

Comprehensive Plan: Summary

TOWN OF RIB FALLS

Marathon County Wisconsin

Plan Editions:

Land Use Plan: Town of Rib Falls - 1999

Comprehensive Land Use Plan: Town of Rib Falls - 2003

Comprehensive Plan: Town of Rib Falls - 2017

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Chapter One: Introduction

Three comprehensive planning efforts have taken place since 1996 to ensure that land use policies, official mapping, programs, and services are consistent with the Wisconsin Statutes.

- 1. <u>Land Use Plan: Town of Rib Falls 1999</u>. On March 14, 2000, the Town of Rib Falls adopted its first Comprehensive Land Use Plan in response to the Wisconsin Smart Growth legislative.
- 2. <u>Comprehensive Land Use Plan: Town of Rib Falls 2003</u>. In April 2003, the town updated the Land Use Plan (1999) as part of a countywide initiative.
- 3. <u>Comprehensive Plan: Town of Rib Falls 2017</u>. In previous plans, the emphasis was on land issues, this plan is more comprehensive in scope to include local housing, transportation, social, and health issues. Furthermore, the plan will identify and discuss strategies to maximize the role of partnerships with public and private stakeholders.

Purpose of Comprehensive Plan: The Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan law requires the town to have a comprehensive plan with nine prescribed elements to undertake certain activities such as zoning, land division, and official mapping. The town is required to update and revise the plan every 10 years.

Local Governance: The purpose of local government is to provide basic services to citizens and visitors within the community that support common social, health, community, and environmental concerns. The government of Rib Falls reflects a conservative view of local governance.

Vision: The town is a rural community that provides residents, businesses, and visitors a safe and healthy environment in support of individual and regional opportunities to prosper.

Mission. The Town of Rib Falls serves our community by:

- Coordinating initiatives that protect the safety and value of individuals and property.
- Developing programs and facilities that protect our natural and cultural resources.
- Supporting economic opportunities on working lands (mining, agriculture, and timber).
- Maintaining a safe and affordable road and bridge system.
- Developing and conserving recreational and natural resources.
- Developing effective service collaborations with local partners.

Guiding Principles of Planning:

- Support and protect vulnerable individuals.
- Respect and protect local control governance.
- Respect individual property rights and self-determination.
- Respect for the diversity of our citizen's backgrounds, opinions, and perspectives.
- Balance residential and industrial/commercial activities.
- Respect the local knowledge of the land and its capacities.
- Define goals and activities that minimize community conflicts.
- Protect property values.
- Develop guidelines and criteria to respond to various scales and intensities of use

Chapter Two: Town History

1. Settlement Along the Big Rib River: Lumber and Water-powered Mills

John and Ernestina Baesemann along with seven children arrived in the Town of Rib Falls on June 16, 1866. The Town of Rib Falls was organized as a separate town in the spring of 1877 with the election of town officers. John Baesemann was elected the first chairman.

- 2. Transition from Lumber to Agriculture
- 3. The Blending of Agriculture and Commuting Community

Today with a population of approximately 1,126 residents, the Town of Rib Falls is experiencing another transition in the population and land use. Specifically, the town is experiencing a slow conversion of agricultural land to other uses. There is still a rural landscape dominated by cropland and woodland, but increasingly the people that live within the town are professionals and service providers commuting to nearby urban centers for employment.

Chapter Three: Public Participation Planning

Since 1998 the Town of Rib Falls' planning commission has served the town board to develop and implement the town's comprehensive planning activities. The role of the planning commission is to provide recommendations to the town board that support the town's Comprehensive Plan.

Process and Strategies: Per Wisconsin State Statute 66.1001(4)(a), the Town of Rib Falls adopted procedures to foster public participation, including open discussion and public meetings for which notice was provided, in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan.

Community Surveys: In March 2015, the community survey was sent to all residents in the town, as well as to non-residents that had land holdings in the town. In June 2015 with forty-three percent (43%) of the surveys returned, the results were compiled and presented to the community at the town's Annual Meeting in April 2017. See Appendix C for a summary of survey results.

