

Sustainability and Shared Services Feasibility Analysis

Village of Park Ridge

FOR
Park Ridge Village Board
PORTAGE COUNTY, WISCONSIN



October 3, 2025

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. PROJECT OVERVIEW
- II. PROJECT WORK TASKS
- III. ASSESSMENTS, OBSERVATIONS, AND DOCUMENTATIONS
 - a. Assessment of Current Operations
 - b. Current and Anticipated Budget Concerns
 - c. Major Infrastructure and Equipment Replacement Needs
 - d. Political and Social Issues
- IV. RECOMMENDATIONS
- V. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

TABLES

Table 1

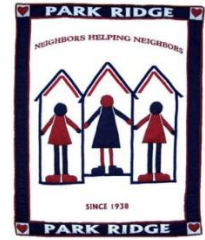


SUSTAINABILITY AND SHARED SERVICES FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

Village Park Ridge

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McM. No. P1019-04-25-00611

I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Village of Park Ridge obtained an Innovation Planning Grant through the Wisconsin Department of Revenue with the objective to analyze and evaluate the feasibility of shared services and/or consolidation with another municipality, presumably, the City of Stevens Point. The project aims to:

1. Compile and assess the sustainability of the Village's staffing and delivery of services, their present and future cost to Village taxpayers, and compare this with similar Wisconsin municipalities;
2. Identify possible cost-effective alternatives for delivery of services (i.e., shared services);
3. Determine the feasibility of consolidation with a neighboring municipality – presumably the City of Stevens Point – and whether this would provide a greater level of service, greater reliability of service, or would potentially save Village taxpayers on the delivery of services which may include: administrative services, emergency services, fire protection, information technology, public safety, public works, and others.

McMahon was retained by the Village of Park Ridge to conduct a sustainability and share services feasibility analysis for the Village. The scope of the project included:

- ◆ Develop a Project Team of appropriate users and stakeholders to oversee and participate in the project. The Project Team will coordinate project schedules, evaluate findings and recommendations, and review and present the final documents.
- ◆ Prepare for and conduct Project Planning Meeting with McMahon Project Manager, the Project Team, and key project personnel. The purpose of the meeting will be to define scope and mission, discuss the work plans, establish liaison responsibilities, coordinate project schedules, and confirm other general arrangements.
- ◆ Obtain and review documentation pertaining to this project, such as Village historical documents, ordinances and resolutions, budgets, current comprehensive plan, strategic plan, community development plans, service contracts, surveys, capital improvement plans, and previous studies.
- ◆ Assess the current operations of the Village and current shared services in order to begin to assess future needs of the Village. Methods include conducting interviews and on-site observations with representatives of the Village administration and neighboring agencies.

The interviews and observations will be held in both group and individual settings. Interviews and observations will primarily focus on the following issues:

- Current Village operations, staffing, and levels of service.
- Current and anticipated budget concerns.
- Major infrastructure needs and equipment replacement needs.
- Economic development plans of the Village.
- Social/Political Issues.
- ◆ Prepare for and facilitate a project status meeting to discuss the results of the interviews and on-site observations and to review the next steps of the project.
- ◆ Prepare for and facilitate a Recommendation Meeting to present preliminary findings and obtain feedback from the Project Team.
- ◆ Develop a comprehensive, detailed Sustainability and Shared Services Feasibility Analysis (Analysis) for the Village, utilizing the information provided by the documentation and data received, the interviews, and on-site observations. The projected growth and level of service needs will be considered during the development of these recommendations to include:
 - Service demand level and ability to meet the demand.
 - Effectiveness and efficiency of infrastructure improvements.
 - Evaluation of consolidation and shared services.
 - Budgetary constraints.
 - Other issues identified during the analysis.
 - Preparation of Draft Implementation Plan in anticipation of State Innovation Grant application.
- ◆ List and describe the findings and recommendations regarding Village administration, services provided, equipment, infrastructure, and staffing that will be included in the recommendations.
- ◆ Prepare budget impact estimates by implementation recommendations, identifying initial and recurring costs.
- ◆ Prepare, produce, and deliver the draft Analysis to the Project Team for review. Facilitate a Report Delivery Meeting to review content as well as schedules and expectations for the remaining project steps.
- ◆ Facilitate an Analysis Review Meeting with the Project Team approximately one (1) week after the initial delivery to answer questions regarding the content of the Analysis. Make any changes to the Analysis based on the discussions at the Analysis Review Meeting. Produce and deliver final document copies to the Project Team.

