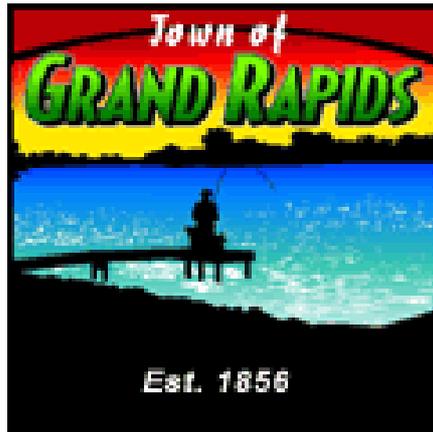


Town of Grand Rapids

Wood County, Wisconsin

Comprehensive Plan 2009



Prepared by:
Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission
with assistance from
Wood County Planning & Zoning Office

TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission

Raymond W. Weber, Chairman
Tom Arnold, Vice-Chairman
Rodney Dorski
Eugene Zager
Mike Speich
Lori Edwards, Alternate
Dave Alft, Alternate

Town Board

Don Bohn, Chairman
Arne Nystrom, Supervisor
Ed Hellner, Supervisor
Jeanne Fehrman, Supervisor
Bill Clendenning, Supervisor

Staff

Lorelei Fuehrer, Town Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator
Judy McLellan, Town Clerk
Kris Ginter, Treasurer

Public Hearing Date: March 2, 2009
Town Board Adoption: _____, 2009

Prepared under the provisions of Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 66.1001 Comprehensive Planning
with assistance from the

Wood County Planning & Zoning Office

Gary Popelka, AICP, Project Manager
Jason Grueneberg, Planner
Justin Conner, GIS Specialist

GRAND RAPIDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES	1
A. Location & Geography	1
B. History.....	1
C. Town Government	2
D. Population	2
E. Cultural Change	3
F. Age Distribution.....	3
G. Median Age.....	5
H. Education	6
I. Households.....	7
J. Income and Poverty	8
K. Employment Characteristics	9
L. Growth Projections: Population and Housing.....	10
(1) Population Projections.....	10
(2) Household Projections.....	11
M. Summary & Conclusions	12
2. HOUSING.....	13
A. Housing Assessment	13
(1) Type of Housing Structures.....	13
(2) Age of Housing Stock	13
(3) Structural Value.....	14
(4) Occupancy Characteristics	15
(5) Housing Affordability	15
(6) Tenure.....	16
(7) Housing Accessibility	16
(8) Platted Lots.....	17
B. Housing Goals, Objectives & Policies	20
3. TRANSPORTATION.....	23
A. Road Network	23
(1) Functional Classifications	23
(2) Average Daily Traffic	26
(3) Commuting Patterns	26
(4) Highway 54 Extension	27
(5) Official Street Map.....	28
(6) Town of Grand Rapids Road Improvement Plan.....	29
(7) STP Urban & Rural Systems Planning	29
B. Airports	30
C. Railroad Service.....	33
D. Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails	33
E. Public Transportation.....	33
F. Relationship of Transportation System to Other Comprehensive Plan Elements	34

G. Transportation Goals & Objectives	34
4. UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES	41
A. Sewage Disposal/Sanitary Sewer	41
B. Water Supply	42
C. Storm Water Management	43
D. Solid Waste Disposal/Recycling	44
E. Contaminated Sites	45
F. Emergency Services	45
(1) Police	45
(2) Fire	45
(3) Ambulance Service	46
G. Parks	46
H. Library Service	47
I. Schools	47
J. Child Care	48
K. Health Care	49
L. Telecommunications Facilities	50
M. Utilities & Community Facilities Goals & Objectives	50
5. AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES	52
A. Introduction	52
B. Topography	52
C. Productive Agricultural Areas	52
D. Soils: Limitations for Dwellings	54
E. Forests	57
F. Water Resources	57
(1) Groundwater	57
(2) Surface Water	59
G. Floodplains and Shorelands	60
H. Wetlands	61
I. Wildlife Habitat	64
J. Parks, Open Spaces and Recreational Resources	64
K. Historical and Cultural Resources	66
L. Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources Goals & Objectives	66
6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	68
A. Recent Economic Change & Purpose	68
B. Employment Trends	68
C. Worker Age Structure	69
D. Labor Force Participation	69
E. Commuting Patterns	71
F. Economic Base	71
G. Employment Projections	72
H. Area Business & Industrial Parks	74
I. Environmentally Contaminated Sites	75

J.	Desired Businesses.....	76
K.	Economic Development Organizational Framework.....	76
L.	Competitive Strengths and Weaknesses	77
M.	Economic Development Goals, Objectives & Policies.....	79
7.	INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION	80
A.	Purpose.....	80
B.	Existing Shared Services and Cooperative Efforts	80
C.	Existing Intergovernmental Regulations and Tools.....	83
D.	Existing and Potential Conflicts.....	86
E.	Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals & Objectives.....	86
8.	LAND USE.....	88
A.	Trends in Supply & Demand	88
(1)	Historical Land Use Pattern	88
(2)	Current Land Use & Future Expectations	88
B.	Potential Conflicts	93
(1)	Suburban Development	93
(2)	Cost of Providing Services	93
(3)	Management of Private Septic Systems	94
(4)	Protecting the 'Suburban Character' of Grand Rapids.....	94
C.	Land Use Goals & Objectives	94
D.	Future Land Use Plan.....	96
9.	IMPLEMENTATION.....	100
A.	Introduction.....	100
B.	Plan Adoption	100
C.	Zoning Ordinance.....	100
D.	Subdivision Ordinance	101
E.	Capital Improvement Program.....	101
F.	Official Map	102
G.	Building Code	102
H.	Other Ordinances	102
I.	Town of Grand Rapids Planning Administration	103
J.	Plan Amendments and Monitoring	104

1. ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

A. Location & Geography

The Town of Grand Rapids is an unincorporated town in the southeast corner of Wood County in central Wisconsin. The Town is located primarily east of the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Port Edwards. Grand Rapids' east boundary is the Wood–Portage County line. The Town of Saratoga lies south of Grand Rapids and Portage County's Town of Grant lies to the east. The Village of Biron in on the Town's north side. Figure 1-1 shows the location of Grand Rapids in relation to the State of Wisconsin and Wood County.

The soils of Grand Rapids are predominately sandy with varying groundwater levels. Generally, south of Lake Avenue (County Road W), groundwater levels are greater than five feet beneath the ground's surface, making these areas very compatible for private onsite waste treatment systems (septic systems). North of Lake Avenue, the soils tend to have intermittently, or seasonally, high groundwater levels, some as shallow as 0 – 1 foot. Soils along the State Highway 54 corridor are similar to those that are south of Lake Avenue, that is they are sandy with deeper groundwater levels, making that area favorable to development. The soils maps, presented in Chapter 5, help to explain development patterns in Grand Rapids.

B. History¹

The Town of Grand Rapids was formed in 1850 as part of Portage County.

¹ Portions of this history section are taken from an article by Town of Grand Rapids Supervisor Arne Nystrom for Wood County's sesquicentennial publication titled, "Reflections of 150 Years," pg. 76.

Grand Rapids became part of Wood County in 1856 when Portage County was split into two counties. The Town got its name from the many areas along the river that had rapids and chutes.

Grand Rapids is the 11th largest unincorporated town in Wisconsin and the third largest municipality in Wood County. Its population is 45% more than the next largest town in Wood County, that town being Grand Rapids' neighbor to the south – Saratoga. There are 7,801 people who live in Grand Rapids, a town of about 22 square miles in size. The greatest population density is in the south half of the town, a factor of the high groundwater levels in the northern parts of the Grand Rapids.

Grand Rapids is a suburban community. Its land uses are mixed and

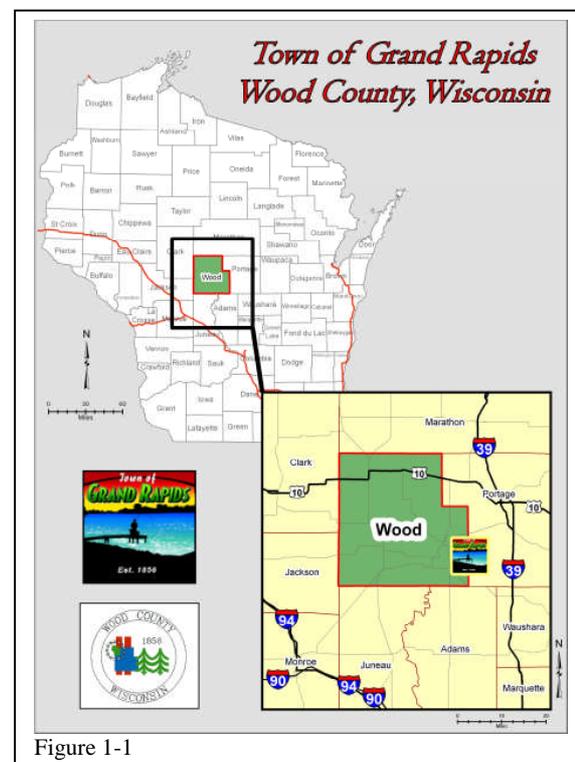


Figure 1-1

include single-family housing and duplexes; commercial uses, such as service and retail establishments; industrial uses; recreational opportunities; and specialized agricultural. The Town is also the home for Mid-State Technical College and that district's home offices.

C. Town Government

The Town of Grand Rapids is governed by a five-member, elected board of supervisors. One member of the board serves as Chairman, a position that is also elected by general ballot. The Town Board holds regular meetings twice each month, all subject to Wisconsin's open meetings laws. The Board oversees a budget of \$2.48 million (2009). Assessed value of the Town is \$453,527,600 (2008).

In addition to the Town Board, there are several appointed full-time and part-time staff members. They include the Town Clerk, Treasurer, as well as positions in the administrative department, building inspection/ zoning administration, police department and public works department. A well-equipped and trained, well-manned volunteer fire department also serves Grand Rapids residents and businesses.

Fourteen committees and commissions are appointed to oversee policy development and operations of many town functions. The planning commission is the most active, meeting twice monthly to consider various building and land use issues. That commission also oversees the development and implementation of the Town's comprehensive plan, zoning and subdivision ordinances and building codes. Many of the other committees and commissions meet monthly, while some meet as needed or at certain times of the year (i.e., Board of Review).

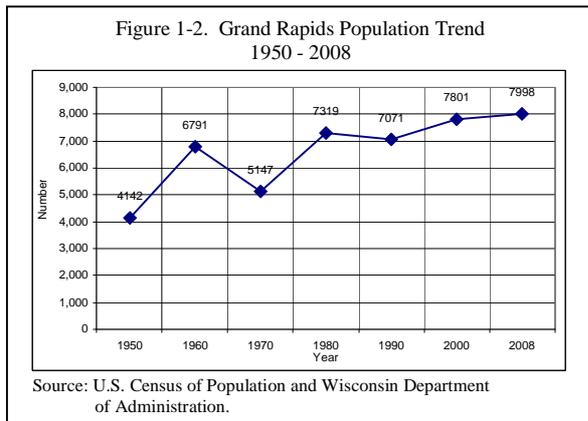
D. Population

Historically, the Town of Grand Rapids has been either the fastest or one of the fastest growing municipalities in Wood County. It is a prime example of a suburban community² with residents commuting to Wisconsin River cities and villages for jobs while escaping the higher property taxes of those communities by building their homes or moving to Grand Rapids. In 1950, the first decennial census after World War II and the marked beginning of heavy suburban development, Grand Rapids had a population of 4,142. The population has fluctuated several times because of substantial annexations to the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Those annexations were primarily the result of failing private on-site waste treatment systems (septic systems) on small lots with sandy soils. Between 1960 and 1970, for example, the population of Grand Rapids dropped from 6,791 to 5,147 and between 1980 and 1990, there was a decline from 7,319 to 7,071. Both declines are direct results of annexations to Wisconsin Rapids. Although Grand Rapids has continued to gain population since 1980, the growth has slowed, as it has throughout the county, generally. In 2000, the population rose to 7,801 and the latest population estimate for the Town is 7,998.³ Figure 1-2 shows the population changes for Grand Rapids since 1950.

The Town of Saratoga is the other Wood County town that lies east of the

² Grand Rapids can be categorized as a 'suburban community,' but has worked hard to become as self-sustaining as possible by adding manufacturing, specialized agriculture, retail businesses and service jobs in the community. More is said about jobs in the economic element.

³ Wisconsin Department of Administration, January 1, 2008 population estimates.



Wisconsin River and has very sandy soils. Saratoga has also experienced considerable growth in population, even more so than Grand Rapids. Whereas Grand Rapids' growth between 1970 and 2000 was 51.6%, Saratoga's was over 80%. Actual growth in real number of people in Grand Rapids, however, outpaced Saratoga 2,654 to 2,405. Growth in Wood County, during the same period of time, was much slower than Grand Rapids. Between 1970 and 2000, Wood County's population grew by only 15.6% compared to Grand Rapids' 51.6%.

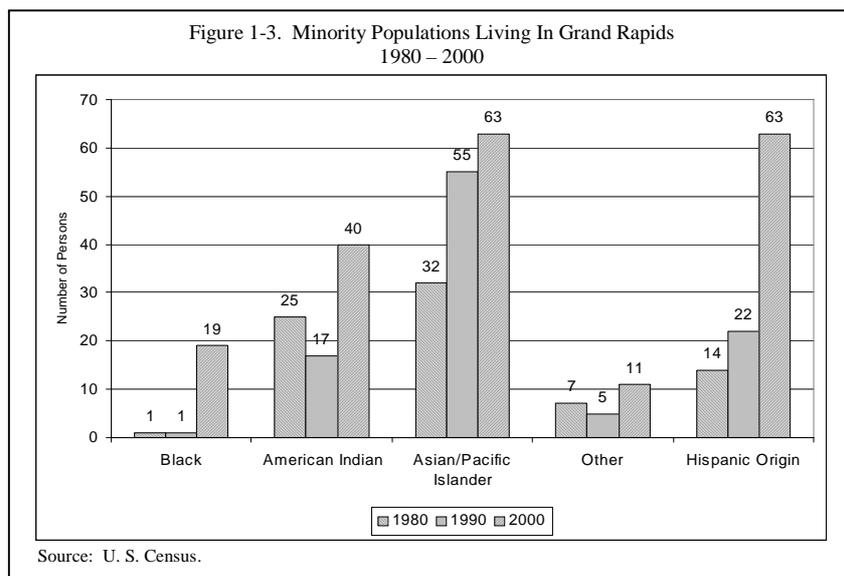
E. Cultural Change

Grand Rapids has experienced a slight mixing of cultures over the past 15- to 25-years with respect to the number of

minorities that live in the Town. While the majority of the Town's population continues to be comprised of persons of the white race, minority populations are increasing in numbers. In 1980, less than one percent of Grand Rapids' population included minorities. The proportion of minorities increased to 1.1% in 1990 and 1.7% in 2000. Figure 1-3 shows the change in the minority groups that are in the Town. Although their numbers are small, there have been significant proportionate gains of those who are black, American Indian, Asian, or Hispanic.

F. Age Distribution

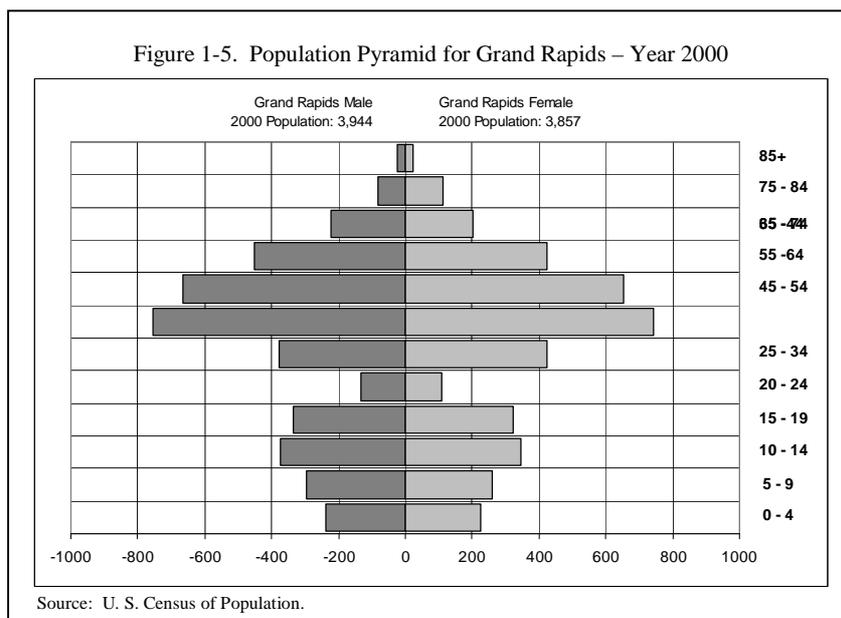
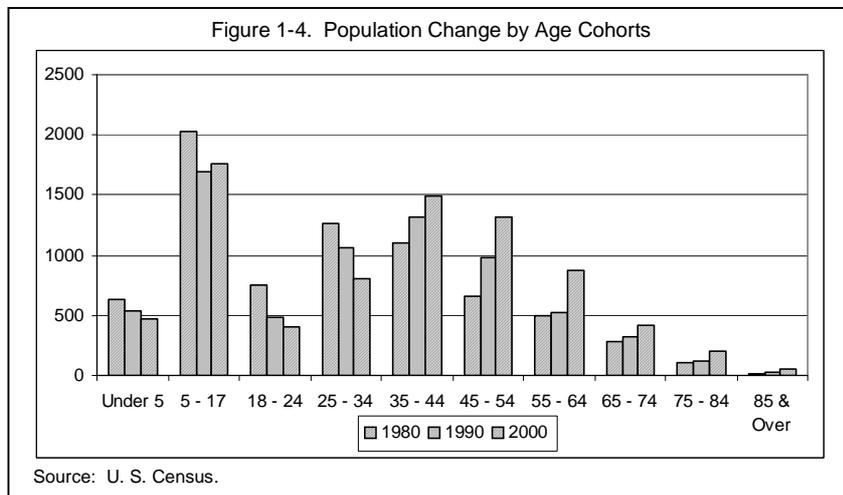
The age distribution in Grand Rapids is similar to most communities, not only in Wood County and Wisconsin, but throughout the nation. Two charts – Figures 1-4 and 1-5 – show the age distribution of Grand Rapids residents. In Figure 1-4, a comparison is provided for the years 1980, 1990 and 2000. The purpose of this chart is to show how the population below the age of 35 has been in a state of decline, while the population age 35 and older has been increasing. This trend suggests that types of services may change in the foreseeable future in the areas of schools, housing types,

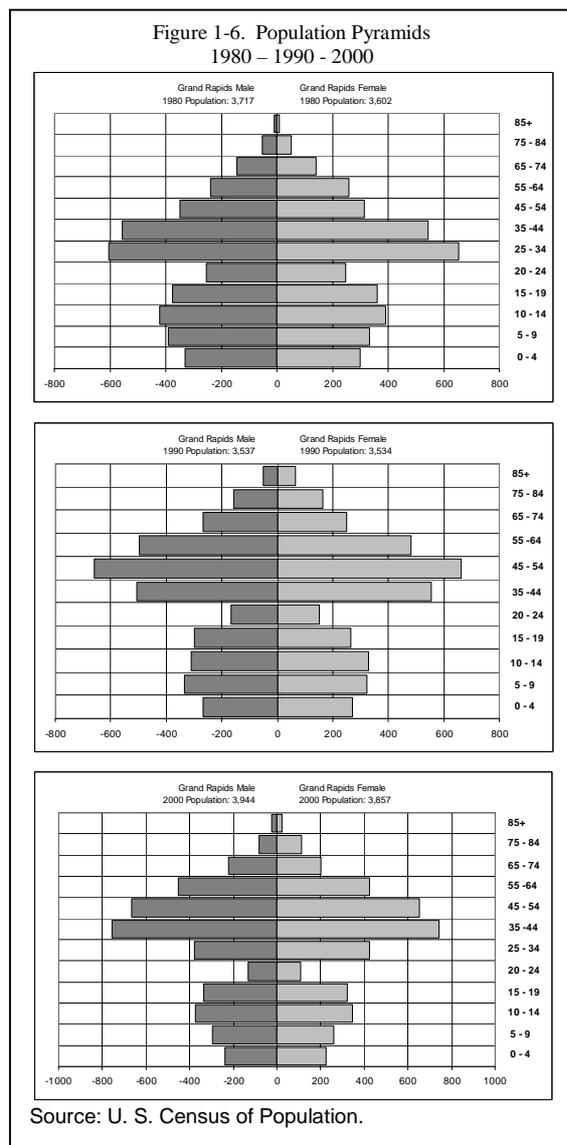


service-oriented businesses, recreation areas and more. In addition, this trend suggests that resources to pay for municipal services may change, placing a heavier financial burden on those with limited incomes. Figure 1-5 is a population pyramid for Grand Rapids. The population pyramid displays the distribution of the age and gender of the people in the Town for the year 2000. A healthy, viable community will have a large base of children and young adults and a much smaller number of residents in the older age groups, or cohorts.

A top-heavy pyramid, like the one for Grand Rapids, is common in central Wisconsin. In fact, population pyramids for the Town of Saratoga and for Wood County look very much like that for Grand Rapids.

The value of the population pyramid is based on the assumptions that (1) the Town exists to meet the needs of its inhabitants and (2) people have needs and expectations that change with age. A comparison of the population pyramids for the last three census periods helps to explain community changes





that are occurring. Figure 1-6 displays the population pyramids for 1980, 1990 and 2000. Note the changes. The most obvious is in the bottom half of the charts, ages 0 to 24. That part of the charts has shrunk with each decennial census, especially the 20 to 24 age group. It was noted, in Figure 1-4 that the decline also included the 18- and 19-year olds. These charts show that Grand Rapids is losing a very important component of its population base – the youth. Why are they leaving? Should the Town develop programs to increase jobs in the area?

Should they try to attract different types of jobs? Are the secondary education opportunities geared toward what area youth want? There has also been a large decline in those who are age 25 to 34. Many of those are parents of the younger age groups. Is housing too expensive? Is enough housing available? How can the Town convince younger age groups to return to Grand Rapids or move there for the first time? The town should consider reasons for the out-migration and develop programs and policies to reverse that trend. Conversely, as the population pyramid becomes heavier in the upper age groups, the Town may want to consider planning for more retirement-type or assisted living housing, medical clinics, transportation services, passive recreation facilities and community centers, fewer public schools, possibly converting those closed into senior housing, medical clinics or community centers.

G. Median Age

Given the information in Figures 1-4, 1-5 and 1-6, it is not surprising that the median age of Grand Rapids' population is going up. In 1980, the Town's median age was 27.2. In 1990, the median age had increased by 5.7 years to 32.9 and by the year 2000, it increased another 5.5 years to 38.4. The 11.2 year increase in median age between 1980 and 2000 reflects the continuing decline in the number of residents that are younger than age 35.

	1980	1990	2000
Grand Rapids	27.2	32.9 +5.7	38.4 5.5
Wood County	28.9	33.3 +4.4	38.0 +4.7
Wisconsin	29.0	32.9 +3.9	36.0 +3.1

Source: U. S. Census.

The change in median age in Grand Rapids is no different than the change in most municipalities, the county or the state. In Table 1-1, you can see that Wood County’s median age increased from 28.9 in 1980 to 33.3 in 1990 to 38.0 in 2000. Why did the median age in Grand Rapids catch up and surpass that of Wood County? One reason is that the cities and villages remain home to a greater proportion of the younger age groups. Although the population in those age groups declined throughout the county, the decline was proportionally greater in Grand Rapids than in the cities. Note that the median age in Grand Rapids and Wood County has been increasing faster than in the State’s and for the same reason - the larger metropolitan areas continue to be home to a greater proportion of the younger age population. Again, the rising median age is indicative of an aging population that will require and demand different services or changes to existing services.

H. Education

The level of education of Grand Rapids residents, age 25 and older, has continued to increase since 1980. This is the result of more emphasis placed on education and the need for more education to live in a society that has much more technology and more specialties than in the past. Many of the Town’s elderly residents ended their educational training with high school graduation or less. Some cut their education short because of World War II and a high school education was all that was required for most manufacturing jobs in our area. Table 1-2 shows the change in educational levels for Grand Rapids, Wood County and Wisconsin. In Grand Rapids, a consistently higher proportion of the population has completed a high school education than both the county and the state. The same is true for a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

Year and Educational Level	Grand Rapids	Wood County	Wisconsin
1980			
High School	78.1	67.9	69.6
Associate Degree			
Bachelor’s Degree	17.1	11.4	14.8
1990			
High School	87.7	78.3	78.6
Associate Degree	11.7	8.2	7.1
Bachelor’s Degree	19.2	13.5	17.7
2000			
High School	94.7	84.8	85.1
Associate Degree	9.4	8.1	7.5
Bachelor’s Degree	27.6	16.9	22.4
Source: U. S. Census.			

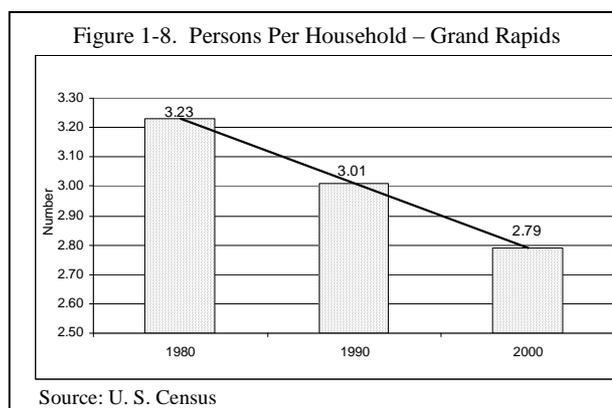
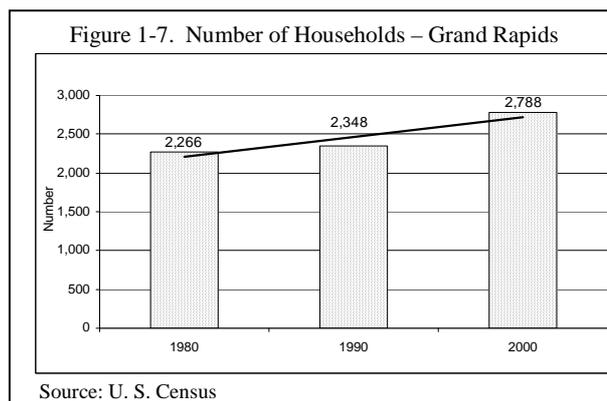
Today, many area businesses and industries require specialized training and a two-year Associate degree. Mid-State Technical College, located in Grand Rapids works closely with area businesses to provide customized training programs to meet changing needs. In 2000, 9.4% of Grand Rapids residents, age 25 and older had an Associate degree. This figure is down from 11.7% in 1990 and may be offset with the increase in the number of residents with at least a Bachelor’s degree. The proportion of county and state residents with Associate degrees remained stable from 1990 to 2000.

A growing number of jobs require a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree. More are requiring a Master’s degree. The nearby University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point and other U. W. campuses help train people who work in our area and live in Grand Rapids.

I. Households

The household characteristics in Grand Rapids are changing as the age and make-up of the population changes. With a lower number of residents 35 years of age and younger, there are fewer persons per household. Although there are fewer persons in each household, the actual number of persons living in Grand Rapids is increasing. The result is a need for more housing. With an aging population, there may be some changes in the type of housing that residents prefer or need. They may prefer smaller homes or condominium living to get away from outdoor maintenance chores that get more difficult with age and disabilities. Perhaps they will need a home that can accommodate persons with mobility impairments who need features like zero-step entrances and wide interior doorways in order to live safely and comfortably in their homes. A survey of Americans aged 45 and older found that nearly one-fourth of the respondents thought it likely that they or someone in their household would have difficulty getting around in their homes within the next five-years.⁴ In 2000, 16% of Grand Rapids residents, age 65 and over, had physical disabilities and 7% had self-care disabilities that could contribute to difficulty getting around in their homes or using facilities within their homes. There are fewer Grand Rapids residents who are under the age of 65 that have these disabilities, but as many as 200 of them have a physical impairment that could make it hard to get around their homes.

⁴ Bayer, A.-H., & Harper, L. (2000). *Fixing to stay: A national survey of housing and home modification issues*. Washington D.C.; AARP Knowledge Management.



Year	Grand Rapids		Wood County	
	# of HH	Pop./HH	# of HH	Pop./HH
1980	2,266	3.23	25,067	2.87
1990	2,348	3.01	27,473	2.65
2000	2,788	2.79	30,135	2.47

Source: U. S. Census

In 1980, there were 2,266 households⁵ in Grand Rapids (population 7,319). By 1990, even after the annexation mentioned earlier, the number of households increased to 2,348 (population 7,071). In the year 2000, there were 2,788 households (population 7,801). Although the population and the number of

⁵ A “housing unit” is the physical structure. It can contain one “household,” as with a single-family home, or more than one “household” as with a duplex, four-plex or other multiple-family “housing unit.” There is more discussion about housing units in the housing element.

households are increasing, the number of persons residing in each household is on the decline. In 1980, 1990 and 2000, the average number of persons per household has gone from 3.23 to 3.01 to 2.79, respectively. Figures 1-7 and 1-8 illustrate the growth in households along with the decline in persons per household. Notice the opposite slopes of the trend lines. Then, Table 1-3 shows how Grand Rapids compares to Wood County for both. Over the 20-year period from 1980 to 2000, the number of households in Grand Rapids grew by 23% compared to just over 20% for the County. The decline in persons per household was pretty equal for both the town and county (-0.44 and -0.40, respectively).

J. Income and Poverty

Income levels in Grand Rapids have consistently been higher than those of the county or State. Also, income levels, particularly median household and median family income levels, increased rapidly between the years 1990 and 2000. As of the 2000 census, Grand Rapids’ median household income was \$62,515, an enormous 50.3% higher than Wood County’s \$41,595 median household income or 42.8% higher than Wisconsin’s \$43,791 figure. Although the gap isn’t as great for median family income (see Figure 1-9), it is still noteworthy. Per capita income,

Income Type	Grand Rapids	Wood County	Wisconsin
Median HH			
1990	\$41,811	\$29,735	\$29,442
2000	\$62,515	\$41,595	\$43,791
Median Family			
1990	\$43,833	\$34,933	\$35,082
2000	\$66,423	\$50,798	\$52,911
Per Capita			
1990	\$15,091	\$12,130	\$13,276
2000	\$25,331	\$20,203	\$21,271

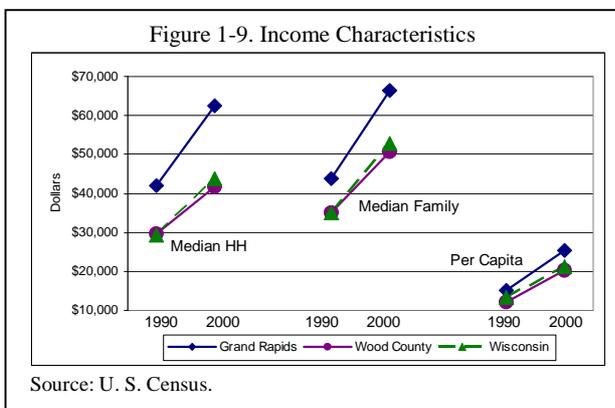
Source: U. S. Census

however, is much more closely aligned than the other two methods of measuring income. Table 1-4 lists the median and per capita income levels for the three jurisdictions for 1990 and 2000.

The information presented in Figure 1-9 and Table 1-4 shows that Grand Rapids is more affluent than the rest of Wood County or Wisconsin, in general. How is the income distributed among Grand Rapids families though? We saw, in Table 1-4, that

Income Level	Grand Rapids	Wood County	Wisconsin
< \$10,000	1.8%	2.9%	3.5%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	2.5%	3.0%	3.0%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	5.3%	10.4%	9.1%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	5.6%	12.2%	11.6%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	13.8%	20.2%	18.7%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	30.2%	29.7%	27.6%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	20.0%	11.9%	14.1%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	14.8%	6.3%	8.5%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	3.8%	1.5%	1.9%
\$200,000 or more	2.1%	1.8%	2.0%
Median family inc.	\$66,423	\$50,798	\$52,911

Source: U. S. Census



	Pct. Families		Pct. Individuals	
	1989	1999	1989	1999
Grand Rapids	3.3	1.8	4.1	2.5
Wood County	6.4	4.4	8.5	6.5
Wisconsin	7.6	5.6	10.7	8.7

Source: U. S. Census, Table DP-3.

the median family income in the year 2000 was \$43,833. Over 30% of all families had an income of between \$50,000 and \$74,999 in 2000 (Table 1-5). This compared to 11.9% and 14.1% in Wood County and Wisconsin, respectively. Nearly 41% of Grand Rapids families had incomes of more than \$75,000 that year compared to 21.5% of Wood County families and 26.5% of Wisconsin families.

The percent of persons and families at or below the poverty level in 1989 and 1999 is shown in Table 1-6 for Grand Rapids, Wood County and Wisconsin. In 1989, the percent of families and individuals in Grand Rapids that were at or below the poverty level was about half the figure for Wood County. In 1999, the percentages dropped for both jurisdictions. The 1.8% of Grand Rapids families that were at or below the poverty level in 1999 translates to 42 families. There were 197 individuals in poverty, 2.5% of the total population in the Town. Data for Wisconsin is also presented in Table 1-6 for information purposes, but cannot be compared to Grand Rapids because of the large cities that are included in Wisconsin's data.

K. Employment Characteristics

The employed labor force is defined as people living in the Town who are 16 years and older and had a job at the time the

Census was taken. Table 1-7 provides a comparison of Grand Rapids' employed labor force for 1980, 1990 and 2000, comparing Grand Rapids data to that of the county and state. According to this data, the employed labor force in Grand Rapids is growing considerably faster than that of either the county or state. Between 1980 and 1990, the employed labor force in Grand Rapids grew by 15.7% and, between 1990 and 2000, it grew by another 20.4%. For the 20-year period, the growth in the employed labor force in Grand Rapids was nearly double that of Wood County and was about one-third faster than Wisconsin. The unemployment rate for the Grand Rapids labor force was only 3.1% in 2000 (3.4% for Wood County), which is considered "full-employment."

