



Town of Seneca Comprehensive Plan 2022



Town of Seneca

Town Board

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Cover photo source: Town of Seneca

May 2022

This plan was developed by the Town of Seneca Zoning Committee with assistance from the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC).

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Table of Contents

Chapters

Chapter 1: Demographics.....	1
Chapter 2: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources	11
Chapter 3: Housing.....	25
Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities	32
Chapter 5: Transportation.....	40
Chapter 6: Economic Development.....	49
Chapter 7: Land Use	58
Chapter 8: Intergovernmental Cooperation.....	67
Chapter 9: Implementation	71

Maps

1. Planning Area	76
2. Natural Resources	77
3. Soils with Basement Limitations	78
4. Utilities and Community Facilities	79
5. Transportation.....	80
6. Existing Land Use.....	81
7. Future Land Use	82

Attachments

- A. Public Participation Plan & Resolution
- B. Plan Commission Resolution
- C. Adoption Ordinance
- D. Wildfire Risk Materials

Chapter 1

Demographics

This chapter explores potential issues that may impact the Town over the 20-year planning period. This chapter contains trends and forecasts with jurisdictional comparisons for basic demographics including: population, households, employment, age, education, and income. Although forecasts should typically cover the 20-year planning period, in some cases, the only acceptable sources had lesser time periods for their forecasts. Official sources are used for data and forecasting, including the WDOA Demographic Service Center and the U.S. Census Bureau.

BACKGROUND

The Town of Seneca is located in central Wood County. See **Maps 1 & 2**. The Town is bounded by the Towns of Hansen and Sigel to the north, the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Port Edwards to the east, the Town of Cranmoor to the south, and the Town of Dexter to the west. Most of the Town consists of cranberry bogs and woodlands, with scattered development throughout.

Planning Process

In the winter of 2021-2022, the Town initiated a process to update its 2003 Plan. The state planning law – 66.1001 – requires that a comprehensive plan be updated every ten years. A variety of Plan Commission meetings were held over the course of 2022 to prepare the plan. A final Plan Commission meeting was held in 2022 to review the final draft and recommend adoption of the plan by the Town Board.

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

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population and Households

Historical Trends

The 2020 Census population for the Town of Seneca is **1,039** [2020: DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)]. The 2021 WI DOA Population Estimate (Final) for the Town of Seneca is **1,118**.

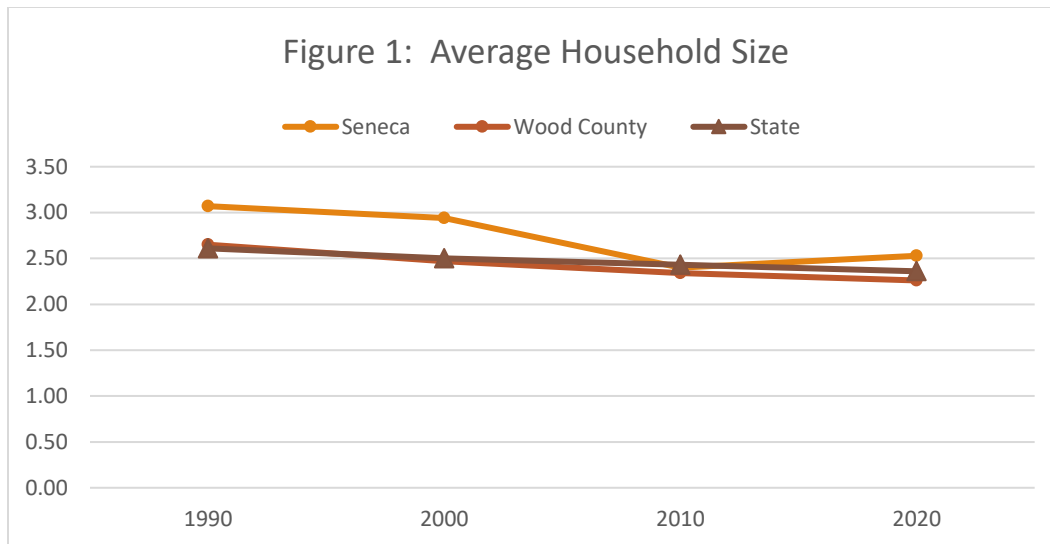
Since there is some kind of error in the 2020 Redistricting Census number (off by about 79 people), then for this plan we will use the 2021 WI DOA Population Estimate.

As shown in Table 1, the Town has experienced a slight decline in population since 1990. From 1990 to 2010, the Town's population went down just over a percent while the Wood County population went up about 1.5%. From 2010 to 2021, the Town's population decreased about 0.2%, while Wood County gained about 1.6% and Wisconsin gained about 3.8% in population.

Table 1: Demographic Change 1990-2020						
	1990	2000	2010	2021**	2010-2021 % Change	1990-2021 % Change
Total Population						
T. Seneca	1,133	1,202	1,120	1,118**	-0.2%	-1.3%
County	73,605	75,555	74,749	75,959**	1.6%	3.2%
State	4,891,769	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,901,473**	3.8%	20.6%
Total Households						
2019						
T. Seneca	369	408	443	449*	1.4 %	21.7 %
County	27,473	30,135	31,598	32,684*	3.4 %	19.0 %
State	1,822,118	2,084,556	2,279,768	2,386,623*	4.7 %	31.0 %

Source: U.S. Census, *Total Households in 2019 comes from Census' American Community Survey (ACS).
2021** = WI DOA Population Estimates (Final).

The number of households in Seneca has gradually increased since 1990. This growth was slightly faster than the Wisconsin Department of Administration projected in Figure 3, but the Town's increase in households from 1990 through 2020 is about the same percentage as Wood County, with Wisconsin increasing about 31% over the same time period.



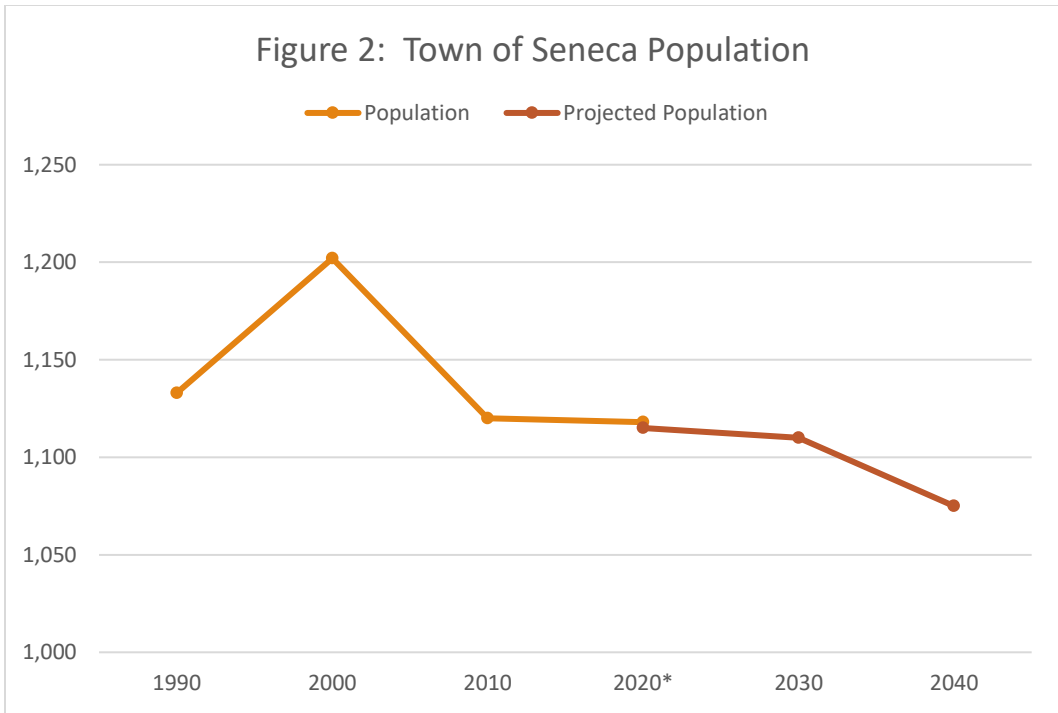
Source: U.S. Census, WI DOA

The average household size has been decreasing steadily across the nation over the past few decades. This is due to a multitude of factors including longer life spans, less people having children, and people having fewer children. In the Town of Seneca, Figure 1 shows that the average household size has decreased steadily over the past few decades, from 3.07 average people per household in 1990 to 2.53 in 2020, for a decrease of half a person (0.54 person) per household. This decrease is more substantial than in Wood County which has dropped from 2.65 in 1990 to 2.26 in 2020, for a total decline of 0.39 persons per household. Wisconsin’s household size dropped, but not to the extent of the Town or the County. The state went from an average household size of 2.61 in 1990 to 2.36 in 2020, for a net reduction of 0.25 persons per household on average.

Projections

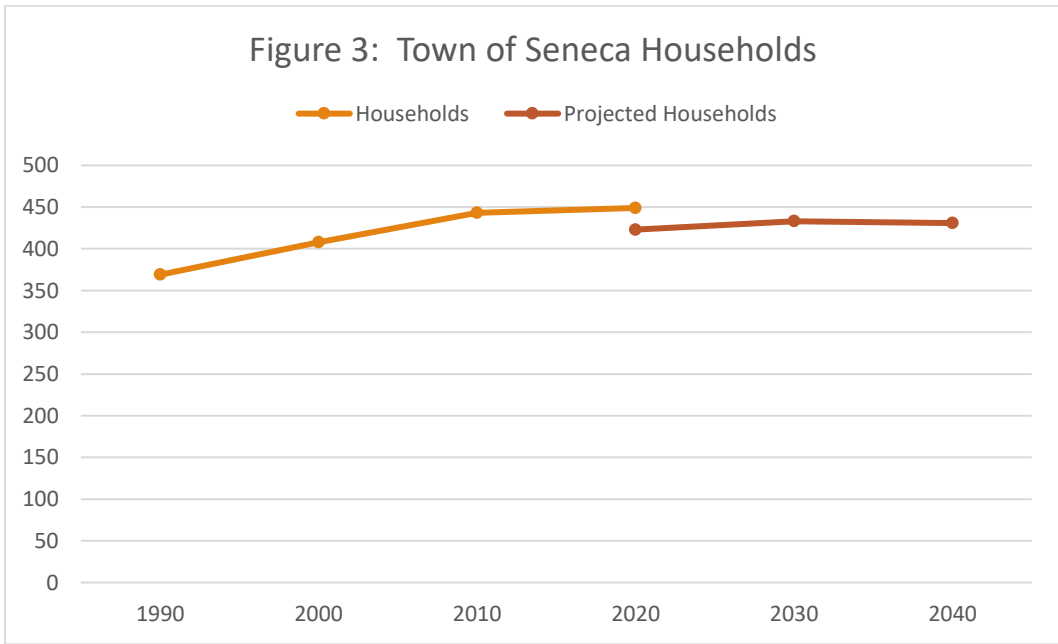
Figure 2 shows population projections for the Town of Seneca and Table 2 compares projected population in the Town to Wood County, based on projections made in 2013 by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA). In Figure 2, since the 2020 Census population for Seneca is so far off from the 2021 WI DOA Estimate, then the 2021 Estimate was used. These projections are based on historical population and household growth in the community, with more recent years given a greater weight. The Town of Seneca was expected to experience a decrease in population through 2040 (-4.0%) that was less than what has actually occurred (-8.3%). Wood County was expected to experience population loss at a similar projected rate (-4.8%) as the Town through 2040, but Table 2 shows a gain of 0.8%.

Figure 3 and Table 3 include household projections completed by the WDOA. Projections indicate that while population is expected to decrease through 2040, the number of households is expected to increase, likely due to the trend of decreased household size. The number of households is expected to increase 4.9% for the Town of Seneca and increase 3.0% for Wood County through 2040.



Source: U.S. Census, 1990, 2000, 2010
WI DOA 2013 Projections

*2020 is WI DOA 2021 Estimate, & 2020 WI DOA Population Projection from 2013



Source: U.S. Census, WI DOA

Table 2: Population Projections, 2010-2040

Total Population by Year								
	2010 Census	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2010-2040
Town of Seneca	1,120	1,115	1,115	1,115	1,110	1,105	1,075	-4.0 %
Wood County	74,749	74,540	74,435	74,370	73,930	73,270	71,150	-4.8 %

Source: WI DOA Population Projections, 2013

Table 3: Household Projections, 2010-2040

Total Households by Year								
	2010 Census	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2010-2040
Town of Seneca	411	417	423	429	433	438	431	4.9 %
Wood County	31,598	32,078	32,486	32,861	33,043	33,175	32,561	3.0 %

Source: WI DOA Household Projections, 2013

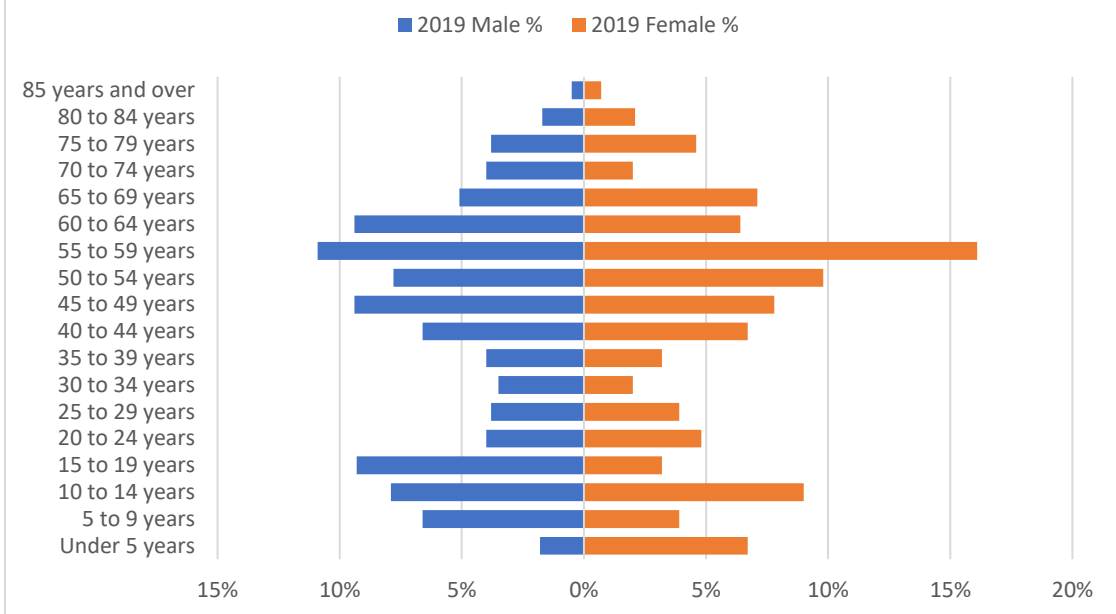
Age

Population distribution is important to the planning process. Two age groups are of particular note, those 17 years of age and younger, and those 65 years of age or older. These are often referred to as dependent populations, but each have different needs. For example, the younger group requires schools and child care, and the older group requires increased levels of medical care and in-home services.

Figures 4 and 5 compare the distribution of age group for the Town of Seneca and Wood County. Wood County's population pyramid is stationary with fairly similar numbers across all age ranges. Stationary population pyramids are characteristic of areas with low birth rates and long life expectancies. This is indicative of slow, steady population growth. In contrast, the Town of Seneca has a baby boomer population that will be of retirement age over the next decade. There are a third more women than men that are 55-59 years old. Most of these women may be with older men, as most of this difference can be made up in the 60-64 year old and 70-74 year old groups. But in older groups there are also more women than men, which is equal to Wood County percentages. Families in Seneca are losing their youth to college or urban areas (as Wood County has a solid core of 20-39 year olds of both sexes). Also, Seneca families consist of about 17% more males than females under 20 years old.

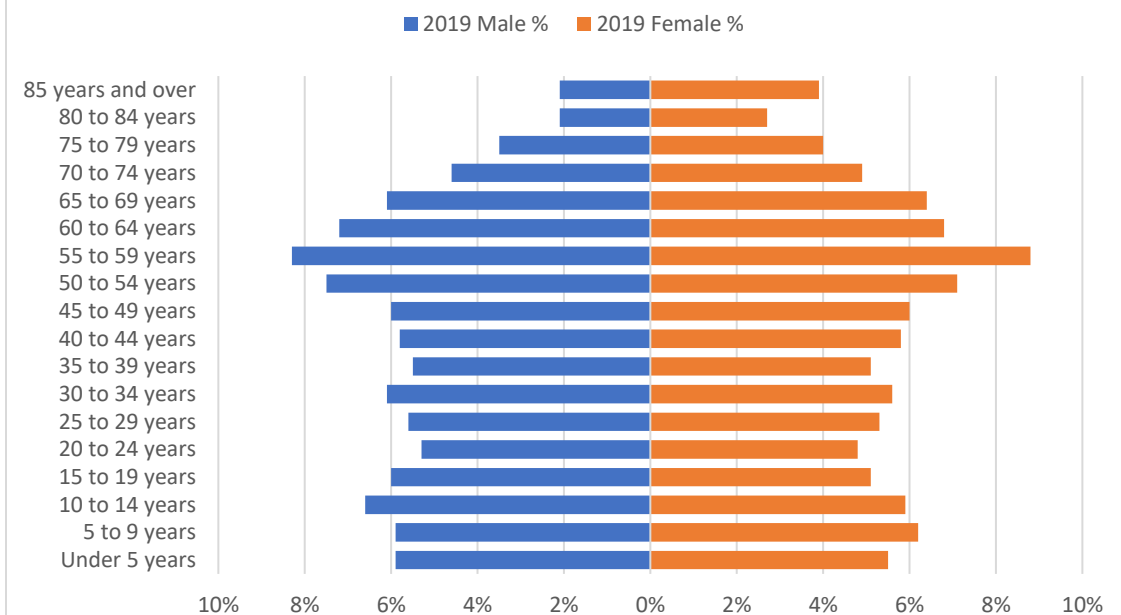
In 2019, the median age in the Town of Seneca was 47.7 years, basically holding steady from 47.0 in 2010. The County's median age of 44.8 in 2019 is now higher than 42.0 in 2010. The median age for both the Town and the County were significantly higher than the State (39.9) in 2019.

