

Oneida County Comprehensive Plan

DRAFT Summary of Changes **updated November 11, 2024**

In 2013, the Oneida County Board adopted its first Comprehensive Plan. In 2023-2024, the Planning and Development Committee is in the process of updating the plan with the assistance of North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) to meet state statute's requirement for a full update every ten years. Staff drafted the updated plan based on the goals, objectives, and policies (GOPs) in the original plan. Background, inventory, text, and charts that describe the data and trends that inform those GOPs has also been updated and condensed to reduce the plan's length. Below is a summary of changes for each chapter's goals, objectives, and policies from the 2013 plan, with 2024 proposed additions in **green** and deletions in **red**. Numbering is omitted in this document as the numbers have changed between the 2013 plan and the 2024 draft.

Chapter 1: Issues and Opportunities (Demographics)

No goals, objectives, or policies in 2013 or 2024.

Chapter 2: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources

Goal 1:

~~Look for opportunities to improve (incremental improvement) as science and technology develops to conserve and enhance the County's natural features, including lakes, rivers and streams, open space, wetlands, wildlife habitat, woodlands, and unique physical areas. This must be done in an approach that balances economic and environmental concerns between the natural and human environments.~~

The management of natural, agricultural, and cultural resources shall be accomplished in a way that both guarantees multiple uses of the county's most important natural resources—sensitive lakes, rivers, and streams; as well as stewardship of critical wetlands, open space, wildlife habitat, woodlands, and unique physical areas—and equally protects private property rights and ensures requisite space for economic development.

The long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources must be considered in any land-use plan. To achieve this goal, the county shall pursue and guarantee appropriate multiple uses of land, including but not limited to recreation, timber harvesting and forest management, metallic and nonmetallic mining, fish and wildlife activities, and agricultural production, as well as conservation. Multiple uses of land must be employed in a way that equally satisfies the economic and stewardship needs of the people of Oneida County, while preserving flexibility for future adjustments to account for changing conditions and encourage state and federal governments to do the same.

Oneida County recognizes that the county's forests are one of the county's most important natural resources and must be managed for the benefit of county residents and taxpayers. The county shall maintain control, management, and ownership of county forestlands above any entity, government or otherwise, that would endanger local control or state sovereignty in the pursuit of state or international agendas.

Objectives:

- ~~• Promote development that considers and takes reasonable economic measures to reduce the impact of natural resources balancing the human and natural environment.~~ Promote development consistent with a primary goal of local control and maintaining and assuring future economic viability, guided by the principles of multiple use and preservation of private property rights, while minimizing impacts on natural, agricultural and cultural resources.
- ~~• Promote opportunities that consider both natural resource protection and economic development allowing for economic decisions in which the risk to the environment is calculated, minimized, and controlled to benefit the economic decision.~~
- The county shall identify and balance those industrial, agricultural/forestry, and tourism opportunities that can best maximize economic benefits and assure wise stewardship of the environment.
- Balance resource protection efforts, with the requirements of human life and economics and identify and enhance the resources to provide economic returns to the County.

Policies:

- Require cost benefit analysis for all major conservation projects on public/easement lands, including for forest management plans. Oneida County will evaluate and determine the cost benefit analysis of any and all guidance, executive action, or mandated action offered by any agency, state and federal, governor or president, before initiating any action pursuant to the action requested, to be approved by the county and paid for by the requesting party.
- Slow the spread of invasive species.
- Examine the impacts of metallic mining on the County's natural resources.
- Conserve and enhance shoreland areas by minimizing impacts from land disturbing activities.

Goal 2:

Conserve and enhance ~~large tract woodlands and County Forests~~ Managed Forest Law (MFL) Lands and encourage the state of Wisconsin to review the state Managed Forest Law (MFL) program.

Objective:

- Minimize the conversion of woodlands into other uses and prioritize forest management and timber production on all such public lands.