Manufacturing remains the strongest industry for area employment, but education, health and social service employment has made substantial gains since 1990 (see Chapter 6, Table 6-1). This confirms statements made in earlier

Jurisdiction	Employed			Net Change 1980-2000
	1980	1990	2000	
Grand Rapids	3,086	3,571	4,299	
Wood County	30,635	34,173	37,345	
Wisconsin	2,114,473	2,386,439	2,734,925	
Jurisdiction	Percent Change			Net Change 1980-2000
	1980-1990	1990-2000	1980-2000	
Grand Rapids	15.7%	20.4%	39.3%	1,213
Wood County	11.5%	9.3%	21.9%	6,710
Wisconsin	12.9%	14.6%	29.3%	620,472

Source: U. S. Census.

	1990		2000	
	Number Employed	Percent of Total	Number Employed	Percent of Total
INDUSTRY				
Employed persons 16 years and over	3571	100.0%	4299	100.0%
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	55	1.5%	72	1.7%
Construction	121	3.4%	292	6.8%
Manufacturing	1276	35.7%	1415	32.9%
Transportation	187	5.2%	140	3.3%
Communications & other public utilities	77	2.2%	66	1.5%
Wholesale trade	67	1.9%	40	0.9%
Retail trade	625	17.5%	499	11.6%
Finance, insurance & real estate	191	5.3%	248	5.8%
Business & repair services	77	2.2%		0.0%
Personal services	79	2.2%	127	3.0%
Entertainment & recreation services	40	1.1%	273	6.4%
Education, health & social services	597	16.7%	944	22.0%
Other professional & related services	108	3.0%	88	2.0%
Public administration	71	2.0%	95	2.2%
OCCUPATION			4,299	100.0%
Management, professional & related			1,397	32.5%
Sales & office			1,089	25.3%
Service, except protective and household			539	12.5%
Farming, forestry & fishing			7	0.2%
Construction, extraction & maintenance			420	9.8%
Production, transportation & material moving			847	19.7%
NOTE: Because of a change in classifying occupations, only those for 2000 are shown in this table.				
Source: U. S. Census.				

paragraphs relating to changes in services and facilities that will be needed or demanded as the population ages. Retail trade remains a strong employment sector, but declined between 1990 and 2000.

Of the Grand Rapids residents who are in the employed labor force, as many as 32.5% hold management positions. The fact that so many Town residents are managers helps to explain the higher income figures in the Town. Sales and office jobs and, of course, production, transportation and

material moving also remain strong in our area. More about the Grand Rapids economy and job force is presented in the economic element of this plan.

L. Growth Projections: Population and Housing

(1) Population Projections

Year	Population	Households	Pop./HH
2000	7,801	2,788	2.79
2005	8,151	2,985	2.73
2010	8,521	3,204	2.66
2015	8,880	3,403	2.61
2020	9,208	3,580	2.57
2025	9,448	3,721	2.54

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration and Wood County Planning & Zoning Office.

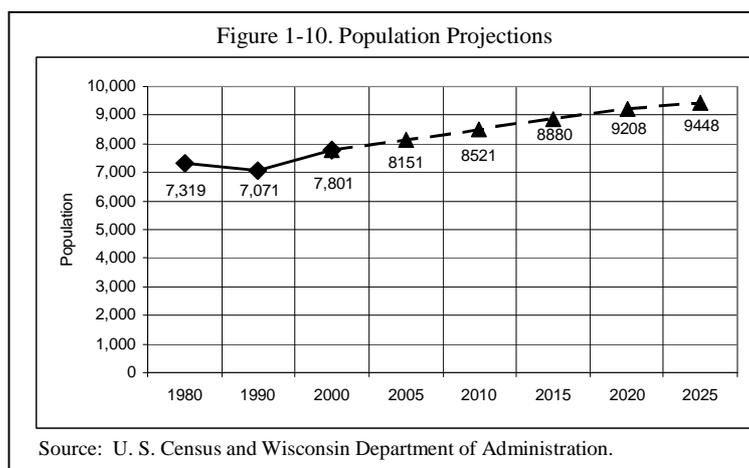
Wisconsin law⁶ requires the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) to make annual population estimates for each municipality and county and to periodically make projections of the anticipated future population of the state, counties and municipalities. Those projections are deemed to be the official population projections for the State. The Department of Administration’s Demographic Services Center is the official agency that is responsible for the statutory mandates, in addition to other census-related tasks. Although population projections are often developed by municipalities for local use, it is the WDOA projections that will be

considered for any federal or state grants, for developing water quality management plans and for many other uses. The WDOA population projections, in five-year increments for Grand Rapids are presented in Table 1-9 and Figure 1-10.

(2) Household Projections

The number of households that will be needed over the planning period is driven by the projected population and the population per household. Replacement housing units will also be needed as some are destroyed by fire, wind or other means or as they become worn and dilapidated. As housing structures are added to accommodate the needs of future households, some undeveloped land will have to be converted.

The Wisconsin Department of Administration projects the number of future households for municipalities as well as projecting population figures. In Figures 1-7 and 1-8, we saw how the number of households has continued to increase and the number of persons per household has continued to decline. Those trends are expected to continue. According to WDOA projections, the number of persons per



⁶ Section 16.96, Wisconsin Statutes, 2008-2009.

household in Grand Rapids will decline over the planning period from the 2000 figure of 2.79 to 2.66 in 2010 to 2.61 in 2020. With the expected increase in population and the expected decline in the number of persons per household, Grand Rapids can expect a fairly substantial demand for more housing units. Projections generated by the WDOA show that Grand Rapids can expect to have to provide an additional 933 households by the year 2025. Table 1-9 provides detail about the expected changes in population, households and population per household for each five years to the year 2025.

M. Summary & Conclusions

Based on the factual data and projections presented throughout this section, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The population of Grand Rapids has grown more rapidly than most Wood County municipalities, with the Grand Rapids losing population only when large areas of the Town have annexed to the City of Wisconsin Rapids. The population is expected to continue growing, perhaps by another 1,650 people by 2025.

2. Although the population will continue to grow, the proportion of younger persons, age 35 and younger, will decrease.

3. Between 1980 and 2000, the median age has increased by 5.5 years each 10-year period from 27.2 to 38.4. The median age will continue going up, causing a change in

demand for types of municipal services, housing types, need for schools and more.

4. Grand Rapids residents, age 25 and older, have more education than the County as a whole and than the State. This is true at the high school, Associate degree and Bachelor's degree or higher levels. Studies have shown that higher levels of education result in higher incomes over a person's lifetime.

5. Household sizes are becoming smaller with about 2.79 persons per household in 2000 and an expected 2.54 persons per household in 2025. As household sizes continue to get smaller and the population continues to grow, the demand for more housing units will require planning for roads and other municipal facilities and services.

6. The income levels of Grand Rapids residents are much higher than Wood County and the number of families and individuals at or below the poverty level is extremely low. Higher incomes often are an indication that larger, more expensive homes will be built, helping the Town with financing of municipal facilities and services through an increased tax base.

7. Many Grand Rapids residents hold managerial, professional or other higher income jobs. Many others are employed in sales and office positions, with a large number employed in the manufacturing sector.

2. HOUSING

A. Housing Assessment

(1) Type of Housing Structures

A major proportion of dwelling units in Grand Rapids has been, and continues to be single-family homes (see Table 2-1). The proportion of single-family dwellings has increased since 1980, due in large part to the annexation of the Maples Mobile Home Park, on Highway 13, to the City of Wisconsin Rapids. In 2000, there were 49 housing structures that have two units (duplexes) and six with more than two units (multi-family). In 1980, there were 35 structures with two or more dwelling units versus the 55 in 2000. The number of mobile homes declined from 224 to 105. In 2008, according to Town records, there are 39 duplexes and 53 mobile homes.

Type	1980		2000	
	Number of Dwelling Units	Percent of Total Units	Number of Dwelling Units	Percent of Total Units
Single Family	2,107	89.0	2,673	94.4
Duplex	35*	1.5*	49	1.7
Multi-Family			6	0.2
Mobile Home	224	9.5	105	3.7
TOTAL	2,366	100.0	2,833	100.0
* The 1980 census listed dwelling structures with 2 – 9 units. In 2000, the census listed structures with 2 units as a separate detail.				
Source: U.S. Census, Summary File 3F – Sample Data (2000) and U.S. Census of Housing, General Housing Characteristics, Table 36a (1980).				

Because housing structures in Grand Rapids are served by private onsite waste treatment systems, it is likely that the type of housing structures will continue to be mainly single-family, with some additional duplexes. Town planners must, however, be aware of the changing age and consequent changing needs that may occur with future housing.

(2) Age of Housing Stock

According to the 2000 census, there are 2,854 total housing units in the Town.⁷ Nearly 40% of them were built in 1980 or later (see Table 2-2). The large proportion of newer housing units is due, in part, because Grand Rapids is one of the fastest growing communities in Wood County, as was discussed in Chapter 1. Another reason for the high proportion of newer housing units is because many of the older units have been annexed to the City of Wisconsin Rapids because of their need for sanitary sewer as septic systems failed on lots that were too

YEAR BUILT	HOUSING UNITS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
1990 – March 2000	618	21.8
1980 – 1989	512	18.1
1970 – 1979	814	28.7
1960 – 1969	391	13.8
1940 – 1959	383	13.5
1939 or earlier	115	4.1
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	2,833	100.0
Source: U.S. Census of Population, 2000, Table DP-4.		

⁷ Total dwelling units for 2000, shown in Table 2-1 is 2,833, a number from Summary File 3F, which is sample data. The 2,854 units is from the 100% data.

small for replacement systems. Only slightly more than a third of all housing units in Grand Rapids were built prior to 1970.

It is difficult to project how much more residential property will be annexed to Wisconsin Rapids for the same reason. Changes in Wisconsin’s plumbing code for private onsite waste treatment systems changed several years ago, however, and now requires that there be room on a residential lot for a replacement system should the original POWTS fail. This will help prevent future annexations primarily for the purpose of getting sanitary sewer services.

(3) Structural Value

The structural value of owner-occupied housing in the Town of Grand Rapids for the year 2000 is listed in Table 2-3. A nearly equal proportion of housing units

VALUE	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Less than \$50,000 -	62	2.6
\$50,000 - \$99,999	935	39.9
\$100,000 - \$149,999	861	36.7
\$150,000 - \$199,999	295	12.6
\$200,000 – \$299,999	149	6.4
\$300,000 - \$499,999	41	1.7
\$500,000 or more	0	0
Median – Grand Rapids	\$108,800	-
Median – Wood Co.	\$81,400	-
Median-Wisconsin	\$112,200	-

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 2000, Table DP-4.

are valued at between \$50,000 and \$99,000 (39.9%) and between \$100,000 and \$149,999 (36.7%). A very small proportion are valued at less than \$50,000. About one in five housing units are valued at \$150,000 or more.

Housing values since 2000 have obviously changed, but actual figures are not available until the next census. Using recent sales data does, however, provide a means to gauge current values. In 2008, 64 properties in Grand Rapids were listed by Realtors (more were sold by owners, but that data is not readily available). Table 2-4 shows that the highest sold price was \$374,900, with an average sold price being \$145,713 and the median being \$128,500. On average, Grand Rapids homes are on the market for 147 days.

	List Price	Sold Price	DOM
High	\$379,900	\$374,900	522
Low	\$26,900	\$26,000	17
Average	\$152,956	\$145,713	147
Median	\$138,950	\$128,500	108
Total Price	\$9,789,199	\$9,325,657	
Listing Count	64		

Source: First Weber Group, Wisconsin Rapids, March 2009.

The value of housing units is a factor of the unit’s age, location, condition and the local economy. A third of the labor force that lives in Grand Rapids is in the “professional and management” occupations and, thus, is in a position to pay more for housing than lower paying occupations. The median value of housing in Grand Rapids is fully one-third higher than Wood County as a whole. Both the Town and the County have lower median housing values than the State, which is reflective of the overall lower cost of living outside the large metropolitan areas of Wisconsin. Values of owner-occupied

housing in Grand Rapids are considered to be “affordable,” providing good selection of owner-occupied housing for persons of all income levels to live in the Town, but most of the Town’s renter-occupied housing is not “affordable” by federal definition (see Housing Affordability below).

(4) Occupancy Characteristics

The occupancy status of housing units in the Town of Grand Rapids has become slightly more owner- and less renter-occupied during the past 20-years (Table 2-5). In 1980, 2,012 of the 2,366 housing units, or 76%, were owner-occupied. By 1990, 88.7% were owner-occupied and, in 2000, over 91% were owner-occupied.

Table 2-5: OCCUPANCY CHARACTERISTICS TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING UNITS 1980 – 2000				
Year	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant	Total Households
2000	2,607; 91.3%	181; 6.3%	66; 2.3%	2,854
1990	2,143; 88.7%	205; 8.5%	69; 2.9%	2,417
1980	2,012; 76%	254; 21%	100; 3%	2,366

Source: U.S. Census of Population, Table DP-1.

Vacancy rates are important because they show the demand for housing. A vacancy rate of 2% or 3% of owner-occupied housing units generally indicates a tight market and unmet demands for new housing. In Grand Rapids, it was a mere 0.7% in 2000. Renter-occupied housing vacancy rates below 5% indicate a need for more rental units. In Grand Rapids, it was 4.2% in 2000. It is very important that communities have available rental units if they want to attract new residents. New families will usually rent a housing unit until they learn the community and find the neighborhood in which they want

to live. Because of the proximity of Grand Rapids to Wisconsin Rapids, the city’s vacancy rates can also be taken into account. In 2000, the homeowner and rental vacancy rates were reported to be 1.6% and 6.3% respectively. Since that census, additional rental units have been added to the housing stock in Wisconsin Rapids. The area’s selection of both homeowner units and rental units is acceptable, although the Town may want to increase their supply of both to attract more residents.

The actual number of owner-occupied housing units continually increased during the 20-year period from 1980 to 2000. The number of owner-occupied housing units increased by 131 between 1980 and 1990, with another 464 units added from 1990 to 2000. The number of renter-occupied housing units has fallen since 1980 when there were 254. In 2000, the number of rental units was down to 181.

(5) Housing Affordability

By federal law, all communities are required to provide for affordable housing. Affordable housing is defined as housing for which a household pays no more than 30% of their annual income, including the cost of a mortgage or rent and homeowner’s or renter’s insurance. Table 2-6 provides a look at housing affordability in Grand Rapids. Using the 30% of annual income definition, it seems that over 10% of homeowner housing is unaffordable to those living in them. Further, data indicate that over half (53%) of Grand Rapids’ renters are living in dwellings that are, by definition, unaffordable to them. These figures are similar to Wisconsin Rapids’ affordable housing figures where slightly more than 12% of homeowners and nearly 33% of renters are living in dwelling units that are defined as unaffordable to those living in them. One reason for these high

numbers may be the rapid increase in the cost of housing and utilities in recent years coupled with the slower rise in household incomes.

Pct. Household Income for Housing	Homeowners		Renters	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Less than 15%	1,138	48.6	26	17.8
15% to 19%	451	19.2	8	5.5
20% to 24%	234	10.0	35	24.0
25% to 29%	215	9.2	13	8.9
30% to 34%	86	3.7	11	7.5
35% or more	180	7.7	40	27.4
Not Computed	39	1.7	13	8.9
TOTAL	2,343	100.0	146	100.0

Source: U. S. Census, 2000, Table DP-4.

Monthly rent in Grand Rapids generally runs between \$300 and \$749, with a few units costing more than \$749/month.⁸ The median rent paid at the time of the last census was \$565 (median rent in Wisconsin Rapids was \$466). One third of the rental units were between \$300 and \$499 and 58% of the units rented for between \$500 and \$749. The median monthly mortgage in Grand Rapids was \$942 in 2000. Monthly mortgages ranged from a low of \$300 to \$499 per month to \$2,000 or more per month. Although we learned, in Chapter 1 (Table 1-6) that a very small percentage of Grand Rapids residents are at or below the poverty level, the fact that 33% of renters are living in housing that is not affordable to them should be a cause for concern, especially if those are renters are having to cut back on other necessities (food, clothing, heat, etc.) to pay for housing.

(6) Tenure

⁸ U. S. Census, 2000.

Tenure is a measurement of how long persons have lived in their present home. Table 2-7 shows tenure data for Grand Rapids. Of the owner-occupied housing units, nearly a third (31.5%) have lived in their Grand Rapids home for five or fewer years and over half (50.8%) for 10 or fewer years. This compares to 40.3% and 56.8% for Wood County for the periods. County numbers indicate more population movement than do Town numbers, but data for Wood County also takes into consideration a very large number of rental units, group homes, nursing homes, etc. that are located in cities and villages, but not in the Town of Grand Rapids.

YEARS	PERCENT OF TOTAL	
	TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS	WOOD COUNTY
1995 – March 2000	31.5	40.3
1990 – 1994	19.3	16.5
1980 – 1989	25.4	17.6
1970 – 1979	14.8	11.9
1969 or earlier	9.0	13.8

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 2000, Table DP-4.

(7) Housing Accessibility

The number of households with at least one disabled resident increases as the population ages. People generally have the desire to age in their own home and live there comfortably. Few single-family detached homes, like those in Grand Rapids, are accessible to those with mobility limitations. Key features for accessibility are a zero-step entrance, a bathroom or half bath on the entry level and interior doors with at least 32 inches of clearance. Other features may include

lever-style door handles, electrical controls that are in reach from a wheel chair, and other features. Such features make a home accessible for both the resident who has physical limitations and for visitors with physical disabilities. A recent study concluded that a typical single-family detached home has a lifespan of 75-100 years and will have an average of four households living there during its life. That study estimated that there is a 60% probability that a single-family house build in 2000 will house at least one disabled resident during its expected lifetime and a 91% chance of having a disabled visitor.⁹ It is suggested that constructing accessible homes, under either a mandatory ordinance or voluntary program, costs less than retrofitting existing homes. It is further suggested that there are economic benefits to society in general if the aging population can remain in their homes longer before moving into an institutionalized setting, many of which are financed by public programs like Medicaid (\$54 billion in 2005) and Medicare (\$20 billion in 2005).

Neither the State of Wisconsin nor the Town of Grand Rapids has mandatory accessibility building standards at this time. Encouraging even the basic features described above would be worthwhile and may make Grand Rapids even more attractive as a place to live.

(8) Platted Lots

Subdivision Plats

There have been numerous lots platted in Grand Rapids over the years in either subdivision developments or by

certified survey maps. Many of those platted lots have been annexed to Wisconsin Rapids because small lot sizes could not accommodate new private onsite waste treatment systems (POWTS, a/k/a septic systems) when the original systems failed. In other cases, small lots as originally platted have been combined to accommodate new septic systems or because owners of the lots wanted more room and greater separation from their neighbors. This section provides a look at the history of subdivision plats in Grand Rapids and their status today.

There are 116 platted subdivisions in Grand Rapids today. The earliest of these include Fisher's Lakeview subdivision and Helke Subdivision, dating back to 1938 and 1939, respectively. Both of these subdivisions are located north of Lake Wazeecha. Lake Wazeecha was constructed in the 1930's as a project of the Civil Conservation Corps, a federal program designed to create jobs. Following its construction, the lake area became a very desirable location for land speculation and residential development. These first two subdivisions had an original total of 81 lots, but, through combining of lots, there are now 45 lots in the two subdivisions. Together, they consumed about 19 acres of land.

During the 1940s, five subdivisions were platted in Grand Rapids, three of them on the shores of Lake Wazeecha. The subdivisions of the '40s converted 18 acres to residential uses. Today, there are 31 lots in those subdivisions. It is interesting to note that, of the seven subdivisions that were created in the 1930s and 1940s, five were near Lake Wazeecha and accounted for 86% of the new lots that were platted during that time. The trend to plat new subdivisions in the Lake Wazeecha area continued beyond

⁹ Smith, S. K., Rayer, S. and Smith, E. A. (Summer 2008). *Aging and Disability, Implications for the Housing Industry and Housing Policy in the United States*. Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 74, No. 3.

1949. Today, 38% of all subdivision lots are located within a half mile of the lake.

A huge demand for new housing began after World War II. It was about that same time that suburbanization started (although the main suburban movement is associated with the 1960s and 70s). The demand that was created by the end of the war is evidenced in the fact that all five of the subdivisions that were platted in Grand Rapids in the 1940s were done in 1946 and 1947. For the most part, these subdivisions were small in size – from four to 7.5 acres in size – and averaged about 10 lots.

was growing rapidly during the 1950s, the number of platted lots increased at a more rapid pace, giving more opportunity for new residents to have a choice of places in which to live in Grand Rapids. The population increased by 64% during the 1950s, while the number of lots in platted subdivisions nearly doubled (+94%).

With the 1960s came the first real sign that the number of new subdivisions that were being platted outnumbered the demand for new lots. The abundance of newly platted areas during the 60s may have been the beginning of the need for a good planning program. During that decade, 26 new subdivisions were recorded in the Wood County Register of Deeds Office, an increase of almost three times that of the 1950s. A total of 490 lots are in those subdivisions, converting 288 acres to residential uses. While the acreage may not seem excessive, what is notable is the fact that the subdivisions were scattered throughout the town with no evidence of land controls that could regulate or guide the subdivision locations, their lot layout or their street design. The popularity of curvilinear streets and cul de sacs virtually eliminated many opportunities for providing needed through streets in Grand Rapids. That design concept also created issues that are being dealt with today; school bussing, snow plowing and garbage collection, to name a few. While curvilinear streets and cul de sacs may initially attract new residents because of limited traffic and control of speed, the reduction or elimination of some form of a grid pattern has contributed to traffic congestion on the few roads that move traffic from the commuter residential subdivision to employment centers, business areas and schools.

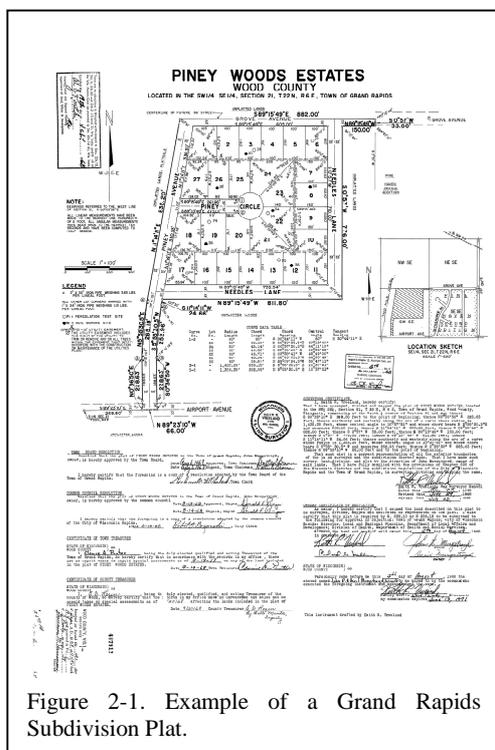


Figure 2-1. Example of a Grand Rapids Subdivision Plat.

The demand for housing increased and land speculation was on the upswing during the prosperous 1950s, but only two of the nine plats that were recorded in the 1950s were recorded prior to 1955. Seventy-seven acres were platted into subdivisions from 1950 to 1959. Today, there are 168 lots in those subdivisions. Although the population of Grand Rapids

In the 1970s, leap-frog siting of subdivisions continued. Another 37 subdivisions were recorded in Grand Rapids, converting over 625 acres from undeveloped to residential uses. Today, there are 881 lots in those subdivisions. Like the subdivisions of the 1960s, the 1970s-vintage developments continued to have curvilinear streets – to slow traffic – and cul de sacs, both exacerbating problems associated with a need for more through streets to serve a rapidly growing population and more vehicles.

In the 1980s, the number of platted subdivisions and lots created in them continued to climb. Fourteen new subdivisions were platted on nearly 200 acres of land in Grand Rapids, creating another 323 lots for residential development.

From 1990 – 1999, there were 22 plats in Grand Rapids, creating 373 lots on 323 acres of land. A sagging economy in the early 2000s slowed subdivision development in the Town. Since the beginning of 2000, there has been only one subdivision plat. That plat created 29 lots on 23 acres of land.

	No. of Plats	Lots ¹	Acres
1930's	2	45	19
1940's	5	31	18
1950's	9	168	77
1960's	26	490	288
1970's	37	881	627
1980's	14	291	197
1990's	22	373	323
2000 – 2007	1	29	23
TOTAL	116	2,308	1,572
1. Number of lots that exist in 2008. This number differs from the original number of platted lots due to several instances where small lots were combined into larger lots. Source: Wood County Planning & Zoning Office.			

All totaled, there are 2,821 lots on 2,238 acres in platted subdivisions in Grand Rapids. Table 2-8 provides an overview of subdivision development in Grand Rapids.

Certified Survey Maps

Certified survey maps, or CSM's, are created by a licensed surveyor for a property owner and usually recorded in the County Register of Deeds office to describe the owner's property boundaries. A CSM may be created for personal use, for mortgage purposes, to divide parcels into smaller lots or building sites, in preparation of selling property, or for other uses. A CSM can be used to create up to four new parcels or building sites.¹⁰ If more than four new lots are created within a five-year time span, a developer will use a subdivision plat. State laws and county and town ordinances address when surveys are required.

Some communities and counties require certified survey maps under certain circumstances for planning or zoning purposes. Review and recording of certified survey maps became a requirement of the subdivision process in Wood County in 1970. Until early 2008, Wood County required a CSM anytime a new lot was created that was five acres or smaller in size. In 2008, the lot size was increased to 10 acres.

¹⁰ It is important to note that recording of a certified survey map does not initiate a conveyance of property; a deed must be recorded for the property to transfer from one owner to another. There are many occasions when a certified survey map is recorded with the intent to transfer ownership, the owners not understanding that the certified survey map serves only to describe and identify the property. Sometimes land is surveyed, but the map is not recorded.

For several years, the Grand Rapids subdivision ordinance has required certified survey maps to be submitted any time those a new lot was created that was 10 acres or smaller in size.

There are 81 certified survey maps in Grand Rapids that have been recorded for parcels of land that are over 10 acres in size. The parcels range from 10.01 to 126.01 acres. These 81 CSMs account for 2,056.56 acres of land. There are 1,059 certified survey maps that are 10-acres or less in size. Those maps account for 1,739.02 acres of land. Grand Rapids has a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet - .46 acres - for building in residential areas. There are 88 CSMs that are smaller than .46 acres. In some cases, these may have been created prior to the establishment of the minimum lot sizes, they may be exchanges of land between adjoining owners to increase lot sizes, they may have been done to combine smaller lots into larger lots (see discussion of subdivision plats), they may be purchases of land for additional highway right-of-way (eg. along Highway 54 or County Road W when those roads were relocated and improved), or they may have been done for other reasons.

It is easy to determine the number of certified survey maps that have been reviewed, thus creating lots that met the review requirement at the time the lots were created, but more difficult to determine how many of those lots are now in the City of Wisconsin Rapids or the Village of Biron. This section then will focus on how many CSM’s have been reviewed by the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office and how many lots created by those surveys.

According to Wood County records, 394 certified survey maps have been reviewed since 1970 for surveys in Grand

Rapids (Table 2-9). Those maps created 802 lots in the Town. As can be seen in Table 2-9, the largest number of both maps and lots created by those maps occurred in the 1970s, followed by another surge in the 1990s. During the first seven years of the new millennium, 59 certified survey maps with 116 new lots have been submitted for review under the County review requirements. This lower number of csm’s and lots is probably a function of the economic downturn in the area during these years.

Table 2-9: Certified Survey Maps & Lots Created

Decade	Certified Survey Maps Reviewed ¹	Number of Lots Created
1970s	135	280
1980s	89	183
1990s	111	223
2000 - 2007	59	116
Total	394	802

1. This table depicts only those maps reviewed under the provisions of the Wood County Land Subdivision Ordinance (creation of lots that are five-acres or less in size). Grand Rapids review requirements are for creation of lots that are 10-acres or less in size).

Source: Wood County Planning & Zoning Office.

B. Housing Goals, Objectives & Policies

It is an overall objective of the Town to encourage home improvements and development standards that will enhance the overall appearance of the Town’s housing, while increasing the structural quality of the homes.

According to the 2000 U. S. Census, 6.5% of the occupied housing units in Grand Rapids are rental units. Average rent was \$565. The average value of houses in the Town was \$108,800 with a good distribution of various housing values throughout the community. It is an overall objective of the Town to continue to encourage development of affordable housing to continue attracting

working-age population with families, as experienced between 1990 and 2000, and to make our community affordable to those who are leaving the work force.

Goal: Promote development of housing types and densities to provide quality housing for persons of all economic means in a manner so as to protect the environment and preserve the natural areas of the Town.

Policies/programs to promote development of housing for residents of Grand Rapids.

- Develop lot sizes throughout the town to accommodate the septic system requirements of the State law, including the requirement for an area for replacement systems. It is the intent of this policy to minimize the need for municipal sanitary sewer or water in the future thus reducing the number of annexations occurring because of failing septic systems.
- Prepare for annexation of higher density, small lot development on the perimeter of Wisconsin Rapids and buffer those areas with larger minimum lot sizes to lower density as a means to ward off the future need for annexation for municipal sanitary sewer or water.
- Where necessary because of lot sizes being too small to accommodate replacement septic systems, zone areas for higher density residential development where public sewer and water can serve higher densities, in the future, if problems arise with regard to groundwater quality or quantity or septic systems should fail.
- Work with the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Biron to promote planned development in the service area of the Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management Plan.

- Consider working with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron to develop boundary agreements to protect residential and commercial uses in Grand Rapids from encroachment from other uses, to protect their property values, and help the communities plan future growth and infrastructure needs.

Policies/programs that provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels, all age groups and special needs.

- Promote the federal fair housing goals by developing zoning standards that are inclusive rather than exclusive, promoting affordability of housing for all income level homeowners, including low- and moderate-income.
- Encourage developers of rental units to build those units in areas of the town where, in the case of duplexes and other multi-family units, the housing type will be compatible with neighboring land uses.
- Encourage housing designers and contractors to build homes that are accessible, specifically including zero-step entries, a bathroom or half bath on the entry level, interior doors with at least 32 inches of clearance, and lever-style door handles.

Policies/programs that promote the availability of land for development or redevelopment of low- & moderate-income housing.

- Allow various lot sizes that are conducive to different housing types.

Policies/programs to maintain or rehabilitate the existing housing stock.

- Encourage homeowners to participate in paint-up/fix-up events to maintain their property and protect their home's value.
- Encourage volunteers or civic organizations to help those who are physically unable to maintain their property.
- Continue to educate property owners about the Town zoning ordinance and other

ordinances that may affect them, including activities that may require permits. This can be accomplished with short notices in the Town's annual newsletter and by posting information on the Town's website. The Town will work with Wood County to help make information available to town residents.

3. TRANSPORTATION

Many of us take our transportation system for granted and, often, are not even aware of the components of the transportation system we use everyday. Grand Rapids' transportation system offers many modes of travel and transport, including roads, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and air and rail transportation. The transportation system in the Town is complex, the complexity compounded because of the Town's proximity to the Wisconsin Rapids, a city that maintains an official street map, pursuant to State statutes; Portage County, which creates boundary issues for the transportation system and other plan elements; and Biron, a village with desires and plans to expand and create more transportation system demands. In addition, Grand Rapids is a co-owner of the South Wood County Airport, or Alexander Field and must work with their partners to provide adequate air transport facilities. As part of the urban area, Grand Rapids must cooperate and coordinate with their partners on regional transportation planning and expenditures. The purpose of this section is to describe the Town's transportation system components, discuss current and future changes and additions to that system, describe how the transportation system relates to other segments of the comprehensive plan, develop goals and objectives for the transportation system and establish local programs that will seek to achieve those goals and objectives.

A. Road Network

Probably the most obvious and most used component of the Town's transportation system is the network of streets and highways that criss-cross through the Town. Different roads are designed to

serve different functions and, with good planning, those functions can be carried out and protected.

(1) Functional Classifications

It is very important to understand the function of different categories of streets and highways so you can plan your street system to be efficient and to protect that efficiency by protecting the function of the road network. Streets and highways are grouped into different classes according to the type of service they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility, which is moving vehicles across a community, region or country, to a low level of mobility of providing access to land or individual lots. The functional classifications are also categorized, in the case of Grand Rapids, as "urban" or "rural." In many cases, the same street (eg. 48th Street) will be in both the urban and the rural classification areas. Also, in some cases (eg. Airport Avenue), a street may transition from one level of classification to another level, depending on the amount of traffic it serves. The functional classifications, from the lowest function to the highest, are generally as defined in the following paragraphs.

Local Streets

The primary function of local streets is to provide access to individual parcels of land. They typically offer the lowest level of mobility of all the functionally-classified streets. A typical subdivision street, like Wintergreen, Lovewood Drive or Arbor Haven Lane, would be an example of a "local street." These streets are designed to serve residential lots, have a 25 mph or lower speed limit, may have a curvilinear

design to “calm” traffic or may be a cul de sac to prevent through traffic. Once you leave these streets, you may turn onto a collector street.

Collector Streets

The function of collector streets is to carry a higher volume of traffic than local streets, provide through traffic in residential, commercial and industrial neighborhoods, and distribute traffic to even higher function highways. Collector streets may be of a straighter design, often have wider pavement widths with fewer access points (driveways) and may have higher speed limits (i.e. 35 to 45 mph). A part of Grand Rapids is in what is called the “urban functional classification system” and part is in the “rural functional classification system.” In the rural areas, collectors are classified as “minor” collectors or “principal” collectors, depending on the volume of traffic they serve. Examples of collector streets in Grand Rapids are 80th Street, Whitrock Avenue and South Park Road.

