



TOWN OF DEKORRA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Columbia County, Wisconsin

PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT: February 2025

Recommended by Plan Commission X.XX.25

Adopted by Town Board X.XX.25 (Ord. 2025-XX)

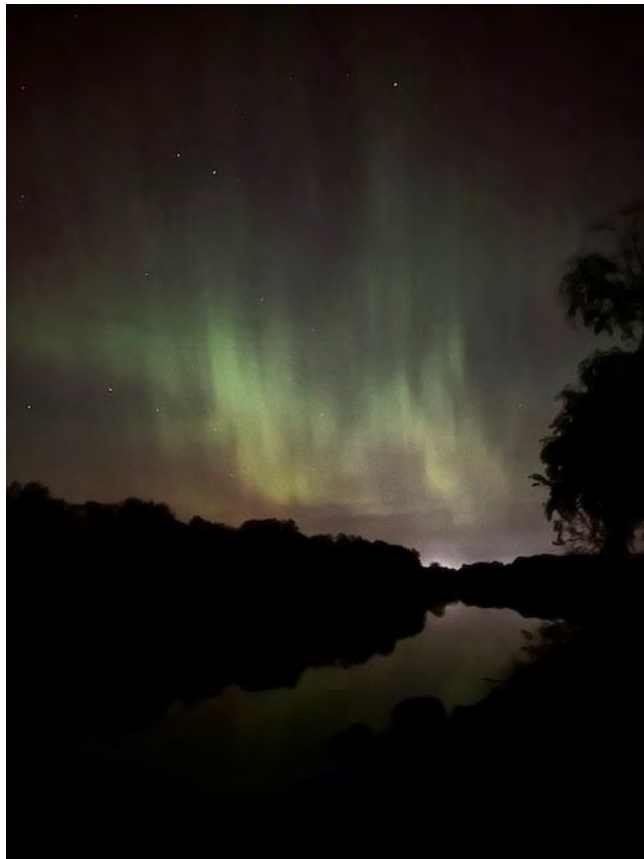
TOWN OF DEKORRA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUMMARY

THE REASON FOR PLANNING

Dekorra enjoys a rich agricultural and recreational heritage, punctuated by the scenic Wisconsin River and rolling hills that define the Town's unique character. The Town's landscape is attractive to an increasing number of residents and visitors. Increasing tourism and growth of nearby communities will place pressure on Dekorra's character in the near future. Dekorra must carefully and creatively plan.

PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan* will help the Town preserve its rural character and, at the same time, attract high quality commercial, industrial, and residential development to planned areas of the Town to help balance its tax base. Carefully planning the location, timing, and quality of this new development will both maximize tax base and assure that the features that brought residents to the Town in the first place are not destroyed in the process.



This *Comprehensive Plan* updates the Town's 2014 comprehensive plan, and meets all requirements of the State's comprehensive planning law. This *Comprehensive Plan* includes ten chapters, covering land use, transportation, agricultural, natural, and cultural resources, utilities and community facilities, housing, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, and implementation.

DEKORRA'S VISION

Dekorra is "beautifully situated" in the heart of southern Wisconsin. Set amidst abundant natural resources and productive farmland, the Town has maintained the integrity of the landscape as a foundation to the Town's quality of life and economy. Building on a vibrant regional economy, convenient access ensures the availability of good jobs to Town residents and attracts businesses. Thoughtfully planned development ensures the small town character of the community is retained, while providing places to live, work, and recreate.

PROTECTING RURAL COMMUNITY CHARACTER

“Community Character” is hard to define, but it is the reason why many people choose to live in Dekorra. The Town’s character is defined by large areas of agricultural land, woodlands, and natural areas like the Wisconsin River and the Rocky Run, Hinkson and Rowan Creeks. To preserve this rural and natural character, the *Plan* will help the Town to:



- Preserve scenic and natural areas, like wooded hillsides and steep slopes, from development.
- Sensitive site new housing on the rural landscape.
- Limit housing density in agricultural and natural areas.
- Protect and enhance the Wisconsin River/Lake Wisconsin waterfront character.

GUIDING DEVELOPMENT

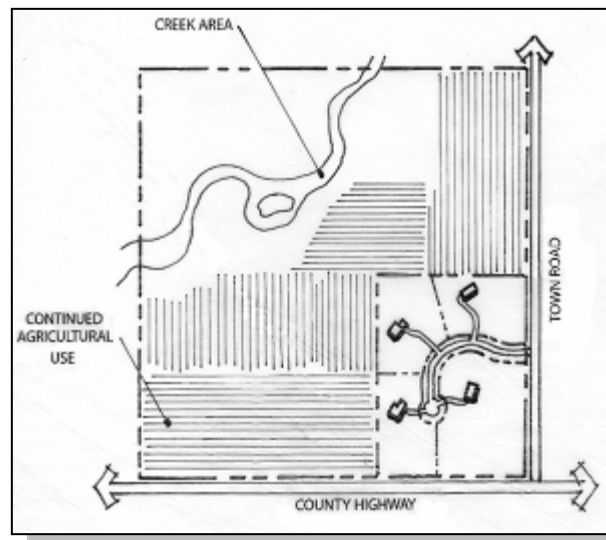
This *Comprehensive Plan* contains a Planned Land Use map (Map 6) to help the Town decide how to guide future land uses. Future development decisions will be based on that map and policies to:

- Guide a quality mix of business development and promoting business redevelopment, mostly to a carefully planned, publicly sewered area near the Interstate 39/Highway CS Interchange.
- Allow for modest residential development, clustered in parts of the Town and within parcels in the places that make the most sense.
- Keep intensive new development away from productive farmland and sensitive environmental areas, such as wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, and productive agricultural land.

PROMOTING HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

As important as *where* new development goes, is *how* it looks and relates to surrounding uses, roads, natural areas, and the desired rural character of the Town. Through this *Plan*, the Town recommends:

- Siting individual homesites and clusters of homes to preserve existing farmland, woodlands, and other natural areas and scenic views.
- Designing new commercial and industrial developments with high quality building materials, landscaping, lighting, and signage.



- Making sure that new residential and commercial waterfront development and uses (e.g., tourist rooming houses) contribute to the character of the area.
- Treating lands along the Interstate and the Interchange Area as a critical gateway to and an image-enhancer for the Town.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN IN COOPERATION WITH OTHERS

The Town of Dekorra will have to work on further efforts and with other governments to fully achieve its future objectives. Recommendations include:

- Coordinating with Columbia County on unifying and improving plans, ordinances, and policies.
- Working with Poynette on an intergovernmental boundary, land use, and utility agreement.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A. SNAPSHOT OF DEKORRA

Dekorra, located in southwestern Columbia County, contains a mostly rural landscape of drumlins, moraines, and stream bottoms. The 44.8 square mile Town has experienced modest growth due to its landscape and location. Residents enjoy the rural atmosphere of the Town, Lake Wisconsin, and accessibility to nearby centers such as Madison. Interstate 39/90/94 and U.S. Highway 51 run through the Town. Most of the land in Dekorra is undeveloped, but the landscape is punctuated by pockets of residential development, especially along the Wisconsin River and Lake Wisconsin, and limited commercial development mostly near the Interstate and waterfront. Map 1 shows the regional influences on Dekorra and its future.



B. PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The 2024 *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan* is intended to update and replace the Town's 2014 Comprehensive Plan. The purposes of the *Comprehensive Plan* are to:

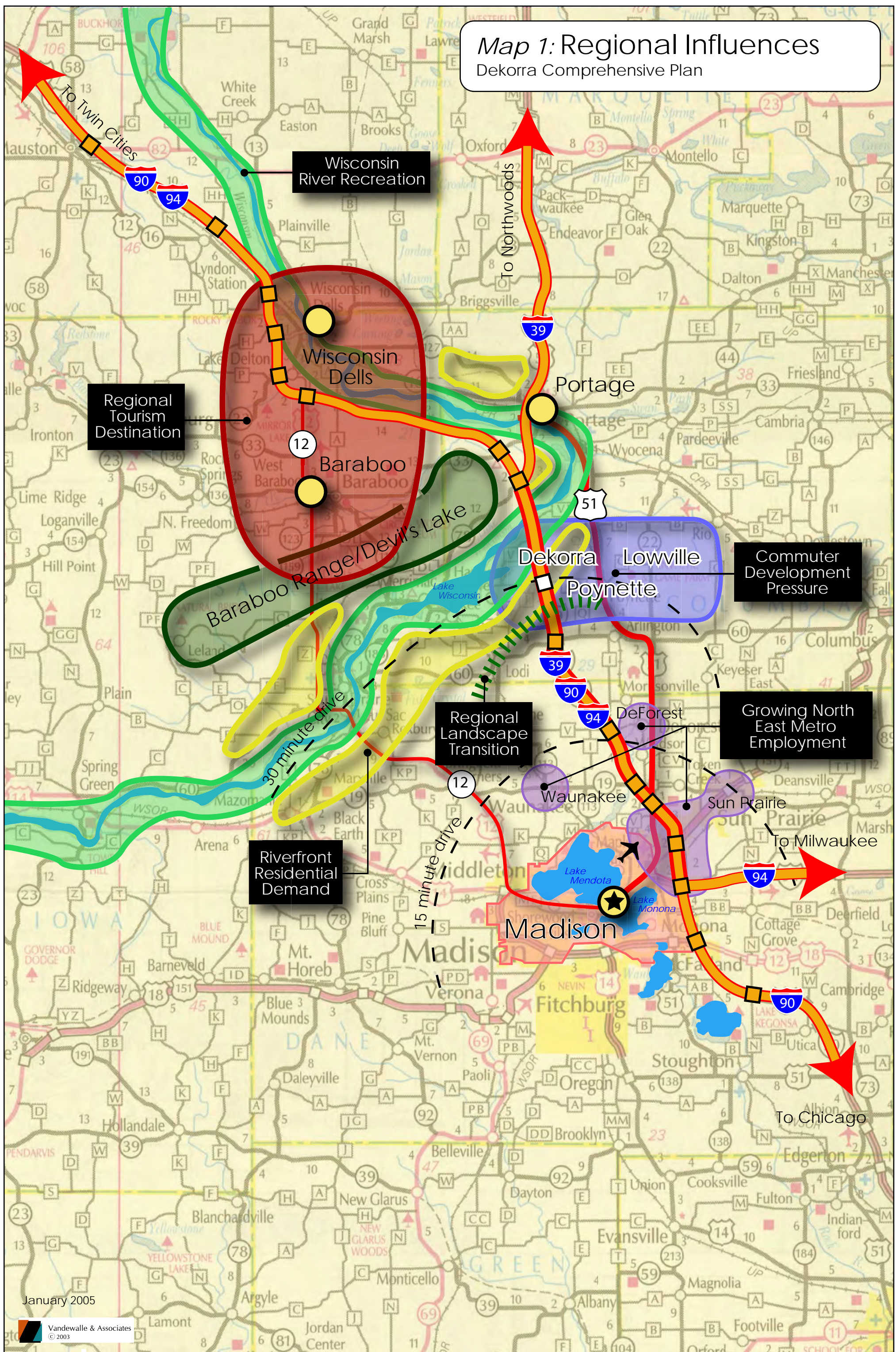
- Identify areas appropriate for development and preservation over the next 20 years;
- Recommend types of land use for specific areas in the Town;
- Preserve agricultural lands and retain farming as a viable occupation;
- Identify the transportation and community facilities to serve future land uses;
- Direct economic development, housing, and other investment in the Town; and
- Provide detailed strategies to implement Plan recommendations.

This *Comprehensive Plan* was updated under the State of Wisconsin's comprehensive planning legislation, contained in §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. The document is organized into several chapters corresponding with the required plan elements under this law. This document also serves as Dekorra's "comprehensive outdoor recreation plan," as defined by the State Department of Natural Resources.

C. GENERAL REGIONAL CONTEXT

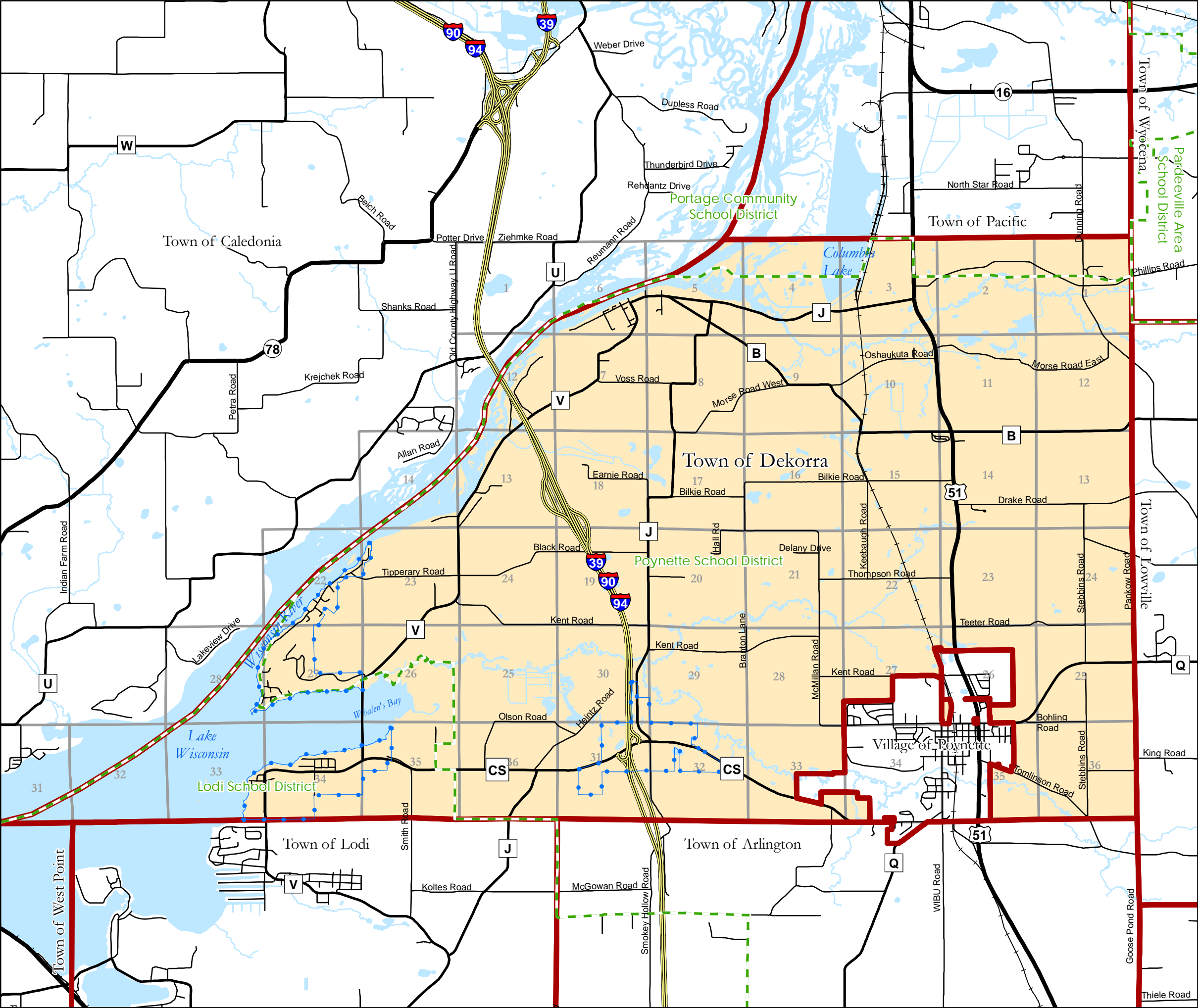
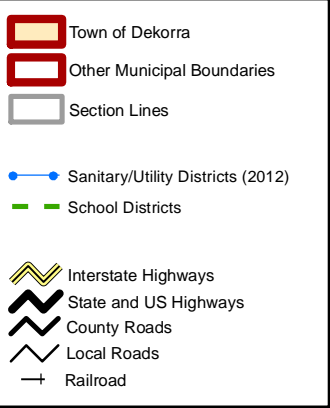
Map 2 shows the relationship of Dekorra to nearby places. Dekorra is in the southwest quadrant of Columbia County, roughly five miles south of Portage. Dekorra surrounds Poynette on three sides—portions of the Town are within Poynette's 1½ mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (which particularly affects land divisions there). Dekorra abuts the Town of Lowville to the east, Lake Wisconsin and the Town of Caledonia to the west, the Town of Pacific to the north, and the Towns of Arlington and Lodi to the south.

Dekorra Comprehensive Plan



Dekorra Comprehensive Plan

Map 2: Jurisdictional Boundaries



Updated: February 28, 2014

Sources: Columbia County LIO, Wisconsin DNR,
US Census Bureau, V&A Inventory & Town of Dekorra.

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Shaping places, shaping change

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CHAPTER TWO: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Overviews demographic trends, background information, and population forecasts to understand the changes taking place in Dekorra, and includes the Town's vision and goals to guide its future preservation and development.

A. POPULATION TRENDS AND FORECASTS

Dekorra experienced significant population growth during the 1990s. The Town grew from 1,829 permanent residents in 1990 to 2,350 permanent residents in 2000—an increase of 28.5% (see Table 1). Dekorra’s growth slowed in the first decade of the new millennium, decreasing by 1.7% from 2000 to 2010. However, from 2010 to 2020, **Dekorra’s population increased by 189 residents, or 8.2%**. This population increase is attributable to a significant increase in the proportion of “year-round” households in the Town (see Chapter Eight), which increased from 72.8% of households in 2010 to 81.8% of households in 2020. This is likely correlated to a number of Baby Boomer retirees converting their former vacation homes to their full time (or near full time) residences.

Table 1: Population Trends

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Population Change*	Percent Change*
Town of Dekorra	1,914	1,829	2,350	2,311	2,500	+189	+8.2%
Village of Poynette	1,447	1,662	2,266	2,528	2,590	+62	+2.5%
Town of Lowville	976	938	987	1,008	1,017	+9	+0.9%
Town of Arlington	752	748	848	806	803	-3	-0.4%
Columbia County	43,222	45,088	52,468	56,833	58,490	+1,657	+2.9%
Wisconsin	4,705,767	4,891,769	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	+206,732	+3.6%

Sources: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1980-2020

* From 2010 to 2020

According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA), the Town’s January 1, 2024 population is estimated at 2,516—a 16 person increase from 2020.

Table 2 shows the Town’s forecasted population growth in five-year increments over the next 20 years based on historic growth trends. The three forecast scenarios in Table 2 reflect different assumptions on the continuation of historic trends and population growth. On average, Dekorra has added about 22 new residents per year from 1990 to 2020.

Table 2: Town of Dekorra Population Forecast Scenarios, 2020-2040

Different Population Forecast Scenarios	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Linear Growth Model (extrapolation of average of 22 new residents per year from 1990 to 2020)	2,500	2,610	2,720	2,830	2,940	3,050
Long-Term Compounded Growth Model (extrapolation of average annual 1.2% population increase from 1990 to 2020)	2,500	2,654	2,817	2,990	3,174	3,369
Recent Compounded Growth (extrapolation of average annual 0.8% increase in population from 2010 to 2020)	2,500	2,602	2,707	2,817	2,932	3,051

Source: MDROffers Consulting

A forecasted 2045 year-round (or nearby year-round) population of somewhere between 3,050 and 3,369 Dekorra residents by the year 2040 will be used as the basis for this Plan. Seasonal (i.e., summer, weekend) population is not reflected in these totals, but anticipated seasonal housing growth is factored in to housing unit forecasts addressed in Chapter Eight: Housing.

The aging population and the Town's attractive setting suggest that Dekorra may continue to be popular for both seasonal vacationers and retirees. Further, anticipated employment growth and higher housing costs in Dane County suggest that commuter housing growth pressure will also be significant. A countervailing trend is lower birth rates. Actual future population will depend on market conditions, regional growth pressure, attitudes toward growth, changing demographics, development regulations, and availability of public utilities.

B. AGE AND GENDER OF POPULATION

Table 3 compares the distribution of Dekorra's population in 2020 to surrounding communities, the County, and the State. Age distribution affects demand for housing, schools, parks, and services.

Table 3: Age and Gender Statistics, 2020

	Town of Dekorra	Village of Poynette	Town of Lowville	Town of Arlington	Columbia County	State of Wisconsin
Median Age	49.4	40.1	46.5	39.3	42.7	39.6
% under 18	16.5%	26.1%	21.4%	24.8%	21.3%	21.9%
% over 65	21.9%	13.1%	15.9%	18.4%	17.8%	16.9%
% Female	46%	50.7%	48.6%	46.6%	48.6%	50.2%

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2020

The median age in Dekorra rose from 40.2 in 2000 to 47.6 in 2010 to 49.4 in 2020. In 2020, Dekorra had the highest median age of the comparison communities, County, and State. The percentage of the Town's population aged 18 and under was the lowest, and the percentage of Dekorra's population aged 65 and older was the highest. Between 2010 and 2020, the Town of Dekorra's median age increased from 47.6 years old to 49.4 years old; the percentage of persons under the age of 18 decreased from 19.7% to 16.5%; and the percentage of persons over the age of 65 increased from 15.4% to 21.9%.

With prolonged life expectancy and declining birth rates, Dekorra's median age will likely continue to rise over the 20-year planning period. The Town's popularity as a location for seasonal and retirement homes will also continue to contribute to the rising median age.

C. EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS), about 96% of Dekorra's population age 25 and older had attained at least a high school level education, relatively unchanged from the 2000 and 2010 decennial censuses. Approximately 27% had attained a college level degree (bachelor's degree or higher), an increase from the 20% reported in the 2007-2011 American Community Survey.

D. INCOME LEVELS

The 2018-2022 ACS indicated that Dekorra's median annual household income was \$117,625 during this period. The ACS data indicates that the percent of Dekorra households below the poverty level was 5.2%--a slight increase from the 2007-2011 rate of 3.5% but still quite low compared to the State.

Based on income tax returns as reported in the Wisconsin Municipal Income Per Return Report for 2022, the adjusted gross income (AGI) per tax return for Dekorra residents was \$82,269, which is

higher than most neighboring communities. The AGI per tax return for all residents in Columbia County was \$67,444; for residents in the Town of Lowville, \$75,592; residents in the Town of Arlington, \$89,193; and residents in the Village of Poynette, \$69,775. This data includes only income subject to tax and income of persons filing tax returns; it does not include non-taxable income and income of persons not filing returns. It does not directly reflect household incomes because tax returns do not always correspond with households.

E. HOUSEHOLD TRENDS AND FORECASTS

Table 4 compares household characteristics in 2020 for Dekorra with surrounding communities, Columbia County, and the State. **Dekorra's average household size of 2.31 persons in 2020 was the lowest of all communities compared.** The fact that Dekorra had the lowest average household size is consistent with the Town's trend toward a higher median age—significant empty nesters.

The Town's average household size has been declining over the past three decades. The number of persons per household dropped from 2.92 in 1980 to 2.48 in 2000 to 2.31 in 2020. The average household size in Columbia County in 2020 was 2.30, down from 2.43 in 2010 and 2.49 in 2000. According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA), average household size in Dekorra is projected to continue to decrease to approximately 2.19 persons by 2040. Household forecasts are included in Chapter Eight: Housing.

Table 4 shows a **notably smaller percentage of year-round homes in Dekorra than in the comparison jurisdictions and the State.** Still, between 2010 and 2020, the proportion of year-round households to total housing units in Dekorra increased from 72.8% in 2010 to 81.3% in 2020.



Table 4: Housing and Household Characteristics, 2020

	Town of Dekorra	Village of Poynette	Town of Lowville	Town of Arlington	Columbia County	Wisconsin
Total Housing Units (inc. seasonal)	1,309	1,143	450	327	26,565	2,727,726
Total Year-Round Households	1,071	1,075	399	323	24,336	2,428,361
Percent Year-Round Households	81.8%	94.0%	88.6%	98.7%	91.6%	89.0%
Average Household Size	2.31	2.33	2.48	2.73	2.30	2.38
% Single-person Households	21.0%	33.6%	19.2%	14.2%	27.5%	30.1%
% with Individuals 60 Years or Older	45.5%	35.9%	38.2%	39.9%	41.4%	39.5%

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2020

F. LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT TRENDS AND FORECASTS

A community's labor force is the portion of the population employed or available for work. The labor force includes people who are in the armed forces, employed, unemployed, or actively seeking employment. According to the 2018-2022 ACS, **1,262 of Dekorra residents aged 16 and older were employed out of a potential labor force of 1,278 Town residents.** According to data from the Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Columbia County's unemployment rate has decreased over the past decade, from 6.0% in 2013 to 2.4% in 2023, which is very low.

Most employed residents of Dekorra work in education services, and health care and social assistance; manufacturing; construction; or finance and insurance, or real estate and rental and leasing.

The percentage of the Town's employed population by sector is shown in Table 5. The percentage of Town labor force employed in manufacturing decreased from 26% in the 2007-2011 American Community Survey (ACS) to 15% in the 2018-2022 ACS. Over the same timeframe, the percentages of Town labor force employed in construction increased from 6% to 13% in finance and insurance from 6% to 9%.

According to the DWD, as of 2023, the largest private employers in Columbia County were Associated Milk Producers, Penda Corporation, Robbins Manufacturing, Inc., Cardinal Class Industries, and Lexington Logistics LLC. Large public employers include Columbia County and Portage Community Schools. Still, much of the Town's labor force is employed outside of Columbia County; the mean travel time to work in 2022 was 32.6 minutes, an increase from 25.9 minutes in 2010.

Table 5: Occupations of Dekorra's Employed Residents, 2018-2022

Industry	Percent of Labor Force
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	17%
Manufacturing	15%
Construction	13%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	9%
Professional, scientific, administrative, and waste management services	9%
Retail trade	9%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation & food services	7%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5%
Wholesale trade	4%
Other services, except public administration	4%
Public administration	4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	2%
Information	1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)

Forecasting employment growth for establishments located within Dekorra is difficult. The Town's greatest number of jobs is near the Interstate 39/Highway CS Interchange. Employment growth is anticipated in the Interchange area will also be scattered employment opportunities along Highway 51 and the waterfront.

G. COMMUNITY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

During the intergovernmental process to prepare the Town's 2005 Comprehensive Plan, Town residents gathered with those from Poynette and Lowville to identify issues, opportunities, and a future vision. As part of this 2024 *Plan* update, the Town reaffirmed but tweaked the following issues identified around 20 years earlier:

- 1. Community Character:** The Town's rural, small-town character is a primary reason why people live in Dekorra. Lake Wisconsin defines the character of the Town and is the main tourist attraction. "Growth" along the lake often means older, smaller seasonal homes being replaced with year-round retirement homes. Most residents appear to support reasonable regulations to help

preserve existing rural and lakeshore community character, and avoid fragmentation of the Town's farmland.

2. **Land Development:** Residents wish to balance new growth with farmland and natural area preservation. Approaches to grow near existing populated areas and to cluster new housing, as opposed larger lots and more scattered development, are supported. There is also a desire to attract high quality commercial development to the Interstate 39/CS Interchange Area, but to generally limit it in most other areas to preserve community character. The Town's housing stock is in good condition, but there are isolated maintenance and code violation problems.
3. **Environment:** Rolling hills, Class A streams, and the Wisconsin River/Lake Wisconsin make Dekorra a special place. Preservation of wildlife habitat, woodlands, wetlands, streams, and other natural areas is important to the quality of life.
4. **Community Facilities and Services:** There is a desire to provide park and recreation opportunities to all areas of the Town, not just the waterfront. Still, there is a strong desire to control property taxes and obtain a fair share of state and federal funding.

Based on these issues and priorities, most residents appear to prefer a future growth and preservation scenario that includes:

- Small-town, rural character reflected in new development
- Joint and responsible economic development planning
- Growth focused in already developed areas and clusters
- Clear edges between developed and open lands
- Unified natural areas
- Coordinated effort to get people to live, work, and recreate locally

H. VISION AND GOALS

Nearly every remaining chapter in this *Plan* includes goals, objectives, policies, and programs. Combined with a vision statement, these provide guidance that the Town will use in making decisions to implement the Plan over the 20-year planning period. Specifically:

- A **Vision Statement** is an expression of the general direction the community wishes to take over the next 20 years. All goals, objectives, policies, programs, and actions to implement the Plan should be consistent with this vision. Dekorra's vision statement is provided on the next page.
- **Goals** are broad, advisory statements that express general public 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. Dekorra's goals are listed on the following page and lead subsequent chapters.
- **Objectives** are more specific than goals. Objectives are usually attainable through policies and specific implementation activities. Accomplishment of an objective contributes to fulfillment of a goal.
- **Policies** are rules or courses of action used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. Success in achieving policies is usually measurable.
- **Programs** are specific projects or services advised to achieve plan goals, objectives, and policies. Programs are sometimes included in the same list as "policies" and are sometimes included in the same section as "recommendations," depending on the chapter.

DEKORRA'S VISION

Dekorra is “beautifully situated” in the heart of southern Wisconsin. Set amidst abundant natural resources and productive farmland, the Town has maintained the integrity of the landscape as a foundation to the Town’s quality of life and economy. Building on a vibrant regional economy, convenient access ensures the availability of good jobs to Town residents and attracts businesses. Thoughtfully planned development ensures the small town character of the community is retained, while providing places to live, work, and recreate.

TOWN GOALS

1. **Agriculture:** Preserve farming as a viable business activity and productive farmlands for continued agricultural use and rural character preservation.
2. **Natural Resources:** Respect the natural environment as an irreplaceable resource for the enjoyment of present residents and future generations.
3. **Cultural Resources:** Preserve Dekorra’s rural, scenic, and historic character.
4. **Land Use:** Promote a future land use pattern that is consistent with the Town’s rural character, but which also focuses economic development near the Interstate interchange and along major highways.
5. **Transportation:** Provide a safe, efficient, multi-modal transportation system that meets the needs of multiple users and minimizes impacts on landowners and farming.
6. **Community Facilities, Utilities, and Services:** Provide basic public services such as police and fire protection, road maintenance and snow removal, recreational facilities, and public utilities in intensive development areas.
7. **Parks and Recreation:** Provide open space and trails for outdoor recreation, access to natural resources, and environmental protection, with safe and efficient neighborhood connections.
8. **Housing:** Provide opportunities for limited housing development, while retaining rural character, productive farmland, natural resources, and historic and cultural features.
9. **Economic Development:** Facilitate high-quality economic development in planned areas that provides quality job opportunities, retains natural resource and agricultural assets, and improves quality of life and tax base.
10. **Intergovernmental Cooperation:** Build on relations with other governments and agencies to achieve mutual goals and deliver services efficiently.

CHAPTER THREE: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Satisfies the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element described in §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes, but does not directly address the use of natural resources for recreational purposes (instead see Chapter Six).

A. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Farming is still a way of life for many Town residents and an essential part of the region and nation. The agricultural landscape also defines much of Dekorra's rural character. The land is punctuated by seasonal changes in crop cover, colors and textures of fields, and significant farm buildings.

1. Character of Farming

Farmers in Dekorra produce a variety of agricultural commodities including dairy, alfalfa, corn, and soybeans, as well as vegetables and fruits for the local market. Most of the farms in the Town remain family-owned.

According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service's Census of Agriculture, the average farm size in Columbia County in 2017 was 224 acres—an increase from 199 acres in 2007. During this same time period, the total acreage dedicated to farming in Columbia County decreased from 316,383 acres in 2007 to 304,058 acres in 2017, while the total number of farms decreased from 1,585 in 2007 to 1,357 in 2017.



2. Location of Farmland

Agricultural land still covers much of Dekorra (approximately ½ of the land mass), but not as much as other towns to the east and south. The largest concentration of farmlands in the Town is east of the Interstate and north of Hinkson Creek.

3. Assessment of Farmland Viability

The suitability of land for crop production is one important predictor of its future viability for continued farming and its level of appropriateness for non-farm development.

The USDA-NRCS Land Evaluation System groups soil suitability for agriculture based on three factors: prime farmland soils, soil productivity for corn, and land capability class. Soils are grouped by suitability from Group I to Group VIII. Group I soils have few limitations that restrict their use for agriculture. Group II soils have moderate limitations that may reduce the choice of crops, require special conservation practices, or both.

Soil suitability for agriculture is presented on Map 3. Approximately 15% of all soils in Dekorra are in Group II and are concentrated in the northeastern part of the Town near Highway 51. There is only a very small amount of Group I soils in the Town. While the Town's soils are generally not as productive as in nearby towns, particularly to the southeast, they still support a variety of agricultural crops as well as grazing.

The viability of land for continued farming is affected by other factors aside from soil suitability. These include size and shape of cropland, farm product market prices, individual commitments to farming (financial and emotional), opportunities for animal farming, conflicts with nearby non-farm uses, proximity to urban areas (sewer and water), and proximity to highways. Each of these factors was considered in making land use recommendations included in Chapter Four: Land Use.

B. AGRICULTURAL GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICES, AND PROGRAMS

1. Goal

Preserve farming as a viable business activity and productive farmlands for continued agricultural use and rural character preservation.




2. Objectives

- a. In planned agricultural areas, limit the amount of non-farm uses, and guide the location of allowable homes on individual sites.
- b. Direct new homes to smaller lots, to locations where housing is already located, and in small clusters where appropriate.
- c. Support appropriate opportunities for farmers to obtain non-farm income.

3. Policies and Programs

- a. Designate **most of the Town as a planned *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*** represented on Map 6, with most of those lands appropriate for A-1 Agricultural zoning.
- b. **Limit the number of homes in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*** by following a maximum residential density policy, described in more detail in Chapter Four.
- c. **Guide the placement of homes**, driveways, and other uses in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* to **less productive soils** and the edges of agricultural fields, as described in more detail in Chapter Four.
- d. Promote the **clustering or grouping of smaller residential lots** in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* consistent with the residential density policy, and promote the use of design guidelines to direct homes away from the best soils and protect rural character. Refer to the Town's Land Division and Subdivision Code and Chapter Four for detailed lot size and clustering standards.
- e. Allow **home occupations, farm family businesses, and other compatible business opportunities** on farm parcels to supplement farming income.
- f. Support farmland preservation tax credits, use value assessments, reform in federal farm laws, and other programs that **encourage the continued use of land for farming**.
- g. Continue to collaborate with Columbia County and the State on **farmland preservation planning and zoning decisions**.

Map 3
Dekorra Soil Suitability for
Agriculture

 Group I Agricultural Soils*
 Group II Agricultural Soils*
 Group III Agricultural Soils*

*Group I, II, & III soils derived from the USDA-NRCS Land Evaluation System. The system uses three factors to determine a numeric rating from Group I to VIII: prime farmland, soil productivity for corn & alfalfa, & land capability class. Group I soils have the highest crop yield & few limitations that restrict their use for agriculture. Group II soils have moderate limitations that may reduce the choice of crops, require special conservation practices, or both. Refer to NRCS documentation for further explanation.



