

TOWN OF EXCELSIOR
Sauk County, Wisconsin

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



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Town of Excelsior Board: May 8, 2024

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The Town of Excelsior (“Excelsior” and/or “Town”), located in north central Sauk County, is characterized by its small town atmosphere and a strong sense of community pride. The Town is rich in natural and recreational resources including prime farmland, forested bluffs, the Baraboo River and Narrow’s Creek. The natural setting, rural atmosphere and proximity to urban amenities in the nearby cities of Reedsburg and Baraboo encourages continued growth in the Town of Excelsior. Planning for the Town’s future is critical to retaining characteristics valued by the community and to ensure the Town’s continued success.

1.0 Purpose Of This Plan

The purpose of the Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan is to help guide local decision-making by:

- Recognizing and documenting the Town’s most important attributes;
- Acknowledging issues of concern to residents;
- Identifying areas appropriate for development and preservation;
- Establishing and assigning future land use districts based on desired land uses;
- Identifying needed transportation and utility provisions to serve existing and new development;
- Focusing attention on critical economic opportunities for local business and recreational development;
- Providing opportunities to preserve open space land for ecological and recreational purposes, and for community aesthetics.

The Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in accordance with Wis Stat § 66.1001 and the original drafting in 2006 was the culmination of 26 months of work on the part of a 24-member Comprehensive Planning Committee. Input from numerous other citizens of the Town and from knowledgeable people from throughout Sauk County was incorporated into the final Comprehensive Plan. This plan was then updated beginning in 2023 through a 9-month plan review and update with the Town Plan Commission. The Plan itself is comprised of nine primary elements, as noted below, however this Plan has rearranged some elements or portions thereof to allow for a greater level of analysis based on some of the more important issues in the Town. For example, Natural Resources and Agriculture have been separated into two individual sections, while Cultural Resources has been included with Utilities and Community Facilities.

For each of these redefined elements, broken into chapters, minimum requirements of the comprehensive planning legislation are met and in many cases exceeded. In this Plan, a description of each element is provided under the purpose statement of each chapter, along with a primary goal, objectives and identified policies. Each chapter is accompanied by a series of charts, tables and maps to illustrate both background information and the intent of the identified goals, objectives and policies.

In addition to the nine required elements, the comprehensive planning legislation also set forth 14 goals for communities to reach both throughout and at the completion of their planning processes. Although these goals are not required, this Plan and planning process has accomplished them.

The nine elements and 13 goals of the comprehensive plan are noted below:

Nine Elements

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

Thirteen Goals

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

During the original drafting of the plan in 2006, planning participants developed an overall vision of how the Town should look and feel in the future to guide the development of goals, objectives and policies. The input for the development of the Town's Vision was gathered through a 'Visioning Session', as well as through feedback from the Comprehensive Planning Committee. In addition to aiding with the development of the Plan's goals, objectives, and policies, the Vision is meant to assist the Town with the actual implementation of the Plan through the years. The Vision is primarily meant to serve as a grounding point for future decisions. It broadly and effectively addresses the needs, desires, and thoughts of residents and landowners in Excelsior. As evidence of the effectiveness of the vision, during the plan's revision process it was widely found to have served the citizens well in plan implementation and still reflected the needs and desires of the residents.

The highlight of the initial planning process was its reliance on extensive public participation and input, far exceeding the requirements of the comprehensive planning legislation. The legislation requires, at a minimum, one town-sponsored public hearing when the draft plan is ready for adoption. In contrast, the planning process focused heavily on public input to formulate a plan that best represented all interests in the Town. The process began with the appointment of a representative Comprehensive Planning Committee and continued with the administration of focus groups, a community-wide survey and vision session, an open house and numerous public meetings. For the comprehensive plan review, the Planning Commission notified all residents of the review and update, holding open meetings each month noting the specific chapters to be discussed. All updated material was available on the Town's website and a legally noticed public hearing for the final draft and approval.

1.1 Statement of Vision, Goals, Objectives and Policies

Each Chapter in this Comprehensive Plan includes a primary goal followed by objectives and policies, which provide future direction to the Town. Visions, goals, objectives and policies are defined as follows:

- A ***Vision*** is the expression of a community's overall desired future direction. The vision statement serves as the foundation for setting goals, objectives and policies.
- ***Goals*** are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the Town should approach preservation and development issues. These goals are based on key issues, opportunities and problems that affect the Town and are derived from the future Vision of a Town.
- ***Objectives*** suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of the goal. While achievement of an objective is not always easily measured, objectives are usually attainable through policies and specific implementation activities.
- ***Policies*** are rules, courses of action, or programs used to ensure Plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives of a Plan. Town decision-makers should use policies, including any housing density policy, on a regular basis. Success in achieving policies is usually measurable.

1.2 Planning History

Town of Excelsior Development Plan (1999)

The Town of Excelsior adopted its first Development Plan in April 1999, which assisted the Town in guiding the location of growth and future land uses. This document represented the primarily residential development areas around Lake Virginia and adjacent to the City of Reedsburg. Medium density development, with a five-acre lot-size minimum, was deemed acceptable in the rural areas. Development on Class I and II farmland was discouraged. In general, new development should conform to policies set by the Town Development Plan.

1.3 Comprehensive Planning Process Sauk County

As part of the State of Wisconsin's 1999-2000 biennial budget, Governor Thompson signed into law one of the State's most comprehensive pieces of land-use legislation. This legislation is intended to

provide local governmental units with the tools to create comprehensive plans, to promote more informed land-use decisions and to encourage state agencies to create more balanced land-use rules and policies. This legislation also includes a substantive definition of a comprehensive plan and provides an essential framework for local land-use decision-making. It also helps local officials determine the likely impacts of their decisions by ensuring that they consider all aspects of community life.

In the summer of 2002, the Sauk County Department of Planning & Zoning announced that it would apply for a 2003 Comprehensive Planning grant from the State of Wisconsin to facilitate planning processes for municipalities, enabling them to develop and adopt local Comprehensive Plans. As a result of this effort, 21 Sauk County municipalities passed resolutions indicating their desire to be co-applicants to the grant. Excelsior was one of these municipalities.

In the spring of 2003, Sauk County announced that the 21 municipalities were awarded a 2003 Comprehensive Planning grant in the amount of \$288,000. Of the total award, Excelsior's share was \$10,000. The provisions of the grant required the Town to match the grant award of \$10,000. In an effort to reduce this local match amount, Sauk County agreed to provide \$5,000 of in-kind mapping assistance, bringing the total Town match to not more than \$5,000.

Once the overall grant was awarded, towns in Sauk County could choose to contract with a private consultant or to use Sauk County as a consultant to aid them with the development of their Comprehensive Plans. Excelsior began its comprehensive planning process with Sauk County in the summer of 2006 and officially adopted the plan on March 25, 2009. The Comprehensive Plan emphasized the importance of maintaining the Town's rural, agricultural character and altered the density policy to 1 house per 35 acres, changing the majority of the Town's zoning to exclusive agriculture. In 2023 the plan was reviewed, and updated, but no major changes were made to the plan's goals, policies or the Town's density policy. The plan was officially amended and adopted on April 24, 2024.

1.4 Regional Context

Map 1-1 Regional Context shows the relationship of the Town of Excelsior to neighboring communities. The Town is located in north central Sauk County, a couple of miles east of the City of Reedsburg. It is also about 5 miles west of the City of Baraboo. The Town also includes the incorporated Village of Rock Springs.

1.5 Jurisdictional Boundaries

A result of the 2020 Federal Census population data required Sauk County to redistrict the county supervisory district boundaries to achieve new districts of equal population. As a result of this effort, the Town of Excelsior was assigned two supervisory districts. Supervisory District 6 and Supervisory District 21. *Map 1-3 Jurisdictional Map* depicts the exact boundaries of Supervisory Districts 6 and 21.

The Town of Excelsior is split into two school districts: Reedsburg and Baraboo. *Map 1-3 Jurisdictional Map* also depicts the locations of these boundaries. *Map 1-4 Emergency Services* depicts the boundaries for fire and ambulance services.

In terms of land use-related issues, the Town of Excelsior is regulated by the following Chapters of the Sauk County Code of Ordinances:

Administered by Sauk County Clerk

- Chapter 1 Supervisory District Plan

Administered by the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department

- Chapter 7 Zoning Ordinance
- Chapter 8 Shoreland Protection Ordinance
- Chapter 9 Floodplain Zoning Ordinance
- Chapter 10 County Parks
- Chapter 18 Rural Identification System
- Chapter 22 Land Division and Subdivision Regulations Ordinance
- Chapter 24 Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation
- Chapter 25 Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems
- Chapter 26 Agricultural Performance Standards and Manure Management
- Chapter 51 Erosion Control and Stormwater Management

Administered by the Sauk County Sheriff

- Chapter 27 Animal Control Ordinance

1.6 Planning Area

The Planning area covers all lands within the Town of Excelsior. As a point of reference, *Map 1-2 Aerial Photography* shows an overlay of tax parcels on an air photo.

2.0 Purpose

This plan was originally created by the Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Planning Committee, comprised of three Town Board members and twenty-one area residents, who took part in several efforts to identify issues and opportunities facing the Town of Excelsior. These issues and opportunities culminated in the Town's Vision as well as its goals, objectives and policies. These efforts included a community-wide survey, community visioning session, numerous press releases and media articles, focus group work, an intergovernmental forum, a formal consensus process to agree upon all goals, objectives and policies, including the Town's density policy, an open house to view the draft Comprehensive Plan and a public hearing on the final Comprehensive Plan. A more in depth description and summary of each activity with results are noted in this chapter. Specific background information regarding population, household and employment forecasts, demographic trends, age distribution, educational levels, and income levels and employment characteristics of the Town can be found under the respective chapters that follow in this Plan.

2.1 Community Survey

As part of the original 2006 planning process, the Comprehensive Planning Committee developed and administered a community wide survey. The survey questions were developed to ascertain the opinions and perceptions of residents and landowners on the issues and opportunities in their Town. During the summer of 2006, 756 surveys were mailed to all Excelsior landowners on the tax roll in the Town of Excelsior. Of the 756 surveys mailed 200, or 26.5%, were returned. This response rate was about the average for a survey of this nature, due to its length and the types of questions asked. A copy of the cover letter to the survey as well as a tally of responses is located in Appendix A. A summary of the more significant results of the survey can be noted as follows:

Quality of Life

Defining and maintaining a high quality of life in the Town of Excelsior is the most important common denominator among all residents and visitors. Among respondents, 64% agreed that "the quality of life is excellent" and another 14% strongly agreed. A way to define quality of life is to find out why people choose to live where they do and, more importantly, why they choose to continue to live there. To better define quality of life, the survey asked participants to list their three most important reasons for living in the Town. The rural character of the Town ranked first with about 25% of respondents noting the natural beauty and quiet, slower, country atmosphere. About 13% of respondents cited the proximity to or from other cities, notably Reedsburg, employment, convenient roads and the 90-94 Interstate. Sixteen percent of respondents noted family, friends, community and home as reasons for coming, and staying. Twelve percent of respondents noted economic reasons such as land prices and tax differences between larger cities and the Town. Other responses named a variety of reasons, among them recreational opportunities, good schools, and the clean air and water.

Housing

Housing is an important part of how a community grows. The location of housing can impact a community's need for services, its aesthetics and overall community feel. Survey participants were asked to review aerial images to determine where and how rural housing could be built in the town. Overwhelmingly, almost 41% of respondents chose to locate new housing in rural subdivisions with the requirement that they maintain blocks of open space. Only 6.5 % expressed a preference for the conventional subdivision layout with little or no open space. Almost 20% of respondents preferred no new housing development and nearly 16% chose small clusters of homes surrounded by open space. Based on the responses in the survey, it appears as though most survey participants are

not categorically opposed to additional housing development so long as provisions are made to include open space areas.

Agriculture Resources

The majority of respondents to the survey indicated that they would support varied forms of community-supported agriculture and value-added agriculture operations. Over 68% indicated they would support the direct sale of farm products. Almost 46% percent of respondents also indicated that they would support forms of agriculture tourism. Eighty percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the preservation of farmland is important, suggesting a strong commitment to sustaining agriculture operations in the Town.

Economic Development

Agriculture and recreation represent the two primary forms of local economic activity in the Town of Excelsior, however alternative forms of economic development were considered in the survey. In terms of sustaining agriculture, survey respondents were asked if they felt there were adequate agriculture support and complementary services such as cooperatives, agronomists, implement dealers, haulers, etc., in northern Sauk County to keep agriculture viable in the Town. Of the total response from residents, many of whom are presumably not farmers, 47% either agreed or strongly agreed that there were adequate support services, while 39% had no opinion.

In terms of other economic opportunities, respondents were asked if they would support business development in areas adjoining the City of Reedsburg or the Villages of Rock Springs and North Freedom. Overall, 76 % of respondents agreed that both small businesses (10 or less full time employees) and large businesses (10 or more full time employees) should be permitted there. Sixty percent agreed on permitting either small or large businesses in rural areas. Nineteen percent of respondents indicated that they would not support either type of business in the rural area.

With respect to economic development and self-sustainability, the majority of residents supported the development of solar and wind energy. Over 84% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the development of these alternative energy sources. Fifty percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the development of ethanol plants, and 39% agreed or strongly agreed with methane production. Five percent or less of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with wind and solar energy production, while about 24% and 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed with methane and ethanol production, respectively.

Utilities and Community Resources

This category of the survey evaluated residents' satisfaction with services such as fire, garbage collection and library opportunities as well as energy needs and energy alternatives. Overall, services primarily received a 'good' rating. However, about 25% of respondents felt that both Internet and cable services were not adequate, and over 30% concluded that cell phone service was inadequate. Eighty-four percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the preservation of cultural, historical, and community resources was important.

Since the survey, there has been significant improvement in the Town's available internet and cell service. The majority of the Town is served by fiber optic and cell service has expanded through the construction of cell towers. There are only two spots in the Town (Lake Virginia and along State Road 136) where fiber optic installation is still needed.

Natural Resources

Survey participants were asked to rank the importance of protecting various natural resources in their community, ranging from general resources such as wetlands, woodlands, and forests to more specific resources such as scenic views, air quality and overall rural character. In almost every resource category over 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that protection is important, but they were somewhat less enthusiastic about the categories of shoreline, floodplains, and hillsides/steep slopes. When asked if the Town should support programs that purchase conservation easements for open space and farmland preservation purposes, over 62% agreed while only 19% disagreed. At the same time, 39% of respondents indicated that it was acceptable to build houses on tillable land.

Transportation

Survey participants were asked to consider both the adequacy and condition of transportation systems (primarily roads) within the Town. Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed that the overall road network meets the needs of citizens, and 78% felt that road conditions were adequate for intended uses. When asked if there are any hazardous road conditions that need to be addressed, 29% of respondents indicated that there were none while 51% were unsure. In terms of multi-modal transportation, 51% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that biking routes should be maintained or improved.

Land Use

The Land Use element recognizes the relationships between all of the other elements of a comprehensive plan and provides an opportunity to integrate their goals, objectives and policies. The Land Use element also addresses some of the larger issues in a community, and its study can yield specific direction to mitigate land use conflicts by posing consistent and equitable development standards and processes. To help identify the critical land use issues in the Town of Excelsior, the survey asked participants to rank their top three land use issues. Development vs. overdevelopment turned up as the primary issue, followed by natural resource protection. The continued care of water resources and agricultural activities tied for the third highest ranked land use issue.

Survey participants were asked questions related to Agricultural Zoning, lot size and housing density. When participants were asked what methods should be used to protect agricultural land, over 60% agreed or strongly agreed that regulation (such as zoning and subdivision ordinances) is appropriate. Almost 70% agreed or strongly agreed with using tax incentives (e.g. use-value taxation or the Managed Forest Law). Fifty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed that the Town's zoning density policy should be formalized (which was informally set at one residence per five acres by virtue of the five-acre minimum lot size requirement). Fifty-five percent of participants were in favor of keeping the minimum lot size of five acres to build a new house, while 41% were opposed.

However, as a result of the original drafting of this comprehensive plan, the Town updated their density policy to one residence per thirty-five acres and the majority of the Town was rezoned to the Exclusive Agricultural zoning district. The rezone and resulting decrease in density has allowed development to slow in the Town, but still allows for minimal development within the Extra Territorial Zone of the City of Reedsburg, located on the western side of the Town. This allows for small scale home-based business and residential development in the rural area of the Town while maintaining a rural, agrarian character.

General Opinions

In addition to specific questions asked of the survey participants, there were some more ‘open-ended’ questions. Among these, participants were asked what they want the Town of Excelsior to look like in 20 years. Overall, a large majority of respondents indicated that they wanted the Town to look the same as it does today but planned for growth. One respondent claimed, “Similar to today with balanced growth...” Respondents expressed a variety of opinions, but there is a strong leaning toward keeping the Town looking like it does, with natural resources and farmland protected, limited housing clustered in pockets, with appropriately scaled and carefully located commercial growth.

2.2 Visioning Session

The Town of Excelsior held a Visioning Session Workshop on March 8, 2007. The purpose of the session was to involve residents and landowners in the Town to take part in defining what they believe the Town should be in the future. In total, 30 residents took part in the session.

The Vision Session was structured in such a way that participants had an opportunity to express their thoughts on the evolution of a future vision for Town. Participants also had an opportunity to identify what they perceive to be the Town’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTs) as related to the future vision as well as the nine elements defined in the comprehensive planning legislation.

Some of the responses included:

- **Strengths:** Small community with a high quality of life, good farmland and natural beauty throughout a diverse landscape, near employment, little traffic on roads, low crime rate in the community.
- **Weaknesses:** City encroachment into the Township, poor internet and cellular telephone services, lack of road maintenance, the Town density policy, low tax base, continued growth of large scale quarry.
- **Opportunities:** Plan and manage growth to maintain the rural flavor of the Township, the use of conservation easements and purchase of development rights to protect land, allow development for an increased tax base, employment opportunities, outdoor recreation.
- **Threats:** Change in culture, excessive tourism, increase in population, bedroom community, lack of future job opportunities, loss of farmland and wildlife habitat to development, ground water and surface water pollution from agricultural runoff and the landfill leeching.

At the time of the plan revision, these Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats were review once again as way to measure the effectiveness of this plan. Items that have changed are the following:

- There has been increased road traffic as the Town’s population has risen, providing a moderate threat to the Town’s infrastructure and overall rural character. As a result road maintenance in the Town has become a priority.
- The opportunity to create conservation easements and the purchase of development rights has become a strength in the Town for the amount of agricultural and recreational land being conserved and protected. The Town now also has the opportunity for continued easements in the form of the Planned Rural Development Program.

- Internet and cellular service has improved throughout the Town, resulting in it becoming a strength as it allows increased quality of life and ability for remote work.
- The Town density policy which was previously 1 home per 5 acres allowed for small lots and increased development, causing the Town to lose its rural character. The policy has now been amended to 1 home per 35 acres, now considered a strength as it protects the Town from over development.
- The Town was originally considered to have a low tax base during the initial drafting of the Plan. That was not the perception at the time of the plan's revision as the Town has had more than adequate funds to maintain its infrastructure and will be able to continue to do so in the future due to its continued strong tax base.

Overall, utilizing the plans initial public input, the Vision Session aimed to help create a Vision for the town as well as provide direction to the Comprehensive Plan Committee regarding the development of the Plan's Goals, Objectives and Policies. The results and process utilized for the Vision Session can be noted in Appendix B.

2.3 Press Releases/Media Coverage

The Town's planning process received media coverage beginning in the Reedsburg Times Press and the Reedsburg Independent, both published press releases promoted the Town's Vision Session. During the 2023 plan revision, the Town posted a legal notice of the public hearing for the final revised draft of the plan.

2.4 Open House/Intergovernmental Forum

On April 5, 2008 the Comprehensive Plan Committee conducted an open house and intergovernmental forum to present the initial draft Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan. Through oral discussion and submitted written comments, participants were given an opportunity to comment on the Committee's work and suggest changes. Approximately 50 Town residents attended the open house.

During the plan's revision, the Town Plan Commission held monthly public meetings in which citizens could attend to speak on any aspect of the Comprehensive Plan being discussed. The agenda for each meeting stated the plan's chapters to be discussed that month and were posted online and at the Town Hall.

2.5 Formal Consensus Process to Establish Goals, Objectives and Policies

The planning committee utilized a formal consensus process to discuss and agree on all goals, objectives and policies, including the Town's density policy. The definition of consensus utilized by the Town during this planning is as follows:

A consensus can only be achieved when a quorum of Committee members is present. A quorum consists of a simple majority of Committee members. Consensus does not require unanimity, but rather the approval of 80% of members present, assuming there is a quorum.

2.6 Town of Excelsior Vision

Please see pullout on next page.



Town of Excelsior Vision

The Town of Excelsior is a rural community with scenic natural beauty, diverse natural resources, a strong agricultural economic base, a high quality of life, access to excellent education at all levels, and a relatively low tax base with satisfactory and necessary government services. We will strive to maintain this essential nature of the Township by considering:

- a) Conservation and environmental protection;
- b) Preservation of farmland and our agriculture industry;
- c) Managed/planned growth and thoughtful land use;
- d) Quality of life;
- e) Economic opportunity, stability, and security;
- f) Efficient and effective government and public services.

Each of these must be in concert with the others to assure the community will thrive and meet the high standards demanded of its citizens.

<p>a) Conservation and Environmental Protection: The Town of Excelsior has diverse natural resources including high quality agricultural land; significant undeveloped land providing habitat for wildlife, for outdoor recreation, and for enjoyment of natural scenic beauty; forests providing an economic benefit that can be sustained for future generations; and quality rivers and streams. This environment should be retained and natural resources conserved.</p>	<p>b) Preserve Farmland and Agricultural Industry: The economic base of the Town of Excelsior is agriculture. Much of the farmland is highly productive and farming practices are environmentally sound. To achieve our vision, we must maintain an economically and environmentally sustainable agriculture industry.</p>
<p>c) Managed / Planned Growth / Thoughtful Land Use: We recognize that the Town of Excelsior faces significant development pressure. Growth in the Township must be well planned, well managed, and be balanced among agriculture, natural resources, development, and quality of life by recognizing a sense of community with a country flavor. A sense of community means a group of people with a cooperative spirit and common values. Our vision is that individual property decisions will minimize negative impacts on others, and that commercial development will retain a country flavor and require only those infrastructure services appropriate to a rural lifestyle.</p>	<p>d) Quality of Life: The residents of the Town of Excelsior consider the Township to be wholesome, a good place to raise children, uncrowded and family friendly. The Township provides a sense of place and a connection with history for many. In short, this is a community. This sense of community must be retained.</p>
<p>e) Economic Opportunity, Stability and Security: The residents of the Town of Excelsior are dependent on nearby communities for economic stability, education, and services. To remain economically viable, there must be nearby employment. Agriculture provides a sound economic base for many residents, but additional economic opportunities are required that are appropriate to the rural character of the Township.</p>	<p>f) Efficient Government and Public Services Our vision is that the Town of Excelsior government will recognize that it serves the people. Town government, as a member of the community, must play a major role in achieving and maintaining intergovernmental cooperation with surrounding villages, towns, city and county. Government must work to provide essential services appropriate for a rural community – services that minimize costs and maximize benefits.</p>

3.0 Purpose

The Population Inventory and Analysis Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan gives an overview of the pertinent demographic trends and background information necessary to develop an understanding of the changes taking place in the Town of Excelsior. In this chapter we will examine the population profile of the Town. The population profile includes features that affect community dynamics and processes such as regional trends in population, housing units and persons per household, as well as local trends in housing occupancy, population composition, age distribution and length of residency. In analyzing these trends and projections, citizens of the Town will gain a more complete understanding of future planning issues that should be addressed within this Comprehensive Plan.

3.1 Regional Population and Housing Trends

In evaluating changes in population and housing units in the Town of Excelsior, comparing regional and local growth trends will help track similarities and differences between Excelsior and nearby towns, and allow the Town of Excelsior to create a Comprehensive Plan unique to its specific issues and goals.

Population

As **Table P1 Regional Population Trends** indicates, the population in the Town has had steady growth since 1970 when averaged over 10 year periods (17.39%). Overall, between the years of 1970 and 2000, the Town’s population increased by 624 persons, or at an average of 208 persons per 10 years. Population growth in the Town has begun to slow over the past two decades, with an average of 98.5 persons per 10 years. When compared with surrounding towns, Excelsior has been faster than some and slower than others. The Town of Dellona has seen an average of 33.27% population growth rate every 10 years since 1970, while the Town of Reedsburg has experienced a -3.68% growth rate over the same period. For context, the State of Wisconsin has experienced a 6.04% average growth rate each decade since 1970, while Sauk County has experienced a 11.05%. Over the thirty years between 1970 and 2000 Excelsior’s average 10-year growth rate (24.5%) was faster than some towns yet slower than others. Sauk County experienced a 11.05% growth rate. Through the examination of these regional trends it is evident that strategies addressing appropriate growth management will need to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan for the Town.

Table P1: Regional Population Trends

Table P1: Regional Population Trends														
Year	Town of Excelsior		Town of Dellona		Town of Baraboo		Town of Freedom		Town of Reedsburg		Sauk County		Wisconsin	
	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change
1970	786		472		1158		371		1442		39,057		4,400,000	
1980	1,266	61.07%	705	49.36%	1545	33.42%	405	9.16%	1468	1.80%	43,469	11.30%	4,700,000	6.82%
1990	1,194	-5.69%	768	8.94%	1503	-2.72%	422	4.20%	1367	-6.88%	46,975	8.07%	4,891,769	4.08%
2000	1,410	18.09%	1199	56.12%	1828	21.62%	416	-1.42%	1236	-9.58%	55,225	17.56%	5,363,675	9.65%
2010	1,575	11.70%	1552	29.44%	1672	-8.53%	447	7.45%	1293	4.61%	61,976	12.22%	5,686,986	6.03%
2020	1,603	1.78%	1901	22.49%	1816	8.61%	449	0.45%	1185	-8.35%	65,763	6.11%	5,893,718	3.64%
Overall Change 1970-2020	817	103.94%	1,429	302.75%	658	56.82%	78	21.02%	(257)	-17.82%	26,706	68.38%	1,493,718	33.95%
Average Change per 10 years	163	17.39%	286	33.27%	132	10.48%	16	3.97%	(51)	-3.68%	5,341	11.05%	298,744	6.04%

Source: US Census 2020

Housing Units

From 1990 to 2020, the numbers of housing units have increased moderately in the Town of Excelsior and in many surrounding towns. However, as seen in **Table P2 Regional Housing Unit Comparison**, the Town of Excelsior’s increase in housing units from 2010-2020 (1.34%) is far below the increase experienced by Sauk County (22.2%) and the state of Wisconsin (19.65%) between the years 2010 and 2020. A number of surrounding towns, including Delton, Freedom, Westfield, and Reedsburg, experienced a decrease in the number of housing units over the past decade.

Table P2: Regional Housing Unit Comparison

Table P2: Regional Housing Unit Comparison														
YEAR	Town of Excelsior		Town of Dellona		Town of Baraboo		Town of Freedom		Town of Reedsburg		Sauk County		Wisconsin	
	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change
1990	439		400		614		179		383		20,439		2,055,774	
2000	558	27.11%	498	24.50%	751	22.31%	182	1.68%	415	8.36%	24,297	18.88%	2,321,144	12.91%
2010	671	20.25%	764	53.41%	748	-0.40%	225	23.63%	501	20.72%	25,192	3.68%	2,279,768	-1.78%
2020	680	1.34%	871	14.01%	815	8.96%	217	-3.56%	462	-7.78%	30,784	22.20%	2,727,726	19.65%

Source: American Community Survey 2020, U.S. Census 1990-2010

Average Household Size

Comparing the number of persons per household from 2010 to 2020 shows that the Town of Excelsior saw a slight decrease in numbers of persons per occupied house, as did two neighboring towns (Reedsburg and Winfield). Comparing the Town of Excelsior, Sauk County, and the State of Wisconsin, only Excelsior experienced a decline, as seen in **Table P3 Regional Average Household Size Comparison**. Both the State and the County experienced similar increases in persons per household in 2020.

Table P3: Average Household Size

Table P3: Average Household Size - Persons Per Household							
YEAR	Town of Excelsior	Town of Dellona	Town of Baraboo	Town of Freedom	Town of Reedsburg	Sauk County	Wisconsin
1990	2.96	2.84	3.11	2.81	3.1	2.61	2.61
2000	2.68	2.84	2.66	2.28	2.78	2.51	2.5
2010	2.45	2.61	2.35	2.55	2.48	2.43	2.43
2020	2.42	2.71	2.52	3.41	2.47	2.92	2.97

Source: American Community Survey 2020, U.S. Census 1990-2010

3.2 Local Population and Housing Trends

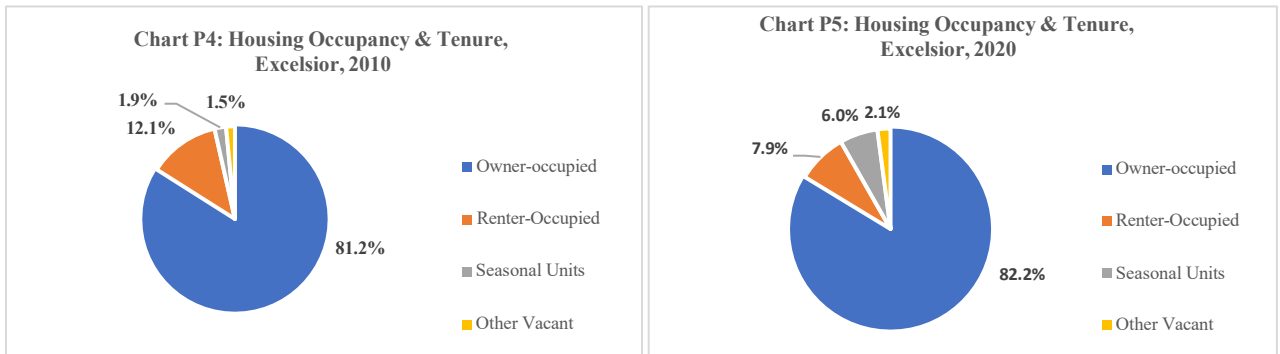
A look at local demographics profiles illustrates local trends and conditions and provides insight as to the types of services both wanted and required by the community. The local trends section includes an examination of occupied housing, population composition, population by age bracket, and length of residency.

