

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Town of Deerfield, located in western Waushara County, lies in central Wisconsin west of the City of Wautoma. Concerned about the impact that development may have on the town, the Deerfield Town Board and Waushara County entered into an agreement with East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) to prepare a community management plan. The community management plan was used as the basis for this comprehensive plan and the content of the existing conditions report of this comprehensive plan is primarily from the community management plan.

One of the first steps in the planning process was soliciting input from all town residents. The community management committee along with ECWRPC prepared a survey that was distributed to all property owners within the Town of Deerfield. The results indicated that preservation of farmland, wetlands, forestland and open space, and small businesses opportunities were supported by over seventy percent of all respondents. A summary of the Town of Deerfield's survey results are presented in Volume Two, Appendix A, a full report is available separately.

Another early step in the planning process was the SWOT analysis. During the SWOT analysis, the Deerfield planning committee was asked to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the town. This exercise was intended to provide the committees with a better understanding of their perception of the community and some of the issues that the community faces. According to the SWOT analysis, the committee felt that recreational land and an adequate water supply were the greatest strengths that the community offered, while benefits would be gained from a sewer system around the lakes, better enforcement of building codes and environmental regulation (enforcement) of the town's lakes. There is an opportunity to preserve what already exists, practice sustainable forestry and educate residents about farmland preservation and trusts. The committee felt that the greatest threat that the town faced was unregulated development, pollution of the lakes and air and forest diseases.

HISTORY

Settlers began to inhabit the western part of Waushara County, in what is now the Town of Deerfield, in the mid-1850's. The town was named Deerfield in honor of an old New England town and because of the deer seen playing in the fields in the mid-1850's. Rich in history, the town was once home to Native Americans. Evidence of its early history are still seen today near the White River Millpond. Two Indian Mounds can be found in this area, as well as the remains of an earthen enclosure, traces of an old campsite, the grave of Big John, a local Indian chief of some distinction, and a cluster of small pits that may have been used to store food. An old grist and flour mill, known as Cox's, could also be found in this area in the 1860's as well as a school house. During the 1920's, the Dahlke Company of Neshkoro intended to build a dam on the millpond to generate electricity. While this project wasn't successful, it did raise the water level enough to support the many summer and permanent residences that exist on the pond today.

The current town hall, built around 1894 as a basic 50 by 20 feet was enlarged in 1938 to include a stage area and basement. In the early 1990's, when the building needed major repairs, the town decided to restore the town hall instead of replacing it with a new structure. The town hall was completed in time to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 1993, after undergoing extensive restoration to restore it to a decorum that was present at the time that it was originally built.

OVERVIEW

The Town of Deerfield is approximately 36 square miles, and its 2000 population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, was 629. In 1990, 174 occupied housing units out of a total of 360 total housing units (161 seasonal units) existed in the town. By 2000, the number of occupied housing units had risen to 260 and the number of total housing units to 492 (206 seasonal). In 1990, over 90 percent of the town's housing stock was comprised of single family units.

The majority of Deerfield's residents were employed in the service sector in 1990. The service sector is made up of many different categories, with educational, health and social services (25%) and other services (17%) employing the largest percentage of workers from this sector. Comprising a smaller percentage of Deerfield's workforce and not included in the service sector were manufacturing (16%) and agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining (17%). Census information indicates that Deerfield's residents are primarily working in Waushara County. Preliminary data indicates that in 2000, 72 percent of residents worked within Waushara County and 35 percent of the workers traveled between 10 to 19 minutes to work.

Utilizing responses from the survey and visioning process as well as the inventory of the demographic makeup and physical characteristics of the Town of Deerfield, the committee drafted goals, objectives and recommendations to guide the town and county when making future land use decisions. The plan's goals and recommendations were categorized by major land use topic areas which included community growth and residential development, natural and cultural resources, agriculture, transportation, community facilities and services, commercial and industrial development, and intergovernmental cooperation. Recommendations or implementation statements spell out more specific activities and techniques which potentially could be used by the town and county to implement the town's vision. A proposed land use map (Exhibit 5-1) was developed that represents, to some degree, the ultimate vision for the town's physical layout over the next twenty years. A summary of the plan's recommendations which require specific follow-up tasks is contained in Table 5-1.

The Code of Country living

Living in the country can be a wonderful way of life-if your expectations are in line with reality. Reality seldom measures up to the romanticized version of almost any idea of ideal – as is frequently discovered by those who move from an urban setting to the country. People often intend to get away from it all and enjoy the serenity of an agrarian countryside. What they are likely find, however, is that they are trading the benefits and draw backs of city living for those of the country.

In rural Wisconsin you'll find working farms. You'll also find a level of infrastructure and services generally below that provided through the collective wealth of an urban community. Many other factors too, make up the country living experience very different from that what may be found in the city.