

8 LAND USE

The Land Use Element was prepared pursuant to Section 66.1001 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Section 66.1001 requires this element to include a compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development of public and private property. Further, the element shall contain a listing of the amount, type, intensity and net density of existing uses of land in the local governmental unit. 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 also contain projections, based on background information, for 20 years, including five-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 will be provided in the future and the general location of future land uses by net density or other classifications.

As in other elements, the information contained in this chapter is the background information for the City. The required goals, objectives, and policies are contained in the Plan report document.

8.1 EXISTING LAND USE

This section outlines the existing land uses in the City of Onalaska. The data in this analysis will help create a detailed land use plan for the City.

The City of Onalaska experienced a moderate population growth rate of approximately 30 percent over the last decade. This growth is expected to continue, and the City will likely expand its boundaries to the east and to the north to accommodate the growth, since the City is constrained by Lake Onalaska and the City of La Crosse to the west and south.

Residential

The dominant land use in the City is residential, which comprises 1,160 acres, or about 27 percent, of Onalaska's total land area. Residential development in the City consists mainly of single-family residential units. Most of the single-family development exists in the coulees and in the northern part of the City, west of USH 53. Single-family and multi-family exists throughout the central portion of the City, west of USH 53 and north of Interstate-90. Pockets of

single-family and multi-family also exist along the STH 16 corridor. Most of the residential density in the City ranges between one unit per five acres and five units per one acre.

Commercial

Commercial areas currently include land and buildings zoned for commercial activities, including retail uses, services and offices. Commercial uses exist mainly in the downtown area, along Main Street and along the I-90 and STH 16 corridors. Most of the new commercial development is located at the STH 16 and I-90 interchange, which is in a Tax Incremental Financing District that was retired in 2003. New commercial development also exists along USH 53, STH 35, CTH OS and Sand Lake Road. Commercial development in the City comprises 939 acres, or about 16 percent of the land.

Industrial

Industrial areas include land zoned for warehousing, distribution, storage, manufacturing and processing. The majority of industrial development is either located in the Onalaska Industrial Park located east of Tenth Avenue and north of Redwood Street or along the railroad in the southwest area of the City. There are 46 acres of the City devoted to manufacturing, just 0.8 percent of the total area of the City.

Public and Semi-Public Land Uses

Public and semi-public land uses in the City includes land devoted to schools, parks and other governmental uses such as public administration buildings and institutional or fraternal uses, such as churches, cemeteries and service organizations. Included in this category are 998 acres, or about 16 percent of the land in Onalaska.

Street Right-of-Way

Street right-of-way includes all land occupied by public street rights-of-way, including those streets that are platted, but not yet constructed. When all right-of-way, including federal, state, county and local, are calculated, they account for 829 acres, or approximately 13 percent of the City's area.

Agricultural Land and Woodlands

Agricultural land and woodlands include land zoned for agricultural or other open space purposes. Agricultural land comprised 545 acres of land in Onalaska in 2000, or about nine percent of the City.

Table 8.1: Existing Land Use, 1999

| Land Use | Acres | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Residential | 1,610 | 27.0% |
| Commercial | 939 | 16.0% |
| Manufacturing | 46 | 0.8% |
| Agriculture | 545 | 9.0% |
| Swamp and Waste | 338 | 6.0% |
| Forest | 346 | 6.0% |
| Other | 8 | 0.1% |
| Private Forests Enrolled in Government Program | 0 | 0.0% |
| Federal Lands | 22 | 0.4% |
| State Lands | 20 | 0.3% |
| County Lands | 162 | 3.0% |
| City Parks | 174 | 3.0% |
| Other Public and Semi Public Use | 620 | 10.0% |
| Open Water | 335 | 6.0% |
| Federal Right of Way | 256 | 4.0% |
| State Right of Way | 235 | 4.0% |
| County Right of Way | 50 | 0.8% |
| Local Right of Way | 288 | 5.0% |
| Total Land Use Inventory | 5,994 | --- |

Source: La Crosse County Development Plan 2020, 2000

8.1.1 Net Residential Density

According to the 2000 Census, the net residential density in the City is 667.4 dwelling units per square mile and the population density is 131.6 persons per square mile. This data is depicted in table 8.2. Residential density in Onalaska is regulated by the City's Zoning Ordinance. The zoning ordinance has five (5) residential zoning districts: R-1, R-1-60, R-2-3, R-4 and R-MH.

