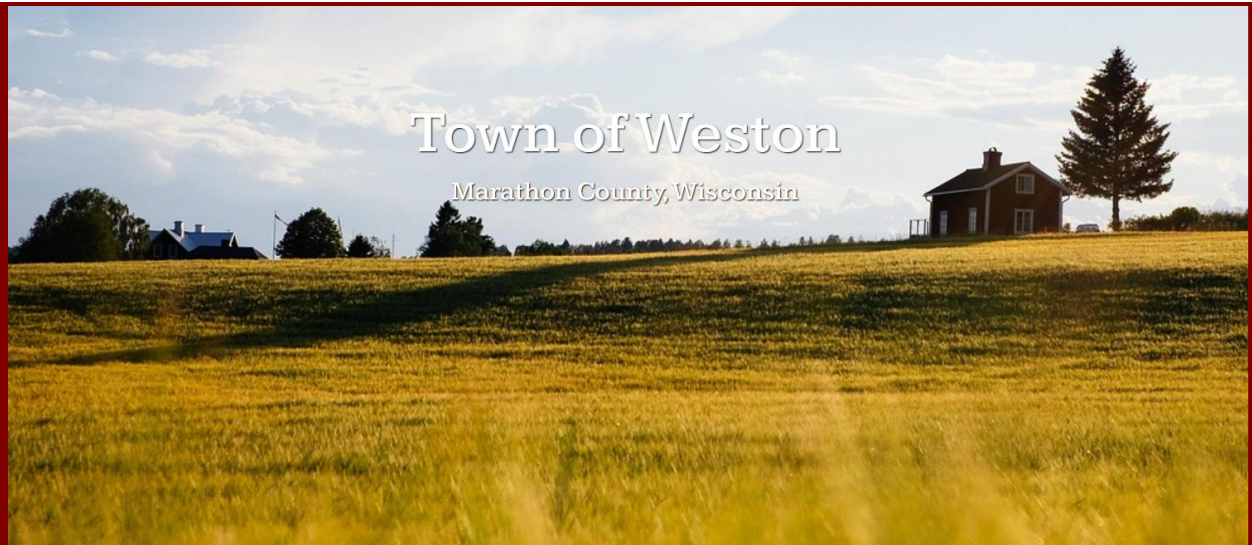




# Town of Weston

Marathon County, Wisconsin

## Town of Weston Comprehensive Plan 2026



# Acknowledgements

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Adopted 08/18/2026

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This plan was developed by the Town of Weston Plan Commission with assistance from the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC)

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# Chapter 1: Issues and Opportunities (Demographics)

## Vision Statement

The Town of Weston will guide the growth and development of the Town in such a way as to preserve its rural, natural, and agricultural character, while maintaining property owner rights, property values, and an affordable Town Tax Rate.

## Background

The Town of Weston's Comprehensive Plan guides the future growth and preservation of the Town over the next 10 to 20 years. The Comprehensive Plan provides the Town's vision and directions for land use, natural area and farmland preservation, housing development, transportation and community facilities, intergovernmental relations, and other factors that together form the Town's future. Before planning where the Town of Weston should head, the Town must first understand its history, current conditions, and trends. An exploration of existing conditions and issues can help the Town identify and take advantage of its assets and opportunities. It can also help prevent poor planning and development; costly mistakes; environmental damage; and inefficient road, utility, and service delivery.

## Location and Context

The Town of Weston is in Marathon County, located in Central Wisconsin. It is east of Interstate 39/U.S. Highway (USH) 51 and north of State Trunk Highway (STH) 29. The Town of Weston is connected to other urban areas in the State and Midwest via this highway network. The Town shares borders with the Town of Wausau to its north, the City of Wausau and City of Schofield to its west, the Town of Ringle to its east, the Village of Weston to its south, and the Town of Easton to its northeast.

The Town had a 2024 population of 780, according to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. This modest population reflects the Town's small land area, much of which remains open. The Town has an area of approximately 8.68 square miles, two-thirds of which is located within the Village of Weston/Town of Weston extraterritorial zoning area.

## Village History

The origins of the Town of Weston go back to the mid-1850s. The Marathon County Board designated it as the Town of Eau Claire on November 12, 1856. This original Town consisted of land in the current Village of Weston, Village of Kronenwetter, Town of Rib Mountain, City of Schofield, and Village of Rothschild. The Town's boundaries were reduced, and the name was changed in 1859 to the Town of Weston. The Town's boundaries changed again in 1996 when the urban center was incorporated as the Village of Weston, leaving the rural sections north of the Eau Claire River as the Town of Weston.

Land in what is now the Town of Weston was originally heavily wooded (Hemlock, White Pine, and Red Pine) and inhabited only by Native Americans. In 1836, the Menomonie Indians signed a treaty giving European settlers title to a strip of land six miles wide along the Wisconsin River as far north as Wausau. The first commerce consisted almost exclusively of hunting and fur trading.

In 1839, the lumber industry developed in the area. Lumbermen began cutting the virgin pine trees and sending them down the Wisconsin River to mills in Mosinee and Stevens Point. As time passed, lumber mills developed in Schofield and Wausau on the Wisconsin River, and in the Town of Weston on the Eau Claire River. At the height of the lumbering era, there were several mills located along the Eau Claire River. Most notably, there were lumber mills near the Ross Avenue Bridge, near Kellyland Park, and at the current site of the Dells of the Eau Claire River County Park. By the early 20th Century, the virgin forests were clear-cut, and the lumber mills ceased to operate.

After the lumbering era, agriculture developed as the Town's main form of commerce. The gently rolling lands that remained after logging were fertile, and suitable for a variety of types of development. Eventually, other businesses developed, residential areas grew, and municipal services followed.

Few reminders of the early history of the Town of Weston remain. There are a few residences and other structures in the Town that are more than one hundred years old. However, all the old lumber mills on the Eau Claire River have either been destroyed or fallen apart and disintegrated. The only evidence of these mills is a few pilings along the Eau Claire River that have survived the elements. The best example of these pilings can be seen east of the Ross Avenue Bridge in the Eau Claire River. Remaining forested areas are second or third growth wood lots, wetlands, and wooded areas along rivers and streams.

The greater Weston area has been one of the fastest growing parts of North Central Wisconsin. The Town of Weston's population grew by almost 28 percent between 2000 and 2020 to reach a population of 657 residents in 2020, according to the U.S. Census. The population for the Village of Weston had a slightly higher rate of growth during this period, increasing by 30 percent. Since 2010, population growth in the Weston area has slowed compared to previous decades when looking at the increase of only 2.8 percent in the Town's population between the 2010 and 2020 Census and 5.8 percent for the Village. However, 2024 American Community Survey estimates show the Town's population increasing rapidly compared to the Village, County, and State, with a 21.5 percent increase in population between 2010 and 2024 for an estimated population of 780. It is important to note that the American Community Survey has some accuracy issues, especially for places with small populations like the Town of Weston, which are discussed later in this Chapter.

The Town maintained an annual new housing start rate of approximately five new housing units per year between 2000 and 2016. Between 2017 and 2025, there were a total of 28 new housing starts, resulting in an average that was closer to three new housing starts annually. The Town's proximity to the City of Wausau and Village of Weston, in addition to its excellent connection to the regional highway system, have made it a desirable location for new residential development in the North Central Wisconsin area.

### **Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law**

A comprehensive plan is a local government's guide to community physical, social, and economic development. They are not meant to serve as land use regulations in themselves; instead, they provide a rational basis for local land use decisions for future planning and community decisions. According to the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, a comprehensive plan must include at least nine elements:

- |                                                  |                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Issues and Opportunities                      | 5. Transportation                |
| 2. Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources | 6. Economic Development          |
| 3. Housing                                       | 7. Land Use                      |
| 4. Utilities and Community Facilities            | 8. Intergovernmental Cooperation |
|                                                  | 9. Implementation                |

## Planning Process

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) began the comprehensive planning process by updating the 2017 Comprehensive Plan based on new data, studies, and other information. As chapters were drafted, Plan Commission held several meetings to review them and provide feedback for various chapters based on the adopted Public Participation Plan in Attachment A. NCWRPC then produced a final draft based on this feedback and the Town held a public hearing for input on the proposed plan. Plan Commission then adopted a resolution recommending the plan for adoption to the Town Board, which adopted the plan via ordinance; see Attachments B, C, and D.

## Data Sources

The U.S. Census Bureau has two data sources that are widely used in this plan, which are described below:

| U.S. Census                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | American Community Survey (ACS)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counts population, households, etc.</li> <li>Based on former Census “short form”</li> <li>Mailed to every household in the U.S.</li> <li>Mailed every decade (2010, 2020, etc.)</li> <li>Self-reported data that is published</li> <li>Typically more accurate than ACS</li> <li>No data for non-Census years</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counts U.S. Census info plus additional topics</li> <li>Based on former Census “long form”</li> <li>Mailed to a limited number of households</li> <li>Mailed every year (2024, 2025, etc.)</li> <li>Self-reported data used to produce estimates</li> <li>Typically less accurate than Census</li> <li>Provides data for non-Census years</li> </ul> |

The ACS evolved from the “long form” that some households used to receive with the Census. In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau began releasing ACS data for all populations on a yearly basis. The availability of these surveys means that communities do not need to wait ten years for the census to assess current trends, but they are only estimates based on a limited sample size. Trends are generally analyzed for the thirteen-year time frame from 2010 to 2024 in this report since 2024 data was released in early 2026.

Despite the limitations listed above for each data source (self-reporting, etc.), there are few substitutes, if any, for most of the demographic data provided by these sources. In general, they are the most widely used and exhaustive data sets used in plans, grants, decision-making tools, and other programs. Other data sources are used for topics not covered by Census are cited accordingly, such as population projections and estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Administration’s (DOA).

Demographics

This analysis is intended to describe the existing demographics of the Town of Weston and identify major demographic trends. Note that a large portion of the Town’s developed area became part of the incorporated Village in 1996. This change in jurisdiction renders historical trends limited and rather difficult to analyze, and therefore, only data after 2000 is included.

Population and Households

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, between 2000 and 2010, population and household growth in the Village and Town of Weston grew at a much faster rate than either Marathon County or the State. The increase in total households between 2000 and 2010 was higher than the increase in population. This is likely due to decreases in household size, which can in turn be attributed to the growth of “empty nesters” and an aging population base and families having fewer children or no children at all compared to the past. These trends continued through 2024, though growth was generally slower between 2010 and 2020 than prior to 2010.

Despite the Village, County, and State growing at rates of 5.9 percent, 3.2 percent, and 4.0 percent between 2010 and 2024, the Town is estimated to have grown by 21.5 percent, with 18.7 percent of that growth occurring between 2020 and 2024. This could be a data accuracy issue that is common in American Community Survey 2024 data for smaller municipalities. The fact that there was an estimated decrease between 2020 and 2024 in the total number of households despite 15 new housing starts between 2020 and 2025 also could be an accuracy issue. It is important to note that the Green Tree Subdivision between Ross Avenue and Machmueller Park was annexed into the Village in 2023; this boundary change may also impact accuracy of the ACS data.

Overall, given continued development in both the Town and Village, it is likely that the population has increased for both municipalities since 2020, and it is possible that the number of households also increased. For the remainder of the Comprehensive Plan, it is assumed that 2020 data is more accurate than 2024 data, and that the Town has seen a continued increase in population since 2020.

Table 1: Population

|              | 2000      | 2010      | 2020      | 2024      | 2000-2010 % Change | 2000-2010 Net Change | 2000-2024 % Change | 2000-2024 Net Change |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| T. Weston    | 514       | 639       | 657       | 780       | 24.3%              | 125                  | 51.8%              | 266                  |
| V. Weston    | 12,079    | 14,868    | 15,723    | 15,749    | 23.1%              | 2,789                | 30.4%              | 3,670                |
| Marathon Co. | 125,834   | 134,063   | 138,013   | 138,403   | 6.5%               | 8,229                | 16.2%              | 12,569               |
| Wisconsin    | 5,363,675 | 5,686,986 | 5,893,718 | 5,914,872 | 6.0%               | 323,311              | 16.3%              | 551,197              |

Source: U.S. Census 2000, 2010, & 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Table 2: Households**

|              | 2000      | 2010      | 2020      | 2024      | 2000-2010 % Change | 2000-2010 Net Change | 2000-2024 % Change | 2000-2024 Net Change |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| T. Weston    | 179       | 228       | 268       | 263       | 27.4%              | 49                   | 46.9%              | 84                   |
| V. Weston    | 4,572     | 5,772     | 6,358     | 7,058     | 26.2%              | 1,200                | 54.4%              | 2,486                |
| Marathon Co. | 47,402    | 53,176    | 55,998    | 57,866    | 12.2%              | 5,774                | 22.1%              | 10,464               |
| Wisconsin    | 2,084,544 | 2,279,768 | 2,428,361 | 2,479,480 | 9.4%               | 195,224              | 18.9%              | 394,936              |

Source: U.S. Census 2000, 2010, & 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

In 2024, the Town had average household size of 2.97 persons and 7.6 percent of all households are classified as “householder living alone.” Nearly 18.3 percent of Town households have a householder 65 years or older. Compared to the 2017 Comprehensive Plan, this reflects a slight increase in household size, which is not typical in recent years, as well as a slight decrease in the share of households who live alone or who have a householder 65 years of age or older. This could indicate that younger families with children may be moving into the Town at a higher rate than the Village, County, and State, which are all experiencing a decrease in household size and a rising median age. See Table 3.

**Table 3: Average Household Size**

|              | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 | 2024 | 2000-2024 Change |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------------------|
| T. Weston    | 2.87 | 2.77 | 2.69 | 2.97 | 0.10             |
| V. Weston    | 2.61 | 2.54 | 2.36 | 2.19 | -0.42            |
| Marathon Co. | 2.60 | 2.49 | 2.39 | 2.36 | -0.24            |
| Wisconsin    | 2.50 | 2.43 | 2.36 | 2.33 | -0.17            |

Source: U.S. Census 2000, 2010, & 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

### Population Projections

Projections offer a municipality a glimpse of future growth potential. Population, household, and employment projections are used to shape the Town of Weston’s policies and initiatives. Population and household projections for the Town of Weston, Village of Weston and Marathon County, shown in Table 4, were obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Administration and are based on the 2020 Census. Previous projections from the Department based on the 2010 Census were generally higher across the state compared to Wisconsin’s observed population growth, whereas the latest projections from 2024, which is based on the 2020 Census, show a statewide decline of about 200,000 residents.

**Table 4: Population Projections**

|              | 2020      | 2030      | 2040      | 2050      |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| T. Weston    | 657       | 664       | 666       | 656       |
| V. Weston    | 15,723    | 15,575    | 15,328    | 14,842    |
| Marathon Co. | 138,013   | 136,750   | 134,615   | 130,380   |
| Wisconsin    | 5,893,718 | 5,890,915 | 5,841,620 | 5,710,120 |

Source: U.S. Census 2020; WDOA 2030-2050

The Department of Administration projects the Town population to increase by 9 people between 2020 and 2040, followed by a decrease of 10 people between 2040 and 2050. This is because the large Baby Boomer generation will enter the highest age brackets while younger age groups are smaller by comparison. Note that all population projections have already been exceeded by the 2024 ACS estimate, which is thought to be somewhat inaccurate, but it is possible that the Town's population has already exceeded its projected 2040 peak.

Typically, the Department of Administration does not consider potential future annexation when projecting future population growth. As a result, it is possible that some projected Town of Weston residents may be Village of Weston residents, resulting from new subdivisions occurring following annexation. Additionally, the projections are mainly based on existing age cohorts, death rates, and fertility rates. Sudden shifts in the economy or migration patterns are not a factor since they are too difficult to predict.

### **Household Projections**

Following previous Census years, DOA also would release household projections. Though population projections were updated in 2024, updated household projections were never released. Table 5 uses the population projections in Table 4 and divides them by the average household size in 2020 in Table 3 to provide population projections. If household sizes trend upward or downward over time, household projections would be impacted even if population projections remained accurate.

Like the population projections in Table 4, Table 5 shows a slight increase through 2040 followed by a slight decrease by 2050. Again, these projections likely do not factor in the effect of future annexations. If many of these projected new households locate in Weston following annexation of the associated lands, they will not actually be Town of Weston residents.

**Table 5: Household Projections**

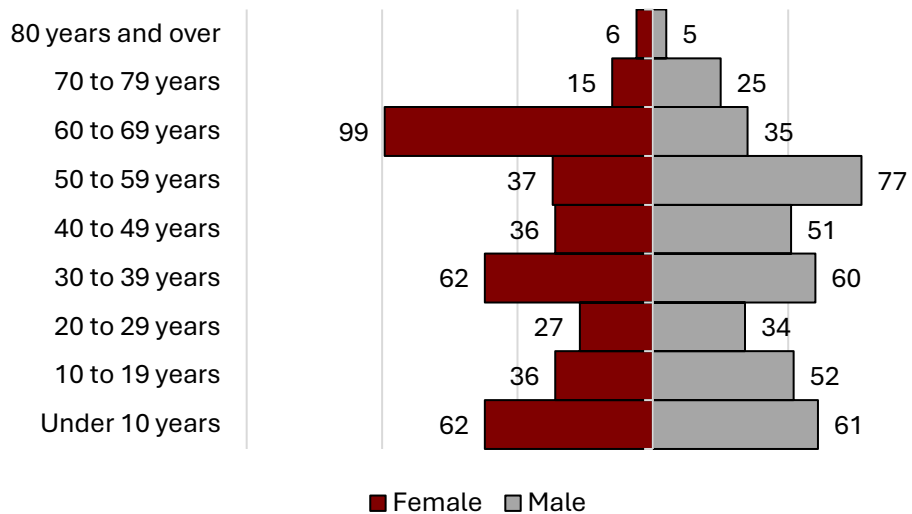
|              | 2020      | 2030      | 2040      | 2050      |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| T. Weston    | 244       | 247       | 248       | 244       |
| V. Weston    | 6,662     | 6,600     | 6,495     | 6,289     |
| Marathon Co. | 57,746    | 57,218    | 56,324    | 54,552    |
| Wisconsin    | 2,497,338 | 2,496,150 | 2,475,263 | 2,419,542 |

Source: U.S. Census 2020; WDOA 2030-2050; NCWRPC

## Age Distribution

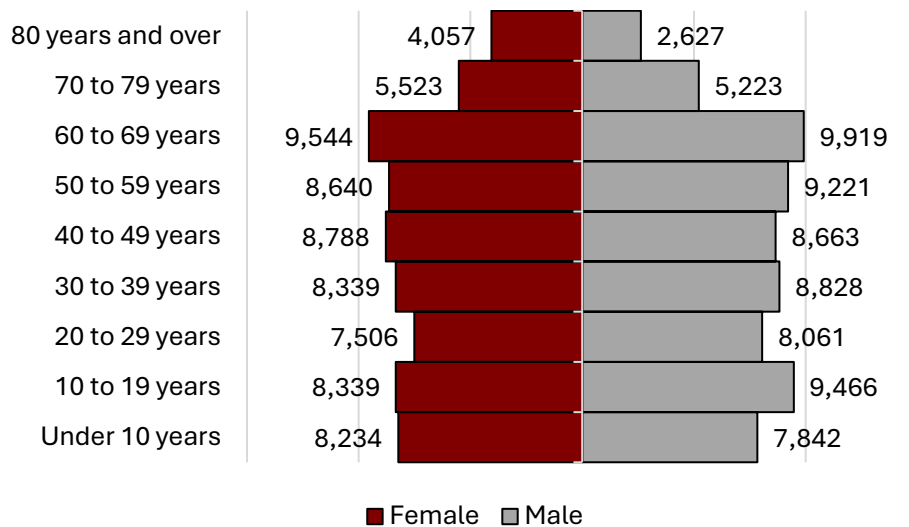
Figures 1 and 2 show population by age group in 2024 for the Town of Weston and Marathon County, respectively. The Town's largest age cohorts were 60 to 69 years old (134 total), under 10 years old (123 total), and 30 to 39 years old (122 total). This reflects the observations discussed earlier in this Chapter: though the area's population is aging, younger families with children find the Town a desirable place to live. This is reflected in a decrease in the Town's median age from 43.6 in 2010 to 39.6 in 2024, while the Village, County, and State all saw an increase in median age.

**Figure 1: Age Distribution, Town of Weston**



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Figure 2: Age Distribution, Marathon County**



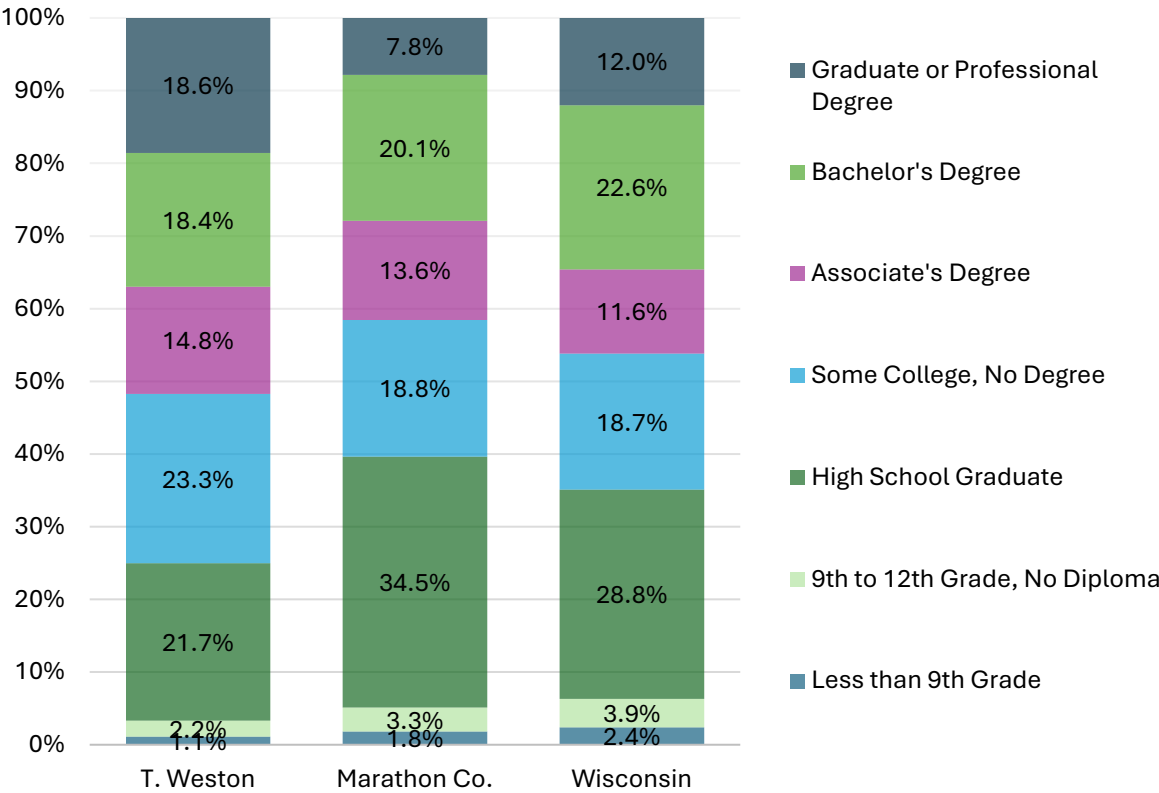
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

The decrease in median age also could be a result of older households downsizing and selling their larger properties in the Town and moving to more compact living arrangements in more urban areas where they are closer to more services and amenities and have less to maintain. In general, the presence of younger families in the Town helps stabilize its tax base, workforce, school enrollments, and more in the coming decades.

Education

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2024 American Community Survey, 96.7 percent of Town residents over the age of 24 have a high school education or higher. This compares to 94.8 percent for the County and 93.7 percent for the State. In the Town, 37 percent of residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher. This rate is significantly higher than the Marathon County’s educational attainment (27.9 percent), and slightly higher than the State’s (34.6 percent). Other rates of educational attainment for the entire population can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Educational Attainment 2024 Population over 24



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

## Employment

Chapter 6 describes the Town's workforce in detail. Labor force participation describes the share of the population over age 16 that is working or looking for work; those choosing to stay at home with children, for example, are not included even though they are considered despite being part of the working age population. In summary, labor force participation has decreased for the Town (-4.6 percent), County (-5.3 percent), and State (-3.7 percent) between 2010 and 2024, which is partially a result of an increase in retirements nationwide.

Table 6 shows which occupations Town, County, and State residents work. Note that these are measured by where the worker lives, rather than where the job is located. The Town has a much higher share of those in management, business, science, and arts occupations compared to the Town and State, and the share of Town residents employed in these occupations has grown nearly 15 percent between 2010 and 2024. There is also a much smaller share of those working in service occupations in 2024 compared to the County and State, and also compared to the Town's workforce in 2010. For all other occupations, figures are somewhat similar to Countywide and statewide trends.

**Table 6: Resident Occupations**

| Occupation                                                   | T. Weston     |               | Marathon Co.  |               | Wisconsin     |               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                                              | 2010          | 2024          | 2010          | 2024          | 2010          | 2024          |
| Management, business, science, and arts occupations          | 41.4%         | 56.3%         | 30.3%         | 37.7%         | 33.0%         | 40.2%         |
| Service occupations                                          | 12.2%         | 4.6%          | 14.2%         | 15.0%         | 16.1%         | 15.1%         |
| Sales and office occupations                                 | 18.8%         | 10.2%         | 24.4%         | 19.6%         | 24.5%         | 18.8%         |
| Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations | 5.7%          | 9.2%          | 10.0%         | 8.9%          | 9.2%          | 8.6%          |
| Production, transportation, and material moving occupations  | 22.0%         | 19.7%         | 21.2%         | 18.8%         | 17.2%         | 17.3%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>100.1%</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100.1%</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010 & 2024

## Income

As shown in Table 7, median household income for Town residents was \$136,563 in 2024, which was a considerable increase from \$87,321 in 2010. Note that \$87,321 in 2010 had the same purchasing power as \$127,183.19 in 2024 due to inflation, so the increase is still present but not as pronounced as the table makes it appear. Median household income also increased at a higher rate than the Village, County, and State.

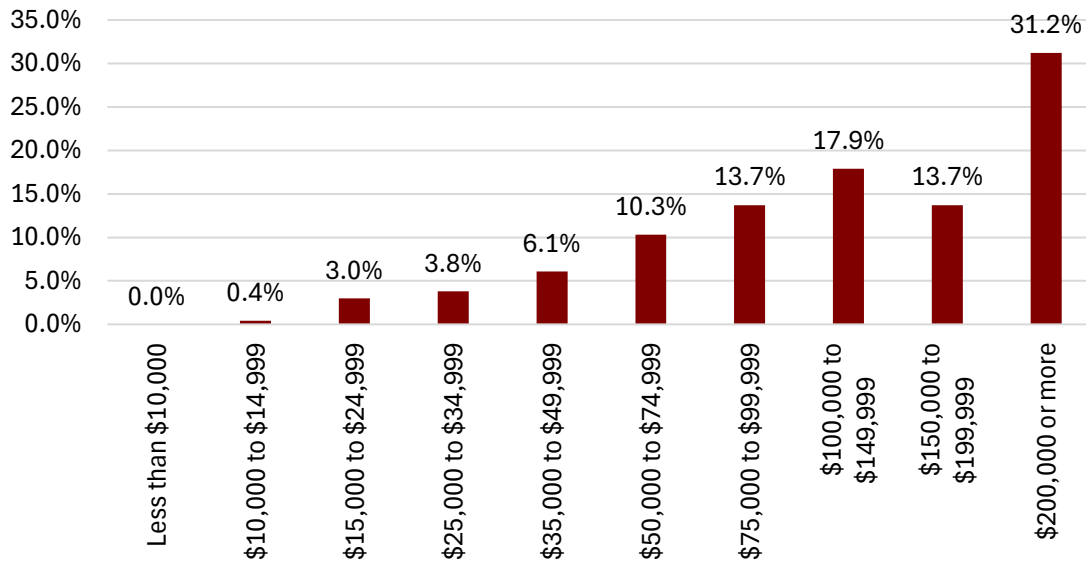
Median household income is also considerably higher than the Village of Weston with a median household income of \$78,207, Marathon County at \$77,884, and the State at \$77,485. In addition to a higher median income, the Town Weston's largest income brackets are between \$100,000 and \$150,000 and above \$200,000, with a significantly smaller proportion of those making less than \$50,000 annually as shown in Figure 4. This suggests a primarily upper middle-class population and reflects the lower median age, meaning a smaller share of the Town's population is retired compared to the Village, County, and State.

**Table 7: Income Characteristics**

|                                | T. Weston | V. Weston | Marathon Co. | Wisconsin |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| <b>Median Household Income</b> |           |           |              |           |
| 2000                           | \$56,719  | \$46,063  | \$45,165     | \$43,791  |
| 2010                           | \$80,156  | \$55,367  | \$49,356     | \$51,598  |
| 2020                           | \$87,321  | \$67,340  | \$63,029     | \$63,293  |
| 2024                           | \$136,563 | \$78,207  | \$77,884     | \$77,485  |
| % Change 2000-2024             | 140.8%    | 69.8%     | 72.4%        | 76.9%     |
| <b>Median Family Income</b>    |           |           |              |           |
| 2000                           | \$61,375  | \$52,398  | \$52,632     | \$52,911  |
| 2010                           | \$87,083  | \$65,873  | \$61,386     | \$64,869  |
| 2020                           | \$93,000  | \$78,294  | \$78,239     | \$80,844  |
| 2024                           | \$145,938 | \$98,018  | \$98,320     | \$100,141 |
| % Change 2000-2024             | 137.8%    | 87.1%     | 86.8%        | 89.3%     |
| <b>Per Capita Income</b>       |           |           |              |           |
| 2000                           | \$23,941  | \$20,148  | \$20,703     | \$21,271  |
| 2010                           | \$37,124  | \$25,500  | \$23,757     | \$26,264  |
| 2020                           | \$42,377  | \$31,897  | \$33,608     | \$34,450  |
| 2024                           | \$50,316  | \$44,362  | \$41,413     | \$43,373  |
| % Change 2000-2024             | 110.2%    | 120.2%    | 100.0%       | 103.9%    |

Source: U.S. Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2020, & 2024

**Figure 4: Town of Weston Income Distribution 2024**



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Median family income, which only measures households with two or more related members, is even higher for Town residents (\$145,938) than the median household income is. This trend is also found in the Village, County, and Marathon, as families are more likely to have more than one working family member than households who are single. Again, median family incomes increased more rapidly in the Town than they did for the Village, County, and State since 2010, but unlike the Village, County, and State, the rate at which it grew was slower than for the median household income.

Per capita income provides a snapshot of how much purchasing power there is for each household member. The Town's per capita income was considerably higher than Village, County, and State per capita incomes, but it grew at a slower rate than the Village's per capita income growth since 2010. This could be due to an increase in average household size for the Town compared to a decrease for the Village.

In summary, incomes in the Town are high, which is common in rural areas near metropolitan areas. Homes in unincorporated areas tend to be larger and on larger properties, and there are fewer multifamily homes or other entry-level housing choices due to the lack of water and sewer that supports higher density development. Being part of the Wausau Metropolitan Area also results in quick access to a variety of high-quality jobs that support the lifestyle that many Town residents have.

## **Summary**

- The Town of Weston has a higher population growth rate between 2000 and 2024 (51.8 percent) compared to the Village (30.4 percent), County (16.2 percent), and State (16.3 percent).
- 2020 Census data may be more accurate than 2024 American Community Survey data. Comparing the growth rate between 2010 and 2020 for the Town (2.8 percent) shows slower growth relative to the Village (5.8 percent), County (2.9 percent), and State (3.6 percent). But either way, it can be assumed that growth is continuing, based on the 15 new housing permits issued between 2020 and 2025.
- The number of Town households rose by 49.7 percent between 2000 and 2020, but 2024 estimates suggested it decreased slightly since 2020. This is reflected in an increase in household size between 2020 and 2024 while the Village, County, and State have consistently decreased in average household size since 2000. The Town's 2024 household size is estimated to be larger than its 2000 household size.
- The Town's 2024 median age (39.6) decreased slightly from 2010, unlike the Village (41.3), County (41.3), and State (40.2), which are all older and have increased. Combined with the information regarding population and households, it appears that the proportion of younger families with children have increased in the Town since 2010.
- Median household income, median family income, and per capita income are consistently much higher than Village, County, and Statewide figures, and with median household and family incomes also rising at a higher rate. Per capita incomes also increased considerably, but at a slightly lower rate due to increasing household size. The Town has a high proportion of high income households and a low proportion of low income households.
- The Town of Weston is projected to see modest growth both in its population and number of households through 2040 with a slight decrease by 2050.
- Economic Development, described in more detail in Chapter 6, impact Town residents' ability to find high quality jobs, and the Town's proximity to the Wausau Area contributes greatly to job availability.

