

9.0 EXISTING LAND USE

Introduction

The landscape of Buffalo tells the story of its heritage and pride. The beautiful rivers, lakes, wooded hills and rolling farms give the community its identity. These physical attributes are echoed in the value statements presented in Chapter 1 and the town's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats listed in Chapter 2.

Existing Land Use Inventory

The *Buffalo Existing Land Use Map* was created from information provided by Marquette County, the WDNR and the WDOT and from Orthophotos (i.e. Air Photos) of the town. These photos are provided on the next two pages. The Town of Buffalo Planning Committee provided additional updates in 2002 and 2003.

Below is a description of the land use categories illustrated on the *Existing Land Use Map*.

TRANSPORTATION FEATURES

All town, county, and state roadways in the Town of Buffalo are shown in black on the *Existing Land Use Map*. Railroads are shown in a purple-hatched line. To learn more about transportation facilities serving the town, refer to Chapter 5.

SURFACE WATER

Several lakes exist in the Town of Buffalo as well as the two important river corridors -- the Fox River and Grand River.

SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING

Single family residential development is scattered throughout the town along town and county roads. Information about the characteristics and quality of the town's housing supply is available in Chapter 4.

MOBILE HOME

There is one mobile home park in the Town of Buffalo located off CTH F. However, there are many individual mobile homes scattered around the town. Some of these mobile homes are used as hunting cabins and vacation homes. Others are the primary residence of their occupants.

FARMSTEADS

Farmsteads include farm buildings and outbuildings associated with family farm operations.

WOODLANDS

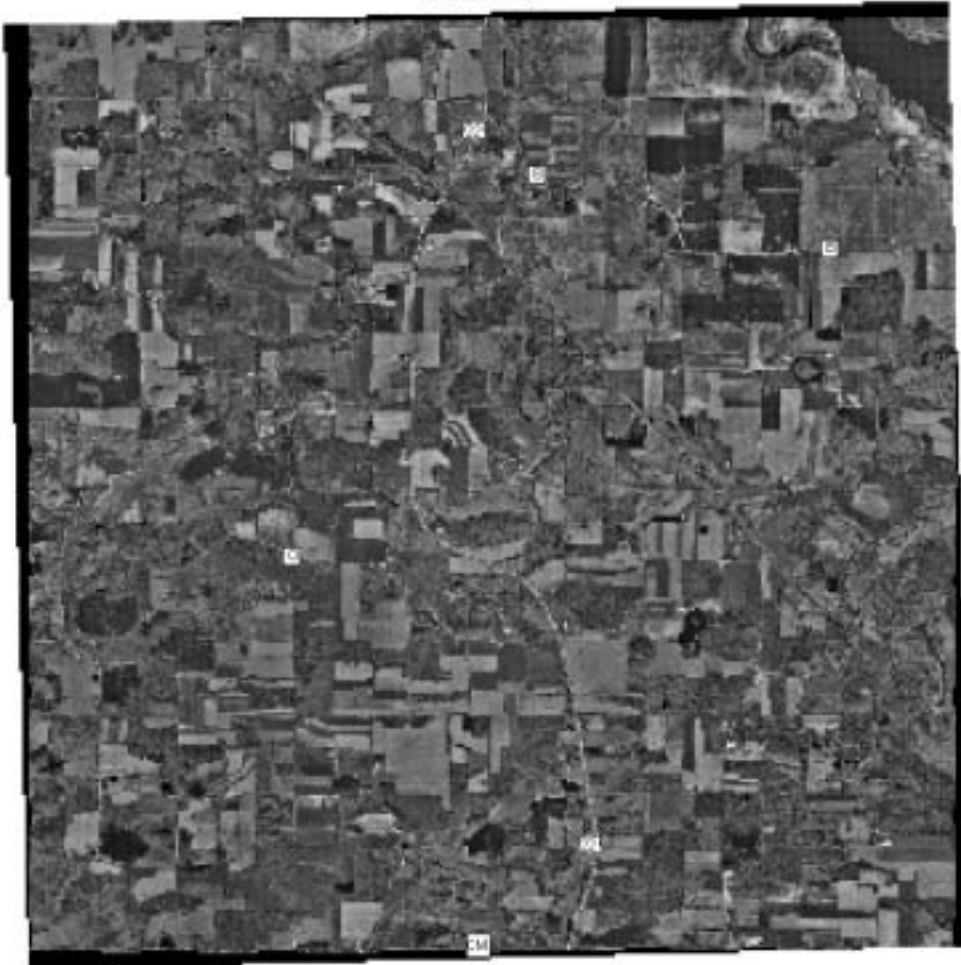
Forested areas dominate the landscape. For information about woodlands and other natural areas, refer to Chapter 7.

