# 2016



## **Ashland County Comprehensive Plan**

## Volume 2: Vision & Goals

10-year review of the 2006 Ashland County Comprehensive Plan, looking forward to 2036







SHLAND COUNTY LAND & WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT



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ASHLAND COUNTY LAND & WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

## Introduction

This volume of the Ashland County Comprehensive Plan update is structured a little differently than the 2006 'Policy Document'. We moved the 'Issues and Opportunities' and "Plan Based Forecasts' sections to the background volume. This volume is future directed. It contains a new Vision Statement, Goals,

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Vision

Community Vision

Objectives and Action Steps for each element and a Future Conditions Section. This is the volume that should guide the county during the next 10 to 20 years. In discussions of the planning committee it was recognized that a much stronger effort is needed (than after the 2006 plan) to assure implementation of these plans. Part of the strategy for that is the prioritization of the objectives and the action steps. A second strategy is the assignment of lead departments for action steps and the identification of resources needed to implement action steps. The committee stressed the need for regular reviews of these steps to keep them fresh in the minds of County Board Supervisors.

In the 2006 Policy Document of the Comprehensive Plan it introduces the concept of a vision statement and directs the reader to a box containing that statement. However, the box was not in the text, and we've been unable to find a county vision statement from that document. So the committee developed its own vision statement that is provided below.

#### Vision

We envision a County that recognizes the diversity of rural, forested, community and village life. By joining together, we become stronger and more efficient in meeting our citizen's needs. We are challenged to maintain and improve land, air and water quality in an increasingly complex world.

To meet these challenges, the County will...

- Have robust economic development throughout the county to remain competitive in attracting new businesses and supporting existing businesses
- Have a thriving local economy that attracts and retains young people, state-of-the-art infrastructure, the most up-to-date telecommunications, well-qualified workforce with a high-quality of life, and ample job opportunities providing a living wage
- Maintain a high-quality natural resource base and preserve our air, land and water at the highest level for future generations
- Continue its position as a steward to county, state, and federal forest lands, fish, and wildlife through collaboration with different agencies and organizations
- Have quality and affordable housing opportunities for all residents
- Continue to provide both natural resource opportunities and cultural resource opportunities that attracts people to the county, and continues to recognize the importance of tourism in the County
- Continue to support the main economic drivers of the county including manufacturing, forestry, tourism, agriculture, education and health services
- Support childhood and life-long learning through strong k-12, two-year and four-year higher educational institutions



## Introduction

As used in this plan, a goal is a long-term target that may or may not be achieved, but describes a desired outcome. Objectives are slightly different than goals. Objectives for the most part are measurable and therefore achievable. When an objective is achieved, one can see or sense a difference – something has changed. Action steps are identified here as specific things that should be done to achieve these goals and objectives.

To come up with the following goals, objectives and action steps, the Comprehensive Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan Committee first went through the 2006 goals and objectives and then considered them in light of the data contained in the updated Background sections. Many of the goals in this section are similar to if not identical to the 2006 goals. The objectives

#### **Chapter Contents**

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- Agriculture Goal
- Natural Resource Goal
- Culture Resource Goal
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- Land Use Goal
- Community Involvement Goal
- Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Goal

however include revised and new items, and the action steps contain mostly new items. Part of this recognizes that many of the action steps identified in 2006 have been completed, or are no longer relevant. Recognizing that the objectives represented a wide range of urgency or timeliness, the committee color coded them to get a sense of priority. Then, realizing that we were developing more action steps than the county has the capacity to implement we undertook an exercise to prioritize those steps. The priorities for the top action steps will be indicated in the Action Step tables. The hope is that as top priority steps are completed that other lower priority steps can be undertaken.

#### Key - Objectives

Green –  $\blacklozenge$ Objectives are currently being met to an adequate degree. Yellow –  $\diamondsuit$ Objectives are currently being met, but could use additional support/work. Red –  $\blacklozenge$ Objectives are currently not being met.

