

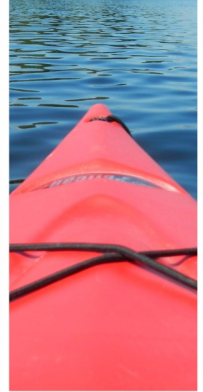
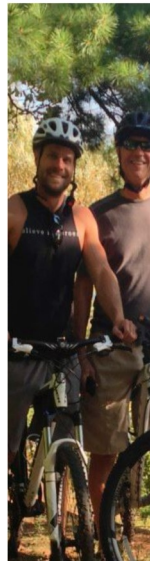
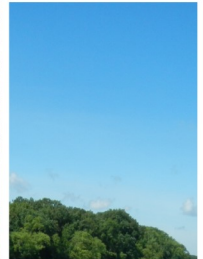
# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Town of Grand Rapids  
Wood County, Wisconsin

2021

Prepared by:  
Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission

With Assistance of the:  
Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning



# Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan

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The Town of Grand Rapids and Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning would like to thank all who participated in the planning process.



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# 1. Introduction

On August 8, 2018 the Grand Rapids Town Board officially approved moving forward with a complete update of the 2009 Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan. The Town Plan Commission was tasked with preparing a plan that will provide the primary framework and policy-directing strategy to guide the coordinated development of the town over the next several years.

Welcome to the *Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan – 2021.*



*Town of Grand Rapids Municipal Building*

## Purpose

Comprehensive planning stems from the core responsibility of the Town of Grand Rapids to protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community. This comprehensive plan is the most fundamental planning document that can be prepared by the town. It is designed to guide current and future development of the community, and provides the foundation for zoning and land use decisions. This includes a vision for the future with realistic goals, objectives, policies, and programs that will provide direction over the next 10 to 20 years. Moreover, proper planning helps organize efforts, financial resources, and time, creating efficiency. This plan is intended to serve the Grand Rapids Town Board, town committees/commissions, and most importantly the town residents.

## Statutory Basis

This plan was prepared pursuant to [§ 66.1001](#) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

According to statute, the Town of Grand Rapids may adopt, prepare or amend a plan *“made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity or the general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.”*

There are (9) nine elements that a comprehensive plan shall address as defined by the comprehensive planning law:

1. Issues and Opportunities
2. Housing
3. Transportation
4. Utilities and Community Facilities
5. Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
6. Economic Development
7. Intergovernmental Cooperation
8. Land-Use
9. Implementation

Furthermore, the comprehensive planning law identifies consistency requirements. Beginning on January 1, 2010, if the Town of Grand Rapids “enacts or amends” any of the following ordinances, the ordinances shall be consistent with the town’s comprehensive plan.

1. Official Mapping
2. Zoning
3. Land-Subdivision
4. Shorelands or Wetlands



### Plan Organization

- **Section 1. Introduction:** Provides an overview of the purpose, planning process and timeframe for the development of the *Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan – 2021*.
- **Section 2. Issues and Opportunities Element:** Presents important community facts and insights into the past and present, to conceptualize how the town might be in the future.
- **Section 3. Housing Element:** Assesses the town’s current housing stock and analyzes housing needs, to ensure an adequate housing supply that meets current and future demands.
- **Section 4. Transportation Element:** Reviews the town’s transportation system components and discusses current and future changes/additions to that system.
- **Section 5. Utilities and Community Facilities Element:** Provides an overview of applicable utilities, community facilities and government services in the town. Framework is presented to help guide future town-level services.
- **Section 6. Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources Element:** Analyzes important town landscape characteristics and resources to effectively manage future community development, while preserving the functions of agricultural, natural and cultural resources.
- **Section 7. Economic Development Element:** Analyzes the town’s labor force, economic base and the types of businesses and industries that are desired. Additionally, this section identifies state, regional and county economic development resources available to the town.
- **Section 8. Intergovernmental Cooperation Element:** Assesses current cooperative activities and relationships with other public agencies, to identify opportunities for joint planning and decision making.
- **Section 9. Land-Use Element:** Presents an inventory of the existing land uses in the town. Additionally, this section analyzes land use trends, supply, demand, conflicts, and contains a future land use map guiding future land use decisions.
- **Section 10. Implementation Element:** Compilation of specific actions necessary to effectively implement the overall vision, goals, objectives, policies, and programs identified in the nine elements of the plan.
- **Section 11. Appendices:** Contains supplementary reference material that is helpful in providing a more comprehensive understanding of information presented in the plan.

## **Planning Process**

The planning process for the *Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan – 2021* spanned a little over two years starting in the fall of 2019. Initially, the Grand Rapids Town Board requested assistance from the Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning for planning services and the preparation of a complete update of the town’s 2009 comprehensive plan. The planning process involved multiple phases. A timeline of the planning process is presented in (Figure 1).

The primary function of the Town Plan Commission was overseeing the coordination and development of the comprehensive plan. The commission met monthly and was responsible for preparing updates to the plan’s nine elements, reviewing data, prioritizing needs, and determining goals, objectives, and policies based on information gathered from the public. Subsequently, the commission recommends adoption of the plan to the Town Board.

An extensive review of the 2009 comprehensive plan was performed to see what had occurred since the last plan was developed. Updated information and data was collected on the physical and social characteristics of the Town of Grand Rapids and their relationship to current and future development. There was regular and meaningful public involvement throughout the planning process. Goals, objectives, policies, and programs were updated to provide direction over the next 10 to 20 years.

The planning process is not finished with the completion or adoption of this plan. The Town of Grand Rapids will be responsible to ensure that implementation of the plan is consistent with its overall vision, goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations.

## **Public Participation**

Nowhere is the commitment to resident involvement more important than in local issues concerning comprehensive land use planning. The Town of Grand Rapids recognizes public participation as one of the most important aspects of the planning process. Public involvement is important to assure that the plan continues to truly reflect community attitudes, needs and input from the public. Consequently, the Town Board adopted public participation procedures early in the planning process to assure public input is responded to and incorporated into the plan. This is a requirement of [§ 66.1001\(4\)\(a\)](#) Wis. Stats. The adopted public participation plan is presented in (Appendix C) of this plan.

High importance was placed on fostering active public participation in every stage of the plan update. This included a community survey, public meetings, public hearings, and other public outreach activities. A community survey provided a majority of the public input utilized in the plan update. Many of the ideas, concerns and comments that were gathered in the community survey are referred to in the plan and reflected in its overall goals, objectives and policies.

In March 2020, the Plan Commission mailed out 3,330 community surveys to all Grand Rapids residents and property owners. The mailing package contained a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and a pre-paid postage return envelope. After approximately two weeks, 1,378 completed surveys were returned by mail with a completion/response rate of over 41.4%. The return rate of over 41.4% is considered very strong for a survey distributed in this manner.

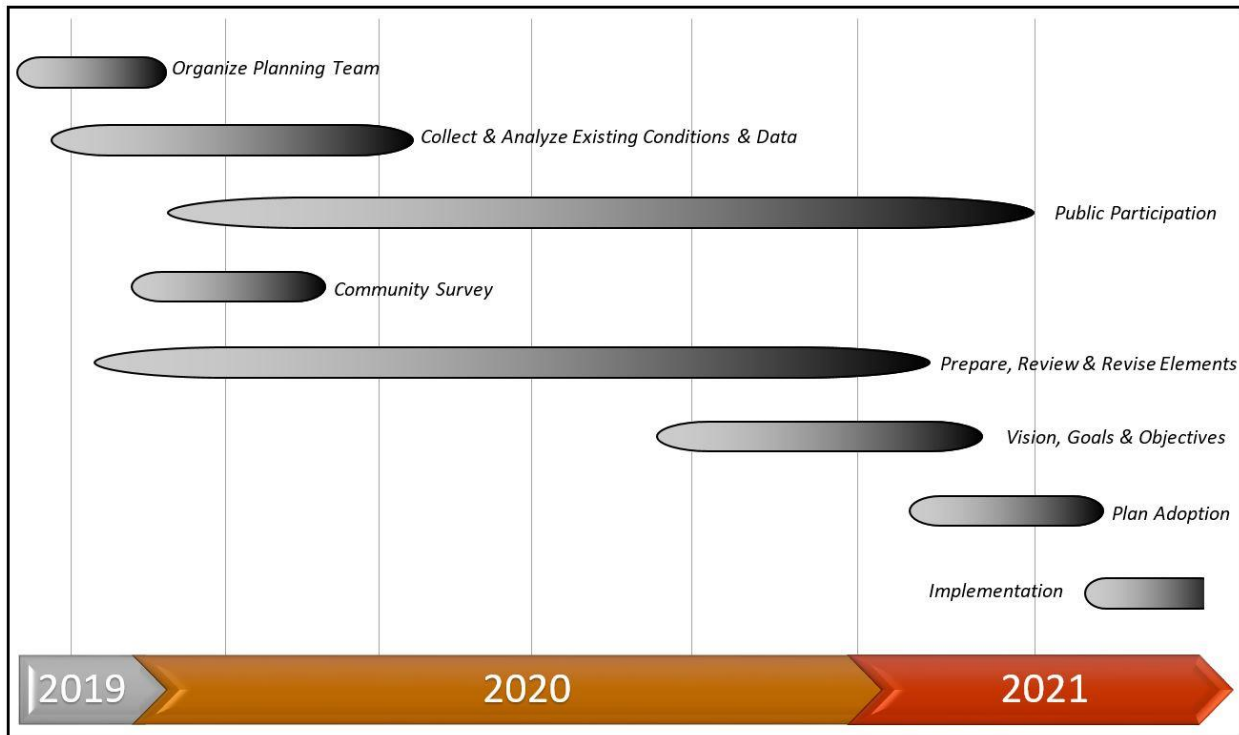
**3,330 Surveys Distributed**  
**1,378 Surveys Returned**  

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**41.4% Completion/Return Rate**

All surveys were reviewed and the data was compiled into a survey summary report. The [Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey Summary](#) is presented in (Appendix D.) of this plan for reference purposes. The summary presents numeric tabulation and graphic representation for each question in the survey. Data presented in the summary document is incorporated throughout this plan.

**Figure 1: Planning Process Timeline**





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## 2. Issues & Opportunities

The Town of Grand Rapids is the largest unincorporated town in Wood County and the 13<sup>th</sup> largest in Wisconsin for population (2020). With increased suburban development, the town has been continually molding land use regulations in an attempt to answer the needs of residents, while at the same time preserving the highly desirable characteristics of the town. Change is inevitable in all communities. Understanding the past and present will assist town officials to effectively manage future change.



*Lake Wazeecha*

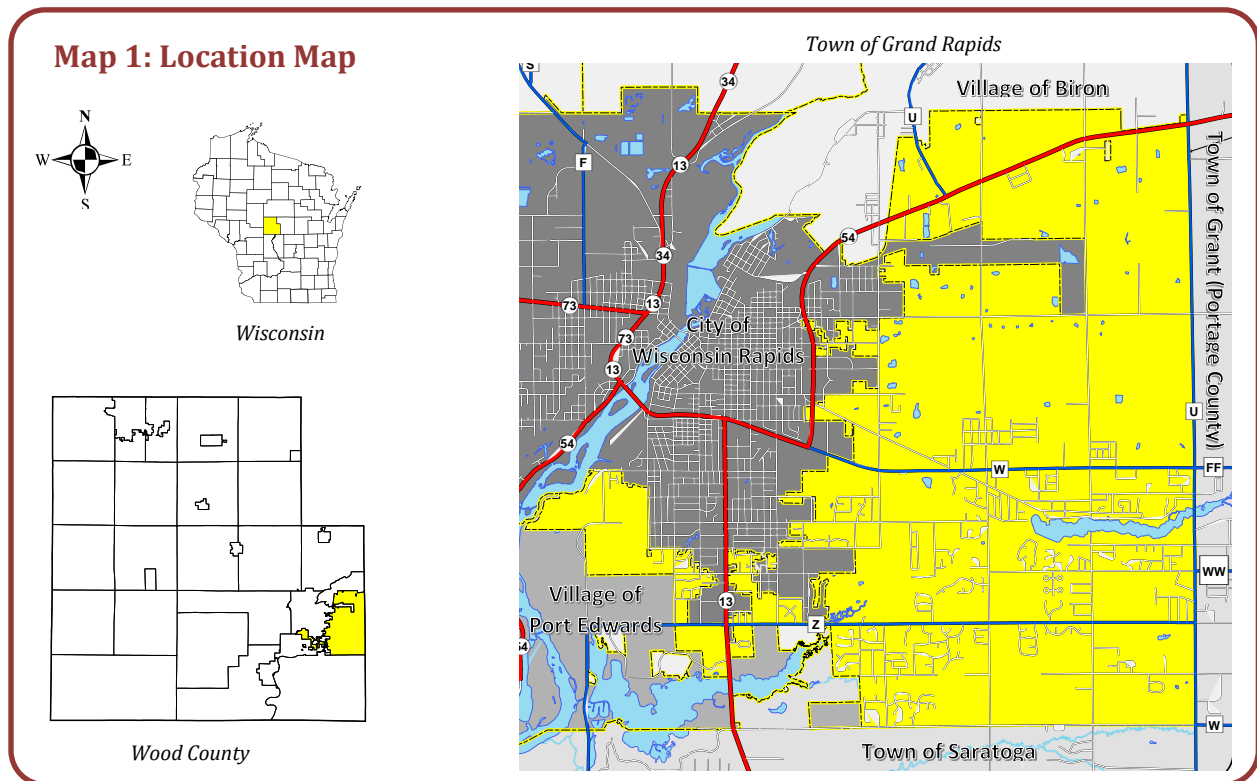
## Introduction

This section presents community trends and insights into the past and present, to conceptualize how the Town of Grand Rapids might be in the future. It is important for town officials to recognize projections and trends to effectively plan for the future of the town. This background information provides a community profile of the town. The overall plan’s vision, goals, objectives, and policies were defined through public participation and background information identified in this element. This provides a rational basis for the town to make current and future development decisions.

*Wis. Stat. § 66.1001(2)(a).  
Issues and opportunities element:  
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.*

## Location

The Town of Grand Rapids an unincorporated town situated in the southeast corner of Wood County in central Wisconsin (Map 1). The town consists of ±20.3 square miles (±13,023 acres), measuring approximately 6 miles from north to south and 6.5 miles from east to west. The town is situated on the east side of the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Additionally, Grand Rapids borders the Villages of Biron and Port Edwards, Town of Saratoga (Wood County), and the Town of Grant (Portage County).





**History**

The Town of Grand Rapids was initially established in 1850 as part of Portage County. The town got its name after the Village of Grand Rapids (now City of Wisconsin Rapids) which it contained. The Village of Grand Rapids was located on the east side of the Wisconsin River and was named after the rapids along that part of the river. These rapids were known as the Grand Rapids as early as 1839. Since then, dams have eliminated the rapids.

The geographical extent of what now exists as the Town of Grand Rapids changed several times since 1850. In 1856, Wood County was created and split-off from Portage County. At that time, Grand Rapids was the sole township in the county and actually included all of the county’s territory. The extent of the town continually changed as Wood County created additional townships. The Town of Grand Rapids now includes all of T22N, R6E, except for areas of the City of Wisconsin Rapids, Village of Biron and Village of Port Edwards. The town’s present municipal building was constructed in 1966.

As with most towns in Wood County, the Town of Grand Rapids evolved from a logging economy to an agriculture-based community. Around the mid 1900’s, the town started transitioning into more of a suburban community with a variety of land uses including: residential, commercial, recreational, industrial, and agricultural.

**Local Government Background**

The Town of Grand Rapids is governed by a five-member, elected Town Board. One member of the board serves as Chairperson, a position that is also elected by general ballot. The Town Board holds regular monthly meetings and oversees a budget of \$3.74 million (2020). The assessed value of the town is approximately \$490,000,000 (2020). Annual town meetings give all town residents a vote in major decisions.



Town of Grand Rapids Municipal Building

In addition to the Town Board, there are several full and part-time staff members. The Town Clerk and Treasurer are appointed positions. Duties of both of these positions are prescribed under Wisconsin Statutes. Other staff positions are in the administrative department, building inspection, zoning administration, police department, and public works department. A well-equipped volunteer fire department also serves Grand Rapids and surrounding areas.

Fourteen total committees and commissions are appointed to oversee policy development, management of town operations, and direct other town functions.

## Demographic Information & Social Characteristics

Demographic data and social characteristics information was appropriated from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA). Please note that the WDOA is an agency that prepares the official population estimates and projections for Wisconsin municipalities. Population projections are not a statement of what will happen, but an inference of what might happen. The agency uses several projection methods in an attempt to get the most accurate numbers. The next national census commences in 2020. 10-year census population data is more accurate than projections and estimates, and is the main source of information to see how communities change over time.

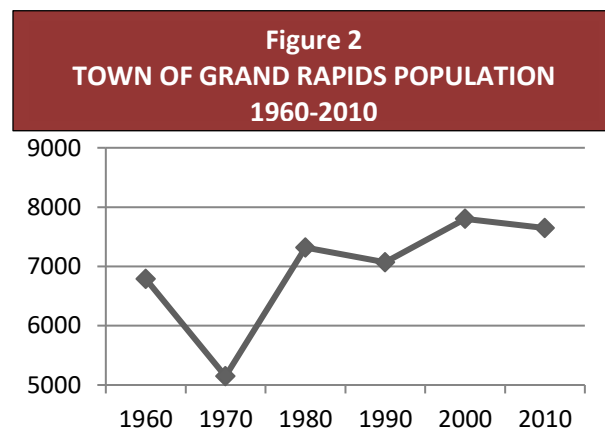
### Population

Historically, the Town of Grand Rapids has been either the fastest growing or one of the fastest growing municipalities in Wood County. Official U.S. Census population counts are detailed in (Table 1) and (Figure 2). The town’s population has fluctuated several times due to the direct results of annexations to the City of Wisconsin Rapids. For example, between 1960 and 1970 the population of Grand Rapids dropped over 24%. Another annexation occurred between 1980 and 1990 resulting in a smaller population decrease of 3.4%.

Overall, for the past several decades (1960 to 2010) the Town of Grand Rapids has experienced a population growth of 12.6%. Grand Rapids experienced what many communities that are located next to growing cities experienced; suburban growth between 1960 and 2000. During this period, suburban growth from the City of Wisconsin Rapids to nearby unincorporated towns increased. According to the most recent census (2010), the town had a total population of 7,646.

Year	Population	Percent Change (%)
1960	6,791	--
1970	5,147	-24.2
1980	7,319	42.2
1990	7,071	-3.4
2000	7,801	10.3
2010	7,646	-2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



**Population Estimates**

Recent population estimates from 2011 to 2019 indicate that the Town of Grand Rapids has experienced relatively steady population growth. Population estimates for the Town of Grand Rapids are presented in (Table 2). The most current population estimates are for the year 2019, with the town having a total population of 7,796. Additionally, the town had an estimated population density of 379 people per square mile in 2019 (WDOA).

<b>Table 2</b> <b>TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS POPULATION</b> <b>(Estimates)</b> <b>2011-2019</b>		
Year	Population	Percent Change (%)
2011	7,658	--
2012	7,659	0.01
2013	7,677	0.2
2014	7,691	0.2
2015	7,699	0.1
2016	7,701	0.02
2017	7,688	-0.2
2018	7,748	0.8
2019	7,796	0.6
Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration		

**Population Projections**

Projections of the anticipated future population of the Town of Grand Rapids are presented in (Table 3). Again, these projections are not a statement of what will happen, but a presumption of what might happen if patterns and trends hold true. Based on population projections from 2020 out to year 2035, the town will continue to grow. From 2020 to 2035 the town’s population is projected to increase by 150, or approximately 2%.

<b>Table 3</b> <b>TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS POPULATION</b> <b>(Projections)</b> <b>2020-2035</b>		
Year	Population	Percent Change (%)
2020	7,795	--
2025	7,880	1.1
2030	7,925	0.6
2035	7,945	0.3
Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration		



### Population Trends & Change

Are Grand Rapids population trends unique to the Wisconsin Rapids area? (Table 4) presents a comparison of the town's population to area communities. Scanning the list, it can be seen that from 1980 to 2010 the Greater Wisconsin Rapids Area overall has slightly increased in population by 2.4%. During that same timeframe, the Town of Grand Rapids had a 4.5% increase in population. Although the town has continued to gain population since 1980, the growth has slowed compared to back in the mid 1970's.

According to the most recent census (2010), the Town of Grand Rapids had a population of 7,646, or 32% larger than the next largest unincorporated town (Saratoga) in the area. All municipalities listed in (Table 4) decreased in population between 2000 and 2010. During that timeframe, the entire area decreased by 2.6%.

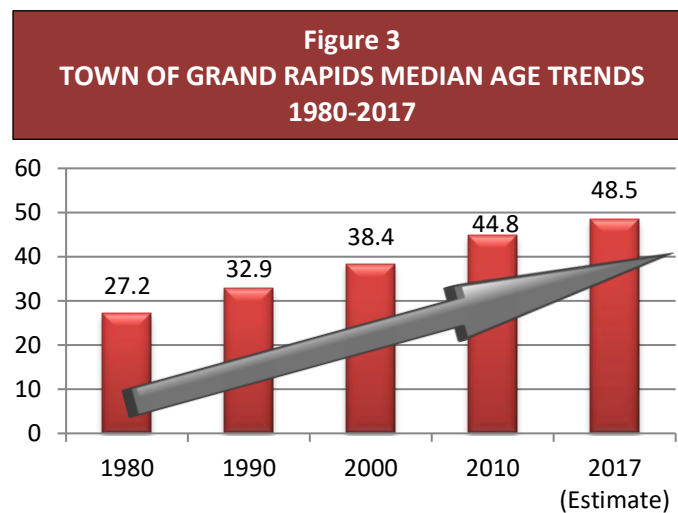
Table 4 GREATER WISCONSIN RAPIDS AREA POPULATION TRENDS 1980-2010							
Community	1980	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change (%)		
					80-90	90-00	00-10
<b>T. Grand Rapids</b>	<b>7,319</b>	<b>7,071</b>	<b>7,801</b>	<b>7,646</b>	<b>-3.4</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>-2.0</b>
T. Saratoga	4,363	4,775	5,383	5,142	9.4	12.7	-4.5
T. Port Edwards	1,387	1,351	1,446	1,427	-2.6	7.0	-1.3
T. Seneca	1,245	1,133	1,202	1,120	-9.0	6.1	-6.8
T. Sigel	1,332	1,192	1,130	1,051	-10.5	-5.2	-7.0
T. Rudolph	1,385	1,180	1,161	1,028	-14.8	-1.6	-11.5
T. Grant	1,593	1,673	2,020	1,906	5.0	20.7	-5.6
V. Biron	698	794	915	839	13.8	15.2	-8.3
V. Port Edwards	2,077	1,848	1,944	1,818	-11.0	5.2	-6.5
C. Wisconsin Rapids	17,995	18,245	18,435	18,367	1.4	1.0	-0.4
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>	<b>39,394</b>	<b>39,262</b>	<b>41,437</b>	<b>40,344</b>	<b>-.33</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>-2.6</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Interestingly, 56.6% of survey respondents said they would like to see the Town of Grand Rapids population be “about the same”. This can be compared with 31.8% that would like to see the town’s population be “somewhat larger” and 2.8% would like to see it “smaller”.

## Age and Gender Distribution

(Figure 3) illustrates the aging population in the Town of Grand Rapids since 1980. Grand Rapids has a current estimated median age of 48.5 (2017). This is over 21-years older than the 1980 median age in the town. This similar trend is also the case for Wood County, Wisconsin, and U.S. as a whole. It is interesting to note, the median age for the State of Wisconsin was 38.4 in 2010, compared to the town median age of 44.8. Why is the median age in Grand Rapids higher than the state as a whole? The primary reason is that metropolitan areas in Wisconsin remain home to a greater proportion of younger individuals. The rising median age is indicative of an aging population that will require different community needs and services.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

What has caused the increase in the town's median age? Has it been a drastic reduction in children under the age of 18? Has it been caused by increased longevity of the elderly population? Or, has the change in median age been driven by something else? (Table 5) on the next page, provides some details about the population of various age groups from 2000 to 2010. The value of the population profile is based on the assumption that the Town of Grand Rapids: (1) wants to meet the needs of its residents and (2) residents have needs and expectations that change with age. It also helps to explain community changes that are occurring.

The first fact that can be seen in (Table 5) is the substantial drop in individuals under the age of 50 and the substantial increase in population over the age of 50. The town's transition into a top-heavy age profile is similar to that of Wood County and the State of Wisconsin as a whole. Moreover, the increase in the median age of town residents is explained by the changes in these two age cohorts.

The WI Department of Administration – Demographic Services Center predicts that Wood County’s 65-and-over-population will consist of over 30% of the county population in the year 2035. In comparison to 15% back in the year 2000. Basically, the percent of 65-and-over-population will double from 2000 to 2035. This trend may be exacerbated in the town because of its higher median age than the county as a whole.

It is extremely important for town officials to recognize this trend when planning for the future of the town. It suggests that the types of services and infrastructure may need to change in the foreseeable future in the areas of schools, housing types, transportation, workforce, emergency preparedness, recreation, and more. In addition, this trend suggests that resources to pay for town services may change, placing a heavier financial burden on those with limited incomes.

<b>Table 5 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS POPULATION PROFILE 2000-2010</b>					
	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Percent Change (2000-2010)</b>
Under 5 Years	464	5.9%	396	5.2%	-17%
5 to 9 Years	557	7.1%	464	6.1%	-20%
10 to 14 Years	720	9.2%	569	7.4%	-27%
15 to 19 Years	657	8.4%	516	6.7%	-27%
20 to 24 Years	240	3.1%	269	3.5%	11%
25 to 29 Years	275	3.5%	297	3.9%	7%
30 to 34 Years	527	6.8%	351	4.6%	-50%
35 to 39 Years	746	9.6%	409	5.3%	-82%
40 to 44 Years	752	9.6%	571	7.5%	-32%
45 to 49 Years	715	9.2%	766	10.0%	7%
50 to 54 Years	604	7.7%	741	9.7%	18%
55 to 59 Years	500	6.4%	657	8.6%	24%
60 to 64 Years	378	4.8%	541	7.1%	30%
65 to 69 Years	235	3.0%	430	5.6%	45%
70 to 74 Years	187	2.4%	314	4.1%	40%
75 to 79 Years	112	1.4%	185	2.4%	39%
80 to 84 Years	84	1.1%	104	1.4%	19%
85 to 89 Years	33	0.4%	52	0.7%	37%
90 years +	15	0.2%	14	0.2%	-7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,801</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>7,646</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-2%</b>
Male	3,944	50.6%	3,893	50.9%	-1%
Female	3,857	49.4%	3,753	49.1%	-3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The largest decline in age cohorts was in those who are 30 to 34 and 35 to 40. Many individuals of that age are parents of the younger age groups. The town needs to consider reasons for this trend and develop public policy to attempt to reverse that trend.

**Race**

Grand Rapids has experienced a very slight mixing of cultures over the past 15 to 25 years with respect to the number of minorities that live in the town. Shown in (Table 6) the Town of Grand Rapids has a population that continues to consist of predominantly White (96.7%), according to the 2010 U.S. Census. A very small percent of residents are: Asian (1%); Two or More Races (0.8%); American Indian and Alaska Native (0.6%); Some Other Race (0.5%); and Black or African American (0.4%). This trend is similar to that of Wood County as a whole.

Table 6 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS POPULATION BY RACE 2010		
Race	Number	Percent (%)
White	7,394	96.7
Black or African American	27	0.4
American Indian and Alaska Native	43	0.6
Asian	73	1.0
Some Other Race	36	0.5
Two or More Races	72	0.8
Source: U.S. Census Bureau		

**Educational Attainment**

Educational attainment is a term commonly referring to the highest degree of education an individual has completed. Educational attainment data for the Town of Grand Rapids, Wood County and Wisconsin are presented in (Table 7). The level of education of Grand Rapids residents, age 25 and older, has continued to increase over the past several decades. This is the result of more emphasize placed on education than in the past. The town has consistently had a greater proportion of high school graduates, residents with Associates Degrees and Bachelor’s Degrees than both the state and county. In 2010, the town had a higher percentage of residents with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher (31.8%); when compared to Wood County (19.2%), and Wisconsin (25.8). The nearby University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point and other U. W. campuses help train people who work in the area and live in Grand Rapids.

Table 7 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (%) (Age 25 and over) 1990-2010									
Educational Level	T. of Grand Rapids			Wood County			Wisconsin		
	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010
High School Graduate	87.7	94.7	93.0	78.3	84.8	89.2	78.6	85.1	89.4
Associates Degree	11.7	9.4	14.6	8.2	8.1	10.9	7.1	7.5	9.0
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	19.2	27.6	31.8	13.5	16.9	19.2	17.7	22.4	25.8
Source: U.S. Census Bureau									

Today, many area businesses and industries require specialized training and a two-year Associate degree. Mid-State Technical College, located in Grand Rapids works closely with area businesses to provide customized training programs to meet changing needs. In 2010, the town had a higher percentage of residents with Associates Degrees (14.6%); when compared to Wood County (10.9%), and Wisconsin (9.0%).

**Income and Poverty**

(Table 8) lists the income levels for Grand Rapids, Wood County and Wisconsin. It is noteworthy that Grand Rapids’ household, family and per capita income levels are significantly higher than the county and state in both 2000 and 2010. As of the 2010 census, the town’s median household income of \$75,503 was almost 60% higher than Wood County’s \$47,204 median household income. This fact is understandable, given the higher college education levels discussed on the previous page. Higher income levels typically translate to a desire for larger homes, a fact that must be considered when developing land use regulation in the town.

Table 8 INCOME LEVELS 2000-2010						
Community	2000			2010		
	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income
<b>T. of Grand Rapids</b>	<b>\$62,515</b>	<b>\$66,423</b>	<b>\$25,331</b>	<b>\$75,503</b>	<b>\$80,806</b>	<b>\$31,850</b>
Wood County	\$41,595	\$50,798	\$20,203	\$47,204	\$58,294	\$24,893
Wisconsin	\$43,791	\$52,911	\$21,271	\$51,598	\$64,869	\$26,624

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Poverty figures are also provided by the U.S. Census. The percent of persons and families at or below the poverty level in 1990, 2000 and 2010 is shown in (Table 9) for Grand Rapids, Wood County and Wisconsin. Of all families in the town for the 2010 census, 1.3% had incomes below the poverty figure. This is substantially lower than both the county and state. Of all individuals in the town for 2010, 1.2% were below the poverty level. Again, this figure is much lower than the county or state for the same period.

Table 9 PERCENT IN POVERTY 1990-2010						
Community	% Families			% Individuals		
	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010
<b>Town of Grand Rapids</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
Wood County	6.4%	4.4%	5.8	8.5%	6.5%	8.4%
Wisconsin	7.6%	5.6%	7.7	10.7%	8.7%	11.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

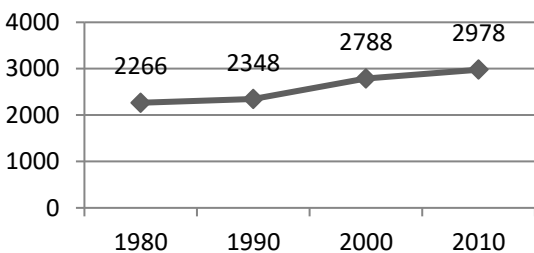


## Household Characteristics

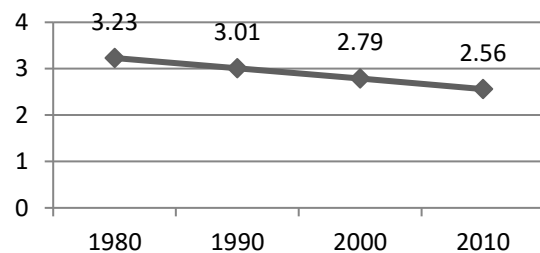
The household characteristics in Grand Rapids are changing as the age and make-up of the population changes. A household includes all people who occupy a housing unit. A household is different than a housing unit. A housing unit is a structure, i.e., single-family home, duplex, four-plex, etc. (Figure 4 and 5) illustrate two distinct household trends in the Town of Grand Rapids. First, the number of households in Grand Rapids continues to increase, having gone from 2,266 in 1980, growing steadily to its present 2,978 (2010). The second trend, shown in (Figure 5), is the fact that the average number of persons per household has continuously decreased over the same time period. In 1980, the average household in Grand Rapids had 3.23 persons. Compare that to the 2.56 average population per household today. The trend for more households and fewer people per household is likely to continue throughout the planning period.

Again, although there are fewer persons per household, the town's population is growing. The result is a need for more housing in the town. Demand for traditional subdivision type single-family housing will always be evident, particularly among households with children. However, with an aging population, there may be some changes in the types of housing that residents want or need. The demand for smaller homes, condos, townhomes, senior housing and rental options is expected to increase.

**Figure 4**  
**TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS**  
**1980-2010**



**Figure 5**  
**PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLDS**  
**1980-2010**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Housing Projections

The number of households is a function of population and population per household. (Table 10) outlines Grand Rapids projected household growth and persons per household expected over the next 15 years. As just noted above, the population and total households are expected to continue to increase in the Town of Grand Rapids while the number of persons living in each household is expected to continue to decline. In the year 2035, the town is forecasted to have 3,337 households. That is a gross increase of almost 360 households from 2010. With the expected increase in population and the expected decline in the number of persons per

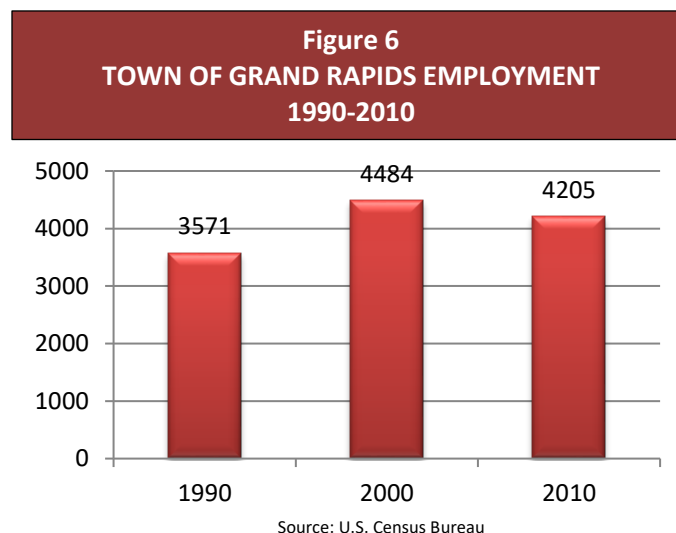
household, Grand Rapids can expect a fairly substantial demand for more housing units and types of available housing. Replacement housing units will also be needed as some are destroyed by fire, wind, or as they become worn and dilapidated. As housing structures are added to accommodate the needs of future households, some undeveloped land will have to be converted.

Table 10 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS HOUSEHOLD PROJECTIONS 2010-2035			
Year	Population	Households	Persons Per Household
2010 Census	7,646	2,978	2.56
2015	7,699	3,061	2.52
2020	7,795	3,139	2.48
2025	7,880	3,217	2.45
2030	7,925	3,278	2.41
2035	7,945	3,337	2.38

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Wisconsin Department of Administration

### Employment Characteristics

(Figure 6) illustrates the general employment characteristics for the Town of Grand Rapids in 1990, 2000 and 2010. According to the 2010 census, the civilian labor force (persons age 16 and over who are either working or looking for a job) in the town totaled 4,205. This number represents approximately 70 percent of the population that was age 16 or over. Overall, the town’s labor force has grown by 17.8 percent from 1990 to 2010. However, from 2000 to 2010 the labor force decreased by 6.2 percent. This decrease may be attributed to the decline in the number of individuals in the working age cohorts as discussed previously and seen in (Table 5). Furthermore, the town experienced a substantial increase in the number of individuals in the retirement age cohorts during this timeframe.



In the future, Grand Rapids may be facing a bodies gap in regards to its workforce. Grand Rapids’ labor force may continue to decline due to the town’s age structure (Table 5). The number of retiring baby boomers may outpace the influx of new workers. Town officials may need to consider strategies to address workforce development challenges. Employment information from the upcoming 2020 Census may be able to further explain and clarify this community trend.

The Town of Grand Rapids is a typical bedroom community. A majority of residents commute to areas outside of the town for work. Commuting characteristics for the town are presented in (Table 11). According to 2017 estimates, almost 94% of Grand Rapids residents work outside the town limits. The mean travel time to work is almost 20 minutes. Travel times demonstrate how jobs in the City of Wisconsin Rapids and City of Stevens Point area contribute to the commuter nature of the town.

This characteristic can also be seen in the 2020 community survey results. Just over 9% of respondents said work in the Town of Grand Rapids, compared to over 46% working in the City of Wisconsin Rapids and 11.3% in the Stevens Point/Plover area.

<b>Table 11</b> <b>TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS COMMUTING CHARACTERISTICS</b> <b>(2017 Estimates)</b>	
<b>Place of Employment</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
In the Town of Grand Rapids	6.3%
Outside of the Town of Grand Rapids	93.7%
<b>Travel Time to Work</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Less than 10 min.	15.1%
10-14 min.	24.8%
15-19 min.	19.5%
20-24 min.	12.1%
25-29 min.	4.9%
30-34 min.	8.6%
35-44 min.	4.8%
45-59 min.	8.0%
60 or more min.	2.1%
<b>Mean Travel Time to Work</b>	<b>19.8 minutes</b>
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates	

(Table 12) presents industry employment information for Grand Rapids workers in 2000 and 2010. During both time periods, the two largest industries in which Grand Rapids’ residents were employed included the: manufacturing sector; and education, health and social services sector. Interestingly, 7 of the 13 industries - a little over half, experienced gains in the number employed in those jobs from 2000 to 2010. The largest noticeable industry increases occurred in the professional services, public administration and information industry sectors. More about Grand Rapids’ economy and job force is presented in the Economic Development Element of this plan.

<b>Table 12</b> <b>TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY</b> <b>(2000-2010)</b>				
<b>INDUSTRY</b> <b>(Employed persons 16 years and over)</b>	2000		2010	
	Number Employed	Percent of Total	Number Employed	Percent of Total
	<b>4,299</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,971</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining	72	1.7%	42	1.1%
Construction	292	6.8%	216	5.4%
Manufacturing	1,415	32.9%	1,152	29.0%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	140	3.3%	147	3.7%
Information	66	1.5%	121	3.0%
Wholesale trade	40	0.9%	52	1.3%
Retail trade	499	11.6%	418	10.5%
Finance, insurance & real estate	248	5.8%	141	3.6%
Professional and personal services	127	3.0%	152	3.8%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	273	6.4%	140	3.5%
Education, health & social services	944	22.0%	991	25.0%
Other professional & related services	88	2.0%	212	5.3%
Public administration	95	2.2%	187	4.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Employment Projections

Information on employment forecasts is unavailable at the township level. However, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development produces projections of industry employment at a regional level. (Table 13) examines ten-year employment forecasts for North Central Wisconsin over the 2016 to 2026 time period. The Town of Grand Rapids is located within this region. It is important to note that unanticipated events may affect the accuracy of these projections.

Employment across all industries is projected to grow by over 7% by 2026, or almost 16,100 workers. Overall, most industries are expected to grow over this period. This further highlights the potential workforce challenges associated with Grand Rapids aging population. Specifically, the town’s labor force growth is slowing, while job growth is expected to continue in the region. The most significant numeral growth is projected in the Education and Health Services industries at almost 5,000 workers. This trend is important for Grand Rapids to identify, being close in proximity to several large medical facilities in Wood County.

<b>Table 13</b> <b>INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS</b> <b>North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Area</b> <b>(2016-2026)</b>			
Industry	2016 Employment	Projected 2026 Employment	Percent Change (2016-2026)
Total All Industries	220,050	236,140	7.30%
<i>Goods Producing</i>	46,170	46,870	1.50%
Natural Resources	6,720	7,190	7.00%
Construction	6,770	7,420	9.60%
Manufacturing	32,690	32,270	-1.30%
<i>Services Producing</i>	160,900	172,640	7.30%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	43,110	44,440	3.10%
Information	2,450	2,460	0.30%
Financial Activities	13,840	14,940	8.00%
Professional and Business Services	13,080	14,730	12.60%
Education and Health Services	45,080	49,980	10.90%
Leisure and Hospitality	19,350	20,720	7.10%
Other Services	11,460	12,080	5.40%
Government	12,530	13,290	6.10%
Self-Employed	12,970	16,630	28.20%

Source: Office of Economic Advisors, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development



**Vision**

As part of the comprehensive planning process, the Plan Commission developed a vision for the Town of Grand Rapids that is realistic and achievable. A vision statement speaks to the future and provides an overall theme for guidance. Furthermore, a vision is a general expression of how the town should be 10 to 20 years from now. All nine comprehensive planning elements identify goals, objectives and policies that support this vision. This vision was defined by the community and provides the foundation on which this plan was built upon.



*The Town of Grand Rapids vision for the future is to preserve its identity as a suburban – rural community with natural areas and high quality of life for residents, while remaining safe, affordable, healthy and sustainable. The guiding principles to achieve this include providing fiscally responsible governance, dependable town services, and exceptional residential living combined with enhanced recreational opportunities and well planned growth.*

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats Analysis (SWOT)**

A “SWOT Analysis” identifies perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that either promote or inhibit the prosperity, safety, health, and general welfare of Grand Rapids residents. Components of the list often identify what needs to be done and puts problems into perspective. The SWOT Analysis aided in the development of an overall “vision” that will provide broad, long-range guidance for the Town of Grand Rapids for the next 10 to 20 years. The complete Town of Grand Rapids SWOT Summary is included in (Appendix B). The cumulative list was developed by the Town Plan Commission through public input received in the community survey.

## Goals, Objectives & Policies

A major component of the comprehensive planning process is the identification of goals, objectives and policies. They provide the basis for community decisions over the next 10-20 years. Most importantly, they provide the framework for guiding current and future development in the Town of Grand Rapids. Furthermore, the vision statement serves as overall policy for the Town of Grand Rapids as well as the foundation for its goals, objectives and policies. The Town Plan Commission developed the goals, objectives and policies of this plan.

- **Goals:** describe general desired outcomes, conditions and/or achievements to strive toward in the future.
- **Objectives:** describe specific targets/tasks that should be achieved in an effort to advance towards accomplishing a goal. Objectives are a subset to goals.
- **Policies:** describe a specific approach or recommendation to achieve an objective of a specific goal.

Elected officials, government leaders, staff, stakeholders, and individual citizens must work together cooperatively to accomplish the goals, objectives and policies of this plan.



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### 3. Housing

Housing is an important component of a community along with the people who live there. In order for communities to function, there must be an adequate supply of housing in proximity to employment, transportation infrastructure, community facilities, amenities, and services. By effectively planning for housing, the town can take a proactive role in shaping the nature of future housing development to meet future needs and ensure community vitality.



