

TOWN OF OULU, WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



The Town of Oulu Comprehensive Plan is part of the Bayfield County 2023-2043 Comprehensive Plan. For references, policies, maps, and implementation steps, please refer to that plan.

Revised: 11.08.2023

Introduction

In 2008, the Town of Oulu developed its first Comprehensive Plan as part of a cooperative effort with 13 other towns and Bayfield County. This plan follows that format and addresses issues and opportunities, land use, housing, economic development, transportation, utilities and community facilities, natural and cultural resources and implementation strategies as required by Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law. This plan relies on the Bayfield County 2023-2043 Comprehensive Plan to provide background information related to the plan elements, policies, and programs.

A set of planning objectives was outlined as a part of the comprehensive planning process:

1. Make certain that the information presented as part of this process was developed in a transparent fashion that incorporates current information and resources as well as public input.
2. Create uniform land use classifications that are clearly identified within the Plan.
3. Work with the County to ensure that the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies are obtainable and realistic.

The Town Board adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in January 2010. In 2011, 2015, and 2023 the Town Board adopted a revised Comprehensive Plan which included changes to the previous plan. Most of the changes in this plan are in the Future Land Use Map. These changes are the result of additional smaller land parcels that were created from previous larger land parcels. The demographic data in this plan has been updated.

Acknowledgments

This plan was developed by the Town Plan Commission, and Town Board with the help of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and in cooperation with Bayfield County.

Town Board

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Ed Burhans, Supervisor
Adam Mattson, Supervisor
Diana Reijo, Clerk
Margie Lahti, Treasurer

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What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Town of Oulu Comprehensive Plan offers a broad look at the elements of housing, land use, transportation, natural environment, utilities and community facilities, economic development, issues and opportunities, intergovernmental cooperation, and implementation. This Plan offers a “30,000 foot” elevated look at the Town related to trends and future needs through a series of goals and policies. The intent of this plan is to offer guidance to the residents, stakeholders, and landowners of the Town of Oulu as well as to ensure the long-term health, safety, and well-being of the Town.

Issues and Opportunities

The issues and opportunities element provides background information about the Town of Oulu and its overall policies, programs, goals, and objectives. The information provided in this section is critical to the development of the goals and objectives concerning the future direction of the town. The following is a review of key issues and opportunities as they relate to the Town of Oulu.

Housing Element Issues

- Need to retain the rural character while also allowing housing options for future generations.
- Lack of qualified personnel, elderly and assisted living opportunities for an ageing population.
- Increased property values are generating increasing real estate taxes and a population of lower and fixed incomes is finding these increases difficult to meet.

Economic Development Element Issues

- Allow home occupations that are consistent with zoning regulations in residential areas provided they fit into the character of the neighborhood.
- Work to promote needed health care and childcare facilities.
- Encourage development of home-based businesses that are consistent with zoning regulations.
- Ensure that new development is compatible with maintaining scenic views and local character and have a “Low impact” on the environment.
- Encourage development of farm production, forestry, and cottage industry.
- Promote development of public recreational opportunities in the Town.
- Utilize local natural resources to produce value-added products to support sustainable home-based businesses.
- Improve and develop partnerships with other communities and state agencies that share the same customers.
- Market information available for home-based businesses.
- Encourage development of small business, especially those that provide year-round employment.
- Enhance high-speed electronic networks and provide access to training for small and home-based businesses.
- Encourage eco-friendly tourism.
- Assist and facilitate economic development planning and coordination between local and regional partners.

Transportation Element Issues

- There is a need to continue to provide a transportation system that efficiently transports people within the Town and to destinations outside of the Town.
- Roads must be built to acceptable standards and maintained in a condition that is conducive to efficient transportation.

Agricultural and Natural Resources Element Issues

- Identify and prioritize sensitive areas for preservation.
- Survey farms for runoff issues.
- Maintain working lands in agriculture and forestry: Farmland Preservation and Managed Forest Law.
- Soil slopes: Areas associated with waterways with soil slopes equal to or greater than 12 percent: Recommend that no development occur in these areas; or if development is permitted that additional conditions be required to prevent and control water and soil runoff and erosion and to protect the development.
- Fisheries resources: Encourage the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to implement habitat management programs to maintain and improve stream and river water quality and fisheries habitat.
- Agriculture and forestry land use: Encourage all landowners engaging in agriculture and forestry to use agriculture and forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Land development: Encourage all landowners engaging in land development or disturbance (building, roads, driveways, etc.) to use land development BMPs.
- Artesian water resources: Spring and free flowing well water resources need to be located and inventoried. Work cooperatively with the County and State to develop a plan to protect these from over exploitation and degradation.