Occupied Housing

Determining the number of all housing units, the number of these units occupied, and the number of persons per occupied household assists our understanding of population trends. In the Town of Excelsior, the number owner-occupied housing units nearly stayed the same from 2010 to 2020,

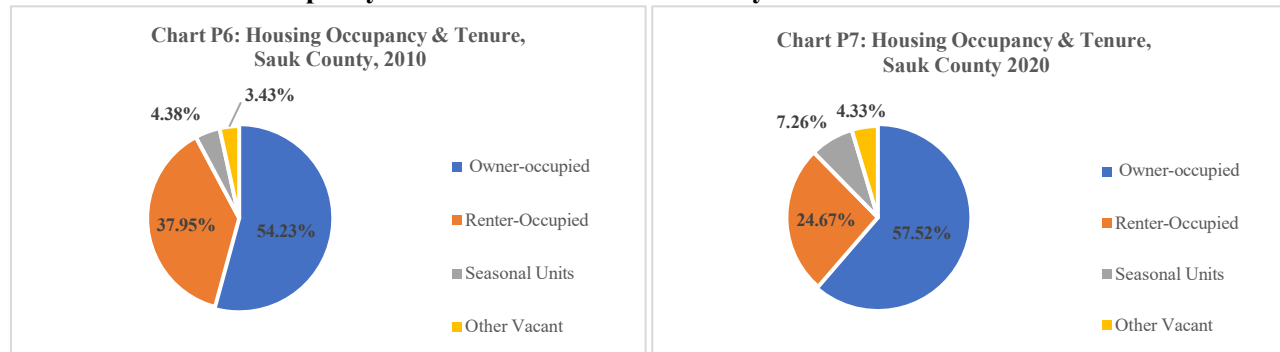
while the number of renter-occupied units decreased by 4.2% of the total housing units. This can be explained by the growth of seasonal units over the past decade, growing from 1.9% of the total housing units in 2010 to 6.0% in 2020. Meanwhile, the percentage of owner-occupied units in Sauk County decreased while the number of renter-occupied units increased. Similarly, the county saw its seasonal units grow from 4.38% of the total housing units in 2010 to 7.26% in 2020. Occupancy rate trends for both the Town and Sauk County are noted for the years 1990 and 2000 on **Charts P4 through P7**.

Charts P4 and P5: Occupancy Rate and Tenure Excelsior 2010 vs. 2020



Source: American Community Survey 2020, U.S. Census 2010

Charts P6 and P7: Occupancy Rate and Tenure Sauk County 1990 vs. 2000



Source: American Community Survey 2020, U.S. Census 2010

Population Composition: Age and Race

Median age is defined as the age at which half of the population is above and half is below. **Table P8 Age, Excelsior and Sauk County** shows the median age in the town of Excelsior at 47.6 in 2020. This is significantly older than the median age of Sauk County at 41 in 2020. The Town has a higher percentage of people older than 65, and a lower percentage of people younger than 18 in comparison to Sauk County.

Table P8: Age and, Excelsior and Sauk County

Table P8: Age and Gender, Excelsior and Sauk County								
Year	Median Age		Percent Under 18		Percent Over 65		Percent Female	
	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County
1990, per census	38.3	34.2	31.50%	27.19%	9.20%	15.77%	46.84%	50.79%
2000, per census	38.3	37.3	26.50%	26%	9.60%	14.50%	49.34%	50.60%
2010, per census	47.7	40	17.10%	23.80%	17.10%	15.00%	48.20%	50.20%
2020, per census	47.6	41	16.80%	22.80%	22.80%	18.40%	47.70%	52.00%

Source: U.S. Census, 2020

Table P9 Ethnic Composition, Excelsior and Sauk County shows that in 2020 there was a similar ethnic composition between the Town of Excelsior and Sauk County. White residents make up over 93% of both the Town and the County. This number has been steadily declining over the past three decades, but white residents still make up the overwhelming majority of the population. Both Excelsior (2.74%) and Sauk County’s (5.3%) most populous minority group in 2020 is Hispanic residents. **Table P9: Ethnic Composition, Excelsior and Sauk County**

Table P9: Ethnic Composition, Excelsior and Sauk County												
Year	Percent White		Percent Native American and Alaska Native		Percent Hispanic (of any race)		Percent Asian		Percent African American		Percent Other	
	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County
1990, per census	100.00%	98.50%	0.00%	0.60%	0.40%	0.40%	0.00%	0.20%	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%	0.20%
2000, per census	99.20%	98.00%	0.10%	1.10%	0.50%	1.20%	0.10%	0.30%	0.00%	0.30%	0.10%	0.70%
2010, per census	98.20%	94.50%	0.38%	1.20%	1.90%	4.30%	0.32%	0.50%	0.12%	0.60%	0.25%	1.90%
2020, per census	93.60%	93.20%	0.37%	1.70%	2.74%	5.30%	0.50%	0.50%	0.18%	0.70%	0.50%	2.70%

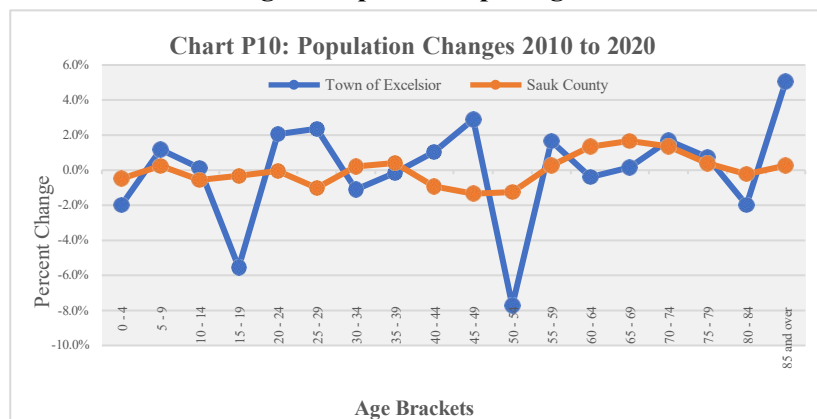
Source: US Census, 2020

* Composition may equal more than 100% because some may report more than one ethnicity.

Population per Age Bracket

Chart P10 Change of Populations per Age Bracket breaks down the changes in population by age brackets for both the Town of Excelsior and Sauk County from 2010 to 2020. Generally, this chart shows that the Town experienced similar growth in similar age groups in comparison to the County. The exceptions are where the Town noticeably gained population in the 85+ age group while Sauk County experienced very little population growth in the same bracket. The Town experienced a significant decrease in population in the 50-54 age group while Sauk County only experienced a slight decrease. The chart shows that Town has experienced little or negative growth in the younger age groups, similar to Sauk County.

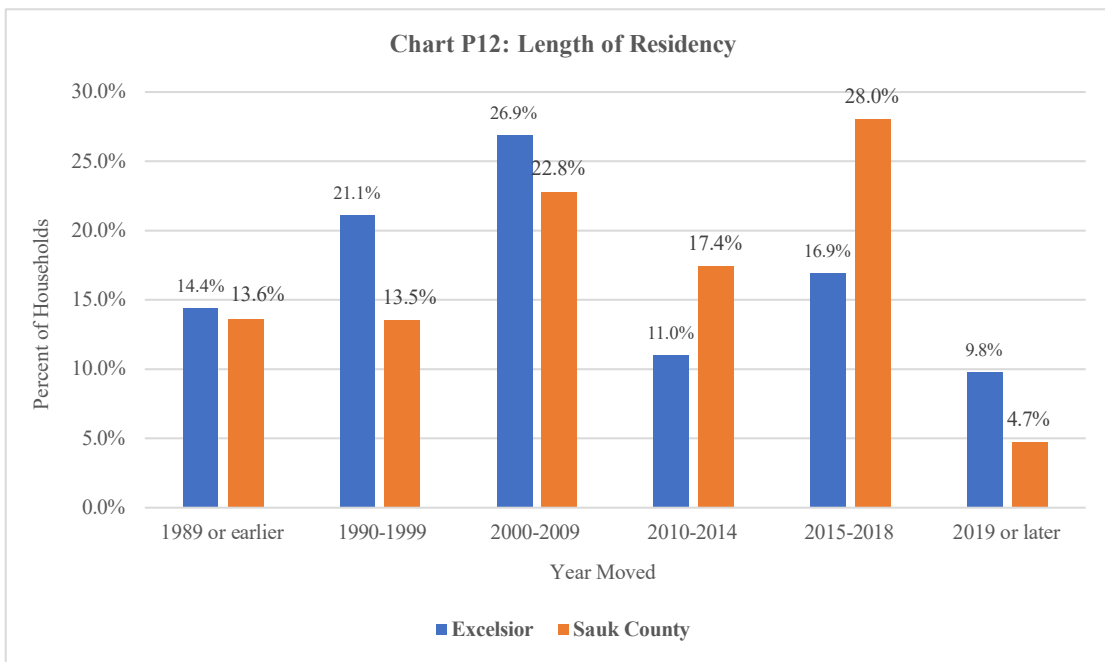
Chart P10: Change of Populations per Age Bracket



Length of Residency

According to sample data included in the 2000 census, 14.4% of Town residents moved into Excelsior in or before 1989. **Table P11: Length of Residency** shows that 48% of those surveyed moved to the Town between the years 1990 and 2009. Since 2010, 37.7% of people surveyed moved to the Town. It is evident from this data that the Town of Excelsior has been experiencing a steady influx of people since 1990. Sauk County, meanwhile, has seen a larger influx of residents since 2000. Notably, residents who moved to Sauk County between 2015-2018 made up 28% of survey respondents. **Chart P12 Length of Residency** graphically represents the data.

Year	Excelsior	Sauk County
1989 or earlier	14.4%	13.6%
1990-1999	21.1%	13.5%
2000-2009	26.9%	22.8%
2010-2014	11.0%	17.4%
2015-2018	16.9%	28.0%
2019 or later	9.8%	4.7%



Source: American Community Survey 2020

3.0 Interpretation of Demographic Data

The Town of Excelsior has experienced periods of growth and loss in population since 1970, with an average gain in population of 17.39% per 10 years between 1970 and 2020. The number of housing units has increased moderately between the years of 2010 and 2020 (1.34% increase), which corresponds with the slight increase in population over that same time period. The average number of people per household decreased slightly from 2.45 in 2010 to 2.42 in 2020. With an average population growth 17.39% every 10 years, and a decreasing household size, the number of new homes built in the Town of Excelsior will be affected. It should be noted that the population growth of 1.78% from 2010 to 2020 was significantly lower than the average since 1970.

The population of the Town of Excelsior in 2020 was 1,603 as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. At the average rate of 17.39% growth every 10 years over the last 30 years and a static household size of 2.42, the Wisconsin Dept. of Administration estimates that the population in the year 2040 will be approximately 1,986. With a continual slight decrease in average household size and a steadily increasing population, the number of housing units needed in the coming decades will be impacted. This demonstrates that the impact of lower household populations is to increase the demand for new homes.

If the average household size of the Town of Excelsior were the same as that of Sauk County at 2.92, the same projected 2040 population of 1,986 yields about 680 housing units, a difference of 140 housing units from the constant household size projection of 820. Average household size plays an important role in determining the amount of housing and new development needed to support a growing population.

3.3 Population Projections

Table P13: Town of Excelsior Population Projections 2030-2050							
	2010 Census	2020 Census	Average Percent Change 1980-2020	2030 Projection	2040 Projection	2050 Projection	2060 Projection
Town of Excelsior	1,575	1,603	6.5%	1,784	1,986	2,210	2,460
Sauk County	61,976	65,763	11.3%	73,194	81,465	90,671	100,917
Wisconsin	5,686,986	5,893,718	5.8%	6,235,554	6,597,216	6,979,854	7,384,686

Source: US Census 2020

Population Projection 1

The first population projection, a straight-line projection growth model based on the Department of Administration’s population projections, shows the populations increasing from the current 1,603 to 1,986 in 2040 and 2,460 in 2060.

Table P14: Town of Excelsior DOA Population Projections 2030-2040								
	2010	2020		2025	2030	2035	2040	Percent Change
	Census	Census	Projection	Projection	Projection	Projection	Projection	2010-2040
Town of Excelsior	1,575	1,603	1,730	1,840	1,920	1,960	1,975	25.4%
Sauk County	61,976	65,763	68,075	72,175	75,660	77,265	77,815	25.6%
Wisconsin	5,686,986	5,893,718	6,005,080	-	6,375,910	-	6,491,635	14.1%

Source: US Census 2020

Population Projection 2

The second trend considers a growth model based on the past 40-year average percent change per ten-year increment. While this is not a standard approach, it is considered for several reasons. First, the population in the past forty years has fluctuated which accounts for minor changes to population. This model shows the population increasing to 1,920 by the year 2030 and to 1,975 by the year 2040.

Table P15: Town of Excelsior Housing Based Population Projections								
2020 Demographics					2030 Projection		2040 Projection	
Occupied Housing Units	Average Change 1990-2020	Average Household Size	2020 Population	Housing Units	Population	Housing Units	Population	Housing Units
625	16.23%	2.42	1603	726	1758	844	2043	981

Source: US Census 2020

Population Projection 3

The third trend considers a growth model based on the past 30-year average percent change per ten-year increment of change in housing units and the average number of people per household. This considers recent housing trends and accounts for the needed amount of new housing. This projection shows a larger increase in population growth than Population Projection 1 and 2, with estimated population of 2,043 by year 2040 and 2,760 persons by the year 2060. When comparing the 2040 projected population to population projection 1 and 2, this is higher by 57 and 68 persons, respectively.

4.0 Purpose

Household and housing stock characteristics, both past and present, can be examined to assess whether a community is providing an adequate housing supply to meet the needs of its residents. This section of the Comprehensive Plan describes and analyzes the Town of Excelsior’s primary housing characteristics such as the number of housing units, occupancy rate, structural type, age and value of existing housing structures, and household income and expenses. This section also describes what constitutes ‘affordable’ housing and further includes a compilation of objectives and policies that ensure a continued housing supply that provides a range of housing opportunities. Portions of this chapter refer to *Chapter 3: Population Inventory and Analysis*.

4.1 Housing Unit Trends

Chart H1 Regional Housing Unit Comparison shows that between 1990 and 2020, the Town of Excelsior experienced an increase of approximately 8 housing units per year, with most of these housing units constructed before 2010. This growth of housing units from 2010 to 2020 has been, on average, greater than most adjacent townships who have seen a decrease in housing units. Only the Town of Winfield had a greater increase in housing units over the last decade. Sauk County and Wisconsin, however, have seen a much larger growth in housing units since 2010.

Chart H1: Regional Housing Unit Comparison

Table P2: Regional Housing Unit Comparison														
YEAR	Town of Excelsior		Town of Dellona		Town of Baraboo		Town of Freedom		Town of Reedsburg		Sauk County		Wisconsin	
	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change
1990	439		400		614		179		383		20,439		2,055,774	
2000	558	27.11%	498	24.50%	751	22.31%	182	1.68%	415	8.36%	24,297	18.88%	2,321,144	12.91%
2010	671	20.25%	764	53.41%	748	-0.40%	225	23.63%	501	20.72%	25,192	3.68%	2,279,768	-1.78%
2020	680	1.34%	871	14.01%	815	8.96%	217	-3.56%	462	-7.78%	30,784	22.20%	2,727,726	19.65%

Source: U.S. Census, 2020

Occupancy Rate

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an overall vacancy rate of roughly 3% (or occupancy rate of 97%) is ideal for providing consumers an adequate choice in housing. As cited in *Chapter 3: Population Inventory and Analysis*, in 2020, 97.9% of the available housing units in the Town of Excelsior were occupied compared to a 95.67% occupancy rate in Sauk County. The Town’s occupancy rate had slightly decreased since 2010, as did the county’s.

4.2 Household Characteristics

Average Household Size

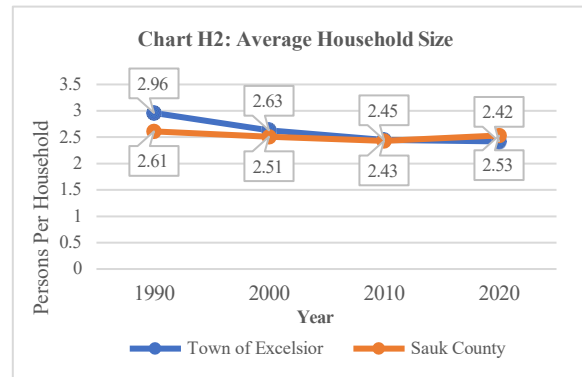
The average household size or persons per households in the Town of Excelsior has decreased from 2.96 persons in 1990 to 2.42 in 2020. As displayed in *Chart H3 Average Household Size Comparison*, the Town's average household size is lower than that of Sauk County. A comparison of average household size between the Town of Excelsior and neighboring Towns may be found in *Chapter 3: Population Inventory and Analysis*.

Table H2: Average Household Size

Average Household Size - Persons Per Household						
YEAR	Town of Excelsior		Sauk County		Wisconsin	
	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change
1990	2.96		2.61			
2000	2.63	-11.15%	2.51	-3.83%		
2010	2.45	-6.84%	2.43	-3.19%	2.43	
2020	2.42	-1.22%	2.53	4.12%	2.51	3.29%

Source: American Community Survey 2020

Chart H3: Average Household Size



Source: American Community Survey 2020

4.3 Housing Stock Characteristics

Table H4 Housing Units by Structural Type shows a breakdown of types of housing in the Town of Excelsior. The percentage of single-family homes has increased by nearly 6% from 2010 to 2020 in the Town. In 2010 there were higher percentage of housing structures in the Town categorized as single-family homes compared to Sauk County, which only became more exacerbated in 2020. This is probably attributed to the Town being a agricultural and rural area. Both mobile homes and multiple-unit housing in the Town comprise a lower percentage of structure types than the County. In fact, multiple-unit structures made up 0% of the housing structures in the Town in 2020, compared to 23.5% of the housing structures in Sauk County.

Table H4: Housing Units by Structural Type

	Table H4: Housing Units by Structural Type			
	Town of Excelsior		Sauk County	
	2010	2020	2010	2020
Occupied Housing Units	587	723	25,438	30,525
% Single Family	90.1%	96.0%	73.1%	67.0%
% Mobile Home	8.2%	3.5%	7.7%	6.3%
% With 2-4 Units	0.5%	0.0%	8.8%	9.5%
% With 5-9 Units	0.5%	0.0%	4.7%	5.5%
% With 10 or More Units	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	8.5%

Source: American Community Survey 2020

Age of Housing Stock

The age of the community's housing stock can be used as a measure of the general condition of the community's housing supply. This information can also provide insight into upkeep costs, the ease of remodeling, and housing resale value in a community. Building quality at the time of initial construction is also an important factor. Generally, housing constructed prior to 1959 has reached an age where continued maintenance and major repairs may be needed. Housing built in the 1970's and 1980's may need upgrading as well due to the level of construction and material quality prevalent during that time.

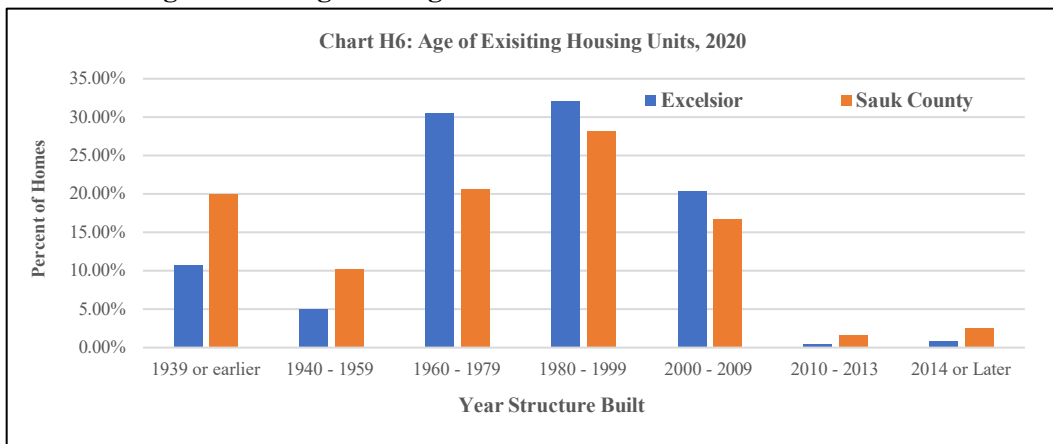
Chart H5: Age of Housing Units shows that 10.79% of the existing owner-occupied housing within the Town of Excelsior was built prior to 1939 while 53.7% of owner occupied homes units were built after 1980. The percentage of existing homes in the Town of Excelsior built prior to 1980 is lower than the percentage of Sauk County homes built in this time period. From 2000 to 2009, a higher percentage of homes were built in the Town of Excelsior than Sauk County. Since 2010, there have been a higher percentage of homes built in Sauk County.

Table H5: Age of Housing Units

Table H5: Age of Existing Housing Structures, 2020				
Year Built	Excelsior		Sauk County	
	# of Units	Percentage	# of Units	Percentage
1939 or earlier	78	10.79%	6,096	19.97%
1940 - 1959	36	4.98%	3,133	10.26%
1960 - 1979	221	30.57%	6,314	20.68%
1980 - 1999	232	32.09%	8,600	28.17%
2000 - 2009	147	20.33%	5,088	16.67%
2010 - 2013	3	0.41%	511	1.67%
2014 or Later	6	0.83%	783	2.57%
Total Units	723	100%	30,525	100%

Source: American Community Survey 2020

Chart H6: Age of Existing Housing Structures

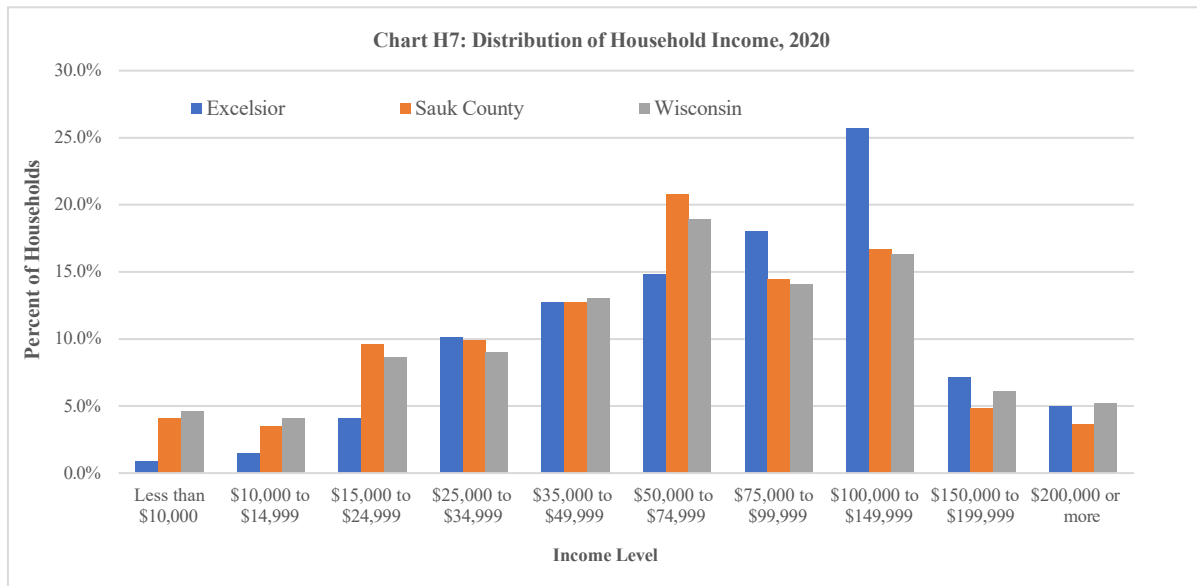


Source: American Community Survey 2020

4.4 Housing Affordability

Examining household incomes, expenses and housing values provides insight into the types of housing structures that currently exist in the Town of Excelsior and those that are needed in the community.

Chart H7: Distribution of Household Income



Source: American Community Survey 2020

Income Per Household

Charts H7 and Table H8 provide a breakdown of household income in the Town of Excelsior. In 2020, the median household income for Excelsior was \$72,083, compared with the median income for Sauk County at \$62,808. 12.7% of households in the Town were in the \$35,000 to \$49,999 income bracket. Another 14.8% of the households were in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 income bracket. These percentages are mostly in line with the county and the state. One income bracket where Excelsior overperformed was in the \$100,000-\$149,999 bracket, with 25.7% of households earning in this range. Sauk County (16.7%) and Wisconsin (16.3%) had significantly lower percentages of households earning in this range.

Table H8: Distribution of Household Income, 2020

Distribution of Household Income, 2020			
Income Level	Percent of Households		
	Excelsior	Sauk County	Wisconsin
Less than \$10,000	1.5%	4.1%	4.6%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	0.8%	3.5%	4.1%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	4.3%	9.6%	8.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	7.1%	9.9%	9.0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	12.6%	12.7%	13.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	26.8%	20.8%	18.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.8%	14.4%	14.1%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	19.1%	16.7%	16.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	6.2%	4.8%	6.1%
\$200,000 or more	6.8%	3.6%	5.2%

Source: American Community Survey 2020

Affordable monthly housing expenses (or mortgage payments) are considered to be 30% of the monthly gross income. This amount can be calculated using the following equation: affordable monthly mortgage expense = .3 * monthly gross income (where the monthly gross income is the annual gross income divided by 12). To determine if the gross annual income is considered to be in the low or moderate-income brackets, the following Department of Housing and Urban Development definitions may be used. As **Tables H9 and H10** illustrate, extremely low income is defined as less than 25% of the household median gross income or = .25 * HMI. Very low income is 25% to 50% of the HMI. Low income is defined as 50% to 80%

of the household median income and moderate income is 80% to 100% of the household median income.

Given the HMI for Excelsior is \$72,083, the extremely low-income range is anyone earning less than \$18,000.00 per year. According to the 2020 census, 4.2% of the households in Excelsior were in this range and could afford monthly housing expenses of \$450.00 or less. This is an increase from 2010, where only 2.8% of households were in this range. 9.5% of the households in Excelsior fell in the very low-income range and could afford monthly housing expenses of \$450.00 to \$901.00. Households in the low-income range comprised approximately 21.2% of the households in Excelsior and could afford \$901.00 to \$1,442.00 in housing expenses each month. Households in the moderate-income range comprised 18.2% of the households in Excelsior and could afford \$1,442.00 to \$1,802.00 in monthly housing expenses. This is an increase from 2020, where 14.5% of households fell in the same category. The percentage of households that were in the high-income range in 2020 was 46.9% in 2020, a slight decrease from 48.6% in 2010.

Table H9: Affordable Housing Expenses per Income, Town of Excelsior 2010

Table H9: Affordable Housing Expenses per Income, Excelsior 2010			
Household Median Income (HMI) = \$63,958			
Household Income Category	Rounded Description	Percent of Households	Affordable housing payment per month based on 30% of income standard
Extremely low income (below 25% of HMI)	\$16,000 or less	2.8%	\$400
Very low income (25% to 50% of HMI)	\$16,000 - \$31,999	16.3%	\$400 - \$800
Low income (50% to 80% of HMI)	\$32,000 - \$51,000	18.0%	\$800 - \$1,280
Moderate to high income (80% to 100% or greater of HMI)	\$51,000 - \$63,958	14.5%	\$1,280 - \$1,600
High income (greater than 100% HMI)	>\$63,958	48.6%	\$1,600 or less

Source: American Community Survey, 2010

Table H10: Affordable Housing Expenses per Income, Excelsior 2020

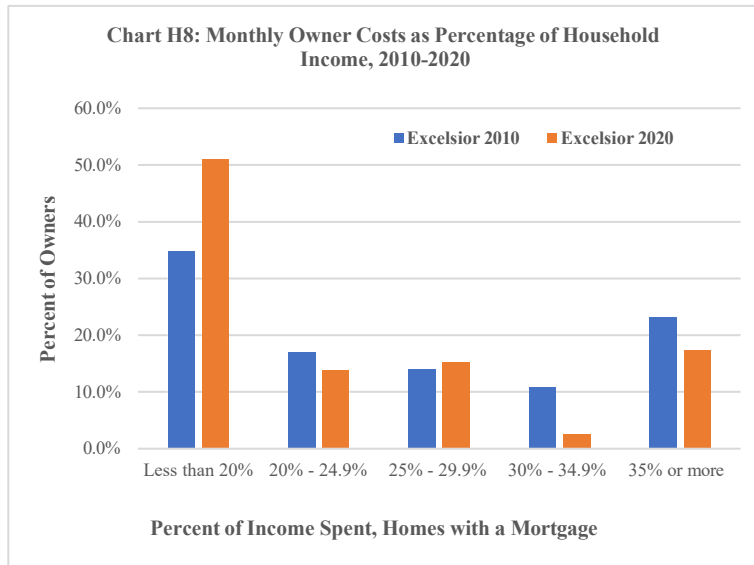
Table H10: Affordable Housing Expenses per Income, Excelsior 2020			
Household Median Income (HMI) = \$72,083			
Household Income Category	Rounded Description	Percent of Households	Affordable housing payment per month based on 30% of income standard
Extremely low income (below 25% of HMI)	18,000 or less	4.2%	\$450
Very low income (25% to 50% of HMI)	\$18,000 - \$36,000	9.5%	\$450 - \$901
Low income (50% to 80% of HMI)	\$36,000 - \$58,000	21.2%	\$901 - \$1,442
Moderate income (80% to 100% of HMI)	\$58,000 - \$72,083	18.2%	\$1,442 - \$1,802
High income (greater than 100% HMI)	>\$72,083	46.9%	\$1,802 or less

Source: American Community Survey, 2020

Owner Costs

Chart H11 and Table H12 Monthly Owner Cost depict housing costs in relation to overall income using a sample population from the Town of Excelsior to better understand housing affordability in the Town. Housing affordability has generally increased between 2010 and 2020 in Excelsior. During this timeframe, the percentage of homeowners whose housing costs exceeded 35% or more of the household income decreased from 2010 to 2020, while the percentage of homeowners whose housing costs were less than 20% of the household income increased.