Figure 4: 2019 Town of Seneca Age Groups



Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

Figure 5: 2019 Wood County Age Cohorts



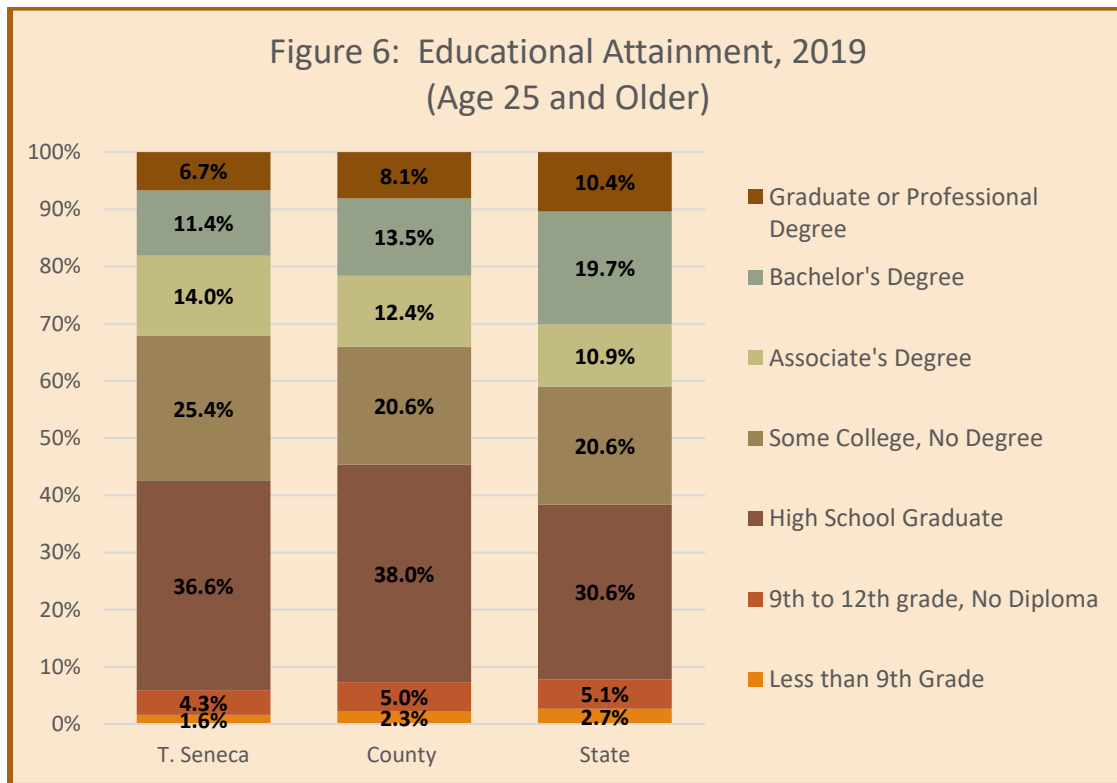
Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

Education and Income Levels

Education

Figure 6 compares educational attainment of those in the Town of Seneca to the County and the State. In 2019, 94.1% of Town of Seneca residents ages 25 and older had a high school education or higher. This was 1.4% higher than the County (92.7%) and 1.9% higher than the State (92.2%).

In 2019, 18.1% percent of Town residents ages 25 years and over had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is lower than Wood County at 21.6%. Both the Town and the County had much fewer bachelor’s degree or higher recipients than the State at 30.1%. Education and how it relates to economic development will be discussed in the economic development chapter.



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 amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, meaning half of all households have income above that amount, and half have income below that amount. Per capita income is the average income earned per person.

Median household income for Town of Seneca residents was \$73,162 in 2019. Table 4 shows that this was higher than the whole of Wood County and the State of Wisconsin. Similarly, in 2010, the Town of Seneca median income was higher than both the County and the State. When adjusted for inflation, the median household income in the Town has risen 11.3% over basically the last decade. This is much higher than the County (-0.8%), and the State (2.1%).

Table 5 illustrates that in 2019 the per capita income in the Town of Seneca was \$29,572, which was lower than the County and the State. This was not true in 2010, where per capita income in the Town of Seneca was about the same as the State, and a little higher than the County. Per capita income in the Town has declined at a rate of -5.1% when adjusting for inflation from 2010 to 2019. This rate of decrease is significant, because both County and State increased by 7.7% and 6.9% respectively.

Table 4: Median Household Income				
	2010*	2019	Net Change	% Change
Town of Seneca	\$65,730	\$73,162	\$7,432	11.3 %
Wood County	\$55,344	\$54,913	-\$431	-0.8 %
Wisconsin	\$60,495	\$61,747	\$1,252	2.1 %

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

*Adjusted for inflation in 2019 dollars

Table 5: Per Capita Income				
	2010*	2019	Net Change	% Change
Town of Seneca	\$31,176	\$29,572	-\$1,604	-5.1 %
Wood County	\$29,185	\$31,425	\$2,240	7.7 %
Wisconsin	\$31,215	\$33,375	\$2,160	6.9 %

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

*Adjusted for inflation in 2019 dollars

Employment Characteristics

Tables 6 and 7 illustrate the breakdown of the labor force and employed population living in the Town of Seneca in 2010 and 2019. The “employed population” includes those that are 16 and older. There was an increase of 41 people in the labor force from 2010 to 2019 in the Town of Seneca. This increase at the Town level was in contrast to the marginal labor force growth seen statewide, and the countywide labor force decline.

Labor force participation indicates the percent of those 16 years and over who are actively looking for work. Table 6 shows that the labor force participation rate in the Town of Seneca increased about 1 percentage point from 2010 to 2019. There was a decrease in the County’s and State’s participation rates over about the last decade.

Table 6: Labor Force					
	Labor Force			Labor Participation Rate	
	2010	2019	2010-2019 % Change	2010	2019
Town of Seneca	576	617	7.1%	64.9%	65.8%
Wood County	39,534	37,386	-5.4%	66.5%	63.4%
Wisconsin	3,078,465	3,097,113	0.6%	69.0%	66.5%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

Table 7 shows that in 2010, the Town of Seneca had an employed population of 551 people. This number increased 44 people to 595 by 2019, for an increase of 8%. From 2010 to 2019, the employed population decreased in the County at a rate of -2.6%, and the number of people employed throughout the State increased 3.9%. The U.S. census classifies individuals as unemployed if they are not working, actively seeking work, or available to accept a job.

The unemployment rate in the Town of Seneca was 3.6% in 2019, which was the same as all of Wisconsin, and a little lower than Wood County per Table 7.

Table 7: Employment				
	2010	2019	2010-2019 % Change	2019 Unemployment Rate
Town of Seneca	551	595	8.0%	3.6%
Wood County	36,924	35,963	-2.6%	3.8%
Wisconsin	2,869,310	2,982,359	3.9%	3.6%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

As shown in Table 8, in 2019 most Seneca residents were employed in 4 of the 5 occupation sectors. Between 2010 and 2019, about the same number of service workers exist; sales and office employment went down, and so did the number working in *natural resources, construction, & maintenance*. Two sectors that increased dramatically were *Management, business, science, & arts*, and *Production, transportation, & material moving*.

Table 8: Town of Seneca Resident Occupations 2010-2019		
Occupation Sector	2010	2019
Management, business, science, and arts	103	186
Service occupations	96	107
Sales and office occupations	154	104
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	83	46
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	115	152
Total employed*	551	595

Source: 2010, 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

*Total employed represents employed civilian population 16 years and over

Demographic Snapshot of Seneca

- The population has decreased 8.3% since 1990 and the number of households has increased by almost 22% since 1990. So even though there are less people in Seneca, there was a greater need for housing due to the decline in household size over the past few decades.
- The Town of Seneca is projected to continue declining in population, but the number of households has increased faster than the Department of Administration projected and the Town has already gained more households than was projected by 2040.
- Seneca is a community of baby boomers and their children.
- The median age of 47.7 in 2019 basically held steady over the last decade.
- Town of Seneca residents have achieved higher levels of educational than the County as a whole, with 14% of residents holding a bachelor's degree vs. 12.4% of the County.
- The Town's 2019 median household income of \$73,162 is higher than both the County and State.
- More people in Seneca are in the labor force, a 7.1% increase from 2010 to 2019, which is much higher than the County or the State. Seneca also has a 3.6% unemployment rate in 2019 that mirrors the State's rate, and is slightly better than the County rate of 3.8%.
- More people are working in the Town of Seneca, and many people's occupation changed dramatically from 2010 to 2019 (Table 8).

Chapter 2

Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources

This chapter describes local land and water conditions in detail as well as agricultural resources and cultural heritage. It is important to consider the patterns and interrelations of natural resources on a broader scale because they do not follow geo-political boundaries. In addition, many of the programs for protecting or mitigating impacts to natural resources are administered at the county, state, or federal level. Thus, an overview of recent county-wide natural resource planning efforts is described below, followed by a description of local natural resource conditions. Of particular interest are geographic areas of the landscape encompassing valued natural resource features grouped below by resource type, including soil and biological resources.

Related Plans and Studies

In the last decade, several plans were prepared by Wood 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.

Wood County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2015

This plan provides a framework for local/state/federal conservation program implementation efforts from 2015 to 2025. This plan aims to protect valuable water and soil resources within Wood County.

The Conservation, Education and Economic Development Committee identified the following long-term program goals:

1. Reduce sediment delivery to surface waters of Wood County.
2. Reduce animal waste and nutrient delivery to surface waters.
3. Reduce crop damage caused by wildlife.
4. Protect and develop wetland and uplands for wildlife habitat.
5. Increase efforts to inventory the water resources.
6. Minimize the adverse effects of urban sprawl and land fragmentation in rural Wood County.
7. Improve air quality.
8. Improve woodlands.

Wood County Farmland Preservation Plan, 2013-2028

The primary goal of this plan was to establish Farmland Preservation Areas as the basis for potential farmland preservation tax credits. The goal is to preserve farmland that contributes to the economic and cultural importance to the county, while still allowing for necessary growth that leads to a vibrant and diverse community.

Wood County Forest Fifteen-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 2021-2035

This county forest management plan is updated every fifteen years to continue to manage and protect natural resources within the county forest on a sustainable basis for the ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future residents throughout the county. The plan 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.

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

The primary focus of this recreation plan is to protect and promote the health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of the community and to provide a quality county-wide recreation system. The plan aims to guide and coordinate a harmonious county recreation system and provides direction for recreation management and policy. This includes direction for short and long-term community recreation decisions, an inventory of existing recreation systems and services, and a practical action program for future improvements.

NATURAL AND AGRICULTURAL 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.

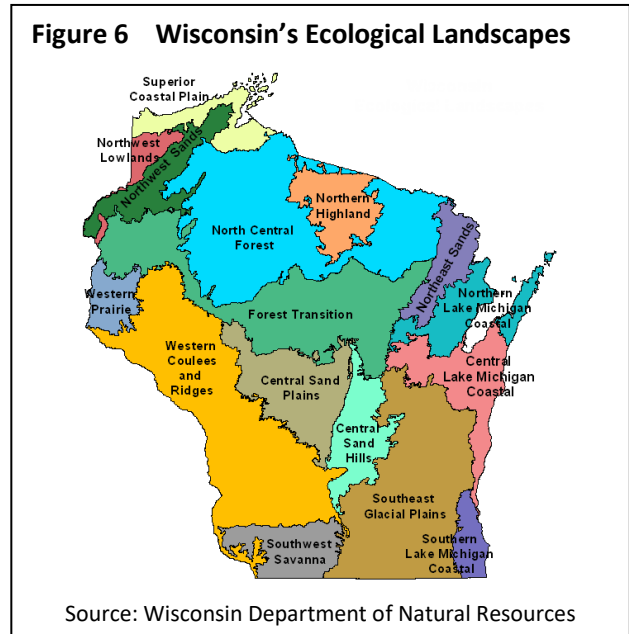
Land Resources

The Town of Seneca is located in south-central Wood County. See **Map 1**. The Town is bounded by the Towns of Hansen and Sigel to the north, the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Port Edwards to the east, the Town of Cranmoor to the south, and the Town of Dexter to the west.

Topography and Geology

Wood County lies in two ecological landscapes of Wisconsin. The northern one-third is part of the Forest Transition landscape and the rest of the county is part of the Central Sand Plains landscape. The Town of Seneca is located mainly in the Central Sand Plains ecological landscape (Figure 6).

The Central Sand Plains ecological landscape occurs on a flat, sandy lake plain, formed in and around what was once Glacial Lake Wisconsin, which contained glacial melt water extending over 1.1 million acres at its highest stage. Soils are primarily sandy lake deposits, with some silt, loam, loess caps. Sandstone buttes carved by rapid drainage of the glacial lake, or by wave action when they existed as islands in the lake, are distinctive features of the landscape. Historical vegetation was a mix of both forested and open wetland types and dry upland forest, savanna, and prairie.



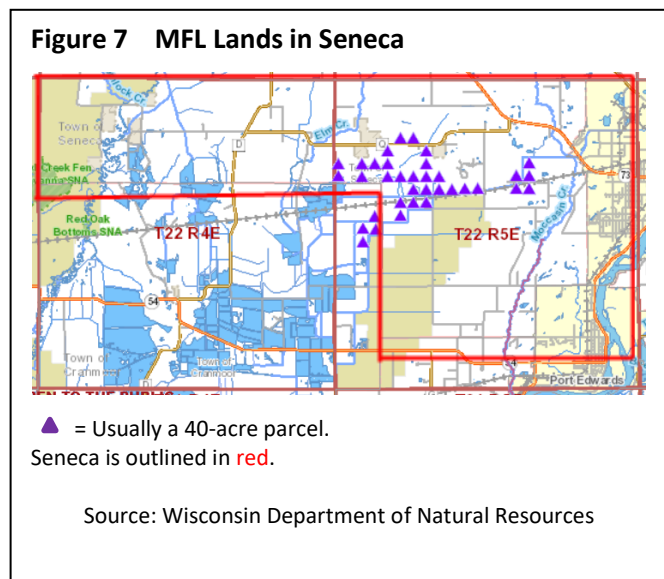
Forests

Woodlands and forests cover about 69% of the Town of Seneca. 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.

The 1850s composition of vegetation in the Town of Seneca was a mix of conifer and deciduous tree species that included oak (white oak, black oak, bur oak), swamp conifers (white cedar, black spruce, tamarack, hemlock) marsh and sedge meadow, wet prairie, and lowland shrubs.

All forests are dynamic, always changing from one stage to another, influenced by natural forces and human behavior. Changes can be subtle and occur over long period or can happen in short spans of time from activities such as timber harvest, a windstorm, or a fire.

Woodlands in the Town are owned by several different entities including the county for the county forest, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and many private property owners. Most of the woodland in the Town of Seneca is privately owned, including over 900 acres enrolled in Managed Forest Law (MFL) program, as of January 2021 (See Figure 7). Most of this MFL land is open to the public for hunting, hiking, fishing, sight-



seeing, and cross-country skiing. Also, this MFL land is adjacent to the county forest. The MFL program was established to preserve and protect woodlands through practicing proper management techniques.

The Ho-Chunk Nation has about 400 acres of tribal land that is mainly forested within Seneca.

About 3,740 acres of Wood County Forest exist in the Town of Seneca, consisting of the northern tip of the Seneca Block of the county forest and northeast corner of the Owl Creek Block (See [Map 4](#)). The rifle range is in the northern tip of the Seneca Block.

Soils

If a line were drawn east and west approximately through Wisconsin Rapids, it would roughly separate the loamy soils north of the line from sandy soils south of the line. The loamy soils have a cap of wind-laid silty material that averages about 24 inches in thickness. (Soil Survey, 1977)

A broad belt across the middle of the county is soils that formed in the silty cap and underlying layers of residuum from weakly cemented sandstone and acid silty clay shale. These are soils of the Kert, Vesper, Hiles, and Veedum series. (Soil Survey, 1977)

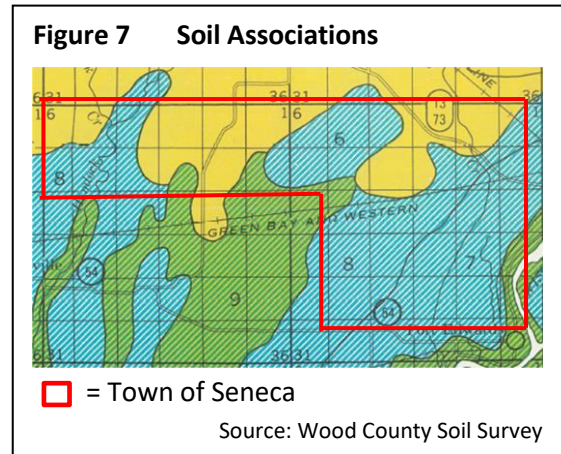
Most of the soils in the southern part of the county formed in sandy material deposited by glacial meltwaters along the Wisconsin River or in Glacial Lake Wisconsin. Soils of the Nymore, Plainfield, Friendship, Meehan, and Newson series formed in these materials. (Soil Survey, 1977)

The Town of Seneca is comprised of three soil associations as shown on [Figure 7](#) and described below.

Gold = Vesper-Kert soil association: Nearly level, poorly drained soils that have a loam to clay subsoil; formed in a thin layer of loess and in residuum from stratified sandstone and shale; on uplands.

Blue = Newson-Meehan soil association: Nearly level, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained soils that have a sandy subsoil; formed in deep sandy outwash; on outwash plains and glacial lake deposits.

Green = Markey-Rifle soil association: Nearly level, very poorly drained organic soils that have an organic subsoil over sand, and deep organic soils; formed in partly decomposed plant remains; in basins and depressions.



Within the above soil associations are many soil types. **Prime Farmland** is found in the Vesper-Kert soil association. See [Map 2 - Natural Resources](#) to see where prime farmland exists in the Town of Seneca.

Agricultural Areas

Agriculture has been an integral part of the Town of Seneca, with cranberries predominant agricultural activity in Town. Over 1,800 acres, 9% of the Town is agricultural.

Many parcels in the northern part of Seneca are designated as Farmland Preservation Areas. These areas are located outside of sewer service areas, contain productive agricultural soils, are suitable, in use, or are complimentary for farming, consistent with other land use plans, and are expected to remain agricultural or forested into the future.

Prime farmlands are identified by NRCS nationwide as a class of the best soils in the nation to grow food and fiber on. In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding. [SSM, USDA Handbook No. 18, October 1993]

See **Map 2 - Natural Resources** to see where prime farmland exists in the Town of Seneca.

For more about agriculture in the Town of Seneca, see: "Agricultural Economy" in Chapter 6 of this plan.

Limitations for Dwellings with Basements

Dwellings for purposes of this section are single-family homes of three stories or less with basements to a depth of about 7-feet. The ratings for dwellings with basements are based on the soil properties that affect the capacity of the soil to support a load without movement and on the properties that affect excavation and construction costs. The properties that affect the load-supporting capacity include depth to a water table, ponding, flooding, subsidence, linear extensibility (shrink-swell potential), and compressibility.

Rating terms indicate the extent to which the soils are limited by all of the soil features. “Not limited” indicates that good performance and very low maintenance can be expected. “Somewhat limited” indicates that the soil has limitations that can be overcome by special planning, and moderate maintenance can be expected. “Very limited” indicates that the limitations generally cannot be overcome without major soil reclamation, special design, or expensive installation procedures. Poor performance and high maintenance can be expected in “very limited” areas.