Utilities and Community Facilities Element Issues

- There is a need for improvement of adequate cell phone telecommunication services and internet broadband service.
- Where possible, work with utility agencies to promote underground lines.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Element Issues

- Cooperation between governmental units is necessary in order to deal with issues that cross municipal boundaries and involve mutual interests.

Land Use Element Issues

- Ensure that land use decisions are consistent with the Future Land Use Plan.

Town of Oulu Profile

Historical Population and Population Projections

The population of Oulu was 560 in 2020, which was a 6% increase from 527 in 2010 and an 8% increase from the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) projected population of 520 for 2020. The WDOA projects a population decrease to 450 people by 2040, which is a 20% decrease from 2020. However, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) predicts an increase of 3.9% to 582 people by 2040; this aligns with the expectation that Bayfield County is expected to grow over the next 20 years.

Town of Oulu Historic Population and Population Projections, 1950-2030

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040
U.S. Census Bureau	725	649	547	513	513	540	527	560	-	-
WDOA Projection	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	520	500	450
NWRPC Projection	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	520	565	582

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and WDOA

Household Characteristics

An analysis of the households of a community helps establish an understanding of the community's character and provides insight into community life. Understanding household composition and conditions is essential to assessing the future needs of the inhabitants of the community.

The 2020 Census identifies 221 households in the Town of Oulu. Of this total, 159 (approximately 72%) are identified as family households.

There was an increase of 14 households from 2010 to 2020 (207 in 2010). This is a 6.8% increase in households. The WDOA expects households decrease by 7.5% between 2020 and 2040 to 205 households in 2040. However, the NWRPC expects households to increase by 19.9% between 2020 and 2040 to 265 households in 2040. This aligns with projected population growth for the Town and Bayfield County. The following table projects the number of households to 2040.

Town of Oulu Household Projections, 1990-2040

	Census 1990	Census 2000	Census 2005	Census 2010	Census 2020	Projection 2025	Projection 2030	Projection 2035	Projection 2040
U.S. Census Bureau	172	192	195	207	221	-	-	-	-
WDOA Projection	-	-	-	-	-	222	221	213	205
NWRPC Projection	-	-	-	-	-	231	243	254	265

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, WDOA, NWRPC

Goals and Objectives

Housing

The following goals and objectives have been developed to guide housing decisions within the Town of Oulu. Implementation of the identified actions will assist in achieving the housing vision stated in Housing Element Issues.

- Goal: The housing stock in the Town of Oulu should provide an adequate range of housing opportunities to meet the varied needs and desires of existing and future community residents.
 - Objective: Maintain viable, properly zoned areas that are available for new residential development.
 - Objective: In conjunction with Bayfield County, develop conservation subdivision standards for new development.
 - Objective: Allow existing homes to be grandfathered in as legal dwellings.

- Goal: Guide new housing development into areas that minimize impacts on sensitive aquatic and terrestrial natural resources so that the Town continues to be an attractive place to reside.
 - Objective: Encourage development in areas that will not result in property or environmental damage.
 - a. Utilizing information in the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element, the Town of Oulu, in conjunction with Bayfield County shall inventory and map sensitive resources that should be preserved to the greatest extent possible.
 - b. Encourage “low-impact” development that strives to retain natural vegetation that can help reduce stormwater runoff, flooding, and minimize impacts on water quality. Encourage the retention of natural vegetation, especially vegetation along waterways.

- Goal: Improve the existing housing stock to enhance quality, livability, and character of the Town of Oulu.
 - Objective: Encourage the elimination of substandard, blighted, or deficient housing throughout the Town, which will benefit housing values over time.
 - a. Support the enforcement of residential codes and nuisance ordinance standards that restrict and/or prohibit the accumulation of junk and debris.
 - b. Use available federal, state, and local funds for housing rehabilitation grants and loans to help owners improve their homes and building sites.

