

# TOWN OF SOMERSET 2015-2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ST. CROIX COUNTY, WISCONSIN

adopted March 30, 2015





# **Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan**

**prepared by the Town of Somerset Plan Commission**

**with assistance from West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**





**PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION 2015-01  
RECOMMENDING TOWN BOARD ADOPTION OF THE  
TOWN OF SOMERSET 2015-2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Town of Somerset has determined the need and propriety to amend and update the Town Comprehensive Plan with the general purpose of guiding, directing, and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the Town of Somerset which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote public health, safety, order, convenience, prosperity, and the general welfare, as well as, efficiency and economy in the process of development; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Somerset Plan Commission has prepared the Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan pursuant to §66.1001 and §62.23, Wis. stats., which contains plan documents, maps, community survey results, and other materials in the nine comprehensive plan elements required by §66.1001(2), Wis. stats.; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Somerset Plan Commission, pursuant to § 66.1001(4)(b), Wis. stats., may recommend to the Town Board the adoption of the updated comprehensive plan by adoption of a resolution to that effect by a majority of the entire Plan Commission.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Plan Commission of the Town of Somerset, St. Croix County, Wisconsin by this resolution, adopted by a majority of the Town Plan Commission on a roll call vote with a quorum present and voting and proper notice having been given, recommends to the Town Board of the Town of Somerset the adoption of the updated and amended Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan.

The vote of the Town Plan Commission in regard to this Resolution shall be recorded by the Clerk of the Town Plan Commission in the official minutes of the Plan Commission of the Town of Somerset. The Town Clerk shall properly post or publish this resolution as required under s. 60.80, Wis. stats.

Adopted this 30<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2015.

Larry Rauch, Larry Rauch, Chair

Sherrill Schottler, Sherrill Schottler

Jean Hoffman, Jean Hoffman

Joseph Jahnke, Joseph Jahnke

William Lawson, William Lawson

Attest: Jeri Koester, Jeri Koester, Secretary/Clerk



**ORDINANCE 2015-01**  
**AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT THE**  
**TOWN OF SOMERSET 2015-2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**SECTION 1 – TITLE AND PURPOSE**

The title of this ordinance is the Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan Ordinance. The purpose of this ordinance is for the Town of Somerset, St. Croix County, Wisconsin, to lawfully adopt an updated Comprehensive Plan as required under s. 66.1001 (4) (c), Wis. stats. Pursuant to Section 66.1001(2)(i), Wis. stats., a Comprehensive Plan shall be updated not less than once every 10 years.

**SECTION 2 – AUTHORITY**

The Town Board of the Town of Somerset, St. Croix County, Wisconsin, has authority under its Village Powers under s. 60.22, Wis. stats., to appoint a Town Plan Commission under ss. 60.62 (4) and 62.23 (1), Wis. Stats., and under s. 66.1001 (4), Wis. Stats., to adopt this ordinance. The Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Somerset must be in compliance with s. 66.1001 (4) (c), Wis. Stats., in order for the Town Board to adopt this ordinance.

**SECTION 3 – ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE**

This ordinance, adopted by a majority of the Town Board on a roll call vote with a quorum present and voting and proper notice having been given, provides for the adoption by the Town of a Comprehensive Plan under s. 66.1001 (4), Wis. stats.

**SECTION 4 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Town Board has adopted written procedures designed to foster public participation in every stage of the preparation of a Comprehensive Plan as required by s. 66.1001 (4) (a), Wis. Stats.

**SECTION 5 – TOWN PLAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Plan Commission of the Town of Somerset, by a majority vote of the entire commission, recorded in its official minutes, has adopted a resolution recommending to the Town Board the adoption of the Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan, which contains all of the elements specified in s. 66.1001 (2), Wis. Stats.

**SECTION 6 – PUBLIC HEARING**

The Town of Somerset has held at least one public hearing on this ordinance, with notice in compliance with the requirements of s. 66.1001 (4) (d), Wis. Stats.

**SECTION 7 – ADOPTION OF TOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

The Town Board, by the enactment of this ordinance, formally adopts the document entitled Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan under s. 66.1001 (4) (c), Wis. Stats.

**SECTION 8 - SEVERABILITY**

If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this ordinance that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this ordinance are severable.

**SECTION 9 – EFFECTIVE DATE**

This ordinance is effective on publication or posting.

The Town Clerk shall properly post or publish this ordinance as required under s. 60.80, Wis. Stats. and a copy of the ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan, shall be filed with at least all of the entities specified under s. 66.1001 (4) (b), Wis. stats..

Adopted this 30<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2015 by:

Ed Schachtner, Ed Schachtner, Town Chair

Larry Rauch, Larry Rauch, Town Supervisor

Shane Demulling, Shane Demulling, Town Supervisor

Lenny Germain, Lenny Germain, Town Supervisor

Douglas Plourde, Douglas Plourde, Town Supervisor

Attest: Jeri Koester, Jeri Koester, Town Clerk/Treasurer

Adopted: March 30, 2015

Publication date: April 9, 2015

# Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan

## Contents

<u>1. Introduction</u>	
1.1 Planning Authority and Scope .....	1
1.2 State Comprehensive Planning Goals.....	2
1.3 Town of Somerset 2003-2028 Comprehensive Plan .....	2
1.4 The Town of Somerset Plan Update Process.....	3
<u>2. Issues and Opportunities</u>	
2.1 Location and Regional Perspective .....	5
2.2 Public Opinion Survey .....	8
2.3 Issues and Opportunities.....	8
2.4 Vision Statement (Overall Goals) .....	11
2.5 Overall Objectives .....	12
2.6 Overall Policies .....	12
2.7 Overall Programs .....	13
<u>3. Population and Housing</u>	
3.1 Population Estimates .....	14
3.2 Population Forecasts and Projections .....	16
3.3 Housing Characteristics .....	22
3.4 Housing Unit Projections .....	26
3.5 Housing Programs .....	27
3.6 Housing Goals and Objectives .....	31
3.7 Housing Policies .....	31
<u>4. Transportation</u>	
4.1 Streets and Highways .....	33
4.2 Pedestrians and Bicycling .....	39
4.3 Other Modes of Transportation .....	39
4.4 Existing Transportation Plans.....	40
4.5 Transportation Programs.....	45
4.6 Transportation Goals and Objectives .....	48
4.7 Transportation Policies .....	48
<u>5. Utilities and Community Facilities</u>	
5.1 Town Administrative Facilities and Services .....	50
5.2 Sanitary Sewer Service .....	53
5.3 Stormwater Management .....	53
5.4 Public Water Supply.....	53
5.5 Solid Waste Management & Recycling .....	55
5.6 Parks and Outdoor Recreation .....	55

5.7 Communications and Broadband .....	56
5.8 Electric and Power Facilities .....	57
5.9 Cemeteries.....	57
5.10 Health Care and Senior Housing Facilities .....	58
5.11 Day Care Facilities .....	58
5.12 Schools and Libraries.....	58
5.13 Emergency Services and Planning .....	59
5.14 Dams and Flood Controls.....	61
5.15 Other Governmental Facilities.....	61
5.16 Civic Organizations and Other Privately-Owned Facilities.....	61
5.17 Other Utilities and Community Facilities Plans and Programs .....	62
5.18 Utilities and Community Facilities Goals and Objectives .....	64
5.19 Utilities and Community Facilities Policies .....	64
<u>6. Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources</u>	
6.1 Agricultural Resources and Trends .....	69
6.2 Soils .....	75
6.3 Topography .....	75
6.4 Bedrock Geology .....	78
6.5 Metallic and Non-Metallic Mineral Resources.....	78
6.6 Groundwater .....	81
6.7 Closed Depressions .....	82
6.8 Surface Waters .....	85
6.9 Forests, Grasslands, and Prairies .....	88
6.10 Wildlife Habitat and Natural Areas.....	88
6.11 Threatened and Endangered Species .....	89
6.12 Air Quality .....	92
6.13 Environmentally Sensitive Areas .....	91
6.14 Energy and Sustainability.....	94
6.15 Historical and Cultural Resources .....	95
6.16 Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Plans and Programs .....	97
6.17 Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Goals and Objectives .....	104
6.18 Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Policies .....	104
<u>7. Economic Development</u>	
7.1 Current Economic Profile .....	110
7.2 Economic Forecast and Trends .....	115
7.3 Economic Strengths and Weaknesses.....	117
7.4 Desired Businesses and Industries .....	118
7.5 Current Town of Somerset Economic Plans and Designated Sites .....	119
7.6 Opportunities for the Use of Environmentally Contaminated Sites .....	121
7.7 Other Economic Development Plans and Programs .....	121
7.8 Economic Development Goals and Objectives .....	125
7.9 Economic Development Policies .....	126
<u>8. Intergovernmental Cooperation</u>	
8.1 Planning in Adjacent and Overlapping Jurisdictions .....	128
8.2 Existing Partnerships, Agreements, and Intergovernmental Plans .....	131

8.3 Intergovernmental Issues and Opportunities .....	131
8.4 Intergovernmental Programs .....	132
8.5 Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals and Objectives .....	135
8.6 Intergovernmental Cooperation Policies .....	135

## 9. Land Use

9.1 Current Land Use and Land Use Trends.....	137
9.2 Supply, Demand, and Price of Land .....	140
9.3 Barriers to Development and Land Use Conflicts .....	142
9.4 Opportunities for Redevelopment.....	143
9.5 Current Land Use Plans, Programs, and Regulations .....	143
9.6 Projected Land Use Supply and Demand .....	145
9.7 Planned Land Use Plan.....	146
9.8 Land Use Goals and Objectives .....	154
9.9 Land Use Policies .....	154

## 10. Implementation

10.1 Action Plan.....	161
10.2 Implementation Resources.....	161
10.3 Plan Integration and Consistency.....	162
10.4 Plan Monitoring and Evaluation.....	162
10.5 Plan Amendments and Updates.....	162

## **Appendices**

Appendix A : Town of Somerset Public Opinion Survey Results .....	164
Appendix B : Town of Somerset Public Opinion Survey Write-In Responses.....	170

## **Tables**

Table 3-1 Population Trends, St. Croix County, 1960-2010 .....	15
Table 3-2 Population by Age, Town of Somerset, 1990-2010 .....	16
Table 3-3 Population Projections, Town of Somerset, 2000-2035 .....	17
Table 3-4 Housing Occupancy and Tenure, Town of Somerset, 1990-2010 .....	24
Table 3-5 Units in Structure, Town of Somerset, 2000-2010.....	24
Table 3-6 Housing Value of Specified Owner-Occupied Units, 2010.....	25
Table 3-7 Owner-Occupied Housing Costs, 2010 .....	25
Table 3-8 Renter-Occupied Housing Costs, 2010 .....	25
Table 3-9 Housing Unit Projection, Town of Somerset, 2010-2040 .....	27
Table 4-1 Functional Road Classifications, Town of Somerset, 2013.....	33
Table 4-2 Town of Somerset Traffic Counts, 2000 & 2009.....	36
Table 4-3 Vehicle Availability in the Town of Somerset, 2012 .....	36
Table 4-4 Means of Transportation to Work, 2012 .....	37
Table 4-5 Place of Work, 2012.....	37
Table 7-1 Unemployment Rate, 2000 & 2010 .....	110
Table 7-2 Educational Attainment of Persons Age 25 & Older, Town of Somerset, 2010 .....	111
Table 7-3 Employment by Industry, Town of Somerset, 2010 .....	112
Table 7-4 Employment by Industry, Area Zip Codes, 2004 & 2014.....	113

Table 7-5 Employment by Industry Projections, West Central WI, 2005 & 2018 .....	115
Table 7-6 Employment Forecast, Area Zip Codes, 2014 & 2024 .....	116
Table 9-1 Prominent Existing Land Use, Town of Somerset, 2013 .....	137
Table 9-2 Estimate Existing Land Use, Town of Somerset, 1973 & 1993 .....	139
Table 9-3 Land Use Acreage and Assessed Value Per Acre, 2003 & 2013 .....	141
Table 9-4 Projected Land Use Demand (acres), Town of Somerset, 2015-2035 .....	145
Table 9-5 Planned Land Use, Town of Somerset.....	152

## Maps

Map 2-1 Regional Perspective .....	7
Map 3-1 Town of Somerset Housing.....	23
Map 4-1 Town of Somerset Transportation System .....	34
Map 4-2 Town of Somerset Functional Classification.....	35
Map 5-1 Town of Somerset Community Facilities .....	51
Map 5-2 Town of Somerset Parks and Conservation Areas.....	52
Map 6-1 Town of Somerset Agricultural Land .....	70
Map 6-2 St. Croix County Land Evaluation .....	72
Map 6-3 St. Croix County Site Assessment .....	73
Map 6-4 St. Croix County LESA.....	74
Map 6-5 Town of Somerset General Soils.....	76
Map 6-6 Town of Somerset Limitations to Septic Systems.....	77
Map 6-7 Town of Somerset Bedrock Geology.....	79
Map 6-8 Town of Somerset Depth to Bedrock.....	80
Map 6-9 Town of Somerset Depth to Groundwater .....	83
Map 6-10 Town of Somerset Closed Depressions .....	84
Map 6-11 St. Croix County Watersheds .....	87
Map 6-12 Town of Somerset Environmentally Sensitive Areas .....	92
Map 7-1 Town of Somerset Industry & Businesses.....	120
Map 9-1 Town of Somerset Existing Land Use .....	138
Map 9-2 Town of Somerset Planned Land Use.....	153

## Figures

Figure 3-1 Town of Somerset Population Change, 1970-2010 .....	14
Figure 3-2 Population Projections, St. Croix County, 2010-2040 .....	18
Figure 3-3 Population Projections, West Central Wisconsin, 2010-2040 .....	18
Figure 6-1 Size and Number of Farms in St. Croix County, 1997-2012 .....	69

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Planning Authority and Scope

Planning is an orderly, open approach to determining local needs, setting goals and priorities, and developing a guide for action. In 1999, the State Legislature created a new framework for community planning in the State of Wisconsin—1999 Wisconsin Act 9.

Beginning on January 1, 2010, any program or action of a local government which regulates land use (e.g., zoning, subdivision regulations, agricultural preservation programs) must be consistent with that government's comprehensive plan<sup>1</sup>. According to Wisconsin Statutes, the comprehensive plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the community which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, or the general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.

1999 Wisconsin Act 9, often referred to as the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning and Smart Growth Law, provides additional guidance regarding what must be included in each community plan and how the plan should be developed. Each plan must address nine key elements:

- 1) Issues & 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

The *Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan Update* fully addresses the requirements of all nine elements within Wisconsin Statutes §66.1001.

**AB608, Wisconsin Act 233**  
**Clarification of Smart Growth Law**

This bill was signed into law in April 2004. This law reduced the number of programs or actions with which a comprehensive plan must be consistent. Under the new legislation, the only actions which must be consistent with a comprehensive plan are official mapping, local subdivision regulation, and zoning ordinances, including zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands. The bill also reiterates that an RPC's comprehensive plan is only advisory in its applicability to a political subdivision (a city, village, town or county), and a political subdivision's comprehensive plan.

---

<sup>1</sup> Certain timeline extensions pertain to municipalities pursuing a comprehensive planning grant or in receipt of a comprehensive planning grant.

## 1.2 State Comprehensive Planning Goals

For communities receiving State comprehensive grant funding, the plans should also address the following fourteen State-identified (§16.965) comprehensive planning goals:

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

Since this plan update was funded by the Town of Somerset without State grant support, the above goals are considered advisory.

## 1.3 Town of Somerset 2003-2028 Comprehensive Plan

This document is an update of the *Town of Somerset 2003-2028 Comprehensive Plan (2003 Plan)* which was adopted in 2003. The 2003 Plan was initiated solely by the Town. The development of the 2003 Plan incorporated a 1996 community opinion survey and the planning process was facilitated by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC). The process also included open houses and extensive involvement of a 65-member Citizens Advisory Group. The Citizen Advisory Group participated in issues identification and visioning, and created focus groups to develop plan goals, objectives, and initial recommendations. The issues, vision, goals, objectives, and policies from the 2003 Plan were reviewed, included, and/or updated as part of this document. Maps and data were also updated and amended as part of this plan update, when applicable, current data was readily available.

## 1.4 The Town of Somerset Plan Update Process

The Town of Somerset contracted with West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to assist with the update of the *Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan*. This update process was robust with some restructuring of the plan to more clearly address the element requirements within the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law.

Most plan elements include goals, objectives, policies, and programs, which are generally defined as:

**Goals** – Broad, general, and long-term expressions of the community’s aspirations for towards which the planned effort is directed. Goals tend to be ends rather than means.

**Objectives** – More specific targets derived from goals and necessary to achieve those goals. While still general in nature, objectives are more precise, concrete, and measurable than goals. Objectives should also be achievable within the 20-year planning horizon.

**Policies** – Decision-making guidance, rules, recommendations, strategies, or courses of action to achieve the goals and objectives they are derived from. They are precise and measurable when reasonably possible. In this plan, policies are further separated into “policies” (general decision-making guidance) and “recommendations” (action-oriented strategies).

**Programs** – A system of projects, services or other resources which can help the community achieve its plan goals, objectives, and policies. Programs are not always administered by the community and may include other service providers, agencies, and their plans.

The plan update was prepared under the guidance of the Town of Somerset Plan Commission which conducted six planning meetings between April 2014 and January 2015 with the WCWRPC facilitator generally described as follows:

### Meeting #1

- review and fine tune planning process and scope
- discuss demographics and other trends
- review issues and opportunities from 2003 Plan and update
- discuss community survey questions and approach
- recommendation to Town Board on public participation procedures

### Meetings #2-#5

- review and discuss issues, trends analysis, available studies, and community survey results
- consider applicable aspects of plans and policies of adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions
- discuss plan goals, objectives, and policies in context of data, issues, and survey results

### Meeting #6

- discuss comments and changes on working draft plan
- discuss open house, public hearing, and adoption process

The Plan Commissioners also reviewed materials as part of homework between meetings. The Town publicized the results of the community survey to residents and invited community comment on the results at the September 17, 2014, Plan Commission meeting.

The Wisconsin comprehensive planning legislation (§66.1001) specifies that the governing body for a unit of government must prepare and adopt written procedures to foster public participation in the comprehensive planning process. The procedures must include open discussion, communication programs, information services and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan. In addition, the participation procedures

# Introduction

must provide for wide distribution of proposed drafts, alternatives, and amendments of the comprehensive plan. The public participation procedures should address how members of the public can send written comments on the plan to the governing body, and how the governing body will respond.

The Town of Somerset has complied with all public participation requirements as detailed in Wisconsin Statutes §66.1001 by adopting and initiating a public participation plan on May 7, 2014. The Town implemented the public participation plan as part of this plan update which included opportunities for public input such as:

- all meetings were properly noticed and open to the public;
- the distribution of a public opinion survey;
- making draft copies of the plan available for public review;
- an open house on the draft plan;
- a properly noticed public hearing on the draft plan; and,
- inviting, considering, and responding to written comments on the draft plan.

The above public participation activities were completed by the Town prior to the adoption of the amended plan. The Town of Somerset Plan Commission recommended adoption of the updated plan by resolution on March 30, 2015. Following a joint Plan Commission and Town Board public hearing conducted on March 30, 2015, the Somerset Town Board adopted the plan update on March 30, 2015.

## 2. Issues and Opportunities

### 2.1 Location and Regional Perspective

#### St. Croix County

St. Croix County, Wisconsin, is located in west-central Wisconsin. Geographically, St. Croix County is 736 square miles and is host to 35 local units of government that include four (4) cities, ten (10) villages and 21 towns. The County of St. Croix was organized in 1838 and at that time was part of the Wisconsin Territory which extended into areas of the present day State of Minnesota. On February 2, 1844, Stillwater was designated as the county seat. In 1848 the Wisconsin Territory became a state, at which time the St Croix River became the western border for the State and St. Croix County.

With a 2010 census population of 84,345 and a total land area of 736 square miles, population density in St. Croix County is 114.6 persons per square mile. St. Croix County has a mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas. The western half of the County is more urban and suburban, while the eastern half of the County is more rural. St. Croix County's economy is relatively diverse with manufacturing, health services, government/education, retail trade, and hospitality representing the largest employers and agriculture still dominating the landscape of many towns.

#### Town of Somerset

The Town of Somerset is located in northwestern St. Croix County along State Highway 64 and is geographically the largest town in St. Croix County. The Village of Somerset is surrounded by the Town and provides some employment, shopping, and services. The cities of Hudson and New Richmond are a short drive from the Town and provide additional employment and shopping opportunities. The eastern edge of the Twin Cities Metro area is only a 30-minute drive from the Town and the majority of working Town residents commute to Minnesota for employment.

The original natives of the area were, for the most part, people of the Dakota and Ojibway American Indian tribes. European fur trappers and explorers used the St. Croix River as a travel route as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the beauty of the valley was noted in their journals and records.

The first European settlers in the present Town of Somerset were two French Canadian brothers, Joseph and Louis Parent who arrived in 1850 and in 1851 built a cabin near the confluence of the St. Croix River and the present day Apple River. They might have built on flatter land to the north and east but, supposedly, this area with its beautiful rivers, cliffs and trees reminded them of their home back in the Province of Quebec.

The Parent brothers named the settlement Apple River Falls and invited friends and family to join them. As others arrived, a schoolhouse and a church were built and a French Canadian community was born. To this day, French surnames are common in the phone books and tax lists of the Town of Somerset.

The Town of Somerset was organized on September 19, 1856, and Thomas Chappell was elected as Town Chairman. In 1859, General Samuel Harrison arrived in the Town of Somerset and built a sawmill on the Apple River upstream from the original settlement. The sawmill prospered and a church, hotel, and a schoolhouse were constructed in what was then called the "Village of the Town" and is now the Village of Somerset. The Village of Somerset was incorporated in 1918 and is completely surrounded by the Town of Somerset.

According to the 2010 Census, the Town of Somerset had a population of 4,036 persons, making the Town the third most-populated town in St. Croix County, behind the towns of Troy and Hudson. The 2013 population estimate for the Town was 4,077. The Town's population grew 54.2 percent since the 2000 Census (2,644). Residential development in the area is primarily characterized by single-family homes. The Town is bordered by four towns—Farmington, Richmond, St. Joseph, and Star Prairie—all of which have also been growing in population. In addition, the Village of Somerset had a 2010 population of 2,635, which is expected to increase by 56 percent by 2040 (or +1,465 residents).

The St. Croix River is along the western border of the Town and is part of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, one of seven such designated rivers in the United States. This border is a striking combination of 200-foot limestone palisades, lush green swampy grasslands, and low bank shorelands. The interior of the Town is typified by gently rolling hills and numerous wooded areas.

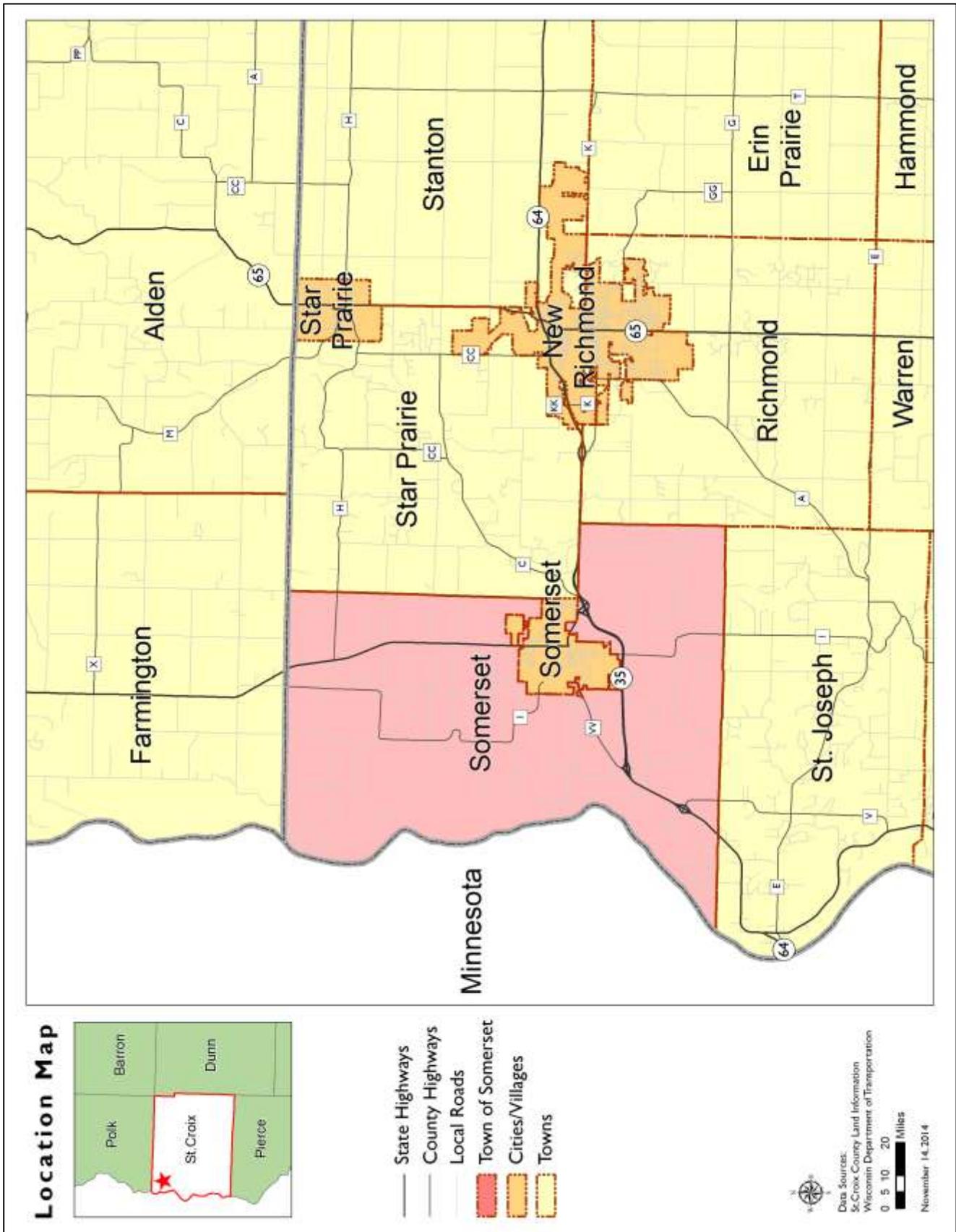
## **The Present and Its Challenges**

As part of St. Croix County, Somerset is also part of the Minneapolis- St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Today, the beauty of the area attracts people to it and the Town of Somerset now faces issues all too common for a largely rural community on the fringe of a major metropolitan area. The community is dynamic, and each new development is viewed as an opportunity for some and a threat to the rural lifestyle of others.

As the demand for land, roads, and public facilities increases, the community recognizes the need to plan for effectively managing change. In addition to residential growth, the influence of the metropolitan area is apparent in Somerset as many of the Town's residents drive to the Twin Cities for employment, shopping, and events, while the natural amenities and surface waters of the Town are attracting visitors from outside the community.

# Issues & Opportunities

Map 2-1 Regional Perspective



## 2.2 Public Opinion Survey

The Town Plan Commission developed a six-page survey which was distributed in April 2014 to 1,473 tax-paying households who owned parcels with improvements within the Town of Somerset. A total of 642 surveys were returned, which is a 44 percent response rate of all surveys distributed.

Demographics of respondents included:

- 61% were male and 39% were female.
- 22% of represented respondents were age 65 or older. The 2010 U.S. Census estimates that about 16.1% of the Town's households had at least one individual over the age 65+, so this age group may be over-represented in the survey results.
- 65% of respondents had no children under 18 in the household.
- 35% had children under 18 in the household. The 2010 U.S. Census estimates that about 42.6% of all households in the Town had at least one child under the age of 18. These households may have been under-represented in the survey results.
- 53% were employed full time. 40% were employed in Minnesota and 28% in Wisconsin.
- 96% owned their place of residence.
- Only 37% have lived in the Town of Somerset for 25 years or more. 35% lived in the Town for 10-24 years. 26% have lived in the Town less than 10 years.

The results of the survey are provided in **Appendix A**, with some selected findings highlighted within the different plan elements.

It is important to note that this was an opinion survey reflecting only the views of the respondents. No statistical analysis with margins of error, non-response bias testing, or sampling was performed.

## 2.3 Issues and Opportunities

According to the survey results, 64 percent of respondents rated the Town of Somerset's quality of life as "good" and an additional 25 percent rated as "excellent." The four most important reasons respondents choose to live in the Town of Somerset are:

- small town atmosphere and rural character
- natural features
- cost of home/land
- near family and friends

Regarding general issues and opportunities for the Town, majorities of respondents also said:

- All programs or services are rated highly except high speed internet access.
- Regulations to protect natural resources are viewed as essential.
- Multi-family housing in the Town is not desirable to the respondents.
- More businesses are desired, but their locations should be regulated by the Town.
- The Town should be involved in community planning to determine where and how development should occur.
- New residential development should use cluster design, but a majority of respondents personally prefer traditional subdivision designs.



# Issues & Opportunities

- Provide more bike routes and off-road trails. Encourage the development of good shoulders on road for use of bikers and pedestrians. (Transportation)
- Increasing demand for public open space. The Comprehensive Plan should reference and coordinate with the Town Parks and Outdoor Recreation Plan. (Utilities & Community Facilities, Land Use)
- Poor and inconsistent broadband speed and reliability. (Utilities & Community Facilities)
- Integrate the County Farmland Preservation Plan and the identified farmland preservation areas in the Town into the comprehensive plan. (Agricultural Resources, Land Use).
- Explore opportunities, manage growth, and encourage best management practices to protect and conserve surface waters, wetlands, groundwater, and wildlife habitat. (Natural Resources, Land Use)
- More groundwater testing is needed. (Natural Resources)
- Improve river access on St. Croix and Apple Rivers for boat, canoe, and kayak, but do not allow over-commercialization; retain natural beauty and protect resources (Natural Resources, Economic Development)
- What will be the impacts of the new St. Croix Crossing Bridge? Integrate stormwater, waste water, and economic studies. (Natural Resources, Economic Development, Land Use)
- Continued coordination with library and school district. (Intergovernmental)
- Where should new commercial and industrial development be located? How do we prevent land use conflicts while retaining rural character? (Economic Development, Land Use)
- Guide growth in order to retain rural character and promote quality development. Promote fair and orderly growth and development. Do not over regulate and maintain flexibility when possible. (Land Use)
- Consider design standards and nuisance ordinances for community character and to protect general welfare. (Land Use)
- Encourage open space preservation, conservation design, and clustering to preserve rural character. (Land Use)
- Control the tax increases associated with development. Impact fees and exactions can be used to finance public open spaces and infrastructure that is required for new development. (Land Use)

The primary plan element(s) in which the above issues will be addressed are identified in parentheses.

## 2.4 Vision Statement (Overall Goals)

Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001 requires a statement of overall goals, objectives, policies, and programs of the local governmental unit to guide the future development and redevelopment of the local governmental unit over a 20-year planning period. **The following vision statement serves as the overall plan goals. All goals, objectives, and policies within this plan should support this overall goal statement.**

### TOWN OF SOMERSET YEAR 2035 VISION STATEMENT

**The Town of Somerset is a place much like it is today, where managed, flexible and orderly growth, good design, and sustainable development has:**

- **ensured the quality, availability, and beauty of its natural and environmental features;**
- **protected the Town's rural character by guiding appropriate land use design and through open space and agricultural preservation;**
- **controlled the impacts of development on taxes, and public services and facilities; and,**
- **developed and maintained parks, trails, water access, and other recreational opportunities that contribute to the high quality of life for residents.**

**These values will continue to preserve and enhance a sense of community, economic vitality and sustainability, and the natural heritage of the Town of Somerset.**

Comprehensive planning should be looking forward and long-term. If carefully considered and crafted, a community's vision and goals should change infrequently or little over time. And the above vision statement is little changed from the vision found in the 2003 Plan. The Plan Commission believed the 2003 Plan's vision was very good and reflects the current wishes of residents to keep the Town much like it is today.

After reviewing the 2003 vision and the survey results, some small changes to the vision statement were made. **The Plan Commission also felt strongly that traditional suburban development patterns were detrimental to the small town character and natural beauty envisioned for the community's future.** These suburban development patterns are characterized by uniform residential subdivisions lacking in public open space and big-box, strip commercial development with endless signs and parking lots.

The 2003 Plan included additional insights on balancing the Town's vision for preserving rural character with the projected growth demands of the community, which still applies today:

“The rural character of this town can and should be preserved, after all, isn't this why we live here? People move here because they want to see farms, wildlife, and open spaces. These should be preserved and enhanced if possible. Development must be consistent with these needs.

*Does this mean that Somerset needs to adopt a no growth policy in order to preserve and protect this community?* Not at all, but it does mean that careful thought must be given to how growth is allowed to proceed. If we allow a no-control type growth, then those of us that wish to live in this community must be prepared for the consequences of that decision.

Responsible development can be allowed, however, we must take into account the impact on our roads, schools, taxes, water and the land itself. If not, then the current practice of chopping up the land into lots that look like another Twin Cities suburb will result in this town experiencing many of the problems that they are incurring. However, if the people of this community are willing, we believe other more appropriate forms of subdivision design that enhance and preserve the existing natural resources can and should be done.”

- Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan 2003-2028, pp.15-16

## 2.5 Overall Objectives

The following objectives support the previous vision statement (overall plan goals). These objectives and subsequent policies are not specific to any other plan element. Instead, these objectives and policies are more administrative and comprehensive in nature; they pertain to multiple, or all, of the other plan elements.

1. Endeavor to implement and achieve the goals, objectives, and policies found in this comprehensive plan.
2. Anticipate and understand demographic and development trends that affect the Town of Somerset.
3. Encourage residents and other stakeholders to participate in community planning, decision-making, and volunteerism.
4. Town decision-making should consider quantitative and qualitative costs and benefits of services and proposed development, including the quality of life of residents, the local economy, and the long-term rural character of the community.

## 2.6 Overall Policies

### ***Policies (Decision-making Guidance)***

1. Utilize the *Town of Somerset 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan* as a guide to community decision-making. Update and amend the Plan as necessary to respond to changing needs, opportunities, and State regulations.
2. Encourage public volunteerism and involvement when opportunities arise. Promote opportunities for volunteerism and involvement through the Town website.
3. Maintain the Town website as the primary means of communicating with the public, with periodic newsletters and direct mailings as needed.
4. After passage by the Town Board, codify new ordinances by the end of the year.

### ***Recommendations (Action-Oriented Strategies)***

1. Continue to confer regularly with the St. Croix County Community Development Department regarding demographic and development trends in the Town of Somerset. (ongoing)

2. On an annual basis, prepare a brief Plan Commission annual report on the demographic and developmental trends (e.g., building permit data) in the Town of Somerset. (ongoing)
  - a. Present and discuss this annual report at the Town Annual Meeting or upon request.
  - b. Establish a yearly noticed joint-meeting of the Plan Commission and Town Board to discuss the annual report and address current issues of the Town.
3. Prepare a Town of Somerset-specific “rural living guide” with information about the Town’s history, recreational opportunities, natural resources, regulations, services, cost-of-living, and contact information. This guide can serve as a local supplement to the St. Croix Rural Living Guide and copies should be provided to new residents, area realtors, and on the Town website. (short-term)

## 2.7 Overall Programs

The previously identified issues and opportunity related to the other elements found within this plan and are reflected in the other elements in terms of data provided, policies/strategies, recommendations, and related programs. Each of the other elements highlights potential programs and resources which are available to help address the issues and opportunities identified within this section. A few additional, multi-disciplinary programs are noted here as possible resources to assist with the Town’s planning and implementation efforts:

### **St. Croix County Government and St. Croix County UW-Extension**

St. Croix County government has various offices and programs which are available to the Town’s residents, officials, and government offices. For instance, the Cooperative Extension provides a variety of practical education program tailor to local needs, including agricultural, family living, nutrition, 4-H, and youth development, and can tap into additional resources through the University of Wisconsin system. St. Croix County UW-Extension also has a Community, Natural Resource, and Economic Development (CNRED) educator who provides additional support and coordination.

### **League of Wisconsin Municipalities**

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities is a voluntary nonprofit and nonpartisan association of cities and villages that acts as an information clearinghouse, lobbying organization and legal resource for Wisconsin municipalities.

### **Wisconsin Department of Administration**

The Wisconsin Department of Administration maintains a comprehensive planning website with element guides and other useful resource links. The Department also manages the State’s Demographics Services Center with official population and housing estimates and projections.

### **West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC)**

WCWRPC conducts areawide planning and provides technical assistance to local governments, including planning support, data analysis, mapping, small business revolving loan fund management, grantsmanship, and project administration. In 2008, WCWRPC completed an *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin* which references and describes the most prominent and applicable programs pertinent to comprehensive planning efforts at that time. WCWRPC also produced a *Plan Implementation Guide for West Central Wisconsin* in June 2010 which includes example best practices from throughout the region on a variety of issues and opportunities commonplace within west-central Wisconsin.

## 3. Population and Housing

To properly plan for the Town of Somerset's future requires an understanding of the community's population, demographic trends, and housing base. Population trends influence all other plan elements, such as the demand for community services, economic development policy, and land use. And housing trends are directly related to demands of the population.

The following element inventories and analyzes available data to gain a basic understanding of the current population and housing status as well as to identify trends that are occurring. After knowledge of this base is gained, then the identification of future trends and issues can be determined.

This element concludes with an overview of housing programs, as well as housing goals, objectives, and policies. Housing costs are the single largest expenditure for most Wisconsin residents. Affordability is just one reason a community may plan for housing, however. A variety of local housing issues and demands can be addressed through planning, such as type (e.g., single-family, rental, manufactured), condition (e.g., age, aesthetics, rehabilitation), and safety (e.g., codes, disaster preparedness, accessibility).

### 3.1 Population Estimates

As of January 1, 2013, the Town of Somerset had 4,077 residents according to the official State of Wisconsin population estimate.

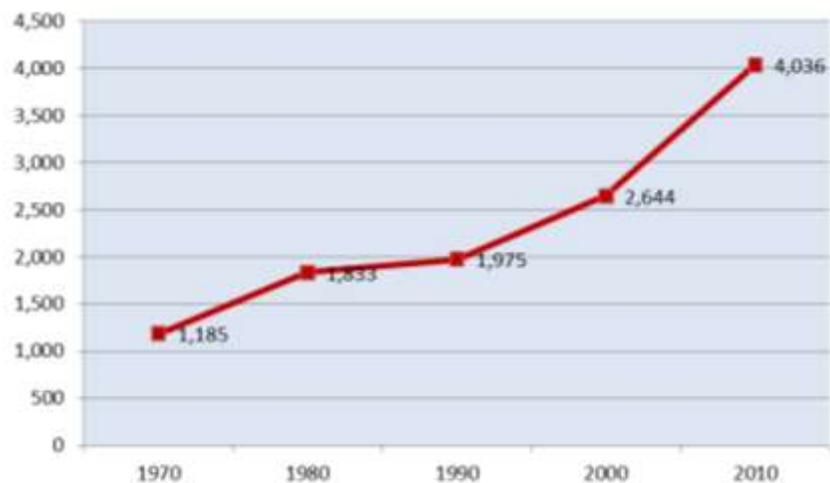
Figure 3-1 shows population from 1970 to 2010 for the Town of Somerset. On the following page, Table 3-1 displays the population trends from 1960 through 2010 for all municipalities within St. Croix County and the State of Wisconsin.

St. Croix County's population will most likely continue to increase over the planning period. The majority of communities within the county have been experiencing moderate to high population growth. Population rates did slow in the late 2000s and early 2010s from the effects of the Great Recession. However, projections show that there will be continued population growth throughout St. Croix County over the planning period.

Population rates did slow in the late 2000s and early 2010s from the effects of the Great Recession. However, projections show that there will be continued population growth throughout St. Croix County over the planning period.

According to the 2010 census, the Town of Somerset had a 2010 population of 4,036 people, a 52.7 percent increase from the 2000 population count (2,644), but significantly more than the 1990 count of 1,975. Populations in the four adjacent towns—Farmington, Richmond, St. Joseph, and Star Prairie,—all have increased during this same timeframe. The Town is relatively racially homogenous with 87.3 percent of its population being White in 2010.

**Figure 3-1 Town of Somerset Population Change 1970-2010**



Source: US Census 1970-2010

# Population & Housing

**Table 3-1  
Population Trends, St. Croix County, 1960-2010**

Municipality	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
<b>Towns</b>						
Baldwin	833	890	943	911	903	928
Cady	762	670	724	643	710	821
Cylon	614	620	717	639	629	683
Eau Galle	717	720	897	756	882	1,139
Emerald	647	588	638	630	691	853
Erin Prairie	499	516	661	647	658	688
Forest	674	649	631	614	590	629
Glenwood	835	764	715	700	755	785
Hammond	773	764	822	819	947	2,102
Hudson	649	925	2,012	3,692	6,213	8,461
Kinnickinnic	667	755	1,051	1,139	1,400	1,722
Pleasant Valley	310	330	360	384	430	515
Richmond	701	1,091	1,338	1,400	1,556	3,272
Rush River	403	439	476	419	498	508
St. Joseph	1,068	1,357	2,180	2,657	3,436	3,842
Somerset	976	1,185	1,833	1,975	2,644	4,036
Springfield	814	811	816	772	808	932
Stanton	640	975	1,083	1,042	1,003	900
Star Prairie	1,015	1,390	1,900	2,098	2,944	3,504
Troy	845	1,517	2,326	2,850	3,661	4,705
Warren	614	622	897	1,008	1,320	1,591
<b>Villages</b>						
Baldwin	1,184	1,399	1,620	2,022	2,667	3,957
Deer Park	221	217	232	237	227	216
Hammond	645	768	991	1,097	1,153	1,922
North Hudson	1,019	1,547	2,218	3,101	3,463	3,768
Roberts	308	484	833	1,043	969	1,651
Somerset	729	778	860	1,065	1,556	2,635
Spring Valley*	0	0	0	0	2	6
Star Prairie	331	362	420	507	574	561
Wilson	140	130	155	163	176	184
Woodville	430	522	725	942	1,104	1,344
<b>Cities</b>						
Glenwood City	835	822	950	1,026	1,183	1,242
Hudson	4,325	5,049	5,434	6,378	8,775	12,719
New Richmond	3,316	3,707	4,306	5,106	6,310	8,375
River Falls*	625	991	1,498	1,769	2,318	3,149
St. Croix County	29,164	34,354	43,262	50,251	63,155	84,345
Wisconsin	3,951,7877	4,417,731	4,705,642	4,891,769	5,363,675	5,686,986

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1950-2010.

\*Portion of River Falls and Spring Valley located in St. Croix County only.

# Population & Housing

## Population by Age Cohort

A shifting age structure is a national trend that is evident in Wisconsin and also St. Croix County. This is largely due to the baby-boomer generation, which is a large segment of the overall population, nearing retirement age. As this age group gets older the demand for services such as health care will increase, and well as employment opportunities in certain industries and the demand for certain housing types. It will become increasingly important for municipalities to recognize these trends and also to plan for the new demands that will need to be met.

Table 3-2 shows population distribution by age in the Town of Somerset from 1990 to 2010. Looking at the cohorts for the Town, the group with the most population in 2010 was the 20-44 age group followed very closely by the 45-64 age group. However, between 1990 and 2010, the Town experienced the largest increase (+273% or 902 persons) in the number of residents that were 45-64 years of age.

The median age increased 2.5 years between 2000 and 2010. This is a smaller increase than the 4.4 years from 1990 and 2000. Over the 20 year span from 1990 and 2010, the median age increase a significant 6.9 years. For comparison, the Town's 2010 median age was 38.5 and St. Croix County's median age in 2010 was 36.7 years of age.

**Table 3-2  
Population by Age, Town of Somerset, 1990-2010**

Age (years)	1990		2000		2010		% Change 1990-2010
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	
Under 5	160	8.1	183	6.9	263	6.5	64.4
5 to 19	514	26.0	642	24.3	965	23.9	87.7
20 to 44	836	42.3	985	37.3	1,268	31.4	51.7
45 to 64	330	16.7	648	24.5	1,232	30.5	273.3
65+	135	6.8	186	7.0	308	7.6	128.1
Total	1,975	100.0	2,644	100.0	4,036	100.0	104.4
Median Age	31.6		36.0		38.5 (county – 36.7)		

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990-2010

## 3.2 Population Forecasts and Projections

Population projections are based on past and current population trends and are not predictions, rather they extend past growth trends into the future and their reliability depends on the continuation of these past growth trends. Projections should be considered as one of many tools used to help anticipate and predict future needs within the Town. Population levels are subject to physical conditions, environmental concerns, land use, zoning restrictions, taxation, annexation, and other political policies that influence business and personal location decisions.

In 2013, the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) Demographic Services Center released their final population projections to the year 2040 for the communities and counties of Wisconsin. The WDOA utilized a projection formula that calculates the annual population change over three varying

# Population & Housing

time spans. From this formula, the average annual numerical population change is calculated, which was used to give communities preliminary population projections for a future date.

Table 3-3 displays the WDOA population projections for the Town of Somerset from 2010 to 2040. The WDOA population projections predict the Town will increase in population by 2,139 persons (or +53.0%) between 2010 and 2040. Based on recent trends, the Town Plan Commission felt that the projections may be higher than what will actually occur, except for the uncertainty of the impacts from the new St. Croix River bridge crossing.

**Table 3-3  
Population Projections, Town of Somerset, 2010-2040**

	2010 Census	2015 Proj.	2020 Proj.	2025 Proj.	2030 Proj.	2035 Proj.	2040 Proj.	% change
Total Population	4,036	4,250	4,770	5,220	5,650	5,945	6,175	+53.0
Population Increase		214	520	450	430	295	230	
% Population Increase		5.3%	12.2%	9.4%	8.2%	5.2%	3.9%	

*Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Final Municipal Population Projections, 2013*

For this plan update overall, the WDOA projections are used for a number of reasons:

- The WDOA projections are the official population projections for the State of Wisconsin.
- The St. Croix County Comprehensive Plan also used population projections prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Administration.
- The WDOA projections are nearly identical to the high growth scenario projected as part of the St. Croix Crossing Impact Study discussed later in this section.
- The goals, objectives, and policies of this plan accommodate and provide for the population growth estimated in these projections.

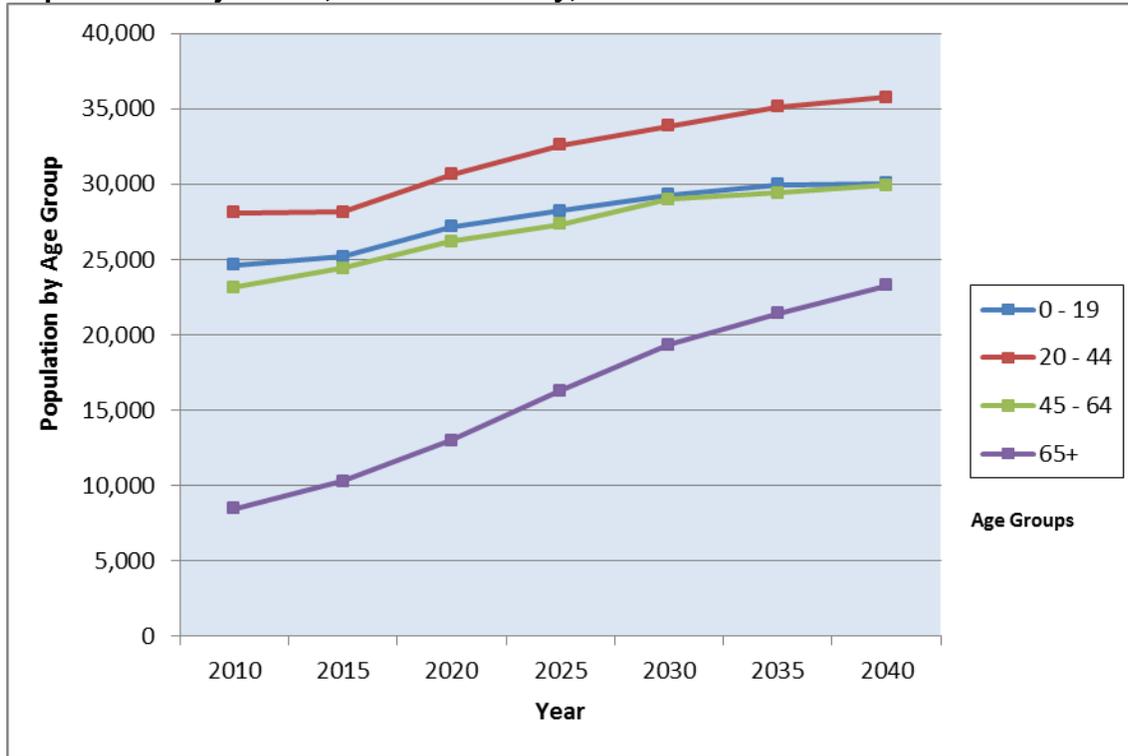
Like the Town of Somerset, St. Croix County has been growing. In fact, St. Croix County is experiencing some important demographic trends, as shown in Figure 3-2. One of these is that the baby boomer generation is dramatically becoming a larger proportion of the County's population. Between 2010 and 2040, the number of residents ages 65 and over is projected to more than double based on current trends. Advances in medicine would further decrease mortality and have the potential to significantly increase older age groups.

These trends are not unique to St. Croix County and have serious future implications for services, housing, tax base, and the labor force. For comparison, Figure 3-3 shows the seven-county West Central Wisconsin region's population and labor force projections. A December 2014 UW-Extension Local Government Center WisLine Program shared the following trends that should be kept in mind:

- Most population growth in Wisconsin is occurring in the metropolitan fringe and ex-urban areas, while most rural areas are declining in population.
- The U.S. is on the eve of a labor shortage without enough workers to replace and support the retiring baby boomer generation.
- As our economy becomes more knowledge-based and the majority of property owners (boomers) retire with fixed incomes (e.g., Social Security), Wisconsin's current tax structure based on property taxes becomes unsustainable.
- The Millennial generation is placing quality of life above employment and the percentage of multi-generational households in Wisconsin is increasing significantly.

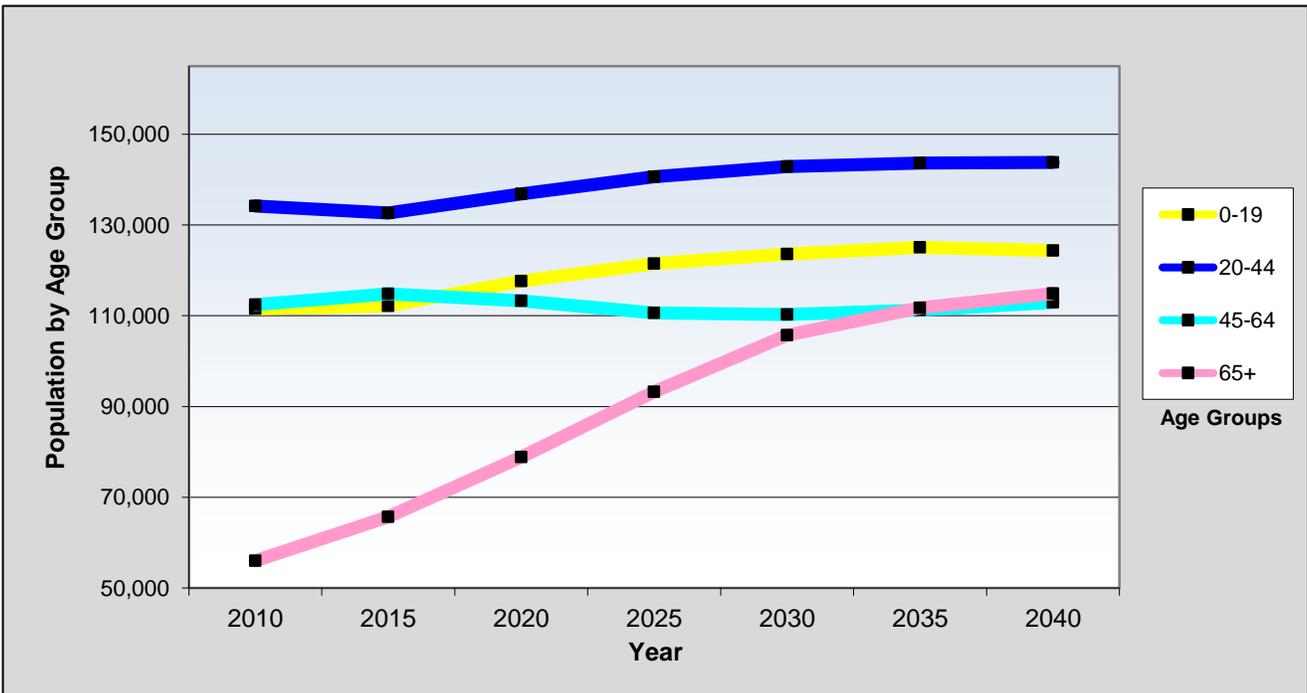
# Population & Housing

**Figure 3-2**  
**Population Projections, St. Croix County, 2010-2040**



Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2014

**Figure 3-3**  
**Population Projections, West Central Wisconsin, 2010-2040**



Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2014

## ST. CROIX RIVER CROSSING IMPACT STUDY

In 2014, the University of Wisconsin-Extension's Center for Community and Economic Development completed a study of how the improved St. Croix River bridge crossing could influence population and economic development growth along the Highway 64 Corridor, as well as tools and related opportunities for shaping future growth. This study did not predict growth or pinpoint impacts on specific communities, nor did it attempt to forecast or dictate future land use patterns.

Some key findings:

- 1) Infrastructure improvements can be seen as a catalyst for change, but are neither necessary nor sufficient to guarantee economic and population growth rates in surrounding areas. **Based on selected comparison projects, new bridges can facilitate growth, but do not drive or spur growth. If a county or area was growing at a rapid rate prior to a bridge improvement, then it tended to continue growing at a similar pace after completion. There was no "spike" or sharp increase in growth once a bridge is completed.** Employment growth had similar trends for the comparison projects.
- 2) Population growth trends in St. Croix County and the metro area are changing. **The metro area's growth rate is slowing and growth outside the central metro counties has decreased dramatically.** The area's demographics are aging (with lower mobility), while Millennials are preferring to live in urban areas. In the past, much of the County's growth was in the 30-39 age cohort, though this cohort within the MSA has been decreasing in size since the mid-1990s. In recent years, net migration into St. Croix County has been very limited or even negative. **In short, it is less likely that St. Croix County will return to the growth rates of the 1990s and 2000s, even with the improved crossing.**
- 3) While growth is slowing, the population of **St. Croix County and the Corridor Communities (including the Town of Somerset) will continue to grow** unless there is a dramatic change in the regional or national economy. With the assistance of a professional demographer, three population projection scenarios were developed. **The "rapid growth" scenario, which had the highest rate of growth, projected that the County and Corridor Communities would grow at a rate nearly identical to the Official State of Wisconsin projections prepared by the Department of Administration.** The two other scenarios had lower rates of growth. It is likely that the growth impacts of the new bridge will become clearer in a relatively short time following the bridge opening.
- 4) **Population projections are not absolute or "set-in-stone."** Actual growth rates will vary by community. The projections should be used to guide local policy. **Communities have an opportunity to shape and influence growth. Communities have a role in determining how they develop and the nature of that development.** Communities should also benchmark key local indicators to help monitor growth and the demand for services.

- 5) **The improved river crossing will increase access to jobs in the region, but Corridor communities will also need to attract and retain residents on the basis of other local economic and quality-of-life characteristics.** Previous studies have suggested that the current Stillwater Lift Bridge can increase travel time by 15-20 minutes during peak periods. This reduced drive time will dramatically increase the number of jobs accessible within 15-, 30-, and 45-minute drive times. However, this is only one of many factors that will influence a household's decision to relocate their place of residence. Further, this increased accessibility may still be less than that of other communities in the metro area. This also works in reverse, with the bridge potentially making employers located in the Somerset area more attractive to potential employees and the talent pool located in the more urbanized areas of the Twin Cities region.
- 6) Population growth will drive demand and support for additional retail, hospitality, health care, construction, real estate, and governmental services. The benefits of new growth are offset, at least in part, by the cost of public services to support this growth. **Depending on the population projection used, new resident income in the Corridor could support 750 to 850 private-sector jobs in these industries over the new decade, in addition to the public-sector jobs that will be needed to support this population and development.** St. Croix County currently experiences large levels of spending leakage in many retail categories, which presents an economic opportunity. This leakage is likely in large part due to the County's high commuter population.
- 7) New economic development and activity will likely occur in an incremental manner. The relocation of large firms to the Corridor based solely on the bridge is less probable. **Most employment growth in the region (and nationally) is driven by new startups and through the expansion of existing companies.** Most firm relocations are executed by smaller businesses, rather than those with 100+ employees. A related opportunity is to develop economic strategies for the Corridor Communities that target certain industry and occupational clusters within the metro area, since the Corridor Communities will become more accessible due to the new bridge.
- 8) **The bike/pedestrian trail created as part of the St. Croix Crossing project also has an opportunity to create economic benefits as it develops,** both as a quality of life consideration for potential residents and through direct user/tourism impacts.

In summary, expectations for new growth must be realistic. The Town of Somerset will continue to grow, but it is really not known how much growth will occur. The report suggests that an "explosion" of growth within the Corridor Communities as a result of the new bridge is unlikely.

The Town of Somerset does have the ability to establish policies and pursue strategies that would significantly influence and guide how the community grows and the nature of that growth. Community collaboration will also be important, as decisions made in one Corridor Community will influence neighboring communities. The report also recommends that communities "over plan" for their future. As such, using the Wisconsin DOA population projections seems reasonable for this comprehensive planning effort.

# Population & Housing

People consider many factors for why they move or stay in a location. Consider the following from a 2008 Pew Research Center survey entitled “American Mobility: Who Moves? Who Stays Put? Where’s Home?”:

- 63% of adults have moved to a new community at least once in their lives, while 37% have never left their hometowns.
- In the Midwest, 46% of adult residents have spent their life in one community.
- Rural residents are the most rooted Americans, with 48% of Americans living in rural areas spending their entire lives in the same place.
- 77% of college graduates have changed communities at least once, compared with 56% of those with a high school diploma or less.
- Major reasons why residents stay in their hometowns are: family ties (74%), desire to remain where they grew up (69%), and a belief that their communities are good places to raise children (59%). Fewer than half (40%) say a major reason for staying put is a job or business opportunities.
- The most frequently cited major reason for moving is a job or business opportunity (44%).
- Levels of community satisfaction do not appear to be correlated with people’s past mobility patterns.
- Just 10% of movers say that cultural activities were a major reason they chose their current community.

Over 70% of the respondents to the 2014 Town of Somerset Public Opinion Survey have resided in the Town for ten or more years, but only 37% have resided in the Town for 25 years or more. During the survey, residents were asked their reasons for choosing to live in the Town of Somerset:

1. What are the <b>three</b> most important reasons you and your family choose to live in the Town of Somerset?					
10%	Agriculture	21%	Low Crime Rate	17%	Quality Schools
1%	Community Services	33%	Natural Features	9%	Recreational Opportunities
32%	Cost of Home/Land	32%	Near Family and Friends	58% Small Town Atmosphere & Rural Character	
26%	Availability of Large Parcels	20%	Near Job (Employment Opportunity)	5% Other: (Please Identify)	
5%	Property Taxes	23%	Born and Raised Here	<b>See Appendix A</b>	

The Plan Commission noted that historically, land costs within the community has been significantly lower compared to areas “across the river” and closer to the Twin Cities. The above survey findings appear to confirm that the cost of the home/land has been a large factor in attracting new residents. Such comparative land prices were not fully analyzed as part of the *St. Croix River Crossing Impact Study* summarized previously.

