

# 7 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

The Town of Onalaska commenced the comprehensive planning process, deliberately, at a time when their neighboring jurisdictions, the Village of Holmen and the City of Onalaska, were undergoing a parallel planning process. The Town's intent was to formally join the discussion already underway over directions for future land use and development in the region and ensure a fully coordinated planning process. Further, the Town wanted to ensure that the planning process would consider the larger regional context and involve thorough communication with neighboring governmental jurisdictions, planning organizations, agencies, stakeholders and strong cross-boundary public participation.

Intergovernmental cooperation is a critical component of this planning effort and the future wellbeing of the Town of Onalaska. Local services and planning strategies can be strengthened by cooperative relationships throughout the County. This chapter contains an overview of Onalaska's intergovernmental relationships. This chapter also identifies known existing or potential conflicts between the Town's Comprehensive Plan and the plans of adjacent cities, villages, and towns, La Crosse County, Holmen School District, Onalaska School District, and the State of Wisconsin. The accompanying plan document contains related future goals, objectives, and policies, pursuant to the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law.

## 7.1 Town of Onalaska Intergovernmental Relationships

As the Regional Context map depicts, the Town of Onalaska, located in La Crosse County, is bordered by the cities of Onalaska and La Crosse, the Village of Holmen, and the towns of Holland, Farmington, Hamilton, and Medary.

The Town of Onalaska is served primarily by the Holmen School District, and partially by the Onalaska School District and the Melrose-Mindoro School District. Portions of the Town are served by the La Crosse Sewer Service Area and also by the Village of Holmen water system, sanitary sewer system and wastewater treatment plant.

The Town maintains excellent relationships with surrounding municipalities.

### 7.1.1 La Crosse County

The Town of Onalaska is located in La Crosse County. Many County plans, such as the La Crosse County Development Plan 2020 and the La Crosse Area Transportation Plan, affect the Town of Onalaska. The Town of Onalaska is under county zoning.

La Crosse County will start the process of updating its comprehensive plan in 2005. The La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) is also in the process of updating its Long Range Transportation Plan, to be completed in September, 2005.

The Town will submit this Plan to the County for review and inclusion into its Comprehensive Plan, and will participate in the creation of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

### 7.1.2 Regional Planning Commission

The Town of Onalaska is located within the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission's (MRRPC) jurisdiction. The MRRPC prepares and adopts regional or county-wide plans.

The MRRPC represents Pierce, Pepin, Buffalo, Trempealeau, La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford, Jackson and Monroe counties. The RPC was established to:

- Carry out comprehensive and intergovernmental planning;
- Have jurisdiction throughout the seven-county area, including incorporated and unincorporated areas;
- Meet area-wide requirements so local jurisdictions could receive federal grants;
- Provide an organization to receive federal grants.
- Services provided by the RPC include:
  - Comprehensive planning
  - Open space, recreational and environmental planning
  - Economic development
  - Demographic information and projects
  - Technical assistance to local governments
  - Geographic information services
  - Aerial photography distribution

The Town of Onalaska is included in many of the MRRPC's planning documents and profiles such as:

- The MRRPC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2001;
- The MRRPC Economic Development Program, 2000; and
- The MRRPC Industry Cluster and Regional Trade Report, 2001.

### 7.1.3 Surrounding Municipalities

a. *Village of Holmen*

The Town of Onalaska surrounds much of the Village of Holmen and the majority of the Town is currently served by the Holmen School District.

The Village has recently completed its comprehensive planning process. The Village's plan identifies future growth to CTH XX on the west and approximately 1.5 miles to the east, which is its current extra-territorial review authority limit.

The Town of Onalaska recently collaborated with the Village on a grant application for a new multi-purpose recreational trail to link the Holmen Village Park with the Great River Trail. The proposed route follows Halfway Creek through the Village and Town and then proceeds south along CTH XX. In addition, the Town and the Village share maintenance equipment.

The Town of Onalaska and the Village of Holmen also operate a joint fire department with the Town of Holland.

The Town of Onalaska has identified potential future areas for cooperative agreements with the Village of Holmen including: creation of a joint planning committee to direct regional growth; regional cooperation on a Purchase of Development Rights or PDR program; development of boundary agreements; expansion of shared equipment agreements; and creation of a stormwater management committee which would include the City of Onalaska. This Plan's recommendations for areas of cooperation are included in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Plan.

b. *Town of Holland*

The Town of Holland borders the northwestern portion of the Town of Onalaska.

The towns of Onalaska and Holland operate a joint fire department with the Village of Holmen and the Town of Holland contracts with the Town of Onalaska for street maintenance.

c. *City of Onalaska*

The City of Onalaska and the Town of Onalaska have a productive and cooperative relationship. Portions of the Town are located in the Onalaska School District.

The Town and the City will establish a regular means of communication for all land use decisions including informing each other of impending land use decisions, coordinating on amendments to land use designations and continuing to exchange ideas on issues confronting each community.