Economic Development

The primary goal and objective of economic development is to support and enhance the quality of life for residents through maintaining and expanding the local tax base, supporting existing businesses, attracting new complimentary businesses, and to attract jobs that provide a living wage. The combination of economic development applications with other units of government and related organizations leverages public investment and often increases the success of economic development initiatives. The following set of goals, objectives and policies have been developed through working groups during the comprehensive process and will strengthen the overall economic development efforts of the Town.

- Goal: Encourage economic opportunities that are compatible with the Town.
 - Objective: Encourage home-based businesses.
 - Objective: Encourage vegetative screening of commercial and industrial developments.
 - Objective: Encourage continued development and updating of communications services including high speed internet, cell phone service, and cable.
 - Objective: Develop Renewable Energy uses and applications.
 - Objective: Encourage commercial development in locations where current Town and/or County infrastructure can properly support it.
Policy: Work with Renewable Energy entities to implement renewable energy systems including solar electric and geothermal heating and cooling.
Policy: Prohibit commercial landfills or hazardous waste sites in the Town.
Policy: Discourage strip highway development.

- Goal: Ensure effective and continued public input-based land use planning process related to economic development.
 - Objective: Encourage public participation in land use planning related to potential economic development.
 - Objective: Define a process for public input on land use planning and land use decisions related to economic development that best fit the will and interest of Town residents.
Policy: Provide continuing public review and a public-based amendatory process to the Land Use Plan at least every ten years.

- Goal: Encourage the protection of existing productive agricultural land in the Town.
 - Objective: Define and inventory the town's prime farmland.
 - Objective: Encourage use of idle farmland for agricultural purposes, wildlife habitat, limited residential and renewable energy use.
 - Objective: Encourage non-traditional agricultural endeavors.
 - Objective: Define sound soil and water conservation practices.
Policy: Increase agricultural landowners' awareness of Agricultural Land Trusts and other programs available to help preserve farmland. Improve forest landowner awareness of Managed Forest Programs and their benefits and contributions to the local and surrounding economies.
Policy: Discourage conversion of prime farmland to non-agricultural use.
Policy: Implement defined soil and water conservation practices.
Policy: Promote participation in the Farmland Preservation Program

Transportation

- Goal: The Town of Oulu encourages the development of a multi-modal transportation system that provides a safe, environmentally sensitive, and economical movement of people and goods.
 - Objective: Work with the Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) to establish a bus stop within the Town of Oulu.
 - Objective: Work to maintain and repair Airport Road as this provides an important north-south connection to the Town and surrounding area. The Town will work with the Towns of Hughes and Orienta to maintain Airport Road in good condition.
 - Objective: The Town will continue to encourage the County to maintain and repair County Roads B and FF.

- Objective: Work to maintain and repair all Town roads to current or higher standards and other regional ride-share systems with the surrounding communities.
- Objective: Encourage the enhancement of regional recreational trails between communities.

Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and action steps have been developed to assist the Town of Oulu in the conservation and promotion of effective management of the local natural, agricultural, and cultural resources.

- Goal: Conserve, protect, manage, and enhance the Town’s natural resources.
 - Objective: Endorse the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) watershed initiatives to restore altered shoreland vegetation and management of natural vegetation in critical shoreland areas.
 - Objective: Promote the establishment and maintenance of natural buffers along water resources.
 - a. Collaborate with state and local organizations whose charge is to enhance water quality.
 - b. Work to assure that all wastewater and septic systems are properly working.
 - c. Work with farmers and educators in developing Best Management Practices (BMPs) related to agricultural land use.
 - d. Control runoff during construction projects through the establishment of erosion control standards found within the Bayfield County Code and the State Stormwater program.
 - Objective: Educate the public on BMPs that will ensure the protection of natural resources.
 - a. Publish or obtain information that can be distributed to residents on the disposal of hazardous materials, such as paint, waste oils, electronics, insecticides, pesticides, and prescription drugs etc.
 - b. At the transfer station, continue the recycling program and continue to inform the town residents and landowner of the need and opportunity for material recycling.
 - c. Make available brochures and provide training on BMPs to the residents and landowners.
 - Objective: Protect and manage local forested areas and other wildlife habitats.
 - a. Encourage managed harvest of forest stands.
 - b. Coordinate with WDNR to identify and protect natural resources.
 - c. Inventory and map sensitive resources that should be preserved to the greatest extent possible.
 - d. Encourage “low-impact” development that strives to retain natural vegetation.
 - e. Discourage habitat fragmentation by avoiding development within identified habitat areas.
 - f. Work and cooperate with local land trusts and similar organizations on forest and wildlife habitat protection, management, and preservation.