II. PROJECT WORK TASKS

To complete the objectives set forth by the Village, McMahon first coordinated a kick-off meeting with the Village representatives to develop the Project Team and develop the work plan. Project Team members from the Village included Village President Steve Menzel, Village Trustee Gordon Renfert, Village residents Jim LaMar, and Tori Jennings. McMahon members included Mark Rohloff, Lori Gosz, and Russ Van Gompel.

The following presents an overview of the work tasks completed by McMahon during the project.

1. Obtained and reviewed documentation pertaining to this project. McMahon has received the follow documents from the Village: 2025 Village Budget, Village of Park Ridge Twenty Year Capital Improvement Plan 2024-2043, Village of Park Ridge Comprehensive Plan 2022, Village of Park Ridge Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026, 2021 Community Survey, Snow Removal Contract 2024-2026, Sanitation and Recycling Contract 2021-2026, Fire & EMS Contracts with SPFD 2025-2029, and Village budgets and annual financial reports for the past two (2) years.
2. Assessed the current operations of the Village and current shared services. Interviews and observations were held with the primary focus on current Village operations, staffing and levels of services, current and anticipated budget concerns, major infrastructure needs and equipment replacement needs, economic development plans of the Village, and social/political issues. McMahon conducted interviews with the Village President Steve Menzel, Village resident Tori Jennings, Village Treasurer Melissa Clark, Village Clerk Anne Arndt, Stevens Point Comptroller-Treasurer Corey Ladick, Stevens Point Public Utilities Director Joel Lemke, Stevens Point Mayor Mike Wiza, and Stevens Point City Attorney Logan Beveridge.
3. Analyzed the information received and develop potential recommendations. Facilitated a Recommendations Meeting to present preliminary findings and obtain feedback from the Project Team.
4. Develop a comprehensive detailed Sustainability and Shared Services Feasibility Analysis (Analysis) for the Village, utilizing the information provided by the documentation and data received, the interviews, and on-site observations.

III. ASSESSMENTS, OBSERVATIONS, AND DOCUMENTATIONS

A. Assessment of Current Operations

The Village currently operates with minimal staff. The following is a summary of each department and the observations made.

Village Clerk:

The Village clerk works 20-25 hours per week and 30 hours per week for elections. Over the last 10 years, the Village has had nine (9) Village clerks. Except for the most recently hired clerk, none of the clerks hired had any prior municipal clerk experience. The current clerk has 12 years of municipal experience. The clerk's duties include day-to-day operations of Village administration, including fielding resident questions and concerns, maintaining records of the Village, preparation of agendas and minutes, payroll, accounts payable and receivable, issue all licenses and permits including liquor, operator, tobacco, dog, bicycle, building and zoning, update the Village website, counter sign and publish all ordinance or resolutions, perform all duties prescribed by law relative to elections, contribute to annual budget process with the Village Board, and custodian of corporate seal and all records of the Village.

Elections:

The Village currently has 14 poll workers with Co-Chief Election Inspectors – one (1) lives in the Village and one (1) lives outside the Village (was a former Village resident). The State allowed the Village to have one (1) Chief Election Inspector from outside the limits of the Village, only if the Village is unable to find a resident willing to take on that role. Currently, the Village has enough poll workers to allow for 4-hour shifts at elections with three to five workers on each shift.

Village Treasurer:

The Village currently contracts out for treasurer services. The contracted individual also services as Bookkeeper for the Almond-Bancroft School District as well as Treasurer for the Town of Hull. This contracted individual reviews the Village financial records and completes the Form C reporting with the State. The Village budgeted \$6,000 for treasurer services and \$1,000 for the filing of the Form C report FY2025.

The Village has not had a major audit done by an auditing firm for a number of years. The Village has used Jeff Kropp, an accounting consultant in the past.