C. INVENTORY OF OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES

Understanding Dekorra's natural features suggests possible locational advantages for particular land uses. It is also essential to understand the location of environmentally sensitive areas where development is not appropriate. This will prevent severe developmental or environmental problems that may be difficult or costly to correct in the future. Maintenance of these natural features is also important for community appearance and the functions they perform for natural communities. Map 4 depicts the Town's environmentally sensitive areas, some of which are described in more detail below.

1. Landforms/Topography/Non-metallic Mineral Resources

Dekorra is situated near the eastern edge of Wisconsin's driftless area. The Town's landforms are characterized primarily by gently rolling ground moraines. Elevations range between 835 feet above sea level at the Wisconsin River and 1,080 feet in bluff areas.

There are a few small sand and gravel quarries located in Dekorra, mostly near the Wisconsin River/Lake Wisconsin. Under State Statutes (295.20), landowners who want to register their property as a nonmetallic mining deposit are required to notify each county, city, village, and/or town that has zoning authority over their property. Registrations must be recorded at the County Register of Deeds in the County where the mineral deposit is located. Columbia County does not have a register of marketable mineral deposits. State law limits the ability of a municipality or a county to rezone or otherwise interfere with the future extraction of a mineral resource from a registered nonmetallic mineral deposit. It is important to note that zoning changes prohibiting mining on land registered as a marketable nonmetallic mining deposit cannot take effect during the registration period. Registration is effective for 10 years and renewable for an additional 10 years. In addition, registration on property with active mining operations can be renewed for as long as mining is ongoing. Zoning changes may take affect after the registration has expired.

2. General Soils Information

Soil suitability is a key factor in determining the best and most cost-effective locations for new development. Problems that limit development on certain soils include slumping, poor drainage, erosion, steep slopes, and high water tables. Dekorra's soils are of four major associations:

- *The Lapeer-Wyocena Association* is found in a wide east-west strip across the center of Dekorra. These soils are found mostly on glaciated uplands, and are characterized by moraines, drumlins, and glaciated ridges. The drumlins are generally east-west oriented. Both Lapeer and Wyocena soils are well drained and consist of a sand/loam mix. These soils have medium fertility and low available water capacity, which may inhibit cultivation in spots. The heavily sloped and ridge areas are wooded. These soils are well suited for development.
- *The Plainfield-Okee Association* is found in the south one-third of Dekorra. The predominant landscape of these soils is sand-capped drumlins separated by low areas of sandy outwash. These soils are generally well-drained. The sandier Plainfield soils occur in outwash plains, while loamy Okee soils are found on the drumlins. The soils are generally low in fertility and available water capacity, and are easily susceptible to drought conditions and wind erosion. Much of this soil association is wooded and provides for wildlife habitat, and also locations for housing.

- *The Houghton-Adrian-Palms Association* is found in three areas of Town, all located along streams (Rocky Run, Rowan Creek, and Hinkson Creek). These soils are usually found in floodplains, and tend to be very poorly drained. Marshes are common throughout this association. These soils have low fertility and high available water capacity, and are often subject to flooding. The soils are limited in their capacity for housing or road construction. Most of the wildlife areas and hunting and fishing grounds throughout the County are associated with the *Houghton-Adrian Palms* association.
- *The Granby-Alluvial Association* is found in the northwest corner of Dekorra, adjacent to the River. These soils are characterized by nearly level or gently sloping poorly drained soils. Available water capacity and fertility are low in this association. Flooding is occasional to frequent, and runoff is very slow. These sand soils can be seasonally dry, and subject to wind and water erosion. *Granby-Alluvial* is poorly suited to crops, although some forage, vegetable, and cash grain crops could be grown in well-drained areas. Housing, industrial, and commercial development is ill suited to this soil association, yet there has been a significant amount of housing built in these areas—often using holding tanks for waste disposal.

The suitability of the various soils in the Town for on-site waste treatment systems is described in Chapter Six: Utilities and Community Facilities.

3. Drainage Basins

Dekorra is located in the Lower Wisconsin River basin. The Lower Wisconsin River basin drains approximately 4,940 square miles of south-central and southwestern Wisconsin. Water quality in the basin is generally good. The primary water quality problems are caused by nonpoint sources of pollution, particularly from agricultural operations. Basins are further divided into watersheds, shown on Map 4. Most of the Town is in the Lake Wisconsin Watershed. The north-eastern portion of the Town is in the Duck Creek and Rocky Run Watershed.

4. Groundwater

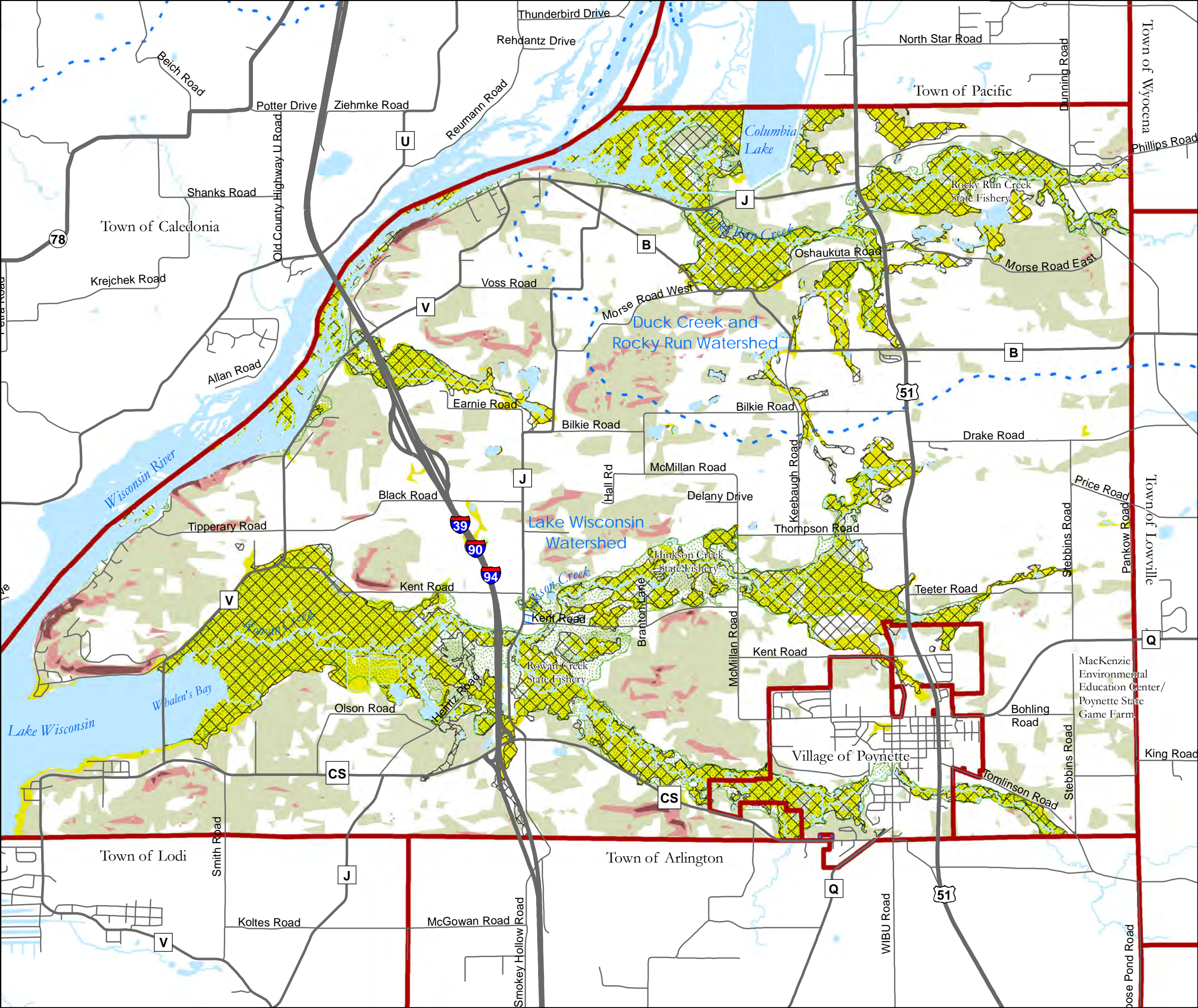
Groundwater resources are plentiful in the Town at both shallow and deep levels. The general geology of the region is comprised of gravel and sand over sandstone or dolomite formations. Water supplies are drawn mostly from the alluvial aquifer made up of the coarse-grained sand and gravel, and are generally of good quality. A large amount of the groundwater withdrawn and used in Dekorra is recharged locally from infiltration of precipitation.

Although groundwater in Dekorra is of good quality, contamination problems can occur. In areas of granular soils, the upper aquifers supplying water are susceptible to contamination from both surface and subsurface sources. The most common and widespread groundwater contaminant is nitrate-nitrogen. Nitrate-nitrogen is highly soluble in water and is not significantly absorbed in the soil, so it can seep readily through the soil and into groundwater. Potential sources of nitrate pollution include on-site wastewater systems, animal feedlots, livestock waste facilities, sludge and septic application, lawn and agricultural fertilizers, silage juice and decaying plant debris.

Another contaminate found in Dekorra groundwater is atrazine, which has been a commonly used corn herbicide. The herbicide and its breakdown products are often found in groundwater in agricultural areas of Wisconsin. Three square miles in the southeast corner of Dekorra, east of and adjacent to the Village of Poynette, are included in the Wisconsin Atrazine Prohibition Area. Affected areas of Dekorra are Section 25, Section 36, the east half of Section 26, and the east half of Section 35.

Dekorra Comprehensive Plan

Map 4: Natural Areas



- Municipal Boundaries
- Highways
- Local Roads
- Watershed Boundaries
- Surface Water

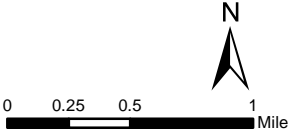
- Slopes 12% to 20%¹
- Slopes > 20%¹
- Hydric Soils²
- FEMA Floodplains³
- DNR Wetlands⁴
- Forested Areas not with other Characteristics⁵

- Slopes extracted from USGS 7.5' digital elevation models.
- A hydric soil is a soil formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part. They are generally not advised for building construction.
- Floodplains are 100 year floodplains extracted from Columbia County's FEMA DFIRM Dataset and modified to reflect LOMA Case # 11-05-1516A.
- Wetlands extracted from WDNR's Wisconsin Wetlands Inventory, which includes mapped wetlands at least 2 acres in size derived mainly from air photo interpretation. All wetlands subject to state or federal regulations.
- Forested areas extracted from WDNR's landcover dataset. Landcover data set is a raster representation of vegetation/land cover for the State. Other lands shown as steep slopes or hydric soils may also be forested even though this map does not represent them as forested.

Updated: December 11, 2012

Sources: Columbia County LIQ, FEMA, NRCS, General Engineering, & Wisconsin DNR.

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5. Surface Waters

Dekorra is bordered on the west by the Wisconsin River and the 9,000 acre Lake Wisconsin, formed by a downstream dam in the River near Prairie du Sac. The lake has a maximum depth of 39 feet. Popular with year-round residents, seasonal residents, and tourists, these waters provide abundant recreational opportunities.

The man-made Lake Columbia is partially located in the Town. The lake was constructed as a cooling pond for the Columbia Energy Center south of Portage. The lake has high levels of fish and aquatic vegetation.



The Town has high quality streams. The following information was derived from WisDNR water body summaries:

- Rowan Creek runs through the southern portion of the Town. 3.6 miles of Rowan Creek at its eastern end are categorized as a Class I trout stream and an Exceptional Resource Water (ERW). 10.4 miles of its westerly stretch are categorized as Class II. Rowan Creek was on the WisDNR's list of Section 303D impaired waters, due to both nonpoint and point source pollution, but it was delisted in 2002. It is now considered by some to be the best trout stream in Columbia County and is home to brown trout, brook trout, mottled sculpin, white sucker, American brook lamprey, brook stickleback, central mud minnow, black bullhead, and fat-head minnow.
- Hinkson Creek is a small, low gradient, cold water, Class II tributary to Rowan Creek. It is 6 miles in length and buffered by wetlands to its junction with Rowan Creek. An abundance of springs throughout the stream course maintain water temperatures capable of supporting a high quality brook trout fishery.
- Rocky Run Creek is a long, low gradient stream which originates from Mud Lake and flows through Dekorra in the northern quarter of the Town. East of Highway 51 the stream is trout water, with 6 miles designated as Class II and 2 miles designated as Class III. Rocky Run has received point source discharges the Columbia Energy Center power plant and (via a tributary) the Rio wastewater treatment plant. The creek has been ranked as a high priority for nonpoint source pollution protection, and would benefit from a pollution reduction project. The Columbia Energy Center power plant is projected to close in 2026 (see Chapter Six: Utilities and Community Facilities).

These surface waters are important to the health of the Wisconsin River. The River has been impacted both by industries (including paper making) and by non-point and point source pollution in its tributaries. Overall, the Lower Wisconsin River is classified as a diverse warm water sport fishery with water quality generally considered good. Water quality problems are typically caused by nonpoint sources of pollution, particularly from agricultural operations; excessive populations of rough fish; and hydrologic modifications such as dams, stream straightening, and the ditching, draining, or other alteration of nearby wetlands. The River no longer supports

commercial fishing, due to pollution, but is home to a number of threatened and endangered species.

6. Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designates floodplains. These are areas predicted to be inundated with floodwaters in the 100-year storm event (e.g., a storm that has a 1% chance of happening in any given year). The State requires County regulation of development in floodplains. Development is strongly discouraged in floodplains to avoid property damage.

Floodplains in the Town are located along Rocky Run, Rowan, and Hinkson Creeks, and along the Wisconsin River. While floodplains are included on Map 4, the National Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) produced by FEMA should be referenced for official delineation and elevations of floodplain boundaries.

7. Wetlands

Wetlands are important for aquifer recharge, groundwater and surface water quality, and wildlife habitat. Wetlands cover approximately 9% of Dekorra. Wetlands in Dekorra are generally found in close vicinity to the streams. Sizeable wetlands are located along the Rocky Run, Rowan, and Hinkson Creeks, and along the Wisconsin River north of the Interstate 39/90/94 bridge. The single largest wetland is northeast of Whalen's Bay near the mouth of Rowan Creek.

Wetlands of at least two acres are shown on Map 4. County zoning regulates wetlands located within 1,000 feet of a lake, pond, or flowage, and within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark of streams or rivers, or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever is greater. Wetlands are also subject to WisDNR or Army Corps of Engineers fill regulations.

8. Woodlands

Remaining woodlands are valuable contributors to the area's character, beauty, and wildlife habitat. About 1/3 of the Town contains significant woodland cover. These areas generally coincide with heavily sloped, floodplain, or marginal agricultural areas. The most common species found in the woodlands are oak, hickory, maple, and basswood.

The State's Managed Forest Law (MFL) program is designed to encourage long-term investment in private forestland and promote sound forest management practices. This program is available to landowners with 20 or more contiguous acres of forestland, with at least 80% in productive forest use. Participating landowners must agree to a forest management plan that includes timber harvesting, wildlife management, water quality and recreation to maintain a healthy and productive forest. In exchange, their land is taxed at a lower rate. To participate in the MFL pro-



gram, landowners commit to a 25- or 50-year sustainable forest management plan. According to the WisDNR's 2024 Managed Forest Law Acreage Summary Report by Municipality, there were 1,722 acres of forestland in the Town enrolled in the MFL program (the equivalent of 2.69 sections of land), up from 1,327 acres in 2013.

9. Steep Slopes

As shown on Map 4, slopes exceeding a 12% grade occur throughout Dekorra, but are more frequent in the central and western portions of the Town. These include lands close to Lake Wisconsin, where significant erosion and run-off events have occurred. About 2% of the total acreage in the Town contains slopes of 12% or greater, and 1% of contain slopes of 20% or greater. Slopes of between 12% and 20% present challenges for building site development. Steep slopes that exceed a 20% grade are not recommended as development sites due to erosion concerns.

10. Hilltops and Ridgetops

Hilltops and ridgetops are important natural features that serve to define the horizon. While commanding impressive views, large structures (houses) constructed on top of them tend to be visually prominent to surrounding lands.

Home placement on hilltops and ridgetops can lead to a perception of greater development in the Town than homes placed more discretely at the base or side of hills with screened vegetation. Hilltops and ridgetops in Dekorra are often associated with steep slope areas on Map 4.



11. Rare Species Occurrences/Natural Areas

WisDNR's Natural Heritage Inventory program maintains data on the general location and status of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species. Rare plant or animal species occur along streams, the Wisconsin River, and Lake Wisconsin. More specific information on location and type of species is available from the state's Bureau of Endangered Resources on a request basis, and is required when development is proposed nearby potential sites.

WisDNR's Wisconsin Land Legacy Report identifies 229 Legacy Places that have been identified as the State's top conservation priorities. There are seven of these places included in Columbia County: Arlington Prairie; Baraboo Hills; Baraboo River; Glacial Habitat Restoration Area; Lewiston Marsh; Middle Wisconsin River; and Portage to Buffalo Lake Corridor.

12. MacKenzie Center and State Game Farm

The MacKenzie Center and State Game Farm are WisDNR facilities, spanning over 600 acres in the eastern part of Dekorra. They are unique among State facilities in their mission of environmental education.

Since its incorporation in 1934, education programs and public contacts have been emphasized. In 1961, a cluster of buildings, built as part of an economic recovery program, and 250 acres were formally set aside “to promote knowledge and wise use of Wisconsin’s outdoor resources.” In 1975, a resident center, authorized and funded through the Legislature, opened to accommodate overnight groups taking part in education programs.



In 2020, 62,000 visitors attended the MacKenzie Center, up from 45,000 visitors in 2019. The MacKenzie Center offers educational programs, interpretive hiking trails, picnic areas, exhibits, and hands on-learning experiences. This includes the logging history museum, the Wisconsin conservation museum, and the Sugar Shack, where visitors learn how maple syrup is made. Events in 2024 included Storytime with Animals, Underwater Wonders: Pond Study, Pollinator Palooza, Chat with a Falconer, Invasive Species Awareness Day, Youth Archery Day, and Feather Frenzy – Summer Birding.

In 2023, WisDNR proposed four potential alternative plans for the MacKenzie Center as part of the Central Sands Hills Region Master Plan. Proposed changes to the MacKenzie Center are intended to address funding issues and concerns over the need for \$5 million to upgrade the wildlife exhibits and another \$5 million for roads, parking lots, and buildings. All of the four alternatives would discontinue the wildlife center, with only one maintaining educational programming at the Center. A second alternative would maintain existing day-use activities and continue to host major events, but would move educational programming to a different WisDNR property like Devil’s Lake State Park. The third alternative would convert the property to a training facility for programs related to hunting, trapping, and fishing. The fourth alternative would focus on a training facility for other outdoor recreational activities.

The primary role of the State Game Farm today is to provide pheasants and chicks for both public and private hunting grounds throughout Wisconsin. Wild pheasant populations in Wisconsin have declined steadily since the 1950’s, due to conversion of wetland and grassland habitat to cropland and urban development. The Farm produces about 75,000 pheasants per year. Adult pheasants are raised for release on public lands, while pheasant chicks are produced and given to 75 cooperating conservation clubs in 35 counties, who raise the birds and release them on private lands open to public hunting.

13. Wisconsin DNR Project Boundaries

WisDNR Project Boundaries, reflected on Map 6: Planned Land Use, encompass lands that the WisDNR has determined represent significant natural features or habitats, typically including and adjacent to existing publicly-owned lands, which WisDNR has an interest in purchasing from willing sellers. The availability of land acquisition funds and the willingness of landowners to sell determine how much land within a project boundary is purchased in any given year, and where. Within project boundaries, WisDNR may also pursue cooperative management of the land with private landowners.

WisDNR will often adopt master plans for individual properties and clusters of properties. On December 12, 2012, the Natural Resources Board adopted the Columbia County Planning Group Master Plan, which highlights WisDNR properties and planning areas within Columbia County and the associated vision, goals, and objectives for the areas. The Columbia County Planning Group includes 19 properties comprising 24,107 acres. The CCPG Master Plan identifies potential property expansions and contractions.

D. NATURAL RESOURCE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

1. Goal

Respect the natural environment as an irreplaceable resource for the enjoyment of pre-sent residents and future generations.

2. Objectives

- a. Preserve streams, drainageways, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, steep slopes, larger continuous woodland areas, and other natural features.
- b. Protect surface water and groundwater quality.
- c. Prevent future problems associated with developing or disturbing land too close to natural areas and on erosion prone slopes.
- d. Cooperate with other units of government on resources under shared authority.
- e. Maintain the peace and tranquility of the Town's rural and waterfront setting.

3. Policies and Programs

- a. Preserve environmental and open space corridors by **prohibiting new buildings in wetlands, stream banks, floodplains, shoreland setback areas, and on slopes greater than 20%**. Also discourage development on slopes between 12% and 20% where other more appropriate sites are available. The Town's Land Division and Subdivision Code and Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Code have specific regulations regarding development on slopes of 12% or greater. Steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains are shown on Map 4. The Town supports more detailed mapping of these natural resources where it is apparent that a development proposal may impact these features, existing maps are in error, or changes have occurred in the features.

- b. **Preserve special landscape features** including the Rowan, Hinkson and Rocky Run Creek corridors; remaining undeveloped Wisconsin River/Lake Wisconsin frontage; bluffs and hilltops; larger woodland habitats; and habitats known to harbor rare or endangered species.
- c. Help protect and improve the **quality of surface water** within the Town, particularly the Hinkson, Rowan, and Rocky Run Creeks, mainly by participating in County and State water quality improvement efforts and encouraging private land stewardship.
- d. Support the formation of a broad-based coalition focused on the **long-term management of the creeks, Lake Wisconsin/Wisconsin River**, and their watersheds. Consider Supporting Creation of Lake Association or “Friends” Group Focused on Lake Wisconsin, as described in greater detail in the Economic Development chapter.
- e. Enforce the Town’s **Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Ordinance**. Emphasize use of natural techniques to control the quality, quantity, and temperature of water leaving any site.
- f. To protect groundwater quality, **avoid the over-concentration of on-site waste treatment systems**.
- g. Avoid extensive hard-surfaces within designated **groundwater recharge areas**.
- h. Before approving any changes in land use, **consider the impact on wildlife habitat**, potential locations of rare or threatened plant and animal species, **and archeological sites** such as mound groups. Ensure that the land use changes meet all applicable criteria in the Town’s Land Division and Subdivision Code and other applicable Town ordinances.
- i. Obtain **drainage easements** from Lake Wisconsin to public roadways where important to secure proper drainage, through tools like certified survey maps.
- j. Continue to participate in efforts to amend, update, and **implement the Columbia County Hazard Mitigation Plan to reduce or mitigate natural hazards in the Town**.



E. CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Preservation of historic, archeological, and other cultural resources fosters a sense of pride, improves quality of life, and provides social and cultural continuity between the past, present and future. The following sections describe the significant historic, archeological, cultural resources in the Town.

1. Early Town History

- a. **Origin of the Name “Dekorra”**
Sébrevoir DeCarrie (or DeCaris), a French fur trader, fell in love with Ho-Pe-Ke-E-Kaw (“Glory in the Morning”) while living among the Ho-Chunk (then called by whites Winnebago). Nation. Glory in the Morning, the eldest daughter of a Winnebago chief, agreed to be his wife in or around 1729, and to them was born a daughter, Oak Leaf, and two sons, Cheu-Ke-Ke (Spoon) and Chah-Post-Kaw-Kaw (Buzzard). After a while DeCarrie wanted to return to his

white culture and take the children with him, but his wife disagreed. The final decision was left to the children. The daughter chose to return to the white world with her father and the two sons chose to stay with their mother.

Sebrevoir DeCarrie became a French army officer and was subsequently killed in Quebec in 1760. The two sons became Ho-Chunk chiefs. It is believed that the sons used the name DeCarrie, but the name was convoluted by the white man's interpretation to become DeKorra, Decorra, DeKorrah, Decorah, Dakouray, Dekora, Decorri, De Korra, DeKauray, and many more variations. The Dekorra Precinct was named in honor of Chief Greyhead Decorah, the grandson of Sebrevoir DeCarrie and Glory in the Morning. Dekorra was adopted as the official township name by the Board of County Commissioners, and later a village was platted within the Town named the Village of Dekorra.

b. The Beginning

Christopher Columbus, on behalf of Spain, discovered a land mass in 1492. Many consider this to be the first foreign entity to claim what is now known as the United States. However, Spain did not clearly define her claim nor did she exert any influence much further than the territory that she actually occupied. When Frenchman Jacques Cartier sailed into the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1534, he laid the basis for later French claims that eventually included much of the continental United States. French control continued until 1759, when the Seven Years War between France and Great Britain ended and Great Britain obtained the undisputed control of all land east of the Mississippi River. At that time, the future State of Wisconsin became a part of the English colony of Quebec. English control continued until 1775, when the colonies declared independence from Great Britain. Aside from its Native American inhabitants, Columbia County, including the Town of Dekorra, had been controlled by four nations beginning with Spain in 1512 to 1634, France from 1634 to 1763, Great Britain from 1763 to 1783, and the United States from 1783 to present.

c. Native Americans

Prior to the claims and domination by foreign nations, the land now known as the Town of Dekorra was inhabited by descendants of the first humans to move into the area as the last glacier withdrew, around 7000 B.C. It is believed that the ancestors of the Native Americans entered the continent across a land bridge from Siberia to Alaska.

The most important topographical feature of Wisconsin in relation to its history is the Fox-Wisconsin waterway, which extends from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River. From pre-historic times, when the native peoples traveled the river, to 1673, when Marquette and Joliet journeyed westward in search of the Mississippi River, and for more than one hundred and fifty years beyond, the Fox-Wisconsin waterway was the most widely used transportation route within the State. The waterway was also a vital link in the great pathway that opened up the west. Along the Fox-Wisconsin traveled the many native peoples, fur traders, missionaries, soldiers, loggers, and early settlers. The waterway was Wisconsin's "First Main Street".

The "portage" between the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers lies eight miles to the north of Dekorra. With only a mile and a half to walk, one could travel down the Fox River to Green Bay and out the St. Lawrence River. Going down the Wisconsin River, one could travel all the

way down the great Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico and up the Missouri River to Yellowstone. This area near the portage was a strategic meeting and gathering point for much of the mid-America continent.

The portage between the Fox and Wisconsin and the large bend of the Wisconsin River were landmarks known across North America as “the meeting place.” From the Ho-Chunk chief, WaukonHaKa Decorah (or Snakeskin), a fur trader named Brisbois learned that the Ho-Chunk referred to the Wisconsin River as the Nee-Koonts-Sa-Ra, or “the Gathering River,” meaning a river having many tributaries. The Ojibwe word for the river, meaning “gathering waters,” was Wees-Kon-san. The Territory, and later the State, of Wisconsin was named for its principal river.

There was an extensive network of Native American trails throughout Wisconsin connecting village sites, numerous fishing, hunting, sugar bush and wintering camps, agricultural garden beds, burial mounds, ceremonial sites, and river landings and crossings. Several major trail systems arrived in the area that was to become the Town of Dekorra. One of the more important trails was the Prairie du Chien to Four Lakes (Madison) to Portage to Green Bay trail, which became part of the Military Road, and which connected Fort Howard in Green Bay to Fort Winnebago near the portage to Fort Crawford in Prairie du Chien. The Port Washington trail from Lake Michigan to the Wisconsin River also came to this area. One of the Ho-Chunk villages was strategically located at the junction of the major trails and also controlled the traffic on the Wisconsin River. It was near the Native American villages at strategic points on these trails that the early French traders established their trading posts and inns. Later, in this area, were platted first Kentucky City (in 1837) and then the Village of Dekorra (in 1843).

d. The Precinct of Dekorra

Long before the Town of Dekorra was established and Wisconsin became a state, there existed the Precinct of Dekorra, which was part of the territorial government. The precinct was named in honor of Chief Grey Haired Decorah, son of Spoon Decorah and Flight of Geese, and grandson of Glory of the Morning.

The area now encompassed by the Town of Dekorra has been a part of five different U.S. territories, the Northwest Territory from 1787 to 1800, Indiana Territory from 1800 to 1809, Illinois Territory from 1809 to 1818, Michigan Territory from 1818 to 1836, and finally the Wisconsin Territory from 1836 to 1848, at which time Wisconsin became the 30th state of the union. Territorial boundaries would shift and change as states were created and admitted into the union.

The boundaries of the counties were continually shifting and changing as well. In 1836, the Territory of Wisconsin was established and the territorial legislature set off a county named Portage from the existing counties of Brown and Crawford. The original Portage County included all of present day Columbia County except a small portion of the Town of Caledonia, which remained in Crawford County; and it also included portions of current day Dodge County and Sauk County. The territorial legislature changed the boundaries of the county in 1838 and once again in 1841. The 1841 boundaries for Portage County included all of the present day counties of Columbia, Adams, Juneau, and Wood; and eastern parts of Taylor,

Price and Iron; and western parts of Marquette, Portage, Marathon, Lincoln, and Langlade. Kentucky City was the county seat for Portage County from 1838 until 1844, when an election was held in the county to determine a new location for the county seat. Plover won out over Fort Winnebago; Kentucky City was not in the running. Three election precincts were established in the area now comprising Columbia County, one of which was at the house of Lafayette Hill, located in Kentucky City, which again later became the Village of Dekorra.

Columbia County was set off from Portage County by an act of the legislature dated February 3, 1846. On July 16, 1846, the three County Commissioners created several voting precincts in the new county, one being the Dekorra precinct. The Dekorra precinct included township 11, ranges 8 and 9 and the south half of town 12, range 9 lying south of the Baraboo River. This precinct included the present day Town of Dekorra, the south half of the Town of Pacific, and all of the Town of Caledonia lying south of the Baraboo River. On November 11, 1851, the Town of Caledonia was created by the County Board of Supervisors, removing it from the Town of Dekorra. Then, on November 19, 1852, the whole of the present Town of Pacific was attached to Fort Winnebago, leaving the boundaries for the Town of Dekorra as they exist today.

e. Villages

Although the Town of Dekorra has always been primarily a rural setting, there have been five villages of note in its long history – Kentucky City, Village of Dekorra, Village of Poynette, Village of Inch, and Village of Oshaukuta. Kentucky City, located on the banks of the Wisconsin River, was platted in 1837, and included the area that would later be platted as the Village of Dekorra. There are reports that a “paper plat” for Kentucky City was drawn up but never officially accepted. On January 12, 1838, Kentucky City became the county seat for the County of Portage and remained the county seat until 1844, when the county seat was moved to Plover. Kentucky City was one of three voting precincts in the county in 1844, as mentioned previously.

Lafayette Hill, owner of Hill’s Hotel and Tavern, was one of the first residents of Kentucky City and was very active in local politics and in the development of the town, as described later during the discussion of the Village of Oshaukuta. LaFayette Hill’s Hotel and Tavern, built in 1837, consisted of two stories and was the only known structure to be built in Kentucky City. However, a reference has been found indicating that a brick maker was located in Kentucky City as well. Hill’s Tavern was designated as a voting precinct on April 20, 1842, when the area was part of Portage County. Hill’s Tavern was again designated as a voting precinct on July 16, 1846, after Columbia County was formed. Hill later sold this business, platted the Village of Oshaukuta in 1848, and established a new public house there. Hill’s Village of Dekorra Hotel and Tavern stood until the late 1950s, when it was finally torn down. During its last years it served as a shelter for a local farmer’s livestock and for storage.

The plat for the Village of Dekorra, which included a portion of the Kentucky City plat, was filed on January 7, 1843, by agents for James H. Thompson of Cincinnati, Ohio. Thompson had purchased the land in the fall of 1842 and named the village after the Town of Dekorra.

At the direction of James Thompson, several stores were built. Between 1843 and 1890, the area had supported several businesses, including grocery stores, shoe shops, taverns, black-

smiths, carpenter/joiners, at least three small hotels, and a post office. LaFayette Hill's Hotel and Tavern was included in the new village as well. The village also served as a supply and rest stop for lumber rafts, steamboats, and travelers on the River. Several homes were built in and near the village. The residents included carpenter/joiners, blacksmiths, a river pilot, a wagon maker, and a Presbyterian minister who served both the Towns of Caledonia and Dekorra in the 1850s, crossing on the ferry to get to Caledonia. The census of 1847 recorded 201 white residents.

The village site was selected because of its landing facilities and the village itself became a major lumber distribution center for southern Wisconsin. The village plat included a 1,000 foot wharf along the Wisconsin River, which was used by commercial river traffic as a landing for the rafts carrying lumber from the northern pineries to destinations along the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers. The rafts would tie up along the wharf area to unload lumber, deliver and take on supplies, and often to wait for the wind to die down so the pilots could see the channel again. Steamboats also docked at the wharf area while they lay on supplies from the local merchants and farmers and loaded on cargo, such as barrels of flour, for delivery to far off places. It is not known what the wharf actually looked like, but local historians believe it was closer to the definition, "a band at the water's edge; shore" rather than "a structure of wood or stone." According to James Hastie, who first came to the area in 1856, "Rafts would tie up to some trees on shore ... When tied up they would take on supplies of eggs, meat, flour; also getting their jugs filled with whiskey and molasses." Rafting, handling, buying, and selling of lumber became the major business of the village. There are stories of oxen pulling wagons loaded with lumber to destinations on the Arlington prairie, in and around Madison, and as far away as Milwaukee.

A ferry, built before 1856, was based in the village, and traveled across the Wisconsin River to the Town of Caledonia for more than 30 years, operated by James McMillan in 1890. The ferry was described as a large scow, usually manned by two men. A cable ran from the top of the bluff on the Dekorra side of the river to big trees on the Caledonia side. The ferry operator would use a pole to push the ferry toward the opposite shore until the current caught the rudder and propelled the ferry to the other side. One account states it cost 25 cents to take a team of horses and rig across the river. They also ferried people, cattle, and hogs.



The village well, dug around 1832, was used until about 1940, at which time it was filled. A building was erected in Dekorra Park to preserve the location of the original well. However, the structure now standing on the site is nothing like the original, which was an open, wooden structure, about four feet tall.

The first village school was located in block three, on lots six and seven. The original Dekorra school house was a simple frame structure that was located across the road from the well. The first teacher was James Wilson. This school was used until the new brick school was built to the east of this site.

The second village school was built in 1878 on lots 10, 11, and 12, block nine. The brick building had separate entrances for the boys and girls. The big wood box was located in the boys' entrance, since the boys were responsible for filling it with wood stored in the wood shed located behind the building. A large, pot-bellied stove was located in the northwest corner of the single classroom. At one time there were three to four rows of desks in the center that were on skids. These desks could be stacked on the outside rows of desks to clear the floor for community dances. There were two outhouses located on the west side of the school and, in the earlier years, the school was surrounded by a wooden fence. The first teacher was James Cross. This school building was torn down in 1958. Many of the bricks from the original school were used in the house now sitting on this site.

