Town of Grand Rapids

Wood County, Wisconsin

Comprehensive Plan 2008

Prepared by:
Town of Grand Rapids Plan Commission
with assistance from
Wood County Planning & Zoning Office

TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Prepared under the provisions of Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 66.1001 Comprehensive Planning
with assistance from the

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GRAND RAPIDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
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1. ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

A. Location & Geography

The Town of Grand Rapids is an unincorporated town in the southeast corner of Wood County in central Wisconsin. The Town is located primarily east of the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Port Edwards. Grand Rapids' east boundary is the Wood–Portage County line. The Town of Saratoga lies south of Grand Rapids and Portage County's Town of Grant lies to the east. The Village of Biron in on the Town's north side. Map 1-1 shows the location of Grand Rapids in relation to the State of Wisconsin and Wood County.

The soils of Grand Rapids are predominately sandy with varying groundwater levels. Generally, south of Lake Avenue (County Road W), groundwater levels are greater than five feet beneath the ground's surface, making these areas very compatible for private onsite waste treatment systems (septic systems). North of Lake Avenue, the soils tend to have intermittently, or seasonally, high groundwater levels, some as shallow as 0 – 1 foot. Soils along the State Highway 54 corridor are similar to those that are south of Lake Avenue, that is they are sandy with deeper groundwater levels, making that area favorable to development. The soils map helps to explain development patterns in Grand Rapids.

B. History[1]

The Town of Grand Rapids was formed in 1850 as part of Portage County. Grand Rapids became part of Wood County in 1856 when Portage County was split into two counties. The Town got its name from the many areas along the river that had rapids and chutes.

Grand Rapids is the 11th largest unincorporated town in Wisconsin and the third largest municipality in Wood County. Its population is 2,418, or 45% larger than the next largest town in Wood County, that town being Grand Rapids' neighbor to the south – Saratoga. Nearly 8,000 people live in this town of about 22 square miles in size. The greatest population density is in the south half of Grand Rapids, a factor of the high groundwater levels in the northern parts of the Town.

Unlike some suburban "residential" communities, Grand Rapids' land uses are mixed and include single- and multiple-family (mostly duplexes) housing, commercial (including service and retail establishments), industrial, recreational, and specialized agricultural. The Town is also the home for Mid-State Technical College and that district's home offices.

C. Town Government

The Town of Grand Rapids is governed by a five-member, elected board of supervisors. One member of the board serves as Chairman, a position that is also elected by general ballot. The Town Board holds regular meetings twice each month, all subject to Wisconsin's open meetings laws. The Board oversees a budget of $2.47 million (2007). Assessed value of the Town is $451,188,100 (2006).

[1] Portions of this history section are taken from an article by Town of Grand Rapids Supervisor Arne Nystrom for Wood County's sesquicentennial publication titled, "Reflections of 150 Years," pg. 76.

In addition to the Town Board, there are several full- and part-time staff members. The Town Clerk and Treasurer are elected full-time positions and appointed full-time positions are in the administrative department, building inspection/ zoning administration, police department and public works department. A well-equipped and trained, well-manned volunteer fire department also serves Grand Rapids residents and businesses.

Fourteen committees and commissions are appointed to oversee policy development and operations of many functions. The most active of these is the plan commission, a group that meets twice monthly to discuss various building and land use issues. That group also oversees the development and implementation of the Town's comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance and building codes. Many of the other committees and commissions meet monthly, while some meet as needed or at certain times of the year (i.e., Board of Review).

D. Population

Historically, the Town of Grand Rapids has been either the fastest or one of the fastest growing municipalities in Wood County. It is a prime example of a suburban community[2] with residents commuting to Wisconsin River cities and villages for jobs while escaping the higher property taxes of those communities by building their homes or moving to Grand Rapids. In 1950, the first decennial census after World War II and the marked beginning of heavy suburban development, Grand Rapids had a population of 4,142. The population has fluctuated several times because of substantial annexations to the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Those annexations were the result of failing private on-site waste treatment systems (septic systems) on small lots with sandy soils. Between 1960 and 1970, for example, the population of Grand Rapids dropped from 6,791 to 5,147 and between 1980 and 1990, there was a decline from 7,319 to 7,071. Both declines are direct results of annexations to Wisconsin Rapids. Since 1980, the changes seem to have stabilized somewhat. Although Grand Rapids has continued to gain population since 1980, the growth has slowed, as it has throughout the county, generally. In 2000, the population rose to 7,801 and the latest population estimate for the Town is 7,989.[3] Figure 2-1 shows the population changes for Grand Rapids since 1950.

The Town of Saratoga is the other Wood County town that lies east of the Wisconsin River and has very sandy soils. Saratoga has also experienced considerable growth in population, even more so than Grand Rapids. Whereas Grand Rapids' growth between 1970 and 2000 was 51.6%, Saratoga's was over 80%. Actual growth in real number of people in Grand Rapids, however, outpaced Saratoga 2,654 to 2,405. Growth in Wood County, during the same period of time, was much slower than Grand Rapids. Between 1970 and 2000, Wood County's population grew by a mere 15.6% compared to Grand Rapids' 51.6%.

E. Cultural Change

Grand Rapids has experienced a slight mixing of cultures over the past 15- to 25-years with respect to the number of minorities that live in the Town. While the

[2] Grand Rapids can be categorized as a 'suburban community,' but has worked hard to become as self-sustaining as possible by adding manufacturing, specialized agriculture, retail businesses and service jobs in the community. More is said about jobs in the economic element.

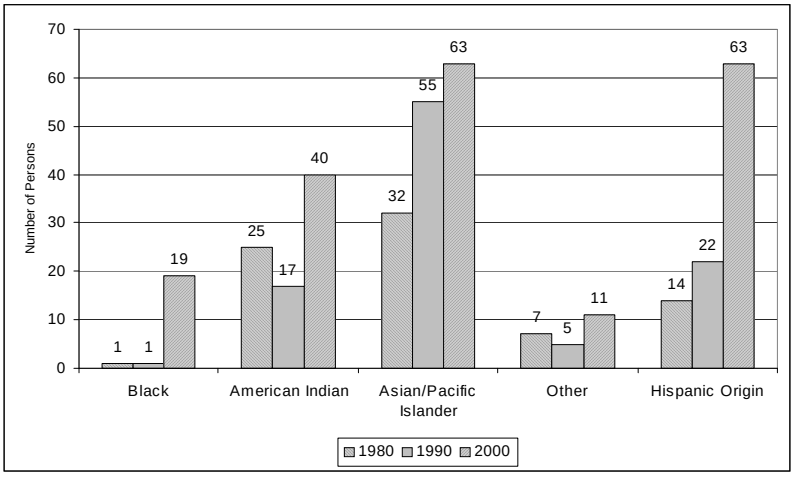
[3] Wisconsin Department of Administration, January 1, 2007 population estimates.

majority of the Town's population continues to be comprised of persons of the white race, minority populations are increasing in numbers. In 1980, less than one percent of Grand Rapids' population included minorities. The proportion of minorities increased to 1.1% in 1990 and 1.7% in 2000. Figure 2-2 shows the change in the minority groups that are in the Town. Although their numbers are small, there have been significant proportionate gains in the numbers of person who are black, American Indian and Asian and, in more recent years, the Hispanic population has increased.

F. Age Distribution

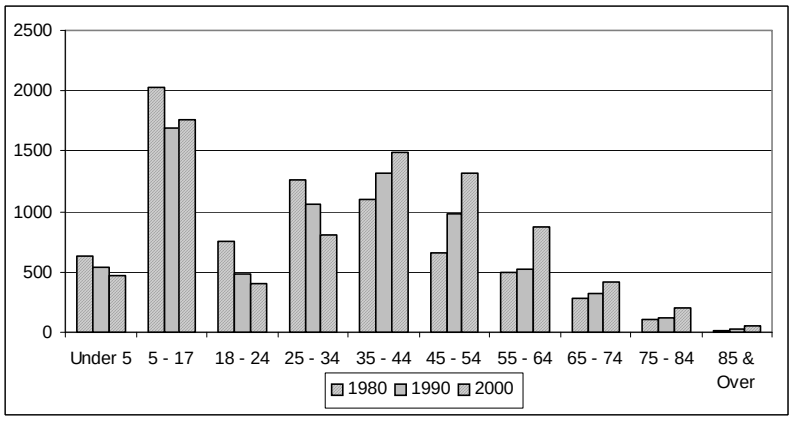
The age distribution in Grand Rapids is similar to most communities, not only in Wood County and Wisconsin, but throughout the nation. Two charts – Figures 2-3 and 2-4 – show the age distribution of Grand Rapids residents. In Figure 2-3, a comparison is provided for the years 1980, 1990 and 2000. The purpose of this chart is to show how, generally, the population below the age of 35 has been in a state of decline, while the population age 35 and

Figure 2-2: Minority Populations Living In Grand Rapids
1980 – 2000



Source: U. S. Census.

Figure 2-3: Population Change by Age Cohorts

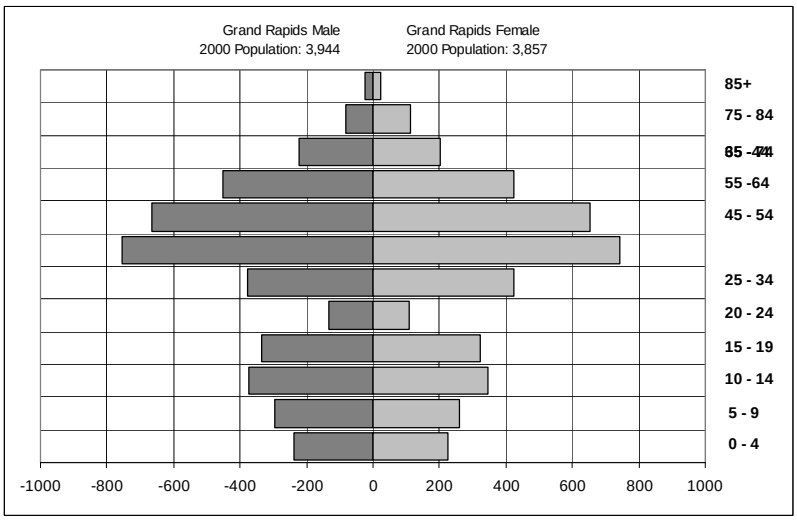


Source: U. S. Census.

older has been increasing. This trend suggests that types of services may change in the foreseeable future in the areas of schools, housing types, service-oriented businesses, recreation areas and more. In addition, this trend suggests that resources to pay for municipal services may change, placing a heavier financial burden on those with limited incomes. Figure 2-4 is a population pyramid for Grand Rapids. The population pyramid displays the distribution of the age and gender of the people in the Town for a particular year – the year 2000 in this case. A healthy, viable community will have a large base of children and young adults and a much smaller number of residents in the older age groups, or cohorts. A top-heavy pyramid, like the one for Grand Rapids, is common in central Wisconsin. In fact, population pyramids for the Town of Saratoga and for Wood County look very much like that for Grand Rapids.

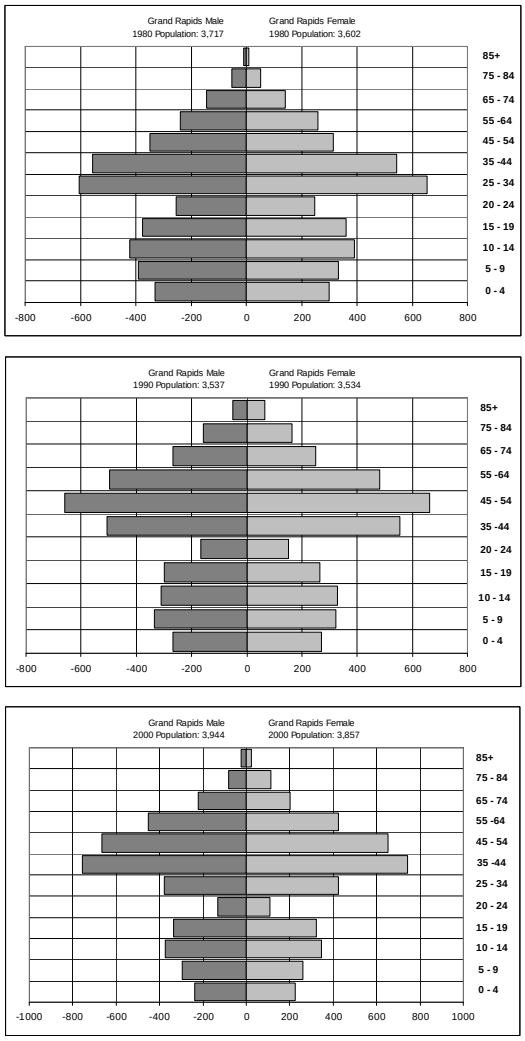
The value of the population pyramid is based on the assumptions that (1) the Town exists to meet the needs of its inhabitants and (2) people have needs and expectations that change with age. A comparison of the population pyramids for the last three census periods helps to explain community changes that are occurring. Figure 2-5 displays the population pyramids for 1980, 1990 and 2000. Note the changes. The most obvious is in the bottom half of the charts, ages 0 to 24. That part of the charts has shrunk with each decennial census, especially the 20 to 24 age group. It was noted, in Figure 2-3 that the decline also included the 18- and 19-year olds. These charts show that Grand Rapids is losing a very important component of its population base – the youth. Why are they leaving? Should the Town develop programs to increase jobs in the area? Should they try to attract different types of jobs? Are the secondary education opportunities geared toward what area youth want? There has also been a large decline in those who are age 25 to 34. Many of those are parents of the younger age groups. Is housing too expensive? Is enough housing available? How can the Town convince younger age groups to return to Grand Rapids or move there for the first time? The town should consider reasons for the out-migration and develop programs and policies to reverse that trend. On the other

Figure 2-4. Population Pyramid for Grand Rapids – Year 2000



Source: U. S. Census of Population.

Figure 2-5. Population Pyramids
1980 – 1990 - 2000



Source: U. S. Census of Population.

hand, as the population pyramid becomes heavier in the upper age groups, the Town may want to consider planning for more retirement-type or assisted living housing, medical clinics, transportation services, passive recreation facilities and community centers, fewer public schools, possibly converting those that close into those types of facilities just mentioned.

G. Median Age

Given the information in Figures 2-3, 2-4 and 2-5, it is not surprising that the median age of Grand Rapids' population is going up. In 1980, the Town's median age was 27.2. In 1990, the median age had increased by 5.7 years to 32.9 and by the year 2000, the median age had increased another 5.5 years to 38.4. That 11.2 year increase in median age between 1980 and 2000 reflects the continuing decline in the number of residents that are younger than age 35.

The change in median age in Grand Rapids is no different than the change in most municipalities, the county or the state. In Table 2-1, you can see that Wood County's median age increased from 28.9 in 1980 to 33.3 in 1990 to 38.0 in 2000. Why did the median age in Grand Rapids catch up and surpass that of Wood County? The primary reason is that the cities and villages remain home to a greater proportion of the younger age groups. Although the population in those age groups declined throughout the county, the proportional decline was greater in Grand Rapids than in the cities. Note, in Table 2-1, that the median age in Grand Rapids and in Wood County has been increasing faster in both of those jurisdictions than in the State as a whole and for the same reason - the larger metropolitan areas continue to be home to a greater proportion of the younger age population. Again, the rising median age is indicative of an aging population that will require and demand different services or changes to existing services.

Table 2-1. Median Age

	1980	1990	2000
Grand Rapids	27.2	32.9 +5.7	38.4 5.5
Wood County	28.9	33.3 +4.4	38.0 +4.7
Wisconsin	29.0	32.9 +3.9	36.0 +3.1

Source: U. S. Census.

H. Education

The level of education of Grand Rapids residents, age 25 and older, has continued to increase since 1980. This is the result of more emphasis placed on education and the need for more education to live in a society that has much more technology and more specialties than in the past. Many of the Town's elderly residents ended their educational training with high school graduation or less. Some cut their education short because of World War II and a high school education was all that was required for most manufacturing jobs in our area. Table 2-2 shows the growth in educational levels in Grand Rapids, Wood County and Wisconsin. Grand Rapids has consistently had a greater proportion of their population with a high school education than both the county and the state. The same holds true for a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 2-2. Educational Attainment
(Percent Age 25 and Older)

Year and Educational Level	Grand Rapids	Wood County	Wisconsin
1980			
High School	78.1	67.9	69.6
Associate Degree			
Bachelor's Degree	17.1	11.4	14.8
1990			
High School	87.7	78.3	78.6
Associate Degree	11.7	8.2	7.1
Bachelor's Degree	19.2	13.5	17.7
2000			
High School	94.7	84.8	85.1
Associate Degree	9.4	8.1	7.5
Bachelor's Degree	27.6	16.9	22.4

Source: U. S. Census.