District R-1 is a single-family residential district that allows single-family dwellings, community living arrangements and family day care homes; District R-1-60 is a single-family residential district, which does not allow any other use by right; District R-2-3 is a single-family and duplex residential district that allows single-family dwellings, duplexes, community living arrangements and family day care homes; District R-4 is a multi-family residential district that allows single family dwellings, duplexes, multi-family dwellings, community living arrangements and family day care; and District R-MH is a mobile home district that must be developed in accordance with Article L in Chapter 1 of the City's zoning code. Minimum lot sizes, building area, setbacks and conditional uses vary by district.

Table 8.2 City of Onalaska Residential Density, 2000

| | Population | Housing Units | Area in Square Miles | | | Density (Units per Sq. Mi) | |
|-------------|------------|---------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|----------------------------|---------------|
| | | | Total | Water Area | Land Area | Population | Housing Units |
| C. Onalaska | 14,839 | 6,070 | 9.68 | 0.58 | 9.09 | 1,631.6 | 667.4 |
| V. Holmen | 6,200 | 2,377 | 3.19 | 0.00 | 3.19 | 1,944.9 | 745.7 |
| T. Onalaska | 5,210 | 1,834 | 44.90 | 7.90 | 37.00 | 140.8 | 49.6 |

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

8.1.2 Non-Residential Intensity

The City of Onalaska Zoning Ordinance regulates the intensity of nonresidential development in the community.

Business Districts

Onalaska has three (3) business zoning districts, B-1 Neighborhood Business District, B-2 Community Business District and B-3 Integrated Business District. There is also one TC Transitional Commercial/Business District.

Maximum building height in the B-1 and B-2 districts is 45 feet, and a minimum 10 foot rear yard is required. Maximum building height in the B-3 district is 45 feet, a minimum 10 foot yard is required, the lot frontage must be a minimum of 200 feet and lot area must be a minimum of two (2) acres. The TC district restricts building height to 30 feet, and has standards for front, rear and side yards. The building is not allowed to occupy more than 25 percent of the lot and strict aesthetic standards are required.

Manufacturing Districts

The zoning ordinance also includes three (3) manufacturing districts, M-1 Light Industrial District, M-2 Industrial District and M-3 Heavy Industrial District.

The M-1 district has a maximum building height of 100 feet. Yards must be a minimum of 10 feet for street and rear sides, and six (6) for side yards, if required. Lot frontage is required to be a minimum of 100. The M-2 district restricts building height to 100 feet. Street and rear yards must be a minimum of ten (10) feet and side yards, if required, must be six (6) feet. Additionally, when M-2 districts border another property with a different zoning classification, a 10 foot setback is required on the M-2 property. The M-3 district also has a maximum building height of 100, with minimum 10 foot street and side yards and minimum 30 foot rear yards. Lot frontage is a minimum of 100 feet and a setback of 10 feet is required if the M-3 district abuts another district.

Agricultural and Natural Resource Districts

The City has one agricultural district, A-1 Agricultural District. Farms in this district must have a minimum of 200 feet of frontage and a minimum area of 10 acres. Structures in this district are limited to 50 feet and yards must be a minimum of 50 feet on each side.

Onalaska also has a floodplain and shoreland-wetland district: F-1 General Floodplain District, F-2 Regional Floodfringe District, F-3 Regional Floodway District and F-4 Wetlands District. These districts limit development in wetland and floodplain areas and are described in the “Floodplain Zoning Code” and “Shoreland Wetland Zoning Code” of the City’s Code of Ordinances.