Policy:

- ~~Improve forestry management to promote productivity of forest products, protect wildlife habitat, water quality, and provide recreational opportunities.~~
- Discourage the conversion of existing privately owned lands to public lands using federal, state, and local tax dollars to purchase existing MFL lands or purchase easements over them. The MFL program contracts are 25 or 50 years, whereas conservation easements are established into perpetuity. The MFL program provides a mechanism for leaving the program. Reducing the tax base in perpetuity is antithetical to the interests of county residents and gives up local control.
- Require the management for multiple uses of woodlands and forestlands on public land to emphasize timber production and forest management as the top priority—producing products and services from working forests, including timber and other forest commodities—with secondary priorities including aesthetics, cultural, recreational, and other ecological values.
- Forest management practices should use multiple-use forest principles. In crafting land use plans for wildlife habitats, include specific goals for balance between game versus non-game species.

Goal 3:

Reduce contamination of surface and groundwater resources in the County.

Objectives:

- Promote development that minimizes surface and groundwater impacts from on-site septic systems and other sources.
- Conserve and enhance surface water, groundwater, and shoreline **buffer zone** quality.

Policies:

- Promote groundwater protection efforts to maintain and lower nitrate, pesticide, and volatile organic compound pollution.
- Identify and assess the current drainage system in the County.
- Support dam/drainage way repair and removal where appropriate to minimize flooding in the County.
- Address erosion through sound erosion control methods and mechanisms.
- Promote prevention of PFAS in groundwater including efforts to facilitate remediation of both water and soil.

Goal 4:

Encourage and support the conservation of natural areas that minimize flooding, such as grasslands, wetlands, and woodlands.

Objective

- Increase and improve wildlife habitat.

Policy

- ~~Encourage the development of a natural area network connecting open areas, wetlands, and woodlands.~~
- Increase awareness of corridors and landscape connectivity and encourage retention of a natural area network connecting open areas, wetlands, and woodlands.
- Work with FEMA to update floodplain maps with new technology.

Goal 5:

Allow for needed non-metallic mining while balancing the interests of adjacent landowners and the County.

Objective

- Minimize and consider impacts to the County's natural resources from non-metallic mining.

Policy

- Promote proper reclamation techniques in the County.

Goal 6:

Allow metallic mining through the County's metallic mining exploration, bulk sampling, and mining ordinance while balancing natural resources, and the interest and safety of County residents and landowners to comply with state laws.

Objective: Minimize impacts to the County's natural resources from metallic mining.

Policy: Promote proper reclamation techniques in the County

Goal:

~~Encourage the USDA Forest Service to obtain their Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ).~~

~~No objectives or policies.~~

Goal 7:

Coordinate all state and federal agencies with a presence in Oneida County regarding all state and federally owned land planning activities.

Objective:

- All state and federal agencies and lands utilizing federal money shall coordinate with Oneida County's comprehensive plan for all land planning and management activities on state and federal lands within the jurisdiction of the county, to ensure consistent and harmonized policies across the three levels of government.
- Notification, consultation, and coordination with the county is required at the earliest time possible for any land planning and/or proposed action by state and/or federal agencies, or nonprofit organizations, or for any change in existing activities, newly permitted activities, or changes in regulations that may affect the economic basis of the county. Consultation and coordination with the county is necessary to determine the full scope of potential social and economic effects of proposed activities. The county considers that consultation and coordination must include all impacted towns on all forest management issues.

Policy:

- Oneida County requires that all federal and state agencies and lands utilizing federal, or state funding coordinate any land use activities with the county and impacted towns, in

compliance with applicable federal and state laws and purposes of those laws with the County.

Goal 8:

Conserve and enhance economically productive farmlands.

Objectives:

- Work to preserve farming as a viable occupation within the County.
- ~~Limit the number of non-farm uses in agricultural areas~~

Policy:

- Maintain an updated Farmland Preservation Plan
- ~~Existing agricultural uses and buildings should be taken into consideration when locating new development to avoid conflict.~~
- ~~Update the Farmland Preservation Plan, under the new Working Lands Initiative, and other related ordinances.~~

Goal 9:

Preserve and enhance cultural, historic, and archeological resources.

Objectives:

- Continue identification and protection of key cultural, historic, and archeological sites.
- Encourage nomination of sites to the State Historical Society.