*Brookshire Village Subdivision*

## Introduction

This section presents an analysis of the Town of Grand Rapids housing situation. This analysis is known as a “Housing Needs Assessment”. The assessment takes into account the town’s current and projected housing supply, demand and development environment. By considering housing issues now, Grand Rapids can proactively manage residential growth by determining how much housing to develop and in what form it should take. This information provides a basis for the town to make current and future development decisions.

*“Almost 90% of survey respondents rated Grand Rapids housing quality and appearance as excellent - good.”*

Source: 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey

Wis. Stat. § 66.1001(2)(b).  
 Housing element:  
 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.

## Housing Needs Assessment

To better understand how well the local housing stock meets the demands of current and future residents in terms of quality, affordability, and suitability, planners can conduct a housing needs assessment. The following is a summary of historical housing trends and current housing data for the Town of Grand Rapids. A majority of the data was appropriated from the U.S. Census Bureau and the 2018 American Community Survey.

## Housing Units

Housing unit data for the Town of Grand Rapids and Wood County are presented in (Table 14). Grand Rapids had 3,075 total housing units in 2010. This is an increase of 221 residential housing units since 2000 (7.7% increase). Grand Rapids was estimated to have 3,264 housing units in 2018. Wood County experienced an increase of 7.5% in housing units between 2000 and 2010.

Civil Division	2000	2010	*2018	Percent Change (2000-2010)
Town of Grand Rapids	2,854	3,075	*3,264	7.7%
Wood County	31,691	34,088	*35,488	7.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
 \*2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

It is interesting to note, according to the 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey: Over 55% of survey respondents favor new residential development in the town compared to roughly 20% that oppose. It should also be noted that 56.6% of respondents would like to see the town’s population stay about the same over the next 10 years. These two survey responses are somewhat contradictory to each other.

**Age Characteristics**

According to the 2018 American Community Survey Estimates, there are 3,264 total housing units in the Town of Grand Rapids. Population growth data presented in Section 2 noted that Grand Rapids has been either the fastest growing or one of the fastest growing municipalities in Wood County. Substantial suburban growth began in the 1970’s. That suburban growth is reflected in the information in (Table 15). Over 80% of all the housing units in the Town of Grand Rapids were built since 1970 when the suburban movement started. Less than 20% of the housing in the town were constructed prior to 1970. It is estimated that approximately 200 new homes have been built since 2010. As this trend continues, there will be additional pressure to convert undeveloped land into residential development. It is important for the town to determine where residential growth areas should be located and, of equal importance, how those areas will be protected from encroachment of other incompatible land uses.

Sometimes the age of a home can be used as a measure of condition and can indicate units in need of rehabilitation and repair. However, many older homes have been remodeled and kept in good repair, so age alone is not a perfect measure of condition. Only 0.2% of the 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey respondents rated the quality and appearance of housing in the town as “poor”.

<b>Table 15</b> <b>TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS - AGE OF HOUSING</b> <b>(2018 Estimates)</b>		
<b>Year Built</b>	<b>Housing Units</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Built 2010 or later	201	6.1%
Built 2000 to 2009	346	10.6%
Built 1990 to 1999	639	19.6%
Built 1980 to 1989	537	16.5%
Built 1970 to 1979	904	27.7%
Built 1960 to 1969	253	7.8%
Built 1950 to 1959	223	6.8%
Built 1940 to 1949	82	2.5%
Built 1939 or earlier	79	2.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,264</b>	<b>100%</b>
<small>Source: U.S. Census Bureau                      2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</small>		



**Value Characteristics**

The value of housing units in the town is a factor of its age, its location and the local economy. It is also an indication of the current housing demand. Grand Rapids housing value estimates for owner-occupied housing are shown in (Table 16). A little over 16% of all housing units were valued below \$100,000. “Middle income housing”, or those units with a value from \$100,000 to \$200,000 included 56% of Grand Rapids owner-occupied housing units. The balance, those valued from \$200,000 to \$1,000,000 or more, made up a little over a quarter (27.4%) of the total units. Overall, the town offers a good selection of housing for persons of all income levels. This characteristic was also identified in the 2020 community survey results. One of the reasons people choose to live in Grand Rapids is because housing is available and affordable.

According to the 2019 assessment records, the Town of Grand Rapids total value of residential improvements was \$398,613,900.

<b>Table 16</b> <b>TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS – HOUSING VALUES</b> <b>(2018 Estimates)</b>		
Value	Housing Units	Percent of Total
Less than \$50,000 -	174	6.0%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	298	10.2%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	904	30.9%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	744	25.5%
\$200,000 – \$299,999	592	20.3%
\$300,000 - \$499,999	194	6.6%
\$500,000 or more	15	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
 \*2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<b>Table 17</b> <b>MEDIAN HOUSING VALUES</b> <b>(2000 – 2018)</b>		
	2000	*2018
Median – Grand Rapids	\$108,800	\$154,300
Median – Wood County	\$81,400	\$129,900
Median – Wisconsin	\$112,200	\$173,600

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
 \*2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Median housing values have increased over the past several decades as seen in (Table 17). The Town of Grand Rapids had an estimated median housing value of \$154,300 (2018). When compared to Wood County as a whole, the town has a substantially higher median housing value. Both the town and county have consistently had lower median housing values than the state. This can be attributed to the overall lower cost of living outside the large metropolitan areas of Wisconsin.

**Tenure Characteristics**

Tenure refers to whether a housing unit is owner-occupied or renter occupied. Information on tenure is important because the town should have a sufficient supply of units to satisfy the needs of both renters and owner-occupants. (Table 18) below shows occupancy characteristics for the Town of Grand Rapids between 1980 and 2018. The occupancy status of housing units in the Town of Grand Rapids has become slightly more owner- and less renter-occupied since 1980. Occupancy status has remained relatively stable starting in the 2000’s.

<b>Table 18</b> <b>TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS - HOUSING OCCUPANCY CHARACTERISTICS</b> <b>1980-2018</b>				
Year	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant	Total Housing Units
*2018	*2,921 (90%)	*309 (9%)	*34 (1%)	*3,264
2010	NA	NA	NA	3,075
2000	2,607 (92%)	181 (6%)	66 (2%)	2,854
1990	2,143 (89%)	205 (8%)	69 (3%)	2,417
1980	2,012 (76%)	254 (21%)	100 (3%)	2,366
Source: U.S. Census Bureau *2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates				

It is important for Grand Rapids to have availability of quality rental units if town leaders want to attract new residents. New residents and families typically utilize a rental housing unit until they learn the community and find the area in which they want to live. The City of Wisconsin Rapids tenure rates can also be taken into account. The area’s selection of both homeowner units and rental units is acceptable, although the town may want to increase the supply of both to attract younger families.

**Housing Building Permits**

The Uniform Dwelling Code (UDC) is the statewide building code for one- and two-family dwellings built since June 1, 1980. This uniform building code applies in the Town of Grand Rapids and across the state. Its purpose is to have minimum standards for fire safety; structural strength; energy conservation; erosion control; heating, plumbing and electrical systems; and general health and safety in new dwellings. UDC building permit numbers for new homes are presented in (Table 19). A total of 151 UDC permits were issued from 2010 to 2019. This information provides additional insight into new housing development in Grand Rapids.

Table 19 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS - BUILDING PERMITS (UDC: 1 & 2 Family Dwellings) 2010-2019	
Year	Number of Permits
2010	16
2011	6
2012	10
2013	9
2014	15
2015	9
2016	15
2017	23
2018	32
2019	16
Source: Town of Grand Rapids	

**Housing Sanitary/Septic Permits**

Housing structures in Grand Rapids are served by Private Onsite Waste Treatment Systems (POWTS). A majority of the installed systems are conventional septic systems, but there are some other types of installed systems including: mounds, systems in fill, and holding tanks. Yearly sanitary permit totals for new and replacement private septic systems are presented in (Table 20). From 2010 to 2019, the town has averaged 16 new and 20 replacement septic systems per year. This information provides insight into new housing development and rehabilitation in Grand Rapids.

Table 20 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS – SANITARY/SEPTIC PERMITS 2010-2019		
Year	New	Replacement
2010	16	24
2011	8	21
2012	9	12
2013	13	23
2014	9	23
2015	10	18
2016	13	20
2017	26	19
2018	34	18
2019	17	20
Source: Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning		

**Subdivision Plats**

Another factor that has influenced housing development in the Town of Grand Rapids is the incremental division of land into residential subdivision plats. There have been numerous lots platted in the town over the years in either subdivision developments or by certified survey maps.

There are a total of 121 platted subdivisions in Grand Rapids today (2020). The earliest of these include Fisher’s Lakeview Subdivision and Helke Subdivision, dating back to 1938 and 1939 respectively. Both of these subdivisions are located north of Lake Wazeecha. Much of the early residential development in the town was located around the lake area. Grand Rapids experienced substantial suburban residential growth between 1960 and 2000. The most recent subdivision developments have been scattered sporadically throughout the town. Since the beginning of 2010, there have been five (5) subdivision plats. Those plats created 89 lots on 110 acres of land. (Table 21) provides an overview of subdivision development in the Town of Grand Rapids.

<b>Table 21 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS - SUBDIVISION PLATS</b>			
	<b>Plats</b>	<b>Lots</b>	<b>Acres</b>
1930's	2	45	19
1940's	5	31	18
1950's	9	168	77
1960's	26	490	288
1970's	37	881	627
1980's	14	291	197
1990's	22	373	323
2000's	1	29	27
2010 - 2020	5	89	110
Source: Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning			

**Housing Accessibility**

The number of households with at least one disabled resident increases as the population ages. As discussed in (Section 2), the town, state and nation are substantially aging. Grand Rapids had a median age over 6 years older than the State of Wisconsin in 2010. Furthermore, the percentage of individual’s 65-and-over will double from 2000 to 2035 in Wood County. This is an important fact the town needs to recognize.

People generally have the desire to age in their own home and live there comfortably. Few single-family detached homes, like those in Grand Rapids, are accessible to those with mobility limitations. Key features for accessibility are a zero-step entrance, a bathroom or half bath on

the entry level, interior doors with at least 32 inches of clearance, and may also include lever-style door handles, electrical controls that are in reach and other features. Such features make a home accessible for both the resident who has physical limitations and for visitors with physical disabilities. It is suggested that constructing accessible homes, under either a mandatory ordinance or voluntary program, costs less than retrofitting existing homes. It is further suggested that there are economic benefits to society in general if the aging population can remain in their homes longer before moving into an institutionalized setting, many of which are financed by public programs like Medicaid and Medicare.

Neither the State of Wisconsin nor the Town of Grand Rapids has mandatory residential accessibility building standards at this time. Encouraging even the basic features described above would be worthwhile and may make Grand Rapids even more attractive as a place to live.

### Housing Affordability

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) identifies a commonly accepted standard of affordable housing. Affordable housing is defined as housing for which a household pays no more than 30 percent of their annual income, including the cost of a mortgage or rent and homeowner’s or renter’s insurance. (Table 22) provides a look into housing affordability in Grand Rapids. Using the 30 percent of annual income definition, it seems that 81.1 % of owner occupied housing is affordable to those living in them. Under 19% of housing is considered unaffordable to those living in them.

Table 22 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME SPENT ON MORTGAGE	
	Percent
Less than 20.0 percent	60.4%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	12.7%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	8.0%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	4.7%
35.0 percent or more	14.2%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau *2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates	

Overall, applying HUD definitions and standards related to affordable housing in Grand Rapids to single family homes indicates that there are a good amount of homes that are within the median family income range. The town shall continue to promote and provide affordable housing.



The financing of a home can be used as a measure of stability within a community. The greater percentage of occupied housing units without a mortgage typically represents a community with longer tenured residents. (Table 23) presents the mortgage status of owner occupied housing in the Town of Grand Rapids. 73.5% of homeowners have a mortgage compared to 26.5% that do not.

Table 23 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS MORTGAGE STATUS	
	Percent of Total
Housing units with mortgage	73.5%
Housing units without mortgage	26.5%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau *2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates	

### Housing Assistance

Several federal, state and local housing programs are available to assist local communities and individuals. Housing rehabilitation programs can help maintain adequate housing stock. Presented below is a partial listing of resources available to Grand Rapids residents.

#### Community Development Block Grant Program – Central Housing Region

This is a program for ensuring the community's ability to conserve, rehabilitate and improve residential properties occupied by low-to-moderate income (LMI) residents.

##### Eligible Rehab Activities

- Repairs that bring the unit to decent, safe and sanitary condition using HQS Inspection/Evaluation of property.
- Examples include but are not limited to: Roofs, Siding, Windows, Plumbing, Electric, Septic, Well, etc.

#### Wood County Housing Repair Program

Wood County's CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds are available to assist low-income households make necessary repairs to their homes. The funds are available as a 0% simple interest 30-year deferred loan, which is also due upon sale of the home or you no longer live in the home.

Wood County CDBG funds are also available to assist income-eligible first time homebuyers with down payment & closing cost assistance and rehabilitation of the property purchased. These funds are again available as a 0% simple interest 30-year deferred loan, which is due upon sale of the home or if it is no longer your primary residence.

Eligible Rehab Activities

- Roof replacement
- Door & window repair/replacement
- Siding replacement
- Foundation repair
- Handicap accessibility accommodations
- Wells & septic systems
- Plumbing
- Electrical
- Heating system replacement
- Water heater replacement
- Lead Hazard reduction measures
- Other measures can be considered on a case-by-case basis

**North Central Community Action Program – Housing Programs**

EHAF-Emergency Housing Assistance Fund

Housing & Homeless Prevention -- Rapid Re-Housing and Transitional Housing

Capistry Town Homes -- Marshfield

**Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program**

The Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) provides assistance for heating costs, electric costs, and energy crisis situations. Operating with federal and state funding, the program provides assistance to approximately 230,000 Wisconsin households annually.

Most types of fuel are eligible to receive assistance. Whether you use wood, propane, natural gas, electricity, or fuel oil to heat your home, energy assistance is available if you qualify. The amount of the assistance benefit varies depending on a variety of factors, including the household's size, income, and energy costs. In most cases the assistance benefit is paid directly to the household energy supplier.

**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Rural Development**

USDA Rural Development is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in rural America. They offer programs to help rural residents buy or rent safe, affordable housing and make health and safety repairs to their homes. Additionally, they offer loans, grants and loan guarantees to help create jobs and support economic development and essential services such as housing, health care, first responder services and equipment, and water, electric and communications infrastructure.

**Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority**

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) offers and manages a variety of financial resources and assistance programs available to Town of Grand Rapids residents.

## **Housing Choices**

It is important to promote a range of housing types and options in Grand Rapids. A diversity of housing types accommodates resident's needs at all life stages and at a range of price points. Suburban towns such as Grand Rapids generally have a higher percentage of single-family homes and a small percentage of other housing types available. As individuals and families go through different life stages, their wants and needs in regards to housing may change. Newlyweds may start off by renting an apartment, and during that time save for a home down payment. When they purchase their first home they may realize over time that they need a bigger home with more storage space and more bedrooms for a growing family. When they purchase their second home they may find they have all of the space they need to raise their growing family. When the kids are on their own, they may consider downsizing to a smaller home with less maintenance. As health concerns arise as they transition to the "golden years", a condominium or some kind of assisted living may be the next step.

The preceding scenarios show that although a family may call one community home for most of their life, they may want to have different housing options to meet their changing needs. Housing options give residents the chance to stay in the community they call home, rather than having to relocate to a different community to accommodate their housing needs.

## **Future Housing Needs**

The Issues and Opportunities Element (Section 2) provides some insight on what to expect in the future regarding housing characteristics, projections and trends. Understanding demographic trends will help the town know what to expect in the future in regards to housing needs. In general, Town of Grand Rapids population and total households are projected to increase over the next 20 years. Available housing units will increase to accommodate expected population increases. As housing structures are constructed to accommodate the needs of future households, some undeveloped land will have to be converted.

Grand Rapids should encourage housing unit designs that accommodate the changing demographics of the town. Additional housing should be developed for a mix of life stages and at a range of price points. This includes planning for more single and two-family homes. It also includes expanding the stock of multi-family homes that may appeal to younger families and empty nesters. There is a shortage of rental options and senior housing is limited in the town. Grand Rapids can decide how much and where rental housing is needed through local zoning and the plan commission. The town should also expect a greater demand for senior housing. Providing a diversity of housing options in Grand Rapids will better accommodate the future needs of its current and future residents. Furthermore, the town shall continue to promote

housing developments through fair and equitable development standards that protect the esthetics of the community.

### **Why Residents Choose to Live in the Town of Grand Rapids**

The reasons that individuals and families choose to reside in a particular community is not always clear. It is a worthwhile exercise to try and determine why individuals choose to live in a particular community. Although the 2020 Community Survey served the broader purpose of gathering public opinions for the comprehensive plan, it also provides some insight on why residents choose to live in the Town of Grand Rapids. In the Community Survey when residents were asked in question 2: what are the top two reasons you choose to live in Grand Rapids, there were a lot of responses that were very common.



Red Sands Beach - Lake Wazeecha

Common responses included:

- Proximity to area communities (employment, amenities, services, etc.)
- Country/Suburban Character (quiet, large lots, privacy, open space, etc.)
- Home (born, raised, family, etc.)
- Natural Resources, Lake Wazeecha
- Affordable Taxes

According to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey*: Over 96% of survey respondents stated they were “*very satisfied*” to “*satisfied*” with the Town of Grand Rapids as a place to live. Furthermore, 94% of survey respondents rated the quality of life in the town as “*excellent*” to “*good*”.

### Housing Goals, Objectives & Policies

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids will provide affordable, safe, quality, housing that meets the existing and forecasted housing demand.

**Objective:** Maintain or improve the overall quality and appearance of the town’s housing stock and residential neighborhoods.

**Policy:** Continue administering Wisconsin’s Uniform Dwelling Code for one and two family residential dwellings.

**Policy:** \*Continue to educate property owners about zoning and other ordinances and regulations that may affect them, including activities that may require permits. The town will work cooperatively with the Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning to help make information available to town residents.

**Policy:** \*Consider working cooperatively with the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Biron to develop boundary agreements to protect residential uses in Grand Rapids from encroachment from other uses, to protect property values, and help the communities plan future growth and infrastructure needs. Look into utilizing the Regional Plan Commission to facilitate this process.

**Policy:** \*Prepare for annexation of higher density/small lot development on the perimeter of the City of Wisconsin Rapids and buffer those areas with larger minimum lot sizes to lower density as a means to ward off the future need for annexation for municipal sanitary sewer or water.

**Policy:** \*Minimum lot sizes throughout the town shall accommodate POWTS to minimize the need for municipal sanitary sewer or water in the future thus reducing the number of annexations occurring because of failing systems.

**Policy:** Minimize conflicts between residential and non-residential land uses by utilizing buffers and other subdivision design elements.

**Policy:** Connect property owners with available housing assistance, home improvement and rehabilitation programs.

**Objective:** Promote the development of a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all age groups, income levels and needs.

**Policy:** \*Allow for various lot sizes that are conducive to different housing types.

**Policy:** Encourage accessible housing designs and options for senior and special needs residents.

**Policy:** Maintain or rehabilitate the existing housing stock to maintain the quality and overall supply of affordable housing.

**Policy:** \*Encourage developers of rental units to build those units in areas of the town where, in the case of duplexes and other multi-family units, the housing type will be compatible with neighboring land uses.

**Objective:** Maintain the environmental assets and natural resources of the town so that it continues to be an attractive place to live.

**Policy:** Encourage environmental sustainability and resiliency as critical elements of future housing development to protect the environment and preserve the country/natural character of the town, while allowing new housing units to be constructed.

**Policy:** Be an active participant in the planning process when the City of Wisconsin Rapids Sewer Service Area Plan is updated in the future.

*( \* Goals, objectives and/or policies from previous plans.)*





## 4. Transportation

A community’s transportation system plays a fundamental role in shaping its physical, social and economic landscape. Transportation options impact the lives of all Town of Grand Rapids residents. It is estimated that almost 94% of Grand Rapids residents commuted to outside of the town for employment in 2017. The ability of residents to get where they need to go, regardless of age and financial ability, plays an important role in where they choose to live, work, shop, attend school, and seek medical and nutritional needs.



*48th Street South - Grand Rapids*

## Introduction

This element takes a look at the transportation system components available in the Town of Grand Rapids; attempts to identify some transportation trends worth considering; identifies future transportation improvement projects; and establishes goals and objectives to guide transportation in the next 20 years. By considering transportation issues now, Grand Rapids will be prepared to meet future transportation needs.

*“Less than 9% of survey respondents rated the overall condition of Grand Rapids roads as poor”*

Source: 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey

*Wis. Stat. § 66.1001(2)(c).*

*Transportation element:*

*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, electric personal assistive mobility devices, 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 functional and jurisdictional studies, urban area and rural area transportation plans, airport master plans and rail plans that apply in the local governmental unit.*

## Road Network

Probably the most obvious and most used component of Grand Rapids transportation system is the network of roads and highways that crisscross through the town. Different roads are designed to serve different functions and with good planning those functions can be carried out and protected. The Town of Grand Rapids internal transportation system consists, primarily, of town roads, county highways and State Highway 54. State Highway 13 also serves town residents. Although only small portions are located within the boundaries of Grand Rapids. Local streets of adjoining communities link to Grand Rapids roads to form a network of transportation corridors.

## Functional Classifications

It is important to understand the function of different categories of roadways so you can plan an efficient road system that protects the overall function of the road network.

Roads and highways are grouped into different functional classifications according to the type of service they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility - which is moving vehicles across a community, region or country, to a low level of mobility - providing access to land or individual lots. These functional classifications are also categorized as “urban” or “rural.” A majority of the Town of Grand Rapids is under the “urban” functional classification. The following paragraphs provide a brief description of the functions of different levels of roads and highways.

### **Local Roads**

The primary function of local roads is to provide access to individual parcels of land. They typically offer the lowest level of mobility of all the functionally-classified roads. A typical subdivision road is an example of a “local road.” Specific examples include: Wintergreen Drive, Lovewood Drive and Dover Court. Local roads provide access to adjacent land and provide for travel over relatively short distances throughout the town. Once you leave these roads, you may turn onto a collector road. All roads in the Town of Grand Rapids not classified as arterials or collectors are considered local roads.

### **Collector Roads**

The function of collector roads is to carry a higher volume of traffic than local roads, provide through traffic, and distribute traffic to even higher function highways. Collector roads may be of a straighter design, often have wider pavement widths with fewer access points (driveways) and may have higher speed limits. Examples of collector roads in Grand Rapids include: 48<sup>th</sup> Street, 64<sup>th</sup> Street, Whitrock Avenue, and Wazeecha Avenue.



Whitrock Avenue (Collector)

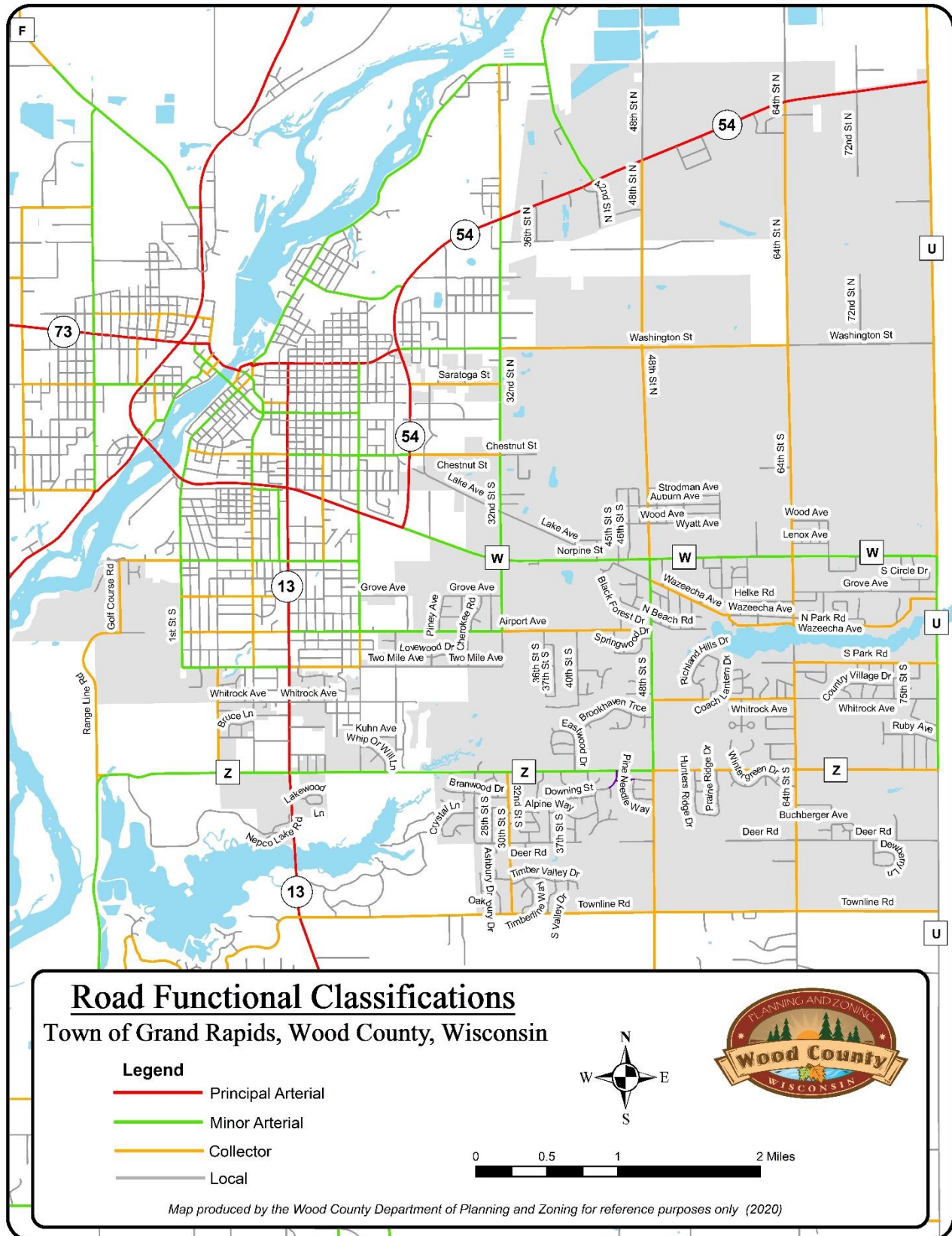
### **Arterials**

Traffic from collector roads may move onto even higher volume roads called “arterials.” Arterials typically have higher speed limits and often have more lanes for travel. Arterials are classified as either “minor arterials” or “principal arterials,” depending on the volume of traffic they serve. Minor arterials, in conjunction with principal arterials, serve moderate to large-sized places and other traffic generators providing intraregional and inter-area traffic movements. County Highway W (Kellner Road) is an example of a minor arterial. Principal arterials serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics of an interstate or interregional nature. They also provide a connection between communities. Minor arterials should have even fewer access points than collectors, but still provide land access. Principal arterials often have limited or controlled access. State Highway 54 is the only principal arterial in the town.

(Map 2) on the following page shows the road functional classifications for the Town of Grand Rapids as prepared by Wisconsin Department of Transportation in 2017.



## Map 2: Town of Grand Rapids Road Functional Classifications



## Traffic Volume & Flow

Traffic counts are important to local officials for future planning for access, for maintenance purposes and to analyze the need for new roadways. They can be helpful to town officials when new subdivisions are proposed to review access points for alignment and safety concerns.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) records traffic counts every few years. The most recent traffic counts in the Town of Grand Rapids were conducted in 2017. Traffic counts are reported as the number of vehicles expected to pass a given location on an average day of the year. This value is called the "annual average daily traffic" or AADT and are represented on traffic count or traffic volume maps. The AADT is based on a short-term traffic count, usually 48 hours, taken at the location. This count is then adjusted for the variation in traffic volume throughout the year and the average number of axles per vehicle.

(Map 3) shows the traffic counts on several roadways located in the Town of Grand Rapids. It can be seen that traffic increases the closer you get to the City of Wisconsin Rapids. AADT counts are lower in eastern portions of the town compared to the western portion of the town. These traffic counts reaffirm the commuting patterns of area residents. County Highway W and State Highway 54 have the highest AADT counts in the Town of Grand Rapids.

It is important to note: 51% of respondents to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* were concerned to some degree with the volume and flow of traffic in the town. The survey also asked respondents to identify roadways with safety concerns for motorists, bicycles or pedestrians. The top 4 roadways of concern are listed below:

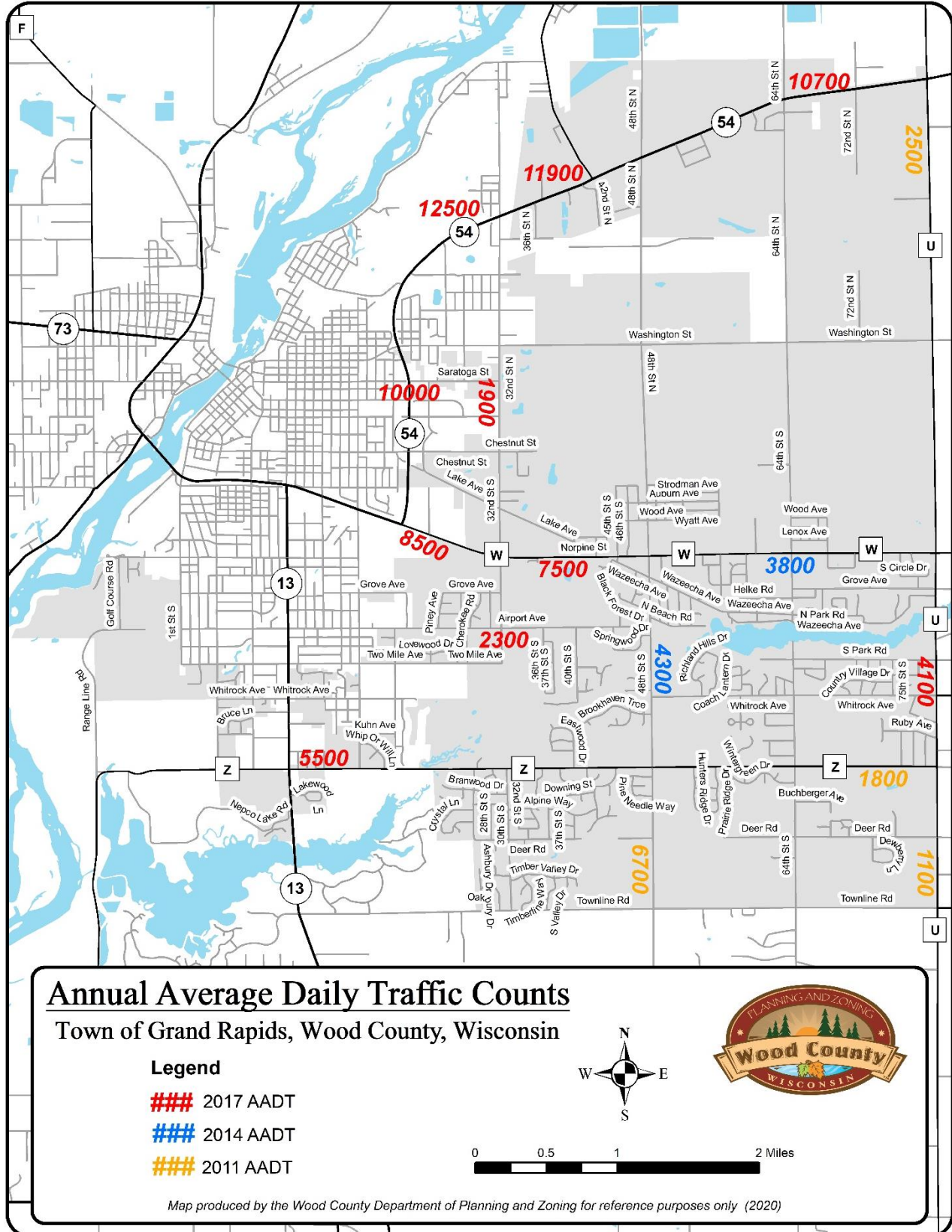
- 48<sup>th</sup> Street
- Griffith Avenue/County Highway Z
- Kellner Road/County Highway W
- Whitrock Avenue

Town officials should consider identifying the reasons for concerns in these areas and develop strategies or plans to improve safety.

## Access Management

Access management to roadways is important to protect public safety, preserve intended capacity and traffic flow, and provide access where possible with minimal conflicts. Often when land subdivision occurs, or development takes place, new access points are necessary to effectively utilize property. With each new driveway access point needed for a property, there is an approval process that takes place to ensure that it does not negatively impact capacity and traffic flow or cause safety concerns. New access points in the Town of Grand Rapids shall be approved by the applicable road jurisdiction authority. Effective access management techniques limit the number of and control the spacing of access points.

Map 3: Town of Grand Rapids Annual Average Daily Traffic Counts





## Road Maintenance

The Town of Grand Rapids - Public Works Department is tasked with town road maintenance and new construction projects; snow and ice control; and repair and maintenance of town vehicles, equipment, and buildings.

The Town of Grand Rapids Board conducts an annual review of the condition of town roads. During the budget process, decisions are made about what improvements are going to be made the following year. Those decisions rest on the availability of various sources of funding, including state road aids and local property taxes. Currently maintenance of existing roadways is the town's top priority. Another priority is that all new town roads shall be constructed to the specifications of the Town Board and applicable ordinances.



Grand Rapids Public Works Grader

It is important to note, over 70% of respondents to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* were very satisfied or satisfied with road maintenance services in the town. Approximately 67% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with snow plowing services. Less than 9% of respondents rated the condition of their road as poor. Additionally, several comments were made in the 2020 community survey about the condition of various town roads. The concerns have been forwarded to the Town Board for their consideration.

## Other Modes of Transportation

### Railroads

The Canadian National Railroad (CN) provides rail service to industries throughout the Wisconsin Rapids area. CN has a 20,000-mile rail network that spans Canada and Mid-America, connecting three coasts: the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico. A main line traverses the Town of Grand Rapids roughly paralleling State Highway 54 on the south side.

There is also an abandoned rail line in the town. This railroad right-of-way extends from the City of Wisconsin Rapids to the Portage County line. The right-of-way is currently owned by the City of Wisconsin Rapids. For purposes of this plan, this area is a planned bike and pedestrian transportation corridor. It has the potential to be a major link between travel origins and destinations in both the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Town of Grand Rapids. This transportation corridor is further discussed later in this element under the "Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation" section (page 48).

## **Air Transportation**

Air transportation not only plays an important role in connecting residents to the world, but also provides a convenient mode of travel for visitors to make their way to Wood County. The Town of Grand Rapids is served by two (2) airports. The South Wood County Airport - Alexander Field is the local airport. The Central Wisconsin Airport located in Mosinee is the closest regional airport.

### **South Wood County Airport - Alexander Field**

The South Wood County Airport - Alexander Field is a local general aviation airport located on the southeast side of Wisconsin Rapids. The airport covers an area of 435 acres and has three runways. It is managed by the City of Wisconsin Rapids and jointly owned by the South Wood County Airport Commission consisting of the City of Wisconsin Rapids, Town of Grand Rapids, Village of Port Edwards and City of Nekoosa. Each of these municipalities and Wood County contribute to the costs of operating and maintaining the airport. Grand Rapids will continue to work with its partners to provide air transport facilities. Alexander Field is a valuable asset in the support of tourism and its importance as a component of the Central Wisconsin economy.

Like most airports, Alexander Field has both direct and indirect impacts on the area's quality of life and economy. Convenient access to air transportation allows businesses to quickly move key personnel from one site to another saving time and increasing productivity. These airports also provide facilities for emergency medical flights, law enforcement, agricultural spraying, pilot training, and recreational flying, all adding to the economy and quality of life in the area.

Recently over \$10 million dollars was invested into Alexander Field for airport improvements with assistance from Federal and State funding opportunities. Airport improvements included: apron expansion and reconstruction to increase aircraft parking capacity and safety; parallel taxiways to promote safer access to and from active runways, while reducing congestion; runway lighting and surface upgrades; and construction of a corporate hangar.

Airports, by their very nature, create planning issues and opportunities for communities. Uses near airports will differ depending on the size and function of the airport. Noise is a factor to consider, along with safety issues related to low-flying aircraft, including clear zones at the end of runway approaches and height restrictions. The Federal Aviation Administration regulates heights of structures. The areas of Grand Rapids most affected by the airport zoning building height limitations are those areas in close proximity to the airport property and areas at the end of runway approaches. Building height restrictions are more restrictive on properties that are in the direct line of the three runways. These areas should be included in local plans and zoning ordinances as overlay zones. Furthermore, special attention should be given to proposals for communication towers and similar taller structures. The Town of Grand Rapids has adopted an ordinance that regulates and restricts the height of structures, vegetation and

land use in the vicinity of Alexander Field. The purpose of the ordinance is to: promote public safety, welfare and convenience, to increase safety in airport operations, to protect persons and property within the area, and protect the municipal investments in the airport facilities. This ordinance is administered by the Airport Administrator.

### **Central Wisconsin Airport**

The Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is a regional non-hub airport located in Mosinee, WI. CWA provides commercial airline service to the area. The airport is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties and is governed by the Central Wisconsin Joint Airport Board. It is currently served by three airlines, Delta, American and United Airlines, and operates 10 daily departures. CWA first opened in 1969 with 39,000 departing passengers annually. In 2018, enplaned passengers topped 125,000 with continued growth anticipated. Upcoming projects include completion of the Master Plan project, passenger boarding bridge replacement and runway 17/35 rehabilitation.

### **Water Transportation**

The Town of Grand Rapids has several navigable waterways. Nearly all of the transportation on these waterways is related to recreational use. The accessibility to waterways as well as water quality maintenance and enhancement is important to maintain the recreational appeal of the waterways. In the future, water travel in the town is intended to remain recreational in focus.

### **Trucking**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) has established freight routes that are best suited for truck traffic in the state. The Wisconsin (DOT) identifies State Highway 54 and 13 as designated truck routes. State Highway 54 is located on the north end of the town, running roughly east-west. State Highway 13 is located on the west end of the town, running roughly north-south.

### **Public Transportation**

Another part of the town's transportation system is public transportation. Currently no public transit exists in Grand Rapids. There are several private transportation companies that provide transportation to town residents for a fee.

Providing for the needs of those who are not able to transport themselves has been provided through programs of the County, with the assistance of State and Federal grants.

Transportation for older and disabled adults is important so they can access the services and programs they need and remain independent.

Wood County provides bus service for seniors and persons with disabilities. Priorities include medical appointments/treatment, nutrition, shopping, and social events. The Wood County

Volunteer Driver program provides certified drivers to transport Wood County residents who are 55 years or older and prioritizes medical and nutritional purposes. This is a non-emergency service covering the entire State of Wisconsin for medical appointments. Riders must be ambulatory or accompanied by an ambulatory individual, and are billed a percentage of the cost of the trip.

The Wood County Human Services Department also has a staff member who coordinates transportation for disabled American veterans of the armed forces. Vans are available to ambulatory veterans only to transport them to VA medical appointments. Vans and transportation are coordinated between Wausau, Stevens Point and Wisconsin Rapids. All of Wood County is covered, as are Portage and Marathon counties. The van drivers are volunteers, but the Veterans Administration provides funding for fuel, maintenance and liability. Wood County veterans can call the Wood County Transportation Office for arrangements.

The town's interest should be in maintaining communications with the appropriate agencies to ensure that the programs available through those agencies are made available to Grand Rapids residents.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation**

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities provide both an alternative means of travel and recreation opportunities for people of all ages in a community. By providing these accommodations in Grand Rapids, residents will have options of bicycling or walking as viable modes of travel. Bicycle and pedestrian travel is becoming more popular as an alternate means of commuting. It is important to note: Respondents to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* identified bike and pedestrian facility improvements as one of the top 5 community issues they would like improved/enhanced in the future. Furthermore, respondents identified recreation as the top land use they would like to see expanded upon in the town.

There are some existing bike and pedestrian opportunities and facilities in Grand Rapids. A paved, off-road path parallels CTH W located on the south side of the highway. It runs from 46<sup>th</sup> Street westerly into the City of Wisconsin Rapids and beyond. Another trail used primarily for recreation and physical activity, is a 4.2 mile partially paved trail around Lake Wazeecha.

The safety of pedestrians is an extremely important consideration in planning transportation networks. Through proper design and planning efforts a variety of transportation options can and should safely be able to coexist with pedestrian traffic. Rural areas face different pedestrian safety challenges than urban areas such as higher vehicular traffic speeds, a reduction in signalized intersections, few or no sidewalks, and in many cases few or no designated bicycle and pedestrian trails. However, it is still possible to make rural areas more

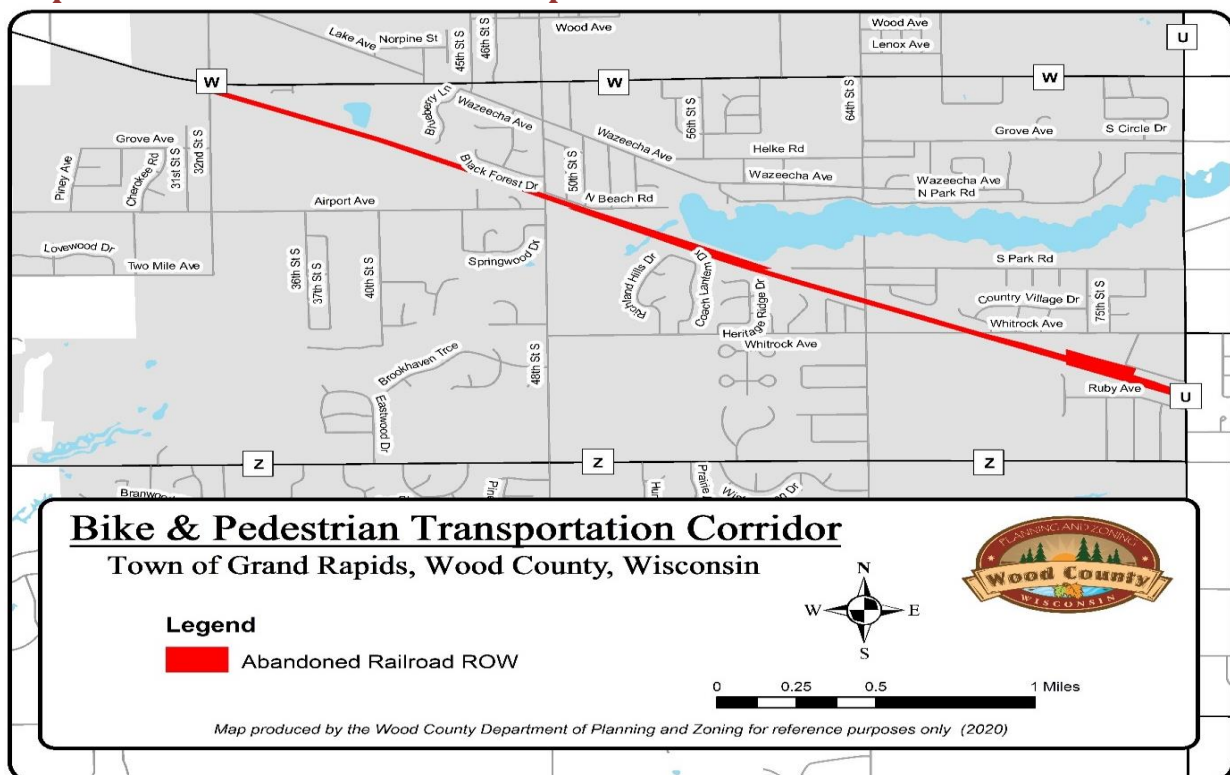
walkable. Rural areas can become safer and more pedestrian friendly by: reduction of speed limits in areas of more pedestrian traffic; design changes of roadways including wider paved shoulders; and signage designating pedestrian crossings and presence of pedestrians.

