

## **Chapter 1, Issues and Opportunities**

This Comprehensive Plan is an update to the 1988 and the 2003 comprehensive plans.

For a more detailed history of the 1988 and 2003 plans, see the archival copies of those plans, respectively.

A comprehensive plan is a policy document that provides a specific guide as to where future conservation, growth, and development should occur within the community. The plan should be consulted when the Town makes decisions concerning land use and other issues impacting the development of the Town.

**In short, the Town should refer to the Comprehensive Plan when any ordinance, plan, or regulation of the Town relates to land use.**

More specific issues addressed by a comprehensive plan as specified by Wisconsin Statutes [statutory references omitted] are those that pertain to the following: municipal incorporation, annexation, cooperative boundary agreements, consolidation and detachment of territory, municipal boundary agreements fixed by judgment, official mapping, land subdivision, extraterritorial plat review, County zoning, town zoning, improvements of a transportation facility, agricultural preservation plans, impact fee ordinances, land acquisition for recreational lands and parks, construction site erosion control, and storm water management zoning.

### **Description of the Planning Area**

The Town of Liberty Grove covers approximately 36,331 acres, approximately 57 square miles. Located at the northern end of the Door Peninsula, the Town borders the Towns of Baileys Harbor and Gibraltar and the Villages of Sister Bay and Ephraim.

## **Public Participation**

The public was enthusiastically and repeatedly invited to attend each of the Comprehensive Plan meetings, a process that lasted more than several years, i.e., from 2015 to 2017.

## **Vision Statement**

The Town of Liberty Grove is a diverse, progressive community with management standards based on the Town's Comprehensive Plan fostering employment opportunities, environmental quality, and a rural atmosphere with scenic beauty and abundant natural resources.

## **Plan Contents**

### **Chapter 2, Agricultural, Natural, and, Cultural Resources**

Goal 1: to preserve, protect, and promote historical and archeological sites within the Town.

Policy: Because of the existence of such historical and archeological sites, care should be given when any excavation that is done within the Town so as to possibly not disturb an historical or archeological site.

Goal 2: Preserve the rural, the open, and the natural character of the Town of Liberty Grove by managing development through planning. [Note: to demonstrate the interrelatedness of the various parts of the Comprehensive Plan, this goal, policies, and actions are identical to Goal 3, Chapter 3, Housing.]

Policy 1: Manage and minimize the environmental impact of multi-unit housing through planning.

Policy 2: Minimize visual impact as well as the social impact of multi-unit housing.

Policy 3: Retain the natural and rural character of the Town while providing sufficient land area for development of residential needs.

Goal 3: Transportation Related to Natural Resources [Note: to demonstrate the interrelatedness of the various parts of the Comprehensive Plan, this goal, policies, and actions are identical, in part to the goals on Transportation in Chapter 4].

### **Chapter 3, Housing and Population**

#### **Goal 1: Facilitate Affordable Housing**

Policy: Encourage an overall atmosphere in the Town and policies of the Town for affordable housing.

#### **Goal 2: Work to Mitigate Property Tax Impact on Residents.**

Policy: Work independently and inter-governmentally to cause legislative change and to formulate policies to control property taxes.

Goal 3: Preserve the rural, the open, and the natural character of the Town of Liberty Grove by managing development through planning.

Policy 1: Manage and minimize the environmental impact of multi-unit housing through planning.

Policy 2: Minimize visual impact as well as the social impact of multi-unit housing.

Policy 3: Retain the natural and rural character of the Town while providing sufficient land area for development of residential needs.

## **Chapter 4, Transportation**

### **GOALS**

The Town's goals related to transportation include the following:

1—Maintain roadways in as drivable condition as economically possible.

2—Promote the safety of roads for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

3 - Encourage the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian paths whenever an opportunity arises, such as when a road undergoes a resurfacing or a reconstruction.