Department of Public Works:

The Village has one (1) part-time employee for Village public works. The employee works 5-10 hours per week doing odd jobs on streets, Village Hall maintenance, and Digger Hotline requests. This individual is nearing retirement and will be difficult to replace. The Village budgeted \$2,200 FY2025 for this position.

Streetlights: The Village owns and maintains all streetlights within the Village limits. Poles mainly consist of standard wooden fixtures that are direct buried with no concrete base. Poles are replaced as needed due to knockdowns or pole failure. All but four (4) poles are unmetered and billed on calculated consumption rather than metered use. The Village has converted the unmetered poles to LED lights to reduce consumption; however, it is unsure whether WPS has adjusted the monthly billings rate to reflect this change. Future street light replacement plan is identified in the Village 20 Year Capital Improvement Plan.

Forestry: The Village contracts out for tree pruning and brush removal in the Village street rights-of-way. This contractor is retiring soon, and Village will need to find comparable replacement contractor.

Yard Waste: The Village has an agreement with the City of Stevens Point to allow Village resident to drop off yard waste i.e., leaves, grass clippings, plant stalks, flowers, twigs/sticks, and brush up to 6" diameter, at the City's drop-off site.

Refuse and Recycling Collection: The Village contracts with the Harter's Fox Valley Disposal, LLC for weekly collection of all residential garbage and recycling. The contract allows for one annual large item pickup (usually in fall). Large items do not include appliances,

building/demolition materials, electronics, tires or toxic materials (paint thinners, pesticides, fertilizers, insecticides, etc.).

Street Maintenance: Village street maintenance and repairs are done by the Village President and some volunteer residents. Repairs done are mainly filling potholes with cold mix until hot patch is available by a contractor. Village streets are maintained at a width of 20 feet, with a 2 foot gravel shoulder on each side.

Snow Removal: The Village currently contracts Zblewski Bros. LLC for snow plowing of the 5 miles of roads within the Village of Park Ridge. The contract for season 2025-2026 is \$24,000. The firm providing the service is a small, family business. Its long-term viability to continue providing this service is an ongoing concern.

Municipal Water: The Village does not have a municipal water system. Residents south of STH 66/Park Ridge Drive rely on individual, on-site wells. The City of Stevens Point water utility provides municipal water supply for a limited number of addresses on Park Ridge Drive, Sunrise Avenue and Sunset Avenue, as well as newer residential subdivisions on Angelo Court and Odessa Court north of Park Ridge Drive. In accordance with the Village's agreement with the City of Stevens Point (City Ordinance 13.09, Sect.(b)(2)), Village parcels adjacent to City water main infrastructure constructed in 2025-2026 will be allowed connection in accordance to City standards and paid for by the Village, however, the water system will be dedicated as a contributed asset to the Stevens Point Public Utilities Department, giving the City the responsibility to maintain the system in the future. City Ordinance 13.09(b)(4) also specifies that no more municipal water infrastructure will be allowed to be installed within the Village of Park Ridge until a consolidation agreement is agreed upon.

Affected property owners may choose (at their own expense) to connect to the municipal water system immediately, but they will be required to connect within 10 years of availability. However, if the well at the residence is a non-conforming well (e.g., located in the basement of the house), the residence must connect to the municipal drinking water system immediately upon availability. No new drinking water wells will be allowed at these residences, as use of the municipal drinking water system is required. Cost for the service is billed to the property owner by the City of Stevens Point Public Utilities Department.

Sanitary Sewer: In 1956 the Village installed new sanitary sewer mains and entered into an agreement with the City (agreement amended in 1993) to allow the Village to connect the new sanitary sewer main system to the City's sanitary sewer system and the City would treat the sanitary sewer of all Village residential and commercial users through its sewage treatment plant. The City agreed to provide all Village users with water meters to meter the sewage use at the same charge as the City plus a 25% surcharge. The Village will guarantee payment of any delinquent charges by Village users. The Village would assume all cost to make the connection through the installation of two large mains. The Village would pay for all operations and maintenance cost of the connection mains and system in the Village. The Village agreed to pay the City \$26,267.02 annually for 12 years without

interest. This cost was understood to be the present-day value of the Stevens Point sewage disposal plan and interceptor sewer from the plant on the east City limits as computed by a comparison of the equalized value of the area, and the population of the respective communities. The agreement is to be in effect for 99 years.

