

CHAPTER 8 Land Use Element

The purpose of this chapter is to compile an inventory of existing land use patterns, and establish the goals, objectives and policies which will be used to guide public and private actions concerning future land use and development. These goals, objectives and policies, along with the land use category descriptions, express ideas that are consistent with the desired character of the Town and the other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

Section 8.1 Existing Land Use

The Town of Belmont consists of predominantly forested and agricultural land and therefore has a low development density. Table 8.1 below and Map 8.1 illustrate the distribution of different land use categories throughout the Town. Nearly 95% of Belmont is either agriculture, parks/recreation, or vacant/undeveloped.

Table 8.1: Acreage of Existing Land Use in the Town of Belmont, 2004

Existing Land Use	Acreage	Percentage
Residential	592.1	2.5%
Commercial	52.5	0.2%
Agricultural	7,298.8	31.4%
Industrial	16.9	0.0%
Institutional	83.9	0.4%
Road Right-of-Way	528.2	2.3%
Parks/Recreation	2,471.9	10.6%
Vacant	12,194.0	52.5%
Total Acreage	23,238.3	100.0%

Source: Portage County Planning and Zoning Department, Town of Belmont

A. Residential

This category includes several types of residential dwellings, including single family and seasonal residences, mobile homes, duplexes, and farm residences or farmsteads. Residences are scattered throughout the Town and are generally located along the established road network and water bodies. For the purposes of land use calculation, rural residences and farmsteads were estimated to occupy approximately 2 acres of area if located within a larger parcel, while calculations for residential uses concentrated in subdivisions or clusters were based on actual parcel size. As of December 2004, 592.1 acres, or 2.5% of the Town's land area, were devoted to residential land use.

B. Commercial/Industrial

Commercial development accounts for a very small amount (52 acres, 0.2%) of land area in Belmont. These lands include uses such as retail and sales establishments, restaurants, taverns, offices, and other professional services. The majority of commercial uses in the Town, aside from home-based businesses, are auto salvage yards.

Industrial uses make up a smaller amount of land than commercial uses (16.9 acres). Current industrial uses can be attributed to a frozen food manufacturing facility and a pickle storage facility.

C. Agriculture

Agriculture is the predominant land use in Belmont. Lands in this category include irrigated and non-irrigated crop lands, dairy farms, pasture, and lands that have structures used to store agricultural equipment or products. These lands (7,298 acres) represent approximately one-third of the total Town acreage. The majority of larger, contiguous areas of agricultural use are found in the western areas of the Town.

D. Institutional

These lands include such things as: Town owned lands, existing municipal and government owned structures, educational research lands, schools, churches, cemeteries and fire stations. The greatest portion of lands in this category is attributed to Town owned property for the Town Hall and abandoned landfill.

E. Road Right-of-Way

This land use category includes all of the road right of way in the Town. Table 8.1 shows the amount of land dedicated for this use to be 528 acres or 2.3% of the total Town area.

F. Parks and Recreation

Lands in this category account for approximately 10.6% of the total acreage in the Town. These lands could be publicly or privately owned. Public lands may include State, County, or Town parks, nature preserves, boat landings, or athletic fields. Private lands may include golf courses, campgrounds, etc. The majority of lands in this category in the Town are owned by the WI DNR.

G. Vacant

Lands in this category make up the largest area of the Town, accounting for 12,194 acres, or approximately 53% of the total area. Vacant land, which includes wetlands, scrub or shrub land, privately owned forested areas, and water, is scattered throughout the Town. Conditions in certain parts of the Town are favorable for growing a range of conifer species. According to aerial photography interpretation from the year 2000, 3,934 acres of the identified forested areas were dedicated to conifer plantations, which include red pine and Christmas tree farms. A substantial amount of the forested areas are enrolled in the Managed Forest Law program, as identified on Map 5.7 in Chapter 5 (Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element) of this plan.