The opening of the Madison-Portage railroad, which did not pass through the Village of Dekorra, began its decline. Today, the former village site is the home of a park, several homes and cottages, a trailer court, and a tavern. The former ferry crossing is now a WisDNR boat landing.

A burying ground was provided for in the original village plat, but the land was not officially deeded to the town until June 6, 1864. Many of the original settlers of the village and surrounding area are buried there.

James Thompson sent engineer Peter Taylor to the Wisconsin Territory to build a saw mill at a site Thompson had designated, directly west of the newly platted Village of Dekorra. Thompson sold the mill in 1854. The saw mill was later transformed into a steam grist mill which failed and the machinery was transferred to Blue Mounds.

The first grist mill in south central Wisconsin was erected in 1843, 100 rods from the Wisconsin River, at the direction of James Thompson of Ohio and his partners. Grain was brought from more than 50 miles away for grinding. The flour produced by the mill was exported as far away as the northern pineries. The mill was first leased from Thompson by Joshua Rhoades for three years. Samuel Carr traded his Ohio farm for the mill, sight unseen, moved to the Town of Dekorra and operated it until 1868, when the mill was purchased by John MacKenzie.

John MacKenzie made many improvements to the property, including a rat-proof flour house, which still stands today. The flour house is a 30'x 42' structure with a full basement and floors and walls made of solid rock. The grout and rock on the bottom was seven inches thick. A plank floor was laid over that.

A millrace is "the channel for a current of water, especially one built to use the water industrially." According to one account, a wooden dam was built on Rowan Creek (which flows into the Wisconsin River) just west of where the creek now flows under County Highway J. A dam was built to hold back the water in the creek, creating the mill pond that had been lo-

cated on the south side of the road. At one time a narrow, steel bridge went over the dam. When the miller was ready to grind, someone would open the gates of the dam which allowed the water to rush down the millrace to the mill. The power of the flowing water would turn the water wheel, which powered the mill. One account suggests it was an under-shot waterwheel, meaning the water passed beneath the wheel rather than over the wheel. Later, after the mill was no longer running, a deep, well-stocked fishing hole was formed on the river side of the dam. The Dekorra mill pond was a popular curling spot in the latter half of the 1800s.

The Wilson Inn and Stage Coach Stop was located on the north side of Hinkson Creek, on the east side of County Highway J. James Wilson (born in 1802 in Scotland), his wife Mary Robertson Wilson (born in 1802 in Scotland) and nine children came to Wisconsin sometime before 1843. A tenth child was born in the Town of Caledonia in 1843. In 1850, James Wilson built the inn and stagecoach stop on the old Lodi/Portage Road at Wilson Creek (now Hinkson Creek). Wilson hewed all of the lumber by hand. Mary Wilson died in 1865 and James died in 1878. Both are buried at Dekorra Cemetery.

James D. Doty, the future governor of Wisconsin, sold 160 acres in the Town of Dekorra to William McDonald, a Scotsman. Prior to filing the Village of Inch plat, it is said that McDonald had maintained a store in the Village of Dekorra. On March 28, 1851, William McDonald filed the Village of Inch plat and on February 21, 1866, he filed an addition to the original plat. The Village was located south of the present County Highway B and on the west and east sides of the present US Highway 51.

The true origin of the name Inch is not known but it is believed that it is a variation of the Scottish word for meadow, meadowland, or island. Over 35 lots were eventually sold in the village and the residents included a physician, a minister, a musician, merchants, a blacksmith, and carpenter/joiners. The buildings included several homes, at least one store, a small hotel, and a blacksmith shop. The village had a designated post office and was located on a stage coach and freight line. According to Katherine Hadden's "Forgotten Villages: The Village of Inch," the school, built about 1850, was "a frame building with hewn logs for beams and joists." The school was originally built on Grove Street but, in 1876, it was moved to the west side of Main Street (Hwy 51). Male teachers taught the winter terms "when the husky eighteen and twenty-year-old farm boys attended..." Female teachers taught the fall, spring, and summer terms. The school was closed in 1957.

In 1875, land adjacent to the Village of Inch was donated by William Waugh, one of the earlier settlers, for a church and cemetery. The congregation formed in 1856 and met in the Village of Inch school until the church was built in the summer of 1875 at a cost of \$1,600.00. It took its name from the Village of Inch although it was not part of the village plat. The original building was 26' by 40'. The church joined the Methodist charge in 1878 and was occupied by the Inch United Methodist congregation, which included descendants of the William Waugh family and other earlier settlers, until March of 2009, when it had to be demolished after suffering serious damage from the flooding of 2008.

Many of the early settlers of the Village of Inch and surrounding area are buried in Schofield Cemetery, which is located near the intersection of Thompson Road and US Highway 51 and in the Inch Cemetery located behind the church site.

The 1871 opening of the Madison-Portage Railroad caused the decline of the Village of Inch. McDonald eventually purchased all but one lot back and converted the property into one of the largest farms in the area. Main Street of that village is now US Highway 51 and Grove Street is now Hebel Lane.

LaFayette Hill, formerly of Kentucky City and the Village of Dekorra, purchased land and filed the plat for the Village of Oshaukuta in 1848. The word “oshaukuta” is believed to be from a Native American language and to mean “big spear” or “a good place to spear fish.” The Village of Oshaukuta was located near Rocky Run Creek and the present US Highway 51. The village was made up of 24 lots and many of them were sold. Hill soon erected Hill’s Tavern which he maintained until his death in 1853. The village consisted of about six houses, Hill’s Tavern, a blacksmith shop, store, post office, and a public school. It is rumored that an irate farmer’s wife burned the tavern to the ground because her husband spent too much time there.

The first Oshaukuta grade school, located on a now-vacated road located west of US Highway 51, was used until a new school was built further north on US Highway 51. According to former students of the second school, upon entering the front door, you would either go down a set of steps to the basement or up steps to the entrance to the single classroom. The entry area contained a water cooler and large coat rack. A large black stove was located in the front of the classroom and the teacher’s desk was beside it. The room contained four rows of desks with five to six desks in each row. One teacher taught all classes, which was reportedly interesting for the younger students as they listened to the lessons of the older students, but boring for the older students when they had to listen to the younger students’ lessons. But all students had to sit quietly and listen if it was not their turn to recite.

The school is currently a private home located on the west side of the intersection of US Highway 51 and Phillips Road. This school was originally built about 300 feet to the south of the present site. A basement was dug on the present site and the school building was rolled on logs onto the basement. The school continued in this building for several more years, until the building was remodeled into a home that now stands on the same site. Original date of construction is unknown.

LaFayette Hill died on July 7, 1853. His early death was believed to have stifled the growth and prosperity of the young village. The opening of the Madison-Portage Railroad in 1871 was the final death blow for the village. The main street of Oshaukuta is the present US Highway 51 and a monument has been placed on the east side of the highway to mark the location of this historic village.

The plat of the Village of Pauquette was filed on April 7, 1837 by proprietors Lt. A.S. Hooe and Wallis Rowan. James Doty, a future governor of Wisconsin, filed an acknowledgment on February 8, 1837, that he was also a proprietor of a portion of that plat. The village was

named for the fur trader/interpreter Pierre Pauquette, no lots were ever sold, and the plat was later vacated.

In about 1850, Doty applied for the establishment of a post office at Pauquette, which was granted, but the postal officials misread the name and spelled it as Poynette. Samuel R. Pinney filed the original plat for the Village of Poynette in 1851, naming the village after the already established post office on the site. The plat consisted of 32 lots in four blocks. In 1852 a school district was formed and a school was built one half mile south of the village. The Village was located on the Military Road, which was built in the 1830s and connected the Forts of Howard, Winnebago, and Crawford.

Wallace Rowan was the first settler in Columbia County to file a claim, said claim being filed on June 6, 1836. The creek running through this village was named in honor of Rowan. He built a double log structure on the Military Road near this stream, which served him as a place for Indian trading and accommodation for travelers as well as his family's home. It was the first hotel in the area. The log building later served as the first home of Hugh Jamieson, a school, a dry goods store, post office and meeting house.

The Madison-Portage Railroad, which opened in 1871, was built through the Village of Poynette. This meant great prosperity for Poynette and a rapid decline for the Villages of Dekorra and Inch. No longer was the Wisconsin River a major transportation route.

The Village of Poynette filed a petition with the Dekorra Town Board to separate the Village of Poynette and the Town of Dekorra into two separate corporations. A special town board meeting was scheduled for September 29, 1892 to vote on the separation. The results of that meeting are not known at this time, but it is assumed that the petition was approved by the voters.

The plat of Hartman was laid out in 1857.

f. Rural Town of Dekorra

Joseph Hartman settled on his property in 1849. He was a blacksmith by trade, took up farming and served as a Justice of the Peace for over 30 years. When the Madison & Portage Railroad came through the area in 1871, a flag station and siding was built near Hartman's home. Hartman was appointed postmaster of what became known as the Hartman Post Office, but it was never platted as a village. Area families used the flag station to stop the passing train so they could travel to distant cities such as Portage, Arlington, and Madison. Area farmers used the siding to bring in box car loads of lime for their hay fields or to ship out box car loads of clay for brick making in other localities. The post office and siding was located on the north side of County Highway B, at the intersection of County Highway B and Keebaugh Road.

"...[T]he brawny Scots, who upon a certain moonlight night, with their wives flatirons, hied themselves to the ice at the mouth of the Rocky Run (Creek)," according to James R Hastie, a Dekorra resident and avid curler. Curlers first used their wives flat irons and later progressed to wooden blocks which they made after the image of Scottish rocks. The men first curled out in the open, on frozen ponds or on the creek itself. Later a curling building was located

in the triangle of what is now the intersection of County Highways B and V. The building was built on a tobacco shed frame, water was hauled up from the river below and poured onto the floor. The doors were left open to freeze the water into a single sheet of ice to be used for curling. There was a walkway on both sides and benches to sit on. Community dances were held in another part of the building that was separated from the curling part by a wall and door. Steps led up from the curling rink to the entrance to the other part. The building was demolished in the late 1920s.

Fulton Pond was used for curling in the last half of the 1850s. Legend has it that when Mr. McMillan was digging a fence post hole on this property, he hit a spring and water came up, forming a pond. This property was owned by John Fulton when it became a popular curling spot and is located on the east side of the intersection of McMillan Road and Bilke Road.

Henry Reedal (born in 1788), his wife Sarah Reedal (born in 1807), and their children were a wealthy family that moved to the Town of Dekorra from England around 1850. Grace Hastie tells of her grandfather, Henry Reedal, drinking whiskey and trading horses with the King of England. Upon arriving in Dekorra, the Reedals invested their money in property, raised horses and raced them on their own track, drawing racers from great distances. They also farmed their land using hired laborers. The Reedals were said to be “people of leisure.” Henry and Sarah Reedal eventually sold off all of their land holdings and left the area. The house started as a small, wood-framed structure and the Reedals later added a brick, 2-story addition. The Haupt family purchased the property about 1900 from the Reedals and in about 1906 added the kitchen. A descendant of those early Haupts still lives in the house, located near the intersection of County Highways J and B.

The Town of Dekorra underwent topographical changes along the Wisconsin River in 1909, with the building of a dam in Sauk County. As a result, thousands of acres of farmland were flooded in the western sections of Range 8. The electric power company and the Town of Dekorra then built “Whalen Grade” (a road across the flooded region near the mouth of the Rowan Creek). This precipitated an interest in the area as the newly formed “Lake Wisconsin” attracted people to the area for recreational purposes. The Plat of Wisconsin Beach Gardens was laid out in 1923.

g. Rural Schools

In addition to the grade schools built in the various villages of the town, there were several other schools built to serve the children located in the rural areas. It is unknown when Hastie School was actually built, but area students attended until 1943, when the school was closed due to low attendance. The school was built on the east side of County Highway J, near its intersection with Black Road. The remaining students were transferred to Lincoln School. It is believed the Hastie School was sold and moved to the lake area to be used as a cottage.

The first Lincoln School was located on the north side of Black Road where it intersects County Highway V. It is said that the school also served as a place of worship for a Baptist congregation. It is reported that this building was later moved to Schiefelbein Road and used as a cottage. The second Lincoln School was built on the south side of Black Road at the

same intersection and was used as a school until the mid to late 1970s. It has since been remodeled and is used as a private residence.

The northern district of the Spring Prairie Lutheran congregation (Dekorra) met on January 13, 1868, to plan the building of a meeting place and school house, which was later called the Olson School. The school and meeting place, located on County Highway CS across from Smith Road, was to be a frame structure of 20 x 30 x 10 feet. The Dekorra Lutheran congregation, numbering 83 members, was organized in 1869 as an annex to the Spring Prairie charge. The congregation worshipped at the school until they built their church in 1869, located at the intersection of County Highway CS and Smith Road. A new church was built in 1971. The Dekorra Lutheran Cemetery was originally established as a burial place for Norwegians by the local Lutherans. The cemetery association was organized in 1949 to maintain the grounds.

The Jefferson School was built on the north side of Teeter Road, about halfway between US Highway 51 and Stebbins Road. There is little information available about this school at this time. It is known that Iva Cuff Robson Luther was one of the teachers.

Pershing School was located on the north side of Thompson Road, just west of the intersection of Thompson and Keebaugh Roads. According to one account, steps led to the front door of this school, which opened into a long coat room. That in turn led to the single room where all classes were taught by one teacher. Students carried in wood from the shed behind the school to feed the wood stove located in the front, left corner. The teacher sat to the right of the stove in front of the black board. Shelves were located in the back, right corner where the students stored their lunches. There was also a door in this corner that opened into a small kitchen. Students brought in water from the well located near the front steps to fill the water cooler. The two outhouses, one for girls and one for boys, were located in the opposite, rear corners of the school property. Community dances and meetings were held at the school. The original building has been remodeled into the house that still stands on this site.

There was also a school located on Smokey Hollow Road, referred to as Smoky (without the "e") Hollow grade school. There is no other information available about this school at this time.

2. Remaining Historic Resources

The Town has a fine collection of historic or architecturally significant buildings and sites from the Amish Era. The State Historical Society's Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) contains data on a wide range of historic properties that demonstrate Wisconsin's "distinct cultural landscape," but they do not convey "special status such as National Register designation." As of 2024, the AHI includes 62 documented properties in Dekorra—an increase from the 29 documented in 2013. These properties mainly include houses and farm buildings.

The State Historical Society also maintains a list of properties certified as significant by the National Park Service, and determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Currently, there are no properties in Dekorra listed in the State or National Registers. There are two sites identified as possibly eligible: the Dekorra Mill and the William Black Farm. Several historical societies operate within the area, including the Poynette Area Historical Socie-

ty, the Columbia County Historical Society, the Portage Historical Society, and the Lodi Valley Historical Society.

3. Archeological Resources

According to the State Historical Society there are 49 known archaeological sites and cemeteries in Dekorra. This does not include all of the sites that might be present in the Town. Sites include cemeteries (church or municipal cemeteries, burial mounds, and unmarked graves), cabins and homesteads, and Native American community and burial sites. Under Wisconsin law, Native American burial mounds, unmarked burials, and all marked and unmarked cemeteries are protected from encroachment by any type of development. Few of the sites reported to the Society have been evaluated for their importance or eligibility for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

4. Visual Character Resources

Visual or scenic resources greatly enhance the unique community character or “personality” of Dekorra. Visual resources include both natural and human-altered landscapes.

Dekorra is mostly rural in character, but it has been greatly influenced by the development of Poynette, vacation and resort development along the Wisconsin River, and the Interstate. There is a great deal of residential development along the Wisconsin River and Lake Wisconsin. Driving the roads through the development areas along the River is reminiscent of vacation areas of northern Wisconsin. Views of Lake Wisconsin are breathtaking from the Highway V causeway (Whalen’s Grade).

Most of the rest of the Town remains quite sparsely settled. There, the land is rolling and mostly devoted to agriculture, open space, and woods. Cultivated flat-to-rolling fields and scattered farmsteads dominate the landscape. Fields are often farmed to road edges and there are few woodlots. Town roads have relatively little traffic, making them ideal for recreational cycling. Long views of the horizon dominate the visual experience.



F. CULTURAL RESOURCE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

1. Goal

Preserve Dekorra's rural, scenic, and historic character.

2. Objectives

- a. Recognize Dekorra's character is defined by large areas of rolling agricultural woodlands, natural areas, Whalen's Grade, and the historic "Dekorra Village" area near the River.
- b. Identify and protect unique historic and archeological areas within the Town.
- c. Protect scenic views, particularly of rolling countryside and along Lake Wisconsin.

3. Policies and Programs

- a. Emphasize the value of **natural resource areas as focal points** of beauty and recreation (see Map 4 for locations).
- b. Promote the **nomination of historic sites** and perhaps the Dekorra Village to the National or State Register of Historic Places.
- c. Make sure that new development in the Dekorra Village **respects its historic integrity and scale**.
- d. Encourage **new development forms that celebrate the Town's agricultural heritage**. Examples include grouping new homes at the end of a driveway or road to look like a historic farmstead, incorporating existing farm outbuildings in new development, and promoting new building styles and materials consistent with historic styles.
- e. In largely undeveloped areas, promote the **use of existing topography and vegetation to screen** new development from public roads. See Chapter Four: Land Use for more detail.
- f. Support Town parks, local festivals, fairs, farm tours, farm breakfasts, and markets that **celebrate the Town's heritage**.
- g. For the Interstate 39-90-94 corridor, work with the County to **limit additional billboards, communication towers, and unplanned development**.
- h. Work to **upgrade development quality and provide an attractive gateway** at the Interchange Area.

CHAPTER FOUR: LAND USE

Contains a compilation of background information, goals, objectives, policies, and recommended programs to guide the future preservation and development of lands in Dekorra—featuring a future land use map and land use policies applicable to each planned land use designation shown on that map

A. EXISTING LAND USE

1. Existing Land Use Pattern

Most of Dekorra is in privately-owned open space. Much is *Agriculture/Open Lands* on Map 5, with scattered areas of *Woodlands* and *Wetlands* along Rowan, Hinkson, and Rocky Run Creeks with very low development densities. Residential development has occurred near Lake Wisconsin and the Wisconsin River, and along some Town and County roads. Residential development has generally occurred at lower densities (e.g., 2+ acre lots), with higher densities (e.g., < ½ acre lots) in lakefront areas.



Commercial and industrial uses are generally along Highway 51, and at the Interstate/Highway CS interchange where public sewer is available.

Table 6: Town of Dekorra Existing Land Use, 2024

Existing Land Use Designation (see Map 5)	Acres	Percent
Agriculture/Open Lands	15,161	53%
Wetlands	2,672	9%
Woodlands > 40 acres	3,266	11%
Rural Single Family Residential	943	3%
Road	384	1%
Public Open Space	3,082	11%
Private Recreational Use	36	<1%
Surface Water	2,801	10%
Institutional	127	<1%
Two Family/Mixed Residential	39	<1%
Landfill/Extraction	7	<1%
Neigh./Central/General Business	134	<1%
Industrial	41	<1%
TOTAL	28,693	

Source: GIS Inventory, General Engineering Company, 2024

2. Land Development Trends

From January 1, 2011 to January 1, 2023, there were a total of 207 new lots created in Dekorra, all by certified survey map, for an average of about 17 new lots per year. These lots include smaller divisions/consolidations of existing developed residential lots close to Lake Wisconsin,

remnant open space lots divided in conjunction with an adjacent smaller lot for single-family residential purposes, and a handful of commercial and miscellaneous lots. The Town had no new subdivision plats over this period.

From January 1, 2012 and January 1, 2024, the Town added 113 new housing units, or on average between 9 and 10 units per year. Some of these houses were on pre-existing lots, particularly along the waterfront, so not necessarily on new lots created by certified survey map over this same period.

Combined, this data suggests that there were roughly the same number of lots created for residential use in Dekorra between over the past approximately twelve years as were built upon with single-family houses. This continues the trend from 2000 to 2010, when there were a total of 204 new lots created in Dekorra and 100 new housing units built.

In summary, the number of new lots created for residential use has generally kept pace with the number of new houses built in Dekorra, suggesting that new lots have generally not been created for speculative use.

Over this period, Dekorra has also had some non-residential development activity, most notably several expansions to ABS Global Inc.'s breeding complex on Stebbins Road and Love's Travel Stop at the southwest corner of the Interstate/CS interchange in 2016.

B. PLANNED LAND USE

1. Planned Land Use Pattern

Map 6 presents recommended future land uses over the 20-year planning period for all parts of the Town. Changes from the existing land use pattern to realize this planned land use pattern may occur if and when property owners make requests for rezoning, subdivisions or land divisions, conditional use permits, or other development approvals. Map 6, along with policies later in this chapter, will guide Town decision making on future land use changes.

Map 6 shows most of the Town as being preserved for agriculture, open space, and natural areas. Aside from very low density housing in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*, new single family residential development will be directed to areas in and around existing residential development—mainly in areas already zoned for that purpose. New high quality commercial and light industrial land uses will be directed to the *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area surrounding the Highway CS interchange with Interstate 90-94-39, where public sanitary sewer service is available. Other commercial and light industrial uses are allowed within a second *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area along Highway 51 near Columbia Lake. This area is appropriate for small-scale industrial and business uses because it already has some small-scale industrial uses, is located near the intersection of Highways 51 and J/V, has rail access, has soils that are not ideal for agriculture, and is relatively remote from the influence of Poynette. However, it also has nearby residences that should be accounted for with any new development proposal.

Table 7 shows the acreage included within each planned land use designation on Map 6. Each designation is described in detail in the Land Use Goals, Objectives, and Policies section below.

Table 7: Town of Dekorra Planned Land Use

Planned Land Use Designation (see Map 6)	Acres	Percent
Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area	16,637	58%
Environmental Corridor*	3,471	12%
Public Open Space	3,082	11%
Surface Water	2,801	10%
Urban Transition Area	339	1%
Single Family Residential	1,089	4%
Multiple Family Residential/Mobile Home Park	33	<1%
Neighborhood Business	14	<1%
General Business	10	<1%
Industrial	18	<1%
Institutional	127	<1%
Commercial/Industrial Mix	688	2%
Roads (existing roads only)	384	1%
TOTAL	28,693	

Source: General Engineering Company, 2024

* Many Public Open Space areas are partially comprised of Environmental Corridor. For the purposes of this table, these areas have been classified as Public Open Space and not as Environmental Corridor. Therefore, total Environmental Corridor acreage in the Town is more than listed in this table.

2. Projected Land Use Demand

Land demand over the 20-year planning period (in five-year increments) for residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural land uses have been projected. Projected demand is then compared to the potential supply of land to meet that demand, presented in Map 6 and Table 7.

Projected rural (i.e., remaining in Dekorra) residential land use demand is presented in Table 8. The ranges presented in this table are based on the range of population growth forecast scenarios presented in Table 2. Table 8 assumes that the average new residential homesite will be 4 acres, based on recent land division trends. Housing unit forecasts that aided in preparation of this table are also shared and described more fully in Chapter Eight: Housing.

The information in Table 8 suggests that through 2045, lands used for rural residential purposes in Dekorra may grow by between 777 and 1,241 acres over 2024 totals. This is between 1.2 and 1.9 sections of land (square miles) spread over the Town's 44.8 square miles.

Future development planned under Map 6 and the policies of this *Plan* provide enough capacity to accommodate the expected residential land use demand through the year 2045. This is because the *Single Family Residential* and *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation* planned land use designations can accommodate new homes at different densities.

Having an available supply of appropriate land for non-residential development over the 20-year planning period is also important. Based on an analysis of historic growth rates, the Town projects a demand for 20 to 30 acres of land for non-residential purposes every five years during the 20-year planning period. This anticipated demand for commercial and industrial land can

easily be accommodated within the planned *Commercial/Industrial Mix* areas on Map 6, supplemented by waterfront business areas.

Table 8: Projected Rural Residential Housing and Land Use Demand

	2030	2035	2040	2045
Cumulative potential demand for <u>additional</u> housing units in Town (above year 2024 totals)	67 to 106 units	108 to 169 units	150 to 237 units	194 to 310 units
Cumulative potential demand for <u>additional</u> acres of rural residential development (above 2024 totals)	269 to 424 acres	430 to 677 acres	600 to 948 acres	777 to 1,241 acres
Projected <u>annual</u> demand for new housing units in previous five-year period	11 to 18 units/yr	8 to 13 units/yr	8 to 14 units/yr	9 to 15 unit/yr

If past trends continue, the amount of agricultural land in active use in the Town may decrease by up to 200 acres every five years over the 20-year planning period. The Town seeks to minimize the amount of agricultural and open land conversion.

3. Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts

Residential development in the Town has created some conflicts between newer residences and surrounding farming operations and older residential parcels. Activities that make up the day-to-day operation of a farm—slow farm machinery, farm odors associated with manure, livestock noise—are sometimes considered nuisances by new, non-farming neighbors. The Town seeks to minimize conflicts in the future by discouraging intensive residential development in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*, and by supporting full disclosure of farming activities where new homes are allowed close to farms (e.g., “right-to-farm” language on CSMs).

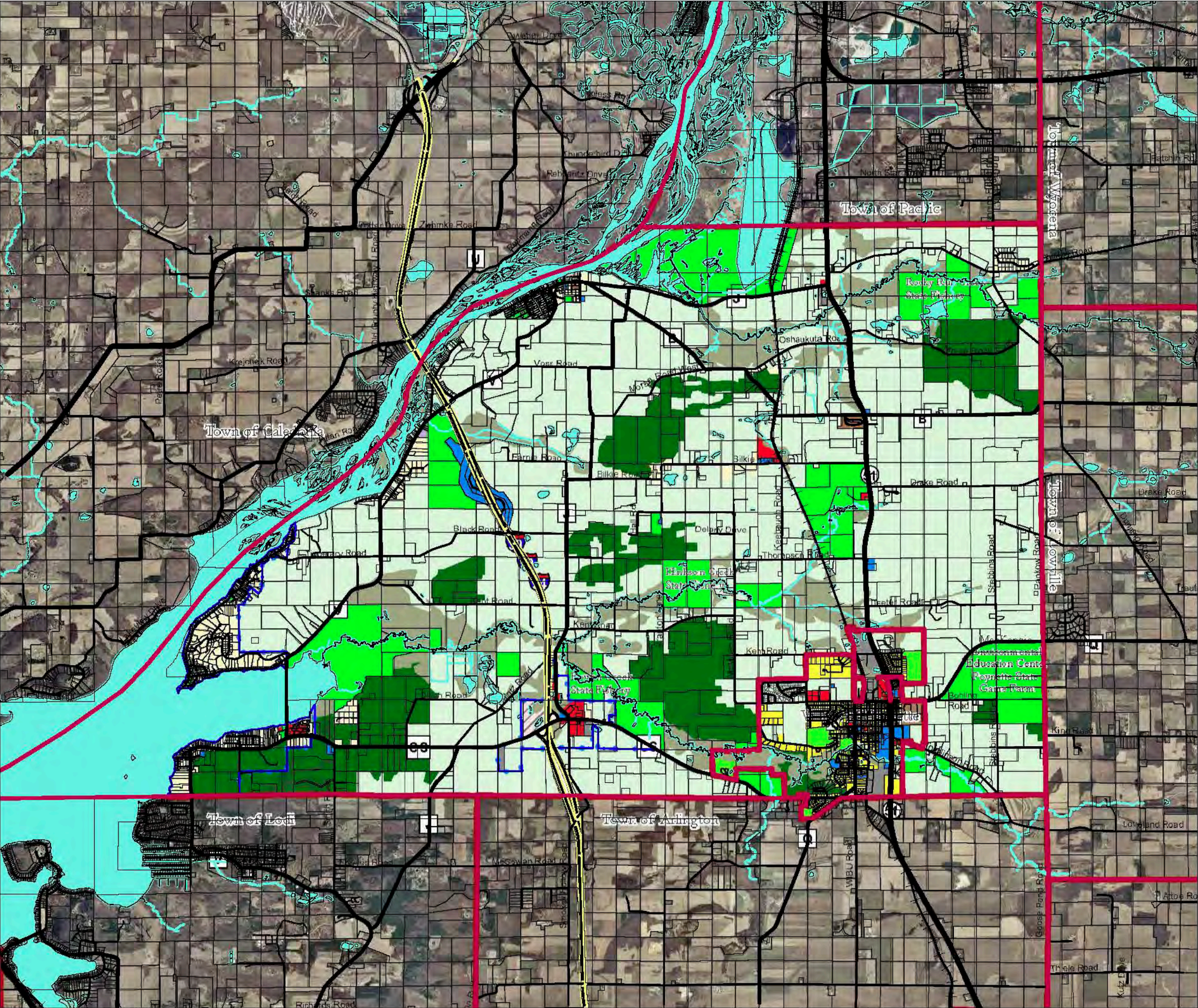
Potential land use conflicts exists in areas where non-residential development is or may be close to areas of existing homes, such as possibly in the planned *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area along Highway 51 near Columbia Lake and the J/V intersection. Within its land use approvals, the Town will take care to minimize such conflicts.

4. Opportunities for Infill and Redevelopment

The Town promotes opportunities for community-sensitive infill development and redevelopment in appropriate locations and situations. Any soil or groundwater contamination on redevelopment sites should be cleaned or mitigated in conjunction with redevelopment. The primary redevelopment area within the Town is the I-39/90/94 Interchange Area, where the Town advocates high-quality redevelopment of older properties, served by public sewer. There will also be smaller redevelopment sites along the waterfront. These often occur where seasonal cottages make way for larger, and often year-round, homes, and in older commercial areas such as Whalen’s Grade and the Dekorra village area.

Dekorra Comprehensive Plan

Map 5: Existing Land Use



- Municipal Boundary (2024)
- Sanitary/Utility Districts (2024)
- State and US Highways
- County Roads
- Local Roads
- Railroad

- Agriculture / Open Lands¹
- Wetlands (DNR)²
- Woodlands > 40 acres¹
- Public Open Space
- Surface Water
- Rural Single Family Residential
- Suburban Single Family Residential
- Two Family Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Private Recreational Use
- Neighborhood Business
- General Business
- Central Business
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Landfill/Extraction

1. Includes existing single-family homes in very low density settings, generally at or below a density of one home per 35 acres.

2. Certain areas of Woodlands on this map may also be Wetlands. Wetlands on this map are per the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). See also the DNR's Surface Water Data Viewer for a complete representation.

Updated on October 18, 2024

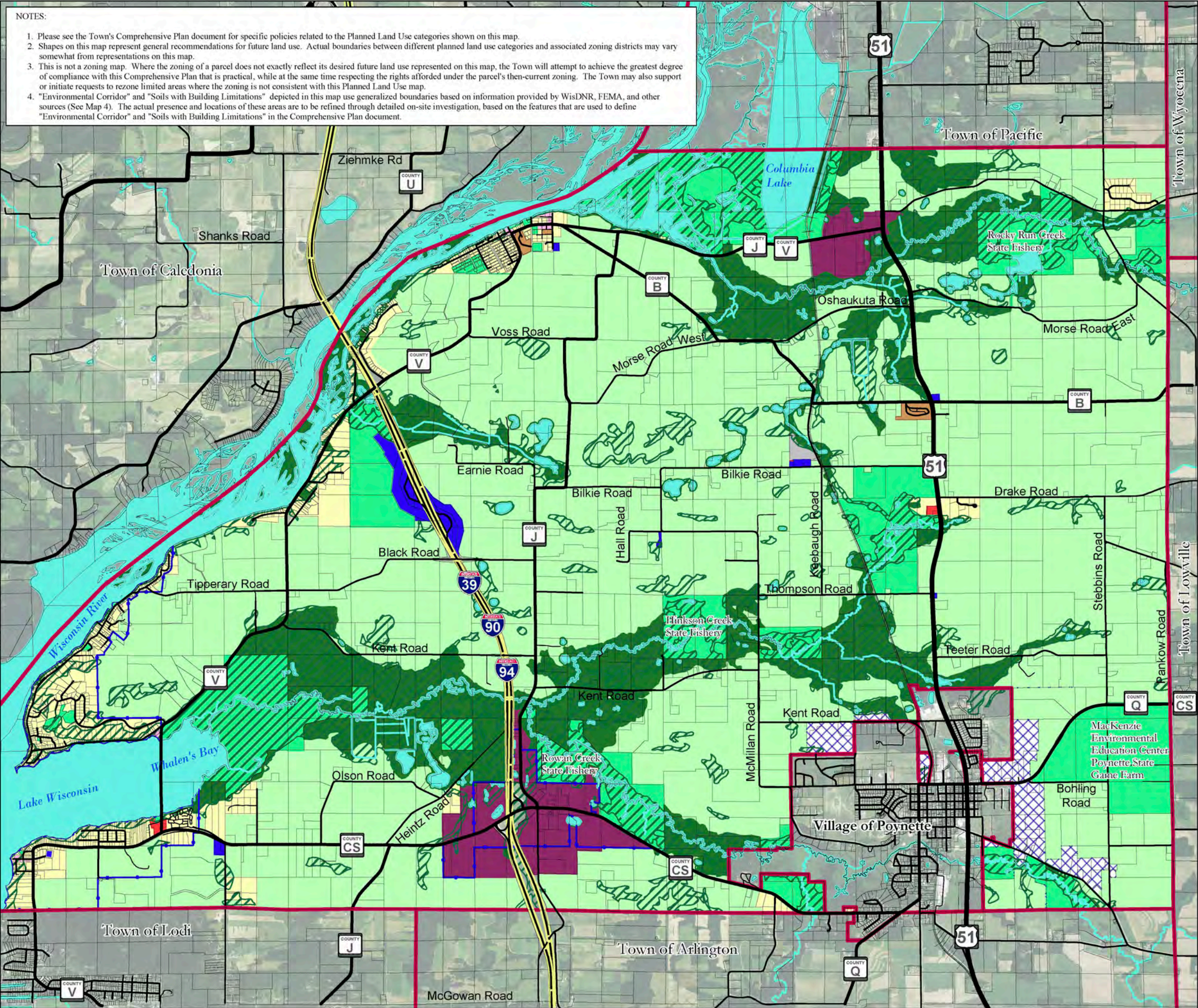
Sources: Columbia County LIO, FEMA, NRCS, Vandewalle & Associates, & Wisconsin DNR



0 0.3 0.6 1.3 Miles



- NOTES:
1. Please see the Town's Comprehensive Plan document for specific policies related to the Planned Land Use categories shown on this map.
 2. Shapes on this map represent general recommendations for future land use. Actual boundaries between different planned land use categories and associated zoning districts may vary somewhat from representations on this map.
 3. This is not a zoning map. Where the zoning of a parcel does not exactly reflect its desired future land use represented on this map, the Town will attempt to achieve the greatest degree of compliance with this Comprehensive Plan that is practical, while at the same time respecting the rights afforded under the parcel's then-current zoning. The Town may also support or initiate requests to rezone limited areas where the zoning is not consistent with this Planned Land Use map.
 4. "Environmental Corridor" and "Soils with Building Limitations" depicted in this map use generalized boundaries based on information provided by WisDNR, FEMA, and other sources (See Map 4). The actual presence and locations of these areas are to be refined through detailed on-site investigation, based on the features that are used to define "Environmental Corridor" and "Soils with Building Limitations" in the Comprehensive Plan document.