Arterials

Traffic from collector streets may move onto even higher volume roads called “arterials.” Arterials have faster speed limits and often have more lanes for travel. Like collector streets, arterials are classified as either “minor arterials” or “principal arterials,” depending on the volume of traffic they serve. Minor arterials may have speeds up to 55 mph and principal arterials, like some state highways and interstate highways, will have speeds up to 65 mph. Minor arterials are designed to take the higher volumes of traffic from the collector streets and move that traffic to and from major traffic generators, such as business districts, employment centers and places of

large public gatherings, like university campuses, stadiums, or something of that magnitude. They also provide a connection between communities. Principal arterials serve urban areas of greater than 5,000 population, usually have multiple lanes, typically carry very high traffic volumes and move traffic on longer trips. Minor arterials should have even fewer access points than collectors, but still provide land access. Principal arterials often have limited or controlled access, such as State Highway 54. In Grand Rapids, County Road W east of its intersection with Highway 54, County Road Z west of 48th Street and Airport Avenue west of 32nd Street are all examples of minor arterials. State Highway 54 is the Town’s only principal arterial.

Grand Rapids Street Classifications and Urban Area

Figure 3-1 is a map showing the classifications for Grand Rapids streets and the urban area boundaries which include portions of Grand Rapids. Table 3-1 lists streets in Grand Rapids that are classified either in the urban area or in the rural area. Functionally classified streets in the urban area are eligible for different federal funding than the rural area classified streets. Sixteen urban areas in Wisconsin, including the Wisconsin Rapids urban area, receive annual allocations based on their population. The communities in the Wisconsin Rapids urban area meet annually to determine which projects should be submitted for funding under the Surface Transportation Program (STP) – Urban funding. Similarly, Grand Rapids’ classified roads that are outside the urban area are eligible for funding under the STP-Rural program. More information is available from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation North Central Regional Office in Wisconsin Rapids.

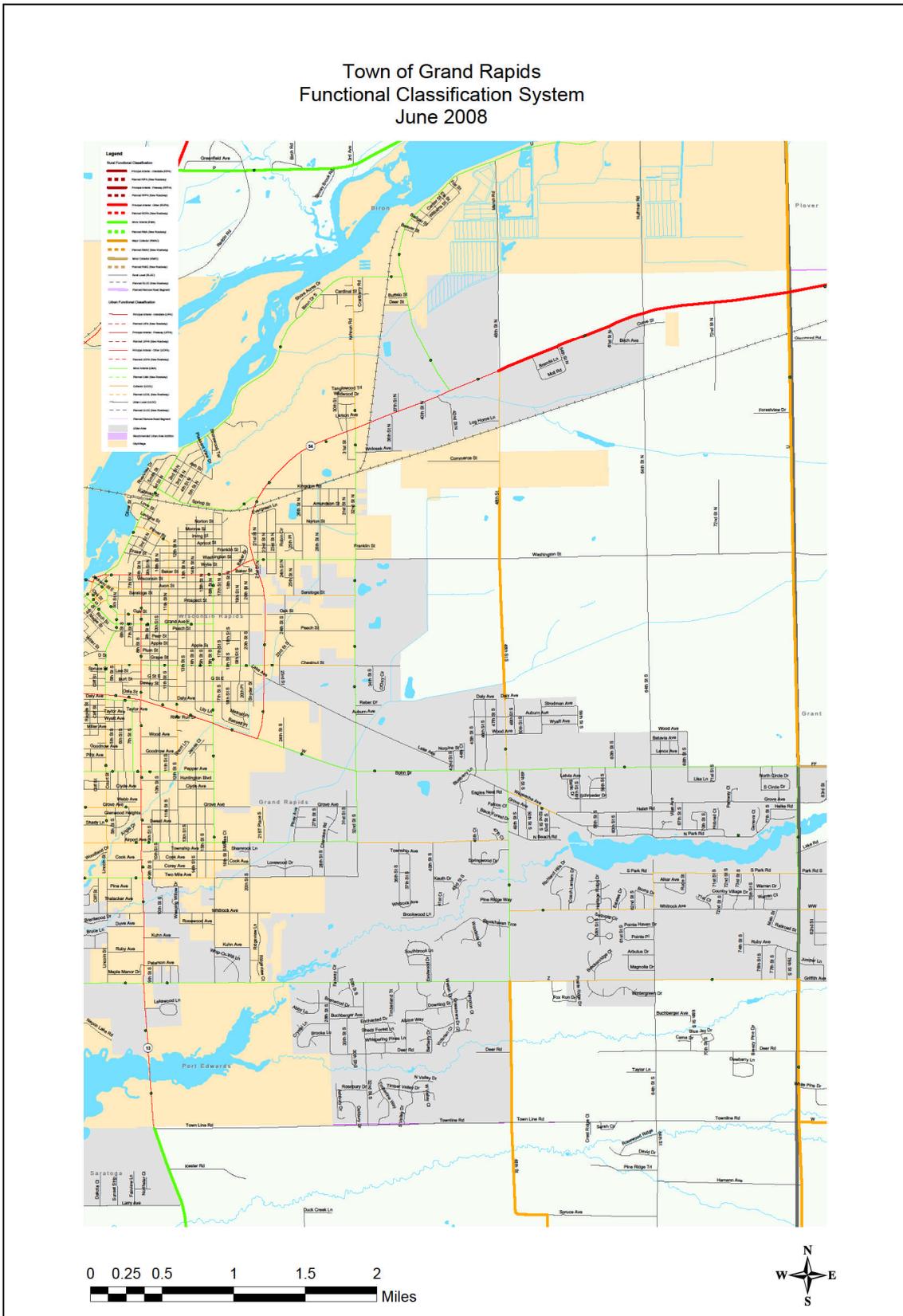


Figure 3-1

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Urban	Street	From-To	Approx. Mileage	
Collector:	48 th St.	Town Line Rd. – Griffith Ave	1.00	
	48 th St.	Lake Avenue – Two Mile Creek	0.50	
	48 th St.	Hwy. 54 – 1,320 ft. S. of RR	0.50	
	Griffith Ave.	48 th St. – 80 th St.	2.00	
	Whitrock Ave.	48 th St. – 64 th St.	1.00	
	64 th St.	Whitrock Ave. – S. Park Road	0.25	
	S. Park Road	64 th St. – 80 th St.	1.00	
	Airport Ave.	32 nd St. – 48 th St.	1.00	
	Lake Ave.	48 th St. – Helke Ave.	0.25	
	Chestnut St.	32 nd St. – WR City Limits	0.75	
Saratoga St.	32 nd St. – WR City Limits	0.25		
Arterial:	Griffith Ave.	48 th St. – Range Line Road		
	48 th St.	Griffith Ave. – Lake Avenue	1.50	
	80 th St.	Griffith Ave. – Lake Avenue	1.50	
	Airport Ave.	32 nd St. to WR City Limits		
	Lake Ave.	80 th St. to WR City Limits		
	32 nd St.	Airport Avenue to Washington St.	1.50	
Rural				
	Collector:	48 th St.	Two Mile Creek – WR City Limits	1.50
		80 th St.	Town Line Rd. – Griffith Ave.	1.00
		80 th St.	Lake Ave. – Biron Village Limits	3.50
		Total	19.00+	

Source: WisDOT Bureau of Planning & Economic Development Map, Oct. 19, 2005.

(2) Average Daily Traffic

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation counts traffic and calculates average daily traffic every few years. The most recent traffic counts in Grand Rapids were conducted in 2005 and, before that, in 2002. The map in Figure 3-2 shows how traffic increases the closer you get to Wisconsin Rapids. Traveling along Highway 54 from west to east, the traffic is high (12,100) near Wisconsin Rapids, dropping off to 80th Street and then increasing again. This shows that 80th Street is used as a traffic carrier to those who are commuting from Wood County to Portage County. Traffic counts are important to local officials for future planning for access, for maintenance purposes and to analyze the

need and timing for new local streets or county and state highways.

(3) Commuting Patterns

Table 3-2 describes the commuting patterns of Grand Rapids resident workers over the age of 16. Most Grand Rapids workers – 95.8% - use automobiles (or trucks or vans) to commute to their workplace and most of them drive alone. There are no public transportation providers in the area. Although there are paved paths in the Town, no one commutes by bicycle, but a few commute by walking. Slightly more than three percent work at home.

	Number	Percent
Car, Truck, Van (drove alone)	3,713	87.5%
Car, Truck, Van (carpooled)	353	8.3%
Public Transportation (inc. taxi)	0	0.0%
Bicycled	0	0.0%
Walked	27	0.6%
Other Means	13	0.3%
Worked at Home	138	3.3%
Total	4,244	100.0%

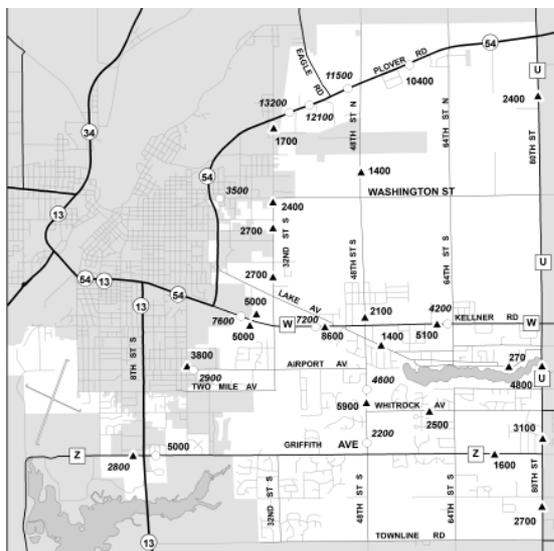
Source: U. S. Census, 2000.

time is similar to the State, where only 56% of workers travel less than 20-minutes to work (Figure 3-3). The short travel time is primarily because of little traffic congestion and the fact that 83% of the Town’s workers work in Wood County (Table 3-3).

	Town of Grand Rapids	Wood County
In County	83.2%	85.1%
Outside of County	16.4%	14.4%
Outside of State	0.4%	0.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Source: U. S. Census.

Figure 3-2: Annual Average Daily Traffic



Source: Wisconsin DOT, 2005

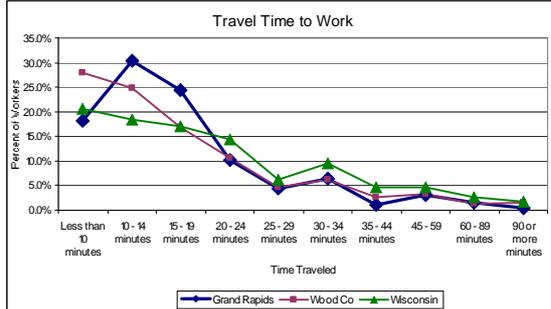


Figure 3-3

Source: U. S. Census.

Nearly half of all Grand Rapids workers have less than 15 minutes travel time to work and almost three-fourths of Grand Rapids workers travel for less than 20-minutes to their workplace. The local travel

(4) Highway 54 Extension

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, in cooperation with Grand Rapids, Port Edwards, Wisconsin Rapids and Wood County, is currently in the process of analyzing the potential for extending State Highway 54 from its intersection with County Road W, south to about Kuhn Avenue, then curving westerly, joining Griffith Avenue and traveling generally west, crossing the Wisconsin River at a point yet to be determined to the Village of Port Edwards. Such an extension would reduce conflict between local and through traffic through the heavy commercial sections of Wisconsin Rapids. Much of the through traffic consists of trucks that are transporting produce from areas west of the Wisconsin Rapids area to processing plants that are located east on Highway 54. One issue that should be addressed immediately is signage, especially for the east-bound traffic on Highway 54/Riverview Expressway that will turn north at the intersection of Highway 54 and County Road W near the Home Depot site. Overhead signs are needed well west of that intersection to assist Highway 54 traffic plan

for the left hand turn to stay on Highway 54. Currently, there are many conflicts with traffic that has not received sufficient notice of the impending turn.

Planning for the Highway 54 extension is in its early stages; the environmental impact assessment has been completed and public information meetings held. No decisions have been made at this time about the final route or the financial ability to make this highway change. At this time, no additional funding has been appropriated for further study of this \$16 million dollar project. The Department of Transportation, however, expects a preferred alternative to be identified as early as the spring of 2009. At that time, the 500-foot study corridor will be narrowed, giving residents and local officials a better idea of the impact on Grand Rapids neighborhoods and providing direction for future land use planning along the corridor. The earliest enumeration of this project by the State is estimated to be 2015, with construction no sooner than 2025. Route alternatives for the extension of Highway 54 through Grand Rapids are shown at the end of this chapter. In addition to this new roadway, there are other components to the proposal that are important to Grand Rapids and the rest of the greater Wisconsin Rapids area.

Issues, such as noise, precise location of the roadway, shifting of heavy truck traffic to another route, impact on businesses on 8th Street in Wisconsin Rapids, impact on growth in the Village of Port Edwards, and others were heard in the public information meeting. Town officials need to be involved in the planning for this highway extension to protect the interests of Grand Rapids residents while, at the same time, serving the interests of the greater community. Continued communications with town residents about this project is the

key to answering questions, learning of concerns and attempting to resolve issues during the planning and engineering phases. For example, several comments were received in the community planning survey regarding the amount of traffic that flows through the residential area south of WalMart and the congestion and turning conflicts in that area. Preliminary design schematics show that 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Streets could be closed with cul de sac turnarounds on their south ends. This would eliminate the through traffic issues and turning conflicts, but would result in some area residents changing their current routes to something new. Another change would be the possible installation of medians along portions of 8th Street that would impact turning movements into and out of businesses. While not in Grand Rapids, Town officials should be active in design discussions, again to protect economic enterprises in the community, while providing a safe and efficient transportation system that will impact all Town residents.

(5) Official Street Map

Two official street maps exist in the area; one adopted by the Town of Grand Rapids and the other by the City of Wisconsin Rapids. The City map shows future streets from the eastern city limits to as far as 64th Street in Grand Rapids. Several discrepancies exist between the two maps; some in the proposed street width and, in some cases, the City is planning for future streets that are not on the Town's official map (Table 3-4). These roads are in the Town, but the City needs to plan for future expansion. It would benefit both jurisdictions to coordinate boundary area plans so the best interests of the area are served as we continue to grow.

Table 3-4. Official Street Map Differences		
Street	Grand Rapids Official Map	Wisc. Rapids Official Map
Eagle Road (bet. Hwy 54 and Biron limits)	80 ft.	100 ft.
Hwy 54 (Plover Rd.)(bet. RR tracks on west and 80 th St.)	100 ft.	132 ft.
48 th Street (bet. Hwy 54 and RR tracks and City limits to Peach Street-ext.)	80 ft.	100 ft.
Kingston Road (bet. 32 nd St. and 48 th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 66 ft. to 80 ft.
Norton Street (bet. 32 nd St. and 48 th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 66 ft. to 80 ft.
Washington St. (bet. City limits to 48 th St.)	66 ft.	80 ft.
Peach St. (bet. 32 nd St. and 48 th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 100 ft.
24 th Street (bet. Saratoga St. and City limits)	Not on map	70 ft.
39 th Street (approx.) (bet. Peach St.-ext. to Kingston Rd.-ext.)	Not on map	Proposed 80 ft.
35 th Street (approx.) (bet. Kingston Rd.-ext. and Norton St.)	Not on map	Proposed 80 ft.
County Road W (between 32 nd St. and 64 th St., extended on old railroad right-of-way)	Not on map	Proposed 132 ft.
Two Mile Ave. (between 32 nd St. and 37 th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 66 ft.
Timber Valley Dr. (bet. East Valley Ct. and 48 th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 66 ft.
Hwy 54 (between County Road W and Wisconsin River)	Not on map	Proposed 80 ft. right-of-way to 500 ft. study corridor

(6) Town of Grand Rapids Road Improvement Plan

The Town of Grand Rapids Board conducts an annual review of the condition of town roads. During the budget process, decisions are made about what improvements are going to be made the following year. Those decisions rest on the availability of various sources of funding, including State road aids and local property taxes. Several comments were made in the community planning survey about the condition of various town roads. Other comments pointed out concerns regarding difficult access onto or across certain streets at busy intersections. The concerns have been forwarded to the Town Board for their notification and consideration.

(7) STP Urban & Rural Systems Planning

Grand Rapids has actively participated with neighboring communities in the area's urban group.¹¹ That group considers projects to be funded with federal Surface Transportation Projects (STP) Urban Program dollars that are channeled to local governments through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The urban group consolidates the funding and uses it for agreed upon urban area projects. Funding is available in two-year cycles, the current cycle being the 2009 – 2011 fiscal years. Upgrading of 32nd Street from Washington Street to Chestnut Street is the current STP Urban Program project. Other projects include one in the Village of Port Edwards, one in Wisconsin Rapids and another in

¹¹ Includes the Towns of Grand Rapids, Seneca and Port Edwards, the Villages of Biron and Port Edwards, the Cities of Nekoosa and Wisconsin Rapids and the Wood County Highway Department. This group is eligible for funding for municipalities with a population of 20,000 to 50,000.

Grand Rapids, which is in the design phase. That project is an upgrade of 48th Street North from Commerce Drive to Highway 54 to serve the East Side Commerce Park.

B. Airports

Grand Rapids is served by two airports; Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport (ISW) and the Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) in Mosinee. CWA provides commercial airline service to the area. Three airlines, Northwest/Mesaba Airlines, Midwest Connect/Midwest Airlines and United/Air Wisconsin, provide 18 flights per day which connect through Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee. There are also nine air freight and express flights daily.

Central Wisconsin Airport is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties. The airport was constructed during the mid 1960's to provide a regional facility to ensure continued quality air service for North Central Wisconsin. The facility opened for operation in October of 1969. The terminal has been modernized and the highway access has been improved to make access to the airport more convenient.

CWA has two grooved concrete runways, precision instrument landing procedures to both runways for all weather operations, an air traffic control tower and all the other amenities of a modern airport. Since 1982, more than \$40,000,000 has been spent to keep the airport ready to serve the business and pleasure needs of the region.

Alexander Field (Figure 3-4) is a local general aviation airport that has two paved runways, including a 5,500-foot concrete runway that will accommodate business jets and other private aircraft. The cross runway is 3,640 feet in length. They

also offer aircraft maintenance, aircraft and jet fuel, a S.D.F. landing system, flying lessons and charter service. The airport is located on the southeast side of Wisconsin Rapids and is situated on land that is in Wisconsin Rapids, Grand Rapids and the Village of Port Edwards. Each of these three communities, the City of Nekoosa and Wood County contribute to the costs of operating and maintaining the airport.

The Airport Commission has identified the need for a 500 foot extension of Runway 2002 and the Village of Port Edwards has indicated a desire to expand Runway 2911 as well. The airport is hemmed in at its current location with residential neighborhoods to the east, the Wisconsin Rapids sewage treatment plant to the north, Nepco Lake to the south and private lands to the west. To accommodate the runway expansions, the main runway would have to be turned slightly, a major expenditure. A feasibility study is due in 2009. Upon release of that report, decisions will be made about the future of Alexander Field.



Figure 3-4. Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport.

Like most airports, Alexander Field has both direct and indirect impacts on the area's quality of life and economy. Convenient access to air transportation allows businesses to quickly move key personnel from one site to another, saving valuable time and increasing their productivity. The airport also provides facilities for emergency medical flights, law enforcement, agricultural spraying, pilot training, recreational flying and hosts annual breakfast fly-ins and a hot air balloon rally, all adding to the economy and quality of life of our area.

Direct economic impacts include jobs at the airport and sales of airport products and services. Indirect impacts include spending by visitors who arrive in the Wisconsin Rapids area via the airport. That spending includes such things as lodging, meals, recreation, ground transportation and retail purchases while here. In addition, there are induced economic impacts which include the activities of suppliers to the businesses at the airport, for example electricity, office supplies, aircraft parts, and fuel for resale; and suppliers to the businesses that serve visitors, such as bedding, towels, and wholesale food suppliers. It also includes activity generated by the airport workers re-spending their income on clothing, housing, groceries, entertainment, etc. The total economic impact of Alexander Field on the area was estimated to be over \$3 million dollars per year, including 53 local jobs with annual wages of nearly \$1 million and another 11 jobs statewide pushing the wages to over \$1.3 million (2000 dollars).¹²

¹² Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics, "The Economic Significance of Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport to the Local Economy – Draft," October 2001.

Airports, by their very nature, create planning issues and opportunities for communities. Uses near airports will differ depending on the size and function of the airport. Noise is a factor to consider, along with safety issues related to low-flying aircraft, including clear zones at the end of runway approaches and height restrictions. The Federal Aviation Administration regulates heights of structures. Much of Grand Rapids' land area that lies west of 48th Street is under some Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) building height restrictions because of the proximity of the airport. Building height restrictions are more restrictive on properties that are in the direct line of the two runways. These areas should be included in local plans and zoning ordinances as overlay zones. Figure 3-5 is a generalized look at the height limitations. Looking at the map, it is obvious that, the closer you get to the end of the runway, the lower the allowable height. The height restrictions have not hindered development in the town in the past and, with the possible exception of wireless communication towers, it is not anticipated that height restrictions will have a negative impact in the Town's future. Special attention should be given to proposals for communications towers and similar structures.

The areas of Grand Rapids most affected by the airport zoning building height limitations are those areas bounded by Whitrock Avenue on the north, Townline Road on the south, 20th Street on the east and the north-south segment of County Road Z (the west town limit) on the west. Most of that area is developed to the extent that it will be developed and only a small portion of this described area is in Grand Rapids. Again, future development in this specific area should not be hindered by the building height restrictions.

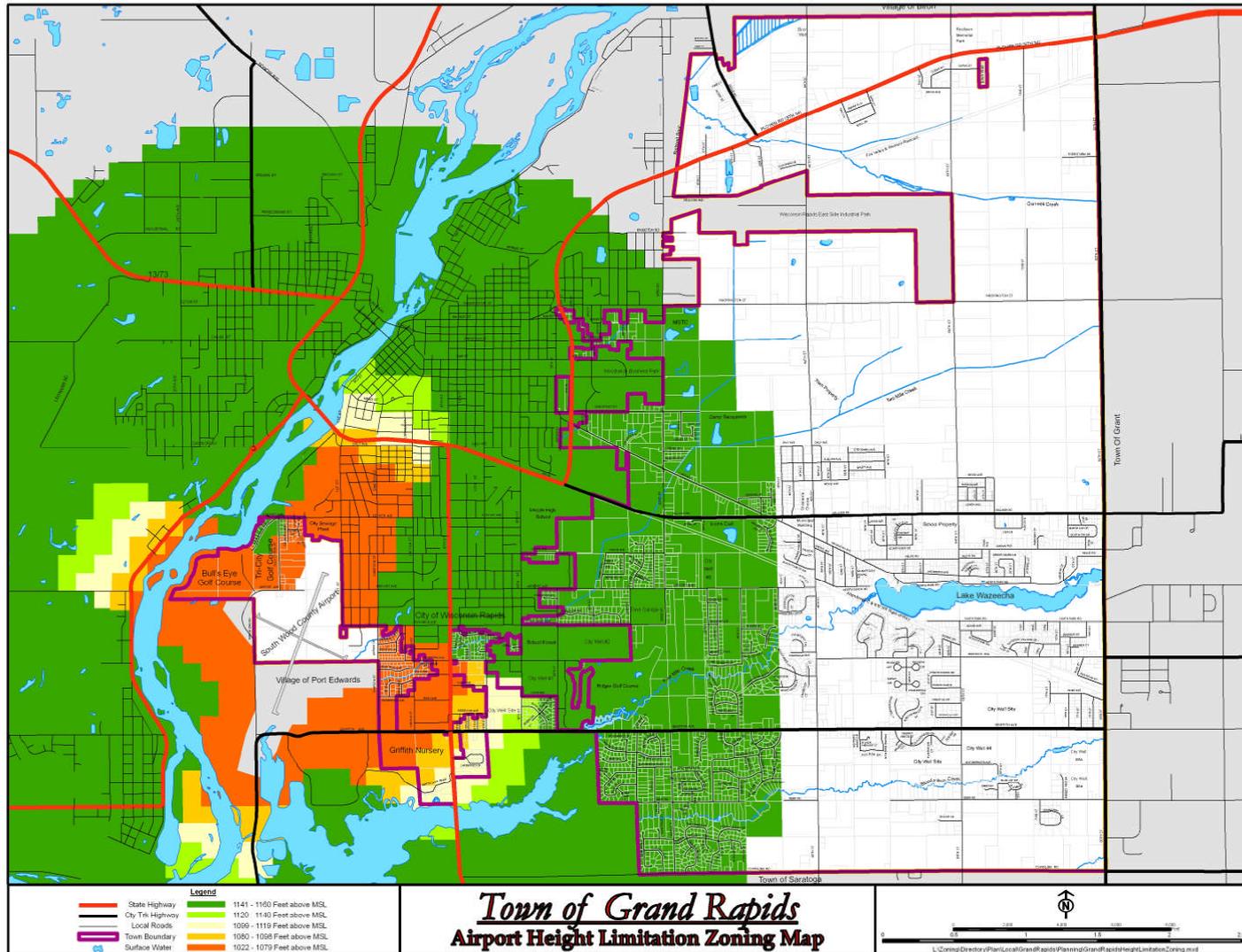


Figure 3-5

C. Railroad Service.

The Canadian National Railroad has service to industries throughout the Wisconsin Rapids urban area with a main line that roughly parallels State Highway 54 in Grand Rapids. Canadian National, headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, is the largest railway in Canada and is currently Canada's only transcontinental railroad. CN also has extensive trackage in the central portion of the United States, from northern Minnesota, through Wisconsin to Chicago, Memphis and New Orleans and including Grand Rapids.

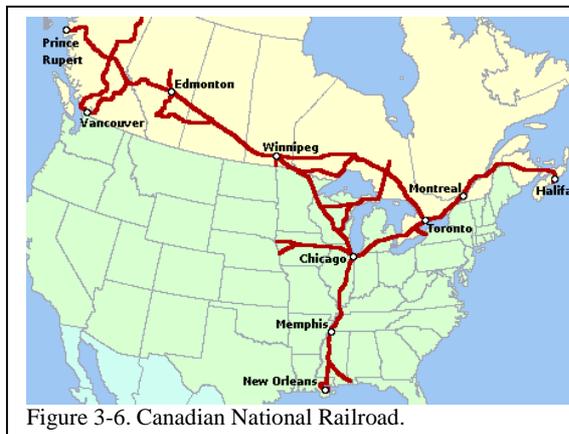


Figure 3-6. Canadian National Railroad.

D. Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails

Bicycle/pedestrian paths and trails provide both an alternate means of travel and a quality of life facility that is important to people of all ages. Recent increased gasoline prices and the "green" movement may be incentives to encourage more use of the bicycle trails and routes for transportation purposes. There are some opportunities for trail use in Grand Rapids. A paved, off-road path parallels County Road W from near 45th Street to and beyond the Wisconsin Rapids city limits.

A second trail, used mostly for recreation, is a 4.2 mile partially paved trail

around Lake Wazeecha. Several residents have expressed an interest in connecting this path to the one along County Road W.

State Highway 54 also has a paved path that parallels that road from its intersection with County Road W, north to Wisconsin Rapids, beyond to Biron. While most of this path is in Wisconsin Rapids, bits and pieces remain in the Town and certainly lend to the quality of the trail network that serves residents of Grand Rapids.

Wood County coordinates trail planning and has utilized state and federal grants to help construct area trails. The county planning process includes working with all local communities to provide a coordinated network of trails.

E. Public Transportation

No public transit service for the general public exists in Grand Rapids. River City Cab, a shared ride taxi company, offers transportation to the public for a fee.

The Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Central Wisconsin provides bus service for seniors and persons with disabilities. Priorities include medical appointments/treatment, nutrition, shopping and social events. Because of recent increased ridership, the ADRC has established a schedule for each of the Wisconsin Rapids area communities. A fee of \$1.00 is charged per one-way trip, but some area retailers will pay the rider fee for persons who patronize their establishments.

The ADRC's Volunteer Driver program provides certified drivers to transport Wood County residents who are 60 years or older and prioritizes medical and nutritional purposes. This is a non-emergency service covering the entire State of Wisconsin for

medical appointments. Riders must be ambulatory or accompanied and are billed a percentage of the cost of the trip.

F. Relationship of Transportation System to Other Comprehensive Plan Elements

In suburban communities, like the Town of Grand Rapids, lifestyle choices of those working in the city, but living in the town, affect the future of surrounding suburban areas. As the town grows, one of the first impacts is on streets. When a new housing development is proposed in a commuter town, provisions must be made to move the intended population to and from that development to work, school, shopping, parks and other activities. Eventually, existing local streets may become so busy that the street will have to be widened to accommodate peak traffic, speed limits may have to be lowered for safety reasons, or additional maintenance of roads may be necessary due to the increased traffic caused by the development. In some cases, the town may have to petition the county to take over jurisdiction of the road because of high traffic. Also, facilities may have to be added to provide a safe area for walkers or bikers.

Transportation system changes will also impact certain community facilities. As more streets are constructed, the demand increases for more road maintenance equipment. In addition, as the town grows and as more roads are constructed, there will come a time that the Town may have to consider hiring additional full-time police officers to patrol those streets. Depending on street design (through streets versus cul de sac streets), costs to provide street maintenance, school bussing and other services that use the streets, could increase. It is less expensive to continue driving through a subdivision, for example, than it is

to maneuver a snowplow or school bus through a development with cul de sac streets.

Intergovernmental cooperation is essential to the development and maintenance of a transportation system. As noted, Grand Rapids is a partner in the ownership of the local airport. Portions of the Town are located immediately adjacent to Alexander Field. Expansion of that airport is restricted because of residential properties and Lake NEPCO and its tributaries and wetlands. Any expansion of facilities or use of Alexander Field could impact land uses in Grand Rapids because of noise and height restrictions.

Street improvements should be coordinated between neighboring communities. If, for example, Wisconsin Rapids or Biron decide to add or widen streets near their borders, the Town of Grand Rapids should be aware of those plans so that they can plan their improvements accordingly or coordinate with their neighbors to lower costs for both. The Town and its neighboring communities should benefit from cost-effective provision of future transportation facilities.

G. Transportation Goals & Objectives

It is the overall objective of the Town of Grand Rapids to provide a safe, efficient, cost-effective transportation system, including streets and highways, bike and pedestrian facilities, and air and rail facilities.

(1) Goal: To provide choices of transportation for Town residents.

Objectives:

- Work to develop an internal street system that will ensure smooth flow of

motorized and non-motorized traffic and will enable Town emergency vehicles to service local neighborhoods in the most expeditious manner.

- Continue to encourage providers of transportation for the public and those who choose not or can not drive to provide transportation alternatives to Grand Rapids neighborhoods. This includes taxi service, Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) bus and driver services, and others.

- Participate with Wood County and area communities to expand and enhance the regional multi-use trail system to provide an alternate means of transportation in the urban area.

(2) Goal: Provide interconnection of transportation systems between municipalities.

Objectives:

- Work externally with neighboring communities to coordinate a street and highway system that creates a smooth flow between communities and the major traffic generators in them.

- Take a proactive position with the Department of Transportation in determining not only the route of the Highway 54 extension, but in determining the final design of the highway extension, considering the impact on Grand Rapids neighborhoods and for commercial and industrial development opportunities.

(3) Goal: Provide safe transportation throughout the Town.

Objectives:

- Coordinate local street improvements with work on County and State highways.

- Schedule work on local streets in such a way as to minimize impact on school services, the technical college activities and regional sporting events.

- Carefully review land subdivision proposals to assure that proposed streets and trails are coordinated with the existing system.

- Encourage pedestrian-friendly design of new residential or commercial developments to provide for alternative modes of transportation to and from area employers and schools.

- Protect the function of various streets and highways and minimize conflicts between local land uses by monitoring the number of access points from subdivisions and higher density residential areas to higher function County and State highways.

- Through implementation of the local plan, zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance, monitor the location of access points to assure clear visibility for motorists and bicyclists and to allow sufficient maneuvering space for speed changes and turning.

- On an annual basis, the Town Plan Commission and Town Board will discuss issues regarding access at points of high volume traffic to work towards alleviating congestion and reducing accidents at those points.

(4) Goal: Support and encourage maintenance of local and regional air and rail transportation facilities.

Objectives:

- Continue to actively participate with other area communities and owners of

Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport to maintain the existing facility and expand the airport to offer better service to airport users, especially businesses and industries that are, or will be, located in the community.

- Promote Alexander Field as a local airport to prospective businesses that may be looking to locate in Grand Rapids.

- Support movement of freight into and out of the community via rail in lieu of higher gasoline and fuel costs. Encourage railroad owners to maintain and improve the area railroads as needed to accomplish this goal.

- Encourage the railroad owners to consider the addition of a second, parallel rail line as an inducement to businesses to locate in the Grand Rapids area.



