

Town of Rietbrock
Comprehensive Plan
Plan Commission Draft July 2024

Town of Rietbrock Comprehensive Plan

Town Board

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Prepared with the Assistance of the:

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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Chapter 1

Demographics

This chapter reviews the demographics of the Town of Rietbrock and identifies the major trends impacting the town over the next few decades. Both Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin are presented for comparison.

BACKGROUND

The Town is located in the northwest portion of Marathon County. The Town is bounded by the Town of Halsey to the north, the Town of Johnson to the west, the Town of Rib Falls to the east and the Town of Wien to the south. The Village of Athens borders the Town to the northwest. Development in the Town is dominated by agriculture with pockets of residences and scattered commercial establishments.

Planning Process

In the spring of 2024, 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 2024 to prepare the plan. A final Planning Commission meeting was held in the summer of 2024 to review the final draft and recommend adoption of the plan by the Town Board. The plan was adopted by the Town Board in the [season] of 2024.

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 Rietbrock posted all Planning Commission meetings to invite the public and held a Public Hearing to collect public input.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population and Households

Historical Trends

According to official population estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Administration, the Town of Rietbrock's population was an estimated 876 people in 2022. As shown in **Table 1**, this represents a 5.5 percent decrease since 2000. However, it should be noted that population within the Town actually increased between 2000 and 2010 before experiencing a 10.7 percent decline between 2010 and 2022. In comparison, the populations of Marathon County and Wisconsin both increased by over 10 percent between 2000 and 2022, with populations also increasing between 2010 and 2022.

Table 1: Population Trends						
Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2022	2000-2022 % Change	2010-2022 % Change
Town of Rietbrock	927	981	874	876	-5.5%	-10.7%
Town of Halsey	645	651	634	643	-0.3%	-1.2%
Town of Johnson	993	985	873	875	-11.9%	-11.2%
Town of Rib Falls	907	993	847	945	4.2%	-4.8%
Town of Wien	712	825	885	886	24.4%	7.4%
Village of Athens	1,095	1,105	1,059	1,065	-2.7%	-3.6%
Marathon County	125,834	134,063	138,013	139,205	10.6%	3.8%
Wisconsin	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	5,949,155	10.9%	4.6%

Source: U.S. Census, WI DOA

There were 353 households in the Town of Rietbrock in 2022, which represents an increase of over 22 percent from the number of households in 2000, as shown in **Table 2**. During the same period, the number of households in Marathon County also increased, but to a lesser degree, at 18.4 percent. Household growth in both Rietbrock and Marathon County was faster than the State, which experienced a 16.4 percent increase during the same time period. There was great variation among the surrounding communities, with the fastest growth in the number of households occurring in the Town of Wien (17.1 percent), and the slowest increase in the number of households occurring in the Town of Johnson which actually experienced a decrease in households (2.3 percent decrease) during this time. In 2022, the average household size in the Town of Rietbrock was 2.48, down from 2.95 in 2010. In comparison, Marathon County's average household size was 2.46 in 2022, down from 2.52 in 2010.

Table 2: Households						
Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2022	2000-2022 % Change	2010-2022 % Change
Town of Rietbrock	289	332	328	353	22.1%	6.3%
Town of Halsey	192	208	207	192	0.0%	-7.7%

Town of Johnson	299	310	310	292	-2.3%	-5.8%
Town of Rib Falls	302	345	350	351	16.2%	1.7%
Town of Wien	248	283	292	293	18.1%	3.5%
Village of Athens	443	471	471	451	1.8%	-4.2%
Marathon County	47,702	53,176	56,517	56,484	18.4%	6.2%
Wisconsin	2,084,544	2,279,768	2,428,361	2,425,488	16.4%	6.4%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2018-2022

Projections

Figure 1 shows population projections for the Town of Rietbrock and **Table 3** compares projected population in the Town to Marathon County, based on projections made by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA). The Wisconsin DOA population projections are recognized as Wisconsin's official population projections. These projections are based on historical population and household growth in the community, with more recent years given a greater weight. The Town of Rietbrock is projected to experience a 19.9 percent increase in population between 2022 and 2040, although the projections do indicate the potential for a slight drop off in population after 2035. In comparison, Marathon County is projected to increase by about ten percent during this time.

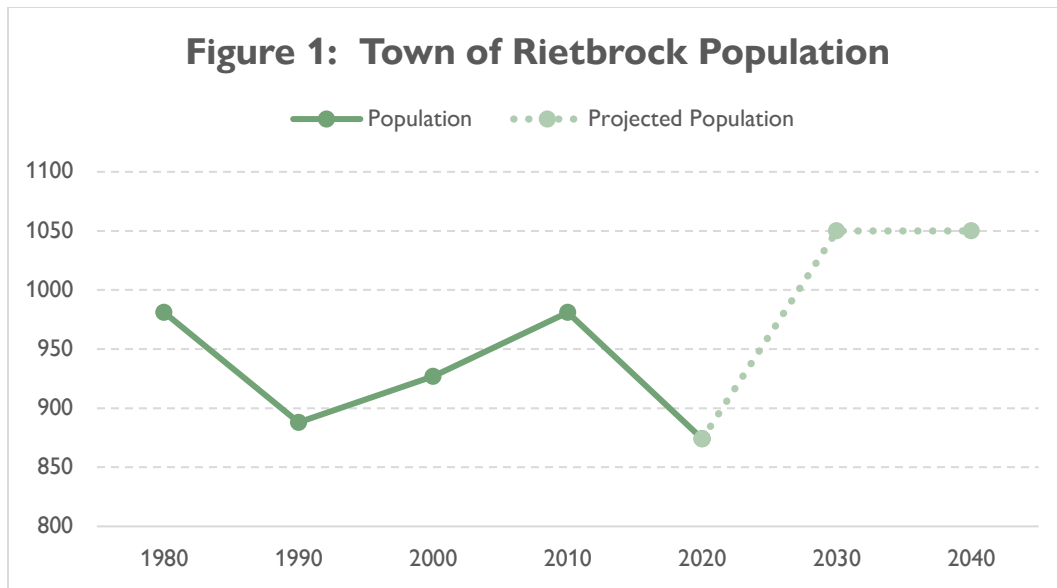
Figure 2 and **Table 4** include household projections completed by the WDOA. The number of households in the Town of Rietbrock is projected to increase by 23 households, or a 6.5 percent increase between 2022 and 2040. This is slower than both the County (12.8 percent) and the State (10.0 percent) in terms of a projected increase. Further analysis of housing unit change can be found in the Housing and Land Use Chapters of this comprehensive plan.

Table 3: Population Projections						
	2022	2025	2030	2035	2040	2022-2040 % Change
Town of Rietbrock	876	1,035	1,050	1,055	1,050	19.9%
Marathon County	137,820	146,595	150,130	152,120	152,790	10.9%

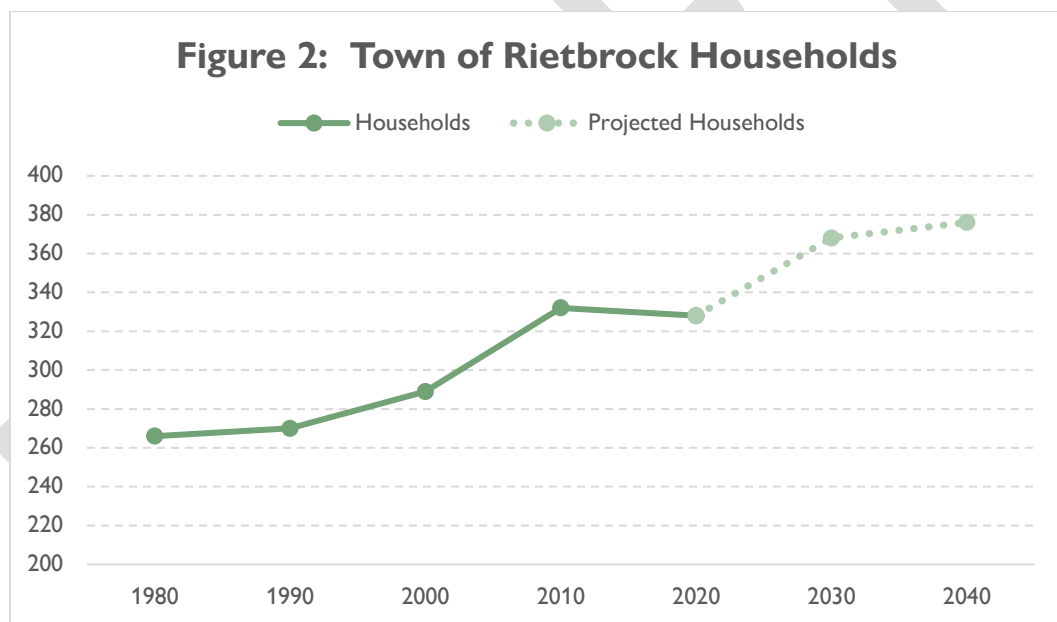
Source: WI DOA Official Population Projections

Table 4: Household Projections						
	2022	2025	2030	2035	2040	2022-2040 % Change
Town of Rietbrock	353	360	368	374	376	6.5%
Marathon County	56,484	59,611	61,524	62,958	63,730	12.8%

Source: WI DOA Official Population Projections



Source: U.S. Census, WI DOA



Source: U.S. Census, WI DOA

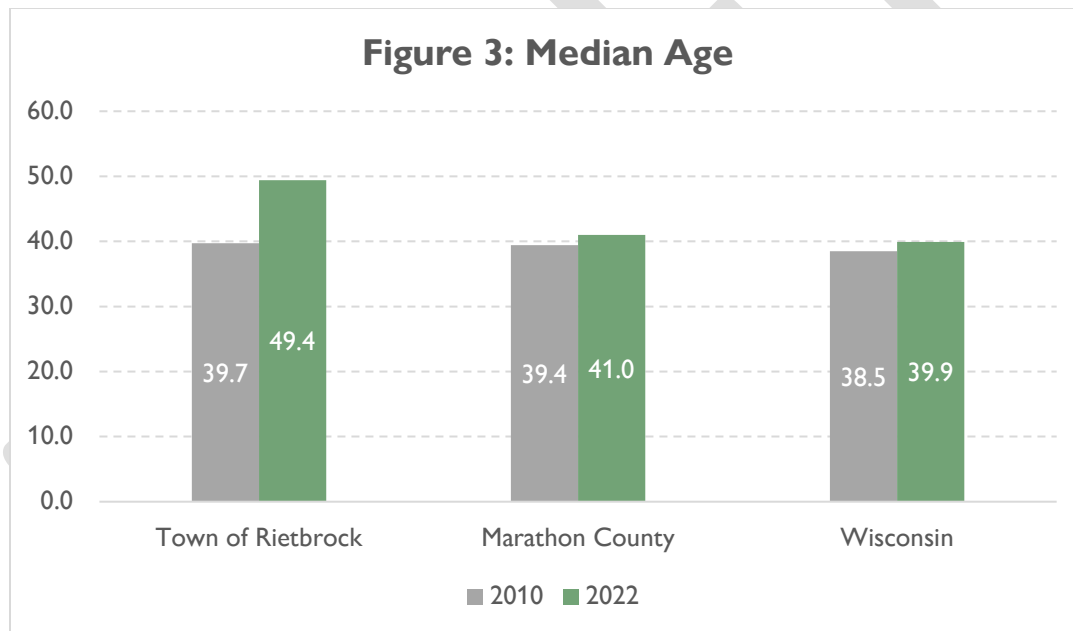
Age

As shown in **Figure 3**, the median age in the Town of Rietbrock was 49.4 in 2022, significantly higher than in 2010 (39.7). This is significantly higher than the median age in both Marathon County (41.0) and Wisconsin (39.9) as a whole. Two age groups are particularly significant, those 65 and over and those under 18. The population under 18 is a dependent population that requires more services including quality childcare, schools, and specialized health care needs. Those 65 and over may require access to healthcare, transportation, and community services. The U.S. Census provides an age dependency ratio, which is the ratio of dependents (people younger than 15 or older than 64) to the working age population (those ages 16-64). The old age dependency ratio is the number of those over 65 divided by the number working age

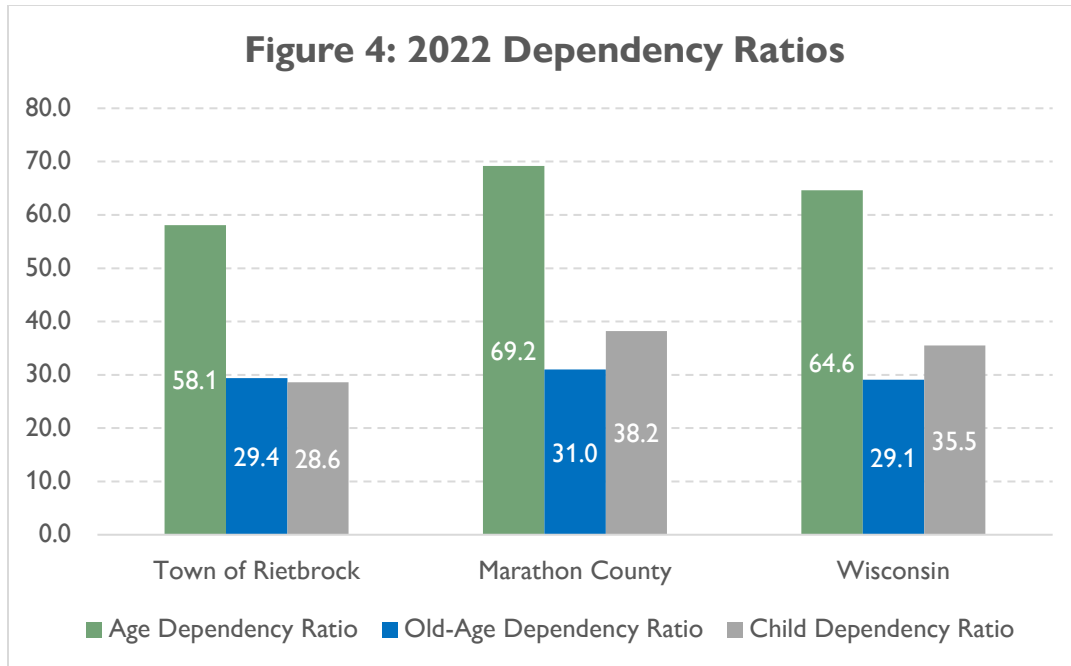
population and the child dependency ratio is that ratio of those under 16 divided by the working age population.

As shown in **Figure 4**, the Town of Rietbrock has a lower age dependency ratio, at 58.1, than Marathon County (69.2) and Wisconsin (64.6). In other words, there are nearly six dependents for every ten working aged adults within the Town of Rietbrock. There are similar rates of dependent residents in the older and younger age categories. These numbers reinforce the importance of support services in the Town ranging from accessible healthcare, quality childcare, and social support systems.

Due to longer life expectancy and the size of the Baby Boomer generation, the 65 and older age group is expected to continue to increase in size. The trend is occurring at the state and national levels and to an even greater degree within the rural Wisconsin counties, especially in the northern one-third of the state. This population trend whereby older age categories increase significantly while younger age categories decline may impact the future labor supply, school system, and health care industry at the national, state, and local levels.



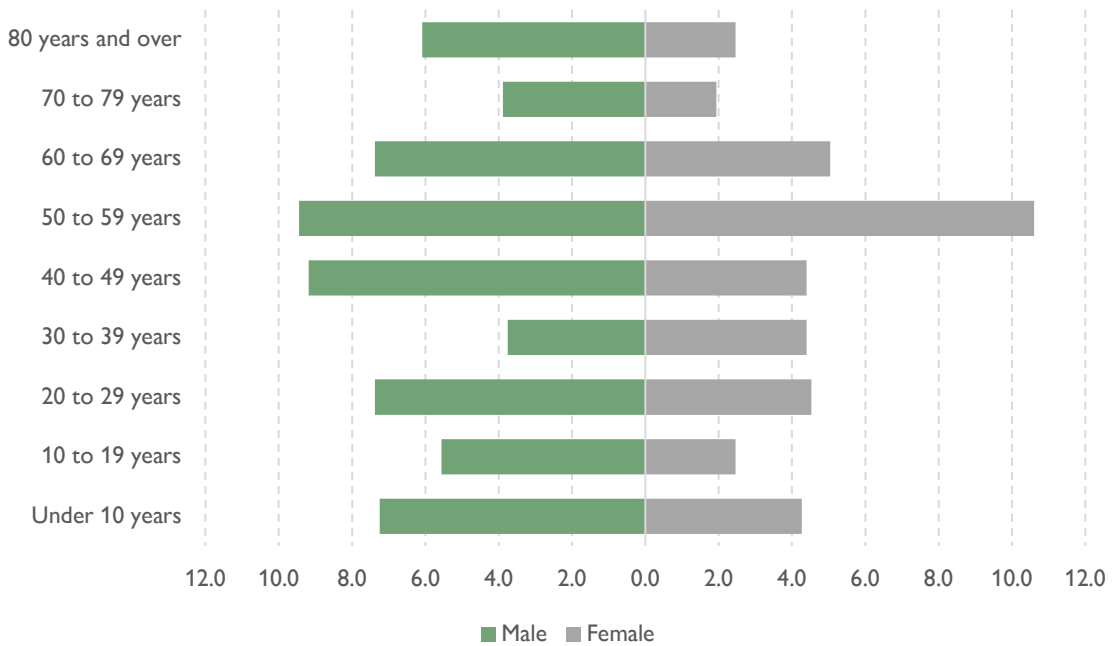
Source: ACS 2010 & 2022



Source: ACS 2010 & 2022

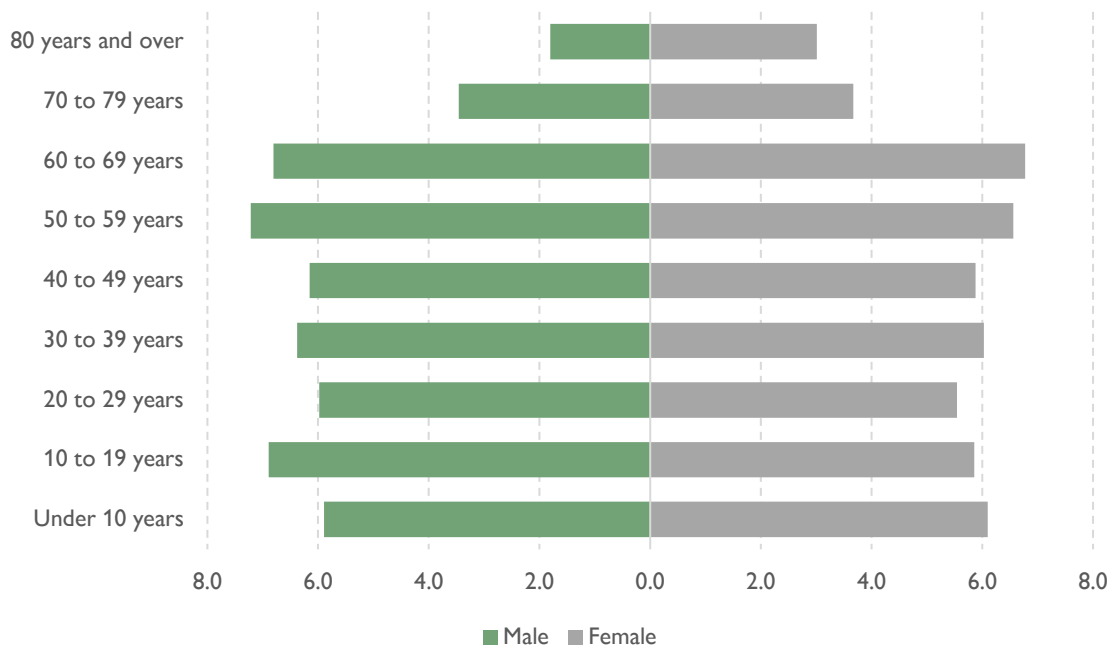
Figures 5 and 6 compare the distribution of age groups for the Town of Rietbrock and Marathon County. Marathon County's population pyramid is slightly expansive showing slow and stable growth. In comparison, the Town of Rietbrock has a slightly constrictive population pyramid with greater numbers in the middle age ranges versus the higher and lower age ranges. This is indicative of an aging population with slow population growth.