4—Maintain the Town roads as far as practicable and within the constraints of fiscal responsibility, by maintaining the scenic, cultural, and historical characteristics of the roads as well as maintaining their rural nature and their geological and geographical features, all within the context of the other transportation and comprehensive plan goals.

5—Promote water access to silent sports as well as for the launching of motorized water craft, where any purchases or projects accord within the parameters of fiscal responsibility.

6—Establish harbor(s) of refuge on the bay side as well as the lake side where geographically possible and economically feasible.

7—Respond to increasing boating pressures where economically feasible, including, but not limited to marina enhancements and expansion.

8—Clean up or otherwise establish water-access points that happen not to be currently accessible or otherwise usable by people seeking additional access to water where feasible and practicable.



9—Promote parking that is safe and convenient, including parking for water access trailer parking, keeping in mind the needs of the physically disabled.

10—Encourage utility providers and internet providers to avoid running overhead lines and other obstructions on certain roads for the easy and safe transport of large water craft and waste hauling in light of the fact that within the Town, large water craft transport as well as waste water hauling are necessary.

11—Encourage extension of public transportation, such as bus lines from northern Door County to Green Bay and points south as well as services such as Door 2 Door Connector Service into the Town.

12—Support green transportation alternatives where economically justified and environmentally sound.

## **POLICIES, PROCEDURES, PRACTICES, AND ACTION ITEMS**

1— The Town will continue to employ its own staff and machinery for road maintenance provided: it is economically feasible to do so; services are enhanced by this practice; and greater control over how the roads will be maintained will be accomplished.

2—Because the Town has many more miles of road per capita than any other municipality in Door County, the Town strongly supports state legislation increasing transportation aid.

3—The Town should diligently and aggressively pursue each and every source of funding from every level of government—federal, state, county, etc.—and from every possible private source to subsidize the Town’s revenue to promote its goals related to transportation. In light of the fact that governmental and private grant and funding programs are constantly changing, rather than list the possible sources of funding and grants in this Comprehensive Plan, the Plan Commission urges the Town and its staff to continue to be fully informed and alert to every

possible grant and funding source through research and current awareness sources.

4-- Cooperate with other levels of government—county, state, and federal—to promote clean energy transportation, including, but not limited to, low emission or electric motor vehicles and non-carbon alternatives and electric car charging stations.

## **Chapter 5, Utilities and Community Facilities**

### **Utility and Community Facility Strategy**

#### **Goal**

To balance the need for Town growth with the cost of providing public and private utilities and community facilities, the goal of this chapter is to preserve clean water, to establish programs to monitor private on-site wastewater treatment systems [POWTS], and to plan for cost-effective treatment of waste as growth necessitates.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Provide for orderly development of safe water and sanitary sewer systems.

#### **Policies and Practices:**

- a. Evaluate all private on-site wastewater treatment systems;
- b. Support the Door County Sanitation office inspection and maintenance program of all private on-site wastewater treatment systems;
- c. Explore the expansion of existing and the creation of new sanitary districts to accommodate future growth in the Town;
- d. Participate in the Well Head Protection and Well Abandonment programs pursuant to applicable Wisconsin Utilities Code;

- e. Encourage citizens to have their well water tested on an annual basis to protect the health and safety of the citizens and visitors of the Town.

2. Consider redundant power transmission facilities to accommodate future needs in the Town and explore alternative energy sources.

- a. Encourage better communication between the power provider and the Town to increase redundancy in public areas while also encouraging the power provider to approach the extension of power lines in a planned, efficient manner.
- b. Whenever possible and when necessary promote an even more reliable power supply by restructuring the power lines in adjacent properties as well as in the immediate problem area.
- c. Encourage the redundancy of power supply to decrease the impact of emergency power outages.
- d. Encourage property owners to monitor evolving technology and to consider alternative energy sources.

3. Establish a solid waste disposal plan for future growth that will be cost-effective, efficient, and environmentally sound.

