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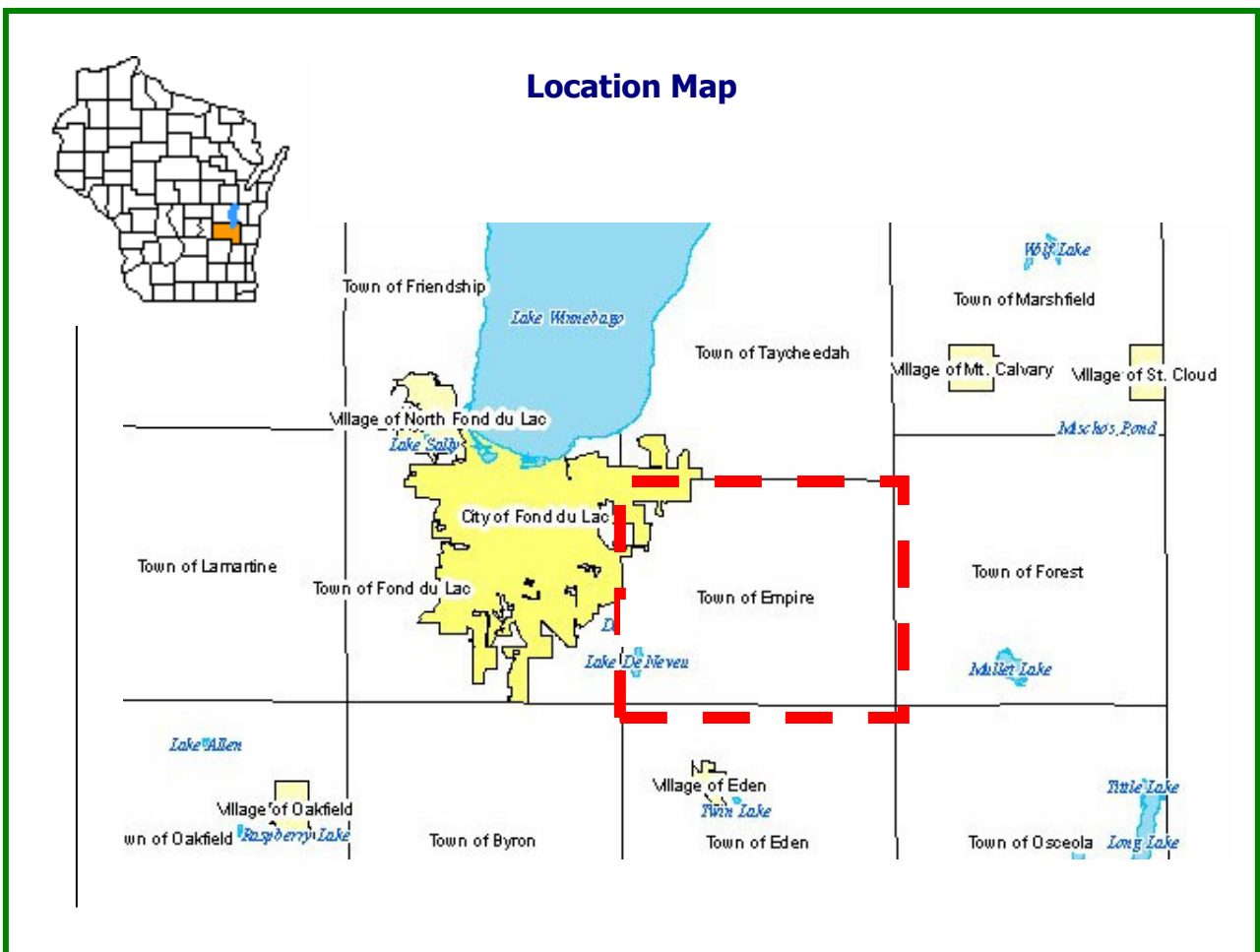
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### Where is the Town of Empire?

The Town of Empire, located in east central Fond du Lac County, lies just east of the City of Fond du Lac. STH 23 runs east and west through the northern portion of the Town of Empire, and USH 45 is located in the southwestern portion of the Town. The township is about 30 square miles and home to more than 2,700 people.

The Town of Empire shares borders with: the Town of Forest, Town of Fond du Lac, Town of Taycheedah, and Town of Eden.



