

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The Intergovernmental Cooperation Element creates an opportunity for Iron County to coordinate with adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions in an effort to promote cooperation, coordination, and consistency between comprehensive plans and land use decisions. Intergovernmental cooperation is an arrangement by which local officials communicate and coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual concern. It can be as simple as communicating and sharing information; or it can involve entering into formal agreements to share resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue. This element attempts to coordinate actions, policies, and programs for Iron County and its towns, to achieve visions for future growth, to avoid inefficient or conflicting development patterns, and to promote intergovernmental agreements. As part of the planning survey that was distributed to all landowners in the county, 90.4 percent of respondents agreed that neighboring towns, cities, and counties should work together toward shared goals.

7.2 ADJACENT GOVERNMENTAL UNITS

Iron County shares borders with the four counties of Ashland, Gogebic (MI), Price, and Vilas. The county's relationship with all neighboring counties can be characterized as one of mutual respect and compatibility from a land use and political standpoint. The borders between the counties are fixed, resulting in minimal boundary disputes. Iron County and its adjoining counties share a common rural character or "northwoods" atmosphere. In the future, as mutually beneficial opportunities for shared services arise, Iron County is open to considering such options.

Several counties adjacent to Iron County are currently underway or have completed the development of comprehensive plans. Ashland County, which borders the entire western portion of Iron County, is developing a comprehensive plan that is anticipated to be completed by mid 2006. Vilas County, which borders the eastern portion of Iron County, has developed the *Vilas County 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan*.

Iron County would like the opportunity to participate in the planning efforts of adjacent counties and communities and, likewise, encourages them to participate in their planning process. Iron County will take into consideration each adjoining county's comprehensive land use plan when making future land use decisions.

Towns within Iron County

Iron County has some jurisdiction within the towns, particularly, as it pertains to zoning (both shoreland and non-shoreland), as Iron County and all ten towns have adopted the Iron County Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. In areas where Iron County has jurisdiction, the county seeks input from the towns before making decisions that affect the towns. Likewise, the towns have attempted to maintain that link of communication with Iron County by providing

recommendations. The county's jurisdiction has at times created conflict within the towns. Future cooperation will be especially important as it relates to:

- coordination with the town's comprehensive plans,
- enforcement of zoning and shoreland regulations, and
- revisions to the Iron County Zoning Ordinance and official map.

The towns expect that Iron County will fully consider recommendations provided by their respective comprehensive plans when making future land use decisions. The towns' *Future Land Use Map* provides a general pattern for development and will aid Iron County when making land use decisions pertaining to a particular town.

Bad River and Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indian Reservations

Portions of both the Bad River and Lac du Flambeau Indian Reservations are located within Iron County's boundaries. The Lac du Flambeau Indian Reservation is located mostly within southwestern Vilas County but substantial acreage exists within the Town of Sherman. The entire reservation is approximately 86,630 acres, with 14,595 acres located in the Town of Sherman. The Bad River Indian Reservation is located mostly within Ashland County with a small portion located in the Town of Saxon in northwestern Iron County. The entire reservation is approximately 124,000 acres with close to 6,000 acres located in the Town of Saxon.

The relationship between Iron County and the tribes is one of which cooperation and joint planning could be enhanced. Establishing better dialog between the county board and tribal councils would open the lines of communication more directly, thereby allowing the elected officials to discuss relevant issues. It is important that Iron County and Lac du Flambeau departments have an integrated relationship where future land use decisions will be agreeable for issues that concern both jurisdictions. In some cases, the tribes and Iron County have worked cooperatively on snowmobile access and trail developments.

School Districts

Iron County is served by three school districts, which include the Hurley School District, Mercer School District, and the Park Falls School District. There are no known conflicts between Iron County and the three school districts that serve the county. Regular and open communication is critical to ensure the possibility of future cooperative relationships. Iron County is committed to working with all school districts/boards on the siting and building of public facilities and for sharing services.

State Agencies

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) are the primary state agencies Iron County must coordinate with to achieve the goals and objectives of this plan.

The WDNR takes a lead role in wildlife protection and the sustainable management of woodlands, wetlands, and other natural wildlife habitat areas. The WisDOT is responsible for planning and development of state highways and other multi-modal transportation systems. Open

communication and participation in land use, natural resources, and transportation decisions, which may impact the county, is an important priority for intergovernmental cooperation in the future.

Regional Agencies

Northwest Regional Planning Commission was formed under Section 60.0309 of Wisconsin State Statutes to provide a range of services to local units of government within the RPC boundary. RPC's provide planning assistance, assist local interests in responding to state and federal programs, serve as a coordinating agency for programs, and provide other technical and advisory assistance to local governments. Iron County is within the boundary of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC), which is based in Spooner, Wisconsin. Iron County and NWRPC have worked cooperatively on projects and continue to work together as exemplified in their relationship to develop this *Comprehensive Plan*.