Dekorra Comprehensive Plan

Map 6: Planned Land Use

- Municipal Boundary (2024)
- Wisconsin DNR Project Boundary (Legal Acquisition Limits)
- Sanitary/Utility Districts (2024)
- State and US Highways
- County Roads
- Local Roads
- Railroad

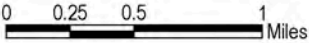
- Rural and Environmental
- Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area
 - Environmental Corridor
 - Public Open Space
 - Soils With Building Limitations
 - Surface Water
 - Urban Transition Area

- Residential
- Single Family Residential
 - Multiple Family Residential / Mobile Home Park

- Mixed-use and Non-residential
- Neighborhood Business
 - General Business
 - General Industrial
 - Institutional
 - Commercial / Industrial Mix (See Map 7)

Updated on October 18, 2024

Sources: Columbia County LIO, FEMA, NRCS, Vandewalle & Associates, & Wisconsin DNR



5. “Smart Growth” Planning Areas

“Smart Growth Areas”, as defined by §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes, are “areas that will enable the development and redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and municipal, state, and utility services, where practicable, or that will encourage efficient development patterns that are both contiguous to existing development and at densities which have relatively low municipal, state governmental, and utility costs.” The Town is required to designate these areas in this *Plan*.

This *Plan* designates the *Single Family Residential*, *Commercial/Industrial Mix*, and *Urban Transition* areas shown on Map 6 as “Smart Growth Areas”.

The primary *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area is designated at the I-39/90/94 Interchange Area. Here, the Town provides public sanitary sewer service. This service enables the Town to facilitate redevelopment of aging development parcels and promote denser development than would otherwise be possible. Development in this area also takes advantage of existing highway infrastructure and provides the Town with an enhanced non-farm, non-residential tax base. The Town actively promote development of the Interchange Area, as is further documented in the Economic Development chapter.

The *Urban Transition Area* is designated near the Village of Poynette. This area is identified for potential development on public utility services over the 20-year planning period, and is described in greater detail in the sections that follow.

C. LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

1. Goal

Promote a future land use pattern that is consistent with the Town’s rural character, but which also focuses economic development near the Interstate interchange and along major highways.

2. Objectives

- a. Maintain low densities and minimize the visual impact of non-farm development in planned agricultural areas.
- b. Direct new development to areas of existing development, utilities, and highways.
- c. Promote high quality design and scale compatibility in new development projects.
- d. Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.

3. Policies

- a. Assure that **incompatible land uses and structures are not located close to one another** or require appropriate separation and screening where they are to reduce land use incompatibilities and preserve the open, rural atmosphere.
- b. Promote **proper siting and clustering of allowable residential development sites** to preserve farmland, protect other natural resources, and reduce development visibility.
- c. Direct **intensive new development to planned *Commercial/Industrial Mix* areas on Map 6**, Poynette, and other specific areas targeted for development to relieve pressure to develop in the planned *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*.

- d. Follow the Town's **rezoning procedures** (in Chapter 11.06 of the Town Code of Ordinances) and the County's zoning ordinance when considering changes in land use that require rezonings. Follow similar procedures for the review of conditional use permits.
- e. Utilize the **Town's Plan Commission** as the primary recommending entity for development decisions in the Town. The **Town Board** is the primary Town approval agent for development decisions in the Town, except where delegated by the Town Board.
- f. **Use the documents listed as described in Table 9 as the primary substantive bases for Town decision making on the indicated land use and development approvals.** Other Town ordinances and County, State, and federal rules may also apply.

Table 9: Documents Used in Review of Common Development Approval Requests

Plan or Ordinance	Applicable Code Chapter or Section	Rezoning	Conditional Use Permits	Zoning Variances	Site Plan Approval	Plats and CSMs
Town Comprehensive Plan	Especially Land Use	✓	✓		✓	✓
County Zoning Ordinance	Title 16, Chapter 100	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Town Land Division and Subdivision Code	Chapter 10					✓
Town Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Regulations	Section 11.01		✓		✓	✓
Town Site Plan Review Ordinance	Section 11.04				✓	
Town Interchange Area Design Guidelines	If near CS Interchange	✓	✓		✓	✓

D. PLANNED LAND USE MAPS

Maps 6 and 7 and related policies described below will be used to guide development decisions that involve a change in land use, such as rezonings, conditional use permits, and subdivision plat and certified survey map approvals. Changes in land use to implement the recommendations of this *Plan* will generally be initiated by property owners and private developers. In other words, this *Plan* does not automatically compel property owners to change the use of their land.

Not all land shown for development on the Maps 6 and 7 will be appropriate for rezoning and other land use approvals immediately following adoption of this *Plan*. Given market and service demands, careful consideration of the amount, mix, timing, and location of development to keep it manageable and sustainable is essential. The Town advocates phased development of land that advances the Town's overall goal and objectives and is consistent with growth projections within this *Plan*.

Like other aspects of this *Comprehensive Plan*, a variety of different types of circumstances may compel the Town to amend Map 6 over time. These include, but are not limited to, changes in market demand, development trends, and available land supply.

The following sections of this chapter provide detailed objectives and policies for the primary planned land use designations that are shown on Maps 6 and 7. The policies under each section apply only to the planned land use designation described in that section.

E. AGRICULTURE AND WOODLAND PRESERVATION AREA (SEE MAP 6 FOR LOCATIONS WHERE POLICIES APPLY)

1. Objective

As shown on Map 6, the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* identifies lands intended to be preserved primarily for farming, forestry, open space, and agricultural or forestry support activities. The *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* is also intended for farmsteads and limited new residential development per the “Policies and Programs” section below, home occupations and family businesses, and other uses identified as permitted and conditional uses in the implementing zoning districts described below.



2. Recommended Zoning

Most lands in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* planned land use designation should be zoned A-1 Agriculture. The A-1 district is a state-certified farmland preservation zoning district, which prioritizes continued farming and open space uses and also enables eligible farmers to obtain state income tax credits.

Where new residential development is proposed, rezoning away from the A-1 zoning district will be required. The RR-1 Rural Residence District is the preferred district for the new residential lots. Other residential districts, such as the R-1 Single Family Residence district, may be considered where the applicant can demonstrate that another district aside from RR-1 meets the objective of the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* and responds to a unique circumstance.

Other zoning districts, such as A-2 General Agriculture, may also be appropriate on an occasional basis for lands planned in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*, such as where preexisting parcel sizes and land uses differ from the norm for these areas.

Columbia County also has the A-4 Agricultural Overlay zoning district, which generally limits underlying land uses and structures to those related to agriculture and open space. The County uses the A-4 district as a means to track and maintain development density policies over time. The A-4 overlay district will often be applied to the balance of the Contiguous Common Ownership that remains zoned A-1 at the time of rezoning to RR-1 or other residential zoning district. The County, through its zoning ordinance, and the Town also enable the application of A-4 zoning to non-contiguous parcels, provided that such A-4 lands are in the same town as the lot(s) on which a dwelling(s) will be constructed.

3. Key Definitions

The definition of “Contiguous Common Ownership” and its component words is important for determining the right to develop lands in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*.

“Common Ownership” means any combination of contiguous parcels singly owned by one uniquely named entity as identified by deed. Such an entity includes, but is not necessarily limited to, an individual person, a married couple or family trust, or a partnership or corporation.

Lots or parcels shall be considered “Contiguous” if they share a common boundary. Parcels in Common Ownership that are directly across from a public street, rail right-of-way, easement, or navigable river, stream, or creek, along with parcels that meet only at a corner, shall be considered “Contiguous.” All other parcels shall be classified as “Non-contiguous.”

“Contiguous Common Ownership” means all contiguous lands zoned A-1 and/or A-2, and under Common Ownership at the time of the development proposal. Contiguous Common Ownership may include one or more tax parcels, “40s”, or lots with lots defined as a parcel designated in a recorded plat or certified survey map, or described in a conveyance recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds, except that each residential lot legally created through a “farm consolidation” process and documented with a recorded certified survey map (CSM) shall not be considered part of any Contiguous Common Ownership.

4. Policies and Programs

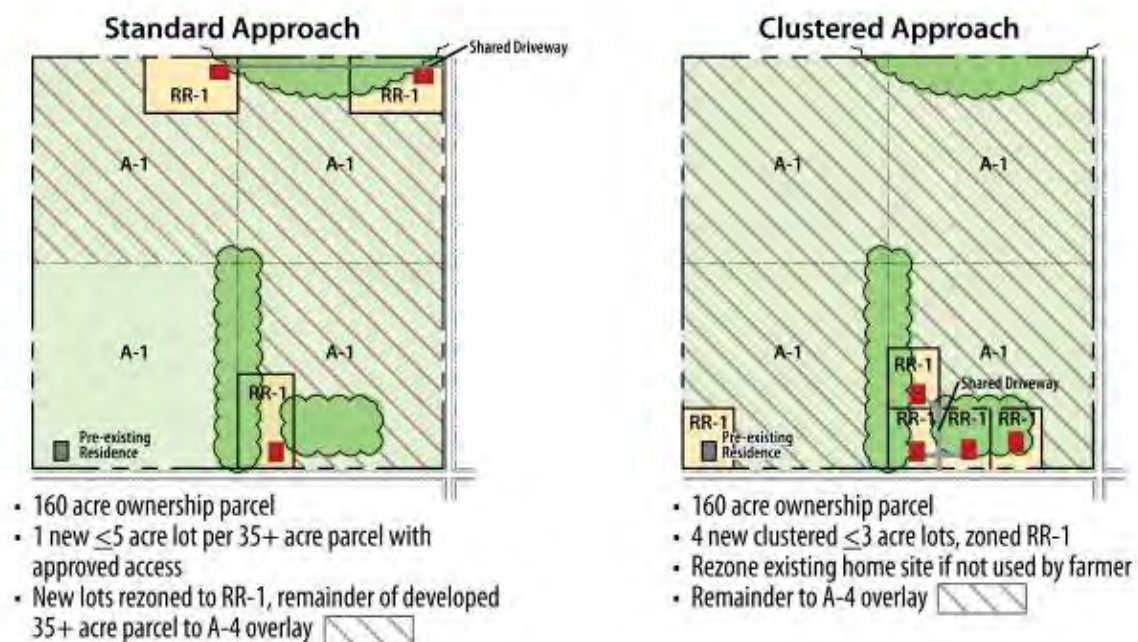
- a. **Required Rezoning Criteria:** Whenever land is proposed for rezoning away from the A-1 district, the following criteria must be met by state law:
 - i. The land is better suited for a use not allowed in the A-1 zoning district.
 - ii. The rezoning is consistent with the applicable Town and County comprehensive plans, including the County farmland preservation plan.
 - iii. The rezoning will not substantially impair or limit current or future agricultural use of surrounding parcels of land that are zoned for or legally restricted to agricultural use.
- b. **Limits on Conversion of Farmland:** Prime farmland is defined and illustrated as Groups I, II, and III soils on Map 3 earlier in this *Plan*. The conversion of prime farmland for residences and other non-farm development shall be minimized, per the following standards:
 - i. The Town Board will consider creation of new residential lots on prime farmland only if it determines that no available non-prime farmland exists on the parcel of record or that placement of lots on prime farmland provides better protection of land, environmental, and habitat resources than a non-prime location.
 - ii. Per State law, new development may not (a) convert prime farmland from agricultural use or convert land previously used as cropland, other than a woodlot, from agricultural use if on the farm there is a reasonable alternative location or size for a non-farm residential parcel or non-farm residence; or (b) significantly impair or limit the current or future agricultural use of other protected farmland.
- c. **Residential Development Density with 35+ acres in Contiguous Common Ownership:** The owner of each set of lands in Contiguous Common Ownership of 35 acres or greater within the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* may develop single family residences, subject to the following criteria:

- i. The owner is normally allowed one single family residence per 35 acres of Contiguous Common Ownership, including any existing house(s) within the Contiguous Common Ownership except where a cluster is used per County policy, Figure A, and the “Residential Development Siting Standards” in subsection e. below.
- ii. Before or at the time of rezoning, the owner may acquire additional land from adjacent landowners to assemble a larger Contiguous Common Ownership, provided that such land is also in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* and is not restricted against additional residential development by policy, zoning rule, deed restriction, conservation easement, or otherwise.
- iii. Before or at the time of rezoning, the owner may build one or more single family residences greater than what the density policy in subsection c.i. and County zoning would allow though conveyance of the right to build such residence(s) from other lands to the Contiguous Common Ownership, subject to the following limitations:
 - 1) Both sets of lands party to the convenience may be under separate ownership or similar ownership, and may be contiguous or not contiguous to the Contiguous Common Ownership, but must be within the Town of Dekorra.
 - 2) All lands from which the conveyance is made must be mapped as *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* on Map 6 and/or adjacent *Environmental Corridor*, subject to other limitations below.
 - 3) No parcel from which the conveyance is made may, in advance of the conveyance, be restricted from the construction of new residences by one or more of the following conditions:
 - It is subject to A-4 zoning, and/or is deed restricted or has a conservation easement that restricts any new residence.
 - It is burdened by environmental or access limitations that would prevent it from providing a viable residential building site in the Town Board’s determination. Such a burden would include, as an example, a parcel that is entirely wetland.
 - It is completely covered by, or restricted from construction of new residences as a result of, alternative energy collection equipment installed on the parcel, such as solar panels or wind turbines.
 - 4) Class I and II soils may not be used for the residence(s) to be conveyed to the Contiguous Common Ownership.
 - 5) The land to which the right to build a residence is conveyed shall be less suitable for agricultural use than the land from which the right is conveyed, per the soil groupings indicated on Map 3 and/or as may be otherwise determined by the Town Board.
 - 6) The right may not be conveyed from any lot or group of lots in Contiguous Common Ownership that are less than 35 acres.
 - 7) The owner of the land from which the right to build the residence is conveyed must have at least 35 contiguous and previously unrestricted acres, which must be zoned A-4 and deed restricted per subsection c.vi. before the

Town will enable the recording of a CSM or issuance of a building permit for the conveyed residence.

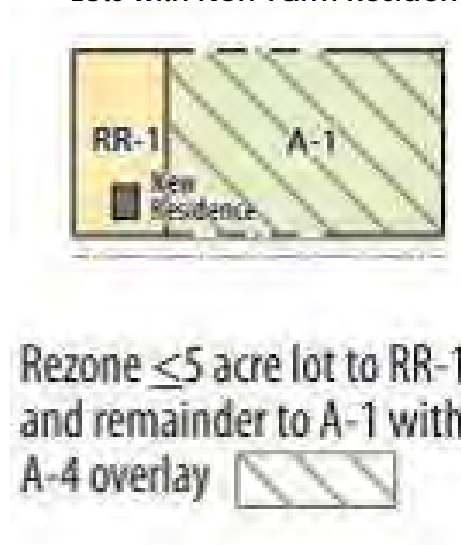
- 8) The Contiguous Common Ownership shall not be developed to a density that is greater than two single family residences per 35 acres as a result of any such conveyance.
- iv. Each new residence must be on a new lot of between one and five acres, except that larger lots may be permitted where other policies in this *Plan* are met and an additional ten acres are restricted via A-4 zoning and deed restriction for every one acre greater than the five acre normal maximum. These maximum lot size and additional restricted land requirements do not apply when the lot is created around a pre-existing residence as described in subsection f. below or where land configuration does not allow a lot size under five acres.
- v. Each newly created residential lot must abut a public road wherever practical, or have a suitable access easement approved by the Town Board and County including a detailed recorded agreement covering responsibilities for initial installation (where applicable) and ongoing maintenance and repair.
- vi. The acreage used to enable the approval of a single family residential lot shall be restricted to agricultural or open space uses via deed restriction. All such deed restrictions shall be preapproved by the Town, recorded in conjunction with the recording of the associated CSM, and allowed to be removed or altered only if approved by the Town Board. The Town does not intend to issue any building permit for construction on an associated residential lot until the recorded deed restriction is provided. Columbia County may also require use of A-4 Agricultural Overlay zoning over the balance. Such deed restriction and A-4 zoning are the means to track the density policy—whether the restricted lands are contiguous to the new residence(s) or not. The Town may make a model deed restriction available for property owner use.

Figure A: Residential Development Examples with and without Clustering



- d. **Residential Development Density with <35 acres in Contiguous Common Ownership:** Map 6 designates, within the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*, many lots and groups of lots in Contiguous Common Ownership that are less than 35 acres (i.e., “<35 Acre Ownerships”). In such cases, the owner may have a maximum of one single family residence for the entire <35 Acre Ownership including any existing dwelling unit, and the Town will not allow rezoning or division that would result in the right to build any more dwelling units, except by conveyance under subsection c.iii. The limitations in subsections c.iii.4) and 8) shall not apply to a conveyance to a <35 Acre Ownership. To build a residence on a <35 Acre Ownership where there is not an existing residence, the following basic standards apply:
- i. Must be a valid parcel(s) created legally prior to November 1, 1984.
 - ii. Rezoning to A-2 or RR-1 or other residential district will be required.
 - iii. Compliance with applicable “Residential Development Siting Standards” in subsection e. will be required.
 - iv. Each lot on which a new residence is to be built must front on a public road.
 - v. No further land division of all newly created lots shall be permitted, unless either (i) the land is redesignated out of the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* through an amendment to this *Comprehensive Plan* or (ii) the divided lot is restricted from residential development via a Town deed restriction (see subsection c.vi. above), and via A-4 zoning if required by the County (see Figure B).
 - vi. In some cases, more than one such lot is held in Contiguous Common Ownership. When new homes are allowed on lots less than 35 acres per the policies in this subsection, the balance of the Contiguous Common Ownership will be restricted to prevent further housing development per subsection c.vi. above.

Figure B: Rezoning and Land Division Approach for Pre-1984 Substandard (<35 acre) A-1 Lots with Non-Farm Residence



e. **Residential Development Siting Standards.** Any new residential structure and its associated driveway and accessory structures where located on land designated within an *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* shall meet the standards in Section 11.04(d)(10) of the Town's Site Plan Review ordinance, except as may be allowed under the variance procedure in that ordinance. It is the applicant's responsibility to learn about and follow any Columbia County siting and design standards. A cluster is a contiguous grouping of two or more allowable lots for new residential development. For clusters, the following additional standards shall be met to the extent determined practical by the Town Board:

- i. Meet cluster development standards in Section 10.745 of the Town's Subdivision and Land Division Code, except that the Town Board may allow variations and exceptions per that Code's procedures.
- ii. Where the area of the Contiguous Common Ownership allows, clusters may take the form of subdivision plats (5+ lots) if also allowed by Columbia County.
- iii. Flag lots will be allowed only where advisable to achieve rural character objectives of this *Plan*, such as by hiding the development. A flag lot is a lot with its widest point set back from the road, and having a thin, long strip (flagpole) of land connected to the road to provide legal access and frontage.
- iv. Existing vegetation, stone rows, fence lines, and tree lines shall be preserved.
- v. New streets or driveways shall be placed along existing contours, property lines, fencerows, lines of existing vegetation, or other natural features.
- vi. Where existing vegetation and changes in topography would not adequately screen the cluster from public roads, and new plantings would be insufficient, consider arranging development sites in a pattern resembling historic farm building placements (e.g., a group of houses set back from the road, tree lined single drive or street, fence rows.)
- vii. The cluster may not be located within 500 feet of any operating farm animal facility.
- viii. The cluster may not be of a size or shape to be efficiently worked for farming.
- ix. Isolated small pockets of uncultivable land in an area otherwise farmed will not result from the cluster.
- x. The site has soils that are able to safely support clusters of buildings and private



Above: A cul-de-sac can provide access to several homes set back from the roadway. The homes are kept off of the hilltops, and a series of driveways leading off the main road is avoided. Below: Vegetation and topography can "hide" development, and a flag lot may be appropriate in such cases.



- on-site waste treatment (septic) systems, other than holding tanks.
- xi. Proposed development has adequate access to existing town roads or, the developer shall provide such a road built to town road standards or such other suitable access approved by the Town and County, at the developer's expense.
 - xii. Proposed access points shall meet minimum spacing requirements as established by County and Town ordinances, as applicable.
 - xiii. Proposed driveways will not exceed 1,000 feet in length, unless otherwise approved by the County following a recommendation by the Town Board.
 - xiv. The cluster is not on land prone to flooding, and does not require driveways over lands that are prone to flooding.
 - xv. The cluster is not on land of archaeological, cultural, historical, or religious significance.
- f. **Treatment of Pre-Existing Residences:** The Town will allow legally established residences to remain within the A-1 zoning district when historically zoned in that manner, except where new land divisions are required outside of farm consolidation situations. When the owner of a preexisting residence legally established before December 21, 1977 desires to divide the land occupied by such residence and accessory buildings from the farm, in conjunction with a farm consolidation, the Town will require the resulting residential lot to be as small as practical, considering the desire to keep accessory buildings with the residence and the future probability that farm animals will be kept on the lot. Further, the Town will require that the balance of the tax parcel (or at least 35 acres elsewhere per the limitations in subsection c. above) be deed restricted per subsection c.vi above. Columbia County may also require use of A-4 Agricultural Overlay zoning over the balance.
- g. **Commercial and Industrial Endeavors:** Within the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*, the Town encourages home occupations and agricultural-related businesses that support farmers, including farm-scale businesses in the A-1 zoning district and larger-scale operations in the A-3 Agriculture Business district. Other types of new commercial and industrial uses over lands planned in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* are discouraged, except for mineral extraction sites and wireless telecommunication facilities that may be allowed under applicable zoning performance standards. Where a tourist rooming house is proposed, the Town will use the standards in Section G.2.b.iv below and in its ordinances.

F. SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (AS SHOWN ON MAP 6)

1. Objective

The *Single Family Residential* planned land use designation is established and mapped on Map 6 to identify certain lands for single-family detached residential development, generally on lots served by on-site waste treatment systems, with minimum lot size depending on zoning classification. Subdivision plats are allowed in areas shown in this designation. The Town intends to allow predominately residential development on those properties, in accordance with their current zoning. Lands shown on Map 6 within this planned land use designation were generally zoned R-1 Single Family Residence under the County zoning ordinance and zoning map in place at time of Plan update.

2. Policies and Programs

- a. **Require a minimum lot size** for all new lots proposed as building sites in accordance with the Town's Land Division and Subdivision Code and the zoning classification of lots. Lots for residential building sites of **over five acres each are not allowed in planned Single Family Residential areas**, except where the subdivider obtains a variance following procedures in the Land Division and Subdivision Code based on unique or challenging natural features, topography, or land ownership patterns.
- b. Direct the vast majority of land planned for *Single Family Residential* use to be **developed and maintained with single family residences**. Consider the following **other types of uses** on a limited basis on lands planned for *Single Family Residential* use on Map 6 where surrounding context warrants and a proper zoning district is sought:
 - i. Institutional uses, such as churches;
 - ii. Neighborhood-scale recreational uses, such as parks and walking trails;
 - iii. Waterfront businesses. These include small retail shops and restaurants, scaled and designed in a manner that is consistent with existing homes and businesses in the area. Heavier commercial uses that are not related to serving waterfront or related recreational activities should be directed to areas of the Town that are better suited for those uses, except that the Dekorra Village area in Sections 5 and 6 of Town 11N, Range 9E may accommodate a broader mix of uses.
 - iv. Tourist rooming houses. These are single-family dwellings licensed by the state and used as a lodging place or tourist cabin or cottage where sleeping accommodations for between 7 and 30 days are offered for pay to tourists or transients. Following a recommendation from the Plan Commission, the Town will consider conditional use permit and Town license requests for tourist rooming houses against tourist rooming house and conditional use permit criteria in the County Zoning Ordinance and Town tourist rooming house ordinance (Section 6.10 of Town Code). In its review of such requests, the Town seeks to limit tourist rooming houses in terms of quantity, density, amount of tourist/transient use, and proximity to each other. Such limits are a means to maintain the rural character of the Town and the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood.
- c. **Limit development within the *Environmental Corridor*** shown on Map 6, unless more detailed investigations suggest that the land does not actually contain the conditions which lead to its mapping as *Environmental Corridor*. Development is also discouraged in areas with soils with severe limitations for on-site solid waste disposal, as shown on Map 8 and on soils with building limitations, as shown on Map 6. Development of slopes between 12% and 20% and over 20% are limited and guided by the Town's Land Division and Subdivision Code and Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Code.
- d. Follow standards for submittal of plats, supporting documents, and environmental assessment in the Town's **Land Division and Subdivision Code and Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Code**.
- e. Require land divisions within this *Single Family Residential* planned land use designation to be **designed in accordance with the Town's Land Division and Subdivision Code and the following general principles**:
 - i. Design and layout should not impede the orderly future development of the surrounding area or future utility extensions.

- ii. Buildings should be sited to minimize visibility from pre-existing public roads through techniques like proper placement with respect to existing vegetation and topographic changes, retention of existing vegetation and topography, distance from such pre-existing public roads, and/or planting of new vegetation or berming.
- iii. Buildings, roads, or driveways should not be developed within sensitive environmental areas, as described elsewhere in this *Comprehensive Plan* and in the Town's Land Division and Subdivision Code.
- iv. Existing contours, vegetation, stone rows, fence lines, and tree lines should be preserved wherever possible.
- v. New streets or driveways should be placed along existing contours, property lines, fencerows, lines of existing vegetation, or other natural features wherever possible.
- vi. Natural areas—such as clusters of mature trees and wetlands—should be preserved and integrated into the subdivision design as aesthetic, conservation, and recreational land use elements. For example, in wooded hillside areas, only enough area for the house, a cleared yard area of no greater than 10,000 square feet, and a driveway should be cut.
- vii. Preservation of common open space, and access to and through such open spaces, should be emphasized.
- viii. Building lots should be sited in such a manner to minimize the potential for incompatibilities with pre-existing land uses on adjoining parcels. These include uses such as agriculture, commercial forestry, and other business operations.

G. NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS (AS SHOWN ON MAP 6)

1. Objective

The *Neighborhood Business* planned land use designation is established and mapped on Map 6 to identify certain lands as appropriate for smaller-scale retail, hospitality, and commercial service uses, generally located on smaller lots and close to residential uses, with attention towards minimizing impacts on those residential uses and preserving residential character of the surrounding area. Appropriate future land uses within areas mapped within mapped *Neighborhood Business* areas include, but are not limited to, inns, rental cottages, tourist rooming houses, beds & breakfast, offices, restaurants, gift and other types of shops, personal or professional services, recreational outfitters, and artist studios. *Neighborhood Business* areas are generally designated on Map 6 over lands close to the Wisconsin River/Lake Wisconsin where commercial uses and/or commercial zoning are already present. The County zoning ordinance contains a new C-1 Light Commercial zoning district that should generally be used for future rezonings in these areas.

H. GENERAL BUSINESS (AS SHOWN ON MAP 6)

1. Objective

The *General Business* planned land use designation is established and mapped on Map 6 to identify certain lands as appropriate for a wider range and scale of commercial service, retail, service, and office uses than the *Neighborhood Business* designation. Still, new manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution uses should not be sited in *General Business* areas. *General Business* areas are generally designated on Map 6 in limited areas along major roadways and at

roadway intersection areas. The County zoning ordinance contains the C-2 General Commercial zoning district that should generally be used for future rezonings in these areas.

I. COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL MIX AREA: INTERCHANGE AREA (AS SHOWN ON MAP 6)

1. Interchange Area Location and Objective

The land surrounding the Interchange of the Interstate 90-94-39 and County Highway CS is identified as one area for future “mixed use” development—almost entirely commercial and light industrial development. These lands serve as the “Gateway to Lake Wisconsin,” and as such should be an area with high quality development meeting design standards described later in this section. This is particularly true for lands along Highway CS west of the Interstate.

The realization of this *Plan* hinges in large part on the presence of public sanitary sewer service in the Interchange Area. The planned *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area (illustrated on Map 6: Planned Land Use) largely coincides with the Dekorra Utility District but also suggests potential future expansion for the Utility District. In general, the Town is seeking high-quality new development and redevelopment in this area that will provide tax base, services, and jobs; will serve as a growth opportunity; and will enhance the Town’s image.

The 400+ acre planned *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area shown on Map 6 roughly encompasses a radius of 1-mile from the interchange. The area is bounded to the north, east, and west by environmental corridors and steep slopes and to the south by a prominent ridge line. The boundaries of the *Environmental Corridor* were determined through a 2011 floodplain mapping update.

Map 7 is a conceptual development plan that advises, in greater detail, future land uses and transportation improvements in this *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area that is shown on Map 6. Future development proposals should be consistent with this conceptual development plan and the desired image and standards that follow.

The Town Board has a site plan review ordinance affecting new commercial and industrial development throughout the Town and detailed design guidelines for future development of the Interchange Area which go beyond the recommendations on the following pages. These are the “Interchange Area Design Guidelines,” adopted by the Town Board on May 10, 2005.

The Economic Development chapter also includes additional ideas and opportunities for the Interchange Area.

2. Interchange Area: Gateway Identification/Development Character

The Interstate 90-94-39 Interchange Area is a “gateway” to Dekorra, Poynette, and Lake Wisconsin. Cooperation to enhanced entryway and directional signage that advertise the Dekorra-Poynette-Lake Wisconsin area to visitors is advised. Possible locations for signs might be at the Interstate entrance/exit ramps, as suggested on Map 7.

Much of the Interstate 90-94-39 corridor is currently lined with continuous stands of trees. These trees help define the character for both residents and visitors. In addition to aesthetic importance, these trees help moderate the effects of wind and snow drifting, screen against noise, act to stabilize soil, reduce erosion and run-off, provide animal habitat, and help manage air pollution. The Town encourages preservation of these trees as new development occurs. The Town will also use its sign ordinance to limit placement of billboards and other large signs along this corridor.

In addition, new landscaping is required in all new development projects in the Interchange Area. Landscaping is encouraged around building foundations, in and around paved areas, around areas where screening is appropriate, and in a buffer between the building and the highway. Landscaping materials should be of adequate size and species to ensure both a high degree of survivability (including from deer) and immediate visual effectiveness.


The Town requires that all proposed commercial and industrial projects submit a detailed site plan, building elevations, landscape plan, lighting plan, grading/stormwater management plan and signage plan prior to development approval. The Town will use the design review standards within its Site Plan Review ordinance and Interchange Area Design Guidelines in the evaluation of such development proposals.

Map 7: Development Plan
 Dekorra Interchange Area/Utility District

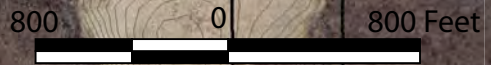
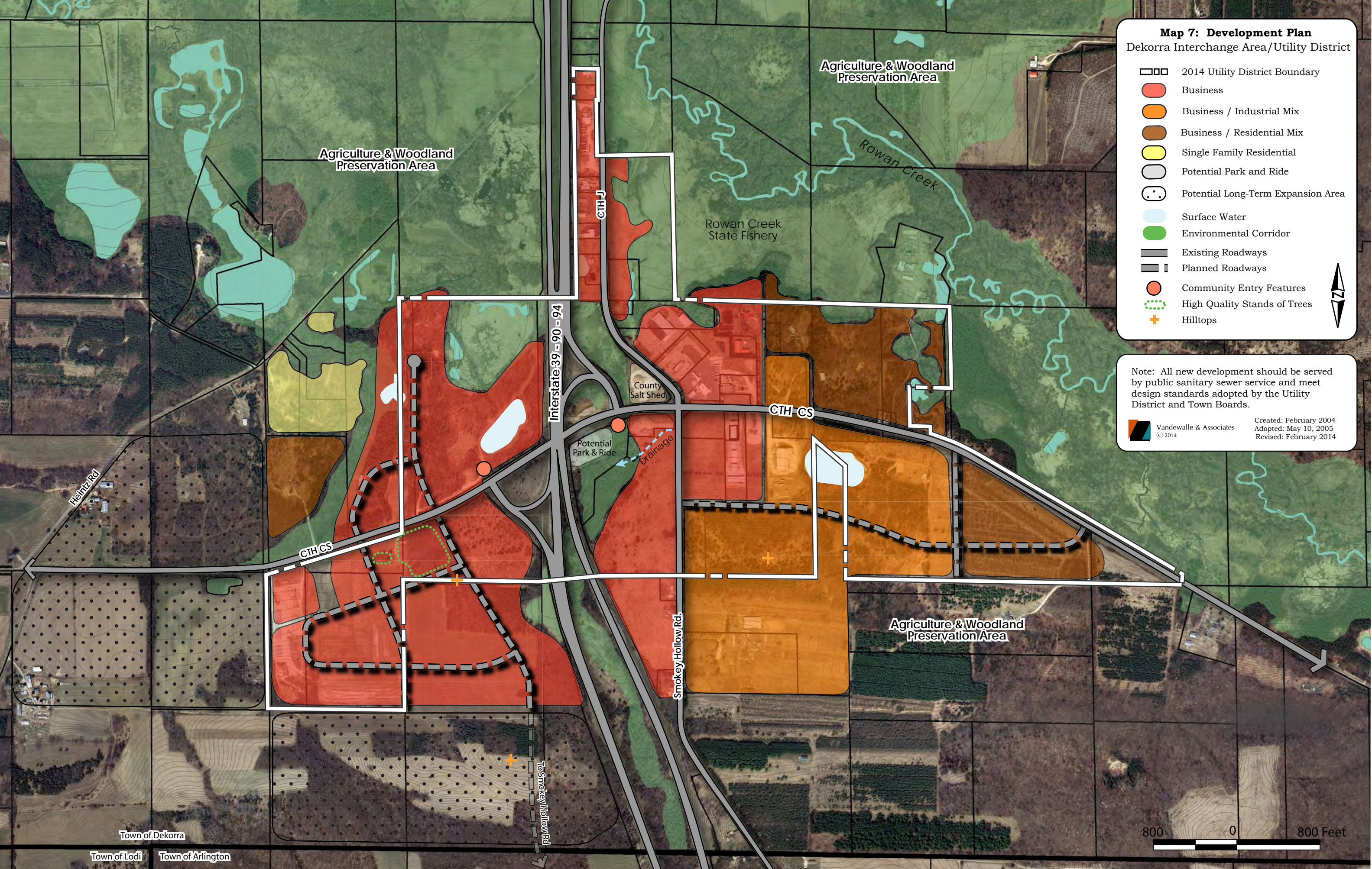
-  2014 Utility District Boundary
-  Business
-  Business / Industrial Mix
-  Business / Residential Mix
-  Single Family Residential
-  Potential Park and Ride
-  Potential Long-Term Expansion Area
-  Surface Water
-  Environmental Corridor
-  Existing Roadways
-  Planned Roadways
-  Community Entry Features
-  High Quality Stands of Trees
-  Hilltops



Note: All new development should be served by public sanitary sewer service and meet design standards adopted by the Utility District and Town Boards.

