

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Background

This chapter is based on the statutory requirement for a “compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions, including school districts and adjacent communities, for siting and building public facilities and sharing public services.” The chapter also examines the relationship of the County with area school districts and adjacent local units of government, the state and other governmental agencies. In addition, this element shall identify existing or potential conflicts between the County and other governmental units that are specified in this paragraph and describe processes to resolve such conflicts.

This Comprehensive Plan provides overall recommendations for relationships with adjacent, local, and overlapping jurisdictions to achieve visions for future growth, avoid inefficient or conflicting development patterns, and promote intergovernmental agreements.

Previous Plans and Studies

Oneida County Comprehensive Plan, 2013

The County’s former Comprehensive Plan contained an exhaustive list of existing and potential intergovernmental efforts. Many of them have been brought forward into this Chapter, reviewed, and updated.

Regional Livability Plan, 2015

This plan was prepared by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission as the regional comprehensive plan. The Regional Livability Plan (RLP) is only advisory and briefly describes intergovernmental cooperation, cooperative agreements, and other methods that local governments can use to address common issues. Not all conflicts between local governments can be settled using these methods, but by looking at problems that transcend local boundaries in a regional context, solutions are more likely to be discovered.

Intergovernmental Issues

Consistency of Plans

Since 2010, state law requires zoning actions be consistent with an adopted plan. Policies between adjoining jurisdictions should be consistent with one another as much as possible, especially between Town and County plans. If the Town and the County plans have conflicting future land use maps, it will be hard for decision makers to be consistent with each other. Therefore, the City, Towns, and County should review and update their Comprehensive Plans at a minimum of ten years to ensure these maps remain consistent with each other.

Shared Services

Examples of shared services include one town contracting with another for fire or Emergency Medical Services (EMS), or the County agreeing to work with an adjacent county to solve a common problem. In both examples, the goal is to reduce costs and improve the quality of services received. Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities describes existing shared services in detail.

Overlapping Jurisdiction

Corporate boundaries of towns and counties often do not coincide with the boundaries of other functional service providing agencies, especially school districts. None of the school districts that operate in Oneida County are entirely within the County, and they cross into neighboring Counties. School district boundaries are set based on the location of school buildings, where the students live, and the efficiency of transporting children to a given school. While there are no known issues at this time, these overlapping jurisdictions must be taken into consideration when considering how best to execute intergovernmental agreements and how best to deliver services to citizens.

Overview of Efforts

This portion of the chapter examines the various existing governmental cooperation agreements, identifies some potential efforts, and provides a summary of the surrounding county planning efforts.

Existing Efforts

Local Efforts

The following departments and agencies work across municipal boundaries countywide:

- The Planning and Zoning department assists municipalities with zoning, planning, land division, and code administration. These tools are described in Chapter 7: Land Use.
- The Land & Water Conservation Department conserves local land and water resources.
- The Highway Department maintains and plows State and County roads in Towns, contracts with Towns to provide plowing and maintenance on Town roads and disperses state funding for local road projects.
- The Sheriff's Department provides protective services to all municipalities in the County, except the City of Rhinelander, which has its own police department. All law enforcement agencies in the County have a mutual aid agreement that allows them to assist each other. Oneida County's Animal Control Ordinance delegates animal complaints and investigations to the Oneida County Humane Society.
- The Clerk's Office manages the County's website, dog licensing, resolution and ordinance adoption, property tax information, DNR licensing, and more. This office also works with the State Elections Board to manage elections.
- The Oneida County Sanitary Landfill is owned by Oneida County and managed by the Oneida County Public Works Committee. The Committee approves contracts for Towns to collect waste using private haulers.
- The Oneida County Housing Authority in Woodruff administers rental subsidies for low-income households in both authority-owned and participating privately-owned housing units.
- The Oneida County Economic Development Corporation (OCEDC) was founded in 1989 as a partnership between business and industry. OCEDC is the countywide coordinator for economic development.
- The Human Service Center based in Rhinelander provides alcohol and drug abuse counseling, outpatient mental health services, programs for those with developmental disabilities, and other community support programs.

