



**Town of Stella  
Comprehensive Plan  
2022**

# Town of Stella Comprehensive Plan

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Prepared with the Assistance of the:

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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# Chapter One

## Demographics

This chapter reviews the demographics of the Town of Stella and identifies the major trends impacting the Town over the next few decades. Both Oneida County and the State of Wisconsin, as well as several of the communities that surround the Town, are presented for comparison.

### Background

The Town of Stella is located in the eastern quarter of Oneida County Wisconsin. The Town measures approximately six miles by six miles square and is bounded by the Towns of Monico, Pelican, Piehl, Pine Lake, Sugar Camp, and Three Lakes. The Town contains one unincorporated community known as Starks and is a short distance east of the City of Rhinelander, County Seat of Oneida County.

### Planning Process

In the spring of 2022, the Town initiated a process to update its plan. The state planning law – 66.1001 – requires that a comprehensive plan be updated every ten years. A variety of Planning Commission meetings were held over the course of 2022 to prepare the plan. A final Planning Commission meeting was held in the fall of 2022 to review the final draft and recommend adoption of the plan by the Town Board. The plan was adopted by the Town Board on December 13, 2022.

### Public Participation

An important part of any planning process is public involvement. Public involvement provides the citizens of the Town an opportunity to express their views, ideas, and opinions on issues that they would like addressed regarding the future development of their town. Local officials use this input to guide policies and decisions with greater awareness of the public's desires and consensus. See the adopted Public Participation Plan in **Appendix A**. The Town of Stella posted all Planning Commission meetings to invite the public and held a Public Hearing to collect public input.

## Demographics

### Population Trends and Forecasts

The estimated 2020 population for the Town of Stella provided by the American Community Survey is 588 people. As shown in **Table 1**, the Town has experienced a steady decline in population since 2000, with population decreasing by over seven percent between 2000 and 2020. During this time, the Town decreased at a faster rate than most of the surrounding communities, as well as Oneida County, which experienced a decline in population of only 2.5 percent in comparison.



**Table 1: Population**

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2000-20 Net Change	2000-20 % Change
Town of Stella	633	650	588	-45	-7.1%
Town of Monico	364	309	347	-17	-4.7%
Town of Pelican	2,902	2,764	2,739	-163	-5.6%
Town of Piehl	93	86	90	-3	-3.2%
Town of Pine Lake	2,720	2,740	2,726	6	0.2%
Town of Sugar Camp	1,781	1,694	1,954	173	9.7%
Town of Three Lakes	2,339	2,131	1,820	-519	-22.2%
Oneida County	36,776	35,998	35,840	-936	-2.5%
Wisconsin	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,806,975	443,300	8.3%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2016-20

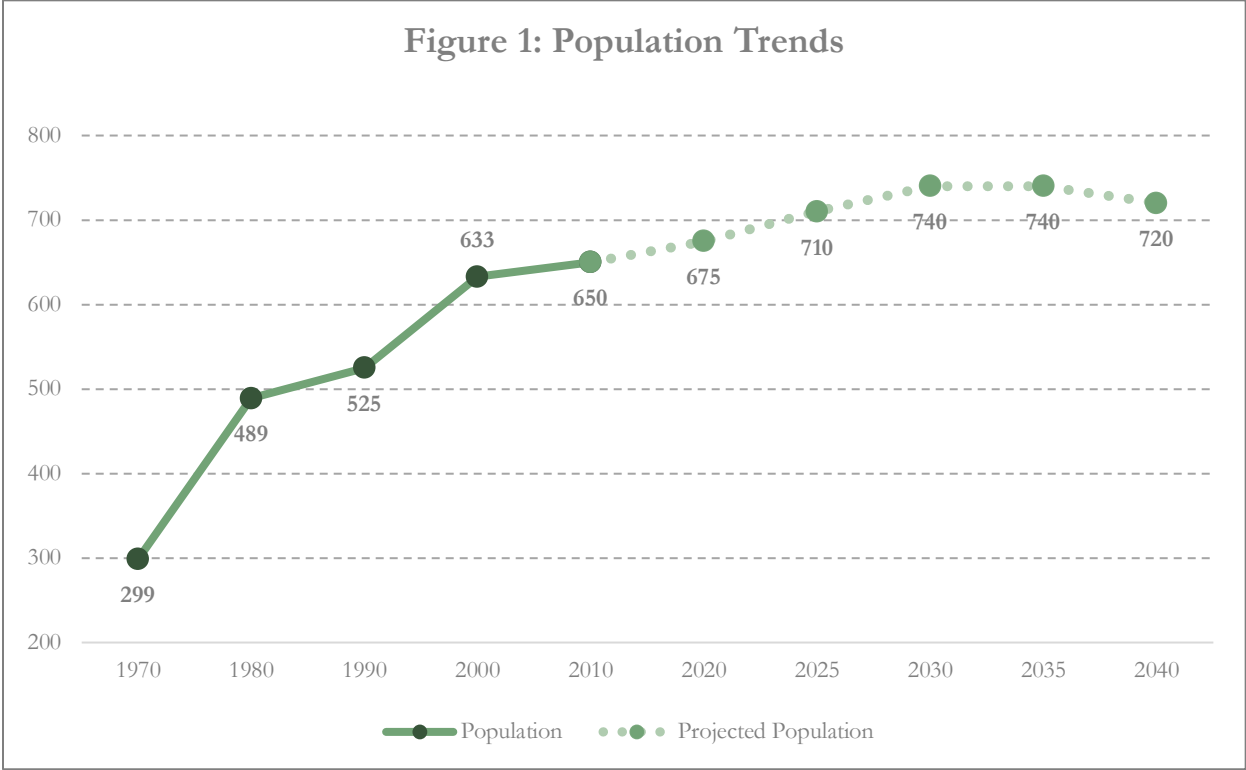
State population projections were completed in 5-year increments between 2015 and 2040, as shown in **Table 2**. According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA), the population in the Town of Stella is projected to experience a 6.7 percent increase in population between 2020 and 2040. In comparison, Oneida County is projected to only increase by about 3.3 percent during this time.

**Table 2: Population Projections**

Minor Civil Division	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2020-40
Town of Stella	675	710	740	740	720	6.7%
Oneida County	37,265	38,905	39,985	39,745	38,500	3.3%
Wisconsin	6,005,080	6,203,850	6,375,910	6,476,270	6,491,635	8.1%

Source: WDOA Population Projections 2013

**Figure 1** displays the population trends in the Town of Stella from 1970 to the projected population in 2040. The Town's population has significantly increased over time, as the Town's population has more than doubled since 1970, growing from 299 residents in 1970 up to 650 residents in 2010. Population within the Town is projected to steadily increase over the next two decades, as the Town's projected 2040 population of 720 residents represents a 6.7 increase in population from the 2020 population.



### Household Trends and Forecast

There were 237 households within the Town of Stella in 2020, similar to the total number of households in 2000 when there were 236 households within the Town, as shown in **Table 3**. In comparison, the number of households in Oneida County experienced an increase of about 2.2 percent during this time. Average household size in the Town of Stella was 2.48 persons in 2020, down from an average household size of 2.68 in 2000. In comparison, Oneida County had an average household size of 2.29 in 2020, down from an average household size of 2.40 in 2000.

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2000-20 Net Change	2000-20 % Change
Town of Stella	236	263	237	1	0.4%
Town of Monico	128	127	178	50	39.1%
Town of Pelican	1,167	1,183	1,108	-59	-5.1%
Town of Piehl	39	41	47	8	20.5%
Town of Pine Lake	1,063	1,136	1,182	119	11.2%
Town of Sugar Camp	708	729	822	114	16.1%
Town of Three Lakes	1,031	996	887	-144	-14.0%
Oneida County	15,333	16,003	15,677	344	2.2%
Wisconsin	2,084,544	2,279,768	2,377,935	293,391	14.1%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2016-20

Like population, household projections were completed in 5-year increments between 2010 and 2040, as shown in **Table 4**. The number of households was calculated by dividing the total population for each 5-year increment by the projected average persons per household.

Like the population projections, the WDOA household projections are recognized as Wisconsin’s official projections in accordance with Wisconsin State Statute 16.96 and are based on the historical population trends of individual communities. Assuming that population within the Town grows over the next two decades, the number of households is projected to increase by 27 households, or a 9.6 percent increase between 2020 and 2040. This is a faster increase than Oneida County’s projected increase of 5.3 percent and slower than the State’s projected increase of 12 percent during this time.

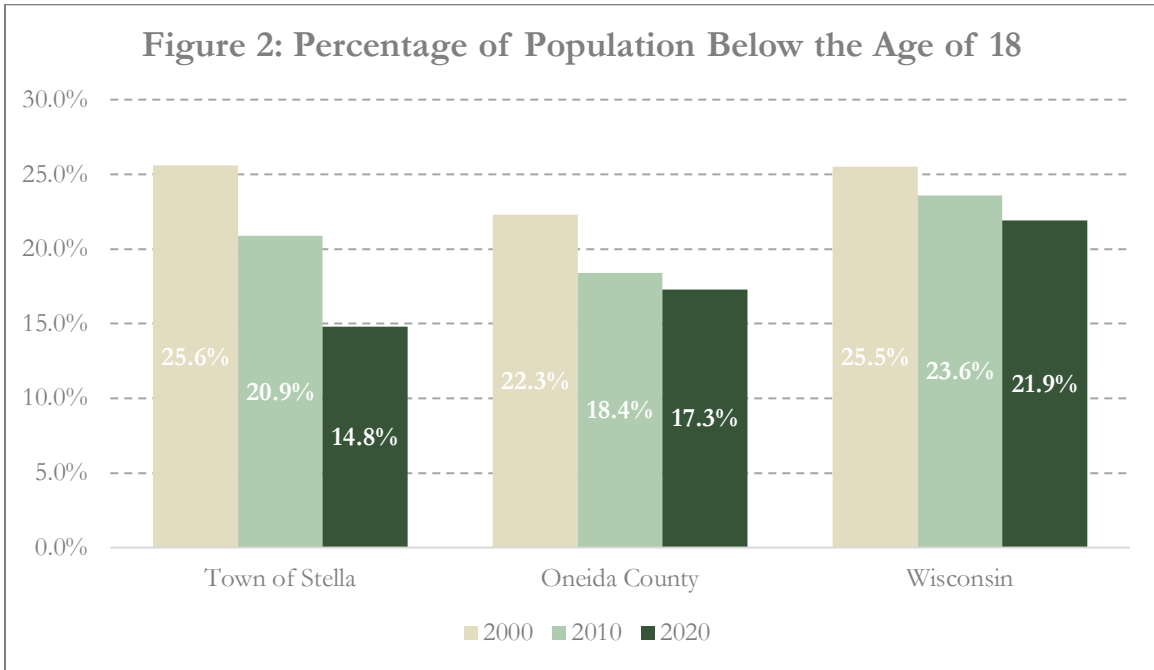
<b>Table 4: Household Projections</b>						
Minor Civil Division	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2020-40
Town of Stella	281	297	311	313	308	9.6%
Oneida County	16,986	17,796	18,344	18,346	17,892	5.3%
Wisconsin	2,491,982	2,600,538	2,697,884	2,764,498	2,790,322	12.0%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)

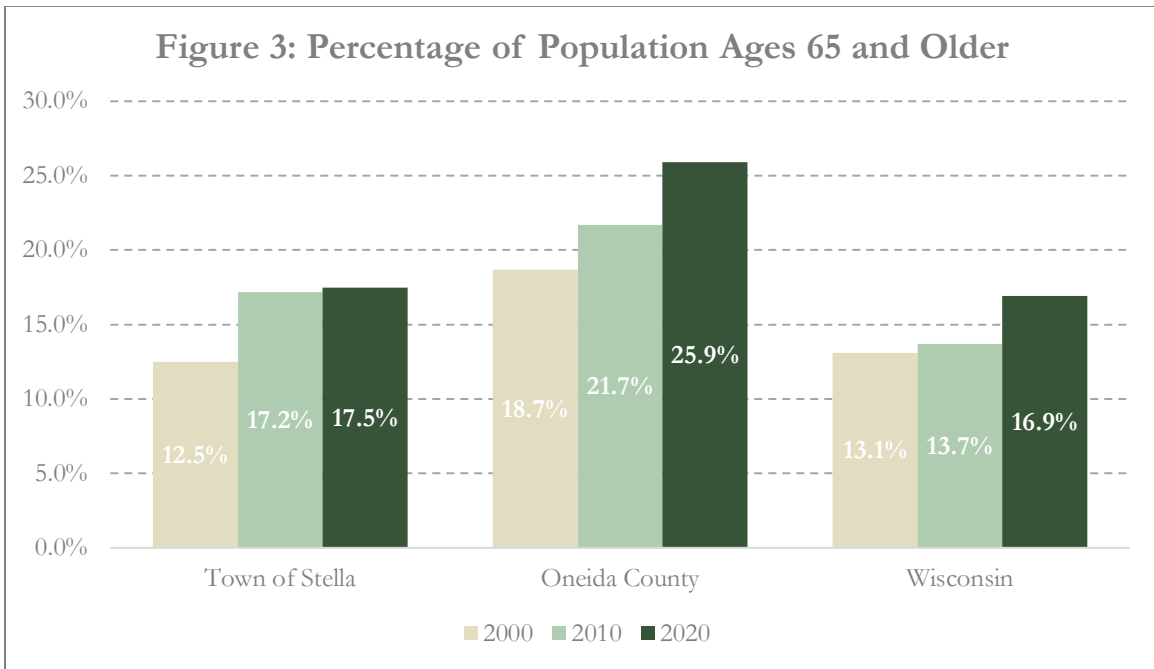
### Age Distribution

Population distribution by age is important in the planning process. Two age groups are examined here: 1) people below the age of 18, and 2) people ages 65 and older. These two age groups are often referred to as dependent populations and have different needs. The younger group requires schools, and the older group is retiring from the workforce.

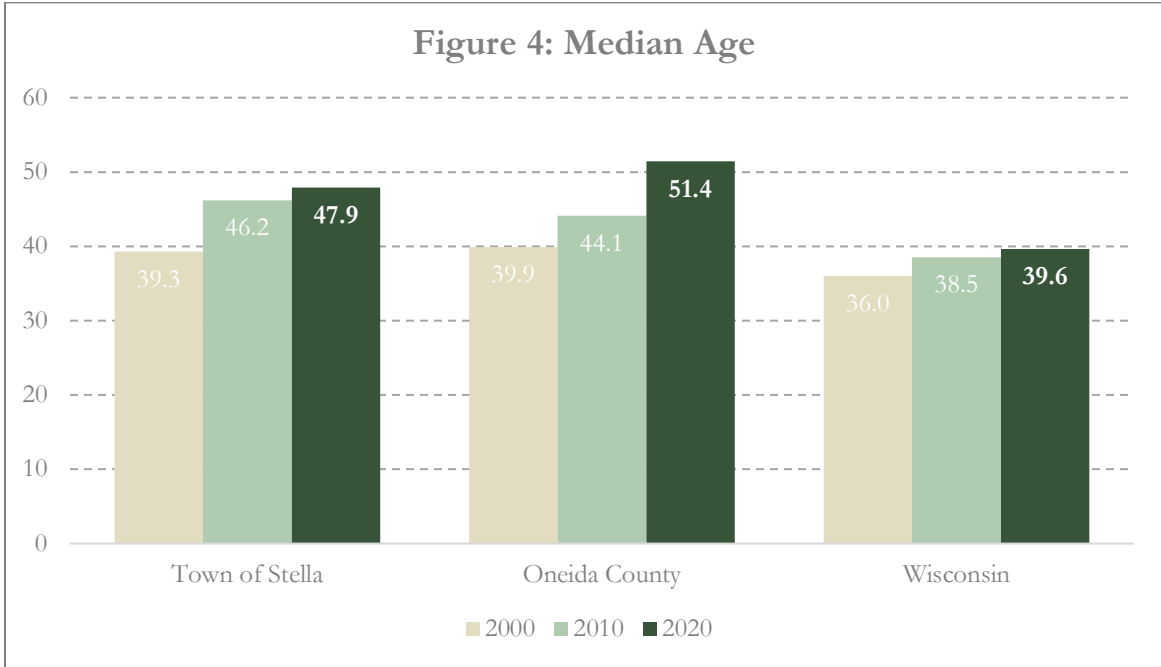
Between 2000 and 2019, the number of children ages 17 and younger within the Town of Stella, as a percentage of the population, decreased from accounting for 25.6 percent of the population in 2000 down to only accounting for 14.8 percent of the population in 2020, as shown in **Figure 2**. The percentage of population below the age of 18 also decreased in Oneida County and Wisconsin as well during this time. This trend may be partly explained by the 2008 economic recession and difficult financial circumstances for young families.



**Figure 3** displays the proportion of population ages 65 and older in the Town of Stella, Oneida County, and Wisconsin. Between 2000 and 2020, the number of adults ages 65 and older within the Town of Stella, as a percentage of the population, increased from accounting for 12.5 percent of the population in 2000 up to accounting for 17.5 percent of the population in 2020. The percentage of population ages 65 and older also increased in Oneida County and Wisconsin during the time.

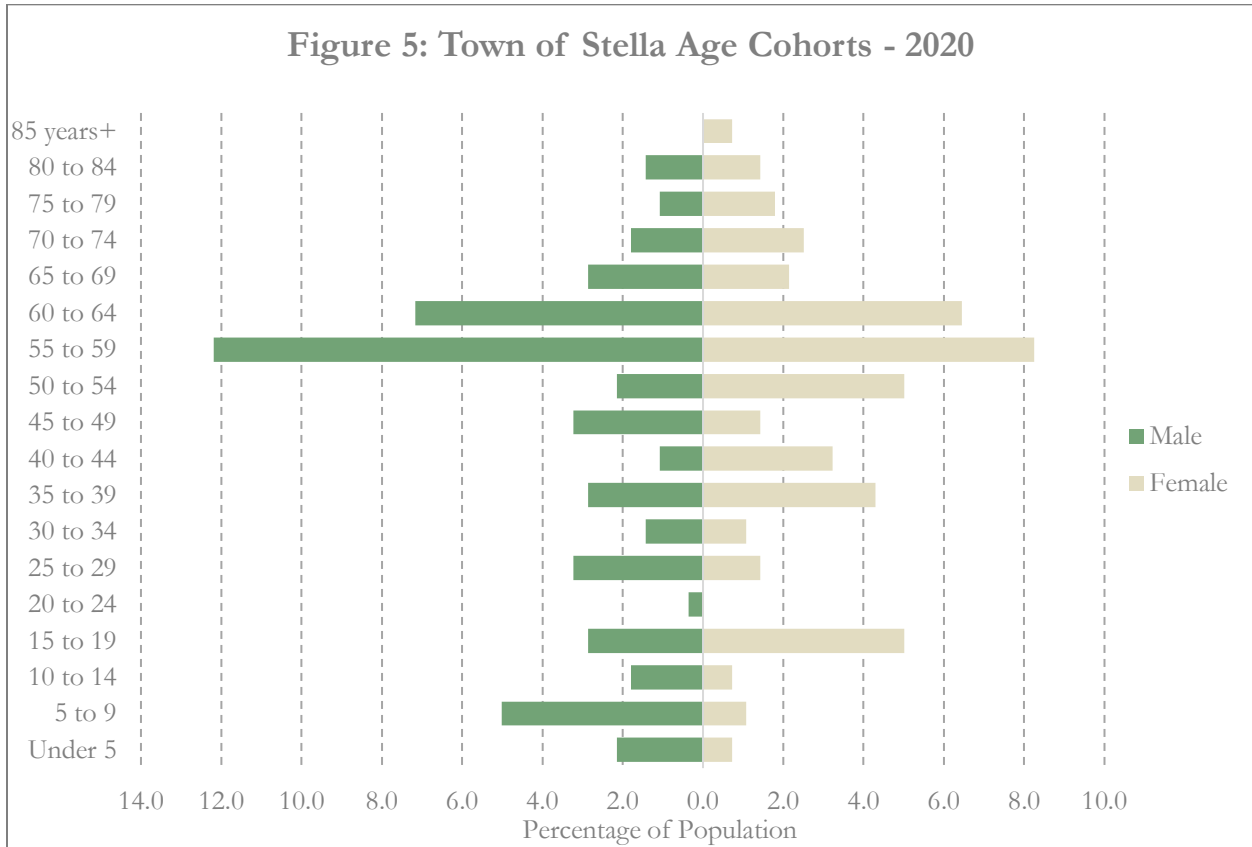


The estimated median age in the Town of Stella in 2020 was 47.9, which is lower than the median age in Oneida County (51.4) and significantly higher than in Wisconsin (39.6), as shown in **Figure 4**. The median age of 47.9 in the Town of Stella reflects the Town’s high proportion of residents nearing retirement age and a low proportion of young residents.



The Town of Stella’s population pyramid, **Figure 5**, displays the population distribution broken down into age cohorts in 2020. The population distribution by age cohort in the Town of Stella could best be described as an hourglass shape. The majority of residents within the Town of Stella fall between the ages of 50 and 64, with small proportions of residents in the younger and older age groups.