All Village water and sanitary sewer utilities that are connected to the City of Stevens Point are maintained by the City and paid for by the Village.

Building Inspector:

The Village has very little activity for residential building inspections, mostly remodeling and additions. The Village does not conduct commercial inspections. The Village Clerk handles all the permit paperwork. The Village Building Inspector retired from his position on 6/30/2025. The Village is considering a contract for building inspection services but is also considering opting out of providing the service and possibly delegating this responsibility back to the State of Wisconsin. It is unknown what the service impact will be should the service be returned to the State.

Zoning Administrator:

The Village Zoning Administrator works as needed and primarily answers residents' questions regarding zoning code issues and also helps with any rezoning requests. The individual is paid a \$100/quarter stipend.

Village Crossing Guard:

The Village hired a crossing guard for the intersection at Park Ridge Drive and Sunset Blvd. The Village budgeted \$4,500 in FY2025 for the position.

Public Safety:

Law Enforcement: Currently the Portage County Sheriff's Department provides response to the Village. The City of Stevens Point Police Department does come through the Village to access the park. The Village may consider looking for a long-term solution in the future. The Village does not budget for law enforcement as it is provided to them by the County.

Fire/EMS: The Village currently contracts with the Stevens Point Fire Department for fire and Emergency Medical Services. The current contract is in effect until December 31, 2029. For many years only one fire hydrant served nearly all of the Village. In an effort to enhance fire protection, the Village is working closely with the Fire Chief and the City's Public Utilities Director to add water mains and hydrants to the Village.

B. Current and Anticipated Budget Concerns

As part of our study, McMahon download historical data from the State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue. Historical data from the state illustrates that Equalized Value for the Village increased by 5.67% annually over the last 10 years. In preparing future

assumptions and calculations, McMahon used an increase in equalized value of 5% for the next eight years. By the year 2033 the projected equalized value for Park Ridge will be \$136,277,203.

On the operational side, the tax levy is estimated to increase at a rate of 2% per year. This operational increase adjusted for the changes in the levy for debt service costs including the current loans, loan in 2025 and potential 2028 would necessitate a levy of \$605,704. The equalized tax rate in 2033 is projected to be \$4.67.

Below is a schedule of the projected equalized tax rates:

Tax Year	Year Payable	Equalized Rate
2024	2025	\$3.86
2025	2026	\$3.93
2026	2027	\$5.20
2027	2028	\$5.02
2028	2029	\$5.48
2029	2030	\$5.28
2030	2031	\$5.09
2031	2032	\$5.46
2032	2033	\$4.67

The fluctuations on the projected equalized tax rate is due to the loan payments for capital projects. McMahon reviewed future debt service payments. In the year 2031 a balloon payment is due for the \$125,000 loan taken out in 2021. By 2028 Park Ridge is projected to be 43.56% of legal debt limit. By the year 2033 Park Ridge is projected to be at 28.58% of its legal debt limit.

C. Major Infrastructure and Equipment Replacement Needs

In 2023 the Village contracted with MSA to complete a Twenty (20) Year Capital Improvement Plan for the years 2024-2043 to maintain and improve its existing infrastructure. The Plan was created to provide the Village elected officials with a tool for evaluating and prioritizing capital projects and identify funding resources. The primary areas of need are streets, drainage improvements, watermains and fire hydrants, and streetlight replacement. The 20-Year Capital Improvement Plan identified the following preliminary project cost estimates.

- \$3,307,000 Street Improvements
- \$2,433,000 Watermain Improvements
- \$ 879,000 Street Lighting Replacements
- Funding Source: \$4,658,300 in Long Term Debt, \$851,200 STP Urban Program, \$904,500 Local Road Improvement Program, \$205,000 General Fund.

The Village's Strategic Plan and Capital Improvement Plan call for large-scale reconstruction of many of the village Streets, most of which are 50-80 years old. Plans also call for adding municipal (City) water mains and hydrants, costing nearly \$1.3 million per mile. The Village has nearly 5 miles of streets that do not currently have water mains. Reconstruction of the first three streets (Hillcrest, Greenbriar, and Ridgewood) amount to approximately 23% of the Village streets and will cost approximately \$4 million for street reconstruction, water mains, and street lighting.

