

CHAPTER 8 Land Use Element

The purpose of this plan's land use 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 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 Buena Vista is predominantly an agricultural community and therefore has a low residential development density. It boasts one of the highest concentrations of vegetable production in Portage County and Central Wisconsin. Consequently, there is very limited commercial and industrial development in the Town, while residential development is scattered throughout the moraine areas of the central and eastern portions of the Town. Table 8.1 and Map 8.1 illustrate the distribution of different land use categories across the Town.

Table 8.1: Acreage of Existing Land Use Town of Buena Vista, 2005

Existing Land Use Category	Acres	Percentage
Residential	964	2.5%
Commercial	32	0.1%
Industrial	0.0	0.0%
Agricultural	22,323	56.7%
Government/Institutional	25	0.1%
Road Right-of-Way	1,094	2.8%
Parks and Recreation	2,774	7.1%
Non-Metallic Mineral Extraction	154	0.4%
Woodlands and Open Space	11,927	30.3%
Total Acreage	39,293	100%

Source: Town of Buena Vista and Portage County Planning and Zoning Department

A. Residential Land Use

This category includes several types of residential dwellings, including single family and seasonal residences, mobile homes, duplexes, and farm residences or farmsteads. Residences are located primarily throughout the moraine areas and along the established road network. There is also a small residential settlement known as Coddington or Pine Island found at the intersection of Taft Avenue and Coddington Road near the Buena Vista Marsh. 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 April 2005, 964 acres, or 2.5% of the Town's land area, were devoted to residential land use.

B. Commercial Land Use

Commercial development accounts for a small (0.1%) amount of land use in the Town. These commercial uses include: trucking operations, auto salvage, restaurants, taverns, retail sales, offices, or other professional services.

C. Agricultural

Agriculture is the predominant land use in Buena Vista. Lands in this category include irrigated and non-irrigated crop lands, cranberries, dairy farms, pasture, and lands that have structures used to store agricultural equipment or products. These lands (22,323 acres) represent over one-half of the total Town acreage. The majority of larger, contiguous areas of agricultural use are found in the western two-thirds of the Town.

D. Government/Institutional

These lands include existing municipal and government owned structures, public schools, churches, and cemeteries. The greatest portion of these lands is attributed to the presence of the St. Maximilian Kolbe Church, which was constructed in 2004.

E. Road Right-of-Way

This land use category includes the road surface and all of the right-of-way for the Town. These lands account for approximately 2.8% of the total acreage in Buena Vista.

F. Parks and Recreation

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 uses such as: golf courses, campgrounds, etc. The majority of these lands are owned by the Department of Natural Resources for use as wildlife habitat and management.

G. Non-Metallic Mineral Extraction

These include lands that are currently being used to extract sub-surface materials such as sand, gravel, clay, or other aggregates. There are currently three active non-metallic mineral operations located within the central portion of the Town.

H. Woodlands and Open Space

Lands in this category include privately owned wooded and non-wooded areas, and fallow fields. As of April 2005, approximately 30% of land within the Town was included in this category. The majority of these lands are undeveloped due to steeper slopes, stonier soils, presence of wetlands, or a shallow depth to groundwater. Shallow groundwater can be found primarily in the western half of the Town while steeper slopes are located in the eastern half.

Section 8.2 Land Use Trend Analysis and Projected Land Use Needs

The Town of Buena Vista is a community that is dominated by higher intensity agricultural operations, consisting primarily of irrigated vegetable production. In order to maintain the Town's economic base and rural character, future development will most likely consist of a mix of low density, farm and non-farm residential use.

A. Residential Land Use

The Town's population has risen slowly over the last twenty (20) years, going from 1,023 to 1,187 residents. The Town of Buena Vista Plan Commission anticipates this trend to continue and desires to direct future non-farm residential uses away from higher intensity agricultural operations.

Map 8.1 Existing Land Use

The Town Plan Commission also recognizes that State Trunk Highway (STH) 54 is a major transportation corridor, providing convenient access between Waupaca, the Stevens Point/Plover urban area, and Wisconsin Rapids. This facility may play a role in increasing demand for residential uses throughout the Town. Given the fact that a combination of agricultural and undeveloped lands would most likely be converted for most new residential uses, the Town recommends housing densities that have minimal impact on groundwater quality and other natural resources, as well as remaining agricultural operations.