## **Issues and Initiatives**

### **Capitalize on Weston's Assets and Opportunities**

Identifying the Town's current assets and future opportunities is important to establishing a bold yet realistic vision and Comprehensive Plan. The Town of Weston's location relative to neighboring communities is depicted in Map 1. Weston is connected to the region and the Midwest through an extensive, modern freeway network. Its position relative to growing communities in Marathon County presents opportunities for collaboration, as well as challenges including decreasing Town land base due to annexation.

Most of the more developed areas of the Town of Weston were incorporated as the Village of Weston in 1996, dramatically affecting the face of Weston. As a result, the Town's population decreased by over 95 percent between 1990 and 2000. Between 2000 and 2010, though, the Town's population had rebounded by almost 20 percent to reach 639 residents.

The Town of Weston values its rural residential landscape and agricultural character, which is in contrast to the more heavily developed areas of the adjacent Village of Weston and City of Wausau. Weston's community assets include its rural character, moderate taxes, D.C. Everest schools, nearby healthcare, accessible location in Central Wisconsin, open space, and natural and recreational amenities.

In a 2013 community survey, Town of Weston respondents indicated that they lived in the Town of Weston because they enjoyed the rural atmosphere and did not desire to see additional commercial development within the Town. This result affirmed the vision statement contained within the Town's 1998 and 2005 plans, which was: "The purpose of land use planning in the Town of Weston is to guide the growth and development of the township in such a way as to preserve the rural character of the township while balancing the rights of individual property owners with the town's need to protect property values communitywide and keep the cost of government as low as possible." The vision statement on the cover page of this Chapter largely carries forward this older vision statement.

Building on this vision, the Town of Weston will work to maintain the Town's rural character. This will be accomplished by limiting new development in Town's more scenic areas, discouraging higher density rural residential and commercial development, not placing burdening existing agricultural operations through conflicting land uses and road usage, and protecting natural resources that add value for residents. The Town will also continue to provide a quality rural living environment.

### **Advance a Compelling Vision for the Town's Future**

The Town's vision statement may be understood as:

- A presentation of how the Town wishes to look, feel, and be perceived.
- An inspirational view of the Town and its future.
- A platform for the Town to take advantage of its assets and opportunities.
- A broad framework around which to build more detailed initiatives, including those in this Comprehensive Plan. The vision statement is elaborated through a set of goals and it guides the content of the remaining chapters in this Plan.

## **Funding and Responsibility**

These two initiatives will be carried out through the more detailed initiatives described in subsequent chapters of this plan, each with its own particular funding need and source. In conjunction with the Town's Plan Commission, the Town Board will articulate, communicate, and implement the general initiatives laid out in the Implementation chapter.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

Each of the following chapters of this comprehensive plan includes a set of goals, objectives, and policies, which the Town Board will use to guide the future development of the Town over the coming decades. For the purposes of this plan, goals, objectives, and policies are defined as follows:

- ✓ **Goals:** Broad statements that express general priorities about how the Town should approach development issues during the next 20 years. These goals are based on key issues, opportunities and problems that affect the community.
- ✓ **Objectives:** More specific than goals are usually attainable through planning and implementation activities. Accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.
- ✓ **Policies:** Rules or courses of action used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. Decision-makers use policies on a day-to-day basis.

Several chapters include a listing of possible programs that the Town might implement to advance the goals and objectives of the plan. The listing does not imply that the Town will utilize every program shown, but only that these programs are available to the Town and may be one of many possible ways of achieving the Town's goals.

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## Chapter 2: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources

### Introduction

Because natural resource features do not follow geopolitical boundaries, it is important to consider their patterns and inter-relationships on a broader scale. In addition, many of the programs for protecting or mitigating impacts on natural resources are administered at the County, State or federal level. A description of local natural resource conditions is described below, as well as an overview of recent County-wide natural resource planning efforts. Of particular interest are geographic areas of the landscape encompassing valued natural resource features grouped below by resource type, including water, soils, and biological resources.

### Background

Previous plans and surveys indicated strong support for protecting and enhancing drinking water, the Eau Claire River and its tributaries (Big Sandy Creek and Little Sandy Creek), and the Town's agricultural economy.

### Previous Planning Efforts

**The Marathon County Forest Ten-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021-2035.** This plan includes recommendations to guide management of forest land in Marathon County and it provides information on existing forest resources and information related to forest management.

**Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) 2021.** This plan identifies the following long-term program outcomes for the natural resource protection efforts in Marathon County:

1. Land resources are improved and protected countywide.
2. Surface water quality is improved and protected.
3. Groundwater quality and quantity is improved and protected
4. Actively educate and engage all community stakeholders to develop an understanding of land, surface water, and groundwater quality concerns.

**Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan 2024.** This plan identifies areas that qualify for farmland preservation zoning where farmers can receive up to \$10 per acre if they enroll in the program. Much of the Town of Weston is designated a Farmland Preservation Area; see this Plan for maps.

**Marathon County Soil Survey.** The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency that produces the County's Soil Survey. The survey contains predictions of soil characteristics for selected land uses and highlights the limitations and hazards inherent in the County's soils. Included are maps identifying the location of soil types.

**NCWRPC Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025.** This regional plan for the 10-County North Central Wisconsin region identifies natural resources as both enhancing the local quality of life but also as an economic development tool as outdoor recreation attracts workers to the region.

**State of the Central Wisconsin River Basin 2002.** This DNR-led plan studies geology, demographics, and land use patterns and provides an assessment of the Wisconsin River's water quality, which the Eau Claire River, Big Sandy Creek, and Little Sandy Creek flow to. This effort provided 1) an assessment of existing conditions, 2) identification of major issues, priorities, and objectives, and 3) recommendations for action.

The plan includes management priorities and recommendations regarding fish, wildlife, and watersheds within the basin.

**The Wisconsin Historic Preservation Plan 2016-2025.** This Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) administers this plan that prioritizes tasks and efforts on five critical issues: 1. Develop and implement targeted educational opportunities, 2. Increase awareness and support of historic preservation, 3. Increase funding sources for historic preservation, 4. Cultivate partnerships to advance historic preservation goals, and 5. Support and expand digital data and access.

### **Natural Resources**

The Town of Weston is relatively flat, except for some areas of undulating terrain in association with rivers, streams, or creeks, that allow for scenic vistas—even as far as across the Wisconsin River Valley. Most of the soils in the community are suitable for agriculture or for various types of development. Three rivers and streams run through the Town of Weston, including the Lower Eau Claire River, Big Sandy Creek, and its tributary, Little Sandy Creek. Map 2: Natural Resources depicts the geographic location of these areas, which are described in further detail on the following pages.



## **Natural Resources Inventory and Trends**

### **Geography**

The Town of Weston is located in Central Marathon County in Central Wisconsin along the Eau Claire River, which influenced early development patterns and drains to the nearby Wisconsin River. It borders the City of Schofield, City of Wausau, Village of Weston, and Towns of Easton, Ringle, and Wausau. The Village of Weston, which features more intense development than the Town, was formerly part of the Town of Weston until its incorporation in 1996. County Highway J provides quick access to State Highway 29, linking the Town with the Greater Wausau Area and other metropolitan areas in Wisconsin. County Highway N provides a direct route towards Downtown Wausau, further linking the Town with its surroundings. Despite its proximity to larger municipalities, the Town features a rural lifestyle with its predominately low-density residential and agricultural character.

### **Geology and Topology**

Marathon County's terrain is primarily the result of glaciation. The central area where the Town is located is a mixed terrain of ground moraines and uplands underlain by bedrock at a depth of 2 to 20 feet. Land along the Eau Claire River is composed of nearly level to very steep outwash terraces and nearly level and gently sloping flood plains. In areas along the Eau Claire River and Big Sandy Creek, the bedrock is generally over 50 feet deep. In other areas, it is possible to find shallow depth to bedrock which limits the construction of homes and other buildings since the cost to excavate the bedrock can be cost-prohibitive. High bedrock may also preclude installation of conventional on-site septic systems.

### **Ecology**

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), the Town is within the Forest Transition ecological landscape. The Forest Transition features glacial characteristics like moraines and till plains. Prior to European settlement, mesic forest covered nearly the entire area, which was eventually cleared for forest products and agriculture. WDNR has a series of reports for each ecological landscape that provide details on plant species, land management practices, and more.

### **Soil**

There are two predominant soil associations in the Town. Fenwood-Rietbrock-Rozellville soils are generally located in the northwest portion of the Town, on either side of CTH X, while Mosinee-Meadland-Dancy dominate the eastern portion of the Town. Several soils in these associations have limitations for septic tank absorption fields, either due to excessive moisture or shallow depth over bedrock. The soils in these associations are commonly used for cropland and woodland, but there are only isolated pockets of Group I and Group II agricultural soils in these associations within the Town of Weston. Also, and not surprising, sandy soils predominate within the corridors surrounding the Big Sandy Creek, and its tributary, Little Sandy Creek.

### **Mineral Resources**

The Reef Deposit, containing an estimated 120,000 ounces of gold, is a geological anomaly located in the Town of Easton. Exploratory drilling has occurred at this site since the 1970s. In 2011, Aquila Resources Inc., purchased options on the mineral and surface rights. They drilled an additional 35 exploratory boreholes in

2011-2012. The Reef Deposit is currently owned by Greenlight Metals who is working to secure additional permits for more exploratory drilling.

Wisconsin's 2017 Nonferrous Metallic Mining Bill (Act 134) opens the Reef Deposit to potential metallic mining. In response, Marathon County is partnered with various stakeholders to create a metallic mining ordinance to provide reasonable local control and protections. Should metallic mining occur at this site, it may impact the Town of Weston's economy and water quality due to its location in a neighboring Town.

### **Non-Metallic Mining**

There are about 400 operating or abandoned sand, gravel, decomposed ("rotten") granite, and stone excavation sites in Marathon County. In 1989, the County adopted a Non-metallic Mining Ordinance that requires reclamation of these sites to a purposeful and acceptable landscape appearance and use. The program is administered by the Marathon County Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department and includes incentives to reclaim abandoned excavations. In 2025, there was one active non-metallic mine in the Town of Weston.

### **Climate**

Marathon County has a continental climate which experiences four distinct seasons with cold winters and warm summers. Winter temperatures average between 0°F and 23°F and summer temperatures average between 54°F and 80°F. Summers are fairly short which limits the crops which can be grown. Average annual rainfall is 32 inches and average annual snowfall is 60 inches.

### **Watersheds**

Watershed identification is important for water quality management, stormwater management, flood control, sanitary sewer delivery, and habitat planning. The Town of Weston is situated in the Lower Eau Claire River Watershed.

In 2021, Marathon County adopted an update to its Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP), in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes (Wisconsin Act 27, Chapter 92.10). The primary intent of the LWRMP is to identify a vision for natural resource management in Marathon County and outline strategies to protect the quality and quantity of soil and water resources. Marathon County encompasses portions of 22 watersheds. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has ranked these watersheds according to water pollution impacts and designated five as "priority" watersheds to receive special planning and funding through the voluntary, State-funded Priority Watershed Program. The County's Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning works with the WDNR to implement that program. Program funding is used to hire staff to assist in developing management plans for each watershed and to provide cost sharing to landowners for implementation of "best management practices" (BMPs) to achieve the program objectives. There are no priority watersheds in the Town of Weston.

### **Surface Water**

Several rivers and creeks pass through the Town. The Lower Eau Claire River meanders along the Town's south border. The Lower Eau Claire River hosts recreational activities within it (paddling, fishing) and alongside it

(camping, trails). There is an emerging local initiative to forge a more formalized water trail along it, including improved launches like the one near the Ross Avenue bridge.

Big Sandy Creek, and its tributary, Little Sandy Creek, flow diagonally through the center of the Town from the northeast to their confluence with the Lower Eau Claire River just east of CTH X. The Sandy Creek corridor is primarily wooded and natural.

The Town of Weston does not have any significant lakes but there are many small ponds affected by shoreland zoning.

Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) designations are derived from an amendment to the U.S. Clean Water Act, which directed states to identify waters that were largely unaffected by pollution and should remain that way. There are no designated ORWs or ERWs in the Town of Weston.

Water resources that have been significantly degraded are identified as “impaired waters.” Four of the 22 watersheds in Marathon County have been identified as “impaired waters” on the “303 (d) list” of the U.S. Clean Water Act. The list identifies waters that do not meet current water quality standards and merit water quality improvement and protection. There are no impaired waters in the Town of Weston.

All areas in the Town of Weston within 1,000 feet of the Ordinary High Water Mark of navigable lakes, ponds or flowages and within 300 feet of streams, or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever distance is greater, are under the jurisdiction of the Marathon County Shoreland and Shoreland-Wetland Floodplain Code.

### **Groundwater Resources**

Depth to groundwater in the Town is generally less than 20 feet below the soil surface, although in scattered areas, groundwater supply is limited due to high bedrock. In the area north of Big Sandy Creek, wells tend to be deep and the volume of water can be limited.

The 2001 Marathon County Groundwater Protection Guide is an extension of the efforts established with adoption of the Marathon County Groundwater Plan in 1988. It is currently being updated as of 2025. The plan guides local and County officials in setting policy. It also serves as a resource of information about groundwater and other natural resources and recommends strategies to address issues related to groundwater protection.

### **Shorelands**

Shorelands, as defined in Wisconsin Administrative Rule Chapter NR 115, are “lands within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high watermark of a lake (including ponds and flowages) or 300 feet of a navigable stream or river or to the landward extent of the floodplain (whichever distance is greater)”. Many homeowners and visitors seek out lakes and rivers as places to enjoy natural beauty in a quiet setting, yet the number of users and riparian landowners can create user conflicts due to demand for limited resources. Furthermore, due to the way it can alter the natural landscape, shoreland development changes the aesthetic, fishery, water quality, and recreational value of lakes, rivers, and streams. The County has shoreland zoning provisions that are described in detail in Chapter 7: Land Use.

## **Floodplains**

Floodplains consist of land likely to be covered by floodwater during the regional (100-year) flood. Floodplain areas are based on information compiled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). The floodplain includes the floodway and the flood fringe. In the Town of Weston, areas immediately adjacent to the Lower Eau Claire River and Big and Little Sandy Creeks are located in the 100-year floodplain. (see Map 2). There are approximately 554 acres of floodplain in the Town.

All areas that would be covered by the regional flood or base flood as shown on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) or other maps approved by DNR in the Town of Weston are under the jurisdiction of the Marathon County Shoreland, Shoreland-Wetland and Floodplain Code. The Code defines “floodway” as the channel of a river or stream and those portions of the floodplain adjoining the channel required to carry the regional flood discharge. “Flood fringe” is defined as the portion between the regional flood limits and the floodway.

## **Wetlands**

In Wisconsin, a “wetland” was defined by the State Legislature in 1978 as: “an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions.” Programs in three levels of government—local, State, and federal—regulate activities in wetlands. There are dozens of wetland types in Wisconsin, characterized by vegetation, soil type and degree of saturation or water cover. Some of the more prominent wetland types are:

- Aquatic Bed wetlands, which contain plants growing entirely on or in a water body no deeper than 6-feet. Plants may include pond-weed, duckweed, lotus and water-lilies.
- Marshes, which are characterized by standing water and dominated by cattails, bulrushes, pickerel-weed, lake sedges and/or giant bur-reed.
- Sedge or "Wet" Meadow wetlands, which may have saturated soils, rather than standing water, more often than not. Sedges, grasses and reeds are dominant, but may also contain blue flag iris, marsh milkweed, sneeze-weed, mint and several species of goldenrod and aster.
- Scrub/Shrub wetlands, which include bogs and alder thickets and are characterized by woody shrubs and small trees such as tag alder, bog birch, willow and dogwood.
- Forested wetlands, which include bogs and forested floodplain complexes. They are characterized by trees 20 feet or more in height such as tamarack, white cedar, black spruce, elm, black ash, green ash, and silver maple.

In the Town, wetlands are mostly associated with rivers and streams which are labeled on Map 2. The largest wetlands are forested wetlands located adjacent to the Lower Eau Claire River and Big Sandy Creek. There is a large, isolated forest wetland complex in Section 11 that would limit potential development of that area. There are approximately 970 acres of wetlands total throughout the Town.

## **Air Quality**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets National Ambient Air Quality Standards according to the Clean Air Act. These standards set parts per million maximums for six principal pollutants: Carbon Monoxide, Lead, Nitrogen Dioxide, Ozone, Particle Pollution, and Sulfur Dioxide. Hundreds of other air toxics are regulated

through permits. Wisconsin DNR monitors air quality to inform the public when air pollution reaches unhealthy levels. Areas with Pollutants that do not meet EPA standards are Nonattainment Areas. Marathon County is designated as an Attainment Area and thus does not have additional regulations on new industries desiring to locate in the County. Northern Wisconsin consistently has some of the nation's highest air quality scores. Despite this, indoor air quality can be a concern, and smoke, carbon monoxide, radon, and mold can be found in homes in Marathon County. The County's Health Department addresses these indoor air quality issues.

### **Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

Environmental corridors are groupings of natural resources, usually situated along a linear waterway or drainage feature. They all contain some type of water feature, such as a river, stream, lake, or wetland, and are often bounded by areas of steep topography, or "rims". They also typically contain a variety of woodlands, grasslands, native plant communities, and wildlife habitat areas.

Primary environmental corridors are the highest quality corridors within the community. They have the largest land areas, the richest diversity of wildlife, and the highest quality water features. Also, primary environmental corridors typically run along the entire length of a water body.

Regional Planning Commission guidelines suggest that primary environmental corridors are a minimum of 400 acres in size, at least two miles long, and a minimum width of 200 feet. Based on these guidelines, the Town of Weston has two areas that meet the criteria for a primary environmental corridor: the Eau Claire River Corridor and the Sandy Creek Lowland Corridor.

These primary environmental corridors provide unique opportunities for recreational development. They provide opportunities for fishing, swimming, hiking, hunting, cross country skiing, and nature interpretation. Multi-purpose trail development along these corridors often provides users with a variety of year-round, barrier-free recreation opportunities.

The Eau Claire River Corridor has the highest potential for recreational development. Approximately one half of the corridor lies in a wetland protection district. The Eau Claire River, which is accessible by canoe or small boat, is known for bass, pan fish, and northern pike fishing, and increasingly for paddling sports. The Eau Claire River Corridor has a number of scenic woodlands, rapids, and other natural and even historic features within the Town.

### **Vegetation**

About half of the Town of Weston is wooded, with most woodlands located along waterways. Areas of cropland are mostly concentrated in the northeast part of the Town. Vegetation in developed areas consists of private landscaping, although large residential lots are commonly wooded.

### **Forests**

Trees are visually pleasing, environmentally beneficial, and an important link between community residents and the natural environment. They provide habitat and sanctuary for birds and other wildlife, rejuvenate oxygen and control air pollution, and provide shade and microclimate control. As of 2025, there were seven

parcels totaling 62.6 open acres in the Town of Weston enrolled in the State of Wisconsin's Managed Forest Program, and another 503.8 acres closed to public use.

The Marathon County Forest Ten-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021-2035 includes recommendations to guide management of forest land in Marathon County. That plan is in accordance with the County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department's mission to manage and protect County forest lands on a sustainable basis for the ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future generations. That plan provides substantial information on existing forest resources and information regarding the roles of the various agencies and regulatory framework related to forest management.

### **Steep Slopes**

Steep slopes are often defined as slopes with gradients over 12 percent. Development in areas with steep slopes is restricted due to the increased potential for soil erosion and runoff. Construction is usually significantly more expensive in areas with steep slopes and extending utilities to such areas can be challenging. Steep slopes in and near the Town are generally located adjacent to the Eau Claire River.

### **Wildlife Habitat**

Wildlife resources include a variety of game and non-game species of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians that typically live in the area. Common types of wildlife include bear, badger, fox, coyote, deer, wild turkeys, raccoon, squirrels, songbirds, waterfowl and raptors. Wildlife resources are abundant in the many undisturbed sanctuaries, refuges, reserves, and scattered habitats. Numerous other species of migrating birds use habitat in the area for food, shelter, and resting stops during seasonal migration. There are some endangered, threatened, or special concern species located within the Town, particularly within its environmental corridors, described below.

### **Threatened and Endangered Species**

The Town of Weston contains a wide range of plant and wildlife resources. Human influence can have a dramatic effect on vegetative communities. Natural habitats have been greatly affected by development and agricultural practices. In most cases, these influences are directly responsible for the endangerment or threatening of certain species. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires all federal agencies to conserve endangered and threatened species. The State of Wisconsin has similar statutes. Wisconsin law prohibits the "taking" of any plant or animal listed as endangered or threatened, which is defined as killing, harming, collecting, capturing, or harassing a member of a protected species. WDNR's Bureau of Endangered species operates the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI), which maintains data on the location and status of rare species, natural communities, and natural features in Wisconsin. For an up-to-date list of species, their status, and laws protecting them, view the NHI at [dnr.wisconsin.gov](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov).

As of 2025, endangered species in Marathon County include: Slender Glass Lizard, Blanchard's Cricket Frog, Ovate Beak Grass, Dwarf Umbrella Sedge, Loggerhead Shrike, Swamp Metalmark, Forster's Tern, and Black Tern. Threatened species include the Brittle Prickly-pear, Dwarf Milkweed, Red-shouldered Hawk, Spatterdock Darner, Slender Bush Clover, White Lady's-slipper, Woolly Milkweed, Pale Green Orchid, Long-beaked Bald-rush, Bell's Vireo, Prairie Parsley, False Asphodel, Yellow Rail, Linear-leaved Sundew, Henslow's

Sparrow, Cerulean Warbler, Little Brown Bat, and Northern Long-eared Bat. There are many additional species of concern as well.

## **Agricultural Resources**

### **Productive Agricultural Soils**

Areas most suitable for agricultural production, with minimal limitations and requiring minimal inputs for successful production have been identified as “prime farmland” by the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Map 3: Prime Farmland illustrates soils in the Town that have been identified by NRCS as “Prime farmland,” “Prime farmland if drained,” and “Farmland of statewide importance.” The majority of the Town of Weston contains soils suitable for agricultural use.

### **Agricultural Activity**

Although agriculture and related occupations employ only a very small percentage of the Town of Weston’s population, as outlined in Chapter 4, farming remains a visible land use in the Town. In 2025, one large dairy farm (approved for 924 units/995 animals) was located in the northeast corner of the Town. In addition, the Town contains crop farms, livestock farms, horse farms, and several hobby farms. In 2024, Marathon County updated the County’s Farmland Preservation Plan in accordance with the State’s Working Lands Legislation. The Farmland Preservation Plan provides a summary of existing agricultural activity in Marathon County, including the Town of Weston. The Town of Weston is located in the so-called “Lumberjack Farmland Preservation Area” in that County Plan. In fact, a great deal of the Town is mapped as a “Farmland Preservation Area” within the County Farmland Preservation Plan.

As stated within that Plan, the purpose of Farmland Preservation Areas are to:

- Preserve productive agricultural lands in the long-term
- Preserve the rural character and aesthetic quality of Marathon County
- Minimize nonagricultural development on prime farmland
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas

The Farmland Preservation Areas were mapped consistently throughout Marathon County using a uniform set of criteria. The purpose of the Farmland Preservation Areas is to identify lands that may be appropriate for farmland preservation zoning or for future designation as “Agricultural Enterprise Areas” through a State of Wisconsin program. In 2016, the Marathon County Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department indicated to the Town’s consultant that these areas are for reference purposes only, and do not need to correlate to future plans or zoning districts.

## **Cultural Resources**

“Cultural resources” is a broad term that can encompass many aspects of the Town’s heritage. Cultural resources may include archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to Native Americans or other cultural groups. Cultural resources are those that signify our heritage and help to evoke the sense of place and identity that makes an area distinctive in an increasingly homogenized society.

The Town of Weston dates to the 1840s with the earliest sawmills built along the Eau Claire River. John B. DuBay built the first dam and mill on the river, but left Weston and later relocated in the Knowlton area (where a dam and flowage bear his name today). These mills also included one later owned by Dr. William Schofield as well as a mill farther up the Eau Claire, which was eventually owned by William and N. D. Kelly. The Town was known as Eau Claire until 1859 when the name was changed to Weston, reportedly after an early settler who operated a sawmill at Callon.

Early maps identify the settlements of Callon and Kelly in the east central portion of Weston. The first recorded Town election occurred in 1869. By 1874, the Wisconsin Valley Railroad (later Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul) reached Weston on its way to Wausau. The Milwaukee, Lake Shore and Western (Chicago and Northwestern) was constructed through the Town in 1880. The Mountain-Bay Trail is now located in this historic rail corridor.

The original Town of Weston's location, with railroads, the Eau Claire River, and proximity to the Wisconsin River, led to urbanization and the creation of several separate municipalities. Schofield incorporated as a separate community in 1904, Rothschild followed in 1917, with the Village of Weston finally incorporating in 1996.

### **Cultural Resources Background**

Preserving historic sites and structures recognizes the architectural, engineering, archaeological, cultural, or historic importance of these assets to a community. To help identify historic sites, the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) has an online database called the Architecture and History Inventory (AHI), which provides historical and architectural information for around 120,000 properties that are relevant to the State's unique and varied history. Sites in the database are not protected and do not have any special status, rights, or benefits to owners unless listed in the State or National Registers.

Similar to the AHI, the Archaeological Site Inventory (ASI) is the most comprehensive list of the archaeological sites, mounds, marked and unmarked cemeteries, and cultural sites in the state. However, it includes only those sites that have been reported to the Wisconsin Historical Society and therefore does not include all possible sites and cemeteries of archeological significance in the state. This inventory has been developed over a period of 150 years, and each entry in the database varies widely and the information has not been verified in all cases. But overall, using both AHI and ASI tools may help the Town determine which sites are worth preserving.

### **Cultural Resources Inventory and Trends**

A brief Countywide historic properties survey was carried out in 1975-77 and has not been updated in the intervening 50 years. Many properties identified at that time may be gone, while other properties not previously surveyed may now be evaluated in a new context. More current information about cultural resources would allow the best planning and use of historic properties. Outside the City of Wausau, there is no process to recognize historic buildings or begin to plan for their protection. Once historic properties are identified, towns and villages do not have an established mechanism for recognizing them or integrating them into ongoing planning processes.

## **Burial and Other Archeological Sites**

Archaeological sites are identified only at the township level. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has identified 13 archaeological sites and historic cemeteries listed as being in the township area of Weston, which includes the incorporated communities of Schofield, Weston, and Rothschild.

## **Historical Structures and Sites**

There are no properties in the Town of Weston listed on the NRHP. The Wisconsin Historical Society maintains the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) that identifies any properties that may have been surveyed in the past; the Inventory does not convey special status and may not be current. The inventory may be reviewed at [www.wisconsinhistory.org/ahi/](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/ahi/). There is one historic property in the Town of Weston included in the AHI: the Hawthorne School-Joint School District #1 site, located on the east side of Ross Avenue, 0.70 miles south of CTH N.

## **Cultural Offerings and Community Character**

The Town's cultural identity and character have, over the years, been affected by incorporation and annexation from neighboring municipalities. Thirty years since the incorporation of the Village of Weston, the Town of Weston is proud to have maintained the land that it has. The Town enjoys a shared sense of community with the Village of Weston and other municipalities within the D.C. Everest School District.

The Town of Weston's landscape, with rural residences interspersed with working agricultural lands, is an often-overlooked cultural resource. As the greater Wausau and Weston areas continue to grow, the Town's landscape will become increasingly unique.

## **Summary**

- Weston's natural areas feature forested areas, wetlands, and the Eau Claire River and Big Sandy Creek corridors. These corridors are perhaps the Town's most significant natural assets.
- The Town's natural features contribute to wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, health, and aesthetics in the community, and enhance the values of adjacent private property.
- Farming is a minor economic activity in the Town of Weston; still, approximately 44 percent of the Town is in agricultural or forestry use.
- Loss of land base due to incorporation and annexation has impacted the Town's sense of identity.
- Natural features, such as the Eau Claire River and Big Sandy Creek, contribute to the Town's culture and sense of place.

## **Issues and Initiatives**

### **Increase the Visibility, Quality, and Use of the Eau Claire River**

The Eau Claire River is an undervalued resource with great potential. The Town of Weston will work with the Village to encourage greater river appreciation and use, such as through development of the Eau Claire River Water Trail and other efforts to improve the environment and activity around the River. Recommendations include:

Establish an Eau Claire River advocacy (or "friends") group for river protection and recreation

The group would increase the number and visibility of River-based activities, advocate for River-based improvements such as new launches, and educate the public about River-related issues. Partners may include other municipalities through which the River flows, the D.C. Everest Area School District, YMCA Camp Sturtevant, the Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Lakes, and the Camp Phillips Boy Scout Camp. The “friends” group would be advised to become a member of the Wisconsin River Alliance, for technical support and networking.

#### Organize River Clean-Up Days

These events reduce the amount of litter and debris while enabling safe passage for paddlers. Local construction companies could help with removing significant blockages and activities could be coordinated by the river advocacy group or D.C. Everest School District on Earth Day or another similar day.

#### Encourage development of the Eau Claire River Water Trail

The Eau Claire River boasts the potential for several different recreational opportunities, such as a more formal and maintained water trail. The Village of Weston is creating/improving a series of kayak and canoe launches that are connected through wayfinding signage, enhancing paddler access to and experience on the water. In 2015, the Village created visioning materials to help the public, regional partners, key stakeholders, foundations, and other potential funders see the potential of the Water Trail.

In 2023, the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway was established along the Wisconsin River, which includes the stretch of the Eau Claire River just downstream of the Town, beginning at Yellow Banks Park in the Village of Weston and ending at the City of Schofield Dam. The Town should continue to monitor opportunities to expand this water trail upstream through the Town.

Outdoor recreation is discussed in this Chapter and expanded upon in Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities.

### **Communicate and Uniformly Implement Environmental Regulations**

Weston’s environmental features, such as the Eau Claire River and Big and Little Sandy Creeks contribute to the Town’s rural sense of place. The Town will work towards protection of these and other natural resources, while striving for efficient and consistent regulations.

Environmental regulations in the Town of Weston are mainly administered by Marathon County. The regulations protect the environment and private property from flooding and other natural disasters and is mandated under State law to regulate development in floodplains, shoreland areas, and wetlands in shoreland areas in the Town of Weston. They include Erosion Control and Stormwater Management, Floodplain, Shoreland, and Shoreland-Wetland ordinances, which are described in Chapter 7: Land Use. Additionally, portions of the Village of Weston’s extraterritorial zoning (ETZ) area fall under the Village’s wellhead protection (WHP) zoning ordinance, which are also described in Chapter 7. Other environmental regulations are found in ETZ ordinances.

### **Promote the Continuance of Agriculture in the Town of Weston**

The Town of Weston will work with area farmers to help ensure that agriculture remains a prominent land use in the Town and that the Town supports farmers to the extent practical.

Although the Town of Weston has little control over many external factors that impact the financial viability of farming and the price for agricultural products, interested parties can work locally on a variety of efforts to improve farming potential. These may include:

- Working with Extension-University of Wisconsin-Madison and Marathon County staff to increase efficiency in farm operations, provide technical assistance, including exploring alternative farming techniques (e.g., grazing), promote agricultural cooperatives, and provide advice on other financial and technical support opportunities.
- Promoting zoning approaches, like the Agricultural Residential zoning district, which seek to minimize conflicts between farming and non-farm uses, while still allowing farmers a limited ability to sell land for housing.
- Continuing to allow flexibility in zoning regulations to allow non-farm home businesses which have little to no impact on surrounding properties.
- Promoting educational partnerships with area groups such as the D.C. Everest High School chapter of FFA and local 4-H Clubs.
- Supporting agricultural diversification through alternative, organic, or niche forms of agriculture suited to the area as well as smaller-scale operations. These may include ginseng, mint, vegetables, dairy, meat, cheese, hops, and other specialty crops in demand locally and nationally.

### **Funding and Responsibility**

Funding sources include various foundations, stakeholder groups, riverfront landowners, the County Environmental Impact Fund, Wisconsin Stewardship and Federal LAWCON programs, donations, partnerships with other local governments, the Town's general fund, Marathon County Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department, Village of Weston, contracted services, Extension – University of Wisconsin – Madison, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), DNR grants, and more. Efforts may be led by the Town Board, Town Plan Commission, and ETZ committee, with collaboration with Village and County staff.

