

2.0 ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

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2.0 ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES ELEMENT

Introduction

The Issues and Opportunities Element provides the background information on the Town and the overall visions to guide future development and redevelopment over a 20-year planning period. Specifically, the Issues and Opportunities Element includes population, household and employment forecasts and demographic trends, age distributions, education levels, income levels and employment characteristics that exist within the local government unit. This chapter presents the overall vision for the Town of Winchester, including a complete assessment of local strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The community characteristics and general background information that form the basis for the Issues & Opportunities Element, is also included in Chapter 1.

Visioning Process

To identify community issues and opportunities, a 4-step process was utilized, which resulted in the development of individual vision statements for each of the 9 required comprehensive planning elements. This process included a community SWOT meeting, cognitive mapping and element vision development.

Strength

Something that makes a community stand out when compared to other communities. Something that makes you proud to call the community home. A strength can be a physical asset, a program, or an environmental condition (i.e. friendly community atmosphere).

Weakness

Opposite of strength. Problem that needs to be addressed.

Opportunity

Something that could be done to improve the community. A potential.

Threat

A threat may be internal or external. A threat can be anything that could jeopardize the future success of a community.

What follows is a description of the activities and the major issues and opportunities identified through the issues and opportunities process.

1. SWOT Meeting

A SWOT meeting is a planning exercise used to get communities thinking about:

- Where they have been;
- Where they are;
- Where they want to be in the future; and
- How they want to get there.

On Tuesday, April 29, 2003, the Town of Winchester Plan Commission and nearly 50 residents participated in a SWOT exercise. The objective of the exercise was to understand how residents view various aspects of the Town. This could include their feelings on physical things such as roads, utilities, etc., and “quality of life” issues. OMNNI Associates, the Town’s comprehensive planning consultant, facilitated the exercise.

To begin the SWOT, everyone was given a few minutes to write down their own ideas about the Town’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

After everyone had recorded their own ideas, participants worked in groups to discuss their answers and decide on the most important Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat facing the Town.

After all groups were finished with these tasks, each group was asked to share its consensus answers.



Groups of Winchester Residents Discuss the Town’s Strengths & Weaknesses

Finally, by show of hands, everyone was asked to vote for the two most important Strengths and Weaknesses facing the Town. The tables below summarize the results.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rural, country living ▪ Good neighbors & not too many of them ▪ Wildlife ▪ Good schools ▪ High property values ▪ Green space ▪ Property owners take pride in the upkeep of their property ▪ Reasonable tax rates ▪ Peace and quiet ▪ Topography ▪ Low crime ▪ Diverse population ▪ Small Town character
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not enough interest/involvement in community planning/issues ▪ Highways ▪ Lack of control over destiny – power is outside of local community control – i.e. county zoning, DOT, DNR ▪ None ▪ Size of the Town limits the ability to address issues ▪ Identity problem with the Other Winchester in Vilas County ▪ Differences/split between “town center” and rural areas of Town ▪ Not enough restaurants/eating establishments ▪ Lack of minimum lot size outside the sanitary district ▪ Lack of kids programs ▪ No consensus
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishment of good Comprehensive Plan to direct growth, protect agriculture and protect environment ▪ Active role of planning ▪ Small town character ▪ Taking over zoning from county ▪ Small business development ▪ People who want to see change ▪ Highway 10 & 45 interchange ▪ To prevent urbanization like Winnebago County Plan Encourages
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government – over regulation ▪ Over development ▪ Uncontrolled development ▪ Possible closure of the Winchester Elementary School ▪ Highway 10/45 & pressures at interchange ▪ Industry moving In ▪ Assessment increases as development increases ▪ Threats that will occur if don’t exercise voice/concerns

2. Cognitive Mapping

A cognitive map, or mental map, is a map drawn by a person that geographically locates his or her memories, ideas and thoughts of a particular place. Since cognitive maps are based on an individual's preferences and opinions there are no "right" or "wrong" maps. Cognitive maps are used to delineate geographic areas of a community people like, dislike, frequently visit, feel are important, travel through regularly, feel safe, etc.