Figure 5: Town of Rietbrock Age-Sex Pyramid



Source: ACS 2022

Figure 6: Marathon County Age-Sex Pyramid

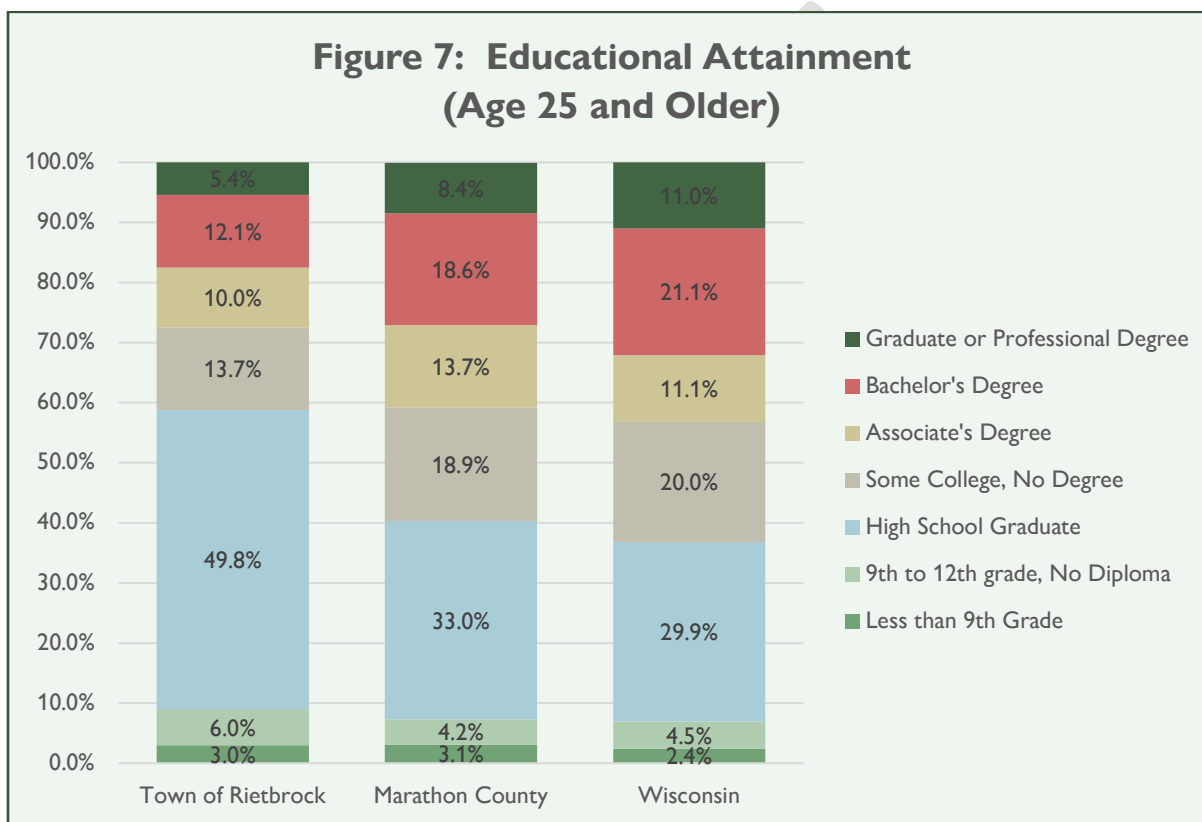


Source: ACS 2022

Education and Income Levels

Education

Figure 7 compares educational attainment of those in the Town of Rietbrock to the County and the State. In 2022, 91.1 percent of town residents age 25 and older had a high school education or higher. This was slightly lower than the County average and State averages. In the Town of Rietbrock, 17.5 percent of the population held bachelor's or other advanced degrees compared to 27.0 percent of County residents and 32.0 percent of State residents.



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Income

Median household income and per capita income are two commonly used measures of income. Median household income is the income for the middle point of households, meaning half of all households fall below that income, and half are above. Per capita income is the measure of average total income per person.

Median household income for Town of Rietbrock residents was \$77,938 in 2022. **Table 5** shows that this was higher than Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin. Median household income within Rietbrock was also higher than in the County and State in 2010 and 2000. When adjusted for inflation, median household income in the Town increased by nearly five percent between 2010 and 2022. During this time, Marathon County experienced a slight increase in median household income of 2.1 percent while median household income in Wisconsin increased by 4.6 percent.

Table 6 illustrates that income per capita in the Town of Rietbrock was higher than the County and was similar to the State in 2022. The Town of Rietbrock's per capita income was significantly lower than Marathon County's and Wisconsin's in 2010. When adjusted for inflation, per capita income in the Town of Rietbrock increased by over 39 percent between 2010 and 2022. This was a significantly faster increase than both the County and State, which rose at rates of 11.9 percent and 12.3 percent respectively.

Table 5: Median Household Income					
Minor Civil Division	2000*	2010*	2022	% Change 2000-22	% Change 2010-22
Town of Rietbrock	\$78,838	\$74,263	\$77,938	-1.1%	4.9%
Marathon County	\$76,758	\$71,764	\$73,248	-4.6%	2.1%
Wisconsin	\$74,423	\$69,250	\$72,458	-2.6%	4.6%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2018-2022)

*: Adjusted for inflation

Table 6: Per Capita Income					
Minor Civil Division	2000*	2010*	2022	% Change 2000-22	% Change 2010-22
Town of Rietbrock	\$27,500	\$28,778	\$40,030	45.6%	39.1%
Marathon County	\$35,185	\$34,751	\$38,886	10.5%	11.9%
Wisconsin	\$36,150	\$35,732	\$40,130	11.0%	12.3%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2018-2022)

*: Adjusted for inflation

Employment Characteristics

Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the breakdown of the labor force and employed population living in the Town of Rietbrock in 2010 and 2022. The “employed population” includes those that are 16 and older. There was a decrease of 67 people in the labor force from 2000 to 2022 in the Town. This is likely due to the decrease in overall population during the same time period.

Labor force participation indicates the percent of those 16 years and over that are in the labor force. The labor force participation rate increased in the Town of Rietbrock from 2010 to 2022. This contrasts with the County and the State where labor force participation rates decreased during this time.

Table 7: Labor Force Characteristics					
Minor Civil Division	Labor Force			Labor Participation Rate	
	2010	2022	2010-2022 % Change	2010	2022
Town of Rietbrock	540	473	-12.4%	70.7%	72.1%
Marathon County	74,962	74,139	-1.1%	72.2%	67.0%
Wisconsin	3,078,465	3,129,606	1.7%	69.0%	65.7%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2018-2022)

In 2010, the Town of Rietbrock had an employed population of 528 people; see **Table 8**. Employment within Rietbrock decreased to 465 people by 2022, representing an 11.9 percent decrease. Employment increased in Marathon County during the same period, increasing by 2.6 percent. The State experienced a 5.3 percent increase in employment from 2010 to 2022. The U.S. Census classifies individuals as unemployed if they are not working, actively seeking work, and available to accept a job. The unemployment rate in the Town was 0.9 percent in 2022, lower than Marathon County's rate of 2.1 percent and the State's rate of 2.2 percent.

Table 8: Employment				
Minor Civil Division	2010	2022	2010-2022 % Change	Unemployment Rate
Town of Rietbrock	528	465	-11.9%	0.9%
Marathon County	69,980	71,774	2.6%	2.1%
Wisconsin	2,869,310	3,020,890	5.3%	2.2%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2018-2022)

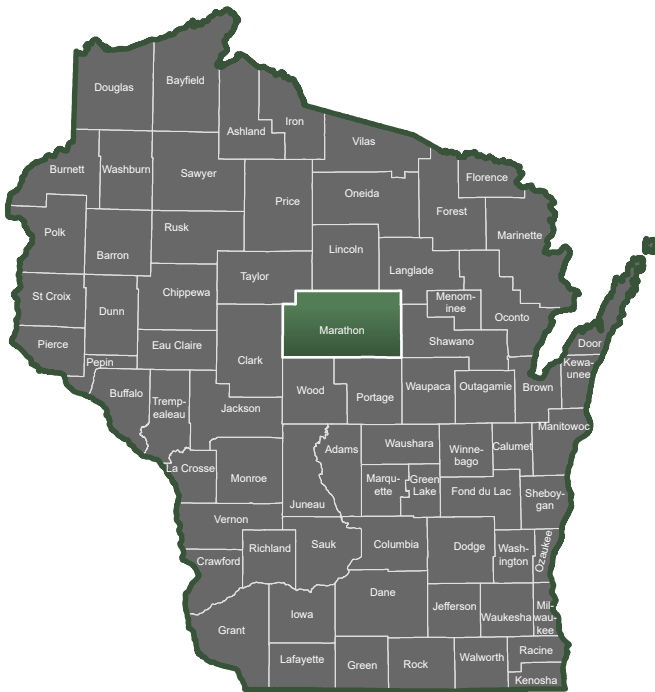
Table 9: Occupation of Employed Workers				
Occupation	Town of Rietbrock		Marathon County	
	2000	2022	2000	2022
Management, Professional & Related	120	140	19,745	26,418
Service	33	80	8,127	10,499
Sales & Office	101	67	17,457	14,094
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	49	73	6,716	6,662
Production, Transportation & Mineral Moving	140	105	14,505	14,101
Total	443	465	66,550	71,774

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2018-2022)

As shown in **Table 9**, most residents in the Town of Rietbrock were employed in Management, business, science, and arts occupations. The second sector most represented was the area of Production, transportation, and material moving occupations, followed by Service occupations. From 2010 to 2022, the most significant increase in employment was seen in Service occupations.

Demographic Snapshot

- The Town's population has decreased since 2010 while the number of households has increased. There has been a significant decline in household size during this time.
- The Town of Rietbrock is projected to increase in terms of the number of people and the number of households through 2040.
- There are a large number of people in the middle and older age categories. In 2022, the Town's median age of 49.4 was significantly higher than the County at 41.0 and the State at 39.9.
- The median age significantly increased from 39.7 in 2010 to 49.4 in 2022.
- The Town of Rietbrock has a lower proportion of residents with a high school diploma, bachelor's degree, or graduate/professional degree than the County and State.
- Both the median household income of \$77,938 and per capita income of \$40,030 are higher than the County.
- The labor participation rate is higher than the county or the state, and the unemployment rate of 0.9 percent in 2022 is lower than the State and the County.
- Most people in the Town of Rietbrock work in Management, Professional, and Related occupations.



The Town of Rietbrock is located in the northwest portion of Marathon County. The Town is bounded by the Town of Halsey to the north, the Town of Johnson to the west, the Town of Rib Falls to the east and the Town of Wien to the south. The Village of Athens borders the Town to the northwest. Development in the Town is dominated by agriculture with pockets of residences and scattered commercial establishments.

The Village of Athens and development of the surrounding area was led by Milwaukee attorney Frederick Rietbrock. While handling a lawsuit in Wausau in the 1870s, Rietbrock took a side trip to the northwest section of the County and began purchasing land. He ultimately owned much of the three townships of Halsey, Johnson and Rietbrock and controlled some 50,000 acres of timberland, which he ruled from his Milwaukee home.



Population:
Total: 876
Median Age: 49.4



Income:
Median Income: \$77,938
Per Capita Income: \$40,030



45°N - 90°W
Geographic Marker



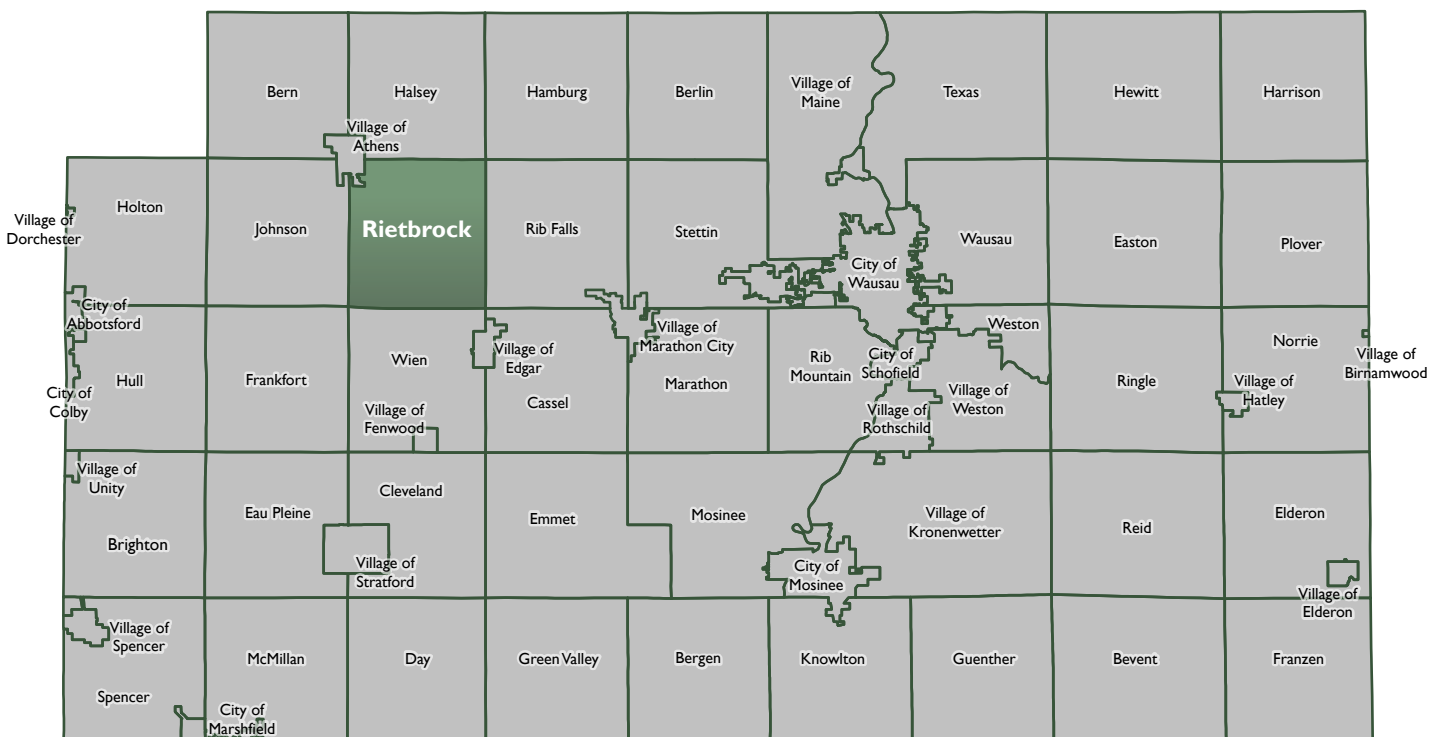
Housing Units:
Total: 371
Occupied: 353



Employment Data:
Town Labor Force: 473
Residents Employed: 465
Unemployment: 0.9%



Major Roadways:
STH 29 CTH H
STH 97 CTH M
CTH U



Chapter 2

Natural 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 administrated 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 NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCE PLANS AND STUDIES

In the last decade, several plans were prepared by the county specifically to address protection and management of natural resources. These plans may be used as resources to guide local policy and decision-making regarding resource management and protection.

Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2021-2030

The Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of soil and water conservation in Marathon County from 2021 to 2030. The Land Conservation and Zoning Committee identified the following long-term program outcomes for the natural resource protection efforts in Marathon County:

1. Land Use activities are well planned to enhance community development, minimize conflicts, maximize infrastructure investments and protect rural character.
2. Improve and protect the surface and ground water assets to enhance public health and safety, recreational opportunities and economic development.
3. Maintain the soil and water resources as productive assets through topsoil and organic matter conservation.
4. Marathon County agriculture and woodlot producers are economically strong.

Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan, 2024-2033

The Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan is required under Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The purpose of this plan is to guide and manage the preservation of farmland and agricultural production capacity. There are an abundance of agricultural areas in the Town, making this program of overall importance to the county in general and may have an impact on Town residents, for example, related to emerging trends such as the local foods movement.

Marathon County Forest Ten-Year Comprehensive Use Plan, 2021-2035

The Marathon County Forest Ten-Year Comprehensive Use Plan is a management guide for the Marathon County Forest and is updated every ten years. The mission of the plan is to manage and protect natural resources on a sustainable basis for the ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future residents throughout the County. The report includes a number of recommendations for timber management, wildlife habitat and game management, land acquisition and forest boundary management, biodiversity management, watershed management and tourism.

Marathon County Groundwater Protection Guide, 2001

The Groundwater Protection Guide was an extension of a 1988 groundwater plan. In April 2001, the guide was created to assist county and local officials in setting policy related to groundwater. It also serves as a resource for information about groundwater and strategies to address issues related to groundwater protection. The County is considering a new groundwater planning effort.

USGS Protecting Wisconsin's Groundwater through Comprehensive Planning, 2007

In a joint effort by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the University of Wisconsin System and the U.S. Geological Survey, a website has been made available with data and information on geology, general hydrology and groundwater quantity and quality. The website was developed to aid government officials and planners in addressing groundwater in their comprehensive plans. The most recent data available for Marathon County was published in 2007. The full Marathon County report is available on the website: <https://wi.water.usgs.gov/gwcomp/find/marathon/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.

Land Resources

The Town is located in the northwest portion of Marathon County. The Town is bounded by the Town of Halsey to the north, the Town of Johnson to the west, the Town of Rib Falls to the east and the Town of Wien to the south. The Village of Athens borders the Town to the northwest. The Town of Rietbrock covers about 21,680 acres of land.

