

Chapter 4:

Utilities and Community Facilities

Utilities and community facilities, provided by either public or private entities, are critical for community development. Utilities include things such as electrical service, natural gas, telephone, cable, and internet. Community facilities include local government buildings, libraries, educational facilities, and maintenance and storage facilities, as well as services like police, fire protection, and emergency medical services.

The efficient utilization of these resources is one of the basic principles of comprehensive planning. Existing infrastructure is a public asset that must be safeguarded for the future, both to conserve and protect environmental values and to maximize the benefits of economic growth. Development that does not acknowledge or integrate existing infrastructure resources is wasteful of the public investment that they represent. Development patterns that require the extension of utilities and the expansion of public facilities while existing facilities go unused at other locations is likely not the best use of public resources. The Utilities and Community Facilities Map provides detailed information about the inventory throughout the Town.

PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

Wood County All Hazards Mitigation Plan, 2020

This plan examines general conditions, including an inventory of utilities, community facilities, and emergency services throughout Wood County. Risk assessment is at the heart of the all-hazards mitigation program. To mitigate the risks, it is necessary to assess their relative importance. The report looks at a series of mostly weather-related disasters; how they have affected the county in the past and how future instances are likely to affect the county and how local government should respond to such occurrences.

The report concludes with suggested mitigation measures that might be taken by local governments to reduce the risk from identified hazards. Counties and incorporated municipalities are required to adopt such plans with updates every five years.

Wood County Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Plan, 2018

The primary purpose of the Wood County Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Plan is to guide and accomplish a coordinated and harmonious county recreation system. It serves as a guide for the decision making of recreation providers, elected officials, and stakeholders for the five-year planning period. This enables the highest and best use of county resources, including natural resources, manufactured resources, and financial resources.

UTILITIES

Water Service

The Town of Saratoga does not have a public water supply system. Instead, private wells supply the water for public and private facilities within the Town. Concerns exist over water quality as properties continue to develop. The Town has an educational program for homeowners with private wells regarding annual testing and monitoring.

Wastewater

There is no public sewer system in the Town of Saratoga. Therefore, all development in the Town uses on-site septic systems that discharge to underground drainage fields and may include conventional (underground), mound, pressure distribution, at-grade, holding tank, or sand filter systems. There is growing concern about water quality and ability to site new septic systems on limited lots as older systems are phased out. There has also been concern about development in the northeastern portion of the Town where water tables are high. Wisconsin Administrative Code regulates these on-site wastewater treatment systems. The Wood County Planning and Zoning Office administers the program locally and issues permits, as well as inspection. Over the years there has been some discussion with the Town of Rome related to their desire to connect to a wastewater plan in the Wisconsin Rapids area, which would require a sewer pipe to run through the Town of Saratoga.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Private haulers provide container pick up of garbage and recycling for businesses and residents in Town. The Town maintains a transfer station for solid waste, recycling, and yard waste, which is available to all Town residents.

Energy and Telecommunications

Electric and Natural Gas

Electric services are provided by Adams-Columbia Electric Cooperative and Alliant, and natural gas service is provided by WE Energies. Both Solarus and Charter Communications provide telephone, television, and internet service in the Town. There are two communication towers located within the Town.

Two solar facilities are in the Town. The 150-Megawatt Wood County Solar – Project 1 will be operated by Alliant Energy when complete, located between CTH Z and STH 13 north of Blue Ridge Ln. Saratoga Solar – Project 2 has been proposed as of 2022 by Savion, the same developer as Wood County Solar – Project 1. This 150-Megawatt project takes advantage of the newly upgraded 138 kV transmission line in its location immediately to the east of Project 1, straddling STH 13. The area has some of the highest solar potential in Wisconsin. Project 1 sits on about 1,600 acres while Project 2 is approximately 1,900 acres. Combined, both facilities are expected to generate \$42 million over 35 years for the Town and the County. See the Utilities & Community Facilities map.

Cable/Internet

Several companies provide high speed internet service throughout Wood County including Frontier, HughesNet, Solarus, Spectrum, Viasat, and TDS. Speeds vary throughout the county. In 2021, Wood County was awarded a Public Service Commission broadband grant that will greatly expand the speed and quality of broadband service throughout Wood County.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Town Operations

Town Hall

The Saratoga Municipal Building, built in 2003, serves as the Town Hall and is located at 1120 WI-73, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494. The Town Board consists of a Chair and four Supervisors. The Town Board meets twice each month while the Town Plan Commission meets monthly. There is also a Town Assessor, Building Inspector, Constable, Clerk, Treasurer, and a Zoning Administrator.



Saratoga Town Hall - 2021

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The Wood County Sheriff's Department provides police protection in the Town of Saratoga. They patrol all county roads and respond to 911 calls. In addition, the Wisconsin State Highway Patrol provides some patrol, mainly on state and federal highways. There are no police facilities located within the Town.

Fire

The Town does not maintain its own fire department, but contracts with the Towns of Grand Rapids and Rome and the City of Nekoosa Fire Departments. Fire stations are located in those communities.

Ambulance

The Town maintains a volunteer Emergency Services first response unit. The Town contracts with various entities for Ambulance Service.

Medical Services

The nearest hospital is Aspirus Riverview Hospital located in Wisconsin Rapids. The 45-bed facility provides full medical services. A 12-bed hospital is being constructed by Marshfield Clinic in the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Marshfield Clinic and Aspirus Clinic are also located within Wisconsin Rapids.