 Vandewalle & Associates
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Created: February 2004
 Adopted: May 10, 2005
 Revised: February 2014



3. Interchange Area: Transportation Access

Numerous private access points can result in more congestion and more traffic-related conflicts along the corridor. Limiting the number of and ensuring adequate spacing between access points can help to control the type and pace of new development. Shared access drives and local access roads are promoted.

Map 7 shows two main proposed development pockets that are advised to be served by an interconnected road network with a minimal number of access points from the County highways. The conceptual new road network is designed to provide access to individual businesses, whereas Highway CS is used primarily to provide access to and from the Interstate, Poynette, and waterfront areas. This arrangement would serve both the goals of avoiding congestion and safety hazards on Highway CS, and maximizing the number of businesses to the Interchange Area by using the full depth of properties. Given topography and recent developments (e.g., Loves), the exact alignment and quantity of local roads may differ, and many future roads suggested on Map 7 may end up being private.



Monument style signs are encouraged

4. Interchange Area: “Business” Land Use Areas

The “Business” areas shown on Map 7 provide locations for high-quality indoor retail, commercial service, office, and institutional land uses. Caretaker’s residences would also be appropriate. Generally, future Business use areas are in closest proximity to the interchange, where market demand for such uses would be the highest.

5. Interchange Area: “Business/Industrial Mix” Areas

The “Business/Industrial Mix” areas shown on Map 7 provide locations just beyond the immediate Interchange Area, east of the Interstate, for either commercial or light industrial development, or a carefully planned mixture of both types of development. Industrial uses should focus on high-quality indoor manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and office uses with generous landscaping, screened outdoor storage areas, modest lighting, and limited signage. Uses that generate significant trucking activity (e.g., transshipment centers) and noises (e.g., heavy manufacturing) are discouraged.



For retail and commercial service uses, parking lots should be landscaped and provide safe pedestrian access to building entrances.

6. Interchange Area: “Business/Residential Mix” Areas

The “Business/Residential Mix” areas shown on Map 7 provide locations generally at the edges of the Interchange Area, intended to accommodate primarily commercial development and carefully planned residential development compatible with the primarily commercial character of the Area. Examples include residences on the second story of commercial properties, garden apartment buildings, or condominiums. These areas are not intended to accommodate single-family residential neighborhoods. The specific mix and details of these areas should be carefully considered to avoid potential conflict of uses or incompatibilities, and are subject to Town approval. Because most “Business/Residential Mix” areas on Map 7 are close to environmental corridor/floodplain areas, careful consideration must be given to managing environmental impact, including following the Town’s stormwater management ordinance.

7. Interchange Area: Potential Park and Ride Lot

Map 7 suggests a possible location for a Park and Ride facility, southeast of the Interstate/Highway CS bridge. Issues that may need to be overcome are environmental—both floodplain and potential contamination.

J. COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL MIX: HIGHWAYS 51/J/V AREA (ON MAP 6)

1. Objective

The second *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area is established and mapped on Map 6 to identify a limited area near the north edge of the Town for indoor manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, office, and commercial uses, limiting outdoor activity areas and allowing only fully screened outdoor storage areas. Attention to building design, landscaping, signage, and lighting will be required. This planned *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area is focused around a few existing similar uses near the intersections of Highways 51, J/V, and the railroad tracks. Its size is limited by *Environmental Corridors* in the vicinity. Special attention will be needed to protect the integrity of the natural resources, rural character, nearby residential uses, and air quality in the area.

2. Policies and Programs

- a. Encourage land uses within the Highways 51/J/V *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area that **capitalize on its assets**, including Highway 51, railroad access, and proximity to the Columbia Energy Storage Project (see Chapter 6). See also the Economic Development chapter for additional land use ideas and opportunities.
- b. Require a **minimum lot size** for all new lots proposed as building sites in accordance with the Town’s Land Division and Subdivision Code and the zoning classification of the lots. Dependent on the proposed development, a larger-than-usual setback distance from Highway J/V or other property lines may be required.
- c. Direct development **away from the *Environmental Corridor***. Development is also discouraged in areas with soils with severe limitations for on-site solid waste disposal shown on Map 8; soils with building limitations shown on Map 6; and slopes between 12 and 20% and over 20% as shown in Map 4. Developers shall submit detailed maps showing these features when applicable.

- d. Before the rezoning of lands for development, require the property owner or developer to **submit a plan showing environmentally sensitive areas** that should not be developed, including:
 - i. Wetlands based on a field survey conducted by a qualified professional
 - ii. Stream banks
 - iii. Shoreline setback areas
 - iv. Floodplains
 - v. Hydric soils (formed under wet conditions—many formerly wetlands)
 - vi. Soils with severe limitations for on-site waste treatment systems (see Map 8)
 - vii. Soils with low or very low potential for dwellings with basements
 - viii. Steep slopes (show 12-20% and 20%+ separately)
- e. Follow the Town’s site plan review ordinance when considering specific commercial and industrial development projects in this area. **Attempt to follow the site and building planning and design standards** for the “Commercial/Industrial Mix: Interchange Area” in Section I above, to the extent considered reasonable by the Town Plan Commission and Board.
- f. **Limit outdoor activities** to loading, unloading, and storage, by recommendation of the Plan Commission and determination of the Town Board, with such areas:
 - i. Not exceeding ½ acre per building site (applies to storage area only).
 - ii. Fully screened from public roads and residentially zoned properties.
 - iii. Not negatively impacting the aesthetics of the surrounding area.
 - iv. Having no impact on air quality, water quality, odor, and noise beyond the property line.
 - v. Not negatively impacting opportunities to develop nearby lands with desired land uses.
 - vi. Located to the rear or non-street side of the building, and away from residential properties.
- g. Support rezonings to the County’s I-1 and commercial zoning districts within this area. **Do not support the rezoning of any additional lands to the I-2 zoning district**, except where the Town Board is satisfied that there will be restrictions against objectionable uses and activities.
- h. Exercise the Town’s ability under the County zoning ordinance in Town actions on conditional use permits in this area, using the **conditional use permit standards** outlined in the County zoning ordinance and the provisions of this *Comprehensive Plan*.

K. ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS & SOILS WITH BUILDING LIMITATIONS (ON MAP 6)

1. Objective

Environmental Corridors are established and mapped to identify and protect generally continuous environmentally sensitive areas including wetlands, floodplains outside of the limited already-developed lands along the waterfront, and undeveloped shoreland setback areas (not all of this last designation shown on Map 6). They are intended for long-term open space, wildlife habitat, stormwater management, natural areas, and or trails. The *Soils with Building Limitations* area is mapped as an overlay designation on Map 6. This planned land use designation includes

slopes greater than 20%, floodplains within limited already-developed areas along the water-front, and hydric soils not in mapped wetlands, per the Columbia County soil survey. The Town also wishes to preserve slopes of 12% to 20% to the extent practical.

2. Policies and Programs

- a. Where development is proposed, determine the **exact boundaries of the *Environmental Corridor* or *Soils with Building Limitations* based on the features that define those areas.** These lands may be considered for more intensive uses if:
 - i. More detailed information or studies reveal that the characteristic(s) that resulted in their designation as *Environmental Corridor* or *Soils with Building Limitations* is not actually present,
 - ii. Approvals from appropriate agencies are granted to alter a property so that the characteristic that resulted in its designation will no longer exist, or
 - iii. A mapping error has been confirmed by the Town.
- b. Where land included in the *Environmental Corridor* and *Soils with Building Limitations* area are adjacent to land in the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area*, such land **shall count toward calculating the number of dwelling units** allowed on the overall parcel, per the Town's density policy in Section E above.
- c. **Generally prohibit building development** in the *Environmental Corridor*, and discourage building development on *Soils with Building Limitations*, except that the preservation of prime farmland soils (groups I, II, and III) on Map 3 is prioritized.
- d. Permit cropping and grazing within *Soils with Building Limitations* and the *Environmental Corridor* in an environmentally responsible manner.

L. URBAN TRANSITION AREA (AS SHOWN ON MAP 6)

1. Objective

The *Urban Transition Area* is shown on Map 6 over certain lands in close proximity to the Village limits within the Town that may be appropriate for development on sanitary sewer and water services over the 20-year planning period. These lands should either (a) be preserved in the near term as mainly agriculture and open space uses, with development densities no greater than one lot per 35 acres (consistent with *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* policies), or (b) be developed more intensively within the next 20 years, if desired by the respective property owners, if provided with public sewer and water services, and if consistent with any intergovernmental agreement between the Village and the Town (see Chapter Ten). The size and boundaries of the *Urban Transition Area* may be altered as a result of any such agreement, revised growth projections, or otherwise as determined by the Town.

2. Policies and Programs

- a. **Limit new development** in accordance with all policies applicable to the *Agriculture and Woodland Preservation Area* (see Section E above), **until such time when the Town and Village agree that particular mapped part of the *Urban Transition Area* is appropriate for more intensive development** with public sewer and water service.

- b. Require that all permitted non-farm development projects be **designed not to impede the orderly future development** of the surrounding *Urban Transition Area* with more intensive development with public sewer and water service in the future.
- c. **Negotiate with Poynette an intergovernmental agreement** to further determine the type, timing, jurisdiction, services, and other aspects of future development within portions of the *Urban Transition Area* presently in the Town. Chapter Ten contains more detailed guidance on the recommended agreement.

CHAPTER FIVE: TRANSPORTATION

Includes a compilation of background information, goals, objectives, policies, and programs to guide future transportation in Dekorra, and compares the Town's transportation policies to state and regional transportation plans.

A. EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Access is a key determinant of growth. Dekorra is very well connected to the region through the existing roadway network. Other transportation facilities, such as freight rail, are located in or easily available to the Town.

1. Roadways

Interstate 39/90/94 runs north-south through Dekorra. It enters the Town two miles west of Poynette, and exits when crossing the Wisconsin River. There is one Interstate interchange in Dekorra, located where Interstate 39/90/94 intersects County Trunk Highway (CTH) CS. CTH CS runs east into Poynette and west to residential and recreational areas on Lake Wisconsin. U.S. Highway (USH) 51 also crosses the Town, running somewhat parallel to the Interstate, three to four miles to its east. State and county highways in Dekorra make up the rest of the community's arterial and collector road network.

Traffic on Interstate 39/90/94 in the Town increased over the past decade, from 50,900 vehicles per day in 2013 to 57,600 vehicles per day in 2023—an increase of 6,700 more vehicles or 13%. Traffic on USH 51 in the Town has remained relatively stable, with traffic increasing on CTH CS from 1,700 vehicles per day in 2011 to 2,000 vehicles per day in 2021. Together, this suggests greater regional traffic and an increase in the use of the Interstate/CS route to get to Dekorra and Poynette.

Traffic on local roads in western areas of the Town increased, specifically near Lake Wisconsin, suggesting more year-round and tourism activity. For example, traffic on Tipperary Road increased from 360 vehicles per day in 2011 to 410 vehicles per day in 2021 and traffic on Black Road increased from 280 vehicles per day in 2011 to 310 vehicles per day in 2021.

Per the 2023-2032 Columbia County Road Plan, there are currently no plans to expand or significantly rework any of the County highways within the Town beyond routine maintenance. At time of writing, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) was resurfacing USH 51 through the Town.

According to the 2024-2027 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), there are a host of design, road maintenance, pavement replacement, and resurfacing projects slated over the next several years for the Interstate corridor through Columbia County. This includes construction and repairs along 3.9 miles of Interstate 39/90/94 from State Highway 60 to CTH CS in the Town of Dekorra. This project is scheduled for 2026. The STIP also mentions that, in 2024, WisDOT received a \$105 million grant from the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) under the Highway Planning and Construction (CFDA



20.205) federal grant program. This funding is supporting the construction and rehabilitation of several Wisconsin River bridges along Interstate 39/90/94 between Madison and Portage, including the Interstate 39/90/94 bridge that is half in the Town of Dekorra spanning the Wisconsin River, under construction at time of writing.

Town roads generally serve local movement. The Town maintains a five-year road maintenance program. Normal maintenance, such as crack filling and sealcoating, is anticipated as needed. Details regarding work on specific roads can be obtained from the Town Clerk.

2. Airports

There are no airports located in Dekorra. There are two landing strips in the Town, one located just south of Bilkie Road and one just east of Stebbins Road. Larger air carrier and passenger facilities are located approximately 30 miles to the south in Madison at the Dane County Regional Airport. Small passenger and freight service is available at the Portage Municipal Airport.

3. Rail

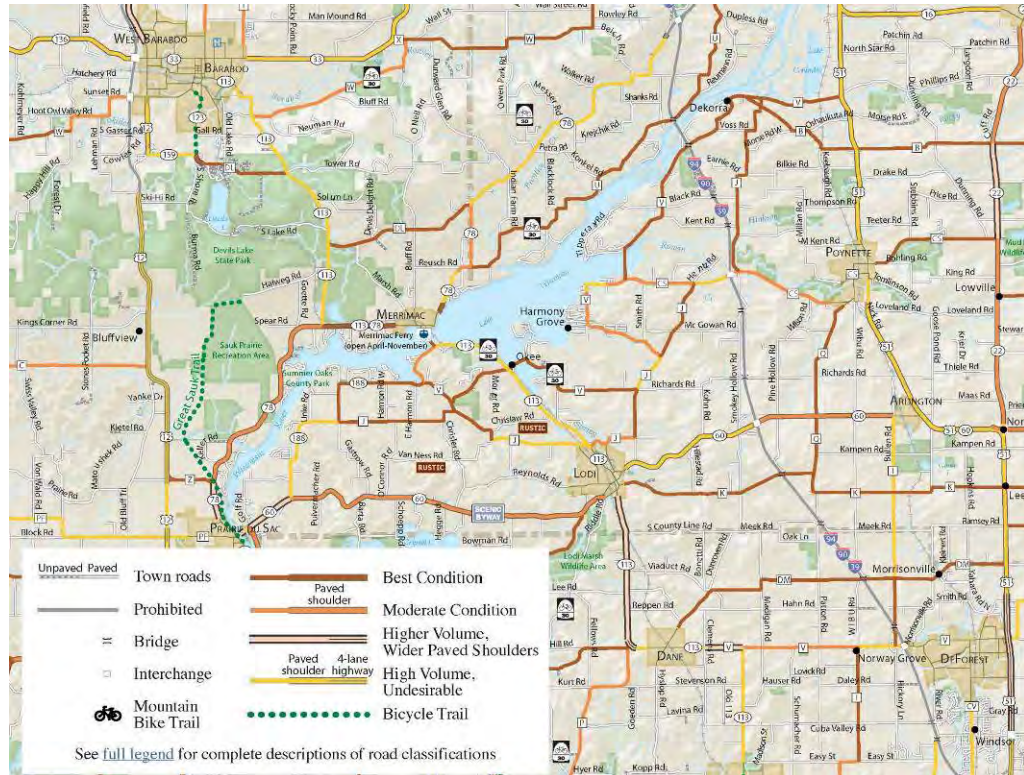
A line of the Canadian Pacific Railway operates north-south through Dekorra, running through Poynette to Madison to the south and Portage to the north. It runs west of and roughly parallel to USH 51. This placement provides opportunities for industries that may require rail and highway access. The nearest passenger rail station are the Amtrak stations in Portage and Columbus.

4. Bicycles and Walking

The bicycling industry is a significant facet of Wisconsin's economy. Many lightly traveled Town roads are in good condition for bicycling. In general, the rolling, winding roads through Dekorra provide amazing cycling options.

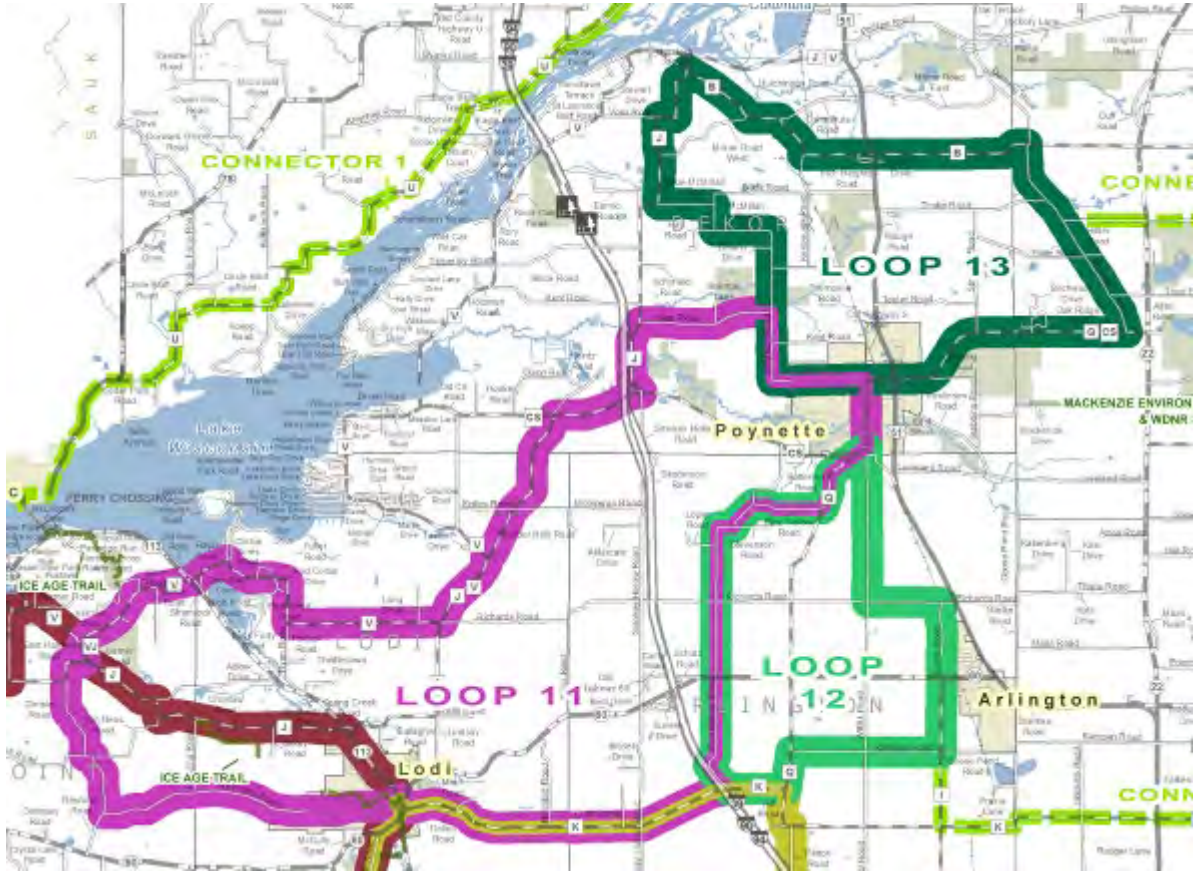
On the 2020 Wisconsin State Bicycle Map for Columbia County—reproduced in part below as Figure C—WisDOT has recommended several cycling roads in Dekorra. Listed as “best condition” include CTH V along Lake Wisconsin and the Wisconsin River, CTH J from Lake Columbia south to CTH CS, CTH B, and CTH CS east of the Village of Poynette. West Poynette, much of CTH CS in the Town is listed as “moderate condition”, with a segment just west of the Interstate listed as “high volume, undesirable”.

Figure C: Wisconsin State Bicycle Map Component



The Columbia County Silent Sports Trails Committee identified and mapped on-street bicycle loops in a bicycling brochure called “Columbia County Bicycling Routes.” Loops 11, 13, and a small part of 12 run through the Town of Dekorra, as represented in Figure D.

Figure D: Segment of Columbia County Bicycling Route Map for Lands Near Dekorra



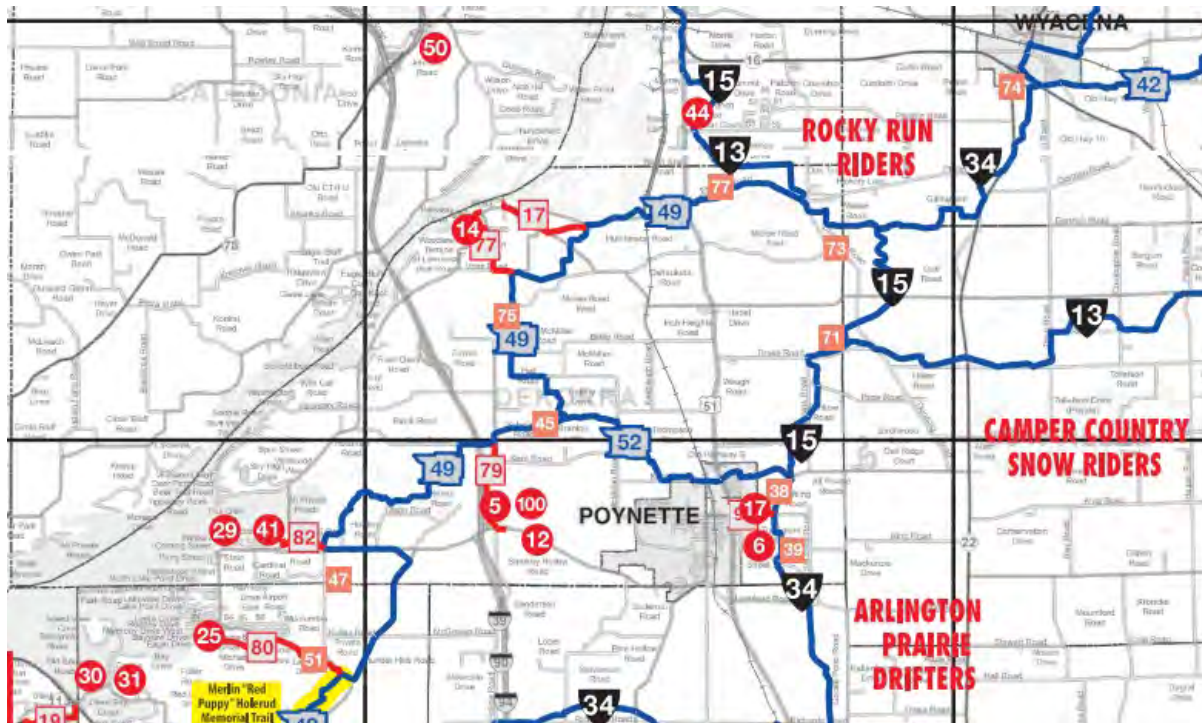
There are few sidewalks in Dekorra. Lesser-traveled roads, such as those in residential subdivisions, provide the main opportunities for safe walking.

The Columbia County Group of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Master Plan identifies a short hiking and cross-country skiing trail within the Rowan Creek Fishery Area southwest of and adjacent to the Village of Poynette.

5. Snowmobile Trails

The 2022-2023 trail map of the Columbia County Association of Snowmobile Clubs identifies a robust network of County trails, County trails designated as State corridors, and club trails—a number of which are located in the town of Dekorra. State Corridors 15/34 run east of Poynette and just west of the MacKenzie Center. They connect the Village of Arlington in the south to both Portage to the north and Wyocena to the northeast via the Rocky Run Creek Fishery area. State Corridor 13 branches to the east to connect to the Village of Rio. County Trail 49 runs approximately one to two miles east of the Wisconsin River through Dekorra between Lodi and USH 51. County Trail 52 connects County Trail 49 to State Corridor 15/34 north of Poynette.

Figure E: Segment of Columbia County Snowmobile Route Map for Lands Near Dekorra



6. Transit and Specialized Transportation Services

There is no public transit system in Dekorra. The Columbia County Department of Health and Human Services facilitates transportation for elderly residents through a volunteer driver service and a County ride service, some portion of which is contractually outsourced. This service can take residents to medical appointments, grocery shopping, nutrition sites, or other personal business. The County can also help put residents in touch with private service providers who will help with transportation.

In 2022, the Columbia County Commission on Aging prepared the 2022-2024 Columbia County Aging Plan. The Plan provides a one stop source of information and assistance for older adults by advocating for, and linking them with, resources and services that enable them to live as independently as possible. The Plan engaged nearly 150 respondents in helping to develop the three-year aging plan. Alternative transportation options was listed as a main theme, with a need for transportation to non-medical and social activities.

7. Trucking

The federal, state, and county highway and interstate network through the Town accommodates truck traffic. Water transportation is limited to recreational boating on the Wisconsin River and Lake Wisconsin.

B. REVIEW OF STATE AND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANS

This section reviews state and regional transportation plans relevant to Dekorra. This *Comprehensive Plan* is consistent with these transportation plans. WisDOT's Southwest Region office is primarily responsible for Interstate, U.S., and State highways in Dekorra. Dekorra is not within the jurisdiction of a regional planning commission or metropolitan planning organization.

1. WisDOT Statewide Transportation Improvement Program: 2024-2027

WisDOT maintains a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for State and federal highways within the District. Columbia County is in WisDOT's Southwest Region. There are two future projects in the Dekorra area in the STIP: patch existing concrete, replace beam guard, and clean drainage pipes for 3.9 miles of I-39/90/94 from Highway 60 to County Highway CS, of which 3,000 feet is located in the Town (scheduled for 2026) and construction and rehabilitation of the Interstate 39/90/94 bridge that is half in the Town of Dekorra spanning the Wisconsin River (scheduled for 2024 and under construction at time of writing).

2. Connect 2050: Wisconsin Long-Range Multimodal Transportation Plan

Connect 2050, adopted by WisDOT in 2022, is WisDOT's long-range transportation policy plan for the State of Wisconsin. That plan establishes goals and objectives that over the life of the plan, will guide and support development of an integrated, efficient, and safe multimodal transportation system. Specific goals in that plan include: pursue sustainable long-term transportation funding; focus on partnerships; pursue continuous improvement and expand data-driven decision-making processes; increase options, connections, and mobility for people and goods; maximize technology benefits; maximize transportation safety; maximize transportation system resiliency and reliability; and balance transportation needs with those of the natural environment, socioeconomic, historic, and cultural resources.

3. Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050

The Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 is the statewide long-range rail transportation plan. It provides a vision for freight rail, intercity passenger rail, and commuter rail, and identifies priorities and strategies that will service as a basis for Wisconsin rail investments. At the time of writing, Amtrak's existing Hiawatha route operates on tracks located 2.5 miles north of the Town boundary, and stops at the nearby Portage Train Station, connecting the Twin Cities to Milwaukee and Chicago. The Wisconsin Rail Plan, released in 2023, mentions a second daily round-trip passenger train between Chicago and the Twin Cities on the Borealis route, an extension of the Hiawatha route, beginning operation in early 2024. In its first months, the second Borealis route had a ridership of more than 18,500 passengers, which is higher than projected.

A significant improvement advised in the Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 is the extension of intercity passenger rail to Madison between the current Portage and Milwaukee stations, bypassing the existing Columbus route. While no stations or stops are proposed in the Town of Dekorra, the service connecting Madison to Portage could use existing railroad tracks in the eastern portion of the Town.

4. Wisconsin Active Transportation Plan 2050

At time of writing, WisDOT was updating the Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan and Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan and combining them into the Wisconsin Active Transportation Plan 2050 (ATP). The ATP will be a statewide long-range plan focused on human-powered modes of transportation, such as bicycling and walking. That plan will evaluate active transportation opportunities and needs, resulting in policies and actions that will align with and further Connect 2050, Wisconsin's statewide long-range transportation plan

5. US 51 Corridor Study

The 2011 *US 51 Corridor Study* covers the stretch of Highway 51 between the north edge of DeForest and the south edge of Portage. The purpose of the Study was to identify options to preserve and improve the function of Highway 51 in that stretch, now and in the future.

In 2015, Highway 51 was expanded to a four-lane freeway through DeForest, significantly affecting commuting and business traffic between Dekorra and Madison/Interstate 94. Before expansion, Highway 51 in DeForest carried an average of 16,600 vehicles per day in 2014. After expansion, Highway 51 in DeForest carried an average of 18,500 vehicles per day in 2017.

One of the topics addressed in the *US 51 Corridor Study* are traffic volumes and their potential effect on current and future highway levels of service. 2010s traffic volumes of 4,000 vehicles per day along Highway 51 were reported in the Dekorra area—lower than the 15,000+ near the southern (DeForest) and northern (Portage) edges of the study corridor. Projected Year 2040 traffic volumes in the Dekorra area exceed 6,000 vehicles per day. In any case, these figures are well below the normal planning threshold of 18,000 vehicles per day to consider a 4-lane roadway. As such, the *US 51 Corridor Study* suggests that most of Highway 51 between DeForest and Portage will be maintained as a two-lane facility for the foreseeable future.

The earliest morning and latest afternoon peak travel hours anywhere along the highway corridor occur in Poynette, Dekorra, and Arlington. This owes to the significant amount of commuting to the Madison and Portage areas from these smaller communities. This results in concentrated traffic concerns, which diminish substantially during non-peak hours, except for those related to weather, agricultural vehicles, and deer.

The Study also looked at accident data. Nearly ½ of all crashes involve deer, and 1/5 of the crashes have injury. There are, therefore, higher crash rates than the State average, but these are in large part driven by deer crashes.

Future improvements to this stretch of Highway 51 will be focused at intersections where there are current or projected safety or traffic flow concerns. These may include medians, left-turn lanes, and realignment, depending on the intersection.

6. Interstate 39/90/94 Corridor Environmental Impact Study

In 2012, WisDOT initiated a two-stage study to provide a comprehensive analysis of the need for and impacts of a capacity expansion for Interstate-39/90/94 between the Beltline in Madison to the interchange of Interstate 39 and Interstate 90/94 north of Dekorra. Growing traffic volumes, crash numbers, and roadway and bridge deterioration has prompted WisDOT to examine the corridor to maintain its viability in the future. The most important aspect of this study is determining how best to support the future functional integrity of this important arterial.

The first stage of the study, completed in 2013, was a traffic impact analysis for segments close to Madison. The second stage is an Environmental Impact Study for the entire corridor. The Environmental Impact Study began in 2022 and is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2024 with the issuance of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

At time of writing, a Draft EIS had been issued for public comment. The Draft suggested that, by 2050 and without improvements, the segment of the Interstate running through Dekorra would be operating at a “D” level of service, indicating notable delays. Current crash rates within Dekorra are at or below the statewide average. The Black and Smokey Hollow Road overpasses have substandard vertical clearance.

The Draft EIS advises reconstruction of the CTH V interchange as a diamond interchange, versus its current partial cloverleaf design, as suggested in Figure F. The Draft EIS also recommends construction of an additional travel lane (8 lanes total) through the Dekorra area, north to where Interstates 39 and 90/94 split. At time of writing, there was no implementation timeframe or programmed budget for these improvements.

Figure F: WisDOT-Recommended Diamond Interchange at CTH CS



C. TRANSPORTATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

1. Goal

Provide a safe, efficient, multi-modal transportation system that meets the needs of multiple users and minimizes impacts on landowners and farming.

2. Objectives

- a. Maintain and require a safe and interconnected road, highway, and Interstate network.
- b. Coordinate transportation with land use, especially near the Interchange and USH 51.
- c. Support biking, walking, transportation facilities and services for the transit-dependent and disabled, freight rail transport, trucking, water transport, transit, nearby air service, and other alternative modes of transportation.

3. Policies and Programs

- a. Work with WisDOT on **implementation of proposed Interstate and interchange improvements** advised under the Interstate 39/90/94 Corridor Environmental Impact Study
- b. Work with WisDOT to plan for a **future park and ride lot** at the interchange of the Interstate and Highway CS (see Map 7).
- c. Work with WisDOT and the Columbia County Highway Department to **control highway access for the planned *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area near the interchange** (see Maps 6 and 7), including access consolidation where possible when development proposals are offered.
- d. **Cooperate with the Village of Poynette, WisDOT, and the Columbia County Highway Department** to explore the extension of Highway CS to link up with Highway 51 near the southern border of the Village. Currently, truck traffic and other motorists trying to reach the Interstate must move through the Village or use Town roads north of the Village to get from Highway 51 to Interstate 39.
- e. Explore how access to the functioning **rail line might be used to promote industrial development** in the planned *Commercial/Industrial Mix* area near the Highway 51/J intersection, as shown on Map 6.
- f. Continue to **update and implement a Town Road Improvement Program** to provide for upgrading of Town roads and seek funding.
- g. **Upgrade existing Town roads** to current standards to the extent practical when repaving those roads (including for local pedestrian and bike movement), **but do not over-design those roads** beyond rural standards.
- h. **Discourage use of Town roads for through and/or heavy traffic** by considering techniques such as signage, speed zones, and weight limits.
- i. Require **new roads and driveways to meet the design, location, and layout standards** in Town ordinances.
- j. Within parts of the Town having or planned for more intensive development (i.e., outside of the planned *Agricultural and Woodland Preservation Area*), generally **require the dedication of public road rights-of-way** when new adjacent Certified Survey Maps or subdivision plats are brought forward.

- k. Work with WisDOT, Columbia County, and Poynette to **improve bike safety along Highway CS between Poynette and Lake Wisconsin**, either through wide on-street bike lanes or an off-street bicycle path.
- l. **Accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic** on less traveled town roads and County Highways, such as on Tipperary Road, along CTH V over Whalen's Grade to Smith Road, and in other intensively developed areas, through techniques like the installation and proper maintenance of paved shoulders and speed control and enforcement.
- m. Support **additional transportation options** for those without access to an automobile, including the elderly, disabled and children.
- n. Continue to **restrict against private improvements within Town road rights-of-way** and other Town lands, except with permission of the Town Board.

CHAPTER SIX: UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Contains background information, goals, objectives, policies, and recommended programs to guide future utilities and community facilities in Dekorra, with parks and recreational facilities addressed in Chapter Seven.

A. EXISTING UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

1. Water Supply

Dekorra is not presently served by municipal water service; residents receive their water via private wells. Poynette provides municipal water services to residents within the corporate limits of the Village. The Town does not anticipate providing municipal water service over the 20-year planning period, except perhaps in the new Utility District. Areas shown as being within the Urban Transition Area shown on Map 6 may be provided with municipal water service when development is imminent.

2. Town Utility District

The Town Utility District near the interchange is designed to facilitate sanitary sewer service to existing and planned land uses in this area. The Utility District is delineated on several maps in this *Plan*. The Town worked with WisDOT and WisDNR on the construction of a sewage treatment plant west of the rest areas and force sewer mains from the rest areas to the Utility District/Interchange Area. Construction of the new sanitary sewer facilities was completed in 2007. The system was designed with adequate capacity to serve the 20-year needs of the rest areas, plus future growth in the Utility District/Interchange Area.

At time of writing, the Town was exploring options to continue to cost-effectively deliver sanitary sewer service to its Utility District and the rest area, given maintenance and upgrades that would soon be required to the treatment plants. This may involve some collaboration/alternative with the Village of Poynette.

3. Sanitary Districts

The Town created Sanitary District 1 under the authority of Wisconsin Statute Section 60.71. It was intended to serve the area on both sides of Tipperary and Wildcat Roads near Lake Wisconsin as shown on Map 8. Commissioners are to be appointed by the Town Board and consist of 3 members serving 6-year staggered terms. However, there is no public sanitary sewer service provided or contemplated in this district at the present time.