Topography and Geology

Marathon County's terrain is primarily the result of glaciation. The western areas of Marathon County consist of broad, nearly level to sloping ground moraines. Pre-settlement this area was dominated by wetlands, which were drained to make way for agriculture. This area is characterized by a flat to gently rolling landscape, with large tracts of contiguous farmland and forest in the wetter areas and along streams.

Most of the soils found in Marathon County are best used for cropland and woodlands. The soils of Marathon County are primarily derived from the weathering of glacial drift, outwash, and bedrock. The Town of Rietbrock is primarily covered by the Loyal-Withee-Marshfield soil group. However, it is also covered on the eastern side of the community by the Fenwood-Rietbrock-Rozellville group, and in the north by the Magnor-Cable soil group. Erosion throughout the Town is approximately 2.0 – 3.0 tons/acre/year. Susceptibility for soil erosion is similar to the average soil loss experienced by Marathon County as a whole and is not a major concern.

The primary concerns with soil erosion are the potential loss of productive farm soils and the impact of sediment and nutrient runoff on water quality. To maintain soil productivity, an average soil erosion rate of three to five tons per acre per year for cropland is considered allowable or tolerable ("T" level). The average soil loss rate for Marathon County is two tons per acre per year. To preserve water quality, the County's goal is to keep soil erosion rates below "T" levels, particularly in water quality management areas.

Forests

According to land cover maps, approximately 5,300 acres, or about 25 percent of the Town of Rietbrock is covered by woodlands. These woodlands are an important resource in the Town. Forests provide protection for environmentally sensitive areas, such as steep slopes, shorelands, wetlands, and flood plains. In addition, expansive forests provide recreational opportunities aesthetic benefits, and economic development.

All of the woodlands within the Town are privately owned, as there currently are no publicly owned woodlands within the Town.

Privately owned forestland includes approximately 980 acres enrolled in Managed Forest Law (MFL) program, as of 2023. Some, but not all, of this land is open to public access. These programs have been established to preserve and protect woodlands through practicing proper management techniques.

Metallic and Non-Metallic Mineral Resources

Non-metallic mining is a widespread activity throughout the State of Wisconsin. There is currently one permitted active non-metallic mine located within the Town.

Environmentally Remediated Areas

Brownfields are commercial or industrial properties that contain or may contain hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. Expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of these properties can be especially difficult. The Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) is an online database that provides information about contaminated properties and other activities related to the investigation

and clean-up of properties with contaminated soil and/or groundwater. Contaminated sites are not uncommon as all communities with commercial and industrial development have the potential for air emissions, groundwater contamination, soil spills, and surface water contamination. Contaminated sites originate when a property is used for such activities as a gas station, industrial processing facility, a landfill, or a laundromat. There are no listed open sites on the BRRTS currently in the Town of Rietbrock while there are five spill sites listed as closed.

Rare Species and Natural Communities

Wisconsin's National Heritage Inventory Program (NHI) is responsible for maintaining data on the locations and status of rare species, natural communities, and natural features throughout the State. The program's database, on the Wisconsin DNR website, identifies species and natural communities that are currently tracked by the NHI. As of January 2024, NHI tracked zero species or communities in the Town of Rietbrock.

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.

Water Resources

Marathon County contains abundant natural surface water features, including rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands. The Town of Rietbrock contains some of these rivers and streams within its boundaries. Many have remained in a fairly pristine state and others are in need of focused efforts to improve water quality. This section discusses the characteristics of the major surface water features located within the Town.

Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land in which water drains to a common point. In Wisconsin, watersheds vary in scale from major river systems to small creek drainage areas and typically range in size from 100 to 300 square miles. River basins encompass several watersheds. There are 32 river basins in Wisconsin, which range in size from 500 to over 5,000 square miles.

Marathon County is geographically located in the Central Wisconsin Basin, which is a subset of the entire Wisconsin River corridor located in Central Wisconsin. The Central Wisconsin River Basin is comprised of 29 watersheds, 17 of which are all or part in Marathon County. The majority of the Town of Rietbrock lies in the Black Creek Watershed, with this watershed covering most of the northern portion of the Town. Most of the southern portion lies in the Lower Rib River Watershed, while the Lower Big Eau Pleine River and Upper Big Eau Pleine River Watersheds cover small portions of the southern part of the Town. The Upper Rib River covers a small area in the northeast corner of the Town.

Surface Water

Marathon County has 202 lakes with a total surface area of 28,322 acres. Many lakes lie in kettle holes left by the retreat of the glaciers. Seepage lakes are the most common type of lake in the county. These lakes do not have any surface outflow but depend on underground movement of water through highly

permeable glacial soils for drainage. Most lakes are quite shallow, with depths ranging from less than one foot to a maximum of 34 feet. The County has 356 rivers and streams with a surface area of 3,748 acres. The interconnected network of rivers and streams that cross Marathon County is characteristic of a landscape influenced by glacial impacts. The Town of Rietbrock contains 146 acres of surface water, including streams and rivers which comprise approximately one percent of the Town's total land area.

Rivers and Streams

The main waterbody that runs through the Town is Black Creek. Black Creek runs across the northern portion of the Town. There are various other rivers and creeks throughout the Town. Black Creek is a tributary of the Big Rib River, which is located just to the east of the Town.

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

The Wisconsin DNR classifies major surface water resources. These classifications allow water bodies of particular importance to be identified because of their unique resource values and water quality. The DNR has two categories which include Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) which have the highest quality water and fisheries in the state and are therefore deserving of special protection, and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) which have excellent water quality and valued fisheries but receive or may receive water discharges.

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 two unnamed tributaries of Black Creek that are listed as ERW's within the Town and there are no waterbodies listed as ORW's within the Town.

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.

Black Creek and two unnamed tributaries are listed as impaired waterbodies due to high Phosphorus levels and degraded biology leading to poor fish community conditions stemming from an unknown pollutant.

Invasive Aquatic Species

Surface water resources in Marathon County are threatened by the introduction of invasive aquatic species. Invasive species can alter the natural ecological relationships among native species and affect ecosystem function, economic value of ecosystems, and human health. It is recommended that the Town

continue to work with the Marathon County Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning to develop public outreach education strategies. It is also beneficial that lake districts and associations continue to work with the DNR and property owners to manage invasive aquatic species within lakes and waterbodies throughout the Town of Rietbrock. There currently are no waterbodies within the Town with a documented case of invasive aquatic species. However, the nearby Big Rib River does have invasive species present including Eurasian Water-Milfoil.

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.

Wetlands in Rietbrock are associated with the river, creek, and tributaries throughout the Town. These areas should be protected and development should be encouraged away from these environmentally sensitive areas.

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. Floodplains 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 most substantial (regional) flood, i.e. those that have a probability of occurring once every one hundred years.

Groundwater

Groundwater is water found underground in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand, and rock. It is replenished by rain and snow melt that seeps down into cracks and crevices beneath the land's surface. 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. Wells are drilled 20 to 200 feet deep to yield 5 to 50 gallons per minute, but yields of 200 gallons per minute are possible. Shallow wells in these deposits are subject to pollution.

Groundwater is the major source of water consumption in Marathon County. All public and private water supplies and most domestic, industrial, and agricultural water supplies in the county rely on groundwater. As residential development continues to expand in the rural areas of the county and agricultural methods intensify, the concern for groundwater protection grows. Depth to groundwater varies from shallow to moderately deep. At current development and land uses, the eastern 2/3 of the Town has a short supply of groundwater, while the remainder has an adequate supply. Over the past few years, the concern for groundwater quantity has increased.

Contamination of groundwater typically is the result of land uses associated with modern development. Many land use activities have the potential to impact the quality of groundwater. A landfill may leach contaminants into the ground that end up contaminating groundwater. Gasoline may leak from an underground storage tank into groundwater. Fertilizers and pesticides can seep into the ground from application on farm fields, golf courses, or lawns. Leaking fluids from cars in junkyards, intentional dumping or accidental spills of paint, used motor oil, or other chemicals on the ground can result in contaminated groundwater.

The Wisconsin DNR in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin Extension, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey and USGS, analyzed the ease whereby contaminants can be carried through overlying materials to groundwater. Variables relevant to this are depth to bedrock, type of bedrock, soil characteristics, depth to water table, and characteristics of surficial deposits. Most areas in western Marathon County, including the Town of Rietbrock, have been identified as being less susceptible to contamination.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Agriculture has played a dominant role in the culture and economy of Marathon County for the past century. A significant number of people throughout the county are employed in agricultural-related industries and the economic health of many rural communities is directly tied to agriculture. Agriculture in Wisconsin has experienced several changes in the past decades including relying more upon technological advances to farm successfully and conversion of significant amounts of cropland to non-farm uses. This has created more recognition of the need for meaningful farmland preservation programs.

Farmland Resources

According to land cover maps, agricultural lands comprise 14,526 acres (67%) of the Town. Farmland is much a part of the history, culture, and economy of the Town of Rietbrock. Croplands constitute the most sizeable land use category within the Town. Preservation and attention to these resources is and will continue to be a priority.

Prime Farm Soils

About two-thirds of the Town has prime farmland soils. These class designations refer to the quality of soils for growing crops and are based on United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classifications. Class 1 soils are the best soils in Marathon County for growing all crops. Class 2 soils are also very good agricultural soils, however, they may be prone to wetness and are therefore less desirable than Class 1 soils. It should be noted that not all prime farm soils are used for farming; some have been developed with residential or other uses. The “prime farm soils” designation simply indicates that these soils are good productive farmland. Approximately 1,800 acres are held under farmland preservation contracts, which provide certain tax incentives to encourage land to be kept in active farming. This is discussed in greater detail in the Land Use section.

Farmland Preservation

Farmland preservation is available to landowners within the Town of Rietbrock and throughout Marathon County, as it impacts local economy and culture. The **Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan** details county policies and strategies with the goal of supporting and sustaining active farms. The Farmland Preservation Plan identifies and distinguishes farm preservation areas from non-farm preservation areas and future development areas. A majority of the Town is designated as Farmland Preservation Areas.

Property owners in farm preservation areas may participate in the Farmland Preservation Program, an income tax credit program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. 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 can receive a state income tax credit in exchange for keeping land in agricultural use. These tax credits are intended as an incentive to keep land in active farming and meet soil conservation standards. Property owners determine if they would like to participate in farmland preservation practices.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A cultural resource is a broad term that can encompass many aspects of heritage. Cultural resources may include archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to Native Americans or other cultural groups. Cultural resources are those elements that signify heritage and help to evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinctive. Cultural resources include buildings; sites and landscape that help communities retain their sense of identity in an increasingly homogenized society.

Community History

The Village of Athens and development of the surrounding area was led by Milwaukee attorney Frederick Rietbrock. While handling a lawsuit in Wausau in the 1870s, Rietbrock took a side trip to the northwest section of the County and began purchasing land. He ultimately owned much of the three townships of Halsey, Johnson and Rietbrock and controlled some 50,000 acres of timberland, which he ruled from his Milwaukee home.

Rietbrock planned his center of operations at Black Creek Falls (later Athens), where he built a sawmill, and a “Company House,” for use as a way station for the new agricultural settlers he also wanted to attract. To haul lumber, Rietbrock built a road west to Dorchester to connect with the Wisconsin Central Railroad. He soon decided that Black Creek Falls needed its own rail connection and incorporated the Abbotsford and Northeastern Railway, and it was built to connect Rietbrock’s sawmill with Dorchester on an alignment through the towns of Holton and Johnson by 1891.

Frederick Rietbrock also supported agricultural development of his land in northwest Marathon County. As early as 1879 he sent representatives to New York City to encourage German immigrants to settle his land. In 1878, Polish immigrants from Milwaukee were attracted to Rietbrock property and settled the Village of Poniatowski. The Town was named for Polish General Jozef Antonio Poniatowski, known for a 1790s revolt against the Russians. By the 1880s, the Town of Rietbrock had over 400 people with the community of Poniatowski serving as the commercial center.

Resources

Historic structures and cultural areas provide a sense of place, enhance community pride, and reinforce social and cultural enrichment. The identification of existing historic structures and cultural areas are an important consideration in all town planning efforts, as these features are critical to defining a community’s look and character.

There are no properties within the Town on the National or State Register of Historic Places or on the Wisconsin Architectural History Inventory. However, a significant proportion of the Town of Rietbrock’s housing units were constructed in 1939 or earlier, many of which are farmsteads. This demonstrates the historical significance that agriculture had on the early development of the Town.

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.

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 10 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 80 acres may be closed to public access by the landowner. There is a 5% yield tax applied to any wood products harvested. Contact the WDNR for further information.

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.

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.

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.

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.

The Central Wisconsin Groundwater Center allows residents in the Town of Rietbrock and other areas in central Wisconsin to determine the safety of their well water by providing the opportunity to have their well water tested. Residents can send in water samples of their well water to any state-certified testing laboratory, including the Water and Environmental Analysis Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, which houses the Central Wisconsin Groundwater Center.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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 of the following categories: Nitrogen Use Efficiency, Tile Monitoring, Leachate Collection Systems, Watershed water quality, and Edge-of-Field Runoff Monitoring.

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.

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.

The Marathon County Historical Society is available to assist Town of Rietbrock residents with preserving their own history, and artifacts that also build upon the history in Marathon County. Their mission is to collect, preserve, and exhibit materials related to the history of Marathon County, and to use those materials to help people learn about North Central Wisconsin, connect with their roots, and explore their own historical connections.

Natural Resources and Cultural Resources Issues

- **Taxes on Woodlands** – Woodlots are taxed at a higher rate than other lands in the Town.
- **Woodlots** – Woodlots are small, and generally located along the waterways within the Town.
- **Farms** – There are many active farms in the Town, and there is a desire to preserve farmland and the family farming way of life.
- **Lack of Current Information** – Although a brief countywide historic properties survey was carried out in 1975-77, there has been no update. Many properties identified at that time may be gone, while other properties not previously surveyed may now be evaluated in a new context. It is necessary for the community to have current information about cultural resources in order to maximize planning and make the best use of historic properties.
- **No Recognition Process** – Outside of the City of Wausau, there is no process to recognize historic buildings or begin to plan for their protection. Once historic properties are identified, towns and villages do not have an established mechanism for recognizing them or integrating them into ongoing planning processes.
- **Rural Character and Historic Resources** – In Marathon County, residents have expressed a strong desire to preserve the rural character of the County and raised concerns about increasing ex-urban development and the decline of working farms. An important part of rural character is the rural landscape and the buildings that convey that sense of place. While it is important to address the location and type of new development, there is also a need to preserve some visible reminders of rural character, including working farms. Without preserving some of the existing resources, including farmsteads and farmlands, the very characteristics that attracted residents will increasingly be lost.

- **Protection of Archaeological Sites and Cemeteries** – Cultural resources planning includes identification and protection of archaeological sites and historic cemeteries. The Wisconsin Historical Society maintains a list of reported sites and cemeteries, representing a fraction of sites that are actually present. This information is often overlooked and should be incorporated into the planning process for local communities.
- **Trend Towards Larger and Fewer Farms** – There is a trend towards larger farm operations within the Town, and there are subsequent concerns about potential contamination from increases in manure spreading, runoff, etc. that typically result from larger farming operations.

DRAFT

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal 1: Protect water quality and quantity throughout the Town.

Objectives:

- Work with Marathon County and the WDNR to identify critical zones, such as groundwater recharge areas, and update applicable Town ordinances.
- Work with Marathon County and the WDNR to encourage landowners within the Town to regularly conduct well testing and to properly maintain their wells.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock discourages development in areas that are critical to maintaining the groundwater supply.

Strategies and Actions:

- Update applicable Town ordinances to discourage development in critical groundwater protection areas.

Goal 2: Preserve historically significant buildings and sites.

Objectives:

- To work with the County Historical Society to identify historic resources so they may be considered in future planning.
- To ensure that any known cemeteries, human burials, or archaeological sites are protected from encroachment by roads or any development activities.
- Identify the 100-year farms located in the Town of Rietbrock.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock supports the preservation of existing historic sites and structures.

Strategies and Actions:

- Identify the known 100-year farms in the Town of Rietbrock.

Goal 3: Preserve and protect the rural character of the Town.

Objectives:

- Minimize nonagricultural development on prime agricultural soils.
- Discourage conversion of active farmland to rural residential lots.
- Explore programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program, that seek to maintain prime soils and cropland.

Policies:

- The Town will support the preservation of active agricultural lands.
- Encourage users of the land to be good stewards of the land.
- Support small farms and family farms within the Town of Rietbrock.

Strategies and Actions:

- Identify prime farm soils in the Town of Rietbrock and work with UW-Extension, Marathon County, and local property owners to preserve these prime agricultural soils.
- Contact local agencies, including UW-Extension, to acquire pamphlets and other informational materials on agricultural preservation tools.

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."

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

ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2023

This report, developed by the United Way, described the 20 percent of households in Marathon County that are above the federal poverty level, but still 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 13 percent of Rietbrock households are either below the federal poverty level or are considered ALICE households, indicating that the average household in Rietbrock is more financially prosperous than the average Marathon County household at-large. This is based on 2021 data, so affordability is likely a larger challenge as housing prices and inflation have increased since then.

Housing Stock Assessment

Housing Type and Tenure

In 2022, the Town of Rietbrock had 353 occupied housing units, nearly all of which were owner-occupied, as shown in **Table 10**. The Town of Rietbrock had a significantly higher percentage of owner-occupied homes than Marathon County (73 percent) and a significantly higher percentage than the State of Wisconsin (68 percent). The average household size of 2.48 was similar to both the County (2.46) and the State (2.45). About 22 percent of households within the Town were occupied by a single householder and about 47 percent of households had at least one individual age 60 and older.

	Town of Rietbrock	Marathon County	Wisconsin
Total Housing Units	371	59,980	2,734,511
Total Occupied Housing Units	353	56,484	2,425,488
Vacant Housing Units	18	3,496	309,023
Seasonal Housing Units	0	899	178,711
Owner-occupied Housing Units	325	41,182	1,641,590
Renter-occupied Housing Units	28	15,302	783,898
Average Household Size	2.48	2.46	2.45
Percent Owner-occupied	92.1%	72.9%	67.7%
Percent Householder Living Alone	21.8%	27.1%	30.7%
Percent with Individuals 60 or Over	47.0%	41.7%	40.9%

Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022

Structural Characteristics

The vast majority of housing units (over 96 percent) in the Town of Rietbrock are single-family, as shown in **Table 11**. Both the Town of Rietbrock and Marathon County have a housing stock with a higher percentage of single-family housing than the State as a whole. There are no housing units within the Town that are multi-family units. In comparison, about 19 percent of housing units in Marathon County are multi-family and about 26 percent of housing units in Wisconsin are multi-family.