Informational Meetings: On April 10, 2017, the Town of Rib Falls hosted an informational meeting for town residents and neighboring community officials. After the informational meeting, edits were made to the comprehensive plan and final recommendations were forwarded to the town board for action.

Public Hearing: April 11, 2017. Per Wisconsin state statute 66.1001 (4), the Town of Rib Falls held a public hearing at which time the proposed ordinance and support resolution was discussed.

Chapter Four: Demographics and Housing

Population: Over the last 50+ years, the population has steadily increased to 1,126 people. The estimated population for Rib Falls in 2040 will approximately 1,283 people.

Age Distribution of Rib Falls Residents. Nearly 25% of the people are of school age.

Educational Characteristics

Income and Employment Characteristics

Housing Characteristics

Housing Age

Special Housing: Senior and Subsidized Housing and Migrant Worker Housing.

Issues and Considerations

- 1. The number of retired, elderly residents is increasing.
- 2. The population of school age children continues to decline.
- 3. The workforce is becoming less connected to farming, timber production, and nonmetallic mining activities.
- 4. Aging housing stock leads to conditions of abandoned or dilapidated residential and agricultural buildings.

Goals: The town will support policies and programs that

- 1. Provide a diversity of housing options that reflect a range of household income levels and special needs.
- 2. Reflect a consistency with local road capacities and land use patterns.

- 1. Promote a variety of safe and affordable housing options.
- 2. Preserve and protect the town's rural landscape and environmentally sensitive lands.
- 3. Promote low density residential land use development in areas of the town
- 4. Promote high density residential and commercial land use development in areas available to public sanitary, stormwater management controls, and public water systems.
- 5. Promote special housing types such as elderly and multi-family that require public services near the nearby villages to provide access to health care, shopping, and social services.
- 6. Preserve rural character by development standards consistent with historical patterns of transportation, housing, and economic well-being.

Chapter Five: Public Safety and Community Services

The welfare and protection of the public is a common mission of many public safety organizations within Marathon County such as:

Sheriff's Office: The Marathon County Sheriff's Office consists of five different divisions: Administration, Communications, Corrections, Investigations, and Patrol.

Emergency Services: Emergency services in Marathon County consist of a very large framework of Police Departments, Fire Departments, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The town is part of a multi-jurisdictional fire department that includes the Town of Hamburg, and the Villages of Marathon City and Edgar.

The Future of Emergency Communications: Next generation 911 dispatches will be equipped to receive text messages, images, and videos. In 2018, Marathon County will implement a Uniform Addressing system to provide greater confidence in response capabilities.

Marathon County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2011-2016: The Marathon County Emergency Management department is responsible to manage preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation of natural and man-made hazards.

Issues and Considerations:

- 1. Emergency response services are provided to the town through several partnerships.
- 2. Communications and dispatches of emergency calls are moving to Next Generation 911 technology to ensure that cellular technology can be processed.
- 3. Marathon County will implement the Uniform Addressing System in the town in 2018.
- 4. The town will monitor county and state efforts to increase broadband services.

Goal: Strengthen partnerships with local emergency response and law enforcement service providers to ensure safety and response capabilities.

- 1. Work with Emergency Management to ensure that emergency preparedness is adequate.
- Support Marathon County to develop and implement the uniform address.
- 3. Review and assess the fire and emergency response contracted services to ensure efficiency and adequacy of response.
- 4. Evaluate and support road system plans that ensure quick response times for emergency services throughout the town. (County Road S is a point of emphasis)
- 5. Educate residents and business of emergency response details within the town.

Chapter Six: Recreation and Community Resources

This chapter describes the recreation amenities and cultural resources in Rib Falls. The recreation amenities consist primarily of a single county park within the town boundaries. However, Rib Falls' residents do have access to a regional park and forest unit system.