Today, many area businesses and industries require specialized training and a two-year Associate degree. Mid-State Technical College, located in Grand Rapids works closely with area businesses to provide customized training programs to meet changing needs. In 2000, 9.4% of Grand Rapids residents, age 25 and older had an Associate degree. This figure is down from 11.7% in 1990 and may be offset with the increase in the number of residents with at least a Bachelor's degree. The proportion of county and state residents with Associate degrees remained stable from 1990 to 2000.

A growing number of jobs require a minimum of a Bachelor's degree and more are requiring a Master's degree. The nearby University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point and other U. W. campuses help train people who work in our area and live in Grand Rapids.

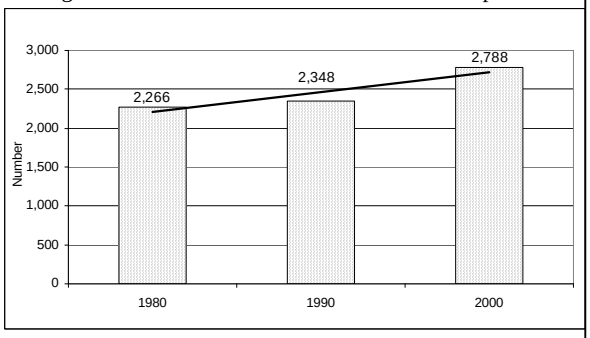
I. Households

The household characteristics in Grand Rapids are changing as the age and make-up of the population changes. With a lower numbers of residents 35 years of age and younger, there are fewer persons per household. Although there are fewer persons per household, the population is growing. The result is a need for more housing. With an aging population, there may be some changes in the type of housing that residents want (or need) to live in – smaller perhaps or condominium living to get away from outdoor maintenance chores that get more difficult with age and disabilities, or homes that can accommodate those with mobility impairments who need features like zero-step entrances and wide interior doorways in order to live safely and comfortably in their homes. A survey of Americans aged 45 and older found that nearly one-fourth of the respondents thought it likely that they or someone in their household would have difficulty getting

around in their homes within the next five-years.[4] In 2000, 16% of Grand Rapids residents, age 65 and over, had physical disabilities and 7% had self-care disabilities that could contribute to difficulty getting around in their homes or using facilities within their homes. The numbers are obviously lower for those under the age of 65, but over as many as 200 Grand Rapids residents under the age of 65 also have physical disabilities that could make it hard to get around their homes.

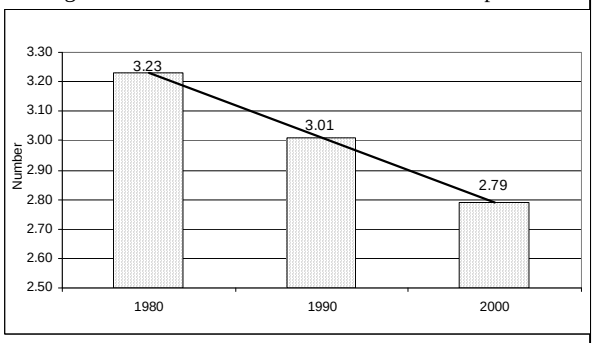
In 1980, there were 2,266 households[5] in Grand Rapids (population 7,319). By 1990, even after the annexation that was discussed earlier, the number of households increased to 2,348 (population 7,071). In the year 2000, there were 2,788 households (population 7,801). Although the population is increasing and the number of households is on the rise, the number of persons residing in each household is on the decline. In 1980, 1990 and 2000, the average number of persons per household has gone from 3.23 to 3.01 to 2.79, respectively. Figures 2-6 and 2-7 illustrate the growth in households along with the decline in persons per household. Notice the opposite slopes of the trend lines. Then, Table 2-3 shows how Grand Rapids compares to Wood County for both. Over the 20-year period from 1980 to 2000, the number of households in Grand Rapids grew by 23% compared to just over 20% for the County. The decline in persons per household was pretty equal for both the town and county (-0.44 and -0.40, respectively).

Figure 2-6. Number of Households – Grand Rapids



Source: U. S. Census

Figure 2-7. Persons Per Household – Grand Rapids



Source: U. S. Census

Table 2-3. Households and Population Per Household

Year	Grand Rapids		Wood County	
	# of HH	Pop./HH	# of HH	Pop./HH
1980	2,266	3.23	25,067	2.87
1990	2,348	3.01	27,473	2.65
2000	2,788	2.79	30,135	2.47

Source: U. S. Census

J. Income and Poverty

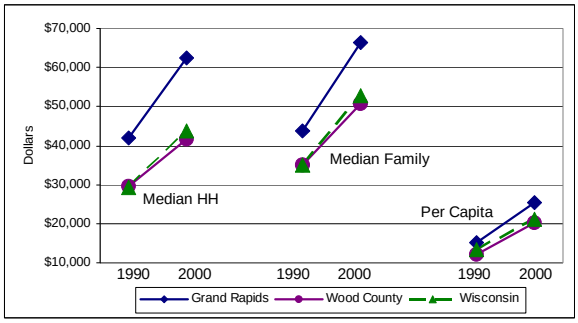
Income levels in Grand Rapids have consistently been higher than income levels in the county as a whole or in the State. Plus, income levels, particularly median household and median family income levels, increased rapidly between the years 1990 and 2000. As of the 2000 census, Grand

[4] Bayer, A.-H., & Harper, L. (2000). *Fixing to stay:A national survey of housing and home modification issues.* Washington D.C.; AARP Knowledge Management.

[5] A "housing unit" is the physical structure. It can contain one "household," as with a single-family home, or more than one "household" as with a duplex, four-plex or other multiple-family "housing unit." There is more discussion about housing units in the housing element.

Rapids' median household income was $62,515, an enormous 50.3% higher than Wood County's $41,595 median household income or 42.8% higher than Wisconsin's

Figure 2-8. Income Characteristics



Source: U. S. Census.

$43,791 figure. Although the gap isn't as great for median family income (see Figure 2-8), it is still noteworthy. Per capita income, however, is much more closely aligned than the other two methods of measuring income. Table 2-4 lists the median and per capita income levels for the three jurisdictions for 1990 and 2000.

Table 2-4. Income

Income Type	Grand Rapids	Wood County	Wisconsin
Median HH			
1990	$41,811	$29,735	$29,442
2000	$62,515	$41,595	$43,791
Median Family			
1990	$43,833	$34,933	$35,082
2000	$66,423	$50,798	$52,911
Per Capita			
1990	$15,091	$12,130	$13,276
2000	$25,331	$20,203	$21,271

Source: U. S. Census

The figures presented in Figure 2-8 and Table 2-4 show that Grand Rapids is more affluent that the rest of Wood County or Wisconsin, in general. How is the income distributed among Grand Rapids families though? We saw, in Table 2-4, that the median family income in the year 2000 was $43,833. Close to a third of all families, 30.2% to be exact, had an income of between $50,000 and $74,999 (Table 2-5). This compared to 11.9% and 14.1% in Wood County and Wisconsin, respectively. Nearly 41% of Grand Rapids families had incomes of more than $75,000 in 2000. This compares to 21.5% of all Wood County families and 26.5% of Wisconsin families with income levels of over $75,000.

Table 2-5. Family Income Distribution - 2000

Income Level	Grand Rapids	Wood County	Wisconsin
< $10,000	1.8%	2.9%	3.5%
$10,000 - $14,999	2.5%	3.0%	3.0%
$15,000 - $24,999	5.3%	10.4%	9.1%
$25,000 - $34,999	5.6%	12.2%	11.6%
$35,000 - $49,999	13.8%	20.2%	18.7%
$50,000 - $74,999	30.2%	29.7%	27.6%
$75,000 - $99,999	20.0%	11.9%	14.1%
$100,000 - $149,999	14.8%	6.3%	8.5%
$150,000 – $199,999	3.8%	1.5%	1.9%
$200,000 or more	2.1%	1.8%	2.0%
Median family inc.	$66,423	$50,798	$52,911

Source: U. S. Census

The percent of persons and families at or below the poverty level in 1989 and 1999 is shown in Table 2-6 for Grand Rapids, Wood County and Wisconsin. In 1989, the percent of families and individuals in Grand Rapids that were at or below the poverty level was about half the figure for Wood County. In 1999, the percentages dropped for both jurisdictions. The 1.8% of families in Grand Rapids that were at or below the poverty level in 1999 translates to 42 families. There were 197 individuals in poverty – 2.5% of the total population in the Town. Data for Wisconsin is also presented in Table 2-6 for information purposes, but

cannot be compared to Grand Rapids because of the large cities that are included in Wisconsin's data.

Table 2-6. Percent in Poverty

	Pct. Families		Pct. Individuals	
	1989	1999	1989	1999
Grand Rapids	3.3	1.8	4.1	2.5
Wood County	6.4	4.4	8.5	6.5
Wisconsin	7.6	5.6	10.7	8.7

Source: U. S. Census, Table DP-3.

K. Employment Characteristics

The employed labor force is defined as people living in the Town who are 16 years and older and had a job at the time of the Census in 2000. Table 2-7 provides a comparison of Grand Rapids' employed labor force for 1980, 1990 and 2000 and compares Grand Rapids data to that of the county and state. According to this data, the employed labor force in Grand Rapids is growing considerably faster than that of either the county or state. Between 1980 and 1990, the employed labor force in Grand Rapids grew by 15.7% and, between 1990 and 2000, it grew by another 20.4%. For the 20-year period, the growth in the employed labor force in Grand Rapids was nearly double that of Wood County and was about one-third faster than Wisconsin. The unemployment rate for the Grand Rapids labor force was only 3.1% in 2000 (3.4% for Wood County), which is considered "full-employment."

Table 2-7. Employed Labor Force

Jurisdiction	Employed		
	1980	1990	2000
Grand Rapids	3,086	3,571	4,299
Wood County	30,635	34,173	37,345
Wisconsin	2,114,473	2,386,439	2,734,925

Jurisdiction	Percent Change			Net Change 1980-2000
	1980-1990	1990-2000	1980-2000	
Grand Rapids	15.7%	20.4%	39.3%	1,213
Wood County	11.5%	9.3%	21.9%	6,710
Wisconsin	12.9%	14.6%	29.3%	620,472

Source: U. S. Census.

Manufacturing remains the strongest industry for area employment, but education, health and social service employment has made substantial gains since 1990 (see Chapter 6, Table 6-1). This confirms statements made in earlier paragraphs relating to changes in services and facilities that will be needed or demanded as the population ages. Retail trade remains a strong employment sector, but declined between 1990 and 2000.

Of the Grand Rapids residents who are in the employed labor force, as many as 32.5% hold management positions. The fact that so many Town residents have management positions helps to explain the higher income figures that were discussed earlier. Sales and office jobs and, of course, production, transportation and material moving also remain strong in our area. More about the Grand Rapids economy and job force is presented in the economic element of this plan.

L. Growth Projections: Population and Housing

(1) Population Projections

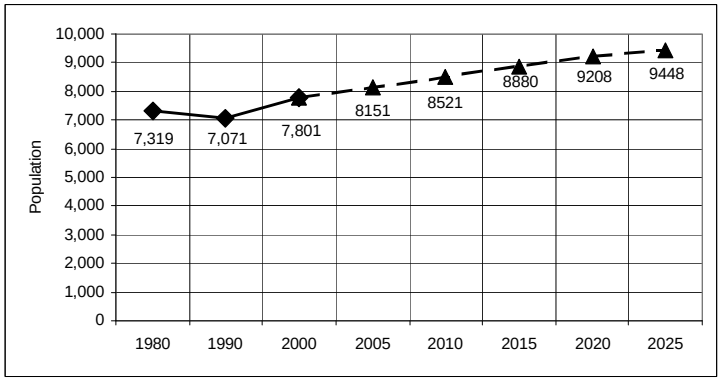
Wisconsin law (s. 16.96, Wis. Stats.) requires the Wisconsin Department of

Table 2-8. Employment by Industry & Occupation – Grand Rapids

	1990		2000	
	Number Employed	Percent of Total	Number Employed	Percent of Total
INDUSTRY **Employed persons 16 years and over**	**3571**	**100.0%**	**4299**	**100.0%**
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	55	1.5%	72	1.7%
Construction	121	3.4%	292	6.8%
Manufacturing	1276	35.7%	1415	32.9%
Transportation	187	5.2%	140	3.3%
Communications & other public utilities	77	2.2%	66	1.5%
Wholesale trade	67	1.9%	40	0.9%
Retail trade	625	17.5%	499	11.6%
Finance, insurance & real estate	191	5.3%	248	5.8%
Business & repair services	77	2.2%		0.0%
Personal services	79	2.2%	127	3.0%
Entertainment & recreation services	40	1.1%	273	6.4%
Education, health & social services	597	16.7%	944	22.0%
Other professional & related services	108	3.0%	88	2.0%
Public administration	71	2.0%	95	2.2%
OCCUPATION			**4,299**	**100.0%**
Management, professional & related			1,397	32.5%
Sales & office			1,089	25.3%
Service, except protective and household			539	12.5%
Farming, forestry & fishing			7	0.2%
Construction, extraction & maintenance			420	9.8%
Production, transportation & material moving			847	19.7%

NOTE: Because of a change in classifying occupations, only those for 2000 are shown in this table.
Source: U. S. Census.

Figure 2-9. Population Projections



Source: U. S. Census.

Table 2-9. Projections of Population, Households and Population Per Household – 2005 to 2025

Year	Population	Households	Pop./HH
2000	7,801	2,788	2.79
2005	8,151	2,985	2.73
2010	8,521	3,204	2.66
2015	8,880	3,403	2.61
2020	9,208	3,580	2.57
2025	9,448	3,721	2.54

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration and Wood County Planning & Zoning Office.

Administration (WDOA) to make annual population estimates for each municipality and county and to periodically make projections of the anticipated future population of the state, counties and municipalities. Those projections are deemed to be the official population projections for the State, to be used for all official estimate and projection purposes, with few exceptions. WisDOA's Demographic Services Center is the official agency that is responsible for the statutory mandates, in addition to other census-related tasks. Although population projections are often developed by municipalities for local use, it is the WDOA projections that will be considered for any federal or state grants, for developing water quality management plans and for many other uses. The WDOA population projections, in five-year increments for Grand Rapids are presented in Table 2-9 and Figure 2-9.

(2) Household Projections

The number of households that will be needed over the planning period is driven by the projected population and the population per household. Replacement housing units will also be needed as some are destroyed by fire, wind or other means or as they become worn and dilapidated. As housing structures are added to accommodate the needs of future households, some undeveloped land will have to be converted.

The Wisconsin Department of Administration projects the number of future households for municipalities as well as projecting population figures. In Figures 2-6 and 2-7, we saw how the number of households has continued to increase and the number of persons per household has continued to decline. Those trends are expected to continue. According to WDOA projections, the number of persons per household in Grand Rapids will decline over the planning period from the 2000 figure of 2.79 to 2.66 in 2010 to 2.61 in 2020. With the expected increase in population and the expected decline in the number of persons per household, Grand Rapids can expect a fairly substantial demand for more housing units. Projections generated by the WDOA show that Grand Rapids can expect to have to provide an additional 933 households by the year 2025. Table 2-9 provides detail about the expected changes in population, households and population per household for each five years to the year 2025.

M. Summary & Conclusions

Based on the factual data and projections presented throughout this section, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The population of Grand Rapids has grown more rapidly than most Wood County municipalities, with the Town losing population only when large areas of the Town have annexed to the City of Wisconsin Rapids. The population is expected to continue growing, perhaps by another 1,650 people by 2025.

2. Although the population will continue to grow, the proportion of younger persons, age 35 and younger, will decrease.

3. Between 1980 and 2000, the median age has increased by 5.5 years each 10-year period from 27.2 to 38.4. The median age will continue going up, causing a change in demand for types of municipal services, housing types, need for schools and more.

4. Grand Rapids residents, age 25 and older, have more education than the County as a whole and than the State. This is true at the high school, Associate degree and Bachelor's degree or higher levels. Studies have shown that higher levels of education result in higher incomes over a person's lifetime.

5. Household sizes are becoming smaller with about 2.79 persons per household in 2000 and an expected 2.54 persons per household in 2025. As household sizes continue to get smaller and the population continues to grow, the demand for more housing units will require planning for roads and other municipal facilities and services.

6. The income levels of Grand Rapids residents are much higher than Wood County and the number of families and individuals at or below the poverty level is extremely low. Higher incomes often are an indication that larger, more expensive homes will be built, helping the Town with financing of municipal facilities and services through an increased tax base.

7. Many Grand Rapids residents hold managerial, professional or other higher income jobs. Many others are employed in sales and office positions, with a large number employed in the manufacturing sector.

2. HOUSING

A. Housing Assessment

(1) Type of Housing Structures

A major proportion of dwelling units in Grand Rapids has been, and continues to be single-family homes (see Table 3-1). The proportion of single-family dwellings has increased since 1980, due in large part to the annexation of the Maples Mobile Home Park, on Highway 13, to the City of Wisconsin Rapids. In 2000, there were 49 housing structures that have two units (duplexes) and six with more than two units (multi-family). In 1980, there were 35 structures with two or more dwelling units versus the 55 in 2000. The number of mobile homes declined from 224 to 105. In 2008, according to Town records, there are 39 duplexes and 53 mobile homes.