- a. When practicable, support permit requests for local solid waste disposal transfer stations and recycling centers.
- b. Encourage the County to establish more frequent hazardous waste collection.
- c. Educate and encourage citizen participation in hazardous waste collection programs to protect the environment and the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens and visitors to the Town.
- d. Encourage the establishment of an organic waste composting operation within the Town.

4. Encourage future growth with the highest available capacity data transmission, including efficient redundancy of telecommunications.

## **Goal**

Continue to supply accessible and adequate Town facilities that will meet the needs of a growing community.

## **Policies and Practices**

1. Continue to operate a park system that provides recreational and open space with safe, passive and active opportunities for residents and visitors.
  - a. Consider the purchase of properties for future expansion and development of parks, water access points, and scenic vistas when they become available.
  - b. When necessary, evaluate parks, water access points, and scenic vistas to maximize safe and proper use and/or development.
  - c. Promote reclamation and adequately mark all rights-of-way at road ends for access to water.
  - d. Promote public awareness of all public recreational lands, especially underused areas.
2. Prioritize and support the maintenance of existing waterfront recreational facilities, including, but not limited to, marinas, boat ramps, beaches, and parking, sensitive to environmental and budgetary concerns.
3. Promote adequate fire and emergency medical protection for all citizens of and visitors to the Town:

- a. By providing adequate budgetary dollars to the various services when feasible;
- b. By participating in intergovernmental cooperative efforts when feasible;
- c. By educating the citizens of the Town of the services available to them and how best utilize such services;
- d. By exploring and encouraging firefighter recruitment;
- e. By continually evaluating, updating, and improving firefighting facilities and equipment as demand requires and within budgetary constraints;
- f. And by encouraging the maintenance of ambulance and medical services at the highest level practicable with service expansion (or contraction) to match population trends.

At the time of the writing of this Comprehensive Plan, The County of Door, the State Patrol, and various enforcement arms of state agencies, e.g., the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, provide law enforcement protection.

- 4. Provide adequate burial locations for Liberty Grove residents and property owners by acquiring land, when available and when financially feasible, contiguous to existing cemeteries and/or develop a new cemetery as necessary and as financially feasible.

## **Chapter 6, Economic Development**

### **I. Goals, Policies Practices, Procedures, and Action Items**

**Goal 1.** Enhance existing internet service and extend such service to areas of the Town without any existing service.

In October, 2014, Dr. Kashian from the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater, presented the findings of a study similar to one that he had conducted in another tourist-type county in Wisconsin based, in this instance, on data he collected within the Town of Liberty Grove. His findings strongly suggest that enhanced, reliable internet services would allow the transient residents to remain in their homes in the Town for more days in the year by virtue of their being able to tele-commute. Their staying even a few more days a year would pump millions of dollars into the local economy as the result of their purchasing food, gasoline, etc.

**Policies, Practices, and Action Items:**

The Town will make every effort to support this goal by encouraging the businesses that are engaged in providing internet services and by encouraging as many similar enterprises to become involved in providing internet services in rural areas.

The Town will support legislation at the local, state, and federal level that seeks to promote internet services in rural areas.

Whenever possible, the Town will cooperate with internet providers, such as by providing land upon which to erect towers, etc.

**Goal 2. Encourage artisan-type enterprises**

The Town will make every effort to create a friendly environment for small, artisan-like enterprises, such as by cooperating with Northeast Wisconsin Technical College for the establishment of “maker spaces”. **Note: a northern campus of NWTC was established in 2017.**

**Goal 3. Enhance Access to Seasonal Labor**



With the Town, like Door County in general, being so dependent upon seasonal tourism as a bulwark of its economy, the Town should encourage as much as possible access to temporary, affordable housing for temporary labor, and to the attraction of young people to fill positions, part-time, seasonal, and temporary. See Chapter 2, Housing.