The Town of Grand Rapids should consider planning, designing, and operating roadways and rights of way with all users in mind to make the transportation network safer and more efficient. It is recommended that the town pursue federal, state and local funding opportunities; and cooperative agreements with adjacent communities, to assist with the development of bike and pedestrian facilities.

### Planned Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Corridor

Grand Rapids has an abandoned railroad right-of-way traversing the town extending from the City of Wisconsin Rapids to the Portage County line (Map 4). This right-of-way is owned by the City of Wisconsin Rapids. For purposes of this plan, this area is a planned bike and pedestrian transportation corridor. It has the potential to be a major link between travel origins and destinations in both the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Town of Grand Rapids. A priority trail connection would be to Lake Wazeecha. Developing a multi-use trail along this corridor would provide significant community benefits. Trail design and surfaces should take into account winter snowmobile use of this corridor. The Town of Grand Rapids and City of Wisconsin Rapids are encouraged to work cooperatively to develop a multi-use trail along this corridor.

### Map 4: Bike and Pedestrian Transportation Corridor





## Snowmobile Trails

At this time, over 270 miles of developed snowmobile trails exist in Wood County on both public and private land. The trail network is effectively meeting the needs of users, and as a result there are no major plans to realign existing trails or add additional mileage. The Town of Grand Rapids is supportive of the trail network because of the recreation opportunity that it provides not only for residents, but for visitors who make Wood County a snowmobiling destination. Grand Rapids adopted an ordinance regulating the use and operation of snowmobiles in the town. There are approximately 15 miles of snowmobile trails in Grand Rapids. Trails are maintained by the Kellner Knights Snowmobile Club.



Wood County Snowmobiling

## ATV/UTV Trails and Routes

Over the past few years, local ATV/UTV clubs have been working with local towns to establish ordinances to allow riders to travel on designated roads or routes throughout Wood County. Currently there are no ATV/UTV trails or routes in Grand Rapids. Results from the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* were as follows: (37.0%) of respondents “support some roads open”; (31.2%) “do not support any roads open”; (16.6) “support all roads open”; and (15.2%) have “no opinion. ATV/UTV use in local communities can support additional economic activity and recreation opportunities. 19 of the 22 total towns in Wood County have approved ATV/UTV designated routes. This includes the towns of Saratoga and Grant, which are adjacent to Grand Rapids. With ATVs and UTVs using the roads there is a possibility of conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians.

## Relationship of Transportation System to Other Comprehensive Plan Segments

The transportation network of a community is tied to every other element of this comprehensive plan. Generally a change in the transportation network will affect local utilities and community facilities, housing, natural resources, economic development, and land use. So as changes are considered in a community that involves transportation, the total impact of the changes should be considered.

In commuter communities, like the Town of Grand Rapids, lifestyle choices of those working in the city, but living in the town, affect the future of surrounding suburban areas. As the town grows, one of the first impacts is on streets. When a new development is proposed in a commuter town, provisions must be made to move the intended population to and from that

development to work, school, shopping, parks, and other activities. Eventually, existing local streets may become so busy that the street will have to be widened to accommodate peak traffic, or speed limits may have to be lowered for safety reasons. In some cases, the town may have to appeal to the county to take over jurisdiction of the road because of high traffic. Facilities may have to be added to provide a safe area for walkers or bikers.

Transportation system changes can directly impact certain community facilities. As more streets are constructed, the demand increases for more road maintenance, and consequently, more annual maintenance planning and funding. In addition, as more roads are constructed there may be a need to hire additional police officers to patrol those streets. Depending on the linking of new to existing streets, or the lack of linking them, costs to provide street maintenance, school busing and other services that use the streets, could increase. It is less expensive to continue driving through a subdivision, for example, than it is to maneuver a snowplow through a development with cul-de-sacs.

Intergovernmental cooperation is essential to the development and maintenance of a transportation system. As noted, Grand Rapids cooperatively operates and maintains Alexander Field. Expansion of that airport is restricted because of residential properties, Lake NEPCO, wetlands, and floodplain. The airport does impact land uses in Grand Rapids because of noise and height restrictions. The height restrictions could affect certain land uses. The town should coordinate with the city to effectively administer the requirements of applicable ordinances.

Street improvements should be coordinated between neighboring communities. If, for example, Wisconsin Rapids or Biron decides to add or widen a particular street near their borders, the Town of Grand Rapids should be aware of those plans so that the town can plan its improvements accordingly. In addition to coordinating planning of new facilities, communities should look into the possibility of cost savings in maintaining their street network by working together. The town and neighboring communities can benefit from cost-effective provision of future transportation facilities.

## **Other Relevant Transportation Plans**

### **Wisconsin Department of Transportation**

Connections 2030 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's long-range transportation plan for the state. This plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit. Part of Connections 2030 is the identification of a series of system-level priority corridors. These corridors are critical to Wisconsin's travel patterns and support the state's economy. A 60-mile corridor (Marshfield/Rapids Connection Corridor – Abbotsford to Stevens Point) is identified in the plan. Primary highways included in this corridor include US 10, WIS 13, WIS 34, WIS 80, and

WIS 54. WisDOT doesn't have any projects scheduled on the state highways within the Town of Grand Rapids out to 2024. Local officials need to be aware of current and future activities occurring, or proposed to occur in this transportation corridor.

Connect 2050 is the future Wisconsin Department of Transportation's long-range transportation plan for the state. It is currently being prepared and will replace Connections 2030 when completed. This plan will address all forms of multimodal transportation needs through the year 2050: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit.

### **State Highway 54 Extension**

Back in 2009, WisDOT in cooperation with Grand Rapids, Port Edwards, Wisconsin Rapids and Wood County developed plans for extending STH 54 from its intersection with County Road W, south to about Kuhn Avenue, then curving westerly, joining Griffith Avenue and traveling generally west, crossing the Wisconsin River into the Village of Port Edwards. Such an extension would reduce conflict between local and through traffic through the heavy commercial sections of Wisconsin Rapids.

As of 2020, WisDOT is no longer pursuing the STH 54 extension/relocation project. The proposed project isn't identified within the department's long-range plans. There are no funds for the proposed project. Consequently, WisDOT is looking at possibly removing the planned route from all official department maps. If the STH 54 extension project does move forward in the future, town officials need to be involved in the planning for this highway extension to protect the interests of Grand Rapids residents while, at the same time, serving the interests of the greater community.

### **Wood County**

Wood County adopted a bicycle/pedestrian plan in 1995. The Wood County plan proposed bicycle routes to be established along all of the county roads in the town via widened shoulders as the county roads were upgraded and maintained. The City of Wisconsin Rapids also has plans for bicycle/pedestrian routes and trails, including a system of internal city trails that can be linked to outlying town trails and routes. The Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning coordinates trail planning and has utilized state and federal grants to develop area trails. The county planning process includes working with all local communities to provide a coordinated network of trails.

County highways in the town are well maintained and some have been improved in recent years. The Wood County Highway Department is currently in the design study phase with a consultant to review the intersections of CTH W and 48th St, and CTH Z and 48th St. Several future resurfacing projects are planned for county highways located in the Town of Grand Rapids. Reconditioning the pavement on CTH W, and CTH U from STH 54 up to the new

alignment of CTH U will occur in the future. It is likely there will be some work on a bridge over the Four Mile Creek on CTH Z (Griffith Avenue) east of the Ridges golf course. The substructure is currently rated as poor and super structure as good. There is a good chance this structure may be replaced. As county highways are improved, the County Highway Department is to consider the Wood County Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan and add shoulders where indicated, if costs can be justified.

### **Official Street Maps**

Official mapping allows municipalities to prepare plans and maps showing the location and size of future roadways. The purpose is to manage development in transportation corridors; coordinate transportation systems with neighboring municipalities; and notify property owners of future transportation plans. The Town of Grand Rapids reviewed and updated its official street map in 2019. Two official street maps exist in the planning area. One was adopted by the Town of Grand Rapids and the other by the City of Wisconsin Rapids. The city map shows future streets from the eastern city limits out into the Town of Grand Rapids. Several discrepancies exist between the two maps. It would benefit both jurisdictions to coordinate boundary area plans and agreements. That way the best interests of the area are served as both communities continue to grow.

Grand Rapids officials will maintain contact with the Wood County Highway Department, District 4 Office of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, City of Wisconsin Rapids, Village of Biron, and all applicable communities and agencies to encourage coordination of roadway projects in the town.

### Transportation Goals, Objectives & Policies

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids will provide a safe, efficient and cost-effective transportation system.

**Objective:** Implement and administer town plans, zoning ordinance and land subdivision ordinance to assure coordinated additions to the transportation systems that avoid negative impacts.

**Objective:** Work to develop an internal street system that will ensure smooth flow of motorized and non-motorized traffic and will enable town emergency vehicles to service local neighborhoods in the most expeditious manner.

**Objective:** Protect the function and integrity of the town’s transportation system by minimizing conflicts with local land uses and managing access points.

**Policy:** Only accept road dedications for roads built to the standards and requirements of the town’s road ordinance.

**Policy:** \*Conduct an annual review of the condition of all town roads. Discuss issues regarding access at points of high volume traffic to work towards alleviating congestion and reducing accidents at those points.

**Policy:** \*Schedule work on local streets in such a way as to minimize impact on school services, the technical college activities and regional sporting events.

**Policy:** Through the town’s zoning ordinance and the land subdivision process, ensure appropriate location of access points and road connectivity to the existing road network.

**Policy:** The town shall bring local transportation concerns before the Wood County Traffic Safety Commission.

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids will provide transportation options and adapt to changing modes of transportation.

**Objective:** Support and encourage maintenance of local and regional air and rail transportation facilities.

**Objective:** Collaborate with Wood County, the City of Wisconsin Rapids, neighboring municipalities, and Regional Plan Commission to help fund, design and construct bicycle and pedestrian trails and routes.

**Policy:** \*Continue to actively participate with other area communities and owners of Alexander Field - South Wood County Airport to maintain the existing facility and expand the airport to offer better service to airport users, especially businesses and industries that are, or will be, located in the community.



- Policy:** \*Encourage the railroad owners to consider the addition of a second, parallel rail line as an inducement to businesses to locate in the Grand Rapids area.
- Policy:** \*Continue to work in coordination with Alexander Field - South Wood County Airport and promote Alexander Field as a local airport to prospective businesses that may be looking to locate in Grand Rapids.
- Policy:** Support the creation of bike and pedestrian routes and trails in the town to provide alternate means of transportation.
- Policy:** Encourage pedestrian friendly design of new developments to support alternative modes of transportation.

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids will provide interconnection of transportation systems between neighboring jurisdictions.

**Objective:** Coordinate with state, county, and town governments on local street improvements and all issues concerning transportation in the town.

**Objective:** Update and maintain an Official Street Map for the Town of Grand Rapids, with input from the City of Wisconsin Rapids, adjacent towns, Wood County and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to coordinate street alignments.

**Policy:** \*The town’s transportation system shall create an efficient flow of commuters between communities and major traffic generators.

**Policy:** Explore feasibility of ATV/UTV use in the town on designated routes and trails.

**Policy:** Assess road access and maintenance concerns on boundary roads with the City of Wisconsin Rapids, specifically in the area of Washington St.

**Policy:** Work cooperatively with the Town of Grand Rapids Police Department, Wood County Sheriff’s Department and Wisconsin State Patrol on enforcement issues related to the town’s transportation system.

**Policy:** Encourage usage of Wood County’s Transportation Program to veterans, seniors and persons with disabilities.

*( \* Goals, objectives and/or policies from previous plans.)*

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## 5. Utilities & Community Facilities

The availability and location of utilities and community facilities play an important role in the future development of a community. Unincorporated towns typically are not able to provide the same level of utilities, community facilities and services as do larger, more densely developed villages and cities. However, town residents generally have the same types of needs as village and city residents.



## Introduction

The purpose of this element is twofold. First, this section will describe the existing utilities, community facilities and services available in the Town of Grand Rapids. Second, this section outlines goals, objectives and policies that meet the needs of residents and will help guide future town-level decisions for the next 10 to 20 years. The challenge in the future will be to maintain or improve the quality of services, while maintaining affordable costs to the residents.

*“Over 93% of survey respondents rated the quality of life in Grand Rapids as good to excellent.”*

Source: 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey

*Wis. Stat. § 66.1001(2)(d).  
Utilities and community facilities element:  
A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development of utilities and community facilities in the local governmental unit such as sanitary sewer service, storm water management, water supply, solid waste disposal, on-site wastewater treatment technologies, recycling facilities, parks, telecommunications facilities, power-generating plants and transmission lines, cemeteries, health care facilities, child care facilities and other public facilities, such as police, fire and rescue facilities, libraries, schools and other governmental facilities. The element shall describe the location, use and capacity of existing public utilities and community facilities that serve the local governmental unit, shall include an approximate timetable that forecasts the need in the local governmental unit to expand or rehabilitate existing utilities and facilities or to create new utilities and facilities and shall assess future needs for government services in the local governmental unit that are related to such utilities and facilities.*

## Water Supply

Generally, all areas of the Town of Grand Rapids rely on private wells for their water supply, with the exception of Mid-State Technical College (MSTC) and areas along Golf Course Rd. Consequently, all development in Grand Rapids is dependent on groundwater availability from private wells. A majority of the existing private wells in the town are drilled or driven point wells. Wells are safe, dependable sources of water if sited wisely and built correctly. Unlike public water systems, protection, maintenance and testing of a private well is largely the responsibility of homeowners. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that private wells be tested annually to ensure that the water is safe for consumption and use.

Although Grand Rapids is not served by a municipal water system there are (2) municipal wells located in the town at this time. These wells are owned and operated by the City of Wisconsin Rapids - Water Works & Lighting Commission. Additionally, the Village of Biron has two (2) municipal wells located on a small island of village jurisdiction that is surrounded by unincorporated areas of Grand Rapids. Future municipal well sites may be proposed in Grand Rapids. On the other hand, municipalities may propose to annex areas with existing or new wells. These are all issues that town officials need to be aware of. In the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation and to protect both water quality and quantity for both private and public wells, Grand Rapids should take a proactive position in reviewing potential well sites for Wisconsin Rapids and Biron.

Groundwater is becoming more of a precious resource. Groundwater quantity and quality has been the subject of many discussions and debates at the local and state level. It is important that the groundwater supply and quality be protected from contamination. Possible sources of contamination can include: failing septic systems; improper disposal of private sewage; fertilizers; pesticides; improperly abandoned wells; improper land uses; and landfills. Certain types of land uses, or changes in land use can impact groundwater quality and quantity.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Administrative Code (NR 812) establishes uniform statewide standards for the construction and maintenance of water supply systems (wells). NR 812 identifies minimum separation distance requirements for wells from possible sources of contamination. For example, wells may not be constructed within 1,200 feet of an existing, proposed, or abandoned landfill. This 1,200 foot setback requirement would apply to: the closed Grand Rapids landfill; the closed John Jefferson dump site; and the Lake Wazeecha sediment disposal area. A variance from the WDNR would be required prior to well construction. The location of these areas can be viewed on the WDNR Well Driller Viewer online.

### **Wastewater Treatment**

All areas of the Town of Grand Rapids rely on Private On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS), also known as septic/sanitary systems for wastewater treatment. As of the beginning of 2020, there was a total of 3,275 POWTS in the town. A vast majority of POWTS installed in the town are conventional systems. From 2010 to 2019, the town has averaged 16 new and 20 replacement POWTS per year. There is no municipal sewer service available in the town. Any development that occurs must rely on a POWTS system. All such systems must be approved by the State Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) under the provisions of applicable statutes and the Wisconsin Administrative Code for both installation and maintenance. The Wood County Planning and Zoning Office administers the permitting and management of POWTS on a county-wide basis per the Wood County Private Sewage System Ordinance #702. Grand Rapids future development will most likely continue to rely on POWTS.

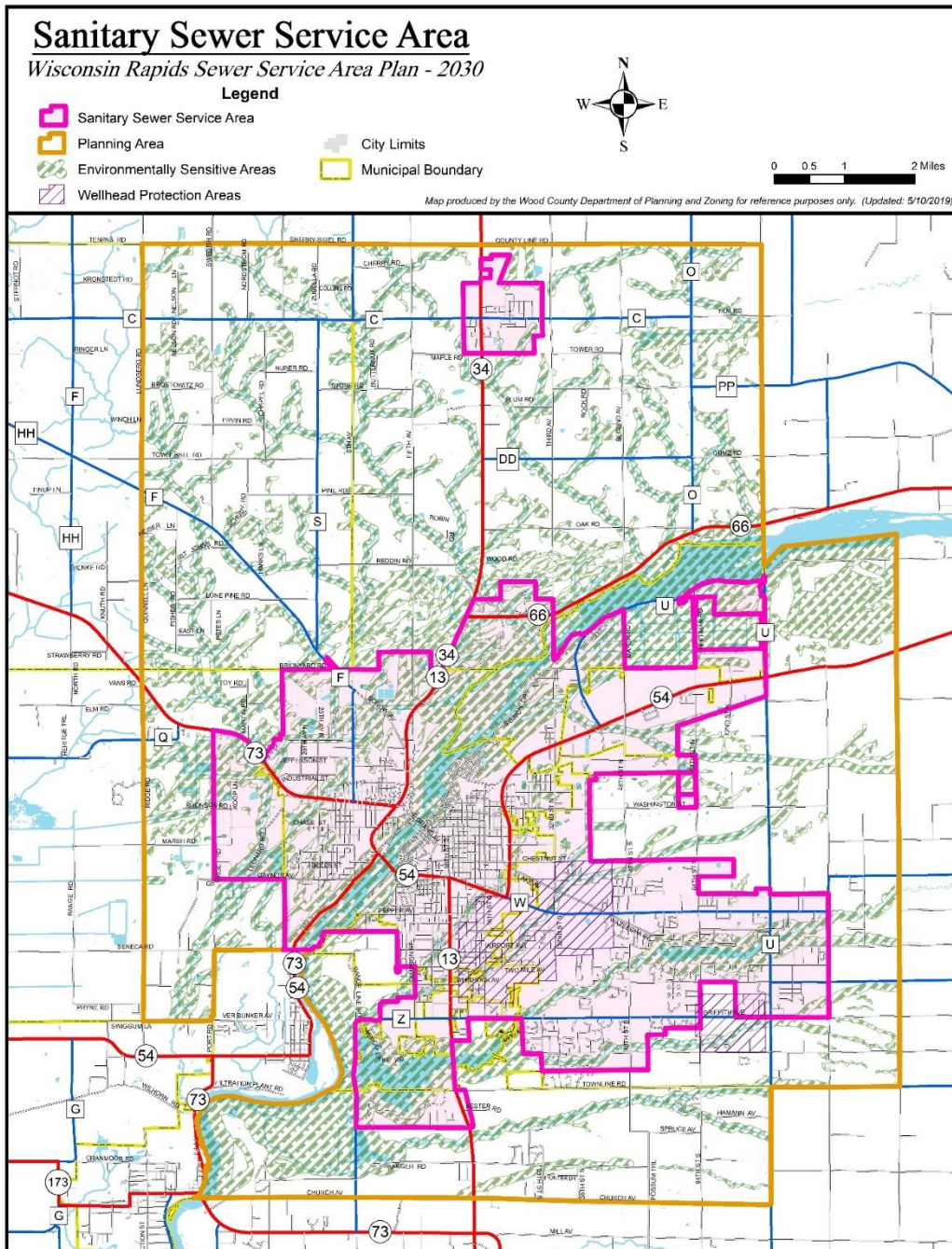
Recognizing that there may be a future need for public sanitary sewer in Grand Rapids, the town created a Sanitary District No. 1 in 1972. Subsequently, the Sanitary District Commission was formed. In 1972, the estimated cost of providing sanitary sewer to the entire district was \$13 million. The commission continues to meet as needed to address sanitary sewer and water drainage issues.

The Town of Grand Rapids has cooperated with the City of Wisconsin Rapids and surrounding communities to develop a 20-year sewer service area plan for the city (Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management - Sewer Service Plan 2010 – 2030). The purpose of sewer service



area planning is to anticipate a community's future wastewater treatment and collection needs for a 20-year planning period. A sewer service area plan identifies areas that are suitable for sanitary sewer development. The plan also delineates environmentally sensitive areas to be protected from future development and indiscriminate urban growth. The official sanitary sewer service area map is presented on (Map 5).

### Map 5: WI Rapids Sewer Service Area Map



**Storm Water Management**

Storm water is described as rain and melting snow that flows off roofs, driveways, lawns, streets, parking lots, construction sites, etc. The management of storm water is an engineering issue in communities where large expanses of land are going to be covered by buildings and pavement. These surfaces do not allow water to infiltrate into the ground. These impermeable surfaces may be from large-scale development or higher density residential subdivisions. Either of these scenarios is possible in Grand Rapids.

Grand Rapids is fortunate to have generally sandy soils, which allow for faster infiltration during storm water events. However, the town has experienced issues with spring and storm water runoff in the past. Associated with urban-type development were problems with wet basements, sewage disposal and flooding typical of developments in high water table sands. Consequently, storm water management is important to town officials. Grand Rapids requires a storm water drainage plan for all new subdivision developments. The town recognizes drainage patterns and strives to protect them. Additionally, Grand Rapids maintains the ditches along the town road network. These ditches assist in the flow and drainage of storm water runoff and meltwater in the spring.

According to the WDNR, the Town of Grand Rapids is located in the Fourmile and Fivemile Creek Watershed. This watershed is 213.96 square miles and extends into Portage County. Seventy-eight streams (654.12 miles) and twenty-four lakes and flowages (3538.98 acres) are located in the watershed.

The Town of Grand Rapids shall work cooperatively with applicable federal, state and local agencies to mitigate the negative impacts of storm water runoff, erosion and flooding in the town.

**Solid Waste Disposal & Recycling**

Curbside collection of solid waste/garbage and recycling is a service provided to all Town of Grand Rapids residents on a weekly basis. The town contracts with a licensed disposal service company for garbage and recycling services. The cost for service is charged back to property owners as a special charge on their property tax bill. This arrangement has worked well and will likely continue. Community solid waste disposal and recycling needs and methods will continue to be assessed and modified as needed near the end of each contract period.

According to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey*, over 93% of respondents were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with garbage and recycling services in the town.

Choose to Reuse events are held by the Town of Grand Rapids. The program allows residents from all municipalities to bring items in good working condition that they want to discard, but that perhaps someone else can use. The objective of Choose to Reuse is simple – reduce the amount of solid waste in landfills and help someone in the process.



Town of Grand Rapids Choose to Reuse

Town residents can also take advantage of the Wood County Clean Sweep Program. Clean Sweep is a voluntary program for the legal and safe disposal of hazardous wastes from homes, farms and businesses. It is available to all Wood County residents. The Clean Sweep program is funded through contributions from Wood County and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Like many towns, Grand Rapids had a garbage dump at one time. The dump was closed in 1978 and seven monitoring wells were installed on the site. The site is monitored quarterly. The dump was located on a 40-acre parcel that is bounded by Airport Avenue on the north, Two Mile Avenue on the south, 28th Street on the west and 32nd Street on the east. Town maintenance buildings and a county salt shed remain on the site today.

### **Yard, Brush & Compost**

The Town of Grand Rapids does not have a yard, brush and compost site. However, the City of Wisconsin Rapids has two composting sites available to town residents for a fee. Materials accepted are leaves, grass clippings, garden waste, brush, and tree limbs. The finished compost is available free of charge for town residents with a compost site pass.

The *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* asked residents to what degree the town should consider a yard, brush and compost site. The results: 41% of respondents said “urgently needed” and 44% “somewhat needed”. This is compared to 8% that said a town yard, brush and compost site is not needed. The survey also identified a town yard, brush and compost site as one of the top 3 issues residents would like improved or changed.



Town of Grand Rapids Municipal Building



## **Grand Rapids Municipal Building**

The Town of Grand Rapids Municipal Building was constructed in 1966 and is located at 2410 48th St South (Map 6). The building houses many town functions including: police; administrative; town staff; municipal court; and others. The municipal building is generally where residents can go to receive assistance with general information and inquiries. It is also the polling location for elections.

## **Emergency Services**

Emergency services typically include: police protection, firefighting services and ambulance services. Other emergency services, not often thought of directly by those in need, include agencies that dispatch emergency vehicles and agencies that provide general information about such services. Many of the emergency services presented below are provided by a variety of agencies. The policy of the town with regard to protective services is to continue to coordinate the most efficient police, fire and ambulance services available to town residents to ensure resident needs are being met.

### **Police**

Grand Rapids has its own full service police department. The goal of the Town of Grand Rapids Police Department is to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors through effective crime reduction, preservation of peace, and responsiveness to social changes in the community. The Department strives to focus on proactive policing and crime prevention. The Police Department conducts investigations on misdemeanors and criminal matters, enforces traffic laws and enforces town ordinances. After hours the Wood County Dispatch will assist citizens with any help they may need. The Grand Rapids Police Department is involved with many other community policing issues such as: neighborhood watch, vacant home checks and business checks.

Additional law enforcement support is provided by the Wood County Sheriff's Department and Wisconsin State Patrol. The Grand Rapids Police Department will continue to work with State and County law enforcement agencies to provide Grand Rapids residents with a safe place to live.

According to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey*, over 90% of respondents were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with police protection in the town.

## Fire

The Grand Rapids Volunteer Fire Department is located in the building adjacent to the Town Municipal Building. The Department provides fire suppression and inspection services to the Towns of Grand Rapids and Saratoga in Wood County; and to the Town of Grant in Portage County. The Department has mutual aid contracts with all Wood and Portage County fire departments. This includes the

communities of Port Edwards, Nekoosa, Biron, Wisconsin Rapids, and Plover. The Department responds to approximately 100 fire related calls and 230 medical related calls per year. They also perform business inspections, safety



Town of Grand Rapids – Engine 1

presentations to local schools, station

tours, and other fire prevention activities. There are (40) firefighters, (15) associates, and (5) EMS members. The *Town of Grand Rapids Volunteer Fire Department – Strategic Plan* is hereby incorporated into this plan by reference. The strategic plan will guide future direction and activities of the fire department. Future needs will focus on keeping equipment updated and recruiting new members.

## Ambulance

Ambulance service is provided to the Town of Grand Rapids by United Emergency Medical Response Ambulance Service. United Emergency Medical Response provides a full service 911 and transfer service providing all levels of prehospital care from basic to critical care paramedic. They are located in the Town of Grand Rapids at 3530 Bohn Drive. Representatives from the Village of Rudolph, and the Towns of Grand Rapids, Grant, Sigel, Seneca, and Rudolph meet semi-annually to discuss services provided and address issues brought to the attention of public officials. It is the policy of the town to continue negotiating for the best ambulance service for town residents.

## Shared Dispatch

When Town of Grand Rapids residents dial 9-1-1 for emergency services, the call is routed to the Wood County Shared Dispatch Center in the Wood County Courthouse located in Wisconsin Rapids. The center dispatches for all emergency responders in Wood County – police, fire and ambulance. The location of land-line and cell phone calls is mapped by the dispatch center to expedite emergency response. Maps of new roads and new lots are updated on a regular basis by the Wood County Planning & Zoning Department through their land records maintenance program.



### **United Way 2-1-1**

United Way's 2-1-1 is an information referral program that maintains a database of community resources and connects callers with questions to the proper service or organization to meet their human, social and information needs. The program is available free-of-charge, 24/7 and is a partnership of United Way of Inner Wisconsin (Wisconsin Rapids) and the Marshfield Area United Way.

### **Parks and Recreation**

Park and recreation opportunities tie directly to quality of life in communities. The location of these facilities can shape development, create livability, preserve property values, and provide infrastructure that promotes health. The following is a summary and general analysis of park and recreation opportunities in Grand Rapids.

#### **Wood County Park System**

Grand Rapids residents rely on the Wood County Parks System for a majority of the outdoor recreation opportunities in the town.

South Wood County Park is the largest park in the Town of Grand Rapids consisting of 332 acres. The park is located around 148-acre Lake Wazeecha. There is a four mile trail encompassing the lake. This multi-use trail is mostly paved, and features community walk/run events annually. Trail users can enjoy scenic views throughout the year. South Wood County Park Campground is located on the south side of the lake. This campground hosts 73 campsites and has shower facilities available to users. Lake Wazeecha is a great place for water skiing, tubing, and other water-sport activities. There are numerous small sandy beaches that are perfect for parking a boat and having a picnic. There are plentiful fishing opportunities by boat and shoreline. The park has hosted state, national, and world Water Ski Show Tournaments, held at Red Sands Beach. South Wood County Park is surrounded by suburban neighborhoods



Red Sands Beach – South Wood County Park

providing outdoor recreation opportunities within walking distance. Some other highlights of the park include: Willow Run Disc Golf Course, two beaches, Red Sands Beach Pavilion, a boat launch, and numerous picnic areas.

The South Wood County Park and Lake Wazeecha are important assets to the town and its residents. This is according to the responses from the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey*.

Wood County also owns over 200 acres north of South Wood County Park that is undeveloped with no plans for development. This site was acquired and used for the deposit of silt material from Lake Wazeecha. The site has been monitored for contaminants, but no problems have been reported. There is opportunity for use of this site for recreation uses.

Grand Rapids residents have access to a number of county and state managed recreation facilities just beyond its boundary. Wood County offers a variety of recreation activities at any of the 7 recreational parks, 3 rivers, many lakes, 38,000 acres of county forest land, and 18,500 acres of Wood County State Wildlife Area. Additionally, the surrounding municipalities host a variety of park and recreation facilities.

### **Grand Rapids Park System**

A couple neighborhood parks are located within residential subdivisions in Grand Rapids. These parks are the result of Wood County subdivision requirements in the 1970s. Weslan of Rapids Subdivision has two (2) parks: 2.5 acre Weslan Park; and 3.8 acre Knoll Park. Weslan Park is developed with a playground, tennis court and sand volleyball. Knoll Park is undeveloped. The town maintains Weslan Park.



Weslan Park Playground

According to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey*: Bike and Pedestrian Facilities; Playgrounds; and Neighborhood Parks; were all identified in the top four community facilities that residents believe should be encouraged and/or considered in the Town of Grand Rapids. Respondents identified the aforementioned facilities as more important than a new municipal building and municipal sewer and water (Question 24). Recreational land use was the top land use that survey respondents would like to see grow or expand in the town (Question 31). Many comments in regards to parks and recreation were received in the 2020 community survey. All comments have been forwarded to the Town Board for review.

The Town of Grand Rapids should consider developing a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) that identifies specific projects and recommendations to meet the current and future recreation needs of town residents. Additionally, the plan provides:

- Eligibility to participate in outdoor recreation grant funding programs administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and other applicable federal, state and local financial assistance programs.

- Direction to guide short and long term community recreation decisions.
- A detailed inventory of the existing recreation system and services.
- A practical action program that meets the needs of residents and visitors.
- A foundation for coordinating future recreation improvements.
- A means to create additional economic, social and environmental benefits.

### **Other Outdoor Recreation Opportunities**

Beyond those mentioned above, the Grand Rapids Lions Club owns a 27.75-acre facility along County Road W. The Lions Club has developed this area with shelter buildings, playground, small lake with beach, etc. The facility is used extensively for community events, such as the Fireman's Picnic, old car shows, benefits for those in need, dog shows, music festivals and much more.

Another privately owned recreation area is that owned by the Woodland Girl Scout Council. This 60 plus acre wooded site includes offices, cabins, areas for large assembly of people, a large pond and other outdoor recreation opportunities. Facilities on the site are used for community functions as well as for scouting activities.

Grand Rapids also has three golf courses located in the town. They include: Bull's Eye Country Club; Tri City Golf Course; and The Ridges Golf Course.

Many other recreation activities are available to Grand Rapids residents through adult and child leagues and recreation events organized by the Wisconsin Rapids Parks and Recreation Department. These activities are available for a fee to users. Also available on a fee basis is the YMCA and Wisconsin Rapids Area Public School District facilities.

## **Utilities**

### **Electricity**

The town's electrical service is provided by Wisconsin Rapids Water Works and Lighting Commission and Wisconsin Power and Light Company (Alliant Energy). There are no power generating plants in the town, but an American Transmission Company (ATC) 115kV transmission line runs through the town (Map 6). Additionally, there are two (2) electric facility substations in the town.

### **Natural Gas**

The Town of Grand Rapids is located within the service area of Wisconsin Gas Company (We Energies). Natural gas service is available in a majority of the town.

### **Telecommunication**

Charter Communications (Spectrum) and Solarus provide internet, television and telephone services throughout the town. There are (2) cell towers located in the Town of Grand Rapids. One is located at 2710 64<sup>th</sup> St. S. The other is located just north of the Wisconsin Rapids East Commerce Center in Section 11 (Map 6). To provide for expansion of wireless technology while protecting the aesthetics and property values in the town, it is in the best interest of the community to establish guidelines for location of these towers and to work with wireless communications providers to continue to co-locate their equipment whenever possible.

### **Transmission Pipelines**

There are no large diameter underground pipelines traversing the Town of Grand Rapids. These types of pipelines typically transport crude oil, natural gas and other hazardous liquids across the region.

## **Other Community Facilities & Services**

### **Cemeteries**

The Town of Grand Rapids has one private cemetery located within its boundary. Restlawn Memorial Park Cemetery is located along STH 54 (Map 6). Additionally, several cemeteries are located within the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Existing cemeteries will adequately serve the needs of the residents for the next 10 to 20 years.

### **Libraries**

The Town of Grand Rapids does not have its own library, but residents have access to other libraries in the area, the closest being in the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Public library service is provided by the McMillan Memorial Public Library. This library is located at 490 E Grand Ave, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494. The library provides books and other media materials for all ages to utilize. Grand Rapids shall continue participating in the library program to provide Town of Grand Rapids residents with important resources.

## Schools

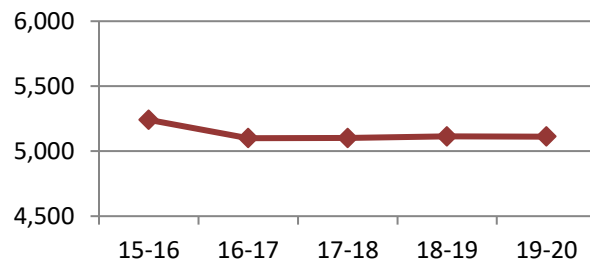
The Town of Grand Rapids is served by the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District. The school district includes: seven K-5 elementary schools, a middle school serving grades 6-8, one senior high school serving grades 9-12, one grades 11-12 program specializing in health occupational training, an at-risk alternative high school for grades 9-12, 4K programming which is held in some of our elementary schools as well as off-site at community partner organizations, and virtual programming for grades 4K-12.

In 2020, the district employed just over 600 teachers, support and administrative staff, serving approximately 5,112 students. 5-year enrollment levels for the Wisconsin Rapids School District are presented in (Figure 8).

There are seven (7) private schools (PK-12) located in the Wisconsin Rapids area that are available to Grand Rapids residents. They include: Assumption High; Assumption Middle; Good Shepherd Lutheran School; Immanuel Lutheran Grade School; Our Lady Queen of Heaven School; Saint Pauls Evangelical Lutheran School; and Saint Vincent De Paul School. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, approximately 700 students were enrolled in a Wisconsin Rapids area private school for the 2020 school year.

Mid-State Technical College (MSTC) is located within the Town of Grand Rapids. MSTC is a leader in providing higher education in more than 50 career opportunities through associate degrees, technical diplomas and certificates. Student-focused and community-based, MSTC serves over 11,000 individuals annually. In addition to Wisconsin Rapids, MSTC has campuses in Stevens Point, Marshfield, and a learning center in Adams.

**Figure 8**  
**TOTAL ENROLLMENT**  
**WISCONSIN RAPIDS SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**2015-2020**



MSTC

Also serving Grand Rapids residents is the University of Wisconsin (UW) System. The UW System serves approximately 170,000 students each year and employs 39,000 faculty and staff statewide. With 13 universities across 26 campuses and a statewide extension network, the



UW System is a tremendous academic, cultural, and economic resource. The closest campus to the Town of Grand Rapids is UW Stevens Point located in the City of Stevens Point.

## **Health Care**

There are no health care facilities located directly in the Town of Grand Rapids. However, Grand Rapids residents are among the most fortunate when it comes to health care. Aspirus Health Care and Marshfield Clinic Health Systems are located only minutes away in the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Aspirus Riverview Hospital and its associated clinics serve town residents. Additionally, the Marshfield Clinic – Wisconsin Rapids center serves area residents.

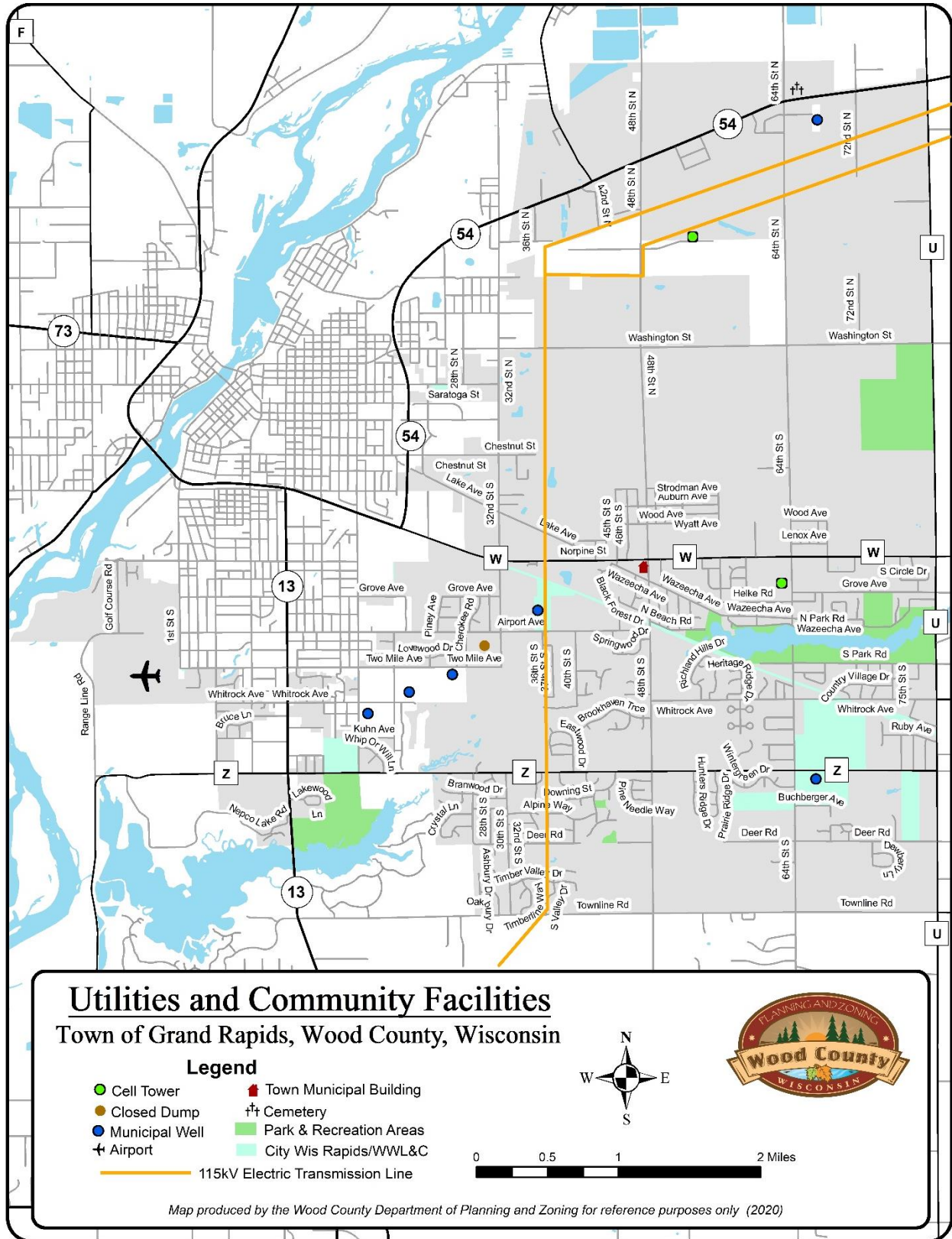
Aspirus is a health care system based in Wausau. Its 8,700 employees are focused on improving the health and well-being of people throughout Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. Aspirus serves communities through six hospitals in Wisconsin, more than 50 clinics, home health and hospice care, pharmacies, critical care and air-medical transport, medical goods, nursing homes and a broad network of physicians.

Marshfield Clinic Health Systems is the largest private medical practice in Wisconsin and one of the largest in the United States. It is an integrated health system serving Wisconsin with more than 10,000 employees and more than 1,200 providers comprising 86 specialties, a health plan, and research and education programs. Marshfield Clinic was founded in 1916 in Marshfield and its Marshfield Center is the largest center in the Clinic System. The System has more than 50 locations in 34 Wisconsin communities in northern, central and western Wisconsin, including hospitals in Marshfield, Eau Claire, Park Falls and Rice Lake.

## **Child Care**

Childcaring – Central WI Early Education Resources is a local child care resource and referral agency. The non-profit organization exists to make quality child care available to all in Adams, Clark, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marquette, Portage, Taylor, Waushara, and Wood Counties in Wisconsin. The agency is comprised of community-based experts who make child care work by: connecting families with child care services, developing child care professionals, and collecting data that impacts communities. Families receive a free customized list of regulated child care providers that match their criteria (age of the children, type of care, days/times care is needed, etc). Additionally, the agency works to increase the child care supply in areas that may lack sufficient care, and offer technical assistance and training to potential and existing child care programs.

Map 6: Town of Grand Rapids Utilities and Community Facilities



### Utilities & Community Facilities Goals, Objectives & Policies

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids will provide infrastructure, utilities, community facilities and public services to meet the needs and desires of town residents.

**Objective:** Continue to coordinate the most effective public emergency services.

**Policy:** Update the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) agreements yearly.

**Policy:** Continue to support town, county and state law enforcement agencies to provide Grand Rapids residents with a safe place to live.