The Town’s residents are less “rooted” in the community compared to many Midwestern communities. The rural character and natural features are the primary reasons residents move to the community, along with the availability of larger parcels and property at a lower cost compared to the suburbs of the Twin Cities. While the Town’s natural beauty is a major factor, the recreational opportunities that these natural areas afford were deemed much less important. But when deciding upon two locations, other factors will also contribute to the decision-making, such as schools, crime, housing costs, sense-of-place, recreation, quality of life, and amenities.

## 3.3 Housing Characteristics

Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law requires that a comprehensive plan include a housing element. Housing costs are the single largest expenditure for most Wisconsin residents. For homeowners, their home is likely their most valuable asset and largest investment. Housing also plays a critical role in state and local economies. The housing in a community may be its largest asset. The construction industry and other occupations that support housing are a major portion of the economy. Residential development is also a major source of revenue for local communities in the form of property taxes. Beyond the financial aspects of housing, there are also social effects that are not so easily measured. People develop a sense of pride in their homes, which in turn creates a sense of community and a likely increase in participation in community activities.

Planning for the provision of housing may be new to many local units of government. Nonetheless, the programs and actions of local governments can influence the housing market. The comprehensive planning process necessitates that the community analyze the impact of the policies and regulations on the development of various types of housing. The analysis is intended to take into account the current and projected housing needs in the community. The analysis should result in policies that provide opportunities for the development of the types and amounts of housing expected to be needed over a twenty-year planning horizon.

The following sections discuss in more detail specific information about the County's and Town's existing housing stock, patterns, and future trends.

### **St. Croix County General State of Housing**

The total number of housing units within St. Croix County has been increasing rapidly when compared to the State of Wisconsin. Between 1980 and 2010, the number of housing units in St. Croix County increased by over 19,000 units or +128 percent. Within the Town of Somerset, the number of housing units grew by 154 percent during the same period.

The majority of homes within the County are single-family, detached structures (71.1%). The next highest housing type is one-unit attached, which accounted for 11.2% of the housing units in the County. With 26.5 percent of the housing units being built before 1970, the majority of homes within the County were built after 1970. Roughly half (47.8%) of the housing units in the County were built since 1990. Specifically, 28.8% of the housing units in the County were built between 2000 and 2009. In addition, 65.8% of all occupied housing units had householders that moved in since 2000.

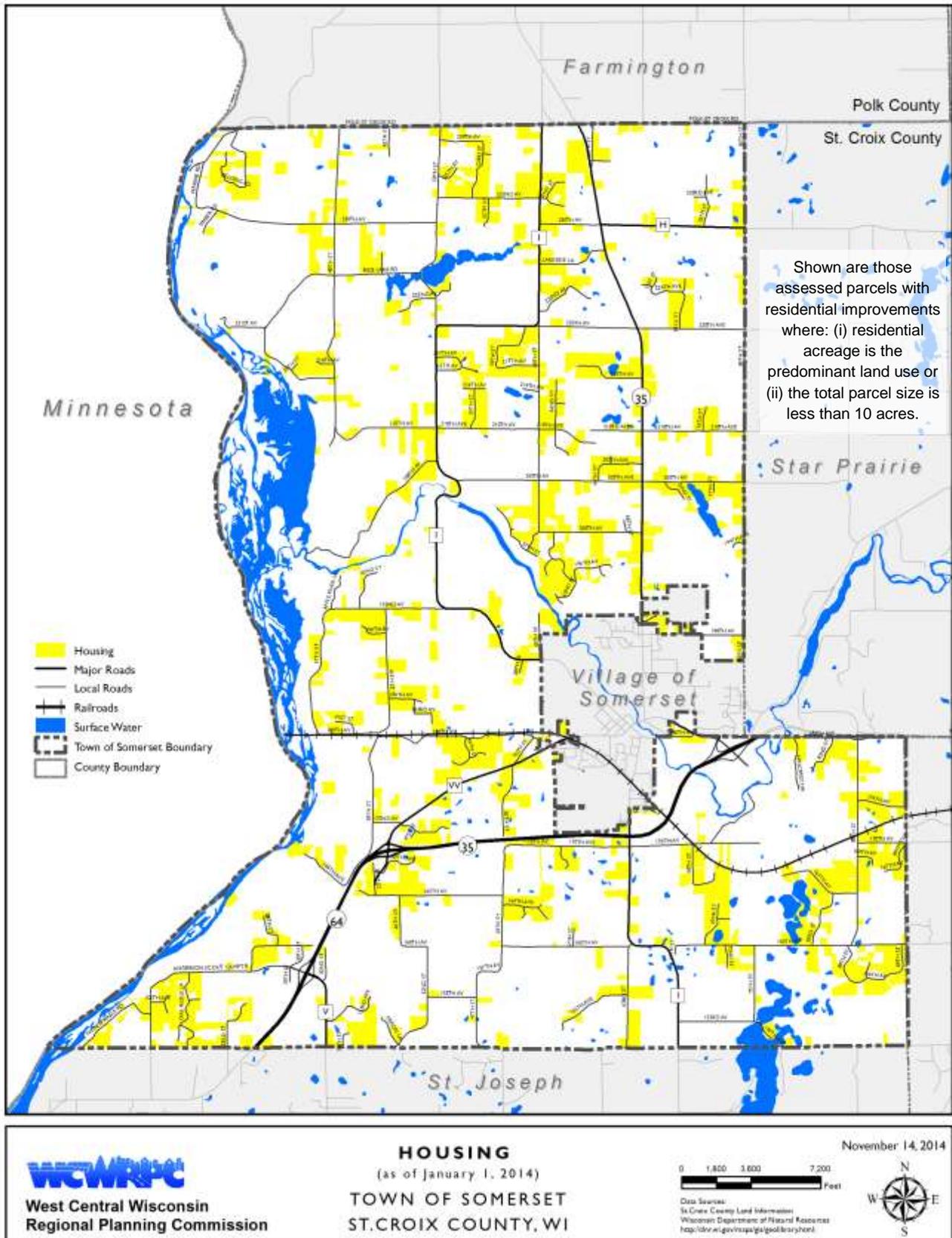
### **Town of Somerset General State of Housing**

The total number of housing units in the Town increased by 53.6% from 2000 to 2010. 516 new housing units were added to the Town's housing stock in this ten-year period. However, the majority of this growth occurred in the first part of the last decade. After the Great Recession and after the mortgage crisis struck in 2007-2008, building permits in the Town dwindled to less than a half dozen annually. Some homes were left unoccupied or abandoned, while many subdivided lots were never developed. As the economy recovers, building permit requests are increasing once again. As Map 3-1 shows, residential development in the Town is scattered throughout the community.

The majority of housing units in the Town are one-unit, single-family detached structures (91.3%) followed by mobile homes (7.1%). A small percent (6.1%) of all homes are renter occupied. Housing vacancy rates have fluctuated with growth and the economy. In 2010, the vacancy rate was 5.9 percent. This was higher than the 2000 Census of 3.7% but lower than the 1990 Census of 7.5%.

# Population & Housing

Map 3-1 Town of Somerset Housing



# Population & Housing

## Housing Supply, Occupancy, and Tenure

Table 3-4 displays the occupancy and tenure characteristics of housing units for the Town of Somerset in 1990, 2000, and 2010. In 2010, there were 1,479 housing units in the Town of Somerset, an increase of 516 units since 2000. Only about six percent of all units were renter-occupied and another six percent were vacant. Only three percent of housing units are considered seasonal.

**Table 3-4**  
**Housing Occupancy and Tenure, Town of Somerset, 1990 - 2010**

	1990	% of Total	2000	% of Total	2010	% of Total	No. Change '00-'10	% Change '00-'10
Total Housing Units	722	100.0	963	100.0	1,479	100.0	516	53.6
Occupied Housing Units	668	92.5	927	96.3	1,391	94.1	464	50.1
Owner-Occupied	589	81.6	848	80.1	1,301	88.0	453	53.4
Renter-Occupied	79	10.9	79	8.2	90	6.1	11	30.0
Vacant Housing Units	54	7.5	36	3.7	88	5.9	52	144.4
Seasonal/Rec/ Occasional Use	34	3.2	15	1.6	45	3.0	30	200.0
Persons per Housing Unit	2.74		2.75		2.91		+0.17	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000, & 2010.

## Units in Structure

Table 3-5 displays the number of units in structure for the Town of Somerset in 2000 and 2010.

**Table 3-5**  
**Units in Structure, Town of Somerset, 2000 - 2010**

	2000	% of Total	2010	% of Total
1-Unit Detached	881	88.2	1,362	91.3
1-Unit Attached	18	1.8	12	0.8
2 Units	15	1.5	0	0.0
3 or 4 units	25	2.5	11	0.7
5 to 9 units	0	0.0	0	0.0
10 to 19 Units	0	0.0	0	0.0
20 or More Units	0	0.0	0	0.0
Mobile Home	60	6.0	106	7.1
Boat, RV, Van, Etc.	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	999	100.0	1,491	100.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 & 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS).  
Based on sample data; ACS annual data can vary over time depending on timeline included.

Perhaps due to a sampling error, the Town Plan Commission pointed out that the estimated number of mobile homes in the Census data is incorrect. The Town has approximately 32 mobile homes located in a single manufactured home park.

## Age of Housing Units

The age of the housing stock is an important element to be analyzed when planning for the future. If there is a significant amount of older housing units within the housing supply, they may need to be replaced, rehabilitated, or abandoned for new development within the planning period. Allowing for a newer housing supply also requires planning regarding infrastructure, land availability, community

# Population & Housing

utilities, transportation routes, and a variety of other needs which are affected by new housing development. In 2012 (ACS 5-year estimate), 32.1 percent of the Town of Somerset housing stock was built since 2000, while 14.2 percent was built before in 1940. Less than one-third of the housing stock (28.1%) was built before 1970. In terms of age, the Town's housing stock is diverse with a relatively lower percentage of older homes compared to many rural towns of west-central Wisconsin.

## Housing Affordability & Value

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as housing that does not cost a household more than 30 percent of its household income. This affordability benchmark is not an underwriting standard; it does not address the ability to pay for housing. Households may choose to pay more to get the housing they need or want; however, according to HUD standards, people should have the choice of having decent and safe housing for no more than 30 percent of their household income.

Finding affordable and quality housing has historically been somewhat difficult in St. Croix County. A lack of affordable housing has overriding impacts on population migration patterns, economic development, and the tax base. According to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS), 43 percent of homeowners with mortgages and over 45 percent of renters were spending more than 30 percent of their household income on housing. And in 2010, the median value of homes within the Town was \$290,800, which is higher than the County average and much higher than the State median. Please note that the ACS is based on sample data and are estimates.

Tables 3-6, 3-7, and 3-8 display the 2010 housing value and costs for the Town of Somerset.

**Table 3-6**  
**Housing Value of Specified Owner-Occupied Units, 2010**

Less than \$50,000	\$50,000- \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$149,000	\$150,000 - \$199,999	\$200,000 – \$299,999	\$300,000 – \$499,999	\$500,000 or more	Town Median Value	County Median Value	State Median Value
12	7	26	213	410	514	89	\$290,800 (\$156,000 in 2000)	\$225,700 (\$139,500 in 2000)	\$169,000

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Table 3-7**  
**Owner-Occupied Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income, 2010**  
**(for homes with mortgages)**

Less than 20%	20.0% - 24.9%	25.0% - 29.9%	30.0% - 34.9%	35.0% or more	Town % not affordable	County % not affordable
301	142	202	109	376	42.9%	35.1%

Note: U.S. HUD defines affordable housing as 30% or less of monthly or annual income.

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Table 3-8**  
**Renter-Occupied Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income, 2010**

Less than 15%	15.0% - 19.9%	20.0% - 24.9%	25.0% - 29.9%	30.0% - 34.9%	35.0% or more	Town % not affordable	County % not affordable
11	21	0	3	0	30	46.2%	45.5%

Note: U.S. HUD defines affordable housing as 30% or less of monthly or annual income.

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

# Population & Housing

## April 2014 Town of Somerset Public Opinion Survey

When residents were asked what types of housing are needed in the Town of Somerset, strong majorities supported single-family homes, senior housing, and starter homes. There was far less support for multi-unit housing types. Many residents had no opinion. The following responses were received:

2. The following types of housing are needed in the Town of Somerset.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a. Single-family homes	42%	39%	7%	2%	11%
b. Duplexes	2%	28%	34%	21%	15%
c. Town homes (multi-story row houses w/ shared walls)	3%	18%	33%	31%	15%
d. Apartments (3+ units in which units are rented)	2%	13%	33%	38%	14%
e. Senior housing (designed for needs of older persons)	22%	50%	11%	5%	12%
f. Starter (first-time buyer) homes	14%	50%	16%	6%	15%

Over 30 percent of survey respondents selected the “Cost of Home/Land” as one of their top three reasons that they choose to live in the Town of Somerset. Over sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed that new residential development should be clustered or designed in a manner that preserves open space. Yet, when provided examples, only 39 percent preferred an open space/cluster subdivision design over a more traditional subdivision design with no public open space. And about two-thirds of respondents preferred a minimum lot size of 3 to 5 acres. These findings will be important as the Town develops its Land Use Element later in this plan.

### 3.4 Housing Unit Projections

Housing projections are helpful to estimate the amount of land that may be consumed by future housing development. As the number of households and housing units continues to grow, there is a resulting need for government to provide additional public facilities and services such as roads, sewer and water extensions, fire and police protection, schools, etc. It may also create a need to develop and enforce additional regulations and ordinances. These are important planning issues for consideration.

The housing unit projections used for this plan are intended to provide an estimate of housing units that will be developed through the year 2040 based on observed changes in population and housing preferences. The projections are based on several assumptions that create limitations that should be remembered when reviewing and evaluating the projections. The assumptions include the following:

- The WDOA population projections are reasonable and will continue to be reasonable during the planning period (see Table 3-3).
- The persons per total housing units (2.90) will remain constant during the planning period. In 2000, The Town of Somerset had 2.85 persons per unit.
- The vacancy rate (5.9%) will remain constant during the planning period.
- Past trends regarding seasonal housing, as previously described, will continue in the future.

# Population & Housing

As shown in Table 3-9, it is estimated that the Town of Somerset will have 2,129 housing units by the year 2040. This is an increase of 738 housing units from the 2010 Census. This is an increase of 53 percent from 2010, It is projected that housing units will average an annual increase of approximately 24.6 housing units per year during the 30-year period.

**Table 3-9  
Housing Unit Projection, Town of Somerset, 2010-2040**

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
WDOA Population Projection	4,036	4,250	4,770	5,220	5,650	5,945	6,175
Housing Unit Projection (Census – 2.90 persons/hh)	1,391	1,465	1,645	1,800	1,948	2,050	2,129

Source: WCWRPC

It should be noted that the 2013 assessment of residential property in the Town of Somerset included 1,437 improved residential parcels, which is consistent with the 2010 Census data and the 2015 projections.

## 3.5 Housing Programs

While comprehensive plans must describe those programs which are available to provide an adequate housing supply that meets existing and projected demand, it is not assumed that the Town of Somerset is solely responsible for managing and providing these programs. In fact, there are a wide variety of available programs for residents at a variety of geographic and jurisdictional levels, with the most commonly used and available programs summarized here.

### Federal Housing Programs

#### Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD is the Federal agency with primary responsibility for housing programs and community development. HUD is the main repository of resources for housing programs in Wisconsin. HUD provides funding for state-developed programs through HOME and other initiatives. It also funds the Continuum of Care for Homeless Families initiative, and provides Section 8 vouchers, which assist low-income families in finding affordable housing.

#### Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME)

HOME is a Federal housing program to support the provision of low-cost housing. A variety of affordable housing activities may be supported by Federal HOME awards including down payment assistance to homebuyers, rental rehabilitation, weatherization-related repairs, accessibility improvements and rental housing development.

The HOME Rental Housing Development (RHD) program is administered by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. These programs provide funds to eligible housing development organizations (homeownership and rental) and local governments (homeownership only) for the acquisition, rehabilitation, and new construction of owner-occupied and rental housing for low-income households in non-entitlement areas. In addition, the HOME Owner-Occupied Housing Loan program is administered by WHEDA.

Rural Development, Rural Housing Service - United States Department of Agriculture (USDA-RD)  
USDA provides a variety of housing and community development programs for rural areas, generally

# Population & Housing

available in areas with populations of 10,000 or less. It provides support for rental housing development, direct and guaranteed mortgage loans for home buyers, and support for self-help and cooperative housing development. For more information visit its website at [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov).

## State Housing Programs

### Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Housing Program

The Wisconsin Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program for housing, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, provides grants to general purpose units of local government for housing programs which principally benefit low- and moderate-income (LMI) households. The CDBG program is a federally funded program through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Small Cities CDBG Program. CDBG funds can be used for various housing and neighborhood revitalization activities including housing rehabilitation, acquisition, relocation, demolition of dilapidated structures, and handicap accessibility improvements. The maximum grant to an applicant is \$500,000. Approximately 15 communities are awarded funds yearly in Wisconsin. For more information on this program contact the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

### Historic Home Owner's Tax Credits

A 25 percent Wisconsin investment tax credit is available for people who rehabilitate historic or non-income-producing personal residences, and who apply for and receive project approval before beginning physical work on their projects. This program is administered by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

### Homeless Programs

The Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations administers the following programs designed to help homeless people:

- State Shelter Subsidy Grant (SSSG) Program: Provides up to one-half of an emergency homeless shelter's program operating budget. Eligible applicants are a county or municipal governing body or agency, an Indian Tribal government, a community action agency, or other private not-for-profit or non-profit organization.
- Housing Opportunities for Persons With Aids (HOPWA): This Federal program is designed to provide eligible applicants with resources and incentives to devise long-term comprehensive strategies for meeting the housing needs of persons with AIDS or related diseases. Funds are distributed through a competitive process.
- HUD Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) Program: Funds may be used for homelessness prevention, essential services, rehabilitation of shelters, and operating costs.
- Transitional Housing Program (THP): Eligible applicants propose to operate transitional programs for formerly homeless individuals and families. Funds may be used for housing costs, education and vocational training, transportation, day care, or other costs needed to assist participants in sustaining self-sufficiency.
- Interest Bearing Real Estate Trust Account Program (IBRETA): Real estate brokers establish interest bearing real estate trust accounts for the deposit of all down payments, earnest money deposits and other trust funds received by the broker and related to the conveyance of real estate. Interest is remitted to the WDOA. Proceeds augment existing homeless programs.

### Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME)

A variety of affordable housing activities may be supported by Federal HOME awards including down payment assistance for home buyers, rental rehabilitation, weatherization related repairs, accessibility improvements and rental housing development. Approximately \$13 million is awarded annually. The

# Population & Housing

program is administered by the Wisconsin Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations (DHIR).

## Home Safety Act

A new Wisconsin law requires the State's Uniform Dwelling Code (UDC) be enforced in all municipalities. This includes the necessity to have new construction inspected for compliance with the UDC, the statewide building code for one and two family dwellings built since June 1, 1980. The Home Safety Act signed into law by Governor Doyle on December 3, 2003 includes important changes to the enabling statutes for the UDC. The changes were effective as of December 18, 2003.

## Housing Cost Reduction Initiative (HCRI)

Local sponsors compete for \$2.6 million in State grants annually to reduce the housing costs of low-income renters or home buyers. Eligible applicants include local units of government, American Indian tribes or bands in Wisconsin, housing authorities, and non-profit housing organizations. Eligible activities are emergency rental aid, home buying down payment assistance, homeless prevention efforts, and related housing initiatives. The HCRI is administered by the Wisconsin Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations (DHIR).

## Property Tax Deferred Loan Program (PTDL)

This State program provides loans to low- and moderate-income elderly homeowners to help pay local property taxes so that the elderly can afford to stay in their homes. To be eligible, individuals must be at least 65-years old with a spouse that is at least 60-years old, unless one is disabled.

## Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations

The Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations provides housing assistance to benefit low- and moderate-income households through the Bureau of Housing. It offers State-funded housing grants or loans through local organizations, coordinates its housing programs with those of other state and local housing agencies, helps develop State housing plans and policies, and provides training and technical assistance. The Division channels Federal housing funds to local authorities and organizations and administers Federal funds for the homeless.

## Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority serves Wisconsin residents and communities by working with others to provide creative financing resources and information to stimulate and preserve affordable housing, small business, and agribusiness.

## Wisconsin Rural Development, Rural Housing Service

The mission of the Rural Housing Service is to enhance the quality of life of rural people through the creation of safe, affordable, housing where people can live, work, and prosper as part of a community. The Wisconsin Rural Housing Service offers housing preservation grants, loans and grants for farm labor housing, loans and grants for home improvement and repair, loans for financing housing site development, loans for home purchase or construction, loans on apartment buildings, and self-help technical assistance grants.

## Wisconsin Weatherization Assistance Programs

The Department of Administration-Division of Energy provides weatherization assistance for units occupied by low-income persons. This service is provided through the community action programs operating in the region. It is also notable that many residential properties which are being sold for conversion to rental units also have to meet State-minimum energy conservation standards at the time of ownership transfer.

# Population & Housing

## Wisconsin Fresh Start Program

The Fresh Start Grants are awarded on a competitive basis to agencies that would like to establish programs based on the Operation Fresh Start, Inc. service model. The purpose of the program is to provide at-risk young people with education, employment skills, and career direction leading to economic self-sufficiency. This is accomplished through opportunities for meaningful service in the young people's communities by helping to meet the housing needs of low-income individuals and families. The program is designed to provide on-site housing construction and rehabilitation work experience, off-site academic classes, and supportive services for young people, primarily for ages 16-24. Contact the Wisconsin Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations (DHIR) for more information.

## **County and Local Housing Programs**

The Town of Somerset does not administer or manage its own housing programs, but refers interested individuals to programs available through St. Croix County and other area service providers. There is no countywide housing authority in St. Croix County and no housing authority is active within the Town of Somerset.

Residents potentially have access to housing services from the following:

- West Central Wisconsin Community Action Agency, Inc. (WestCAP) provides low-income families with resources, training and opportunities for safe, affordable housing and to overcome poverty. WestCAP has also been designated as a Community Housing Development Organizations for special funding and support associated with the State's HOME Investment Partnership Program. WestCAP also administers a low-income weatherization program and an energy assistance program.
- Impact Seven, Inc. provides senior housing support to some communities in St. Croix County. Impact Seven is a private nonprofit community development corporation dedicated to increasing the economic opportunity of Wisconsin people.
- Habitat for Humanity has a local affiliate located in River Falls, WI. The goal of this program is to eliminate inadequate housing and poverty housing throughout the world. Local affiliates, including dozens in Wisconsin, are responsible for raising funds, recruiting volunteers, identifying project sites, and constructing owner-occupied housing for the benefit of participating low-income families. Visit [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org).
- Special services are available to persons with disabilities through programs such as Movin' Out, Inc. and Tomorrow's Home Foundation, both based in Madison, WI.
- West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission offers technical housing assistance with respect to housing related grants and funding and grant writing. WCWRPC should be contacted for further information. Visit its website at [www.wcwrpc.org](http://www.wcwrpc.org).

## 3.6 Housing Goals and Objectives

### *Housing Goal 1:*

***Provide sound and affordable housing without compromising environmental constraints indigenous to the rural Somerset community.***

#### **Objectives**

1. Allow opportunities for diverse housing choices that are compatible with the community's rural character, while directing multi-family housing (e.g., apartments) to incorporated areas.
2. Local ordinances, land use planning, and local decision making should allow for and encourage a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels, all age groups, and persons with disabilities.
3. Promote housing development and housing policies that allow for aging in place.
4. Identify and remediate health and safety problems with the Town's existing housing stock.
5. Residential development should not encroach upon or negatively impact environmentally sensitive areas.
6. Residential properties should be adequately maintained in a manner that does not conflict with the health, safety, or general welfare of neighboring properties and the community.

## 3.7 Housing Policies

### ***Policies (Decision-making Guidance)***

1. Consider the use of common on-site wastewater treatment systems alternatives that have a long-term record of success on soils and topography similar to that in the Town of Somerset.
2. Accept manufactured housing that conforms to applicable Town and County ordinances.
3. Work closely with the Town building inspector and the County Community Development Department to identify and address housing-related problems (e.g., health & safety, maintenance, environmental impacts, supply).
4. Habitation of a structure will not be allowed until all Uniform Dwelling Code requirements have been met and a certificate of occupancy has been issued by the Town building inspector.
5. Rely primarily on partner agencies, public service providers, and non-profit housing programs, such as WestCAP, to deliver housing services and manage housing maintenance and rehabilitation programs within the Town. As needed, consult with the area housing programs, local realtors and developers, and the general public to help identify viable options to address specific housing needs.
6. Maintain the Town's comprehensive plan and future land use map to provide adequate opportunities to meet a variety of housing market needs, while providing access and linkages to appropriate services and amenities when possible.
7. The site layout, design, character, and neighborhood context of residential development will be considered during zoning and conditional use permitting decisions. While design and maintenance of homes and home sites is important, any related regulations must be reasonable, appropriate, and justified.

8. When opportunities allow, encourage housing developers to consider issues of accessibility and aging in place standards as part of new home construction.
9. Based on demand, the Town will consider group homes, accessory residential units (e.g., granny flats), senior housing duplexes, and other non-traditional housing arrangements on a case-by-case basis and if deemed consistent with the vision, goals, and objectives of this Plan.

**Recommendations (Action-Oriented Strategies)**

1. The Town of Somerset will act, with the support of the St. Croix County Community Development Department, on situations where housing is grossly deteriorating or debris is collecting to the extent that it is a public nuisance. (short-term)
2. Make available information on housing assistance programs at the Town Hall and/or website. (short-term)

**“Aging in Place”**

Aging in place is the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably regardless of age, income, or ability level.

This concept is not limited to housing design and construction, but includes aspects of other plan elements such as transportation, access to goods and services, and urban design.



## 4. Transportation

A transportation system should safely and efficiently move people and products. Transportation can directly influence a community's growth, or it can be used as a tool to help guide and accommodate the growth that a community envisions. Like the other elements in the plan, transportation is interconnected, especially with land use. Economic, housing, and land use decisions can increase or modify demands on the various modes of transportation (e.g., highways and roads, air, rail, pedestrian, bicycling). Likewise, the transportation decisions, such as the construction of new roadways, can impact accessibility, land values, and land use. And for most smaller communities, maintaining the local transportation system is a very large part of their local municipal budget.

### 4.1 Streets and Highways

The Town of Somerset's transportation system is shown on Map 4-1 with the jurisdiction of each roadway (e.g., town/local, county, state) shown. Streets and highways constitute Town of Somerset's primary mode of transporting people, goods, and services. The primary components of the Town's street and highway network are:

- State Trunk Highway 64 and State Trunk Highway 35 are significant regional transportation routes connecting the Town with the Village of Somerset and the surrounding communities, such as St. Croix Falls, New Richmond, Stillwater, and Hudson. In addition, these two highways also connect the Town to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.
- County Highway H, County Highway I, County Highway V, and County Highway VV also travel through the Town. These County highways provide connections to the State highway system and/or to surrounding communities.
- Local Town roads provide access to abutting lands and to the State, County, and Federal highway system serving the community.

For planning, transportation funding, and design purposes, public roadways are divided into different functional classes, such as arterials and collectors. Factors influencing function include traffic circulation patterns, land use, the land access needs, and traffic volumes. These functional classifications are also often related to ownership and maintenance responsibilities, with the higher roadway classes often being County, State, or federally owned.

The functional road classification system for the Town of Somerset is depicted on Map 4-2 and described in Table 4-1.

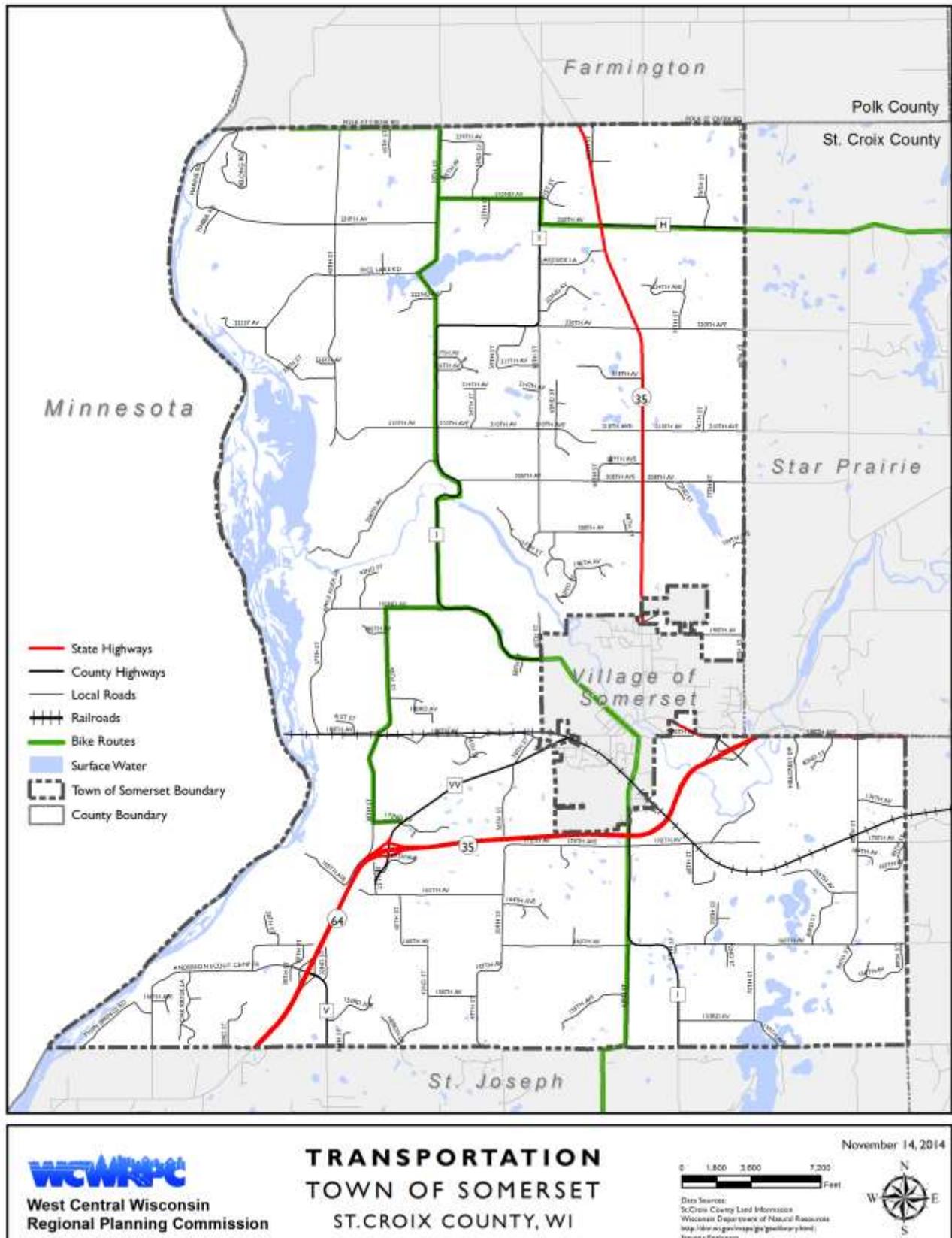
**Table 4-1**  
**Functional Road Classifications, Town of Somerset, 2013**

Functional Class	Approximate Miles
Principal Arterials	12.57
Minor Arterials	0.0
Major Collectors	9.17
Minor Collectors	15.98
Local Roads	107.17

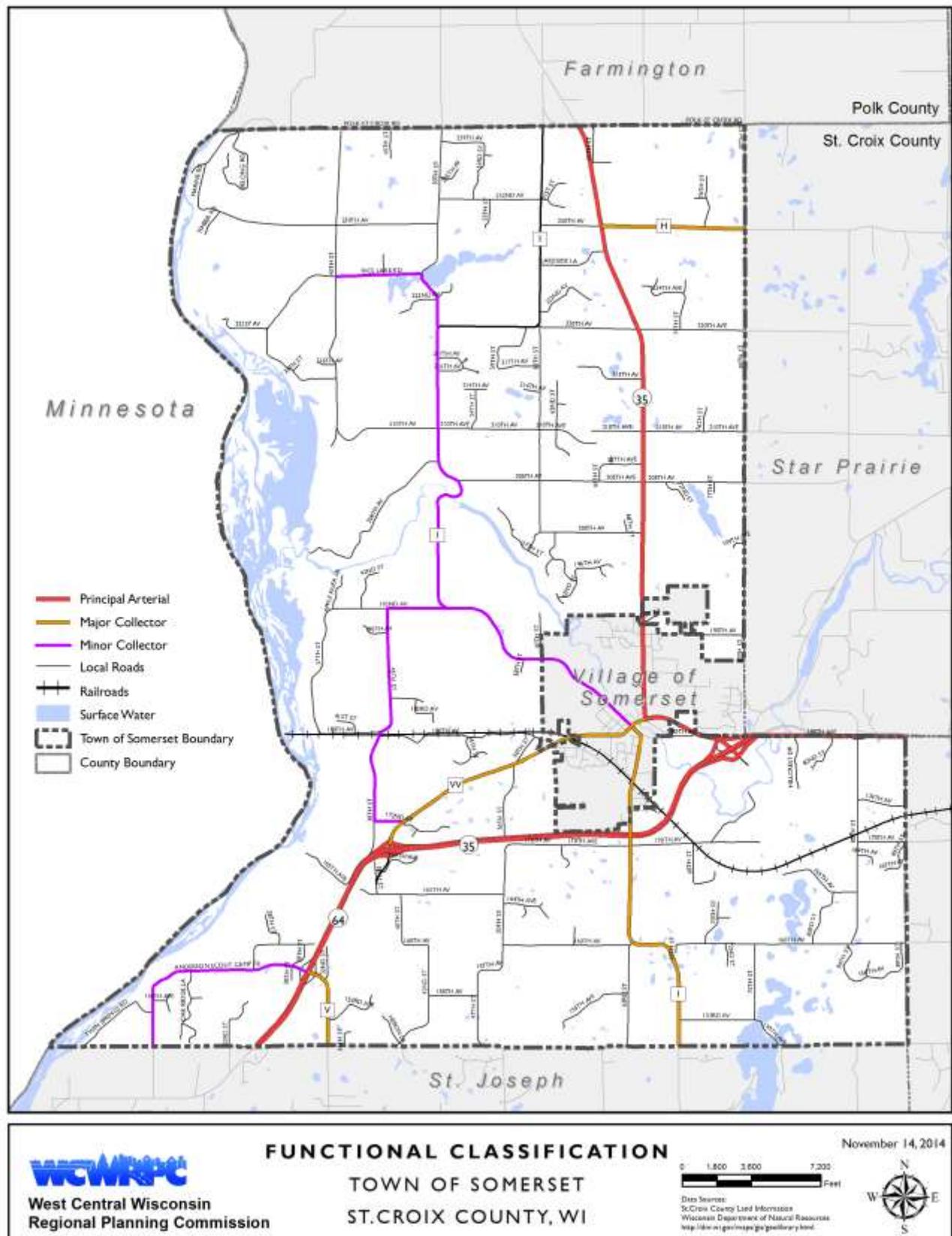
*Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 2014*

# Transportation

Map 4-1 Town of Somerset Transportation System



Map 4-2 Town of Somerset Functional Classification



# Transportation

## Traffic Volume Trends

Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts are conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation every three years. The majority of these counts are focused on State highways, County trunk highways and other higher traffic volume roadways. In 2009, STH 35/64 south of CTH V had an AADT of 15,600 vehicles, with traffic volumes on STH 35/64 decreasing as one travels northeast towards the Village of Somerset. Headed north, STH 35 has a reduction in AADT as it travels north. There are more traffic count locations in 2009 than in 2000. In future years, the Town will be able to analyze AADT changes in these new locations.

**Table 4-2  
Town of Somerset Traffic Counts, selected segments, 2000 & 2009**

Road Segment	2000 ADT	2009 ADT	% change
STH 35 – north of CTH H	3,600	3,200	-11.1%
STH 35 – north of Village of Somerset	5,400	5,700	+5.5%
STH 35/64 – west of Village of Somerset	5,300	8,900	+68.0%
STH 35/64 – south of 165 <sup>th</sup> Ave.	9,400	14,700	+56.4%
CTH W – between V of Somerset and STH 35	n/a	5,200	n/a
STH 35/64 – south of CTH V	11,300	15,600	+38.1%
CTH I – south of Apple Falls Flowage	n/a	890	n/a
CTH I – west of Village of Somerset	n/a	650	n/a
CTH H –east of STH 35	840	510	-39.3%

Source: WisDOT Annual Average Daily Traffic maps, 2000 & 2009

The new St. Croix River Crossing project is scheduled to be completed in 2016. The new bridge crosses the St. Croix River in the Town of St. Joseph, which is located directly south of the Town of Somerset. STH 64 then travels north to the Town of Somerset and through the community. The completion of the bridge will allow safer, faster, and more convenient vehicle transportation between the Somerset area and the Twin Cities. It is anticipated that with the completion of the St. Croix River Crossing there will be an increase in the residential growth east of the crossing, including in the Town of Somerset, as more people choose to live in the area and commute to the Twin Cities.

## Vehicle Use and Commuting Trends

The automobile is the dominant mode of transportation for the residents in the Town of Somerset. According to the most recent census estimates in Table 4-3, 100 percent of the households in the Town have one or more vehicles. Over half of the households (57%) have three or more vehicles. These numbers are for all residents. Households with workers had higher numbers of vehicles available.

**Table 4-3  
Vehicle Availability in the Town of Somerset, 2012**

# of Vehicles Available	Percent of Households
No vehicle	0.0%
1	7.1%
2	35.9%
3	57.0%

source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

The preference for the use of a personal vehicle as a means of transportation to work is clearly

# Transportation

identified in Table 4-4. This preference is also a requirement based on the spatial pattern of the Town, as distances and existing infrastructure to and from other residents, shopping, and employment centers are generally not conducive for walking and biking.

**Table 4-4**  
**Means of Transportation to Work for Town of Somerset Residents, 2012**

Primary Means of Transportation	Percent of Workers
Car, Truck, or Van – Drove Alone	80.9%
Car, Truck, or Van – Carpooled	13.9%
Public Transportation (excluding taxi)	0.0%
Walked	0.5%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or other	0.5%
Worked at home	4.1%

source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

There were no residents in the Town of Somerset that work in the Town of Somerset as shown in Table 4-5; this data excluded farmers. The mean travel time to work for residents is 32.5 minutes. Approximately one-third (32.6%) of all residents travel 45 minutes or more to work. It is anticipated that with the completion of the St. Croix River Crossing that the percentage of workers that work outside State of Wisconsin will increase.

**Table 4-5**  
**Place of Work for Town of Somerset Residents, 2012**

Place of Work (non-farm)	Percent of Workers
Worked within the Town of Somerset	0.0%
Worked in St. Croix County, but outside T. of Somerset	42.3%
Worked outside St. Croix County	2.2%
Worked outside State of Wisconsin	55.6%

source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

## Accident Types and Locations

From 2009 to 2013, 517 vehicular crashes occurred in the Town of Somerset. Over the five year period, the average number of crashes annually was 103. One crash resulted in a fatality and 68 resulted in injuries. Deer were involved in 283 of the 517 crashes, more than half of the total. No bicyclists or pedestrians were involved in any of the crashes. Ninety-one of the accidents occurred at intersections with 34 of those on Highway 35. The location with the most crashes was the intersection of Highway 35 and Highway C. Highway 35 travelers also had the highest percentage of total crashes during the time period (36%) followed by Highway 64 (20%) and Highway I (12%).

## Vehicle Parking

The vast majority of vehicle parking in the Town is located on private property. No public parking concerns were noted during the planning process.

## Truck Freight Service

Over-the-road trucking provides for the vast majority of the freight shipping needs of area manufacturers, retailers, and farmers. The major issues with truck traffic are safety and roadway capacity. The far majority of local truck freight service takes advantage of STH 35 and STH 64, along with the County highways, which are constructed to higher standards than local streets to

# Transportation

accommodate heavier loads. Heavy truck traffic can impact the quality of life along truck and haul routes, as well as discourage the use of roadways for bike traffic. The transport of hazardous materials on the State highways also poses a safety and health threat. No other specific issues or needed road improvements related to truck freight service were identified during the planning process.

## Rustic Road 103

A 2.8-mile Rustic Road has been designated in the northwest part of the Town of Somerset. This route leads to the historic Somerset Landing and features sandstone bluff outcroppings, tree canopies, prairie, and farm views.



Wisconsin's Rustic Road program has three program goals:

- to identify and preserve in a natural and essentially undisturbed condition certain designated roads having unusual or outstanding natural beauty, by virtue of native vegetation along with natural or man-made features associated with the road
- to provide a linear park-like system for vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian travel for quiet and leisurely enjoyment by local residents and the general public alike
- to maintain and administer these roads to provide safe public travel, yet preserve the rustic and scenic qualities through use of appropriate maintenance and design standards, and encouragement of zoning for land use compatibility, utility regulations and billboard control

## 2014 Town of Somerset Public Opinion Survey – Street and Road Network

The public opinion survey provided the following insights into the Town's street and road network:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
3. The overall road network (roads, streets, and highways) in the Town of Somerset meets the needs of its citizens.	15%	73%	9%	3%	1%
4. The Town should designate certain roads as ATV/UTV routes.	19%	37%	20%	12%	12%
5. There should be more biking and walking lanes along public roadways.	29%	38%	17%	8%	8%
6. There should be more off-road biking and walking trails in the Town of Somerset.	30%	40%	13%	7%	10%

Survey respondents provided the following additional insights:

- 61 percent stated that street and road maintenance/snow plowing within the Town was good or excellent. 26 percent rated maintenance/snow plowing as fair.
- 18 percent of stated that “plan effective transportation network” as one of their top 3 most important functions of the Town of Somerset.
- When asked what they liked about living the Town of Somerset, many respondents mentioned the proximity to the Twin Cities. This suggests that the attractiveness of the Town as a place to live could increase once the St. Croix Crossing bridge is open.
- There were a small number of mixed write-in comments regarding the Town's road network.

Most were complimentary to the maintenance and snow plowing of roads, but not all. Two roads in particular were noted as needing paving or repair—230<sup>th</sup> and 160<sup>th</sup>. One respondent suggested an additional highway interchange is needed.



## 4.2 Pedestrians and Bicycling

Pedestrians and bicyclists traffic is not just recreational, but is an alternative to the automobile for many purposes, including commuting to work, shopping, visiting neighbors or service providers, and safe routes to school. Due to the lack of density in the Town, there are very few opportunities to walk and bike for functional reasons. Therefore, the majority of walking and biking for Town residents are for recreational purposes. As the previous survey results showed, 67 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there should be more biking and walking lanes along public roadways within the community. In addition, 70 percent agreed or strongly agreed that there should be more off-road biking and walking trails in the Town.

The Town of Somerset *Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan 2013-2018* includes the following recommendations that also apply to non-recreational bicycle and pedestrian traffic:

- establish bike route signage on heavily travelled roads
- promote connector trails between existing and new developments for pedestrians and bicycles, including between River Hawk Rice to Pine Cliff to Whispering Pines
- develop a comprehensive trail system connecting neighborhoods, bike paths, parks, etc.
- create ADA-compliant accessibility where economically and physically feasible.

Appendix A of the Parks and Recreation Plan identifies the existing bike and pedestrian routes within the Town of Somerset. Outside of Parnell Prairie and the Boy Scout Camp, no off-road trails existing with the Town. Appendix B identifies proposed trail corridors.

The Town of Somerset has been actively participating on the St. Croix Bike and Pedestrian Trails Coalition, which is working collaboratively to support the development of a multi-use pedestrian/bike trail system across St. Croix County. St. Croix County has received grant funding to update the 2008 *St. Croix County Bike and Pedestrian Plan*.

## 4.3 Other Modes of Transportation

The most prevalent of the other, alternative modes of transportation for the Town of Somerset are described here.

### Transit and Specialized Transportation

The Town of Somerset does not have its own public transit system. However, St. Croix County Department of Aging and Aging Disability Resource Center maintains a fleet of vans that provide demand responsive service during limited weekday hours. This service is available in the Village of Somerset. It includes a 14-seat mini-van and is available Monday through Thursday from 10am-1pm.

# Transportation

St. Croix County Aging also coordinates a volunteer, demand-response service for seniors and those with disabilities. The County is also participating in a multi-county collaborative effort working with the New Freedom Transportation Program administered by the Center for Independent Living for Western Wisconsin based in Menomonie. The New Freedom Program provides a volunteer-based, demand responsive transportation service in the County to those persons with disabilities of all ages. 48-hour advance notice is required and wheel-chair assessable vans are not available. County residents ages 60 years and older may also contact Interfaith Caregivers of St. Croix County for transportation services, especially for medical reasons. Specialized Van Transportation ADRC of St. Croix County And Volunteer Medical Transportation Program ADRC of St. Croix County is also located in the County.

An intercity express bus service provided by MetroTransit exists between the Twin Cities to Stillwater on weekdays during rush hours. A Park & Ride Lot is available at the St. Croix Valley Recreation Center. As part of the St. Croix Crossing bridge project, a new Park & Ride Lot is planned for Houlton in the Town of St. Joseph. The possible expansion of transit service from Somerset to St. Paul has been under discussion and is part of the Wisconsin DOT Connections 2030 Plan.

## **Rail Service**

A Canadian National's Rail Line travels through the Town of Somerset. No rail spurs currently exist within the Town of Somerset.

## **Air Service**

The nearest scheduled air passenger service and air freight connections are available at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, located approximately 45 miles to the southwest is the 16<sup>th</sup> busiest airport in the U.S. and offers scheduled passenger service and serves as an air cargo feeder for air freight shipments.

The Town of Somerset's residents or businesses desiring to use commercial air passenger or air cargo services must arrange for ground transportation to these commercial airport facilities. Based on the size of the Town's population, the demand for commercial air services would appear to be adequately met by the facilities at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The New Richmond Regional Airport is the only public airport located in St. Croix County and is the fifth largest municipal airport in Wisconsin with two runways and averaging 122 flights per day and about 180 aircraft based in privately owned hangars.

## **ATV and Snowmobile Routes**

ATV and snowmobile routes have been designated within the Town of Somerset. Designating certain Town roads for ATV/UTV use is not without some resident debate, with 56 percent of survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to such designation and 32 percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

## **4.4 Existing Transportation Plans**

### **State Plans**

#### **Wisconsin State Transportation Plan 2030 (Connections 2030)**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has a statewide long-range transportation plan through the year 2030, called Connections 2030. The plan address all forms of transportation—highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit—and ways to make the individual modes work better as an integrated transportation system.

# Transportation

The overall goal of the planning process is to identify a series of policies to aid transportation decision-makers when evaluating programs and projects.

Connections 2030 differs from WisDOT's previous planning efforts. Beginning with the release of Translinks 21 in the mid-1990s, the Department has prepared a series of needs-based plans for various transportation modes. Connections 2030 is a policy-based plan. The policies are tied to "tiers" of potential financing levels. One set of policy recommendations focuses on priorities that can be accomplished under current funding levels. Another identifies policy priorities that can be achieved if funding levels increase. Finally, WisDOT also identifies critical priorities that must be maintained if funding were to decrease over the planning horizon of the plan. While the final plan includes statewide policy recommendations, some variances exist specific to individual corridors.



In addition to policies related to each transportation mode, Connections 2030 also includes recommendations on cross-cutting issues such as economic development, land use, transportation finance, and the environment. WisDOT's goal is to provide a plan that can aid policy-makers in future transportation decisions. Connection 2030 is the statewide blueprint for future transportation.

Connections 2030 identifies a series of multimodal corridors for each part of the State. Each corridor identifies routes and/or services of several modes such as highways, local roads, rail, air, transit, etc. The multimodal corridors build on the idea of the Corridors 2020 network, first established in 1988, which identified a system of two-lane and multi-lane highways. The network is made up of two subsystems:

- Backbone system: 1,550-mile network of multi-lane highways connecting all major population and economic regions of the State.
- Connector system: 2,100-mile network of high-quality two-lane highways directly linking significant economic and tourism centers to the Backbone system.

Chapter 8 of the Connections 2030 Plan does specifically mention the Somerset area in the context of possible transit service to St. Paul:

- Several metropolitan planning organizations' plans have identified additional corridors where new fixed-guideway transit systems could be implemented, including:
  - » Somerset, Wis. to St. Paul, Minn.
  - » Roberts, Wis. to St. Paul, Minn.
  - » Eau Claire, Wis. to St. Paul, Minn.
- *Mid- to Long-Term Action Item (2014 – 2030)*  
Participate in studies in cooperation with metropolitan planning organizations or local governments for additional fixed-guideway services in other metropolitan areas. Possibilities include Somerset-St. Paul, Roberts-St. Paul, Eau Claire-St Paul,

## Access Management

WisDOT employs three types of access control authorized by State statutes. A short summary of the State statutes follows, but it should be noted that the actual content of the statutes is significantly more detailed, and many special conditions and provisions are not included in this text. The type of access control that is imposed on various highway road segments influences how that segment is managed.

# Transportation

- Wis. Stats. 84.09 (purchase access control) – WisDOT acquires land by gift, devise, purchase or condemnation to establish, extend, or improve transportation facilities.
- Wis. Stats. 84.25 (administrative access control) – WisDOT designates some rural portions of the State trunk highway system as controlled-access highways where studies show that the potential exists for traffic volumes to exceed 2,000 vehicles per 24-hour day.
- Wis. Stats. 84.295 (freeway and expressway access control) – WisDOT designates highways with greater than 4,000 vehicles per day as freeways or expressways when it is determined that the volume and character of traffic warrants the construction or acquisition of right-of-way to accommodate a four-lane highway.

## Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030

Airports, aviation and aviation-related industries play a significant role in the economic success of Wisconsin communities. The Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030 (SASP 2030) provides a framework for the preservation and enhancement of a system of public-use airports adequate to meet current and future aviation needs of Wisconsin.

## Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan – 2020

This is the State's major plan for developing and integrating bicycles into the transportation system. It was adopted by WisDOT in 1998 and looked at creating a system of bikeways using suitable routes along county and State highways. There are no recommendations specific to the Somerset area.

## State Recreational Trails Network Plan

This plan was adopted in 2001 and updated in 2003 by WDNR as an amendment to the Wisconsin State Trail Strategic Plan to identify a network of trail corridors throughout the State consisting of more than 4,000 miles of trails known as the Trail Interstate System. There are no recommendations specific to the Somerset area.

## Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) developed the Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020 to provide a long-range vision addressing Wisconsin pedestrian needs. The Pedestrian Plan provides a basic description of existing and emerging pedestrian needs over the next 20 years, with a set of recommendations to meet those needs. WisDOT's efforts ensure that this plan complements both existing and future long-range transportation plans. There are no recommendations specific to the Somerset area.

## **Regional and Local Plans**

St. Croix County and the Town of Somerset consider applicable State, regional, and local transportation plans in the development of their own respective transportation plans. Both also submit Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) plans to WDOT in order to receive LRIP funding. The Town of Somerset manages its local transportation improvements through its seven-year Road Work Plan.

## St. Croix River Crossing

This project entails the construction of a new MINN 36/WIS 64 bridge across the St. Croix River between Oak Park Heights, MN (Washington Co.) and Houlton, WI (St. Croix Co.) areas. This is one of only two river crossings between Interstate 94 to the south and U.S. Highway 8 to the north. Increasing tourism, commercial, and commuter traffic from the growing Twin Cities have necessitated a significant upgrade in transportation facilities for the area, in addition to the age of the existing lift bridge. Traffic congestion and delays at the existing bridge can become severe during summer

# Transportation

months. The bridge has a daily average traffic volume of 18,600 vehicles according to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

There are also safety concerns with the aging existing lift bridge. Built in 1931, the Stillwater Lift Bridge is on the National Register of Historic Places and has been closed on occasion due to flooding and ice/debris damming. Crash rates in the existing bridge's vicinity are also substantially above Wisconsin averages.

Local discussions regarding the need for a new bridge date back to at least the 1950s; and the more recent planning process for a new crossing has a long history of disputes over location, design, use of the historic bridge, and potential impacts to the riverway. Serious discussions on the replacement of the existing bridge began in the 1980s. Both states jointly completed a Final Environmental Impact Statement for a replacement bridge south of the existing one in 1995. However, environmental groups successfully challenged the project by arguing that the EIS did not fully consider the National Scenic Riverway status of the St. Croix River; and, thus, the project temporarily stalled.



In 2000, the secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Interior and Transportation stepped in to help break the impasse. After six more years of discussion, community input, and planning, the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement was completed in 2006. While such disputes and discussion have undoubtedly delayed the project, it has resulted in a collaboratively designed project considering many diverse perspectives.

The new bridge is expected to be completed and open in 2016. On the Wisconsin side of the River, Wisconsin State Highway 64 improvements will be made as far northeast as 150<sup>th</sup> Street, limiting access to the realigned four-lane highway. A new intersection for STH 35/County "E" will also be

# Transportation

developed. In addition to the construction of a new four-lane bridge, the existing lift bridge will be converted to recreational use and linked to a network of trails on both sides of the St. Croix River. A park and ride lot is also planned at Houlton. Both the trail system and the park and ride lot are expected to be completed in 2017.

Both St. Croix County and the Town of St. Joseph have received growth management mitigation funding as part of the project for planning, education, ordinance development, acquisition of property or easements, and other related mitigation activities within the corridor. These funds are being used to support (and leverage additional funding for) a number of local planning efforts that representatives from the Town of Somerset have been participating in, such as:

- Highway 64 Coalition Stormwater and Wastewater Study
- UW-Extension's Population and Economic Study
- St. Croix County bike and pedestrian planning

## Major Planned Transportation Improvements

### State of Wisconsin and St. Croix County Highways

No major improvements, expansions, or realignments are currently planned for any State or County Highways within the Town of Somerset.

### Town of Somerset Improvements

Planning for local streets and roads is a continual process and improvements may be hastened or delayed due to damage from flooding, winter-related damage, heavy use, or coordination with other infrastructure improvements. The Town of Somerset received a 2014-2015 TRIP-D (now TRID) grant of \$379,133 from Wisconsin DOT for the reconstruction of 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 75<sup>th</sup> Street. The Town's 2014-2012 Road Work Plan included the following projects:

<b><u>2014</u></b>	37 <sup>th</sup> St. from Apple River Lane to 180 <sup>th</sup> Ave.	.75 mi.	\$325,000
	155 <sup>th</sup> Ave. from 47 <sup>th</sup> St. to 42 <sup>nd</sup> St.	.50 mi.	\$100,000
<b><u>2015</u></b>	160 <sup>th</sup> Ave. from Cty. I to 85 <sup>th</sup> St.	1.84 mi.	\$400,000
	75 <sup>th</sup> St. from 160 <sup>th</sup> Ave. to 153 <sup>rd</sup> Ave.	.75 mi.	\$325,000
<b><u>2016</u></b>	40 <sup>th</sup> St. from 216 <sup>th</sup> Ave. to Rice Lake Rd.	.50 mi.	\$275,000
	50 <sup>th</sup> St. from County VV to 180 <sup>th</sup> Ave.	.25 mi.	\$ 35,000
<b><u>2017</u></b>	72 <sup>nd</sup> St. from 205 <sup>th</sup> Ave. to end	.50 mi.	\$ 70,000
	50 <sup>th</sup> St. from County VV to end	.65 mi.	\$ 91,000
<b><u>2018</u></b>	165 <sup>th</sup> Ave. from 38 <sup>th</sup> St. to end	.25 mi.	\$ 35,000
	215 <sup>th</sup> Ave. from Hwy. 35 to end (new blacktop)	.72 mi.	\$100,000
<b><u>2019</u></b>	208 <sup>th</sup> Ave. from County Rd. I toward end (mill & new blacktop)	.75 mi.	\$105,000
	230 <sup>th</sup> Ave. from 40 <sup>th</sup> St. to 50 <sup>th</sup> St. (Reconstruction)	1.00 mi.	\$350,000
<b><u>2020</u></b>	200 <sup>th</sup> Ave. from Hwy. 35 to 60 <sup>th</sup> St. (Reconstruction)	1.20 mi.	\$200,000
<b><u>2021</u></b>	205 <sup>th</sup> Avenue from Hwy. 35 to Cty. Rd.I (Reconstruction)	2.04 mi.	\$400,000

The above project list is subject to modification based on need, funding, or other changing conditions.

# Transportation

The previous project list does not include seal coating, crack filling, and AMZ patch, which the Town does annually as maintenance. Approximately 5.5 to 8 miles of seal coating are performed annually. Crack filling and AMZ patch are applied to various roads over a period of several weeks. Cold patching and shouldering are also considered maintenance.

## 4.5 Transportation Programs

Below is a listing of transportation related programs available to the Town of Somerset.

### State Programs

#### Adopt-A-Highway Program

The Adopt-A-Highway Program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT). The program was initiated to allow groups to volunteer and support the State's anti-litter program in a more direct way. Each qualified group takes responsibility for litter control on a segment of State highway. The group picks up litter on a segment at least three times per year between April 1 and November 1. Groups do not work in dangerous areas like medians, bridges, or steep slopes. In addition, a sign announcing a group's litter control sponsorship can be installed. The State Adopt-A-Highway coordinator should be contacted for further information. Applications and forms are available through the WDOT website.

#### Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER)

PASER is a simple method of rating asphalt and concrete roads on a scale of 1 to 10 and gravel roads on a scale of 1 to 5, based on visual inspection. PASER manuals and a video explain how and why roads deteriorate, and describe proper repair and replacement techniques. PASER ratings can be put into PASERWARE, an easy to use pavement management software. PASERWARE helps to inventory roads and keep track of their PASER ratings and maintenance histories. It also helps to prioritize road maintenance and improvement needs, calculate project costs, evaluate the consequences of alternative budgets and project selection strategies, and communicate those consequences to the public and local officials. Both PASER and PASERWARE are available from the University of Wisconsin's Transportation Information Center at no charge. The Center also offers free training courses. Call 1-800-442-4615 for more information.

#### Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) Program

The Transportation Economic Assistance program provides 50% state grants to governing bodies, private businesses, and consortiums for road, rail, harbor, and airport projects that help attract employers to Wisconsin, or encourage business and industry to remain and expand in the State. Grants of up to \$1 million are available for transportation improvements that are essential for an economic development project. It must be scheduled to begin within three years, have the local government's endorsement, and benefit the public. For more information about this program, contact: Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Division of Transportation Investment Management, phone (608) 266-3488.

#### Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides funding to local governments for trails, paths, routes, and other infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation, such as biking, walking/hiking, boating, and ATVs. Though these programs often have a recreational focus, such facilities can many times be an important component of a community's transportation strategy.

#### Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) administers many of the Federal HUD Community Development Block Grant programs at the State level. This funding includes the CDBG-

# Transportation

Public Facilities program for infrastructure and building projects which may include streets and specialized transportation projects.

## Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Transportation programming efforts in Wisconsin are largely coordinated or funded through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), including the distribution of Federal transportation assistance dollars. Many of these key assistance programs for county and local governments are listed below.