Table 11: Housing Units by Structural Type							
	Single-Family		Multi-Family		Mobile Home		Total
Town of Rietbrock	358	96.5%	0	0.0%	13	3.5%	371
Marathon County	46,903	78.2%	11,482	19.1%	1,595	2.7%	59,980
Wisconsin	1,934,556	70.7%	713,394	26.1%	86,561	3.2%	2,734,511

Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022

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 Marathon County. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

Table 12 outlines build dates of housing units throughout the Town, County, and State based on 2022 American Community Survey data. Over 40 percent of Rietbrock's housing units were built before 1940, compared to about 17 percent of housing units in Marathon County and about 19 percent of housing units statewide. About 22 percent of housing units within the Town of Rietbrock were built between 1970 and 1999, a significantly lower proportion than both Marathon County (39 percent) and Wisconsin (37 percent). Housing growth has slowed significantly over the past decade, as only about two percent of the Town's housing stock has been built since 2010, a trend that is also being experienced within Marathon County and Wisconsin. Nationwide, home supply has not been constructed to meet demand since the Great Recession of 2008, leading to increased competition and higher prices.

Table 12: Year Structure Built						
	Town of Rietbrock		Marathon County		Wisconsin	
Before 1939	149	40.2%	10,138	16.9%	504,575	18.5%
1940-1949	10	2.7%	3,035	5.1%	147,777	5.4%
1950-1959	60	16.2%	6,061	10.1%	287,354	10.5%
1960-1969	26	7.0%	4,731	7.9%	262,836	9.6%
1970-1979	12	3.2%	9,123	15.2%	394,115	14.4%
1980-1989	26	7.0%	6,426	10.7%	263,915	9.7%
1990-1999	43	11.6%	7,863	13.1%	365,107	13.4%
2000-2009	38	10.2%	8,914	14.9%	333,032	12.2%
2010 or Later	7	1.9%	3,689	6.2%	175,800	6.4%
Total	371	100.0%	59,980	100.0%	2,734,511	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022

Value Characteristics

Table 13 details housing values in owner-occupied homes throughout the Town, County, and State. In 2022, the median housing value was \$217,400 in the Town of Rietbrock. This was higher than Marathon County's median housing value of \$194,500, and lower than the State of Wisconsin's median home value of \$231,400. Nearly a third of the homes within the Town (about 31 percent) are valued between \$100,000 and \$199,999. There is housing across a broad spectrum of valuations in the Town.

Table 13: Housing Values of Owner-Occupied Units, 2022							
	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 Rietbrock	2.2%	12.9%	16.6%	14.5%	19.7%	34.2%	\$217,400
Marathon County	3.5%	9.9%	18.2%	20.4%	27.9%	20.1%	\$194,500
Wisconsin	4.0%	7.2%	12.9%	16.7%	26.7%	32.4%	\$231,400

Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022

Housing Affordability

Several factors contribute to the affordability of housing in Marathon 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.

Table 14 shows that the percentage of owner-occupied households in the Town of Rietbrock that are cost-burdened is similar to the County and lower than the State for those with a mortgage and is lower than both the County and the State for those without a mortgage. **Table 15** shows that the percentage of renter-occupied households in the Town of Rietbrock that are cost-burdened is substantially lower than the County or the State.

Table 14: Housing Affordability (Owner-Occupied Units)				
	With Mortgage	Percent Cost-Burdened	No Mortgage	Percent Cost-Burdened
Town of Rietbrock	\$1,331	17.1%	\$523	2.9%
Marathon County	\$1,404	17.1%	\$557	9.4%
Wisconsin	\$1,602	22.0%	\$624	12.1%

Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022

*Cost-Burdened means a household is paying more than 30% of their income towards housing costs

Table 15: Housing Affordability (Renter-Occupied Units)		
	Median Gross Rent	Percent Cost-Burdened
Town of Rietbrock	\$747	9.5%
Marathon County	\$898	42.9%
Wisconsin	\$992	43.1%

Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022

*Cost-Burdened means a household is paying more than 30% of their income towards housing costs

Specialized Housing

In Marathon County, housing for seniors and populations with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Wausau. The Marathon County Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC), the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and the Marathon County United Way all maintain a list of these housing options throughout Marathon County. 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 the Town of Rietbrock, 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 City of Wausau area. The area surrounding the Town of Rietbrock will likely need additional housing options for seniors in upcoming years.

Summary of Housing Characteristics

The Town of Rietbrock is abundant with homes and farmsteads and many residents live and work within the Town, particularly in the area of agriculture. The Town itself has an overriding rural character, and is abundant with natural resources, agricultural resources, and cultural resources.

Most housing consists of single-family detached housing that is owner-occupied. A substantial amount of the Town's stock housing was constructed before 1940 and falls into mid-valuation ranges. Some population increase is expected in upcoming decades and the community would benefit from a wide range of housing options. Consistent with the state as a whole, new housing construction over the past decade has stalled. There is a need for construction of additional housing units to accommodate demand. It would be desirable to construct housing in a variety of styles to create affordability and more adequately meet the needs of those at various income levels and desiring a range of amenities. Affordability is more commonly an issue for owners, rather than renters in the Town.

There are a large number of residents nearing retirement age in the Town. Seniors typically desire housing that is smaller, accessible, and near needed healthcare services and amenities. This need will continue throughout the upcoming decades. These are important considerations when looking at future housing policy and planning.

Housing Issues

- **Older Housing Stock** – Over 40 percent of the housing stock was built prior to 1940 and thus may require maintenance or replacement.
- **New Construction** - Rietbrock is seeing low levels of new construction.
- **100-Year Farms** - The Town has a number of 100-year farmsteads. These represent a heritage that the Town should look to protect.
- **Rural Housing** - New housing construction is changing the rural landscape.
- **Mobile Homes** - Town zoning allows mobile homes to be located on a pad. These are allowed for family members of farm operations. The Town should look to develop a non-farm policy for mobile homes.
- **Manufactured Homes** - Manufactured housing is allowed under current zoning.
- **Accessory Dwelling Units** - The Town is seeing an influx of accessory dwelling units and garages being used as living quarters. The Town should look to develop standards for potential accessory dwelling unit occupancies to mitigate potential harmful impacts that these can cause.

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

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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 1: Locate new residential development in appropriate areas.

Objectives:

- To discourage development on prime ag soils.
- Guide new housing to locations where the extension of service provision will be easiest to deliver.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock discourages development on prime agricultural soils.
- The Town of Rietbrock encourages future subdivisions to locate in close proximity to existing developed areas to ensure that service provision costs are minimal.

Strategies and Actions:

- Develop and enforce a land use plan that guides housing development to the Village of Athens or the Village of Edgar area.
- Identify natural areas that the Town would like to preserve, and guide growth to other locales.

Goal 2: Redevelop, rehabilitate, and maintain the Town's existing housing stock.

Objectives:

- Identify homes that could be revitalized.
- Identify funding for redevelopment.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock supports the development of a regional or county revolving loan fund to aid owners in the rehabilitation of their homes and to aid first-time homebuyers.

Strategies and Actions:

- Work with the County and other applicable agencies to identify and develop funds for a housing revolving loan fund.

Goal 3: Develop a set of standards for accessory dwelling units within the Town.

Objectives:

- Develop restrictions, prohibited uses, and allowable uses for accessory dwelling units within the Town of Rietbrock.

Policies:

- Consider amendments to the zoning code to set restrictions and conditions for the potential use of accessory dwelling units within the Town.

Strategies and Actions:

- Strive to ensure that accessory dwelling units do not replace productive agricultural lands.

Chapter Four

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 Rietbrock.

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

Transportation is one of four elements included in the Regional Livability Plan (RLP), adopted by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in 2015. The Transportation Assessment Report, a component of the plan, looks in detail at the transportation network throughout the ten-county region and identifies trends and issues facing transportation.

The Regional Livability Plan addresses three issues: the modes of transportation to work, the age of drivers in the region, and the high transportation maintenance cost. The three transportation goals of the RLP are as follows:

- Provide and improve transportation access to people of all ages and abilities to ensure lifelong mobility and accessibility.
- Fund the maintenance and expansion of the transportation system.
- Enhance the regional economy by supporting airports and freight rail.

Locally Developed, Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan, 2019

Marathon County developed this five-year plan that was facilitated by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The plan analyzes service gaps and needs in public transit and human services transportation and proposes strategies to address the gaps and needs.

Connections 2050

Connections 2050 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the state. Adopted recently, the plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit. WisDOT is currently updating several of the modal plans.

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

This 2001 document [revised in 2003] clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in the provision of all types of trails. The plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in the creation of recreational and alternative transportation corridors.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act)

This current federal transportation program authorizes up to \$108 billion to support federal public transportation programs, including \$91 billion in guaranteed funding. It also reauthorizes surface transportation programs for FY 2022-2026 and provides advance appropriations for certain programs. Major goals include improving safety, modernizing aging transit infrastructure and fleets, investing in cleaner transportation, and improving equity in communities with limited transportation access. These funds will be distributed via formulas and grants to the states. Local units will be able to access the funds through various grant programs.

Road Network

The Town of Rietbrock is bordered to the south by State Highway 29, to the east by County Highway H, and to the west by State Highway 97. County Highways M and U cut through the Town of Rietbrock. The road network within the Town of Rietbrock is a network of state and county highways together with various local roads. The jurisdictional and functional breakdown the Town of Rietbrock road network is shown in **Table 16**.

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.

Table 16: Road Mileage by Jurisdictional and Functional Class

Jurisdiction	Functional Classification			Totals
	Arterial	Collector	Local	
State*	16.05	0.00	0.00	16.05
County	0.00	14.11	0.00	14.11
Town	0.00	0.58	41.49	42.07
Totals	16.05	14.69	41.49	72.23

Source: WisDOT & NCMRPC

*: WisDOT has jurisdiction over interstate and federal highways

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, identifies 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.

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 Road Facilities

Functional classification and jurisdiction are summarized below for all major roads within the Town of Rietbrock.

- State Highway 29 is a four-lane divided principal arterial which serves as the border between the Town of Rietbrock and the Town of Wien.
- State Highway 97 is a two-lane minor arterial and serves as the border between the Town of Rietbrock and the Town of Johnson.
- County Highway H is a major collector running in a north-south direction at the eastern border of the Town.
- County Highway M is a minor collector between County Highway U and the southern border of Rietbrock at State Highway 29.
- County Highway U is a minor collector connecting County Highways H and M.

Local Roads

The Town of Rietbrock local road network consists of approximately 42 miles of local roads, of which about 34 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 Rietbrock 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 17 shows a summary of pavement conditions in the Town of Rietbrock. 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 9.93 miles of roads in the Town, or 24 percent of the Town’s roads, are in need of improvement. Approximately 81 percent of roadways in the Town are gravel roads. Asphalt or concrete roads account for the remaining 19 percent of the total.

Table 17: Summary of Pavement Conditions, 2023		
Surface Condition Rating	Miles	Percent of Total Mileage
Very Poor	0.01	0.0%
Poor	1.44	3.4%
Fair	8.48	20.2%
Good	25.9	61.6%
Very Good	0.56	1.3%
Excellent	5.67	13.5%
Total	42.06	100.0%

Source: WisDOT 2023

Trucking

State Highways 29 and 97 are the truck routes that serve the Town as designated by WisDOT. 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 within the local area. Local issues such as safety, weight restrictions, and noise impacts play significant roles in the designation of local truck routes.

Rail

There are no rail lines in the Town of Rietbrock. Shipments needing rail service would have to be trucked to nearby cities with rail access such as Marshfield or Wausau.

Airport

Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties and is governed by the Central Wisconsin Joint Airport Board. It is the only airport within Marathon County or neighboring counties that provides scheduled air passenger services. The Central Wisconsin Airport is located east of Mosinee and is easily accessible via I-39. In 2011, the airport underwent a terminal renovation and expansion project which increased operational space, expanded the security checkpoint, increased parking, and relocated rental cars to a separate facility. The airport is currently served by three airlines, Delta, American and United Airlines.

Bus/Transit

There is no public transit service available in the Town. North Central Health Care provides paratransit services for persons over 60 or persons with disabilities who live within Marathon County. The service includes semi-fixed routes that are scheduled, and demand service available with 48-hour notice. Information and services are available by calling 715-841-5101.

ATV and UTV

ATV and UTV's are allowed on all Town roads and on County Highways. ATV and UTV's are prohibited on State Highway 29.

Bicycling and Walking

All roads are available for bicycle and pedestrian travel in the Town of Rietbrock. No sidewalks exist. Roads that do not have sidewalks may not provide sufficient shoulder areas for safe pedestrian access.

The 2018 North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan recommends the addition of on-road bicycle infrastructure along County Highways H, M, and U within the Town of Rietbrock.

The Central Wisconsin Convention & Visitors Bureau has expressed interest in designating bicycle routes throughout Marathon County that will connect points of interest throughout the County. The 45x90 geographical marker is a likely point of interest within the Town that will be connected in the county-wide route system.

Specialty

The Aging and Disability Resource Center serves Marathon County residents with a variety of resources including those related to transportation. More details about transportation services for ambulatory and non-ambulatory residents can be found on their website. Some examples include Abby Vans, which provides weekend transportation services county-wide and Wheels to Work which assists Marathon County families/individuals to overcome transportation obstacles between home and work.

Transportation Issues

- **Road Maintenance** – Identifying, prioritizing, and funding road maintenance needs and road improvements (e.g. blacktopping) is a priority for the Town.
- **STH 29** – Town residents are concerned about access management and possible expansion on STH 29 and the potential impact on adjacent land uses. Improved access could open up land for development and increase development pressure. Decreased access could negatively affect property values and minimize access for existing residents.
- **Bike Routes** – Potential bike routes in the community should be identified and marked.
- **Highway Access / Residential Demand** – Excellent highway access will result in continued rural residential development.

- **Impact of Farm Vehicles** – Transportation of large farm and CAFO waste products heavily impacts the condition of Town roads, requiring more frequent maintenance.
- **Hazardous Roads** – Residents have identified the intersections of County Highway M and Drewek Creek Road, and Mount View Lane and Pioneer Road as hazardous intersections within the Town.

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 Rietbrock 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 Wisconsin Rapids or on the Internet at www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/index.htm.

Goals, Objectives & Policies

Goal 1: Maintain Town Roads

Objectives:

- Utilize the PASER analysis and prioritize maintenance scheduling through a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).
- Develop criteria to address whether or not to blacktop new roads.
- To develop a retainer system for road or other capital repairs which occur as a direct result of large farm equipment and trucks on local roadways.
- Work with the Marathon County Sheriff's Department to enforce weight limits on Town roads.
- Work with farmers to assist in the reduction of conflicts between farm and non-farm vehicles.
- Maintain and improve the ongoing cooperation with surrounding Towns and the Village of Athens regarding road maintenance.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock supports the continued funding and maintenance of the Town transportation system.
- The Town of Rietbrock supports placing additional requirements on large equipment and vehicles to pay for the costs of road repair.

Strategies and Actions:

- Continue to utilize the CIP and PASER to prioritize maintenance projects.
- Develop criteria, such as traffic counts and costs, to address whether or not to blacktop new roads.
- Develop a retainer system for capital repairs that occur as a result of large farm equipment and trucks on local roadways.
- Meet with surrounding Towns and the Village of Athens to maintain and improve ongoing cooperation related to road maintenance.
- Meet with the Marathon County Sheriff's Department to discuss the enforcement of weight limits on Town roads.
- Work with Marathon County to develop a program / protocol to inform new rural residents about the realities of farm equipment on Town roads.

Goal 2: Plan for the impacts of future road improvements.

Objectives:

- Work with WisDOT and Marathon County to identify future access points on State Highway 29.
- Plan for future access changes to State Highways 29 and 97, and their impacts on public safety services and development patterns.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock strongly supports the continuing level of access that is currently available along State Highway 29.

Strategies and Actions:

- Meet with WisDOT and Marathon County to develop a long-term plan for future access to State Highways 29 and 97.

Goal 3: Maintain a safe transportation system.**Objectives:**

- Address safety issues on County Highway M and Drewek Creek Road, and Mount View Lane and Pioneer Road to ensure citizens have safe transportation routes.
- Provide for a safe, efficient, multi-modal, and well-maintained transportation network for all modes of transportation.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock supports a safe transportation system.

Strategies and Actions:

- Meet with the Marathon County Highway Department to develop a plan to safely address safety issues at County Highway M and Drewek Creek Road, and Mount View Lane and Pioneer Road.

Chapter Five

Utilities and Community Facilities

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

Previous Plans and Studies

Marathon County All Hazards Mitigation Plan

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 is necessary to assess their relative importance. The report reviews a series of weather disasters; how they have affected the county in the past and how future instances are likely to affect the county and how local government should respond to such occurrences. The report concludes with suggested mitigation measures that might be taken by local governments to reduce the risk from identified hazards. Counties and incorporated municipalities are required to adopt such plans with updates every five years.

Utilities

Water Service

The Town of Rietbrock does not have a public water supply system. Instead, private wells supply the water for public and private facilities within the Town. Concerns exist over water quality as properties continue to develop.

Wastewater

There is no public sewer system in the Town of Rietbrock. Therefore, all development in the Town uses on-site septic systems. The Town, which has Town zoning, requires a minimum lot size of 2 acres for installation of individual septic systems and wells. Generally, these private sewage systems fall into four categories:

- Conventional systems – these systems include an absorption field that is buried under the natural ground level.

- At-grade systems – consist of a septic tank and soil absorption bed. Treatment begins in the first inch of soil.
- Mound systems – these systems include an absorption field that is constructed above ground creating a “mound”.
- Holding tank systems – these systems are considered a last resort and are only allowed if other septic systems cannot be used. Because of the geology and soil types in the area, most homes in the Town use holding tanks.

Solid Waste and Recycling

The Town of Rietbrock operates a transfer station for solid waste and recyclables drop-off. The Marathon County Solid Waste Management Department is in charge of waste management for non-hazardous solid waste. It consists of the 575-acre landfill, recycling programs, composting, and waste-to-energy.

Stormwater Management

Surface water management (also referred to as “storm water management”) is one of the key components in efforts to improve water quality. It primarily involves controlling the volume, quality, and storage of runoff. Marathon County is especially concerned about non-point sources of pollution, including failing septic systems, urban runoff, and issues often identified with rural areas such as soil erosion, animal waste and pesticides. Non-point pollution is best addressed at the watershed level.

Energy and Telecommunications

Electric and Natural Gas

Electric services are provided by Wisconsin Public Service Commission (WPS) and Northern States Power Company. Some of the Town receives natural gas services from WPS while other parts of the Town rely on private contracts for LP service.

Solar Energy Potential

The Town of Rietbrock recognizes the potential impacts to our community of large-scale Solar Energy projects (100 MW or greater) can be both positive and negative. Since the landscape of our Township offers prime conditions for solar energy development, the Town recognizes the need to encourage the siting of potential solar projects to specific areas that best fit the needs and desires of both the citizens and the agricultural community while minimizing negative impacts on existing land use trends and public interests.

