

# TOWN OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## 8. Land Use

### Introduction

The land use chapter is a key backdrop of the town comprehensive plan. It looks at how future land development might play out within each section and what projected acreages might be needed to accommodate growth and change in select land use categories. Overall, land use change is impacted more by human development than the forces of nature, barring any major catastrophic natural event. The previous chapters have provided a wealth of background data and other information pertinent to the Town of Atlanta. Land use activity directly or indirectly impacts the livelihood and environment of the Town of Atlanta is up to each resident and visitor of the town.

The comprehensive planning legislation outlines the minimum required components necessary to be included in the planning document. These components shall include a compilation of goals, policies, objectives, maps and programs to guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property; a listing of the type, amount, intensity, and net density of existing uses of land in the Town of Atlanta; an analysis of trends in supply, demand and price of land; opportunities for redevelopment; and existing and potential land use conflicts. The plan shall contain projections, bases on background information for 20 years, in 5-year increments, of future residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial land uses and shall also include a series of maps that show current and future land uses.

Evaluating present land use patterns assists in identifying projected future land use acreage for agricultural, commercial, industrial, residential, farmland preservation areas, proximity to existing uses, and other measures serve as guides to future development. As a result an inventory and analysis of existing land use conditions is necessary to evaluate current land use patterns and densities that will assist the Town of Atlanta and other units of government in determining land available to meet the town's future needs.

### 8.1 Existing Land Use

#### Existing Land Use Map Categories

Land use categories include:

1. Agricultural – Predominate land use is agriculture where the lands include croplands, livestock grazing, and dairy farming.
2. Commercial – Retail sales establishments including gravel and sand pits.
3. Forest – Forest lands under private or industrial ownership. Mixed residential activity may also occur within this area.

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4. Residential – Lands with structures designed for human habitation including: permanent, seasonal, and mobile housing units and recreational cabins and cottages.
5. Manufacturing – Manufacturing and industrial processing, warehousing, and distribution, and similar activities.
6. Open Space – Private and public owned non-wooded undeveloped lands, fallow fields.
7. Government/Institutional – Land used for government-owned administration buildings and offices and cemeteries are included in this land use category.
8. Communications/Utilities – Land used for generating and/or processing electronic, communication, or water, electricity, petroleum, or other transmittable product and for the disposal, waste processing, and/or recycling of by-products.
9. Federal – Federal owned forest lands (there are none in the Town of Atlanta.)
10. State – State owned forest.
11. County – County owned forest lands.
12. Town – Town owned forested and non-forested lands.
13. Water – Open water areas, including natural and impounded lakes and streams.

## Land Use Pattern

Land use activity has evolved to its present form primarily following human development of the landscape. The Town of Atlanta's existing land use pattern remains primarily rural in nature, with large areas of forest and farmland.

## Land Use Assessments & Trends

Changes in land use over time can indicate development patterns or trends, which may be useful in determining future land use. Ideally, existing land use information would be compared with historic data to identify these trends. Unfortunately, historic land use inventory for the Town of Atlanta is largely unavailable, making this type of analysis difficult. Wisconsin Department of Revenue land assessment data can be used to conduct a simplified land use analysis and for examining trends.

1. Residential – any parcel or part of untilled land that is not suitable for the production of row crops, on which a dwelling or other human habitat is located.
2. Commercial – properties where the predominate use is the selling of merchandise or a service. Apartment buildings of four or more units and office buildings.
3. Manufacturing – consists of all property used for manufacturing, processing, assembling, fabricating, or milling tangible personal property or profit. It also engages in assembling component parts of manufacturing parts.

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4. Agricultural – land, exclusive of buildings and improvements that is devoted primarily to agricultural use, as defined by rule.
5. Undeveloped – uncultivated land zoned as shore land, bog, marsh, brush, wetlands, and other non-productive lands not elsewhere classified.  
  
5m Agricultural Forest – land that is producing or is capable of producing commercial forest products, if the land satisfies any of these conditions.
6. Forest – productive forestland that is producing or is capable of producing commercial forest products.
7. Other – includes all tax exempt lands.

Real estate assessments are also used to display trends in land use to aid in predicting future trends. Since the data goes back a few years, they are useful in conducting a simplified analysis for each real estate class. Trends in tax class from 2003 through 2006 are depicted for residential, manufacturing, commercial, agriculture, and forestry in the next figures.