The Town of Onalaska has identified potential future areas for cooperative agreements with the City of Onalaska including: creation of a joint planning committee to direct regional growth; regional cooperation on a Purchase of Development Rights or PDR program; boundary agreements; shared equipment agreements; development of a shared park and recreation service and maintenance agreement between the Town of Onalaska, the City of

Onalaska and the Village of Holmen; and creation of a stormwater management committee which would include the Village of Holmen. This Plan's recommendations for areas of cooperation are included in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Plan.

*d. City of La Crosse*

The City of La Crosse is located south of the Town beyond the City of Onalaska. The Town of Onalaska shares a water boundary with La Crosse. Portions of the Town are also located within the La Crosse Sanitary Sewer Service Area.

### 7.1.4 School Districts

The Holmen School District comprises most of the Town of Onalaska, as well as parts of the Towns of Holland and Hamilton. Portions of the Town are also served by the Onalaska School District and the Melrose-Mindoro School District.

### 7.1.5 State & Federal Agencies, Districts

In addition to local units of government, the Town has worked extensively in the past with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Wisconsin (Department of Natural Resources in particular), Environmental Protection Agency, and the Lake Onalaska Protection and Rehabilitation District.

## 7.2 Existing or Potential Conflicts

The May 26, 2004 meeting attended by Town of Onalaska, Village of Holmen, City of Onalaska, Town of Holland, La Crosse County, and Holmen School District officials, resulted in the creation of a list of existing or potential conflicts related to the Town. The development of this Plan, which mostly occurred following the May 26, 2004 meeting, has aimed to eliminate many of these existing or potential areas of conflict. These existing or potential areas of conflict identified included the following:

- Discrepancies between the Town of Onalaska's land use plan and the Village of Holmen's land use plan.
- Discrepancies between the land use classifications employed by the individual communities which comprise La Crosse County.
- Differences between the Town's environmental, agricultural and bluff land preservation objectives and those of neighboring communities.
- School district planning and boundaries.

- Differences between the Town's priorities for commercial and industrial development and those of neighboring communities, specifically the Village of Holmen's proposals for development along its boundaries moving south toward CTH XX.
- The existence of large tracts of industrially zoned land in the Town.
- Stormwater management practices and natural resource protection.
- The location, type and extent of housing development in the Town and subsequent impacts on neighboring communities and the Holmen and Onalaska School Districts.

Subsequent to the intergovernmental meeting, additional areas of existing or potential conflict have been identified, which include the following:

- Loss of Town tax base, particularly of light industrial properties along the U.S. Highway 53/Great River Road corridors, to annexation.
- Political turnover among the area's communities.
- The Village of Holmen's, or the Cities' of Onalaska or La Crosse exercising their extra-territorial review authority to deny developments and/or failure to purchase or transfer development rights in the Town. This conflict may be with either the Town government and/or property owners. The Town absorbing the adverse financial impacts of implementing the municipalities' plan(s).
- Annexations that would bisect the Town.

### 7.3 Processes to Resolve Conflicts

Three meetings have been conducted during this planning process to identify processes to resolve conflicts. The first meeting occurred on May 26, 2004 in the Village of Holmen, which included a discussion of the above existing or potential conflicts as well as a list of potential resolution processes to address these conflicts.

The second meeting occurred on August 5, 2004 in the City of Onalaska, which was focused primarily on conflict resolution processes.

The third meeting was held on December 13, 2004 in the Town, and consisted of two parts – one meeting with the Village of Holmen and the second with the City of Onalaska to more specifically talk about areas for possible agreement.

The overall general list of possible processes to resolve conflicts includes:

- Maintain an ongoing dialogue between the Town and surrounding communities via joint committees such as the Town Board and Village Board or the Onalaska Common Council, and joint plan commission meetings.
- Draft and adopt intergovernmental and/or boundary agreements with appropriate neighboring communities and La Crosse County.
- Coordinate long range planning processes such as the comprehensive planning process (and future plan update processes) to identify and resolve incompatible goals, objectives and policies regarding development in the region; transportation plans; parks, recreation and open space plans; and more.
- Identify a formal method for conflict resolution. Consider contracting with a private firm for mediation/dispute resolution services.
- Improve the exchange of information related to municipal issues and promote regular coordination between municipal staff and government representatives.
- Work with the La Crosse Area Planning Committee, the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, La Crosse County and other communities in the Coulee Region to establish Annual Leaders' Meetings as described in the *City of La Crosse Confluence Plan*.
- Participate in the La Crosse County Technical Advisory Committee meetings, which includes planning and zoning administrators from area cities, villages and towns to discuss a predetermined subject to avoid conflicts.
- Building relationships through such efforts as cooperating on school district planning, sharing equipment, and staff, as well as identifying the most efficient means of providing public services to area residents and businesses.
- Revenue sharing.
- Participation in regional PDR or Transfer of Development Rights programs.

The Intergovernmental Cooperation Plan part of this document includes recommendations for resolving existing or potential conflicts with other communities.