

Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources

Introduction

The Town of Lincoln has a strong farming history. Its landscape is dominated by agricultural land, woodlands, wooded wetlands, and streams...each contributing to the community's rural character and sense of place. Maintaining the agricultural history and rural character of the community is a key goal of this plan.

Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources Vision

The Town of Lincoln will adopt policies and programs to preserve its prime agricultural lands, unique natural environment, and cultural and historic resources to ensure that these assets remain available for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources Issues & Initiatives

Farming in Lincoln Township

The face of agriculture in the state, Kewaunee County and Lincoln Township has changed over the last two decades. Wisconsin is now the largest producer of organic crops second only to California. Kewaunee County experienced a 38% growth in dairy herds since 2000.

Prior to 2000, traditional family dairy farms dominated Lincoln Township¹. Between 2000 and 2013 the growth of the industrialized dairy model known as Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) fueled a growth in the number of cows in the township. During that same period, the number of independent, family run dairy farms has plummeted.



In 2006, the Township's Comprehensive Smart Growth Plan called for more "niche", alternative and specialty agricultural operations.

While no database exists within the governmental agencies to track organic, sustainable, or simply alternative agricultural or agri-tourism efforts, the township is home to a handful of organic,

¹ From USDA Agricultural Census for 2002 to 2012.

natural and sustainable farms. These include more than 300 acres in organic small grains, legumes, and alfalfa crops. Additionally, grazing dairy and meat livestock, an orchard, a tree farm, and a maple syrup operation have all started in the last decade.

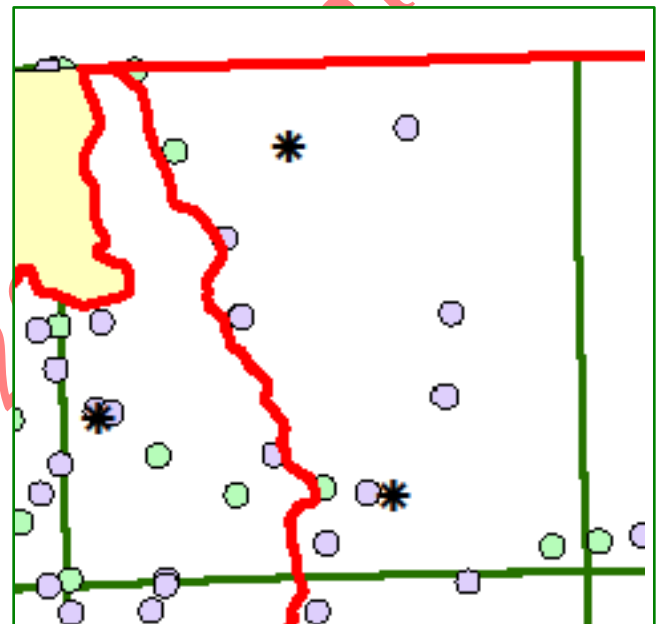
In partnership with NRCS, many acres within the township are being placed in multi-year conservation programs intended to provide wildlife habitats while conserving and protecting sensitive natural resources.

The outlook is that consumer demand will continue to fuel the sustainable farming trend. When coupled with the water quality issues caused to a great extent by industrial farming practices, it would seem that growth of these alternative agricultural operations would be in the best interest of Lincoln Township.

Dairy Farming in Lincoln Township

Lincoln Township has a total of 19 dairy farms of various sizes. Three farms are WPDES permitted and categorized as CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding Operations). A fourth farm is close to being in this category, but currently categorized as mid-sized. The other 15 farms are categorized as small with four of these on the upper end of the small category.

As reported in their 2015 Nutrient Management Plans, there are 16,579 dairy cattle of various ages and sizes in Lincoln Township.² Of those, the three CAFOs account for 13,773 dairy cattle, and the mid-sized farm another 800. The balance of 2,806 dairy cattle are distributed among the other 15 small dairy farms.



Air Quality Issues in Lincoln Township

One particular downside to the dairy CAFOs in the Lincoln Township is the storage of manure in lagoons holding multiple-tens-of-millions of gallons of agricultural wastewater. While storing manure and other nutrients for application on fields, these lagoons emit ammonia, sulfur dioxide, and other noxious gases that have caused considerable

² Numbers provided by the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation District based on 2015 Nutrient Management Plans.

consternation with the non-CAFO neighbors. One neighborhood within close proximity to a CAFO has seen the exodus of at least nine families who have sold their homes due to odors. (While the biggest complaints about CAFOs were odors, other issues cited were noise, increased road traffic, reduced property values, and not wanting to live near a CAFO.)

