

## 7. Intergovernmental Cooperation

From cooperative road maintenance, to fire protection service districts, to shared government buildings, Burnett County and its communities have a long history of intergovernmental cooperation. As social, economic, and geographic pressures affect change in Burnett County, units of government increasingly look to cooperative strategies for creative and cost-effective solutions to the problems of providing public services and facilities.

Intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communicating and sharing information, or it can involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements to share resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue. Intergovernmental cooperation can even involve consolidating services, consolidating jurisdictions, modifying community boundaries, or transferring territory.

The nature of the issues related to comprehensive planning necessitates intergovernmental cooperation. Communities are not islands, as many issues cross jurisdictional boundaries. Watersheds, economic conditions, commuter patterns, housing markets, media markets, and effects from growth and change are all issues that spill over municipal boundaries. Air, water, and wildlife pass over the landscape regardless of boundaries. Today, increased communication technologies and personal mobility mean that people, money, and resources also move across jurisdictions, as quickly and freely as air and water. Persons traveling along roadways use a network of transportation routes, moving between jurisdictions without even realizing it.

Frequently, the actions of one governmental unit impact others. Increasingly, units of government have come to the realization that many vital issues are regional in nature. Wisconsin has over 2,500 units of government and special purpose districts which include the following.

- ◆ 72 counties
- ◆ 190 cities
- ◆ 400 villages
- ◆ 1,260 towns
- ◆ 426 school districts
- ◆ 16 technical college districts
- ◆ Sanitary districts, drainage districts, lake protection districts, metropolitan sewage districts, etc.

Wisconsin ranks 13<sup>th</sup> nationwide in total number of governmental units and third nationwide in governmental units per capita. Having so many governmental units allows for very local representation and means that Wisconsin residents have numerous opportunities to participate in local decision making. However, the sheer number of

### Units of Government in Burnett County

Burnett County is host to 34 units of government including municipalities and special purpose districts.

- ◆ Burnett County
- ◆ St. Croix Indian Tribe
- ◆ 3 villages
- ◆ 21 towns
- ◆ 3 primary school districts
- ◆ 3 lake rehabilitation districts
- ◆ 2 sanitary districts
- ◆ 6 fire protection districts

governmental units with overlapping decision making authority presents challenges. More governmental units can make communication, coordination, and effective action more difficult, creating a greater potential for conflict. Typically communication needs to move across multiple jurisdictions and involves multiple boards, commissions, committees, executives, administrators, and citizens. Goals between communities may differ and present challenges. More governmental units may also mean unwanted and wasteful duplication in the delivery of community services. Cooperation can help avoid this.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation Benefits**

There are many reasons intergovernmental cooperation makes sense. Following are some key examples provided by the Wisconsin Department of Administration.

- ◆ Cost savings – Cooperation can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Cooperation can enable some communities to provide their residents with services that would otherwise be too costly.
- ◆ Address regional issues – By communicating and coordinating their actions, and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities are able to address and resolve issues that are regional in nature.
- ◆ Early identification of issues – Cooperation enables jurisdictions to identify and resolve potential conflicts at an early stage, before affected interests have established rigid positions, before political stakes have been raised, and before issues have become conflicts or crises.
- ◆ Reduced litigation – Communities that cooperate are able to resolve issues before they become mired in litigation. Reducing the possibility of costly litigation can save a community money as well as the disappointment and frustration of unwanted outcomes.
- ◆ Compatibility – Cooperation can lead to compatibility between the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.
- ◆ Predictability – Jurisdictions that cooperate provide greater predictability to residents, developers, businesses, and others. Lack of predictability can result in lost time, money, and opportunity.
- ◆ Understanding – As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another’s needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them.
- ◆ Trust – Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions.
- ◆ History of success – When jurisdictions cooperate successfully in one area, the accomplishment creates positive feelings and an expectation that other intergovernmental issues can be resolved as well.