Scenic Vistas in the Town of Empire

## **Early Town History**

Fond du Lac County's boundaries were finalized in 1840. By 1842, the entire county was divided into three townships: Calumet, Fond du Lac, and Waupun. Between 1846-1851, these three initial townships were further divided into the townships found in the county today. The Town of Empire, Township 15 north, Range 18 east, originally was a part of the Town of Taycheedah. Empire did not become an official separate township until 1851.

The first permanent settlers in the Town are believed to be G. de Neveu and his hired help - the family of A. T. Denniston, who worked the large de Neveu farm. Among Mr. G. de Neveu's land holdings was the lake that lies in Sections 30 and 31 of the Town.

The first schoolhouse in the county was built in Empire, but never was used for school purposes, due to a greater number of scholars living at Taycheedah. The building was constructed of logs, and erected by G. de Neveu and others. By 1854, the Town contained three schoolhouses, and in 1880 it contained seven.

The first births recorded in the Town were not far apart, in 1839, in the families of G. de Neveu, A. T. Denniston and Luke La Borde. They were among the first recorded births in the county.

The southeast portion of the Town, when initially settled, was heavily timbered and Fond du Lac prairie covered the northwest corner of the Town. The east and some of the south portions of Empire were noted hay marshes, with the balance composed of oak openings. The earliest records of the Town also describe the "Ledge" extending the whole distance across the west side of the Town. In areas where the limestone crops out of the ground, being too rough and barren for cultivation, the land was used profitably as sheep pastures, or as source of wood, building-stone and lime. Stone quarries and limekilns were also commonplace in the Town.

Early records for the Town of Empire also note it lies on many natural springs, especially along the "Ledge." In particular, larger springs were noted F. M. Phelps farm; another on the farm of G. de Neveu; one or more on David Giddings farm; a very large and peculiar one on the Henry Conklin land, and another on the John Westervelt farm.

From its humble beginning, the Town of Empire has grown into a rural residential and agricultural community. Today, farming is still important, but faces several challenges. In more recent decades, residential development has become more and more pervasive as people seek rural "country living" home sites with easy access to the employment opportunities in the Fond du Lac and other nearby employment centers.

## **How Did this Plan Get Started?**

In 2005, the Town of Empire decided to initiate a comprehensive planning process to update its 1998 plan. This decision was made to ensure that the Town will continue to have a say in land use decisions after 2010, as is stipulated in the Wisconsin Smart Growth Law (1999 Wisconsin Act 9). Town leaders sought assistance from OMNNI Associates, a consulting firm based in Appleton, WI. OMNNI's staff of certified planners was selected to facilitate a community-based planning program including visioning, town strengths and weakness identification, and the development of GIS-based maps. This community-based planning approach helped the Town to identify and address important land use, resource protection and development issues facing the Town of Empire.

## What is Planning?<sup>1</sup>

- Planning is an orderly, open approach to determine local needs, goals and priorities, and developing a guide for action.
- Planning is a concentrated effort by a community to reach a balance between the natural environment and residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural development.
- A plan is a guide for public officials and private citizens to use in making informed decisions that will affect their community.
- Planning is a process that helps a community prepare for change rather than react to it.

## Planning is not...

- An attempt to replace market forces of supply and demand. It helps shape and channel market forces by establishing certain guidelines to manage development.
- Action. A plan is only a guide for action and implementation.
- An instrument for immediate change. Change will occur incrementally as the plan is implemented.
- Static. Good planning requires continual review of implementation successes and failures, citizen desires and the surrounding environment so that the plan can be adjusted as needed.
- Zoning. A comprehensive plan is a foundation and guide for many tools that may be used to implement the plan. Zoning is one of these tools. Utilities, capital improvements planning, and subdivision regulations are examples of other tools.

## Why Develop a Plan?

This plan is being made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing coordinated and harmonious development of the Town which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and the general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.

Developing this plan sends a clear message that the Town of Empire wishes to act proactively – to set its own ground rules for the types of development that will benefit the Town, maintain a rural atmosphere and still provide flexibility for landowners.

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Koles, Comprehensive Planning Fundamentals, UW-Extension, 2000.