See **Map 3 – Basement Limitations** to see where houses must be constructed on mounded soils or without basements to keep them out of the groundwater in the Town of Seneca. Areas on the map that are “Not rated” are flooded soils or data was not available.

Metallic and Non-Metallic Mineral Resources

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources estimates that there could be no more than five metallic mineral mines developed in Wisconsin in the foreseeable future. This includes the Flambeau Mine now in operation, the Crandon Project now owned by two tribes, the Lynne Project in Oneida County, the Bend Project (west of Tomahawk), and one additional ore body not now known. This estimate is based on the current state of knowledge about the geology of northern Wisconsin and the steps necessary to discover an ore body and the time it takes to complete the regulatory requirements.

Frac sand is quartz sand of a specific grain size and shape that is suspended in fluid and injected into oil and gas wells under very high pressure. The type of sand used in this process must be nearly pure quartz, very well rounded, extremely hard, and of uniform size. Frac sand is or was recently mined from sandstone formations in much of western and central Wisconsin. Wisconsin Public Radio reported in mid-2021 that since about 2018, oil companies started using cheaper sand found closer to

oil wells. By switching, energy companies could save as much as \$60 per ton by not having to ship sand from Wisconsin.

- In Wood County, there are two frac sand mines at this time.

The USDA's Soil Survey of Wood County notes locations where sand and gravel deposits can be found. In general, the soils of Wood County have a very low content of gravel.

With little available gravel in the County it is not a surprise that there are no gravel pits in the Town of Seneca. No sand pits exist either. See **Map 4**.

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.

The BRRTS database lists no action required sites, spills, and LUSTs. Of those actions, spills existed at facilities that are generally still in use, so there is nothing to redevelop. LUST sites may exist at closed businesses, and therefore may provide opportunities for redevelopment.

- Only 2 sites with environmental repair and one site with a spill exist in the Town of Seneca, so no redevelopment opportunities exist.

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 October 2021, NHI tracked the following threatened or endangered species in the townships of Seneca and/or Cranmoor:

- Blanchard's Cricket Frog (Endangered)
- Red-shouldered Hawk (Threatened)
- Karner Blue Butterfly (Endangered)
- Black Tern (Endangered)
- Redfin Shiner (Threatened)

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.

The Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area (CWGCA) is where the DNR would like to protect active Greater Prairie Chicken breeding grounds and range, primarily through acquisition and easements.

The Town of Seneca is on the southern edge of the CWGCA. An area of significance is north of Wisconsin Rapids, and between the villages of Arpin and Vesper.

The Wisconsin Land Legacy Report 2006-2056, compiled by the WDNR, is a comprehensive inventory of the special places that will be critical to meet future conservation and outdoor recreation needs for the next fifty years. The report focused on identifying what areas of our state or regionally significant green infrastructure remains to be protected. The Central Wisconsin Grasslands is a Land Legacy Area summarized below with 5 stars representing the highest level for that category:

CG Central Wisconsin Grasslands

Size:	Large	Protection Remaining:	Moderate
Protection Initiated:	Moderate	Conservation Significance:	☆☆☆☆☆
		Recreation Potential:	☆☆☆☆

Water Resources

Surface Water

Surface water in the Town of Seneca consists of the Moccasin Creek, Elm Creek, Hemlock Creek, Little Hemlock Creek, a small portion of Ripple Creek and other minor tributaries. Surface water also includes the many ponds and reservoirs. Most of the ponds and reservoirs are manmade, many of which are used for flooding of cranberry beds. With the groundwater being so shallow, it is relatively easy to create ponds and reservoirs. It is important to protect the quality of Seneca’s surface waters for the protection of the abundant wildlife in the Town and because contamination can migrate to residential wells. See **Map 2 – Natural Resources** to see where the surface waters are in Seneca.

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 including Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) which have the highest quality water and fisheries in the state deserving of special protection, and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) which have excellent water quality and valued fisheries.

There are no ORWs or ERWs within the Town of Seneca.

Impaired Waters

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

There is one impaired water within the Town of Seneca. Moccasin Creek is listed as impaired due to high phosphorus levels. This water is part of the Wisconsin River TMDL, which was approved in 2019.

Invasive Aquatic Species

Surface water resources in Wood 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.

Hemlock Creek within Seneca is shown to have Eurasian Water-Milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*).

Since the Town of Seneca does not have any boat launches, then the chances of spreading aquatic invasive species to waters in the Town have a very low likelihood. Most waterbodies in Seneca are creeks or cranberry bogs.

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 DNR has promulgated minimum standards for managing wetlands. See **Map 2 – Natural Resources** to see where wetlands are in Seneca.

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. Due to the nature of the geography and hydrology of the area, floodplain mapping is also known to have accuracy issues in this area. The presence and exact location of floodplains must be verified by field survey, and applicable permits obtained prior to any land disturbing activity. See **Map 2 – Natural Resources** to see where floodplains are in Seneca.

Groundwater

Groundwater is water found underground in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand, and rock. It is replenished by precipitation that infiltrates into the ground. The type of soil and bedrock that a well is drilled into often determines water's pH, saturation index, and the amount of hardness or alkalinity in water. The type of soil and bedrock in a region also determines how quickly contaminants can reach groundwater.

The source of all drinking water in Wood County is groundwater, and it supplies many agricultural and industrial processes as well. Groundwater is a limited renewable resource, and both its quality and quantity are important factors. These factors are primarily influenced by local geology and local land use.

Groundwater in Wood County is generally abundant and of good quality.

- 89% of 532 private well samples collected in Wood County from 1990-2006 met the health-based drinking water limit for nitrate-nitrogen.
- A 2002 study estimated that 36% of private drinking water wells in the region of Wisconsin that includes Wood County contained a detectable level of an herbicide or herbicide metabolite. Pesticides occur in groundwater more commonly in agricultural regions, but can occur anywhere pesticides are stored or applied.

Susceptibility of groundwater to pollutants is defined here as the ease with which a contaminant can be transported from the land surface to the top of the groundwater called the water table. Many materials that overlie the groundwater offer good protection from contaminants that might be transported by infiltrating waters. The amount of protection offered by the overlying material varies, however, depending on the materials. Thus, in some areas, the overlying soil and bedrock materials allow contaminants to reach the groundwater more easily than in other areas of the state.

Groundwater contamination susceptibility in the portion of Wood County that includes the Town of Seneca is "more susceptible" based upon soil characteristics, surficial deposits, depth to water table, depth to bedrock, and type of bedrock.

The Town of Seneca is in an area of Wood County where the depth to groundwater is less than 3 feet in most soils. The "very limited" category on **Map 3 – Basement Limitations** shows where groundwater is less than 3 feet deep.

HISTORIC 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 local 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.

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.

Inventory

There are a few registered **century farmsteads** near the Town of Seneca, but none in Seneca. A century farmstead has been maintained in family ownership for at least 100 years.

The tribal office of the **Ho-Chunk Nation** has advised the Town that several historical and cultural sites exist in the Town, including burial sites and sites of religious significance.

The settlement of **Altdorf**, along CTH D at about Mattheis Road, was named after Altdorf in Switzerland, the native home of a share of the first settlers. A post office was established at Altdorf in 1885, and remained in operation until 1905. St. Joseph Catholic Chapel and cemetery was established in 1879. The community once had a schoolhouse (Altdorf School). The building still exists.

Seneca's listing on the **Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory (AHI)**:

- Old Pullman car used for farm storage. (NW corner of George Rd and Bronson Rd).

NOTE: The Seneca Plan Committee noted that this railcar no longer exists at this location.

Historic Compatibility with Modernization

There are certainly many historic buildings that don't currently meet today's standards for comfort, convenience, and safety. Since the 1990s great strides have been made around the world in the methods of bringing historic buildings into compliance with modern demands without harming their physical structure or their architectural character. Most components for modernization – water and sewer lines, telephone cables, electric wires, and high-speed computer data transmission lines – can be put in place almost invisibly – often underground and in walls – without jeopardizing the individual historic resources or their important context and interrelationships.

Historic preservation has moved from being an end in itself (save old buildings in order to save old buildings) to being a vehicle of broader ends – downtown revitalization, job creation, small business incubation, housing, tourism, and others.

Utilizing historic preservation as a vehicle of broader ends requires the recognition of certain values:

- Major landmarks and monuments need to be identified and protected, *BUT...*
- Historic resources are far more than monuments and often are functional buildings.
- Groups of buildings rather than individual structures are often what is important.
- The vast majority of buildings of "historic importance" have their importance defined by their local significance, not national or international.
- Adaptive reuse of buildings is central to an effective historic preservation as economic development strategy.
- Authenticity is an important element in sustainable historic preservation based success.

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 NSP 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 NSP 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 Seneca 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 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.

Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES:

Goal – Maintain and enhance the quality of the Town’s land and water resources for appropriate agricultural and silvicultural use while protecting public health through clean groundwater.

Objectives:

1. Exclude non-farm and non-forestry related development within environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands and floodplains.
2. Promote nutrient management planning.
3. Promote proper maintenance of septic systems and wells.

Policies:

1. Direct new intensive development of all kinds to incorporated areas within Wood County.
2. Continue working with the Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department to implement public educational strategies related to improving natural resources in the County.

Chapter 3

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.

Related 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

Wood County Comprehensive Plan, 2009

The plan closely examines the state of housing throughout Wood County, examining housing issues and qualities such as age of housing units, housing value, housing types, seasonal housing, and general housing characteristics. The housing related goals from this plan are:

- Provide sound, healthy and affordable housing for all residents at all income levels.
- Provide housing types to accommodate the needs of our aging population.
- Increase the supply of sustainable housing in the county.

Housing Assessment

Housing Type and Occupancy

In 2020, the Town of Seneca had 446 total housing units; 84.1% of which were owner occupied, see **Table 9**. The Town of Seneca had a significantly higher percentage of owner-occupied homes than both Wood County (66.7%) and the State of Wisconsin (58.7%). The Town's average household size in 2019 of 2.53 was slightly higher than the County (2.26) and the State (2.36). In Seneca, 13.1% of householders lived alone and 31.2% of households had children under 18 years old living with them.

“Total Vacant” in **Table 9** includes vacancies for the following purposes: for rent, rented but not occupied, for sale, sold but not occupied, for seasonal use, for migrant workers, and other vacant per the U.S. Census.

Table 9: Residential Occupancy Status, 2020					
		Occupancy Status		Vacancy Status	
	Total Housing Units*	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Seasonally Occupied	Total Vacant
Town of Seneca	446	84.1%	13.7%	0%	0.02%
Wood County	34,549	66.7%	25.5%	1.6%	7.8%
Wisconsin	2,727,726	58.7%	28.8%	7.1%	12.5%

Source: *2020 Census
2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates for percentages

Structural Characteristics

Housing in the Town of Seneca is overwhelmingly single-family homes, with a small number of mobile homes; see **Table 10**. Wood County is also comprised mainly of single family housing, but does have a variety of housing types. This is due mainly to a balance of urban and rural communities throughout the County. In Wood County, 76.6% of housing units are single-family detached homes, followed by apartment style homes with five or more units, which account for 10.8% of housing. There are no apartment buildings in Seneca per **Table 10**.

	1-Detached	1-Attached	2	3 or 4	5 or more	Mobile Home	Total
Town of Seneca	433	4	0	0	0	12	449
Wood County	24,758	884	1,389	600	3,481	2,356	32,332
Wisconsin	1,566,122	105,274	151,005	87,343	383,130	65,282	2,358,156

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

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 1960’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 Wood County. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

Table 11 outline build dates of housing units throughout the Town, County, and State based on 2019 American Community Survey data. Most housing stock was constructed in the Town of Sigel prior to 1940 (30.9%). About 1/3rd of the Town of Seneca’s housing stock was built in 1960 to 1980, with about 40% of the stock built since 1980. Almost no housing was built in Seneca since 2010 (0.9%), but only about 3% of housing stock in the County was built during this time, and only about 4% of statewide housing was built at this time. Clearly, home supply has not been constructed much since the Great Recession of 2008 in the Town, County or the State.

	1939 or earlier	1940 to 1959	1960 to 1979	1980 to 1999	2000 to 2009	2010 to 2013	2010 or later
Town of Seneca	7.3%	20%	32.1%	25.2%	14.5%	0%	0.9%
Wood County	17%	17.3%	29.6%	23%	10.3%	1.5%	1.3%
Wisconsin	19.1%	16.4%	24.4%	23.8%	12.5%	2%	1.8%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Value Characteristics

Table 12 details housing values in owner-occupied homes throughout the Town, County and State. In 2019, the median housing value in Seneca was \$153,200. This was higher than Wood County, at \$131,900 and lower than the State of Wisconsin, at \$180,600. Almost 1/3rd of homes in Seneca (30.3%) are valued between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Another quarter of homes in Seneca (25.9%) are valued between \$150,000 and 200,000. Overall, there is housing across a broad spectrum of valuations in the Town of Seneca.

Table 12: Housing Values, Owner Occupied, 2019							
	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 Seneca	10 (2.6%)	58 (15%)	117 (30.3%)	100 (25.9%)	79 (20.5%)	22 (5.7%)	\$153,200
Wood County	6.6%	26.6%	25.7%	17.7%	15.8%	7.6%	\$131,900
Wisconsin	4.6%	12.6%	19.6%	19.6%	23.9%	19.7%	\$180,600

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Housing Affordability

Several factors contribute to the affordability of housing. 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% of monthly income. If housing costs exceed 30% 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% of the monthly household income. Low income households that pay more than 30% of their income toward rent may have difficulty affording other household necessities such as food, child care, and healthcare costs. Severely cost-burdened households are at risk of becoming homeless.

Table 13 shows that the percentage of households in the Town of Seneca that pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs is between the County and State with those that have a mortgage. However, for those in Seneca without a mortgage significantly less people are cost burdened than either the County or State. **Table 14** shows that 20.6% of renter occupied households that are cost burdened was about half as much as the County or the State.

Table 13: Owner-Occupied Housing Affordability, 2019

	With mortgage		No Mortgage	
	Median selected owner costs	% Cost burdened	Median selected owner costs	% Cost burdened
Town of Seneca	\$1,113	19.3%	\$466	5.7%
Wood County	\$1,113	18.1%	\$462	10.3%
Wisconsin	\$1,430	22.8%	\$553	13.3%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Table 14: Renter-Occupied Housing Affordability, 2019

	Median gross rent	% Cost burdened
Town of Seneca	\$691	20.6%
Wood County	\$718	40.5%
Wisconsin	\$856	44%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Specialized Housing

In Wood County, housing for seniors and populations with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield. The Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Central Wisconsin has locations in Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield and serves Lincoln, Marathon and Wood Counties. The ADRC supports seniors, caregivers and adults with disabilities. The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, the United Way of South Wood & Adams County, and the Marshfield Area United Way all maintain information about specialized housing options throughout the County. As the number of elderly persons 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, although Seneca is next to Wisconsin Rapids, 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). Most senior housing within the county is located within the urbanized areas of Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield.

Housing Programs

Various organizations offer a variety of programs to assist with the purchase, rehabilitation, or construction of housing. Many of these programs are listed below:

Housing Repair and Rehabilitation Grant

This program is administered by the Rural Housing Service of the USDA Rural Development Department. Seniors aged 62 and older may obtain a grant for rehabilitating their home provided they are below 50% of the area median income and are unable to procure affordable credit elsewhere.

Housing Repair and Rehabilitation Loan

Also administered by USDA, this program is a loan for rehabilitation provided applicants meet the same standards as the grant above.

Rural Housing Guaranteed Loan

USDA also offers this loan that is used to help low-income individuals or households purchase homes in rural areas. Funds can be used to build, repair, renovate or relocate a home, or to purchase and prepare sites, including providing water and sewage facilities.

Rural Housing Direct Loan

USDA-Rural Development also offers this loan to provide financing at reasonable rates and terms with no down payment. The loan is intended for low-income individuals or households to purchase homes in rural areas. Funds can be used to build, repair, renovate or relocate a home, or to purchase and prepare sites, including providing water and sewage facilities.

Rural Housing Direct Loan

USDA-Rural Development uses this program to help very low- and low-income households construct their own homes. The program is targeted to families who are unable to buy clean, safe housing through conventional methods.

HUD's FHA Loan

This program is administered by the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department and offers a low down payment of 3% mortgage loan for home purchase or construction for selected applicants under certain income limits.

HUD Insured Loans for Condominiums, Energy Efficiency, Special Credit Risks, and Rehabilitation

These programs are administered by the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department. HUD will insure selected applicants under certain income limits when procuring loans for rehabilitation or for rehabilitation at the time of purchase.

FHA HUD 203(k) Home Rehabilitation Loan Program

Whereas HUD desires to see current housing stock rehabilitated, this program provides owner occupants of existing homes, or intended owner occupants who are looking to purchase a home, readily available mortgage money to refinance/rehabilitate or purchase/rehabilitate their homes, respectively.

VA Home Loans

These loans, administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, are often made without any down payment at all, and frequently offer lower interest rates than ordinarily available with other kinds of loans. These loans may be used for purchase or construction up to \$240,000.

HOME Loans

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) offers federal HOME Investment Partnership Program loans with a low, fixed interest rate to help low- and moderate-income individuals and families buy a home.

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Central Wisconsin

The ADRC supports seniors, caregivers, and adults with disabilities. Services they provide include meals for seniors, benefits identification, community resources identification, caregiver support and education, classes for healthy living, and equipment lending.

Housing Goals, Objectives, and 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.

Goal 1 – Allow private development of residential housing.

Goal 2 – The housing supply is to consist of both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units that meet the needs of Seneca residents for both large and small families of all economic levels.

Objectives:

1. Encourage home improvement and development standards that will enhance the overall appearance of housing in the Town.
2. Encourage development of affordable housing through appropriate zoning districts and standards.
3. Maintain zoning standards that allow residential development where it will not encroach on prime agricultural lands, but may mix into the agricultural community in appropriate locations, such as areas that are not tillable.

Policies:

1. Allow consideration for residential development, on both larger lots and in clustered subdivisions, both where appropriate and while maintaining the Town's rural landscape.
2. Provide adequate areas for the projected need for residential development on the Future Land Use Map.
3. Promote housing programs that assist residents with maintaining or rehabilitating their homes.

Chapter 4

Utilities and Community Facilities

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

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

Related Plans and Studies

Wood County All Hazards Mitigation Plan, 2020

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

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

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

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

Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management Plan, 2012-2030

The purpose of that plan was to determine where municipal sanitary sewer may be needed over a 20-year planning period.