**Policy:** Provide the safest, most efficient fire protection possible by continuing to monitor fire department success, analyze needs for more or different equipment, and encourage more town residents to join the fire department volunteer staff.

**Objective:** Support and maintain provisions of services and community facilities.

**Policy:** Develop a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) so the town is eligible for local, state and federal grant funding to expand recreation opportunities.

**Policy:** Consider options for creating park and recreation facilities.

**Policy:** Monitor the Town Municipal Building’s conditions and maintenance costs to assist in determining the feasibility for an updated facility.

**Objective:** \*Protect the town’s ground and surface water resources.

**Policy:** Continue to participate the Citizens of Wood County Groundwater Committee.

**Policy:** Assess the need for a groundwater study in the town.

**Policy:** Review subdivision proposals to consider and protect drainage patterns via appropriate setbacks, drainage easements, or similar means.

**Policy:** \*Minimize non-point source pollution and reduce volumes of untreated runoff.

**Policy:** \*Zone floodplains and wetlands that are identified on DNR wetland maps as conservancy, preserving their function to carry and store storm runoff and snow melt.

**Policy:** Use regulatory/development standards that will best meet the needs of the town while protecting the quality and quantity of groundwater for existing and future residents.

**Policy:** Educate residents on appropriate pesticide/herbicide applications.

- Objective:** \*Promote efficient and coordinated sewer and water expansion.

  - Policy:** Continue cooperating with the City of Wisconsin Rapids and surrounding towns in regards to the Wisconsin Rapids Sewer Service Area Plan.
  - Policy:** \*Through local zoning, encourage high-density residential development to locate in areas that can be served by municipal sewer and water systems. Encourage medium- and low-density developments in other areas of the Town where soil conditions can sustain private wells and private sewage systems.
  
- Objective:** \*Provide safe, cost-effective recycling and solid waste disposal.

  - Policy:** \*Encourage residents to make use of Wood County’s “Clean Sweep” and Grand Rapids Choose to Reuse Programs.
  - Policy:** Consider options for a town yard, brush and composted site.
  
- Objective:** \*Protect private property values and uses while assuring adequate utility expansion in the future.

  - Policy:** Support broadband expansion in the town.
  - Policy:** The town is receptive of renewable energy projects in the town.
  - Policy:** Explore appropriate regulations for the approval and siting of solar energy systems.
  - Policy:** Coordinate with all types of utility companies and surrounding communities to provide for orderly expansion of needed utilities, while setting safety of town residents and protection of their property values as a high priority.

( \* Goals, objectives and/or policies from previous plans.)

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## 6. Natural, Agricultural & Cultural Resources

Natural, agricultural and cultural resources are often defining features of a community's landscape. These resources tend to play a role in why residents choose to reside in a town, compared to a city. The suburban - country character of Grand Rapids is important to town residents and significantly contributes to the overall quality of life. Town officials have recognized the importance of responsibly balancing the needs for future development while preserving these community resources.



*Woodlands & Forests*

## Introduction

The following element will inventory the Town of Grand Rapids natural, agricultural and cultural resources. It is important to identify and understand these community resources to effectively balance the needs of future development while also maintaining a healthy environment. Through this analysis, this section will outline goals, objectives and policies that will help guide future town-level decisions for the next 10 to 20 years.

*“Almost 80% of survey respondents are concerned to some degree if natural/rural areas and farmland are converted to more suburban type land uses.”*

Source: 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey

Wis. Stat. § 66.1001(2)(e).  
*Agricultural, natural and cultural resources element:*  
*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.*

## Natural Resources

The purpose of this section is to analyze Grand Rapids’ natural environment. Natural resources include such features as groundwater, surface water, floodplains, wetlands, forests, soils and plant and animal species. Natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas play a direct role in the location of development and certain land use in the town. They also define the character and appearance of a community. Additionally, an analysis of the physical landscape is critical to properly understand unique environmental constraints and limitations. This inventory will assist the town in determining whether protection, enhancement or restoration is needed over the next 10 – 20 years.

## Topography

The elevations in the Town of Grand Rapids range from about 985 feet to 1,055 feet above mean sea level, a variation of 70 feet. Most of the Town is at an elevation of between 1,020 and 1,040 feet above sea level. The lowest areas are in the southwest near Nepco Lake and the higher areas are in the northeast corner of the Town. Land in Grand Rapids has a general pitch from northeast to southwest. Grand Rapids lies in the Central Sand Plains ecological landscape of Wisconsin.



## **Forests**

Woodlands and forested areas in Grand Rapids play an important role in the town's identity and character. They are the most prominent land cover type in the Town of Grand Rapids. Scattered forests and woodlots are common with acreages ranging from 1 acre to several hundred. A majority of the town's forested lands are privately owned. The largest mass of wooded properties are located in areas having high groundwater that is not conducive to structural development or septic systems. Trees and forests provide important ecological functions, recreation opportunities and economic benefits.



Fall colors in Grand Rapids

It is important to note: Over 90% of respondents to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* said forests/woodlands are essential or important to protect and/or enhance. Respondents also said that wooded lands play an important role in determining the character of Grand Rapids.

Forests and woodlands create a landscape that many Grand Rapids residents desire and plays an important role in why most people choose to live in the town. Through this document, the Town of Grand Rapids adopted goals that work to preserve these resources and protect the country character of the town. Town residents have supported these goals through their responses in the 2020 community survey. Development policies that promote an environment where residents can enjoy the aesthetic benefits of a wooded landscape should be considered.

In an effort to promote sustainable forestry practices, the WDNR provides a property tax incentive for private forest landowners under the Managed Forest Law (MFL). Voluntary participation in the program requires that private landowners follow "sound forestry practices" as prescribed in a formal management plan. In 2020, the Town of Grand Rapids property owners had (58) acres of MFL lands open to the public and (1,295) acres of MFL lands closed to the public. The town encourages property owners to enroll forested land into the state's MFL Programs to ensure the town's woodlands are being managed for sustainable forestry, providing many benefits to the community. Forestry assistance is also available for woodland owners through WDNR foresters and private consulting foresters.

## **Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

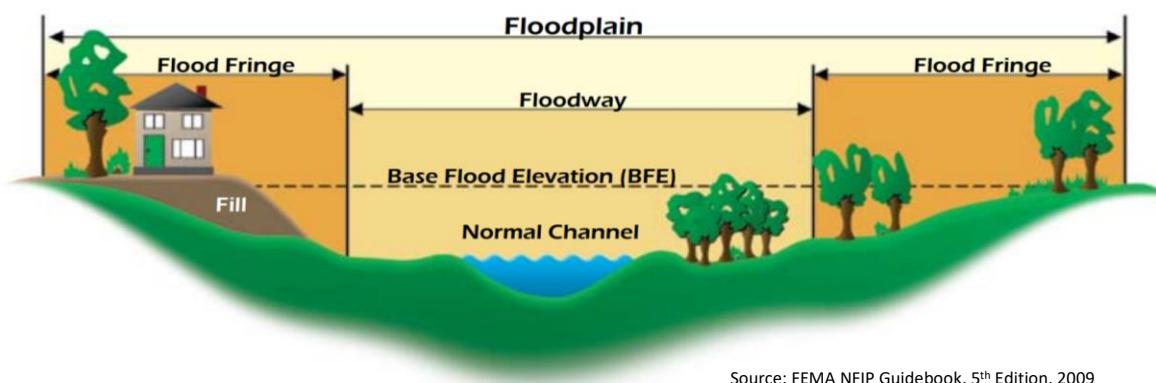
Environmentally Sensitive Areas, or ESA's, are generally defined as those areas that are unsuitable for certain development because of the potential adverse impacts on the natural environment. These areas include, but are not limited to wetlands, shorelands, floodplain, and

other such physical constraints. The exact boundaries of environmentally sensitive areas shall be located through field surveys by appropriate regulatory agencies. Many of the ESA's in the Town of Grand Rapids are already protected under current laws and ordinances. Any consideration of development within or adjacent to an ESA must be in conformance with all applicable federal, state, and local rules and regulations. The following sections will provide specific information on Grand Rapids ESA's and how they relate to land use planning over the next 10 – 20 years.

## Floodplain

Rivers, streams and lakes periodically will overflow their banks and inundate areas of land. These areas are referred to as floodplains. Floodplains serve many important functions related to flood control, erosion control, groundwater recharge, fish and wildlife habitat, and water quality. A floodplain is a natural extension of a waterway and flooding is a natural physical event. When structures are placed in the floodplain, the floodplain's water storage capacity is reduced, causing the next flood of equal intensity to crest even higher than the last, often flooding areas that were previously outside the floodplain. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines floodplains. Floodplains are comprised of the floodway, which is that area that actually carries the floodwaters, and the flood fringe, which is the area that accepts backed-up water for storage until the floodway can carry the water downstream (Figure 9). The flood fringe is sometimes referred to as the "backwater" areas. Floodplain boundaries have been established nationwide to delineate the 100-year and 500-year flood elevations. There is a one percent chance that the 100-year flood will occur in any given year.

**Figure 9: Characteristics of Floodplain**



Source: FEMA NFIP Guidebook, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2009

As required by state law, Wood County adopted and administers a floodplain zoning ordinance so county residents would be eligible to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). FEMA Flood Insurance Maps (FIRMs) identify various floodplain zones. Regulations prohibit development in the floodway, the most dangerous flood area. Development is allowed

in the flood fringe, provided it is built above flood levels and otherwise flood-protected. Although allowed, it is wise to restrict development from occurring in the flood fringe as well as the floodway. Any potential development in or near floodplain areas may require permitting and approvals from the Wood County Planning and Zoning Department.

FEMA mapped floodplains in the Town of Grand Rapids are shown in (Map 7). The floodplain generally follows the streams, creeks and surface water in Grand Rapids. There are ±1,1035 acres of floodplain in Grand Rapids.

Lake Wazeecha is a flowage of the Four Mile Creek. The federal government required Wood County to prepare what is referred to as a “flood shadow” study of the Four Mile Creek below the Lake Wazeecha dam. A flood shadow is that area beyond the floodplain that would flood if an event destroyed the dam at Lake Wazeecha and released the water in the lake. Wood County and Grand Rapids treat development proposals in the flood shadow the same as if they were in the floodplain.

### **Shoreland**

Shorelands and floodplains are very closely associated. Like floodplains, shoreland areas are protected under Wisconsin law. Wisconsin statutes define shorelands as lands within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM) of a navigable lake, pond, or flowage and lands within 300 feet or within the floodplain of a navigable river or stream, whichever distance is greater (Map 8).

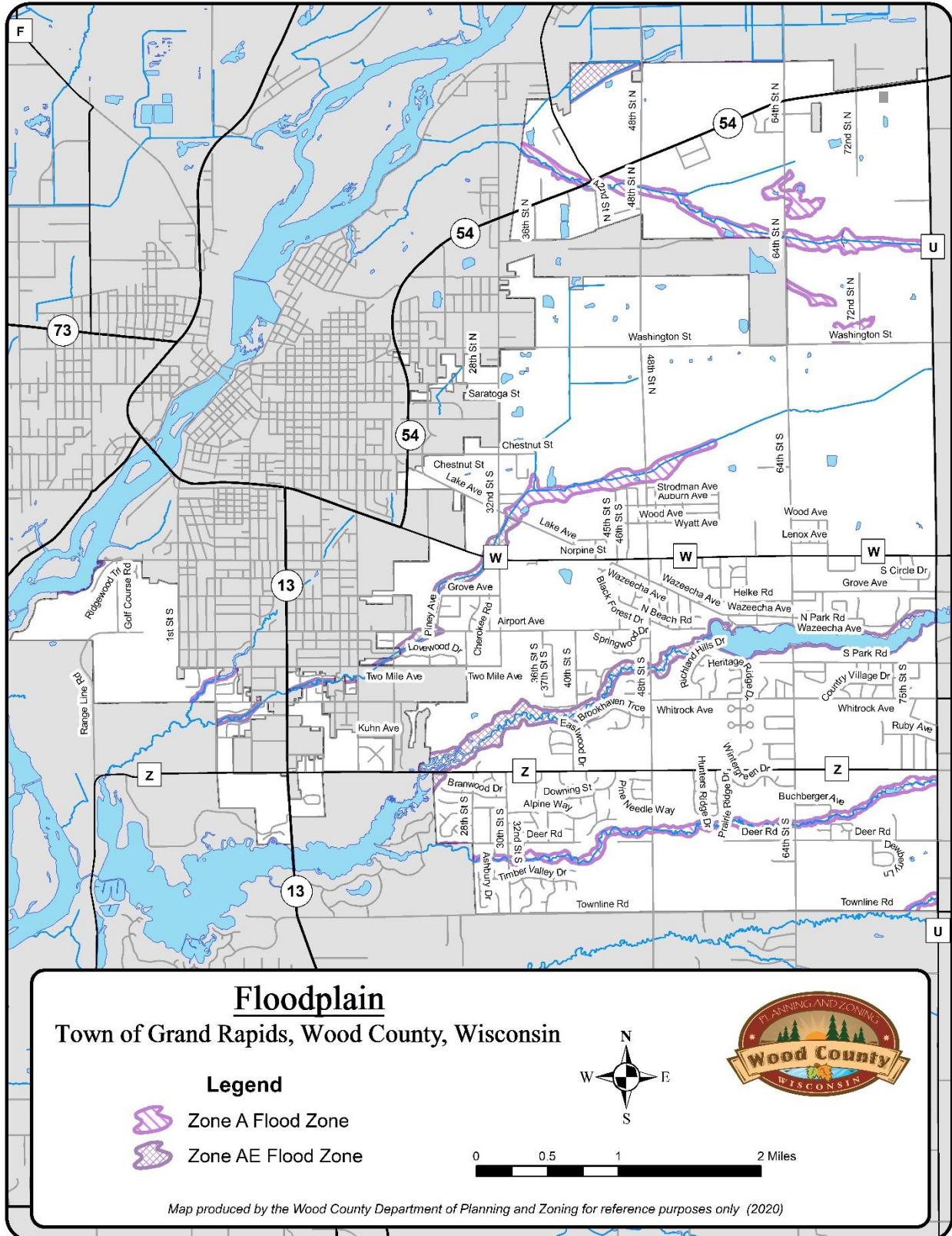
Also, like floodplains, the state requires counties to adopt and administer development standards for shorelands in unincorporated areas per Wis. Stat. § 59.692 and Wis. Admin. Code § NR115. Wood County adopted and administers a shoreland zoning ordinance for the following purposes:

- Maintain safe and healthful conditions
- Prevent and control water pollution
- Protect spawning grounds, fish and aquatic life
- Control building sites, placement of structures and land uses
- Preserve and restore shoreland vegetation and natural scenic beauty

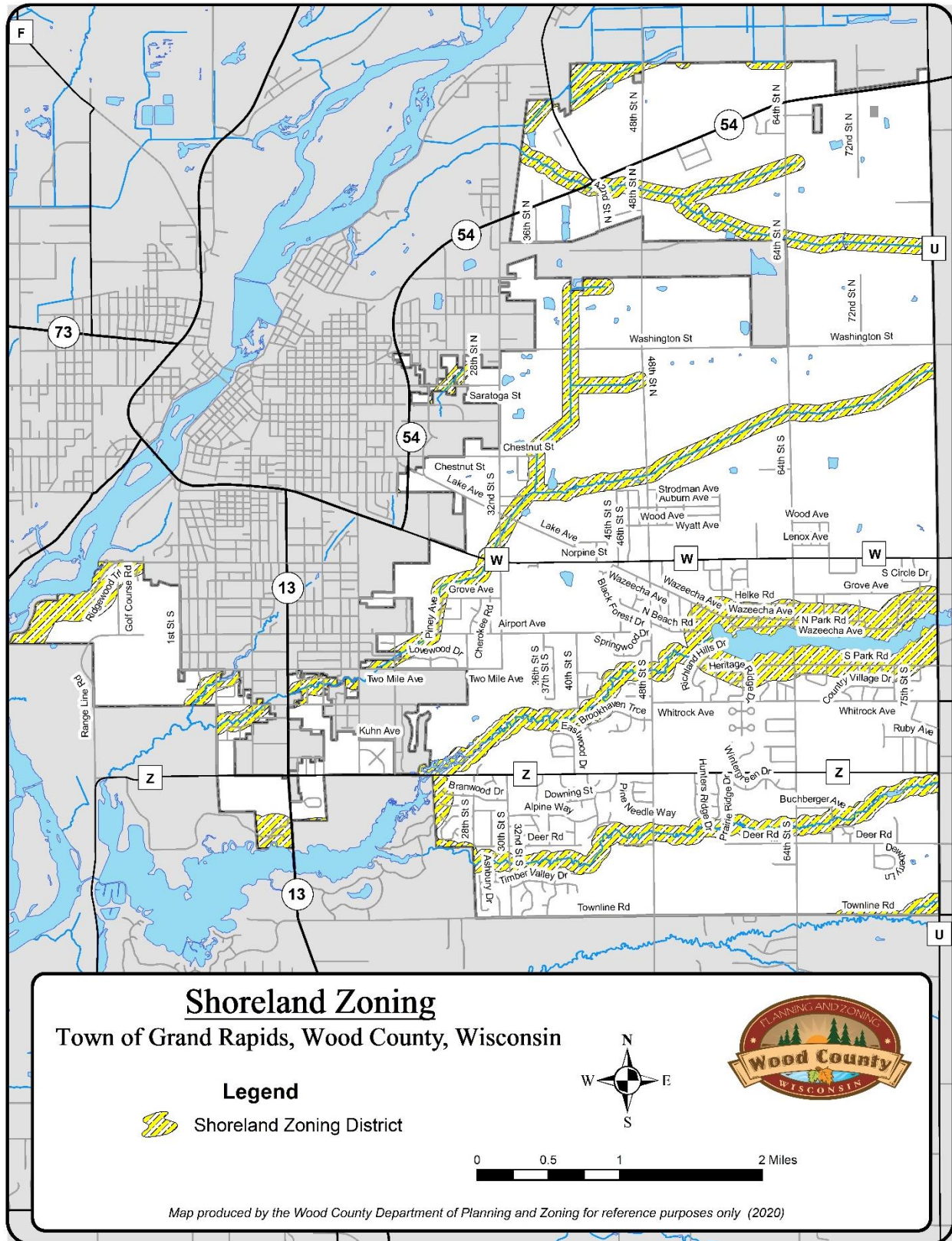
Many riparian areas in the Town of Grand Rapids are located within the shoreland zoning district. Any potential structure(s), building(s), site disturbance, and/or development in shoreland areas may require permitting/approvals from the Wood County Planning and Zoning Department.



### Map 7: Floodplain Map



### Map 8: Shoreland Zoning Map





## **Wetlands**

Wetlands are another important natural resource in the Town of Grand Rapids. Wetlands serve as a water storage and distribution system, filtering nutrients and purifying the water before it is reintroduced into the groundwater or surface water system. As more impermeable surfaces (rooftops, driveways, patios, roads, etc.) dominate the landscape, the capacity of wetlands to handle excess water runoff becomes increasingly important.

Overall, wetlands are not abundant in the Town of Grand Rapids. They are generally confined mostly to lands along creeks and drainage ways. They also tend to mirror floodplain areas. Wetlands are most notable in northern portions of the town as seen in (Map 9). According to the WDNR Wetland Inventory there are approximately 700 acres of wetlands in the town. The wetland inventory is used for reference purposes. The exact location and extent of wetland boundaries can be determined through an onsite wetland delineation. Federal and state regulations and permitting may apply to wetlands.

Development should be directed away from all mapped wetlands, both for the protection of the wetland and for the protection of the structures and persons using them. The Town of Marshfield for example, requires a 100-foot setback from any mapped wetland for any new structure. Such a requirement will preserve the important functions of the wetlands for many years into the future. It should be a town policy to protect wetlands from encroachment and destruction so they can serve the function of water runoff storage, wildlife habitat, etc.

## **Groundwater**

Groundwater is the source of all drinking water in Wood County, including Grand Rapids. The main sources of groundwater in the county are from saturated sand and gravel deposits, fractured Precambrian rock and Cambrian sandstone. Generally, groundwater in the town is acceptable as far as quality and quantity. Regardless of the source, many factors determine the quality of the groundwater supply. Despite this seemingly inexhaustible supply, there are growing concerns about the quality of groundwater in Wood County.

Respondents to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* identified “Groundwater - Drinking Water” as the most important resource to protect and enhance in the Town.

Northern areas of the Town of Grand Rapids (between STH 54 and CTH W) are characterized by shallow groundwater conditions or having seasonally high groundwater. This area can be visualized by referencing the “very limited” area/category in the Soil Limitations for Dwelling (Map 10). This area of the town has been identified as a groundwater recharge area. Groundwater is close to the ground’s surface. For future planning purposes, this area is not suited for development purposes. Grand Rapids is fortunate that nearly all of the southern half

of the town has sandy soils with groundwater levels greater than five feet. It is these areas that are best suited for private sewage systems and where the bulk of the town's development has occurred and will occur in the future. More discussion is presented in other chapters about the amount of land that has been subdivided and the amount of land that will be needed to accommodate future growth. Policies to protect the groundwater need to be continually enforced through land development programs, such as the town zoning ordinance.

Groundwater quantity and quality has been the subject of many discussions and debates at the local and state level. It is important that the groundwater supply and quality be protected from contamination. Possible sources of contamination can include: failing septic systems; fertilizers; pesticides; improperly abandoned wells; improper land uses; and landfills. Nitrate is Wisconsin's most widespread groundwater contaminant and is increasing in extent and severity. Nitrate levels in groundwater are generally below 2 parts per million where pollution sources are absent. Higher levels indicate a source of contamination such as agricultural or turf fertilizers, animal waste, septic systems or wastewater. To obtain a safe water supply, private well owners may opt to replace an existing well with a deeper, better cased well or, if available, connect to a nearby public water supply. Nitrate concentrations are poised to further increase as nitrate pollution penetrates into deep aquifers and migrates farther from original source areas. Improved management strategies, technical tools and incentives to promote efficient use of nitrogen are another top priority.

The City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Biron have municipal wells located within, or in close proximity, to the Town of Grand Rapids. The town has a keen interest in protecting the groundwater and maintaining a working relationship with both communities because of the impact the municipal wells could have on town residents and the impact town activities could have on the municipal wells. Area economic development depends on clean water as does the continued suburban development in Grand Rapids. The town may want to pursue a joint planning effort for its boundary areas and, perhaps, propose boundary agreements so all municipalities can better plan for their joint and individual future services.

## **Soils**

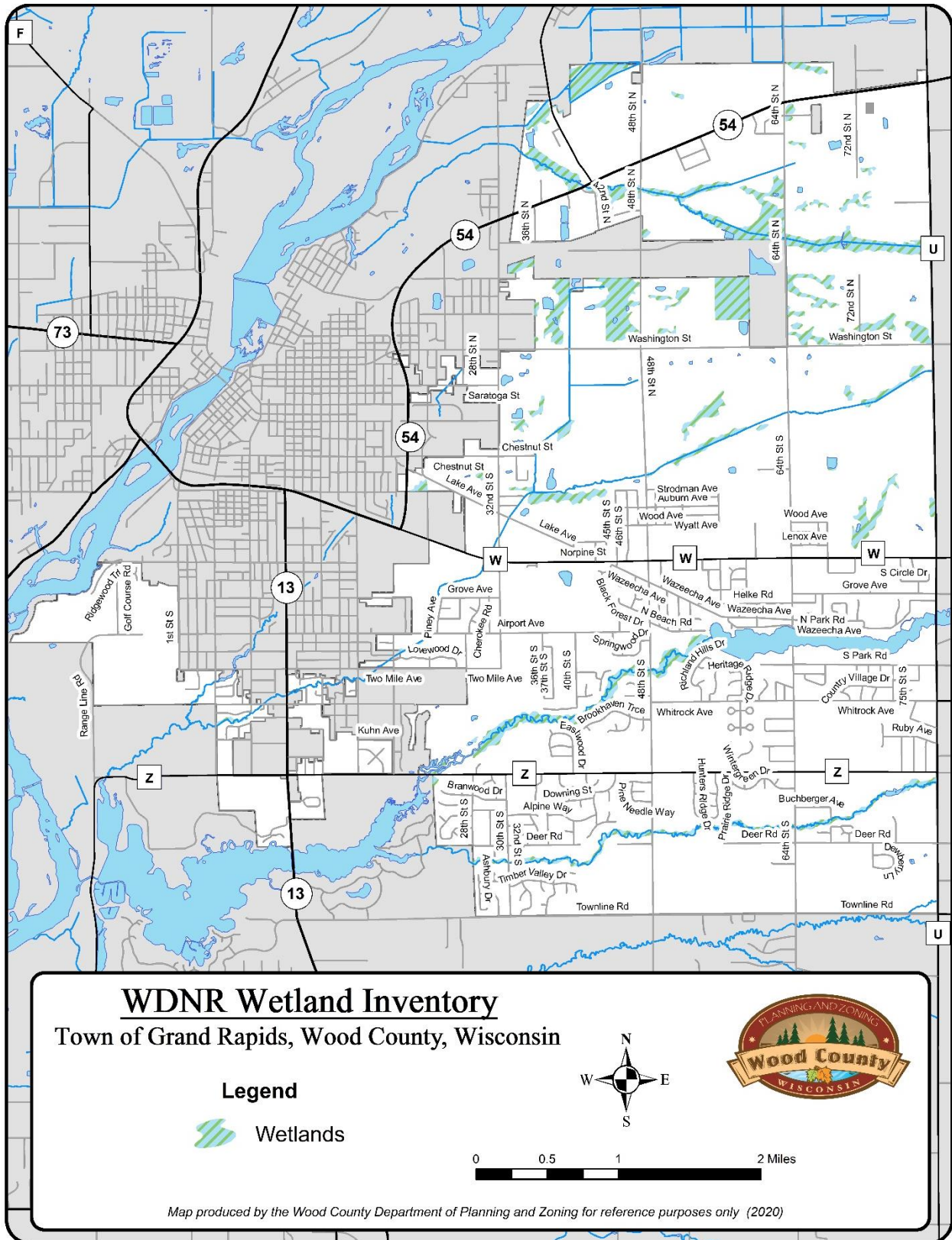
The soils in Grand Rapids are generally sandy. Soils range from a Plainfield-Friendship Association to Newson-Meehan Association. Plainfield-Friendship Association soils are nearly level to steep, moderately well drained and excessively drained soils that have a sandy subsoil; formed in deep sandy outwash on outwash plains. Newson-Meehan Association soils are nearly level, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained soils that have a sandy subsoil, formed in deep sandy outwash, on outwash plains and glacial lake deposits. The sandy soils in Grand Rapids are a factor that makes it easier to develop.

(Map 10) shows the soil limitations for dwellings with basements. Soil limitations are indicated by the ratings “not limited,” “somewhat limited,” and “very limited.” based on the Wood County Soil Survey. Exactly half (50.5%) of the town’s land area has no limitations for dwellings with basements. These areas are along the Highway 54 corridor and most parts of Grand Rapids on either side and south of Kellner Road (County Road W). Another 17.4% of the town is rated as being “somewhat limited.” These areas are scattered, but generally in the Highway 54 corridor, between Kellner Road and Peach Street-extended, and along the streams in the south portions of the town. Areas that are “somewhat limited” for buildings with basements may need mound systems for treating private sewage and they may have to take extra steps to keep basements dry in times of high groundwater. Finally, nearly 1/3 of Grand Rapids is “very limited” for structures with basements. Those areas, shown in red in (Map 10), have remained relatively undeveloped and are associated with a groundwater recharge area. They should be protected from groundwater contamination to preserve the town’s potable water supply for the future. Soil limitations and high groundwater conditions in the northern parts of Grand Rapids are one of the biggest limiting factors for development.

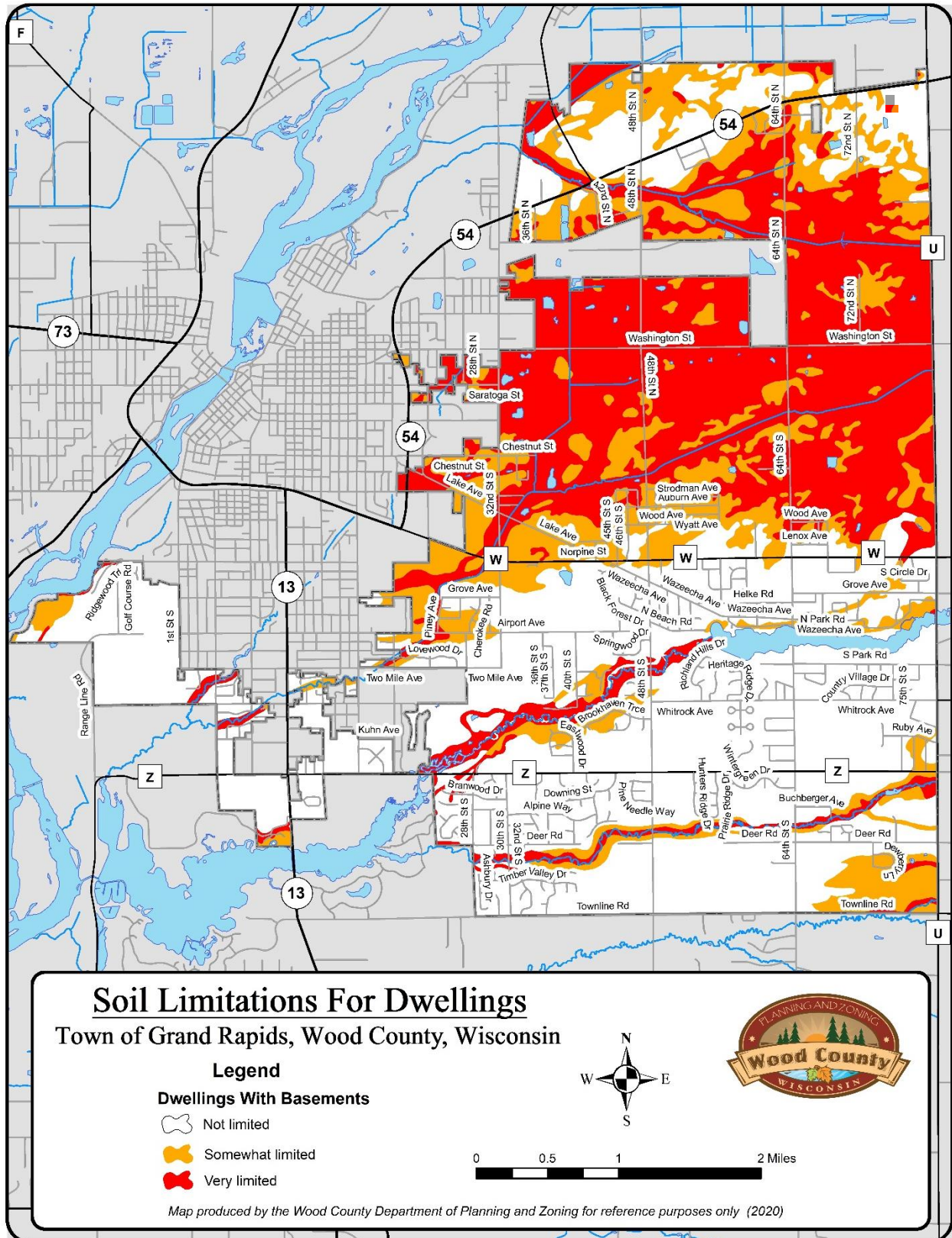
With few exceptions, virtually all structures with plumbing are served by Private On-Site Waste Treatment Systems (POWTS), it is important for town officials to keep the soil maps in mind when recommending areas for new development. It is imperative that all POWTS be properly permitted and maintained to protect the public health, drinking water and surface waters of the town.



### Map 9: Wetland Map



### Map 10: Soil Limitations for Dwellings Map





## Surface Water

Surface water in Grand Rapids consists of tributaries to the Wisconsin River. Quinnell Creek drains the northern portions of the Town, as well as parts of the Town of Grant in Portage County. Quinnell Creek enters Biron north of Highway 54 and west of Eagle Road. A fish-rearing pond, is located on Quinnell Creek at the intersection of Highway 54 and Eagle Road.

The One Mile Creek begins near Washington and 28th Street and travels south-southwest into Wisconsin Rapids, through Grand Rapids again southeast of Alexander Field and then enters the Village of Port Edwards where it discharges into Nepco Lake and on to the Wisconsin River.

Two Mile Creek enters Grand Rapids and Wood County south of Washington Street and flows to the southwest where it meets One Mile Creek in the Village of Port Edwards west of Sampson Street, south of Alexander Field. Much of Two Mile Creek has been diverted through culverts as it travels through Wisconsin Rapids.

Four Mile Creek (a/k/a Duck Creek) enters Grand Rapids via Lake Wazeecha. The lake is a man-made impoundment that is near a mile and a half in length, east to west. At the lake's west end, water discharging from the lake flows southwest to Nepco Lake in the Village of Port Edwards. From there, water flows a short distance from Nepco Lake to the Wisconsin River.

Finally, Bloody Run Creek enters Grand Rapids from Portage County south of Griffith Avenue (County Road Z), flowing westerly to Lake Nepco, west of 28th Street extended. Like One- and Two-Mile creeks, water is then discharged from Nepco Lake to the Wisconsin River a short distance away.

Lake Wazeecha (Ho-Chunk, meaning “lake of the land of the pines”) is a very important body of water for Grand Rapids and for the entire urban area. This man-made body of water, created in the 1930s is about 148 acres in size. It is surrounded by South Wood County Park. Lake Wazeecha is an important asset to the town and its residents. This is according to the responses from the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey*. Because of the importance of this lake to the area's economy, it is to the town's benefit to monitor management and maintenance of Lake Wazeecha. If necessary, the town should facilitate meetings between “irrigation” communities that lie upstream, the County and the State to assure that the quantity and quality of water in Lake Wazeecha is protected.



Water Ski Show – Lake Wazeecha

Grand Rapids shall strive to improve and protect the quality of surface waters by reducing pollutants from urban and rural nonpoint sources. Nonpoint sources of pollution include: Excess fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides from residential areas and agricultural areas; eroding soils, streambanks, roadsides; and runoff from livestock wastes.

### **Wildlife**

The Town of Grand Rapids has an abundance of wildlife, including deer, rabbits, ducks, geese, turkey and more. In many communities, like Grand Rapids, suburban development has encroached on wildlife habitat, often eliminating former homes and breeding areas for wildlife. 2020 community survey respondents value the area's wildlife. Suburban landscaping provides a food source for the deer herd, a fact that sometimes bothers some residents. The town, through this planning program, recognizes the value of its wildlife and is considering development areas and densities that will provide for development that will protect wildlife habitat.

### **Threatened and Endangered Species**

In 1972, Wisconsin passed its own endangered species law. Under the WDNR, the state created rules and regulations and identified which species to protect. Congress passed the Endangered Species Act in 1973 with a purpose "to conserve the ecosystem upon which endangered and threatened species depend". The law incorporates the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 and Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969. WDNR maintains a list of threatened and endangered species. However, they are careful about the information they release about specific species and locations. General information on threatened and endangered species is available on the WDNR web site.

### **Non-Metallic & Non-Ferrous Metallic Mining**

There are three (3) active non-metallic mining operations located in the Town of Grand Rapids as of the beginning of 2020. Non-metallic mining involves the extraction of stone, rock, sand or other similar material from natural deposits. This is a widespread activity in Wood County with the most common examples of nonmetallic mines being quarries and pits. Materials extracted can range from aggregate for construction; sand, gravel and crushed limestone or dolomite for road building; peat for gardening and horticulture; dimension stone for use in buildings, landscaping, and monuments; and sand that is exported for use by the oil industry. Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 135 requires that all counties adopt and enforce a Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance that establishes performance standards for the reclamation of active and future nonmetallic mining sites, but not sites abandoned prior to August 1, 2001. The Wood County Land Conservation Department administers the reclamation ordinance. Ordinance standards address reclamation, surface water and wetland protection, groundwater

protection, topsoil management, grading and slopes, maintenance, and a variety of other issues. Although the County is required to have a reclamation ordinance that is focused on how the site will be left following the mining operation, siting of nonmetallic operations is dependent on regulation identified in the Town of Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance. The town, through its zoning ordinance, shall identify appropriate areas for mining operations, established regulations that set hours of operations, safety features such as fencing, and noise thresholds, among other requirements.

There are no active non-ferrous metallic mining operations located in the Town of Grand Rapids (2020). Non-ferrous metallic mining involves the extraction of copper, zinc, gold, silver, platinum, nickel, aluminum, lead, etc. from natural deposits. The Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department administers a Non-ferrous Metallic Mineral Mining Land Use and Reclamation Ordinance within all unincorporated areas of the county including the Town of Grand Rapids.

### **Agricultural Resources**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines “agriculture” as the science or practice of farming, including growing crops and raising animals for the production of food, fiber, fuel, and other products. Grand Rapids is considered to be more of a suburban community rather than an agricultural. Most traditional farming has disappeared from Grand Rapids’ landscape. There is specialized agricultural and smaller hobby farm activities occurring in the town. Field crops and forage agricultural operations are scattered throughout the rural areas of the town. Successful cranberry production is evident in northern portions of the town. The town’s soils and development patterns are not conducive to agricultural operations. Very few areas of the town are considered prime farmland according to the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service. The number of farms and agricultural acreage in Wood County has declined since the early 1960’s.

### **Animal Waste Management**

There are no permitted animal waste storage facilities located in the Town of Grand Rapids as of 2020. One of the most significant potential groundwater contamination sources is animal waste. Both storage and spreading of animal waste can contaminate groundwater if not properly managed. Wood County regulates the location, design and installation of animal waste storage facilities through its Animal Waste and Manure Management Ordinance administered by the Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department. This ordinance ensures that all new, substantially altered and abandoned manure storage facilities are completed in compliance with approved standards and specifications. The ordinance also requires that permitted storage facilities submit and follow an annual nutrient management



plan. Additionally, the State of Wisconsin regulates livestock operations with 1,000 animal units or more and those livestock operations with less than 1,000 animal units that have discharges that significantly affect water quality.

### **Farmland Preservation Program**

Wisconsin's Farmland Preservation Program helps farmers and local governments preserve farmland, protect soil and water, and minimize land use conflicts. The program became available to Wood County landowners in 1984. It is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) in cooperation with the Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department. Wood County has a Farmland Preservation Plan. If interested, the Town of Grand Rapids may adopt farmland preservation zoning in the future and encourage farmers to enroll land into the Farmland Preservation Program.

### **Parks, Open Space & Recreation**

Parks, public open space and recreation opportunities are important determinants of the quality of life within a community. The location of these facilities can shape development, create livability, preserve property values, and provide infrastructure that promotes health. Section 5: Utilities and Community Facilities Element (page 57) provides a summary and general analysis of park and recreation opportunities in Grand Rapids.

Generally, Grand Rapids residents rely on area city and county parks and open spaces for their recreation needs. That is not to say that provisions should not be made for additional park and recreation opportunities during the planning period. The town should consider recreation facilities needed or desired by its residents. If the opportunity presents itself, the town should consider acquiring land for a future park, especially in the residential-developing areas in Grand Rapids. Another option may be to encourage dedication of parkland through the zoning provisions or a subdivision ordinance. Cooperative ventures between area communities and organizations are encouraged.

### **Historical & Cultural Resources**

The Town of Grand Rapids is a community rich in history (presented in section 2 of this plan). Cultural resources tie directly into the history of Grand Rapids. Cultural resources may include historic buildings and structures as well as historic archeological sites. These resources provide a window to the past and often define a community's historic character. Additionally, historic preservation efforts may generate a sense of pride in the community.

The Wisconsin Historical Society Inventory includes one (1) record for the Town of Grand Rapids presented in (Table 24) below.

<b>Table 24</b>	
<b>TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS – HISTORICAL &amp; CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>	
<b>Feature</b>	<b>Location</b>
1930 Astylistic Utilitarian Building (Alexander Field – South Wood County Airport)	3620 1 <sup>st</sup> Street South
Source: Wisconsin Historical Society	

Community events and social customs also play an integral part of a community’s culture and character. Annually, volunteer and non-profit events like the firefighter’s picnic, town-wide rummage sale and Choose to Reuse, etc. take place in Grand Rapids. The town will continue to support community events desired by its residents. The *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* asked residents what kinds of community events they would like to see in the town. Top responses included: Music Events, Picnics, and Kids and Family Events and Activities.

**Natural, Agricultural & Cultural Resources Goals, Objectives & Policies**

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids will balance the needs of future development while preserving and protecting its natural resources, and maintaining a healthy environment.

**Objective:** Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) from unsuitable development to avoid potential adverse impacts on the natural environment of the town.

**Policy:** Support sustainable management of development in or near wetland, floodplain and shoreland areas.

**Policy:** Continue to coordinate applicable permitting with the Wood County Planning and Zoning Department for any development in floodplain and shoreland zoning areas.

**Objective:** Protect groundwater quality and quantity, especially the groundwater recharge area in the northern part of the Town.

**Policy:** \*Analyze development proposals for their potential impact on groundwater resources.

**Policy:** \*Assure compliance with state building codes regarding construction site and erosion control, and storm water management where necessary.

**Policy:** \*Use the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to control the density and location of developments in areas that may be environmentally sensitive.

**Policy:** Educate town residents on how to use best management practices when applying fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides.

**Policy:** Assess the need for a groundwater study.

**Objective:** Protect and improve the quality of surface water in the town.

**Policy:** Reduce pollutants from urban, suburban and rural nonpoint sources.

**Policy:** \*Require protection of drainage patterns through use of drainage easements on certified survey maps and subdivision plats and building setbacks in the zoning ordinance

**Policy:** \*Continue to work with and support the Wood County Private Sewage Ordinance administration with regard to regular state-required septic tank pumping and reporting, and replacement of failing septic systems.

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids will remain a community with country/suburban character.

**Objective:** Preserve and enhance woodlands, forests, open areas, and other environmental resources that contribute to the desired identity and character of the town.

**Policy:** \*Maintain low density development in areas where there may be environmental concerns.

**Policy:** Promote a development environment where residents can enjoy the aesthetic benefits of the town.

**Policy:** Monitor wildlife damage complaints and communicate wildlife damage or control issues with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

**Policy:** Consider requiring dedication of parkland, open space and natural areas through the zoning provisions or subdivision ordinance.

**Objective:** Recognize and nurture cultural and community pride in the town.

**Policy:** \*Continue to support the celebration of community and cultural events at locations in the Town.

**Policy:** Encourage all eligible residents to participate in elected and appointed offices. Encourage those who are not eligible for elected offices to participate on committees and commissions to serve their community.

**Policy:** Encourage the preservation of architectural and historical sites within the town.

( \* Goals, objectives and/or policies from previous plans.)

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## 7. Economic Development

Economic development is the process of improving a community's well-being through job creation, business growth, and income growth, as well as through improvements to the social and natural environment that strengthen the local economy. The present condition of the local economy directly influences economic development and the overall quality of life in the Town of Grand Rapids. The simple beauty of the town, with its wooded areas and Lake Wazeecha, is an attraction to people looking for the peacefulness of suburban living, but still only minutes from work, schools and services.