- ♦ Service to citizens – The biggest beneficiaries of intergovernmental cooperation are citizens for whom government was created in the first place. They may not understand, or even care about, the intricacies of a particular intergovernmental issue, but all Wisconsin residents can appreciate the benefits such as costs savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

The Intergovernmental Cooperation element provides information regarding the status of relationships between Burnett County and other jurisdictions, agencies, and groups. Existing intergovernmental plans and programs, plans of neighboring jurisdictions, and intergovernmental statutes are identified. Additional details on the local use of intergovernmental agreements are provided in the *Plan Recommendations Report* for each participating community.

## 7.1 Intergovernmental Plan Building Process

As a means to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation, the Burnett County planning process utilizes an approach that is locally driven while providing opportunities for regional and county coordination. Regional workshops are being used to facilitate the development of local comprehensive plans. Neighboring communities meet together and have opportunities to communicate throughout the planning process. Coordination of the Burnett County Comprehensive Plan was achieved through local representation on the County Planning Committee (CPC) and direct authority for plan development within the coordinated planning framework. Separate cluster meetings were held for towns and villages in the northern and southern part of the county. The cluster meetings include representatives from each local plan commission and/or town board that would meet on successive evenings about every other month. The CPC developed a framework for planning considerations, which was validated and refined at the local level for each step in the process. Local communities also provided feedback and direction during the development of the County Plan. Refer to the Issues and Opportunities element for additional information on the coordinated, intergovernmental planning effort.

The CPC also played a role relative to intergovernmental cooperation during the planning process. When the need arose, the CPC was responsible for recommending a method of resolving incompatibilities between plans and plan components of neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions.

## 7.2 Status of Planning in Neighboring Counties and Communities

Burnett and surrounding counties have been and are currently active in long-term planning. Each of the surrounding Wisconsin counties has applied and received state aid to assist in carrying out their comprehensive planning process. The state aid rewards vary in size from \$66,500 to \$380,000. Many of the county and community plans are in the process of being completed, while a significant number have already been adopted and are on file with the Wisconsin Department of Administration. A more specific description of each county follows.

### **Douglas County**

Douglas County, the Wisconsin county to the north of Burnett County, submitted a multi-jurisdictional grant application for the 2007 planning grant cycle and was awarded \$290,000. In

additional to the county, 11 towns and the City of Superior are participating in the planning process. According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, two plans compliant with the comprehensive planning law have been submitted by communities in Douglas County to date. The communities are the Town of Wascott, which completed its plan in 2005 and the Village of Oliver, which completed its plan in 2008.

### **Washburn County**

Washburn County, the Wisconsin county to the east of Burnett County, submitted a multi-jurisdictional grant application for the 2001 planning grant cycle and was awarded \$222,000. In addition to the county, 14 towns and the Villages Birchwood and Minong participated in the planning process. According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, eighteen plans compliant with the comprehensive planning law have been adopted by communities in Washburn County. This includes the Town of Stinnett which received a separate \$84,000 grant in 2002 to carry out comprehensive planning. Each of the adopted plans in Washburn County was prepared by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission.

### **Barron County**

Barron County, the Wisconsin county to the southwest of Burnett County, submitted a multi-jurisdictional grant application for the 2003 planning grant cycle and was awarded \$66,500. In addition to the county, 13 towns, the Cities of Cumberland and Chetek, and the Villages of Almena and Turtle Lake participated in the planning process. According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, nineteen plans compliant with the comprehensive planning law have been submitted by communities in Barron County to date. This includes the City of Rice Lake, which completed its comprehensive plan in 2003.

### **Polk County**

Polk County, the Wisconsin county to the south of Burnett County, submitted a multi-jurisdictional grant application for the 2007 planning grant cycle and was awarded \$380,000. In addition to the county, 16 towns, eight villages, and the City of Amery are participating in the planning process. According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, three plans compliant with the comprehensive planning law have been adopted by communities in Polk County to date. The communities and the year of plan adoption are as follows: Town of Milltown in 2002, Village of Frederic in 2003, and the City of St. Croix Falls in 2002.