- Goal: Preservation and enhancement of agricultural resources.
 - Objective: Encourage both traditional and non-traditional agriculture production.
 - a. Encourage production of agricultural products for local consumption and valued added production.

- Goal: Preserve and enhance cultural resources, including historical and archeological sites and resources.
 - Objective: Coordinate with the Oulu Historical Society, the Oulu Cultural and Heritage Center and the Bayfield County Historical Society to update the inventory and preservation of historic properties within the town and share this information with the Wisconsin Historical Society.
 - a. Develop a list of eligible or registered historical places and structures in the Town.
 - b. Work with private landowners on the preservation of historic buildings.

Utilities and Community Facilities

The Town of Oulu continues to ensure public services within the Town's capacity to provide such services. The maintenance and enhancement of public facilities and public recreational facilities encourages a healthy community environment. Leadership and growth is vital to maintaining the desired characteristics of the township. This element serves as an inventory that describes what is and what has been. The Town of Oulu will continue to establish and enhance mutual relationships with federal, state, county, and local governments to develop solutions to issues within the Town as well as issues that involve multiple jurisdictions or cross municipal boundaries.

- Goal: Maintain and improve community facilities.
 - Objective: Maintain and improve existing community facilities and services to meet community needs.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

- Goal: Improve communication with neighboring Towns, Bayfield County, area school districts, and state agencies.
 - Objective: Notify the area school districts about proposed residential developments so the districts may plan accordingly. Encourage the school districts to provide input into these decisions.
 - Objective: Seek ways to share community facilities and services with neighboring communities and coordinate multi-jurisdictional applications whenever possible.
 - a. Coordinate sharing of equipment and services with other jurisdictions including road development/maintenance, garbage collection, etc.
 - b. Seek funds for housing rehabilitation in coordination with other jurisdictions.
 - Objective: Identify existing or potential conflicts between local governmental units, including future land use trends and describing processes to resolve such conflicts.
 - a. Establish a conflict resolution process with adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions.
 - b. Work with Bayfield County and the surrounding Towns on land use and zoning issues.

Implementation

As part of the Comprehensive Planning process, a number of goals, objectives, and action items were developed that when implemented are intended to build stronger relationships and give direction to the Town Board and its residents. To ensure that the Town's Plan is an effective management tool, the Town of Oulu Plan Commission will review the Plan goals and objectives periodically to track those activities that have been completed to realize its accomplishments and identify areas where additional resources or actions are needed. Part of this effort will also include addressing conflicts which may arise between the elements of the Plan.

This is a living document, and all implementation action items are ongoing.

Housing Implementation Schedule

- Action: The housing stock in Oulu should provide an adequate range of housing opportunities to meet the varied needs and desires of existing and future community residents.
- Action: Support efforts of private and non-profit organizations to address the needs of all income levels, age groups, and persons with special needs in the development of housing within the Town.
- Action: Support efforts and new programs that will provide additional elderly and disabled resident housing opportunities and services, along with qualified personnel to provide these services.
- Action: Coordination with nearby Towns to direct large alternative and multiple family developments to locations where appropriate municipal services are available.
- Action: Guide new housing development into areas that minimize impacts on sensitive resources so that the Town continues to be an attractive place to reside.
- Action: Encourage development in areas that will not result in property or environmental damage.
- Action: Utilizing information in the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element, the Town shall inventory and map sensitive resources that should be preserved to the greatest extent possible.
- Action: Encourage "low-impact" development that strives to retain natural vegetation that can help reduce stormwater runoff and flooding.
- Action: Encourage landscaping and natural screening between building sites.