PIM #1
SEPTEMBER 26, 2007

Figure 3-7

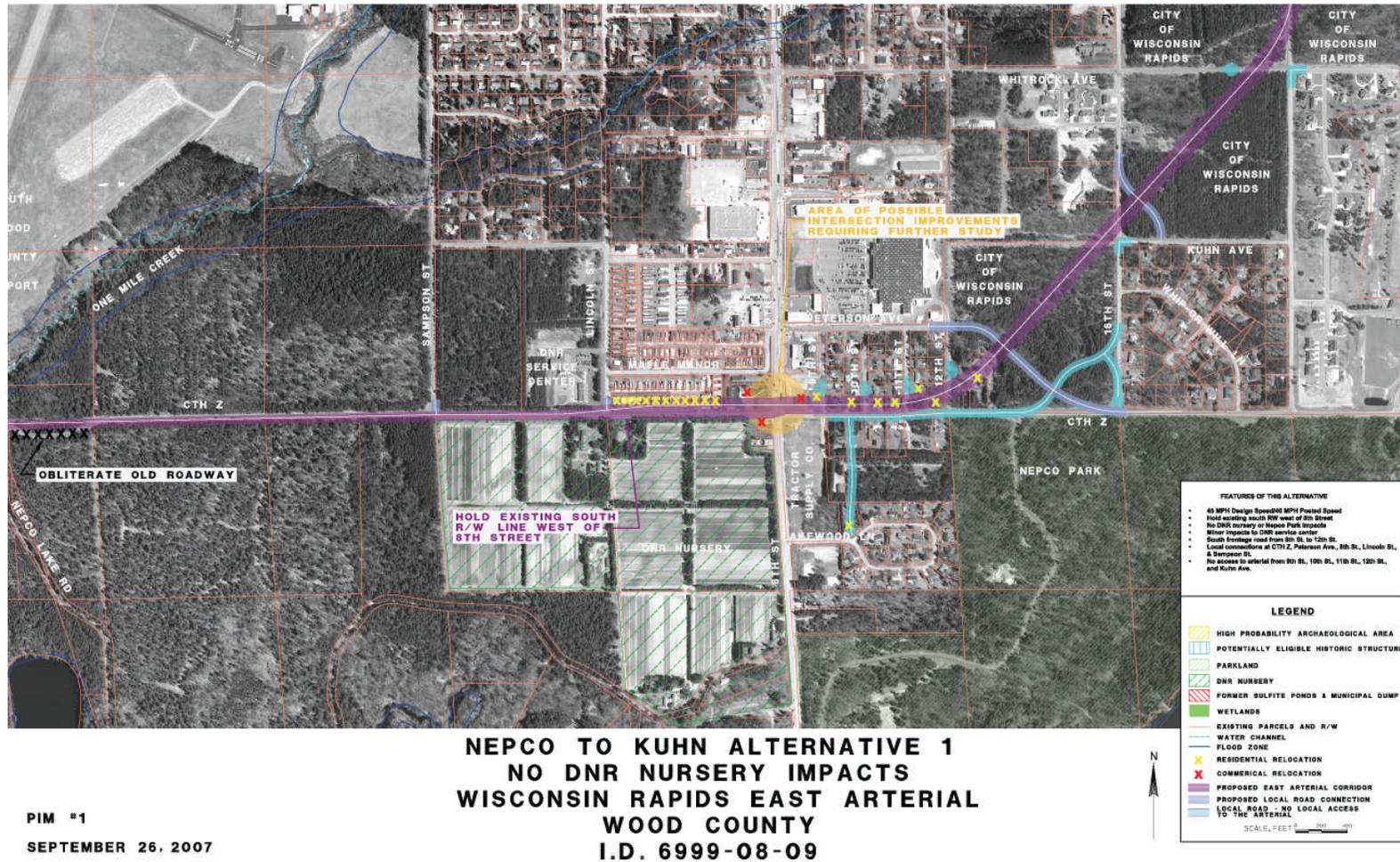
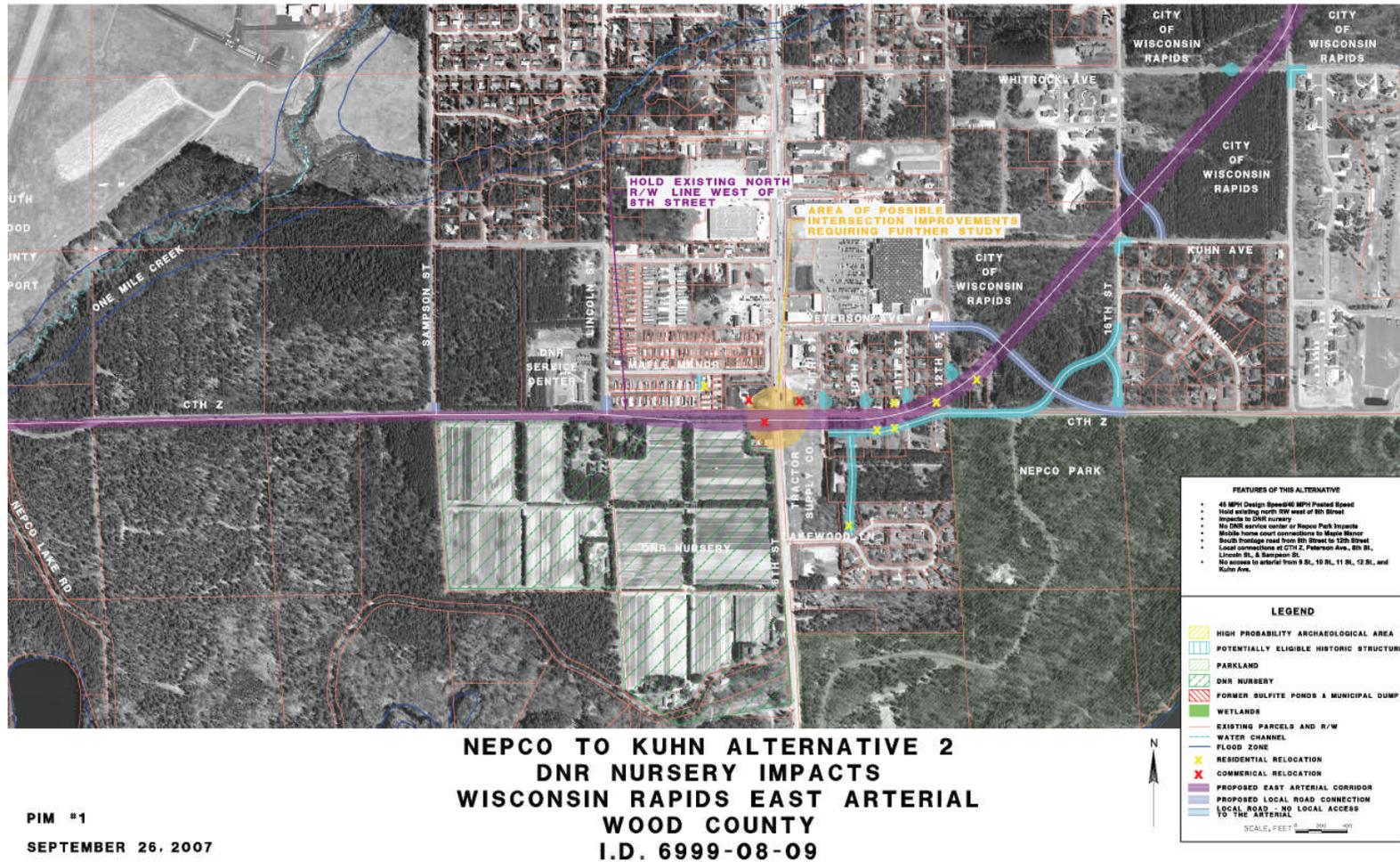


Figure 3-8



Figure 3-9



PIM #1
SEPTEMBER 26, 2007

Figure 3-10

4. UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Unincorporated towns typically are not able to provide the same type utilities as do larger, more compactly developed villages or cities. Unincorporated towns do, however, have the same type utility and community facility needs as residents who live in villages and cities. The purpose of this element is twofold. First, the following paragraphs describe the existing conditions and issues relative to public and private utilities and community facilities in the Town of Grand Rapids. Second, goals, objectives and policies are presented regarding utilities and facilities to help guide future town-level decisions.

A. Sewage Disposal/Sanitary Sewer

The Town of Grand Rapids does not have a municipally-owned sanitary sewer system. Any structure that is built with running water in the Town must install a private on-site waste treatment system, also known as a “septic system.” All septic systems must be approved by the State Department of Commerce under the provisions of applicable statutes and the Wisconsin Administrative Code for both installation and maintenance.

The Wood County Planning & Zoning Office administers the private sewage program, issuing permits for septic systems, inspecting them for proper installation and assuring that failing systems are replaced. Wood County has issued permits for septic systems since 1970. As the state plumbing code has changed because of more knowledge of the ability of various soil types to either treat or not treat domestic sewage, the types of systems being installed in the various soils has also changed. Even with the changes in State standards, the vast majority of septic

systems installed in Grand Rapids are conventional systems.

Recognizing that there may be a future need for sanitary sewers in Grand Rapids, the Town created Grand Rapids Sanitary District No. 1 in December, 1972. The sanitary district was divided into several study areas to consider the design and construction of wastewater collection and transmission facilities to the Wisconsin Rapids wastewater treatment plant. Although the engineering studies that were conducted concluded that, “there are no technical obstacles facing the construction of municipal wastewater collection facilities to serve the residents of the Grand Rapids Sanitary District,” the cost estimate for the entire sanitary district was \$13 million.¹³ In addition to the cost, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has a non-proliferation policy that requires municipalities to compare the cost feasibility of new collection and treatment systems to joining existing “regional” systems. That policy would probably require most of Grand Rapids to join the Wisconsin Rapids sanitary sewer system the same as was required of Biron in the 1980s. Wisconsin Rapids requires unincorporated areas to annex in order to receive their municipal services. Consequently, many of the small lot, more densely developed areas of the sanitary district – those immediately adjacent to Wisconsin Rapids and Biron – have been annexed since the sanitary district studies were completed.

The Sanitary District Commission now meets on an as needed basis. The

¹³ \$13 million in 1972 converts to over \$60 million in 2007 dollars (<http://oregonstate.edu/cla/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/cv2007rsx1.pdf>).

District has funds, but taxing of residents that live in the district was suspended several years ago and will probably not be reinstated unless and until a cooperative agreement can be reached with Wisconsin Rapids to provide needed sanitary sewer services. That is unlikely. The District has undertaken some drainage work, dredging portions of the Two Mile Creek and removing some of the old dams to help with water issues caused by the dams and siltation. They have also considered other municipal projects they could assist with to promote the Town's economic development.

Grand Rapids collaborated with the Town of Seneca, Village of Biron and City of Wisconsin Rapids to develop the "Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management Plan" in 1985. Prepared with a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the purpose of this plan was to establish boundaries in the urban area that included areas anticipated to need sanitary sewer over a 20-year period (Figure 4-1). Further, the plan designated environmental corridors that would be protected from development and established the institutional structure for reviewing boundary amendments and needs of the community change. Although the plan is now beyond the 20-year planning period and is in need of updating, it is still used to determine qualified sanitary sewer extension and certain building projects. The plan should be updated upon completion of all area comprehensive plans. The goals and objectives of the 1985 plan are still important to the area. The five goals of the plan are:

- (1) To preserve the quality of the urban area's groundwater and surface water.
- (2) To preserve the area's prime agricultural lands.

- (3) Provide cost-effective sewer services to the urban area.
- (4) To provide good development review to aide developers in proper planning.
- (5) Coordinate separate facilities planning efforts to provide a long-range, cost-effective regional system.

Except for a few of the areas that are in the 20-year sewer service area, Grand Rapids' future development will continue to rely on private on-site waste treatment systems, primarily conventional septic systems unless new technology is developed that can treat private waste on-site.

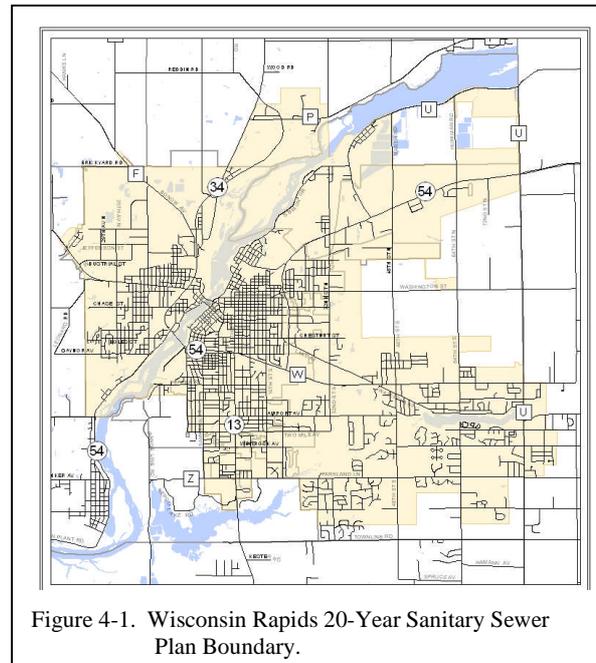


Figure 4-1. Wisconsin Rapids 20-Year Sanitary Sewer Plan Boundary.

B. Water Supply

With the exception of Mid-State Technical College, Grand Rapids residents and businesses depend on private onsite wells for drinking water and other water needs. MSTC is connected to the Wisconsin Rapids municipal water system even though the campus is in Grand Rapids. Although

Grand Rapids is not served by a municipal water system, there are municipal wells located in the Town. Wisconsin Rapids has five wells in Grand Rapids. Biron has two wells that are located in a small island of village that is completely surrounded by Grand Rapids.

Each of the Wisconsin Rapids wells is used daily and the volume of water pumped by each is roughly equal. The capacity of Well #1 is 1.5 million gallons per day (MGD), Wells #2 and #3 are 2.0 - 2.5 MGD, Well #4 is 2.5 - 3.0 MGD, and Well #5 is 0.5 MGD. Well #5 is a vertical well and the others are radial wells. Well #4 had some cone of depression issues that were resolved by the City's Water Works and Lighting Commission. For future needs, Wisconsin Rapids has purchased 266 acres in the Town of Grant (Portage County) and done testing for a new well.

Each of the Biron wells has a capacity of about $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 MGD. The village has plenty of capacity for today's needs, but has and will continue to investigate new sites for future wells. Some of the sites may be in the Town of Grand Rapids. In the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation and to protect both water quantity and water quality for both private and public wells, Grand Rapids should take a proactive position in reviewing potential well sites for either of the two neighboring communities.

Grand Rapids has other large water users in addition to Wisconsin Rapids and Biron. Irrigation wells provide water to the vegetable crops at Altenberg's on Highway 54. Urban Processing, a local cranberry grower and processor, has a need for both irrigation and flooding in the cranberry marshes and uses considerable water processing their product. Both of these water users are located in the northern high

groundwater region of the Town that is known to be a groundwater recharge area. Again, the Town has an interest in communicating with both in an effort to preserve and protect groundwater resources.

C. Storm Water Management

The management of storm water is an engineering issue in cities where large expanses of land are going to be covered with roofs, parking lots and streets. These impermeable surfaces may be from large-scale development like typical big-box developments or business park-type developments, or it could be from higher density residential subdivisions. Either of these scenarios is possible in Grand Rapids. State codes require management of storm water runoff for large-scale developments. This is usually accomplished with the use of retention ponds or basins as approved as part of the State's site development review.

Grand Rapids has had issues with spring and storm water runoff in the past. The Two Mile Creek, for example, has been the subject of several studies. Early reports documented flooding problems and the impact of the environment on urban-type land use changes. A 1957 report on the Two Mile drainage District indicates that the land use was, at that time, still general farming and dairying. The land was mostly open with corn, oats, rye, hay and potatoes being the primary crops. According to a 1983 study by the U. S. Department of Agriculture¹⁴, the land use shifted away from agricultural in the 1950s and 1960s, becoming more wooded and, in the 1960s and 1970s became more urbanized.

¹⁴ Tiry, Michael, J., "Preliminary Study, Two Mile Creek, Town of Grand Rapids, Wood County, Wisconsin," United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, December, 1983.

Associated with the urban-type development were problems with wet basements, sewage disposal and flooding typical of developments in high water table sands. That study concluded that the greatest problem along the Two Mile Creek was flooding due to obstruction of the creek channel by ice. Because of the freezing, flooding and high ground water conditions would occur with the spring runoff. This caused wet basements and non-functioning septic systems. The report further concluded that the best solution was not deepening the creek channel, lining the channel, or even diverting the flow by engineering means to keep the water away from the people, but to keep the people away from the water through an effective zoning ordinance and building code.

Keeping people away from the water, both surface drainage and high groundwater, is important. In periods of drought, people sometimes tend to forget the natural characteristics of a site and might want to develop it, only to regret that decision later when there is a lot of spring runoff or a rising ground water table. Such was the case in 1973 with the spring runoff after a very snowy winter. In 1972, a subdivision development was approved just north of Lake Wazeecha in Section 24. During the review of the proposed subdivision, it was noted that a drainage swale meandered through planned lots, but a drainage plan was not required nor was a drainage easement. Basements of new homes were flooded. The result was a very expensive (\$1 million +) diversion project between that subdivision and county park property at taxpayers expense. This is an example where proper planning and development regulations could have protected the natural drainage of the area as well as properties in that area.

Grand Rapids has learned from their experiences. The Town now requires a drainage plan for subdivision developments and recognizes drainage patterns and strives to protect them.

D. Solid Waste Disposal/Recycling

Like most towns, Grand Rapids had a garbage dump at one time. The dump was located on a 40-acre site that is bounded by Airport Avenue on the north, Two Mile Avenue on the south, 28th Street on the west and 32nd Street on the east. Town maintenance buildings remain on the site today. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources inspected the Grand Rapids dump in the summer of 1975. That inspection found that groundwater at the site was 12' 8" beneath the ground's surface at the site and the active trench used for dumping garbage and other waste was about 10 feet deep, or only 2' 8" above the ground water table. A few months later, the WDNR issued orders to close the dump based on their inspection, which concluded that, "the permeable nature of the subsurface material and close proximity of groundwater to the bottom of the trenches does not allow for attenuation of leachate and protect the ground water from chemical contaminants." After some extensions of the closure order, a public hearing and various engineering measures, the town dump was closed in 1978 and garbage was hauled to the landfill that is located on Wisconsin Rapids' northwest side of town. Monitoring wells were installed and remain on the Grand Rapids site today.

Solid waste collection and disposal is currently handled on a contract basis between the Town and Veolia Environmental Services. Veolia contracts to the Town for a weekly collection service for garbage and recyclables. The cost for the

service is charged back to property owners as a special charge on their property tax bills. Garbage is disposed of in the landfill on the northwest side of Wisconsin Rapids, north of the industrial park.

There are other options for recycling available to Grand Rapids residents. Express Recycling accepts aluminum and other metals, household appliances, computers and more. Wisconsin Rapids owns and operates two compost sites that are available to Town residents for a fee. The finished compost is available free of charge to city residents and Town residents who have compost site passes. Ideal Wood, on Highway 54, also accepts yard waste. Finally, Wood County holds an annual clean-sweep program where residents can dispose of household wastes that can not be disposed of in the landfill.

E. Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources lists five sites in Grand Rapids where there were leaking underground storage tanks and four sites with recorded chemical spills. All but one of the sites is categorized as “closed,” having been cleaned up to WDNR acceptable standards. One site is recorded as a “historic” spill, which means that “cleanups may have been completed prior to 1996 and no end date is shown” in DNR files (possible record keeping issue only).

F. Emergency Services

(1) Police. Grand Rapids has its own police department. That full service department is staffed by a full-time chief, four full-time officers and four part-time officers. The Police Department conducts investigations on misdemeanors and criminal matters, enforces traffic laws and

enforces town ordinances. There are two full-time administrative assistants to assist the public with law enforcement matters. The Wood County Dispatch assists citizens with any help they may need. The Grand Rapids Police Department is also involved with many other community policing activities such as, neighborhood watch, vacant home checks and business checks. The Police Department provides coverage nearly 24 hours a day.

In the community planning survey that preceded this plan, 71% of the respondents said police service is “good” and less than four percent thought it was “poor.” Since the survey was taken in late 2007, the police force personnel has changed and the Town Board has concentrated efforts to improve the image and effectiveness of the police force.

(2) Fire. The Grand Rapids Volunteer Fire Department is located in a full-service building located adjacent to the municipal building. The Fire Chief is full-time and the rest of the personnel are volunteers. In addition to the Chief, staff includes two assistant fire chiefs, two captains and four lieutenants. In total, there are 40 regular firefighters and 15 fire auxiliaries and nine EMS responders. The department has several first responders, extrication technicians, and DNR fire control personnel. In addition to Grand Rapids, the fire department also provides fire protection to the Town of Saratoga to the south and the Town of Grant to the east.

The department is equipped with three pumper trucks, including a 65-foot ladder truck, two tankers, two brush trucks and a miscellany of fire fighting and rescue equipment.

Town residents are very happy with current fire services. Ninety-two percent of community planning survey respondents rated the Town's fire service as "good," commenting that the response time "could not have been better."

(3) Ambulance Service. Ambulance service is provided to the Town of Grand Rapids under contract with Higgins Ambulance Service. The contract includes the towns of Seneca, Sigel, Rudolph and Grant and the Village of Rudolph along with Grand Rapids. An annual base cost is paid by the communities plus a user fee is charged for service-related equipment. The municipalities agree to the rate schedule for the user fee. Based on its population, Grand Rapids is responsible for about 57% of the total contract cost.¹⁵

While over 82% of community planning survey respondents rate ambulance service as "good," some who have used that service called for better service with faster response times. The Town Board monitors comments and services that are contracted and will continue to provide the best service available for emergencies.

G. Parks

The largest park in Grand Rapids is South Wood County Park. This county owned and operated park is 324-acres in size and offers many types of outdoor recreation opportunities, including boating and fishing, two swimming beaches, camping (with on-site campground ranger), 4.2-mile multi-use trail, picnic areas, shelter buildings, playgrounds, and disc golf. Lake Wazeecha is the host site for the annual Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Team competition, drawing teams from throughout the state. It

has also hosted the National Water Ski Show Team competition, most recently in August, 2008, attracting teams from throughout the U. S. and included a team from China. Recent improvements have been made with the addition of a new staging area and plans for a new building that will provide storage, concession areas, dressing rooms, banquet space and a judging stand. The Wisconsin Rapids Aqua Skiers water ski team has spearheaded the improvements and has worked closely with the Wood County Park & Forestry Department to bring their plans to fruition. The entire community strongly supports the annual water ski tournament because of its huge economic impact each summer.

The South Wood County Park is an important asset to the town, according to the responses from participants of the community planning survey. Although it's considered an asset and although it is a county owned and operated facility, the park creates issues and concerns that add demands on the Grand Rapids Police Department, Public Works Department, Fire Department and others. Working closely with the Wood County Park & Forestry Department and Wood County Sheriff's Department helps keep the demands on Town crews to a minimum.

Wood County also owns over 200 acres north of South Wood County Park that is undeveloped with no plans for development. This site was acquired and used for the deposit of silt material from Lake Wazeecha when it was dredged in the early 1990s. The site has been monitored for contaminants, but no problems have been reported. There is opportunity for use of this site for uses such as a dog park, equestrian trails or similar uses.

¹⁵ For 2008, the total contract cost is 159,555.11. Grand Rapids portion is \$91,233.25.

A few small neighborhood parks are located in residential subdivisions. These parks are the result of County subdivision requirements in the 1970s. Examples include a neighborhood playground in the Weslan of Rapids subdivision on Grassmere Drive, south of Griffith Avenue and a neighborhood tennis court and open space development in the Brookhaven Estates subdivision on Brookhaven Trace, west of 48th Street. The Weslan subdivision play area belongs to the Town, having been dedicated when the subdivision was created. The Brookhaven Estates recreation area is owned and maintained by their homeowners association.

Beyond those mentioned above, the Grand Rapids Lions Club owns a 27.75-acre facility along County Road W. The Lions Club has developed this area with shelter buildings, playground, small lake with beach, etc. The facility is used extensively for community events, such as the Fireman's Picnic, old car shows, benefits for those in need, dog shows, music festivals and much more.

Another privately owned recreation area is that owned by the Woodland Girl Scout Council. This 60 plus acre wooded site includes offices, cabins, areas for large assembly of people, a large pond and other outdoor recreation opportunities. Facilities on the site are used for community functions as well as for scouting activities.

Grand Rapids also has three golf courses. Bull's Eye Country Club is an 18-hole private club, located on the banks of the Wisconsin River. BECC has a clubhouse with pro shop and banquet facilities, the golf course and tennis courts. Bull's Eye Country Club also owns a nine-hole public course – Tri City Golf Course - adjacent to the country club. Tri-City has a clubhouse

with pro shop, bar and eating/meeting room. They also rent clubs and golf carts for patrons of the golf course.

The Ridges Golf Course is an 18-hole golf course with pro shop. The Ridges has hosted several golf tournaments, most recently the Channel 7 Golf Classic, a popular event that drew about 275 golfers from throughout central Wisconsin. The Ridges also has large banquet facilities that can accommodate up to 400 people for any occasion or meeting and is a popular location for wedding receptions and outdoor weddings.

Many other recreation activities are available to Grand Rapids residents through adult and child leagues and recreation events organized by the Wisconsin Rapids Park and Recreation Department. These activities are available for a fee to users. Also available on a fee basis is the YMCA and Wisconsin Rapids Area Public School District facilities. There are no plans to develop any Town-owned recreation facilities in Grand Rapids in the foreseeable future because of the vast selection of activities and facilities that are available throughout the area.

H. Library Service

Public library service is provided to Grand Rapids residents at McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids. This service is made available, in part, through financing to the library from Wood County.

I. Schools

The Town of Grand Rapids is located in the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District. That district has nine elementary schools, two junior high schools, one senior high school, and a Charter School for At-Risk Students (grades 9–12).

Enrollment figures are listed in Table 4-1. Those figures show a growth in enrollment from the 2003-04 school year to the 2005-06 school year, then a steady decline the following three school years to the present enrollment of 5,670.

School Year	Enrollment (Pre K-12)
2003-04	5,704
2004-05	5,818
2005-06	5,862
2006-07	5,834
2007-08	5,711
2008-09	5,670

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website (<http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/selschool.asp>) and WRPS Superintendent (2008-09 figure).

As shown in the discussion of demographic trends, Grand Rapids’ school and pre-school age population cohorts have been in an overall decline since 1980, as have been those in the child bearing age groups. A continued decline in the number of persons in these age groups could have a significant impact on school enrollments in the future. One elementary school, Children’s Choice, has already been closed. Children’s Choice is located in Grand Rapids.

The Wisconsin Rapids Public School District recognizes that there are students whose educational needs are not being met in a traditional school setting. To meet the unique needs of all students and provide opportunities for success, the River Cities High School (RCHS) has created an environment that promotes the social, emotional, academic, and vocational growth and development of students most at-risk. The school provides students with non-

traditional approaches to meet their high school graduation requirements to raise the hope and redefine success among RCHS students. About 100 students are enrolled in this educational facility.

There are also six parochial schools in Wisconsin Rapids that are available to Grand Rapids residents. The parochial schools are affiliated with the Catholic and Lutheran religions. The parochial schools and their enrollments are listed in Table 4-2.

School	Location	Grades	Students	Student/Teacher Ratio
Assumption High School	Wisconsin Rapids	9 – 12	168	8.28
Assumption Middle School	Wisconsin Rapids	7 – 8	99	15.47
Immanuel Lutheran School	Wisconsin Rapids	K - 8	233	17.79
Our Lady Queen of Heaven Elementary School	Wisconsin Rapids	1 – 3	99	11
St. Lawrence Early Childhood	Wisconsin Rapids	Pre-K	102	12.44
St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran School	Wisconsin Rapids	Pre K – 8	145	14.82
St. Vincent De Paul Elementary School	Wisconsin Rapids	4 – 6	124	13.63

Source: “Private Schools Directory,” July, 2008, <http://www.allpublicschools.org/schools-wisconsin.html>

J. Child Care

The Wisconsin Child Care and Referral (CCR&R) Network is a membership organization made up of 17-community based CCR&R agencies serving the State of Wisconsin.

CCR&R agencies assist parents in selecting quality childcare, help to increase the supply of childcare in areas that may be lacking sufficient care, offer information and technical support to potential child care providers and give technical assistance and support to existing childcare programs.

Each agency manages a database of existing childcare providers and programs, collects data about childcare rates, provider and teacher salaries, the number of parents and children using their services, the type of care requested and the children's ages.

The community-based CCR&R agency that provides services to Wood County is the Child Care Resources & Referral of Central Wisconsin.¹⁶

K. Health Care

Grand Rapids is in the Riverview Hospital service area and, together with the associated clinics that are housed in the same building, provides full medical services to area residents. Licensed for 99 beds, it currently has approximately 70 beds for inpatient care and provides a wide range of outpatient services, including the four clinics that occupy space in the hospital. The hospital is in the process of completing a new 117,000 square foot, two-story addition that will include up to 57 private inpatient rooms on the second floor and room for future expansion on the third floor. The licensed capacity will not change, as similar use areas in the existing building will be vacated to the new addition and the vacated areas will be dedicated to other uses,

possibly community relations and staff education functions, staff offices for UW Cancer Center Riverview, business offices, clinical suites for relocation of one or both clinics currently on the third floor of the hospital, or other hospital uses. The new addition is scheduled to open in August 2009.

The Marshfield Clinic and Saint Joseph's Hospital are located less than an hour away from Grand Rapids in Marshfield. The Marshfield Clinic has nearly 40 specialty areas and 83 sub-specialties. More than 700 doctors are employed by the Marshfield Clinic. The clinic is the largest private group medical practice in Wisconsin and one of the largest in the U. S. A satellite clinic is also located in The Woodlands Business Park in Wisconsin Rapids. That business park is located immediately adjacent to the Wisconsin Rapids-Grand Rapids border.

A major research center and laboratory are also located in Marshfield. The Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation, is the largest private medical research foundation in Wisconsin and one of the largest in the nation. Research areas of focus in the foundation include rural and agricultural health and safety, epidemiology, human genetics, personalized medicine, health services research and biomedical informatics. Marshfield Laboratories is a joint venture between the clinic and the hospital. Marshfield Laboratories provides comprehensive human diagnostic and testing service for physicians, clients and staff. It is the state's largest medical laboratory, employing more than 450 people and reporting over 20-million test results annually from clients across the nation.

¹⁶ Child Care Resources & Referral of Central Wisconsin, 210 East Jackson Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI serves Wood, Clark and Adams counties. Contact information, in addition to the address listed here is: Phone 1-800-628-8534; email - ccrcw@tznet.com; website - www.ccrw.org.

L. Telecommunications Facilities

Wireless communications continues to grow at a rapid pace. There are currently two wireless towers in Grand Rapids used by four providers. The towers are located at 3530 48th Street South and 2710 64th Street South. To provide for expansion of wireless technology while protecting the aesthetics and property values in the Town, it is in the best interest of the community to establish guidelines for location of these towers and to work with wireless communications providers to continue to co-locate their equipment whenever possible.

Charter Communications and Solarus provide television, internet and telephone services throughout the Town.

M. Utilities & Community Facilities Goals & Objectives

It is the overall objective of the Town of Grand Rapids to provide those utilities and community facilities that are needed, or desired, by town residents, either through individual town efforts or as a partner with other communities and agencies. Following are policies, goals and programs for utilities and community facilities.

Goal: Protect the Town's ground and surface water resources.

Objectives:

- Work with neighboring communities to provide adequate development standards aimed at avoiding degradation of the groundwater for municipal wells.
- Minimize non-point source pollution and reduce volumes of untreated runoff.
- Zone floodplains and wetlands that are identified on DNR wetland maps as

conservancy, preserving their function to carry and store storm runoff and snow melt.

- Require drainage easements as part of the local site development review process where drainage swales are identified. Do not allow drainage swales to be filled or leveled, which may cause localized flooding in parts of Grand Rapids or adjacent communities.

Goal: Promote efficient and coordinated sewer and water expansion.

Objectives:

- Actively participate in continuing planning efforts of the area's 20-year sewer service plan.
- Continue to participate in the joint planning area to review development proposals.
- Through local zoning, encourage high-density residential development to locate in areas that can be served by municipal sewer and water systems. Encourage medium- and low-density developments in other areas of the Town where soil conditions can sustain private wells and private sewage systems.

Goal: Provide safe, cost-effective recycling and solid waste disposal.

Objectives:

- Continue to provide compost sites as contracted or joint facilities with neighboring communities.
- Encourage residents to utilize existing privately owned and operated recycling businesses so that the Town will not have to incur this cost in the future. Encourage those businesses to control costs so recycling will be a viable option for Grand Rapids residents.

- Encourage residents to make use of Wood County’s “Clean Sweep” program to dispose of hazardous chemical waste.

Goal: Protect private property values and uses while assuring adequate utility expansion in the future.

Objectives:

- Review utility expansion plans and coordinate with surrounding communities on expanded and new routes.
- Preserve utility routes with special overlays in the Town zoning ordinance.
- Encourage modern, high-tech communications services to be extended to all town residents at the earliest opportunity.

5. AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

A. Introduction

The natural and cultural resources of a community have been described as being where the “heart and soul” of the community exists.¹⁷ Natural resources include such features as groundwater, surface water, steep slopes, forests, soils and plant and animal species. The natural resources, along with cultural resources, help define the character and appearance of a community, as well as the community’s health and economic condition. Cultural resources most commonly include historic buildings and places, and buildings and places that are of some cultural significance. Although not addressed as often, social events and customs are an integral part of the community, a fact that was made very clear in the responses to the community planning survey in Grand Rapids.

The purpose of this planning element is to inventory the natural and cultural resources and present a discussion of their role in Grand Rapids, both in the past and for the future. Goals, objectives and policies have been developed from those discussions and the will of the residents who responded to the community planning survey and are presented at the end of this chapter. We begin with a discussion of the terrain in Grand Rapids.

B. Topography

The elevations in the Town of Grand Rapids range from about 985 feet to 1,055 feet above mean sea level, a variation of 70 feet. Most of the Town is at an elevation of

between 1,020 and 1,040 feet above sea level. The lowest areas are in the southwest near Nepco Lake and the higher areas are in the northeast corner of the Town. Land in Grand Rapids has a general pitch from northeast to southwest.

C. Productive Agricultural Areas

Grand Rapids is considered to be more of a suburban rather than agricultural community. Most traditional farming has disappeared from Grand Rapids’ landscape. There are still specialized agricultural activities in the Town, including Christmas tree farming, keeping of horses and raising ostrich. Successful cranberry production is evident in areas immediately adjacent to the Town. Generally, though, the Town’s soils and development patterns are not conducive to agricultural operations.

Figure 5-1 shows how the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service rates soils in Grand Rapids for agricultural purposes. Less than one acre of land, located near the Wisconsin River on Bull’s Eye Country Club, is actually classified as “prime” and only 62.5 acres are classified as “prime if drained.” Of the areas that are “prime if drained,” about half is located in the SE ¼, NE ¼ of Section 24 and is partially developed with residential structures. The other, largest acreage in this classification, is located in the NW ¼, NW ¼ of Section 11. The best soils are contained in one parcel that has developed with one house in the center of the parcel. Therefore, neither area that is classified as “prime if drained” is farmed, nor are those areas available for much farming. The

¹⁷ Daniels, Thomas L. et al, *The Small Town Planning Handbook* (American Planning Association, 2007).

