

1.0 INTRODUCTION

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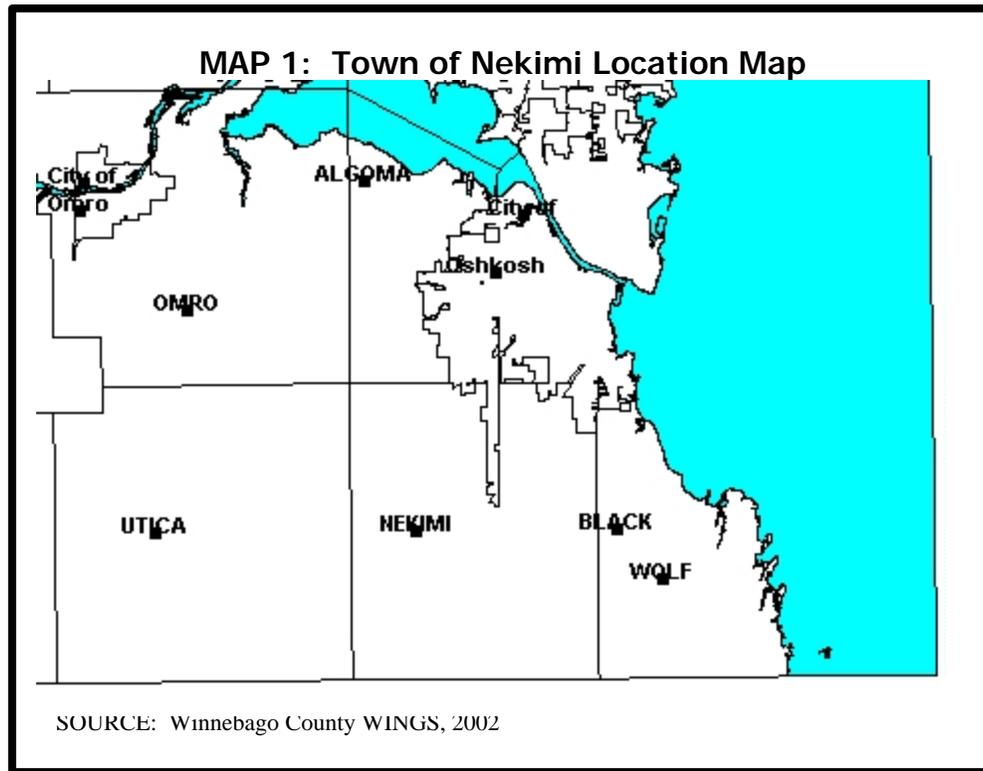
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Where Is The Town Of Nekimi And Who Lives There?

The Town of Nekimi, located in southeastern Winnebago County, lies adjacent to Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The town covers approximately 30 square miles of land area. US 41 runs north and south through the town. STH 44 and STH 26 also diagonally traverse the town. The Town of Nekimi can best be described as a rural farming community. New residents are moving to the town in search of rural homesteads that are still accessible to the employment opportunities in the Fox Valley.



What Is Included In This Plan?

This 20-year *Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Nekimi*, includes four major components:

- *A profile of the demographic, economic and housing characteristics of the town;*
- *An inventory and assessment of the environment, community facilities, and natural resources;*
- *Visions, goals, objectives and implementation strategies; and*
- *A land use map that suggests specific areas for future residential, commercial and industrial development in the town.*

This plan was developed under the authority of 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" Law. The law requires that a 20-year comprehensive plan be developed and adopted by all units of government that wish to have a role in land use issues. The law authorizes municipalities to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans to serve as guides for the development of their communities. The law also authorizes multi-jurisdictional planning efforts. The plan is intended to serve as a guide for future development decisions that will affect the town.

What is a Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan?

1999 Wisconsin Act 9, more commonly known as the "smart growth" law, requires communities to adopt a comprehensive plan, in accordance with nine (9) required elements by 2010, if they wish to continue to have a say in land use issues (i.e. zoning, subdivision development, farmland preservation, etc.).