Chart H11: Monthly Owner Costs

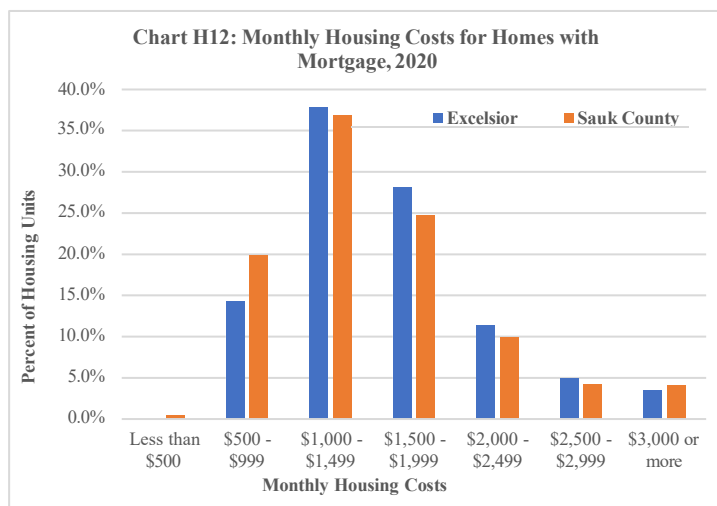


Source: American Community Survey 2020

Mortgage Costs

Although mortgage costs are only one of many monthly housing expenses, this section narrows its focus by concentrating on them. A comparison of housing costs between the Town of Excelsior and Sauk County is shown in **Chart H12 Monthly Housing Costs for Homes with Mortgage**. Overall, the Town and the county’s monthly housing costs were very similar in 2020. Most households in both the Town (37.8%) and county (36.8%) fell into the \$1,000-\$1,499 per month. Sauk County had a slightly higher percentage of households that fell into the lowest brackets of monthly housing costs.

Comparisons of monthly mortgage costs from 2010 to 2020 are broken down for the Town of Excelsior in **H13 Selected Monthly Owner Costs as Percentage of Household Income**. In 2010, 34.9% of households with a mortgage spent less than 20% on monthly mortgage costs, while in 2020 51.1% of the households had mortgage payments in this category. While 23.1% of households in the Town spent more than 35% on their monthly mortgage costs in 2010, only 17.3% of households were in the same category in 2020. As for households without a mortgage, 31.7% of households in 2010 spent less than 10% of their monthly income on housing costs. This number slightly increased in 2020 to 35.4% of households.



Source: American Community Survey, 2020

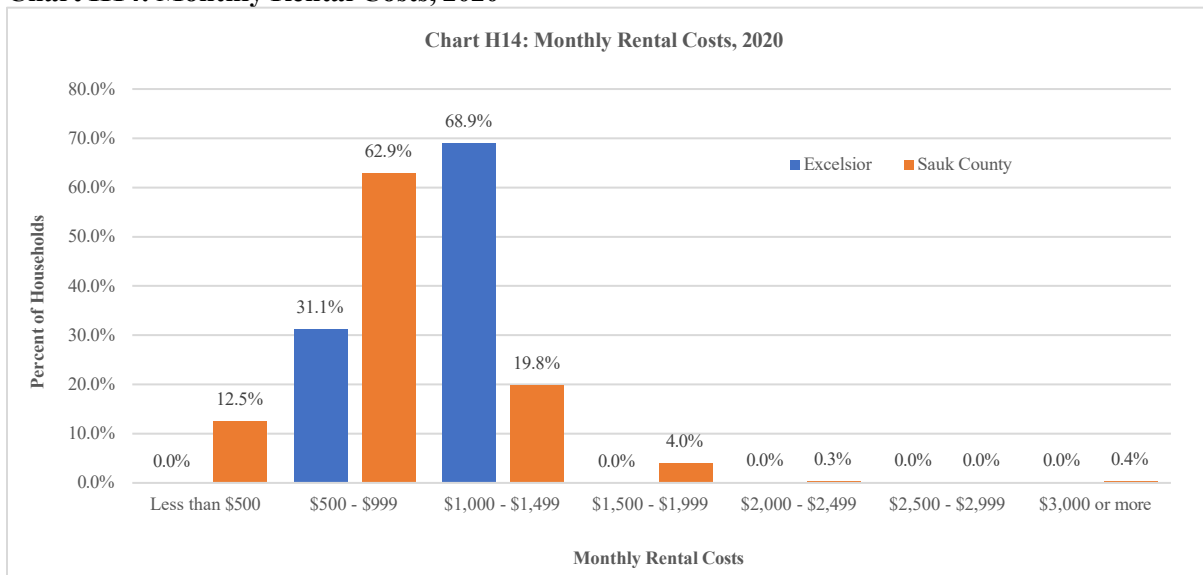
Chart H13: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as Percentage of Household Income

Table H13: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as Percentage of Household Income				
Percentage of Income	Excelsior 2010		Excelsior 2020	
Housing Unit with a Mortgage	# of Owners	% of Owners	# of Owners	% of Owners
Less than 20%	122	34.9%	207	51.1%
20% - 24.9%	60	17.1%	56	13.8%
25% - 29.9%	49	14.0%	62	15.3%
30% - 34.9%	38	10.9%	10	2.5%
35% or more	81	23.1%	70	17.3%
Housing Unit without a Mortgage	# of Owners	% of Owners	# of Owners	% of Owners
Less than 10%	51	31.7%	90	35.4%
10% - 14.9%	50	31.1%	56	22.0%
15% - 19.9%	20	12.4%	69	27.2%
20% - 24.9%	9	5.6%	6	2.4%
25% - 29.9%	9	5.6%	6	2.4%
30% - 34.9%	7	4.3%	0	0.0%
35 % or more	15	9.3%	27	10.6%

Source: American Community Survey, 2020

It is also important to consider monthly rental costs when analyzing the affordability of housing in a community. **Chart H14 Monthly Rental Costs** compares monthly rental costs in the Town of Excelsior and Sauk County. In 2020, 31.1% of monthly rent payments in the Town were between \$500-\$999, compared to 62.9% in Sauk County. 68.9% of rent payments in Excelsior were between \$1,000-\$1,499, compared to 19.8% in Sauk County. No reported rents in Excelsior rose above \$1,500 in 2020, according to the American Community Survey.

Chart H14: Monthly Rental Costs, 2020

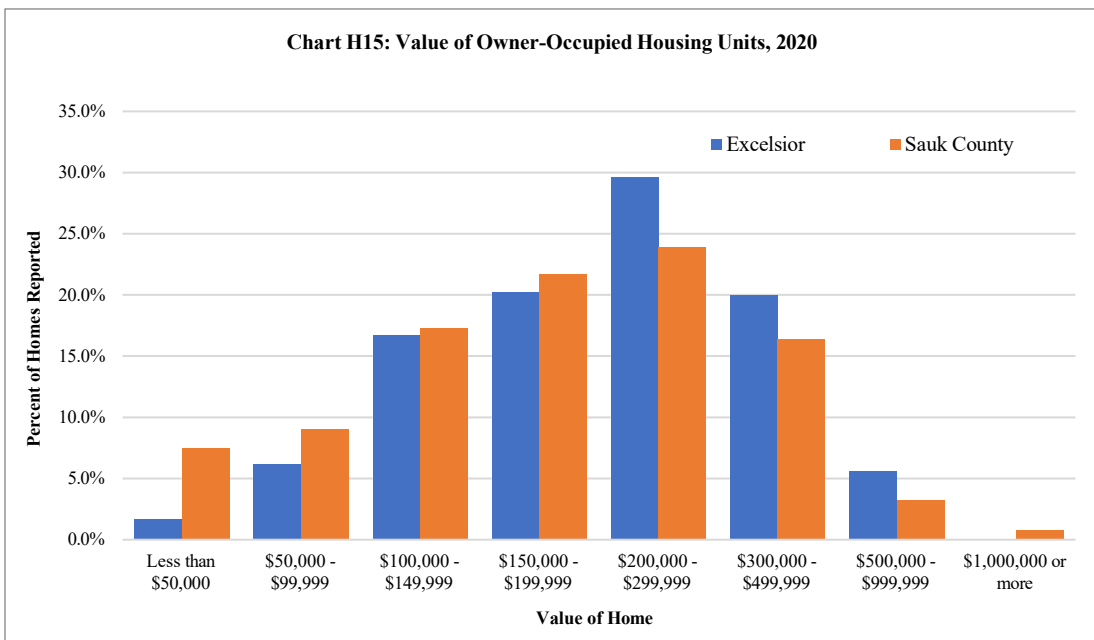


Source: American Community Survey 2020

House Values

A sample of housing values in Excelsior during 2020 ranged from less than \$50,000.00 to the \$500,000-\$999,999 category. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, **Chart H15 Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units** compares the housing values for the Town of Excelsior with those of Sauk County. Approximately 24.6% of the homes in the Town of Excelsior are less than \$150,000, whereas the percentage of homes valued between \$150,000 to 199,999 is 20.2% in Excelsior. This is comparable to Sauk County’s 21.7% in this category. Approximately 26.9% of the homes were valued between \$200,000 and \$299,999 in the Town, compared to Sauk County’s 23.9%. 20% of the homes in Excelsior were valued between \$300,000 and \$499,999, compared to 16.4% of the homes in Sauk County. Statistics for housing value are based on a sample population and do not include all owner-occupied housing units.

Table H15: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units, 2020



Source: American Community Survey 2020

4.5 Housing Density

Housing density can be defined in a number of ways, most simply as the number of housing units in a given area of land. This numerical value is commonly referred to as gross density. A community “density policy”, on the other hand, can be defined as the desired ratio of housing units and/or lots created per specified unit of land area. Such area density policies are often combined with an optimum or maximum size for each building lot. A community density policy can be utilized to calculate the total number of potential of future houses until an endpoint (“total buildout”) is reached. Future population predictions can be based on a community’s housing density policy. Rural communities having relatively low overall density policies can offer a “density credit” to developers, when increased density is appropriate, that permits additional units or lots in exchange for the preservation of adjacent land resources.

With a total area of 33.98 square miles and census report of 680 housing units, the Town of Excelsior's gross housing density in 2020 stood at 20 housing units per square mile, or about one housing unit per 32 acres. This is an increase in density from 2000, when there were 16.5 housing units per square mile, or about one housing unit per 38 acres. This is also an increase in density from 1990, when housing density stood at about one unit per 49 acres. Much of the increase can be attributed to housing subdivision development, but some is due to the development of rural residential lots. Until 1999, rural lots could be less than one acre in size and then the minimum lot size was 5 acres up until 2014 which allowed for increased development throughout the rural areas of the Town. This development has slowed with the adopted of the Exclusive Agricultural Zoning District in 2014.

4.6 Local Population and Housing Trends

Understanding of local population and housing trends and their potential impacts on the future of the Town of Excelsior requires a re-examination of population projections discussed in the previous chapter. The growth of the population will drive housing development in the Town. Should the average household size decrease in the Town, which is generally the trend on Sauk County, the number of housing units needed to accommodate the population may increase further. Over the past few decades, the Town has experienced inconsistent rates of increase in its housing units. From 2010 to 2020, the Town experienced a 1.34% increase in housing units. From 2020 to 2030, an additional 9 housing units will be built if the 1.34% increase rate remains constant.

4.7 Projected Housing Needs Based on Population Projections

As noted in *Chapter 3 Population Inventory and Analysis* three methods of population projections are utilized. Population Projection 1 involved a comparison between a linear and growth method, along with a method used by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Population Projection 2 uses a method that combines the historic projected number of new housing units coupled with a projected occupancy rate. Population Projection 3 considers a growth model based on the past 30-year average percent change per ten-year increment of change in housing units and the average number of people per household.

General Housing Needs Analysis

In reviewing the housing projection methods based on Population Projections 1 and 2, it appears as though the most logical housing projections are those that produce a slight increase in population through the years 2020 and 2030 respectively. Under Population Projection 1, all three models present a realistic increase in population and corresponding housing units by the year 2030. Population Projection 2 recognizes that the static and trend methods reveal unrealistic changes in projected housing units added by the year 2030. With this analysis, it appears as though the DOA and growth projections under Population Projection 1 may best represent future population growth in the Town of Excelsior until the year 2030.



4.8 Housing Opportunities

The Town of Excelsior has always provided options for varying housing choices and locations. There are a number of lots located in platted subdivisions that can provide for additional residential development. Currently, there are approximately 85 vacant Certified Survey Map (CSM) or residential subdivision lots in the Town. Some of these lots were platted before minimum lot size

standards, and although they can support a residential structure and septic system, the area of the lots is limited. Thus, in order to develop these lots, two or more may be combined to provide the space necessary for a house, a primary septic system and a replacement septic area. Reference **Map 11-1 Current Land Use**.

Rural lots have historically been created by Certified Survey Map to accommodate rural residences and farmette operations. The creation of these ‘rural lots’ has served to provide an alternative living option to locating in an existing subdivision.

Additional Housing Opportunities

New development may result from Certified Survey Map (CSM) divisions or the creation of either conventional or conservation subdivisions. These housing opportunities may include accessory dwelling units, such as mother-in-law suites. This would allow for additional and varied housing affordability options without new lots being created. These housing opportunities would need to be in line with the Town’s current density policy of 1 unit per 35 acres. This type of development would cluster housing units together, thereby continuing to preserve the rural character of the Town.

4.9 Housing Programs and Resources

Listed below are some examples of housing assistance programs available to Town of Excelsior residents:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Section 811 – provides funding to nonprofit organizations for supportive housing for very low-income persons with disabilities who are at least 18 years of age.

Section 202 – provides funding to private nonprofit organizations and consumer cooperatives for supportive housing for very low-income persons age 62 and older.

Section 8 – major program for assisting very low-income families, elderly and disabled individuals to afford housing on the private market. Participants are responsible for finding their own housing. Funding vouchers are distributed through Public Housing Authorities that deliver the vouchers to eligible applicants.

Section 8/SRO – provides funding to rehabilitate existing structures to create single room occupancy (SRO) housing for homeless individuals of very low income, with shared spaces.

Hope VI – provides grants to Public Housing Authorities to destroy severely distressed public housing units and replace them with new units or dramatically rehabilitate existing units. It hopes to relocate residents in order to integrate low and middle-income communities. It also provides community and supportive services.

Public Housing – the goal is to provide rental housing for low-income families, elderly and disabled individuals. Rents are based on resident’s anticipated gross annual income less any deductions.

HOME – provides formula grants to states and localities that communities use to fund a range of activities that build, buy, or rehabilitate affordable housing units for rent or ownership.

Section 502 – makes loans to low- and very low-income households in rural areas to build, repair, renovate, or relocate houses, including mobile/manufactured homes. Funds can be used to purchase and prepare sites and to pay for necessities such as water supply and sewage disposal.

Section 515 – provides direct, competitive mortgage loans to provide affordable multifamily rental housing for very low-, low- and moderate-income families, and elderly and disabled individuals. It is primarily a direct mortgage program but funds can also be used to improve land and water and waste disposal systems.

Section 514/516 – loans and grants used to buy, build, improve, or repair housing for farm laborers, including persons whose income is earned in aquaculture and those involved in on-farm processing. Funds can be used to purchase a site or leasehold interest in a site, to construct or repair housing, day care facilities, or community rooms, to pay fees to purchase durable household furnishings and pay construction loan interest.

State of Wisconsin Department of Administration (Bureau of Housing)

Home Rehabilitation and Accessibility (HRA) – provides Federal HOME funds to participating agencies to make repairs and improvements needed to bring dwellings, owned and occupied by low-income households, up to appropriate housing quality standards and provide accessibility modifications.

Home Buyer Rehabilitation (HBR) – funds provided through local agencies for the lowest income households either in grant or loan formats for a wide variety of local affordable housing activities.

Rental Housing Development (RHD) – Provides additional information to HUD’s HOME program for requirements on funding. These funds are used to provide direct competitive mortgages in order to establish affordable multi-family housing for very low-, low- and moderate- income families, and elderly and disabled individuals.

Rental Housing Development (RHD) – funds provided through HUD’s HOME program to make repairs or improvements to rental units leased to persons who have low or very low incomes.

Housing Cost Reduction Initiative (HCRI) – funds set aside to assist low or moderate income persons of families to secure affordable, decent, safe and sanitary housing by defraying some of the housing costs.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) – funds made available to local units of government that are deemed most in need of assistance for housing rehabilitation and/or limited other housing activities. The funds are awarded to a local governmental unit, which in turn, provides zero interest, deferred payment loans for housing assistance to low- to moderate-income homeowners.

Community Development Block Grant - Emergency Assistance Program (CDBG-EAP) - Funds are to be directed to eligible units of government throughout the State that are in need of assistance due to a natural or manmade disaster. Funds are to be used to provide housing assistance to low- to moderate-income homeowners to address the damage caused by the disaster.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) offers two specific programs to assist individuals with their homeownership needs: HOME and Home Improvement Loans. The HOME program provides competitive mortgages to potential homeowners with fixed below-market interest rates to qualified candidates. The Home Improvement Loan program provides funding up to \$17,500 to qualified candidates for rehabilitation and other various housing activities. These funds are provided at below-market fixed interest rates for up to 15 years with no prepayment penalties. The properties must be at least 10 years old and the applicants must meet the income limits established by WHEDA for the county they reside within.

Additional Housing Programs:

[WHEDA First Mortgage and Down Payment Assistance Programs](#)

“Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) has been the State of Wisconsin’s trusted partner for affordable homeownership for more than 50 years. WHEDA is mission-based and our mission is simple: to stimulate the state’s economy and improve the quality of life for Wisconsin residents by providing affordable housing and business financing products.

WHEDA has helped more than 137,600 Wisconsin renters, first-time home buyers, non-first-time home buyers, eligible veterans and more achieve their dream of homeownership and finance their principal residence with a WHEDA loan. Why did they choose WHEDA? Because WHEDA offers unique financing options that get buyers into a home sooner, with a mortgage they can afford long-term.

Through our statewide network of approved lenders, we offer:

- Two first mortgage programs
- Two Down Payment Assistance programs
- WHEDA Rehabilitation Mortgage Programs

WHEDA Refi Advantage Loan Program

The WHEDA Refi Advantage is an exclusive mortgage refinance product designed specifically to make home ownership more affordable for borrowers who currently have a WHEDA loan. The Refi Advantage will allow eligible homeowners to refinance their mortgage with as little as 3% equity in their home.

As with most refinance programs on the market, the Refi Advantage will only be accessible to homeowners who are current with mortgage payments, have a good standing mortgage payment history and have a strong overall credit profile.

Division of Energy, Housing, and Community Resources (DEHCR)

[HOME Homebuyer and Rehabilitation Program \(HHR\)](#)

The Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources (DEHCR) has identified homeownership and the conservation of quality owner-occupied housing as top priorities for allocating federal and state housing resources. A program was established to provide essential home purchase assistance and necessary home rehabilitation, and other vital improvements for dwelling units occupied by low- and moderate-income households. The source of funds is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). The Wisconsin Department of Administration, DEHCR awards these funds to local units of government and local housing organizations through a biennial funding cycle.

Housing Cost Reduction Initiative Program (HCRI)

The Housing Cost Reduction Initiative (HCRI) was created in 1989, by the Governor and the Wisconsin Legislature. The State set aside these funds to provide housing assistance to low- and moderate-income (LMI) households seeking to own decent, safe, affordable housing. The Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources (DEHCR) awards these funds to eligible applicants through a biennial funding cycle.

The Wisconsin Fund

The Wisconsin Fund is a program that provides grants to homeowners and small commercial businesses to help offset a portion of the cost for the repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of existing failing Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS). Eligibility is based upon several criteria, including household income and age of the structure.

USDA Single Family Housing Repair Loans & Grants

Also known as the Section 504 Home Repair program, this provides loans to very-low-income homeowners to repair, improve or modernize their homes or grants to elderly very-low-income homeowners to remove health and safety hazards. Loans may be used to repair, improve or modernize homes or remove health and safety hazards. Grants must be used to remove health and safety hazards.

Other Programs – Other programs that may be considered for housing assistance are provided by various agencies throughout the State, including Rural Development components of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Sauk County.

4.10 Housing Goal, Objectives and Policies**Housing Goal:**

Have well-maintained housing that will enhance the country flavor of the Town and reflect a balance between housing and natural resources, reflect a balance between land housing and agriculture, reflect a common sense of values, and minimize negative impacts on others.

Housing Objectives and Policies:

HO-1 Encourage new housing adjacent to current housing.

HP-1a Areas of the Town that are appropriate for high density residential development are limited to those lands within the Reedsburg ET District.

HO-2 Develop appropriate regulations to meet the housing goal.

HP-2a Permitting for proposed housing should be easier for plans that are environmentally friendly.

HP-2b Provide educational materials to persons seeking development permits to assure the policies of the Township are understood and will allow the proposed development.

HP-2c For “cluster” developments, the question of common or individual well and common or individual septic systems may be considered.

HO-3 Development should retain the present environment, conserve natural resources, and require rural lifestyle infrastructure services.

HP-3a Encourage the location and grouping of housing on lands not suitable for agriculture (cluster development).

HP-3b Proposed development that changes the agricultural landscape shall be discouraged.

HO-4 Educate new and existing residents on farm life, farm noises, odors, and operational requirements prior to granting permits for the construction of new rural residences.

HP-4a Provide educational materials to persons seeking development permits to assure the agriculture ways of life are made available before the proposed permits are approved.

HP-4b In conjunction with the approval of a Town building and land use permits, the Town Clerk will provide educational materials for people seeking a residential permit for housing to raise their awareness and understanding of the quality of life in a rural society that includes agriculture, hunting, and outdoor recreation, as well as of the businesses permitted in the township.

5.0 Purpose

While manufacturing and retail trade occupations represented the majority of employment activities in the Town of Excelsior in 2000, farming and agricultural activities continue to represent an important form of economic activity, and for some Excelsior residents, a primary way of life. Despite only 3.4% of the Town’s population being employed in agriculture in 2020, 42.9% of the land is covered by agriculture. Excelsior’s farmland and farming operations have been traditionally passed down to succeeding generations. As in most of Wisconsin, the local agricultural community faces many challenges. Because of its proximity to the City of Reedsburg, the Town of Excelsior has begun to experience an increased rate of rural residential development, more so than in many other parts of Sauk County. Along with this residential development rate, increases in property value assessments, increasing health care costs, and stagnant farm prices have compounded recent challenges to the agriculture industry.



From being a viable employment opportunity and lifestyle for many, the future of Excelsior’s agricultural economy is now in question. While rural residential development can provide an opportunity for landowners to realize some immediate economic value from their land, if done without careful thought, such land divisions may conflict with adjacent agricultural land uses and contribute to the loss of prime farmland in the Town of Excelsior.

This section highlights some of the trends in agriculture from a local, county and state perspective. More importantly, it provides guidance to the Town to allow for a specified amount of rural residential development that is compatible with continued agriculture land uses.

5.1 Regional and Local Trends in Agriculture

From 1987 to 2022, the estimated number of farms in Sauk County decreased from 1,502 to 1,408 (6.3%). The average size for farms in Sauk County also decreased from 246 acres in 1987 to 212 acres in 2022. During the same time period, the estimated number of farms in the State of Wisconsin decreased from 75,131 to 58,521, (22.1%), while the average size for farms increased from 221 acres to 236 acres. Notably, from 2017 to 2022, the number of farms in Wisconsin decreased by 9.3%, while the number of farms in Sauk County nearly stayed the same.

Table A1: Trends in Average Size of Farms

Table A1: Trends in Average Size of Farms						
Year	Sauk County Farms			Wisconsin Farms		
	Approximate Number of Farms	Average Size of Farm in Acres	Percent Change	Approximate Number of Farms	Average Size of Farm in Acres	Percent Change
1987	1,502	246		75,131	221	
1992	1,383	243	-1.2%	67,959	228	3.2%
1997	1,452	229	-5.8%	65,602	227	-0.4%
2002	1,673	211	-7.9%	77,131	204	-10.1%
2007	1,923	187	-11.4%	78,463	194	-4.9%
2012	1,665	200	7.0%	69,754	209	7.7%
2017	1,412	212	6.0%	64,793	221	5.7%
2022	1,408	212	0.0%	58,521	236	6.8%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 1987-2022

From 1990 to 2022, the estimated number of farms in Sauk County decreased by 11.8%, while the number of dairy farms decreased by 82.1%. In Sauk County, there were estimated 1.7 farms per square mile during 2022, and an estimated 0.15 dairy farms per square mile.

Table A2: Trends in Farm Numbers

Table A2: Trends in Farm Numbers in Sauk County from 1990-2022													
Estimated Farm Numbers							Dairy Farm Numbers						
1990	1997	2007	2017	2022	% Change, 1990-2022	Estimated Farms per square mile, 2022	1989	1997	2007	2017	2022	% Change, 1989-2022	Dairy Farms per Square Mile, 2022
1597	1507	1,923	1,412	1,408	-11.8%	1.7	687	475	295	188	123	-82.1%	0.15

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 1990-2022

The estimated number of farms for Sauk County illustrated in the *Charts A1 Trends in Average Size of Farm and A2 Trends in Farm Numbers*, differs. This is due to different methodologies used between the methodology for estimating the number of farms in Sauk County prepared by the Program on Agricultural Technology Studies (PATS), UW Madison, and Census of Agriculture. The individual Town data is no longer available through the PATS program, but data trends were continued through 2022 with the most recent data available during the time of this plan for the County agricultural statistics.

5.2 Land in Agriculture Use

Land sales in the Sauk County, and State of Wisconsin, indicate that 1,090 acres of farmland were sold in Sauk County in 2022 through 17 transactions. All sales saw the land continuing in agricultural use. The average dollars per acre for agricultural land continuing in agricultural use was slightly higher in Sauk County (\$7,440) than Wisconsin (\$7,157).

Tables A3: Agriculture Land Sales, Sauk County, and State of Wisconsin

Table A3a: Agriculture Land Sales Without Buildings 2022									
	Agricultural Land Continuing in Agricultural Use			Agricultural Land Being Diverted to Other Uses			Total of all Agricultural Land		
	Number of Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars Per Acre	Number of Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars Per Acre	Number of Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars Per Acre
Sauk County	17	1,090	7,440	-	-	-	17	1,090	7,440
Wisconsin	888	52,747	7,157	56	2,267	24,485	944	114,311	-*

Source: USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2022

*Dollars per acre not listed for Total of All Agricultural Land

Table A3b: Agriculture Land Sales With Buildings 2020									
	Agricultural Land Continuing in Agricultural Use			Agricultural Land Being Diverted to Other Uses			Total of all Agricultural Land		
	Number of Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars Per Acre	Number of Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars Per Acre	Number of Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars Per Acre
Sauk County	20	1,339	7,058	2	92	12,815	22	1,431	7,428
Wisconsin	596	42,308	6,559	45	1,517	11,466	641	43,825	6,729

Source: USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2020

* Data for land sales with buildings not provided after 2020

5.3 Production Trends

The County averaged 177 bushels of corn for grain per acre in 2022, compared to 168 bushels per acre in 2017. The County averaged 20 tons of corn for silage per acre according to the 2022 USDA Census on Agriculture, the same average as in 2017. In comparison, the State averaged 174 bushels of corn for grain and 20.5 tons of corn for silage per acre in 2022. Sauk County yielded on average 53.5 bushels of soybeans per acre and the State averaged 51 bushels per acre in 2022, up from 47 bushels for Sauk County and 46 bushels for Wisconsin in 2017.