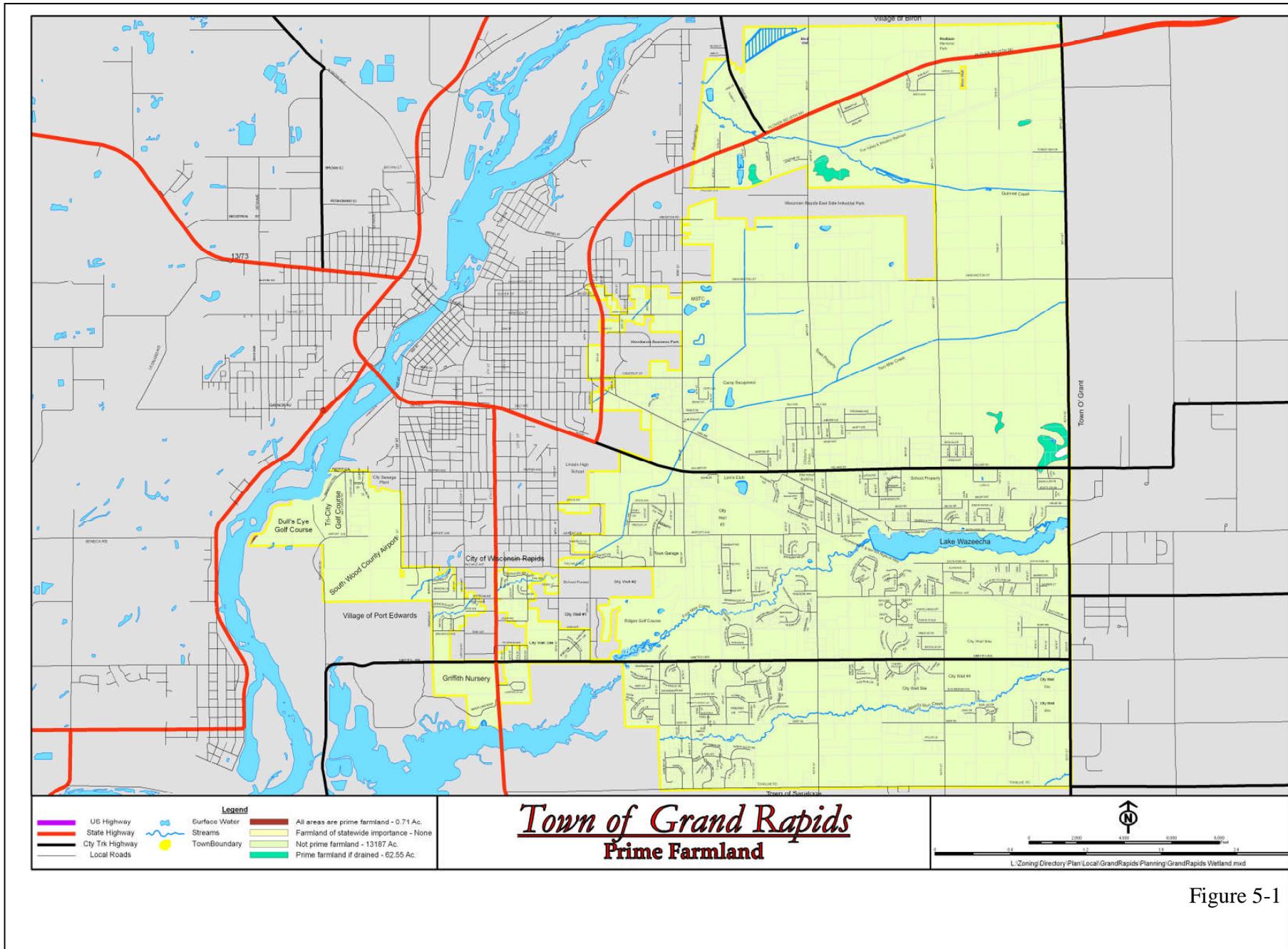


Figure 5-1

balance of the town is considered “not prime.”

D. Soils: Limitations for Dwellings

Grand Rapids’ soil types are not typical for most of Wood County in that soil conditions east of the Wisconsin River (Grand Rapids and Saratoga) are more sandy than most of Wood County and have deeper groundwater and bedrock than many areas. These factors make Grand Rapids (and Saratoga) easier to develop. Grand Rapids’ soils range from a Plainfield-Friendship association, which includes “nearly level to steep, moderately well drained and excessively drained soils that have a sandy subsoil; formed in deep sandy outwash on outwash plains” to a Newson-Meehan association, which includes “nearly level, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained soils that have a sandy subsoil, formed in deep sandy outwash, on outwash plains and glacial lake deposits.”¹⁸

Figure 5-2 shows the soil limitations for dwellings with basements. Soil limitations are indicated by the ratings “not limited,” “somewhat limited,” and “not limited.” based on the “Soil Survey of Wood County, Wisconsin,” a comprehensive soil survey by the USDA’s Soil Conservation Service. Exactly half (50.5%) of the Town’s land area has no limitations for dwellings with basements. These areas are along the Highway 54 corridor and most parts of Grand Rapids on either side and south of Kellner Road (County Road W). Another 17.4% of the Town is rated as being “somewhat limited.” These areas are scattered, but generally in the Highway 54 corridor, between Kellner Road and Peach Street-

extended, and along the streams in the south portions of the Town. Areas that are “somewhat limited” for buildings with basements may need mound systems for treating private sewage and they may have to take extra steps to keep basements dry in times of high groundwater. Finally, nearly 1/3 of Grand Rapids is “very limited” for structures with basements. Those areas, shown in red in Figure 5.2, have remained relatively undeveloped and are associated with a groundwater recharge area. They should be protected from groundwater contamination to preserve the Town’s potable water supply for the future.

Compare Figures 5-2 and 5-3. In Figure 5-2, we discussed the limitations for buildings with basements, noting that the Highway 54 corridor and south half of the Town were very good development areas. Areas of Grand Rapids that have high groundwater conditions are directly related to the areas that were described in Figure 5-2 to have some degree of limitations for basements. The obvious conclusion that can be drawn from these two maps is that the high groundwater conditions in the northern parts of the Town are the limiting factor for development.

With few exceptions, residential, commercial and industrial structures in Grand Rapids that generate waste water are served by Private On-Site Waste Treatment Systems, or “septic systems.” Therefore, it is important for town officials to keep the soil conditions in mind for new development. For the 10-year period from 1997 – 2006, 399 Wood County sanitary permits were issued for new construction in the Town of Grand Rapids. Each permit for new construction means that more land is converted from an undeveloped use – probably wooded – to a residential or

¹⁸ “General Soil Map, Wood County, Wisconsin, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, 1976.

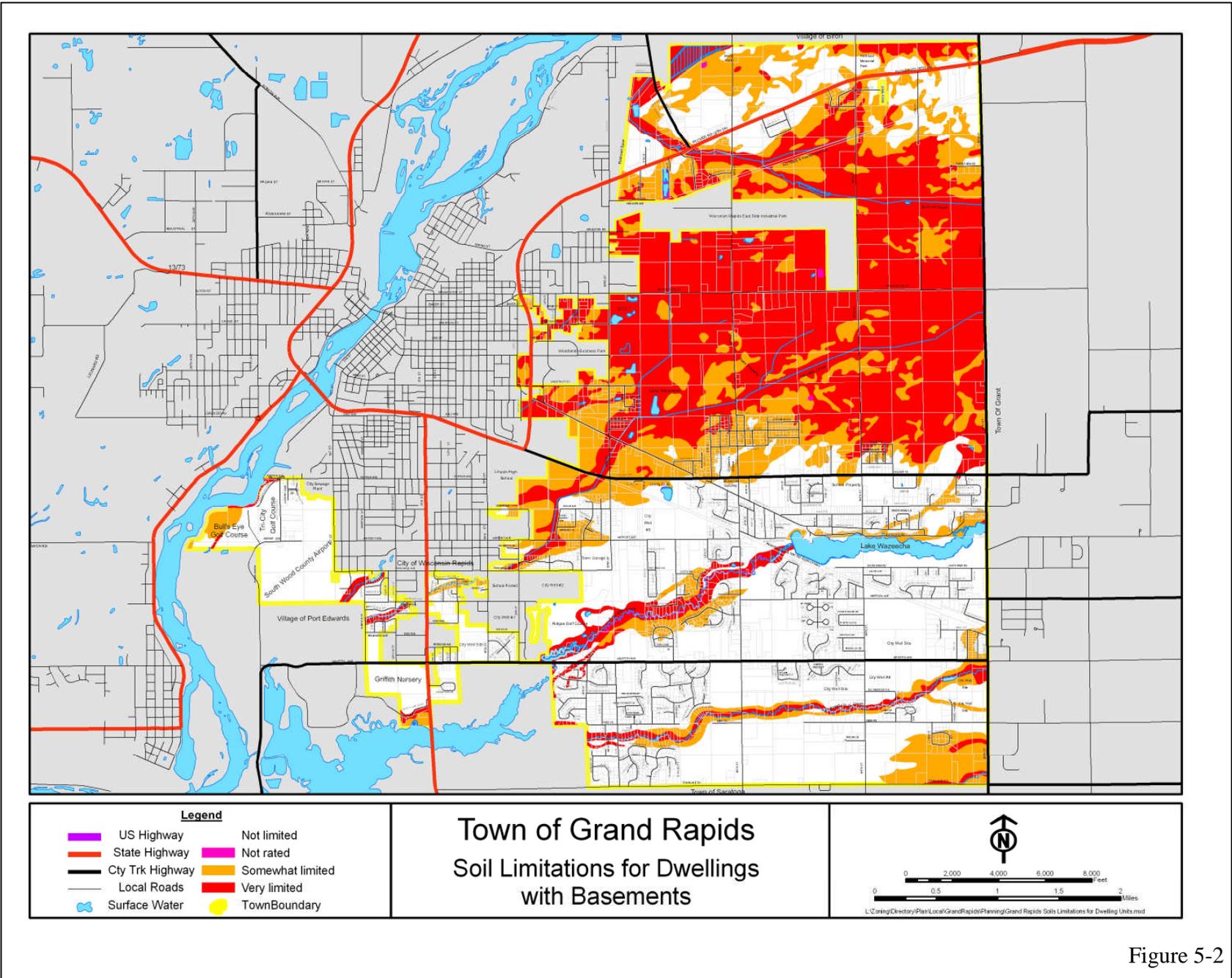


Figure 5-2

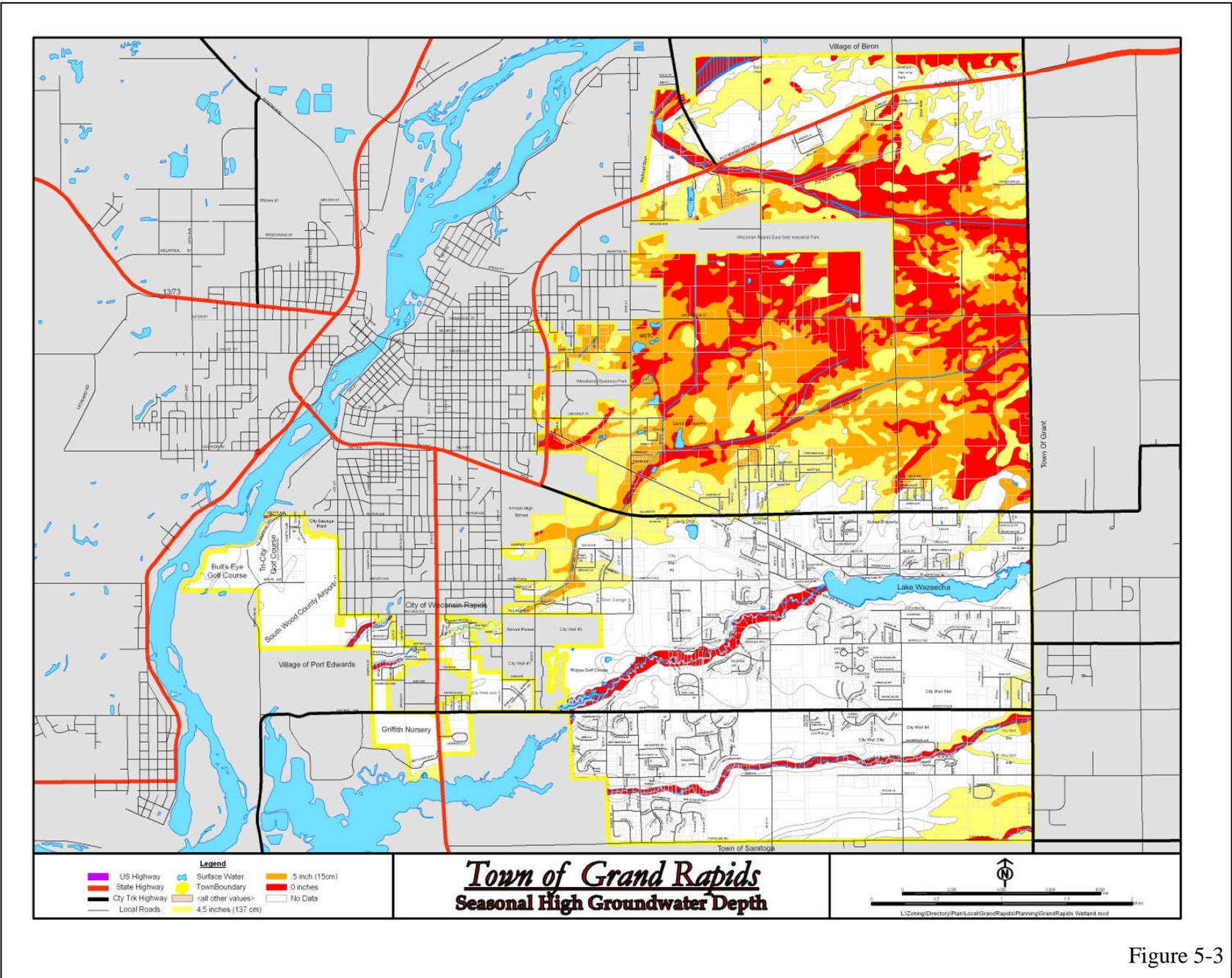


Figure 5-3

commercial use. More discussion is presented in other chapters about the amount of land that has been subdivided and the amount of land that will be needed to accommodate future growth. Policies to protect the groundwater need to be continually enforced through land development programs, such as the Town zoning ordinance.

E. Forests

Wood County has abundant forest lands, both in public and in private ownership. The forest lands in Grand Rapids are in privately owned. The largest mass of wooded properties is located in those areas shown in the previous maps as having high groundwater that is not conducive to structural development or septic systems.

While an important factor in determining the character of the Town, the wooded properties in Grand Rapids do not play as important of role on a county wide basis as do the forests in the nearby Nepco Lake County Park or those where vast acres are owned by Wood County or the State of Wisconsin. A large majority of respondents to the Town's community planning survey, however, consider the wooded lands to be a very important asset to the Town, helping to shape the local character and image. While it is important to respect the rights of private property owners who choose to cut trees down, the Town can encourage property owners to manage their wooded areas and maintain the character that those wooded areas create in Grand Rapids.

F. Water Resources

The State of Wisconsin has significant responsibilities for protecting water resources under what is known as the

“Public Trust Doctrine.” The Public Trust Doctrine embodies the notion that the waters in Wisconsin are held in trust by the State for the benefit of all. There can be no private interests in waterways that adversely affect this public interest. In fulfilling its responsibilities under the Public Trust Doctrine, the Wisconsin Legislature has enacted laws and charged the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to protect water resources. This local comprehensive plan must, at a minimum, be consistent with the State laws. The purpose of this section of the plan is to provide an inventory of the water resources in the Town and established local policies and programs regarding those resources.

(1) Groundwater

Fifteen to thirty percent of the precipitation we get in Wisconsin each year seeps into the ground and recharges our aquifers.¹⁹ It is estimated that there is enough groundwater underground to cover Wisconsin to a depth of 30 feet. The Town of Grand Rapids, as was shown in Figure 5-3, has a vast area between Highway 54 and County Road W that is characterized by shallow groundwater conditions. This map is based on data from the federal Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS). Parts of the red area on the map have been identified as being a groundwater recharge area. Other maps show that much of the high groundwater area in Grand Rapids, has groundwater levels of zero to one foot beneath the ground's surface. Some areas have groundwater levels from one to three feet and are, for the most part, not suited for development of structures of any kind. Soils with groundwater levels

¹⁹ “Planning for Natural Resources”, Dept. of Urban & Regional Planning, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, January, 2002, pg. 35.

from three to five feet buffer even better soils from the high groundwater areas. These soils can be developed with private sewage systems, such as mound systems. Grand Rapids is fortunate that nearly all of the south half of the Town has sandy soils with groundwater levels greater than five feet. It is these soils that are best suited for private sewage systems and where the bulk of the Town's development has occurred and will occur in the future.

Figure 5-4 is a diagram to illustrate how nature's water system works and how land uses can impact groundwater quality. There are growing concerns statewide about both the quantity and quality of groundwater. For example, groundwater quality may be impacted by a variety of activities, including leaking underground storage tanks, old dumps, septic systems, and over-application of fertilizers and pesticides. The most common contaminants

found in Wisconsin groundwater are nitrate-nitrogen, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), such as gasoline, paints and thinners and drain cleaners, and pesticides. Nitrate comes from a number of sources, including nitrogen-based fertilizers, septic systems, animal waste storage, feedlots, municipal and industrial wastewater discharges and sludge disposal. Phosphorus is another mineral that can be a potential problem because, while phosphorus levels in the soils are high, the types of crops needed to reduce those levels are not being planted as often as in the past and the soils do not break this mineral down.

It is not only important to protect groundwater resources at the local level, it is the law. Private well supplies, agricultural uses, recreational use of surface waters, etc. depend on a clean water supply. Every drinking water supply in Grand Rapids is a private well – untreated water from the

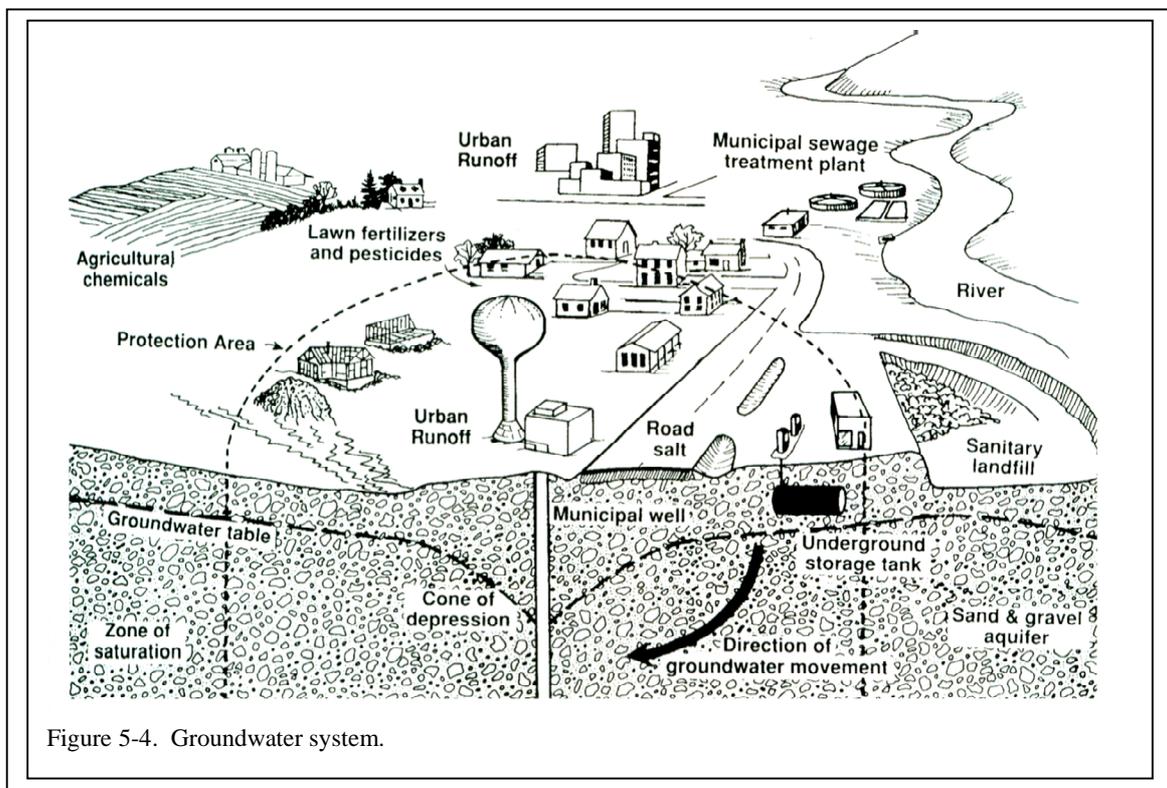


Figure 5-4. Groundwater system.

groundwater supply. In 1974, the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned existing law and created the current law – the doctrine of reasonable use. A property owner’s use of groundwater is not absolute, but has to be reasonable. It must consider impacts on the water table and other uses. Like surface water, groundwater is protected as “waters of the State”.

The City of Wisconsin Rapids has municipal well fields south of Two Mile Avenue, east of 20th Street and on property bordered by Two Mile and Kuhn Avenues and 16th and 20 Streets. They also have property for future municipal wells on the north side of Two Mile Avenue, near 37th Street. In addition, the Village of Biron has their well sites on Grand Rapids’ north side, south of Highway 54 at the east end of Curve Street. The Town has a keen interest in protecting the groundwater and maintaining a working relationship with both other communities because of the impact the municipal wells could have on Town residents and the impact town activities could have on the municipal wells. Area economic development depends on clean water as does the continued suburban development in Grand Rapids. The Town may want to pursue a joint planning effort for its boundary areas and, perhaps, propose boundary agreements so all municipalities can better plan for their joint and individual future services.

(2) Surface Water

Surface water in Grand Rapids consists of tributaries to the Wisconsin River. Quinnell Creek drains the northern portions of the Town, as well as parts of the Town of Grant in Portage County. Quinnell Creek enters Biron north of Highway 54 and west of Eagle Road. A fish-rearing pond, is located on Quinnell Creek at the intersection of Highway 54 and Eagle Road.

The One Mile Creek begins near Washington and 28th Street and travels south-southwest into Wisconsin Rapids, through Grand Rapids again southeast of Alexander Field and then enters the Village of Port Edwards where it discharges into Nepco Lake and on to the Wisconsin River.

Two Mile Creek enters Grand Rapids and Wood County south of Washington Street and flows to the southwest where it meets One Mile Creek in the Village of Port Edwards west of Sampson Street, south of Alexander Field. Much of Two Mile Creek has been diverted through culverts as it travels through Wisconsin Rapids.

Four Mile Creek (a/k/a Duck Creek) enters Grand Rapids via Lake Wazeecha. The lake is a man-made impoundment that is near a mile and a half in length, east to west. At the lake’s west end, water discharging from the lake flows southwest to Nepco Lake in the Village of Port Edwards. From there, water flows a short distance from Nepco Lake to the Wisconsin River.

Finally, Bloody Run Creek enters Grand Rapids from Portage County south of Griffith Avenue (County Road Z), flowing westerly to Lake Nepco, west of 28th Street extended. Like One- and Two-Mile creeks, water is then discharged from Nepco Lake to the Wisconsin River a short distance away.

Lake Wazeecha (Ho-Chunk, meaning “lake of the land of the pines”) is a very important body of water for Grand Rapids and for the entire urban area. This man-made body of water, created in the 1930s, is about 130 acres in size, surrounded by a county park, a total of 324 acres, including the lake and surrounding park

land. The lake was dredged to a depth of 10 feet in 1994. At the time of the dredging, there was concern that the lake was silting in because, in part, land to the east (Portage County) has been cleared for irrigation farming and soil erosion has caused silting of streams and Lake Wazeecha. Because of the importance of this lake to the area's economy²⁰, it is to the Town's benefit to monitor the County's maintenance of Lake Wazeecha. If necessary, the Town should facilitate meetings between "irrigation" communities that lie upstream, the County and the State to assure that the quantity and quality of water in Lake Wazeecha is protected.

G. Floodplains and Shorelands

Floodplains serve many important functions related to flood control, erosion control, groundwater recharge, fish and wildlife habitat and water quality. Floodplains are often misunderstood locally. A floodplain is a natural extension of a waterway and flooding is a natural physical event. When structures are placed in the floodplain, the floodplain's water storage capacity is reduced, causing the next flood of equal intensity to crest even higher than the last, often flooding areas that were previously outside the floodplain.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines floodplains. Floodplains are comprised of the floodway, which is that area that actually carries the floodwaters, and the flood fringe, which is the area that accepts backed-up water for storage until the floodway can carry the water downstream. The flood

fringe is sometimes referred to as the "backwater" areas. Floodplain boundaries have been established nationwide to delineate the 100-year and 500-year flood elevations. There is a one percent chance that the 100-year, or regional, flood will occur in any given year. The regional flood could occur two years in a row, or may not occur at all in a 100-year period. According to the Wisconsin Emergency Management Division, Wisconsin communities experienced significant flooding each year from 1990 – 2001, except 1994. Total damages to public and private property, including agricultural damages, during that time period totaled more than one billion dollars.²¹

By State law, Wood County adopted a floodplain zoning ordinance in the late 1960s to regulate development in floodplains. FEMA floodplain maps identify areas where major floods occur. Regulations prohibit development in the floodway, the most dangerous flood area. Development is allowed in the flood fringe, provided it is built above flood levels and otherwise flood-protected. Although allowed, it is wise to restrict development from occurring in the flood fringe as well as the floodway.

The floodplains in Grand Rapids, shown in Figure 5-5, are very closely associated with the banks of the streams described in the "Surface Water" section. There is a total of about 1,035 acres in Grand Rapids that is in the floodplain and is, for all intents and purposes, undevelopable.

Lake Wazeecha is a flowage of the Four Mile Creek. The federal government

²⁰ Lake Wazeecha has been the host site of the Wisconsin State Waterski Show Team Tournament for several years, drawing ski show teams from around Wisconsin. It has received attention, having been featured on ESPN. South Wood County Park's campgrounds draw campers from throughout the State and Midwest, helping local businesses.

²¹ ²¹ "Planning for Natural Resources", Dept. of Urban & Regional Planning, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, January, 2002, page 28.

required Wood County to prepare what is referred to as a “flood shadow” study of the Four Mile Creek below the Lake Wazeecha dam. A flood shadow is that area beyond the floodplain that would flood if an event destroyed the dam at Lake Wazeecha and released the water in the lake. Wood County and Grand Rapids treat development proposals in the flood shadow the same as if they were in the floodplain. The flood shadow of the Four Mile Creek is also shown on Figure 5-5.

Shorelands and floodplains are very closely associated. Like floodplains, Shoreland areas are protected under Wisconsin law. Also, like floodplains, counties are required to zone all shorelands within their jurisdiction.²² The Shoreland includes that land that is located within 300 feet of a navigable stream or 1,000 feet of a lake, pond or flowage.

H. Wetlands

The value of wetlands to humans and to wildlife is often disregarded or not understood by the public. Wetlands are a critical resource, providing fish and wildlife habitat and serve as a water storage facility and distribution system, filtering nutrients and purifying the water before it is reintroduced into the groundwater or surface water system. As more impermeable surfaces (rooftops, driveways, patios, roads, etc.) dominate the landscape, the capacity of wetlands to handle excess water runoff becomes increasingly important.

Under Wisconsin Administrative Code, cities and villages (and towns with village powers) are required to protect, at a minimum, all unfilled wetlands that 1) are within their borders, 2) are five acres or

larger, 3) are shown on Department of Natural Resources wetland inventory maps, and 4) are located within shorelands.

Wetlands are not abundant in Grand Rapids. In most cases, wetlands in the Town tend to mirror the floodplains. The exceptions include those wetlands that are in Sections 11 and 12 and a few other scattered wetlands, most notably in the north half of Section 24. According to the DNR wetland inventory, there are about 645 acres of defined wetlands in Grand Rapids.

Development should be directed away from all mapped wetlands, both for the protection of the wetland and for the protection of the structures and persons using them. The northern Wood County Town of Marshfield, for example, requires a 100-foot setback from any mapped wetland for any new structure. Such a requirement will preserve the important functions of the wetlands for many years into the future and protect structures during periods of exceptionally high water from rain storms and spring snow melt.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources protects wetlands from development when those wetlands lie within 300 feet of a navigable stream. Nearly all wetlands in Grand Rapids are within that distance. Note, however, that there are also some wetland areas that lie further than 300 feet of the streams. These areas need to be protected to an equal degree as wetlands that lie adjacent to streams. It should be a town policy to protect the unregulated wetlands from encroachment and destruction, similar to the example of the Town of Marshfield, so wetlands can serve the function of water runoff storage, wildlife habitat, etc.

²² Sec. 59.692, Wis. Stats., and Chapter NR 115, Wisconsin Administrative Code.

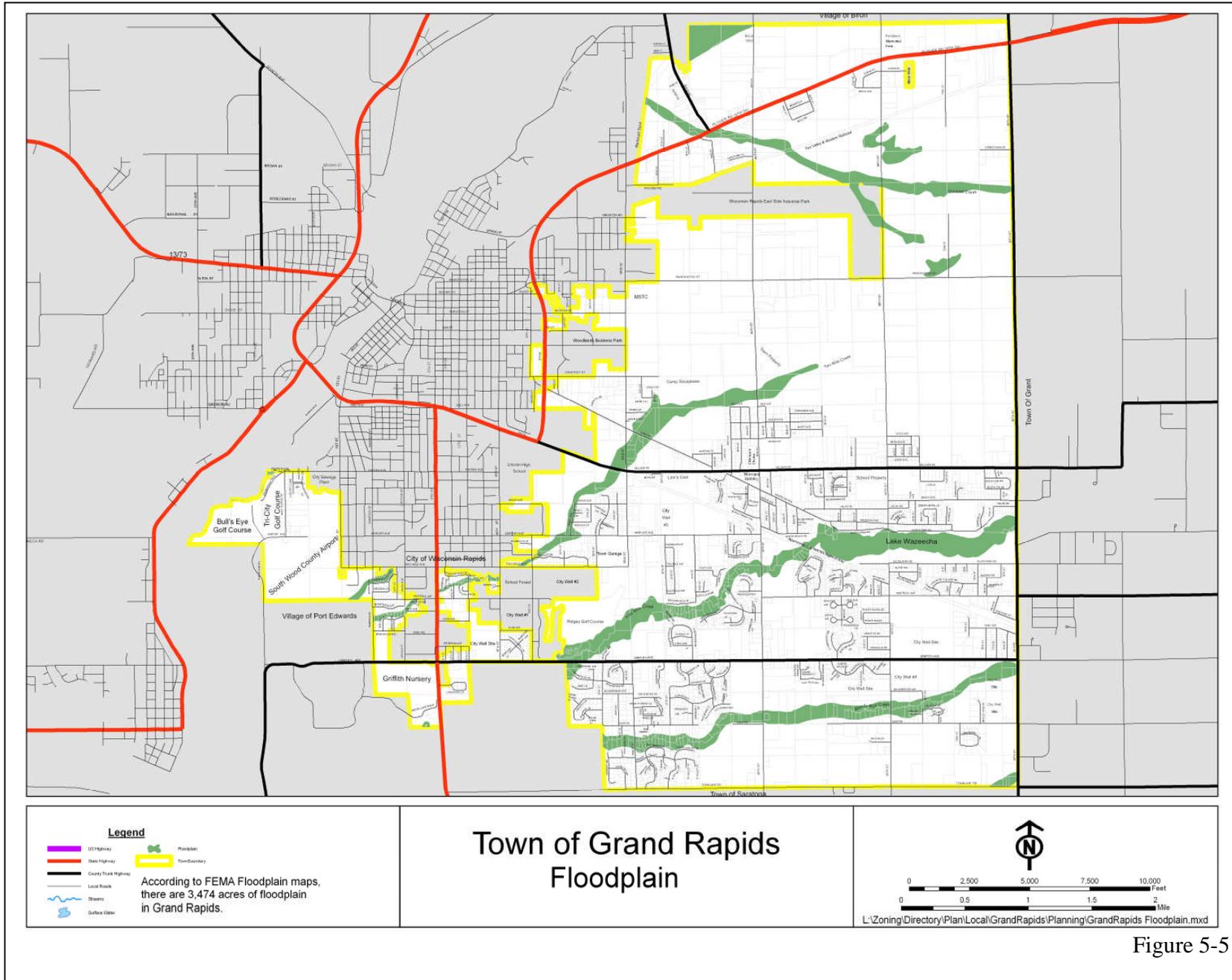


Figure 5-5

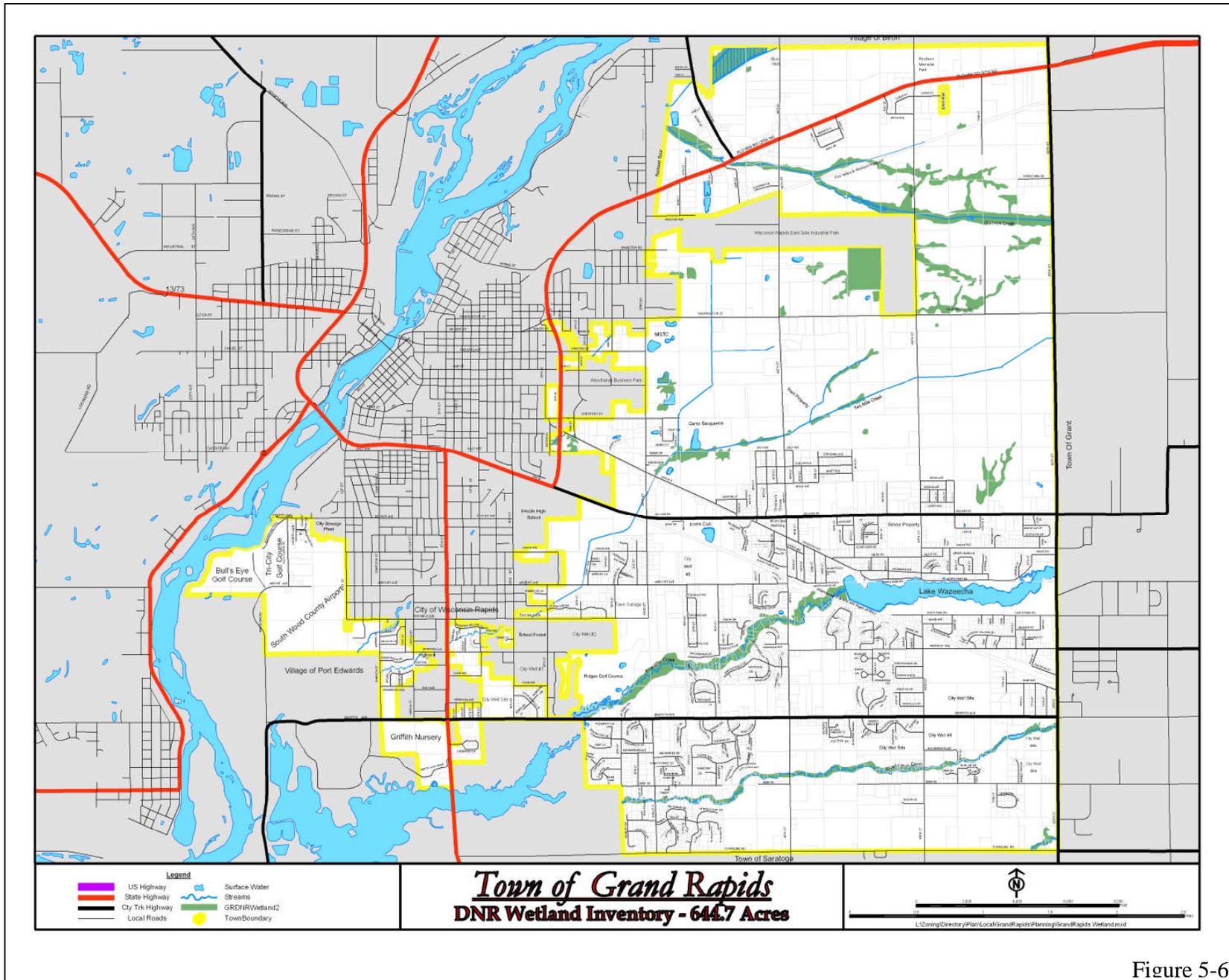


Figure 5-6

I. Wildlife Habitat

The Town of Grand Rapids has an abundance of wildlife, including deer, rabbits, turkey and more. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources maintains a list of threatened and endangered and protected species that are sighted in Wisconsin, but are careful about the information they release about specific species or locations. Specific site reports are exempt from the Wisconsin open records laws, but general information is available. A general map of species, showing where sightings have been recorded, broken down only to quarter sections is available on the Wisconsin DNR web site²³ and is provided in Figure 5-7.