Economic Development Implementation Schedule

- Action: Support the County and State economic development efforts in the retention and enhancements of existing businesses.
- Action: As appropriate, provide financial assistance and/or incentives through state and federal grants, low interest loans and other financial instruments to existing and new companies.
- Action: Ensure that the zoning code adequately addresses development standards that reflect the characteristics of the Town (e.g., appropriate building materials, setbacks from natural resources, signage, lighting, landscaping, etc.)

- Action: New commercial activities should be limited to minimize adverse impacts upon surrounding land use, particularly residential use.

Transportation Implementation Schedule

- Action: Establish open lines of communication with Bayfield County, WisDOT, and local and regional transit authorities to maintain and enhance transportation facilities throughout the Town of Oulu.
- Action: Continue to establish a local network of roads that is connected, coordinated, and affordable that will link residents to important community facilities and regional highways.
- Action: Facilitate discussion with BART to improve transit locations throughout the County.
- Action: Encourage the development and enhancement of regional recreational trails between communities.

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Implementation Schedule

- Action: Support setback requirements for water resources as established by the County shoreland standards.
- Action: Educate residents about the importance of natural areas and wildlife corridors.
- Action: Endorse the WDNR watershed initiatives to educate shoreland and basin property owners on the appropriate safe levels, application, timing and safe types of fertilizers and pesticides applied to lawns and fields.
- Action: Endorse the WDNR watershed initiatives to restore altered shoreland vegetation and discourage removal of natural vegetation in critical shoreland areas.
- Action: Inventory and map sensitive resources that should be preserved to the greatest extent possible.
- Action: Encourage “low-impact” development that strives to retain as much natural vegetation as possible and discourage habitat fragmentation.
- Action: Encourage the development of a list of eligible or registered historical places and structures in the Town.
- Action: Work with private landowners and organizations on the preservation of historic buildings.
- Action: In association with Bayfield County, work to improve awareness of water quality issues in the town and Bayfield County and develop strategies that assist in the preservation of natural areas as well as a reduction in stormwater runoff.

Utilities and Community Facilities Implementation Schedule

- Action: Maintain and improve community facilities.
- Action: Ensure there are adequate emergency services of police, fire, rescue, hazardous event responders and emergency medical services.

- Action: Encourage utility companies to seek system upgrades in a timely and cost-effective manner when they are necessary.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Implementation Schedule

- Action: Improve communication with neighboring towns, Bayfield County, area school districts and state agencies.
- Action: Notify appropriate state agencies of proposed land use changes and development plans.
- Action: Explore the potential for mutual services with neighboring towns including road development/maintenance, garbage collection, etc.
- Action: Seek funds for housing rehabilitation in coordination with other jurisdictions.
- Action: Work with Bayfield County and the surrounding Towns on land use and zoning issues; and conflict resolution processes

Land Use Implementation Schedule

- Action: Encourage “low-impact” development especially in areas near sensitive natural resources.
- Action: Coordinate with Bayfield County to consider additional strategies and requirements for protection of water resources. These requirements should establish a minimum percentage of natural area that shall be preserved in a development and create buffer zones and vegetative screens along roads and sensitive natural resources (i.e., steep slopes, wooded areas, wetlands, waterways, etc.).
- Action: Conduct a review of the Comprehensive Plan periodically.
- Action: Provide a public-based amendatory process to the Comprehensive Plan.
- Action: Utilize the Plan Commission to inform the Town Board on recommended changes needed within the Comprehensive Plan as land use patterns or trends change
- Action: Encourage Bayfield County to change zoning to be consistent with the Town’s Future Land Use Map.

