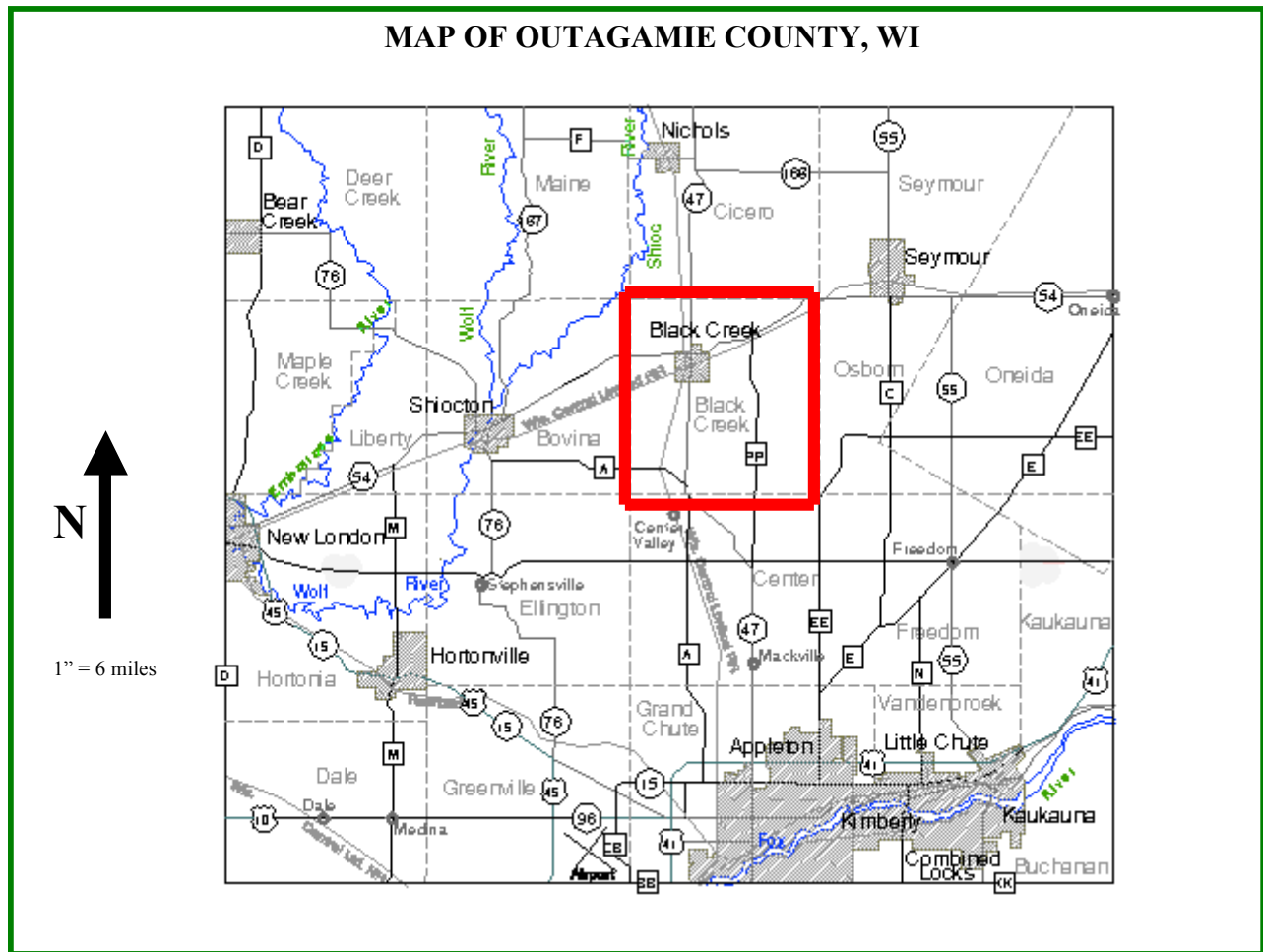


CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

The Town and Village of Black Creek are located in central Outagamie County, Wisconsin. The Village is located in the north central portion of the Town. The Village offers an array of municipal services (i.e. schools, library, post office, etc.) in a quiet, friendly setting. As of the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) the Village had a population of 1,311.

The Town enjoys a blend of family farming operations, undeveloped swamplands, and rural residential development. The township is approximately 36 square miles in size and was home to about 1,199 people as of the 2013 ACS. The Town of Black Creek shares borders with the Town of Cicero to the north, Town of Bovina to the west, Town of Center to the south, and Town of Osborn to the east.

STH 47 and STH 54 traverse the community and provide easy access to the Fox Cities and Green Bay. Most residents are only a 15-20 minute drive away from service and employment opportunities in nearby communities.

AREA HISTORY

The Town of Black Creek was created in 1851, when Outagamie County separated from Brown County. From its beginning, the Town of Black Creek has been a farming community. Today, farming is still important, but faces several challenges. In more recent decades, residential development has become more pervasive as people seek rural locations with easy access to the employment opportunities in the Fox Cities and Green Bay.