#### **Key – Action Steps**

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Priority Action Steps as identified by members of the Comprehensive Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan Committee and county staff engaged in the plan review process. The number of asterisks illustrate the number of individuals who felt the action step in question represented a top priority for the county to address given limited staff time, resources and money.

Timeline (when will the Action Steps be completed?) S – Short term, 1-2 years M – Medium term, 3-5 years L – Long term, 5-10 years Ongoing

Empty boxes in the Action Step tables indicate a medium- to long-term timeline, and content will be determined at a future date.



## Housing

Goal: Provide for a variety of housing choices that promote affordable and quality housing for all County residents.

#### **Objectives:**

- a. Promote and encourage the maintenance and improvement of the County's housing stock. Reduce blight.
- **b.** Increase the range of affordable housing types and prices in order to meet the needs of residents.
- c. Increase cooperation among both public and private agencies to address the provision of affordable housing for residents.
- **d.** Reduce the costs of owning or renting housing, particularly through energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- e. Increase availability of quality housing options for low income, elderly, the homeless and the physically and psychologically impaired.
- **f.** Increase dissemination of information about housing assistance opportunities including energy assistance, energy efficiency upgrade assistance, rental assistance and other programs for home owners, renters and landlords.

	Action Steps: Housing							
Priority	Action Step	Who is	When?	Resources	<b>Evaluation?</b>			
		<b>Responsible?</b>		Needed?				
*	Convene a county-wide meeting, in a central county location, of stakeholders to gather input and to develop a plan to address these objectives including a database of all county housing stock	County government, Housing Authority	S	Staff time, mailing/email list, meeting site, grant/charge for food for a daylong meeting	Attendance and quality of the plan			
	Develop and implement plans to share the information regarding resources, funds, incentives, etc. gathered with county citizens through a variety of media	Housing Authority	М	Staff time to develop social media, websites, factsheets, etc.	Google analytics could be used for web-based information			
	Develop a list/database of all county housing related services/resources/stakeholders including funding opportunities e.g. PACE and incentives e.g. Focus on Energy	Housing Authority, City Planning, Land Records, Tribe, Towns	S	Staff time, an intern would help	Usefulness of database			



Increase homeowner, landlord	County	S	Staff	Evaluation
and renter education through	convener of		time/intern	forms for
fact sheets, courses and	countywide			participants
workshops of alternative	meeting			
housing types e.g. coop	(and/or			
housing, model homes	NWRPC,			
	NWCSA)			

## **Transportation**

**Goal:** Provide a transportation network that will ensure the year-round safe and efficient movement of individuals, goods and needs of common businesses, while respecting the quality of life and character of the community.

#### **Objectives**:

- a. Address the issue of heavy loads on county and town roads with objectives of supporting farms, logging, and other businesses while also protecting the roadways
- **b.** Acknowledge and anticipate potential impacts from climate change on the county's roadways during future maintenance and repairs
- c. Support increased state and local road improvement funding at all levels of government
- **d.** Continue developing and improving public and specialized transportation services to meet the needs of a varied population (i.e. elderly, disabled, youth, etc.)
- e. Support the creation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) for such a time when it will be politically feasible
- f. Increase multi-jurisdictional cooperation in the upkeep of roads in the County
- g. Maintain the natural beauty of the County's roadways and scenic views
- h. Enhance the County's transportation network for motorized/non-motorized recreational use



	Action	n Steps: Transpo	rtation		
Priority	Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When?	Resources Needed?	Evaluation?
*	Plan and budget for the repair and maintenance of existing County roads	Highway Committee	Ongoing	\$ for resources needed	Written plan
*	Coordinate a collaboration to identify freight routes for investment and grant opportunities	Highway Commissioner and Highway Committee to identify stakeholders	М		
	Anticipate likely impacts of climate change from increased severity of weather events on county infrastructure and develop a plan	Highway Department	L		
	Site industry based on transportation availability in order to maximize good roads and minimize stress through increased collaboration between county departments	Director of the County Zoning Department and the Highway Department	М		
	Study the feasibility of and support for designating Highway 13 as a state scenic highway	Highway Committee	L		A study on potential benefits
	Review guidelines to manage trees within the right-of-ways for State and County Highways	Highway Committee	М		
mean plan	Create a citizen committee as a means of soliciting input when planning for motorized/non- motorized trails	ATC citizen group, Forestry and Recreation Committee	М		
	Develop an agriculture transportation plan that facilitates access to fields and supplies during all times of the year	Highway Department, Town Boards, Agricultural stakeholders, Land and Water Conservation Department	М		