Discussion of future land use in each community in this plan:

Town of Seneca - Only a very small portion of the Town of Seneca is in the planning area. Soils in this area of Seneca will dictate that lots be larger if no sewer service is available. The area will probably not experience much change between now and 2030. The future land use plan for Seneca shows the area continuing to be comprised of residential with some commercial along Highway 13. Further to the west, low density development may occur although much of the area has environmental constraints to development.

Utilities

Water Service

The Town of Seneca does not have a public water supply system. Instead, private wells supply the water for public and private facilities within the Town. Most private wells provide a clean, safe supply of water; however, contaminants can pollute private wells, and unfortunately most contaminants cannot be seen, smelled, or tasted. Because of this, Wood County recommends that individuals should test their water on a regular basis. The Wood County Water Laboratory provides reasonably priced water testing services to the citizens of Wood County.

Wastewater

The Town of Seneca does not have municipal sanitary sewer service. Unless it is determined that other parts of Seneca will need sanitary sewer, the Town's development will continue to rely on private on-site waste treatment systems. If sanitary sewer services are needed, it will be most cost effective to utilize the Wisconsin Rapids wastewater collection and treatment system.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Municipal solid waste is disposed at the Superior Cranberry Creek Landfill in Wisconsin Rapids. There are collection containers for both trash and recycling at the Town Hall. Individuals may contract with private haulers for curbside garbage and recycling pick-up.

Energy and Telecommunications

Electric and Natural Gas

Electric service is provided by one of three providers within Seneca: Alliant Energy (Wisconsin Power & Light Company), Oakdale Electric Cooperative, and Wisconsin Rapids Waterworks & Light.

Where natural gas service is available in the Town, it is provided by WE Energies, but according to the 2019 ACS only 18% of homes were heated this way. About 57% of homes in Seneca were heated with LP gas. About 13% of homes were heated with wood, and about 11% of homes were heated with fuel oil/kerosene.

Telecommunications

Solarus and TDS provide wired telephone, television, and internet service in the Town. Country Wireless provides some fixed wireless internet service within the Town.

Mobile phone service in Seneca is provided by these companies: US Cellular, AT&T, Cellcom, Sprint, and Verizon.

Current satellite internet service providers include: HughesNet and Viasat Inc.

Community Facilities

Community facilities include an array of services and facilities associated with schools, libraries, public protection, and health care. This section describes the existing community facilities and services located in or used by the Town of Seneca.

Town Government Facilities

The town hall and town garage are located next to each other at 3540 County Rd Q, west of Wisconsin Rapids. The town hall has a multi-purpose room to conduct Town business and restrooms.

The Town has a garage attached to the Town Hall, and a second separate garage, where heavy equipment is stored. The Town owns a variety of equipment to maintain the roads and clear them of snow and ice.

The local road system is the most significant public facility maintained by the Town and is covered in the Transportation Chapter.

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The Wood County Sheriff's Department provides police protection in the Town of Seneca. They patrol all county roads and respond to 911 calls. In addition, the Wisconsin State Highway Patrol provides some patrol, mainly on state and federal highways.

Fire

The Town of Seneca receives fire protection from either the Village of Vesper Volunteer Fire Department or the Village of Port Edwards Volunteer Fire Department, depending on the location in Seneca. Vesper provides service from the railroad tracks north to the town line. The Village of Port Edwards services that part of Seneca from the railroad tracks south. The DNR's Nekoosa Fire Response Unit, out of the Nekoosa Ranger Station, provides wildland fire protection in the Seneca area of southern Wood County.

An ISO rating of 1 represents the best protection and 10 represents an essentially unprotected community. Generally, most of Seneca is over 5-miles away from each of the two fire departments, therefore most of Seneca holds an ISO rating of 10. Dry hydrants exist in various areas of the Town.

Wildfire Risk

The DNR has completed a statewide evaluation of fire risk, referred to as the Communities-at-Risk (CAR) assessment. This assessment uses extensive DNR geo-databases to analyze and map hazardous woodland fuel types and the degree of the intermixing of development with wildlands. Based upon this risk assessment, the entire Town of Seneca is rated "high" (the second highest category).

Fuels are combustible materials comprised of both living and dead vegetation (mainly trees). The amount of dead vegetation, both standing and on the forest floor, increases when natural disturbance events like straight line winds as well as by insects and disease occur. Dead vegetation accumulates until they decompose naturally or a disturbance event, like a wildfire, occurs. Fuel types vary in the ways they respond to fire, although all plants will burn if exposed to enough heat. Jack pine and red pine are among the most flammable tree species found in Wisconsin.

Throughout the project area, areas of insect/disease infestation damage or storm damage should be addressed as well as areas that have simply accumulated a significant fuel load over time.

EMT and First Responder Service

The Town is part of a multi-town service that has contracted with a private provider (United Emergency Medical Response) for this service.

Wood County is served by 5 ambulance and 19 first responder service providers. First responders are many times the first to the scene of an accident or medical emergency, and responsible for stabilizing the individual until Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) arrive on the scene and can provide more advanced medical attention and transportation to a medical facility.

Medical Services

The nearest hospital is Aspirus Riverview Hospital located in Wisconsin Rapids. The 45-bed facility provides full medical services. Marshfield Clinic Wisconsin Rapids Center and Aspirus Riverview Clinic are also located within Wisconsin Rapids.

Cemeteries

Wisconsin Statute 157.70 provides for the protection of all human burial sites, including all marked and unmarked burials and cemeteries. There are five small cemeteries in the Town, as shown on the Utilities and Community Facilities Map.

Wood County owns a small, inactive cemetery on Seneca Road. The Wood County cemetery, active from 1891 through 1948, was used for former residents of the County Poor Farm and Home for the Aged, as well as other Wood County residents who could not afford to pay for a funeral.

A second cemetery is located on County Road D, adjacent to the St. Joseph Catholic Church in the settlement known as Altdorf. The church and cemetery site is about 2-acres in size.

There are three Native American cemeteries in Seneca. Two are located along County Road Q in the western part of the Town. The White Cemetery is on the north side of County Road Q in Section 6,

T. 22 N., R. 5 E. It is the largest of the three cemeteries. The Anawash Cemetery is in the same area on the south side of County Road Q, and the Pigeon Cemetery is located in Section 9.

Minimum acreage requirements exist for cemeteries established on or after November 1, 1991, unless a cemetery is owned by a religious association, or the Town enacts an ordinance allowing new cemeteries of less than 20 acres to be constructed.

Childcare Facilities

Many licensed childcare facilities that serve Seneca residents exist in the City of Wisconsin Rapids.

Education

Primary and Secondary Schools

Seneca is included in three school districts: Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards and Pittsville. Only a small portion on the Town's far west side are in the Pittsville School District. The rest of the Town is fairly evenly split between the two other school districts. Town officials must coordinate with each of the three school systems to keep them notified of new land splits, road extensions and other land development activities that may affect either the number of students or the routes that school busses can use.

Post-Graduate Education

Mid-State Technical College is a public two-year technical college with four regional campuses, one in Wisconsin Rapids. They offer degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in a variety of high-demand career fields designed to meet local workforce needs.

Libraries

The Town of Seneca does not have its own library, but residents have access to the other libraries in the County, the closest being in Vesper and Wisconsin Rapids.

Communities without libraries pay for these services through a County assessment. That assessment is based on the Town's equalized valuation. It is calculated on the basis of the non-library municipalities paying 70 percent of the costs associated with circulation to non-library-community users.

Recreation

George Nielsen Memorial Park

The Town of Seneca owns the George Nielsen Memorial Park on the northeast corner of County Road Q where that road intersects with Ridge Drive. This facility is 3.7 acres in size and has a ball field, volleyball court, and shelter building with gravel parking lot.

Golf Course

The **Homestead Golf Course** has 9-holes and is open to the public with a restaurant. Located at the intersection of State Highways 13/73 and County Road Q, this facility also includes a practice green.

Wood County Parks

All county parks are available to Seneca residents. Contact Wood County Parks and Forestry for descriptions of each of the parks and their locations.

Nearby City Parks

Seneca residents also make use of Wisconsin Rapids and Port Edwards parks and recreation opportunities, especially in organized youth and adult sports activities. Facilities include both outdoor and indoor opportunities. Examples are the YMCA, South Wood County Hockey Arena, Wisconsin Rapids Area Youth Sports Association (boys and girls baseball and softball), adult softball leagues, youth soccer leagues, flag football, youth and adult basketball, youth wrestling and more.

Wood County Forest

Wood County owns about 3,740 acres of forestland in Seneca, all of which is available for hunting, hiking and other outdoor use. A county-owned public shooting range is located in the county forest at the intersection of Marsh Road and Range Road in Seneca. The range has 14 shooting stands, with distances of 25-, 50- and 100-yards. There are also four pistol shooting points. Another county facility is the ATV trail in County forestland along Highway 54, approximately four miles west of the Village of Port Edwards.

The **Wood County ATV Intensive Use Area** includes about 10-miles of developed trails on 400-acres of county forestland. Except for gun deer season, the trail is open to the public year around. This trail also includes a parking lot, restrooms, loading ramp, wash down station/well, 28-foot by 40-foot enclosed shelter, children's playground, and a roofed charcoal grill; all of which are handicap accessible. Accessible hunting blinds for people with disabilities are also available.

Utilities and Community Facilities

Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1 – Provide sufficient public services (roads, police, fire & rescue, and garbage & recycling) either through Town efforts or as a partner with other communities to meet existing needs of Town residents and future demand for agricultural, residential uses.

Objective:

1. Maintain the current provision of community services.
2. Provide information to residents on the proper maintenance of septic systems and the benefits of recycling.
3. Share equipment and services across Town boundaries, where possible.
4. Provide the most efficient police, fire, and ambulance services to Town residents at the most cost-effective rates.

Policies:

1. Continue maintaining the Town's roads. See the Transportation Chapter for more details.
2. Continue cooperating with Wood County Sheriff's Department to provide law enforcement services.
3. Continue cooperating with the Village of Vesper Volunteer Fire Department and the Village of Port Edwards Volunteer Fire Department.
4. Continue participating in the County library program.
5. Continue listing capital improvements for the Town park in the Wood County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for access to DNR funding.

Goal 2 – Direct development that needs municipal services to incorporated communities in Wood County.

Objective:

- Consider the potential impacts of development proposals on groundwater quality and quantity.

Policy:

- Provide information about the advantages and disadvantages of building in various soils and groundwater conditions and to refer potential developers to the appropriate County and State agencies who regulate POWTS and well locations.

Goal 3 – Prevent wildfires.

Objective:

- Work with Wood County Emergency Management and WDNR to reduce the wildfire risk to Town of Seneca property owners.

Policies:

1. Consider creating a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, possibly with other similar high risk communities like the Town and Village of Port Edwards and the City of Nekoosa.
2. Work with both fire departments covering Seneca to locate additional dry hydrants or pressurized hydrants in Seneca.
3. Provide Home Ignition Zone flyer (Attachment D) to homeowners.

Chapter 5

Transportation

A community's transportation system consists of a variety of roads; some are owned and maintained by local officials, others are part of the county or state road systems. In addition to roads, the transportation system includes separate facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, railroads, airports, and public transit. This section describes the transportation system in the Town of Seneca and related improvements or issues affecting the system.

Issue

- Most roads are in “fair” condition. Over half of the soils in Seneca are “least suitable” soils for road construction (Figure 8) due to soil saturation (i.e. wetland soils). Town roads are not designed to handle truck traffic.

Related Plans and Studies

Connections 2030

Connections 2030 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the state. Adopted in 2009, 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 in the plan development process to create Connect 2050, which will be an update to this plan.

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 Service Transportation Plan, 2019
Wood 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.

Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2018

This plan is a region-wide effort to improve bicycling and walking across communities within North Central Wisconsin. The plan assesses existing conditions related to bicycling and walking, identifies other potential trail and route user groups, identifies routes, and describes 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.

Wood County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

This plan is intended to guide the development of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, recommendations, and policy that will create a safe and accessible network across Wood County's various communities. In 2021-2022, Wood County is partnering with the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission on an update to this plan.

Road Network

The road system in the Town of Seneca plays a key role in development by providing both access to land and serving to move people and goods through the area. The interrelationships between land use and the road system makes it necessary for the development of each to be balanced with the other. Types and intensities of land uses have a direct relationship to the traffic on roadways that serve those land uses. Intensely developed land often generates high volumes of traffic. If this traffic is not planned for, safety can be seriously impaired for both local and through traffic flows. See **Map 5**.

Road Classifications

Functional Classification

A functionally classified road system is one in which streets and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of service they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility to a high amount of land access functions. At the upper limit of the system (e.g., principal arterials), are facilities that emphasize traffic mobility (long, uninterrupted travel), while at the lower limits are local roads and streets that emphasize access to local properties over speed and efficiency.

Rural functional classifications are shown and include State Highway 73 as a minor arterial, County Road D as a major collector and County Road Q as a minor collector. **Table 15** defines what each functional classification means for rural highways and roads.

Table 15: Rural Highway Functional Classification System	
Principal Arterials	Serve interstate and interregional trips. These routes generally serve all urban areas with populations greater than 5,000. The rural principal arterials are further subdivided into 1) Interstate highways and 2) other principal arterials.
Minor Arterials	In conjunction with the principal arterials, they serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators providing intra-regional and inter-area traffic movements.
Major Collectors	Provide service to moderate sized communities and other inter-area traffic generators and link those generators to nearby larger population centers or higher function routes.
Minor Collectors	Collect traffic from local roads and provide links to all remaining smaller communities, locally important traffic generators, and higher function roads. All developed areas should be within a reasonable distance of a collector road.
Local Roads	Provide access to adjacent land and provide for travel over relatively short distances. All roads not classified as arterials or collectors are local function roads.

Source: WisDOT

Jurisdictional Classification

Roads are commonly classified in one of two ways: by ownership or by purpose. Jurisdiction refers to a governmental ownership, not necessarily responsibility. For example, some state owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Additionally, the designation of 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 the road eligible for Federal-aid construction and rehabilitation funds. Ownership is divided among the federal, state and local governments. States own over 20 percent of the national road network. The Federal Government has responsibility for about 5 percent, primarily in national parks, forests and Indian reservations. Over 75 percent of the road system is locally controlled.

In some cases, local municipalities are responsible for conducting routine maintenance and minor repairs on state and federal highways within their jurisdictional boundaries. In return, the state generally provides financing to those jurisdictions. However, major repairs and reconstruction are generally still the responsibility of the State Department of Transportation.

Map 5 – Transportation shows how all the state highways, county highways, and Town roads make up a connected street network. **Table 16** shows the jurisdictional mileage breakdown as of January 2022.

Table 16: Road Mileage by Jurisdictional and Functional Class				
Jurisdiction	Arterial	Collector	Local	Totals
Federal				0
State	2.42			2.42
County		7.92		7.92
Town		1.01	37.45	38.46
Totals	2.42	8.93	37.45	

Source: WisDOT

In addition to these main classifications, a road or segment of road may hold a number of other designations, such as forest road, rustic road, emergency or evacuation route, truck route, bike route, etc.

Road Maintenance

Pavement Condition

WisDOT requires all local units of government to submit road condition rating data every two years as part of the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR). 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 keep track of roads that are in need of repair.

The PASER system rates road surfaces on a scale of 1 to 10.

- “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 Seneca. Town 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. Most Town roads are in relatively good condition, as about 16.3% of roads rate as “Poor” or “Very Poor,” about 58.1% of roads rate as “Fair,” and about 25.4% as “Good” or better.

Table 17: Summary of Pavement Conditions, 2022 Town of Seneca Roads	
Surface Type	Miles
Unimproved	5.41
Gravel	2.99
Sealcoat	0.00
Asphalt	30.17
Total	38.57
Surface Rating	Miles
Very Poor	1.20
Poor	5.07
Fair	22.42
Good	8.43
Very Good	1.00
Excellent	0.36
Total	38.57

Source: WisDOT

Weight Limits

The public invests tax dollars every year for safe, reliable infrastructure. To maximize and protect this investment seasonal weight restrictions are one way to prolong the life of roads. State weight restrictions allow industry trucking partners to carry heavier loads during winter and help protect the roads during spring thaws.

- The **frozen road declaration** by the State on state highways is normally in effect from mid-December to late February or early March. Eligibility for increased weight limitations is restricted to vehicles hauling abrasives or salt for highway winter maintenance and peeled or unpeeled forest products cut crosswise not to include woodchips.
- **Seasonal weight restrictions** go into effect during the springtime freezing and thawing period, typically from early March until the second week in May. The State, County, and Town have their own schedules as to when a specific road needs to have a seasonal weight restriction enacted.

Town roads are an important component of the countywide transportation system because they serve local agricultural and forestry areas, as well as local development. A particular issue of concern with Town roads is that of seasonal weight limits. In Seneca, a 5-ton limit applies to all Town roads during spring thaw.

Traffic and Safety

Traffic Volumes

Annual average daily traffic (AADT) counts are measured and calculated on selected high traffic roads and highways every three, six, or ten years (depending upon functional classification) by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). Monitoring these counts provides a way to gauge how traffic volume is changing in the Town of Seneca. **Table 18** provides traffic counts for years 2011, 2014, and 2017 and notes the overall percent change.

Most traffic is mainly traveling through the Town of Seneca on State Highway 73, and traffic has declined overall from 2011 to 2017. The other two traffic count locations show that very little traffic is leaving State Highway 73 to go to any destinations in Seneca. County Highways D and Q both act like local roads with very low traffic volumes that basically equal residential streets in a city or village.

Location	2011 AADT	2014 AADT	2017 AADT	2011-2017 % Change
STH 73, west of Cranberry Creek	6900	4900	5800	-15.9%
CTH Q, west of Ridge Rd	620	N/A	N/A	N/A
CTH D, south of STH 73	500	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: WisDOT

Trucking

State Highway 73 is a designated long truck route as identified by WisDOT. Designated long truck routes permit the largest trucks to operate in Wisconsin (tractor-semitrailer combinations of up to 75 feet in overall length).