Wind Energy Potential

The Town of Rietbrock recognizes both the positive and negative impacts to our community of large-scale wind energy projects. Although wind energy can be a very cost-effective source of electricity, wind

energy developments do pose potential issues for the Town, mainly regarding visibility, noise, negative impacts on property values, and harmful impacts on wildlife.

Since the landscape of our Township offers prime conditions for wind energy development, the Town should consider adopting an ordinance focused on the regulation of wind turbines that complies with the local government regulatory limitations set by 2009 Wisconsin Act 40 - [ch. PSC 128, Wis. Adm. Code](#) and State Statute [§.66.0401](#). Under current state law, a local ordinance may require a study, money compensation, and annual reports, among other requirements.

Cable/Internet

Several companies currently provide high speed internet access throughout the Town including Frontier, Country Wireless, and AirRunner Networks, as well as various satellite internet providers.

As a rural community, there are significant gaps in internet coverage that exist within the Town, resulting in areas that have inadequate internet access.

Cable service is only available near the Village of Athens. There are no communication towers currently located within the Town.

Community Facilities

Town Operations

The Town Hall is located at 125354 Cherry Grove Lane, Edgar, WI 54426. The Town Board meets once each month while the Town Plan Commission meets as needed. There is also a Town Assessor, Building Inspector, Clerk, Treasurer, and Zoning Administrator.

Schools

The Town of Rietbrock is served by two public school districts: the School District of Athens and the School District of Edgar. The School District of Athens has an elementary, middle, and high school located in the Village of Athens, as well as Maple Grove Elementary School located in the Town of Hamburg. The School District of Edgar has an elementary, middle, and high school all located in the Village of Edgar.

Post-Secondary Education

- **Northcentral Technical College** – located in Wausau, offers several one- and two-year programs and certificates in business, technical, health and industrial fields.
- **Mid-State Technical College** – located in Marshfield, is one of 16 regional colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College system, with campuses in Adams, Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids. They offer associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in a wide variety of high demand fields.

- **University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point at Wausau** – offers courses leading to a baccalaureate degree. They also offer graduate degrees including Master of Business Administration (MBA), Physician Assistant (in partnership with UW Madison), and Master’s Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (in partnership with Northern Vermont University).
- **University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UWSP) at Marshfield** – located in Marshfield, students can work toward a variety of bachelor’s degree options including business administration, nursing, and social work.

Libraries

The Town of Rietbrock is served by the Marathon County Library System. The nearest branches are located in the Village of Athens and the Village of Edgar. The Athens Branch Library contains 2,750 square feet of space and approximately 18,800 volumes while the Edgar Branch Library has 2,046 square feet of space and approximately 14,800 volumes.

Cemeteries

There are two cemeteries located within the Town, both of which are located on Cherry Grove Lane.

Public Safety

- **Law Enforcement** – Police protection for the Town of Rietbrock is provided by the Marathon County Sheriff’s Office.
- **Fire and Emergency Response** – The Town of Rietbrock has a shared fire district with the Villages of Athens and Edgar.
- **E-911 Dispatch Service** – The Marathon County Sheriff’s Office Communications Division provides E-911 Dispatch for all Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies in Marathon County.

Hospitals and Medical Services

There are two major hospitals in Marathon County, Aspirus Wausau Hospital at 425 Pine Ridge Boulevard in Wausau and Marshfield Clinic Hospital in Weston. The Wausau Hospital is a multi-specialty regional health center.

Marshfield Medical Center is located at 611 Saint Joseph Avenue in Marshfield and offers a full array of services, specialty services and a complete rehabilitation unit.

Two physicians provide pediatric and internal medicine services at the Marshfield Clinic Stratford Center, currently housed in a facility in Stratford’s Business and Industrial Park. Doctors of Physical Therapy, located on N. 3rd Avenue in Edgar, offers physical and occupational therapy to area residents. Treatment

programs include post-operative, sports injury, neck and back care, women's health issues, and chronic pain/headache management.

The nearest dental services are provided in the Villages of Athens and Marathon City.

Childcare

The Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network is a membership organization made up of community-based CCR&R agencies serving the State of Wisconsin. Marathon County is within Region 6, which is served by Childcaring, Inc., located in Wisconsin Rapids.

CCR&R agencies assist parents in selecting quality childcare, help to increase the supply of childcare in areas that may be lacking sufficient care, offer information and technical support to potential childcare providers, and give technical assistance and support to existing childcare programs. Each agency manages a database of existing childcare providers and programs, collects data about childcare rates, provider and teacher salaries, the number of parents and children using their services, the type of care requested and the children's ages. There are three licensed childcare facilities in the Village of Edgar, and two other licensed childcare facilities located within ten miles of the Town.

Recreation

Parks

The 45°N - 90°W Geographic Marker is the only park facility located within the Town of Rietbrock. A quarter-mile pathway will lead you to the point that is the exact center of the Northwest Hemisphere where the 45th Parallel of Latitude intersects the 90th Meridian of Longitude. There are only four 45° - 90° locations in the world, and this is the only conveniently accessible marker in the world. There is a perceived significance that this geographical location is responsible for the prevalence and high quality of ginseng in Marathon County. This park contains a gravel path, picnic tables & seating, and a surveyor's marker & monument sign explaining the geological significance of the location.

Rib Falls County Park is the next closest park to the Town, located about three miles east of Rietbrock in the Town of Rib Falls. Rib Falls Park is 315 acres with park facilities including hiking & walking trails, a paved path, an open shelter, a picnic area with tables & seating, playground equipment, and vault restrooms. The park's main feature is the Big Rib River, which flows through the park and over a dam and rapids, with an impoundment that allows for swimming. Fishing is prohibited at the park.

Rib Mountain State Park is the closest state park to the Town of Rietbrock. The park's main feature is Rib Mountain, which at 1,924 feet above sea level is one of the highest elevations in the State of Wisconsin. The park surrounds the mountain and contains picnicking amenities, hiking trails, and reservable facilities that include a scenic amphitheater, indoor gathering space, and picnic shelters. The top of the park offers spectacular views of the Wausau area and Wisconsin River. Granite Peak Ski Area is on the north face of the mountain and offers downhill skiing and snowboarding.

Utilities and Community Facilities Issues

- **Sheriff Response Time** – There are some concerns with response time from the County Sheriff's Office.
- **Fire District Allocation** – Some homes are located closer to one fire district but are served by the other.
- **Broadband** – There are existing gaps in coverage for internet service and inadequate internet service throughout the Town.
- **Solar Energy Farms** – There are concerns about harmful impacts of commercial solar development on prime farmland and the agricultural landscape.
- **Loss of Prime Farmland** – There are concerns about the loss of prime farmland to commercial developments, including commercial wind and solar developments.

Goals, Objectives & Policies

Goal 1: Maintain current provision of services.

Objectives:

- To perform annual budget allocations to fund public services.
- Continue to find methods of cost sharing, such as equipment sharing, with surrounding municipalities to increase the efficiency by which services are provided.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock supports the continued funding of services through the annual budgeting process.

Strategies and Actions:

- Continue to perform the annual budget process.
- Hold discussions with surrounding communities to identify areas where cost savings could be achieved through the joint provision of services.

Goal 2: Protect the Town's water resources, including potable water.

Objectives:

- Work with Marathon County and the WDNR to identify critical zones, such as groundwater recharge areas, and update applicable Town ordinances.
- Work with Marathon County and the WDNR to monitor the impact of high-volume wells on the water table.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock discourages development in areas that are critical to maintain the region's groundwater capacity.

Strategies and Actions:

- Monitor high-volume wells in the Town.
- Review and update Town ordinances, as needed, to protect the water supply.

Goal 3: Provide effective public safety services.

Objectives:

- Work with the Marathon County Sheriff's Department and the Villages of Athens and Edgar to continue to provide effective police and EMS services to the area.
- Analyze the current fire district boundaries to identify those areas that are located in a district that could be better served by transferring to another district.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock supports the continued effective provision of public safety services.

Strategies and Actions:

- Meet with existing fire districts to analyze response times to outlying areas and discuss transfer of responsibilities, should one district be more suitable to serve a particular area.
- The Town of Rietbrock will work to refine the existing fire district boundaries to ensure that maximum levels of service are achieved.

Goal 4: Support the Marathon County park system.**Objectives:**

- To encourage proper funding for maintenance of local Marathon County parks.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock supports the continued funding of the Marathon County park system.

Strategies and Actions:

- Encourage appropriate funding levels for the Marathon County park system.

Goal 5: Strive to work with Marathon County to develop an Emergency Management Plan in the Town of Rietbrock.**Objectives:**

- Work with the Marathon County Emergency Management Department to develop a plan for emergency management within the Town of Rietbrock.

Policies:

- Work with the Marathon County Emergency Management Department to coordinate the Town planning, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery efforts for natural and man-made disasters.

Strategies and Actions:

- Establish a working relationship with the Marathon County Emergency Management Department.

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

Marathon 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

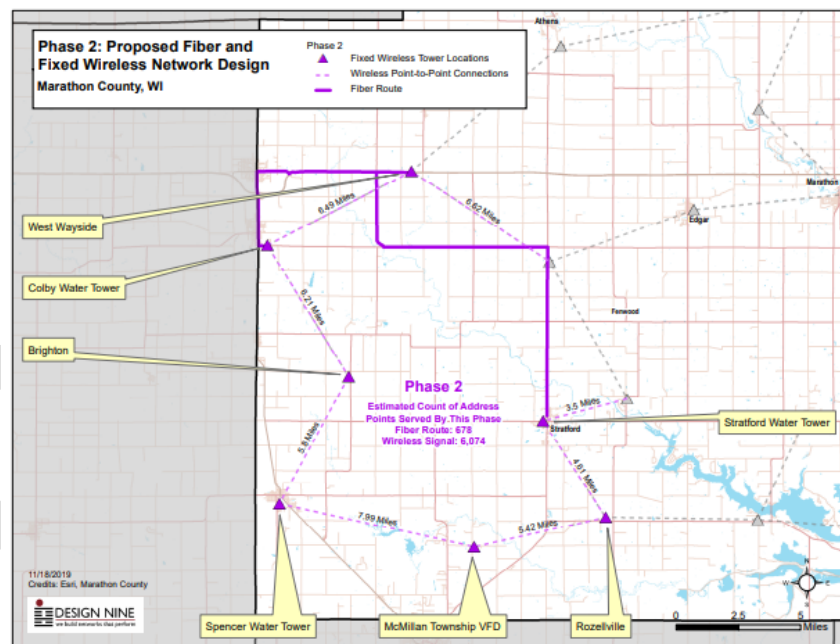
must seek public assistance and/or hold multiple jobs in order to meet the basic needs of their families. Occupations paying a living wage provide families resources for savings, investments, education, and the purchasing of goods which improves the local economy and increases the quality of life of 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.

Broadband for Marathon County - Broadband Assessment and Plan, 2019

The Broadband Feasibility Study is the latest action Marathon County has taken in proactively planning for high-speed internet. In the fall of 2018, Marathon County Extension engaged community stakeholders in dialogue about broadband and cellular coverage within the county. Phase two continues building fiber to the west end of the county.

Figure 7: Phase Two Proposed Fiber and Wireless, Page 71



ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2023

This report, developed by the United Way, described the 20 percent of households in Marathon County that are above the federal poverty level, but still 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 13 percent of Rietbrock households are either below the federal poverty level or are considered ALICE households, indicating that the average household in Rietbrock is more financially prosperous than the average Marathon County household at-large. This is based on 2021 data, so affordability is likely a larger challenge as housing prices and inflation have increased since then.

Marathon County Comprehensive Plan, 2016

The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan sets an economic development goal of being the most prosperous county in the state. The plan analyzes education, workforce development, economic development, and sets goals and objectives in these key areas. Goals include:

- Ensuring that every resident has the opportunity to receive a world-class education
- Ensuring that every worker have family supporting job and that every business has a strong workforce
- Ensuring that Marathon County is a diverse economy and place of opportunities where people and businesses can grow to be successful

Economic Environment

County Economic Environment

Historically, the Marathon 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.

Marathon County data is presented for comparison, because the Town of Rietbrock is located within Marathon County. It should be noted that most of the predominant economic data for Marathon County is derived from the Wausau metropolitan region, as most of the Marathon County population is centered in this area.

Economic Sectors

Table 18 details employment by sector for the Town of Rietbrock and Marathon County. In 2022, there were 465 persons employed in the thirteen basic economic sectors in the Town, a 12 percent decrease from the Town’s total employment in 2010. In 2022, the leading industry sectors for Town of Rietbrock employed residents were the Manufacturing; Education, Health, and Social Services; and the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Mining sectors.

Overall, there were 71,774 persons employed in the basic economic industry sectors in Marathon County in 2022. Employment within Marathon County has increased by 2.6 percent since 2010 when there were 69,980 persons employed. The leading industry sectors within Marathon County in 2022 were the Education, Health and Social Services; Manufacturing; and Retail Trade sectors.

Between 2000 and 2022, there were several dramatic shifts in employment throughout industries within Marathon County. Three sectors – the Other Services; Public Administration; and the Education, Health, and Social Services sectors – experienced significant increases in employment between 2010 and 2022, with each of these sectors experiencing increases in employment of over 15 percent. Only four sectors – the Information; Manufacturing; Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services; and the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining sectors – experienced a decrease in employment within the County during this time.

Table 18: Employment by Industry Sector						
Sector	Town of Rietbrock			Marathon County		
	2010	2022	% Change	2010	2022	% Change
Ag., Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Mining	43	63	46.5%	2,231	2,186	-2.0%
Construction	88	32	-63.6%	3,891	4,002	2.9%
Manufacturing	127	109	-14.2%	16,870	14,600	-13.5%
Wholesale Trade	37	13	-64.9%	2,369	2,408	1.6%
Retail Trade	27	44	63.0%	7,697	8,012	4.1%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	23	11	-52.2%	3,116	3,160	1.4%
Information	10	0	-100.0%	1,026	710	-30.8%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	29	26	-10.3%	5,471	5,796	5.9%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative & Waste Mgmt Services	27	44	63.0%	3,865	4,078	5.5%
Education, Health, and Social Services	65	96	47.7%	14,895	17,681	18.7%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	29	14	-51.7%	4,702	4,552	-3.2%
Public Administration	6	3	-50.0%	1,393	1,609	15.5%
Other Services	17	10	-41.2%	2,454	2,980	21.4%
Total	528	465	-11.9%	69,980	71,774	2.6%

Source: American Community Survey (2018-2022)

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 Rietbrock with that of Marathon County. Between 2010 and 2022, the Town of Rietbrock experienced a 12 percent decrease in the labor force, as the Town's labor force decreased from 540 residents in 2010 to 473 residents in 2022. The decrease in the

Town's labor force during this time is more significant to the decrease experienced in Marathon County during the same time period. With a labor force consisting of 74,139 persons in 2022, Marathon County's labor force has decreased by 1.1 percent since 2010, when the County's labor force consisted of 74,962 persons.

Table 19: Town of Rietbrock Labor Force						
	Town of Rietbrock			Marathon County		
	2010	2022	Percent Change	2010	2022	Percent Change
Population 16 years and over	764	656	-14.1%	103,816	110,583	6.5%
Labor Force	540	473	-12.4%	74,962	74,139	-1.1%
Employed	528	465	-11.9%	69,980	71,774	2.6%
Unemployed	12	6	-50.0%	4,856	2,327	-52.1%
Unemployment Rate	1.6%	0.9%	-43.8%	4.7%	2.1%	-55.3%
Participation Rate	70.7%	72.1%	2.0%	72.2%	67.0%	-7.2%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2018-2022)

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 2010, the Town of Rietbrock had 1.6 percent unemployment, and the 2022 unemployment rate was slightly lower at 0.9 percent. The Town of Rietbrock's unemployment rate was lower than Marathon County (2.1%) and higher than the State of Wisconsin (2.2%) in 2022.

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 2010, about 71 percent of the Town of Rietbrock's population over the age of 16 was in the labor force. In 2022, that percentage was slightly higher at 72.1 percent, which was higher than Marathon County's participation rate of about 67 percent. The Town of Rietbrock also had a much higher participation rate than the State (65.7%), while Marathon County had a slightly higher participation rate than the State.

Laborshed

A laborshed is an area or region from which an employment center draws its commuting workers. In 2021, there were 52 jobs located within the Town of Rietbrock, with 48 of these jobs being filled by persons who live outside of Rietbrock. In contrast, there were 450 workers who live in Rietbrock that commuted to locations outside of the Town for work, as shown in **Figure 8**. This indicates that Rietbrock's laborshed extends beyond its municipal borders.

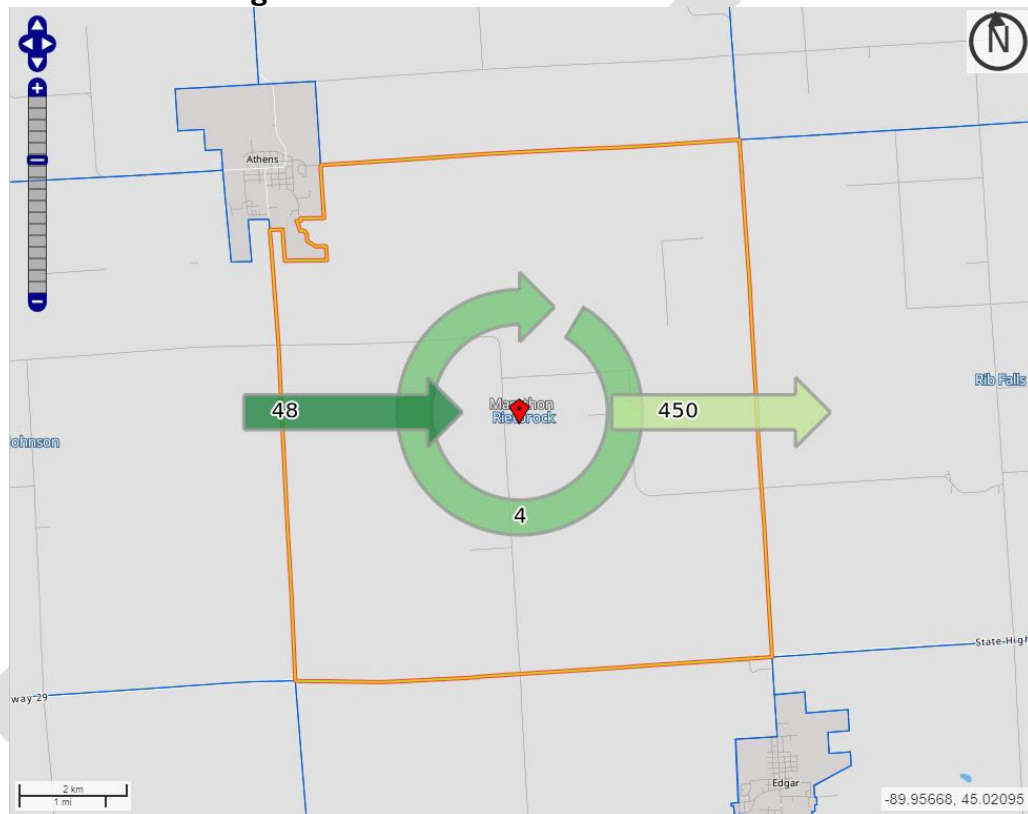
In-Migration

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 Marathon County or in neighboring Lincoln County.