As part of the Mid-Course Meeting, the members of the Plan Commission and other residents in attendance were provided two maps of the Town of Winchester. On the first map, participants were asked to delineate important travel routes and aesthetically pleasing areas of the Town. The most attractive places were colored in one shade, less attractive another, not attractive in yet another color.

On the second map, participants outlined those areas where they would like to see new commercial/industrial development, new residential development, new recreation areas and open space in the Town of Winchester.

These maps were considered in the development of the *Future Land Use Maps* presented later in this plan. This approach helped to ensure that the *Future Land Use Maps* would reflect community concerns and priorities for the future.

3. Vision Exercise

On Tuesday, May 27, 2003, the Town of Winchester Plan Commission and residents worked in groups to discuss their ideas about what the Town will look like in 20 years.

To facilitate discussion, OMNNI Associates prepared a worksheet that included a series of open-ended statements for participants to complete. The idea was to complete the sentences to describe conditions in the year 2025. What follows are the partial statements included on the worksheet.

1. *"Rural Character" in the Town of Winchester means...*
2. *Retired and senior residents who grew up in the area ...*
3. *Attractive and desirable housing in the Town of Winchester can be described as...*
4. *The Town of Winchester provides the following quality services for residents ...*
5. *To receive proper medical care residents need to*
6. *Recreational opportunities include...*
7. *Farming in the Town of Winchester is ...*
8. *For entertainment and cultural activities, residents of the Town of Winchester...*
9. *Development in Winchester includes...*
10. *Development adjacent to the USH 10 and USH 45 interchange includes...*
11. *On average, residents travel _____ miles 1 way, from home to get to work each day.*
12. *Winnebago County and the Town of Winchester work harmoniously to...*
13. *Looking down at the Town of Winchester from an airplane a resident would see ...*
14. *Large open spaces that existed in the Town in 2003 are now ...*
15. *The Town of Winchester Comprehensive Plan was ...*

The statements related to each of the 9 required comprehensive plan elements. In small groups, everyone shared their ideas. Each group then developed a consensus answer. At the

end of the meeting OMNNI recorded all of the ideas discussed in the groups. OMNNI used the responses to develop draft vision statements, which the Plan Commission reviewed in June 2003. Each of the final vision statements is provided at the end of this chapter.

4. Photo Assignment

During the summer of 2003, the Plan Commission was asked to photograph community amenities and development. The Commission was also asked to photograph scenic areas, important natural resources, historic resources and other points of local interest. These photos help to illustrate important features of the community that are discussed in the vision statements. The photos taken by the Commission are presented throughout the plan.

Visions

Rather than rely solely on a series of policy or position statements, the Plan Commission participated in an extensive visioning process to establish a framework from which to make future planning decisions for the Town of Winchester. The result of this process was a vision statement for each of the 9 required plan elements, including an overall vision statement. This process was critical to establish a unified vision for the Town of Winchester and provide a direction and focus for the planning effort.

Below are the community vision statements, which represent the broad interests of Town residents, elected/appointed officials, business leaders and property owners. These visions establish the planning framework and a direction for subsequent planning efforts and decisions in the Town.

Supporting goals, objectives and program initiatives are described in Chapter 11 of this plan.

What is a Vision?

Webster's Dictionary, defines a vision as: (1) sense of sight; (2) something supposedly seen by other than normal sight; something perceived in a dream; (3) mental image; (4) the ability to perceive something not actually visible, as through mental acuteness or keen foresight [a project made possible by one man's vision].

In planning, the term "vision" is an expression or idea of the future. In the Town of Winchester, the Plan Commission and residents are working to define their desired vision of the Town in the Year 2025.

