

Chapter 4

Utilities & Community Facilities

Utilities and community facilities, provided by either public or private entities, are critical for community development. Utilities include things such as electrical service, natural gas, telephone, and telecommunications. Community facilities include local governmental buildings, libraries, educational institutions, parks, and maintenance and storage facilities, as well as services like police and fire protection, medical, municipal water provision, and wastewater treatment.

Previous Plans and Studies

Oneida County All Hazards Mitigation Plan, 2023

This document is required for local governments to be eligible for certain disaster mitigation programs. The report looks at general conditions in Oneida County, including population, transportation, land use, and economics. An inventory of utilities, community facilities and emergency services form the background for understanding how the County might respond to a disaster. Risk assessment is at the heart of the All-Hazards Mitigation program. To mitigate the risks, it's necessary to assess their relative importance. Examples of hazards include floods, tornadoes, winter storms, drought, fire, and hazardous materials accidents. The likelihood of any given hazard occurring is estimated based on historical data, and the impact of these hazards is evaluated. The plan seeks to recommend how County government should respond to such occurrences and suggests mitigation measures to reduce the risk caused by identified hazards.

Inventory

Utilities and community facilities provided by the City of Rhinelander 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 City. Many of the major facilities are identified on **Map 4: Utilities and Community Facilities**.

Water and Wastewater Facilities

Drinking Water & Water Supply

The City's Water Utility operates a system consisting of water supply, storage, treatment, and distribution facilities. The Water Utility owns and operates 5 drilled wells, 3 above-ground storage tanks, 1-1.25 million gallons underground treatment reservoir, and more than 66 miles of distribution water mains ranging from 4-inch to 16-inch diameter size. The utility supplies approximately 1.5 million gallons of potable drinking water to its customers on an average day. The water supply is served to residential, multi-family,

commercial, industrial, and public authority customers. The water supply distribution system also provides for public and private fire protection systems located throughout the service area.

The water utility treats its' native groundwater water supplies with the addition of fluoride to promote dental health; caustic soda to adjust native pH and protect against corrosion; polyphosphates to sequester iron and manganese and protect against leaching of copper and lead; and chlorine for disinfection. All chemical additions are monitored and controlled to meet the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) regulatory requirements.

Wastewater

The City of Rhinelander Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) treats the liquid wastewater generated by the residential, business, and industrial users of the sanitary sewer system, along with commercial hauler waste. Our facilities operate in compliance with the limiting discharge parameters and rules set forth by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). A state-of-the-art SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) control system allows remote monitoring of the WWTP, main lift station, lift stations, wells, chemical usage, towers, and reservoir.

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling Facilities

The City of Rhinelander contracts with Republic Services for residential garbage and recycling disposal. Waste is collected on a weekly schedule, and recyclables are collected on a biweekly schedule. Alternatively, Rhinelander is also served by the Oneida County Solid Waste Department. At the Oneida County Landfill, yard waste is composted and sold to the public for their use. Grass, leaves/needles, tree trimmings and brush under $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter are the types of yard waste accepted. A private Transfer Station is located on State Highway 17.

Public Safety

Police Department

Three departments provide public safety protection within the City. They are the City of Rhinelander Police Department, the Oneida County Sheriff's Department, and the Wisconsin State Patrol which has statewide jurisdiction on all public roads.

The Rhinelander Police Department is located at 201 N. Brown Street. The mission of the Rhinelander Police Department is to work in partnership with the community to prevent crime, enhance the quality of life, and provide a safe environment for everyone. The Oneida County Sheriff's Office, located on the east side of Rhinelander just off of STH 17, provides service to all the towns and the City of Rhinelander in Oneida County for law enforcement.

Rhineland Fire Department

The Rhineland Fire Department (RFD) is located at 128 W Frederick Street. The RFD provides fire suppression, EMT Paramedic level service (with full ambulance service), specialty rescue, and an extensive fire prevention program. The RFD has mutual aid agreements with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the volunteer departments in the Towns of Pine Lake, Pelican, Crescent, and Newbold. The RFD is also part of the Oneida County HAZMAT Team and is a State asset for structural collapse.