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 Wausau for work. Other common work locations for Town residents include the Villages of Marathon City and Weston and the City of Medford.

Figure 8: Town of Rietbrock Laborshed



Source: U.S. Census On the Map

Occupations

Table 20 displays the occupational employment for residents in the Town of Rietbrock and for residents in Marathon County. In 2022, most residents in the Town of Rietbrock were employed in Management, business, science, and arts occupations. The second sector most represented was the area of Production, transportation, and material moving occupations, followed by Service occupations. From 2010 to 2022, the most significant increase in employment was seen in Service occupations.

Table 20: Occupation of Employed Workers				
Occupation	Town of Rietbrock		Marathon County	
	2000	2022	2000	2022
Management, Professional & Related	120	140	19,745	26,418
Service	33	80	8,127	10,499
Sales & Office	101	67	17,457	14,094
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	49	73	6,716	6,662
Production, Transportation & Mineral Moving	140	105	14,505	14,101
Total	443	465	66,550	71,774

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey (2018-2022)

Economic Development Programs

There are a number of economic development programs available to businesses and local governments in Marathon 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:

MCDEVCO

MCDEVCO acts as an economic development coordinator for all of Marathon County. The purpose of the Corporation is to promote the social and economic welfare of the residents of Marathon County. The primary focus is to lessen the burdens of government by reducing the need for public assistance; and to alleviate unemployment, relieve poverty, and eliminate blighted areas that had surfaced within the County. The organization's fundamental objectives are to bring about civic betterments and social improvements designed to promote the common good and general welfare of Marathon County.

MCDEVCO Revolving Loan Funds

MCDEVCO's Revolving Loan Funds provide gap financing that can be used to finance acquisition of existing businesses, land, building, and equipment; working capital; or construction/expansion projects. Gap financing builds strong communities for Marathon County. Economic development through gap financing attracts new businesses and allows small businesses to grow.

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 Central Wisconsin Fund 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.

Central Wisconsin Development Fund

The Central Wisconsin Development Fund (CWED) 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:

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) is the state's primary department for the delivery of integrated services to businesses. Their purpose is to 1) foster retention of and creation of new jobs and investment opportunities in Wisconsin; 2) foster and promote economic business, export, and community development; and 3) promote the public health, safety, and welfare through effective and efficient regulations, education, and enforcement. WEDC manages a variety of programs intended to assist businesses and communities. These include:

- Brownfield Program
- Capacity Building Grants (CB)
- Certified Sites
- Historic Preservation Tax Credit
- Business Opportunity Loan Fund
- Workforce Training Grants
- Idle Industrial Sites Redevelopment Program
- The Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program
- Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant Program
- Fast Forward Program

Rural Economic Development Program

This program administered 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.

Economic Development Issues

- **Development Patterns** – Residents would like to discourage commercial development on productive farmland throughout the Town, unless it supports the agricultural community.
- **Transportation / Land Use Connection** – Fast commutes due to a good transportation network means the Town will most likely see continued rural residential development.
- **Town Zoning** – Town zoning reviews for home-based businesses on a case-by-case basis.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Although the Town of Rietbrock 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 1: Discourage large, unscattered site commercial and industrial development in the Town of Rietbrock.

Objectives:

- Direct industrial and commercial development to appropriate areas, such as industrial parks in the Village of Athens or the Village of Edgar, or along STH 29 or STH 97.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock discourages large, scattered commercial and industrial development in the Town.
- The Town of Rietbrock will direct future commercial and industrial growth to the Villages of Edgar and Athens.

Strategies and Actions:

- Work with the Villages of Athens and Edgar to direct industrial and commercial growth to their communities.

Goal 2: Promote economically viable farms.

Objectives:

- Participate in regional programs throughout Marathon County, UW-Extension, and others, that assist farmers in maintaining economically viable farms.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock recognizes that agriculture may be the highest and best use of a property.

Strategies and Actions:

- Take an active role in regionally based agricultural forums and programs.
- Encourage agricultural operators in the Town to participate in regional programs aimed at improving the agricultural economy.
- Review Town ordinances to ensure that they encourage appropriate types of secondary agricultural businesses to locate in the Town.
- In cooperation with Marathon County, UW-Extension, and other neighboring communities, develop a regional plan to encourage enhancement and further development of the regional agricultural economy.
- In concert with the County and UW-Extension, develop a visitation program to meet with local agricultural operators and discover how to assist them in being more successful.

Chapter Seven

Land Use

Land use is a major component of the Comprehensive Plan. Analysis of land use is a means of broadly classifying how land is used across the entire Town. Each type of use has its own characteristics that can determine compatibility and location to other land uses in the Town. Land use information is used to examine the current pattern of development and serves as the framework for formulating how land will be used in the future. There are two primary maps associated with this chapter: the first is a land use map, that examines how land is currently being used, and the second is a future land use map, that lays out desired land use in the future.

Previous Plans and Studies

Regional Livability Plan (RLP), 2015

Wisconsin requires that regional planning commissions develop a comprehensive plan for the area they serve. These plans are advisory only. The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan which serves Marathon County prepared the Regional Livability Plan (RLP) in 2015. The RLP is focused on four elements, one of these is Land Use. The plan identifies two land use goals:

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

Marathon County Comprehensive Plan, 2016

The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan chapter on land use analyzes pattern of development, existing land use, and future land use. The plan sets the following land use goals:

- Minimize scattered rural development and preserve rural character.
- Preserve active farming.
- Encourage redevelopment of under-utilized areas.
- Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth.

Town of Rietbrock Comprehensive Plan, 2006

Town of Rietbrock Comprehensive Plan is a policy plan that describes existing and future land uses, and regulatory tools for land use. The overall goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide consistency between official mapping, zoning and subdivision ordinances, local plans, and other implementation tools.

Existing Land Use

The Town of Rietbrock covers about 21,679 acres in the northwest portion of the County. The Town is bounded by the Town of Halsey to the north, the Town of Johnson to the west, the Town of Rib Falls to the east and the Town of Wien to the south. The Village of Athens borders the Town to the northwest.

Knowledge of the existing land use patterns within a town is necessary to develop a desired “future” land use pattern. The **Existing Land Use Map** was developed using air photos from a countywide flight in 2021, with updates by residents in 2024. Twelve basic categories were used to classify the various existing land uses. The categories include Agriculture, Commercial, Governmental/Institutional, Industrial, Open Lands, Outdoor Recreation, Quarry, Residential, Transportation, Utility, Water, and Woodlands.

Land use classifications are groups of land uses that are compatible, and that separate 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.

Existing Land Use Classifications

The **Existing Land Use Map** outlines the existing land use pattern throughout the Town. The intent of an existing land use map is to illustrate the location of existing land use categories within the Town for planning purposes. Land use classifications are grouped by the use most central to each parcel. For example, lands classified as residential may also have a barn or home-based business on site.

Existing land use classifications and acreage totals are presented in **Table 21**. Agriculture accounts for the largest share of the Town's land area at about 67 percent. The next largest land use category is Woodlands at about 24 percent, followed by Residential at about 5 percent and Transportation at about 3 percent. Uses such as Commercial, Industrial, Governmental, Outdoor Recreation, Open Lands, and Water each occupy less than a percent of the Town. Note that “outdoor recreation” refers to developed facilities like parks and golf courses, which is different from recreation like hunting or snowmobiling that takes place within land uses like woodlands.

There are a variety of issues that have been identified during the planning process, including the potential conversion of agricultural lands into solar energy fields, and the trend towards larger farm operations and the potential negative impacts that they pose to the environment and roadway conditions.

Table 21: Existing Land Use		
Land Use	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	14,526	67.0%
Commercial	24	0.1%
Governmental/Institutional	13	0.1%
Industrial/Quarry	19	0.1%
Open Lands	30	0.1%
Residential	1,051	4.8%
Transportation	581	2.7%
Water	146	0.7%
Woodlands	5,290	24.4%
Total	21,679	100.0%

Source: NCWRPC

Managed Forest Law & Public Lands

There are 979 acres enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program and approximately 20 acres of additional tax-exempt land in the Town. This is a voluntary program between willing landowners and the State of Wisconsin.

Land Supply and Demand

As shown by the existing land use inventory, the majority of the Town is "undeveloped" agricultural areas or woodlands, 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 Rietbrock is more than sufficient to accommodate projected demand over the next 20 years for all use categories.

Land Values

Table 22 displays the assessed land values in the Town of Rietbrock. It is important to note that lands enrolled in the Managed Forest Law and Forest Crop Law programs and other exempt lands are not included in values for Table 22. Overall, land value per acre in the Town is valued at about \$2,714 per acre based on assessed land values from tax information submitted to the Department of Revenue. Residential properties have the highest value per acre, followed by those properties designated as other and commercial.

Table 22: Assessed Land Value (per acre), 2023

Land Classification	Total Value of Land and Improvements	Average Value per Acre
Residential	\$30,742,100	\$66,831
Commercial	\$559,800	\$46,650
Manufacturing	\$251,200	\$35,886
Agriculture	\$3,333,100	\$249
Undeveloped	\$1,113,700	\$451
Forest	\$1,431,200	\$1,828
Agricultural Forest	\$3,044,200	\$1,004
Other	\$14,961,300	\$54,405
Total	\$55,436,600	\$2,714

Source: VI Department of Revenue

Opportunities for Redevelopment

The vast majority of the Town currently consists of open farmland, wetlands and woodlands, all of which has experienced very little development. Hence the need for “redevelopment” is negligible. Some developed areas may not meet current development standards or may have fallen into disrepair since they were developed. Some of these properties may be in need of rehabilitation by property owners rather than needing a comprehensive redevelopment strategy.

Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts

There is an abundance of open land and generally stable land ownership. The most common land use conflicts in the past involved existing agricultural uses and the environmental impact on sensitive groundwater. The Town’s suitability for potential solar projects could negatively alter the Town’s rural character. The Town generally values maintenance of large tracts of undeveloped land and enabling residential development where appropriate.

Future Land Use Map

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.

The Future Land Use Map is not a zoning map. The Future Land Use Map is general in nature and was developed as a general guide for future development in the town. Although general, the future land use plan map indicated appropriate future land uses, and as a result shows where rezoning may occur. In many areas the existing zoning districts already reflect the desired future land uses; while in other areas, zoning map or text changes may be required to meet some of the desired future land uses.

The identification of desired future land use types through the map does not imply that an area is immediately appropriate for rezoning. Given service demands and a desire for controlled growth, careful consideration to the timing of zoning decisions is essential. In some places, it may be desirable to rezone land to reflect the planned land use designations as soon as possible. In other cases, it may be appropriate to wait to rezone the area until an actual development proposal is brought forward.

Future land use planning assists local governments with balancing individual property rights and community goals, minimizing conflict between different land uses, and maximizing use of public expenditures. It is essential that future land use planning is ongoing and flexible. Periodic plan updates ensure that the plan continues to reflect future community preferences.

Town of Rietbrock Plan Commission members participated in a mapping exercise with NCWRPC staff to identify the desired future land uses by using twelve 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.

The map includes ten land use categories to guide where new residential and non-residential development should be encouraged to locate or where development should be discouraged. Descriptions of each land use category are provided below.

Future Land Use Map Classifications

Barren Land

Unused open land in wooded areas, along streams, and along roadsides.

Commercial Services

Identifies areas that are recommended for commercial and business development, varying in scale and intensity, as well as existing commercial establishments located throughout the Town.

Cropland

Identifies areas designed to foster the preservation and use of agricultural land and related uses including the associated farmsteads. Cropland areas are those with tilled agriculture and areas of prime farmland.

Forest Land

Identifies areas of woodlands within the Town, as well as areas for reforestation.

Industrial

Identifies areas recommended for industrial development, as well as existing industrial uses.

Other Agriculture

Identifies agricultural areas consisting of fallow, pasture and undetermined agricultural uses, power lines and towers, water towers, and municipal wells.

Public/Quasi-Public

Identifies existing or planned governmental/public/institutional facilities within the Town, including churches, cemeteries, government buildings, and recreational facilities.

Single Family Residential

Identifies areas recommended for residential development typically consisting of one family structures, farm residences, and/or mobile homes.

Transportation

Identifies the existing road network along with the recommendations for improved and safe traffic movement in the Town.

Water and Wetlands

Open waters, such as lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, creeks, reservoirs, etc.

Land Use Programs and Tools

The principal land use program in Wisconsin is the comprehensive planning program, while the primary land use tools are zoning, subdivision ordinance, and official mapping.

Comprehensive Planning Programming

Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law was established in state statutes in 1999. The comprehensive plan is intended to be a local government's guide to community physical, social, and economic development. Comprehensive plans are not meant to serve as land use regulations in themselves; instead, they provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a twenty-year vision for future planning and community decisions.

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law does not mandate how a local community should grow, but it requires public participation at the local level in deciding a vision for the community's future. The uniqueness of individual comprehensive plans reflects community-specific and locally driven planning processes.

While a local government may choose to include additional elements, a comprehensive plan must include at least all of the nine elements below as defined by the Comprehensive Planning Law (s. 66.1001).

- Issues and Opportunities (Demographics)
- Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Housing
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Land Use
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Implementation

Zoning

Basically, zoning is a set of regulations used to minimize land use conflicts and promote development that supports a community's values. It regulates how property is used and how development occurs as well as the physical placement of buildings on land. Under Wisconsin Statutes, counties and local units of government are authorized to adopt zoning ordinances.

A zoning ordinance consists of a written text and a map. The text of a zoning ordinance specifies the permitted land uses, the size of buildings, yard/lot dimensions, and other prerequisites in obtaining permission to develop, while the zoning map arranges the community into districts or zones, such as agriculture, residential, commercial, or industrial. Each of these districts has different regulations. The goal of the zoning ordinance is to establish a reasonable development pattern by keeping similar and

related uses together and separating dissimilar, unrelated, incompatible uses, particularly in relationship to transportation facilities, utilities and public services and facilities.

The Town of Rietbrock has its own Zoning Ordinance that provides development guidelines including height restrictions, minimum lot area, and guidelines for accessory uses and structures. Currently the Town is developing a variety of recommendations to revise and update the ordinance.

Consistency between Land Use and Zoning

Land use and zoning designations are related, but not necessarily identical. Land use categories tend to be fairly general whereas zoning districts regulate specific land uses and development requirements. Because the land use categories are general it is common for more than one zoning district to correspond to each land use category. It is also possible that some zoning districts might be consistent with more than one land use designation.

Achieving consistency between land use and zoning is required by State Statutes. This generally occurs when a community is considering a proposed zoning change. The decision to approve a zoning change must be based on the adopted comprehensive plan, and specifically, the future land use map. Generally, if the requested zoning is consistent with the land use designation on the property it should be approved, unless unique circumstances indicated the rezoning would negatively impact surrounding properties or the community. If a rezoning request is not consistent with the land use designation, the community should consider denying the rezoning request.

In situations where a rezoning request is not consistent with the land use designation - but the community believes the requested zoning is appropriate in the specific location and would benefit the community - the zoning change can be approved, however, the land use map should be amended accordingly to establish land use and zoning consistency. The process for amending the land use map is discussed in greater detail in the Implementation Chapter.

Shoreland Zoning

All counties, including Marathon County, are mandated by Wisconsin law to adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates development in shoreland and floodplain areas for the entire County outside of villages and cities in accordance with state shoreland zoning standards. Towns may apply their own zoning in shoreland areas as long as it does not impose requirements regulated by a county.

Land Division

At present, land division within the Town of Rietbrock is regulated by Marathon County Land Division and Surveying Code. 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 restricting 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.

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.

A town land division code can provide the town the means to review and regulate new divisions of land to ensure consistency with the vision, goals, objectives, land protection criteria, and other recommendations of an adopted plan. The ordinance would require administration and enforcement by the town. Therefore, local control of divisions of land would require town funding. It also adds a layer of government involved in regulating proposals for land divisions.

Official Mapping

An Official Map is a map adopted by a municipality that specifies locations of future roads and other utilities or public facilities, along with right-of-way widths and other specifications. When a land division is approved, it must accommodate dimensions for future facilities according to the Official Map. Currently, the Town of Rietbrock does not have an official map.

Other Tools

Additional tools and approaches can be utilized by the Town to achieve the goals of the plan. These include but are certainly not limited to the following: fee simple land acquisition, easements (purchased or volunteered), deed restrictions, land dedication, and ordinances or programs regulating activities such as impact fees, land division, building permits, and erosion control.

Land Use Issues

- **Rural Character** – Residents of the Town of Rietbrock are concerned about the loss of rural character. They also recognize that some development will occur either way.
- **Rural/Urban Conflicts** – There are concerns over the use of Town roads by large farm equipment and contract haulers. These users can cause damage to Town roads that must be repaired.
- **Code Enforcement** – There is a need for improved code enforcement, as there are some parcels in the Town that have junked cars parked on them. These cars are an eyesore and a public health issue.
- **Large Farms and CAFO's** – Town residents are concerned about the development of large farms and CAFO's in the area. These farms and the associated equipment cause damage to Town roads. There is also concern about the environmental impacts of these farms from the large quantities of manure they produce, and the associated impacts on groundwater.
- **Contract Haulers** – Contract haulers through the Town of Rietbrock cause damage to the Town's road system, and effectively do not pay for this damage.

Goals, Objectives & Policies

Goal 1: Preserve and protect the rural / agricultural character of the Town.

Objectives:

- Identify those natural resources that are of particular importance to residents and actively pursue their protection.
- Investigate other growth management tools, such as developing a Town subdivision ordinance, to protect the Town's rural character.
- To implement zoning measures which preserve natural and agricultural resources.
- Provide consistent enforcement of the Town's zoning code and other related ordinances to protect the public's health and safety, and preserve the visual aesthetics of the Town.
- Work with interested farmers who are looking to sell their land to see that it remains in agricultural production.
- Actively address future growth pressure that may result from the STH 29 improvements.
- Plan for any impacts, such as increases in development pressure, which may result from future STH 97 improvements.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock discourages development from infringing upon natural resources and prime farm soils.