Figure 5: Town of Stella Age Cohorts - 2020



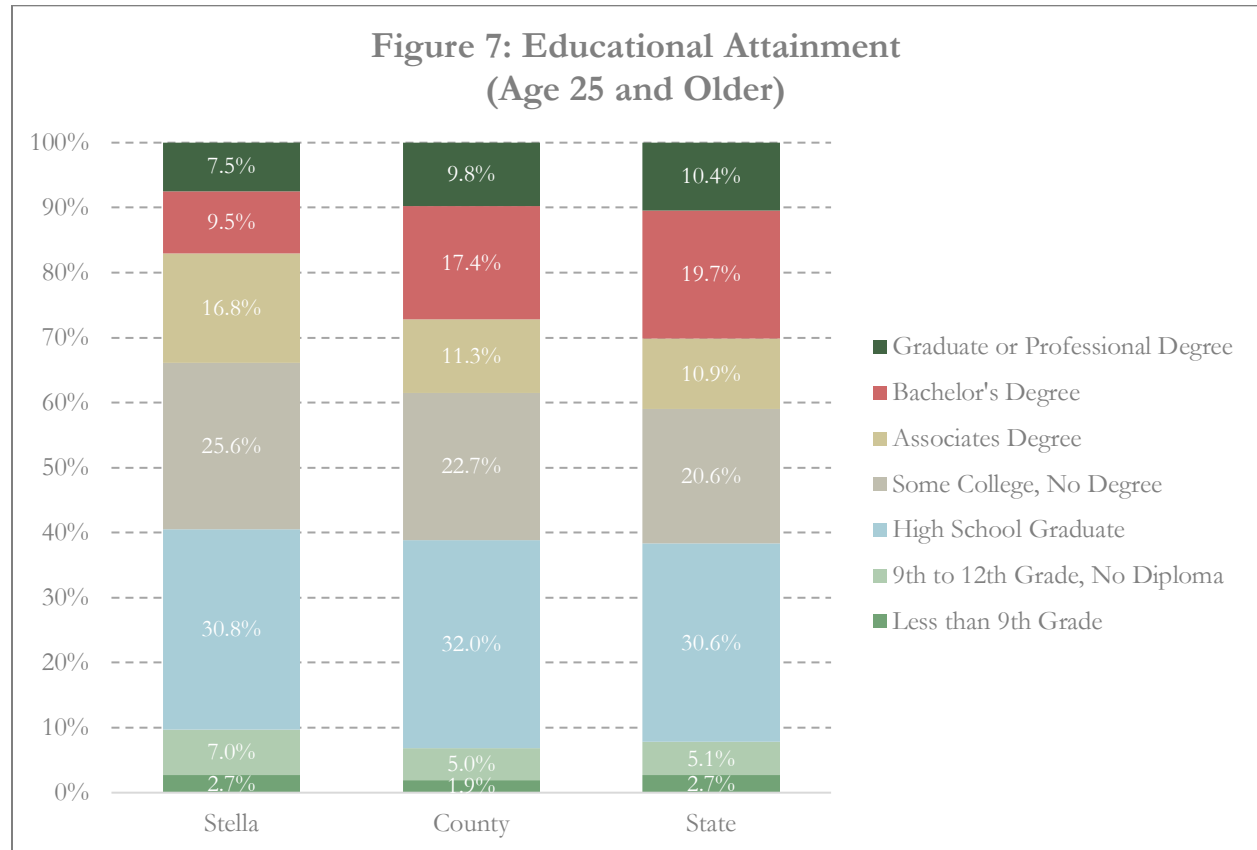
## Education Levels

The educational attainment level of persons within a community is often an indicator of the overall income, job availability and well-being of a community. Educational attainment in the Town of Stella has increased since 2000. The percentage of population ages 25 and older with a high school education increased from 82.8 percent in 2000 to 94.3 percent in 2020, as shown in **Table 5**. Additionally, the percentage of those with a bachelor’s degree or higher has increased from 15.0 percent in 2000 to 20.2 percent in 2020. These increases were in line with those experienced in Oneida County and Wisconsin. The Town of Stella has a higher percentage of people with a high school degree or higher than both Oneida County and the State of Wisconsin as a whole. The Town of Stella has a lower percentage of people with a bachelor’s degree or higher than Oneida County and the State of Wisconsin as a whole. **Figure 6** displays a comparison between Stella, Oneida County, and Wisconsin for all educational attainment categories for the year 2020.

**Table 5: Educational Attainment Trends, 2000-2020**

Educational Attainment	Town of Stella			Oneida County			Wisconsin		
	2000	2010	2020	2000	2010	2020	2000	2010	2020
Percent high school graduate or higher	82.8%	88.8%	94.3%	85.1%	90.9%	93.9%	85.1%	89.4%	92.6%
Percent with bachelor's degree or higher	15.0%	14.5%	20.2%	20.0%	21.8%	26.3%	22.4%	25.8%	30.8%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)



## Income Levels

**Table 6** shows median household income for the Town of Stella. The median household income for Town of Stella households was \$81,250 in 2020, up from \$40,909 in 2000. However, after adjusting for inflation, real median household income experienced a less drastic increase during this time, as the inflation-adjusted median household income for the Town of Stella in 2000 was \$62,250. Oneida County experienced a significantly slower increase in median household income during this time, as Oneida County's median household income experienced a 1.2 percent increase, rising up to \$58,156 in 2020.

**Table 6: Median Household Income**

Minor Civil Division	2000*	2010*	2020	% Change 2000-20	% Change 2010-20
Town of Stella	\$62,520	\$63,991	\$81,250	30.0%	27.0%
Oneida County	\$57,492	\$53,546	\$58,156	1.2%	8.6%
Wisconsin	\$66,924	\$61,394	\$63,293	-5.4%	3.1%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)

\*: Adjusted for inflation

**Table 7** shows per capita income for the Town of Stella. Per capita income is the average obtained by dividing aggregate income by the total population of an area. Since 2000, the Town’s per capita income increased by over 44 percent when adjusted for inflation, significantly faster than both Oneida County and Wisconsin.

**Table 7: Per Capita Income**

Minor Civil Division	2000*	2010*	2020	% Change 2000-20	% Change 2010-20
Town of Stella	\$25,540	\$27,367	\$36,823	44.2%	34.6%
Oneida County	\$30,177	\$32,556	\$35,811	18.7%	10.0%
Wisconsin	\$32,507	\$31,486	\$34,450	6.0%	9.4%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)

\*: Adjusted for inflation

## Employment Characteristics

**Tables 8** illustrates the breakdown of the labor force within the Town of Stella in 2000, 2010 and 2020. The labor force is defined as the number of persons, sixteen and over, employed or looking to be employed. Between 2000 and 2020, the Town of Stella experienced a 23.2 percent increase in the labor force, as the Town’s labor force increased from 302 residents in 2000 to 372 residents in 2020.

Labor force participation rate indicates the percentage of those 16 years and over that are in the labor force. Over the past two decade, the Town’s labor force participation rate has increased from about 64.4 percent in 2000 up to about 72.5 percent in 2020.

In 2000, the Town of Stella had an employed population of 275 people. Over the past two decades, the number of employed residents within the Town has significantly increased, as employment among Town residents increased by 34.2 percent during this time.

The U.S. Census classifies individuals as unemployed if they are not working, actively seeking work, and available to seek a job. In 2020, the unemployment rate in the Town of Stella was 0.6 percent, representing a substantial decrease from the Town’s unemployment rate of 5.8 percent in 2000.



**Table 8: Town of Stella Labor Force**

	2000	2010	2020	Percent Change
Population 16 years and over	469	538	513	9.4%
Labor Force	302	340	372	23.2%
Employed	275	325	369	34.2%
Unemployed	27	15	3	-88.9%
Unemployment Rate	5.8%	2.8%	0.6%	-89.7%
Participation Rate	64.4%	63.2%	72.5%	12.6%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)

**Table 9** displays the occupational employment for residents in the Town of Stella and for residents in Oneida County. In 2020, most residents within the Town of Stella were employed in Management, Professional & Related occupations, while most Oneida County residents were also employed in Management, Professional & Related occupations. The second-most represented occupational group among Town of Stella residents was the Sales & Office occupational group, while the Sales & Office occupational group was also the second-most represented in Oneida County.

**Table 9: Occupation of Employed Workers**

Occupation	Town of Stella		Oneida County	
	2000	2020	2000	2020
Management, Professional & Related	97	114	5,117	5,505
Service	22	52	2,747	2,792
Sales & Office	74	85	4,465	3,716
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	37	76	2,266	1,925
Production, Transportation & Mineral Moving	45	42	2,604	2,616
Total	275	369	17,199	16,554

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)

**Table 10** displays the breakdown of employment for Town of Stella and Oneida County residents by industry sector. In 2020, the leading industry sectors for Town of Stella employed residents were the Education, Health, and Social Services; Manufacturing; and Construction sectors. In Oneida County, the leading industry sectors in 2020 were the Education, Health, and Social Services; Retail Trade; and Manufacturing industry sectors.

**Table 10: Employment by Industry Sector**

	Town of Stella			Oneida County		
	2000	2020	% Change 2000-20	2000	2020	% Change 2000-20
Ag., Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining	30	5	-83.3%	526	330	-37.3%
Construction	6	27	350.0%	1,455	1,115	-23.4%
Manufacturing	42	62	47.6%	2,080	2,192	5.4%
Wholesale Trade	3	6	100.0%	425	387	-8.9%
Retail Trade	46	37	-19.6%	2,815	2,540	-9.8%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	13	18	38.5%	689	466	-32.4%
Information	3	0	-100.0%	434	171	-60.6%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	12	42	400.0%	636	933	46.7%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative & Waste Mgmt Services	21	27	28.6%	898	1,223	36.2%
Education, Health and Social Services	49	88	79.6%	3,953	3,884	-1.7%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	16	15	-6.3%	1,694	1,659	-2.1%
Public Administration	14	31	121.4%	861	738	-14.3%
Other Services	20	11	-45.0%	733	916	25.0%
Total	275	369	34.2%	17,199	16,554	-3.8%

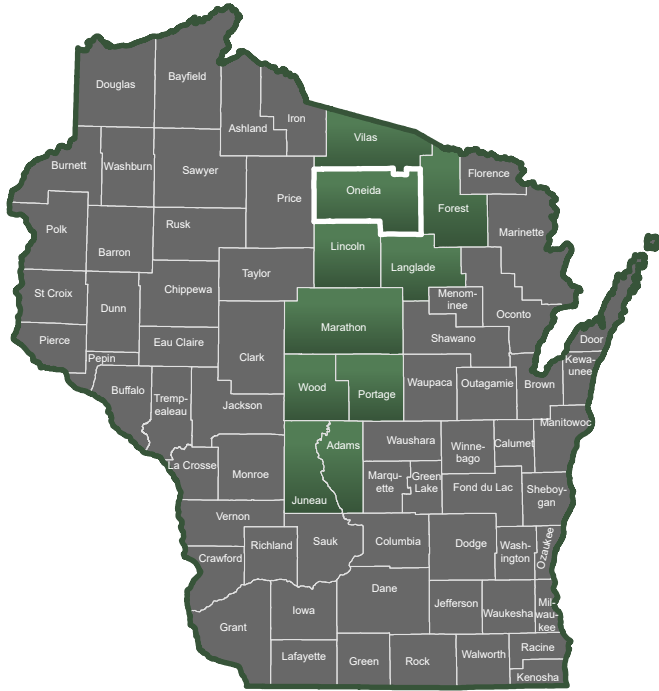
Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)

## Review of Demographic Trends

Demographic change is a principal factor in predicting future community growth. Population characteristics relate directly to the community's housing, education, utility, recreation, and facility needs, as well as future economic development. Over time, functions in local and regional economies can influence population change.

### Demographic Snapshot

- The population within the Town of Stella has steadily declined since 2000, while the number of households within the Town has slightly increased. This indicates that average household size within the Town has decreased.
- The Town of Stella is projected to experience an increase in population over the next several decades.
- There are a large number of residents within the Town that fall in the middle and older age groups. In 2020, the Town had a median age of 47.9, slightly lower than the median age of Oneida County and significantly higher than the State's median age.
- The Town of Stella has a higher proportion of residents with a high school diploma or higher than both Oneida County and Wisconsin. In terms of higher education, the Town has a lower proportion of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher than both Oneida County and Wisconsin.
- Both the average household income of \$81,250 and per capita income of \$36,823 experienced in the Town of Stella are higher than the County and the State.
- The Town's labor force participation rate has slightly increased over the past two decades, while the unemployment rate has significantly decreased during this time.



The Town of Stella is located in the eastern quarter of Oneida County Wisconsin. The Town measures approximately six miles by six miles square and is bounded by the Towns of Monico, Pelican, Piehl, Pine Lake, Sugar Camp, and Three Lakes. The Town contains one unincorporated community known as Starks and is a short distance east of the City of Rhinelander, County Seat of Oneida County.

In 1912 Leonard Starks purchased 10,000 acres of land from the Menasha Wooden Ware Company and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway Co. for agricultural purposes. He rebuilt the town and gave it his name, "Starks." From 1914 on, it has been known as Starks. Mr. Starks, known as the "Potato King" became a producer as well as a buyer of potatoes. After his death, his daughter, Lelah Starks, took over the land and became one of Wisconsin's most prominent potato growers and an internationally recognized authority in the specialized field of seed potatoes. Since then, seed potatoes from the farms in Stella Township have been shipped all over the United States. In recent years, a lot of the farm land has been sold off as residential parcels, and today the Town of Stella is largely a mix of agricultural and residential property.



Population:  
Total: 588  
Median Age: 47.9



Housing Units:  
Total: 380  
Occupied: 237  
Seasonal: 125



Employment Data:  
Employed: 369  
Unemployment: 0.6%



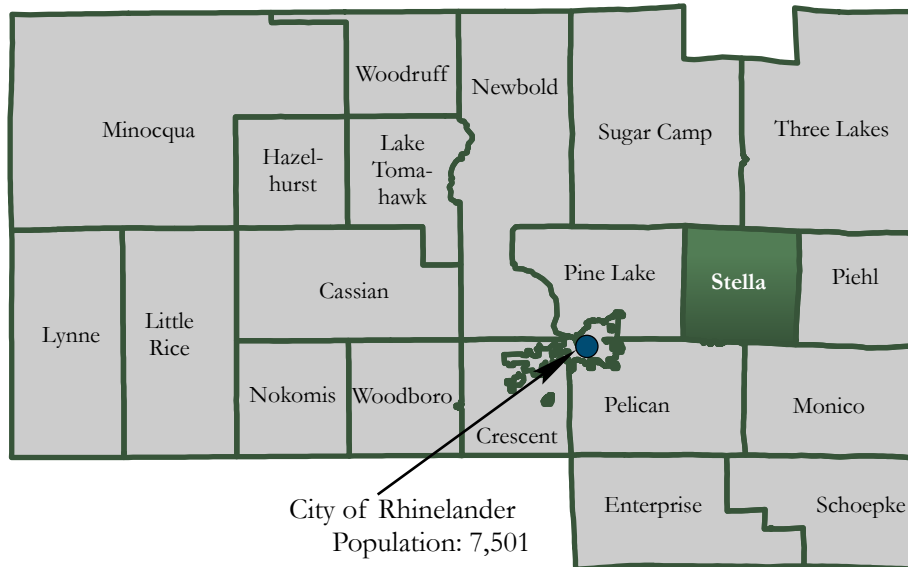
Woodlands:  
Acres: 15,638  
% of Town Area: 66%



Major Waterbodies:  
Pelican River  
Stella Lake  
Sunset Lake  
Snowden Lake



Major Roadways:  
County Highway C



City of Rhinelander  
Population: 7,501

# Chapter Two

## Natural, Cultural, & Agricultural Resources

This chapter describes local land and water conditions in detail as well as agricultural resources and cultural heritage. It is important to consider the patterns and interrelations of natural resources on a broader scale because they do not follow geo-political boundaries. In addition, many of the programs for protecting or mitigating impacts to natural resources are administered at the county, state, or federal level. Thus, an overview of recent county-wide natural resource planning efforts is described below. Natural resources covered in this chapter include biology, geology, and geography including terrain, soils, water, forests, wetlands, wildlife, and habitat.

Cultural resources include a community's heritage, archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to indigenous peoples or other cultural groups. Cultural resources also include arts and the way of life in a community. Cultural resources are those elements around us that signify our heritage and help to evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinct.

### Previous Plans and Studies

#### Oneida County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2020-2029

This Plan provides a framework for local/state/federal conservation program implementation efforts. Implementation of this plan will help protect and improve the valuable water and soil natural resources in Oneida County. Some of the plan's recommendations include protecting shoreland areas, reducing nonpoint source pollution, replace failing septic systems, and reduce wildlife conflicts. A copy is available in the Oneida County Land Conservation Department.

#### Oneida County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2019-2023

Creation of this plan is in process. The primary purpose of this recreation plan is to provide continued direction in meeting the current and future recreation needs of the County. This direction takes the form of an inventory and analysis of outdoor recreational facilities followed by establishing recommendations to meet identified needs. Adoption of this plan and its subsequent acceptance by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) allows for continued eligibility for financial assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), the Stewardship Fund, and many other federal and state funding programs. A copy is available in the Oneida County Forestry Department.

#### Oneida County Farmland Preservation Plan, 2015

The Oneida County Farmland Preservation Plan is required under Chapter 91 of Wisconsin Statutes. The Plan's purpose is to guide and manage farmland preservation and agricultural production capacity from 2015 to 2024. The plan functions as the primary policy document setting forth directions for how

the County intends to preserve agricultural production capacity, farmland, soil and water resources, and rural character.

Farmland Preservation Areas - Parcels that meet the Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP) mapping criteria. Landowners in this area may apply for farmland preservation income tax credits. No non-agricultural development is planned in the next fifteen years for those areas identified.

*Criteria for Farmland Preservation Areas:*

- Lands depicted on the Soils Map as farmlands.
- Lands depicted on the Land Use Map as agriculture, cranberry bog, open lands, or woodlands.
- Lands depicted on the Future Land Use Map that allow agriculture or forestry to occur

*Lands are excluded if they are any of the following:*

- Local, county, state, and federal lands
- “Planned Out” lands on Map 5 of the FPP
- Parcels less than 5 acres
- Tax exempt land

Farmland preservation areas cover a significant portion of the Town of Stella, with areas that are not designated as farmland preservation areas mainly being located adjacent to waterbodies. Existing agricultural areas within the Town are scattered throughout the Town.

### Oneida County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2006-2020

The mission of the County Forest is to manage, conserve and protect the natural resources within the county forest on a sustainable basis for present and future generations. The Plan contains information about forest resource planning, outdoor recreation planning, silvicultural practices, aesthetic management zones, trails and access control, biological communities, and wildlife species that exist within the county forest. A copy is available in the Oneida County Forestry Department.

### USGS Protecting Wisconsin’s Groundwater through Comprehensive Planning

In a joint effort by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the University of Wisconsin System, and the United States Geological Survey, a website was made available with data and information on geology, general hydrology, and groundwater quantity and quality. The website was developed to aid government officials in their comprehensive plans, including this plan.

The most recent data available for Oneida County was public in 2007. The Oneida County report can be accessed here: <https://wi.water.usgs.gov/gwcomp/index.html>.

## **Natural Resources**

Examining the natural environment is essential to the planning process. For instance, soils, topography and geology can pose limitations to certain types of development, while an inventory of surface water resources, vegetation types, environmentally significant areas, and historical features identify those resources and areas which should be protected from over-development. This section of the plan identifies both the land and water resources of the Town.

## Water Resources

Surface water resources support the area's economy by drawing tourists and providing a good quality of life for residents. Oneida County contains one of the highest concentrations of natural lakes in the world.

The Town of Stella lies entirely within the Pelican River Watershed. The Pelican River watershed drains into a tributary of the Pelican River itself, which then flows into the Wisconsin River. There are large wetland acreages within the watershed that have a substantial effect upon the quality of the surface water drainage within each watershed. Many localized impacts within the watershed tend to concentrate as water moves from vast areas into streams and creeks, then into rivers or lakes. This concentration can result in turbid waters or high amounts of phosphorus that can feed

Oneida County Shoreland Zoning is in effect. Actual shoreland jurisdiction measurements are coordinated through the County Zoning Department. Refer to Natural Resources Map for water bodies in the Town.

### Stream Corridors

Within the Town of Stella, there are several named river and creek features in addition to the many tributaries, intermittent streams, wetlands and floodplains located throughout the Town including:

- Angelo Lake Creek
- Cornell Creek
- Gudegast Creek
- Jennie Webber Creek
- Jewel Creek
- Lela Creek
- Outlet Creek
- Pelican River, North Branch
- Starks Creek
- Twin Lakes Creek

### Lakes

Lakes have a significant impact on Stella's development pattern because of the variety of opportunities they provide to property owners and visitors. Property values, community character, fishing, wildlife, and recreation are all dependent upon the level of protection and quality of these surface waters. There are fifteen named lakes within the Town of Stella including:

- Angelo Lake
- Del Stengl Lake (Jennie Raisen Lake)
- Dollar Lake
- Fifth Lake
- Fourth Lake
- Ginty Lake
- Mud Lake
- Second Lake
- Snowden Lake
- Starks Flowage
- Starks Spring
- Stella Lake
- Sunset Lake
- Tenderfoot Lake
- Third Lake

### Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs) share many of the same environmental and ecological characteristics. The primary difference between the two is that ORWs typically do not have any direct point sources discharging pollutants directly to the water. In addition, any pollutant load discharged to an ORW must meet background water quality at all times.

Exceptions are made for certain types of discharge situations to ERWs to allow pollutant loads that are greater than background water quality when human health would otherwise be compromised.

There are no waterbodies within Stella that are listed as an ORW. Four waterbodies within the Town (Gudegast Creek, Lela Creek, Outlet Creek, and Starks Creek) are listed as an ERW.

### Impaired Waters

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to develop a list of impaired waters, commonly referred to as the "303(d) list." A water body is considered impaired if a) the current water quality does not meet the numeric or narrative criteria in a water quality standard or b) the designated use that is described in Wisconsin Administrative Code is not being achieved. A documented methodology is used to articulate the approach used to list waters in Wisconsin. Every two years, states are required to submit a list of impaired waters to EPA for approval. There are three (Third Lake, Fourth Lake, and Fifth Lake) impaired water bodies within the Town.

### Invasive Aquatic Species

Surface water resources in Oneida County are threatened by the introduction of invasive aquatic species. These species out compete native species and degrade habitats possibly by decreasing biodiversity from having less plant and animal species. There are ten waterbodies within the Town that have documented infestations of aquatic invasive species. Contact the County Land Conservation Department for public outreach education strategies.

- Fifth Lake – Banded Mystery Snail
- Fourth Lake – Chinese Mystery Snail and Rusty Crayfish
- Ginty Lake – Chinese Mystery Snail
- Mud Lake – Banded Mystery Snail
- Pelican River – Chinese Mystery Snail and Rusty Crayfish
- Starks Creek – Chinese Mystery Snail
- Stella Lake – Chinese Mystery Snail
- Sunset Lake – Chinese Mystery Snail and Yellow Iris
- Third Lake – Chinese Mystery Snail
- Twin Lakes Creek – Purple Loosestrife

### Wetlands

Wetlands perform many indispensable roles in the proper function of the hydrologic cycle and local ecological systems. In terms of hazard mitigation, they act as water storage devices in times of high water. Like sponges, wetlands are able to absorb excess water and release it back into the watershed slowly, preventing flooding and minimizing flood damage. As more impermeable surfaces are developed, this excess capacity for water runoff storage becomes increasingly important.

Wetland plants and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants ranging from pesticides to animal wastes. Calm wetland waters, with their flat surface and flow characteristics, allow particles of toxins and nutrients to settle out of the water column. Plants take up certain nutrients from the water. Other substances can be stored or transformed to a less toxic state within wetlands. As a result, the lakes, rivers and streams are cleaner.