## **Utilities and Community Facilities**

**Goal:** Strategically assess, prioritize, maintain and improve vital utilities and community facilities to provide the infrastructure for a vibrant economy and a high quality of life.

#### **Objectives:**

- **a.** Form collaborative efforts to increase the availability of high quality cell phone service and high speed internet broadband service to all residents and businesses in the county.
- b. Transition county infrastructure toward energy independence via renewable sources of energy. Promote, implement and model energy independence to citizens and businesses in the county.
- c. Investigate facilities and housing/daycare services available in the county for the elderly, disabled and young children. Develop plans to address gaps or inadequacies.
- **d.** Work with the federal, state and tribal governments to maintain and create recreational infrastructure including trails and campgrounds. Investigate opportunities for providing additional camp experiences for county youth.
- e. Assess the condition of Privately Owned Water Treatment (POWT) systems throughout the county.
- **f.** Develop and implement communication strategies for educating county citizens of opportunities and services available to them regarding utilities and community facilities.

	Action Steps: Utilities and Community Facilities						
Priority	Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When?	Resources Needed?	Evaluation?		
*	Identify key stakeholders and convene a meeting of broadband providers as well as advocate to legislature about continued need of broadband to areas currently lacking access	County Board	S	Funding	Invite Century Link Representative to send updates		
*	County will be a leader in actively promoting renewable sources of energy and efficiency by actively seeking out opportunities for renovations and new construction to be energy positive	Finance and Economic Development Committee to hold seminar regarding what area businesses/county currently doing related to renewable energy	S				



Identify stakeholders and hold an annual meeting to develop recommendations and track progress on monitoring and maintaining Privately-Owned Water Treatment Systems (POWTS). Develop a plan for bringing all Privately- Owned Water Treatment Systems POWTS into proper operation and develop a system whereby POWTS can be recertified or renewed on a regular basis.	Zoning Department, Health and Human Services, Townships	М	
Create/implement plans to develop services for elderly, disabled and young children	Health and Human Services	М	
Develop potential sites, as well as tracking status of current campgrounds and trails, for youth/adult camping experiences.	Forestry & Recreation Committee, municipalities affected, UW- Extension	М	
Plan and Implement energy efficiency and renewable energy for county facilities	County Administrator and UW-Extension	S	
Identify key stakeholders and convene a meeting of cellular providers as well as convene a taskforce to investigate cell coverage gaps and obstacles to filling these gaps	Chairman of the Board, UW- Extension	М	
Achieve the 25 by 2025 renewable energy goal that was passed by County resolution	UW-Extension and County Administrator	М	



## Agriculture

**Goal:** Preserve the County's agricultural land base to protect the County's aesthetics, rural character, and agricultural heritage for future generations.

#### **Objectives:**

- **a.** Prepare ordinances to protect land, water and air quality in advance of potential increase of industrial agriculture in the county. (e.g. manure storage, CAFOs, etc.)
- **b.** Encourage and support economically sustainable small farms and farmers, including the next generation of farmers.
- c. Supply: Promote local food production and value-added agricultural products to increase the availability of fresh, healthy and culturally relevant food for all residents and decrease the distance food travels from farm to fork.
- **d.** Demand: Promote increased purchases of local and regionally produced food.
- e. Support existing, and the creation of new, agriculture-related infrastructure in the county such as a food processing facility.
- **f**. Support the operation of existing farms and encourage the creation of new farms
- g. Enhance the preservation and protection of agriculturally productive soils
- h. Minimize water pollution and erosion from farmland in Ashland County
- i. Increase the number of acres of agricultural land that is voluntarily protected through farmland conservation programs