Policy:

- Development proposals should be reviewed relative to the potential impacts to the cultural resources of the county.

Chapter 3: Housing

Goal 1:

Encourage adequate supply of affordable housing for all individuals of all income levels consistent with the County's rural character. ~~rural character of the county.~~

Objectives:

- Encourage local land use controls and permitting procedures that allow affordable housing opportunities.
- ~~Encourage appropriate public & private sector development of senior and special needs housing within the County:~~
- Encourage appropriate public and private sector development of housing within the county.

Policies:

- Consider use of manufactured housing as an affordable, well-regulated source of housing.
- Encourage that adequate opportunities for multi-family housing that can meet the needs of moderate-income families are available, especially in areas where service jobs are prevalent.
- ~~Examine creation and county support of a county-wide housing authority:~~
- Continue County support of a County-wide housing authority.
- Make changes to zoning ordinances that reduce the cost of housing.

Goal 2:

Encourage residential development in suitable areas.

Objectives:

- Encourage residential development in areas that avoid conflict ~~away from existing forestry and agricultural uses to avoid conflicts:~~
- Encourage multi-family dwellings and subdivision facilities. ~~to be located to coincide with major thoroughway and other public facilities:~~

Policies:

- Discourage the location of new development in areas that are shown to be unsuitable for specific uses due to flood hazard, groundwater pollution, highway access problems, etc.
- ~~Encourage more intensive residential development to areas served by the Lakeland, Lake Tomahawk, or Three Lakes Sanitary Districts, or the City of Rhinelander where the utilities and services exist to accommodate the development.~~

Goal:

- ~~Encourage the use, maintenance and renovation of existing housing as a source of affordable housing:~~

Objectives:

- Prepare for the transition of many seasonal to year-round residences by fostering the level of service required by full-time residents.
- Maintain enforcement of existing building codes and examine offering financial incentives to property owners to maintain their property.

Policies:

- Encourage the development of a revolving loan program to help homeowners and rental property owners improve their properties.
- Examine services that will help elderly residents remain in their homes, to the extent possible.

Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities

Goal 1:

- Strive to provide the best quality public services to all the citizens of the County, including water related facilities, solid waste and recycling facilities, public works, public safety, health care, education, recreation, culture, energy, and telecommunication.

Objectives:

- Direct more intensive development to areas where a full array of utilities, community facilities and public services are available.
- Monitor ~~and control~~ the effects of Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS) by inspecting them every three years (five years for housing with seasonal occupancy). ~~high-volume wells, private onsite waste disposal systems, and solid waste disposal on the County's quality and quantity of groundwater.~~
- Provide law enforcement, ambulance, volunteer fire, and first responder services to residents, whether by the County or by local units of government.
- Support high-quality educational opportunities for all residents.
- Monitor and respond to PFAS as issues, information, and programs continue to emerge.

Policies:

- Ensure that schools, public safety, health care, and other community facilities are of the highest quality without placing undue financial burden on County taxpayers.
- Make more extensive use of the Wisconsin Fund to upgrade failing onsite disposal systems on qualifying properties.
- Assure public health and groundwater quality when permitting and monitoring private onsite wastewater and wells.
- Encourage the development of a comprehensive County-wide trail plan that includes facilities for hikers, bikers, ATVs, and disabled and elderly individuals and a system that ties together attractions and natural and cultural resources throughout the County.
- Encourage land acquisition and development strategies for parks, as outlined in the County Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- Promote improved broadband internet service throughout the County.

Chapter 5: Transportation

Goal 1: To provide an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transitdependent and disabled citizens, while maintaining the rural character of the County. Investigate implementation of policies which can help enhance, encourage, and maintain the viability of the airport for passenger, freight, and private use.

Objectives:

- Maintain the efficiency, safety, and functionality of the County's existing transportation system, which links the urban center with outlying towns, adjacent communities and the region.
- Encourage a balanced transportation network that provides a choice in the type of mode (i.e., car, bus, bike, walking, etc.) easy transfer between modes and transportation opportunities for those without use of an automobile.
- Achieve close coordination between development of transportation facilities and land use planning, land development and rural character preservation.
- Preserve the scenic value along select roadways to enhance and protect the County's rural character.
- Minimize the negative impacts of proposed transportation facility expansions.