- **General Transportation Aids** return about 30% of all state-collected transportation revenues to local governments for road construction, maintenance, and other related costs
- **Local Roads and Local Bridge Improvement Programs** assist local governments in improving seriously deteriorating roads and bridges.
- **Surface Transportation Program** uses allocated Federal funds for the improvement of Federal-aid-eligible rural and urban roadways.
- **Connecting Highway Aids** are available to municipalities for roadways connecting to the State Trunk Highway system, in particular if increased traffic is experienced.
- **Traffic Signing and Marking Enhancement Grants Program** provides funds to local governments for signage improvements to improve visibility for elderly drivers and pedestrians.
- **Rural and Small Urban Area Public Transportation Assistance** and the **Transit Assistance Program** allocate Federal funds to support capital, operating, and training expenses for public transportation services.
- **Supplemental Transportation Rural Assistance Program** provides Federal funds for the planning, start-up, and expansion of non-urban transit service projects.
- **Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance** funds provide counties with financial assistance to provide transportation services to the elderly and persons with disabilities. Capital funds through the **Section 5310 Program** are also available for non-profits and local governments. A related WisDOT-administered program is **New Freedom**, which provides Federal Transit Administration funds to private and public entities for programs which assist individuals with disabilities to overcome transportation-related barriers so they may get to work.
- **Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP)** provides start-up and development grant funding for projects which connect low-income workers with jobs through enhanced local transportation services. WETAP includes Federal **Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)** Program funding and related requirements.
- **Local Transportation Enhancement Program** funds projects that increase multi-modal transportation alternatives (e.g., bicycling, pedestrian), landscaping/streetscaping, and the preservation of historic transportation structures.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program** funds projects that construct or plan for bicycle or bicycle/pedestrian facilities. This program shares the same application process as the Local Transportation Enhancement Program.
- **Safe Routes to School Program** is a Federal program administered by WisDOT aimed at helping communities to make it safer for children to walk and bike to and from school and to encourage them to do so. In addition to planning grants, implementation of education,



# Transportation

enforcement, engineering, and evaluation programs and projects are also eligible under the program.

- **Airport Improvement Program** combines a variety of resources to fund improvements for the State's public-use airports which are primarily municipally owned. WisDOT is currently encouraging land use planning around airports and a *Wisconsin Airport Land Use Guidebook* is available to assist in these efforts. Additional program and regulatory support is also available through the Federal Aviation Administration.
- **Freight Rail Programs** for the preservation of existing rail service through rail acquisition and rehabilitation, and for the improvement of rail infrastructure.

Each year, WisDOT updates a four-year **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program** of all highway and transit projects that propose to use Federal funds. WisDOT also has a variety of specialty assistance programs, such as Flood Damage Aids, Rustic Roads, County Forest Road Aids, and the Adopt-A-Highway Program. Data for local roads is managed by WisDOT through the Internet-accessible **Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR)**. For further information, contact the WDOT at (715) 836-2891.

## Regional and Local Programs

### Town of Somerset Maintenance Department

The Town's Maintenance Department is responsible for road maintenance, plowing, vehicle maintenance, and various other road and facility maintenance and upkeep.

### St. Croix County Highway Department

The County Highway Department has responsibilities regarding the maintenance and repair of State Highway 35, State Highway 64, County Highway H, County Highway I, County Highway V, and County Highway VV. As of Fall 2014, the County Highway Department identified no major transportation projects or concerns specific to the Town of Somerset, but did have the following improvements scheduled:

- Paving with some spot widening on CTH "C" from Highway 35 north to Bristol Ridge Golf Course.
- Paving with widened shoulders on CTH "H" from Highway 35 to CTH "CC" (less or more depending upon the budget).

### West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWPRC)

The West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission offers highway, rail and airport planning services as well as access control planning, pavement management plans, thoroughfare plans, traffic and parking studies, grant assistance, and pedestrian/bicycle trail planning guidance. Contact WCWRPC for further information.

### Specialized Transportation and Transit Providers

The following programs were discussed previously in Section 4.3 and should be contacted for more information. Information on these programs, including contact information, can be found at the Aging and Disability Resource Center website or by contacting their office.

New Freedom Program – Center for Independent Living for Western Wisconsin

Interfaith Caregivers of St. Croix County

Specialized Van Transportation ADRC of St. Croix County

Volunteer Medical Transportation Program ADRC of St. Croix County

## 4.6 Transportation Goals and Objectives

### *Transportation Goal 1:*

***Provide a safe, efficient, and cost-effective transportation system that supports and compliments existing and planned land uses within the Town of Somerset.***

### **Objectives**

1. Planning for the Town's land uses and transportation network should provide multi-modal linkages between residential areas, employment centers, services, and other destinations throughout the community when safe, practical opportunities allow.
2. Encourage and maintain a safe, reliable, and connected local road system.
3. Guide new growth to developed road systems or preserved rights-of-way when possible.
4. Manage the land use and traffic impacts due to the State Highway 35/64 reconstruction and the St. Croix River Crossing project.



## 4.7 Transportation Policies

The following transportation policies are a mix of decision-making guidance (policies) and recommendations (action-oriented strategies). Highway facilities operated by St. Croix County or State of Wisconsin may not be bound by the policies or recommendations within this plan.

### ***Policies (Decision-Making Guidance)***

1. Maintain an accurate road map of the Town, including future road corridors and connections.
2. Continue to administer minimum design, construction, and maintenance standards for public roads, trails, and (if needed) sidewalks, including:
  - Dead-end roads and long cul-de-sacs should be avoided where possible.
  - New roads should generally intersect at 90 degree angles with no “dog legs.”
  - Road design standards should enhance the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists when feasible.
  - Enforce access controls where necessary to preserve the safe functionality of roadways.
  - Trails should be ADA compliant and accessible by emergency vehicles where economically and physically feasible.
3. Work closely with Wisconsin DOT, St. Croix County, the Village of Somerset, and adjacent towns on evolving highway and transportation issues and planning in the area (e.g., bike trails/routes, Safe Routes to School, maintenance, access/connectivity).

# Transportation

4. Future development plans and road improvements should be evaluated with regard to accommodating the safe and efficient travel of pedestrians and bicycle users. Encourage adequate road shoulders for safe biking and walking. Explore more off-road trails as opportunities allow as recommended in the *Town of Somerset Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan*.
5. Developers shall generally bear an equitable share of the costs for new road and transportation system development, improvements, and extensions.
6. Coordinate road and highway improvement work with utility providers (i.e., electric, gas, cable, broadband).
7. Review of rezoning requests must consider impacts on the existing transportation network. Direct future residential, commercial, and industrial development to roadways capable of accommodating resulting traffic.
8. Adequate off-street parking must be provided for commercial and institutional developments.

## **Recommendations (Action-Oriented Strategies)**

1. Continue to manage the Town's roads using the PASER pavement rating system and WISLR road management database. Maintain a current Town Road Work Plan that is reviewed annually. (ongoing)
2. Continue to work cooperatively with St. Croix County, the Village of Somerset, and adjacent towns for the development of bike and pedestrian trails and routes within the Town of Somerset. Cooperatively engage in productive county and regional efforts to plan for and promote walking and biking connectivity, such as participating in the St. Croix Bike and Pedestrian Trails Coalition and the update of the County's bike and pedestrian plan. Advocate for and build upon the routes and trails identified in the *Town of Somerset Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan*. (ongoing)
3. Continue to monitor resident transportation needs and keep informed on the availability of transportation services and programs offered by private and public agencies in order to make referrals and advocate for such services. (ongoing)
4. Explore the potential adoption of a Town of Somerset Official Map to promote connectivity and preserve possible locations for future roads, rail spurs, trails, and public rights-of-way. (short-term)
5. Consider amending the Town Road Work Plan to include bike and pedestrian improvements (e.g., signage, trail development) as envisioned in the *Town of Somerset Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan*. (long-term)
6. Work with the Wisconsin DOT, Village of Somerset, and other nearby communities to explore and encourage a potential METRO bus line or other transit option to the Somerset area as demand warrants. (long-term)

## 5. Utilities and Community Facilities

Utilities and community facilities provide the foundation on which a community is built and maintained. Utilities may include sanitary sewer, storm water, and water systems as well as electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, and solid waste disposal. Community facilities can vary greatly by community, but typically include parks, schools, libraries, cemeteries, and various health and safety providers (e.g., police, fire, ambulance, hospitals). Special services deemed to be vital to a community, such as day care, may also be included as a community facility though not publically owned.

Utilities and community facilities can also be used to guide growth, encourage development, contribute to quality of life, or help establish community identity. And, combined with roads, the construction, maintenance, and operation of public utilities and community facilities often constitute the largest proportion of a community’s budget.

For all public utilities, local government services, and community facilities that serve the local governmental unit, the location, use, capacity, and approximate timetable to address short-term needs (1-5 years) and long-term needs (5+ years) are identified if available, including expansion, rehabilitation, or new development.

### 5.1 Town Administrative Facilities and Services

The Town Office and Garage for the Town of Somerset are located in the Town Hall at 748 State Highway 35 as shown on Map 5-1 on the following page. This facility includes the Town Clerk’s office, a Planning Commission office, a large kitchen, a large assembly area, and the Town road equipment storage and repair garage. The kitchen and assembly areas are used as a Senior Center and hot lunch program for senior citizens from the area Monday through Thursday in cooperation with the St. Croix County Office of Aging. The Town offers this facility rent-free. There are currently no plans for expansion of this structure, though there has been some discussion on the need for a new Town Hall in the future. The Town has established a fund for the replacement of major equipment that receives an annual budget contribution from Town tax revenue.

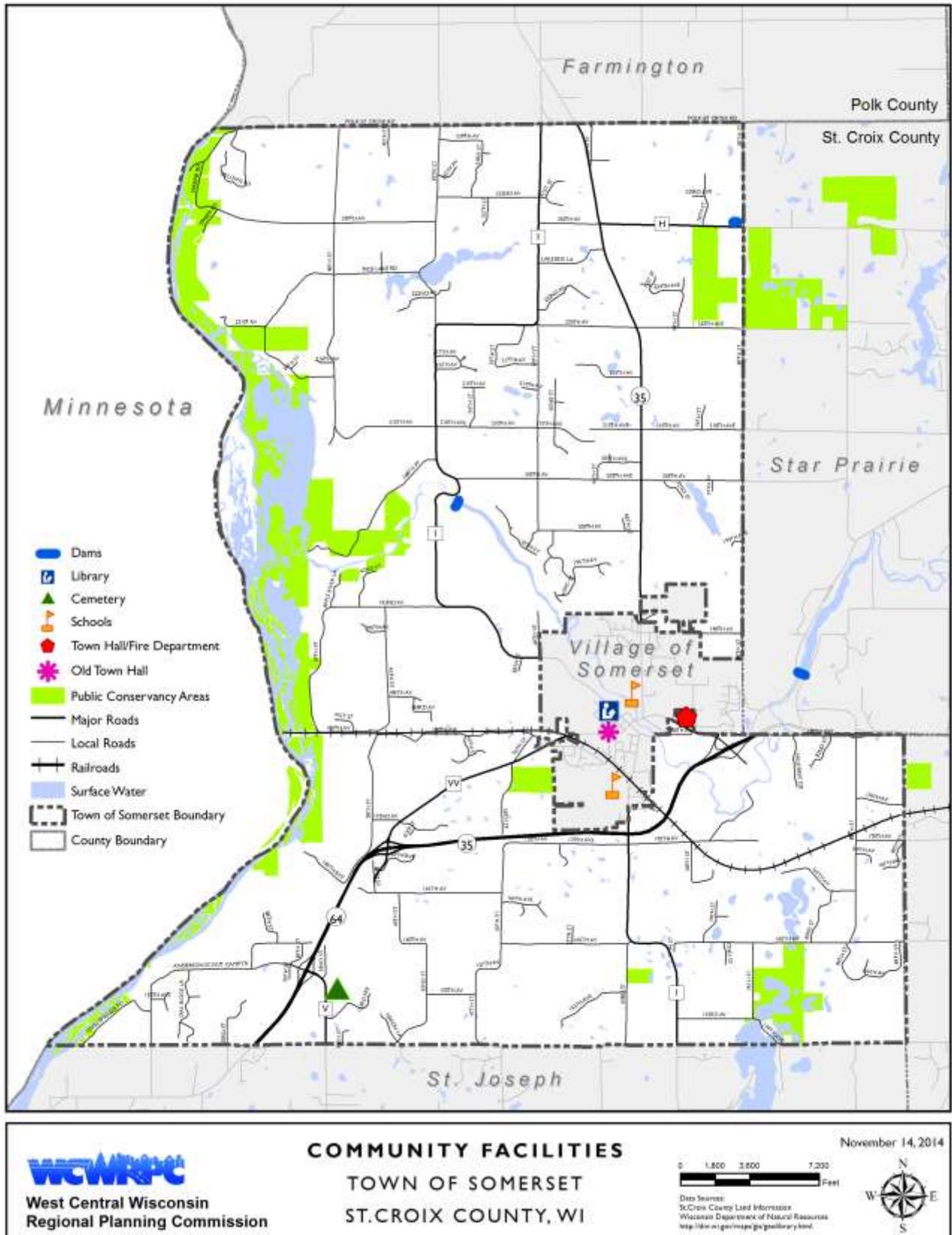
The Town of Somerset government consists of the five supervisors and three committees—Plan Commission, Parks and Recreation Committee, and Transportation and Facilities Committee. The Town also has representatives on other intergovernmental committees, such as the Fire and Rescue Commission. Town staff consists of the Town Clerk/Treasure and a two-person Maintenance Department. The Town’s website can be accessed at [www.townofsomersetwi.com](http://www.townofsomersetwi.com), and details a variety of government related information about the Town.

The Town of Somerset still owns its historic Town Hall located within the Village of Somerset. Significant renovations have been completed at the structure and it is currently used as storage.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	The current 5,750-square foot Town Hall and Garage built in 1968. Also on site is the recycling area and salt/sand storage. Historic Town Hall is under-utilized.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	Identify use(s) for historic Town Hall that is compatible with its historic character.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	Eventual replacement of the current Town Hall/Garage will likely be needed. Specific sites and plans have not been identified, though finding a more centrally located site has been discussed.

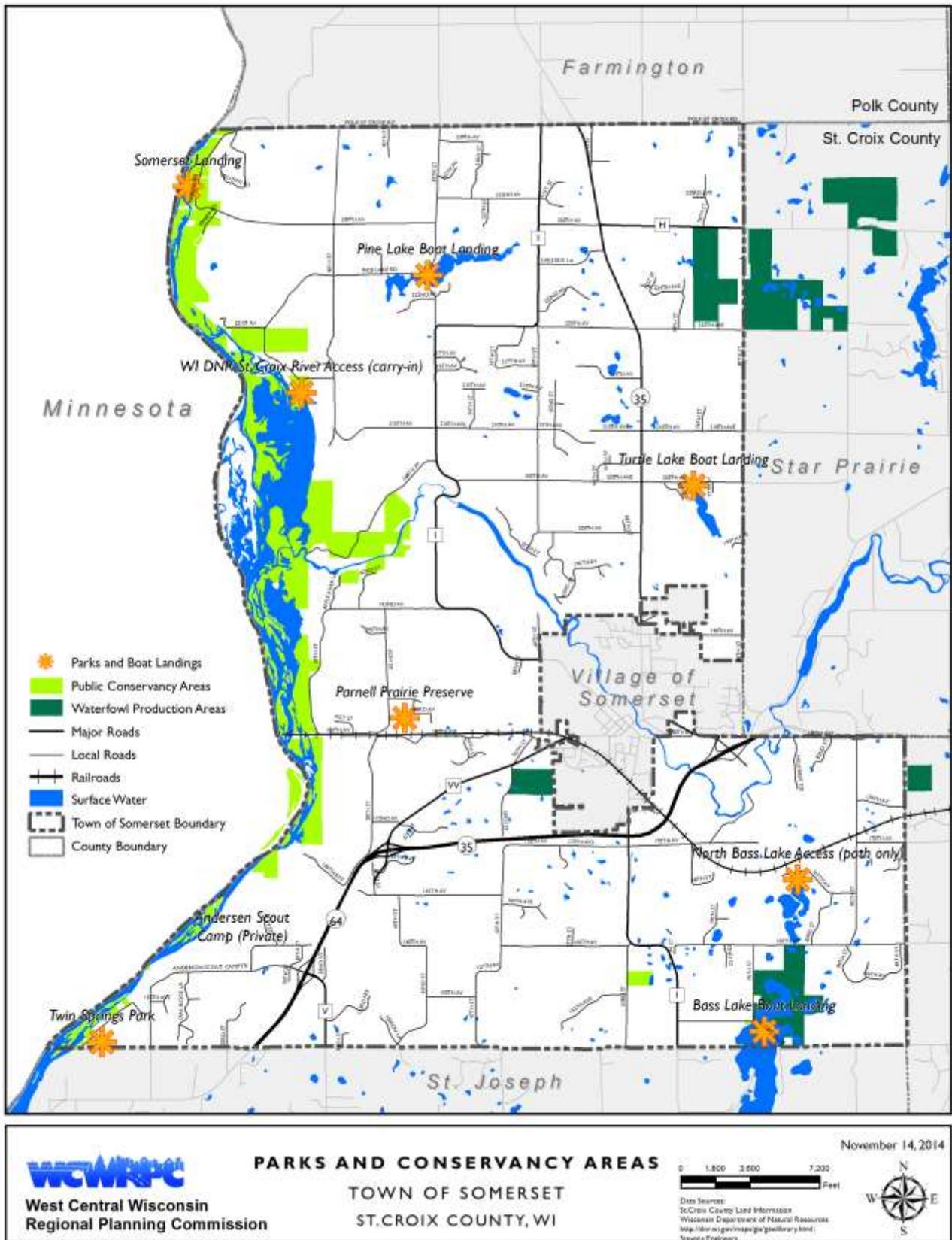
# Utilities & Community Facilities

Map 5-1 Town of Somerset Community Facilities



# Utilities & Community Facilities

Map 5-2 Town of Somerset Parks and Conservation Areas



## 5.2 Sanitary Sewer

All wastewater in the Town of Somerset is managed through private, on-site septic treatment systems.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	There are currently 1,426 private onsite wastewater treatment systems within the Town of Somerset. Private septic systems are closely regulated and periodic pumping is now required. No issues noted.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	The Highway 64 Coalition is currently studying and planning for sewer service and stormwater management within the region. Recommendations from this initiative may recommend action by the Town.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.

## 5.3 Stormwater Management

The goal of stormwater management is to prevent runoff from delivering pollutants or sediment to lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, or adjacent properties. Commonly applied stormwater management tools include: ditches, culverts, grassed waterways, rock chutes, retention basins or settling ponds, curb and gutter, storm sewer, and construction site erosion control. There have been significant changes in State law over the past decade that now require more stormwater management and erosion control planning. Newer techniques, such as bio-retention, rain gardens, and permeable pavements, are also becoming more common.

While each new development presented to the Town Plan Commission and Town Board is examined carefully, it is the St. Croix County Community Development Department that brings expertise to matters of storm water management since the Town of Somerset is under County ordinances.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	Largely addressed on a project-by-project basis. No current issues noted.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	The Highway 64 Coalition is currently studying and planning for sewer service and stormwater management within the region as described on the following page. Recommendations from this initiative may suggest action by the Town.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	Maintain awareness of evolving trends and new technologies.

## 5.4 Public Water Supply

Potable water within the Town of Somerset is obtained through individual, private wells. A few scattered wells experienced ran dry during the 2009-2010 drought years. No new high capacity wells have been installed in the community during the past ten years. From recent testing, water quality is good. There are no atrazine prohibition areas within the Town; the closest such area is located northeast of New Richmond. Groundwater is discussed more within the Agriculture, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	95% of the comprehensive plan survey respondents stated that it is important or essential that the Town use regulations to protect groundwater.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	Continue to promote well and radon testing.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.

## HIGHWAY 64 STORMWATER AND WASTEWATER COALITION

The Highway 64 Stormwater and Wastewater Coalition's was formed in the Summer 2013 with a mission to become a productive recommending body that has the ability to positively impact the region through the coordinated efforts of each of its members. The Coalition is working to form a common understanding of the region's growth and to coordinate strategies associated with the collection, treatment, and disposal of wastewater and stormwater.

As of December 2014, the following municipalities are part of the Coalition:

Town of Somerset  
Town of St. Joseph  
Village of Deer Park  
Village of Somerset  
City of New Richmond  
Town of Richmond  
Town of Stanton  
Town of Star Prairie

Also as of December 2014, a draft *Scoping and Funding Document* has been prepared with recommendations for future Coalition activities and studies. This document is primarily a "plan to plan"; it offers few insights that will inform the Town's current comprehensive planning effort. It includes a cursory review of existing systems and generally describes the existing regulatory framework. The document suggests that the Bass Lake area may be a candidate for a common wastewater system or extension from nearby existing wastewater treatments facilities.

Draft recommendations include:

- Prepare population projections for each community based on the UW-Extension report, plus spatial distribution of new residents based, in part, on local comprehensive plans.
- Development of a sewer service area plan and address how sewer will be provided in rural areas.
- Review existing stormwater regulations and prepare a stormwater water quality plan for each coalition community; most of the stormwater assessment focuses on urban water quality.
- Complete an erosion assessment of the Apple and Willow River channel corridors.
- Complete a riparian corridor assessment with the purpose of identifying existing and potential stream buffers.
- Conduct a restorable wetland feasibility assessment.
- Evaluate current water resources management ordinances.
- Complete a rural water quality assessment and prepared watershed plans for communities and the watershed.

No decision has been made by the Coalition regarding the draft recommendations.

## 5.5 Solid Waste Management & Recycling

Each property owner or household individually contracts for garbage collection. Olson Sanitation and Waste Management provide curbside collection. Recycling drop-off is available on Saturdays behind the Town Hall. St. Croix County Community Development Department organizes the County's Clean Sweep and Hazardous Waste Collection Program for the collection of hazardous waste, tires, and appliances from households, farms, and small businesses on 2-3 days each year. Pharmaceutical collection is available at many locations in the County, including at the Somerset Police Department five days a week.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	The use of the recycling and Clean Sweep programs has been increasing among Town residents. 70% of comprehensive plan survey respondents rated garbage service/recycling as good or excellent.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	Continue to encourage residents to use the recycling and Clean Sweep programs.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.

## 5.6 Parks and Outdoor Recreation

The Town of Somerset is blessed with many outdoor recreation opportunities that contribute to the community's identity and the high quality of life enjoyed by its residents. The majority of the public outdoor recreation lands and conservancy areas shown previously on Map 5-2 are owned and managed by the Federal and State government. Most significant is the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway managed by the National Park Service.

The Town maintains four outdoor recreational facilities:

**Twin Springs Park**—At 1478 Twin Springs Road, the Town of Somerset has developed a boat launch and parking area in cooperation with the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway administration that allows public access to the St. Croix River at the southern Town boundary. This facility is supported through income generated by the sale of yearly launch and parking permits issued by the Town. The National Park Service operates and supports a boat launch and parking area that provides access to the St. Croix River at the Town's northern boundary.

**Turtle Lake Boat Landing**—This is a small boat landing is available on 52-acre Turtle Lake located about 1.5 miles north of the Village of Somerset at 751 205<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**Pine Lake Boat Landing**—Located in the north-central part of the Town at 2249 50<sup>th</sup> Street on the 89-acre Pine Lake, this is a boat landing with dock/fishing pier and shoreline fishing opportunities.

**Parnell Prairie Preserve**—Located at 1823 45<sup>th</sup> Street, this park opened in 2010 as a cooperative effort between the Town and Village on a reclaimed dump site. The Preserve includes 30 acres of



# Utilities & Community Facilities

restored prairie and 1.4 miles of mowed hiking paths/cross-country ski trails. It is also available for hunting under WDNR rules. The Preserve is open 5 AM to 10 PM. A gravel parking lot and information signage is available at the trailhead.

The Town of Somerset assesses a \$400 park fee for each lot created in the community. In the past twenty years, the Town of Somerset has donated \$57,000 of accrued park fees to the Village of Somerset to support development of parks serving recreational activities for both the Village and the Town of Somerset.

The *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan 2013-2018* provides a complete inventory of the outdoor recreational facilities within the community, as well as related recommendations. This plan is available online at the Town's website, as well as additional information regarding recreational facilities within the community. Bike, pedestrian, snowmobile, and ATV/UTV routes and trails were discussed previously within the Transportation Element.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	52% of comprehensive plan survey respondents rated parks and recreation services in the Town as good or excellent; 30% rated these services as fair. As the population increases, so will the demand for outdoor recreation opportunities. Additional river access on the St. Croix and Apple is desired. See <i>Town of Somerset Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan 2013-2018</i> .
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	See <i>Town of Somerset Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan 2013-2018</i> . Care will also be needed to ensure that development, commercialization, and over-use does not threaten or degrade the quality of the outdoor recreation facilities and natural resources of the community.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	See <i>Town of Somerset Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan 2013-2018</i> . Update this Plan once every five years, or more often if needed.



## 5.7 Communications and Broadband

Telephone service within the Town of Somerset is principally provided by Northwest Communications, Company with additional service provided by Frontier Communication, Centurytel, and AT&T. An increasing number of households are solely using mobile telephone service rather than the traditional fixed, land lines.

The siting of new wireless telecommunication towers is a growing issue in the State of Wisconsin and new State laws in 2013 limited a local government's ability to regulate siting. The need to construct additional towers is being driven by advancements in mobile telephone technology, additional demand for mobile

telephone service, and increased numbers of service providers competing to supply that increased demand. The popularity of the handheld digital phone is the primary reason that more towers are needed. These phones require more towers to operate than the older cellular telephone.

In addition to telephone communications, broadband Internet has become part of the daily lives of residents and required for most businesses. Fast, reliable broadband is now a quality of life issue. This is also important for bedroom communities that have a large number of commuters who are interested in working from home. Broadband can be provided through fixed lines (e.g., xDSL through

# Utilities & Community Facilities

phone lines, cable modem, fiber optics) or wireless (e.g., satellite, mobile towers). Most of the Town has xDSL service available through phone lines with advertised speeds of 10-25 mbps<sup>2</sup>. There is no cable modem or fiber-to-the-door within the Town. There is also no fixed wireless service, making mobile wireless (often more expensive) or satellite (sometimes less reliable depending on topography or vegetation) service the primary wireless options.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	While a few areas of the Town are without broadband service, broadband <u>speed</u> and <u>reliability</u> were arguably the most significant utility and community facilities concern identified during the planning effort. Residents complained of low speeds and frequent service interruptions. 37% of comprehensive plan survey respondents rated high speed internet/broadband service as poor and another 27% gave it only a fair rating.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	Improved broadband speeds and reliability.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	Changing technologies may influence regulation of communications facilities and offer new opportunities for improved service.

## 5.8 Electric and Power Facilities

The Town is provided electric service by Excel Energy, St. Croix Electric Cooperative, Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, and Dairyland Power. Midwest Natural Gas currently provides natural gas to many parts of the Town, while other residents use propane.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	Propane and natural gas prices during Winter 2013-2014 sky-rocketed, which became a hardship for many residents; no related strategies for the Town were identified.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.

## 5.9 Cemeteries

The Town is home to one cemetery—German Lutheran Emmanuel Cemetery—that is maintained by its Cemetery Association.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	No issues identified.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.

<sup>2</sup> The current FCC standard for minimum download speed is 4 Mbps (megabytes per second). The FCC is considering raising this minimum to 10 Mbps. For comparison, Netflix currently recommends a minimum download speed of 5 Mbps to stream a video in HD.

# Utilities & Community Facilities

## 5.10 Health Care and Senior Housing Facilities

The nearest **health care facility** is the Somerset Clinic (Stillwater Medical Group) located in the Village of Somerset. Hospital and emergency care is also available in New Richmond, Stillwater, and Osceola. Optical and dental care is also available in these communities.

For **nursing care**, the St. Croix County Health Center northwest of New Richmond is the largest public nursing home in the area with 50 beds. The Deerfield Care Center in New Richmond has 61 additional beds. The Christian Community Home has facilities in Osceola (40 beds) and Hudson (81 beds).

Additional senior and specialized care housing in the areas within St. Croix County by zip code include:

- **Adult Family Homes:** Somerset (1 home with 4 beds), New Richmond (12 homes with 48 beds total), Hudson (13 homes with 46 beds total)
- **Community Based Residential Facilities (CBRFs):** New Richmond (4 facilities with 48 beds total), Hudson (7 facilities with 180 beds total)
- **Residential Care Apartment Complexes (RCACs):** New Richmond (2 complexes with 29 beds total), Hudson (2 complexes with 93beds total)

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	The Town's median age is higher than that of St. Croix County overall. By 2035, the County's population aged 65 years or more is projected to double to over 20,000 seniors. 72% of comprehensive plan survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that more senior housing (designed for the needs of older persons) is needed in the Town.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	Revisit existing ordinances to allow for senior housing facilities and alternatives, if compatible with nearby land uses.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	Demand for senior housing will increase as the population ages. Existing capacity within the area unlikely to be sufficient to meet area demand.

## 5.11 Child Care Facilities

There are eight child care facilities licensed for 153 children with a Somerset address (zip code 54025). An additional twelve facilities with a New Richmond address (54017) are licensed for 567 children. No licensed facilities have a Houlton address (54082). To the knowledge of Town officials, these facilities and services are currently meeting the needs of residents.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	No issued identified.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.

## 5.12 Schools and Libraries

### School District of Somerset

The Town is primarily served by the School District of Somerset. The New Richmond School District and Osceola School District also serve small areas of the Town. The Somerset School District has been experiencing steady growth.

# Utilities & Community Facilities

The Somerset District had the following 2013-2014 enrollments:

Pre-Kindergarten	-	8 students
4-Year Old Kindergarten	-	79
Kindergarten	-	121
Grades 1-4	-	443
Grades 5-8	-	451
Grades 9-12	-	488

Three additions to school facilities were recently approved by referendum and completed in 2013. The Elementary School is currently near or at capacity.

### **Private Schools and Higher Education**

St. Anne Grade School is located in the Village of Somerset and offers classes for 4-year old Kindergarten through eighth grade. The School's 2013-2014 enrollment was 124 students.

### **Higher Education**

The Town is located in the Wisconsin Indianhead Vocational District. The nearest facility is located in the City of New Richmond. The University of Wisconsin system serves western Wisconsin with a number of campuses. The nearest four-year campuses are UW-Stout and UW-River Falls.

### **Libraries**

There are nine libraries in St. Croix County. The closest library is in the Village of Somerset, 208 Hud St., Somerset, in a structure built in 1993. The library is supported by the Village of Somerset and monies provided by St. Croix County; the Town of Somerset contributes indirectly through taxes paid to the County.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	Somerset Elementary School at capacity. 64% of comprehensive plan survey respondents rated the schools good or excellent, with 23% having no opinion. The library is approximately 3,500 s.f. in size, with the State recommending an expansion to 16,000 s.f. to meet 20 year needs.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	Continue to maintain communication with school district and library. The library is considering expansion, but a firm timeline has not yet been determined.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	If District continues to grow in population, additional space may be needed in future, especially at the Elementary School.

## 5.13 Emergency Services and Planning

### **Police Services**

Law enforcement and protective services are provided by the St. Croix Sheriff's Department. Statewide law enforcement mutual aid exists if needed.



### **Fire Protection and Rescue Services**

Fire protection and rescue services for the Town are provided by the Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) which serves the Town of Somerset and the Village of Somerset. The department is housed in a large structure attached to the Somerset Town Hall. The FRS has been in this location since 1970. This is a volunteer department consisting of a Chief,

# Utilities & Community Facilities

Deputy Chief, 2 Captains, 19 Firefighters/Medical personnel, and a high school Cadet. All fire departments in St. Croix County participate in the Wisconsin Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) if assistance is needed.

## Emergency Medical Services

In addition to the Fire Department's rescue personnel, ambulance and EMT services are provided by Lakeview Ambulance Service.

## 9-1-1 Emergency Communications

St. Croix County has a single emergency dispatch for the entire county, including the Town of Somerset. The St. Croix County Emergency Communications Center provides the vital communications link between those needing emergency services and fire, law enforcement, and emergency medical services in the County. Enhanced 9-1-1 and a Reverse 9-1-1 system are available if needed.

## Hazardous Materials Planning and Response

The St. Croix County Emergency Management Division assists with the coordination of all emergency management and hazardous materials activities throughout the entire county.

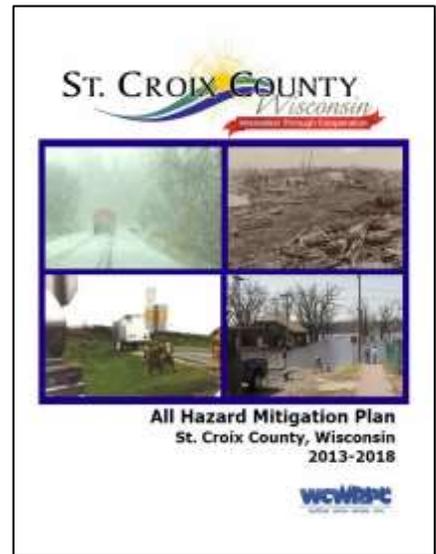
## Town of Somerset Emergency Operations Plan

This plan identifies procedures, roles, responsibilities, and contact information in case of a large emergency or disaster event.

## St. Croix County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan

The Town is included within the *St. Croix County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan* and adopted the plan in March 2013. Adoption of the plan is a prerequisite for certain FEMA mitigation grant programs. The included the following hazard concerns specific to the Town of Somerset:

- Areas of flooding concern and dam shadows. See floodplain discussion in Natural Resources element.
- Manufactured Home Park may be a good candidate for a community safe room/storm shelter.
- Closed depressions and karst topography poses a groundwater contamination risks from hazardous materials.
- Snow drifting can be especially bad along 230<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- The Town is located within the 50-mile Ingestion Pathway Zone of Prairie Island Nuclear facility.



<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	No issues noted.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	1. Periodically revisit and update the Town Emergency Operations Plan. Officials listed in the plan should have basic levels of Incident Command System (ICS) training. 2. Identify or develop a community storm shelter should opportunities arise.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	Work with Somerset Fire Protection and Rescue Services to develop a capital equipment replacement plan.

## 5.14 Dams and Flood Controls

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Dam Safety Program, two dams exist within the Town of Somerset. A small, unrated dam structure exists on a small seepage pond in the northeast part of the Town. Of greater concern is the larger Apple River Falls Dam owned by Xcel Energy, which is rated as a significant hazard. The Apple River Falls Dam is highly regulated, inspected regularly, and has an emergency action plan on file with St. Croix County Emergency Support Services Department. The Apple River Falls Dam is located approximately 6.59 miles downstream of the Riverdale Dam and 2.32 miles upstream of the backwaters of the St. Croix River. The inundation area for a failure of the Apple River Falls Dam could be slightly larger than the 100-year floodplain for the first mile downstream, but would closely follow the 100-year floodplain boundary thereafter to the St. Croix River. The dam power plant itself is within the inundation area, as well as 5 to 6 structures closer to the mouth of the River where it joins with the St. Croix River. Should a failure occur, less time would be available for evacuation compared to the Riverdale Dam. Flood conditions would begin in 10-12 minutes at the mouth of the Apple River and peak flooding would occur within 30 minutes, likely allowing less 10 minutes or less to evacuate the 5 to 6 structures just upstream of the confluence before flooding begins.

Though the Riverdale Dam is not located in the Town, it is also of concern to residents. This high-hazard dam is located approximately 2-3 miles upstream of the Village of Somerset on the Apple River. The inundation area for the first 2 to 3 miles downstream of the dam, should a failure occur, is significantly larger than the high hazard floodplain area.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	No issues noted. Closely regulated.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.

## 5.15 Other Governmental Facilities

The Town of Somerset is served by the Village of Somerset Post Office, 750 Rivard Street, Somerset, WI.

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	No issues noted.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.

## 5.16 Civic Organizations and Other Privately-Owned Facilities

### Civic Organizations

There are a number of civic organizations and other clubs located in the area, such as chambers of commerce, Lions Clubs, 4-H Clubs, conservation groups, etc. Coordination with these groups with regard to planning or implementing programs should be considered and utilized whenever possible because of the guidance, funding, support, and volunteer efforts the groups may provide. Civic organizations provide local governments a cost effective way to leverage tax dollars for community projects.

# Utilities & Community Facilities

The most prominent privately-owned facilities available to the public active within the Town of Somerset are:

- German Lutheran Emmanuel Church and Cemetery
- St. Croix National Golf Club
- Fred C. Anderson Scout Camp (Boy Scouts of America)

<b>Use/Capacity:</b>	No issues noted.
<b>Short-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.
<b>Long-Term Needs:</b>	None identified.

## 5.17 Other Utilities and Community Facilities Plans and Programs

### Assistance to Firefighting Grant Program

This program is administered by the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The program assists rural, urban, and suburban fire departments to increase the effectiveness of firefighting operations, expand firefighting health and safety programs, purchase new equipment, and invest in EMS programs. For information regarding the grant contact FEMA Grant Program staff at 1-866-274-0960. For the most current information regarding grant awards and any other USFA projects, visit [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov).

### Aids for the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks

Funds are available to assist local communities acquire and develop public outdoor recreation areas as per s. 23.09 (20), Wis. Stats. Counties, towns, cities, villages, and Indian Tribes with an approved Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan are eligible to apply. The program is offered by the WDNR, Bureau of Community Financial Assistance. There is a 50% local match required. Awards are granted on a competitive basis. Acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas are eligible projects. Priority is given to the acquisition of land where a scarcity of outdoor recreation land exists.

### Brownfields Initiative

The Brownfields Initiative provides grants to persons, businesses, local development organizations, and municipalities for environmental remediation activities for brownfield sites where the owner is unknown, cannot be located, or cannot meet the cleanup costs. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation should be contacted for further information.

### Clean Water Fund Program

Funds are available to protect water quality by correcting existing wastewater treatment and urban storm water problems and preventing future problems as per s. 281.58 and 281.59, Wis. Stats. Cities, towns, villages, counties, town sanitary districts, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and federally-recognized tribal governments are eligible to apply. Eligible projects include construction of treatment works, sewer systems, interceptors, and urban stormwater runoff treatment systems. Projects that are necessary to prevent violation of discharge permits, meet new or changed discharge limits, or correct water quality or human health problems in unsewered areas may receive priority for funding. Low interest loans are available for planning, design, and construction of wastewater treatment projects and urban storm water runoff projects approved by the Department. The program is offered by the WDNR, Bureau of Community Financial Assistance.

# Utilities & Community Facilities

## **Community Development Block Grant Blight Elimination and Brownfield Redevelopment Program (CDBG-BEBR)**

The Blight Elimination and Brownfield Redevelopment Program is designed to assist communities with assessing or remediating the environmental contamination of an abandoned, idle, or underused industrial or commercial facility or site in a blighted area, or one that qualifies as blighted. Critical to obtaining a grant is a redevelopment plan that describes how the property will be reused for commercial or industrial development that results in jobs and private investment in the community. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation should be contacted for further information.

## **Community Development Block Grant for Public Facilities (CDBG-PF)**

The Wisconsin CDBG Public Facilities Program is designed to assist economically distressed, smaller communities with public facility improvements. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, publicly-owned utility system improvements, streets, sidewalks, and community centers. Federal grant funds are available annually. The maximum grant for any single applicant is \$750,000. Grants are only available up to the amount that is adequately justified and documented with engineering or vendor estimates. For more information on this program contact the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

## **Community Development Block Grant Public Facilities for Economic Development (CDBG-PFED)**

The CDBG Public Facilities for Economic Development Program helps underwrite the cost of municipal infrastructure necessary for business development that retains or creates employment opportunities. Eligible activities are improvements to public facilities such as water systems, sewerage systems, and roads that are owned by a general or special purpose unit of government, and which will principally benefit businesses, and which as a result will induce businesses to create jobs and invest in the community. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation should be contacted for further information.

## **Household and Agricultural Hazardous Waste Collection Grant (Clean Sweep)**

Funds are available to municipalities to create and operate local "clean sweep" programs for the collection and disposal of hazardous waste. Any type of program for the collection and disposal of hazardous wastes, including permanent collection programs, is eligible. The program is offered from the WDNR, Bureau of Community Financial Assistance and is managed locally through St. Croix County.

## **Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)**

TIF can help a municipality undertake a public project to stimulate beneficial development or redevelopment that would not otherwise occur. It is a mechanism for financing local economic development projects in underdeveloped and blighted areas. Taxes generated by the increased property values pay for land acquisition or needed public works. Town governments in Wisconsin now have the authority to create TIF districts for a limited variety of specific uses.

## 5.18 Utilities and Community Facilities Goals and Objectives

### *Utilities and Community Facilities Goal:*

***Support and maintain existing community facilities and anticipate public needs and desired for new or expanded facilities.***

### **Objectives**

1. Utilities, community facilities, and public services should be planned and maintained in a manner that protects the health, safety, and general welfare of residents and property owners, while contributing to the community's quality of life.
2. Continue to partner with the School District, Library, utility providers, service providers, and adjacent communities to provide services in an efficient, cost-effective manner and avoid unneeded duplication of facilities and services.
3. Return on investment and long-term maintenance/operating costs should be considered and planned for before creating or expanding a new facility or service. Some benefits are difficult to quantify and a positive financial return may not be necessary or definable in all instances.

## 5.19 Utilities and Community Facilities Policies

### **General Policies and Recommendations**

1. When evaluating investments in outdoor recreation facilities, community services, and other public amenities, consider the potential long-term positive impacts to the community's quality of life and attractiveness to residents, visitors, and employers/business investors. Continue to maintain an up-to-date description of key services and amenities at the Town's website. (policy)
2. Maintain a "dig once" goal, so that private infrastructure is installed concurrently with public road and infrastructure improvements. Contact providers when such projects are planned. (policy)
3. Explore the creation and adoption of a Town official map that could preserve rights-of-way and lands for utilities, public facilities, and parks, as well as future roads. (short-term)

### **Town Facilities**

4. Continue to consider options for a future, more centralized location for a new Town Hall and Town Maintenance Shop, possibly to include room for the Senior Center and meal site. If a property becomes available and is deemed appropriate, consider acquisition. It may be advantageous if the property includes adequate land for public outdoor recreational use and community events, as well as being located on a recreational trail or route. (ongoing)



# Utilities & Community Facilities

## ***Wastewater/Septic, Stormwater Management, and Water***

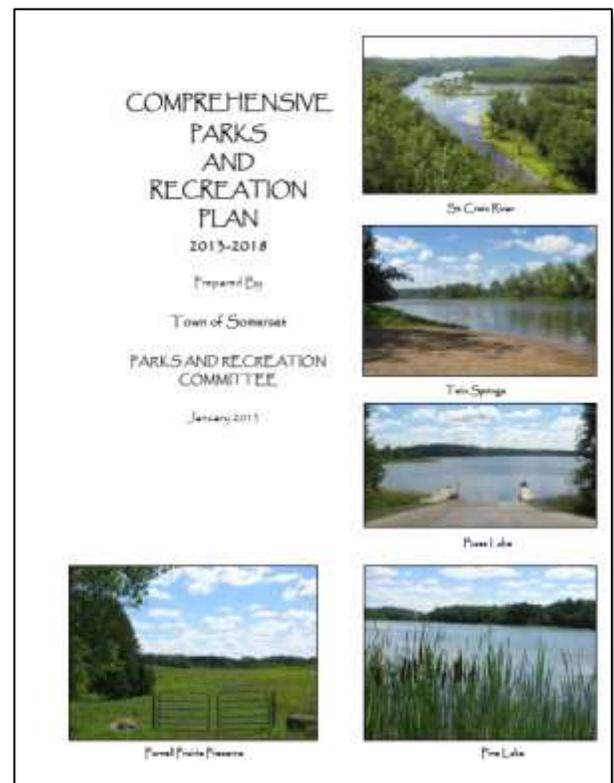
5. The Town of Somerset will not allow holding tanks for septic waste for new construction. Holding tanks will be allowed for remedial action on existing structures with proper monitoring and pumping.
6. Continue to support and locally promote septic pumping requirements and water testing programs administered by St. Croix County Land Use & Conservation Division. Encourage residents to also test for radon and increase local awareness of related risks. (ongoing)
7. Continue to participate in the Highway 64 Wastewater and Stormwater Coalition planning for wastewater/septic and stormwater facilities within the larger area. Advocate for projects that are consistent with and support the vision, goals, and objectives of this comprehensive plan, if they are in the best interests of the community. (ongoing)

## ***Solid Waste Management and Recycling***

8. The Town of Somerset will promote reuse, waste reduction, and composting to reduce the amount of waste disposal.
9. The Town of Somerset will require the proper recycling and disposal of waste.
10. Continue to advertise and encourage residents and businesses to use the recycling facility and Clean Sweep programs. (ongoing)

## ***Parks and Outdoor Recreation***

11. During land use permitting and zoning decisions, ensure that the quality of the public outdoor recreational lands in the Town are used in a manner that is compatible with and does not unduly detract from the character of these natural areas and the overall experience of users. If needed, engage St. Croix County, Wisconsin DNR, the National Park Service, and nearby communities in a discussion of design, regulatory, and management options to protect sensitive features, prohibit over-commercialization, and prevent over-use. (policy)
12. Continue to actively evaluate, plan for, and improve outdoor recreational facilities within the community through the Town of Somerset Parks and Recreation Committee. (ongoing)
13. Implement the recommendations identified within the *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan 2013-2018*. Include projects that: (i) increase access to the St. Croix and Apple Rivers for boating, canoeing, and kayaking; (ii) add more open park areas, like at Parnell's Prairie, (iii) improve bicycle and pedestrian route and trail connections, and (iv) protect the quality of public outdoor recreational areas. (short- & long-term)
14. Review and update the *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan 2013-2018* at least once every five years. (long-term)



# Utilities & Community Facilities

## ***Communications and Broadband***

15. If there is sufficient public interest, form an ad hoc committee to further explore broadband issues and needs in the community. Reach out and collaborate with providers to identify barriers to improving service and available alternatives, including any priorities that may be grant eligible. Treat the community as a market and develop a business case for private broadband investment. Consider organizing a “broadband open house” or similar event that brings together residents, business owners, and Internet service providers to increase awareness of available broadband alternatives and to discuss related needs. Also consider any policy actions that the Town may take, such as adopting a joint trench-use policy. (short-term)

## ***Senior Housing Facilities***

16. Land use regulations and enforcement should allow for and encourage the development and operation of senior housing facilities (e.g., nursing homes, CBRFs, group homes) in the Town, if the proposed facility: (i) can be physically accommodated at the site, (ii) does not create significant use conflicts, and (iii) is designed and operated in a manner that is compatible with the Town’s rural character. (policy)

## ***Schools and Libraries***

17. Maintain open communications and partnerships with the Somerset Public Schools and the Somerset Public Library that benefits Town residents. (policy)

## ***Emergency Services and Planning***

18. Continue to support the joint fire/rescue service in cooperation with the Village of Somerset. Maintain open lines of communication with the fire/rescue service to anticipate future needs and encourage the planning for future capital projects and equipment replacement. (policy)

## 6. Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

This element of the *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan* presents the goal, objectives, and strategies for three resources important to any community—agricultural, natural, and cultural resources. For the past century, agriculture has been the primary land use in the Town, though residential growth and changes in the local farm economy have also resulted in changes to the economy and character of the Town. The area's water and air are natural resources important to public health, while natural areas and environmentally sensitive areas may pose development limitations, provide important recreational resources, are aesthetically enjoyable, or contribute to the character of the community. Cultural resources are the important third sub-element, which can nurture a "sense of place," provides an important context for planning, have social or spiritual importance, and helps foster community identity and pride.



### General Context

The Town of Somerset lies in the northwest corner of St. Croix County and is, geographically, the largest town in the county. The St. Croix Federal Riverway forms the western border of the Town and is a landscape of forested limestone cliffs interspersed with low, timbered banks and wetland areas where the Apple River joins the St. Croix River.

For much of its course through the Town of Somerset, the Apple River is a fast flowing river with occasional moderate rapids. The river traverses the Town of Somerset and is a unique and largely unspoiled waterway. Portions of the river flow through eighty- to ninety-foot rock palisades on its way to join the St. Croix National Riverway. There has been considerable interest in improving public access to the Apple River, possibly through the use of conservation easements that would allow the public access for low impact activities such as hiking, fishing, and picnicking.

The physical geography of the Town was created through thousands of years of glacial sculpturing which has created both gentle rolling hills and steep ravines throughout the Town. The basic fundamentals of the land in the Town have changed little since its settlement, but the use of the land has changed drastically in the last century. The economic base of early settlement was timber and, at one time, two saw mills were established on the Apple River within the Town. These mills sawed pine logs using waterpower from the river. Later, the prime occupation in the Town was farming which lasted until the 1970's at which time landowners began to realize that their land, little of which was prime farmland, was becoming increasingly valuable as house sites for the booming population of the Twin Cities. It is estimated that, presently, no more than six farming operations in the Town provide a family's basic income. The Town now has a morning and evening rush hour and the traditional rural character and agricultural heritage of the Town is rapidly disappearing. A central concern of the Plan Commission is that this Comprehensive Plan should guide development in a way that might retain some sense of the land's original character.

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

## 2014 Public Opinion Survey on Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

As part of the Town’s comprehensive plan public opinion survey, respondents expressed their thoughts on the importance of some of the community’s resources:

7. How important is it for the Town of Somerset to use regulations to protect the following:	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
a. Farmland	36%	45%	13%	6%
b. Forested Lands	41%	43%	12%	4%
c. Groundwater	75%	20%	4%	1%
d. Historic and Cultural Sites	17%	46%	30%	7%
e. Open Space	28%	45%	20%	7%
f. Lakes, Rivers and Streams	66%	27%	5%	2%
g. Scenic, Rural Character	41%	41%	15%	4%
h. Hunting and Fishing	33%	42%	20%	5%
i. Wetlands	38%	40%	17%	5%
j. Wildlife Habitat and Existing Natural Corridors	48%	34%	14%	4%
k. Air Quality	61%	28%	7%	4%



“Protect environmental & cultural resources” was also ranked in the survey as the third most important function of the Town of Somerset, only behind “ensure public safety” and “provide efficient/effective government.” By far, the “small town atmosphere and rural character” of the community was identified as the most important reason why the respondents live in the Town of Somerset. And the “natural features” of the Town was number two on this second list.

These responses indicate that while protecting water and air are necessary, nearly as important is the preservation of open spaces and natural resources for reasons of aesthetics, recreation, quality of life, and general community character. The importance of aesthetics, open space, and rural character is further supported by additional survey responses that are discussed in the Land Use Element and as discussed previously in Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

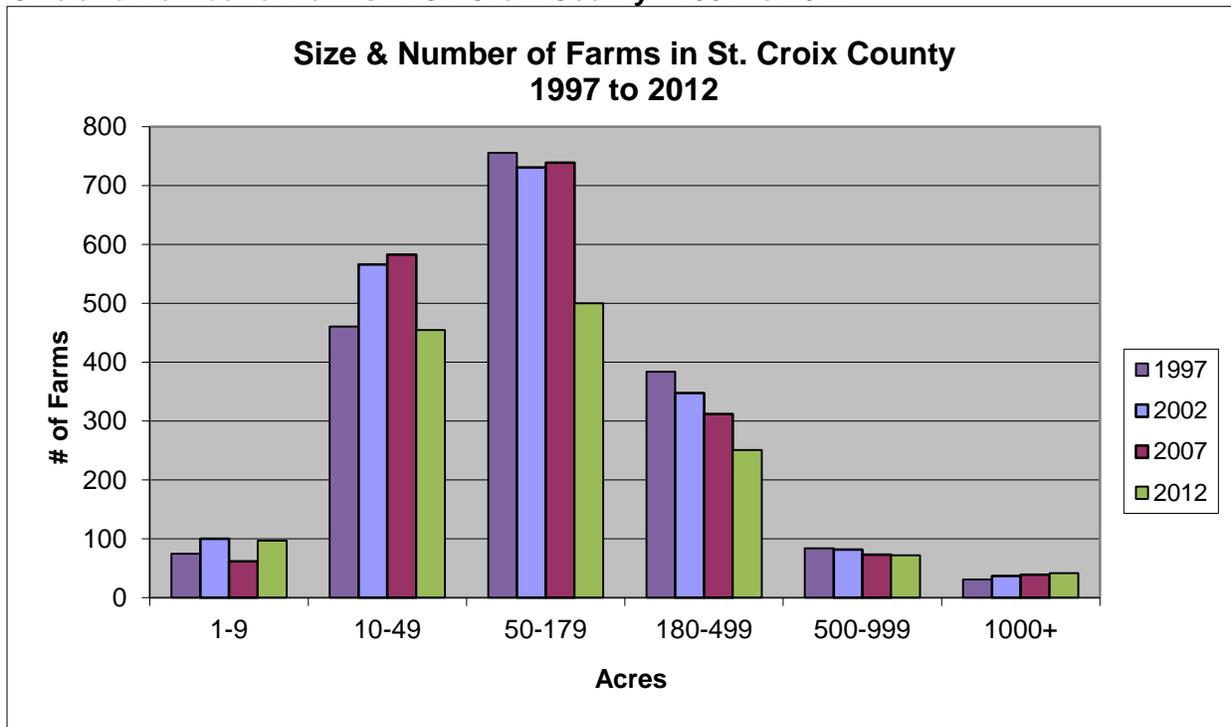
## 6.1 Agricultural Resources and Trends

Agriculture is an important element of the social and economic characteristics of St. Croix County. Up until about 30 years ago agriculture was the predominant feature of the Town of Somerset as well. Changes in agriculture, due to socio-economic conditions, new practices, and development pressure, have had profound impacts in the Town of Somerset.

In 1987, there were 18,034 acres of assessed agricultural land on 730 parcels within the Town of Somerset. By 2013, the Town contained approximately 10,091 acres of assessed agricultural land on 514 parcels. This is a 44 percent loss of agricultural land during the 26-year period or an average annual loss of 305.5 acres per year. Even so, agricultural land continues to be the largest assessed land use within the community. Map 6-1 shows those lands and farmland preservation areas in the Town of Somerset where agriculture is the predominant assessed use as of 2013.

As reflected in the table below, the number of farms in St. Croix County decreased by 21% between 1997 and 2012. But there have been some notable trends. In particular, the number of small farms (likely specialty farms and direct-market farms) has been more volatile, with recent increases in the number of farms less than 10 acres in size. Medium-sized farms have experienced the greatest decreases, while the number of very large farms (1,000+ acres) continues to slowly rise.

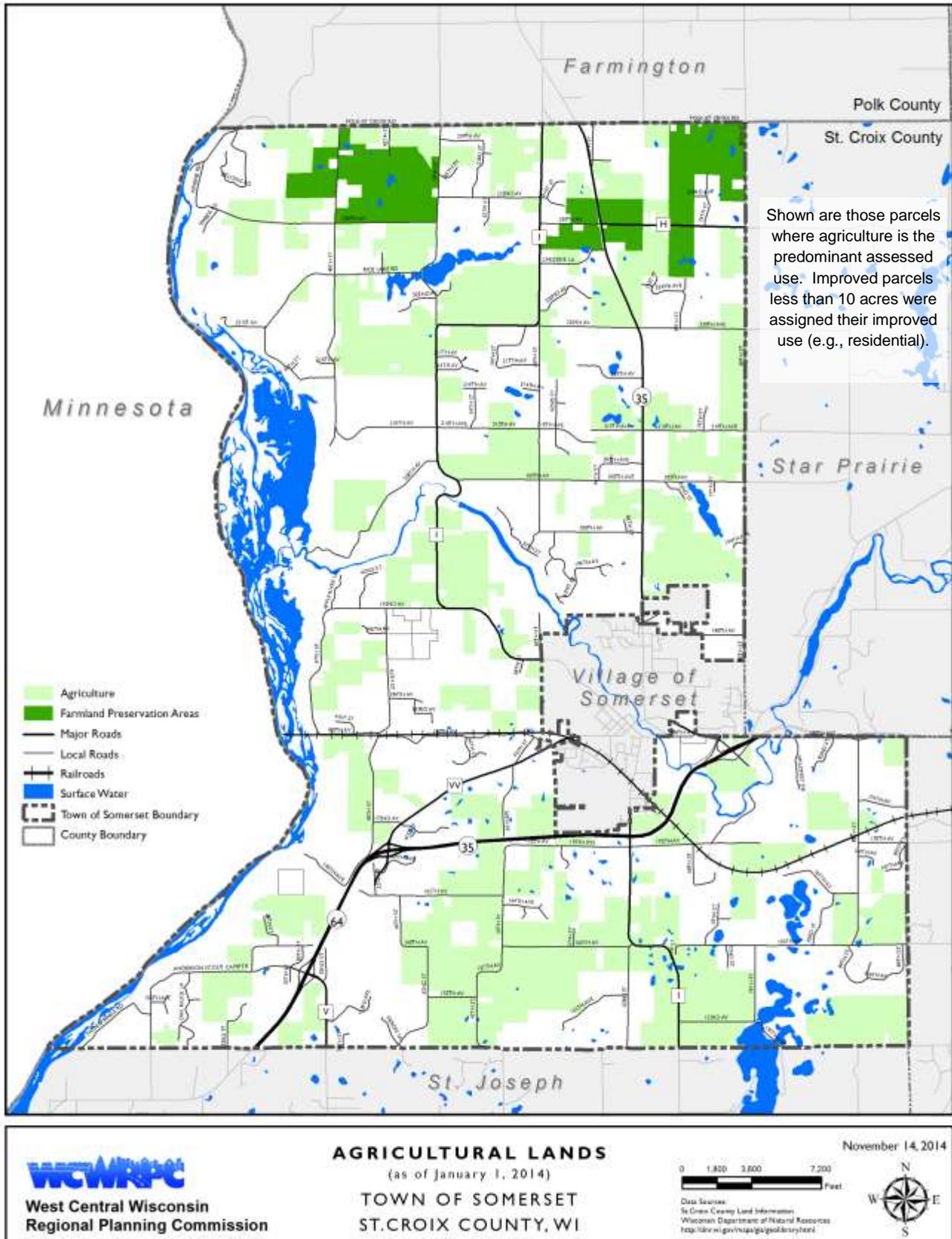
**Figure 6-1**  
**Size and Number of Farms in St. Croix County - 1997 to 2012**



Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1997 - 2012

In 1990, there were 61 people reported to live on farms in the Town of Somerset, down from 339 in 1980. By 2000, the Census Bureau reported a farm population in the Town of Somerset of 43. It should be noted that the definition includes all operations that receive \$1,000 or more in gross farm income. After 2000, the Census Bureau no longer collected data on farm vs. nonfarm households. But, it is obvious that production agriculture is no longer a dominant land use in the Town of Somerset.

Map 6-1 Town of Somerset Agricultural Land



# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

## **Prime Agricultural Land and Farmland Preservation Areas**

Prime agricultural land is the land that is best suited to food, feed, forage, fiber, and oil seed crops. It may be cultivated land, pasture, woodland, or other land, but it is not existing urban and developed land or water areas. The soil qualities, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for a well-managed soil to produce a sustained high yield of crops in an economic manner. Prime agricultural land produces the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources. Frequently, prime farmland is based solely on U.S. Department of Agriculture soil classification data for traditional row crops. Compared to many other towns in St. Croix County, a relatively small proportion of the Town of Somerset's soils are classified as prime farmland soils.