	Action Steps: Agriculture							
Priority	Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When?	Resources Needed?	Evaluation?			
**	Increase funding to the Land and Water Conservation Department and UW- Extension to adequately meet the needs of agricultural resources in the county, & hire a full-time County Agricultural Agent	Executive Committee, UW System, UW- Extension, County Finance and	S	\$ Full time og	Hiring, and increased funding Successful			
	Engage and support local organizations working towards building agriculture- related infrastructure	Economic Development Committee, Ag and Extension Committee	M	Full-time ag agent	engagement of local organizations			
	Explore ways of creating and supporting new and existing community gardens, farmers	Finance and Economic Development	М					



markets, produce stands and other county-based local food projects Reinvigorate local food group	Committee and UW- Extension Finance and	М	
(see economic development objectives)	Economic Development Committee	IVI	
Adopt a manure storage ordinance to manage the creation of new manure storage facilities, proper closure of unused or unsafe manure storage structures, and implement agricultural performance standards of NR 151	Land Conservation Committee	S	Improved inventory of agriculture operations in the county
Adopt a livestock citing ordinance for new or expanded livestock facilities of 500 or more animal units, which may include operational controls to ensure protection of surface water, ground water, and human health and safety	Land Conservation Committee	М	Improved inventory of agriculture operations in the county
Amend the Ashland County zoning ordinance to classify farmland preservation zoning within designated Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs)	Land Conservation Committee and Zoning Committee	М	



## **Natural Resources**

Goal: Preserve and protect the County's natural resource base from potential degradation and contamination.

#### **Objectives**:

- a. Increase collaboration with local or regional organizations and with the Bad River Tribal Government and other tribal entities to increase the protection of natural resources
- **b.** Encourage the preservation and protection of environmental corridors for wildlife, water quality values, and habitat protection
- c. Encourage the sustainable use and development of natural resources
- **d.** Use education to protect natural resources and to encourage development that is supportive of the natural resource goal. (example: low density lake development)
- e. Encourage the sustainable harvest of forest products (see economic development)

	Action Steps: Natural Resources					
Priority	Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When?	Resources Needed?	Evaluation?	
	Encourage a fully staffed Land Conservation Committee and Forestry Committee as well as increase funding of the Land and Water Conservation Department and the Forestry Department	Land Conservation Committee, Forestry Committee, State	Ongoing	Petition the State		
	Identify stakeholders and issues and host an annual meeting	Land Conservation Committee, Forestry Committee	S	Meeting room, funding for meals		
	Research and develop agricultural ordinances that help reduce the risk of water quality degradation and loss of wildlife habitat	Land Conservation Committee and UW- Extension Ag Agent	М			



## **Cultural Resources**

Goal: Promote and preserve the County's cultural resource base.

**Objectives:** 

- a. Collaborate with the historical societies in the county and the Bad River Tribal Historic **Preservation Officer**
- **b.** Increase the awareness of and protection of local historic and archaeological resources
- c. Increase the number of historic sites in the County which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and/or on the State Register of Historic Places
- **d.** Support County libraries and the Northern Waters Library Service

	Action Steps: Cultural Resources						
Priority	Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When?	Resources Needed?	Evaluation?		
	Increase marketing and education regarding county's historic resources		М				
	Continue support of county historic preservation organizations and county libraries	County Board	Ongoing	\$			
	Education and training for volunteers		М				
	Strengthen ties and outreach between local historic preservation organizations		М				



## **Economic Development**

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Goal: Develop and maintain a strong economy that supports residents and the community with services, opportunities, and amenities consistent with the County's rural character.
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#### **Objectives:**

