# Acknowledgments

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# Introduction

## The Value of a Comprehensive Plan

When we think about places we have visited or lived, some stand out as models of natural beauty and human comfort, supported by thriving local economies. The most satisfying places to live, work, and raise families are communities that meet the needs of local businesses and individual expression, and provide opportunities to explore and conserve our natural environment. Great communities do not grow by accident or without public debate and agreed-upon guidelines. Collaborative planning processes and comprehensive plans are the building blocks of such great communities. Planning helps maintain and promote livable, vital communities.

Monroe County, Wisconsin is a great place to live. The Elroy-Sparta Recreation Trail, an extensive snow-mobile trail system, and the Kickapoo River provide year-round recreational opportunities for residents. The beautiful countryside of Monroe County is rich with productive forest, farmland, and cranberry bogs. Generations of Monroe County families have enjoyed the quiet rural character and strong sense of community found here. This comprehensive plan outlines how to maintain what community members like about the county and identifies key improvements to make it even better.

The *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan* presents a shared vision for the county. It is a statement reflecting community pride and how residents, business owners, and local leaders want the county to manage growth and development in the future. This plan will help elected officials and county staff make decisions that reflect the short- and long-term wishes of the community. It will help prioritize the county's human and financial resources to provide the necessary public infrastructure and amenities needed to maintain a high quality of life. In doing so, the plan also seeks to foster sustainable development and an economy that is in keeping with the county's rural character.

The *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan* focuses on county-wide issues, coordination and collaboration between local municipalities, and future land use for areas under county zoning jurisdiction. This plan is a blueprint for collective action over the next twenty years, and it is based on past and concurrent planning efforts by the towns, villages, and cities in Monroe County. By continuing to work together, business owners, residents, as well as city, village, town, county, state, and federal officials can have a positive influence on the future of Monroe County. The Farmland Preservation Plan supersedes the Comprehensive Plan and any and all inconsistencies between the two shall be resolved in favor of the Farmland Preservation Plan. (See appendix J)

## Wisconsin "Smart Growth" Legislation

As part of the State of Wisconsin's 1999-2000 biennial budget, Governor Thompson signed into law what is referred to as the "Smart Growth" legislation (1999 Wisconsin Act 9). Smart Growth legislation significantly changed the stature of comprehensive planning in the Wisconsin. Although state statutes do not require local governmental units to adopt comprehensive plans consistent with the requirements, Wisconsin Statutes Sec 66.1001 provides that if a local governmental unit does not do so by January 1, 2010 the local government may not enforce existing or adopt new ordinances, plans, or regulations that in anyway affect land use.

Wisconsin Statutes Sec 66.1001 specifies substantive and procedural requirements for developing a comprehensive plan, including addressing the following nine elements in a community's plan:

1. Issues and opportunities (Chapter 2)
2. Housing (Chapter 3)
3. Transportation (Chapter 4)
4. Utilities and community facilities (Chapter 5)
5. Agricultural, natural, and cultural resources (Chapter 6)
6. Economic development (Chapter 7)
7. Land use (Chapter 8)
8. Intergovernmental cooperation (Chapter 9)
9. Implementation (Chapter 10)

The Smart Growth legislation also mandates specific procedures for public participation that must be followed as part of the comprehensive planning process. Specifically, a municipality must hold at least one public hearing on the plan and notify the public at least thirty days in advance of this hearing. In an effort to foster meaningful public input, Monroe County provided additional opportunities for public involvement, as outlined in the county's Public Participation Plan (refer to Appendix A for a copy of the plan).

Wisconsin Statutes Sec 66.1001 also specifies the procedures by which a comprehensive plan is adopted and/or amended, specifically through an ordinance (refer to Chapter 10 for specifics on the process). Although this document is adopted by an ordinance, it is not an ordinance. Rather, the comprehensive plan serves as a general guide for the county.

## Past Planning Efforts

This is Monroe County's first comprehensive plan. This plan, however, builds on other planning efforts, including town, city, and village-level comprehensive plans, as well as the Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan discussed below.

### Town, Village, and City Comprehensive Plans

A number of towns, villages, and cities in Monroe County have completed Smart Growth comprehensive plans. These plans provide the basis for local decisions regarding land use regulations, as well as outline specific goals, objectives, policies, and actions for each community's future.

As of July 2009, the following municipalities have adopted or are in the process of adopting a comprehensive plan:

Town of Adrian
Town of Jefferson
Town of La Grange
Town of Leon
Town of Little Falls
Town of New Lyme
Town of Oakdale
Town of Portland
Town of Tomah
Town of Wilton
Village of Cashton
Village of Melvina
Village of Oakdale
Village of Warrens
Village of Wilton
City of Sparta
City of Tomah

The following municipalities are in the process of completing their comprehensive plans (as of July 2009):

Town of Byron
Town of Grant
Town of Lafayette
Town of Ridgeville
Town of Wells
Village of Norwalk

### Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP)

Monroe County prepared its initial LWRMP in 1999 in response to Wisconsin Act 27 and Wisconsin Act 9.

Since that time, several changes and trends have taken place that impact resource management, including use value assessment, NR 151 rules, and a trend towards fewer but larger dairy herds. As a result, an update of the plan was prepared in 2005 by the Monroe County Land Conservation Committee and staff with input from Monroe County citizens. The new Resource Management Plan was approved by the Monroe County Board of Supervisors on November 3, 2005.

## A Community Process

The comprehensive planning process set out to celebrate and protect the diversity of lifestyles and interests within Monroe County, build on the strengths of the community in achieving goals, and guide the future of the county.

In order to fulfill this charge, the County Planning and Zoning Committee took seriously the process of engaging as many residents as possible in the comprehensive planning process. The County Planning and Zoning Committee's job was not merely to produce a report but to reach out and collaborate with the community, to educate residents about planning, and to involve them in developing this plan. These goals stem from the fundamental desire to engage residents in the planning process and build community consensus for Monroe County's future.

Throughout the process, the county's website and periodic press releases were used to provide information on meeting dates and updates on the planning process. This ensured that everyone in the county was at least aware of the process, even if they were not able to attend specific meetings.

### Community Visioning Workshops

The planning process began with three public visioning workshops, which were held in different locations throughout the county to ensure accessibility to all county residents. Workshops were conducted in Sparta, Norwalk, and Tomah on August 18, 19, and 20, 2009 respectively. Members of the community met in small groups to engage in a guided discussion on current community assets, issues, and opportunities and to identify specific priority goals and actions for the comprehensive plan. Notes from the visioning workshops, including individual responses to the discussion questions, can be found in Appendix B.

***Residents discussed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within the county during the three visioning workshops.***

### Focus Groups

In August 2009, Crispell-Snyder also conducted ten focus groups with a total of thirty-two (32) individuals identified by the County Planning and Zoning Committee. The focus groups covered a wide range of topics and were designed to solicit additional insight into key issues including Land and Water Conservation, Transportation, Agriculture and Farmland, Construction Related Business, Housing, Economic Development, Community/Social Organizations, Tourism-Related Businesses, the Cashton Area Amish and the Wilton Area Amish. A report summarizing the highlights of these focus groups can be found in Appendix C.

### Open Houses and Plan Adoption

Based on input from the public and extensive data analysis provided by Crispell-Snyder, Inc., the County Planning and Zoning Committee worked to identify

specific goals, objectives, and actions for the plan. A draft plan was completed in April 2010 and three open houses were held to seek public input. Copies of the draft plan and display boards showing various maps were available for viewing and comment at the open houses, and county staff, officials, and Crispell-Snyder staff were available to answer questions on the draft plan. The first open house was held in Village of Wilton on May 18, 2010 and had five (5) participants. The second open house was held in Tomah on May 19, 2010 and had twelve (12) participants. The final open house was held in Sparta on May 20, 2010 and had thirteen (13) participants. The County Planning and Zoning Committee reviewed all comments received at the open houses, in writing, and at the public hearing on June 2, 2010 at the American Legion in Sparta. The plan was then revised based on County Planning and Zoning Committee direction, and a final plan was approved and adopted by the County Board on September 29, 2010. Comments received at the open houses can be found in Appendix B.

## County-Wide and Regional Cooperation

A key theme in *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan* is the interrelationship among the various aspects of our daily lives. These interrelationships often extend well beyond municipal lines and are county-wide and regional in nature. Monroe County is made up two cities, eight villages, and twenty-four towns. Each of these communities has its own unique characteristics but all are part of the broader community of Monroe County. Monroe County, in turn, is part of a broader geographic area and economic market that influences everything from where people choose to shop and live to what areas people visit to hike and swim.

An over-arching principle of this plan is that Monroe County will work proactively with towns, villages, and the cities, the Ho-Chunk Nation, adjacent counties, the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission, Fort McCoy, and state and federal agencies to cooperatively address county-wide and regional issues, such as natural resources, public infrastructure, and consumer, employment, and housing markets.

The State of Wisconsin comprehensive planning legislation adopted in 1999 requires that municipalities work cooperatively to address regional issues. The county plan plays a particularly critical role in helping to foster intergovernmental cooperation and coordination between various governing entities in the county. As part of the planning process, three intergovernmental meetings were held with local municipalities, the regional plan commission, Ho-Chunk Nation representatives, and various state agency representatives to discuss regional issues and seek agreement on inter-municipal planning issues (see Appendix D for notes from these meetings). Informal conversations throughout the process helped to ensure a collaborative and mutually-beneficial planning process.

To facilitate good communication with local governments, Crispell-Snyder, Inc. also provided periodic updates on the project to local plan commissions, town boards, village boards, city councils, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and Fort McCoy.

# Issues and Opportunities

***Statutory Requirements for this Chapter***

*Background information on the local governmental unit and a statement of overall objectives, policies, goals and programs of the local governmental unit to guide the future development and redevelopment of the local governmental unit over a 20–year planning period. Background information shall include population, household and employment forecasts that the local governmental unit uses in developing its comprehensive plan, and demographic trends, age distribution, educational levels, income levels and employment characteristics that exist within the local governmental unit.*

## Geology and Natural Surroundings

Monroe County is located in west central Wisconsin between the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers, in a portion of the state known as the Driftless Area. This nonglaciated area is characterized by dramatic hills, rock formations, and beautiful river valleys. The La Crosse, Kickapoo, and Lemonweir Rivers wind their way through this scenic landscape, providing fishing and boating opportunities for residents, as well as attracting visitors from throughout the state.

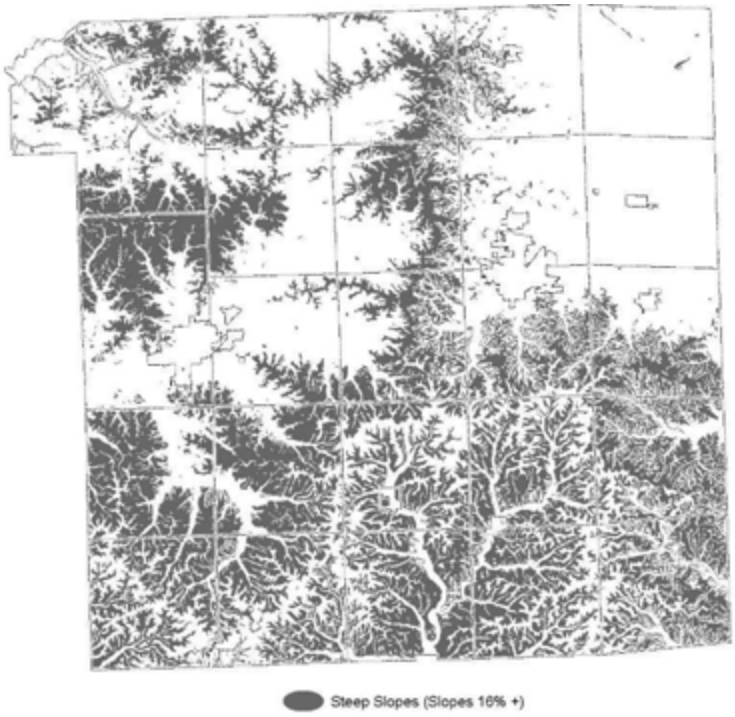
The northwestern portion of the county is relatively flat with large areas of sandy soils that are generally poorly-suited for farming, resulting in a predominantly forested landscape. In the northeastern portion of the county, cranberry bogs are a dominant feature. This area was once part of the glacial Lake Wisconsin. The southern portion of the county features steeper hillsides and beautiful valleys (see map 1). The higher-quality soils in the southern part of the county support a number of farms, including many dairy farms and Amish farms.

## Location and History of Settlement

Monroe County is bordered by Jackson County to the north, Juneau County to the east, Vernon County to the south, and La Crosse County to the west. Twenty-four townships make up the county, with the county seat located in Sparta. The 60,000-acre Fort McCoy Military Reservation is located in the north-central portion of the county and includes parts of six towns.

In 1848, the time when Wisconsin became a state, the area was inhabited by the Winnebago Tribe. However, other Native Americans may have lived or passed through the area before then. With the development of a state road between Prairie du Chien and Green Bay in 1849, settlers began coming to the area. The land was subsequently surveyed and immigrants flooded the area. The county was created by state legislation in 1854.

**Map 1. Steep Slopes in Monroe County**



A logging and transportation boom in the 1850s led to the establishment of several lumber camps, mill sites, and railroad depots. These eventually grew into villages. Since the turn of the twentieth century, Monroe County has transitioned to an agriculture-based economy. The unique geography allows for agricultural uses from dairy farms to cranberry bogs.

***The rolling hills, river valleys and farmland are characteristic of the natural beauty of Monroe County.***

## Population Trends and Projections

Over the past 40 years, Monroe County has seen a steady increase in population growth (see Table 1.1). In 1900, the population was 28,103, in 1950 the population hit 31,378, and in 2009 was estimated at 44,620 (WI DOA). This is a 12 percent increase in the first half of the twentieth century and a 42 percent increase in population since 1950.

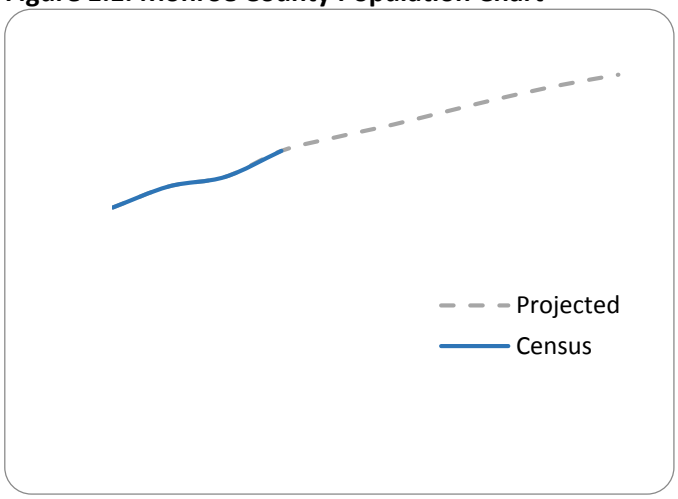
Population growth can be attributed to the quality of life offered in the towns, villages, and cities with well-preserved historic commercial buildings and "country-style" of life, a wide array of outdoor recreational activities, and scenic landscapes. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) projects that this trend will continue in Monroe County, with gradual growth resulting in a projected population of 45,229 in 2010 and 53,390 in 2030 (see Figure 1.1). This represents about 400 additional people per year and a 21 percent increase from the 2008 population estimate. Significantly, almost 60 percent of this population growth is expected to come from people moving to Monroe County (Wisconsin DOA).

***Table 1.1. Monroe County Population and Households***

| YEAR | POPULATION | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|---|
| **US Census of Population and Housing** | | |
| 1970 | 31,610 | 10,168 |
| 1980 | 35,074 | 12,741 |
| 1990 | 36,633 | 14,135 |
| 2000 | 40,896 | 16,672 |
| **American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates** | | |
| 2005 – 2007 | 42,248 | 17,411 |
| **Wisconsin DOA Estimates/Projections** | | |
| 2008 | 44,170 | NA |
| 2010 | 45,229 | 17,519 |
| 2015 | 47,507 | 18,659 |
| 2020 | 49,742 | 19,774 |
| 2025 | 51,743 | 20,756 |
| 2030 | 53,390 | 21,699 |

**Source: WI DOA vintage 2008 Population Projections**

**Figure 1.1. Monroe County Population Chart**




**Source: WI DOA vintage 2008 Population Projections**

There is projected to be a corresponding increase in number of households in the county, with approximately 179 new households per year for an overall increase of about 4,288 households by 2030 (i.e., a 25 percent increase from the 2005-2007 household estimate). This is due in part to the potential changes in household size which is projected to decrease resulting

in a corresponding increase in the demand for housing units as the overall population grows. In 2000, the average household size in Monroe County was 2.6 people (US Census). In 2007, it was estimated at 2.43 and by 2030 it is projected to be 2.39 (DOA). This tracks with the national trend of smaller household due in part to a decrease in the number of children in families, an aging population, couples marrying later,and/or without children.

More than half of the projected population and household increase in Monroe County is expected to occur outside the villages and cities (see Appendix E, Table 1.1 for detailed projections and statistics by municipality). The greatest population increases are projected to occur primarily in towns near the cities of Tomah and Sparta, specifically in the towns of Sparta (29 percent increase), Leon (36 percent increase), Tomah (28 percent increase), and Adrian (41 percent increase). Other towns that are projected to increase substantially in population over the next twenty years are Wilton (32 percent increase), Grant (39 percent), Lincoln (25 percent), and Little Falls (26 percent).

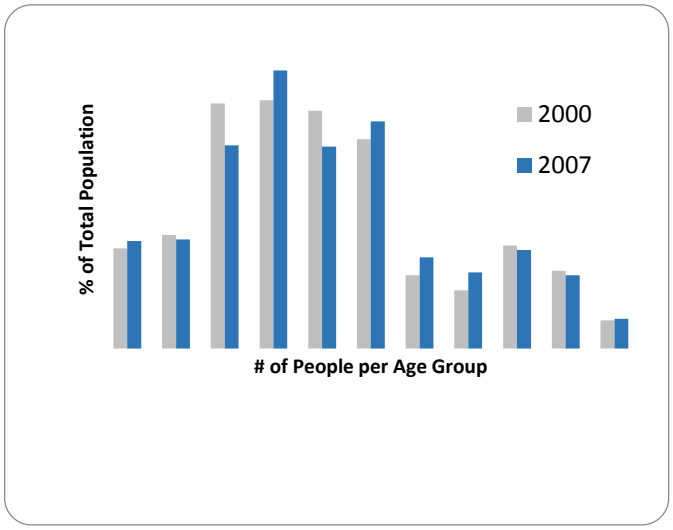
The projected location of future population and housing has significant implications for future housing demand, patterns of development, community character, farmland preservation, and overall quality of life. The overall trend shows a slow but steady decline in the villages and a corresponding slow increase in the percent of the population living in the town areas. Over time, this may undermine the role of these villages as population and service centers.

It is important to understand the uncertainty inherent in population and household projections. Projections are based on past population and household trends; however, it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict future deviations from these trends. For example, gas prices may discourage people from living away from their place of employment or the closure of a major local employment center may force people to leave the community in search of work. On the other hand, new employment opportunities can significantly increase population growth. Therefore, population projections should be viewed as general guidelines for future planning initiatives.

## Age Distribution

The most significant increase in population between 2000 and 2007 was in the 45 to 64 age group, which increased about 20 percent, from 9,343 people to 11,250 people (see Figure 1.2). This increase suggests that additional housing and services for retirement-age people may be required in the county in upcoming years. Indeed, the DOA projections estimate that between 2007 and 2030, the Monroe County population age 65 to 84 will nearly double from 5,742 to 9,753. This trend reflects what is happening at the state- and national-level and is due primarily to an aging baby-boomer generation.

**Figure 1.2. Monroe County Age Distribution**




*Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, 2000 US Census Summary File 1*

Interestingly, there was also a significant population increase in people age 20 to 34. In 2000 there were 6,784 people in this age group and in 2007 there were 7,933 people, a 17 percent increase. At the state-level, this age group only increased by 3 percent.

The population of middle and high school age youths (age 10 to 19 years), however, decreased by 14 percent

from 6,718 in 2000 to 5,779 in 2007. By comparison, at the state level this age group only decreased by 4 percent between 2000 and 2007. This trend may reflect concerns about social or education opportunities for middle and high school kids or the location of Fort McCoy, resulting in families with kids in this age group moving out of the county.

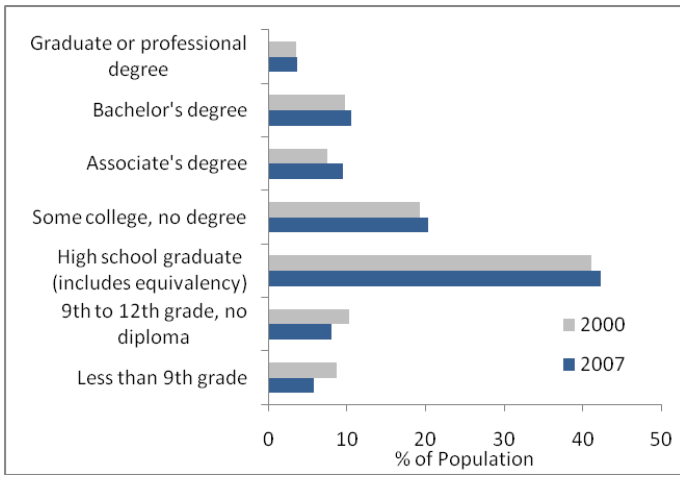
## Education and Employment Trends and Projections

Monroe County was originally established during a time when the logging industry flourished in the area and railroads were booming. Towards the end of the 19th century, the economy shifted to an agricultural base and agriculture remains a central part of the economy in Monroe County.

Since 2000, the greatest increase in an industry was in professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services, which increased by 2 percent. This is reflected in the educational attainment of the residents in Monroe County. Between 2000 and 2007, there was an 18 percent increase in the percent of residents with a high school diploma or higher (see Figure 1.3). In particular, the number of people who have an Associate's Degree rose significantly from 1,965 people in 2000 to 2,666 people in 2007.

The trend in educational attainment is also reflected in the incomes of residents. Estimates from 2005 to 2007 show an increase the number of people in all income brackets $50,000 and above and a decrease in those brackets below $50,000. The most significant increase was in the $100,000 to $149,999 range, which increased 3 percent since 2000. The state median income is approximately $50,000; while the county median income is still below this amount ($43,845), the gap is narrowing. This is reflective of the median income in the region. In La Crosse County, the median income in 2007 was $48,139; in Vernon County, it was $43,267. The 2006-2008 estimated median income in Juneau County was $46,024.

**Figure 1.3. Monroe County Education Levels**




*Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, 2000 US Census Summary File 1*

More details on employment growth and projections can be found in the Economic Development chapter of this plan.

## Key Issues and Opportunities Identified by Residents

Residents are proud to call Monroe County home; however, they also recognize there are challenges which they collectively face. This plan is designed to help focus the collective energy of residents and elected officials, and serve as a guide for the physical, economic, and cultural growth and preservation of Monroe County.

A wide variety of issues and opportunities were identified throughout the planning process. The visioning workshops and interviews with key stakeholders and decision makers highlighted several critical issues and opportunities that Monroe County is facing. This public participation process, discussed in the Introduction, was integral to shaping the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan*. Detailed information on the issues and opportunities are incorporated into each chapter of the plan, with the most important of these summarized below.

***Rural Character, Scenic Views, and Land Conservation***

Residents are particularly fond of the farms and forests of Monroe County and are passionate about protecting these resources. Farms and forests are central to the

local economy, as well as the county's scenic views and rural character. Residential development and the lack of zoning in many of the towns have threatened to deteriorate these key rural resources. Preserving farms and forests was the major theme of all three public workshops, in several of the focus groups, and at the first Intergovernmental Workshop. Farmland preservation was also the top priority identified at the first Intergovernmental Workshop.

***Fragmentation of Farm and Forest Land***

Land fragmentation was a major topic of discussion at the Land and Water Conservation Focus Group and at the Agriculture and Farmland Focus Group. In most cases, forests and farms work best when they are in large blocks rather than divided up into smaller pieces. Sections of large forest tracks in Monroe County are being sold off for housing lots. These smaller parcels generally stop being managed for forestry, creating a number of potential problems including lack of invasive species management and pest control and decline of the forestry industry and associated businesses. For agriculture, land fragmentation means more non-farm neighbors who might not appreciate the odors and noises associated with farming. Smaller parcels of land also makes it necessary for farmers to work several parcels of land resulting in more time spent traveling between parcels and more safety and maintenance issues on the roadways.

***Land Use and Conservation around Fort McCoy***

Fort McCoy is an important component of the Monroe County. However, military installations affect adjacent communities in several ways, some positive and some negative. On the positive side are jobs and income that contribute to the economic base. Negative impacts may include noise, safety concerns, smoke, dust, and other effects from training and military operations.

In general, areas adjacent to military installations can be very attractive for development because of their proximity; however, these areas are also subject to military related noise and accident potential. In some cases incompatible development has been a factor in the curtailment of training operations and the relocation of certain operations to other bases. This has, in turn, reduced the economic benefit of the installation to the adjacent community and the mission suitability to the Department of Defense.

Consequently, Fort McCoy is very interested in doing a joint land use study to address future growth and compatibility issues for areas surrounding the base. There is funding for such a study through the Department of Defense (DOD). As part of examining the lands surrounding Fort McCoy, the study could identify priorities for land conservation near the Base. This may be a possible opportunity for the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC).

***Amish***

The Amish population in Monroe County is growing. This is good for tourism and helps to keep farmland in active agriculture, but it has also raised concerns about environmental issues, road maintenance, and building permits.

***Senior Services: Transportation and Housing***

The number of seniors in Monroe County is increasing, and this segment of the population will need better housing and transportation choices in the future. This was one of the top priorities identified at the first Intergovernmental Workshop. In particular, local officials see a need for more assisted living options located throughout the county so that individuals in need of additional assistance can do so while remaining close to family and friends. Rural transportation for senior was also identified as a key issue in the transportation focus group.

***Road Maintenance and Road Designation***

Road maintenance and classification were identified as key issues at the first Intergovernmental Workshop and by the transportation focus group. Road maintenance is a significant cost and a primary concern for local governments. There are opportunities to improve efficiency by sharing equipment, coordinating maintenance efforts, purchasing materials

cooperatively, and re-evaluating the designation of county and local roads.

***Safe Roads for Everyone***

Monroe County is well known as a bicycling mecca. The miles of scenic bike trails draw people to the county, but bicyclists do not always stick to these off-road trails. This makes it critical that roads in the county take into account the safety needs of bicyclists. Horses and buggies from a growing Amish population and large farm equipment on the roadways contribute to the transportation safety challenges in Monroe County.

***Rural residential development***

Rural residential development was identified as a key issue at the first Intergovernmental Workshop. People frequently move to Monroe County for the quiet rural character and affordable rural land. Unfortunately, rural residential development threatens to destroy the very thing that people move here for. Workshop and focus group participants, as well as municipal officials' survey respondents, indicated that new residential development needs to be better located so as to avoid prime farmlands and sensitive natural areas, help revitalize existing population centers, and take advantage of existing transportation infrastructure and proximity to jobs.

***Mobile Homes***

Mobile homes were identified as a priority issue at the first Intergovernmental Workshop. People are particularly concerned about the use and regulation of campers, the age of mobile homes being used for residences, and unoccupied mobile homes.

***Lack of Zoning in Many Towns***

As of October 2009, less than half of the towns in Monroe County had zoning (11 out of 24). In part, this reflects a desire among many of the towns to not restrict private property rights or have the county interfere with "local" issues. In some cases, it also reflects the remote location of these towns. There are, however, several potential issues associated with the lack of zoning. Without zoning, communities have little or no control over the placement or density of housing, commercial uses, or industrial uses. This can result in loss of farmland, degradation of natural and scenic resources, and higher costs for transportation projects when buildings are located too close to existing roads. Lack of zoning has also contributed to concerns regarding wind turbines in the southern portion of the county, which was also identified as a priority issue during at the first Intergovernmental Workshop.

Towns with zoning include: Adrian, LaGrange, Leon, Little Falls, New Lyme, Oakdale, Ridgeville, Sparta, Tomah, Wells, and Wilton.

***Information/Communication***

Contractors who participated in the construction-related focus group indicated that there is need for a "one stop shop" for development permits and information regarding land use regulations. A developer's guide that addressed town- and county-level regulations was requested. Improved communication would help promote appropriate development in the county. Similarly, municipal officials who participated in the planning process expressed an interest in having better and more regular communication between the county and the towns.

***Business Development***

Job growth in Monroe County was one of the top priority issues identified at the first Intergovernmental Meeting, and it was also discussed as a key issue in several of the focus groups. People emphasized the need for living wage jobs, the critical need for a county economic development planner, and the need for suitable land for businesses development around Tomah. An economic development planner would help the county attract and retain businesses, access grant funds, and take better advantage of regional economic development efforts. In terms of land for business, the issue stems from the extensive wetlands in and around Tomah that are perceived to limit opportunities for commercial and industrial development.

***Crime and Justice Center***

Monroe County is conveniently located along the interstate system roughly halfway between Minneapolis, MN and Chicago, IL. This helps support many legitimate businesses in the county but also has contributed to a high concentration of illegal businesses. As a result, Monroe County has a significantly higher crime rate than other nearby counties with similar populations. This has put a serious strain on law enforcement staff and infrastructure. In particular, there is currently not enough space in the county jail and the county contracts with other jails to house inmates.

***Tourism***

Tourism is an important part of the local economy. The Sparta-Elroy Recreation Trail, canoeing and fly fishing, an extensive snow-mobile trail system, the cranberry festival, the Amish, as well as the beautiful scenery and quaint villages all draw tourists to Monroe County. Most participants in the planning process indicated that they would like to see tourism continue to flourish in the county, but that they do not want tourism to undermine the unique qualities of Monroe County. For instance, people want to make sure that additional tourism does not develop too fast and that Monroe County does not become like the Wisconsin Dells.

***Recreation/Public Land***

Monroe County is blessed with considerable public land. These lands provide extensive outdoor recreational opportunities, including hunting, hiking, swimming, and camping. Unfortunately, most of the public land is located in the northern portion of the county. Participants in the planning process indicated that it would be nice to have additional public land in the southern portion of the county.

***Water Quality***

Water quality was identified as a priority issue at the first Intergovernmental Workshop. Agriculture runoff, groundwater contamination, aquifer regulations, and lack of funding were all noted as specific concerns by workshop participants. In particular, people felt that the county should do more to promote river activities and responsible land stewardship.

## Monroe County Overall Planning Goals

Overall planning goals set the stage for what the community is trying to accomplish in Monroe County. Just as the vision paints a picture of Monroe County in twenty years, these goals help to describe what the community is trying to achieve over the long-term. The specific goals contained in each chapter of the plan reflect and support the overall planning goals outlined below.

**Definition of Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

***Goals*** are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how Monroe County should approach preservation and development issues. These goals are based on key issues, opportunities, and problems that affect the county.

***Objectives*** suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal. While achievement of an objective is often not easily measured, objectives are usually attainable through policies and specific implementation activities.

***Policies*** are rules, courses of action, or programs used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. County decision makers can use policies on a day-to-day basis. Success in achieving policies is usually measurable.

***Goal 1.1*** Protect economically productive areas, including viable farmland and forests.

***Goal 1.2*** Expand the current economic base, with a focus on farming and agricultural-related services.

***Goal 1.3*** Protect natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, rivers, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.

***Goal 1.4*** Protect scenic resources and promote patterns of development that are compatible with the rural character of Monroe County.

***Goal 1.5*** Encourage residential development in areas away from prime farmland and Fort McCoy, and promote densities that allow for efficient use of land and rural lifestyles.

***Goal 1.6*** Provide an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels.

***Goal 1.7*** Provide an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential and commercial uses.

***Goal 1.8*** Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.

***Goal 1.9*** Preserve cultural, historic, and archeological sites in Monroe County.

***Goal 1.10*** Provide an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety, and that meets the needs of all citizens.

***Goal 1.11*** Work in cooperation with towns, Fort McCoy, and the Regional Plan Commission to achieve regional community goals.

## Monroe County
## 20-Year Vision

The purpose of comprehensive planning is to identify a clear and compelling vision for the future and to develop strategies to reach that vision. Each section of the plan contains goals, objectives, and action items that will help lead our community to a bright future. The following vision statement paints a picture of what this future will look like.

**Working together, we envision Monroe County twenty years from now as a place where:**

- Neighborhoods in the cities and villages are thriving and have experienced growth and revitalization.
- A limited amount of rural residential development provides opportunities for people to live in the country and pursue a rural lifestyle.
- Assisted living facilities scattered near population centers throughout the county provide opportunities for seniors to remain close to friends and family as they age.
- Roads and corridors are safely shared by motorists, horse and buggies, bicycles, and pedestrians alike. Widened shoulders along county roads and key bridges have improved safety and access for people using alternative modes of transportation.
- The library and school systems are excellent, and residents have access to quality medical facilities throughout the county.
- Local residents continue to enjoy the recreational opportunities provided by the bike trails, rivers, and public lands throughout Monroe County.
- Good farmland throughout the county is protected from development and remains in active agriculture. Working forests provide beautiful scenery and support local saw mills and other forest product businesses.
- Trout streams and rivers run clean and clear, and the stream banks along these bodies of water are stable and provide habitat for a variety of native plants and animals.
- Groundwater resources are protected from contamination and provide high-quality drinking water for all residents.
- Residents have access to good jobs. Tourism, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, trucking businesses, health services, and Fort McCoy continue to provide a solid base for the county's economy. Home-based businesses are increasing and help to provide rural employment opportunities.
- The area's scenic beauty and recreational amenities continue to draw tourists to the county, and bed and breakfasts, artist studios, bike and boat outfitters, and small cafes prosper from this increased tourism.
- Intergovernmental cooperation efforts enable Monroe County to provide quality services, preserve land and natural resources, and provide abundant recreational opportunities.