## How is this Plan Organized?

This 20-year *Town of Empire Comprehensive Plan*, 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, policies and implementation strategies; and*
- *A land use map that depicts the future land use patterns 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 *Town of Empire Comprehensive Plan* is divided into a series of chapters following the nine (9) required chapters defined in the Smart Growth Law:

1. Issues and Opportunities (Chapters 2 & 3)
2. Housing (Chapter 4)
3. Transportation (Chapter 5)
4. Utilities and Community Facilities (Chapter 6)
5. Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources (Chapter 7)
6. Economic Development (Chapter 8)
7. Land Use (Chapter 9 and 10)
8. Intergovernmental Cooperation (Chapter 11)
9. Implementation (Chapter 12)

In addition, the state requires that these chapters be developed in concert with Wisconsin's 14 goals for local planning. These goals are highlighted throughout this plan.

### DEFINITIONS

**Vision:** An overall statement related to the required smart growth chapters expressing the Town's expectations for the future. These statements provide a framework and context to consider when making future land use decisions.

**Goal:** A statement that describes, usually in general terms, a desired future condition. Goals will usually only address one specific aspect of the vision.

**Objective:** A statement that describes a specific action or condition that is to be attained within a stated period of time. Objectives include ordinances changes, new programs, and other tasks. The objectives serve as a "to do" list to implement the plan. To be effective, objectives must be evaluated regularly and updated as necessary.

**Policy:** A course of action, or rule of conduct, used to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan. Policies are based on specific research. Therefore, they are developed after vision statements. In some cases, the policies relate closely to the vision, but provide more refined, specific actions.

## How Were Residents Involved?

The *Town of Empire Comprehensive Plan* was developed in an environment rich with opportunities for public input. To gain citizen understanding and support throughout the planning process the public was provided with a variety of meaningful opportunities to become involved in the process. What follows is a description of the primary opportunities for public input in the planning program. The adopted *Public Participation Plan* is provided as an appendix to this plan.

### **KICK-OFF MEETING**

At this meeting held in February 2005, the public was informed of future opportunities to participate in the planning process. In addition, those in attendance were asked to identify qualities of Empire that they value and to identify Empire's strength's, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Results from the Town's 1995 survey were also presented at this meeting along with some basic 2000 U.S. Census Data. Approximately 125 residents attended this meeting.

### **VISION SESSION**

After the Kick-Off Meeting, the Planning Commission, business owners, residents and other stakeholders worked to develop an overall 2025 vision for the Town of Empire, as well as individual visions for the required Smart Growth chapters. Together these visions serve as the mission for planning in Empire. They describe desired future conditions in the Town.

### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING**

At the meeting, invited intergovernmental partners were given the opportunity for mutual exchange of ideas and recommendations to address any conflicts. This meeting included a scenario-based exercise to facilitate discussion among participants.

### **CHAPTER WORKSHOPS**

Throughout the planning program, the Planning Commission convened monthly to review draft text, maps, and other information pertinent to the planning program. Each of these working meetings was open to the public. At each chapter workshop, participants had the opportunity to discuss their concerns and ideas about each particular chapter, refine the chapter vision, and review a preliminary draft of the relevant chapter of the plan. For each meeting, a subsequent public work session was scheduled for the Planning Commission to finalize the draft chapter.

### **MAP FORUM**

During this event, participants had the opportunity to view and comment on draft maps from the plan. In addition, OMNNI Associates facilitated a "cognitive mapping" exercise and visual preference survey during which participants were asked to draw their own future land use maps of the Town. A more detailed discussion of these activities is provided in Chapter 10.

### **MEDIA RELEASES AND WEB SITE**

Periodically during the planning process, media releases were provided to area newspapers to publicize the planning program. In addition, an interactive web site was provided via links from the OMNNI web site ([www.OMNNI.com](http://www.OMNNI.com)) in an effort to keep the public informed.

The web page offered meeting schedules, summaries of past meetings, draft maps and plan chapters, and general education materials about the Smart Growth Law. Throughout the

program, the site was updated at least once a month to ensure that the information was current.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

At the public hearing, the OMNNI Associates gave a presentation summarizing the planning effort and recommendations. Following this presentation, the public had an opportunity to testify about the plan.

#### **COMMUNITY SURVEY**

A community survey instrument was developed by OMNNI Associates in the fall of 2005. The survey was mailed to every town address in December 2005. The survey was collected and tabulated by the Town of Empire in January 2005. The results from the survey are highlighted throughout this plan and the complete results are provided in the appendix. 383 residents responded to the survey.