PARKS AND RECREATIONAL AREAS

The Rib Falls Park was established in 1982 by Marathon County when the land was secured from the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company. In resolutions adopted by Marathon County and the Town of Rib Falls, the park area was utilized as a sand and gravel source by Marathon County's Highway Department, as well as County Materials Corporation. Because of the nonmetallic mining activities, all operational costs associated with mining activities were charged a 5% reclamation fee for future park reclamation and development.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES: Community resources include infrastructure or essential physical structures and facilities required for a community to operate and thrive. These structures and facilities include the transportation network or roads, rail, and other means of moving people and goods, as well as the public and private utility systems for water and sewer, power, and telecommunications, among others.

Issues and Considerations

- 1. The town will coordinate with Marathon County to determine the status of the reclamation fund for the Rib Falls Park. The town will also work with the county to support the reclamation and recreational facility plans for the park.
- 2. In the citizen survey, the costs of garbage services were identified as a possible improvement. The town will assess the feasibility and interest of residents to contracted garbage and recycling services through a single contracted provider.

Goals:

- 1. The town will coordinate with Marathon County and state agencies to provide public recreational opportunities for the community.
- 2. The town will assess community service needs and availability relative to communication, sanitation, and utilities to ensure adequate capacity and cost effectiveness.

- 1. Develop Rib Falls Park into a community based recreational facility.
- 2. Develop a recreational plan that identifies and assesses the development of public and private trail system that integrates roadways, reclaimed mining areas, old rail beds, and easements.
- 3. Develop strategies to enhance and expand biking and hiking trails within the community.
- 4. Study the possibility to consolidate garbage and recycling services.
- 5. Support improved communication facilities and capabilities within the town.

Chapter Seven: Transportation and Infrastructure

Road and Bridge Network: The Town of Rib Falls transportation system is comprised of 59.74 miles of State, County and town roads, 35 miles of unpaved roads and 9.2 miles of paved roads. The town has two bridges over twenty (20) feet long. The town is responsible for the inventory and assessment of bridges less than twenty (20) feet in length.

The Marathon County Highway Department is responsible for operation, maintenance, and improvements to the County road system. Based upon the Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) program, the town develops a five-year road maintenance program for all major capital road improvements. The Town of Rib Falls has provisions to review the needs for road upgrades and/or maintenance protocol for activities such as large scale trucking and farming operations.

Issues and Considerations:

- 1. The local road and bridge system is constructed and maintained through a partnership of local, state, and federal resources where the town will need to collaborate to secure financial resources.
- Commuting traffic miles is increasing in the town due to changing occupational and population demographic trends. The town will need to balance road surfacing and signage policies between the need of agriculture, trucking, and commuter traffic.
- 3. The town must develop traffic policy relative to equipment weight and size to protect these investments and to recognize the condition of this infrastructure.
- 4. The town will continue to collaborate with Marathon County Highway Department to assess the condition and safety of local roads and bridges. he town will develop a Capital Improvement Plan that identifies and prioritizes road and bridge maintenance.
- 5. The scale and seasonal distribution of manure by livestock producers are negatively impacting the surface and shoulder condition of local roads. The town will support farmers who chose to distribute liquid manures through dragline hose technology.

Goal: The town will collaborate with county and state departments to provide a safe and cost effective transportation infrastructure.

- 1. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that identifies, prioritizes, and budgets for local road and bridge re-construction and maintenance projects.
- 2. Develop policy and procedures to support use of town roadway rights-of-way for manure distribution lines.
- 3. Evaluate the safety and administrative responsibilities of the town relative to All Terrain Vehicles.
- 4. Develop a road maintenance agreement between the Village of Marathon City and County Materials Corporation to address long maintenance issues along 13th Lane.
- 5. Complete official mapping on the State Highway 29 and County Trunk S interchange site.

Chapter Eight: Land Use

Rib Falls' farmers utilize almost 13,300 total acres of land (60%) for commercial crop production. There are about 6,255 acres (30%) of wooded lands. Existing commercial or industrial uses are located on small parcels of land located throughout the town, usually functioning as a home occupation activity. The town has no industrial park; however, the town recognizes the potential of the Villages of Marathon City and Edgar to extend their boundary and business activities the Hwy 29 interchange.