While the owners, managers, operators, and employees of the CAFOs in the Kewaunee County are part of our community, there is little support for the expansion of this industrial model of farming in Lincoln Township and the county. Many residents are hoping for alternatives.

Specialty Farming

On average, nearly 3,000 acres of productive farmland are lost to development in the U.S. each day. Adapting to survive, many farmers have embraced a new paradigm that focuses on agricultural models custom-fit to changing markets and filling local niche markets with specialty produce and value-added products. Specialty (or niche) farming provides an alternative to “conventional” agricultural practices, particularly for smaller farmers attempting to compete with larger operations. According to Agricultural Census data nearly 300,000 new farms have begun operations since 2005. Compared with all farms nationwide, these new arrivals tend to have more diversified production, fewer acres, lower total-dollar sales, and operators who also work off-farm. Lincoln Township’s proximity to Green Bay, Door County, and Highways 42 and 54 tourist traffic provides opportunities for directly marketing specialty agricultural products to local consumers.

Examples of specialty agricultural products include:

- Agriforestry, wood products, and firewood
- Aquaculture products
- Alternative grains and field crops
- Industrial, energy, and non-food crops
- Native plants and ecofriendly landscaping
- Organic meats, milk, and cheese
- Organic produce, maple syrup, fruits, and cash crops
- Ornamental and nursery crops
- Post-harvest handling and processing
- Medicinal and culinary herbs
- Raising of non-traditional farm animals (llama, ostrich, bison, etc.)
- Seeds and plant breeding
- Specialty, heirloom and ethnic fruits and vegetables



Organic Agriculture

Organic farming is a particularly attractive specialty farm option given that organic food is the fastest growing segment of the agricultural industry. Products that once occupied a boutique marketplace niche are becoming mainstream as consumers seek healthier alternatives to conventional farm produce. Organic and specialty farming counter the notion that farms must become very big or be lost to development. They provide a profitable choice for small, family farmers.

“Given current trends in consumer demand, as much as 20 percent of cropland in America could be organic in the next decade or so, but land suitable for transition is getting harder to come by.”³



Community Supported Agriculture⁴

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a system in which a farm operation is supported by shareholders who share both the benefits and risks of food production. CSAs consist of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes the ‘community’s farm’, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer’s salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm’s bounty throughout the growing season, as well as satisfaction gained from reconnecting to the land and participating directly in food production. Members also share in the risks of farming, including poor harvests due to unfavorable weather or pests. By direct sales to community members, who have provided the farmer with working capital in advance, growers receive better prices for their

crops, gain some financial security, and are relieved of much of the burden of marketing.

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary but legally binding agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that limits present and future development of a parcel. Under a

³ Paying Farmers to Go Organic, Even Before the Crops Come In, Stephanie Strom, New York Times, July 14, 2016

⁴ Excerpted from United States Department of Agriculture, Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, 2015.

conservation easement, the landowner retains ownership of the land (within the terms of the easement, i.e. only for farmland or natural space, not for development) and a land trust or similar organization assumes the responsibility for protecting the land's conservation values.

Donated conservation easements that meet federal requirements can provide significant tax advantages to landowners since their land will be assessed as undevelopable land, which has a much lower tax value than developable land. Qualified easements may also generate charitable contribution deductions for income and transfer tax purposes. All land is "taxed" at the same rate, though value determinations are variable.

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resource Programs

Farmland Preservation Program

The Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program (Chapter 91, Wis. Stats.) is designed to help local governments and landowners preserve agricultural land, minimize conflicting land uses, and promote soil and water conservation. Under the program, local governments may adopt and have certified a farmland preservation zoning ordinance that enables eligible landowners to claim farmland preservation tax credits. The credits are applied against tax liability on an annual basis.

FSA – Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

Other NRCS and WDNR programs include but are not limited to:

- FSA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program
- NRCS Financial Assistance Program
- NRCS Landscape Initiatives Program
- NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program
- WDNR Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program – Acquisition and Development of Local Parks Program
- WDNR Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program – Acquisition of development Rights Program
- WDNR Managed Forests Law
- WDNR Land and Water Conservation Fund Program
- Wisconsin Forests Landowners Grant Program

UW-Extension Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program⁵

Despite the rich stock of historic barns in the Wisconsin landscape, we see fewer attempts to save them. The threats to these buildings are many, including urban growth and its associated roadway expansion, improper maintenance and upkeep, and new construction techniques, materials, and design. The University of Wisconsin-Extension and Wisconsin Historical Society, are spearheading a multifaceted approach aimed at saving many of Wisconsin's historic agricultural buildings. The Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program is aimed at both addressing public concerns and drawing attention to the importance of preserving the elements of Wisconsin's rural countryside, those elements that make it a unique part of America.