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# Housing

***Statutory Requirements for this Chapter***

*A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs of the local governmental unit to provide an adequate housing supply that meets existing and forecasted housing demand in the local governmental unit. The element shall assess the age, structural, value and occupancy characteristics of the local governmental unit's housing stock. The element shall also identify specific policies and programs that promote the development of housing for residents of the local governmental unit and provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels and of all age groups and persons with special needs, policies and programs that promote the availability of land for the development or redevelopment of low–income and moderate–income housing, and policies and programs to maintain or rehabilitate the local governmental unit's existing housing stock.*

## Overview

The quality of life, employment opportunities, and proximity to urban areas have created moderate residential housing development pressure in Monroe County. So far, however, the county has been able to maintain much of its agricultural land and rural characteristics that the residents value.

### Monroe County Housing Facts (2005/2007)

| | |
|---|---|
| Total households | 17,411 |
| Average household size | 2.43 |
| Average household size (owner occupied) | 2.61 |
| Average household size (renter occupied) | 1.94 |
| Total housing units | 18,652 |
| Homeowner vacancy rate | 0.8 |
| Rental vacancy rate | 4.1 |
| Percent owner-occupied units | 73.1% |
| Percent rental-occupied units | 26.9% |
| Median value of owner occupied units | $115,100 |
| Median rent | $527 |

*Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*

### Definitions

**A household** is "a person or group of people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence."

**A housing unit** is "a single-family house, townhouse, mobile home or trailer, apartment, group of rooms, or single room that is occupied as a separate living quarters, or if vacant, is intended for occupancy as a separate living quarters."

*(US Census)*

The majority of homes in Monroe County are single-family homes and recent trends have continued along the same path. Between 2000 and 2007, single-family homes accounted for 94 percent of new residential building permits in the unincorporated areas of the county. Future housing needs in Monroe County will be influenced by changes in household size, demographics, and consumer preferences. A growing population of seniors will require new and creative housing solutions. Population growth and an expected decrease in household size will also influence demand for housing in the county.

There are expected to be 21,699 households in the county by 2030, indicating a need for about 23,257 total housing units, a 21 percent increase from 2008 (see Map 2). In 2008, there were 19,111 housing units in the county, suggesting a need for approximately 188 new housing units per year over the next twenty-two

years (WI DOA, Demographic Services Center, 2008 Annual Housing Survey for Years following 2000 Census). Additional new housing units may be needed to replace houses that are demolished or lost to disasters.

As development continues in the future, it is important for Monroe County to plan for how many and where new houses should be built. Many residents have expressed concern over preserving farmland and forest land in the county while at the same time accommodating future residential growth. This, along with a desire to revitalize the cities, villages, and hamlets, has significant implications for the density and location of future housing. Providing affordable housing options for all residents, including lower income families and seniors, is also important for the quality of life in Monroe County. Housing for seniors was identified as a priority issue during the public input process for this plan.

This chapter highlights the types of housing currently found in the county, discusses issues associated with housing quality and affordability, and describes opportunities for new housing development in the county. Specific goals, objectives, and policies for appropriate housing development are identified.

## Existing Housing Stock

### Age of Homes

Monroe County has a number of older homes that add to its character, but also generally require extra maintenance. According to the 2005-2007 American Community Survey, a little over a quarter of homes (27 percent) in the county were built prior to 1940 (Table 2.1). This portion of older homes is greater than the 22 percent of homes built prior to 1940 in Wisconsin as a whole.

If homeowners are not able to afford costly maintenance projects, homes can show signs of disrepair and property values may go down.

**Table 2.1. Year of Construction**

| Year Constructed | Monroe County | | Wisconsin | US |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Percent | Percent |
| 2005 or Later | 158 | 0.80 | 1.40 | 1.90 |
| 2000 to 2004 | 1,607 | 8.60 | 8.20 | 8.40 |
| 1990 to 1999 | 3,078 | 16.5 | 14.1 | 14.3 |
| 1980 to 1989 | 2,237 | 12.0 | 10.1 | 14.6 |
| 1970 to 1979 | 2,824 | 15.1 | 15.6 | 16.9 |
| 1960 to 1969 | 1,301 | 7.00 | 10.4 | 11.7 |
| 1940 to 1959 | 2,463 | 13.3 | 18.0 | 17.6 |
| Prior to 1940 | 4,984 | 26.7 | 22.2 | 14.6 |
| Total | 18,652 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*Source: 2000 US Census of Population and Housing (Summary Tape File 3A)*
*Note: The percent columns may not add up to 100 due to rounding*

Rehabilitating the existing housing stock can revitalize traditional population centers and decrease the need for development of open space and farmland areas.

### Types of Housing Units

Approximately three-quarters (73 percent) of all housing units in Monroe County are single family homes. There are also a large number of manufactured homes (11 percent of the total housing stock) and a similar number of multi-family homes (12 percent of the total housing stock). Monroe County has a higher percent of manufactured housing than both the state and US, and a lower number of multi-family units (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2. Housing Units by Type: 2007**

| Housing Type | Monroe County | | Wisconsin | US |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Percent | Percent |
| Single-Family | 13,638 | 73.1 | 70.6 | 67.2 |
| Duplex | 740 | 4 | 7.4 | 4 |
| Multi-Family | 2,168 | 11.6 | 18.1 | 21.8 |
| Manufactured | 2,048 | 11 | 4 | 6.9 |
| Other | 58 | 0.3 | 0 | 0.1 |
| Total | 18,652 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*
*Note: The percent columns may not add up to 100 due to rounding*

***The majority of housing in Monroe County is single family, including this residential area in the Village of Cashton.***

Older mobile homes and campers were identified as a priority issue during the planning process. Local officials would like to see a county-wide ordinance for campers and restrictions placed on the age of mobile homes. There is also some concern about abandoned mobile homes creating eyesores and potential safety concerns.

## Housing Demand

### Vacancy Rates

Vacancy rates reflect housing supply and demand. It is a difficult balance between vacancy rates deemed "too high" and "too low". If the housing supply is insufficient, it is likely that housing costs will increase, thereby making it more difficult to find affordable housing. If there is too much available housing, vacant homes and apartments can undermine the viability of the housing market. A vacancy rate of 3 percent (1.5 percent for owned units and 4.5 percent for rentals) is considered healthy and able to support housing needs.

In 2007, Monroe County's overall vacancy rate was 6.7 percent (Table 2.3) which is lower than the vacancy rate of the State of Wisconsin (US Census). This is down from the 7.6 percent of vacant housing units in 2000. The homeowner-vacancy rate in Monroe County is very low at 0.8 percent and may signify a shortage of housing in the area, while the rental vacancy rate is 4.1 percent.

Fort McCoy also has a large impact on the housing market. The Fort employs many transient people who stay only for a three year tour or civilians whose transfer leads to high turnover rates of some units. There are currently 80 single family homes in Tomah leased exclusively by the military under Section 801 Housing.

**Table 2.3. Occupancy Status: 2007**

| | Monroe County | | Wisconsin | US |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Occupancy Status** | **Number** | **Percent** | **Percent** | **Percent** |
| Occupied Units | 17,411 | 93.3 | 88.2 | 88.4 |
| Unoccupied Units | 1,241 | 6.70 | 11.8 | 11.6 |
| Total | 18,652 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*

Section 801 Housing is an Act created to improve military family housing near military bases to increase morale and encourage reinvestment. Under this act, private developers are provided incentives to build rental housing near military installations. The military then leases the units from the developer at a fixed rate, regardless of occupancy level. Once the contract expires, the developer retains the option to put the units on the housing market for rental by the general public.

The contract for the 80 units in Tomah which are currently leased by the military will expire in June 2012. All 80 homes re-entering the housing market at one time could over-saturate the market. However, this surplus of housing could provide opportunities for re-use as senior housing, which is a concern of local residents.

### Household Size

Household size influences how many housing units a community may need. Recent trends in living choices have led to smaller household sizes and the need for more homes in the county. Many factors contribute to

the trend in decreasing household size, including: increasing number of single-parent homes, decreasing number of children per household, and increasing life expectancy. In 2000, the average household size in Monroe County was 3.11. Seven years later, the average household size in Monroe County was estimated at 2.43, and it is expected to continue to decrease over the next twenty years (US Census).

**Future Housing Needs**

A decrease in household size and a projected increase in population over the next twenty years signifies a likely increase in demand for housing. It is projected that Monroe County will need approximately 23,257 total housing units by 2030. This is 22 percent (4,146 units) more housing units than currently exist. Approximately 47 percent (1,949 units) of the new units are projected to be built in areas outside of the cities and villages, raising significant concerns about the potential loss of farms and forests (see Map 2).

As new homes are built or renovated, the type of housing needed in the community will likely change. Changes in household size and household makeup will necessitate a variety of housing options in the future. The increasing number of single-person households, the preference for young couples to wait to have children, the increase in the number of young couples moving to the county, and the expected increase in the over-65 population will all impact the types of housing Monroe County needs.

Participants at the Visioning Workshops and at the Intergovernmental Workshop were concerned about the effect new development might have in terms of loss of agricultural land, open space, rural character and the increased costs associated with new homes being built far from current housing. At the public workshops, participants were split as to whether new housing should be clustered or scattered. Many acknowledged the importance of revitalizing existing housing stock to keep costs down and minimize the dangers of haphazard development, but some were also concerned about land prices and the ability of farmers to sell their land in the future if they so chose.

## Affordable Housing

Affordable and decent housing has long been considered a basic tenet of quality of life. Yet it is not always possible to find housing that is both decent and affordable, even in times of relative economic prosperity. So, when the economy is struggling, housing affordability can become a critical issue. When households face affordability problems they may not be able to acquire adequate housing or may spend more than they can afford on housing and may not have enough left over for other necessities such as food, clothing, and transportation.

The generally accepted definition of "affordable" is that a household should pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. Approximately 26 percent of homeowners and 33 percent of renters spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing in Monroe County (2005-2007 American Community Survey). Although this is better than what is seen at the state and national level (see Table 2.4), it indicates that a significant portion of Monroe County households face housing affordability challenges.

**Table 2.4. 30% or More of Income Spent on Housing**

| | Monroe County | | Wisconsin | | US | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Owner | 3,331 | 26 | 439,303 | 28 | 22,279,030 | 30 |
| Renter | 1,538 | 33 | 280,146 | 42 | 16,687,813 | 46 |

*Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*

The Monroe County Housing Coalition has expressed concern regarding the quality of affordable rental housing in the county. According to the Coalition, lead and mold in older rental housing is a major problem. In addition, the rental housing in the rural areas is also over-crowded. This is particularly a concern in the Village of Norwalk and City of Tomah.

Insert Map2– Projected Housing Units
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**Senior and Special Needs Housing**

The special housing needs of the elderly must be an important part of a community's commitment to providing appropriate housing options for all of its residents. The availability of special facilities is especially important to residents who want to stay in the community and remain near family and friends. Local officials have expressed a desire to have senior housing options dispersed throughout the county so that people can remain near family and friends.

In 2030, the population over 64 will account for over 21 percent (11,017 people) of the county's population, significantly more than the 13 percent (5,742 people) today (2005-2007 American Community Survey). As more baby boomers age, we can expect a significant increase in retirees in the coming years. This population will place demands on government, service systems, and the community-at-large in a multitude of ways. The increased number of seniors in Monroe County will also require more housing choices in the future. This was one of the top priorities identified at the first Intergovernmental Workshop. In particular, local officials see a need for more assisted living options located throughout the county so that people can remain close to family and friends as they age.

As people age, their income tends to decline. Low and low-moderate income seniors will need affordable housing options. Most seniors want to stay in their homes, or "age in place," as long as they can. Coordinated services such as Meals on Wheels, grocery delivery, snow removal, and home repairs allow seniors to stay in their homes longer. Some seniors may also wish to move into smaller homes to reduce costs and regular upkeep.

Due to increased life expectancy, assisted living is the fastest growing and fastest changing sector of senior housing. Private-pay assisted living units have been added to the market, but there is a lack of subsidized units for seniors needing high levels of personal care. Affordability of assisted living facilities and services is a major issue for many seniors. The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS), Division of Supportive Living licenses a number of residential settings for the elderly along with facilities for the physically and developmentally disabled. Table 2.5 lists various residential settings and the total capacity in Monroe County. The county currently has thirty-one assisted living facilities ranging from adult family homes to residential care apartment complexes.

Several of the town, village, and city comprehensive plans in Monroe County address senior housing. Most focus on directing housing for elderly residents into the villages and cities. The comprehensive plans for the towns of LaGrange and Tomah, for example, call for "senior housing and special needs housing near or inside the City of Tomah, where there is easier access to public services and facilities to support such developments." Similarly, the Town of Glendale's comprehensive plan says to "discourage development of multi-family apartment buildings, senior housing and special needs housing in rural areas of Monroe County and encourage it inside urban areas of the county." The Town of Little Falls' comprehensive plan, on the other hand, notes that "the availability of residential settings for the elderly near their homes and families is critical to their well-being." Clearly a one-size- (or one-location) fits all approach does not work for elderly housing any more than it works for housing for the rest of the population.

Large nursing homes and senior housing complexes are most appropriately located within the urban areas of the county, specifically within the cities of Tomah and Sparta. These areas provide services, amenities, and infrastructure to support larger populations of elderly people. Smaller facilities and group homes are appropriate for village settings, in accordance with village regulations and comprehensive plans.

In the unincorporated areas of Monroe County, small group homes (fifteen or fewer people) may provide opportunities for the rural elderly to age and receive care within their local communities. According to state

law (Wis. Stats. 60.63), community living arrangements for eight or fewer residents are entitled to locate in any residential zone. Facilities for nine to fifteen residents are entitled to apply for special zoning permission to locate in a residential zone. Encouraging these types of facilities in appropriate locations in the county would help to address the growing need for senior housing and nursing home facilities.

## Rural Housing Programs

The mission of the US Department of Agriculture Rural Development is to improve the quality of life in rural areas. The housing programs help rural communities and individuals by providing loans and grants for housing and community facilities to fund single-family homes, apartments for low-income persons or the elderly, and housing for farm laborers.

**Farm Labor Housing Loans and Grants** provide low cost financing for the development of affordable rental housing for both year-round and migrant "domestic farm laborers" and their households. These programs may be used to build, buy, improve, or repair farm labor housing and provide related facilities, such as on-site child care centers.

**Housing Preservation Grants** provide qualified public nonprofit organizations and public agencies funding to assist very low and low income homeowners repair and rehabilitate their homes in rural areas.

**Rural Housing Site Loans** are short term loans to finance development costs of subdivisions located in communities with a population less than 10,000 persons. Developed lots are to be sold to families with low to moderate household income (up to 115 percent of the county median income).

**Repair Loans and Grants** are low interest home improvement loans and grants designed for very low income individuals (50 percent or less of county median income). Funding can be used for making repairs, installing essential features, or to remove health and safety hazards. In order to be eligible for grants, the applicant must be at least sixty-two (62) years old and be unable to repay the loan.

**Single Family Housing Direct Loans** are for families seeking financing to purchase (existing or new construction), repair, or improve a home. This subsidized housing program offers loan benefits as down payment assistance to enable purchase with a loan through a private lending source (Rural Development accepts a junior lien behind the primary lender) or as a sole source of assistance for purchase, repair, or improvement. Sole source assistance is limited to families who are unable to obtain any part of the needed credit from another lending source.

The **Guaranteed Rural Housing** (GRH) loan program provides moderate income families with access to affordable home ownership in eligible rural areas. Approved GRH lenders provide home purchase financing requiring no down payment and can finance loan closing costs and repairs up to the property's appraised value.

**Multi Family Housing Direct Loans** provide loans for the development of affordable rental housing in rural communities for seniors, individuals, and families. Low and very-low income households are targeted as tenants, but moderate income households are also eligible. Rural Development may also provide Rental Assistance (RA) with its loan. Rental Assistance is a project-based tenant subsidy that pays a portion of tenant shelter costs, reducing them to an affordable level (30 percent of adjusted income).

**Multi Family Housing Guaranteed Loans** serve the rental housing needs of low and moderate income rural households by providing loan guarantees for newly constructed or rehabilitated rental property in eligible rural areas. Guarantees may be used in conjunction with other subsidy programs, such as the Low-Income Tax Credit, HOME, and state rental assistance programs.

Loans can be made for a variety of rental housing types, including family, elderly, congregate housing, and mobile homes. Loans can be made for new construction, moderate or substantial rehabilitation, acquisition of buildings that meet "special housing needs," and combination construction and permanent loans.

**Table 2.5. Special Needs Housing in Monroe County**

| Facility Type | Description | Total Number Monroe County |
|---|---|---|
| **Adult Family Homes (Licensed by the State)** | A place where three or four adults receive care, treatment or services (above the level of room and board), including up to seven hours of nursing care. | **15 Facilities** |
| **Adult Day Care Center** | A group day facility for adults who need assistance with activities of daily living, supervision, or protection. | **3 Facilities** |
| **Community Based Residential Facility** | A place where five or more unrelated people live together in a community setting. Services provided include room and board, supervision, support services and may include up to three hours of nursing care per week. | **9 Facilities** |
| **Facility for the Developmentally Disabled** | A residential facility for three or more unrelated persons with developmental disabilities. | **1 Facility** |
| **Nursing Home** | A residential facility for three or more unrelated persons that provides 24-hour services, including room and board and extensive nursing care. | **283 Beds** |
| **Residential Care Apartment Complex** | Independent apartment units in which the following services are provided: room and board, up to 28 hours per week of supportive care, personal care and nursing services. | **80 Apartments** |

*Source: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Quality Assurance*

## Housing

## 20-Year Vision

In the year 2030, all residents of Monroe County have a safe, well-maintained, and affordable place to live. Neighborhoods in the cities and villages are thriving and have experienced growth and revitalization. A limited amount of rural residential development provides opportunities for people to live in the country and pursue a rural lifestyle. The county retains its rural character by keeping rural residential development sparse and protecting productive farmland and forests.

Assisted living facilities scattered near population centers throughout the county provide opportunities for seniors to remain close to friends and family as they age. These facilities are well-located to provide access to goods, services, and transportation, and they have helped to spark the revitalization of villages and hamlets.

**The following goals, objectives, and policies are intended to provide a comprehensive approach for achieving this vision. The order in which these goals, objectives, and policies are listed does not necessarily denote their priority.**

### Goals

*Goals provide concise statements of what the county aims to accomplish over the life of the plan—for the next ten to twenty years. Goals provide the basic organization and direction for the plan's policies and actions.*

***G2.1*** Ensure high quality construction (including alternative and "green" construction methods), enforcement, and maintenance standards for new and existing housing.

***G2.2*** Encourage revitalization of housing in existing population centers.

***G2.3*** Protect prime farmland, working forests, and sensitive natural areas from scattered residential development.

***G2.4*** Encourage affordable, quality housing available to all residents.

***G2.5*** Provide opportunities for senior and other individuals needing assistance to live close to family and friends.

### Objectives

*Objectives suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.*

***O2.1*** Improve rental housing conditions, including addressing issues of mold, lead, and over-crowded conditions in older rental housing.

***O2.2*** Require property owners to remove and properly dispose of junk vehicles, including abandoned, ruined, or dismantled mobile homes, manufactured homes, and recreational vehicles.

***O2.3*** Improve site design and maintenance of manufactured home communities, and reduce

the impact of these communities on adjoining properties.

***O2.4*** Encourage conservation subdivisions.

***O2.5*** Direct new rural residential development away from prime farmland and sensitive natural areas.

***O2.6*** Direct new residential development into areas with existing homes and to areas served by public sanitary sewer.

***O2.7*** Promote the construction of new assisted living facilities throughout the county in locations that are accessible to goods, services, and transportation options.

**Policies**

*Policies provide a definite course of action or direction decided upon by the county to be employed to attain the goals. They provide ongoing guidance for elected and appointed community leaders, staff and administrators as they make decisions about development, programs, and investments in the county.*

***P2.1*** Enforce existing county regulations on Human Health Hazards to improve conditions in older rental housing.

***P2.2*** Regulate storage and disposal of junk vehicles including mobile homes and campers (see Appendix F for sample ordinance).

***P2.3*** Require manufactured homes to be on a permanent foundation, unless located in a mobile/manufactured home park or on a farm occupied for farm purposes.

***P2.4*** Prohibit mobile homes (constructed before 1977) outside of mobile/manufactured home parks.

***P2.5*** Require mobile/manufactured home parks to provide adequate maintenance, set-backs, and screening from roadways and adjoining properties.

***P2.6*** Strongly discourage the development of major subdivisions (defined as five or more lots) in the unincorporated portions of the county, particularly in areas with viable farmland and working forests, unless they are part of a conservation subdivision.

***P2.7*** Promote the development of affordable housing options for all residents.

***P2.8*** Identify potential sites and establish appropriate zoning for senior and assisted living facilities in or near cities, villages, and hamlets throughout the county.

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# Transportation

***State Comprehensive Planning Requirements for this Chapter***

*A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development of the various modes of transportation, including highways, transit, transportation systems for persons with disabilities, bicycles, walking, railroads, air transportation, trucking and water transportation. The element shall compare the local governmental unit's objectives, policies, goals, and programs to state and regional transportation plans. The element shall also identify highways within the local governmental unit by function and incorporate state, regional and other applicable transportation plans, including transportation corridor plans, county highway function and jurisdictional studies, urban area and rural area transportation plans, airport master plans and rail plans that apply in the local governmental unit.*

## Overview

Residents of Monroe County depend on the transportation facilities in their community to connect them to other areas of the region and state. The type, quality, and location of transportation facilities are an important component in residents' quality of life. Transportation also plays an important role in creating business opportunities and providing access to employment in and around the county.

There is a significant relationship between transportation and land use. New development or changes in existing land uses, whether incremental or sudden, directly affects the safety and functionality of roadways and the demand for additional transportation facilities and services. Thus, this element and the Land Use Element support and complement one another.

The intent of this element is to provide basic information on the existing transportation network in Monroe County and in the region. Statewide planning efforts and local municipal comprehensive plans have been reviewed to assess how these efforts may or may not affect transportation facilities within and around Monroe County. State programmatic budgets are reviewed to determine what transportation projects, if any, are anticipated. Taken together this review helps to better define the issues, problems, and opportunities this plan needs to address in order to accommodate residents' needs.

***Winding, scenic roads are characteristic of Monroe County.***

## Existing Transportation Network

Monroe County is located where I-90 and I-94 split, making it a major transportation hub. In general, however, Monroe County has a transportation system reflective of the rural nature of the region. While there are a number of high traffic volume roads cutting through the county, most roads are rural in character and have relatively low traffic volumes.

### Road Classification

To help plan for current and future traffic conditions, it is useful to categorize roads based on their primary function. Arterials accommodate the rapid movement of vehicles, while local streets typically provide the access to homes and neighborhood businesses. Collectors serve both local- and through-traffic by

providing a connection between arterial and local roads. Map 3 identifies the location of arterial and collector roads in Monroe County. A description of the DOT's classification system is provided in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 Functional Classification System**

| Classification | Description |
|---|---|
| Principal Arterials | Serve the major centers of activity of an urban area, the highest traffic volume corridors, and the longest trip desires, and carry a high proportion of the total urban area travel on a minimum of mileage. |
| Minor Arterials | Provide intra-community continuity and service to trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials. |
| Collectors | Provide both land access service and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas. |
| Local Streets | Comprise all facilities not on one of the higher systems. They serve primarily to provide direct access to abutting land and access to the higher order systems. |

*Source: "Facilities Development Manual" Wisconsin Department of Transportation*

**Road Jurisdiction**

According to the Monroe County Highway Commissioner, there is a need to review and modify the jurisdiction of roads in the county. In general, collector roads should be under county jurisdiction and local roads should be under the town's jurisdiction. There are currently 92 miles of local roads that are under county jurisdiction and 13 miles of collector roads that are under town jurisdiction. In addition, there are several county trunk highways which are duplicates in that they provide access via parallel routes. Re-evaluating the jurisdiction of these roads would help to focus county road maintenance and plowing efforts on major roads, and ensure that towns are not burdened with maintenance requirements of collector roads.

**Bridges**

There are 353 bridges throughout Monroe County (WI DOT Highway Structure Information System). Seventy-eight of these bridges are owned and maintained by the county (see Map 4).

All bridges in Wisconsin are inspected at least once every two years and sometimes more frequently depending on a bridge's age, traffic load, and any known deficiencies or load restrictions. A computed numerical value between zero and 100 is used to help determine a bridge's priority for rehabilitation or replacement as well as eligibility for state or federal funding. The rating considers structural factors noted during a bridge inspection, a bridge's geometry and the amount of traffic the bridge handles. A bridge with a sufficiency rating of 80 or less is potentially eligible for bridge rehabilitation funding. A bridge with a sufficiency rating of 50 or less is eligible for replacement funding.

Of the seventy-eight bridges owned by the county, 29 (37 percent) have a sufficiency rating of 80 or less and six bridges (8 percent) have a sufficiency rating of 50 or less (see Appendix E Table 3.1 and Map 4). Bridges that have a sufficiency rating of 50 or less as of January 2010 are the following:

- On CTH PP in the Town of Oakdale, crossing Bear Creek (sufficiency rating of 28.8)
- ON CTH M in the Town of Tomah, crossing Lemonweir Creek (sufficiency rating of 39.3)
- On CTH M in the Town of Tomah, crossing Linnehan Valley Creek (sufficiency rating of 42)

- On CTH BC in the Town of Sparta, crossing Big Creek (sufficiency rating of 44.6)
- On CTH M in the Town of La Grange, crossing Mill Creek (sufficiency rating of 45.2)
- On CTH EW in the Town of Scott, crossing Lemonweir River (sufficiency rating of 46)

**Truck Routes**

There are numerous truck routes throughout Monroe County. See Map 3 for the location of major truck routes in the county.

**Air Transportation**

Within Wisconsin, there are 100 public-use airports of various sizes and capabilities that are part of the State Airport System. Airports included in this system are primarily owned by a municipality or a county. However, certain privately-owned, public-use airports are also part of the system either because they provide general aviation relief to a major airport or because they have strong municipal ties.

There are two airports within Monroe County. Bloyer Field Airport is a public airport located in the City of Tomah. The city's comprehensive plan identifies that the site has limited expansion opportunities because of environmental and physical restraints. The airport has two runways and on average twenty aircraft operations per day. There is also the Sparta/Fort McCoy Airport, a public airport, located within the Fort McCoy installation and used primarily by the US army.

Volk Field, a military Air National Guard field, is located about twenty miles east of Fort McCoy in Juneau County. The La Crosse Municipal Airport is also close to Monroe County, along with the Black River Falls Airport.

**Railroad Facilities**

Canadian Pacific Railway lines and Union Pacific Railroad lines run through Monroe County (see Map 5). The Canadian Pacific Railway, a class 1 North American railway, runs between Chicago, IL and Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN.

Daily Amtrak rail passenger service on the Empire Builder line, between Milwaukee/Chicago and La Crosse/Twin Cities and west, is available at Tomah or nearby La Crosse. Service on the line extends west to Seattle, WA. The line from Minneapolis, MN to Chicago, IL is proposed to be upgraded to high speed rail (up to 110 miles per hour), as part of the Midwest Regional Rail System project.

**Bicycle / Walking Paths**

Monroe County is well-known for its beautiful bike trails. The longest bike path in the county is the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail, running 32.5 miles from Elroy to Sparta. The trail is also linked to the La Crosse River State Trail to the west and the "400" State Trail to the east. While bike travel is permitted on public roadways, there is a need for bicycle lanes to accommodate more recreation and travel opportunities within some municipalities in Monroe County. Residents also expressed an interest in creating better connectivity between municipalities.

**Special Transit Facilities**

Transportation for seniors and disabled residents in the county is provided by the Monroe County Senior Service Department. Mini-bus service and volunteer drivers take elderly and disabled residents to medical appointments, banks, grocery stores, etc. The service is available throughout the county and to La Crosse. Some additional services are provided in or by individual municipalities.

Transportation for seniors was identified as a key issue by the transportation focus group. The growing senior population in Monroe County's rural areas will require creative transportation solutions. While providing opportunities to live closer to population centers is part of the solution, it is also critical that seniors who chose

to "age in place" in rural areas have access to services. Participants in the transportation focus group indicated that there is a need to expand the senior mini-bus service and provide additional services for handicap patrons, particularly on Sundays. The City of Tomah recently received a grant to assist with costs for senior busing services.

**Water Transit**

There is no waterborne freight movement in Monroe County. The nearest port is located in La Crosse which has access to the Mississippi River. Local navigable waters are used only for recreational purposes.

**Bus Service**

Intercity bus travel is available through Greyhound Bus lines in Tomah (see Map 5). From Tomah, passengers can reach Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN or Chicago, IL. Tomah to Chicago will take about six hours. A trip between Tomah and Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN is about three hours. Currently, there are no direct trips between either destination.

**Equestrian Transportation**

Horse and buggy travel along public roadways is a common mode of travel for the local Amish population. Horse and buggies on the roadway present significant safety and maintenance challenges and was identified as a key issue. In some municipalities there have been discussions about widening and paving shoulders to better accommodate this mode of travel. Specific areas where horse and buggy traffic are a safety concern include:

- Near CTH T just north of municipal boundary of the Town of Ridgeville – Better visibility is needed
- Along Highway 21
- In southern part of county on Highway 33 between Ontario and Cashton – High volume of horse traffic
- Bad intersection/poor visibility of Amish in North Wilton near where Highway 131 intersects CTH A

## Traffic Safety Concerns

A number of transportation concerns were pointed out during the public input process. At the public visioning workshops, participants were asked to identify transportation issues on a map. Specific areas with safety concerns identified during this exercise include:

- Idell Road south of Sparta - dangerous hill
- Garland Ave west of Sparta – dangerous intersection
- Bad intersection at Kerry Ave, Keets Ave and Highway U in the Town of Ridgeville
- Intersection of Highways 27 and 33 in the Village of Cashton
- Interstate 90 and Highway 16 in the Town Angelo
- Traffic congestion from school on county B, north of Sparta
- Speed/passing lane through Cataract
- Cut across from CTH B to Highway 27
- Traffic volume from cutting through Highway 27 to get from 90 to 94
- Need to light up the intersections with Interstate 90

## Road Conditions and Maintenance

**Road Conditions**

Periodically Monroe County inspects all of the public roads that the county maintains and assigns a rating for the physical appearance of each road by segment. The system is referred to as PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating). Data from the most recent survey is shown in Table 3.2. and Map 4. In general, Monroe County Roads are in relatively good shape;

however, there is some concern that the quality of county roads is deteriorating.

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Insert Map 3 - Transportation

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Insert Map 4 – Bridges and Road Conditions

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Insert Map 5 – Regional Transportation

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**Table 3.2. Condition of County Roads**

| PASER Rating | Warranted Maintenance | Miles | Percent of Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 or 2 | Reconstruction | 10 | 3 |
| 3 or 4 | Structural Improvements and leveling – overlay | 43 | 12 |
| 5 or 6 | Preservative Treatments | 40 | 12 |
| 7 or 8 | Routine Maintenance – cracksealing and minor patching | 237 | 69 |
| 9 or 10 | None required | 14 | 4 |

*Source: Monroe County PASER January 2010*

## Road Maintenance

Monroe County currently reconditions about six or seven miles of roadway each year. The amount of roadway reconditioned each year is highly dependent on funding available. At this rate, it will take approximately fifteen years to address existing maintenance issues (e.g., 93 miles of county roads currently warrant preservative treatments, structural improvements, or reconstruction). These improved roads typically last thirty years. In order to maintain the overall road network in its current state of repair, the county should repair eleven or twelve miles of roads annually, or almost twice the current rate of repair. Unfortunately, each year there has been less money going to the highway department and costs continue to rise. Deferring road maintenance will likely result in higher overall costs and future budget issues.

The WisDOT State Highways Improvement Program details specific road improvement projects for 2008 to 2013. The Improvement Program identifies eighteen future transportation projects, totaling between $34 million and $46 million dollars. These projects include the maintenance, repair, and reconstruction of bridges and roads totaling 103 miles. See Appendix E for a copy of the 2008-2013 Monroe County Highway Improvement Program.

Road maintenance costs account for a significant portion of county and local budgets. Over the past seven years, Monroe County has contracted with four towns to provide winter maintenance on almost seventeen miles of county trunk highways (CTH). Similarly, there are other opportunities to improve efficiency by sharing equipment, coordinating maintenance efforts, and purchasing materials cooperatively.

## State and Regional Transportation Plans

### State Plans

A number of statewide transportation planning efforts will affect the transportation facilities and services in the region. The following sections provide a brief overview of the plans that have been completed or that are in a draft phase.

Connections 2030

Connections 2030 is Wisconsin's statewide long-range, multimodal transportation plan for the state. The plan identifies a series of multimodal corridors for each part of the state and addresses all forms of transportation over a twenty year planning period. Three system-level priority corridors have been identified in Monroe County: the Badger State Corridor runs from Eau Claire to Madison, the Coulee County Corridor runs from La Crosse to Tomah, and the Cranberry Country Corridor runs from Tomah to Oshkosh. The multimodal corridor plans help prioritize investments and assist the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) in identifying future segments for more detailed corridor plans. The plan was adopted in October 2009.