The information regarding the status of neighboring county and community comprehensive plans is provided in an online library maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. The library is updated periodically and was last updated on July 28, 2008.

## **7.3 Status of Intergovernmental Relationships**

### **St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin**

Burnett County and some of the jurisdictions within the county maintain a cooperative relationship with the St. Croix Tribe. For example, the Town of Sand Lake has a cooperative road maintenance agreement with the Tribe. Also, the Tribe provides many of its own services

to members, including law enforcement, a court system, a Head-Start educational program, health care clinics, and some social services.

The Burnett County Human Services Division has several agreements for shared services:

- ◆ The Department of Aging has an agreement to provide Title VI home delivered meals—or “meals on wheels”—to tribal members. Title VI is an Elderly Nutrition Program; 51% of participants must be at or below federal poverty guidelines. In turn, the tribe provides Title III congregate meals to non-Native Americans. Congregate meals are served to seniors in groups, usually in churches or community centers. To qualify for funding, at least 34% of participants must be at or below the federal poverty line.
- ◆ The Mental Health/ Alcohol and other Drug Abuse (AODA) Department shared the following programs with the tribe: Drug Court, The Burnett County Adolescent AODA Coalition, and the Regional Partnership Grant Program.
- ◆ Burnett County has a 161 Agreement with the St. Croix Chippewa Indians, as required by the 1983 Wisconsin Act 161. The purpose of the act was to create a mechanism for each county in Wisconsin to make payments for costs of out-of-home placement of Native American children. The agreement is not required, but many counties and tribes have entered into such agreements to more efficiently deal with the issue of out-of-home placement.
- ◆ The Burnett County Department of Health and Human Services has a Memorandum of Understanding with the tribe to allow tribal members to take advantage of some of the County’s Public Health Preparedness Programs, which are programs and plans to deal with large-scale public health threats, such as infectious diseases or bioterrorism.

## **School Districts**

Burnett County and its communities maintain cooperative relationships with its school districts. The entire county is serviced by six school districts, with three, the Siren School District, Grantsburg School District, and the Webster School District occupying a majority of the service area. The school districts of Frederic, Shell Lake, and Spooner extend into Burnett County and in essence offer services without having any physical facilities in the county. For more information about school districts in Burnett County, please reference Section 4.4 in Chapter 4, Utilities and Community Facilities.

## **Adjacent Local Governments**

Burnett County and its communities maintain cooperative relationships with adjacent local governments. The remainder of this chapter details the current use of intergovernmental agreements between communities and between the county and communities. The involvement of Burnett County with units of government outside the county is evidenced by its participation in regional programs and organizations.

## **The Northwest Wisconsin Region**

Burnett County and its communities maintain a cooperative relationship with the northwest Wisconsin region. The county participates in several regional programs and organizations. Refer to Section 7.6 for details.

## **The State of Wisconsin**

Burnett County and its communities maintain a cooperative relationship with the State of Wisconsin. The daily business of Burnett County's departments and offices requires frequent interaction with numerous state agencies. Positive working relationships with the Departments of Natural Resources, Transportation, and Administration are especially relevant to the issues and opportunities of comprehensive planning.

### Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)

Several county departments work actively with the WDNR toward the objectives of protecting the county's natural resources, utilizing up-to-date information and research, and identifying funding opportunities for natural resource related projects. The presence of Governor Knowles State Forest and Crex Meadows and other public lands provide opportunities for coordination.

### Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT)

The presences of state highways that traverse the county require considerable coordination between the county, its communities, and the WDOT.

### Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA)

The WDOA Office of Intergovernmental Relations administers the state's comprehensive planning grant program. The county received funding from this program to help offset the costs of plan development and has maintained communication with the Office through the project.

## **Other Units of Government**

In addition to state and municipal government, Burnett County and its communities maintain cooperative relationships and work actively with special purpose units of government. The county's lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, fire protection districts, and emergency medical service districts play vital roles in providing public services and protecting natural resources.

