CITY OF
EAGLE RIVER
Wisconsin

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AGENDA NOTICE *(10/16/2026)*

THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF EAGLE RIVER WILL HOLD A SPECIAL SESSION ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2026, AT 5:00 P.M. AT CITY HALL, 525 E. MAPLE STREET IN EAGLE RIVER.

Notice is hereby given *that a majority of the City Council of the City of Eagle River may be attending scheduled Planning Commission meetings either in person or via zoom. This constitutes a meeting of the City Council pursuant to State ex rel. Badke v. Greendale Village Bd., 173 Wis. 2d 553, 494 N.W.2d 409 (1993), and must be noticed as such, although the Council will not take any formal action at these meetings.*

This meeting will be available by Zoom at the following link:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85111695208?pwd=x5pMv8crrbsPuYwefObTYbJG0m83b3.1
Meeting ID: 851 1169 5208
Passcode: 963936

1) Call to Order.
2) Roll Call.
3) Discussion and possible action on the following agenda item(s):
   a) Comprehensive Plan, Review and Possible Modification of the Following Chapters/Maps:
      i) Chapter 7, Land Use
      ii) Map 6, Existing Land Use
      iii) Map 7, Future Land Use
   b) Scheduling of recurring Comprehensive Plan Special Meetings moving forward
4) Adjournment.

Robin Ginner, City Administrator

Please note that, upon reasonable notice, at least 24 hours in advance, efforts will be made to accommodate the needs of disabled individuals through appropriate aids and services or provide a video link for meetings. For additional information to request this service, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 715-479-8682 ext. 224, 525 E. Maple Street, P.O. Box 1269, Eagle River WI 54521.

September 17, 2026

A meeting of the Plan Commission of the City of Eagle River was called to order at 5:05pm by Mayor Deb Brown.

Roll Call**:** Alex Forer, Mary Horant, Adam Grassl, Kim Schaffer and Deb Brown. John Hletko arrived at 5:45PM. Also in attendance Becky Bolte. Absent: Robin Ginner and Brad Adamovich.

a) Comprehensive Plan update: Eric Sonnleitner was present for North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. Review of NCWRPC Chapters 5 - Transportation, Chapter 6 – Economic Development, including Data Centers discussion, and Chapter 8, Intergovernmental Cooperation. Sonnleitner gave summaries of each chapter presented. Discussion.

b) Scheduling of recurring Comprehensive Plan Special Meetings. The next meeting for the Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan review and update was scheduled for October 22, 2026 at 5:00pm at Eagle River City Hall.

Motion by Horant, 2nd by Grassl to adjourn at 5:05PM. Carried, all.

Becky J Bolte - Clerk

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Chapter 7

Land Use

Land use analysis is a means of broadly classifying how land is used. Each type of use has its own characteristics that can determine compatibility, location, and preference to other land uses in the City. The land use plan brings together consideration for both the physical development as well as the social characteristics of the City. Land use mapping and related information is used to analyze the current pattern of development and serves as the framework for formulating how land will be used in the future.

To arrive at an optimum plan that will be both effective and implemented, the plan must account for past development activity as well as current market factors and conditions that shape where and how land will be developed. This chapter discusses uses of land in the City of Eagle River. The existing land use types are defined, current land uses are analyzed, and existing and potential land use conflicts are identified.

Previous Plans and Studies

Vilas County Comprehensive Plan, 2023

The Vilas County Comprehensive Plan's chapter on land use analyzes patterns of development, existing land use, and future land use. The 2023 plan sets the following land use goals:

- Provide for a well-balanced mix of residential, business, industrial, recreational, forestry, and other uses to serve the future needs of Vilas County and to maintain the area as a desirable place to live and work.

- Work cooperatively with Town and neighboring governments to promote coordinated land use and a compatible development pattern that respects private property rights; to minimize land use conflicts and negative development impacts; to carefully consider the use, location, and density of development and how it affects the natural resources, community character, anticipated growth, and need for utilities and services.

- In conjunction with local municipalities, retain and preserve the rural, "Northwoods" aesthetics and related quality of life.

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Regional Comprehensive Plan, 2025

The RCP's Land Use chapter looks in detail at the land uses through the ten-county region and identifies the following issues and trends related to land use:

- **Dispersed Land Use Patterns.** As the Region continues to age, a dispersed population will impact the ability of residents to access services. There are also concerns about continuing to fund infrastructure as a result.

- **Contamination and Blight.** Older neighborhoods in the Region may have sites contaminated by former industry and structures that have fallen into disrepair. There is an opportunity to rehabilitate these properties to save infrastructure costs compared to new construction.

- **Environmental Features.** Development pressures can fragment woodlands and other wildlife habitat, increase runoff into waterways, impact aesthetics, and contribute to erosion if not designed properly.

- **Land Use Demand.** Work-from-home may increase the number of people living in certain areas, and decrease demand for commercial space, influencing land use patterns and infrastructure needs.

- **Renewable Energy.** While renewable energy provides environmental and economic opportunities, large scale solar and wind power is approved at the State level, with few tools for municipal and county government to manage its location, screening, and other impacts.

- **Comprehensive Plans.** While many communities and counties have adopted comprehensive plans, they are frequently not being updated as required by Wis. Stats. 66.1001. See Map 7 for Comprehensive Plan status.

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Existing Land Use Inventory

A land use planning process requires that all of the existing land uses in the community and surrounding area be inventoried. The overall form and arrangement of Eagle River is determined by its pattern of residential, commercial, industrial and other activities. The location and density of various uses and the way in which they are grouped, directly affects the quality of life in the City.

