

INTRODUCTION

Location

The Town of Barnes is located in the southwest corner of Bayfield County in Northwest Wisconsin (see *Map-1*). The Town is approximately 80,000 square acres in size and occupies the area of three and a half townships. It is known for its forests, wildlife, and water resources.

The area was originally inhabited by Chippewa Indians and small numbers of woodsmen before others began settling in the area by the late 1800's. The Town was created in 1905 and has recently celebrated its Centennial.

Early on, the Town was home to farming and logging activities. Today, area businesses cater to seasonal populations and the harvesting of timber for forest related products.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Town of Barnes had 610 permanent residents and 1,160 seasonal dwelling units in the year 2000. To address the future growth of the Town of Barnes, the Town Board laid the foundation for long-term planning by creating the Town of Barnes Comprehensive Land Use Planning Committee.

Wisconsin “Smart Growth” Law

The Town of Barnes Comprehensive Land Use Plan was created in compliance with and under the authority of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law (s.66-1001). Known as the “Smart Growth” Law, it was approved as part of the 1999-2001 State Biennial Budget.

The Law states that a comprehensive plan must contain the following nine elements:

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

The Comprehensive Planning Law requires that, beginning January 1, 2010, any local governmental action or procedure that affects land use, must be consistent with that government unit's comprehensive plan. Government actions are listed as:

- Official mapping established or amended under s. 62.23 (6).
- Local subdivision regulation under s. 236.45 or 236.46.
- County zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 59.69.
- City or village zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 62.23 (7).
- Town zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 60.61 or 60.62.
- Zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands under s. 59.692, 61.351 or 62.231.

The Comprehensive Planning Law also requires that a local government shall adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation. The adopted written procedures can be found in Appendix A.

Citizen Advisory Board (CAB)

The Town of Barnes conducted a planning session to gain insight into important issues and to use this insight when addressing the nine elements. A diverse group of thirty-eight Town residents and property owners gathered at the Town Hall to answer these three questions:

1. What are the strengths of the Town of Barnes?
2. What areas of the Town of Barnes need improvement?
3. What should the Town of Barnes look like in 10-20 years?

The participants were organized into four groups and their answers were gathered and ranked. When finished, all four groups came together and ranked their cumulative answers. A copy of the Citizen Advisory Board report is included in Appendix B. The overall results of the planning session are listed below:

What are the strengths of the Town of Barnes?

1. Lakes
2. Clean air and water
3. Small town atmosphere
4. Good area to live
5. Forests

What areas of the Town of Barnes need improvement?

1. Lake management
2. Controlled development
3. Zoning enforcement
4. Community center
5. More small business

What should the Town of Barnes look like in 10-20 years?

1. Maintained “small town” atmosphere
2. Maintain air and water quality
3. Clean and accessible lakes
4. Enforced/Planned Zoning
5. Centralized business district “Main Street”

Town of Barnes Community Survey

The Town of Barnes Comprehensive Land Use Committee created and mailed a community survey to all property owners and made available copies to all renters in the Town. Press releases were published in the County Journal and Northwoods Shopper to inform residents about the survey. All totaled, 1,674 surveys were mailed with 858 being returned. This equated to a return rate of 51.25%! The results were tabulated and the results can be found in Appendix C.

Overall Comprehensive Land Use Planning Goals

The Comprehensive Land Use Planning Committee used the results of the Citizen Advisory Board meeting and the Town of Barnes Community Survey to reach these overall goals for the Town of Barnes Comprehensive Land Use Plan:

- Encourage all development in the Town of Barnes to blend in with the surrounding environment, minimize the impact on the Town’s natural resources, and protect the northwoods character of the Town.
- Protect the Town’s lakes and natural resources.
- Identify potential areas for a future Central Business District.
- Develop ways to provide community facilities and services for area residents.

The Citizen Advisory Board results, Town of Barnes Community Survey responses, and the Overall Comprehensive Land Use Goals were used to provide direction as the Comprehensive Land Use Planning Committee drafted the Town of Barnes Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Northwoods Character

Throughout the Town of Barnes Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the term northwoods character appears several times. The Town of Barnes Comprehensive Land Use Planning Committee has adopted a revised definition of rural character included in the Bayfield County Land Use Plan. The definition of northwoods character is defined as:

“A combination of natural and manmade features that portray the traditional form and preserve the traditional function of the northwoods landscape. In the Town of Barnes, northwoods character is manifested in a backdrop of forests and fields, natural features such as creeks, lakes, and wetlands, and structures such as churches, cabins, and homes. These physical features support traditional northwoods activities such as farming, logging, and outdoor recreation that have been practiced for generations in the Town. Homes in the northwoods are either scattered at low densities or clustered together in small communities surrounded by open space.”