Wisconsin State Highway Plan - 2020

The State Highway Plan 2020 outlines investment needs and priorities for Wisconsin's 11,800 miles of state trunk highways through the year 2020. The plan does not identify specific projects, but broad strategies and policies to improve the state highway system. Top priority is given to pavement and bridge preservation, safety improvements, completion of backbone routes, and bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. Second priority is given to capacity expansion, new interchanges, and new bypasses.

State Six-Year Highway Improvement Plan

The Highway Improvement Plan covers the 11,773 miles of state highways maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The program details projects that are scheduled for improvement over the next six years. There are eighteen projects within the 2008-2013 Highway Improvement Program associated with the Monroe County. A list of all projects and descriptions is available in Appendix E.

I-90 Corridor Roadside Facilities Study

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is conducting a study evaluating the roadside facilities along the I-90 corridor from the Wisconsin/Minnesota state line at La Crosse to Tomah. Results will be used to develop a long range plan to modernize roadside facilities along this corridor that serve the public, enhance freeway operations and safety, and are compatible with local land use planning.

Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan - 2020

The Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan – 2020 presents a guide for developing and integrating bicycling into the overall transportation system. In an effort to promote bicycling between communities, the plan analyzed the condition of all county trunk and state trunk highways in the state and produced maps showing the suitability of these roads for bicycle traffic. Suitability criteria were based primarily on road width and traffic volumes with secondary consideration given to pavement condition, passing opportunities, and percent and volume of truck traffic. The Monroe County bicycle suitability map was updated in 2004 (see Appendix G).

The plan recognizes that it is the responsibility of the county to consider the needs of bicyclists in all road projects and construct facilities accordingly, consider adopting a shoulder paving policy, promote land use policies that are bicyclist friendly and educate sheriffs on share-the-road safety techniques and enforcement strategies for specific high-risk bicyclist and motorist infractions of the law.

State Recreational Trails Network Plan

In 2001, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources adopted the State Trails Network Plan as an amendment to the Wisconsin State Trail Strategic Plan. This plan identifies a network of trail corridors throughout the state referred to as the "trail interstate system" that potentially could consist of more than 4,000 miles of trails. These potential trails may follow one or more of the following: highway corridors, utility corridors, rail corridors, and linear natural features (e.g., rivers and other topographic features).

The Elroy Sparta State Trail is identified in this plan. The first rail-to-trail conversions in the US, the trail travels between Sparta and Elroy, passing through the villages of Norwalk, Wilton, and Kendall. A potential trail corridor is identified in the northeast portion of the county starting in Wyeville and continuing to Mauston and to Adams at County Hwy Z. The trail corridor is a combination of rail line and highway right-of-way that links via Juneau County's Omaha Trail to the Elroy-Sparta and "400" State Trails in Elroy.

## Regional Plans

Monroe County is a member of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. Members of the

planning commission include Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties.

SAFETEA-LU Regional Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan 2008-2013

In August of 2005, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation, Equity Act: A Legacy for Users or SAFETEA-LU. The act requires that federally funded projects be "derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan." The purpose of this plan is to develop regional coordination in availability of services and identify gaps in service and service needs for different groups.

Numerous service gaps and needs were identified in the plan including: a growing homeless population and individuals on Social Security who lack transportation; lack of appropriate reimbursement for transportation for those on medical assistance; impacts of rising fuel costs; a need for more wheel chair space on mini-buses; more coordinated efforts to inform the public of available services; mismatches between when people need transportation to and from work and services available; lack of public awareness of low income needs; and literacy.

Future strategies focus on improving intergovernmental coordination to address needs and gaps and assist in relieving some of the financial burden through shared services.

Midwest Regional Rail System

One large-scale regional transportation initiative that Monroe County would benefit from is the development of the Midwest Regional Rail System. Since 1996, transportation officials from nine Midwest states, Amtrak, and the Federal Railroad Administration have been developing a proposal to bring efficient high-speed passenger rail to the Midwest. The recently adopted Midwest Regional Rail Initiative lays out a general framework for developing and improving the 3,000-mile rail network, known as the Midwest Regional Rail System (MWRRS).

A depot is proposed for the City of Tomah, connecting the county to nine Midwestern states and major cities such as Cleveland, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Chicago, Illinois; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The line from Minneapolis, MN to Chicago, IL is proposed for high speed rail up to 110 miles per hour.

## Transportation
## 20-Year Vision

In 2030, Monroe County has a well-maintained transportation system that offers a variety of options for all residents. Roads and corridors are safely shared by motorists, horse and buggies, bicycles, and pedestrians alike. The Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail continues to provide visitors and residents with a safe and scenic bike route through the county, and connecting trails link the main trail to tourist attractions, campgrounds, and other recreation destinations. Widened shoulders along county roads and key bridges have improved safety and access for people using alternative modes of transportation. Expanded mini-bus service for seniors and disable residents provides access to medical appointments, community services, shopping, and social activities.

**The following goals, objectives, and policies are intended to provide a comprehensive approach for achieving this vision. The order in which these goals, objectives, and policies are listed does not necessarily denote their priority.**

### Goals

*Goals are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the county should approach transportation issues.*

***G3.1*** Seek improved design, function, and safety of existing roads and bridges.

***G3.2*** Enhance and promote the scenic and recreational characteristics of transportation in Monroe County as significant tourism attractions.

***G3.3*** Coordinate land use and transportation planning to meet the needs of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and local residents.

***G3.4*** Enhance and promote the use of bicycles and walking as viable forms of transportation by providing trails, bicycle routes, and wide shoulders on key roads.

***G3.5*** Improve the safety of all modes of transportation on roadways, including but not limited to horse and buggies, bicycles, etc.

***G3.6*** Improve government coordination and efficiency relating to road maintenance.

***G3.7*** Encourage economic development and support local business success by providing a comprehensive transportation network that meets the needs of commerce.

***G3.8*** Provide rural seniors and disable residents with adequate transportation options.

***G3.9*** Manage traffic flow to allow for safe efficient transportation.

### Objectives

*Objectives suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.*

***O3.1*** Increase the percent of county roads that are well maintained.

***O3.2*** Improve the condition of county bridges with a sufficiency rating of 80 or less.

***O3.3*** Improve visibility at intersections with Interstate 90.

***O3.4*** Improve access to the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail and encourage tourists to explore Monroe County by connecting the trail to other tourist amenities and recreational opportunities throughout the county.

***O3.5*** Establish an interconnected network of county bike routes that provide access to population centers, recreational resources, and scenic routes.

***O3.6*** Maintain and improve the safety of roads and key bridges for bicycles, pedestrians, and horse and buggies.

***O3.7*** Ensure that road jurisdiction is logical and focuses county maintenance and plowing efforts on major roads.

***O3.8*** Designate a network of county highways that provides for efficient travel across the county without unnecessary redundancy.

***O3.9*** Encourage maintenance of existing air, rail, and truck infrastructure to meet the transportation needs of commerce.

## Policies

*Policies are rules, courses of action, or programs used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives.*

***P3.1*** Address maintenance and repair needs on an average of eleven or twelve miles of county roads each year.

***P3.2*** Pursue state and federal grant funding for bridge rehabilitation and replacement.

***P3.3*** Work with the WisDOT to address safety and visibility issues at the interchanges of county roads and Interstate 90.

***P3.4*** Work with local municipalities to identify and designate scenic routes of historic value for cars and bicycles across Monroe County.

***P3.5*** When selecting the design of new bridges along scenic routes, incorporate architectural elements that enhance the bridge's visual quality when it is not cost prohibitive.

***P3.6*** Working in collaboration with other entities and jurisdictions, identify and pursue opportunities to establish a network of trails and on-street bike routes that connect the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail to key locations and amenities in the county.

***P3.7*** Install paved shoulders on county highways and bridges as part of repaving/reconstruction/ replacement projects where feasible and where doing so would help to address safety concerns and/or establish a network of interconnected bike routes.

***P3.8*** Work with towns, villages, and cities to ensure that road jurisdiction is logical and facilitates efficient plowing and road maintenance.

***P3.9*** Expand minibus service for seniors and disabled individuals so that these populations have access to services, shopping, and social activities.

***P3.10*** Work with railroads to address safety of high speed rail lines.

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# Utilities and Community Facilities

***State Comprehensive Planning Requirements for this Chapter***

*A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide future development of utilities and community facilities such as: sanitary sewer service, storm water management, water supply, solid waste disposal, on-site wastewater treatment tech, recycling facilities, parks, telecommunications facilities, power plants/transmission lines, cemeteries, health care facilities, child care facilities, police, fire, rescue, libraries, schools and other governmental facilities. The element shall also describe the existing and future public utility and community facilities and asses the future needs for government services related to such utilities and facilities. It will describe the approximate timetable that forecasts the need to expand or rehabilitate existing utilities and facilities or to create new utilities and facilities and asses future needs for government services in the local governmental unit that are related to such utilities and facilities.*

## Overview

This chapter provides basic information on the community-type services currently offered in Monroe County with the exception of transportation related facilities, which are addressed in the Transportation Chapter of the *plan*. The location, use, capacity and extent of services are identified for both public- and private-sector utilities and services. This information was used to determine which public services should be expanded or rehabilitated and what, if any, new services could be provided to satisfy any unmet need.

## Sewer, Water, and Stormwater Facilities

### Wastewater

There are eleven municipal wastewater facilities in Monroe County. The operators of these facilities are the villages of Cashton, Kendall, Norwalk, Oakdale, Warrens, Wilton and Wyeville, the cities of Sparta and Tomah, Fort McCoy, and Norwalk-Ontario Schools. Some municipalities, such as the villages of Cashton and Melvina, partner to share costs and services by having a joint wastewater treatment system. Put into service in 2006, the duration of the joint wastewater treatment agreement is for forty years.

Private, on-site wastewater treatment systems are also used throughout the county in areas not served by public sewers. Typically, these individual systems are designed for each household or business based on the site's soil characteristics and capabilities. On-site systems, depending on the type and maintenance frequency, can function for fifteen to thirty years.

The Wisconsin Administrative Code Comm. 83, revised during the 1990's to add provisions for new system technologies and land suitability criteria, came into effect on July 1, 2000. Unlike the previous code, it regulates the purity of groundwater discharged from the system instead of the specific characteristics of the installation. Monroe County also has a general ordinance regulating private on-site wastewater treatment systems (POWTS).

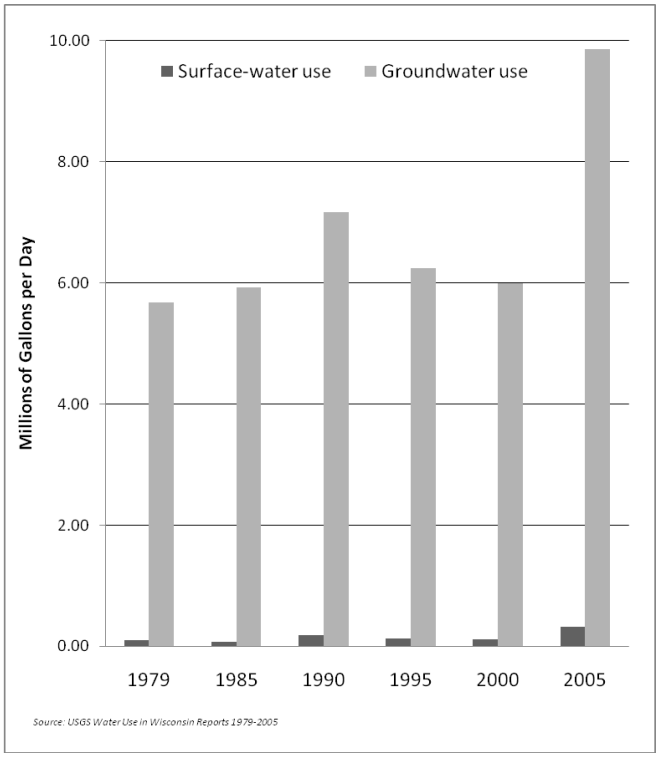
***Water towers such as this one can be found scattered across the countryside reflecting rural life in the area.***

Monroe County residents meeting eligibility criteria may qualify to receive a Wisconsin Fund Grant to replace a failing septic system. The grant is funded through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce and reimburses homeowners for the replacement of failing septic systems that may be polluting the environment. Information about this program is available through the Monroe County Sanitation Department.

**Water Supply**

Monroe County residents rely mainly on groundwater for their drinking water (see Figure 4.1). About 51 percent of residents are self-supplied through private wells, and the rest are supplied through one of eight municipal water systems in the county. Six of the municipal water systems currently have a wellhead protection plan and four have a wellhead protection ordinance.

**Figure 4.1. Water Use in Monroe County**




Monroe County residents are greatly concerned with the issue of water quality. Specifically, groundwater contamination and land stewardship were discussed at the public workshops and intergovernmental meetings. Participants at these events pointed to the need for additional education and outreach to landowners about groundwater quality and drinking water protection.

In Iowa County, WI, a similar issue of groundwater education was identified by the residents as an important issue and need[1]. The county applied for and received an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) grant to fund well testing in priority watersheds. Newsletters were sent out to residents, who were encouraged to register their private well for testing. The program proved very successful and, as of 2009, over 900 wells had been tested. Testing allowed local residents to be aware of the quality of their water and specific implications of their well, such as depth, the last time their well was tested, and whether or not they had a well casing. Other general successes of the program included an increase in awareness of local residents and adoption of additional wellhead protection ordinances throughout the county.

Residents in Monroe County are advised to have their water tested to verify it produces safe potable water. Testing should be a collective effort, potentially collaborating with the Wisconsin DNR, so a central collection of testing results could be maintained and water quality monitored over time. Based on a study conducted by the Wisconsin DNR, the northwest corner of Monroe County, along with the land around the Upper La Crosse River, are particularly susceptible to groundwater contamination (based on depth to bedrock, bedrock type, soil characteristics, surficial deposits, and depth-to-water table).

[1] Ohlrogge, Paul. Drinking Water Quality in Iowa County. September 2002

The Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Chapter of this plan provides additional information on groundwater contamination and protection.

### Ten Things Residents Can Do about Stormwater

Residents play an important role in helping to manage and control stormwater runoff and associated pollution. Suggestions for what residents can do, including:

1. Be a watershed watchdog. If you see a potential stormwater problem contact the county or local municipality.
2. Pick up after your pets. Dog waste is a major source of water contamination.
3. Properly apply lawn and garden fertilizer to avoid over-fertilizing.
4. Properly dispose of yard waste
5. Properly dispose of household chemicals.
6. Regularly maintain your car and fix any oil, radiator or transmission leak as soon as you see them.
7. Maximize infiltration in your yard by directing rainwater away from paved areas.
8. Use a proper container for trash and recyclables.
9. Keep soil in your yard, and out of waterways.
10. Join a local watershed association.

**Stormwater**

Stormwater runoff and management have recently gained more attention as an environmental concern due to surface water quality issues. According to studies conducted by the Center for Watershed Protections, as little as 10 percent impervious cover (e.g., streets, roofs, parking lots, and driveways) within a watershed can negatively impact fish habitat. Managing and controlling storm water runoff is imperative for a healthy environment. It is also a matter of health, safety, and welfare for a community in that surface water runoff can lead to erosion and flooding problems.

Monroe County has adopted a stormwater drainage ordinance to address the issues of stormwater and erosion control. Stormwater drainage is mandatory under Required Improvements section of the Monroe County Municipal Code.

**Solid Waste and Recycling**

Monroe County recycles between 3,500 and 4,000 tons of waste per year. Each municipality manages their own waste collection and recycling programs, sometimes contracting with a private company or collaborating with a nearby municipality. For example, the Town of Lafayette has an agreement with the towns of Little Falls and New Lyme for recycling services. Twelve of the thirty-four municipalities within the county offer waste collection pick-up. Other municipalities require drop off at a specified location. Municipal waste facilities and collection details are available in Appendix E.

The county provides special waste collections the last Saturday in April and the first Saturday in October each year. Hazardous waste, paints, and old medications are collected at no charge. Tires, electronics, and appliances are collected for a minimal charge. Monroe County also provides subsidized electronic collections the last full week of each month. Residents also have the option to pay to use the La Crosse County Hazardous Waste Collection Facility between scheduled collections.

Monroe County is currently operating one active Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Sanitary Landfill which is just less than one million cubic yards. The solid waste property is located in the Town of Ridgeville. The property holds one landfill that is full and closed and the currently active county landfill. This landfill will receive solid waste until 2019.

Once the landfill is full, it will be covered, or capped, with a layer of impermeable clay or plastic. While this surface area is generally not capable of future development, it could provide recreational opportunities for the area. Capped landfills can be covered with vegetation, providing homes for wildlife, open space, natural area, and opportunities for hiking and other passive recreational activities. These sites can also be turned into dog parks, athletic fields and golf courses. A landfill in Milwaukee, WI has been converted into a motocross racing track and a ski hill during the winter.

The county has completed a landfill gas to energy/food waste diversion project feasibility study and will be diverting food waste from the landfill to generate energy needed to power generators used for landfill operations. This project has the potential to extend the life of the future, third landfill by 25 percent, servicing Monroe County residents for at least thirty years without any additional land purchases.

A fifteen to twenty year future landfill site is currently being tested nearby the other two landfills. During the comprehensive planning process, Fort McCoy expressed interest in working with Monroe County on various solid waste and recycling initiatives.

## Electrical, Gas, Power, and Telecommunication Facilities

### Electrical Service

Monroe County electrical needs are served though Alliant Energy, Oakdale Electric Cooperative, Vernon Electrical Cooperative, and Xcel Energy. The infrastructure is well-maintained, and there is no anticipated change in service. There are, however, several planned system improvement.

Alliant Energy, in conjunction with American Transmission Co, is constructing a new 69,000 volt transmission line from Tomah to Warrens that will span approximately nine miles. The company also plans to build a new substation just south of Warrens, by the end of 2010. The American Transmission Company is planning a new 161-kV transmission line from the City of Tomah to the City of Sparta. As part of this project, a new substation is proposed to be built south of the City of Tomah along Highway 131. The transmission line and substation are being proposed to address low-voltage issues in the area.

### Natural Gas

According to the 2005-2007 American Community Survey, approximately 46 percent of Monroe County residents use utility gas; 23 percent use bottled, tank, or LP gas; and 12 percent use electricity to heat their homes. Most companies in the area provide liquefied petroleum (LP) gas for individual tanks including: We Energies; Tru-Gas; Ferrellgas; Tomah Co-op Services, Inc.; Midwest Fuels; Sparta Co-op Services; and Elroy Gas Co.

### Telecommunication Facilities

There are two telecommunication service (e.g., telephone and internet) providers within Monroe County: CenturyTel and Charter Fiberlink LLC. Some municipalities are also able to obtain telephone services through the Lemonweir Valley Telephone Company, Hillsboro Telephone Company, or Closecall America.

According to the 2005-2007 American Community Survey, approximately 5 percent of Monroe County residents have no telephone service available to them. Concern over cell phone service was expressed during the public workshops. Residents indicated the need for better service, possibly through the construction of a cell tower within Norwalk as well as other areas of the county. The Village of Melvina's comprehensive plan expressed support for upgrading the facilities technology and capacity in order to obtain better cell phone reception. Currently, Melvina is mostly in a dead zone for cell reception.

Participants in the comprehensive planning process suggested that internet and telephone services were adequate in some areas of Monroe County, such as in and near cities, but that some areas were underserved.

There are places where service is unreliable or completely lacking indicating a strong need for better telecommunication service in some areas in the county.

# Renewable Energy: Wind Turbines

**Why Wind?**
Wind farms have the potential to change part of the nation's energy source and decrease negative effects associated with energy production. Wind farms also generate rural income and create local jobs.

Governor Jim Doyle has a policy goal to generate 25 percent of Wisconsin's electricity from renewable sources by 2025. Wisconsin electric public utilities are under statutory mandates to ensure that at least 10 percent of electricity comes from renewable sources by 2015.

**Wind Energy in Monroe County**
From 1997 to 2002, the Wisconsin Energy Bureau (WEB), the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in conjunction with multiple utility companies conducted a statewide wind resource assessment study. Thirteen sites were monitored to identify potential areas for wind energy project development, including one site in Monroe County located about six miles southwest of Tomah. The site was selected because of its slightly hilly terrain with more prominent hills to the west. Results from the study will be used to determine potential sites for wind farm development in the future.

**Disadvantages**
Wind farms in Monroe County, as well as across the state, have faced opposition. Residents are concerned over noise, safety and shadow flicker. Some are also concerned that the sheer size of the turbines is too big and they pollute the landscape, degrade residents' quality of life, and decrease property values.

**State Regulation**
On September 16, 2009 Senate Bill 185 passed, stating that wind farm development should be uniform and centralized under the state. The bill requires the state Public Service Commission to develop rules and standards for the construction and operation of wind farms. The bill also prohibits any municipality from enacting any ordinance that would be more restrictive than these standards.

**Facts on Wind Energy** (Energy Center of Wisconsin)

- A modern wind turbine will produce about 50 decibels of noise at a distance of about 300-600 feet—primarily a rhythmic "whooshing" sound from the blades. This is comparable to the sound of light traffic at a distance of 100 feet.
- Wind developers typically pay a royalty to landowners of about $2,000 per year per turbine. A wind turbine typically uses only a half-acre of land.
- In Wisconsin, since the land is relatively flat allowing birds to maneuver around the turbines easily, research shows no impact on bird populations.

*Source: US Department of Energy*

## Cemeteries

There are 97 cemeteries located throughout Monroe County. Currently, about 60 cemeteries are in use, while the other 37 are historic. No additional cemeteries are projected to be needed throughout the life of the plan.

## Public Safety and Emergency Services

### Police Service

Public safety was identified as a major issue during the public participation process. With its prime location between Minneapolis, MN and Chicago, IL, at the intersection of two interstates, Monroe County has attracted more than its fair share of drug trafficking and criminal activity. This has placed significant burdens on local law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement agencies in Monroe County include Cashton Police Department, Fort McCoy Law Enforcement Agency, Kendall Police Department, Monroe County Sheriff Department, Norwalk/Wilton Police, Sparta Police, Tomah Police, Veteran's Administration Police Department-Tomah and the Warrens Police Department. The county also currently has a good working relationship with Fort McCoy. While there are no formal mutual aid agreements between the county and Fort McCoy, they frequently share resources and collaborate with each other.

### County Jail

The recent discussion over construction of a new county jail has led to much public debate. The county jail is currently housed within the county courthouse building in downtown Sparta, and there is a shortage of space. The small facility forces the county to rent out beds in surrounding counties costing over $1 million annually. There is also concern about the building not conforming to current security requirements and a lack of screening points.

However, some residents are opposed to the construction of a new justice center. The debate stems from the new project's high price tag of $26 million, the historic qualities of the county courthouse building, and the potential effect the move could have on local businesses in downtown Sparta. A recall of eight pro-justice center county board members in November 2009 effectively stopped the proposed project. New alternatives for addressing capacity and safety concerns for the jail are being discussed and evaluated.

Monroe County is not alone in facing the challenge of an over-crowded jail. For example, twelve years ago, the Dane county, WI Board budgeted $30 million for a new jail to address overcrowding. After much debate, the plan was vetoed by the County Executive, who then embarked on a mission to solve jail overcrowding by other means. As a result of this effort, there are now a total of eighteen jail diversion programs in place, including: alternative sentencing for psychiatric patients, Spanish-speaking assistance for Hispanic defendants, and drug and alcohol treatment programs. Dane County court officials have also worked to streamline the court process in order to get people in and out of the county criminal justice system more efficiently. As a result of these efforts, there are now fewer people in the Dane County criminal justice system (i.e., in jail, on parole, or under supervision) than there were ten years ago, despite relatively high population growth in the county.

### Fire Protection

Fire Departments within Monroe County include the Cashton Fire Department, Elroy Area Volunteer Fire Department, Fort McCoy Fire & Emergency Services, Kendall Fire Department, Norwalk Fire & 1st Responders, Oakdale Fire Association, Ontario Fire Department, Sparta City Fire Department, Sparta Rural Fire Department, Town of Lincoln Fire & 1st Responders, Veteran's Administration Fire Department-Tomah and the Wilton Fire Department.

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Insert Map 6 – Jurisdictional

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**Emergency Medical Services**

Monroe County is covered by multiple EMS services including: Elroy Area Ambulance Service, Fort McCoy Fire Department, Kendall Area Ambulance, Ontario Area Ambulance Service, Sparta Area Ambulance Service Ltd., Tomah Area Ambulance, and Village of Wilton Ambulance Service. There are 1st responder groups in Angelo, Cashton, Cataract, Leon Valley, Norwalk, Oakdale, and the Town of Lincoln.

## Health Care Facilities

Health care facilities in Monroe County are generally considered to be excellent. The main medical centers are Franciscan Skemp Healthcare in the City of Sparta and Tomah Memorial Hospital in the City of Tomah.

Clinics in the area include the Franciscan Skemp Healthcare Sparta Campus Clinic and Gundersen Lutheran in Sparta, the Lake Tomah Clinic and Tomah Clinic in Tomah, the Norwalk Clinic, the Tomah Hospital Clinic in the Village of Warrens, and Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers in Cashton. Also, the VA Hospital, a major resource for the area, is located in nearby La Crosse.

There are three nursing homes in Monroe County including: Morrow Memorial Home (110 beds) and Rolling Hills Rehabilitation Center (89 beds) in Sparta and Tomah Health Care Center (84 beds) in Tomah. The Rolling Hills Rehabilitation Center also provides services to county residents with developmental disabilities.

Mental health facilities in Monroe County include: Veterans Affairs Medical Center (Tomah), Franciscan-Skemp Healthcare Behavioral Health Services (Tomah and Sparta), Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center Inc. Behavioral Health (Tomah and Sparta), Ho-Chunk Nation Alcohol/Drug Program Services (Tomah), LT Resources (Sparta), Monroe County Community Support Program (Sparta), Monroe County Department of Human Service (Sparta), and Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers (Cashton).

Alzheimer's and dementia services are offered through the Alzheimer's Association, Faith in Action, Monroe County Human Services, Monroe County Senior Services Family Caregiver Support Program, Morrow Memorial Home, Riverfront Inc., Rolling Hills Nursing Home, and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

In Monroe County, providers of Community Based Residential Facilities include Agape Acres in Warrens; Close to Home Inc., Cranberry Court LLC., Sunset Ridge Estates and Greenfield House in Tomah; and Little Falls Group Home and Time for Ease in Sparta. Community Based Residential Facilities are places where five or more adults reside who do not require care above intermediate level nursing care. Adults receive care, treatment, or services that are above the level of room and board. It includes no more than three hours of nursing care per week per resident.

Monroe County is a member of the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Western Wisconsin (ADRC), which offers more information on programs, service and support available in Monroe County.

## Libraries, Schools, Childcare, and Senior Facilities

**Libraries**

The Winding Rivers Library System serves Monroe County with six public libraries. These libraries are located in Kendall, Norwalk, Sparta, Tomah, Cashton, and Wilton. The Winding Rivers Library System provides library service to seven counties including Monroe, and includes thirty-nine libraries. As part of this broader system, Monroe County residents have access to outstanding electronic resources as well as all of the books in the extended library system.

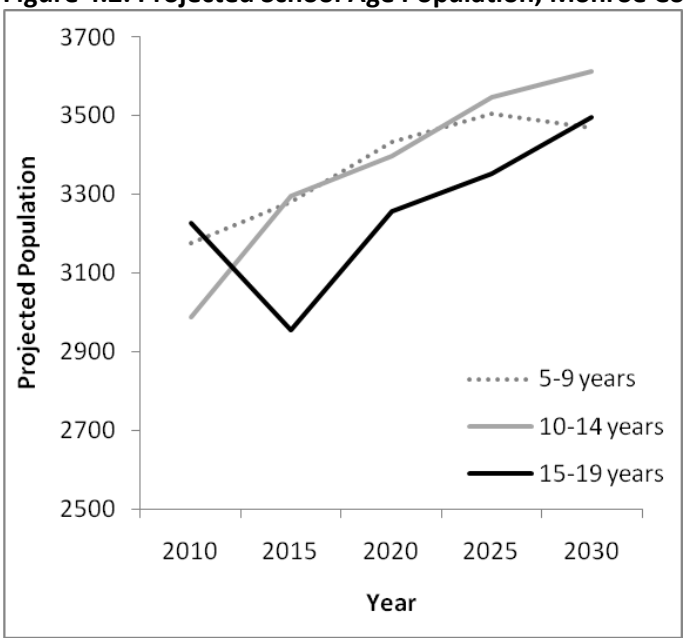
**Schools**

There are eleven school districts within Monroe County: Bangor, Black River Falls, Cashton, Hilsboro, Melrose-Mindoro, New Lisbon, Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton, Royall, Sparta Area, Tomah Area, and Westby Area (Map 6). Only five school districts – Cashton,

Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton, Royall, Sparta Area, and Tomah Area – have schools within Monroe County boundaries. A list of all Monroe County Schools and enrollment numbers are available in Appendix E Table 4.2.

From 2000 to 2009, the Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton School District realized an increase in enrollment of 44 percent or 223 students, the largest increase in the county (see Figure 4.2). Enrollment in the Sparta Area School District decreased by 8 percent or 233 students. Similarly, the Tomah Area School District decreased by 4 percent or 119 students. Enrollment in the Cashton Area School District stayed relatively the same, only increasing 1 percent or by 7 students. Overall, enrollment in the school districts within Monroe County decreased by 2 percent or 122 students.

**Figure 4.2. Projected School Age Population, Monroe County**




*Source: WI DOA Projections*

The school age population in Monroe County is expected to increase steadily over the next twenty years, based on the Wisconsin State Department of Administration (DOA) projections (see Figure 4.2). Elementary school aged kids (5-9 years) are projected to increase by 9 percent, middle school aged kids (10-14 years) by 21 percent, and high school aged kids by 8 percent.

In 2009, there were 1,142 students enrolled in private schools in Monroe County. Within the Bangor, Black River Falls, Cashton, Hilsboro, Melrose-Mindoro, New Lisbon, Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton, Sparta Area, Tomah Area, and Westby Area School Districts, there are 548 students with home-based enrollment (i.e., home schooled).

**Childcare Facilities**

Safe and affordable childcare is a significant consideration for families and employers alike. As more families become dual income and more households are headed by a single parent, the number of children needing day care is increasing despite only a slight projected increase in children under the age of five over the next five years (3 percent or 92 children under 5). Monroe County has thirteen licensed group childcare facilities which provide licensed childcare for nine or more children: one in Warrens, four in Sparta and seven in Tomah. There are twenty-four licensed family childcare facilities which provide care for up to eight children: one in Cashton, fourteen in Sparta, eight in Tomah and one in Warrens.

## Parks and Recreation Facilities

**Public Recreation Land**

Many residents place a high value on the outdoor recreational opportunities available in Monroe County. Recreation also attracts tourists, which are major contributors to the local economy. Monroe County currently offers a wide range of public recreation land and facilities.

McMullen Park, a county park located 2.5 miles northwest of Warrens, offers opportunities for camping, picnicking, boating, ice fishing, hiking, and snowmobiling. The park also includes 1,000 acres of county forest land. Some areas of the forest have been developed to accommodate a high degree of public use. In these areas there are picnic areas with shelters, tables and grills; boat landings; and waysides. Managed trail areas are also found throughout the forest.

Available to the public are motorized trail opportunities for snowmobile use, and non-motorized trail opportunities for skiing and hiking.

There is also over 3,000 acres of county owned forest land in the Town of New Lyme, which is utilized by bow hunters in the fall and snowmobilers in the winter.

The county also maintains about 300 miles of snowmobile trails during the winter months. Currently, only about 10 to 12 miles of these trails are on county land. Skiing, snow tubing, and snowboarding are also offered at Whitetail Ridge.

Streams and rivers also provide many recreational activities in the county. Canoeing and kayaking are common on the La Crosse River, which flows through Monroe and La Crosse counties into the Mississippi River. On the Vernon-Monroe County border is generally where canoeing begins. There is also a public access area located on the La Crosse River Headwaters on CTH BB northeast of Sparta off STH 21.

There are also numerous opportunities for fishing throughout the county. The Mill Park Pond, maintained by the Cataract Sportsman's Club in Cataract, is stocked with fish and within close proximity to numerous miles of public hiking trails.

Fort McCoy offers year round recreational activities at Pine View Campground and Whitetail Ridge Ski Area including camping, swimming, miniature golf, tactics paintball, laser tag, down-hill skiing, cross-country skiing, and tubing.

It was noted during the planning process that while there is generally adequate public recreation land, it is all in the northern part of the county. Many residents expressed an interest in expanding public recreational opportunities in the southern portion of the county. Monroe County currently owns 760 acres of land in the Town of Ridgeville that could be designated as county forest land. This would keep the land in permanent public ownership, as well as help to establish recreational amenities and opportunities similar to those found on other county forest land. The land is north of the Village of Norwalk along County Highway T and the river. It was originally purchased to put in a flood control structure; however, the project was never completed.

In the long-term, the existing county landfill could also be capped and used for passive recreation after it is closed.

Angelo Wayside Park, a former wayside along State Highway 21, is also being transferred from WisDOT to Monroe County for county parkland.