Medical Facilities

Aspirus Rhineland Hospital is located at 2251 North Shore Drive. This facility is a combined hospital and clinic and contains five surgical suites, three surgical procedure rooms, a cancer center, and a comprehensive birth center and women's imaging services. Aspirus also has an additional walk-in clinic located at 1630 North Chippewa Drive. Additionally, there are a variety of other medical and dental clinics located throughout the City, including a VA clinic.

Assisted Living Facilities

There are two nursing homes and seven assisted living facilities within the City of Rhineland. There are also five federally subsidized apartments targeted to seniors. Between this mix of options available, Rhineland facilities can care for over 200 adults.

Education Facilities

There are a variety of educational facilities in the area – public schools, parochial schools, a technical college, and various licensed childcare facilities.

Public Schools

The School District of Rhineland serves nine surrounding townships and the City of Rhineland. The District serves approximately 2,300 students in its four elementary schools, middle school, and high school. A secondary alternative education program and a variety of virtual opportunities are offered to students as well as partnerships for home-school families.

The School District of Rhineland is involved in a competitive activities program and believes in promoting a positive value system for the participating students and the community. Participation in activities is a privilege and is intended to be an enjoyable experience, which contributes to the physical, social, mental, and emotional development of the student.

Parochial Schools

There are four parochial schools that serve the area. Nativity North Catholic School (K-2), Nativity South Catholic School (3-8), Zion Lutheran Elementary School (K-8), and Seventh Day Adventist School (1-8).

Higher Education

Nicolet College serves the Northwoods from its Rhinelander campus situated on the shores of Lake Julia, and from outreach centers located within the Nicolet District. It is one of 16 colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System. Created in 1967 as a pilot community college, Nicolet was destined to be unique in Wisconsin. In a state with University of Wisconsin branch campuses and separately administered technical colleges, Nicolet's mission is to deliver superior community college education that transforms lives, enriches communities, fosters economic development, and expands employment opportunities.

The College offers more than 70 associates degrees, diplomas, certificates, and apprenticeship programs, as well as a University Transfer Liberal Arts program. In addition to academic programs, Nicolet offers Continuing Education courses, the Outdoor Adventure Series, and Learning in Retirement, as well as theatre events, a community library, and an art gallery.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

The City of Rhinelander offers a number of parks and other recreational facilities. Additional recreation within Rhinelander's extraterritorial boundary (1.5-mile buffer) around the City includes a County park and State Natural Area. Motorized and water trails are accessible from points within the City. Public and private schools also have playgrounds that are generally open to the public after school hours. All parks and playgrounds are shown on **Map 4 – Utilities & Community Facilities**.

The City of Rhinelander Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023-2027 contains additional analysis of existing parks, and recommendations for improvements.

Rhinelander contains the following parks and recreational facilities:

Pioneer Park – Pioneer Park is a heavily wooded park situated along the Pelican River and features a mix of towering old growth and young pine trees. The park hosts both the Hodag Farmers Market and Oneida County Fair and is home to several impressive museums within the Pioneer Park Historical Complex. It also has a large playground area for kids, beautiful pickleball courts, and three pavilions available for reservation. Park bathrooms are generally open from late April through mid to late October. Opening and closing are dependent upon night-time temperatures.

Hodag Park – Hodag Park is a large park stretching along the shore of Boom Lake (Wisconsin River). It is home to the Hodag Water Ski shows, the annual July Fourth fireworks celebration, three baseball diamonds, handicap accessible fishing dock, a public beach, and a large boat landing. There is also a tennis court, playground and several pavilions that can be reserved for private events. This is a very popular park for picnickers and walkers due to its location along the waterway and is a great spot to enjoy an evening concert and watch the sunset. Park bathrooms are generally open from late April through mid to late October. Opening and closing are dependent upon night-time temperatures.

West Side Park – West Side Park is a medium size park with a softball field and a small play structure for kids. The main attraction is the Hodag BMX complex within the park. It is among the best in the state. Park bathrooms are generally open from late April through mid to late October. Opening and closing are dependent upon night-time temperatures.

Sarocka Field – Sarocka Field is a small neighborhood park with a large grassy area, a playground for kids and a large sledding hill in winter for all to enjoy. It is also home to Pop Warner football in the fall.

