

Introduction

The Bayfield County Comprehensive Plan is a broad, policy-driven document that looks at key elements which impact residents, visitors, the environment, and natural resources. This document was created to allow future readers to see Bayfield County as a place that connects the past with the present. Bayfield County is a place that is steeped in an abundance of natural beauty and engaging people. A sense of place and peace.

While the support, promotion, and review of each element of the Bayfield County Comprehensive Plan is critical to capturing a “return on investment”, sustainability is one element that must be tied to each of the others. Sustainability is a cornerstone element that is interwoven throughout this document. For Bayfield County to preserve its natural beauty and create new jobs based upon the promotion of alternative energy sources, sustainability practices must be supported by elected officials in the decades to come.

Bayfield County supports activities that promote sustainable practices in the protection, preservation, development, enhancement, and maintenance of its natural and built environments, while supporting the pursuit of activities that enhance the community and economic vitality without compromising the needs of future generations.

The Comprehensive Planning Process

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law was enacted in 1999 (66.1001, Wis. Stats.) and created a framework for long-range comprehensive planning in the State of Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law does not mandate how a local community should grow, but it requires public participation at the local level in deciding a vision for the future. The uniqueness of individual comprehensive plans reflects a community-specific and locally driven planning process.

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law defines a Comprehensive Plan as a local government's guide to a community's physical, social, and economic development.

As mandated by the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, a total of nine planning elements are to be addressed in a Comprehensive Plan:

1. Issues and Opportunities
2. Housing
3. Transportation
4. Utilities and Community Facilities
5. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
6. Economic Development
7. Intergovernmental Cooperation
8. Land Use
9. Implementation

Consistency Requirement

According to the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, beginning January 1, 2010, if a local government unit enacts or amends an official mapping, land division, or zoning ordinance, the enactment or amendment ordinance must be consistent with that community's Comprehensive Plan. "Consistent with" means furthers or does not contradict the objectives, goals, and policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan.

Plan Update

A Comprehensive Plan must be updated no less than once every 10 years. However, the law does not define update. A thorough update of background information and a public participatory process to evaluate the plan's vision, goals, objectives, policies, and programs is recommended. At minimum, the planning process must follow the process outlined in s.66.1001(4), with a public hearing, resolution, and ordinance.

What is the Bayfield County Comprehensive Plan?

In July 2022, Bayfield County began the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. In addition to the nine elements required as part of the Comprehensive Plan, a Hazard Mitigation Element was developed and included as part of this update.

Elements addressed in the Bayfield County Comprehensive Plan:

1. Issues and Opportunities
2. Housing
3. Transportation
4. Utilities and Community Facilities
5. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
6. Economic Development
7. Intergovernmental Cooperation
8. Hazard Mitigation
9. Land Use
10. Implementation

Key Reasons to Having a Plan

- Provides a roadmap for planning over the course of the next decade and beyond.
- Provides a framework for development and redevelopment.
- Outlines comprehensive issues related to housing, transportation, utilities and community facilities, agricultural, natural, and cultural resources, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, land use, and hazard mitigation.

How the Plan was Updated

- Monthly Comprehensive Planning Committee meetings
- Plan Element Workgroups reviewed and updated Element vision, goals, objectives, policies, and actions. Workgroups were established for the following Plan Elements:
 - Housing
 - Transportation
 - Utilities and Community Facilities
 - Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
 - Economic Development
 - Intergovernmental Cooperation
 - Hazard Mitigation
 - Land Use
- Periodic updates and presentations to Town and County Boards
- Public Open Houses on the proposed draft plan
- Public Hearing and County Board adoption

How to Use this Plan

- All development and redevelopment within the County should be reviewed against the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Town Boards and the County Board should review this document and the policies within at the beginning of each year or sooner to determine if an amendment is necessary.

How to Amend this Plan

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law established the procedures for adoption or amendment of the Comprehensive Plan. Bayfield County must comply with the following five steps before its Comprehensive Plan becomes effective.

- Public Participation Plan (66.1001)(4)(a) - The adoption of a written Public Participation Plan designed to foster public participation in the development or amendment of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Resolution Recommending Adoption (66.1001)(4)(b) - The body (i.e., planning committee) that is authorized to prepare or amend a Comprehensive Plan may recommend the adoption or amendment of a Comprehensive Plan only by adopting a resolution by a majority vote of the entire commission.
- Draft Plan Review (66.1001)(4)(b) - Prior to formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, one copy of the draft plan is submitted for review and comment to the entities listed in Chapter 66.100(4)(b), including all government units within and adjacent to Bayfield County, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, and public libraries serving the area.

- Public Hearing (66.1001)(4)(d) - Before an ordinance can be enacted adopting the Comprehensive Plan, Bayfield County must hold at least one public hearing at which the proposed ordinance is discussed. A class 1 notice of the hearing must be published at least 30 days prior to the hearing.
- Adoption of the Plan by Ordinance (66.1001)(4)(c) - In order for the Comprehensive Plan to take effect, Bayfield County must enact an ordinance that adopts or amends the plan. The ordinance must be passed by a majority vote of the County Board.
- Notice of Plan Adoption/Amendment (66.1001)(4)(b) - The adopted Comprehensive Plan is sent to all governmental units within and adjacent to Bayfield County, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, and public libraries serving the area. Notice of adoption of the Plan is sent to the Wisconsin Department of Administration. The Wisconsin Department of Administration requests a copy of the adoption ordinance with the notice.

Public Participation and Transparency

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law requires public participation at every stage of the comprehensive planning process, including:

- Adopting a public participation plan to provide a diverse range of opportunities for the public to help shape the community's comprehensive plan. The Public Participation Plan adopted by Bayfield County for this Plan update is found in Appendix A.
- Providing an opportunity to comment on the draft Comprehensive Plan.
- Holding at least one public hearing prior to adopting the Comprehensive Plan, announced by a Class 1 notice.

As part of this plan update, every effort was made to ensure that all stakeholders were given the opportunity to participate in the planning process. The strategy for outreach was to identify specific constituencies, apply a wide variety of methods to reach them, and ensure they were engaged.

Website

A project website was developed at the beginning of the planning process as a means of informing the public about the project. Meeting agendas and minutes, announcements, and links to helpful resources were posted on the website.

In the News

In addition to public meetings and webpages, this process also relied on print media as a way of informing residents about the Comprehensive Plan update. All public notifications, meeting updates, legal notices, and feature articles were published in various online and print news sources.

Steering Committee Meetings

The overall design and execution of the planning process relied heavily on monthly steering committee meetings. These meetings focused on the planning process, issues and opportunities, visioning, strategy, and existing and future land use mapping. This Plan emerged from the input and dedication of the steering committee members.

Community Open Houses

The Comprehensive Planning Committee hosted three Community Open Houses on the proposed draft Comprehensive Plan in September 2023. These meetings were held throughout the County and provided the public an opportunity to learn more about the Comprehensive Plan update process and to provide the Committee with input on the proposed Draft Comprehensive Plan.

- September 13, 2023 in the County Board Room
- September 20, 2023 at the Iron River Community Center
- September 27, 2023 at the Cable Community Center

Public Hearing

The Bayfield County Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed Draft Comprehensive Plan and Ordinance on November 14, 2023.