## **7.4 Inventory of Existing Agreements**

Intergovernmental agreements are utilized throughout Burnett County for the cooperative provision of many public services. They include both informal, verbal agreements and formal, documented agreements. Informal agreements are commonly utilized for services such as snow plowing of shared roadways, mutual aid for protective services, and shared use of buildings or other facilities. Documented intergovernmental agreements are currently utilized in Burnett County for the following services:

- ◆ Fire protection

- ◆ Emergency medical service
- ◆ Dispatch service
- ◆ Highway maintenance
- ◆ Senior center programming
- ◆ Youth recreation program funding
- ◆ Sanitary sewer service and facilities
- ◆ Wellhead protection
- ◆ Internet service
- ◆ Library service

Descriptions of existing intergovernmental agreements to which Burnett County is a party are found in Section 7.6 (Intergovernmental Cooperation Plans and Programs Currently in Use). Descriptions of existing local agreements are found in the *Plan Recommendations Report* of each participating community. The most broadly used intergovernmental agreements in Burnett County are for fire protection, emergency medical service, solid waste and recycling, and highway maintenance.

### **Fire Protection**

Fire protection agreements and contracts are in place throughout the county. Burnett County is served by 13 fire departments, all of which provide service to more than one governmental unit. Several towns in the county are served by multiple departments due to town development patterns, availability of transportation routes, or natural features that may limit a particular department from serving the town. Almost all fire departments have memorandums of agreement with all of the towns. The agreements typically identify the department providing fire protection and the communities and areas of the county that are served. Most agreements also detail a cost sharing formula and establish a committee or commission to facilitate and monitor the agreement. Cost sharing is typically based on the assessed value of property or population. For more information about fire protection in Burnett County, please reference Section 4.3 in Chapter 4, Utilities and Community Facilities.

**Local Cooperative Assistance  
(Mutual Aid)**

Mutual aid agreements exist between communities throughout the county to address police, fire, and ambulance services. Mutual aid allows communities to share equipment, personnel, and other resources in the event that an emergency situation is beyond the capacity or ability of the primary service provider. In Burnett County, mutual aid is widespread, but is primarily established through informal, verbal agreements.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

Emergency medical service agreements are in place throughout the county for both ambulance service and first responder service. Emergency medical service is provided by North Memorial Ambulance and there is a network of first responders that can assist while ambulances are en route.

### **Dispatch Service**

The Burnett County Sheriff’s Department is responsible for dispatching police, fire, and ambulance services throughout the county.

## **Solid Waste and Recycling**

At present there are no formal agreements regarding garbage pick-up in Burnett County. Curbside pick-up is only available for residents in the Village of Grantsburg, Siren, and Webster. Residents in unincorporated area may contract with a private company or bring their trash to one of three solid waste transfer stations within the County.

The eight recycling centers in Burnett County are operated by the Recycling Center Commission, an intergovernmental organization that provides service to both Burnett and Washburn Counties. For more information about solid waste and recycling services, please reference section 4.7 in Chapter 4, Utilities and Community Facilities.

## **Sanitary Sewer Service**

There are no formal agreements for shared sewer service between communities in Burnett County.

## **Highway and Road Maintenance**

Intergovernmental agreements are utilized by the Burnett County Highway Department to provide service to towns for winter road maintenance. The county and the towns also coordinate snow-plowing services.

Additionally, Burnett County contracts with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to provide maintenance for state roads within the county.

Some communities have verbal agreements for shared maintenance of roadways along community boundaries, but many communities have written agreements. These primarily cover winter road maintenance activities like snow plowing and salting.

Several intergovernmental agreements also exist between the towns for road maintain. For example, the Towns of Grantsburg and Wood River have a formal agreement for sharing maintenance work on each other's roadways due to some road segments being closer to the other town. As a result, the two towns share responsibility on segments that are more convenient and cost effective to maintain.