In many communities, like Grand Rapids, suburban development has encroached on wildlife habitat, often eliminating former homes and breeding areas for wildlife. Community planning survey respondents in Grand Rapids value the area's wildlife although many residents wish to see some type of management, especially of the deer population. Suburban landscaping provides a good food source for the deer herd, a fact that bothers some residents. The Town should foster an environment that will protect the area wildlife while allowing property owners the opportunity to protect their property with fencing and other options,

J. Parks, Open Spaces and Recreational Resources

Public open space is an important determinant of the quality of life within a community. Grand Rapids is fortunate to have one of Wood County's major lakes located in the Town and another just adjacent

to the Town in the Village of Port Edwards. South Wood County Park surrounds Lake Wazeecha and offers a multitude of recreation opportunities, including swimming, water skiing, fishing and boating activities; camping; multiuse trails; Frisbee golf; ball fields; open and enclosed shelters, picnicking and playground areas; and more. Lake Wazeecha has been the host site of the Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Team Tournament for many years, an event that has been broadcast on ESPN television.

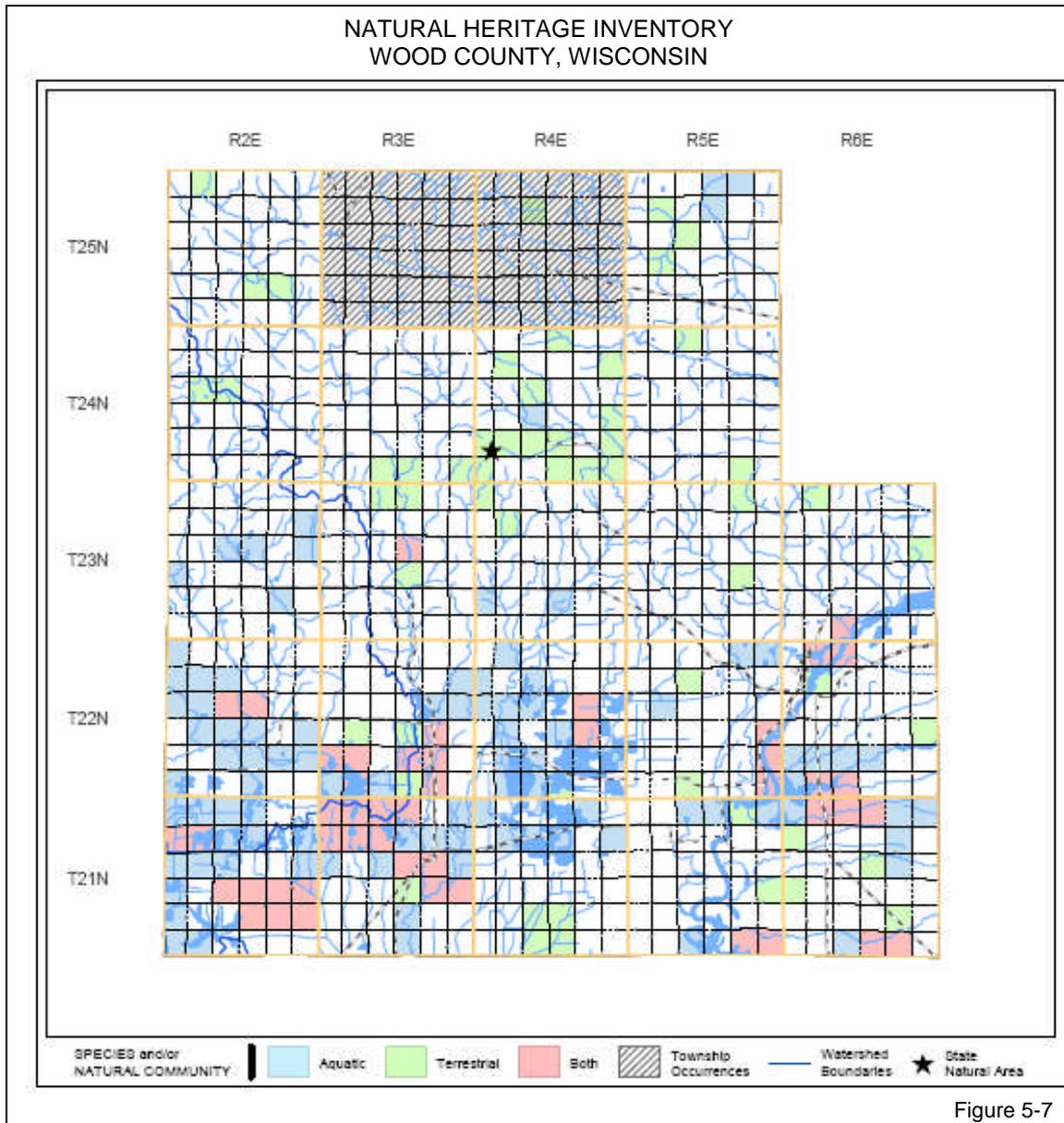
NEPCO Lake is undeveloped except for the county park on the lake's north side. Facilities in that county park include swimming, water skiing, fishing and boating activities; cross-country ski trails; open and enclosed shelters; and picnicking and playground areas.

In addition to South Wood County Park, Wood County owns about 200 acres on County Road U (80th Street), north of County Road W (Kellner Road). That property has limited opportunities for development, but could be put into use as a dog park or some other outdoor recreation area that requires vast open spaces.

The Grand Rapids Lions Park is a 28-acre site on County Road W that is used for several not-for-profit and community events each summer. It is not unusual to see the signature United States flags lining the fence along County Road W, notifying the community that a concert, car show, pet show, used car sale or community picnic is taking place. The Lions Park has pavilions, a playground, storage buildings and acres of open space in which to hold outdoor events. This facility is truly an asset to the Town.

Children's Choice elementary school, located at the NW corner of County Road W and 48th Street, was closed as a public school

²³ <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/nhi/CountyMaps/pdfs/WoodCounty.pdf>



in 2006. Prior to its closing, that site provided the neighborhood with a playground, soccer field and gymnasium. With the loss of the school, efforts have been made toward reuse of the structure and the outdoor recreation opportunities it provides. In the event of a permanent loss of this facility, the Town may want to investigate other opportunities for a neighborhood playground, preferably on the north side of the county road.

During the 1970s, subdivision developers were required to provide areas for neighborhood parks. That requirement was later eliminated because of the responsibility it placed on the Town to maintain the areas and because it took some prime areas off the property tax rolls. Neighborhood recreation areas that were developed under the earlier requirement include a playground in the Weslan Subdivision and the Brookhaven Subdivision. Land also was dedicated in the

Pleasantview Heights Subdivision at the east end of Deer Road, but that property was never developed into a recreation area.

The proximity of Grand Rapids to the City of Wisconsin Rapids has provided an opportunity for Town residents to participate, in City sponsored athletic leagues for both the youth of the community and adults. There is usually a nominal fee to Town residents to participate. Many city parks and Wisconsin Rapids Public School District school facilities are used year round for both indoor and outdoor recreation activities. Cooperative ventures between the area communities are recommended because of the spirit of cooperation that is fostered and because of the cost savings that are realized when resources are shared. From time-to-time, the Town should consider what recreation facilities are needed or desired by Town residents. Providing quality of life facilities and opportunities is an important function of a community and the not-for-profit organizations in a community.

K. Historical and Cultural Resources

The Wisconsin Historical Society's online inventory of architecture and history includes two records for the Town of Grand Rapids. A field check of the structures revealed that the barn no longer exists. The house is probably still standing, but there is inadequate data in the Historical Society's inventory to identify the structure. The historic structures, per the Historical Society records, are described as follows:

1. Astylistic utilitarian building, located on 48th Street in the NE, SE, Sec. 3, T21N, R6E. This is a wood barn. The Historical Society survey date was 1978.
2. A house, built in 1896, is listed as being on Whitrock Avenue. No other information

is available from the Historical Society inventory, except that it was surveyed in 1996.

L. Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources Goals & Objectives

The Planning Commission and Town Board recognize that many residents located in Grand Rapids because of the natural resources that are present in the Town. They also recognize the fact that the Town has experienced a lot of growth in recent decades and know that projections of new housing needs will place a demand on the remaining natural resources. It is the overall objective of the Town to provide a balance between future development pressures and the preservation and protection of our natural resources. To that end, the following are the goals and objectives to accomplish those goals.

Goal: Protect the groundwater recharge area in the northern part of the Town.

Objectives:

- Analyze development proposals for their potential impact on groundwater resources.
- Assure compliance with State building codes regarding silt fencing on construction sites and storm water retention basins where necessary.
- Use the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to control the density and location of developments in areas that may be environmentally sensitive.

Goal: Protect the Town's surface water and groundwater resources in developable areas.

Objectives:

- Require protection of drainage patterns through use of drainage easements on certified survey maps and subdivision plats and building setbacks in the zoning ordinance.

- Continue to work with and support the Wood County Private Sewage Ordinance administration with regard to regular state-required septic tank pumping and reporting, and replacement of failing septic systems.

Goal: Protect property values while also protecting the Town’s wildlife.

- Monitor wildlife damage complaints and consider whether ordinance changes will allow residents latitude in protecting property.

- Communicate wildlife damage or control issues with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources who may be able to assist homeowners in techniques that can protect their property.

Goal: Preserve the Town’s woodlands, forests and other wildlife habitat.

Objectives:

- Maintain low density development in areas where there may be environmental concerns.

Goal: Recognize and nurture cultural and community pride.

Objectives:

- Continue to support the celebration of community and cultural events at locations in the Town.

- Using the Town’s website and annual property tax insert, encourage all eligible residents to participate in elected and appointed offices. Encourage those who are not eligible for elected offices to participate on committees and commissions to serve their community.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. Recent Economic Change & Purpose

The greater Wisconsin Rapids area has been hard hit with industrial plant downsizings and closings in the past few years. As a major paper manufacturing area, the community has seen the sale of a once strong Consolidated Papers, Inc. first to a Finnish company (Stora Enso) and, a few years later, to NewPage Corporation which is based in Miamisburg, Ohio. The sales resulted in hundreds of layoffs. The former Great Northern Nekoosa Corporation has also been sold twice in recent years. The first sale was to Georgia-Pacific Corporation. That sale resulted in several lost jobs in our area as some office jobs were moved out of state. The second sale was to Domtar Corporation, a Canadian company. In 2008, Domtar made the decision to close their Port Edwards plant, resulting in the loss of over 500 local jobs. Yet another transition was the sale of American-held Vulcan Chemicals in Port Edwards to Canadian-held Erco Worldwide. Many Grand Rapids residents were employed by these companies and were displaced with the restructuring and closing.

On the other hand, the area has seen expansion in the medical services sector and specialized agriculture, especially the production and processing of cranberries. Growth in the Woodlands Business Park and the East Side Commerce Center of Wisconsin Rapids, along with movement to create a new business/industrial park in Biron and a technology center near Mid-State Technical College show the community's optimism that there will be new business attracted to or started from within the community.

The changing economy of the greater Wisconsin Rapids area has left the community with certain competitive strengths and weaknesses that will be discussed later in this chapter, but, first, the status of the local economy will be established in the following paragraphs.

The purpose of this element of the comprehensive plan is to provide an analysis of the current labor force and economic base of the Town and, from that analysis, develop objectives, policies, goals and programs “to promote the stabilization, retention or expansion of the economic base and quality employment opportunities in the [Town].”²⁴ To achieve that purpose, this chapter will assess the types of businesses and industries that are desired in Grand Rapids, perceived strengths and weaknesses with respect to attracting and retaining businesses and industries, designate sites for desired business development, evaluate the status of contaminated sites, and identify county, regional and state economic development programs that apply to the Town. Some employment characteristics were presented in Chapter 2 of this plan and will be expanded upon here. Much of the economy-related information is available only on a countywide basis. Consequently, that level data will be presented where town level data is not available, with comments and assumptions for the Town drawn from county level data.

B. Employment Trends

In Chapter 1, the Grand Rapids employed labor force was described as “growing considerably faster than that of

²⁴ Chapter 66.1001 (2) (f), Wisconsin Statutes.

either the county or state.” A comparison of the labor force from 1980 to 2000 revealed a growth of 15.7% between 1980 and 1990 and another 20.4% between 1990 and 2000. For the 20-year period, the growth in the employed labor force in Grand Rapids was nearly double that of Wood County and was about one-third faster than Wisconsin. The unemployment rate for the Grand Rapids labor force was only 3.1% in 2000 (3.4% for Wood County), which is considered “full-employment.” Unemployment rate figures for municipalities have not been available since 2000, but the unemployment rate for Wood County in 2007 was 5.5% and 5.8% through July, 2008. The State had a similar trend, rising from 3.4% in 2000 to 4.6% in 2007.

The industries that employ Grand Rapids residents and the type of jobs are listed in Table 6-1. Manufacturing remains the strongest industry for area employment, although education, health and social service employment has made substantial gains since 1990, as has entertainment and recreation services. Substantial declines in number employed and percent of total employment occurred in the transportation and retail trade sectors, although retail trade continues to remain as a strong employment sector for Grand Rapids in the most recent census.

The types of occupations held by Grand Rapids residents indicate that several hold management positions (32.5%). Management positions usually indicate higher salaries which were shown in Chapter 1 to be prevalent in Grand Rapids. Sales and office jobs and, of course, production, transportation and material moving also remain strong in our area.

C. Worker Age Structure

In Grand Rapids, there are 5,230 people between the ages of 16 and 65, which is generally considered the working age group. Sixty-nine percent of those are between the ages of 25 and 64, a range that the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) considers to be the “prime working age” population. This is comparable to the proportion for Wood County (68%) and Wisconsin (67%). On the national level, the growth of the civilian labor force is expected to slow down, while the older labor force is expected to grow five times faster than the overall labor force. The age 55 and older portion of the labor force is expected to grow by 46.7% between 2006 and 2016, according to the BLS. Similar conclusions have been projected for Wisconsin and it is not unreasonable to expect our area to be any different given the information that was presented in Chapter 1 regarding the local aging population. The two principal reasons for the change are: the baby-boom generation is aging and retiring, and the labor force participation rate of women appears to have peaked.

D. Labor Force Participation

The previous section focused on the working age population. Even though a person may be in that age group, he or she may or may not actually be in the labor force. If a person who is 16 years old or older is not looking for a job, that person is not part of the labor force. Most of those who fit into this category are students, retirees and others who choose not to work. If a person who is 16 years old or older is employed or is unemployed but looking for a job, that person is participating in the labor force. In 2000, the Grand Rapids labor force consisted of 4,484 persons, a 75.3% labor force participation rate which is very high.

INDUSTRY	1990		2000	
	Number Employed	Percent of Total	Number Employed	Percent of Total
Employed persons 16 years and over	3571	100.0%	4299	100.0%
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	55	1.5%	72	1.7%
Construction	121	3.4%	292	6.8%
Manufacturing	1276	35.7%	1415	32.9%
Transportation	187	5.2%	140	3.3%
Communications & other public utilities	77	2.2%	66	1.5%
Wholesale trade	67	1.9%	40	0.9%
Retail trade	625	17.5%	499	11.6%
Finance, insurance & real estate	191	5.3%	248	5.8%
Business & repair services	77	2.2%		0.0%
Personal services	79	2.2%	127	3.0%
Entertainment & recreation services	40	1.1%	273	6.4%
Education, health & social services	597	16.7%	944	22.0%
Other professional & related services	108	3.0%	88	2.0%
Public administration	71	2.0%	95	2.2%
OCCUPATION			4,299	100.0%
Management, professional & related			1,397	32.5%
Sales & office			1,089	25.3%
Service, except protective and household			539	12.5%
Farming, forestry & fishing			7	0.2%
Construction, extraction & maintenance			420	9.8%
Production, transportation & material moving			847	19.7%
NOTE: Because of a change in classifying occupations, only those for 2000 are shown in this table.				
Source: U. S. Census.				

Only four other Wood County towns had higher rates than Grand Rapids in 2000 (Milladore, Cameron, Marshfield and Lincoln). In comparison, the participation rate for Wood County in the same year was 67.1% and for Wisconsin was 69.1%.

Wisconsin ranks high, nationally, for labor force participation. In 2004, Wisconsin ranked sixth, at a rate of 71.8% (Minnesota, Nebraska, the Dakotas and Colorado ranked higher).

The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed as a percent of the labor force. At the time of the 2000 census, the unemployment rate in Grand Rapids was 3.1%, slightly lower than the unemployment rate of Wood County (3.4%) or the State (3.2%). The unemployment rates for all jurisdictions have increased substantially since the 2000 census. Although unemployment rates for municipalities are not available, one can surmise from looking at Wood County's 2007 annual unemployment rate of 5.5%, coupled with

the downturn in the paper industry, that the unemployment rate in Grand Rapids also exceeds 5%.

E. Commuting Patterns

More people commute into Wood County from neighboring counties than those who travel to other counties to work (Table 6-2). Wood County has a net gain of over 5,000 commuters on a daily basis. The greatest number of commuters comes from Portage County and it is likely that most of these commuters work in the Wisconsin Rapids urban area. In Chapter 3, it was noted that only about 16% of Grand Rapids workers commute to other counties (most likely to Portage County). Many community planning survey respondents indicated that they work in the Stevens Point area. Still several others said they commute to the Wausau area or to Adams County.

County	Commute		Net Commute
	Into	From	
Portage	2,572	2,639	67
Marathon	1,449	3,944	2,495
Clark	272	1,956	1,684
Adams	178	899	721
Juneau	83	186	103
Jackson	52	70	18
TOTAL	4,606	9,694	5,088

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census.

F. Economic Base

The Town of Grand Rapids is dependent on the general economy of the urban area, county and region. There are more than 50 businesses and 80 home occupations located in the Town. They range in size from one employee up to over 50 employees. The largest employers in the Town are listed in Table 6-3. These

Rank	Employer	Industry Type	No. of Emp.
1	Mid-State Technical College	Junior Colleges	250-499
2	Golden Eagle Log Homes Inc.	Prefab. Wood Building Manufacturing	50-99
3	Cable Constructors Inc.	Nonresidential Electrical Contractors	50-99
4	Altmann Construction Co. Inc.	Commercial & Institutional Building. Construction	50-99
5	The Ridges of Wis. Rapids LLC	Golf Courses and Country Clubs	20-49
6	Ron's Refrigeration & Air	Nonresidential Plumbing, Htng., and Air-Cond. Contractors	20-49
7	Donahue Super Sports Inc.	Motorcycle, ATV, & Personal Watercraft Dealers	10-19
8	DNL Recreation Inc.	Recreational Vehicle Dealers	10-19
9	Country Tots Day Care	Child Day Care Services	10-19
10	Safeway Bus	School busses	10-19
11	FRP Composites Inc.	All Other Plastics Product Manufacturing	5-9
12	Wolosek Landscaping	Landscaping Services	5-9
13	Jammers	Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)	5-9
14	TDO Enterprises Inc.	Residential Painting and Wall Covering Contractors	5-9

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development.

businesses and others of similar size are very important to the area's economy. Half of the businesses in Grand Rapids are located along Highway 54, a corridor that

has historically been zoned for commercial uses and has potential for future growth of small manufacturing companies that don't use or dispose of a lot of water or need high water pressure for fire protection, small businesses similar to those already located in the Town, businesses that provide neighborhood support services, small office complexes and others. The urban area's largest employers are located and will continue to locate where municipal services can be provided, namely sanitary sewer and water. Those employers include businesses such as NewPage Corporation; Domtar, Inc.; Wal-Mart; Riverview Hospital; Renaissance Learning, Inc. and governmental units like the County of Wood, the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District and others.

Wage information on the various industry types in Wood County is listed in Table 6-4 for the years 2000 and 2007. Those who work in the Education and Health Services industry earn the most on average and those who work in the Leisure and Hospitality industry are the lowest paid. Similar average annual wage increases are evident in many of the industries with the largest increases in the Other Services, Financial Activities, and Education and Health Services sectors. Very little gain was made in the Professional and Business services which includes professional and technical services, management of companies, and administrative and support services.

G. Employment Projections

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development makes 10-year projections of the fastest growing occupations in Wisconsin. Recognizing that these are statewide projections, it is worthwhile to consider their impact in central Wisconsin. Table 6-5 identifies the

Table 6-4: Average Wages by Industry – Wood County			
Industry	2000	2007	Average Annual Increase
Education & Health Services	\$38,974	\$50,600	4.3%
Manufacturing	\$41,704	\$50,211	2.9%
Professional & Business Services	\$41,179	\$42,323	0.4%
Construction	\$36,781	\$42,152	2.1%
Information	Suppressed	\$40,008	N/A
Natural Resources & Mining	\$29,963	\$34,216	2.0%
Public Administration	\$27,812	\$33,007	2.7%
Financial Activities	\$24,237	\$32,718	5.0%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	\$24,038	\$29,405	3.2%
Other Services (inc. repair & maintenance, personal & laundry, membership organizations, and private households)	14,310	\$20,960	6.6%
Leisure & Hospitality	\$8,717	\$10,288	2.6%

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development.

occupations that are expected to grow the fastest between 2006 and 2016. It should come as no surprise that, given the aging population, those occupations are medical and health related. Also, computer and data communications jobs are expected to continue to remain strong during this period.

A follow-up table, (Table 6-6) lists those industries that the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development foresees as the fastest growing between

Occupational Title	Estimated Employment				2006 Avg. Annual Salary
	2006	2016	Change	Pct. Chg.	
Network Systems and Data Communications Analysts	5,150	7,390	2,240	43.5%	\$58,024
Home Health Aides	16,550	23,310	6,760	40.8%	\$20,812
Personal and Home Care Aides	22,030	30,540	8,510	38.6%	\$19,602
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	8,830	12,170	3,340	37.8%	\$69,811
Medical Assistants	7,120	9,720	2,600	36.5%	\$27,632
Physician Assistants	1,110	1,480	370	33.3%	\$78,373
Radiation Therapists	490	650	160	32.7%	\$67,848
Personal Financial Advisors	3,170	4,190	1,020	32.2%	\$74,784
Dental Hygienists	4,170	5,470	1,300	31.2%	\$55,069
Substance Abuse & Behavioral Disorder Counselors	1,550	2,020	470	30.3%	\$39,904
Physical Therapist Assistants	1,270	1,650	380	29.9%	\$38,206
Surgical Technologists	2,310	2,990	680	29.4%	\$41,203
Skin Care Specialists	510	660	150	29.4%	\$27,885
Physical Therapist Aides	1,240	1,600	360	29.0%	\$24,614
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	700	900	200	28.6%	\$44,814
Social and Human Service Assistants	7,340	9,400	2,060	28.1%	\$29,355
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	1,510	1,930	420	27.8%	\$28,104
Pharmacy Technicians	6,300	8,030	1,730	27.5%	\$25,518
Respiratory Therapists	1,790	2,270	480	26.8%	\$48,842
Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software	2,840	3,600	760	26.8%	\$74,640
Financial Analysts	2,140	2,710	570	26.6%	\$64,017
Registered Nurses	51,130	64,550	13,420	26.2%	\$57,376
Physical Therapists	4,060	5,080	1,020	25.1%	\$64,087
Marriage and Family Therapists	720	900	180	25.0%	\$54,128
Animal Trainers	730	910	180	24.7%	\$26,590
Medical Equipment Repairers	690	860	170	24.6%	\$46,212
Veterinarians	1,750	2,170	420	24.0%	\$77,803
Mental Health Counselors	1,650	2,040	390	23.6%	\$41,324
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers	2,230	2,740	510	22.9%	\$49,021

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

2006 and 2016. Again, the medical industry has a strong presence in this list as does the computer technology and data communications industry. Ranked 17th statewide is the Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries. This category may rank higher in our area because of our ability to attract statewide sports tournaments. All three of these areas provide an opportunity to attract new development to our area. The presence of Riverview Hospital, the U. W. Cancer Center, the Marshfield Clinic, Saint

Joseph's Hospital and the research labs associated with the Marshfield medical industry are examples that can be used to market our area for medical industry expansion. Renaissance Learning provides a good base for attracting the computer industry. In addition, our location in proximity to the rest of Wisconsin has helped attract major state and national sports tournaments to our area. This is an area that local officials have been trying to improve

Industry Title	Estimated Employment			
	2006	2016	Change	Pct. Chg.
Securities, Commodity Contracts and Other Financial Investments	9,500	13,120	3,620	38.1%
Social Assistance	65,800	86,210	3,620	31.0%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	104,150	133,990	29,840	28.7%
Warehousing and Storage	12,230	15,260	3,030	24.8%
Support Activities for Transportation	5,250	6,370	1,120	21.3%
Internet Service Providers, Web Search Portals, & Data Processing Services	8,040	9,750	1,710	21.3%
Waste Management and Remediation Service	5,370	6,500	1,130	21.0%
Administrative and Support Services	127,480	151,570	24,090	18.9%
Hospitals, including State and Local Government	113,010	133,960	20,950	18.5%
Lessors of Nonfinancial Intangible Assets (except Copyrighted Works_)	550	650	100	18.2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	95,810	113,080	17,270	18.0%
Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institution	1,720	2,020	300	17.4%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	69,400	79,630	10,230	14.7%
Transit and Ground Passenger Transport	13,580	15,560	1,980	14.6%
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	11,520	13,020	1,500	13.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	41,510	46,800	5,290	12.7%
Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	26,060	29,360	3,300	12.7%
Real Estate	19,000	21,400	2,400	12.6%
Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations	87,800	98,700	10,900	12.4%
Construction of Buildings	30,980	34,710	3,730	12.0%
Accommodation	31,510	35,210	3,700	11.7%
Wholesale Electronic Markets and Agents and Brokers	6,570	7,340	770	11.7%
Food Services and Drinking Places	192,060	214,060	22,000	11.5%
Truck Transportation	49,550	55,050	5,500	11.1%
Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	67,700	75,180	7,480	11.0%
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	68,220	74,850	6,630	9.7%
Specialty Trade Contractors	81,470	89,380	7,910	9.7%
Repair and Maintenance	21,700	23,690	1,990	9.2%
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	54,770	59,650	4,880	8.9%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

upon with some success, but does not create high paying jobs like the two other sectors.

H. Area Business & Industrial Parks

There are three business and industrial parks in the immediate vicinity of Grand Rapids. Each of these is located in Wisconsin Rapids, two of them adjacent to Grand Rapids. The third is on the west side of Wisconsin Rapids. In addition, the

Village of Biron is proposing a new, privately owned business/industrial park along Highway 54. Additional land will be annexed from Grand Rapids to Biron to accommodate this development so it will also be immediately adjacent to the Town's boundary. The Wisconsin Rapids Industrial Park is on the city's northwest side. It is a 450 acre park with about 75 acres remaining for additional development. The Woodlands Business Park is on the city's far east side

adjacent to Grand Rapids between Highway 54 on the west, 32nd Street on the east, Chestnut Street on the south and Saratoga Street on the north. The Woodlands is a 95 acre business center with about 55 acres available for additional development. Immediately south of The Woodlands Business Park is an area that is planned to be developed with commercial land uses. This area is also adjacent to Grand Rapids. Wisconsin Rapids also has the Rapids East Commerce Center, a 230 acre industrial park that was developed as a Tax Increment Finance district in 2004. Much of the Commerce Center is still available for development at this time and there is an additional 149 acres available for future expansion. Like the other two just mentioned, this industrial park is adjacent to Grand Rapids. Finally, the Town has a large undeveloped area that has been zoned for manufacturing uses for many years. This area is in Sections 2 and 11, bounded on the south by the Rapids East Commerce Center. It provides rail access and is about a quarter mile south of the four-lane Highway 54.

As is evident from this discussion, there is ample room for future industrial development in the Grand Rapids area. The business and industrial parks that are in Wisconsin Rapids and proposed for Biron offer municipal services for those manufacturing and commercial businesses and the area in Grand Rapids that is zoned for manufacturing provides a good opportunity for smaller manufacturing operations and those that need rail or four-lane access.

I. Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment oversees the investigation and cleanup of contaminated

soil or groundwater in Wisconsin and tracks these sites on what is called the Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System, or BRRTS. There are 10 Grand Rapids sites listed in the BRRTS database (Table 6-7). Six of these involved a leaking underground storage tank (LUST) or a spill, which is defined as “a discharge of a hazardous substance that may adversely impact, or threaten to impact public health, welfare or the environment.” The status of all but one of these sites is “closed.” The one that is not closed is classified as “historic,” which is a spill where cleanup may have been completed prior to 1996 and no end date is shown in DNR records.

Table 6-7: BRRTS* Sites in Grand Rapids		
Site Name & Address	Activity Type	Status
CPI Biron Biron-Govt Lot 1	LUST	Closed
South Wood County Park North Beach Road	LUST	Closed
Alexander Field 3620 1 st Street	LUST	Closed
Grand Rapids Town Garage 2410 48 th Street South	LUST	Closed
Berg, Doug Property 5110 Auburn Avenue	LUST	Closed
Alexander Air Field 3620 1 st Street South	LUST	Closed
Dirt Doctor, The (Historic Spill) 5721 N. Park Road	Spill	Historic
.1 Mi E of Griffith Ave & 16 th St	Spill	Closed
.1 Mi N of Hwy 54 & Saratoga St	Spill	Closed
Semfuel LP CTH U & CTH W	Spill	Closed
* Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System.		
LUST – Leaking Underground Storage Tank Spill - a discharge of a hazardous substance that may adversely impact, or threaten to impact public health, welfare or the environment.		
Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.		

J. Desired Businesses

In the community planning survey that was provided to all property owners in Grand Rapids, 75% of the respondents said they want to see more job opportunities in the Town. Light industrial jobs were the most desired, followed by general industry. These types of jobs would fit well in the area that has been zoned for manufacturing. Rail and four-lane access is available for industrial applications. Some survey respondents suggested locating the jobs in the existing and proposed industrial and business parks of Wisconsin Rapids and Biron. Those areas lend themselves to industrial activities that consume or dispose of a lot of water or need water pressure for fire protection. Working with those communities would be a positive activity that would benefit both the town and the city or village, as suggested by several survey respondents.

Other types of jobs that are desirable to Grand Rapids residents are retail, restaurants and medical/health. Grand Rapids has the commercial areas that can accommodate these type jobs and, in fact, have restaurants and some retail establishments in the Highway 54 corridor and near the Town offices at 48th Street and Kellner Road.

Grand Rapids residents strongly support the creation of jobs that provide a good income while protecting the Town's suburban character and environment. Supporting existing businesses to retain them and help them grow was suggested in the community planning survey, as was the idea that vacant buildings should be reused where possible.

K. Economic Development Organizational Framework

There are several economic development organizations and efforts in the Grand Rapids area. Some of the primary organizations include:

HOWBEA – The Heart of Wisconsin Business and Economic Alliance receives financial support from annual membership dues, local government funding, public and private grants, sponsorships, program revenues and more. HOWBEA serves as a first contact for business resource assistance, maintains the Wisconsin Rapids revolving loan fund, provides entrepreneurial training and either sponsors or participates in several economic development workshops each year. The Town of Grand Rapids is a member of HOWBEA.

Wood County – Under the oversight of the Conservation, Education and Economic Development Committee, Wood County participates in several economic development activities and is represented on various Boards of Directors of area economic development organizations. Wood County has a revolving loan fund that has been used successfully with area businesses, including a growing cranberry processing industry in Grand Rapids.

NCWRPC – The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, located in Wausau, provides technical assistance and compiles economic development data for its members. It also administers a regional revolving loan fund on behalf of the North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation and the North Central Advantage Technology Zone, one of eight technology zones in Wisconsin that provides Wisconsin income tax credits to qualified high technology businesses that create jobs

in the region. The ten counties the NCWRPC serves have also been formally designated as an Economic Development District by the State of Wisconsin and by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. Under this designation, the NCWRPC maintains a continuous process of planning assistance that supports the formulation and implementation of economic development programs designed to create or retain full-time permanent jobs and income. The NCWRPC provides services such as economic research, marketing, financial packaging, evaluation and analysis of public infrastructure needs that support private economic development activity, and works with local units of government to maintain eligibility for certain grants. The NCWRPC was retained by Wood County to conduct an economic feasibility study prior to dredging Lake Wazeecha in Grand Rapids in the 1990s.