Some of the strategies being pursued by this group include the coordination of regional educational workshops, the production of technical resource materials and the support of non-profit organizations that can help orchestrate efforts to establish grants and other kinds of technical assistance programs aimed at helping barn owners interested in preservation.

Kewaunee County Land & Water Conservation Department⁶

The Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Department provides local leadership in carrying out programs that conserve Wisconsin's land and water resources. Working closely with the Land and Water Conservation Committee, they are the primary local delivery system of natural resource programs. Their connection to county government gives them an understanding of local land and water resource problems and solutions serving as a reliable source for conservation assistance and planning. They provide educational, technical and conservation planning assistance to help communities control soil erosion; protect lakes, streams and groundwater; and manage woodlots, forests and wildlife.

Economic Development

Economic development entails efforts that seek to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of a community by creating and retaining jobs, growing incomes, and expanding the local tax base.⁷ Creating a successful economic development plan involves defining the local economy, determining its strengths and weaknesses, anticipating change, building resilience through diversification, and identifying sources of financial and technical assistance. It depends upon the sustained actions of elected and appointed officials in partnership with the private sector and enthusiastic community volunteers to promote the standard of living and economic health of a community. Such actions target multiple areas of the economy including development of human capital (through higher education and job training), critical infrastructure, regional competitiveness, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and health and safety, among others. The elements of a successful economic development plan include:

⁵ Excerpted from Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program website, 2016.

⁶ Excerpted from Wisconsin Land and Water website, 2016.

⁷ Definition courtesy Salmon Valley Business Center.

- A detailed analysis of the local economy.
- A common vision based upon what residents and businesses value in the community.
- Strong collaboration between the public and private sectors oriented around agreed-upon goals.
- Diversity in the types of businesses and industries.
- Resilience, or the ability of the community to adapt quickly to change based on regional, national, and global economic conditions.
- Cooperation, not competition, between neighboring municipalities.

A vibrant economy is vitally important since it affects so many aspects of everyday life, including the ability to earn a living, refine skills and access training, attract new residents and businesses, and to access services. Economic development expenditures of money as well as time are investments in the community.

Economic Development Vision

Farming and agriculture-related businesses will remain the dominant sector in Lincoln's economy, supplemented by a mixture of commercial and light manufacturing uses in areas appropriate for such development. The Town will seek to expand communication technology and infrastructure to expand opportunities for telecommuting and home-based businesses. The Town will also seek to expand opportunities in eco- and agri-tourism.

Economic Development Issues & Initiatives

Rural Enterprise Network (REN)

In response to the 2007 Comprehensive Smart Growth Plans call for more specialty and niche farms, in late autumn of 2013, a group of Lincoln Township citizens created an advocacy group with the mission to foster small, sustainable, rural businesses in the Township. Their vision is to “facilitate the development of rural economic opportunities which focus on those enterprises that recognize the interdependence of economic, environmental, and societal issues by growing and prospering without diminishing the land, water, air, natural and cultural resources on which the community depends”.

To date, REN has held three annual workshops and over a dozen sessions focused on providing attendees with alternative, profitable, opportunities for their rural businesses and their farmland. They have co-sponsored a session with Wisconsin Farmers Union on rural solar energy options and a session with UW Extension on growing the local food market. In 2015 they held a small ruminant workshop for the area's sheep and goat farmers utilizing UW Extension resources. In February of 2016 REN Partnered with SLO Coop, ThedaCare Health Systems, Glacierland R&D and Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in “The Healthy Three” workshop



which focused on the importance and interdependency of our natural resources and food systems. In May of 2016 REN partnered with Midwest Organic and Sustainable Educational Services to bring NRCS’s curriculum “Women Caring for the Land” to Algoma.

Most notably, in 2014, REN organized, launched and managed the Kewaunee County Farmers Market for three years, handing it off to Algoma in 2017. Billed as a “Market with a Purpose” this is the only market in the region that limits products sold at the Market to “food based or farm raised”. Besides making traditional farmers market booths available to producers, REN created a “Nano Market” within the market for locals with small gardens to sell their products on commission without going through the expense to get a full space. Having just started their third season, the Market hosted almost 5,000 visitors in 2015.



