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Introduction

This chapter provides the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan, outlining why we plan, the planning process, Smart Growth Planning, and the planning area.

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Why We Plan

It is difficult to predict what the future may bring for the Town of Sparta, or for any community. As residents and businesses come and go, and economic trends rise and fall, changes will occur. The purpose of this plan is to establish a shared vision for the Town of Sparta to guide future actions and decisions. This guidance provides predictability and consistency over time, which encourages investment and a stable planning environment. We plan so that we can act and react in a changing world with a confident understanding of our common values and goals.

Plan Maintenance

This planning document is a “living” guide for growth and change in the Town of Sparta. The plan represents the Town’s best effort to address current issues and anticipate future needs; however, it can and should be amended from time to time if conditions warrant reconsideration of policies in this plan. If decisions are being made that are not consistent with this plan, then the plan has lost its relevance and should be amended. The process of amending the comprehensive plan should not be onerous, but it should trigger a brief pause to consider again the long term vision for the community. This plan’s value is dependent upon frequent use and occasional updates.

Wisconsin Smart Growth Planning

Wisconsin’s “Smart Growth” planning law [s. 66.1001 Wis. Stats.] was adopted in October of 1999. The law requires that, after January 1, 2010, if a local government unit enacts or amends any of the following ordinances, the ordinance must be consistent with that local governmental unit’s comprehensive plan:

1. Official maps
2. Local subdivision regulations
3. General zoning ordinances
4. Shoreland/wetland zoning ordinances

Although this document is adopted by an ordinance, it is not in itself an ordinance. Rather, the comprehensive plan serves as a general guide for the Town. In matters pertaining to those items 1-4 listed above, the Town shall enact or amend ordinances consistent with this plan as required under s. 66.1001 Wis. Stats. In matters not pertaining to those items 1-4 listed above, this plan can serve as a guide for Town decision making purposes.

The Wisconsin Smart Growth Law does not mandate how communities should manage growth, rather it requires that communities and state agencies consider Smart Planning Principles when planning for the future and provides guidance concerning important elements local plans should include.

Comprehensive Planning Guidance

The Wisconsin Smart Growth Law outlines 9 elements that must be included in a community’s comprehensive plan:

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

Plan Organization

The Town of Sparta has chosen to slightly modify the terminology used throughout this plan from that used in state statute. For example:

- Issues and Opportunities has been modified to *Demographics*.
- Transportation has been modified to *Mobility & Transportation*.
- Economic Development has been modified to *Economic Prosperity*.
- Utilities and Community Facilities has been modified to *Community Facilities & Services*.
- Intergovernmental Cooperation has been modified to *Collaboration & Partnerships*.
- Cultural Resources has been split off from Agricultural and Natural Resources into its own element titled *Community Character*.

While the Town has chosen to deviate slightly from the terminology used in state statute the prescribed requirements from Wis. Stats. 66.1001 are still addressed in there entirety throughout this plan. The final 10 elements of this plan are:

1. Demographics
2. Housing
3. Mobility & Transportation
4. Economic Prosperity
5. Agricultural & Natural Resources
6. Community Facilities & Services
7. Community Character
8. Collaboration & Partnerships
9. Land-use
10. Implementation

The organization of the plan is based both on the planning process and the guidance provided by the Wisconsin Smart Growth Legislation. The plan is divided into four chapters plus several important appendices.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 discusses the role of the plan, the Wisconsin Smart Planning Act, the planning area boundaries and regional context, and the Town's previous planning efforts.

Chapter 2: Vision, Goals, Objectives and Policies

Chapter 2 presents a vision for the future of the Town and describes goals, objectives, and policies to achieve that vision. This chapter addresses all planning elements except implementation, which is addressed in separate chapters.

Chapter 3: Future Land Use

Chapter 3 defines categories of land use and features a Future Land Use map showing where each use will be permitted.