The Town created Sanitary District 2 under the same authority. It was intended to serve the area on both sides of County Highway CS near Lake Wisconsin west of Whalen's Grade as shown on Map 8. Commissioners in District 2 are also to be appointed by the town board and consist of 3 members serving 6 year staggered terms. However, there is no public sanitary sewer service provided or contemplated in this district at the present time.

4. On-Site Water Treatment Systems

All development in the Town currently utilizes individual on-site wastewater treatment systems, often referred to as septic systems, which generally discharge the wastewater to underground drainage fields. Some of the Town's existing systems were installed prior to 1970, when standards for on-site systems began to be upgraded. Columbia County requires regular monitoring of on-site wastewater treatment system performance.

There are six types of on-site disposal system designs authorized for use today: conventional (underground), mound, pressure distribution, at-grade, holding tank, and sand filter systems. In

some cases, alternative waste disposal systems can be used in areas where conventional systems are not feasible due to unsuitable soil conditions. In Columbia County, the Department of Planning and Zoning administers the private sewage system ordinance.

Map 8 shows soil suitability for conventional on-site wastewater treatment systems in Dekorra. The suitability classifications (from severe to slight limitations) are derived from the Columbia County soil survey. Classifications are based on average slope, depth to soil saturation, average depth to bedrock, and flooding potential. In general, there is a high probability that a conventional system could be used in areas identified on Map 8 as having “slight limitations”. As areas move toward “severe limitations”, the probability increases that mound or alternative treatment technologies would have to be used.

5. Solid Waste Disposal Sites

There are no active solid waste disposal sites in the Town, and none planned. The Columbia County Recycling and Waste Processing Facility is located in Pardeeville.

Solid waste disposal sites, or landfills, are potential sources of groundwater pollution. With the passage of stringent federal regulations in the late 1980s, many smaller landfills closed. Many of these older landfills were located in worked-out sand and gravel pits, or in low-lying wetland areas. These landfills sites pose a much greater risk to local groundwater quality than modern landfills because of poor location and absence of liners or advanced leachate collections systems. To protect drinking water quality, WisDNR requires a separation of 1,200 feet (a little less than ¼ mile) between open or closed landfills and new private water supply wells.

6. Stormwater Management

Dekorrra does not have or intend to have an urban storm sewer system. Dekorrra has an Erosion Control and Stormwater Runoff ordinance that applies to all land-disturbing activities (as defined in Section 11.01 of the Building and Construction Codes). In addition, Columbia County requires the submittal of a stormwater management plan with all new subdivision requests. The Wisconsin DNR requires an erosion control plan and permit for all projects that disturb one or more acres of land. The landowner is required to ensure that a site-specific erosion control plan and stormwater management plan are then implemented.

7. Town Hall








The Town Hall is located at W8225 County Road JV, west of the Highway 51 and County Highway V intersection. It is located within a building purchased and refurbished by the Town in the early 2020s, including a new parking lot in 2024. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend all Town meetings.

8. Law Enforcement

The Columbia County Sheriff’s Department serves as the primary law enforcement agency for Town residents. The patrol officer serving Dekorrra is stationed at a dispatch office in Portage, on STH 33. The Town considers these law enforcement services adequate. The Town has a constable, who is primarily involved with enforcing the Town’s ordinances.

Dekorra Comprehensive Plan

Map 8 Dekorra Soil Suitability for Conventional On-Site Waste Disposal Systems

-  Sanitary District
-  Utility District
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Roads
-  Severe
-  Moderate
-  Slight


Note: This map is for general informational use only, and is not to be used to obtain detailed siting information.

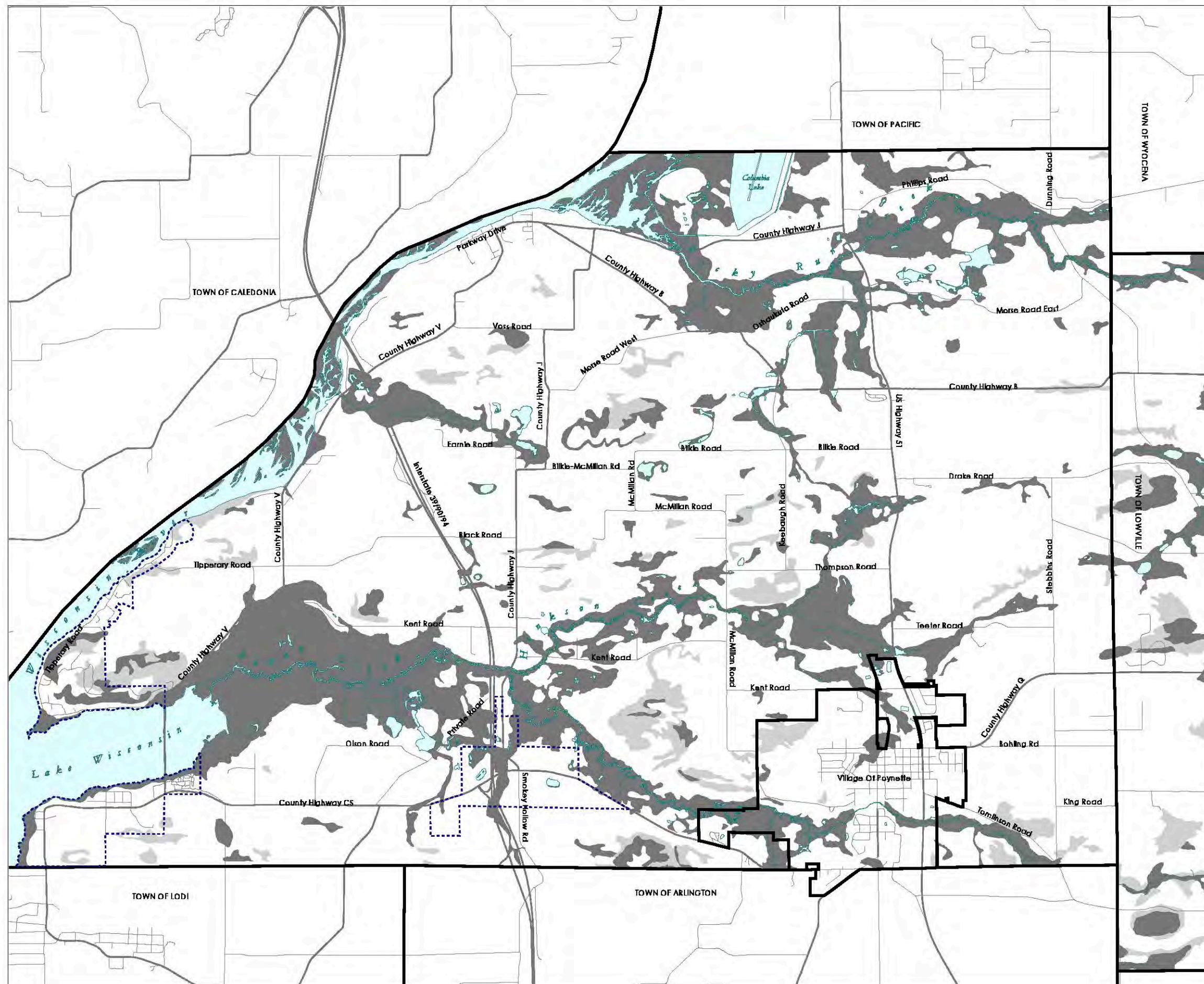
Note: Ratings of soil suitability do not indicate public policy of where new development may be appropriate. Classifications are based on average slope, depth to soil saturation, average depth to bedrock, and flooding potential. Soil series categorized as marsh, alluvial, water, gravel, or stony are also classified least suitable for any type of system development.

4250 0 4250 Feet

Adopted May 18, 2005

Sources: Columbia County LEO, NRCS,
& Wisconsin DNR

 Vandewalle & Associates
Madison, Wisconsin
Planning - Creating - Rebuilding



9. Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Service

Fire and ambulance services are provided by the Joint Poynette-Dekorra Fire and EMS Protection District, which provides both firefighting and emergency medical services to the Village of Poynette, the Town of Dekorra, the Town of Lowville, and other communities by mutual aid agreements. The District is governed by a Commission which has 7 members plus the Fire Chief who is a non-voting member. Dekorra is entitled to appoint 3 of the commissioners, selected by the Town Board and serving 2-year terms. The Fire Protection District and Commission is governed by the Restated Fire and Emergency Protection Agreement executed in 2011.

The Fire Department's building is located at 606 Water Tower Road on the north side of Poynette. Fire and first responder services are provided by members of the volunteer department. They are backed up by other volunteer departments from other communities.

10. Trash Collection and Recycling Services

Residents of the Town contract privately with one of several private services to receive on-site trash and recycling pickup on a weekly basis. The Town runs a trash drop-off/recycling site at McMillan and Hall Roads (W8901 Hall Road), paid through property tax bills as a special charge.

11. Libraries

Residents in Dekorra generally patronize the Poynette Library. The Town has historically contributed funds to subsidize this service. Library patrons can use their Columbia County Library card at any of the libraries in the seven-county South Central Wisconsin Library System. The Library and the United States Postal Service also provide free delivery for persons who are physically unable to visit.

12. Schools

Most students in Dekorra attend schools in the Poynette School District. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), 2022-2023 enrollment in the Poynette School District was 1,001 students—a decrease from 1,147 students in the 2012-2013 academic year. The Poynette school system includes one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school. Since 2000, two elementary schools in the Poynette School District have closed, including Dekorra Elementary, which was formally located in the Town on Bilkie Road and closed in 2009. The closure of Arlington Elementary School in 2020 coincided with the opening of the brand-new Poynette Elementary School at 225 W. North Street in the Village of Poynette.

There are a few households in the northeast corner of the Town in the Portage School District, and the southwestern part of the Town is in the Lodi School District. The Lodi School District has one primary school for pre-school to Grade 2; one elementary school for grades 3-5; a middle school for grades 6-8; a high school for grades 9-12; and Ouisconsing School of Collaboration, a charter school for grades 3-5. All schools are located within the Village of Lodi. DPI indicates that 2012-2013 enrollment for the Lodi School District was 1,491 students—down from 1,609 students in the 2012-2013 academic year.

13. Child Care Facilities

There are several small child care facilities, pre-schools, and family day care homes in the Poynette-Dekorra area, including Main Street Youngsters of Poynette and Kids First Preschool and Childcare, both located in the Village of Poynette. Several other child care options exist in

nearby Portage, Pardeeville, Rio, and Wyocena. There is a perpetual shortage in child care services in the area and state.

14. Churches and Cemeteries

There is one church in Town, Dekorra Lutheran Church, on CTH CS and Smith Road. This church serves as both a community gathering place and prominent building on the rural landscape. There are five cemeteries within the Town, including one at Dekorra Lutheran Church. Others include the Inch Methodist Cemetery at USH 51 and CTH B, Schofield Cemetery (inactive, Town-owned) at USH 51 and Thompson Road, the Hastie Cemetery at CTH J & Black Road, and Dekorra Cemetery in the old Dekorra village area. Other smaller burial areas are located throughout the Town.

15. Medical and Health Care Facilities

Local hospitals and clinics include the following:

- a. **Divine Savior Healthcare**
2817 New Pinery Road, Portage
608-742-4131
- b. **Prairie Ridge Health Hospital**
1515 Park Ave, Columbus
920-623-2200
- c. **UW Health Portage Clinic**
2977 County Road CX, Portage
608-742-3004
- d. **SSM Health Dean Medical Group Specialty Services**
2825 Hunters Trail, Portage
608-742-1063
- e. **Prairie Ridge Health Clinic**
1515 Park Ave, Columbus
920-623-1200
- f. **Columbus Health Care Center**
825 Western Ave, Columbus
920-623-9236
- g. **Lodi Clinic**
160 Valley Dr, Lodi
608-592-3296

The Town's proximity to the Madison metropolitan area provides a wide array of regional health care providers, including the University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics, UnityPont Health, SSM Health Dean Medical Group, St. Mary's Hospital, Meriter Hospital, and several HMO provider facilities.

16. Wireless Telecommunications Facilities

Due to the proliferation of wireless communications, the construction of telecommunication towers is an issue that towns are addressing more and more often. Most telecommunications towers are located in the northwestern portion of Dekorra, near the Interstate.

17. Power Generation and Transmission Lines

The Columbia Energy Center is a power plant located just north of the Town of Dekorra along the Wisconsin River. It is a 1054 megawatt coal-fired facility built in the late 1970s.

In December 2024, the Center's co-owners—Alliant Energy, Madison Gas and Electric, and Wisconsin Public Service—jointly detailed plans to suspend coal operations by the end of 2029. In the meantime, the companies intend to explore converting at least one of Columbia's units to natural gas.

Also, in August 2024, an application for state regulatory approval was filed for the Columbia Energy Storage Project. This project received an award from the U.S. Department of Energy in July 2024 to support the construction of a compressed carbon dioxide long-duration energy storage (LDES) system at the Columbia Energy Center site. The LDES project would be the first of its kind in the United States.

The American Transmission Company (ATC) operates a transmission line through Dekorra. This line was upgraded in 2018 via the Badger-Coulee Transmission Line Project. This project included a 180-mile, 345-kilovolt transmission line from La Crosse to northern Dane County that addresses electric system reliability issues locally and in the Midwest, provides economic savings, and supports renewable energy policy. Approximately 4.3 miles of the transmission line are located in the Town.

At time of writing, there were no commercial solar fields in the Town. Solar field proposals and developments are becoming more common in rural communities across Southern Wisconsin as utility companies and consumers desire to switch from fossil fuels to renewables for electricity production. In general, five to seven acres of land are used for every megawatt of solar power capacity.

Solar fields sized under 100 megawatts are subject to County zoning regulations and approval, while solar fields 100 megawatts or larger are not subject to local zoning regulations. Instead, these larger solar fields must gain approval from the State of Wisconsin's Public Service Commission (PSC). This process is called a Certificate for Public Convenience and Necessity, or CPCN, which requires the PSC to find that the project will 1) be in the public interest, 2) have no undue adverse impact on environmental values, 3) not interfere with orderly land use and development plans, and 4) have no adverse impact on competition in the relevant wholesale market.

B. UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, PROGRAMS

1. Goal

Provide basic public services such as police and fire protection, road maintenance and snow removal, recreational facilities, and public utilities in intensive development areas.

2. Objectives

- a. Coordinate utility and community facility systems planning with land use, transportation, and natural resource planning.
- b. Protect the Town's health and natural environment through proper siting of utility uses and mitigation of off-site impacts such as stormwater management and view preservation.
- c. Promote the use of existing public facilities, and logical expansions to those facilities to serve future development wherever possible.
- d. Support the provision of a range of utilities and community facilities in the Dekorra area, recognizing that many of these utilities may not be appropriate in a rural setting that most of the Town provides.

3. Policies and Programs

- e. Explore **viable long-term alternatives for continuing to provide sanitary sewer service** to the Utility District/Interchange area, and consider **water service** within the Utility District in the longer term.
- f. Continue to work with the Village and other neighboring governments to share costs for **joint fire and emergency medical services** and with Columbia County to maintain law enforcement services.
- g. Direct **rural development away from areas with limited suitability** for on-site waste treatment systems, as depicted on Map 8, as a way to protect groundwater supply for private wells.
- h. Work with the County Planning and Zoning Department to ensure the **proper approval process and placement of new on-site wastewater treatment systems**, and appropriate maintenance and replacement of older systems as a means to protect groundwater quality.
- i. Allow the use of holding tanks and biological and chemical wastewater treatment technologies **only where other systems are not feasible**, placement is consistent with the land use objectives of this *Plan*, and the property owner pays a special assessment on the property for monitoring and maintenance.
- j. **Carefully evaluate proposed large on-site waste treatment systems**, or groups of more than 10 individual on-site systems on smaller lots (1.5 to 2 acres) in the same general area, to ensure that groundwater quality standards are not impaired.
- k. Continue to enforce the Town's **Erosion Control and Stormwater Runoff ordinance** for multiple and individual lot developments.
- l. Within parts of the Town having or planned for more intensive development (i.e., outside of the planned *Agricultural and Woodland Preservation Area*), generally **require public stormwater management or drainage easements along lot lines** when new adjacent Certified Survey Maps or subdivision plats are brought forward, especially between Tipperary Road and the Wisconsin River/Lake Wisconsin.
- m. Do not plan for direct Town government involvement in **health care and child care** over the 20-year planning period, as these services will be provided by private and non-profit entities and in nearby communities.
- n. Do not plan for direct Town involvement in providing additional or expanded libraries, cemeteries, or solid waste disposal facilities. The Town expects that **cemeteries and libraries** in

- the area will be sufficient to serve Town residents over the planning period, or other entities will provide these facilities.
- o. Utilize detailed standards in the Columbia County zoning ordinance, as limited by State law, when considering requests to **site new telecommunications facilities**.
 - p. Remain actively involved in processes to site and replace **power generation facilities** in the Town, including those for alternative energy generation, distribution, and storage, applying this *Comprehensive Plan* to the extent possible.

C. UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES TIMETABLE

Table 10 is an estimated timetable for possible utility and facility changes in the Town over the 20-year planning period. Budgetary constraints and other unforeseen circumstances may affect this timeframe.

Table 10: Utilities and Community Facilities Timetable

Utility or Facility	Timeframe for Town Improvements	Comments
Water Supply	N/A	All water supplied by private wells. Town may consider providing water service to Utility District in future. No other plans.
Sanitary Sewer	2026-2030	Explore and implement desired alternative to continue to provide sanitary sewer service to the Utility District/Interchange Area.
Solid Waste Disposal	N/A	All landfills in the Town are closed. None planned.
Stormwater Management	Ongoing	Enforce the Erosion Control and Stormwater Runoff ordinance (Section 11.01, Chapter 11 Building and Construction Codes).
Town Hall	2025	Continue technology enhancements in the Town Hall, including monitors for the meeting room.
Recycling/Trash Services	N/A	The Town's recycling and private trash service should meet forecasted needs over the planning period.
Law Enforcement	N/A	County Sheriff and Town Constable are expected to continue in their present form, with additional need if population grows.
Fire Protection & Emergency Medical Services	N/A	Joint fire and EMS services are sufficient to meet needs and forecasted needs.
Medical Facilities	N/A	Medical facilities in nearby communities appear to meet needs.
Library	N/A	Continue arrangements for use of Poynette and other libraries.
Schools and Child Care	Ongoing	Encourage more child care facilities in the area.
Park & Rec Facilities	See Chapter 7	
Telecommunications	N/A	Private carriers addressing phone and internet needs.
Power Generation, Storage, & Transmission Facilities	Ongoing	Participate in any proposal to develop or convert power generation and transmission facilities in the Town, consistent with Town policies and as the law allows.
Cemeteries	N/A	Private sector will serve needs.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Contains background information, goals, objectives, policies, and recommended programs to guide public park and recreational facilities in Dekorra, also serves as the Town's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) together with data provided in other chapters. The State of Wisconsin requires communities to update its CORP every five years should it wish to maintain eligibility for State and Federal recreational grants.

This chapter includes a number of recommendations to improve park and recreation resources in the Town. It does not represent, however, a commitment by the Town of Dekorra to complete any particular project over the ensuing five years or beyond. Implementation of the recommendations will depend upon adequate financial resources being made available by the Town of Dekorra, taxation, user fees, grant monies, private donations, or other as-yet unknown sources.

A. EXISTING PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

1. Natural Resources

The Town's natural resource base is covered in depth in Chapter Three: Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources.

2. Population, Housing, and Land Use Trends and Projections

Trends and projections are the underpinning of the recommendations of this chapter and required by the State. These are included in other chapters of this *Comprehensive Plan*, including Chapter Two: Issues and Opportunities, Chapter Four: Land Use, and Chapter Seven: Housing.

3. Overview of Town-owned Parks and Recreational Facilities

This chapter uses terms from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) to describe the characteristics of a park, as follows:

- A mini park is typically less than one acre. Mini-parks typically include playground equipment and some field space, and serves a residential area within ½ mile or so.
- A neighborhood park is typically 1 to 9 acres. Neighborhood parks typically include areas for intense recreational activities such as field games, court games, and playground equipment. Service area can be ½ mile or more.
- A community park is generally 10 acres and up. Community parks typically include large areas for intensive recreational activities, often with lighting, parking, restrooms, and spectator areas. Passive recreation and natural areas may also be included.
- Developed water accesses provide access to Lake Wisconsin or the Wisconsin River from Town roads. Some are improved with pier and driveway. Some are grass access only that may primarily serve as storm water run-off areas.
- Undeveloped water accesses are remnants of road plats and/or public water access as required in Town ordinance Section 10.82(b)(1), which also may serve as storm water run-off areas and provide possible access from the water.
- Natural and conservancy areas are set aside for their natural beauty, their function of concentrating storm water runoff, and their benefit to residents, vacationers, and wildlife.

The Town of Dekorra owns six mini parks, four neighborhood parks, three conservancy areas, 14 developed water accesses, and three undeveloped water accesses (and four related undeveloped areas). These are described in the following subsections.

4. Existing Mini-Parks

a. Camp Perry Park

Location: Near W10934 Willow Ave. Section 33, T11N, R8E; North of County Highway V, turn north onto Willow Street

Facilities include: Lake Wisconsin frontage, sign designating park, ADA accessible play-ground area (2007), picnic table area, sand beach (swim at own risk), pier, parking, portable toilet, and access from water.



b. Camp Rest Park

Location: Near N3814 Tipperary Rd. Parcel 1600.02, Section 22, T11N, R8; located on Tipperary Rd.

Facilities include: sign designating park, Wisconsin River frontage, shelter, well with hand pump, playground equipment (2004), picnic table areas, sand beach (swim at own risk), paved boat launch, parking, portable toilet, and access from water.

c. Irene's Isle

Location: Parcels 1600, 03, 04, 05, 06, Section 22, T11N, R8; between Isle and Tipperary Road, 50' by 300' area adjacent to and South of Camp Rest Park

d. James Whalen Memorial Park

Location: Near W10893 Tipperary Rd. Parcel 915, Section 27-28, T11N, R8. Across the street from Tipperary Point Access, described below.

Facilities include: sign designating park, ADA accessible playground area (constructed 2007), picnic table areas, parking for fishing, portable toilet.

e. Riverside Park

Location: Near W9370 County Highway V. Section 6, T11N, R9; N of County Road V next to Wisconsin Street Access (described separately below), frontage between Wisconsin River and Hooker's Resort. Frontage width varies from approximately 100 feet near Hooker's to approximately 50 feet where it almost joins the land at Dekorra Park (also described below), separated by one parcel.

Facilities include: sign designating park, Wisconsin River frontage, adjacent to Wisconsin Street paved boat launch, picnic table area, parking, and access from water.

5. Existing Neighborhood Parks

a. Old Dekorra School Park

Location: W8460 Bilkie Road. Section 16, T11N, R9E, N. on the north side of Bilkie Road.

Facilities include: dog park (established in 2014), three pickleball courts (constructed 20254), playground equipment, picnic tables, shelter, baseball diamond, sport fields, storage building, and parking.

b. Dekorra Park

Location: Near W9306 County Highway V. Section 6, T11N, R9E, lots 3,4,5,8,9,10,11, Dekorra Village Plat; north of County Road V. Adjacent to Main Street Access described below.

Facilities include: sign designating park, Wisconsin River frontage, tennis court, ADA accessible playground area, picnic table areas (2007), fishing, parking, well with hand pump, portable toilet, and access from water.

c. Happy Hollow Park

Location: Near N3685 Tipperary Rd. Parcel 766.1, Section 22, T11N, R8E.

Facilities include: sign designating park, tennis court, baseball field, basketball court, playground equipment, picnic table areas and portable toilet.

d. Hickory Oak Park

Location: Near W7350 Hickory Ln. Section 1, T11N, R9E; E of Phillips Rd, Hickory Oak Subdivision

Facilities include: sign designating park, playground equipment, shelter, basketball court, and portable toilet.



6. Existing Developed Water Accesses

e. **Corning Street Access**

Location: Near W10963 Corning Rd. Section 34, T11N, R8E; W of County Highway V, turn W onto Corning Street.

Facilities include: sign designating access, Lake Wisconsin frontage, picnic table area, paved boat launch, pier.

f. **Stein Road Access (Lake Wisc. Highlands)**

Location: Near W10702 Becker Rd. Section 34, T11N, R8E; Stein Rd N of County Highway V, 60 ft x 100 ft

Facilities include: sign designating access, sandy area (swim at own risk), fishing, canoe or small boat launch by foot, minimal parking, and no toilet, access from water for picnics.

g. **Tipperary Point Access**

Location: Section 27-28, T11N, R8; 75 ft x 125 ft, off Tipperary Point Rd.

Facilities include: Lake Wisconsin frontage, paved boat launch, pier, fishing, parking along side of access and across street at James Whalen Memorial Park

h. **Second Road Access**

Location: Section 27, T11N, R8E, between parcels 807 and 808, 25 ft x 75 ft off Tipperary Rd

Facilities include: Lake Wisconsin frontage, sign designating access, grassy picnic area (no table), parking along road, fishing.

i. **Copse Road Access**

Location: Section 22, T11N, R8; 25 ft x 150 ft, between parcels 750 & 751, located off Tipperary Road

Facilities include: sign designating access, Wisconsin River frontage, gravel road to boat launch, pier, parking along sides of access, and cement pavements put in launch area (2007).

j. **Saddle Road Access**

Location: Section 22, T11N, R8E; 25 ft x 150 ft, between parcels 740 & 744, off Tipperary Road

Facilities include: sign designating access, Wisconsin River frontage, paved boat launch, pier, parking along the sides of access.

k. **Camp Rest Access**

Location: Section 22, T11N, R8; 25 ft x 50 ft off Tipperary Road

Facilities include: sign designated access, Wisconsin River frontage, paved canoe launch and parking.

l. **Wildcat Road Access**

Location: Near N3933 Wild Cat Rd. Section 22, T11N, R8E; 60 ft x 100 ft, off Wildcat Road, between lots 681 & 682

Facilities include: sign designating access, fishing, canoe or small boat launch by foot, foot path to river, only parking along Wildcat Road, picnic area (no table), access from water for picnics.

m. **Cedar Street Access**

Location: Near N4020 Wild Cat Rd. Section 23, T11N, R8; 25 ft x 100 ft, off Wildcat Road

Facilities include: sign designating access, fishing, canoe or small boat launch by foot down a stairway only, stairway and foot path to Wisconsin River below, parking – limited, parallel to cul-de-sac, picnic area, access from water for picnics.

n. **Oak Knoll Access**

Location: Near N4567 Oak Knoll Dr. Parcel 1701.13, Section 12, T11N, R8E, 25 ft x 100 ft. off Oak Knoll Drive

Facilities include: sign designating access, Wisconsin River frontage, paved boat launch, parking along side of access, low water levels–canoe or small boat launch only, no picnic area available.

o. **Woodlawn Terrace to River Access**

Location: Section 6, T11N, R9E; W of Parkway Drive, between parcels 1274 & 1285

Facilities include: paved road to River, steel rail across water's edge with three red posts, canoe or small boat launch by foot, parking along side of access, no picnic area.

p. **Beach Garden Road Access**

Location: Section 6, T11N, R9E; W of Parkway Drive between parcels 1292 & 1306.2

Facilities include: paved road halfway down access, canoe or small boat access by foot, fire pit, picnic area (no table), parking at pavements end, access from water for picnics.

q. **Wisconsin Street Access**

Location: Near W9370 County Highway V (Hooker's Resort) Section 6, T11N, R9E; west of County Highway V, next to Riverside Park

Facilities include: paved boat launch, Wisconsin River frontage, minimal parking but additional parking at WisDNR parking lot up the road.

r. **Main Street Access**

Location: Section 6/5, T11N, R9E; W of County Highway V, next to WisDNR parking lot

Facilities include: paved boat launch, Wisconsin River frontage, WisDNR parking lot across the road, east of County Highway V.

7. Existing Undeveloped Water Accesses and Related Areas

a. **Sweetbrier Trail**

Location: Section 6, T11N, R9E; W. of Parkway Dr, between parcels 1263 & 1273

Facilities include: undeveloped ravine

b. **Shady Cove**

Location: Section 6, T11N, R9E; W. of Parkway Dr. between parcels 1272 & 1280

Facilities include: undeveloped ravine

c. **Wildwood Glen**

Location: Section 6, T11N, R9E; W. of Parkway Dr. between parcels 1298 & 1282.4

Facilities include: undeveloped ravine

d. **Unnamed Ravine**

Location: Section 6, T11N, R9E; W. of Parkway Dr. between parcels 1271 & 1308

Facilities include: undeveloped ravine

e. **Unnamed Access**

Location: East of W10858 County Highway V. between parcels 1003 & 1004

Facilities include: undeveloped access

f. **Unnamed Access**

Location: River Oaks Road extension across Hwy V to water access.

Facilities include: undeveloped road right of way

g. **Unnamed Trail**

Location: River Oaks Road cul-de-sac trail extending south and east to WisDNR lands

Facilities include: undeveloped trail

8. Existing Natural, Conservancy, and Cultural Areas

a. Water Frontage along Tipperary Road

Location: Parcel 1100.6, Section 27, T11N, R8; all along the south border of Tipperary Road, 3400 ft x 50 ft to 100 ft

Facilities include: undeveloped and privately maintained.

b. St. Lawrence Bluff Park

Location: Near N4691 Saint Lawrence Bluff Rd. Parcel 1356, Section 12, T11N, R8E; St. Lawrence Bluff Rd, goes to River east of Interstate bridge, 1.75 acres

Facilities include: undeveloped, sign designating park, walkway along easement to signs showing entrance into park, no parking except on side of St. Lawrence Bluff Rd., walking possible but no established trails.

c. Beach Gardens Town Acreage

Location: Sections 5 & 6, T11N, R9E; Various parcels in the Beach Garden Area.

Facilities include: undeveloped and forested area, walking possible but no established trails.

d. Public Square

Location: Parcel 104.4, Section 5, T11N, R9E; Dekorra Village Plat, plus undeveloped Main Street to County Highway V. Along Dekorra Heritage Trail described and depicted below,

Facilities include: undeveloped; walking possible but no established trails or other improvements within square.

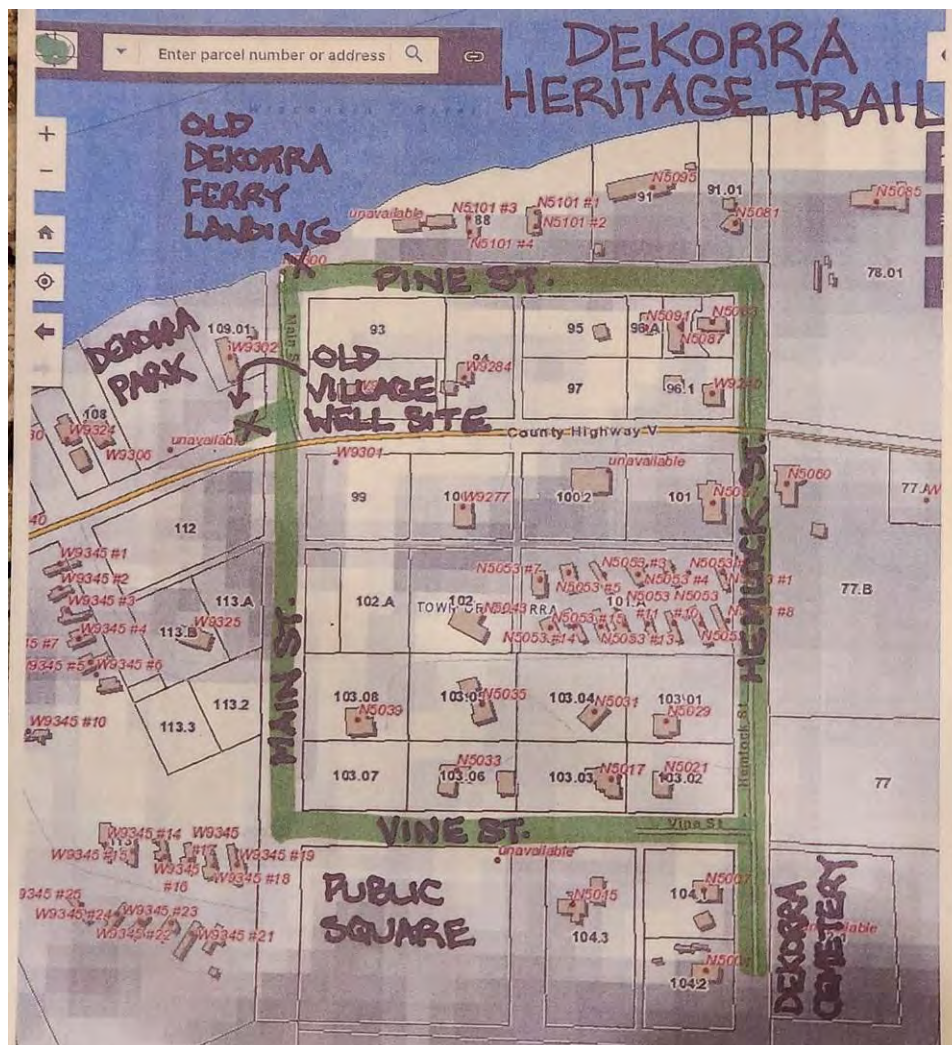
e. Dekorra Heritage Trail

Location: Near Dekorra Park; W9306 County Highway V.

Facilities include: approximately 1-mile long signed walking trail utilizing both paved roadways and undeveloped public rights-of-way. See Figure H for route. Users are advised to park in Wis DNR parking lot (just southeast of Old Village Well Site on Figure G, and to stay on trail following Main, Vine, Hemlock, and Pine Streets.