Centergy – The Centergy Central Wisconsin Alliance for Economic Development was initially created in 1988 and has evolved into the strong economic development proponent it is today. Growth of this non-profit organization has resulted in the recent hiring of an executive director who has the responsibility of conducting economic development activities and looking after economic development interests in Wood, Portage and Marathon counties. The County of Wood is represented on the Board of Directors by County staff, HOWBEA staff and private business owners from the county. Centergy has conducted economic opportunity forums and studies for central Wisconsin, which have resulted in cooperative efforts in our region.

L. Competitive Strengths and Weaknesses

A community's approach to economic development is based on its competitive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Strategic planning workshops have been held for our area in recent years. Participants identified four key actions that are needed for our area to move aggressively forward in economic development. The first is regional collaboration; the development of a shared vision and common economic development goals by all regional leaders and more cooperation between municipalities to create and support a strong economic base.

Second is business innovation. The strategy here is to attract and grow new industries by developing economic incentives to draw industries capable of competing on a global, versus regional or national, scale. In addition, the strategy would include developing a support network to retain and expand local businesses. In 2008, the area has created and promoted the "Buy Local" campaign to keep sales and jobs in our community.

The third action is to develop strong and inclusive local leadership with broad based community participation and engagement. This action includes programs to encourage more people to become involved with local programs and government through leadership training, entrepreneurial training, etc.

The fourth action that was identified is the creation of a new model for education. Workshop participants identified a need to reshape the education system in the region to include entrepreneurial training beginning in the elementary school levels, long range planning to include Charter schools, and

creating a workforce collaborative to re-skill and retain our workforce.

The Grand Rapids Community Planning Survey also identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in our area. Some of the SWOT items that have been identified are listed in the following paragraphs.

Strengths

- Proximity to Wisconsin Rapids business and industrial parks and proposed Biron industrial park.
- Access to four-lane state highway and rail.
- Lower property taxes than nearby communities.
- Abundant labor force.
- Well educated workforce.
- Access to customized training at local technical college.
- Cooperative, supportive, proactive town government.
- High quality of life – abundant recreation opportunities (indoor and outdoor), safe, friendly, excellent schools, etc.
- Community support of locally owned businesses.
- Economic development incentives – County revolving loan fund, Wisconsin income tax credit program for high technology businesses, State training grants, etc.
- High quality municipal services.
- Abundant water supply for agricultural and industrial uses.

Weaknesses:

- Business climate – plant downsizings, plant closings, sale of major industries.
- Lack of municipal sanitary sewer and water.

- Proximity to Wisconsin Rapids business and industrial parks and proposed Biron industrial park.
- Intergovernmental cooperation – lack of consideration for sharing services, cooperating with joint business and industrial parks.
- Location – Fifteen miles from nearest Interstate highway.
- Lack of risk capital.
- Lack of citizen participation at the local level.
- Lack of neighborhood schools.

Threats:

- Workforce – aging workers, worker shortage.
- Brain drain – many students leave area for college education and there aren't jobs to for them to return.
- Lack of Interstate highway access.
- Global industrialization and commerce.
- Decline of the paper industry.
- State tax burden on new businesses.
- Zoning and permitting issues.
- Upper Midwest climate.

Opportunities

- Health care (clinic spin-offs – research, angel investing).
- Growth of small/medium size businesses.
- New business start-ups.
- Development/expansion of the arts and cultural programs and activities.
- Expansion of tourism and utilization of area park facilities.
- Aging population (expanded market opportunities, services).
- Green community movement.
- Growth of cranberry production and processing industry.

M. Economic Development Goals, Objectives & Policies

It is the overall objective of the Town of Grand Rapids to encourage development of small businesses in the community and to support area job retention and expansion programs to provide Grand Rapids residents the best opportunity possible to earn a living wage and to stay in the community, or to allow college graduates the opportunity to return to their hometown and have high paying jobs in their fields. Following are policies, goals and programs relating to specific utilities and community facilities.

Goal: Develop small businesses along the Highway 54 corridor.

Objectives:

- Maintain commercial zoning along the Highway 54 corridor and provide development standards that are economically feasible for small businesses and business start-ups.
- Encourage reuse of residential structures for home-based occupations, office space or small retail businesses as those structures are sold.
- Make referrals to Wood County to provide information on funding opportunities for new and expanding commercial and industrial businesses.

Goal: Develop small to medium size industrial businesses in “manufacturing” zone.

Objectives:

- Promote the manufacturing zones on the Town’s website with a location map and brief description.

- Post a list of current manufacturers that are located in Grand Rapids in the Town’s website.
- Promote the Town’s desire for new light industries in the annual newsletter to Town residents (they may have contacts with business owners in other parts of the State or nation).

Goal: Continue to participate/cooperate with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron on the development of their business and industrial parks.

Objectives:

- Publicize the fact that Grand Rapids is located immediately adjacent to business and industrial parks that have ample development opportunities and are close to the Town’s quality housing supply.
- Place a high priority on sharing of services and revenues associated with development of adjacent industrial and business parks.
- Work toward boundary agreements with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron so that the Town can properly plan for future growth and determine needs for future municipal services the Town will need to provide.

Goal: Retaining existing businesses in the Town.

Objectives:

- Develop business retention program to visit local businesses to discuss needs with which the Town may be able to assist.
 - Feature existing businesses in monthly newspaper column.
-

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

A. Purpose.

In recent years government at all levels has struggled to continue to provide expected levels of services. There are a variety of factors that have contributed to this including rising costs of labor and materials, consensus against new taxes, and increased responsibilities. As local government searches for ways to continue to provide quality services with limited resources, they are reviewing the efficiency of their service delivery, setting priorities of services, and determining which services can be provided through alternative arrangements. One alternative arrangement that government has gravitated towards in recent years is providing services by working together with other government agencies. This “intergovernmental cooperation” can be defined as two or more government agencies working together to provide services, reach common goals, or solve mutual problems.

In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation among communities can lead toward relationships that prosper based on common goals and interests, while putting aside political and boundary differences. By establishing a rapport with adjacent communities, improved communication can lead to a better working relationship that can benefit all of the communities involved. By working together, not only will they have the potential of providing services at the lowest cost, and most efficient manner, they will be better positioned to address issues of mutual interest.

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning law requires each comprehensive plan to include an analysis of “the relationship of the local governmental unit

to school districts and adjacent local governmental units and to the region, the state and other governmental units” and to identify potential conflicts between the local governmental unit and other governmental units. One purpose of this chapter, then, is to inventory existing activities in which Grand Rapids currently participates with other local units of government, the Wisconsin Rapids Public School district, Wood County, and State and Federal governments. The inventory will identify important existing cooperative activities and summarize major challenges and issues that have been identified regarding intergovernmental cooperation, including opportunities to reduce or eliminate duplication of services; incompatible goals, policies and development; mechanisms for conflict resolution; and opportunities for joint planning and decision making. This chapter will also describe major area planning issues that will or could impact Grand Rapids residents and residents of neighboring communities.

B. Existing Shared Services and Cooperative Efforts

Law Enforcement. Grand Rapids has its own police force, as described in Chapter 4. The Town is also located within the jurisdiction of the Wood County Sheriff’s Department. The County provides routine patrols in the Town and assists with calls that may require backup or that are received when no Grand Rapids officer is available. For “backup” calls, the first responding officer is usually from the Grand Rapids Police Department, with a Sheriff’s deputy providing the backup. Wood County also provides security at the annual water ski tournament at Lake Wazeecha, with Grand

Rapids being very involved in that event as they move toward a 24-hour department.

E-911 Dispatch Services. The Wood County Communications Department receives emergency calls for Grand Rapids and dispatches officers for response. Calls for the Humane Officer are dispatched through the 911 system only, not by the Town municipal staff.

Fire Services. The Grand Rapids Fire Department (GRFD) has mutual aid agreements with each of the surrounding municipalities that have fire departments. The GRFD has contracts to provide fire services to all or portions of the towns of Grant and Saratoga. The Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) is the new mutual aid system where the GRFD, if in need of additional help, can contact another fire department that will provide up to 20% of their resources to the fire department in need. This new system guarantees that the loaning fire department's community has 80% of their resources at home in case they have a fire.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (forest fire protection). A portion of Grand Rapids is located in a DNR fire protection district. If the Grand Rapids Fire Department responds to a forest or grass fire outside that area, the DNR is available to assist them through a mutual aid agreement. Conversely, if the DNR responds to a forest fire in the fire protection district, they can call the GRFD for assistance. In other words, the entire Town is covered for forest fire protection.

Wood County Park & Forestry Department. South Wood County Park, surrounding Lake Wazeecha, is owned and operated by Wood County. The Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Tournament is held at this park each

July, drawing teams and spectators from throughout the State. The logistics of this event require extensive planning and cooperation between the County's Park & Forestry Department, the Sheriff's Department, the Town Police Department, the host Aqua Skiers water ski team and other agencies throughout the community. The event has been a huge success because of the cooperative efforts.

Wood County Health Department. This department is concerned about all aspects the health of our residents. They have conducted water tests in the Town to test for nitrate levels. The Health Department has an agreement with the Town to administer shots to their employees. They also handle the public health ordinance violations that the Town cannot handle, usually indoor issues. The Town's first responders are included in the first round of drug dispensing in the event of a public health emergency, such as an influenza pandemic. The Health Department also is the lead agency for conducting inspections of all restaurants in the County, including those in Grand Rapids. Finally, the Health Department handles lead inspections for elevated blood lead levels in the Town. Residents can participate in the County's Clean Sweep program and the Town can consult with the Health Department regarding animal bites and rabies control issues.

Wood County Planning & Zoning Support. Grand Rapids has been an active participant in local planning and zoning since the 1960's when the South Wood County comprehensive plan was developed. The first Town plan was developed with the assistance of the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office in 1982. Since that time, the Town Plan Commission has maintained their zoning ordinance to provide

consistency with the comprehensive plan. County staff assisted with the 2009 comprehensive plan, meeting regularly with the Plan Commission, and attempting to coordinate boundary issues and other planning-related projects with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron. Wood County also works with the Town Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator on issues relating to private septic systems, wetlands, and floodplain and shoreland zoning. The Town works closely with Wood County's GIS Specialist to develop and maintain maps for Town planning and zoning, street maintenance, and emergency services uses.

Wood County Towns Association. The 22 towns in Wood County meet monthly to discuss common issues and provide ideas others can use to make town operations more efficient. State legislators are usually at the Towns Association meeting to provide information and alerts on activities in Madison and interact with town officials on issues and legislation of concern. Each meeting features a speaker, often from county or state agencies, to provide information on programs or to offer assistance in meeting legislative requirements. This has been a very active, quite successful organization, very valuable to Wood County's towns.

Wisconsin Rapids Public School District. All of the Town of Grand Rapids is encompassed in the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District (WRPS). The District owns land and one building in Grand Rapids, so it is in the interest of each that they communicate regarding the use of the land and building, which now houses the alternative high school. Communications are also important when reviewing new residential subdivision proposals in the Town. Street configuration is important to the school district's busses. Cul de sac

streets result in difficult bussing of students, cause traffic conflicts on through streets and can be dangerous for both the student and motorists. Each residential subdivision plat should be provided to the school district prior to approval to get the district's comments on street layout.

Mid-State Technical College (MSTC). The MSTC campus is entirely within the boundary of Grand Rapids. Students and staff travel along Town roads to access the MSTC campus. MSTC plans to develop a technology park for new businesses. This proposal will probably result in annexation of college lands and some building into Wisconsin Rapids, as well as additional traffic on Town roads. Three-way communications and planning between the City, MSTC and Grand Rapids are necessary for existing and planned campus activities.

Neighboring Municipalities. Grand Rapids has been an active participant on area-wide programs and projects that affect Town residents and businesses. The relocation and proposed extension of State Highway 54 is one example. When Highway 54 was widened to a four-lane roadway, part of it was also relocated through Grand Rapids. A study is currently underway to extend that road south to Griffith Avenue, then west to and across the Wisconsin River. Much of this relocated highway will travel through Grand Rapids (see Chapter 3). The Town Board and Plan Commission have attended meetings and will continue to do so to protect access to and the value of property in the Town.

Another example is the series of meetings that have been held between Grand Rapids and Biron officials to discuss cooperation and collaboration of services. Both know the difficulty of providing and

expanding expensive municipal services and know the value of working together to give their residents cost effective government.

It is very important that Grand Rapids and its neighbors coordinate their planning efforts. Wisconsin Rapids uses the extraterritorial plat review rights that the Wisconsin Statutes provide for the purpose of reviewing certified survey maps and subdivision plats. They review the maps and plats primarily for consistency with their official street map. They have also commented on minimum lot sizes and other requirements of their zoning ordinance that may be inconsistent with Town ordinances (Wisconsin Rapids does not use extraterritorial zoning as provided in the Statutes). The City is developing a comprehensive plan that will look beyond its borders. Coordination of the City and Town Plan Commissions is important to eliminate as many inconsistencies on the same parcels as possible. With past land use planning, such inconsistencies in boundary areas caused frustration when the two communities projected the same parcels to become different future uses.

Finally, boundary issues need to be continually addressed. Boundaries may be the most challenging of all intergovernmental issues and resolving any conflicts with boundaries can have dramatic improvements for the community. Grand Rapids has attempted to resolve boundary issues with Wisconsin Rapids on many occasions, but has been left frustrated because of what Town representatives consider being a lack of cooperation on the part of the City. Both communities must continue to strive to resolve boundary issues. The certainty that results by cooperating with boundaries can lead to more timely decision-making, greater economic opportunity, protection of natural

resources, more efficient provision of services, better planning, greater public and private investment in infrastructure, greater community identity, and an improved quality of life for residents.

State and Federal Agencies. There are, of course, many programs that are mandated by various State and Federal agencies. The Town cooperates by submitting the appropriate records and reports as prescribed by the specific programs and laws.

C. Existing Intergovernmental Regulations and Tools

Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code Chapters Comm 20 to 25 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code establish statewide construction standards and inspection procedures for one- and two-family dwellings and manufactured dwellings in Wisconsin. The Grand Rapids Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator is licensed to conduct all phases of these inspections. That person is employed by the Town and reports to the Planning Commission and Town Board on a regular basis.

Wisconsin Commercial Building Code. Uniform standards for design, installation, maintenance and inspection of commercial buildings and structures are contained in Comm 60 – 66 of the Administrative Code. This code addresses erosion control during construction; energy conservation; heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC); and fuel gas appliances as well as administration and enforcement of the code.

Wisconsin Electrical Code and National Electric Code. Chapter Comm 16 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code provides a “practical safeguard” of persons and property throughout the state from hazards arising from the installation and use of

electricity. Among other things, Comm 16 covers installation of electric and communication conductors and equipment in places of employment, within or on public and private buildings or other structures, including mobile homes and certain other structures and premises. The National Electric Code, NEC-2005, is incorporated into Comm 16 by reference and, thus, are required to be followed for electrical installations.

Wisconsin Plumbing Code. Wisconsin Statutes and the companion Administrative Code regulate the method of installation and maintenance of private septic systems. The Code is implemented through the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office. That office works with homeowners, plumbers and system pumpers on the design, installation and maintenance of septic systems. Activities are coordinated with the Grand Rapids Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator to ensure that a sanitary permit is issued prior to issuance of the Town building permit. The two agencies also work together to follow-up on complaints about failing septic systems.

Floodplain & Shoreland Zoning. Although there are not many floodplain and shoreland zoning issues in Grand Rapids, there are occasions where development is requested near Lake Wazeecha and local streams. Floodplain regulations are driven by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and channeled to the State and down to the County. Wood County participates in the flood insurance program and has cooperated with the Town on a few floodplain issues. The two cooperated on a flood fringe study on the Two Mile Creek below the Lake Wazeecha dam several years ago. That study impacted some proposed residential development in the Town that wanted to develop in the flood fringe. Other

shoreland issues arise when development is proposed within 300 feet of a stream or 1,000 feet from a lake, pond or flowage.

Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan. The Town of Grand Rapids has participated in comprehensive planning dating back to the late 1960s when the Wisconsin Rapids area developed the “South Wood County Comprehensive Plan,” or “701 Plan.” In 1982, Grand Rapids adopted a comprehensive plan for the Town, a plan that was referred to often as new development and zoning amendments were considered. This plan marks the third comprehensive plan for the Town. The Plan Commission will continue to use the plan to provide consistency with the zoning and subdivision ordinances and official map.

Town of Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance. Grand Rapids first adopted a zoning ordinance in the mid-1960s, a document that has undergone a comprehensive revision and has been amended many times to accommodate the Town’s rapids growth. The Grand Rapids Plan Commission is one of the most active commissions in the unincorporated communities. The Commission meets twice each month and typically addresses several discussion items, rezoning petitions, conditional use permits and ordinance enforcement actions.

Wood County and Grand Rapids Land Subdivision Review. Both Wood County and Grand Rapids have subdivision ordinances that require review of, among other things, newly created parcels that are 10 acres or smaller in size. Wood County will not approve a land division if the Town objects. The two jurisdictions cooperate in that the County will grant an extended review period beyond the normal 60-days in those cases where the Town is working with the subdivider on other local issues.

Extraterritorial Plat Review. The City of Wisconsin Rapids and the Village of Port Edwards exercise extraterritorial plat review as allowed by Wisconsin Statute. Wisconsin Rapids has statutory authority to review, comment on, approve or reject land division proposals within three miles of the city limits. Port Edwards can do the same for land subdivisions that are proposed within a mile and a half of the village limits. Both municipalities review proposed divisions of land that conflict with their respective zoning standards, comprehensive plans and official street maps. In a few cases, those municipalities and the County have negotiated and compromised on such things as street alignments and lot sizes.

Water Quality Management Review. Grand Rapids, Biron, Wisconsin Rapids and the Town of Grant cooperated on the development of an area wide water quality management plan. Such plans are required for cities with a population of 10,000 or more under the Federal Clean Water Act. This 20-year plan was written in 1986 and has been amended in Grand Rapids four times. Although it now needs to be updated, the chief elected officials of the participating communities have agreed to finish their comprehensive plans first so they have a better idea on future land use plans for the area.

Annexation. Wisconsin law generally places annexation power in the hands of individual property owners, making it difficult for local municipalities to control where or when annexation will occur. A landowner may petition a city or village to annex a parcel of land. Cities and villages may only react to annexation petitions, they cannot initiate them (except in the case where the territory petitioned for annexation is owned by the city or village). Chapter

66.021 of the Wisconsin Statutes outlines three procedures for petitioning for annexation. The most common involves a petition signed by owners of property that is proposed to be annexed to a city or village. A petition can also be circulated to initiate annexation. This requires signatures of a majority of electors in the territory and owners of one-half of the property either in value or land area. A petition for annexation can also be requested through a referendum election, but this requires signatures of at least 20% of the electors in the territory and is not a process that is used very often. Once a petition is received by the incorporated municipality, the local council or village board acts on the proposal. Annexation has been an issue between Grand Rapids and Wisconsin Rapids for many years, the Town feeling that the city is annexing prime properties, businesses and industrial sites, taking away from the Town's tax base, a tax base that is needed in order to afford to provide necessary services. City officials, on the other hand, recognize that the city needs to be able to annex in order to grow. There has also been an overriding policy that the city will not extend sewer and water services to areas that do not annex first, a policy that is supported by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in *T. of Halley v. City of Eau Claire*.

Detachment. Detachment is a process where territory is detached from one municipality and transferred to another. Detachment can be between cities and villages, and also between cities/villages and towns. Detachment between a city/village and a town is like the opposite of annexation and, most often, tends to involve land that is rural in nature and more appropriate for town-level government, although they have been used to resolve boundary disputes. Detachments are rare – there have been only about 40 in the State since 2002 – but it is a

tool that is available for certain circumstances.

D. Existing and Potential Conflicts

Annexation. Loss of property and tax base by annexation has created conflicts for the Town for many years. Everything from single residential or commercial lots to major subdivisions, commercial or industrial areas have eaten away at the Town's borders. On a couple of occasions in the past few decades, town officials have investigated the possibility of incorporating in order to lock their borders. Local concern is that the Town needs the tax base to provide the multitude of municipal services and loss of land, especially large expanses of land, reduces the fiscal abilities of the Town to expand or even maintain those services. Many Community Planning Survey respondents indicated a strong desire to slow down or stop future annexations. Several respondents probably do not understand the fact that property owners, not the City or the Town, have the decision to request annexations.

Boundary Development/Land Uses. The development on the east boundary of Wisconsin Rapids is coupled with conflicts about annexation just mentioned. Opinions about future land use often differ between Town officials and City officials. A boundary agreement has been discussed, but no agreement has been reached even about having an agreement.

Extraterritorial Plat Review. Wisconsin Rapids exercises extraterritorial plat review of new land divisions that fall under the requirements of the Wood County Land Subdivision Ordinance (currently 10 acres or less). Although the City's review is normally conducted to assure street alignments or utility easements, some land

divisions have been denied by the City because the new lots do not conform to City zoning requirements. The extraterritorial plat review for the City is three miles from its borders. The Village of Port Edwards also exercises extraterritorial plat review within one and a half miles of the Village limits. Where the two extraterritorial review jurisdictions overlap, the difference is split between the two. Neither Wisconsin Rapids nor Port Edwards exercise extraterritorial zoning, as allowed by Wisconsin Statutes, so they have no authority to approve or deny Grand Rapids zoning map amendments. When zoning-related comments are made during the review of land divisions, it can be confusing and cause delays in the recording of new survey maps.

Coordination of Services. There are several miles of boundary streets between Grand Rapids and its neighboring municipalities. More coordination of municipal services could probably save the municipalities money and a lack of coordination is both an existing and a potential conflict. Frustration caused by a lack of coordination and cooperation was voiced in the community planning survey, with many residents angry at the City of Wisconsin Rapids' lack of interest in working together. It's a popular belief in the Town that the Town's desire to meet with Wisconsin Rapids to discuss and take positive action on issues of mutual interest have been unsuccessful although the Town has extended an invitation to work together and has held several joint meetings with the City dating back into the 1970s.

E. Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals & Objectives

Goal: Continue cooperative participation for emergency services.

Objectives:

- Have police and fire personnel attend joint training so they can coordinate efforts in emergency situations.

- Use the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) to assist neighboring communities while maintaining protection within the Town.

- Cooperate with the E-911 dispatch center to assure rapid response to emergencies.

Goal: Continue collaborations and partnerships with neighboring communities to provide cost-effective services.

Objectives:

- Maximize effectiveness by encouraging town staff to work together with county and state staff for the conduct of inspections, reductions of health and safety violations, and monitoring new developments in the many different areas where staff can effectively work together.

- Remain active in the urban group, the Wood County Towns Association, the sewer

service area planning group and with neighboring municipalities to gain new knowledge and ideas of how to provide services in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

Goal: Become an effective voice for State initiatives that can affect the Town operations or residents.

Objectives:

- Consider participating in Central Wisconsin Days in Madison. This Centergy-sponsored event is aimed at making State legislators aware of central Wisconsin's needs. The annual two-day event brings a program of four or five issues to Madison, where participants meet with the Governor, his cabinet, and state senators and assemblymen.

- Through the Wood County and Wisconsin Towns Associations, be proactive in proposing or supporting changes in state statutes or codes that will have a positive impact on Grand Rapids.

8. LAND USE

A study of past and current land use patterns is a good way to understand why a community looks like it does and reveals growth areas, or those areas that have not grown at all. Land use changes have, more often than not, been driven by socio-economic conditions, but can be effectively guided by political decisions that are the result of desires of community residents. Regardless of why land uses changed the way they have in past years, reflecting on historic land use changes will assist the community in determining how they want their area to develop in the future.

Physical land use in Grand Rapids has been inventoried by the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office several times in the past. The inventories can be used to aid in land use analysis and planning for such things as community development projects and natural resource protection efforts. The land use inventory is important for good community management and should be updated regularly to remain current. The land use inventory is not a plan; it is part of the vital data from which plans are made.

A. Trends in Supply & Demand

(1) Historical Land Use Pattern

Unlike most Wood County towns, Grand Rapids has developed as a suburban, commuter community to the Wisconsin Rapids area employment center. More recently, many families who have income earners, one of which works in the Wisconsin Rapids area and the other who works in the greater Stevens Point area, have settled in Grand Rapids. In 2000, 16% of Grand Rapids' workers commuted to jobs outside Wood County. The fairly recent

upgrade of Highway 54 to a high-speed, four-lane facility makes Grand Rapids a good location for such families; jobs are easily accessible and lower property taxes are an inducement to live in Grand Rapids. Because many large businesses and industries require municipal sanitary sewer and water, the Town is not likely to attract major employers. Small business, however, can thrive in the town and, as such, is a good target for future development.

(2) Current Land Use & Future Expectations

The inventory used for this analysis was developed using the Land Based Classification Standards (LBCS). These standards, developed by the American Planning Association, provide a consistent method for classifying land uses based on their characteristics. LCBS refines traditional categories (i.e., residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) into multiple dimensions, such as activities, functions, building types, site development character and ownership constraints. Each dimension has its own set of categories and subcategories for classifying land uses, providing users precise control of land-use classifications. Classifications are based on field surveys, aerial photographs, topographic maps, local knowledge and other data.

For the purpose of this comprehensive plan, current land use analysis will focus on the activity dimension of LBCS. Activity refers to what is actually taking place on the land, such as farming, housing, shopping, manufacturing, etc. This is the most commonly referred to method of

defining land uses and is the most easily understood.

The map in Figure 8-1 shows the “observable activity” on each parcel in Grand Rapids and Table 8-1 summarizes what is shown on the map. It is important to remember that the “observable activity” is different from “zoning designation”. Although an entire parcel may be zoned for a specific use, the “observable activity” (eg. residential home on a 5-acre tract) may be on only a part of the parcel (i.e. ¾ of an acre with the house and mowed lawn). A description of each observable activity follows.

Residential

Residential activities fall in the 1000 LBCS code. In Grand Rapids, 2,148 acres, 18.3% of the total land area, is classified as residential. Residential development in Grand Rapids consists mostly of traditional single-family detached structures, although, according to the 2000 census, about 2% of the structures were duplexes, with a few (6, 0.2%) having more than two housing units in the structure. The 1982 comprehensive plan for Grand Rapids projected the proportion of two-family structures to increase to 2% of the total housing “to meet the needs for rental units in out-lying areas. That plan also projected the proportion of mobile homes to decline to 8.6%. Because of annexation of two mobile home parks that were previously in Grand Rapids to Biron and Wisconsin Rapids because of the need for sanitary sewer, the proportion of mobile homes actually dropped to 3.7% in 2000. Because Grand Rapids does not provide municipal sewer and water, it is likely that the Town will continue to have mostly single-family homes.

Growth in residential structures is hard to measure in Grand Rapids because of the large number of homes that have been annexed to Wisconsin Rapids and Biron in recent years. According to census figures, however, in 1980, there were 2,314 single-family structures in Grand Rapids. In 2000, there were 2,673, a difference of 359 from 10-years earlier. Since 2000, the growth has slowed, a declining rate of growth brought about by a sagging local economy; manufacturing layoffs, fluctuating interest rates, and uncertainties about the future of jobs in the area. In the eight years from 2000 through 2007, there have been 202 building permits issued by the Town for new residential construction. A somewhat disturbing fact is that the number of permits issued for new residential construction has been declining each year since 2000 (Table 8-2).

LBCS* Code	LAND USE BY ACTIVITY ON PARCEL	ACRES	PCT. OF TOTAL
1000	Residential activities	2,148	18.3%
2000	Shopping, business or trade activities	59	0.51%
3000	Industrial, manufacturing and waste-related activities	185	1.6%
4000	Social, institutional or infrastructure-related activities	252	2.2%
5000	Travel or movement activities	355	3.0%
6000	Mass assembly of people	20	0.2%
7000	Leisure activities	683	5.8%
8000	Natural resources-related activities	8,307	70.7%
9000	No human activity or unclassifiable activity	420	3.6%
TOTAL		11,746	100.0%

* Land-Based Classification Standards
Source: Wood County Planning & Zoning Office, 2004

Year	No. of Permits
2000	37
2001	31
2002	37
2003	25
2004	23
2005	21
2006	178
2007	11
Total	202

Source: Town of Grand Rapids
Building Inspector.

Commercial

The 2000-code includes shopping, business or trade activities. In Grand Rapids, there are about 59 acres that are categorized as having some type of commercial activity listed as the primary use. Most commercial uses are clustered along Highway 54, Highway 13 South (8th Street) and near the municipal building on 48th Street and Kellner Road. Additional commercial structures are located in Kellner. Most commercial uses are so close to either Wisconsin Rapids' or Biron's corporate limits that they are in jeopardy of being absorbed by those municipalities with simple annexations. The Town should consider establishing policies, such as performance standards, for commercial development. They may also want to consider setting aside an area or areas for future commercial development.

Traditional zoning separates land uses that might result in danger to health, safety and welfare. For example, a shopping center should not be located next to a school because of the traffic danger to young pedestrians. Performance zoning regulates the impacts of land uses rather than the uses themselves. For instance, in a typical R-1

single-family residential zone, convenience stores are often not allowed or may only be permitted as a conditional use. Under performance zoning, a convenience store, for example, would be allowed as long as the business met certain performance standards relating to noise, air and water pollution, size of building, and parking. This concept of mixed commercial and residential activities allows people to live and work at the same location (similar to a home occupation). Town officials may wish to consider all the advantages and disadvantages of this concept before adopting ordinance provision allowing mixed uses.

Industrial

Industrial, manufacturing and waste-related activities are identified in the 3000-level code of the land base classification standards. In Grand Rapids, nearly 185 acres is classified in the 3000-level code. Businesses include construction-related companies, self-storage facilities, warehouse and distributors, and various other "industrial" businesses.

There are no industrial or business parks in Grand Rapids, but the City's Woodlands Business Park and the East Side Commerce Park are both located immediately adjacent to the Town. In addition, Biron is proposing the development of a business/industrial park on the Village's southwest side, encroaching into and requiring annexation of acreage in the Town. The Wood County Board of Supervisors approved bonding for infrastructure development for the first phase of that park, the bonded amount to be loaned to the Village. In addition, an amount of \$1.2 million has been earmarked in the federal budget for this project. A mixed use Tax Increment Finance (TIF)

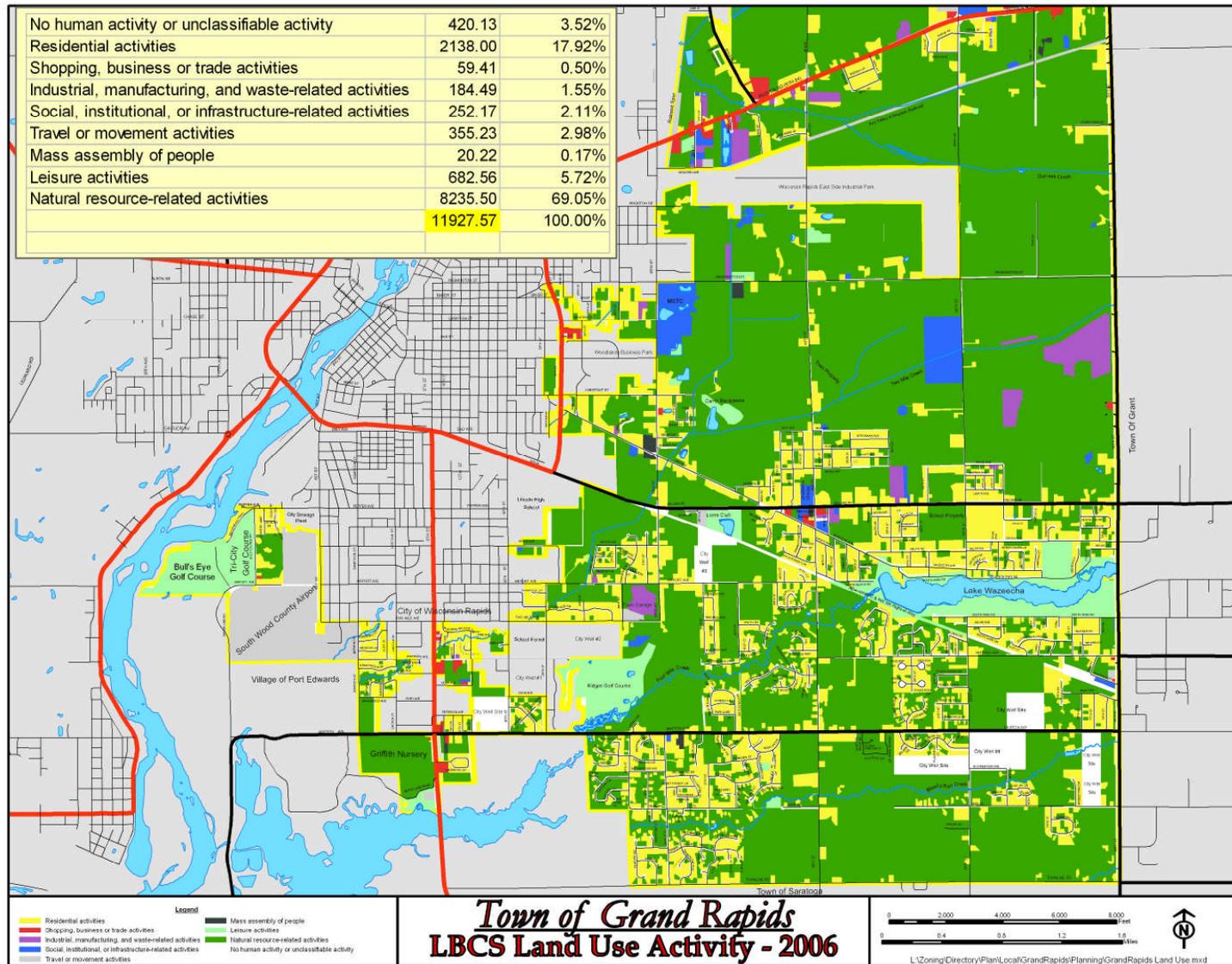


Figure 8-1

district was formed in the area a few years earlier. The Town of Grand Rapids has communicated an interest to Biron in participating in discussions regarding development of this business park and other adjacent lands that may impact the health, safety or general welfare of Grand Rapids residents and property owners.