In November of 2015 REN announced a joint Farm to School venture with Algoma School District. REN is working with local farmers to produce foods that can be used in meals served in the District’s cafeterias. Having partnered with the Feeding America organization, REN is also expanding access for local producers to sell into more than 20 additional school districts in Northeastern Wisconsin.

Economic Development Plan

Growing from Within

Local ownership of businesses tends to maintain economic diversity because it builds on the loyalty shared between customers, owners, and their community. Local businesses offer connections to place through everyday transactions. They keep money circulating in the community, thereby stimulating the economy and creating new economic niches. Businesses that begin in a community tend to stay in that community. The most effective way to ensure a healthy local economy over time is to offer “assistance” for those interested in starting their own business and provide the means to relocate within the community when growth merits such a move.

Business Retention

The key to a successful business retention strategy is building trust between business owners and local officials. Communities must identify the specific gaps and niches their economies can fill, and promote a diversified range of specialized industry clusters drawing on local advantages to serve local, regional, and international markets. Local government, business groups, educators, and the

public must work together to create a vibrant local economy, through a long-term investment strategy that:

- Encourages local enterprise
- Serves the needs of residents, workers, and businesses
- Promotes stable employment and revenues by building on local competitive advantages
- Protects the natural environment
- Increases social equity
- Is capable of succeeding in the local, regional, and global marketplace⁸

Local businesses provide employment for a wide array of supporting services. They hire architects, designers, cabinet shops, sign makers, and contractors for construction. Opportunities grow for local accountants, insurance brokers, computer consultants, advertising agencies, etc. Local retailers and distributors are more likely to carry locally made goods, thereby creating additional jobs for local producers. Some of the ways in which the Town of Lincoln may achieve high rates of business retention include:

- Assist businesses that have outgrown current facilities or sites with identifying new locations within the community.
- Supporting local business associations.
- Providing clearly understandable processes for construction and economic development within local ordinances.

Eco- and Agri-Tourism

Agri-tourism provides opportunities to increase farm income and diversity in the local economy. Eco-tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry. The Town's farming culture and natural environment create unique opportunities for such development.

Social Media

Americans of all ages and backgrounds are increasing their use of social media tools as a way to connect to each other and the issues they care about. Local governments can use these same tools to promote the community and inform residents and business owners. Although benefit can be gained by using social media to augment traditional communication methods, it presents both opportunity and risk to municipal government. Prior to implementing a social media strategy it is important to develop an agreed-upon policy for its use.

Some of the ways in which local governments utilize social media include:

- Economic Development – Many companies use social media to scope out communities as they look to build or relocate their business. Economic developers use social media to attract those businesses to the area and build relationships with current ones. This is arguably the most important reason for local government to maintain an active social media presence.

⁸ Excerpted from Ahwahnee Principles for Economic Development, Economic Development for the 21st Century, 2016.

- Community Building – Building a sense of community pride by recognizing local business, sharing photos and stories about the community, and marketing local events.
- Public Service Announcements – Emergency alerts and severe weather updates, general health and safety tips, road construction schedules, and other important local information.
- Governmental Meetings – Posting schedules, agendas, and meeting minutes.⁹

Economic Development Partners

UW-Extension Center for Community & Economic Development

The UW-Extension Center for Community and Economic Development offers a number of programs intended to assist local governments with economic development activities. They include:

- Community Preparedness and Resiliency
- Downtown Revitalization
- Food Systems Initiative
- Tourism Development
- First Impressions Program

Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission

Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission annually creates a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report, which evaluates local and regional population and economic activity. The purpose of the CEDS is to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy and to qualify the region for additional EDA assistance. A section within the CEDS identifies other economic development initiatives at the state, regional, sub-regional, and local levels. The CEDS analyzes local and regional economies and serves as a guide for promoting regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources.

Kewaunee County Economic Development Corporation

The Kewaunee County Economic Development Corporation (KCEDC) works pro-actively to retain, expand, develop and attract businesses that strengthen the economy of Kewaunee County. As the economy and markets transition, KCEDC helps business and local communities prepare and partner for adaptation and improvement. Targeted industries include:

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Fishing and maritime
- Manufacturing
- Tourism

⁹ Excerpted from United States Department of Agriculture website, 2016.