## Utilities and Community Facilities

## 20-Year Vision

In 2030, Monroe County residents continue to have access to and be served by quality, affordable utilities and community facilities. Cell phone reception and internet access are good throughout the county, and communication and power infrastructure is well-maintained. The library and school systems are excellent, and the residents have access to quality medical facilities throughout the county.

All residents in Monroe County have access to safe drinking water, and private septic systems are well-maintained. Stormwater regulations effectively limit the potential impact of new development on water quality and flooding.

Local residents continue to enjoy the recreational opportunities provided by the bike trails, rivers, and public lands throughout Monroe County. The closed and capped county landfill provides on-site power generation for the new landfill, as well as space for passive recreation. County-owned land, including land in the southern portion of the county, offers a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities.

**The following goals, objectives, and policies are intended to provide a comprehensive approach for achieving this vision. The order in which they are listed does not necessarily denote their priority.**

### Goals

*Goals are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the county should approach preservation and development issues.*

***G4.1*** Ensure that residents have access to water quality that meets EPA standards.

***G4.2*** Protect groundwater from contamination.

***G4.3*** Have high-quality water.

***G4.4*** Plan for the perpetual care of public cemeteries and encourage private cemeteries to be self-sustaining.

***G4.5*** Ensure that residents and businesses have access to affordable, reliable, and technologically advanced power and communication services.

***G4.6*** Look for alternative energy sources to reduce local carbon emissions, including opportunities such as working with Fort McCoy on renewable energy initiatives.

***G4.7*** Ensure that residents continue to have convenient access to state-of-the art health care facilities and services.

***G4.8*** Ensure that children and families have access to quality, affordable daycare facilities close to their home and places of employment.

***G4.9*** Manage waste disposal in an environmentally healthy way.

***G4.10*** Ensure that police, fire, and rescue services continue to meet the public health and safety needs of the public.

***G4.11*** Ensure that the public library and school systems continue to meet the educational needs of the public.

***G4.12*** Provide ample opportunities for outdoor recreation for all residents of Monroe County.

## Objectives

*Objectives suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.*

***O4.1*** Limit to the greatest extent possible the runoff of water and pollutants from the site at which they are generated.

***O4.2*** Work with local farms to reduce groundwater contamination from agriculture.

***O4.3*** Encourage local residents to reduce potential sources of groundwater contamination. Encourage local residents to monitor and protect their well-water.

***O4.5*** Identify potential threats to groundwater resources in the county.

***O4.6*** Encourage the expansion of cell phone coverage and high-speed internet access in the rural portions of the county.

***O4.7*** Encourage the use and production of renewable energy, especially for on-site use.

***O4.8*** Reduce the amount of waste entering the county landfill.

***O4.9*** Expand recreational opportunities and access to public open space in the southern portion of Monroe County.

***O4.10*** Improve access for people with physical handicaps to county forest lands and recreational opportunities, and encourage other clubs/organizations to improve handicap access to other recreation facilities.

## Policies

*Policies are rules, courses of action, or programs used to ensure Plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives.*

***P4.1*** Manage water and water pollutants at the source by requiring/encouraging new development to incorporate on-site stormwater strategies, such as rain gardens and infiltration areas, into new development.

***P4.2*** Encourage/require materials and design that reduce the overall amount of impervious cover associated with new development.

***P4.3*** Establish a drinking water testing program, in coordination with WDNR, to identify any harmful contaminants.

***P4.4*** Work with Fort McCoy to evaluate and mitigate potential groundwater contamination issues.

***P4.5*** Prepare and keep up-to-date a capital improvement plan that includes key county facilities, including the county solid waste facility, county jail, and county park and recreation facilities.

***P4.6*** Continue to educate the public about recycling and waste reduction.

***P4.7*** Pursue opportunities to create handicap accessible trails and parking on county forest land.

***P4.8*** Promote Monroe County as a handicap accessible recreation destination, and increase awareness of handicap accessible facilities (including Cataract Pond, the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail, McMullen Park, and other county recreation facilities).

***P4.9*** Permanently protect and provide recreational opportunities on the existing 760 acres of county-owned land in the Town of Ridgeville.

***P4.10*** Evaluate the feasibility of providing passive recreation opportunities at the current landfill once it is closed and capped.

***P4.11*** Pursue opportunities for renewable energy production on county-owned land, including hydro-electric power at Angelo Pond and waste-to-energy at the landfill.

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# Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

***State Comprehensive Planning Requirements for this Chapter***

*A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for the conservation, and promotion of the effective management, of natural resources such as groundwater, forests, productive agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, stream corridors, surface water, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, metallic and nonmetallic mineral resources consistent with zoning limitations under s. 295.20 (2), parks, open spaces, historical and cultural resources, community design, recreational resources and other natural resources.*

## Overview

Agricultural, natural, and cultural resources help to define a community's character, quality of life, and economic activities. Agriculture and forestry is central to life in Monroe County, providing fuel for the local economy and scenic vistas around town. Local residents derive pride and value from the working landscape, pristine scenic views, preserved heritage, and natural resources abundant in the area. This chapter highlights the key agricultural, natural, and cultural resources found in Monroe County, and sets goals, objectives, and policies for protecting and enhancing these resources.

***Forests are central to the local economy and residents take a sense of pride in the working landscape.***

## Agriculture Resources

### County Agricultural Trends

Agriculture is changing in Monroe County. The size, number, and types of farms, as well as the amount of farmland in the county, have all changed significantly over the past decade. Between 1997 and 2007:

- The total number of farms in Monroe County *increased* by 9 percent (178 farms), while at the state- and national-level the number of farms *decreased* by about 1 percent (see Table 5.1).
- Total acreage in farming decreased by 5 percent (18,276 acres) in Monroe County, compared to 6 percent (about 1.04 million acres) in Wisconsin and 3 percent (about 32.65 million acres) in the US.
- Average farm size decreased 13 percent in the county, from 191 acres to 166 acres.
- In Monroe County, the number of small farms (1 to 49 acres) increased 77 percent (254 farms). In both the state and US, small farms increased by 16 percent (see Table 5.2).
- The number of farms with annual sales of $2,500 or less increased by 532 farms (from 351 to 883 farms). This is a 151 percent increase in the county, compared to a 36 percent and 30 percent increase at the state and national level respectively.
- The number of farms with horses or ponies increased dramatically from 293 farms (15 percent of all farms) to 651 farms (30 percent of all farms).

These trends likely reflect an increase in the Amish population as well as an increase in hobby and/or part-time farming operations. In many ways, smaller farms are good for rural areas. Small farms are generally more

**Table 5.1. Number of Farms and Acres in Farmland: 1997-2007**

| | Monroe County | | Wisconsin | | United States | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | # of Farms | Acres | # of Farms | Acres | # of Farms | Acres |
| 1997 | 1,937 | 369,582 | 79,541 | 16,232,744 | 2,215,876 | 954,752,502 |
| 2002 | 1,938 | 351,775 | 77,131 | 15,741,552 | 2,128,982 | 938,279,056 |
| 2007 | 2,115 | 351,306 | 78,463 | 15,190,804 | 2,204,792 | 922,095,840 |

**Table 5.2. Number of Farms 1-49 Acres: 1997-2007**

| | Monroe County | Wisconsin | United States |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1997 | 332 | 21,293 | 736,292 |
| 2007 | 586 | 24,756 | 853,132 |
| % change | 0.77 | 0.16 | 0.16 |
| Farm Change | 254 | 3,463 | 116,840 |

*Source: USDA NASS Census of Agriculture 2007, 2002, 1997*

affordable for beginning farmers, they lend themselves well to u-pick operations and direct marketing to consumers, they are sometimes seen as being more environmentally friendly, and they help support an agrarian lifestyle.

Breaking up larger farms, however, can also be cause for concern. Farm "fragmentation" is generally permanent and, in some cases, can lead to loss of farmland. Hobby farms are also generally less productive than commercial operations. As a result, a large number of hobby farms can undermine the local agricultural economy.

**Agricultural Products**

Milk, and other dairy products from cows, accounted for $84,011,000 of sales in 2007, the highest value of sales for all commodities in Monroe County. Cranberries (and other fruit, tree nuts, and berries) are the county's second highest value in sales ($39,925,000 in 2007). Monroe County is a leader in this category, ranking 2nd in the state in total value of sales and acreage of land in berries. It is also notable that the county is 17th in the entire US with most land in berries. Other crops, such as hay and grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas are also significant in the area.

**Organic Farming**

Organic farming is a niche market that has become increasingly popular in Monroe County. In 2007, there were fifty-four organic farms (5,432 acres of farmland) with total product sales over $2.8 million[2]. This sector has significantly increased from 2002, when there were twenty-six organic farms, with a total value of $952,000 in sales. Data relating to organic farming was not recorded by the USDA prior to 2002. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, an additional thirty-one farms (2,300 acres) are in the process of being converted to organic production.

**Cranberries**

Monroe County is well known for its cranberry production. In 1997, 2,777 acres (58 farms) were devoted to cranberry production. This increased to 3,083 acres (59 farms) in 2002 and to 3,654 as of 2007 (USDA Ag Census). This is an 11 percent increase between 1997 and 2002 and a 19 percent increase from 2002 to 2007.

Cranberry production can have negative impacts on the environment. Cranberry operations can impact surface water quality by increasing levels of nutrients and phosphorus in the water. The water level is also impacted by cranberry production when water is diverted for uses, causing unnatural water fluctuations at different times of the year. This water diversion, including ditching or diking surface water, can result in degradation or destruction of wetlands.

[2] This data is according to those who reported organic production defined by the National Organic Standards in the 2007 USDA Census of Agriculture.

**Local and Regional Markets**

The shift towards smaller farms and the increase in organic practices influences the types of markets that local farmers sell to. Larger farms often look to regional and international markets to sell their products. Smaller farms, on the other hand, are generally more reliant on local markets. Direct marketing to consumers provides opportunities for increased profits and makes smaller farms more financially viable than they might otherwise be. U-pick operations and farm stands offer another option for farmers to market their products directly to consumers.

The cities of Tomah and Sparta both have farmers markets. Held in Gillette Park in Tomah and Memorial Park in Sparta, the markets are open annually from June through October. Farmers utilize these venues as outlets to sell their goods directly to local residents. The Madison Farmer's Market, one of the largest farmers markets in the country, is also within a two hour drive of Monroe County.

**Large Agricultural Livestock Operations**

Large livestock operations and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) can have both environmental and quality of life impacts on a community. Many rural communities impose restrictions and regulations on large corporate farms in order to preserve quality of life and the environment. This can be done by adopting a livestock siting ordinance, which sets in place state permit standards. A livestock siting ordinance can also be used to identify specific areas that are suitable for larger livestock operations.

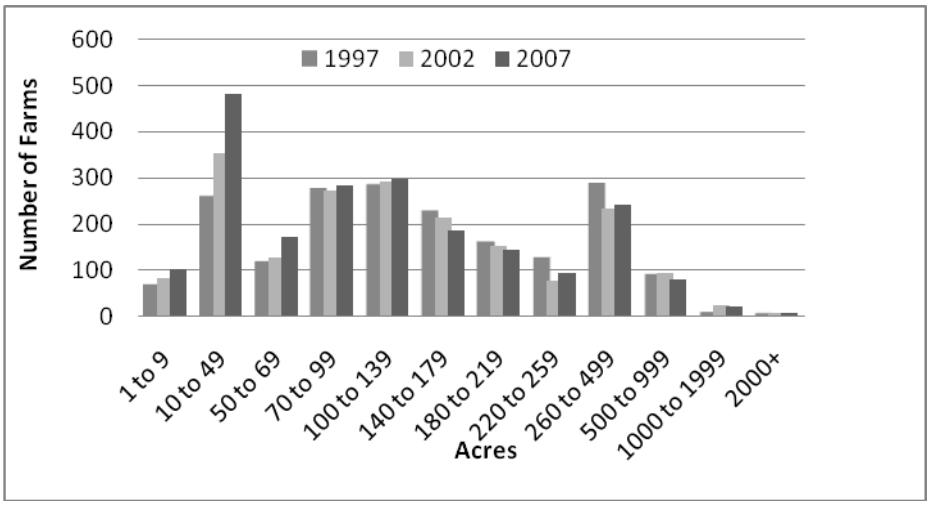
In many ways, the rolling hills, short valleys, and steep slopes of Monroe County already serve to limit opportunities for very large farms. Despite these limitations, the number of large farms in Monroe County is increasing. While farm size in general tends to be decreasing in Monroe County, the number of farms between 1,000 to 1,999 acres nearly doubled (from 12 to 21) between 1997 and 2007 (see Figure 5.1). Monroe County currently has three permitted CAFO operations, all dairy cattle. Two of these operations are located in Cashton and one in Tomah.

**Soils**

The US Department of Agriculture classifies soil based on its quality for agricultural production. Class I, II, and some Class III soils are considered good soils for agricultural production. Although soils tend to be of relatively poor quality in Monroe County, there are pockets of excellent soils (see Map 7). Class I and II soils can be generally found in the valleys of the southern part of the county, around the City of Sparta, and north of Tomah to Warrens. Soils range from sandy soils in the northwest to silty and loamy soils in the south half.

As population continues to grow, careful consideration should be given to the location of highly productive soils and farms. Many towns and villages in Monroe County have indicated through their individual comprehensive plans that development is preferred on less fertile soils, and soil productivity should be a factor in guiding new development. Soil erosion by wind and water is also major problem on much of the cropland and pasture in Monroe County.

**Figure 5.1. Monroe County Farm Size: 1997-2007**




*Source: USDA NASS Census of Agriculture 2007, 2002, 1997*

**Farmland Conservation**

Many rural areas across the US have been losing prime farmland to development, farmer retirement, and farm business failure. Monroe County is no exception. From 1997 to 2002, Monroe County lost 5 percent (17,807 acres) of its farmland; however, from 2002 to 2007, the county lost less than 1 percent of farmland, only losing 469 acres (USDA NASS Census of Agriculture 2007). The state lost about 3 percent of farmland between 1997 and 2002 and another 3 percent between 2002 and 2007. Similarly, the US lost about 2 percent of farmland between 1997 and 2002 and another 2 percent between 2002 and 2007.

Preserving farmland is a top priority of local residents and municipal officials, and it was an underlying issue in many discussions about Monroe County's future. This issue was brought up multiple times during the planning process and was identified as a top priority at the public workshops. According to local residents, much of the loss of farmland is due to retiring farmers and newcomers buying large tracts of land for home construction. Lack of zoning in many towns was identified as a significant contributing factor. The resulting scattered residential development takes land out of farming and breaks large blocks of farmland into smaller pieces.

Fortunately, there are many opportunities available to individual landowners and communities wishing to preserve farmland. Wisconsin's new Working Lands Initiative (WLI) provides several key opportunities for towns and counties to work with farmers to preserve farmland. These opportunities include:

- Enhanced state income tax credits for farmers. WLI simplifies and increases the previous farmland preservation tax incentive program to encourage greater participation. In order to be eligible for the new tax credits, however, a farmer must be located in an "agricultural enterprise area" (AEA) or be zoned for farmland preservation. Both an AEA and farmland preservation zoning must be consistent with a state-certified county farmland preservation plan.

- Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE). WLI provides state funding for PACE. Also sometimes referred to as Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), PACE permanently protects farmland by purchasing the "development rights" from willing farmers. In exchange, farmers agree to keep their property as farmland or open space in perpetuity. The land remains in private ownership, and the owner continues to pay property taxes. To be eligible for state funding for PACE, a farm must be located in a farmland preservation area identified in a state-certified county farmland preservation plan. Preference is given to farms that are in an agriculture enterprise area and are zoned for farmland preservation.

- Farmland Preservation Plans. WLI mandates that all counties have a certified farmland preservation plan. Certification on existing farmland preservation plans will expire over the next 10 years according to a schedule set by the state. Monroe County's Farmland Preservation plan is set to expire in 2013. Fortunately, WLI provides significant funding for county farmland preservation plans through an annual grant program.

- The Farm and Ranch lands Protection Programs (FRPP) is another potential source of funding for purchase of development rights and can be used as a match for state PACE funding. Significant tax incentives are also currently available through the federal government for landowners who donate, rather than sell, their development rights. For agricultural land, 100 percent of the value of the development rights can be taken as an income tax deduction. This tax deduction can be spread out over a sixteen year period. This program, however, expired at the end of 2009. An extension for this program has been proposed for 2010.

**Potential Conflicts with Non-Farm Neighbors**

Local farmers who participated in the agriculture focus group indicated that non-farming individuals moving out to the country is a major issue that impacts their farming operations. Unfortunately, farming and residential uses are not always compatible. Farm practices such as spraying, manure spreading, and late night (sometimes 24 hours/day) schedules are not always appreciated by non-farm neighbors. Most of the farmers interviewed agreed that more needed to be done in the county to address this growing problem. People felt that it was important to notify new neighbors that this is a farming community and that normal farming practices (such as manure spreading and late night noise) is part of the "rural package". Some municipalities are looking into programs such as dispersing literature on "right to farm practices" to new residents. For example, the Town of Glendale's comprehensive plan suggests that any new non-farm lots be encouraged to have a right to farm agreement.

**Challenges and Opportunities Noted by Local Farmers**

- People moving into farming areas and not understanding the noises and smells associated with farming.
- Keeping tracts of land in the county that are large enough to farm and make a living.
- Deteriorating housing in cities could lead to more development in farming areas.
- Utilizing grant money.
- Keeping large amounts of land in farming for food security.
- Sub-division ordinances can affect the ability of farmers to sell off land for future development.
- Expiration of old contracts preserving farmland and need for more information about the new Working Lands Initiative.

**Agriculture's Impact on Water Quality**

Most farmers in Monroe County are good land stewards and actively work towards reducing the environmental impacts of their operations. According to the Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, however, there are significant water quality issues associated with agricultural practices in the county. The Land and Water Resource Management Plan estimates that, based on research done in the Middle Kickapoo River Watershed, roughly two-thirds of stream bank erosion issues in the county are caused by agricultural activities.

Agricultural runoff is also a significant concern for water quality in the county and was identified as a major issue by local residents during the planning process. Agricultural runoff can contaminate wells, lead to algae growth in lakes and ponds, impact fish and wildlife populations, and contribute to overall degradation of water quality.

In an effort to protect water quality, Monroe County currently requires nutrient management plans as part of the permit process for building a manure storage facility. State Agricultural Performance Standards also play an important role in reducing the impact of farming on the environment. Compliance with these standards is required by law, although enforcement efforts have varied. In the past, the standards could only be enforced as part of a cost-share program. Under the new Working Lands Initiative, however, compliance with these standards is required in order to qualify for the farmland preservation tax credit. Enabling farmers to take advantage of this tax credit would help to address water quality issues in the county. In order to qualify for the tax credit, farmers must be located in an exclusive agricultural zone and/or be in a designated Agricultural Enterprise Area.

***Streambank erosion in the county is often the result of agricultural practices.***

## Natural Resources

### Forests

Approximately 47 percent (273,000 acres) of Monroe County is forested (Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan). The major cover type is oak-hickory, comprising about 53 percent of total woodland.

County-owned forests make up 7,152 acres of land dispersed throughout the county (see map 8). The Monroe County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan outlines specific management practices to effectively manage, utilize, and sustain the resources of the County Forest. These practices include controlling forest composition and managing structure and growth in order to maintain and enhance the forest's utility.

The County Forest is also managed for aesthetic and recreational purposes. The County Forest Plan delineates scenic management zones within the forest and prescribes modified forestry practices for these zones. Recreational opportunities on the county forest land include camping, hunting, fishing, picnicking, snowshoeing, biking, hiking, cross-country skiing, photography, and nature study.

Public and private forests provide multiple benefits to the residents of the county: shade in the summer, beauty year round, wind reduction, energy savings, pollution removal, erosion and stormwater control, carbon sequestration, and a source of income. Forests are particularly important to the local economy, supporting a large cluster of wood and forest product industries in western Monroe County (see the Economic Development Chapter). They also provide a venue for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities.

Monroe County residents place a high value on preserving forest. During the planning process, many residents spoke about the importance of maintaining and preserving these resources for the scenic views, rural character, economic contributions, and other benefits they provide.

Pastured woodlots are a major concern in the county according to the Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan. Pastured woodlots result in increased runoff and more gully erosion which make watersheds more susceptible to flash flooding, excess siltation and streambank erosion. Since the implementation of "use value assessment", pasture land is assessed at the lowest of the agricultural classifications. This gives landowners incentives to graze woodlands, resulting in poor forest management and degradation of land and water resources.

Poor forest management is also a significant concern for parcels that are split off and sold for individual home sites. Although these parcels typically remain forested, they are generally no longer actively managed for timber production. This can undermine the local timber economy as well as create issues with pest management and disease control. This was identified as a significant concern during the public participation process. At the public workshops, 78 percent (18 out of 23) people thought Monroe County should work with interested land owners to permanently protect farms and working forests.

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Insert Map 7 – Soils and Farmland

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Insert Map 8 – Natural Features

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**Natural Areas**

There are three designated Department of Natural Resources "Natural Areas" in Monroe County. The Eureka Maple Woods tract, located in the Town of Portland, is representation of pre-settlement maple-basswood forests of southwest Wisconsin. Observable along the La Crosse River State Trail is typical "railroad prairie", which are the last vestiges of dry land prairie in the sandy soils of Monroe County. Finally, the Oak Savanna, a type of vegetative cover that existed in western Wisconsin in pre-settlement days is viewable on Fort McCoy (2004-2008 Monroe County Recreation Plan). Additionally, Fort McCoy also contains the Clear Creek and Silver Creek Natural Areas.

**Trout Streams**

*Monroe County has 92 miles of Class 1 trout streams and 114 miles of Class 2 trout streams.*

**Class 1 trout streams** (92 miles in Monroe County) are defined as "high quality waters having sufficient natural reproduction to sustain populations of wild trout and are classified as Exceptional Resource Waters under NR 102, the administrative rules establishing water quality standards for Wisconsin waters".

**Class 2 trout streams** (114 miles in Monroe County) are less productive than Class 1 streams and require some stocking to sustain sport fishing (Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan).

*Source: DNR, April 19, 2002*

**Water Resources**

Monroe County is well known for its water resources, particularly the Kickapoo River, La Crosse River, cranberry bogs, and numerous coldwater trout streams. These bodies of water provide excellent recreational opportunities and habitat, and help support the local economy through cranberry production and tourism. While these resources are generally well cared for, there are several important water quality issues that have been identified by DNR and the Monroe County Land Conservation Department. Some of these issues have been addressed through state-funded projects. Specifically, Priority Watershed and Priority Lake Program projects were completed for the Lake Tomah Watershed in 2002 and Middle Kickapoo River Watershed in 2004.

Despite these efforts, significant water quality issues remain. Monroe County has nine water bodies listed on the Wisconsin DNR's 2008 Impaired Waters List. Impaired waters include: Printz Creek (low priority), South Fork Lemonweir River (low priority), Tomah Lake (low priority), Angelo Pond (low priority), North Flowage (low priority), Ranch Creek (low priority), Squaw Creek (implementation priority), Stillwell Creek (implementation priority), and Unnamed Creek 23-13b—also known as Ash Run-North Fork (implementation priority).

Monroe County contains eleven different watersheds delineated by the DNR (see Map 9). These watersheds are part of four different river basins. The location of Monroe County at the headwaters of these four basins suggests that local water quality issues and protection efforts can have a significant impact at the regional level.

Below is a description of the watersheds in Monroe County, along with information regarding recommendations from DNR staff and Monroe County Land Conservation Department (LCD) found in the *Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan*. Map 8 and 9 show the location of these watersheds.

<u>Lower Wisconsin River Basin</u>

*West Fork Kickapoo River Watershed*- Approximately 80 percent of the watershed is in agriculture (Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan). There is evidence of excessive nutrients from manure runoff, which has resulted in fish kills. The Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan recommends that Jersey Valley Lake (located in Vernon County with headwaters in Monroe County) be

considered as a high priority for a planning and lake protection grant.

*Middle Kickapoo River Watershed*- This watershed is characterized by steep, wooded hillsides and narrow valleys. The grazing of livestock on streambanks, cropland erosions, and streambank erosion are the primary cause of water quality problems. The proliferation of spring ponds is also a concern.

*Upper Kickapoo Watershed*- This watershed has much wider valleys and less steep slopes then typically found in the other Kickapoo River Watersheds. Consequently, almost half of the land is in agriculture and water pollution from agricultural run-off is an issue. Higher than desirable water temperatures are also a concern for sustaining fish populations.

**Map 9. Wisconsin Watershed Basins**

Central Wisconsin River Basin

*Little Lemonweir River Watershed*- Nonpoint source pollution is a problem in the watershed. The Lake Tomah Priority Watershed Project was funded by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to reduce water pollution. Since 1992, the Monroe County Land Conservation Department has worked with landowners in this watershed to reduce an estimated 2,300 tons per year of sediment from reaching the lake. The South Fork of the Lemonweir below Lake Tomah has high fecal coliform concentrations and low dissolved oxygen levels. The Department of Natural Resources has acquired several fishing easements on Class I and II trout streams throughout the watershed.

*Beaver Creek/Juneau Watershed*- Bogs throughout the Beaver Creek Watershed are used for growing cranberries. As a result, the main water quality issues are from water being diverted from trout streams to flood cranberry beds. Alterations of wetlands, water level fluctuations, and ditching are concerns.

*Seymour Creek & Upper Baraboo River Watershed*- This watershed is characteristic of the driftless area in Monroe County with steep slopes but also wide valleys. Agricultural uses are found on the wider ridgetops and most valleys. Approximately 65 percent of the primary land use in the watershed is agriculture (WDNR). Not surprisingly, the main concern is non-point source pollution primarily from agricultural activities.

Black-Buffalo-Trempealeau Basin

*Big and Douglas Creeks*- Several streams in this watershed are impacted by streambank pasturing, including Printz Creek which has been placed on the impaired waters list. Sedimentation is a major concern.

*Trout Run and Robin Creek*- Cranberry operations upstream have caused temperature and irregular flow concerns. The DNR believes Clear Creek could be upgraded to trout water if the right solution is implemented.

LaCrosse/Bad Axe

*Coon Creek Watershed*- This became the nation's first watershed project in 1933. Farming practices such as cultivation and pasteurizing of steep slopes have historically led to soil erosions and flash floods in the area. Though the project was deemed successful, urban

and agricultural non-point source pollution, stormwater volume, quality and temperature are still issues today. The purchase of additional streambank easements is recommended, along with in-stream habitat restoration and temperature monitoring. Rullands Coulee Creek, located within the watershed, is considered an Outstanding Resource Water and is part of the Coon Creek Fishery Area. The stream was part of the early stream restoration efforts conducted in Wisconsin.

*Little La Crosse River Watershed*- Steep hills and narrow valleys limit the tillable acreage of farms in this watershed. Because of the limited land area there is often very little buffer between cultivated fields and the river. Stormwater runoff from fields and barnyards is a significant concern. The DNR has purchased ownership and easements on property adjacent to Farmers Valley Creek and the Little La Crosse River system. Habitat restoration is ongoing on these streams.

*Upper La Crosse River Watershed*- Approximately 57 percent of this watershed is contained within Fort McCoy. The Fishery Staff there have been coordinating with the DNR, NRCS, FWS, and Monroe County staff in a successful effort to improve streams and lakes in and around Fort McCoy. Since 1999, the Coles Valley Creek, located in central Monroe County, has been a target of habitat improvement, and this has led to its reclassification to Class 1 trout water. The WAC Pond dam on Tarr Creek and the Lower Sparta Pond dam on Sparta Creek have already been removed. Fort McCoy has plans underway to remove the Hazel Dell and Alderwood Lake dams on the La Crosse River. Impoundments of trout streams, such as those at Angelo Pond, Perch Lake, and in Fort McCoy are a concern. Agricultural non-point source pollution and stormwater quality and volume are also issues.

**Floodplains**

Although the water table is especially high in some areas and water fluctuation can be problematic, flooding is not considered to be a major issue in Monroe County. Floodplains in the county are found along major waterways, such as the Upper La Crosse River, South Fork Lemonweir River, and Big and Douglas Creeks. There is, however, a clustering of floodplains in the northeast corner of the county in the towns of Byron, Scott, Oakdale, La Grange and Tomah, Village of Wyeville and the City of Tomah.

**Wetlands**

Wetlands are nature's filters and sponges. They temporarily store floodwaters, filter pollutants from surface waters, control erosion and sediment, supply surface water flow, recharge groundwater supplies, and provide habitat for wildlife. The loss of these key areas represents a dramatic change in the environment – one that has repercussions throughout the county and region.

Nationally and statewide wetlands have experienced a decline. Pre-settlement, wetlands totaled about 10 million acres in the State of Wisconsin. Based on an aerial photography from 1979, only about half that exists today (Wisconsin Wetland Inventory).

Monroe County has also experienced a decline in the acreage and quality of wetlands. Flooding of wetlands for cranberry production has resulted in a significant loss of wetlands, particularly in the Beaver Creek Watershed in the northeastern portion of the county. However, there has been increased interest in wetland restoration, mainly due to recreational interests and programs offering restoration opportunities. State and Federal mitigation and cross-compliance rules have also had a positive impact (Monroe County Land and Water Resource Management Plan). The DNR estimated in 1988 that Monroe County has 56,842 acres of wetlands, which equals about 10 percent of the county (WDNR).

**Groundwater**

Groundwater originates from local precipitation that infiltrates through the soil into recharge area of aquifers. Groundwater contamination is a major concern of local residents. Contamination risks from

land use practices are the greatest threat to groundwater resources. The potential sources of contaminants are from old, unregulated landfills; underground storage tanks; on-site waste disposal systems; livestock manure handling and storage; improper usage of fertilizers and pesticides; and septic disposal. All of these sources are presently regulated or are being addressed through ordinances and/or technical assistance service by various county and state agencies. Factors that influence groundwater contamination susceptibility include depth to bedrock, type of bedrock, soil characteristics, depth to water table and characteristics of surficial deposits.

According to the Wisconsin Groundwater Coordinating Council, 75 percent of Wisconsin residents get household water from groundwater (USGS). In Monroe County, about 98 percent of county water use is supplied by groundwater. Of the eight public water systems in Monroe County, six have a wellhead protection plan, including: Cashton, Norwalk, Oakdale, Tomah, Warrens, and Fort McCoy. Of those, four have a wellhead protection ordinance (Norwalk, Oakdale, Tomah, and Warrens).

The WDNR has reported that nitrate-nitrogen is the most widespread groundwater contaminant in the state, and the problem is increasing in extent and severity. From 1990-2006, only 78 percent of the 294 private well samples collected in Monroe County met the health based drinking water limit for nitrate-nitrogen (WDNR Protecting WI Groundwater through Comprehensive Planning). The samples that did not meet the health based drinking water limits are clustered in the central part of the county near Tomah and in the south-central portion of the county.

Most nitrates originate from manure spreading, agricultural fertilizers, and legume cropping systems, although on-site wastewater systems (i.e., septic tanks) can also be a significant source. Some municipalities in Wisconsin have gone so far as to provide incentives to farmers who grow groundwater friendly crops or limit nitrogen applications in target areas. For example, the City of Waupaca identified land containing recharge areas for their wells and offered incentives to farmers who entered into agreements to limit nitrate use on these lands.

Pesticides are another potential source of groundwater contaminants. In 2006, the Wisconsin Department of Trade and Consumer Protection (WDTACP) prohibited the use of atrazine on 102 designated atrazine prohibition areas in Wisconsin. Atrazine is a commonly used herbicide for corn production. There are 9,855 acres of land in prohibition sites in Monroe County, including land in the towns of Tomah, Adrian, and La Grange. The soils in these areas are exceptionally permeable, which allows the atrazine to reach the groundwater.

Source controls are the most effective practice in controlling groundwater contamination. Restricting, regulating, and/or limiting application of certain pesticides, nitrogen, and nutrient loading can have great impacts on protecting groundwater resources.

**Threatened and Endangered Species**

Based on information contained in Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Inventory there are twenty-four aquatic animals, eighteen aquatic plants, seventeen aquatic natural communities, forty terrestrial animals, twenty-one terrestrial plants, and sixteen natural communities in Monroe County that are threatened, endangered, or a species of special concern (see Map 10).

**Parks and Open Space**

Parks and open space are addressed in the Community Facilities Chapter of this plan.

## Metallic/Non-metallic Mineral Resources

Permits are required for all metallic and non-metallic mining sites, in accordance Monroe County Non-Metallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance and Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 135. There are currently forty-

four registered non-metallic mining sites in Monroe County.

## Historic and Cultural Resources

### Historic Architecture and Sites

There are 1,337 historic sites in Monroe County identified by the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory database. Of these sites, 474 are located in the unincorporated areas.

***The Wegner Grotto, located near the Village of Cataract, is a well-loved historic site in Monroe County.***

These sites are representative of the strong agrarian history of Monroe County. The history is reflected in the number of historic homesteads that include examples of the Gabled Ell (164 houses), Queen Anne (164 houses), and Greek Revival (18 houses) architectural styles. There are also thirty-five barns identified in the inventory database. Eleven 1-6 room school houses are also preserved in the county, ten of which are Front Gabled and one is Greek Revival.

Historic places identified by the National Register include:

- Kendall Depot
- Marx, Albert and Theresa House
- Monroe County Courthouse
- Sparta Free Library
- Sparta Masonic Temple
- St. John's Episcopal Church
- Tomah Post Office
- Tomah Public Library
- Walczak-Wontor Quarry Pit Workshop
- Water Street Commercial Historic District
- Williams, William G. and Anne House

Other landmarks of historical significance in Monroe County include Paul and Matilda Wegner Grotto and the Little Red School House. The preservation of these sites is an important way to sustain the heritage and history of the county for future generations.