Tables A4 & A5: Production trends: Sauk County & State of Wisconsin

Table A4: Farm Production Trends Forage/Feed, 2017

	Forage/Feed													
	Corn for Grain		Corn for Silage		Soybeans		Sorghum for Grain		Sorghum for Silage		Wheat for grain, all		Oats & Barley	
	Acres	Yield (bushels)	Acres	Yield (tons)	Acres	Yield (bushels)	Acres	Yield (bushels)	Acres	Yield (tons)	Acres	Yield (bushels)	Acres	Yield (bushels)
Sauk County	69,217	11,623,669	15,100	295,291	38,470	1,809,438	-	-	50	396	4,459	322,951	1,436	82,858
Wisconsin	3,074,502	519,334,406	921,602	17,474,959	2,214,985	101,917,737	3,171	292,849	2,646	34,866	200,613	13,285,868	105,024	6,191,952

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017

Table A5: Farm Production Trends Forage/Feed, 2022

	Forage/Feed													
	Corn for Grain		Corn for Silage		Soybeans		Sorghum for Grain		Sorghum for Silage		Wheat for grain, all		Oats & Barley	
	Acres	Yield (bushels)	Acres	Yield (tons)	Acres	Yield (bushels)	Acres	Yield (bushels)	Acres	Yield (tons)	Acres	Yield (bushels)	Acres	Yield (bushels)
Sauk County	76,306	13,556,719	9,401	187,423	42,696	2,282,623	-	-	-	-	5,089	363,035	393	20,870
Wisconsin	3,065,380	533,043,125	787,423	16,167,200	2,144,830	109,209,073	921	76,338	3,166	32,986	240,287	18,082,100	68,537	4,740,685

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2022

The percentage of farms with beef cows in Sauk County was higher than Wisconsin in 2022, however Sauk County had a lower percentage of farms with milk cows. The County and the State had similar percentages of farmers with sheep and lambs, as well as layer chickens. While beef cows were accounted for on 25.9% of farms in Sauk County, their numbers (7,034) were significantly lower than those of milk cows (16,971) and hogs and pigs (32,301). From 2017 to 2022, the County saw a 15% decrease in the number of milk cows, and a 4.6% decrease in the percentage of farms that had milk cows.

Tables A6 & A7: Dairy Production Trends: Sauk County & State of Wisconsin

Table A6: Farm Production Trends Livestock and Poultry in Percentage of Farms Inventory, 2017

	Beef Cows		Milk Cows		Hogs & Pigs		Sheep & Lambs		Layer Chickens		Broilers & Other Meat Chickens	
	#	% of farms	#	% of farms	#	% of farms	#	% of farms	#	% of farms	#	% of farms
Sauk County	8,297	25.8%	19,965	13.3%	34,350	3.3%	2,691	3.8%	95,757	12.5%	1,736	1.3%
Wisconsin	287,100	21.5%	1,280,395	13.9%	298,879	3.4%	80,688	4.4%	7,639,627	12.3%	53,438,462	1.9%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017

Table A7: Farm Production Trends Livestock and Poultry in Percentage of Farms Inventory, 2022

	Beef Cows		Milk Cows		Hogs & Pigs		Sheep & Lambs		Layer Chickens		Broilers & Other Meat Chickens	
	#	% of farms	#	% of farms	#	% of farms	#	% of farms	#	% of farms	#	% of farms
Sauk County	7,034	25.9%	16,971	8.7%	32,301	4.4%	2,516	4.5%	19,101	15.2%	2,600	3.1%
Wisconsin	284,400	22.2%	1,264,272	10.6%	335,975	3.5%	71,801	4.3%	6,490,101	14.9%	8,493,377	2.9%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2022

Summary of Agricultural Statistics

Overall, the number of the farms across Sauk County is trending down, despite there being a net decrease of only 4 farms from 2017 to 2022. The State of Wisconsin has been experiencing a decline of the number of farms, while the average size of farms has been slightly increasing. The number of dairy farms in Sauk County, however, has rapidly declined over the last 3 decades. From 1989 to 2022, there has been a 82.1% decrease in dairy farms in the County. From 2002-2022 the number of dairy farms decreased by 65% while in the same period the number of livestock only decreased by 37%. This is indicative of the loss of smaller and perhaps medium sized dairy producers. This decrease is a common trend throughout Wisconsin. Across the State, the amount of land in agriculture is decreasing at an alarming rate. According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, Wisconsin saw 533,952 acres of agriculture land from 2017 to 2022, 3.7% of the total in 2017. Surprisingly, Sauk County only lost 803 acres of agriculture land, only 0.27% of the total in 2017.

5.4 Local Farm Numbers and Types

Even though farming and related agricultural activities are declining, they still are a significant economic activity in the Town. Farmers in the Town of Excelsior produce a variety of agricultural commodities including dairy, beef production, animal feed such as corn, alfalfa and soybeans as well as a number of cash crops. Historical data shows that the total number of dairy farms has declined significantly since the eighties throughout Sauk County and the rest of the State. At the time of this plan in 2024, there are approximately 12,666.43 acres in agricultural use.

5.5 Farmland Preservation Program

The Farmland Preservation Program was established by the State of Wisconsin and was designed to help local governments that wish to preserve farmland through local planning and zoning by providing tax relief to farmers who participate. In the late 1970’s, Sauk County produced a Farmland Preservation Plan as a requirement to enter the program. The individual farmland preservation program contracts include approximately 21 participants, averaging 124.46 acres per farm and 2,613.68 acres in total enrolled in the program.

5.6 Land Capability Classification

Soil suitability is a key factor in determining the best and most cost-effective locations and means for agricultural practices in the Town of Excelsior. The USDA-NRCS groups soils suitable for agriculture based on the most suitable land for producing food, feed, fiber, forage and oilseed crops. When classifying soils, consideration is given to the limitations of the soil, its risk of damage, and its response to treatment. In general, the fewer the limitations, the more suitable the soil is for agricultural use. **Map5-1 Land Capability Classification** depicts the soils by classifications for the Town of Excelsior.

Approximately 46% of the soils in the Town of Excelsior are Class I, II, or III soils. Class I soils have few limitations that restrict their use.

Class II soils have some limitations such as wetness, erosion, or drought that require conservation practices. They are cultivated with a few simple precautions. Class III soils have many limitations with special management practices required.

Table A8: Soil Class and Acreage of in the Town of Excelsior

Town of Excelsior Land Capability Classification		
Soil Class	Acres	Percent of Total Land Area
Class I	571	2.62%
Class II	3,970	18.22%
Class III	5,530	25.38%
Class IV	4,825	22.14%
Class V	0	0.00%
Class VI	4,296	19.72%
Class VII	958	4.40%
Class VIII	1,639	7.52%
Total	21,789	100.00%

Source: Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department

As a general reference, *Map 5-2 Prime Farmland/Slope Delineation* defines prime farmland as having Class I and Class II soils. Approximately 21% of the soils on this map are indicated as prime farmland. Soils that require other management practices to be considered prime farmland are also indicated as such on the map.

5.7 Agriculture Infrastructure

The agricultural industry in the Town of Excelsior is supported by a diverse agricultural infrastructure within the area. Although most agriculture-supporting enterprises are not located within the Town, they can be easily accessed in the nearby trade centers.

5.8 Alternative Agricultural Opportunities

Despite the change in the number of farmers, farm size and the price of farmland, agricultural productivity has increased. According to a study completed in August 2001, by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, entitled, “Wisconsin County Agricultural Trends in the 1990’s”, Sauk County remains one of the State’s leaders in terms of agricultural production and revenue generated. This is still accurate today as Wisconsin is still the national leader in dairy, particularly cheese products.

Overall, changes to technology, machinery and agricultural practices have improved agricultural industry efficiency. In addition, it is more common for farms to concentrate their efforts on certain niche markets such as the production of organic, and non-traditional commodities such as specialty meats, artisan cheeses and varied forest products. The promotion of locally produced products, community supported

agriculture, and direct marketing to the public, local restaurants, school districts, cooperatives and retail grocery cooperatives expands opportunities for the industry.

Other examples of agricultural alternatives include agri-tourism/bed and breakfast establishments, recreational activities and agriculture-related cottage industries. The Town of Excelsior has adopted policies that support alternative agriculture and related opportunities.



5.9 Federal, State and Local Programs and Resources Federal Programs and Resources

There are numerous programs and resources available through federal, state and local agencies that can provide assistance to farmers to help ensure the agricultural sustainability. These programs should not be looked at individually, as a possible solution to ensure the viability of agriculture, but rather viewed as small components of the collective system aimed at preserving the production of food and fiber and our resources in the United States.

- **Federal Programs and Resources**

Below are some examples of federal programs and resources, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which can provide assistance to farm operators in the Town of Excelsior. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) are agencies within the USDA that provide consultation and local administration of these programs and resources within Sauk County. In addition, these agencies also provide technical assistance and staffing to develop farm conservation plans and other management tools.

- **Farmland and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP)** provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and rangeland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50% of the fair market easement value.
- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them safeguard environmentally sensitive land. Producers in CRP plant long-term, resource conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.
- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)** is a voluntary land retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water. Like CRP, CREP is administered by the USDA's FSA.
- **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)** is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture. The program offers three options inclusive of a permanent easement, 30-Year Easement or a Restoration Cost Share Agreement.

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** provides a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers. The program promotes agriculture productions and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practices and a maximum term of 10 years.
- **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)** is a voluntary program that encourages creation of high-quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of National, State, Tribal, and local significance. Through WHIP, the NRCS provides technical assistance to landowners and others to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat in areas on their property.
- **State and Local Programs and Resources**
In addition to the federal programs, several state and local programs and resources are available to aid in the sustainability of agricultural operations in the Town of Excelsior. These programs are supported by agencies like the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS), Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and local organizations like the Sauk County Development Corporation and the Sauk County Department of Land Conservation. A few examples of these programs and resources include:
 - **Farmland Preservation Program** which provides tax credits to farms of 35 acres or more under Exclusive Agriculture Zoning, having produced at least \$6,000 of gross farm revenues in the taxable year preceding the petition or those that produced at least \$18,000 in gross farm revenues during the three taxable years preceding the petition, and which operations are in compliance with county soil and water conservation programs.
 - **Wisconsin's Use Value Tax System** provides tax relief to agricultural landowners by assessing property on its value in terms of crop production and agricultural market prices, not current real estate market trends or non-farm development potential.
 - **Agriculture Development Zone (South-Central)** is an agricultural economic development program in the State of Wisconsin that provides tax credits to farm operators and business owners who make new investments in agricultural operations. These tax incentives are offered for three basic categories of investment including job creation, environmental remediation, or capital investments in technology/new equipment. The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services administers this program.
 - **Wildlife Abatement and Claim Program** is a county-administered program to assist landowners that have excessive levels of agriculture crop damage from deer, bear, geese, or turkey.

Planned Rural Development

The Planned Rural Development (PRD) Program applies location criteria and residential dwelling density allowances to regulate the number and location of rural residential housing lots and dwellings in order to protect agricultural, cultural, natural, or recreational features of the landscape; to provide for the transfer of development rights to identified sending areas pursuant to the comprehensive plan; to provide for the transfer of land while retaining the development allowance originally allotted to a parcel; to allow for flexibility in increasing the intensity of development while maintaining the density and use requirements in the applicable zoning district, and other requirements as specified by the town.

A PRD is required in order to create a lot of less than 35 acres on which dwelling units may be established with the Exclusive Agricultural Zoning District. A PRD consists of a PRD preservation area and a PRD development area. A PRD development area is a lot created using density credits. A PRD preservation area is determined by the following: $(\text{number of density credits used} * 35 \text{ acres}) - \text{PRD development acres} = \text{PRD preservation area}$. Any remnant land of a parcel that results from the application of a PRD, and that does not otherwise qualify for a density credit, shall be subject to a PRD preservation area easement.

5.10 Agriculture Goal, Objectives and Policies

Agriculture Resources Goal:

Maintain an economically and environmentally sustainable agriculture industry, both animal and crop based, and preserve farmland.

Agriculture Resources Objectives and Policies

ARO-1 Educate new and existing residents on farm life, farm noises, odors, and operational requirements prior to granting permits for the construction of new rural residences.

ARP-1a Provide educational materials to persons seeking development permits to assure the agriculture ways of life are made available before the proposed permits are approved.

ARO-2 Maintain an environment for economically viable agriculture.

ARO-3 Maintain an environment for environmentally sustainable agriculture.

ARO-4 Preserve Farmland

6.0 Purpose

The Town of Excelsior supports and utilizes an effective array of utilities (such as phone and internet service) and public facilities including a park, church, and school located in the Village of Rock Springs. The Town also supports and utilizes services provided by both the County and School District. In addition to utilities and services, Excelsior has many historic attributes. These attributes provide insight into the Town's past and serve to ground the community as it builds upon its future. This section of the Plan summarizes the Town's utilities, public facilities, and significant community cultural and historical resources.

6.1 Water Supply and Private On-site Waste Disposal Systems

All residents in the Town of Excelsior are currently served by private wells. Sauk County worked with the Wisconsin Geological Survey office on a groundwater study in 2002. The study, which can be found here: <https://wgnhs.wisc.edu/pubshare/M145.pdf>, includes information pertaining to volumes and quality as well as typical movement patterns, wellhead protection areas, and contamination issues. According to information obtained from Wisconsin and neighboring states, a low probability of significant groundwater pollution from private on-site sewage treatment systems occurs in housing developments with a density less than one house per two acres. There is a high probability of groundwater pollution where homes are located at a density greater than one house per acre. Given the soil types in the region and the mix of agricultural fields with forested areas and a low-density development pattern, groundwater contamination is assumed to be at a minimum. Exceptions include the densely developed area around Lake Virginia, which may exhibit impacts from private septic systems, and some lands adjacent to the Sauk County Landfill, which has been subject to scrutiny regarding groundwater contamination.

Overall, the disposal of domestic wastewater in the Town is handled through the use of individual Private On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS), or septic systems, which generally collect solids in a septic tank and discharge gray water to a drain field. The Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) has adopted a revised private sewage system code referred to as Wisconsin Administrative Code SPS 383. Based on the requirements set forth by the State of Wisconsin Code 383, all residential units with running water and plumbing fixtures must have an approved means of wastewater disposal. Because the Town of Excelsior is not served by a sanitary sewer system, the only current means of service is via POWTSs.

The Wisconsin DSPS, in conjunction with the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department (LRE), regulates the siting, design, installation, and inspection of all POWTS systems in the Town of Excelsior. This requirement of Code 383 permits the continued use of conventional systems as well as alternative systems, such as those that employ the use of biological or aerate treatment. It also stipulates system inspections every three years to ensure compliance with installation and operation requirements.

Typically, these alternative systems permit development of land areas that previously would not support a conventional system. A comparison of lands that previously could not support a POWTS under conventional technologies to those that can support alternative systems is illustrated through the [NRCS Web Soil Survey](#). In 2003, Sauk County revised its Private Sewage System Ordinance to allow the use of alternative systems.

As a general explanation, the NRCS Web Soil Survey shows soil suitability for conventional POWTS in the Town of Excelsior. The suitability classifications, ranging from very low to high suitability, are determined based on information obtained from the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office. These classifications are based on average slope, depth to soil saturation, average depth to bedrock, and flooding potential. As a general observation, soils that fall within or near the category of

most suitable are best suited for conventional POWTS. Soils that fall within or near the category of least suitable may be candidates for alternative POWTS, or may not be structured to support any POWTS.

Caution should be advised that while areas of sandy soils most commonly appear to be most suitable for POWTS, there is a danger of groundwater contamination with nitrates and bacteria, particularly when a cluster of homes are proposed and wells are placed down groundwater flow from POWTS. Additionally, POWTS are not well suited in areas of shallow soils with bedrock that is close to the surface. Although new septic technologies can now facilitate the installation of septic systems in these shallow soils areas, these septic systems also pose a greater potential threat of groundwater contamination, especially in highly developed areas.

Excelsior does have areas of sandy soils and of shallow soils close to bedrock. Private septic systems in areas of sandy and/or shallow soils may threaten surface water quality. In terms of lake development in areas of shallow soils, leachate from septic drain fields may not percolate through the soil as is intended, instead encountering an impermeable layer (i.e., bedrock) and traveling laterally to enter the lake. Whether this is an actual threat to the surface waters in Excelsior is unknown at this time, however preventative measures can be taken with the installation of new systems and replacement of failed systems. Systems should be sited as far from the water resource as possible. Shared septic systems must be sited in an area having suitable soils, and require verification that a new technology septic system will in fact adequately treat wastewater. These types of evaluations and any regulations guiding the placement of septic systems are best handled by an associated property owners' Association and adopted in a revised set of bylaws/covenants.

6.2 Solid Waste Disposal/Recycling

Solid waste disposal sites, or landfills, are potential sources of groundwater pollution in Sauk County. In 2000, the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department conducted an inventory to verify the number of active and inactive or abandoned landfill sites. According to that process, it was determined that Sauk County has 15 active landfill sites throughout the County, including sites for brush disposal. In addition, more than 40 sites were identified as abandoned sites. One of those 40 sites, the old Sauk County Landfill, is located in the Town of Excelsior in sections 14 and 15. Groundwater contamination has been detected at this site, but currently no active remediation program is in place. The site is still being measured for contamination levels. Current uses of the site include a training area for the Sauk County Sheriff's Department and a centralized location for Clean Sweep. Future uses for the landfill site include storage for the snowmobile association, as well as ATV and other recreational uses on the site.

Currently, the Town of Excelsior contracts with Peterson Sanitation, which provides solid waste and recycling services for Town residents. Currently solid waste is handled by Town & Country is brought to a transfer station in Lone Rock and finally to a sanitary landfill located in the Janesville area.

6.3 Septage Waste Disposal

The State of Wisconsin requires that homeowners pump their septic tanks on a 3-year basis to prolong the life of a POWTS and ensure optimal efficiency and protection of groundwater. Holding tanks are pumped on a regular basis, typically bi-monthly. Disposal methods of septage vary from deposition into a licensed municipal sewage treatment plant to land spreading. Land spreading requires special permits issued by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Part of this permitting process examines land area, soil types, and crops grown to ensure that natural resources in the area will be protected from such activity. Additionally, the permitting process ensures the protection of human health from viruses and pathogens contained in the septage.

6.4 Town Hall

The Excelsior Town Hall is located at 100 E Broadway Street in the Village of Rock Springs. The town owns no road maintenance or construction equipment at this time.



6.5 Law Enforcement

The Sauk County Sheriff's Department serves as the primary law enforcement agency to Town residents. Patrol officers are assigned general service areas within the county. These law enforcement services are considered adequate.

6.6 Emergency Services

The Town of Excelsior is served by the Reedsburg Fire Department in the majority of the Town, with the southeastern portion of the Town served by the North Freedom Fire Department. The western half of the Town is served by Reedsburg EMS and the eastern half of the Town is served by the Baraboo EMS. Includes a small eastern portion of the Town and is covered by the Lake Delton Ambulance Service. District 177 is located in the northwestern part of the Town and is covered by the Reedsburg Ambulance Service. District 184 includes the far southwestern corner of the Town and is covered by the Reedsburg Ambulance Service. District 186 is located in the southeastern quarter of the town and is covered by the Baraboo Area Ambulance Service. The entire Town is within the Reedsburg Area Fire District, which contracts with the North Freedom Fire District to serve some areas in the southeastern part of the Town. Jurisdictional boundaries of these respective services can be noted on *Map 1-4 Emergency Services*.

6.7 Library

The Town of Excelsior and surrounding communities are served by the South-Central Wisconsin Library System through Sauk County. In 2022 the Rock Springs Community Center finalized construction which includes a new community library. The library utilized by the Town is the Reedsburg Public Library located in the City of Reedsburg. The library hosts a collection of historic photographs of the area. The Baraboo City Library, which contains a variety of books, and the Kilbourn Library in the City of Wisconsin Dells provide literary options for the residents of Excelsior.

6.8 Communication, Electric Utilities and Heating Fuel

Telecommunication services are provided by Frontier, Brightspeed, Spectrum and Reedsburg Utility LightSpeed. Wireless communication facilities and fiber optics facilities are becoming increasingly available in the area.

Electrical power service in the Town is provided by Alliant Energy. According to a survey conducted prior to the 2009 Town comprehensive plan, homes heated by natural gas comprise 13.2% of the total households in Excelsior. Heating fuel is also provided through contracts with independent fuel dealers with roughly 62.5% of residents utilizing LP/Propane, or fuel oil (12.6%). Heating fuel from wood and biomass sources includes 45 households or 8.5% of the town's residents. The remaining households utilize electricity (2.4%).

6.9 Medical Facilities

The Town of Excelsior is served by three primary care medical facilities; SSM Health in Baraboo, Reedsburg Area Medical Center, and the Sauk Prairie Health Care and Clinic in Prairie du Sac. These facilities offer a wider range of services including family medicine, behavioral health, maternity, emergency services, dermatology, women's health, orthopedics, sleep medicine, and more specialized areas of health care.

6.10 Educational Facilities

Primary Educational Facilities

The Town of Excelsior is divided into two public school districts. The Reedsburg School District incorporates the western and northern two-thirds of the Town while the Baraboo School District includes the southeastern part of the Town. *Map 1-2 Jurisdictional Boundaries* shows the exact location of these boundaries. While the majority of school aged children attend one of the two districts, parochial schools also offer a schooling option as well as increasing involvement in home schooling opportunities.

- **Reedsburg School District**

The Reedsburg School District has located all of its schools in the City of Reedsburg. The Reedsburg High School located at 1100 S. Albert Avenue, Webb Middle School located at 707 N. Webb Avenue; Pineview Elementary School located at 1121 8th Street; Pineview Elementary School located at 1121 8th Street; Westside Elementary School located at 401 Alexander Avenue; and Prairie Ridge Elementary School located at 1400 8th Street. Additionally, the Reedsburg School District provides a community based 4K program.

- **Baraboo School District**

The Baraboo School District is located at 423 Linn Street in the City of Baraboo. The district has four K-5 elementary schools, one kindergarten center, one 4K school, one middle school and one high school. Baraboo High School is located on 1201 Draper Street, Baraboo. The Jack Young Middle School is located on 1531 Draper Street in Baraboo. Three of the elementary schools- Al Behrman Elementary, East Elementary, and Gordon L. Wilson Elementary- are located in Baraboo, and one- North Freedom Elementary- is in the Village of North Freedom.

- **Parochial Schools**

Sacred Heart Catholic School is at 545 North Oak Street in the City of Reedsburg. St Peter's Lutheran School is at 346 N. Locust Street in the City of Reedsburg. St. John's Lutheran School is at 515 5th Street in the City of Baraboo and is affiliated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. St. Joseph's Catholic School is at 310 2nd Street in the City of Baraboo. St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran School is at 101 Church Street in the Village of Wonewoc.

- **Secondary Educational Facilities**

The Town of Excelsior is within commuting distance of several two and four year college campuses including:

University of Wisconsin- Platteville Baraboo Sauk County offers freshman/sophomore-level university instruction leading to several associates degrees ranging from hospitality and tourism management to arts and sciences. UW- Platteville Baraboo Sauk County also offers a bachelor's degree program in business management. With fall 2019 enrollment at 348 students, the campus saw a nearly 30% decline in enrollment from 2018. UW-Baraboo has a continuing education program that offers a variety of non-credit seminars, workshops and short courses. The programs range from computer applications and communication to theater and art field trips.

Madison College Reedsburg Campus / Reedsburg provides technical and workplace skills training. The college offers associate degrees, technical diplomas, certificates and apprenticeships, and offers classes that transfer to four-year degree programs. Programs are offered in nursing, accounting, administrative assistance, business management, finance, and childcare education, among others. The college offers apprenticeships in electrical and machine maintenance, and tool and die. Madison College Reedsburg Campus also offers customized labor training for local businesses.

Madison College Truax Campus is a two-year technical and community college serving the greater Madison area. MATC provides training for over 100 careers, offering associate degrees, diplomas and certificates. The comprehensive curriculum includes technical, liberal arts, sciences, college transfer courses, basic and continuing education adult classes, as well as customized training courses. Class sizes are small, with many courses available online and through distant learning programs.

University of Wisconsin- Madison enrolled 44,995 students as of fall 2019. UW-Madison is the flagship research campus of the University of Wisconsin system. The world-class university offers more than 130 undergraduate programs, 160 master's degree programs and 130 Doctoral degree programs. UW-Madison also has professional degree programs in law, medicine, pharmacy and veterinary medicine.

Edgewood College is a private college located in Madison, which currently enrolls approximately 1,200 undergraduate students and 650 graduate students. Edgewood offers more than 60 majors and 40 Minors, plus opportunity for individualized programs. 82% of all classes have less than 20 students. Several master's degrees are offered as well. The adult accelerated degree programs allow working adults to earn an undergraduate degree in 3 years, completing both their general education and major requirements. Edgewood College also offers doctoral programs in education and nursing.

- **Childcare Facilities**

There are no commercial childcare facilities located in the Town of Excelsior. Formal childcare is available in nearby communities such as the City of Reedsburg, the City of Baraboo, the City of Wisconsin Dells, and the Village of Lake Delton. Informal care may be available locally with neighbors, family, and friends.

6.11 Recreational Facilities

There is a portion of Mirror Lake State Park within the Town of Excelsior, located in the northeast corner of the Town just off Highway 23. The park contains a boat landing, a fishing pier, playground, beach, and picnic area. It also has handicapped-accessible restrooms, trails, and camping available. The Baraboo River flows through the southwestern quarter of the Town of Excelsior and the Village of Rock Springs. There are numerous river access points. The Baraboo River, the longest restored free-flowing river in the Midwest, is a well-known canoe trail. The Village of Rock Springs maintains Wiedman Park on State Road 154 west of the Village. Ableman's Gorge State Natural Area has hiking trails for visitors. The Reedsburg County Club, which abuts the Town, has an

18-hole golf course. The Gurvin J. Romoren School Forest, located on the west side of Terrytown Rd, provides a space for educational opportunities for local youth.

6.12 Cemeteries and Churches

(Locations of each are identified on *Map 6-1 Community and Cultural Resources*)

6.13 Historical and Cultural Structures and Areas (locations of each are identified on *Map 6-1 Community and Cultural Resources*)

Historic Schools

- **Jopp School** was originally a log schoolhouse on the S.J. Jopp farm. School was first taught there in 1854. The log building was to be replaced by a frame building on the same property in 1873. In 1942 the school district was consolidated with another, and then in 1960 the school closed when the district joined the Baraboo schools.
- **Pleasant Valley School** was originally located in section 25 when it started out in the 1850's, but moved to section 26 as shown on an 1877 map. In 1883 a new schoolhouse was built, as well as in 1934. The school closed in 1955, and was remodeled into a private home. Following the closing students were sent to North Freedom.
- **Oak Grove School** opened in the 1850's near the center of section 35 on State Road 136. In 1894 a new building was constructed. In 1951 the school closed and students were sent to North Freedom. The old schoolhouse is now a private home.
- **Metcalf School** has a brief history. The school opened somewhere between 1861 and 1877, and was closed already in the 1880's. Students were sent to Excelsior School and Montgomery School. Originally the schoolhouse was located in the northeast quarter of section 8. The school was used as a church and eventually to the corner of State Road 33 and Chapel Road. The old schoolhouse was torn down and replaced by a new church known as Excelsior Chapel.
- **Excelsior School** was originally known as Red School when it was put up in 1855. It was located in the northeast quarter of section 17. In 1877 the school was relocated to the west central region of section 17. In 1914 the schoolhouse was replaced with a modern building made of concrete. The school closed in 1962 and the area was added to the Reedsburg School District. The schoolhouse was remodeled for residential purposes.
- **Butterfield School** was built in 1862 on the corner of State Road 23 and Coon Bluff Road in section 2. In 1960 students were sent to the Reedsburg School District, and the school was converted to a private home.
- **Montgomery School** dates back to 1857, and was located in the northwest quarter of section 5 on Briar Bluff Road. The school was closed during the 1949-1952 terms and again for the 1953-1954 terms due to low attendance. It finally closed for good in 1955. The school building was sold to a farmer in a different location who uses it as a garage.
- **Rock Springs/Ableman's School** was originally a log cabin built in the mid 1850's. In 1871 a new schoolhouse was built on the corner of River and Maple Streets. In 1974 another new school was built. The school is still used today and is located at 306 Elm Street in Rock Springs and is owned by Cooperative Education Service Agency (CESA) No. 5.

Other Historic Structures or Areas

- **Van Hise Rock** is listed on the National Register of Historic places. It played a key role in the history of geology as Charles Van Hise used this remnant to interpret the major structural features of the metamorphosed Precambrian rocks of the entire Wisconsin River Valley, or Baraboo District. It has long served and continues to serve as a hands-on field laboratory for professional geologists and students.
- **Ableman's Gorge:** The Upper Narrows of the Baraboo River, sometimes called Ableman's Gorge, is a State Natural Area and one of the classic geological field localities in Wisconsin if not the entire world. It is a classic gorge cut by the Baraboo River through Baraboo quartzite, Cambrian sandstone, and conglomerate. The cliffs and rocky slopes rise about 200 feet above the river to form a wall nearly three-fourths of a mile long. The latter portion is 250-450 feet wide and is composed of irregular quartzite cliffs. Spectacular unconformable contacts with younger Cambrian sandstone can be seen on both the north and south sides of the Precambrian Baraboo quartzite. The exposures of the unconformity between the ancient quartzite and the overlying sandstone.
- **Pioneer Log Village Museum** is a series of historic log buildings owned by the Reedsburg Area Historical Society. This is located on the north side of State Road 33 just west of Northwoods Drive.