As part of the *St. Croix County Comprehensive Plan (and Farmland Preservation Plan)* adopted in January 2012, a *Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)* system was used to identify productive agricultural lands and provide a relative rating of potential farmland preservation areas. The LESA system is a numeric rating developed by the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for planning, policy development, and decision-making, but refined to accommodate local soil conditions, development trends, and goals. After much community discussion and public input, St. Croix County's LESA system included the following two components that were weighed evenly:

**LAND EVALUATION (LE):** This component is similar and is based on soils and their characteristics with three primary weighted indexes:

Prime Farmland (10%)  
Capability Class (30%)  
Productivity for Corn and Alfalfa (60%).

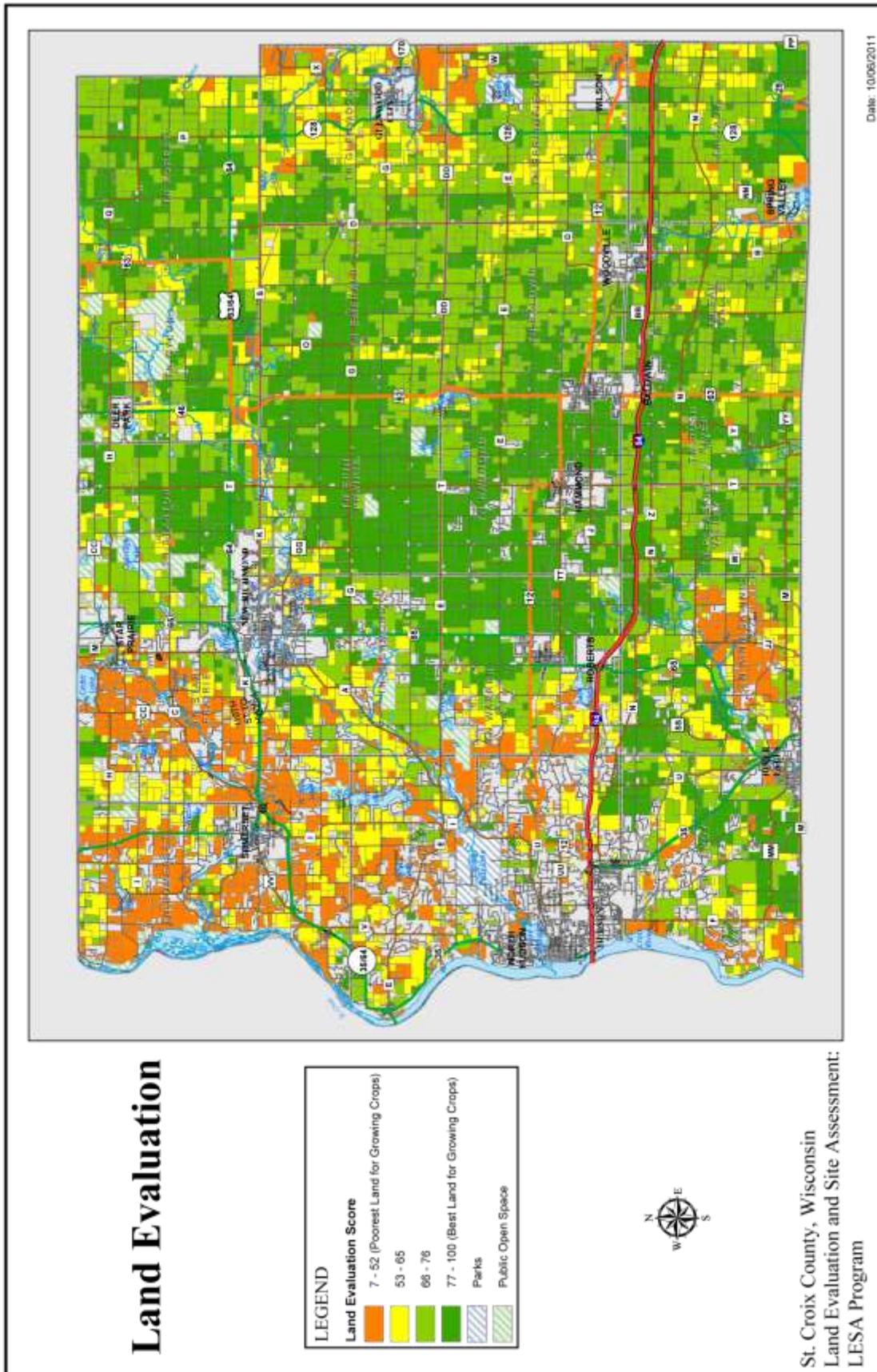
**SITE ASSESSMENT (SA):** This component is not based on soils data. It is more dynamic and reflects the development pressure based on adopted plans, policies, and other social, economic, and geographical attributes. Ten evenly weighted factors were used to provide a relative rating of a property's long-term farmland preservation potential. These ten factors were:

Size and Tract of Contiguous Ownership	Future Land Use Policy on Existing Site
Compatibility of Adjacent Land Uses	Future Land Use Policies on Adjacent Sites
Compatibility of Surrounding Land Uses	Distance to Public Sewer
Existing Land Use Policy on Site	Road Classification of Site Access
Existing Land Use Policy on Adjacent Sites	Environmental and Public Values of the Site

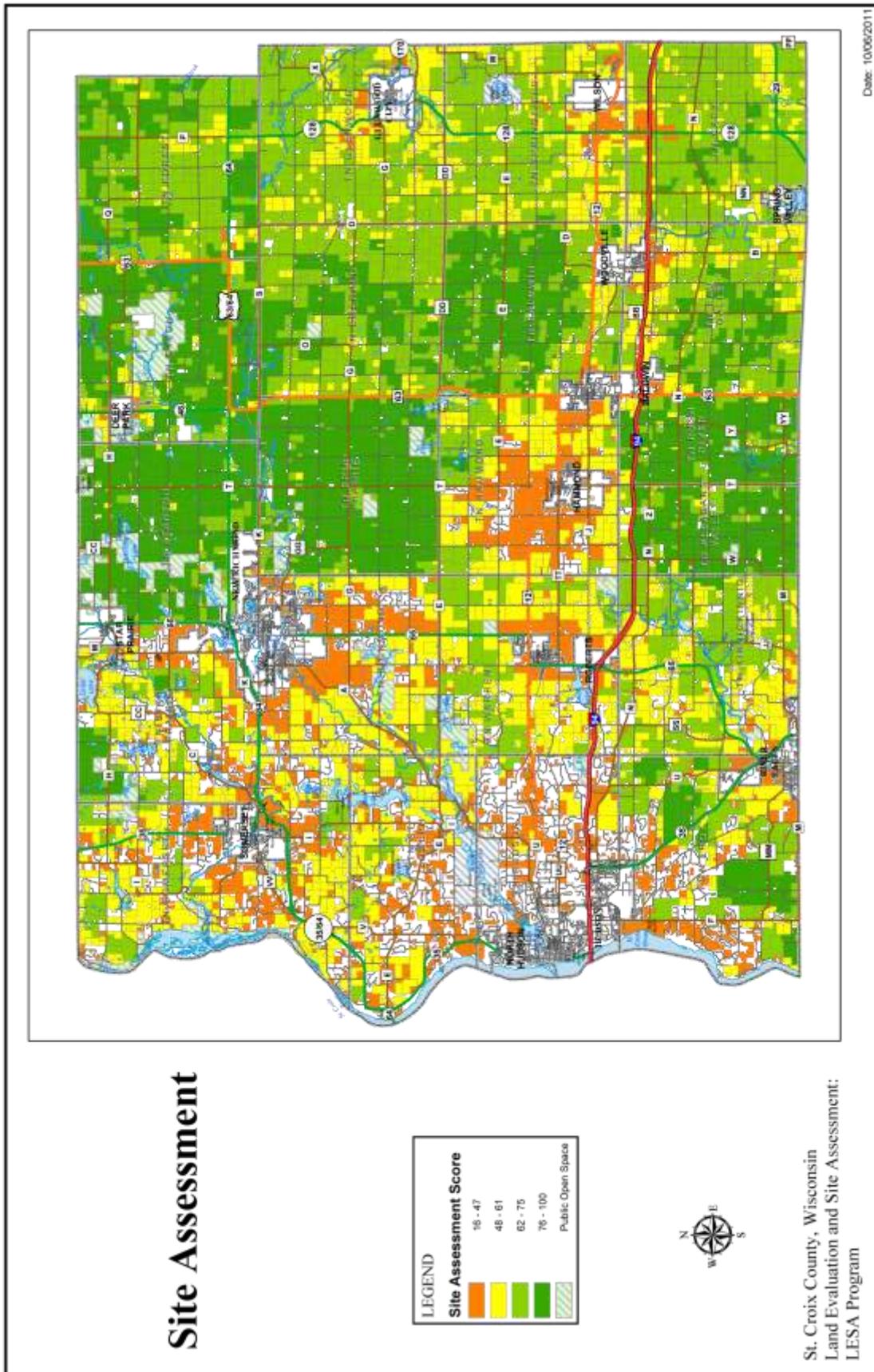
The Land Evaluation (Map 6-2) yielded that most of the Town of Somerset was poorly suited for growing crops, with very little of the best lands. The Site Assessment (Map 6-3) did identify some areas of moderately high potential for farmland preservation, mostly in the north one-half of the Town, but none of the highest-rated lands. The LESA composite scores (Map 6-4) suggests that the Town of Somerset has limited high-priority farmland preservation areas relative to all lands within St. Croix County. Ultimately, working cooperatively with the Town, St. Croix County used the LESA model to identify the farmland preservation areas shown previously on Map 6-1.

**The County's approach recognized that the productive agricultural land identified through the LESA process is not undeveloped land waiting for other uses, but is a valuable and productive resource. The County will prohibit non-farm development of productive farmland, wherever the Town will support it.** And those properties identified as farmland preservation areas are given a high level of zoning protection. The Town also has the ability to identify additional productive farmlands and farmland preservation areas that should be protected through its comprehensive plan.

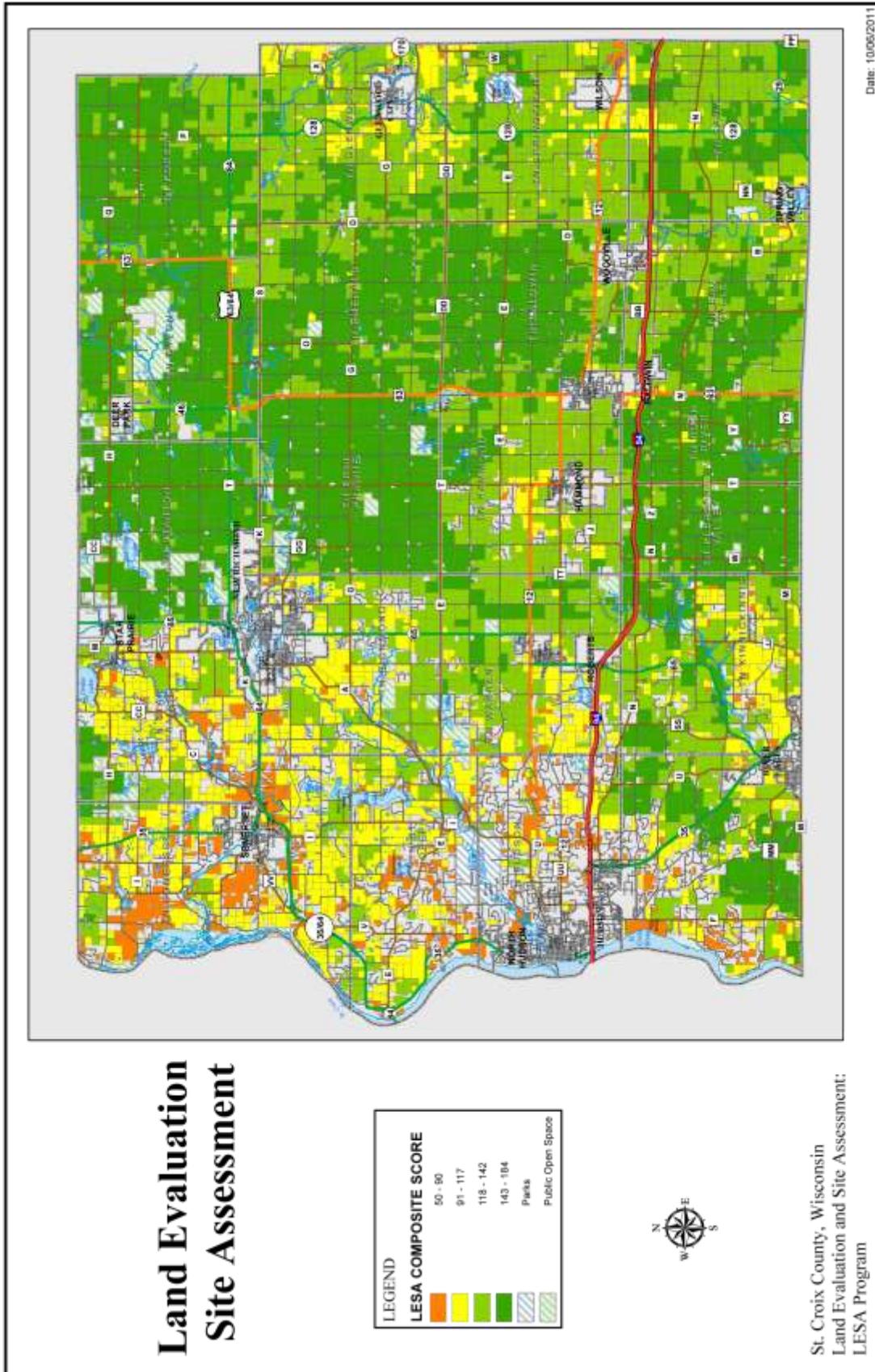
Map 6-2 St. Croix County Land Evaluation



Map 6-3 St. Croix County Site Assessment



Map 6-4 St. Croix County Land Evaluation Site Assessment (Composite)



## 6.2 Soils

Shown on Map 6-5 are the general soil associations for the Town of Somerset, which included the following associations:

**Amery-Cromwell Association** Well drained and somewhat excessively drained, gently sloping to steep, medium textured and moderately coarse textured soils on glacial drift plains.

**Burkhardt-Chetek-Sattre Association** Well drained and somewhat excessively drained, nearly level to steep, medium textured and moderately coarse textured soils on outwash plains and stream terraces.

**Sattre-Pillot-Antigo Association** Well drained, nearly level to sloping, medium textured soils on outwash plains and stream terraces.

**Plainfield-Boone Association** Excessively drained, gently sloping to moderately steep, coarse textured soils on outwash plains and stream terraces, and underlain by sandstone at a relatively shallow depth; on uplands.

Soils in the Town have been analyzed using information provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Understanding the types of soils that are present in the Town is important because of the limitations that soils can have on the type and amount of development that can be reasonably supported based on the various soil characteristics. Many of the natural resource maps found in this element are based on this soils data. Examples of the soil characteristics include slope of the land, soil depth to bedrock, soil depth to ground water, and the identification of wetlands. These characteristics are then interpreted in order to establish development limitations, such as the suitability of septic systems to be constructed and function properly, the ability to construct dwellings with basements, and the identification of areas with slopes of 12% or greater.

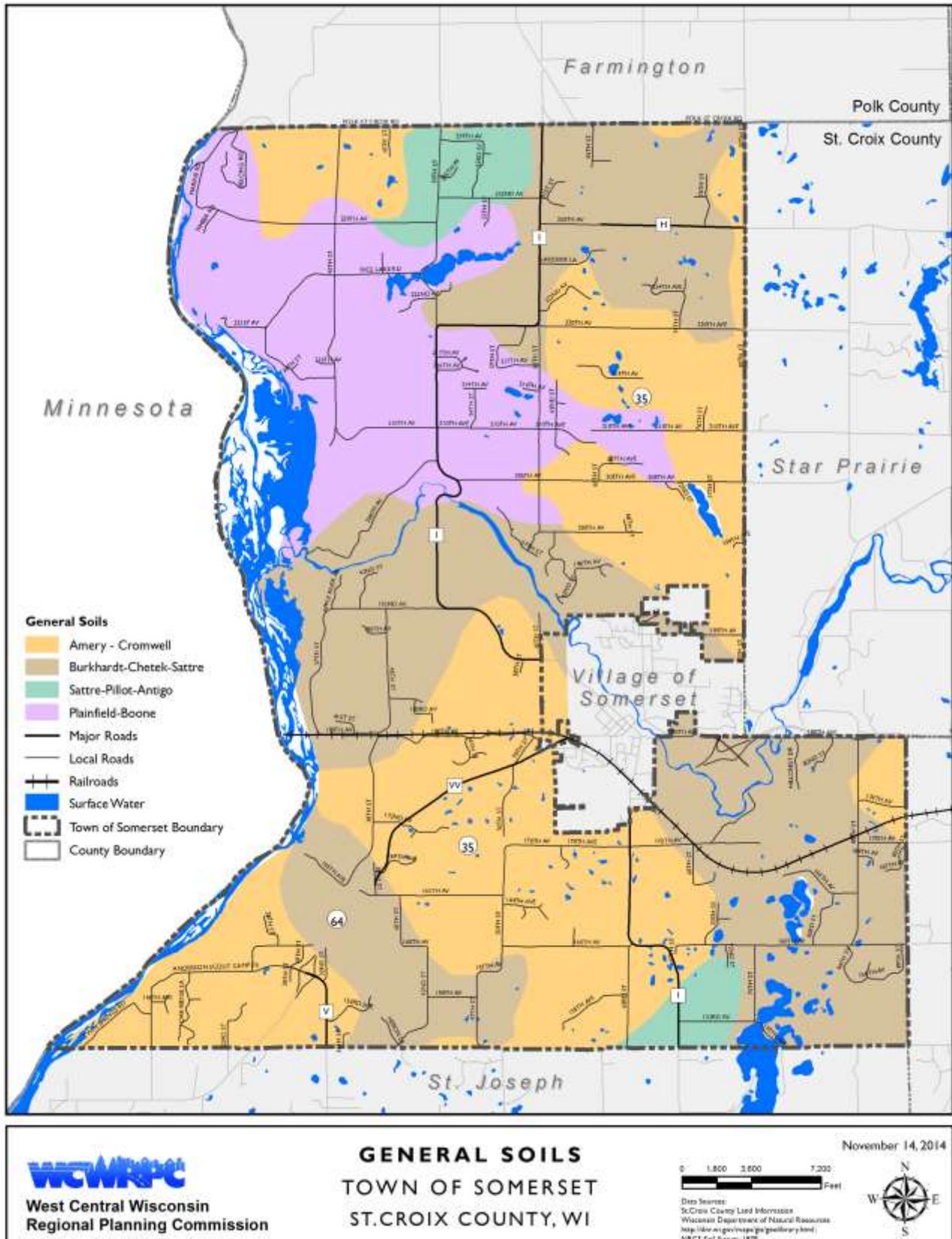
As Map 6-6 shows, the majority of the Town of Somerset has severe limitations to conventional septic systems. The rating is based on the soil properties that affect absorption of the effluent, construction and maintenance of the system, and public health. Factors considered include permeability, depth to wet soils, ponding, stones/boulders, depth to bedrock, excessive slope, and flooding. Soils underlain by loose sand and gravel or fractured bedrock at a depth of less than four feet below the distribution lines may not allow adequate filtration of effluent and poses groundwater contamination concerns. Careful siting, diligent maintenance, mound systems, holding systems, pretreatment, and community wastewater treatment are a few ways to potentially mitigate or overcome some limitations.

## 6.3 Topography

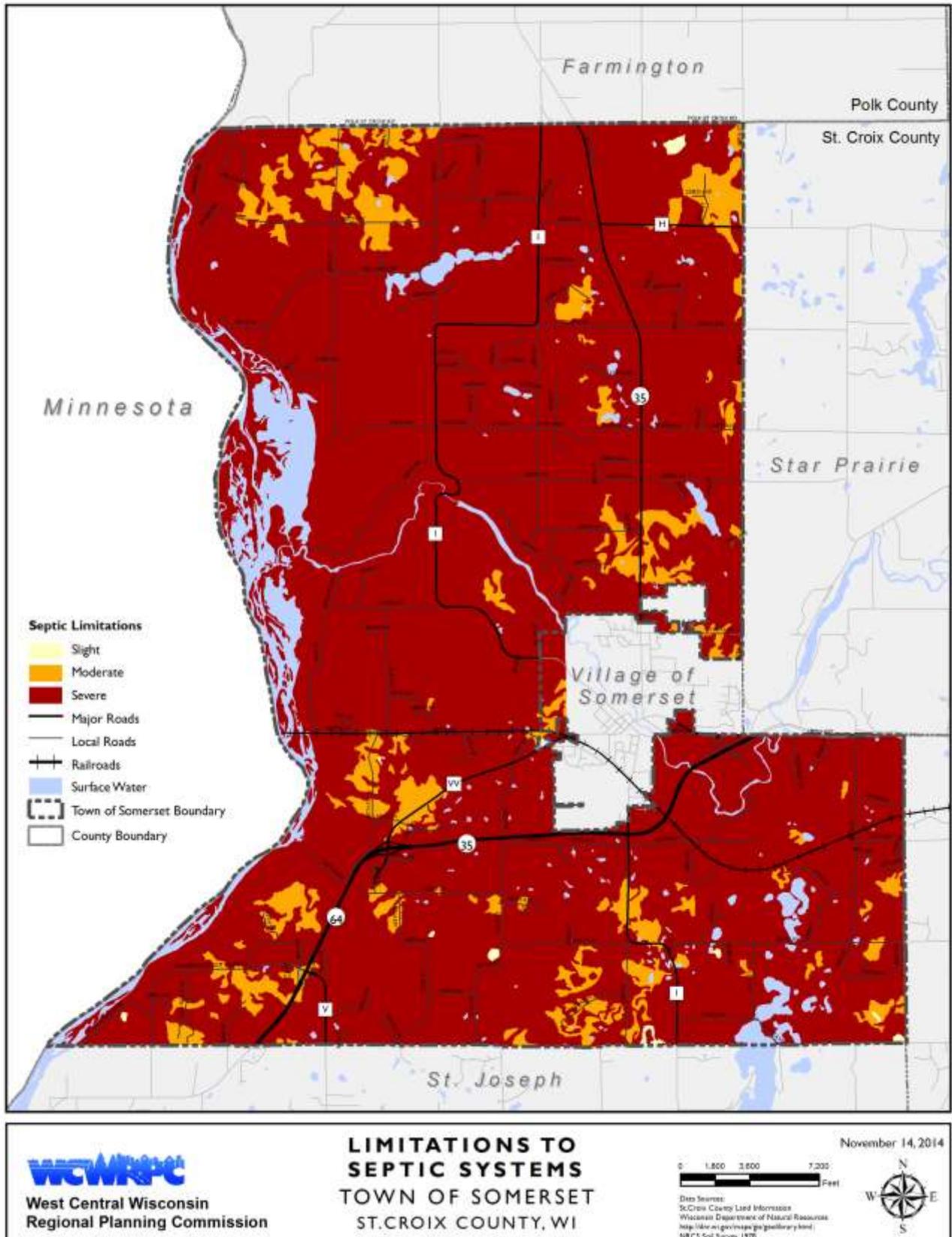
The glacier activity of the past greatly influenced the topography of St. Croix County. The majority of the County has gently rolling terrain, with more hilly terrain in the eastern and southern portions of the County and along some of the rivers. The contours range from roughly 650 feet above sea level in the west to over 1,330 feet in the eastern portion of the County. Within the Town of Somerset, the elevation varies by 400 feet with lower elevations found in adjacent to the St. Croix River and Apple Falls Flowage.

The topography in the Town of Somerset is gently rolling to hilly and rough. This is a result of glacial end moraine deposition that took place during the most recent glacial activity. This has created a very scenic landscape, but one that can also be more sensitive to development activities. Steep slopes are considered an environmental sensitive area due to potential erosion, run-off, and flooding concerns, which is discussed later in this section.

Map 6-5 Town of Somerset General Soils



Map 6-6 Town of Somerset Limitations to Septic Systems



## 6.4 Bedrock Geology

Shown on Map 6-7 is the bedrock geology of the Town of Somerset. The general bedrock geology has been mapped using the *Bedrock Geology of Wisconsin* map series produced in 1987 by the University of Wisconsin - Extension. Map 6-8 shows that the depth to bedrock deep over most of the Town and does not pose a barrier to development in most locations.

Based on these maps, sandstone is shown to be the primary bedrock underlying the Town of Somerset. In addition there are some lesser amounts of dolomite located in the central and southern corners of the town. Both of these types of bedrock are porous and have the ability serve as good natural groundwater aquifers depending on their thickness, degree of fracture, overlying soil characteristics, and proximity to the land surface. However, these types of bedrock are susceptible to contamination in areas where this fractured rock occurs at or near the land surface, especially where there is little or no soil to attenuate groundwater contaminants.

## 6.5 Metallic and Non-Metallic Mineral Resources

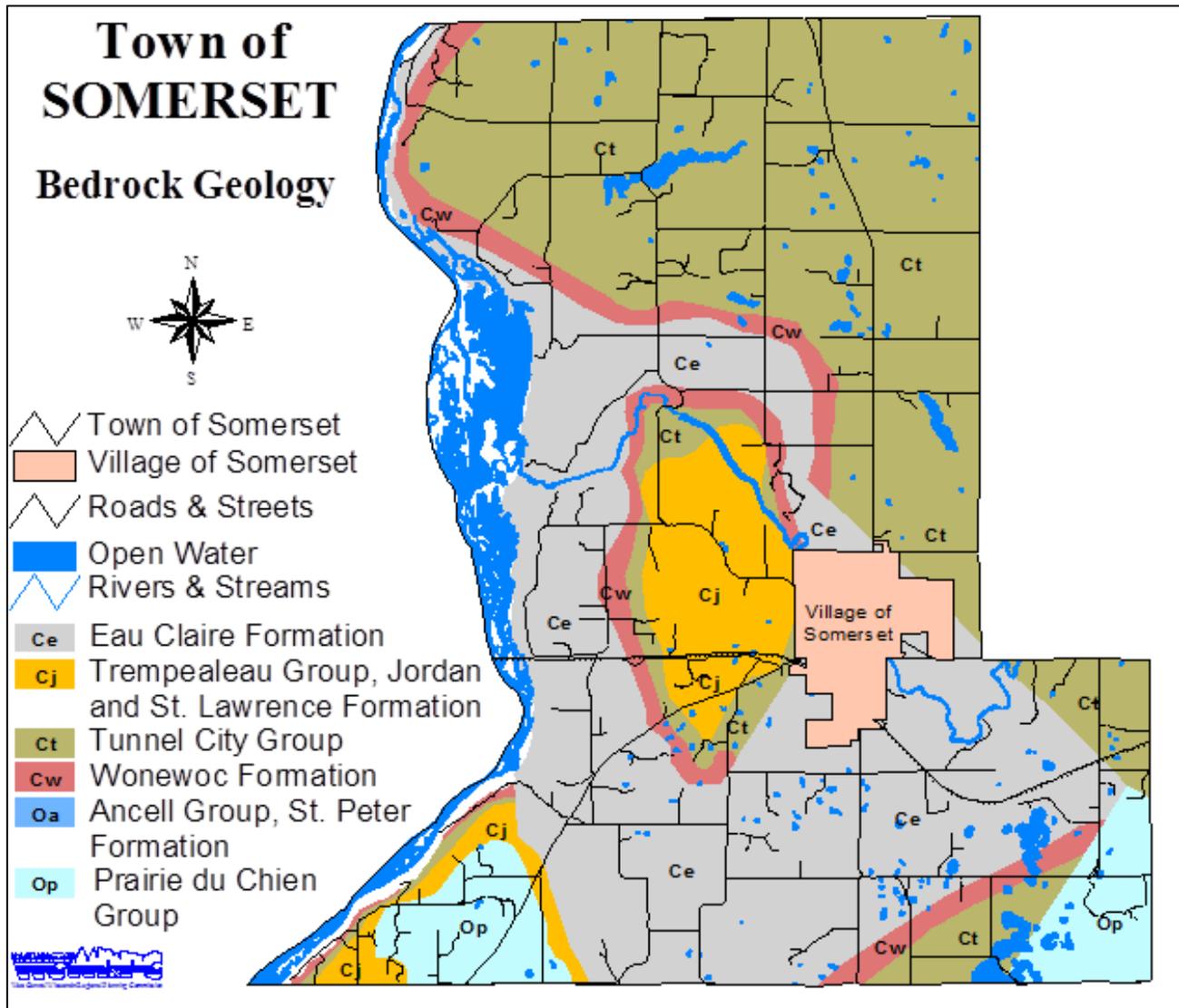
Mineral resources are important for construction and as an economic resource. While many such operations are privately owned, it is also not unusual for counties and communities to maintain smaller sand and/or gravel mine as a source of material for road construction and maintenance. However, extraction, processing, and transport of mineral resources can also create land use conflicts, impact the quality of life of nearby residents, decrease nearby property values, and pose environmental concerns. No known metallic mineral resources of economic value have been identified in the Town of Somerset, though there are non-metallic mining sites in the Town as identified on Map 6-8.

As suggested by its soils and bedrock geology, nearly all of the lands in the Town are probable sand deposits potentially of marketable value. Much of the Town also has probable gravel deposits potentially of marketable value. Knowing where potential sand and gravel deposits are is not only important for the consideration of managing such activity, but also in considering the management of other uses to keep such deposits available, protect sensitive resources, or to prevent potential use conflicts. Development can and does occur on reclaimed non-metallic mining sites. However, it is difficult to extract these valuable resources if development precedes resource extraction.

In recent years, west-central Wisconsin has experienced an explosion of silica (frac) sand mining operations. These mining operations have been primarily targeting Jordan, Wonewoc, and Mt. Simon Cambrian formations, though new mining operations have also been proposed for areas mapped as being part of the Eau Claire Formation, especially if near rail lines. Based on Map 6-8 and the existing Canadian National Railline, there is some potential for such a facility within the Town.

However, the frac sand industry is looking for a very particular type of sand with certain characteristics (e.g., uniform size, hardness, well rounded). There have been anecdotal statements made by local officials that the sand within the Town of Somerset does not meet these characteristics. It is also possible, and even likely, that there are more valuable non-metallic mineral and frac sand deposits available elsewhere in the County or region within a less developed area where potential use conflicts are less likely, but still with convenient rail access.

Map 6-7 Town of Somerset Bedrock Geology



**Eau Claire Formation:** Sandstone, fine grained, light brown to buff; 1 to 40 meters thick.

**Trempealeau Group, Jordan and St. Lawrence Formation:** Sandstone, sandy dolomite, and siltstone; 1 to 20 meters thick.

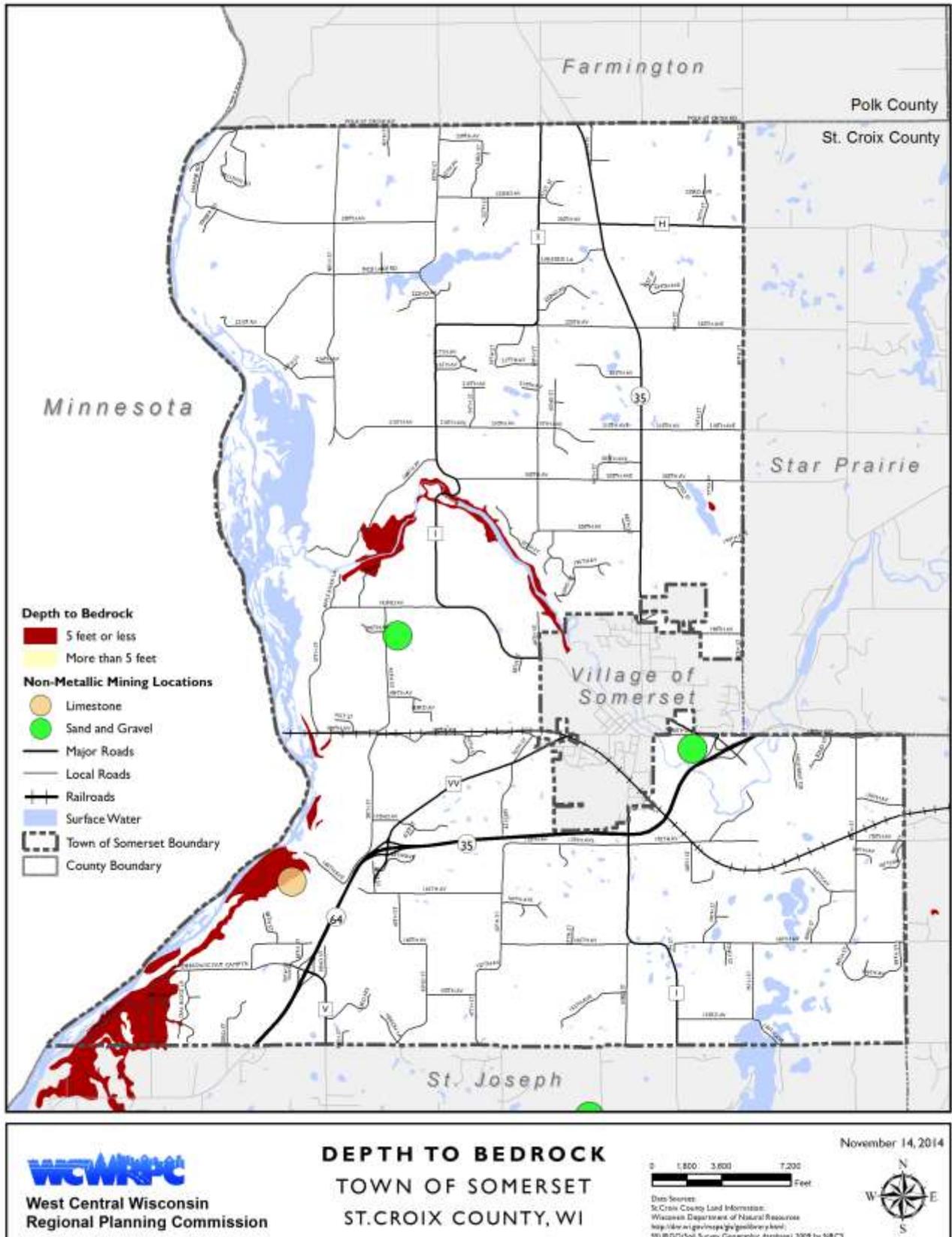
**Tunnel City Group:** Sandstone and glauconitic sandstone; 20 to 30 meters thick.

**Wonewoc Formation:** Sandstone; 10 to 25 meters thick.

**Ancell Group, St. Peter Formation:** Sandstone and quartzose; less than 5 to 20 meters thick.

**Prairie du Chien Group:** Dolomite and sandy dolomite; 3 to 30 meters thick.

Map 6-8 Town of Somerset Depth to Bedrock



## 6.6 Groundwater

Groundwater is the primary source of water for domestic, industrial, and agriculture uses in St. Croix County and is the main source of potable water supplies in the Town of Somerset. From 1979 to 2005, total water use in St. Croix County has increased from 6.2 million gallons per day to about 15.8 million gallons per day, not including mining and thermoelectric data.

Groundwater in the Town of Somerset is supplied through individual, private wells; there is no municipal water supply within the Town. As of December 1, 2014, there were nine permitted high-capacity wells within the Town or Village of Somerset, of which two were owned by the Village, three were owned by a golf course, and two were associated with pits or quarries.

Groundwater is consistently identified by communities and residents in west central Wisconsin as one of most critical resources that needs to be protected. It is no different in the Town of Somerset as the survey results at the beginning of this element demonstrate. Of the survey respondents, 95% stated that it was important or essential to use regulations to protect groundwater, making it the highest ranked resource deserving protection.

According to the NRCS, all of the soil associations found in Somerset are classified as *soils with moderate to very rapid permeability*. This is due not only to the type of soil that is found in the Town, but also in part to the topography of the land. The principal aquifers in the Town of Somerset are the sand and gravel aquifer and the sandstone aquifer. The sand and gravel aquifer consists of unconsolidated sand and gravel in glacial drift and alluvium. The sand and gravel aquifer is found throughout the Town of Somerset, and is underlain by the sandstone aquifer, also located throughout the majority of the Town. Contamination of the groundwater can occur more easily in areas where the soils are very permeable or shallow. Shown on Map 6-9 are areas with shallow depth to groundwater.

According to “*An Introduction to Groundwater in St. Croix County*” produced in May 2006:

- Most groundwater used for the water supply is supplied by shallow flowpaths that have been in the system only a few years or decades. Within these shallow aquifers, groundwater flows only short distances (up to a few miles) from the recharge area (where it enters the ground) to a discharge area (where it exits into a surface water).
- For the Somerset area, most of the local groundwater flow is towards the St. Croix River, while some local flow towards Bass Lake or other kettle lakes/ponds.
- As part of this study, of 330 well testing reports from the Town of Somerset, only 2.3% had nitrate levels exceeding current health standards. Less than two percent of wells tested positive for triazine, none of which exceeded the 3 ppb standard. A primary source for triazine is the use of atrazine herbicide in agriculture.

Groundwater contamination is possible from many sources ranging from leaking underground storage tanks, hazardous materials spills, and landfills to agricultural practices, landspreading, and industrial operations. Groundwater quality can often be very site specific for certain contaminants. No site-specific hazardous materials concern or toxic release site were identified within the Town of Somerset. However, the transport of hazardous materials via rail and highway is always a potential contamination source.

According to the Wisconsin Center for Watershed Science and Education’s private wells groundwater quality data for the Town of Somerset for wells tested over the past 25 years:

- Nine of 333 wells tested (3%) had nitrate levels exceeding the current health standard of 10.1 mg/l. The Town’s median nitrate level was 2.7 mg/l. In Wisconsin, 80 percent of nitrate inputs

into the groundwater are agricultural in origin (e.g., manure spreading, fertilizers), but on-site septic systems and lawn fertilizers can also be a significant nitrate source, especially in densely populated areas.

- Ten percent of wells tested positive for coliform bacteria and five percent tested positive for E. Coli.

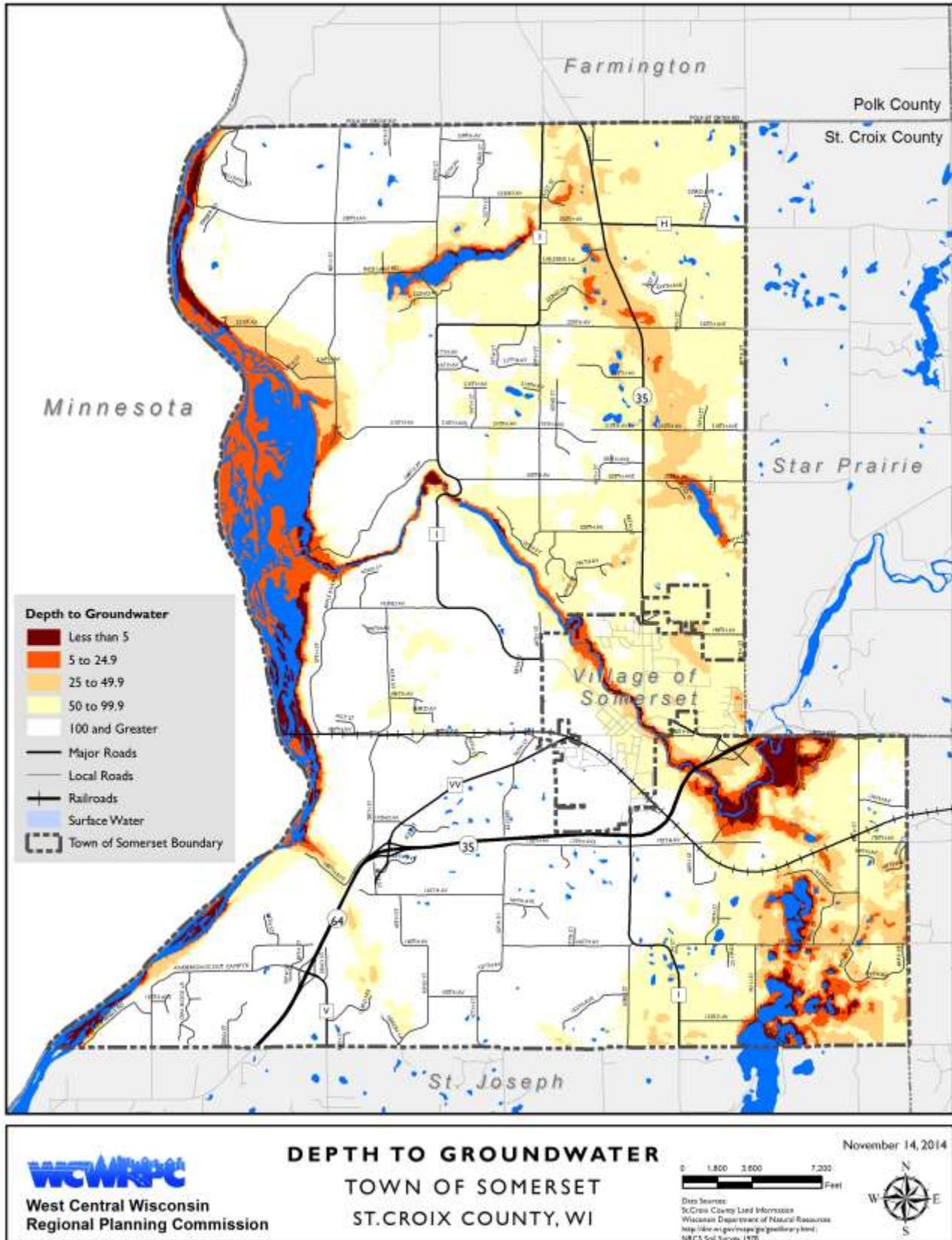
It is important to understand that there is a connection between the various water resources. As rain and snow fall to the ground, some runs off into lakes, rivers and streams; some evaporates; and some is used by plants. The rest trickles down through the soil and subsurface material. This water eventually reaches a saturated zone that comprises groundwater. The groundwater then can travel to and through geologic formations that can store and transmit water called aquifers. The concept of water moving from the land's surface into groundwater is the starting point for thinking about the relationship between land use and groundwater quality. Nearly anything people can dump, spill, or spread on the ground can seep down to groundwater. This groundwater is then used by residents for drinking, farming, and other activities. Groundwater can also return to the surface as springs or as discharge to lakes, rivers, and streams. And large withdrawals of groundwater (e.g., high capacity wells) can have an impact on surface water.

## 6.7 Closed Depressions

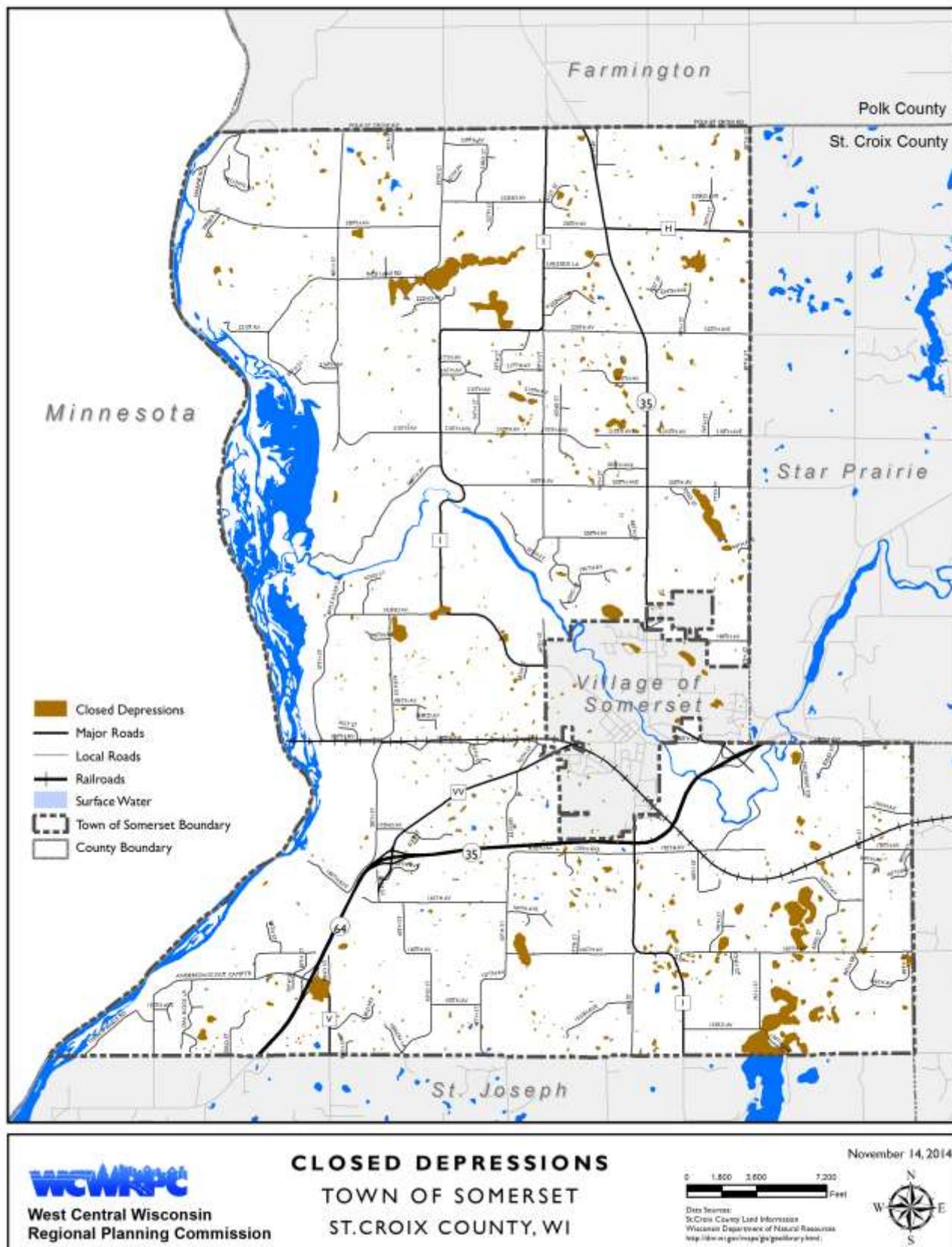
A fairly common topographic feature found throughout St. Croix County is closed depressions. Closed depressions can be formed through different geological processes. Many areas of St. Croix County have dolomite and limestone upper bedrock layer, which can fracture and enlarge over time to form what is known as karst topography. But in the Somerset area, sandstone bedrock is more dominant making kettles or kettleholes the primary type of closed depression. Kettles develop when large blocks of glacier ice are buried within glacial deposits and subsequently melt leaving behind a surface depression. Kettle depressions are typically round and have filled over time with surface water runoff, groundwater, sediment, or vegetation. Kettle ponds or lakes are often also seepage lakes that are primarily fed by springs or groundwater with no associated stream inlet or outlet.

Closed depressions are extremely sensitive land features because of their close association with the groundwater. The release of pollutants into or near closed depressions can reach the groundwater immediately. Shown in Map 6-10 are the closed depressions within the Town of Somerset.

Map 6-9 Town of Somerset Depth to Groundwater



Map 6-10 Town of Somerset Closed Depressions



## 6.8 Surface Waters

A watershed is an area of land that drains or “sheds” its water to a lake, river, stream, or wetland. Some watersheds encompass several hundred square miles, while others may be small, covering only a few square miles that drain into a lake. This is important to understand since the effects of natural and man-made activities in one area can have a direct impact on other areas. For example, stormwater runoff and flash flooding from a heavy rainfall upstream in a watershed will eventually reach the downstream part of that watershed.

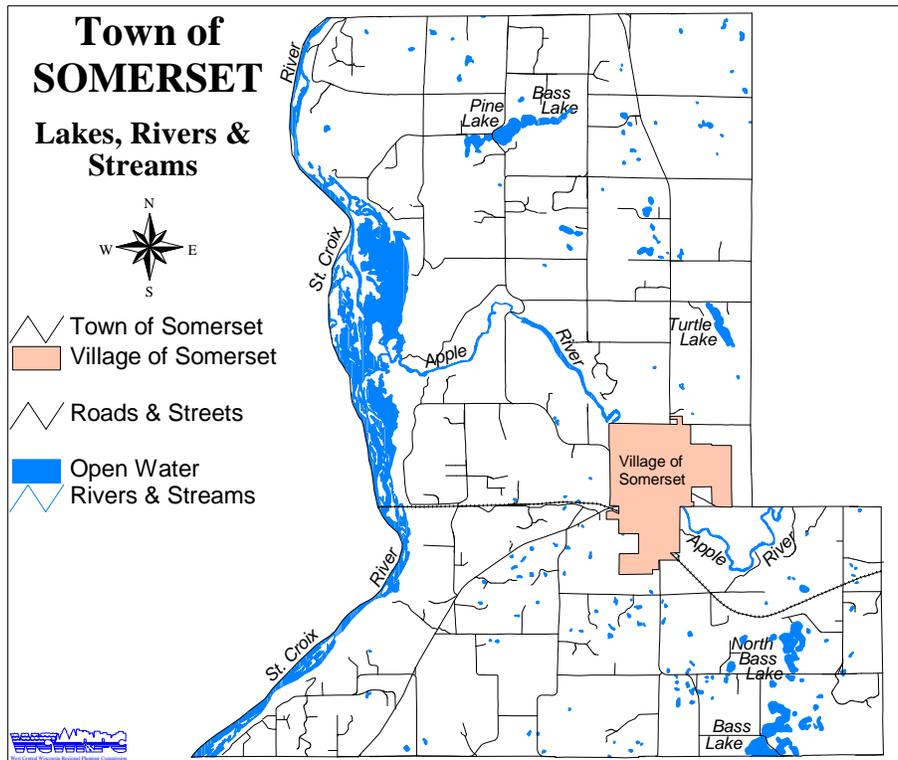
As shown on Map 6-11, St. Croix County is comprised of all or parts of ten watersheds which drain into one of two river basins in the county—the St. Croix River Basin and the Lower Chippewa River Basin. The Town of Somerset is located within the Trout Brook, Lower Apple River, and Lower Willow River watersheds which drain into the St. Croix River Basin. Water-related issues of concern in the basin include: loss and fragmentation of native habitats from growth and development; sediment and nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) delivery to water bodies from both point and non-point sources; and threats to the high quality and abundant groundwater sources.

The most obvious surface water resources are lakes, rivers, and streams. These resources are important not only important to the environment, but as recreational and scenic assets. The primary surface water body in the Town of Somerset is the St. Croix River, which flows along the entire western border of the community. The other major surface water features include the Apple River and Pine, Turtle, North Bass, and Bass Lakes, as shown on the inset map to the right. In addition, Somerset’s landscape is covered by numerous kettle lakes.

Some notable features of the Town’s primary surface waters are:

**St. Croix River** – This river has been designated as a National Scenic Riverway and a National Wild And Scenic Waterway, which has limited development near its shorelines. The St. Croix River has been classified as an Outstanding Resource Water and receives high levels of recreational use. While water quality on the St. Croix River is generally good, it does have a fish consumption advisory for PCB and mercury contamination.

**Apple River** – This river drains a large agricultural area and has moderate water quality impacts as a result of barnyard runoff, streambank erosion, cropland runoff and erosion. The Apple River Falls Flowage within the Town has problems typical of man-made flowages including excessive siltation and nutrients combining to create favorable conditions for nuisance aquatic plant growth. The flowage also receives stormwater runoff from the City of Amery, which serves as an additional source of



# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

nutrients. The Apple River is heavily used for water sports, most notably for commercial tubing operations within the Somerset area.

**Pine Lake** -- This 33-acre seepage lake in Sections 9 and 10 has a maximum depth of 9 feet with low water clarity and largely sandy bottom. Approximately 100 acres of privately owned land in this area has been placed into a conservation easement to protect the lake and wetlands. This example should be publicly commended as a best management model for other area residents.



**Bass Lake (north)** – Nine-acre Bass Lake is located just east of Pine Lake in Section 10. This lake, and nearby smaller ponds, have attributes similar to Pine Lake.

**Turtle Lake** – This 30-acre seepage lake in Section 24 also has characteristics similar to Pine Lake.

**Bass Lake (south)** – The largest part of 370-acre Bass Lake is located in the Town of St. Joseph and has a maximum depth of 33 feet. The north end of Bass Lake, as well as a number of nearby smaller, unnamed ponds, within the Town of Somerset are surrounded by a Federal waterfowl management area. To the south within the Town of St. Joseph, the lakeshore has experienced relatively heavy residential development and the lake receives moderate-to-heavy recreational use. The Bass Lake Rehabilitation District, which has taxing authority, undertakes projects to implement those goals found within the 2009 *Bass Lake Management Plan*.

Of the above surface waters, only the St. Croix River has been given a special WDNR water quality or habitat designation. The Town of Somerset has only one designated trout stream. A small creek—Levesque Springs—is a Class II Trout Stream. Levesque Springs runs from the south end of 82<sup>nd</sup> Street then west to the Apple River.

While water quality is degraded on some of the surface waters, none have been designated as impaired waters for not meeting water quality standards. However, all but one of the above listed lakes, including the Apple River Flowage, are eutrophic (rich in nutrients and biological productivity), which means that a dense plant growth can potentially deprive animal life of oxygen; Bass Lake (south) is mesotrophic with medium levels of nutrients. Many, if not most, of the other ponds and lakes in the Town of Somerset are undoubtedly eutrophic or mesotrophic.

Eutrophic waters are known for their algae blooms that can result in fish kills and can even become a health hazard for people and animals. In Wisconsin, agricultural run-off is primary source of nutrient loading to surface waters. WDNR has identified the Lower Apple River Watershed as a high priority for protection from non-point source pollution, in part due to the River's use for full-body contact recreation.

Invasive species, notably Curly-Leaf Pondweed, Eurasian Water-Milfoil, and Zebra Mussel, are present at both of the Bass Lakes, with Chinese Mystery Snail present as an additional invasive at the southern Bass Lake. These invasives may be present in other smaller lakes and ponds to varying degrees.



## 6.9 Forests, Grasslands, and Prairies

Forests, grasslands, and prairies stabilize the soil, improve air quality, and provide natural beauty and wildlife habitat. Up-to-date data on land cover in St. Croix County is limited. The last major land cover inventory was completed in 1993 and the Town of Somerset has changed significantly in the interim. Further, it was difficult to differentiate between agricultural land and grassland, since some fields are marginal or, at times, are left fallow.

Tax assessment data provides the best overall picture of today's landscape within the Town. As will be shown later in the Land Use Element, there is approximately 4,600 acres of privately owned property (about 15% of the Town) that has forestry as its predominant use<sup>3</sup>. There is an additional 3,475 acres of other undeveloped privately owned land, which includes wetlands, shrublands, and non-forested grasslands. An additional 3,015 acres were public and recreational lands, much of which is forested, but also includes some grasslands such as Parnell Prairie. Together, these lands constitute about one-third of the Town of Somerset.

The Town of Somerset is part of the Western Prairie Ecological Landscape, which includes most of St. Croix County. Prairie, oak, and brush (prairie with woody plants) dominated the Town's pre-settlement land cover in the mid-1800s. The Town is also part of WDNR's Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area, which has a goal of permanently protecting 20,000 acres (or 10%) of the historic grassland acreage within fifteen townships in St. Croix and Polk counties. The far majority of this restoration acreage is publically owned land, including some lands within the Town of Somerset, such as Apple River Canyon, Parnell Prairie Reserve, Rice Lake Flats National Park Service area on 221<sup>st</sup> Avenue, and some waterfowl production areas. This demonstrates that grasslands and prairies can include a diversity of prairie types, such as wet meadows. Additional prairie remnants within the Town of Somerset undoubtedly exist. However, there has been no formal effort to inventory these remnants.

## 6.10 Wildlife Habitat and Natural Areas

The Town provides habitat for a variety of plants, birds, and other animals. In particular, the forests, grasslands, and waterways offer food, cover, and water for many animal species. The Town is home to four U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) St. Croix Islands Wildlife Area. The St. Croix Islands Wildlife Area features a diverse and extensive mosaic of running sloughs, backwater lakes, braided



<sup>3</sup> A single parcel may have many different uses. For instance, a 40-acre parcel may include 30 acres of forest, 5 acres of undeveloped wetlands, and 5 acres of cropped farmland. For purposes of this plan, predominant use reflects the primary assessed use (50+% of the total acreage) on a taxable parcel, except on improved residential or commercial parcels less than 10 acres in size for which residential or commercial were assigned as the predominant use.

stream channels, stands of emergent aquatic vegetation, old-growth lowland forest, and the delta of the Apple River. St. Croix Islands is owned by the DNR and was designated a State Natural Area in 2010. The four WPAs are: Bass Lake WPA, Prairie Flats-South WPA, Somerset WPA, and White WPA. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources owns and manages the 160 acre Apple River Canyon State Natural Area as a reserve for various forest, prairie, and aquatic habitats. The County also manages the Bass Lake Boat Landing.

As the existing land use discussion and map within the Land Use Element will show, the forest and undeveloped lands are scattered throughout the Town. The fragmentation of these lands decreases their value as wildlife habitat. However, many of the public and recreational lands are located adjacent or near surface waters and do provide important corridors for recreation, resource conservation, and habitat protection. Private forest and undeveloped lands adjacent to surface waters serve a similar purpose and be important to maintaining the integrity of these corridors.

In some cases, shorelines, stormwater ponds, or ponds created for stormwater management or aesthetic reasons can create habitat for unwanted waterfowl, notably Canada Geese or gulls. In numbers, geese and gulls can become a nuisance, most notably due to accumulations of fecal matter that can carry disease and can impact water quality. The design of ponds and shorelines can deter geese in a variety of ways, such as making the water more difficult for geese to get to (e.g., slope, vegetative barriers, rocks,), limiting potential food sources, limiting fountain and aerator use, discouraging domestic waterfowl, and providing habitat for would-be predators.

In addition to the aquatic invasive species mentioned previously, a variety of terrestrial invasive species and diseases are present in the Town of Somerset, such as Common Buckthorn, Wild Parsley, and Asian Lady Beetles. Some invasives are regulated under State law. A variety of prevention and best practices can deter or slow the introduction or spread of invasives, such as limiting cutting of oak forest to certain times of year to prevent Oak Wilt, preventing the “import” of non-local firewood to slow the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer, or the use of mowing and chemicals to control Garlic Mustard, Reed Canary Grass, or Purple Loosestrife.

## 6.11 Threatened and Endangered Species

In part due to the area’s mix of habitats and surface waters, there are numerous threatened and endangered species and habitats in the Town of Somerset area. In 1972, Wisconsin passed its own endangered species law. Under the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the State created rules and regulations and identified which species to protect. Congress passed the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973 with a purpose “to conserve the ecosystem upon which endangered and threatened species depend”. The law incorporates the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 and Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969. Wisconsin State Statute 29.604 and Administrative Rule Chapter NR 27 that establish, define and guide Wisconsin's endangered and threatened species laws.

No one is exempt from these laws, but an endangered or threatened species permit can allow you to conduct certain activities under certain conditions. Any person in violation of these laws is subject to fines and/or imprisonment, even for unintentional violations. The Department of Natural Resources is required by law to implement conservation programs on State-listed species. This involves conducting research and developing programs directed at conserving, protecting, managing for and restoring certain endangered and threatened species to the extent practical.

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

The St. Croix River is one of the premier mussel watersheds in the world with forty-one species, of which fifteen are State endangered or threatened species and five are Federal endangered species. Pollutants and sediment loading from erosion and runoff are the principle threats to these bi-valves. The invasive Zebra Mussel also poses a significant threat.