## What Do Empire Residents Value?

During the “kick-off” meeting held in February 2005, participants were asked to identify the values that influence people to remain, take pride in, and become actively involved in the community. These value statements provide a direction for implementation of the Town of Empire Comprehensive Plan. Moreover, these values clearly indicate that residents share a strong sense of community identity and pride closely associated with the rural character and natural areas that make Empire a desirable place to live.

### GENERAL VALUES

- The rural community. Country style of life. (85)
- Friendly residents (13)
- Picturesque - rural, pastoral scene (5)
- Reasonable taxes (23)
- Low crime / safe community (18)
- The people seem to have common values

### HOUSING

- People take care of their homes

### TRANSPORTATION

- Good roads (15)
- Many areas to walk, bike have a fire in the backyard. Safe.
- Low traffic volumes (3)

### UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- Great services such as snow plowing, garbage pick-up, cable tv, sewer, etc. (18)
- Responsive government. Great town clerk. Good communication. (4)
- Good schools (9)
- Fire Dept qualified personnel to man emergency equipment.
- Sewer system

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Limited commercial development in Town.
- Easy access to destinations in Fond du Lac and beyond; 12 minutes to center of Fond du Lac – making services available, church, post office, clinics, etc and jobs. Close to City, but not in it. (24)

### AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Natural resources (16)
- Balance among farmland, woodland, residential land use, safe, quiet, room to enjoy. (2)
- The Niagara Escarpment (14)
- Farmland is scenic and productive (25)
- Open space and views (19)
- Unique landscape / topography / streams (6)
- Lake DeNeveu (4)
- Great air quality – no pollution (3)
- Wildlife (11)
- Dark skies (3)
- Family farm heritage

### LAND USE

- Large lots and the limited amount of houses (5)
- Balance between agriculture and residential
- Open spaces for scenic enjoyment and hunting and recreation

### IMPLEMENTATION

- Opportunity to participate directly in town government
- “Fairly” easy to build/modify property
- Town recognizes and responds to its citizens’ needs



Picturesque View of Farmland in Empire located off Artesian Road, west of CTH UU. Farmland contributes to the local economy and the scenic, rural character of the Town of Empire.

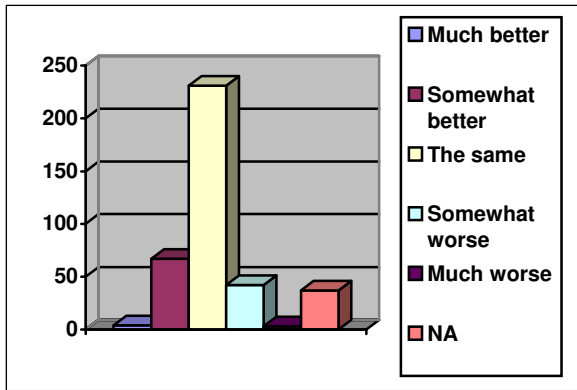


In the community survey, residents provided more information about what they value about the Town.

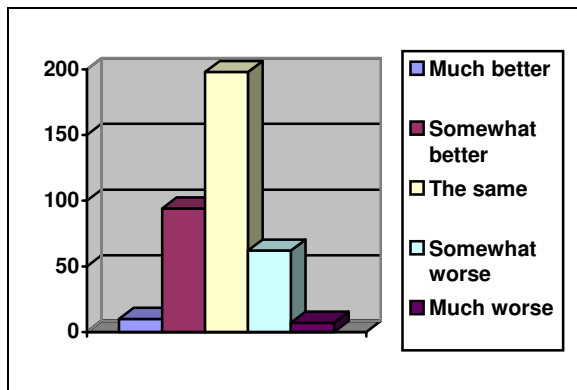
**Question 38:** How satisfied are you with the Town of Empire as a place to live?

	Count	%
<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>55.5%</b>
<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>43.4%</b>
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1.0%</b>

**Question 39:** Compared with 5 years ago, the quality of life in the Town of Empire is:



**Question 40:** In the next 5 years, I believe the quality of life in the Town of Empire will be:



**Question 41:** What do you like most about the Town of Empire?

	Selected	
	Count	%
<b>Friendly people</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>31.8%</b>
<b>Rural, country atmosphere</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>81.3%</b>
<b>Quietness</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>49.9%</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>50.8%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5.4%</b>
<b>Good services</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>22.3%</b>
<b>Safety/feeling of security</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>28.9%</b>
<b>Good government</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>17.9%</b>