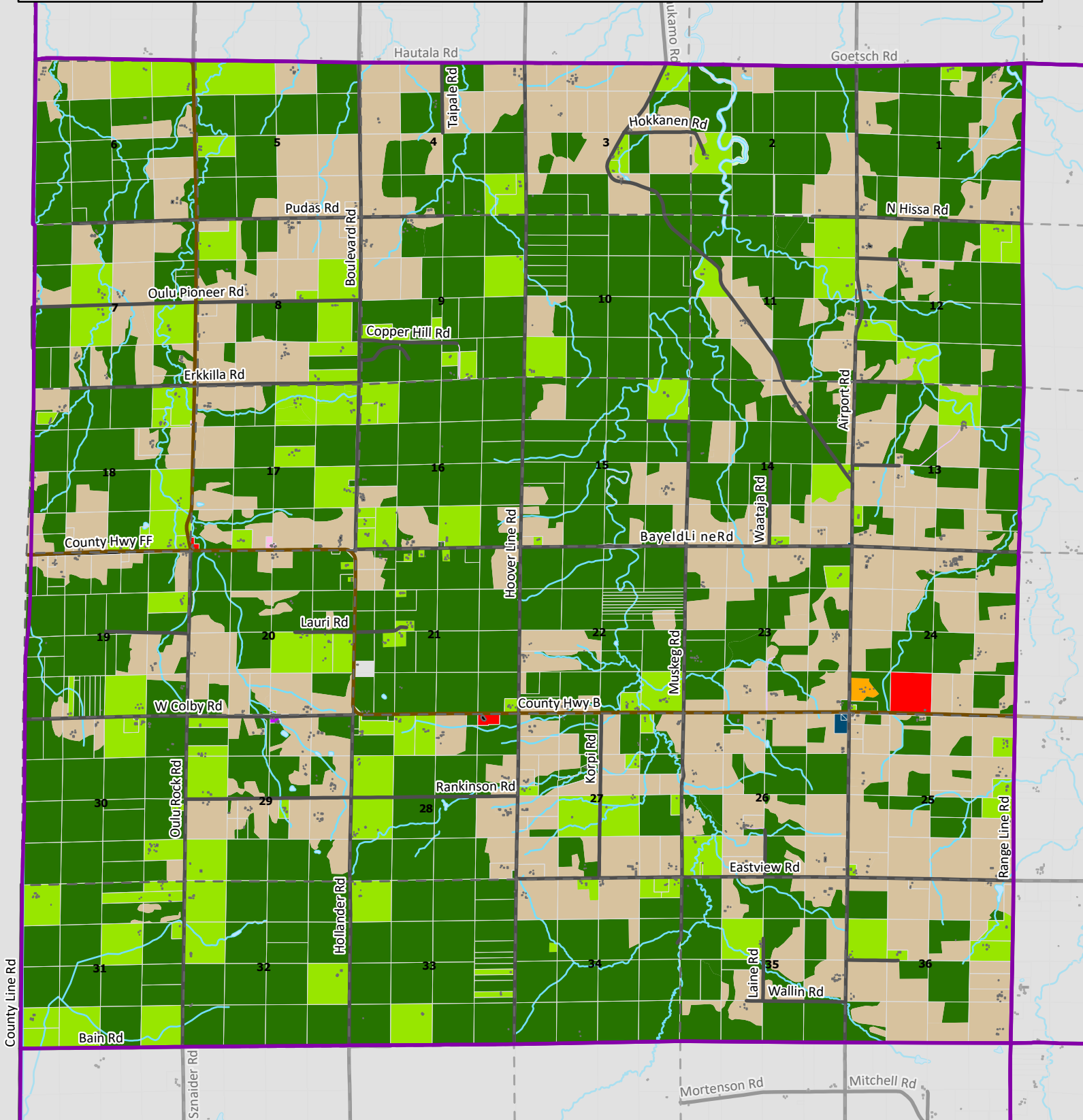
Town of Oulu

Comprehensive Plan 2023 Map A - Existing Land Use



- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Agriculture | Town Land | Town Boundary | County Forest Road |
| County Land | Institutional | Tax Parcel | Private Road |
| Cemetery | Recreation | Federal Highway | River/Creek/Stream |
| Commercial | Right-Of-Way | State Highway | Lake/Large River/Flowage |
| Forested/Open Space | Utility | County Highway | |
| Forest Residential | Building Footprint | Town Road | |

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Data Sources: Town of Oulu, Bayfield County, NWRPC, WI DNR