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

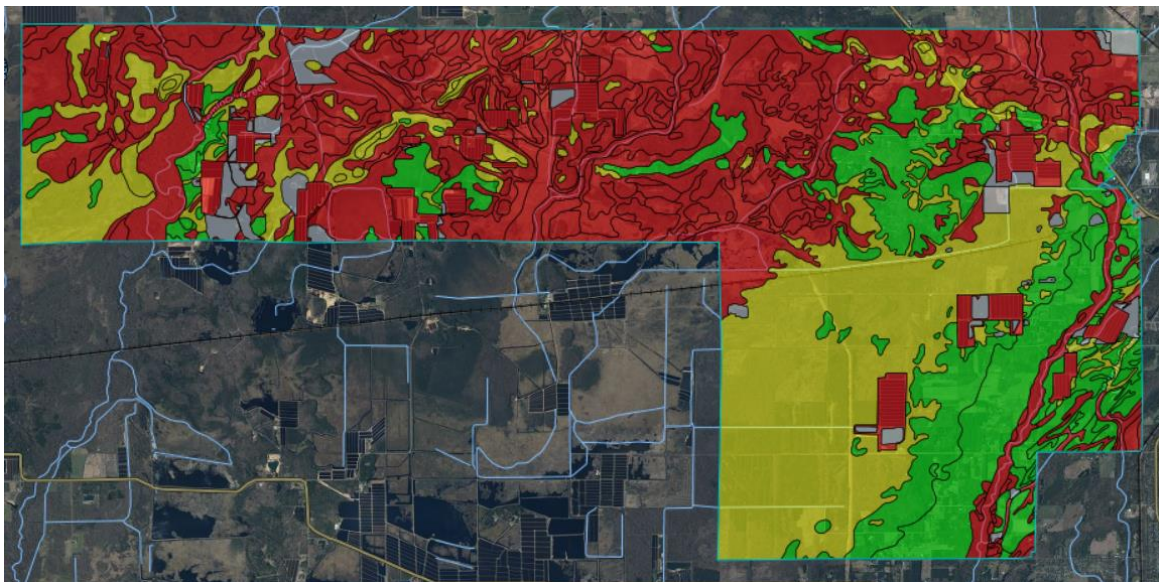
Limitations for constructing Local Roads and Streets

Local roads and streets for purposes of this section are roads that are maintained all year long (including snow removal) to allow automobile and light truck traffic to operate. The soil suitability ratings for constructing local roads and streets (**Figure 8**) are based on the soil properties that affect the ease of excavation and grading, and the traffic-supporting capacity. In Seneca, traffic-supporting capacity is the limiting factor. The properties that affect the traffic-supporting capacity are soil strength, subsidence, linear extensibility (shrink-swell potential), the potential for frost action, depth to a water table, and ponding.

Rating terms indicate the extent to which the soils in **Figure 8** are limited by all of the soil features:

- **Green** indicates that good performance and very low maintenance can be expected.
- **Yellow** indicates that the soil has limitations that can be overcome by special planning, and moderate maintenance can be expected.
- **Red** (Very limited) indicates that the limitations generally cannot be overcome without major soil reclamation, special design, or expensive installation procedures. Poor performance and high maintenance can be expected in “very limited” areas.

Figure 8 Limitations for Local Roads and Streets



Source: Wood County Soil Survey

Rail

The railroad plays a significant role in the local, regional, and state economy by transporting freight. All of the railroad in Wood County is operated by Canadian National (CN).

Map 5 – Transportation shows where CN travels through Seneca.

Air Transportation

Two airports serve the Town. The South Wood County Airport – Alexander Field is managed by the City of Wisconsin Rapids and jointly owned by South Wood County Airport Commission, the City of Wisconsin Rapids, Town of Grand Rapids, Village of Port Edwards, and the City of Nekoosa. The airport has three runways and there is no commercial service.

The Central Wisconsin Airport provides commercial air service to the area. Currently, three airlines have daily scheduled flights from the facility.

Transportation Services for Specialized Populations

The Aging and Disability Resource Center provides information on transportation services for those that are elderly and for those with disabilities including the Wood County Transportation Program. The Wood County Elderly and Disabled Transportation program provides rides to persons over the age of 55, and people who have a disability that prevents them from driving. Rides are provided for shopping, medical appointments, or to other locations as needed. Bus transportation is provided on weekdays and is equipped with a wheelchair lift.

Bicycling and Walking

All roads in the Town are available for bicycle and pedestrian travel, although they may not be safe to travel on without some improvement. Currently, County Highways D and Q are bike routes. Next door in Wisconsin Rapids, an extensive bike route & trail system exists. Wood County coordinates route and trail planning throughout the county.

Recreational Vehicles

There are extensive snowmobile trail and ATV route/trail systems throughout Wood County that include the Town of Seneca. The Town of Seneca allows the use of ATV/UTVs on Town roads. Some county highways also allow ATV/UTV use.

Transportation Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1 – Maintain a safe and efficient Town road system.

Objectives:

1. Maintain road capacity for all the traffic and vehicle types expected on Town roads.
2. Provide for annual maintenance of the Town's roads.
3. Avoid allowing land uses that generate heavy truck traffic on local roads that have not been constructed or upgraded for such use.

Policies:

1. Update the Town's official map [per Sec. 62.23(6) Wis. Stats] to show where future roads will go in cooperation with adjacent municipalities, Wood County, and WisDOT.
2. Designate specific routes for cranberry harvest trucks.
3. When farms or other employers become large enough to generate substantial heavy vehicle traffic, then consider using WisDOT's Transportation Economic Assistance program to help pay for road upgrades.
4. Use the Town Driveway Ordinance to address blind spots, increase safety, and to space out appropriate driveways to preserve road capacity.
5. Continue creating and implementing a 5-year Town Road Improvement Plan.
6. Promote WisDOT's Tourist Oriented Directional Sign (TODS) Program to provide signs on state highways for qualifying tourist-related businesses, services, or activities that are not on state highways.
7. Maintain and upgrade Town roads so they continue to accommodate emergency vehicles, school buses, and snowplows.

Goal 2 – Provide transportation choices for Town residents.

Objectives:

1. Continue maintaining Town streets, which already provide a shared space for low volume traffic, walking, and biking in the road.
2. Support snowmobile and ATV trails/routes within the Town.

Policies:

1. Work with Wood County Planning as they develop the updated Wood County Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan to improve walking and biking conditions within the County.
2. Continue keeping Town roads open to ATV traffic.

Chapter 6

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.

RELATED PLANS and STUDIES

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), 2017

Wood 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 (e.g., home prices and rent) have increased faster than per capita and household incomes. Consequently, many working adults must seek public assistance and/or hold multiple jobs in order to meet the basic needs of their families. Occupations paying a living wage provide families resources for savings,

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

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

ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2020

This report, developed by the United Way, described the 22% of households in Wood 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, child care, and security, but cannot make ends meet on the income provided from these jobs.

- The ALICE report shows that 15% of Seneca households are either below the federal poverty level or are considered ALICE households.

Wood County Comprehensive Plan, 2010

The Wood County Comprehensive Plan was created as the impacts of the Great Recession were being realized. The plan analyzes labor patterns, the economic base, employment projections, and existing facilities. The plan outlines the following goals:

- Continue to maintain a strong presence in area economic development organizations.
- Retain local businesses and jobs and help them expand.
- Attract new businesses to Wood County.
- Continue to improve the logistics in Wood County.
- Provide a quality of life that is attractive to young company executives.

Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) Plan, 2021

This plan was created with a 2019 grant that provided technical assistance from Purdue University and University of Kentucky to help develop this strategic plan for Wood County. The Wood County Rural Economic Development Innovation Plan includes evidence-based assessments, quantifiable goals, plans to improve the local and regional economy, and metrics to track progress.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

County Economic Environment

Wood County has a very diverse economic base. Agriculture is a major industry in Wood County. In 2014 UW Extension reported that 87.8% of Wood County farms were owned by individuals or families. Wood County agriculture is a mix of several sectors and is Wisconsin's leading cranberry county. The healthcare and social assistance industries employ the most people in Wood County. This is due mainly to Marshfield Clinic located within the City of Marshfield which is an integrated health system that employs a total of 10,000 people in more than 50 locations in 34 Wisconsin communities. Although manufacturing jobs (including forest products) have dropped in recent decades, manufacturing also remains a significant contributor to the Wood County economy.

Wood County data is presented for comparison because the Town of Seneca is located within Wood County. It should be noted that most of the predominant economic data for Wood County is derived from the more urbanized Cities of Marshfield and Wisconsin Rapids, as most of the Wood County population is centered in this area. The Town of Seneca's economy has an interconnectedness with the City of Wisconsin Rapids' economy due to its proximity.

In July of 2020, the City of Wisconsin Rapids and surrounding economy experienced a significant impact when Verso Papers closed its mill in Wisconsin Rapids. The mill employed 900 workers and served as the upper Midwest's largest buyer of Wisconsin forest products until the company took the mill idle in July 2020, citing unprecedented market decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic as the cause. The closure has had lasting effects on the city, and on industries that relied on the mill — especially logging. The mill was the largest employer in Wisconsin Rapids and had been in operation since 1904.

Economic Sectors

Table 19 details employment by sector for the Town of Seneca. In 2019, there were 595 people employed in the thirteen overall economic sectors in the Town, up 8.0% since 2010.

Between 2010 and 2019, there were several dramatic shifts throughout most of the sectors. The three fastest growing sectors by adding the most people were 1) Education and Health Services, 2) Leisure and Hospitality, and 3) Other Services. In terms of total employment, the Education and Health Services industry is the largest segment of the Town's economy followed by Manufacturing.

In Wood County there were 35,963 people employed in 2019, down 2.6 percent since 2010. Most people were employed in the areas of Education and Health Services, followed by Manufacturing. The fastest growing sectors from 2010 to 2019 were Public Administration (29.7%, 245 people added) and Finance & insurance, & Real Estate (28%, 438 people added). The area that experienced the most significant downward trend was Other Services.

Table 19: Employment by Industry Sector

Sector	Town of Seneca			Wood County		
	2010	2019	% Change	2010	2019	% Change
Natural Resources and Mining	27	15	-44.4%	1,411	1,407	-0.3%
Construction	33	34	3.0%	2,229	2,239	0.4%
Manufacturing	182	151	-17.0%	7,530	6,870	-8.8%
Wholesale trade	0	7	700%	795	740	-6.9%
Retail trade	86	34	-60.5%	4,246	4,006	-5.7%
Transportation and Warehousing and Utilities	21	25	19.0%	1,983	2,003	1.0%
Information	10	8	-20.0%	827	568	-31.3
Finance & insurance, & Real estate	19	37	94.7%	1,564	2,002	28.0%
Professional and Business Services	30	40	33.3%	1,713	1,826	6.6%
Education and Health Services	103	158	53.4%	9,695	9,460	-2.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	12	38	216.7%	2,375	2,268	-4.5%
Other Services	18	40	122.2%	1,732	1,505	-13.1%
Public Administration	10	8	-20.0	824	1,069	29.7%
Total	551	595	8.0%	36,924	35,963	-2.6%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Labor Force Analysis

Labor Force

Labor force is defined as the number of persons, sixteen and over, employed or looking to be employed. Consistent with the Town’s population decrease from 2010 to 2021, **Table 20** shows that the number of people in the labor force has increased. There were 41 more people in the labor force from 2010 to 2019, for a gain of 7.1%. While Seneca’s labor force increased 7.1% from 2010 to 2019, Wood County’s labor force decreased 5.4%, which is a decline of 2,148 people. The State of Wisconsin had a marginal increase of 0.6% in the labor force from 2010 to 2019.

Table 20: Seneca Labor Force

	2010	2019	% Change
Population 16 years and over	888	937	5.5%
Labor Force	576	617	7.1%
Employed	551	595	8.0%
Unemployed	25	22	-12.0%
Unemployment Rate	4.3%	3.6%	-16.3%
Participation Rate	64.9%	65.8%	1.4%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

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 part of the labor force. In 2010, **Table 20** shows that the Town of Seneca had 4.3% unemployment, and in 2019 unemployment was down to 3.6%. The unemployment rate was lower in Seneca than Wood County (3.8%) and equal with the State of Wisconsin (3.6%) in 2019.

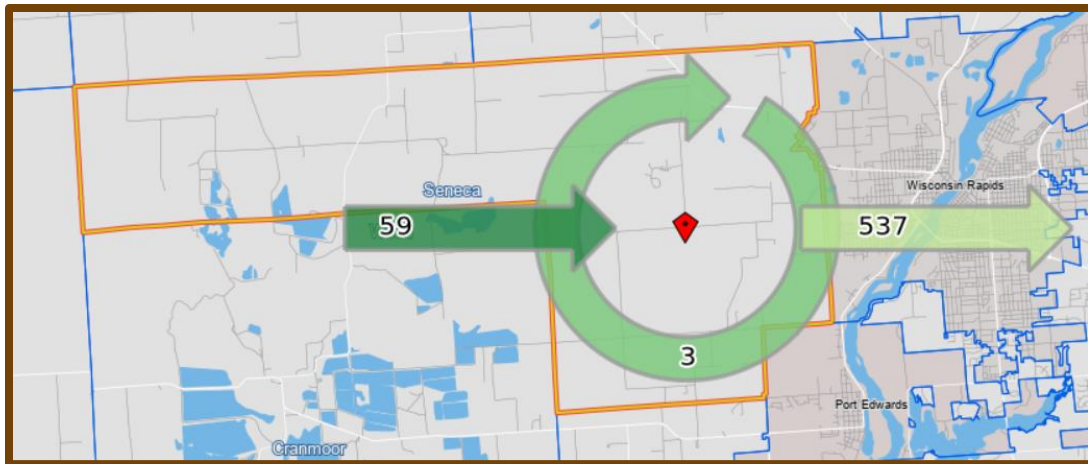
Workforce Participation

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, 64.9% of Seneca's population over the age of 16 was in the labor force. By 2019, that percentage increased almost a whole percent to 65.8%. The state participation percentage was 66.5% in 2019, while Wood County's rate was 63.4%.

Laborshed

A laborshed is an area or region from which an employment center draws its commuting workers. In 2019, approximately 3 of the 62 total jobs within the Town of Seneca were filled by Seneca residents. About 59 workers traveled to Seneca during the average work day. There were 537 Seneca residents that commuted to locations outside of the Town for work, indicating that Seneca's laborshed extends beyond its municipal boundaries. **Figure 8** shows the inflow-outflow patterns of the Town of Seneca's laborshed.

Figure 8: Town of Seneca Inflow/Outflow, 2019



Source: U.S. Census "On the Map"

In-Migration

The majority of the in-commuters live in close proximity to Seneca. They come from various locations, with the largest concentration of 135 workers (25%) coming from the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Other commuting communities include City of Marshfield (6.7%), City of Stevens Point (4.6%), Village of Plover (4.4%), City of Nekoosa (4.1%), City of Wausau (2.4%), and many more communities that send fewer than 2% each.

Out-Migration

Town of Seneca residents commuting outside of the Town’s boundaries travel across Wisconsin. About 537 residents are employed outside of the Town’s boundaries. Like in-commuters, the majority of employed residents work in nearby communities. The largest percentages of workers leaving Seneca for work travel to the City of Wisconsin Rapids (12.9%), City of Nekoosa (6.5%), Village of Vesper (4.8%), City of Pittsville (3.2%) and many more communities with less than 1.6% each.

Occupations

Table 21 identifies the five main occupational categories by number and percentage and provides comparison with the Town, County and State. Occupation is the kind of work a person does to earn a living, while industry is the type of activity at a person’s place of work.

All occupations except Natural Resources/Construction have over 100 residents employed. The Management/Business/Science occupation is the largest component of the labor force in the Town of Seneca, followed by Production/Transportation. In both the County and the State most workers were in the occupation of Management/Business/Science. In Seneca, the smallest number of residents work in Natural Resources/Construction occupations, which is the same as both the State and County.

Table 21: Resident Occupations, 2019						
Occupation	Town of Seneca		Wood County		Wisconsin	
Management/Business/Science	186	31.3%	11,705	32.5%	1,138,200	37.9%
Service	107	18.0%	5,658	15.7%	486,642	16.2%
Sales/Office	104	17.5%	6,942	19.3%	584,729	19.5%
Natural Resources/Construction	46	7.7%	3,901	10.8%	257,846	8.6%
Production/Transportation	152	25.5%	7,757	21.6%	534,657	17.8%
Total	595	100%	35,963	100%	3,002,074	100%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Economic Development PROGRAMS

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

See the Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources chapter in this plan for additional programs related to agriculture and forestry.

County

Conservation, Education, and Economic Development (CEED) Committee

There is a standing Conservation, Education, and Economic Development (CEED) Committee at the county level that deals with economic development related issues. In addition, county planning staff work with development prospects and serve on the Board of Directors for Centergy (economic development organization for Wood, Portage and Marathon Counties) and the North Central Advantage Technology Zone (a group that recommends tax credits for technology business expansion).

Community Progress Initiative Entrepreneurial Boot Camp

The Heart of Wisconsin's Community Progress Initiative Entrepreneurial Boot Camp is designed to train potential entrepreneurs. The camp provides the framework necessary to participants to take ideas and develop them into workable business plans.

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

North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation

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

Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund

Revolving loan funds are available to entrepreneurs and their lenders to structure financing packages for start-up and expanding businesses to encourage economic growth in the area.

State

Rural Economic Development Program

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

Wisconsin Small Cities Program

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

University of Wisconsin Extension Office

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

The Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC)

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

Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

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

Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)

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

Federal

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

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

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

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

assistance and information to help agricultural and other cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their member services.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

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

Economic Development

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES:

Goal – Promote maintenance of the agricultural, recreation, and forest products economic base.

Objective:

1. Encourage and support development of large commercial and industrial development that needs municipal utilities to locate in incorporated communities in Wood County.
2. Continuing allowing small businesses and industries that do not require large amounts of water or public sewer services in the Town.
3. Promote healthy and protected forest ecosystems to serve a multitude of ecological roles that include habitat for animal and plant species, and water quality and quantity protection.

Policies:

1. Accommodate home-based businesses that do not significantly increase noise, traffic, odors, lighting, or otherwise negatively impact the surrounding areas.
2. Direct commercial and industrial development to locate in cities and villages.
3. Protect the farmer's right to farm by discouraging conflicting land uses near active farms.
4. Encourage participation in the WDNR's Managed Forest Law program.
5. Promote non-animal micro-farming operations as complimentary or supplementary use in rural residential areas.
6. Promote agroforestry as a value added land use to owners.

Chapter 7

Land Use

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

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

RELATED PLANS and STUDIES

Regional Livability Plan, 2015

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

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

Wood County Comprehensive Plan, 2010

The Wood 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:

- Encourage local units of government to work together.
- Encourage Wood County towns to develop zoning provisions.
- Encourage cities and villages to include adequate provisions for multiple family and senior housing facilities.
- Increase awareness of officials in towns and small cities and villages of the increased interest in moving into their communities.

- Encourage small cities and villages that have not had much business development to plan for and provide adequate areas for future business growth in their comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.
- Develop a zoning model for telecommunications towers and wind energy facilities that will provide consistency throughout Wood County.
- Encourage planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
- Encourage preservation, restoration, and reuse of historically significant buildings referencing success stories from other smaller size communities.
- Encourage strong partnerships to develop and showcase industrial business parks and create joint boards to “sell” Wood County to developers.
- Continue to work toward connection of communities and major recreation areas with multi-use trails.

EXISTING LAND USE

The Town of Seneca covers about 20,700 acres in Wood County. The area is characterized by flat sandy plains that were formed in and around what was once Glacial Lake Wisconsin. Wetlands and lowlands are common throughout Seneca. Agricultural uses mainly consist of cranberry crops.