Park and Recreation Districts

The City has one (1) park district, the P-1 Public and Semi-public District. This district has no requirements for building, setback or yard restrictions.

8.2 LAND USE TRENDS

Onalaska is considered one of the most desirable communities within the greater La Crosse metropolitan area to live. Good schools, a sound existing housing stock, a wide range of shopping opportunities, good public facilities (particularly transportation), a low crime rate and a reputation as a family-oriented community are some of the factors that have contributed to Onalaska’s status as an attractive place to live and do business. Because of this, Onalaska has enjoyed steady growth over the past decade, which will likely continue. To meet the needs of existing and future Onalaska residents, it is important to analyze the supply, demand and price of land to plan accordingly for the future.

8.2.1 Land Demand

Based on the City’s historic population growth rate, a demand for residential and commercial land will likely continue. As geographical constraints in the City of La Crosse limit the amount of new development there, Onalaska may experience some spillover growth. However, the City of Onalaska is also geographically constrained by the bluffs and Lake Onalaska and therefore must proceed carefully when determining where future land uses will be located.

One way to determine land demand is to examine the housing growth on land adjacent to the City. Table 8.3 shows the growth in housing units in the Town of Medary and the Town of Onalaska, both of which border Onalaska. Between 1990 and 1997, over 25 percent of growth in new housing in towns throughout the county occurred Medary and Onalaska. Also, half of the

housing unit annexations from towns in the entire county occurred in the Town of Onalaska. This data shows a strong demand for residential land adjacent to the City.

Table 8.3 Housing Growth in La Crosse County Towns, 1990-1997

| | Number of Housing Units | | New units built (net) | Units annexed (in or out) | Total net change | % change | New housing units per square mile 1990-1997 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------|----------|---|
| | 1990 | 1997 | | | | | |
| T. Medary | 589 | 654 | 71 | -6 | 65 | 11.0% | 4.9 |
| T. Onalaska | 2,001 | 2,068 | 260 | -193 | 67 | 3.3% | 6.7 |
| All towns in La Crosse County | 9,903 | 10,782 | 1,267 | -388 | 879 | 8.9% | 3.0 |

Source: Wisconsin Town Land Use Data Project: Program on Agricultural Technology Studies, UW- Madison

8.2.2 Land Prices

One way of determining land prices for future growth in Onalaska is to examine the cost of farmland in the Town of Medary and the Town of Onalaska, which border the City. Table 8.4 shows average farmland sales for the Towns of Medary and Onalaska and the average of all towns in La Crosse County from 1990-1997. It is interesting to note that in the Town of Medary, an approximately equal amount of acres were converted out of agriculture than remained in agriculture. However, in the Town of Onalaska, more than twice as many acres of land remained in agriculture than were converted out of agriculture.

In the Town of Onalaska, and the county as a whole, land converted out of agriculture sold for a higher value than land that remained in agriculture. It is also important to note that only three (3) percent of land sold in all towns in the county were converted out of agriculture, whereas 5.8 percent and 6.8 percent of agricultural land sold in the Town of Medary and the Town of Onalaska respectively were converted out of agriculture.

Table 8.4 Average Farmland Sales, 1990-1997

| | Number of parcels sold | Total acres | Acres continuing in agriculture | Acres converted out of agriculture | \$/acre of land continuing in agriculture | \$/acre of land converted out of agriculture | 1990 acres of farmland | % sold and converted 1990-1997 |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| T. Medary | 8 | 410 | 213 | 197 | n/a | n/a | 3372 | 5.8% |
| T. Onalaska | 47 | 2,404 | 1,635 | 769 | \$1,082 | \$1,204 | 11,294 | 6.8% |
| All towns in La Crosse County | 404 | 21,421 | 17,508 | 3,913 | \$885 | \$1,609 | 128,529 | 3.0% |

Source: Wisconsin Town Land Use Data Project: Program on Agricultural Technology Studies, UW-Madison

8.2.3 Opportunities for Redevelopment

Redevelopment opportunities exist in several areas throughout the City. The most notable location is in the downtown area, where the City is currently working to acquire land along the waterfront for redevelopment. In addition to this redevelopment possibility, there is strong community support for increasing tourism and recreation related businesses in Onalaska, and the downtown could be the focal point of this economic development opportunity. Underutilized properties and/or blighted buildings could be redeveloped to promote a unique downtown environment that attracts residents and tourists.

