



Town Hall 10-20-09

Introduction

Location

The Town of Round Lake is located in the northwest part of the state in Sawyer County, Wisconsin. Much of the town's development is centered on the lakes and rivers. The Town of Round Lake is home to individuals who support local tourism, the recreation industry, its northwoods character and natural beauty. The town covers approximately 76,800 acres of land area of which about eighty percent is forest. The Town of Round Lake shares municipal borders with six towns, one county (**Map 1.1**-Governmental Jurisdictions) and has relations with a number of state, federal and regional agencies:

- Town of Chippewa (Ashland County)
- Town of Hayward
- Town of Hunter
- Town of Lenroot
- Town of Spider Lake
- Town of Winter
- Ashland County
- Sawyer County
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)
- Hayward School District
- Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indian
- Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR)
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)
- Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Land
- U.S. Forest Service (Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest)
- U. S. Department of Agriculture

History

The first white settlers (about 1784) to the area were French fur traders who wintered near Lac Courte Oreilles. At that time the Ottawa Indians (close relatives to the Ojibwas) inhabited the area. The major waterways of the Namekagon and Chippewa rivers allowed for easy travel around the entire region. Travelers down the Namekagon could reach the St. Croix and Mississippi rivers without portages. The Chippewa was used to go north to the Bad River and eventually to Lake Superior with a difficult portage at Glidden.

Fur trading was prominent in the area until 1839 when the first sawmill was constructed near Chippewa Falls. There were 50 logging camps in Sawyer County during the peak years of 1880-1890. The last log drive was made down the Chippewa River in 1917.

Sawyer County was created on March 9, 1853. Agriculture began twelve years later. Immigrants practiced slash-and-burn agriculture as they came to the area via railroads. By 1940 there were 1300 farms covering over 129,000 acres. In 2007 there were 231 farms in Sawyer County covering about 47,000 acres.

The first fishing resort was established on Spider Lake in 1892 and catered primarily to lumbermen. As railroad lines became more established and better roads were constructed, the tourist industry began. Fish and game quickly became economic factors as the tourist industry grew. Other forms of recreation such as hunting, skiing, boating and riding soon became popular. This increased opportunities for year-round residents to make a living.

Anticipated Trends Impacting the Town of Round Lake

- The average age of households will continue to increase, as seasonal homes become year-round residential structures.
- Year-round residents, seasonal residents and visitors will continue seek recreational resources found throughout the Town.
- Demand for rural housing will continue to increase, coupled with increased demand for larger parcels of land.
- Shoreland development will continue to be in demand, with second tier shoreland development growing, as lakes become more developed and priced out of reach to local residents.
- Demand for waterfront property will continue, with increased pressure to develop smaller lakes and riverfront property.
- Increased traffic will occur on the roadway system to accommodate more residents and visitors to the area.
- Land prices will continue to be strong, and may fluctuate from time to time, based on the local and nation economy.
- Water quality concerns will increase due to increased development.
- Fragmentation of the forest/woodland areas to accommodate residential development will continue.

Planning

In 1999, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted a new comprehensive planning law, set forth in Section 66.1001 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*. The new requirements, which are often referred to as the “Smart Growth” law, provide a new framework for the development, adoption, and implementation of comprehensive plans in Wisconsin. The intent of the comprehensive planning law is to require that comprehensive plans be completed and adopted by the governing bodies of counties, cities, villages, and towns prior to January 1, 2010. County and local governments will then make land-use decisions based on their comprehensive plan, e.g., adopting or enforcing zoning, subdivision control, or official mapping ordinances.

The first version of this comprehensive plan was the Town of Round Lake Land Use Plan in 2003. With a state grant and the assistance of the Northwest Resource Planning Commission, the Town of Round Lake Plan Commission began the development of a revised plan in May 2006. We sought input from the public through surveys (2001 and 2008), public informational meetings (2008 and 2009), and a public hearing (2009). The public input reinforced the values stated in the 2003 plan:

- Northwoods character
- Natural resources and wildlife habitat
- Farmland
- Forests
- Cultural heritage
- Clean Water
- Housing and employment opportunities

Purpose of Plan

The Town of Round Lake Comprehensive Plan is intended to assist local officials make future land use decisions regarding growth and management issues. The plan will also address short and long-term concerns regarding growth, development, and preservation of the community. The plan is organized into nine chapters or elements.

Nine Elements of the Comprehensive Plan

1. Issues and opportunities element
2. Land use element
3. Housing element
4. Transportation element
5. Utilities and community facilities element
6. Agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element
7. Economic development element
8. Intergovernmental cooperation element
9. Implementation element

Fourteen Comprehensive Planning Goals

The nine plan elements documented in this plan address the 14 planning goals set forth in Section 16.965(4) (b) of the *Wisconsin Statutes*.

1. Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures.
2. Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
3. Protection of natural areas; including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces, and groundwater resources.
4. Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.
5. Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state government, and utility costs.
6. Preservation of cultural, historic, and archeological sites.
7. Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
8. Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
9. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
10. Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
11. Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional, and local level.
12. Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
13. Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
14. Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependant and disabled citizens.

The Comprehensive Plan

The plan is an expression of the town's wishes and desires, and provides a series of actions/policies for assisting the community in attaining its goals. It is not an attempt to predict the future, but an attempt to document community values and philosophies that citizens and property owners of the Town of Round Lake share.