The Smart Growth Law defines, for the first time, what is meant by a "comprehensive plan." It includes the nine elements that were addressed during the planning process and included as part of the plan. These are:



- 1) Issues and Opportunities
- 2) Housing
- 3) Transportation
- 4) Utilities and Community Facilities
- 5) Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- 6) Economic Development
- 7) Intergovernmental Cooperation
- 8) Land Use
- 9) Implementation

In addition, the state requires that these elements be developed in concert with Wisconsin's 14 goals for local planning, which are:

- 1) Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures.
- 2) Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
- 3) Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.
- 4) Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.

- 5) Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.
- 6) Preservation of cultural, historic and archeological sites.
- 7) Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
- 8) Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
- 9) Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
- 10) Providing adequate infrastructure, public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- 11) Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional and local levels.
- 12) Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
- 13) Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban or rural communities.
- 14) Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

History of Planning in the Town of Nekimi

In 1996, the Town of Nekimi authorized the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) to distribute a survey to all property owners within the town. In response to the questionnaire, residents expressed that protection of environmentally sensitive lands, preservation of farmland, and preservation of natural and open spaces were considered very important land use issues. The majority of respondents also noted that the amount of residential and commercial development at that time was adequate. In order to address the concerns of the survey respondents, the town entered into an agreement with the ECWRPC to prepare the *Town of Nekimi Land Use and Development Plan*. That plan was completed and adopted in 1997. It included several strategies to manage growth within the Town of Nekimi. One of those strategies urged the town to develop a subdivision ordinance.

Following a public hearing in the summer of 2000, the Town of Nekimi adopted its new subdivision ordinance. This ordinance included provisions for conservation and cluster residential subdivision developments. The subdivision ordinance also includes an overlay zone to allow for varying minimum lot sizes in the Town of Nekimi in accordance with identified primary and secondary areas for residential development.

Just before the Town of Nekimi Subdivision ordinance was adopted, the State of Wisconsin passed 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, more commonly referred to as the “Smart Growth” Law. The *1997 Town of Nekimi Land Use and Development Plan* only partially addressed these new requirements. It provided a description of community characteristics and resources based primarily on 1990 U.S. Census data. Specifically, the document included population trends and projections, a housing profile and an economic analysis. The plan also provided a description of environmental resources, existing land use and zoning, public facilities, and the transportation network. The plan culminated with a land use and development strategy, which included goals, objectives, and recommendations for the future. Two *Future Land Use Maps* are also included.

Given the adoption of the new “Smart Growth” Law and the approval of the *Town of Nekimi Subdivision Ordinance*, the town decided to update the *1997 Land Use and Development Plan*. The purpose of this update was to:

- Update the demographic, housing, and economic data with estimates and projects (in five [5] year increments) through 2020.
- Review and update goals and objectives in accordance with the new Subdivision Ordinance and the nine (9) “Smart Growth Elements.”
- Prioritize existing implementation strategies and consider additional strategies in accordance with current Town goals and objectives.
- Update the *Existing Land Use Map* and *Zoning Map* to reflect changes between 1996 and 2000.
- Update the *Future Land Use Map* to include primary and secondary conservation area for residential development.

Although still not a “Comprehensive Plan” as defined by 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, efforts were made to format the Land Use Plan Update in such a manner to support the eventual development of a “Smart Growth” Comprehensive Plan. The *Town of Nekimi Land Use Plan Update* was approved and adopted by the Town Board in May of 2001.

Using its recently updated Land Use Plan, the Town of Nekimi sought to complete the requirements of the Smart Growth Planning Legislation by developing a plan that addresses the nine required elements outlined in 1999 Wisconsin Act 9. This effort was initiated in 2002, and completed over a 24-month period. This document, the *Town of Nekimi Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan*, is the finished product of that planning process.