*STH 54 Commercial Corridor*

## Introduction

The purpose of this element is to provide an analysis of the Grand Rapids' current workforce and economic base. From this analysis this section will outline goals, objectives and policies that are intended to promote the stabilization, retention or expansion of the economic base and quality employment opportunities in the town over the next 10 to 20 years. To achieve that purpose, this chapter will assess the types of businesses and industries that are desired/not desired in Grand Rapids, perceived strengths and weaknesses with respect to attracting and retaining businesses and industries, designate sites for desired business development, and identify county, regional and state economic development programs and resources that apply to the town.

*Wis. Stat. § 66.1001(2)(f).  
Economic development element:  
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 the 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.*

*“Over 70% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that new business development should be encouraged in the town.”*

Source: 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey

## Economic Base

The economy of the Town of Grand Rapids is dependent on the general economy of the Wisconsin Rapids urban area, county and region.

Several small businesses and home occupation businesses are scattered throughout the town. These also play an important role in the town's economy. Given the fact that Grand Rapids has attracted skilled populations with its natural amenities, there is an opportunity to create and grow local small businesses. This can be a sustainable strategy for suburban economic development. Grand Rapids also has exceptional broadband and telecommunication access.

Grand Rapids is home to several larger employers in the medical, education, construction, and agribusiness industries.

Grand Rapids has attracted residents who commute to neighboring areas for employment. As shown earlier in (Table 11), it is estimated almost 94% of town residents commute to a place of employment outside of Grand Rapids. Because most residents work outside of the town, the Town Board should take careful consideration of the transportation network to move people to and from adjacent communities.

Grand Rapids does not have a municipal water supply and sanitary sewer system. This prevents the town from attracting large industrial or commercial development. Many larger businesses use a lot of water and, as a result, need to dispose of a lot of wastewater. Because all of the Town of Grand Rapids is on private, on-site waste treatment systems, disposal of large quantities of water can be hard on systems and pose a potential of contaminating private drinking water supplies. This can also be a very expensive option for a start-up or expansion business.

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development maintains a list of major employers in the Grand Rapids' area.

### **Workforce**

Attracting and retaining a quality workforce is essential for the Town of Grand Rapids and area businesses. The primary challenge for the future will be workforce quantity. Grand Rapids, like many communities in WI, may be facing a body's gap in regards to its workforce. Grand Rapids' labor force may continue to decline due to the town's age structure. The town is projected to see a substantial increase in the number of individuals entering retirement age cohorts. The number of retiring baby boomers may outpace the influx of new workers.

Supplemental labor force data is presented in (Section 2) of this plan. This includes, but is not limited to: educational attainment levels; income levels; employment characteristics and projections; industry characteristics; and commuting information.

Town officials may need to consider strategies to address workforce development challenges. Town officials shall thoughtfully consider long-term policies and investments related to education, infrastructure and quality of life to attract and retain residents. Communities require a quality labor force to stay competitive, to keep existing economic development strong, to keep people in the community, and to enhance overall quality of life.

### **Desired Business and Industry**

The Town of Grand Rapids residents and elected officials strongly support the creation of jobs that provide a good income while protecting the town's suburban character and environment.

According to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey*: Over 70% of survey respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that new business development should be encouraged

in the town. Compared to a little over 18% that “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with that statement. The community survey also asked respondents what types of businesses they would like to see. The following are the top 5 categorized responses, in no particular order:

- Restaurants and Food
- Manufacturing
- Grocery Store
- Retail
- Small Business/Shops

The Town of Grand Rapids has both commercial and industrial areas that can accommodate the desired businesses and industries mentioned above. Areas along the STH 54 corridor, Kellner area, and intersection of 48<sup>th</sup> Street and CTH W are all planned commercial areas. Manufacturing would fit well in the areas close to rail and four-lane highway access. Larger industrial activities and development that may require municipal sewer and water should be encouraged in designated industrial and business parks of surrounding communities. Any additions to the job base in the Wisconsin Rapids area benefits Grand Rapids as well.

**Area Business & Industrial Sites**

The Town of Grand Rapids, through their town zoning ordinance, has provided districts for commercial and industrial land uses. The town has a large undeveloped area that has been zoned for manufacturing uses for many years. This area is in Sections 2 and 11, bounded on the south by the Rapids East Commerce Center. It provides rail access and is about a quarter mile south of the four-lane Highway 54. The town has a planned commercial corridor located along STH 54. This corridor that has historically been zoned for commercial uses. It has potential for future growth of small manufacturing companies that don’t use or dispose of a lot of water or need high water pressure for fire protection; small businesses similar to those already located in the Town; businesses that provide neighborhood support services; small office complexes; and others. The urban area’s largest employers are located and will continue to locate where municipal services can be provided, namely sanitary sewer and water.

The town should evaluate economic development sites and projects on a case-by-case basis. It is important for these types of land uses to be consistent with Grand Rapids’ overall vision for the town, its comprehensive plan, and local ordinances.

There are (4) designated business parks and industrial parks that are in close proximity to the Town of Grand Rapids.

**Rapids East Commerce Center**

Location: City of Wisconsin Rapids  
Size: Park is 230 acres with sites available from 2 to 100 acres  
Uses: Suitable for manufacturing, warehouse and distribution

### **West Side Industrial Park**

Location: City of Wisconsin Rapids

Size: Sites available from 1 to 45 acres

Uses: Suitable for light and heavy manufacturing, warehouse and distribution

### **Woodlands Business & Technology Center**

Location: City of Wisconsin Rapids

Size: Sites available from 1 to 50 acres

Uses: Suitable for professional offices, research, and development, medical services

### **Biron Hwy. 54 East Business Park**

Location: Village of Biron

Size: Park is 160 acres with sites available from 2 to 80 acres

Uses: Suitable for manufacturing, commercial, and new technologies

## **Brownfields & Environmentally Contaminated Sites**

Brownfields and environmentally contaminated sites can be redeveloped and remediated to promote economic development in a community. Brownfields are abandoned, idle or underused commercial or industrial properties, where the expansion or redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived contamination. Brownfields vary in size, location, age, and past use - they can be anything from a five-hundred acre automobile assembly plant to a small, abandoned corner gas station. The WDNR's Remediation and Redevelopment program has a wide range of financial and liability tools available to assist local governments, businesses, lenders and others to clean up and redevelop brownfields in Wisconsin. The WDNR has a comprehensive database available online that provides information on brownfields and environmentally contaminated sites. As of 2020, there are (15) "closed status"; (6) "closed status – with continuing obligations"; and (1) "open status" contaminated site located in the Town of Grand Rapids. The WI-DNR can provide additional details on these sites.

## **Economic Development Resources**

Economic development efforts in the Town of Grand Rapids area are available through a variety of resources, programs and organizations. These include federal, state and local economic development programs. Some of the primary organizations include:

### **Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce**

Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce is a dynamic investor organization comprised of non-profit, educational, government, and small and large businesses. The mission of the Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce is to strengthen the economy and enhance quality of place. The chamber receives financial support from annual membership dues from member businesses, local government funding, public and



private grants, sponsorships, program revenues and more. The chamber serves as a first contact for business resource assistance, provides entrepreneurial training and either sponsors or participates in several economic development workshops each year. The Town of Grand Rapids is a member of Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce.

#### **Wisconsin Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (WRACVB)**

The WRACVB is an organization that serves as a resource for area information, and a recognized point of contact for convention and meeting planners, tour operators, sporting events and leisure travelers. The WRACVB promotes the Wisconsin Rapids area as a business and leisure destination resulting in economic prosperity for businesses and organizations. They are directly responsible for tourism in the area, which creates a positive economic impact.

#### **Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund (CWED)**

The Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund (CWED) Revolving Loan Program works with entrepreneurs and their lenders to structure financing packages for start-up and expanding businesses to encourage economic growth in the area.

#### **Wood County**

The Conservation, Education and Economic Development (CEED) Committee is charged with overseeing day-to-day economic development activities in Wood County. The CEED Committee is a standing committee of the Wood County Board of Supervisors. Under the oversight of this committee, Wood County participates in several economic development activities and is represented on various Boards of Directors of area economic development organizations. Wood County has also been facilitating reoccurring economic development roundtable meetings with regional economic development partners and stakeholders. In 2020, Wood County revived a Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) grant to develop a strategic plan for Wood County.

#### **North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC)**

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, located in Wausau, provides technical assistance and compiles economic development data for its members. It also administers a regional revolving loan fund on behalf of the North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation. The ten counties the NCWRPC serves have also been formally designated as an Economic Development District by the State of Wisconsin and by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. Under this designation, the NCWRPC maintains a continuous process of planning assistance that supports the formulation and implementation of economic development programs designed to create or retain full-time permanent jobs and

income. The NCWRPC provides services such as economic research, marketing, financial packaging, evaluation and analysis of public infrastructure needs that support private economic development activity, and works with local units of government to maintain eligibility for certain grants.

### **Centergy**

The Centergy Central Wisconsin Alliance for Economic Development was initially created in 1988 and has evolved into the strong regional economic development proponent it is today. This non-profit organization is led by an executive director who has the responsibility of conducting economic development activities and looking after economic development interests of Adams, Lincoln, Marathon, Portage and Wood counties. Centergy has conducted economic opportunity forums and studies for central Wisconsin, which have resulted in cooperative efforts in our region. Each year, Centergy coordinates Central Wisconsin Days in Madison. This two-day event features one-on-one meetings with many Wisconsin legislators and state-level staff members to educate them on the opportunities and needs throughout central Wisconsin. Centergy Board members, private business representatives and local elected officials travel to Madison to represent our area.

### **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Rural Development**

USDA Rural Development is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in rural America. They offer loans, grants and loan guarantees to help create jobs and support economic development and essential services such as housing, health care, first responder services and equipment, and water, electric and communications infrastructure.

### **Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA)**

The Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to expanding Wisconsin's economy. WEDA's mission is to enhance economic development in Wisconsin through professional development, networking and advocacy. WEDA provide members with the resources and tools to strengthen their skills in economic development, help achieve their professional goals, and promote economic growth in communities throughout the state.

### **Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Administration (WHEDA)**

WHEDA offers and manages a variety of financial resources and assistance programs that can assist small businesses. WHEDA's mission is to stimulate the state's economy and improve the quality of life for Wisconsin residents by providing affordable housing and business financing products.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats (SWOT) Analysis**

A SWOT Analysis identifies perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that either promote or inhibit the prosperity, safety, health, and general welfare of Grand Rapids residents. Every community has certain competitive factors that can encourage economic development (strengths and opportunities) and certain shortcomings that may detract from a community (weaknesses and threats). The SWOT Analysis will also aid in the development of an overall “vision” that will provide broad, long-range guidance for the Town of Grand Rapids for the next 10 to 20 years. The complete Town of Grand Rapids SWOT Summary is included in (Appendix B). The cumulative list was developed by the Town Plan Commission through public input received in the 2020 community survey.

### Economic Development Goals, Objectives & Policies

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids actively promotes a strong local economic base.

- Objective:** \*Develop small businesses along the Highway 54 corridor.

  - Policy:** \*Maintain commercial zoning along the Highway 54 corridor and provide development standards that are economically feasible for small businesses and business start-ups.
  - Policy:** \*Encourage reuse of residential structures for home-based occupations, office space or small retail businesses as those structures are sold.
  - Policy:** Make referrals to local economic development organizations (Heart of Wisconsin Chamber, Wisconsin Rapids CVB, Wood County, etc.) to provide information on funding resources for new and existing businesses.
  - Policy:** Promote small businesses that do not require large amounts of water or wastewater treatment services.
  
- Objective:** \*Develop small to medium size industrial businesses in “manufacturing” zone.

  - Policy:** \*Promote the manufacturing zones on the Town’s website with a location map and brief description.
  - Policy:** \*Post a list of current manufacturers that are located in Grand Rapids in the Town’s website.
  - Policy:** \*Promote the Town’s desire for new light industries in the annual newsletter to Town residents (they may have contacts with business owners in other parts of the State or nation).
  - Policy:** Consider feasibility of a town business park.
  
- Objective:** Enhance the overall quality of life and community pride in the town.

  - Policy:** Identify economic development strategies related to placemaking.
  - Policy:** Consider constructing town entrance signs and other strategic signs to strengthen the town’s identity and resident’s sense of place.
  
- Objective:** \*Continue to participate/cooperate with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron on the development of their business and industrial parks.

  - Policy:** \*Publicize the fact that Grand Rapids is located immediately adjacent to business and industrial parks that have ample development opportunities and are close to the Town’s quality housing supply.
  - Policy:** \*Place a high priority on sharing of services and revenues associated with development of adjacent industrial and business parks.

**Policy:** \*Work toward boundary agreements with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron so that the town can properly plan for future growth and determine needs for future municipal services the Town will need to provide.

**Policy:** Encourage and large industrial developments where municipal sewer and water services are located.

**Objective:** Retain existing small businesses and industries.

**Policy:** \*Develop business retention program to visit local businesses to discuss needs with which the Town may be able to assist.

**Policy:** \*Feature existing businesses in monthly newspaper column.

**Policy:** Support the development of appropriate home occupations in the town.

**Policy:** Provide areas for appropriate commercial and industrial land uses through the town’s zoning map and ordinance.

( \* Goals, objectives and/or policies from previous plans.)





## 8. Intergovernmental Cooperation

Intergovernmental cooperation among communities can lead toward relationships that prosper based on common goals and interests, while putting aside political and boundary differences. By establishing a rapport with adjacent communities, improved communication can lead to better working relationships that can benefit all of the communities involved. By working together, not only will communities have the potential of providing services at the lowest cost, and most efficient manner, they will be better positioned to address issues of mutual interest.



## Introduction

The purpose of this element is to identify existing activities in which the Town of Grand Rapids currently participates with other local units of government, the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District, Wood County, and state and federal governments. The inventory will identify important existing cooperative activities and summarize major challenges and issues that have been identified regarding intergovernmental cooperation, including opportunities to reduce or eliminate duplication of services; incompatible goals, policies and development; mechanisms for conflict resolution; and opportunities for joint planning and decision-making. This chapter will also describe area planning issues that will or could impact Grand Rapids residents and residents of neighboring communities. Through this analysis, this section will outline goals, objectives and policies that will help guide future town-level decisions for the next 10 to 20 years.

*Wis. Stat. § 66.1001(2)(g).  
Intergovernmental cooperation element:  
A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps, and programs for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions, including school districts, drainage 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, drainage districts, and adjacent local governmental units, and to the region, the state and other governmental units. The element shall consider, to the greatest extent possible, the maps and plans of any military base or installation, with at least 200 assigned military personnel or that contains at least 2,000 acres, with which the local governmental unit shares common territory. The element shall incorporate any plans or agreements to which the local governmental unit is a party under s. 66.0301, 66.0307 or 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.*

*“One of the top reasons residents choose to live in Grand Rapids is its close proximity to area communities”*

Source: 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey

## Options for Intergovernmental Cooperation

As The Town of Grand Rapids searches for ways to continue to provide quality services with limited resources, they are reviewing the efficiency of their service delivery, setting priorities of services, and determining which services can be provided through alternative arrangements.

The desirability of cooperative efforts depends upon a variety of factors like the size of the jurisdiction, the overall economic impact, and advantages and disadvantages of the effort. There is no single agreement that will meet everyone’s needs, however, there are a variety of approaches that communities can take advantage of when considering cooperative efforts. Wisconsin law provides flexibility and opportunity when it comes to working with others.

Cooperating with services can save money, improve the quality and efficiency of services, and allow services to be provided that would not otherwise be feasible. The following are some ways that communities can work together to provide services:

- **Mutual Aid/Voluntary assistance** – Voluntarily providing services and resources to another municipality.
- **Trading services** – Exchanging different pieces of equipment for labor, or labor for labor.
- **Renting equipment** – Renting equipment from neighboring communities could be cheaper than purchasing, and it provides revenue to the community that owns the equipment.
- **Contracting** – Contracting with another community to provide a service.
- **Routine county services** – Some county services are already paid for through taxes or fees such as police protection. Through cooperation, areas where improvements are needed can be identified along with ways to cooperatively address them.
- **Sharing municipal staff** – Sharing municipal employees and independently contracted professionals allows communities to reduce staffing costs, while providing the same level of services.
- **Consolidating services** – Communities can work together to provide a service, rather than individually providing the service to their residents. This approach many times makes cost-prohibitive or inefficient services, feasible.
- **Joint use of a facility** – Communities can share use of a public facility.
- **Special purpose districts** – Districts are created to provide a particular service. Special purpose districts are separate and legally independent entities that have their own governing bodies, boundaries, ordinances, and taxing authority.
- **Joint purchase and ownership of equipment** – Communities can agree to jointly purchase and own equipment that may be too costly to otherwise purchase individually.
- **Cooperative purchasing** – Purchasing equipment or supplies cooperatively may allow communities to gain more favorable pricing.

## **Statutes Pertaining to Intergovernmental Cooperation**

### **Wisconsin State Statute 66.0301 – Intergovernmental Cooperation**

State Statute 66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, certain special districts, including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, native American tribes or bands and others.

### **Wisconsin State Statute 66.0307 – Boundary Plans and Agreements**

State Statute 66.0307 permits cities, villages or towns to participate in cooperative boundary agreements. Each municipality that participates must adopt a resolution authorizing its participation in the planning process.

## **Adjacent Local Governmental Units**

The Town of Grand Rapids shall strive to maintain a cooperative working relationship with adjacent local governmental units. These adjacent local governmental units are shown in (Map 11) on the next page. Grand Rapids is surrounded to the south and east by the Towns of Saratoga and Grant (Portage County). The City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Port Edwards lie generally to the west. The Village of Biron is adjacent to Grand Rapids northern boundary.

It is very important that Grand Rapids and its neighbors coordinate their planning efforts. These efforts initiate opportunities to collectively identify issues, propose ideas, and reach consensus. Many community issues cross jurisdictional boundaries, affecting more than one community. Joint planning provides the chance to address community issues before decisions have been made and before development activities occur that may limit future solutions. Cooperating with planning provides opportunities for jurisdictions to be proactive rather than reactive.

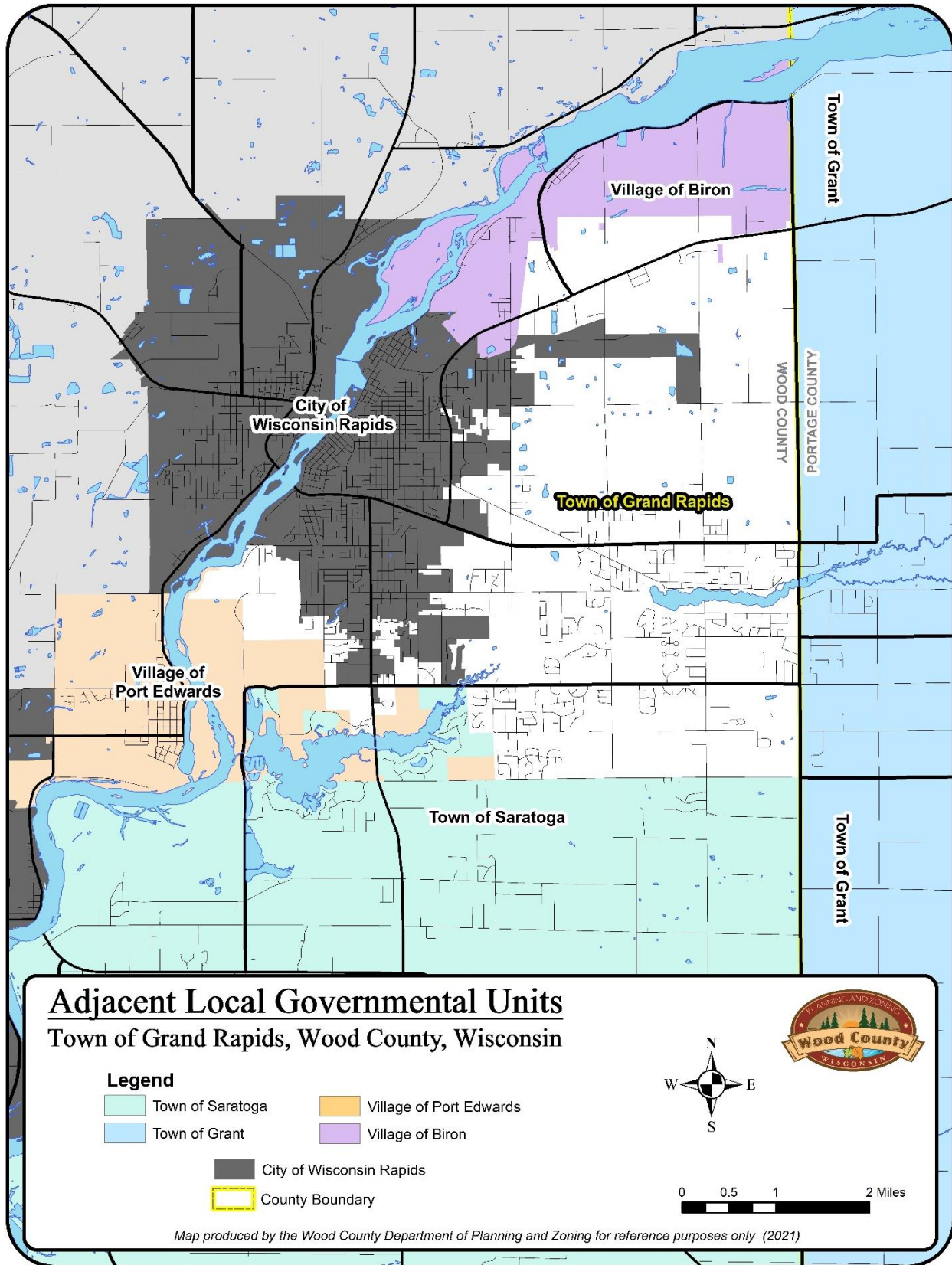
Wisconsin Rapids uses the extraterritorial plat review rights that the Wisconsin Statutes provide for the purpose of reviewing certified survey maps and subdivision plats. They review the maps and plats primarily for consistency with their official street map. The city has developed a comprehensive plan that looks beyond its borders. Coordination of the city and town Plan Commissions is important to eliminate as many inconsistencies on the same parcels as possible. With past land use planning, such inconsistencies in boundary areas caused frustration when the two communities projected the same parcels to become different future uses.

Boundary issues need to be continually addressed. Boundaries may be the most challenging of all intergovernmental issues and resolving any conflicts with boundaries can have dramatic improvements for the community. Grand Rapids has attempted to resolve boundary issues with Wisconsin Rapids on many occasions. Both communities must continue to strive to resolve boundary issues. The certainty that results by cooperating with boundaries can lead to more timely decision-making, greater economic opportunity, protection of natural resources, more efficient provision of services, better planning, greater public and private investment in infrastructure, greater community identity, and an improved quality of life for residents.

Overlapping decision making authority of adjacent governmental units presents challenges. The Town of Grand Rapids shall continue to identify existing cooperative efforts and build on the cooperation that already exists. Furthermore, it is important for town officials to continue communicating with city, village, and town officials to avoid any potential conflicts or issues.



Map 11: Adjacent Local Governmental Units Map





## **Existing Shared Services and Cooperative Efforts**

The Town of Grand Rapids currently has shared services and cooperative efforts with local, county, state, regional, and federal agencies. These services and efforts can be as simple as communicating information, or it can be as complex as entering into formal intergovernmental agreements. Cooperation between governmental jurisdictions can help avoid wasteful duplication of services at the town level. The information presented below is intended to be used by town officials to understand existing intergovernmental relationships and successes. This understanding and analysis can be used to build upon and improve intergovernmental cooperation in the future.

### **Towns Association**

The 22 towns in Wood County meet monthly to discuss common issues and provide ideas others can use to make town operations more efficient. This meeting is the local unit of the Wisconsin Towns Association. State legislators are usually at the towns association meeting to provide information and alerts on activities in Madison and interact with town officials on issues and legislation of concern. Each meeting features a speaker, often from county or state agencies, to provide information on programs or to offer assistance in meeting legislative requirements. This has been a very active, quite successful organization, very valuable to Wood County's towns. Interestingly, the Wood County unit of the WI Towns Association started in the Town of Grand Rapids in 1947.

### **Wood County**

Grand Rapids maintains a cooperative working relationship with Wood County, which provides a variety of services to the town including: law enforcement, E-911 dispatch services, planning and zoning, maintenance of county highways, parks, emergency management, and others.

Grand Rapids has its own police force, but also lies within the jurisdiction of the Wood County Sheriff's Department. The county provides routine patrols in the town and assists with calls that may require backup or that come in when no Grand Rapids officer is available. Wood County also provides security at community events. Additionally, the Wood County Sheriff's Rescue is a dedicated group of 27 volunteer adults who provide rescue services for the area. The town will continue to work with state and county law enforcement agencies to provide town residents with a safe place to live.

The Wood County Shared Dispatch Center is located in the Wood County Courthouse in Wisconsin Rapids. The center dispatches for all emergency responders in Wood County – police, fire and ambulance. The center receives emergency calls for the Town of Grand Rapids and dispatches officers for response. Calls for the Humane Officer are also dispatched through the 911 system.

The Town of Grand Rapids has a great working relationship with the Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning. The first Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan was developed with the assistance of Wood County in 1982. Since that time, the Town Plan Commission has maintained their zoning ordinance to provide consistency with the comprehensive plan. County staff assisted with the 2009 and 2021 comprehensive plan, meeting regularly with the Plan Commission, and attempting to coordinate boundary issues and other planning-related projects with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron. Wood County also works with the Town Zoning Administrator on issues relating to land divisions, private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS), county zoning, shoreland zoning, and floodplain zoning. The town works closely with Wood County's GIS/Land Records Coordinator to develop and maintain maps for town planning and zoning, street maintenance, and emergency services uses.

South Wood County Park, surrounding Lake Wazeecha, is owned and operated by Wood County. The Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Tournament is held at this park each July, drawing teams and spectators from throughout the State. The logistics of this event require extensive planning and cooperation between the County's Parks & Forestry Department, the Sheriff's Department, the Town Police Department, the host, Aqua Skiers water ski team, and other agencies throughout the community. The event has been a huge success because of the cooperative efforts.

The Wood County Health Department is concerned with all aspects of public health. They have conducted water tests in the town to test for nitrate levels. They also handle the public health ordinance violations that the town cannot handle, usually indoor issues. The Health Department also is the lead agency for conducting inspections of all restaurants in the county, including those in Grand Rapids.

### **Regional Agencies**

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) is a regional agency that provides assistance to local governmental units throughout a ten-county region, which includes Wood County and the Town of Grand Rapids. NCWRPC provides assistance in areas of land use planning, economic development, geographic information systems (GIS), intergovernmental cooperation, and more. The NCWRPC can assist Grand Rapids with facilitating boundary plans and cooperative agreements with area municipalities.

### **State and Federal Agencies**

The Town of Grand Rapids cooperates with several state and federal agencies including, but not limited to: the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Wisconsin Department of Transportation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Aviation Administration. There are several local programs that are mandated by various state and federal agencies. The town

cooperates by submitting the appropriate records and reports as prescribed by the specific programs and laws.

A portion of Grand Rapids is located in a WDNR fire protection district. If the Grand Rapids Fire Department responds to a forest fire (or grass fire) outside that area, the WDNR is available to assist them through a mutual aid agreement. Conversely, if the WDNR responds to a forest fire in the fire protection district, they can call the GRFD for assistance.

### **Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools (WRPS)**

WRPS serves all of the Town of Grand Rapids. Cooperation with the district includes open communications regarding snow plowing on town roads, accepting their comments on subdivision layouts (particularly the street layout for busing), and other concerns or issues they may have. The Town Board remains open to any discussions or correspondence that the district may want to approach the town about. WRPS owns land and one building in Grand Rapids, so it is in the interest of each that they communicate regarding the use of the land and building, which now houses the alternative high school.

### **Mid-State Technical College (MSTC)**

The MSTC campus is entirely within the boundary of Grand Rapids. Students and staff travel along town and city roads to access the MSTC campus. Three-way communications and planning between the City of Wisconsin Rapids, MSTC and Grand Rapids are necessary for existing and planned campus activities.

## **Existing Intergovernmental Regulations and Tools**

### **Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code**

Wisconsin Administrative Code establishes statewide construction standards and inspection procedures for one- and two-family dwellings and manufactured dwellings in Wisconsin. The Grand Rapids Building Inspector is licensed to conduct all phases of these inspections. That person is contracted by the town and works cooperatively with the Town Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission and Town Board.

### **Wisconsin Commercial Building Code**

Uniform standards for design, installation, maintenance and inspection of commercial buildings and structures are contained in the Wisconsin Administrative Code. This code addresses erosion control during construction; energy conservation; heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC); and fuel gas appliances as well as administration and enforcement of the code.

### **Wisconsin Electrical Code and National Electric Code**

The Wisconsin Administrative Code provides a “practical safeguard” of persons and property throughout the state from hazards arising from the installation and use of electricity. Among

other things, the code covers installation of electric and communication conductors and equipment in places of employment, within or on public and private buildings or other structures, including mobile homes and certain other structures and premises. The National Electric Code, NEC-2005, is incorporated into the Administrative Code by reference and, thus, are required to be followed for electrical installations.

### **Wisconsin Plumbing Code**

Wisconsin Statutes and the companion Administrative Code regulate the method of installation and maintenance of private septic systems. The code is implemented through the Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning. That office works with homeowners, plumbers and system pumpers on the design, installation and maintenance of septic systems. Activities are coordinated with the Grand Rapids Building Inspector and Zoning Administrator to ensure that a sanitary permit is issued prior to issuance of the town building permit. The two agencies also work together to follow-up on complaints about failing septic systems.

### **Floodplain & Shoreland Zoning**

Although there are not many floodplain and shoreland zoning issues in Grand Rapids, there are occasions where development is requested near Lake Wazeecha and local streams. Floodplain regulations are driven by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and channeled to the State and down to the County. Wood County participates in the flood insurance program and has cooperated with the town on several floodplain issues. Shoreland regulations arise when development is proposed within 300 feet of a stream or 1,000 feet from a lake, pond or flowage.

### **Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan**

The Town of Grand Rapids has participated in comprehensive planning dating back to the late 1960s when the Wisconsin Rapids area developed the “South Wood County Comprehensive Plan,” or “701 Plan.” In 1982, Grand Rapids adopted a comprehensive plan for the Town, a plan that was referred to often as new development and zoning amendments were considered. This plan marks the fourth comprehensive plan for the Town. The Plan Commission will continue to use the plan to provide consistency with the zoning and subdivision ordinances and official map.

### **Town of Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance**

Grand Rapids first adopted a zoning ordinance in the mid-1960s, a document that has undergone a comprehensive revision and has been amended many times to accommodate the town’s rapid growth. The Grand Rapids Plan Commission is one of the most active commissions in the unincorporated communities. The Commission meets once a month and typically addresses several discussion items, rezoning petitions, conditional use permits and ordinance enforcement actions.

### **Wood County and Grand Rapids Land Subdivision Review**

Both Wood County and Grand Rapids have subdivision ordinances that require review of, among other things, newly created parcels that are 10 acres or smaller in size. Wood County will not approve a land division if the town objects. The two jurisdictions cooperate in that the county will grant an extended review period beyond the normal 60-days in those cases where the town is working with the subdivider on other local issues.

### **Wood County Zoning Ordinance**

Wood County adopted the Wood County Zoning Ordinance in 1934. This ordinance is still in effect in all (22) towns within its jurisdiction, including Grand Rapids. Because Wood County has a county zoning ordinance, no town zoning ordinance or amendment of a zoning ordinance may be adopted unless approved by the Wood County Board of Supervisors. This requirement applies to town map amendments/rezones and ordinance amendments. Grand Rapids will continue to submit any zoning amendments to the Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning.

### **Extraterritorial Plat Review**

The City of Wisconsin Rapids and the Village of Port Edwards exercise extraterritorial plat review as allowed by Wisconsin Statute. Wisconsin Rapids has statutory authority to review, comment on, approve or reject land division proposals within three miles of the city limits. Port Edwards can do the same for land subdivisions that are proposed within a mile and a half of the village limits. Both municipalities review proposed divisions of land that conflict with their respective zoning standards, comprehensive plans and official street maps. In a few cases, those municipalities and the County have negotiated and compromised on such things as street alignments and lot sizes.

### **Water Quality Management Review**

The Town of Grand Rapids has cooperated with the City of Wisconsin Rapids and surrounding communities to develop a 20-year sewer service area plan for the city (Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management - Sewer Service Plan 2010 – 2030). The purpose of sewer service area planning is to anticipate a community's future wastewater treatment and collection needs for a 20-year planning period. A sewer service area plan identifies areas that are suitable for sanitary sewer development. The plan also delineates environmentally sensitive areas to be protected from future development and indiscriminate urban growth.



## **Existing and Potential Conflicts**

### **Annexation**

Chapter 66 of the Wisconsin Statutes outlines several methods by which lands may be annexed into a village or city. The loss of property and tax base by annexation has created potential conflicts for Grand Rapids for many years. Everything from single residential or commercial lots to major subdivisions, commercial or industrial areas, have eaten away at town borders. Town officials have looked into the possibility of incorporating in order to lock their borders. Local concern is that the town needs the tax base to provide all of the town services they provide, and loss of land, especially large expanses of land, reduces the fiscal abilities of the town to expand or even maintain those services. City officials on the other hand, recognize that the city needs to be able to annex in order to grow. There has also been an overriding policy that the city will not extend sewer and water services to areas that do not annex first.

### **Boundary Development/Land Uses**

The development on the east boundary of Wisconsin Rapids is coupled with conflicts about annexation just mentioned. Opinions about future land use often differ between town officials and city officials. A boundary agreement has been discussed in the past, but no agreement has been reached. Grand Rapids should consider developing and adopting boundary plans and agreements with the City of Wisconsin Rapids that are mutually beneficial and minimize future conflicts.

### **Extraterritorial Plat Review**

The general purpose of extraterritorial plat review is to cooperatively influence development patterns adjacent to a city or village, because these areas may be annexed in the future. The City of Wisconsin Rapids exercises extraterritorial plat review of new land divisions that fall under the requirements of the Wood County Land Subdivision Ordinance. The city's review is normally conducted to assure street alignments or utility easements. Extraterritorial plat review for the city is 3 miles from its borders. The Village of Port Edwards also exercises extraterritorial plat review within 1 ½ miles of the village limits. Where the two extraterritorial review jurisdictions overlap, the difference is split between the two. Neither Wisconsin Rapids nor Port Edwards exercise extraterritorial zoning, as allowed by Wisconsin Statutes, so they have no authority to approve or deny Town of Grand Rapids zoning map amendments.

### **Coordination of Services**

There are several miles of boundary streets between Grand Rapids and its neighboring municipalities. More coordination of municipal services could probably save the municipalities money and a lack of coordination is both an existing and a potential conflict. The town shall continue to extend invitations to adjacent municipalities to discuss cooperative services. Priority should be placed on providing services at the lowest cost and most efficient manner.

## Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals, Objectives & Policies

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids will communicate, cooperate, and collaborate with all governmental units to address services, regulations, activities, and efforts of joint concern.

**Objective:** Continue shared agreements and contracts with neighboring communities when such cooperation and shared services are cost-effective and economically feasible.

**Policy:** Formalize road maintenance agreements in cooperation with the applicable governmental jurisdiction for activities on boundary roads that do not currently have an agreement.

**Policy:** Extend invitations to adjacent municipalities to discuss cooperative services.

**Objective:** Establish mutually-beneficial intergovernmental relations with other jurisdictions.

**Policy:** Consider developing and adopting boundary plans and agreements with the City of Wisconsin Rapids that are mutually beneficial and minimize future conflicts. NCWRPC can facilitate these efforts.

**Policy:** Continue active participation in the Wood County Unit of the WI Towns Association.

**Policy:** Continue active participation in the Citizens (Wood County) Groundwater Group.

**Policy:** Continually evaluate opportunities for improving intergovernmental cooperation to make provision of services more cost effective and efficient.

**Policy:** Identify existing cooperative efforts and build on the cooperation that already exists.

**Objective:** Coordinate town planning activities with adjacent communities and Wood County.

**Policy:** Identify areas where conflicts and issues exist along town boundaries. Recommend strategies to resolve.

**Policy:** Remain active on the Policy Committee for the Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management - Sewer Service Plan.

**Policy:** Attempt to coordinate with the City of Wisconsin Rapids to create, or update, official maps concurrently.

**Objective:** Continue participating in mutual aid agreements for emergency services with neighboring jurisdictions.

**Policy:** \*Have police and fire personnel attend joint training so they can coordinate efforts in emergency situations.

**Policy:** Continue to use and update the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) to coordinate EMS services with neighboring communities and the town.

**Policy:** \*Cooperate with the E-911 dispatch center to assure rapid response to emergencies.

**Objective:** \*Become an effective voice for state initiatives that can affect the town operations or residents.

**Policy:** Participate in Central Wisconsin Days in Madison. This Centergy-sponsored event is aimed at making State legislators aware of central Wisconsin's needs.

**Policy:** \*Through Wood County and Wisconsin Towns Associations, be proactive in proposing or supporting changes in state statutes or codes that will have a positive impact on Grand Rapids.

*( \* Goals, objectives and/or policies from previous plans.)*

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## 9. Land Use

The Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission recognizes that land use planning for the future is sound public policy. A study of past and current land use patterns is a good way to understand why a community looks like it does. Land use changes in the town have more often than not, been driven by socio-economic conditions. However, land use can also be effectively guided by political decisions and policy that are the result of desires of community residents. The land use element provides guidance to improve town zoning and land use decision making.





## Introduction

The purpose of this element is to analyze past, present and future projected land uses in the Town of Grand Rapids to determine how the town could, or will change, in the future. The land use element uses information gathered from other elements of this plan to understand the types of land uses that are possible or desired in the town. Town officials want to avoid haphazard development that can be costly to taxpayers, while ensuring compatible land uses in the town. This chapter will illustrate various land uses on two types of maps: the Existing Land Use Map and Future Land Use. Through this analysis, this element will outline goals, objectives and policies that will help guide future town-level zoning and land use decisions for the next 10 to 20 years.

*“Top 3 land uses that survey respondents would like to see grow or expanded in the Town of Grand Rapids: 1) Recreational; 2) Natural Areas; 3) Residential.”*

Source: 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey

Wis. Stat. § 66.1001(2)(h).

Land use element:

*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.*

## Historical Land Use and Development

There have been three distinct historical phases in the land use history of the Town of Grand Rapids. It was timber that first brought development to this region, which eventually evolved into an agricultural community. Around the 1900's, the town started transitioning into more of a suburban community with a variety of land uses including: residential, commercial, recreational, industrial, and agricultural. The town developed as a suburban, commuter community to the Wisconsin Rapids area employment center. This paradigm continues today. The forces that are driving an increase in residential growth are expected to continue.

The upgrade of State Highway 54 to a high-speed, four-lane facility makes Grand Rapids a good location for families; jobs are easily accessible and lower property taxes are an inducement to live in Grand Rapids. Because many large businesses and industries require municipal sanitary sewer and water, the town is not likely to attract major employers. Small business, however,

can thrive in the town and, as such, is a good target for future development.

Like many unincorporated towns that are adjacent to urban communities like the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Biron, areas of the Town of Grand Rapids will inevitably see conflicts caused by growth of the neighboring communities. While it is necessary for cities and villages to grow in population to support their infrastructure, it is equally important that towns not lose too much population or tax base too fast because they too have municipal services they are obligated to provide. The clash between city and town presents challenges. Cooperation is key to address issues of mutual concern.

Grand Rapids plans to ensure incompatible land uses are separated from each other by other more compatible land uses. The Town Board and Plan Commission will continue to use the town's zoning map and future land use map to guide growth and development. Moreover, Grand Rapids residents and officials plan to retain the current landscape and suburban character of the town, while allowing planned growth.

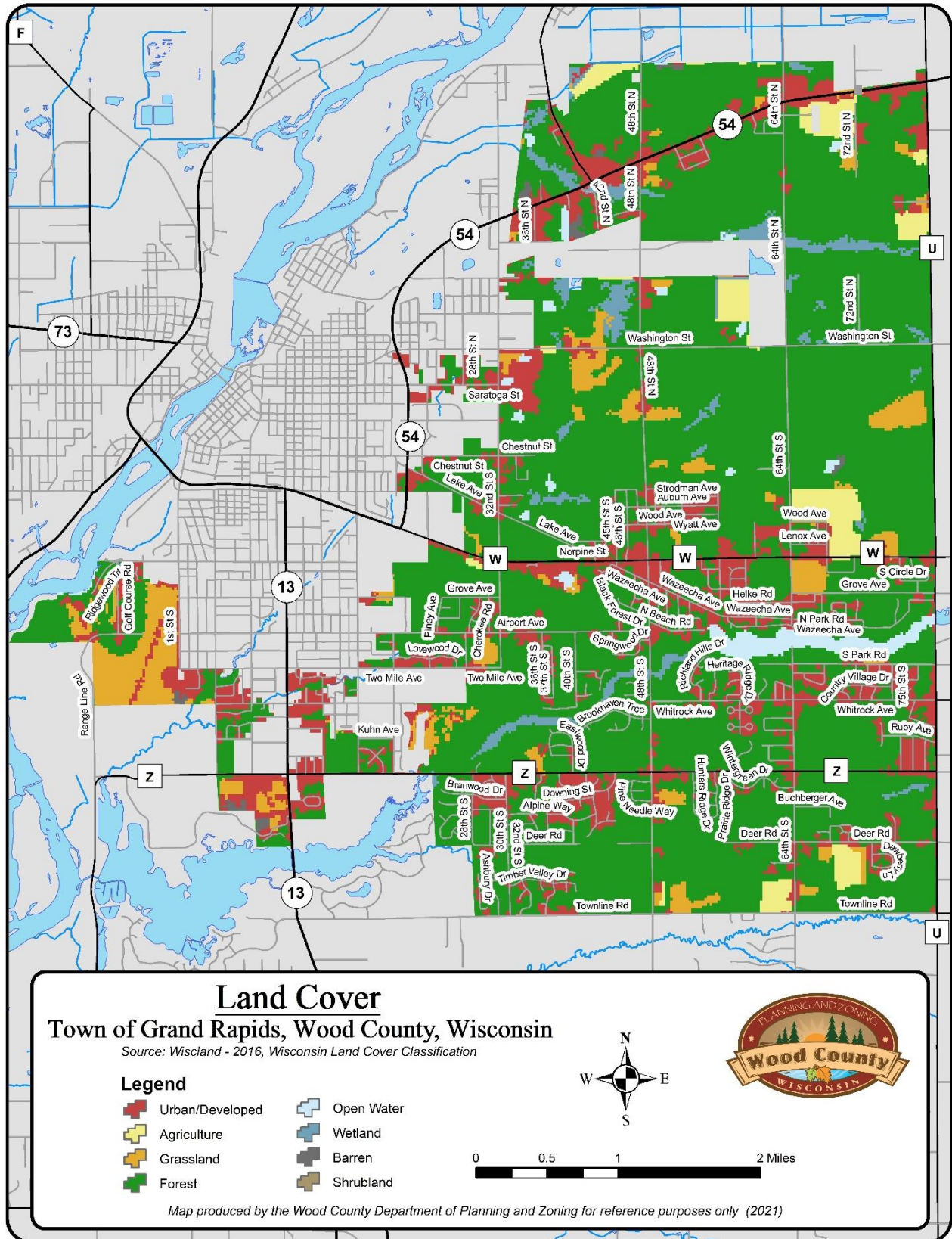
### **Current Land Cover**

One of the fundamental prerequisites for determining future land use is understanding existing land cover in the Town of Grand Rapids. The University of Wisconsin-Madison and WDNR partnered on a project to map the current land cover of Wisconsin. The resulting dataset, known as Wiscland 2.0, was completed in 2016. Land cover data for the Town of Grand Rapids is presented in (Map 12) on the next page. Understanding land cover types and patterns is important for improving or maintaining desired land use cover levels and activities on the landscape. Forests/Woodlands are the largest land cover activity in the Town of Grand Rapids.