Village residents are willing to make needed investments in infrastructure improvements. In April of 2023, Village residents approved a levy limit increase of \$130,000 going forward. The referendum question read as follows: *"Under state law, the increase in the levy of the Village of Park Ridge for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2024, is limited to 1.38%, which results in a levy of \$233,098. Shall the Village of Park Ridge be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2024, for the purpose of supporting the increasing costs of contracted services, Village operations, enhanced fire protection, and capital improvement debt service by a total of 55.77%, which results in a levy of \$363,098, and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of \$130,000 for each fiscal year going forward?"* The referendum passed 203-85 with a 70% voter turnout.

D. Political and Social Issues

Based on the results of the 2021 Community Survey and the public input from the October 27, 2021 Open House, there is a great deal of community pride in Park Ridge. Follow up questions regarding the survey results confirm the belief that Park Ridge has a "community charm," and a "unique quality." The survey identified "Quality Neighborhoods" and "Natural Beauty" as the most important reasons that residents live in Park Ridge. Features such as narrower, tree lined streets and the lack of sidewalks are often cited as some of these "charming" characteristics. One key comment received was that part of the community charm comes from the fact that there are not a great deal of regulatory standards, meaning that each property has maintained its own unique quality, unlike the uniformity often identified with modern suburban areas. As one resident put it, "I moved to Park Ridge because it's Park Ridge."

As McMahon conducted follow up interviews, a question was posed about how consolidation might impact Park Ridge's areas of strength (quality neighborhoods and natural beauty). The concern mentioned is that Park Ridge would fall into the planning and zoning rules of the City of Stevens Point, including standards for road width, sidewalk installation, and other property-related regulations. The fear is that these rules, if fully implemented, would take away the neighborly feel of Park Ridge, encourage more, faster traffic, and in general result in a loss of local autonomy.

In reality, there are neighborhoods in Stevens Point that have characteristics similar to Park Ridge. They have likely remained in place because of community standards, as opposed to city regulatory standards. Decisions to change these features in Park Ridge would likely be met with opposition at the city level. Every Wisconsin city, including Stevens Point, has

challenges getting all its infrastructure needs met; while not a formal policy or guaranteed, changes to “standardize” neighborhoods would be likely be overlooked because of the many other pressing needs throughout the Stevens Point community.

The services and facilities sought by Park Ridge residents in the Community Survey are those that are difficult for the Village to provide. These services include street improvements (paving and resurfacing) as well as safe drinking water, or at a minimum, a more reliable water supply for fire suppression. Stevens Point has stated on multiple occasions that expansion of water service would require consolidation. If consolidation is a requirement for further extension of utilities, then Park Ridge may very well need to consolidate for that singular purpose.

A final social issue is the ability to sustain civic involvement with such a small community. Elected and appointed officials alike are concerned with the lack of civic engagement. This was a factor in the Village consolidating its fire service with Stevens Point in 2022. This same lack of civic engagement exists for people serving on board and commissions, part-time election workers, as well as the Village Board itself. Some city services are actually performed by volunteer residents; the age of these residents does not make this practice sustainable. With the Village only encompassing 140 acres, the addition of Park Ridge into Stevens Point would make it relatively easy for Park Ridge to be a unique neighborhood in its own right without being burdened with sustaining the level of civic engagement of such a small area. While these observations are more based on logic and less on emotion, at its core Park Ridge has demonstrated its community pride time and again and continued to exist. The question remains: How sustainable will this civic engagement be before the Village runs out of this important social capital?

IV. FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The Village of Park Ridge, like most municipalities in Wisconsin and nationwide, is financially challenged with great pressure to do more with less. The Village is unique in the way that it is a 140-acre landlocked community with no room for expanding its tax base. The State-mandated levy limits, which are based largely on “net new construction”, suppresses small communities like Park Ridge with minimal options to sustain the levels of services required by its residents and businesses without going to its voters with a referendum to increase the levy limit for every street reconstruction project or capital improvement need.