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 (**Map 6**) was developed using air photos from a countywide flight in 2020, with updates by local residents in 2022. The following categories were used to classify the various existing land uses: Agriculture, Commercial, Cranberry Bog, Governmental/Institutional, Industrial, Open Lands, Outdoor Recreation, Transportation, Residential, 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

Map 6 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.

Table 22: Existing Land Use, 2020

Land Use Classification	Acres	Percentage
Agriculture	1,855	9.0%
Commercial	22	0.1%
Cranberry Bog	1,035	5.0%
Governmental/Institutional	3	0.0%
Industrial	28	0.1%
Open Lands	2,107	10.2%
Outdoor Recreation	47	0.2%
Residential	401	1.9%
Transportation	330	1.6%
Water	628	3.0%
Woodlands	14,243	68.8%
Total	20,699	100.0%

Source: NCWRPC GIS

Existing land use classifications and acreage totals are presented in **Table 22**. The vast majority of land within the Town is woodlands (69%). Most of the woodlands are in private ownership that are not enrolled in the Managed Forest Law program. County forest is part of the woodlands classification in Seneca.

With cranberry farming as the main industry in Seneca, most of the lands classified as agricultural, cranberry bog, and open lands are probably used for that industry.

Residential development back in the 2003 Seneca Comprehensive Plan was described as follows:

“Of the total, 232 parcels, or 49 percent are within one-half mile of the route that follows George Road to Swanson Road, between Highway 13/73 and Highway 54. Another 110 residential parcels, or 23 percent, are located on the route that follows County Road Q to Ridge Road to the railroad tracks from Highway 13/73. That is a total of 342 of the 475 residential parcels (72 percent) along these two main transportation routes in Seneca.”

Not much has changed since 2003. Almost no development pressure has occurred from Port Edwards or Wisconsin Rapids.

Transportation includes roads, highways, and railroads, covering about 1.6% of the land in Seneca.

Industrial development in Seneca has remained constant with the Town directing new companies to nearby industrial parks where they have access to the utilities they need. The only additional industrial development was a 6 acre expansion to the oil pipeline’s pumping station in Seneca (Section 6).

Existing commercial uses in Seneca have expanded since 2003.

Outdoor recreation has not changed since 2003, when there was a golf course, county gun range, and Town park.

Managed Forest Law (MFL) & Public Lands

As of 2021, there are over 900 acres enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program in Seneca, which are subject to a substantial reduction in property taxes. See **Figure 7** (MFL Lands in Seneca) in Chapter 2 to see a map of where MFL lands are in Seneca and for a description of the MFL program.

The Ho-Chunk Nation has about 400 acres of tribal land that is mainly forested within Seneca.

About 3,740 acres of Wood County Forest exist in the Town of Seneca, consisting of the northern tip of the Seneca Block of the county forest and northeast corner of the Owl Creek Block (See **Map 4**).

Land Supply and Demand

Table 23 shows the estimated land demand in acres over the next 20 years. The Future Land Use map (**Map 7**) illustrates the anticipated future pattern of land uses in Seneca over this same time.

As shown by the existing land use inventory (**Table 22 and Map 6**), a substantial portion of the Town is woodlands or agriculture, so the supply of land “available” for development appears to be adequate. However, the Town is balancing long-term development and growth against priorities for keeping large blocks of agricultural land and woodland whole to maintain working farms and working forests.

Agriculture:

Per Seneca’s 2003 Comprehensive Plan, back in 1972 there were 5,220 acres of cropland and pasture. By 2001, agricultural acreage had dropped roughly to 2,577 acres. Back in 1972, there were 23 acres of cranberry bogs and a total of 55 acres of surface water. As of 2020, cranberry bogs now cover 1,035 acres and a total of 628 acres of surface water exist, much of which are ponds to support cranberry bogs. A total of 2,890 acres of cranberry bogs and agricultural lands exist in 2020.

Since cranberry growing and general agriculture are strong in Seneca, with a slight gain in agricultural land between 2003 and 2020, then agricultural projections will increase farmland at this rate through 2040.

Residential:

Residential development back in the 2003 Seneca Comprehensive Plan was described as follows:

Of the total, 232 parcels, or 49 percent are within one-half mile of the route that follows George Road to Swanson Road, between Highway 13/73 and Highway 54. Another 110 residential parcels, or 23 percent, are located on the route that follows County Road Q to Ridge Road to the railroad tracks from Highway 13/73. That is a total of 342 of the 475 residential parcels (72 percent) along these two main transportation routes in Seneca.

Not much has changed since 2003, so only a modest amount of new residential acreage will be projected through 2040. Almost no development pressure has occurred from Port Edwards or Wisconsin Rapids.

Commercial:

There are a limited number of commercial uses in Town, mainly along STH 13/73. Existing commercial uses in Seneca have expanded since 2003. Even though commercial uses statewide are converting to other uses or in-fill commercial is being built in parking lots, the types of commercial in Seneca (e.g., car dealership, storage) may continue to expand through 2040.

Industrial:

Industrial development in Seneca has remained constant with the Town directing new companies to nearby industrial parks where they have access to the utilities they need. The only additional industrial development was a 6 acre expansion to the oil pipeline's pumping station in Seneca (Section 6). Mild expansion will be projected through 2040.

Category	Projected Total Acreage			
	2025	2030	2035	2040
Agricultural*	2,965	3,040	3,115	3,190
Residential	411	421	426	431
Commercial	27	32	37	42
Industrial	33	38	43	48

Source: NCWRPC

*Agricultural = Agriculture and Cranberry Bog from Table 22.

Land Values

Table 24 displays the assessed land values in the Town of Seneca. It is important to note that lands enrolled in the Managed Forest Law and Forest Crop Law programs and other exempt lands (such as the county forest) are not included in values for **Table 24**. Overall, land value per acre in the Town is valued at about \$6,007 per acre based on assessed land values from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. Residential properties have the highest value per acre, followed by commercial.

Land Classification	Total Value of Land and Improvements	Total Acres	Average Value per Acre
Residential	\$60,131,600	1,641	\$36,643
Commercial	\$2,150,100	83	\$25,905
Manufacturing	\$0	0	N/A
Agricultural	\$266,700	1,972	\$135
Undeveloped	\$1,979,300	3,923	\$505
Agricultural Forest	\$867,100	838	\$1,035
Forest Lands	\$7,017,500	3,611	\$1,943
Other	\$3,534,700	576	\$6,137
Total	\$75,947,000	12,644	\$6,007

Source: WI Department of Revenue and NCWRPC

Opportunities for Redevelopment

The vast majority of Seneca currently consists of open farmland 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 initially developed. Some of these properties may be in need of rehabilitation rather than needing a comprehensive redevelopment strategy.

Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts

Few existing or potential land use conflicts exist in the Town of Seneca. There is an abundance of open land. The most likely potential land use conflicts would be between agricultural uses and the pressure to convert to residential use. Residential expansion from Wisconsin Rapids is not extensive, since almost no land has been platted for housing in the last two decades.

FUTURE LAND USE

The **Future Land Use Map (Map 6)** 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.

Land use classifications group land uses that are compatible and provide for the separation of conflicting uses. Not all land use classifications are used on both the Existing Land Use Map and Future Land Use Map. The classifications are not zoning districts and do not have the authority of zoning, but are intended for use as a guide. Subdivision, zoning, and official map decisions must be consistent (§66.1001(3) WI Stats.) with the Future Land Use Map.

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 appropriate to rezone land to reflect the planned land use designations, while in other cases, it may be desirable 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.

Future Land Use Map Classifications

Agriculture

Lands that are managed to produce crops or raise livestock and related uses including farmsteads.

Commercial

Identifies areas that sell goods or services to the general public; such as gas stations, stores, restaurants, professional services, hotels, campgrounds, and car dealerships. Higher density residential development is also allowed here, along with some storage facilities.

Governmental/Institutional/Utility

Local governmental buildings, utility structures not in road right-of-ways, religious institutions, schools, and cemeteries are all part of this classification.

Industrial

Identifies areas that produce goods or services for distribution to commercial outlets, for example: manufacturers and wholesale distributors. Any uses that directly relate to trucking or mining operations are also located in industrial areas.

Open Lands

Contains land without trees that does not appear to be agricultural. Such lands may include 100-year floodplains as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, DNR wetlands, and steep slopes of 12 percent or greater.

Outdoor Recreation

Land that is or could become parks or trails. Ball fields, outdoor amphitheaters, and waysides are all included in this designation.

Residential

Identifies areas of residential development, regardless of parcel size.

Transportation

Identifies the existing road network along with the recommendations for improved and safe traffic movement in the town, including airports and rail facilities.

Water

Lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds are all part of the surface water designation.

Woodlands

Areas of land that are covered with trees and hardly any grass. Single family houses, and hunting shacks may exist in this area on large lots. DNR wetlands that contain many trees.

Land Use PROGRAMS and TOOLS

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

Zoning

Under Wisconsin Statutes, counties and local units of government are authorized to adopt zoning ordinances. Zoning is a method for implementing or carrying out the land use plan by predetermining a logical pattern of land use development.

A zoning ordinance consists of a map and written text. The zoning map arranges the community into districts or zones, such as agriculture, residential, commercial, or industrial. Within each of these districts, the text of zoning ordinance specifies the permitted land uses, the size of buildings, yard/lot dimensions, and other prerequisites in obtaining permission to develop. The goal of the zoning ordinance is to set a reasonable development pattern by keep 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 Seneca has had its own zoning ordinance since the 1960s. The Zoning Ordinance outlines zoning districts and provides development guidelines including height restrictions, minimum lot area, and guidelines for accessory uses and structures.

Shoreland Zoning

All counties are mandated by Wisconsin law to adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates development in shoreland and floodplain areas of the 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 on matters regulated by their County. Wood County Shoreland Zoning regulates land use within shoreland and floodplain areas throughout the Town.

Farmland Preservation Zoning

Farmland Preservation Zoning is a voluntary zoning classification that is intended to minimize fragmentation of farmland by imposing a minimum lot size of 35 acres. In order to adopt farmland preservation zoning, a municipality must be enrolled in the Farmland Preservation Program. No Wood County jurisdictions have certified ordinances.

Land Division

Land division within the Town of Seneca is regulated by Wood County's Land Subdivision Ordinance. Subdivision regulation relates the way in which land is divided and made ready for development. A community can control the subdivision of land by requiring a developer to meet certain conditions in exchange for the privilege of recording a plat. While imposing conditions restricts the use of private

property, the cumulative effect of land subdivision on the health, safety, and welfare of a community is so great as to justify public control of the process.

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.

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

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, and POLICIES

Goal – Provide orderly growth for the health, safety, and general welfare of Town residents that also makes efficient use of existing tax dollars.

Objectives:

1. Maintain the Comprehensive Plan as a guide for future land use and zoning decisions.
2. Protect and preserve the rural character of Seneca.
3. Protect prime agricultural lands for working farms or working forests.

Policies:

1. Permit new development based upon consideration of this Comprehensive Plan.
2. Encourage dense residential development to locate in Wisconsin Rapids and other incorporated communities that provide sanitary sewer service.
3. All industrial development proposals will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Chapter 8

Intergovernmental Cooperation

This section describes existing mechanisms that the Town of Seneca uses to coordinate with other units of government, including: Wood County, adjacent towns, the school district, the State of Wisconsin and the Federal government. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the existing cooperative mechanisms and summarize the major challenges and issues regarding intergovernmental cooperation and regional planning, including:

- Opportunities to reduce or eliminate duplication of services;
- Incompatible goals, policies and development;
- Mechanisms for conflict resolution; and
- Opportunities for joint planning and decision making.

Mechanisms for cooperation and coordination primarily take the form of intergovernmental agreements, leases and contracts, and regulatory authority. These can occur between the Town of Seneca and other local, regional, State or Federal entities. Following is a brief description of the various functional areas and services that require intergovernmental coordination at various levels.

Intergovernmental Relationships

School Districts

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

Primary and Secondary Schools

The Town of Seneca is served by the Wisconsin Rapids School District and has a good standing relationship with the district. There are no school district facilities located within the Town.

Post-Secondary Educational Facilities

Mid-State Technical College is a public two-year technical college with four regional campuses, one in Wisconsin Rapids. The main form of interaction with both school and college districts are through payment of property taxes, which help to fund district operations. The Town has little participation in issues pertaining to administration or siting of new facilities. All school and college board meetings are open to the public.

Shared Services

Police protection in the Town of Seneca is provided by the Wood County Sheriff's Department. The Town does not maintain its own fire department, but contracts with Vesper and Port Edwards Volunteer Fire Departments. There are no police or fire facilities within the Town. The Town is part of a multi-town service that has contracted with a private provider for ambulance service.

Adjoining Units of Government

The Town is bounded by the Towns of Hansen and Sigel to the north, the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Port Edwards to the east, the Town of Cranmoor to the south, and the Town of Dexter to the west.

Wood County

Wood 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, and private sewage system regulation.

In many cases where state and federal agencies require area-wide planning for various programs or regulations, Wood 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. Wood County is a member of the NCWRPC, which qualifies the Town of Seneca for low cost local planning assistance. Typical functions of the NCWRPC include (but are not limited to) comprehensive, transportation, economic development, intergovernmental and geographic information systems (GIS) planning and services.

The NCWRPC has prepared plans for various municipalities in Wood County; as well as a county-wide economic development strategy, county comprehensive plan, road rating assistance, and various GIS projects and administrative assistance. The NCWRPC has written or assisted with numerous grants for the County and various units. All of these projects will directly include or indirectly affect the Town of Seneca.

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 (DNR) takes a lead role in wildlife protection and sustainable management of woodlands, wetland, lakes, and other wildlife habitat areas, while Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) 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 Seneca. 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) within WisDOT.

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.

Existing or Potential Intergovernmental Conflicts

No existing or potential intergovernmental conflicts were identified in the Town of Seneca.

The Town has a good working relationship with other governmental agencies. The process for resolving these conflicts will in part be a continuation of past practices as new mechanisms evolve and take shape. The Town of Seneca will continue to meet with governmental entities when significant issues of mutual concern arise.

Intergovernmental PROGRAMS and TOOLS

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.

Intergovernmental GOALS, OBJECTIVES, and POLICIES

Goal 1 – Seek mutually beneficial cooperation with all levels of government.

Objective:

- Maintain open channels of communication with all levels of government.

Policies:

1. Continue participating in the Wood County Towns Association meetings.
2. Continue cooperating with nearby services to provide ambulance and fire protection.
3. Continue forwarding issues of Town-wide concern to elected officials at the County and State levels.
4. Continue cooperating with the various Wood County departments and elected officials to the benefit of all County residents.
5. Continue providing timely responses to State and Federal agencies and elected officials as needed.

Chapter 9

Implementation

The primary reason why a community prepares a comprehensive plan is to provide a vision for the future of their community. Decisions regarding land use that are based upon this comprehensive plan provide a level playing field for everyone to implement the community's vision. Subdivision, zoning, and official map decisions must be *consistent with* (§66.1001(3) WI Stats.) the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Actively using this comprehensive plan by local policy makers assists them with decisions concerning:

- The implementation and enforcement of regulatory ordinances based on the goals, objectives, and policies identified in each chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.
- The development of programs and support systems that further the goals, objectives, and policies set forth in this Comprehensive Plan.
- The implementation of community improvements as identified in this Comprehensive Plan.
- The establishment and support of a continued planning process providing for periodic review and updates to this Comprehensive Plan and other land use control measures.

Implementation Tools

Having the appropriate tools to implement the recommendations in this comprehensive plan is critical. 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. 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. Following the adoption of this comprehensive plan update, the Town of Seneca should evaluate and update, as necessary, its related ordinances to ensure meeting this requirement.

Zoning Ordinance and Map

The Town of Seneca Zoning Ordinance is the primary land use regulation for the Town. 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 Future Land Use Map (**Map 7**). While the zoning map and Future Land Use Map do not need to directly match at the time the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, the intent is that the Future Land Use Map will serve as a guide indicating how property should eventually be zoned. Changes to zoning district boundaries should only be made if they are consistent with the Future Land Use Map in this Comprehensive Plan and the goals of this Comprehensive Plan.

Subdivision (Land Division) Ordinance

Land division within the Town of Seneca is regulated by Wood County's Land Division 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 stations)
- Park and trail acquisition and development
- Roads and highways (maintenance and new construction/paving)
- Fire and law enforcement 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. This may require some upfront investment from the community. However, as sites are improved and reused they generate tax base.

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 the Town of Seneca completed all planning chapters simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. It is noted that some overlap naturally exists between the nine comprehensive 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 Comprehensive Plan involves adoption of this 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. A public hearing is required to allow public comment on the ordinance prior to final action to adopt the plan by the Town Board. That public hearing must be preceded by a class 1 notice that is published at least 30 days before the hearing is held. The Town Board must adopt the Plan by ordinance (of majority vote) for the Plan to take effect. Notice of Plan adoption must be sent to those listed in §66.1001(4)(b) of Wisconsin Statutes.

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 Town of Seneca 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 Seneca 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 that cannot 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 rewriting 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.