Policies:

- ~~Work~~ Coordination must occur with the Department of Transportation (WisDOT), the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRCP) or private Engineering Firms to ensure that the County's transportation system is coordinated with surrounding regional systems and that the County's interests are well served when major transportation facilities or programs are proposed.
- Work with WisDOT on corridor preservation for all federal and state highways.
- Plan for extension of County highways and other major arterials as necessary to complete connections, provide for appropriate routes for trucks and emergency vehicles and serve planned development areas.
- Preserve scenic views by limiting off-premise advertising along selected highways.
- Consider future road locations, extensions, or connections when reviewing development plans and proposals.
- Work with local governmental units to plan for a network of interconnected roads in planned development areas to control highway access, preserve rural character, and improve access to these areas.
- ~~Space roadway access according to minimum standards to increase safety and preserve capacity.~~
- Consider upgrading where land uses generate heavy traffic on roads that have not been constructed or upgraded for such use, including seasonal uses.

- ~~Because commercial and residential development increases traffic on roads, the county should consider assisting towns with implementing road impact fees for new development projects that place a burden on or require upgrading of town roads.~~
- ~~Work with towns to update and implement Town Roadway Management Plans to provide for the appropriate maintenance of town roads.~~
- ~~Encourage traditional neighborhood designs (TND) to support a range of transportation choices.~~
 - Support coordination and consolidation of specialized transit by a variety of agencies that serve the County's elderly and handicapped residents.
 - Support the Northwoods Transit Commission which serves Oneida and Vilas Counties. ~~the development of a tri-county transit system with Forest and Vilas counties.~~
- ~~Support implementation of a County park-and-ride plan and establishment of park-and-ride lots.~~
 - Continue support of the Rhinelander / Oneida County Airport.
 - Support the Oneida County Biking and Walking Trails Council bike route and trail plan and subsequent updates that use grant funding.
 - Support expanded bike accommodations on County Highways with resurfacing/reconstruction projects and additional off-road bike trails that use grant funding.
 - Continue to encourage Canadian National (CN) Railroad to maintain quality rail service to Oneida County and the City of Rhinelander.

Chapter 6: Economic Development

Goal 1:

Maintain, diversify, and expand the economy, while maintaining the rural character and environmental integrity of the County.

Objectives

- Promote the retention and expansion of the current economic base.
- ~~Encourage the creation of new businesses.~~
- Promote the relocation of compatible businesses to the County.
- Pursue increased funding from both public and private sources.
- Encourage infill development throughout the county, where existing facilities exist.
- Encourage sustainable yield forestry by promoting the harvesting of wood products as raw materials for the energy industry.
- Encourage development of high-speed Internet infrastructure capabilities to meet the growing needs and challenges of an information-based economy.

Policies

- Working with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation conduct a business retention survey from time to time to understand the needs of area businesses.
- Working with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation and U.W. Extension continue to support and expand the Inventors & Entrepreneurs Club to assist local inventors to create new firms, work with area entrepreneur networks.
- Pursue U.S. Economic Development Administration, USDA – Rural Development, and Wisconsin Department of Commerce funds, among other sources for projects.
- Research private community and national foundations as a source of project funding.
- Examine the economic impacts of metallic mining on groundwater, health, and quality of life in the county by employing commonly accepted business practices of due diligence, cost benefit analysis and risk assessment.
- Encourage “best management practices” for the development of county and private commercial forestland that both benefit the economy of the county and maintain its rural character.
- Encourage the location of communication towers in areas that provide the widest coverage throughout the county while minimizing the impact on the landscape and wildlife migration patterns.

Goal 2:

Conserve and enhance the quality of life in the county by promoting the infrastructure and human resources that will foster economic development compatible with Oneida County’s rural Northwoods character.

Objectives

- Maintain and enhance public facilities and services.

- Work with area schools and the technical college to develop and maintain a well-educated and trained workforce.