Strategies and Actions:

- Develop a Town subdivision ordinance that identifies requirements for lot layout, required infrastructure improvements, and other critical features of new developments.
- Develop a cluster subdivision ordinance to preserve agricultural and open space and the Town's rural character.
- Consistently enforce existing and future ordinances to ensure that the intended results are achieved.
- Coordinate with Marathon County and UW-Extension to connect local farmers to programs that can assist them in keeping their land in agriculture, while also ensuring that their financial needs are met.
- Work with UW-Extension and Marathon County to meet with agricultural operators in the Town to discover their individual needs, and how they could be assisted.
- Identify areas that are appropriate for growth along STH 29, and those areas that are inappropriate for growth along STH 29.
- Coordinate with the Village of Athens and the Town of Johnson to develop a long-term plan for the future of STH 97 and any improvements that may be made to this facility.

Goal 2: Preserve agricultural uses.

Objectives:

- Identify the working farms in the Town of Rietbrock.
- Protect the working farms in the Town of Rietbrock by minimizing development pressure in these areas.

Policies:

- To limit the development of new farm / non-farm conflicts, the Town of Rietbrock discourages the development of subdivisions in close proximity to working farms.

Strategies and Actions:

- Identify working farms in the Town of Rietbrock.
- Develop a buffer system in the Town to ensure that new developments and existing agricultural operations are adequately separated from each other.

Goal 3: Address ongoing conflicts between residential, commercial, and agricultural uses.

Objectives:

- Work with Marathon County and UW-Extension to raise awareness of the connection between the rural landscape and the role of active agriculture in maintaining the landscape.
- Actively mitigate existing conflict areas between farming and non-farm uses.
- Work with appropriate entities, such as UW-Extension and Marathon County to develop and promote a public information campaign about the daily activities of agricultural enterprises.
- Promote active communication between agricultural entities and their neighbors.
- Ensure existing regulations regarding permitted uses are effectively enforced.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock will coordinate with UW-Extension and Marathon County to mitigate existing conflicts between farm and non-farm residents.

Strategies and Actions:

- Work with Marathon County and UW-Extension to raise awareness of the connection between the rural landscape and the role that agriculture plays in maintaining this landscape.
- Work with Marathon County and UW-Extension to mitigate existing farm / non-farm conflict areas.
- Actively enforce existing regulations related to agricultural uses.
- Work with UW-Extension and Marathon County to develop an education process / protocol to inform new residents about the realities of rural living, and how they are connected with the overall quality of life.

Goal 4: Preservation of prime agricultural land.

Objectives:

- Identify those areas of the Town that are covered with prime agricultural soils.
- Encourage property owners of prime farmland to preserve these areas.
- Actively coordinate and participate with regional programs through agencies such as Marathon County and the UW-Extension that promote the preservation of prime agricultural land.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock requires that future subdivisions in the Town occur in a clustered fashion, so as to preserve prime agricultural soils.

Strategies and Actions:

- Identify prime farm soils in the Town of Rietbrock.
- Work with UW-Extension, Marathon County, and local property owners to preserve prime agricultural soils.
- Develop a cluster subdivision ordinance.

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.

Overview

Wisconsin Statute §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 such as town to town and municipality to county or town. The result is that towns, municipalities, and counties act more as adversaries than as partners.

State-wide, Wisconsin has more than 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.

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. Intergovernmental cooperation makes sense for many reasons including trust, cost savings, consistency, and ability to address regional issues. Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions. It can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. It can lead to consistency of goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities. Finally, by communicating and coordinating their actions and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities are able to address and resolve issues that 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 cost savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

A variety of factors, some long-standing and others more recent, have brought the issue of intergovernmental cooperation to the forefront. Some of these factors include:

- Local government's financial situation;
- Opportunity to reduce costs by working together;
- Elimination of duplication of services;
- Population settlement patterns and population mobility; and
- Economic and environmental interdependence.

In addition, as more jurisdictions create and implement comprehensive plans and share them with surrounding communities, new opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation will be identified.

Intergovernmental Relationships

School Districts

The Town of Rietbrock is served by two public school districts: the School District of Athens and the School District of Edgar. The School District of Athens has an elementary, middle, and high school located in the Village of Athens, as well as Maple Grove Elementary School located in the Town of Hamburg. Similarly, the School District of Edgar has an elementary, middle, and high school all located in the Village of Edgar.

Post-Secondary Education

- **Northcentral Technical College** – located in Wausau, offers several one- and two-year programs and certificates in business, technical, health and industrial fields.
- **Mid-State Technical College** – located in Marshfield, is one of 16 regional colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College system, with campuses in Adams, Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids. They offer associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in a wide variety of high demand fields.
- **University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point at Wausau** – offers courses leading to a baccalaureate degree. They also offer graduate degrees including Master of Business Administration (MBA), Physician Assistant (in partnership with UW Madison), and Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (in partnership with Northern Vermont University).
- **University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UWSP) at Marshfield** – located in Marshfield, students can work toward a variety of bachelor's degree options including business administration, nursing, and social work.

Shared Services

- **Fire and Emergency Response** – The Town of Rietbrock has a shared fire district with the Villages of Edgar and Athens.
- **Utilities** – The Town of Rietbrock does not cooperate for any utility provision.

Surrounding Towns

The Town of Rietbrock has met periodically with its surrounding townships and the Villages of Athens and Edgar.

Marathon County

Marathon 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 law enforcement through the Sheriff's Office, 911 dispatch services, access permits, maintenance and improvement of county highways, planning and permitting oversight regarding shoreland, wetland and floodplain regulation, private sewage system regulation, and animal waste and manure management. The county also provides oversight on compliance with county soil and water conservation policy for the Farmland Preservation Program.

In many cases where state and federal agencies require area-wide planning for various programs or regulations, Marathon County sponsors a county-wide planning effort to complete these plans and include each individual local unit 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 the 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. Stats. as a voluntary association of governments within a ten-county area. Marathon County is a member of the NCWRPC, which qualifies the Town of Rietbrock for low-cost 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, lakes, 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 Rietbrock. Examples include local road aids, the Local Roads Improvement Plan (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.

Programs

66.0301 – Intergovernmental Cooperation: Wisconsin Statute §66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, and certain special districts, including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and sewer utility districts, Indian tribes or bands, and others.

Intergovernmental agreements prepared in accordance with §66.0301, formerly §66.30, are the most common forms of agreement and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as police, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide for revenue sharing, determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement and boundary changes have to be accomplished through the normal annexation process.

66.0305 – Municipal Revenue Sharing: Wisconsin Statute, §66.0305, Municipal Revenue Sharing, gives authority to cities, villages, and towns to enter into agreements to share revenue from taxes and special charges with each other. The agreements may also address other matters, including agreements regarding services to be provided or the location of municipal boundaries.

Boundaries of the shared revenue area must be specified in the agreement and the term of the agreement must be for at least ten years. The agreement must specify the formula or other means for sharing revenue, the date of payment of revenues, and the means by which the agreement may be invalidated after the minimum 10-year period.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal 1: Maintain and enhance intergovernmental relationships.

Objectives:

- Maintain and enhance intergovernmental communications between the Town of Rietbrock and the Villages of Athens and Edgar, and between the Town and Marathon County.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock supports the creation of a regional forum to enhance intergovernmental relationships.

Strategies & Actions:

- Meet with surrounding communities on an as needed basis to discuss issues of regional importance.

Goal 2: Ensure annexations proceed in an orderly manner.

Objectives:

- Work with the Village of Athens to prevent large annexations that would negatively affect the tax base of the Town.
- Develop a boundary agreement with the Village of Athens to determine the extent of future growth into the Town.

Policies:

- The Town of Rietbrock supports the creation of a joint land use plan with the Village of Athens, in preparation for the creation of a joint boundary agreement.

Strategies & Actions:

- Meet with the Village of Athens to develop a long-term boundary agreement.

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 Rietbrock. 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, Rietbrock 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 Rietbrock has its own Zoning Ordinance. 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 Rietbrock is under 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 Rietbrock 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 Rietbrock 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 Rietbrock 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.

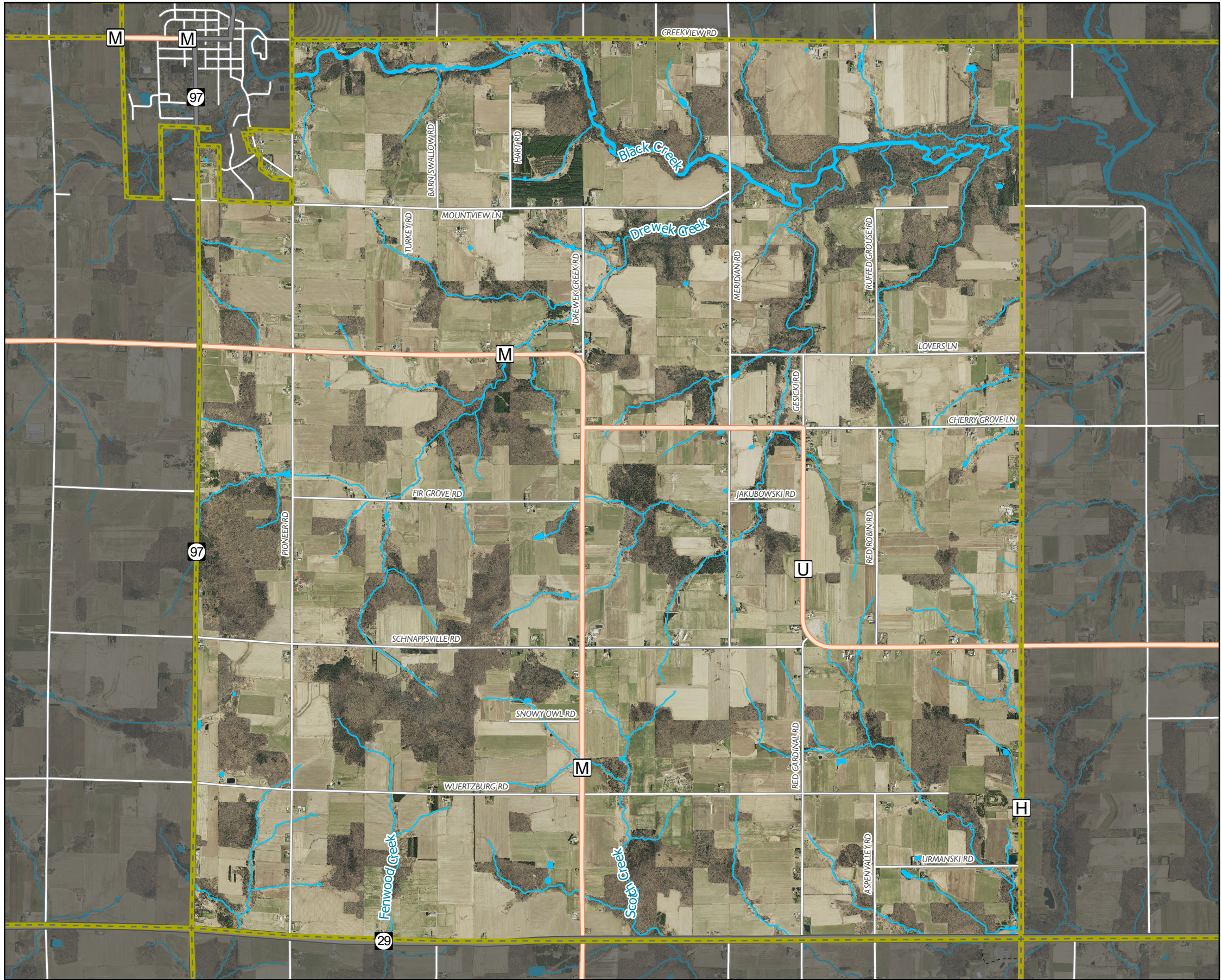
Plan Monitoring

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.

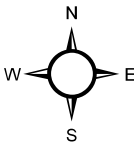
This plan should be evaluated at least every 5 years and updated at least every 10 years. Members of the Town Board, Plan Commission, and any other local decision-making bodies should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated. The evaluation should involve first reviewing 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
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads

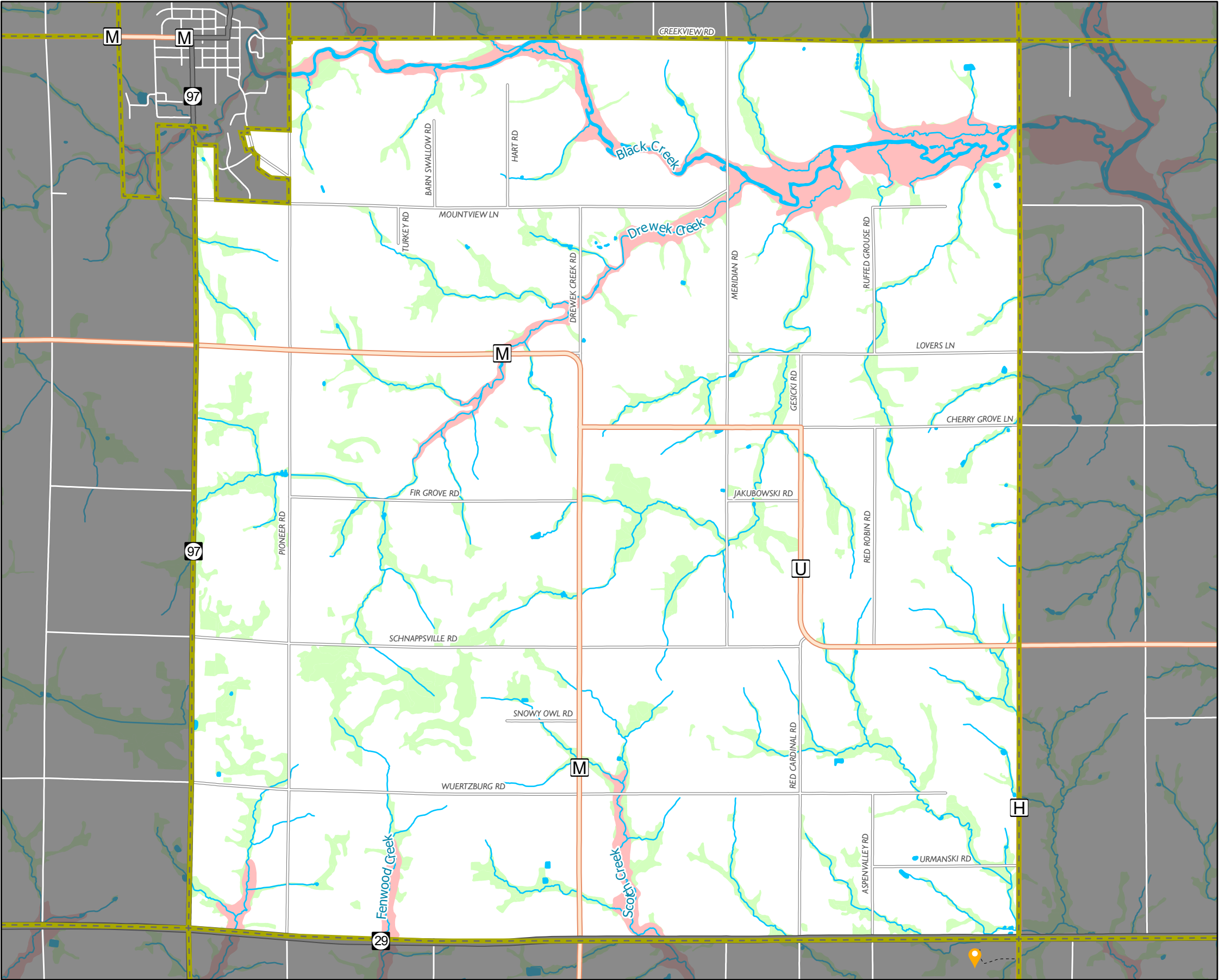


Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co
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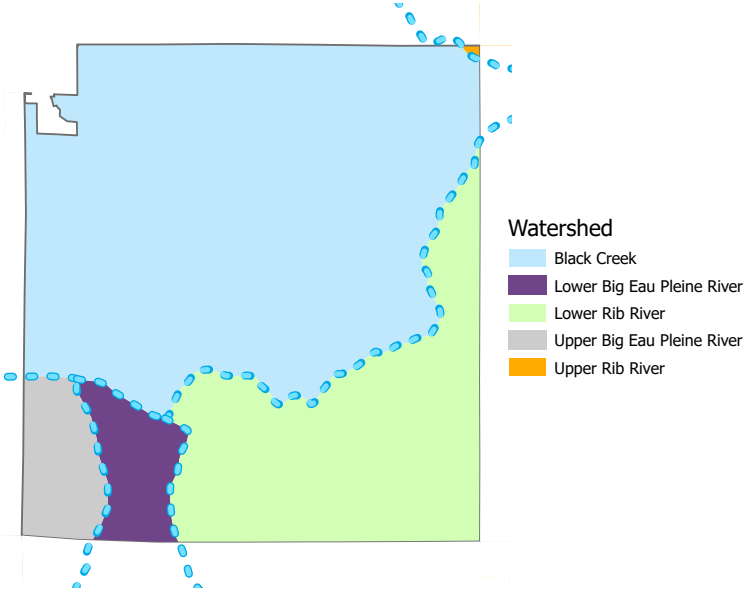
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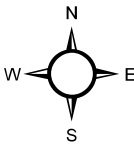
Natural Resources

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Non Metallic Mines
- Floodplain
- Wetlands
- Water