Chapter 4: Implementation

Chapter 4 describes the process for adopting and amending the plan, tools and procedures by which the plan will be implemented.

Appendix A: Public Participation Plan

Appendix A includes a copy of the public participation plan.

Appendix B: Community Indicators

Appendix B is a compilation of data that describes the existing conditions, trends, and projections for the Town of Sparta. This data informs the planning process and should be updated from time to time to track progress and change in the Town.

Appendix C: Planning Maps

A set of the existing conditions and future land use maps with the entire planning area.

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Planning Area

The Planning Area includes all lands within the current Town jurisdiction. The Town is located in Monroe County, WI (pop. 44,673). The Town is approximately 30,276 acres (47.3 square miles). The 2010 population Census for the Town was 3,128, making the Town the third largest community in Monroe County, trailing only the cities of Tomah and Sparta.

The County Seat is the City of Sparta (pop. 9,522), which is almost entirely surrounded by the Town. The City and Town maintain Extraterritorial Zoning to guide the development of land uses around the periphery of the City.

The Town is bordered on the east by the Town of Lafayette and the Town of Angelo, to the south by the Town of Leon, and to the north by the Town of Little Falls. The Town is bordered on the west by La Crosse County and the Town of Burns and the Village of Rockland (pop. 594).

Major transportation facilities in the Town include I-90 which connects the La Crosse region to Madison and Milwaukee metropolitan regions. State highway 16 parallels I-90 running east-west across the Town through the City of Sparta. Between these two roadways lies the Canadian Pacific Railroad and the La Crosse River State Bicycle Trail, which connects the City of La Crosse to the City of Sparta, where the trail then connects to the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail.

State highway 27 runs south-north through the Town linking the City of Sparta to the City of Westby to the south and City of Black River Falls to the north.

Refer to the planning maps in Appendix C for more information on the project area.



TownMapsUSA.com

Planning Process

In January of 2014, the Town of Sparta engaged MSA Professional Services, Inc. to assist in updating of its Comprehensive Plan complying with Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" requirements, State Statute 66.1001. The Town had completed its first comprehensive plan in 2003. Per SS 66.1001, a comprehensive plan must be updated every 10 years.

The 2003 plan was adopted as a joint plan with the City of Sparta. For this plan update, the Town chose to complete and adopt its own separate comprehensive plan. This does not signal an unwillingness to cooperatively work with the City of Sparta on regional land use and transportation planning. Rather, the Town chose to develop a more concise plan with a focus on the rural areas of the Town. Prior to adoption, the Town invited staff from the City's Community Development Department to review and provide feedback on the Town's updated plan. The Town also provided the same opportunity to the Monroe County Zoning Department. Both of these departments will continue to play an active role in cooperatively managing growth and preservation within the Town of Sparta.

The project included six project meetings. Four of the six meetings were working sessions with the Town's Planning Commission, which was tasked by the Town Board to work with MSA to develop the updated Comprehensive Plan. As required by SS 66.1001, every community must adopt a public participation plan at the beginning of the planning process. The purpose of the public participation plan is to define procedures for public involvement during every stage of the planning process (Refer to Appendix A for the complete Public Participation Plan).

Project Schedule

- Kickoff Meeting, Community Indicators Report (April 2014)
- Meeting #2, Community Policy Report (May 2014)
- Meeting #3, Community Land Use and Implementation Report (June 2014)
- Meeting #4, Draft Plan Review (August 2014)
- Meeting #5, Planning Commission Recommendation (October 2014)
- Meeting #6, Public Hearing and Plan Adoption by the Town Board (December 2014)

Area History

The town was originally organized October 8, 1854, by a resolution of the county board and was one of the first five towns into which the county was divided after the organization of it. Refer to Appendix B for an historical overview of the Town.