Policies

- Continue to support the Rhinelander/Oneida County Airport as an economic development asset.
- Continue to support an active rail system as an economic development and tourism asset.
- Plan for an adequate supply of land for commercial and industrial needs.
- Evaluate, maintain, and enhance infrastructure as necessary to facilitate economic growth, such as an industrial park.
- Promote telecommunications infrastructure, especially broadband Internet, and other technology related to development and expansion.
- Encourage industrial development to areas with the infrastructure and services to support the development.
- Encourage educational institutions to develop training programs needed by the area's businesses to meet identified needs.
- Support and work with local school officials on expanding the school to work program.
- Working with Workforce Development, determine current employment characteristics and identify existing and future employment needs.

Goal 3:

Encourage the coordination of economic development efforts with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, City and Towns, Chambers of Commerce, as well as other local and regional organizations.

Objectives

- Establish strong local and regional partners in the area of economic development.

Policies

- Incorporate the economic development strategies developed in the Town plans into the County plan.
- Continue and strengthen relations with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, local chambers, and other local organizations.
- Participate in regional economic development efforts with surrounding counties, Grow North, the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and other regional efforts

Chapter 7: Land Use

Goal 1:

Provide for a well-balanced mix of residential, business, industrial, recreational, forestry, and other uses to serve the future needs of Oneida County and to maintain the area as a desirable place to live and work.

Objectives

- Work with the Towns to guide the use, location, and density of development within both public and private lands consistent with the Oneida County Comprehensive Plan.
- Designate, maintain, and regulate an adequate quantity of suitable lands for future residential, commercial, forestry, industrial, recreational, and other uses in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and public input.
- Encourage the clustering of new business, residential, commercial, and industrial development into planned development areas to promote defined development districts, conserve resources, and maintain the character of the area.
- Encourage early identification of potential negative impacts from development proposals and promote strategies to minimize those impacts on neighbors, the community, and the natural resources.

Policies

- Consider the use, location, and density of development and how it affects the natural resources, community character, anticipated growth, and need for utilities and services.
- Development should be discouraged in environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands and flood plains.
- Guide the location, mix, and quality of private development to meet both private and public land use demands.
- ~~Update land use regulations to better guide and manage the location, mix, quality, and impacts of development in the county.~~
- Land uses should be planned and approved for development in an orderly manner and avoid land use conflicts.
- Encourage infill development and redevelopment throughout the county, especially where facilities and services are available, such as Brownfields.

Goal 2:

Provide adequate infrastructure & public services, and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future demand for residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses.

Objective

Encourage new areas of growth within or near existing areas of development where adequate public facilities and services exist or are planned for expansion and where there is adjacent existing compatible development.

Policies

- ~~Assure~~ Consider that the pace of development does not exceed the capacity of utilities, roads, and community facilities and services.
- ~~Discourage sprawling, low-density development where there is no existing infrastructure and service capacity.~~
- New development should be responsible for paying for the cost of any new infrastructure costs required for that development.
- All locally adopted plans should strive to be complimentary with and seek to minimize conflicts with other levels of government and implementation tools.
- Work with Towns to develop and update individual comprehensive or coordination plans and create or modify implementation tools to reflect the future needs of their communities

Goal 3:

Maintain and update the County Comprehensive Plan.

Objectives

- All comprehensive plans should strive to maximize public input in their planning efforts.
- Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.
- Promote flexibility in the plan.
- Establish on-going communication with each Town.

Policies

- Work cooperatively with the Towns to ~~promote coordinated~~ coordinate land use and ~~a~~ compatible development patterns that respect private property rights.
- Establish a policy on the relationship between the county and town plans as it relates to plan implementation.
- Establish a policy to ensure Towns are providing all plan amendments and updates to the county for incorporation into the County Comprehensive Plan.
- The County will maintain the County Comprehensive Plan, which will serve as a guide for future land use and zoning decisions.
- New development and redevelopment will be permitted based on consideration of this Plan.

Chapter 8: Intergovernmental Cooperation

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 Rhineland 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.

Chapter 9: Implementation

No goals, objectives, or policies in 2013 or 2024