## Land Prices

Land prices have remained relatively stable in the Town of Atlanta in recent years. A variety of markets impact land prices, and in some cases one market may drive the price in marginal pieces of property that can have multiple uses (recreational land that can also be agricultural land). Price data is available for the Register of Deeds (transfer returns) and Realtors (Multiple Listing Service –MLS). The current market shows agricultural land selling from \$1,000/acre up to \$2,500/acre depending on quality and location in the Town. Recreational and Forest land is a little higher, in the \$1,500 to \$2,750/acre. Variables for recreational/forest land include species of harvestable timber, location, and acreage available.

## County Ordinances:

The Town of Atlanta has adopted all of the Rusk County ordinances. The Rusk County Zoning Office administers those ordinances. The Town of Atlanta also has its own, more restrictive, Subdivision Control Ordinance.

Comprehensive Zoning – The Towns of Atlanta, Flambeau, Grant, Grow, Marshall, Thornapple, Stubbs, Washington, and Wilson has adopted Comprehensive Zoning. Chapter 17 of the Rusk County Code regulates the location, construction and use of buildings and structures, and other land uses so as to separate conflicting land uses and promote and protect public health, safety and general welfare.

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Shore land Zoning – Countywide. Shore land zoning limits the development of wetlands and shore land areas in order to protect water quality, fish spawning grounds, wildlife habitat and land and river ecosystems.

Floodplain Zoning – Countywide. Chapter 20 of the Rusk County Code addresses floodplain protection in order to protect life, health and property in floodplain areas.

Subdivision Control Ordinance – Countywide. The subdivision ordinance regulates the division of land within all unincorporated areas of Rusk County in order to provide safe and orderly subdivision layouts. Note – the Town of Atlanta has its own, more restrictive, Subdivision Control Ordinance.

Private Sewage Ordinance – Countywide. This ordinance refers to Comm 81-87 and Comm 91 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code and Chapter 145 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. These rules address proper siting, design, installation, inspection and maintenance of private sewage systems in order to protect public and environmental health and safety.

Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance – Countywide. This ordinance provides for proper restoration of gravel pits and other nonmetallic mining operations. Permits are required for all nonmetallic mining operations in the county.

The Zoning Office prepares an annual report which details permitting activity in the County on an annual basis. In addition the office monitors inspections of holding tanks, and private sewage systems.

## Existing and Potential Land Use Issues and Conflicts

As growth occurs in the Town of Atlanta and as municipal areas expand and get bigger, there will likely be increasing land use conflicts. Future rural residential, commercial and manufacturing developments will likely require the conversion and fragmentation of forests, farmland, and open space areas.

Conflicts between non-farm residential development and surrounding farms and forestry activities could become increasingly common in the Town of Atlanta. Other potential rural land uses that could conflict with neighboring uses include non-metallic mining operations, late night farming operations, large-scale farm operations, and rural manufacturing plants. While this plan and its process sought to minimize future land use conflicts, continuous local government and developer related coordination must occur as few ordinances are in place that can directly impact land use conflicts.

## 8.2 Future Land Use

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Future land use is anticipated to be very similar to current land use. No significant changes in use or in demand are anticipated on historic trends. Market changes in the recreational land, agriculture, forestry, and residential land sectors will undoubtedly change and land parcels may move amongst these land uses as demands change. However, as it has historically occurred, land uses will balance out. Demand will also rise and fall for shore land uses, where there is a more limited supply and limited ability to create more parcels. Market demands will cause price fluctuations and change the activity that occurs on these lands, (i.e. more small cabins on hunting and recreational land, removal of abandoned farm buildings). Again this has happened historically as the market demands change and cycles occur within the recreation and housing industry. No extraordinary or unusual future land use demands are anticipated.

A current land use map is attached displaying land use and is based on current land use from assessment information. The land use map is non-binding on property owners and does not determine or impose zoning on a property.

## 8.3 Summary – Goals & Objectives

Goal: Work in cooperation with municipal bodies and the public to promote development and land use that is sustainable and compatible and also respects private property rights.

Objectives:

1. Promote communication between government entities and the property owners.
2. Monitor land use activities within the Town and region for public sentiment and emerging trends.

Actions:

- A. Review the need for and update current ordinances and regulations as deemed necessary.
- B. Maintain the comprehensive plan so that it is consistent with existing ordinances and regulations.