Pelican Rapids – Pelican Rapids is a small park on the confluence of the Wisconsin and Pelican rivers. It offers a boat landing and small walkway to a boardwalk overlooking the water for fishermen and nature lovers. Park bathrooms are generally open from late April through mid to late October. Opening and closing are dependent upon night-time temperatures.

Shepard Park – Shepard Park lies on the Pelican River and is home to Shepard Dog Park which has an area for small dogs as well as a larger area for the bigger dogs to run. Included is a nice walking path along the river for nature viewing.

Stevens Port Square – This 0.6-acre park is located on the southeast corner of Davenport St and Stevens St in downtown Rhinelander. Facilities include some benches and picnic tables in a landscaped area off the busy road.

Estabrook Green Space – This 0.3-acre park is located on the northwest corner of Rives St and Brown St in downtown Rhinelander. Facilities include some benches in a landscaped area off the busy road.

Band Shell – This half-acre park is on the east bank of the Wisconsin River in downtown, just south of Davenport Street. A band shell exists along with a small lawn.

Hanson Lake – This 75-acre recreational area is located on Hanson Lake, on the east side of the airport. Facilities include a boat launch on the south side of the lake, a beach on the east side of the lake, a trailhead along STH 47, and multi-use trails (hiking, biking, and snowshoeing) around the entire lake.

Northwood Golf Course – Northwood Golf Course is a public golf course that is owned by the City of Rhinelander and is long-term leased to a private operator. Facilities include an 18-hole golf course, a clubhouse with restaurant, locker rooms, and pro shop; a sledding hill exists in winter along with groomed cross-country ski trails.

Heal Creek Nature Area – Heal Creek Nature Area is about 475 acres of City-owned forested recreation land that has a trailhead on the east side of the Northwood Golf Course parking lot. The cross country ski trails, snowshoe trails, and fat tire biking trails that have been developed on this property also cross onto the Northwood Golf Course side in winter.

Power and Telecommunication Facilities

Electrical service in the City of Rhinelander is provided by the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation. Electrical needs are served by the electrical transmission system. Generating capacity comes from various source throughout the American Transmission Company (ATC) of Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and from other states. Rhinelander is mainly connected to a loop with Tomahawk, Merrill, and Wausau for electrical transmission. Natural gas service in the City of Rhinelander is provided by Wisconsin Public Service Commission.

Landline telephone service within the City is provided by Spectrum Voice. This service features copper wires and digital switches that are linked to a fiber optic cable and digital microwave network. Cable TV lines provide a signal for TV, internet, and telephone over coaxial cables serving most residents and businesses in Rhinelander. These lines are also maintained by Spectrum.

Internet service continues to expand as an economic development necessity, and access to internet service is continuing to improve throughout Rhinelander and the rest of Oneida County. According to data from the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, there are 3,470 broadband serviceable locations located within the City of Rhinelander. Of these 3,470 locations, only ten are considered to be unserved by broadband, meaning that they lack access to broadband meeting current standards. Fiber and cable internet service providers in the area include Spectrum and Frontier. Satellite providers serving the area include Starlink, Bug Tussel Wireless, Hughes Net, and ViaSat. **Chapter 5 – Technology** contains a more in-depth analysis of broadband conditions within the City.

Library

The City's public library opened in 1898. The Rhinelander District Library (RDL) is a member of the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS), a seven-county cooperative public library system. RDL is also a member of V-Cat, a shared information system administered by WVLS that provides local library users with direct access to over one million items in the collections of thirty-one system members. Additionally, access to library materials from throughout the state and nation is available via the statewide interlibrary loan network.

The RDL serves the residents of the City of Rhinelander and the adjacent Townships of Crescent, Newbold, Pelican, and Pine Lake, as well as the entire County.

The library collection contains titles and holdings in many formats, including books, magazines, large-print, audio-books, microfilm, videocassettes, DVDs, and music CDs. Special collections include art history, genealogy, pre-school education kits and parenting materials. Public Internet access is available in the library at internet terminals and wirelessly.

Cemeteries

There are three cemeteries located within the City – Municipal (Forest Home), St. Mary's, and St. Joe's. Forest Home Cemetery is managed by the City's Parks, Buildings, and Grounds Department. There is space projected to accommodate burials over the next 100 years. St. Mary's and St. Joseph Cemeteries are both operated by Nativity of Our Lord Catholic Parish. Additionally, Northland Memorial Park, located in the Town of Pine Lake, is operated by Greg Umland.