If residential land use projections were based on past permit activity (average of 7.8 single family permits per year over the past 14 years) and assuming a lot size of two (2) acres per housing unit, 312 acres would be needed to accommodate new growth over a 20-year period. If population and household size projections were used (108 new housing units; based on year 2000 occupied housing units), along with the same lot size assumption (2 acres), 216 acres would be needed for future residential use. Due to a desire to protect the rural character and agricultural community, and variables that are at best difficult to anticipate, the Town projects that growth in residential acreage will be closer to the second scenario at about 216 acres, with most growth occurring near County Road BB or within easy access to STH 54.

B. Agricultural Land Use

Buena Vista residents consider agricultural land a valuable natural resource to the Town, and since it is the community's economic base, there is a desire to protect those who wish to farm. To encourage retention of the community's agricultural base, the Town Plan Commission recommends limiting residential densities near active agricultural operations.

Acreage in the Town of Buena Vista devoted to agricultural land uses is projected to decrease during this planning horizon due to an aging agricultural work force and a decreasing percentage of people entering the agricultural industry.

C. Commercial Land Use

The majority of commercial activity in the Town compliments the dominant agricultural uses and serves limited residential needs. The Town foresees that trend to continue. Developable acreage for these activities is abundant, provided that new businesses have a minimal impact on the agricultural community and are complimentary to surrounding uses. There is a desire by Town residents to preserve and protect the existing open space and maintain its rural character, resulting in a future desire for very limited commercial activity in the Town.

D. 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 2.8% (existing percentage of road right-of-way) times 216 acres (216 acre increase in residential use), or 6 more acres of road right of way over the next 20 years.

In addition to the creation of new roads, the following existing roads are recognized as gravel or dirt roads: Elm Rd., Buena Vista Dr., Lake Rd., and Town Line Rd (along the western Town boundary). It is the intent of the Town to maintain these facilities as unpaved roads.

E. Non-Metallic Mining

It is difficult to project changes in acreage of non-metallic mining operations; however, conditions are favorable in certain areas of the Town for continued extraction of this natural resource. As stated earlier, there are three active non-metallic mining operations within the central portion of the Town. Buena Vista officials should maintain communications with these and future operators to consider the costs and benefits of future extraction operations.

F. Trends in Land Values

Table 8.2 below describes the increase in the equalized values for the different property types, as compiled by the State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue. 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 12/03*)

Table 8.2 Equalized Assessed Property Values, Town of Buena Vista

Type of Property	1980		1990		2000	
	Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total
Residential	\$5,197,000	15%	\$9,861,000	25%	\$26,844,000	50%
Commercial	\$178,000	1%	\$384,000	1%	\$627,000	1%
Manufacturing	\$0	0%	\$124,000	0%	\$72,000	0%
Agricultural	\$24,157,000	70%	\$23,673,000	59%	\$7,999,000	15%
Swamp and Waste	\$3,000	0%	\$24,000	0%	\$107,000	0%
Forest	\$4,320,000	12%	\$3,686,000	9%	\$7,693,000	14%
Other	N/A	0%	N/A	0%	\$9,034,000	17%
Personal Property	\$880,000	3%	\$2,052,000	5%	\$1,159,000	2%
Total Value	\$34,735,000	100%	\$39,804,000	100%	\$53,535,000	100%

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

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 premature development of lands at densities more appropriate to a suburban or urban fringe area. Due to the important role agriculture plays in the community's economy and character, the primary recommendations for limiting conflict are to direct non-farm residential building away from intensive agricultural operations and to limit development densities throughout the Town.

A specific area of possible conflict is located at the Plover/Buena Vista border near the Hwy 54 corridor. The Town of Plover has identified lands east of the Village of Plover corporate boundary and east of I-39 as likely growth areas over the next twenty years. The Town of Buena Vista shows the areas on its Future Land Use map along the STH 54 corridor within its boundaries as higher intensity agricultural operations, which includes a hog farm. The two Towns should maintain communication about the potential for conflict in this area as non-farm

development occurs. The Town recommends limiting residential development in close proximity to the higher intensity agricultural operations or the use of buffers (spatial or vegetative) by new development.