### **Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Programs**

**Aquatic Habitat Protection Program.** WDNR provides aquatic habitat protection services through their Water Management (Regulation) Specialists, Zoning Specialists, Rivers Specialists, Lakes Specialists, Water Management Engineers, and their assistants (LTEs). Programs assist with water regulations, zoning assistance, coordination of rivers, lake management, and engineering.

**Discovery Farms Program,** UW-Extension program, leads agricultural research regarding economic and environmental impacts. It also facilitates communication to help implement effective and profitable management practices.

**Drinking Water and Groundwater Program.** This WDNR program ensures safe, high quality drinking water and groundwater by enforcing minimum well construction and pump installation requirements, conducting surveys and inspections of water systems, investigating and sampling drinking water quality problems, and requiring drinking water quality monitoring and reporting. WDNR staff assists with water quality issues and provides educational materials.

**Endangered Resources Program.** The DNR's Endangered Resources staff provides endangered resources expertise. 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 permitting, applications, and approvals.

**Farm Service Agency.** This USDA agency administers the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

**Farmland Preservation Program.** To preserve farmland, the state enacted the Farmland Preservation Program, which is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Each County must develop a Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP), which becomes part of the County comprehensive plan as well.

**Fisheries Management Program.** This 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.

**Managed Forest Law (MFL).** WDNR's MFL promotes good forest management through property tax incentives. Management practices are required under an approved forest management plan. Landowners with a minimum of 10 contiguous acres (80 percent 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 percent yield tax applied to any wood products harvested.

**Nonpoint Source Program (NSP).** Wisconsin's NSP Program, through a network of federal, state, and local agencies partnering with other organizations and citizens, addresses nonpoint pollution 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 — address current and future water quality issues caused by NPS pollution.

**North Central Conservancy Trust.** Based in Stevens Point, NCCT works with landowners in Marathon County to develop and maintain conservation easements to enhance wildlife habitat, water quality, aesthetics, and more.

**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 damage caused by floods and other natural disasters. NRCS provides funding opportunities for agricultural producers and other landowners through a variety of programs listed on their website, including but not limited to:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)
- Water Bank and Watershed Programs
- Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program
- Watershed Rehabilitation Program (REHAB)
- Wetland Mitigation Banking Program (WMBP)
- Working Lands for Wildlife

**Parks and Recreation Management Program.** This WDNR program helps develop public parks and recreation facilities under Wis. Stat. Chapter 27. Funding sources include the general fund, the Stewardship Program, Land and Water Conservation fund (LAWCON), and program revenue funds.

**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 that provides assistance as well as educational programs for landowners, schools, and the public.

**Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants (PLWPG).** DATCP provides funding to producer-led groups that focus on nonpoint source water pollution abatement through this program by increasing management practices and farmer participation in these efforts.

**Stewardship Grants for Nonprofit Conservation Organizations.** Nonprofit conservation organizations may obtain funding from WDNR for conservation land or easement acquisition and wildlife habitat restoration. Priorities include 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 the restoration of wetlands and grasslands. Eligible types of projects include fee simple and easement acquisitions and habitat restoration projects.

**Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).** This voluntary program restores wetlands which were altered for agricultural use. The program is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in consultation with the Farm Service Agency and other federal agencies.

**Wildlife Management Program.** WDNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management oversees a variety of programs that incorporate state, federal and local initiatives for wildlife habitat management and enhancement. They 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 state and County forest staff to maintain, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. WDNR staff conduct wildlife population and habitat surveys, prepare property needs analysis, develop wildlife management plans, and collaborate with other Park, Forestry or Fishery Area Property Master Plans to ensure proper implementation.

**Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS).** This office serves as the principal historic preservation agency in the state. SHPO partners with communities, organizations, and individuals works to identify, interpret, and preserve historic places.

### **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

#### **Goal**

The Town of Weston supports preservation of farmland and farming as an occupation, the Sandy Creek and the Eau Claire River corridors, other natural areas and habitat, and the Town's rural and scenic heritage.

#### **Objectives**

1. Preserve environmental corridors given their multiple benefits to scenic beauty, recreation, public health, and wildlife habitat.
2. Manage quality and quantity of water entering waterways, especially Big and Little Sandy Creeks and the Eau Claire River.
3. Respect the agricultural heritage of the Town and support area farmers.

#### **Policies**

1. Cooperate on the protection of regional natural resources and systems, particularly the environmental corridors including the Eau Claire River, Big Sandy Creek, and Little Sandy Creek.
2. Promote farming as a prominent land use in the Town of Weston and preserve prime agricultural soils.
3. Promote the continuation of agriculture in the Town, including by encouraging agricultural related businesses, value-added agriculture, and other farm family business opportunities to supplement farm income.
4. Protect and celebrate remaining vestiges of the Town's historic character and buildings.
5. Continue stewardship of land and water resources for their multiple benefits to human well-being, community image, and environmental health.
6. Foster a new generation of Town leaders and volunteers.

## Chapter 3. Housing

Chapter 3 provides an inventory and analysis of housing conditions in the Town of Weston. The predominant type of housing in the Town is single-family. Also, over 94 percent of housing units are owner-occupied. The Town's housing stock is relatively new, with over half of all housing units constructed since 1980. Median housing values in the Town are higher than values in the Village, County, State, and Nation.

### Background

#### Residential Siting

The following approach from the Town's former 2017 Comprehensive Plan describes how residential development is best sited in the Town:

- Preserve open space, farmland, woodland, and natural features that define, sustain, and connect rural neighborhoods and enhance rural character.
- Site homes behind trees, hills, ridges and other natural features. Where such features are absent, the use of berms with natural plantings can also be effective. Another method would be to discourage the development of highly visible "frontage lots" along roadways, as these have the greatest visual and traffic impacts. It should be noted, however, that while minimizing the visual impact of development, it is also critical to maintain safe fire access and appropriate road and driveway markings to ensure fast emergency response.
- Minimize the impact of residential development through the clustering of lots in a portion of the development site. Town of Weston and extraterritorial zoning ordinances allow for a density based, rather than minimum lot size, based development in areas zoned Agricultural Residential (i.e., most of the Town). Smaller lots that are "clustered" in buildable portions of a property allow for greater protection of natural features and open space in other portions of the land.



## **Neighborhood Plans**

The Town's former 2017 Comprehensive Plan described how Town lands closest to the Village of Weston are considered a "transition" area that will likely continue to receive the most development pressure. The Town respects property owners' preferences in these areas, and in the event they would like to develop into neighborhoods, developing neighborhood plans with the Village of Weston is recommended. These plans include:

- An inventory and analysis, including an investigation of opportunities given the neighborhood's position in Weston and the greater Wausau Area.
- A development plan map and text including residential, commercial, and institutional use areas.
- Locations for single-family housing consistent with the Village of Weston's housing mix policy, and techniques to validate and enhance the market for single-family housing.
- Recommended areas and themes for parks, environmental corridors, other natural areas, and stormwater management.
- A layout for interconnected arterial, collector, and other important future streets.
- Bicycle/pedestrian trails and routes, including connections to adjacent neighborhoods and regional trails and routes.
- Housing and neighborhood design concepts for an attractive, functional place integrated within the larger community.
- Recommendations for public utility system and stormwater management improvements, such as conveyance routes and logical regional basin locations.
- An implementation strategy with zoning and subdivision approaches, capital improvement programming, and grants.

## **Housing Maintenance**

The Town facilitates property maintenance by communicating expectations with landowners directly and through tools like the Town web page, enforcing its building and property maintenance codes, and working with Marathon County and the Village of Weston to enforce zoning and other standards.

## **Previous Planning Efforts**

### **2022 Wausau Metropolitan Housing Assessment**

Though this assessment doesn't include the Town, the Village of Weston, seven other municipalities, and Marathon County participated in this project. The assessment highlighted the challenges of inflation, construction costs, workforce availability, retirements, and more that have led to a shortage of housing units and available contractors to renovate existing homes. It noted that strong immediate need for housing means that housing built in any of the municipalities helps all of them catch up to demand. Included in the study is a series of strategies, programs, and recommendations that expedite the production of housing while reducing development costs.

**ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin 2023**

“ALICE” Households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) are above the poverty level, but struggle financially. United Way reported that 23 percent of Marathon County households are ALICE households, and another 9 percent are below the poverty level, for a combined 32 percent of the population below the ALICE threshold.

**Centergy Regional Housing Study 2025**

While the focus on this housing study is the expansion of workforce housing, it notes the challenge of attracting homebuilders to Central Wisconsin, where population growth and household incomes are lower than in larger cities.

**Marathon Co Sr Housing Study 2026**

This housing study provides data on the projected dramatic increase in households over age 55 in Marathon County in the coming years as well as the styles of housing that are desired. Included are recommendations on how to retrofit existing homes so residents can stay in them longer as they age.

## Inventory and Trends

### Total Housing Units

As shown on Table 8, the Town of Weston has 263 occupied housing units. Between 2000 and 2024, total housing units in the Town increased by 63 units, per the American Community Survey. According to the Town's building permit data, 28 new home permits were issued between 2017 and 2025. This means that housing starts decreased from an average of 5 per year between 2000 and 2016 to closer to 3 per year between 2017 and 2025. It is important to note that the 88-unit Green Tree Subdivision on land that was recently in the Town between Ross Avenue and Machmueller Park was annexed to the Village prior to construction, so this subdivision contributes to the Village's housing unit totals, rather than the Town's.

**Table 8: Housing Units Totals and Tenure**

|                               | T. Weston | V. Weston | Marathon Co. | Wisconsin |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Total Housing Units           | 270       | 7,180     | 60,910       | 2,778,572 |
| Total occupied housing units  | 263       | 7,058     | 57,866       | 2,479,480 |
| Vacant Housing Units          | 7         | 122       | 3,044        | 299,092   |
| Seasonal Housing Units        | 0         | 0         | 744          | 172,842   |
| Owner occupied housing units  | 249       | 4,474     | 42,414       | 1,682,214 |
| Renter occupied housing units | 14        | 2,584     | 15,452       | 797,266   |
| Average household size        | 2.97      | 2.19      | 2.36         | 2.33      |
| % owner occupied              | 94.7%     | 63.4%     | 73.3%        | 67.8%     |
| % householder living alone    | 3.0%      | 20.3%     | 15.2%        | 16.5%     |
| % with individuals 65 or over | 18.3%     | 27.6%     | 32.0%        | 31.4%     |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

### Owner-Occupancy Rates

94.7 percent of all housing units are owner-occupied, which is significantly higher than the percentages for the Village, County, and State. This suggests a significantly lower-than-average amount of rental housing in the Town and a significantly higher percentage of single-family residences compared to other areas in the County. The percentage of owner-occupied housing increased slightly from 94.1 percent to 94.7 percent since 2014, the rate reported in the previous comprehensive plan.

### Housing Age

The age of a community's housing stock typically reflects several important factors, including size, offered amenities, and overall maintenance costs. House age often reflects different regional and national trends in housing development. Housing predating the 1940s, for example, was typically smaller and built on smaller lots. In subsequent decades, both average lot and home sizes have increased, though that trend has reversed in recent years. Tables 9 and 10 show the range of housing ages as captured in the 2024 American Community Survey. Over 55 percent of the Town of Weston's housing stock was built after 1980. Note that ACS estimates only 3 units were built after 2020, when permit data shows that 15 were built between 2020 and 2025.

**Table 9: Year Built (Total)**

| Community       | T. Weston | V. Weston | Marathon Co. | Wisconsin |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| 2020 or later   | 3         | 105       | 992          | 38,983    |
| 2010 to 2019    | 16        | 802       | 4,179        | 197,957   |
| 2000 to 2009    | 44        | 1,577     | 9,538        | 347,953   |
| 1990 to 1999    | 39        | 1,668     | 7,784        | 347,567   |
| 1980 to 1989    | 47        | 811       | 5,813        | 262,669   |
| 1970 to 1979    | 49        | 1,433     | 8,885        | 394,494   |
| 1960 to 1969    | 26        | 471       | 5,009        | 262,558   |
| 1950 to 1959    | 16        | 166       | 5,755        | 285,081   |
| 1940 to 1949    | 2         | 108       | 2,931        | 146,155   |
| 1939 or earlier | 28        | 39        | 10,024       | 495,155   |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Table 10: Year Built (Percent)**

| Community       | T. Weston | V. Weston | Marathon Co. | Wisconsin |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| 2020 or later   | 1.1%      | 1.5%      | 1.6%         | 1.4%      |
| 2010 to 2019    | 5.9%      | 11.2%     | 6.9%         | 7.1%      |
| 2000 to 2009    | 16.3%     | 22.0%     | 15.7%        | 12.5%     |
| 1990 to 1999    | 14.4%     | 23.2%     | 12.8%        | 12.5%     |
| 1980 to 1989    | 17.4%     | 11.3%     | 9.5%         | 9.5%      |
| 1970 to 1979    | 18.1%     | 20.0%     | 14.6%        | 14.2%     |
| 1960 to 1969    | 9.6%      | 6.6%      | 8.2%         | 9.4%      |
| 1950 to 1959    | 5.9%      | 2.3%      | 9.4%         | 10.3%     |
| 1940 to 1949    | 0.7%      | 1.5%      | 4.8%         | 5.3%      |
| 1939 or earlier | 10.4%     | 0.5%      | 16.5%        | 17.8%     |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Housing Condition**

Table 11 looks at several select measures of physical housing condition and compares them to figures for Marathon County and Wisconsin. The median house size in the Town, as measured by number of rooms, is significantly higher than the Village, County, and State. Almost 99 percent of the Town's housing stock is classified as being a single-family home, which is also significantly higher than Village, County, or State percentages. The Town of Weston also has no homes lacking complete kitchen or plumbing facilities, which reflects the relatively new housing stock.

**Table 11: Structure Characteristics**

|                            | <b>T. Weston<br/>2024</b> | <b>V. Weston<br/>2024</b> | <b>Marathon<br/>Co. 2024</b> | <b>Wisconsin<br/>2024</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Median number of rooms     | 7.3                       | 6.0                       | 6.0                          | 5.6                       |
| Detached SF residences (%) | 98.9%                     | 59.0%                     | 75.4%                        | 66.2%                     |
| Lacking complete plumbing  | 0.0%                      | 0.0%                      | 0.1%                         | 0.4%                      |
| Lacking complete kitchen   | 0.0%                      | 0.4%                      | 0.5%                         | 0.8%                      |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Median Home Value**

Table 12 shows median housing value for single family owner-occupied homes for the Town, County, and State. As shown, the Town of Weston had a median housing value of \$361,800, which is 64.7 percent higher than Marathon County's median housing value and 35.7 percent higher than the State's. The Town's higher median housing value may also correspond with the Town's higher median household income. Median housing values in Marathon County were \$46,900 less than the State's median value. Despite the 2008 housing crisis, home values have more than doubled in the County and the State in the past 24 years, while housing values in the Town of Weston increased by 266.2 percent during this period.

**Table 12: Median Home Value**

| <b>Municipality</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2010</b> | <b>2024</b> | <b>Net<br/>Increase<br/>2000-2024</b> | <b>% Increase<br/>2000-2024</b> |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| T. Weston           | \$98,800    | \$172,900   | \$361,800   | \$263,000                             | 266.2%                          |
| V. Weston           | \$111,200   | \$143,500   | \$229,300   | \$118,100                             | 106.2%                          |
| Marathon Co.        | \$95,800    | \$139,500   | \$219,600   | \$123,800                             | 129.2%                          |
| Wisconsin           | \$112,200   | \$169,000   | \$266,500   | \$154,300                             | 137.5%                          |
| Nation              | \$119,600   | \$188,400   | \$332,700   | \$213,100                             | 178.2%                          |

Source: Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010 &amp; 2024

**Range of Values**

Table 13 shows the range of housing values in the Town. In keeping with the Town's higher median housing value and relatively young housing stock, the Town of Weston has a larger percentage of housing valued \$300,000 and above. The County has a larger share of housing that was valued at less than \$300,000, likely indicative of older homes in more rural areas and the City of Wausau.

**Table 13: Owner Occupied Housing Values**

| Community    | Less than \$50,000 | \$50,000-\$99,999 | \$100,000-\$149,999 | \$150,000-\$199,999 | \$200,000-\$299,999 | \$300,000-\$499,999 | \$500,000 or more | Median Value |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| T. Weston    | 2.0%               | 3.2%              | 3.6%                | 8.8%                | 22.9%               | 29.7%               | 27.7%             | 2.0%         |
| Marathon Co. | 3.6%               | 7.3%              | 14.1%               | 18.6%               | 28.5%               | 20.5%               | 6.5%              | 0.8%         |
| Wisconsin    | 4.0%               | 5.1%              | 8.9%                | 14.1%               | 25.5%               | 29.4%               | 11.4%             | 1.7%         |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Cost Burden**

Several factors impact the varied levels of housing affordability. These factors include rent and mortgage payments, maintenance expenses, lot size, and required or desired amenities for the home. Household size and income are also key factors contributing to what housing options are available and accessible to residents.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that housing costs or rent not exceed 30 percent of the monthly household income. 15.8 percent of households with a mortgage in the Town of Weston pay greater than 30 percent of their income on housing costs, while 42.9 percent of renters spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. By contrast, only 4.3 percent of homeowners without a mortgage spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs.

Table 14 shows that housing costs for homeowners with or without a mortgage as well as renters pay more than the average Marathon County or Wisconsin resident. Homowners with a mortgage spend on average \$479 more than the average County resident, \$254 more for a home without a mortgage, and \$301 more for rent. The increase in wages discussed in Chapter 1 is reflected here as the Town's housing costs were more similar to County and State figures when the 2017 Comprehensive Plan was written.

**Table 14: Median Housing Costs**

| Community    | With mortgage | % Cost burdened | No mortgage | % Cost burdened | Median Rent | % Cost Burdened |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|
| T. Weston    | \$1,942       | 15.8%           | \$843       | 4.3%            | \$1,200     | 42.9%           |
| Marathon Co. | \$1,463       | 17.7%           | \$589       | 9.8%            | \$999       | 42.1%           |
| Wisconsin    | \$1,689       | 22.5%           | \$659       | 12.6%           | \$1,087     | 43.7%           |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

**Housing for Older Adults**

In Marathon County, housing for seniors and people with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Wausau. The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and the Marathon County United Way all maintain a list of these housing options throughout the County. As the elderly population increases in the coming years, there will most likely be an increased need for these types of housing options. This trend will be seen throughout Marathon County, the State of Wisconsin, and the nation. There is no dedicated senior or special need housing in the Town of Weston, though there are options available in neighboring communities.

## **Vacancy Rates**

Nearly all housing in the Town is occupied year-round, with no reported seasonal or vacation homes indicated by the American Community Survey. The ACS also reported that there were no vacant owner-occupied homes, and only 7 vacant renter-occupied homes, for a homeowner vacancy rate of 0 percent and rental vacancy rate of 33.3 percent. Low vacancy rates generally result in higher prices and limited availability for those interested in finding a new home.

## **Household Projections**

Based on the household projections in Chapter 1, there will be demand for three additional housing units by 2030 and another housing unit by 2040, followed by decreasing demand. However, based on the variety of information presented in Chapter 1, actual demand could be higher based on population and housing unit growth since 2020.

## **Summary**

- The median price for a single-family residence in the Town of Weston in 2024 was \$361,800, which is an increase of 266.2 percent since 2000.
- Over 94 percent of the Town of Weston's housing units are owner-occupied, which is over 20 percent higher than the County as a whole.
- 15.8 percent of homeowners with a mortgage, 4.3 percent of homeowners without a mortgage, and 42.9 percent of renters spend greater than 30 percent of their income on housing and related expenses, which is an indicator of when housing is not affordable. These rates are lower than County and Statewide rates, except Marathon County renters who are slightly less cost burdened.

## **Issues and Initiatives**

### **Thoughtfully Site New Residential Development**

The Town will encourage new homes to be placed in a manner that reflects the rural landscape and allows cost effective service delivery, consistent with Town and extraterritorial zoning standards.

### **Work with the Village of Weston to Develop Neighborhood Plans for Growth Areas**

Neighborhood development plans are the recommended bridge between the policies and land use recommendations in this and the Village's plans and subdivision platting. The Town promotes neighborhood development planning in planned "Transition" areas shown in Map 8 (and discussed in Chapter 7: Land Use) to create neighborhoods that are functional and attractive, and that connect residents to each other and the community.

### **Encourage High Quality Property Maintenance**

The Town of Weston will work to ensure high quality property maintenance through relationships with property owners and enforcement of local ordinances.

## **Funding and Responsibility**

Funding is to be provided by a combination of the Town of Weston general fund as well as partnerships with landowners and developers, and the initiatives are to be led by the Town Board, Plan Commission, and ETZ Committee. Funding and leadership from the Village of Weston's Planning and Development Department, Building Inspector, and Code Enforcement Officer is also utilized when applicable.

## **Housing Programs**

### **Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA)**

- Community Development Block Grant
- Housing Revolving Loan Fund Program
- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)
- Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP)
- Housing Assistance Program (HAP)
- HOME Homebuyer and Rehabilitation Program
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program

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

- Housing Tax Credit (HTC, formerly LIHTC)
- Home Improvement Advantage Loan
- Home Rehab and Repair Loan
- Vacancy-to-Vitality Loan
- Restore Main Street Loan
- Infrastructure Access Loan

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

- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers

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

- Section 502 Homeownership Direct Loan
- Section 502 Mutual Self-Help Housing Loan
- Section 504 Very-Low-Income Housing Repair Program
- Section 515 Multi-Family Housing Loan Program
- Section 521 Rural Rental Assistance
- Section 523 Rural Housing Site Loans
- Section 533 Rural Housing Preservation Grants
- Single-family Home Loan Guarantees

### **Other Programs**

- The Federal Housing Supply Action Plan.
- Emerging CDBG, LIHTC, HOME, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and other Department of Transportation (DOT) and Economic Development Authority (EDA) programs.
- Emerging WEDC and WHEDA housing programs.
- Focus on Energy (rebates on energy efficient upgrades)

## **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

### **Goal:**

The Town of Weston will accommodate new housing at low densities in a manner that honors the Town's rural character, guiding more intensive housing and neighborhood development to nearby villages and cities.

### **Objectives:**

Promote a housing mix that:

1. Reflects the Town's desire to continue to be a rural community.
2. Emphasizes owner-occupancy and single-family housing.
3. Achieves a lasting and high-quality housing base.
4. Does not overburden the Town and D.C. Everest Area School District to provide services and facilities.

### **Policies:**

1. Encourage the limited, density-based lot development option described within Town and extraterritorial zoning ordinances.
2. Encourage home siting where there is existing roads and other infrastructure, conflicts with and unnecessary conversion of agricultural lands is minimized, where scenic viewsheds and natural areas are maintained, and where property or environmental damage will not result.
3. Direct intensive new housing and neighborhood development to areas near existing development, including the northwest corner of the Town near the Home Sweet Home subdivision and to nearby incorporated areas, particularly the Village of Weston.
4. Emphasize home and property maintenance, supporting efforts to help maintain and rehabilitate the Town's existing housing stock.

## Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities

### Background

Community facilities include an array of services and their associated facilities for government, schools, libraries, public protection, and health care. This Chapter describes the existing community facilities and services located in or provided by the Town of Weston as well as existing conditions and issues related to utilities available in the Town of Weston, including sewage disposal, water supply, power supply, and solid waste management.

The Town intends to engage in a limited array of Town facilities and services over the next 5 to 10 years. Table 15 at the end of this Chapter will guide the Town with these investments. Table 15 includes some elements that are not typically considered municipal responsibilities but are required to be addressed in a comprehensive plan under Wisconsin Statutes.

The Town of Weston contracts with neighboring municipalities for the provision of many community services, through different intergovernmental agreements and arrangements. The Village of Weston provides land use regulation and zoning, building permit and inspections, refuse and recycling, snowplowing, road paving, maintenance and construction. Fire and Emergency response is provided by the South Area Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) District. Police protection is provided by the Mountain Bay Metropolitan Police Department, and the Town rents office space from the Village, who owns the SAFER building at 5209 Mesker Street. The Town also follows the Village's adopted fee schedules for services the Village provides to the Town.

The Town of Weston will continue to evaluate and monitor these existing intergovernmental agreements to ensure that services are provided in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

### Previous Planning Efforts

**American Transmission Company (ATC) 10 Year Transmission System Assessment 2024.** ATC manages transmission projects that improve flexibility, reliability, economic factors, connectivity, and performance. Currently, a 115 kV transmission line runs through the Town between CTH N and the Village of Weston's Sandy Meadows subdivision. Currently, ATC is not planning any projects in the Town of Weston.

**Lower Eau Claire River Water Trail Vision.** This plan identifies opportunities to enhance the quality and usability of the Eau Claire River for outdoor recreation. Existing access points in the Town of Weston include Club House Rd, Riverside Elementary School, the Mountain Bay Trail picnic area off Ringle Ave, and a planned park near the north side of the river between Kramer Lane and CTH J. It also identifies the CTH J access near D.C. Everest Middle School that has since been upgraded with a parking area and ramp. It recommends that all access points be developed with parking, signage, maps, a launch ramp, and picnic tables. The Town of Weston is identified as a partner in implementing the project's vision.

**2040 Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan 2018.** The sewer service area plan helps communities look at wastewater collection systems to adequately accommodate growth, to protect the communities' sanitary sewer service through sound planning, and to ensure that growth occurs in a cost-effective manner. Areas of the Town that are within the Sewer Service Area are described in detail in this chapter.

**Marathon County All Hazard Mitigation Plan 2022.** This document is required for local governments to be eligible for certain disaster mitigation programs. The report looks at general conditions in Marathon County, including population, transportation, land use and economics. An inventory of utilities, community facilities and emergency services form the background for understanding how the County might respond to a disaster. Hazards that are assessed in the plan include floods, tornadoes, winter storms, drought, fire, and hazardous materials accidents.

**Marathon County Parks Plan 2020.** The purpose of this plan is to “Adaptively manage park and forest lands for natural resource sustainability while providing healthy recreational opportunities and unique experiences making Marathon County the preferred place to live, work, and play.” Other than supporting the on-road bicycle route described below in the NCWRPC Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as well as the upgrades described in the Lower Eau Claire Water Trail Vision, there are no planned facilities in the Town of Weston at this time.

**Marathon County Health Department Plans.** The Community Health Assessment (CHA) identifies critical health needs through data collection and analysis, and a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is created to address concerns reflected in the two assessments.

**Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026.** Issues identified in this plan are focused on improving opportunity, wellness, housing, safety, outdoor recreation, tourism, sustainability, water quality, transportation, broadband, agriculture, economic diversification, and efficiency of public infrastructure and services.

**Marathon County LIFE Report 2023.** United Way’s LIFE Report identifies several areas for improvement regarding mental health, substance misuse, childcare, and public transportation.

**North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2018.** This plan proposes an on-street bicycle route on CTH J between Schofield Ave and River Rd, continuing east down River Rd.

**Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2025-2030.** This WDNR plan assists with local planning efforts and is updated every 5 years. It analyzes trends in outdoor recreation and identifies barriers that prevent more Wisconsinites from enjoying outdoor recreation. Issues include changing demands on recreational resources, how new recreational activities compete for the same resources as traditional ones, the effect of surrounding land uses on recreational areas, the socioeconomic characteristics that influence access to outdoor recreation, and climate change impacts to temperature and precipitation. According to a statewide survey, almost seventy percent of respondents indicated that walking, hiking, or running was their most common recreational activity. Swimming and wildlife viewing/photographing were the next two popular activities. These results emphasize the importance of public lands.

**Wausau Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2021).** Similar to other plans, this Plan recommends extending paved shoulders along Ross Avenue to connect the Village of Weston with CTH N.

## **Inventory and Trends**

### **Town Government**

The Town of Weston leases facilities at 5209 Mesker St from the Village of Weston to conduct Town business. This building houses operations for the Mountain Bay Metropolitan Police Department and South Area Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) District operations. Town boards, committees, and commissions are:

#### Meetings at SAFER Building, 5209 Mesker St

- Town Board
- Plan Commission
- Zoning Board of Appeals

#### Meetings at Village Hall, 4747 Camp Phillips Rd

- Joint Parks Committee
- Joint Urban Hunting Committee
- Joint Extraterritorial Committee
- Joint Public Safety Commission
- Mountain Bay Joint Finance Committee
- Public Works Committee

### **Post Office**

The nearest post offices are located at 5404 Normandy St in the Village of Weston and 169915 Brickyard Dr in the Town of Ringle.

### **Drinking Water**

All development in the Town of Weston receives water from private wells. Overall water quality is very good. Water supply is limited in some scattered areas, mostly because of high bedrock as shown on Map 2.

### **Wastewater**

The Town of Weston does not provide public sewer or water service, and residents rely on private septic systems, known as Private On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS). Use of conventional septic systems is limited in some areas due to high bedrock as shown on Map 2. Map 4 illustrates the location of soils suitable for conventional type septic systems. The Marathon County County's Conservation, Planning, and Zoning issues permits and requires inspections at least once every 3 years for these systems. Soil and site evaluations are required to determine if the proposed septic system is suitable for the specific property and location before a permit will be issued. If deemed necessary, floodplain and/or wetland delineation may also be required prior to permit issuance. In addition, a maintenance agreement must be submitted prior to permit issuance. The County website has an entire page dedicated to explaining all the regulations related to POWTS; see [marathonCounty.gov](http://marathonCounty.gov) for more information.

Residents in the Home Sweet Home subdivision have older septic systems. There is a correlation between older systems, system failures, and potential groundwater contamination. Poor soils, bedrock near the surface, and other constraints for septic systems in other areas of the Town also may prompt waste disposal challenges. These conditions could result in requests or even Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requirement to connect to City of Wausau or Village of Weston public sewer systems. Such municipalities typically require annexation in advance of sewer connection.

### **Sewer Service Area**

Portions of the Town of Weston are located within the 208 Sewer Service Area defined in the Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan, which was updated in 2018. See Map 4 for the Sewer Service Area boundary. Preparation of this plan was mandated by the DNR as one component of the Upper Wisconsin River Water Quality Plan, and as a requirement for receiving wastewater treatment facility grants and approval of sanitary sewer extensions. DNR's involvement is promulgated under State Administrative Rules and in the Federal Clean Water Act.

The boundary of the Sewer Service Area (also known as the "208 boundary") sets the 20-year maximum limit for the extension of sanitary sewer services in a cost-effective, environmentally sound manner. Property located within the Sewer Service Area is eligible to receive sanitary sewer service during the 20-year planning period. Property outside the Sewer Service Area is not eligible, unless the Plan and boundary are amended. The City of Wausau and the Village of Weston both have policies to not extend sewer service without annexation. Therefore, when and if sewer service is provided, the property would likely no longer be in the Town of Weston.

### **Stormwater**

Stormwater management is a key component of efforts to improve water quality. It generally involves controlling the volume, quality, and storage of runoff. Stormwater management typically consists of structural elements such as ditches, culverts, swales and ponds as well as development or construction practices aimed at minimizing runoff and erosion. Marathon County's 2023 Stormwater Quality Management Plan Update addresses water quality in the Eau Claire River and its tributaries like the Little and Big Sandy Creeks.

In 2021, Marathon County adopted an update to its Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes (Wisconsin Act 27, Chapter 92.10). The primary intent of this plan is to identify a vision for natural resource management in Marathon County and outline strategies to protect the quality and quantity of soil and water resources.

### **High-Capacity Wells**

A high capacity well is a well that has the capacity to withdraw more than 100,000 gallons per day, or a well that, together with all other wells on the same property, has a capacity of more than 100,000 gallons per day. Residential wells and fire protection wells are excluded from the definition of a high capacity well, and their pumping capacities are not included in the calculation of a property's well capacity. These wells extract water from considerable depths and may impact water quantity in aquifers. Currently, there are no permitted high-capacity wells in the Town of Weston.

## **Electric and Natural Gas Utilities**

The Town of Weston receives electric power and natural gas service from Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPS). Four existing coal generated power plants (Weston 1, 2, 3, 4) are located nearby in the Villages of Kronenwetter and Rothschild. WPS was purchased by We Energies in June 2014. Though the Town is within WPS's service territory for natural gas, its unincorporated nature means there are limited buried gas lines to connect to. Some property owners purchase LP gas tanks for private use.

## **Telecommunications**

According to the Wisconsin Broadband Map, internet service providers that serve the Town include Frontier, Viasat, HughesNet, Bug Tussel Wireless, U.S. Cellular, Starlink, T-Mobile, AirNet ISP, Verizon, and Viasat, Inc. U.S. Cellular, T-Mobile, and Verizon provide cellular service as well. Access to cable internet is limited, with Spectrum (formerly Charter) providing service to areas near the Village of Weston's boundary and TDS providing service for only a few properties in the Town. The Town of Weston zoning ordinance and extraterritorial zoning regulates communication towers, to the extent allowed by State law. There is currently one communication tower located within the Town.