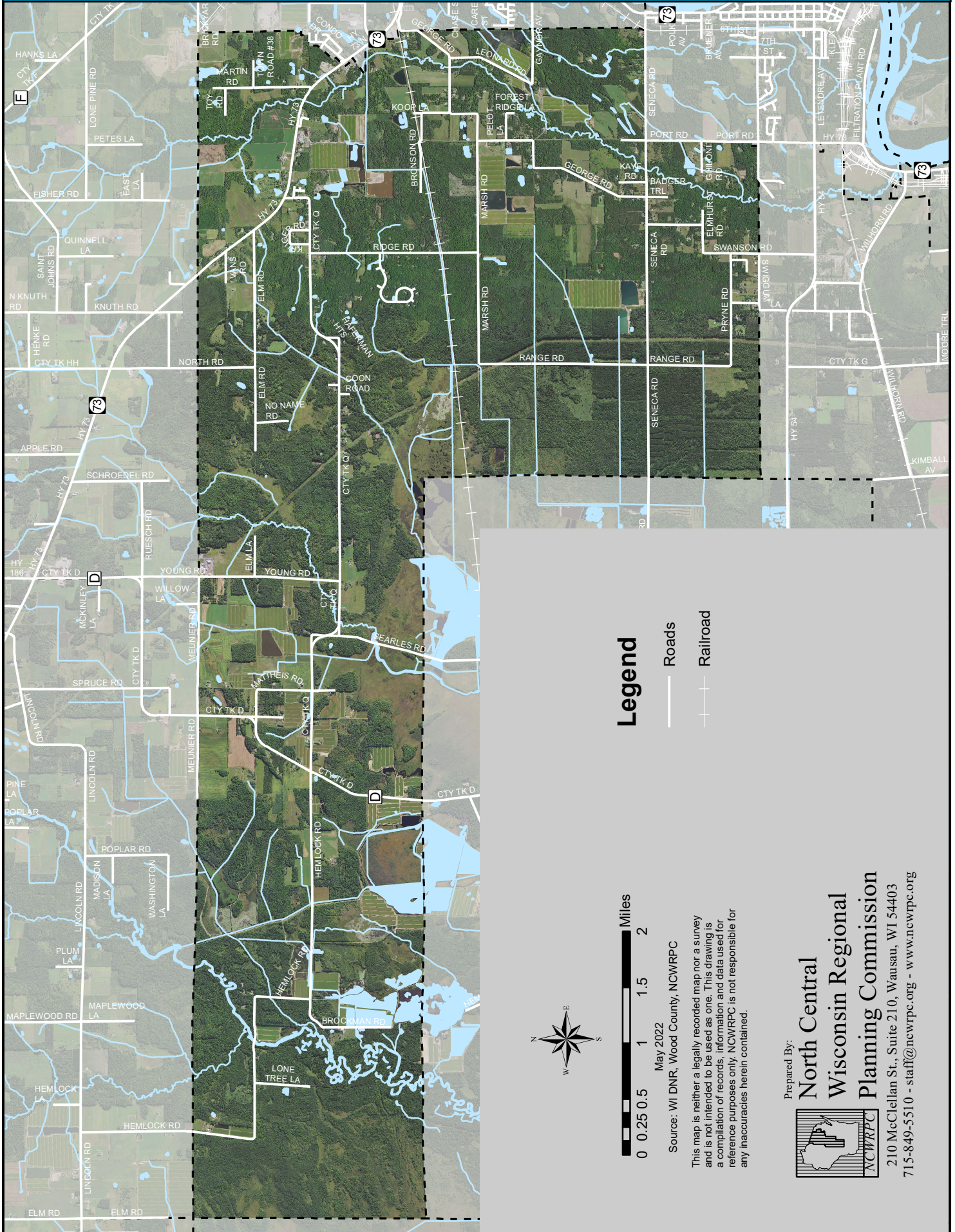
Plan Monitoring

The adopted Plan should be used as a tool by the 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 this 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 policies should be reviewed and refined to eliminate completed tasks and identify new approaches if appropriate.

Maps



Legend

-  Roads
-  Railroad




Source: WI DNR, Wood County, NCWRPC
May 2022

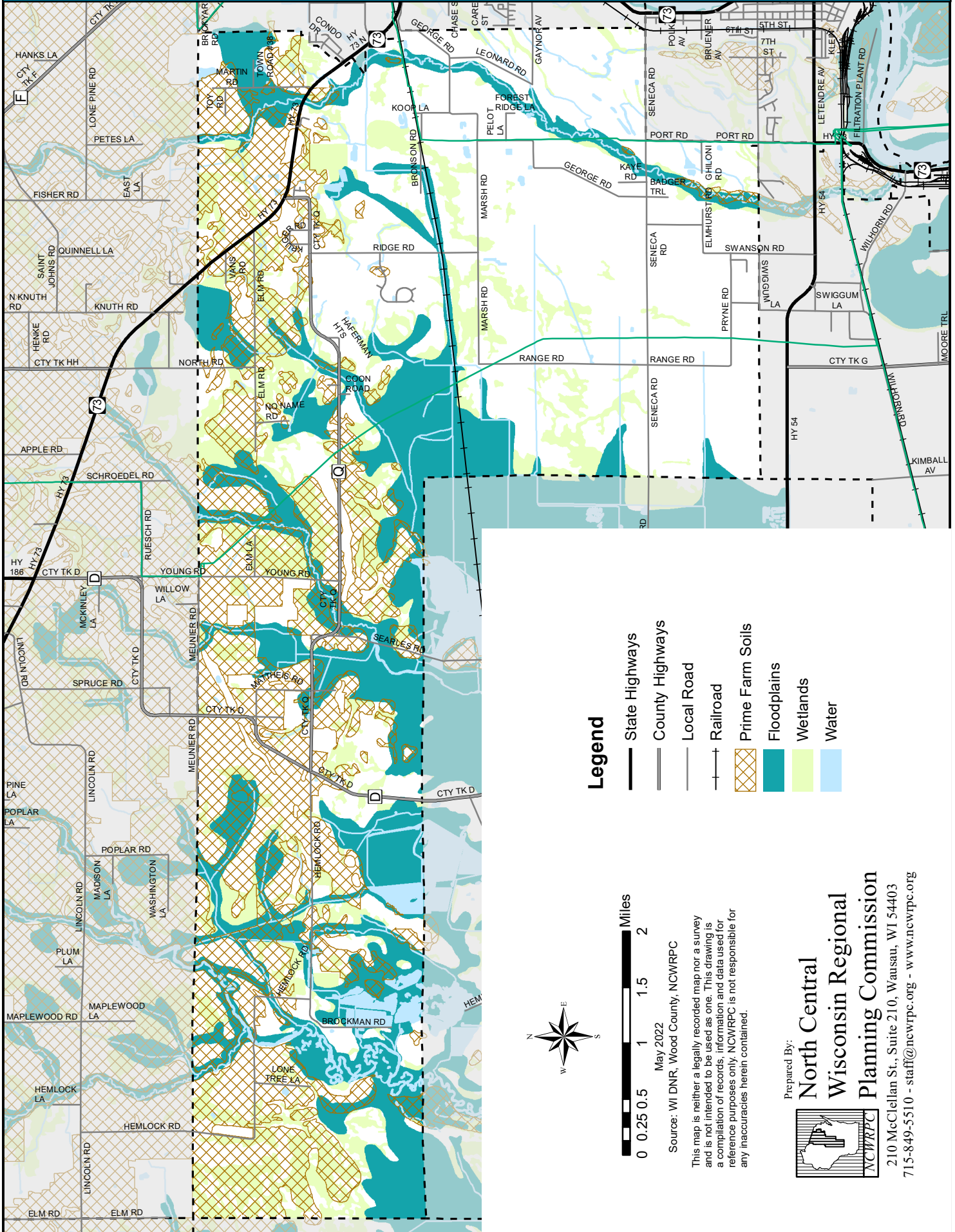
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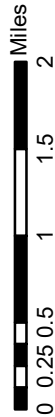
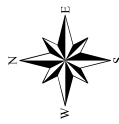


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Legend

- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Prime Farm Soils
- Floodplains
- Wetlands
- Water




Source: WI DNR, Wood County, NCWRPC
May 2022

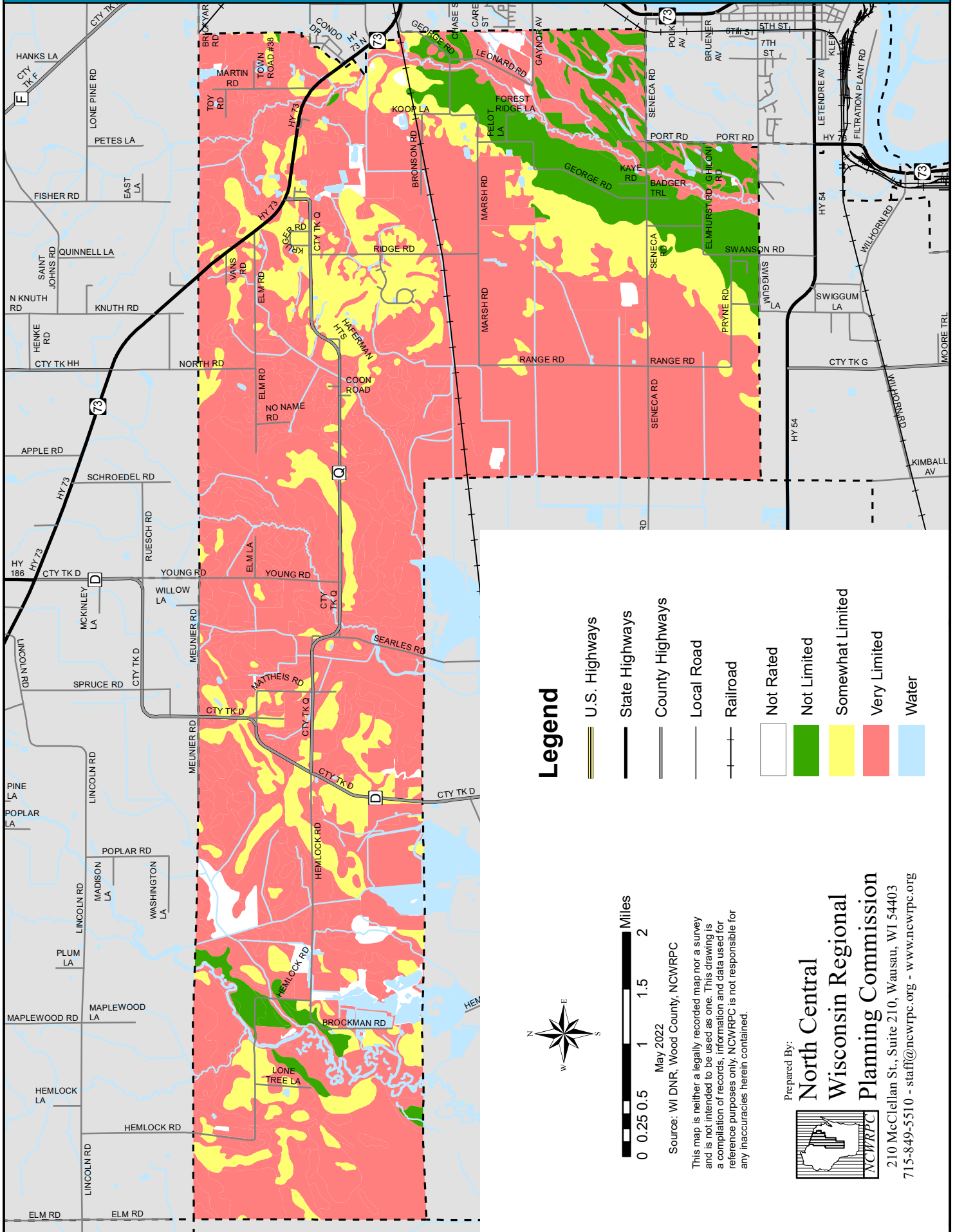
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Legend


-  U.S. Highways
-  State Highways
-  County Highways
-  Local Road
-  Railroad
-  Not Rated
-  Not Limited
-  Somewhat Limited
-  Very Limited
-  Water



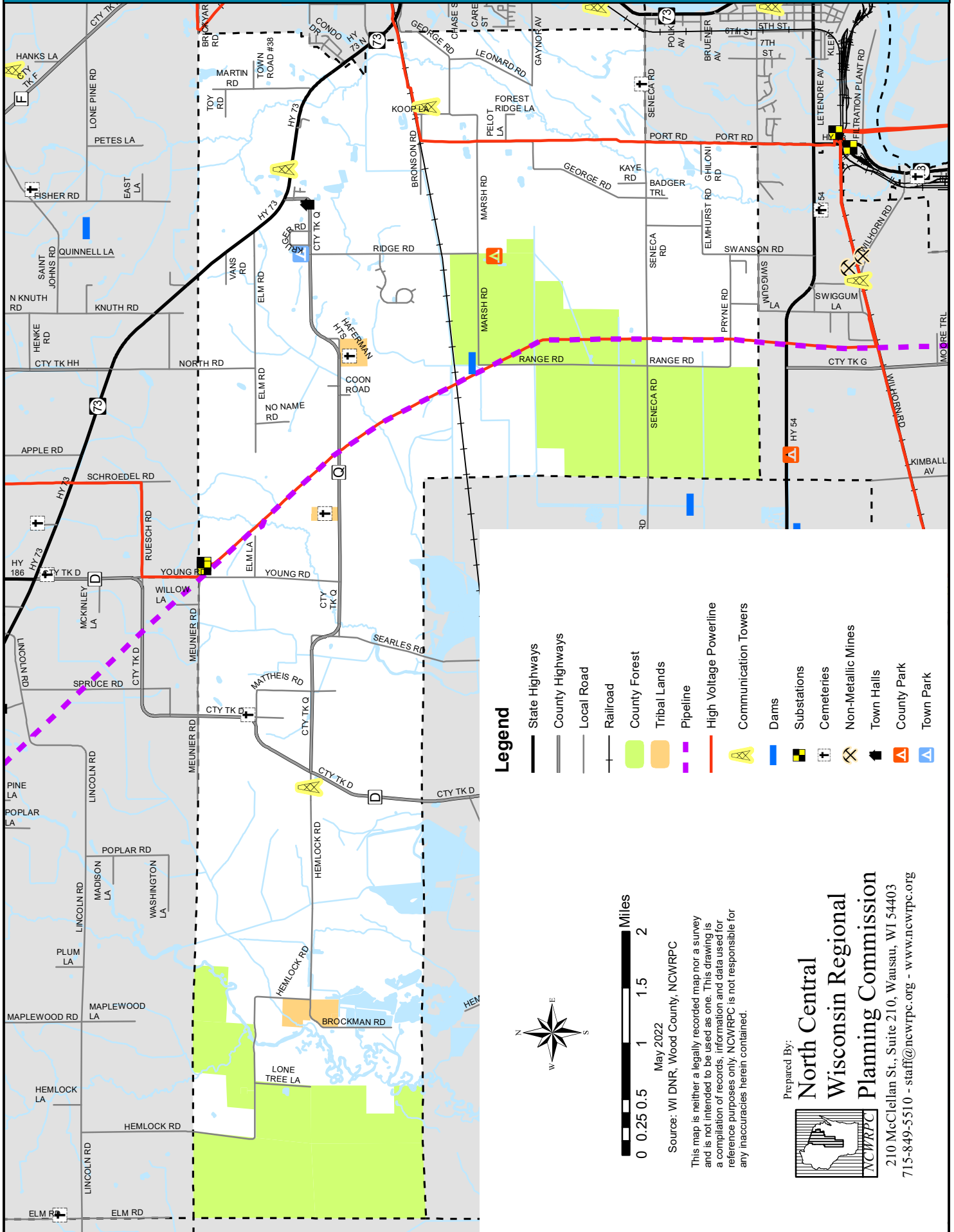
Source: WI DNR, Wood County, NCWRPC
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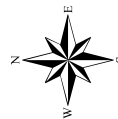
Legend

- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Road
- Railroad
- County Forest
- Tribal Lands
- Pipeline
- High Voltage Powerline
- Communication Towers
- Dams
- Substations
- Cemeteries
- Non-Metallic Mines
- Town Halls
- County Park
- Town Park



Source: WI DNR, Wood County, NCWRPC
May 2022

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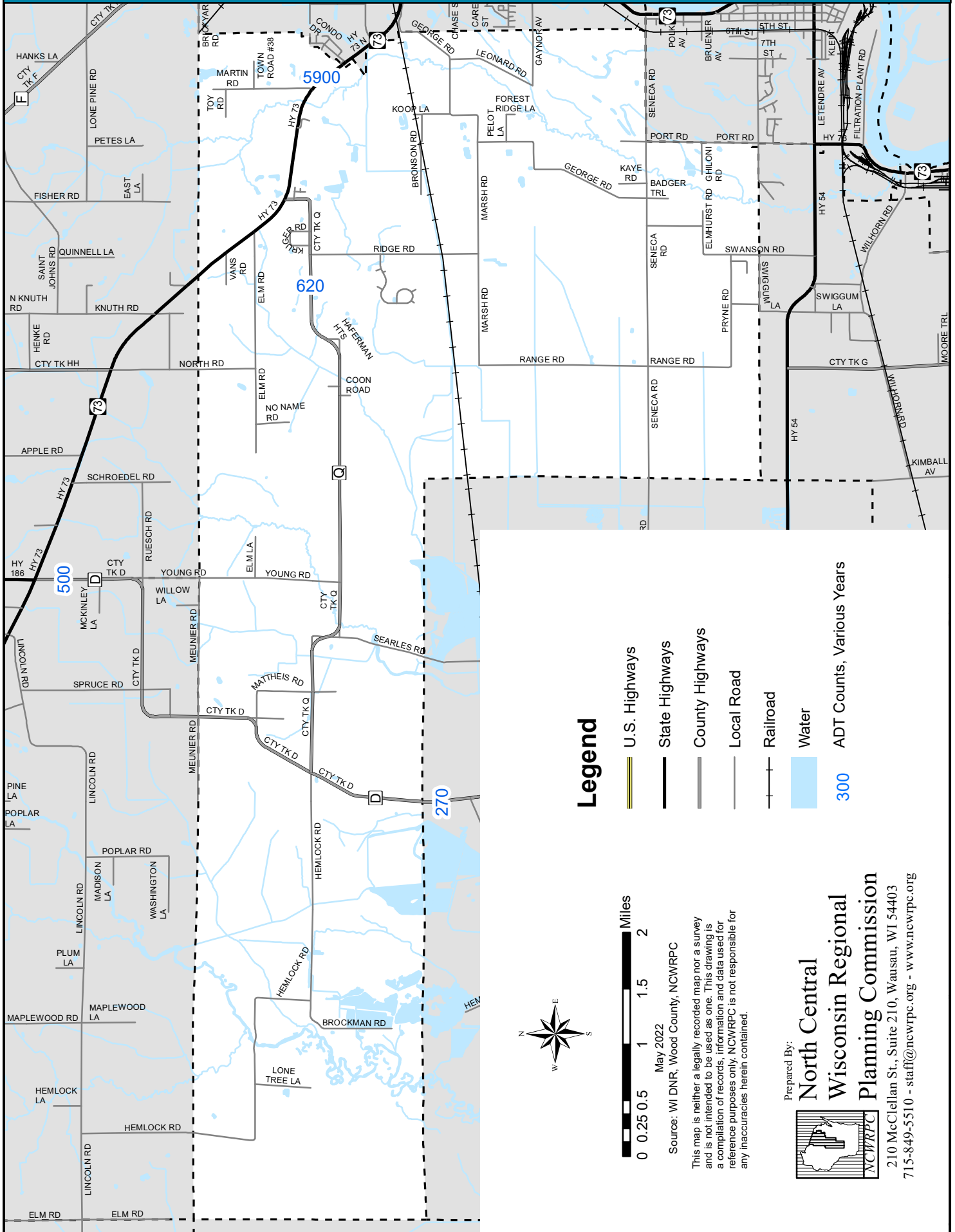


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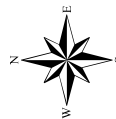
Legend

-  U.S. Highways
-  State Highways
-  County Highways
-  Local Road
-  Railroad
-  Water
-  ADT Counts, Various Years



