

2.0 Purpose

During the original draft of the plan in 2005-2006, Town of Woodland Comprehensive Planning Committee, comprised of sixteen area residents, took part in several efforts to identify issues and opportunities facing the Town of Woodland. These issues and opportunities culminated in the Town's Vision as well as its goals, objectives and policies. These efforts included a community-wide survey, community visioning session, an intergovernmental forum, a formal consensus process to agree upon all goals, objectives and policies, including the Town's density policy, an open house to view the draft Comprehensive Plan and a public hearing on the final Comprehensive Plan. During the 2024 plan review, the Town Plan Commission and Town Board joined together to reform the Comprehensive Planning Committee and held monthly public meetings noting each subject and chapter to be reviewed that month. The public were encouraged to join in discussion at the meetings held directly prior to the Town Plan Commission and Board meetings. A more in-depth description and summary of each activity with results are noted in this chapter. Specific background information regarding population, household and employment forecasts, demographic trends, age distribution, educational levels, and income levels and employment characteristics of the Town can be found under the respective chapters that follow in this Plan.

2.1 Community Survey

As part of the original planning process, the Comprehensive Planning Committee developed and administered a community wide survey mailed to a random sample of 500 residents and landowners. The survey questions were developed to ascertain the opinions and perceptions of residents and landowners on the issues and opportunities in their Town. Of the 500 surveys mailed 114, or 23%, were returned. This response rate is just below the average for a survey of this nature, due to its length and the types of questions asked. A copy of the cover letter to the survey as well as a tally of responses is located in Appendix A. A summary of the more significant results of the survey can also be found within the appendix.

Respondents showed a high level of satisfaction with the Town with a good quality of life. Most respondents indicated that they liked the beauty of the area and rural/country setting. Other responses included being near family, Dutch Hollow Lake fishing, farm environment and cost of living. The majority of respondents to the survey indicated that they would support varied forms of community-supported agriculture and value-added agriculture operations. When asked if residents support the direct sale of farm products, 59% indicated they would. Forty-nine percent of residents indicated that they would support forms of agriculture tourism, workdays and educational opportunities, and overnight lodging/bed and breakfasts with an agricultural theme. From a different perspective, 79% of respondents indicated that the preservation of farmland was either essential or very important, suggesting a strong commitment to sustaining agriculture operations in the Town.

Agriculture and recreation represent the two primary forms of local economic activity in the Town, however alternative forms of economic development were considered in the survey as well. In terms of sustaining agriculture, survey respondents were asked if they felt there were adequate agriculture support and complementary services such as cooperatives, agronomists, implement dealers, haulers, etc., in northern Sauk County to keep agriculture viable in the Town. Of the total response from residents, many of whom are presumably not farmers, 37% indicated that there were adequate support services while 47% were unsure or had no opinion.

In terms of other economic opportunities, respondents were asked if they would support business development in areas of existing development. Overall, 53% of respondents indicated that they would support the inception of both small businesses (10 or less full-time employees) and large

businesses (10 or more full time employees) if they adjoin the Village of Valton while only 23 % of respondents indicated that they would support both types of businesses if located in rural areas (areas outside of Valton). When survey participants were asked what types of businesses are needed in the Town, 39% agreed that a market or grocery store is needed while 38% indicate that agricultural supply and services should be added. Thirty-five percent of respondents indicated tourism and hospitality opportunities should be developed in the town.

Land Use is the one element that recognizes the interconnectedness of all of the other elements of a comprehensive plan and ties them all together. Land Use also addresses some of the larger issues in a community, and a study of land use concerns can give specific direction to mitigate land use conflicts by posing standards and procedures that apply to everyone equally. To gain a broader perspective of some of the top land use issues in the Town, the survey asked participants to list their top three land use issues. Through this listing, concerns of too much growth and overdevelopment is the primary issue followed by maintaining the current quality of rural life. High taxes also ranked high. Participants were asked what they want Woodland to look like in 20 years, overall, a large majority of respondents indicated that they wanted Woodland to look like it does now with a mix of residential uses in a rural environment.

2.2 Visioning Session

The Town held a Visioning Session Workshop on March 19, 2007. The Vision Session provided an opportunity for residents and landowners in the Town of Woodland to take part in defining what they believe Woodland should be in the future.

The Vision Session was structured in such a way that participants had an opportunity to express their thoughts on the evolution of a future vision for Woodland. Participants also had an opportunity to identify what they perceive to be the Town's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT's) as related to the future vision as well as the nine elements defined in the comprehensive planning legislation.

Some of the more common 2007 responses included:

- **Strengths:** Small town atmosphere, clean air and water, diversity of people, communication with neighbors, privacy, peace and quiet.
- **Weaknesses:** Lack of communication on town issues, lack of local job opportunities, confusing ordinances, cell phone service, division of communities (lake vs. rural).
- **Opportunities:** Lodging (public camping), density limits on housing, Dutch Hollow available to township, alternative energy sources, organic agriculture production, ATV routes.
- **Threats:** High deer population, ATV routes, division of communities (lake vs. rural), housing development, increase in population, lake water quality.

In comparing these to current issues in 2024, getting reliable cell service throughout the Town is still an issue. However, fiber optic and cell towers have expanded through the Town, but full coverage has not yet been achieved. There is still a lack of economic opportunities as well, as most citizens need to commute outside of the Town for work. The deer population has remained quite high, causing an issue for agricultural producers along with the increased spread of CWD.

There have been improvements in the Town over the last 20 years, such as the creation of the Friends of Dutch Hollow Lake Association which have worked on weed management, water quality, and musk rat removal. The division of the community between locals and vacationers has decreased as more homes along the lake are gaining full time occupants with an increase in retirees. Since this plan, the Town has begun a partnership with La Valle to have a Town patrolman around the Lake. ATV routes have been embraced throughout the County as almost every Town and County Road has allowed ATVs/UTVs.

Equally important to identifying the Town's SWOT's, participants had the opportunity to begin developing a Town Vision Statement. To develop the Vision statement, key vision themes were identified in three separate working groups on large boards. The boards were then compared with the collective group to identify the common 5 themes that appeared on all three boards. These themes not only contributed to the town's overall vision statement, but also served as the 5 major points consider during the planning process. Generally, the 5 major points were as follows:

- Conservation of natural beauty, farmland and open space resources;
- Diversified economic opportunities;
- Assurance of adequate communication and emergency services;
- Community involvement in town government;
- Managed and planned growth.

Overall, utilizing public input, the Vision Session aimed to create a Vision for the town as well as provide direction to the Comprehensive Plan Committee with the development of the plans goals, objectives and policies. The results of the Vision Session can be noted in Appendix B.

2.3 Open House/Intergovernmental Forum

On March 4, 2008, the Comprehensive Plan Committee conducted an open house to present the draft Town of Woodland Comprehensive Plan. Through discussion and submittal of written comments, participants were given an opportunity to comment on the Committee's work and suggested changes.

2.4 Update and Open Meeting Discussion Process

The Town Plan Commission review the original draft during a 9-month period of 2024 with the assistance of Sauk County. Each month at a public meeting in the Town Hall, the Commission reviewed and discussed specific chapters and topics. The County provided updated Census data, maps and assisted in directing discussion. After an initial review of the individual chapters, the Town was provided with a complete draft plan to review.

2.5 Town of Woodland Vision

Please see next page.