Wetlands that filter or store sediments or nutrients for extended periods may undergo fundamental changes. Sediments will eventually fill in wetlands and nutrients will eventually modify the vegetation. Such changes may result in the loss of this function over time. Eradication of wetlands can occur through the use of fill material. This can destroy the hydrological function of the site and open the area to improper development. The WDNR has promulgated minimum standards for managing wetlands. The wetlands shown for the Town of Stella were mapped from the WisDNR Wetlands Inventory, and are shown in the **Natural Resources Map**.

### **Floodplains**

A floodplain is generally defined as land where there is a one percent chance of flooding in any year. The primary value of floodplains is their role in natural flood control. Flood plains represent areas where excess water can be accommodated whether through drainage by streams or through storage by wetlands and other natural detention/retention areas. Specific areas that will be inundated will depend upon the amount of water, the distance and speed that water travels, and the topography of the area. If uninterrupted by development, the areas shown on a map as floodplains should be able to handle the severest (regional) flood, i.e. those that have a probability of occurring once every one hundred years. The 100-year floodplain was digitized by the NCWRPC from FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps, for planning purposes only, and are shown in the **Natural Resources Map**.

### **Groundwater & Geology**

Groundwater is water that occupies void spaces between soil particle or cracks in the rock below the land surface. It originates as precipitation that infiltrated into the ground. The type of soil and bedrock that a well is drilled into often determines water's pH, saturation index, and the amount of hardness or alkalinity in water. The type of soil and bedrock in a region also determines how quickly contaminants can reach groundwater.

Groundwater is an important resource since it is used for all domestic, agricultural, and commercial purposes in the Town. According to the Oneida County Soil Survey report, the main aquifer in the county is glacial drift, particularly glacial outwash and ice-contact sand and gravel. The total mineral content is less than 150 milligrams per liter. The main components in the water are calcium, magnesium, and bicarbonate ions. A large concentration of iron is in the groundwater throughout the county but is not considered to be a health hazard.

The source of all groundwater is precipitation percolating down through the soil until it reaches the saturated zone called an aquifer. Water in an aquifer travels from its source to a discharge point, such as a well, wetland, spring, or lake. During periods of increased precipitation or thaw, this vast resource is replenished with water moving by gravity through permeable soils. This is known as a water table system.

In some instances, groundwater moves because of pressure created by a confining layer of impervious rock known as an artesian system. The existence of granitic bedrock causes difficulties with obtaining groundwater in some areas of the Town. This hard rock is very difficult to drill through and thereby limits the availability of water. This bedrock layer is generally between ten and sixty feet below the ground and is present throughout the Town. The bedrock comes closer to the surface in the eastern part of the Town.

## Land Resources

### Topography and Geology

Oneida County is in the Northern Highlands physiographic region of Wisconsin where crystalline rock is overlain by thick glacial deposits. The surface of the Town can be described as having a varied topography. The Town and County were covered by glacial ice during the most recent glaciation period. Glacial activity formed several distinct types of glacial deposits such as end moraine and glacial ground moraine. End moraine deposits are composed of glacial till which is an unsorted mixture of gravel, sand, silt, clay, and occasional boulders. Adjacent to the end moraine deposits are glacial ground moraine deposits. A glacial ground moraine is also composed of till and gives rise to the rolling undulated type topography.

The Town of Stella is made up of three rock types: granite intrusive rocks, which are located in a large circular area centrally within the Town; gneiss, located along the northern border of the Town; and metavolcanic rocks, located in the remaining areas of the Town. It is important to be aware of the bedrock in an area before and development takes place. For example, when bedrock is located at or near the surface, there is potential for hindering excavation of septic systems and a considerable increase in the cost of construction. In addition, a conventional onsite septic system may not function properly in areas where bedrock is near the surface, possibly resulting in wastewater passing through cracks or fissures.

### Forests

Forests play a key role in the protection of environmentally sensitive areas like steep slopes, shorelands, wetlands, and flood plains. Expansive forests provide recreational opportunities, aesthetic benefits, and economic development.

Boreal Northern Forest is the predominant forest community in the Town of Stella. Stella lies north of the climatic transition belt known as the “tension zone”. The Boreal Northern Forest community consists of mixed deciduous and coniferous forests and may be composed of pines, maples, oaks, birch, hemlock, and other hardwood and conifer species. According to “Wisconsin’s Biodiversity as a Management Issue” (a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) report), the composition of the Boreal Northern Forest in Oneida County is primarily made up of pine, both white and red, as well as hemlock, sugar maple and yellow birch.

Approximately 15,000 acres of the land in Town consists of forestland – both private-owned and industry-owned. There are also about 240 acres of land owned by the State of Wisconsin and managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Stella has large tracts of land designated as Forestry zoning districts by the Oneida County zoning ordinance. These districts were established to protect the integrity of the county’s forested lands by preserving the land in a relatively natural state. The forestlands in the Town offer both recreational opportunities as well as economic benefit. Preservation of Stella’s forestland maintains the rural Northwoods character of the community.

All forests are dynamic, always changing from one stage to another, influenced by natural forces and humans. Changes can be subtle and occur over long periods, or can happen in seconds from a timber harvest, windstorm, or fire. A significant portion of the land in the town is owned by private investors. Some private woodlands in the county are enrolled in Managed Forest Law (MFL). This program provides a low annual tax rate per acre and requires a management plan for the property that must include some harvesting along with allowing some public uses based on acreage thresholds. When

timber is harvested from MFL properties, a harvest tax is also assessed. This provides an incentive to keep woodlots in active production and allows some community access to the site in exchange for greatly reduced taxes. See the programs section at the end of this chapter for more detail on this program.

### Metallic & Non-Metallic Resources

There are no active metallic mines within the Town, nor are there any known deposits. There is currently one active non-metallic mining gravel pit located within the Town, the location of which is also shown in the **Natural Resources Map**.

### Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Environmentally sensitive areas are typically defined by the local jurisdiction and often include many of the areas referred to in this section such as special groundwater protection areas, threatened or endangered species habitat, floodplains, wetlands and other unique or special resources where encroachment or development could have negative consequences. Some potentially sensitive areas are discussed below.

Potentially contaminated sites might fall under the environmentally sensitive designation in part because they may need special care or monitoring to prevent further environmental degradation or hazard to human life. The WDNR Internet database known as the Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) lists two sites, both of which are considered “closed” and remediated to DNR standards making them available for use.

The following sites were listed as “closed”:

- Abandoned Container Site: Spring Road
- Abandoned Container Site: Tenderfoot Road & County Highway C intersection

### Rare Species & Natural Communities

As of October 2021, the Town of Stella has two sections with occurrences of endangered resources (rare, threatened, or endangered species of plants & animals, and high-quality natural communities) as identified in the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory, as shown in **Table 11**.

Wisconsin's biodiversity goals are to identify, protect and manage native plants, animals, and natural communities from the very common to critically endangered for present and future generations. Knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship of Wisconsin's native species and ecosystems are critical to their survival and greater benefit to society.

<b>Table 11: Rare Species &amp; Natural Communities</b>		
<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Group</b>
Elktoe	Special Concern/Fully Protected	Mussel
Spruce Grouse	Threatened	Bird

Source: Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory

# Agricultural Resources

## Soils & Productive Agricultural Resources

Soil is composed of varying proportions of sand, gravel, silt, clay, and organic material. The soils in the Town primarily result from glacial till, glacial outwash, or glaciolacustrine deposits, and a few formed from organic material.

A detailed study of all the soils in Oneida County was developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. As part of that study, soils were identified in terms of both generalized soil associations, or predominant soil patterns, and specific detailed soils.

A majority of the Town is covered in soils that are considered to be prime farmland or a farmland of statewide importance. While this does not mean that these lands are being used for agricultural purposes, it does mean that soils throughout the Town have the potential to provide for productive farmland.

Approximately 5,000 acres of the land within the Town consists of cropland. According to the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, a short growing season limits the number of viable crops in Oneida County. Given the Town's climate and soil conditions, commonly planted crops can include potatoes, snap beans, hay crops, and oats. Most farms specialize in potatoes. Historically, potatoes have grown well in Stella and a substantial amount of ground has been relegated to agricultural use. Today, potatoes remain a reliable crop for area growers.

## Historical & Cultural Resources

### Town History

Thousands of years ago, the Town of Stella was shaped by glacial activity. The advances and retreats of these glaciers over the centuries are responsible for distinctive geological features. The last of these glaciers receded about 15,000 years ago and its impacts are still noticeable in the present-day landscape. Stella is part of the Northern Highland physiographic subdivision. The Precambrian bedrock of Oneida County is a conglomeration of gneisses and schist although some younger, intrusive granites are also found. Bedrock formations are observed in scattered outcrops, and the ground moraine is thin.

Native Americans of the Chippewa tribes were the first inhabitants of the Oneida County area. Originally a French holding, Wisconsin was acquired by the English following the French and Indian War circa 1763. By 1812, the Northwest Territory was eventually given up to the United States. Until this time, the area was primarily used along rivers for fur trapping and trading. Wisconsin became a state in 1848, but the first recorded plat in the Town of Stella was not until 1887 when the Sault Ste. Marie Land and Improvement Company of Hennepin County, Minnesota, created the community of Pennington (now known as Starks) named for the Superintendent of the Atlantic Railway. A 100' wide right-of-way was granted for a public use railroad which is still used to this day. By September of 1887, the Town of Stella saw the first regular train service from Rhinelander through Starks to Gagen. In Pennington the railroad terminal consisted of a six stall round house, blacksmith shop, boiler house, water tank, turn table, cooling station, cinder pit, sand pit, and water standpipe. There was also a hotel and the homes of the railroad employees. Main Street ran east and west facing the tracks while all the

other streets bore the names of native trees. Local lore claims that the name Stella came from the daughter of a man who operated a mill on what is now Stella Lake prior to 1912.

As the railroad continued further east from Gagen, logging traffic became more prominent as logs headed to the mills in Rhinelander. Horse teams hauled logs unable to be sent by rail. White pine was commonly cut for the mills, Norway pine for homes, and White Cedar for shingles and railroad ties. The Menasha Wooden Ware Company owned most of the land in the Town during this period. In 1898, a tornado demolished Pennington and the train terminal facilities were moved to Rhinelander. Disaster struck again in 1908 when a fire destroyed much of the timber in the area from Three Lakes to Rhinelander. In the early 1900's the name Pennington was changed to Hobson in honor of Commander Hobson, a famous hero of the Spanish-American War. By 1910, much of the forest in the Town of Stella had been cut and the land became idle.

Leonard Starks was a man destined to play a significant role in the history of the Town of Stella. He was born in New York in 1851 and in 1903 he organized the L. Starks Company in Chicago specializing in buying potatoes. In 1912 Leonard Starks purchased 10,000 acres of land around Hobson and began clearing stumps and rocks using oxen teams, steam tractors, and dynamite. The leftover stones from the cleared rocks were used to build a stone warehouse 200 feet long and 60 feet wide. By 1914, Starks rebuilt the community of Hobson and renamed it after himself. The company maintained a company store and post office for use by employees of the Starks Farm. In 1915 the company erected a portable sawmill for the construction of homes and other buildings. After the land clearing, the first crops were rye, clover, and potatoes. The potatoes were planted and dug by hand. Carloads of cattle and sheep were also shipped in from Idaho for livestock activities. Largely due to Mr. Starks' success, Wisconsin became nationally known for its seed potatoes. Starks peaked in potato production with holdings of nearly 19,000 acres until a period of deflation in 1922. Mr. Starks died in 1927 after suffering substantial financial losses after 1922.

Leonard Starks had only one child named Lelah Starks. Lelah was born in Plainfield, Wisconsin in 1882 and took over her father's holdings after his death, but she was more interested in poultry than potatoes and raised several prize-winning chickens on the Stella Lake Farm. Even so, Miss Starks became one of Wisconsin's most prominent potato growers and was eventually able to buy back some of the land her father lost in the mid-1920s. In 1941, Miss Starks was honored by the University of Wisconsin for her work in the field of seed potatoes. Miss Starks died in 1951.

The people of Stella are of German, Polish, English, French, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, Lithuanian, Irish, and Scottish descent. With such mixed nationalities, old country customs were difficult to maintain, but new ones were formed. The Town Hall hosted many dances and plays using talent from the local population. There were housewarming parties for each new home that was built; Meredith's Hill was a popular location for sledding in winter; hayrides on the west end of Moen's Lake at Roosevelt; boat trips on nearby lakes. Baseball became a favored sport for Town residents and to this day there is a ball stadium in Starks.

## Historical & Cultural Resources

The National Register of Historic Places recognizes properties of local, state, and national significance. Properties are listed in the National Register because of 1) their associations with significant persons or events, 2) because they contain important information about our history or prehistory, or 3) because of their architectural or engineering significance. The National Register also lists important groupings of properties as historic districts. In addition, the National Park Service highlights properties that have significance to the nation as a whole by conferring them the status of National Historic Landmark.

The Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places parallels the National Register. It is designed to enable state-level historic preservation protection and benefits. Most of the properties in Wisconsin listed in the National Register are also listed in the State Register. According to the National and State Register, no historic places have been identified within the Town of Stella. The Wisconsin Architecture & History Inventory (AHI), provided by the Wisconsin Historical Society, lists historical and architectural information on properties in Wisconsin. The AHI contains data on buildings, structures and objects that illustrate Wisconsin's unique history. The majority of properties listed are privately owned. Listed properties convey no special status, rights or benefits. Within the Town of Stella, two homes were listed in the inventory: a side-gabled home in section 25 and a one-story cube home in section 26. Both homes are located on County Highway C.



## Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Programs

There are a variety of programs available to the Town related to natural, agricultural, and cultural resources. Some of these are identified below. The following list is not all-inclusive. For specific program information, the agency or group that offers the program should be contacted.

### **Aquatic Habitat Protection Program**

The WDNR provides basic aquatic habitat protection services through their staff. Staff members include Water Management (Regulation) Specialists, Zoning Specialists, Rivers (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission-FERC) Specialists, Lakes Specialists, Water Management Engineers, and their assistants (LTEs). The program assists with water regulation permits, zoning assistance, coordination of rivers, lake management, and engineering.

### **County Conservation Aids**

Funds are available to carry out programs for fish or wildlife management projects as per §23.09 (12), Wis. Stats. and NR 50, Wis. Adm. Code. Projects related to providing improved fish or wildlife habitat or projects related to hunter/angler facilities are eligible. Projects that enhance fish and wildlife habitat or fishing and hunting facilities have priority. Contact the WDNR for further information.

### **Discovery Farms Program**

Discovery Farms is a program administered by UW-Extension that works with over 40 farmers across the state of Wisconsin. The program's mission is to "develop on-farm and related research to determine the economic and environmental effects of agricultural practices on a diverse group of Wisconsin farms; and educates and improves communications among the agricultural community, consumers, researchers and policymakers to better identify and implement effective environmental management practices that are compatible with profitable agriculture." On-Farm projects fall under one the following categories: Nitrogen Use Efficiency, Tile Monitoring, Leachate Collection Systems, Watershed water quality, and Edge-of-Field Runoff Monitoring.

### **Drinking Water and Groundwater Program**

This WDNR program is responsible for assuring safe, high quality drinking water and for protecting groundwater. This is achieved by enforcing minimum well construction and pump installation requirements, conducting surveys and inspections of water systems, the investigation and sampling of drinking water quality problems, and requiring drinking water quality monitoring and reporting. A team of specialists, engineers, hydrogeologists, and a program expert and program assistants staff the program. WDNR staff provide assistance to public and private well owners to help solve water quality complaints and water system problems. They also provide interested citizens with informational or educational materials about drinking water supplies and groundwater.

### **Wisconsin Fund**

Wisconsin Fund is a program by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Safety and Buildings Division. Grants are provided to homeowners and small commercial businesses to help offset a portion of the cost for the repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of existing failing Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWIS). Eligibility is based upon several criteria, including household income and age of the structure.

### **Endangered Resources Program**

The DNR's Endangered Resources staff provides expertise and advice on endangered resources. They manage the Natural Heritage Inventory Program (NHI), which is used to determine the existence and location of native plant and animal communities and Endangered or Threatened Species of Special Concern. The NHI helps identify and prioritize areas suitable for State Natural Area (SNA) designation, provides information needed for feasibility studies and master plans, and maintains the list of endangered and threatened species. All management activities conducted by Wildlife Management and Forestry staff must be reviewed to determine the impact on NHI-designated species. A permit for the incidental take of an Endangered or Threatened species is required under the State Endangered Species Law. The Endangered Resources Program oversees the permit process, reviews applications and makes permit decisions. Funding for the Endangered Species Program comes from a number of sources, including tax checkoff revenue, license plates, general program revenues (GPR), gaming revenue, Natural Heritage Inventory chargebacks, wild rice permits, general gifts and Pittman Robertson grants.

### **Fisheries Management Program**

The WDNR funds this program primarily through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. The program assists with fishery surveys, fish habitat improvement/protection, and fish community manipulation. This program may also be used to fund public relations events and a variety of permitting and administrative activities involving fisheries.

### **Private Forestry**

The WDNR's goal is to motivate private forest landowners to practice sustainable forestry by providing technical forestry assistance, state and federal cost-sharing on management practices, sale of state produced nursery stock for reforestation, enrollment in Wisconsin's Forest Tax Law Programs, advice for the protection of endangered and threatened species, and assistance with forest disease and insect problems. Each county has at least one Department forester assigned to respond to requests for private forestland assistance. These foresters also provide educational programs for landowners, schools, and the general public. Both private and industrial forest landowners have enrolled their lands under the Managed Forest Law.

### **Managed Forest Law (MFL)**

The purpose of the MFL is to promote good forest management through property tax incentives. Management practices are required by way of an approved forest management plan. Landowners with a minimum of 20 contiguous acres (80% must be capable of producing merchantable timber) are eligible and may contract for 25 or 50 years. Open lands must allow hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and sight-seeing; however, up to 320 acres per township may be closed to public access by the landowner. Contact the WDNR for further information.

### **Nonpoint Source Program (NSP)**

Wisconsin's NPS Program, through a comprehensive network of federal, state and local agencies working in partnership with other organizations and citizens, addresses the significant nonpoint sources in the state. This program combines voluntary and regulatory approaches with financial and technical assistance. Abatement activities include agriculture, urban, forestry, wetlands and hydrologic modifications. The core activities of the program — research, monitoring, data assessment and management, regulation and enforcement, financial and technical assistance, education and outreach and public involvement — work to address current water quality



impairments and prevent future threats caused by NPS pollution. Contact the WDNR for more information.

### **NRCS Conservation Programs**

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. NRCS provides funding opportunities for agricultural producers and other landowners through these programs:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) by USDA's Farm Service Agency
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Small, Limited, and Beginning Farmer Assistance
- Working Lands for Wildlife

### **Parks and Recreation Program**

The WDNR gets its authority for administering the Parks and Recreation Program from Chapter 27 Wisconsin Statutes. This program provides assistance in the development of public parks and recreation facilities. Funding sources include: the general fund, the Stewardship Program, Land and Water Conservation fund (LAWCON), and program revenue funds.

### **Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants**

The Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) provides funding to producer-led groups that focus on nonpoint source pollution abatement activities through the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program (PLWPG). The goal is to improve Wisconsin's soil and water quality by supporting and advancing producer-led conservation solutions by increasing on the ground practices and farmer participation in these efforts.

### **Stewardship Grants for Nonprofit Conservation Organizations**

Nonprofit conservation organizations are eligible to obtain funding for the acquisition of land or easements for conservation purposes and restoration of wildlife habitat. Priorities include acquisition of wildlife habitat, acquisition of lands with special scientific or ecological value, protection of rare and endangered habitats and species, acquisition of stream corridors, acquisition of land for state trails including the Ice Age Trail and North Country Trail, and restoration of wetlands and grasslands. Eligible types of projects include fee simple and easement acquisitions and habitat restoration projects. Contact the WDNR for further information.

### **Wastewater Program**

The Department of Natural Resources provides this program to address point and non-point source pollution control. Operating funds for this program come from the federal government's Clean Water Act funding as well as state general program revenues. The core work of this program involves the issuance of wastewater discharge permits that discharge directly to surface or groundwater and enforcing the requirements of these permits. The program closely monitors the impacts of industry, septic tanks, sludge, and stormwater on the environment. Pretreatment plants for wastewater are offered economic assistance and provided with plan review services before the facility is established.

### **Watershed Program**

The WDNR seeks to protect wild and domestic animals, recreational activities, natural flora and fauna, agriculture, business, and other land uses through watershed management. Funds to run this program are provided by the federal government through Clean Water Act and through state general program revenues. The program assists with watershed planning, water quality monitoring and modeling, and development of water quality standards and policy.

### **Wetlands Reserve Program**

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program which was established to restore wetlands on lands which were previously altered for agricultural use. The program is administered by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service in consultation with the Farm Service Agency and other federal agencies.

Land is eligible for enrollment in the WRP if the landowner has owned that land for at least one year, and the land is restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits. Landowners may choose to restore wetlands with a permanent or 30-year easement, or enter into a cost-share restoration agreement with the USDA. If a permanent easement is established, the landowner will receive payment up to the agricultural value of the land and 100% of the wetland restoration costs. The 30-year easement payment is just 75% of what would be provided for a permanent easement on the same site, and 75% of the restoration costs. Voluntary cost-share restoration agreements are generally for a minimum of 10 years, and 75% of the cost of restoring the land to wetlands is provided. In all instances, landowners continue to control access to their land.

### **Wildlife Management Program**

The DNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management oversees a complex web of programs that incorporate state, federal and local initiatives primarily directed toward wildlife habitat management and enhancement. Programs include land acquisition, development and maintenance of State Wildlife Areas, and other wild land programs such as State Natural Areas. Wildlife Staff work closely with staff of state and county forests to maintain, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. Wildlife Management staff conduct wildlife population and habitat surveys, prepare property needs analysis's, develop basin wildlife management plans and collaborate with other DNR planning efforts such as Park, Forestry or Fishery Area Property Master Plans to assure sound habitat management. Funding comes from the federal government in the form of Endangered Species grants and Pittman-Robertson grants and from state government in the form of hunting and trapping license revenues, voluntary income tax contributions, general program revenue and Stewardship funds.

### **Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Wisconsin Historical Society**

This office is part of the Wisconsin Historical Society and serves as the principal historic preservation agency in the state. In partnership with communities, organizations and individuals, the SHPO works to identify, interpret and preserve historic places for the benefit of present and future generations.

## Goals, Objectives, and Policies

*Goal: Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.*

Policy: The Town shall promote well-planned development to minimize negative impacts on land and water resources.

Objective: Protect local water quality and forestland integrity through the use of regulatory development ordinances.

Objective: Educate and encourage landowners near the shoreline in the use of buffers and proper riparian land management practices.

Objective: Educate and encourage landowners in forested areas to use proper forestland management practices.