Zoning: The town first adopted zoning in 1984. In April 1994, the town adopted county administered County Zoning. The town supports zoning for the following purposes:

- 1. Minimize land use conflicts
- 2. Support and protect the value of public and private property.
- Support and protect natural resources.
- 4. Support and protect the regional importance of agriculture, mining, and woodland activities.
- 5. Balance residential and intensive industrial/commercial activities.

Nonmetallic Mining Areas: Rib Falls has 15 active nonmetallic mines and 7 reclaimed sites. Active and reclaimed mining sites impact groundwater flow, base river flow, and recreational opportunities.

Shoreland Zoning: Wisconsin law mandates that counties adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates land use in shoreland/wetland and floodplain areas.

Land Division Regulations: Marathon County land division regulations apply in all unincorporated areas. Where a town has land division regulations that are more restrictive, the local regulations apply.

Issues and Considerations

- 1. Agricultural activities represent an important economic and cultural land use for the community. The Town of Rib Falls will support and encourage agricultural production and cropland protection through the Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan.
- 2. Promote policies and programs that foster small and moderate scaled farm enterprises to prosper in the community economically, socially, and culturally.
- 3. To control housing and residential development, the town will seek land division and development policies that limit densities, cropland fragmentation and conflicts of land use.
- 4. The town will support activities that promote farmland and woodland conservation.
- 5. The town will promote zoning of different land uses to protect the value of existing assets.
- 6. Develop strategies to assess impact fees for land uses requesting high levels of service.
- 7. Develop criteria to minimize use conflicts due to scale of normally acceptable practices or uses.

Goal: The town will support policies and programs to maintain and enhance land use consistent with rural, working lands (farmland, woodland, and nonmemtallic mining) at a scale consistency with infrastructure capacity, local economies, and minimal land use conflicts.

- 1. Minimize scattered rural development and preserve rural character.
- Preserve active farming.
- 3. Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth.

Chapter Nine: Natural Resources

Natural resources, the soil, water, and air, are critical to the Town of Rib Falls. These resources are highly valued for the beauty, wildlife, economic, and recreational opportunities.

Several plans are prepared by Marathon County to address protection and management of natural resources. The plans are used to guide opportunities to develop partnerships.

Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) – 2010. The LWRM plan identifies and quantifies specific resources concerns facing the town. The county identifies the following long-term program outcomes for the natural resource management efforts:

- Community and economic development plans are balanced and appropriately scaled.
- Resident and business land use conflicts from neighboring land uses are minimized.
- Public infrastructure investments (road, bridge, and park facilities) are protected.
- Rural character of the landscape and land use is preserved.
- Soil and water resources are protected as productive and recreational assets.
- Rib Falls agriculture and woodlot producers are economically strong.

Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan – 2013. This plan represents a strategic and program guide for the preservation of rural character by minimizing the conversion of agricultural and woodland.

Soil Resources (Erosion and Health) Depth to Bedrock

Issues and Considerations:

- 1. Soil erosion rates have been increasing over the past 10 years. The town will promote programs and practices that reduce soil erosion rates below tolerable rates.
- 2. The town will promote programs to promote and improve the soil health of the community's soil.
- 3. The Rib River corridor is an intensely used non-metallic area of the town. The town will promote regulations to ensure ground and surface waters are protected from these activities, as well as reclaim lands to aesthetic, stable landscapes.

Goal: The town will support policies and programs to minimize soil erosion and the impacts of nonmetallic mining to the environment

- 1. Reduce soil erosion rates to below 4.0 tons per acre per year
- 2. Protect and improve soil health.
- Ensure mine reclamation and reuse.
- 4. Preserve prime agricultural soils.
- 5. Preserve prime woodland soils.

Chapter Ten: Water Resources

Rib Falls' water resources are economically and ecologically important to the health and welfare of its citizens. These water resources provide drinking water from both surface and groundwater sources, important recreational benefits, and contribute to a diverse ecosystem.

Wetland

Floodplains

Groundwater and Susceptibility to Contaminants

Surface Water Quality: Nonpoint sources of pollution include soil erosion, animal waste runoff, pesticide runoff, and urban runoff that need to be controlled to meet state water quality goals.