The Town's 2017 Comprehensive Plan had a robust chapter on Broadband, which can be summarized as follows:

- Community, business, and personal access to broadband technology is an increasingly essential pathway to opportunity in the modern world.
- There are several State and Federal offices and initiatives to expand broadband internet service for economic development and personal advancement.
- Mainly private providers supply broadband services, though there are public/nonprofit initiatives such as the Wausau Community Area Network (WCAN).
- Download and upload speeds in the Weston area are generally adequate for residential use, except in parts of the Town of Weston. With exceptions for certain geographic areas, speeds in the Weston area are not yet adequate for many types of business development.

At that time, the Comprehensive Plan's goal identified the Village and Town of Weston as taking a lead role in developing the local broadband network. The goal stated that "The Town of Weston will work with the Village of Weston, area organizations and utility providers to develop a high quality affordable broadband network within the Town."

Since then, the responsibility for broadband expansion has shifted to Marathon County taking the lead role. The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, which was established under the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), provided \$1.06 billion for broadband expansion in Wisconsin. The expanded broadband provides service of 100 Mbps download speed and 20 Mbps upload speed to all households and residences that lack access to service with 25 Mbps (download) and 3 Mbps (upload) speeds. Around 15,000 addresses in Marathon County qualify for broadband expansion under BEAD, with 43 percent of County residents living in rural areas, according to 2023 federal data.

In 2025, the federal government announced program changes to implementation, known as the Benefit of the Bargain, or BEAD BOB. This policy prioritizes wireless internet over fiber internet, which reduces installation

costs, but can result in lower reliability and higher costs for users. The reduced installation costs are also a result of lower participation, meaning fewer households will receive upgraded internet access. For example, 7,788 Marathon County Households now qualify under BEAD BOB, which is less than half of the 15,000 that qualified under the original BEAD. The Public Service Commission (PSC) website has a map of addresses that qualify for broadband expansion under this updated policy. In summary, the western half of the Town will be served by SpaceX's Starlink internet, while the eastern half will be served by Hilbert Communications' Bug Tussel internet.

Marathon County's website contains the most up-to-date information for the Town of Weston regarding broadband expansion. It contains resources regarding broadband affordability, speed tests, service availability, as well as maps of recent County-led broadband expansion areas. In 2025, the County led some expansion efforts for Spectrum (Charter) east and south of the Town's boundaries.

For this updated comprehensive plan, the 2017 plan's recommendations for the Town's general fund to assist with broadband expansion have not been carried into the new plan due to Marathon County's emergence as the leader in broadband expansion for all municipalities as well as the emergence of BEAD funding. The Town will continue to promote and collaborate with the County and surrounding communities to continue expanding and enhancing access to broadband, which is reflected in Goal 2 and its Objectives and Policies at the end of this Chapter. It is important to note that some areas in the Town have access to buried fiber that is already installed, but no service is currently available at those locations.

### **Industrial Park Infrastructure**

Currently, there are no industrial or business parks located in the Town, but the Weston Business and Technology Park is located immediately to the south of the Town in the Village of Weston, providing economic benefits and job opportunities for Town residents.

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

The Town of Weston contracts with the Village of Weston for waste management. In 2026, the contracted hauler changed to Harter's Fox Valley Disposal located at 169901 Ringle Ave. Municipal, commercial, and industrial waste is accepted at the Marathon County Landfill in Ringle. User fees collected at the landfill defray the cost of landfill operations.

The Marathon County Solid Waste Management Department oversees waste management for non-hazardous solid waste. The Department manages the 575-acre landfill, recycling, composting, and waste-to-energy programs. The Department operates a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility that is housed at the Ringle Landfill at 172900 State Highway 29.

### **Public Works**

The Town does not have a public works department, but it has a public works committee. The Town works closely with the Village of Weston's public works committee and department on various road projects that impact both municipalities.

## **Law Enforcement**

The Town has a contract with the Village of Weston to be served by the Mountain Bay Metropolitan Police Department, which also serves the Villages of Rothschild and Weston, and the City of Schofield. It was founded on May 1, 2024 as result of a merger of the former Everest Metro and Rothschild Police Departments. It is based at 211 Grand Ave in Rothschild, and no longer uses the former facility at 5303 Mesker St in the Village of Weston. The Department currently has 37 sworn officers and shares certain services with the County Sherriff's Department. The Rothschild Area Municipal Court, which serves the Town, is also located at 211 Grand Ave in Rothschild.

In 2026, the Village of Weston committed to borrowing \$4.5 million to help fund the construction of a new Mountain Bay Metropolitan Police Station that is expected to cost \$7 million, with the remaining \$2.5 million funded by The Village of Rothschild. The goal is to pay back these funding commitments through the Police Department's annual budget rather than by raising taxes. The new station is planned to be built on Community Center Drive in the Village of Weston west of Camp Phillips Road, with the move-in date yet to be determined. This planned move will vacate the existing 211 Grand Avenue location.

## **Fire and EMS**

South Area Fire and Emergency Response District (SAFER) provides Fire, EMS and rescue operations to the Town of Rib Mountain; Village and Town of Weston; Village of Kronenwetter; and Towns of Easton, Ringle, Guenther, Stettin, and Marathon. The District began operations on January 1, 2014, and operates stations in Rib Mountain (224225 Hummingbird Rd) and the Village of Weston (5303 Mesker St). EMS serves a population of 36,000 and covers nearly 300 square miles. Fire services are provided to 26,000 people, covering over 125 square miles. Marshfield Medical Center - Weston operates a paramedic intercept service in the area. Aspirus Wausau Hospital also has an ambulance housed near their Clinic on Community Center Drive in the Village of Weston. The Town has two emergency sirens located on Ross Ave and on Fust Lane south of CTH N.

## **Prison**

There are no prisons in the Town of Weston. According to the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan, the overall inmate population at the Marathon County Jail in Wausau is an ongoing concern and the County is working to address efficiencies to maintain public safety and facility capacities.

## **Emergency Management**

The Marathon County Sheriff's Department Communications Division provides dispatch for all Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies in Marathon County. The Communications Division services 78 user agencies and also provides alert paging support for the Emergency Management Office, District Attorney, and Medical Examiner's Office. The users are served by a microwave linked repeater radio system, consisting of a control center at the Sheriff's Department, and nine remote radio tower sites spread throughout the County. The system is also utilized by the Marathon Highway Department, the Wausau Fire Department, and other agencies to support their radio communications.

## **Healthcare**

Marshfield Medical Center - Weston

The Marshfield Medical Center - Weston was built in 2004 in the southwest quadrant of the interchange of STH 29 and Camp Phillips Road in the Village of Weston. The Center is part of the Marshfield Clinic, which began in 1916 when six physicians decided to join efforts, based in Marshfield, WI. Marshfield Clinic recently merged with Sanford Health based in Sioux Falls, SD. As of 2025, Marshfield Medical Center – Weston provides advanced heart and vascular health services, birth services, certified primary stroke center, an emergency department, imaging services, lab and prescription services, medical offices and outpatient care, general and orthopedic surgery services, physical therapy and rehabilitation, a surgery center with operating and procedure rooms, a sleep disorder center, and a pediatric walk-in clinic.

#### Aspirus Wausau Hospital/Aspirus Weston Clinic

Aspirus Wausau Hospital at 425 Pine Ridge Boulevard in Wausau is a major hospital in Marathon County. Aspirus Wausau Hospital was created in the 1970s from a merger of St. Mary's Hospital and Memorial Hospital. A new building was completed in 1979 and expansions followed in 1982 and 1992. The facility is a multi-specialty regional health center serving north central Wisconsin. Aspirus Weston Clinic opened in January 2004 in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of STH 29 and Camp Phillips Road, in the Village of Weston at 4005 Community Center Dr.

#### North Central Health Care (NCHC)

In addition to the hospitals and clinic described above, Marathon County is served by NCHC, a public agency that also serves Langlade and Lincoln counties. The NCHC main campus is located at 2400 Marshall Street in Wausau. NCHC offers outpatient, day hospital, community support and inpatient services for mental/emotional problems; vocational, life skill training, early intervention, housing and care management services for the developmentally disabled; and assessment, individual and outpatient group counseling, intensive programming, referral for residential and inpatient treatment, and education for alcohol and other drug problems. Services for detoxification and for persons suffering from problems with gambling addiction are also offered. NCHC also operates a nursing home (Mount View Care Center) at 1100 Lake View Drive in Wausau that provides skilled nursing services at the main campus in Wausau.

### **Libraries**

The Town of Weston is served by the Marathon County Public Library system. While no libraries are located in the Town, there are two libraries located in adjacent communities that are readily accessible by Town residents. The County system's main library is located at 300 1st St in downtown Wausau. This main library branch is open seven days a week and has a circulation of over 368,000 volumes, offers thousands of events each year, and serves over 79,000 patrons (about 71 percent of the total County population). Its facilities also include Internet access. The Rothschild Area Branch Library at 211 Grand Avenue encompasses 3,240 square feet of space holding over 31,500 volumes.

### **Parks and Recreation**

The Town of Weston does not own or manage any public parks. However, residents use many park and recreation facilities located in the Village of Weston and other nearby municipalities. The Town has contributed to the acquisition, development and maintenance of several facilities, including Machmueller Park in the Village. Given the rural nature of the Town of Weston and the robust park and recreation system

available nearby in the Village of Weston, the Town will continue to support and rely on facilities provided by the Village. The following is a summary of Village parks and trails most commonly used by Town residents:

- Kennedy Park is a 38.8-acre community park that is located in the older developed section of the Village of Weston. It is also the most developed and heavily used park in the Village park system. It has a wide variety of active use, passive use, and support facilities that provide residents with year-round opportunities. The Park includes the Weston Aquatic Center, three baseball diamonds, a lacrosse field, two irrigated, regulation sized soccer fields, one sand volleyball court, two horseshoe pits, one lighted hockey rink, one lighted open skating rink and an 8,000 square foot skate park. In 2025, Kennedy Park began a major multi-phase renovation; see the Village of Weston's website for up-to-date information on progress and future phases.
- Yellowbanks Park is located on the Eau Claire River, west of, and adjacent to Camp Phillips Road, just south of the Town of Weston border. Yellowbanks Park is a former Marathon County Park (Sandy Beach Park) that did not meet County park criteria. The Marathon County Parks Department transferred the ownership and maintenance responsibilities of Yellowbanks Park to the Town of Weston in 1993, and it has become one of the most popular parks in the Village park system. Park facilities include restrooms, disc golf course, two open-sided shelters, a drinking fountain, picnic tables, grills, children's playground equipment, a sand volleyball court, and horseshoe pits. The park also has two paved parking lots that service each shelter. Playground facilities were replaced in 2024 and the Village added a new kayak/canoe launch with parking facilities in 2025.
- Kellyland Park is a 105.6-acre community park complex located near Rogan Lane and Heather Street in the east central section of the Village. Kellyland Park is located adjacent to, and west of, the Eau Claire River Nature Center, and includes the Weston Dog Park. Active use facilities at Kellyland Park include an open play area, a children's play equipment area that was upgraded in 2024, and a basketball court. In 2025, the four soccer fields were removed to create a stormwater basin for the Fuller Street reconstruction project. Passive recreation facilities at Kellyland Park include an open shelter (built 1997), picnic tables, benches and grills.
- Machmueller Park. The Town of Weston assisted the Village of Weston with the acquisition of Machmueller Park, a 32.1-acre community park, in 2002. The park is located in the northeastern section of the Village in a heavily developed new residential area adjacent to the Town. Machmueller Park is the only park in this section of the Village. Active use facilities in the park include children's play equipment, a Little League baseball field, 3 tee ball fields, one regulation sized soccer field with bleachers, a large open play area, a 10-station "born learning" trail for children and a ½ mile walking path with fitness course. Passive use facilities include an open shelter, picnic tables and grills. Support facilities include a paved road into the park and a large, paved parking lot.
- Trails. The Eau Claire River Trail provides gravel paths that connect trailheads at Ryan St, Tricia Ave, and Brook Ct to the Eau Claire River and the Jaeger Prairie in the Village of Weston. The Village also has an asphalt multi-use path along the segment of Camp Phillips Road from the northern edge of the Village at Northwestern Avenue, which connects the Village to the City of Wausau. There is also a concrete multi-use path along Weston Avenue to the west, which services the Marshfield Medical Center area. This path was extended eastward to Ryan Road in 2025, where it connects to a new park, Prohaska Family Park. A bike lane/multi-use path was added during the Ross Avenue reconstruction in 2010. The

path runs from the western edge of the Village, connecting with Schofield, and runs to the east out as far as River Bend Road. This bike/multi-use path also runs a few blocks away from the Eau Claire River Trail and connects to the Mountain Bay Trail via a new path along Fuller Street that opened in late 2025. The Village of Weston is also spearheading further development of the Lower Eau Claire River Water Trail for paddlers.



### **Childcare**

The Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network is a membership organization made up of 17 community-based CCR&R agencies serving Wisconsin. CCR&R agencies assist parents in selecting quality childcare, help to increase the supply of childcare in areas that may be lacking sufficient providers, offer information and technical support to potential childcare providers, and give technical assistance and support to existing childcare programs. The community-based CCR&R agency that provides services to Marathon and adjacent counties is Childcaring, Inc. There are currently no licensed childcare facilities in the Town, but there are several in neighboring communities. For information and access to a list of certified childcare providers, see [childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov](https://childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov).

### **Schools**

The Town of Weston is served by the D.C. Everest School District, which has seven elementary schools, a middle school, a junior high, a high school, and a charter school for grades 6-12. Seven of the schools in the District are located within the Village of Weston. These include Weston Elementary, Mountain Bay Elementary, Odyssey Elementary School, D.C. Everest Middle School, D.C. Everest Junior High, and D.C. Everest Senior High. Riverside Elementary is located just outside the Town of Weston in the Town of Ringle. The Idea Charter School is also in the Village of Weston on Camp Phillips Road just north of Weston Elementary. The Greenheck

Field House, which contains an Olympic size indoor skating rink, three basketball courts, a fitness center, racquetball courts, classrooms, and a pro shop is located on the Senior High campus. In 2024, the Greenheck-Turner Community Center opened, providing indoor turf athletic fields, sports simulators, a walking track, and more. The District also maintains the Twin Oaks Environmental Center, located in the nearby Village of Kronenwetter, and the Eau Claire Nature Center.

While many school districts are seeing dramatic enrollment declines throughout Wisconsin, D.C. Everest's enrollment has been relatively flat, falling slightly from 5,803 students in the 2015-2016 school year to 5,730 students during the 2025-2026 school year. In general, people are having fewer children per family, and fewer people are having children, resulting in a nationwide decrease in child population. Additionally, several private schools are located in the Wausau metro area and in other surrounding communities.

### **Colleges and Universities**

#### University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point at Wausau

UWSP at Wausau offers lower level (freshman/sophomore) college classes that lead to a baccalaureate degree. Associate degrees are offered in arts and sciences and bachelor's degrees (through collaborative degree programs with UW-Oshkosh and UW-Stevens Point) are offered in Business Administration, Engineering, American Studies, and Nursing. Enrollment in 2011 was approximately 1,366 students, but this fell drastically to 229 students in 2025 due to a decrease in the college age group, financial pressures, and other factors. The college is planning to move its operations to the Northcentral Technical College (NTC) campus in Fall 2026 to avoid duplicating associates degree offerings. The move will also streamline the college's facilities and allow it to focus more heavily on bachelor's and master's programs while promoting NTC's associates degree programs. The two organizations will maintain separate finances, programs, and staff, but will promote and complement each other by sharing a campus. Students can complete a two-year degree at NTC and then transfer to a four-year program at UWSP at Wausau, saving tuition, commuting, and housing costs for members of the community who want to pursue a degree locally.

#### Northcentral Technical College (NTC)

Located in Wausau, NTC offers over 190 one- and two-year associates degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in business, technical, health and industrial fields. Over 5,800 full- and part-time students attend classes.

### **Resources for Seniors and People with Disabilities**

The Aging & Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin (ADRC-CW), located in Wausau, assists seniors and people with disabilities with various programs and services. There are also a variety of area nonprofits and privately owned facilities that provide services or housing for this demographic. The Landing, a program of the Woodson YMCA in downtown Wausau, is particularly known for having some of the best programming for older adults in the country. It currently has more than 80 programs and is presently undergoing a 12,000 square foot expansion.

## Summary

- The Town provides a basic level of rural services to its residents.
- Town of Weston residents are served by the D.C. Everest School District, which has most of its schools in the Village of Weston to the immediate south of the Town. School district enrollment has been falling slightly over the past decade.
- Due to the Town's proximity to the Village of Weston and other incorporated communities, many services are collaboratively provided— notably police, EMS, fire protection, public works, and zoning services.
- The Town of Weston generally relies on the Village and County and other organizations to provide recreational opportunities for Town residents, but has partnered with the Village of Weston on recreational projects including the development of Machmueller Park.
- The Town has no municipal utilities. Development in the Town of Weston relies on private on-site waste disposal systems and private wells.
- A great deal of the Town is situated within the Sanitary Sewer Service (208) Area boundary, which means it is eligible to connect to municipal sewer service provided by other jurisdictions.
- Town residents rely on private providers for electric, power, and telecommunications services.

**Table 15: Utilities and Community Facilities Recommendations**

| Category                      | Timeframe                             | Recommendations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Water Supply                  | Ongoing                               | Implement strategies to help ensure high quality ground water, described later in this chapter.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Sanitary Wastewater Treatment | Ongoing                               | Coordinate with Marathon County to ensure the proper siting and maintenance of private on site waste treatment systems.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Solid Waste Disposal          | Before contract expires               | Review contract with the Village of Weston for solid waste disposal.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Recycling                     | Before contract expires               | 1. Renew/rebid contract when set to expire.<br>2. Continue to monitor and advocate the Town's comingled program for recycling carts.<br>3. Investigate pilot food waste disposal cart program and other new and innovative ideas for recycling.                                                        |
| Stormwater Management         | As state and federal mandates require | 1. Comply with Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) sediment reduction.<br>2. Attempt to meet Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements.<br>3. Keep Town ordinances and practices up to date.                                                                                   |
| Hazard Mitigation             | Every 5 years                         | Participate in updates to the County Hazard Mitigation Plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Town Administration           | As need arises                        | Evaluation of municipal buildings to ensure that they adequately serve residents' needs.                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Parks and Recreation          | As needed                             | 1. Encourage improvements to Machmueller Park in conjunction with the Village.<br>2. Work with the Wausau MPO to implement the recommendations contained within the Wausau MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.<br>3. Encourage trail projects outlined in this chapter and in the Transportation chapter. |
| Fire Protection and EMS       | Revisit agreement as needed           | Continue participation in the S.A.F.E.R. District.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Police Protection             | Revisit agreement as needed           | Continue participation in the Mountain Bay Metropolitan Police Department.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Library                       | As determined by library system       | 1. Encourage continued library service to Weston residents by the Marathon County Library System.<br>2. Participate in discussions with the Village of Weston regarding development of a library in the Village.                                                                                       |
| Schools                       | As determined by school district      | Work with D.C. Everest Area School District regarding shared resources and common goals.                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Telecommunications            | As market or Town needs require       | See objectives, policies, and programs in this Chapter.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Medical Facilities            | As market requires                    | Encourage growth of the Marshfield Medical Center.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Cemeteries                    | As market requires                    | Private parties will add cemetery land as needed. Promote cremation as alternative.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Childcare Facilities          | As market requires                    | Area childcare facilities will expand to meet needs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

Source: Town of Weston

## Issues and Initiatives

### Effectively Manage Town Facilities and Services

The Town of Weston will utilize information in this chapter, including Table 15, to guide its provision of services to residents. The Town will also continue and monitor contracts and intergovernmental agreements to provide services.

### Facilitate a Clean and Plentiful Water Supply

Water quality is critical to community health and well-being. The Town will monitor and protect its ground water supply to ensure a safe drinking water supply. This broad initiative includes the following potential efforts that, cumulatively, would protect and enhance the quantity and quality of the Town's water supply.

- **Support Implementation of the Wisconsin River TMDL Study.** The DNR and other partners in the Wisconsin River basin aim to improve the basin's water quality, reservoirs, and tributaries. WisDNR's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study and implementation plan provides a strategic framework for water quality improvements. The Town of Weston participates in this effort collaboratively with Marathon County. The Town and County work with area farmers to ensure that stormwater runoff from agricultural areas complies with Marathon County Code Chapter 11.02 Animal Waste Storage and Nutrient Management Code and NR 151. Weston's interest in improving water quality and activity in the Eau Claire River, Big Sand Creek, and Little Sandy Creek is an area of particular contribution to the Wisconsin River TMDL Study.
- **Work with Farmers to Reduce Sediment and Nutrient Delivery from Agriculture.** Encouraging farmers in the Town of Weston to comply with the conservation standards found in NR 151 can help reduce erosion and limit nutrient loss. These include agricultural best management practices such as nutrient and manure management, tillage and grazing setbacks from water bodies, and vegetated drainageways and steep slopes. Implementing the Wisconsin River TMDL study will also assist in protecting surface water quality.
- **Septic Nutrient Management.** The Town of Weston will work with Marathon County to properly site new wastewater treatment systems and facilitate the proper maintenance of existing systems in the Town to limit the potential for untreated discharge of septic waste into surface water.
- **Implement Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs).** BMPs for stormwater often use vegetation, soils, and natural processes and terrain to manage water, as opposed to piping and discarding stormwater as quickly as possible. BMPs include engineered and planted swales along roads, deep tilling of construction sites, installation and maintenance of rain gardens, and preservation and use of natural drainageways in new developments. Major drainageways in and around the Town are presented on Map 2. BMPs will be considered in Town road and stormwater projects. In addition, the Town's updated zoning and subdivision ordinances encourage and sometimes require BMPs.
- **Encourage Proper Siting and Maintenance of Private on-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems.** Development in the Town utilizes private on-site sewage systems. Wisconsin's Safety and Professional Services (SPS) regulates the siting, design, installation, and inspection of most private on-site waste treatment systems under SPS 383, which is administered by Marathon County in Chapter 15 of the County Code. Marathon County issues permits, conducts system inspections, addresses violations,

and oversees a Countywide septic system maintenance program. The Town of Weston will coordinate with Marathon County to assist residents that have failing septic systems and will provide residents with information regarding the County's maintenance program.

### **Support Development of Weston-area Recreational Facilities**

The Town of Weston values the recreational amenities that are and could be available to its residents. The Town will continue to work with other units of governments on park and trail improvements and maintenance in the Weston area. This includes but is not limited to:

- **Machmueller Park Improvements.** Recommended improvements are identified in the Village's Comprehensive Plan and 2024 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The Town of Weston will consider supporting such improvements.
- **Bike and Pedestrian Facilities.** Within the Weston area, there are several local and regional multiuse, off-street trails. Such trails provide for bike and pedestrian access. Depending on surfacing and corridor width, some also provide access for in-line skating, cross-country skiing, and/or snowmobiling. The Town will work with the Village, other adjoining municipalities, and the County on interconnected trail and bike route systems. Where possible, these should use existing road, environmental, and utility corridors.
- **Snowmobile Trail Connections to the Mountain-Bay Trail.** In winter, snowmobile trails are a popular form of entertainment and recreation. They are also a significant driver of winter tourism. The Town of Weston is part of a larger snowmobile network. Route 15 winds its way through the northern edge of the Town, southeast to the Village of Weston and connects to the Mountain Bay Trail and a second snowmobile route runs north-south through the Town along the Camp Philips Road corridor. The Town will work with area snowmobile clubs on trail development and support snowmobile accommodations in the greater Weston area.
- **Eau Claire River Water Trail.** The Town supports the Village's initiative to expand use of the Eau Claire River for canoeing, kayaking, tubing, fishing, and swimming. To maintain a successful water trail, navigability during most times of the year is key, including the maintenance of sufficient water flow and the cleaning of woody and other debris. Other potential barriers, such as bridges and underpasses, need to be considered. The Lower Eau Claire Water Trail Vision, adopted by the Village of Weston in 2015, shows potential locations for water trail launches, some of which are used informally today. Launches should be improved, and also accompanied by convenient parking areas. Trailhead signs and bridge underpass signs installed along the water trail also would provide users an easy way to identify progress along the trail and ease when finding their destination.

### **Support the Expansion of Broadband Technology in the Town for Residents and Businesses**

The Town will work with Marathon County, the Village of Weston, the Public Service Commission, area broadband providers, and surrounding municipalities to facilitate broadband expansion and promote its economic, educational, and other benefits.

## **Funding and Responsibility**

Funding for most initiatives is to come from the Town general fund, grants, partnerships with State and County agencies, especially the Wisconsin DNR. The Town Board will lead efforts with assistance from the Joint Park Committee. Broadband expansion should be funded by the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program and any similar subsequent programs.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

### **Goal 1:**

The Town of Weston will strive to meet resident service and expense expectations by providing public services and facilities that are appropriate for the Town's rural character and maintain reasonable rates, fees, and taxes.

### **Objectives:**

1. Provide and support services and facilities for a quality living and working environment.
2. Maintain the current level of community services in a cost-effective manner.
3. Coordinate utility and community facility systems planning with land use, transportation, natural resources, and intergovernmental planning.

### **Policies:**

1. Direct new intensive land uses to incorporated areas with appropriate levels of urban services to make efficient use of existing sewer, water, and road infrastructure.
2. Invest in technologies and infrastructure solutions that reduce costs, promote resource stewardship, and protect the environment.
3. Regulate the placement of private septic systems through Chapter 15 of Marathon County's General Code of Ordinances.
4. Work with neighboring communities to ensure that collaborative agencies—such as SAFER and Mountain Bay Metropolitan Police Department—provide appropriate services and have adequate staffing, facility, and equipment capacity.
5. Collaborate with the D.C. Everest Area School District on projects of mutual interest, and ensure the District is aware of community growth issues that may impact schools.
6. Implement and require progressive stormwater management and collaborate with others such as the North Central Wisconsin Stormwater Coalition.
7. Work with Marathon County, Extension-University of Wisconsin-Madison and other organizations on programs to protect groundwater quality and quantity, including efforts to identify, map, and protect groundwater recharge areas.

### **Goal 2:**

The Town of Weston will continue to work with Marathon County to expand access to affordable broadband for residential customers, particularly in underserved areas.

**Objectives:**

1. Strengthen relationships with broadband service providers and regional entities to expand broadband access.
2. Promote extension of fiber and other broadband technology to support growth of local businesses and attract new businesses.
3. Increase awareness and usage of internet services in the area, thereby making expansion proposals more cost-effective.
4. Integrate the broadband expansion goal into all decisions, such as new infrastructure.
5. Enhance internet service available to residents throughout the Town and Village.

**Policies:**

1. Work with Marathon County on broadband expansion and consider them the lead entity in these efforts.
2. Assist with securing grants and other resources to expand broadband to businesses and residents.
3. Consider broadband expansion needs when public infrastructure investments are being planned or installed.
4. Ensure that local policies and ordinances support the expansion of broadband service, while protecting other community interests.
5. Expand familiarity, comfort, and use of the internet as a communication tool.
6. Encourage public libraries, the Northcentral Technical College, the UW-Extension, and other institutions to serve as centers of technology training and to raise awareness.
7. In areas where fiber extension is less financially feasible, support options for other technologies to provide high speed internet communications.
8. Work to expand internet coverage and particularly to enhance speeds in residential areas throughout the Town and Village, as a mechanism to maintain property values, deliver educational services, enable rural entrepreneurship, and minimize isolation for aging residents.

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## Chapter 5. Transportation

The Town's transportation system consists of a variety of roads; some of which it owns and maintains, while others are part of the County Trunk Highway (CTH) or County or State Trunk Highway (STH) systems. In addition to roads, the local and regional transportation system includes facilities for pedestrian and bicyclists, railroads, airports, and public transit. This chapter describes the transportation system in the Town of Weston, issues, and plans affecting the system.

### Background

Town of Weston residents depend on local roadways for trips in cars, trucks, agricultural vehicles, bikes, and on foot. In this era of diminishing fiscal resources for roads, the Town will prioritize maintaining and, where necessary, rebuilding its existing roadways, based on objective measures and considering the needs of all users. Through timely maintenance and an appropriate level of reconstruction, existing roads can be maintained with modest investment. Conversely, deferring maintenance will be costlier to the Town over the long term.

Transportation planning in Marathon County is coordinated between the Marathon County Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning staff and the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPO). The MPO is designated by the Federal Department of Transportation to be responsible for transportation planning in the Wausau metropolitan area, which includes Weston. Marathon County provides staff for the MPO and all member communities are assessed a part of staff payroll costs each year.

### Previous Planning Efforts

#### Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Wausau Metropolitan Area (2022-2050)

Every five years, the MPO updates its LRTP. The LRTP identifies the current conditions in the area and identifies and recommends solutions to the issues regarding the deficiencies of the roadways in the metro area. Its goals are to develop the transportation system to best support economic development and optimize the area's financial resources, minimize negative social and environmental impacts, and maintain a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system while fostering regional and intermunicipal cooperation.

#### Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) 2025-2028

This plan is updated annually and contains all the projects impacting the functionally classified transportation system. Any project scheduled to receive State and federal funding over the next four years, or projects which may have prospects to receive such funding, must be included in the TIP. The TIP includes the financial budgets for each project, including anticipated federal, state and local funding. Local governments are responsible for submitting their priority transportation projects on the MPO. Projects in the Town of Weston include replacement of the CTH J Bridge scheduled for 2026. It also notes that pavement was replaced on sections of Ross Avenue and Gusman Road in 2024. Finally, the Village plans to replace portions of Ross Avenue between the roundabout and Machmueller Park, which will include extending water and sewer service to the park, which will border the Town.

## Transit Development Plan (TDP)

The MPO assists in the planning functions for transit in the Wausau area. Every five years the MPO, in conjunction with the Wausau Area Transit System, Metro Ride, creates a TDP. This document identifies the current conditions in the area for transit and identifies and recommends solutions to the issues regarding transit. The Town of Weston is not a part of the Metro Ride service area.

## Locally Developed, Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan 2024-2028

This Marathon County plan was written in response to a federal transit law that requires any project that deals with enhancing transit options for the elderly and those with disabilities to have a written plan that details stakeholder involvement and provides strategies for improving transit alternatives that serve those communities.

## Wausau MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2021

This 2015 plan, updated in 2021, identifies the current conditions and recommends solutions to the issues regarding bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in the metro area. The Plan found that streets in the Town of Weston had a Level of Traffic Stress Rating of LTS 2, with little to no traffic stress, and were of a good condition for rural cycling. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan recommends construction of a paved shoulder heading north of the Village of Weston to CTH N along Ross Avenue.

## Inventory and Trends

### Road Network

The road system within the Town is described in Table 19 later in this Chapter in terms of functional classification and roadway jurisdiction (i.e., U.S., State, and County) and shown geographically on Map 5. Past community surveys had indicated that road maintenance and construction were the Town's highest funding priority. The road network can be described in two ways: by Jurisdictional Classification (who owns it) and Functional Classification (what function does the road serve). Road network mileage is summarized below in Table 16:

**Table 16: Road Way Length in Miles by Functional and Jurisdictional Classification**

| Jurisdiction | Functional Classification |           |       | Total  | Percent |
|--------------|---------------------------|-----------|-------|--------|---------|
|              | Arterial                  | Collector | Local |        |         |
| State        | 0.00                      | 0.00      | 0.00  | 0.00   | 0.0%    |
| County       | 3.84                      | 2.36      | 0.00  | 6.20   | 28.5%   |
| Local        | 1.89                      | 3.75      | 9.95  | 15.59  | 71.5%   |
| Total        | 5.73                      | 6.11      | 9.95  | 21.79  | 100.0%  |
| Percent      | 26.3%                     | 28.0%     | 45.7% | 100.0% |         |

Source: WisDOT & NCWRPC

### Jurisdictional Classification

While jurisdiction refers to government ownership, it does not necessarily correspond to responsibility. For example, some State-owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Following is a brief description of the

major roads located in the Town, along with the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts, which is the average number of cars that pass through a given location each day.

#### CTH N (Townline Road)

CTH N is an east-west route along the northern border of the Town of Weston. East of the intersection with Ross Avenue and west of the intersection of CTH J, CTH N had a 2019 AADT of 1,900 vehicles, a decrease from an AADT of 2,400 in 2010. West of the intersection of Ross Avenue, near the Big Sandy Creek crossing, CTH N had an AADT of 3,800 vehicles in 2010, which decreased to an AADT of 1,700 in 2019.