Objective: Monitor and encourage proper construction site and agricultural field erosion control.

Objective: Educate the public on proper maintenance of septic systems, groundwater testing, well maintenance, and unused wells.

Objective: Mark ecologically sensitive areas with signs and buoys to help enforce recommended restrictions. This includes speed limit signage for boating in shallow water or sensitive areas.

*Goal: Preservation of cultural, historic and archaeological sites.*

Policy: The Town shall seek to preserve and maintain cultural, historic, and archaeological sites located within the Town.

Objective: Use local ordinances to protect historically significant structures; seek protective status designations from the federal and state government for publicly-owned historic sites and structures.

Objective: Encourage residents to obtain special status for historic structures and sites.

*Goal: Retain and restore shorelands on lakes, rivers, and streams, to preserve or improve shoreland habitat and reduce pollutants from entering water bodies.*

Policy: The Town shall encourage riparian landowners to establish shoreland buffers.

Objective: Use Town Board's review of land development to advocate the creation of shoreland buffers.

*Goal: Improve forestry management to promote productivity of forest products, protect wildlife habitat, water quality, and provide recreational opportunities.*

Policy: The Town shall encourage proper forest management and attempt to control illegal dumping and garbage in commercial and public forestlands.

Objective: Establish fines for illegal dumping in the Town.

Objective: Promote and support the “Clean Sweep” program.

Objective: Encourage private landowners to use professional forestry assistance.

# Chapter Three

## Housing

Housing characteristics and trends are important components of comprehensive planning. The physical location of housing can determine the need of many public facilities and services. Furthermore, understanding dynamics in the market likely to affect housing development in the future provides a basis for the formulation of policy to coordinate transportation facilities with a sustainable pattern of residential development. Understanding the factors affecting people’s ability to meet their own housing needs provides a basis for reinforcing community ties, fostering economic development and environmental sustainability and improving the quality of life.

### Previous Plans and Studies

#### Wisconsin State Consolidated Housing Plan

The Consolidated Housing Plan is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \*(HUD) in the application process required of the states in accessing formula program funds of Small Cities Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships, Emergency Shelter Grants and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) “The Consolidated Plan provides the Framework for a planning process used by states and localities to identify housing, homeless, community, and economic development needs and resources and to tailor a strategic plan for meeting those needs.”

#### Grow North Region Housing Study, 2021

The Grow North Region Housing Study analyzes the Grow North Region’s (which includes Oneida County) housing stock and housing trends, as well as workforce housing within the Grow North Region. This analysis identifies needs, such as a need for additional housing throughout the Grow North Region, what types of housing are needed throughout the Region, and which steps are needed to solve housing gaps within the Region. This housing study also developed a set of goals and strategies to address the housing issues identified. The identified goals in the Grow North Region Housing Study are as follows:

- Provide an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals and households of all income levels throughout the Region.
- Increase the number of rental units within the Region.
- Encourage and Support a diverse mix of housing within the Grow North Region.
- Encourage housing that accommodates seniors, those with special needs, and those that are extremely-low income.

### Regional Livability Plan, 2015

The 2015 Regional Livability Plan (RLP), written by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), addresses issues of livability in the areas of housing, transportation, economic development and land use. The RLP identifies a number of issues affecting community livability related to housing:

- Aging Population
- Smaller household sizes
- Lack of Housing Options
- Increase in Housing Costs related to incomes

### Oneida County Comprehensive Plan, 2013

The Oneida County Comprehensive Plan closely examines the state of housing throughout Oneida County, examining housing issues and qualities such as age of housing units, housing value, housing types, seasonal housing, and general housing characteristics. The identified goals in the Oneida County Comprehensive Plan as pertains to housing are as follows:

- Encourage adequate supply of affordable housing for all individuals of all income levels consistent with the rural character of the county.
- Encourage residential development in suitable areas
- Encourage the use, maintenance and renovation of existing housing as a source of affordable housing

## Housing Stock Assessment

### Housing Type and Tenure

In 2020, the Town of Stella had 237 occupied housing units, nearly all of which were owner-occupied, as shown in **Table 12**. The Town of Stella had a significantly higher percentage of owner-occupied homes than Oneida County (83 percent) and a significantly higher percentage than the State of Wisconsin (67 percent). The average household size of 2.48 was higher than both the County (2.22) and the State (2.38). About eight percent of households within the Town were occupied by a single householder and about 28 percent of households had at least one individual age 65 and older.

**Table 12: Housing Units by Type and Tenure, 2020**

	Stella	Oneida County	Wisconsin
Total Occupied Housing Units	237	15,677	2,377,935
Owner-Occupied Units	235	12,979	1,596,500
Renter-Occupied Units	2	2,698	781,435
Average Household Size	2.48	2.22	2.38
Percent Owner-Occupied	99.2%	82.8%	67.1%
Percent Householder Living Alone	8.4%	15.3%	16.0%
Percent with Individuals 65 or Over	27.8%	40.1%	29.2%

Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020

## Age Characteristics

The age of a community’s housing stock typically reflects several important factors including size, offered amenities, and overall maintenance costs. Age of the home often also reflects different regional and national trends in housing development. Housing predating the 1940’s for example, was typically smaller and built on smaller lots. In subsequent decades, both average lot and home sizes have increased. For example, average homes constructed in the later part of the previous century and the first decade of the millennium are typically much larger than housing built in previous decades. This can be seen in both the rural and more urban environments of Oneida County. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

**Table 13** indicates the age of the housing stock in the Town of Stella area that is based on the year the structures were built as reported in the 2016-2020 American Community Survey. About five percent of Stella's housing units were built before 1940, compared to only about eight percent of housing units in Oneida County and about 19 percent of housing units statewide. Over 59 percent of housing units within the Town of Stella were built between 1970 and 1999, a significantly higher proportion than both Oneida County (52 percent) and Wisconsin (38 percent). Housing growth has slowed significantly over the past decade, as only about one percent of the Town’s housing stock has been built since 2010, a trend that is also being experienced within Oneida County and Wisconsin.

Table 13: Year Structure Built						
	Town of Stella		Oneida County		Wisconsin	
Before 1939	20	5.3%	2,456	7.9%	514,838	19.0%
1940-1949	7	1.8%	1,427	4.6%	147,695	5.5%
1950-1959	28	7.4%	2,676	8.6%	289,277	10.7%
1960-1969	22	5.8%	2,862	9.2%	262,303	9.7%
1970-1979	71	18.7%	5,620	18.0%	392,059	14.5%
1980-1989	75	19.7%	5,190	16.6%	266,654	9.8%
1990-1999	80	21.1%	5,322	17.0%	380,262	14.0%
2000-2009	73	19.2%	4,334	13.9%	334,007	12.3%
After 2010	4	1.1%	1,353	4.3%	122,349	4.5%
Total	380	100.0%	31,240	100.0%	2,709,444	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020

## Structural Characteristics

The vast majority of housing units (over 86 percent) in the Town of Stella are single-family, as shown in **Table 14**. Both the Town of Stella and Oneida County have a housing stock with a significantly higher percentage of single-family housing than the State as a whole. There are only seven housing units within the Town that are multi-family units, with multi-family housing units accounting for only 1.8 percent of the Town’s housing stock, which is significantly lower than both Oneida County and Wisconsin. Mobile homes comprise about 11.8 percent of the housing stock in Stella, significantly higher than both Oneida County and Wisconsin.

**Table 14: Housing Units by Structural Type**

	Single-Family		Multi-Family		Mobile Home		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Town of Stella	328	86.3%	7	1.8%	45	11.8%	380
Oneida County	26,792	85.8%	1,079	3.5%	1,877	6.0%	31,240
Wisconsin	1,918,556	70.8%	699,129	25.8%	91,759	3.4%	2,709,444

Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020

## Value Characteristics

**Table 15** details housing values in owner-occupied homes throughout the Town, County, and State. In 2020, the median housing value was \$153,600 in the Town of Stella. This was significantly lower than Oneida County, at \$179,000 and the State of Wisconsin, at \$189,200. Over half of the homes within the Town (approximately 55 percent) are valued between \$100,000 and \$199,999. There is housing across a broad spectrum of valuations in the Town.

**Table 15: Housing Values of Owner-Occupied Units, 2020**

	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 to \$299,999	\$300,000 or More	Median Value
Town of Stella	13.6%	11.1%	23.0%	31.9%	14.0%	6.4%	\$153,600
Oneida County	5.8%	15.2%	17.5%	19.1%	21.3%	21.1%	\$179,000
Wisconsin	4.4%	11.4%	18.5%	19.2%	24.6%	21.9%	\$189,200

Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020

## Seasonal Housing

Seasonal housing plays an important role in the demographics and economy of Oneida County. Every year, thousands of absentee landowners visit their properties in the Northwoods for recreation. Most of these landowners permanently reside and are employed across Wisconsin or Illinois. As a result, there is a significant number of homes in the area that are vacant for long periods of time (usually in winter).

Seasonal housing makes up a significant portion of the Town's housing stock. In 2020, seasonal housing accounted for nearly a third of the Town's total housing stock, as shown in **Table 16**. Seasonal housing also makes up a significant portion of the housing stock in Oneida County, as about 45 percent of all housing units within the County were considered seasonal in 2020. Seasonal housing is much more common in both the Town and County than it is throughout the State as a whole, as only about seven percent of housing units across the State are considered to be seasonal housing units.



**Table 16: Percentage of Seasonal Housing, 2020**

	Total Housing Units	Seasonal Housing Units	Percent Seasonal Housing Units
Town of Stella	380	125	32.9%
Oneida County	31,240	14,058	45.0%
Wisconsin	2,709,444	191,920	7.1%

Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020

## Housing Affordability

Several factors contribute to the affordability of housing in Oneida County. These factors include rent and mortgage payments, maintenance expenses, lot size, and required or desired amenities for the dwelling. Household size and income are key factors contributing to what housing options are available and accessible to residents.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban (HUD) development recommends that housing costs do not exceed 30 percent of monthly income. If housing costs exceed 30 percent of monthly income, a household is considered cost-burdened. HUD also indicates that lenders are more willing to make loans if the scheduled mortgage payment is no greater than 31 percent of the monthly household income. Low-income households that pay more than 30 percent of their income toward rent may have difficulty affording other household necessities such as food, childcare, and healthcare costs. Severely cost-burdened households are at risk of becoming homeless.

Median monthly costs for homeowners, with and without a mortgage, and for renters are shown in **Table 17**. For homeowners with a mortgage, costs are slightly lower in Stella than in Oneida County. For homeowners without a mortgage, costs are also slightly lower in Stella than in Oneida County. Due to the low number of rental households within the Town, rent information is unavailable for the Town of Stella. The median gross rent in Oneida County was \$789 in 2020, which is significantly lower than the statewide median gross rent of \$872.

Table 17 also displays the percentage of households that are considered to be cost-burdened. About 12 percent of owner-occupied households in Stella are cost-burdened, compared to about 19 percent of owner-occupied households in Oneida County. Renter households are significantly more likely to be cost-burdened than owner-occupied households. In Oneida County, about 42 percent of renter-occupied households were cost-burdened in 2020, which compares similarly to the statewide percentage of about 43 percent.

**Table 17: Housing Affordability, 2020**

	With Mortgage	Without Mortgage	Cost-Burdened (Owner-Occupied)	Median Gross Rent	Cost-Burdened (Renter-Occupied)
Town of Stella	\$982	\$386	11.9%	N/A	N/A
Oneida County	\$1,197	\$431	19.4%	\$789	41.5%
Wisconsin	\$1,436	\$556	18.8%	\$872	43.2%

Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020

## Specialized Housing

In Oneida County, housing for seniors and populations with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Rhinelander, while Crandon provides these resources in neighboring Forest County. The Oneida County and Forest County Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC), the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and the Northwoods United Way all maintain a list of these housing options throughout both Oneida and Forest Counties. As the number of elderly populations increases in the coming years, there will most likely be a greater need for a wider variety of housing options.

## Senior Housing

Housing for seniors typically consists of a range of housing options that provide a spectrum of assistance starting with individual units or homes with little or no assistance, independent living communities for seniors that remain independent, assisted living facilities for those who are no longer able to live on their own, and nursing homes for those that need skilled medical care.

According to research by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the overwhelming majority of seniors prefer to “age in place,” or remain in their home throughout retirement. This can be difficult for those in rural areas such as Stella, as the ability to access medical care and necessary goods and services can become burdensome. This highlights the importance of senior transportation services and universal design (home design that creates access for all people). The closest senior housing facilities are located in the Rhinelander and Crandon areas. The area surrounding the Town of Stella will likely need additional housing options for seniors in upcoming years.

## Housing Programs

There are a variety of state and federal housing programs geared at addressing a variety of housing issues. Grants and low interest loans are available for counties, communities, or individual homeowners and renters. The following are some housing resources administered through the state using state or federal funds that are available to participants.

### **Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)**

- Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)
- Rental Assistance (Section 8) Programs
- Multifamily Loan Fund
- National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling
- WHEDA Advantage
- FHA Advantage
- First-Time Home Buyer Advantage
- WHEDA Tax Advantage
- WHEDA Foundation Grant Program

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development (USDA-RD)**

- Single Family Direct Home Loans
- Single Family Home Loan Guarantees
- Mutual Self-Help Housing Technical Assistance Grants
- Rural Housing Site Loan
- Housing Preservation & Revitalization Demonstration Loans & Grants
- Housing Preservation Grants
- Multi-Family Housing Direct Loans
- Multi-Family Housing Loan Guarantees
- Multi-Family Housing Rental Assistance

### **State of Wisconsin Department of Administration Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources (DEHCR)**

- Housing Grants and Loans
- Homelessness Assistance and Prevention
- Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)
- HOME Homebuyer and Rehabilitation Program
- HOME Rental Housing Development (RHD)
- Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program
- Housing Cost Reduction Initiative Program (HCRI)
- CDBG – Small Cities Housing and Revolving Loan Program

### **The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

- The HUD Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program
- The HOME Investment Partnership Program
- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers
- CDBG – Small Cities Program

## Goals, Objectives & Policies

Although the Town has not historically played a role in housing, it supports equal opportunity housing, and understands the importance of sound housing stock for its residents and the community as a whole. A review of housing stock assessment information has led to the establishment of the following housing policy statement:

*Goal: Promotion of the redevelopment, maintenance, and rehabilitation of existing residential structures.*

Policy: The Town shall encourage development activities that seek to redevelop underutilized land area and/or rehabilitate existing housing.

Objective: Promote education about and utilization of available programs to assist homeowners and homebuyers with rehabilitation of housing and the construction of new homes.

*Goal: Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.*

Policy: The Town shall encourage development regulations that seek to maintain affordable land values with respect to the median family income.

Objective: Form a partnership with local financial institutions to promote low-interest rates and available financing for homeownership.

Objective: Promote education about and utilization of available programs to assist low- to moderate-income homeowners and homebuyers with the construction of new homes.

# Chapter Four

## Utilities and Community Facilities

Utilities and community facilities play an important role in the livability of a community. This is because 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, and cable communications. 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.

### Previous Plans and Studies

#### Oneida County All Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2016

This document examines general conditions, including an inventory of utilities, community facilities and emergency services, throughout the county. Risk assessment is at the heart of the All-Hazards Mitigation program. In order to mitigate the risks, it's 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 the identified hazards. Counties and incorporated municipalities are required to adopt such plans with updates every five years, and the Oneida County program includes the Town of Stella.

### Inventory

Utilities and community facilities provided by the Town of Stella or by other public or private entities are inventoried and evaluated as to their present condition and adequacy to meet the current and future needs of the Town. Many of the major facilities are identified on the **Utilities and Community Facilities Map**.

#### Water and Wastewater Facilities

The Town residents maintain their own on-site sewage treatment systems for wastewater. That is, each resident and business is responsible for installing and maintaining their own septic tank or other approved means of treating wastewater within the bounds of the Wisconsin state sanitary code known as COMM 83. At the current time, private, on-site sewage treatment is an adequate means to serve the community need.

## **Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling Facilities**

The Town does not provide a publicly funded garbage collection service. At one time, the Town maintained a waste dump on a parcel of land near Rasmussen Rd. This site was closed many years ago to alleviate environmental concerns. Landowners coordinate and finance their own curbside garbage collection. There are a number of firms in the general area that provide this service. Large items may be taken by the resident to the Oneida County landfill for disposal at a cost commensurate with weight and size of the items to be disposed. At the current time, revenues do not support municipally funded solid waste disposal services.

## **Power and Telecommunication Facilities**

Electricity lines were first run to the community of Starks in 1932. There are no power plants or high voltage transmission lines within the Town of Stella. Most power in the community is drawn from a high voltage line crossing through the Town of Piehl located to the east of Stella.

Telephone service is provided by Frontier, as well as various cellular companies. Spectrum provides cable TV and broadband Internet service, generally along US 8 and north for a distance along US 45. There is one cellular tower located within the Town.

## **Parks, Recreation, and Other Youth Facilities**

The Town of Stella maintains one park known as Stella Municipal Park. This park is located behind Town Hall on Stella Lake Road. The grass stadium is used primarily for baseball and softball events and consists of a fenced field. There is a small playground near the stadium with a teeter-totter, swings, pull up bars, and climbing bars.

Most of the Town of Stella is in the Rhinelander school district, while the northeast portion of the Town is in the Three Lakes school district. The Town is also served by three parochial elementary schools in Rhinelander. The Nicolet Technical College, located in Rhinelander, serves the Town. Two libraries serve the Town - Rhinelander Library and the Nicolet Technical College library also in Rhinelander. Stella is a member of the Rhinelander Library District as well as the Three Lakes Library District.

## **Emergency Services**

Police protection in the Town of Stella is provided by the Oneida County Sheriff's Department. The Town has a volunteer fire department, including rescue and first responders. EMS/ambulance service is provided by the County, in conjunction with Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital.

The nearest medical facilities are the Aspirus Crandon Clinic located in Crandon, the Marshfield Clinic in Eagle River, and the Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital located in Rhinelander. The Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital is available to provide 24-hour emergency service and critical care.

## Other Government Facilities

The local road system is the most significant public facility maintained by the Town and is covered in the **Transportation Chapter**. The Town Hall is located at 2496 County Highway C, Rhineland, WI 54501. The Town Hall serves as a meeting room available for Town committees and residents to use. The Town also anticipates that the Town Hall will be able to function as a storm shelter by 2023 with power supplied by multiple generators. There are no known cemeteries located within the Town.

## Utilities and Public Facilities Programs

Providing public infrastructure – roads, sewer and water service, schools, police and fire protection – is one of the major functions of local government. In addition to these public services, both public and private entities provide electricity and telephone service as well as such specialized services as child-care, health-care and solid-waste disposal. Taken together these constitute the utilities and community facilities that represent much of the backbone of modern life. Beyond what these facilities do for us, they also represent a huge investment of public and private resources.

The efficient utilization of these resources is one of the basic principles of comprehensive planning. Already in-place 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 bypasses or ignores 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 probably not the best use of scarce public resources.

Both the state and federal governments offer programs that assist communities with the development of critical infrastructure and facilities. These programs are listed in more detail in the **Economic Development Chapter** of this plan.

## Goals, Objectives, and Policies

*Goal: Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.*

Policy: The Town shall be attentive to development impacts as they relate to the expense of infrastructure, utilities, and services.

Objective: Evaluate each new development proposal for its impact on local services and choose options that either operate within current capacities or expand capacity to accommodate the additional impacts.

Objective: Examine the possibility of utilizing impact fees to reduce municipal expenses in accommodating new development.

*Goal: Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.*

Policy: The Town shall make provision for improvements, expansions, and repairs with respect to infrastructure and public services consistent with current and projected need.

Objective: Develop and adhere to a Capital Improvements Plan.

Objective: Maintain a current comprehensive plan with population projection data to estimate future demand.



# Chapter Five

## Transportation

Transportation is necessary for the effective movement of people and goods within the community. It is also essential to connect those within the Town with connections outside of the Town. Transportation is also critical to development and land use. This chapter provides an inventory of the existing transportation facilities and services within the Town of Stella.

Transportation is a crucial component of livability and provides a basis for the formulation of policy to coordinate transportation facilities within a sustainable pattern of development. The existing network, from roads to rails needs to be coordinated to maximize efficiency for the overall system. The connection between home and work is an important part of any transportation system. A range of transportation alternatives should be supported, including walkability whenever possible.

### Previous Plans and Studies

#### Regional Livability Plan, 2015

The 2015 Regional Livability Plan (RLP), written by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, addresses issues of livability in the areas of housing, transportation, economic development, and land use. The RLP identifies three major transportation issues.

- Modes of Transportation to Work – The region’s workforce is extremely dependent on the automobile. In 2012, over 80 percent of the region’s workforce drove alone to work on a daily basis. Another 10 percent carpooled, leaving less than 10 percent for the non-automobile methods such as walking, biking, and using transit. The average commute time in Oneida County, was 19.2 minutes.
- Age of Drivers in the Region – The region is seeing a change in the number of licensed drivers by age groups. Between 2004 and 2013, the region saw a 20 percent decrease in the number of drivers between the ages of 17 and 19. During the same years, the region also had a 20 percent increase in drivers over age 65. These changes mean communities will have a need for multimodal options for the younger ages and options to increase safety as drivers age.
- Transportation Maintenance Cost – It is expensive to maintain the transportation infrastructure in the region. The current reliance on fuel tax and registration fees is inadequate, unstable, and may soon be outmoded. The inability to fund improvements and maintenance on transportation infrastructure will impact the ability to transport goods and provide safe, reliable, and efficient roads.

#### Connections 2030

This is Wisconsin's latest long-range, statewide, multimodal transportation plan. It identifies a series of system-level priority corridors that are critical to Wisconsin's travel patterns and the state economy.

### Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

This 2018 plan is a region-wide effort to improve bicycling and walking across the communities. The plan assesses existing conditions related to bicycling and walking, identifying other potential trail and route user groups, identifying routes and describing policies and programs to assist local governments in improving bicycling and walking to promote connectivity between communities and destinations throughout north central Wisconsin.

### State Trails Network Plan

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) created this plan in 2001, to identify a statewide network of trails and to provide guidance to the DNR for land acquisition and development. Many existing trails are developed and operated in partnership with counties. By agreement the DNR acquires the corridor and the county government(s) develop, operate, and maintain the trail.

One proposed trail from the State Trails Network Plan involves the Town of Stella:

**Segment 68—Rhineland to Three Lakes** is a northeast-southwest abandoned rail corridor that connects Rhineland with Three Lakes and runs through Stella.

### Oneida County Pedestrian and Bicycle Corridors Plan, 2002

In 2002, this plan was created to guide the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Oneida County. The vision of this plan is to increase the mobility of people within the County by making walking and bicycling viable and attractive transportation choices.