The Village of Park Ridge elected officials have done an exceptional job being innovative in providing for their constituents with basic levels of service, to the point that even the Village President and resident volunteers fill potholes with cold mix in the spring of the year until a contracted service can complete the work later in summer. This is the definition of true dedication to your community!

Our study indicates that the Village cannot sustain itself at this current level. The Village is already contracting for services totaling 63% of its annual budgeted expenditures. During our

assessment and observations, we concluded that Park Ridge has debt limit challenges and borrowing for street projects and the goal to add municipal water mains and fire hydrants to improve fire protection may not be a viable option. By 2028 Park Ridge is projected to be at 43.56% of its legal debt limit. We also concluded that the City of Stevens Point is also challenged with meeting their capital improvement goals. At the end of 2024, Stevens Point was at 52% of their ordinance-imposed debt limit (3% of equalized assessed valuation). Also, the Village currently not only has staffing challenges, but also is challenged with the recruitment of residents to serve important civic roles as elected and appointed officials.

Based on the findings of this study, McMahon recommends the following options to be considered:

1. Apply for the Innovation Grant through the WisDOR to contract with the City of Stevens Point for transfer of the following services or duties:
 - a. Administration, including staffing, payroll, and human resources
 - b. Public works (snow removal, street maintenance and improvements, garbage/recycling collection)

This option, if successful in the grant application, would allow the Village to keep its unique “non-standard” character that residents enjoy. However, this option does not address the concern of providing a reliable municipal water system.

2. Begin negotiations with the City of Stevens Point to consolidate. Consolidation with the City of Stevens Point would alleviate the growing concern of providing reliable snow removal services, garbage and recycling services, street maintenance and improvements, and a municipal water system. With this option however there are concerns with the City’s capital improvement plan and debt limit drawback. Also, the risk that the Village may lose its feel of independence and the characteristic charm. There is also the concern that the Village portion of the tax rate could double after consolidation with Stevens Point. Table 1 illustrates the projected equalized tax rates.

Table 1 projects that a merger of Park Ridge into Stevens Point would result in a slightly lower municipal tax rate for Stevens Point, while resulting in an increase of \$4.00-\$5.00 per thousand for Park Ridge property owners. This sizeable increase represents the cost of having full access to the services of Stevens Point, which may or may not be attractive to Park Ridge residents. It also represents the cost for eliminating the risk that Park Ridge currently has with its limited staff and contractual options, as well as its limited social capital for a community with only 500 residents. This cost of risk is what the Park Ridge Village Board will have to evaluate as it reviews the findings of this analysis.

Table 1
Projected Comparison of Municipal Tax Rates with and without a Merger

City of Stevens Point					Village of Park Ridge			Potential Combined		
Tax Year	Pay Year	Equalized Value	Tax Levy	Equal Tax Rate	Equalized Value	Tax Levy	Equal Tax Rate	Equalized Value	Tax Levy	Equal Tax Rate
2024	2025	2,441,733,600	20,421,231	8.36	87,845,500	339,120	3.86	2,529,579,100	20,760,351	8.21
2025	2026	2,619,975,500	22,362,237	8.54	92,237,775	362,496	3.93	2,712,213,275	22,724,733	8.38
2026	2027	2,724,774,520	24,390,588	8.95	96,849,664	503,575	5.20	2,821,624,184	24,894,163	8.82
2027	2028	2,833,765,501	26,307,610	9.28	101,692,147	510,211	5.02	2,935,457,648	26,817,821	9.14
2028	2029	2,947,116,121	28,393,263	9.63	106,776,754	585,381	5.48	3,053,892,875	28,978,644	9.49
2029	2030	3,065,000,766	30,560,746	9.97	112,115,592	592,283	5.28	3,177,116,358	31,153,029	9.81
2030	2031	3,187,600,796	32,162,944	10.09	117,721,372	599,325	5.09	3,305,322,168	32,762,269	9.91
2031	2032	3,315,104,828	33,127,833	9.99	123,607,440	676,515	5.47	3,438,712,268	33,804,347	9.83
2032	2033	3,447,709,021	34,121,668	9.90	129,787,812	605,704	4.67	3,577,496,833	34,727,372	9.71
2033	2034	3,585,617,382	35,145,318	9.80	136,277,203	584,055	4.29	3,721,894,585	35,729,372	9.60