#### CTH J

CTH J follows the eastern Town boundary with Ringle. CTH J veers westward farther south and has a grade-separated interchange with STH 29 in the Village of Weston. Traffic count information for CTH J is only available outside of the Town of Weston. North of CTH N, CTH J had an AADT of 1,600 vehicles in 2019, a slight increase from 1,400 in 2010. Just north of Schofield Avenue in the Village of Weston, CTH J had an AADT volume of 3,500 in 2010, which decreased slightly to 3,100 in 2016.

#### CTH X

CTH X (Camp Philips Road) provides a connection to the Village of Weston and STH 29 further south. WisDOT traffic count data indicates that CTH X, just south of its intersection with CTH N, had an AADT of 6,200 vehicles in 2019, increasing from an AADT of 5,300 in 2010.

#### Ross Avenue

The continuous road formerly known in different segments as Kersten Road, Kramer Lane, and Lester Street is designated as a collector through the Town of Weston. South of the intersection with CTH N, Ross Avenue had an AADT of 580 vehicles in 2019, a decrease from 1,100 in 2010.

#### Gusman Road

This east-west road extends for two miles in the Town of Weston between the Village of Weston and Town of Ringle. It is an important local transportation route, including traffic to Riverside Elementary School in Ringle.

**Table 17: Traffic Counts (AADT)**

| Location                    | 2010  | 2019   | % Change |
|-----------------------------|-------|--------|----------|
| CTH X South of CTH N        | 5,300 | 6,200  | 17.0%    |
| CTH N West of Ross Ave      | 3,800 | 1,700  | -55.3%   |
| CTH N West of CTH J         | 2,400 | 1,900  | -20.8%   |
| Ross Ave South of CTH N     | 1,100 | 580    | -47.3%   |
| CTH N East of Skyline Ln    | 2,500 | 2,400  | -4.0%    |
| CTH J near Eau Claire River | 3,500 | 3,100* | -11.4%   |
| CTH J North of CTH N        | 1,400 | 1,600  | 14.3%    |

Source: WisDOT. \*Traffic count from 2016; 2019 unavailable in that location.

In summary, most locations saw a decrease in AADT since 2010, except for CTH X (Camp Phillips Rd) and CTH J north of CTH N. This could be due to a higher share of retiring people in Marathon County in recent years who no longer commute, and a lower share of younger adults driving compared to previous generations.

### Surface Conditions

The Town has an annual program for road reconstruction and maintenance, which helps extend the life of street surfaces and other right of way improvements. Since 2016, the Town has contracted all road maintenance out to private contractors or to the Village of Weston. The Town also contracts with the Village of Weston for snow plowing.

WisDOT requires all incorporated communities to prepare a Pavement Management Plan (PMP) using a pavement rating system for their local roads. The data from these plans is intended to provide the foundation for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR), which is a resource that enables communities and the State to begin to assess Wisconsin's local roadway system. The Town of Weston uses PASER as its pavement rating system. PASER was designed by the Transportation Information Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. PASER 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 18: Road Condition and Surface**

| Condition    | Miles | Percent |
|--------------|-------|---------|
| Very Poor    | 0.00  | 0.0%    |
| Poor         | 0.22  | 1.4%    |
| Fair         | 6.48  | 41.6%   |
| Good         | 3.19  | 20.5%   |
| Very Good    | 0.75  | 4.8%    |
| Excellent    | 4.95  | 31.8%   |
| Total        | 15.59 | 100.0%  |
| Surface Type | Miles | Percent |
| Gravel       | 0.50  | 3.2%    |
| Sealcoat     | 0.25  | 1.6%    |
| Asphalt      | 14.84 | 95.2%   |
| Total        | 15.59 | 100.0%  |

Source: NCWRPC

Most roads in the Town are paved with asphalt or sealcoat. Roads exhibiting a surface condition rating at or below “fair” should be examined to determine what type of reconstruction or strengthening is necessary. As indicated in Table 18, as of 2025, about 43 percent of roadway miles in the Town of Weston needed this

attention. About 57 percent of roadway miles in the Town were rated in good, very good, or excellent condition, and should therefore require only preventative maintenance in the near future.

The Town will consider a road for reconstruction once it has a PASER rating of 5 or lower. Other factors will include traffic volumes, safety issues, and economic development impact. PASER allows citizens and business leaders to understand the relative condition of “their road” compared to other roads in the Town. Equally important, simply knowing the Town has a fair and objective process for inventorying and programming needed road improvements helps minimize public criticism and opposition to needed investments.

### **Functional Classification**

Table 19 provides a summary of each functional classification’s characteristics for both urban and rural areas. 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 land access functions. At the upper limit of the system (i.e., principal arterials) are those roads that emphasize traffic mobility (long, uninterrupted travel), whereas at the lower limit are those local roads and streets that emphasize access. Wisconsin has two sets of functional classifications: urban and rural. The Town of Weston is divided into both, with everything north of a line that parallels Kersten Rd across the entire Town being considered rural, and everything south of it being considered urban. Urban areas are those that have a combined population of 5,000 or more, and the Town’s southern half is considered part of the Wausau urban area.



**Table 19: Functional Classification Characteristics**

| Functional Classification  | Urban Classifications<br>(South of Kersten Rd)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Rural Classifications<br>(North of Kersten Rd)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Principal Arterials</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve major activity centers, highest traffic volume corridors, and longest trip demands</li> <li>• Carry high proportion of total urban travel on minimum of mileage</li> <li>• Connect to major rural corridors</li> <li>• Serve demand for intra-area travel between the central business district and outlying residential areas</li> </ul>                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics indicative of substantial statewide or interstate travel</li> <li>• Connect urban areas with populations greater than 25,000</li> <li>• Provide an integrated network of continuous routes</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Minor Arterials</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interconnect and augment Principal Arterials</li> <li>• Serve trips of moderate length at a somewhat lower level of travel mobility than Principal Arterials</li> <li>• Distribute traffic to smaller geographic areas than those served by Principal Arterials</li> <li>• Provide access to adjacent land uses and neighborhoods</li> </ul>                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link cities and larger towns (and other major destinations such as resorts capable of attracting travel over long distances)</li> <li>• Form and provide intrastate and inter-County service</li> <li>• Are spaced at intervals, consistent with population density, so that all developed areas within Wisconsin are within a reasonable distance of an Arterial roadway</li> <li>• Provide service to corridors with trip lengths and travel density greater than those served by Collectors and Local Roads</li> </ul>        |
| <b>Major Collectors</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve both land access and traffic circulation in higher density residential, and commercial/industrial areas</li> <li>• Penetrate residential neighborhoods, often for significant distances</li> <li>• Distribute and channel trips between Local Roads and Arterials, usually greater than three-quarters of a mile</li> <li>• Operating characteristics include higher speeds and more signalized intersections</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide service to any County seat not on an Arterial route, to the larger communities not directly served by an Arterial and to other traffic generators of equivalent intra-County importance such as consolidated schools, shipping points, County parks and other important rural industry locations</li> <li>• Link these places with nearby larger communities and urban areas or with Arterial routes</li> <li>• Serve the most important intra-County travel corridors (arterials or other major collectors).</li> </ul> |
| <b>Minor Collectors</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve both land access and traffic circulation in lower density residential and commercial/industrial areas</li> <li>• Penetrate residential neighborhoods, often only for a short distance</li> <li>• Distribute and channel trips between Local Roads and Arterials, usually less than three-quarters of a mile</li> <li>• Operating characteristics include lower speeds and fewer signalized intersections</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are spaced at intervals, consistent with population density, to collect traffic from Local Roads and bring all developed areas within reasonable distance of a Collector</li> <li>• Provide service to smaller communities not served by an Arterial or Major Collector</li> <li>• Link locally important traffic generators with surrounding rural areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Local Roads</b>         | <p>Local Roads are at the bottom of the functional classification hierarchy, even though they comprise the largest percentage of all roadways in the state. Their role is to provide access to homes and businesses. They have low speed limits and offer limited mobility for through traffic.</p>                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

Source: WisDOT

## **Bridges**

Bridges are critical infrastructure to support the road network. A bridge is a structure having a clear span of more than twenty feet, designed to convey vehicles (and/or pedestrians) over a watercourse, railroad, public or private right-of-way, or depression. Structures having a shorter clear span are designated as culverts. Culverts function similar to bridges in conveying lanes of travel over underlying features. Culverts are commonly used to carry water under roadways but also serve as pedestrian, bicycle, or cattle underpasses. Culverts range from a small diameter tube to multi-celled box culverts. A common road maintenance issue with culverts is washouts during periods of heavy rain.

WisDOT inspects bridges on state trunk highways on a two-year rotation and requires that local units of government have bridges on roads under their jurisdiction inspected every two years by qualified inspectors. The inspections allow WisDOT to monitor the condition of all bridges and prevent any deterioration of structural integrity that might threaten safety or level of service. Bridges with sufficiency ratings of less than 50 are eligible for replacement or rehabilitation, while those of 50 to 80 are only eligible for rehabilitation. WisDOT has an up-to-date inventory of bridges available through its Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR).

## **Network Users**

### Trucking

Truck traffic consists of both through-traffic and traffic generated by local manufacturers, distribution centers, and services which include rental, sales, service, transport and transportation brokers. Issues related to increased stress on physical infrastructure, noise, and pedestrian safety concerns should be considered along corridors of heavy truck traffic. According to WisDOT, there are no designated long truck routes in the Town, but STH 29 nearby is a designated long truck route. Issues such as safety, weight restriction and noise impacts play significant roles in the designation of local truck routes. See WisDOT's website for more information.

### Long Distance Intercity Bus Service

Lamers Bus Lines currently connects Wausau to the Stevens Pont, Wisconsin Rapids, Fox Cities, and Milwaukee areas. WisDOT supports a north-south route connecting the Wausau area to Madison and Milwaukee operated by Coach USA Van Galder, and another east-west route that connects to the Twin Cities, Eau Claire, Green Bay, and Milwaukee operated by Coach USA Wisconsin.

### Transit and Transportation Systems

There is no public transit service provided in the Town. However, transit service for the elderly and disabled is provided throughout the County through North Central Health Care (NCHC). The services include semi-fixed routes that are scheduled, and demand services available with advanced notice. Information and services are available by calling 608-848-4600.

### Pedestrian Facilities

There are no public sidewalks or dedicated non-motorized trails in the Town. There are some concerns about safety for cyclists and pedestrians using the graveled shoulders of County roads, and Town roads. Gusman

Rd was identified in previous plans for potential Safe Routes to Schools upgrades to connect the Village and Town better to Riverside Elementary School in the Town of Ringle.

### Bicycle Facilities

Many residents use the shoulders of County roads for bicycling, which poses some safety concerns. Some in the Town desire establishment of a bike/hiking trail system that would connect to the Mountain Bay Trail, preferably before much more development occurs, while others are less committed to this objective.

At the regional level, the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, written in 2009, includes on-street bicycle routes in Marathon County. Two of the routes pass through the Town of Weston. Route 14 runs east to west and follows Ross Avenue from Kramer Lane in the Town to Grand Avenue in Schofield. Route 15 runs north to south and follows Camp Phillips Road/CTH X to Ross Avenue, west to Birch Street, and south to Weston Avenue, where it eventually meets again to Camp Phillips Road/CTH X.

## **Other Transportation Modes**

### Airports

The Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties. It is the only nearby airport that provides scheduled air passenger services. CWA is located at the east edge of Mosinee. The terminal has been modernized and highway access reconstructed. Delta, United, and American Airlines operate daily flights to Minneapolis and Chicago.

The Wausau Municipal Airport, located in the City of Wausau, provides general aviation services and is fully equipped to receive large corporate jets, charters, and privately owned aircraft. Air charter, flight instruction, aircraft rental, scenic rides, as well as aviation line services such as refueling, transportation, lodging, and catering are available.

### Rail

The only area of the Town that is served by rail lines is an industrial property on the western border, near the City of Wausau.

### Water Transportation

There are no water routes that transport freight or passengers, but the Eau Claire River provides abundant opportunities for paddling, floating, swimming, and other river-based recreational forms of transportation.

### Other Modes of Travel

There are a variety of other miscellaneous modes within and around the Town including snowmobiles, off-highway vehicles (OHVs), horses, cross-country skis, and others. For the most part, however, these forms of travel are not recognized as modes of transportation, but rather as forms of recreation. As such, these alternative forms of travel will not be addressed extensively in the transportation chapter. However, it is important to be aware of interactions between recreational forms of travel and more traditional transportation systems. For example, snowmobiles have an extensive network of their own trail routes that are often parallel to or cross public highways. Snowmobiles and OHVs trails may compete against a bike trail for the same right-

of-way, and OHVs are permitted to travel on some Town roads. Each municipality has its own ordinances and locations where these modes of travel are permitted.

### **Land Use and Transportation Relationship**

Land use and transportation have a reciprocal relationship. Land uses (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial) affect the amount of traffic generated and the type of access needed in a given geographic area. Likewise, improved transportation facilities and access can affect decisions about the market for and type of land uses that will be attracted to a certain area.

#### Congestion

Traffic conditions vary considerably depending on the time of day, season, type and location of the roadway, weather, and other factors. The heaviest traffic typically occurs during travel periods most important to the economy as people are traveling to work, businesses are shipping products, or children are traveling between school and home. These factors tend to exacerbate the effects of traffic congestion. Historically, congestion has not been a widespread issue in the Town of Weston. Additionally, WisDOT's policies have shifted in recent decades, with higher levels of congestion being accepted compared to the past, and lower levels of funding to address congestion. Therefore, congestion is not an urgent issue at this time.

#### Crashes and Safety

WisDOT provides crash data at the County level. The number of crashes in Marathon County has remained relatively stable around an average of 3,194 per year between 2015 and 2020. There has also been an average of 8 fatal crashes per year between 2020 and 2024. Crashes result in injury, loss of life, and economic loss, and demand for police, fire, and ambulance services. Additional losses occur, such as lost wages during recovery, hospital costs, drug costs, rehabilitation costs, professional fees, administrative costs, legal and court costs, and property damage costs. This justifies the need to continually improve transportation safety through education and better roadway design.

#### Development Impacts

Existing, planned, or anticipated development in and near the Town that will have direct impacts on the traffic and the transportation system include continued development in the Village of Weston and other areas around Weston, including continued development of the Marshfield Medical Center - Weston and nearby lands and development along the north side of CTH N in the Town of Wausau.

#### Access Management

Wisconsin was one of the first states to recognize the relationship between highway operations and the use of abutting lands. Under Chapter 233, the WisDOT was given authority to establish rules to review subdivision plats abutting or adjoining State trunk highways or connecting highways. Regulations enacted by WisDOT establish the principles of subdivision review. They require new subdivisions to have internal street systems, limit direct vehicular access to the highways from individual lots, establish building setbacks, and establish access patterns for remaining unplatted land.

Marathon County issues driveway permits and implements access restrictions on all properties fronting a County Trunk Highway. The Town will work with developers regarding access, however, the County or WisDOT

has final say on access to all CTHs. The County Trunk Highway Access Driveway Policy addresses the requirements regarding culverts, access width, slope, visibility and spacing. The policy is available through the Marathon Highway Department. The Town will also continue to regulate driveway placement along Town Roads, applying adopted zoning and subdivision ordinance standards.

### **Road Design Standards**

Roads should be designed for the function they serve. Lightly traveled rural roads may remain graveled to reduce speed levels and maintain a rural character. Where higher traffic volumes are expected, roads should be paved. Communities should consider the current and potential future usage of a road to determine if minimum design standards will be adequate or if higher standards are needed. WisDOT has multiple resources and guidelines for facility design.

Construction of new or complete reconstruction of existing roads often must meet a higher level of design standards than basic resurfacing or reconditioning improvements. Examples of resurfacing and reconditioning improvements include pavement rehabilitation, lanes and/or shoulder widening, replacing bridge elements, bridge deck overlays, bridge and culvert replacement, and other improvements such as minor grading, sub-grade work, and correction of drainage problems.

### **Commuting Patterns**

According to the U.S. Census-on-the-Map online tool, an estimated 347 workers commuted out of the Town each day for work, and another 38 people commuted into the Town from somewhere else for work. The tool also estimates that there are no Town residents who both live and work in the Town; however it is likely that farmers or those working from home are not included in this estimate. Rather, it reflects the number of commuters who both live and work in the Town, who still have a commute. In summary, this reflects the Town's position as primarily a residential and agricultural community, with most workers commuting to other communities with a higher concentration of jobs.

### **Proposed Highway Improvements**

The Town's former 2017 Comprehensive Plan had a map of planned road improvements, which were adopted as the Town's Official Road Map. Included are future right-of-way widths for Lahr Ave, Salzman Ave, Ross Ave, Kramer Ln, and Gusman Rd should these roads ever be upgraded. There are also planned future roadways that connect Salzman Ave and Linden Ln to the Sandy Meadows subdivision in the Village of Weston as well as several connections between existing roads in the eastern portion of the Town south of Kersten Rd. The former Comprehensive Plan specifically identified Camp Phillips Rd (CTH X) as a major future project due to its high traffic volumes as well as Ross Ave, which needs upgrades to address vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic due to its connections to multiple subdivisions and Machmueller Park.

For all road projects, conduit may be buried for future broadband expansion. Additionally, the Town will work with the Wausau Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to implement bicycle and pedestrian facilities based on the cost of improvement compared to the overall project cost and the likelihood it will be utilized by nonmotorized traffic. The MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian plan identifies one route that utilizes Ross Avenue to eventually connect the Wausau area to the Dells of the Eau Claire County Park. This would support the tourism economy and expand recreational options for residents. Finally, the Town had identified the Gusman Rd

corridor as an area that could be enhanced utilizing the Safe Routes to School program to better connect Village and Town of Weston residents to Riverside Elementary School in the neighboring Town of Ringle.

County transportation planning efforts are presented in various plans and studies discussed at the beginning of this Chapter. Findings and recommendations presented in these plans should be integrated into local community planning efforts when relevant and appropriate.

### **“Dig Once” Approach to Road Projects**

“Dig once” and joint trench use policies are local government efforts to reduce the number and scale of repeated excavations for the installation and maintenance communications and utilities infrastructure in public rights-of-way. They require a coordinated effort among public and private entities for installing infrastructure when there are plans for excavation. According to the Federal Highway Administration, such policies are sensible solutions to expedite the deployment of fiber along main routes when implemented as part of a cooperative planning process.

The Village and Town adopt a dig once and joint trench use policy with the following components. To fully implement certain aspects of the policy, adjustments to ordinances and engineering design standards are also necessary or advisable, such as to the Town’s subdivision ordinance.

- Share Town and Village capital improvement programs with utility, telecommunication companies, and non-profit entities like WCAN to enhance likelihood of coordinating projects.
- Coordinate with broadband services providers for joint trenching and simultaneous projects when undertaking the engineering/design and pre-construction phases of all road and utility projects. The communities could also include fiber/conduit as part of the bid document, and in any case will coordinate on timing.
- Require coordination between road and utility construction projects, no matter which agency or business initiates such projects, to the extent permitted by State and federal law. This should include sharing of engineering/design plans for comment and contribution, invitations and attendance at pre-construction meetings, and joint trenching wherever possible. Joint trenching for electrical and fiber lines are particularly feasible and even desirable.
- Include the simultaneous installation of fiber conduit within all Village and Town infrastructure installation projects, including local infrastructure installed by developers in new subdivisions and business parks, unless infeasible from a cost, public safety, or available space standpoint. Conduit serves as “place holder” for future service providers to maximize future opportunities for broadband network expansion.
- Adopt engineering standards for designing roads and utilities (including developer installation) to ensure that conduit will be of a feasible size, design, and placement for future fiber installation and to maximize joint trenching. Also, establish standards advising the scope of project for which conduit would be required to be installed (e.g. major corridors or all roadways?).
- Add “broadband/ fiber” to the list of required public improvements in new subdivisions and other developments at the expense of the developer, and specify design requirements and construction standards/scope for installation of conduit and fiber infrastructure.

- Restrict the frequency of road excavation for the purpose of installing utility, communications, or other underground infrastructure. This is designed to protect street investments, encourage earlier collaboration, and enable other alternatives like directional boring and small cells. Directional boring is a trenchless method of installing underground pipes, conduits, and cables along a prescribed bore path by using a surface-launched drilling rig, with minimal impact on the surrounding area. Small cells are devices that can be attached to poles and/or buildings to increase network capacity via a wireless signal instead of excavation.
- Encourage or require different techniques to minimize the impact of excavation, where the Town or Village determine that road excavation is required. For example, microtrenching involves digging a small trench just inches under the road surface along the curb line to install fiber optic lines.
- Encourage the County and State to coordinate with telecommunication providers and install conduit for fiber in accordance with local standards, when participating on technical teams supporting or advising on County and State highway projects.
- Investigate and follow Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) standards for facilitating highway corridors for broadband infrastructure, and explore possible relationships that may result in expansion of facilities from providers in the Green Bay market area utilizing the Highway 29 corridor.

## Summary

- The Town of Weston is served by the regional highway network, including the STH 29 freeway with interchanges at CTH X and CTH J, and CTH N to Wausau.
- Most Town roads are paved and in good condition.
- The Town has limited facilities dedicated to pedestrian and bicycle use, except for its roads and their shoulders.

## Issues and Initiatives

### Maintain the Function and Condition of the Town's Roadways

Maintaining Town roads is essential for daily transportation and agricultural needs. Keeping existing roads in good condition and engaging in strategic, modest improvements will take priority over new construction projects.

### Prioritize a Limited Number of Roadway Expansion Projects

The Town will have limited resources for the foreseeable future to undertake major roadway projects. The Town will prioritize projects based on need, economic impact, funding, and leadership by other units of government.

### Support Additional Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The Town values bike and pedestrian movement, both as a transportation and recreational option.

### Funding and Priorities

The Town Board is responsible for managing transportation maintenance and expansion. Funding sources include bonding, the Town's general fund, the State Town Road Improvement Discretionary Provisions

program; Participation with Marathon County on Camp Phillips Road, CTH J and CTH N; Special Assessments; State and federal construction funding, such as STP/Urban Funding, Safe Routes to School (SRTS), Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and Stewardship funds.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

### **Goal**

The Town of Weston will work with other units of government to develop and maintain a safe, efficient, and interconnected road and trail network that is consistent with the Town of Weston's rural character and serves local residents.

### **Objectives**

1. Maintain the Town's road network in a way that prioritizes fiscal responsibility and safety.
2. Collaborate with regional, County, State, and federal partners to connect Weston to the broader region.
3. Accommodate pedestrian and bicycle access wherever practical.

### **Policies**

1. Provide connections between Town residents, job and shopping centers, schools, and parks in adjacent communities.
2. Prioritize major road projects in the Town and nominate projects to the regional transportation improvement program.
3. Access State and federal transportation funding and partnerships to support the Town's priority transportation projects.
4. Participate in and encourage State, regional, County and intergovernmental transportation planning efforts that benefit the Town.
5. Seek multiple purposes and benefits for transportation projects with each other, and with other initiatives the Town is undertaking (e.g., road project that provides paved shoulders or side path for bike access).
6. Advocate for a "dig once" policy for roadway improvement projects, as described in this chapter.

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## Chapter 6: Economic Development

The condition of the local economy directly influences growth and development and therefore is a central element of planning for a community's future. Employment patterns and economic trends generally occur on a regional scale. Often, residents of one community work in another, particularly in rural communities such as the Town of Weston. 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. The following section provides a brief overview of the economy in Marathon County, in terms of key economic sectors and the regional labor force. A more specific description of employment trends, major local employers or industries, and where most residents of the Town of Weston work follows. Potential economic development opportunities and/or issues regarding the local economy are also identified.

### Background

#### Surrounding Context

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

With limited commercial and industrial development, the economy of the Town of Weston relies heavily on the economic health of neighboring incorporated areas. The Town of Weston will support and assist with economic development activities in the greater Wausau area and the Village of Weston.

#### Existing Agricultural Economy

Town encourages farmers to develop markets for their agricultural products. Producing, processing, and marketing farm products to local, Wausau area, and Midwest metro consumers will bring more income to Weston area farm families. It could also mean more home-based businesses, value-added on-site processing, organic food production, agricultural tourism, and direct marketing.

Direct marketing to consumers adds value to locally produced agricultural products. This approach will become increasingly viable for the Weston area as local and regional population and tourism increases. The Weston communities are well-positioned to take advantage of the local food movement as an economic, farmland preservation, and community health initiative. Some direct marketing techniques that may be considered or expanded include:

- **Farmers' markets.** These provide an outlet for locally produced food, contribute to the local economy, and enhance a sense of place and downtown activity. With the popularity of the Wausau and Weston

farmers' markets nearby, the continuing trend for fresh produce suggests that even more farm market locations could be supported in the area. Markets could be diversified through programming and events that attract additional consumers.

- **Community-supported agriculture (CSA).** CSA programs are defined by farmers selling shares of their products to consumers in advance of the growing season. This cooperation can provide healthful food choices that support local farms, while relieving some of the burdens and uncertainties of conventional marketing.
- **Special on-farm events.** Such activities can enhance the bottom line for farmers and provide educational and recreational opportunities for visitors. Events like “Summer Saturday Breakfasts” and pick-your-own events generate enthusiasm for local products and can even reduce labor costs.
- **Better links to local restaurants and grocery stores.** Groceries and restaurants are finding new marketing opportunities by promoting locally grown produce and meats on their menus and in their stores. Forward-thinking market buyers can provide the freshest food products to their customers, support local farms, ensure an increasingly engaged public of the quality of its food products, and use this approach as a marketing strategy to attract local residents and visitors.
- **More local foods to schools and hospitals.** Institutions purchase large quantities of food and are focused on wellness. Eating fresh, in-season produce could be promoted even more widely for the health of students, elderly, and hospital patients.

## **Previous Plans and Studies**

### **Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026**

The County's Comprehensive Plan has an economic development chapter with the following goals: 1. Every child and adult in Marathon County can get a high-quality education, 2. Marathon County is a community where every person can find a family-supporting job and every business has a strong, skilled workforce, and 3. Marathon County has a diverse economy with opportunities for people and businesses to grow and be successful.

### **North Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2026**

The North Central Region in Wisconsin, which includes Marathon County as one of its ten counties, adopted this regional economic development strategy with the following goals:

1. Promote and increase communication between regional and County economic development, workforce development and other organizations.
2. Encourage business retention and expansion to maintain and increase employment opportunities in the Region.
3. Create an innovative atmosphere to foster an entrepreneurially supportive environment.
4. Promote and attract new business to the Region.
5. Encourage the reuse of existing commercial and industrial sites for more sustainable economic development.
6. Meet the full range of private sector infrastructure needs with emphasis on transportation, utilities, and communications.

7. Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce prepared to meet the needs of both existing and emerging industries and technologies.

### **North Central Wisconsin Regional Entrepreneurship Assessment & Strategy 2023**

In 2023, NCWRPC surveyed businesses across its ten-County region to assess how business-friendly the region is for entrepreneurs. Included in this report are survey findings, recommendations, and an inventory of all programs and facilities that support entrepreneurship. An Entrepreneurship Portal containing these resources is found on NCWRPC's website.

### **North Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025**

NCWRPC's regional comprehensive plan has an economic development chapter with the following goals:

1. Support infrastructure needed for economic development.
2. Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce.
3. Support and develop a diverse economic base ensuring economic growth and resiliency.
4. Develop tourism and the knowledge-based economy into leading economic sectors.
5. Support economic development that ensures a living wage for the Region's residents.

## **Inventory and Trends**

### **Location Quotient**

Key sectors of a regional economy can be identified by size, by growth, or decline in employment, and by a concentration of the industry in the local area exceeding the national concentration. An industry that shows a higher concentration of employment than the national average is considered a "basic industry" and is identified by a technique called "Location Quotient" analysis. Basic industries are those sectors that export a product or service from the local community into the national or international economy. They are a critical part of the "economic engine" for a region, affecting the growth and health of many dependent sectors such as retail, transportation, construction, and local services. Top industry groups for Marathon County, based on location quotients, are in Table 20. The County's economic base was compared against the nation. A location quotient of 5, for instance, means that the industry in question is five times as concentrated in the area of analysis compared to the rest of the nation. Marathon County's strongest industries, according to this standard, are manufacturing (3.25), natural resources (2.66) and management (1.26).

**Table 20: Marathon County Location Quotient 2026**

| Industry                                                                 | 2026 LQ |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Manufacturing                                                            | 3.25    |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                               | 2.66    |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises                                  | 1.26    |
| Wholesale Trade                                                          | 1.22    |
| Finance and Insurance                                                    | 1.13    |
| Retail Trade                                                             | 1.07    |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                      | 1.07    |
| Health Care and Social Assistance                                        | 0.98    |
| Construction                                                             | 0.86    |
| Utilities                                                                | 0.83    |
| Accommodation and Food Services                                          | 0.81    |
| Transportation and Warehousing                                           | 0.79    |
| Other Services (except Public Administration)                            | 0.72    |
| Government                                                               | 0.69    |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                       | 0.6     |
| Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 0.49    |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                            | 0.44    |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                         | 0.35    |
| Information                                                              | 0.32    |
| Educational Services                                                     | 0.25    |
| Unclassified Industry                                                    | 0       |

Source: Lightcast Analyst Platform

Most of the Town's commercial and industrial development was in the area that became incorporated into the Village of Weston in 1996. Within the Village of Weston, commercial and industrial development is concentrated along Schofield Avenue and/or Business Highway 51, with retail and commercial service businesses concentrated along Schofield Avenue between its intersection with Business Highway 51 and Birch Street. Most heavy manufacturing in the Village is concentrated around the intersection of CTH J and STH 29. Additionally, in recent decades, the intersection of Camp Phillips Road (CTH X) and STH 29 in the Village of Weston has experienced a significant amount of new development, particularly with construction of Marshfield Medical Center - Weston.

### **Labor Force**

The labor force reflects how many people aged 16 and over are employed or looking for employment. Those who are retired or staying home with children, for example, are not considered to be part of the labor force since they are not looking for work. In 2024, the Town had a labor force of 408 workers, with 391 of them employed. See Table 21.

The percentage of those looking for work compared to the total number of those aged 16 and over is called the labor force participation rate, and the number of those who are unemployed compared to the total labor force is the unemployment rate. Between 2010 and 2024, the population aged 16 and over increased in the Town by 22.7 percent, and the labor force increased by 14.9 percent. The unemployment rate decreased during this time, following Countywide and national trends. Although the labor force participation rate decreased, the size of the total labor force increased at a much faster rate (14.9 percent) compared to the County (-0.9 percent) and State (1.9 percent). With a decreasing labor force Countywide, the Town's increase in workers helps fill vacant roles as retirements continue and workers become scarcer with smaller family sizes.

**Table 21: Labor Force Characteristics**

| Category            | T. Weston |       |          | Marathon Co. |         |          | Wisconsin |           |          |
|---------------------|-----------|-------|----------|--------------|---------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
|                     | 2010      | 2024  | % Change | 2010         | 2024    | % Change | 2010      | 2024      | % Change |
| Population aged 16+ | 485       | 595   | 22.7%    | 103,816      | 111,067 | 7.0%     | 4,458,387 | 4,805,425 | 7.8%     |
| Labor Force         | 355       | 408   | 14.9%    | 74,962       | 74,302  | -0.9%    | 3,078,465 | 3,136,600 | 1.9%     |
| Employed            | 336       | 391   | 16.4%    | 69,980       | 72,144  | 3.1%     | 2,869,310 | 3,031,042 | 5.6%     |
| Unemployed          | 19        | 17    | -10.5%   | 4,856        | 2,129   | -56.2%   | 204,600   | 101,728   | -50.3%   |
| Unemployment Rate   | 5.4%      | 4.2%  | -1.2%    | 6.5%         | 2.9%    | -3.6%    | 6.6%      | 3.2%      | -3.4%    |
| Participation Rate  | 73.2%     | 68.6% | -4.6%    | 72.2%        | 66.9%   | -5.3%    | 69.0%     | 65.3%     | -3.7%    |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010 & 2024

## Occupations

Table 22 shows the total number of Town residents working in each occupation. Management, business, science, and arts occupations saw the biggest numeric increase. Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations more than doubled between 2010 and 2024 a Countywide and statewide decline in these occupations. For sales and office occupations, there was a decline for the Town, County, and State. For service occupations, there was a decline for Town and State residents, but a slight increase Countywide. Production, material transportation, and material moving occupations saw a slight increase for the Town and State, and a slight decrease for the County.