- **a.** Increase initiatives for early childhood development in the County recognizing that research shows that this contributes to a successful workforce.
- **b.** Open up the County budgeting process to engage all members of the County Board.
- c. Improve county infrastructure including broadband, cell service, roads, railroads, energy, housing and county facilities in order to make the county a more attractive and desirable community in which to live and start or grow a business.
- **d.** Develop and implement a plan for retaining and attracting young people to live and work in the county.
- e. Plug the leaks reduce the amount of local financial and human resources that leave the county, especially related to food and energy. (this refers to the graphic depiction of resources leaving the county that is on the last page of the economic development background document)
- **f.** Encourage economic development throughout the county to increase the tax base.
- g. Promote and leverage the county's assets (natural resources, human resources, social and political resources) toward development of a more robust county economy.
- h. Provide education to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy that leads the county toward energy independence, and assist in finding incentives for citizens and businesses to employ efficiency and renewables.
- i. Promote greater utilization of county forestry products and value added production including traditional products like pulp and lumber but also things like maple syrup and seasonal decorations.
- **j.** Provide support and incentives for agricultural producers to start and/or maintain sustainable family farms.
- **k.** Provide maintenance and expansion of the tourism industry in the county.
- I. Ensure there is adequate support for entrepreneurs as well as existing businesses so they can thrive in the county and provide stable living wage jobs.
- m. Help build the local demand for locally produced food and forest products.



	Action Ste	ps: Economic D	evelopmen	ıt	
Priority	Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When?	Resources Needed?	Evaluation?
***	Hire a grant writer to assist in achieving the above objectives	Executive Committee, Finance and Economic Development Committee, County Administrator	S	Staff time, \$ for position, designated fund for matching grants	Hiring of grant writer
*	Create partnerships with local municipal governments and economic development agencies to assist in economic development efforts	Finance and Economic Development Committee, AADC, NWRPC, Mellen, Glidden, Butternut, Chambers and EDC's	Ongoing	UW- Extension staff time	Establishment of successful collaborations
*	Schedule an annual County budget retreat	Finance and Economic Development Committee	S	UW- Extension staff time	
	Convene a county-wide task force to research opportunities and develop a plan for achieving the objectives listed above	Finance and Economic Development Committee	S	UW- Extension staff time	
	Establish a standing committee of the County Board charged with promoting community and economic development (underfunded mandates, ease of business, early childhood development)	Finance and Economic Development Committee	М		



## **Intergovernmental Cooperation**

Goal: Achieve a high level of cooperation and consistency among local units of government.

#### **Objectives:**

- a. Serve as a model of cooperation and collaboration and use this to engage with entities in the county that typically do not collaborate with the county.
- **b.** Maintain and strengthen existing cooperative initiatives and programs.

	Action Steps:	Intergovernmen	tal Cooper	ation	
Priority	Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When?	Resources Needed?	Evaluation?
***	Develop a database of existing government and quasi- government entities that serve the county citizens. Database to include key contacts, contact information, regular meetings, area of focus, current issues, resources available and opportunities for collaboration	UW-Extension	S	Grant writing, Intern	Production and maintenance of database
	Identify areas for intergovernmental cooperation that would leverage the efforts of all affected entities, such as water quality, drug abuse, and economic development	County Administrator, Committees, and Department Heads	Ongoing	Staff time	
	Review the information gathered and work to reduce duplication, fill in gaps and find opportunities for increased efficiency and improved service	UW-Extension	М		
	Hold a community workshop (World Café style) meeting that contains all municipalities in the county with the intent of meeting objective 1 and 2	Comprehensive Plan Review Committee	L	Funding for food/beverage, event space, round tables, Intern	



## Land Use

Goal: Support a land pattern that facilitates the growth of cities, villages and hamlets and the protection of forests and agricultural lands.