**Goal 4. Encourage Development of Geo-Tourism**

The Town should capitalize on the existence of the Niagara Escarpment as well as the burgeoning field of geo-tourism to make the Town the center for geo-tourism in Northeast Wisconsin.

**Goal 5. Furthering Economic Stability**

In order to increase the number of wage earner positions, the Town should encourage local businesses to develop marketing strategies that utilize the names and images of the Town and of the County.

Economic stability and growth also depend on expanding of existing marinas, encouraging new marinas, enhancing boat ramps, and enhancing the use and expansion of park lands for recreation and tourism.

The Town is encouraged to work with private agencies and government agencies for job training opportunities, affordable housing, and year-round wage positions.

**Goal 6. Mitigate Property Tax Burdens on Businesses**

As far as possible, the Town should work on its own as well as in cooperation with other levels of government to formulate policies to control property taxes and other governmental and administrative burdens on businesses.

**Goal 7. Equitable Returns of Tax Revenue**

The Town should pursue every avenue to receive an equitable return of tax revenue and services by developing effective communication between Town, County, and State regarding tax revenue generated and returned to the Town, including, but not limited to shared revenue, general transportation aid, county services, DNR in lieu of tax, fire dues distribution, forest crop payment, and payment of municipal services. See Chapter 7 on Intergovernmental Cooperation.

### **Goal 8. Enhance Tourism**

The Town should utilize any and all organizations and associations that can provide local tourism-related programs and/or information for the Town.

## **Chapter 7, Intergovernmental Cooperation**

### **Goal**

The goal of intergovernmental cooperation: promote cooperation between the Town and any other governmental unit or agency making decisions that impact the Town.

### **Policies and Procedures**

1. It is the policy of the Town to work with neighboring communities to discuss any unique natural features and other land uses that span municipal boundaries.

Procedurally, the Town may execute this policy by the following:

- a. By working with neighboring communities to identify shared natural features such as wetland recharge areas and natural habitat areas;

- b. By co-planning with neighboring municipalities to ensure compatible land use along shared borders;
  - c. By encouraging the exchange of municipal board minutes and encourage leaders of neighboring communities to meet at least semi-annually to discuss issues of common concern;
  - d. By working with neighboring municipalities to identify and develop advantageous transportation corridors.
2. It is the policy of the Town to explore the possibility of sharing municipal services, facilities, and programs with neighboring municipalities.

Procedurally, the Town may execute this policy by the following:

- a. By exploring the possibility of jointly developing services including, but not limited to fire protection, police protection, ambulance and first responder services, public transportation, joint sanitary and water districts, and snow removal.
  - b. By exploring the possibility of jointly developing facilities including, but not limited to utilities, joint sanitary and water treatment plants, parks and recreational facilities, marina, boat launches, airports, libraries, shared municipal buildings, animal shelters, and high speed Internet.
  - c. By exploring the possibility of jointly developing programs including, but not limited to waste and recycling, health and human services, building inspections, beach maintenance and beach water quality testing, household water testing, cooperative efforts to spur legislative change, child care programs, and cultural programs.
3. It is the policy of the Town to work with surrounding municipalities to address possible boundary issues to minimize conflict.

Procedurally, the Town may execute this policy by the following:

- a. By encouraging open communication with neighboring towns and villages to facilitate the creation of co-planning areas along municipal borders;
- b. By encouraging the development of border agreements with neighboring villages if and when annexation issues arise.

## **Chapter 8, Land Use**

### **Goal Relating to Land Use in General:**

Promote responsible future development that will meet the needs of the Town while protecting and enhancing its visual character, promoting environmental protection, conserving natural resources, meeting the needs of social and economic forces, providing for adequate services and facilities, providing for the health, safety, and welfare of the public, and ensuring compatibility of future land uses while conserving natural resources.