Section 8.2 Land Use Trend Analysis and Projected Land Use

The Town of Belmont has the lowest population of all Towns in Portage County and is projected to remain the least populated Town through 2025. Therefore, conflicts between incompatible land uses due to conversion of agricultural and forested lands will most likely be minimal. However, the Town should still oversee development proposals to help ensure that conflicts are minimized and consideration is given to existing landowners and infrastructure.

A. Residential Land Use

The Town experienced the 4th highest rate of growth (15.3%) of all Portage County Towns between 1990 and 2000; and is projected to add another 141 residents by 2025 (a 23% increase from 2000).

Map 8.1: Existing Land Use

The Town of Lanark, immediately to the north of Belmont, experienced the highest growth rate in the County between 1990 and 2000 and is projected to sustain more residential development over the next 20 years. Residential expansion in Lanark may impact residential growth in Belmont, especially the northern portion of the Town along County Roads D and TT.

As forested and agricultural lands will most likely be converted for many of the new residential sites, the Town recommends housing densities that have minimal impact on the Town's rural character and remaining agricultural operations. If residential land use projections are to be based on projected population increase (94 new households by 2025, with each household representing a new housing unit) times 2 acres per housing unit, 188 acres will be needed to accommodate the new growth. There is sufficient land in the Town to accommodate this projected growth; however, due to unforeseen events (e.g. demand, land prices, economy), the acreage could vary.

B. Transportation (Right of Way)

An increase in residential use usually carries with it a corresponding increase in need for more roadways or at least, an increased load on the existing infrastructure. For purpose of projecting land use, the Town projects an increase of 5% of 188 acres (188 acre increase in residential use), or 9.5 more acres of road right of way over the next twenty years.

C. Agricultural Land Use

Although lands designated as agriculture have shown a decline in equalized value over the last twenty years (Table 8.2), the Plan Commission anticipates that agriculture will continue to be a significant (although decreasing) use over the next twenty years due to the changing desire of current farmers to continue farming, and the overall farm economy. To encourage retention of the community's agricultural base, the Town of Belmont recommends the protection of productive agricultural land. The Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA) system will be used as a tool to help identify productive agricultural areas (see the Agriculture, Natural, Cultural Resources Element of this Comprehensive Plan).

D. Commercial and Industrial Land Use

The majority of commercial activity in Belmont, as stated earlier, consists of home-based businesses and auto salvage yards. Future commercial activity in a rural area such as Belmont is difficult to anticipate. The Town, however, has designated the Blaine area (the intersection of County Roads A and D near Pickerel Lake) for future commercial mixed use expansion. An increase in home-based businesses scattered throughout the Town is also projected over the next twenty years. The Town recommends directing larger scale commercial activity to areas outside of Belmont that provide services, such as municipal sewer and water.

Industrial activity in the Town includes a frozen foods manufacturing facility and a pickle storage facility. The Town supports these businesses and has identified lands surrounding these facilities for possible expansion.

Since it is difficult to project future commercial and industrial uses in a rural area, the Town projects an increase in these types of activity that is proportional to the projected increase in population, which translates to an increase of approximately 15 acres during this planning period.

E. Trends in Land Values

Table 8.2 below describes the change in the equalized values for the different property types, as compiled by the State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

Table 8.2: Equalized Property Values, Town of Belmont

Type of Property	1980		1990		2000	
	Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total	Value	% of Value
Residential	\$2,021,000	12%	\$4,514,000	24%	\$16,523,000	47%
Commercial	\$167,000	1%	\$335,000	2%	\$598,000	2%
Manufacturing	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$913,000	3%
Agricultural	\$9,484,000	55%	\$9,188,000	49%	\$3,083,000	9%
Swamp & Waste	\$2,000	0%	\$23,000	0%	\$47,000	0%
Forest	\$4,848,000	28%	\$3,975,000	21%	\$8,389,000	24%
Other	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$4,698,000	13%
Personal Property	\$629,000	4%	\$611,000	3%	\$703,000	2%
Total Value	\$17,151,000	100%	\$18,646,000	100%	\$34,954,000	100%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue Statistical Report of Property Valuations, 1980, 1990, 2000