Table 3-1. Dwelling Types – 2000 vs. 1980

Type	1980		2000	
	Number of Dwelling Units	Percent of Total Units	Number of Dwelling Units	Percent of Total Units
Single Family	2,107	89.0	2,673	94.4
Duplex	35*	1.5*	49	1.7
Multi-Family			6	0.2
Mobile Home	224	9.5	105	3.7
TOTAL	2,366	100.0	2,833	100.0

* The 1980 census listed dwelling structures with 2 – 9 units. In 2000, the census listed structures with 2 units as a separate detail.

Source: U.S. Census, Summary File 3F – Sample Data (2000) and U.S. Census of Housing, General Housing Characteristics, Table 36a (1980).

Because housing structures in Grand Rapids are served by private onsite waste treatment systems, it is likely that the type of housing structures will continue to be mainly single-family, with some additional duplexes. Town planners must, however, be aware of the changing age and consequent changing needs that may occur with future housing.

(2) Age of Housing Stock

According to the 2000 census, there are 2,854 total housing units in the Town.[6] Nearly 40% of them were built in 1980 or later (see Table 3.2). The large proportion of newer housing units is due, in part, because Grand Rapids is one of the fastest growing communities in Wood County, as shown in Chapter 2. Another reason for the high proportion of newer housing units is because many of the older units have been annexed to the City of Wisconsin Rapids because of their need for sanitary sewer as septic systems failed on lots that were too small for

Table 3-2. AGE OF HOUSING STRUCTURES
TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS

YEAR BUILT	HOUSING UNITS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
1990 – March 2000	618	21.8
1980 – 1989	512	18.1
1970 – 1979	814	28.7
1960 – 1969	391	13.8
1940 – 1959	383	13.5
1939 or earlier	115	4.1
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	2,833	100.0

Source: U.S Census of Population, 2000, Table DP-4.

[6] Total dwelling units for 2000, shown in Table 3-1 is 2,833, a number from Summary File 3F, which is sample data. The 2,854 units is from the 100% data.

replacement systems. Only slightly more than a third of all housing units in Grand Rapids were built prior to 1970.

It is difficult to project how much more residential property will be annexed to Wisconsin Rapids for the same reason. Changes in Wisconsin's plumbing code for private onsite waste treatment systems changed several years ago, however, and now requires that there be room on a residential lot for a replacement system should the original POWTS fail. This will help prevent future annexations primarily for the purpose of getting sanitary sewer services.

(3) Structural Value

The structural value of owner-occupied housing in the Town of Grand Rapids for the year 2000 is listed in Table 3-3. A nearly equal proportion of housing units are valued at between $50,000 and $99,000 (39.9%) and between $100,000 and $149,999 (36.7%). A very small proportion are valued at less than $50,000. About one in five housing units are valued at $150,000 or more.

Table 3-3. VALUE OF OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS - TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS

VALUE	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Less than $50,000 -	62	2.6
$50,000 - $99,999	935	39.9
$100,000 - $149,999	861	36.7
$150,000 - $199,999	295	12.6
$200,000 – $299,999	149	6.4
$300,000 - $499,999	41	1.7
$500,000 or more	0	0
Median – Grand Rapids	$108,800	-
Median – Wood Co.	$81,400	-
Median-Wisconsin	$112,200	-

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 2000, Table DP-4.

Housing values since 2000 have obviously changed, but actual figures are not available until the next census. Using recent sales data does, however, provide a means to gauge current values. In 2007, 80 properties in Grand Rapids were closed by Realtors (more were closed by owners, but that data is not readily available). Table 3-4 shows that the highest sold price was $372,000, with an average sold price being $149,000 and the median being $138,950. On average, Grand Rapids homes are on the market for 125 days.

Table 3-4. Housing Sales Data - 2007

	List Price	Sold Price	DOM
High	$410,000	$372,000	674
Low	$23,900	$21,500	21
Average	$153,380	$149,000	125
Median	$141,244	$138,950	78
Total Price	$12,270,479	$11,920,070	
Listing Count		80	

Source: First Weber Group, Wisconsin Rapids, June 2008.

The value of housing units is a factor of the unit's age, its location and the local economy. A third of the labor force that lives in Grand Rapids is in the "professional and management" occupations and, thus, is in a position to pay more for housing than lower paying occupations. The median value of housing in Grand Rapids is fully one-third higher than Wood County as a whole. Both the Town and the County have lower median housing values than the State, which is reflective of the overall lower cost of living outside the large metropolitan areas of Wisconsin. Values of owner-occupied

housing in Grand Rapids are considered to be "affordable," providing good selection of owner-occupied housing for persons of all income levels to live in the Town, but most of the Town's renter-occupied housing is not "affordable" by federal definition (see Housing Affordability below).

(4) Occupancy Characteristics

The occupancy status of housing units in the Town of Grand Rapids has become slightly more owner- and less renter-occupied during the past 20-years (Table 3-5). In 1980, 135 of the 178 housing units, or 76%, were owner-occupied. There was very little change between 1980 and 1990, but between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of owner-occupied housing climbed to 83% of the total housing stock.

Table 3-5: OCCUPANCY CHARACTERISTICS
TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING UNITS
1980 – 2000

Year	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant	Total House-holds
2000	2,607; 91.3%	181; 6.3%	66; 2.3%	2,854
1990	2,143; 88.7%	205; 8.5%	69; 2.9%	2,417
1980	2,012; 76%	254; 21%	100; 3%	2,366

Source: U.S. Census of Population, Table DP-1.

Vacancy rates are important because they show the demand for housing in Grand Rapids. A vacancy rate of 2% or 3% of owner-occupied housing units generally indicates a tight market and unmet demands for new housing. In Grand Rapids, it was a mere 0.7% in 2000. Renter-occupied housing vacancy rates below 5% indicate a need for more rental units. In Grand Rapids, it was 4.2% in 2000. It is very important that communities have available rental units if they want to attract new residents. New families will usually rent a housing unit until they learn the community and find the neighborhood in which they want to live. Because of the proximity of Grand Rapids to Wisconsin Rapids, the city's vacancy rates can also be taken into account. In 2000, the homeowner and rental vacancy rates were reported to be 1.6% and 6.3% respectively. Since that census, additional rental units have been added to the housing stock in Wisconsin Rapids. The area's selection of both homeowner units and rental units is acceptable, although the Town may want to increase their supply of both to attract more residents.

The actual number of owner-occupied housing units continually increased during the 20-year period from 1980 to 2000. The number of owner-occupied housing units increased by 131 between 1980 and 1990, with another 464 units added from 1990 to 2000. The number of renter-occupied housing units has fallen since 1980 when there were 254. In 2000, the number of rental units was down to 181.

(5) Housing Affordability

By federal law, all communities are required to provide affordable housing. Affordable housing is defined as housing for which a household pays no more than 30% of their annual income, including the cost of a mortgage or rent and homeowner's or renter's insurance. Table 3-6 provides a look at housing affordability in Grand Rapids. Using the 30% of annual income definition, it seems that nearly 10% of homeowner housing is unaffordable to those living in them. Further, data indicate that over half (53%) of Grand Rapids' renters are living in dwellings that is, by definition, unaffordable to them. These figures are similar to Wisconsin Rapids' affordable housing figures where slightly more than 12% of homeowners and nearly

33% of renters are living in dwelling units that are defined as unaffordable to those living in them. One reason for these high numbers may be the rapid increase in the cost of housing and utilities in recent years coupled with the slower rise in household incomes.

Table 3-6. Housing Costs as a Percent of Household Income - Grand Rapids, 2000

Pct. Household Income for Housing	Homeowners		Renters	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Less than 15%	1,138	48.6	26	17.8
15% to 19%	451	19.2	8	5.5
20% to 24%	234	10.0	35	24.0
25% to 29%	215	9.2	13	8.9
30% to 34%	86	3.7	11	7.5
35% or more	180	7.7	40	27.4
Not Computed	39	1.7	13	8.9
TOTAL	2,343	100.0	146	100.0

Source: U. S. Census, 2000, Table DP-4.

Monthly rent in Grand Rapids generally runs between $300 and $749, with a few units costing more than $749/month. The median rent paid at the time of the last census was $565 (median rent in Wisconsin Rapids was $466). One third of the rental units were between $300 and $499 and 58% of the units rented for between $500 and $749. The median monthly mortgage in Grand Rapids was $942 in 2000. Monthly mortgages ranged anywhere between a range of $300 to $499 per month to $2,000 or more per month. Although we learned, in Chapter 2 (Table 2-6) that a very small percentage of Grand Rapids residents are at or below the poverty level, the fact that 33% of renters are living in housing that is not affordable to them should be a cause for concern, especially if those are renters are having to cut back on other necessities (food, clothing, heat, etc.) to pay for housing.

(6) <u>Tenure</u>

It is interesting to analyze the tenure of householders, or how long they have lived in their present home. Table 3-7 shows this data for Grand Rapids. Of the owner-occupied housing units, nearly a third (31.5%) have lived in their Grand Rapids home for five or fewer years and over half (50.8%) for 10 or fewer years. This compares to 40.3% and 56.8% for Wood County for the periods. County numbers indicate more population movement than do Town numbers, but the numbers for Wood County also take into consideration a very large number of rental units, group homes, nursing homes, etc. that are located in cities and villages, but not in the Town of Grand Rapids.

Table 3-7
TENURE BY YEAR HOUSEHOLDER MOVED INTO UNIT
TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS

YEARS	PERCENT OF TOTAL	
	TOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS	WOOD COUNTY
1995 – March 2000	31.5	40.3
1990 – 1994	19.3	16.5
1980 – 1989	25.4	17.6
1970 – 1979	14.8	11.9
1969 or earlier	9.0	13.8

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 2000, Table DP-4.

<u>(7) Housing Accessibility</u>

The number of households with at least one disabled resident increases as the population ages. People generally have the desire to age in their own home and live there comfortably. Few single-family detached homes, like those in Grand Rapids, are accessible to those with mobility limitations. Key features for accessibility are a zero-step entrance, a bathroom or half bath on the entry

level, interior doors with at least 32 inches of clearance, and may also include lever-style door handles, electrical controls that are in reach and other features. Such features make a home accessible for both the resident who has physical limitations and for visitors with physical disabilities. A recent study concluded that a typical single-family detached home has a lifespan of 75-100 years and will have an average of four households living there during its life. That study estimated that there is a 60% probability that a single-family house build in 2000 will house at least one disabled resident during its expected lifetime and a 91% chance of having a disabled visitor.[7] It is suggested that constructing accessible homes, under either a mandatory ordinance or voluntary program, costs less than retrofitting existing homes. It is further suggested that there are economic benefits to society in general if the aging population can remain in their homes longer before moving into an institutionalized setting, many of which are financed by public programs like Medicaid ($54 billion in 2005) and Medicare ($20 billion in 2005).

Neither the State of Wisconsin nor the Town of Grand Rapids has mandatory accessibility building standards at this time. Encouraging even the basic features described above would be worthwhile and may make Grand Rapids even more attractive as a place to live.

(8) <u>Platted Lots</u>

Subdivision Plats

There have been numerous lots platted in Grand Rapids over the years in either subdivision developments or by certified survey maps. Many of those platted lots have been annexed to Wisconsin Rapids because small lot sizes could not accommodate new private onsite waste treatment systems (POWTS, a/k/a septic systems) when the original systems failed. In other cases, small lots as originally platted have been combined to accommodate new septic systems or, in many cases, because owners of the lots wanted more room and greater separation from their neighbors. This section provides a look at the history of subdivision plats in Grand Rapids and their status today.

There are 116 platted subdivisions in Grand Rapids today. The earliest of these include Fisher's Lakeview subdivision and Helke Subdivision, dating back to 1938 and 1939, respectively. Both of these subdivisions are located north of Lake Wazeecha. Lake Wazeecha was constructed in the 1930's as a project of the Civil Conservation Corps, a federal program designed to create jobs. Following its construction, the lake area became a very desirable location for land speculation and residential development. These first two subdivisions had an original total of 81 lots, but, through combining of lots, there are now 45 lots in the two subdivisions. Together, they consumed about 19 acres of land.

During the 1940s, five subdivisions were platted in Grand Rapids, three of them on the shores of Lake Wazeecha. The subdivisions of the 40s converted 18 acres to residential uses. Today, there are 31 lots in those subdivisions. It is interesting to note that, of the seven subdivisions that were created in the 1030s and 1040s, five were near Lake Wazeecha and accounted for 86% of the new lots that were platted between 1938 and 1949. The trend to plat new

[7] Smith, S. K., Rayer, S. and Smith, E. A. (Summer 2008). *Aging and Disability, Impliations for the Housing Industry and Housing Policy in the United States.* Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 74, No. 3.

subdivisions in the Lake Wazeecha area continued beyond 1949. Today, 38% of all subdivision lots are located within a half mile of the lake.

A huge demand for new housing began after World War II. It was about that same time that suburbanization started (although the main suburban movement is associated with the 1960s and 70s). The demand that was created by the end of the war is evidenced in the fact that all five of the subdivisions that were platted in Grand Rapids in the 1940s were done in 1946 and 1947. For the most part, these subdivisions were small in size – from four to 7.5 acres in size – and averaged about 10 lots.

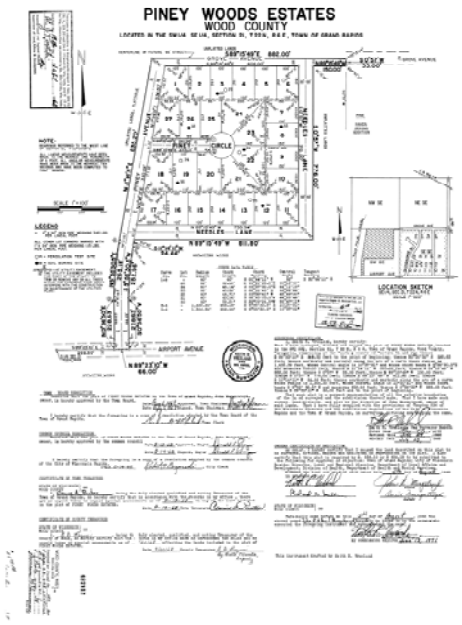


Figure 3-1. Example of a Grand Rapids Subdivision Plat.

The demand for housing increased and land speculation was on the upswing during the prosperous 1950s, but only two of the nine plats that were recorded in the 1950s were recorded prior to 1955. Seventy-seven acres were platted into subdivisions from 1950 to 1959. Today, there are 168 lots in those subdivisions. Although the population of Grand Rapids was growing rapidly during the 1950s, the number of platted lots increased at a more rapid pace, giving more opportunity for new residents to have a choice of places in which to live in Grand Rapids. The population increased by 64% during the 1950s, while the number of lots in platted subdivisions nearly doubled (+94%).

With the 1960s came the first real sign that maybe the number of new subdivisions that were being platted outnumbered the demand for new lots. The abundance of newly platted areas during the 60s may have been the beginning of the need for a good planning program. During that decade, 26 new subdivisions were recorded in the Wood County Register of Deeds Office, an increase of almost three times that of the 1950s. A total of 490 lots are in those subdivisions, converting 288 acres to residential uses. While the acreage may not seem excessive, what is notable is the fact that the subdivisions were scattered throughout the town with no evidence of land controls that could regulate or guide the subdivision locations, their lot layout or their street design. The popularity of curvilinear streets and cul de sacs virtually eliminated many opportunities for providing needed through streets in Grand Rapids. While curvilinear streets and cul de sacs may initially attract new residents because of limited traffic and control of speed, the reduction or elimination of some form of a grid pattern ultimately contributes to traffic congestion on the few roads that move traffic from the commuter residential subdivision to employment centers, business areas and schools.

In the 1970s, leap-frog siting of subdivisions continued. Another 37 subdivisions were recorded in Grand Rapids,

converting over 625 acres from undeveloped to residential uses. Today, there are 881 lots in those subdivisions. Like the subdivisions of the 1960s, the 1970s-vintage developments continued to have curvilinear streets – to slow traffic – and cul de sacs, both exacerbating problems associated with a need for more through streets to serve a rapidly growing population and more vehicles.

In the 1980s, the number of platted subdivisions and lots created in them continued to climb. Fourteen new subdivisions were platted on nearly 200 acres of land in Grand Rapids, creating another 323 lots for residential development.

From 1990 – 1999, there were 22 plats in Grand Rapids, creating 373 lots on 323 acres of land. A sagging economy in the early 2000s slowed subdivision development in the Town. Since the beginning of 2000, there has been only one subdivision plat. That plat created 29 lots on 23 acres of land.

All totaled, there are 2,821 lots on 2,238 acres in platted subdivisions in Grand Rapids. Table 3-8 provides an overview of subdivision development in Grand Rapids.