6.14 Historical and Cultural Programs and Resources

- **Sauk County Historical Society** protects and maintains the history of the county by collecting and preserving historic artifacts, photographs and documents. The Historical Society has many community outreach programs, acts as a resource and research facility for local history and assists other Sauk County historical societies in pursuing their goals.
- **Sauk County Arts, Humanities and Historic Preservation Committee** provides funding through grant programs to community organizations and local governments seeking supplementary funds for local arts and history projects.
- **State of Wisconsin Historic Preservation Programs** provide several opportunities for cost sharing through grant and subgrant programs, through the Wisconsin Historical Society. These programs are dependent on variable annual funding sources.
- **Historic Preservation Subgrants** are available to governments and non-profit organizations for surveys to identify and evaluate historical, architectural and archaeological resources. These properties and districts can then be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Historic Preservation Tax Credit for Income-Producing Historic Buildings** is available to those who apply for and receive project approval before beginning physical work on the rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- **Historic Homeowner's Tax Credits** are available to those who apply for and receive project approval before beginning work on rehabilitating non-income personal residences.
- **Archaeological Sites Property Tax Exemption Program** provides tax exemption for owners of archaeological sites listed in the National or State Register of Historic places.
- **Jeffris Family Foundation** provides funding for bricks and mortar rehabilitation projects in Wisconsin's smaller communities.
- **Save America's Treasures** is a federal grant program for governments and non-profit organizations.

6.15 Utilities and Community Resources Goal, Objectives and Policies

Utilities and Community Resources Goal: Maintain and enhance utilities, facilities, services, and community resources.

Utilities and Community Resources Objectives and Policies:

UCRO-1 Encourage the maintenance and improvement of the utility infrastructure.

UCRO-2 Encourage energy conservation and use of renewable energy.

UCRO-3 Protect archeological and historic structures and the overall rural character of the Town.

UCRO-4 Provide for the proper disposal and recycling of solid waste.

UCRO-5 Maintain service in a safe and efficient manner.

7.0 Purpose

Transportation networks affect development patterns in a community. Effective systems allow people and goods to move efficiently for employment, commerce, and tourism.



The Town of Excelsior is well served by a mix of state highways, county and town roads that provide convenient travel across the community and access to virtually every corner within it. Uses include automobile travel, farm machinery and occasional bike traffic. As rural non-agriculture homes are built, the use of transportation routes for residential purposes has increased. Other transportation options both within and outside of the Town are varied, including airports, special service transportation, recreational transportation, and trucking. This section summarizes existing transportation options available to Town residents as well as conditions of Town and County roads. *Map 7-1 Transportation* shows the location of all transportation options in the Town.

7.1 Principal Arterial, Collector Roadways and Local Roads

Transportation routes can be classified by both form and function. *Table T1 Excelsior Roadway Classification System Definitions* identifies each road in the town by its classification and purpose. *Table T2 Excelsior Roadway Classification System Descriptions* describes the location of each of these roads including its potential users.

Table T1: Excelsior Roadway Classification System Definitions (Source: Wisconsin DOT)

Town of Excelsior Roadway Classification System (Definition)		
Road	Classification	Definition
I-90/94, U.S. Hwy 12, State Road 33	Principal Arterial	Principal Arterials serve longer intra-urban trips and traffic traveling through urban areas. They carry high traffic volumes and provide links to major activity centers.
State Road 23, 154, 136 (part)	Minor Arterial	Provide intra-community continuity and service to trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials. The minor arterial system interconnects with the urban arterial system and provides system connections to rural collectors.
State Road 136 (part) County Roads I, PF, and D	Major Collectors (and) Minor Collectors	Provide both land access service and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas. These facilities collect traffic from the local streets in residential neighborhoods and channel it onto the arterial system in the central business district. In some areas of development and traffic density, the collector may include the street grid, which forms the basic unit for traffic circulation.
Remaining Town Roads, County Road DD	Local Roads	Comprise all facilities not on one of the higher systems. They primarily provide direct access to land and access to order systems. Local roads offer the lowest level of mobility, and through traffic movements are discouraged.

Table T2: Excelsior Roadway Classification System Descriptions (Source: Wisconsin DOT)

Town of Excelsior Roadway Classification System (Description)		
Road	Classification	Description
I-90/94	Regional Interstate Roadway Principal Arterial	Located 12 miles east of the Town of Excelsior, Interstate 90/94 serves as a regional controlled-access facility within Wisconsin. It is considered a backbone route, according to the Connect 2050 Plan, connecting major population and economic centers
U.S. Hwy 12, State Road 33	Regional Interstate Roadway Principal Arterial	Located 2.5 miles east of Excelsior, Highway 12 serves as a principal north-south arterial, connecting Wisconsin Dells with Dane County and carrying a large volume of both local and through traffic. State Road 33 connects the Wisconsin Dells and Baraboo areas with the City of Reedsburg. Highway 33 runs east to west in the northern part of the Town.
State Road 23, 136 (part) and 154	Regional State Roadway Minor Arterial	Located in the northeastern part of the Town, State Road 23 runs easterly to connect to Interstate 90/94. That part of State Road 136 from the eastern town boundary to the Village of Rock Springs and State Road 154 west of Rock Springs serve as a Minor Arterial.
State Road 136 (part) and County Roads I and PF	Local Roads Major Collectors	That part of State Road 136 north of Rock Springs serves as a major collector while County I and PF direct north/south traffic at the southern boundary to the Village of North Freedom.
County Road D	Local Roads Minor Collectors	County Road D is a north/south road just west of Rock Springs.
County Road DD and remaining Town Roads	Local Roads	Many of the remaining local roads include those less traveled rural stretches and which connect roads under a higher classification.

7.2 Airports

Although there are no airports located in the Town of Excelsior, three area airports are available for small passenger and freight service: The Tri-County Airport, the Reedsburg Municipal Airport and Baraboo-Dells Municipal Airport.

The Tri-County Airport, located off County Road JJ, is jointly owned and operated by the Richland and Sauk Counties and provides passenger and cargo service.

The Reedsburg Municipal Airport is paved with lighted runways of 4,900 and 2,650 feet in length. It is designated as a “Transport/Corporate” airport facility intended to serve corporate jets, small passenger and cargo jet aircraft used in regional service and small airplanes used in commuter air service.

The Baraboo-Dells Municipal Airport is located east of the Town of Excelsior near the intersection of State Road 33 and US Highway 12. It offers small passenger and freight service.

The airport is equipped with 2 runways suitable for recreational and small business aircraft. It should be noted that the turf runway is closed from November 15 to April 15. The airport also offers privately owned hangars on site, hangar lots for lease, outdoor airplane parking and airplane maintenance facilities. The airport is classified as a regional general aviation facility by the Federal Aviation Administration.

The Dane County Regional Airport, located on the east side of the City of Madison, provides larger air carrier and passenger service and is approximately one hour from the Town. The airport is classified as a small-hub primary commercial service facility by the Federal Aviation Administration.

7.3 Elderly, Disabled and Veteran Transportation

Sauk County offers several specialized transportation assistance programs for persons who are elderly, disabled or veterans within the Town of Excelsior.

Persons who are elderly and disabled that are unable to transport themselves and who do not have family members or friends to drive them can take advantage of the Volunteer Driver Program by contacting the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) at 608-355-3289. This service is provided for medical, nutritional and personal business reasons. Individuals available for driving are encouraged to call.

Veterans in need of transportation assistance to a Veteran's Hospital or Clinic should contact the Veterans Service Office at 608-355-3260.

7.4 Other Transportation Options

Trucking

Trucking service is accommodated by the region's transportation network. There are several privately owned trucking operations within this area that meet the needs of the residents. Area freight services can be found in Reedsburg, Wisconsin Dells, and Baraboo.

Rail

The Wisconsin and Southern rail line serves the Town of Excelsior and runs through the Village of Rock Springs and the southwest corner of the Town. The rail line travels through the Cities of Reedsburg and Baraboo, crosses the Wisconsin River in the Village of Merrimac then travels to the City of Madison. Amtrak in Wisconsin Dells on the Canadian Pacific Railway provides passenger rail service to the area.

Bicycle and Recreational Trails (not in Excelsior)

The 400 Recreational Trail, which begins in downtown Reedsburg, stretches for 22 miles along the Baraboo River between Reedsburg and Elroy. The trail is part of a 117- mile trail system that includes the Elroy-Sparta Trail, the La Crosse River Trail, and the Great River Trail in west- central Wisconsin. The 400 Trail was built on an abandoned railroad grade with packed limestone screenings and planked surface bridges. The trail is maintained by



the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and is managed by the Wildcat Mountain State Park office. In 1990, the Wisconsin DNR created a management plan for the 400 Trail. The plan provides background information on the trail system including goals, annual objectives and additional benefits of the trail. The Town is expected to be connected to trails in the region via the Great Sauk State Trail in the near future.

Great Sauk State Trail

Paralleling the Wisconsin River and extending through the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area, the Great Sauk State Trail is a 10.5-mile trail paved with asphalt that bikers, roller bladers, and pedestrians can utilize for recreation. The trail is currently planned for further extension to the north. An interactive trail map can be found at: <https://www.greatsaukstatetrail.org/maps> The trail may be accessed from parking lots located at Goette Rd in the Town of Merrimac and at County Rd Z and State Rd 78 in the Town of Prairie du Sac.

ATV Trail System

There are ATV/UTV routes throughout the majority of the County. ATV/UTV routes are along the majority of Town roads and some County roads. Routes on County highways are open year-round. The routes are marked by signage that is maintained and paid for by the ATV/UTV clubs. An interactive motorized trail map with route hours can be found at: <https://saukgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=2235911fc3074bce898aefa98bb54652>

State of Wisconsin

The State of Wisconsin provides for vanpooling opportunities with the requirement that at least two State employees are part of the pool. Once this criterion is met, any individual may become part of the vanpool.

7.5 Review of State, Regional and Other Applicable Plans

The following is a review of local, state and regional plans and studies relevant to the Town that may affect the overall transportation system. The Town of Excelsior's transportation element incorporates these plans into the comprehensive plan in varying degrees to ensure an accurate reflection of the overall transportation system.

WisDOT Active Transportation Plan 2050

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is updating the Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan and Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan and combining them into the Wisconsin Active Transportation Plan 2050 (ATP). The ATP will be a statewide long-range plan focused on human-powered modes of transportation, such as bicycling and walking. This plan will evaluate active transportation opportunities and needs, resulting in policies and actions that will align with and further Connect 2050, Wisconsin's statewide long-range transportation plan.

USH 12 Corridor Growth Management Plan (October 2003)

The *Highway 12 Corridor Growth Management Plan* includes an overall vision and detailed recommendations for the entire 24-mile Highway 12 corridor in Sauk County. The Plan's recommendations are focused on identifying areas for development, preserving natural areas and

farms, protecting community appearance and views, promoting appropriate economic development, and making the most of transportation improvements. The Highway 12 Plan also includes potential tools and techniques which may be adopted by local governments to implement the recommendations of the Highway 12 Plan.

Although the Highway 12 Plan primarily focuses on communities directly adjacent to the corridor, it also includes recommendations which can be utilized by secondary communities, which are those communities adjacent to the ‘primary’ communities. Excelsior has been recognized as one of the secondary communities that will be impacted by the overall upgrades to and expansion of the Highway 12 corridor.

Connect 2050: Wisconsin’s Long-Range Multimodal Transportation Plan

Connect 2050 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the state. This plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and transit. This plan is currently being updated by WisDOT.

LRIP: Local Roads Improvement Program

One component of the LRIP is the Town Road Improvement Program (TRIP) which aids local town governmental units with improving seriously deteriorating town roads. A reimbursement program, TRIP pays up to 50% of total eligible costs with local governments providing the balance.

Transit Improvement Program

The TIP must be consistent with the region’s long-range transportation plan, include all transportation projects in the metropolitan area that are proposed for federal funding, and include at least four years of programming.

Sauk County Highway Improvement Plan

The Highway Improvement Program for Sauk County identifies and prioritizes specific county road improvement projects for the next five years.

7.6 Analysis of the Existing Transportation Systems and Plans

As previously described, the Town of Excelsior’s transportation system consists of local, county and state roads. Responses from the Town survey indicated that Excelsior’s local and county roads are in good condition, and it appears that there were no major transportation-related issues in the Town at the time of the survey completion.



7.7 Transportation Goal, Objectives, and Policies

Transportation Goal: Preserve and maintain a safe and efficient transportation network.

Transportation Objectives and Policies:

TO-1 Maintain road quality by utilizing state and federal aid for road improvement.

TO-2 Coordinate town road standards with adjacent municipalities.

TO-3 Address safety concerns with regard to multi-use roads.

TO-4 Development requiring new or upgrading of existing roads and permits as required must be paid for by the developer, not by the existing tax base.

TO-4a Impact fees (if required by other units of government, or other infrastructure costs attributable to new development) are to be paid completely by the developer.

TO-5 Mowing should consider vehicular safety, the negative impacts of wildlife habitat, and the spread of invasive species

8.0 Purpose

Through its comprehensive planning process, the Town of Excelsior has identified a desire to foster local independent business ventures as they relate to the service industry and tourism as well as everyday support businesses for residents. The Town has also recognized the importance of ensuring quality development that is not only attractive, but of a mix and location to attract consumers. This Chapter provides an overview of economic activity both in the Town and for Sauk County overall. It also provides a listing of local and state programs focused on economic development.

8.1 Area Employment and Economic Activity

An investigation of commuting patterns, regional employment and income characteristics, tourism economic impacts and agriculture economic impacts provides insight to the county's economic vitality.

Commuting Patterns

In terms of commuting patterns, the 2020 Census indicates that 6.6% of Excelsior residents work at home. It is assumed that the majority of these residents are involved in farming. For those who commute to their jobs, 78.1% drive alone while 8.5% carpool. The average commuting time to work is approximately 23.2 minutes.

Commuting patterns in rural areas are typically reflective of both the number of on-site agriculture operations as well as numbers of rural residential homes not related to agriculture activities. A larger percentage of Excelsior's population works from home when compared to Sauk County, yet Excelsior has a slightly longer average travel time. The number of Excelsior residents who commute alone decreased from 9.4% in 2010 to 6.6% in 2020, and the average travel time increased by 4.1 minutes during that same period.

Table E1: Commuting Patterns

Table E1: Commuting Patterns, 2020				
	2010		2020	
	Excelsior	Sauk County	Excelsior	Sauk County
Drive Alone	80.6%	80.7%	78.1%	81.9%
Carpooling	7.0%	10.2%	8.5%	8.3%
Public Transportation	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Walk	0.0%	2.4%	5.2%	3.3%
Other Means	3.0%	1.3%	1.7%	1.4%
Worked at Home	9.4%	5.3%	6.6%	4.9%
Average Travel Time (minutes)	19.1	21.0	23.2	22.2

Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2020

Employment Characteristics in Excelsior and Sauk County

Sauk County provides many employment opportunities, as is reflected in the low unemployment rates, occupation type and major employers in the area. This data is shown in **Table E9 Labor Force and Employment**.

According to the American Community Survey, the unemployment rate for the Town of Excelsior for 2020 was 1.7%, while the unemployment rate for Sauk County was 2.3%. The 2020 census identified that of the 1,045 Town of Excelsior residents over 16 in the civilian labor force, only 18 persons were unemployed while 1,027 persons (67.9% of the population over 16 years of age) were employed. The remaining 467 people either claim disability or are retired. In 2020 there were no residents in the Armed Forces.

Area Economic Viability and Employment Opportunities

The potential for economic opportunities within commuting distance of Excelsior continues to improve. The City of Reedsburg is host to a number of Tax Increment Finance Districts (TIF) to facilitate the industrial tax base and high-end manufacturing jobs. The City has also established a business park focused on promoting industrial development in the City’s business Center. The agricultural, retail sales and services sectors of the economy are strong. Tourism is playing an increasing role in this area with the 400 Trail and historically maintained downtown area.

The major county employers provide diverse employment opportunities for residents of the Town of Excelsior. **Table E2** shows the largest employers in Sauk County as of 2022. While most of the county is within commuting distance of Excelsior, the major employment areas of Baraboo, Lake Delton / Wisconsin Dells, and Reedsburg are within the average commute time of 23.2 minutes from Excelsior.

In addition to business opportunities outside of the Town, the Town continues to provide a number of jobs in the agriculture industry.

Table E2: Sauk County Largest Employers

Table E2: Sauk County Largest Employers		
Employer	Product	Location
Cardinal Glass	Insulated Glass	Spring Green
Grede	Ductile Iron Castings	Reedsburg
Teel Plastics	Plastics	Baraboo
Kalahari Development	Waterparks & Resorts	Wisconsin Dells
Ho-Chunk Gaming	Casino	Baraboo
Wilderness Resort	Waterparks & Resorts	Wisconsin Dells

Source: Source: U.S. Census; Emsi; Wisconsin’s WORKnet; Municipality Population Estimates, Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center; Applied Geographic Solutions via LocateInWisconsin

Area Income Comparison

According to the 2020 American Community Survey, the median income for residents in Excelsior was \$72,083. **Table E3 Regional Comparison of Income Distribution** shows that compared to the neighboring Towns, the County and the State, Excelsior has the highest median income. Excelsior has a higher median household income than the state and county, but slightly lower when compared to adjacent towns.

Table E3: Regional Comparison of Income Distribution

Table E3: Regional Comparison of Income Distribution, 2020							
Household Income, 2020 Estimates	Percent of Households						
	Excelsior	Dellona	Baraboo	Freedom	Reedsburg	Sauk County	Wisconsin
Less Than \$10,000	1.5%	6.2%	60%	5%	2.8%	4.1%	4.6%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	0.8%	0.8%	3%	2%	0.4%	3.5%	4.1%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	4.3%	3.2%	10%	2%	2.8%	9.6%	8.6%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	7.1%	4.4%	3%	5%	7.5%	9.9%	9.0%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	12.6%	9.8%	9%	12%	13.5%	12.7%	13.0%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	26.8%	29.5%	16%	24%	26.9%	20.8%	18.9%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	14.8%	16.0%	19%	17%	14.6%	14.4%	14.1%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	19.1%	21.0%	29%	22%	19.1%	16.7%	16.3%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	6.2%	6.7%	5%	6%	6.5%	4.8%	6.1%
\$200,000 or more	6.8%	2.4%	6%	6%	5.8%	3.6%	5.2%
Median Household Income	\$72,083	\$73,663	\$82,667	\$77,500	\$67,422	\$62,808	\$63,293

Source: American Community Survey, 2020

Agriculture Economic Activity

The most recently compiled and fully analyzed data available for state agriculture economic characteristics is from 2022, broken down by county. This information is provided in Tables E4-E5 as indicators of the important economic impact agriculture has on communities. **Table E4 Characteristics of Hired Farm Labor** indicates that from 2017 to 2022, both Sauk County (-7.2%) and Wisconsin (-8%) saw a decrease in hired farm workers. The annual payment indicates that most are seasonal employees. **Table E5 Average Value of Farmland** shows that Sauk County has lower values and income per farm than the average statewide. The average value of farmland buildings and the value of machinery and equipment are based on market value. **Table E5b Average Value of Farmland by Value of Sales** shows that Sauk County has a lower percentage of farms with a positive net income (48.7%) than Wisconsin’s average (53.4%). Sauk County also has a slightly higher percentage of farms that receive government payments (31.4%) than statewide (36.2%). The fact that 74% of the farms in the County had a sales value of less than \$100,000 per year in 2022 indicates that many of the farms in Sauk County are relatively small, family-farm operations. Many of these farms depend on off-farm work or investments for their main source of income. Overall, economic development strategies for agriculture include looking at opportunities for diversification in products produced, producing for niche markets, direct marketing, agri-tourism and participating in grower cooperatives.

Table E4: Characteristics of Hired Farm Labor, Sauk County and the State of Wisconsin 2017

Table E4a: Characteristics of Hired Farm Labor by Wisconsin Counties 2017					
	Percent of farms with any hired labor	Number of hired farm workers	Change in hired farm workers net change 2012-2017	Change in hired farm workers, percent change 2012-2017	Hired farm worker payroll (\$1,000 payroll)
Sauk County	19.9%	1,226	-59	-15.1%	\$17,806
Wisconsin	26.1%	72,425	-2,015	-10.6%	\$1,052,738

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017

Table E4b: Characteristics of Hired Farm Labor by Wisconsin Counties 2022					
	Percent of farms with any hired labor	Number of hired farm workers	Change in hired farm workers net change 2017-2022	Change in hired farm workers, percent change 2012-2017	Hired farm worker payroll (\$1,000 payroll)
Sauk County	21.00%	1,138	-88	-7.20%	\$17,806
Wisconsin	22.80%	66,659	-5,766	-8.00%	\$1,052,738

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2020

Table E5: Average Value of Farmland

Table E5a: Average Value of Farmland, 2017					
	Average Value of all agricultural products sold	Estimated market value of land and buildings		Average value of machinery and equipment per farm	Average net farm income per farm
		Per Farm	Per Acre		
Sauk County	\$107,354	\$674,903	\$2,485	\$130,623	\$24,157
Wisconsin	\$176,368	\$1,083,640	\$4,904	\$156,689	\$36,842

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017

Table E5b: Average Value of Farmland, 2022					
	Average Value of all agricultural products sold	Estimated market value of land and buildings		Average value of machinery and equipment per farm	Average net farm income per farm
		Per Farm	Per Acre		
Sauk County	\$191,083	\$1,329,231	\$6,278	\$160,529	\$42,934
Wisconsin	\$285,347	\$1,440,749	\$6,117	\$191,104	\$77,839

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2022

Table E5b: Average Value of Farmland by Value of Sales

Table E5a: Average Value of Farmland by Value of Sales, 2017									
	Percent of farms with positive net income	Value of total government payments (in thousands)	Percent of farms receiving government payments	Percent Farms market value of agricultural products sold					
				\$1,000 to \$19,999	\$20,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$249,000	\$250,000 to \$499,999	\$500,000 to \$999,999	\$1,000,000 or more
Sauk County	46.7%	\$2,048	45.5%	55.8%	21.1%	10.6%	6.4%	6.1%	0.0%
Wisconsin	50.8%	\$126,583	42.4%	6.6%	18.9%	10.6%	6.6%	3.9%	3.3%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017

Table E5b: Average Value of Farmland by Value of Sales, 2022									
	Percent of farms with positive net income	Value of total government payments (in thousands)	Percent of farms receiving government payments	Percent Farms market value of agricultural products sold					
				\$1,000 to \$19,999	\$20,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$249,000	\$250,000 to \$499,999	\$500,000 or more	
Sauk County	48.7%	\$3,074	31.4%	33.5%	16.8%	10.5%	8.0%	7.5%	
Wisconsin	53.4%	\$147,121	26.2%	32.0%	19.6%	10.2%	7.1%	9.7%	

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2022

Tourism Economic Impact and Opportunity

The overall statewide economic impact of travelers is broken down in several ways. Looking at the expenditures by category for 2022, travelers spent more than half of their total estimated travel expenditures on lodging and food expenditures. Recreation expenditures represent 13.2% and lodging expenses represent 27% of the total estimated traveler expenditures. 19.5% of traveler expenses were spent on retail, and 26% were spent on food and beverage. 14.1% of Wisconsin traveler expenditures were spent on transportation within the state.

The total number of full-time equivalent jobs supported by visitor activity in the state was 122,799 in 2022, an increase of 3.6% from 2021. Visitor volume in Wisconsin increased by 8.7% from 2021 to 2022, and visitor spending increased by 15.7% to \$14.9 billion. The local government revenue generated was \$759.4 million and the total state government revenues generated were \$1.516 billion in 2022.

Sauk County is the third most popular tourism destination in the State, behind Milwaukee and Dane Counties. In 2022, Sauk County had \$1.8 billion in tourism spending and saw a 7.9% percent increase in direct visitor spending.

Table E6 Travel Expenditures and Economic Impact shows that the Wisconsin Department of Tourism estimated traveling expenditures at approximately \$2,091 million during 2022, up from \$1,669 million in 2021. Spending by overnight visitors reached \$10 billion in 2022, with 45 million overnight trips in Wisconsin, spending an average of \$219 per person trip.

Table E6: Travel Expenditures and Economic Impact

Table E6: Total Economic Impact 2022							
	Total Economic Impact		Percent Change	Direct Visitor Spending	Employment	Total Labor Income	State & Local Taxes
	2021	2022					
Sauk County	\$1,779,000,000	\$1,920,000,000	7.9%	\$1,603,100,000	11,455	\$299,400,000	\$142,500,000
State of WI	\$20,929,000,000	\$23,655,000,000	13%	\$14,880,100,000	174,623	\$6,525,700,000	\$1,516,200,000

Source: Wisconsin Department of Tourism, 2022

The northeastern portion of Sauk County has many opportunities for recreational based tourism. Some of the sites visited in or near the Town of Excelsior include the 400 Trail for biking in the summer and snowmobiling in the winter, Mirror Lake State Park for camping, and the Baraboo River and Narrows Creek for paddling and fishing opportunities. Private recreational opportunities in the Town of Excelsior include swimming and boating on Lake Virginia; the Mid-Continent Railway Historical Society Museum; and the Reedsburg Country Club. Other recreational opportunities in Sauk County include the Great Sauk State Trail and Devils Lake State Park.

The Town of Excelsior’s proximity to so many regional tourism locations presents an opportunity to expand its economic base. This allows the Town to have a more diversified economy and economic opportunities for residents. The Town should encourage the formation of a unique niche market for agricultural tourism that would carefully compliment the recreational tourism industry of the Wisconsin Dells area as well as the resource-based recreational attractions such as Mirror Lake and Devil’s Lake State Park, without attempting to duplicate intensive, large-scale commercial recreational tourism areas. Main thoroughfares, State Roads 23, 33, 136, and 154 bisect the Town, and emphasizes the rural landscape. The Town should continue to support small scale ag tourism and resource-based recreation to continue this emphasis.

8.2 Local Employment and Economic Activity

The Town of Excelsior and Sauk County provide many local employment opportunities as is reflected in the education levels, labor force and occupation characteristics of Excelsior.

Education, Income Levels and Employment Activity

Table E7 Educational Attainment, Excelsior shows that Excelsior has maintained a higher level of high school graduates than the county as a whole, yet lower higher education attainment. Residents of Excelsior with a high school diploma and residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher increased from 2010-2020. From 2010-2020, the number of Excelsior residents with a high school diploma increased by 4.2%, while Sauk County saw its number of high school graduates decrease by 0.3% over the same time period.

Table E7 Educational Attainment

Table E7: Educational Attainment				
Year	High School Diploma		Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	
	Excelsior	Sauk County	Excelsior	Sauk County
2010	90.9%	88.8%	15.9%	20.0%
2020	95.1%	88.5%	19.1%	23.8%

Source: U.S. Census 2020

Income Levels

As detailed earlier in this chapter, 12.6% of households in the Town of Excelsior were in the \$35,000 to \$49,999 income bracket as of 2020. Another 26.8% of the households were in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 income bracket. This is compared to Sauk County, with 12.7% of the households in the \$35,000 to \$49,999 income bracket and 20.8% of the households in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 income bracket.

Another tool in the assessment of income distribution is the comparison of the median household income with the average household income for a particular year. A median value represents the middle value in an ordered list of data values. It divides the values into two equal parts with one half of the values falling below the median and one half falling above the median. An average value is found by dividing a sum of values by its total number of values. Average household income is calculated by dividing aggregate household income by the number of households in a given geographic area for a given year. Aggregate household income is the sum of the incomes of a sample of households in a given geographic area.

Table E8 Distribution of Household Income, 1999 shows that in 2020, the median household income for the Town of Excelsior was \$72,083 while the average household income was \$90,564. The ratio of the average to the median income is 1.26. As a comparison, Sauk County’s median household income is \$49,326, the Town of Dellona’s is \$73,663, the Town of Baraboo’s is \$82,667, the Town of Reedsburg’s is \$67,422, and the Town of Freedom’s is at \$77,500.

Table E8: Distribution of Household Income, 2020

Table E8: Distribution of Household Income, 2020			
Distribution of Household Income, 2020	Percent of Households		
	Town of Excelsior	Sauk County	Wisconsin
Less than \$10,000	1.5%	4.1%	4.6%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	0.8%	3.5%	4.1%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	4.3%	9.6%	8.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	7.1%	9.9%	9.0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	12.6%	12.7%	13.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	26.8%	20.8%	18.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.8%	14.4%	14.1%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	19.1%	16.7%	16.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	6.2%	4.8%	6.1%
\$200,000 or more	6.8%	3.6%	5.2%
Median Household Income	\$72,083	\$62,808	\$63,293
No. of Households	723	26,751	2,377,935
Avg. Household Income	\$90,564	\$77,000	\$82,757
Ratio of mean to median HH Income	1.26	1.23	1.31

Source: American Community Survey, 2020

In 2020, Sauk County (1.23) had a lower ratio of average income to median household income compared to the Town of Excelsior (1.26) and the State of Wisconsin (1.31).

Employment

Table E9 Labor Force and Employment shows that, of the 1,603 persons in Excelsior during 2020, 1,045 persons aged 16 or older are in the labor force, and an additional 467 persons aged 16 or older are not in the labor force. Of those in the labor force, 18, or 1.7%, are unemployed. This is lower than the unemployment rate for Sauk County of 2.3%, according to the American Community Survey.