The STH 35 corridor is another possible redevelopment site. This corridor is related to the redevelopment of the waterfront and the downtown area, and the three should be considered together during the redevelopment process. Because STH 35 is an entrance point to the City and because this route is traveled by many tourists as part of the Great River Road system, which is a National Scenic Byway, it is important that any redevelopment is aesthetically pleasing and makes a positive statement about Onalaska.

Another redevelopment opportunity may exist at the Coulee Golf Course, an 80-acre parcel of land that is currently in private ownership. The land is located in a prominent location at the junction of Main Street and Greens Coulee Road. This parcel is centrally located and could be an asset to the community as an open space or recreational resource.

Other redevelopment opportunities will exist along the STH 16 corridor, where older commercial businesses will eventually need to be revitalized or modified to incorporate more aesthetically pleasing building or site design characteristics. Redevelopment of this area should be done in accordance with the WIS 16 Transportation Study.

Finally, the commercial areas on the west side Sand Lake Road just north of Main Street will likely be redeveloped within the 20-year planning period.

This area is experiencing significant new development during the preparation of this Plan.

8.2.4 Existing/Potential Land Use Conflicts

Existing land use conflicts in Onalaska include boundary disputes with the City of La Crosse regarding land along the La Crosse River in the eastern portion of the City. Conflicts also may arise between the City and surrounding towns as annexations are proposed.

8.3 LAND USE PROJECTIONS

This element is expected to contain projections, based on background information, for 20 years, including five-year increments, of future residential, commercial and industrial land uses including the assumptions of net densities or other spatial assumptions upon which the projections are based.

Table 8.5 shows these land use projections, and also includes projections for City parks and local street right-of-way. The City will need about 2093 acres for new growth in these categories by the year 2025, if current development patterns continue. Most of this growth, approximately 53 percent, will be used for residential purposes.

Most new residential development will be in the coulee areas east of USH 53 and north of STH 16. These areas will consist of predominantly lower density single-family development. Opportunities exist in the central portion of the City for residential infill and redevelopment. Most multi-family and medium density housing will occur in the older sections of Onalaska between USH 53 and Lake Onalaska and the Black River, or north of I-90.

Most of the new commercial development in the City is anticipated in several main areas: at freeway interchange areas, along STH 16, near the Menard's site at CTH S and STH 53, and east and south of the La Crosse County Landfill.

The City would like to redevelop the Main Street and STH 35 area and is currently undergoing negotiations to purchase the land and properties in this area. Once these are acquired, the City will follow a public involvement process to determine what type of development is desired. The redevelopment will capitalize on its location along the Black River and Lake Onalaska.

A transitional commercial district was created to soften the impact of commercial development along Main Street and STH 35, which is occurring in areas that are predominantly residential.

Table 8.5 City of Onalaska Projected Acreage Needs

| | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 | Change 2000- 2025 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------------|
| Residential | 1610 | 1817 | 2024 | 2240 | 2456 | 2711 | 1101 |
| Commercial | 939 | 1054 | 1174 | 1299 | 1424 | 1572 | 633 |
| Industrial | 46 | 55 | 61 | 67 | 74 | 81 | 35 |
| City Parks | 174 | 200 | 223 | 246 | 270 | 298 | 124 |
| Local Right of Way | 288 | 327 | 364 | 403 | 442 | 488 | 200 |

Source: SAA, 2004

Table 8.5 is based on the following assumptions:

1. Growth is based on the Housing Projections-Scenario B in the Issues and Opportunities Element of this plan.
2. Existing acres (2000) are based on estimates of land use acres provided by the La Crosse County Development Plan 2020.