Based on the Wisconsin DNR Natural Heritage Working List, the following threatened and endangered resources can be found within the Town of Somerset area (T31N, R19-20W and T30N, R19-20W):

## Federal Listed Endangered Species (4)

Mussels - Higgins' Eye, Snuffbox, Spectacle Case, Winged Mapleleaf

## Wisconsin Endangered Species (8)

Bird – Loggerhead Shrike

Fish – Crystal Darter, Goldeye

Mussel – Butterfly, Ebony Shell, Elephant Ear, Purple Wartyback

Plant – Dotted Blazing Star

## Wisconsin Threatened Species (11)

Bird – Great Egret

Fish – Blue Sucker, Gilt Darter, River Redhorse, Shoal Chub

Mussel – Buckhorn, Fawnsfoot, Monkeyface, Rock Pocketbook, Salamander Mussel

Plant – Kitten Tails

## Wisconsin Species of Concern (17)

Other – Bird Rookery

Plant – Arrow-headed Rattle-box, Bird's-eye Primrose, James' Cristatella, Rock Stitchwort, Short's Rock-cress, Silky Prairie-clover, Small-flowered Woolly Bean, Wild Licorice

Turtle – Blanding's Turtle

Fish – American Eel, Mud Darter, Pugnose Minnow, Weed Shiner, Western Sand Darter

Mussel – Elktoe, Washboard

## Wisconsin Native Natural Communities (9)

Dry Cliff

Dry Prairie

Dry-mesic Prairie

Moist Cliff

Northern Dry-mesic Forest

Southern Dry Forest

Emergent Marsh

Floodplain Forest

Wet Prairie

Some sensitive endangered species may not be listed. Federal and State regulations varies by the level of protection, type of species, etc.

## 6.12 Air Quality

The Town of Somerset Plan Commission identified outdoor wood-fired furnaces or boilers as the only potential air quality concern at this time. Outdoor wood boilers have become more popular in the Wisconsin, particularly in rural areas, as the prices for heating oil, propane and natural gas have increased. According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website, the WDNR and Department of Health Services have limited ability to address outdoor wood boiler (OWB) related problems. In fact, there are no State or Federal standards regulating the residential use of OWBs. Due to potential health impacts, some municipalities have adopted ordinances to ban or limit their use. To this end, the WDNR does have a manual and a model ordinance available for local governments on OWBs and outdoor burning.

## 6.13 Environmental Sensitive Areas

For purposes of this plan, there are six primary types of environmental sensitive areas (ESAs). In addition to the surface waters and closed depressions discussed previously, there are four additional primary types of environmental sensitive areas within the Town of Somerset that pose development limitations or where development should generally be avoided. Critical habitat for endangered and threatened species should also be considered a seventh type of ESA, but is not mapped within this plan.

### Steep Slopes

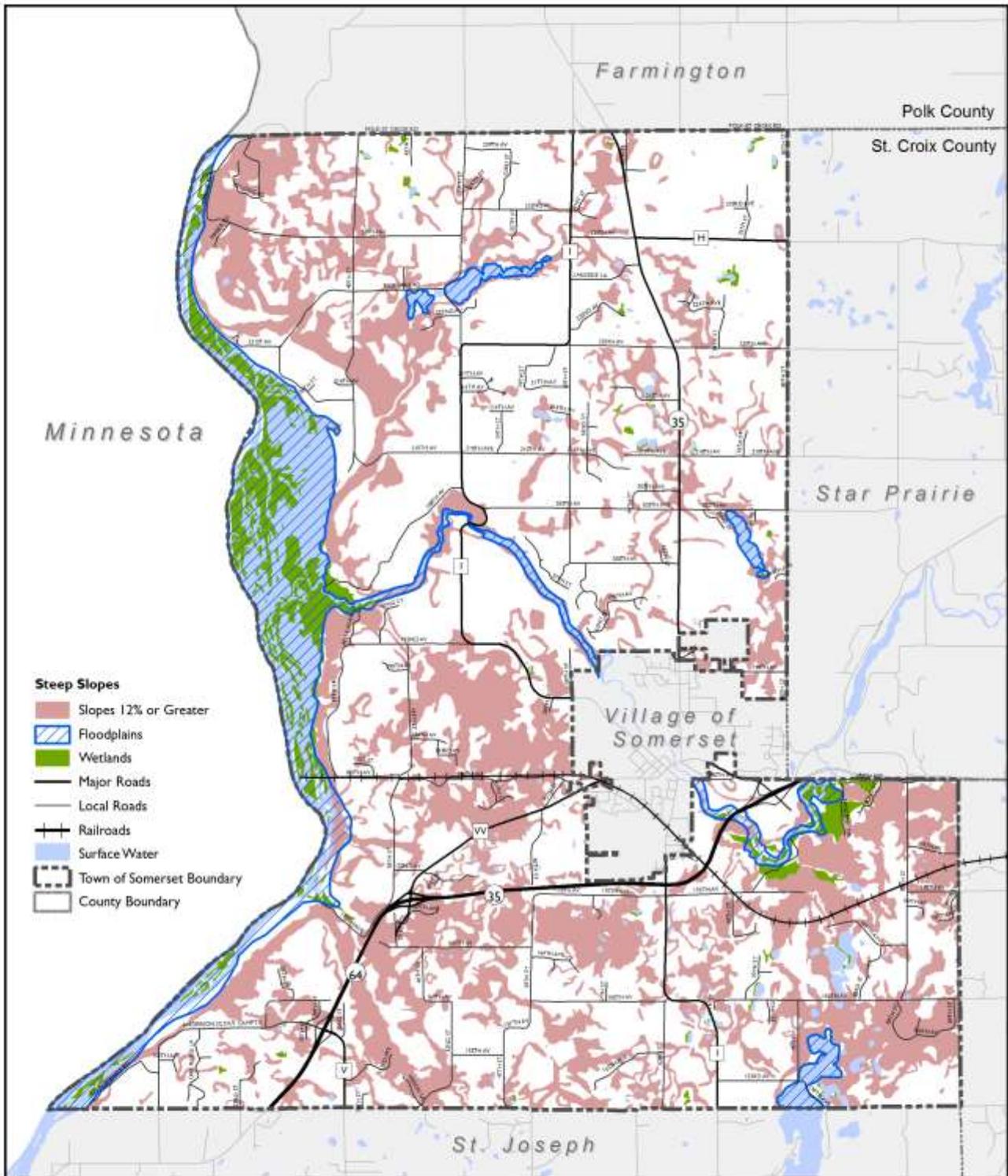
The steep slopes shown on Map 6-12 are areas that are more susceptible to erosion, run-off, and flash flooding. Disrupting natural drainageways with new construction, development, and other activities can create a variety of new problems and hazards. The WDNR considers any area of 12 percent or greater to be steep slopes. Soil erosion on slopes 12 percent to 20 percent is often manageable with good practices. The WDNR discourages development of slopes greater than 20 percent without more intensive or engineered best management practices and erosion controls. Where steep slopes exist, more attention to site planning, stormwater management, and erosion control should be given in these areas.

### Wetlands

Wetlands are defined by State Statute as “an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions.” Wetlands may be seasonal or permanent and are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, or bogs. Wetland areas, plants, and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants, replenish groundwater supplies, provide wildlife habitat, and store floodwaters. Wetlands are also an important part of the Town’s rural character.

Map 6-12 identifies the WDNR-mapped wetland areas within the Town according to the Wisconsin Wetland Inventory. Smaller wetland areas (generally less than 5 acres) are often not mapped. Additional areas in the Town may not been formally mapped as wetlands, but may be natural drainage ways or have “somewhat poorly”, “poorly”, or “very poorly” drained soils according to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey, which are also indicators of potential wetlands. Both of these sources—the Wisconsin Wetlands Inventory and NRCS Soil Survey—should be used in combination to identify potential wetlands. Whether mapped or not, all wetlands are protected from development under WDNR and local regulations.

Map 6-12 Town of Somerset Environmental Sensitive Areas



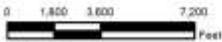


**West Central Wisconsin  
Regional Planning Commission**

**ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVE AREAS**

TOWN OF SOMERSET  
ST. CROIX COUNTY, WI

November 14, 2014




Data Sources:  
St. Croix County Land Information  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
<http://dnr.wisconsin.gov/info/gis/gisdata/soils.html>  
1993

## **Floodplains and Flooding**

**Flooding** is defined as a general condition of partial or complete inundation of normally dry land from the overflow of inland waters, or the unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any source. Often, the amount of damage from flooding is directly related to land use. If the ground is saturated, stripped of vegetation, or paved, the amount of runoff increases, adding to the flooding. Additionally, debris carried by the flood can damage improvements and infrastructure, or can obstruct the flow of water and further contribute to flooding. For the Town of Somerset, flooding can be further subdivided into two primary types: (1) riverine or overbank flooding or (2) stormwater or overland flooding.

**River or Overbank Flooding** – River flooding is when the channel no longer has the capacity to handle the water flow. This can include flash flooding or a slow buildup of flow and velocity over many hours or days. Within the Town of Somerset, this type of flooding is primarily limited to the St. Croix River and its floodplain. The Apple River Dam has provided a measure of flood control along the Lower Apple River.

For purposes of this plan, a **floodplain** is that land which has been or may be covered by floodwater during a flood event. The terms “100-year flood” and “floodplain” are commonly used interchangeably, and are generally treated as such within this plan. A **100-year flood**, often referred to as a **regional flood, special flood hazard area, or base flood**, is a flood that has a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. This can be misleading as a 100-year flood is not a flood that will occur once every 100 years. The 100-year flood, which is the standard used by most Federal and State agencies, is used by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as the standard for floodplain management and to determine the need for flood insurance.

St. Croix County, and thus the Town of Somerset, is a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in good standing. Updated NFIP floodplain maps for St. Croix County were effective in March 2009, including a floodplain ordinance update. The official 100-year floodplains within the Town are shown in Map 6-11. These maps were created without the assistance of detailed survey work or LIDAR-assisted topographical mapping. Until LIDAR mapping is completed and the NFIP floodplain maps updated, questions will remain regarding the accuracy of the 2009 maps.

The Town has also adopted the *St. Croix County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan* which makes the Town eligible for FEMA flood mitigation grant funding should it be needed. This plan identified fourteen structures in the Town which may potentially be located within the 100-year floodplain.

- Slowly fluctuating groundwater levels have historically been a flooding problem for homes at Bass Lake in the towns of St. Joseph and Somerset. At least fourteen NFIP claims have been made for six properties on Bass Lake, making it the highest concentration of claims in the County. Groundwater levels have historically cycled, reaching an all-time high in 1998, but are 4 to 5 feet lower now; levels have been as much as 10 to 15 feet lower in the past. In the 1990's, a lake rehabilitation district was established and an extensive pumping effort undertaken to reduce waters. Water levels retreated very soon thereafter, apparently not due to the pumping, itself. There has been some speculation that removal of dams on the Willow River in the late 1990s may have helped lower groundwater levels in the area. Drier weather conditions and normal groundwater cycles may have also contributed to the lower levels.
- Portions of the lower Apple River in the Town of Somerset have been subject to seasonal riverine flooding in the past, but impacts to structures have not been significant overall and limited to one NFIP claim. A few roadways in the Town also have occasional riverine flooding problems.

**Stormwater or Overland Flooding** – The type of flooding which occurs primarily from surface runoff as a result of intense rainfall or heavy snowmelt is referred to as stormwater flooding or overland flooding. These flooding events tend to strike quickly and end swiftly. Poorly drained soils or areas already saturated can contribute to such flooding and areas of steep slopes can be particularly vulnerable. Stormwater flooding often follows natural drainageways and may be very localized. About 20 percent of the National Flood Insurance Program claims and 1/3 of all flood disaster assistance is for flood damages to structures located outside the 100-year floodplains. No stormwater flooding “hotspots” or concerns were noted for the Town of Somerset. However, as more development occurs or if natural drainageways are disrupted, the threat of overland flooding increases.

Please refer to the *St. Croix County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan* for more information on flooding in the Town of Somerset and St. Croix County.

## **Shorelands**

The Town of Somerset has many shoreland areas. Shorelands provide valuable habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial animals and vegetation, and also act as buffers and thus serve to protect water quality. Shorelands are also considered prime residential building areas because of their scenic beauty. Recognizing this conflict, and to maintain the environmental, recreational, and economical quality of our water resources, the State of Wisconsin requires counties to adopt and enforce a shoreland ordinance. As required by the State, shorelands are defined as:

- all land within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a lake, pond, or flowage; or
- all land within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a river or stream or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever is greater.

Shorelands in the Town are regulated by St. Croix County. Each county must meet or exceed the minimum State standards for shoreland protection.

Due to its status as a National Wild and Scenic River, areas along the St. Croix River have additional protections to reduce adverse effects of overcrowding, bluff development, soil erosion, pollutant runoff, flooding, loss of property values, and a reduction in the exception scenic, cultural, and natural characteristics of this water and related lands. The boundary of the Riverway generally equates to an average depth of ¼ mile land-ward from the ordinary high water mark on both sides of the River. This boundary also generally follows identifiable property lines and roads, rather than natural features.

In addition to normal zoning and subdivision regulations, this special protection is enforced in two primary ways:

- St. Croix County enforces the Lower St. Croix Riverway Overlay District as part of its code of ordinances.
- The National Park Service has purchased and enforces easements within the Riverway boundaries. The majority of these easements are scenic easements that control general use and development in a manner that restricts the visibility of development.

## **6.14 Energy and Sustainability**

The Town of Somerset currently has no specific sustainability plans or initiatives.

## 6.15 Historical and Cultural Resources

Historical and cultural resources are often core to a community's identity. They are often what makes a community unique, while archeological sites can offer invaluable insights into history or be of sacred, cultural importance. And society has a responsibility to protect all human remains and burial sites. Historical and cultural resources can also be important to attracting visitors, new residents, and business investment. A community's culture and history builds community pride, provides a sense of place, and add to the overall quality of life.

The Town of Somerset is rich in cultural history and structures. This history includes the expeditions of early explorers, trappers and missionaries who used the St. Croix River as their "highway" to explore the land, harvest furs, and bring Christianity to the existing Native American tribes that populated the area. One of the missionaries gave the river the name it carries today because he saw the form of a cross in the rocks of the palisades at present day St. Croix Falls.

### **Archeological Sites**

As of Fall 2014, the Wisconsin Archeological Site Inventory included 23 entries that appear to be located in the Town of Somerset, including:

- two cemeteries
- five campsites/villages/finds of Historic Euro-American and/or Pre-European significance
- sixteen sites of Pre-European Woodland or Prehistoric significance (e.g., mounds, campsites, rock art, other finds).

These sites range from a site on the St. Croix River that contain scatterings of ancient pottery and arrow heads to a site with remnants of thirty effigy mounds, a campsite/village area, and a burial ground. The far majority of the inventoried sites are located along or near the St. Croix and Apple Rivers, some of which are afforded a certain level of protection since they are located on public lands. However, there are undoubtedly unrecorded historic period sites found in other areas of the Town where survey work as not been performed or access has been limited. In order to protect archeological sites and property owner rights, access to this database is very limited and closely monitored.

The Town Plan Commission expressed a desire to help protect these sites, as well as other potential sites of archeological or historical significance that have not yet been formally inventoried. There are no State fact sheets or guides covering the role of local governments in protecting such sites. And except for the protection of burial sites, few State rules exist to protect other sites of archeological interest that are on private lands. The Town does have the ability to consider such sites during its planning and plan review, and could adopt its own ordinance and/or pursue additional inventory work.

### **Historical Sites and Structures**

The Town of Somerset has one structure on the National Register of Historic Places. The Soo Line High Bridge is a magnificent iron bridge that is 185 feet high and 2600 feet long. This bridge, built in 1910-1911, and is still in use today.

The National Register of Historic Places "Statement of Significance" declares that:

*"The Soo Line High Bridge is significant for the innovative engineering techniques used in its design, for the length and height of its span, and for the beauty and drama of its structure. It remains an important transportation link between the Minneapolis-St Paul area and western Wisconsin."*

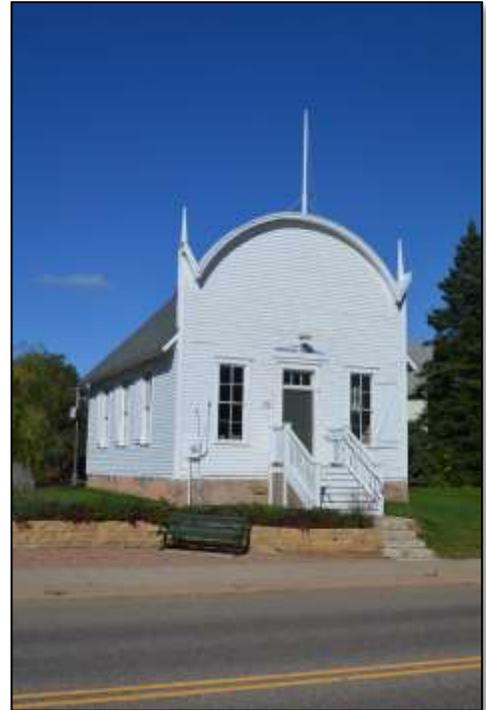
# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

During the summer, restored steam engines pulling restored coaches take passengers on excursions from Osceola and New Richmond, Wisconsin to the bridge and back.

A total of 27 structures and sites are listed on the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) in the Somerset area due to their historical or cultural characteristics. While many of these structures are located within the Village, other structures may exist within the Town that is not on the AHI. No complete inventory of historic structures in the Town has been completed.

Three additional historical sites within the Town deserve special mention:

- The 2003 Comprehensive Plan mentions a modest farmhouse built in 1907 that includes a summer kitchen that was built in 1860.
- The 2003 Plan also discussed that Town residents and other interested persons have adopted and restored a small rural church (Emmanuel Lutheran Church) built in 1896 that had become inactive in 1950 after its congregation outgrew the structure. A Cemetery Association was formed at that time to maintain the graves and the historic church. By the spring of 1993, the church was showing its age and the original members of the Cemetery Association were also in advanced age. At this point a group of younger descendants met and organized a plan to preserve the church through an organization called the Preservation Society. This group of volunteers repaired, repainted and completely restored the church to its original condition. Each year, the Preservation Society holds an Ice Cream Social and Annual Meeting in the spring and a Fall Social later in the year. These events are well attended by descendants of the original members of the church. Weddings, christenings, family reunion and funerals are now frequent events at the church.
- A significant change since the 2003 Plan is that the original Somerset Town Hall has now been fully restored and has been used for events and storage. The old Town Hall, probably built in the late 1800s, sits on a small lot in the Village of Somerset.



## **Other Historical and Cultural Resources**

No specific historical or cultural organizations exist in the immediate area, though the Somerset Library does maintain a local history collection. Many additional cultural and community activities revolve around the School District, with its plays, musicals, sporting events, and other events. In addition, the Village of Somerset does host a number of festivals and large music events.

## 6.16 Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Plans and Programs

The following is a description of some of the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources programs which may be of particular interest to the Town and its residents.

### Agricultural Resources Programs

#### U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

The USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is tasked with implementing Federal farm conservation programs to improve the economic stability of the agricultural industry, maintain a steady price range of agricultural commodities, and help farmers adjust to changes in demand. These goals are achieved through a range of farm commodity, credit, conservation, loan, and disaster programs, including Federal Crop Insurance.

Also part of the USDA is the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), which was formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service. The NRCS provides data, maps, technical expertise, and training in soils, conservation techniques, ecological sciences, and other such activities.

The USDA has service centers located in each county in the region, which include the FSA and NRCS offices. Local USDA staff typically work very closely with local UW-Extension Agriculture Agents and county conservation staff to assist farmers and municipalities in their respective counties.

#### **St. Croix County USDA Service Center**

1960 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Baldwin, WI 54002  
715-684-2874

#### Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program Wis. Stats. §91

The Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program was established in 1977 to assist local government efforts to preserve agricultural resources. The Program was updated in 2009 as part of the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative.

Eligible farmland owners receive state income tax credits. The amount of the credit varies and eligible landowners may collect one of the following per acre amounts by filing with their income tax return:

- \$5.00 for farmers with a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009 and located in an agricultural enterprise area.
- \$7.50 for farmers in an area zoned for farmland preservation.
- \$10.00 for farmers in an area zoned for farmland preservation and in an agricultural enterprise area, with a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009.

There is no cap on the amount of credit that an individual can claim or on the amount of acreage eligible for a credit. For more information on the state program, please contact the DATCP or visit the Working Lands Initiative website: [http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Working\\_Lands\\_Initiative/](http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Working_Lands_Initiative/)

#### Farmland Use Value Assessment (1995 Wisconsin Act 27; Wis. Stats. §70.32(2r) & 73.03(49))

With the passage of the State 1995-1997 Budget Act, the standard for assessing agricultural land in Wisconsin changed from market value to use value. With taxation of land based on the income that could be generated from the land's rental for agricultural use, rather than development potential, the program helps Wisconsin farmers to maintain current farming practices, rather than succumbing to development due to economic pressures. Only land devoted primarily to agricultural use qualifies. For reference, undeveloped land (e.g., bog, marsh, lowland brush, wetlands) is assessed at 50% of its full value.

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

## Livestock Facility Siting Ordinances Wis. Stats. §93.90 & ATCP 51

The role of local governments in the regulation of the site of new and expanded livestock operations changed significantly in 2006 with the adoption of Wisconsin Statutes §93.90 and Administrative Rule ATCP 51. Effective May 1, 2006, local ordinances which require permits for livestock facilities must follow state rules. The siting standards only apply to new and expanding livestock facilities in areas that require local permits, and then only (in most communities) if they will have 500 animal units (AU) or more and expand by at least 20%.

For the Town of Somerset, livestock siting is regulated under the St. Croix County Zoning Ordinance. For communities with zoning, the new Statute limits the exclusion of livestock facilities from agricultural zoning districts, unless another ag district exists where operations of all sizes are allowed and the exclusion is for public health and safety based on scientific findings of fact. However, such facilities can be treated as a conditional use. Appeals of local permit decisions are taken to the State Livestock Facility Siting Review Board. The changes in state rules for livestock facility siting do not impact a local government's ability to enforce shoreland-wetland zoning, erosion controls, stormwater management requirement, manure storage ordinances, and road regulations.

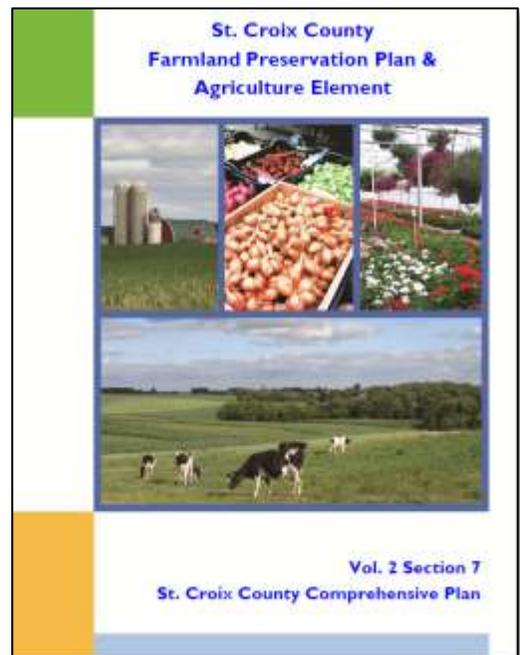
## University of Wisconsin-Extension

UW-Extension offices provide a variety of educational and support programming in the areas of agribusiness, land use and soil management. To assist farmers and local governments, a UW-Extension Agricultural Agent is located in each county in the region with county support.

**St. Croix County - UW Extension**  
Agricultural Service and Education Center  
1960 8th Avenue, Suite 140  
Baldwin, WI 54002  
715-684-3301 Ext 5

## St. Croix County Farmland Preservation Plan

St. Croix County updated its Farmland Preservation in 2012 as an element of its comprehensive plan with the assistance of West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and input from local municipalities. This plan has been integrated into the County's Comprehensive Plan and official zoning map. More information on the *St. Croix County Farmland Preservation Plan* can be found at the County's website.



## **Natural Resources Programs**

### U.S. Department of the Interior - National Park Service

The National Park Service has an active presence in western Polk and St. Croix counties through its management of the St. Croix River National Scenic Riverway, in conjunction with state and local entities.

**Saint Croix River National Scenic Riverway**  
401 North Hamilton Street  
Saint Croix Falls, WI 54024  
715-483-2274

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains the St. Croix Wetland Management District, which is one of only two such districts in the state. The St. Croix District was established in 1974 and consists of 41 waterfowl production areas totaling 7,700 acres as well as 15 easements protecting wildlife habitat on private land in Barron, Burnett, Dunn, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, St. Croix, and Washburn counties.

### **USFWS St. Croix Wetland Management District**

1764 95<sup>th</sup> Street  
New Richmond, WI 54017  
715-246-7784

## Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources develops, maintains, implements, and enforces a wide variety of programs, plans, and permitting for west central Wisconsin. WisDNR is perhaps most visible to the region's residents through its management of state parks, trails, and other recreational or natural areas, as well as permitting for hunting, fishing, trapping, and burning. WisDNR also provides educational programs and training to residents and teachers/instructors in hunting, ecology, outdoor skills, safety, and regulatory compliance. Training and assistance are also available to governments and businesses in regulatory compliance, grant programs, etc. And WisDNR scientists and managers are working to address potential conflicts and threats to wildlife and recreational opportunities, such as invasive species.

But local governments often have more contact with WisDNR officials on planning, permitting, grants, and regulatory issues, such as stormwater planning, financial assistance for outdoor recreation or environmental remediation, or permitting as it relates to utilities, mining, burning, wetlands, and water discharges. More information and contact information for WisDNR programs and plans can be found at their website: [www.dnr.state.wi.us](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us)

## Forest Land Tax Programs Wis. Stats. §70 & 77

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources manages two forestry tax laws that provide tax incentives to encourage proper management of private forest lands for forest crop production, while recognizing a variety of other objectives. The Forest Crop Law (FCL) program allows landowners to pay taxes on timber only after harvesting or when the contract is terminated, though enrollment in this program was closed in 1986. The Managed Forest Law (MFL) program replaces the FCL and the now-defunct Woodland Tax Law Program. The Woodland Tax Law program expired in 2000, and there are no active contracts under this program in Wisconsin.

The Managed Forest Law (Wisconsin Statutes §77.80) was enacted in 1985 and offers flexibility for private owners of 10 or more acres of contiguous woodlands who enroll in the program. Under the MFL program, landowners have the option to choose either a 25- or 50-year order period; and the annual tax varies depending on whether the land to open or closed to public access (certain restrictions apply). Enrollees are obligated to submit and follow a forest management plan, submit a harvest report, and permit inspections, in exchange for technical support, tax benefits, and good woodlot management. Participants in the MFL program are automatically eligible for American Tree Farm System group certification which provides certain marketplace benefits.

## WisDNR Division of Water and Watershed Management

The Division of Water promotes the balanced use of Wisconsin's waters to protect, maintain and enhance them in full partnership with the public. Communities with municipal water supplies also interact with the Division of Water through water quality testing and reporting and wellhead protection.

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

WisDNR has the authority to issue permits affecting navigable waters of the state. These permits include bulkhead line ordinance establishment, bridge or culvert placement, dam construction, stream realignment, retaining wall construction, water diversion and pond construction.

The Bureau of Watershed Management administers programs on dam safety, floodplain mapping and management, impaired waters, shoreland management, runoff management, the priority watershed program, and a variety of water-related permits.

The Bureau also conducts basin planning or “water quality management planning” for the state, of which local sewer service area plans are part. Beginning in 1999, the water quality management program worked with state lands and fisheries programs to develop integrated basic plans statewide.

The Town of Somerset falls within the St. Croix Basin Plan:

***The State of the St. Croix Basin, 2002***  
**St. Croix Watershed Basin Supervisor**  
810 W. Maple St.  
Spooner, WI 54801  
715-635-4053

In concert with the National Park Service and Minnesota DNR, a *Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Final Cooperative Management Plan* has also been developed.

## Wisconsin Act 307 – Notification to Nonmetallic Resource Owners

This Act amends portions of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law to increase communication and notification of local planning with owners of nonmetallic mineral sites. Public participation procedures must now include written procedures describing the methods the local government will use to distribute proposed, alternative, or amended elements of a plan to owners of property, or to persons who have a leasehold interest in property, which may extract nonmetallic mineral resources on the property. This is only required if the comprehensive plan changes the allowable use or intensity of use of the given property. Wisconsin Act 307 also added provisions to the Comprehensive Planning Law detailing that prior to a public hearing written notice shall be provided to property owners or operators with an interest in nonmetallic mineral resources.

## Historic Building Code

The Wisconsin Historic Building Code facilitates the restoration and rehabilitation of historic structures. Once historic building owners obtain permission to use the Historic Building Code, they may use it in lieu of any other state, county, or municipal code. The code is designed to help owners maintain the historic appearances of their buildings and allow them to use original materials and construction techniques that may no longer be permitted under present day building codes. To qualify to use the code, property owners must own buildings that fall under the code’s definition of a historic building. Buildings listed in, nominated to, or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or State Register of Historic Places qualify as historic under the code. The code may also be applied to properties located in National Register and State Register historic districts. The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services administers the Historic Building Code and can be contacted for further information.

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The purpose of EQIP is to provide technical and financial help to landowners for conservation practices that protect soil and water quality. Nutrient management and prescribed grazing are eligible for cost-sharing statewide. Assistance for other practices is available in selected priority areas. Approved projects are based on environmental value. Five to 10 year contracts are used. Agricultural producers may be eligible for up to 75% cost share on agricultural land. Public access is

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

not required. Contact: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or Farm Service Agency, or County Land and Water Conservation Department.

## Non-Point Pollution Abatement Program

Funds are available to improve water quality by limiting or ending sources of non-point source (run-off) water pollution by providing financial and technical assistance to landowners, land operators, municipalities, and other governmental units. Governmental units located within designated priority watersheds, or whose jurisdiction include priority lakes, are eligible to apply. Eligible projects are watersheds and lakes where: 1) the water quality improvement or protection will be great in relation to funds expended; 2) the installation of best management practices is feasible to abate water pollution caused by non-point source pollution; and 3) the local governmental units and agencies involved are willing to carry out program responsibilities. Efforts are focused statewide in critical watersheds and lakes where non-point source related water quality problems are most severe and control is most feasible. Rural landowners or land operators, whose properties lie within selected priority watersheds or include a priority lake, can contact their county land conservation department to receive an explanation of the program and to sign up for cost sharing of best management practices. Non-rural landowners and land operators can contact their municipal government offices. A watershed or lake project normally has a 10 to 12 year time frame: two years for planning and eight to ten years to implement best management practices. Contact the WDNR Regional Environmental Grant Specialist for further information.

## River Management and Planning Grants

River management and planning grants are available from the WDNR for various river protection and conservation efforts.

## Stewardship Grants for Municipalities and Non-Profit Conservation Organizations

Funds are available for the acquisition of land or easements for conservation purposes, and restoration of wildlife habitat. Non-profit conservation organizations are eligible to apply. Priorities include acquisition of wildlife habitat, acquisition of lands with special scientific or ecological value, rare and endangered habitats and species, acquisition of stream corridors, acquisition of land for state trails and restoration of wetlands and grasslands. Eligible types of projects include fee simple and easement acquisitions and habitat restoration projects. Contact the WDNR for further information.

## Land Recycling Loan Program (LRLP)

Wisconsin's Land Recycling Loan Program (LRLP) provides low cost loans to cities, villages, counties, and towns for the purpose of remediating environmental contamination (brownfields) at landfills, sites, or facilities where contamination has affected or threatens to affect groundwater or surface water. Redevelopment and housing authorities are also eligible. Contact the WDNR for further information.

## St. Croix River Crossing Bridge Mitigation Grant Dollars

The new St. Croix River Crossing Bridge located in Oak Park Heights, Minnesota and Houlton, Wisconsin will create significant impacts and changes to St. Croix County and the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and its watershed, including stimulating additional residential growth and related business development, and changes to the surface water, groundwater, landscape, and other resources.

To mitigate these and other potential impacts, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), National Park Service, St. Croix County, Town of St. Joseph, and University of Wisconsin-River Falls entered into two Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). These MOUs provide financial support for various studies, plans, and activities to mitigate impacts. The Town of Somerset, individually or in concert with other

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

governmental entities, may pursue such mitigation funding to mitigate negative impacts within the community.

## Highway 64 Wastewater and Stormwater Coalition

The Town of Somerset has been an active participant in this Coalition. The intergovernmental collaboration efforts of the Coalition has a focus on protecting surface and ground water quality by cooperatively planning for wastewater and stormwater within the region. The Coalition is currently in the initial planning phase funded with St. Croix River Crossing Bridge mitigation dollars as discussed previously in the Utilities and Community Facilities element. It is anticipated that the Coalition will be pursue additional mitigation dollars and other funding sources to carry out further planning, study, and projects.

## Other Related Plans and Programs

Some additional natural resources plans and programs of special interest to the Town of Somerset are:

- St. Croix County Comprehensive Plan
- St. Croix County Development Management Plan
- St. Croix County General, Shoreland, and Floodplain Zoning Regulations
- St. Croix County Drinking Water Program (e.g., testing, education)
- St. Croix County Sanitary/Septic, Solid Waste Management, and Recycling Regulations
- St. Croix County Animal Waste and Livestock Siting Regulations
- St. Croix County Nutrient Management Program (landspreading primarily regulated by WDNR)
- St. Croix County Mining Regulations
- St. Croix County Land Conservation Office and Land & Water Resource Management Plan
- St. Croix County Clean Sweep Program
- Village of Somerset Wellhead Protection Plan and Ordinance
- Village of Somerset Comprehensive Plan
- St. Croix River Association

## **Cultural and Historical Resources Programs**

### Wisconsin Historical Preservation Tax Credits

One of the benefits of owning a historic property in Wisconsin is the ability to participate in Federal and state income tax incentives programs for rehabilitation of historic properties. There are currently three programs available to owners of properties that are either listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in, the state or national registers of historic places. The three programs are:

- 1 Federal 20% Historic Rehabilitation Credit.
- 2 Wisconsin 5% Supplement to Federal Historic Rehabilitation Credit.
- 3 Wisconsin 25% Historic Rehabilitation Credit. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Division of Historic Preservation should be contacted for further information

### Wisconsin Historical Society, Office of Preservation Planning (OPP)

Whether you need information concerning state or Federal laws and regulations that may be applicable in your case, whether you need information on grassroots strategies for preserving and protecting historic properties, or whether you need information on how you may protect and preserve your own historic property, the OPP can assist.

### Wisconsin's Historical Markers Program

For almost 50 years, Wisconsin's State Historical Markers program has been interpreting both important small incidents and monumental events that form the State's past. Placed on the very site where significant events occurred, markers evoke an immediacy of the past that no history book can provide. The Society's Division of Historic Preservation administers the Wisconsin Historical Markers

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

Program. Applications are required for all official State of Wisconsin historical markers and plaques. Applications are available at [www.wisconsinhistory.org/histbuild/markers/apply](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/histbuild/markers/apply).

## National Historic Landmarks Program

National Historic Landmark status is the highest level of national designation. These are properties of exceptional value to the nation that retain a high degree of architectural and historical integrity. The purpose of the National Historic Landmarks Program is to identify and designate these properties and to encourage their long-range preservation. Nomination preparers should consult the Division of Historic Preservation and the National Park Service before proceeding with a National Historic Landmark nomination.

## National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Services Fund

Grants from this fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation are designed to encourage preservation at the local level by providing seed money for preservation projects. These grants help stimulate public discussion, enable local groups to gain the technical expertise needed for particular projects, and encourage financial participation by the private sector. PSF award applicants must be a non-profit organization or public agency capable of matching the grant amount dollar-for-dollar. The grant range is from \$500 to \$5,000.

## Wisconsin Humanities Council, Historic Preservation Program Grants

The Wisconsin Humanities Council and the Jeffris Family Foundation have formed a partnership pool to support Historic Preservation Program Grants. The Wisconsin Humanities Council (WHC) will award grants with funds from both groups. The WHC accepts proposals for projects that enhance appreciation of the importance of particular historic buildings or that increase public awareness of the importance of particular buildings or decorative art works in Wisconsin. Preference will be given to small town and rural communities with populations under 30,000. For more information contact the WHC, 222 South Bedford Street, Suite F, Madison, WI 53703.

## Certified Local Government Program

Local units of government that have enacted historic preservation ordinances may consider being certified to participate in the state and Federal Certified Local Government (CLG) program. The CLG program provides special grants to fund planning and educational activities. The Division of Historic Preservation at the Wisconsin Historical Society administers the CLG program. Wisconsin has 40 Certified Local Governments. For more information about the Certified Local Government please visit the Society's Web site at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/> or the National Park Service's Web site at <http://www.nps.gov/nr/>.

## St. Croix Heritage Initiative

A grassroots effort is underway to potentially create a St. Croix National Heritage Area, which would include the Town of Somerset. If created, the National Park Service would partner with the SCNHA to provide technical assistance and distribute matching Federal funds for projects. Annual funding has ranged from \$150,000 to \$750,000 for existing NHA entities in the past. NHA designation does not impose or require any new land use regulations. The Feasibility Study for NHA status has been completed and action by the Federal government on the request is pending. More information can be found at [www.stcroixheritage.org](http://www.stcroixheritage.org).

## 6.17 Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Goals and Objectives

### ***Agricultural and Natural Resources Goal:***

***Retain the rural character of the Town of Somerset landscape, while protecting and maintaining healthy ecological systems.***

#### ***Objectives***

1. Encourage agricultural land use through support of land use policies that encourage farming the land.
2. Development and non-agricultural use of the land, including new construction and recreational activities, should be conducted in a manner that minimizes or prevents the negative impacts to groundwater, surface waters, wetlands, steep slopes, and other environmental sensitive areas. Agricultural uses should also be encouraged to minimize or avoid such impacts.
3. Guide growth in a manner that: conserves and enhances natural or scenic resources; protects groundwater and surface water quantity and quality; promotes the conservation of wetlands and flood storage areas; preserve native prairie remnants, protects endangered or threatened habitat and species; and enhances public recreation opportunities.
4. When opportunities allow, encourage the preservation, enhancement, and linkages of environmental corridors, wildlife habitat, and conservancy areas.
5. Maintain natural, open spaces within the community that accessible by residents, while protecting habitats and environmentally sensitive features from development, overuse, and commercialization.

### ***Cultural Resources Goal:***

***Retain and preserve the Town's historical and cultural resources.***

#### ***Objectives***

1. Identify and protect sites and features of archeological interest.
2. Encourage the protection and rehabilitation of structures of significant historical interest.
3. Support partnerships with local residents and community organizations that encourage preservation, education, and celebration of the area's historical and cultural resources.
4. Preserve open space, historical resources, and the Town's rural character as a reflection of the Town's past and the cultural importance to our quality of life in the future.

## 6.18 Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Policies

### ***Policies & Recommendations – Agricultural Resources***

1. Strong preference shall be given to agricultural uses over non-agricultural development within farmland preservation areas. Non-farm related development on productive farmland shall be discouraged. (policy)
2. Productive farmlands that are intended to be preserved long-term should be identified as farmland preservation areas within the County's plans and protected through agricultural zoning. (policy)

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

3. Continue to encourage in-fill and manage growth through zoning, conservation design, and other tools within the Town in a manner that helps to preserve productive agricultural areas. (policy)
4. Through cooperation and land use regulations, avoid or mitigate potential conflicts between agricultural-related uses and residential uses within the Town and at the Town-Village boundary. (policy)
5. Encourage St. Croix County to revisit its zoning ordinance to consider excluding or mitigating potential use conflicts (e.g., livestock facilities with 500+ animal units) within rural residential areas. (short-term)

## ***Policies & Recommendations – Natural Resources***

6. Working with St. Croix County and the National Park Service, continue to maintain and enforce Town and County ordinances in a manner that ensures the protection and conservation of groundwater, surface waters, environmentally sensitive areas, and the natural environment. Utilize the environmentally sensitive areas map (or more accurate information if available) when considering zoning and land use decisions. (policy)
7. Discourage landspreading and disposal of septic sludge, solid waste, and contaminated materials within environmental sensitive areas and near residential areas. Monitor related trends and explore adoption of appropriate landspreading and other solid waste regulations, if needed. (policy & ongoing)
8. Promote and utilize the Town and County conservation design standards to preserve and link environmental corridors and sensitive areas. (policy)
9. Community land use plans, subdivision plats, and individual site plans should provide convenient public access to natural, open spaces in the community for recreational purposes when possible, but should also support the restoration or protection of natural habitats and environmentally sensitive areas. (policy)
10. Discourage the development of significant intact native prairie remnants and encourage the restoration of prairie or grassland systems through cooperative efforts of landowners and State, County, and Federal agencies. (policy)
11. Create an inventory of known prairie remnants within the Town of Somerset. (long-term)
12. Mining-related uses, including mining, processing, transload facilities, and haul routes, shall be treated similarly to a heavy industry and should be closely regulated. Such uses should be discouraged from siting near existing or planned residential areas. The Town may require additional studies on noise, traffic, real estate value, air quality, groundwater, economic costs-benefits, and other potential impacts for site-specific non-metallic mineral extraction and processing proposals. (policy)
13. Encourage St. Croix County to revisit its zoning ordinance and consider the establishment of a separate non-metallic mining zoning district. (short-term)
14. The Town Plan Commission shall explore the future potential for mining-related development within the Town and whether the Town should develop its own non-metallic mining ordinance. (short-term)
15. Meet with St. Croix County, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service to identify strategies to prevent the potential over-commercialization of the Apple River and its associated shorelands and facilities (e.g., boat ramps). Explore the potential adoption of a special Town licensing overlay district to address this issue if needed. (short-term and long-term)

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

16. Through the Town website and/or other outreach, work to increase resident knowledge of the radon risks in the area and encourage testing. (short-term, then ongoing)
17. Create a Town of Somerset “Rural Living Guide” to include information on environmental sensitive areas, protection of water quality, applicable regulations, best management practices, Town services, and key contact information. (short-term)
18. Make residents aware of existing conservation and farmland preservation efforts within the community as best practices and models. (short-term)
19. Explore and promote energy conservation and sustainability initiatives in the community. (ongoing).
20. In order to protect air quality in the Town of Somerset, the outdoor burning of solid wastes, including but not limited to garbage, trash, construction debris, and industrial waste, shall be prohibited. Prescribed burns for the purpose of regenerating and/or maintaining wildlife habitat ecosystems shall be allowed. Consider the creation of a Town ordinance regarding outdoor wood furnaces and boilers. (policy and short-term)
21. Steep slopes with a grade of 20 percent or more shall not be developed. Development shall only be allowed on steep slopes with a grade from 12 to 20 percent where best management practices for erosion and sediment control and stormwater management can be implemented successfully. (policy)



## ***Policies & Recommendations – Water Resources***

22. The Town of Somerset will work with St. Croix County to identify and monitor potential pollution sources in the Town that might contaminate groundwater. (ongoing)
23. Promote proper well abandonment and wellhead protection. (policy)
24. Discourage uses in the Town that place a high demand on the local aquifer that could potentially impact nearby wells or surface waters. The cumulative impacts of groundwater withdrawals should be considered prior to approving uses that require high capacity wells. (policy)
25. Continue to work cooperatively with the National Park Service, St. Croix County, and the St. Croix River Association in the protection of the St. Croix Riverway. Continue disseminating information to landowners and local realtors regarding the scenic easements, bluff setbacks, and other applicable protections. (policy; ongoing)
26. All structures and roads shall be built at least 75 feet from the ordinary high water mark of all surface waters and wetlands. Development and re-development should be discouraged or prohibited within 100-year floodplains and dam failure inundation areas. Under no circumstances shall development be allowed that would increase the base flood level of the floodplain; the Town may require an engineering certification to this effect at their discretion. Support efforts by St. Croix County to increase the accuracy of FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (D-FIRMs). (policy)
27. The Town of Somerset will work with St. Croix County to ensure that shoreland regulations are enforced and appropriate buffers are maintained to reduce runoff, prevent contamination, reduce erosion, and protect and preserve water quality. (policy)

## Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

28. Closed depressions shall not be developed, drained or filled, nor shall closed depressions be used for the dumping or storage of any substance, material, or equipment. Best management practices to repair damage near residences and structures shall be exempt from this provision. (policy)
29. The Town of Somerset will require landowners to provide at least a 75-foot buffer of permanent vegetation between closed depressions, kettles, or sinkholes and yards, croplands, feedlots, buildings, roads, parking areas, etc. to protect the groundwater from contamination. Closed depressions, kettles or sinkholes which are associated with farm fields actively cropped any two out of the last five years shall be exempt from this provision. (policy)
30. Support the education of Town residents and businesses on the proper disposal of household, pharmaceutical, and agricultural hazardous waste at county collection programs. (policy)
31. All development shall attain pre-development levels of stormwater runoff after development. Stormwater runoff as the result of development and the use of land should not adversely impact shorelands, wetlands, closed depressions, or other waterbodies. As needed, require maintenance agreements and develop an inspection schedule for stormwater management systems on private lands that are approved as part of a development. (policy)
32. The Town of Somerset will require plans for controlling and minimizing water runoff, erosion, and sedimentation for all development. Erosion control and drainage plans shall be required for all roads and driveways, any portion of which, including rights-of-way, has a grade of 10 percent and over. (policy)
33. The Town of Somerset standards for controlling and minimizing water runoff, erosion, and sedimentation shall include, but not be limited to (policy):
  - a. New development and roads should conform to the natural topography of the site.
  - b. Bare soil must be protected from rain, snow, or meltwater induced erosion.
  - c. The infiltration function of the soil must be maintained.
  - d. Runoff velocities must be kept low.
  - e. All areas on the site must be protected from runoff which flows from land above the site.
  - f. Sediment at the perimeter of the site must be controlled.
  - g. There must be permanent controls established for the release of excess runoff which result from the completed development.
  - h. Installed controls must be properly constructed and maintained both during and after the construction period.
  - i. Stormwater runoff shall not be discharged to closed depressions, kettles, or sinkholes.
34. The Town of Somerset will not allow the development, filling, or draining of wetlands, nor should development negatively impact wetlands. Wetlands shall not be used for the purpose of stormwater retention or as development related detention basins. Runoff shall be controlled so that the natural functions of wetlands are not overloaded or disrupted. (policy)
35. Continue to support and promote use of the St. Croix County well-testing program. (ongoing)
36. Encourage discussion and partnerships with St. Croix County Land Conservation, UW-Extension, Bass Lake Management District, area farmers, and other municipalities in the watershed to reduce phosphorus loading, explore adaptive management strategies, and improve the water quality of area surface waters. (short-term)

37. Work cooperatively with the National Park Service, Wisconsin DNR, St. Croix County Land Conservation, St. Croix River Association, and the Bass Lake Management District to increase public awareness and support initiatives which work to prevent or eliminate invasive species and the spread of these species. (policy)
38. Continue to participate in the Highway 64 Wastewater and Stormwater Coalition's initiative regarding stormwater and wastewater planning and management. Consider implementation of the recommendations from this initiative as deemed feasible and beneficial to the Town. (ongoing)
39. Encourage the use of rain gardens, natural or vegetated swales, and other infiltration systems that reuse water, limit stormwater runoff, and add aesthetic appeal to the landscape.

## ***Policies & Recommendations – Wildlife Habitat***

40. The Town of Somerset considers wildlife habitat to be an essential part of the Town's character and heritage, and something that residents have voiced clear interest in retaining as a major element of our future community. Wildlife habitat is generally recognized as any and all native flora and fauna and insects, terrestrial and aquatic, and the soils, wetlands, streams and lakes on which they depend. Wildlife habitat is further considered to be:
  - a. Any and all of the naturally occurring resources that are necessary or useful to support and assure the presence and well-being of native wildlife populations.
  - b. Any and all wildlife plants, terrestrial and aquatic, that help provide the food, shelter, and cover requirements for the support and well-being of any and all animal and insect wildlife populations, terrestrial and aquatic.
  - c. Any and all man-made structures, ponds, cultivated crops, plants, etc., that are useful to support the presence and well-being of wildlife populations, whether or not such is the primary intent of such structures, crops, plants, etc. (policy)
41. Natural wildlife habitat shall be identified prior to development and the impacts of development on such habitat shall be minimized. All development plans adjacent to or within areas of wildlife habitat will be reviewed for the purpose of protecting and preserving said habitat to the greatest extent which is practical. (policy)
42. The Town of Somerset will encourage that undeveloped lands (open spaces), that are not agriculturally productive, be utilized for the purpose of protecting, preserving, enhancing, and/or establishing wildlife habitat. (policy)
43. The Town of Somerset will encourage the use of conservation subdivision design to maintain as much of the wildlife habitat value of a site as possible, with priority given to quality habitat and encouraging connected environmental corridors. (policy)
44. The Town of Somerset will encourage all resident landowners to maintain and/or establish appropriate vegetation in order to provide wildlife habitat and preserve the rural character of the community. (policy)
45. The Town of Somerset will encourage the preservation, protection, enhancement, and/or establishment of fence rows, hedge rows, and wind breaks wherever they will not adversely affect agricultural operations or significantly jeopardize the safe operation of motor vehicles on Town roads, in order to provide wildlife habitat, reduce erosion, control snow drifts, and enhance the aesthetics and rural character of the community. (policy)
46. The Town of Somerset will discourage the development of significant intact prairie remnants and will encourage the restoration of prairie or grassland systems through cooperative efforts of landowners and State, County, and Federal agencies. (policy)

# Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

47. The Town of Somerset will continue to allow the activities of regulated sport hunting and fishing within the community. These activities function both as wildlife management tools and help to finance wildlife management programs and projects. (policy)
48. Encourage stormwater and aesthetic ponds, including adjacent shorelines and vegetation, to be built and maintained in a way that deters Canada Geese. (policy)

## ***Policies & Recommendations – Cultural Resources***

49. Through the Town newsletter, website, information at the Town Hall, and other activities, increase awareness of the Town's history and culture as a means of strengthening a sense of community and ownership among residents of the Town. (short-term)
50. Encourage and support the development of groups interested in the identification, preservation, and increase awareness of lands or sites that are part of the Town's history. (policy)
51. Continue to partner with the Village to maintain the original Town Hall and explore uses and events at the Town Hall that celebrate local history. (ongoing)
52. As part of the Town's "rural living guide", raises awareness that sites of archeological interest exist within the Town, the importance of preserving such sites, and to encourage the reporting of known or suspected sites. (short-term)
53. Amend the Town's subdivision checklist to require that the State inventory list of archeological sites be checked prior to issuing building or use permits and prior to taking action on zoning applications. (short-term)



## 7. Economic Development

### **Use Caution When Using Economic Data**

The data in this section should be used for general planning purposes and consideration of trends, but must be used cautiously and with a critical eye. Critical decisions may require additional data collection.

The data found here is taken from different sources and, sometimes, for different geographic areas. Some data sources use different definitions which may differ from each other (as well as your own definition). Further, when dealing with small samples or a single community, a single oversight during data collection (e.g., missing one business) or a change after the data is collected can make large differences. And in some cases, data may be withheld due to confidentiality.

Through planning, a community can anticipate economic change and guide development to the best of its abilities to achieve its economic vision and objectives. Economic development is about working together to maintain a strong economy which provides a good standard of living for individuals and a reliable tax base for the community. A community's economic development plan should reflect the values of the community and must be carefully linked to the goals, objectives, and strategies of the other plan elements.

This plan element provides a variety of economic data and indicators which can guide and focus related goals, objectives, and policy. Existing plans and programs are considered which can be important resources, while the Plan Commission also considered local economic strengths, weaknesses, and redevelopment opportunities.

### 7.1 Current Economic Profile

#### **Civilian Labor Force and Employment**

The number of Town of Somerset residents in the labor force increased from 1,540 to 2,260 from 2000 to 2010. In 2010, 78.9 percent of Town residents over the age of 16 years were in labor force. Unemployment in the Town was lower than the county average overall in 2010 as shown in Table 7-1.

**Table 7-1  
Unemployment Rate, 2000 & 2010**

	2000		2010	
	Employed	Unemployment Rate	Employed	Unemployment Rate
Town of Somerset	1,540	4.0%	2,127	5.9%
St. Croix County	34,905	2.6%	44,716	6.7%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau and 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

# Economic Development

## Educational Attainment

Table 7-2 displays the education attainment level of residents in the Town of Somerset that were age 25 and older in 2010. The educational attainment level of persons within a community is often an indicator of the overall income, job availability, and well-being of the community. Lower educational attainment levels can also be a hindrance to attracting certain types of businesses, typically those that require high technical skills and upper management types of positions.

**Table 7-2**  
**Educational Attainment of Persons Age 25 & Older Town of Somerset, 2010**

Attainment Level	Number	Percent of Total
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	79	2.9%
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade to 12 Grade, No Diploma	202	7.5%
High School Graduate (includes equivalency)	1,020	37.7%
Some College, No Degree	625	23.1%
Associate Degree	236	8.7%
Bachelor's Degree	406	15.0%
Graduate or Professional Degree	141	5.2%
<b>TOTAL PERSONS 25 AND OVER</b>	<b>2,709</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey*

Educational attainment of Town residents has stayed relatively the same (and within the margin of error) over the past decade with 89.7 percent of residents over 25 years of age in 2010 (ACS 5-year estimates<sup>4</sup>) having at least attained a high school diploma as compared to 92 percent in 2000. For all of St. Croix County in 2010, 94.6 percent of residents over 25 years of age had at least a high school diploma.

## Income

The median household income in the Town of Somerset increased 8.2 percent between 2000 and 2010, above the County average increase of 24.1 percent and the State average increase of 17.8 percent. The Town's median household income in 2000 was \$62,063 and in 2010 it was \$67,135, compared to the 2010 County median household income of \$68,139. In 2010, 13.6 percent of persons and 2.9 percent of families in the Town of Somerset were below the poverty level. This is compared to 7.5 percent and 5.4 percent, respectively, for St. Croix County as a whole.

## Employment by Industrial Sector

The employment by industry within an area illustrates the structure of the economy. Historically, the State of Wisconsin has had a high concentration of employment in manufacturing and agricultural sectors of the economy. Recent state and national trends indicate a decreasing concentration of employment in the manufacturing sector while employment within the services sector is increasing. This trend is partly attributed to the aging of the population.

<sup>4</sup> Many of the 2010 economic estimates are based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates for 2006-2010 which can have fairly significant margins of error.

# Economic Development

Table 7-3 displays the number and percent of employed persons by industry group in the Town of Somerset for 2010.

**Table 7-3  
Employment by Industry, Town of Somerset, 2010**

Industry	Number	Percent of Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	22	1.0%
Construction	192	9.0%
Manufacturing	417	19.6%
Wholesale trade	31	1.5%
Retail trade	226	10.6%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	169	7.9%
Information	66	3.1%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	80	3.8%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	154	7.2%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	449	21.1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	145	6.8%
Other services, except public administration	77	3.6%
Public administration	99	4.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,127</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

In 2010, about 40 percent of all working Town residents were employed in the education, health care, and social assistance industry or the manufacturing industry. Further, 34.6 percent worked in management, business, science, and arts occupations. An additional 23 percent worked in sales and office occupations.

Most of the Town's workforce in 2010 were employed by private firms (76.1%). Government workers constituted 15.0 percent and self-employed workers in a non-incorporated business constituted an additional 8.9 percent.

Of employed residents in 2010, very few worked within the Town of Somerset:

Worked within the Town of Somerset	< 1%
Worked in St. Croix County, but outside T. of Somerset	42.3%
Worked outside St. Croix County	2.2%
Worked outside State of Wisconsin	55.6%

The mean travel time to work in 2010 was 31.6 minutes.

# Economic Development

Table 7-4 includes employment by industry numbers from a different source for 2004 and 2014, but is only available at the zip code level. To provide a sense of the economic trends in the larger area, the combined data for the Somerset, Houlton, and New Richmond zip codes is shown.

The table reflects the economic slowdown in Wisconsin over the past decade with losses in construction and real estate, but the area countered some national trends by showing increases in manufacturing and retail trade employment.

**Table 7-4**  
**Employment by Industry, Somerset, Houlton, & New Richmond Zip Codes,**  
**2004 and 2014 (non-farm)**

NAICS Code	Description	2004 Jobs	2014 Jobs	Change	Competitive Effect	2014 L.Q.
11	Crop and Animal Production	421	277	(34%)	(131)	2.07
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	27	<10	Insf. Data	(40)	0.05
22	Utilities	<10	<10	Insf. Data	(0)	0.02
23	Construction	1,078	737	(32%)	(182)	1.32
31-33	Manufacturing	2,316	3,338	44%	1,380	3.81
42	Wholesale Trade	158	224	42%	61	0.52
44-45	Retail Trade	985	1,164	18%	168	1.02
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	153	154	1%	(11)	0.43
51	Information	79	51	(35%)	(17)	0.26
52	Finance and Insurance	164	238	45%	76	0.54
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	54	41	(24%)	(10)	0.23
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	331	395	19%	1	0.58
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	203	126	(38%)	(130)	0.83
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	231	263	14%	6	0.38
61	Educational Services	35	50	43%	7	0.18
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	769	1,157	50%	192	0.86
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	159	162	2%	(17)	0.90
72	Accommodation and Food Services	781	1,014	30%	99	1.12
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	504	475	(6%)	(32)	0.92
90	Government	885	1,016	15%	118	0.59
99	Unclassified Industry	0	0	0%	0	0.00
	Total	9,335	10,884	17%	1,538	--

Source: EMSI Complete Employment, December 2014

Included for reference in Table 7-4 are competitive effect and location quotient numbers. Competitive effect is used as part of shift-share analysis to show the number of jobs gained or lost that cannot be explained by national growth or overall changes in an industry; these numbers attempt to isolate region-specific trends. Again, most of the manufacturing growth within the three zip code area is unique and a competitive strength. Location quotient (L.Q.) is a “snapshot in time” of how concentrated or clustered each industry is within the three zip code area. In the case of manufacturing, the area has 3.81 times more manufacturing jobs compared to the national average. By delving deeper into shift share and L.Q. for different years, trends, competitive advantages, and opportunities can be identified.

## ST. CROIX RIVER CROSSING IMPACT STUDY

The St. Croix River Crossing Impact Study was discussed previously, at length, within the Population and Housing Element. A few key economic-related points are repeated here for convenience:

Some key findings:

- 1) Infrastructure improvements can be seen as a catalyst for change, but are neither necessary nor sufficient to guarantee economic and population growth rates in surrounding areas. **Based on selected comparison projects, new bridges can facilitate growth, but do not drive or spur growth. If a county or area was growing at a rapid rate prior to a bridge improvement, then it tended to continue growing at a similar pace after completion. There was no “spike” or sharp increase in population or economic growth once a bridge is completed.**
- 2) Though it is unlikely that the area will **return to the growth rates of the 1990s and 2000s, even with the improved crossing**, the population of **St. Croix County and the Corridor Communities (including the Town of Somerset) will continue to grow** unless there is a dramatic change in the regional or national economy.
- 3) **The improved river crossing will increase access to jobs in the region, but Corridor communities will also need to attract and retain residents on the basis of other local economic and quality-of-life characteristics.** This also works in reverse, with the bridge potentially making employers located in the Somerset area more attractive to potential employees and the talent pool located in the more urbanized areas of the Twin Cities region.
- 4) Population growth will drive demand and support for additional retail, hospitality, health care, construction, real estate, and governmental services. **Depending on the population projection used, new resident income in the Corridor could support 750 to 850 private-sector jobs in these industries over the new decade, in addition to the public-sector jobs that will be needed to support this population and development.** St. Croix County currently experiences large levels of spending leakage in many retail categories, which presents an economic opportunity. This leakage is likely in large part due to the County’s high commuter population.
- 5) New economic development and activity will likely occur in an incremental manner. The relocation of large firms to the Corridor based solely on the bridge is less probable. **Most employment growth in the region (and nationally) is driven by new startups and through the expansion of existing companies.** Most firm relocations are executed by smaller businesses, rather than those with 100+ employees. A related opportunity is to develop economic strategies for the Corridor Communities that target certain industry and occupational clusters within the metro area, since the Corridor Communities will become more accessible due to the new bridge.