### Map 12: Land Cover Map



**Existing Land Use**

It is a necessary component of the land use element to identify and analyze current land use conditions in the Town of Grand Rapids. Knowing what land use activities currently occur in different locations in a community and the relations between those different uses or activities is essential information for planning future land use. It is important to note, “Land Use” is different from “Zoning Classification”. This evaluation is intended to assist town officials when making decisions on future land use needs. Moreover, the goals, objectives and policies of this element are greatly affected by existing land uses and development patterns in Grand Rapids. The land use inventory is important for good community management and should be updated regularly to remain current. The land use inventory is not a plan; it is part of the vital data from which plans are made.

The following land use inventory was performed in 2021. It was developed using 2020 aerial photography interpretation, assessment records, field checks, and the Land Based Classification Standards (LBCS). The LBCS was developed by the American Planning Association to provide a consistent method for classifying land uses. (Map 13) shows the current (2021) location of land use types in Grand Rapids. Additionally, (Table 25) below presents land use classification totals for the Town of Grand Rapids.

<b>Table 25</b> <b>EXISTING LAND USE TOTALS – TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS</b> <b>2021</b>		
Land Use Classification	Acres	% of Total
Natural Areas	±7,945	61.0%
Residential	±2,650	20.4%
Transportation	±919	7.1%
Agriculture	±734	5.6%
Outdoor Recreation	±406	3.1%
Commercial	±185	1.4%
Institutional & Government Services	±105	0.8%
Industrial	±61	0.5%
Utilities	±4	0.03%

Source: Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning (2021)

## **Natural Areas**

The natural areas classification category is the largest land use in the Town of Grand Rapids. Specifically, natural areas land use comprises ±7,945 acres of land, or over 61% of the town. The natural areas classification consists of woodlands, forests, wetlands, open space, unused suburban/rural lands, etc. This classification can also be referenced to identify areas of environmentally sensitive lands. These areas often have natural limitations for building site development such as floodplains, wetlands, high groundwater, and other environmentally sensitive lands.

## **Residential**

The residential classification category is the 2nd largest land use in the Town of Grand Rapids. Specifically, residential land use comprises ±2,650 acres of land, or over 20% of the town. The residential classification consists of any areas used for residential activities including single family, two-family and multi-family. Residential development in Grand Rapids consists mostly of traditional single-family residential structures. Also, there are several duplexes and multi-unit housing structures in the town.



## **Transportation**

Transportation land use comprises ±919 acres of land, or just over 7% of the Town of Grand Rapids. The transportation classification delineates all town, county and state roadways, as well as the road right-of-way. It also includes railroad right-of way and lands of the South Wood County Airport – Alexander Field.

## **Agriculture**

The agriculture land use comprises ±734 acres of land, or 5.6% of the town. The agricultural classification consists of those areas utilized for cultivated crop lands, pasture lands, farm lands, agricultural lands, cranberry bogs, etc. This includes buildings for which the primary function is agriculture related. Agricultural areas are scattered throughout Grand Rapids.

## **Outdoor Recreation**

Outdoor recreation land use comprises ±406 acres of land, or just over 3% of the Town of Grand Rapids. Outdoor recreation areas provide opportunities for recreational activities such as golfing, camping, picnicking, playfields, playgrounds, etc. and are classified as outdoor



recreation. South Wood County Park and local golf courses in the town make up a majority of these areas.

### **Commercial**

Commercial land use comprises ±185 acres of land, or 1.4% of the Town of Grand Rapids. The commercial classification includes any areas for which the primary function involves retail sales and services. Current commercial activities in Grand Rapids are clustered along State Highways 54 and 13 South (8th Street). There are also clusters of commercial development near the town municipal building along County Highway W (Kellner Rd) and along County Highway U near Kellner.



### **Institutional and Government Services**

Institutional and government services land use comprises ±105 acres of land, or less than 1% of the Town of Grand Rapids. This classification includes governmental and institutional buildings and grounds for which the function involves administration, safety, education, assembly, etc. Cemeteries are also included in this classification. MSTC makes up a majority of this land use classification, along with government and WRPS facilities.

### **Industrial**

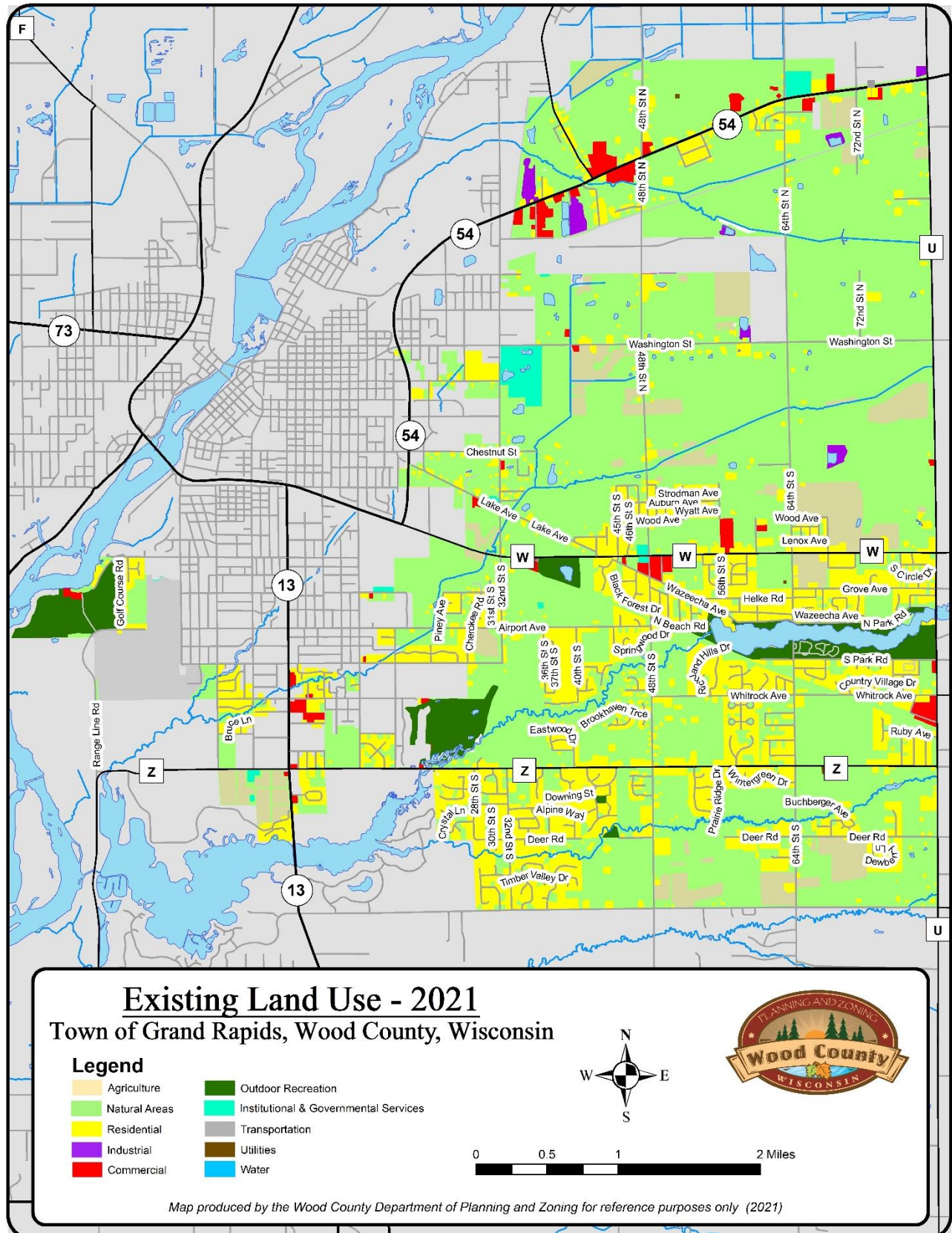
Industrial land use comprises ±61 acres of land, or around a half percent of the Town of Grand Rapids. The industrial classification includes buildings and premises, which are devoted to industrial, manufacturing, production, etc. Areas utilized for the extraction of stone, sand, rock or similar materials from natural deposits (nonmetallic mining) is included in this classification. The Town of Grand Rapids does not have any designated industrial or business parks.

### **Utilities**

Utilities land use comprises ±4 acres of land, or 0.03% of the Town of Grand Rapids. This consists of buildings or premises used for communications, utilities, transmission facilities, etc. This includes cell and radio towers. It also includes municipal well facilities. Existing above ground electric transmission lines have not been included in this classification due to other primary land use functions occurring in these locations.

Again, (Map 13) shows the current (2021) location of the above mentioned land use classifications in the Town of Grand Rapids.

### Map 13: Existing Land Use Map



## **Future Land Use**

The previous portions of this chapter have presented a discussion on historical development trends, existing land cover and existing land use in the Town of Grand Rapids. This information, along with information from all of the other comprehensive planning elements and public input, provided the foundation for future land use planning in the town. The Future Land Use Map (Map 14) takes into consideration all of these factors and illustrates graphically how the Town of Grand Rapids is planned to grow for the next 20-years. It is a visual guide to future land use. It is important to note that the future land use plan map is not a zoning map, but is a depiction of the desired growth patterns for several years into the future. The town ordinance and zoning map are the actual documents that set standards for each of the land uses, including setbacks, height limitations, minimum lot sizes, etc. The future land use plan map often shows some areas to be used for purposes other than what the current use may be. That map is a blueprint for development and can be changed. It is dynamic. The following paragraphs, along with information presented throughout this plan, help explain the reasoning behind the future land use plan categories.

### **Residential**

Residential growth in the town over the past few decades has slowed when compared to before the 2000s. However, town officials shall continue to provide areas for residential housing to meet future growth expectations. As residential structures are constructed to accommodate the needs of future households, some undeveloped land will have to be converted. The town has considerable medium to higher density residential development in the southern half of the town. Lower density residential development will continue throughout Grand Rapids with large lots. Because Grand Rapids does not provide municipal sewer and water, it is likely that the town will continue to experience mostly single-family residential development.

Grand Rapids should encourage housing unit designs that accommodate the changing demographics of the town. It is in the town's best interest to encourage residential development that promotes a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all age groups, income levels and needs. This includes planning for more single and two-family homes. It also includes expanding the stock of multi-family homes that may appeal to younger families and empty nesters. There is a shortage of rental options and senior housing is limited in the town. Providing a diversity of housing options in Grand Rapids will better accommodate the future needs of its current and future residents. The challenge will be to maintain the suburban and natural character of the area as the density of development increases.

According to the *2020 Town Grand Rapids Community Survey*: Approximately 55% of respondents favor residential development, 21% oppose, and 24% had no opinion.

## **Industrial**

The Town of Grand Rapids does not have any designated businesses and industrial parks. However, the town has a large undeveloped area that has been planned for manufacturing and industrial land use for many years to accommodate desired businesses and industries. This area provides rail access and is about a quarter mile south of the four-lane Highway 54. Grand Rapids does not have a municipal water supply and sanitary sewer system. This may prevent the town from attracting large industrial or commercial development.

There are three designated industrial and business parks located immediately adjacent to the town's boundary. This should be of concern to town officials. Expansion of these areas may encroach into the town's planned industrial areas potentially resulting in annexation.

The town should evaluate industrial sites and projects on a case-by-case basis. It is important for these types of land uses to be consistent with Grand Rapids' overall vision for the town, its comprehensive plan, and local ordinances.

Respondents to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* identified "Manufacturing" as one of the types of businesses they would like to see located in the town.

## **Commercial**

The Town of Grand Rapids has planned commercial areas to accommodate desired businesses. A planned commercial corridor is located along STH 54. This corridor has historically been zoned for commercial uses. The STH 54 corridor has many commercial uses today and will likely continue to develop in that manner, although it is expected that there will continue to be some residential uses mixed in with commercial.

Grand Rapids has other planned commercial areas along the STH 13 corridor, Kellner area, and intersection of 48th Street and CTH W. Home-based businesses may also develop and will be monitored for their impact on traffic, noise and associated issues. More home-based internet businesses are likely to increase as well as computer commuting technology jobs. The town will continue to promote commercial land uses in planned commercial areas.

It is important to note, many commercial uses are close to either Wisconsin Rapids' or Biron's corporate limits that they are in jeopardy of being absorbed by those municipalities with simple annexations.

Respondents to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey* identified several commercial type businesses they would like to see located in the town in the future. These included: restaurant and food establishments; retail; small businesses and shops; grocery store; and more.



## **Outdoor Recreation**

Continued residential development in Grand Rapids may increase pressure on local officials to create additional parks and other recreation areas. The town may want to consider additional recreation opportunities needed or desired by its residents. If the opportunity presents itself, the town should consider acquiring land for recreational purposes, especially in the residential-developing areas in Grand Rapids. Another option may be to encourage dedication of parkland through zoning provisions or a subdivision ordinance.

According to the *2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey*: Recreational land use was the #1 land use respondents would like to see grow or expanded in Grand Rapids.

Many comments in regards to parks and recreation were received in the 2020 community survey. Bike and Pedestrian Facilities; Playgrounds; and Neighborhood Parks; were all identified in the top four community facilities that residents believe should be encouraged and/or considered in the Town of Grand Rapids.

## **Agriculture**

Trying to determine the future of the agricultural economy is nearly impossible; however, Wisconsin agriculture will likely stay strong for the foreseeable future. It is important to minimize the intrusion of incompatible land uses within agricultural areas. No significant agricultural land use additions are anticipated for the future. Agricultural acreage in Grand Rapids will most likely continue to decline over the planning period.

## **Institutional and Government Services**

No additional such uses are anticipated during the planning period.

## **Transportation**

While no significant increase in roads is anticipated, the town may experience small additions where new residential lots are created either by certified survey map or subdivision plat.

Alexander Field (South Wood County Airport) will remain an important asset to the area, but further expansion of the facility is severely limited.

The Wisconsin Central Railroad parallels State Highway 54 in an easterly-westerly direction. That railroad corridor will remain important for attracting potential manufacturing and industrial companies. The corridor should be protected to allow for a possible expansion with a parallel track to the existing track.

It is important to note: Respondents to the 2020 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey identified bike and pedestrian facility improvements as one of the top five community issues they would like improved/enhanced in the future. As mentioned in Transportation Element,



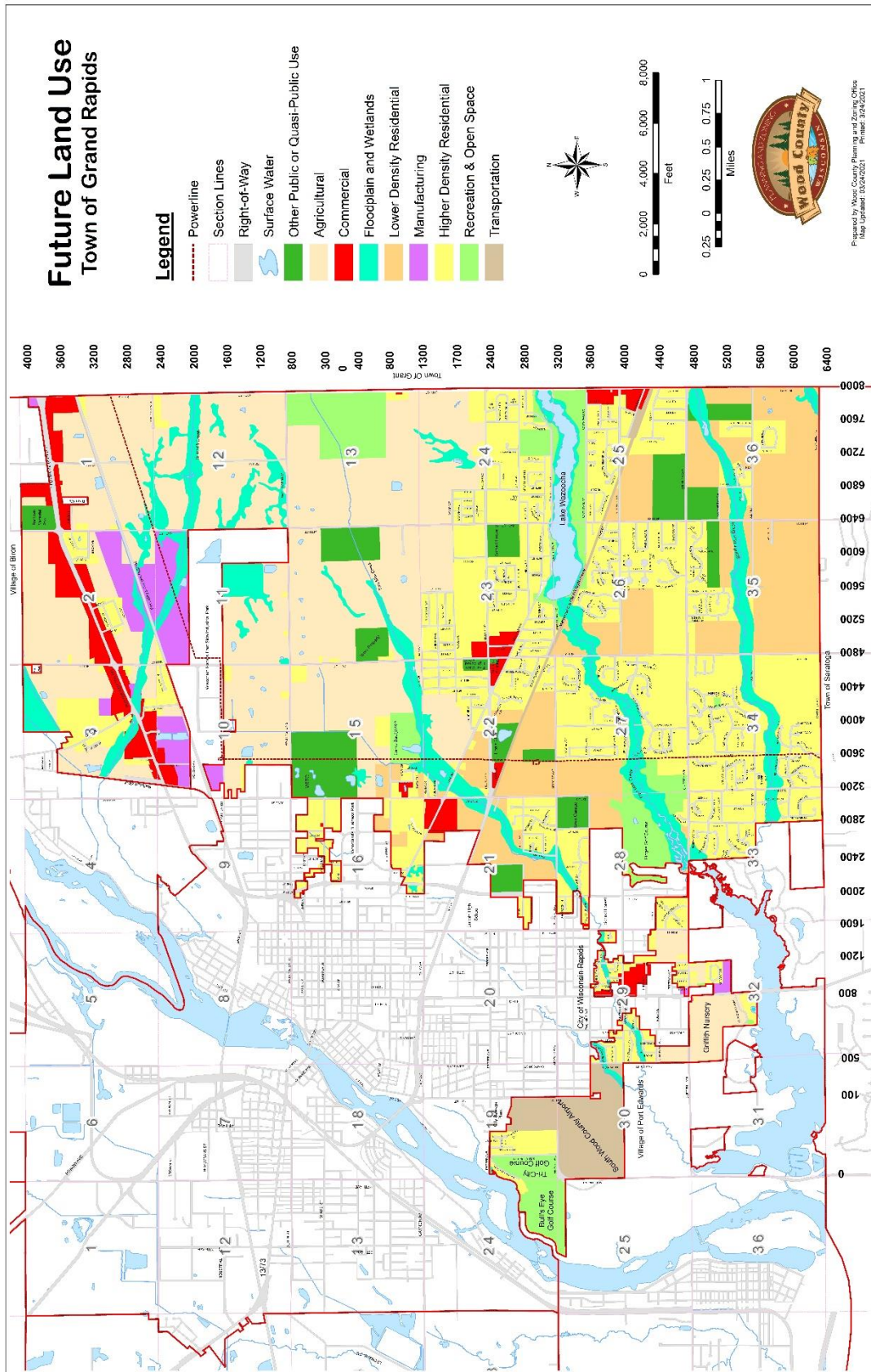
The abandoned railroad right-of-way from 32<sup>nd</sup> Street to 80<sup>th</sup> Street is a planned bike and pedestrian transportation corridor. It provides an opportunity to create multi-use trails for bike and pedestrian commuting and recreation.

If the STH 54 extension project does move forward in the future, town officials need to be involved in the planning for this highway extension to protect the interests of Grand Rapids residents while, at the same time, serving the interests of the greater community.

**Utilities**

The town officials should be open to facilities that expand broadband access in the town. No other additional uses are anticipated during the planning period.

## Map 14: Future Land Use Map



## **Development Influences and Potential Land Use Conflicts**

Some of the development influences and potential land use conflicts in the Town of Grand Rapids are listed below, along with a discussion of each and ideas as to how they might be addressed.

### **Maintaining the “Suburban Character” of the Community**

93% of community planning survey respondents agreed that maintaining Grand Rapids suburban/rural character is important. The challenge for the Plan Commission and Town Board is to create development policies that let the town grow while protecting the natural resources and preserving the character that attracted the people here in the first place. The town should support development standards that encourage developers to increase density, utilize public resources more efficiently, improve quality, and reduce natural and open space conversion. The town should continue to work with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron on boundary and transition issues to accomplish this goal while selecting the best areas for additional residential development in areas where there may be concerns about groundwater protection or natural area preservation.

### **City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Biron**

Unincorporated towns that are adjacent to growing cities and villages will inevitably have some conflicts caused by growth of the neighboring community. While it is necessary for cities and villages to grow in population to support their infrastructure, it is equally important that towns not lose too much population or business and industrial development too fast because they too have municipal services they are obligated to provide. When annexation takes population or business and industrial development away from towns, they also struggle to maintain their services and infrastructure. It is important for town officials to continue communicating with city and village officials to avoid any potential conflicts or issues.

Both neighboring municipalities have developed business and industrial parks adjacent to the town. In the case of both the city and village, annexation of land in Grand Rapids has or will likely occur to accommodate the business and industrial growth, depleting land that the town has historically identified through earlier planning and zoning for potential industrial or commercial development. Although that is the type of land use being developed in those areas, it is not creating additional tax base for Grand Rapids.

The Town of Grand Rapids participated with Biron and Wisconsin Rapids in planning future sanitary sewer extensions for a 20-year period. Much of Grand Rapids was delineated to receive sanitary sewer during the planning period (Map 5). The conflict with that thought process, however, is that neither Biron nor Wisconsin Rapids will provide sanitary sewer without annexation of the land to be served. Again, this is reason to work cooperatively with both municipalities toward a win-win development policy.

### **Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

Environmentally Sensitive Areas, or ESA's, are defined, generally, as those areas that are unsuitable for certain development because of the potential adverse impacts on the natural environment. These areas include, but are not limited to wetlands, shorelands, floodplain, and other such physical constraints. The general location of these areas are shown in (Map 14). The exact boundaries of environmentally sensitive areas shall be located through field surveys by appropriate regulatory agencies. Many of the ESA's in Wood County are already protected under current laws and ordinances. Any consideration of development within or adjacent to an ESA must be in conformance with all applicable federal, state, and local rules and regulations. If properly developed, certain land uses can even protect and preserve ESA functions while at the same time maximizing use of the resource.

### **Management of Private On-Site Waste Treatment Systems POWTS/Septic Systems**

Most of the structures in the Town of Grand Rapids are served by private onsite septic systems. It is necessary that lots be sized adequately to accommodate the original septic system and alternate system should the original fail while, at the same time, providing a legal and safe distance from any private wells that are used for drinking water. State law requires that all septic systems, no matter when they were installed, be inspected every three years and, if necessary, be pumped by a licensed pumper, with waste being disposed of in a legal manner. Additional demand for more housing in the town can create a conflict in preserving both the natural water resources and providing for the housing needs of those wishing to locate in the town. Good planning policies and zoning regulations can help achieve these goals.

### Land Use Goals, Objectives & Policies

**Goal:** \*The Town of Grand Rapids will preserve its current landscape and suburban character.

**Goal:** The Town of Grand Rapids will provide quality residential living.

**Objective:** Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) from unsuitable development to avoid potential adverse impacts on the natural environment of the town.

**Objective:** Preserve the town’s natural areas to the greatest extent possible.

**Objective:** Minimize the intrusion of incompatible land uses.

**Objective:** Discourage scattered development.

**Objective:** \*Develop and monitor the impact of zoning standards that are designed to encourage commercial and industrial activities in the Town.

**Objective:** \*Encourage residential development in areas that will not have a negative environmental impact on the area’s groundwater, surface water and natural resources.

**Policy:** Consistently administer and enforce the Town Zoning Ordinance.

**Policy:** Adopt, administer and continually review the Town Comprehensive Plan.

**Policy:** Utilize the town’s future land use map as a guide for approving/denying development.

**Policy:** Continue to update and review the town’s Official Streets Map.

**Policy:** Encourage developing areas where existing development is located rather than developing new areas, or where certain public services do not exist.

**Policy:** \*Consider adding zones of different development densities to protect the area’s resources while encouraging housing types for different economic levels.

**Goal:** \*The Town of Grand Rapids will work with adjacent towns, Wisconsin Rapids and Biron on boundary issues and cooperative growth management.

**Objective:** Cooperate and communicate with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron to minimize future land use issues.

**Objective:** \*Continue to participate in joint area planning meetings and provide input to make sound planning decisions that will accommodate new growth on the city’s and village’s perimeters while keeping urban sprawl tendencies in check.

**Objective:** \*Monitor proposed amendments to the area’s sewer service area plan and provide input when boundary changes are proposed in Grand Rapids.



**Objective:** \*Encourage open dialogue with the adjacent towns of Saratoga and Grant to discuss common issues regarding town issues and for addressing those issues.

**Objective:** \*To promote job growth, encourage development of small businesses that are compatible with neighboring properties, yet encourage larger commercial and industrial developments to locate in nearby business and industrial parks where public services, such as sanitary sewer, water and police and fire protection can be provided most efficiently and cost effectively.

**Policy:** \*The Town of Grand Rapids will support coordinated planned growth in boundary areas, while protecting the Town’s land area and tax base.

**Policy:** \*The Town of Grand Rapids will participate at area committee meetings that make economic development and planning decisions that impact the town, again protecting the interests of town residents.

**Policy:** \*When appropriate and in the interest of town residents, provide letters of support and participate with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron in marketing of their industrial and business parks to larger commercial enterprises and industrial manufacturers that require municipal services.

**Policy:** Consider boundary plans and agreements with the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Biron that are mutually beneficial.

**Goal:** \*The Town of Grand Rapids will recruit developers and businesses to occupy buildings as they are vacated for various reasons, economic or otherwise.

**Objective:** Encourage the adaptive reuse of old commercial, industrial and public buildings.

**Policy:** \*Streamline local permit process to aid developers meet timelines for rehabilitating or remodeling buildings for their new uses.

**Policy:** \*Communicate with existing businesses that may be anticipating vacating their building in an attempt to attract new uses.

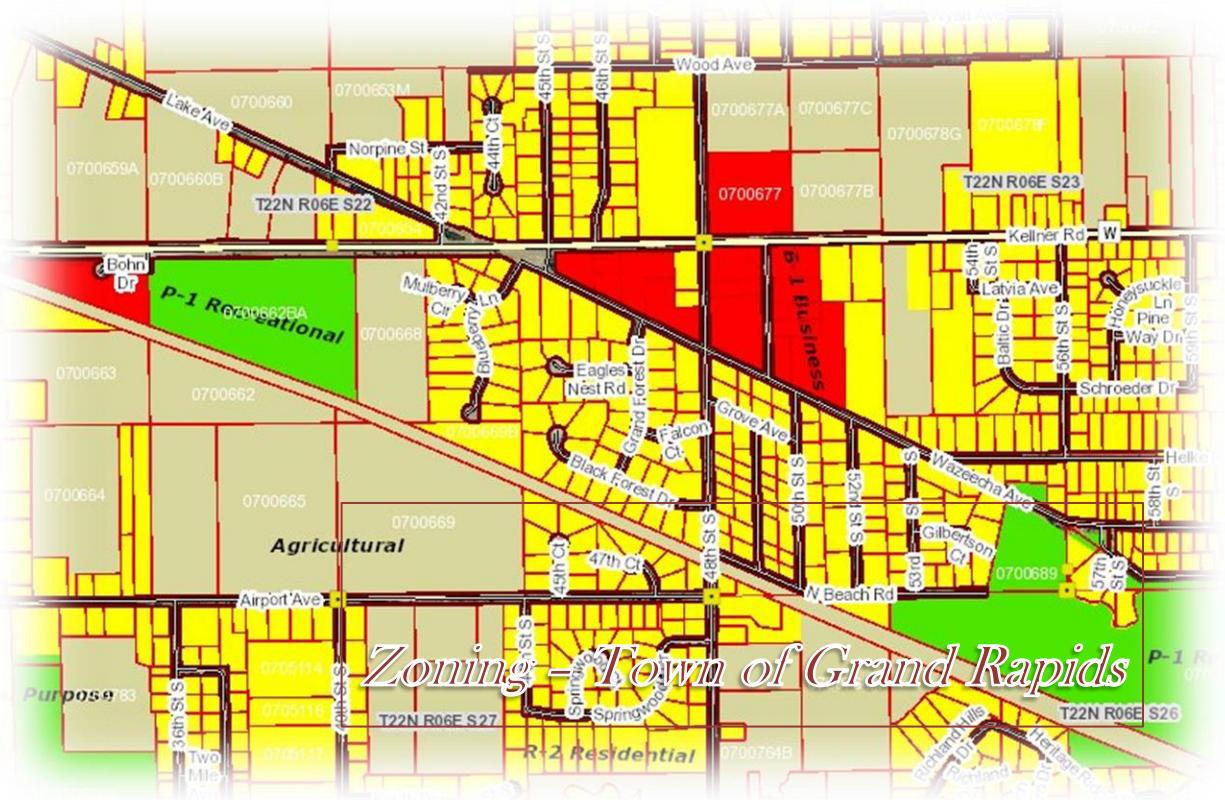
*( \* Goals, objectives and/or policies from previous plans.)*

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## 10. Implementation

The Town of Grand Rapids has been successful over the past several decades implementing public policies that have molded the town into the desirable community it is today. This success can be contributed to several comprehensive plan implementation tools. These tools can consist of: regulatory tools, land use design tools, financial tools, incentive-based tools, and others. The success of this comprehensive plan is directly linked to Grand Rapids' commitment to follow-through on the goals, objectives and policies identified within.



## Introduction

The following element will provide Town of Grand Rapids policy makers a blue-print to guide local level decisions to move this comprehensive plan to action over the next several years. Specific actions and implementation measures are identified to accomplish the goals, objectives and policies that are identified in all nine elements of the plan. Additionally, this element describes how the elements are integrated and consistent with each other and provides mechanisms to measure progress toward achieving all aspects of the plan.

*“Over 60% of survey respondents are satisfied to some degree with the current zoning and code enforcement services provided by the Town of Grand Rapids”*

Source: 2021 Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey

*Wis. Stat. § 66.1001(2)(i).  
Implementation element:  
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 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

The first step toward implementation of the comprehensive plan is adoption of the plan by the Town Board. Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 (4) provides specific procedures that are necessary to adopt the plan. As allowed by statute, the Town Board has authorized the responsibility of preparing, maintaining and amending the comprehensive plan to the Town Plan Commission. Upon completion of the plan, the Plan Commission may recommend the adoption of the comprehensive plan only by adopting a resolution by a majority vote of the entire commission. Subsequently, the comprehensive plan is forwarded to the Town Board for adoption. The comprehensive plan does not take effect until Town Board enacts an ordinance that adopts the plan and that ordinance cannot be adopted unless the plan contains all of the elements specified by the comprehensive planning statute. At a minimum, the Town Board must hold one public hearing. A class 1 public notice is required to be published at least 30 days before the hearing is held. The aforementioned is a general overview of the main procedures for adopting comprehensive plans. It is not all encompassing of all the procedures as required by Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 (4), however, all procedures will be complied with.

**Implementation Tools & Actions**

The intent of this comprehensive plan is to be a useful community planning guide. To ensure that this plan does not just sit on a shelf, the following paragraphs outline implementation tools and actions for the Town of Grand Rapids. These implementation tools and actions will assist the town in accomplishing its desired future. The Town Plan Commission shall be responsible for implementation of this plan.

**Tool: Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies**

The goals, objectives and policies for each element identify specific future implementation actions (Table 26). They provide the basis for community decision making and policy development. Each element identifies both short and long term recommendations.

Table 26 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	
Element – Goals, Objectives and Policies	Plan Location
Housing	Pg: 36-38
Transportation	Pg: 54-55
Utilities and Community Facilities	Pg: 72-73
Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources	Pg: 92-93
Economic Development	Pg: 103-104
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Pg: 116-117
Land Use	Pg: 134-135

**Action Plan:**

The plan commission will determine the structure of implementation and will coordinate with town officials to determine prioritization, timelines, partners and funding sources.

**Tool: Zoning Administration**

Zoning is the most widely accepted land use control tool that is used in Wisconsin communities. Furthermore, it is one of the best tools to carry out many of the goals and objectives identified in this comprehensive plan. Zoning allows municipalities to determine how different areas of their community will be used (eg. residential, agricultural, commercial, etc.) and authorizes municipalities to regulate the design and placement of structures within various zoning districts. The Town of Grand Rapids first adopted a zoning ordinance in the 1960’s. Over time the town has amended the ordinance as needed to reflect changes in development patterns, law changes, and desired/undesired land uses. Grand Rapids has actively administered the ordinance since its enactment.

The relationship between the plan and the zoning ordinance is easy to understand if one considers that the plan identifies a general pattern of desired land use development and the zoning ordinance specifies the range of conditions of use that can occur on parcels of land to be



“consistent” with the plan. In this relationship, the zoning ordinance is clearly a tool to implement the land use recommendations of the comprehensive plan. Moreover, it is a statutory requirement.

An effective and manageable planning tool, zoning, offers many possibilities for confronting the issues presented in this comprehensive plan. Natural conditions such as geology or geography are very difficult, if not impossible, to alter. Zoning is an acceptable solution because of the characteristics of the land. Fitting compatible uses with suitable natural conditions saves expense for the landowner or homeowner as well as protects natural conditions.

Zoning traditionally creates different zones, or districts, for various land uses. Each district has some clearly permitted uses and other uses requiring approval of the zoning board/planning commission and town board for specific site proposals. Some uses are prohibited. Flexibility can be built into the zoning ordinance to allow for some variance in land use rules. This is important because the unique characteristics of some lands preclude them from being categorized to be used the same as other lands in a specific zoning district. In some cases, mixing of uses may be appropriate where the uses are compatible with one another and with neighboring properties and where neither use creates a nuisance, health hazard, safety hazard or other conflict with other nearby uses.

**Action Plan:**

The Town of Grand Rapids will continue to monitor and enforce the zoning ordinance and make any changes the town deems necessary to assure consistency with the other elements of the comprehensive plan. The process to adopt or amend a town zoning ordinance is outlined in Wis. Stat. 60.61(4). Final approval is required by Wood County Board of Supervisors per Wis. Stat. §60.62(3)(a). This requirement applies to town map amendments/rezones and ordinance amendments.

The Town Plan Commission will review the official zoning map for inconsistencies, reduce zoning district nonconformance and reduce split zoned parcels. (Ex. The town has a large number of parcels that are zoned Agricultural and under the 5 acre minimum lot size requirement.)

**Tool: Land Subdivision Ordinance (Plat Review)**

As a comprehensive plan implementation tool, land subdivision regulations attempt to minimize the creation of lots that fail to satisfy zoning or sanitary ordinances. They identify standards and procedures for dividing land in the town. They specify how a parcel of land may be divided prior to sale and/or development. Furthermore, land subdivision regulations ensure accurate legal descriptions of properties. The Town of Grand Rapids has developed and

adopted a land subdivision ordinance. The Town Plan Commission and Zoning Administrator effectively implement these regulations and recommend amendments as needed.

**Action Plan:**

Town land division provisions should be reviewed to ensure that they assist, not hinder, progress toward meeting the town’s comprehensive plan goals and objectives. Design and development standards should promote enhancement of the built environment, while also enhancing the highly desired natural environment of the town.

**Tool: Capital Improvement Plan**

A capital improvement plan (CIP) is a plan for the capital expenditures of the town over a period of years, usually 4 to 6 years. The CIP addresses the town’s capital needs that require attention during the fiscal period and helps establish priorities and financing for those needs. Capital improvements refer to larger, non-recurring expenditures such as road improvements, equipment procurement, town building improvements, community facilities, park and trail development, and other major projects. A tax impact analysis, or development impact analysis, is sometimes used to develop the CIP and helps town officials determine both the advantages and disadvantages of various projects or developments. A capital improvement plan is a very useful tool for implementing the town’s comprehensive plan. Grand Rapids does not have a CIP at this time.

**Action Plan:**

The Town may want to consider developing a CIP to identify the most economical means of financing road improvements, equipment procurement, town building improvements, community facilities, park and trail development, and other major projects. A CIP helps to balance desired public improvements with the town’s financial resources. It is a working document that needs to be reviewed and updated yearly to address ever-changing town needs and funding.

**Tool: Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning**

Outdoor recreation planning stems from the core responsibility of a town to protect and promote the public health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of the community. Proper planning is an important step in providing a quality recreation system. Moreover, proper planning helps organize efforts, financial resources, and time, creating efficiency and economy in the process of implementation.

**Action Plan:**

The Town of Grand Rapids should consider developing a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) that identifies specific projects and recommendations to meet the current and future recreation needs of town residents. The plan would provide: Eligibility to participate in

outdoor recreation grant funding programs administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and other applicable federal, state and local financial assistance programs; a foundation for coordinating future recreation improvements; and a means to create additional economic, social and environmental benefits in Grand Rapids.

**Tool: Code Administration - Uniform Dwelling Code – Building Inspections**

Grand Rapids has historically been one of the fastest developing towns in Wood County. Reasons for the popularity of Grand Rapids have been listed and discussed throughout this plan. Because of their steady growth, the town has created and maintained a Zoning Administrator position along with a contracted Building Inspector position. The Zoning Administrator is responsible for enforcing the town’s land use/zoning related ordinances. The Building Inspector is responsible for enforcing the Uniform Dwelling Code (UDC). UDC is the statewide building code for one- and two-family dwellings built since June 1, 1980

**Action Plan:**

Continued application of the UDC program and zoning program will help to ensure consistency with the comprehensive plan’s goals, objectives and policies.

**Tool: Cluster Development/Conservation Design – Incentive Zoning**

Town community surveys over the past several decades continue to reveal that town residents want the suburban/country character and natural areas of Grand Rapids preserved and expanded.

One tool that can be used by the town is cluster development zoning or conservation design. These techniques can successfully preserve and enhance natural areas and suburban/country character of the town. These residential development standards are designed to allow the same overall amount of development that is allowed in the underlying zoning district, but requires that the development be placed only on a portion of the site “clustering”. Consequently, this retains the remnant area as: natural areas, open space, parkland, etc. Clustering can also be used to protect environmentally sensitive areas.

Another technique that can be used is incentive zoning. This tool allows a residential developer to create a greater number of lots that is allowed in the underlying zoning district, in exchange for dedicating to the public additional natural areas, open space, parkland, etc.

**Action Plan:**

The Town may want to consider adding language to its zoning ordinance that promotes enhancement of the town’s suburban/country character and natural areas. Common techniques and standards include: cluster development/conservation design and incentive zoning.

### **Tool: Official Streets Map**

Official mapping allows municipalities to prepare plans and maps showing the location and size of future roadways. The purpose is to manage development in transportation corridors; coordinate transportation systems with neighboring municipalities; and notify property owners of future transportation plans. As a supporting document to a land use plan and map, the Official Streets Map is a valuable tool.

The Town of Grand Rapids has an adopted official streets map. It was recently reviewed and updated in 2019. The map is a legal document that must be adopted by the Town Board after a public hearing. According to state law, "The map is conclusive with respect to the location and width of streets, highways, waterways and parkways, and the location and extent of railroad rights-of-way, public transit facilities, parks and playgrounds shown on the map. The official map is declared to be established to conserve and promote the public health, safety, convenience or general welfare."

The state statute also allows the official street map to be used as a planning document. Section 62.23(c), of the law, allows a community to "amend the official map of the city so as to establish the exterior lines of planned new streets, highways, historic districts, parkways, railroad rights-of-way, public transit facilities, waterways, parks or playgrounds, or to widen, narrow, extend or close existing streets, highways, historic districts, parkways, railroad rights-of-way, public transit facilities, waterways, parks or playgrounds. No such changes may become effective until after a public hearing concerning the proposed change..."

### **Action Plan:**

Grand Rapids will continue to use their official streets map to preserve their ability to construct streets on forty lines throughout the town and to preserve their ability to create a grid street system for efficient movement of traffic through the town. The map will help to keep the cost of road improvements to a minimum and would coordinate street location and right-of-way widths. The map shall be reviewed and amended as needed.

### **Tool: Boundary Plans and Agreements**

Boundary plans and agreements (Wis. Stat. 66.0307) provide the avenue for Grand Rapids and its neighbors to coordinate their planning efforts. These efforts initiate opportunities to collectively identify issues, propose ideas, and reach consensus. Many community issues cross jurisdictional boundaries, affecting more than one community. Joint planning provides the chance to address community issues before decisions have been made and before development activities occur that may limit future solutions. Cooperating with planning provides opportunities for jurisdictions to be proactive rather than reactive.

The certainty that results by cooperating with boundaries can lead to more timely decision-making, greater economic opportunity, protection of natural resources, more efficient provision of services, better planning, greater public and private investment in infrastructure, greater community identity, and an improved quality of life for residents.

**Action Plan:**

Grand Rapids should consider developing and adopting boundary plans and agreements with the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Biron that are mutually beneficial and minimize future conflicts.

**Other Ordinances**

The Town of Grand Rapids has other ordinances that have been enacted as needed to address local concerns, or to meet the requirements of state statutes. Consistency is needed, but not necessarily required, with the comprehensive plan. A variety of local regulations can be adopted to address the goals, objectives and policies identified in the comprehensive plan and to address the needs of the town's residents for the future. The town should update and evaluate these ordinances yearly.

**Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission**

**Plan Commission Structure**

All towns in Wisconsin are authorized by state statutes to establish a local plan commission. A plan commission is created by town ordinance under s. 62.23, Wisconsin Statutes. The ordinance may create a 7-member commission, or, if the town is under 2,500 population, a 5-member commission. A town under 2,500 population may, by ordinance, change from a 5- to a 7-member commission and vice versa. The town chairperson appoints the members and chooses the plan commission chair. Elected and appointed town officials may be appointed to the commission. There must, however, be at least three citizen members who are not town officials on the 7-member commission and one citizen member who is not a town official on the 5-member commission. Grand Rapids currently has a 7-member commission that meets monthly. The plan commission can discuss: zoning amendments (map or ordinance); conditional uses; ordinance violations; land divisions; comprehensive plan amendments; and other various planning and zoning related issues.

**Plan Commission Function**

The relationship of the town plan commission and the town board is important. The town board consists of elected officials and is primarily a policy-making body charged with conducting the town's affairs. The plan commission is an appointed body with the main duty of developing the comprehensive plan and implementation measures for recommendation to the



town board for adoption. The plan commission should function in a more objective fashion than the town board, but must realize that, in developing plans and ordinances, it operates within a political system where the town board has the final say.

The plan commission can be of great assistance to the town board by involving citizens and developing expertise in planning, which can be a time-consuming and controversial undertaking, thereby freeing the town board to carry out its other functions. Remember, the plan commission should not be viewed as an independent, dictatorial body. Instead, it is an appointed body whose policy-making function is advisory to the town board. If the town board wishes to delegate additional powers to the plan commission, beyond advisory powers, it may do so. For example, the town board may allow the plan commission to issue conditional use permits under town zoning under village powers and allow it to approve subdivision plats.