## Road Network

The highway system within the Town of Stella is a network of federal and state highways together with various local roads and streets. The jurisdictional and functional breakdown of the Town of Stella road network is shown in **Table 17**.

<b>Table 17: Road Mileage by Jurisdictional and Functional Class</b>				
Jurisdiction	Functional Classification			Totals
	Arterial	Collector	Local	
State*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
County	0.00	6.26	0.00	6.26
Town	0.00	0.00	39.12	39.12
Totals	0.00	6.26	39.12	45.38

Source: WisDOT & NCWRPC.

\* WisDOT has jurisdiction over interstate and federal highways.

### Functional Classification

A functionally classified road system is one in which streets and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of the services they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility to land access functions. At the upper limit of the system (principal arterials, for example), are those facilities that emphasize traffic mobility (long, uninterrupted travel), whereas at the lower limits are those local roads and streets that emphasize access.

The functional classifications are generally defined as:

- **Principal Arterials** serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics of an interstate or interregional nature. These routes generally serve all urban areas with populations greater than 5,000 or connect major centers of activity. They carry the highest traffic volumes and are designed to accommodate longer trips.
- **Minor Arterials**, like principal arterials, minor arterials also serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators, providing intra-community continuity and service for trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials.
- **Collectors** provide both land access service and traffic circulation, within residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas. The collector system distributes trips from the arterials through the area to the local streets. The collectors also collect traffic from the local streets and channel it into the arterial system.
- **Local streets** comprise all facilities not on one of the higher systems. They serve primarily to provide direct access to abutting land and access to higher order systems. Local streets offer the lowest level of mobility and high volume through-traffic movement on these streets is usually discouraged.

## Jurisdiction

Roads are commonly classified in one of two ways: by ownership or by purpose. Jurisdictional responsibility refers to ownership of a particular road, while functional classification, as described above, identified the road by the level of service it provides.

Jurisdiction refers to governmental ownership, not necessarily responsibility. For example, some State-owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Additionally, the designation of a public road as a “Federal-aid highway” does not alter its ownership or jurisdiction as a State or local road, only that its service value and importance have made that road eligible for Federal-aid construction and rehabilitation funds.

The Stella road system is composed of two levels of governmental jurisdiction. These include the Town system encompassing the local roads and the county highway system. There currently are no state or federal highways that run through the Town.

As previously noted, these functional classifications are generally equated with the jurisdictional divisions. In the more developed larger urban communities, this relationship may not be as rigid, whereas the local community constructs and maintains all classes of the roadway system. However, in the typical rural transportation system the jurisdictional and the functional classifications maintain a closer relationship. The greatest emphasis of traffic in rural areas is generally on non-local efficient movement, whereas local access is secondary due to relatively low population densities.

### Major Collectors

Based on the qualifications of the roadway classifications, the Town of Stella has the service of one major collector, County Highway C. As shown in the **Transportation Map**, County Highway C serves

as the main roadway of the Town, travelling in an east-west direction. This highway connects Rhinelander and Highway 45, which provides linkages to Antigo, Elcho, Three Lakes, and Eagle River.

### Local Roads

The Town of Stella local road network consists of approximately 39 miles of local roads, of which about 12.25 miles are unpaved. As part of the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) the Wis. DOT requires all local units of government to submit road condition rating data every 2 years. The Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) program and WISLR are tools that local governments can use to manage pavements for improved decision making in budgeting and maintenance. Towns can use this information to develop better road budgets and monitor roads in need of repair.

### Road Maintenance

The Town of Stella uses the Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) system, which was designed by the Transportation Information Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The PASER system is the rating system used by most Wisconsin communities. The PASER system rates road surfaces on a scale of 1 to 10. This scale is broken down as follows:

- “1” and “2” = very poor condition
- “3” = poor condition
- “4” and “5” = fair condition
- “6” and “7” = good condition
- “8” = very good condition
- “9” and “10” = excellent condition

**Table 18** shows a summary of pavement conditions in the Town of Stella. Roads exhibiting a surface condition rating at or below “fair” must be examined to determine what type of reconstruction or strengthening is necessary. The roads that display a surface rating of “good” or better will only require minimal preventative maintenance to promote safe travel conditions. An aggregate 24.89 miles of roads in the Town, or 63.6 percent, are in need of improvement. Approximately 31 percent of roadways in the Town are gravel roads. Asphalt or concrete roads account for the remaining 69 percent of the total.

Table 18: Summary of Pavement Conditions, 2021	
Surface Condition Rating	Miles
Very Poor	4.20
Poor	7.55
Fair	13.14
Good	11.50
Very Good	2.28
Excellent	0.48
Total	39.15

Source: WisDOT 2021

## Other Modes of Transportation

### Bicycle and Pedestrian

In 2002, Oneida County developed a bike route plan (Oneida County Pedestrian and Bicycle Corridors Plan, 2002) with assistance from the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. This plan established a number of scenic, on-road bike routes throughout the County.

The Town of Stella contains portions of multiple existing and planned bike routes as described in the Previous Plans and Studies section of this chapter on pages 1 and 2.

The County Bike Plan recommends institutionalizing bicycle needs within local schools, public health programs, local law enforcement programs, and transportation planning processes that occur in Oneida County.

### Airport

The Rhinelander/Oneida County Airport (RHI) in Rhinelander is the closest public airport to Stella. RHI has one concrete runway that is 6,799 feet long, and one asphalt runway that is 5,201 feet long. The airport had just over 25,000 enplanements in 2010 and is classified by WisDOT as a “commercial” airport.

Delta Connection now provides two daily flights between the Rhinelander-Oneida County Airport and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, and a third flight from Minneapolis-St. Paul in the evening in route to Ford Airport in Iron Mountain Michigan.

### Public Transportation

Northwoods Transit Connections provides public transportation in Oneida and Vilas Counties with on-demand service 5 days per week from 8:00am - 5:00pm. The Oneida County Department on Aging coordinates volunteer driver-escort service to residents of Oneida County, which includes Stella. Escort drivers provide transportation to elderly and disabled residents of Oneida County that qualify as a priority trip purpose such as medical appointments.

Scheduled intercity bus service is no longer available in the area since Greyhound discontinued service to Rhinelander. Private charter/tour bus companies are based in surrounding cities.

### Trucking

U.S. Highways 8 and 45 are the closest principal truck routes to the Town of Stella as designated by WisDOT. This corresponds with its role as Corridors 2020 connecting route, linking to the Backbone highway system, and facilitating the movement of goods between Oneida County and the rest of the state/nation.

Local truck routes often branch out from these major corridors to link local industry with the main truck routes as well as for the distribution of commodities with the local area. Mapping these local routes is beyond the scope of this study, and local issues such as safety, weight restrictions, and noise impacts play significant roles in the designation of local truck routes.

A number of private trucking companies are available in Rhinelander.

## Transportation Programs

Below is a listing of programs that may be of assistance to the Town with regard to the development of the local transportation system. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is the primary provider of programs to assist local transportation systems. A wide variety of programs are available to serve the gamut of jurisdictions from county down to the smallest town. The programs most likely to be utilized by rural towns such as Pelican include:

- General Transportation Aids
- Flood Damage Aids
- Town Road Improvement Program
- Town Road Improvement Program – Discretionary
- Local Bridge Improvement Assistance
- Local Transportation Enhancements
- Traffic Signing & Marking Enhancement Grant
- Rustic Roads

More information on these programs can be obtained by contacting the WisDOT region office in Rhinelander or on the Internet at [www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/index.htm](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/index.htm).

## Goals, Objectives, and Policies

*Goal: Encouragement of development designs that support a range of transportation choices.*

Policy: The Town shall encourage developments that allow for pedestrian and bicycle traffic as well as vehicular traffic.

Objective: Ensure that approved subdivisions have adequate roadway widths to safely accommodate pedestrians and bicycles simultaneously with vehicle traffic.

*Goal: Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.*

Policy: The Town shall favor development patterns that are within the Town's capacity to provide adequate roadway maintenance.

Objective: Utilize a subdivision ordinance to require development that is readily accessible by existing roads with appropriate maintenance to handle the impact of the new development.

Objective: When necessary, require the developer to contribute to the maintenance of existing roads and/or the construction of new internal roads within the development.

*Goal: Providing adequate transportation infrastructure to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.*

Policy: The Town shall anticipate and budget for future transit system demands and maintenance of existing transit systems.

Objective: Utilize a capital improvements plan to prioritize transportation infrastructure expenditures.

*Goal: Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.*

Policy: The Town shall attempt to facilitate transportation methods that are effective, but within the bounds of the municipal budget.

Objective: Continue to maintain all Town roads and implement ADA compliant design measures in the construction of new roads and trails when possible.

# Chapter Six

## Economic Development

The economic base of the community serves as an important driver for current and future land use. Economic characteristics include such components as the size of the civilian labor force, comparative employment growth, employment by industry, unemployment rates, and commuting patterns. Employment patterns and economic trends generally occur on a regional scale. Residents of one community often work in another. Similarly, changes in a major industry can impact jobs and growth far beyond the community where the business is physically located. It is therefore important to understand a local community's economy in light of its regional context.

Assessment of these components of the economic base provides an important historical perspective on current land use patterns and provides insights that help to predict possible future directions and opportunities for growth of the local economy.

### Previous Plans and Studies

#### Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), 2021

Oneida County is one of ten counties included in the North Central Wisconsin Economic Development District as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). The NCWRPC is the agency responsible for maintaining that designation. As part of the designation, the NCWRPC annually prepares a CEDS. This report summarizes and assesses economic development activities over the past year and presents new and modified strategies to promote growth.

#### Regional Livability Plan (RLP), 2015

Economic Development is one of four elements included in the RLP, adopted by the NCWRPC in 2015. The Economic Development Assessment Report within the RLP observes in detail the economic health of the ten-county region and identifies trends and issues facing the local economy.

The RLP addresses three economic development issues:

- Available Labor Force and Employment – Businesses need a workforce with the proper education to meet the demands of an ever-changing job market. High labor needs combined with an older workforce preparing for retirement will result in a labor force shortage and inability to meet the workforce needs of area businesses. The future availability of a quality labor force is a major concern for the business community.
- Living Wage – over the past ten years, the region's cost of living (i.e. home prices and rent) have increased faster than per capita and household incomes. Consequently, many working adults must seek public assistance and/or hold multiple jobs in order to meet the basic needs of their families. Occupations paying a living wage provide families resources for savings,



investments, education, and the purchasing of goods which improves the local economy and increases the quality of life of the region’s population.

- Broadband – High-speed broadband connections are crucial for government services, healthcare, education, library systems, private businesses, and residents. Improving the region’s telecommunication network can assist existing businesses, attract new businesses, and allow residents to access education opportunities.

### ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2020

This report, developed by the United Way, described the 33 percent of households in Oneida County that are below the federal poverty level and/or struggle to afford basic household necessities, or “ALICE” households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). These households are largely employed but do not earn enough in wages to meet the “household survival budget,” which does not allow for any savings. The report states that many ALICE households provide vital services, such as retail, health care, childcare, and security, but cannot make ends meet on the income provided from these jobs.

- The ALICE report shows that 24 percent of Stella households are either below the federal poverty level or are considered ALICE households, indicating that the proportion of households financially stressed in Stella is similar to the proportion in Oneida County.

## Economic Environment

### County Economic Environment

Historically, the Oneida County economy was based on forest resources and diversified agriculture. Increased population and infrastructure – railroads, roads and dams for power enabled the area to evolve beyond simple agriculture and logging operations. Resources that once left the area unprocessed were now transformed into finished products in the County, providing employment opportunities and adding value in forest products and agricultural processing. A number of related manufacturing operations grew up in the area, some based on forest products and agricultural products, others supplying the existing industries with fabricated metals products. As these industries progressed, so did industries such as transportation, communications, public utilities, government, trade, finance, insurance, and real estate. The County now enjoys a well- diversified economy.

Due to the low amount of economic activity which takes place exclusively within the Town and the truth that the local workforce is primarily employed outside the Town, Oneida County data is presented for comparison.

### Economic Sectors

**Table 18** details employment by sector for the Town of Stella and Oneida County. In 2020, there were 369 persons employed in the thirteen basic economic sectors in the Town, up 34.2 percent since 2000. In 2020, the leading industry sectors for Town of Stella employed residents were the Education, Health, and Social Services; Manufacturing; and Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing sectors.

Overall, there were 16,554 persons employed in the basic economic industry sectors in Oneida County in 2020. In contrast to the increase in employment experienced in the Town of Stella, employment within Oneida County has decreased by 3.8 percent since 2000, when there were 17,199 persons employed within Oneida County. The leading industry sectors within Oneida County in 2020 were the Education, Health and Social Services; Retail Trade; and Manufacturing sectors.

Between 2000 and 2020, there were several dramatic shifts in employment throughout industries within Oneida County. Only four sectors – the Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing; Professional and Business Services; the Other Services; and the Manufacturing sectors - experienced growth within the County during this time. All other industry sectors experienced declines within the County during this time, with the Information and the Natural Resources & Mining sectors experiencing the fastest declines in employment.

Industry Sector	Town of Stella			Oneida County		
	2000	2020	% Change 2000-20	2000	2020	% Change 2000-20
Ag., Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining	30	5	-83.3%	526	330	-37.3%
Construction	6	27	350.0%	1,455	1,115	-23.4%
Manufacturing	42	62	47.6%	2,080	2,192	5.4%
Wholesale Trade	3	6	100.0%	425	387	-8.9%
Retail Trade	46	37	-19.6%	2,815	2,540	-9.8%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	13	18	38.5%	689	466	-32.4%
Information	3	0	-100.0%	434	171	-60.6%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	12	42	400.0%	636	933	46.7%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative & Waste Mgmt Services	21	27	28.6%	898	1,223	36.2%
Education, Health and Social Services	49	88	79.6%	3,953	3,884	-1.7%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	16	15	-6.3%	1,694	1,659	-2.1%
Public Administration	14	31	121.4%	861	738	-14.3%
Other Services	20	11	-45.0%	733	916	25.0%
Total	275	369	34.2%	17,199	16,554	-3.8%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)

## Labor Force Analysis

Labor force is defined as the number of persons, sixteen and over, employed or looking to be employed. **Table 19** compares the labor force of the Town of Stella with that of Oneida County. Between 2000 and 2020, the Town of Stella experienced a 23.2 percent increase in the labor force, as the Town’s labor force increased from 302 residents in 2000 to 372 residents in 2020. The increase in

the Town’s labor force during this time is in stark contrast to the decrease experienced in Oneida County during the same time period. With a labor force consisting of 16,931 persons in 2020, Oneida County’s labor force has decreased by 7.6 percent since 2000, when the County’s labor force consisted of 18,327 persons.

<b>Table 19: Labor Force</b>						
	Town of Stella			Oneida County		
	2000	2020	% Change	2000	2020	% Change
Population 16 years and over	469	513	9.4%	29,592	30,078	1.6%
Labor Force	302	372	23.2%	18,327	16,931	-7.6%
Employed	275	369	34.2%	17,199	16,554	-3.8%
Unemployed	27	3	-88.9%	1,112	377	-66.1%
Unemployment Rate	5.8%	0.6%	-89.7%	6.1%	1.3%	-78.7%
Participation Rate	64.4%	72.5%	12.6%	61.9%	56.3%	-9.0%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)

### Unemployment

Unemployment is defined as the difference between the total civilian labor force and total persons employed. Stay-at-home parents, retirees, or persons not searching for employment are not considered unemployed because they are not considered part of the labor force. In 2000, the Town of Stella had 5.8 percent unemployment, and in 2020 unemployment was significantly lower at 0.6 percent. The Town of Stella’s unemployment rate was lower than both Oneida County (1.3%) and the State of Wisconsin (2.3%) in 2020.

### Workforce Participation

Workforce participation is a measure expressed in terms of a percentage of persons actively seeking employment divided by the total working age population. People not participating in the labor force may not seek employment due to a variety of reasons including retirement, disability, choice to be a homemaker, or are simply not looking for work. In 2000, 64 percent of Stella’s population over the age of 16 was in the labor force. By 2020, that percentage was significantly higher at 72.5 percent, which was significantly higher than Oneida County’s participation rate of about 57 percent. The Town of Stella had a slightly higher participation rate than the State (66.1%), while Oneida County had a significantly lower participation rate than the State.

### Laborshed

A laborshed is an area or region from which an employment center draws its commuting workers. In 2019, there were 65 jobs located within the Town of Stella. 61 of these jobs were filled by persons who live outside of Stella, while only six of these jobs was filled by a resident of Stella. In contrast, there were 381 workers who live in Stella that commuted to locations outside of the Town for work, as shown in **Figure 8**. This indicates that Stella’s laborshed extends beyond its municipal borders.

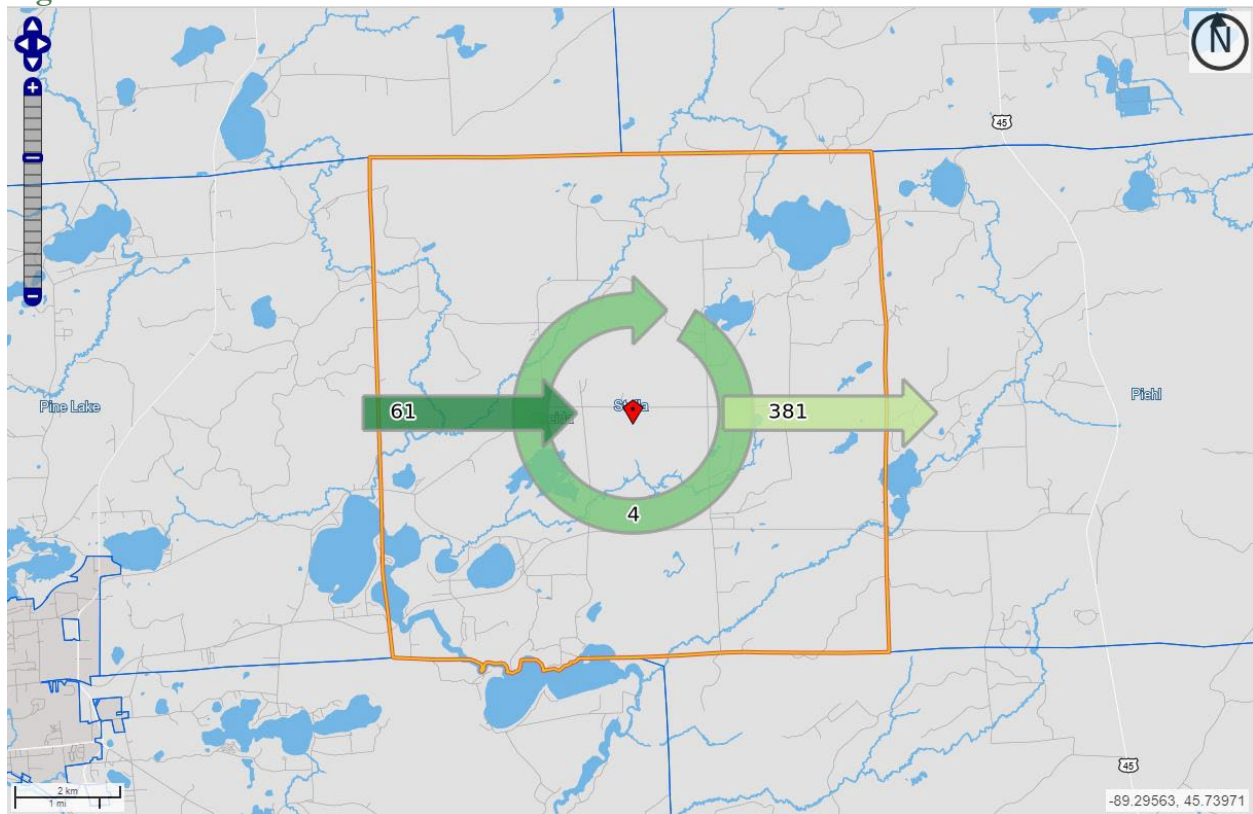
### In-Migration

The majority of workers that commute into the Town for work live in close proximity to the Town, with many of these workers either living within Oneida County or in neighboring Vilas and Forest Counties.

### Out-Migration

The most substantial group of outbound commuters (those who live in the Town but work outside of the Town) travel to the City of Rhinelander for work. Other common work locations for Town residents include Eagle River, Three Lakes, Antigo, and Wausau.

**Figure 8: Town of Stella Laborshed**



Source: U.S. Census On the Map

## Occupations

**Table 20** displays the occupational employment for residents in the Town of Stella and for residents in Oneida County. In 2020, most residents within the Town of Stella were employed in Management, Professional & Related occupations, while most Oneida County residents were also employed in Management, Professional & Related occupations. The second-most represented occupational group among Town of Stella residents was the Sales & Office occupational group, while the Sales & Office occupational group was also the second-most represented in Oneida County.

**Table 20: Occupation of Employed Workers**

Occupation	Town of Stella		Oneida County	
	2000	2020	2000	2020
Management, Professional & Related	97	114	5,117	5,505
Service	22	52	2,747	2,792
Sales & Office	74	85	4,465	3,716
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	37	76	2,266	1,925
Production, Transportation & Mineral Moving	45	42	2,604	2,616
Total	275	369	17,199	16,554

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2016-2020)

## Economic Development Programs

There are a number of economic development programs available to businesses and local governments in Oneida County. Following is a partial list of those programs.

### Local:

#### Tax Increment Financing

In 2004, the WI State Legislature enacted changes to the state’s Tax Increment Financing statutes. One significant change involved allowing townships to establish tax increment districts for specified economic development projects. Tax Increment Financing has been employed by numerous communities throughout the state to promote redevelopment in blighted areas and finance new industrial development.

### County:

#### Oneida County Economic Development Corporation (OCEDC)

The Oneida County Economic Development Corporation (OCEDC) was founded in 1989 as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) Corporation to act as an economic development coordinator for all of Oneida County. OCEDC assists individuals investigating the feasibility of going into business, works with existing business to expand and retain economic viability, and works to attract new business in an effort to expand our economic base and provide employment alternatives to the citizens of Oneida County. OCEDC also acts as a conduit between business and government on a local, regional, state, and federal level.

#### Oneida County Revolving Loan Fund

A Wisconsin Department of Commerce Economic Development Grant was awarded to Oneida County, which enabled the county to establish a revolving loan fund in order to assist local businesses. The fund is managed and administered by the OCEDC.