The Grotto is located near the Village of Cataract, where Paul and Matilda Wegner began building it in 1929. Over the years the Grotto slowly grew. The Wegners covered the Grotto in color and light by decorating the concrete sculpture with a brilliant mosaic of shattered glass and broken crockery. It was the Wegners' fantastic vision and their imaginative use of such unexpected materials that make their Grotto a significant work of art (Monroe County Local History Room and Museum).

The Little Red School House dates back to the nineteenth century. While the schoolhouse was recently moved from its originally site, the one-room school maintains its 19th century charm and depicts what life was like in earlier years.

### Historic Bike Trail

Monroe County is also known for its historic bike trails. The most widely known, and arguably most popular in the country, is the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail. The trail passes through three beautiful stone-arch tunnels. In 1873, the Chicago-North Western Railroad built what is now the Elroy-Sparta Trail as a way to get from St. Paul Minnesota directly to Chicago. In 1965 with the tracks no longer in use, the property was sold to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (then known as the Wisconsin Conservation Department), creating the nation's first rails to trails conversion. The

tunnels along the bike trail were hand dug by workers and completed in 1873. Tunnels one and two are ¼ of a mile long and tunnel three is ¾ of a mile long.

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Insert Map 10 – Natural Heritage Inventory

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## Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
## 20-Year Vision

In 2030, Monroe County continues to be characterized by its agricultural and natural resources. Good farmland throughout the county is protected from development and remains in active agriculture. Small and mid-sized family farms continue to prosper and adjust to changing conditions and challenges. These family farms help to support a diverse array of local agriculture-related businesses, such as feed and tractor supply companies. Larger farms are also an important part of the agricultural economy in the county. Livestock siting regulations are in place to limit the impact of these operations on the environment and neighbors. Cranberry bogs help to further diversify agriculture and promote agricultural-related tourism. Working forests provide beautiful scenery and support local saw mills and other forest product businesses.

Farmers and forest owners are active participants in land and water conservation, and they play an important role in protecting and improving these resources. Water quality is excellent throughout the county. Native trout populations in the county's numerous cold-water streams are thriving. Trout streams and rivers run clean and clear, and the stream banks along these bodies of water are stable and provide habitat for a variety of native plants and animals. Groundwater resources are protected from contamination and provide high-quality drinking water for all residents.

The stone-arch tunnels along the Elroy-Sparta bike trail draw tourists to the community, and remind visitors and residents of the county's transportation history. Historic barns, homes, schools houses, and churches help to connect the community to its agrarian culture and roots.

**The following goals, objectives, and policies are intended to provide a comprehensive approach for achieving this vision. The order in which these goals, objectives, and policies are listed does not necessarily denote their priority.**

### Goals

*Goals are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the county should approach issues identified in the comprehensive plan.*

***G5.1*** Protect good-quality farmland for agricultural production.

***G5.2*** Encourage a diverse range of farm operations, including small-, mid-, and large-size farms.

***G5.3*** Reduce the impact of large livestock farms on neighboring homes and the environment.

***G5.4*** Reduce potential conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors.

***G5.5*** Maintain contiguous tracts of actively managed forest land.

***G5.6*** Improve water quality in streams, rivers, and lakes.

***G5.7*** Reduce streambank erosion and improve habitat along streams.

***G5.8*** Protect groundwater from contamination.

***G5.9*** Preserve historic buildings throughout county.

## Objectives

*Objectives suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.*

***O5.1*** Work with interested farmers to pursue long-term protection of good farmland.

***O5.2*** Limit new residential development in areas with good farmland and working forests.

***O5.3*** Increase opportunities for residents to buy products from local farms.

***O5.4*** Promote understanding and acceptance of the potential noise and smells associated with agricultural practices.

***O5.5*** Reduce agricultural runoff and pollutants found in this runoff.

***O5.6*** Promote the establishment of native vegetated buffers along streams, lakes, and wetlands throughout the county.

## Policies

*Policies provide the definite course of action or direction decided upon by the county to be employed to attain the goals. They provide ongoing guidance for elected and appointed community leaders, staff and administrators as they make decisions about development, programs, and investments in the county.*

***P5.1*** Work with interested farmers to pursue state funding for Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) to permanently protect high-quality farmland.

***P5.2*** Locate residential zoning districts away from good farmland and large tracts of working forests.

***P5.3*** Limit development in agricultural and forestry areas, while still allowing some land divisions.

***P5.4*** Work with towns to establish exclusive agricultural districts and/or Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs) so that farmers can take advantage of tax incentives offered through the Wisconsin State Working Lands Initiative.

***P5.5*** Regulate potential environmental impacts of new large livestock operation through the establishment of livestock siting standards (ATCP 51).

***P5.6*** Educate nonfarm residents about farming practices, including potentially working with realtors to distribute information brochures about living in an agricultural area.

***P5.7*** Encourage the establishment of a winter farmers market in the county, and work with local municipalities to identify and/or create permanent space for such a market.

***P5.8*** Work with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and the Department of Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) to continue to address agricultural runoff and streambank erosion issues.

***P5.9*** Update the county Farmland Preservation Plan

***P5.10*** Encourage private property owners to restore or maintain a natural buffer area along streams, rivers, and lakes, including potentially implementing a program that provides technical and financial assistance and tax incentives (see Appendix H for description of Burnett County program).

***P5.11*** Prohibit new residential development within 50 feet of wetlands and prohibit new commercial/manufacturing development within 100 feet of wetlands.

# Economic Development

***State Comprehensive Planning Requirements for this Chapter***

*A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to promote the stabilization, retention or expansion, of the economic base and quality employment opportunities in the local governmental unit, including an analysis of the labor force and economic base of the local governmental unit. The element shall assess categories or particular types of new businesses and industries that are desired by the local governmental unit. The element shall assess the local governmental unit's strengths and weaknesses with respect to attracting and retaining businesses and industries, and shall designate an adequate number of sites for such businesses and industries. The element shall also evaluate and promote the use of environmentally contaminated sites for commercial or industrial uses. The element shall also identify county, regional and state economic development programs that apply to the local governmental unit.*

## Overview

Monroe County is located in the western Wisconsin, adjacent to La Crosse, Jackson, Juneau, and Vernon counties. The area of the state offers a serene landscape and coveted rural qualities while maintaining a close proximity to larger, denser areas. There is a wide range of recreational activities in the area, a result of the diverse natural resources in the county. As with many communities in the area, Monroe County has a deeply rooted rural way of life and culture. While the rural roots of the community is reflected in the local economy, agricultural has drastically declined in the area in recent years. As agriculture has declined, a new interest in arts, entertainment, and recreation has emerged.

Manufacturing continues to be an important part of the economy, and thrives in large part on the presence of Interstate 90 and 94. The county is also home to the largest military base in Wisconsin, Fort McCoy, which plays a vital and pivotal role in shaping the economy and population.

Job growth was identified as a priority issue during the planning process. Local officials and several of the focus groups discussed the need for living wage jobs, a county-level economic development planner position, and adequate land for new business growth.

## Employment

### Labor Force

While the population in Monroe County is expected to steadily increase over the next twenty years, the actual available labor force is only expected to increase by about 2,400 people, from an estimated 24,305 in 2010 to 26,705 in 2030 (Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Monroe County Workforce Profile 2008). This reflects that a large number of baby-boomers are expected to retire over the next twenty years. Most of the growth in the labor force is projected to occur over the next ten years, with only a nominal increase in the labor force between 2020 and 2030.

***Historically, Monroe County jobs were rooted in farming, however recently jobs have transitioned more to manufacturing and tourism.***

**Figure 6.1 Industry Changes: 1990-2007**

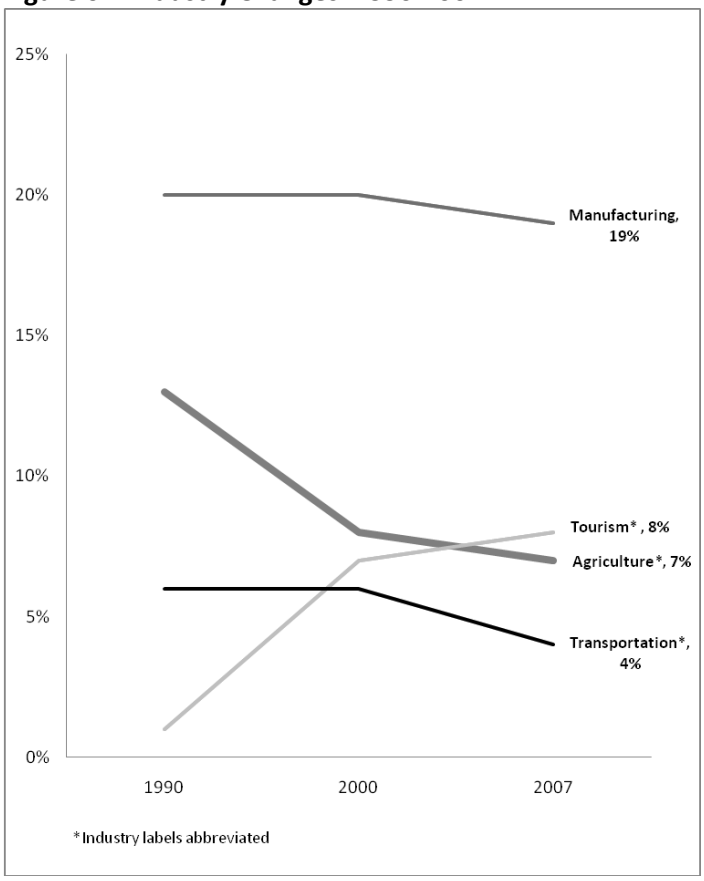



**Table 6.1 Industry Changes: 1990-2007**

| Industry | Monroe County 1990 | 2000 | 2007 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ag, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining | 2,128 | 1,532 | 1,450 |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services | 124 | 1,462 | 1,612 |
| Manufacturing | 3,311 | 3,994 | 4,165 |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities | 990 | 1,105 | 926 |

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape, Census 2000 Summary File 3 and 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*

**Job Types**

Monroe County is largely a manufacturing-based community. Monroe County's location and the Highways 90 and 94 make it very attractive to industries such as trucking and warehousing. Trade, transportation, and utilities makes up 24 percent of all employment in the county (WI DWD, Bureau of Workforce Training, Quarterly Census Employment and Wages, June 2008). Accordingly, this has also resulted in a large manufacturing presence in the area, comprising around 20 percent of all the employment.

Employment and economic activity associated with manufacturing and transportation have remained relatively stable over the years. There is some concern, however, over the potential economic instability associated with such a large concentration of the local economy in only two economic sectors. In general, the more diverse the economy, the better able it is to weather changes in any one sector.

The biggest change in the local economy has been a significant decrease in the percentage of workers employed in agriculture and forestry. Only about 8 percent of the workforce is currently employed in these areas, which is slightly less than half of what it was in 1990 (see Table 6.1). Despite this decline, agriculture and forestry will likely remain an important part of the economy in Monroe County.

Since 1990, the county has seen a large increase in portion of workers employed in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector. The diverse geography, rural qualities, and small-town feel of communities have made Monroe County a popular travel destination for people from surrounding regions. Many visitors come to take advantage of the unique qualities the county has to offer such as bike trails and cranberry bogs. The increase in employment in the arts and recreation industry reflects the importance of natural resources and scenic views on the local economy. Preserving the county's natural and historical qualities will help tourism and recreation prosper, and it will protect the quality of life residents want.

**Unemployment Rates**

In 2000, the unemployment rate was 3.7 percent, while the State of Wisconsin was 3.4 percent (Wisconsin Office of Economic Advisors). In 2002, however, the state's unemployment rate surpassed the county's (5.3 percent as compared 4.9 percent respectively), and since then Monroe County's unemployment rate has

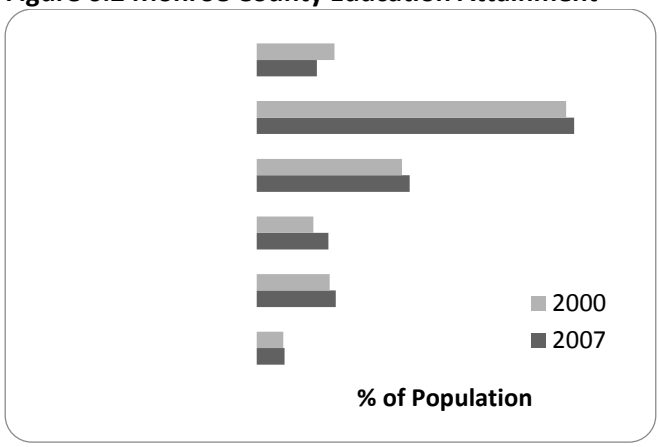
remained below the states. The unemployment rate in 2008 for the county was 4.5 percent, as compared to 4.7 percent for the state.

**Education and Income Levels**

The percentage of people over twenty-five in Monroe County who have not earned a high school diploma decreased from 19 percent in 2000 to 14 percent in 2007. However, the portion of residents in the county with a Bachelor's or Graduate degree remains much lower than in the state as a whole (11 percent for the county compared to 17 percent at the state level). Some of this may be attributed to Amish populations in the county that typically do not attend college-level education programs.

Since 2000, Monroe County has experienced an increase of about 18 percent in median income, which is possibly a reflection of the increase in education attainment levels. In 2007, however, the US Census Bureau estimated the median income in Monroe County to be $43,845, which is still lower than the state's median income of $50,309.

**Figure 6.2 Monroe County Education Attainment**



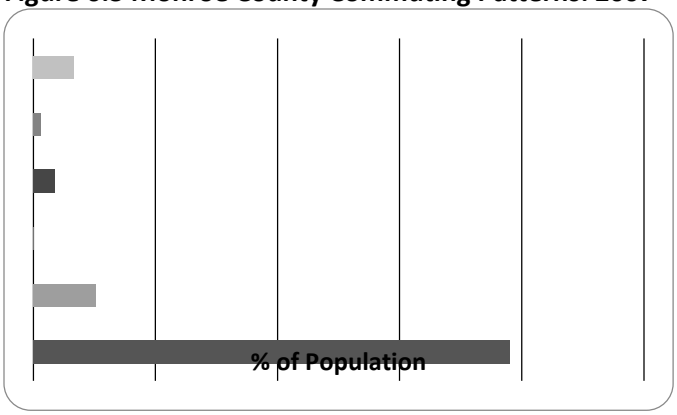

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Summary File 3, 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*

Source: *2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*

**The Commute to Work**

Most Monroe County residents travel to work by car. In 2007, 78 percent of workers drove to work alone and 10 percent carpooled. Less than 1 percent used public transportation to get to their work location, while nearly 4 percent walked. This has changed only slightly from 2000 when 76 percent drove alone, 12 percent carpooled, and 4 percent walked. The time commute time to work has remained the same at nineteen minutes.

**Figure 6.3 Monroe County Commuting Patterns: 2007**




In 2000, approximately 81 percent of residents (16,059 people) worked with in the county. A report from the US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis estimated that in 2001 more money was flowing into the county than out of the county based on commuting patterns. However, this trend has since reversed and, in 2006, it was estimated that more money is flowing out of the county than is flowing into the county. Most residents travelling outside the county to work are going to La Crosse, while those coming into the county are arriving from La Crosse, Juneau, and Jackson Counties.

## Businesses and Employers in Monroe County

The most prominent business type in Monroe County is retail, with 162 establishments comprising 17 percent of total establishments in the area in 2007 (US Census). Overall, Monroe County has a wide variety of businesses. Prominent public and private-sector employers in Monroe County are shown in Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2. Prominent Employers in Monroe County**

| Establishment | Service or Product | Number of Employees (March 2007) |
|---|---|---|
| Wal-Mart | General warehousing & storage | 1,000+ |
| Fort McCoy | National security | 4,000+ |
| Department of Veterans Affairs | Psychiatric & substance abuse hospitals | 500-999 |
| Toro Manufacturing | Turf maintenance equipment manufacturing | 500-999 |
| Northern Engraving Corp | Motor vehicle metal stamping | 500-999 |
| Tomah Area School District | Elementary & secondary schools | 500-999 |
| Cardinal Glass Industries Inc | Glass product mfg. made of purchased glass | 500-999 |
| Sparta Area School District | Elementary & secondary schools | 250-499 |
| Monroe County | Executive & legislative offices, combined | 250-499 |
| V T Griffin Services | Facilities support services | 250-499 |

*Source: WI DWD, Bureau of Workforce Training, QCEW, OEA special request, April 2008*

As the county's largest employer, Fort McCoy military base has a significant effect on the local economy. The military base influences the community by bringing a variety of age groups of people to the area, contributing large amounts of money to the local economy, and employing a large number of local residents. Fort McCoy is a stable and significant resource to the county. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce development estimates that in the 2007 fiscal year the total economic impact of Fort McCoy was a little less than one billion dollars. Contributions to the community include payments to local governments for land permit agreements, school-district impact aid, solider spending in the area, and local and regional spending for supplies, utilities, repairs and maintenance.

Fort McCoy also creates opportunities for other businesses. The tenth largest employer in the county (Vt Griffin Services), for example, provides defense logistics, communications and support services that directly cater to Fort McCoy.

## Home Based Businesses

The percent of people who worked from home stayed roughly the same between 2000 and 2007, with approximately 7 percent of people working from home (2005-2007 American Communities Survey). This is, however, almost twice the rate of home-based employment found elsewhere in Wisconsin or at the national level (4 percent).

Home-based businesses can play an important role in rural economies, providing opportunities for people to earn income without a long commute or simply a way to supplement income earned from another job. In Monroe County, tourism- and farm-based enterprises are widespread. Bed and breakfasts, in particular, are thriving as a result of tourism.

## Strengths and Weaknesses

Economic development is closely tied to a number of other issues addressed in this comprehensive plan, including transportation, natural and agricultural resources, utilities and community facilities, and land use. A brief summary of associated strengths and weaknesses that relate to economic development are discussed below. These strengths and weaknesses are also discussed in greater detail in the corresponding chapters of this plan.

The greatest strengths of the county are its unique qualities such as landscape, diverse outdoor activities, and historic-rural feel that draw tourists, as well as the interstate system that provides for easy access for tourists, residents, and businesses alike.

Monroe County is adjacent to the County of La Crosse. This is both a strength and a weakness for Monroe County. La Crosse offers a nearby pool of visitors to come to Monroe County and take part in the local festivals and recreational opportunities. However, studies show that many residents from Monroe County are commuting out of the county to work. This detracts

from the local economy and stunts healthy economic growth.

As with many areas, Monroe County faces the dilemma of an aging population and the effects it will have on the local economy. While the shift to an older population is milder in Monroe County than it is in neighboring counties, notably Vernon and Juneau (WI DWD), it is likely to affect the types of commodities purchased and services needed. This shift may also influence employment opportunities for younger residents.

Regional strengths and opportunities also influence Monroe County's economy and potential for future growth. The Mississippi River Region Plan Commission (MRRPC) 2007-2012 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy concludes that "lower income levels, lower rates of population growth, an aging population and low workforce growth rate negatively impact the Mississippi River Region's economy. This situation is not caused by lack of jobs or unemployment but by lower numbers of higher paying jobs that reduce our ability to retain and attract a younger and higher educated workforce." Other potential weaknesses and threats identified by the MRRPC include:

- **Weather and climate.**
- **Topography and associated transportation challenges.**
- **Loss of manufacturing jobs**. Between 2000 and 2007, the Monroe County lost 171 manufacturing jobs (2000 US Census, 2005-2007 American Community Survey).
- **Lower post-secondary education attainment**, as compared to the state and nation. Monroe County ranks low in the percentage of residents with an Associates Degree or higher – only 24 percent compared to 34 percent for the state and nation (2005-2007 American Communities Survey). The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development employment estimates indicate that roughly one-third (5,000) of all new jobs created in the region over the next decade will require at least an Associates Degree (WDA Western Occupation Projections 2006-2016).
- **Lower income levels** in the region than in the state or nation, as discussed above.
- **Declining dairy farming and wood products.** The Mississippi River Region and Monroe County have experienced a steady decline in dairy farming over the past two decades. A number of sawmills have also closed as a result of international competition and decreased demand for domestic paper products. This combined with changes in forest type and forest management practices have reduced the productivity of forests in the region. Forestry and farming are discussed in more detail in the Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Chapter.
- **A need for larger industrial sites (20 to 100 acres) and sites with good communication infrastructure** (e.g., broadband). Wireless service off of broadcast antennas is one potential solution for improving communication infrastructure in more rural areas.
- **The region's dependence on coal for electricity** and a handful of railroad companies for delivering coal makes the area susceptible to electricity rate hikes.

Specific regional economic strengths and growth opportunities identified by the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission that relate to Monroe County include:

- **Organic Farming and Value Added Food Processing.** The MRRPC Region has a growing and nationally known organic foods industry. The Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool (CROPP), an organic cooperative based in Vernon County, recently built a 110,000 square food distribution facility in Cashton, Monroe County. CROPP produces dairy products and markets its products under the Organic Valley label. According to the company, CROPP Co-op experienced faster growth

than the organic industry in 2006, with a 38 percent increase in sales and continued strong in 2007 for another 21 percent growth rate. Total co-op sales reached $242 million in 2005, over $334 million in 2006, $430 million in 2007, and $505 million for 2008 (projected). They are looking for additional organic farmers to join the cooperative in the Monroe County region. In addition to organic products, there is good potential for direct to consumer and consumer supported agriculture in the region.

- **Equipment, Machinery, and Metal Products.** Equipment, machinery and metal products make up the most prominent industry cluster in the region and employ over 10,000 people. Monroe County, with 96 businesses in 2007, is second only to La Crosse County as having the largest concentration of these industries (US Census 2007 County Business Patterns). Although this sector, and manufacturing as a whole, has declined in recent years, it still remains an important part of the economy for Monroe County and the Mississippi River Region.

- **Wood and Forest Products.** The wood and forest product industry is a large regional industry cluster, with a significant grouping of businesses located in western Monroe County. According to the county Business Patterns, there were thirty-four wood and forest product business located in Monroe County in 2007. The industry was stable between 1998 and 2001, with thirty-nine wood and forest businesses in the county. Between 2001 and 2003, the industry peaked at forty-seven businesses. However, since 2003, the industry has slowly declined.

- **Health Care Institutions.** The MRRPC region has a strong and growing health care industry cluster. In 2007, this cluster employed about 18,000 people and supplied more than 15 percent of the region's jobs.

- **Mississippi River Region Tourism.** With its amazing scenery and outdoor recreation amenities, Monroe County and the Mississippi River Region as a whole draw tourists from throughout the country. Tourists are drawn to this area, but relatively little has been done to actively promote the area as a tourist destination. MRRPC recommends a more proactive approach to tourist development and promotion: "Tourism is an expanding industry and is the U.S.A.'s second largest employer with five million jobs and growing. It is in the best interest of the region to move from a passive tourism approach to a more vibrant and active approach so it can prosper from this growing industry." Specific MRRPC tourism promotion strategies relevant to Monroe County include: 1) Market travel in the area as a "uniquely quintessential American experience"; 2) Designate and promote popular canoe trails and other boating excursions along the Mississippi River and its tributaries; 3) Designate and promote popular scenic automobile, motorcycle, cross country ski, bike trails, and snowmobile routes; 4) Develop county tourism maps highlighting local businesses, recreational opportunities, and historical attractions; and 5) Develop and market an ethnic/recreational "trip ticket" to draw attention to community festivals, shops, historic sites, restaurants, and bed & breakfast inns.

## Employment Projections

The western region of Wisconsin is composed of eight counties: Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon. According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (WI DWD), La Crosse and Monroe counties together account for 53 percent of the region's population, 54 percent of the region's labor force, and 63 percent of the nonfarm jobs. Jobs in all non-farm industries are expected to increase 8 percent (11,230 jobs) from 2006-2016 (WI OEA). Since Monroe County comprises a large majority of all non-farm jobs,

a significant portion of this job growth is likely to occur inside the county. Table 6.3 shows projected employment growth for the region for 2006 to 2016. Industry sectors with the greatest projected employment growth are the following:

- Transportation and Utilities
- Education and Health Services (particularly hospitals)
- Leisure and hospitality
- Information/Professional Services/ Other Services

## Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin DNR's Environmental Remediation and Redevelopment Program maintains a list of contaminated sites, or "brownfields," in the state. The WDNR defines brownfields as "abandoned or underutilized commercial or industrial properties where expansion or redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived contamination." Properties listed in the WDNR database are self-reported and do not necessarily represent a comprehensive listing of possible locations in a community.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has currently identified sixty-two open remediation activity sites in Monroe County. An open status constitutes spills, leaking underground storage tanks, environmental repair sites, voluntary party liability exemption, and abandoned container activities in need of clean up or where cleanup is still underway. The majority of the open remediation sites are located in the cities of Sparta and Tomah, and on Fort McCoy Military Base (see Map 11). The remaining sites are located in the villages of Cashton, Norwalk, Oakdale, Wilton, and Wyeville. There are three sites located within the unincorporated areas in the county. These sites include Grace's Store, located in the Town of

**Table 6.3 Western WI Workforce Development Area Industry Employment Projections: 2006-2016**

(Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties)

| Industry Title | Estimated Employment(1) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2006 | 2016 | Change | Percent Change |
| **Total, All Nonfarm Industries** | **137,380** | **148,610** | **11,230** | **8.2** |
| Construction/Mining/Natural Resources | 5,580 | 6,110 | 530 | 9.5 |
| Manufacturing | 24,630 | 24,840 | 210 | 0.9 |
| Food Manufacturing | 3,110 | 3,010 | -100 | -3.2 |
| Machinery Manufacturing | 4,610 | 4,480 | -130 | -2.8 |
| Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing | 3,910 | 4,200 | 290 | 7.4 |
| Trade | 21,630 | 21,970 | 340 | 1.6 |
| General Merchandise Stores | 3,830 | 3,970 | 140 | 3.7 |
| Transportation and Utilities (Including US Postal) | 9,570 | 10,640 | 1,070 | 11.2 |
| Financial Activities | 4,840 | 5,360 | 520 | 10.7 |
| Education and Health Services (Including State and Local Government) | 30,970 | 35,920 | 4,950 | 16.0 |
| Educational Services (Including State and Local Government) | 10,230 | 10,670 | 440 | 4.3 |
| Hospitals (Including State and Local Government) | 8,180 | 9,700 | 1,520 | 18.6 |
| Leisure and Hospitality | 13,250 | 14,760 | 1,510 | 11.4 |
| Information/Prof. Services/Other Services | 14,420 | 16,260 | 1,840 | 12.8 |
| Government (Excluding US Postal, State and Local Education and Hospitals) | 12,500 | 12,760 | 260 | 2.1 |

*Source: Office of Economic Advisors, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, November 2008*

Notes: (1) Employment is a count of jobs rather than people. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Byron; Bacon Village Mart in the Town of Little Falls; and the Clifton Service Center in the Town of Clifton. All three sites are contaminated due to petroleum (i.e., gasoline) that has leaked into the ground contaminating soil, wells, and groundwater. These sites would be most suitable for a gas station, with little other redevelopment options.

## Economic Development Programs

### Statewide Programs

At the state-level there is a wide range of programs to assist business retention, expansion, and relocation. The Department of Commerce (DOC) is the lead economic development agency in the state and administers a number of programs. The Department of Transportation (WisDOT) plays a much smaller, but important, role as well. State and federal economic development programs are outlined in the box at the end of this chapter.

*Forward Wisconsin* is a nonprofit organization created as a public-private partnership to attract new businesses and jobs, and increase economic activity in the state. The group focuses on six target industries (computer and data processing services; plastics; business services; forest products; biotechnology; and production machinery and equipment) and one secondary target industry (customer service centers).

### Regional Programs

Monroe County is a part of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, whose goal is to provide planning and economic development services to improve the region's environment, economy, and quality of life. The nine counties in the region have been designated as an Economic Development District, which makes all local governments, institutions, and businesses in the region eligible for public works grants, business loans, and research and development grants. An initiative currently underway is an Industry Cluster and Regional Trade Report that will provide information on the region's three key industry cluster strengths: machinery, equipment and metal products; food processing; and wood processing.

The Commission also updates its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Report each year. This is available on the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission website. The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission is proposing a regional economic development focused around the following:

- Developing cluster initiatives around the regional industry strengths
- Increasing efficiency and productivity through infrastructure improvements
- Encouraging entrepreneurism and business innovation
- Encouraging renewable energy development and energy conservation
- Improving on the region's level of acceptance of people from different races, cultures, and backgrounds
- Encouraging activities that will protect the natural resources and improve recreational opportunities
- Further developing the capacity of the MRRPC to meet the planning and economic development needs of the region

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Insert Map 11 – Contaminated Sites

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**County Programs**

The Monroe County Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program is designed to promote local economic development by providing a source of long term, fixed rate, low interest financing for new and existing business projects that are located in Monroe County. The Monroe County RLF was capitalized in 1998 by a $450,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) the county received from the State of Wisconsin's Department of Commerce. These funds are used to provide grants to local governments that use the funds to loan to a business for an expansion project, retention of an existing business, or a new business start-up located in Monroe County.

Buy MoCo is a countywide campaign supported by the Monroe County Tourism & Economic Development Committee as well as the both the Sparta and Tomah Area Chambers of Commerce. The goal of the campaign is to increase in-county retail sales by 10 percent as a result of citizens shifting their current out-of-county retail spending into the county.

There are several development organizations located in the county that serve specific areas, including

- Cashton Area Development Corporation
- City of Sparta Economic Development and Tourism Department
- Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce
- City of Tomah Community Development
- Forward Tomah Development Corporation
- Greater Tomah Area Chamber of Commerce
- Kickapoo Valley Association, Inc.

Establishing a county-level economic development planner position could help the county to attract businesses and expand employment opportunities.

**State and Federal Economic Development Programs**

- **The Community Development Block Grant-Public Facilities for Economic Development (CDBG-PFED) Program** is a federally funded program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. A CDBG-PFED grant is designed to assist communities that want to expand or upgrade their infrastructure to accommodate businesses that will create new jobs. A local unit of government is limited to $1,000,000 per calendar year and no more than $750,000 can be used to benefit a single business or a group of related businesses.
- **The Community Development Block Grant-Economic Development (CDBG-ED) Program** is a federally funded program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. It is designed to assist businesses that will invest private funds and create jobs as they expand or relocate to Wisconsin. The Department of Commerce awards funds to a local unit of government as a grant, which then loans the funds to a business that commits to create jobs for low and moderate-income residents. When the business repays the loan, the community retains the funds to start a local revolving loan fund. This fund can then be used to finance additional economic development projects within the community.
- **Community Development Zones** are specially designated areas in the state. Once created they exist for twenty years with a potential for extending the zone for another five years. The zones range from small rural areas to large metropolitan areas. A certified employer in a zone can earn a tax credit against a Wisconsin income tax liability for job creation and for environmental remediation.
- **Rural Economic Development (RED) Early Planning Grant Program** is designed to assist rural business with twenty-five employees or less. Grants may only be used for professional services such as preparation of a feasibility study, market study, or business plan.
- **Wisconsin Development Fund – Technology Development Fund (WDF)** helps finance product research and development and commercialization.
- **Wisconsin Development Fund-Major Economic Development Program (MED)** provides financial assistance for business startups or expansions that can create or retain a significant number of jobs and to leverage private capital investment.
- **Transportation Facilities Economic Assistance and Development Program** funds transportation facilities improvements (e.g., road, rail, harbor, and airport) that are part of an economic development project.
- **Wisconsin Rural Partners** is a non-profit organization chartered to pursue an educational mission dedicated to building collaborative partnerships across the public and private sectors for the benefit of rural Wisconsin. Since December 1992, the organization has served as Wisconsin's state rural development council (SRDC) through a cooperative agreement with the US Department of Agriculture.

**The following goals, objectives, and policies are intended to provide a comprehensive approach for achieving this vision. The order in which these goals, objectives, and policies are listed does not necessarily denote their priority.**

## Goals

*Goals provide concise statements of what the county aims to accomplish over the life of the plan—for the next ten to twenty years. The goals provide the basic organization and direction for the plan's policies and actions.*

***G6.1*** Support economic development that provides quality employment opportunities to local residents, good wages and benefits, and affordable goods and services.

***G6.2*** Support and enhance opportunities for home-based businesses.

***G6.3*** Increase the demand for local goods and services, and decrease the amount of consumer spending leaving the county.

***G6.4*** Increase the rate of post-secondary education attainment for county residents.

***G6.5*** Enhance the viability of existing farming- and forestry-related businesses, and encourage new ones to be formed.

***G6.6*** Attract tourists to Monroe County, and provide goods and services that encourage them to stay and spend their money.

***G6.7*** Protect and enhance the county's scenic, environmental, and recreation features as economic assets to the county and region.

***G6.8*** Encourage economic development and job creation in the cities and villages.

***G6.9*** Improve coordination and cooperation between communities in the county, and encourage collaborative efforts to attract new business to the county.

## Objectives

*Objectives suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.*

***O6.1*** Encourage local residents and visitors to buy from local farms, businesses, and service providers.

***O6.2*** Assist in the promotion and attraction of agriculture- and forestry- related services and industries.

***O6.3*** Improve the tourism image and "name recognition" of Monroe County, and increase tourist access to goods, services, and recreational amenities in the county.

***O6.4*** Capitalize on the county's recreational resources to encourage appropriate retail and service businesses, such as bed and breakfasts, outfitters, cross country ski resorts, cafes, restaurants, artist studios/shops, and antique shops.