Issues and Considerations

- 1. The Town of Rib Falls is in the Upper Wisconsin River TMDL which is impacted negatively by excessive amounts of phosphorus in the Rib River. The town will support efforts to manage land use activities to reduce soil sediment and agricultural runoff discharge to the river or its tributaries.
- 2. The town will promote and support the development of a Rib River overlay area that would be the focus of targeted efforts to implements conservation and water quality efforts to lower phosphorus.
- 3. The town will support programs that provide technical and financial incentives to landowners and farmers to improve local soil and water conservation practices.
- 4. While the quality of the groundwater in Marathon County is generally very good, contamination has occurred in some areas. The town concerned about non-point sources of pollution, including failing septic systems, soil erosion, manure runoff, nitrates and other chemicals in runoff. The town will support education and programs that support efforts to protect groundwater quality.

Goals: The town will support policies and programs that protect and enhance water resources and natural habitat areas.

- 1. Protect and enhance the quantity and quality of potable groundwater and potable surface water supplies.
- Reduce agricultural nonpoint runoff to surface water (soil sediment and nutrients).
- 3. Support and participate in water quality trading programs within rural and urban communities.

Chapter Eleven: Economic Activity and Development

AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY: Since the end of the lumber era (1930s), the Town of Rib Falls' economy has been supported by production of agricultural commodities. Specifically, the production of milk. At one time, Rib Falls was home to 138 dairy farms. Today only 12 working dairy farms produce a raw milk product. Although the number of farms is declining, the scale of dairy production has dramatically increased.

The other large contributor to the agri-business in the town is ginseng production. Marathon County is the largest producer of ginseng in the state producing over one million pounds of roots annually. Other significant agricultural commodities grown in the town include corn, hay, and soybeans.

WOODLAND AND FORESTRY ACTIVITY: The production of timber and pulp wood as a cash crop is still a valuable crop in Rib Falls. Through selective cutting and harvesting the available woodlands produce an income for the land owners.

INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY: The sand and gravel industries are located primarily along the Rib River. This industry provides the raw materials for road surfacing material, concrete batching activities, and many trucking jobs.

Employment by Occupation Employment Characteristics

Issues and Considerations

- 1. The Town of Rib Falls is an agricultural community and will remain that way for the foreseeable future if action is taken to protect and enhance its profitability. This trend of declining agriculture in the town will continue unless policies are initiated at all levels of public and private activities to increase the profitability and sustainability of small and moderate scaled farms. The town will support market-based programs to increase the profitability of farmers and woodland owners.
- 2. The economic impact to Rib Falls from mining of sand and gravel is significant through job creation, value-added commodity processing, and export marketing. The town will support efforts to support jobs and industrial based upon the mining industry and processing activities.

Goals: The town will support policies and programs that create employment and business activities that support working lands within the town.

- 1. Develop a review policy for nonmetallic mining activities to assure that the scale and intensity of the operations are consistent with the safety, capacities, and maintenance of town infrastructure.
- 2. Develop a review and permit process for large scale livestock and agricultural operations to assure that local infrastructure concerns are addressed.
- 3. Review opportunities with other communities and governmental sectors to connect agricultural producers and processors.
- 4. Develop land division specifications to minimize conflicts of agriculture and rural residences, cropland fragmentation, and high density housing.
- Review opportunities to promote farm economic diversification in areas of woodland production, energy production, biosolids processing, and recreational access that increase the profitability of "working land".

Chapter Twelve: Intergovernmental Cooperation

This chapter describes existing activities that the Town of Rib Falls uses to coordinate with other various units of government including municipalities, school districts, the State of Wisconsin and the federal government. This chapter will also summarize the major challenges and issues regarding intergovernmental cooperation and identify mechanisms for cooperation and coordination. The Town of Rib Falls is governed by Wisconsin State Statutes and collaborates with the following governmental programs to support local services:

- 1. Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2016
- 2. Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan 2010
- 3. Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan 2013
- 4. Marathon County Highway and Transportation Plan
- 5. Marathon County General Zoning and Ordinance 2016.
- 6. Floodplain and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance
- 7. Marathon County Land Division Ordinance 2017
- 8. Marathon County Nonmetallic Mining Ordinance
- 9. Marathon County Park and Recreational Plan
- 10. Managed Forest Law
- 11. Marathon County Uniform Addressing Ordinance
- 12. Marathon County Groundwater Protection Guide 2000
- 13. Marathon County Animal Waste and Nutrient Management Ordinance
- 14. Marathon County Livestock Siting Ordinance 2006
- 15. WI Department of Transportation Highway 29 Corridor Preservation Plan

INTERGOVERNMENTAL TOOLS AND REGULATIONS

Annexation

Extraterritorial Zoning (ETZ)

Extraterritorial Subdivision Review

Intergovernmental Agreements

Emergency Response

E-911 Dispatch Service

Law Enforcement

Issues and Considerations

- 1. Regionalization. The Town of Rib Falls has increasingly engaged the neighboring towns and villages in planning efforts to share resources and problem solving across a wide array of topics including economic development, land use, emergency services, transportation, and environmental protection. Town efforts should focus on working together to attract development projects and jobs to locations that best benefit the region and best utilize public resources.
- 2. Regulatory Structure. There seems to be some frustration over the various levels of government involved in regulation of natural resources and the potential for the rules to change, which creates confusion and complicates enforcement. While the town has virtually no control over changes in State or Federal regulations or procedures, as the most direct local unit of government, the town can play an important role in communicating changes and making people aware of current regulations and permitting procedures.
- **3. Transportation Coordination.** The County maintains a highway network throughout the entire County. The town needs to maintain communication with the Highway Department to provide the best service and to coordinate engineering services and state funds toward local infrastructure projects. In addition, coordination needs to be maintained related to bicycle routes and trails.
- **4. Zoning Coordination.** The town has adopted County zoning. In addition, the County administers shoreland throughout the entire town. The town will need to assure that zoning rules are communicated consistently to landowners, as well as the purposes of zoning are realized.

Goal: The town will develop strong partnerships with county, state, and federal agencies and departments to effectively and efficiently leverage human and financial resources, program services, and community facilities to the town.

- 1. Encourage proactive conflict resolution.
- 2. Promote cost-effective public services.
- 3. Provide coordination of regional development and planning activities.
- 4. Encourage participation in all levels of government.
- 5. Develop a project to access the Marathon County Environmental Impact Fund for recreational facilities at the Rib Falls Park.
- 6. Develop a land division ordinance, development plans, and agreements with the Village of Marathon City, Town of Stettin, and Town of Cassel to provide for an orderly and reasonable transition of the State Highway 107 and State Highway 29 interchange relative to land use, landowner transition, and develop of property and tax base.

Chapter Thirteen: Strategic Plan and Implementation

The plan provides a blueprint for growth and development to maintain rural and community character. To be effective, this plan should be actively used as a tool to guide decisions concerning:

- 1. The development and implementation of programs and support systems.
- 2. The implementation of specific goals and actions as identified in this plan.
- 3. The implementation and enforcement of regulatory ordinances identified in this plan.
- 4. The establishment of a planning process for periodic review and updates to this plan.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

Zoning Ordinance:

Land Division Ordinance:

Plan Adoption, Monitoring, and Amendments

Plan Amendments

Plan Evaluation

Plan Updates

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

The Strategic Action Plan will identify the overarching goals, objectives and actions to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

Each Comprehensive Plan chapter concluded with the town's understanding of issues and trends, followed by a listing of goals. The Plan compiles the goal and objectives from each chapter and includes a list of action steps.

The action steps proposed in this plan are recommended to help the town move forward toward its mission and vison. Some action steps are continuations of things the town currently does.

Chapter 4: Demographics and Housing

Chapter 5: Public Safety and Community Services

Chapter 6: Recreation and Community Resources

Chapter 7: Transportation and Infrastructure

Chapter 8: Land Use

Chapter 9: Natural Resources

Chapter 11: Economic Activity and Development

Chapter 12: Intergovernmental Cooperation