Table E9: Labor Force and Employment

Table E10: Labor Force Status, 2020		
Category	Excelsior	Sauk County
Population 16 years and over	1,512	51,342
Not in Labor Force	467	16,316
In labor force	1045	35,026
Armed Forces	0	20
Civilian labor force	1045	35,006
Employed	1027	34,197
Unemployed	18	809
Unemployment Rate	1.7%	2.3%

Source: American Community Survey, 2020

Forecasting future employment and available labor helps a community understand the age and gender make-up of their future workforce (people between the ages of 15 and 64), the size of the future workforce and how it will affect the overall population and the demand on certain future jobs in the community. A future workforce profile also assists a Town in planning for desired future levels and types of employment within the economy on an area. Typically, a workforce projection is based upon an analysis of the age group distribution and the change in population over time. However, it is difficult to complete these projections for the Town of Excelsior due to insufficient Census data on future age distribution at the town level. One way to assess the future labor force is to consider possible future age group distribution in the Town of Excelsior based on data for age group trends in Sauk County from 2000 to 2020. This assumes that the Town of Excelsior will experience changes in age group categories parallel to those occurring in Sauk County.

Table E10 Labor Force Change by Age Group in Sauk County, 2000-2020 and **Chart E11 Sauk County Labor Force Trends by Age 2000-2020** show the age group data forecast for the Sauk County labor force. In looking at **Table E10**, notable trends include the older age groups (55-64, 65-74 and 75+) showing the greatest amount of increase, and the 45-54 age group (the age group in their prime earning years) showing the greatest amount of decrease from 2000-2020 (-35.6%). According to **Table E10**, the age group 65-74 grows the most, exhibiting a 51.9% increase over the past two decades. Notably, the 25-44 age group shows an average increase of 29.3% from 2000-2020.

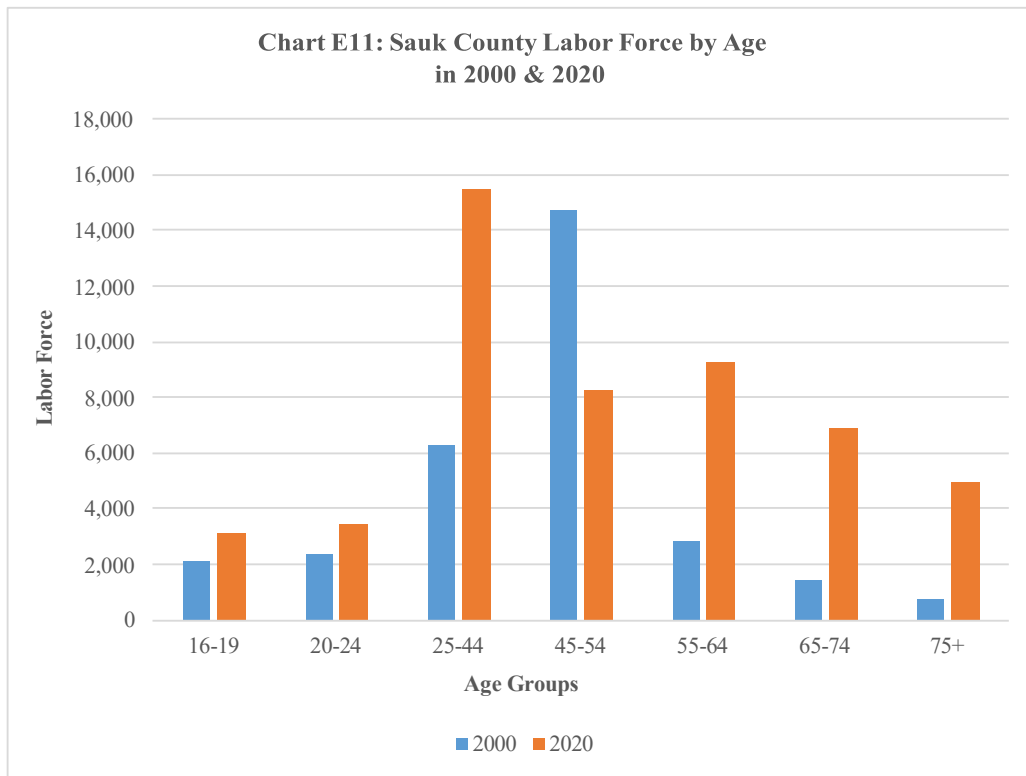
Table E10: Labor Force Change by Age Group in Sauk County, 2010-2020

Table E10: Labor Force by Age Group in Sauk County, 2010 - 2020						
Age Groups	2000	2010	Percent Change	2020	Percent Change	Average Change
16-19	2,122	3,152	32.7%	3,137	-0.5%	16.1%
20-24	2,346	3,408	31.2%	3,422	0.4%	15.8%
25-44	6,261	15,744	60.2%	15,485	-1.7%	29.3%
45-54	14,746	9,432	-56.3%	8,218	-14.8%	-35.6%
55-64	2,870	7,488	61.7%	9,248	19.0%	40.4%
65-74	1,398	4,479	68.8%	6,882	34.9%	51.9%
75+	748	4,470	83.3%	4,950	9.7%	46.5%
Total Labor Force	30,491	48,173		51,342		

Source: American Community Survey, 2020

Chart E11 clarifies that the 25-44 age group has increased dramatically, while the 45-54 age group has decreased dramatically from 2000-2020. It also emphasizes the shift in labor force from the 45-54 age group to the older age groups over the last two decades.

Chart E11: Sauk County Labor Force Trends by Age 2000-202



Source: Sauk County Workforce Profile, www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/cp_pdf/S111cpw.pdf

While assessing the types of employment opportunities in the Town of Excelsior **Table E12 Employment by Industry, Town of Excelsior** shows that the manufacturing industry as the major employer in 2020. In addition to manufacturing, construction, retail trade, and educational, health, and social services employed the largest percentages of the Town’s population in 2020. Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing saw the greatest rate of change from 2010-2020, followed by the construction industry. Wholesale trade saw the greatest decrease from 2010-2020. The agriculture industry is also of note, which saw a slight decrease in employment over the past decade.

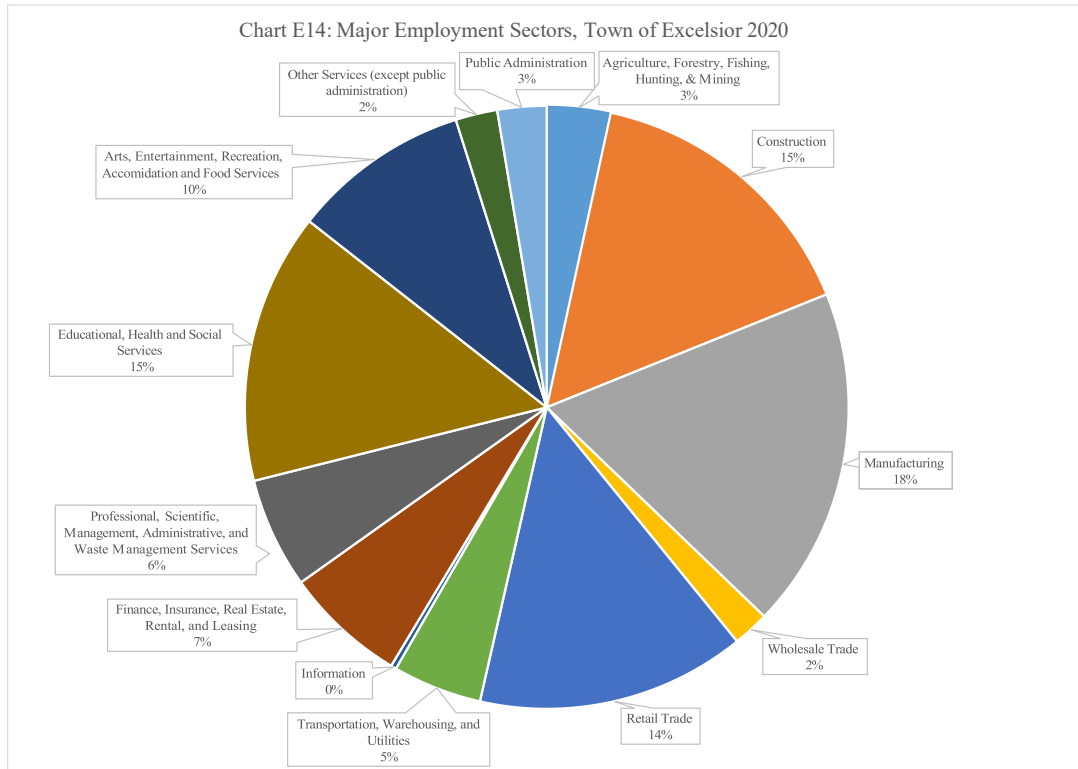
Chart E13 Major Employment Sectors, Town of Excelsior graphically shows the major areas of employment in the Town. **Table E15 Employment by Industry, Sauk County** provides an overview of Sauk County’s employment sectors. In 2020, educational, health, and social services was the major employer, followed by the manufacturing and recreation industries. The largest increase from 2000-2020 in the county came from professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services. Meanwhile, the employment sector with the largest decrease over the past two decades has been agriculture. **Chart E14 Major Employment Sectors, Town of Excelsior** graphically shows the major areas of employment in the county.

Table E12: Employment by Industry, Town of Excelsior

Table E12: Employment by Industry, Town of Excelsior 2010 - 2020			
Industry	Percent Employed Population, 2010	Percent Employed Population, 2020	Rate of Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Mining	3.7%	3.4%	-7.7%
Construction	7.5%	15.5%	106.4%
Manufacturing	18.3%	18.3%	-0.2%
Wholesale Trade	5.0%	1.9%	-61.1%
Retail Trade	13.0%	14.4%	11.1%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	6.2%	4.8%	-1.4%
Information	0.4%	0.3%	-18.2%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	1.5%	6.5%	321.5%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services	4.5%	5.9%	31.3%
Educational, Health and Social Services	22.9%	14.5%	-36.5%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	8.6%	9.5%	11.3%
Other Services (except public administration)	3.2%	2.2%	-30.3%
Public Administration	5.2%	2.6%	-49.8%
Civilian Employed Population	840	1,027	22.3%

Source: American Community Survey, 2020

Chart E13: Major Employment Sectors, Town of Excelsior, 2020



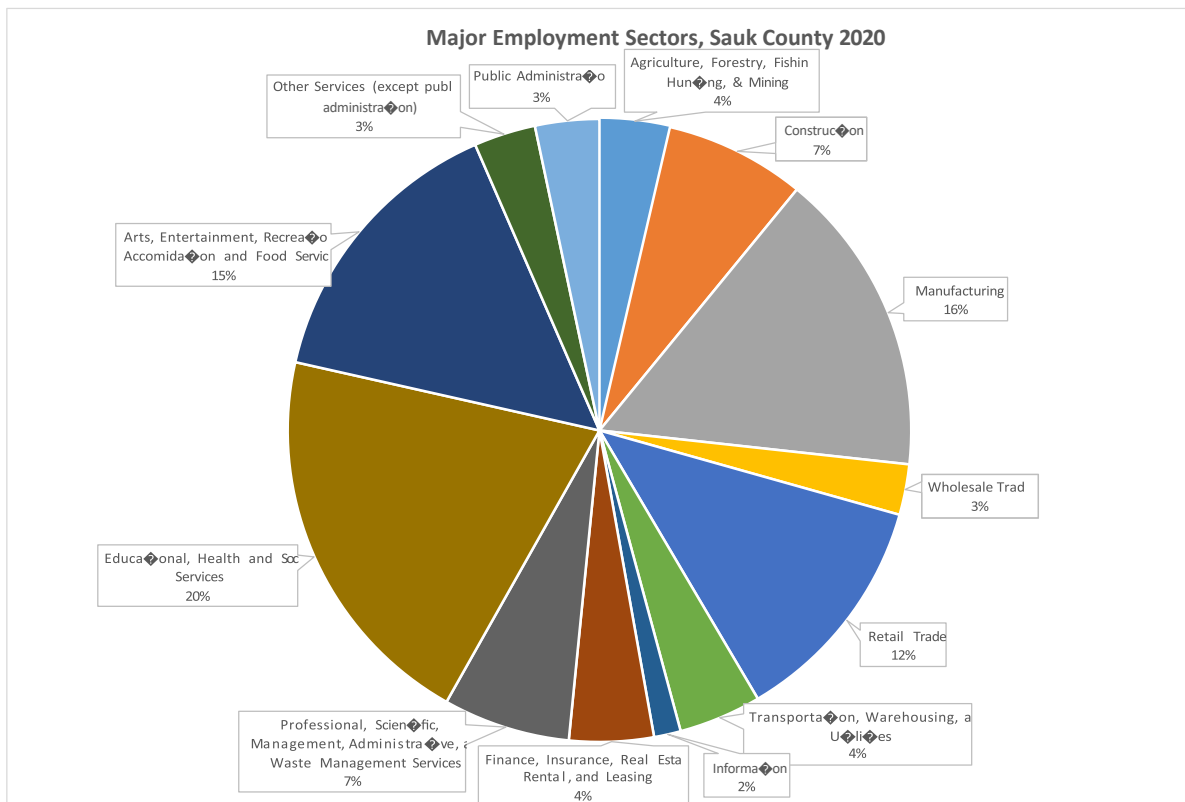
Source: American Community Survey, 2020

Table E14: Employment by Occupation, Sauk County

Table E14: Employment by Industry, Sauk County 2000 - 2020				
Industry	Percent Employed Population, 2000	Percent Employed Population, 2010	Percent Employed Population, 2020	Rate of Change 2000 to 2020
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Mining	5.3%	4.2%	3.6%	-31.5%
Construction	7.8%	8.0%	7.3%	-6.6%
Manufacturing	19.1%	17.3%	15.8%	-17.2%
Wholesale Trade	3.2%	3.3%	2.6%	-17.9%
Retail Trade	13.2%	12.5%	12.2%	-7.9%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	4.0%	3.7%	4.3%	7.2%
Information	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%	-7.4%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	4.3%	4.6%	4.4%	1.8%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services	5.2%	5.7%	6.6%	26.8%
Educational, Health and Social Services	17.6%	17.4%	20.4%	15.7%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	12.1%	15.4%	15.0%	23.6%
Other Services (except public administration)	3.1%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%
Public Administration	3.5%	3.3%	3.3%	-5.0%
Civilian Employed Population	29,108	33,210	34,197	17.5%

Source: American Community Survey, 2020

Chart E15 Major Employment Sectors, Sauk County



Source: American Community Survey, 2020

Local Employment Opportunities

Within the Town of Excelsior several small businesses exist. These include construction businesses and agricultural businesses, including agricultural tourism.

8.3 Opportunities to Attract and Retain Business

As stated earlier, it will be important for Excelsior to foster cottage industries and low-impact tourism opportunities that both reflect and protect the Town's history, natural resources and current residents. The Town should encourage the formation of a unique niche market for tourism and prohibit business development similar to that in Wisconsin Dells and other large-scale tourism areas.

8.4 Other Programs and Partnerships

- **Sauk County Development Corporation's** mission is to promote and retain the diverse economic vitality of Sauk County and its individual communities.
- **Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS)** provides a broad range of financial resources to help businesses and communities undertake economic development. These programs include:
- **MadREP** serves as a partner and collaborator to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and other state agencies, as well as economic development initiatives within counties, municipalities, chambers of commerce, and the private sector.
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Economic Development Program** Provides grants to communities to promote local job creation and retention.
- **CDBG – Public Facilities** helps eligible local governments upgrade community facilities, infrastructure, and utilities to benefit lot to moderate income residents
- **Rural Economic Development Program** offers low-interest loans for businesses with fewer than 25 employees.
- **US Small Business Administration (SBA)** provided loan guarantees that are used in conjunction with bank financing to improve loan terms.
- **Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)** a program that buys down commercial interest rates, enabling Wisconsin lenders to offer short-term, below-market rate loans to small, minority- or women-owned businesses.
- **Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs)** are municipal bonds whose proceeds are loaned to private persons or to businesses to finance capital investment projects. All Wisconsin municipalities – cities, villages, and towns are authorized to issue IRBs.
- **Major Economic Development Program (MED)** is designed to provide financial assistance for Wisconsin business startup or expansions.

- **Customized Labor Training Program (CLT)** encourages businesses to invest in the retooling and upgrading of equipment in order to increase the productivity of its labor force by providing a grant of up to 50% of the cost of a workforce training program.
- **Technology Development Fund Program (TDF)** is designed to provide assistance to businesses embarking on technical research projects aimed at developing new products or processes or improving existing products or processes.
- **Wisconsin Small Business Development Center** helps to ensure the state's economic health and stability through formative business education by counseling, technology and information transfer, and instruction. By forming partnerships between the University of Wisconsin Extension and the business schools and departments of the University of Wisconsin system, the center provides an array of programs, counseling, special initiatives, research and publications.
- **Forward Wisconsin** is a non-profit economic development-marketing corporation for the State of Wisconsin. This organization creates marketing strategies aimed at luring businesses and industry from other states within the United States and other countries throughout the world to improve the corporate climate in Wisconsin. The organization assists in locating companies throughout the State, based on those companies' needs. Assistance is available to aid with community development projects and marketing.
- **Agriculture Development Zone (South-Central)** is a new agricultural economic development program in the State of Wisconsin that provides tax credits to farm operators and business owners who make new investments in agricultural operations. These tax incentives are offered for three basic categories of investment including job creation, environmental remediation, or capital investments in technology/new equipment. This program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.

8.5 Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Comprehensive Planning Legislation requires communities to evaluate and promote the use of environmentally contaminated sites for commercial or industrial uses. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Environmental Remediation and Redevelopment Program maintains a list of contaminated sites.

The Town of Excelsior does not have any open sites. Site 09-57-293909, an underground storage tank leak has since been closed with no action required. The use at this location is commercial and future use is planned as commercial.

The former Sauk County landfill has had contamination issues, impacting the Town's residents and property values. The former landfill has been designated with the Superfund ID: WID980610141 by the Environmental Protection Agency. Local municipalities worked to create a property final use plan in 2006. The buildings located on the site are currently used for training and storage purposes. Future land uses are being considered, as informed by Sauk County and local partners. More information from the EPA regarding the site can be found [here](#).

DNR Definitions:

- **Brownfields:** The DNR identifies brownfields as abandoned or underutilized commercial or industrial properties where expansion or redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived contamination
- **Open:** Spills, LUST, ERP, VPLE and abandoned container activities in need of clean up or where cleanup is still underway. Not applicable to activity types of “General Property” and “No Action Required by RR Program.
- **Closed:** Activities where investigation and cleanup of the contamination has been completed and the state has approved all cleanup actions. Not applicable to activity types of “General Property” and “No Action Required by RR Program.
- **Historic:** Spills where cleanups may have been completed prior to 1996 and no end date is shown. Spill activities in this category show Historic status. Please contact regional spills coordinator (WDNR) if you need more information.
- **NAR:** No action required by RR Program, there was or may have been a discharge to the environment and based on known information, DNR has determined that the responsible party does not need to undertake an investigation or cleanup in response to that discharge. NAR activities in BRRTS have an activity number prefix of 09.
- **Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST)** A LUST site has contaminated soil and/or groundwater with petroleum, which includes toxic and cancer-causing substances. However, given time, petroleum contamination naturally breaks down in the environment (biodegradation) Some LUST sites may emit potentially explosive vapors. LUST activities in BRRTS have an activity number prefix of 03’.

8.6 Economic Development Goal, Objectives and Policies Economic**Development Goal:**

Promote economic success of residents and businesses that reflect and are compatible with the rural character of the Town.

Economic Development Objectives and Policies:

EDO-1 Encourage the maintenance and development of home-based businesses, cottage industries, farming, and farm related businesses that complement the agrarian and rural character of the Town.

EDP-1a The Town will work with Sauk County to develop new zoning options that will allow for innovative opportunities for economic development related to agriculture, home based businesses, and farm related businesses to negate the need to rezone, but rather incorporate a system of conditional uses under the predominant zoning district.

EDO-2 Promote alternative and renewable forms of energy as a form of economic development and self-sustainability.

EDO-3 Consider the location of new residential development to prevent future conflicts with agricultural uses.

EDP-3a Allow commercial zoning only within Extra Territorial (ET) areas next to Reedsburg and those lands directly adjacent to the Reedsburg ET District that are designated "Future Commercial" on the Town's Future Land Use Map. Land zoned commercial that is adjacent to land zoned residential shall consider appropriate buffers as approved by the plan commission.

9.0 Purpose

The Town of Excelsior's landscape varies dramatically from rolling upland farm fields, scattered wetlands and streams to the steep forested bluffs of the Baraboo Range. This landscape provides recreational opportunities such as hiking and hunting. Public participation efforts reveal that preserving these natural features and productive agricultural lands as being critical to maintaining the desired agrarian and rural lifestyle of current residents. Additionally, public input has emphasized that water quality protection and



improvement is crucial and should be considered a key planning issue. This section of Excelsior's plan highlights these and other important natural resource issues in the Town and provides a platform for the establishment and implementation of programs that ensure the protection of agricultural lands, water quality improvement and the general open space nature of the Town.

9.1 General Soils Information

Soil suitability is a key factor in determining the best and most cost-effective locations for new development. Problems that limit development and the placement of Private On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems (septic systems) on certain soils may include poor drainage, erosion, steep slopes or high-water tables. Soil suitability is also a key factor in determining agricultural productivity and suitability. Three major soil types dominate Excelsior: Eleva-Boone-Plainfield, Urne, and Fayette series. General soils information can also be noted on *Map 9-2 General Soils Map*.

- **Eleva-Boone-Plainfield series** soils are distributed evenly throughout the town's uplands. The spoils in this series are typically excessively drained, moderately rapid to rapidly permeable soils. These soils vary in use. Agriculture is the main use in the Plainfield series. The Boone series is usually wooded, however it can be used for agriculture if it is fertilized and irrigated. The Plainfield series is a suitable soil for septic systems. The Boone series is moderately suitable for septic systems with slope being the limiting factor. The Eleva series is generally not suited to septic tank absorption fields due to a shallow bedrock layer, however new septic technologies can be used.
- **Urne series** soils are somewhat excessively drained and are often found on convex ridge tops, concave side slopes, and valley floors of unglaciated sandstone uplands. This series is moderately rapid, and the available water content is low. Many of these soils are used for cultivation, and some for woodland. This soil is suited to trees. The Urne series is moderately suited to building because of frost action and is poorly suited to septic tank absorption fields because the depth to bedrock. This series is mapped with the Eleva-Boone-Plainfield category, as they are most similar to these series.
- **Fayette series** soils are mapped under the Baraboo-Rock Outcrop category, as they are most similar to these series. These soils are well drained and found on unglaciated uplands. Permeability is moderate with a very high available water capacity. The series is suitable to septic systems and buildings, unless the slope is too steep. The soils are primarily under agricultural production, and fairly suitable for that use. These soils are suited to trees.

9.2 Topography and Slope

The topography in the Town of Excelsior varies dramatically from rolling farm fields in the northern half of the Town to wetlands and streams to the steep forested bluffs of the Baraboo Range that dominate the Town's southern region.

9.3 Environmentally Sensitive and Significant Resources

The Town of Excelsior has identified environmentally sensitive areas as those having unique geology, important agricultural soils, surface and ground water resources, wetlands, native grasslands, Baraboo Range woodlands, scenic landscapes and vistas, habitat for native plant and wildlife communities, endangered and threatened species. Also worth careful consideration are lands having slopes greater than 12%, floodplains, wetlands, hydric soils, groundwater recharge areas (zones of contribution to municipal wells), and areas that contribute water recharge to Lake Virginia, the Baraboo River and Narrows Creek. The Town has further recognized that any future land uses could negatively impact these areas and should be managed utilizing a combination of restrictions on the rate and density of residential development, site evaluations by the Town's Plan Commission, and careful application of the objectives and policies in this Plan. *Map 9-1 Environmentally Sensitive Areas* shows the location of the aforementioned components of this subsection with the exception of floodplain, which is shown on *Map 9-2 General Floodplain Areas*.

Woodlands

A portion of Excelsior is covered by forest. Much of this forest is located along rivers and on slopes that are generally greater than 10%. This woodland pattern results from historical agricultural land uses that avoided land types that are difficult to place under cultivation. Riparian woodland areas are primarily composed of silver maple, aspen and box elder, while upland forests are primarily composed of red and black oak, hickory and a mixture of upland hardwood forests. These woodlands have been identified as important features that add to the Town's rural character.



Rare Species Occurrences

The Wisconsin DNR's Natural Heritage Inventory program maintains information on the general location and status of rare, threatened or endangered plant and animal species. There are documented occurrences of rare or threatened species in much of the Town of Excelsior. *Map 9-1 Environmentally Sensitive Areas* shows general areas in Excelsior that could support, or have at one time in history been identified as containing, rare plant or animal species. These general areas are spread over a large portion of the Town. The DNR does not list specific areas where endangered species live for fear of purposeful harvest or destruction of them or their habitat.

Landowners seeking to know whether a specific parcel of land is host to endangered species must contact the Wisconsin DNR to fill out a NHI Endangered Resources Review Request. WDNR Reviewers communicate to the applicant any rare species, natural communities, or natural features tracked in the Natural Heritage Inventory database have been found in or near the proposed project area. Reviewers also explain whether additional steps should be followed to assure compliance with the Wisconsin Endangered Species Law. The Review letter may be necessary for other Department of Natural Resources permits, since it is illegal to take, transport, possess, process or sell any wild

animal that is included on Wisconsin Endangered and Threatened Species List. In addition, it is illegal to remove, transport, carry away, cut root up, sever, injure or destroy a wild plant on the [Wisconsin Endangered and Threatened Species List](#).

Significant Natural Areas and Resources



There are a number of significant natural areas and resources in the Town of Excelsior. The plan calls attention to these natural areas, which, by their nature, connect the present-day Town to the landscape that once dominated the area. This material, in part, is from the [Natural Area Inventory of Sauk County Wisconsin, 1976](#), by William E. Tans, Botanist and Kenneth I. Lange, Naturalist. Locations of each are noted on *Map 6-3 Community and Cultural Resources*.

- Ableman’s Gorge Hemlocks and Ableman’s Gorge Area: Parts of Section 29, includes wooded cliffs and boulder slopes facing north with best Hemlock and Yew stand in Southern Wisconsin. Quartzite and conglomerate cliffs, section of Baraboo River and riparian floodplain habitat. Area includes Van Hise Rock.
- The Excelsior Township Pine Barrens, including the Van Zelst Pine Barrens, Section 21, a sand barren remote from Wisconsin River terraces, with Little Bluestem and jack pine, as noted in original land survey. Also, the Reedsburg School Forest, Section 21, a dry oak forest and sand barren; numerous additional sand blows in Section 22, with old jack pine forest and quartzite conglomerate.
- Narrows Creek Gorge and Vicinity, Section 31 and Section 6, in the northwestern corner of the Baraboo Hills, includes red and white pines on quartzite conglomerate, sandstone and Baraboo quartzite outcroppings, shaded cliff habitats, prairie remnant and lowland hardwoods along Narrows Creek. A Narrows Creek tributary in Section 6 is largely undisturbed sugar maple- yellow birch-oak forest.
- Pine Knob, Section 17, an isolated sandstone knob with white pines, oaks and northern forest understory.
- The North Slope of the Baraboo Range, parts of Section 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23 and Section 18, includes extensive oak forests on the north facing slope of the North Range of the Baraboo Hills, and dry oak forest on a hogsback. Trilobites have been found. Ordovician dolomite caps some ridges, underlain by exposed upper Cambrian sandstone. Dry mesic forest of white pine, red maple and red oak in Section 9.
- Fossil quarry, Section 25, site of fossils in Lodi siltstone and dolomite.
- “Sand Marble” Hill, Section 11, a site for small, rounded sand concretions.
- The Baraboo River winds through the Town from the west, flows south through the Village of Rock Springs and toward the Village of North Freedom.

Drainage Basins

The Town of Excelsior is located entirely in the Lower Wisconsin River Basin, which drains approximately 4,940 square miles of south central and southwestern Wisconsin and is located within the Copper Creek-Dell Creek, Camels Creek-Dell Creek, Lake Delton-Dell Creek, Pleasant Valley-Baraboo River, and Narrows Creek watersheds. These watersheds eventually drain into the Wisconsin River, which can be located on *Map 9-5 Watershed Boundaries*. These boundaries can serve as a starting point for identifying non-point sources of pollution in the river system.

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designates floodplain areas. These general floodplain delineations represent the areas adjacent to navigable waters potentially subject to a 100-year flood event (1% chance of occurring in any year). All areas subject to flooding are not necessarily reflected in mapped floodplains. The State requires County regulation of development in floodplains. Development is strongly discouraged in floodplains, to avoid both upstream and downstream property damage as well as reduced governmental costs in relation to disaster relief. Floodplain areas in Excelsior are located near creeks and rivers, particularly the Baraboo River and Narrows Creek. The FEMA maps should be referenced for official delineation and elevations of floodplain boundaries. General Floodplain boundaries can be noted on *Map 9-3 General Floodplain Areas*.

Wetlands

Wetland areas are important for aquifer recharge, flood control, groundwater and surface water quality improvement, and wildlife habitat. The majority of the Town's wetlands are associated with the Baraboo River and Narrows Creek. Also, small inclusions not included on the generalized map are common in the Baraboo Hills region. The greatest threat to these wetlands has been drainage for agricultural purposes.

All known wetland areas over 2 acres in size have been mapped and can be referenced on *Map 9-1 Environmentally Sensitive Areas*.