7.3 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

On an element-by-element basis, Iron County, local school districts, and state and federal agencies were contacted regarding their available services. For example, during development of the *Utilities and Community Facilities* element, the school districts were contacted to gather information on current and future enrollment and existing facilities and to determine if future expansion of district facilities was planned. The multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning process between Iron County and adjoining towns and counties allowed for greater interaction and understanding of local issues.

7.4 CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS (CRP)

Potential conflicts related to land use decision-making have been greatly diminished due to the concerted development of the local multi-jurisdictional planning process. Although, it is important to recognize that future variables may result in conflict, planning for potential future conflict between jurisdictions requires a process to resolve such disputes. The conflict resolution process developed for Iron County outlines the appropriate steps to be taken by the local governing body to resolve these disputes in a logical, systematic, and equitable manner. See Appendix E for detailed description of the conflict resolution process.

7.5 AGREEMENTS WITH NEIGHBORING OR OVERLAPPING JURISDICTIONS

Iron County has established both formal and informal agreements with adjacent and overlapping units of government.

See list below:

- ◆ Agreement with Gogebic County, MI to house prisoners in Iron County Jail
- ◆ Agreement with Gogebic County on use of the Gogebic-Iron County Airport

- ♦ Share a Land & Water Conservation Dept. with Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, and Iron Counties (ABDI)
- ♦ Share the Northern Waters Library System with surrounding counties
- ♦ Agreement with Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indian Tribe on trail to casino
- ♦ Agreement with Gogebic County on Help Orphan Pets Everywhere (HOPE) Program
- ♦ Agreements with Iron County Sheriff's Department for dispatching for police, fire and ambulance (911) services
- ♦ Bad River Watershed Council

7.6 EXISTING AND POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

Identify existing/potential conflicts between Iron County and other governmental units.

Existing Conflicts

1. Lack of tracking system for zoning and building permits for towns.
2. Confusing and inconsistent building and zoning permit process.
3. Inaccurate zoning maps.
4. Zoning enforcement.
5. Inadequate county government presence in Southern half of county.
6. Inadequate economic development assistance in Southern half of county.
7. Conflict between ATV trails and private landowners.
8. Inconsistent transportation standards across county.
9. Increased land development raises property taxes.

Potential Conflicts

1. ATV usage, trail maintenance.
2. Geographic representation on county committees.
3. Disproportionate allocation of housing grant monies.
4. Miscommunication between county and towns.
5. Allocation of county budgeted dollars.
6. Towns don't understand need for cooperation or are not aware of local Comprehensive Plans.
7. Information agreements need to be formalized to be more effective.
8. Conflicts between communities regarding zoning administration.
9. Building inspections, especially as it relates to new legislation.
10. Conflicting comprehensive plans between neighboring communities.
11. Locally unwanted land uses adjacent to neighboring communities.
12. Enforcement of blight ordinances (county or towns?).
13. Payment for services – who will pay?
14. Differing transportation strategies between communities.
15. Diversity of housing.
16. Impact of mining operations if they locate in the county.

7.7 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions has been recommended for the county to engage and work with adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions. Implementation of the actions are a start to providing discussion and cooperation of a broad range of issues impacting the towns, cities, and other jurisdictions in and around Iron County.

Goal: Encourage and promote intergovernmental cooperation between local governments in and around Iron County.

Objective 1: Examine the possibility of utilizing common resources between Iron County and local jurisdictions.

Action: *Act as a focal point and inventory agency for County departments to facilitate sharing of equipment and services.*

Objective 2: Encourage cost sharing between the county and local jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.

Action: *Consolidate equipment supply purchases from all municipalities annually in an attempt to get better pricing.*

Objective 3: Encourage communication between all local units of government and other organizations providing services to discuss mutual issues and concerns.

Action: *Actively participate with governmental units from adjoining counties.*

Action: *Formalize current informal and understood agreements with local and county governmental units.*

Action: *Communicate as needed with WisDOT regarding future plans for US highways bisecting Iron County.*

Action: *Continue to work with the Wisconsin County Association.*

Action: *Formalize liaison with Gogebic County and Bad River Tribal Government to assure cooperation on road building, recreation, and business development.*

Action: *Promote long-range planning with neighboring counties through annual updates on Iron County planning activities.*

Objective 4: Encourage communication and intergovernmental cooperation regarding town, city and county comprehensive planning, zoning administration, project development and grant writing and administration.

Action: *Ensure that information regarding comprehensive planning, zoning, project development, grant writing, and administration*

is available to public through Iron County Miner and the Iron County website.

Objective 5: Identify existing or potential conflicts among local governmental units and assertively address processes to alleviate or resolve such conflicts.

Action: *Follow precepts of the Conflict Resolution Process outlined in Appendix A of this document.*

Objective 6: Advocate change in Wisconsin Statutes that discourages cooperation.

Action: *As statutes that discourage cooperation are discovered, seek a process to change the legislation.*