A good working relationship between the plan commission and the town board is essential for implementing land uses that are in the public interest. The existence of an adopted comprehensive plan and implementation measures depends upon both bodies – the plan commission to develop the proposals with public support and the town board to support the effort and ultimately adopt the policy and implementation programs.

### **Plan Commission Powers and Duties**

The powers and the duties of the plan commission are outlined in state statutes and applicable town ordinances. The primary duty of the commission is to develop the town's comprehensive plan, under the specifications of Chapter 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. Under statutory requirements, the plan commission must solicit citizen participation and intergovernmental communication and coordination in developing the plan. The plan commission must oversee coordination, development and implementation of the comprehensive plan and, once completed, forward the plan to the town board by formal resolution.

### **Consistency**

It is a statutory requirement that the implementation element of the comprehensive plan describe how each of the elements of the comprehensive plan will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the comprehensive plan. Consequently, the town plan commission developed all elements simultaneously and in a coordinated fashion. As seen throughout the plan, overlap of the elements naturally exists. All of the element's goals, objectives and policies are consistent with each other. They do not conflict with any existing or recommended programs and functions of the Town of Grand Rapids. Moreover, it is important that the Town of Grand Rapids continue to cooperate with the Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ). DPZ administers several ordinances in the town including: private on-site waste, land subdivisions, floodplain, shoreland, and more.

## **Plan Amendments, Updates & Monitoring**

The amendment process can be as important as the initial development and adoption of the plan. Monitoring changes helps the plan commission and town board to assure consistency in the application of standards and in proposing changes to either the text or the future land use map. The following paragraphs outline the process for amending, updating and monitoring the plan.

The comprehensive plan is a dynamic document, that is, as conditions change in the town, the plan will change. In addition, the Wisconsin planning law requires that comprehensive plans that are created under the statute be updated “no less than once every 10 years.” An example of why a comprehensive plan would need to be amended, or updated, might include changing economic conditions in the area – if a new land use chooses to locate in the Town or urban area, there may be demands for new housing, new roads or highway access. An aging population demanding different types of housing or a change in the types of municipal services is another example. A major change to the local transportation system is yet another example of when the plan may need to be updated/amended.

Town officials must be ready to react to changing conditions in the community by amending the plan to reflect changes if those changes are in the best interest of the town. Care must be taken, however, not to amend the plan as a routine or the process may lose its importance in the community development process. It is important to establish local planning goals, review those goals on a regular basis and develop objectives that will help the decision makers achieve community planning goals.

The amendment process is outlined in the state statutes. The first step can be either a petition to the plan commission from a town resident or property owner or a proposal by the plan commission or town board. The petition can be for either a change in the plan’s text, such as a change in goals or objectives, or a change to the future land use map. Remember, the zoning ordinance must also be consistent with the comprehensive plan and may need to be amended to reflect the change in the comprehensive plan.

The second step is review of the petition or proposal by the plan commission. Their review can include a site visit, meeting with the petitioner to discuss the reason for the request, obtaining professional planning assistance or a legal opinion, or meeting as a commission to discuss the merits of the proposal. Third, the plan commission will make a recommendation, in writing, to the town board. The town board will then publish a notice for a public hearing and hold a hearing on the proposal to get input from any interested persons. They should keep a written transcript or, at the very least, detailed minutes of the testimony. Following the hearing, the town board will make a decision in the form of a motion to amend the comprehensive plan. The board can make a decision immediately following the public hearing or they can set a time

to meet later to make the decision, allowing additional time to receive written testimony about the proposal. The board's options are to accept the recommendation, modify it, deny it, or send it back to the plan commission for further study. They should provide the petitioner a copy of the decision in writing. If the petitioner is not satisfied with the decision, he can submit an entirely new petition, submit a petition with revisions to the original proposal, appeal the decision to the circuit court, or do nothing.

Monitoring plan amendments and maintaining accurate records about why the changes were, or were not made, is also important. Changes can be documented simply by maintaining a file of each change, including copies of the:

- Petition for amendment or minutes of the Planning Commission meeting where an amendment was initiated.
- Minutes of all Planning Commission meetings where the proposal was discussed.
- Planning Commission's written recommendation to the Town Board.
- Notice of public hearing.
- Public hearing transcript or detailed minutes of the hearing.
- Decision of the Town Board, including their rationale or justification for their decision.
- Notice to petitioner of Town Board decision.

In the past, these files have been maintained in a safe place in case the decision is challenged by either the petitioner, in the case of a denial, or by someone who opposed the amendment proposal. They will continue to be carefully maintained by Town staff in the future. Included in the individual files are reasons for the Planning Commission's and Board's decisions regarding specific cases. These files will prove useful when a comprehensive review of the plan is done in ten years (or sooner) from adoption.

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## 11. Appendices

- A. Ordinance Adopting the Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan – 2021
- B. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (SWOT)
- C. Adopted Public Participation Procedures
- D. Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey Summary





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**APPENDIX** **A**

**Ordinance Adopting the Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan - 2021**

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**ORDINANCE # 2021- 15**  
**Town of Grand Rapids Town Board**  
**Wood County, Wisconsin**

**AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT AN AMENDMENT AND UPDATE TO  
THE TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS, WOOD COUNTY, WISCONSIN, does ordain as follows:**

**Section 1.** Pursuant to Sections 60.10(2)(c), 62.23, 61.35, and 60.22(3) of the Wisconsin Statutes, the Town of Grand Rapids is authorized to prepare, adopt and amend a comprehensive plan as defined in Sections 66.1001(1)(a) and 66.1001(2) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

**Section 2.** The Town Board, by the enactment of an ordinance, formally adopted the document titled, "Town of Grand Rapids, Wood County, Wisconsin, Comprehensive Plan 2008," on May 13, 2009.

**Section 3.** The Plan Commission, by a majority vote of the entire Commission at a meeting held on June 28, 2021, adopted a resolution approving the Amendment and recommending adoption of the Amendment by the Town Board as the 10-year update to the Town's comprehensive plan required by Section 66.1001(2)(i) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

**Section 4.** The Town published a Class 1 public notice in compliance with the requirements of Section 66.1001(4)(d) of the Wisconsin Statutes, and held a public hearing on July 13, 2021 to obtain public comments regarding the comprehensive plan amendment and update.


**Section 5.** The Town Board hereby adopts this Ordinance as the 10-year update to the Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan.


**Section 6.** The Town Clerk is directed to send a copy of the plan update to the parties listed in Section 66.1001(4)(b) of the Wisconsin Statutes.


**Section 7.** This Ordinance shall take effect upon passage by a majority vote of the full membership of the Town Board, and publication or posting as required by law.

Adopted by the Town of Grand Rapids Board of Supervisors this 10<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2021.

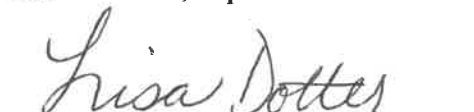
  
Arne Nystrom, Town Chairperson

  
Bill Clendenning, Supervisor

  
Jeffery Eichhorn, Supervisor

  
Amber France, Supervisor

  
Patty Lumby, Supervisor

Attest:   
Lisa Dotter, Town Clerk

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APPENDIX **B**

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (SWOT)**

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# Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats (SWOT) Analysis

## – Town of Grand Rapids, Wood County –

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This SWOT Analysis identifies perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that either promote or inhibit the prosperity, safety, health, and general welfare of Grand Rapids residents. It is important to identify and understand these unique community components. That way, the town can accentuate its Strengths and Opportunities to address its Weaknesses and Threats. Components of the list often identify what needs to be done and puts problems into perspective. The SWOT Analysis will also aid in the development of an overall “vision” that will provide broad, long-range guidance for the Town of Grand Rapids for the next 10 to 20 years. The cumulative list below was developed by the Town Plan Commission through public input received in the community survey.

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### STRENGTHS

Many strengths of Grand Rapids were identified and can be grouped into the following categories:

**Location:** Proximity to area communities (access to services, employment, shopping, etc.), Quality natural resources/physical environment, Access to STH 54 and 13, Rail access, Lake Wazeecha, Access to local technical college,

**Town Character:** Suburban/rural/county character, Clean, Privacy, Open Space, Overall high quality/appearance of housing, Higher median income levels/lower poverty levels than County and State

**Livability:** Quiet, High quality of life, Recreation opportunities, Friendly/happy residents, Safe community, Quality/affordable housing, Availability of larger lots, Access to quality school system, Relatively low taxes, Desirable place to live, New subdivisions/residential lots available

**Services:** Quality/Dependable town services, Quality broadband access, Good utilities, Planning and Zoning Administration

---

### WEAKNESSES

Weaknesses of Grand Rapids were identified and can be grouped into the following categories:

**Land Use and Development:** Lack of municipal sanitary sewer and water, Lack of intergovernmental cooperation, No boundary agreements

**Services:** Lack of town compost site, Brush pickup/drop-off, No solid waste and recycling containers, Road maintenance

**Recreation:** Lack of bike and pedestrian infrastructure, Lack of town neighborhood parks and playgrounds, No ATV/UTV routes

**Quality of Life:** Funding (how to afford the needs of the community), Communication gap between town government and residents, Lower resident involvement in community

## OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities for Grand Rapids were identified and can be grouped into the following categories:

**Preserve Identity:** Maintain suburban/rural character, Responsible/well-planned/orderly development, Conservation of natural resources (soils, wetlands, floodplain, wildlife, etc.)

**Recreation:** Old Railroad ROW for trail development, Add bike and pedestrian trails and lanes, Maintain/develop neighborhood town parks and playgrounds, Promote use of South Wood County Park - Lake Wazeecha and other area recreation opportunities, Youth sports

**Land Use and Development:** New subdivisions/residential lots available, Quality housing, Find ways to increase tax base, Attract younger families, Quality schools, Conducive to working from home - home businesses, Encourage business development, Quality of life enhancements

**Services:** Maintain efficient infrastructure/services, Recruit volunteers for fire department, Road maintenance, Tap into area communities services/resources, Improve town communication with residents, Promote community involvement

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## THREATS

Potential threats Grand Rapids should be mindful of included issues in the following categories:

**Future Land Use and Development:** Potential annexations, Extraterritorial issues/concerns, conflicting land uses, Maintaining tax base, WWLC ownership of prime development areas, Lack of diverse housing, Inability to attract younger families

**Community Identity:** Loss suburban/rural character, Overdevelopment, Conversion of natural/rural areas

**Natural Resources:** Maintaining groundwater quality/quantity, Failing septs, High groundwater/water issues, Noise pollution

**Trends:** Brain drain, Aging population, Decline in working age population, Unstable regional economy, Fewer volunteers, Lack of government and community participation

**Safety and Security:** Increase in traffic, Lack of volunteers for fire department

*Developed by the Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission – 5/10/2021*

*Facilitator – Adam DeKleyn - County Planner, Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning*

**APPENDIX C**

**Adopted Public Participation Procedures**



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# 2019 TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

## **Section 1: Public Participation Plan Purpose**

In an effort to address the guidelines for adopting comprehensive plans under Wisconsin comprehensive planning statutes (Section 66.1001(4)(a)), the Town of Grand Rapids has prepared this public participation plan and public involvement schedule for the 2019 Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan update.

Public participation helps to ensure that the comprehensive plan accurately reflects the needs, opportunities and desires of our community. This document outlines the procedures that will be used in the comprehensive planning process to foster public participation, and to ensure that there are opportunities for public participation at every stage of the preparation of the comprehensive plan.

While no specific dates are outlined in this plan, the document serves as a general guideline for the methods of public outreach and the meetings to be held. This Public Participation Plan will be forwarded to the Town Board of Supervisors after recommendation by the Plan Commission for approval and revisions, as necessary.

## **Section 2: Public Participation Plan Goals**

The Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission and staff will work to:

- Provide a range of opportunities and venues for residents of the Town of Grand Rapids to participate in the Comprehensive Planning Process;
- Meet the standards set forth in Section 66.1001(4)(a), Wisconsin Statutes;
- Establish a formalized and recorded framework for public participation;
- Ensure that a broad range of interests are considered in the comprehensive planning process;
- Ensure that the planning process is as inclusive as possible and that perspectives of all interested parties, including traditionally under-represented populations, influence the plan; and
- Actively seek involvement from the general public so that the plan becomes a “living plan” with community buy-in.

## **Section 3: Public Participation Plan Process**

Wisconsin State Statute 66.1001 *Comprehensive Planning* outlines the procedures for adopting comprehensive plans. A local government unit shall comply with all of the following before its comprehensive plan may take effect:

*The governing body of a local governmental unit shall adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services, and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage of the*

*preparation of a comprehensive plan. The written procedures shall provide for wide distribution of proposed, alternative, or amended elements of a comprehensive plan and shall provide an opportunity for written comments on the plan to be submitted by members of the public to the governing body and for the governing body to respond to such written comments. The written procedures shall describe the methods the governing body of a local governmental unit will use to distribute proposed, alternative, or amended elements of a comprehensive plan to owners of property, or to persons who have a leasehold interest in property pursuant to which the persons may extract nonmetallic mineral resources in or on property, in which the allowable use or intensity of use of the property is changed by the comprehensive plan.*

The following represents the approach the Town will take to inform and involve the public:

1. Community Survey,
2. Public Hearings,
3. Public Work Sessions, Open Houses, and Community Events,
4. Plan Commission Meetings,
5. Town Website and Social Media

### **1. Community Survey**

A community survey will be mailed to all property owners and residents in the Town. The survey will be used, along with input at public meetings to draft goals, objectives, policies and programs for the comprehensive plan as required by Wisconsin Statute 66.1001, also known as the “Wisconsin comprehensive planning law,” or “planning law.” Copies of the community survey form and final report of survey findings will be available upon request, or may be viewed and downloaded at <https://townofgrandrapids.org>. Once in that site, look for “Community Survey” under the “News & Notices” list. If a printed copy is requested, a fee may be required to cover reproduction costs.

### **2. Public Hearings**

According to Wisconsin State Statute 66.1001(4)(d), at least one public hearing must be held before a comprehensive plan is adopted or updated, and the hearing must be preceded by a class 1 notice under Chapter 985 that is published at least 30 days prior to the date of the hearing. The Town will exceed this requirement by holding at least two public hearings. The first will be held before the Plan Commission once the Draft Plan is prepared, and the Town Board will hold one final hearing prior to plan adoption. Additional hearings may be scheduled if deemed necessary by the Plan Commission and/or Town Board. A time period of 15 days following the Public Hearing on the Draft Plan will be provided for the public to comment in writing. All public hearings will be open to the public and written and oral testimony will be taken. Minutes will be kept and filed with the Town Clerk.

### **3. Public Work Sessions, Open House, and Community Events**

Public work sessions will be held to solicit input from the community and to provide information on the plan update. Public work sessions may occur as part of regularly scheduled Plan Commission meetings. At all of these meetings, participants will be able to submit written and oral comments regarding the plan. Other focus meetings may be scheduled during the planning process to solicit public input.

Toward the end of the process, a Draft Plan, including any updated maps, will be available for viewing in an open house/community event format. This open house will allow Town of Grand Rapids residents the opportunity to view the plan elements and ask questions or make comments as to the plan's content. The open house will provide an informal setting so they can comfortably interact with Commission members and Town Officials.

### **4. Plan Commission Meetings**

The Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission typically meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall. Throughout the planning process, each Plan Commission meeting will include an agenda item related to the planning process so that an update can be provided on progress related to the plan. There may be additional Plan Commission meetings that may take place as needed. All meetings will be open to the public and the meeting agendas will be posted. Minutes will be kept and filed with the Town Clerk.

### **5. Town Website and Social Media**

A page will be created on the Town's website specifically for information pertaining to the comprehensive plan update. Information will include meeting notices and summaries and drafts of chapters of the plan. A feedback option will be provided so that questions and comments can be submitted electronically to the Zoning Administrator, to forward to the Plan Commission.

In addition, the Town will utilize its social media page (i.e. Facebook) to keep citizens informed on the planning process, to encourage public involvement and provide input/comments to Town staff at any time.

## **Section 4: Plan Adoption Procedures**

The Plan Commission will review the plan prior to recommendation for adoption to ensure that all elements specified in Wis. Stat 66.1001(2) entitled "Contents of a Comprehensive Plan" are included. The Plan Commission will forward the final draft of the comprehensive plan to the Town Board with a motion passed by a majority vote of the Commission members present, recommending that the Town Board adopt the plan by ordinance. The Commission's vote shall be recorded in the meeting's minutes.

Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan Update 2019  
Public Participation Plan

Following the final public hearing at the Town Board's meeting, and 15-day review period, it will take a majority vote of the Town Board members-elect, as defined in Wis. Stats. 59.001(2m), to enact the comprehensive plan as an ordinance.

Following the adoption of the comprehensive plan as an ordinance, the ordinance and plan to which it relates, shall be filed with all required entities in accordance with Wis. Stats. 66.1001(4)(b).

Comments and questions regarding the Comprehensive Plan Update can be directed to the Town of Grand Rapids Zoning Administrator, 2410 48<sup>th</sup> Street South, WI 54494, (715) 424-1821, info@grandrapidswi.org.

This Public Participation Plan was recommended for adoption by motion and majority vote of the Plan Commission on May 28, 2019.

Adopted by Grand Rapids Town Board of Supervisors on May 28, 2019.

Aime Neptson, Town Chair

Andrew J. Sun, Supervisor

Cathy Lumley, Supervisor

William S. Christensen, Supervisor

Paul Hanke, Supervisor



**APPENDIX** **D**

**Town of Grand Rapids Community Survey Summary**

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# Community Survey Summary

TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - 2020

*March 2020*



*Compiled by:*

*Wood County Department of Planning & Zoning*



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## INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the Town of Grand Rapids initiated a complete update of its 2009 Comprehensive Plan. The *Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan – 2020* will provide the primary framework and policy-directing strategy to guide the coordinated development of the town over the next 10-20 years.

Nowhere is the commitment to resident involvement more important than in local issues concerning comprehensive planning. The Town of Grand Rapids recognizes this importance. Consequently, a public participation strategy was identified early in the planning process to foster public involvement at all stages of the plan update. Public involvement is important to assure that the plan continues to truly reflect community needs and input from the public. Furthermore, it is essential to the overall success of the plan.

A community survey was developed by the Town Plan Commission as one means of gathering resident input and opinion. Specifically, the survey gathered information on: community perspectives; visions for the future; preferred town services; resident values and attitudes towards future development in the Town of Grand Rapids; and much more.

In March 2020, the Plan Commission mailed out 3,330 community surveys to all Grand Rapids residents and property owners. The mailing package contained a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and a pre-paid postage return envelope. After approximately two weeks, 1,378 completed surveys were returned by mail with a completion/response rate of over 41.4%. The return rate of over 41.4% is considered very strong for a survey distributed in this manner.

<p><b>3,330 Surveys Distributed</b> <b>1,378 Surveys Returned</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>41.4% Completion/Return Rate</b></p>
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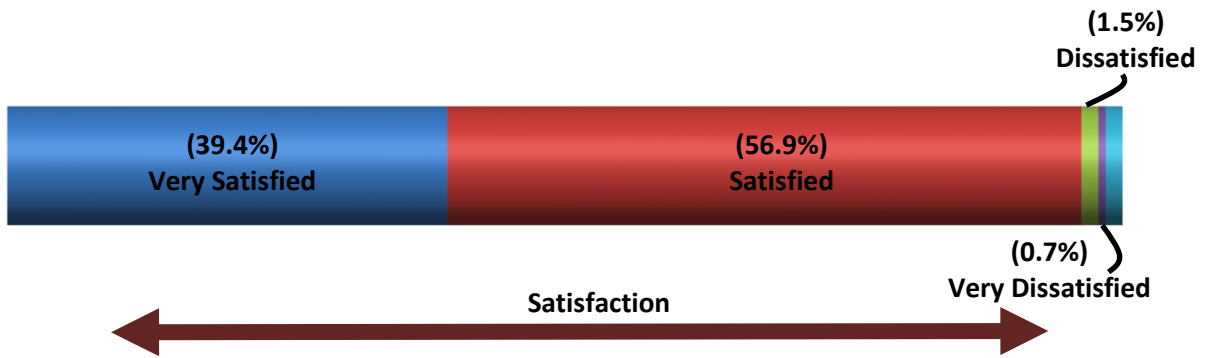
All survey responses were reviewed and the data was compiled into this survey summary report. This report summarizes the needs, desires, opinions, and attitudes of Grand Rapids residents. The report presents numeric tabulation and graphic representation of the questions and answers in the community survey. In addition to numeric data, respondent's additional comments are provided. The input collected through this survey will be incorporated into the *Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan – 2020*. Results of this survey will provide guidance for current and future development decisions over the next 10 to 20 years.





# COMMUNITY

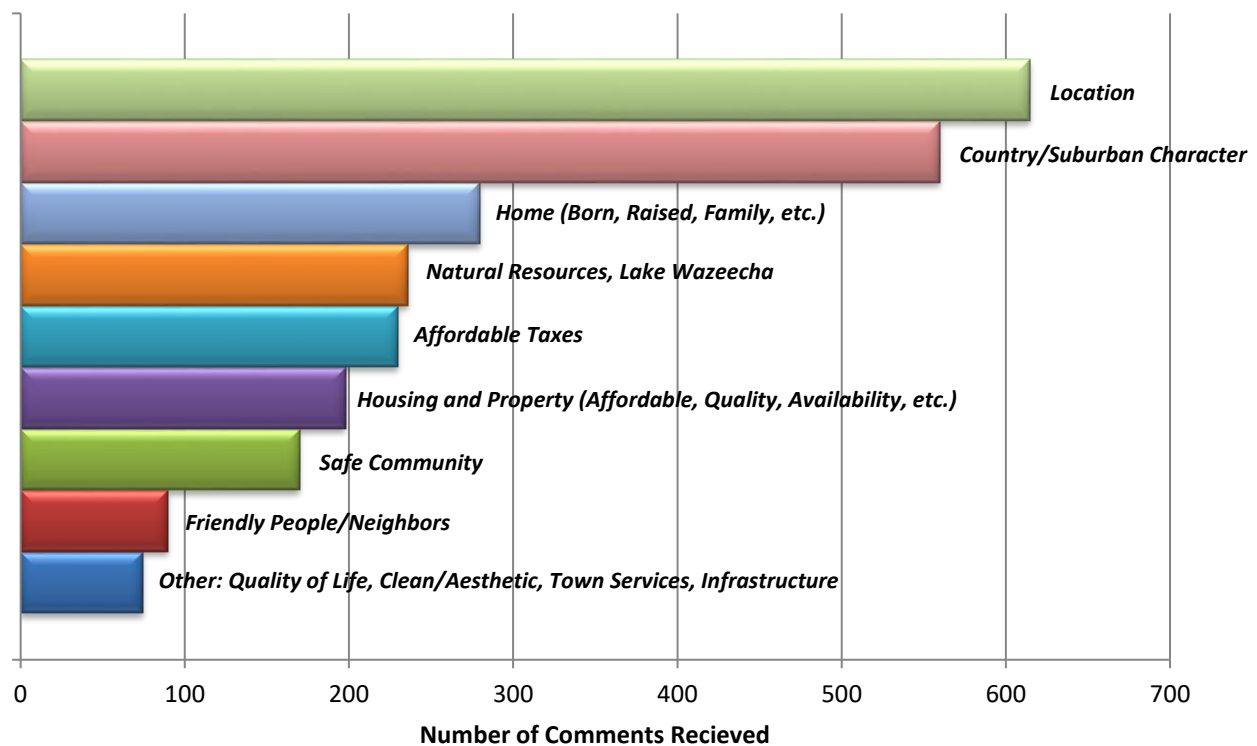
**Question 1: In general, how satisfied are you with the Town of Grand Rapids as a place to live?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very Satisfied	39.4%
Satisfied	56.9%
Dissatisfied	1.5%
Very Dissatisfied	0.7%
No Opinion	1.5%

**Question 2: What are the top 2 reasons you choose to live in the Town of Grand Rapids?**

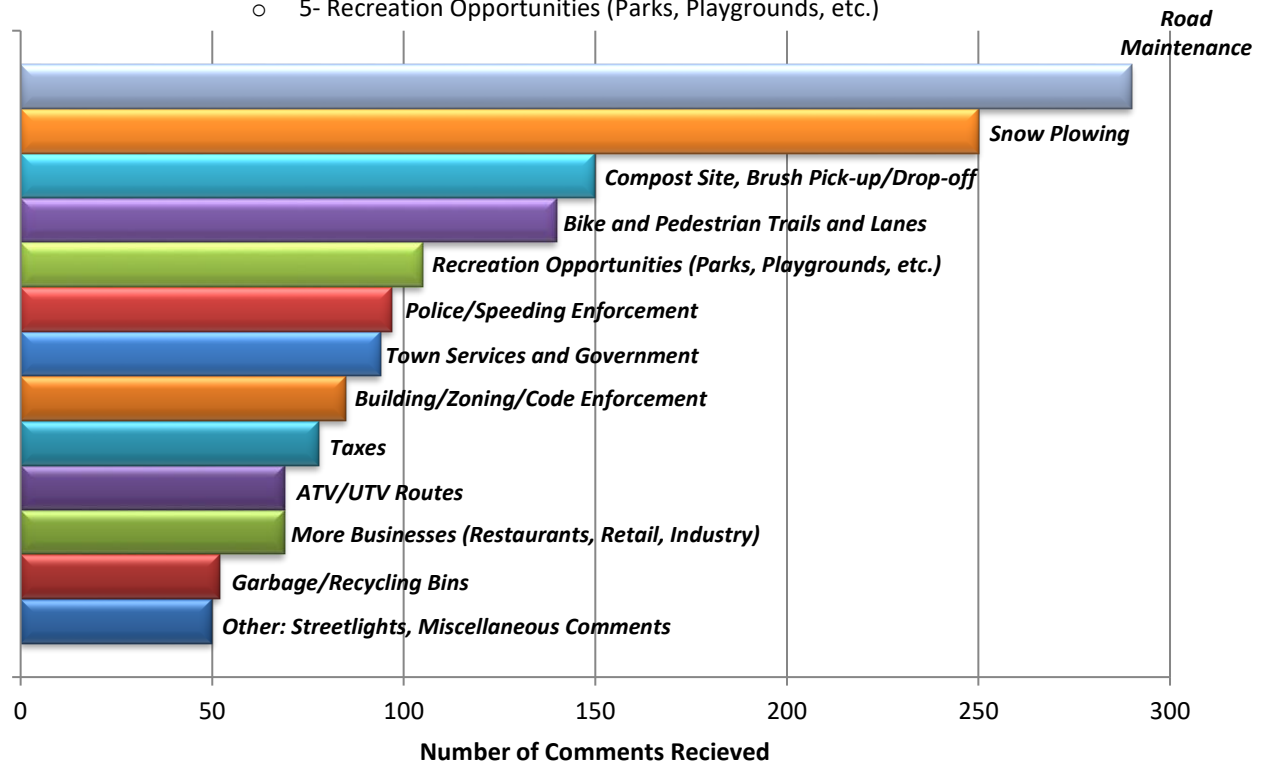
- Top five reasons:
  - 1- Location/Proximity to area communities (Employment, Amenities, Services, etc.)
  - 2- Country/Suburban Character (Quiet, Large Lots, Privacy, Open Space, etc.)
  - 3- Home (Born, Raised, Family, etc.)
  - 4- Natural Resources, Lake Wazeecha
  - 5- Affordable Taxes



*\*NOTE: A total of 2,369 responses were received. All responses have been compiled and presented to the Town of Grand Rapids.*

**Question 3: Please list two things you would like to improve/change in the Town of Grand Rapids:**

- Top five issues:
  - **1- Road Maintenance**
  - 2- Snow Plowing
  - 3- Compost Site, Brush Pick-up/Drop-off
  - 4- Bike and Pedestrian Trails and Lanes
  - 5- Recreation Opportunities (Parks, Playgrounds, etc.)



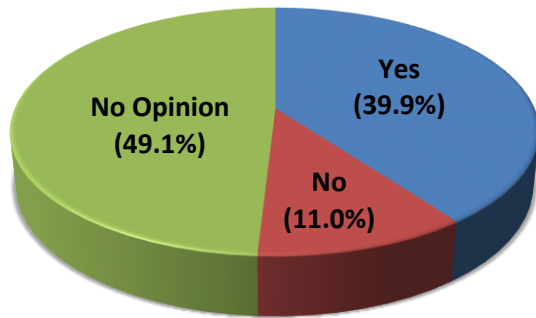
*\*NOTE: A total of 1,516 responses were received. All responses have been compiled and presented to the Town of Grand Rapids.*

**Question 4: Rate the overall quality of life in the Town of Grand Rapids.**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Excellent	30.0%
Good	63.7%
Fair	4.4%
Poor	0.1%
No Opinion	1.8%

**Question 5: Annually, volunteer and non-profit events like the firefighter’s picnic, town-wide rummage sale, choose to reuse, etc. take place in the town. Would you like to see more community events in the town?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	39.9%
No	11.0%
No Opinion	49.1

**Question 6: If you answered “yes” to Question 5, what kinds of community events would you like to see in the town?**

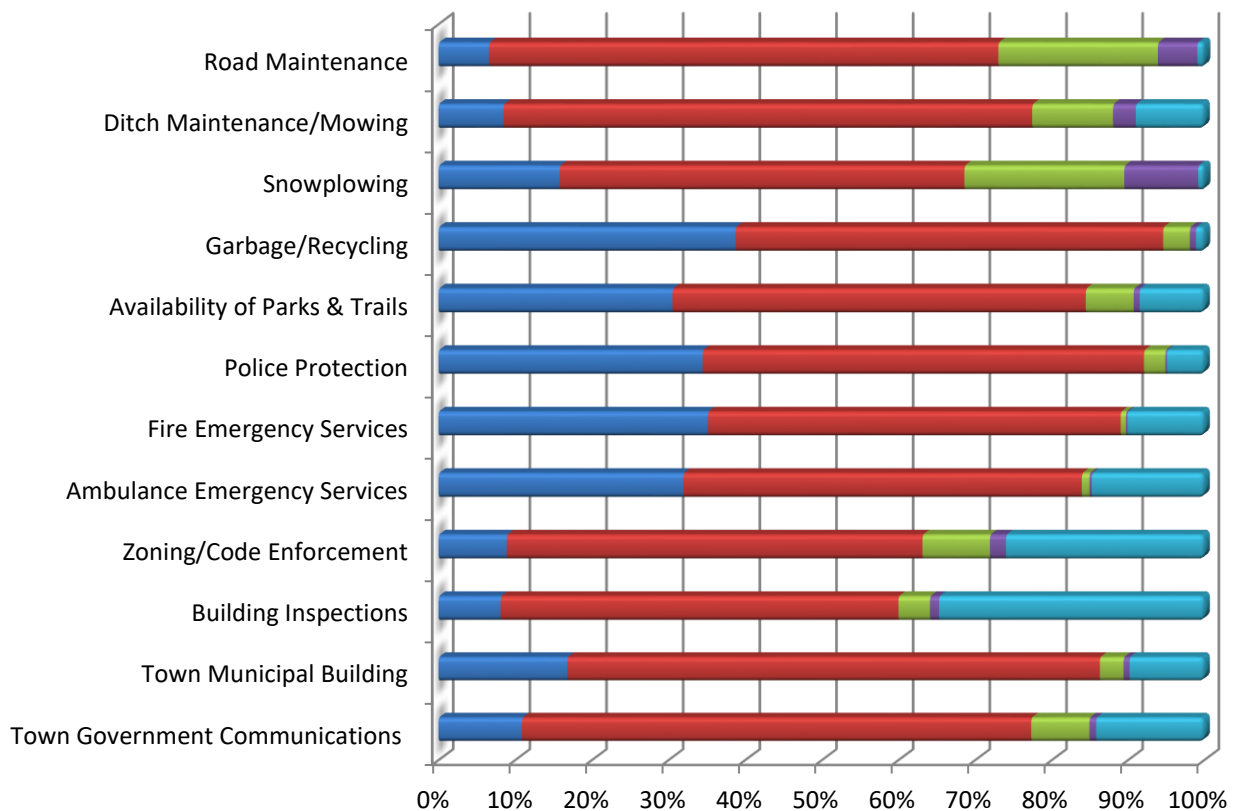
- Top responses included:
- Music Events
  - Picnics
  - Kids and Family Events and Activities

*\*NOTE: A total of 784 responses were received. All responses have been compiled and presented to the Town of Grand Rapids.*

## TOWN SERVICES

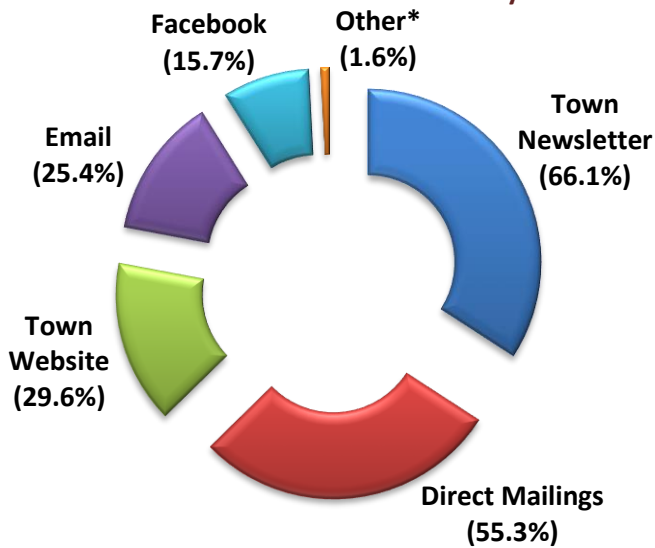
**Question 7: How satisfied are you with the following services provided by the Town of Grand Rapids?**

■ Very Satisfied  
 ■ Satisfied  
 ■ Dissatisfied  
 ■ Very Dissatisfied  
 ■ No Opinion



## COMMUNICATIONS & INVOLVEMENT

**Question 8: What are the most effective ways to receive information from the Town of Grand Rapids?**

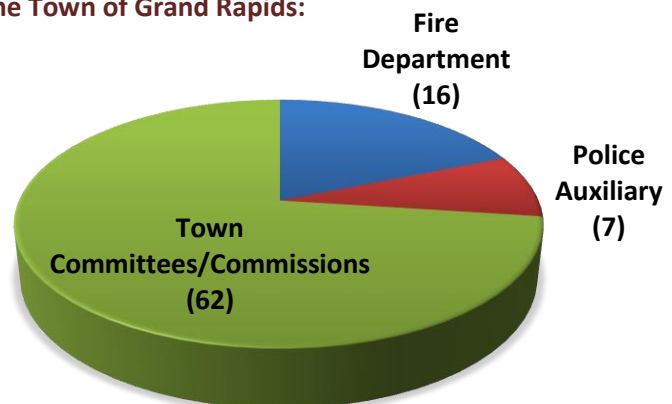


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Town Website	29.6%
Town Newsletter	66.1%
Email	25.4%
Direct Mailings	55.3%
Facebook	15.7%
Other	1.6%

*\*NOTE: Other responses included: Text, Phone, Radio, TV, Newspaper, etc.*

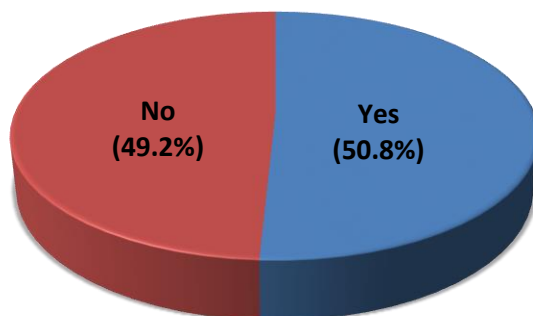
**Question 9: Are you interested in serving on the Town of Grand Rapids:**

ANSWER CHOICES	# RESPONSES
Fire Department	16
Police Auxiliary	7
Town Committees/Commissions	62



*\*NOTE: 1,299 survey respondents were not interested in serving.*

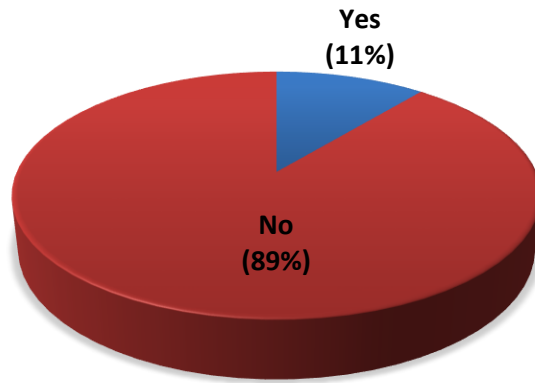
**Question 10: Have you visited the Town of Grand Rapids website?**



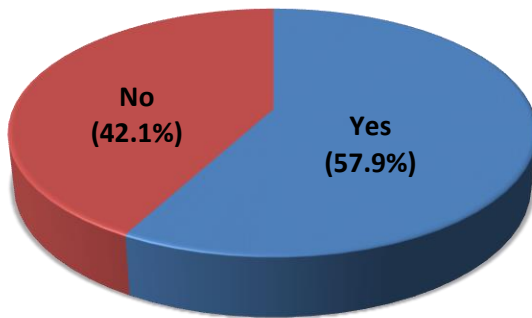
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	50.8%
No	49.2%

**Question 11: Have you visited the Town of Grand Rapids Fire Department website?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	11.0%
No	89.0%

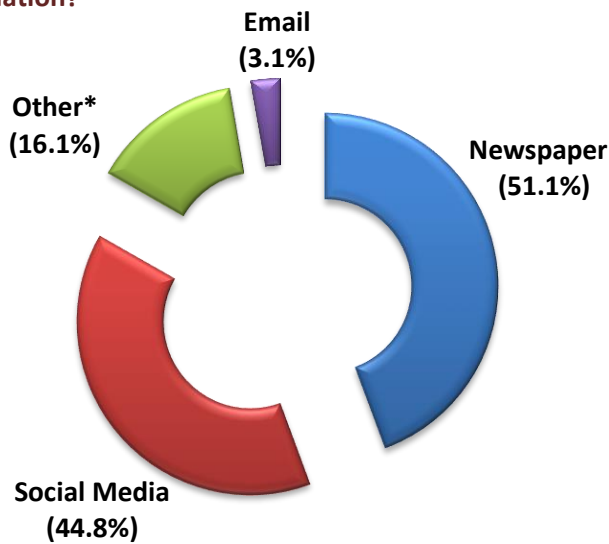


**Question 12: Are you familiar with the Town of Grand Rapids being named by SafeWise as the #1 safest community in WI for 2019?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	57.9%
No	42.1%

**Question 13: If you answered “yes” to question 12, please indicate how you received this information?**



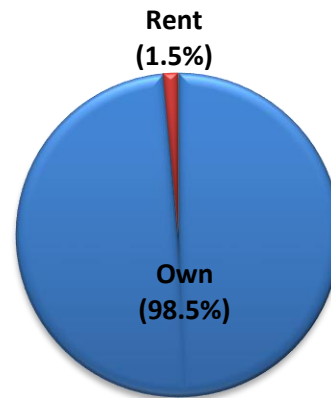
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Email	3.1%
Social Media	44.8%
Newspaper	51.1%
Other	16.1%

*\*NOTE: Other responses included: Word-of-mouth, Radio, TV, News, etc.*

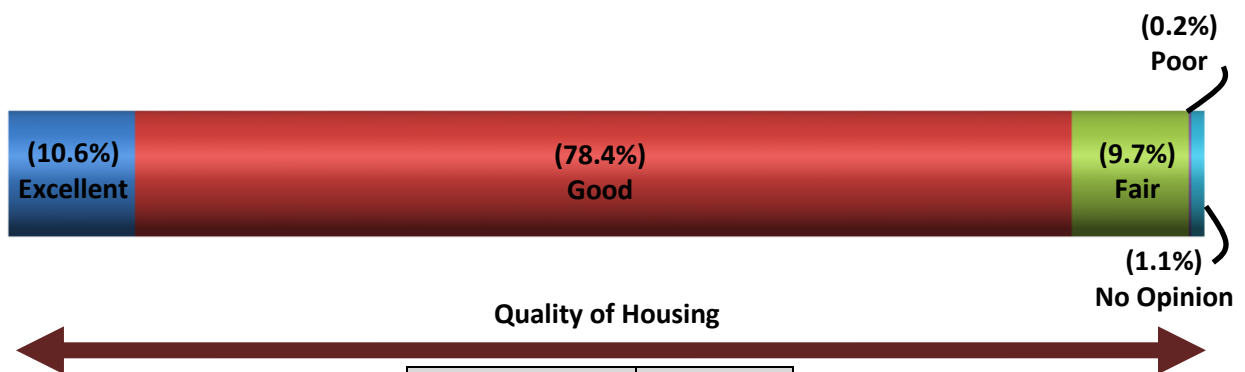
# HOUSING

**Question 14: Do you own or rent your residence?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Own	98.5%
Rent	1.5%

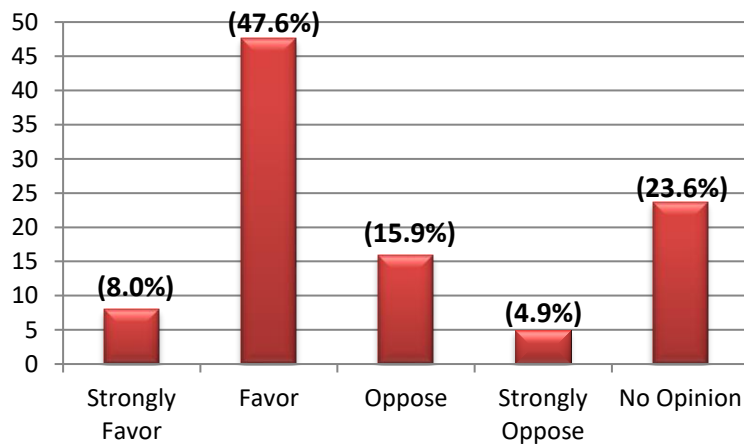


**Question 15: Rate the overall quality and appearance of housing in the Town of Grand Rapids.**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Excellent	10.6%
Good	78.4%
Fair	9.7%
Poor	0.2%
No Opinion	1.1%

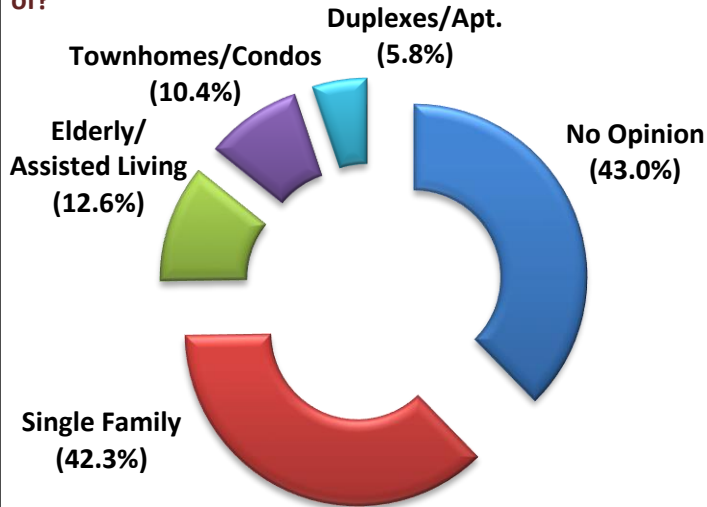
**Question 16: To what extent do you favor new residential development in the Town of Grand Rapids?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly Favor	8.0%
Favor	47.6%
Oppose	15.9%
Strongly Oppose	4.9%
No Opinion	23.6%