### **Policies, Practices, and Procedures Related to Land Use Generally and to Groundwater Protection:**

1. Ensure that all growth and development occurs in a planned and coordinated manner that will maintain or improve the quality of life associated with the rural character of the Town for both existing and future residents.
  - a. Utilize the general plan design map as an illustration of the Town's overall development policy
  - b. Encourage future development with and towards population centers to facilitate controlled growth
  - c. Encourage the use of ecologically sound practices in all types of development

- d. Work with the County and neighboring towns and villages to encourage compatible growth
  - e. Work independently and with the Door County Planning Department on developing standards and procedures for major land division in the Town.
- [See Chapter 7, Intergovernmental Cooperation]

- 2. Encourage groundwater protection within the Town.
  - a. Cooperate with governmental agencies to prevent groundwater contamination
  - b. Consider ongoing research for planning for sanitary services and potable water throughout the Town
  - c. Encourage citizens to have their well water tested on an annual basis to protect the health and safety of the citizens and visitors of the Town.

**Policies, Practices, and Procedures Related to Natural and Cultural Resources:**

Encourage preservation of water resources, unique open spaces, and other cultural and natural resources while considering the future integration of existing natural areas (contiguous woodlands, meadows, open spaces, marshes, wetlands, etc.) into site designs creating environmental corridors throughout the Town for wildlife habitat and/or pedestrian linkages.

- a. Encourage residential subdivisions that are compatible with their natural and cultural surroundings
- b. Encourage private landowners to preserve and create wildlife areas, conservation easements, and wetlands and refer these landowners to the appropriate public and private organizations



- c. Encourage the utilization of the environmental corridor/wetlands classification of the general plan design to promote and preserve wildlife habitats and trails, where appropriate
- d. Encourage careful consideration of the impacts of land use within and adjacent to the Comprehensive Plan's identified environmental corridor/wetlands

**Policies, Practices, and Procedures Related to Affordable Housing:**

[See Chapter 3, Housing]

[See Chapter 7, Intergovernmental Cooperation]

- a. Explore policies and programs that promote year-round affordable and seasonal housing
- b. Encourage dialog with neighboring communities and Door County to explore policies and programs that promote affordable housing
- c. Encourage policies and programs that allow housing for all workers, both seasonal and low-to-moderate income.

**Policies, Practices, and Procedures Related to Commercial Land Use:**

Encourage harmonious and well-planned commercial development that will serve the needs of the Town and area residents as well as the State Highway 42 and State Highway 57 corridors.

- a. Areas already characterized by commercial development and where Town services, public utilities, and facilities are available should be given priority for further development
- b. Encourage expanding home occupational businesses to relocate in areas classified as "commercial"



- c. Points of ingress and egress should be properly located and controlled to prevent problems and traffic congestion on adjacent arterial roads. Adjacent roads should be capable of accommodating the increased traffic associated with the commercial development
- d. Encourage a landscape screening “buffer” between commercial uses and adjacent noncommercial uses
- e. Enforce building setbacks from roads and highways

**Policies, Practices, and Procedures Related to Light Industrial Activity:**

Provide for additional light industrial zoning.

- a. Encourage light industrial development in designated areas
- b. Promote design standards for light industrial development that mitigates the environmental impact on the Town, including but not limited to landscaping, signage, and lighting
- c. Work with adjoining municipalities and governmental agencies to develop infrastructure that would be attractive to potential businesses

See Chapter 7, Intergovernmental Cooperation

**Policies, Practices, and Procedures Related to Conservancy:**

Encourage increasing the acreage that is protected from development by public ownership, environmental trust ownership, private conservation easements, or other appropriate means.

## **Policies, Practices, and Procedures Related to Concentrated Development:**

If population growth necessitates higher density residential development, such density should be constructed in and around the present population centers.

- a. Consider appropriate densities within the existing areas of Ellison Bay, Gills Rock, and areas contiguous to the Villages of Sister Bay and Ephraim
- b. Encourage compatible in-fill development and redevelopment within the established classification.