Public Participation

The *Town of Nekimi Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan* was developed in an environment rich with public input opportunities. To gain citizen understanding and support, throughout the planning process the public was provided with meaningful opportunities to become involved in the process. Public input was facilitated through the several meetings and activities. Results of the 1996 community survey, copies of meeting agendas and attendance sheets as well as the *Public Participation Plan and Adoption Procedures* are provided in the appendices of this document.

What follows is a description of some of the primary opportunities for public education and input in the planning program.

Kick-Off Meeting

The Town of Nekimi “kick-off” meeting was held at 7:00 pm on February 11, 2002 at the Nekimi Town Hall. At that meeting, OMNNI Associates (the town’s planning consultant) presented an overview of the planning process and a Draft of the *Public Participation Plan and Adoption Procedures*. The focus of the meeting was a discussion of town values, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat. The town values are presented at the end of this chapter. The results of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats discussion are presented in Chapter 2.

Planning Commission Meetings

The Planning Commission met on a bi-monthly basis to review draft text, maps, establish goals and establish priorities for plan implementation. Each of these meetings was duly posted and the public was encouraged to attend.

Issues Workshop

At the Issues Workshop, participants worked in groups on an exercise designed to get the community thinking about the character of the Town of Nekimi in 2020. Residents and Planning Commissioners worked together to discuss their ideas for the future of the Town of Nekimi. To facilitate discussion, OMNNI Associates, the town’s planning consultant, provided all participants with a series of open-ended questions to answer. The questions related to each of the nine (9) required smart growth plan elements.

At the conclusion of the meeting, everyone shared their answers for all to hear and OMNNI kept a record of every answer. In many cases, the answers to the questions were very similar. However, some notable differences were also suggested. The results were used to draft the vision statements presented in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter.

Mid-Course Meeting

At the mid-way point of the planning program, the Planning Commission hosted a mid-course meeting. The meeting was actually part of the 2003 Annual Town Meeting. The purpose of this event was to update residents about the planning program by explaining what had been completed and what was yet to be done.

Participants were encouraged to provide feedback for the Planning Commission to consider. Available draft maps and the vision statements developed by the Planning Commission were presented at the meeting.

Intergovernmental Meeting

As part of the planning program, the Planning Commission facilitated an intergovernmental meeting in July of 2003. At the meeting, the Planning Commission met with representatives from neighboring units of government, school districts, Winnebago County, the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, WDNR and WisDOT to discuss the existing plans of these neighboring jurisdictions and agencies to identify potential conflicts that may exist with the proposed *Town of Nekimi Comprehensive Plan*.

During the meeting, participants were given the opportunity for mutual exchange of ideas and recommendations to address any conflicts. Based on the conversations and suggestions received at this meeting, the *Town of Nekimi Comprehensive Plan* includes recommendations to continue to resolve intergovernmental planning issues and conflicts over the 20-year planning period.

Town Values

During the kick-off meeting, the Planning Commission identified the values that influence residents to remain, take pride in, and become actively involved in the community. This list was reviewed with residents at the Mid-Course Meeting and several additional values were added. The complete list of those values is provided below. These value statements provided a clear direction for the development and implementation of the *Town of Nekimi Comprehensive Plan*. Moreover, these values clearly indicate that residents of the Town of Nekimi share a strong sense of community identity and pride closely associated with the rural character and natural areas that make the Town of Nekimi a desirable place to live.

- *We value the town's space and openness*
- *We value the town's rural environment / rural setting*
- *We value the sense of privacy the spacious environment and rural setting provides*
- *We value the fact that our taxes are relatively low*
- *We value the town's quiet and "laid-back" environment*
- *We value the fact that the town is a safe place to live*
- *We value our town roads because they are not overly congested and provide good access to all areas of the town.*
- *We value the fact that we are not over-governed, which gives residents, a sense of sense of freedom to use their land as desired*
- *We value the fresh "country" air*
- *We value the wildlife in the area – turkey, deer, etc.*
- *We value our agricultural operations. We value the rural views of cows and tractors in the fields of the town.*
- *We value our outstanding volunteer fire department, first responders, and emergency service providers (through the Oshkosh Ambulance Service).*