The implementation of agricultural use value assessment in the mid 1990's redistributed valuations from the Agricultural category to the Residential, Forest, and Other categories. The Other category (created between 1990 and 2000) includes, "buildings and improvements; including any residence for the farm operator's spouse, children, parents, or grandparents; and the land necessary for the location and convenience of those building and improvements (WI Statutes 70.32)." The critical factor defining "Other" property is its actual use supporting a farm enterprise. If an assessor obtains verifiable evidence that buildings on a farm are used for agricultural purposes, they qualify as "Other." (WI DOR *Agricultural Assessment Guide for Wisconsin Property Owners*, December, 2003).

F. Redevelopment Areas

The only potential site identified at this time for redevelopment is located in the central portion of Town on 16th Road. This property, owned by the Town, is the site of an abandoned land fill and the recently constructed Town Hall. The Town will study possible alternative uses for the property over the next ten years.

Section 8.3 Land Use Conflicts

The primary land use conflicts identified during the planning process were: a potential for dispute between non-farm residences and existing farm operations, and the potential impacts from non-metallic mineral operations on existing road infrastructure. Due to the important role agriculture plays in the community's economy and character, the primary recommendations for limiting conflict are to limit non-farm residential development near intensive agricultural operations, encourage the use of spatial or vegetative buffers, and provide information to residents regarding Wisconsin's Right to Farm law.

Section 8.4 Land Use Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal 1: Maintain the rural character of the Town of Belmont.

Objective 1.1: Promote the viability of existing agricultural operations and local businesses.

Objective 1.2: Encourage the use of the Town Hall for neighborhood events.

Policy 1.1(a): Encourage the development of home-based businesses that are compatible with surrounding uses.

Policy 1.1(b): Recommend a minimum lot size of five (5) acres for residential development.

Policy 1.1(c): All land splits within the Town require Plan Commission recommendation and Town Board approval.

Policy 1.1(d): Encourage developers to create open spaces as part of development requests.

Goal 2: Preserve productive farmland for present and future residents.

Objective 2.1: Encourage government programs that promote the agricultural economy.

Objective 2.2: Cooperate with neighboring municipalities to preserve farmland.

Policy 2.1(a): Notify surrounding units of government regarding proposed residential developments along Town borders.

Goal 3: Preserve and protect natural resources in the Town.

Objective 3.1: Encourage the proper management of natural resources, including publicly owned lands.

Objective 3.2: Non-metallic mining operations have a minimal impact on Town infrastructure and surrounding uses.

Policy 3.1(a): Protect valued natural resources through the use of Conservancy Zoning.

Policy 3.2(a): Limit access points for non-metallic mining operations to County Roads or roads built to handle heavy traffic.

Goal 4: Limit conflict between farm and non-farm uses.

Objective 4.1: Limit growth when considering its affect on existing agricultural operations.

Objective 4.2: Cooperate with neighboring municipalities to preserve farmland.

Policy 4.1(a): Consider the use of density-based development near productive agricultural areas.

Policy 4.1(b): Recommend that residential development provide spatial or vegetative buffers in areas adjacent to existing agricultural operations.

Policy 4.1(c): Inform residents of Wisconsin's Right to Farm Law.

Policy 4.1(d): Inform residents regarding issues of interest in the Town's newsletter.

Section 8.5 Future Land Use Recommendations

Table 8.3 and Map 8.2 illustrate the Future Land Use recommendations for the Town of Belmont Comprehensive Plan, and identify how development should proceed in the future to meet the Town’s goals of protecting rural character, providing for orderly growth and encouraging development that will maintain the Town’s tax base. Future development should be encouraged in an orderly pattern adjacent to and compatible with existing development. The Town projects that any future residential or commercial development will occur primarily on undeveloped forested land and agricultural lands. As stated before, balancing the protection of rural character and individual property rights in the face of growth will present a challenge for Town residents.