The Village of Black Creek was born under an alias on November 31, 1871. On that date, the county register's office in Appleton accepted and recorded a plat submitted by G.A. Randall, Dorr Clark and Thomas J. Burdick. The name of the proposed settlement was Middleburg. Why "Middleburg"? It could have been a reference to its location on the stagecoach route between Appleton and Shawano or its central location in Outagamie County.

At the time the village was being created, the railroad right of way had just been cleared and graded. Track had been laid and the first run was expected soon. In addition a state road running a mile west of the new village had been updated several times by the county board, providing new settlers easier access to the land north of Appleton.

The Village of Black Creek was incorporated in 1904. At the time it was a bustling a prosperous community – home to many businesses and nearly 450 residents.

Today, the Village stands at the crossroads of STH 54 and STH 47. Development along these corridors includes gas stations, a grocery store, restaurants, taverns and other local service businesses. The Village population has grown to more than 1,200 residents. However, the population gains by the Village have not kept pace with the rate of growth in the Town and Outagamie County. The Village also faces a somewhat uncertain future given the proposed STH 47 bypass. This plan is seen as an important tool to ensure the Village is a thriving community well into the 21st century.

HOW DID THIS PLAN GET STARTED?

In 2002, the Village of Black Creek and Town of Black Creek decided to initiate a multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning process. To begin this effort, the Town and Village applied for comprehensive planning grant from the State of Wisconsin. The Town and Village learned in June of 2003 that their grant application was successful.

This decision to develop a Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan was made to ensure that the Town and Village will continue to have a say in land uses decisions after 2010, as is stipulated in the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law (66.1001 Wis. Stats.). Town and Village leaders sought assistance from OMNNI Associates, a consulting firm based in Appleton, WI. OMNNI was selected to facilitate a community-based planning program including visioning, strengths and weakness identification, and the development of GIS-based maps. This community-based planning approach helped the community to identify and address important land use, resource protection and development issues facing Black Creek. The 2015 update process was facilitated by Community Planning & Consulting, a municipal planning firm located in Green Bay.

Why Develop a Multi-Jurisdictional Plan?

Early in the initial planning process, the Town and Village realized that to be successful in their planning efforts, it was imperative that they cooperate. The Village and the Town decided to work jointly in the development of their comprehensive plans. Working jointly on one Comprehensive Plan proved to be a cost-effective alternative to preparing separate plans. As a result of the success of the initial effort the two communities agreed to update the plan as a joint planning process.

WHY DEVELOP A PLAN?

This plan was developed with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated and harmonious development of the Town and Village which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and the general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PLAN?

This 20-year *Comprehensive Plan for the Town and Village of Black Creek*, includes four major components:

- A profile of the demographic, economic and housing characteristics
- An inventory and assessment of the environment, community facilities, and natural resources
- Visions, goals, objectives and implementation strategies
- A series of land use maps that depicts future land use pattern

The plan was developed under the authority of the Comprehensive Planning Law. The law requires that a 20-year comprehensive plan be developed and adopted by all units of government that wish to have a say in land use decisions. The law authorizes municipalities to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans, singly or in cooperation with other communities, to serve as guides for the development of their communities. The Smart Growth Law defines, for the first time, what is meant by a “comprehensive plan” in Wisconsin. It includes the following nine required elements:

- Issues and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use

DEFINITIONS

Vision: An overall statement related to each of the nine required elements expressing the community's expectations for the future. These statements provide a framework and context to consider when making future land use decisions.

Goal: A statement that describes, usually in general terms, a desired future condition. Goals will usually only address one specific aspect of the vision.

Objective: A statement that describes a specific action or condition that is to be attained within a stated period of time. Objectives include ordinances changes, new programs, and other tasks. The objectives serve as a “to do” list to implement the plan. To be effective, objectives must be evaluated regularly and updated as necessary.

Policy: A course of action, or rule of conduct, used to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan. Policies are based on specific research. Therefore, they are developed after vision statements. In some cases, the policies relate closely to the vision, but provide more refined, specific actions.

- Implementation

In addition, the state requires that these elements be developed in concert with Wisconsin's 14 goals for local planning. The goals include:

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

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The *Town and Village of Black Creek Comprehensive Plan* was developed in an environment rich with public input. To gain citizen understanding and support throughout the planning process, the public was provided with a variety of meaningful opportunities to become involved in the process. Public input was facilitated through several meetings and activities and an internet web site. Copies of meeting agendas

and attendance sheets, as well as, the *Public Participation Plan and Adoption Procedures* are provided in the appendices of this document. What follows is a description of some of the primary opportunities for public education and input in the planning program.

KICK-OFF AND VISION MEETINGS

Initial Plan Process

The Town “kick-off” meeting for the initial planning process was held on April 30, 2003 at the Town of Black Creek Hall. At that meeting, OMNNI Associates presented an overview of the planning process, and provided general information to the public about smart growth planning and its importance to the Town of Black Creek. The meeting concluded with a discussion of area values (presented at the end of this chapter) and a SWOT Exercise (presented in Chapter 2). Interested residents were advised on how they can keep informed about, and become involved with, the comprehensive planning process.