Similar agreements are in place for the following streets:

- ◆ The Town of Sand Lake has cooperative road maintenance agreement with the Town of La Follette for Larrabee Subdivision Road and Shrider Road. The Town of Sand Lake also has cooperative road maintenance agreements with the Town of Meenon for Lily Lake Road.
- ◆ The Towns of Wood River and Anderson share equipment for fixing potholes.
- ◆ The Town of Siren has a road maintenance agreement with the neighboring Towns of Meenon, La Follette, and Clam Falls (Polk County).



- ◆ The Town of Jackson plows snow for a section of road in the Town of Scott
- ◆ The Town of Anderson occasionally rents out road maintenance equipment to other towns.

## 7.5 Intergovernmental Cooperation Trends and Outlook

The following intergovernmental cooperation trends are likely to be experienced in Burnett County over the next 20 to 25 years. The following statements are based on recent trends that are expected to continue well into the future and on the opinions of Burnett County and municipal staff who deal with these issues.

- ◆ Intergovernmental cooperation will continue to increase as state, county, and local operating budgets become more restrictive and partnerships are pursued.
- ◆ As more jurisdictions create comprehensive plans and share them with surrounding communities, new opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation will become apparent.
- ◆ The sharing of employees, equipment, and facilities will increase locally to meet demand at reduced costs.
- ◆ State programs that provide incentives for communities that utilize intergovernmental cooperation tools are likely to increase in the future.
- ◆ The use of boundary agreements and extraterritorial review tools will increase as development pressures increase near municipal borders.
- ◆ The level of success with intergovernmental agreements will be in direct to the level of trust between communities.
- ◆ The most successful economic development efforts will require leveraging the strengths of the county as a region rather than focus on individual communities in an uncoordinated manner.
- ◆ Successful intergovernmental cooperation will require sustained commitment and investment by all affected parties to produce value over time.

## 7.6 Intergovernmental Cooperation Plans and Programs Currently in Use

The following plans and implementation programs are currently available for use in Burnett County with regard to intergovernmental cooperation. Existing county level intergovernmental agreements are also inventoried.

## **State Programs**

### Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA)

The Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA) is a non-profit, non-partisan statewide organization created under s. 60.23(14) of the Wisconsin Statutes to protect the interests of the state's 1,260 towns and to improve town government. In 2002 The WTA celebrated its 55<sup>th</sup> year of service to town governments and the state's 1.6 million town residents. The association is organized into six districts and is headquartered in Shawano. The WTA relies on regular district meetings, an annual statewide convention, publications, participation in cooperative training programs, and other means to support the goal of keeping grassroots government strong and efficient in Wisconsin. For further information on the WTA visit its website at [www.wisctowns.com](http://www.wisctowns.com).

### League of Wisconsin Municipalities

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities is a non-profit, non-partisan statewide association of municipalities. First established in 1898, the League acts as an information clearinghouse, lobbying organization, and legal resource for Wisconsin municipalities. Its membership consists of 386 villages and all of the 190 cities in the state. For more information on the League visit its website at [www.lwm-info.org](http://www.lwm-info.org).

### Wisconsin Counties Association

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) is an association of county governments assembled for the purpose of serving and representing counties. The direction of the organization is one that is determined by the membership and the WCA Board of Directors consistent with the parameters set forth by the WCA Constitution. For more information on WCA visit its website at [www.wicounties.org](http://www.wicounties.org).

### Wisconsin Partnership

The State of Wisconsin offers local government contract purchasing, technical advice, data, and financial assistance to provide more efficient government services and increase cooperation. At [www.WisconsinPartnership.wi.gov](http://www.WisconsinPartnership.wi.gov), a variety of information is provided to help local governments become more cost-effective.