Town of Oulu

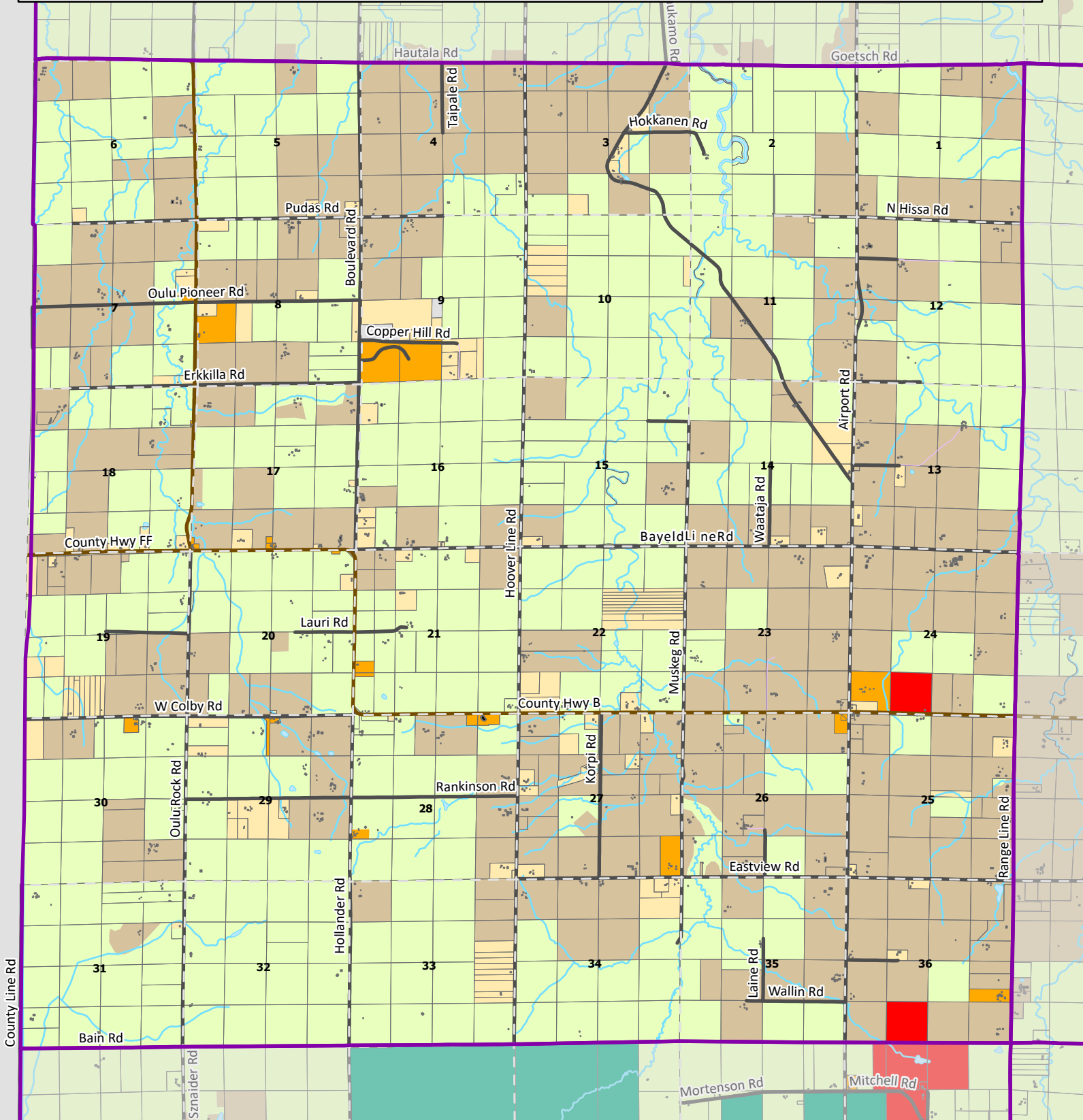
Comprehensive Plan 2023

Map B - Generalized Future Land Use



- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Residential | Forestry & Open Space | County Highway |
| Rural Residential | Right-Of-Way | Town Road |
| Commercial | Building Footprint | County Forest Road |
| General Mixed Use | Tax Parcel | Private Road |
| Industrial | Town Boundary | River/Creek/Stream |
| Agricultural | Federal Highway | Lake/Large River/Flowage |
| Conservation | State Highway | |

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Data Sources: Town of Oulu, Bayfield County, NWRPC, WI DNR





This plan was reviewed and revised by:

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Original Plan adopted: December 9, 2009 by the Oulu Town Board

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