**Table 22: Employment by Occupation**

| Occupation                                                   | T. Weston  |            | Marathon Co.  |               | Wisconsin        |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                                              | 2010       | 2024       | 2010          | 2024          | 2010             | 2024             |
| Management, business, science, and arts occupations          | 139        | 220        | 21,212        | 27,203        | 947,672          | 1,219,259        |
| Service occupations                                          | 41         | 18         | 9,919         | 10,803        | 462,097          | 458,226          |
| Sales and office occupations                                 | 63         | 40         | 17,063        | 14,118        | 702,658          | 568,852          |
| Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations | 19         | 36         | 6,970         | 6,421         | 262,749          | 259,826          |
| Production, transportation, and material moving occupations  | 74         | 77         | 14,816        | 13,599        | 494,134          | 524,879          |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>336</b> | <b>391</b> | <b>69,980</b> | <b>72,144</b> | <b>2,869,310</b> | <b>3,031,042</b> |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

## Economic Sectors

Table 23 illustrates the breakdown, by occupation, of the Town's labor force. The labor force is defined as people living in the Town who are 16 years and older, regardless of where they work. Jobs in the manufacturing sector employed the most people in the Town followed by education, health care, and social assistance sectors.

**Table 23: Percentage of Residents by Industry Sector of Employment**

| Sector                                                                                     | T. Weston |       |          | Marathon Co. |       |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------|----------|--------------|-------|----------|
|                                                                                            | 2010      | 2024  | % Change | 2010         | 2024  | % Change |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining                                     | 4.2%      | 2.3%  | -1.9%    | 3.3%         | 2.7%  | -0.6%    |
| Construction                                                                               | 3.9%      | 5.4%  | 1.5%     | 5.9%         | 6.1%  | 0.2%     |
| Manufacturing                                                                              | 26.8%     | 20.7% | -6.1%    | 21.3%        | 20.7% | -0.6%    |
| Wholesale trade                                                                            | 0.0%      | 2.0%  | 2.0%     | 3.5%         | 3.1%  | -0.4%    |
| Retail trade                                                                               | 11.9%     | 5.9%  | -6.0%    | 12.0%        | 9.8%  | -2.2%    |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities                                              | 3.3%      | 6.4%  | 3.1%     | 5.4%         | 4.6%  | -0.8%    |
| Information                                                                                | 0.0%      | 0.5%  | 0.5%     | 0.7%         | 0.8%  | 0.1%     |
| Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing                              | 4.5%      | 7.7%  | 3.2%     | 8.6%         | 7.9%  | -0.7%    |
| Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services | 14.0%     | 12.3% | -1.7%    | 6.6%         | 6.6%  | 0.0%     |
| Educational services, and health care and social assistance                                | 17.6%     | 25.8% | 8.2%     | 20.2%        | 24.1% | 3.9%     |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services                   | 4.8%      | 4.3%  | -0.5%    | 7.1%         | 6.6%  | -0.5%    |
| Other Services, except Public Administration                                               | 4.8%      | 2.6%  | -2.2%    | 3.5%         | 4.3%  | 0.8%     |
| Public Administration                                                                      | 4.5%      | 4.1%  | -0.4%    | 1.8%         | 2.6%  | 0.8%     |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010 & 2024

## Major Employers

According to the Lightcast Analyst Platform, Marathon County's top employers were Aspirus, Marshfield Clinic, Northcentral Technical College, Greenheck, Wausau School District, Liberty Mutual, Greenheck Group, Aqua Finance, Crystal Finishing Systems, Inc., and UnitedHealth Group as of 2026.

## Employment Projections

According to the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan, completed in 2026, all occupations except for three are projected to see an increase in employment between 2025 and 2035. The three occupations projected to lose jobs are Legal Occupations, Office and Administrative Support Occupations, and Military Occupations. The occupations projected to increase the most Countywide in number of jobs are Healthcare Support

Occupations (329), Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (298), Management Occupations (234), and Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations (227).

### **Education and Training**

Education and Training contribute to Wisconsin's economic competitiveness and productivity. Chapter 1 discusses educational attainment and Chapter 4 lists educational facilities in the Region. In general, Wisconsin has historically had high quality schools, technical colleges, and universities. Training is another labor force indicator, which involves partnerships between businesses, governments, and educational institutions to develop the Region's economy. Included in this Chapter is a list of programs.

### **Brownfields**

Brownfields are sites contaminated by former uses. DNR identifies these sites through the Wisconsin Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) and assists with the reuse and cleanup of brownfield lands. This can help contaminated land that was a former business or industry be repurposed for a new business or opportunity, which improves the environment while providing a building site that doesn't require agricultural or natural areas to be developed.

### **Summary**

- The regional economic base centers around manufacturing based on natural resources, but healthcare and tourism are emerging regional strengths.
- The Town of Weston has little commercial or manufacturing development, instead relying on surrounding communities for these industries.

### **Issues and Initiatives**

#### **Support Economic Development Initiatives in the Greater Weston Area**

The Town of Weston will support economic development efforts in the greater Weston area. Given the close proximity of "the two Westons," it is efficient and logical for the two communities to collaborate on economic development.

#### **Grow the Local Agricultural Economy**

The Town of Weston will encourage and support agriculture and agriculture related businesses in the Town.

#### **Funding and Responsibility**

Funding may be provided by Town official volunteer efforts as well as the Town general fund, led by the Town Board with assistance from the Town Plan Commission and Marathon County.

## **Economic Development Programs**

### **Federal**

- Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA – RD)
- America’s Seed Fund: Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs

### **Regional**

- North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (See NCWRPC’s online Entrepreneurship Portal for a list of programs and resources)
- Central Wisconsin Economic Development (CWED) Fund
- Centergy, Inc.
- Impact 7 Business Loans
- Central Wisconsin SCORE

### **State**

#### Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)

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

#### Additional Statewide Programs and Agencies

- |                                                       |                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce                 | • Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) |
| • Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)            | • Wisconsin Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP)                   |
| • The Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC)      | • Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC)           |
| • Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) | • Wisconsin Small Cities Program                               |
| • Wisconsin Fast Forward                              | • Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC)    |

## **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

### **Goal**

The Town of Weston will continue to be an agricultural and rural residential community. The Town supports limited economic development consistent with this character.

### **Objectives**

1. Help existing Weston-area businesses expand employment and increase sales.
2. Limited non-farm commercial development within the Town.
3. Maintain and support the agricultural economy.
4. Collaborate with the Village of Weston on economic development activities.

### **Policies**

1. Utilize the zoning ordinance to streamline development approval processes and promote high-quality economic growth.
2. Collaborate with the Village of Weston and regional business development agencies to advance economic development, retain existing businesses and help them succeed and grow, and provide business services and networking.
3. Continue to rely on neighboring municipalities for medical, employment, retail, and educational opportunities.
4. Utilize Chapter 7: Land Use to geographically guide and adequately plan for non-residential development.
5. Continue to support infrastructure improvements that drive economic activity, such as improvements to the utility, highway, and broadband networks.
6. Recognize and promote agriculture in the Town of Weston by ensuring Town policies, programs and ordinances do not overly burden Town farmers and provide opportunities for agriculture-based economic development.

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## Chapter 7: Land Use

### Background

The Town of Weston is characterized by primarily rural residential and agricultural land use patterns, which are heavily influenced by the Town's close proximity to several larger incorporated areas. The vast majority of the Town's developed areas were incorporated as the Village of Weston in 1996.

### Previous Plans and Studies

#### Local Planning Efforts

##### Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026

Marathon County's goal is to make sound land use decisions which balance the needs of agriculture, recreation, economic development, and growth to wisely maximize the land's potential. Objectives are: 1) Promote the preservation of agricultural land, 2) Promote practices that preserve soil health and land productivity, 3) Encourage revitalization of former residential properties in rural areas, and 4) Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth.

##### NCWRPC Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025

Regional land use issues include dispersed land use patterns affecting an aging population's ability to stay in their homes, contamination and blight on some vacant sites, negative development impacts to environmental/landscape features, changes in land demand, and land use concerns for renewable energy. Goals of this plan are: 1. Preserve and protect the Region's landscape, environmental resources, and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities, 2. Provide adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial uses, 3. Encourage land uses, densities, and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, State, governmental, and utility costs, and 4. Encourage planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.

##### Marathon County Land & Water Resource Management Plan 2021-2030

The primary intent of this plan is to identify strategies to protect the quality and quantity of the County's soil and water resources.

##### Marathon County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan 2022

This plan's primary purpose is to identify how to prevent injury and property damage from natural and manmade hazards.

##### Marathon County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2020-2024

This plan's primary purpose is to identify existing recreational facilities and identify the facilities needed for a five-year period.

### Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan 2024-2033

The purpose of this plan is to guide and manage growth and development in a manner that will preserve the rural character; protect the agricultural base and natural resources; and contribute to the County's overall goal of promoting public safety, health and prosperity within the County

### Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021-2035

The mission of the plan is to manage and protect natural resources on a sustainable basis for the ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future generations.

### **Surrounding Efforts**

The Town of Weston borders six municipalities: Village of Weston, City of Wausau, City of Schofield, Town of Ringle, Town of Easton, and Town of Wausau. Five of these six municipalities have up-to-date comprehensive plans with no land use conflicts mapped at the border of the Town of Weston. The Town of Easton currently does not have a comprehensive plan, but Marathon County's Comprehensive Plan has a composite Future Land Use Map for all municipalities. No known land use conflicts between the Town of Weston and its neighbors exist at this time, however it is likely that the Village of Weston will continue to expand residential neighborhoods into the Town of Weston through annexation.

### **State Planning Efforts**

The state is involved in a variety of planning efforts that impact the Town. For example, the Town is entirely within the Forest Transition Ecological Landscape. Wisconsin's ecological landscapes have master plans that are drafted by WDNR and adopted by the Natural Resources Board to manage state-owned properties in these regions in an ecologically appropriate manner.



## Existing Land Use

The Town of Weston is dominated by agricultural and low-density, rural residential land uses. As Table 24 indicates, most of the land in the Town consists of woodlands, cropland, and single-family residential land uses. Together, these land use categories comprise over 90 percent of the Town's area.

One of the Town's oldest residential subdivisions, the Home Sweet Home subdivision, is located in the northwest corner of the Town, near the border with the City of Wausau. Remaining residences are scattered throughout the Town, with some concentrations in Section 13 along County Trunk Highway (CTH) J. A non-metallic mine is also located in the central portion of the Town, along Ross Avenue. Map 7 depicts Existing Land Use patterns and Table 24 summarizes the acreage.

**Table 24: Existing Land Use**

| Land Use           | Acres          | Percent of Total |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Agriculture        | 1,263.7        | 22.8%            |
| Commercial         | 90.1           | 1.6%             |
| Governmental       | 0.0            | 0.0%             |
| Industrial         | 69.1           | 1.2%             |
| Open Lands         | 58.9           | 1.1%             |
| Outdoor Recreation | 0.0            | 0.0%             |
| Residential        | 799.1          | 14.4%            |
| Transportation     | 198.9          | 3.6%             |
| Utility            | 6.1            | 0.1%             |
| Water              | 83.8           | 1.5%             |
| Woodlands          | 2,982.5        | 53.7%            |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>5,552.1</b> | <b>100.0%</b>    |

Source: NCWRPC

## Equalized Real Estate Values

Table 25 displays the equalized land values in the Town. It is important to note that lands that are tax exempt would not have a taxable value to report. Overall, land value per acre for non-tax-exempt land in the Town is valued at about \$22,879 per acre based on assessed land values from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. Residential properties have the highest value per acre, followed by "other" land. Note that equalized values are generally lower than sales prices, which are hard to average due to the variety of parcel sizes and characteristics.

Note that total acres is calculated much differently by using parcel boundaries, rather than by air photos as in Table 24. Uses like water, public right-of-way for highways, or tax-exempt lands are not reported in Table 25 like they are in Table 24. Therefore, acreage totals vary greatly between the two methods of calculation used for Tables 24 and 25.

**Table 25: Equalized Land Values in the Town of Weston**

| Land Use      | 2025 Value of Land and Improvements | Total Acres  | Average Value per Acre |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Residential   | \$92,121,300                        | 776          | \$118,713              |
| Commercial    | \$326,800                           | 62           | \$5,271                |
| Manufacturing | \$0                                 | 0            | \$0                    |
| Agricultural  | \$315,900                           | 1,373        | \$230                  |
| Undeveloped   | \$302,400                           | 289          | \$1,046                |
| Ag Forest     | \$2,536,800                         | 906          | \$2,800                |
| Forest        | \$7,079,000                         | 1,265        | \$5,596                |
| Other         | \$5,282,300                         | 48           | \$110,048              |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$107,964,500</b>                | <b>4,719</b> | <b>\$22,879</b>        |

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR)

### Land Supply

A great deal of the Town of Weston remains undeveloped. Much of this land is zoned AR, which limits residential development. Other parcels within the RR-5 and RR-2 zoning districts are capable of being divided into additional residential lots. The future supply of vacant land within the Town boundaries may be affected by annexations from the Village of Weston and City of Wausau. Annexation is a property owner driven process, usually initiated to obtain the public sewer, water, and other urban services that the Village and City provide.

### Land Demand

2025 Wisconsin Act 173 requires comprehensive plans to project land demand in five-year increments, despite DOA providing population projections in 10-year increments. Therefore, this section uses existing densities and divides each decade's DOA population change in half to estimate land demand in five-year increments as shown in Table 26.

**Table 26: Land Demand in Acres by Land Use Type**

|                              | 2020-2025   | 2025-2030   | 2030-2035   | 2035-2040   | 2040-2045    | 2045-2050    |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Population Change (DOA)      | 7           |             | 2           |             | -10          |              |
| Residential (1.21 ac/person) | 4.26        | 4.26        | 1.22        | 1.22        | -6.08        | -6.08        |
| Commercial (0.13 ac/person)  | 0.29        | 0.29        | 0.08        | 0.08        | -0.42        | -0.42        |
| Industrial (0.11 ac/person)  | 0.02        | 0.02        | 0.00        | 0.00        | -0.02        | -0.02        |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>4.56</b> | <b>4.56</b> | <b>1.30</b> | <b>1.30</b> | <b>-6.52</b> | <b>-6.52</b> |

Source: Wisconsin DOA and NCWRPC

### Residential Land Demand

Currently, there are about 1.21 acres of residential land per Town resident. Based on this density and the DOA population projections in Chapter 1 of this plan, an additional 8.52 acres are expected to be consumed between 2020 and 2030, and an additional 2.44 acres are needed between 2030 and 2040. After 2040, the Town's population is projected to decrease as discussed earlier in this plan, resulting in a lack of demand. Based on Table 5 in Chapter 1, an additional 3 households between 2020 and 2030 as well as an additional household between 2030 and 2040 are projected, resulting in a total demand of 4 housing units by 2040, followed by decreasing demand after 2040. Therefore, there is enough land available to accommodate future growth.

### Non-Residential Land Demand

When evaluating the existing acreage of commercial and industrial land and the Town's population projections, less than one acre would be expected for commercial and industrial land demand between 2020 and 2040 according to Table 26. This is not enough demand to justify creating a business or industrial park style development.

Since the early 2000s, the Town of Weston has consistently sought to limit new non-residential development. Given the Town's desire to maintain its rural character and the close proximity of incorporated areas offering a full complement of urban services, it is logical for the Town of Weston to not actively plan for new non-residential development.

### Total Land Demand

In summary, only 11 acres of residential land are projected to be needed between 2020 and 2040 to meet demand, with no commercial or industrial development recommended other than those that are compatible with a rural environment with limited services. With demand expected to fall after 2040, there may need to be a creative strategy for repurposing existing developed properties should they fall into disrepair. If local and regional economic development efforts increase the population beyond what is projected, land demand could be higher. Either way, the Town has sufficient land to meet anticipated demand for the foreseeable future.

### **Future Land Use**

Future Land Use outlines the Town of Weston's desired future land use pattern. This map and associated policies will be a basis for land development decisions. These include annexations, rezonings, conditional use permits, subdivision, redevelopment decisions, and utility service areas and extensions. Village of Weston plans will also influence such decisions. According to the Town's 2017 Comprehensive Plan, the Future Land Use map (Map 8) was created using:

- A similar map in the Town's 2006 Comprehensive Plan.
- Existing land use and zoning patterns.
- Location and capacity of existing and planned roads and utility service areas.
- Natural areas and environmental constraints.
- Future land demand projections for the Town, included in the Conditions and Issues volume.

- The Town’s vision statement.
- Plans and intergovernmental arrangements with nearby cities, villages, and towns, especially the Village of Weston.

This map was reviewed during the 2026 Comprehensive Plan update. The Future Land Use Map is designed to allow for appropriate development throughout the Town, but it does not imply that those areas will all develop in the near future. The 2017 Comprehensive Plan’s Future Land Use map, which this Plan’s Future Land Use Map is based on, was developed shortly after the Town of Weston and Village of Weston zoning ordinances and associated zoning maps were updated, which affect the entire Town.

There are similarities between the Future Land Use map and the Town and extraterritorial zoning maps. However, they are not the same for a couple of reasons. First, there are intentionally more zoning districts than future land use designations used on Map 8. Second, the zoning map identifies the most appropriate uses of land at the time that map is viewed, while Map 8 shows the desired land use pattern for the coming decades. Not every area shown for land use change on Map 8 is immediately appropriate for such change, so current zoning is usually different than desired future use in such areas.

Following the adoption of this Plan, property owners will be the ones to initiate changes in existing land uses and zoning to implement the recommendations shown on Map 8 and described in this Chapter. Exceptions may occur where the Town observes a significant discrepancy between the desired future land use pattern shown on the map and the parcel’s current zoning. Existing uses, however, may remain despite their status on the Future Land Use map. Neither Map 8 nor the Comprehensive Plan as a whole compels property owners to change the current use of their land, unless otherwise required by law. Similarly, the Town is not compelled to immediately approve development proposals to coincide with the Future Land Use map.

### **Future Land use Categories**

2025 Wisconsin Act 173 also requires future residential densities to be mapped on a comprehensive plan’s Future Land Use Map (Map 8) in terms of residential units per acre. Below is a description of each future land use category’s density, which is based on the minimum lot size.

#### **Single-Family Residential: Unsewered**

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Permitted Land Uses</b>  | Single family residences, home occupations, small-scale institutional, recreational, and agricultural uses, all served by private waste treatment (septic) systems.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Zoning Districts</b>     | RR-2 and RR-5 Rural Residential for new subdivisions (smaller-lot residential zoning districts may be used for older subdivisions, particularly near the northwest corner of the Town)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Lot Size/ Density</b>    | Minimum lot sizes of 2 acres (RR-2) or 5 acres (RR-5) for new subdivisions for a net density of 0.5 and 0.2 units per acre, respectively.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Development Policies</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design all lots with public road frontage, and to allow the construction of driveways suitable for emergency vehicle access, in accordance with the Town’s driveway ordinance.</li> <li>2. Minimize removal of mature trees and shoreline vegetation and maintain waterway access.</li> <li>3. Promote interconnection in road and trail networks within and among neighborhoods.</li> </ol> |

## Agriculture and Rural

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Permitted Land Uses</b>  | Agricultural, forested, and other open lands. Also includes and is intended to accommodate farmsteads, limited nonfarm housing in accordance with associated zoning policies, associated home occupations and family businesses, and other uses allowed in implementing zoning districts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Zoning Districts</b>     | AR Agriculture and Residential                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Lot Size/ Density</b>    | Within AR district, minimum lot size of 20 acres, or minimum lot size of 2 acres if density of one home per every 20 acres is maintained. This results in a net density of 0.05 units per acre.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Development Policies</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support continued farming and forestry where in accordance with property owner and Town wishes.</li> <li>2. Support ag research operations, seed production operations, operations that process farm products grown mainly on-site and where farming remains the primary activity, and agricultural entertainment.</li> <li>3. Support density-based approach for limited residential development. See zoning ordinance.</li> <li>4. Ensure that rural uses do not impede future urban development or road or utility extensions.</li> </ol> |

## Transition

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Permitted Land Uses</b>  | Same as “Agriculture and Rural” except that “Transition” areas may be appropriate for future urban development following extension of sewer, water, road, and other urban infrastructure and services.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Zoning Districts</b>     | AR Agriculture and Residential, prior to designation for more intensive development per the policies below. After such designation, a variety of residential and other zoning districts available within the Village of Weston’s zoning ordinance (extraterritorial jurisdiction) may be mapped.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Lot Size/ Density</b>    | Within AR district, minimum lot size of 20 acres, or minimum lot size of 2 acres if density of one home per every 20 acres is maintained. Density and lot sizes will vary once land is designated for more intensive development per the policies below. This results in a net density of 0.05 units per acre.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Development Policies</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In advance of a proposal for urban (public sewer and water) development in the “Transition” area, follow policies applicable to the “Agriculture and Rural” future land use designation.</li> <li>2. Consider more intensive developments in the “Transition” area, once these standards are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local government has received a property owner request for more intensive development.</li> <li>• The property owner or developer has submitted a conceptual development plan.</li> <li>• There is a plan for extension of public utilities, which is feasible, cost-effective, and environmentally sound.</li> <li>• The proposed development is justified by community growth forecasts.</li> <li>• The proposed development will not have a substantial adverse effect upon adjacent property, the planned character of the area, or the environment.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> |

## Environmental Corridor

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Permitted Land Uses</b>  | Environmentally sensitive lands, natural resources, and wildlife habitat intended for long-term preservation. More particularly, includes FEMA 1 percent regional (100-year) floodplains, DNR mapped wetlands, and 75-foot shoreland setback areas from navigable waterways, where state and federal regulations significantly limit development.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Zoning Districts</b>     | A variety of “base” zoning districts, plus floodplain, shoreland-wetland, and shoreland overlay zoning districts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Lot Size/ Density</b>    | No new building development is typically allowed, except for recreational and/or education structures providing citizen access to environmental corridors for the purpose of facilitating public appreciation of such corridors.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Development Policies</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Allow preexisting uses plus cropping, grazing, and passive recreational activities like trails.</li><li>2. Preserve, protect, and enhance open spaces and conservancy areas along waterways.</li><li>3. Where development is proposed near mapped Environmental Corridors, determine the exact boundaries of the Environmental Corridor based on the features that define those areas. Remap these areas away from Environmental Corridor to allow more intensive uses if more detailed information or studies reveal that the characteristic(s) that resulted in their designation as an Environmental Corridor is not actually present, approvals from appropriate agencies are granted to alter land so that the characteristic that resulted in its designation will not exist, and/or a mapping error is confirmed.</li></ol> |

100-year floodplains and wetlands as well as land owned by state, local, or federal government not intended for residential development are excluded from net density calculations under [2025 Wisconsin Act 173](#). See the Town’s zoning, subdivision, stormwater management, official map, and other ordinances for details.

## Land Use Tools

### Zoning

In March 2015, the Village of Weston adopted an updated zoning ordinance covering lands in the Village limits and in the extraterritorial zoning area in the Town of Weston. The Town of Weston adopted an updated Town zoning ordinance in December 2015. These two ordinances are virtually identical, which provides consistency for Town property owners and eases ordinance administration.

At time of writing, Village of Weston staff administered both zoning ordinances through a cooperative arrangement. At time of writing, six zoning districts were mapped within the Town of Weston, with the vast majority of the Town being situated within the AR Agriculture and Residential zoning district. The AR district provides for a variety of agricultural and related rural land uses, while allowing single-family residential development at a density of one dwelling unit per 20 acres.

RR-5 Rural Residential 5 Acres and the RR-2 Rural Residential 2 Acres zoned areas are scattered throughout the Town but are slightly more concentrated in Sections 12 and 13, reflecting areas of existing residential development.

## **Shoreland Zoning**

All counties are mandated by Wisconsin law to adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates development in shoreland and floodplain areas for the entire County outside of villages and cities in accordance with state shoreland zoning standards. The Town's shoreland zoning ordinance is administered by Marathon County in these areas. The ordinance requires a 75-foot building setback from waterways, maximum building heights, and impervious surface area within the shoreland area, which is defined as all lands within 1,000 feet of all lakes and ponds, and 300 feet from all rivers and streams (or from their floodplain, if greater).

## **Shoreland-Wetland Zoning**

Marathon County is required by State law to limit the alteration of wetlands of five acres or greater within the designated shoreland area. State and federal regulation of wetlands, administered by the DNR and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is stricter and more inclusive of all wetlands in the Town of Weston.

## **Floodplain Zoning**

The County's floodplain zoning ordinance limits development and filling in all floodplain areas to minimize the effects of flooding on private property. The County is required to enforce this ordinance so property owners in floodplains can participate in the national flood insurance program.

## **Farmland Preservation Zoning**

Farmland preservation zoning is a voluntary zoning classification that is intended to minimize fragmentation of farmland by following Chapter 91 of WI Statutes. The Town currently has farmland preservation areas as identified in the 2024-2033 Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan, but they are not currently zoned for farmland preservation.

## **Erosion Control and Stormwater Management**

Marathon County enforces erosion control and stormwater management regulations in the Town of Weston. Depending on size and geographic area, development projects may also be subject to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) erosion control and stormwater management plan review and standards.

## **Wellhead Protection Zoning**

Wellhead protection zoning ordinances restrict the land use activities that take place within a certain radius of public wells to protect what is known as the "recharge" area. This ensures that contaminants like chemicals will not easily travel into groundwater and contaminate sources of drinking water. The Village of Weston has wellhead protection ordinances that restrict certain land uses based on their proximity to the well. These wellhead zones cross into the Town in some locations near its border with the Village, and permits in these areas are administered by the joint Village-Town extraterritorial zoning (ETZ) committee.

## **Land Division**

A community can control the subdivision of land by requiring a developer to meet certain conditions when 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 can set minimum lot sizes or assess the suitability of land for development. Implementing certain development styles like new urbanist or mixed-use neighborhoods often requires use of the zoning ordinance and the subdivision ordinance together. Currently, the Town has a subdivision ordinance, which should be maintained to meet the goals, objectives, land protection criteria, and other recommendations of this plan.

### **Annexation**

Annexation is the statutory process for transferring lands from unincorporated areas (towns) to incorporated areas (cities and villages). Annexations are usually initiated by landowners to transfer their land into a city or village. Cities and villages vote to accept or reject the petition. As a result, annexations often become contentious between local governments. Annexations often provide the trigger for lengthy and expensive legal struggles between competing community land use visions, and for tax base and community identity. A more constructive approach may be to explore intergovernmental agreements. The methods of intergovernmental cooperation available to address annexation-related issues include general intergovernmental agreements, municipal boundaries fixed by court judgment, boundary change by cooperative plan agreement, and revenue sharing agreements.

### **Extraterritorial Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances**

Like annexation, extraterritorial zoning and land division ordinances are useful but contentious tools to assist with a municipality's growth. For cities and villages, state law allows for extraterritorial zoning and land division regulations which can extend 1½ (Villages) to 3 miles (Cities) beyond the municipal boundary. This applies automatically if the city or village adopts a subdivision ordinance or an official map, and it allows the city or village to influence the pattern of development outside their corporate limits through zoning and land division. Currently, land divisions in unincorporated towns are reviewed by the Village for approval if they are proposed within the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

To exercise extraterritorial zoning (ETZ), it is necessary for a city or village to form a committee with the adjacent town, in which both parties have three representatives. A majority of committee members must agree, and the governing body of both jurisdictions must adopt whatever agreement is reached for extraterritorial zoning to go into effect. As of right now, the Village of Weston exercises ETZ within a 1.5 mile of its border, and there is a joint ETZ committee with the Town. The goal of extraterritorial zoning and land division is to reserve space for future roads and land use patterns, so an incorporated community doesn't become landlocked by unincorporated development as it grows.

Most new development in the Town is anticipated to occur within the Village of Weston's extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction. The Town of Weston will work with the Village to help ensure the orderly and efficient development of this area, while respecting the rural ambiance of the surroundings and the remaining, less-developed areas of Town.

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning law requires that communities identify "Smart Growth Areas" in their comprehensive plans. Smart Growth Areas are defined as "areas that will enable the development and redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and municipal, State, and utility services, where practical, or that will encourage efficient development patterns that are contiguous to existing development and at

densities which will have relatively low municipal, State governmental, and utility costs.” Due to its rural nature and limited developed area, the Town of Weston does not have any areas appropriate for redevelopment, however, by directing the vast majority of new non-residential and higher density residential development to the Village of Weston, the Town is encouraging the efficient use of existing infrastructure and a more compact development pattern.

### **Official Mapping**

State Statutes permit municipalities to adopt an Official Map under Section 62.23(6). This map is used when reviewing land division and subdivision requests to ensure that adequate right-of-way is dedicated for future road expansions, reducing future land acquisition expenses. For example, a property that borders a County Highway may be required to dedicate additional frontage if said highway is planned to have a wider future right-of-way to gain subdivision approval. Both the Village of Weston and the Town of Weston have official maps affecting lands within the Town.

### **Other Tools**

Additional tools and approaches may 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.

### **Summary**

- Most of the Town is either in residential, agricultural, or woodland.
- Only 2.8 percent of the Town of Weston is in industrial or commercial use.
- The Town currently does not have any lands in governmental or recreational use.

### **Issues and Initiatives**

#### **Use the Future Land Use Map to Guide Growth and Development**

The Town’s Future Land Use map (Map 8) represents the desired land use future of the Town through coming decades. This map and policies for each future land use designation shown on this map will guide Town decisions on rezonings, plat and CSM approvals, intergovernmental agreements, and other land use decisions.

#### **Maintain the Rural Character of the Town**

The Town of Weston will minimize and appropriately guide new rural residential development, and work with the Village on logical future urban expansion.

#### **Funding and Responsibility**

Funding comes from the Town’s general fund, and the responsibility is led by the Town Board, Plan Commission, and Extraterritorial Zoning Committee, with contracted assistance for services from the Village of Weston.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

### **Goal:**

The Town of Weston will continue to be a desirable place for rural living and open space activities. The Town will plan for new land development and preservation in a manner that maximizes use of existing infrastructure and land base, protects the environment, honors the Town's rural and agricultural heritage, and preserves and enhances the quality of life for its residents.

### **Objectives:**

1. Establish a land use pattern that is efficient and enhances the Town's image as a rural and agricultural community.
2. Collaborate with the Village of Weston on implementation of the Town's land use plan.

### **Policies:**

1. Use this chapter as a basis for Town and extraterritorial zoning maps and ordinances, rezonings and conditional use permits, subdivision plats and CSMs, and intergovernmental agreements.
2. Ensure consistency between this Comprehensive Plan and zoning and subdivision ordinances, rezonings, and other land use decisions.
3. Ensure the Future Land Use Map and subsequent land use decisions preserve the rural natural, and agricultural character of the Town of Weston.
4. Interconnect areas of different development, including via road and open space linkages throughout the community.
5. Encourage careful mixing, transitioning, and buffering between different land uses to maximize benefits and minimize conflicts associated with locating different uses and activities in proximity.
6. Utilize standards in this Comprehensive Plan and the zoning ordinance to guide the quality of land development.
7. Collaborate with adjacent communities, Marathon County, and the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission on complementary land use patterns, while maintaining a distinct sense of place for the Town of Weston.
8. Continue to work in cooperation with the Village of Weston on land use and residential expansion, as envisioned on the Future Land Use map (Map 8).
9. Work with the D.C. Everest Area School District to coordinate residential growth with future school facility needs.

## Chapter 8: Intergovernmental Cooperation

### Background

This chapter describes the existing mechanisms that the Town of Weston uses to coordinate with other units of government, including Marathon County, adjacent municipalities, the D.C. Everest 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.

The Town of Weston has an interest in pursuing greater levels of intergovernmental cooperation in all areas of service delivery to reduce or eliminate the duplication of services, minimize incompatible goals policies and development, develop mechanisms for conflict resolution, and pursue 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 Weston and other local, regional, State or federal entities. This chapter incorporates all plans or agreements to which the Town is a party under Sections 66.0301, 66.0307 or 66.0309 of Wisconsin Statutes.

### Previous Plans and Studies

**Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026.** This plan's overall goal is for the County to work with municipalities and organizations to provide services most effectively and efficiently to residents. Objectives include promoting technology and resource sharing, encouraging proactive conflict resolution, promoting cost-effective public services, providing coordination of regional development and planning activities, and encouraging participation in all levels of government.

**Village of Weston Comprehensive Plan 2024.** Since the Village has a long history of partnering with the Town, it is important to consider its comprehensive plan's recommendations. The Village's overall goal is to collaborate with neighboring and overlapping governments to achieve common goals, deliver efficient services, share resources, educate residents, and avoid conflicts. This goal is reached by maintaining intergovernmental relationships and communication while looking to improve efficiencies in service and utility delivery across jurisdictional boundaries. It also recommends collaboration for economic development, tourism, and recreation.

**Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025,** developed by NCWRPC, encourages coordination and cooperations between different units of government to provide quality public services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

### Inventory and Trends

#### Consistency of Plans

Since 2010, state comprehensive planning law has a consistency requirement, meaning that land use controls need to reflect the content of and to be consistent with an adopted comprehensive plan. Comprehensive plans should strive to be consistent with adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions' plans as

well, even though they are not required by law to be. Inconsistency between city, village, town, and County plans would put land use decision makers in the difficult position of choosing between competing visions for the proper policy. Although the ultimate responsibility for defining the extent to which local plans must be consistent will fall to the courts, prudence would demand an attempt to resolve conflict between plans, especially where more than one level of government has a say in a single land use decision. An example would be if the Town and a neighboring municipality have conflicting land use maps in places where they border or overlap each other. Therefore, municipalities and the County should review and update their comprehensive plans at a minimum of ten years to ensure these maps remain consistent with each other.

### **Shared Services**

Since the Town is adjacent to three incorporated municipalities (City of Schofield, City of Wausau, and Village of Weston) and three unincorporated municipalities (Towns of Easton, Ringle, and Wausau), there are opportunities for local governments to share services. Whether this involves one community contracting with another for fire or EMS service, or the Town agreeing to work with its neighbors to solve a common problem, the goal is to maximize the benefit from the expenditure of public dollars. The result is economies of scale that reduce costs while improving the quality of public services. The mutual aid agreements described in Chapter 4 illustrate these shared services.

### **Overlapping Jurisdictions**

Corporate boundaries of municipalities and counties often do not coincide with the boundaries of other functional service providing agencies, especially school districts. For example, the D.C. Everest School District overlaps with several neighboring municipalities. School district boundaries are set based on the location of school buildings, where the students live, and the efficiency of transporting children to a given school. Another example is the Central Wisconsin Airport in Mosinee, which is in Marathon County, but jointly owned by Marathon and Portage Counties.

In planning for intergovernmental cooperation, it is important to remember that jurisdictional boundaries can present an obstacle to efficient service delivery. While there are no known issues at this time, there can also be inconsistency between service delivery districts and other entities. All neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions must be taken into consideration when considering intergovernmental agreements and how best to deliver services to citizens.

### **Existing Local Efforts**

#### **D.C. Everest School District**

The Town is located in the D.C. Everest School District, and there is regular communication between the Town and School District. The District offices and several school facilities are located in the Village of Weston. The general public uses some recreational facilities located at school sites. In particular, the Greenheck Field House, located on the D.C. Everest Senior High campus, includes a major ice rink facility. Community education, the Boys & Girls Club, and Adult Continuing Education programs are also housed in the Greenheck Field House. The recent addition of the Greenheck-Turner Community Center further expands indoor recreational programming at D.C. Everest Senior High School.

## Marathon County

The County supplies the Town with services including 911 dispatch service; access permits, maintenance, and improvement of CTHs; Sewer Service Area planning services; private on-site waste treatment permitting; development review in floodplain, shoreland, and shoreland-wetland areas, and animal waste and manure management. The County completed an update to the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan in 2026.

### **Existing Regional Efforts**

The Town coordinates with the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission (Wausau Area MPO) on regional transportation issues and planning. The Town coordinates with the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission on regional land use and growth management planning, including the creation of this Plan.

### **Existing State Efforts**

The Town's primary State and Federal agency contacts are the DNR and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). The Town collaborates with the DNR on wetland delineation and permitting; shoreland, shoreland-wetland, and floodplain zoning; and other natural resources matters. Finally, the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) provides demographic and tax data each year that the Town can use.

### **Existing Intergovernmental Agreements**

#### Law Enforcement

The Mountain Bay Metropolitan Police Department is shared on a formula basis between the Town, the Village of Rothschild, the Village of Weston, and the City of Schofield. This arrangement is discussed in Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities.

#### Fire and Emergency Response

The South Area Fire and Emergency Response District (SAFER) provides Fire and/or EMS and rescue operations to the Town of Rib Mountain, Village and Town of Weston, Village of Kronenwetter and Towns of Easton, Ringle, Guenther, Stettin, and Marathon. This arrangement is discussed in Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities.

#### Transportation

The Town of Weston depends on intergovernmental cooperation on highway maintenance and improvement and on para-transit services. As discussed in Chapter 5, the Town of Weston contracts with the Village of Weston for snow removal, road maintenance, and construction.

#### Recreation

The Town collaborates with the Village of Weston, the D.C. Everest School District, Marathon County, surrounding municipalities, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on park, trail, and recreational planning and development.

#### Zoning

The Village of Weston administers extraterritorial zoning over parts of the Town of Weston. The Village also assists the Town with administering its zoning ordinance over the rest of the Town, via a cooperative relationship.

### **Potential Efforts**

The Town will continue to work with the Village to amend ordinances as needed in response to concerns over emerging topics like Tourist Rooming Houses (TRHs, also known as Airbnb, VRBO, etc.), Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), solar energy, wind energy, and more.

### **Surrounding and Overlapping Efforts**

#### Surrounding Municipalities

As described and mapped in Chapter 1, the Town abuts other cities, villages, and towns. The Town has a number of relationships with these municipalities, described elsewhere in this plan. There are no known conflicts among the plans and policies of the Town and those of surrounding municipalities. Most prepared comprehensive plans in conjunction with the County-wide effort in the mid-2000s, and are therefore scheduled for update at this time.

### **Summary**

- The Town of Weston has a number of intergovernmental agreements, shared services arrangements, and zoning collaboration with its neighboring communities.
- The Town also depends on successful relationships with Marathon County, the D.C. Everest School District, the Wausau Area MPO, DNR, and WisDOT.
- Since the Village was incorporated from the Town of Weston in 1996, the Village and Town have maintained a close working relationship. This includes traditional areas of collaboration, such as maintenance of border roads. The cooperation has extended to joint planning and zoning. This includes an extraterritorial zoning (ETZ) area and contracted Village administration of Town zoning beyond the ETZ area. The Town and Village also share certain planning documents, such as for Broadband Technology.

## Issues and Initiatives

### Continue the Intergovernmental Relationship with the Village of Weston

The Village of Weston is the Town's closest partner. The Town may pursue additional planning, zoning, and development efforts with the Village. Opportunities and avenues for further collaboration and integration between the Town and Village may include the following:

- **Broadband Implementation.** Opportunities for collaborative broadband expansion are laid out within Chapter 4.
- **Road Reconstruction.** The Transportation Chapter identifies, as a priority roadway project, the reconstruction and improvement of the Ross Avenue corridor. This project would require collaboration between the Village and Town.
- **Potential Expansion of Extraterritorial Zoning.** Portions of the Town of Weston close to the Village are under an extraterritorial zoning ordinance, while other parts more remote from the Village limits are under Town zoning. The Village and Town intend to continue their collaboration on the zoning of both areas.

### Streamline the Planning and Zoning Relationship with Marathon County

Landowners in the Town are subject to a somewhat confusing range of local and County development regulations. The Town seeks to streamline the experience when landowners interface with County shoreland zoning rules in particular.

The Town and Village manage general zoning within the Town's boundaries, and the Town is able to prepare and update its own comprehensive plan. Still, land in the Town remains subject to certain County plans (e.g., farmland preservation), subdivision regulations, and specialized zoning directed to wetland, floodplain, and shoreland area protection. Shoreland areas are generally within 1,000 feet of a lake and 300 feet of a stream or river.

The Town seeks to streamline development review processes for owners within the shoreland area in particular, which appears to be the most common interface with County development regulations. The Town and Village intend to approach the County to develop a more unified application and review scheme when landowners wish to construct buildings or improve sites within the shoreland area. This should be done in a manner that does not compromise surface water quality or waterfront experience, which are key objectives of shoreland zoning.

### Funding and Responsibility

Funding for these initiatives comes from the Town general fund and is led by the Town Board with guidance from the Plan Commission.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

### **Goal:**

Working with other governments, districts, and agencies, the Town of Weston will enhance intergovernmental relationships to avoid conflicts, achieve common goals, share resources, educate residents, improve services, increase efficiency, and reduce costs.

### **Objectives:**

1. Advance the Town's vision and a regional ethic via intergovernmental relationships.
2. Maintain intergovernmental communication, whether through formal agreements or not.
3. Improve efficiencies in service and utility delivery across jurisdictional boundaries and traditional service categories.
4. Increase collaboration on economic development, tourism, and recreation initiatives.

### **Policies**

1. Monitor, honor, and implement intergovernmental agreements to which the Town is a party.
2. Continue to formalize major areas of agreement, such as new, amended, and replacement intergovernmental agreements and cooperative plans, as authorized under State Statutes.
3. Continue to engage in informal intergovernmental arrangements, such as sharing of information, personnel, marketing, equipment, facilities, parkland/trails, and recreational programming.
4. Seek opportunities to expand intergovernmental arrangements with abutting Town governments.
5. Seek opportunities to coordinate bidding and construction of infrastructure and equipment projects.
6. Collaborate on regional sewer service area planning, flood protection, stormwater management, transportation (highways, trails, bus), and park and open space projects with Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR), North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission (Wausau Area MPO), Marathon County, and other communities.
7. Continue to support intergovernmental and cross-community organizations that enhance the area's quality of life, such as the Marathon County Development Corporation (MCDEVCO), Wausau Area Chamber of Commerce, Central Wisconsin Off-road Cycling Coalition (CWOCC), Marathon County Friends of the Mountain-Bay State Trail, Hmong American Center, the Marathon County Public Library system, and environmental/watershed organizations.
8. In the event of disagreements between the plans, policies, programs, ordinances, or interpretation of intergovernmental agreements between the Town and adjacent or overlapping units of government, pursue dispute resolution approaches that rely on open, direct communications between Town officials and the officials of other affected governments.

## Chapter 9. Implementation

### Background

This chapter describes implementation tools available to the Town and explains how each of the chapters of this Comprehensive Plan functions with one another to guide growth in the Town. Also included is an overview of the process to adopt, amend, update, and evaluate the Comprehensive Plan. To be effective, this plan should be actively used as a tool to guide decisions concerning:

1. The development and implementation of programs and support systems that further the goals and objectives set forth in this Plan.
2. The implementation of specific actions as identified in this Plan.
3. The implementation and enforcement of regulatory ordinances based on the goals and objectives identified in this Plan.
4. The establishment of a continued planning process providing for periodic review and updates to this Plan.

### Existing Implementation Tools

There are two primary types of implementation tools: Non-regulatory and Regulatory. Nonregulatory approaches involve decisions related to policy and about how the Town will spend its financial resources. Regulatory approaches involve implementing various rules and regulations, mainly related to land use regulations. Zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations are the principal regulatory devices used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development.

### Non-Regulatory Tools

The Town government annually prepares an operational budget and a capital improvement plan.

#### Annual Operating Budget

Town government prepares a budget each year as one of its most important policies. It is a statement that prioritizes and allocates financial resources to achieve certain objectives over a specific time. The budget is based on the needs of Town residents, priorities set by the Town Board, and the related work plans identified by Town staff.

#### Capital Improvement Plan

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) or Capital Fund is a blueprint for planning the Town's major capital expenditures. A Capital Fund is a method of scheduling expenditures for public improvements over a period of several years to maximize the use of limited public funds. CIPs must consider short- and long-term expenses of maintaining existing infrastructure while upgrading it as needed. Roads, for example, are one aspect of the Town's infrastructure that must be invested in for routine maintenance to save money in the long term, as a road that falls behind its maintenance schedule has a shorter life expectancy and is expensive to replace.

The Capital Improvement Program is typically composed of two parts: a capital budget and a capital program. The capital budget is the upcoming year's spending plan for capital items. The capital program is a plan for capital expenditures that extends five years beyond the capital budget. Public improvements or expenditures typically considered in a CIP include major non-recurring costs, assets with a cost of over \$25,000 and a service life of 7 years or more, and rolling stock and equipment replacement that is of critical importance to the functioning of the department involved.

Each year the CIP is 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 changing needs. It coordinates community planning, financial capacity, and physical development. The preparation of a CIP is a joint responsibility between various Town staff members. The Town Board approves the CIP as part of the Annual Budget.

### **Strategic Plan**

Strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes, and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. It is a disciplined effort that produces fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, who it serves, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future. It usually focuses on a 3-to-5-year time-period.

### **Regulatory Tools**

There are three basic implementation tools that the Town can use to implement this comprehensive plan. These are 1) General & Shoreland Zoning, 2) Subdivision Ordinance, and 3) Official Mapping. General zoning, shoreland zoning, and subdivision ordinances apply throughout the Town. The Town's Official Map applies throughout the Town, and the Village of Weston's official map applies in the Village's extraterritorial jurisdiction. See Chapter 7: Land Use for a detailed description of these tools. Town's Official Map, adopted in 2017, is on Map 9 attached to this document.

### **Other Planning and Zoning Tools**

Other planning and zoning tools include annexation, extraterritorial zoning (ETZ), and land division ordinances, which are described in detail on page 96 in Chapter 7: Land Use.

## **Implementation Effort**

### **Plan Adoption**

Few of the directions of the Comprehensive Plan will be automatically implemented. Specific follow-up actions will be required to convert the Plan into reality. This final chapter of the Town's Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide Weston with a roadmap for implementation. The following pages further describe implementation priorities listed in each of the Plan's chapters and necessary to achieve the Town's vision.

The Town of Weston's Comprehensive Plan is adopted following procedures specified by Wisconsin's comprehensive planning statute. The Town included all necessary elements and met all the procedural requirements under the statute. This included opportunities for public input, a Town Plan Commission recommendation, a formal public hearing, and finally Town Board adoption of this plan by ordinance.

### **Share and Institutionalize the Town's Plan**

The Town's Comprehensive Plan will have value only if it is understood, supported, and used by staff, officials, landowners, residents, and others interested in the future of the Town to guide future growth and preserve the existing rural heritage of the town. The Town will therefore work to increase awareness of its Plan by:

- Ensuring that up-to-date materials are easily accessible on the Town website.
- Coordinating educational activities and plan dissemination with the Village of Weston, and encouraging the Village of Weston to share the Town of Weston Comprehensive Plan with interested parties.
- Encouraging all Town committees and staff to become familiar with and use the Plan in their decision making.
- Incorporating major initiatives into annual budgets and grant requests, as funding allows

### **Implement Plan Initiatives**

Table 27 includes the initiatives from all preceding chapters. The referenced chapter includes more information on each initiative. The Town Board and Plan Commission have evaluated all of these initiatives against one another to arrive at the priority ratings in Table 27.

The highest priority initiatives are a primary focus, and implementation ought to begin almost immediately (if not already started). Priorities a bit further down the list should advance as soon as practical, assuming that the highest priorities are on course and manageable. Lower priority initiatives may elevate or may be ongoing or time-permitting initiatives of the associated board, committee, or staff.

**Table 27: Ranked List of Comprehensive Plan Initiatives**

| Priority Initiative                                                    | Chapter                        | Priority Rating |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Effectively Manage Town Facilities and Services                        | Chapter 4: UCF                 | 1               |
| Maintain the Rural Character of the Town                               | Chapter 7: LU                  | 2               |
| Maintain the Function and Condition of the Town's Roadways             | Chapter 5: TR                  | 3               |
| Facilitate a Clean and Plentiful Water Supply                          | Chapter 4: UCF                 | 4               |
| Promote the Continuance and Growth of Agriculture in the Town          | Chapter 2: NR<br>Chapter 6: ED | 5               |
| Communicate and Uniformly Implement Environmental Regulations          | Chapter 2: NR                  | 6               |
| Use the Future Land Use Map to Guide Growth and Development            | Chapter 7: LU                  | 7               |
| Increase the Visibility, Quality, and Use of the Eau Claire River      | Chapter 2: NR                  | 8               |
| Thoughtfully Site New Residential Development                          | Chapter 3: HOU                 | 9               |
| Support Development of Weston-area Recreational Facilities             | Chapter 4: UCF                 | 10              |
| Continue the Intergovernmental Relationship with the Village of Weston | Chapter 8: IGOV                | 11              |
| Prioritize a Limited Number of Roadway Expansion Projects              | Chapter 4: TR                  | 12              |
| Encourage High Quality Property Maintenance                            | Chapter 3: HOU                 | 13              |
| Grow the Local Agricultural Economy                                    | Chapter 6: ED                  | 14              |
| Support Economic Development Initiatives in the Greater Wausau Area    | Chapter 6: ED                  | 15              |
| Support Additional Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities                   | Chapter 5: TR                  | 16              |
| Streamline the Planning and Zoning Relationship with Marathon Co.      | Chapter 8: IGOV                | 17              |
| Continue to Promote and Collaborate Broadband Access with Marathon Co. | Chapter 4: UCF                 | 18              |
| Develop Neighborhood Plans for Growth Areas with the Village of Weston | Chapter 3: HOU                 | 19              |

The Town may adjust priorities to capture unique opportunities or reflect policy changes. Also, some priority initiatives will require substantial cooperation with others, including surrounding local governments and local property owners, which can affect implementation timeframes.

## Consistency Review

Many of the individual decisions guided by this Plan will revolve around zoning, land divisions, public investments, and intergovernmental relations. The State's comprehensive planning statute requires that new and amended zoning ordinances (and rezonings), subdivision regulations, and official maps be "consistent" with this Town Comprehensive Plan. The Town's approach to evaluating consistency of subsequent decisions with this Comprehensive Plan is as listed below:

- **Zoning.** Proposed zoning text and map amendments (rezonings) must be consistent with this Plan. The Future Land Use map will be used to guide the application of the general pattern of permanent zoning. However, the precise location of zoning district boundaries may vary from the Future Land Use map, as judged appropriate by the Plan Commission, ETZ Committee, and Town Board. Departures from the exact land use boundaries depicted on the Future Land Use map may be particularly appropriate for properties located at the edges of future land use areas. In their consideration of zoning map changes, the Plan Commission, ETZ Committee, and Town Board will also evaluate the specific timing of the zoning map amendment request, its relationship to the nature of both existing and future land uses, the current availability of public infrastructure and services, and the details of the proposed development. Therefore, this Plan allows for the phasing of zoning actions and the refinement of the precise recommended land use boundaries through the zoning processes. Where the Town wishes to amend its zoning map in a manner that differs from this Plan, the Town will first need to amend the Plan to resolve the difference(s).
- **Land Division.** Proposed land divisions should be generally consistent with the recommendations in this Plan. In their consideration of land divisions, the Plan Commission and Town Board will also evaluate the specific timing of the land division request, its relationship to the nature of both existing and future land uses, the current availability of public infrastructure and services, and the details of the proposed development. This Plan allows for the phased timing and the refinement of the precise recommended development pattern through the land division process, as deemed appropriate by the Plan Commission and Town Board, in cooperation with the Village of Weston.
- **Public Investments.** Proposed public investment decisions will generally be guided by the recommendations in the Town Comprehensive Plan. The timing and precise location of public investments may vary, as judged appropriate by the Town Board, often following recommendations from appropriate committees. This Plan allows for the phased timing and the refinement of the precise recommended public facilities and other public investments, as deemed appropriate by the Town Board.
- **Intergovernmental Relations.** Proposed intergovernmental relation decisions will generally be guided by the recommendations in this Plan, as the Town Board deems appropriate. However, in its consideration of intergovernmental decisions and agreements, the Town Board will also evaluate a wide variety of other factors. Departures from the recommendations in this Plan shall be resolved by the Town Board through the associated intergovernmental process.

## **Plan Adoption, Amendments, Updates, and Evaluation**

### **Plan Amendments**

Amendments are generally defined as minor changes to the maps or text in the Comprehensive Plan. Amendments may be appropriate in instances where the Plan becomes irrelevant or contradictory to emerging policy, initiatives, or trends. Weston is also likely to receive and wish to entertain requests for Plan amendments from landowners, developers, and others. The State comprehensive planning law requires that the Town uses the same basic process to amend, add to, or update the Comprehensive Plan as it used to adopt the Plan. Adoption or amendment of the Comprehensive Plan shall comply with the procedures set forth in Section 66.1001(4)a of Wisconsin Statutes. The Town intends to use the following procedure to amend, add to, or update the Comprehensive Plan:

- a. The Plan Commission initiates the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment, perhaps based on a referral or request from the Town Board, ETZ Committee, or Town staff or consultants.
- b. Following an opportunity for public input on the proposed Plan amendment, the Plan Commission recommends Town Board approval (or rejection or modification) of the amendment via resolution.
- c. Following passage of the Plan Commission resolution recommending the amendment, the Town Clerk schedules a formal public hearing on the Plan amendment in front of the Town Board and publishes a Class 1 notice at least 30 days before the hearing. The Class 1 notice shall contain the date, time, and place of the hearing, a summary of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment, the name of a Town employee to be contacted to provide information about the amendment, the location and time wherein the amendment can be inspected before the hearing, and information about how a copy can be obtained. Also, at least 30 days before the hearing, the Clerk provides written notice to those entities that qualify under Sections 66.1001(4)(e) and (f) of Wisconsin Statutes.
- d. Following the public hearing, the amendment may be enacted by the Town Board in the form of an ordinance adopted by majority vote of all the members of the Town Board (not a simple majority of a quorum).
- e. Following Town Board approval of the amendment, the Town Clerk sends a CD or hard copy of the approved ordinance and Plan amendment to the nearest branch of the Marathon County Library System, Wisconsin Department of Administration (Division of Intergovernmental Relations), Marathon County Clerk and Planning and Development Department, Northcentral Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and all adjoining towns, cities, and villages.

The State comprehensive planning law requires that the Comprehensive Plan be updated at least once every ten years. As opposed to an amendment, an update is often a substantial re-write of the Plan document and maps. The Town intends to update its Comprehensive Plan before its ten-year expiration date.

While this Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide a long-term framework to guide general development, it must also respond to continuous changes that occur that may not have been foreseen when the plan was adopted. It is appropriate that some chapters of the Plan are rarely amended while others are subject to 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 remain current.

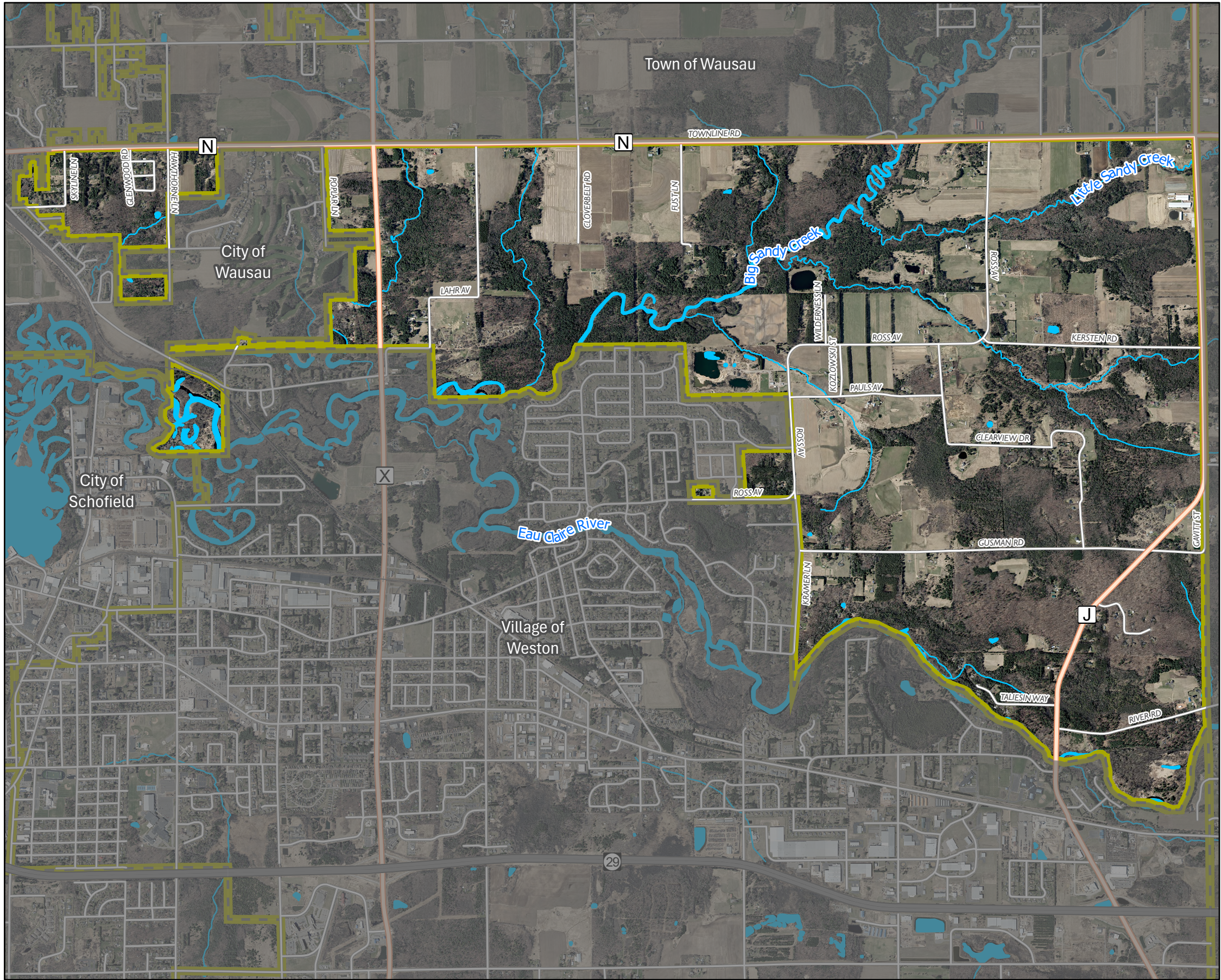
## **Conclusion**

The Town of Weston Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a living document. Periodic amendment and updating of the plan are critical to ensure that it is accurate and consistent with the needs and desires of the Town. The specific policy statements are meant to serve as the mechanisms for achieving the goals and objectives, which were defined throughout the planning process. Ultimately, the success of the planning process will be measured by the future quality of life experienced by both residents and visitors of the Town of Weston. To move the plan forward, a strategic planning process may occur as the next step in the planning process. As part of that effort, goals will be prioritized, benchmarks will be established, and responsible parties will be identified. The result will be a framework for the Town in the coming years to help implement the comprehensive plan.

## **Recommendations**

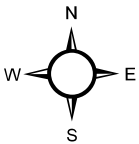
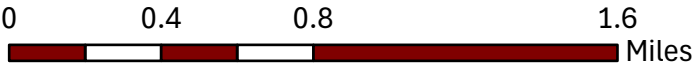
1. The Town Plan Commission and Town Board should review and adopt this Plan when complete.
2. The Town Plan Commission and Town Board shall review this Comprehensive Plan every 5 years and consider amendments that respond to changing conditions.
3. The Town shall maintain a fully updated Comprehensive Plan every 10 years.

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Planning Area

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Railroad
- Water



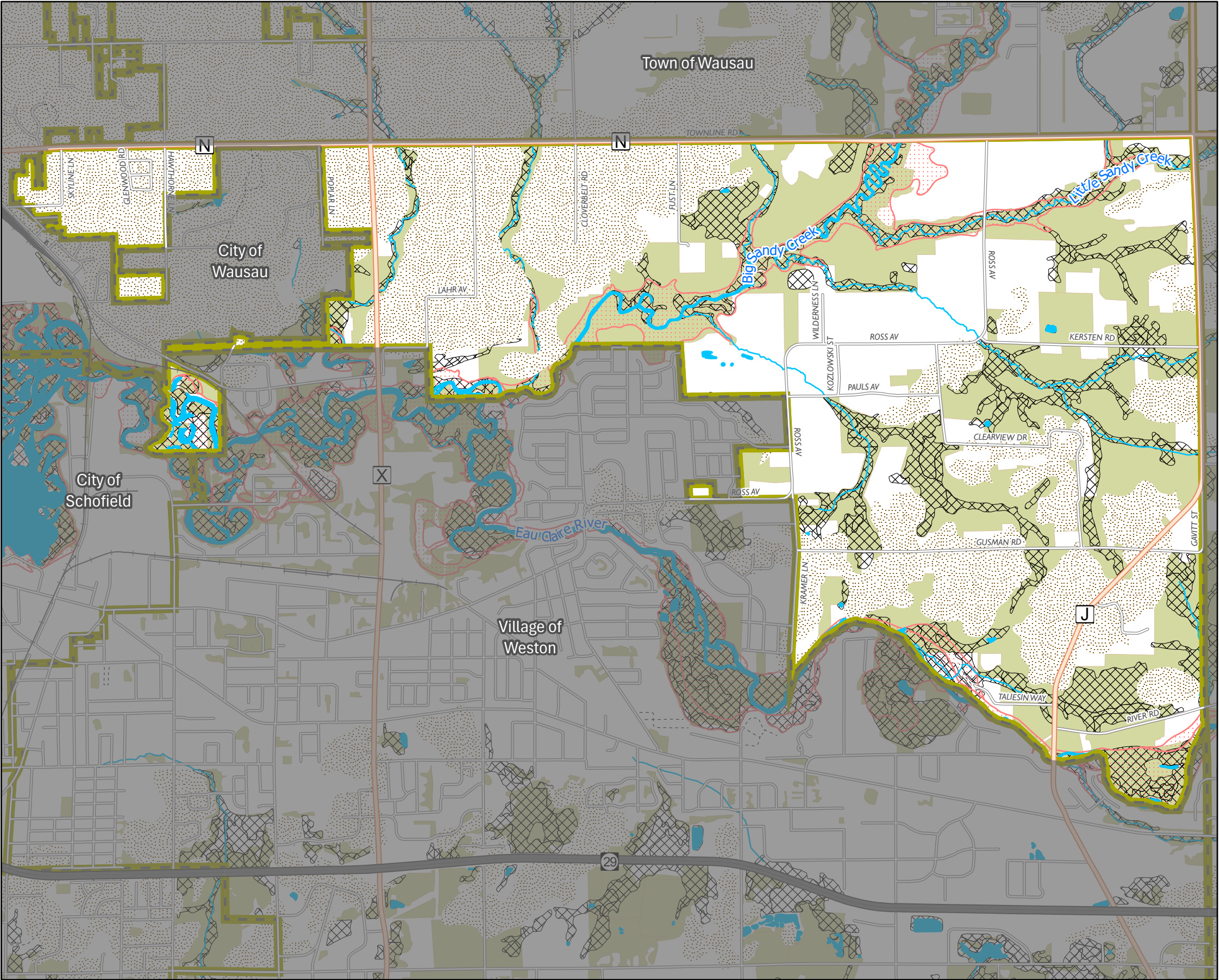
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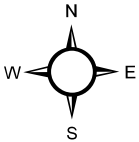
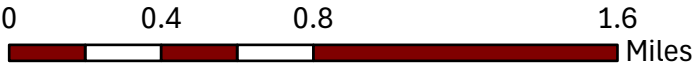
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Natural Resources

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Railroad
- Limited Depth to Bedrock
- Forested Areas
- Wetlands
- Floodplain
- Water



Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co  
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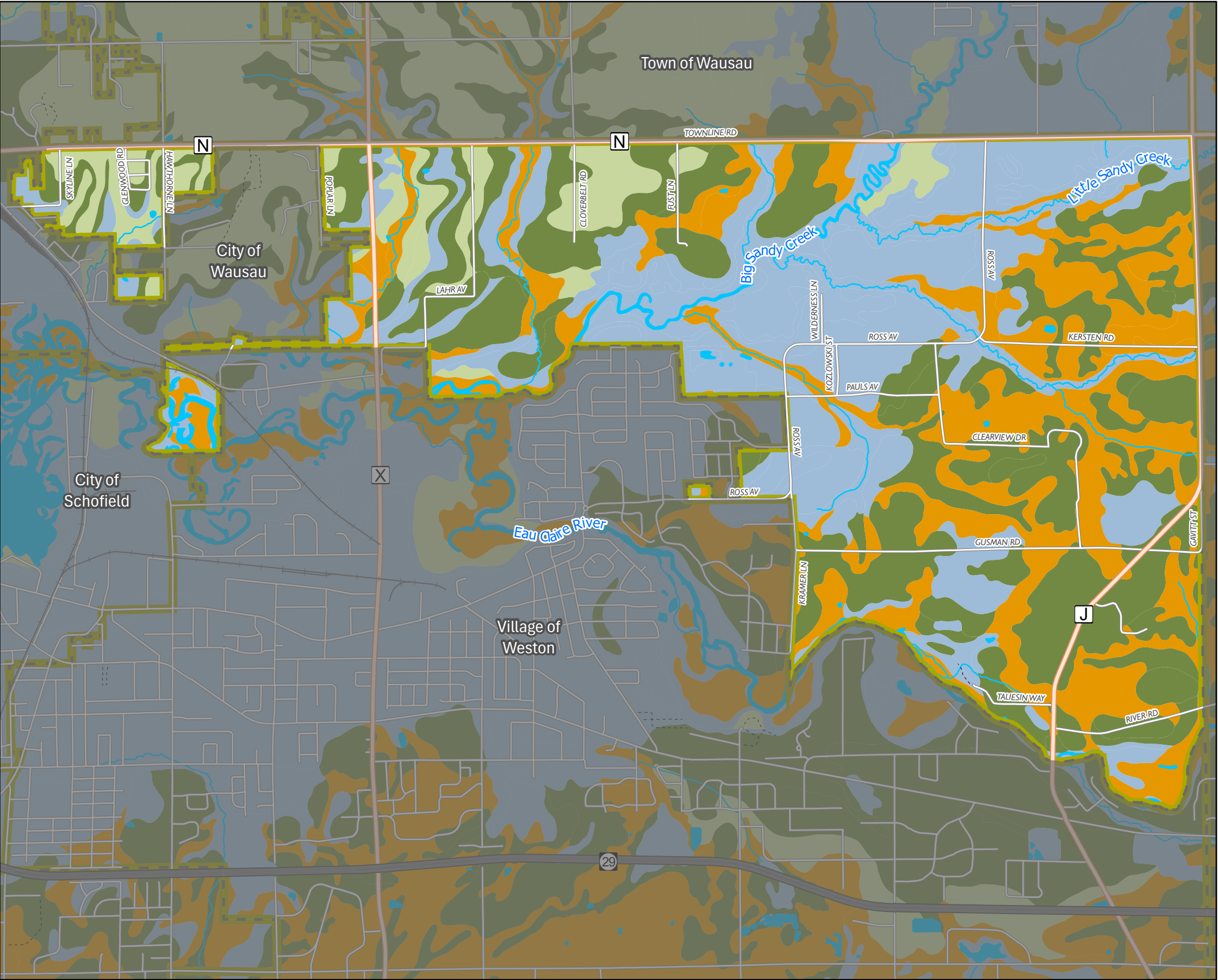


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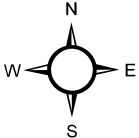
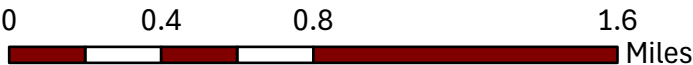
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Prime Farmland



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



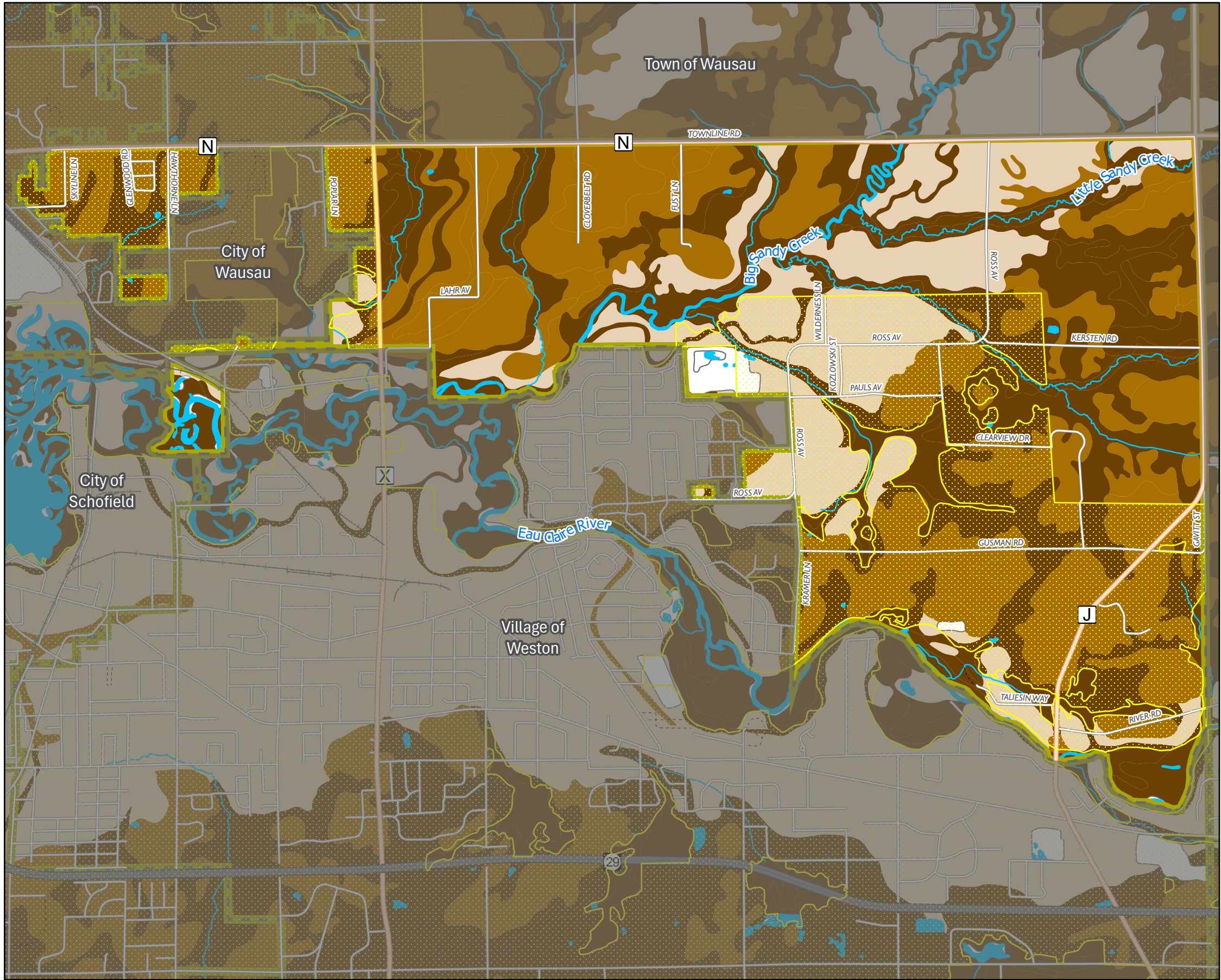
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Prepared By:  
**North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**

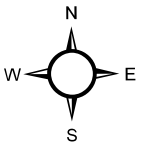
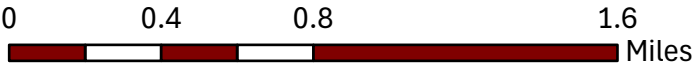
210 McClellan St., Suite 210, Wausau, WI 54403  
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Septic Suitability

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Railroad
- Sewer Service (208) Area
- Water
- Septic Suitability Rating
  - Not limited
  - Somewhat limited
  - Very limited
  - Not rated



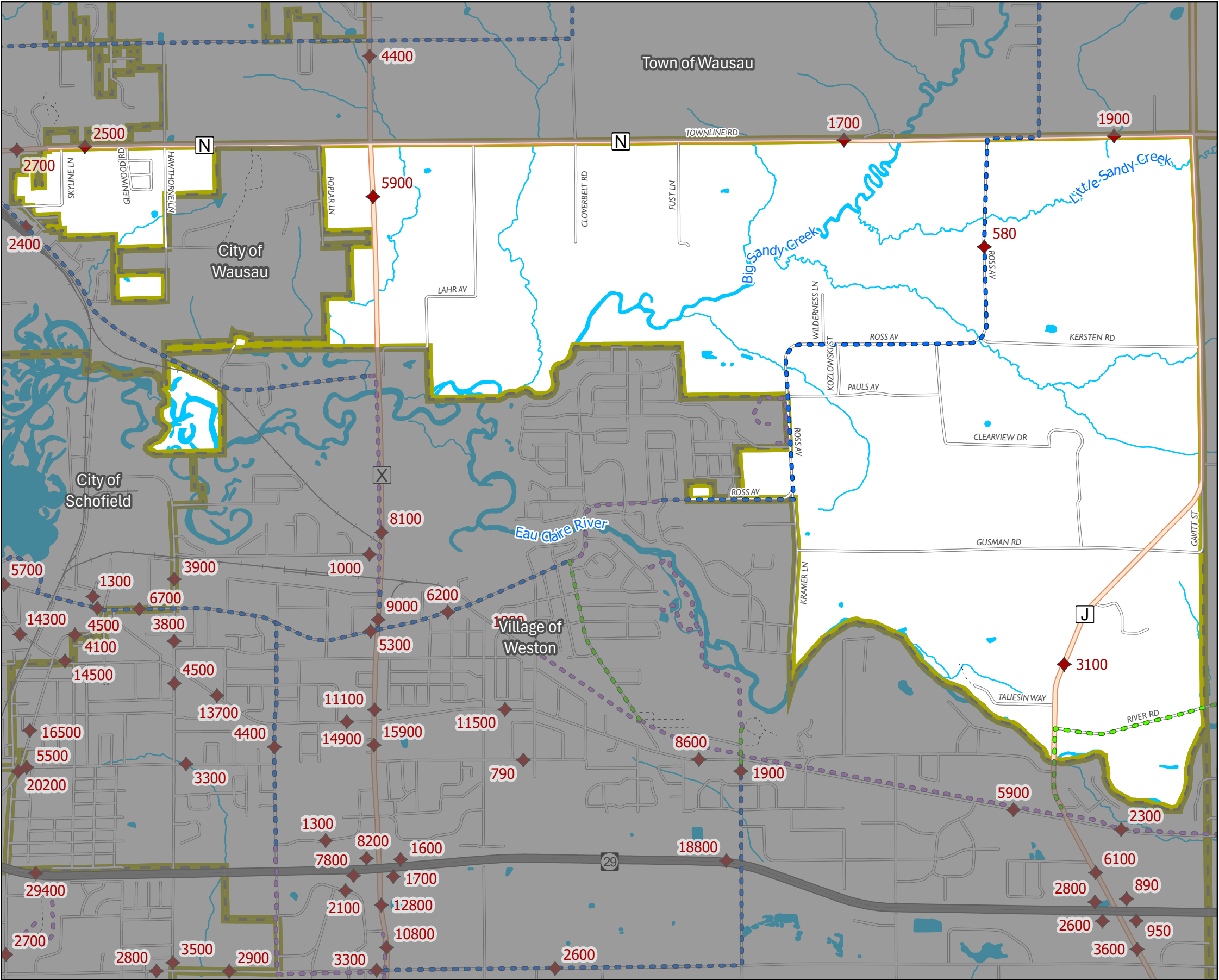
Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co  
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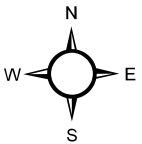
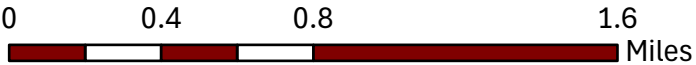
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Transportation

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Railroad
- Existing Off Road Trail
- Existing On Road Bike Route
- Proposed On Road Bike Route
- Traffic Counts
- Water



Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co  
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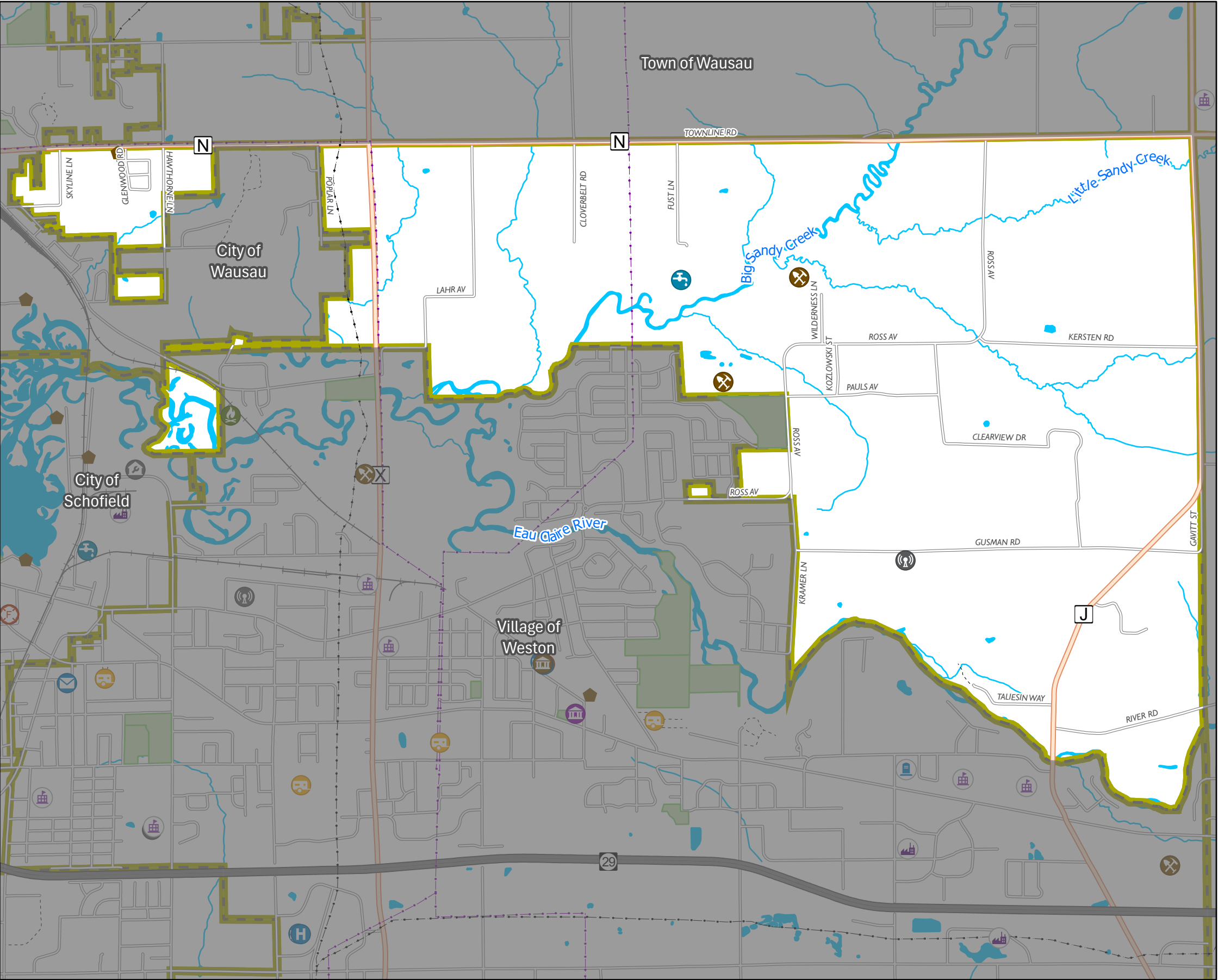


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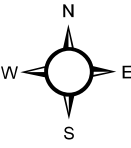
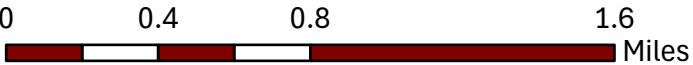
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Utilities & Community Facilities



- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Railroad
- High Voltage Powerline
- Gas & Oil Pipeline
- Ambulance
- Cemetery
- Fire Station
- Former Landfill
- Hospital
- Industrial Park
- Mobile Home Park
- Non Metallic Mines
- Police Station
- Post Office
- School
- Town Garage
- Town Hall
- Village Hall
- Youth Camp
- Communication Towers
- Municipal Water Supply
- Park
- Water



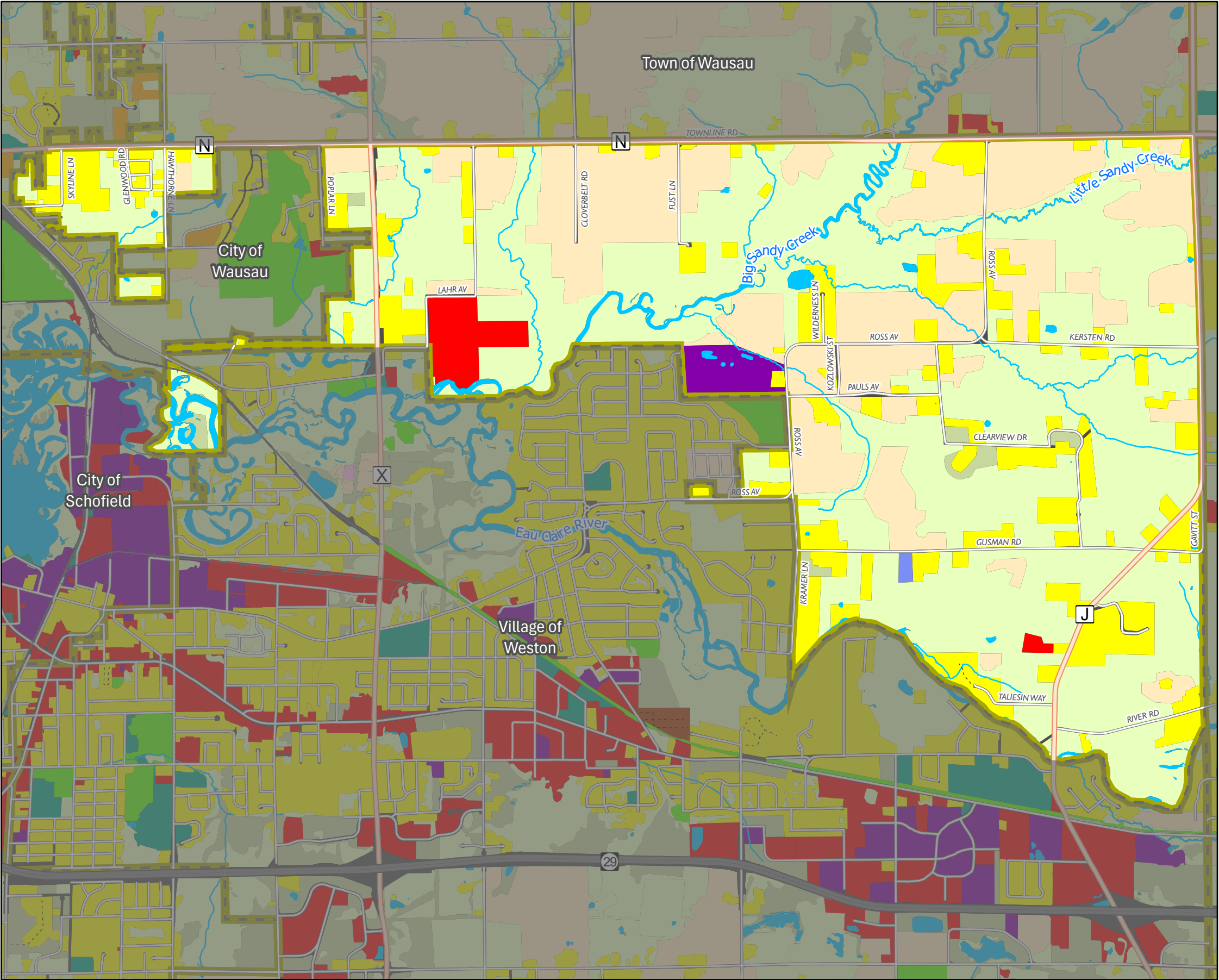
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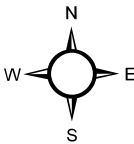
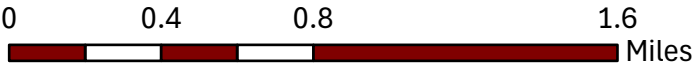
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Existing Land Use

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Railroad
- Existing Land Use 2025
  - Agriculture
  - Commercial
  - Governmental / Institutional
  - Industrial
  - Mobile Home Park
  - Multi-Family
  - Open Lands
  - Outdoor Recreation
  - Quarry
  - Residential
  - Transportation
  - Utility
  - Woodlands
  - Water



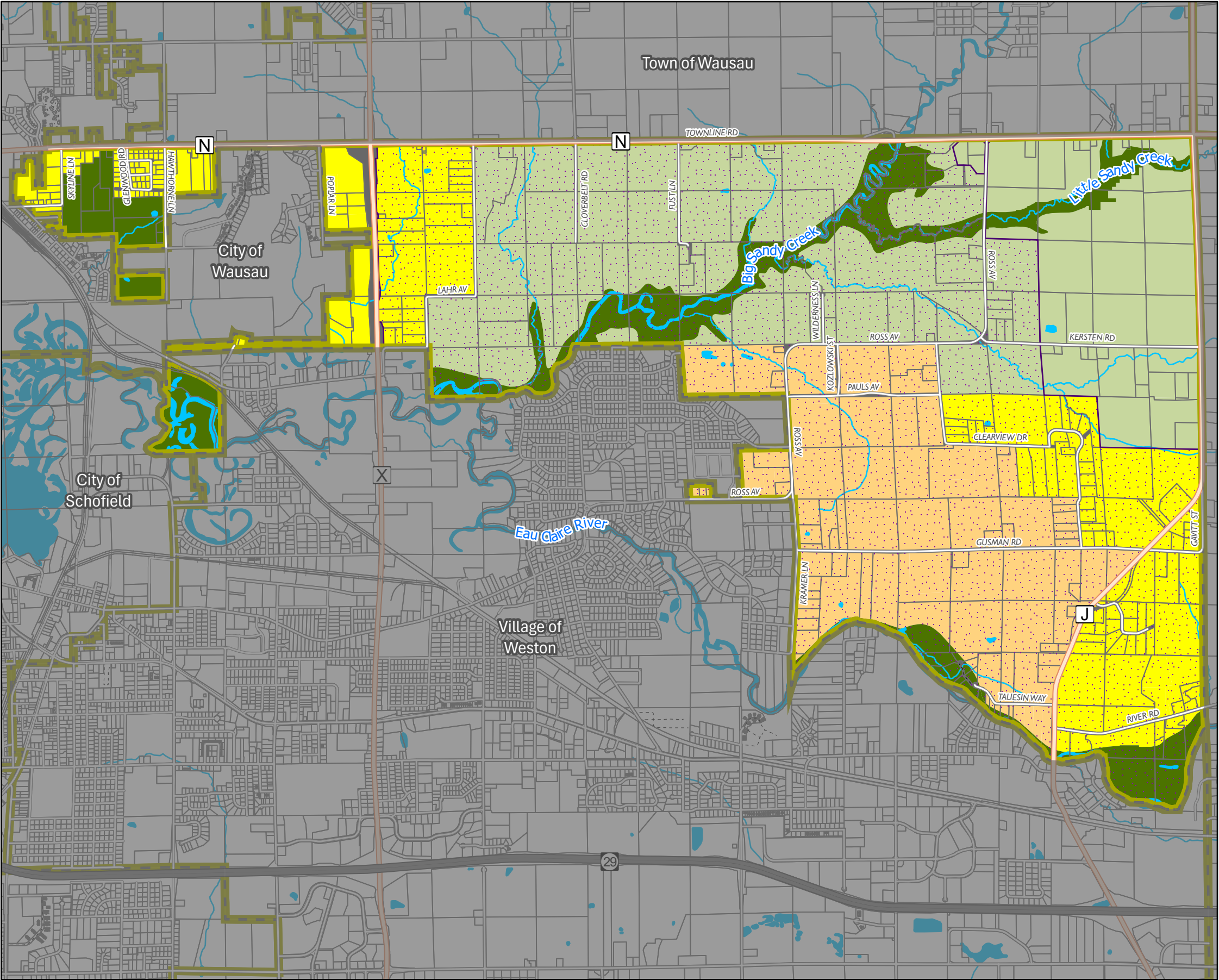
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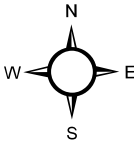
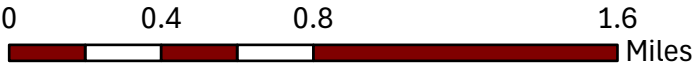
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Future Land Use

- Minor Civil Division
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Railroad
- Parcels
- Village of Weston
- Extraterritorial Zoning Boundary

- Future Land Use
- Single Family Residential - Unsewered
  - Agriculture and Rural
  - Transition
  - Environmental Corridor
  - Right-of-Way
  - Surface Water



Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Marathon Co  
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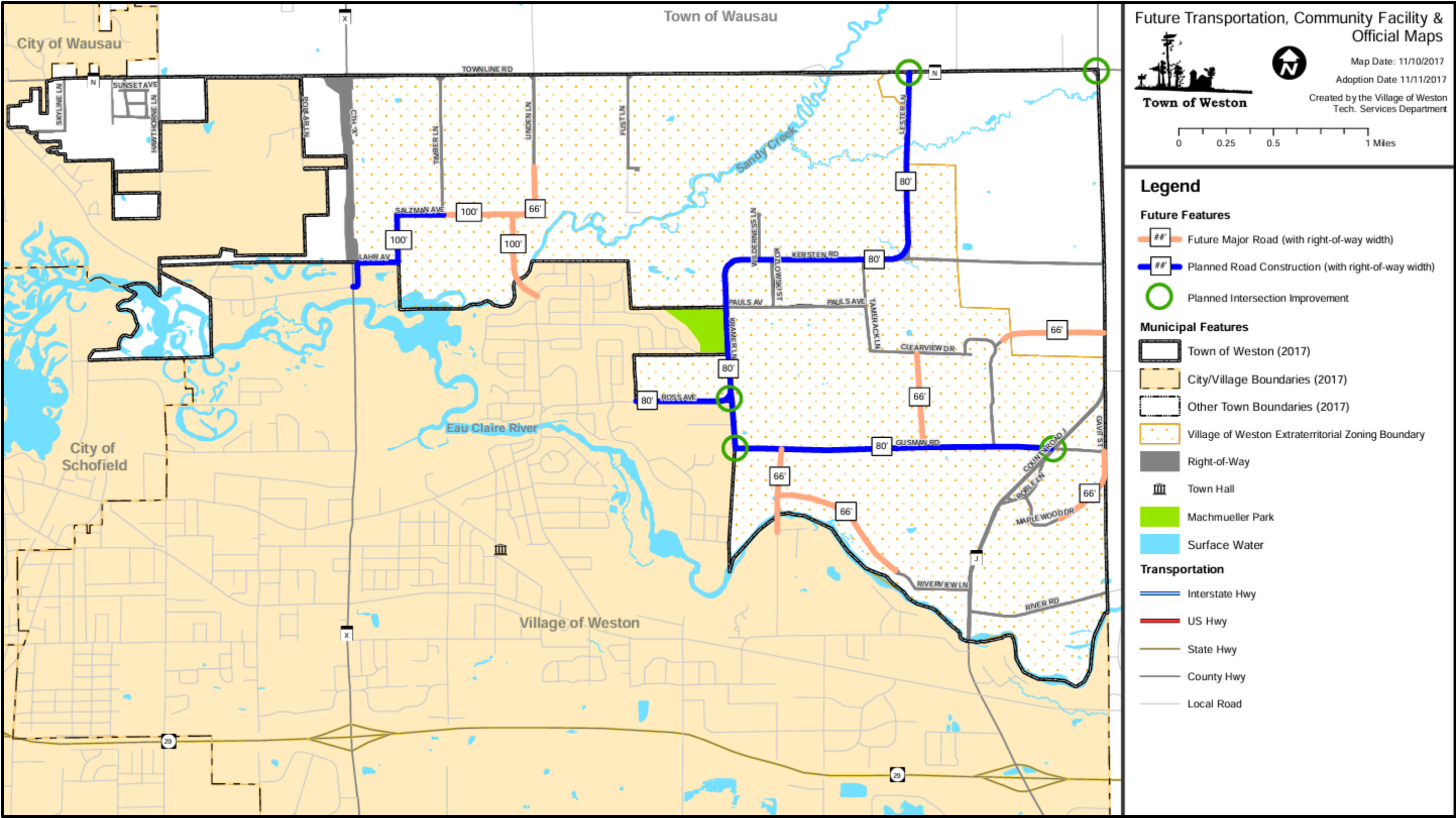


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Map 9: Village of Weston Official Map



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## **Town of Weston Comprehensive Plan Public Participation Plan (PPP)**

The Town of Weston 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 adopt the Public Participation Plan.

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 Office within the South Area Fire and Emergency Response District (SAFER) Station # 2 (5209 Mesker St Weston, WI 54476) for review by the public.
3. The draft plan and maps will be available on a website ([www.ncwrpc.org](http://www.ncwrpc.org)) 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.

---

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)**

THE TOWN OF WESTON 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 Plan Commission to approve a process to involve the public in the planning effort; and

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

I, David Phelps, Plan Commission Chair, do hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted at a Plan Commission meeting, held at the Town Office within the South Area Fire and Emergency Response District (SAFER) Station # 2 on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of February 2026 at 6:00 pm.



---

David Phelps, Plan Commission Chair

## PLAN COMMISSION RESOLUTION

### RESOLUTION #

Town of Weston, Wisconsin

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

Adoption of the Town of Weston Comprehensive Plan.

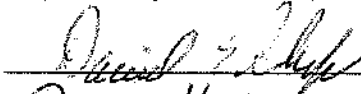
The Town of Weston Plan Commission, by this resolution, further resolves and orders as follows:

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

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

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

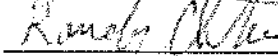
Adopted this 19<sup>th</sup> day of May ~~2025~~ April 2026.

David Phelps: 

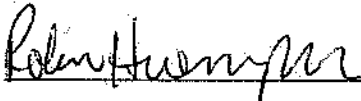
Jim King: 

Mark Hull: 

Connie Conrad: 

Randy Christianson: 

Attest:

Robin Heumpfner: 

## PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing for comments on the Recommended Town of Weston Comprehensive Plan shall be held at 5209 Mesker Street, Weston, WI 54476 on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. The proposed comprehensive plan has been distributed as outlined in the statute.

Dave Phelps, Town Board Chair and Planning Commission Chair, may be contacted to provide additional information on the proposed comprehensive plan and ordinance at 715-574-9622 or [twphelps@westonwi.gov](mailto:twphelps@westonwi.gov).

Robin Huempfer, Town Clerk/Treasurer, may be contacted to schedule an in-person appointment to view comprehensive plan materials or to obtain a copy of them prior to the public hearing. Robin's contact information is 715-241-8209 and [twclerk@westonwi.gov](mailto:twclerk@westonwi.gov). Appointments to view/obtain comprehensive plan materials are held at 5209 Mesker St, Weston, WI 54476.

The plan is also available on the Town's website, [townofwestonwi.com](http://townofwestonwi.com), as well as [www.ncwrpc.org](http://www.ncwrpc.org).

---

#### NOTE:

Under s. 66.1001 (4) (d), Wis. stats., the hearing must be preceded by a class 1 notice under chapter 985, Wis. stats., that is published at least 30 days before the hearing is held.

6/2/26

Posted to website & box at office  
RA.

## ORDINANCE FOR PLAN ADOPTION

### ORDINANCE #TW2026-02

Town of Weston, Wisconsin

#### SECTION I – TITLE/PURPOSE

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

#### SECTION II – AUTHORITY

The Town Board of Town of Weston has authority under its Town 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 Town of Weston 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 Town of Weston 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 Weston 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 Town of Weston 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 Town of Weston, 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 Weston Comprehensive Plan, which contains all the elements specified in s. 66.1001 (2), Wis. stats.

#### SECTION VI – PUBLIC HEARING

The Town of Weston Board 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 Town of Weston, by the enactment of this ordinance, formally adopts the document entitled Town of Weston 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.

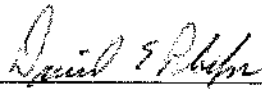
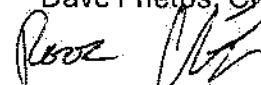
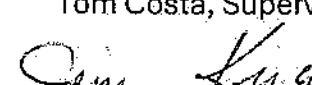
## SECTION IX – EFFECTIVE DATE

This ordinance is effective on publication or posting.

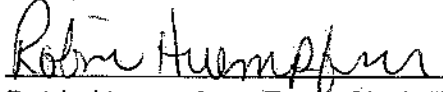
The Town clerk shall properly post or publish this ordinance as required under s. 60.80, Wis. stats.

Adopted this 18 day of August 2026

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, TOWN OF WESTON

By:   
Dave Phelps, Chairman  
  
Rock Christiansen, Supervisor  
  
Thomas Salzman, Supervisor  
  
Tom Costa, Supervisor  
  
Jim King, Supervisor

ATTEST:

  
Robin Huempfer, Town Clerk/Treasurer