Table 3-8. Subdivision Lots and Acreage

	No. of Plats	Lots[1]	Acres
1930's	2	45	19
1940's	5	31	18
1950's	9	168	77
1960's	26	490	288
1970's	37	881	627
1980's	14	291	197
1990's	22	373	323
2000 – 2007	1	29	23
TOTAL	116	2,308	1,572

1. Number of lots that exist in 2008. This number differs from the original number of platted lots due to several instances where small lots were combined into larger lots.

Source: Wood County Planning & Zoning Office.

Certified Survey Maps

Certified survey maps, or CSM's, are often created by a licensed surveyor for a property owner and usually recorded in the County Register of Deeds office to describe the owner's property boundaries. A CSM may be created for personal use, for mortgage purposes, to divide parcels into smaller lots or building sites, in preparation of selling property, or for other uses. A CSM can be used to create up to four new parcels or building sites.[8] If more than four new lots are created within a five-year time span, a developer will use a subdivision plat.

Some communities and counties require certified survey maps under certain circumstances for planning or zoning purposes. Review and recording of certified survey maps became a requirement of the subdivision process in Wood County in 1970. Until early 2008, Wood County required a CSM anytime a new lot was created that was five acres or smaller in size. In 2008, the lot size was increased to 10 acres.

For several years, the Grand Rapids subdivision ordinance has required certified survey maps to be submitted any time those a new lot was created that was 10 acres or smaller in size.

[8] It is important to note that recording of a certified survey map does not initiate a conveyance of property; a deed must be recorded for the property to transfer from one owner to another. There are many occasions when a certified survey map is recorded with the intent to transfer ownership, the owners not understanding that the certified survey map serves only to describe and identify the property.

There are 81 certified survey maps in Grand Rapids that have been recorded for parcels of land that are over 10 acres in size. The parcels range from 10.01 to 126.01 acres. These 81 CSMs account for 2,056.56 acres of land. There are 1,059 certified survey maps that are 10-acres or less in size. Those maps account for 1,739.02 acres of land. Grand Rapids has a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet - .46 acres - for building in residential areas. There are 88 CSMs that are smaller than .46 acres. In some cased, these may have been created prior to the establishment of the minimum lot sizes, they may be exchanges of land between adjoining owners to increase lot sizes, they may have been done to combine smaller lots into larger lots (see discussion of subdivision plats), they may be purchases of land for additional highway right-of-way (eg. along Highway 54 or County Road W when those roads were relocated and improved), or they may have been done for other reasons.

It is easy to determine the number of certified survey maps that have been reviewed, thus creating lots that met the review requirement at the time the lots were created, but more difficult to determine how many of those lots are now in the City of Wisconsin Rapids or the Village of Biron. This section then will focus on how many CSM's have been 'reviewed' by the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office and how many lots created by those surveys.

According to Wood County records, 394 certified survey maps have been reviewed since 1970 for surveys in Grand Rapids (Table 3-8). Those maps created 802 lots in the Town. As can be seen in Table 3-8, the largest number of both maps and lots created by those maps occurred in the 1970s, followed by another surge in the 1990s. During the first seven years of the new millennium, 59 certified survey maps with 116 new lots have been submitted for review under the County review requirements. This lower number of csm's and lots is probably a function of the economic downturn in the area during these years.

Table 3-8: Certified Survey Maps & Lots Created

Decade	Certified Survey Maps Reviewed[1]	Number of Lots Created
1970s	135	280
1980s	89	183
1990s	111	223
2000 - 2007	59	116
Total	394	802

1. This table depicts only those maps reviewed under the provisions of the Wood County Land Subdivision Ordinance (creation of lots that are five-acres or less in size). Grand Rapids review requirements are for creation of lots that are 10-acres or less in size).

Source: Wood County Planning & Zoning Office.

B. Housing Goals, Objectives & Policies

It is an overall objective of the Town to encourage home improvements and development standards that will enhance the overall appearance of the Town's housing, while increasing the structural quality of the homes.

According to the 2000 U. S. Census, 6.5% of the occupied housing units in Grand Rapids are rental units. Average rent was $565. The average value of houses in the Town was $108,800 with a good distribution of various housing values throughout the community. It is an overall objective of the Town to continue to encourage development of affordable housing to continue attracting working-age population with families, as experienced between 1990 and 2000, and to make our community affordable to those who are leaving the work force.

Goal: Promote development of housing types and densities to provide quality housing for persons of all economic means in a manner so as to protect the environment and preserve the natural areas of the Town.

Policies/programs to promote development of housing for residents of Grand Rapids.

- Develop for lot sizes throughout the town to accommodate the septic system requirements of the State law, including the requirement for an area for replacement systems should the first system fail. It is the intent of this policy to minimize the need for municipal sanitary sewer or water in the future thus reducing the number of annexations occurring because of failing septic systems.

- Prepare for annexation of higher density, small lot development on the perimeter of Wisconsin Rapids and buffer those areas with larger minimum lot sizes to lower density as a means to ward off the future need for annexation for municipal sanitary sewer or water.

- Where necessary because of lot sizes being too small to accommodate replacement septic systems, zone areas for higher density residential development where public sewer and water can serve higher densities, in the future, if problems arise with regard to groundwater quality or quantity or septic systems should fail.

- Work with the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Village of Biron to promote planned development in the service area of the Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management Plan.

- Consider working with Wisconsin Rapids and Biron to develop boundary agreements to protect residential and commercial uses in Grand Rapids from encroachment from other uses, to protect their property values, and help the communities plan future growth and infrastructure needs.

Policies/programs that provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels, all age groups and special needs.

- Promote the federal fair housing goals by developing zoning standards that are inclusive rather than exclusive, promoting affordability of housing for all income level homeowners, including low- and moderate-income.

- Encourage developers of rental units to build those units in areas of the town where, in the case of duplexes and other multi-family units, the housing type will be compatible with neighboring land uses.

- Encourage housing designers and contractors to build homes that are accessible, specifically including zero-step entries, a bathroom or half bath on the entry level, interior doors with at least 32 inches of clearance, and lever-style door handles.

Policies/programs that promote the availability of land for development or redevelopment of low- & moderate-income housing.

- Allow various lot sizes that are conducive to different housing types.

Policies/programs to maintain or rehabilitate the existing housing stock.

- Encourage homeowners to participate in paint-up/fix-up events to maintain their property and protect their home's value.

- Encourage volunteers or civic organizations to help those who are physically unable to maintain their property.

- Continue to educate property owners about the Town zoning ordinance and other ordinances that may affect them, including activities that may require permits. The Town will work with Wood County to help make information available to town residents.

3. TRANSPORTATION

Many of us take our transportation system for granted and, often, are not even aware of the components of the transportation system we use everyday. Grand Rapids' transportation system offers many modes of travel and transport, including roads, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and air and rail transportation. The transportation system in the Town is complex, the complexity compounded because of the Town's proximity to the Wisconsin Rapids, a city that maintains an official street map, pursuant to State statutes; Portage County, which creates boundary issues for the transportation system and other plan elements; and Biron, a village with desires and plans to expand and create more transportation system demands. In addition, Grand Rapids is a co-owner of the South Wood County Airport, or Alexander Field and must work with their partners to provide adequate air transport facilities. Grand Rapids is part of the urban area and, as such, must cooperate and coordinate with their partners on regional transportation planning and expenditures. The purpose of this section is to describe the Town's transportation system components, assess current and future changes and additions to that system, describe how the transportation system relates to other segments of the comprehensive plan, develop goals and objectives for the transportation system and establish local programs that will seek to achieve those goals and objectives.

A. Road Network

Probably the most obvious and most used component of the Town's transportation system is the network of streets and highways that criss-cross through the Town. Different roads are designed to serve different functions and, with good planning, those functions can be carried out and protected.

(1) Functional Classifications

It is very important to understand the function of different categories of streets and highways so you can plan your street system to be efficient and to protect that efficiency by protecting the function of the road network. Streets and highways are grouped into different classes according to the type of service they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility, which is moving vehicles across a community, region or country, to a low level of mobility of providing access to land or individual lots. The functional classifications are also categorized, in the case of Grand Rapids, as "urban" or "rural." In many cases, the same street (eg. 48th Street) will be in both the urban and the rural classification areas. Also, in some cases (eg. Airport Avenue), a street may transition from one level of classification to another level, depending on the amount of traffic it serves. The functional classifications, from the lowest function to the highest, are generally as defined in the following paragraphs.

Local Streets

The primary function of local streets is to provide access to individual parcels of land. They typically offer the lowest level of mobility of all the functionally-classified streets. A typical subdivision street, like Wintergreen, Lovewood Drive or Arbor Haven Lane, would be an example of a local street. These streets are designed to serve residential lots, have a 25 mph speed limit,

may have a curvilinear design to "calm" traffic or may be a cul de sac to prevent through traffic. Once you leave these streets, you may turn onto a collector street.

Collector Streets

The function of collector streets is to carry more traffic than local streets, provide through traffic in residential, commercial and industrial neighborhoods, and distribute traffic to even higher function highways. Collector streets may be of a straighter design, often have wider pavement widths with fewer access points (driveways) and may have higher speed limits (i.e. 35 to 45 mph). A part of Grand Rapids is in what is called the "urban functional classification system" and part is in the "rural functional classification system." In the rural areas, collectors are classified as "minor" collectors or "principal" collectors, depending on the volume of traffic they serve. Examples of collector streets in Grand Rapids are 80th Street, Whitrock Avenue and South Park Road.

Arterials

Traffic from collector streets may move onto even higher volume roads with higher speed limits and, perhaps, more lanes of travel. Like collector streets, arterials are classified as either "minor arterials" or "principal arterials," depending on the volume of traffic they serve. Minor arterials may have speeds up to 55 mph and principal arterials, like some state highways and interstate highways, will have speeds up to 65 mph. Minor arterials are designed to take the higher volumes of traffic from the collector streets and move that traffic to and from major traffic generators, such as business districts, employment centers and places of large public gatherings, such as university campuses, stadiums, or something of that magnitude. They also provide a connection between communities. Principal arterials serve urban areas of greater than 5,000 population, usually have multiple lanes, typically carry very high traffic volumes and move traffic on longer trips. Minor arterials should have even fewer access points than collectors, but still provide land access. Principal arterials often have limited or controlled access, such as State Highway 54. In Grand Rapids, County Road W east of its intersection with Highway 54, County Road Z west of 48th Street and Airport Avenue west of 32nd Street are all examples of minor arterials. State Highway 54 is the Town's only principal arterial.

Grand Rapids Street Classifications and Urban Area

Figure 3-1 is a map showing the classifications for Grand Rapids streets and the urban area boundaries which include portions of Grand Rapids. Table 3-1 lists streets in Grand Rapids that are classified either in the urban area or in the rural area. Functionally classified streets in the urban area are eligible for different federal funding than the rural area classified streets. Sixteen urban areas in Wisconsin, including the Wisconsin Rapids urban area, receive annual allocations based on their population. The communities in the Wisconsin Rapids urban area meet annually to determine which projects should be submitted for funding under the Surface Transportation Program (STP) – Urban funding. Similarly, Grand Rapids' classified roads that are outside the urban area are eligible for funding under the STP-Rural program. More information is available from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation North Central Regional Office in Wisconsin Rapids.

Table 3-1: Grand Rapids Functional Classification of Roads			
Urban	Street	From-To	Approx. Mileage
Collector:	48th St.	Town Line Rd. – Griffith Ave	1.00
	48th St.	Lake Avenue – Two Mile Creek	0.50
	48th St.	Hwy. 54 – 1,320 ft. S. of RR	0.50
	Griffith Ave.	48th St. – 80th St.	2.00
	Whitrock Ave.	48th St. – 64th St.	1.00
	64th St.	Whitrock Ave. – S. Park Road	0.25
	S. Park Road	64th St. – 80th St.	1.00
	Airport Ave.	32nd St. – 48th St.	1.00
	Lake Ave.	48th St. – Helke Ave.	0.25
	Chestnut St.	32nd St. – WR City Limits	0.75
	Saratoga St.	32nd St. – WR City Limits	0.25
Arterial:	Griffith Ave.	48th St. – Range Line Road	
	48th St.	Griffith Ave. – Lake Avenue	1.50
	80th St.	Griffith Ave. – Lake Avenue	1.50
	Airport Ave.	32nd St. to WR City Limits	
	Lake Ave.	80th St. to WR City Limits	
	32nd St.	Airport Avenue to Washington St.	1.50
Rural			
Collector:	48th St.	Two Mile Creek – WR City Limits	1.50
	80th St.	Town Line Rd. – Griffith Ave.	1.00
	80th St.	Lake Ave. – Biron Village Limits	3.50
		Total	19.00+
Source: WisDOT Bureau of Planning & Economic Development Map, Oct. 19, 2005.			

(2) Average Daily Traffic

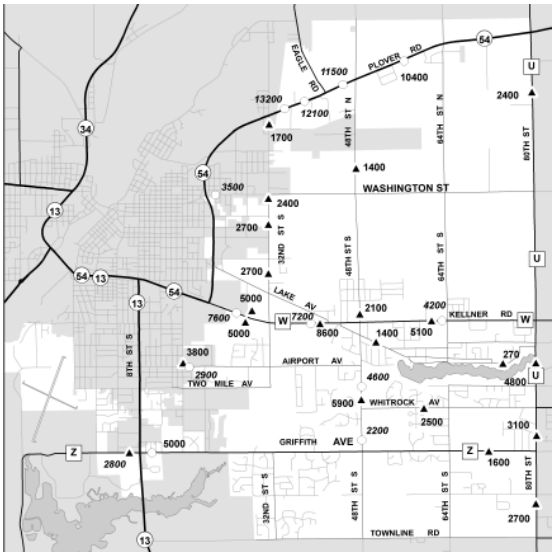
The Wisconsin Department of Transportation counts traffic and calculates average daily traffic every few years. The most recent traffic counts in Grand Rapids were conducted in 2005 and, before that, in 2002. Figure 3-2 is a map showing the 2005 counts (red) and counts that were taken prior to 2005 (blue), most of which are 2002 or 2003 counts. This map shows how traffic increases the closer you get to Wisconsin Rapids. Traveling along Highway 54 from west to east, the traffic is high (12,100) near Wisconsin Rapids, dropping off to 80th Street and then increasing again. This shows that 80th Street is used as a traffic carrier to those who are commuting from Wood County to Portage County. Traffic counts are important to local officials for future planning for access, for maintenance purposes and to analyze the need and timing for new local streets or county and state highways.

(3) Commuting Patterns

Table 3-2 describes the commuting patterns of Grand Rapids resident workers over the age of 16. Most Grand Rapids workers – 95.8% - use automobiles (or trucks or vans) to commute to their workplace and most of them drive alone. There are no public transportation providers in the area. Although there are paved paths in the Town, no one commutes by bicycle, but a few commute by walking. Slightly more than three percent work at home.

Table 3-2: Commuting to Work		
	Number	Percent
Car, Truck, Van (drove alone)	3,713	87.5%
Car, Truck, Van (carpooled)	353	8.3%
Public Transportation (inc. taxi)	0	0.0%
Bicycled	0	0.0%
Walked	27	0.6%
Other Means	13	0.3%
Worked at Home	138	3.3%
Total	4,244	100.0%
Source: U. S. Census, 2000.		

Figure 3-2: Annual Average Daily Traffic



Source: Wisconsin DOT, 2005

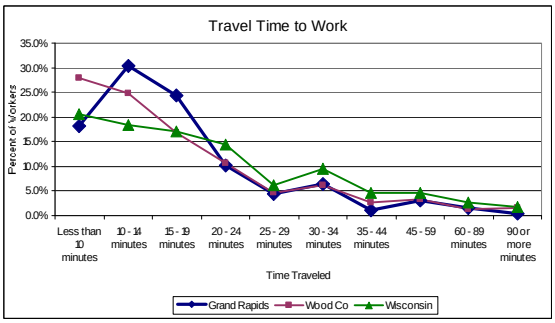


Figure 3-3 Source: U. S. Census.

Nearly half of all Grand Rapids workers have less than 15 minutes travel time to work and almost three-fourths of Grand Rapids workers travel for less than 20-minutes to their workplace. The local travel time compares favorable to the State as a whole, where only 56% of workers travel less than 20-minutes to work (Figure 3-3). This is because, in part, there is little traffic congestion and 83% of the Town's workers work in Wood County (Table 3-3).

Table 3-3. Place of Work Residents 16 Years or Older		
	Town of Grand Rapids	Wood County
In County	83.2%	85.1%
Outside of County	16.4%	14.4%
Outside of State	0.4%	0.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Source: U. S. Census.		

(4) Highway 54 Extension

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, in cooperation with Grand Rapids, Port Edwards, Wisconsin Rapids and Wood County, is currently in the process of analyzing the potential for extending State Highway 54 from its intersection with County Road W, south to about Kuhn Avenue, then curving westerly, joining Griffith Avenue and traveling generally west, crossing the Wisconsin River at a point yet to be determined to the Village of Port Edwards. Such an extension would reduce conflict between local and through traffic through the heavy commercial sections of Wisconsin Rapids. Much of the through traffic consists of trucks that are transporting produce from areas west of the Wisconsin Rapids area to processing plants that are located east on Highway 54. One issue that should be addressed immediately is signage, especially for the east-bound traffic on Highway 54/Riverview Expressway that will turn north at the intersection of Highway 54 and County Road W near the Home Depot site. Overhead signs are needed well west of that

intersection to assist Highway 54 traffic plan for the left hand turn to stay on Highway 54. Currently, there are many conflicts with traffic that has not received sufficient notice of the impending turn.