Additional services include fire, ambulance, and EMS services, which are also provided countywide, crossing municipal boundaries as described in Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities.

Regional Efforts

Grow North Regional Economic Development Corporation was created in 2004 to foster cooperation among economic development partners and foster economic growth efforts in

Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, and Vilas counties recognizing the value of collaborative efforts to grow and diversify the Northwoods economy.

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), who assisted in the creation of this Plan, provides planning and economic development assistance to 10 counties in Central Wisconsin (Adams, Forest, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, and Wood). As a member of this organization, Oneida County is eligible for Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding (see Chapter 6: Economic Development) as well as cost-effective planning projects led by NCWRPC staff.

State Efforts

The County primarily will coordinate with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Department of Transportation (WisDOT), and Department of Administration (DOA) to implement goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan. The level of involvement of these agencies is described in detail through the various chapters of this Plan, especially Chapter 2 (WDNR) and Chapter 5 (WisDOT). Additionally, DOA provides demographic data to the County each year and is the agency responsible for monitoring Comprehensive Plans among all of Wisconsin's Cities, Counties, Towns, and Villages.

Existing Intergovernmental Agreements

Existing intergovernmental agreements meet the County's needs as well as the needs of its municipalities at this time. These agreements are periodically reviewed and updated as conditions change. There is potential for exploring agreements as conflicts arise.

Potential Areas of Cooperation

The 2013 Oneida County Comprehensive Plan noted that opportunities existed for road maintenance and snowplowing to reduce costs and increase efficiency. It specifically mentioned agreements for shared equipment or contracts to outsource the work. Additionally, the 2013 Plan noted that several Towns in the County adopted Coordination Plans and described their intent.

Planning Efforts in Surrounding Counties

Forest (2023), Langlade (2019), Lincoln (2022), and Vilas (2023) Counties all have adopted County Comprehensive Plans while Price County has not created or adopted one. These plans were reviewed, including their future land use plans, and no conflicts with Oneida County were identified.

Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1: Encourage coordination and cooperation among all units of government.

Objectives:

- Promote communication with other units of government, including adjoining towns, the County, the region, the State, and federal government.
- Identify alternative solutions to existing or potential land use, administration or policy conflicts that may hinder inter-governmental cooperation.
- Encourage regularly scheduled meetings and on-going communications between County departments, local governments, State agencies, and surrounding governments.
- Encourage the sharing of information between departments, local governments, and citizens.

Policy:

- Pursue dialogue with and between the Towns and City in the county to seek areas of coordination, cooperation, and collaboration.

Goal 2: Coordinate activities across jurisdictional boundaries to improve the quality and efficiency of services.

Objective:

- Work together with other units of government, and others, to provide services in a more cost-effective manner.

Policies:

- Periodically review existing shared service agreements and explore additional agreements.
- Encourage cooperative agreements regarding annexation, expansion of public sewer and water services, growth management and boundary agreements between the Towns and the City.
- Encourage Towns to explore joint service agreements with neighboring Towns and the City where consolidating and coordinating services will result in better services and/or cost savings.

Goal 3: Encourage countywide and regional planning efforts to address issues that will affect the future of Oneida County.

Objectives:

- Coordinate the planning effort between the City of Rhinelander and its surrounding towns, as well as possible discussions with WI-DOA, DOT, and DNR, and any other governmental unit that can influence the planning process.
- Engage in and support processes to resolve conflicts between the plans of governments with overlapping jurisdictions.

Policies:

- At least annually, meet with adjoining units of government to discuss issues of mutual concern.
- Involve all school districts that serve the county in the planning process, to assist them with facility planning and site selection.
- Encourage coordination with surrounding counties and the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission or other resources to address issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries or involve the larger region.