## **Regional:**

### **North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**

The Town is a member of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, as are all local governments in Marathon County based on county membership. Membership brings with it a variety of planning benefits and service. Benefits include participation in the Economic Development District, including eligibility for a variety of grants administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. In addition, resulting in membership with the NCWRPC, the County is a member of the North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation which manages a revolving loan fund designed to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed-rate, low down payment, low interest financing.

### **North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation**

The North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation (NCWDC) manages a revolving loan fund designed to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed rate, low down payment, low-interest financing. It is targeted at the timber and wood products industry, tourism, and other manufacturing and service industries.

## **State:**

### **Rural Economic Development Program**

This program administrated by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) provides grants and low interest loans for small business (less than 25 employees) start-ups or expansions in rural areas. Funds may be used for "soft costs" only, such as planning, engineering, and marketing assistance.

### **Wisconsin Small Cities Program**

The Wisconsin Department of Administration provides federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to eligible municipalities for approved housing and/or public facility improvements and for economic development projects. Economic Development grants provide loans to businesses for such things as: acquisition of real estate, buildings, or equipment; construction, expansion or remodeling; and working capital for inventory and direct labor.

### **University of Wisconsin Extension Office**

The Center for Community Economic Development, University of Wisconsin Extension, creates, applies and transfers multidisciplinary knowledge to help people understand community change and identify opportunities.

### **The Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC)**

This non-profit organization is located at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater and specializes in new product and invention assessments and market expansion opportunities for innovative manufacturers, technology businesses, and independent inventors.

### **Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**

The UW SBDC is partially funded by the Small Business Administration and provides a variety of programs and training seminars to assist in the creation of small business in Wisconsin.



### **Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)**

This program, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, provides immediate assistance and funding for the cost of transportation improvements necessary for major economic development projects.

### **Federal:**

#### **Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

EDA offers a guaranteed loan program as well as public works grant program. These are administered through local units of government for the benefit of the local economy and, indirectly, private enterprise.

#### **US Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA – RD)**

The USDA Rural Development program is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in all of rural America. Financial programs include support for such essential public facilities and services as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and electric and telephone service. USDA-RD promotes economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks and community-managed lending pools. The program also offers technical assistance and information to help agricultural and other cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their member services.

#### **Small Business Administration (SBA)**

SBA provides business and industrial loan programs that will make or guarantee up to 90% of the principal and interest on loans to companies, individuals, or government entities for financing in rural areas. Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corporation acts as an agent for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) programs that provide financing for fixed asset loans and for working capital.

## Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Although the Town of Stella has not, historically, played a role in economic development, it supports efforts to stabilize and expand the economic base and employment opportunity for its residents and the community as a whole. A review of economic base assessment information has led to the establishment of the following economic development policy statement:

*Goal: Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing structures to revitalize community identity.*

Policy: The Town shall encourage developments that rehabilitate and protect the historic character of the community while utilizing existing commercial and industrial structures.

Objective: Direct development into the area of Starks along County Highway C to preserve the character of the Town seat.

Objective: Educate the business community about the economic development assistance programs available to the Town.

*Goal: Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.*

Policy: The Town shall advocate land uses that utilize existing natural resources to yield an economic return.

Objective: Support land use that maintain renewable sources of lumber and agricultural products.

*Goal: Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base.*

Policy: The Town shall attempt to maintain the status quo with respect to economic base and employment. The Town Board should take measures to allow the economy to expand if the opportunity presents itself and it is within the financial means for the Board to do so.

Objective: Develop a working relationship with local and area economic development organizations for assistance in applying for funding assistance from local, state, and federal government entities.



# Chapter Seven

## Land Use

Land use analysis is a means of broadly classifying how land is used. Each type of use has its own characteristics that can determine compatibility, location, and preference to other land uses in the Town. The land use plan brings together consideration for both the physical development as well as the social characteristics of the Town. Land use mapping and related information is used to analyze the current pattern of development and serves as the framework for formulating how land will be used in the future.

To arrive at an optimum plan that will be both effective and implemented, the plan must account for past development activity as well as current market factors and conditions that shape where and how land will be developed. This chapter discusses uses of land in the Town of Stella. The existing land use types are defined, current land uses are analyzed, and existing and potential land use conflicts are identified.

### Previous Plans and Studies

#### Oneida County Comprehensive Plan, 2013

The Oneida County Comprehensive Plan is primarily a policy plan. The overall goal of the Plan is to add county-level perspective and planning direction that compliments and strengthens local planning efforts, as well as provide guidance to the communities within Oneida County. The Plan describes existing and future land uses and regulatory tools for land use.

#### Regional Livability Plan, 2015

Land use is one of the four elements included in the RLP, adopted by NCWRPC in 2015. The Land Use Assessment Report, a component of the plan, looks in detail at the land uses through the ten-county region and identifies issues and trends related to land use: housing density and farmland preservation. The two land use goals of the plan are as follows:

- Preserve and protect the Region’s landscape, environmental resources and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.
- Manage and reduce vacant land and structures.

### Existing Land Use Inventory

Current land use activity in the Town is characterized by large blocks of forestland with scattered farming, and residential development. There are large sections of forest with limited access, most of which is privately owned. These large contiguous forest blocks are necessary to maintain economically viable forests.

**Table 20** presents the current breakdown of land-use types within the Town. The majority of the Town is woodlands at about 15,638 acres or about 66 percent. The next most significant land use types are agriculture, water, residential, and open lands. The other land uses combined account for only two percent of the Town’s total land area. The **Existing Land Use Map** displays the existing land use within the Town.

<b>Table 20: Existing Land Use, 2020</b>		
	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	4,882	20.6%
Commercial	27	0.1%
Cranberry Bog	57	0.2%
Governmental/Institutional	151	0.6%
Industrial	21	0.1%
Open Lands	619	2.6%
Outdoor Recreation	73	0.3%
Residential	911	3.8%
Transportation	150	0.6%
Water	1,194	5.0%
Woodlands	15,638	65.9%
Total	23,722	100.0%

Source: NCWRPC GIS

## Land Use Trends

### Land Supply and Demand

As shown by the existing land use inventory, the majority of the Town is "undeveloped" woodlands and agricultural land, so the supply of land "available" for development appears to be adequate. Even under a rapid growth scenario, the supply of land in the Town of Stella is more than sufficient to accommodate projected demand over the next 20 years for all use categories.

### Land Values

**Table 21** displays the assessed land values in the Town of Stella. It is important to note that lands enrolled in the Managed Forest Law and Forest Crop Law programs and other tax-exempt lands are not included in values for Table 21. It should also be noted that improvements (structures) are also not included in the values. In 2021, the assessed value per acre in the Town was valued at about \$2,282 per acre. Properties classified as “Residential” have the highest value per acre within the Town, followed by properties classified as “Commercial” and “Other”.

**Table 21: Assessed Land Value (per acre), 2021**

Land Classification	Total Value of Land	Total Value per Acre
Residential	\$21,387,700	\$16,401.61
Commercial	\$1,864,200	\$11,578.88
Manufacturing	\$0	\$0.00
Agriculture	\$724,800	\$165.10
Undeveloped	\$1,373,600	\$349.25
Forest	\$6,966,800	\$1,890.07
Agricultural Forest	\$975,900	\$865.16
Other	\$132,400	\$3,310.00
Total	\$33,425,400	\$2,282.84

Source: WI Department of Revenue

## Opportunities for Redevelopment

While there are properties that could be redeveloped for other uses in Stella, the likelihood of doing so is limited. The amount of undeveloped land readily available for residential development in Stella precludes the likelihood that existing developments will be removed in favor of this use. Commercial and industrial activities have limited market potential given the rural nature of the community.

## Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts

The issues identified under the land value section above play out as a land use conflict. The search for developable land at inexpensive prices brings residential subdivision development to the Town. These new subdivisions and high value homes raise land values and associated costs for Stella's residents. Most Stella residents prefer the rural character of their Town; as development continues in the Town, these residents will likely be less satisfied with the character of their community. In summary, the greatest land use conflict for the Town will be finding a balance between maintaining rural character and accommodating new residential development.

## Future Land Use

The **Future Land Use Map** represents the long-term land use recommendations for all lands in the Town. Although the map is advisory and does not have the authority of zoning, it is intended to reflect community desires and serve as a guide for local officials to coordinate future development of the Town.

Town of Stella Plan Commission members participated in a mapping exercise with NCWRPC staff to identify the desired future land uses by using eight common Land Use Map Classifications, as described below. Town Plan Commission members used their broad knowledge of the Town to draw shapes on a map representing the different land uses. The goal was to produce a generalized land use plan map (future land use) to guide the Town's growth.

## **Future Land Use Map Classifications:**

Future land use classifications are groups of land uses that are compatible, and separates conflicting uses. The classifications are not zoning districts and do not have the authority of zoning, but are intended for use as a guide when making land use and zoning decisions.

### **Forestry / Agriculture**

This land use planning district is intended to cover all the land uses in Stella that are either undeveloped, used for forestry, or are engaged in farm practices. The district assumes that the land will remain as large parcels to promote efficiency in farming activities and forestry; farm houses are also permitted as a necessary part of the farm use. Open space recreational uses such as golf courses, campgrounds, and wilderness areas are permitted with special consideration. The following zoning districts (per the Oneida County Zoning Ordinance) are considered to be consistent with the intent of this land use district: 1-A Forestry and 1-B Forestry.

### **Rural Residential**

This land use district accommodates roadside development in the town. The district is best described as a 660' wide buffer on each side of Stella's paved roads wherein the Town is likely to see limited residential development in the near future. The district allows for churches, cemeteries, schools, public libraries, campgrounds, public museums, parks, and municipal buildings given certain review. Home occupations and businesses subordinate to the residence may be permitted as well. The following zoning districts (per the Oneida County Zoning Ordinance) are considered to be consistent with the intent of this land use district: Rural Residential District. Land divisions creating parcels of less than five acres should be discouraged or prevented by the Town's Subdivision Ordinance where possible. While this district seeks to focus development within a short distance from the roadway access, the planning committee anticipates that this district may be expanded further from the road once development has "filled in" in those areas closest to the road. This approach avoids difficulties in emergency management caused by population densities in remote areas accessed by long private roads.

### **Residential**

This land-use planning district is intended to allow single-family residential uses. The district allows for more density around the Town's lakes. The district allows for churches, cemeteries, schools, public libraries, campgrounds, public museums, parks, and municipal buildings given certain review. Home occupations and businesses subordinate to the residence may be permitted as well. Unlike the rural residential district, this district has no special limitation on land divisions; minimum parcel size is determined by the zone prescribed under the official county zoning map. The following zoning districts (per the Oneida County Zoning Ordinance) are considered to be consistent with the intent of this land use district: 1-B Forestry, 1-C Forestry, Rural Residential, and Single Family.

### **Commercial**

This land-use planning district is intended to allow for general commercial activities. This district is intended to cover most of the commercial operations in Stella with the exception of home occupations. This district is found in three places on the map: the community center of Starks, Camp Deerhorn, and Camp Bryn Afon. The following zoning districts (per the Oneida County Zoning Ordinance) are considered to be consistent with the intent of this land use district: Single Family, Multiple Family Residential, Residential and Retail, Recreational, B-1 Business, and B-2 Business.

### **Industrial**

This land use planning district is intended to accommodate intensive land uses, particularly those characterized by noise, dirt, smoke, odor, and physical appearance. This district is used in only one place on the land use map: in section 26 it denotes a mining operation adjacent to County Highway C. The following zoning districts (per the Oneida County Zoning Ordinance) are considered to be consistent with the intent of this land use district: Manufacturing and Industrial District.

### **Governmental / Institutional**

This district identifies land owned and maintained by government or institutional entities. Both Town Hall and the UW Agricultural Research property are covered by this district. The following zoning districts (per the Oneida County Zoning Ordinance) are considered to be consistent with the intent of this land use district: General Use District.

### **Open Space and Recreation**

Only Stella Municipal Park is provided with this land use district. This use defines land that is publicly owned and maintained for purposes of outdoor recreation and open space. The following zoning districts (per the Oneida County Zoning Ordinance) are considered to be consistent with the intent of this land use district: General Use District.

## **Land Use Programs**

To implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, there are some basic tools that are available to the Town. There are zoning, subdivision ordinance, and official mapping.

### **Zoning**

Zoning is a major tool used to regulate land uses and implement a comprehensive plan. The zoning ordinance regulates the use of property to advance the public health, safety, and welfare of the community. It has been used throughout the United States and in Wisconsin since the 1920's.

A zoning ordinance creates different use zones or districts within a community. Each district has a list of permitted uses, which are uses that are desirable in a district. Districts may also contain a list of special uses, sometimes called special exceptions or conditional uses, which are allowed under certain circumstances, and require review by a local government body to be allowed. All other uses are prohibited.

Zoning regulations are adopted by local ordinance and consist of two major components, a map and related text. The zoning map displays where the zoning district boundaries are, and the text describes what can be done in each type of district. The Future Land Use Plan and zoning are similar but they are not the same.

Zoning should be derived from, and be consistent with, the policy recommendations adopted in the comprehensive plan. The desired land uses should “drive” the development of specific zoning ordinance provisions including district descriptions, permitted uses, conditional uses, and the zoning map. This consistency has been important in upholding legal challenges in the Courts. Following the

planning process it is critical that the zoning ordinance be updated to incorporate the findings of the plan.

### Land Division

Subdivision regulation relates to the way in which land is divided and made ready for development. A community can control the subdivision of land by requiring a developer to meet certain conditions in exchange for the privilege of recording a plat. While imposing conditions restricts the use of private property, the cumulative effect of land subdivision on the health, safety, and welfare of a community is so great as to justify public control of the process.

Of all the land use control devices available, subdivision regulation has probably the greatest potential. When compared with zoning, a well-administered subdivision control is more useful in achieving planning goals and its influence is far more lasting. Once land is divided into lots and streets are laid out, development patterns are set. Subdivision regulations can ensure that those development patterns are consistent with community standards. Subdivision regulations can also ensure the adequacy of existing and planned public facilities such as schools, wastewater treatment systems, and water supply to handle new growth. Finally, subdivision regulation can help ensure the creation and preservation of adequate land records. As is the case for shoreland zoning, Oneida County administers subdivision regulation within the Town of Stella. Additionally, all one- and 2-family dwellings and modular homes are required to adhere to uniform statewide construction standards and inspection procedures as per the State's Uniform Dwelling Code.

There is some overlap between zoning and subdivision codes in terms of standards. Both ordinances, for example, can set lot sizes. Both can deal with the suitability of land for development. Implementing important plan techniques such as rural cluster development often requires use of the zoning ordinance and the subdivision ordinance.

### Shoreland Zoning

All counties are mandated by Wisconsin law to adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates land-use in shoreland/wetland and floodplain areas for the entire area of the county outside of villages and cities. As a result, shoreland zoning within Stella is administered by Oneida County. This ordinance supersedes any town ordinance, unless the town ordinance is more restrictive. The shoreland/wetland and floodplain area covered under this zoning is the area that lies within 1,000 feet of a lake and within 300 feet of a navigable stream or to the landward side of a floodplain, whichever distance is greater.

### Farmland Preservation Program

The State of Wisconsin has a Farmland Preservation Tax Credit Program. The goals of the program are twofold: to preserve Wisconsin farmland by means of local land use planning and soil conservation practices, and to provide property tax relief to farmland owners. Landowners keeping land in agricultural use can claim a credit on their state income taxes. See the **Oneida County Farmland Preservation Plan** for more information.

### Forest Crop Law (FCL) and Managed Forest Law (MFL):

The Forest Crop Law is no longer open to new participants except through the purchase of land currently under this law. The length of the original contracts was for either a 25 or 50 year period. Forest Crop contracts cannot be renewed, however conversion into the Managed Forest Law program is possible. Participants must follow a written management schedule, including mandatory activities of cutting mature timber, and thinning plantations and natural stands. A ten percent yield tax is applied. Public access for fishing and hunting activities must be permitted on Forest Crop land.

The purpose of the Managed Forest Law (MFL) is to encourage sustainable forestry on private woodlands in Wisconsin. The law incorporates timber harvesting, wildlife management, water quality, and recreation to maintain a healthy and productive forest. To be eligible for the MFL program, a landowner must have a minimum of 20 acres, 80 percent of which must be productive forest land. Landowners designate the land “open” or “closed” and commit to a 25 or 50 year sustainable forest management plan. Lands designated as open may be used by the public for hunting, fishing, hiking, sightseeing, and cross country skiing.

The plan sets a schedule for specific forestry practices, and in return participants make a payment in lieu of traditional property taxes. Lands enrolled or renewed as of January 1, 2017, are not eligible if they contain a building or an improvement associated with a building. Mandatory practices during the MFL entry period include harvesting timber, thinning plantation and natural stands, pine release, pre- and post-harvest treatments, and controlling soil erosion.

The benefits of these programs to Stella include:

- Protection against over timber harvesting;
- Long-term investment in area forestry;
- Encouraged woodland expansion;
- Preservation and management of wildlife habitat;
- Preservation of the Town's “northwoods character” and;
- FC and MFL-open lands are available for recreational use by public.

The benefits to the individual property owner include:

- A lower payment in lieu of property taxes;
- Protection against annual increases in property taxes, and;
- Private land forestry technical assistance.

Further participation in these programs by private landowners is a vital component to ensure the preservation of the Town's natural “northwoods character”. It would be beneficial for the Town of Stella to continue informing private landowners of the forestry management and preservation programs as well as other available resource protection programs, and to encourage private landowners to continue to participate in such programs.



### **Impact of Public and Private Resource Protection Programs:**

The Town of Stella benefits from significant public and private participation in land and resource protection programs. State owned land, forestry management programs, and a conservation easement currently impact more than 7,150 acres, approximately 30%, of the available land in the Town.

About 6,700 acres of woodlands and forestlands are currently enrolled in WDNR Forest Crop (FC) or Managed Forest lands (MFL) programs. As a result of the associated deed restrictions, the continued and expanded participation in these programs assist in the preservation of natural resources. This provides a means to enhance and retain the “northwoods character” of the Town.

Woodlands, forests, waterbodies, and other natural amenities are among the Town of Stella’s most notable assets. Public and private resource protection programs safeguard these resources for future generations.

### **Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Program:**

In October of 1999, the Governor signed into law Wisconsin Act 9, the Budget Bill, containing substantial revisions of statutes governing comprehensive planning. The law has been revised by the signing of two additional bills into law. The first is AB 872, containing “technical revisions” which was signed May 10, 2000. The second bill, signed April 13, 2004, is AB 608, which reduced the number of items that must be consistent with the plan to three, these are: official mapping, subdivision ordinances and zoning ordinances. Taken together these bills represent the most sweeping revision of the State’s planning enabling laws in half a century.

The law (§66.1001 WI Stats.) requires all jurisdictions within the state that exercise control over land-use to prepare a comprehensive plan by 2010. It lays out the nine required chapters of the plan and requires a public participation process. Jurisdictions that do not have a comprehensive plan in place by the deadline may not engage in actions that impact land-use.

The comprehensive planning law is significant in many ways. The law creates for the first time a definition of a comprehensive plan; it requires that almost all local units of government have a plan; it sets requirements for public participation; and requires that the plan be consistent with local implementations tools. Most important, is that it maintains that the process be locally driven so all local units of government decide their own future.



## Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The following land use policy statement is a means of guiding future development within the Town towards a more orderly and rational pattern:

*Goal: Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.*

Policy: The Town shall favor development patterns that are consistent with the land use plan.

Objective: Use the land use plan to direct land uses into established areas that are both aesthetically suitable and adequately serviced by services including school buses, Town fire protection, etc.

Objective: Use the land use plan to direct land uses into established areas that are adequately serviced by adjoining roads.

*Goal: Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.*

Policy: The Town shall endeavor to protect private property values and the ability of the property owner to enjoy his/her property to the extent that this protection does not constitute a severe detriment to the community welfare.

Objective: Ensure that zoning and subdivision regulations are consistent with the comprehensive plan.

*Goal: Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique communities.*

Policy: The Town shall attempt to develop and preserve community identity.

Objective: Planning and regulatory controls should be applied with the intention of maintaining the existing density and character of current development within the Town.

Objective: Attempt to preserve a low-density level of development when reviewing land division requests.

*Goal: Consider implementing the Town's Subdivision Ordinance to preserve a low-density level of development throughout the Town.*

Policy: The Town shall attempt to develop and preserve community identity.

Objective: Planning and regulatory controls should be applied with the intention of maintaining the existing density and character of current development within the Town.

Objective: Attempt to preserve a low-density level of development when reviewing land division requests.

# Chapter Eight

## Intergovernmental Cooperation

The issue of intergovernmental cooperation is increasingly important; since many issues cross over political boundaries, such as watersheds, labor force, commuter patterns, and housing. Communities are not independent of each other, but rather dependent on each other. The effects from growth and change on one spill over to all surrounding communities and impact the region as a whole.

Wisconsin Statute s.66.30, entitled “Intergovernmental Cooperation”, does enable local governments to jointly do together whatever one can do alone. Unfortunately, there is little public policy in Wisconsin law that encourages, let alone requires, horizontal governmental relationships. The result is that towns, villages, cities, and counties often act more as adversaries than as partners.

Statewide, Wisconsin has over 2,500 units of government and special purpose districts. Having so many governmental units allows for local representation, but also adds more players to the decision making process. In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate

### Background

#### Overview

As discussed earlier in the plan, the Town is surrounded by the Towns of Monico, Pelican, Piehl, Pine Lake, Sugar Camp, and Three Lakes. These are important intergovernmental relationships for the Town. Efforts should be made to maintain good working relationships with the surrounding towns and the County.

The issue of intergovernmental cooperation is increasingly important; since many issues cross over political boundaries, such as watersheds, labor force, commuter patterns, and housing. Communities are not independent of each other, but rather dependent on each other. The effects from growth and change on one spill over to all surrounding communities and impact the region as a whole.

Statewide, Wisconsin has over 2,500 units of government and special purpose districts. Having so many governmental units allows for local representation, but also adds more players to the decision making process. In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communication and information sharing, or it can involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue.

## Benefits

There are many reasons intergovernmental cooperation makes sense. Some examples include:

- **Trust:** Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions. As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another's needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them.
- **Cost Savings:** Cooperation can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Cooperation can enable some communities to provide their residents with services that would otherwise be too costly.
- **Consistency:** Cooperation can lead to consistency of the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.
- **Address Regional Issues:** Communicating and coordinating their actions, and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities are able to address and resolve issues, which are regional in nature.