Planning for the Highway 54 extension is in its early stages; the environmental impact assessment has been completed and public information meetings held. No decisions have been made at this time about the final route or the financial ability to make this highway change. At this time, no additional funding has been appropriated for further study of this $16 million dollar project. The Department of Transportation, however, expects a preferred alternative to be identified as early as the spring of 2009. At that time, the 500-foot study corridor will be narrowed, giving residents and local officials a better idea of the impact on Grand Rapids neighborhoods and providing direction for future land use planning along the corridor. The earliest enumeration of this project by the State is estimated to be 2015, with construction no sooner than 2025. Route alternatives for the extension of Highway 54 through Grand Rapids are shown at the end of this chapter. In addition to this new roadway, there are other components to the proposal that are important to Grand Rapids and the rest of the greater Wisconsin Rapids area.

Issues, such as noise, precise location of the roadway, shifting of heavy truck traffic to another route, impact on businesses on 8th Street in Wisconsin Rapids, impact on growth in the Village of Port Edwards, and others were heard in the public information meeting. Town officials need to be involved in the planning for this highway extension to protect the interests of Grand Rapids residents while, at the same time, serving the interests of the greater community. Continued communications with town residents about this project is the key to answering questions, learning of concerns and attempting to resolve issues during the planning and engineering phases. For example, several comments were received in the community planning survey regarding the amount of traffic that flows through the residential area south of WalMart and the congestion and turning conflicts in that area. Preliminary design schematics show that 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Streets could be closed with cul de sac turnarounds on their south ends. This would eliminate the through traffic issues and turning conflicts, but would result in some area residents changing their current routes to something new. Another change would be the possible installation of medians along portions of 8th Street that would impact turning movements into and out of businesses. While not in Grand Rapids, Town officials should be active in design discussions, again to protect economic enterprises in the community, while providing a safe and efficient transportation system that will impact all Town residents.

(5) <u>Official Street Map</u>

Two official street maps exist in the area; one adopted by the Town of Grand Rapids (Figure 3-4) and the other by the City of Wisconsin Rapids. The City map shows future streets from the eastern city limits to as far as 64th Street in Grand Rapids. Several discrepancies exist between the two maps; some in the proposed street width and, in some cases, the City is planning for future streets that are not on the Town's official map (Table 3-4). These roads are in the Town, but the City needs to plan for future expansion. It would benefit both jurisdictions to coordinate boundary area plans so the best interests of the area are served as we continue to grow.

Table 3-4. Official Street Map Differences		
Street	Grand Rapids Official Map	Wisc. Rapids Official Map
Eagle Road (bet. Hwy 54 and Biron limits)	80 ft.	100 ft.
Hwy 54 (Plover Rd.)(bet. RR tracks on west and 80th St.)	100 ft.	132 ft.
48th Street (bet. Hwy 54 and RR tracks and City limits to Peach Street-ext.)	80 ft.	100 ft.
Kingston Road (bet. 32nd St. and 48th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 66 ft. to 80 ft.
Norton Street (bet. 32nd St. and 48th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 66 ft. to 80 ft.
Washington St. (bet. City limits to 48th St.)	66 ft.	80 ft.
Peach St. (bet. 32nd St. and 48th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 100 ft.
24th Street (bet. Saratoga St. and City limits)	Not on map	70 ft.
39th Street (approx.) (bet. Peach St.-ext. to Kingston Rd.-ext.)	Not on map	Proposed 80 ft.
35th Street (approx.) (bet. Kingston Rd.-ext. and Norton St.)	Not on map	Proposed 80 ft.
County Road W (between 32nd St. and 64th St., extended on old railroad right-of-way)	Not on map	Proposed 132 ft.
Two Mile Ave. (between 32nd St. and 37th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 66 ft.
Timber Valley Dr. (bet. East Valley Ct. and 48th St.)	Not on map	Proposed 66 ft.
Hwy 54 (between County Road W and Wisconsin River)	Not on map	Proposed 80 ft. right-of-way to 500 ft. study corridor

(6) Town of Grand Rapids Road Improvement Plan

The Town of Grand Rapids Board reviews, on an annual basis, the condition of town roads. During the budget process, decisions are made about what improvements are going to be made the following year. Those decisions rest on the availability of various sources of funding, including State road aids and local property taxes. Several comments were made in the community planning survey about the condition of various town roads. Other comments pointed out concerns regarding difficult access onto or across certain streets at busy intersections. The concerns have been forwarded to the Town Board for their notification and consideration.

(7) STP Urban & Rural Systems Planning

Grand Rapids has always actively participated with neighboring communities in the area's urban group[9] that considers projects to be funded with federal Surface Transportation Projects (STP) Urban Program dollars that are channeled through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The group consolidates the funding and uses it for agreed upon urban area projects. Funding is available in two-year cycles, the current cycle being the 2009 – 2011 fiscal years. Upgrading of 32nd Street from Washington Street to Chestnut Street is the current STP Urban Program project. Other projects include one in the Village of Port Edwards, one in Wisconsin Rapids and another in Grand Rapids, which is in the

[9] Includes the Towns of Grand Rapids, Seneca and Port Edwards, the Villages of Biron and Port Edwards, the Cities of Nekoosa and Wisconsin Rapids and the Wood County Highway Department. This group is eligible for funding for municipalities with a population of 20,000 to 50,000.

design phase. That project is an upgrade of 48th Street North from Commerce Drive to Highway 54 to serve the East Side Commerce Park.

B. Airports

Grand Rapids is served by two airports; Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport (ISW) and the Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) in Mosinee. CWA provides commercial airline service to the area. Three airlines, Northwest/Mesaba Airlines, Midwest Connect/Midwest Airlines and United/Air Wisconsin, provide 18 flights per day which connect through Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee. There are also nine air freight and express flights daily.

Central Wisconsin Airport is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties. The airport was constructed during the mid 1960's to provide a regional facility to ensure continued quality air service for North Central Wisconsin. The facility opened for operation in October of 1969. The terminal has been modernized and the highway access has been improved to make access to the airport more convenient.

CWA has two runways that are grooved concrete, precision instrument landing procedures to both runways for all weather operations, an air traffic control tower and all the other amenities of a modern airport. Since 1982, more than $40,000,000 has been spent to keep the airport ready to serve the business and pleasure needs of the region.

Alexander Field (photo T-1) is a local general aviation airport that has two paved runways, including a 5,500-foot concrete runway that will accommodate business jets and other private aircraft. The cross runway is 3,640 feet in length. They also offer aircraft maintenance, aircraft and jet fuel, a S.D.F. landing system, flying lessons and charter service. The airport is located on the southeast side of Wisconsin Rapids and is situated on land that is in Wisconsin Rapids, Grand Rapids and the Village of Port Edwards. Each of these three communities and Wood County contribute to the costs of operating and maintaining the airport.

The Airport Commission has identified the need for a 500 foot extension of Runway 2002 and the Village of Port Edwards has indicated a desire to expand Runway 2911 as well. The airport is hemmed in at its current location with residential neighborhoods to the east, the Wisconsin Rapids sewage treatment plant to the north, Nepco Lake to the south and private lands to the west. To accommodate the runway expansions, the main runway would have to be turned slightly, a major expenditure. A feasibility study is due in 2009. Upon release of that report, decisions will be made about the future of Alexander Field.

Photo T-1. Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport.

Like most airports, Alexander Field has both direct and indirect impacts on the area's quality of life and economy. Convenient access to air transportation allows businesses to quickly move key personnel from one site to another, saving valuable time and increasing their productivity. The airport also provides facilities for emergency medical flights, law enforcement, agricultural spraying, pilot training, recreational flying and hosts annual breakfast fly-ins and a hot air balloon rally, all adding to the economy and quality of life.

Direct impacts include jobs at the airport and sales of airport products and services. Indirect impacts include spending by visitors who arrive in the Wisconsin Rapids area via the airport. That spending includes such things as lodging, meals, recreation, ground transportation and retail purchases while here. In addition, there are induced economic impacts which include the activities of suppliers to the businesses at the airport, for example electricity, office supplies, aircraft parts, fuel for resale, etc. and suppliers to the businesses that serve visitors, such as bedding, towels, wholesale food, etc. It also includes activity generated by the airport workers re-spending their income on clothing, housing, groceries, entertainment, etc. The total economic impact of Alexander Field on the area was estimated to be over $3 million dollars per year, including 53 local jobs with annual wages of nearly $1 million and another 11 jobs statewide pushing the wages to over $1.3 million (2000 dollars).[10]

Airports, by their very nature, create planning issues and opportunities for communities. Uses near airports will differ depending on the size and function of the airport. Noise is a factor to consider, along with safety issues related to low-flying aircraft, including clear zones at the end of runway approaches and height restrictions. The Federal Aviation Administration regulates heights of structures. Much of Grand Rapids' land area that lies west of 48th Street is under some Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) building height restrictions because of the proximity of the airport. Building height restrictions are more restrictive on properties that are in the direct line of the two runways. These areas should be included in local plans and zoning ordinances as overlay zones. Figure T-2 is a generalized look at the height limitations. Looking at the map, it is obvious that, the closer you get to the end of the runway, the lower the allowable height. The height restrictions have not hindered development in the town in the past and, with the possible exception of wireless communication towers, it is not anticipated that height restrictions will have a negative impact in the Town's future. Special attention should be given to proposals for communications towers and similar structures.

The areas of Grand Rapids most affected by the airport zoning building height limitations are those areas bounded by Whitrock Avenue on the north, Townline Road on the south, 20th Street on the east and the north-south segment of County Road Z (the west town limit) on the west. Most of that area is developed to the extent that it will be developed and only a small portion of this described area is in Grand Rapids. Again, future development in this specific area should not be hindered by the building height restrictions.

[10] Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics, "The Economic Significance of Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport to the Local Economy – Draft," October 2001.

C. Railroad Service.

The Canadian National Railroad has service to industries throughout the Wisconsin Rapids urban area with a main line that roughly parallels State Highway 54 in Grand Rapids. Canadian National, headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, is the largest railway in Canada and is currently Canada's only transcontinental railroad. CN also has extensive trackage in the central portion of the United States, from northern Minnesota, through Wisconsin to Chicago, Memphis and New Orleans and including Grand Rapids.

Figure 3-4. Canadian National Railroad.

D. Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails

Bicycle/pedestrian paths and trails provide both an alternate means of travel and a quality of life facility that is important to people of all ages. Recent skyrocketing gasoline prices may be an economic incentive to encourage more use of the bicycle trails and routes for transportation purposes. There are some opportunities for trail use in Grand Rapids. A paved, off-road path parallels County Road W from near 45th Street to and beyond the Wisconsin Rapids city limits.

A second trail, used mostly for recreation, is a 4.2 mile paved trail around Lake Wazeecha. Several residents have expressed an interest in connecting this path to the one along County Road W.

State Highway 54 also has a paved path that parallels that road from its intersection with County Road W, north to Wisconsin Rapids, beyond to Biron. While most of this path is in Wisconsin Rapids, bits and pieces remain in the Town and certainly lend to the quality of the trail network that serves residents of Grand Rapids.

Wood County coordinates trail planning and has utilized state and federal grants to help construct area trails. The county planning process includes working with all local communities to provide a coordinated network of trails.

E. Public Transportation

No public transit service exists in Grand Rapids. River City Cab, a shared ride taxi company, offers transportation to the public for a fee.

The Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Central Wisconsin provides bus service for seniors and persons with disabilities. Priorities include medical appointments/treatment, nutrition, shopping and social events. Because of recent increased ridership, the ADRC has established a schedule for each of the Wisconsin Rapids area communities. A fee of $1.00 is charged per one-way trip, but some area retailers will pay the rider fee for persons who patronize their establishments.

The ADRC's Volunteer Driver program provides certified drivers to transport Wood County residents who are 60 years or older and prioritizes medical and nutritional purposes. This is a non-emergency service covering the entire State of Wisconsin for

medical appointments. Riders must be ambulatory or accompanied and are billed a percentage of the cost of the trip.

F. Relationship of Transportation System to Other Comprehensive Plan Elements

In commuter communities, like the Town of Grand Rapids, lifestyle choices of those working in the city, but living in the town, affect the future of surrounding suburban areas. As the town grows, one of the first impacts is on streets. When a new development is proposed in a commuter town, provisions must be made to move the intended population to and from that development to work, school, shopping, parks and other activities. Eventually, existing local streets may become so busy that the street will have to be widened to accommodate peak traffic, speed limits may have to be lowered for safety reasons, or maintenance of roads may more necessary due to the increased traffic caused by the development. In some cases, the town may have to appeal to the county to take over jurisdiction of the road because of high traffic. Facilities may have to be added to provide a safe area for walkers or bikers.

Transportation system changes will also impact certain community facilities. As more streets are constructed, the demand increases for more road maintenance equipment. In addition, as the town grows and as more roads are constructed, there will come a time that the Town may have to consider hiring additional full-time police officers to patrol those streets. Depending on the linking of new to existing streets, or the lack of linking them, costs to provide street maintenance, school bussing and other services that use the streets, could increase. It is less expensive to continue driving through a subdivision, for example, than it is to maneuver a snowplow through a development with cul de sacs.

Intergovernmental cooperation is essential to the development and maintenance of a transportation system. As noted, Grand Rapids does not have an airport, yet portions of the Town are located immediately adjacent to Alexander Field. Expansion of that airport is restricted because of residential properties and Lake NEPCO and its tributaries and wetlands. Any expansion of facilities or use of Alexander Field, however, could impact land uses in Grand Rapids because of noise and height restrictions. The height restrictions could affect certain land uses.

Street improvements should be coordinated between neighboring communities. If, for example, Wisconsin Rapids or Biron decide to add or widen streets near their borders, the Town of Grand Rapids should be aware of those plans so that they can plan their improvements accordingly or coordinate with their neighbors to lower costs for both. The Town and its neighboring communities should benefit from cost-effective provision of future transportation facilities.

G. Transportation Goals & Objectives

It is the overall objective of the Town of Grand Rapids to provide a safe, efficient, cost-effective transportation system, including streets and highways, bike and pedestrian facilities, and air and rail facilities.

(1) Goal: To provide choices of transportation for Town residents.

- Work to develop an internal street system that will ensure smooth flow of motorized and non-motorized traffic and

will enable Town emergency vehicles to service local neighborhoods in the most expeditious manner.

- Continue to encourage providers of transportation for the public and those who choose not or can not drive to provide transportation alternatives to Grand Rapids neighborhoods. This includes taxi service, Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) bus and driver services, and others.

- Participate with Wood County and area communities to expand and enhance the regional multi-use trail system to provide an alternate means of transportation in the urban area.

(2) Goal: Provide interconnection of transportation systems between municipalities.

- Work externally with neighboring communities to coordinate a street and highway system that creates a smooth flow between communities and the major traffic generators in them.

- Take a proactive position with the Department of Transportation in determining not only the route of the Highway 54 extension, but in determining the final design of the highway extension, considering the impact on Grand Rapids neighborhoods and commercial and industrial development opportunities.

(3) Goal: Provide safe transportation throughout the Town.

- Coordinate local street improvements with work on County and State highways.

- Schedule work on local streets in such a way as to minimize impact on school services, the technical college activities and regional sporting events.

- Carefully review land subdivision proposals to assure that proposed streets and trails are coordinated with the existing system.

- Encourage pedestrian-friendly design of new subdivisions, residential or commercial, to encourage alternate modes of transportation to and from area employers and schools.

- Protect the function of various streets and highways and minimize conflicts between local land uses by monitoring the number of access points from subdivisions and higher density residential areas to higher function County and State highways.

- Through implementation of the local plan, zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance, monitor the location of access points to assure clear visibility for motorists and bicyclists and to allow sufficient maneuvering space for speed changes and turning.

- On an annual basis, the Town Plan Commission and Town Board will discuss issues regarding access at points of high volume traffic to work towards alleviating congestion and reducing accidents at those points.

(4) Goal: Support and encourage maintenance of local and regional air and rail transportation facilities.

- Continue to actively participate with other area communities and owners of Alexander Field/South Wood County Airport to maintain the existing facility and expand the airport to offer better service to airport users, especially businesses and

industries that are, or will be, located in the community.

- Promote Alexander Field as a local airport to prospective businesses that may be looking to locate in Grand Rapids.

- Support movement of freight into and out of the community via rail in lieu of higher gasoline and fuel costs. Encourage railroad owners to maintain and improve the area railroads as needed to accomplish this goal.

- Encourage the railroad owners to consider the addition of a second, parallel rail line as an inducement to businesses to locate in the Grand Rapids area.