#### **Objectives:**

- **a.** Minimize the negative effects of incompatible land uses
- **b.** Minimize conflicts between forest and non-forest related uses as well as between agriculture and non-agriculture related uses
- c. Maintain the integrity and viability of forestry and forestry-related practices
- **d.** Maintain a well-balanced mix of land uses within the County including commercial and industrial
- e. Support the Land and Water Conservation Plan
- f. Ensure sound land use planning utilizing current technology such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- g. Publish an up-to-date plat book on a continuous basis

Action Steps: Land Use						
Priority	Action Step	Who is	When?	Resources	<b>Evaluation</b> ?	
		<b>Responsible?</b>		Needed		
*	Continue to amend the	Land and	Ongoing	Staff	Annual	
	County's zoning	Zoning			Review	
	regulations, as needed, to	Committee,				
	ensure they implement	Zoning				
	this plan and the	Administrator				
	comprehensive plans of					
	the 13 towns					
	Maintaining up-to-date	Forestry	Ongoing	Land		
	mapping of forestry-	Committee,		Information		
	related practices in the	County		Committee		
	county to minimize future	Forester,				
	land use conflicts					
	Continue to amend the	Land and	Ongoing			
	County's land division	Zoning				
	regulations, as needed, to	Committee,				
	ensure they implement	Zoning				
	this plan and the	Administrator				
	comprehensive plans of					
	the 13 towns					



## **Community Involvement**

**Goal:** Increase knowledge and involvement of citizens in the operations of county government to reflect demographic diversity of area residents

#### **Objectives:**

- a. Encourage adults of all ages to attend and participate in county governance.
- **b.** Engage students from area schools, WITC and Northland College.

	Action Steps: Community Involvement						
Priority	Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When?	Resources Needed?	Evaluation?		
**	Identify and implement steps to involve school age youth in county government, such as representation on committees, advisory groups or the County Board	Ag and Extension Committee, Youth Officer	S	Staff time, \$ (travel reimbursements, etc.)	Youth participation		
*	The County will conduct business in such a way that will maximize opportunities for different groups to participate in County governance through flexible meeting times, dates and locations	County Board, Executive Committee, County Administrator	Ongoing	Staff time	Increase in attendance at County meetings, and an increase in people running for County Office		
	Develop and implement a plan for greater use of web- based tools and social media for communicating governmental information with citizens, particularly younger age groups	Designate responsibility to keep web- based information accurate and up-to-date	М				



## **Plan Monitoring and Evaluation**

Goal: Keep this comprehensive plan relevant, useable, and timely.

#### **Objectives:**

• a. Keep the plan up-to-date, relevant and as a guiding/driving document in county operations

	Action Steps: Plan Monitoring and Evaluation					
Priority	Action Step	Who is Responsible?	When?	Resources Needed?	Evaluation?	
*	Responsibility of committee chairs, department heads and County Administrator to prepare a collaborative report and conduct a yearly meeting to evaluate and update the comprehensive plan	Committee chairs, Dept. heads, and County Administrator	Ongoing	Staff time	Completion of a report	
*	Conduct a more comprehensive review five years after adoption to evaluate changes and progress in lieu of the annual County Board Retreat	County Board, Department heads	М	Committee and staff time	Process summary	
	Monitor the key indicators of growth (housing starts, average age and per capita income of county residents, business start- ups, business and farm closures, assessed value, sales tax, school attendance, etc.) on a yearly basis to be presented at the annual meeting on plan evaluation and progress	County Administrator, County Treasurer, Health and Human Services	Ongoing		Ensure compatible uses to allow county residents to age in place, adequate child care	
	Ensure continuity in plan monitoring and implementation through education and transition in committee and workforce	Executive Committee, UW- Extension	Ongoing			



## Introduction

The following pages show the County's planned future transportation and future land use maps.

Considering the conditions identified in the 'Plan

#### **Chapter Contents**

- Introduction
- Future Transportation
- Future Land Use

Based Projections' section of the background document the Future Land Use map for the county does not have many substandive changes from the 2006 map. We did attempt to standardize the elements in the legend so they are consistent across municipalities. This map also identifies public lands in the county because they comprise such a significant portion of the county and they are generally not open to development. A future transportation plan is included, though the only foreseen changes are a couple new trail additions.

## **Future Transportation**

Ashland County, Wisconsin





## **Future Land Use**

Ashland County, Wisconsin









Wisconsin Coastal Management Program This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. Ashland County is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.

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