2000 ORTHO PHOTO

TOWN OF BUFFALO (EAST PART)

MARQUETTE COUNTY

MONTELLO



GREEN LAKE COUNTY

KINGSTON

FORT
WINNEBAGO

MARCELLON

(COLUMBIA COUNTY)



1000 S. UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SUITE 1111
ANN ARBOR, MI 48106
PHONE: 734.769.1000



2000 ORTHO PHOTO

TOWN OF BUFFALO (WEST PART)

MARQUETTE COUNTY

PACKWAUKEE



OMNI CONSULTANTS
SERVICES IN LAND DEVELOPMENT, SURVEYING, AND ENGINEERING



FARMLAND

There is a significant amount of quality agricultural land in the Town of Buffalo, including areas farmed by the local Amish population. For additional information about farming, refer to Chapter 7.

COMMERCIAL

Commercial land uses are concentrated primarily along STH 22. A campground development near Madden Lake is also shown as commercial. Chapter 8 profiles economic development opportunities in the Town of Buffalo.

QUARRY

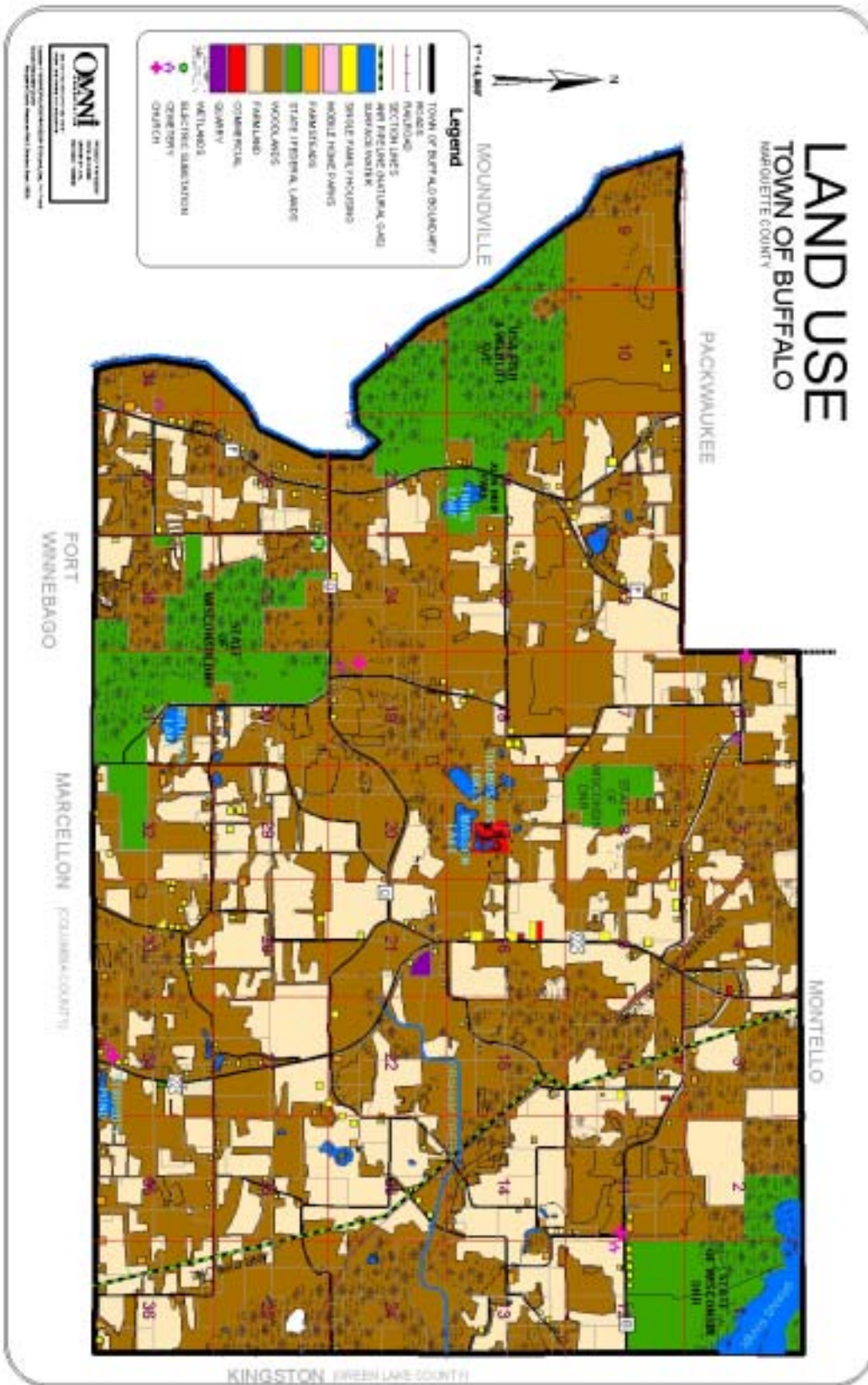
There is one quarry in the town. To learn more about non-metallic mining operations refer to the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element provided in Chapter 7.