## 7.2 Economic Forecast and Trends

An important feature of determining the economic health and future of St. Croix County and its communities is to determine the amounts and types of jobs currently available as well as making predictions for the future. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (WDWD), Office of Economic Advisors produced employment projections in October 2013 for West Central Wisconsin, which includes Barron, Chippewa, St. Croix, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, and St. Croix counties (see Table 7-5).

**Table 7-5  
Employment by Industry Projections, West Central Wisconsin, 2010 and 2020**

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment			
		2010 Annual Estimate	2020 Projection	Change	% Change
	<b>Total, All Nonfarm Industries</b>	<b>187,791</b>	<b>209,667</b>	<b>21,876</b>	<b>+11.65</b>
1133, 21, 23	Construction/Mining/Natural Resources	6,138	7,758	1,620	27.64
31-33	Manufacturing	29,827	31,328	1,501	5.03
42, 44-45	Trade	35,470	38,328	2,858	8.06
	Information	1,888	1,958	70	3.71
52-53	Financial Activities	7,491	8,549	1,058	14.12
61-62	Education and Health Services (Including State and Local Government)	42,567	48,984	6,417	15.08
611	Educational Services (Including State and Local Government)	16,912	17,937	1,025	6.06
622	Health Care & Social Assist. (Including State and Local Govt)	25,655	31,047	5,392	21.02
71-72	Leisure and Hospitality	17,154	20,766	3,612	21.06
	Other Services (Except Govt)	7,920	8,791	871	11.00
	Government (Excluding US Postal, State and Local Education and Hospitals)	12,892	12,939	47	0.36
	Total Self-Employed & Unpaid Family Workers	12,420	12,926	506	4.07

Source: Office of Economic Advisors, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, October 2013

WDWD notes that employment is a count of jobs rather than people, and includes all part- and full-time nonfarm jobs. Employment is rounded to the nearest ten, with employment less than five rounded to zero. Totals may not add-up due to rounding and some data for certain industries may be suppressed due to confidentiality. Government employment includes tribal owned operations, which are part of Local Government employment. Information is derived using a variety of Federal data sources. To the extent possible, the projections take into account anticipated changes in Wisconsin's economy from 2010 to 2020. It is important to note that unanticipated events may affect the accuracy of the projections.

# Economic Development

As shown, during the next several years, West Central Wisconsin's workforce is expected to increase by almost 12 percent between 2010 and 2020, which is a very large improvement compared to the previous 2008-2018 projections that projected only 3.3 percent growth. The following industries are expected to grow the most: hospitals; construction/mining/natural resources, leisure and hospitality; and health care and social assistance. Also unlike the 2008 projections, no industries are expected to lose employment.

Table 7-6 shows an employment forecast of the Somerset, Houlton, and New Richmond zip codes compiled by WCWRPC utilizing EMSI software. It is important to note that the data at the zip code level are based on samples and the future trends are estimates. Based on the figures, it is estimated that a number of industries, including manufacturing, will continue to grow and do especially well in the Somerset area. Overall, a 17 percent increase in job growth is projected over the next decade.

**Table 7-6  
Employment Forecast, Somerset, Houlton, & New Richmond Zip Codes, 2014 and 2024**

NAICS Code	Description	2014 Jobs	2024 Jobs	Change
11	Crop and Animal Production	277	157	(43%)
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	<10	<10	Insf. Data
22	Utilities	<10	0	Insf. Data
23	Construction	737	675	(8%)
31-33	Manufacturing	3,338	4,218	26%
42	Wholesale Trade	224	277	24%
44-45	Retail Trade	1,164	1,424	22%
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	154	200	30%
51	Information	51	42	(18%)
52	Finance and Insurance	238	307	29%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	41	33	(20%)
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	395	480	22%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	126	92	(27%)
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	263	311	18%
61	Educational Services	50	63	26%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,157	1,453	26%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	162	163	1%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	1,014	1,296	28%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	475	481	1%
90	Government	1,016	1,094	8%
99	Unclassified Industry	0	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10,884</b>	<b>12,767</b>	<b>17%</b>

Source: EMSI Complete Employment - 2013.4

Some additional, more general economic trends include:

- The “new economy” places greater emphasis on regional and global relationships and marketing. Many firms are smaller, leaner, and decentralized. Service-oriented industry is replacing manufacturing in many communities.
- High speed, broadband communication is essential to functioning in the new economy. The

speed and reliability of broadband service was an identified concern during this plan update. This is especially important for the Town of Somerset given its large commuter population and potential pool of telecommuters.

- Economic and land use decision-making must consider lifestyle changes and the demands of today's households. Households are continuing to get smaller, while the area's population is aging. An active, vibrant community with a strong sense-of-place is desired, especially among younger households.
- A 2008-2010 Gallup poll for the Knight Foundation found that there is a significant correlation between how attached people feel to where they live and the local economy. People spend time and money "where their heart is." The study concluded that what drives people to love where they live is their perception of their community's: (1) aesthetics; (2) social offerings; and (3) openness and how welcoming it is. Other polling shows that young talent is increasingly choosing a place to live first, then find a job. Quality of life, vibrant places, and a strong sense-of-place are increasingly important in the new economy as communities compete to attract and retain workers, entrepreneurs, businesses, and growing industries.

It is unrealistic for the Town of Somerset to compete with the urban central cities in terms of nightlife and cultural things to do. However, not all households are looking for that lifestyle. The Town should build upon and protect its economic strengths, most notably its natural recreational amenities, open spaces, and rural character. But this does not mean that the Town should not take additional actions to further enhance the quality of life for residents or strengthen sense-of-place within the community.

## 7.3 Economic Strengths and Weaknesses

An effective economic development strategy should build upon local strengths, while improving or mitigating potential weaknesses. Many of the strengths and weaknesses are also economic goals or opportunities.

### Strengths – Town of Somerset

- Access to Highway 64 and 35 for commuting and travelers
- Rail access
- Proximity to the Twin Cities, as well as to other smaller urban areas
- Natural resources base provides recreational and tourism opportunities
- Location and proximity to larger urban areas
- Affordable land
- Small town atmosphere, rural character, natural resources, and open space
- Educated population
- School system
- Partnerships and intergovernmental collaboration

### Weaknesses – Town of Somerset

- Lack of municipal water and sewer limits some types of development
- Some new residents may have "big city" expectations in terms of services
- Aging population and workforce development needed
- "Brain drain" as youth leave community for college, etc., and don't return
- Current trend is that more households are moving to urban areas
- Telecommunications and cable service
- No specific business park area within the Town
- Competition outside the Town for retail goods and services; retail leakage

# Economic Development

Though not specifically weaknesses, the following were also discussed as economic needs, issues, or opportunities:

- The large number of working residents employed outside the community presents challenges (e.g., retail leakage), but also opportunities for new retail and employers.
- More commercial and light industrial development is desired, but should be sited, designed, and maintained in a way that does not conflict with adjacent uses, contributes to the quality of life of residents, and is compatible with the community's rural character.
- The natural resources of the community must be protected since they are vital to the community's quality of life. Access to natural recreational amenities, such as the Apple River, should be provided, but care is needed to ensure that these resources are not over-commercialized and the experience is not diminished or destroyed.
- The development of multi-community recreational trail linkages would be a positive economic tool to increase quality of life and encourage tourism.
- Town residents generally feel that the Town should not use significant tax dollars to encourage or promote economic development within the community.

## 7.4 Desired Businesses and Industries

The Town of Somerset would welcome most commercial and light industrial businesses that do not threaten natural resources, sacrifice community character, create significant land use conflicts, reduce nearby property values, or add a disproportionate level of Town services per taxes gained. Generally, such businesses should be low impact and low water use. The Town should pursue a limited number of non-polluting, environmentally safe light industries and/or businesses that would not need municipal water and sewer service. The Town should also actively support the installation of a high-speed internet service which would allow high-tech home businesses to thrive without any impact on the visual rural character of the Town.

### Public Opinion

As part of this plan update, a public opinion survey was distributed in April 2014 which provided the following insights into desired economic development by community members:

Commercial or industrial buildings in the Town of Somerset should be located:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a. Near the Village of Somerset	31%	48%	9%	3%	9%
b. Along major highways and county roads	19%	53%	15%	5%	8%
c. Only in designated commercial or industrial areas	37%	45%	11%	2%	6%
d. Anywhere in the Town	4%	10%	33%	47%	5%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
More new businesses and light industry are needed in the Town of Somerset (outside the Village).	19%	38%	23%	11%	10%
The Town of Somerset should use tax dollars to recruit or promote new business and industry.	9%	25%	37%	18%	11%

# Economic Development

8. The following types of economic/business development are appropriate in the Town of Somerset.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a. Agricultural-Related Businesses	20%	64%	7%	1%	7%
b. Commercial and Retail Development	12%	51%	22%	7%	8%
c. Home-Based Businesses	14%	63%	10%	2%	11%
d. Industrial and Manufacturing Development	10%	47%	25%	8%	9%
e. Tourism and Recreation	17%	55%	14%	5%	9%
f. Technology related (e.g. biotechnology, computers, etc.)	14%	53%	18%	5%	11%
g. Service industries (e.g. financial services, health services, etc.)	14%	56%	17%	4%	9%

## 7.5 Current Town of Somerset Economic Plans and Designated Sites

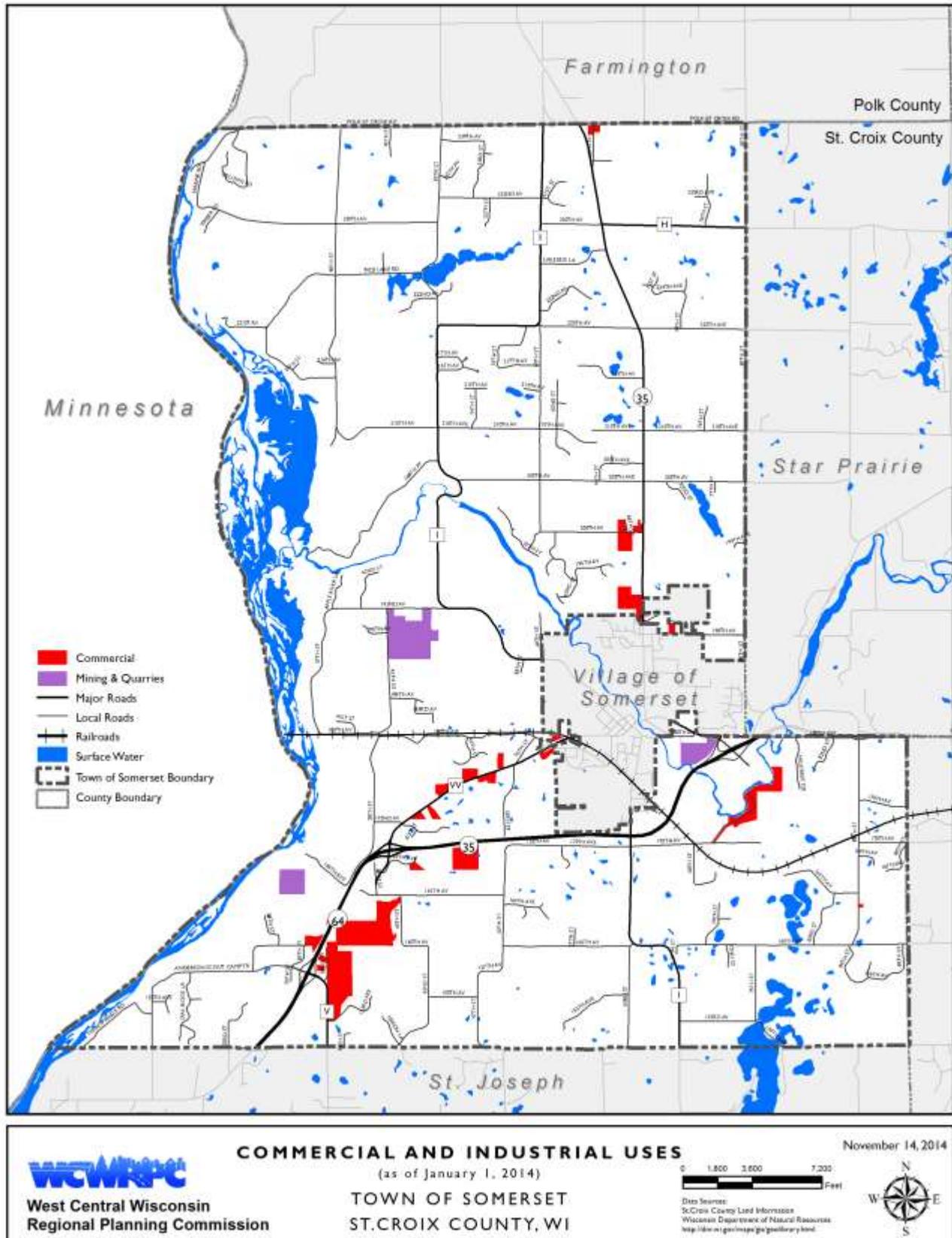
The Town of Somerset has no formal economic development plan. Nor does it have an industrial or business park, tax increment financing district, central business district, or other similar commercial district. Development and siting of new businesses is regulated through zoning. Economic and business development in the area is largely promoted through multi-jurisdictional partnership organizations, such as St. Croix County Economic Development Corporation, Momentum West, and West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

As reflected on Map 7-1 on the following page, there are a number of areas in the community which are predominately commercial in nature, including a private campground, a golf course, and three non-metallic mineral operations. As will be discussed later within the Land Use element, the Town envisions further commercial growth within the Town to occur principally in five general areas within the community:

- Highway 64 and County “V” intersection.
- Highway 64 and County “VV” intersection, and along County “VV” to the Village limits
- Highway 64 and County “C” intersection
- Along Highway 35 north of the Village to 205<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- Highway 35 and 65<sup>th</sup> Street area

The above five areas have already experienced some commercial growth. However, this above list should not be considered a guarantee that commercial and light industrial development in these areas will occur or will be allowed. Any proposed development should be individually evaluated to determine if the nature and design of the development is appropriate at the location, is designed in a manner that does not conflict with the rural character of the community, and is deemed compatible with surrounding uses. Not shown on Map 7-1 are various home-based businesses, in which the commercial activities are secondary to the principal residential use. There are no industrial or manufacturing assessed businesses currently located in the Town of Somerset.

Map 7-1 Town of Somerset Industry and Businesses



## 7.6 Opportunities for the Use of Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) urge the clean-up of environmentally contaminated commercial or industrial sites to utilize the lands for more productive uses. According to the WDNR's Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) there are six basic types of environmentally contaminated sites in St. Croix County: Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (LUST), Environment Repair Program (ERP) sites, Abandoned Continued – Open, No Action Required, General Property, and Spills.

As of December 2014, there were no open or active environmentally contaminated sites located within the Town of Somerset listed in the BRRTS. There are ten closed sites located within the Town or close to the border between the Town and Village. All but one of these are LUST sites. A closed ERP site is located at an auto salvage yard on the north end of the Village of Somerset along Highway 35. One LUST site at 274 Old Scout Camp Road has been closed, even though residual contamination remains and the WDNR must be contacted if a well is proposed at this location. In addition, remediation at the three mining sites will be required in accordance with approved remediation plans.

During the plan update process, the Town's Plan Commission identified no specific contaminated sites within the Town requiring action which should be addressed in the plan, though groundwater contamination is a concern due to the closed depressions in the Town.

## 7.7 Other Economic Development Plans and Programs

There are many organizations, programs, grants, and services available to assist with economic development planning and activities. A number of the programs related to infrastructure development were previously discussed in the Utilities and Community Facilities Element. The following are some additional commonly referred to economic development plans and programs.

### **U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) provides financial assistance to help distressed communities overcome barriers that inhibit the growth of their local economies. EDA provides assistance for public works projects, planning, research and technical assistance, grants, and education. The WCWRPC is designated as an economic development district by the Economic Development Administration. It is required to undertake economic development planning and project identification for all seven counties of the region. For more information, see [www.wcwrpc.org](http://www.wcwrpc.org).

### **USDA, Wisconsin Rural Development Programs**

The Wisconsin Rural Development Program has many services that are available to rural communities and their residents. Available programs and services include: community development programs, business and community programs, rural housing and utilities services, and community facility programs. For more information visit the Wisconsin Rural Development web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wi/index.html>.

### **Forward Wisconsin**

Forward Wisconsin helps businesses looking for available sites or buildings through its website at <http://www.forwardwi.com/search/index.html>.

### **Wisconsin Economic Development Association**

WEDA is a statewide association of 410+ member organizations whose primary objective is to increase the effectiveness of individuals involved in the practice of economic development in

# Economic Development

Wisconsin by encouraging cooperation, exchange of information and promotion of professional skills. With a proactive board and involved membership support, we will continue to advance the professionalism of Wisconsin's economic development efforts. For more information see <http://www.weda.org/>.

## **Wisconsin Department of Administration**

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) has several grant programs and services available to communities or businesses within communities. The federally funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program can be used for housing, economic development, and public facility improvements. The following programs are available:

- CDBG Public Facility (PF) program for infrastructure and buildings benefitting the public
- CDBG Economic Development (ED) funding for business expansions, employee training and business infrastructure
- CDBG Public Facility-Economic Development (PF-ED) funding for public infrastructure necessary for business expansions

For more information, see <http://www.doa.state.wi.us>.



## **Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation**

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) nurtures business growth and job creation in Wisconsin by providing resources, technical support, and financial assistance to companies, partners and the communities they serve. For more information, see <http://inwisconsin.com/>.

One program within WEDC is the Main Street Program. The Main Street Program helps communities revitalize their downtown areas. The National Main Street Center and state staff offer a comprehensive range of professional services that follow a four-point approach: organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. More information on the Wisconsin Main Street Program can be found at: <http://inwisconsin.com/mainstreet/>.

## **Wisconsin Department of Tourism**

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism has four primary grant programs and provides technical assistance and support to promote tourism and to maintain a strong tourism industry in Wisconsin. The grant programs include the Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Program for tourism marketing, the Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) Program for sporting events, the Tourist Information Center (TIC) Program, and the Meetings Mean Business Program to support conventions. Contact the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for further information at: <http://industry.travelwisconsin.com/>.

## **Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development**

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is a state agency charged with building and strengthening Wisconsin's workforce in the 21st century and beyond. The Department's primary responsibilities include providing job services, training, and employment assistance to people looking for work, at the same time as it works with employers on finding the necessary workers to fill current job openings.

Under the DWD umbrella, a wide variety of employment programs can be found which include securing jobs for the disabled, assisting former welfare recipients as they make a transition into work, promoting 72 job centers, linking youth with the jobs of tomorrow, protecting and enforcing worker's

# Economic Development

rights, processing unemployment claims, and ensuring workers compensation claims are paid in accordance with the law. There are six divisions within the Department which is headed by a Secretary appointed by the Governor. For further information visit the web-site at [www.dwd.state.wi.us](http://www.dwd.state.wi.us).

The Office of Economic Advisors (OEA), within DWD, researches the relationships between labor markets and other economic and demographic factors. OEA economists and analysts serve in regions throughout Wisconsin. Staff works closely with partners to provide timely analysis of labor market data and economic trends.

## **Agricultural Development and Diversification (ADD) Grant Program**

The ADD grant program annually provides funding to projects that have the potential to bolster agricultural profits or productivity. The program funds proposals that are likely to stimulate Wisconsin's farm economy with new production or marketing techniques, alternative crops or enterprises, new value-added products, or new market research. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection should be contacted for further information.

## **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) provides many avenues for business owners to work with the agency in growing and sustaining Wisconsin's economy. The Office of Business Support and Sustainability is the agency's one-stop shop for business assistance. The office's mission is to work across programs to create the business climate that yields better environmental and economic performance. Some of the programs administered through the WDNR are:

- Remediation & Redevelopment (RR) Program: The WDNR's Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program oversees the investigation and cleanup of environmental contamination and the redevelopment of contaminated properties. WDNR provide a comprehensive, streamlined program that consolidates state and Federal cleanups into one program (e.g., hazardous waste cleanup, underground storage tank investigation & cleanup, spill response, state-funded cleanups and brownfields).
- Business sector support: Sector development specialists are WDNR staff who work with specific industrial or commercial sectors. They serve as the first point of contact for those businesses, providing coordinated technical and compliance assistance across all DNR divisions and programs. Sector development specialists work to improve environmental and economic performance by clarifying requirements, facilitating flexible approaches to requirements and enabling practices that improve profitability and market performance. Improved environmental and economic performance is pursued through various strategies, including pollution prevention, waste minimization, energy efficiency, supply chain management, green chemistry, market development and many others. The sector specialists will also work with a business or sector to address trends important to business retention and market development related to environmental performance.
- Green Tier: Green Tier assists green business ventures. WDNR assists businesses with credible, creative ways to enable businesses to be a powerful, sustainable force for environmental good and enhance productivity, cut costs and strengthen the health of culture and community.
- DNR Switchboard: The WDNR Switchboard is for people who need to securely login and access forms and reporting systems which are usually related to a specific company or municipality.

# Economic Development

## **Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)**

The following economic programs are offered by WHEDA:

- **Credit Relief Outreach Program:** CROP features 90% guarantees on loans of up to \$30,000 made by local lenders. Interest rates are competitive, and payment is not due until March 31 of the following year. CROP can be used for feed, seed, fertilizer, pesticides, land rent, custom hire, animal feed, UCC filing fees, crop insurance, feeder animals, tillage services, equipment rental or repair, or utilities for commodity production. You cannot use CROP for property taxes, farm house utilities, existing loans, capital improvements, CROP loan interest, accounting services, or revolving lines of credit.
- **FARM:** FARM is for the producer who wants to expand or modernize an existing operation. FARM gives you access to credit by guaranteeing a loan made by your local lender. You can purchase agricultural assets including machinery, equipment, facilities, land, and livestock. You can also make improvements to farm facilities and land for agricultural purposes. FARM cannot be used for a farm residence, existing loans, maintenance, or other working capital needs that are eligible under CROP.
- **Small Business Guarantee:** A guarantee is a pledge of support on a bank loan. WHEDA will guarantee a portion of a loan made to you by your local lender. A WHEDA Small Business Guarantee can be used to expand or acquire a small business. It can also be used to start a day care business, including one owned by a cooperative or non-profit. The guarantee can be used for most of your financing needs, including working capital and refinancing of business notes and credit card debt.

## **Wisconsin Department of Transportation**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) administers the Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) program which provides 50 percent state grants to governing bodies, private businesses, and consortiums for road, rail, harbor and airport projects that help attract employers to Wisconsin, or encourage business and industry to remain and expand in the state. For more information, see <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/tea.htm>.

## **Momentum West**

Momentum West is a regional economic development organization serving Barron, St. Croix, Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pierce, Pepin, Polk, Rusk, and St. Croix counties. The mission of Momentum West is to develop partnerships and leverage the resources in West Wisconsin to market the region and grow the economy. For more information, see <http://www.momentumwest.org/index.cfm>.

## **West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**

On a multi-county level, the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission conducts economic development and project development. The Commission is designated as an economic development district by the Economic Development Administration and produces an annual, regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and is required to undertake economic development planning and project identification for all seven counties of the region. The Commission provides local economic strategies, industrial site analyses, economic development financing, county economic and population profiles, EMSI Analyst information, and community and industrial park profiles. In addition WCWRPC can assist communities with placemaking initiatives, Tax Incremental Financing (TIF), grant coordination, writing and administration. For more information, please see [www.wcwrpc.org](http://www.wcwrpc.org).

# Economic Development

## **Regional Business Fund, Inc.**

All communities in St. Croix County are covered by a business revolving loan fund. All but two participate in the Regional Business Fund, Inc., administered by WCWRPC which has three components—Downtown Façade Loan, Micro Loan Fund, and Technology Enterprise Fund.



## **St. Croix County Economic Development Corporation & Tourism Bureau**

St. Croix County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) is the primary agency in St. Croix County responsible for creating new jobs and investment. SCEDC programs are designed to support and promote economic development with the county and its communities, primarily by attracting new industries, assisting in the development, retention, and expansion of businesses, and assisting communities in preparing for economic development opportunities. For more information on SCEDC, see [www.stcroixedc.com](http://www.stcroixedc.com)

## **St. Croix County, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension**

The University of Wisconsin-Extension has an office in Baldwin. Cooperative Extension develops practical educational programs tailored to local needs and based on university knowledge and research. County-based Extension educators are University of Wisconsin faculty and staff who are experts in agriculture and agribusiness, community and economic development, natural resources, family living, nutrition, 4-H, and youth development.

Extension county-based faculty and staff live and work with the people they serve in communities across the state. Extension specialists work on UW System campuses where they access current research and knowledge. Collaboration between county and campus faculty is the hallmark of Cooperative Extension in Wisconsin.

One program within the Cooperative Extension is the First Impressions program. The First Impressions program offers an inexpensive way of determining what visitors think of your community. Volunteers from two somewhat similar communities (size, location, county seat, etc.) agree to do unannounced exchange visits and then report on their findings. It is somewhat similar to the WCWRPC's placemaking efforts, but provides a visitor's impressions of aesthetics and "welcomingness", rather than an emphasis on function, uses, and activities by those who live, work, and play in a place. The two programs can be complimentary. For more information, visit [www.cced.ces.uwex.edu](http://www.cced.ces.uwex.edu) and contact WCWRPC regarding placemaking.

## **7.8 Economic Development Goals and Objectives**

### ***Economic Development Goal:***

***Ensure the continuation of a quality environment by promoting economic development activities and productive businesses that strengthen the local economy while maintaining a commitment to protecting the environment.***

### **Objectives**

1. Provide opportunities for commercial and light industrial development within the community.
2. Commercial and light industrial development and activities should occur in a manner that:
  - a. is high quality in site design, landscaping, and architectural design;
  - b. is compatible with, and if possible, contributes to the rural character of the community;

- c. does not negatively impact or over-commercialize the Town's natural resources;
  - d. is compatible with the neighborhood context and does not create significant land use conflicts with adjacent and nearby land uses; and,
  - e. does not require additional public services without significant benefits to the Town or create unsustainable economic conditions.
3. Most commercial and light industrial development should be limited to specific areas and sites located along highways. Home-based businesses, agri-businesses, and certain tourism businesses may be appropriate in other areas of the Town, if planned and operated in a manner that does not conflict with the other goals and objectives of this plan.
  4. Maintain productive partnerships that advance the economic wellbeing of the Town and larger areas.

## 7.9 Economic Development Policies

### *Policies (Decision-making Guidance)*

1. Continue to support agriculture, agri-business, agri-tourism, and related agricultural service industries within the community, and especially within farmland preservation areas to the extent allowable, if performed in a safe manner using best management practices.
2. Business growth and expansion, including home-based businesses, should not significantly increase noise, traffic, odors, lighting, or would otherwise negatively impact property values, nearby businesses, and the surrounding area. All businesses and industry should be developed and maintained in a manner that minimizes land use conflicts and aesthetic impacts, while preserving the rural character of the community.
3. Consider the conservation of non-renewable resources and the natural physical environment when evaluating a commercial or industrial development request. The Town of Somerset will only allow light industry and commercial development that have no adverse environmental impact on the land, air, or water of the Town. Work with businesses to maintain and protect the air quality, water quality, and rural character of Somerset.
4. When considering community investments, keep in mind that aesthetics, social offerings, rural character, recreational amenities, and "welcoming/openness" all contribute to quality of life and the local economy. People spend money where their heart is.
5. Encourage bike and pedestrian connections between commercial nodes and residential areas.
6. General areas suitable for commercial/light industrial development will be identified as part of the Planned Land Use Map based on proximity to existing commercial zoning, highway access, and lack of interference with residential properties.
7. Business signage, landscaping, screening, and lighting should be compatible with the rural character of Somerset.
8. Light industrial and commercial development shall also be evaluated based on ability of the land, roads, and other infrastructure to handle and support the proposed development. The long-term costs and benefits to the Town and its residents will be considered, including the economic sustainability of the business.
9. Light industrial and commercial development that does not meet the goals, objectives, and policies of this plan element shall be referred to Village of Somerset and other areas having municipal water and wastewater treatment facilities.

# Economic Development

10. Implement those housing, transportation, utilities, community facilities, and land use policies in other elements related to economic development, in particular the commercial and industrial policies of the Land Use element.

## **Recommendations (Action-Oriented Strategies)**

1. Encourage the improvement of the telecommunications network and broadband services serving the community and local businesses as described in the Utilities and Community Facilities Element. (ongoing)
2. Continue to maintain and promote partnerships between the Village of Somerset, St. Croix County Economic Development Corporation, and other partners (e.g., WCWRPC) to encourage appropriate economic development and tourism within the community. (ongoing)
3. Coordinate with St. Croix County Community Development Department to enforce review standards for all commercial ventures from home occupations to the largest of commercial establishments. Such standards should deal with traffic volume, outdoor lighting, type of business, hours of business, landscaping, screening, parking, noise, pollution, etc. (ongoing)
4. The Town of Somerset believes that higher standards for new commercial development and signage are needed within the community in order to ensure quality commercial development that is compatible with the Town's rural character, prevents visual clutter, and encourages a common aesthetic. To this end, the Town should work with St. Croix County to develop the appropriate mix of regulatory and design review controls to meet the goals, objectives, and policies of this plan element. (short-term)

This strategy can potentially be accomplished in a number of ways:

- Cooperatively work with St. Croix County to develop a design manual or guidelines with an emphasis on rural commercial development/redevelopment site design, aesthetics, etc.
  - Cooperatively work with St. Croix County to create a new zoning district, overlay district, or other design criteria.
  - If needed, explore the potential creation of a Town of Somerset commercial licensing ordinance with site design and architectural review standards that requires a Town committee approval prior to issuing a Town building permit. The committee would help ensure that applicable codes/zoning is being met and that the exterior functional appeal and site plan, within the discretionary judgment of the committee, would not be contrary to accepted design standards, the neighborhood context, and the underlying aesthetic values of the community.
  - Explore the need for other Town nuisance ordinances (e.g., junk, light, health/safety) to address negative impacts not regulated under zoning.
5. Explore the use of tax incremental financing (TIF) as a tool to support eligible business development within the community. (long-term)
  6. If a large economic development project is proposed, provide a description of planned infrastructure improvements that support economic development projects to West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission for inclusion within the *West Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS) as a recommended pre-requisite for Federal Economic Development Administration grant dollars. (long-term)

## 8. Intergovernmental Cooperation

Advances in technology and improved mobility have resulted in the faster and easier movement of people, money, goods, and other resources across jurisdictions. Likewise, budget constraints are encouraging many municipalities to explore partnerships and collaborative efforts to provide services more efficiently. Many issues cross intergovernmental boundaries, affecting more than one community or governmental unit. And the decisions, plans, and strategies of one community can impact neighboring jurisdictions.

Through intergovernmental cooperation, communities can anticipate potential conflicts in plans and policies in order to identify potential solutions to mitigate such conflicts. Governmental units may also identify opportunities for cost-sharing, competitive bidding, and other strategies to leverage available resources to everyone's benefit.

### 8.1 Planning in Adjacent and Overlapping Jurisdictions

#### Adjacent and Overlapping Local Governments

##### St. Croix County

The Town of Somerset has coordinated with St. Croix County on a wide variety of planning and programming activities, such natural hazards mitigation planning, recycling, well testing, the meal site for seniors, and transportation planning for road maintenance and improvements. The Town of Somerset participates in County zoning and coordinates with the County's Community Development Department on land use planning, farmland preservation, and zoning enforcement. Efforts have been made by both the County and the Town to ensure consistency between their respective comprehensive plans whenever possible.

##### Surrounding Communities

The Town of Somerset is bordered by four towns—Farmington, Star Prairie, Richmond, and St. Joseph. In addition, the Village of Somerset is largely surrounded by the Town of Somerset. All four of the towns and the Village have an adopted comprehensive plan on file with the State of Wisconsin. All four of these municipalities were provided a PDF version of the draft Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan update and invited to share additional ideas and comments.

The Town of Somerset coordinates with the Village on a number of activities, including the Fire District, Library, and official mapping. The Village's Clerk, Public Works Department, and a Village Council person were contacted during the planning process and the Village's comprehensive plan was reviewed. Currently, the Village does not enforce extraterritorial plat review, nor is extraterritorial zoning in place. The Village expressed their desire to continue working with the Town as a partner.

##### Bass Lake Rehabilitation District

As described previously, the Bass Lake Rehabilitation District located, in part, in the southern part of the Town has taxing authority. The District undertakes projects to implement those goals found within the 2009 *Bass Lake Management Plan*.

##### Other Planning Efforts

As mentioned previously in other plan elements, the Town of Somerset is an active participant in two notable multi-jurisdictional planning efforts: the Highway 64 Wastewater and Stormwater Coalition and the St. Croix County Bike and Pedestrian Trails Coalition.

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

## School Districts

The Town of Somerset is served by the School District of Somerset and has a good working relationship with the district.

## Regional Coordination

Numerous non-governmental entities can have a role in multi-jurisdictional or regional coordination, ranging from the County Economic Development Corporation and St. Croix County UW-Extension to the Indianhead Community Action Agency, and various special interest groups. These entities are largely discussed in other plan elements.

### West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC)

St. Croix County is a member of the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. There are nine regional planning commissions (RPCs) that represent 67 of 72 Wisconsin counties. RPCs are designed to offer local planning assistance and support to county and municipal governments; WCWRPC's role is advisory, not regulatory. Typical functions of an RPC include, but are not limited to: comprehensive, intergovernmental planning; transportation planning and programming; water quality planning; collecting and analyzing data; conducting studies; sewer service area planning; economic development planning and grant writing; and meeting area wide requirements so local jurisdictions can receive Federal grants. The WCWRPC has assisted St. Croix County and its municipalities with numerous projects and a variety of planning efforts, including the development of the *Town of Somerset 2003-2028 Comprehensive Plan*.



## Federal and State Agencies

Coordination with various Federal and state agencies is sometimes required by the Town, with the following agencies of particular interest to the Town of Somerset:

### U.S. Department of the Interior - National Park Service

The National Park Service has an active presence in the Town through its management of the St. Croix River National Scenic Riverway. NPS was contacted during the planning process and their comments have been incorporated into this plan update.

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains the St. Croix Wetland Management District, which is one of only two such districts in the state. The St. Croix District was established in 1974 and consists of 41 waterfowl production areas totaling 7,700 acres as well as 15 easements protecting wildlife habitat on private land in Barron, Burnett, Dunn, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, St. Croix, and Washburn counties. A number of USF&WS lands are located within the Town.

### Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) – Division of Intergovernmental Relations

As per its webpage, “[t]he Division of Intergovernmental Relations provides a broad array of services to the public and state, local and tribal governments. It supports counties, municipalities, citizens and businesses by providing support services in land use planning, land information and records modernization, municipal boundary review, plat review, demography and coastal management programs.”

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

The Division administers the state's comprehensive planning grant program and includes a library of completed comprehensive plans throughout Wisconsin at its website. The Division also includes the State's Municipal Boundary Review agency which regulates the transition of unincorporated lands to city or village status through municipal annexation, incorporation, consolidation, or cooperative boundary agreement. State review of subdivision plats also occurs within the Division. The Division's Demographic Services Center also provides population and demographic estimates and projections for planning purposes.

To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services through greater intergovernmental cooperation, the Wisconsin Partnership initiative is also administered through the Division. State government can offer its public sector partners access to procurement contracts, technologies, grants and other resources that can either reduce costs or expand the range of available options.

## Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT)

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation maintains several plans with statewide policies regarding various aspects of transportation. Plan recommendations were consulted and incorporated into local comprehensive plans where applicable. WDOT plans and programs are discussed previously in the Transportation Element.

## Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is responsible for implementing the laws of the state and, where applicable, the laws of the Federal government that protect and enhance the natural resources of the state. It is the one agency charged with full responsibility for coordinating the many disciplines and programs necessary to provide a clean environment and a full range of outdoor recreation opportunities for Wisconsin citizens and visitors.



During the St. Croix County comprehensive planning process, the WDNR provided natural resource information for such components as wetlands, surface waters, watersheds, groundwater, air quality, threatened and endangered species, wildlife habitat, and more. The WDNR also provided information on recreational activities and use such as hunting and fishing. Opportunities to work collaboratively with the WDNR are numerous as the department maintains programs for shoreland management, stormwater, public water supply, solid

waste management, recycling, dam permitting, and much more.

## Wisconsin Historical Society

The Wisconsin Historical Society provided data for this planning effort through its Wisconsin Architecture & History Inventory (AHI). Coordination with the Historical Society would be required should the Town pursue the archeological-related strategies identified previously in the plan.

## Other State Agencies

In addition to the above, the following state agencies also contributed data and other trend information towards the St. Croix County comprehensive planning process:

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (school enrollments and district information)
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (economic information)
- Wisconsin Public Service Commission (information on public utilities)

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

## 8.2 Existing Partnerships, Agreements and Intergovernmental Plans

The primary intergovernmental agreements and plans involving the Town of Somerset are:

- participation in County zoning and coordination on farmland preservation planning
- emergency services agreement (EMS, Fire, Ambulance, etc.)
- recycling/Clean Sweep participation with the County
- library agreement
- official mapping with the Village for a number of potential roadways
- public works mutual aid and support with the Village if needed
- agreement with County ADRC as a senior meal site
- coordination with the Village on parks (e.g., Parnell Prairie)

## 8.3 Intergovernmental Issues and Opportunities

The following intergovernmental trends are anticipated during the planning period:

- Intergovernmental cooperation will increase as state, county, and local budgets become more restrictive and partnerships are pursued.
- As more jurisdictions create comprehensive plans and share them with surrounding communities, new opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation will become apparent.
- The sharing of employees, equipment, and facilities will increase locally to meet demand at reduced costs.

### Opportunities

Numerous opportunities for service or program administration exist for cooperation with other units of government. Several of the key opportunities are:

Opportunity	Other Governmental Unit Assistance
1. Reduce cost for providing services through working with neighboring communities and the county for such items as road maintenance, fire and emergency service, police protection, solid waste and recycling, local parks, trails, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adjacent Towns</li><li>• Village of Somerset</li><li>• St. Croix County Board of Supervisors</li><li>• St. Croix County Department Staff</li></ul>
2. Continue to protect the area's water quality and natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Park Service, WDNR</li><li>• St. Croix County</li><li>• All adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions</li></ul>
3. Build a connected regional bike and pedestrian trail network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• St. Croix County Trails Coalition</li><li>• All adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions</li></ul>
4. Improve transit connections between the Somerset area and the Twin Cities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wisconsin DOT, MetroTransit</li><li>• WCWRPC</li><li>• Village and adjacent Towns</li></ul>

The policies within the other plan elements mention additional intergovernmental opportunities to coordinate with State, County, Village of Somerset, and area towns to achieve the Town's goals.

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

## Potential Conflicts and Resolutions

The Town of Somerset identified no current intergovernmental issues or concerns, though potential conflicts may develop through the course of the planning period. The Town did recognize that growth of the Village of Somerset could lead to annexation requests in the future—a potential source of intergovernmental conflict.

Potential conflicts can be most effectively addressed in a “pro-active” fashion. In other words, pursuing opportunities will often avoid future conflicts. Thus several of the potential conflicts identified may be similar to the opportunities discussed earlier. Potential conflicts and the process to resolve the conflicts are summarized as follows:

Potential Conflicts	Process to Resolve
1. Potential land use compatibility and planning concerns regarding properties adjacent to or near the Village boundary. This include impacts from large festivals (e.g., noise, traffic, garbage)	Maintain an open, regular dialogue with the Village.  Explore the potential use of cooperative boundary agreements and plans to develop solutions that benefit both jurisdictions.
2. Annexation for new industrial, residential, or commercial development.	

## 8.4 Intergovernmental Programs

The following general intergovernmental programs may impact the Town, in addition to those plans and programs mentioned in other sub-sections of this element.

### Annexation

Wisconsin Statute, 66.021, Annexation of territory, provides three petition methods by which annexation may occur. Annexation involves the transfer of one or more tax parcels from a town to a city or village. Cities and villages cannot annex property without the consent of landowners as required by the following petition procedures:

1. Unanimous Approval - A petition is signed by all of the electors residing in the territory and the owners of all of the real property included within the petition.
2. Notice of intent to circulate petition (direct petition for annexation) - The petition must be signed by a majority of electors in the territory and the owners of one-half of the real property either in value or in land area. If no electors reside in the territory, then only the landowners need sign the petition.
3. Annexation by referendum - A petition requesting a referendum election on the question of annexation may be filed with the city or village when signed by at least 20 percent of the electors in the territory.

The *Village of Somerset Comprehensive Plan* suggests that the possibility of future annexation by the Village will continue to increase.

### Extraterritorial Zoning

Wisconsin Statute, 62.23(7a) allows a city or village to participate with towns in the zoning of lands outside their incorporate boundaries. For the Village of Somerset, the extraterritorial area would

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

encompass 1.5 miles. The steps for exercising this power are identified in the Statutes and includes the Town working with the Village to create a joint extraterritorial zoning committee with three city/village and three town members to create the extraterritorial zoning plan. A majority of the joint committee members must approve the zoning plan recommendations.

There has been previous discussion between the Town and Village on extraterritorial zoning, but no such ordinance or map was adopted. The Village's Comprehensive Plan does not include a recommendation regarding extraterritorial zoning.

## **Extraterritorial Subdivision Review**

Wisconsin Statute, 236.10 allows a city or village to exercise its extraterritorial plat review authority in the same geographic area as defined within the extraterritorial zoning statute. However, extraterritorial zoning requires town approval of the zoning ordinance, while extraterritorial plat approval applies automatically if the city or village adopts a subdivision ordinance or official map. The town does not approve the subdivision ordinance for the city or village. The city or village may waive its extraterritorial plat approval authority if it does not wish to use it.

The purpose of extraterritorial plat approval jurisdiction is to help cities and villages influence the development pattern of areas outside their boundaries that will likely be annexed to the city or village. This helps cities and villages protect land use near its boundaries from conflicting uses outside its limits. Overlapping authority by the city and village is prohibited. This situation is handled by drawing a line of equal distance from the boundaries of the city and village so that not more than one ordinance will apply. The Village's Comprehensive Plan does not include a recommendation regarding extraterritorial plat review.

## **Office of Land Information Services, Municipal Boundary Review**

Municipal Boundary Review regulates the transition of unincorporated areas to city or village status through municipal annexation, incorporation, consolidation, or by joint city-village-town activities involving cooperative boundary plans and agreements. Such agreements may change territorial boundaries and may provide for the sharing of municipal services. Staff members are available upon request to meet with local officials and citizens to discuss annexation, incorporation, consolidation, and cooperative boundary plans. Contact the Wisconsin Department of Administration, Office of Land Information Services for further information.



## **UW-Extension Local Government Center**

The mission of the Local Government Center is to provide focus, coordination, and leadership to UW System educational programs for local government, and to expand the research and knowledge base for local government

education. The Center conducts and coordinates educational programming in general local government, local government finance, growth management, and community planning and design. Additional programs are under development. Educational programs are delivered through the two-way audio Educational Telecommunications Network (ETN), satellite television, and state-wide and regional workshops. The Center supports the programming of county-based Extension faculty. A variety of resources regarding intergovernmental cooperation are available through the Local Government Center. For further information visit its web-site at [www.uwex.edu/lgc/](http://www.uwex.edu/lgc/).

# Intergovernmental Cooperation

## Wisconsin Intergovernmental Statute Agreements

The following statutes in Wisconsin promote and allow for intergovernmental cooperation:

### **66.0301 - Intergovernmental Cooperation**

Wisconsin Statute, 66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, certain special districts, including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and sewer utility districts, Indian tribes or bands, and others. Intergovernmental agreements prepared in accordance with s. 66.0301, formerly s. 66.30, are the most common form of agreement and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as police, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide for revenue sharing, determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement and boundary changes have to be accomplished through the normal annexation process.

### **66.0307 - Boundary changes pursuant to approved cooperative plan**

Under Section 66.0307, Wisconsin Statutes, combinations of municipalities may prepare cooperative boundary plans or agreements. Each city, village, or town that intends to participate in the preparation of a cooperative plan must adopt a resolution authorizing its participation in the planning process.

Cooperative boundary plans or agreements involve decisions regarding the maintenance or change of municipal boundaries for a period of 10 years or more. The cooperative plan must include: a plan for the physical development of the territory covered by the plan. It must also include; a schedule for changes to the boundary; plans for the delivery of services; an evaluation of environmental features and a description of any adverse environmental consequences that may result from the implementation of the plan; and it must address the need for safe and affordable housing. The participating communities must hold a public hearing prior to its adoption. Once adopted, the plan must be submitted for state approval. Upon approval, the cooperative plan has the force and effect of a contract.

### **66.0309 Creation, Organization, Powers and Duties of Regional Planning Commissions**

Wisconsin Statute 66.0309 permits local governments to petition the governor to create a regional planning commission (RPC). If local support for a commission is unanimous, the governor may create it by executive order. The governor may also create a commission if local governments representing over 50% of the population or assessed valuation of the proposed region consent to the creation. Either local governments or the governor appoints commission members.

State Statutes require the RPC to perform three major functions:

- Make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the region.
- If requested by a local unit, report recommendations to that local unit on the location of, or acquisition of, land for any of the items or facilities that are included in the adopted regional master plan.
- Make an annual report of its activities to the legislative bodies of the local governmental units within the region.

RPCs are also authorized to perform several other functions, however, by law, they serve a strictly advisory role. St. Croix County is a member of the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

## 8.5 Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals and Objectives

### *Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal 1:*

***Continue and improve intergovernmental cooperation with the Village of Somerset and St. Croix County.***

#### **Objectives**

1. Continue working relationships with neighboring communities, the School District, and the County to provide efficient and cost effective emergency services, street maintenance, and other services when appropriate.
2. Maintain participation in effective, intergovernmental partnerships for local planning, resource protection, and the improvement of the quality of life of residents.
3. Explore cost-sharing opportunities and seek cooperative solutions to potential intergovernmental challenges, conflicts, and disagreements
4. Work cooperatively and proactively to prevent or minimize land use conflicts along or near the Town's boundaries.

## 8.6 Intergovernmental Cooperation Policies

### ***Policies (Decision-making Guidance)***

1. The Town of Somerset will continue to maintain communication with the Village of Somerset regarding all joint concerns.
2. When needed, create ad-hoc committees with appropriate governmental entities to study opportunities to coordinate activities and reduce costs.
3. Seek out intergovernmental solutions to effectively and efficiently implement the policies and recommendations found in this comprehensive plan.

### ***Recommendations (Action-Oriented Strategies)***

4. Continue participation on the St. Croix Bike and Pedestrian Trails Coalition and work with nearby communities and St. Croix County to promote recreational trail and route linkages. (ongoing)
5. Continue to coordinate official mapping efforts with the Village of Somerset, and adjacent towns if needed. (ongoing)
6. Maintain the Town's existing cooperative relationship with St. Croix County Community Development Department through regular communications. (ongoing)
7. Encourage the development and passage of ordinances at the County level that will support the implementation of the *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan*. (short-term)
8. The Town of Somerset will continue to support the ongoing efforts to better organize the presently very good joint Somerset Fire and Rescue Department. (ongoing)
9. Work with the Village of Somerset to explore development of a cooperative boundary agreement and plan as an alternative to incremental, unplanned annexation. (long-term)

## 9. Land Use

The use of land is a critical factor in guiding the future growth and decision-making of any community. This plan element identifies a land use goal, objectives, and strategies for the Town of Somerset, based on current and projected land use trends as well as local land use issues and conflicts.

The Town of Somerset comprehensive planning public opinion survey conducted in the spring of 2014 provided the following land use-related insights:

- 58% of respondents identified “small town atmosphere & rural character” as one of their three most important reasons why they choose to live in Somerset. This was the highest ranking response. The next highest response was “natural features”, closely followed by “cost of home/land.”
- 43% of respondents identified “protect environmental/cultural resources” as one of their top three most important functions for the Town of Somerset, ranking number three overall. Not far behind were “regulate land use” at 34% and “protect agricultural resources” at 31%.
- It is not clear how residents feel about the Town using tax dollars to purchase development rights to preserve prime farmland or open space, since 27% of respondents did not know enough on this topic to express an opinion.
- Based on pictures of example layouts, 61% of respondents preferred a more traditional subdivision design, yet 39% preferred an open space/cluster design, though a different survey question yielded strong support for subdivision designs that preserve open space (63%).
- A strong majority of respondents (67%) preferred a 3-5 acre minimum lot size.
- A strong majority of respondents believed that commercial and industrial buildings should be located near the Village of Somerset (79%), along major highways (72%), and only in designated commercial or industrial areas (82%).

The following questions ask your opinion about land use in the Town of Somerset.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
The Town of Somerset should be involved in community planning to determine where and how development should occur.	38%	52%	6%	2%	2%
Landowners should be allowed to develop land any way they want.	7%	16%	50%	24%	3%
It is important to protect my quality of life and property values from impacts due to activities or development on neighboring properties.	44%	50%	3%	1%	3%
The visual impacts of development are an important consideration when evaluating proposed development.	40%	52%	5%	1%	3%
New development should be required to pay impact fees to help defray costs of roads, parks, and other public services associated with that development.	45%	41%	6%	3%	4%
More parks and public open space are needed in the Town of Somerset, such as Parnell Prairie.	19%	41%	20%	5%	15%
New residential development should be clustered or designed in a manner which preserves open space.	20%	43%	19%	6%	11%

## 9.1 Current Land Uses and Land Use Trends

Table 9-1 and Map 9-1 summarizes and displays the existing land uses within the Town of Somerset based on property tax assessment and parcel GIS data provided by the St. Croix County Land Information Office as of January 2014 and a review of the draft map by the Town Plan Commission. For comparison, Table 9-1 also shows 2013 Wisconsin Department of Revenue assessment data. Since these land uses are largely based on property tax assessment data, rather than “field verified” data, the following approach was used:

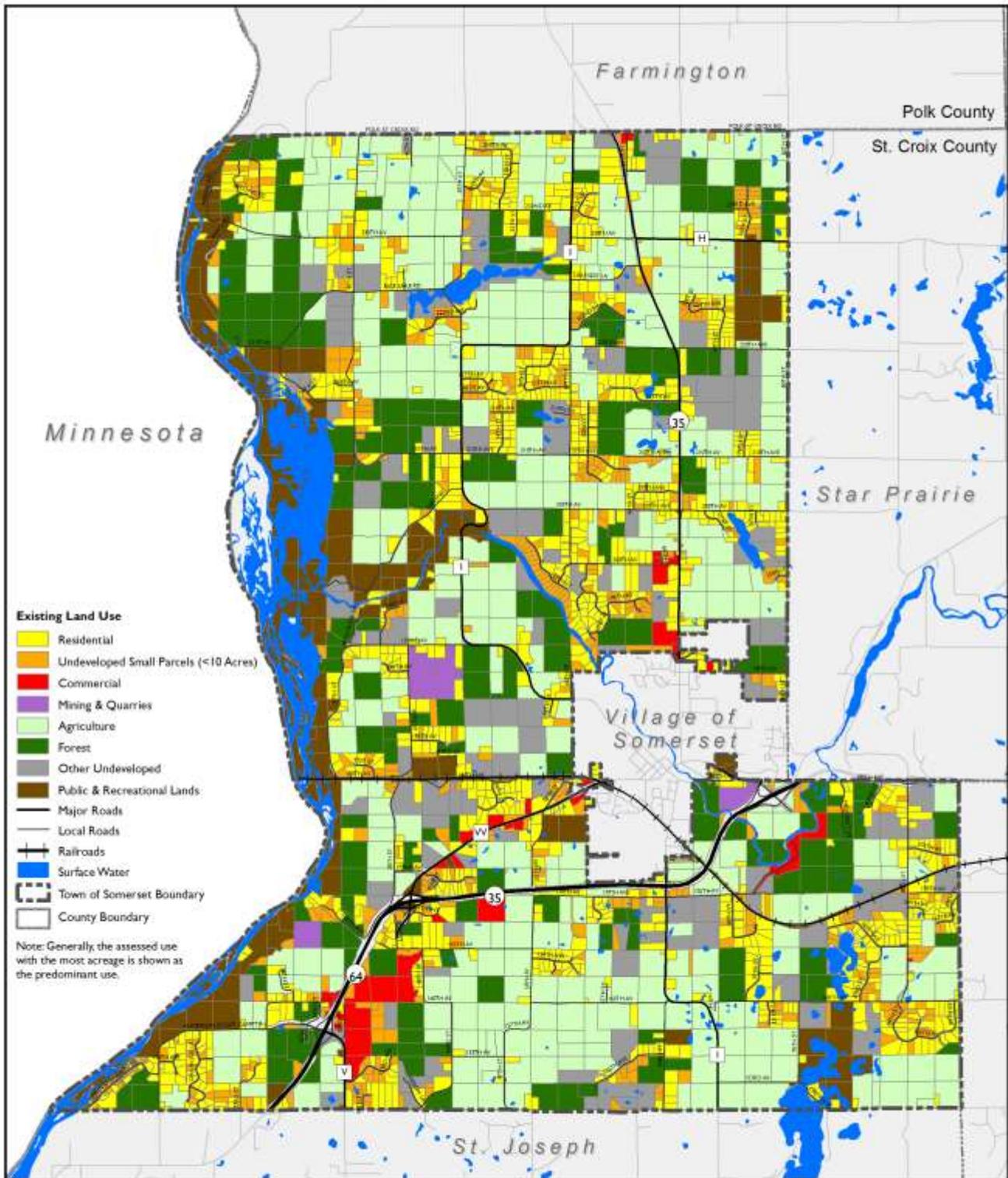
- Existing use was determined on a parcel-by-parcel basis.
- Those parcels for all three quarries are shown as **Mining/Quarries** as the predominant use.
- **Public and Recreational** acreages include tax-exempt lands, including the Boy Scout Camp.
- All other properties with assessed commercial (except apartments) are shown as **Commercial** as the predominant use, including the golf course and private campground.
- Generally, for other parcels 10+ acres in size, the assessed use (agricultural, residential, forest, undeveloped) with the most acreage is shown as the predominant use. A parcel may have other uses (e.g., a home) that have lower amounts of acreage.
- Generally, for those other parcels that are less than 10 acres in size with assessed residential, **Residential** is shown as the predominant use.
- Generally, for those other parcels that are less than 10 acres in size with no assessed residential, these parcels are shown as **Undeveloped Small Parcels**.

**Table 9-1**  
**Prominent Existing Land Use, Town of Somerset, 2013**

LAND USE	GIS Database		WDOR Assessment Data (2013)	
	Acreage	Number of Parcels	Acreage	Number of Parcels
Agriculture	10,617	357	10,091	514
Forest	4,603	172	3,463	287
Residential	5,289	1,282	6,947	1,763
Undeveloped Small Parcels	1,981	599	--	--
Commercial	451	36	457	41
Mining & Quarries	203	6	--	--
Industrial	0	0	0	0
Public & Recreational	2,426	203	--	--
Undeveloped	3,307	133	3,826	501
Water	1,779	--	--	--
Other	589	--	61	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,244</b>	<b>2,788</b>	<b>24,845</b>	<b>3,127</b>

source: St. Croix County Land Information Parcel GIS Database and Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Map 9-1 Town of Somerset Existing Land Use



West Central Wisconsin  
Regional Planning Commission

## PREDOMINANT EXISTING LAND USE

(as of January 1, 2014)

TOWN OF SOMERSET  
ST. CROIX COUNTY, WI

November 14, 2014



Data Source:  
St. Croix County Land Information  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
<http://dnr.wisconsin.gov/maps/geogislibrary.html>



# Land Use

For comparison, the following land use acreages were provided in the *Town of Somerset 2003-2028 Comprehensive Plan*:

**Table 9-2  
Estimated Existing Land Use, Town of Somerset, 1973 & 1993**

Land Use Category	1973		1993		Change 1973-93	
	Acres	Pct of Total	Acres	Pct of Total	Acres	Percent
Residential	982	3.27	2,228	7.50	1,246	126.9
Commercial	18	0.06	111	0.37	93	516.7
Industrial	6	0.02	32	0.11	26	433.3
Government & Institutional	1	0.00	5	0.02	4	400.0
Agricultural & Grasslands	21,901	73.01	18,495	62.29	-3,406	-15.6
Parks & Recreation	188	0.63	122	0.41	-66	-35.1
Wooded Lands	5,958	19.86	7,501	25.26	1,543	25.9
Transportation	943	3.14	1,196	4.03	253	26.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,997</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>29,690</b>	<b>100.00</b>		

Source: *Land Use Policy Plan for West Central Wisconsin; St. Croix County Development Plan*

Care must be used in interpreting this data or comparing it to the existing land uses in the Town's 2003 Comprehensive Plan due to the different methodology used in data collection and reporting. The previous plan largely used orthophotography and a detailed field survey to collect land use data, with the predominant uses assigned for three-acre polygons. The GIS data in Table 9-1 and Map 9-1 collects and reports data based on the most intensive use on a given parcel (e.g., a single home on a 20-acre parcel labels the entire parcel as residential) and the WDOR lacks data for unassessed (nontaxable) parcels.

## **Residential**

Homes are scattered throughout the Town in subdivisions and on larger lots. As discussed previously in the Housing Element, nearly all of the residential development is single-family residential on individual lots. Residential development, which accounts for about 17 percent of the Town's predominant land use and about 46 percent of its parcels, is the second largest land use classification in the Town. From these parcels, the average residential parcel size is about four acres. However, there are an additional 208 parcels in the Town with assessed residential improvements totaling 5,412 acres. With these larger parcels included, the average parcel size with a home increases to 7.2 acres. For these larger parcels, even though a parcel is assessed as residential, the majority of parcel is usually predominately forest, agriculture, or some other undeveloped use. Since 1993, it is clear that residential development has increased dramatically within the Town. It is anticipated that the far majority of the 599 Undeveloped Small Parcels will be developed as residential within the planning horizon, since most have been platted as part of partially built-out residential subdivisions. These undeveloped small parcels have a smaller average lot size of 3.3 acres. However, the Plan Commission noted that some of these small parcels were purchased by adjacent landowners with the intent to preserve them as open space, effectively increasing the amount of acreage per home site.

## **Commercial and Industrial**

The Town of Somerset currently has no industrial assessed acreage, three non-metallic mining operations on 203 acres, and 471 acres of commercial development on 36 parcels. The golf course and campground contain a significant amount of the total commercial acreage in the Town. Most other commercial acreage is located in close proximity to the State highways. Other, smaller, home-based businesses do exist with the Town of Somerset, which are not included in these numbers.



## **Public & Recreational Lands**

There are very few governmental or institutional uses in the Town, but there are large amounts of public wildlife habitat and recreational lands. Since 1993, the acreage of parks and recreational lands appears to also have increased dramatically. However, it is also difficult to obtain exact estimates of the public recreational lands since some of these lands are wet areas that may also be classified as surface waters. No plans to substantially increase the public and recreational acreage were identified during the planning process.