Land Use recommendations include both immediate and long range planning goals to be implemented. The long range Land Use Plan recommendations will be implemented over the course of the 20 year planning period as development proposals and land use changes are presented to the Town for consideration. The Town will have to consider periodically updating its land use or zoning map to reflect changing land uses and citizen requests.

Table 8.3: Future Land Use in the Town of Belmont, 2025

Existing Land Use	2004 Acres	% (of total)	2010 Acres	2015 Acres	2020 Acres	2025 Acres	% (of total)	Change 2004 to 2025
Residential	592.1	2.5%	639.1	686.1	733.1	780.1	3.4%	31.8%
Commercial	52.5	0.2%	52.5	55.0	55.0	57.5	0.2%	19.0%
Agricultural	7,298.8	31.4%	7,273.8	7,245.3	7,220.3	7,191.8	30.9%	-1.5%
Industrial	16.9	0.0%	16.9	21.9	21.9	26.9	0.1%	59.2%
Governmental/ Institutional	83.9	0.4%	83.9	83.9	83.9	83.9	0.4%	0.0%
Road/Railroad Right-of-Way	528.2	2.3%	530.7	533.2	535.7	538.2	2.3%	19.2%
Parks and Recreation	2,471.9	10.6%	2,471.9	2,471.9	2,471.9	2,471.9	10.6%	0.0%
Vacant/Undeveloped	12,194.0	52.5%	12,169.5	12,141.0	12,116.5	12,088.0	52.0%	-0.9%
Total Acreage	23,238.3	100.0%	23,238.3	23,238.3	23,238.3	23,238.3	100%	

Source: Town of Belmont and Portage County Planning and Zoning Department

Section 8.6 Future Land Use Categories

Categorizing the land within the Town of Belmont into different land use classes is a formidable task. In order to ensure accuracy and consistency throughout the mapping process, specific mapping criteria were developed.

A. Residential Mapping Criteria

As used here, the term “residential” is intended to identify existing concentrations of lots, which are distinguished by platting or nonagricultural zoning, where it is the original intent of the developer/residents to maintain a residential/neighborhood character and where nonresidential uses would be incompatible. Examples of areas to be mapped as residential include:

- Clusters of lots, strongly residential in character, that have developed under agricultural zoning. It is recommended that such areas be identified as residential in this Plan, but considered for rezoning to an appropriate residential district, only where the majority of residents are in agreement as to the need for residential zoning restrictions.

Map 8.2: Future Land Use

- Pre-existing concentrations of lots that are smaller than two acres.

Areas for expansion of residential development are based on goals and policies in this Plan and may also be identified. Current non-residential uses would be allowed until future residential development occurs.

Land Use Categories:

Residential: Equal to, or greater than 2 acres per residence.

B. Commercial and Industrial Mapping Criteria

Areas of existing developed commercial or industrial land uses. For most rural communities, it is difficult to determine an appropriate location for the growth of commercial activity. Most of the businesses that developed are home or farm-based, and do not have the option of relocating. Some communities have a clear vision of a commercial or industrial development area while others may not. Proposals for new industrial and commercial development should be considered only on a case-by-case basis, based on the goals, objectives, and policies of the comprehensive plan. Approval for such uses may require a change to the land use map.

Land Use Categories:

Commercial: Includes uses as allowed in Commercial Zoning districts.

Industrial: Includes uses where the manufacturing of a product is the primary purpose of the business.