KUHN TO CTH W ALTERNATIVE 1
NO ACCESS FROM TWO-MILE RD. TO AIRPORT AVE.
WISCONSIN RAPIDS EAST ARTERIAL
WOOD COUNTY
I.D. 6999-08-09

PIM #1

SEPTEMBER 26, 2007

NEPCO TO KUHN ALTERNATIVE 1
NO DNR NURSERY IMPACTS
WISCONSIN RAPIDS EAST ARTERIAL
WOOD COUNTY
I.D. 6999-08-09

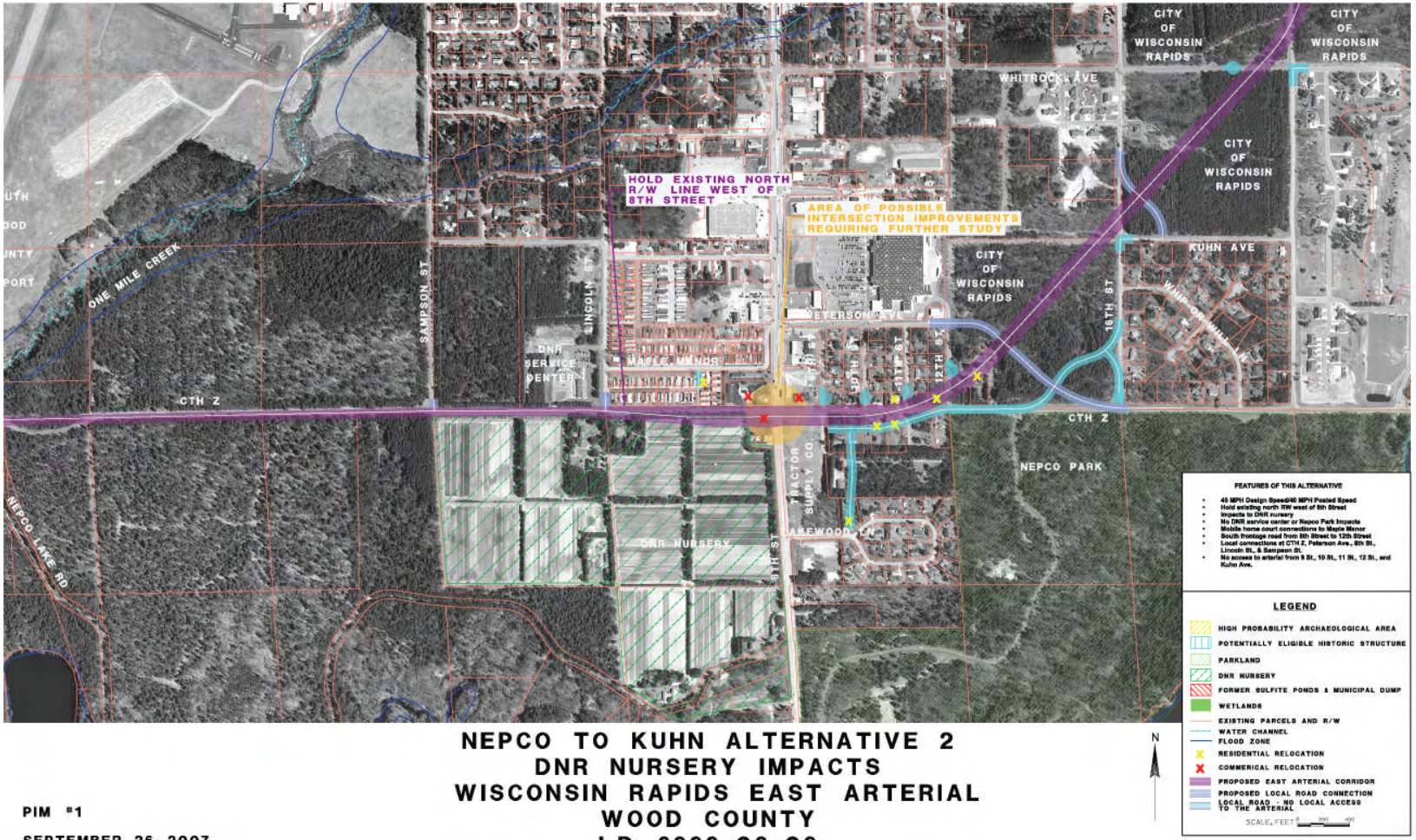
PIM #1

SEPTEMBER 26, 2007

KUHN TO CTH W ALTERNATIVE 2
FRONTAGE ROADS FROM TWO-MILE AVE. TO AIRPORT AVE.
WISCONSIN RAPIDS EAST ARTERIAL
WOOD COUNTY
I.D. 6999-08-09

PIM #1

SEPTEMBER 26, 2007



NEPCO TO KUHN ALTERNATIVE 2
DNR NURSERY IMPACTS
WISCONSIN RAPIDS EAST ARTERIAL
WOOD COUNTY
I.D. 6999-08-09

PIM #1

SEPTEMBER 26, 2007

4. UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Unincorporated towns typically are not able to provide the same type utilities as do larger, more compactly developed villages or cities. Unincorporated towns do, however, have the same type utility and community facility needs as residents who live in villages and cities. The purpose of this element is twofold. First, the following paragraphs describe the existing conditions and issues relative to public and private utilities and community facilities in the Town of Grand Rapids. Second, goals, objectives and policies are presented regarding utilities and facilities to help guide future town-level decisions.

A. Sewage Disposal/Sanitary Sewer

The Town of Grand Rapids does not have municipal, or public, sanitary sewer service. Any structure that is built with running water in the Town must install a private on-site waste treatment system, also known as "septic systems." All septic systems must be approved by the State Department of Commerce under the provisions of applicable statutes and the Wisconsin Administrative Code for both installation and maintenance.

The Wood County Planning & Zoning Office administers the private sewage program, issuing permits for septic systems, inspecting them for proper installation and assuring that failing systems are replaced. Wood County has issued permits for septic systems since 1970 and, as the state plumbing code has changed because of more knowledge of the ability of various soil types to either treat or not treat domestic sewage, the types of systems being installed in the various soils has also changed. Even with the changes in State standards, the vast majority of septic systems installed in Grand Rapids are conventional systems.

Recognizing that there may be a future need for sanitary sewers in Grand Rapids, the Town created Grand Rapids Sanitary District No. 1 in December, 1972. The sanitary district was divided into several study areas to consider the design and construction of wastewater collection and transmission facilities to the Wisconsin Rapids wastewater treatment plant. Although the engineering studies that were conducted concluded that, "there are no technical obstacles facing the construction of municipal wastewater collection facilities to serve the residents of the Grand Rapids Sanitary District," the cost estimate for the entire sanitary district was $13 million.[11] In addition to the cost, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has a non-proliferation policy that requires municipalities to compare the cost feasibility of new collection and treatment systems to joining existing "regional" systems. That policy would probably require most of Grand Rapids to join the Wisconsin Rapids sanitary sewer system the same as was required of Biron in the 1980s. Wisconsin Rapids requires unincorporated areas to annex in order to receive their municipal services. Consequently, many of the small lot, more densely developed areas of the sanitary district – those immediately adjacent to Wisconsin Rapids and Biron – have been annexed since the sanitary district studies were completed.

The Sanitary District Commission now meets on an as needed basis. The

[11] $13 million in 1972 converts to over $60 million in 2007 dollars (http://oregonstate.edu/cla/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/cv2007rsx1.pdf).

District has funds, but taxing of residents that live in the district was suspended several years ago and will probably not be reinstituted unless and until a cooperative agreement can be reached with Wisconsin Rapids to provide needed sanitary sewer services. That is unlikely. The District has undertaken some drainage work, dredging portions of the Two Mile Creek and removing some of the old dams to help with water issues caused by the dams and siltation. They have also considered other municipal projects they could assist with to promote the Town's economic development.

Grand Rapids collaborated with the Town of Seneca, Village of Biron and City of Wisconsin Rapids to develop the "Wisconsin Rapids Area Water Quality Management Plan" in 1985. Prepared with a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the purpose of this plan was to establish boundaries in the urban area that included areas anticipated to need sanitary sewer over a 20-year period (Figure 4-1). Further, the plan designated environmental corridors that would be protected from development and established the institutional structure for reviewing boundary amendments and needs of the community change. Although the plan is now beyond the 20-year planning period and is in need of updating, it is still used to determine qualified sanitary sewer extension and certain building projects. The plan should be updated upon completion of all area comprehensive plans. The goals and objectives of the 1985 plan are still important to the area. The five goals of the plan are:

(1) To preserve the quality of the urban area's groundwater and surface water.
(2) To preserve the area's prime agricultural lands.
(3) Provide cost-effective sewer services to the urban area.
(4) To provide good development review to aide developers in proper planning.
(5) Coordinate separate facilities planning efforts to provide a long-range, cost-effective regional system.

Except for a few of the areas that are in the 20-year sewer service area, Grand Rapids' future development will continue to rely on private on-site waste treatment systems, primarily holding tanks unless new technology is developed that can treat private waste on-site.

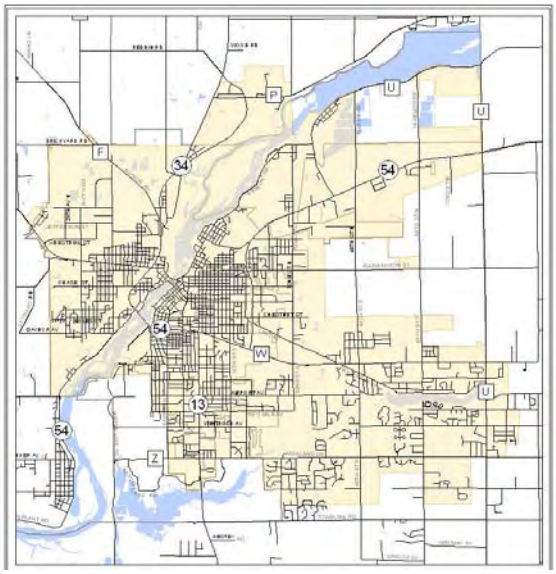


Figure 4-1. Wisconsin Rapids 20-Year Sanitary Sewer Plan Boundary.

B. Water Supply

With the exception of Mid-State Technical College, Grand Rapids residents and businesses depend on private onsite wells for drinking water and other water needs. MSTC is connected to the Wisconsin Rapids municipal water system although it is in Grand Rapids. Although Grand Rapids is

not served by a municipal water system, there are municipal wells located in the Town. Wisconsin Rapids has five wells in Grand Rapids. Biron has two wells that are located in a small island of village that is completely surrounded by Grand Rapids.

Each of the Wisconsin Rapids wells is used daily and the volume of water pumped by each is roughly equivalent. The capacity of Well #1 is 1.5 million gallons per day (MGD), Wells #2 and #3 are 2.0 - 2.5 MGD, Well #4 is 2.5 - 3.0 MGD, and Well #5 is 0.5 MGD. Well #5 is a vertical well and the others are radial wells. Well #4 had some cone of depression issues that were resolved by the City's Water Works and Lighting Commission. For future needs, Wisconsin Rapids has purchased 266 acres in the Town of Grant (Portage County) and done testing for a new well.

Each of the Biron wells has a capacity of about ¾ - 1 MGD. The village has plenty of capacity for today's needs, but has and will continue to investigate new sites for future wells. Some of the sites may be in the Town of Grand Rapids. In the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation and to protect both water quantity and water quality for both private and public wells, Grand Rapids should take a proactive position in reviewing potential well sites for either of the two neighboring communities.

Grand Rapids has other large water users in addition to Wisconsin Rapids and Biron. Irrigation wells provide water to the vegetable crops at Altenberg's on Highway 54. Urban Processing, a local cranberry grower and processor, has a need for both irrigation and flooding in the cranberry marshes and uses considerable water processing their product. Both of these water users are located in the northern high groundwater region of the Town that is known to be a groundwater recharge area. Again, the Town has an interest in communicating with both in an effort to preserve and protect groundwater resources.

C. Storm Water Management

The management of storm water is an engineering issue in cities where large expanses of land are going to be covered with roofs, parking lots and streets. These impermeable surfaces may be from large-scale development like typical big-box developments or business park-type developments, or it could be from higher density residential subdivisions. Either of these scenarios is possible in Grand Rapids, but State codes require management of storm water runoff for large-scale developments. This is usually accomplished with the use of retention ponds or basins as approved as part of the State's site development review.

Grand Rapids has had issues with spring and storm water runoff in the past. The Two Mile Creek, for example, has been the subject of several studies. Early reports documented flooding problems and the impact of the environment on urban-type land use changes. A 1957 report on the Two Mile drainage District indicates that the land use was, at that time, still general farming and dairying. The land was mostly open with corn, oats, rye, hay and potatoes being the primary crops. According to a 1983 study by the U. S. Department of Agriculture[12], the land use shifted away from agricultural in the 1950s and 1960s, becoming more wooded and, in the 1960s and 1970s became more urbanized.

[12] Tiry, Michael, J., "Preliminary Study, Two Mile Creek, Town of Grand Rapids, Wood County, Wisconsin," United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, December, 1983.

Associated with the urban-type development were problems with wet basements, sewage disposal and flooding typical of developments in high water table sands. That study concluded that the greatest problem along the Two Mile Creek was flooding due to obstruction of the creek channel by ice. Because of the freezing, flooding and high ground water conditions would occur with the spring runoff. This caused wet basements and non-functioning septic systems. The report further concluded that the best solution was not deepening the creek channel, lining the channel, or even diverting the flow by engineering means to keep the water away from the people, but to keep the people away from the water through an effective zoning ordinance and building code.

Keeping people away from the water, both surface drainage and high groundwater, is important. In periods of drought, people sometimes tend to forget the natural characteristics of a site and might want to develop it, only to regret that decision later when there is a lot of spring runoff or a rising ground water table. Such was the case in 1973 with the spring runoff after a very snowy winter. In 1972, a subdivision development was approved just north of Lake Wazeecha in Section 24. During the review of the proposed subdivision, it was noted that a drainage swale meandered through planned lots, but a drainage plan was not required nor was a drainage easement. Basements of new homes were flooded. The result was a very expensive ($1 million +) diversion project between that subdivision and county park property at taxpayers expense. This is an example where proper planning and development regulations could have protected the natural drainage of the area as well as properties in that area.

Grand Rapids has learned from their experiences. The Town now requires a drainage plan for subdivision developments and recognizes drainage patterns and strives to protect them.

D. Solid Waste Disposal/Recycling

Like most towns, Grand Rapids had a garbage dump at one time. The dump was located on a 40-acre site that is bounded by Airport Avenue on the north, Two Mile Avenue on the south, 28th Street on the west and 32nd Street on the east. Town maintenance buildings remain on the site today. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources inspected the Grand Rapids dump – and all others in Wood County – in the summer of 1975. That inspection found that groundwater at the site was 12’ 8” beneath the ground’s surface at the site and the active trench used for dumping garbage and other waste was about 10 feet deep, or only 2’ 8” above the ground water table. A few months later, the WDNR issued orders to close the dump based on their inspection, which concluded that, “the permeable nature of the subsurface material and close proximity of groundwater to the bottom of the trenches does not allow for attenuation of leachate and protect the ground water from chemical contaminants.” After some extensions of the closure order, a public hearing and various engineering measures, the town dump was closed in 1978 and garbage was hauled to the landfill that is located on Wisconsin Rapids’ northwest side of town. Monitoring wells were installed and remain on the Grand Rapids site today.

Solid waste collection and disposal is currently handled on a contract basis between the Town and Veolia Environmental Services. Veolia contracts to the Town for a weekly collection service for

garbage and recyclables. The cost for the service is charged back to property owners as a special charge on their property tax bills. Garbage is disposed of in the landfill on the northwest side of Wisconsin Rapids, north of the industrial park.

There are other options for recycling available to Grand Rapids residents. Express Recycling accepts aluminum and other metals, household appliances, computers and more. Also, two compost sites that are owned and operated by Wisconsin Rapids are available to Town residents for a fee. The finished compost is available free of charge to city residents and Town residents who have compost site passes. Finally, Wood County holds an annual clean-sweep program where residents can dispose of household wastes that can not be disposed of in the landfill.

E. Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources lists five sites in Grand Rapids where there were leaking underground storage tanks and four sites with recorded chemical spills. All but one of the sites is categorized as "closed," having been cleaned up to WDNR acceptable standards. One site is recorded as a "historic" spill, which means that "cleanups may have been completed prior to 1996 and no end date is shown" in DNR files (possible record keeping issue only).

F. Emergency Services

(1) Police. Grand Rapids has its own police department. That full service department is staffed by a full-time chief, three full-time officers, a ¾-time officer and three part-time officers. The Police Department conducts investigations on misdemeanors and criminal matters, enforces traffic laws and enforces town ordinances. There are two full-time administrative assistants to assist the public with law enforcement matters. After hours and on weekends, the Wood County Dispatch assists citizens with any help they may need. The Grand Rapids Police Department is also involved with many other community policing activities such as, neighborhood watch, vacant home checks and business checks.