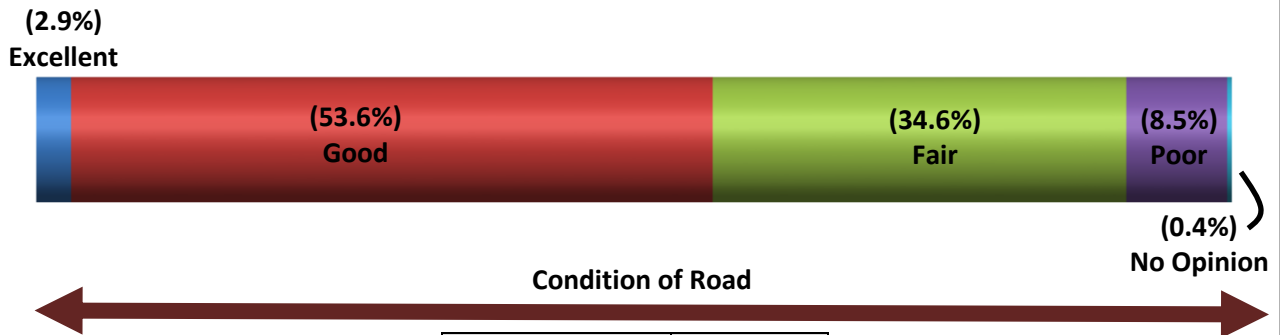
**Question 17: What, if any, types of residential dwellings does the Town of Grands Rapids need more of?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Single Family	42.3%
Townhomes/Condos	10.4%
Duplexes/Apartments	5.8%
Elderly/Assisted Living	12.6%
No Opinion	43.0%

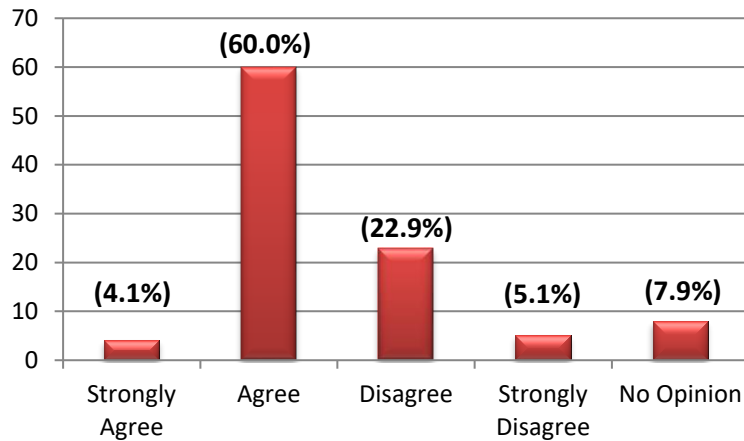
## TRANSPORTATION

**Question 18: Rate the overall condition of roads in the Town of Grand Rapids.**



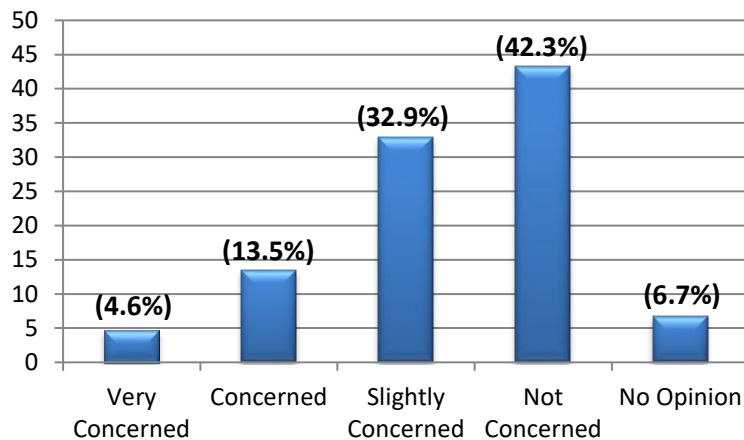
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Excellent	2.9%
Good	53.6%
Fair	34.6%
Poor	8.5%
No Opinion	0.4%

**Question 19: The Town of Grand Rapids is a safe community for bicyclists and pedestrians.**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly Agree	4.1%
Agree	60.0%
Disagree	22.9%
Strongly Disagree	5.1%
No Opinion	7.9%

**Question 20: How concerned are you with the volume & flow of traffic in the Town of Grand Rapids?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very Concerned	4.6%
Concerned	13.5%
Slightly Concerned	32.9%
Not Concerned	42.3%
No Opinion	6.7%

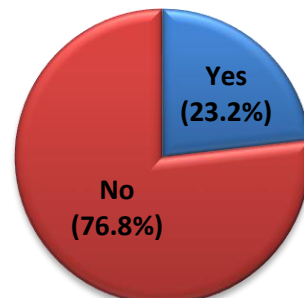
**Question 21: Please list any intersections or locations in the town where you feel there are safety concerns for vehicle traffic, bicyclists or pedestrians.**

- Top 5 roads of concern:
- 48<sup>th</sup> Street
  - Griffith Avenue/CTH Z
  - Whitrock Avenue
  - CTH W
  - Kellner Road

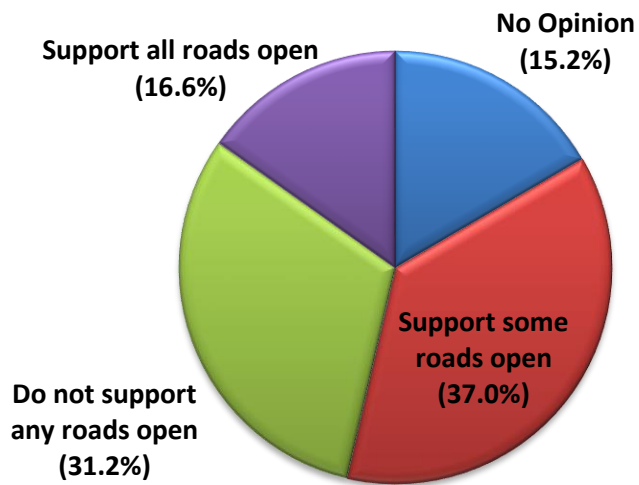
*\*NOTE: A total of 1,122 responses were received. All responses have been compiled and presented to the Town of Grand Rapids.*

**Question 22: Do you own an ATV or UTV?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	23.2%
No	76.8%



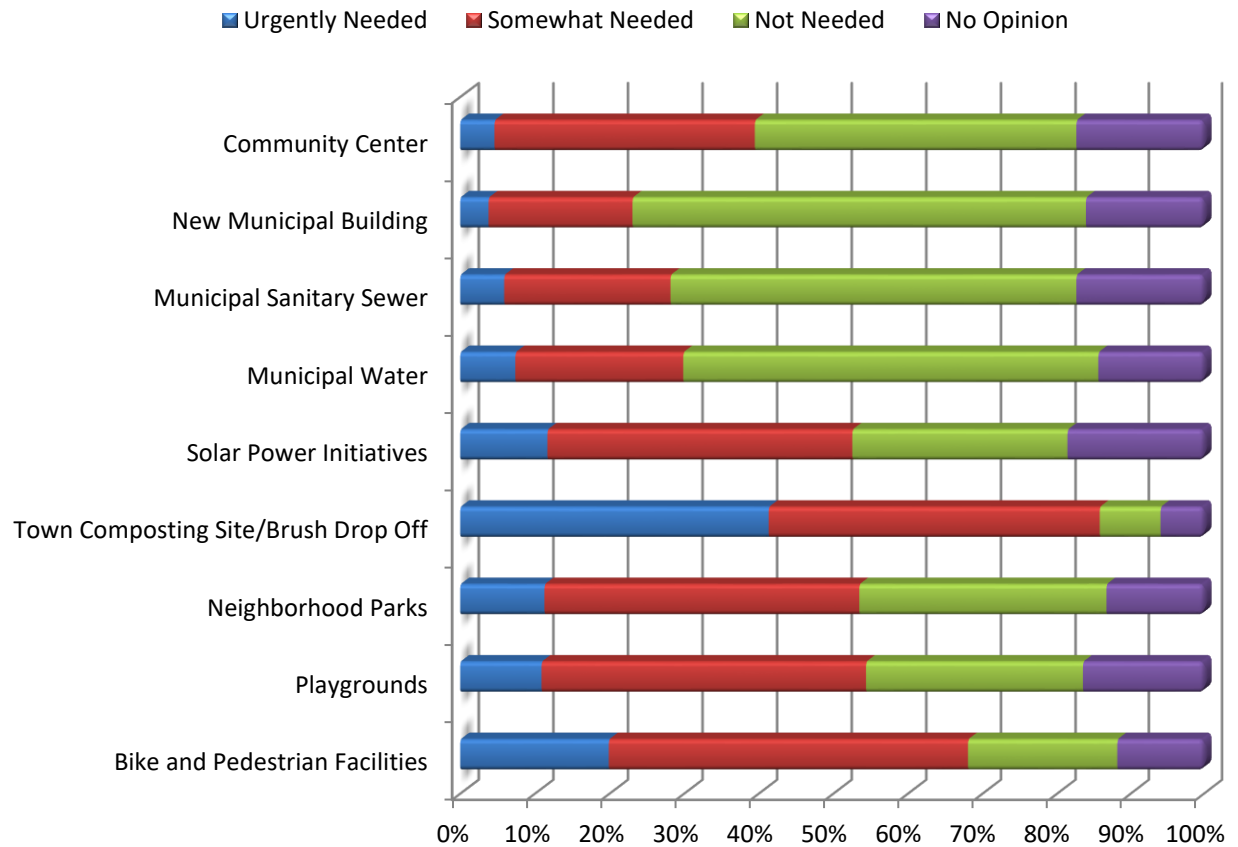
**Question 23: Overall, how would you describe your position with respect to ATV/UTV use on Town of Grand Rapids roads?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Support all roads open	16.6%
Support some roads open	37.0%
Do not support any roads open	31.2%
No Opinion	15.2%

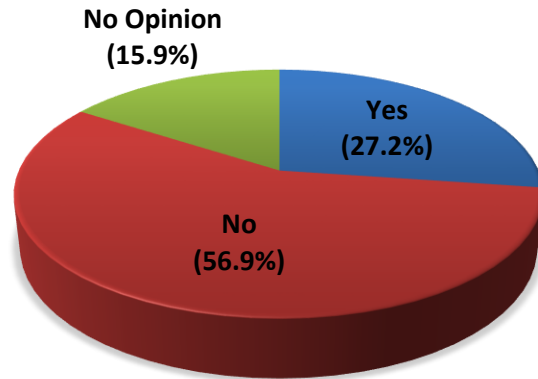
## UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

**Question 24: To what degree should the Town of Grand Rapids consider and/or encourage the following services and facilities?**



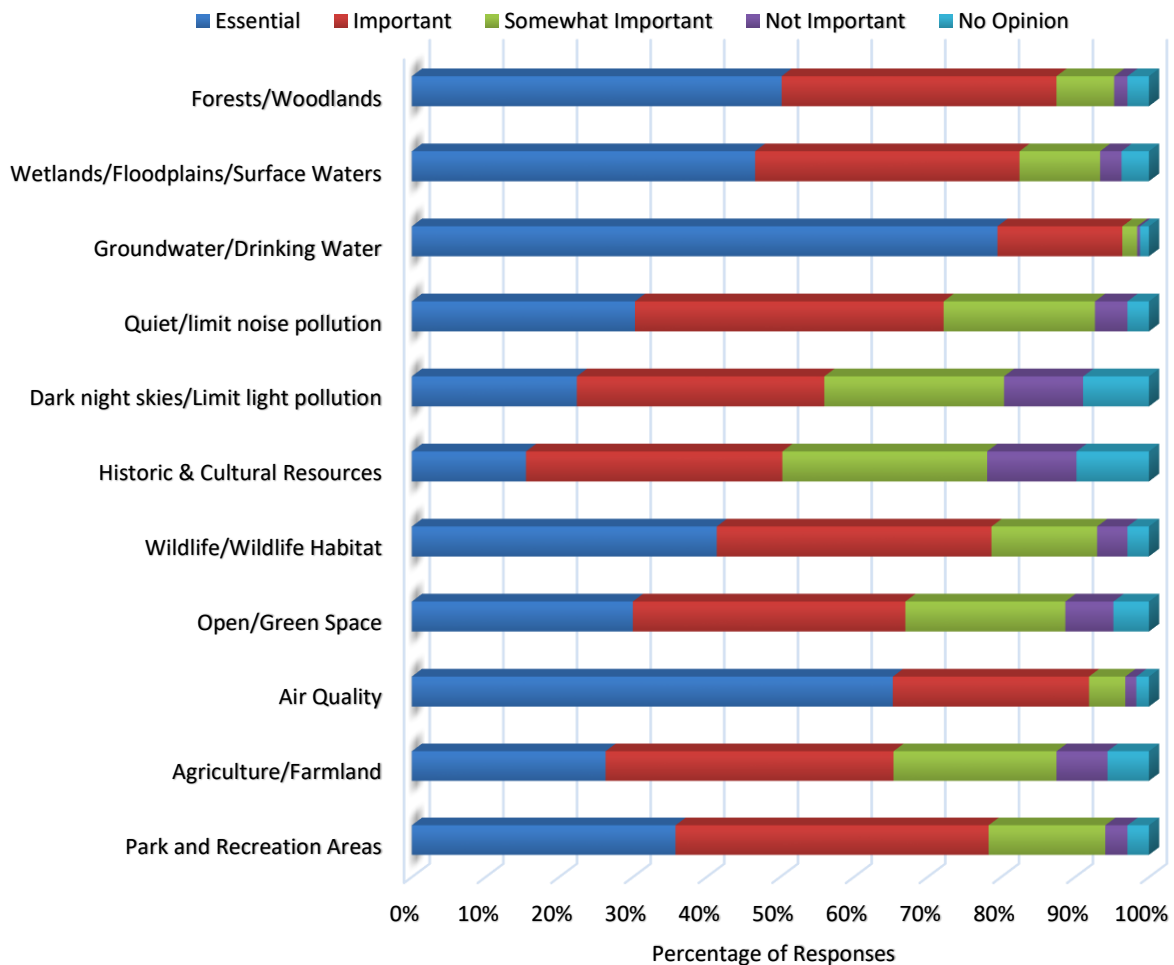
**Question 25: Would you be in favor of the Town of Grand Rapids contributing tax payer money, no less than 2 million dollars, towards the construction of the Wisconsin Rapids Aquatic Center in exchange for reduced resident admission rates?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	27.2%
No	56.9%
No Opinion	15.9%



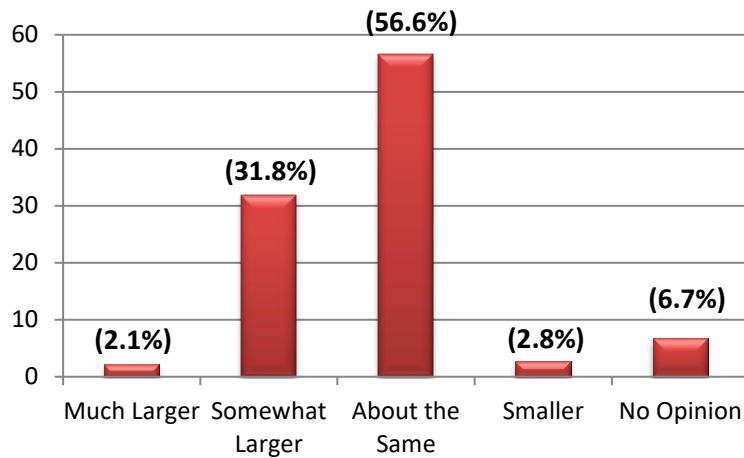
## AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

**Question 26: How important are the following to protect and/or enhance?**



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

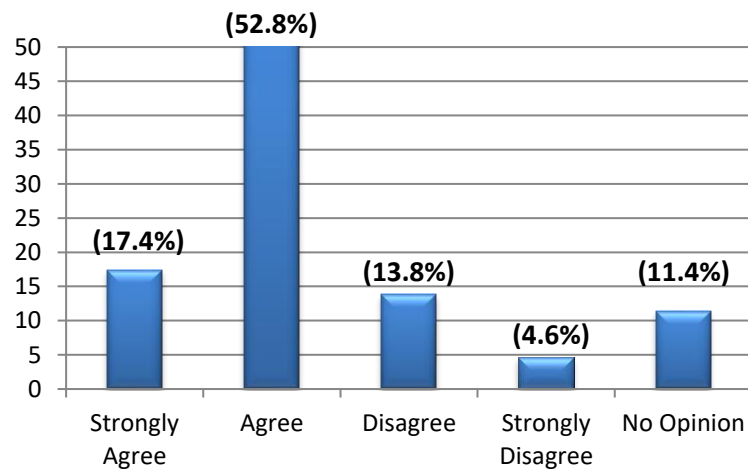
**Question 27: The current population of Grand Rapids is estimated to be 7,796. Over the next 10 years, would you like to see the Town's population be:**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Much Larger	2.1%
Somewhat Larger	31.8%
About the Same	56.6%
Smaller	2.8%
No Opinion	6.7%

**Question 28: New business development should be encouraged in the Town of Grand Rapids.**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly Agree	17.4%
Agree	52.8%
Disagree	13.8%
Strongly Disagree	4.6%
No Opinion	11.4%



**Question 29: What types of businesses would you like to see located in the Town of Grand Rapids?**

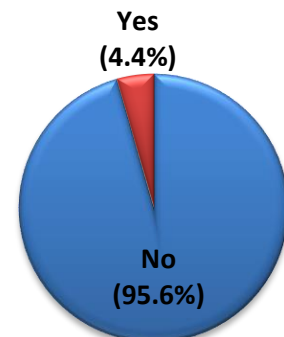
Top responses included:

- Restaurants and Food
- Manufacturing
- Grocery Store
- Retail
- Small Businesses and Shops

*\*NOTE: A total of 1,073 responses were received. All responses have been compiled and presented to the Town of Grand Rapids.*

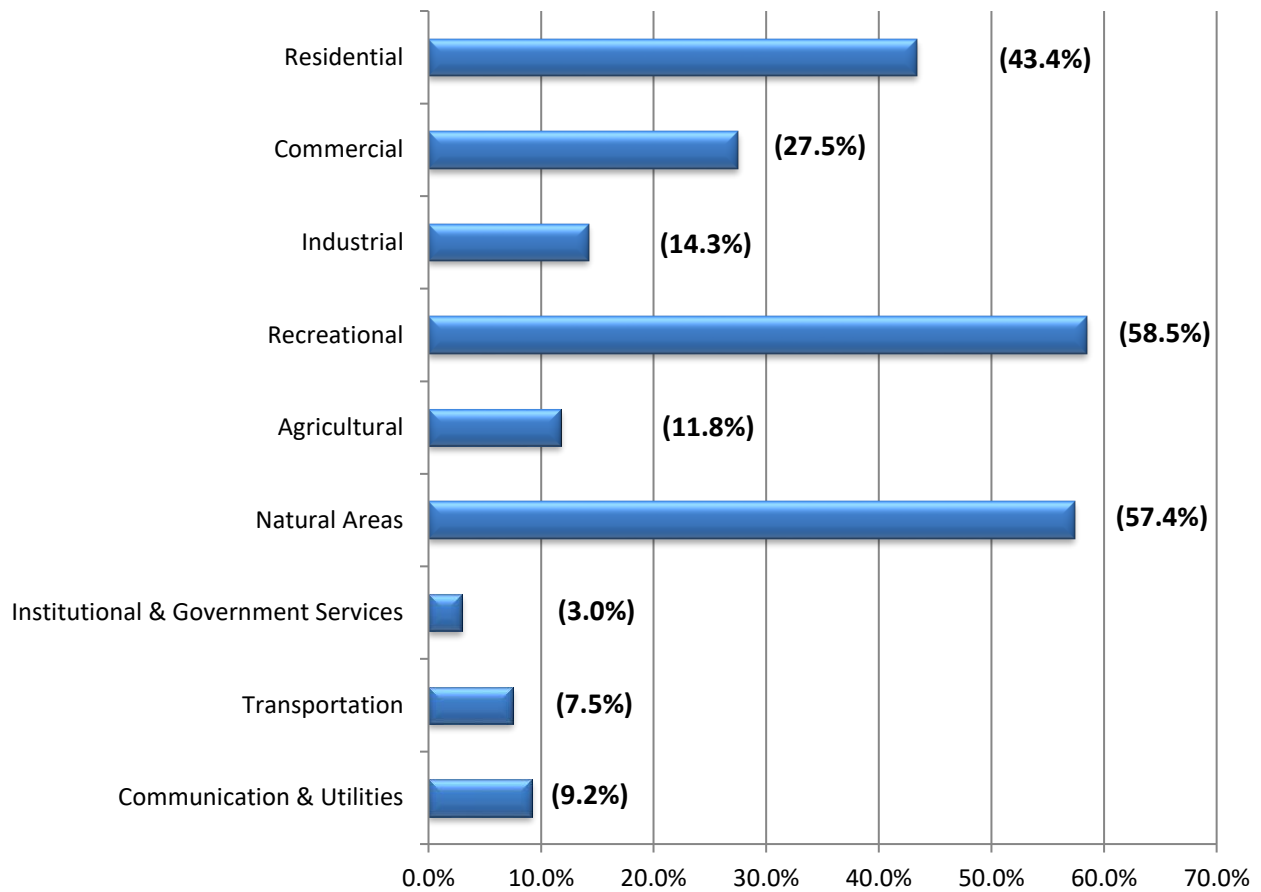
**Question 30: Do you currently operate a home occupation business?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	4.4%
No	95.6%

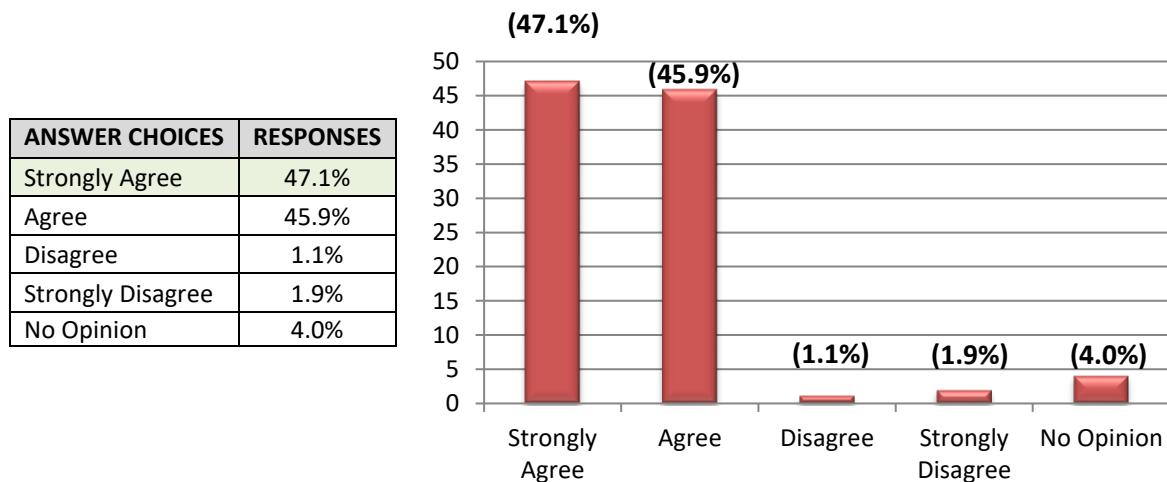


## LAND USE

**Question 31: What, if any, land uses would you like to see grow or expand in the Town of Grand Rapids?**

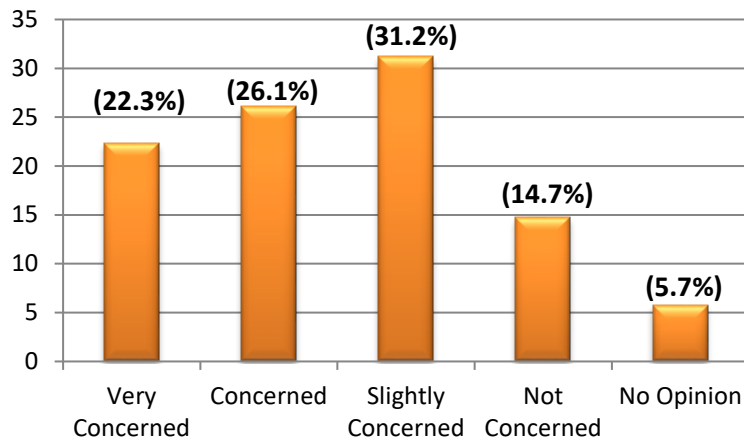


**Question 32: Maintaining the Town of Grand Rapids current suburban/rural character is important.**





**Question 33: How concerned are you if natural/rural areas and farmland in the Town of Grand Rapids are converted to more suburban types of land uses?**

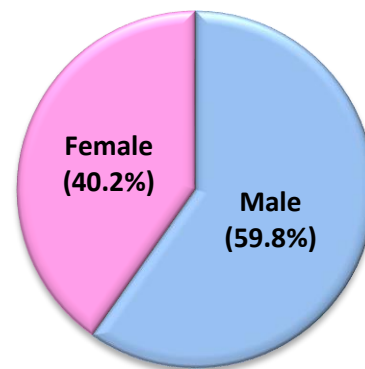


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very Concerned	22.3%
Concerned	26.1%
Slightly Concerned	31.2%
Not Concerned	14.7%
No Opinion	5.7%

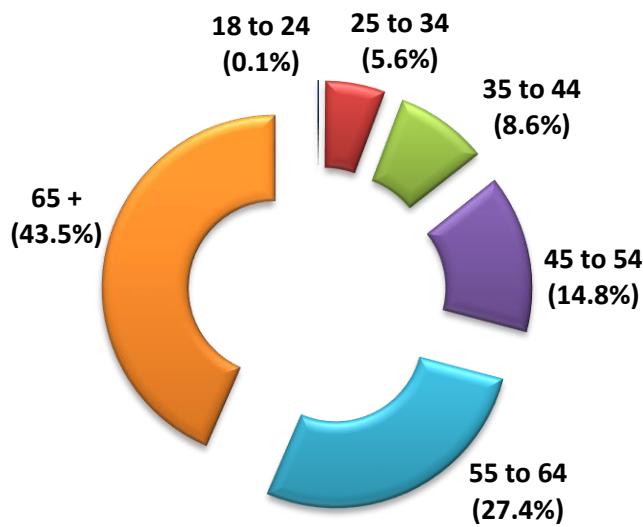
## RESPONDENTS PROFILE

**Question 34: What is your gender?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Male	59.8%
Female	40.2%

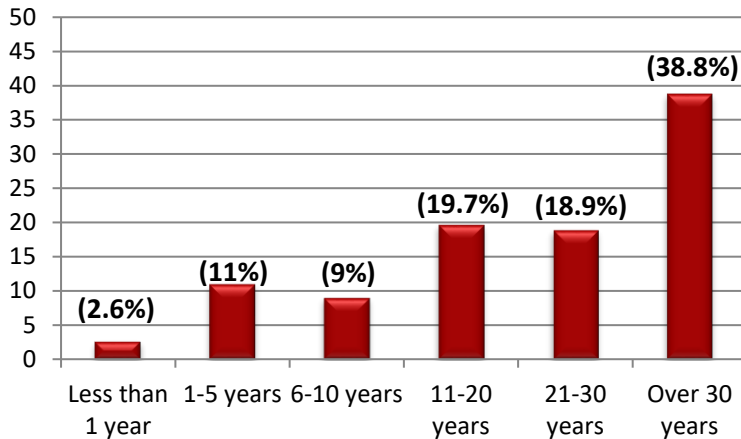


**Question 35: What is your age?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
18 to 24	0.1%
25 to 34	5.6%
35 to 44	8.6%
45 to 54	14.8%
55 to 64	27.4%
65 and older	43.5%

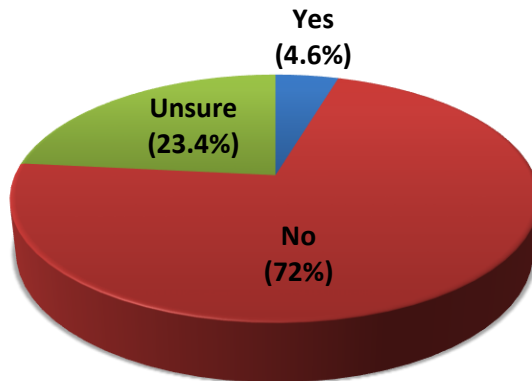
**Question 36: How long have you resided in the Town of Grand Rapids?**



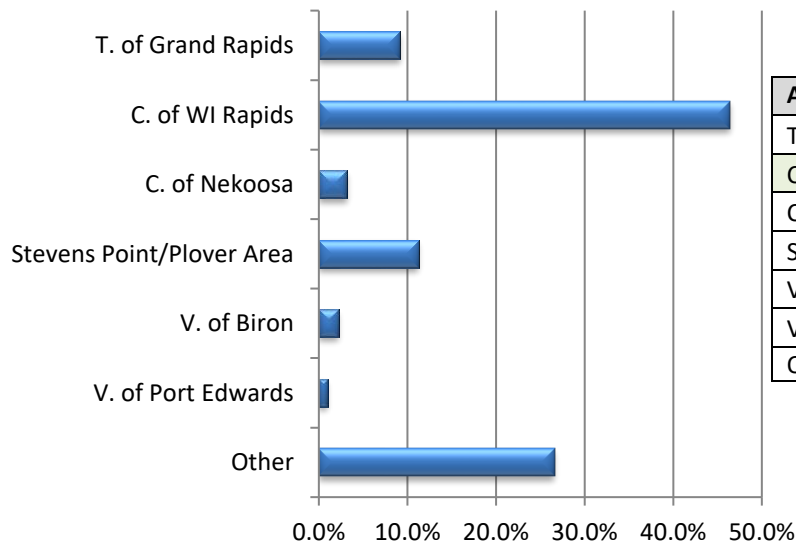
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Less than 1 year	2.6%
1-5 years	11.0%
6-10 years	9.0%
11-20 years	19.7%
21-30 years	18.9%
Over 30 years	38.8%

**Question 37: Do you have plans to move out of the Town of Grand Rapids within the next 5 years?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	4.6%
No	72.0%
Unsure	23.4%



**Question 38: If you are employed, where is your primary place of employment?**

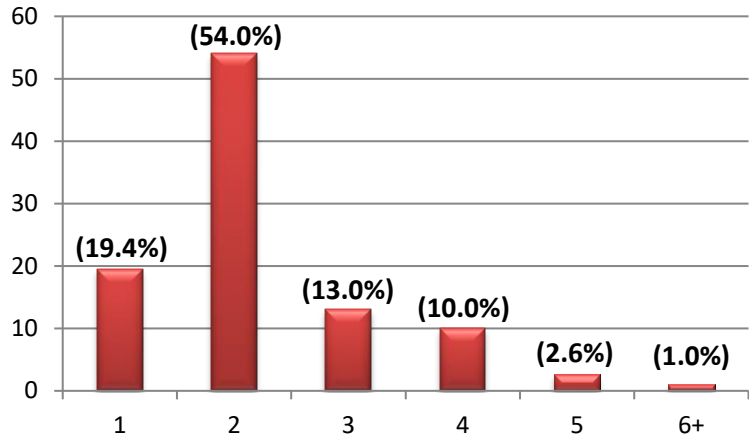


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Town of Grand Rapids	9.2%
City of WI Rapids	46.4%
City of Nekoosa	3.2%
Stevens Point/Plover Area	11.3%
Village of Biron	2.2%
Village of Port Edwards	1.1%
Other	26.6%

*\*NOTE: Other responses included: Retired, Remotely, Adams/Juneau/Portage County, Marshfield, Pittsville, Wausau, etc.*

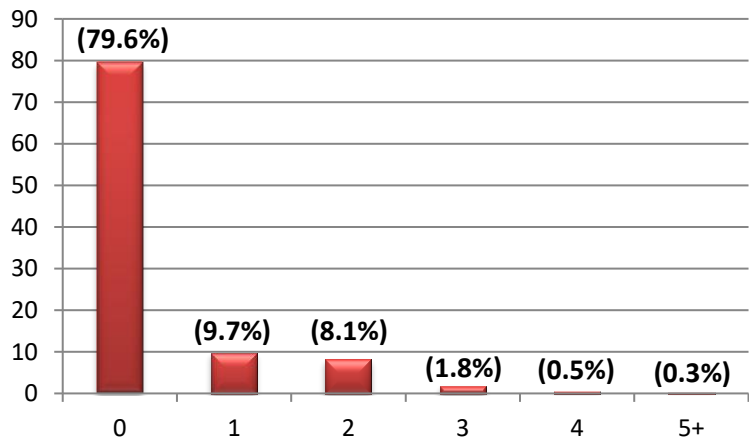
**Question 39: How many people currently live in your household?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
1	19.4%
2	54.0%
3	13.0%
4	10.0%
5	2.6%
6+	1.0%



**Question 40: How many children under the age of 18 years old live in your home?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
0	79.6%
1	9.7%
2	8.1%
3	1.8%
4	0.5%
5+	0.3%



**Question 41: Additional Comments?**

*\*NOTE: A total of 377 comments were received. All comments have been compiled and presented to the Town of Grand Rapids.*



2410 48th Street South  
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

## *Community Survey*

Dear Town of Grand Rapids Residents and Property Owners,

The Town Plan Commission is starting the process of updating the Town of Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan. This plan will guide current and future development of the town over the next 10-20 years. Public participation and input is essential to the overall success of the plan. Attached is a questionnaire designed to survey your opinions of the Town of Grand Rapids, and to determine future needs of our community. This questionnaire was developed by the Town Plan Commission and is part of our on-going effort to improve our community.

**Please take a few minutes to answer the questions in the survey and then return it in the enclosed pre-paid/self-addressed envelope.** We ask that only one person per household fill out the questionnaire, but please feel free to consult with all members of your household in forming your opinion.

The responses on the questionnaire will be tabulated by computer. Only the final results will be presented to the Plan Commission and the public at large. **The information provided to us on individual questionnaires is anonymous and confidential.**

Our Plan Commission meeting times and agendas will be posted at the Town Hall, The Store in Kellner, Town Garage, and on the town website ([www.townofgrandrapids.org](http://www.townofgrandrapids.org)). Meeting minutes will be available on the website as well. You are also welcome to comment or ask questions at any of our meetings or give the town a call at (715) 424-1821.

There will be several opportunities for the public to participate in the planning process including work sessions, open house and community events. There will also be a public hearing near the end of the updating process to get any last-minute concerns or questions before submitting the updated plan to the Town Board for final approval. We hope you attend.

On behalf of the Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission, thank you in advance for supporting the planning efforts in our community by completing and returning this survey.

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE ATTACHED SURVEY NO LATER THAN MARCH 25TH**

Sincerely,

Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission:

Justin Conner, Chair  
Jason Grueneberg  
Jeff Brewbaker  
Brian Piesik

Patty Lumby  
Jason Sachs  
Tom Heiser  
Peggy Doughty, Zoning Administrator

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**TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY SURVEY**

\*\*\*Please complete and return this survey by MARCH 25TH\*\*\*

**COMMUNITY**

**1. In general, how satisfied are you with the Town of Grand Rapids as a place to live? (Mark one)**

- Very Satisfied       Satisfied       Dissatisfied       Very Dissatisfied       No Opinion

**2. What are the top 2 reasons you choose to live in the Town of Grand Rapids? (List two)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Please list two things you would like to improve/change in the Town of Grand Rapids: (List two)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Rate the overall quality of life in the Town of Grand Rapids. (Mark one)**

- Excellent       Good       Fair       Poor       No Opinion

**5. Annually, volunteer and non-profit events like the firefighter's picnic, town-wide rummage sale, choose to reuse, etc. take place in the town. Would you like to see more community events in the town? (Mark one)**

- Yes       No       No Opinion

**6. If you answered "yes" to question 5, what kind of community events would you like to see in the town?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

**TOWN SERVICES**

**7. How satisfied are you with the following services provided by the Town of Grand Rapids? (Mark one for each service)**

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	No Opinion
Road Maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ditch Maintenance/Mowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snowplowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Garbage/Recycling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of Parks & Trails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Police Protection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fire Emergency Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ambulance Emergency Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Zoning/Code Enforcement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building Inspections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Town Municipal Building	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Town Government Communications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**COMMUNICATIONS & INVOLVEMENT**

**8. What are the most effective ways to receive information from the Town of Grand Rapids? (Mark all that apply)**

- Town Website     Town Newsletter     Email     Direct Mailings     Facebook     Other \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Are you interested in serving on the Town of Grand Rapids: (Mark all that apply)**

- Fire Department     Police Auxiliary     Town committees or commissions

If interested, please contact the Town Hall at 715-424-1821.

**10. Have you visited the Town of Grand Rapids website (www.townofgrandrapids.org)? (Mark one)**

- Yes     No

**11. Have you visited the Town of Grand Rapids Fire Department website (www.grandrapidsfd.com)? (Mark one)**

- Yes     No

**12. Are you familiar with the Town of Grand Rapids being named by SafeWise as the #1 safest community in WI for 2019? (Mark one)**

- Yes     No

**13. If you answered "yes" to question 12, please indicate how you received this information? (Mark all that apply)**

- Email     Social Media     Newspaper     Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**HOUSING**

**14. Do you own or rent your residence? (Mark one)**

- Own     Rent

**15. Rate the overall quality and appearance of housing in the Town of Grand Rapids. (Mark one)**

- Excellent     Good     Fair     Poor     No Opinion

**16. To what extent do you favor new residential development in the Town of Grand Rapids? (Mark one)**

- Strongly Favor     Favor     Oppose     Strongly Oppose     No Opinion

**17. What, if any, types of residential dwellings does the Town of Grand Rapids need more of? (Mark all that apply)**

- Single Family     Townhomes/Condos     Duplexes/Apartments     Elderly/Assisted Living     No Opinion

**TRANSPORTATION**

**18. Rate the overall condition of roads in the Town of Grand Rapids. (Mark one)**

- Excellent     Good     Fair     Poor     No Opinion

**19. The Town of Grand Rapids is a safe community for bicyclists and pedestrians. (Mark one)**

- Strongly Agree     Agree     Disagree     Strongly Disagree     No Opinion

**20. How concerned are you with the volume and flow of traffic in the Town of Grand Rapids? (Mark one)**

- Very Concerned     Concerned     Somewhat Concerned     Not Concerned     No Opinion

**21. Please list any intersections or locations in the town where you feel there are safety concerns for vehicle traffic, bicyclists or pedestrians.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

**22. Do you own an ATV or UTV? (Mark one)**

- Yes     No

**23. Overall, how would you describe your position with respect to ATV/UTV use on Town of Grand Rapids roads? (Mark one)**

- I support all roads being open     I support some roads being open     I do not support any roads being open     No opinion

**UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

**24. To what degree should the Town of Grand Rapids consider and/or encourage the following services and facilities? (Mark one for each category)**

	Urgently Needed	Somewhat Needed	Not Needed	No Opinion
Community Center	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Municipal Building	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Municipal Sanitary Sewer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Municipal Water	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Solar Power Initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Town Composting Site/Brush Drop Off	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Neighborhood Parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bike and Pedestrian Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**25. Would you be in favor of the Town of Grand Rapids contributing tax payer money, no less than 2 million dollars, towards the construction of the Wisconsin Rapids Aquatic Center in exchange for reduced resident admission rates? (Mark one)**

- Yes     No     No Opinion

**AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**26. How important are the following to protect and/or enhance? (Mark one for each category)**

	Essential	Important	Somewhat	Not Important	No Opinion
Forests/Woodlands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wetlands/Floodplains/Surface Waters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Groundwater/Drinking Water	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quiet-limit noise pollution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dark night skies-limit light pollution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Historic & Cultural Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wildlife/Wildlife Habitat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open/Green Space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Air Quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Agriculture/Farmland	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Park and Recreation Areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**27. The current population of Grand Rapids is estimated to be 7,796. Over the next 10 years, would you like to see the Town of Grand Rapids population be: (Mark one)**

- Much larger     Somewhat larger     About the same     Smaller     No Opinion

**28. New business development should be encouraged in the Town of Grand Rapids. (Mark one)**

- Strongly Agree     Agree     Disagree     Strongly Disagree     No Opinion

**29. What types of businesses would you like to see located in the Town of Grand Rapids? (List two)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

**30. Do you currently operate a home occupation business? (Mark one)**

Yes  No

**LAND USE**

**31. What, if any, land uses would you like to see grow or expand in the Town of Grand Rapids? (Mark all that apply)**

Residential  Commercial  Industrial  Recreational  Agricultural  
 Natural Areas  Institutional & Government Services  Transportation  Communication & Utilities

**32. Maintaining the Town of Grand Rapids current suburban/rural character is important. (Mark one)**

Strongly Agree  Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree  No Opinion

**33. How concerned are you if natural/rural areas and farmland in the Town of Grand Rapids are converted into more suburban types of land uses? (Mark one)**

Very Concerned  Concerned  Somewhat Concerned  Not Concerned  No Opinion

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

**34. What is your gender? (Mark one)**

Male  Female

**35. What is your age? (Mark one)**

18 to 24  25 to 34  35 to 44  45 to 54  55 to 64  65 and older

**36. How long have you resided in the Town of Grand Rapids? (Mark one)**

less than 1 year  1-5 years  6-10 years  11-20 years  21-30 years  over 30 years

**37. Do you have plans to move out of the Town of Grand Rapids within the next 5 years? (Mark one)**

Yes  No  Unsure

**38. If you are employed, where is your primary place of employment? (Mark one)**

In the Town of Grand Rapids  City of Wisconsin Rapids  City of Nekoosa  Stevens Point/Plover Area  Village of Biron  
 Village of Port Edwards  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**39. How many people currently live in your household? (Mark one)**

1  2  3  4  5  6+

**40. How many children under of the age of 18 years old live in your home? (Mark one)**

0  1  2  3  4  5+

**41. Additional Comments?**

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**Thank you for supporting the planning efforts in the Town of Grand Rapids by completing and returning this survey!**

**\*\*\*PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS SURVEY BY MARCH 25\*\*\***

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The Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning along with the Town of Grand Rapids would like to thank all who participated in the community survey.



**Wood County Department of Planning and Zoning**

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