In a recent community planning survey, 75% of the respondents support more job opportunities – light or general industrial jobs for the most part - in Grand Rapids, or for Grand Rapids residents. Nearly 40% would like to see a business park developed in the Town and 30% favor having an industrial park developed, yet another third said they wanted neither. A large majority of survey respondents (90%) said they think Grand Rapids works well with neighboring communities and many suggested that the Town work with other communities that can provide the necessary infrastructure for business and industrial parks, while preserving the resources and character of the Town.

Social, institutional or infrastructure-related

The 4000-code includes, among other things, schools and libraries, public safety-related activities, activities associated with utilities and health care or medical facilities. Grand Rapids has 252 acres coded in this area, including utility facilities, power lines, the Fire Department and a cemetery.

Transportation or movement-related

The 5000-code, travel or movement activities, includes all types of transportation systems, whether for pedestrians, vehicles (including parking), railroads, aircraft and more. The transportation code includes trucking companies, town garage facilities and some roads. In Grand Rapids, about

355 acres has been classified under this code. While no significant increase in roads is anticipated, the Town may experience small additions where new residential lots are created either by certified survey map or subdivision plat.

Mass assembly of people

The municipal building, former Children's Choice School and churches located in the Town are examples of the 20 acres of land that is categorized under the 6000-level land use.

Leisure activities

Leisure activities consume about 683 acres of the land in Grand Rapids. These 7000-level coded land uses include Lake Wazeecha and South Wood County Park, some neighborhood parks and other areas. In the community planning survey, several respondents suggested that additional trails, parks and dog parks be added in the future. As Grand Rapids continues to grow, there may be pressure to create additional community parks or neighborhood playgrounds. Because of the interest in trails, future subdivision plats should be reviewed with pedestrian-friendly facilities in mind, provided they fit into a planned community-wide system.

Agricultural and natural resources-related

Agricultural and natural resources-related activities (8000-code) in Grand Rapids include 8,307 acres. Under the LBCS, natural resources-related activities include farming activities, mining and quarrying and logging. Much of the north half of the town has shallow groundwater conditions and is included in this category as is a lot of undeveloped land area in the

southern tier of the town, including Griffith State Nursery and more.

B. Potential Conflicts

Unincorporated towns that are adjacent to growing cities and villages will inevitably have some conflicts caused by growth of the neighboring community. The so-called conflicts are often nothing more than growing pains that can be resolved fairly easily if the two communities sit down and plan the growth cooperatively. While it is necessary for cities and villages to grow in population to support their infrastructure, it is equally important that towns not lose too much population or business and industrial development too fast because they too have municipal services they are obligated to provide. When annexation takes population or business and industrial development away from towns, they also struggle to maintain their services and infrastructure. Some of the potential conflicts in the Town of Grand Rapids are listed below, along with a discussion of each and ideas as to how they might be addressed. As mentioned earlier, the Town has communicated their interest to Biron officials in participating in discussions regarding the development of boundary areas because of the potential impacts on the Town's health, safety and general welfare.

(1) Suburban Development

The Town of Grand Rapids will continue to be impacted by activities in Wisconsin Rapids and Biron for a number of reasons. First, the two neighboring municipalities are where most jobs are being created, at least by larger employers or by those who require municipal sanitary sewer and water. Both neighboring municipalities have either developed or are in the process of developing business and industrial parks adjacent to the Town. In the case of both

the city and village, annexation of land in Grand Rapids has or will likely occur to accommodate the business and industrial growth, depleting land that the Town has historically identified through earlier planning and zoning for potential industrial or commercial development. Although that is the type of land use being developed in those areas, it is not creating additional tax base for Grand Rapids.

Although the Town has lost land for business and industrial development, when new jobs are created, another impact on Grand Rapids is a demand for additional housing (see Chapter 2: Housing) and support services, primarily in the retail sector, but also to support the new business development. An example is the recent expansion of Graphics Express on Highway 54. The potential for new or expanded retail growth and new residential growth is reason to work with neighboring municipalities to attract the larger employers into the business and industrial parks.

The Town of Grand Rapids participated with Biron and Wisconsin Rapids in planning future sewer extensions for a 20-year period. In that somewhat dated plan, much of Grand Rapids was delineated to receive sanitary sewer during the planning period (Figure 4-1, Utilities & Community Facilities Element). The conflict with that thought process, however, is that neither Biron nor Wisconsin Rapids will provide sanitary sewer without annexation of the land to be served. Again, this is reason to work cooperatively with both municipalities toward a win-win development policy.

(2) Cost of Providing Services

General revenue sharing has been the topic of discussions and proposals at the state level for several years. Cuts in revenue

sharing in recent years, coupled with tax freezes, have had a drastic affect on every level of government in Wisconsin. At the town level, services that have felt the impact include fire protection, ambulance service, road maintenance, snow plowing, garbage collection and more. Many communities have entered agreements, or are contemplating agreements with their neighbors to provide or share certain services to help with the financial situation and to continue to provide essential services. Under current fiscal policies, the Town needs to continue to be innovative in this regard.

(3) Management of Private Septic Systems

All structures in Grand Rapids are served by private onsite septic systems. It is important that lots be sized adequately to accommodate the original septic system and alternate system should the original fail while, at the same time, providing a legal and safe distance from any private wells that are used for drinking water. State law requires that all septic systems, no matter when they were installed, be inspected every three years and, if necessary, be pumped by a licensed pumper and disposed of in a legal manner. Additional demand for more housing in Grand Rapids can create a conflict in preserving both the natural water resources and providing for the housing needs of those wishing to locate in the Town. Good planning policies and zoning regulations can help achieve these goals. Most residents who responded to the community survey, however, do not favor increasing the minimum lot sizes.

(4) Protecting the 'Suburban Character' of Grand Rapids

Ninety percent of the community planning survey respondents said that maintaining the Town's current landscape and suburban character is important. More than half favor less residential development in Grand Rapids (although 57% said they thought the population should be "somewhat larger") compared to 21% who want more. The challenge for the Plan Commission and Town Board is to create development policies that let the Town grow while protecting the natural resources and preserving the character that attracted the people here in the first place. The Town should continue to work with the Wisconsin Rapids and Biron on boundary and transition issues to accomplish this goal while selecting the best areas for additional residential development in areas where there may be concerns about groundwater protection or wildlife preservation.

C. Land Use Goals & Objectives

As mentioned, it is the desire of Grand Rapids' residents to retain the current landscape and suburban character of the Town, yet allow some continued growth. While retaining the current character is important, it is acknowledged that Wisconsin Rapids and Biron will continue to expand into Grand Rapids because of the improvements to Highway 54, the location of the East Side Commerce Center, the location of the proposed Wood County Business Park in Biron, and the fact that soil conditions in much of Grand Rapids will support septic systems. The overall land use objective in Grand Rapids is to plan for the new urban growth that will come from adjoining municipalities while protecting the Town's natural resources and current suburban landscape.

Goal: Work with adjacent towns, Wisconsin Rapids and Biron on boundary issues and cooperative growth management.

Objectives:

- Continue to participate in joint area planning meetings and provide input to make sound planning decisions that will accommodate new urban growth on the City's and Village's perimeters while keeping urban sprawl tendencies in check.
- Monitor proposed amendments to the area's sewer service area plan and provide input when boundary changes are proposed in Grand Rapids.
- Encourage open dialogue with the adjacent towns of Saratoga and Grant to discuss common issues regarding town issues and to for addressing those issues.
- To promote job growth, encourage development of small businesses that are compatible with neighboring properties, yet encourage larger commercial and industrial developments to locate in nearby business and industrial parks where public services, such as sanitary sewer, water and police and fire protection can be provided most efficiently and cost effectively.

Policies:

- The Town of Grand Rapids will support coordinated planned growth in boundary areas, while protecting the Town's land area and tax base.
- The Town of Grand Rapids will participate at area committee meetings that make economic development and planning decisions that impact the Town, again protecting the interests of Town residents.
- When appropriate and in the interest of Town residents, provide letters of support and participate with the Wisconsin Rapids and Biron in marketing of their industrial and business parks to larger

commercial enterprises and industrial manufacturers that require municipal services.

Goal: Preserve the Town's current landscape and suburban character.

Objectives:

- Develop and monitor the impact of zoning standards that that are designed to encourage commercial and industrial activities in the Town.
- Encourage residential development in areas that will not have a negative environmental impact on the area's groundwater, surface water and wildlife.

Policies:

- The Town of Grand Rapids will attempt to manage residential development through its future land use plan and zoning ordinance to preserve the suburban character of the Town.
 - Consider adding zones of different development densities to protect the area's resources while encouraging housing types for different economic levels.
-

Goal: Recruit developers and businesses to occupy buildings as they are vacated for various reasons, economic or otherwise.

Objectives:

- Encourage the adaptive reuse of old commercial, industrial and public buildings.

Policies:

- Streamline local permit process to aid developers meet timelines for rehabilitating or remodeling buildings for their new uses.
- Communicate with existing businesses that may be anticipating vacating their building in an attempt to attract new uses.

D. Future Land Use Plan

The previous portions of this chapter have presented a discussion on historical trends, existing land use patterns and goals that have been established, based on environmental information, Town growth expectations and the desires of Town residents as voiced in the community planning survey that preceded the development of the comprehensive plan. The Future Land Use Plan map (Figure 8-2) takes into consideration all of these factors and illustrates graphically how Grand Rapids is planned to grow for the next 20-years. It is important to note that the future land use plan map is not a zoning map, but is a depiction of the desired growth patterns for several years into the future. The Town ordinance and zoning map are the actual documents that set performance standards for each of the land uses, including setbacks, height limitations, minimum lot sizes, etc. It is also important to note that the future land use plan is dynamic and can be amended as market trends or the local economy change. The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, Ch. 66.1001, requires that the comprehensive plan be updated no less than once every ten years, but it must also be consistent with the zoning ordinance. The future land use plan map often shows some areas to be uses other than what the current use may be. That map is a blueprint for development and can be changed. The following paragraphs, along with information presented throughout this plan, help explain the reasoning behind the future land use plan categories.

Environmental Corridors

Grand Rapids has some natural resources that create difficulties for some types of development and, certainly, create areas that should not experience urban-type

development that is common in Grand Rapids. Those have been discussed in earlier sections of this plan. The future land use plan map shows the floodplains and the identified wetlands. Areas that present difficulties for dwellings with basements were also presented in Chapter 5, but this is not to say these areas can not be developed. To develop some areas may require compliance with certain federal, state, county or local restrictions.

Residential (Additional Need to 2025 = 455 Acres)

Because residential land uses in Grand Rapids rely on private septic systems and water supplies, it is not likely that large apartment or condominium complexes will develop in the Town. The Town has had considerable medium- to higher-density residential development, mainly in the south half of the Town. It is likely that there will be some in-fill in these areas and higher density in Grand Rapids is certainly not the same as in a city where municipal sanitary sewer and water make multi-family housing possible. Low-density residential development will continue in other parts of Grand Rapids – areas with large lots and areas with environmental issues such as seasonally high groundwater. Based on the housing projections that were made in Chapter 1 and assuming that land parcels for each new housing unit will consume a minimum of 20,000 square feet of land (the current minimum lot size for single-family housing), an additional 455 acres of land will be converted from some other land use – mostly from undeveloped lands – between now and the 2025. Additional acres will likely be taken as future homeowners purchase a half acre (21,780 square feet) or more.

Commercial (Additional Need to 2025 = 11 Acres)

The Highway 54 corridor has many commercial uses today and will likely

continue to develop in that manner, although it is expected that there will continue to be some residential uses mixed in with commercial. Home-based businesses may also develop and will be monitored for their impact on traffic, noise and associated issues. More home-based Internet businesses are likely to evolve as well as computer commuting technology jobs, but, because they are operated out of homes, they can not be illustrated on the future land use map. Based on the current ratio of commercial properties to population, an additional 11 acres of land will be needed for typical commercial retail and support businesses by the year 2025.

Manufacturing, Business & Technology *(Additional Need to 2025 = 35 Acres)*

Recent development of an industrial park by Wisconsin Rapids has encroached into Grand Rapids and plans for mixed use business/industrial park in Biron will also encroach into the Town. It is expected that similar manufacturing uses may occur near these two commerce centers. In fact, Grand Rapids has planned for and zoned areas for future manufacturing operations along the railroad corridor, north of the Wisconsin Rapids industrial park in Sections 2 and 11. Because of the large size of the planned (and zoned) manufacturing areas, it is not anticipated that additional lands will be needed during the planning period. Additional manufacturing areas exist in Sections 3 and 10, although there is little potential for expansion of these areas because of the level of adjacent development or because they are adjacent to the City of Wisconsin Rapids.

Mid-State Technical College is proposing to develop a technology park adjacent to the east side of the college campus in Grand Rapids. The proposal calls for development of 10 lots, each exceeding five-acres in size. Targeted occupants include

software development, data warehousing, medical and renewable and alternative energy. Their concept calls for Mid-State Technical College establishing long-term relationships with the technology park occupants to provide and sustain a ready resource of skilled technicians for job-related experiences, apprenticeships and long-term placement. This park will need city services and presents an opportunity for the City, the Town and Mid-State Technical College to share in the cost of the services and the increased tax base as up to 200 new jobs are created in technology fields. Based on the current ratio of manufacturing properties to population, an additional 35 acres of land will be needed for manufacturing uses by the year 2025. Depending on the size and type of manufacturing business that might locate in Grand Rapids, however, the acreage may vary substantially. Many large manufacturers require municipal sanitary sewer and water and, consequently, Grand Rapids lends itself toward smaller operations. The future land use plan map shows more land than is projected here because of historic zoning in the Town and the desire to preserve lands along the railroad corridor for potential manufacturers. Much of Grand Rapids' manufacturing areas are adjacent to or very near new and proposed industrial parks in Wisconsin Rapids and Biron.

Transportation

Transportation is an important issue in Grand Rapids, as pointed out by community survey respondents. First, the abandoned railroad right-of-way from 32nd Street to 80th Street provides an opportunity to improve vehicular circulation and relieve congestion on Kellner Road. It also provides a good opportunity to offer additional multiuse trails for bicycle or pedestrian commuters. Second, a major study is underway for the future extension of State Highway 54 from County

Road W, south to County Road Z (Griffith Avenue), then west, crossing the Wisconsin River to Port Edwards. As that plan is finalized, the Town of Grand Rapids needs to stay proactive because of the impact on so many properties and traffic patterns in the Town.

Alexander Field (South Wood County Airport) will remain an important asset to the area, but the expansion of the facility is severely limited. It is not anticipated that the airport will be relocated at any future time.

The Wisconsin Central Railroad parallels State Highway 54 in an easterly-westerly direction. That railroad corridor will remain important for attracting manufacturing companies to the industrial parks mentioned above. The corridor should be protected to allow for a possible expansion with a parallel track to the existing track.

Recreation & Open Spaces

The Town has one county park within its boundary and another immediately adjacent on Nepco Lake in the Village of Port Edwards. They also have private recreation areas mentioned earlier in this plan. It is not anticipated that any large recreation facilities will be developed in Grand Rapids during the planning period, nor is it anticipated that the Town will create new smaller parks or playgrounds.

Public & Quasi-Public

Public & quasi-public land uses include utility properties, school lands, municipal buildings, property owned by fraternal or non-profit organizations and used for recreation purposes (Lions Club, Girl Scouts, etc.). Several of these exist in Grand Rapids and are color-coded in a green tone.

Agricultural

It is not anticipated that agriculture will play a dominant role in Grand Rapids. The soils are not conducive to growing crops and, with continued residential development demands, the few small farms that exist will likely disappear.

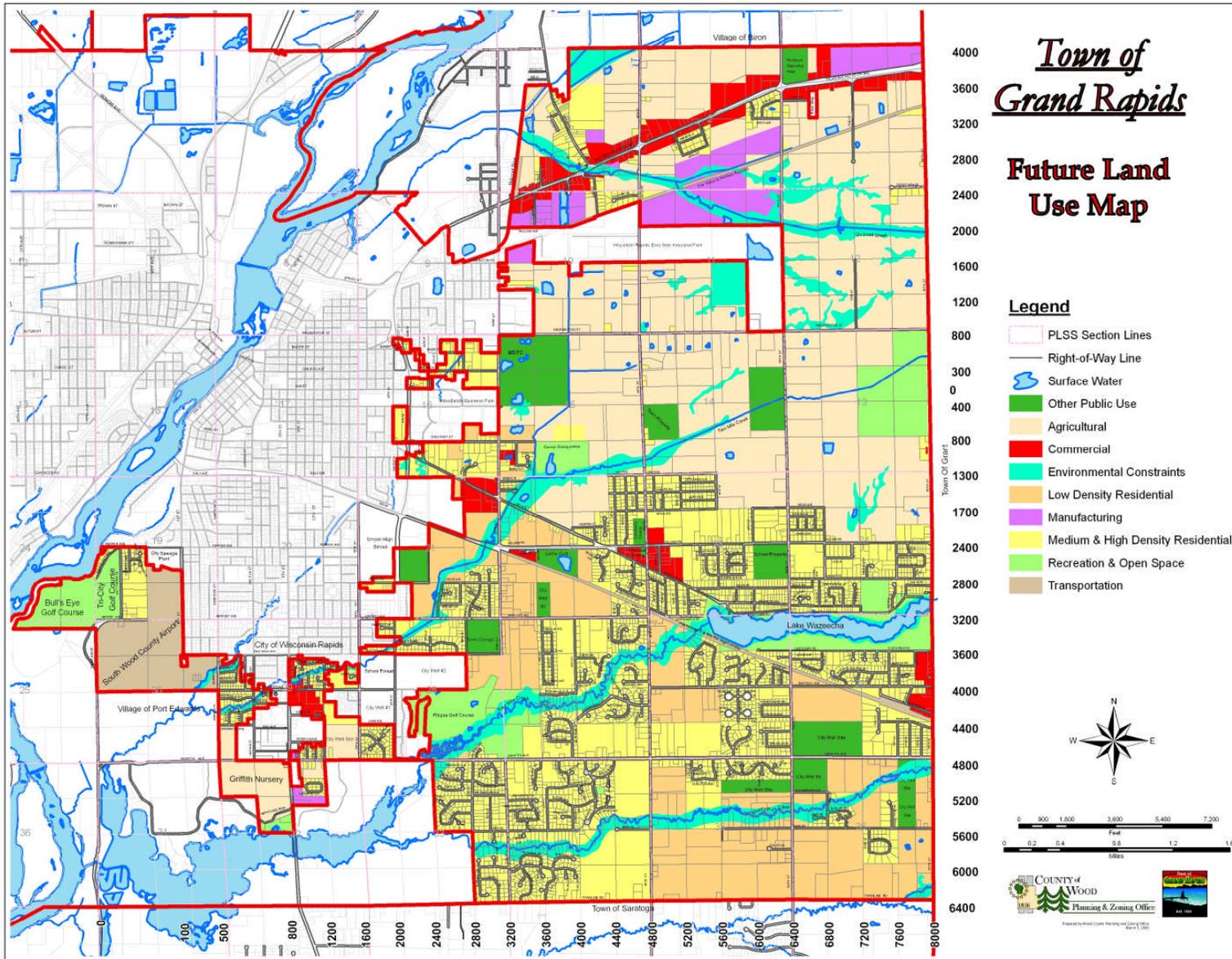


Figure 8-2

9. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Introduction

The Wisconsin planning law describes the implementation element as a compilation of programs and specific action to be completed in a stated sequence, including proposed changes to any applicable zoning ordinances, official maps, or subdivision ordinances, to implement the objectives, policies, plans and programs in the other elements. The task of this element is to describe how each of the elements of the comprehensive plan will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements and includes a mechanism to measure progress toward achieving all aspects of this comprehensive plan. A process for updating the comprehensive plan is also included as part of this element.

B. Plan Adoption

The first step toward implementation of the comprehensive plan is adoption of the plan by the Town Board. Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 provides specific procedures that are necessary to adopt the plan. As allowed by statute, the Grand Rapids Town Board has delegated the responsibility of preparing and maintaining the comprehensive plan to the Planning Commission. Upon completion of the plan, the Planning Commission will adopt a resolution by a majority vote of the entire commission before sending the plan to the Town Board for adoption.²⁵ The comprehensive plan does not take effect until Town Board enacts an **ordinance** that adopts the plan and that ordinance cannot be adopted unless the plan contains all of the elements specified by the

comprehensive planning statute.²⁶ At a minimum, a class 1 public notice is required to be published at least 30 days before the hearing is held.²⁷ Once adopted and no later than January 1, 2010, any program or action of the Town Board or its authorized commission, that affects land use shall be “consistent” with the comprehensive plan.²⁸ This statutory requirement will primarily impact the Town’s zoning ordinance, if they choose to adopt one, or any other land use-related ordinance or program that the Town may adopt.

C. Zoning Ordinance

The zoning ordinance is the most common land use regulatory tool that is used in Wisconsin communities. Zoning allows municipalities to determine how different areas of their community will be used (eg. residential, commercial, open space, etc.) and authorizes municipalities to regulate the design and placement of structures within various zoning districts. The Town of Grand Rapids first adopted a zoning ordinance in 1960s and, through the Town’s Planning Commission, has amended the ordinance as needed to reflect changes in development patterns and structures. The commission and Town Board have actively enforced the ordinance since its enactment.

The relationship between the plan and the zoning ordinance is easy to understand if one considers that the plan identifies a general pattern of desired land use development and the zoning ordinance specifies the range of conditions of use that can occur on parcels of land to be

²⁵ Chapter 66.1001 (4) (b), Wisconsin Statutes, 2003-2004.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

“consistent” with the plan. In this relationship, the zoning ordinance is clearly a tool to implement the land use recommendations of the comprehensive plan and, in Wisconsin, it is a statutory requirement.

An effective and manageable planning tool, zoning offers many possibilities for confronting the issues presented in this comprehensive plan. Natural conditions such as geology or geography are very difficult, if not impossible, to alter. Zoning is an acceptable solution because of the characteristics of the land. Fitting compatible uses with suitable natural conditions saves expense for the landowner or homeowner as well as protects natural conditions.

Zoning traditionally creates different zones, or districts, for various land uses. Each district has some clearly permitted uses and other uses requiring approval of the Planning Commission and Town Board for specific site proposals. Some uses are prohibited. Flexibility can be built into the zoning ordinance to allow for some variance in land use rules. This is important because the unique characteristics of some lands preclude them from being categorized to be used the same as other lands in a specific zoning district. For example, odd-shaped lots may preclude a parcel from meeting lot line setbacks, while the lot may, in fact, contain adequate area for development. In cases, some mixing of uses may be appropriate where the uses are compatible with one another and with neighboring properties and where neither use creates a nuisance, health hazard, safety hazard or other conflict with other nearby uses.

Grand Rapids will continue to monitor and enforce the zoning ordinance and make any changes the Town deems

necessary to assure consistency with the other elements of the comprehensive plan.

D. Subdivision Ordinance

As a comprehensive plan implementation tool, subdivision regulations attempt to minimize the creation of lots that fail to satisfy zoning or sanitary ordinances. The control of land divisions promotes the dedication and reservation of land for roadways and drainage ways. In addition, landowners benefit from an effective subdivision code by assuring that properties don't overlap when new parcels are created by metes and bounds land descriptions. Most towns rely on the County to monitor and regulate land divisions. Grand Rapids, however, has developed their own subdivision regulations and the Planning Commission effectively implements those regulations, recommending modifications as conditions change or as needed to protect the public interest. A full-time administrator of the zoning and subdivision ordinances and building code assures that the Town stays on top of any problems or new federal or state mandates. The Planning Commission will review this ordinance for consistency with the other elements of the comprehensive plan and recommend any needed changes to the Town Board.

E. Capital Improvement Program

A capital improvement program (CIP) is a plan for the capital expenditures of the Town over a period of years, usually five years. The CIP addresses the Town's capital needs that require attention during the period and helps establish priorities and financing for those needs. A capital budget is a concurrent document that outlines the plans for the expenditure of funds for capital projects. A tax impact analysis, or development impact analysis, is sometimes

used to develop the CIP and helps Town officials determine both the advantages and disadvantages of various projects or developments. Capital improvement programs are very useful, especially when the supply of money is short and the demand for services or improvements is high. The Town of Grand Rapids may want to consider developing a five-year capital improvement plan for road improvements, large equipment procurement, large improvements to municipal buildings and for other large capital outlays.

F. Official Map

Grand Rapids also has an adopted official street map. As a supporting document to a land use plan and map, the Official Street Map is a valuable tool. According to Wisconsin Statutes, "The [official] map is conclusive with respect to the location and width of streets, highways, waterways and parkways, and the location and extent of railroad rights-of-way, public transit facilities, parks and playgrounds shown on the map. The official map is declared to be established to conserve and promote the public health, safety, convenience or general welfare."²⁹

State law also allows the official street map to be used as a planning document. Section 62.23(c), of the law, allows a community to "amend the official map of the city (town) so as to establish the exterior lines of planned new streets, highways, historic districts, parkways, railroad rights-of-way, public transit facilities, waterways, parks or playgrounds, or to widen, narrow, extend or close existing streets, highways, historic districts, parkways, railroad rights-of-way, public transit facilities, waterways, parks or

playgrounds. No such changes may become effective until after a public hearing concerning the proposed change..." Grand Rapids has used their official map to preserve their ability to construct streets on forty lines throughout the Town and to preserve their ability to create a grid street system for efficient movement of traffic through the Town and for efficient movement of school buses and emergency services equipment.

G. Building Code

Grand Rapids has historically been one of the fastest developing towns in Wood County. Reasons for the popularity of Grand Rapids have been listed and discussed throughout this plan. Because of their rapid and steady growth in the past, the Town created and has maintained the position of zoning administrator/building inspector. This person enforces the land use and building codes. In 1980, Wisconsin adopted a Uniform Dwelling Code (UDC) for one- and two-family dwellings. A function of the administrator, when applying the requirements of the zoning and building codes, is to pay attention to site design. Questions regarding site design are often referred to the plan commission for further review and action. Grand Rapids has and will continue to apply the regulations of the zoning ordinance and UDC so they are consistent with the comprehensive plan.

H. Other Ordinances

The Town of Grand Rapids has many other ordinances that have been enacted for a myriad of reasons, some being land use-related, but not affected by the comprehensive planning law. Although they are not required to be consistent with the comprehensive plan, consistency between many other ordinances (junk vehicles, protecting the water supply,

²⁹ Chapter 62.23 (6) (b), Wisconsin Statute, 2003-2004.

noise regulations, speed limits, etc.) and the comprehensive plan will prove to be advantageous to the Town and will help to implement the comprehensive plan recommendations.

I. Town of Grand Rapids Planning Administration

Planning Commission

Planning commissions in Wisconsin are created by town ordinance under s. 62.23, Wisconsin Statutes. The ordinance may create a 7-member commission³⁰, or, if the town is under 2,500 population, a 5-member commission.³¹ The town chairman appoints the members and chooses the planning commission chair. Elected and appointed town officials may be appointed to the commission. There must, however, be at least three citizen members who are not town officials on the 7-member commission and one citizen member who is not a town official on the 5-member commission.³²

The Town of Grand Rapids has a five-member planning commission with two alternate members. The commission meets twice monthly to consider rezoning requests, conditional uses, ordinance violations, text and map amendments, land divisions, consistency between the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance and the official map and various other planning-, zoning- and building code-related issues.

The relationship of the planning commission and the town board is important. The town board in Grand Rapids is a five-member, elected body that is

primarily a policy-making body charged with conducting the Town's affairs. The planning commission, on the other hand, is an appointed body, whose responsibility includes developing a community development plan and measures to implement that plan. Many of the planning commission's recommendations are forwarded to the town board for approval or adoption. A planning commission, therefore, functions in a more objective (versus political) manner than the town board, but must realize that, in developing plans and ordinances, it operates within a political system where the town board makes the final decision. Put another way, the appointed planning commission removes, in theory, politics from the planning and zoning process.

The planning commission is of great assistance to the town board by involving citizens and developing expertise in planning, which can be a time-consuming and controversial undertaking, thereby freeing the town board to carry out its other functions. The planning commission is an appointed body whose policy-making function is advisory-only to the town board. If the town board chooses to delegate additional powers to the planning commission, beyond advisory powers, it may do so. For example, the town board may allow the planning commission to issue conditional use permits under town zoning and allow it to approve subdivision plats.

The Grand Rapids Planning Commission has a good working relationship with the Town Board, which is essential for implementing land uses that are in the public interest. The existence of an adopted comprehensive plan and implementation measures depends upon both bodies – the planning commission to develop the proposals with public support

³⁰ Chapter 62.23 (1), Wisconsin Statutes, 2003-2004.

³¹ Chapter 60.62 (4), Wisconsin Statutes, 2003-2004.

³² Chapter 60.62 (4) (b) and (c), Wisconsin Statutes, 2003-2004.

and the town board to support the effort and ultimately adopt the legislation and implementation programs.

Planning Commission Powers and Duties

The powers and the duties of the planning commission are spelled out in state statutes and applicable town ordinances. A chief task of the commission is to develop the town's comprehensive plan, pursuant to the specifications of Chapter 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. That statute requires the planning commission ("or other body of a local governmental unit that is authorized to prepare or amend a comprehensive plan"³³) to solicit citizen participation and intergovernmental communication and coordination in developing the community's plan. The planning commission oversees coordination and development of the comprehensive plan and, once completed, forwards the plan to the town board by formal resolution.

After the comprehensive plan is adopted, the zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance and official map are to be reviewed and amended to reflect the goals, objectives, policies and programs of the plan (to provide consistency between the plan and the land use regulations). In Grand Rapids, updating and maintaining the zoning ordinance is another function that the Town Board has delegated to the Planning Commission.

J. Plan Amendments and Monitoring

The plan amendment process can be as important as the initial development and adoption of the plan. Monitoring those changes is also important. Monitoring changes can assist the Planning Commission

and Town Board to assure consistency in the application of standards and in proposing changes to either the text or the future land use map. The following process is used in Grand Rapids for amending the plan and monitoring changes.

Plan Amendments

The comprehensive plan is a dynamic document; as conditions change in the Grand Rapids, the plan will change. In addition, the Wisconsin planning law requires that comprehensive plans that are created under the statute be updated "no less than once every 10 years."³⁴ An example of why a comprehensive plan would need to be amended, or updated, might include changing economic conditions in the area – if a new manufacturer chooses to locate in the Town or urban area, there may be demands for new roads or highway access. An aging population demanding different types of housing or a change in the types of municipal services is another example. A major change to the local transportation system is yet another example of when the plan may need to be updated. Grand Rapids officials, along with representatives from surrounding communities, Wood County and the local office of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, are investigating the possible extension of State Highway 54 from its current intersection with County Road W, south to Griffith Avenue (County Road Z), then west, crossing the Wisconsin River to the Village of Port Edwards. To implement this proposal will impact existing residential and commercial developments, may impact municipal well fields, could have an impact on the local airport, and will result in changing traffic patterns through Grand Rapids.

³³ Chapter 66.1001 (4) (a), Wisconsin Statutes, 2005-2006, page 535.

³⁴ Chapter 66.1001 (2) (i), Wisconsin Statutes, 2005-2006, page 535.

Town officials must be ready to react to changing conditions in the community by amending the plan to reflect changes. Care must be taken, however, not to amend the plan as a routine or the process may lose its importance in the community development process. It is important to establish local planning goals, review those goals on a regular basis and develop objectives that will help the decision makers achieve community planning goals.

The amendment process is rather straight forward (the flow chart on the last page shows the process for amendments). The first step can be either a petition to the Planning Commission from a town resident or property owner or a proposal by the Planning Commission or Town Board. The petition can be for either a change in the plan's text, such as a change in goals or objectives, or a change to the future land use map. Remember, the zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance and official street map must be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

The second step is review of the petition or proposal by the Planning Commission. Their review can include visiting the site, meeting with the petitioner to discuss the reason for the request, obtaining professional planning assistance or a legal opinion, or meeting as a commission to discuss the merits of the proposal.³⁵ Third, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation, in writing, to the Town Board. The Town Board will then publish a notice for a public hearing and hold a hearing on the proposal to get input from any interested persons. They should keep a written transcript or, at the very least, detailed minutes of the testimony.

Following the hearing, the Town Board will make a decision in the form of a motion to amend the comprehensive plan. The Board can make a decision immediately following the public hearing or they can set a time to meet later to make the decision, allowing additional time to receive written testimony about the proposal. The Board's options are to accept the recommendation, modify it, deny it, or send it back to the Planning Commission for further study. They should provide the petitioner a copy of the decision in writing. If the petitioner is not satisfied with the decision, he can submit an entirely new petition, submit a petition with revisions to the original proposal, appeal the decision to the Circuit Court, or do nothing. Of course, the petitioner also has the option of rescinding the petition at any time during the process.

Monitoring

Monitoring changes over time is also relatively easy and important. Changes can be documented simply by maintaining a file of each change, including copies of the:

- petition for amendment or minutes of the Planning Commission meeting where an amendment was initiated,
- minutes of all Planning Commission meetings where the proposal was discussed,
- Planning Commission's written recommendation to the Town Board,
- notice of public hearing,
- public hearing transcript or detailed minutes of the hearing,

³⁵ All meetings of plan commissioners must comply with the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law.

- decision of the Town Board, including their rational or justification for their decision,
- notice to petitioner of Town Board decision.

In the past, these files have been maintained in a safe place in case the decision is challenged by either the petitioner, in the case of a denial, or by

someone who opposed the amendment proposal. They will continue to be carefully maintained by Town staff in the future. Included in the individual files are reasons for the Planning Commission's and Board's decisions regarding specific cases. These files will prove useful when a comprehensive review of the plan is done in ten years (or sooner) from adoption.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