Issues And Opportunities (Overall Vision)

In 2025, the Town of Winchester provides residents with a high quality of life in a rural setting by encouraging an optimal mix of farming, undeveloped natural areas and residential development. The village center of Winchester is a thriving community destination point with a school, parks, and local businesses catering to resident needs. The Arrowhead and Rat Rivers, Lake Winneconne, and farming operations are an integral part of the rural landscape beyond the village center. The Town respects private property rights and responsibilities of landowners. The Town continues to provide basic municipal services and has developed working relationships with neighboring Towns and Winnebago County.

Housing Vision

In 2025, the Town of Winchester provides mainly single-family housing as the primary choice for residential development. Much of the Town's housing is concentrated within the sanitary district. These homes are located in subdivisions that are traditionally-designed and are also walkable developments.

To maintain the rural character of the community, rural residential house sites developed through CSM's consider location, landscaping, large minimum lot sizes and design promote farming and protect natural resources. Well-planned conservation-based subdivisions are also encouraged as a means to permit rural development (beyond the sanitary district).

Transportation Vision

In 2025 Winchester residents enjoy well-maintained Town and County roadways with little to no traffic congestion. State highways provide important links between Winchester and the Fox Valley region where employment, shopping, health care, education and entertainment choices are readily accessible. Carpooling and other means of alternative transportation are encouraged. Trails and sidewalks provide connections between key areas of the community, natural areas, and neighboring communities.

Utilities & Community Facilities Vision

In 2025, the Town of Winchester coordinates with Winnebago County, local school districts and neighboring Towns to ensure that Town residents have easy access to a full-range of utilities, services and facilities, including a local school. The Town strives to ensure that property taxes are minimized without jeopardizing public health and safety. Therefore, the Town seeks to improve efficiencies by pursuing shared services with neighboring communities.

Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Vision

In 2025, primary agricultural areas, woodlands, wetlands, rivers and other natural areas and wildlife habitats are highly valued in the Town of Winchester and conserved whenever possible. The Town's farmland and natural areas enhance the rural character of the community by maintaining open vistas and the low, rural density development pattern desired by residents. Family farms have diversified due to economic challenges to include: rented cropland, commercial farms, niche farms and farmettes.

Residents enjoy access to many natural areas via recreational trails. Fishing, hunting, and hiking are common recreational pursuits. Efforts by the Winchester Area Historical Society have retained a strong sense of local history by preserving structures, educating residents and maintaining a living record of the area.

Economic Development Vision

In 2025, given the Town's desire to remain a rural, agricultural community, commercial development is limited. Businesses catering to local resident needs are located in the village center. The village center functions as the walkable community center ---

including a school, post office and library. The Town of Winchester and the Historical Society have worked together to ensure that amenities in the area are provided to enhance the village center appearance (i.e. façade improvements, landscaping, lighting, etc.)

Businesses along the highway corridors cater to passing motorists. Employment opportunities for Town residents can be found within 20 miles of their homes.

Intergovernmental Coordination Vision

In 2025, Winchester works cooperatively with neighboring communities and Winnebago County to provide residents with cost-effective, non-duplicative services. Town leaders keep residents informed on all issues pertinent to Town operations and community concerns.

Land Use Vision

In 2025, promotion of agriculture, natural resource conservation efforts and well-managed development have successfully maintained the Town's rural character and quality of life.

Local businesses and most housing developments are concentrated in the sanitary district.

The Town relies on effective land use ordinances to achieve these goals.

Implementation Vision

In 2025, the Town of Winchester consistently recognizes the value and importance of planning to promote well-coordinated land uses and compatible development. The Town rights recognizes the opinions of its residents and business owners, while also respecting property owner's and responsibilities. The Plan Commission and Town Board regularly update the Comprehensive Plan, land use maps, and implementation ordinances to ensure they are effective and in compliance with State statutes. In conformation with the State's view that government planning authority rests at the most local level, the Town maintains highest authority to implement comprehensive planning in the Town of Winchester, to the extent allowed by law.