Section 8.4 Redevelopment Areas

As of the writing of this plan, the Town has not identified any areas for redevelopment within its boundaries.

Section 8.5 Land Use Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal 1: Protect the principal agricultural use and purpose of the drainage ditches.

Objective 1: Limit non-farm residences within the drainage district.

Policy 1.1: Adhere to rules and recommendations set forth by the Portage County Drainage District.

Policy 1.2: Recommend that lands within the drainage district that are designated as Enterprise Agriculture (L-1) be zoned A-1, Exclusive Agriculture.

Goal 2: Preserve and protect farmland for present and future generations.

Objective 1: Limit non-farm residences in and adjacent to productive agricultural areas.

Policy 1.1: Lands adjacent to A-1 Zoning should be developed at a density of four (4) lots per forty (40) acres. Lands within this ‘agricultural buffer area’ are recommended to be developed at a minimum lot size of 5 acres; however, it may be appropriate for some of these areas to be developed at 2 acre lot sizes only per Town approval.

Objective 2: Minimize conflicts between farm and non-farm uses.

Policy 2.1: Recommend the use of spatial and vegetative buffers adjacent to active agricultural uses. Residences should be located at least 250 feet from agricultural operations.

Goal 3: Preserve and protect lands that are aesthetically important to the community because they help give Buena Vista its rural character.

Objective 1: Preserve and protect these lands for future generations including woodlands, grasslands, old or fallow fields, steeper slopes, and smaller, family-type farms and fields.

Policy 1.1: Limit development densities to two lots per 40 acres in designated areas.

Policy 1.2: Lands adjacent to designated areas should be developed at a minimum density of 10 acres (“four per forty”), with a minimum 5 acre lot size.

Goal 4: Preserve, protect, and manage natural resources and the environment.

Objective 1: Identify important natural resources in the Town.

Policy 1.1: Important natural resources in the Town are to include: drainage ditches, lakes, rivers, productive agricultural soils, moraines, and large tracts of wooded lands.

Policy 1.2: Acknowledge that prairie chicken management is of continuing importance in the area.

Objective 2: Protect the quality of the groundwater aquifer which supplies drinking water to the Town and surrounding area.

Policy 2.1: Recommend the use of good farming practices to minimize resource degradation, such as groundwater contamination and wind erosion. Residential development should occur at densities that minimizes negative impacts to groundwater.

Goal 5: Maintain and protect the Town's rural character.

Objective 1: Limit growth within the Town and protect rural agricultural areas.

Policy 1.1: Any request for a subdivision of more than four (4) contiguous lots must have Town approval.

Policy 1.2: Create a Town subdivision ordinance.

Objective 2: Protect the area's scenic beauty, including the avoidance of unnecessary signs, billboards, and structural blight.

Policy 2.1: Encourage commercial uses that are fitting with community character and on a scale appropriate to surrounding uses.

Policy 2.2: Consider the creation of a Town sign ordinance.

Policy 2.3: Recommend the County strengthen its sign ordinance regarding billboards.

Goal 6: Maintain a balance between the best interest of the community and the property rights of the individual.

Policy: Maintain open communication between the Town and its citizens.

Map 8.2 Future Land Use

Section 8.6 Future Land Use Recommendations

Table 8.3 and Map 8.2 illustrate the Future Land Use recommendations for the Town of Buena Vista Comprehensive Plan, and identify how future development should proceed to meet the Town’s goal of encouraging a pattern of community growth and development that will provide a quality living environment, protect rural character, and maintain the agricultural economy. Future development and redevelopment should be encouraged in an orderly pattern adjacent to and compatible with existing development.