Figure G: Dekorra Heritage Trail



9. Other Publicly Owned Recreational Lands and Facilities in and near Dekorra

a. Jamieson Park (Village of Poynette)

Location: Section 33, T11N, R9E off County Highway C

Facilities include: 45-acre park, picnic shelter, trail access to Rowan Creek, trails, portable toilets, well with hand pump, 9-hole disc golf course (established in 2020), dog park.

b. Forest Area in Beach Gardens (Poynette School District)

Location: Section 6, T11N, R9E. Parcels 1185, 1212

Facilities include: Undeveloped.

c. Lake Columbia Area (Wisconsin Power & Light)

Location: Across the road from W8495 County Highway J & V

Facilities include: Fishing area, Canoe launch (no powered equipment), gravel road walking area.

d. **Whalen's Grade (Columbia County)**

Location: Section 27, 28, 33, 34, T11N, R8; E and W of County Highway V

Facilities include: Lake Wisconsin water frontage, fishing, ADA accessible fishing area, pic-nicking (no tables), parking on west side only.

e. **Whalen's Grade Boat Landing (WisDNR)**

Location: Parcel 959.E, Section 34, T11N, R8; County Highway V

Facilities include: blacktop boat launch, large parking area, and portable toilet.

f. **Dekorra Wisconsin River Public Boat Access/Parking Lot (WisDNR)**

Location: Parcel 99, Section 5, T11N, R9E; Across from Main Street Access

Facilities include: Large paved boat parking area for Main Street Access, maintained by Town/DNR partnership

g. **State Game Farm/MacKenzie Center (WisDNR)**

Location: Section 25, T11N, R9; 364.63 acres

Facilities include: See Chapter 3: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

h. **Rowan Creek Area (WisDNR)**

Location: Section 36, T11N, R9; 861.4 acres

Facilities include: See Chapter 3: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

i. **Hinkson Creek Area (WisDNR)**

Location: Section 21, T11N, R9E; 318.16 acres

Facilities include: See Chapter 3: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

j. **Public Hunting Grounds (WisDNR)**

Location: Section 13, T11N, R8E; 220+ acres along Interstate 90/94

k. **Rest Areas off I-39/90/94 (WisDOT)**

West Location: Section 13, T11N, R8E

East Location: Section 18, T11N, R9

l. **Other State of Wisconsin Lands**

Locations: Section 1, T11N, R9E; 138 acres; Section 2, T11N, R9E; 160 acres; Section 11, T11N, R9; 10.34 acres

m. **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lands**

Location: Sections 13 and 22, T11N, R9E; 250+ acres

10. Other Existing Recreational Opportunities

Programs that require organizations in surrounding municipalities are organized for youth and for adults. Opportunities for youth include football, wrestling, basketball, volleyball, softball, baseball, golf, hockey, soccer, curling, and swimming at the high school pool. Adult opportunities include baseball, softball, basketball, golf, volleyball, horseshoes, and curling.

Individual opportunities include the use of Lake Wisconsin and Wisconsin River boating, fishing, water skiing, canoeing, personal watercraft use, swimming, sailing, kayaking, and island camping. Other activities include running, walking, and biking along the roadways; tennis; basketball; golf; hiking; and hunting on public hunting grounds. Winter activities include snowmobiling, ice boating, ice fishing, cross country skiing, ice skating, and ice races by Whalen's Grade.

B. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

For the purpose of interpretation, the following definitions shall be used. Where terms referred to in this chapter are not defined, the Town adopts the terms, definitions, and standards that appear in the "Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines" (4th Edition) published by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). This system is intended to serve as a guide and not an absolute blue-print. The NRPA suggests that a park system, at a minimum, be composed of a "core" system of parklands, with a total of 6.25 to 10.50 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population.

1. Needs Standards

a. Mini-Park (or Neighborhood Playground)

Mini-Parks typically have facilities for young children or senior citizens, a land area of less than one acre, and a service area of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. The Town of Dekorra has several mini-parks already and prefers not to acquire or develop new parks that are this small. However, some parks in any newly created subdivisions may be mini-parks.

b. Neighborhood Park

A neighborhood park serves a neighborhood within about a $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 mile radius. Typically, a neighborhood park includes area for intense recreational activities such as field games, court games, playground equipment, as well as picnic facilities. Larger neighborhood parks may include tennis, volleyball, and basketball courts, soccer or ball fields and restroom facilities. The preferred size of a neighborhood park is 5 to 9 acres, but they can be as small as one acre. Newly created subdivisions often have neighborhood parks.

c. Community Park

A community park is a large recreation facility serving the entire community. Typically, community parks include all of the improvements found in a neighborhood park plus athletic fields designed for competitive athletics. Generally, community parks have lighted playfields, spectator areas, restroom facilities, and picnic shelters or pavilions. Community parks are usually 10+ acres in area. Community parks with adjacent natural areas may be significantly larger.

d. Regional Park

A regional park is a facility designed to serve a broad area that generally includes several local government jurisdictions. Regional park facilities are usually owned and maintained by a

county, state, or a regional park district. Regional parks generally feature both natural areas for passive recreation and active recreation facilities.

e. **Special Purpose Park**

Special purpose parks are public recreational and open space facilities that are designed to serve a specific purpose, which may include a public plaza or memorial, a swimming pool or other discreet recreational use, or a key open space in an otherwise fully developed commercial or industrial district.

f. **Conservancy Park**

A conservancy park is a publicly owned area that is managed primarily for its natural resource qualities, such as wetlands, wildlife habitats, or unique vegetation. Generally, trails and other passive recreational facilities are installed within conservancy parks. Conservancy parks are usually not suitable for active recreation facilities such as playfields or athletic facilities.

g. **Environmental Corridors**

Environmental corridors are continuous environmentally sensitive areas including wetlands, floodplains outside of the limited already-developed lands along the waterfront, and undeveloped shoreland setback areas. They are intended for long-term open space, wildlife habitat, stormwater management, natural areas, and or trails. They are further described in Chapter Four: Land Use, and shown on Map 6.

h. **Other Drainageways or Greenways**

Drainageways or greenways are undeveloped lands that are maintained in an undeveloped condition in order to provide sufficient land area to detain or retain periodic stormwater. While drainageways and greenways have recreational benefits, they can be periodically flooded or have poor drainage and are generally unsuitable for active recreational use.

i. **Service Area**

The service area is the zone of influence of a park. Service areas are usually determined by the average distance users are willing to travel to reach a facility. Although expressed in terms of service radius, features such as arterial roads, rivers, or other disruptions to normal travel may influence the extent of the service area.

2. Improvement Standards

The Town of Dekorra's existing park and outdoor recreation areas offer a high level of service. The Town of Dekorra continually strives to improve service to its residents. The following table summarizes standard NRPA park size recommendations.

Table 11: NRPA Park Size and Service Area Standards

Park Type	Acreage Standard	Service Area Radius
Mini-Park	.25 to .5 acres per 1,000 population	¼ to ½ mile
Neighborhood Park	1.0 to 2.0 acres per 1,000 population	½ to 1 mile
Community Park	5.0 to 8.0 acres per 1,000 population	1 to 2 mile (in village setting)

The Town of Dekorra currently meets these standards. There are six mini-parks of about 1/3 acre each and four neighborhood parks of about 2 acres each. Regardless, there will be additional need for “close-to-home” mini-parks and neighborhood parks in new residential subdivisions, if and where they develop.

While the Dekorra Dog Park site arguably services as a Dekorra’s community park, a site that would support structured athletic fields may also be studied, perhaps in cooperation with Poynette.

C. RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

There are currently no Town-organized sports and recreational activities, and no Town-organized activities are anticipated. Participants join the organization of their choosing for these activities. The Poynette School District, Village of Poynette, and private groups offer organized recreational activities. These fees for organized recreational programs should be primarily left to the participating individual.

D. PARKS AND RECREATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

1. Goal

Provide open space and trails for outdoor recreation, access to natural resources, and environmental protection, with safe and efficient neighborhood connections.

2. Objectives

- a. Provide permanent open space throughout the Town of Dekorra for outdoor recreation, access to natural resources, and environmental protection.
- b. Assure that neighborhoods within the Town of Dekorra have access to developed public parks.
- c. Provide safe and efficient trail access and bike routes between residential neighborhoods, parks, and other recreational sites and destinations.
- d. Preserve environmental corridors as permanent open space areas.

3. Policies

- a. Provide mini-park or neighborhood park facilities that are **safely accessible by children** within all developed residential neighborhoods.
- b. Provide **sufficient community park facilities** to serve community-wide park and outdoor recreation interests.
- c. Utilize drainageways, greenways, and environmental corridors as part of a **permanent open space system suitable for passive recreation use**, including nature walking, wildlife habitat preservation, and trail development.
- d. Require larger **new residential developments to provide parkland and/or per home fee in lieu of parklands** (per Town of Dekorra ordinance), and easements that would be consistent with the goal of safe and efficient trail access and continued park development.

- e. Implement a **maintenance plan for boat landings** that would include a capital improvement schedule, and with a focus on pier improvement. Investigate options for landing or pier usage fees. Use such fees to help cover these maintenance and improvement costs.
- f. **Coordinate parkland and open space planning** with the Village of Poynette, Town of Lodi, Town of Arlington, Town of Lowville, Poynette School District, Columbia County, and Wisconsin DNR.
- g. Design park facilities whenever practical to meet the requirements of the **American's With Disabilities Act (ADA)**.
- h. Create a **historic kiosk** or information center near the Dekorra Park/Dekorrra Heritage Trail area.

E. PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS AND RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

1. Generally

The Town will work to use American Transmission Company (ATC) annual payments as much as possible for park and recreation projects that meet the criteria for its use.

Common issues and recommendations identified for most Town parks are as follows:

- Permanently mark park boundaries.
- Trim trees, remove dead limbs and stumps, and remove invasives as advised.
- Continually maintain picnic tables, park signs, and other site improvements.
- If parks have street numbers, get signs and/or add number to existing park sign.

2. Individual Park Improvement Suggestions

- a. Cedar Street Park
 - Bounded by cottage at N4005 Wildcat Rd and private tennis court; owner maintains park. No vehicle access to park.
 - Dead/dying oak in middle of park; leave stump to rot as there is no vehicle access.
- b. Happy Hollow Park
 - Replace tennis court posts and net.
 - Add mobile pickleball net.
- c. 2nd Road Access
 - Regular clean-up of litter and driftwood at shoreline and in stormwater culvert.
 - Install property boundary posts; send annual reminder notices of property edges to adjacent landowners.
- d. Tipperary Point Access
 - Practice regular clean-up of brush on north side of ramp and in stormwater culvert.
- e. Stein Road Access
 - Reroof artesian well house.

- f. Camp Perry Park
 - Practice regular clean-up of litter and driftwood at shoreline.
 - Provide play area for older children.
- g. Sweetbriar Trail
 - Complete boundary survey.
 - Resolve final name for this area, given other “known-as” names (Woodlawn / Un-named road / Shady Cove).
- h. Potential Columbia Court Access
 - Resolve whether in fact there is an access at this location.
 - Complete boundary survey.
- i. Beach Garden Road Access
 - Complete boundary survey (not clear whether fire pit, bench, and logs are on Town property).
 - Either remove brush or retain if it has value as a visual block.
 - If brush removed, add guardrail like Woodlawn Access.
- j. Dekorra Park
 - Practice regular pulling/killing of brush in fence on tennis courts.
- k. Main Street Access
 - Repair west side of landing pad blacktop.

3. Recommendations for Future Parks and Recreation Facilities

- a. Trails
 - Encourage hiking trails on WisDNR lands and in the area along Parkway Drive and on Town lands in the Beach Gardens area.
- b. Community Parks and Related
 - Continue to improve and open the Old Dekorra School Park for recreational use as practical and demanded.
 - Identify 10+ acre site that could accommodate ball fields.
 - Encourage a private sports/recreation center in the Utility District/Interchange Area.

F. FUTURE PARKLAND ACQUISITION GUIDELINES

If and as new residential subdivisions develop in the Town, additional parkland may be dedicated through implementation of Sections 10.81 through 10.85 of the Town Land Division and Subdivision Code. Those sections generally require developers to dedicate developable land for park and recreational space equivalent to 5,000 square feet per dwelling unit for subdivision plats.

In areas where land dedication is not desired by the Town, a fee in-lieu-of parkland dedication should be provided. There are certainly areas where a fee for land acquisition elsewhere is more desirable and a recreational trail or easement through the property would better suit the public. The Town may use such fees for additional land acquisition for parks, conservancy areas, and recreational trail areas or for the development of parks, conservancy areas and recreational trail areas and are payable at the time of

plat approval. At time of writing, the fee amount was \$2,500 per lot per Section 10.82(g)1 and Chapter 1 of Town ordinances.

The Town may also acquire property via delinquent tax options and donations, as has happened in the Beach Gardens area. As land is acquired in this manner, it should be reviewed whether the best use is as a Town park or for subsequent sale and private development.

In addition to the standards in Sections 10.81 through 10.85 of the Town Land Division and Subdivision Code, the Town will use the following guidelines when making decisions on whether to acquire or accept park and recreational lands:

- The acquisition of parkland is consistent with this *Comprehensive Plan* and other Town policies.
- Adequate road and trail access will be available or provided to lands within the park service area, and for ongoing access and maintenance of the park.
- Where feasible, parkland should be located adjacent to other public facilities or environmental corridors in order to take advantage of shared-use opportunities and maximize benefits.
- Environmental corridors *may* be accepted as part of the public parkland dedications, where such land is not within wetlands or 100-year floodplains and such land provides key linkages between residential neighborhoods and community facilities.
- Land needed for stormwater management or land within delineated wetlands or 100-year floodplains will not be credited toward meeting parkland dedication requirements.
- As a general rule, mini-parks and playgrounds are more costly to improve and maintain on a per acre basis. Where feasible, consideration should be given to the accumulation of larger dedications or fees that could support the activities of a neighborhood or community park, as opposed to obtaining a significant number of additional mini-parks.

G. MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

While adding new parkland is important to serving new residential areas, the Town is committed to a program of maintaining existing parks in good condition and providing sufficient funds for operations. Such maintenance and operation include providing sufficient budget for:

- Maintaining and replacing facilities and equipment, as needed.
- Mowing and maintaining the lawn and landscaped areas.
- Keeping the parks litter-free, graffiti-free, and in a general state of positive upkeep.

These maintenance and operations need to be considered as part of the overall budgeting for park facilities. As any new lands are added to the park system, additional funds will be needed for maintenance and operations.

H. EXISTING USAGE ASSESSMENTS; POSSIBLE DISPOSITION

The Town Board and Parks Commission will continue to assess existing Town owned lands and make recommendations as to improvements, whether the Town should continue to own all these properties, or whether some of them should be sold. Lands assessed may include parks, water accesses, and erosion control green space (such as in the Beach Gardens Plat).

Such assessments should consider the following factors:

- Types and amount of existing uses. Existing uses may include water access, recreation, erosion control, or common green space buffer.
- Extent to which existing uses are available in other parks, or whether one or more existing uses in the park under assessment are unique or uncommon.
- Make-up of existing users. This should include whether the lands are truly used by the public in general or only by adjacent property owners and their friends/patrons.
- Suitability for future improvement as more attractive recreational space.
- Suitability for private development, both in terms of land characteristics and marketability.
- Whether the money obtained from such a sale could be better used for park and recreational lands or facilities elsewhere.
- Whether the Town could legally sell the land if it chooses. Some public right-of-way lands if vacated by the Town may need to revert to adjacent landowners. Other lands may have recorded deed restrictions that may limit their sale.
- Whether a water access is necessary to meet statutory requirements (generally one access for every ½ mile).
- Neighborhood and community opinion.

Such assessments will provide the data to create an informed decision on potential disposition of Town park and recreational lands.

CHAPTER EIGHT: HOUSING

Contains background information, goals, objectives, policies, and recommended programs aimed at providing an adequate housing supply that meets housing demand in Dekorra.

A. EXISTING HOUSING FRAMEWORK

1. Housing Stock Characteristics

Between 2010 and 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that the number of new housing units in Dekorra *decreased* by 28 housing units, from 1,337 housing units to 1,309 housing units. This could be a result of some demolitions but is more likely an error in one count or the other. From January 1, 2012 and January 1, 2024, the Town added 113 new housing units based on County zoning permit records.

Between 2010 and 2020,, the population of Dekorra increased from 2,311 residents to 2,500 residents. The population increase is likely due to a significant increase in “year-round” households, which increased from 72.8% of total households in 2010 to 81.8% of total households in 2020. The population living in year-round households is included in total population figures while the population living in seasonal households is not included in total population figures.

Table 11: Housing Units by Structure Size, 2000 – 2020

Units per Structure	2000 Units	2000 Percent	2010 Units	2010 Percent	2020 Units	2020 Percent
Single-Family	1,171	93.9%	1,349	92.7%	1,199	91.2%
Two-Family (Duplex)	8	0.6%	20	1.4%	17	1.3%
Multi-Family	0	0%	0	0%	39	2.9%
Mobile Home	67	5.4%	81	5.6%	54	4.1%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000, 2010, 2020

Table 12 compares other housing stock characteristics of Dekorra with the Towns of Lowville and Arlington, the Village of Poynette, and Columbia County. Of all communities compared, Dekorra has by far the greatest percentage of seasonal units. Dekorra also had one of the highest rates of owner occupancy among the communities, with only the Town of Lowville having a higher owner occupancy rate. Nearly 89% of all Dekorra’s housing units were owner-occupied.

Based on the 2020 U.S. Census, the Town’s median housing value of \$288,500 was higher than the values of all of the surrounding communities. Dekorra’s median value also substantially exceeded that of Columbia County as a whole, as shown in Table 12.

Between 2013 and 2023, the annual median sale price of a home in Columbia County increased year-over-year based on statistics derived from the South Central Wisconsin Multiple Listing Service (MLS). In 2013, the median home sale price in Columbia County was \$132,000. By 2023, the median home sale price had more than doubled to \$295,000. This represents an increase of \$163,000 or 123%. While this represents a significant increase, the median home sale price in Columbia County remains significantly lower than nearby Dane County, which had a median home sale price of \$409,900 in 2023. These increases have been driven by a persistent, and worsening, housing supply shortage in Columbia County, the southcentral Wisconsin region, and the nation as a whole.

Table 12: Housing Stock Characteristics, 2020

	Town of Dekorra	Village of Poynette	Town of Lowville	Town of Arlington	Columbia County
Total Housing Units	1,309	1,143	450	327	26,565
Total Year-round Households	1,071	1,075	399	323	24,336
% Seasonal Units	18.2%	5.9%	11.3%	1.2%	8.4%
Owner-Occupied Vacancy Rate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
% Owner-Occupied	88.9%	67.5%	90.2%	83.0%	74.5%
Median Housing Value	\$288,500	\$210,800	\$271,600	\$278,600	\$206,300
Median Contract Rent	\$572	\$666	\$488	\$600	\$705

Source: U.S. Census, 2020 and South Central Wisconsin MLS.

2. Housing Condition and Age

Age of a community's housing stock is sometimes used as a measure of the general condition of the community's housing supply. Only 12% of Dekorra's housing stock was constructed since 2000 while almost one-quarter of the Town's housing stock was constructed prior to 1950. Over the planning period, some of these older homes may need rehabilitation.

3. Forecasted Housing Needs

Future housing units in Dekorra are forecasted based on the population forecast scenarios in Chapter Two, projected average household sizes, and projected additional absorption of new households into existing seasonal homes. The 2010 average number of persons per household was 2.37, while the 2020 average was 2.31. This downward trend has been consistent for decades. This forecast assumes another decrease in the average, but anticipates that it will level off at 2.2 persons per household by 2045. Further, the consultant assumed that 20% of the new households expected in Dekorra would occupy existing homes (i.e., seasonal to full-time residences).

Based on this methodology and the population projections from Chapter Two, from 2024 Dekorra is forecasted to accommodate between 67 and 106 additional housing units between 2024 and 2030, between 108 and 169 additional housing units by 2035, between 150 and 237 additional housing units by 2040, and between 194 and 310 additional housing units by 2045. Actual housing units built in the Town will depend on a number of factors, including market conditions, demographic shifts, regulations, and attitudes towards growth.

These housing forecasts were used to forecast residential land use demand in Chapter Four.

4. Housing Affordability

Under the comprehensive planning law, a community must provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels, age groups, and special needs. Affordable housing choices in the Town will be most feasible where public sanitary sewer services are available and Town plans allow for housing. Sewer service allows smaller (and therefore more affordable) lots and the potential for attached housing options, like condominiums and small apartments.

The Village of Poynette provides the most appropriate location for affordable housing in the area. Based on the Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey, over 20% of Poynette's housing units were in multi-family structures containing three or more units, and 5% of the Village's housing units were mobile homes. Within Dekorra, the "Business/Residential Mix" portions of the Interstate Interchange Area (see Map 7) provide some opportunities for denser, more affordable housing choices with public sewer.

The Town's three mobile home parks and older houses also will provide affordable housing in Dekorra. The Town also advocates smaller lot sizes for rural residential development outside of publicly sewered areas, which can reduce the overall costs for housing. According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), there are no subsidized housing units in Dekorra.

In Columbia County, housing assistance is provided through both a non-profit and a private company. Administration of the W-2 program is provided for Columbia County by Forward Services Corporation by way of contract with the State of Wisconsin. Some housing assistance is available to those who qualify for the W-2 program.

The County refers others with housing assistance needs to the non-profit Community Action Agency, Central Wisconsin Community Action Council, Inc. The Council receives federal and state funding to provide housing assistance to low- to moderate-income residents. These programs include:

- Weatherization assistance to replace materials and rehabilitate homes
- Section 8 housing
- Rental assistance program
- Emergency funding through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Grants for temporary housing for the homeless
- Home buyers rehabilitation funding
- Down payment and closing cost assistance

Other housing programs available to Dekorra residents include home mortgage and improvement loans from WHEDA and home repair grants for the elderly from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds down-payment assistance for homebuyers, rental rehabilitation, weatherization-related repairs, accessibility improvements, and rental housing development. The Housing Cost Reduction Initiative (HCRI) funds activities such as emergency rental aid, homeless prevention efforts, and related housing initiatives. Further information on these programs can be obtained by contacting WHEDA.

The USDA Rural Development department provides low-interest loans to very low-income owner occupants, to improve or repair homes, to remove health and safety hazards, or to make homes accessible to disabled household members.

Other programs available to Columbia County residents can provide disabled, low-income, or elderly residents with energy assistance and in-home services, such as cleaning and health visits. Further information on these programs can be obtained by contacting the Columbia County Department of Health and Human Services.

B. HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

1. Goal

Provide opportunities for limited housing development, while retaining rural character, productive farmland, natural resources, and historic and cultural features.

2. Objectives

- a. Support the provision of housing in the Town to meet the needs of persons of all income levels, age groups, and special needs.
- b. Encourage high quality construction and maintenance standards for housing.
- c. Encourage home siting that will not result in property or environmental damage, or impair rural character or agricultural operations.
- d. Encourage neighborhood designs and locations that protect residential areas from infringement by incompatible land uses, promote connectivity of road and environmental systems, support a range of transportation choices, and preserve rural character.

3. Policies and Programs

- a. Plan for a **sufficient supply of developable land for housing for a variety of income levels**, including low- and moderate-income residents, in areas and densities consistent with the goals of the Town as set forth in this *Plan*, at a pace consistent with recent development trends, and of densities and types consistent with a rural setting.
- b. Direct eligible persons to County, State, Federal, and non-profit **housing programs** to promote and preserve decent, affordable housing options, maintain the Town's existing housing stock, and provide housing options with people of all ages and with special needs.
- c. **Support the private market in developing affordable housing** for low- and moderate-income residents, the elderly, and people with special needs. Several state and federal programs and funding sources are available to assist private developers, Columbia County, local governments, and residents to meet housing objectives.
- d. Encourage the **maintenance of housing and residential neighborhoods** through efforts such as enforcement of existing local and county housing and zoning regulations and the identification of funding sources and programs to rehabilitate housing that has deteriorated. For example, using CDBG funds, communities may establish rehabilitation loans or grants to assist owner-occupants with repairs.
- e. **Work with Poynette** and other urban communities in the area to also meet the policies and programs listed above. In many cases, affordable housing goals are more appropriate to achieve in urban areas because the higher levels of urban services and utilities allow for greater density and closer proximity to required services.

CHAPTER NINE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Presents the Town's economic development strategy; contains background information, goals, objectives, policies, and recommended programs to promote the retention and enhancement of the economic base; assesses geographic and other focus areas for the desired range of businesses and industries; and identifies the Town's assets, strengths, challenges, and opportunities related to attracting and retaining businesses.

A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1. Town of Dekorra: Economic Overview

The Town of Dekorra is located just minutes north of the City of Madison, Wisconsin's state capital and home to the state's flagship university, technical institutions, and centers of innovation. The Town is also only 20 minutes south of the Wisconsin Dells—a major Midwest tourist destination.

Dekorra maintains a relatively diverse economic base for a community of its type and size. In recent years, the Town as a whole has experienced a growing and increasingly affluent population, but is still predominantly characterized by farmlands and rolling, wooded hills. The presence of several key assets in the Town—such as the “triple” Interstate 30/90/94, U.S. Highway 51, and the Wisconsin River and Lake Wisconsin—has provided additional opportunities to promote higher-value commercial, industrial, and residential development. Dekorra is also the “Gateway to Lake Wisconsin”—providing multiple opportunities for lake access, housing and business development, and water-based recreation.

Described in the remainder of this chapter are the Town's more specific assets, opportunities, and challenges for economic growth; its desired focus for economic development associated with the major transportation and natural assets; and the Town's economic development strategy.

2. State and Regional Economic Development Agencies and Initiatives

- a. **Columbia County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC):** The Columbia County Economic Development Corporation is a non-profit corporation established in 1992 to coordinate economic development throughout Columbia County. CCEDC undertakes the following activities: business development, retention, and expansion; business visits; entrepreneurs and inventors club; maintenance of website serving as community portal (see <http://www.ccedc.com/>); inventories available business sites; markets revolving loan fund; maintains regional data; and supports tourism activities.
- b. **Madison Region Economic Partnership (MadREP):** MadREP, formerly known as Thrive, is a multi-county regional economic development partnership comprised of eight counties in the Madison region: Dane, Dodge, Columbia, Sauk, Jefferson, Green, Iowa, and Rock counties. MadREP's mission is “through a comprehensive regional approach to economic development, the strategic pursuit of job creation and business growth in target clusters, and a coordinated talent development pipeline, MadREP leads the expansion and innovation of a dynamic economy where people and businesses thrive.” MadREP utilizes the strategic vision of the Elevate Madison Region Strategy (see <https://madisonregion.org/elevate-strategy/>) and lists several strategic initiatives to sustain and elevate the economic vitality of the Madison Region. More information about MadREP can be found at <https://madisonregion.org/>.
- c. **Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):** CEDS are tools and planning processes promoted by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (a bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce) to establish formally recognized and approved Eco-

- conomic Development Districts and establish strategic priorities and an implementation plan for economic development in these areas. Dekorra and Columbia County are within an eight-county Economic Development District that includes: Dane, Dodge, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Rock, Sauk, and Columbia counties. In 2024 a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy—Elevate Madison Region—was prepared with the guidance of MadREP (described above) for and approved for this region. This strategy sets a blueprint for economic development programs and helps leverage opportunities for funding, and devises actionable implementation strategies for the region (see <https://madisonregion.org/elevate-strategy/>).
- d. **Wisconsin Biohealth Tech Hub:** In 2023, the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced that Wisconsin Biohealth Tech Hub was designated as one of 31 inaugural tech hubs in regions across the country that show potential for rapid growth in key technology sectors. The Wisconsin Biohealth Tech Hub, a consortium led by Bioforward Wisconsin, will work to position Wisconsin as a global leader in personalized medicine. This designation is part of the first phase of the novel Tech Hubs program, authorized by the CHIPS and Science Act, which will invest directly in high-potential U.S. regions and aim to transform them into globally competitive innovation centers. In 2024, the EDA approved \$49 million in Phase 2 funding for the Wisconsin Biohealth Tech Hub. The Tech Hub is projected to create up to 30,000 jobs over the next decade and generate \$9 billion in economic activity.
 - e. **Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC):** WEDC is a public-private agency designed to assist business development and innovation through loans, grants, tax credits, and technical assistance programs. WEDC divides the State into nine different territories covered by Regional Development Director who help connect resources to businesses hoping to expand and/or locate in the Region. Dekorra and Columbia County are within the region that includes the following Counties: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Jefferson, Sauk, and Rock counties. WEDC partners with local government, as well as businesses and industry, specifically targeting high-growth businesses. Several of the programs discussed in the following section of the report are overseen by WEDC.
 - f. **Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant Program:** Through this program, WEDC supports redevelopment efforts by providing financial incentives for shovel-ready projects in urban, small city, and rural communities. Grant recipients must demonstrate significant, measurable benefits in job opportunities, property values, and/or leveraged investment by local and private partners. CDI has a continuous application process. Applicants for a CDI grant should complete an application through an Account Manager.
 - g. **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):** This federally funded program is currently administered for non-urban locations in Wisconsin by WEDC. Grants for improvements to public infrastructure where the direct result is the attraction or expansion of a business that brings quality jobs into the community.
 - h. **Brownfields Grant Funding:** WEDC also currently manages the Brownfields Grant Program. This program provides funds to assist with the assessment and remediation of environmental contamination of abandoned, idle, or underused industrial or commercial facilities or sites. This program helps convert contaminated sites into productive properties that are attractive and ready for redevelopment. The Brownfields Grant Program has a continuous ap-

plication process. Applicants for Brownfields Grants should complete an application through an Account Manager.

- i. **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP):** This program is a legislative program reauthorized in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. With certain exceptions, projects that met eligibility criteria for the Safe Routes to School Program, Transportation Enhancements, and/or the Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities Program are eligible TAP projects. TAP questions can be directed to the WisDOT contact for the Southwest Region.
- j. **Renewable Energy Incentives for Businesses:** A Focus on Energy program provides financial incentives to businesses to take advantage of clean, green, renewable energy, such as wind, solar, biomass, biogas, and biodigesters. Further, the U.S. Department of Energy periodically issues competitive funding through the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, Industrial Technologies Program, and other offices. The Town can monitor whether any programs align with local needs or business opportunities or present partnership opportunities as they arise.
- k. **Thrive Rural Wisconsin:** This new initiative from the Office of Rural Prosperity is a way for rural and tribal communities to bring together local leadership, set common goals in a neutral and facilitated structure, and access resources that will help them act on those goals. Provided at no cost to communities, the Thrive Rural Wisconsin program brings project management, financial support, and technical assistance to advance housing, community economic development, community facilities, and sustainable energy projects and connects them to the resources they need to be successful. For more information, visit <https://ruralwi.com/thrive-rural-wisconsin/>.
- l. **U.S. Small Business Administration's Certified Development Company (504) Loan Program:** This program provides growing businesses with long-term, fixed-rate financing for major fixed assets, such as land and buildings. 504 loans can be used to fund land purchases and improvements, grading, street improvements, utilities, parking lots and landscaping, construction of new facilities, or modernizing, renovating, or converting existing facilities. A Certified Development Company is a nonprofit corporation set up to contribute to the economic development of its community.

B. DEKORRA'S ECONOMIC ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Town aims to proactively respond to its assets, strengths, and opportunities in fostering its desired economic focus, as presented in Figures H and I on the following pages.

In addition to understanding the assets, strengths, and opportunities, it is also important to acknowledge challenges and weaknesses in order to address problems and advance an effective economic strategy. The Town's challenges and weaknesses in advancing its desired economic base include the following:

- Competition with other local governments for economic development.
- Town government structure limits the ability to provide economic incentives for development, like Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

- Limited tax base creates limited revenues to proactively solicit economic development.
- Inconsistent development quality across Town, and in areas like Interchange and waterfront.
- Limited array and locations of public utilities, even with sewer in the Utility District/Interchange Area.

Figure H: Town of Dekorra ASSETS/STRENGTHS for Economic Improvement

Environment and Geography	Infrastructure
Wisconsin River and Lake Wisconsin	"Triple Interstate" (39,90,94) and U.S. Highway 51
Natural beauty (rolling, wooded countryside; dramatic views)	Utility district/sewer service
Designated natural areas (Hinkson, Rowan, and Rocky Run Creeks, wildlife areas and State fisheries)	Interstate 39/90/94 and County Highway CS interchange
American Breeders Service/Genus investments	Rail corridor
Proximity to population and innovation centers (Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago)	Power Plant/Columbia Energy Storage Project
Positioning and marketing through MadREP	Busiest rest areas in State
Access to higher education	Good roads
Economy, Tourism & Recreation	"The Grade" and bridges to Sauk County
Proximity to Wisconsin Dells	Local parks and boat launches
Lake Wisconsin is tourist destination	Human Capital
Recreation gateway to Dells/Up North	Massive regional population/market
Trout fishing	High local incomes and education
Boating destination	Established and growing resident base
Waterfront living, dining, and lodging	Local "movers & shakers"
Cabins/camping	
Food processors, plastics, health care as key area industries	
Economic development opportunity areas generally remote from residential areas	

Figure I: Town of Dekorra OPPORTUNITIES for Economic Improvement

General/Town-Wide	Lake Wisconsin Waterfront
Nature-based recreation & education	Retirement destination (low maintenance living options)
Hinkson, Rowan, and Rocky Run Creeks	Sustainable design opportunities (e.g., storm-water management)
Unified community entryway and wayfinding signage	Continued redevelopment in the “Whalen’s Grade” causeway area
Becoming a more bike-friendly community (capitalize on regional cycling destination)	Utility District/Interchange Area (see further description below and in Land Use chapter)
Rest Area kiosks as marketing opportunity	Local products outlet(s)—meat, dairy, wine, etc.
Further collaboration with County and Poynette	Innovation Center—business development for local “baby boom” entrepreneurs
	Preliminary Welcome Center--Lake Wisconsin, Dells, “Northwoods”
Highway 51 Corridor (see more detailed description of this area below and in Land Use chapter)	Outfitters--fishing, paddling, boating, climbing, biking, etc.
Freight rail-road based industries	Lodging
New uses related to Columbia Energy Storage Project	Dining
Highway 51 upgrades	Ag, Forestry, and Tourism
	Possible housing in mixed use settings

C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

1. Goal

Facilitate high-quality economic development in planned areas that provides quality job opportunities, retains natural resource and agricultural assets, and improves quality of life and tax base.

2. Objectives

- Work jointly with nearby communities, Columbia County, and regional entities (e.g., Mad-REP) on mutually beneficial economic development initiatives that promote the stabilization, retention, and attraction of local economic opportunity.
- Prioritize business development at the Interchange Area of Interstate 39/90/94 and County Highway CS and, to a lesser extent, at the intersection area of US Highway 51 and County Highway V/J.
- Plan for compact growth and small-scale businesses compatible with a mainly residential setting along the waterfront area. Address commercial and tourist rooming land uses that challenge compatibility and negatively affect quality of life in this area.
- Promote economic development efforts that are compatible with and support farming and farm-related businesses, natural resource-based recreation, and environmental protection.