Other Facilities

City Hall

The current City Hall was built in 1908-09 and is located at 135 South Stevens Street. Many of the municipal functions operate from this location. A mayor and eight-member Common Council govern the City of Rhinelander.

Post Office

The City of Rhinelander Post Office is located at 156 S Courtney Street.

County Seat

Rhinelander is the County Seat and as such is the location of the Oneida County Courthouse, which is located at 1 S Oneida Ave. The City of Rhinelander is also the location and numerous County buildings and services, such as the Oneida County Sheriff's Department, Oneida County Emergency Management Operations, the Oneida County Aging & Disability Resource Center, and the Oneida County Humane Society Adoption Center among others.

YMCA & Ice Arena

Together these facilities provide recreational opportunities for the residents of the City and surrounding area. Both are located on the eastern edge of the community along State Highway 17.

ArtStart

Officially formed in 2011, ArtStart is a destination arts and cultural center located in the downtown area. ArtStart provides a variety of exhibitions, programming and event activities which leverage art to engage community members in cultural, social, and economic development.

State & Federal Agency Offices

WisDOT's North Central Region Office is located at 510 Hanson Lake Road. The DNR Service Center covering northcentral Wisconsin is located at 107 Sutliff Ave. The Rhinelander office for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is located at 500 Hanson Lake Road.

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.

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 **Chapter 7 - Economic Development**.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal 1: Provide a safe and healthy environment in Rhinelander for people to live, work, and play.

Objective 1: Protect the lives, property, and rights of all in Rhinelander.

- a. Support local emergency services and facilities (e.g., police, fire, rescue/EMS) through adequate funding, training, facilities, and equipment.
- b. Establish a capital improvement program (CIP) to include a timetable to expand or rehabilitate existing and develop new community facilities.
- c. Promote and continue joint service agreements as a means to consolidate and coordinate services among the City, County, and Towns to achieve better services and cost savings.

Objective 2: Support high quality educational opportunities for all residents.

- a. Cooperate with the Rhinelander School District, Nicolet College, and other educational providers with their potential facility development projects.
- b. Establish a capital improvement program (CIP) to include a timetable to expand or rehabilitate existing and develop new community facilities.
- c. Create and continue joint service agreements between the City and non-profit service providers (e.g. school district, YMCA) as a way to provide additional recreational programming in an economical way to City residents.

Objective 3: Provide outdoor recreation for residents and visitors.

- a. Annually review the Rhinelander Outdoor Recreation Plan and consider the best ways to implement that plan's recommendations and capital improvements.
- b. Keep the Rhinelander Outdoor Recreation Plan current by updating it every 5 years.

Objective 4: Assure a high-quality and abundant supply of water, and manage stormwater falling in the City.

- a. Maintain water utility and wastewater utility infrastructure.
 - a. Actively work to prevent and address water quality & quantity issues and concerns.
 - b. Implement best practices to proactively address water contamination (such as PFAS). Some best practices include implementing regular source water testing, encouraging the use of DSF-certified carbon filtration systems, working with local industries and the WI DNR to identify, manage, and isolate historic discharge sites and PFAS-containing wastes, and communicating with private landowners about the health risks of contaminants such as PFAS.
 - c. Consider utilizing grant funding to help address potential water quality & quantity issues.
 - d. Continue separating storm water connections from sanitary sewer mains.
 - e. Continue developing water supply wells to address future needs.
 - f. Continue performing Class A wastewater treatment.
 - g. Upgrade water mains in conjunction with street construction projects.
 - h. Upgrade sewer mains in conjunction with street construction projects.
- b. Limit wastewater and stormwater leakage in wellhead protection areas, so that drinking water is not contaminated.
- c. Remove lead water service lines.
 - a. Pass an ordinance requiring property owners to replace lead service lines at the same time the City replaces the lead service line adjacent to the landowner's property.
 - b. Negotiate a special rate with a private contractor to replace landowner's lead service lines.
 - c. Design a replacement program for low-income customers; possibly having the City pay the entire plumbing cost and placing a lien on the property for half the cost.