In the community planning survey that preceded this plan, 71% of the respondents said police service is "good" and less than four percent thought it was "poor." Since the survey was taken in late 2007, the police force personnel has changed and the Town Board has concentrated efforts to improve the image and effectiveness of the police force.

(2) Fire. The Grand Rapids Volunteer Fire Department is located in a full-service building located adjacent to the municipal building. The Fire Chief is full-time and the rest of the personnel are volunteers. In addition to the Chief, staff includes two assistant fire chiefs, two captains and four lieutenants. In total, there are 40 regular firefighters, 15 fire auxiliaries and nine ambulance attendants. The department has several first responders, extrication technicians, hazardous materials personnel, and DNR fire control personnel. In addition to Grand Rapids, the fire department also provides fire protection to the Town of Saratoga to the south and the Town of Grant to the east.

The department is equipped with three pumper trucks, including a 65-foot ladder truck, two tankers, two brush trucks and a miscellany of fire fighting and rescue equipment.

Town residents are very happy with current fire services. Ninety-two percent of community planning survey respondents rated the Town's fire service as "good," commenting that the response time "could not have been better."

(3) Ambulance Service. Ambulance service is provided to the Town of Grand Rapids under contract with Higgins Ambulance Service. The contract includes the towns of Seneca, Sigel, Rudolph and Grant and the Village of Rudolph along with Grand Rapids. An annual base cost is paid by the communities plus a user fee is charged for service-related equipment. The municipalities agree to the rate schedule for the user fee. Based on its population, Grand Rapids is responsible for about 57% of the total contract cost.[13]

While over 82% of community planning survey respondents rate ambulance service as "good," some who have used that service called for better service with faster response times. The Town Board monitors comments and services that are contracted and will continue to provide the best service available for emergencies.

G. Parks

The largest park in Grand Rapids is South Wood County Park. This county owned and operated park is 324-acres in size and offers many types of outdoor recreation opportunities, including boating and fishing, two swimming beaches, camping (with on-site campground ranger), multi-use trails, picnic areas, shelter buildings, playgrounds, and disc golf. Lake Wazeecha is the host site for the annual Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Team competition, drawing teams from throughout the state. It has also hosted the National Water Ski Show Team competition, most recently in August, 2008, attracting teams from throughout the U. S. and included a team from China. Recent improvements have been made with the addition of a new staging area and plans for a new building that will provide storage, concession areas, dressing rooms, banquet space and a judging stand. The Wisconsin Rapids Aqua Skiers water ski team has spearheaded the improvements and has worked closely with the Wood County Park & Forestry Department to bring their plans to fruition. The entire community strongly supports the annual water ski tournament because of its huge economic impact each summer.

The South Wood County Park is an important asset to the town, according to the responses from participants of the community planning survey. Although an asset and although it is a county owned and operated facility, the park also creates issues and concerns that add demands on the Grand Rapids Police Department, Public Works Department, Fire Department and others. Working closely with the Wood County Park & Forestry Department and Wood County Sheriff's Department helps keep the demands on Town crews to a minimum.

Wood County also owns over 200 acres north of South Wood County Park that is undeveloped with no plans for development. This site was acquired and used for the deposit of silt material from Lake Wazeecha when it was dredged in the early 1990s. The site has been monitored for contaminants, but no problems have been reported. There is opportunity for use of this site for uses such as a dog park, equestrian trails or similar uses.

A few small neighborhood parks are located in residential subdivisions. These

[13] For 2008, the total contract cost is 159,555.11. Grand Rapids portion is $91,233.25.

parks are the result of County subdivision requirements in the 1970s. Examples include a neighborhood playground in the Weslan of Rapids subdivision on Grassmere Drive, south of Griffith Avenue and a neighborhood tennis court and open space development in the Brookhaven Estates subdivision on Brookhaven Trace, west of 48th Street. The Weslan subdivision play area belongs to the Town, being dedicated when the subdivision was created. The Brookhaven Estates recreation area is owned and maintained by the homeowners association.

Beyond those mentioned above, the Grand Rapids Lions Club owns a 27.75-acre facility along County Road W. The Lions Club has developed this area with shelter buildings, playground, small lake with beach, etc. The facility is used extensively for community events, such as the Fireman's Picnic, old car shows, benefits for those in need, dog shows, music festivals and much more.

Another privately owned recreation area is that owned by the Woodland Girl Scout Council. This 60 plus acre wooded site includes offices, cabins, areas for large assembly of people, a large pond and other outdoor recreation opportunities. Facilities on the site are used for community functions as well as for scouting activities.

Grand Rapids also has three golf courses. Bull's Eye Country Club is an 18-hole private club, located on the banks of the Wisconsin River. BECC has a clubhouse with pro shop and banquet facilities, the golf course and tennis courts. Bull's Eye Country Club also owns a nine-hole public course – Tri City Golf Course - adjacent to the country club. Tri-City has a clubhouse with pro shop, bar and eating/meeting room. They also rent clubs and golf carts for patrons of the golf course.

The Ridges Golf Course is an 18-hole golf course with pro shop. The Ridges has hosted several golf tournaments, most recently the Channel 7 Golf Classic, a popular event that drew about 275 golfers from throughout the entire central Wisconsin area. The Ridges also has large banquet facilities that can accommodate up to 400 people for any occasion or meeting and is a popular location for wedding receptions and outdoor weddings.

Many other recreation activities are available to Grand Rapids residents through adult and child leagues and recreation events organized by the Wisconsin Rapids Park and Recreation Department. These activities are available for a fee to users. Also available on a fee basis is the YMCA and Wisconsin Rapids Area Public School District facilities. There are no plans to develop any Town-owned recreation facilities in Grand Rapids in the foreseeable future because of the vast selection of activities and facilities available at this time.

H. Library Service

Public library service is provided to Grand Rapids residents at McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids. This service is made available, in part, through financing to the library from Wood County.

I. Schools

The Town of Grand Rapids is located in the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District. That district has nine elementary schools, two junior high schools and one senior high school and one Charter School for At-Risk Students (grades 9–12). Enrollment figures are listed in Table 4-1.

Those figures show a growth in enrollment from the 2003-04 school year to the 2005-06 school year, then a steady decline the following three school years to the present enrollment of 5,670.

Table 4-1
School Enrollment
Wisconsin Rapids Public School District
2008-09 Compared to Prior Years

School Year	Enrollment (Pre K-12)
2003-04	5,704
2004-05	5,818
2005-06	5,862
2006-07	5,834
2007-08	5,711
2008-09	5,670

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website (http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/selschool.asp) and WRPS Superintendent (2008-09 figure).

As shown discussion of demographic trends, Grand Rapids' school and pre-school age population cohorts have been in an overall decline since 1980, as have been those in the child bearing age groups. A continued decline in the number of persons in these age groups could have a significant impact on school enrollments in the future. One elementary school, Children's Choice, has already been closed. Children's Choice is located in Grand Rapids.

The Wisconsin Rapids Public School District recognizes that there are students whose educational needs are not being met in a traditional school setting. To meet the unique needs of all students and provide opportunities for success, the River Cities High School (RCHS) has created an environment that promotes the social, emotional, academic, and vocational growth and development of students most at-risk. The school provides students with non-traditional approaches to meet their high school graduation requirements to raise the hope and redefine success among RCHS students. About 100 students are enrolled in this educational facility.

There are also six parochial schools in Wisconsin Rapids that are available to Grand Rapids residents. The parochial schools are affiliated with the Catholic and Lutheran religions. The parochial schools and their enrollments are listed in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2
Wisconsin Rapids Area Private Schools

School	Location	Grades	Students	Student/Teacher Ratio
Assumption High School	Wisconsin Rapids	9 – 12	168	8.28
Assumption Middle School	Wisconsin Rapids	7 – 8	99	15.47
Immanuel Lutheran School	Wisconsin Rapids	K - 8	233	17.79
Our Lady Queen of Heaven Elementary School	Wisconsin Rapids	1 – 3	99	11
St. Lawrence Early Childhood	Wisconsin Rapids	Pre-K	102	12.44
St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran School	Wisconsin Rapids	Pre K – 8	145	14.82
St. Vincent De Paul Elementary School	Wisconsin Rapids	4 – 6	124	13.63

Source: "Private Schools Directory," July, 2008, http://www.allpublicschools.org/schools-wisconsin.html

J. Child Care

The Wisconsin Child Care and Referral (CCR&R) Network is a membership organization made up of 17-community based CCR&R agencies serving the State of Wisconsin.

CCR&R agencies assist parents in selecting quality childcare, help to increase the supply of childcare in areas that may be lacking sufficient care, offer information and technical support to potential child care providers and give technical assistance and support to existing childcare programs.

Each agency manages a database of existing childcare providers and programs, collects data about childcare rates, provider and teacher salaries, the number of parents and children using their services, the type of care requested and the children's ages.

The community-based CCR&R agency that provides services to Wood County is the Child Care Resources & Referral of Central Wisconsin.[14]

K. Health Care

Grand Rapids is in the Riverview Hospital service area and, together with the associated clinics that are housed in the same building, provides full medical services to area residents. Licensed for 99 beds, it currently has approximately 70 beds for inpatient care and provides a wide range of outpatient services, including the four clinics that occupy space in the hospital. The hospital is in the process of completing a new 117,000 square foot, two-story addition that will include up to 57 private inpatient rooms on the second floor and room for future expansion on the third floor. The licensed capacity will not change, as similar use areas in the existing building will be vacated to the new addition and the vacated areas will be dedicated to other uses, possibly community relations and staff education functions, staff offices for UW Cancer Center Riverview, business offices, clinical suites for relocation of one or both clinics currently on the third floor of the hospital, or other hospital uses. The new addition is scheduled to open in August 2009.

The Marshfield Clinic and Saint Joseph's Hospital are located less than an hour away from Grand Rapids in Marshfield. The Marshfield Clinic has nearly 40 specialty areas and 83 sub-specialties. More than 700 doctors are employed by the Marshfield Clinic. The clinic is the largest private group medical practice in Wisconsin and one of the largest in the U. S.

A major research center and laboratory are also located in Marshfield. The Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation, is the largest private medical research foundation in Wisconsin and one of the largest in the nation. Research areas of focus in the foundation include rural and agricultural health and safety, epidemiology, human genetics, personalized medicine, health services research and biomedical informatics. Marshfield Laboratories is a joint venture between the clinic and the hospital. Marshfield Laboratories provides comprehensive human diagnostic and testing service for physicians, clients and staff. It is the state's largest medical laboratory, employing more than 450 people and reporting over 20-million test results annually from clients across the nation.

L. Telecommunications Facilities

Wireless communications continues to grow at a rapid pace. There are currently two wireless towers in Grand Rapids used by four providers. The towers are located at 3530 48th Street South and 2710 64th Street

[14] Child Care Resources & Referral of Central Wisconsin, 210 East Jackson Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI serves Wood, Clark and Adams counties. Contact information, in addition to the address listed here is: Phone 1-800-628-8534; email - ccrrcw@tznet.com; website - www.ccrrcw.org.

South. To provide for expansion of wireless technology while protecting the aesthetics and property values in the Town, it is in the best interest of the community to establish guidelines for location of these towers and to work with wireless communications providers to continue to co-locate their equipment whenever possible.

Charter Communications and Solarus provide television, internet and telephone services throughout the Town.

M. Utilities & Community Facilities Goals & Objectives

It is the overall objective of the Town of Grand Rapids to provide those utilities and community facilities that are needed, or desired, by town residents, either through individual town efforts or as a partner with other communities and agencies. Following are policies, goals and programs relating to specific utilities and community facilities.

Goal: Protect the Town's ground and surface water resources.

Objectives:

- Work with neighboring communities to provide adequate development standards aimed at avoiding degradation of the groundwater for municipal wells.
- Minimize non-point source pollution and reduce volumes of untreated runoff.
- Zone floodplains and wetlands that are identified on DNR wetland maps as conservancy, preserving their function to carry and store storm runoff and snow melt.
- Require drainage easements as part of the local site development review process where drainage swales are identified. Do no allow drainage swales to be filled or leveled, which may cause localized flooding in parts of Grand Rapids or adjacent communities.

Goal: Promote efficient and coordinated sewer and water expansion.

Objectives:

- Actively participate in continuing planning efforts of the area's 20-year sewer service plan.
- Continue to participate in the joint planning area to review development proposals.
- Through local zoning, encourage high-density residential development to locate in areas that can be served by municipal sewer and water systems. Encourage medium- and low-density developments in other areas of the Town where soil conditions can sustain private wells and private sewage systems.

Goal: Provide safe, cost-effective recycling and solid waste disposal.

Objectives:

- Continue to provide compost sites as contracted or joint facilities with neighboring communities.
- Encourage residents to utilize existing privately owned and operated recycling businesses so that the Town will not have to incur this cost in the future. Encourage those businesses to control costs so recycling will be a viable option for Grand Rapids residents.
- Encourage residents to make use of Wood County's "Clean Sweep" program to dispose of hazardous chemical waste.

Goal: Protect private property values and uses while assuring adequate utility expansion in the future.

Objectives:

- Review utility expansion plans and coordinate with surrounding communities on expanded and new routes.
- Preserve utility routes with special overlays in the Town zoning ordinance.
- Encourage modern, high-tech communications services to be extended to all town residents are the earliest opportunity.

5. AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

A. Introduction

The natural and cultural resources of a community have been described as being where the "heart and soul" of the community exists.[15] Natural resources include such features as groundwater, surface water, steep slopes, forests, soils and plant and animal species. The natural resources, along with cultural resources, help define the character and appearance of a community, as well as the community's health and economic condition. Cultural resources most commonly include historic buildings and places, and buildings and places that are of some cultural significance. Although not addressed as often, social events and customs are an integral part of the community, a fact that was made very clear in the responses to the community planning survey in Grand Rapids.

The purpose of this planning element is to inventory the natural and cultural resources and present a discussion of their role in Grand Rapids, both in the past and for the future. Goals, objectives and policies have been developed from those discussions and the will of the residents who responded to the community planning survey and are presented at the end of this chapter. We begin with a discussion of the terrain in Grand Rapids.

B. Topography

The elevations in the Town of Grand Rapids range from about 985 feet to 1,055 feet above mean sea level, a variation of 70 feet. Most of the Town is at an elevation of between 1,020 and 1,040 feet above sea level. The lowest areas are in the southwest near Nepco Lake and the higher areas are in the northeast corner of the Town. Land in Grand Rapids has a general pitch from northeast to southwest.

C. Productive Agricultural Areas

Grand Rapids is considered to be more of a suburban rather than agricultural community. Most traditional farming has disappeared from Grand Rapids' landscape. There are still specialized agricultural activities in the Town, including Christmas tree farming, keeping of horses and raising ostrich. There is also a strong cranberry producer in Grand Rapids and several hundred acres of cranberry production just north of Grand Rapids in the Village of Biron, but the Town's soils and development patterns are not conducive to farming.

Figure 5-1 shows how the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service rates soils in Grand Rapids for agricultural purposes. Less than one acre of land, located near the Wisconsin River on Bull's Eye Country Club, is actually classified as "prime" and only 62.5 acres are classified as "prime if drained." Of the areas that are "prime if drained," about half is located in the SE ¼, NE ¼ of Section 24 and is partially developed with residential structures. The other, largest acreage in this classification, is located in the NW ¼, NW ¼ of Section 11. The best soils are contained in one parcel that has developed with one house in the center of the parcel. Therefore, neither area that is classified as "prime if drained" is farmed, nor are those areas available for much farming. The

[15] Daniels, Thomas L. etal, *The Small Town Planning Handbook* (American Planning Association, 2007).