Groundwater Resources

As in most of Sauk County, groundwater remains the major source of fresh water. In Excelsior, groundwater is supplied by the sandstone and dolomite aquifer prevalent in western Sauk County. This yields a reliable average of 400-500 gallons per minute.

The Town of Excelsior is the host watershed for all of the Village Rock Springs municipal water supply as identified by the zones of contribution on *Map 9-1 Environmentally Sensitive Areas*. The zones of contribution are identified areas where rainwater that falls to the surface will become groundwater and part of a community's potable water supply. The zones of contribution have been broken down into 5, 50 and 100-year time frames. This timeframe indicates that when rainwater falls to the surface and becomes groundwater, it will be subsequently be utilized by the Village of Rock Springs. Identifying zones of contribution is the precursor to the establishment of a wellhead protection program. Wellhead protection aims to encourage or require compatible land uses in the zones of contribution areas to protect contaminants from entering the public water supply and to also ensure continued quantities of water.

The 5-year zone of contribution is entirely located within the corporate limits of the Village of Rock Springs, but the implementation of responsible land use provisions to protect groundwater supplies will be remain important to a sustained and safe water supply for the Village.

Surface Waters of Excelsior

The Town of Excelsior’s surface water resources, including the Baraboo River, Lake Virginia, Copper Creek, Dell Creek, and Narrows Creek, are valued resources that Town residents have identified for priority protection. Farm fields and runoff in the watershed have been identified as problem areas that contribute to non-point source pollution.



Storm Water Management

Managing storm water has a significant impact on the surface water resources in the Town of Excelsior. Currently, construction site erosion control is regulated by the State of Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code and is enforced by the Town's building inspector. All stormwater not involved with residential development is regulated through Sauk County Code of Ordinances *Chapter 51 Erosion Control and Stormwater Management*. *Chapter 22 Sauk County Land Division and Subdivision Regulations Ordinance* requires a storm water management plan for new subdivision and commercial development that is reviewed by the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department.



Hilltops and Ridges

Hilltops and ridges are important natural features that define the horizon of the Town. Large structures at the top of these features tend to be visually prominent—especially when these structures do not blend into the overall landscape in terms of color, material or style.

9.4 Mineral Resources

Currently, the Town of Excelsior is home to three active mineral extraction sites. The Rock Springs quarry located on State Road 136 in Section 28, the Duck Farm quarry is located on State Road 23 in Section 7 and the Ault quarry is also located in Section 7 near the Duck Farm quarry. The Rock Springs quarry, owned by Mathy Construction Company, produces quartzite. Its final reclamation plan calls for allowing the quarry pit to refill “primarily with surface water to form a post-mining lake”¹. The Duck Farm quarry mines sand and gravel and has a final reclamation plan to grassland. Preserving mineral deposits for future generations is important, as more development demands these raw materials. As a general reference, potential gravel deposits or areas that may support future mineral extraction operations are noted under *Map 9-4 Potential Gravel Deposits*.

9.5 Programs, Partnerships and Resources

Below are some examples of programs, partnerships and resources that provide assistance to landowners in the Town of Excelsior relative to land preservation and stewardship options.

- **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)** first came to the Baraboo Bluffs in the early 1960s at the request of local residents and university professors who knew how ecologically unique the area was and who wanted the Conservancy's help in protecting the area. Today the Conservancy has 900 members in the Baraboo Hills area and is staffed out of a Baraboo Office. The Conservancy protects lands through education programs and work activities, Land/Forest Management Programs, voluntary agreements, acquisition of lands and through purchase of development rights.
- **Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department** coordinates natural resource management and environmental enhancement activities within county boundaries and administers a variety of county, state, and federal initiatives. The Department places particular emphasis on soil conservation, water quality improvement, groundwater protection, flood control, nonpoint water pollution abatement, erosion control, wildlife habitat improvement, farmland preservation and animal waste management and further strives to promote the awareness of natural resources and their value to the citizens of Sauk County. The Department is also responsible for the administration of programs such as the administration of Earth Day activities, and coordinates with school districts to teach children about natural resources and conservation.
- **County Land & Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan Implementation** is a cost share and technical assistance program to landowners installing best management practices. These programs help to reduce soil erosion, protect water quality and conserve county-identified natural resources. Landowners can contact Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for more information.
- **Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program** is a State program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry, which provides assistance to private landowners to protect and enhance their forested lands, prairies and waters. Landowners must receive written approval from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and be identified as the landowner in a Forest Stewardship Plan or in the process of applying for plan development. Qualified landowners may be reimbursed up to 50% of cost of eligible practices.
- **Community Financial Assistance (CFA)** is a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources program that administers grants and loans to local governments and interested groups to develop and support projects that protect health and the environment and provide recreational opportunities.
- **Partnership for Fish and Wildlife Management**, a US Fish and Wildlife Services program, assists with the restoration of wetlands, grasslands, and threatened and endangered species habitat through a cost share program. Any privately owned land is potentially eligible for restoration under this program.
- **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)** is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial

incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture. The program offers three options inclusive of a permanent easement, 30-Year Easement or a Restoration Cost share Agreement.

- **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)** is a voluntary program that encourages the creation of high-quality wildlife habitat to support wildlife populations of national, state, tribal, and local significance. Through WHIP, the NRCS provides technical assistance to landowners and others to restore and maintain upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitats on their property.
- **Managed Forest Law Property Tax Program** is a DNR program that provides tax incentives for approved forest management plans. The MFL can ease the burden of property taxes for forest landowners with at least 10 acres of woods that meet specific requirements. The program is intended to foster timber production on private forests while recognizing other values of forests.
- **Forestry Incentive Program** provides cost sharing for landowners with no more than 1000 acres for tree planting, site preparation, timber stand improvements, and related practices on non-industrial private forest lands. This is a federal NRCS program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
- **National Wildlife Turkey Federation** has a variety of programs to benefit wild turkey habitat, management, conservation and education.
- **Pheasants Forever** provides assistance with habitat restoration through five major programs: food plots, nesting cover, woody cover, land purchase and wetland restoration projects.
- **Prairie Enthusiasts** is a private nonprofit organization committed to the protection and management of native prairie and savanna in the Upper Midwest, providing educational activities and opportunities to aid landowners in the identification and management of prairie remnants. Work parties assist with brush clearing and removal of invasive species.
- **Aldo Leopold Foundation** strives to promote the protection of natural resources and to foster an ethical relationship between people and land. Programs involve restoration and land protection through partnerships with more than 30 organizations and educational programs for private landowners and public land managers.

Conservation Programs

The following is a list of the active conservation programs available in Sauk County. These programs are administered through the cooperative effort of various federal, state, and local agencies. Interested individuals can contact the listed agencies or the Land Conservation Division for additional eligibility criteria. Further details on each program can be found in the Sauk County Land and Water Resource Management Plan.

USDA-NRCS Programs

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)—Purpose: to reduce erosion, increase wildlife habitat, improve water quality, and increase forestland.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)—Purpose: to provide technical and financial help to landowners for conservation practices to protect soil and water quality.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – Purpose: to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land. CSP is available on private agricultural lands, as well as for nonindustrial private forest lands.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) - provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and restore wetlands.

Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department

Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program (FPP)—Purpose: to preserve farmland through local planning and zoning or agreements and to provide tax relief to participating farmers.

Sauk County Conservation Cost-share Program (CCP)—Purpose: to protect the forestland, cropland, groundwater, and surface water resources in Sauk County.

Baraboo River Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Purpose: promotes coordination between USDA-NRCS and its partners to provide technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to help implement conservation practices that improve soil health, water quality, restore wildlife habitat, and will also improve agricultural productivity.

Lake Management Grant Program – Purpose: for enhancing, restoring, or protecting lakes in Sauk County.

Lake Shore Assistance Program – Purpose: to provide cost share assistance to lake shore owners to address erosion and runoff concerns on their property.

Nutrient Management Plan (NMP)—Purpose to obtain the maximum return from on-farm and off-farm fertilizer resources in a manner that protects the quality of nearby water resources.

Animal Waste Ordinance (AWO)—Purpose: to provide a permitting process that will reduce the groundwater and surface water pollution from animal waste.

Sauk County Transect Survey (SCTS)—A county-wide soil loss evaluation using statistical sampling of numerous cropland and stream sites.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)—Purpose: to restore drained wetland and protect them with a 30-year or perpetual easement.

Wisconsin Nonpoint Source Priority Watershed Program (NPS)—Purpose: to improve and protect water quality.

Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program – Purpose: provides financial incentives to private landowners who open their property to public hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife observation.

Managed Forest Law (MFL)—Purpose: to reduce property tax and promote good forest management.

Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP)—Purpose: is designed to assist woodland owners in protecting and enhancing their woodlands.

9.6 Natural Resources Goal, Objectives and Policies:

Natural Resources Goal:

Protect, preserve and enhance the Town’s natural resources, including geology, soils, surface and ground water, open space, woodlands, wetlands and grasslands, native plant and animal communities and habitats, wildlife, and endangered and threatened species. Encourage wise use and sustainable recreational, aesthetic, scientific, and economic use of resources.

Natural Resources Objectives:

NRO-1 Preserve and manage the forest canopy of the wooded areas in the Town with an emphasis on the Baraboo Range.

NRP -1a Manage forests using sustainable harvesting and stewardship practices in the Town.

NRP -1b Work to conserve the Baraboo Range and other outstanding natural resource features in the Town, consistent with this plan’s objectives and policies.

NRO-2 Manage roadside vegetation throughout the town to protect wildlife during nesting season and to limit the spread of invasive species.

NRO-3 Preserve clean water resources and employ policies and practices that will eliminate and/or minimize water contamination.

NRO-4 Protect endangered and threatened species of indigenous plants and animals.

NRO-5 Discourage or prevent the introduction and/or spread of invasive or exotic species and work to eradicate or control them.

NRO-6 Encourage the enhancement of wildlife habitat.

NRO-7 Protect/maintain scenic vistas and views.

NRO-8 Encourage lighting standards to minimize light glare from trespassing onto neighboring properties and the night sky, except for normal agricultural practices.

NRO-9 Encourage standards to reduce noise pollution in the Town.

10.0 Purpose

In order to achieve the overall vision in the Town of Excelsior, including the protection of natural and cultural resources, agricultural operations, and the overall quality of life, the Town must interact with many agencies and governmental units. The Town of Excelsior should evaluate how the plans of Sauk County as well as neighboring units of government will affect it.

10.1 Adjacent Town Plans and Planning Efforts Town of Winfield (April 2007)

The Town of Winfield adopted a Comprehensive Plan in accordance with Wis. Stats. 66.1001 in April 2007. Prior to the development of this Comprehensive Plan, the Town had no development plan or land use plan. The Town of Winfield is under the Sauk County Zoning Ordinance. To view the current Winfield Comprehensive Plan, follow [this link](#).

Town of Westfield (June 2006)

The Town of Westfield adopted a Comprehensive Plan in accordance with Wis. Stats. 66.1001 in June 2006. The updated plan will allow the Town to guide future growth, development and preservation, and includes precise guidelines for plan implementation, future review, amendments and direction relative to further policy development. Land Use in the Town of Westfield is regulated under the Sauk County Zoning Ordinance. To view the current Winfield Comprehensive Plan, follow [this link](#).

Town of Freedom Land Use Plan (August 2009)

The Town of Freedom Comprehensive Plan was developed primarily to manage future growth, as evidenced by the town's 9% average annual growth rate between 1990 and 2000. Just as importantly, the town faces issues with respect to groundwater quality, preservation of rural character and agricultural operations. The development of a comprehensive plan will provide the town with the opportunity to address these, and other issues, in a complete and long-term manner. Developing this plan sends a clear message that the Town of Freedom wishes to act proactively—to set its own ground rules for the types of development that will benefit the town, maintain a rural atmosphere and still provide flexibility for landowners. To view the current Freedom Comprehensive Plan, follow [this link](#).

Town of Reedsburg (October 2014)

The Town of Reedsburg adopted a Comprehensive Plan in accordance with Wis. Stats. 66.1001 in September 2004 which was amended and updated in October 2014. The Town of Reedsburg Comprehensive Plan has identified areas within the City of Reedsburg's extraterritorial jurisdiction as residential and commercial development areas. The Town has also identified a commitment to preserving agricultural operations, and all areas outside of the City's ET have been identified as agriculture preservation/rural residential areas. The Town of Reedsburg adopted a density-based cluster development program that applies to areas outside of the City's ET and which sets a density of 1 house per 35 acres of ownership with a maximum lot creation per parcel of not more than three in any 10-year period. Land Use in the Town of Reedsburg is regulated under the Sauk County Zoning Ordinance. To view the current Freedom Comprehensive Plan, follow [this link](#).

Town of Baraboo Comprehensive Plan (August 2005)

The Town of Baraboo's Comprehensive Plan replaces the Town's 1998 Land Use Plan. The purpose of the plan is to provide a land use management strategy for the Town that will ensure that growth and development decisions made over the next 20 years are consistent with the

community's desired character and vision for the future. The plan will act as a guide for the Town Board, Plan Commission, residents, landowners, developers, neighboring communities, and others as they make the decisions that will shape the Town of Baraboo.

To view the current Baraboo Comprehensive Plan, follow [this link](#).

Town of Delton (2009)

The Town of Delton completed their Comprehensive Plan in 2009. Land Use in the Town of Delton is regulated under the Town's own zoning ordinance, with subdivisions regulated by Sauk County.

To view the current Baraboo Comprehensive Plan, follow [this link](#).

Town of Dellona (June 2009)

The Town of Dellona completed their Comprehensive Plan in June 2009. Land Use in the Town of Dellona is regulated under the Sauk County Zoning Ordinance.

To view the current Baraboo Comprehensive Plan, follow [this link](#).

Village of Rock Springs

The Village of Rock Springs has not begun work on a Comprehensive Plan, as of the winter of 2023.

10.2 Current Intergovernmental Programs, Plans, Agreements and Opportunities**Memorandum of Agreement concerning US Highway 12 between Middleton and Lake Delton, Wisconsin (March, 1999)**

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is an agreement between Sauk County, Dane County, the State of Wisconsin, WisDOT, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Park Service (NPS), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The agreement includes commitments and timeframes for Highway 12 improvements in Dane and Sauk Counties, protection of the Baraboo Range National Natural Landmark, farmland preservation and other natural resource protection. Specifically, the parties agreed to the following transportation system improvements:

1. "WisDOT and FHWA may proceed with a phased construction of a modified four-lane USH 12 in Dane County (between Middleton and Sauk City)..."
2. "WisDOT will exercise its authority to control and reduce access points along USH 12..."

The parties also agreed to the following:

1. The creation of two funds "to provide long-term protection of the nationally significant natural resources in the Baraboo Range National Natural Landmark (BRNNL) which may be impacted from the USH 12 project." The BRNNL Protection Fund "will contain \$5 million paid by WisDOT from state/federal transportation monies. " The Special BRNNL Stewardship Fund " will contain up to \$5 million of additional Stewardship Capital Fund dollars but will require a dollar-for-dollar federal/local/private non-transportation fund match...". Funding of \$250,000 each for Dane County and Sauk County for local planning assistance for "the towns, cities, and villages along the USH 12 corridor to use as they see appropriate to address growth-related issues." This is the funding source for this Highway 12 Corridor Growth Management Plan and future implementation projects to be determined.
2. The creation of the Sauk County Fund in which "WisDOT agrees to provide up to \$250,000 over a five year period in state/federal transportation monies to be used to establish and fund a program to purchase lands, scenic/conservation/agricultural easements and/or development rights from willing sellers in Sauk County outside of the BRNNL"

Sauk County Highway 12 Corridor Growth Management Plan

As part of the USH12 MOA, funding was provided to address growth related issues resulting from the expansion of US Hwy 12 from Middleton to Lake Delton. In Sauk County, the Highway 12 Local Planning Assistance Advisory Committee was formed. The committee consists of members of Sauk County, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and local governments along the Hwy 12 corridor. In March of 2002, the Committee hired Vandewalle and Associates to assist with the preparation of *Highway 12 Corridor Growth Management Plan*, with a set of recommendations for the *Plan*. The *Growth Management Plan* will focus on issues such as complimentary land use, preservation, access, economic development, and community image issues that arise as a result of the future Highway expansion. The planning process finished in 2003, with the plan providing an overall vision and detailed recommendations for the entire 24-mile Highway 12 corridor in Sauk County.

Baraboo Range Protection Program

The County created the Baraboo Range Protection Program (BRPP), a component of the Sauk County Protection Program (SCPP), to use state/federal monies and local matches provided under the MOA, described above. The BRPP reimburses eligible participants for costs associated with the purchase of land or development rights of properties with substantially undisturbed forested land. Protection must be permanent. Eligible land or development right purchasers include the Sauk County government, any Sauk County town government within the BRNNL, any nonprofit conservation organization, and State and Federal agencies. The Sauk County Baraboo Range Commission, a special committee of the Sauk County Board of Supervisors, administers the program.

Sauk County Comprehensive Plan (2009)

Adopted in 2009, the mission of the Sauk County Comprehensive Plan is to "Position Sauk County for the Future". The Sauk County Comprehensive Plan is the key strategic document that provides an integrated approach to Sauk County's physical development and related economic and social potential, with an emphasis on moving Sauk County toward economic, social, and environmental sustainability; enhancing educational and health systems, transportation coordination, business development, supporting agriculture, and developing attractive and prosperous places to live.

The comprehensive plan seeks to:

- Inspire the community with bold ideas to shape and re-shape the communities in Sauk County
- Provide a sustainability framework to implement the plan's strategies
- Facilitate continued and active discussion among the public to further strategy implementation
- Build on ideas and guidance from the many participants in the Sauk County Comprehensive Planning Process

Once local municipalities have adopted their updated local Comprehensive Plans, Sauk County will prepare an updated County Comprehensive Plan. This Plan will reflect and recognize the Towns' Comprehensive Plans including their Development Plans and Land Use Elements.

Reedsburg Intermunicipal Cooperation Agreement

The Town entered into an agreement in December of 2007 with the City of Reedsburg for extraterritorial (ET) zoning for some shared municipal services and joint municipal powers and duties within the ET Zone. This area is recognized as a planned growth area for both the City and the Town for expansion of residential and commercial development. There are shared sewer and water services with the City's municipal system to allow for a greater density in development. The area is regulated by the Extraterritorial Committee which consist of representatives from all municipalities within the ET Zone but zoning enforcement is administered by the City. The agreement dictated the initial extent of the ET Zone, and the map is reviewed every five years by the Extraterritorial Committee and recommended changes are sent to the Town Plan Commission for review. Ultimately all the land within the ET zone will be annexed to the City as it continues to expand, but until it the land is annexed, the development is concentrated to main transportation corridors. The boundaries of the ET Zone may be seen on **Map 11-4 Extraterritorial Zoning**.

10.3 Current and Future Cooperative Planning Efforts

Neighboring Town Planning

It is anticipated that the Town of Excelsior will share this comprehensive plan with adjacent Towns that have developed a comprehensive plan or are updating their comprehensive plans.

Sauk County

The Town of Excelsior should continue to work with Sauk County, particularly with the development of options related to land use and land division, which can aid the Town with the implementation of their Comprehensive Plan policies. Furthermore, the Town should continue to work with Sauk County and adjacent communities to ensure that the integrity of Excelsior's Comprehensive Plan is not compromised by neighboring community decisions and vice versa.

With regard to everyday land division, land use and agriculture-related questions, residents and Town officials are encouraged to work with various county departments. The Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department administer the majority of county ordinances and programs that affect the Town.

Village of Rock Springs

The Town of Excelsior should maintain a close working relationship with the Village of Rock Springs as they both plan for growth and economic development. The Town encourages those future subdivisions and commercial development should be restricted to within Village jurisdictional boundaries. The Village's does not have a comprehensive plan at this time which identifies its own

growth areas within the Village limits. The Village of Rock Springs and the Town of Excelsior should seek mutual compatibility with regard to the respective communities' Comprehensive Plans as each seeks future growth and economic development opportunities.

10.4 Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal, Objectives, and Policies Intergovernmental

Cooperation Goal:

Provide essential services appropriate for the rural community through intergovernmental cooperation to minimize costs and maximize benefits.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Objectives and Policies:

ICO-1 Identify and work to eliminate existing or potential conflicts and maintain effective relationships between the Town and those units of government and other entities upon which the Town must depend.

ICP-1a Work with the agencies providing services to ensure the Town of Excelsior has an opportunity to give input to any issue related to providing those services.

ICP-1b Cooperate with the City of Reedsburg and County Highway Department for contractual services to plow and maintain roadways.

ICO-2 Secure necessary services from other units of government (or private contractors) that are reliable and economically justified.

ICP-2a Develop and maintain agreements with municipalities, other government bodies, or private companies for services most appropriately provided by those organizations such as, but not limited to, fire service, ambulance services, snow plowing, etc.

ICO-3 Coordinate development options with neighboring towns, villages, and cities relative to development to maintain the rural nature of the Town.

ICP-3a Encourage the Town of Excelsior to work cooperatively with the City of Reedsburg, Village of North Freedom, Village of Rock Springs and adjacent towns regarding future land use proposals.

ICP-3b Encourage growth within the ET Zone in coordination with the City of Reedsburg and continue to coordinate with them on zoning districts within the growth management area.

11.0 Purpose

The Land Use Chapter of the *Comprehensive Plan* is one of the most important components of the plan, second only to the Implementation chapter, which establishes an action plan for the local municipality. Prior to the adoption of the Comprehensive Planning Law (Smart Growth) in 1999, many communities adopted what were termed ‘Land Use Plans’ or ‘Development Plans’, which reflected the goals of the community through specific land use related policies by way of ordinances, zoning and subdivision regulations. The Town of Excelsior’s Development Plan, adopted in 1999 provides a good example of this kind of ‘policy-driven’ plan. The 1999 Development Plan was the Town’s first attempt at identifying clear community goals, objectives and policies for agricultural, transportation, commercial, industrial and residential land uses. A primary theme was to maintain the natural beauty of the Town, and the recognition of its strong “sense of place”. Since then, the plan has been updated in 2009, amended in 2011, and updated further in 2023.

The Town of Excelsior’s 1999 Development Plan addressed some of the broader issues affecting land use including the protection of agricultural lands that exhibit the greatest long-term commitment to agriculture, encouraging developments to prevent soil erosion and to promote orderly development that could efficiently connect to existing urban services.

The 2009 *Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan* maintains similar themes as the 1999 Development Plan, however the new *Plan* refines these concepts and enacts specific policy measures to achieve the *Plan*’s overall Vision. The Land Use chapter recognizes that the goals, objectives and policies under each of the previous chapters either directly or indirectly impact land use within the Town.

The Land Use chapter of this *Comprehensive Plan* serves to recognize policies addressed in previous chapters and to discuss how they impact land use. In doing this, the Town officially recognizes the direct relationship between chapter policies and land use decisions. Second, the Land Use chapter offers an opportunity to address issues that are specific to land use such as the current use of the land, designated future land use, land divisions, density policies, home siting requirements, and development guidelines.

11.1 Existing Land Use

Map 11-1 Current Land Use, along with the following descriptors, will aid in the understanding of existing land uses in the Town. The information provided in this section will serve as baseline data for future studies.

Land Use Districts

- ▶ **Agriculture.** This area includes land uses primarily for farming and includes, grasslands, pastures, cropland, and barnyards. This is the largest land use category in the Town and includes approximately 58.4% of the total land area or approximately 12,666.43 acres.
- ▶ **Commercial.** This area includes all commercial land uses such as restaurants, stores, bars, hotels, and large-scale service-based businesses. This land use is assigned to the actual use of the land regardless of zoning or legal nonconforming status. This small category includes approximately 0.05% of the total land or 10.4 acres.

- ▶ **Industrial.** This area includes all industrial zoned areas and land uses such as contractor storage yards, trucking terminals, and general large equipment storage or use. This small category includes approximately 0.04% 8.51 acres.
- ▶ **Institutional/Government.** This area includes all properties owned or utilized by school districts, churches, cemeteries, medical institutions, museums, and local government entities. This includes approximately 0.62% of the total land area or 134.39 acres.
- ▶ **Landfill/Extraction.** This area includes all nonmetallic mine sites and landfills, including composting sites. This small category includes approximately 0.1% of the total land area or 21.57 acres. There are no active landfills in the Town.
- ▶ **Mixed Use.** This area includes all areas with a combination of residential and small-scale commercial uses. This area is typically cut out only include the structures and outdoor areas being utilized for residential living and business activities. This small category includes 0.09% of the total land or 19.79 acres.
- ▶ **Multi-family Residential.** This area includes all duplexes, apartment structures, and mobile home parks. This is a small category including approximately 0.006% of the total land or 1.41 acres.
- ▶ **Recreational/Open Space.** This area includes public and private recreational spaces including parks, campgrounds, golf courses, ski resorts, theme parks, boat landings, rod and gun clubs, and state trails. This category includes approximately 2.11% of the total land or 458.05 acres.
- ▶ **Single-family Residential.** This area includes all single-family residential homes and incorporates the structure, lawns or active outdoor living areas, and driveways. This category covers approximately 3.73% of total land area or 808.42 acres.
- ▶ **Transportation.** This area includes all roadways, railroads, and airports. The transportation land use takes up approximately 0.8% of total land area or 173.47 acres of land owned specifically for transportation.
- ▶ **Utilities.** This area includes all water treatment plants, cell towers, and power substations. This category covers approximately 0.03% of total land area or 6.21 acres.
- ▶ **Vacant.** This area marks all lots located within a subdivision that is yet to be developed. This is to mark lots that are already designated for residential development that do not have a residential structure. This category covers approximately 0.32% of total land area or 69.74 acres. There are 85 vacant lots in the Town within the Lake Virginia subdivision.
- ▶ **Woodland.** This area includes land that is primarily undeveloped, evergreen and deciduous forestland. This area includes all lots of 3 acres or greater with at least 75% tree coverage. This area represents 33.21% of the Town's total land area, or approximately 7,202.34 acres.

11.2 Recent Development Trends

The issuance of new land use/building permits for single family residential construction in the Town of Excelsior has remained relatively constant since 2007, issuing roughly 4 permits per year. This comes after issuing an average of 13 land use permits for single family residential construction per year in the early 2000's.

Assuming the Town will maintain this trend of growth in the rural areas, it will become more important for the Town of Excelsior to guide rural residential growth in a way that preserves the rural character of the Town and that can be adequately served by existing public facilities.

Table L1: Excelsior Land Use Permits (2001-2021)

Excelsior Land Use Permits Issued for New Construction										
Year	Residential					Ag Structures	Tower/ Antennas	Commercial	CUP or Change of Use	Total Permits Issued for New Construction
	Single Family	Multi Family	Mobile Home	Garage	Accessory Structures					
2001	10	0	0	2	8	1	0	1	0	22
2002	6	0	0	2	5	3	0	1	0	17
2003	18	0	0	6	10	1	0	0	0	35
2004	17	0	0	6	4	0	0	0	0	27
2005	14	0	0	3	8	0	0	0	0	25
2006	13	0	0	5	14	0	1	1	1	35
2007	6	0	0	3	8	0	0	0	0	17
2008	5	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	1	14
2009	1	0	0	3	9	0	1	1	0	15
2010	2	0	0	6	10	0	0	0	1	19
2011	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	5
2012	2	0	0	5	6	0	0	1	0	14
2013	2	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	6
2014	1	0	0	4	9	4	1	0	0	19
2015	5	0	0	1	10	9	1	2	1	29
2016	2	0	0	1	4	2	0	0	0	9
2017	6	0	0	4	4	1	0	0	1	16
2018	8	0	0	2	6	1	0	0	1	18
2019	4	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	2	13
2020	5	0	0	3	6	1	1	1	1	18
2021	5	0	0	2	11	3	0	0	0	21
Total 2001 - 2010	133	0	0	65	147	26	6	8	9	394
Total 2011 - 2020	41	0	0	27	65	21	4	4	6	168
Overall Total	133	0	0	65	147	26	6	8	9	394
% of Total in Excelsior	33.8%	0.0%	0.0%	16.5%	37.3%	6.6%	1.5%	2.0%	2.3%	
% of Total in Sauk County	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	13.7%	14.5%		22.2%	29.6%	17.6%	
Average Issued Per Year	6.3	0.0	0.0	3.1	7.0	1.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	18.8

Source: Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department

11.3 Current Population and Housing Density

A density calculation can be utilized during the comprehensive planning process to compare population and housing statistics for a community. This calculation will provide additional insight into development patterns and provide background information as the Town of Excelsior determines its future development policies and practices. In 2020, with a population of 1,603 persons and a land area of approximately 35 square miles and 22,654 acres, the Town of Excelsior's population density was roughly 46 persons per square mile or roughly 1 person per 14 acres.

The calculation for the housing density of the Town of Excelsior in 2020 is the number of occupied housing units in 2020 (680) divided by the total land area. This equates to roughly 19 houses per square mile or approximately one home per 33 acres. The further breakdown of these densities will be analyzed later in this section.

11.4 Future Land Use Districts (locations correspond with *Map 11-3 Land Use Districts*)

The future land use districts as shown on *Map 11-3 Land Use Districts* is intended to aid the Town of Excelsior in making land use decisions pertaining primarily to rezone requests and subdivision plats. It is also intended that decisions about future land uses in the Town be consistent with this *Map* and that any decision not consistent with this *Map* may not be permissible until such time that a map amendment has been completed as part of an amendment to the *Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan*. Future land uses designated in this *Plan* also correspond to the following descriptions:

Primary Density Development

Currently, higher density developments are concentrated on or in the vicinity of Lake Virginia and within the City of Reedsburg Extra-Territorial (ET) District. The policies in this plan call for infill of these areas on lots that are not currently developed, and for directing new subdivision development to the Primary Development District within the Reedsburg ET.