Town of Rietbrock Watersheds



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

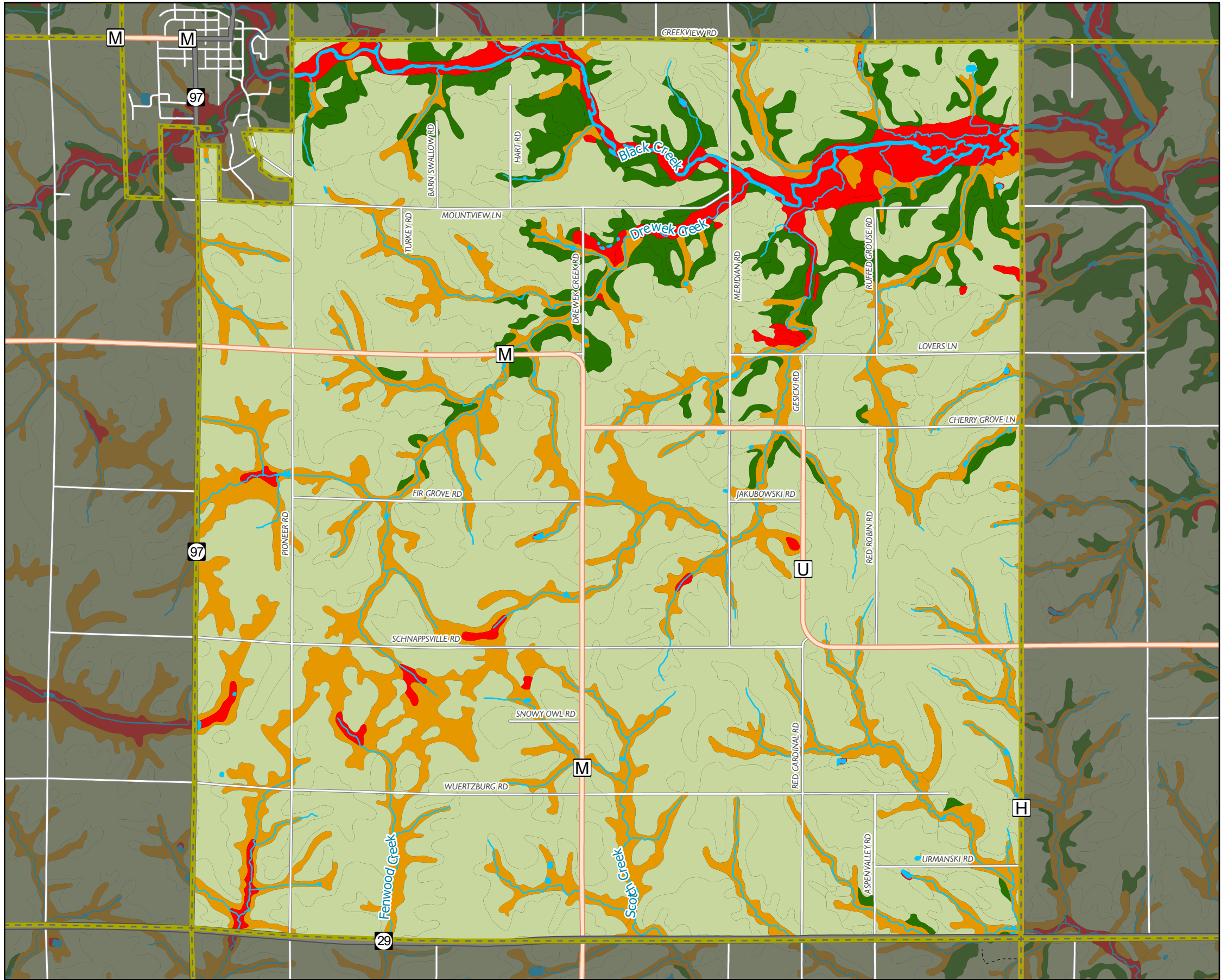


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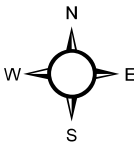
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Prime Farmland

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Water
- Farmland Classification**
 - Farmland of statewide importance
 - All areas are prime farmland
 - Prime farmland if drained
 - Not prime farmland



Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co
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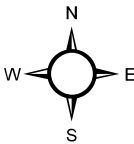


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Transportation

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Traffic Counts

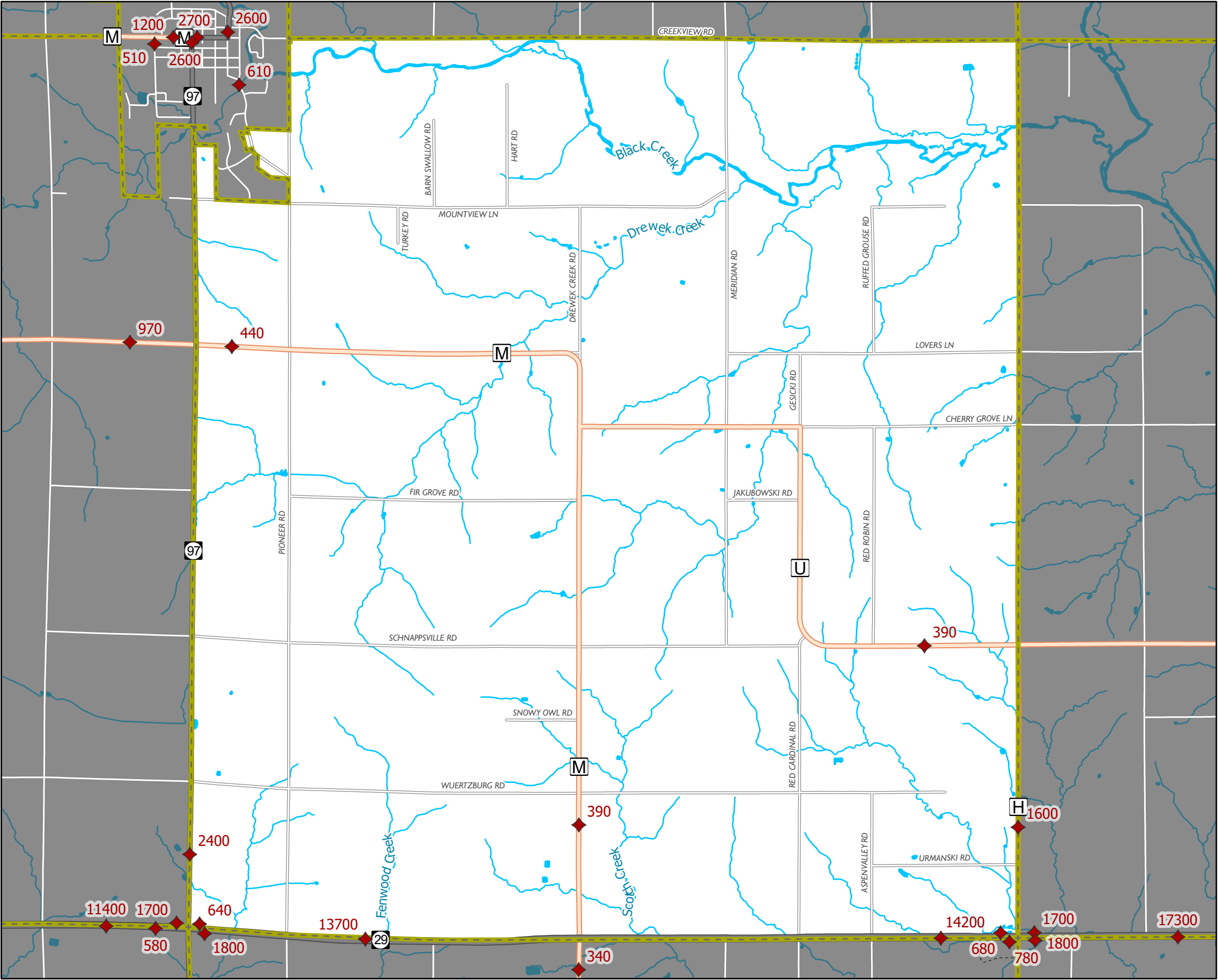


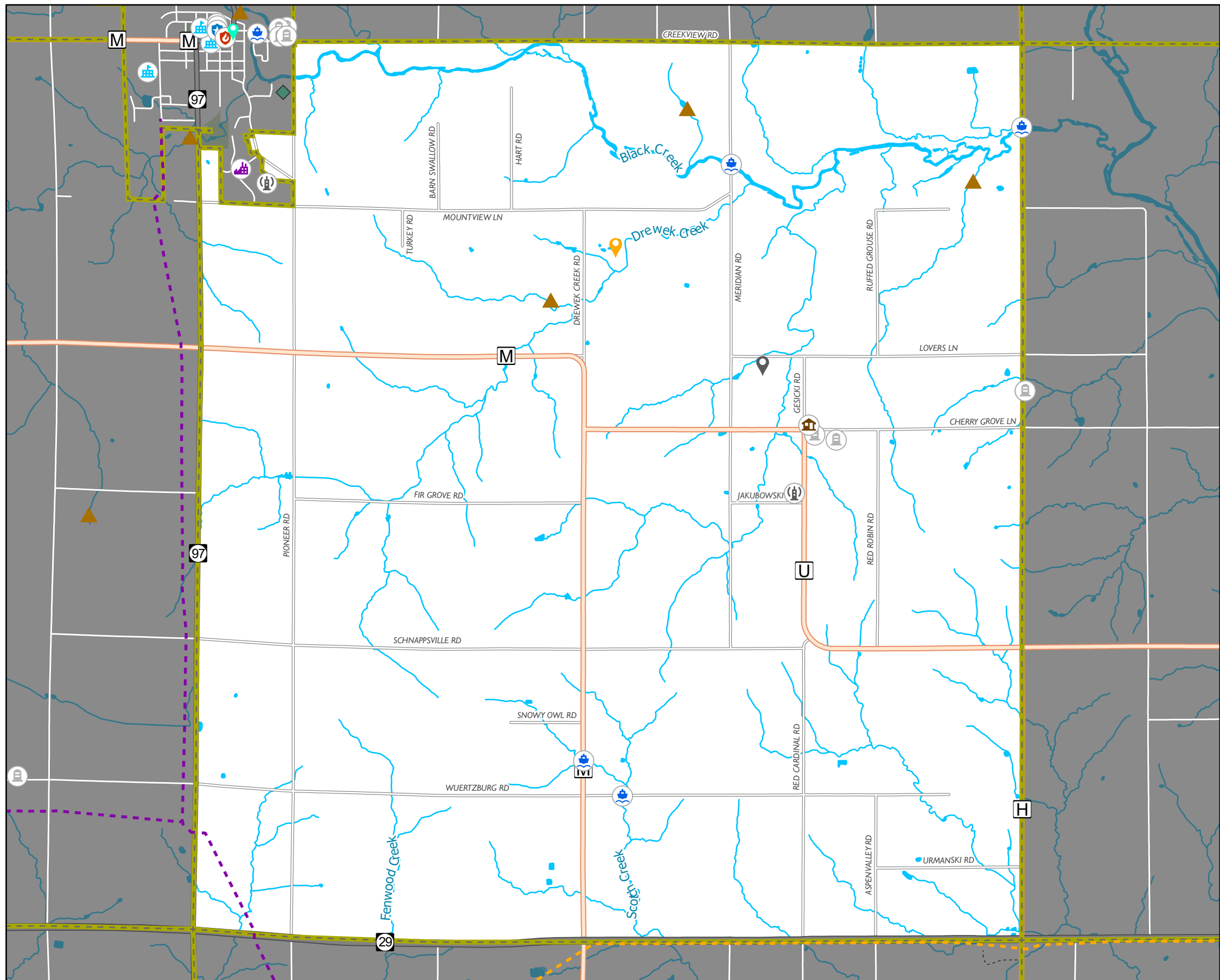
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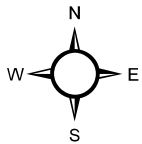




Utilities & Community Facilities

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- High Voltage Powerline
- Gas & Oil Pipeline
- Cemetery
- Fire Station/Ambulance
- Geographical Marker
- Industrial Park
- Library
- Non Metallic Mines
- Police Station
- School
- Town Hall
- Communication Towers
- Dams
- Municipal Water Supply
- Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Boat Landings
- Parks

0 0.5 1 2 Miles



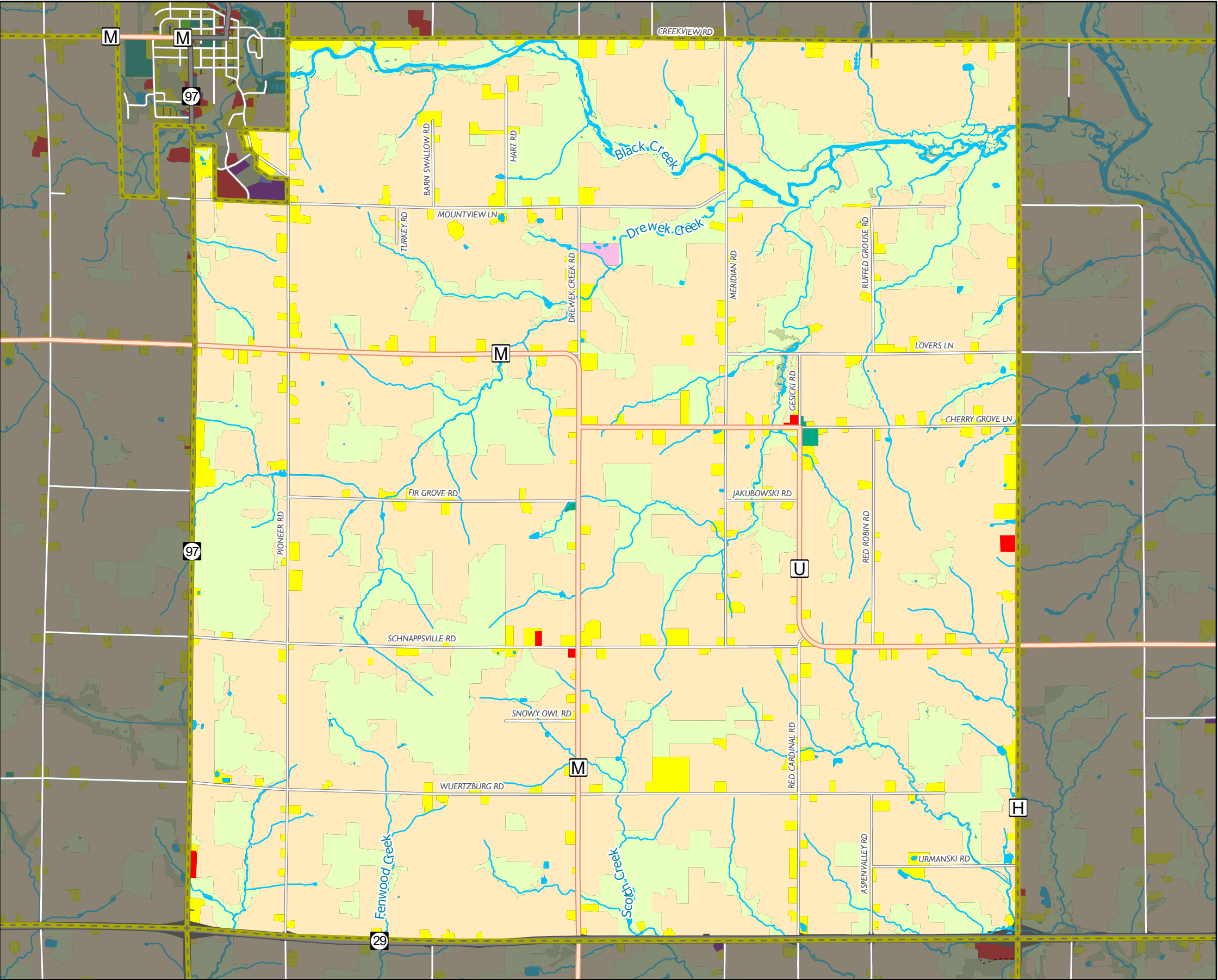
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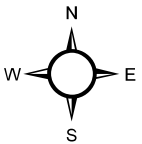
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Existing Land Use



- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Governmental / Institutional
- Industrial
- Open Lands
- Outdoor Recreation
- Quarry
- Residential
- Transportation
- Utility
- Woodlands
- Water

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

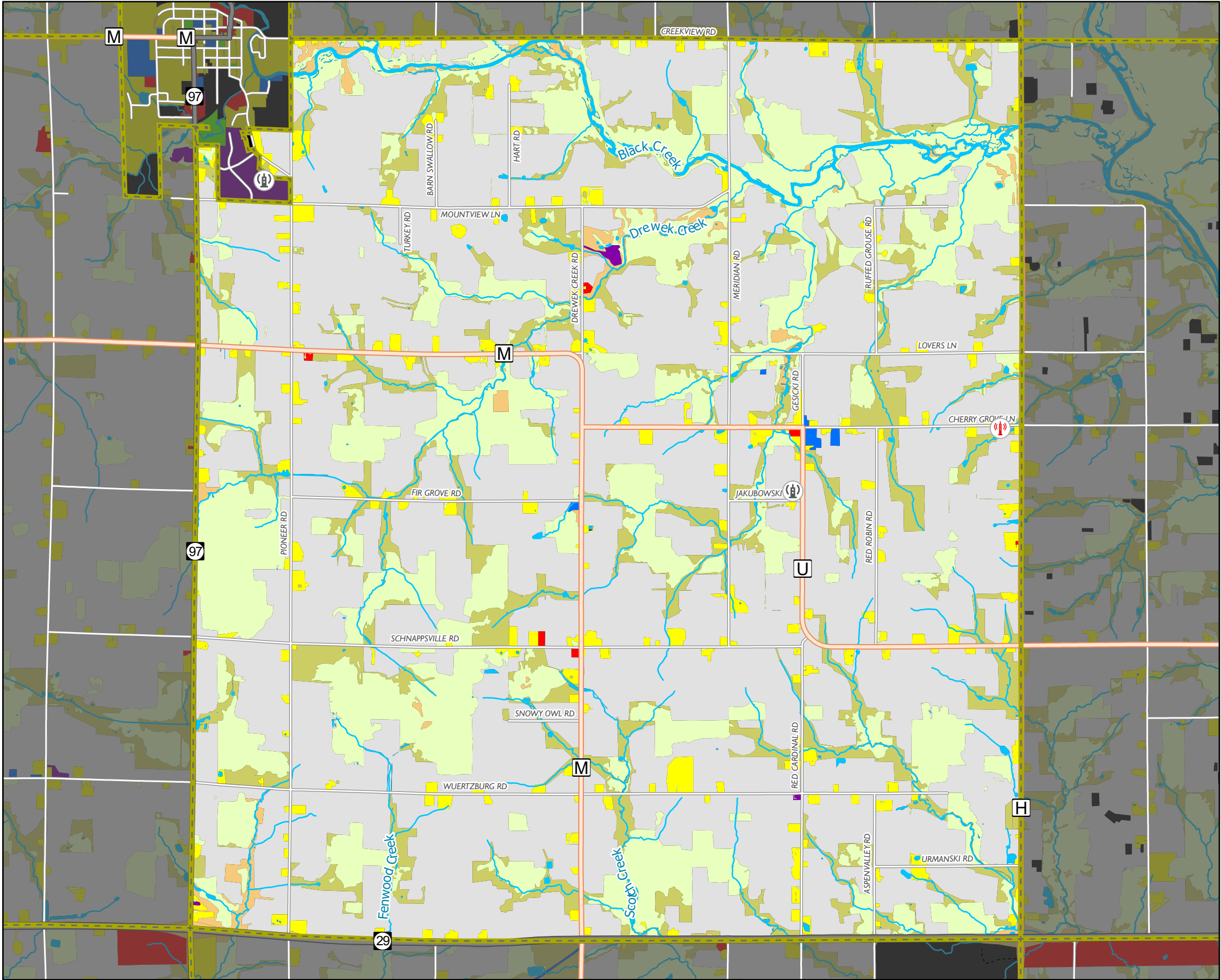


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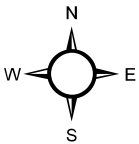


Future Land Use

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Communication Towers
- Potential Communication Tower

- Future Land Use
- Single Family Residential
 - Commercial*
 - Industrial
 - Quarry
 - Barren
 - Crop Land
 - Other Agriculture
 - Forest Land
 - Public/Quasi-Public
 - Recreational
 - Water

*: Commercial business is encouraged on County Roads within the Town of Rietbrock.



Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co
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Appendix A

Public Participation Plan

Appendix B

Adoption Resolution

Appendix C

Adoption Ordinance