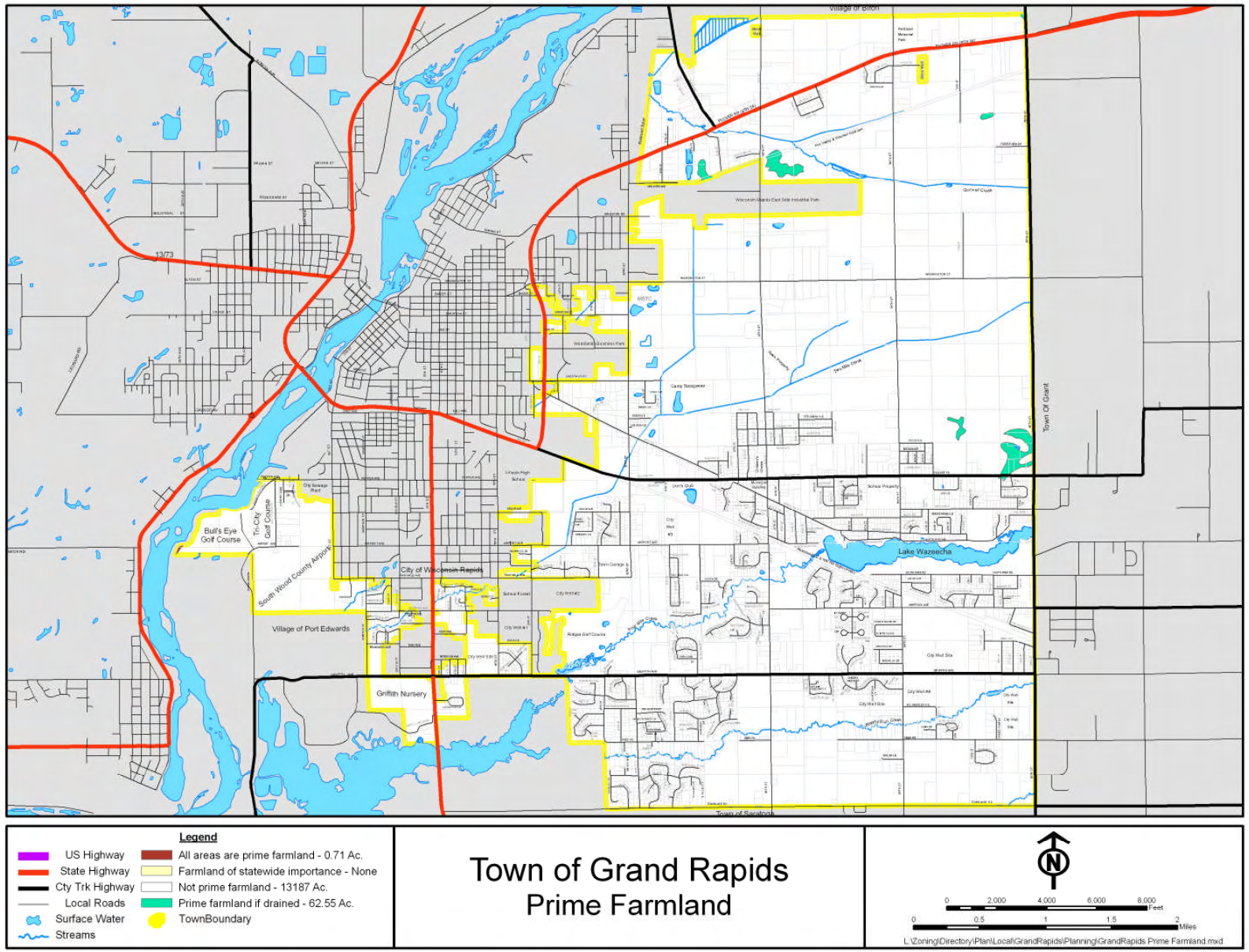

Village of Biron
13/73
Bull's Eye Golf Course
Tri-City Golf Course
City Sewage Plant
South Wood County Airport
City of Wisconsin Rapids
Village of Port Edwards
Griffith Nursery
Lake Wazeecha
Town Of Grant
Town of Saratoga
Legend
US Highway
State Highway
Cty Trk Highway
Local Roads
Surface Water
Streams
All areas are prime farmland - 0.71 Ac.
Farmland of statewide importance - None
Not prime farmland - 13187 Ac.
Prime farmland if drained - 62.55 Ac.
TownBoundary
Town of Grand Rapids
Prime Farmland
N
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles
L:\Zoning\Directory\Plan\Local\GrandRapids\Planning\GrandRapids Prime Farmland.mxd

Figure 5-1

balance of the town is considered "not prime."

D. Soils: Limitations for Dwellings

Grand Rapids' soil types are not typical for most of Wood County in that soil conditions east of the Wisconsin River (Grand Rapids and Saratoga) are more sandy than most of Wood County and have deeper groundwater and bedrock than many areas. These factors make Grand Rapids (and Saratoga) easier to develop. Grand Rapids' soils range from a Plainfield-Friendship association, which includes "nearly level to steep, moderately well drained and excessively drained soils that have a sandy subsoil; formed in deep sandy outwash on outwash plains" to a Newson-Meehan association, which includes "nearly level, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained soils that have a sandy subsoil, formed in deep sandy outwash, on outwash plains and glacial lake deposits."[16]

Figure 5-2 shows the soil limitations for dwellings with basements. Soil limitations are indicated by the ratings "not limited," "somewhat limited," and "not limited." based on the "Soil Survey of Wood County, Wisconsin," a comprehensive soil survey by the USDA's Soil Conservation Service. Exactly half (50.5%) of the Town's land area has no limitations for dwellings with basements. These areas are along the Highway 54 corridor and most parts of Grand Rapids on either side and south of Kellner Road (County Road W). Another 17.4% of the Town is rated has being "somewhat limited." These areas area scattered, but generally in the Highway 54 corridor, between Kellner Road and Peach Street-extended, and along the streams in the south portions of the Town. Areas that are "somewhat limited" for buildings with basements may need mound systems for treating private sewage and they may have to take extra steps to keep basements dry in high groundwater seasons or years. Finally, nearly 1/3 of Grand Rapids is "very limited" for structures with basements. Those areas, shown in red in Figure 5.2, have remained relatively undeveloped and are associated with a groundwater recharge area. They should be protected from groundwater contamination to preserve the Town's potable water supply for the future.

Compare Figures 5-2 and 5-3. In Figure 5-2, we discussed the limitations for buildings with basements, noting that the Highway 54 corridor and south half of the Town were very good development areas. Areas of Grand Rapids that have high groundwater conditions are directly related to the areas that were described in Figure 5-2 to have some degree of limitations for basements. The obvious conclusion that can be drawn from these two maps is that the high groundwater conditions in the northern parts of the Town are the limiting factor for development.

With few exceptions, residential, commercial and industrial structures in Grand Rapids that generate waste water are served by Private On-Site Waste Treatment Systems (POWTS). Therefore, it is important for town officials to keep the soil conditions in mind for new development. For the 10-year period from 1997 – 2006, 399 Wood County sanitary permits were issued for new construction in the Town of Grand Rapids. Each permit for new construction means that more land is converted from an undeveloped use – probably wooded – to a residential or

[16] "General Soil Map, Wood County, Wisconsin, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, 1976.

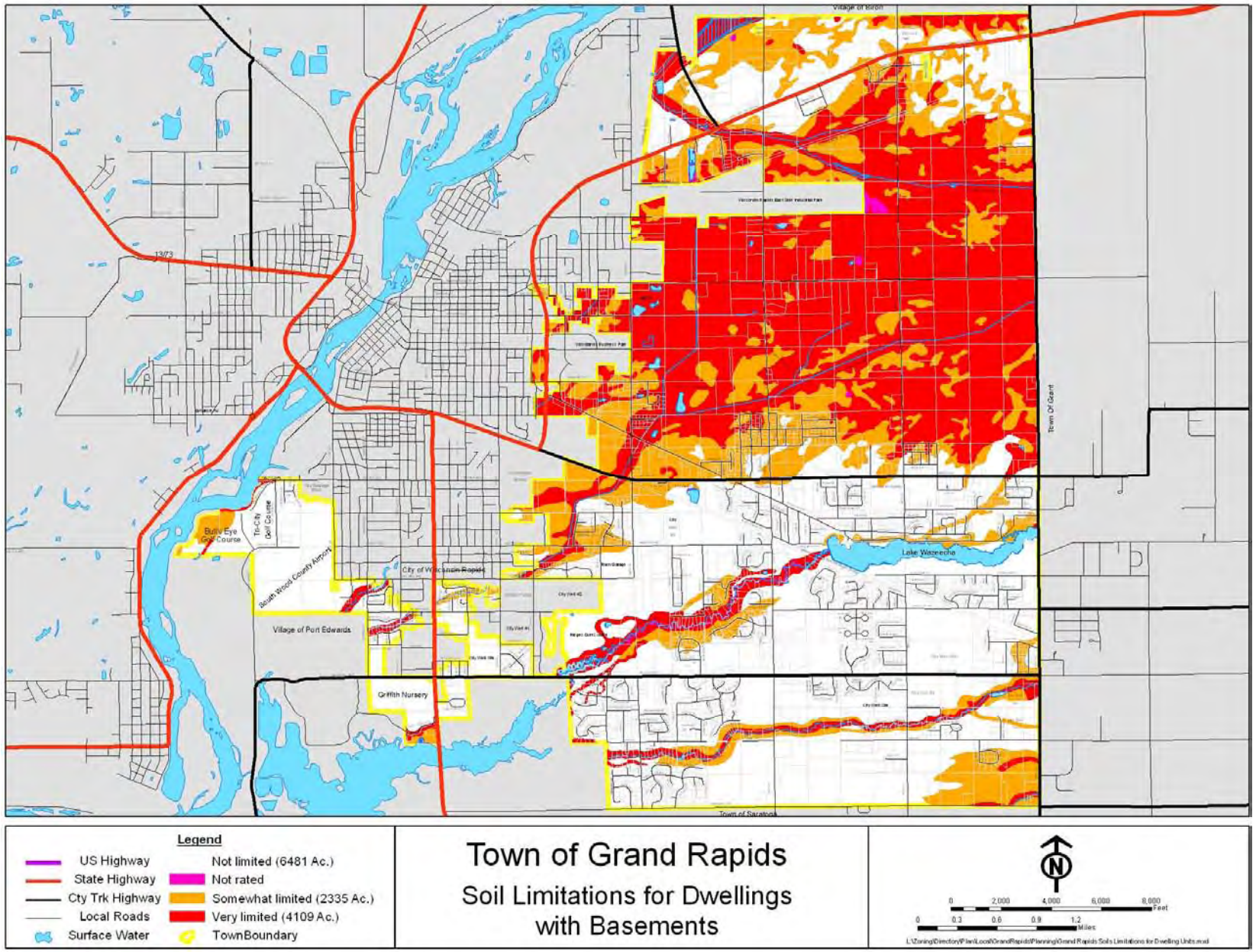

Village of Biron
13/73
Bull's Eye Golf Course
Tri-City Golf Course
South Wood County Airport
City of Wisconsin Rapids
Village of Port Edwards
Griffith Nursery
Lake Wazeecha
Town Of Grant
Town of Saratoga
Legend
US Highway
State Highway
Cty Trk Highway
Local Roads
Surface Water
Not limited (6481 Ac.)
Not rated
Somewhat limited (2335 Ac.)
Very limited (4109 Ac.)
TownBoundary
Town of Grand Rapids
Soil Limitations for Dwellings with Basements
N
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
0 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 Miles

Figure 5-2

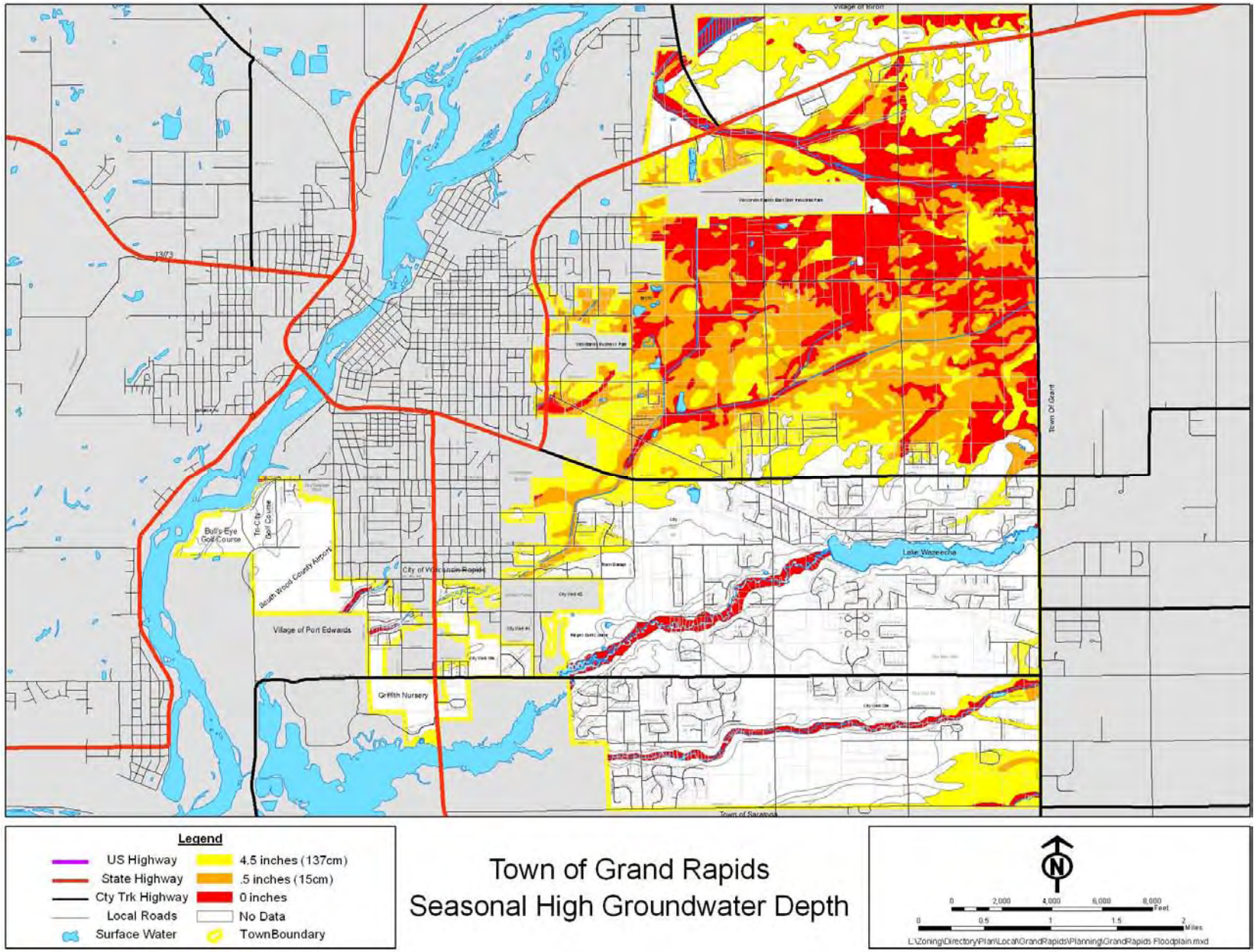

Village of Biron
Town Of Grant
Bull's Eye Golf Course
Tri-City Golf Course
South Wood County Airport
City of Wisconsin Rapids
Village of Port Edwards
Griffith Nursery
Lake Wazeecha
Town of Saratoga
Legend
US Highway
State Highway
Cty Trk Highway
Local Roads
Surface Water
4.5 inches (137cm)
.5 inches (15cm)
0 inches
No Data
TownBoundary
Town of Grand Rapids
Seasonal High Groundwater Depth
N
0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Feet
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles
L:\Zoning\Directory\Plan\Local\GrandRapids\Planning\GrandRapids Floodplain.mxd

Figure 5-3

commercial use. More discussion is presented in other chapters about the amount of land that has been subdivided and the amount of land that will be needed to accommodate future growth. Policies to protect the groundwater need to be continually enforced through land development programs, such as the Town zoning ordinance.

E. Forests

Wood County has abundant forest lands, both in public and in private ownership. The forest lands in Grand Rapids are in private ownership. The largest mass of wooded properties is located in those areas shown in the previous maps as having high groundwater and, much of which, is not conducive to private onsite waste treatment systems.

While an important factor in determining the character of the Town, the wooded properties in Grand Rapids do not play as important of role county wide as do the forests in the nearby Nepco Lake County Park or those where vast acres are owned by Wood County or the State of Wisconsin. A large majority of respondents to the Town's community planning survey, however, consider the wooded lands to be a very important asset to the Town, helping to shape the local character and image. While it is important to respect the rights of private property owners with respect to their decision to cut trees, the Town can encourage property owners to manage their wooded areas and maintain the character that those wooded areas create in Grand Rapids.

F. Water Resources

The State of Wisconsin has significant responsibilities for protecting water resources under what is known as the "Public Trust Doctrine." The Public Trust Doctrine embodies the notion that the waters in Wisconsin are held in trust by the State for the benefit of all. There can be no private interests in waterways that adversely affect this public interest. In fulfilling its responsibilities under the Public Trust Doctrine, the Wisconsin Legislature has enacted laws and charged the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to protect water resources. This local comprehensive plan must, at a minimum, be consistent with the State laws. The purpose of this section of the comprehensive plan is to provide an inventory of the water resources in the Town and established local policies and programs regarding those resources.

(1) <u>Groundwater</u>

Fifteen to thirty percent of the precipitation we get in Wisconsin each year seeps into the ground and recharges our aquifers.[17] It is estimated that there is enough groundwater underground to cover Wisconsin to a depth of 30 feet. The Town of Grand Rapids, as was shown in Figure 5-3, has a vast area between Highway 54 and County Road W, that is characterized by shallow groundwater conditions. That part of the Town has been identified as being a groundwater recharge area. Of the high groundwater areas in Grand Rapids, ??% are at levels of zero to one foot beneath the ground's surface. Another ??% has groundwater levels from one to three feet and is, for the most part, not suited for development of structures of any kind. Soils with groundwater levels from three to five feet buffer even better soils from the high

[17] "Planning for Natural Resources", Dept. of Urban & Regional Planning, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, January, 2002, pg. 35.