## **Background and Information Summary: Comprehensive Plan 2003**

For archival statistics on population, education levels, income levels, and employment characteristics see Chapter 1, Comprehensive Plan, 2003.

### **Demographic Trends**

Table 1.1, Population Trends, 1970-2015, Town of Liberty Grove, U.S. Bureau of the Census of Population and Housing, 1970-2000, Wisconsin Department of Administration, Official Population Estimates and Projections.

### **Age Distribution**

The age distribution within Liberty Grove's population is consistent with trends found at the county and state levels as set forth in Table 1.2

below with one notable exception; more than 24 percent of the population of Liberty Grove was over the age of 65 in 2000, a significantly higher percentage than found in state statistics. Due to the aging of the baby boomer, older population segments are expected to continue to increase.

Table 1.2 Population by Age Groups, 2010, Town of Liberty Grove, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010 Census of Population and Housing.

### Employment Characteristics

In 2000, the majority of people in the workforce in Liberty Grove, Baileys Harbor, and Sister Bay were employed by the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service industry as per Table 1.3, while the manufacturing industry employed the most people countywide. The retail trade industry was the second highest employer for Liberty Grove at 15.5 percent, followed by the construction industry with 14.7 percent of total population for 2000.

Added to traditional agricultural pursuits is a growing trend in the Town and in Door County as a whole including more specialized agricultural and food production, such as viticulture, wineries, breweries, cideries, chemically independent or sustainable farms, and processing facilities with a growing emphasis on environmentally friendly practices.

For a graphic depiction of this information, see Table 6.2.

Annual earnings in Door County are typically less than they are for similar jobs in other parts of Wisconsin. In addition, the seasonality of many Door County industries, especially tourism, means annual incomes often have to be earned in six months or less. Consequently, hourly wages that are above average still produce a below average

annual earned income. In order for Door County businesses to compete globally, they may not have the option to simply raise wage rates without becoming price-uncompetitive.

Door County is experiencing an atypical relationship between wage rates and housing costs. Often, areas that have low wage rates will have low housing costs. Unfortunately, that is not the case in Door County, which has lower than average wages and higher than average housing costs. The housing issue is closely linked to the labor shortage problem because if new employees are indeed attracted to the area, they may be unable to afford housing.

[See Chapter 3, Housing.]

# Chapter 1, Maps, Tables and Charts





Table 1.1: Population Trends, 1900-2000, Town of Liberty Grove & Selected Areas

Year	Town of Liberty Grove		Town of Baileys Harbor		Village of Sister Bay		Door County	
	No.	Annual Change	No.	Annual Change	No.	Annual Change	No.	Annual Change
1900	1,550		645		NA		17,583	
1910	1,529	-1.4%	628	-2.6%	NA	NA	18,711	6.4%
1920	1,410	-7.8%	679	8.1%	190	NA	19,073	1.9%
1930	1,275	-9.6%	641	-5.6%	238	25.3%	18,182	-4.7%
1940	1,358	6.5%	677	5.6%	309	29.8%	19,095	5.0%
1950	1,332	-1.9%	715	5.6%	429	38.8%	20,870	9.3%
1960	1,190	-10.7%	654	-8.5%	520	21.2%	20,685	-0.9%
1970	1,174	-1.3%	615	-6.0%	483	-7.1%	20,106	-2.8%
1980	1,313	11.8%	799	29.9%	564	16.8%	25,029	24.5%
1990	1,506	14.7%	780	-2.4%	675	19.7%	25,690	2.6%
2000	1,858	23.4%	1,003	28.6%	886	31.3%	27,961	8.8%

Source: Population Characteristics of the Bay-Lake Region, Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, August, 1993; General Population Characteristics 1840-1970, Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, December, 1975 and 2002.



Table 1-2 - Population by age Groups – 2010

School age (5-17)	249	14.4%
Working and voting age	1,485	85.6%
18-64	923	62.2%
65+	562	37.8%
Total population	1,734	