## Policies

*Policies provide the definite course of action or direction decided upon by the county to be employed to attain the goals. They provide ongoing guidance for elected and appointed community leaders, staff and administrators as they make decisions about development, programs, and investments in the county.*

***P6.1*** Establish a county-level economic development planner position.

***P6.2*** Identify and promote large sites (20 to 100 acres) for industrial uses near existing industry clusters.

***P6.3*** Continue to support and promote the current "Buy MoCO" buy local campaign and similar buy local campaigns in the future.

***P6.4*** Establish a county government "buy local" policy to give preference to local businesses for county government contracts/purchases.

***P6.5*** Allow home-based businesses where there will be no significant impact on surrounding properties.

***P6.6*** Work with the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission to pursue regional economic development strategies.

***P6.7*** Support opportunities for people with disabilities to work in the community.

***P6.8*** Promote local businesses that serve Fort McCoy.

# Land Use

***State Comprehensive Planning Requirements for this Chapter***

*A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property. The element shall contain a listing of the amount, type, intensity and net density of existing uses of land in the local governmental unit, such as agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial and other public and private uses. The element shall analyze trends in the supply, demand and price of land, opportunities for redevelopment and existing and potential land–use conflicts. The element shall contain projections, based on the background information specified in par. (a), for 20 years, in 5–year increments, of future residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial land uses including the assumptions of net densities or other spatial assumptions upon which the projections are based. The element shall also include a series of maps that shows current land uses and future land uses that indicate productive agricultural soils, natural limitations for building site development, floodplains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands, the boundaries of areas to which services of public utilities and community facilities, as those terms are used in par. (d), will be provided in the future, consistent with the timetable described in par. (d), and the general location of future land uses by net density or other classifications.*

## Overview

Land use is one of the most important factors in determining the character and livability of a community. Outside the cities and villages, Monroe County is defined by its rural landscape of farms and forests. Maintaining the rural quality of life that residents value requires limiting suburban sprawling patterns of development and supporting the working rural landscape. Fragmentation of forests and farmland, haphazard development, and incompatible mixes of land use can undermine the viability of farms and working forests and may lead to a general decline in quality of rural life.

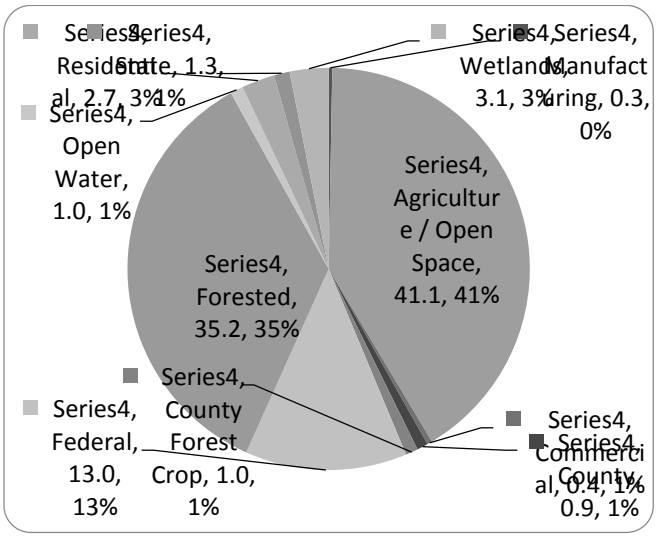
It is the goal of the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan* to maintain the rural character of the county through smart growth management. Specifically, determining the type, location, quality, and character of new development will help ensure that (1) land uses are compatible; (2) the county's scenic character is maintained; (3) there is adequate land for homes and businesses; and (4) working farms and forests continue to be a central characteristic of the county

This chapter discusses patterns of land use, land supply and demand, land use conflict, and future goals, objectives, and policies for future land use.

## Land Trends

For the purposes of this plan, existing land uses were grouped into general categories for review and analysis. Individual properties were placed into one or more categories based on information obtained from local municipal comprehensive plans, county tax parcel data, and state land cover data. Map 12 shows the existing land uses in the county and Figure 7.1 shows the percent of land cover by land use category (see Appendix E for a detailed breakdown of land use type by municipality).

**Figure 7.1. Existing Land Use Inventory (percent)**



### Categories of Existing Land Use

**Residential.** Residential properties including single family homes, duplexes, multi-family, and mobile homes.

**Commercial.** Stores, restaurants, service stations, offices, and repair shops.

**Manufacturing.** Manufacturing / processing plants of all types, quarries and gravel/sand pits

**Agricultural/Open Space.** Not developed and/or used for agricultural purposes.

**Wetlands.** Terrestrial ecosystems and aquatic systems.

**Institutional.** Municipal buildings, fire stations, community centers, libraries, and post offices. Schools both public and private. Hospitals, medical clinics, nursing homes, churches, auditoriums, and sports assembly halls.

**Open Water.** Lakes, ponds, reservoirs, flowages, and flooded bogs.

**Forested.** Forest covered land without buildings.

**County Forest Crop.** County-owned forest land.

**County.** County-owned land (excluding county forests).

**State.** State-owned land.

**Federal.** Federal land, including Fort McCoy.

Agriculture and forestry are the dominant land uses in Monroe County (42 and 35 percent respectively). A significant portion of the county (10 percent) is also occupied by Fort McCoy, a military installation. Other land uses in the county include manufacturing, commercial, open water, institutional, county, county forest crop, state, federal, residential and wetlands.

The county's geography plays a significant role in determining land use. The county is comprised of non-glaciated land in the west and south and glacial Lake Wisconsin in the northeast. Non-glaciated lands are primarily characterized by forested hillsides and agricultural valleys, while former glacial Lake Wisconsin is characterized by marshes, cranberry bogs, and reservoirs.

Historically, commercial and residential development has occurred primarily in the cities and villages, with scattered farmsteads and home sites throughout the rest of the county. However, there is evidence that land use and development patterns are gradually beginning to change. The number of rural, non-farm residences has greatly increased. In recent years (2000 – 2008) there has been an average of 171 new housing units per year in the unincorporated areas of the county (2000 Census, 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates). This has had a noticeable impact on the rural landscapes and land uses in the county.

According to the Wisconsin Agriculture Statistics Service, 392 acres of agricultural land in Monroe County was sold and diverted to non-agricultural land use in 2008. This is 17 percent of agricultural land sales that took place that year. From 1999 to 2008, 6,835 acres or 20 percent of the agricultural land sold was diverted to uses other than agriculture (see Table 7.1). This trend indicates that many farmers who stop farming or retire, sell their land to recreational or commercial buyers.

**Table 7.1. Monroe County Total Agricultural Land Sales**

| | Agricultural land Continuing in Agricultural Use | Agricultural Land Diverted to Other Uses | Percent Agricultural Land Diverted to Other Uses |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Acres Sold | Acres Sold | |
| 2008 | 1,896 | 392 | 0.17 |
| 2007 | 1,456 | 676 | 0.32 |
| 2006 | 2,215 | 230 | 0.09 |
| 2005 | 2,874 | 405 | 0.12 |
| 2004 | 1,988 | 616 | 0.24 |
| 2003 | 2,283 | 857 | 0.27 |
| 2002 | 3,331 | 1,015 | 0.23 |
| 2001 | 3,203 | 1,294 | 0.29 |
| 2000 | 3,395 | 1,041 | 0.23 |
| 1999 | 4,587 | 309 | 0.06 |
| *Total* | 27,228 | 6,835 | 0.20 |

*Source: USDA NASS 199-2008*

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Forest land sales in Monroe County have followed a similar pattern. Between 2005 and 2008, 1,182 acres (20 percent) of forest land sold was diverted to uses other than continuing in forest land. The fractioning of woodland was listed as a major threat to the county during the first governmental workshop and throughout the planning process.

**Land Supply and Demands**

Land supply is not a major issue in Monroe County. There is currently adequate supply of land and ample opportunity for development throughout the county. However, while there are many opportunities for new development, local residents stressed the importance of guiding new development to appropriate places. In addition to potentially taking working lands out of farming and forestry, haphazard development can increase costs for provided public services, such as snow plowing, road maintenance, emergency response, and school busing.

Land is relatively affordable in the county. In many ways, this is a strength. Affordable land is important for farming and forestry, and can attract new home buyers and business to the area. However, low land prices can also cause less desirable development patterns by encouraging people to buy large lots for rural residential development.

The presence of Fort McCoy is also a major factor in determining land uses in the county, particularly for land adjacent to its borders. The large numbers of military personnel and their families relocating to the county to work at Fort McCoy place extra demand on housing in the area. When military housing is in short supply, increased demand is placed on the local housing market.

Over the years the cost of land has increased in Monroe County. According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) annual report on agricultural land sales, in 2008 agricultural land that was sold and continuing on in agricultural use averaged $3,346 per acre, whereas agricultural land sold and converted to another use other than agriculture sold for $4,579 per acre. In 1999, agricultural land that was sold and continuing in agricultural use averaged $1,833 per acre and agricultural land sold and converted to another use other than agriculture sold for $1,974 per acre. This is an 83 percent and a 132 percent increase respectively over the past decade. It should also be noted that the difference between the two values (land sold for agriculture versus land sold for another use) has also increased by $1,092 per acre.

**Land Use Conflicts**

Land use conflicts can arise when different types of land uses are located, or potentially located, in close proximity to one another. The nature of a conflict depends on localized circumstances and the personal opinion of affected individuals. As a result, conflicts can develop or subside as demographic characteristics of an area or community change over time. This can be particularly true in rural farming communities that see an increase in new non-farming residents.

As development pressures increase throughout the county, there will likely be conflicts between agricultural use and residential development. These conflicts can be most significant with large-scale livestock operation. Non-metallic mining can also result in conflicts with neighboring land uses, such as residential, recreational, and natural features.

In order to preserve the rural quality of life, maintain viable farming operations and plan for new residential development, there needs to be a clear plan for limiting conflicts between residential and farm uses. Limiting the number of dwelling units in farming areas can help reduce conflicts. It is also important to educate newcomers to the area about the realities of rural life and farm operations.

Land use conflicts can also arise at the border between two communities when the planning goals or regulations differ. This planning process and the intergovernmental cooperation efforts outlined in the

plan will help to minimize potential future land use conflicts between neighboring jurisdictions.

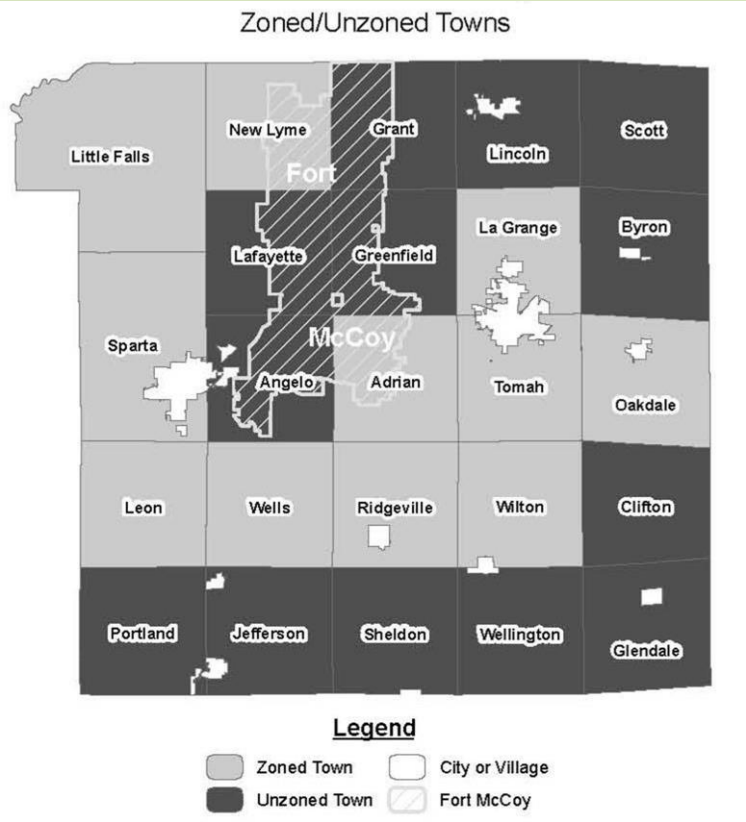
**Fort McCoy**

Fort McCoy is located in the north central portion of Monroe County, within the towns of Adrian, Angelo, Grant, Greenfield, LaFayette, and New Lyme. The southern portion of the base is located between and within close proximity of the cities of Tomah and Sparta. The Fort McCoy/Volk Field Plan has identified that the cities of Sparta and Tomah pose the greatest threat in terms of development. The City of Sparta has identified in their comprehensive plan that growth be directed away from the base. The City of Tomah's comprehensive plan notes that development historically has proceeded in the direction of Fort McCoy, but also strongly emphasizes the need for infill development. Outside the cities, low population density serves to limit potential conflicts between the fort's operations and residential uses. The towns adjacent to the base only average seven homes and seventeen residents per acre, which is unlikely to increase dramatically in the future.

**Zoning Regulations in Monroe County**

Zoning can help limit conflicts between incompatible land uses, protect farmland and forests from encroaching development, and protect scenic resources and rural character. As of October 2009, eleven of twenty-four towns within Monroe County had zoning.

The lack of zoning in more than half of the towns in part reflects a desire among these towns to not restrict property rights or have the county interfere with "local" issues. In some cases, it also reflects the remote location of these towns. There are, however, several potential issues associated with the lack of zoning. Without zoning, communities have little or no control over the placement or density of housing, commercial uses, or industrial uses. This can result in loss of farmland, degradation of natural and scenic resources, and higher costs for transportation projects when buildings are located too close to existing roads.



The Department of the Army and Fort McCoy have also completed an Installation Environmental Noise Management Plan (IENMP). This plan identifies and outlines mitigation for potential land use conflicts between base operations and neighboring land owners. The plan details where and at what level the majority of their noise generating activities occur. The plan also recognizes that Fort McCoy and local governments have a history of cooperation, and, should future conflicts arise, they can be resolved in "a reasonable and mutually beneficial manner" (*A Plan to Position Fort McCoy and Volk Field Region as the Best Four Season Region in the Nation to Train and Care for our Nation's Defense Personnel and their Families Report 2004).*

**Wetlands**

With the historic loss of wetlands in Wisconsin, local residents have begun to realize the increasing importance of preserving and protecting wetlands. However, this can lead to conflicting land uses when a wetland is located on private property and the owner wishes to develop it. In Wisconsin, if you are planning a project that will impact wetlands, you must first obtain a wetland water quality certification (permit). There are also a number of wetland rules established to protect wetlands, including

- NR103 establishes the water quality standards for wetlands
- NR299 explains the procedures for certifying projects that impact wetlands
- NR300 describes the time limits and fees for waterway and wetland permits
- NR350 describes the requirements for the wetland compensatory mitigation program
- NR351 identifies federal materials to be used for determining whether certain activities in non-federal wetlands are exempt from water quality certification requirements
- NR352 designates that the 1987 US Army Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual and additional federal materials be used in delineating non-federal wetlands
- NR353 establishes a streamlines process to review regulated activities associated with the restoration of former wetlands, the enhancement of degraded wetlands and the maintenance or management of existing wetlands

## Land Use Projections

Land use projections help gauge whether adequate land is set aside for future residential, commercial, and industrial development. It also provides an indication of potential impacts in terms of loss of farmland and forested land as a result of new development. The projections provided below are calculated specifically for the unincorporated areas of the county, and they do not include development in cities and villages over the next twenty years.

**Land for Housing**

Land use projections for housing take into account population and housing projections discussed in both the Issues and Opportunities and Housing chapters. Based on the housing projections, there appears to be a demand for about 4,480 additional housing units over the next twenty years. Approximately 47 percent (2,124 units) of the new units are projected to be built in areas outside of the cities and villages.

**Housing Type**

The mix of housing types and lot size are major factors in determining how much land will be required to accommodate future housing growth. The current mix of housing in Monroe County consists of over 73 percent detached single-family units, 4 percent two-unit structures, 12 percent multi-family units, and 11 percent manufactured homes. Most housing in the unincorporated areas are single-family or mobile/manufactured homes.

**Lot Size**

Residential lots in Monroe County average 1.33 acres. County zoning currently has a minimum lot area of 1.5 acres per family in the suburban residential (R-2), rural residential (R-3), and general agricultural (GA) districts, and 5 acres in the general forestry (GF) district. There are currently no maximum lots sizes, clustering requirements, or overal density restrictions.

While residents and decision makers in Monroe County want to preserve individual landowner rights, there is concern about too much land being taken out of farming and forestry. Specifically, people expressed concern about large residential lots that are bigger than needed for residential purposes but too small for most commercial farming and forestry operations. On the other hand, people also want to make sure that lot sizes are large enough to accommodate replacement septic systems, and that the overal density of residential lots is minimized.

Many towns in the county have grapled with this question in their comprehensive plans and have come up with a variety of potential solutions. While some of the towns, such as Little Falls, offer general recommendations in their comprehensive plans that focus on protecting high-quality farmland and sensitive areas from residential development, other town plans offer specific policies on lot sizes and overall density.

- The towns of LaGrange and Tomah designate much of the land in their towns for "rural preservation." Their comprehensive plans set a maximum gross residential density in these areas of 1 dwelling unit per 35 acres and a minimum lot size of two acres. Outside these areas, the plans designate "rural residential" areas, with one lot per five acres and a minimum lot size of two acres, and "suburban residential" areas, with a minimum lot size of two acres.
- The *Town of Glendale Comprehensive Plan* also designates much of the town as "rural preservation", but it is less specific about density restrictions focusing instead on directing development away from prime farmland. The plan sets a minimum lot size of three acres within the rural preservation area.
- The Town of Little Falls'comprehensive plan establishes a minimum lot size of five acres in agricultural and forestry areas and a minimum of two acres in residential areas.
- The Town of New Lyme's future land use map designates all of the town –outside county and federal land— as "agricultural land use and rural housing with 5 acre lot size for all housing."
- The Town of Oakdale does not provide specific policies about density or lot size, rather it bases future land use projections on an average lot size of five acres.
- The Town of Sparta designates four categories of future residential land uses, including two-family and multi-family housing districts. Minimum lot sizes for the single-family residential districts are one acre in the suburban areas, 5 acres in rural residential areas, and 20 acres in estate residential areas.
- The Town of Wilton's plan suggests a minimum lot size of four acres, with an emphasis on clustering, restricting development on steep slopes, and protecting farmland.
- The Town of Adrian suggests a minimum lot size of 2.5 acres in the rural residential and general agricultural districts.

**Development and Redevelopment in Cities & Villages**

It is the intent of this plan to promote development, redevelopment, and revitalization within the existing cities and villages in Monroe County. Development and redevelopment within these population centers takes advantage of existing infrastructure and reduces the overall cost of public services. Creating and sustaining cities and villages that offer quality neighborhoods,

affordable housing, and extensive shopping and employment opportunities benefits the entire county. Limiting residential development in the rural areas of the county similarly benefits everyone by keeping land available for farming and forestry. By working with cities and villages to encourage development and redevelopment within existing population centers, the county hopes to reduce the number of new housing units that are needed within the rural areas.

**Future Residential Land Use**

There is a strong desire on the part of county residents as well as municipal and county officials to limit the amount of new residential development in areas with viable farmland, working forests, or sensitive environmental features. As a result, future land use projections for residential development are based on the assumption that 85 percent of new housing in the unincorporated areas will occur within planned residential areas, as designated on the future land use map (Map 13). The remaining housing units will be scattered throughout the county (Table 7.2).

**Table 7.2. Projected Housing Distribution and Lot Size, 2010-2030**

| Land Use District | Percent of Total Housing Units | Average Lot size |
|---|---|---|
| Residential | 85 | 2 |
| Agriculture/Open Land | 5 | 3.5 |
| General Forestry | 5 | 5 |
| Shoreland | 2 | 2 |
| Estate Residential | 1 | 20 |
| Rural Preservation | 1 | 2 |
| Natural Resource Protection and Recreation | 1 | 2 |

The total acres needed to accommodate future residential development was calculated as follows. The number of projected housing units within the county was converted to lots and adjusted upward to account for those lots that are purchased for speculation and to allow for normal market forces to create competition and keep housing prices reasonable. An additional 425 lots (or 20 percent) were added to account for these two factors. These lots were then allocated to each of the land use districts (Table 7.3).

The number of lots was then converted to acres by applying an average lot size. Lot sizes are shown in Table 7.2, and are based on planned densities identified in town comprehensive plans. The land area was then adjusted upward to account for roads and other infrastructure associated with development. The results are shown in Table 7.4.

**Table 7.3. Projected New Residential Lots by Land Use District, 2010-2030**

| Land Use District | 2010 to 2014 | 2015 to 2019 | 2020 to 2024 | 2025 to 2030 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Residential | 590 | 574 | 512 | 491 | 2,167 |
| Agriculture / Open Land | 35 | 34 | 30 | 29 | 127 |
| General Forestry | 35 | 34 | 30 | 29 | 127 |
| Shoreland | 14 | 14 | 12 | 12 | 51 |
| Estate Residential | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 25 |
| Rural Preservation | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 25 |
| Natural Resource Protection and Recreation | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 25 |
| Total | 695 | 675 | 602 | 577 | 2,549 |

**Table 7.4. Projected New Residential Acres by Land Use District, 2010-2030**

| Land Use District | 2010 to 2014 | 2015 to 2019 | 2020 to 2024 | 2025 to 2030 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Residential | 1,299 | 1,263 | 1,126 | 1,080 | 4,767 |
| Agriculture / Open Land | 122 | 118 | 105 | 101 | 446 |
| General Forestry | 174 | 169 | 150 | 144 | 637 |
| Shoreland | 28 | 27 | 24 | 23 | 102 |
| Estate Residential | 139 | 135 | 120 | 115 | 510 |
| Rural Preservation | 14 | 14 | 12 | 12 | 51 |
| Natural Resource Protection and Recreation | 14 | 14 | 12 | 12 | 51 |
| Total | 1,788 | 1,739 | 1,550 | 1,487 | 6,564 |

**Land for Commercial and Industrial Development**

Acreage requirements for commercial and industrial land uses were projected by first calculating the current ratio of population to existing commercial and industrial land. Specifically, there are currently about 17 people for every acre of commercial or industrial land in the unincorporated areas of the county. In order to calculate the future need for commercial and industrial land, the same ratio was applied to the future projected population. This assumes that as the population grows in Monroe County, the need for shops, services, jobs, etc. will increase at the same rate. The results suggest that there is a need for about 245 additional acres of new commercial and industrial land for development over the next twenty years (see Table 7.5).

**Table 7.5. Projected New Commercial and Industrial Development, 2010-2030**

| Year | Acres |
|---|---|
| 2010 - 2014 | 68 |
| 2015 - 2019 | 67 |
| 2020 - 2024 | 60 |
| 2025 - 2030 | 50 |
| Total | 245 |

Redevelopment of existing commercial land may allow for additional new businesses in the future. Agriculturally-related commercial uses (e.g., farm equipment sales and repair; industries related to the production, processing, and sale of agricultural-related products) should also be permitted on existing farms to increase economic opportunities in the county and to accommodate commercial activities without the need for additional commercial land. In addition, bed and breakfast accommodations should be permitted in residential and agricultural areas throughout county.

**Projected Loss of Farm and Forest Land**

Residential, commercial, and industrial development in the unincorporated areas of Monroe County will likely result in the loss of an estimated 6,845 acres of farm and forest land over the next twenty years, or roughly 1,700 acres every five years. Efforts to reduce the loss of farmland, such as clustering of lots and encouraging development in villages and cities should be pursued where possible.

## Community Character & Design

At the community visioning workshop, residents cited preserving Monroe County's rural character as an important issue. Land use is one of the main determinants in maintaining the rural character of the county. Rural character is influenced not only by the amount of development, but also by other factors such as the type of development, the position of homes and buildings in relation to the road and other features, the preservation of key views natural areas and ridgetops, and the continuation of farming.

**Rural Views and Key Landscape Features**

Monroe County residents value their agricultural land, forests, open spaces, and natural resources. These are key components in creating the views, landscapes, and rural character that so many want to preserve. When asked to describe some of their favorite places in Monroe County, many referred to the natural features and views that define the local character. Specific

places mentioned include the southern part of county, Fort McCoy and Meadow Valley area, Warrens for the cranberries, ridgetops, the Elroy-Sparta and other bike trails, and McMullen Park. Other residents put it simply that they enjoy just driving the roads to take in the views.

**Houses scattered along the countryside*, farm fields, and rolling forested hills define the rural character of Monroe County.***

Preserving this rural landscape is dependent on limiting development in key areas and on protecting significant landscape features and views when development does occur. Specifically, new development in the county should:

- Avoid productive farmland and, in areas with nearby farmland, be located so as to limit potential impacts on existing and future farming operations.
- Avoid fragmenting large tracts of forest land and maintain existing forested areas along roadways.
- Protect and provide adequate buffers for sensitive environmental features, including open water, wetlands, streams, forests, and key habitat areas.
- Protect key views of rural vistas, ridgelines, and key natural features.
- Minimize the visual intrusion of new buildings by:preserving trees and other vegetation on the site, as well as limiting the distance from which new buildings can be seen by avoiding construction along ridgelines and in open fields.

**Clustered Versus Scattered Housing**

Like many rural areas, communities within Monroe County are struggling with how best to accommodate new homes in a way that protects the rural landscape. In some instances, smaller lot sizes can help to protect rural character by limiting the loss of farmland and forests. Similarly, clustering several homes together, rather than spreading them throughout the countryside, can help to limit the impact of new development on farming, forestry, habitat, and hunting opportunities by maintaining large expanses of unbroken land and by concentrating new housing away from agricultural and forestry areas.

On the other hand, clustered housing and houses on small lots are not necessarily part of the historic rural landscape or experience. As a result, this pattern of development can look out of place in the rural setting and may not meet the needs of people seeking a rural life.

During the public workshops, residents were asked whether clustered housing, housing scattered throughout the county, or a mix of clustered and scattered housing would be best for accommodating new housing in Monroe County. The results were as follows:

- 52 percent (13 people) indicated that they would prefer clustered housing. The main reasons cited were a desire to preserve green space and protect farmland from development.
- 20 percent (5 people) indicated that they would prefer scattered housing. The reasons for this included a desire to limit congestion and crime.
- 16 percent (4 people) thought it depended on the township or soil qualities in the proposed location of development.

## Future Land Use

### Incorporating Municipal Plans

This plan seeks to build on past and concurrent planning efforts of the towns, villages, and cities in Monroe County. As a result, the future land use map is, for the most part, a composite of the various future land use maps found in local municipal plans.

As of December 2009, not all municipalities in Monroe County had completed comprehensive plans (see the Issues and Opportunities Chapter for a list of plans completed to date). Towns that are not under county zoning and have not completed a comprehensive plan are left blank on the county's future land use map. Similarly, villages that have not completed a comprehensive plan are left blank on the future land use map. If, and when, these communities adopt a comprehensive plan, the county's future land use map should be reviewed and updated. For towns that have adopted county zoning but have not yet completed a comprehensive plan (i.e., the Town of Wells), or do not have a specific future land use map in their adopted comprehensive plan (i.e., the towns of Adrian, Little Falls, and Wilton), future land use was derived based on existing zoning, existing land use, and the goals/objectives/policies outlined in the town plans. For a description of how the future land use was handled for each town, see Appendix I.

### Future Land Use in Cities and Villages

City and village plans, in accordance with state statues (Wis. Stats. 59.69(3)(b)) are included in this plan, by reference and without change. Given the scale of the county future land use map, however, the land use categories for cities and villages have been simplified for display purposes. The original plans from the cities and villages should be referred to for detailed future land use.

### Future Land Use in Towns

Future land use in the unincorporated areas of the county is based on town comprehensive plans. In some cases, the land use categories identified in town-level plans have been combined to simplify the county map. Below is a description of each land use category, including information on lot sizes and density restrictions. These categories correspond with those shown on the county future land use map (Map 13).

<u>Residential</u>

This includes areas that are suitable for rural and suburban residential development. It also includes areas identified as "Rural Transitional" in the Town of Glendale's comprehensive plan. New residential development should have a minimum lot size of between one and three acres, depending on the recommendations of town comprehensive plans. In general, suburban patterns of development will occur in residential areas adjacent to the cities of Tomah and Sparta, while rural residential development with somewhat larger lot sizes will occur in the more remote areas of the county.

<u>Agriculture/open land</u>

These areas are intended to remain primarily in agricultural land use, with limited rural residential development. A minimum lot size of two to five acres is recommended for new residential development in agricultural areas, depending on the recommendations of town comprehensive plans.

<u>General Forestry</u>

These areas are intended to remain primarily in forestry, with limited rural residential development. A minimum lot size of five acres is recommended for new residential development.

<u>Estate Residential</u>

These areas are designated for large lot residential development, suitable for hobby farms and large residential estates. New residential development should have a minimum lot size of twenty acres.

Rural Preservation

These areas, as designated in town comprehensive plans, should be preserved for farming or forestry. Residential development should be limited to one new dwelling unit per 35 acres, with a minimum lot size of 2 acres. All or part of these areas may be appropriate for designation as exclusive agriculture zones, in accordance with the State Working Lands Initiative. Doing so would allow farmers in these areas to take advantage of state income tax credit (currently $7 per acre). In order to qualify, the density in these areas would need to be restricted to one residential acre per 20 acres, with a maximum of four non-farm residential units per base farm tract.

Shorelands

Based on state statutes, shorelands are defined as land located with 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a lake, pond, or flowage; or within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a navigable river or stream. Wisconsin´s Shoreland Management Program established statewide minimum standards for shoreland development. Counties are required to adopt and administer shoreland zoning ordinances that meet or exceed these minimum requirements. These zoning regulations apply to all unincorporated areas in the county.

***State minimum standards, including a 75-foot building setback from the ordinary high water mark, apply to shoreland areas throughout the county.***

The state standards set a minimum average width of 100 feet and a minimum area of 20,000 square feet (about ½ acre) for unsewered lots. Clear-cutting of trees and shrubs is not allowed in the strip of land from the ordinary high water mark to 35 feet inland. One exception exists for a 30 foot wide path, for every 100 feet of shoreline, down to the water. All buildings and structures must be set back at least 75 feet from the ordinary high water mark. Piers, boat-hoists, and boathouses are allowed along the shore.

Natural Resource Protection and Recreation

These areas are generally not suitable for development, including floodplains, wetlands, and wetland buffers (50 feet). This category also encompasses areas identified in town-level plans as sensitive areas, including

- Natural resource protection and recreation areas identified on the future land use maps for the towns of LaGrange and Tomah
- Slopes greater than 12 percent in the towns of Little Falls, New Lyme, and Wilton
- Slopes greater than 20 percent in the Town of Glendale

Future development in Natural Resource Protection and Recreation areas should be limited to one dwelling unit per 35 acres, with a minimum lot size of two acres. No development should occur on floodplains, wetlands, or within 50 feet of a wetland.

Commercial/Manufacturing

This includes areas for commercial and industrial development outside of villages and cities. These are generally highway-oriented and include larger sites for uses that cannot be accommodated within existing population centers. The minimum lot size should be two acres.

Other Land Use Categories (Static)

In addition to the categories described above, the following land uses are included on the future land use map: County Forest Crop; County; State; Federal; cranberry bogs, and Open Water. These are included on the future land use map based on existing conditions. These land uses are not anticipated to significantly change over the next twenty years.

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Insert Map 13 - FLU

## Land Use

## 20-Year Vision

In 2030, Monroe County remains an attractive rural community where farming and forestry are the dominant land uses. New housing, commercial, and industrial development are primarily located in villages and cities. Rural and suburban residential development in the unincorporated portions of the county are located away from viable farmland, working forests, and sensitive natural areas. New homes fit into the rural landscape and are set back from the road to minimize visual impact. Natural areas and rural views are protected throughout county. The result is a community that creates opportunities for rural living while supporting the visual character, agricultural and forestry resources, and natural areas that residents value.

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**The following goals, objectives, and policies are intended to provide a comprehensive approach for achieving intergovernmental cooperation. The order in which they are listed does not necessarily denote their priority.**

## Goals

*Goals are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the county should approach preservation and development issues.*

***G7.1*** Protect productive farmland from development.

***G7.2*** Protect sensitive natural areas from development.

***G7.3*** Allow for growth without losing the rural feel of the county.

***G7.4*** Protect private property rights, and provide farmers and other land owners with some flexibility to sell off lots.

***G7.5*** Limit the visual impact of new residential development.

***G7.6*** Provide opportunities for new agricultural-related business.

***G7.7*** Promote development within cities and villages, in accordance with local comprehensive plans.

***G7.8*** Limit potential land use conflicts.

***G7.9*** Protect public health and safety.

## Objectives

*Objectives suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.*

***O7.1*** Limit the amount of residential development in agricultural areas.

***O7.2*** Locate new residential development away from prime farmland and sensitive natural features.

***O7.3*** Configure new lots in agricultural areas in a way that preserves as much contiguous farmland as possible.

***O7.4*** Protect scenic views of rural vistas, ridgelines, and key natural features.

***O7.5*** Encourage preservation of trees and native vegetation on new residential lots.

***O7.6*** Locate new buildings away from the road and where possible behind vegetation or physical landscape features that help to obscure the building.

## Policies

*Policies are rules, courses of action, or programs used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives.*

***P7.1*** Work with towns to adopt zoning regulations that are consistent with both the town and county comprehensive plans.