## **Regional Programs**

### Northwest Regional Planning Commission

The Commission is the official comprehensive planning agency for the Northwest Wisconsin Counties of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, and Washburn as well as the tribal nations of Bad River, Red Cliff, Lac du Flambeau, Lac Courte Oreilles, and St. Croix. Services provided by the Commission include comprehensive and land use planning; transportation improvement and corridor planning; open space, recreational and environmental planning; economic development; demographic information and projections; technical assistance to local governments; geographic information services and aerial photography distribution. For more information on the Commission visit its web-site at <http://www.nwrpc.com/>.

## **County Programs and Plans**

### Burnett County Development Association (BCDA)

The Burnett County Development Association assists in the retention and expansion of local businesses, and helps businesses relocate in Burnett County. The WCEDC also markets the County for business and industrial development, providing business planning, financing, infrastructure development, land use planning, and workforce development.

### Tourism Assessment and Strategic Plan

Since tourism is a large part of Burnett County's economy, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission undertook a series of strategic planning sessions to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing Burnett County's tourist industry.

## **Local Plans and Programs**

### 66.0301 - Intergovernmental Cooperation

Wisconsin Statute, 66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, and certain special districts, including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, sewer utility districts, Indian tribes or bands, and others.

Intergovernmental agreements prepared in accordance with s. 66.0301, formerly s. 66.30, are the most common form of agreement and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as police, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide for revenue sharing, determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement and boundary changes have to be accomplished through the normal annexation process.

### 66.0307 - Boundary Changes Pursuant to Approved Cooperative Plan

Under Section 66.0307, Wisconsin Statutes, combinations of municipalities may prepare cooperative boundary plans or agreements. Each city, village, or town that intends to participate in the preparation of a cooperative plan must adopt a resolution authorizing its participation in the planning process.

Cooperative boundary plans or agreements involve decisions regarding the maintenance or change of municipal boundaries for a period of 10 years or more. The cooperative plan must include a plan for the physical development of the territory covered by the plan, a schedule for changes to the boundary, plans for the delivery of services, an evaluation of environmental features, and a description of any adverse environmental consequences that may result from the implementation of the plan. It must also address the need for safe and affordable housing. The communities participating in the plan must hold a public hearing prior to its adoption. Once adopted, the plan must be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Commerce for state approval. Upon approval, the cooperative plan has the force and effect of a contract.

### Annexation

Wisconsin Statute, 66.021, Annexation of Territory, provides three petition methods by which annexation may occur. Annexation involves the transfer of one or more tax parcels from a town to a city or village. Cities and villages cannot annex property without the consent of landowners as required by the following petition procedures:

1. Unanimous Approval - A petition is signed by all of the electors residing in the territory and the owners of all of the real property included within the petition.
2. Notice of intent to circulate petition (direct petition for annexation) - The petition must be signed by a majority of electors in the territory and the owners of one-half of the real property either in value or in land area. If no electors reside in the territory, then only the landowners need sign the petition.
3. Annexation by referendum - A petition requesting a referendum election on the question of annexation may be filed with the city or village when signed by at least 20 percent of the electors in the territory.

Burnett County cities and villages have grown, and will likely continue to grow, through the use of annexation.

### Wellhead Protection

The three incorporated villages in Burnett County do provide municipal water and do have wellhead protection plans to protect the water quality in the wells. Wellhead protection planning is utilized by municipalities to ensure the safety and quality of drinking water supplied by public wells. Wells are often sited outside the boundaries of the community served, and groundwater recharge areas extend through multiple communities. While the villages do not have formal agreements with surrounding towns, cooperative efforts are utilized to implement the goals and recommendations of wellhead protection plans.

### Cooperative Planning

Prior to the comprehensive planning effort, cooperative land use planning had been utilized in the Burnett County area. Cooperative land use plans included:

- ◆ Burnett County Land Use Plan, 1998
- ◆ Burnett County Land and Water Resources Plan, 2004
- ◆ Burnett County Farmland Preservation Plan, 1982
- ◆ Burnett County Forest Comprehensive Plan Use Plan, 2006
- ◆ Burnett County Strategic Plan, 2006
- ◆ Burnett County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2004