C. Agricultural Mapping Criteria

This category includes lands recommended for the continuation of agricultural pursuits, the protection of productive agricultural lands, and the retention of the rural nature of the community. In recognition of the varying nature of soil characteristics throughout the County, the changing agricultural economy, and non-agriculture development pressures, three categories of agriculture will be utilized, based on the intensity of the agricultural operations in that area:

Land Use Categories:

L-1 Enterprise Agriculture: The Enterprise Agriculture Category is intended to include lands that can support a full range of intensive agricultural uses, including large dairies, large confined livestock feeding operations, and concentrations of irrigated vegetable crop production. The L-1 Category uses and regulations are designed to implement Comprehensive Plan goals by encouraging livestock and other agricultural uses in areas where conditions are best suited to these agricultural pursuits, and discouraging residential development to avoid potential land use conflict. Due to the more intensive nature of uses allowed, the L-1 category is not intended to be applied near moderately- to densely-populated areas, and it is not intended to accommodate residential uses as principle uses.

L-2 Intermediate Agriculture: The Intermediate Agriculture Category is intended to preserve and enhance land for agricultural uses. Large confined livestock operations are recommended to be limited to ensure compatible land use and minimize conflicts. The intensity of agricultural uses allowed in this category is less than that of the L-1 Enterprise Agriculture category but more intense than the uses recommended in the L-3 Limited Agriculture category. The L-2 category uses and regulations are designed to encourage agricultural uses in areas where soil and other conditions are best suited to these agricultural

pursuits, and residential development is controlled to avoid potential conflict with agriculture uses. Lands in this category include the majority of dairy operations within the Town.

A minimum lot size of five acres will be recommended in these areas.

L-3 Limited Agriculture/Mixed Use: The Limited Agriculture Category is intended to provide for the continuation of low intensity agricultural uses, recommend against new and expanding livestock operations, provide for careful siting of single family residences, and support other uses that maintain the rural characteristics of the area. It may serve as a buffer for more intensive agricultural uses in adjacent categories, and prevent premature conversion of rural lands to urban and other non-agricultural uses. The category's use and development regulations are designed to implement the Comprehensive Plan goals by discouraging urban and suburban development in areas that are suited to agricultural uses and that are not well served by public facilities and services.

A minimum lot size of five acres will be recommended in these areas.

D. Natural Areas Mapping Criteria

This category includes lands recommended to remain in their natural state or for non-intensive uses such as recreation, wildlife habitat, or forest management. It was applied to lands which are environmentally important or sensitive, including shore lands, wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, substantial wildlife habitat and public resource areas. Limited residential development could occur in a manner that does not negatively impact the ecological or aesthetic value of areas designated for preservation in their natural state. Criteria for identification may include the following:

1. Lands within 100 feet of navigable waters or to the landward side of adjoining wetlands, if greater than 100 feet. Including wetlands within 300 feet of navigable waters, and excluding preexisting structures or cropland that would be nonconforming uses under Conservancy Zoning.
2. Other wetlands (not adjoining navigable waters).
3. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100 year floodplains.
4. Publicly owned lands used for recreation or wildlife/resource management.
5. Large tracts of unbroken native landscapes such as natural forests, grasslands, and wetlands.
6. Other natural features of the landscape deemed important by the local community

Land Use Categories:

NA – Protected: Lands recommended to remain in their natural state or for non-intensive, non-developed uses such as passive recreation, wildlife habitat, ground and/or surface water protection and forest management. Development of these lands is not recommended due to the potential of destroying or degrading important or unique natural resources or due to the excessive measures necessary to overcome development barriers presented by the environmental conditions.

NA – Limited Development: Identifies lands that are environmentally important to the community; however limited residential development (*no more than one residence per 20 acres*) may occur without negatively impacting the ecological value of the area.

E. Institutional Land Mapping Criteria

This category includes lands where public facilities exist or are to be located. Facilities include, but aren't limited to: government services and institutions, educational, religious, cemeteries, medical and health care, military, power plants, solid waste disposal sites, and sewage treatment plants.

Land Use Categories:

1. **Institutional**

F. Resource Extraction Mapping Criteria

These areas are considered economically viable resources and are identified within specific boundaries to minimize or avoid conflict with other adjacent land uses. Resource extraction uses include clay, sand, gravel, and other aggregate extraction.

Land Use Categories:

1. **Non-Metallic Mineral Extraction**