The *Existing Land Use Map* also identifies the locations of churches, cemeteries, electric substations, natural gas pipelines, wetland areas, and state and federal lands.

The table below is a required numerical breakdown of the existing land uses in the town. The Wisconsin Smart Growth Law requires this table. The net density (total number of dwelling units divided by all residential acres) in the Town of Buffalo is 2.0 dwelling units/acre (461 housing units/229 acres).

TABLE 17 2003 EXISTING LAND USE AMOUNT & INTENSITY		
Land Use Type	Amount (in acres)	% of Planning Area
Single Family Residential & Duplex	155	Less than 1%
Mobile Home Parks	20	Less than 1%
Farmstead	54	Less than 1%
DNR Lands	2,323	6.9%
Forests	18,379.1	54.9%
Farmland	8,613.8	25.7%
Commercial	10	Less than 1%
Campground	40	Less than 1%
Marquette County Land	165	Less than 1%
Quarry	36	Less than 1%
US Fish & Wildlife Lands	1,000	3.0%
Surface Water & Roads	2,707.1	8.1%
TOTALS	33,503	100%

NOTE: Based on limited data availability for the purposes of calculating area the following assumptions were used. Single family homes were calculated on a 1 acre per house basis. Farmstead were calculated at 1.5 acres for each farmstead. Commercial properties were calculated on a 2 acre lot basis.



Zoning Regulations

Marquette County enforces shoreland and wetland zoning in the Town of Buffalo within 1000' of the ordinary high water mark of a lake or pond and 300' to a navigable stream.

Marquette County has adopted a County Zoning Ordinance for unincorporated areas. However, the Town of Buffalo has not adopted this ordinance as its own. As a result, at this time, there is *no zoning* in effect in Buffalo beyond the requirement of the shoreland and wetland zoning.

A town, like Buffalo, which has never been under County Zoning, may adopt its own zoning ordinance, provided the town has village powers under 60.62 (3). The Town of Buffalo has adopted village powers. Under this section of the state statutes, the town will have to submit its completed proposed zoning ordinance to the county for approval before the town can adopt its ordinance. At no time will the town be required to adopt the county zoning ordinance, even if the county does not approve the town's ordinance. In such a situation, the town will simply remain unzoned.

The Town of Buffalo is interested in developing local zoning control. When developing a zoning ordinance, it will be important to develop regulations that are basic, easily enforced, and supported by the community. The zoning requirements must be based on the long-term visions and goals presented in this plan.

Important topics to address in the Town of Buffalo Zoning Ordinance include:

- ? Sign regulations to restrict billboards along STH 22;
- ? Commercial development lighting standards;
- ? Standards for cellular towers, including requirements for co-locations to limit the number and location of towers;
- ? Definition of business, residential, agricultural, and conservation districts, including permitted uses, minimum lot sizes, setbacks and conditions.
- ? Provisions for enforcement (including permits), appeals, and penalties.

Subdivision Regulations

The Town of Buffalo does not have its own subdivision ordinance. Marquette County enforces a Land Division/Subdivision Ordinance in all unincorporated areas of the county. The ordinance requires a certified survey map for the creation of any new lot, which is 15 acres or less. In addition, all new lots must have an access, with a minimum width of 66 feet, to a public road. There are additional requirements for creating more than 4 lots of 5 acres or less in a period of 5 years.



To learn more about county zoning and subdivision requirements visit :
www.co.marquette.wi.us

The town may develop and adopt its own subdivision ordinance in the future. The town's ordinance, to be enforced, must be more restrictive than the existing county requirements. To support the goals and objectives of this plan, Buffalo's subdivision ordinance should provide for conservation subdivisions.