Table 8.3 Future Land Use in the Town of Buena Vista, 2025

Land Use Category	2005 Acres	% (of total)	2010 Acres	2015 Acres	2020 Acres	2025 Acres	% (of total)	Change 2005 to 2025
Residential	964	2.5%	1,018	1,072	1,126	1,180	3.0%	22.4%
Commercial	32	0.1%	32	35	35	37	0.1%	15.4%
Industrial	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0%	0.0%
Agricultural	22,323	56.7%	22,299	22,221	22,192	22,112	56.2%	-0.9%
Governmental/Institutional	25	0.1%	25	25	25	25	0.1%	0.0%
Road Right-of-Way	1,094	2.8%	1,094	1,097	1,096	1,099	2.8%	0.5%
Parks and Recreation	2,774	7.1%	2,774	2,774	2,774	2,774	7.1%	0.0%
Non-Metallic Mineral Extraction	154	0.4%	154	194	194	234	0.6%	51.9%
Woodlands and Open Space	11,927	30.3%	11,897	11,875	11,851	11,832	30.1%	-0.8%
Total Acreage	39,293	100%	39,293	39,293	39,293	39,293	100%	

Source: Town of Buena Vista and Portage County Planning and Zoning Department

Land Use recommendations include both immediate and long range planning recommendations to be implemented. The long range Land Use recommendations are not considered to be inconsistent or in conflict with the Town’s existing zoning map because they will be implemented over the course of the planning period as development proposals and land use changes are presented to the Town for consideration.

Section 8.7 Future Land Use Categories

MAPPING CRITERIA

Categorizing the many acres of land in the Town 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.

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 was 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:

1. Existing developed residential or recreational zoning.
2. Subdivisions or 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.

Other lands that may be identified as residential include areas for new or future expansion of residential uses based on goals and policies in this Plan. Existing non residential uses would be allowed until future residential development occurs. Densities for new residential development are recommended to be at a two (2) acre minimum per Town approval.

Land Use Categories: Residential

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 develop 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 use may require a change to the land use map. Commercial uses that have developed as special exceptions under agricultural zoning have also been included in this category.

Land Use Categories:

Commercial: Includes uses as allowed in Commercial Zoning districts.

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

Agricultural Mapping Criteria

Lands recommended predominantly 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 differentiation of soil characteristics throughout the County, changing agricultural economy, and development pressures, three categories of agriculture will be used based on the intensity of the agricultural operations in that area:

Land Use Categories:

L-1 Enterprise Agriculture: The Enterprise Agriculture District 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 district's 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, commercial or industrial uses as principle uses.

L-2 Intermediate Agriculture: The Intermediate Agriculture Category is intended to preserve and enhance land for agricultural uses. Large livestock operations should be appropriately sited to ensure compatible land use and minimize conflicts with adjacent uses.

The intensity of agricultural uses allowed in this district is less than that of the L-1 Enterprise Agriculture category but more than the L-3 Limited Agriculture category. This category's uses and regulations are designed to encourage agricultural uses in areas where soil and other conditions are best suited to these agricultural pursuits, and control residential development to avoid potential conflict with agriculture uses.

Residential development in these areas is recommended to occur in a manner that preserves rural character, protects open space, and promotes the rural lifestyle. **Lot densities for lands in this category are recommended to be 20 acres, with an allowable minimum lot sizes of five (5) acres.**

L-3 Limited Agriculture/Mixed Use: The Limited Agriculture District 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 districts, and prevent premature conversion of rural lands to urban and other non-agricultural uses. The district'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.

Lot densities for lands in this category are recommended to be 10 acres, with an allowable minimum lot sizes of five (5) acres.

Natural / Rural Areas Mapping Criteria

Lands recommended to remain in their natural state or for non-intensive uses such as recreation, wildlife habitat, or forest management. This category 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 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:

Natural Areas – 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.

Rural Areas – Limited Development: Identifies lands that are environmentally or aesthetically important to the community, they include: woodlands, grasslands, steeper slopes, smaller farms and fields, and other characteristics that define a rural area. Limited residential development could occur in these areas without negatively impacting the ecological value or rural character. Development densities for lands within this category are recommended to be no more than 20 acres, with a minimum lot size of five (5) acres.

Institutional Land Mapping Criteria

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: **Institutional**

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: **Non Metallic Mineral Extraction**