***P7.2*** Recommend a minimum driveway width for all new development in the county to provide access for emergency vehicles.

***P7.3*** **Work with MRRPC,** Fort McCoy, and adjoining municipalities to initiate a joint land use study with the Department of Defense (DOD).

***P7.4*** Incorporate rural design guidelines into the county's subdivision regulations so as to limit the visual and environmental impact of new development.

***P7.5*** Permit agriculturally-related commercial uses on existing farms, such as farm equipment sales and repair, industries related to the production, processing, and sale of agricultural-related products.

***P7.6*** Permit bed and breakfast accommodations in residential and agricultural areas throughout the county.

***P7.7*** Set appropriate lot size and density regulations for livestock.

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

***State Comprehensive Planning Requirements for this Chapter***

*A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions, including school districts and adjacent local governmental units, for siting and building public facilities and sharing public services. The element shall analyze the relationship of the local governmental unit to school districts and adjacent local governmental units, and to the region, the state and other governmental units. The element shall incorporate any plans or agreements to which the local governmental unit is a party under §66.0301, §66.0307, §66.0309. The element shall identify existing or potential conflicts between the local governmental unit and other governmental units that are specified in this paragraph and describe processes to resolve such conflicts.*

## Overview

This chapter is focused on "intergovernmental cooperation", which is any formal or informal arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions communicate visions and coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve land use, transportation, natural resource, utility or facility services, or other issues of mutual interest. While the comprehensive planning law does require that a community consider intergovernmental relationships and develop ways to resolve conflicts, it does not require that it undertakes specific intergovernmental activities. However, in a state with over 2,500 units of government or special purpose districts (e.g., technical colleges, sanitary districts, lake districts, drainage districts), it is becoming increasingly important to coordinate decisions that affect neighboring communities in the comprehensive planning process.

Per the requirements of Wisconsin's comprehensive planning legislation, this chapter of the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan* includes goals, objectives, policies and programs for joint planning and decision-making; incorporates by reference all plans and agreements to which Monroe County is a party under §66.0301, §66.0307, or §66.0309, Wisconsin Statutes; and identifies known existing or potential conflicts between this comprehensive plan and the plans of municipalities within Monroe County, the State of Wisconsin, and school districts.

Monroe County is made up of two cities, eight villages, and twenty-four towns – each with their own unique character, issues and vision of the future. County officials understand that the measure of a well-conceived plan will be determined not only by how well it serves Monroe County, but also how well it meshes with the plans and policies of local municipalities, and state and county agencies.

## Benefits of Intergovernmental Cooperation

Some of the benefits of good intergovernmental cooperation include (Wisconsin Department of Administration):

Cost Savings. Cooperation can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication.

Address Regional Issues. By communicating their actions and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities are able to address and resolve issues that are regional in nature.

Early identification of issues. Cooperation enables jurisdictions to identify and resolve potential conflicts at an early stage, before political stakes have been raised and issues have become conflicts or crises.

Reduced litigation. Communities that cooperate are able to resolve issues before they become mired in litigation. Reducing the possibility of costly litigation can save a community money, as well as the disappointment and frustration of unwanted outcomes.

Consistency. Cooperation can lead to consistency of the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.

Predictability. Jurisdictions that cooperate provide greater predictability to residents, developers, businesses, and others. Lack of predictability can result in lost time, money, and opportunity.

Understanding. As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become aware of one another's needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them.

Trust. Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions.

History of Success. When jurisdictions cooperate successfully in one area, the success creates positive feelings and an expectation that other intergovernmental issues can be resolved as well.

Service to Citizens. The biggest beneficiaries of intergovernmental cooperation are citizens for whom the government was created in the first place. They may not understand, or even care about the intricacies of a particular intergovernmental issue, but all Wisconsin residents appreciate their benefits, such as cost savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

## Existing Regional Framework

The following is a description of the plans of other state and regional jurisdictions operating within or adjacent to Monroe County. Following the description of each jurisdiction's plan, this section analyzes potential conflicts with the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan*. Where conflicts are apparent, a process to resolve them is also proposed.

### State Agency Jurisdictions

WisDOT. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is geographically organized into eight district offices throughout the state. Monroe County is in the Southwest Region, along with Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau, La Crosse, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk, and Vernon counties. The regional office is located in La Crosse. North of Monroe County is Jackson County, which is part of the Northwest Region—its office is located in Eau Claire.

As noted in the Transportation Chapter, WisDOT has recently completed or is nearing completion on a number of statewide transportation planning projects. These documents were reviewed to understand how these efforts would directly or indirectly affect the provision of transportation services in the region and to the county. In addition, WisDOT programmatic budgets were reviewed to identify what projects, if any, have been programmed that might increase existing transportation capacity, efficiency and/or safety in the area.

WDNR. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) is organized into five geographic regions. Monroe County is located in the West Central Region along with eighteen other counties, including adjacent Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, and Vernon counties.

The WDNR has been very successful over the years in working with local governments to establish recreational trails throughout the state. The *State Recreational Trails Network Plan* was reviewed to identify existing and proposed trails in the region as well.

### Regional Planning Commissions

Monroe County is located within the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission's (MRRPC) planning

jurisdiction. Typically, a regional planning commission (RPC) has the function of preparing and adopting a master plan for the physical development of the region.

A Regional Economic Development Strategy is updated every five years. The current strategy was completed in 2008. Additionally, the MRRPC prepares a Regional Transportation Plan. The most recent plan was completed in 2008 and is also updated every five years. The findings and recommendations of both documents were incorporated into the county's plan. The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission has not completed a regional comprehensive plan.

## Surrounding Counties

Monroe County is bordered by four counties: La Crosse, Jackson, Juneau, and Vernon counties. La Cross County, located along Monroe County's western border, provides shopping and services for many Monroe County residents. It is the only surrounding county to have adopted a comprehensive plan (March 2008), and no conflicts were identified between the *La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan* and the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan.* Vernon County borders Monroe County to the south and is in the process of formally adopting a comprehensive plan. Juneau and Jackson counties do not currently have a comprehensive plan.

## Town, Village, and City Plans

As of February 2010, seventeen municipalities in Monroe County have completed comprehensive plans. The following is a discussion of the major themes and issues addressed in these plans.

### Preserve Rural Character and Natural Resources

A common theme among the comprehensive plans of municipalities within Monroe County is the importance of preserving rural character and protecting the natural resources and beauty of the area. While there are differences in some of the associated goals, objectives, and policies, the overarching visions remain similar. For example, most plans state that productive or prime farmland needs to be preserved and future development should only be allowed in areas suitable for development. Many plans also made it a goal, objective, or policy to assist interested residents in getting information on how to preserve their property.

### Communication

Most municipal plans indicate that increased communication is desired and would be mutually beneficial to all parties. Similar goals policies and objectives include continued communication from/with the county on road maintenance or projects; promotion of communication between all units of government, including adjoining towns; and increased dialogue with County Board members to obtain more county participation in city projects and ensure towns/villages/cities have an active role in providing input on future plans and projects.

### Tourism and Bicycle Trails

Many Monroe County municipalities have developed a tourism market within their community and, as such, many businesses have come to depend on tourists as a major source of revenue during the year. The importance of promoting tourism, including expanding/maintaining bicycle trails in the county, is addressed in many of the plans.

### Transportation and Road Maintenance

Municipal plans address continued maintenance of roads and county highways. Municipalities have a desire for cost sharing of new roads and maintenance of roads passing through different municipalities. Some plans note the importance for the county to accommodate horse and buggy travel along appropriate sections of state and county highways. The development of additional transportation services for elderly, disabled, and other residents was another top theme addressed by municipalities.

**Overlapping Jurisdictions**

Fort McCoy is a military installation located in northern Monroe County. A plan was recently developed by the MRRPC titled *Plan to Position Fort McCoy and Volk Field Region as the Best Four Season Region in the Nation to Train and Care for our Nation's Defense Personnel and their Families*. No conflicts were found between Fort McCoy and the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan*. Fort McCoy's plan does mention that they are confident any future conflicts that may arise will be able to be solved in "a reasonable and mutually beneficial manner" due to the strong ties and communication between the Fort and local communities.

**Intergovernmental Meetings**

Intergovernmental meetings provide an opportunity to outline the broader community vision and plan direction, specific mutual interests, issues and concerns, objectives, and review mapping products. Three intergovernmental meetings were held during the county's planning process. A summary of the highlights from these meetings is provided below. See Appendix D for detailed notes from these meetings.

**Intergovernmental Meeting #1**

This first intergovernmental meeting was held on September 28, 2009. The purpose of this meeting was to initiate discussions between the county, local municipalities, and neighboring communities, as well as to provide an opportunity to "lay cards on the table" at an early stage in the planning process. Invitations were sent to municipal officials in all towns, villages, and cities within the county, as well as to County Board members, Fort McCoy, the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission, and the Ho-Chunk Nation. Thirty-four people representing seventeen jurisdictions attended the meeting.

The meeting focused on identifying key issues to address in the county's comprehensive plan. Through a series of exercises, workshop participants were asked to share priority goals for their jurisdiction, help group these goals with similar goals from other jurisdictions, and ultimately vote on key issues that should be addressed at the county-level. The priority issues identified for the county's comprehensive plan included:

- Farmland preservation
- Protect water resources
- Maintain good rural road system
- Senior housing
- Control mobile homes
- Windmills
- Control residential growth
- Job growth

**Intergovernmental Meeting #2**

The second intergovernmental meeting was held on Wednesday, February 3, 2010. The purpose of this meeting was to present the draft comprehensive plan to county and local municipal officials. Invitations were sent to municipal officials in all towns, villages, and cities within the county, as well as to County Board members, Fort McCoy, the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission, and the Ho-Chunk Nation. The attendees were informed that draft chapters of the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan* would be posted on the Monroe County Zoning Department's website (www.co.monroe.wi.us/) two weeks prior to the meeting, and hard copies of the draft chapters could be obtained by contacting the Zoning Department. Municipal officials were encouraged to review the draft chapters in advance of the meeting and come prepared to ask questions and share their ideas. Thirty-five people representing eleven jurisdictions attended the meeting.

This meeting focused primarily on land use and farmland and natural resource preservation. Following brief presentations, participants were invited to discuss

these topics as well as complete individual worksheets on the specific topics. The following is a summary of key points from the written comments and discussion:

- In general, municipal officials at the meeting were supportive of the land use categories and the future land use map. They appreciated that the county had based the future land use map on the town plans. The Town of Ridgeville requested a change to the future land use for their town to better reflect their town goals. The Town of New Lyme expressed interest in having land with 12 percent or greater slope in their town be included in the Natural Resource Protection and Recreation district.

- Most municipal officials at the meeting were very supportive of having the county strongly discourage subdivisions unless they are part of conservation subdivisions. Despite the conceptual support for conservation subdivisions, most towns indicated that they do not want subdivisions in their community even if they are conservation subdivisions.

- There was not a lot of support for exclusive agriculture zoning, although several municipal officials expressed an interest in getting more information and having further discussion on this topic.

- Most municipal officials at the meeting were in favor having at least a 50 foot set back from wetlands. Some people indicated a desire for greater setback.

**Intergovernmental Meeting #3**

The third Intergovernmental meeting was held on Wednesday, April 7, 2010. The purpose of this meeting was to present the complete draft comprehensive plan and facilitate a discussion about implementation strategies. Invitations were sent to municipal officials in all towns, villages, and cities within the county, as well as to County Board members, Fort McCoy, the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission, and the Ho-Chunk Nation. The invitation announced that the combined draft of the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan* was available on the Monroe County Zoning Department's website (www.co.monroe.wi.us/), and hard copies of the draft chapters could be obtained by contacting the Zoning Department. Invitees were encouraged to review the draft plan in advance of the meeting and come prepared to ask questions and share their ideas. Fifteen people representing seven jurisdictions attended the meeting.

During the first half of the meeting a presentation was given that provided an overview of the highlights from each chapter of the plan. Participants were then provided with an opportunity to ask questions about the plan. Questions and discussion primarily focused around the county future land use map and proposed county junk ordinance.

During the second half of the meeting, people were asked to participate in group discussions about implementation strategies. There were four discussion groups that participants could choose from 1) Intergovernmental Cooperation; 2) County Regulations and Ordinances; 3) Transportation, Infrastructure, and Economic Development; and 4) Agriculture, Environment, Tourism, and Recreation.

The discussions started off with the group facilitator providing an overview of the proposed implementation strategies associated with that group's topic. Participants were then asked to provide comments, focusing on two general questions:

1. Do you have any general comments or questions about the list of actions? Is there anything critical that is missing or any actions you do not think are necessary?
2. Do you have any comments or suggestions for how best to implement any of the proposed actions?

In general, people were very supportive of the proposed implementation strategies. Specific

suggestions that came out of these group discussions have been incorporated into the Implementation Chapter of this plan.

**Areas of Existing Cooperation**

A number of municipalities worked together to jointly prepare a comprehensive plan. These joint planning efforts reflect and enhance collaboration between municipalities. In addition to saving money and time associated with plan preparation, joint plans help to reduce boundary issues and potential land use conflicts. Joint planning efforts as of February 2010 include:

- The Town and City of Sparta;
- The City of Tomah, and the towns of Tomah and LaGrange;
- The Town and Village of Oakdale;
- The villages of Cashton and Melvina and towns of Jefferson and Portland;
- The Town and Village of Wilton; and
- The Town of Ridgeville and Village of Norwalk.

Many municipalities have also realized the cost reduction and improved services made available through sharing services with other municipalities. Existing cooperative agreements as of February 2010 include:

- The villages of Cashton and Melvina have a 40-year joint wastewater treatment system agreement.
- The Town of Ridgeville and Village of Norwalk share fire, ambulance, and first responder and police services, along with senior meal services with the Village of Norwalk.
- The Town of Lafayette has an agreement with the Town of Little Falls for shared recycling services.
- The towns of Leon and Sparta share agreements including repairs, upgrading, snowplowing and brush cleaning on many roads.
- There is a long standing agreement between the Town of New Lyme, Monroe County, and Fort McCoy which allows the fort to utilize County Forest Land in New Lyme for solider training.
- The Sparta Rural Fire Department (i.e., Erv's Rural Area Fire Protection District) is made ip and governed by a trustee from each of the eight participating townships. These townships include Adrian (defined portion), Angelo, La Fayette, Leon, Little Falls, New Lyme, Sparta, and Wells (defined portion).
- A mutual aid agreement for emergency and fire services exists between Fort McCoy and the Sparta City Fire Department, Tomah City Fire Department, Wilton Fire Department, Sparta Rural Fire Protection District, Cashton Fire and Rescue, Oakdale Area Fire Association, Norwalk Fire Department, Kendall Fire Department, Sparta Ambulance Service, Town of Lincoln Fire Department, and the Tomah Ambulance Service.

**Collaborative Opportunities**

The opportunity for shared services and collaboration was noted by many municipalities in their local comprehensive plans and during the county's planning process. Most local plans express interest in developing area-wide services to minimize overall cost and more efficiently provide essential services. Many plans call for cooperation among municipalities and Monroe County in economic development planning and tourism, advertising and marketing. Multiple plans also express interest in creating connections between parks and trails throughout the county. In addition, the importance of wind energy is recognized as a priority in

many plans, suggesting possible coordination between municipalities.

Some of the other collaborative opportunities found in plans include:

- The Village of Kendall's plan expresses interest in coordinating with Monroe County and the Town of Glendale to jointly plan boundary areas and coordinate long-term growth plans.
- The Town and Village of Oakdale's plans indicates that they may want to provide areas zoned for multi-family housing to assist in providing housing for low income residents in the county.
- The Town of New Lyme's plan expresses interest in a Joint Land Use Study regarding properties bordering Fort McCoy.
- The Town of Leon's plan recommends that drainage corridors, which may cross jurisdictional boundaries, be identified and protected through a watershed plan to aid in the management of stormwater runoff.
- The plans for the towns of Glendale and Wilton, and the Village of Wilton all indicate interest in a purchase or transfer of development rights program if it was developed by or with the county.

## Areas of Potential Intergovernmental Conflicts

There are no current conflicts have been identified between municipal plans and the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan.* There is potential, however, for conflict regarding how to address potential future development surrounding Fort McCoy. To minimize potential conflicts with the towns and Fort McCoy, the county is advised to actively participate in a Joint Land Use Study.

## Process to Resolve Potential Conflicts

### Improved Communication

A key issue discussed during the workshops and focus groups was the need for better coordination and communication between the county, local municipalities, agencies, businesses, and residents. The idea was suggested to create a "one-stop shop" at the county level where residents, business owners, and local officials could obtain essential information and provide their own input. For example, there is currently nowhere that a contractor from outside the county, who may not be aware of the various rules and regulations of Monroe County, can go to gather comprehensive information about regulations in the county. Similarly, local municipalities and the county would benefit from improved information and communication.

This comprehensive plan recommends that the county engage in regular (biannual) meetings with the other jurisdictions (e.g., towns, villages, and cities within the county, Fort McCoy, the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and adjacent counties) to discuss community service and development issues of mutual concern.

### Intergovernmental Agreements

In addition to regular meetings and improved communication, intergovernmental agreements also offer a framework for enhance collaboration and addressing conflicts. 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 by the restriction that the municipalities must be able to exercise co-equal powers. 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 it does not have some of the limitations of the "66.0301" agreement format.

A variety of issues can be addressed as part of an intergovernmental agreement. These include municipal boundary changes; future land use recommendations; and shared programs or services.

## Intergovernmental Cooperation
## 20-Year Vision

Intergovernmental cooperation efforts enable Monroe County to provide quality services, preserve land and natural resources, and provide abundant recreational opportunities. The county coordinates and collaborates with towns, villages, cities, and state regional and federal agencies to function as a cohesive government system. The county effectively communicates with different units of government, which allows for better coordination, cooperation, and early identification of potential issues. Collaboration efforts reduce costs and allow services to be provided more efficiently, helping to maintain the quality of life for county residents.

**The following goals, objectives, and policies are intended to provide a comprehensive approach for achieving intergovernmental cooperation. The order in which they are listed does not necessarily denote their priority.**

### Goals

*Goals are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the county should approach preservation and development issues.*

***G8.1*** Promote effective communication within the county and between county, regional, state and federal agencies.

***G8.2*** Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relations with adjacent and overlapping governments.

***G8.3*** Encourage better cooperation and coordination among town, village, city and county officials and committees and with adjacent county, regional, state and federal agencies.

***G8.4*** Maintain a high level of service and quality of life for Monroe County residents.

***G8.5*** Enable residents to understand and easily navigate through government services.

### Objectives

*Objectives suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.*

***O8.1*** Increase communication between town, village, city, and county units of government, officials and committees.

***O8.2*** Provide easier access to information on county rules and regulations.

***O8.3*** Ensure county planning and implementation efforts reflect town plan and implementation efforts.

***O8.4*** Pursue opportunities for cooperative agreements with adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions regarding the expansion and cost sharing of appropriate services, economic development opportunities, and transportation improvements.

***O8.5*** Explore area-wide approaches to providing services to minimize overall costs and more efficiently provide essential services.

***O8.6*** Identify and take steps to avoid potential future land use conflicts between adjacent municipalities within the county.

***O8.7*** Continue to evaluate ways to fully utilize regional, state, and federal resources available to the county.

***O8.8*** Continue preserving the rural character and natural resources in the county.

**Policies**

*Policies are rules, courses of action, or programs used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. The county's policies are stated in the form of position statements, directives to the county, or as criteria for the review of proposed development.*

***P8.1*** Provide a copy of this comprehensive plan to all surrounding local governments.

***P8.2*** Establish regular (biannual) meetings with all jurisdictions in the county, and seek participation of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC), Fort McCoy, and the Ho Chunk Nation at these meetings.

***P8.3*** Promote communication among all jurisdictions to identify opportunities to promote tourism, expand/maintain bicycle trails and increase recreation opportunities.

***P8.4*** Coordinate with local municipalities to provide information for residents, businesses, professional service providers, and local officials regarding ordinances, regulations and opportunities to provide their own input.

***P8.5*** Provide educational opportunities for town boards, plan commissions and county officials to learn tools, strategies and resources regarding comprehensive planning in their municipality.

***P8.6*** Base future land use and county zoning changes on town comprehensive plans and future land use maps.

***P8.7*** Establish an identification process for issues that affect multiple jurisdictions and cross municipal boundaries so the issues can be addressed in a coordinated and efficient manner.

***P8.8*** Work with the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) to initiate a joint land use study with Fort McCoy and adjacent municipalities.

***P8.9*** Work with the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) to more fully utilize their expertise and services in addressing planning issues in Monroe County.

***P8.10*** Continue county-wide services while encouraging local municipalities to coordinate and collaborate with each other and the county in providing services such as road maintenance projects, snow plowing, fire/EMS, and senior/disabled resident transportation in order to provide these services more efficiently and to reduce costs.

***P8.11*** Continue to support natural resource and land preservation within the county and explore establishing a county-wide program for rural land preservation.

***P8.12*** Work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to assure that development, resources protection and other improvements are consistent with the goals and objectives of this plan.

***P8.13*** Work with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to assure that transportation improvements are consistent with the goals and objectives of this plan.

# Implementation

***State Comprehensive Planning Requirements for this Chapter***

*A compilation of programs and specific actions to be completed in a stated sequence, including proposed changes to any applicable zoning ordinances, official maps, or subdivision ordinances, to implement the objectives, policies, plans and programs contained in pars. (a) to (h). The element shall describe how each of the elements of the comprehensive plan will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the comprehensive plan, and shall include a mechanism to measure the local governmental unit's progress toward achieving all aspects of the comprehensive plan. The element shall include a process for updating the comprehensive plan. A comprehensive plan under this subsection shall be updated no less than once every 10 years.*

## Plan Adoption

Section 66.1001(4) of the Wisconsin Statutes prescribes specific procedures that are required for the adoption of a comprehensive plan. Adoption is a critical step in implementation and sets the stage for meaningful use of the plan for implementing the community's future vision.

## Implementation Framework

The *Monroe County Comprehensive* Plan identifies thirty-three priority actions to be initiated within the next five to ten years. Long-term programs and actions should be identified as part of the ten-year update of the plan, as discussed below. Specific dates for implementation are also provided, although these should be considered as a guide rather than an absolute. The order in which items are listed does not necessarily denote their priority for implementation.

To ensure consistency across the plan, and to facilitate straightforward implementation, programs and actions outlined below provide a comprehensive approach to addressing the policies and objectives of the various chapters of this plan. The specific plan policies addressed under each program or action are listed to assist with cross referencing the appropriate chapters.

The County Planning and Zoning Committee will take the lead on implementing most of the identified actions. Very few actions, however, can be undertaken and completed exclusively by the County Planning and Zoning Committee. Successful implementation will require public-private partnerships, inter-municipal efforts, and/or inter-agency coordination and cooperation. A cooperative, collaborative approach is essential for the plan to be successful.

## Plan Consistency and Use

The *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan* is intended to serve as a guide for all actions by the county. The plan outlines not only specific programs and actions, but also broader visions, goals, and objectives for the future of Monroe County. The plan can be a helpful tool for daily decisions by elected officials, appointed committees, and staff members.

At a minimum, State Law states that beginning on January 1, 2010, the following county actions must be consistent with the county's comprehensive plan:

- Subdivision regulation under s. 236.45 or 236.46.
- Zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 59.69.

- Zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands under s. 59.692.

Zoning maps do not necessarily need to be the same as the future land use map, since the future projections are twenty to thirty years out while the zoning map should be current. Instead, zoning maps should be consistent with the vision and goals of the plan, while generally working towards the long-term future land use plan. However, the state is clear that other zoning regulations and specifications need to be made in accordance with the comprehensive plan. Subdivisions can be rejected based on its inconsistency with an element of the master plan, although it does not necessarily have to (the legal language is still unclear).

## Monitoring, Evaluating, and Updating the Plan

The County Planning and Zoning Committee will report annually to the County Board on progress in implementing the comprehensive plan. This will include identification of action items that have been initiated and the results of those actions. The County Planning and Zoning Committee report will also include a discussion of any barriers to implementation that have been encountered.

The County Planning and Zoning Committee could also use this opportunity to annually review and consider any requested changes to the plan, especially as they relate to the future land use map. The county is likely to receive occasional requests for plan amendments, either from individual property owners or from towns. In order to efficiently review these requests, the county could set an annual deadline for people to submit requests for plan amendments. These amendments could then be reviewed collectively along with a detailed assessment of how the changes might affect the overall vision and goals of the plan.

Within five years following adoption of the comprehensive plan, the county will review and evaluate the success of plan implementation. This evaluation needs to include tracking what actions have been initiated as well as an assessment of whether these actions have been effective in furthering the goals and objectives of the plan. It is expected that this evaluation will result in some actions and/or policies being dropped or others being added to address new issues. This five-year review does not necessarily need to include extensive public participation.

The plan's time horizon is intended to be twenty years; however, after ten-years the plan should be completely reviewed and updated. At this time, extensive public involvement and detailed analysis should be conducted.

## Plan Amendment Procedures

Any amendments to the comprehensive plan must undergo a formal review process and be adopted by the county in the same manner as the original plan, as outlined in Wisconsin Statutes Section 66.1001(4). Frequent amendments to the plan to accommodate specific projects should be avoided, as this might result in development that is not in keeping with the broader intent of the plan. The following outlines the process for amending the plan.

1) The County Board or County Planning and Zoning Committee recommend amendment of the comprehensive plan.

2) Written procedures to foster public participation are adopted. The public participation process for plan amendment does not necessarily need to include the same steps as the original comprehensive plan.

3) The County Planning and Zoning Committee prepares the text or maps associated with the proposed amendment.

4) The County Planning and Zoning Committee holds one or more public meetings on the proposed comprehensive plan amendment, and follows any

additional procedures outlined in the written public participation plan.

5) Following the public meeting(s), the County Planning and Zoning Committee makes a recommendation by resolution to the County Board by majority vote of the entire Committee.

6) The County Clerk sends a copy of the recommended comprehensive plan amendment sections to all municipalities within the county, adjacent and surrounding government jurisdictions, and the State. In addition, nonmetallic mine operators, any person who has registered a marketable nonmetallic mineral deposit with the local government, and any other property owner or leaseholder who has requested notification in writing must be informed through this notice procedure. These governments and individuals should have at least thirty days to review and comment on the recommended comprehensive plan amendment.

7) The County Clerk directs the publishing of a Class 1 notice, published at least thirty days before a County Board public hearing and containing information required under Section 66.1001(4)d, Wisconsin Statutes.

8) The County Board holds a formal public hearing on the proposed comprehensive plan amendment.

9) Following the public hearing, the County Board approves (or denies) the ordinance adopting the proposed plan amendment. Adoption must be by a majority vote of all members. The County Board may require changes from the County Planning and Zoning Committee's recommended version of the proposed comprehensive plan amendment.

10) The County Clerk sends a copy of the adopted ordinance and comprehensive plan amendment sections to all parties that received a copy under step #6.

# Priority Programs and Actions

## General

**A1. Provide a copy of this comprehensive plan to all surrounding local governments.**

Timing: 2010

Associated Policies:

*P8.1 Provide a copy of this comprehensive plan to all surrounding local governments.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Providing surrounding local governments with a copy of the county's comprehensive plan will help facilitate inter-municipal cooperation. Copies of the comprehensive plan should also be made available on the county's website.

## Intergovernmental Cooperation

**A2. Establish regular (biannual) meetings with all jurisdictions in the county, and seek participation of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC), Fort McCoy, and the Ho Chunk Nation at these meetings.**

Timing: Ongoing

Associated Policies:

*P8.2 Establish regular (biannual) meetings with all jurisdictions in the county, and seek participation of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC), Fort McCoy, and the Ho Chunk Nation at these meetings.*

*P8.3 Promote communication among all jurisdictions to identify opportunities to promote tourism, expand/maintain bicycle trails and increase recreation opportunities.*

*P8.7 Establish an identification process for issues that affect multiple jurisdictions and cross municipal boundaries so the issues can be addressed in a coordinated and efficient manner.*

P8.10 *Continue county-wide services while encouraging local municipalities to coordinate and collaborate with each other and the county in providing services such as road maintenance projects, snow plowing, fire/EMS, and senior/disabled resident transportation in order to provide these services more efficiently and to reduce costs.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Establishing regular meetings between different jurisdictions in the county is intended to build on the success of the intergovernmental meetings initiated during the comprehensive planning process. Biannual meetings will allow issues and concerns to be discussed in a timely manner by the people responsible for making important land use, development, and programmatic decisions. Periodic discussions will enable the communities to better plan for capital improvements, ongoing infrastructure maintenance, enhance/expand shared services, and minimize conflicts.

Intergovernmental meetings are more likely to continue taking place if their structure and administrative functions are formalized. It is recommended that a chair, co-chair, and secretary be identified for these meetings, as well as a process for identifying and addressing issues that cross jurisdictions. One possible strategy is as follows:

- Send out a preliminary notice to all jurisdictions to announce the upcoming meeting (similar to the notification process used for the Intergovernmental Meetings during the comprehensive planning process). A

meeting summary or minutes from the previous meeting could be included with this mailing. (Note: The county should maintain an up-to-date list of town plan commission members and representatives of MRRPC, Fort McCoy, and Ho Chunk Nation.)

- The preliminary meeting notice should include a request for agenda items and a specific date by which these agenda items should be submitted to the Zoning Administrator.
- The County Planning and Zoning Committee should review proposed agenda items and prepare an agenda for the upcoming intergovernmental meeting.
- Send out a follow-up notice with the agenda to all jurisdictions. The agenda could also include "future agenda items" as a topic for discussion at the meeting.

Potential collaborative efforts could be discussed at the intergovernmental meetings, including service coordination and cost sharing, tourism and recreation opportunities, and senior housing and transportation. Discussions should identify areas of need within municipalities, opportunities to fill gaps by expanding services across borders, areas where costs can be shared, and assistance if needed to draft service agreements. Zoning issues and on-going planning efforts may also be discussed.

Participants at the Intergovernmental Workshop on implementation suggested starting with a biannual intergovernmental meeting, but then adjusting as needed. Participants felt that a meeting once a year might be enough. It was also suggested that when the Wisconsin Towns Association meets in Monroe County, a representative from the county should attend and provide an update on the county's comprehensive plan, implementation efforts, and any ideas for intergovernmental cooperation/ collaboration. City and village officials should also be invited to attend these meetings.

Participants at the Intergovernmental Workshop also suggested that county supervisors should attend city, village, and town meetings within their district to facilitate better communication between local jurisdictions and the county. This should be done at least quarterly.

**A3. Work with regional, state and federal agencies to coordinate planning and implementation efforts.**

Timing: Ongoing

Associated Policies:

P8.9 Work with the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) to more fully utilize their expertise and services in addressing planning issues in Monroe County.

P8.12 Work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to assure that development, resources protection and other improvements are consistent with the goals and objectives of this plan.

P8.13 Work with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to assure that transportation improvements are consistent with the goals and objectives of this plan.

Detailed Recommendations:

The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Department of Transportation all provide planning and services that could be utilized by the county and local governments. Taking advantage of these opportunities can reduce local planning costs and ensure that Monroe County is integrated into regional planning and implementation efforts.

**A4. Conduct an annual meeting or conference with local civic groups to discuss potential areas for public-private partnerships and collaboration.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P8.3 Promote communication among all jurisdictions to identify opportunities to promote tourism, expand/maintain bicycle trails and increase recreation opportunities.*

Detailed Recommendations:

This recommendation came out of the discussions at the Intergovernmental Workshop on implementation. Participants in the discussion group on intergovernmental cooperation suggested that the county initiate dialogue with civic organizations (e.g., Lion's Club, Kiwanis Club, and American Legion). An annual conference would provide an opportunity for various non-profits, clubs, and organizations to meet with the county and discuss potential collaborative efforts that could be mutually beneficial.

**A5. Facilitate efforts to engage in a joint land use study with Fort McCoy, including applying for funding and approaching the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission about conducting the study.**

Timing: 2010

Associated Policies:

*P7.3 Work with MRRPC, Fort McCoy, and adjoining municipalities to initiate a joint land use study with the Department of Defense (DOD).*

*P8.8 Work with the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) to initiate a joint land use study with Fort McCoy and adjacent municipalities.*

Detailed Recommendations:

The county should encourage Fort McCoy and adjoining municipalities including the towns of Adrian, Angelo, Grant, Greenfield, La Fayette, and New Lyme to participate in the joint land use study to address future growth and compatibility issues for areas surrounding the base. Funding for the study is available through the Department of Defense (DOD). While Fort McCoy has expressed interest in participating in the study, they are not eligible to apply for funding. Funding for the study must be applied for by a public entity such as the county or the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. The county should approach the MRRPC to conduct the study and be the intermediary between the fort and participating towns.

Participants at the Intergovernmental Workshop on implementation suggested that the county and towns meet with Fort McCoy in August or September 2010.

**A6. Establish an educational program regarding comprehensive planning or make resources available to local officials, boards, and committees to assist in future planning efforts.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P8.5 Provide educational opportunities for town boards, plan commissions, and county officials to learn tools, strategies, and resources regarding comprehensive planning in their municipality.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Zoning Department staff, working with a consultant, the Department of Administration, the Town's Association, League of Municipalities, and/or the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission, should provide an annual training session for municipal officials in the county. These sessions could include an overview of planning best management practices, county zoning and subdivision regulations, grant opportunities, and the like.