Trends in Supply, Demand and Price of Land

Through much of the 20th century, Marquette County has remained undeveloped. However, in recent decades this has started to change. The county has abundant areas of available and affordable land accessible to Madison and the Fox Cities. As these urban areas expand, people from these areas have begun to recognize Marquette County for its rural character, lakeshore properties, natural resource opportunities, and available land for building. Lakeshore and wooded acreage are in high demand. The recent influx of settlers has caused the values of lakeshore and mature wooded property to increase 200 – 300% from the early 90s.

Increased development has also resulted in parcels becoming fragmented. **Fragmentation** has a negative impact on wildlife habitat, productive agricultural uses, and natural features such as lakes, streams and woodlands.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Residential development accounts for a small portion of the land area in the town, but it is a growing share of the town's tax base and expenses. Land prices for residential development are quite affordable in comparison to neighboring towns. This affordability is not expected to change in the future.

There is not a supply of vacant housing units in the town available for purchase. Most vacant units are seasonal homes used on a limited basis by people who live elsewhere. **People moving to the town generally build new homes.**

There is a **significant amount of land available for additional residential development.** However, residents of the area do not want to see productive agricultural areas and scenic wooded areas extensively developed (i.e. fragmented).

Historically, most of the new housing has been developed on individual lots, not in subdivisions, adjacent to town and county roads. In recent years, subdivision development proposals have been submitted to the town. This has also resulted in a sharp increase in the number of annual building permits for new housing construction.

Given that the town's population is projected to continue to increase over the planning period, new housing development is eminent. To protect the rural character of the town and northwoods feel, the town would like to establish minimum lot size standards and also permit conservation-based development approaches.

FARMING

Farming is a significant land use in Buffalo. Unlike many towns in Wisconsin, **farming will continue to be a significant land use in the future** given the fact that the Amish own 10 square miles of land in the town. These areas will remain farmland for the next 20 years and beyond as the Amish work to preserve their traditions and heritage into the 21st century. As the Amish community grows, it may also demand additional farmland areas.

Other local farmers, who are not part of the Amish community, have not expressed a great deal of optimism with respect to the long-term sustainability of their farming operations. The Wisconsin farm economy is very challenging. Moreover, local farmers are aging and will seek opportunities for retirement in the future. For most of these farmers, their landholdings are their primary asset. Therefore, they often sell their land to finance their retirement.

Several opportunities exist to preserve farmland in the Town of Buffalo, while still accommodating the needs of retiring farmers. Specifically:

- ? **Partnerships** could be established **between the Amish and other farmers, so** when a farmer wants to retire and sell their land the Amish would have the opportunity to purchase the property to retain the farmland.
- ? If a farmer would rather develop their property, **conservation-based approaches** (refer to the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element) should be pursued. These approaches can accommodate residential development, but also preserve farmland areas.
- ? More limited development (i.e. **the selling of a lot or two**) by farmers can also be **done in a manner to preserve as much farmland and possible and preserve the rural character** of the community. For additional information refer to the Future Land Use Chapter.

Information on the value of farmland is presented in Chapter 7.

NATURAL AREAS

The rolling hills, scenic open views, and dense woodlands in the Town of Buffalo contribute significantly to the town's rural character. Marquette County, the State of Wisconsin and the federal government own some of these areas. These land-holdings are for conservation and preservation of forest resources and wildlife habitat. These areas account for approximately ¼ of all natural areas in the town. The remaining areas are privately owned. As a result, it is incumbent upon the town and county to work with landowners to preserve the character and quality of these other natural areas.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Only a handful of businesses exist in the town. Given there is no water or sewer service available, a significant amount of future commercial development is not anticipated. However, some additional development, particularly along STH 22 is desired. These businesses would be able to capitalize on the town's affordable land prices (compared to other communities in the county), state highway visibility, and tourist potential associated with the natural resources and Amish Community. For additional information about business opportunities refer to Chapter 8.

Opportunities for Redevelopment

Given the rural nature of the town, opportunities for redevelopment are extremely limited since most areas are undeveloped at this time. Probably the greatest potential for redevelopment is associated with the local quarry operation. Additional information about quarry redevelopment is provided in Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Chapter. When redevelopment opportunities arise, the Town of Buffalo will rely on zoning requirements, site plan review, and other tools.

Underutilized Commercial/Industrial Areas

STH 22 is the primary area for commercial/industrial development. The rural nature of the town, with limited services available (i.e. no water or sewer), commercial and industrial development opportunities are limited. Nevertheless, some businesses have located in the town (refer to the Economic Development Element). Given this situation and the town's close proximity to Montello (where services are available) there are no underutilized commercial or industrial areas in the town.