3. Policies and Programs

- a. Accommodate a **range of high-quality employment opportunities** particularly focused in areas planned as *Commercial/Industrial Mix* on Map 6, and as further detailed on Map 7 for the Interchange Area.
- b. Direct **highway oriented commercial uses**, particularly redevelopment, to lands closest to the Interchange.
- c. Direct **light industrial uses** (with limited outside storage, limited noise, controlled trucking) further away from the immediate Interchange Area and to a second proposed mixed use area located along Highway 51 near its intersection with County Highway J/V.
- d. **Discourage scattered commercial or industrial development** between the Interchange Area and the rest areas, along Highway CS, and along Highway 51 in locations that are not planned for commercial development (see Maps 6 and 7).
- e. Support the continued maintenance of **farming as a legitimate business activity** in the Town. Support opportunities for farm family businesses, home occupations, and agriculturally related businesses to assist farmers in creating secondary income sources.
- f. Encourage **small businesses related to farming, natural resources, and recreation**.
- g. Continue to **enforce the Town's Interchange Area Design Guidelines**, site plan ordinance, and subdivision ordinance to ensure high quality development at.
- h. **Market the Town's economic opportunities** as a strategy to attract new businesses compatible with the Town's vision for development, including through the Town's website (<http://dekorra-wi.gov/>). Keep website up to date.
- i. **Partner with the Village of Poynette and other area communities** to attract businesses that are appropriate for each community and work together on joint marketing of the area.
- j. Encourage a **bike and pedestrian trail** linking the MacKenzie Center, the Village of Poynette, the Rowan Creek, the utility district/Interchange Area, and Lake Wisconsin.
- k. Consider a **community entryway and wayfinding signage** program to direct visitors to points of interest within the community, particularly focused on the Interchange Area.
- l. Identify and pursue **funding sources** to help attract, support, and grow economic enterprises within the Town.
- m. Explore the appropriate use of **Tax Increment Financing** or other development incentive tools to promote development within the Town, particularly in the Interchange Area.

D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Building on the above goal, objectives, and policies, this section describes the Town's economic development strategy. It elaborates on geographic areas most appropriate for business development, and provides an assessment of categories or particular types of new businesses and industries that the Town desires.

The Town's ability to implement a compli-

DEKORRA'S ECONOMIC VISION

Dekorra is "beautifully situated" in the heart of southern Wisconsin for business and pleasure. The Town enjoys access to Interstate 39/90/94 and Highway 51 and features an interchange that is already zoned and served by public sewer. Dekorra's farmlands, wooded hills, the Wisconsin River, and Lake Wisconsin provide the perfect backdrop for both work and play.

cated economic improvement strategy is limited. The Town has a very few staff and no designated organization, committee, or individual devoted to economic development. Further, compared to cities or villages, towns in general have limited economic development powers under Wisconsin Statutes. Therefore, creativity and simplicity in developing a viable economic strategy are critical.

1. Dekorra's Economic Opportunity Areas

There are three focus areas where business development is planned and most appropriate in the Town of Dekorra. These include high quality commercial, light industrial, and mixed uses in the Interstate 39/90/94 Interchange Area (Utility District); light industrial and related business development in the US Highway 51/County Highway J/V intersection area; and residential and compatible tourism development and redevelopment along Lake Wisconsin. The geographic boundaries of each area are shown on Map 6: Planned Land Use and Map 7: Development Plan, Dekorra Interchange Area/Utility District, with the Land Use chapter including detailed land development policies. Broadly speaking, the Town's plan is to direct most economic development to these three areas, thereby preserving the vast majority of Town's land as open space. Concentrating development into well-planned, discrete locations also allows for the more effective and efficient mitigation of negative environment impacts.

The desired economic development direction for each of the three areas is described below.

a. Interstate 39/90/94 Interchange Area (Utility District)

This area surrounds Dekorra's Interstate interchange, and includes Dekorra's Utility District. This is the only area within the Town that is served by public sanitary sewer service. Future development and redevelopment in the Utility District and on adjoining lands should include commercial service and retail uses designed to serve the community, visitors, and the traveling public, with the additional potential for industrial and distribution uses (in high-quality buildings and on sites in less visible areas) and possibly moderate-density residential areas on the east end. A sampling of desired types of businesses include hotels, restaurants, a business that could also serve as a "welcome center" and/or a "celebration center" for the area, an incubator for small business start-ups and acceleration, and specialty retail stores such as an outlet for locally-produced food and beverage products. Desired future uses and site and building design standards for this critical and highly visible economic development area are further articulated within the Town's Interchange Area Design Guidelines document (see <https://cdn.townweb.com/dekorra-wi.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/InterchangeDesignGuidelines-1.pdf>).

b. U.S. Highway 51/County Highway V/J Intersection

In addition to direct access to a major U.S. highway through the Town, this area in the northern part of Dekorra is also flanked by a major freight rail line and is close to the Columbia Energy Center. The Town envisions some future economic development at this intersection, which is already home to two small businesses. Future development will include a mixture of indoor light manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution uses, with associated office and commercial uses. Particular opportunities associated with rail service and proximity to the Columbia Energy Center may be pursued. Site and building design in this area of the Town will need to be particularly sensitive to natural features and the rural and residential character of nearby lands.

c. Lake Wisconsin Area

The eastern shore of Lake Wisconsin is home to numerous year-round and seasonal homes. There are also a few areas where non-residential development, mainly serving residents and vacationers, has occurred. These include lands in the historic Dekorra “village” area near the northwest corner of the Town, and lands south of “Whalen’s Grade”—a highway crossing/causeway over the lake near the Town’s southwestern corner. Future development and redevelopment of commercially planned and zoned areas of the Lake Wisconsin area will include smaller scale commercial uses that support the surrounding neighborhoods, permanent and seasonal lakefront residents, and tourists. Potential future uses include inns, rental cottages, bed and breakfasts, offices, restaurants, gift and other retail shops, personal or professional services (e.g., salon), recreation outfitters, art studios, and daily shopping and services. At the same time, the Town is cautious about the overpopulation of tourist rooming houses in its Lake Wisconsin Area—particularly parts that are mostly residential—and has regulations to this effect.

By virtue of these three areas, through Map 6: Planned Land Use, the Town has designated a sufficient number of sites and opportunities for the Town to achieve its desired economic development focus over the 20-year planning period.

2. Agricultural and Natural Resource-Based Economic Development

While business development in the Town is intended to be focused in the three areas and for the uses discussed above, another key component of the economic base of the Town relates to agriculture and natural resources. The Town contains vast tracts of agricultural land and many natural resource-based assets: the Wisconsin River and Lake Wisconsin, natural areas, and trout streams, and the MacKenzie Center. These assets and features will continue to support economic development activities centered around agricultural and natural resources, while ensuring that new development does not impair these resources.

The Town supports the economic health of production agriculture in the Town. The Town also encourages the exploration of “non-traditional” forms of agriculture, such as vegetable, fruit and nut farms, and other small-acreage farms; grazing; research farming; community-supported agriculture; farmers’ markets; equine centers; and businesses supporting hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreational activities. See the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources chapter for detailed recommendations.

The Town also encourages the establishment of recreation-based businesses that relate to the enjoyment and enhancement of the collection of resources in the Town: Lake Wisconsin and the Wisconsin River, streams, MacKenzie Center, and other privately owned and publicly owned resources. The Town generally supports businesses that aim to enhance and expand recreational opportunities in the area. The Town may continue to collaborate with various partners in the County on promoting “silent sports” and low impact recreational pursuits.

3. Re-use of Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ (WisDNR) Environmental Remediation and Redevelopment Program maintains a list of contaminated sites, or “brownfields,” in the State. WisDNR defines brownfields as “abandoned or under-utilized commercial or industrial properties where expansion or redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived contamination.” Examples of brownfields might include a large abandoned industrial site or a small corner gas station.

Properties listed in the WisDNR database are self-reported, and do not necessarily represent a comprehensive listing of possible brownfields in a community.

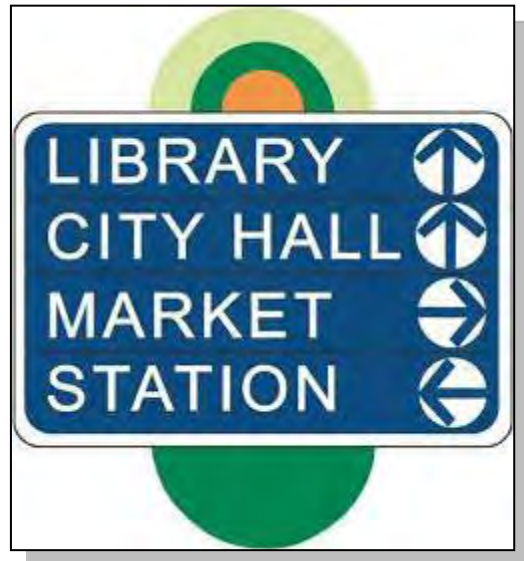
There are two sites in Dekorra listed on the DNR's Environmental Clean-up and Brownfields Re-development database that had not been closed at the time this updated chapter was prepared, however these sites were classified as "no action required" (July 2024). More specific locations, property ownership information, and status of remediation efforts for these sites are available from WisDNR.

The location of contaminated sites was considered when making land use recommendations in the Plan. If additional contaminated sites are identified in the future, the Town supports clean-up and appropriate reuse of these and other contaminated sites, but should not approve (re)development projects until remediation is completed or commitments are secured for remediation.

4. Continued Public Infrastructure Investments

The Town and area property owners have already made a considerable investment in extending sanitary sewer to the Utility District/Interchange Area, and the Town is pursuing a long-term approach to continue to efficiently provide such service. As development demand dictates, there are opportunities for further sewer extensions in this area, such as east along County Highway CS.

Each of the Town's three economic improvement areas is adjacent to one or more U.S., State, or County highways. The Town will therefore continue to advocate for improvements and access policies that both assure safe traffic flow and maximize business development opportunities on adjacent lands.



Generic example of a wayfinding sign

Finally, the Town may consider a community entryway and wayfinding sign system, with the most critical location for such signs near the ends of Interstate 39/90/94 ramps. Entryway signs announce that one has entered a community; there seems a great opportunity to use an existing structure at the southeast corner of the Interchange for an entryway sign. Wayfinding signs direct visitors to key destinations in the community. Any effort to install entryway and wayfinding signs should be accompanied by removal of pre-existing, redundant signage.

5. Consideration of Development Incentive Tools

To encourage development in the Town's economic development areas, and particularly in the Utility District/Interchange Area, the Town may explore the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Within a tax increment district (TID), the local government may borrow funds to install necessary public improvements or to fund development incentives. Once new private development

occurs in the TID as a result of these efforts, the principal and interest payments associated with the borrowing are made with the additional property tax revenues.

Under Wisconsin Statutes, towns do not have the same abilities to use TIDs as cities or villages, particularly if they have fewer than 3,500 people like Dekorra. Still, towns are authorized to establish TIDs (and direct TIF expenditures) to promote environmental remediation or agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, and tourism development (see box on previous page). Fortunately, many of the Town's desired business types within the Utility Dis-

trict/Interchange fit into one of these categories. There may be further opportunities for TID/TIF were the Town to enter what is called a "cooperative plan" with the Village of Poynette, which may also address a wide variety of intergovernmental boundary, land use, and economic development issues (see the Intergovernmental Cooperation chapter).

The Town's use of TID/TIF would probably be opportunity-based or project-based. That is, a particular possible private development project that is consistent with the Town's economic development strategy and with this *Comprehensive Plan* in general could approach the Town with a particular request for a financial incentive to allow a desired project to be financially feasible in the Interchange Area. If desired, the Town could then establish a TID around the affected property, and execute a development agreement with the property owner to recover Town costs and assure that the project/requestor will generate enough additional tax revenue to fund any incentives or public improvements initially paid for through TIF borrowing.

6. Pursuit of Grants and Other Funding Support

The Town may work independently and with other agencies in the pursuit of grants or other funding sources to advance economic development and continued utility service in the Utility District/Interchange Area, and to a lesser extent in the other parts of the Town that are targeted for economic growth. Representatives of the Town, potentially together with those from the County, might consider meeting with WEDC Regional Development Director and/or MadREP to help the agency better understand priorities of the Town regarding economic development and to further identify what specific resources might be available to the Town.

Options for TIDs in Dekorra

- **Environmental Remediation TID.** Dekorra may create a TID to fund the removal, containment, and monitoring of contamination of soil, air, surface water, sediments, or groundwater caused by environmental pollution. The Town of Springfield in northwestern Dane County established an ER TID in 2014.
- **"Agricultural/Natural Resource" TID.** Dekorra may create a TID wherein 75% of the improvements made by the TID involve projects revolving around agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, and tourism resources (the other 25% can revolve around other uses).

CHAPTER TEN: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Contains background information, goals, objectives, policies and recommended programs for intergovernmental planning and decision making; incorporates by reference all plans and agreements to which Dekorra is a party under §66.0301, §66.0307, §66.0309 of Wisconsin Statutes; and identifies existing and potential conflicts between this *Comprehensive Plan* and the plans of adjacent villages and towns, Columbia County, the State, and school districts.

A. REGIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The following is a description of the plans of other jurisdictions operating within or adjacent to Dekorra. These jurisdictions are depicted on Map 2. A summary of any potential conflicts with this *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan* follows the description of each jurisdiction's plans. Where conflicts are apparent, a process to resolve them is also proposed.

1. Columbia County

In 2007, the Columbia County Comprehensive Plan 2030 was prepared in conjunction with comprehensive plans for most of the towns in Columbia County, and also reflected city and village plans. The Columbia County Comprehensive Plan 2030 includes an "Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources" element; a future land use map that identifies planned "Agricultural and Other Open Space Areas," and policies for limited residential development within such areas. In 2013, the County adopted amendments to the Columbia County Comprehensive Plan 2030 to ensure full consistency with its new Farmland Preservation Plan, which itself was adopted as a detailed component of the County's Comprehensive Plan under Section 66.1001.

In March 2012, after a 3½ year effort that overlapped with the State's adoption of the Working Lands Initiative, Columbia County adopted a "comprehensive revision" to its general county zoning ordinance. Under Wisconsin Statutes, a comprehensive revision to a general county zoning ordinance must be approved by each town in the county for that zoning ordinance to take effect in that town. The County elected as part of that process not to make substantial changes to its agricultural and open space zoning districts and zoning standards. Instead, the County agreed to defer such effort until after the completion of its Farmland Preservation Plan and to treat such second effort as another "comprehensive revision." The County adopted the second comprehensive revision to its zoning ordinance in 2014 to address farmland preservation matters.

In 2020, Columbia County adopted the Columbia County, WI Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Plan include several general hazard mitigation measures applicable to and relevant for the Town of Dekorra, but also includes the specific hazard mitigation measure of identifying right-of-way and pave or gravel County Highway V in the Town for flooding issues for 225 feet from Rory to River Oaks. The Plan is scheduled for update in 2025.

There are no known conflicts between this *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan* and the adopted Columbia County plans and ordinances. This *Town Comprehensive Plan* was updated to correspond with the County Comprehensive Plan (as amended in 2013) and the 2014 comprehensive revision to the County zoning ordinance.

2. Village of Poynette

The Village of Poynette last updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2017, with the most recent amendments occurring in 2019 and 2020.

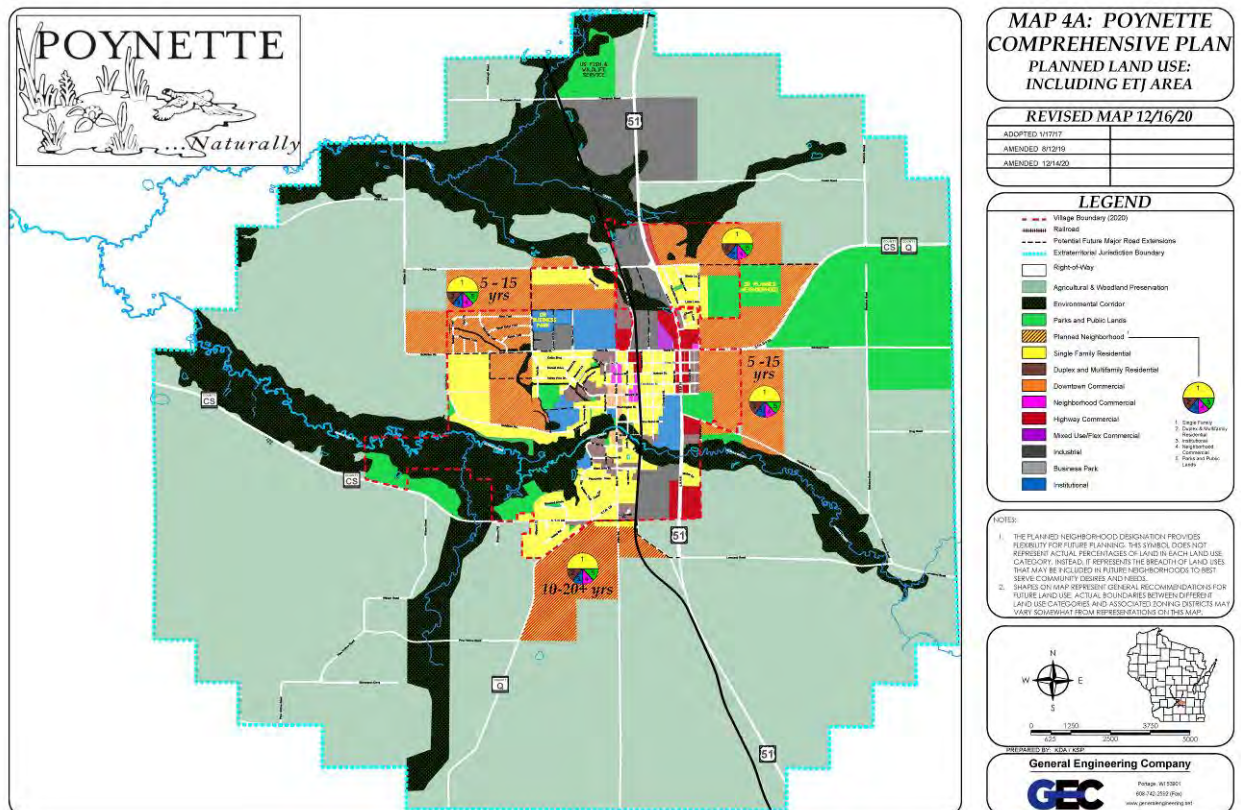
Poynette's Comprehensive Plan features a planned land use map, reproduced below as Figure K. That map suggests potential future Village neighborhood expansion areas to the east, north-west, and south of the current Village limits, where mainly residential development would be anticipated. The east and northwest areas are currently in Dekorra. The northwest area is adjacent to the recently-platted, 80-acre Point Gardens neighborhood in the Village. Point Gardens is envisioned for around 320 single family homes, 128 multiple family units, and over 9 acres of public parkland. It is likely that Point Gardens will absorb most of Poynette's residential devel-

opment demand for the next several years, minimizing the likelihood of larger annexations into the Town for residential use.

The Figure K map also suggests potential future business park development north of the Village and Hinkson Creek, on lands currently in Dekorra. Per the Village plan, “this location is viewed as most advantageous for establishment of a modern business park or a large industrial site(s) in the community.” In 2023, Poynette approved the Cannery Square subdivision southwest of the Highway 51/Kent Road intersection in the Village, with eight lots ranging from one to seven acres zoned for industrial development. This development, plus remaining vacant industrial lands in the North Street corridor, should absorb demand for smaller-lot industrial use for the next several years, but not any demand for larger industrial sites.

The Figure J map also shows the outer boundaries of Poynette’s extraterritorial jurisdiction, where it exercises extraterritorial land division review authority into the Town.

Figure J: Village of Poynette Planned Land Use Map



Within its Implementation chapter, the Village’s plan advises negotiation of an intergovernmental agreement/cooperative plan with the Town of Dekorra, as a top priority, to cover community development issues of mutual concern. Stated issues may include municipal boundaries, extraterritorial rights, joint economic development, rural development and farmland preservation, growth management, sanitary sewer and water service provision, road maintenance, parks and recreation, development design standards, or even shared revenues from new development.

Poynette’s Comprehensive Plan was generally consistent with and complimentary to Dekorra’s *Plan*, except that Dekorra’s *Plan* does not acknowledge the possibility of future industrial expansion north of Hinkson Creek in the Highway 51 corridor.

3. Town of Lowville

The Town of Lowville Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2004 and last amended in 2008. It is consistent and complimentary to this updated *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan*.

4. Town of Pacific

The Town of Pacific Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2012. While understanding its role as a residential community, the Town of Pacific seeks to maintain its rural character by promoting low density housing and enforcing higher development standards for new subdivisions, while protecting its ample natural resources. Due to its larger shared borders and influence, the town anticipates more collaboration between the City of Portage and the Town of Wyocena and Columbia County as a whole than with the Town of Dekorra. There are no known conflicts between Pacific's and Dekorra's plans.

5. Town of Caledonia

The Town of Caledonia Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2009. That town anticipates that growth will occur at a similar rate to the past two decades. It discourages housing growth on parcels with fewer than 35 acres and on land zoned for agricultural purposes. Its goal is to maintain and promote the rural identity and agricultural economy already in the area and improve already-existing commercial areas. The Town of Caledonia views its relationships with adjacent towns as one of "mutual respect with limited opportunities for shared resources and services." There are no known conflicts between Caledonia's and Dekorra's plans.

6. Town of Arlington

The Town of Arlington Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2009. Arlington's plan is focused on farmland preservation. It is consistent with the *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan*.

7. Town of Lodi

The Town of Lodi Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2009. It is consistent with the goals and objectives of the *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan*, particularly when considering its objectives for land use, agriculture, and economic development. Its anticipated collaboration efforts deal more with the Village of Lodi and Columbia County as a whole than with the Town of Dekorra.

B. IMPORTANT STATE AGENCY JURISDICTIONS

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) Southwest Region office (Madison) serves Dekorra and all of Columbia County. WisDOT plans—and Town approaches to working with WisDOT—are summarized in Chapter Five.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR) provides service to the Town out of its service center located in Poynette. Project boundaries for potential WisDNR land acquisitions from willing sellers are shown on Map 6, and WisDNR plans and studies are summarized in Chapter Three.

There are no known conflicts between the plans and policies of these State agencies and the *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan*.

C. REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Dekorra is not within the service area of any regional planning commission or metropolitan planning organization, but is eligible to obtain fee-service services from the Dane County Regional Planning Commission with mutual agreement.

D. SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Information on local school districts is presented in Chapter Six. There are no known conflicts between this *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan* and the plans of the affected school districts.

E. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, PROGRAMS

1. Goal

Build on relations with other governments and agencies to achieve mutual goals and deliver services efficiently.

2. Objectives and Policies

- a. **Work with Poynette** to ensure that future municipal boundary changes, utility service areas, land use and transportation policies, and extraterritorial decisions benefit both municipalities.
- b. Explore the possibility of **pursuing cooperative economic development initiatives** and/ or a marketing approach.
- c. Work with Columbia County and neighboring jurisdictions on their **comprehensive, farm-land preservation, and hazard mitigation planning and zoning efforts**.
- d. Cooperate with neighboring governments, school districts, Columbia County, and State agencies on **providing joint or shared services and planning for future public facility needs**, such as recreational programming and emergency services.
- e. Continue to **maintain good relations with WisDOT and WisDNR** through their regional offices, addressing projects and issues of mutual concern as described elsewhere in this *Comprehensive Plan*.
- f. Stay informed on **activities of the school districts** to ensure the Town has the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect Town residents, such as building improvements, tax issues, and transportation.

3. Recommended Program: Intergovernmental Agreement/Cooperative Plan

Dekorra and Poynette would benefit from entering into a formal intergovernmental agreement covering community development issues of mutual concern. These issues may include municipal boundaries, extraterritorial rights, economic development, rural development, growth management, sanitary sewer and water service provision, road maintenance, parks and recreation, development design standards, or even shared revenues from new development. An agreement could help the communities minimize competition for development, share both the costs and benefits of economic development, make sure that future development is of high quality, provide all parties with a greater sense of certainty on the future actions of others, and promote municipal service and growth efficiency in an era of diminishing government resources.

The following is a draft outline of issues that an intergovernmental agreement could cover. Municipal attorneys would need to place any agreement in a proper legal format prior to adoption, obviously following a significant amount of additional negotiation among the communities. Often, intergovernmental agreements are executed after a year or more of meetings, research, consideration of options, writing, and legal review. At time of writing, the two municipalities have been discussing a potential plan for joint utility service.

Intergovernmental Agreement Options

There are two main formats for intergovernmental agreements under Wisconsin Statutes. The first is available under Section 66.0301, which allows any two or more communities to agree to cooperate for the purpose of furnishing services or the joint exercise of any power or duty authorized under State law. While this is the most commonly used approach, a “66.0301” agreement is limited to a 10-year term related to boundaries. Another format for an intergovernmental agreement is a “cooperative plan” under Section 66.0307 of the Wisconsin Statutes. This approach is more labor intensive and ultimately requires State approval of the agreement, but does not have some of the limitations of the “66.0301” agreement format, mainly the term.

- a. **Municipal Boundary Changes.** Future (e.g., through 2045) annexation area boundaries could be based on a negotiated *Urban Transition Area* boundary between the Town and Village. Within that mutually agreed area, the Town could agree not to oppose annexation. Outside of that area, the Village could agree not to annex land. The future of Village-planned (but not Town-planned) industrial lands north of Hinkson Creek could be a topic.
- b. **Road Maintenance:** Both communities could agree to a procedure for addressing road maintenance issues when new land is annexed. The Town is also concerned about significant traffic from Point Gardens using McMillan Road to get to the Interstate, particularly as Point Gardens continues to expand west.
- c. **Utility Service Area Boundaries.** Long-term utility service area boundaries could be established within a negotiated *Urban Transition Area* boundary between the Town and Village and near the Interstate Interchange. A permanent solution for sanitary sewer service and treatment is required for lands near the Interchange; the possibility of municipal water service could also be discussed. Discussions on utility services could also cover provisions for dealing with developed areas with failing septic systems or holding tanks to address public health concerns. Combined with the municipal boundary provisions described above, collaboration on utility service boundaries and responsibilities would provide greater certainty to both communities, property owners, developers, and the general public as to where intensive development could occur and where it could not.
- d. **Future Land Use Recommendations.** The negotiations and resulting agreement could focus on provisions to:
 - Amend this *Comprehensive Plan* and Poynette’s plan as necessary to achieve full compliance with the intergovernmental agreement.
 - Make development (e.g., rezoning) decisions that are consistent with the amended comprehensive plans and the agreement.
 - Implement innovative approaches to achieving shared growth management and land use objectives. This may include cooperative extraterritorial zoning, whereby the Village

and Town could jointly make zoning decisions within all or part of lands within 1½ miles of the Village limits.

- e. **Joint Economic Development Efforts.** The negotiations and resulting agreement could focus on provisions to:
 - Jointly pursue state, federal, and county economic development grants and incentives to promote business and light industrial development consistent with the Town's vision.
 - Cooperatively plan for economic development in mutually agreed areas in and near Poynette and the Interstate 39/CS interchange.
 - Consider a revenue sharing agreement for new municipal taxes generated from development in some of these areas.
 - Decide on the rerouting of Highway CS to extend near the Village's southern boundary east to Highway 51 as a means to facilitate economic development and redirect heavy and through traffic.
- f. **Shared Programs or Services.** The communities could discuss greater opportunities for co-operation or consolidation of local parks and recreational programming. This should ideally be done in consultation with the Poynette School District.
- g. **Agreement Term and Amendments.** An intergovernmental agreement should specify the length of time that it is applicable. Twenty years is a typical timeframe (e.g., through 2045), as this corresponds with local comprehensive planning time horizons. Occasionally, agreements have provisions for automatic extensions if neither party decides to withdraw. Most agreements also include provisions for periodic review and possible amendments if both parties agree.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: IMPLEMENTATION

Provides a roadmap for specific actions necessary to fully implement the Plan's recommendations. This chapter generally does not cover day-to-day decisions. Instead, it identifies certain programs and larger actions that the Town may undertake over the next several years.

A. PLAN ADOPTION AND INTERNAL CONSISTENCY

A first step in implementing this updated *Town of Dekorra Comprehensive Plan* is to make sure that it is adopted in a manner that supports its intended future use as a tool for consistent decision-making. Pursuant to Section 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes, the Town has included all necessary elements and has followed the procedures for adopting and updating this *Plan* under the State's comprehensive planning legislation.

The State comprehensive planning statute requires that the implementation element "describe how each of the elements of the comprehensive plan shall be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the comprehensive plan." Because the various elements of this *Plan* were prepared simultaneously, there are no known internal inconsistencies between the different elements or chapters of this *Plan*, although there are clearly challenges and tensions among certain recommendations.

B. PLAN MONITORING, AMENDMENTS, AND UPDATE

The Town intends to regularly evaluate its progress towards achieving the recommendations of the *Comprehensive Plan*, and amend and update the *Plan* as appropriate. This section suggests recommended criteria and procedures for monitoring, amending, and updating the *Plan*.

1. Plan Monitoring and Use

The Town will evaluate its decisions on private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other actions against the recommendations of this *Comprehensive Plan*. The Town of Dekorra intends to use this *Plan* to inform such decisions under the following guidelines:

- **Rezoning:** The Town Board and County Board have shared authority to approve, conditionally approve, or reject requested changes to the zoning of any property in the Town. Section 11.06 of the Town Code of Ordinance describes the Town rezoning process in detail. In general, Town Board action on a rezoning request is preceded by a recommendation of the Town Plan Commission. The Town will generally not approve speculative rezoning of lands in the absence of a specific development proposal and site plan.

Proposed rezonings must be consistent with the recommendations of this *Plan*. Specifically, the Planned Land Use map and the detailed policies associated with that map will be used to guide the application of the general pattern of zoning districts. However, the precise location of zoning district boundaries may vary, as judged appropriate by the Plan Commission and Town Board. Departures from the exact land use boundaries depicted on the Planned Land Use map may be particularly appropriate for projects involving a mix of land uses and/or residential development types, properties split by zoning districts and/or properties located at the edges of Planned Land Use areas. In their consideration of rezoning requests, the Plan Commission and Town Board will also evaluate the specific timing of the rezoning request, its relationship to the nature of both existing and planned land uses, and the details of the proposed development. Therefore, this *Plan* allows for refinement of the precise planned land use boundaries and Town discretion on the timing of rezonings implementing the Plan.

- **Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments:** Changes to the text of the County zoning ordinance will be approved or rejected/vetoed by the Town Board, following a recommendation by the Town Plan Commission. Columbia County may not approve a zoning ordinance text amend-

ment if a majority of town boards in the County reject/veto that amendment. The Town will rely on this *Comprehensive Plan* and may rely on the advice of professionals before deciding whether to approve, reject/veto, or take no action on a proposed zoning ordinance text amendment.

- **Conditional Use Permits:** Under the 2012 County Zoning Ordinance, the County and Town share Committee share authority to approve, conditionally approve, or reject requests for conditional use permits. Prior to County action, the Town Plan Commission will make a recommendation to the Town Board on a conditional use permit request, and the Town Board will take Town action.

Proposed conditional use permits should be consistent with the recommendations of this *Plan* to the extent applicable. In their consideration of conditional use permit requests, the Plan Commission and Town Board will also evaluate the specific timing of the conditional use permit request, its relationship to the nature of both existing and planned land uses, and the details of the proposed development.

- **Land Divisions and Subdivisions:** Both the Town and County review all proposed land divisions and subdivisions against the standards of their respective and independent subdivision regulations. Within 1 ½ miles of the Village of Poynette limits, Village review and approval of land divisions is also required. At the Town level, the Town Board will act to approve, conditionally approve, or reject all requested land divisions and subdivisions, following a recommendation from the Town Plan Commission. Separate applications for both the Town and County reviews are required. Frequently, a request for land division or subdivision approval is submitted in tandem with a rezoning request.

Proposed land divisions should be generally consistent, but not necessarily precisely consistent, with the recommendations of this *Plan*. Specifically, the Planned Land Use map and the policies related to this map will be used to guide the general pattern of development and the general location and design of public streets and parks. Departures from the exact locations depicted on these maps will be resolved through the land division process involving certified survey maps, preliminary plats, and final plats. 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 planned land uses, and the details of the proposed development. This *Plan* allows for the timing and the refinement of the precise recommended boundaries, development patterns, and public roads and parks provided through the land division process, as deemed appropriate by the Plan Commission and Town Board.

- **Building and Zoning Permits:** Prior to the erection or remodeling of most buildings in the Town, the petitioner must obtain a building permit from the Town under Chapter 11 of the Town Code of Ordinances and a zoning permit from the County.
- **Driveway Permits:** Prior to the installation of a driveway to a Town road, the petitioner must obtain a driveway permit from the Town.
- **Other Land Use Actions:** In general, the Town Board, following a recommendation from the Plan Commission, will take all other actions related to land use. These include amendments and updates to this *Plan*; annexations, incorporations, or consolidations affecting the Town; amendments to utility and sanitary districts affecting the Town; and potential Town acquisitions or sales of land.

2. Plan Amendments

Amendments may be appropriate in the years following Plan adoption and in instances where the Plan becomes irrelevant or contradictory to emerging policy or trends. “Amendments” are generally defined as minor changes to the Plan maps or text. All required procedures should be followed. Frequent amendments to accommodate specific development proposals should be avoided.

The State comprehensive planning law requires that the Town use the same basic process to amend or add to the Plan as it used to initially adopt the Plan. This means that the procedures defined under §66.1001(4), Wisconsin Statutes need to be followed.

3. Plan Update

The State comprehensive planning law requires that this *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 should update its *Comprehensive Plan* by the year 2035 (i.e., ten years after 2025).

C. IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 13 provides a detailed list and timeline of the major actions that the Town should complete to implement the *Comprehensive Plan*. Often, such actions will require substantial cooperation with others, including County government and local property owners. Other Town government priorities, time constraints, and budget constraints may affect the completion of the recommended actions in the timeframes presented.

The table has three different columns of information, described as follows:

- *Category*: The list of recommended actions is divided into six different categories generally based on the different chapters of this *Plan*.
- *Recommendation or Program*: The second column lists the actual actions recommended to implement key aspects of the *Comprehensive Plan*. The recommendations are for Town actions that might be included, for example, in an annual work program or as part of the annual budgeting process.
- *Implementation Timeframe*: The third column responds to the State comprehensive planning statute, which requires implementation actions to be listed in a “stated sequence.” The suggested timeframe for the completion of each recommendation reflects the priority attached to the recommendation. Suggested implementation timeframes are all within the next 10 years (and not the full 20-year planning period), because the Plan will have to be updated by 2035.

Table 13: Recommended Major Implementation Actions

Category	Implementation Timeframe	Recommendation or Program
Land Use and Ordinance Amendments	2025-26	Simply the Town's Land Division and Subdivision and Site Plan Review ordinances to reflect current and desired practices.
	2034-2035	Prepare a complete update of this <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> .
Transportation	2025 and ongoing	Continue to update and implement a Town Road Improvement Program, and advocate for County upgrades to its highways in Dekorra.
	2030-2034	Work with Poynette, WisDOT, and the County Highway Department to extend Highway CS to Highway 51 along the southern border of the Village.
	2025-2034	Collaborate with WisDOT on improvement of the Interstate and the Highway CS interchange in a manner most advantageous to the Town.
Utilities and Community Facilities	Ongoing	Implement the recommendations in Table 10 in timeframes identified in that table, as budget resources permit.
Parks and Recreation	Ongoing	Implement the recommendations in Chapter Seven of this <i>Plan</i> , as budget resources permit.
Economic Development	2025-2034	Implement the Town's economic strategy as described in Chapter Nine.
Intergovernmental Cooperation	2025-2026	Negotiate an intergovernmental agreement between Dekorra and Poynette, potentially including utility service provisions.