The major beneficiary of intergovernmental cooperation is the local resident. They may not understand, or even care about, the details of a particular intergovernmental issue, but residents can appreciate their benefits, such as costs savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

## Intergovernmental Relationships

### Surrounding Towns

The Town of Stella has no internal units of government like cities or villages, but it is adjacent to a number of jurisdictions with varying degrees of impact on Stella's activities. The Town Board government is overlapped by the Oneida County Board of Supervisors, the Rhinelander and Three Lakes School Boards, the Nicolet Technical College District, the Wisconsin State government, and finally the Federal government. Meanwhile, Stella abuts six Town governments: Piehl, Pine Lake, Monico, Pelican, Sugar Camp, and Three Lakes. Local planning efforts should involve what other units of government have in their plans or intend to do in the future.

#### Town of Pelican

The Town of Pelican completed its Comprehensive Plan update in 2019. This land use plan was prepared by the Town of Pelican Plan Commission and the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. This plan involves many goals and objectives regarding land use that are similar to those found in the land use element of Stella's plan. The Town of Pelican abuts the Town of Stella in the vicinity of Fourth and Fifth Lakes. Proposed land use maps within the Pelican plan indicate consistency with Stella's land use plan in that both indicate single-family residential use in these areas surrounding the lakes. Other adjoining areas are classified as forestry, which is also consistent with

Stella's classifications of those areas. The Town of Stella has a mutual aid agreement in place for Fire, Police, and EMS rescue with the Town of Pelican.

#### Town of Pine Lake

The Town of Pine Lake completed its 2022 Comprehensive Plan in October of 2003. The intergovernmental element of this plan identifies a desire to work cooperatively with the Town of Stella and other adjoining communities. The "Preferred Land Use" Map in the plan shows consistency with Stella's plan in the areas surrounding Third Lake and between Moen and Second Lakes in that both indicate single-family residential use in these areas surrounding the lakes. North of these lakes, Pine Lake's plan shows forestry uses while Stella shows both forestry and agricultural uses. The only inconsistency between the two planned land use maps is Pine Lake's classification of Rural Residential along Cross Country Road in the northeast portion of the Town. Stella's land use map does not support this type of development along this road, rather it indicates farm or large acreage forest residential development, if any. Much of this area is located in wetland/floodplain areas and is therefore unlikely to develop in this manner in either Town. The Town of Stella has a mutual aid agreement in place for Fire, Police, and EMS rescue with the Town of Pine Lake.

#### Town of Piehl

The Town of Stella Volunteer Fire Department provides Fire Service and Emergency Service to the Town of Piehl.

## County

Oneida County directly and indirectly provides a number of services to the Town and the Town enjoys a good working relationship with many of the responsible departments. These departments include Sheriff, Health, and Land Records. The Town contracts with the County for EMS service, provided by Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital.

The County Sheriff provides protective services through periodic patrols and on-call 911 responses. The Sheriff also manages the 911-dispatch center, not only for police protection, but also for ambulance/EMS response and dispatching the Town Fire Department. Oneida County also administers a county-wide mutual aid organization - MABAS Division 114 - and holds safety drills on a regular basis. The Forestry, Land and Outdoor Recreation Department maintains a countywide park system and county forest system for the use and enjoyment of all residents including the Town of Stella. The County Planning & Zoning Department administers shoreland zoning in the Town.

In many cases where state and federal agencies require area-wide planning for various programs or regulations, the County sponsors a countywide planning effort to complete these plans and include individual local units in the process and resulting final plan. Examples of this include the County Outdoor Recreation plan which maintains the eligibility for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources administered park and recreation development funding of each local unit that adopts it, and All Hazard Mitigation Plans which are required by Federal Emergency Management Agency in order for individual local units of government to qualify for certain types of disaster assistance funding.

## North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) was formed under §60.0309 Wis. Statutes as a voluntary association of governments serving a ten-county area. Oneida County is a member of the NCWRPC, which includes all of its local units of government.

NCWRPC provides both regional and local planning assistance. Typical functions of the NCWRPC include (but are not limited to) land use, transportation, economic development, intergovernmental and geographic information systems (GIS) planning and services.

## State and Federal Government

The Wisconsin departments of Natural Resources and Transportation are the primary agencies the Town might deal with regarding development activities. Many of the goals and objectives of this plan will require continued cooperation and coordination with these agencies.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources takes a lead role in wildlife protection and sustainable management of woodlands, wetland, and other wildlife habitat areas, while Wisconsin Department of Transportation is responsible for the planning and development of state highways, railways, airports, and other transportation systems. State agencies make a number of grant and aid programs available to local units of government like the Town of Elcho. Examples include local road aids, the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) and the Priority Watershed Program. There are also a number of mandates passed down from the state that the Town must comply with, such as the biannual pavement rating submission for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR).

Most federal programs are administered by the states, so the Town would be dealing with the responsible state agency with regard to federal programs and regulations.

## School District

Most of the Town of Stella is in the Rhinelander School District while the northeastern portion of the Town is in the Three Lakes School District. The Nicolet Technical College district includes the Town of Stella and has its nearest campus in Rhinelander.

The main form of interaction with both school and college districts are through payment of property taxes, which help to fund both districts' operations. The Town has little participation in issues pertaining to administration or siting of new facilities.

## Goals, Objectives & Policies

As in the previous chapters of this plan, a series of goals, objectives, and policies are identified.

*Goal: Encouragement of regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low governmental and utility costs.*

Policy: The Town shall endeavor to limit municipal spending on redundant government services and utilities.

Objective: Seek out nearby units of government that may be interested in partnerships to obtain services already provided by Stella (e.g. fire protection, road maintenance, etc.).

*Goal: Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.*

Policy: The Town shall attempt to plan and develop the community in harmony with the plans and intentions of nearby units of government.

Objective: Periodically request plans and information from nearby government units for review and use by the Stella Planning Committee and the Town Board.

Objective: Invite representatives from nearby units of government to participate in public hearings, meetings, and discussions that involve issues of importance to the representative's jurisdiction.

# Chapter Nine

## Implementation

This Plan is intended to be used as a guide by local officials, both town and county, when making decisions that affect growth and development in the Town of Stella. It is also important that local citizens and developers become aware of the Plan.

Some steps taken to implement this Plan include the adoption of written public participation guidelines, Plan Commission formation, a Plan Commission resolution recommending Plan adoption by the Town Board, an open house meeting, a formal public hearing, Town Board approval of the Plan by ordinance, distribution of the Plan to affected government units and ongoing Plan Commission reviews and updates.

### Implementation Tools

Having the appropriate tools to implement the recommendations in this comprehensive plan is critical. The most common implementation tools are the Town official controls or regulatory codes. The zoning ordinance and subdivision (or land division) regulations are used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development as identified in this comprehensive plan. Other regulatory tools include purchase of development rights (i.e., conservation easements), transfer of development rights, and purchasing of ecosystem services. There are also non-regulatory approaches to implementing the comprehensive plan; these generally involve decisions about how the community will spend its limited funding resources on capital improvements, staffing and maintenance. These decisions will affect the development demand and the location of development in the Town.

The State planning law requires certain programs and/or actions that affect land use must be consistent with the locally adopted comprehensive plan. To meet this requirement, Stella should evaluate and update related ordinances after the adoption of the comprehensive plan update. The Town Board officially adopts these regulatory and land use control measures as ordinances (or as revisions to the existing ordinances). Some of these tools were also discussed in the Land Use Chapter.

### Zoning Ordinance and Map

The Town of Stella is currently under Oneida County general zoning. Zoning is used to manage and control how land is used and developed. Zoning ordinances typically establish detailed regulations concerning how land may be developed, including setbacks, the density or intensity of development, and the height and bulk of building and other structures. The general purpose of zoning is to minimize undesirable externalities from development by segregating and/or buffering incompatible uses and by

maintaining standards that ensure development will not negatively impact the community's character or environment. The zoning ordinance also controls the scale and form of development, which heavily influences how people will interact with their environment and their neighbors.

The establishment of zoning districts and the zoning map indicates where specific types of development can and should be located. Zoning districts shown on the zoning map should be coordinated with the land use plan and map. While the zoning map and land use map do not need to directly match at the time the land use map is adopted, the intent is that the land use map will serve as a guide indicating how the property should eventually be zoned. Therefore, indiscriminate zoning changes may result in weakening of the comprehensive plan. In fact, changes to zoning district boundaries should only be made if they are consistent with the adopted land use map and the goals of the comprehensive plan.

However, there may be situations where changing the zoning district boundary makes sense and is in the best interest of the community. If changing the zoning would result in a conflict with the future land use map, the land use map should also be changed. However, the future land use map should only be changed if it does not accurately reflect the community's desired land use pattern. Achieving consistency between zoning and land use designation is also discussed in the **Land Use Chapter**.

### **Subdivision (Land Division) Ordinance**

The Town of Stella adopted the County subdivision ordinance. Subdivision regulations are an important tool ensuring the orderly development of unplatted and/or undeveloped land. These regulations may regulate lot sizes, road access, street design, public utilities, storm water drainage, parks and open space, and other improvements necessary to ensure that new development will be a public asset.

### **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**

This is an ongoing financial planning program that allows local communities to plan ahead for capital expenditures and minimize unplanned expenses. A capital improvement plan consists of a list of proposed projects according to a schedule of priorities over a four-to-six year period. It identifies needed public improvements, estimates their costs, and identifies financing methods and sources. Public improvements or expenditures typically considered in a CIP include:

- Public buildings (i.e., fire and police stations)
- Park and trail acquisition and development
- Roads and highways (maintenance and new construction/paving)
- Fire and police protection equipment

A CIP is simply a method of planning for and scheduling expenditures for public improvements over a period of several years in order to maximize the use of limited public funds. Each year the CIP



should be reviewed and extended one year to compensate for the previous year that was completed. This keeps the improvement program current and allows for modifications to meet the community's changing needs.

The preparation of a CIP is normally a joint responsibility between the town board, plan commission, staff, and citizen commissions. The preparation of a capital improvement program may vary from community to community depending on local preferences, the local form of government and available staff. The proposed capital improvement plan should be reviewed in light of the priorities outlined in the comprehensive plan.

## **Annual Operating Budget**

The Town prepares a budget each year and it is one of the most important policy documents prepared. It is a statement of the prioritization and allocation of financial resources to achieve certain objectives over a specific time period. The budget is based on the needs of Town residents and priorities set by the Town Board. The budget and the services provided by that budget are instrumental in achieving the goals and objectives of the plan.

## **Brownfield Redevelopment**

Pursuing funding from state agencies for redevelopment of contaminated sites can reduce the uncertainty that otherwise prevents contaminated properties from being redeveloped. Action by the Town to evaluate contaminants or begin remediating the property is often necessary before the private sector is willing to invest in redevelopment. While this may require some upfront investment from the community, as sites are improved and reused they generate tax base.

## **Other Tools:**

Some additional tools that could be utilized by the Town, include: fee simple land acquisition, easements (purchased or volunteered), and impact fees, among others.

## **Consistency Among Plan Chapters**

The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the Implementation Chapter describe how each of the required chapters will be integrated and made consistent with the other chapters of the plan. Since Stella completed all planning chapters simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. It is noted that some overlap naturally exists between the nine plan chapters. Where deemed appropriate, goals, objectives, and policies have been repeated under all applicable chapters to reinforce their importance.

## Plan Adoption, Amendments, Updates and Monitoring

While this comprehensive plan provides a long-term framework to guide development and public spending decisions, it must also respond to changes that occur in the community and region that were not foreseen when the plan was initially adopted. Some elements of the plan are rarely amended while others need updating on a more regular basis. Plan maps should also be updated periodically. In general, key maps, such as the future land use map, should be reviewed annually to make sure they are still current.

### Plan Adoption

The first step in implementing this plan involves adoption of the plan by local officials. The formal review and adoption process involves plan review by the Plan Commission (or other planning committee) who must adopt the plan by resolution of majority vote. The Plan Commission recommendation is forwarded to the Town Board who must adopt the plan by ordinance (of majority vote). A public hearing is required to allow public comment on the ordinance prior to Board final action to adopt the plan. Adoption formalizes the plan document as the framework to guide local development decisions over the next 20 years. The adopted plan should also be recognized as a tool for communicating the community's land use policy and goals and objectives regarding coordination of growth and development.

### Plan Amendments

The Stella Comprehensive Plan may be amended at any time by the Town Board following the same process described above for initial Plan adoption, regardless of how minor the proposed amendment or change. Amendments may be appropriate throughout the lifecycle of the plan, particularly if new issues emerge or trends change. These amendments will typically consist of minor changes to the plan text or maps. Large-scale changes or frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals should be avoided or the plan loses integrity.

The following criteria shall be considered when reviewing plan amendments:

- The change corrects an error made in the original plan.
- The change is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Town of Stella Comprehensive Plan.
- The change does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated.
- Development resulting from the change does not create an undue impact on surrounding properties. Such development shall be consistent with the physical character of the surrounding neighborhood or would upgrade and improve its viability.

- The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- The change does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment including trees, slopes and groundwater, or the impact could be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- There is a change in town actions or neighborhood characteristics that would justify a change.
- There is a community or regional need identified in the comprehensive plan for the proposed land use or service.
- The change does not adversely impact any landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties unless mitigated through relocation, commemoration, or dedication.
- The change does not adversely affect water quality and the overall health of residents.

Proposed amendments must be reviewed by the Plan Commission prior to final action and adopted by the Town Board. The public should be notified of proposed Plan changes and allowed an opportunity for review and comment. For major amendments, the Town might consider soliciting public opinion through surveys and/or community meetings prior to the official public hearing.

## Plan Updates

According to the State comprehensive planning law, comprehensive plans must be updated at least once every ten years. As opposed to the more routine amendments described above, plan updates often involve re-writing of whole sections of the plan document and significant changes to supporting maps. A plan update should include a thorough examination of the community's goals and objectives based on an analysis of current growth trends and major changes that have occurred since the plan was initially adopted or last amended. Plan updates must be formally adopted following the same procedure described above for initial plan adoption.

## Plan Monitoring

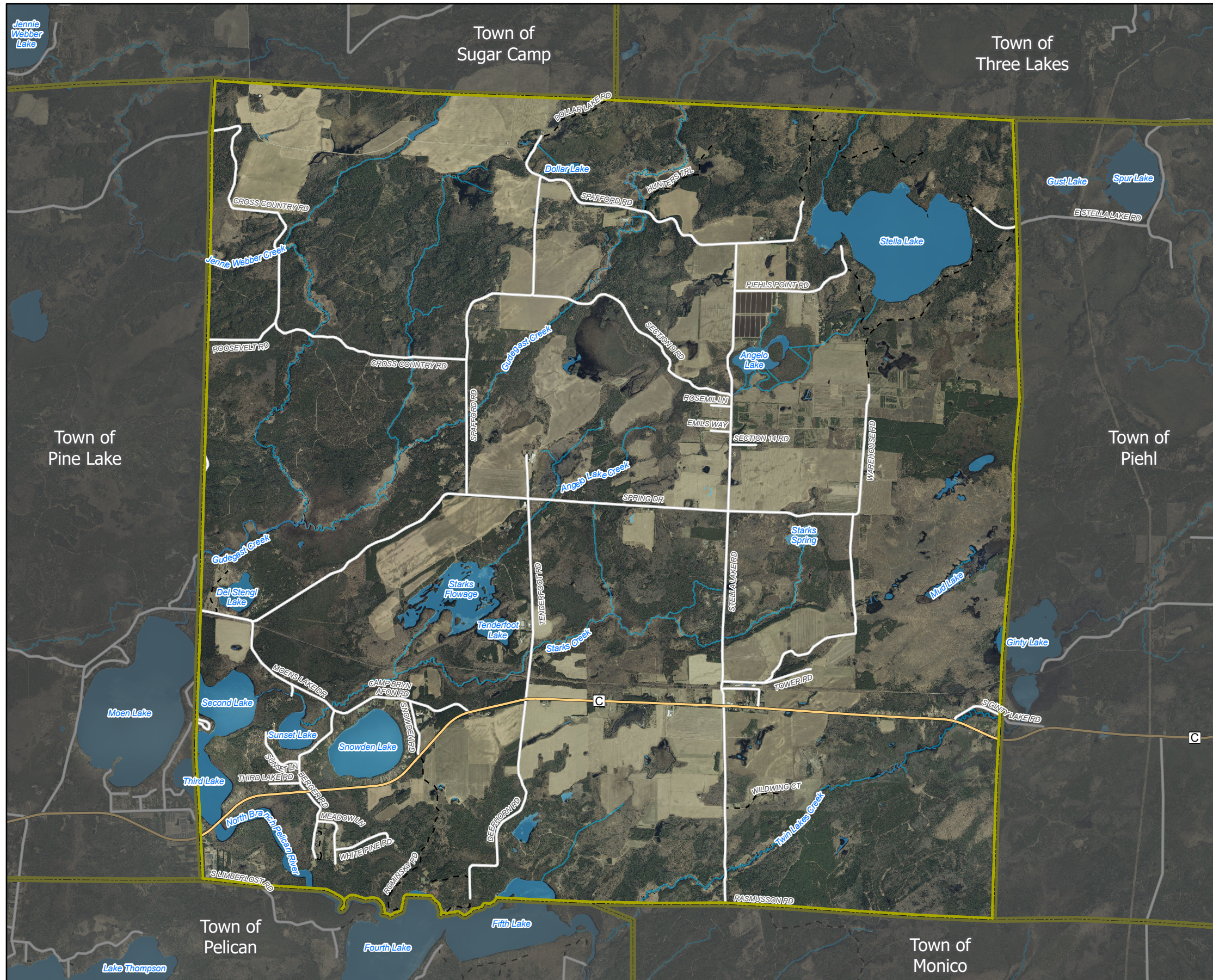
The adopted plan should be used as a tool by Town when making land use and development decisions. Decisions concerning private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other actions should be consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations outlined in this plan.

Although this plan describes policies and actions for future implementation, it is impossible to predict the exact future condition. As such, the goals, objectives, and actions in this plan should be monitored on a regular basis to maintain concurrence with changing conditions and respond to unanticipated events.







This plan should be evaluated at least every 5 years, and updated at least every 10 years. Members of the Town Board, Plan Commission, and any other local decision-making bodies should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated. The evaluation should involve first reviewing the goals and objectives to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires. Then the strategies and actions should be reviewed and refined to eliminate completed tasks and identify new approaches if appropriate.

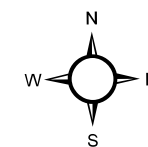
# Maps





### Planning Area

-  Minor Civil Division
-  U.S. Highway
-  County Highway
-  Local Roads
-  Private Roads
-  Water



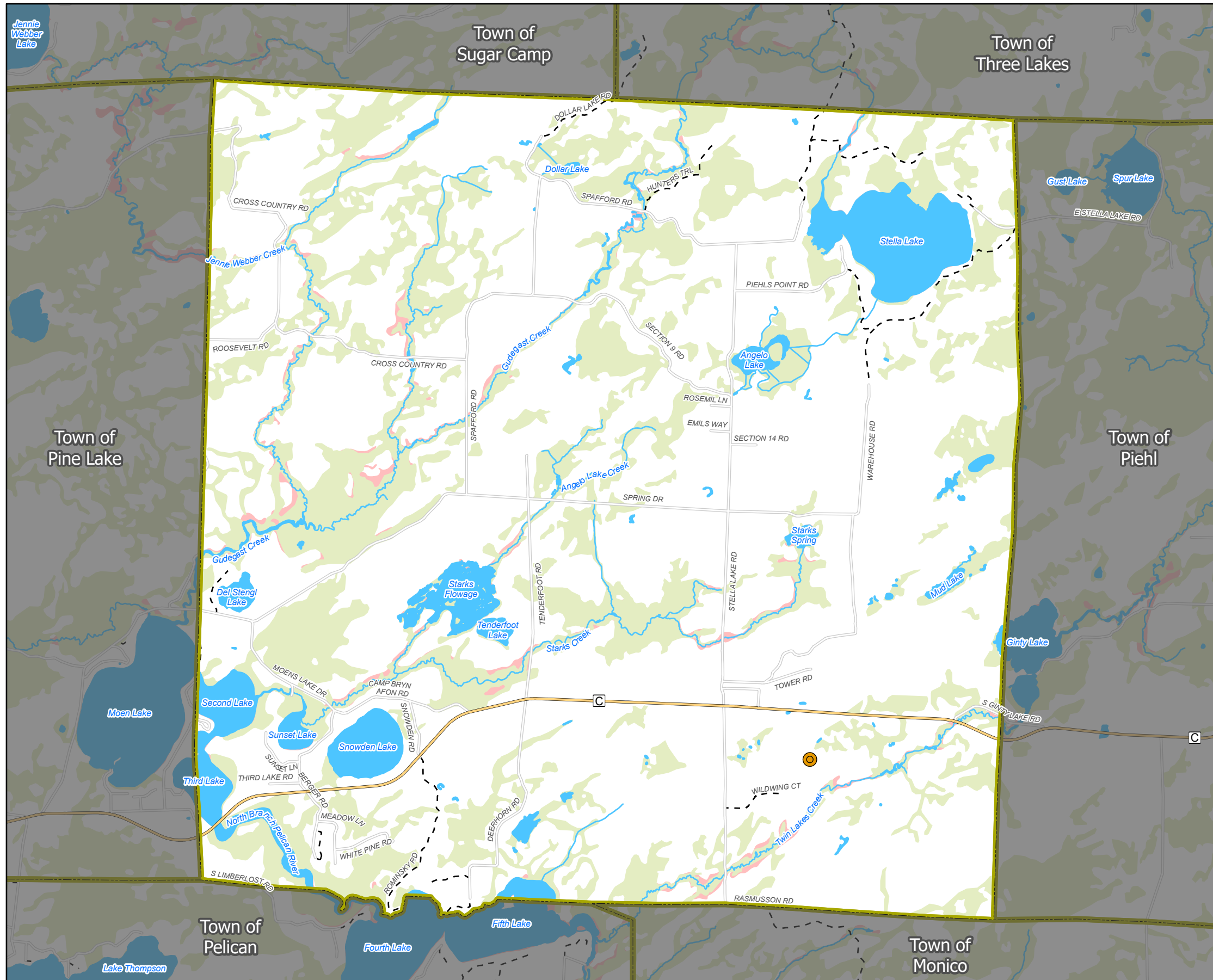
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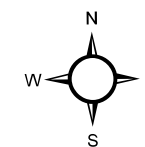
210 McClellan St., Suite 210, Wausau, WI 54403  
 715-849-5510 - staff@ncwrpc.org - www.ncwrpc.org





## Natural Resources

- Minor Civil Division
- U.S. Highway
- County Highway
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Non-Metallic Mines
- Wetlands
- Floodplain
- Water