The Town hosted a Vision Meeting the following week on May 6, 2003 to discuss initial ideas for what the Town would look like in 20 years. An assignment developed by OMNNI was used to facilitate this discussion. The assignment had participants completing a series of statements to get an idea of what the Town would be like in 20-years. For example, one statement started, “*Looking down at the town from an airplane in 20-years one would see...*” This assignment allowed residents to be very creative in the way they looked at the Town.

The Village officially kicked-off the initial planning program on June 5, 2003 in the Village Community Room. The same activities completed at the Town “kick-off” meeting were repeated for the benefit of the Village. The Village Vision Meeting was held on June 12, 2003. Again, this meeting followed the same format as the Town meeting.

2015 Plan Update Process

The 2015 update began with Community Engagement Sessions held at the Town Hall on November 20, 2014 and at the Village of Black Creek Community Center on February 2, 2015. Issues presented and discussed during the meetings included:

- Defining the role of the Comprehensive Plan
- Rationale for updating the plan
- Plan update timeline
- Updated demographic data for each community
- Visioning Session to guide the update process

Summaries of visions developed during the Engagement Session for each community are presented in Chapter 2: Community Profile.

JOINT PLANNING MEETINGS

The Town and Village Plan Commissions convened monthly to review draft text, maps, establish goals and establish priorities for plan implementation. Each of these meetings was duly posted and open to the public.

MID-COURSE MEETING

At the mid-point of the initial planning process, an informational meeting to share with the public what had been happening in the planning program and what was yet to be done was facilitated by OMNNI. At the meeting, OMNNI presented an overview of progress on the planning program, shared the vision statements developed by the Town and Village and encouraged the public to participate in the process to provide additional input.

MAP FORUM

At the map forum, a preliminary set of plan maps was displayed for residents, property owners and business owners to review and comment upon. This opportunity allowed residents to find “their property” and comment on what they liked or didn’t like about the maps they saw. This was also the first opportunity the Town and Village had to see the first *Draft Future Land Use Maps*.

OPEN HOUSE

The purpose of the plan “open house” was to display the plan maps and text in an informal setting. At the “open house,” there were no formal presentations, minutes, or voting. Rather, the maps and plan text were on display for interested residents to review at their own pace. The atmosphere was as casual as possible. Members of the Town and Village Plan Commissions and OMNNI staff were available to answer questions as needed. This meeting was a success in that it allowed the participants to share their ideas in a setting that was much less formal than the public hearing. As a result, more people were able to react to the plan than would have otherwise done so, if only a formal public hearing had been held.

Open houses were also held near the conclusion of the development of the 2015 update.

INTERNET WEB PAGE

The initial planning program was profiled on an interactive web page hosted on the OMNNI Associates Web Site. The page included meeting schedules, summaries of past meetings, draft maps and plan chapters, and general education materials about the Comprehensive Planning Law. The site was updated on a monthly basis to ensure that the information was current and would effectively inform the public.

During the 2015 update process meeting schedules and summaries and copies of draft plan chapters and maps were posted to websites hosted by the Town of Black Creek, Village of Black Creek, and Community Planning & Consulting. Additional information was posted to the Community Planning & Consulting Facebook page.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING

As part of the initial planning program, the Town and Village hosted an intergovernmental meeting to present the draft *20-Year Town and Village of Black Creek Future Land Use Map* for initial comment and feedback. Existing or anticipated plans from neighboring units of government, school districts, Outagamie County, the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, WDNR and WisDOT were

discussed in relation to the draft *Future Land Use Map*. A similar meeting was held during the 2015 update process.

VALUES

During the initial kick-off meetings, participants were asked to identify the values that influence residents to remain, take pride in, and become actively involved in the community. The complete list of those values is provided below. These value statements provided a clear direction for the development and implementation of the *Town and Village of Black Creek Comprehensive Plan*.

TOWN VALUES

We value the Town's rural atmosphere.

We value our central location in proximity to Green Bay and Appleton— close to employment, shopping, schools, medical facilities and churches.

We value our easy access to the amenities available in the Village of Black Creek.

We value our quality roads.

We value our ease of transportation (i.e. can travel to places without having to drive through crowded cities).

We value our quality schools.

We value our superb fire and ambulance service.

We value our quiet, peaceful environment.

We value our dark skies (i.e. no light pollution).

We value our slow population growth rate.

We value our sense of safety and low crime rate.

We value our sense of community – everyone knows one another.

We value our large lot size requirements (35 acres) to keep development to a minimum.

We value the fact that the Town does not have a lot of industrial development.

We value our Exclusive Agricultural Zoning.

VILLAGE VALUES

We value our small-community setting.

We value our central location and highway access to Appleton and Green Bay.

We value the Village's "big city" services – library, video rental store, police and fire, grocery store, post office, etc.

We value the quality schools.

We value the Village's quiet, peaceful atmosphere.

We value our sense of safety and low crime rates.

We value that the Village is a great place to raise children – lots of safe places for children to play and run and swim.

We value the caring, friendly people.

We value our clean environment and quality housing choices.

We value the fact that the Village has room to grow (for residential and industrial).