Sparta Today

From 1990 to 2010, the Town of Sparta grew by 31%. This growth rate significantly surpassed the growth rate for the City of Sparta (22%), Monroe County (22%) and the State as whole (16%) during the same period. As of 2010, the Town of Sparta accounted for 7% of the total County population, with just over 3,100 people, or roughly 66 people per square mile.

Based on Wisconsin Department of Administration (WIDOA) data, the Town's 2035 population is projected to be 3,930, which is an increase of nearly 26%. This is comparable to the growth projected for the City of Sparta (23%) and the County (21%),

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Sparta Today, Cont.

while far exceeding the State's projected growth of six percent.

In 2010, the median age in the Town was 44.3, which is higher than the median age for the City of Sparta (38.2) and Monroe County (39.1). Based on this data (shown in the table below), the Town of Sparta has a higher ratio of persons between the ages of 35-64 years old as compared to the City of Sparta and Monroe County (8% and 5% higher, respectively). However, looking just at the "senior citizen" age cohort (i.e. 65 and Over), the Town of Sparta only has slightly higher proportion, as compared to the County and State.

POPULATION TRENDS & PROJECTIONS

Source: 2010 Census, Wisconsin Department of Administration

	Town of Sparta	City of Sparta	Monroe County	Wisconsin
1980	2,317	6,934	35,074	4,705,642
1990	2,385	7,788	36,633	4,891,769
2000	2,750	8,648	40,899	5,363,675
2010	3,128	9,522	44,673	5,686,986
2015	3,245	9,870	46,110	5,783,015
2020	3,455	10,430	48,600	6,005,080
2025	3,650	10,970	50,975	6,203,850
2030	3,825	11,420	52,950	6,375,910
2035	3,930	11,670	53,970	6,476,270

Source: 2010 Census; Wisconsin Dept. of Administration

From 2000-2010, the Town of Sparta experienced a 22% increase in the number of households. This significantly surpassed the increases in the City of Sparta (11%) and Monroe County (13%) during the same period.

The Town's "persons per household" dropped from 2.94 in 1990 to 2.77 in 2010, which is a reduction of 5.7%. During this same period, the City of Sparta's "persons per household" declined by 2.1% to 2.39 and Monroe County declined by 7.8% to 2.57. This trend is consistent with national trends over the past several decades and can be attributed to smaller family sizes, increases in life expectancy, and increases in single parent households.

HOUSING UNITS TRENDS & PROJECTIONS

Source: U.S. Census Bureau & MSA projections

	Town Of Sparta	City Of Sparta	Monroe County
1980	n/a	n/a	12,741
1990	n/a	3,266	14,135
2000	967	3,733	16,672
2010	1,178	4,192	19,204
2015	1,228	4,367	19,921
2020	1,314	4,638	21,103
2025	1,395	4,903	22,245
2030	1,470	5,129	23,223
2035	1,518	5,268	23,789

As shown, the Town of Sparta may see an increase of 279 households between 2010 to 2030. This equates to an addition of 292 housing units, using 2010 average vacancy rates, an increase of 24.8%.

The Town of Sparta includes approximately 30,276 acres, 47.3 square miles. The majority of Town is currently comprised either as agriculture/open space (49% of the Town) or woodlands (40%). Developed lands (i.e. commercial, industrial and residential) only makes up 7% of the Town. There are many portions of the Town with limitations to building development (i.e. steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplain). In total there is approximately 13,685 acres of land with some type of development limitation, which accounts for 45% of the Town.

Refer to Appendix B for additional information.

EXISTING LAND USES, 2013

Source: MSA Mapping

	Acres	%
Agriculture/Open Space	14,562.1	48.1%
Wooded/Forested	12,030.1	39.7%
Commercial	75.3	0.2%
Industrial/Manufacturing	40.0	0.1%
Residential	1,924.5	6.4%
Vacant Platted	228.7	0.8%
Wetlands/Open Water	525.5	1.7%
County	353.9	1.2%
State	535.6	1.8%
TOTAL	30,275.7	100.0%