Cemeteries

There are two cemeteries in the Town. Greenhill/Pioneer Cemeteries at 504 Heminger Court and 4810 Townline Road. Wisconsin Statute 157.70 provides for the protection of all human burial sites, including all marked and unmarked burials and cemeteries. Minimum acreage requirements exist for cemeteries established on or after November 1, 1991, unless a cemetery is owned by a religious association, or the Town enacts an ordinance allowing new cemeteries of less than 20 acres to be constructed.

Childcare Facilities

Currently, there are no licensed childcare facilities located within the Town of Saratoga.

Education

Primary and Secondary Schools

The Town of Saratoga is located within both the Nekoosa and Wisconsin Rapids School Districts. The Nekoosa School District operates one elementary, one middle, and one high school, as well as the Nekoosa Academy, Central Wisconsin STEM Academy, and WISE Academy. These schools serve the five municipalities: Armenia, Rome, Saratoga, Port Edwards, and Nekoosa. The Wisconsin Rapids School District operates multiple elementary schools, one middle school, two high schools, and two academies. Assumption Catholic Schools operates a K-12 school system and Good Shepard Lutheran Church operates a K-8 school. These private schools also serve the area.

Post-Graduate Education

Mid-State Technical College is a public two-year technical college with four regional campuses, one in Wisconsin Rapids. They offer degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in a variety of high-demand career fields designed to meet local workforce needs. UW- Stevens Point located in Stevens Point offers 4-year bachelor's degrees as well as master's degrees.

Libraries

McMillan Library in Wisconsin Rapids and Charles & Jo Ann Lester Library in Nekoosa serve the Town. Wood County provides some financial support of these organizations.

Recreation

Parks

There are some DNR natural areas located along Ten-mile Creek that provide some recreational opportunities. There is also a canoe launch at Point Basse and a boat launch at Devil's Elbow. Recently, there has been some discussion related to the development of some additional park and boat/kayak launch facilities near Lake Nepco and along Petenwell Flowage. An outdoor recreation plan is being developed by the Town to address this issue in more detail.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Goals:

1. Maintain high quality Town services and facilities.
2. Guide new growth to areas that are most efficiently served by utilities.
3. Provide recreational opportunities in the Town.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that public and private utilities are constructed and maintained according to professional and governmental standards and do not detract from the rural character of the Town.
2. Annually evaluate the condition of the Town Hall and Garage as well as associated equipment to ensure that it will continue to meet Town needs.
3. Monitor satisfaction with local emergency services, and other utility or community services, and seek adjustments as necessary.
4. Maintain and expand the bike routes and other trail network in the Town.

Policies:

1. Sanitary Sewer – Density and minimum lot sizes should be managed allowing adequate space for replacement of private on-site sewage systems. Continue working with Wood County to ensure that existing private septic systems are adequately maintained and inspected on a regular basis, and that new private septic systems are designed, constructed, and inspected according to WIDNR and Wood County regulations.
2. Water Supply - Encourage landowners with private wells to properly maintain and monitor their wells through inspection and water testing as necessary or required by WIDNR regulations. Landowners with private wells that are no longer in use shall properly close and abandon wells according to Wisconsin DNR regulations.
3. Stormwater Management – Control stormwater quality and quantity impacts from development. Maintain natural drainage patterns, as existing drainage corridors, streams, floodplains, and wetlands can provide for stormwater quality and quantity control benefits at no cost to the community. Direct that developers be responsible for stormwater quality and quantity control both during and after site preparation and construction activities. Collaborate with other jurisdictions as necessary to enforce stormwater management and erosion control ordinances.

4. Solid Waste & Recycling – Provide solid waste collection, disposal and effective recycling services that protect public health and the natural environment. Annually review levels of service provided by the contracted solid waste disposal and recycling carrier and meet with them to address any concerns raised by residents or local businesses. Hazardous materials shall be disposed of properly.
5. Parks - Evaluate the need for recreational or natural preserve areas in the Town and work with Wisconsin River Power Company, WIDNR, City of Nekoosa, Village of Port Edwards, and Wood County as necessary to develop and maintain these areas if established.
6. Utilities - Ensure the provision of reliable, efficient, and well-planned utilities to adequately serve existing and planned development. Actively participate in the planning and siting of any major transmission lines, facilities, natural gas lines, or telecommunication towers. If such facilities are proposed, they should be located in an area safely away from existing residential uses. In addition, such uses shall be sited and designed to minimize impacts on adjacent uses. Underground placement and co-location for new public and private utility facilities is encouraged. Above ground utilities shall incorporate site, design, and landscaping features that minimize impacts to adjacent uses.
7. Cemeteries – Collaborate with local churches, the City of Nekoosa, and the Village of Port Edwards regarding the need for additional cemeteries or cemetery expansion.
8. Special Needs Facilities – Work with the City of Nekoosa, Village of Port Edwards, and Wood County to maintain and improve access to special needs facilities (i.e. health care, childcare) for Town residents. Actively participate in the planning of any new special needs facility.
9. Emergency Services - Work with the City of Nekoosa, Village of Port Edwards, Wood County, Nekoosa Fire District, Rome Fire District, and the Grand Rapids Fire District to maintain adequate provision of emergency services (i.e. fire, police, EMS, first responders) for Town residents and businesses, and review service provision levels with the appropriate agencies annually.
10. Schools - Collaborate with the Nekoosa & Wisconsin Rapids School Districts to provide high quality educational facilities for Town residents. Actively participate in the planning and siting of any new school facility.
11. Libraries - Work with Wood County to maintain and improve access to public library facilities for Town residents. Actively participate in the planning and siting of any new library facility.