**A7. Establish a resource within the county zoning department where residents, businesses, professional service providers, and local officials can obtain essential information regarding ordinances, regulations and the development review process.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P8.4 Coordinate with local municipalities to provide information for residents, businesses, professional service providers, and local officials regarding ordinances, regulations and opportunities to provide their own input.*

Detailed Recommendations:

A resource should be developed at the county level that contains information about town, village, city, and county regulations and the development review process. The purpose of this resource is to aid residents, businesses, and local officials in navigating through government processes to increase compliance, facilitate appropriate development, and reduce potential land use conflicts. This resource might be a website, point-person, and/or document that is updated regularly.

Compiled information might include the subdivision, zoning, and other development-related regulations of individual municipalities and the county, local comprehensive plans, agencies and contact information for different permits, and any funding opportunities available for projects. Information regarding available sites and brownfield redevelopment opportunities could also be included. This resource should be well-maintained, easily accessible, and available to all residents.

## County Regulations and Ordinances

**A8. Enforce existing regulations on human health hazards and work with the Monroe County Housing Coalition and other housing agencies/organizations to establish emergency housing assistance for families in substandard housing.**

Timing: Ongoing

Associated Policies:

*P2.1 Enforce existing county regulations on Human Health Hazards to improve conditions in older rental housing.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Additional enforcement efforts associated with the county's Human Health Hazard Ordinance would help to address concerns about substandard housing. The authority to enforce these regulations falls with the county health officer or a designee.

Unfortunately, when a human health hazard is reported, landlords will often close or abandon a property rather than make proper improvements. This leaves the family who had been living there homeless. As a result, enforcement must be combined with housing assistance for families residing in substandard housing. Monroe County Housing Coalition has expressed interest in establishing a program to take care of families that find themselves in these situations, and the county should take steps to actively support this effort. Providing emergency housing assistance for families in substandard housing would encourage people to report degraded housing conditions. The Wisconsin Department of Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is another outlet for assistance in these efforts, however these situations typically are extremely time sensitive and need immediate response, making a local program much more effective.

**A9. Update the county's zoning ordinance.**

Timing: 2010

Associated Policies:

*P2.3 Require manufactured homes to be on a permanent foundation, unless located in a mobile/manufactured home park or on a farm occupied for farm purposes.*

*P2.4 Prohibit mobile homes (constructed before 1977) outside of mobile/manufactured home parks.*

*P2.5 Require mobile/manufactured home parks to provide adequate maintenance, set-backs, and screening from roadways and adjoining properties.*

*P2.7 Promote the development of affordable housing options for all residents.*

*P2.8 Identify potential sites and establish appropriate zoning for senior and assisted living facilities in or near cities, villages, and hamlets throughout the county.*

*P5.2 Locate residential zoning districts away from good farmland and large tracts of working forests.*

*P5.3 Limit development in agricultural and forestry areas, while still allowing some land divisions.*

*P5.11 Prohibit new residential development within 50 feet of wetlands and prohibit new commercial/manufacturing development within 100 feet of wetlands.*

*P6.2 Identify and promote large sites (20 to 100 acres) for industrial uses near existing industry clusters.*

*P6.5 Allow home-based businesses where there will be no significant impact on surrounding properties.*

*P7.1 Work with towns to adopt zoning regulations that are consistent with both the town and county comprehensive plans.*

*P7.5 Permit agriculturally-related commercial uses on existing farms, such as farm equipment sales and repair, industries related to the production, processing, and sale of agricultural-related products.*

*P7.6 Permit bed and breakfast accommodations in residential and agricultural areas throughout the county.*

*P7.7 Set appropriate lot size and density regulations for livestock.*

*P8.6 Base future land use and county zoning changes on town comprehensive plans and future land use maps.*

Detailed Recommendations:

The zoning ordinance should be modified to implement the land use recommendations of this plan. Specifically, the county should

- Modify regulations relating to manufactured homes to require a permanent foundation for all manufactured homes unless located in a manufactured home park or on a farm occupied for farm purposes. Permitted uses in residential districts should also be modified to prohibit mobile homes (constructed prior to 1977) outside of a mobile home park.
- Provide supplemental regulations for mobile home parks that address landscaping and set-back requirements.
- Modify the zoning map to be consistent with the county's future land use map. Land use categories on the updated zoning map should be based on county and town comprehensive plans. In some cases, the town plans provide more detail than what is included in the county's plan. When available, these detailed town-level recommendations should be used to establish the specific land uses, lot sizes, and density restrictions for zoning districts. Participants at the Intergovernmental Workshop on implementation suggested that the county zoning administrator should meet with individual towns when updating the county zoning regulations. It is also important

to keep in mind that the county's future land use map is intended to show general land use categories over the next twenty years. The zoning map, on the other hand, reflects what is currently allowed. The zoning map does not need to follow exactly what the future land use map shows, so long as it is generally consistent with the long-term plan.

- Promote the development of affordable housing options for all residents by evaluating options for incorporating density bonuses or other affordable housing measures.
- Prohibit new residential development within 50 feet of wetlands and new commercial/manufacturing development within 100 feet of wetlands.
- Allow home-based businesses where there will be no significant impact on surrounding properties. Home-based businesses should be allowed with a special use permit. Specific standards should be developed that address the number of employees permitted, parking requirements, retail and storage regulations, lighting, signs, location, and size of home-based businesses.
- Permit agriculturally-related commercial uses on existing farms, such as farm equipment sales and repair, industries related to the production, processing, and sale of agricultural-related products.
- Permit bed and breakfast accommodations in residential and agricultural areas throughout the county.
- Incorporate lot size, location, and intensity regulations for livestock, or consider adopting a county-wide livestock/manure storage ordinance. If this is done as a separate ordinance, it could address livestock and manure storage in all unincorporated areas (rather than just in zoned towns).
- Modify zoning code to allow for the use of desirable new agricultural technology, such as on-site manure digesters for energy production.

**A10. Update county Subdivision Regulations.**

Timing: 2010

Associated Policies:

*P2.6 Strongly discourage the development of major subdivisions (defined as five or more lots) in the unincorporated portions of the county, particularly in areas with viable farmland and working forests, unless they are part of a conservation subdivision.*

*P4.1 Manage water and water pollutants at the source by requiring/encouraging new development to incorporate on-site stormwater strategies, such as rain gardens and infiltration areas, into new development.*

*P4.2 Encourage/require materials and design that reduce the overall amount of impervious cover associated with new development.*

*P7.4 Incorporate rural design guidelines into the county's subdivision regulations so as to limit the visual and environmental impact of new development.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Subdivision regulations govern the way in which new subdivisions are platted and what amenities are provided. These regulations provide a powerful tool for shaping the future of residential areas as well as for limiting the impact of future development on farming, forestry, and the environment. The county has the authority to review and approve or deny subdivisions within all unincorporated areas. To take full advantage of this tool, the county's current subdivision ordinance needs to be modified to incorporate the recommendations of the comprehensive plan. Specifically, the following modifications should be made:

- Incorporate rural design guidelines into the county Subdivisions Regulations. Design guidelines provide information about the quality and design features that the county looks for when reviewing

subdivision proposals. Design guidelines should specify that buildable lots in subdivisions should:

- Avoid productive farmland and, in areas with nearby farmland, be located so as to limit potential impacts on existing and future farming operations.
- Avoid fragmenting large tracts of forest land and maintain existing forested areas along roadways.
- Avoid sensitive environmental features, including open water, wetlands, streams, forests, and key habitat areas.
- Avoid rural vistas, ridgelines, and key natural features.
- Preserve trees and other vegetation on the site.

- Establish regulations that permit and encourage conservation subdivisions. The state has a model ordinance that can be used as a good starting point. This should be tailored and adopted as part of the county's Subdivision Ordinance.
- Establish standards for on-site stormwater strategies, such as rain gardens and infiltration areas, into new development. "Green infrastructure" strategies for stormwater management are generally more cost effective than traditional stormwater infrastructure and do a much better job of protecting water quality.

**A11. Draft and adopt a junk ordinance regulating the storage and disposal of junk vehicles and other miscellaneous waste.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P2.2 Regulate storage and disposal of junk vehicles including mobile homes and campers (see Appendix F for sample ordinance).*

Detailed Recommendations:

The purpose of a junk ordinance is to regulate the storage and disposal of automobiles, tires, junk and miscellaneous waste within the county that present a threat to public health, safety, welfare, the natural environment, scenic beauty and economic well-being of residents. Authority for the provision of this ordinance is granted under Wisconsin State Statutes sections 59.55 (5); 84.31 (2), (b) & (9); and 175.25.

A junk ordinance specific to Monroe County should be drafted and adopted. When drafting the ordinance, it is important to review the county's public health ordinance for consistency and to avoid redundancy. The junk ordinance should also clearly define what the county considers as "junk." This might include things such as waste tires, ruined, dismantled or wrecked machinery and parts of buildings or other structures, including abandoned mobile homes, campers, or house trailers. Exceptions might be included, such as for properly zoned junk yards and operable but idle cars. Enforcement is typically done by the zoning administrator, and penalties should be included to encourage compliance. A sample ordinance is included in the appendix.

Participants at the Intergovernmental Workshop on implementation suggested that the compliance process should be initiated by the town and then move to the county for enforcement.

**A12. Establish a county driveway/highway access ordinance and work with towns to adopt/amend local driveway ordinances.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P7.2 Recommend a minimum driveway width for all new development in the county to provide access for emergency vehicles.*

Detailed Recommendations:

In accordance with ss. 86.07 (2), Wis. Stats., counties and local municipalities can adopt standards for driveways that are accessed from roads under their jurisdiction. Once adopted, county standards would apply to all new private driveways adjacent to a county Trunk Highway within the unincorporated areas.

Although Monroe County currently requires a written permit from the county highway commissioner or his designee for all new driveways and/or field entrances and the improvement of existing driveways/field entrances, the existing regulations lack standards for driveway width, length, steepness, or general design.

The county is advised to review existing model driveway ordinances and work with local emergency response providers to determine appropriate driveway widths, length, and grade. There are several model driveway ordinances available, including one provided by the Wisconsin Towns Association. La Crosse County also has a driveway ordinance that could be used as a starting point for a Monroe County Ordinance.

It is also important for the county to coordinate with local municipalities and WisDOT on this issue so that consistent standards can be applied to driveways that are accessed from town and state roads.

Participants at the Intergovernmental Workshop on implementation suggested that it might make sense for Emergency Services to approve driveways. A question was also raised about whether it would be appropriate to regulate the entire driveway or just the right-of-way access.

**A13. Establish Livestock Siting Regulations.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P5.5 Regulate potential environmental impacts of new large livestock operation through the establishment of livestock siting standards (ATCP 51).*

Detailed Recommendations:

The Wisconsin State Livestock Facility Siting Law consists of a state statute (s. 93.90) and rule (ATCP 51) that change how local governments regulate the siting of new and expanded livestock operations. It establishes procedures local governments must follow if they decide to issue conditional use or other local permits for siting livestock facilities. The statute limits the exclusion of livestock facilities from agricultural zoning districts. It also established the Livestock Facility Siting Review Board to hear appeals concerning local decisions on permits.

Effective on May 1, 2006, the rule establishes standards that local governments must follow if they decide to issue local permits. Local governments must use the application and worksheets in the rule to determine if a proposed facility meets these standards:

- Property line and road setbacks
- Management plans
- Odor management
- Manure management
- Manure storage facilities
- Runoff management

The Wisconsin Counties Association, Wisconsin Towns Association and the State Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) worked together to develop a model zoning ordinance and a model licensing ordinance.

Local governments must submit any new or modified ordinances that regulate the siting of new or expanding livestock operations to DATCP for tracking purposes. Copies of applications for local permits, as well as notices regarding decisions on the applications, must also be submitted to the department.

## Transportation and Public Infrastructure

**A14. Prepare and keep up-to-date a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that includes key county facilities.**

Timing: Ongoing

Associated Policies:

*P3.1 Address maintenance and repair needs on an average of eleven or twelve miles of county roads each year.*

*P3.3 Work with WisDOT to address safety and visibility issues at the interchanges of county roads and Interstate 90.*

*P3.7 Install paved shoulders on county highways and bridges as part of repaving/reconstruction/ replacement projects where feasible and where doing so would help to address safety concerns and/or establish a network of interconnected bike routes.*

*P4.5 Prepare and keep up-to-date a capital improvement plan that includes key county facilities, including the county solid waste facility, county jail, and county park and recreation facilities.*

Detailed Recommendations:

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is one way to help organize, budget, and plan for future capital improvements such as road repaving projects. Items that should potentially be incorporated into the CIP include:

- Eleven to twelve miles of road repairs annually, including installing paved shoulders on county highways and bridges along designated bike routes.
- Interchange improvements where county roads meet Interstate 90 (coordinate and cost-share with WisDOT).
- Intersection improvements to address safety concerns, including where county Highway U meets Kerry Avenue and Keets Avenue in the Town of Ridgeville.
- Costs associated with closing and capping the existing land fill.
- Addressing county jail space, courthouse space, and safety concerns.
- Recreation improvements on county-owned land in the Town of Ridgeville.

**A15. Actively participate in discussions with Wisconsin Department of Transportation regarding the location, design, and safety measures associated with high-speed passenger rail in Monroe County.**

Timing: Ongoing

Associated Policies:

*P3.10 Work with railroads to address safety of high speed rail lines.*

Detailed Recommendations:

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is leading the effort to establish high-speed rail between Milwaukee, Madison, and Minneapolis. The existing passenger rail route crosses through Monroe County, with a stop in Tomah. In 2010, Wisconsin State received $810 million in federal stimulus money for establishing a high-speed rail route between Madison and Milwaukee. It remains unclear whether the route between Madison and Minneapolis will utilize the existing passenger rail corridor through Monroe County or if it would instead go through Eau Claire. If the route for high-speed rail goes through Monroe County, the county should actively work with WisDOT to address any safety issues. System upgrades, including enhanced signals and crossing improvements would likely be a major component of the project. Cutting back trees and vegetation where roads cross the railroad tracks is also important to ensure adequate visibility.

**A16. Pursue funding for bridge rehabilitation and replacement.**

Timing: 2010

Associated Policies:

*P3.2 Pursue state and federal grant funding for bridge rehabilitation and replacement.*

*P3.5 When selecting the design of new bridges along scenic routes, incorporate architectural elements that enhance the bridge's visual quality when it is not cost prohibitive.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Local bridge funding is available through the WisDOT. The Local Bridge Improvement Assistance Program helps rehabilitate and replace, on a cost-shared basis, the most seriously deficient existing local bridges on Wisconsin's local highway systems. Counties, cities, villages and towns are eligible for rehabilitation funding on bridges with sufficiency ratings of 80 or less, and replacement funding on bridges with sufficiency ratings less than 50. Monroe County owns 29 bridges with a sufficiency rating of 80 or less and 6 bridges with a sufficiency rating of 50 or less.

The application deadline is July 30, 2010 for the 2011-2014 Program Cycle. Additional information about the grant application is available at www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/bridgeprogram.htm or by contacting WisDOT.

**A17. Evaluate existing level of service and demand for minibus services for seniors and special needs residents within the county.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P3.9 Expand minibus service for seniors and disabled individuals so that these populations have access to services, shopping, and social activities.*

*P6.7 Support opportunities for people with disabilities to work in the community.*

Detailed Recommendations:

A taskforce should be formed to prepare a report that documents and discusses the level of minibus service throughout the county. Specifically, the Task Force should look at the size of the population that might utilize minibus service in each municipality, the frequency of trips needed, the average distances to destinations, and common days of the week services are needed. A survey could potentially be used to evaluate service demand and identify ways to improve existing minibus routes. Recommendations should be made to the County Board following completion of the report.

**A18. Establish a multi-jurisdictional task force to review and discuss potential modifications to road jurisdiction.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P3.8 Work with towns, villages, and cities to ensure that road jurisdiction is logical and facilitates efficient plowing and road maintenance.*

Detailed Recommendations:

The county could establish a task force to review and discuss potential modifications of the jurisdictions of roads. Proper identification of road jurisdiction will allow the county's resources to be applied more efficiently. A task force might be composed of a representative from each jurisdiction along with the county Highway Commissioner. Recommendations in the form of a report should be presented to the county.

## Agriculture

**A19. Initiate farm awareness/notification efforts.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P5.6 Educate nonfarm residents about farming practices, including potentially working with realtors to distribute information brochures about living in an agricultural area.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Right-to-farm laws are designed to protect farm operators from nuisance complaints directed at normal farm operations. Sec. 823.08, Wis. Stats. has language stating that an agricultural use or change in use cannot be deemed a nuisance if it predates the complainants use of neighboring property and presents no "substantial threat to public health or safety" (Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection).

The State Right-to-Farm Law, however, lacks provisions for notification of new residential owners in rural areas. As a result, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) recommends that the state right-to-farm law be supplemented by local ordinances requiring notifying of new residential owners in rural areas as to normal impacts of agricultural operations. Notification would typically be required at the time of sale, as part of the real estate closing process. Other options for raising the awareness about farming include potentially installing "farming community" signs at key entryways into the community and/or distributing information brochures about living in an agricultural area. Information brochures could be developed by the Planning and Zoning Committee or county Land Conservation Department in cooperation with local farmers, and could be distributed by real estate agents in the area.

**A20. Pursue state funding for farmland preservation planning and update the county Farmland Preservation Plan.**

Timing: 2012

Associated Policies:

*P5.9 Update the county Farmland Preservation Plan.*

*P5.1 Work with interested farmers to pursue state funding for Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) to permanently protect high-quality farmland.*

*P5.4 Work with towns to establish exclusive agricultural districts and/or Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs) so that farmers can take advantage of tax incentives offered through the Wisconsin State Working Lands Initiative.*

*P8.11 Continue to support natural resource and land preservation within the county and explore establishing a county-wide program for rural land preservation.*

Detailed Recommendations:

The Working Lands Initiative (WLI) requires that all counties in Wisconsin have a certified farmland preservation plan. Certification on existing farmland preservation plans will expire over the next ten years according to a schedule set by the state. Monroe County's Farmland Preservation Plan is set to expire on December 31, 2013.

Farmland preservation planning grants will be available to reimburse counties for up to 50 percent of the costs of preparing a farmland preservation plan, with a maximum grant of up to $30,000. Costs eligible for reimbursement must be identified in a contract developed in partnership with the department. All counties are eligible to receive a grant. In awarding grants, the department will give counties with an earlier certification expiration date a higher priority for that year.

The Farmland Preservation Plan should address the following:

- Opportunities for using state and federal funding to permanently protect farmland

- Areas in the county that might be appropriate for designation as an Agricultural Enterprise Area
- Areas in the county that should be zoned for exclusive agriculture

It is important to note that the county's farmland preservation plan must be consistent with the county comprehensive plan. The Farmland Preservation Plan should reflect the recommendations of the *Monroe County Comprehensive Plan*. Any updates to the county's comprehensive plan should be coordinated with the county's Farmland Preservation Plan and visa versa.

## Environment

**A21. Continue to educate the public about recycling and waste reduction.**

Timing: Ongoing

Associated Policies:

*P4.6 Continue to educate the public about recycling and waste reduction.*

Detailed Recommendations

The Monroe County Solid Waste Management Department currently produces and distributes a flyer on recycling in Monroe County. The county should continue to educate the public about recycling and waste reduction.

**A22. Pursue opportunities for renewable energy production on county-owned land, including hydro-electric power at Angelo Pond and waste-to-energy at the landfill.**

Timing: Ongoing

Associated Policies:

*P4.11 Pursue opportunities for renewable energy production on county-owned land, including hydro-electric power at Angelo Pond and waste-to-energy at the landfill.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Generation of hydroelectric power at Angelo Pond should be explored. The dam, which has not been working for about forty years, has the potential to generate power and possibly create revenue for the county through the sale of electricity. A study should be conducted verifying the possibility of bringing the dam back on-line for power production, and the costs and benefits associated.

The county has completed a landfill gas to energy/food waste diversion project feasibility study and will be diverting food waste from the landfill to generate energy needed to power generators used for landfill operations. This project has the potential to extend the life of the future, third landfill by 25 percent, servicing Monroe County residents for at least thirty years without any additional land purchases. The county should continue to support this program and encourage opportunities for expansion.

In 2009, legislation passed creating state standards for wind farm development and operation in Wisconsin. Monroe County has potential for wind energy generation and should identify if there are any appropriate areas for wind farm construction on county land.

**A23. Increase efforts to address runoff and streambank erosion issues.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P5.8 Work the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and the Department of Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) to continue to address agricultural runoff and streambank erosion issues.*

*P5.10 Encourage private property owners to restore or maintain a natural buffer area along streams, rivers, and lakes, including potentially implementing a program that provides technical and financial assistance and tax incentives (see Appendix H for description of Burnett County program).*

Detailed Recommendations:

The county should work with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and the Department of Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) to develop programs, incentives and/or penalties to decrease streambank erosion and runoff issues.

**A24. Work with Fort McCoy to conduct a study of groundwater resources and potential sources of contamination in and around Fort McCoy.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P4.4 Work with Fort McCoy to evaluate and mitigate potential groundwater contamination issues.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Gaining a better understanding of groundwater resources and potential threats will help Fort McCoy and the county to protect groundwater resources from contamination. The study should map aquifer recharge areas and groundwater flow, document existing brownfield and environmental remediation sites, and identify strategies for addressing potential sources of future contamination from Fort McCoy operations. The study could be jointly conducted by Fort McCoy and the DNR, and it could be coordinated with the joint land use study (Action A4).

**A25. Establish a drinking water testing program for private wells.**

Timing: 2012

Associated Policies:

*P4.3 Establish a drinking water testing program, in coordination with WDNR, to identify any harmful contaminants.*

Detailed Recommendations

Majority of Monroe County's drinking water comes from groundwater. In order to protect this resource and the health and safety of residents, the county should work with the WDNR to develop a program to test water and identify any harmful contaminants in private wells.

Participants at the Intergovernmental Workshop on implementation also suggested annually sending educational materials to rural homeowners to remind them about the importance of getting their well tested and how to do so.

## Tourism and Recreation

**A26. Evaluate options for permanently protecting 760 acres of county-owned land in the Town of Ridgeville, including potentially designating some or all of the land as county forest land and/or county park land.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P4.9 Permanently protect and provide recreation opportunities on the existing 760 acres of county-owned in the Town of Ridgeville.*

Detailed Recommendations:

The County Land Conservation Committee and the County Sanitation, Planning & Zoning, Forestry, Dog Control Committee should work with county staff to evaluate options for permanently protecting and providing recreational opportunities on the existing 760 acres of county-owned land in the Town of Ridgeville. Potential options for permanent protection include designating some or all of the land as county forest land and/or county park land.

Wisconsin's county forests are governed by the County Forest Law, which requires they be managed in a sustainable manner for multiple uses, including timber production, recreation, wildlife habitat, and watershed protection. The county forests are also required to update their forest plans every fifteen years, a process that includes approval both by each forest's county board and the DNR.

Section 28.11(4)of the Wisconsin Statutes outlines the specific process by which land is officially designated as county forest land. The process is as follows:

- The county files an application with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to designate land as county forest land. The application must include the description of the land and a statement of the purposes for which the lands are best suited.
- DNR assesses whether the proposed land meets the statutory qualifications for designation as county forest land (including whether it is a large block of land or adjacent to existing county forest land). The DNR may also conduct a public hearing if it deems it advisable to do so.
- If after such investigation the DNR finds that the lands are suitable, DNR designates the lands as county forest lands.
- A copy of the order of entry shall be filed with the county clerk and the county forestry committee, and the order shall also be recorded with the register of deeds.

**A27. Collaborate with local municipalities and other entities to identify and implement scenic routes and bike trails within the county.**

Timing: 2012

Associated Policies:

*P3.4 Work with local municipalities to identify and designate scenic routes of historic value for cars and bicycles across Monroe County.*

*P3.6 Working in collaboration with other entities and jurisdictions, identify and pursue opportunities to establish a network of trails and on-street bike routes that connect the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail to key locations and amenities in the county.*

Detailed Recommendations:

The Planning and Zoning Committee, working in collaboration with local municipalities and trail groups, should prepare a detailed plan that maps scenic roads, on-street bike routes, and off-street bike/pedestrian trails. The plan should detail the location of existing bike and pedestrian facilities and scenic corridors. A planned network of on- and off-street bike and pedestrian facilities should be mapped, incorporating information about key origins and destinations, recommendations of the Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan – 2020, and local priorities for bike and pedestrian improvements. The findings of the plan should be provided to the county board for review and consideration of future action.

**A28. Create and implement a plan for handicap accessible trails and parking on county forest land.**

Timing: 2012

Associated Policies:

*P4.7 Pursue opportunities to create handicap accessible trails and parking on county forest land.*

Detailed Recommendations:

A task force should be established to create a plan for handicap improvements on county forest land. The plan should address site limitations, environmental consideration, long-term maintenance costs, and options for trail materials. Recommendations should be made to the County Board following completion of the report, and improvements should be budgeted for

either through the annual department budget process or as part of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

**A29. Work with the Monroe County Tourism & Economic Development Committee and the Sparta and Tomah Area Chambers of Commerce to incorporate information about handicap facilities and recreational opportunities into tourism brochures, websites, and maps.**

Timing: 2013

Associated Policies:

*P4.8 Promote Monroe County as a handicap accessible recreation destination, and increase awareness of handicap accessible facilities (including Cataract Pond, the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail, McMullen Park, and other county recreation facilities).*

Detailed Recommendations:

Handicap parking, handicap accessible trails (including the Elroy Sparta bike trail), and handicap accessible fishing sites should all be highlighted in tourism materials. Lodging and dining options for handicap visitors could also be inventoried and included in tourism materials. The Area Chambers and Monroe County Tourism Committee should also evaluate opportunities for targeting marketing of Monroe County as a handicap friendly recreation destination.

**A30. Evaluate the feasibility of beautifying and/or providing passive recreation opportunities at the current landfill once it is closed and capped.**

Timing: 2017

Associated Policies:

*P4.10 Evaluate the feasibility of providing passive recreation opportunities at the current landfill once it is closed and capped.*

Detailed Recommendations:

The existing county landfill will receive solid waste until 2019. Once the current active landfill is full, the capped landfill could provide passive recreation opportunities in the county. A feasibility study should be conducted to determine the suitability of the capped landfill for different opportunities including new vegetation, providing homes for wildlife, open space, natural area, and opportunities for hiking, dog parks, athletic fields and golf courses.

WI State Code requires Monroe County to maintain the landfill cap, manage the landfill gas, and provide treatment of the landfill leachate for a minimum of forty years after the landfill is closed. The money needed for these long term expenses is placed in escrow during the active life of the landfill.

## Economic Development

**A31. Establish a county government "buy local" policy to give preference to local businesses for county government contracts/purchases when cost effective.**

Timing: 2010

Associated Policies:

*P6.4 Establish a county government "buy local" policy to give preference to local businesses for county government contracts/purchases.*

*P6.3 Continue to support and promote the current "Buy MoCO" buy local campaign and similar buy local campaigns in the future.*

*P6.8 Promote local businesses that serve Fort McCoy.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Future economic growth will benefit tremendously by simply increasing the amount of local goods purchased within the county. Given that Monroe County government is one of the larger purchasing entities in the county, it has the potential to significantly increase local goods consumption. Creating a policy to buy goods and services from local providers will also help to

set an example for other residents and business owners.

The "buy local" policy should give preference to goods and services that are provided by locally-owner businesses. This might focus exclusively on businesses located within county limits that are owned by someone who lives within the county limits, or it might be more flexible to include businesses and/or owners within the Mississippi River Region. Local businesses that serve Fort McCoy may also be included in this policy since the Fort has such as great influence on the economic vitality of the county.

The current "Buy MoCo" campaign should continue to be supported and work in conjunction with this policy, encouraging local residents and visitors to buy goods in Monroe County.

**A32. Establish a county-level economic development planner position.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P6.1 Establish a county-level economic development planner position.*

*P6.6 Work with the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission to pursue regional economic development strategies.*

Detailed Recommendations:

Monroe County should establish a county-level economic development planer position. This person would aid and assist in creation and coordination of programs relating to economic development and the economic vitality of the county. The position would also assist local governments in their planning and development efforts, including development of projects, identification of funding sources, assistance in preparing applications for said funding sources, and tracking projects to completion.

The county economic development planner would also be responsible for coordinating with the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission and local municipalities to pursue regional economic development strategies.

**A33. Establish a task force to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a year-round farmers market.**

Timing: 2011

Associated Policies:

*P5.7 Encourage the establishment of a winter farmers market in the county, and work with local municipalities to identify and/or create permanent space for such a market.*

Detailed Recommendations:

A task force should be established to evaluate the feasibility of creating a year-round farmers market in Monroe County. The task force should solicit input from area farmers about interest in a year-round farmers market and ideas for the location and facility. Representatives from the Tomah and Sparta farmers markets, city representatives, farmers, county representative(s), and cooperative extension should be invited to participate in the task force.

Possible funding sources include the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP). The grant program is targeted to help improve and expand domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs. Grants are up to $100,000 and are typically due in March/April. Approximately $5 million is allocated for FMPP for Fiscal Year 2010 and $10 million for Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012. Eligible grant recipients include: agriculture cooperatives, local governments, nonprofit corporations, public benefit corporations, economic development corporations, regional farmers, and market authorities.

**Summary of Proposed Actions**

| General | |
|---|---|
| **Program or Action** | **Timing** |
| A1. Provide a copy of this comprehensive plan to all surrounding local governments. | 2010 |
| **Intergovernmental Cooperation** | |
| **Program or Action** | **Timing** |
| A2. Establish regular (biannual) meetings with all jurisdictions in the county, and seek participation of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) at these meetings. | Ongoing |
| A3. Work with regional, state and federal agencies to coordinate planning and implementation efforts. | Ongoing |
| A4. Conduct an annual meeting or conference with local civic groups to discuss potential areas for public-private partnerships and collaboration. | Ongoing |
| A5. Facilitate efforts to engage in a joint land use study with Fort McCoy, including applying for funding and approaching the regional plan commission about conducting the study. | 2010 |
| A6. Establish an educational program regarding comprehensive planning or make resources available to local officials, boards and committees to assist in future planning efforts. | 2011 |
| A7. Establish a resource within the county zoning department where residents, businesses, professional service providers, and local officials can obtain essential information regarding ordinances, regulations and the development review process. | 2011 |
| **County Regulations and Ordinances** | |
| **Program or Action** | **Timing** |
| A8. Enforce existing regulations on human health hazards and work with the Monroe County Housing Coalition and other housing agencies/organizations to establish emergency housing assistance for families in substandard housing. | Ongoing |
| A9. Update the county's zoning ordinance. | 2010 |
| A10. Update county Subdivision Regulations. | 2010 |
| A11. Draft and adopt a junk ordinance regulating the storage and disposal of junk vehicles and other miscellaneous waste. | 2011 |
| A12. Establish a county driveway/highway access ordinance and work with towns to adopt/amend local driveway ordinances. | 2011 |
| A13. Establish Livestock Siting Regulations. | 2011 |
| **Transportation and Public Infrastructure** | |
| **Program or Action** | **Timing** |
| A14. Prepare and keep up-to-date a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that includes key county facilities. | Ongoing |
| A15. Actively participate in discussions with Wisconsin Department of Transportation regarding the location, design, and safety measures associated with high-speed passenger rail in Monroe County. | Ongoing |
| A16. Pursue funding for bridge rehabilitation and replacement. | 2010 |
| A17. Evaluate existing level of service and demand for minibus services for seniors and special needs residents within the county. | 2011 |

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|---|---|
| A18. Establish a multi-jurisdictional task force to review and discuss potential modifications to road jurisdiction. | 2011 |
| **Agriculture** | |
| **Program or Action** | **Timing** |
| A19. Initiate farm awareness/notification efforts. | 2011 |
| A20. Pursue state funding for farmland preservation planning and update the county Farmland Preservation Plan. | 2012 |
| **Environment** | |
| **Program or Action** | **Timing** |
| A21. Continue to educate the public about recycling and waste reduction. | Ongoing |
| A22. Pursue opportunities for renewable energy production on county-owned land, including hydro-electric power at Angelo Pond and waste-to-energy at the landfill. | Ongoing |
| A23. Increase efforts to address runoff and streambank erosion issues. | 2011 |
| A24. Work with Fort McCoy to conduct a study of groundwater resources and potential sources of contamination in and around Fort McCoy. | 2011 |
| A25. Establish a drinking water testing program for private wells. | 2012 |
| **Tourism and Recreation** | |
| **Program or Action** | **Timing** |
| A26. Evaluate options for permanently protecting 760 acres of county-owned land in the Town of Ridgeville, including potentially designating some or all of the land as county forest land and/or county park land. | 2011 |
| A27. Collaborate with local municipalities and other entities to identify and implement scenic routes and bike trails within the county. | 2012 |
| A28. Create and implement a plan for handicap accessible trails and parking on county forest land. | 2012 |
| A29. Work with the Monroe County Tourism & Economic Development Committee and the Sparta and Tomah Area Chambers of Commerce to incorporate information about handicap facilities and recreational opportunities into tourism brochures, websites, and maps. | 2013 |
| A30. Evaluate the feasibility of beautifying and/or providing passive recreation opportunities at the current landfill once it is closed and capped. | 2017 |
| **Economic Development** | |
| **Program or Action** | **Timing** |
| A31. Establish a county government "buy local" policy to give preference to local businesses for county government contracts/purchases when cost effective. | 2010 |
| A32. Establish a county-level economic development planner position. | 2011 |
| A33. Establish a task force to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a year-round farmers market. | 2011 |