Commercial Development Area

The Commercial Development Area identifies areas of current and future land uses that will accommodate commercial uses. The Town encourages land uses that support the rural agrarian and recreational based economy. The area is designated around primary density development areas with compatible zoning districts of agricultural and commercial.

Rural Residential Area

The Rural Residential Area includes those lands that were platted at a medium to high density around Lake Virginia and Belterra Heights subdivisions. The primary intent of the area is to maintain and promote high-quality single-family residential development. It should be noted that a significant number of off-water vacant lots exist that were platted in the 2000's to accommodate additional development at the time. However, many lots are still undeveloped and could support future residential development. Future residential expansion is concentrated in this area near Lake Virginia and the Reedsburg Extra-Territorial District and would be compatible with agricultural or residential zoning districts.

Non-Primary Development

Non-Primary Development areas designated on Map 11-3 Future Land Use may also accommodate clusters of rural residential development provided that such developments abide by standards set forth in the Town of Excelsior comprehensive plan and any separately adopted Town ordinances. The Non-Primary Development area includes rural residential areas that would offer an additional living option outside of the rural residential area. The Non-Primary Development area for residential development includes lands designated by the exclusive ag zoning district, which requires a 35-acre minimum. The plan does not include Non-Primary Development Areas for commercial land uses.

Planned Rural Development Program

To maintain the 35-acre density while directing development to smaller lots and still conserving farmland, the County created the Planned Rural Development Program which allows the creation of smaller lots (preferably clustered) in exchange for placing conservation easements on productive agricultural land. The Planned Rural Development (PRD) Program applies locational criteria and residential dwelling density allowances to regulate the number and location of rural residential housing lots and dwellings in order to protect agricultural, cultural, natural, or recreational features of the landscape while retaining the development allowance originally allotted to a parcel. This allows for flexibility in increasing the intensity of development while maintaining the density and use requirements in the applicable zoning district, and other requirements as specified by the town.

PRD conservation areas are identified as part of a PRD that contain productive agriculture or environmentally and culturally sensitive lands that significantly contribute to the economic and natural resource base of the rural community. Because of their importance, PRD conservation areas shall be substantially protected from residential development. Lands identified as such shall be designated under a Preservation Area Easement. No structure may be built on land identified as being subject to a Preservation Area Easement except for structures that have a use consistent with agricultural uses or other structures with the approval of the Town and Sauk County. The initial term of the easements are for 20 years and at the end of the initial term are automatically renewed for an additional ten years while the zoning density remains the same. The easement will continually renew for an additional ten years until the zoning density changes.

In exchange for preserving greater areas of farmland, unique environmental resources, and to further increase housing placement flexibility, density credits may be transferred between properties within, or between, the exclusive agricultural zoning districts, or may be transferred from areas with this zoning to incorporated areas.

As of 2023, the Town has 11 easements in the PRD program totaling 466 acres.

11.5 Zoning Classifications

The Town of Excelsior adopted county zoning in 1964. At this time the entire Town was placed under the Agricultural Zoning District. Since that time there have been a number of rezoning actions, including the rezoning of lands around Lake Virginia, and a development along State Road 136 and County Road PF to the Single Family Residential District, and a rezoning north of State Road 33 which recognizes commercial land uses. Most recently in 2014, the Town rezoned to Exclusive Agriculture zoning. A comparison of *Map 11-2 Zoning Districts* and *Map 11-3 Future Land Use* indicates a relationship between lands designated by the Primary Development District and lands zoned Single Family Residential. Lands zoned Commercial are so few as to not have established a pattern.

11.6 Future Land Area Needs

Predicting future land area needs for residential, commercial (includes industrial), and agricultural uses involves a process of projecting trends into the future to determine the demand that will be placed on a community relative to maintaining land in its current land use or converting it to an alternative land use. Once these projections are made, quantities of land can then be accurately identified on a future land use map. In order to study the demand of future land uses in Excelsior two factors will be considered. The first of these factors looks at population projections over time. And the second factor utilizes assumptions that population and development pressure will increase in the Town given the increased development of Sauk County and of the areas within and around the City of Reedsburg extraterritorial zoning district.

Future Residential Land Area Needs

According to the population projections under *Chapter 3 Population Inventory and Analysis* and *Chapter 4 Housing* it is reasonable to assume that the population will continue to increase in the Town of Excelsior. This increase will in turn cause an increased demand for housing in the Town. To realistically determine the number of new homes that will be needed through the year 2040, one must make a few assumptions. First, we assume that population growth will remain relatively steady by utilizing **Projection 1** which averages the population growth over the last forty years to estimate future growth. Secondly, we assume that average household size and occupancy rates will remain constant as we use the currently occupied housing and average household size to estimate the number of future households. **Table LU3 Household Forecast: Household Size Trend and Lands Needed** correlates population increases to average household size to determine a projected number of new households. Only occupied households were considered for purposes of determining the amount of land needed in the future for additional occupied residential houses. Additional land needed represents a conservative assumption of two acres needed for each new house: an average lot size of 1.5 acres and an additional ½ acre required for each lot for road rights-of-way, new park dedication and utility rights-of-way.

Table LU3: Household Forecast: Household Size Trend and Lands Needed

Year	Population	Average Household Size	Number of Occupied Households	Additional Residential Land Needed
1990, per census	1,194	2.96	439	NA
2000, per census	1,410	2.63	558	NA
2010, per census	1,575	2.45	671	NA
2020, per census	1,603	2.42	680	808 acres (current)
2030, Projection	1,784	2.42	737	114 acres
2040, Projection	1,986	2.42	820	167 acres

Source: US Census and Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department

Based on this projection, for the next twenty years or so the Town can expect approximately 70 acres to be converted to residential uses in every 5-year time period. This equates to roughly 35 new lots at 2 acres per lot as explained above. It is important to note that the Town currently has approximately 85 vacant residential lots around Lake Virginia – zoned single-family residential - and approximately 450 undeveloped lots of record throughout the Exclusive Agricultural Zoning district. The Town conceivably has adequate existing residential lots to accommodate additional residential housing development for the foreseeable future. However, it should be noted that based on the Town’s residential density policy, that it would only be desirable to have an

additional 20 residential developments occur in order to maintain the desired rural character of the Town. It is encouraged that the majority of the new development to occur in the future be in the Lake Virginia subdivision where undeveloped lots are already zoned for residential use.

Future Commercial Land Area Needs

This comprehensive plan does not anticipate a need for any future commercial land area.

Future Agricultural Land Area Needs

Based upon projected and actual residential and commercial land needs, it can be assumed that the amount of agricultural land in the Town of Excelsior will stay stable.

11.7 Natural Limitations to Building and Site Development

Natural limitations to development vary depending on where in the Town development is being proposed. Generally speaking, the Baraboo River, which traverses through the Town, includes a related floodplain area depicted on *Map 9-3 General Floodplain Areas* and wetlands noted on *Map 9-1 Environmentally Sensitive Areas*. Likewise, there are other non-riparian wetlands scattered throughout the Town. Other natural limitations to development include soil limitations on the placement of foundations, roads and septic suitability. General soils information can be noted under *Chapter 9 Natural Resources*.

11.8 Land Use Goal, Objectives and Policies

Land Use Goal: Plan, control and manage development that will continue to foster a sense of community, and that will preserve the country flavor of the Township while maintaining a balance among agriculture, natural resources, quality of life and development.

Land Use Objectives and Policies:

LUO-1 Protect natural areas, such as wetlands, floodplains, the “Narrows” area, large contiguous forested areas, and the Baraboo Range.

LUO-2 Encourage development adjacent to already developed areas using alternatives to conventional residential development patterns that minimize development impacts on public infrastructure.

LUP-2a Areas of the Town that are appropriate for high density residential development are limited to those lands within the Reedsburg ET District, as well as lands adjacent to Lake Virginia and the Reedsburg Country Club.

LUP-2b Allow commercial zoning only within Extra Territorial (ET) areas next to Reedsburg and those lands directly adjacent to the Reedsburg ET district that are designated “Future Commercial” on the Town’s Future Land Use Map.

LUO-3 Maintain the economic viability of sustainable farming.

LUP-3a Maintain prime (Class I, II and III Soils) agricultural crop land.

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- LUP-3b Direct new residential development to “borderline” or “marginal” (Class IV- VIII Soils) lands not suitable for farming, whenever possible.
- LUO- 4 Partner with neighboring municipalities on land use policy.
- LUO- 5 Protect the quality of surface and ground water from the impacts of development.
- LUO- 6 Protect community aesthetics, including scenic views and neighborhood character.
- LUP-6a Maintain an uncrowded rural community, natural beauty and quality of life.
- LUP-6b Restrict commercial signage (billboards) on roads and highways.
- LUO- 7 Maintain private property rights.
- LUO-8 Ensure that future uses at the former Sauk County landfill property are compatible with the Town’s Comprehensive Plan and adjacent land uses.
- LUP-8a Encourage that any uses of the former Sauk County landfill property reflect the Sauk County landfill final use plan (2006) and participate in any amendments to the plan.
- LUP-8b Establish permit guidelines for shooting ranges to minimize impacts on neighbors, such as hours when shooting is allowed, types of weapons, bunkering protections, gates, etc.
- LUO - 9 Encourage potential mineral extraction adjacent to county roads and state roads.
- LUP 9a - Discourage mineral extraction in the Baraboo bluffs.
- LUP 9b - Discourage mineral extraction on bluff faces.
- LUP 9c - Discourage mineral extraction visible from public roads.
- LUP-9d - Require that all resource extraction activities have a reclamation plan that provides for the activity to be conducted in a way that minimizes its impact on the natural environment. A guarantee of financial assurance should be posted in an amount equal to the projected cost of reclamation. The reclamation plan and financial guarantee should be reviewed with every renewal of the mining permit. The reclamation plan should fall within a use that is compatible with all the other elements of the comprehensive plan.
- LUP 9e –Request that all nonmetallic extraction operations in the town be approved by the town plan commission and the town board before operations shall begin.
- LUP 9f – Encourage that all reclamation plans include a hydro-geologic study showing impact on water tables.
- LUP 9g – Encourage that there be no more than one permitted non- metallic mineral extraction operation of each type (sand/gravel, limestone, quartzite) at one time.
- LUP 9h – Encourage all mineral extraction sites be no more than 20 acres, including buffers required by county zoning ordinances, and no more than 65 feet deep, or no deeper than the plane of adjoining land, whichever is less.

LUP 9i - Require all petitioners utilizing Town roads to maintain liability insurance and financial assurance with the Town in case of damage.

LUP 9j - Require all such activity to be distant from any natural or recreational waterway, wetland, natural spring, or other sensitive natural area.

LUP 9k - Limit hours of operation of any mineral extraction activity including maintenance of equipment and reclamation activities to the hours of 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday, and 6:00 to noon on Saturday excluding legal holidays.

LUO -10 Land Uses and Land Divisions in the Town of Excelsior will be regulated through the Sauk County Code of Ordinances, and appropriate Town policies and ordinances.

LUP-10a Rezoning petitions located within the Exclusive Agriculture Zoning District will be addressed as follows:

- The land is better suited for a use not allowed in the farmland preservation zoning district.
- The rezoning is consistent with any applicable comprehensive plan.
- The rezoning is substantially consistent with the county certified farmland preservation plan.
- The rezoning will not substantially impair or limit current or future agricultural use of surrounding parcels of land that are zoned for or legally restricted to agricultural use.

12.0 Purpose

A number of the policies in this Comprehensive Plan will not be implemented automatically, and follow-up actions will be required for the Plan to become a reality. However, by default, many of the plan policies have been developed in such a manner that, by themselves, they provide specific guidance to the Town with everyday decision-making. Therefore, the Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan has two roles. One of these roles is to provide everyday guidance for decision making by the Town, and the other is to provide specific direction for carrying forth projects that will aid the Town with the full realization of its vision, goals and objectives.

This section is meant to provide guidance for the general process of adopting the Comprehensive Plan as well as more specific detail on how and when amendments will be made to the Plan. This section also provides a ‘timeline of implementation’ of all policies in the plan and recommendations, where needed, as to whom will be implementing these policies. This section defines the suggested implementation roles of the Plan Commission, and the Town Board.

12.1 Plan Adoption

The Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan must be adopted in a manner that recognizes a commitment to implement each policy within the Plan. The Plan itself will also be adopted as an ordinance, which will allow the Town to enforce its vision, goals, objectives, and policies. The Town has also included all of the basic elements of Comprehensive Planning and has achieved all 14 goals of the ‘Smart Growth’ legislation.

In addition to this achievement, the development of this plan included an extensive public participation component, which ensured numerous opportunities for residents, landowners, and neighboring governments to give input. Also, the Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan Committee consisted of people from all interests and backgrounds, ensuring that the plan was developed by the people and for the overall good of the Town. The public participation plan and scope of services to the planning process are noted in Appendix C.

The final Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed by the Plan Commission, which will forward its recommendations to the Town Board for final Town approval. Upon Town approval, the Plan will be forwarded to State of Wisconsin, Department of Administration to ensure compliance with Wisconsin State Statute 66.1001.

12.2 Plan Monitoring, Amendments, and Update

The Town should regularly evaluate its progress towards achieving the policies in this Comprehensive Plan, and amend and update the Plan as appropriate. This section suggests recommended criteria and procedures for monitoring, amending, and updating the Plan.

Plan Monitoring

The Town should constantly evaluate its decisions on private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other actions based on the recommendation/policies of the Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan. More specifically, for each proposal that comes before the Town, any recommendation by the Town’s Plan Commission and final action by the Town Board should reference all plan policies utilized as part of the review and decision-making process. This reference may come in the form of a resolution or minutes officially adopted by the Town.

Plan Amendments

Amendments may be deemed appropriate or necessary in the years following the adoption and implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. Amendments are generally defined as either minor or major. Minor amendments generally include changes to maps or general text. Major amendments are defined as any change to plan policies. Therefore major amendments will require, at a minimum, a public hearing to garner input from the community regarding the amendment(s).

Plan Update

The State comprehensive planning law requires that the Comprehensive Plan be updated at least every ten years. As opposed to an amendment, an update is often a substantial re-write of the Plan document and maps. Further, on January 1, 2010, “any program or action that affects land use” will have to be consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plans- including zoning and subdivision ordinances, annexation, and transportation improvements. Based on these two deadlines, the Town should update its Comprehensive Plan before the year 2034 (i.e., ten years after 2024). The Town should also monitor any changes to language or interpretations of State law throughout the life of the Comprehensive Plan.

12.3 Role of Implementation

Town Board

The Town Board will provide for general oversight of the Plan Commission’s activities relative to selecting and guiding Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee participants. The Town Board will also consider any current proposals and ensure that they are consistent with this Plan as well as consider Plan Commission recommendations for such proposals. Like Plan Commission members, Town Board members are encouraged to take an active role as members of the Implementation Committee.

Plan Commission

It is intended that the primary body responsible for the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan be the Plan Commission. Implementation by the Plan Commission will take two forms. The first form comes with the utilization of the Comprehensive Plan for everyday decision making. It is also recommended that the Plan Commission take the role of identifying policies within the Plan to support its recommendation to the Town Board. The second form of implementation recognizes the role of the Plan Commission to select participants for the Comprehensive Planning Implementation Committee and guide the work of this Committee. This work should be based on the premise that this Committee will be the ‘work-horse’ behind the implementation of many Plan policies. It is highly recommended that Plan Commission members, in addition to simply guiding the Implementation Committee, become members of this Committee themselves.

12.4 Implementation Timeline and Recommended Courses of Action

This section provides a summary of the actions that the Town should complete in order implement this Comprehensive Plan. This summary has been broken down by each element and elements’ policies to include a minimum recommended course of action and timeframe for implementation. Each policy has also been assigned a representative body charged with the primary implementation of the policy.

HOUSING

Objectives and Policies:	Timeline
HO-1 Encourage new housing adjacent to current housing.	Ongoing
HP-1a Areas of the Town that are appropriate for high density residential development are limited to those lands within the Reedsburg ET District.	Ongoing
HO-2 Develop appropriate regulations to meet the housing goal.	Ongoing
HP-2a Permitting for proposed housing should be easier for plans that are environmentally friendly.	Ongoing
HP-2b Provide educational materials to persons seeking development permits to assure the policies of the Township are understood and will allow the proposed development.	Ongoing
HP-2c For “cluster” developments, the question of common or individual well and common or individual septic systems may be considered.	Ongoing
HO-3 Development should retain the present environment, conserve natural resources, and require rural lifestyle infrastructure services.	Ongoing
HP-3a Encourage the location and grouping of housing on lands not suitable for agriculture (cluster development).	Ongoing
HP-3b Proposed development that changes the agricultural landscape shall be discouraged.	Ongoing
HO-4 Educate new and existing residents on farm life, farm noises, odors, and operational requirements prior to granting permits for the construction of new rural residences.	Ongoing
HP-4a Provide educational materials to persons seeking development permits to assure the agriculture ways of life are made available before the proposed permits are approved.	Ongoing
HP-4b In conjunction with the approval of a Town building and land use permits, the Town Clerk will provide educational materials for people seeking a residential permit for housing to raise their awareness and understanding of the quality of life in a rural society that includes agriculture, hunting, and outdoor recreation, as well as of the businesses permitted in the township.	Ongoing

AGRICULTURE

Objectives and Policies:	Timeline
ARO-1 Educate new and existing residents on farm life, farm noises, odors, and operational requirements prior to granting permits for the construction of new rural residences.	Ongoing
ARP-1a Provide educational materials to persons seeking development permits to assure the agriculture ways of life are made available before the proposed permits are approved.	Ongoing
ARO-2 Maintain an environment for economically viable agriculture.	Ongoing
ARO-3 Maintain an environment for environmentally sustainable agriculture.	Ongoing
ARO-4 Preserve Farmland.	Ongoing

UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Objectives and Policies:	Timeline
UCRO-1 Encourage the maintenance and improvement of the utility infrastructure.	Ongoing
UCRO-2 Encourage energy conservation and use of renewable energy.	Ongoing
UCRO-3 Protect archeological and historic structures and the overall rural character of the Town.	Ongoing
UCRO-4 Provide for the proper disposal and recycling of solid waste.	Ongoing
UCRO-5 Maintain service in a safe and efficient manner.	Ongoing

TRANSPORTATION

Objectives and Policies:	Timeline
TO-1 Maintain road quality by utilizing state and federal aid for road improvement.	Ongoing
TO-2 Coordinate town road standards with adjacent municipalities.	Ongoing
TO-3 Address safety concerns with regard to multi-use roads.	Ongoing
TO-4 Development requiring new or upgrading of existing roads and permits as required must be paid for by the developer, not by the existing tax base.	Ongoing
TO-4a Impact fees (if required by other units of government, or other infrastructure costs attributable to new development) are to be paid completely by the developer.	Ongoing
TO-5 Mowing should consider vehicular safety, the negative impacts of wildlife habitat, and the spread of invasive species.	Ongoing

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Objectives and Policies:	Timeline
EDO-1 Encourage the maintenance and development of home-based businesses, cottage industries, farming, and farm related businesses that complement the agrarian and rural character of the Town.	Ongoing
EDP-1a The Town will work with Sauk County to develop new zoning options that will allow for innovative opportunities for economic development related to agriculture, home based businesses, and farm related businesses to negate the need to rezone, but rather incorporate a system of conditional uses under the predominant zoning district.	2024-2025
EDO-2 Promote alternative and renewable forms of energy as a form of economic development and self-sustainability.	Ongoing
EDO-3 Consider the location of new residential development to prevent future conflicts with agricultural uses.	Ongoing
EDP-3a Allow commercial zoning only within Extra Territorial (ET) areas next to Reedsburg and those lands directly adjacent to the Reedsburg ET District that are designated "Future Commercial" on the Town's Future Land Use Map. Land zoned commercial that is adjacent to land zoned residential shall consider appropriate buffers as approved by the plan commission.	Ongoing

NATURAL RESOURCES

Objectives and Policies:	Timeline
NRO-1 Preserve and manage the forest canopy of the wooded areas in the Town with an emphasis on the Baraboo Range.	Ongoing
NRP -1a Manage forests using sustainable harvesting and stewardship practices in the Town.	Ongoing
NRP -1b Work to conserve the Baraboo Range and other outstanding natural resource features in the Town, consistent with this plan's objectives and policies.	Ongoing
NRO-2 Manage roadside vegetation throughout the town to protect wildlife during nesting season and to limit the spread of invasive species.	Ongoing
NRO-3 Preserve clean water resources and employ policies and practices that will eliminate and/or minimize water contamination.	Ongoing
NRO-4 Protect endangered and threatened species of indigenous plants and animals.	Ongoing
NRO-5 Discourage or prevent the introduction and/or spread of invasive or exotic species and work to eradicate or control them.	Ongoing
NRO-6 Encourage the enhancement of wildlife habitat.	Ongoing
NRO-7 Protect/maintain scenic vistas and views.	Ongoing
NRO-8 Encourage lighting standards to minimize light glare from trespassing onto neighboring properties and the night sky, except for normal agricultural practices.	Ongoing
NRO-9 Encourage standards to reduce noise pollution in the Town.	2024-2025

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Objectives and Policies:	Timeline
ICO-1 Identify and work to eliminate existing or potential conflicts and maintain effective relationships between the Town and those units of government and other entities upon which the Town must depend.	Ongoing
ICP-1a Work with the agencies providing services to ensure the Town of Excelsior has an opportunity to give input to any issue related to providing those services.	Ongoing
ICP-1b Cooperate with the City of Reedsburg and County Highway Department for contractual services to plow and maintain roadways.	Ongoing
ICO-2 Secure necessary services from other units of government (or private contractors) that are reliable and economically justified.	Ongoing
ICP-2a Develop and maintain agreements with municipalities, other government bodies, or private companies for services most appropriately provided by those organizations such as, but not limited to, fire service, ambulance services, snow plowing, etc.	Ongoing
ICO-3 Coordinate development options with neighboring towns, villages, and cities relative to development to maintain the rural nature of the Town.	Ongoing
ICP-3a Encourage the Town of Excelsior to work cooperatively with the City of Reedsburg, Village of North Freedom, Village of Rock Springs and adjacent towns regarding future land use proposals.	Ongoing
ICP-3b Encourage growth within the ET Zone in coordination with the City of Reedsburg and continue to coordinate with them on zoning districts within the growth management area.	Ongoing

LAND USE

Objectives and Policies:	Timeline
LUO-1 Protect natural areas, such as wetlands, floodplains, the “Narrows” area, large contiguous forested areas, and the Baraboo Range.	Ongoing
LUO-2 Encourage development adjacent to already developed areas using alternatives to conventional residential development patterns that minimize development impacts on public infrastructure.	Ongoing
LUP-2a Areas of the Town that are appropriate for high density residential development are limited to those lands within the Reedsburg ET District, as well as lands adjacent to Lake Virginia and the Reedsburg Country Club.	Ongoing
LUP-2b Allow commercial zoning only within Extra Territorial (ET) areas next to Reedsburg and those lands directly adjacent to the Reedsburg ET district that are designated “Future Commercial” on the Town’s Future Land Use Map.	Ongoing
LUO-3 Maintain the economic viability of sustainable farming.	Ongoing
LUP-3a Maintain prime (Class I, II and III Soils) agricultural crop land.	Ongoing
LUP-3b Direct new residential development to “borderline” or “marginal” (Class IV- VIII Soils) lands not suitable for farming, whenever possible.	Ongoing
LUO- 4 Partner with neighboring municipalities on land use policy.	Ongoing
LUO- 5 Protect the quality of surface and ground water from the impacts of development.	Ongoing
LUO- 6 Protect community aesthetics, including scenic views and neighborhood character.	Ongoing
LUP-6a Maintain an uncrowded rural community, natural beauty and quality of life.	Ongoing
LUP-6b Restrict commercial signage (billboards) on roads and highways.	Ongoing
LUO- 7 Maintain private property rights.	Ongoing
LUO-8 Ensure that future uses at the former Sauk County landfill property are compatible with the Town’s Comprehensive Plan and adjacent land uses.	Ongoing
LUP-8a Encourage that any uses of the former Sauk County landfill property reflect the Sauk County landfill final use plan (2006) and participate in any amendments to the plan.	Ongoing
LUP-8b Establish permit guidelines for shooting ranges to minimize impacts on neighbors, such as hours when shooting is allowed, types of weapons, bunkering protections, gates, etc.	Ongoing
LUO - 9 Encourage potential mineral extraction adjacent to county roads and state roads.	Ongoing
LUP 9a - Discourage mineral extraction in the Baraboo bluffs.	Ongoing
LUP 9b - Discourage mineral extraction on bluff faces.	Ongoing
LUP 9c - Discourage mineral extraction visible from public roads.	Ongoing
LUP-9d - Require that all resource extraction activities have a reclamation plan that provides for the activity to be conducted in a way that minimizes its impact on the natural environment. A guarantee of financial assurance should be posted in an amount equal to the projected cost of reclamation. The reclamation plan and financial guarantee should be reviewed with every renewal of the mining permit. The reclamation plan should fall within a use that is compatible with all the other elements of the comprehensive plan.	Ongoing
LUP 9e –Request that all nonmetallic extraction operations in the town be approved by the town plan commission and the town board before operations shall begin.	Ongoing
LUP 9f – Encourage that all reclamation plans include a hydro-geologic study showing impact on water tables.	Ongoing
LUP 9g – Encourage that there be no more than one permitted non- metallic mineral extraction operation of each type (sand/gravel, limestone, quartzite) at one time.	Ongoing
LUP 9h – Encourage all mineral extraction sites be no more than 20 acres, including buffers required by county zoning ordinances, and no more than 65 feet deep, or no deeper than the plane of adjoining land, whichever is less.	Ongoing
LUP 9i - Require all petitioners utilizing Town roads to maintain liability insurance and financial assurance with the Town in case of damage.	Ongoing
LUP 9j - Require all such activity to be distant from any natural or recreational waterway, wetland, natural spring, or other sensitive natural area.	Ongoing
LUP 9k - Limit hours of operation of any mineral extraction activity including maintenance of equipment and reclamation activities to the hours of 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday, and 6:00 to noon on Saturday excluding legal holidays.	Ongoing
LUO -10 Land Uses and Land Divisions in the Town of Excelsior will be regulated through the Sauk County Code of Ordinances, and appropriate Town policies and ordinances.	Ongoing
LUP-10a Rezoning petitions located within the Exclusive Agriculture Zoning District will be addressed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The land is better suited for a use not allowed in the farmland preservation zoning district. • The rezoning is consistent with any applicable comprehensive plan. • The rezoning is substantially consistent with the county certified farmland preservation plan. • The rezoning will not substantially impair or limit current or future agricultural use of surrounding parcels of land that are zoned for or legally restricted to agricultural use. 	Ongoing

12.5 Consistency Among Plan Elements

The State Comprehensive Planning statute requires that the implementation element “describe how each of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan shall be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.” Preparing the various elements of the Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan simultaneously has ensured that there are no known internal inconsistencies between the different elements of this Plan.

Utilizing the Plan:

As the Town begins implementing the plan, it should regularly review the goals and policies to ensure that land use decisions being made are following the vision of the Town. Below are criteria specifically for reviewing the change of land use districts and to avoid spot zoning of individual parcels.

Rezone Criteria:

- a) The proposed amendment is consistent with the overall purpose and intent of the Comprehensive Plan
- b) The proposed amendment is consistent with the Town’s *Map 11-3: Future Land Use*.
- c) Factors have changed since the last comprehensive plan and map adoption that warrants the change.
- d) If rezoning land out of an agricultural district, the plan commission shall find all of the following:
 - i) The land is better for non-agricultural use.
 - ii) The rezone is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
 - iii) The rezone is consistent with the Farmland Preservation Plan

The rezone will not substantially impair or limit current or future agricultural use of surrounding parcels of land zoned for agriculture.

Spot Zoning Criteria:

“Spot Zoning” means amending a zoning ordinance whereby a single lot or area is granted privileges which are not granted or extended to other land in the vicinity, in the same use district. Spot zoning shall be considered undesirable and a hindrance to long-term planning efforts by causing land use conflicts. When making a decision on a rezone request, or land use change, each of the criteria below should be addressed. If the rezone meets the criteria below, it is considered spot zoning and therefore should be avoided.

- The rezone area is small compared to the surrounding zoning districts.
- The rezone district is inconsistent with the surrounding zoning districts.
- The rezone would be to the sole benefit of the applicant and does not serve as a public benefit.
- The rezone is inconsistent with the purpose and planned district in the Comprehensive Plan.

12.6 Annual Review of the Implementation Progress

It is intended that prior to each annual meeting, the Plan Commission and Town Board jointly review the Vision, Goals, Objectives and Policies of this Comprehensive Plan to ensure that the Plan has been adhered to and to ensure its continued implementation. This will be particularly important for those policies that have an asterisk (*), which are policies that require additional work as part of their implementation. It is also intended that an update be provided at each annual meeting, which summarizes both how and when policies of the Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan have been/will be implemented. This process of review and summary will also offer the Plan Commission and Town Board an opportunity to identify the policies that may be implemented with the assistance of any additional appointed Committee to complete tasks.