Source: WI DNR, Wood County, NCWRPC
May 2022

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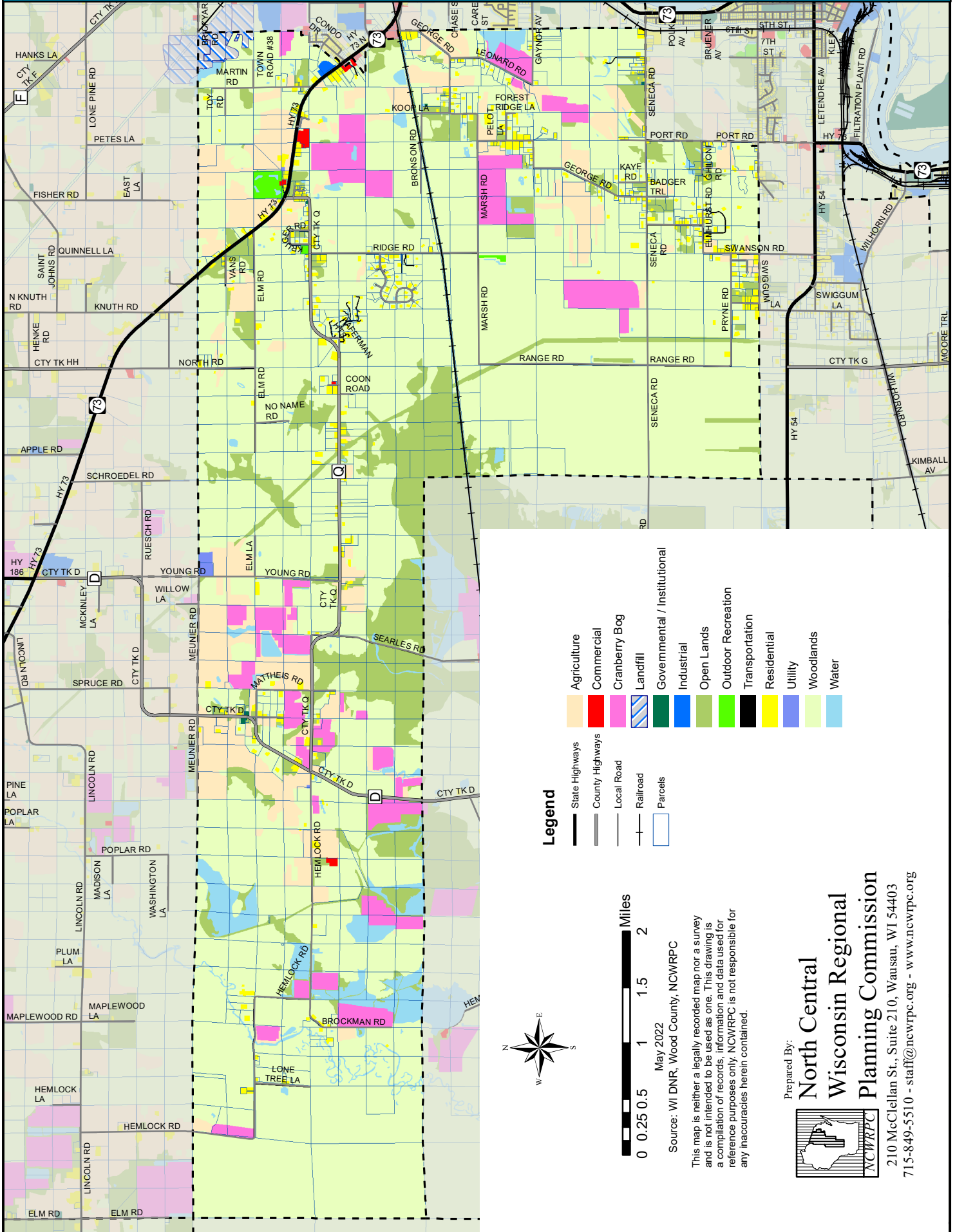


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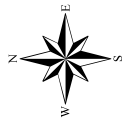
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Legend


- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Parcels
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Cranberry Bog
- Landfill
- Governmental / Institutional
- Industrial
- Open Lands
- Outdoor Recreation
- Transportation
- Residential
- Utility
- Woodlands
- Water



May 2022
Source: WI DNR, Wood County, NCWRPC

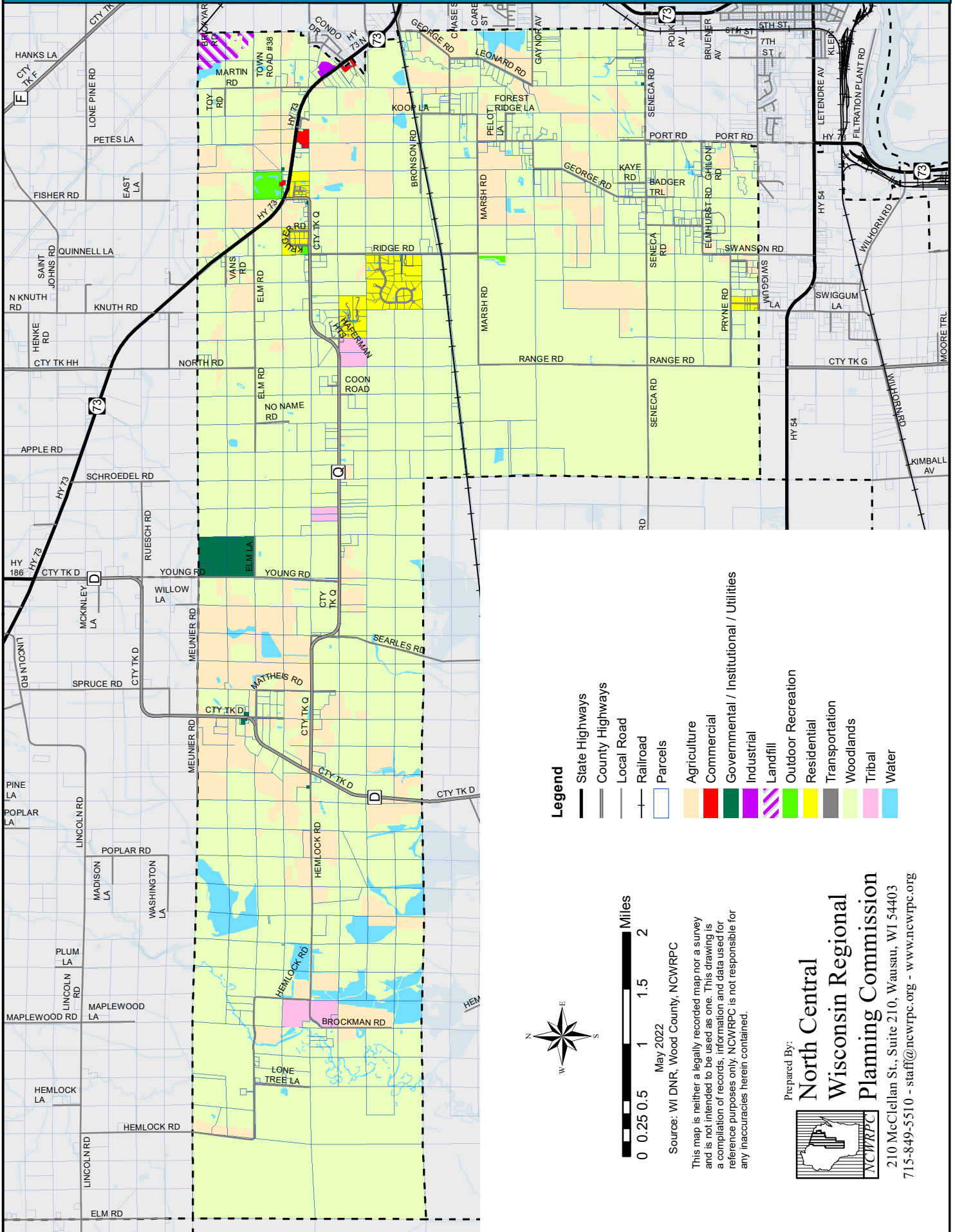
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Attachment A

Public Participation Plan & Resolution

Town of Seneca Public Participation Plan (PPP)

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

I. Plan Development:

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

The Public Participation Plan will incorporate the following:

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

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

II. Implementation, Evaluation & Update:

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

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

MEETING time and date 6:00pm March 9, 2022

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

**Resolution for the Adoption of a PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP)
Resolution # 2022-1**

THE TOWN OF SENECA, Wisconsin Rapids, WI DOES HEREBY RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

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

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

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

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

I, Sandra Green, Clerk, do hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted at a Town Board meeting, held at the Seneca Town Hall in Wisconsin Rapids on the 2nd day of March, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

x Sandra Green, Clerk

Attachment B

Plan Commission Resolution

PLAN COMMISSION RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION # 22-04

Town of Seneca, Wood County, Wisconsin

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

Adoption of the Town Comprehensive Plan.

The Town of Seneca, Zoning/Plan Commission, by this resolution, further resolves and orders as follows:

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

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

The town clerk shall properly post or publish this resolution as required under s. 60.80, Wis. stats.

Adopted this 20 day of June 2022

Zoning/Plan Commission

<u>Daniel B.</u>	<u>Kenn J. Fertin</u>
<u>Paul D. Camp</u>	<u>Atto Statchi</u>
<u>Thomas Hoff</u>	<u>_____</u>

Seneca Town Clerk

Veronica Walter

Attachment C

Adoption Ordinance

Copy

ORDINANCE FOR PLAN ADOPTION

ORDINANCE # 22-01

Town of Seneca, Wood County, Wisconsin

SECTION I – TITLE/PURPOSE

The title of this ordinance is the Town of Seneca Comprehensive Plan Ordinance. The purpose of this ordinance is for the Town of Seneca to lawfully adopt a comprehensive plan as required under s. 66.1001 (4) (c), Wis. stats.

SECTION II – AUTHORITY

The town board of the Town of Seneca has authority under its village powers under s. 60.22, Wis. stats., its power to appoint a town plan commission under ss. 60.62 (4) and 62.23 (1), Wis. stats., and under s. 66.1001 (4), Wis. stats., to adopt this ordinance. The comprehensive plan of the Town of Seneca must be in compliance with s. 66.1001 (4) (c), Wis. stats., in order for the town board to adopt this ordinance.

SECTION III – ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE

The town board of the Town of Seneca, by this ordinance, adopted on proper notice with a quorum and roll call vote by a majority of the town board present and voting, provides the authority for the Town of Seneca to adopt its comprehensive plan under s. 66.1001 (4), Wis. stats., and provides the authority for the town board to order its publication.

SECTION IV – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The town board of the Town of Seneca has adopted written procedures designed to foster public participation in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan as required by s. 66.1001 (4) (a), Wis. stats.

SECTION V – TOWN PLAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Plan Commission of the Town of Seneca, by a majority vote of the entire commission, recorded in its official minutes, has adopted a resolution recommending to the town board the adoption of the Town of Seneca Comprehensive Plan, which contains all of the elements specified in s. 66.1001 (2), Wis. stats.

SECTION VI – PUBLIC HEARING

The Town of Seneca, has held at least one public hearing on this ordinance, with notice in compliance with the requirements of s. 66.1001 (4) (d), Wis. stats.

SECTION VII – ADOPTION OF TOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The town board of the Town of Seneca, by the enactment of this ordinance, formally adopts the document entitled Town of Seneca Comprehensive Plan Ordinance under pursuant to s. 66.1001 (4) (c), Wis. stats.

SECTION VIII – SEVERABILITY

If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this ordinance that can be given effect without the invalid provision of application, and to this end, the provisions of this ordinance are severable.

SECTION IX – EFFECTIVE DATE

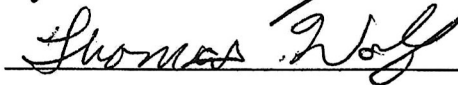
This ordinance is effective on publication or posting.
The town clerk shall properly post or publish this ordinance as required under s. 60.80, Wis. stats.

Adopted this 7 day of Sept 2022.

Seneca Town Board

 (chair)





Seneca Town Clerk



Attachment D

Wildfire Risk Materials

Wisconsin's

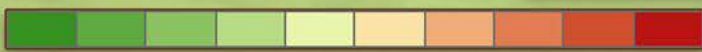
Community Wildfire Protection Plans

CWPPs



Wildfire Risk Level

 Wisconsin Fire Landscape (FL)



Very Low

Very High

Where do I begin?

Reduce fuel in your home ignition zone. Start making improvements in (1) building materials, (2) landscaping and (3) maintenance. Remember, a fire needs fuel to burn. By reducing or changing the fuels around your home, for example pruning trees, cleaning out gutters and raking leaves, you are starving a wildfire of the fuel it needs to burn.

Start right away.

Past fires have shown that the little things can make a big difference when it comes to your home surviving a wildfire. Maintenance suggestions can be implemented quickly and for little or no cost. You can tackle bigger projects as time and resources allow. Every step you take, no matter how small, makes your home that much safer.

7 Steps to a Safer Home Ignition Zone

- 1 Remove pine needles and leaves from roof and gutters.
- 2 Rake debris from under deck and around wood fences.
- 3 Keep lawn clean and green. Rake 30 feet around buildings.
- 4 Remove tree branches that overhang the roof.
- 5 Move firewood 30 feet away from buildings.
- 6 Prune dead branches off trees and shrubs.
- 7 Remove branches of evergreen trees up to a height of 6-10 feet.

Home Ignition ZONE



Protecting Your Home from Wildfire

When it comes to protecting your home from wildfire, the most important firefighter is you!

Learn more at:
firewise.org
dnr.wi.gov/forestry/fire

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audiotape, etc.) upon request. Please call 608/267-7494 for more information.
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER.

PUB-FR-449-2009 Home Ignition Zone



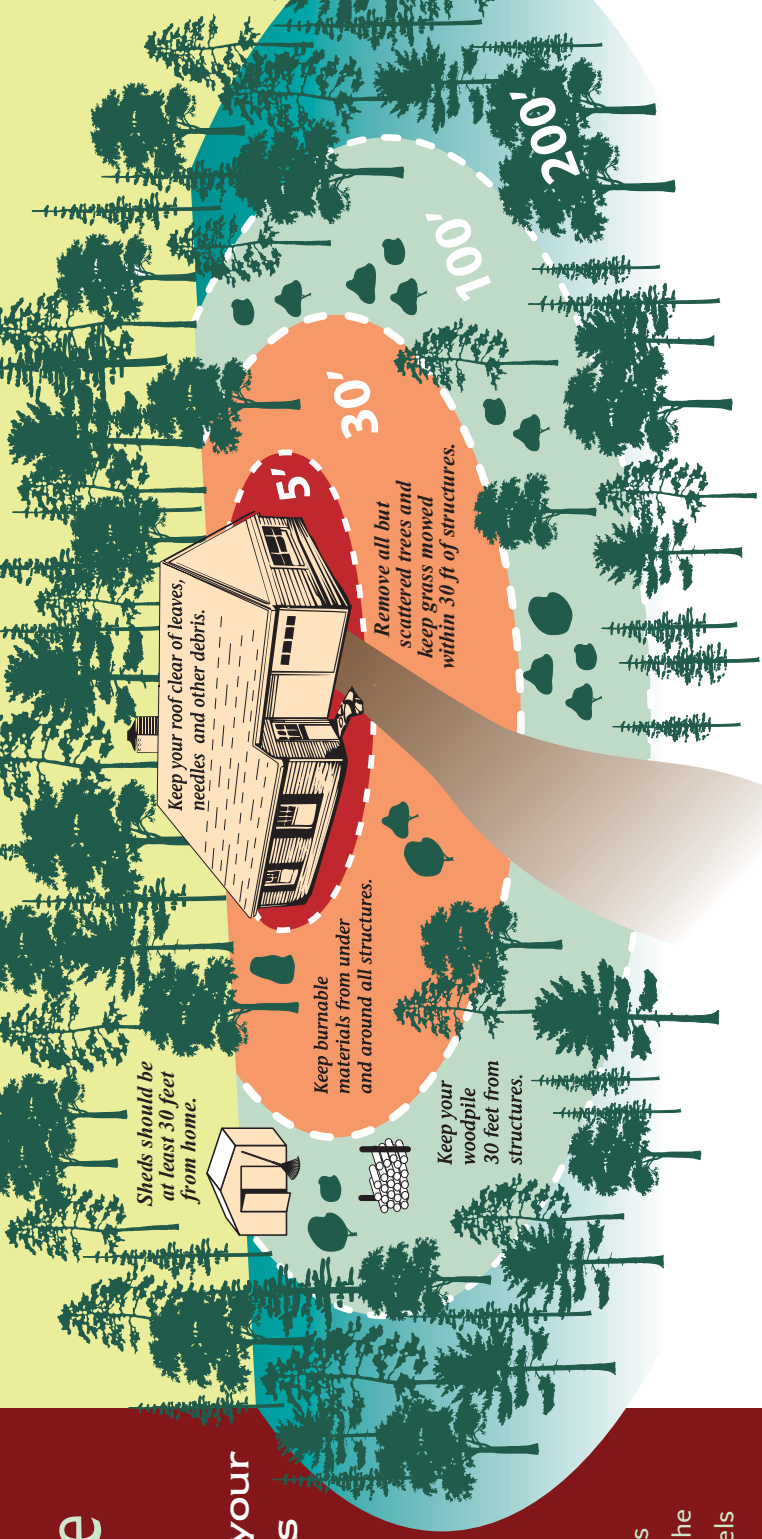
What is the home ignition zone?

The home ignition zone is your home and its surroundings out to 100-200 feet.

Research has shown that the characteristics of buildings and their immediate surroundings determine the risk of ignition.

That's why preparing your home and the area around your home, known as the home ignition zone, is so important. The steps you take to reduce or change the fuels in your home ignition zone could determine whether or not your house survives a wildfire. For example, raking leaves out of your yard may prevent a surface fire from burning right up to your house. A wind-blown ember which lands in a gutter free of pine needles will not have any fuel to ignite and so will extinguish. Since you, as the homeowner, are the only one who has authority to make changes around your home, you have a vital role in protecting it.

Make your home ignition zone more resistant to wildfire!



ZONES

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

3-5 feet
around your home

Remove anything that can burn, including mulch, grass, plants, shrubs and any flammable man-made objects. If you do plant here, choose deciduous plants and shrubs over evergreens. Bare dirt or rock mulch is a better choice than wood mulch.

30 feet
around your home

Keep it lean, clean and green by mowing often, pruning lower branches, removing dead vegetation and watering plants. Choose deciduous trees and shrubs over evergreens.

30-100 feet
from the home

Plants should be low-growing, well-watered and less flammable. Leave 20 feet between trees. Favor deciduous trees and shrubs over evergreens.

100-200 feet
from the home

For homes built on slopes and in pine plantations, remove build-up of woody debris on the forest floor. Thin trees to leave space between tree canopies.