## **Agriculture, Forest, and Other Undeveloped Lands**

With approximately one-third of the Town's total acreage, agriculture remains the predominant land use within the Town of Somerset. An additional 25 percent consists of forest and other undeveloped acreage. Altogether, about 60 percent of the Town's land use is predominantly farmland, forest, public recreational lands, or other undeveloped lands. This represents the core of the Town's rural character that community members value. Yet, this core of non-public rural lands has been decreasing over time. In 1993, between 85-90 percent of the Town was classified as agriculture, forest, or grasslands.

## **9.2 Supply, Demand, and Price of Land**

Two indicators of a dynamic economy and a changing land use pattern are land sales and prices. These two indicators show a demand to convert undeveloped or under-developed land to more intensive uses such as residential, commercial or industrial. In turn, additional community services may be needed to support this change.

Recent agricultural and forest land sales data is not available at the Town or zip code level. Instead, we can compare assessed acreage over time for some insights into land supply and demand trends. Assessment information can also help indicate land prices; however, this information has certain limitations due to assessment methods, timing, and whether a particular assessor has completely established current fair-market value comparables for a given community. The State of Wisconsin attempts to equalize values so communities whose assessments are in different years will have assessments that are fair. Eventually all assessments are supposed to reflect fully equalized, fair-market value of property.

Table 9-3 includes 2003 and 2013 assessed land use acreage and assessed value per acre for the Town of Somerset. As discussed previously, please keep in mind that Table 9-3 uses Wisconsin Department of Revenue tax assessment data, which only reflects taxable property. This table is also influenced by the inclusion of Agricultural Forest land and by annexation during the timeframe which could be partly responsible for the total net decrease of acres during this timeframe. Land assessed in 2003 and converted to unassessed ownership (e.g., government, church, non-profit) in 2013 would also explain the total net decrease in acreage.

Table 9-3 shows net losses in agricultural, forest, and ag forest acreages, with the agricultural and forest land values remaining relatively static. The increase in undeveloped acreage is likely related to larger agricultural parcels being converted to residential use and a portion of these lots becoming

# Land Use

unused. Not surprisingly, residential experienced a significant gain in acreage. Assessed commercial lands experienced losses in both acreage and value.

The recession and housing market collapse of the past 5-7 years undoubtedly are reflected in these numbers. Many homes were foreclosed upon, some new homes sat empty for extended periods, and many parcels were subdivided in anticipation of new homes, but were never built upon. Local officials have commented that the local housing market has begun to recover in the past year.

**Table 9-3  
Land Use Acreage and Assessed Value Per Acre, 2003 and 2013**

	Agricultural	Forest	Ag. Forest	Undeveloped	Residential	Commercial	Manufacturing	Other	Total
<b>2003</b>									
# Parcels	468	282	0	394	1,566	44	0	20	2,774
# Improved	0	0	0	0	1,212	32	0	21	1,174
Acres	10,782	4,102	0	3,771	6,498	549	0	44	25,746
Land Value per Acre	\$119	\$4,108	-	\$3,335	\$12,967	\$7,555	0	\$13,318	-
Improv Value per Imp. Parcel	-	-	-	-	\$138,260	\$154,172	0	\$70,290	-
<b>2013</b>									
# Parcels	514	162	125	501	1,763	41	0	21	3,127
# Improved	0	0	0	0	1,437	32	0	21	1,490
Acres	10,091	2,219	1,244	3,826	6,947	457	0	61	24,845
Land Value per Acre	\$140	\$4,083	\$2,037	\$1,625	\$8,311	\$5,549	0	\$7,110	-
Improv Value per Imp. Parcel	-	-	-	-	\$169,048	\$286,913	0	\$102,314	-
<b>Difference</b>									
# Parcels	+16	-12	+125	+107	+197	-3	0	+1	+353
# Improved	0	0	0	0	+225	0	0	0	+316
Acres	-691	-1,883	+1,244	+55	+449	-92	0	+17	-1,001
Land Value per Acre	+21	+65	+2,037	-1,710	-4,656	-2,006	0	-	-
Improv Value per Imp. Parcel	-	-	-	-	+\$30,788	+\$132,741	0	-	-

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue; values do not include unassessed/exempt properties.

But other factors are also influencing land values and demand in the Town of Somerset. Nationally, there is a movement of people back to the urban areas and growth within the rural areas of the larger Twin Cities metro region is down. Further, corn and soybean prices have risen as the demand for ethanol has increased, thereby increasing the acreage and value of farmland throughout the region.

As discussed previously in the Population & Housing Element, growth with the Town may approach pre-recession numbers, but it is unlikely that it exceed those rates, even after the new Highway 64 bridge opens. Prior to the recession, the land use trends in the Town were much more dramatic. The Town lost about 42 percent of assessed agricultural land and 32 percent of assessed forest land between 1987 and 2007. During the same period, the Town experienced a 169 percent increase in improved residential parcels and a 133 percent increase in assessed residential acreage. There was also a 48 percent increase in improved commercial parcels during that time. These numbers must be considered when considering Table 9-3 and the Town's future.

## **9.3 Barriers to Development and Land Use Conflicts**

### **Physical Barriers to Development**

The most significant barriers to development in the Town of Somerset are natural, rather than manmade. The Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources element identifies potential barriers to building site development within Town, including floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes.

Previous Town of Somerset land use and comprehensive plans recognized that any development near or within certain Town Resources must be carefully planned and executed. Town Resources are natural features, environmentally sensitive areas, and culturally or aesthetically significant areas that are important for preserving the rural character and quality of life in the Town of Somerset. These Town Resources include, but are not limited to:

- a. Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, floodplains, and shorelands
- b. Bluffs, steep slopes, bedrock outcrops
- c. Springs, prairie potholes, wetlands, marshes
- d. Crop and pasture land
- e. Existing sand, gravel, and non-metallic mining operations
- f. Woodlands, hedgerows, prairie, savannas, grasslands
- g. Rare or endangered plant and animal communities and their habitats
- h. River valleys, drainage ravines
- i. Scenic areas and parks
- j. Rustic roads, archeological, cultural or historical structures and sites
- k. Closed depressions, kettles, sink holes

### **Transportation, Utilities and Community Facilities Barriers**

Transportation, utilities, and community facilities can also pose development limitation, or be used to guide development. The status of the Town's utilities and community facilities was discussed previously in the Utilities and Community Facilities element. The Town reviewed and considered public utilities and facilities when updating this Land Use Element. The following potential infrastructure barriers were identified:

- The Town has good highway connections, but not all roadways of the Town are suitable for heavy truck or vehicle traffic.
- There are no municipal sewer or water services in the Town. Businesses and uses that require large amounts of water for cleaning, processing, septic service, etc., or have special wastewater treatment needs should be guided to municipalities with such public utilities.
- Availability of high quality, fast broadband connections may influence development decisions. No accurate map of broadband service area gaps or concerns within the Town exists.

## **Regulatory or Policy Barriers**

The Town of Somerset is zoned and a number of standard development regulations are enforced (e.g., floodplain zoning, shoreland zoning, wetlands). In addition, areas along the St. Croix River have additional development restrictions. St. Croix County enforces the Lower St. Croix Riverway Overlay District as part of its code of ordinances. And the National Park Service has purchased and enforces easements within the Riverway boundaries. The majority of these easements are scenic easements that control general use and development in a manner that restricts the visibility of development.

The *St. Croix County Farmland Preservation Plan* was completed in 2012. Based on this plan and with landowner consent, a number of parcels in the north part of the Town have been designated as Farmland Preservation Areas and have tighter zoning restrictions that limit redevelopment of these areas. Also as noted previously, the Town has numerous archeological sites that also impact potential development at the locations.

## **Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts**

The primary types of existing and potential land use conflicts in the Town of Somerset are not atypical for a rural community. Residential development within an agricultural area can create related conflicts over odors, manure on roads, hours of harvesting, etc. Loss and fragmentation of farm and forest lands can also decrease the viability of such uses within a community. Commercial and recreational activities (e.g., tubing, ATV use, festival grounds) can also create land use conflicts or negatively impact natural resources. Four specific potential land use conflicts were identified during the planning process:

- The potential for over-use or over-commercialization of land, sensitive resources, and natural areas.
- The potential impacts of commercial and light industrial development on nearby properties.
- The maintenance of property and structures for aesthetic, health, and safety reasons.
- The desire to preserve the rural character and quality of life within the community.

## **9.4 Opportunities for Redevelopment**

During the plan update process, the Town Plan Commission identified no specific sites for potential redevelopment requiring action that should be addressed in the plan. However, reclamation at the three mining sites will be required in accordance with approved reclamation plans.

## **9.5 Current Land Use Plans, Programs, and Regulations**

The following are the key land use-specific plans and programs that may have implications for the Town of Somerset. Some of these and others are described previously in other plan elements.

## **Town of Somerset Plans and Ordinances**

- The Town previously adopted a comprehensive plan in October 2003, which is fully updated as part of this document.
- Town of Somerset Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan 2013-2018
- Code Chapter 6 – Amusements and Entertainment
- Code Chapter 10 – Buildings and Building Regulations
- Code Chapter 12 – Businesses, including RV campgrounds and junkyards
- Code Chapter 22 – Manufactured and Mobile Homes, including related communities
- Code Chapter 30 – Roads, Streets, Sidewalks, and Other Public Places
- Code Chapter 34 – Subdivisions, including conservation design development

## **St. Croix County**

- County Comprehensive Plan, 2012
- County Farmland Preservation Plan, 2012
- County Development Management Plan, 2000
- St. Croix River Crossing Bridge Growth Management & Mitigation effort, ongoing
- County zoning, sanitary, non-metallic mining, animal waste, and land division ordinances, including floodplain, shoreland, and riverway overlay zoning regulations

## **State and Federal**

There is a lengthy list of State and Federal plans, programs, and regulations that could potential influence land use in the Town of Somerset ranging from the Clean Water Act to high capacity well permitting. The majority of the key programs are mentioned previously within other elements. Unique to the Town of Somerset compared to most towns in the State of Wisconsin is its relationship and proximity to National Park Service-administered lands along the Town's western boundary. The National Park Service has purchased and enforces easements within the Riverway boundaries.

## **Additional Land Use Programs**

### ***AB608, Wisconsin Act 233 – Clarification of Smart Growth Law***

This bill was signed into law in April 2004. This new law reduces the number of programs or actions with which a comprehensive plan must be consistent. Under the new legislation, the only actions which must be consistent with a comprehensive plan are official mapping, local subdivision regulation, and zoning ordinances, including zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands. The bill also reiterates that an RPC's comprehensive plan is only advisory in its applicability to a political subdivision (a city, village, town or county), and a political subdivision's comprehensive plan.

### ***Wisconsin Land Information Program***

The Wisconsin Land Information Program is a voluntary, statewide program that provides financial support to local governments for land records modernization efforts. All 72 Wisconsin counties voluntarily participate in the Program. The Wisconsin Land Information Board oversees the Program's policies. The Board's statutory authority includes preparing guidelines to coordinate the modernization of land records and land information systems; implementing a grant program for local governmental units; approval of countywide plans for land records modernization; serving as the clearinghouse for access to land information; and providing technical assistance and advice to state agencies and local governmental units with land information responsibilities.

### ***Division of Intergovernmental Relations, Wisconsin Department of Administration***

The Division of Intergovernmental Relations provides staff support to the Wisconsin Land Council, and it administers the Wisconsin Land Information Program in conjunction with the Wisconsin Land Information Board. It also houses Plat Review and Municipal Boundary Review, both of which have

statutory authority for approval of specific land use related requests, and the GIS Services, dedicated to the efficient use of geographic information systems. For further information about the division visit its web-site via the WDOA web-site at: [www.doa.state.wi.us](http://www.doa.state.wi.us).

### ***UW-Extension Center for Land Use Education***

The Center for Land Use Education uses a team-based approach to accomplish its dual missions in campus based undergraduate and graduate education and Extension outreach teaching related to: land use planning, plan and ordinance administration, project impact and regional trends analysis, and public involvement in local land use policy development. For more information on the Center for Land Use Education visit its web-site at [www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/](http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/).

### ***West Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan***

As required by State Statute, West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission adopted a regional comprehensive plan in September 9, 2010. This advisory document includes all of the nine elements required under State comprehensive planning statutes, plus an additional energy and sustainability element. The plan includes land use trends for the region.

## **9.6 Projected Land Use Supply and Demand**

Table 9-4 provides estimates for the total acreage that will be utilized by residential, commercial/industrial, and agricultural/forest land uses for five-year increments through the year 2035 in the Town of Somerset. These future land use demand estimates are largely dependent on population increases and should only be utilized for planning purposes in combination with other indicators of land use demand.

**Table 9-4  
Projected Land Use Demand (acres), Town of Somerset, 2015-2035**

Year	Population	Residential (pop-based)	Residential (housing-based)	Commercial & Light Industrial	Agricultural & Forest (trend-based)	Agricultural & Forest (goal-based)
2013	4,077	5,289	5,289	451	10,617	10,617
2015	4,250 (+173)	5,514	5,485	470	10,351	10,535
2020	4,770 (+520)	6,190	6,075	527	9,686	10,290
2025	5,220 (+450)	6,775	6,586	577	9,021	10,077
2030	5,650 (+430)	7,334	7,074	624	8,356	9,874
2035	5,945 (+295)	7,718	7,409	657	7,691	9,734
Difference	1,868	2,429	2,120	206	-2,926	-833

The above is one picture of what may occur and the future will largely be determined by the manner in which the Town guides and manages growth. These projections should be used for general planning purposes only.

The Year 2013 acreage figures were obtained from the GIS-estimated acreages previously described in Table 9-1. Year 2015 to 2035 acreage calculations were projected by utilizing Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) 2013 population projections.

The projected demand for residential land uses is provided using two methods:

*Population-based:* This method assumes that the ratio of the Town's 2013 population to the predominantly residential acreage (parcels <10 acres with assessed residential improvements)

will remain the same in the future. In other words, each person will require the same amount of land for each residential acre as they do today (i.e., 1.3 acres per person).

*Housing based:* This method is based on the WDOA population projections, the 2010 persons per household of 2.91, and an average lot size of 3.3 acres based on the current average for the Undeveloped Small Parcels. Changes in household size would impact this projection. Since 1990, household size in the Town has been increasing.

Projecting commercial and light industrial uses can be very difficult for a smaller community since a single new project (or a business closure) can have large land use implications. Commercial and industrial land uses had a combined average annual increase of 11 percent (or +15.7 acres per year) between 1993 and 2013, which is very unlikely to continue. In fact, since 2003, assessed commercial acreage has actually increased. For the projections in Table 9-4, the ratio of the Town's 2013 population to current land area for commercial/light industrial (0.11 acres/person) will remain the same in the future.

As will be shown later, this Plan's objectives include farmland preservation, infill of undeveloped small parcels, promoting conservation subdivision design, and the preservation of wildlife habitat. In fact, there are nearly 2,000 acres of undeveloped parcels less than 10 acres in the Town, many of which could be developed prior to subdividing more agricultural or forest lands. As such, the projected rate of loss of agricultural and forest lands could be considerably reduced compared to the previous ten years. Projected demand for agricultural and forest land uses is provided using two methods:

*Trend-based:* Between 2003 and 2013, the Town lost 133 acres of assessed agricultural and forest lands each year. This projection is based on this trend continuing. These losses exceed the residential and commercial gains since a portion of land converted to these other uses is often assessed as undeveloped.

*Goal-based:* This method was determined using the sum of the housing-based residential and commercial/light industrial increases, multiplied by 1.15 to account for right-of-way, market factors, etc., then divided by two-thirds to account for Town's land use goals. It is acknowledged that this projection is quite subjective, since the two-thirds reduction "goal" is not based on a specific metric.

The Town of Somerset will undoubtedly grow during the next twenty years and the Town has the ability to guide and manage this growth. It will be the decisions of the community that will ultimately determine if land use changes will be closer to (or even exceed) the population-based and goal-based projections that seem most consistent with this plan's vision and goals.

## 9.7 Planned Land Use

The planned land use map is one of the primary components of the comprehensive plan that can be used as a guide for local officials when considering future development within the community. The plan is long-range and will need to be re-evaluated periodically to ensure that it remains consistent with changing trends and conditions.

As the existing land use map previously showed, the land use pattern in Town of Somerset is quite diverse and fairly fragmented. Residential subdivisions are mixed among predominantly forested and agricultural lands throughout the community. This land use pattern makes it challenging to create a future or planned land use map with different, individual uses in separate, distinct zones. This is

especially true in the Town of Somerset, which has traditionally preferred flexibility in land management and has shown great respect for individual property rights.

## Land Use Classifications

The following land use classifications are descriptions used to define areas within the Town that are of consistent character, use, and identity. These classifications correspond to the planned land use areas shown on Map 9-2.

### Rural Living and Open Space

The RURAL LIVING AND OPEN SPACE classification includes a mix of compatible single-family residential, agriculture, forest, conservancy, and open space uses. All of the Town's residential subdivisions fall into this classification. Home-based businesses, direct-market farming, agricultural supply businesses, tourism activities, public recreational uses, and governmental or institutional uses are also acceptable within this area, if such uses are low impact, do not create significant land conflicts with nearby uses, and are compatible with the rural character of this area.

The RURAL LIVING AND OPEN SPACE classification is carefully named to reflect the Town's intent that development and land uses within **these areas should be designed and managed in a manner that reinforces and stays true to the community's vision of preserving the Town's rural character for future generations.** A wide mix of land uses may be appropriate within these areas, if certain standards are met, such as:

- compatibility with adjacent uses and avoidance of land use conflicts
- residential development densities appropriate for rural areas that are not urban
- residential subdivision designs that preserves open space and conservation areas
- careful aesthetic design and building siting
- conservation of resources and wildlife habit
- consistency with the various goals, objectives, and policies of this plan

A mix of zoning districts may be consistent with this classification, if compatible with the overall character of this area. **Growth within this area can be managed by continuing to discourage the rezoning from agricultural zoning districts to districts that allow for residential subdivision development.** Such an approach would encourage the infill of the undeveloped small parcels in the Town.

### Commercial and Commercial Nodes

The COMMERCIAL classification identifies existing, non-residential properties within the Town of Somerset that are assessed commercial. It is envisioned that these properties will continue to be used for commercial or light industrial use. **The Town may encourage the reuse of unused commercial properties prior to rezoning additional properties for commercial use.**

The COMMERCIAL NODES are four generalized areas near or along major highways or key intersections that have the potential for commercial and light industrial development in the future. The exact boundaries of these nodes are not set-in-stone and are flexible based on distance to the highway and close proximity to other existing or planned commercial development. These nodes include many of the existing, smaller commercial assessed parcels.

Proposed commercial and light industrial development that are higher impact and not appropriate for the Rural Living and Open Space areas should be guided to these nodes. These higher impacts could including retail, services, and employers that have extended hours of operation, create higher levels of noise, or have a relatively large amount of hardscape (e.g., buildings, parking), or generate

large numbers of vehicle trips, including for shipping or warehousing. With careful planning, senior housing facilities and smaller multi-family housing facilities may be appropriate within the Commercial Nodes close to the Village of Somerset, if adequate water and septic can be provided.

**However, these uses should still be planned, sited, designed, and maintained in a high-quality manner that is compatible with nearby uses and the rural character of the community as discussed within the Economic Development Element policies, Land Use Element policies, and the examples within the next three pages.** Proposed commercial or light industrial uses deemed incompatible may be required to modify their plans or may be directed to nearby incorporated areas.

Given the distribution of closed depressions, surface waters, and existing residential subdivisions throughout the community, heavy industries and large commercial ventures should be guided to communities with municipal water or sewer, or to other less populated areas of St. Croix County. For example, heavy industries include facilities such as food processing, heavy equipment manufacturing, petro-chemical plants, facilities that use large amounts water or hazardous materials, salvage yards, solid waste processing, landfills, transfer stations, freight terminals, and large warehousing.

### Farmland Preservation Areas

The FARMLAND PRESERVATION AREAS classification includes those existing and planned areas in which traditional agricultural practices and accessory uses will remain the predominant use. **These areas should be used and maintained in a manner that allows certification as a Farmland Preservation Zoning District under State Statute §91.38.** To the extent allowable under State Statute, the Town is supportive of compatible agricultural-related uses, such as agri-tourism and direct-market farm sales, as long as farming remains the predominant use and any potential negative impacts are mitigated or avoided. Identification as a farmland preservation area within this amended plan was at the consent of the property owners.

### Mining and Quarries

The MINING AND QUARRIES classification covers the three existing non-metallic mining sites within the community. These sites should be reclaimed by the owner in accordance with an approved reclamation plan once mining activities have halted. The Town encourages that reclamation take place incrementally as excavation within an area of a mining site has been completed. Given the distribution of closed depressions, surface waters, and existing residential subdivisions throughout the community and the potential use conflicts that mining creates, no new or expanded non-metallic or metallic mining operations (excavating, processing, or transload facilities) are envisioned for the Town of Somerset. Other areas in St. Croix County are better suited for such mining operations.

### Public and Recreational Lands

The PUBLIC AND RECREATIONAL LANDS classification includes existing governmental facilities, tax-exempt properties, and public-owned recreational areas. Overall, these lands are very compatible with the RURAL LIVING AND OPEN SPACE classification. **As such, the Town may allow new PUBLIC AND RECREATIONAL LANDS development within the RURAL LIVING AND OPEN SPACE area without needing to amend the Future Land Use Map.** For example, a new park could be development as part of a subdivision or a new Town Hall site may be acquired within the RURAL LIVING AND OPEN SPACE area. However, some proposed public or institutional uses (e.g., schools, hospitals, special care facilities, prisons) may be directed to the COMMERCIAL nodes or to an incorporated municipalities depending on traffic created, nuisances (light, noise), security needs, hours of operation, or water use.

## COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN

During the plan update process, the Town of Somerset Plan Commission spent considerable time discussing their vision for the siting and design of new commercial development. The following are various characteristics, preferences, and concerns that should be used, in combination with the goals, objectives, and policies within the Economic Development and Land Use elements, when guiding and reviewing commercial and light industrial development proposals. **Many of these characteristics can also be used to guide the site planning and design of mixed-use and residential development proposals within the community.**

### Characteristics that are Preferred

New development and infill development should support and reflect the rural character of the community through compatible features such as:

- Use of trees, shrubbery, greenery of local, native species for landscaping and screening.
- Smaller-sized buildings instead of a large single big box store or mall complex.
- Smaller parking areas that are less visible from the main roadway and “broken-up” through landscaping. Large parking areas and extensive hardscape between the main roadway and the commercial buildings should be avoided.
- More master planning and coordination in the planning of adjacent businesses with some cohesion in design, signage, and other site amenities (e.g., lighting, landscaping). However, a development where the majority of the buildings have too much uniformity and no individual character is not preferred.
- Quality architectural design reflecting a more traditional or natural aesthetic in character with the community. Building designs that are essentially “boxes”, such as pre-fabricated metal structures with straight-lines or flat roofs, should be discouraged.



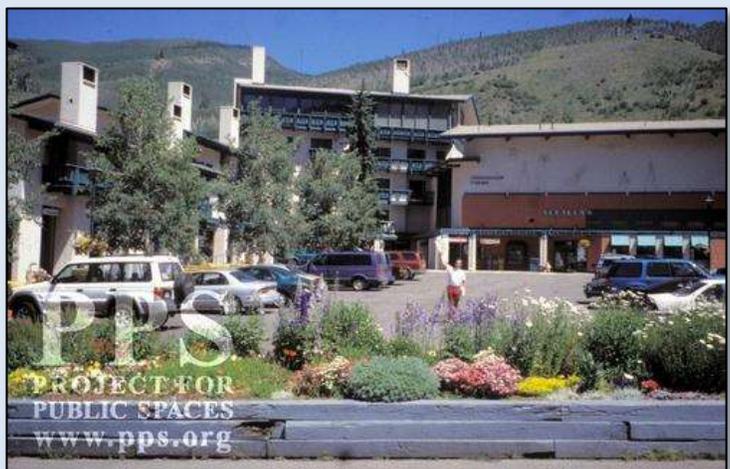
*Strip-type development that gives a cluttered, sprawling appearance, like the above two pictures, should be avoided. Undesired features identified by the Plan Commission include: too many access points; many different billboards and styles of signage; various types of site and signage lighting; parking lots along the roadway; lack of natural landscaping; and unappealing, “flat” building designs that are uninteresting, low quality, “overly branded” or inconsistent with traditional designs within the community.*

- The use of access controls and, if necessary, frontage roads. Multiple, individual driveways for adjacent businesses should be avoided to the extent possible. However, in keeping with the Town's vision, backage roads would be preferable to frontage roads in many cases.
- Site planning should carefully consider internal vehicle and pedestrian circulation systems, in addition to encouraging connections and linkages to adjacent properties and trail systems.
- To be consistent with rural character, site lighting and the lighting of signage should also be carefully planned. Glare and obtrusive light should be controlled and limited. The Town may require lighting plans, cutoff shielding, lumen limits, timing systems, and other dark sky friendly best practices. Impacts of vehicle lights on neighboring properties will also be considered.



*Excessive uniformity, monotony, and a lack of individual character, such as in the picture above, should be avoided regardless of whether the development is commercial or residential. While the rooflines are not flat, the development is still very linear. The Plan Commission is also concerned with the density of development; quite simply, the above picture has “too much of it.”*

*The development to the right was viewed favorably by the Plan Commission. Attractive landscaping “softens and greens” the hardscape and buffers parking areas from the main roadway. There is uniformity to the overall design without being monotonous and the buildings incorporate natural materials. However, care should be taken not to make parking areas too large.*



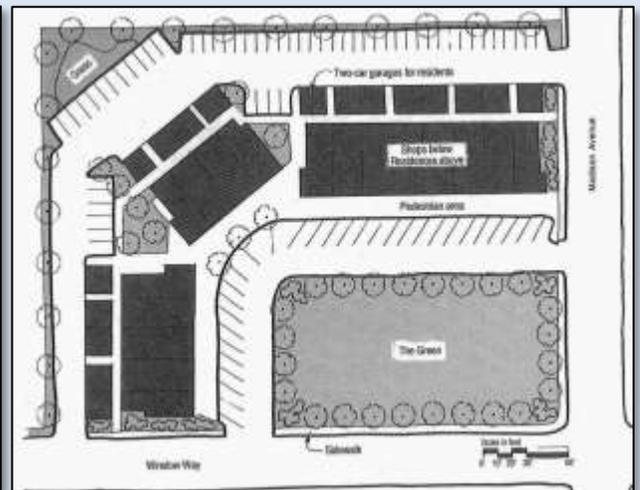
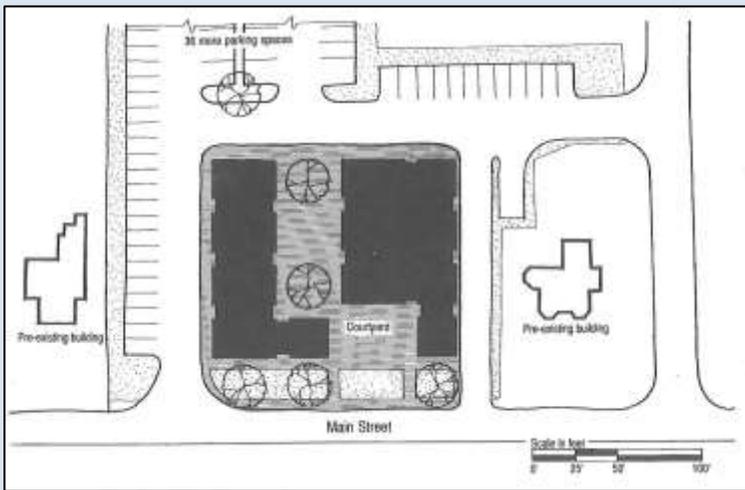


Natural landscaping, rain gardens, and bio-swales “break-up” the hardscape and reflect rural character, while managing stormwater. Quality pavement treatments add further aesthetic appeal, while reinforcing pedestrian linkages.



The above picture shows that even corporate brands can respect local context and be integrated into the character of the community.

picture source: Arendt, Randall. “Rural by Design” American Planning Association. 1994.



Many of the features in the above commercial site plans are preferred. Multiple businesses are accommodated as part of a single site plan. Parking is not immediately adjacent to the main roadway and there are no large parking lots. Landscaping and public green space are attractive, welcoming, and reflect rural character. Smaller buildings, as opposed to a single large building or mall oriented parallel to the main roadway, provide an additional sense of open space.

site plan source: Arendt, Randall. “Rural by Design” American Planning Association. 1994.

## Planned Land Use Map (Map 9-2)

The Town of Somerset planned vision and desired pattern of future land use is depicted by the arrangement of the previously described land use classifications as shown on Map 9-2.

Table 9-5 lists the selected classifications as shown on Map 9-2.

**Table 9-5  
Planned Land Use, Town of Somerset**

<b>Land Use Classification</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Rural Living & Open Space	24,203
Commercial (existing)	451
Farmland Preservation Areas	1,593
Mining & Quarries	203
Public & Recreational Lands	2,426
Other (e.g., R-O-Ws)	589
Surface Water (existing)	1,779
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31,244</b>

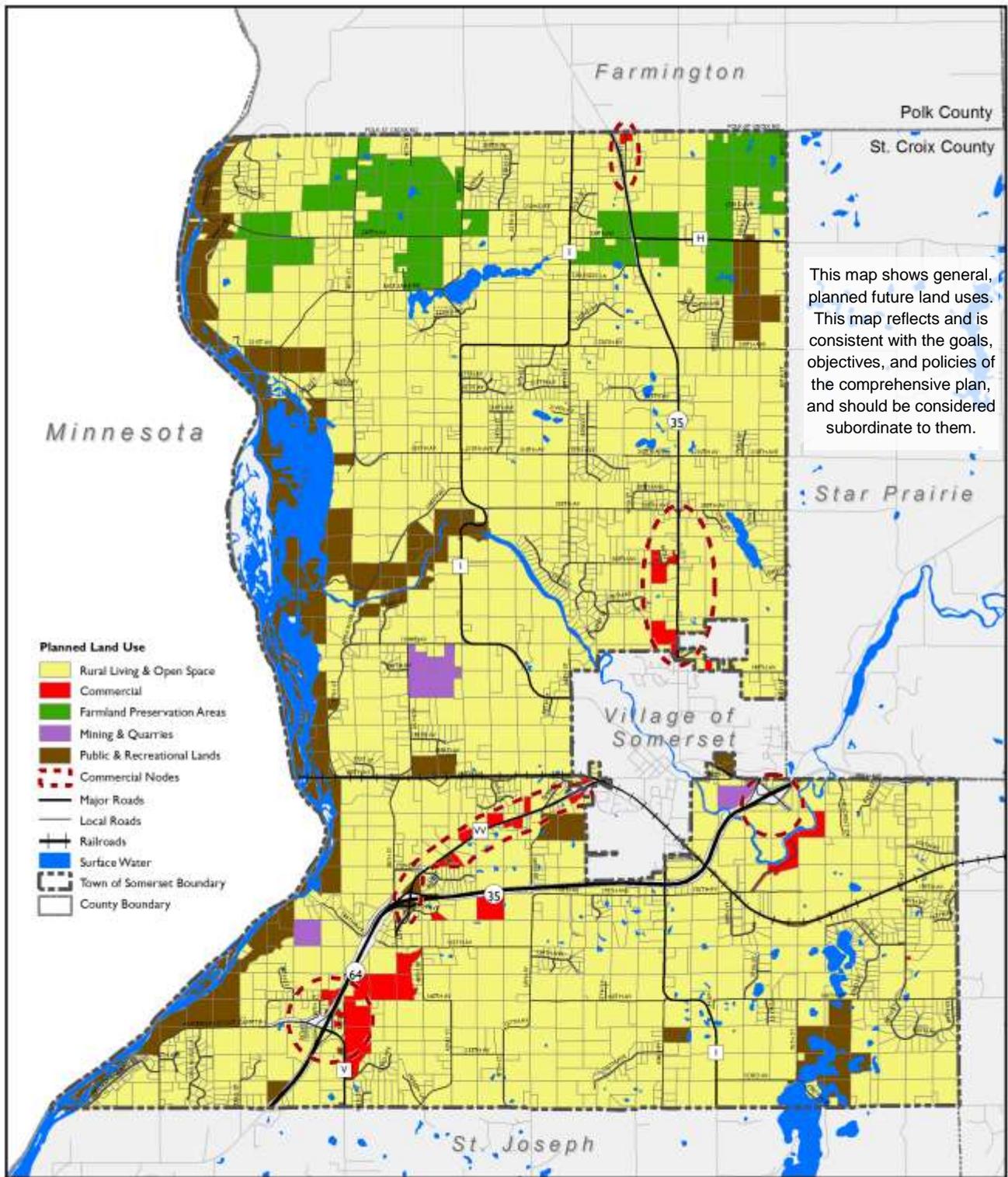
A comparison of all of the previous tables within this Land Use Element yields the following insights:

- Most or nearly all of the residential growth needs projected for the next twenty years could potentially be met by developing only those undeveloped small parcels shown on Map 9-1.
- Projecting the demand for commercial and light industrial land is difficult. If growth is managed, the majority of new commercial and light industrial development can be guided to the Commercial Nodes.
- The loss of agricultural land will be somewhat restrained by the creation of the Farmland Preservation Areas. However, the Town of Somerset has the opportunity to influence the rate of loss of other farmland, forest land, and open space, if growth can be guided to current undeveloped small parcels and through the use of tools such as conservation subdivision design.

In an attempt to implement the Town of Somerset Planned Land Use Map (Map 9-2), the Town should utilize this map and the classification descriptions when acting on zoning decisions, amendments to the Town's zoning map, and for other land-use decision making. The review of Map 9-2 and the Town's zoning map concurrently will ensure consistency between planning and zoning decisions. Zoning decisions must be consistent with the guidance of *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan* considered as a whole and in its entirety.

# Land Use

Map 9-2 Town of Somerset Planned Land Use



This map shows general, planned future land uses. This map reflects and is consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the comprehensive plan, and should be considered subordinate to them.



**PLANNED LAND USE**  
TOWN OF SOMERSET  
ST. CROIX COUNTY, WI



Data Sources:  
St. Croix County Land Information  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
<http://dnr.wis.gov/rp/gis/gislibrary.html>



December 23, 2014

## 9.8 Land Use Goals and Objectives

### *Land Use Goal:*

***Provide for a compatible mix of land uses within the community in a manner that preserves and protects the natural environmental resources and rural character of the Town of Somerset while maintaining a high quality of life for residents.***

### **Objectives**

1. Preserve and protect surface waters, wetlands, groundwater, wildlife habitat, steep slopes, natural drainage systems, and other natural features.
2. Protect farmland preservation areas and productive farmland for agriculture.
3. Encourage the preservation of open spaces, the infill of residential areas, and the use of cluster development.
4. Require good design and a sustainable development pattern that is compatible with the rural character and agricultural heritage of the community, fosters a sense of community, and prevents incompatible land uses and negative impacts on natural and agricultural resources.
5. New commercial and light industrial development should be clustered and low impact, with a high-quality design compatible with the community's rural character.
6. Minimize the visual impact of development to maintain the rural, undeveloped character and feeling of the community.
7. Land development should support and enhance multi-modal linkages and connections.
8. Provide residents with access to quality parks, outdoor recreation areas, and natural amenities.
9. Encourage development that minimizes the cost and impacts on public facilities and services.
10. Manage and control the rate of development to maintain a distinctive rural community in the Town of Somerset.
11. Development should occur in a fair and orderly fashion with some controls, while maintaining flexibility and avoiding over regulation.

## 9.9 Land Use Policies

### ***Policies — General Land Use (Decision-making Guidance)***

1. The Town of Somerset will continue to participate in County zoning, to the extent that the County's zoning regulations are compatible with this plan and addresses the community's needs and this plan.
2. The Town of Somerset will require a preliminary site review and development planning checklist for all development within the community.
3. The Town of Somerset will encourage clustered residential development using conservation subdivision design in accordance with the Town conservation design standards, if the natural features of the site and ability to provide potable water and safe on-site wastewater treatment allow it. Open space held in common shall be required to be under a perpetual conservation easement and managed by a homeowners association per specification in the deed of each lot of the development, or by a land trust organization, which if dissolved the conservation easement reverts to the homeowners association.

4. The Town of Somerset will continue to enforce its land division ordinance.
  - a. Each lot, parcel, or tract created for the purpose of erecting a residential building or structure shall be required to have a minimum of one-half acre of contiguous buildable area, except for conservation designed subdivisions which can be demonstrated not to adversely impact the land and water when using a smaller buildable area.
  - b. Continue to require a Certified Survey Map for all land divisions that create a lot, parcel or tract of land 35 acres in area or less, except where the newly created parcel is entirely within a recorded subdivision or where such parcel is entirely within a previously recorded Certified Survey Map. All such land divisions will be reviewable by the Town of Somerset.
  - c. Continue to encourage the use conservation subdivision design for proposed subdivisions.
  - d. Continue to enforce standards for construction site erosion control and stormwater management for all subdivisions.
5. The Town of Somerset will require appropriate fees for all development to cover the costs related to its density or intensity and its environmental impact, and the additional administration, services, and infrastructure that it will impose upon the Town and its residents.
6. Utilize the existing road network to accommodate most future development and require multi-modal connectivity of new roadways and between land uses whenever possible and appropriate. Development plans and site plans shall be evaluated with regard to accommodating the safe and efficient travel of pedestrians and bicycle users and providing linkages to existing and planned trail systems as discussed in the Transportation element and the *Town of Somerset Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan*.
7. During land use permitting and zoning decisions, ensure that the quality of the public outdoor recreational lands in the Town are used in a manner that is compatible with and does not unduly detract from the character of these natural areas and the overall experience of users. If needed, engage St. Croix County, Wisconsin DNR, the National Park Service, and nearby communities in a discussion of design, regulatory, and management options to protect sensitive features, prohibit over-commercialization, and prevent over-use.
8. Work with developers to ensure that residents of proposed subdivisions will have convenient, safe access to outdoor recreational opportunities. If no public amenities are available, the Town may require the development to provide and maintain such amenities at their cost.
9. The Town will encourage a mix of setbacks and screening to help minimize visual and noise impacts in a manner that reinforces the community's rural character, such as:
  - a. Protect the visual quality of rural roadways through site planning, driveway location, landscaping, signage control, and other standards, such as placing driveways along property lines, fence rows, or existing vegetation, wherever possible and safe.
  - b. Encourage tree preservation and tree planting to screen new structures from neighboring properties and public roadways in residential areas and require such screening for

commercial and industrial development.

- c. Use landscaping, such as plants, trees, or decorative fencing, to reduce the visual impact of parking lots, garbage storage, and other unsightly storage areas as seen from streets, trails, and public rights-of-way.
10. Property should be used and maintained in a manner that does not pose health or safety hazards, create use conflicts, decrease nearby property values, or otherwise become a health, safety, visual, auditory, or other similar nuisance.
11. The Planned Land Use Map (Map 9-2) should be used as a guide for land use decision-making, but it does not take precedence over the goals, objectives, and policies of this plan.
  - a. The descriptions of the planned land use classifications in the Section 9.7 should be generally followed when making land use decisions.
  - b. Farmland preservation areas as shown on the Planned Land Use Map should not be used for non-eligible uses as described under Wisconsin's farmland preservation Laws unless the Planned Land Use Map is first amended.
  - c. To the extent reasonably possibly, agricultural, forestry, wildlife habitat and open spaces should be preserved or not fragmented within the Rural Living and Open Space area of the Planned Land Use Map.
  - d. Proposed commercial and light industrial development that is not home-based businesses or agricultural-related should be directed to the Commercial Nodes shown on the Planned Land Use Map.
  - e. Senior housing, group homes, and special care facilities should be directed to the Commercial Nodes shown on the Planned Land Use Map or to nearby incorporated communities.
  - f. The Planned Land Use Map is a vision, but it is not a zoning map, nor is it an assurance that certain land uses or development will be allowed or approved. The Town may use site analysis, impact reports, zoning, and other tools to determine the feasibility of specific development proposals, guide development to preferred or better suited locations, and manage the phasing of growth. For instance, the Rural Living & Open Space area may use multiple zoning districts to encourage home development on subdivided small parcels prior to rezoning larger agricultural parcels for residential use.
12. When possible, the Town of Somerset will encourage the infill of those existing, previously subdivided smaller lots (<10 acres) available for sale prior to approving new residential subdivisions.
13. Land use decisions should be consistent with and not contradict the goals, objectives, and policies of this element, as well as the goals, objectives, and policies of the other plan elements.

### ***Policies – Natural Resources and Conservation (Decision-making Guidance)***

14. Any development near or within certain Town Resources must be carefully planned and executed. Town Resources are natural features, environmentally sensitive areas, and culturally or aesthetically significant areas that are important for preserving the rural character and quality of life in the Town of Somerset. These Town Resources include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, floodplains, and shorelands
  - b. Bluffs, steep slopes, bedrock outcrops
  - c. Springs, prairie potholes, wetlands, marshes

# Land Use

- d. Crop and pasture land
  - e. Existing sand, gravel, and non-metallic mining operations
  - f. Woodlands, hedgerows, prairie, savannas, grasslands
  - g. Rare or endangered plant and animal communities and their habitats
  - h. River valleys, drainage ravines
  - i. Scenic areas and parks
  - j. Rustic roads, archeological, cultural or historical structures and sites
  - k. Closed depressions, kettles, sink holes
15. The Town of Somerset will review all proposed development adjacent to or within Town Resources in order to ensure the protection or proper use of these valued features.
16. Town Resources shall be a major factor in determining approvals for land divisions, plat plans, development proposals, rezonings and other planning and development decisions made by the Town of Somerset Plan Commission and Board of Supervisors. Natural drainage patterns shall not be altered. Wooded sites being developed shall only be cleared to the extent necessary to allow safe access and to adequately open the canopy for sunlight exposure and ventilation, and care should be taken to protect all remaining trees from disturbance and subsequent exposure to disease.
17. For the purposes of the *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan* the term "Open Space" is used to describe a combination of Town Resources on public or private land within the Town, that when observed by Town residents and visitors are recognized as contributing to the rural character and aesthetic qualities of the Town. Open Space is usually undeveloped, but can have an active use such as agriculture or can be developed for passive use such as a park with predominant natural areas.
- 
18. When reviewing development proposals, the Town of Somerset will encourage the preservation and/or creation of open spaces that are grouped and combined into connecting, undeveloped units called environmental corridors. Areas of low-density development may serve as connecting corridors between open space corridors where undeveloped units are not available to serve this function. The scenic, open space and habitat function of corridors will be maintained to the greatest extent which is practical.
19. The Town of Somerset will request that agencies and bodies--governmental and/or private--responsible for the location of improvements such as roads, highways, pipelines, power lines, towers, rail lines, airports, billboards, etc. recognize and do not violate the intent of the Town's goals and policies for open spaces.

## ***Policies — Commercial and Industrial Uses (Decision-making Guidance)***

20. The spot zoning of commercial and industrial land or activity will be prohibited in the Town of Somerset
21. All existing and proposed commercial and light industrial uses within the Town of Somerset should be planned, sited, designed, and maintained in a high-quality manner that is compatible with the rural character of the community. Proposed commercial or light industrial uses deemed incompatible may be required to modify their plans or may be directed to nearby incorporated areas.
22. Proposed commercial and light industrial development that are higher impact and not appropriate for the Rural Living and Open Space areas identified on the Planned Land Use Map should be guided to the Commercial Nodes as discussed previously within the definitions of the land use classifications.
23. Heavy industries, new mining-related operations, and large commercial ventures should be guided to communities with municipal water or sewer, or to other less populated areas of St. Croix County.
24. In those areas deemed suitable for commercial and light industrial use, discourage commercial and light industrial development designs, site plans, and land use practices that have one or more of the following characteristics:
  - a. A corridor of automobile-oriented business development generally in a linear arrangement, yet people cannot park in a single location and safely visit several places of business;
  - b. Development along a corridor with numerous road access points and a lack of shared vehicle access;
  - c. Development along a corridor, when viewed separately or as a whole, creates a cluttered appearance from an abundance of signs, lights, etc.; and,
  - d. New business development with a lack of a shared design standard, common aesthetic, or identity.
25. Encourage commercial and light industrial development designs, site plans, and land use practices that include the following characteristics:
  - a. New commercial and industrial development is designed and concentrated in a manner that shares common highway access and promotes internal connectivity;
  - b. Maximize the infill of existing commercial- and industrial-zoned areas, before zoning new lands for commercial or industrial use;
  - c. Low-traffic generating commercial development should be sited behind existing commercial development;
  - d. A unified streetscape in commercial and industrial areas with quality landscaping and plantings, shared design characteristics, and internal wayfinding and circulation systems, when possible;
  - e. Avoid large parking lots between the commercial buildings and the primary street if possible, with parking preferably behind buildings and the use;
  - f. Use landscaping, vegetative swales, rain gardens, and permeable pavement in parking areas; and,
  - g. Diligent site plan review with a focus on desired outcomes and allows flexibility to achieve these outcomes.

## **Recommendations (Action-Oriented Strategies)**

26. Following adoption of the updated *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan*, the Town Plan Commission shall:
  - a. Review the current Town ordinances to determine if modification is needed for consistency with the plan. (short-term)
  - b. Consider the adoption of a development impact fee ordinance or other special assessment policies for new development and infrastructure improvements. (short-term to long-term)
  - c. Work with St. Croix County to explore potential County regulatory changes suggested within this Plan, such as greater flexibility to allow compatible agri-tourism activities within farmland preservation areas and greater design standards for rural commercial development nodes. (short-term to long-term)
27. The Town of Somerset will consider establishment of purchase and transfer of development rights programs to preserve the remaining agricultural lands and highly valued open space land in the Town and to guide development to existing undeveloped (or underdeveloped) subdivided lots or areas immediately adjacent to existing residential subdivisions. Any such effort should include or be preceded by an educational component to increase awareness of such tools among community members.
  - a. The Town of Somerset Plan Commission will study funding mechanisms for a purchase of development rights (PDR) program for agricultural land and highly valued open space land, and make a recommendation to the Town Board. (short-term to long-term)
  - b. The Town of Somerset will investigate a transfer of development rights (TDR) program with development rights "sending" areas of agricultural land and highly valued open space land and development rights "receiving" areas well suited for development within two years of plan certification. (short-term)
  - c. The Town will engage in discussions with St. Croix County on potential participation in a county-level TDR or PDR, but with caution. Participation in such a program must be consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of this comprehensive plan and the long-term best interests of the Town. (short-term to long-term)
28. Encourage the National Park Service and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to consider acquisition of key undeveloped or underdeveloped properties along the St. Croix and Apple Rivers that would strengthen and permanently preserve environmental corridors, while offering more public recreational opportunities and potential trail linkages. (ongoing)

## **Planned Land Use Map Policies**

The Planned Land Use Plan map is intended to be a graphic and pictorial description of the desired pattern of land use showing the general location, character, and intensity of land uses for the foreseeable future. The general land use categories depicted represent the predominant land use as described previously. It is recognized that there may be other land uses within these areas as provided for in comprehensive plan policy. The map itself, Map 9-2, is not intended to be a rigid end-product document, but a necessary and useful planning tool in helping the community clarify and better evaluate its position on development issues and thereby formulate policies which will best achieve local objectives in an effective but flexible manner. The map also helps to illustrate the implications of related goals, objectives, and policies, but is subordinate to them. The form, character, and impacts of a proposed development are typically more important than the Town's planned land use map.

The Town of Somerset Plan Commission shall use the following general guidelines and considerations in delineating preferred development areas, as well as when reviewing potential amendments to the Town's Planned Use Map and zoning map amendment requests:

1. Impacts to existing development and roads, as well as the ability to enhance road, pedestrian, and bicycling connectivity.
2. Terrain and site conditions that are suitable for development, considering slopes, wetlands, depth to water table, soils, geology, closed depressions, archeological and historical features, and other physical limitations.
3. Appropriateness of development adjacent to or in proximity to rivers, wetlands, lakes, floodplains, and conservancy areas.
5. Protection of farmland preservation areas and carefully consider applications for the rezoning of other high-quality agricultural lands without justification for non-agricultural uses on such land.
6. Consistency with and supportive of the rural character of the community, including the preservation of open spaces, scenic vistas, and environmental corridors and mitigating impacts to wildlife habitat.
7. Preventing or minimizing potential use conflicts and negative impacts to nearby properties, including but not limited to: noise, light, odors, traffic, health and safety risks, or loss of property values.
8. Availability or provision of convenient access for emergency vehicles.
9. Ability to provide public facilities and services will not place an unreasonable burden on the Town and other governmental units.
10. The public need for the proposed use or change in the planned land use map. Are other areas of the Town better suited for the proposed use?
11. Consistency with the vision, goals, objectives, and policies found within this Comprehensive Plan.

The above are considerations and not absolute requirements. Additional factors may be considered. When development is proposed, it shall be the responsibility of the petitioner to provide the information necessary to demonstrate consistency with the above general guidelines and their approach to prevent or mitigate any potential negative impacts. Further, the Town of Somerset may require the petitioner to provide independent traffic, environmental, fiscal, or other impact studies.

## 10. Implementation

To achieve the community's vision, the plan must be put into action. This plan element discusses the timeframe for specific actions to be completed in order to achieve the plan's vision, goals, and objectives. Also included is a description of how each of the plan's elements is integrated and consistent with each other.

The comprehensive plan must also be a "living," dynamic document which considers or allows for change in the community. An evaluation strategy provides a mechanism to measure progress toward achieving all aspects of the comprehensive plan and monitors progress in the context of local change and a process for plan amendments and updates is described.

### 10.1 Action Plan

The policy subsections of most plan elements are separated into policies and recommendations. The policies are general, ongoing decision-making guidance which further supplement or expand upon the objectives, while the recommendations are action-oriented strategies with a measurable timeframe. A suggested implementation timeframe is provided for each recommendation:

<u>Ongoing:</u>	Recommendation ongoing and should be continued.
<u>Short Range:</u>	approximately 0 to 5 years (or before 2020)
<u>Long Range:</u>	approximately 5+ years (or after 2020)

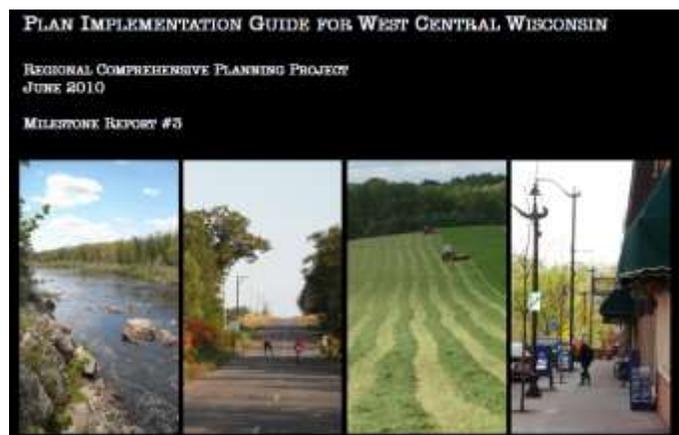
These timeframes provide the Town with a sequence of action. Initial focus should be on the ongoing and short-range recommendations. However, the above timeframes also offers some flexibility to accommodate budgets and other priorities. Generally, the Town of Somerset has expressed its desire to maintain its "pay-as-you-go" approach, with large expenditures paid from general revenues, grants, development fees, and funds saved over time, rather than loans or bonding.

This Town Board has the primary responsibility of implementing the plan recommendations, but it may delegate such responsibility to the Plan Commission, other committees, or Town departments. Many times, collaboration will be required for implementation. In some cases (e.g., certain housing or social services programming) the Town may not be the lead implementing entity. Prior to implementation, the Town will consider and reassess each action item to further determine if each is in the best interest of the community. Some recommendations will require further analysis and exploration, and may later be deemed unfeasible. Changing conditions in the community may necessitate an addition or modification to the action plan.

### 10.2 Implementation Resources

The plan implementation programs and resources are largely covered by the programs, resources, and tools identified in the other elements of this plan. One unique plan implementation resource which covers multiple plan elements is the *Plan Implementation Guide for West Central Wisconsin*.

In June 2010, West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission developed the *Plan*

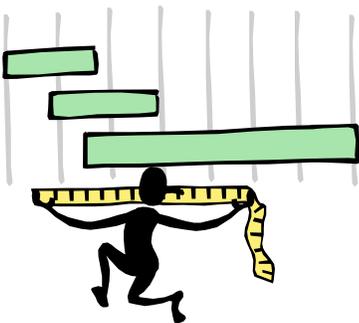


*Implementation Guide for West Central Wisconsin* as part of its regional comprehensive planning effort. The Guide discusses best practices from around the region and other ideas and resources for some of the key concepts and trends identified in the regional comprehensive plan. Many of the ideas found within the Guide were considered by the Plan Commission during this plan update. The Town of Somerset can use this Guide as the Town moves forward with implementation of its comprehensive plan. And for land use issues and regulations in particular, the Town maintains a strong working relationship with St. Croix County Community Development Department.

## 10.3 Plan Integration and Consistency

*The Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan* has an important role as a guide for future action and policy decisions in the Town. When the Town Board, Plan Commission, or other Town officials are considering policy or programmatic decisions or developing other Town plans, this comprehensive plan can provide important guidance. In addition to using the Town's plans, communities and counties should consider the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies of the *West Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan* and adjacent and overlapping comprehensive plans for potential opportunities and collaboration.

The elements of this plan are also internally consistent and there is much overlap in issues and policy between many of the elements. A review of the plan goals, objectives, and policies has been performed to ensure consistency. As the plan developed, major consistent themes emerged which moved the plan toward consistent conclusions and compatible approaches to solving identified problems among the elements. When using and interpreting this plan, the vision, goals, objectives, and policies should be considered in total and as a whole. Any future plan amendments should be evaluated for consistency with the overall comprehensive plan.



## 10.4 Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

Every comprehensive plan is required by statute to include a “mechanism to measure the local governmental unit’s progress toward achieving all aspects of the comprehensive plan.” As the entity primarily responsible for development and use of the comprehensive plan, plan monitoring and evaluation naturally falls under the responsibilities of the Town Plan Commission. To ensure the plan is achieving intended results, the Town Plan Commission should review the plan at least annually with any recommendations reported to the Town Board. The Plan Commission’s review should particularly focus on whether the

identified policies are: (1) being implemented in accordance with the recommended timelines and (2) are the recommended policies effective in meeting the plan’s goals and objectives.

## 10.5 Plan Amendments and Updates

Frequent comprehensive plan amendments or updates should be avoided. However, plan monitoring and evaluation is an ongoing process and may lead to the realization that the Plan requires an amendment or updating.

### Amendments

The Town of Somerset should regularly evaluate its progress towards achieving the goals, objectives, policies within the comprehensive plan. It may be determined that amendments are needed to

# Implementation

maintain the effectiveness and consistency established within the plan. Plan amendments are typically minor changes or additions to Plan maps or text as deemed necessary and appropriate. The Town Plan Commission must be given sufficient opportunity to make a recommendation to the Town Board on proposed amendments prior to the Town Board decision.

A change to the Town's future land use map shall be considered a plan amendment. A proposed change to the preferred future land use map may be initiated by a landowner requesting a zoning map amendment if the proposed rezoning is inconsistent with the Plan's future land use map. Since zoning decisions must be consistent with the comprehensive plan and the Town is under St. Croix County zoning and is part of the County's Comprehensive Plan, the following sequence of approvals may be required:

- 1) Amend Town Comprehensive Plan
- 2) Amend County Comprehensive Plan
- 3) St. Croix County Zoning Map Amendment (Rezoning) Process

During proposed plan and map amendments, the petitioner(s) should demonstrate how their proposal is consistent with the *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan* as a whole. The proposal should not contradict the objectives, goals, and policies of the Plan, or else additional plan changes must be considered. There should be a clear public need for the proposed change or unanticipated circumstances have resulted in a need for the change. The proposed change should also not result in substantial adverse impacts to the community, nearby properties, or the character of the area. The Town may require the petitioner(s) to prepare reports or fund other such studies prior to a decision on amending the Comprehensive Plan.

## **Updates**

The *Town of Somerset Comprehensive Plan* will be updated at least once every ten years as required by State law, unless a more frequent update is deemed necessary by the Town Board. Unlike an amendment, an update is often a substantial re-write of the text, updating of the inventory and tables and substantial changes to maps, if necessary. The Town Plan Commission is responsible for facilitating the Plan update, working within any general guidelines provided by the Town Board. The plan update process will likely involve a similar process as the one allowed for during the initial creation of this plan.

The adoption process for plan amendments and plan updates is similar. Consistent with State law, a public hearing must be held. The Plan Commission must then adopt a resolution recommending the proposed plan changes or updates to the Town Board. The Town Board will then adopt the plan changes or updates by ordinance. Whether the Town of Somerset is considering a plan amendment or update, the Town will encourage public participation during the plan amendment and update processes. A public participation plan should be developed and adopted at the beginning of any plan update process.

## Appendix A: Town of Somerset Public Opinion Survey Results

### TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

PLEASE RETURN BY May 31, 2014

Fill the circle that most closely describes your perspective toward the following statements:

Like this: ● Not like this: ✓ ✗ /

**PLEASE READ FIRST:** If you received this survey, you are a **Town of Somerset** resident. In Wisconsin, town governments are for the unincorporated areas, which tend to be more rural. This survey does not cover the Village of Somerset. When answering this survey, do not consider places and characteristics located in the Village, such as EconoFoods, School District facilities, the Amphitheatre, Royal Credit Union, downtown Somerset, and the industrial park.

Please limit your responses and comments to locations and your vision for the Town of Somerset, not the Village.