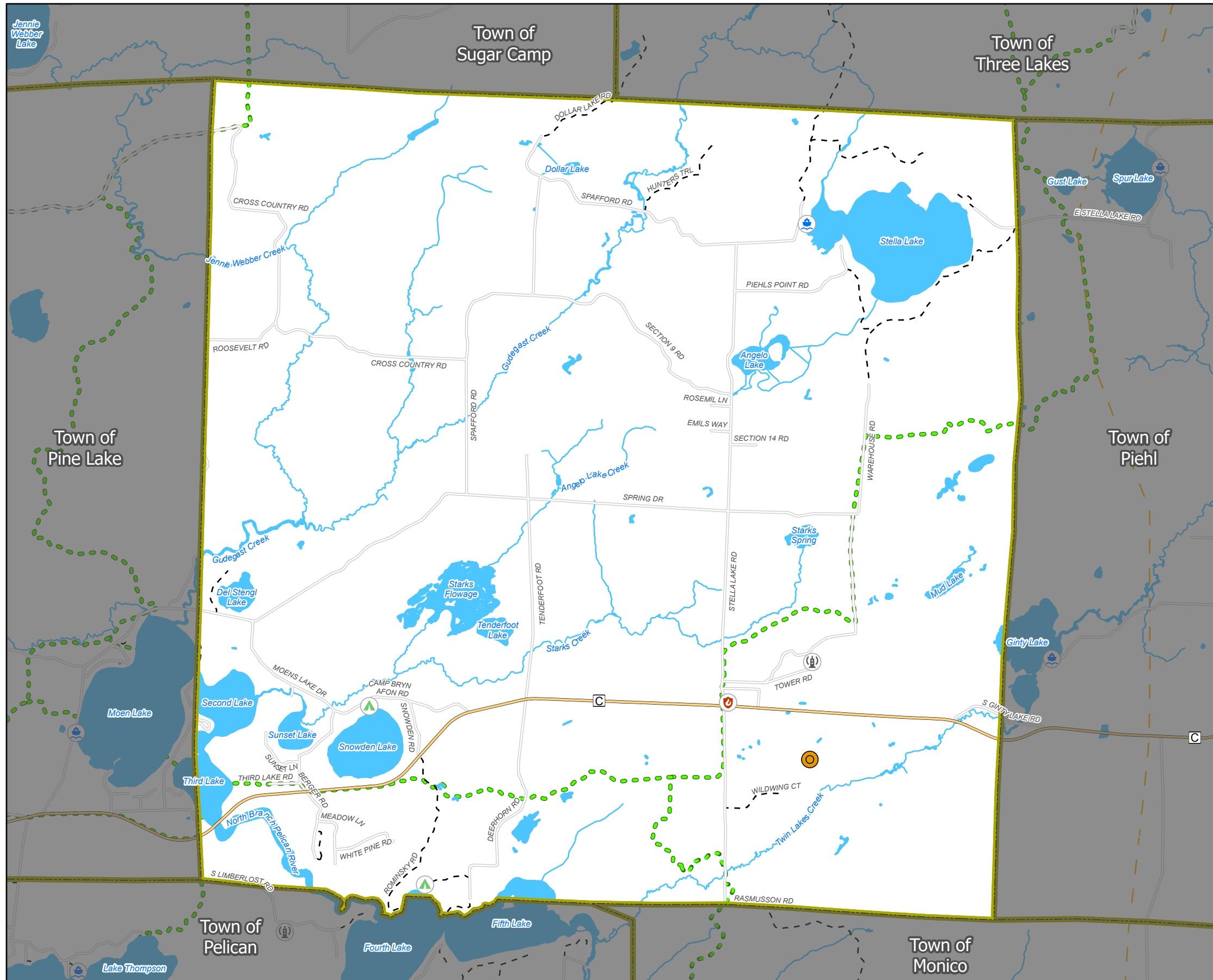


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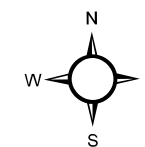
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## Utilities & Community Facilities

- Minor Civil Division
- U.S. Highway
- County Highway
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- High Voltage Powerline
- Snowmobile Trails
- Non-Metallic Mines
- Town Hall / Fire Dept
- Youth Camp
- Boat Launch
- Communication Towers
- Water



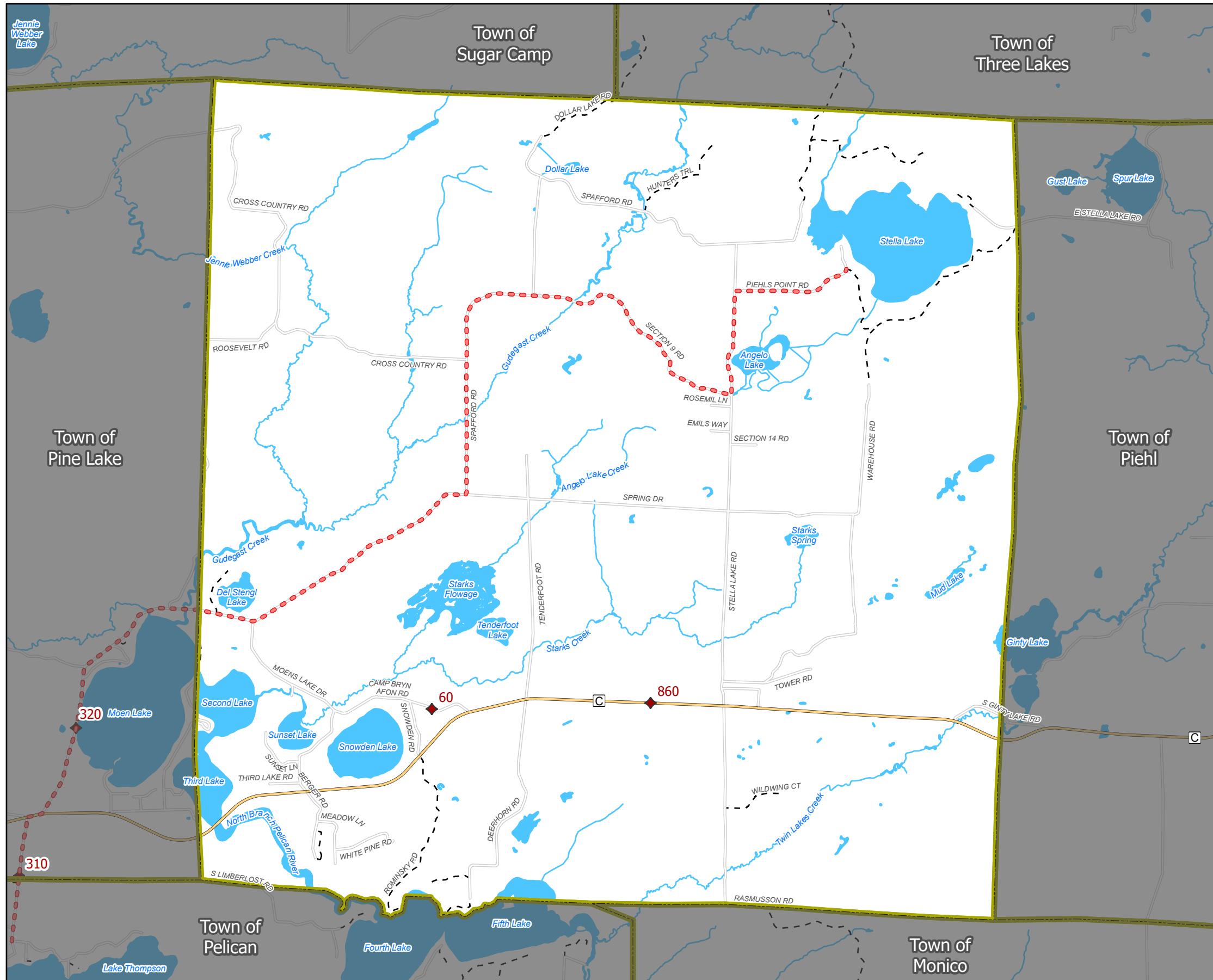
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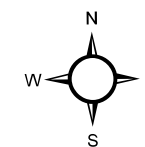
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## Transportation

- Minor Civil Division
- U.S. Highway
- County Highway
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Proposed On Road Bike Route
- Traffic Counts
- Water

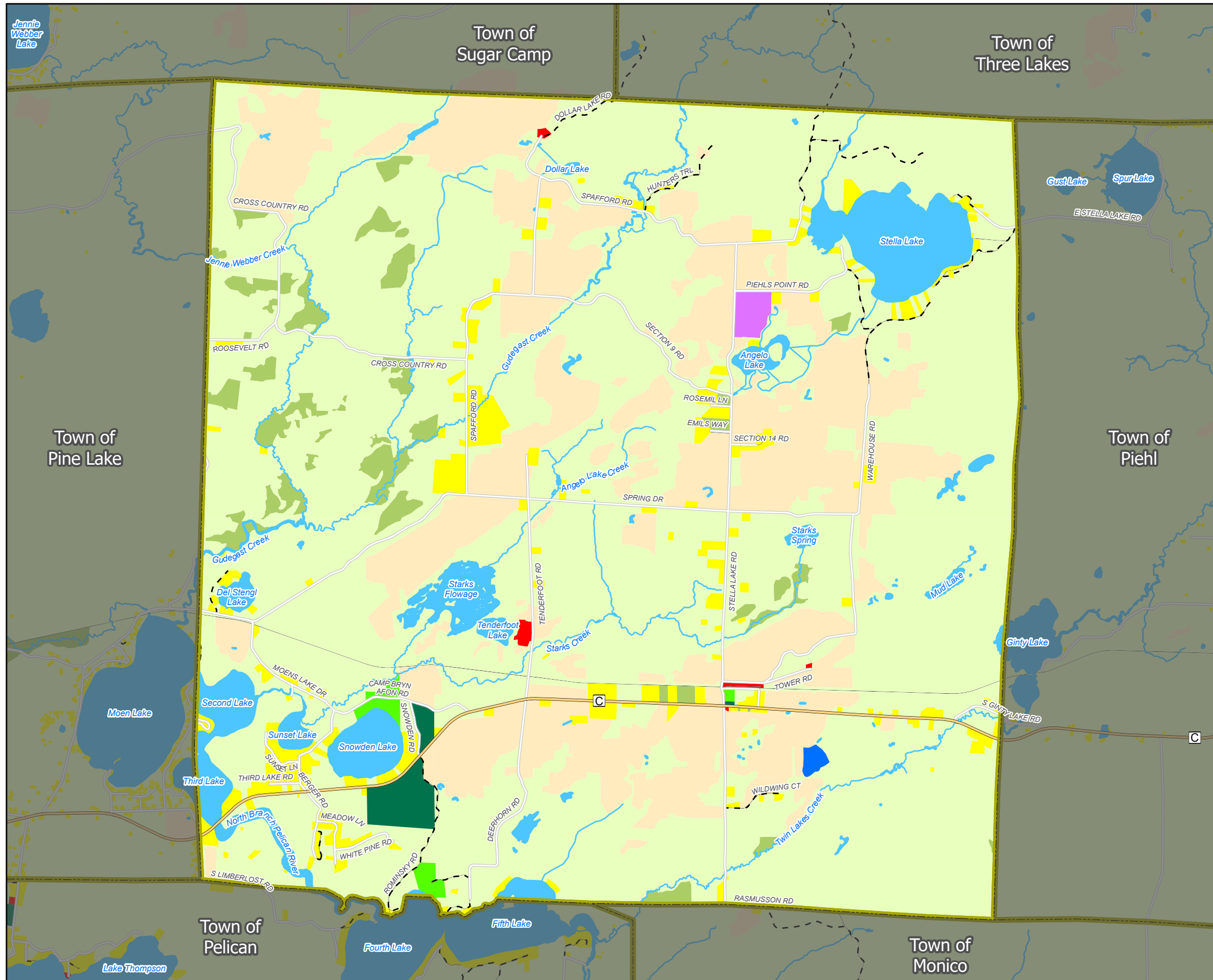


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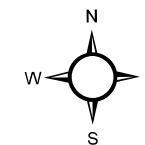
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### Existing Land Use

- Minor Civil Division
  - U.S. Highway
  - County Highway
  - Local Roads
  - Private Roads
- Existing Land Use 2020**
- Agriculture
  - Commercial
  - Cranberry Bog
  - Governmental / Institutional
  - Industrial
  - Open Lands
  - Outdoor Recreation
  - Residential
  - Transportation
  - Woodlands
  - Water

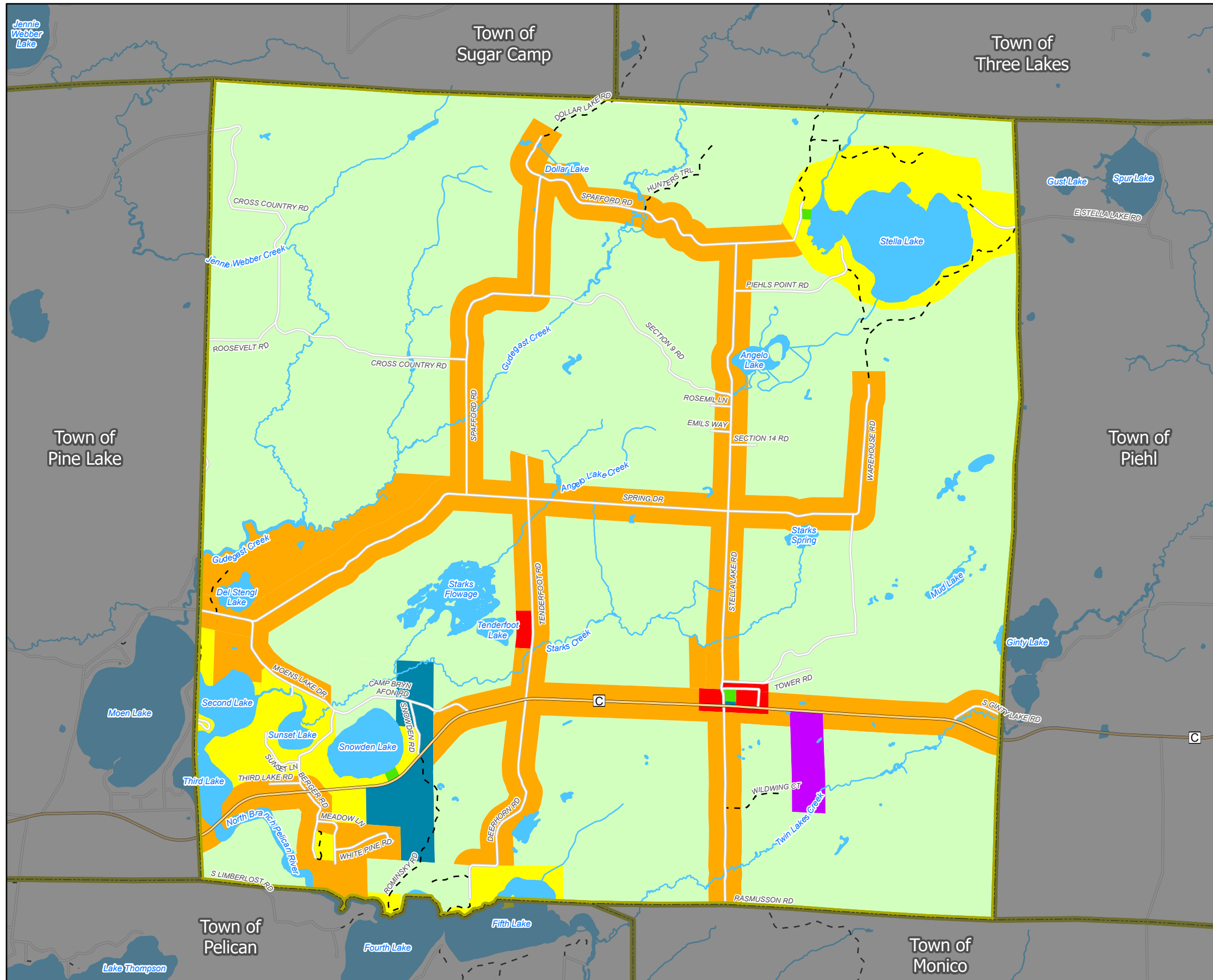


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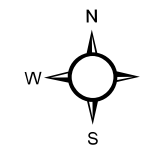
Prepared By:  
**North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**

210 McClellan St., Suite 210, Wausau, WI 54403  
 715-849-5510 - staff@ncwrpc.org - www.ncwrpc.org



### Future Land Use

- Minor Civil Division
  - U.S. Highway
  - County Highway
  - Local Roads
  - Private Roads
- Future Land Use**
- Commercial
  - Forestry / Ag
  - Governmental
  - Industrial
  - Open Space / Rec
  - Residential
  - Rural Residential
  - Water



Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Oneida Co  
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**Appendix A**  
**Public Participation Plan**

**TOWN OF STELLA  
Resolution No. 2022-02**

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT A PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP)  
FOR THE TOWN OF STELLA'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Town of Stella, by this resolution, resolves as follows:

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Stella is updating its Comprehensive Plan as outlined in Wisconsin Statutes; and

**WHEREAS**, public participation is critical for the development of a plan; and

**WHEREAS**, it is necessary for the Town Board to approve a process to involve the public in the planning effort; and

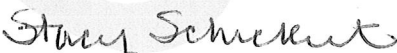
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IS RESOLVED**, that the Town Board does approve and authorize the Public Participation Plan as attached to this resolution.

Adopted this 13<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2022, by the Town of Stella Town Board.

Dave Brunette, Town Chair  
Robert Goodin, Town Supervisor  
Richard Hirman, Town Supervisor

**CERTIFICATION**

I, Stacy Schickert, Clerk of the Town of Stella, does hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution passed by the Stella Town Board on September 13, 2022.

  
Stacy Schickert, Town Clerk



## **TOWN OF STELLA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP)**

The Town of Stella recognizes the importance of public participation in the planning process. As such, a goal during the comprehensive planning process will be to inform and involve the public in the planning process.

### **I. PLAN DEVELOPMENT:**

Throughout the plan process, the Plan Commission will provide oversight for the update of the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan Commission will also recommend adoption of the Public Participation Plan to the Town Board.

The public participation plan will incorporate the following:

1. All meetings for the planning process will be posted and open to the public.
2. Plan related materials will be available at the Town Hall for review by the public.
3. The draft plan and maps will be available on a website for review by the public.
4. A public hearing will be held to solicit comment from the public.
5. The Comprehensive Plan will be distributed as outlined in state statutes.

The Plan Commission will review and recommend adoption of the Comprehensive Plan to the Town Board.

### **II. IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION & UPDATE:**

The Comprehensive Plan will be used as a general guideline for development in the Town. The plan will support the existing zoning and other regulations that the Town has in place.

As with all plans, it is critical for the Comprehensive Plan to be maintained and updated on a regular basis to keep it current as things change.

---

Any planning process is subject to change, and this public participation plan is no different. Over the planning period the process may vary from that presented.

**Appendix B**  
**Adoption Resolution**

**TOWN OF STELLA**  
**Resolution No. 2022-04**

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT TOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Town of Stella, by this resolution, resolves as follows:

**WHEREAS**, The Plan Commission of the Town of Stella, Oneida County, Wisconsin, by this resolution, adopted on proper notice with a quorum and by a roll call vote of a majority of the town plan commission present and voting resolves and recommends to the town board of the Town of Stella as follows:

Adoption of the Town Comprehensive Plan.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IS RESOLVED**, that the Town of Stella Plan Commission, by this resolution, further resolves and orders as follows:

All maps and other materials noted and attached as exhibits to the Town of Stella Comprehensive Plan are incorporated into and made a part of the Town of Stella Comprehensive Plan.

The vote of the town plan commission in regard to this resolution shall be recorded by the clerk of the town plan commission in the official minutes of the Town of Stella Plan Commission.

Adopted this 25<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2022, by the Town of Stella Plan Commission.

Jodi Baker, Committee Member  
Robert Goodin, Committee Member  
Jerome Kuczmariski, Committee Member

**CERTIFICATION**

I, Stacy Schickert, Clerk of the Town of Stella, does hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution passed by the Town of Stella Plan Commission on October 25, 2022.

Stacy Schickert, Clerk of Town of Stella Plan Commission



**Appendix C**  
**Adoption Ordinance**

**TOWN OF STELLA  
ONEIDA COUNTY, WISCONSIN**

**ORDINANCE TO ADOPT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
Ordinance No. 2022-02**

The Town of Stella, Oneida County, does ordain as follows:

1. **TITLE/PURPOSE.** The title of this ordinance is the Town of Stella Comprehensive Plan Ordinance. The purpose of this ordinance is for the Town of Stella to lawfully adopt a comprehensive plan as required under s. 66.1001(4)(c), Wis. Stats.
2. **AUTHORITY:** The town board of the Town of Stella has authority under its village powers under s. 60.22, Wis. Stats, its power to appoint a town plan commission under ss. 60.62(4) and 62.23(1), Wis. Stats, and under s. 66.1001(4) Wis. Stats, to adopt this ordinance. The comprehensive plan of the Town of Stella must be in compliance with s. 66.1001(4)(c), Wis. Stats, in order for the town board to adopt this ordinance.
3. **ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE.** The town board of the Town of Stella, by this ordinance, adopted on proper notice with a quorum and roll call vote by majority of the town board present and voting, provides the authority for the Town of Stella to adopt its comprehensive plan under s. 66.1001(4), Wis. Stats, and provided the authority for the town board to order its publication.
4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.** The town board of the Town of Stella has adopted written procedures designed to foster public participation in every stage of the preparation of the comprehensive plan as required by s. 66.1001(4)(a), Wis. Stats.
5. **TOWN PLAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION.** The Plan Commission of the Town of Stella, by a majority vote of the entire commission, recorded in its official minutes, has adopted a resolution recommending to the town board the adoption of the Town of Stella Comprehensive Plan, which contains all of the elements specified in s. 66.1001(2), Wis. Stats.
6. **PUBLIC HEARING.** The Town of Stella has held at least one public hearing on this ordinance, with notice in compliance with requirements of s. 66.1001(4)(d), Wis. Stats.
7. **ADOPTION OF TOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.** The town board of the Town of Stella, by the enactment of this ordinance, formally adopts the document entitled Town of Stella Comprehensive Plan Ordinance pursuant to s. 66.1001(4)(c), Wis. Stats.

8. SEVERABILITY. If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this ordinance that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end, the provisions of this ordinance are severable.
9. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance is effective on publication or posting.

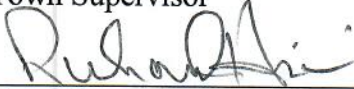
Adopted this 13<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2022.



Town Chairman



Town Supervisor



Town Supervisor

Attest:



Town Clerk

**Town of Stella**  
**Comprehensive Plan**  
**2022**