#### QUALITY OF LIFE

1. What are the **three** most important reasons you and your family choose to live in the Town of Somerset?

10%	Agriculture	21%	Low Crime Rate	17%	Quality Schools
1%	Community Services	33%	Natural Features	9%	Recreational Opportunities
32%	Cost of Home/Land	32%	Near Family and Friends	58%	Small Town Atmosphere & Rural Character
26%	Availability of Large Parcels	20%	Near Job (Employment Opportunity)	5%	Other: (Please Identify)
5%	Property Taxes	23%	Born and Raised Here	<b>See Appendix B</b>	

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Applicable
2. Rate the quality of life in the Town of Somerset	25%	64%	11%	0%	0%

#### PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

3. Rate the following <u>Programs and Services</u>	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Applicable
a. Fire protection/Emergency Services/EMT	27%	54%	8%	1%	11%
b. Law Enforcement	14%	59%	14%	5%	8%
c. Street and Road Maintenance/Snow Plowing	15%	46%	26%	11%	1%
d. Parks and Recreation	8%	44%	30%	8%	10%
e. Garbage Service/Recycling	19%	51%	15%	6%	9%
f. Schools	18%	46%	12%	1%	23%
g. High Speed Internet/Broadband Service	4%	22%	27%	37%	10%

4. Which **THREE** of the following Town of Somerset functions do you think are **most important** (Only select top 3)?

a. Ensure public safety	68%	b. Provide efficient/effective government	47%
c. Protect environmental/cultural resources	43%	d. Protect agricultural resources	31%
e. Support recreational opportunities	23%	f. Regulate land use	34%
g. Enhance economic development	31%	h. Plan effective transportation network	18%

**Please keep in mind, this survey is about the Town of Somerset, not the Village.**

## **NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

5. How important is it for the Town of Somerset to use regulations to protect the following:	Essential	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
a. Farmland	36%	45%	13%	6%
b. Forested Lands	41%	43%	12%	4%
c. Groundwater	75%	20%	4%	1%
d. Historic and Cultural Sites	17%	46%	30%	7%
e. Open Space	28%	45%	20%	7%
f. Lakes, Rivers and Streams	66%	27%	5%	2%
g. Scenic, Rural Character	41%	41%	15%	4%
h. Hunting and Fishing	33%	42%	20%	5%
i. Wetlands	38%	40%	17%	5%
j. Wildlife Habitat and Existing Natural Corridors	48%	34%	14%	4%
k. Air Quality	61%	28%	7%	4%

## **HOUSING**

6. The following types of housing are needed in the Town of Somerset.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a. Single-family homes	42%	39%	7%	2%	11%
b. Duplexes	2%	28%	34%	21%	15%
c. Town homes (multi-story row houses w/ shared walls)	3%	18%	33%	31%	15%
d. Apartments (3+ units in which units are rented)	2%	13%	33%	38%	14%
e. Senior housing (designed for needs of older persons)	22%	50%	11%	5%	12%
f. Starter (first-time buyer) homes	14%	50%	16%	6%	15%

## **TRANSPORTATION**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
7. The overall road network (roads, streets, and highways) in the Town of Somerset meets the needs of its citizens.	15%	73%	9%	3%	1%
8. The Town should designate certain roads as ATV/UTV routes.	19%	37%	20%	12%	12%
9. There should be more biking and walking lanes along public roadways.	29%	38%	17%	8%	8%
10. There should be more off-road biking and walking trails in the Town of Somerset.	30%	40%	13%	7%	10%

**Please keep in mind, this survey is about the Town of Somerset, not the Village.**

## AGRICULTURE

11. Large scale farms (500 or more animal units) should be allowed to expand:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a. Anywhere in the Town of Somerset	13%	26%	31%	18%	12%
b. Nowhere in the Town of Somerset	16%	18%	34%	17%	15%

## LAND USE

12. How many acres of land do you own in the Town of Somerset?	Less than 5 acres	5 to 10 acres	10 to 20 acres	20 or more acres
	46%	25%	12%	16%

13. Is the land you own actively farmed?	Yes, by myself	Yes, by lease or other agreement	No	Not Applicable
	6%	11%	79%	5%

14. Do you think your land will be actively farmed (by you or someone else) in the next (fill all circles that apply):

less than 5 years	5 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 to 20 years	Not Applicable
3%	6%	2%	6%	83%

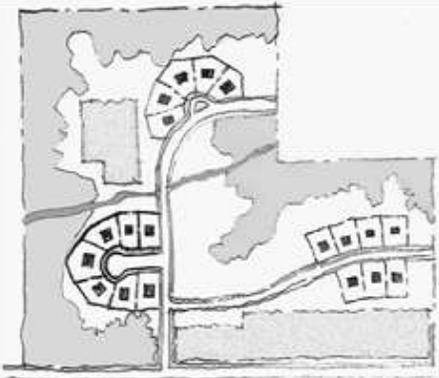
The following questions ask your opinion about land use in the Town of Somerset.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
15. The Town of Somerset should be involved in community planning to determine where and how development should occur.	38%	52%	6%	2%	2%
16. Landowners should be allowed to develop land any way they want.	7%	16%	50%	24%	3%
17. It is important to protect my quality of life and property values from impacts due to activities or development on neighboring properties.	44%	50%	3%	1%	3%
18. The visual impacts of development are an important consideration when evaluating proposed development.	40%	52%	5%	1%	3%
19. New development should be required to pay impact fees to help defray costs of roads, parks, and other public services associated with that development.	45%	41%	6%	3%	4%
20. Additional public river access is needed for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking (not tubing).	22%	42%	15%	6%	15%
21. More parks and public open space are needed in the Town of Somerset, such as Parnell Prairie.	19%	41%	20%	5%	15%
22. New residential development should be clustered or designed in a manner which preserves open space.	20%	43%	19%	6%	11%

**Please keep in mind, this survey is about the Town of Somerset, not the Village.**

The next question involves the purchase of development rights (PDR), which some communities have used to preserve open space, natural areas, or farmland. Under a PDR program, a landowner sells their “right” to develop and subdivide their land to the municipality and/or a land trust. This right is held and protected so that the open space or resource is preserved in perpetuity. There is significant flexibility in how PDR programs can work, depending on the property and community goals. For instance, these agreements often allow farming and timber management to continue on the property. Or PDRs can be used to protect natural features or provide recreational areas near homes.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
23. Should the Town of Somerset use tax dollars to purchase development rights to preserve prime farmland or open space?	33%	40%	27%

24. Within the Town of Somerset, would you prefer housing built in a traditional design (Option A) with larger individual lots and no open space OR an open space/cluster design (Option B) with smaller individual lots and open space that is permanently preserved? Both options contain the same number of housing lots. **Please fill only one circle for either Option A or Option B below to indicate your preference.**

Option A: Traditional Design	Option B: Open Space/Cluster Design
61%	39%
	

25. For the traditional subdivision design in Option A above, what should the minimum lot size be for new residential development? **Fill one circle only.**

2 acres	3 to 5 acres	5-10 acres	10 or more acres
23%	67%	7%	3%

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

26. Commercial or industrial buildings in the Town of Somerset should be located:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a. Near the Village of Somerset	31%	48%	9%	3%	9%
b. Along major highways and county roads	19%	53%	15%	5%	8%
c. Only in designated commercial or industrial areas	37%	45%	11%	2%	6%
d. Anywhere in the Town	4%	10%	33%	47%	5%

**Please keep in mind, this survey is about the Town of Somerset, not the Village.**

27. More new businesses and light industry are needed in the Town of Somerset (outside the Village).	19%	38%	23%	11%	10%
28. The Town of Somerset should use tax dollars to recruit or promote new business and industry.	9%	25%	37%	18%	11%

29. The following types of economic/business development are appropriate in the Town of Somerset.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a. Agricultural-Related Businesses	20%	64%	7%	1%	7%
b. Commercial and Retail Development	12%	51%	22%	7%	8%
c. Home-Based Businesses	14%	63%	10%	2%	11%
d. Industrial and Manufacturing Development	10%	47%	25%	8%	9%
e. Tourism and Recreation	17%	55%	14%	5%	9%
f. Technology related (e.g. biotechnology, computers, etc.)	14%	53%	18%	5%	11%
g. Service industries (e.g. financial services, health services, etc.)	14%	56%	17%	4%	9%

30. What do you like about living in the Town of Somerset?

**See Appendix B**

31. What would you like the Town of Somerset to look like 25 years from now?

**See Appendix B**

## **COMMUNICATION**

32. Fill the circles of the **three** most effective ways that the Town of Somerset could provide information regarding its services and programs to residents.

Direct Mailings	E-Mail and Social Media	Newspaper Articles	Newsletters	Town Website	Other: (Specify) See Appendix B
74%	45%	38%	53%	49%	2%

	Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
33. How likely are you to attend meetings or other public participation events as related to planning in the Town of Somerset?	9%	46%	40%	5%

# Appendix A

**Please keep in mind, this survey is about the Town of Somerset, not the Village.**

	Saturday mornings	Monday evenings	Tuesday evenings	Wed. evenings	Thursday evenings
34. What two times would be most convenient for you to attend a Town planning meeting? (Only select top 2)	22%	31%	39%	35%	26%

**DEMOGRAPHICS:** Please tell us some things about you:

35. Gender:	Male	Female	36. Age:	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and older
	61%	39%		0%	6%	20%	24%	26%	22%

36. Employment Status:	Employed Full Time	Employed Part Time	Self Employed	Unemployed	Retired	Other: See Appendix B
	53%	5%	11%	1%	29%	2%

37. Where do you work?	Wisconsin	Minnesota	Other	Not Applicable
	28%	40%	2%	30%

38. Place of Residence:	Own Full-Time Resident	Own Part-Time Resident	Rent	Other: See Appendix B
	96%	4%	0%	0%

	0	1	2	3	4	5+
39. Number of Adults (18 or older) in Household:		14%	71%	10%	4%	1%
40. Number of Children (under 18) in Household:	65%	11%	17%	6%	1%	0%

41. Household Income Range?	Less than \$14,900	\$15,000 to \$24,999	\$25,000 to \$49,999	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 or more
	1%	3%	13%	42%	34%	7%

42. How many years have you lived in Town of Somerset?	Less than 1	1 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 24	25+	Seasonal Only
	2%	7%	17%	35%	37%	1%

43. In what zip code do you live?	<u>See Appendix B</u>
-----------------------------------	-----------------------

**Thank You for Completing the Survey!**  
**Your survey responses are anonymous and will be reported in group form only.**

Please return your survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by May 31, 2014 to:

Town of Somerset  
 P.O. Box 248  
 Somerset, WI 54025

## Appendix B: Town of Somerset Public Opinion Survey Write-In Responses

### Q1. What are the three most important reasons you and your family choose to live in the Town of Somerset? “Other: (Please Identify)”. (33 Responses)

- Close proximity to Twin Cities. (4x)
- Apple River
- Bought land from family member.
- Bridge Bible Church.
- Country, but close to cities.
- Farm in family 99 years.
- Good neighbors.
- Historical low property taxes which do not exist any longer.
- In business here.
- It's quiet.
- Land quality.
- Like the house and property.
- Low population density.
- Lower restrictions and taxes.
- Marriage
- Moved to husband's farm.
- Nice house.
- No congestion.
- No neighbors within sight.
- Not having houses piled on top of each other. The space.
- Not in MN.
- Owned farm land since 1989.
- Proximity-St. Croix River.
- Public hunting land.
- River
- Small class size.
- Small, quiet, peaceful.
- St. Croix River Valley
- Taxes should be lower.
- Wonderful neighbors and good governance.

### Q30. What do you like about living in the Town of Somerset? (516 Responses)

#### Atmosphere/Rural/Space (263 Responses)

- Quiet (6x)
- Rural atmosphere. (6x)
- Small town feel. (6x)
- Country life. (5x)
- Small town atmosphere. (5x)
- Peace and quiet. (4x)
- Rural (4x)
- Rural character. (4x)
- The rural atmosphere. (4x)
- Quiet, rural. (3x)
- Good place to live. (2x)
- I like the rural atmosphere. (2x)
- Open space! (2x)

## Appendix B

- Peace (2x)
- Quiet, peaceful. (2x)
- Rural area. (2x)
- Rural feel. (2x)
- Rural nature. (2x)
- Rural setting. (2x)
- Being in the country and having a rural lifestyle.
- Clean
- Comfortable and clean living for all.
- Convenient small town services. Country living.
- Country atmosphere-open views-space. Cool town chairman.
- Country living-little traffic-safe from high crime. Clean air and water.
- Country location.
- Distance from neighbors, peace and quiet.
- Fresh air and open spaces.
- Home town. Standard of living and low cost of living.
- I am on the outskirts and enjoy my farm and trees and rural character. It's quiet here.
- I enjoy and love the peace and quiet, and beauty of it.
- I like coming home and having a feel of the country! More quiet at times.
- I like not having houses on top of each other!!
- I like not having malls and gas stations all over the place. I love the open spaces. Quiet. Little traffic.
- I like the fresh air and rural charm.
- I love the rural feel. The lack of light pollution. Farms are a necessary part of the community.
- I moved here to live in a rural atmosphere and that's what I like. Small town USA.
- I moved out here from Minneapolis in 1991. I love the open space, not having horses all around me.
- It is nice and small.
- It is quiet and peaceful.
- It is rural. Natural, undeveloped area promotes wildlife.
- It's beautiful and rural, but only 20 minutes from larger areas for shopping.
- It's out of town, rural feel. Having my own land, woods, and a few small animals.
- It's quiet and I like the open country side I live in!
- It's quiet.
- It's relaxing and low key.
- It's rural but near larger cities.
- Its rural setting close to the Twin Cities.
- Large lots, open spaces, reasonable land and home prices.
- Like living in the country-quiet!
- Like the rural feeling.
- Like the rural setting-peace and quiet.
- Live in rural area with peace and quiet and enjoy seeing deer, turkey, and pine tree forested areas and keep the ban on ATV use on roads; they are too noisy and dangerous.
- Living in country on corner not feasible for big farming but good for extra big gardening and good wildlife.
- Living in the country and not having neighbors so close.
- Living out in the country.
- Love it. Really like the environment.
- Love the rural atmosphere; space; quality of life;
- Low crime and friendly atmosphere.
- Low density of population.
- Low density. Country feel. Relaxed.
- Lower population levels than on the other side of the river in MN.
- Minimal development outside of town.
- My acreage. The St. Croix River. Friendly people.
- Nice space, open areas, rural living, close to anything you want/need.
- No gang bangers (but they are coming). Good space.

# Appendix B

- Not busy, private yards, safe.
- Not in town.
- Not over populated. Would like to keep it that way.
- Open and still rural.
- Open fields! No big development nearby. Reasonable distance from noisy highway!
- Open space, great views, small town feel, low cost of taxes and close to family and the Twin cities when we want.
- Open space, pristine land/water, large lots mixed with farms, schools, small town feel.
- Open space, some access to fishing and hunting areas, snowmobile trails.
- Open space. Undeveloped land.
- Open spaces, beautiful area.
- Open spaces, quiet feel.
- Open spaces, quiet, in the country but close to major roads and river.
- Open spaces, trees, close to Village.
- Open spaces. Nature.
- Open spaces. Rural feel.
- Open spaces. Wildlife. Feeling of safety.
- Openness, quiet except when concerts are going on in the Village of Somerset!
- Owning several acres with neighbors spread out.
- Peace and quiet (so far since November 2013).
- Peace and quiet and beauty.
- Peace and quiet and relative isolation.
- Peace and quiet!
- Peace and quiet, however, with the bridge over Stillwater it is going to bring changes with planning and insight. This town can flourish but we must be careful to not always take the easy path so just a few can benefit.
- Peace, quiet, rural setting.
- Peaceful and the beauty.
- Peaceful, small town. I know most people, open spaces, farmland, and atmosphere.
- Peaceful. It still has a very rural feeling living here.
- Peaceful. Scenery.
- Peacefulness here.
- People don't live on top of each other.
- Privacy
- Privacy, acreage.
- Privacy. Open land, large lot sizes.
- Privacy. Space.
- Privacy. We have neighbors but not too close. Natural habitat surrounds us.
- Quiet and friendly.
- Quiet because of the 3-5 acres, we have plenty of room.
- Quiet natural setting close to retail in Stillwater. River.
- Quiet place to live.
- Quiet rural area close to everything.
- Quiet setting. The fact that it's not a part of Twin Cities metro development.
- Quiet, beautiful scenery near river-St. Croix.
- Quiet, friendly and the natural beauty of the river.
- Quiet, friendly, well maintained roads, rural atmosphere.
- Quiet, lots of wildlife, scenic, great neighbors, convenient to Twin Cities.
- Quiet, peaceful. Easy to commute.
- Quiet, peaceful. Wildlife. Country living close to the city.
- Quiet, rural and safe neighborhood within 30 minutes of my work. Large lots.
- Quiet, rural living. Short distance to metro.
- Quiet, safe, and friendly neighbors.
- Quiet, small town atmosphere (except during concerts).
- Quiet. Able to see wildlife.
- Quiet. Farmland and wooded areas. Low crime.

# Appendix B

- Quiet. Low crime. Friendly neighbors.
- Quiet. Near stuff.
- Quiet. Peaceful. No loud neighbors. No traffic. No developments near me.
- Quiet. Peaceful. Wildlife.
- Quietness and wildlife.
- Relatively quiet, great schools, safety is great.
- Rolling open spaces.
- Rural and scenic small town living. Not a lot of rules and regulations. Near big cities and once Stillwater Bridge completes easy access.
- Rural area, small town feel, living in country but close enough to the Twin Cities.
- Rural atmosphere and small town character. It is safe and a quiet place to live.
- Rural atmosphere yet close to the metro area.
- Rural atmosphere, woods, natural features.
- Rural atmosphere.
- Rural atmosphere. Large residential parcels.
- Rural atmosphere. Small farms are mixed in. Some farms raise and sell their livestock locally (cow/pig/chickens).
- Rural but everything we need is within easy access.
- Rural character and open space.
- Rural character and slow growth.
- Rural character with access to rivers, lakes, trails, and forest.
- Rural character, low density housing, natural resources.
- Rural character, open space, near metropolitan areas, lakes, rivers.
- Rural character, proximity to Twin Cities.
- Rural character. Abundance of wildlife. Beauty of the landscape.
- Rural character. Lack of congestion.
- Rural environment.
- Rural feel. Close to action.
- Rural feeling, but close to good and services.
- Rural feeling, open space and large lot yet proximity to large metro area.
- Rural feeling, open space.
- Rural landscapes.
- Rural living somewhat close to the city.
- Rural setting but close to cities.
- Rural setting close to large metro area and near St. Croix.
- Rural setting.
- Rural setting. Close to bigger towns.
- Rural site.
- Rural surroundings!
- Rural yet close to everything the Twin Cities has to offer.
- Rural, natural setting with large parcels of land.
- Rural, non-commercialized, residential, private and bucolic.
- Rural, small town feel.
- Rural, small town, beautiful but within an hour of a major metropolitan area.
- Rural, small town, light traffic.
- Rural, wildlife, quiet.
- Rural. Quiet.
- Rural/farm quality of life.
- Small population with open fields and quality people.
- Small town appeal.
- Small town atmosphere but close to metro area.
- Small town atmosphere in rural setting.
- Small town atmosphere. Close to work. Like schools.
- Small town atmosphere. Little traffic.
- Small town atmosphere-wide open spaces (i.e.) farmlands, low saturation of people. Home owner autonomy.

# Appendix B

- Small town but close to major cities (Minneapolis/St. Paul).
- Small town feel and acreage.
- Small town feel but near larger cities.
- Small town feel with easy access to bigger cities (i.e. Stillwater, Woodbury, Hudson).
- Small town feel with minimal commute to the Twin Cities.
- Small town feel with some metro access when the new bridge opens. Feels safe.
- Small town feel, comfortable.
- Small town feel, little crime.
- Small town feel. Quiet. I left Woodbury, MN for this reason. If I wanted traffic and over-development I would have stayed there.
- Small town feel-agricultural land-low crime-no gangs-not much section 8 living.
- Small town feeling. Knowing everyone.
- Small town living but close to large metropolitan area.
- Small town living. Open spaces. Wildlife.
- Small town rural living.
- Small town, rural feel-limited enterprise of commercial chains.
- Small town.
- Space/Quiet.
- Spacious
- Still a small town feels with most houses on 3-5 acres.
- Still has some rural character, but close to Twin City area.
- Still have some freedom.
- The country feel, being able to walk along the road without a lot of traffic, access to lakes and rivers, and not far from larger cities, good neighbors.
- The elbow room.
- The feeling of open space and a little place that is not right on top of someone else.
- The lack of housing developments and the country feel.
- The open space, no traffic and clean environment.
- The openness, and still close to work and shopping.
- The peace and quiet.
- The quiet rural aspect.
- The rural atmosphere and sense of community.
- The rural land.
- The rural setting and experience.
- The rural setting.
- The rural, small town feel.
- The rural, unpopulated area.
- The ruralness of it, small town feel.
- The small town feel. The feeling I don't have to lock up my house like a prisoner.
- The small town peaceful living.
- The small town rural feeling without inspectors and others poking their noses into what I am doing and most people keeping the town clean and in good shape and are proud like me to call the area home.
- The space. The quiet.
- We enjoy the quiet and the ability to own a larger parcel of land.
- We enjoy the small town living, the open spaces.
- We have 3 acres. The room (privacy).
- We own 6+ acres. Modest homes. Room to plant and grow.
- Where I live, it's peaceful and quiet.

## **Location (65 Responses)**

- Close to cities. (2x)
- Location to Twin Cities. (2x)
- Away from the (big) cities but have good access to (state) roads.
- But not too far from work and retail stores.

# Appendix B

- But very close to Stillwater, Hudson, and New Richmond.
- Close proximity to a lot of options for entertainment and dining out.
- Close proximity to everything-New Richmond, Hudson, and Stillwater.
- Close proximity to metro.
- Close proximity to Stillwater and Twin Cities.
- Close to cities with a low cost rural setting.
- Close to entertainment.
- Close to highways and county roads where a commute to cities is still feasible.
- Close to larger cities, but still a country living with good open space plan like 4-10 acres per home.
- Close to major highways.
- Close to metro city.
- Close to Stillwater and the St. Croix.
- Close to the Twin Cities.
- Close to Twin Cities. Rural setting. Small town community.
- Close to village.
- Close to work and my home and friends.
- Closeness to Minneapolis/St. Paul.
- Closeness to Twin Cities. Scenery.
- Commutable to the Twin Cities yet open and rural.
- Convenience of being close to town and other major cities but having the privacy of what rural living gives you.
- Convenience to other cities.
- Convenience to the metro area, but small town feel.
- Convenient location to towns and cities nearby.
- Convenient location to where I do business and visit friends and relatives.
- Country living close to the city!
- Country living with open space but still very accessible to shopping and entertainment.
- Distance to/from Twin Cities.
- Good location.
- I am far enough out of town but close enough if I need to be in town.
- I like being away from the rustle and bustle of working in St. Paul, traffic, city lights, the view of our deck at sundown is priceless.
- I like it is within driving distance to work.
- It's close enough to the Twin Cities and we can be in the country/small town too.
- Its proximity to the Twin Cities.
- I've almost always lived here except when I was away for school. I bought a home here because the land is beautiful and peaceful yet close enough to the city to take advantage of shopping, etc.
- Living in the country but not too far from towns like New Richmond, Hudson and Stillwater.
- Location (close to Twin Cities), wonderful schools, "small town" feel, relatively safe.
- Location-country living, but close to larger metro area (employment, entertainment, shopping).
- My home is close to my work.
- My location and neighborhood.
- My location is nice.
- My scenic lot near Twin Cities.
- Proximity to cities.
- Proximity to other locations.
- Proximity to the Twin Cities and yet rural.
- Proximity to Twin Cities metro.
- Proximity to urban area yet it's a rural environment.
- Small community close to cultural and shopping areas.
- Small community close to large cities.
- Small town relaxed place. Proximity to Minneapolis, St. Paul, Stillwater while still being a quiet place.
- Small town. Close to the cities but far enough away. Feels like the woods.
- Small, central location.
- Small, quiet community away from the busyness of the cities.

# Appendix B

- Smaller town sense of community but great schools and resources available similar to suburban areas.
- Undeveloped and authentic character while still being close to urban area. Plenty of open countryside-open spaces-natural resources. These are our best assets we need to preserve and capitalize on.
- We are near the metro yet able to enjoy "country living."
- We enjoy the open space. Ease of access to larger towns (Hudson, WI or Stillwater, MN for example).
- We like living outside of town on 3.5 acres.
- We love our privacy and how close we still are to the Twin Cities.
- We've been here a very short time. So far we like it very much. Enjoy the rural feel of the area with closeness to conveniences of New Richmond and Somerset.

## Nature/St. Croix River (55 Responses)

- Beautiful (2x)
- Access to St. Croix River-rural aspect-natural, forested beauty.
- Agriculture. Rolling landscape. Wildlife. Lakes.
- Also, there's the stargazing ability I have, here, due to the fairly low, localized light pollution levels (you can see my article about this in the Feb. 2011 issue of WI Natural Resources magazine, if interested). Generally speaking, the sights, sounds, smells and "feel" of this rural land of which I am but a temporary caretaker...as are we all.
- And natural beauty of the St. Croix area.
- Beautiful landscape
- Being close to nature/St. Croix River.
- Clean air, clean water, beauty of area.
- Clean air, clean water, relaxing atmosphere.
- Clean air.
- Cycling, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, fishing, wildlife, quiet, scenery, little traffic.
- Fishing and hunting.
- Hunting.
- I like the small town, the country, the trees, the beauty, the little unique things, etc.
- I like the surrounding land and river/beauty.
- I love the wildlife and the beautiful starry sky at night.
- It is beautiful and quiet out here. We live right next to the farms and get to enjoy the planting and harvesting seasons as well as the livestock farms. Enjoy the quiet lakes and walks, biking on quiet country roads.
- It's nice and quiet. Beautiful views.
- Lots of green space.
- My privacy. Nice area. Beautiful surroundings.
- Natural beauty.
- Natural features (river area). Great people. Good schools.
- Natural resources, scenic.
- Natural setting.
- Natural surroundings, small community, long-standing citizens, St. Anne Catholic School, wonderful library and library system, near St. Croix River Valley, all the wildlife.
- Nature and wildlife in the country.
- Nature, beauty.
- Nature/Quiet.
- Near St. Croix River.
- Near to Rivers, Lakes and Wetlands. Diversity of wildlife.
- Public land and boat launches that offer everyone equal access to OUR natural resources.
- Rolling hills, open space, canoeing.
- Seeing wildlife, nature, the winding hills, watching seasons change.
- Small quiet area. Friendly and beautiful.
- The Apple River.
- The beautiful land, trees, river and many lakes.
- The beauty, the quiet, and the stars.
- The feeling of living in the country. The peace and quiet.
- The natural beauty of the area. The convenience to major metro area. The quality of life is very good.

# Appendix B

- The natural features-as natural features they should not be compromised in the name of business or "jobs."
- The nature and peacefulness.
- The opportunity that we've had to live within a 10 acre woodlot, that is continuous with the neighbors' woodlots, providing about 120+ acres of woodland habitat for a variety of interesting, resident and migratory wildlife.
- The openness of the land, the quiet and beauty of the natural surroundings, the clean and open appearance.
- The rural environment. Wildlife.
- The rural lifestyle. The beauty of the natural things grown. Animals. Quiet. No traffic.
- The rural quiet setting and the variety of birds.
- Trees, quiet, wildlife, rural character, reasonable taxes, open space, low traffic.
- Water, woods, trees, and views.
- We enjoy country living and have open spaces, seeing the animals all around.
- We like living in a natural and quiet setting. We moved here so we didn't have to live in a suburb in the cities.
- We like our location we have. Plenty of wildlife, including deer, wild Canadian goose sitting on her nest, many turkeys, black squirrels, unwanted bears and woodchucks. We have our own orchard, grapes, garden, hundreds of variety of flowers. We raise black walnuts, etc.
- We love the natural resources-hills, turkeys, deer, birds, etc. Places near us have horses.
- Woods and open space. Rivers and lakes.
- Woods and rural living.

## **Community/Neighbors (54 Responses)**

- Friendly people, open space. (2x)
- Low crime. (2x)
- People (2x)
- People are nice. (2x)
- Also, the fact that we can't see the neighboring houses from this location: "Elbow room, cried Daniel Boone!"
- And great people.
- Community
- Community involvement opportunities.
- Family
- Far enough away from neighbors. Large yard, privacy.
- Friendliness of people.
- Friendly atmosphere.
- Friendly neighbors.
- Friendly people.
- Friends
- Good and safe place to live.
- Good neighbors and quiet and room.
- Good, hardworking, honest people.
- great neighbors, friendly and welcoming people
- I can walk over to the neighbor's house to talk...but I can't see it!
- I can't see my neighbors (privacy).
- I have a long driveway.
- I have been here all my life, other than college. Our land was home steadied in 1868.
- I like space. Keep it a bedroom community.
- I liked it more when it was smaller. I like knowing everyone and being close to family.
- Independent lifestyle: low crime, quiet.
- Low crime, safe to raise a family. Small, low key.
- Low traffic levels. A sense of community.
- Low crime, safe to raise a family. Small, low key.
- My neighbors and no houses in my windows.
- Neighbors, good roads, good governance.
- Next to my friends and family.
- Nice advice. People.
- Open spaces with wildlife and no close neighbors.

# Appendix B

- People are friendly. Moved here last November to be closer to daughter. It is pretty. Peaceful and small town like.
- Personal association with the town and village.
- Quality of life.
- Safe, close-knit community, lots of family focuses.
- Safe, quiet place to live.
- Safety of small town-knowing lots of local people.
- Small community. Close to family.
- The development in which we live has created trails, river access, etc., which offer the amenities of rural while providing the community of neighbors.
- The friendly atmosphere of living in the country. The way the neighbors lend each other a hand in need or just being neighborly.
- The friendly people.
- The people that live here.
- The people.
- The potential for a great community with neighborly feel.
- The pristine and private environment. It's safe and uncluttered and natural. The type of residents it attracts care about the environment and the neighborhood.
- We are in a development where each land parcel is 3 acres. It's nice to have acreage but have neighbors that are still fairly close.
- We live in a neighborhood with preservation of open space-sufficient sized parcels to allow individual space, but neighbors-our access to services is good without them being intrusive.

## **Government /Town Board (13 Responses)**

- Being left alone by government constable and corrupt jurisdictions.
- Great public works staff.
- Great Town Board!
- Responsiveness of Town Board to citizen concerns.
- So far the local government hasn't tried to micro-manage our lives. Keep the area safe and the roads cleared and stay out of our lives.
- Space. Minimal government. No bike paths.
- The effectiveness of the Town Board to look after the interests of its residents.
- Watching all the small town politics.
- We have a very good fire department and EMT. Good garbage pickup. Good response from police sheriff department.
- We keep government out of our lives and pockets-too much government is a money maker for governments only by tax a few.
- Well maintained roads, good town board members, country living.

## **Schools (16 Responses)**

- Good schools. (2x)
- Great school system. (2x)
- Education
- Excellent school district.
- Good parks, schools.
- Good schools, peace and quiet in the country.
- School has programs for special needs children.
- Schools. Near good jobs. Small town.
- Schools. Small town. People.
- Schools. We know each other.
- Small school, close to Stillwater, rural landscape.
- Small schools (i.e. small school population).
- Somerset has been a good place to raise our family. The schools brought us here, and the sense of community has made us stay. The town has a low crime rate, provides parks for kids, and a rural feel that makes people feel free.

# Appendix B

- The schools are good but are independently managed (administration and school board). Otherwise nothing special.

## **Roads/Plowing (13 Responses)**

- Good roads. (2x)
- Awesome snow plowing.
- Dislike snowplow services.
- Driving in the country roads.
- Enthusiastic about Stillwater bridge opening. Wish there was an over pass with on/off ramps from 85th St. and 64. Also would like on/off ramps from County I and 64 to get traffic off 160th Ave.
- I think Town of Somerset does an awesome job on our roads. We live on till and always have it plowed. Sanded in timely fashion.
- No traffic jams.
- Please pave our road, 230th, as promised.
- Rapid snow removal-Great.
- We feel the quality of roads and snow plowing service, however, is poor at best.
- Well maintained roads and well plowed.
- When I first moved here 17 years ago we were the only house around. Since then large developments have moved in and the infrastructure roads, bridges, have not been upgraded in the township, more with less. If you want to see an example of a bad road drive down 160th Ave.

## **Taxes (8 Responses)**

- Low taxes. (2x)
- Dislike that our real estate taxes are way out of line-too high!
- Leave it just the way it is with some small growth and try to keep taxes lower.
- Low taxes, not micro management.
- Reasonable taxes, quality of life.
- Reasonable taxes.
- The lots were 3 acres and the taxes were not as high as other areas.

## **Miscellaneous (27 Responses)**

- Born and raised here. (2x)
- Freedom (2x)
- A place to unwind after work.
- Affordable homes.
- Cost of living.
- Don't. I will be moving after starting my business here in 1989 and being told I could work from my resident. I am moving as soon as the bridge goes in. Hopefully I can get what my place is worth.
- Fine.
- Freedom to shoot guns.
- Good service except for Internet.
- Good so far.
- Government stays out of my business.
- I understand the need for some regulation but on the other hand I feel property owners should have the freedom to do what they like with/on their own property-to a great extent.
- I would sell but can't get out of my house what I need to. Tired of living in this town.
- It's home. Born and raised.
- Land availability.
- Living is easy.
- Low cost of land.
- No association or HOA regulations.
- No low cost housing.
- OK
- On farm.

# Appendix B

- That development out where the water slides used to be is the ugliest thing I've ever seen. Please no developments in the town.
- The downtown needs help.
- We are getting crowded!
- We moved here because the city of Crystal, MN destroyed our neighborhood with low income crime: creating housing-while at the same time restricting our use of our property. Don't forget, we pay the bills.

## **Q31. What would you like the Town of Somerset to look like in 25 years? (424 Responses)**

### **Same/Similar to now (217 Responses)**

- Same (12x)
- The same. (11x)
- Same as it does now. (9x)
- Stay the same as it is now. (5x)
- Like it does now. (4x)
- Similar to what it is now. (4x)
- The same as it does today. (4x)
- About the same. (2x)
- As much as it does right now as possible. (2x)
- A balanced, planned multi-use development that still preserves the rural and open space character of the town.
- A friendly easy place to live in.
- A good mix so there still is growth-but country. If rules are created they need to be important enough to enforce and everyone follows them.
- A newer version of what it is now!
- About the same as it is now but with well planned development.
- About the same but I know it's not realistic.
- An attractive community, small town feel, great schools, safety, cleanliness.
- As close as possible to how it is now.
- As is but that is not likely with the bridge construction which is needed. Tasteful, rural surroundings.
- As it does now.
- As similar/close as possible to the way it is now and as is described above.
- Controlled growth-preservation of environmental and natural beauty of St. Croix Valley.
- Country living and some industrial business and commercial.
- Country living-little traffic-safe from high crime. Clean air and water.
- Don't change it.
- For the most part the same.
- Fresh air and open spaces.
- High quality bedroom community with mix of farms and public lands.
- Hopefully about the same.
- How it looks now.
- I do not want Somerset to look like Hudson. I appreciate the small town feel.
- I feel I made it clear. Don't pack us in like sardines. We moved out here for peace and quiet and open space.
- I hope it keeps the small town atmosphere.
- I like it fine the way it is.
- I like it the way it is now. I believe we need to preserve a much open space as possible.
- I suppose the same as it does today is not realistic.
- I would like the town to retain its small town, somewhat rural atmosphere and look.
- I would like to see it maintained and preserved. The river should be protected from commercial business to maintain its integrity.
- I would like to see it preserved so that hunting and fishing are just down the road and still have the wildlife in abundance like we do now.
- I would like to see the natural beauty to remain and to see walking/biking/running trails.
- Just like it does today!
- Just like today with more businesses to take the tax burden.

# Appendix B

- Keep it green.
- Keep it small.
- Keep small town feeling.
- Keep the farms and woods, wetlands, and rural character.
- Keep the small town feel, but expand on the outskirts.
- Like it does now but it won't happen. People will come no matter what and the new bridge will accelerate it.
- Like it is now with quality homes in empty lots. Also a lot more taxes.
- Like now. Cleaner.
- Low density. Country feel. Relaxed. This is an unrealistic expectation.
- Maintain an urban environment.
- Maintain country feel. Lots of green space. Bike/walk trails. Mixture of agriculture and residential.
- Maintain its rural feel, a retreat from urban/suburban cities nearby.
- Maintain the large lots and allow development along major highway intersections or near the village only for service industries or light business development. All mfg. should remain only in a restricted, zoned industrial park.
- Maintain the rural character of the town, yet, be very business friendly.
- Maintain traditional standards and rural attitude.
- Maintaining open spaces and control development. Maintain the small town living standards.
- More open spaces with more of the natural features restored-more prairies, etc. A village that shows a serious effort to avoid the development pressure that will come with the bridge. Let's stay rural and beautiful.
- Much as it is now with limitations on quarry operations.
- Much like it is now with controlled, slow, steady growth (mostly residential, small amount of business).
- Much the same as now.
- Much the same-new housing in planned 2-5 parcels with preservation of trees, rolling terrain, open spaces and recreational access.
- Nice home town feel.
- No change. (2x)
- No major industry. A place that preserved the rural landscape.
- Not much different from now.
- Not much different. Maybe a few more restaurants and small businesses. Not too much growth or over development of large housing tracks.
- Not much different. Maybe a few more restaurants and small businesses. Not too much growth or over development of large housing tracks.
- Not much different-some parks, trails for recreation, small community farms but still beautiful and full of nature.
- Not much different-some parks, trails for recreation, small community farms but still beautiful and full of nature.
- Not much more than it is now.
- Not overpopulated, rural atmosphere.
- Not too different from today.
- Not too large.
- Only [??] more populated, more services/retail, rural character maintained.
- Open and rural.
- Open space- clean highways and roadsides. No litter.
- Peaceful, tranquil, friendly community.
- Preserve small town feel, but get some retail businesses.
- Preserve small town feel, but get some retail businesses.
- Pretty much the same but with a little more housing and business (maybe 25% more centered on the Hwy 64 corridor).
- Pretty much the same but with a little more housing and business (maybe 25% more centered on the Hwy 64 corridor).
- Pretty much the same with more clean industry in industrial parks.
- Pretty much the same with more clean industry in industrial parks.
- Pretty much the same.
- Pretty much the same. Very little change.
- Pretty much the same-country.
- Protect our rural character. Not over-developed. More affordable-property taxes are a burden.

# Appendix B

- Protect our rural character. Not over-developed. More affordable-property taxes are a burden.
- Quiet, rural and safe neighborhoods. An island of large lots surrounded (I assume) by "smart growth" neighborhoods. This will raise the property values of the town.
- Recognizable-I hope it can remain looking as it does now.
- Relatively the same-increase the lot sizes to 5 acres minimum to reduce cluster housing.
- Relatively the same-increase the lot sizes to 5 acres minimum to reduce cluster housing.
- Retain small town atmosphere with "controlled" developed housing, industry and business planning.
- Retain small town atmosphere with "controlled" developed housing, industry and business planning.
- Rural countryside.
- Rural landscapes connected to residential and recreation by multi-use trails paved and unpaved for pedestrians, bicycles, motor and horse. Trails could be seasonal use.
- Rural landscapes connected to residential and recreation by multi-use trails paved and unpaved for pedestrians, bicycles, motor and horse. Trails could be seasonal use.
- Rural settings-more light industry. More parks.
- Rural settings-more light industry. More parks.
- Rural with controlled housing with a plan.
- Rural with controlled housing with a plan.
- Rural with little change.
- Rural with little change.
- Rural, low density-3-5 acre minimum lots, no large subdivisions (50 lot), quality people, homes, schools, limited services-hair care, health, mental services locally.
- Rural, low density-3-5 acre minimum lots, no large subdivisions (50 lot), quality people, homes, schools, limited services-hair care, health, mental services locally.
- Rural, natural, quiet.
- Rural, without big town house developments.
- Rural, without big town house developments.
- Same as it does today. We don't need to resemble the Town of Hudson with disappearing farms, small lots and traffic.
- Same as it is now-be unique not Hudson or Woodbury.
- Same as now but more public access areas for hunting, fishing and recreation.
- Same as now but more public access areas for hunting, fishing and recreation.
- Same as today, not a suburban housing development.
- Same small town feel with perhaps a few additional opportunities (business for retail or employment).
- Same small town feel with perhaps a few additional opportunities (business for retail or employment).
- Same way it is now. But I would like your bus route changed so my kids who live 3 miles from Somerset school don't have to get bused cross country to New Richmond. Who comes up with this?
- Same. I do not want growth. I like small town.
- Similar
- Similar as present; single family homes with parks and bike/walking paths.
- Similar as present; single family homes with parks and bike/walking paths.
- Similar as these days with growth and layout, with the added average percentage of new people yearly.
- Similar as these days with growth and layout, with the added average percentage of new people yearly.
- Similar country feel, mix of farming, some commercial and industry, but by far mostly residential with larger lots. (No "cookie-cutter" developments). Freedom to walk, ride bicycles.
- Similar country feel, mix of farming, some commercial and industry, but by far mostly residential with larger lots. (No "cookie-cutter" developments). Freedom to walk, ride bicycles.
- Similar rural setting-not a Woodbury, MN. More access to St. Croix River by public.
- Similar to existing character with businesses and higher density housing clustered near the village to make it a more viable destination.
- Similar to existing character with businesses and higher density housing clustered near the village to make it a more viable destination.
- Similar to how it is now, but with more economic opportunities for people. It would be great to have some more trails along the St. Croix River.

## Appendix B

- Similar to how it is now, but with more economic opportunities for people. It would be great to have some more trails along the St. Croix River.
- Similar to how it is now. Not a Woodbury.
- Similar to now with some development.
- Similar to now-no business development.
- Similar to present.
- Similar to the current state with continued small town feel.
- Similar to today-single family residential; large lot size minimums. Controlled and tasteful development for both business and residential. Don't want mecca of chain stores and franchise retail.
- Similar to today-single family residential; large lot size minimums. Controlled and tasteful development for both business and residential. Don't want mecca of chain stores and franchise retail.
- Similar to what currently is. Reasonable home development that makes sense but doesn't make it look like a city. Logical economic or business development that fits the area.
- Similar to what currently is. Reasonable home development that makes sense but doesn't make it look like a city. Logical economic or business development that fits the area.
- Similar to what it looks like now. A mix of residential and farming with a little more business developments.
- Similar to what it looks like now. A mix of residential and farming with a little more business developments.
- Similar to what we see today. Farmland, single homes in the country and people that smile and say hello to you.
- Similar to what we see today. Farmland, single homes in the country and people that smile and say hello to you.
- Similar, but with a few more stores.
- Similar, but with a few more stores.
- Small town rural living.
- Smaller back to home town not the big city.
- Some change is always good, but we hope things don't change too much.
- Some growth but being over crowded.
- Space. Privacy.
- Stay mostly rural.
- Stay small and rural.
- Stay the same!
- Still a little country. A place to escape from the city.
- Still a quaint but efficient village.
- Still be a great place to live without neighbors right on top of each other.
- Still lots of green space. I love living in the country.
- Still promoting agriculture.
- Still rural setting.
- Still rural with some growth.
- Still very rural.
- The beautiful landscape we have today-rolling hills, woods, farms, grasslands, wetlands, lakes, rivers. A community celebrating its natural resources. New housing clustered to preserve larger tracks.
- The same but get rid of the "clubs" and tubing. Somerset has a bad reputation.
- The same, just older. Like me.
- The town needs to try to keep its current rural feel and keep large business to the areas closest to the village. Home businesses should not be discouraged.
- The way it looks now. I know that's unrealistic but at least retain its rural atmosphere.
- To be kept as much as it is today (no modernization).
- To keep it a rural area. To have the people clean up their places and get rid of some junk and junk cars on their places or build nice privacy fences.
- Um...bedroom community like it is now.
- Unchanged
- Very concerned about open space for all.
- Very much like it is now.
- We'd like it to look similar to today, but in 25 years we'll be dead, so perhaps our feelings about it don't matter so much.

# Appendix B

## Development/Change (154 Responses)

- 10% population increase.
- 5 acre lots.
- A better organized and thriving community that offers residents amenities so they don't have to go to other towns. Also, a revived and thriving main street. We have none.
- A few more rural parks and walking trails.
- A friendlier town area, more family-type businesses.
- A little larger with some medium size retail and nice housing developments.
- A little more developed but keep its small town status.
- A little more shopping options would be great!
- A mess if controlled planning does not occur now.
- A much larger population that people will be proud to live in and visit with great restaurants, business entertainment and shopping. If we can keep gang's out, good people will come and spend money. Public safety will be very important and police and fire. Community involvement.
- A nice looking place to visit. Light industry should be moved back, out of sight of highways. Less billboards, more "Vermont style" looks with regards to "eye sores." Plant more trees along desolate read ways. Bring back a north woods feel.
- A nice, clean inviting downtown, not rundown like now.
- A quaint, clean downtown area, packs of open space, welcoming community like Stillwater or Red Wing or Hudson.
- A rural recreation area where everyone can use the St. Croix River sanding at a fair fee not like Twin Springs-what a lake.
- A village that is more visually attractive with businesses that care and change with the times. Beautify the school corridor!!! Hold down development of rental properties, clean-up of existing rentals! Hopefully, a more attractive town for attracting quality people.
- Additional housing near 4 lanes. Perhaps a bigger manufacturer in township with good paying jobs.
- Area with expanded trails for bicycling and pedestrian with open space.
- Back the way it was before all the new homes were built. But since that can't happen I'd like it to stay how it is.
- Beautiful parks, trails, some (nice) developments near the new bridge over the St. Croix. Better high end restaurants and shops (mall or other stores). I like bars, but the town still has the feel of too many of them and all about partying on the Apple River. We need to somehow clean it up and have better businesses in town. I have to go to Stillwater or New Richmond for most things.
- Better grocery store. Farmers market.
- Better internet, more commercial retail and restaurants. I hate driving to Hudson/Stillwater to buy essentials.
- Bigger
- Bigger downtown, less bars.
- Bike path along Hwy 35, newer homes, possibly offer a tax break to upgrade and repair older homes to keep property values up,
- Build it for the farmers and horse people. Build a riding trail system and allow people with 3-5 acres to keep horses. Possible stable horses. Raise chickens, goats, and sheep. We have always been a rural community farming based. Those now don't like that, don't need to be here.
- Businesses that are reliable (e.g. Groceries that are not near/already expired). Have a good restaurant or two to be on the map, but not too long.
- But at the same time I would like to be able to buy things like clothes, shoes and the items that a community needs to grow and survive without having to drive 20 miles or to pay twice the price for it.
- Cleaned up downtown.
- Cleaner and more organized. Too many junk houses/yards.
- Clean-void of junk in yards and businesses. More balanced business culture. Well planned residential areas with parks. Well planned industrial and commercial parks.
- Cluster development.
- Continue in the same path we are on and keep the ATV use restricted-we live here and don't need a bunch of crazy people circling our homes making noise. Go to a race track instead. My neighbors nearly died from ATV accidents.
- Develop Main Street area.
- Developed with buffers for recreational and farming areas.

## Appendix B

- Double in size but careful plan and zoning to maintain area.
- Enhance the Main Street to riffle. A trail. No industry.
- Expanded business and village. Need parks with recreational opportunities. Buildings updated.
- Farm land-open prairies-still peaceful.
- Fewer bars. No concerts. Make Somerset into a historical town bringing in families to visit to tube, canoe, kayak and hike. The Apple River should be used for families not partiers and reckless kids/adults. We have a lot of great land that could use for family campgrounds/parks not concerts. For Somerset to become a great place to visit and vacation not party, more parks and biking trails. Keep it small and quiet. Don't draw in low income, reckless people.
- Good highway system. Place to work and shop.
- Great schools with major economic development.
- Growth without looking suburban (not like Woodbury or Hudson).
- Highway 64/County I exit/entrance ramps. More technology and MFG. development along Hwy 64. More housing developments, but not a mish-mash; please have a development plan!
- I did not like seeing the changes I have already seen-new houses with lights on the house and garage, new street lights beginning of light pollution. So I must see less building, no change. I hate new speeding cars, none waving, etc.
- I know it's going to get much larger when the bridge is done. But I hope it's done with respect to current home and landowners.
- I would like to see both residential and industrial expand to make the local economy stronger, but would like our resources and habitat protected as much as possible.
- I would like to see farms stay farms and if there is housing it stays acreages and not lots. I would like to see more businesses so I'm not running to the city every weekend for things.
- I would love a YMCA-with a pool so families can join together. I would like some clothing/retail stores, not necessarily a Walmart or Target, but maybe a Walgreens, Payless Shoes, Jimmy Johns or Coffee Shop.
- I wouldn't mind seeing the real estate/property values increase. 1 good store would be great (in the village) to avoid travel. Otherwise, I don't want much change. We would like to know why we have so many dead trees.
- I'd like to see this area be more self-contained with appropriate shopping, industry, farming and homes.
- In 25 years I'll be 98 so maybe a paved driving lane for motorized wheelchairs and a clinic across the road from me. Actually, a nice family restaurant and reasonably priced starter homes for young adults would be nice.
- Industry is coming. Tearing up 35 to Osceola to make a fourth lane. Farmlands gone to make room for business and housing. Peace and quiet will not be peace and quiet anymore.
- Inviting clean businesses that pay well enough to work close to home.
- Large open space public areas. A number of off road trails paved for biking, walking, and roller blading. Local industry for jobs. Clustered development next to open spaces.
- Larger lot sizes, less clustered developments, maintenance/up keep of existing roads, potential for more small business opportunities.
- Larger proper size for new builders.
- Larger upscale residential lots. Limited commercial to include restaurants, theater, etc.
- Less bars and more family friendly restaurants and stores.
- Less houses, more land.
- Less rundown businesses and homes.
- Like New Richmond or Hudson.
- Lot size no less than 10 acres. No sustainable communities influenced by Minnesota's Metropolitan Council. Keep it rural.
- Many more businesses, additional school buildings on campus, reduced rental properties.
- Many open fields and undeveloped land.
- Many walking and bike trails, off road. Fast food restaurant.
- Maybe a few new businesses but not a lot more.
- Maybe even more bike or walking space.
- More access to rivers and parks.
- More business and less bars and downtown to look better.
- More business development, commercial.
- More business options along Hwy 35, same rural feel, limited government intervention, more parks/meeting pavilion.

# Appendix B

- More business to support tax base. More commercial business available. More trails, recreation.
- More business.
- More businesses and work opportunities.
- More businesses to shop and restaurants.
- More cluster housing. This allows for larger open spaces that residents can use rather than small yards.
- More commercial retail while maintaining a small town feel.
- More culturally and economically developed.
- More emphasis on bringing in businesses to grow the area responsibly.
- More establishments for eating-restaurants.
- More housing additions. More parks. More public access to River, less tubing.
- More land set aside for outdoor activities.
- More noise barriers along highway 64.
- More options for residents.
- More public areas. Bike paths.
- More recreation and parks.
- More recreation and shopping for residents. More dining options would be nice as well.
- More restriction on where certain housing can be located. Examples: group homes-high risk individuals, mentally unstable individuals.
- More retail and commercial. More jobs and places to eat.
- More retail, jobs and restaurants.
- More school buildings with a community center. There needs to be somewhere for kids to go.
- More services and opportunities to shop.
- More vibrant economically.
- New Richmond with more stores here.
- Nice homes, no trailer houses, trails, tubing.
- No apartments or clumpy houses/living units. Keep it nice.
- No development.
- No high density development. A lot of single family homes on at least 3-5 acre lots or larger.
- No more trailer houses /double wide/houses that look like junkyards in private businesses. There are enough low cost homes.
- No Walmart.
- Not cluttered and over developed.
- Not like the built up-commercial nature of Hudson.
- Not like the village.
- Not like Woodbury!
- Not over grown with all open spaces subdivided into 2 acre lots.
- Not overly platted out to look like a subdivision.
- Not over-populated.
- Not to look like a bunch of developments.
- Not too developed; agriculture still big role.
- Off-road bike/walking trails. Increased number of retail stores and restaurants.
- Osceola/New Richmond
- Osceola-cute downtown.
- Population of about 5,000.
- Preserve all tillable farmland by zoning restrictions. Allow residential building only on non-tillable poor soil in 2 acre parcels.
- Public water and sewer, wider town roads. The same feel I have now even though we know we are going to grow very soon.
- Quality-homes, people, families. Quaint.
- Recycling curbside at more options. Lower costs.
- Senior living one levels home-no town homes. All single family living-dredged boat ramp at Bass Lake.
- Slightly more population and greater school population (up to about 150 kids per grade). More business development and more retail resources (clinics, restaurants, pharmacy, some stores).
- Some small expansion and growth not a large town.

# Appendix B

- Somerset has great potential. In 25 years I would dream for Somerset to have top notch schools, a clean waterfront, a thriving downtown with balance,
- Spruce up Main Street. Bens and standing buildings s/3 rose.
- Still a small town feels with more jobs for people to work in the town they live in.
- Still open spaces, small lots, family farms and more working, horseback riding, picnic parks.
- Still places with pastoral peace. I have a 5 acre lot and I wouldn't want to live somewhere with much less. I like the idea of clustering though so all can share the open spaces.
- Still the small town atmosphere, but with more shopping/retail so things can be purchased without going to Stillwater.
- Subdivisions that have a neighborhood feel to them.
- Take a trip to St. Michael and Monticello, MN to see what this area will look like in 10 years after the bridge is built.
- Target and a few more businesses and homes but not a lot.
- The lack of apartment buildings as well as the lack of government assisted housing. Keeping crime low and preserving the quiet nature of our life.
- The same as now but with a few more restaurants, better road repair, and ATV routes.
- The same as now; perhaps some additional mixed market cluster housing. I would like to see more parks and picnic areas.
- The same but with more access to parks and the river.
- The same it does today, but maybe a few more homes.
- The same only more paved trails to enjoy the scenery.
- The same with more ATV routes to area lakes and wider roads for bicycle and vehicular safety.
- The same with more retail businesses close to Somerset and New Richmond. Easy access to highway.
- The same, but with more manufacturing and heavy commercial tax base for a higher in town employment rate.
- The same...limit development.
- The Town of Somerset will be like a hub for Stillwater and Hudson. Hopefully we will have some farming yet, rarely housing, bike trails, and ATV/UTV trails. Of course our water ways are very important also.
- Thoughtful design to balance multiple interests with a premium on protecting from sprawl-a premium on protecting the natural landscape.
- Trails for biking and walking.
- Very similar to now except with a few new businesses and a handful of new housing developments.
- Very similar. A small increase in single family homes on larger lots to boost home values would be nice.
- Walking/biking path. Continued rural, residential community.
- Walking/biking paths along Hwy 35. Keep lot size at 3+ acres and clustered.
- We need bike trails so our kids can safely get into town.
- We would like the Town of Somerset to look like a typical small town. The big difference is that we would like to see DSL cables available-not just Wi-Fi. We wouldn't mind seeing the town grow a bit in size as long as we are not a "tier" suburb and lose the quality of life available to us currently.
- Well planned development. Local government with all members making decisions, not just one.
- Well planned, but less regulated, low crime and more public services.
- Woodbury
- Would like to see a few more businesses.
- Would like to see more bike paths and better roads.
- Would like to see more parks. Public bench. More family recreation.

## **Plowing/Roads (23 Responses)**

- Better paved streets.
- Better plowing of roads.
- Better road plowing and upkeep. Quicker.
- Better road. Plowing attention.
- Better roads.
- Better roads. Plowing.
- Better snowplowing and clean up ditches.
- Get better road plowing. Fix roads. Clean ditches.

# Appendix B

- Have some decent roads and a place to bring refuge.
- Improve roads.
- Larger roads with white and yellow stripes. Some place safe to walk. Now the roads are so small with no shoulders, you take your life in your hands just getting the mail.
- Mostly rural with better roads.
- Mostly the same as today but better roads and streets.
- Much the same! Need some rural road upkeep though.
- Much the same. Better, wider roads.
- No dead end roads.
- Rural side roads are narrow, lack of shoulders and are dangerous to travel. Would like to see rural roads widened. There are no options (reasonable) for internet or entertainment.
- Similar but with wider, better roads.
- Some of the back roads up to par.
- Some wider roads in the country (dangerous).
- The same, with better roads, however.
- Unchanged but good roads. Off-road motorized trails.
- Wider country township roads with shoulders.

## **Government/Taxes (16 Responses)**

- Also some police patrolling the roads for speed-you can put all the 45mph signs up you want but if it is not enforced what good is it. Average speed on my 45mph road is 60mph. You take your life in your hands walking down 160th Ave.
- And a balanced budget that allows a feeling of generosity. I would hope that our government would be vigilant to bring in clean industry that lifts the level of living.
- Bigger tax base with more residents and utilities.. Let's get out of the Stone Age people.
- Come see Martin Fagnan property that I've been bitching about for 25 years and you will see how willing to uphold laws the board is. The existing board is not interested in maintaining the value of the township or they would have done something about this issue and the value of MY property. They can't do 1 property, how can they do a whole township.
- Every time someone gets on some type of board or commission they feel they must leave a spending legacy-just tend to the basics. Get your legacy by loving your God and your family-not because you were a spender.
- Better infrastructure: public transportation, public services without being a "Nanny State."
- Healthy tax base.
- Healthy, well-educated children who want to make Somerset a vital community.
- I won't be here. Your "property" taxes are too high. You also should have something in place to handle neighbors who have garbage all over their property.
- Less junk, better services like curbside recycling and faster snow plowing of my road.
- Let property owners and residents dictate change-the market NOT government should divide.
- Let the free market decide that, not an unelected planning commission.
- Lower taxes, simple living, and greater sense of community.
- Lower taxes.
- More services for its residents.
- Same with cheaper taxes.

## **Internet/Telecommunications/Utilities (11 Responses)**

- Better internet. (3x)
- Add something other than Somerset cable/phone. They stink!
- Better phone and internet connectivity, better cell reception, but keep lot sizes larger and maintain rural nature.
- Better internet and gas service
- Good internet options, minimal change (i.e. would hate to be like Hugo, MN in the past 25 years).
- Internet.
- Natural gas.
- Options for Internet. NW Com is the worst!
- Really fantastic internet service without a home phone!

# Appendix B

## Nature/Environment (9 Responses)

- Better use of Apple River.
- Clean
- Clean rivers and lakes. Lots of green.
- Clean, nice roads, parks, trails.
- Clean-lots of mature trees.
- I'm concerned about groundwater and surface water. I hope that 25 years from now the population density and number of businesses will be appropriate for providing an appropriate supply of clean, unpolluted water.
- It would be great if poor and marginal farm fields could be restored to native prairies, oak openings and/or woodlands in order to protect the groundwater (our well is high in nitrates, for example), improve wildlife habitat and provide more open space for people to experience and enjoy. Wetlands restoration is needed too, the frog and salamander populations have greatly decreased in the short time we've lived here. 15-23 years ago I had to watch for the wood-frogs, toads, and tree-frogs while mowing our small lawn. Now, we rarely encounter them anymore. Also, the neo-tropical bird populations (warblers, orioles, flycatchers, etc.) are continuing to diminish here as well.
- Keep farming land for food as much as possible. Help develop small plot for hunting and walking trails. Natural areas too for fishing like lake shores or rivers.
- To be clean.

## Miscellaneous (21 Responses)

- No opinion. (4x)
- (Homer Simpson)
- Doesn't matter. It'll be too crowded. We'll have to move farther from "The Cities."
- Don't know.
- Dumb question.
- Grow more of our own food including most of the schools.
- I think they should go after ATV and other recreational activities to bring in more [???
- Keep the riff-raff out of town.
- Low crime rate
- No comment.
- No opinion-will is dead-like to see our small farm as is.
- Not sure what is being asked here.
- Prosperous
- See enclosed separate sheet.
- We are near the top in the nation for expensive place to live! Really don't understand where that came from wages and benefits of cities don't come out, just working poor!
- We won't be living here in 25 years, so I have no opinion.
- Won't be here.
- You need to ask someone younger.

## **Q32. Fill the circles of the three most effective ways that the Town of Somerset could provide information regarding its services and programs to residents. Other: (Specify). (10 Responses)**

- Annual meeting. (2x)
- Postings (i.e. library) (2x)
- Blog
- Electronic
- Facebook
- Flyers at library, grocery, etc.
- School
- TV

# Appendix B

## **Q36. Employment Status: Other. (7 Responses)**

- Homemaker (4x)
- Disability
- SAHM
- Student

## **Q38. Place of Residence: Other. (1 Responses)**

- Own-Rent out land.

## **Q43. In what zip code do you live? (631 Responses)**

- 54025 (459x)
- 54017 (90x)
- 54082 (57x)
- 54020 (18x)
- 55003
- 55082
- 55105
- 55113
- 55126
- 55127
- 55920