Existing land use patterns are needed to understand how to develop a desired future land use pattern. **Table 21** provides a breakdown of land use within the City. **Map 6 – Existing Land Use** depicts existing land use throughout the City and surrounding area. Both Table 21 and Map 6 are based off of 2025 aerial imagery.

The most common land use activity within the City is Transportation, mostly due to the presence of the Eagle River Regional Airport, accounting for over 29 percent of the City's land base. Other common land use activities within the City include Residential, Commercial, Outdoor Recreation, and Governmental. About 10 percent of the City's land currently consists of undeveloped lands (woodlands and open lands). However, most of these lands are located in environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands or floodplains or in areas with environmental conditions that limit the suitability for buildings such as areas in steep slopes.

Residential development generally exists in the core part of the City and in the southern portion of the City. Commercial development is mostly found within the Downtown area and along major transportation corridors. The Eagle River Regional Airport is located in the northwest corner of the City, while pockets of industrial uses are located throughout the City, most prominently adjacent to the airport, and in the city block between S Forrest St, W Pine St, S Willow St, and W Division St.

Table 21: Existing Land Use, 2025

	Acres	Percent
Commercial	304	13.9%
Governmental / Institutional	224	10.3%
Industrial	47	2.2%
Open Lands	35	1.6%
Outdoor Recreation	272	12.5%
Residential	362	16.6%
Transportation	640	29.3%
Utility	4	0.2%
Water	111	5.1%
Woodlands	183	8.4%
Total	2,182	100.0%

Source: NCWRPC GIS

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Adjacent to the City is the 1.5-mile radial planning area, which encompasses the City's whole exterritorial area. Considerable forested lands as well as scattered low-density residential uses and some businesses are in this area. There is also residential activity concentrated along water frontage within this area as well. Much of the future growth of the City will occur in this zone as a result of development pressure for City services.

This existing land use information provides the foundation for understanding where future land uses may go. Reviewing what land use patterns have occurred, in addition to reviewing the **Natural Resources Map** in this plan, will provide some guidance for what land uses are possible on undeveloped lands.

Land Use Trends

Land Supply

As shown in the Existing Land Use Map and in Table 21, the City contains over 200 acres of undeveloped land (woodlands and open lands). However, much of these undeveloped lands are located in wetland and/or floodplain areas, making them unsuitable for development.

Land Demand

Based on the population projections discussed in Chapter 1, **Table 22** summarizes the projected land demand based on the current acres of each land use per person:

Wisconsin DOA Projections project a declining demand for land within the City over the next several decades. The City of Eagle River's status as one of the most suitable and desirable locations within Vilas County for residential development makes the DOA's projected decrease in demand for land within the City unlikely.

NCWRPC Projections indicate that, with continued population growth through 2050, an average of 52 acres of developable land are needed per decade between 2020 and 2050, for a total demand of 156 acres by 2050.

Though the DOA's population projections are considered the official state projections, the City being one of the few communities within Vilas County to provide water and sewer infrastructure means that land demand for future development will likely exceed the DOA projections. Additionally, since the City provides most of the services geared towards elderly residents within Vilas County, many residents may move into the City as they advance in age. Therefore, the NCWRPC projections predict an alternative scenario that could result from these factors.

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Table 22: Land Use Demand in Acres				
Projection	**Category**	**2020-2030**	**2030-2040**	**2040-2050**
WI DOA	Projected new residents	15	-54	-101
	Residential (0.24 acres/person)	4	-13	-24
	Commercial (0.20 acres/person)	3	-11	-20
	Industrial (0.03 acres/person)	0.5	-2	-3
	Total	7	-25	-47
NCWRPC	Projected new residents	104	111	119
	Residential (0.24 acres/person)	25	26	28
	Commercial (0.20 acres/person)	21	22	24
	Industrial (0.03 acres/person)	3	3	4
	Total	48	52	55

Source: Wisconsin DOA & NCWRPC

The City of Eagle River is well suited for accommodating future development, as it is one of the only communities within Vilas County that provides municipal water and sewer infrastructure. The City of Eagle River is also home to many services and amenities that are becoming increasingly important for residents, making it an even more attractive location for future development. Additionally, shrinking household sizes means that demand for housing can continue even if there is not a population increase, since more housing units are needed to house the same number of people when household sizes decrease. Therefore, it is more likely that future land demands will more closely follow the NCWRPC projections than the WI DOA projections over the next several decades.

It is also important to note that while the City has an abundant supply of undeveloped land, most of this undeveloped land is located within wetland or floodplain areas, limiting the development potential of these lands. Limited land available within the current City boundary that is suited for development could lead to an increased need for annexation for the City to meet the land demands required for future development.

Residential

Residential demand is measured by examining population projections from the Wisconsin DOA and the NCWRPC. Population projections range from a DOA projected decrease of 140 residents between 2020 and 2050 and an NCWRPC projected increase of 334 residents between 2020 and 2050. Table 22 shows projected residential land demand based on these population projections and the current 0.24-acre average acres of residential land per capita, resulting in a projected need for 156 total acres of residential land between 2020 and 2050 based on NCWRPC projections.

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Commercial and Industrial

Commercial and industrial development is subject to market forces and difficult to predict. Based on existing density and DOA projections, there is a projected decrease in demand for both commercial and industrial development for each decade between 2020 and 2050. In contrast, the NCWRPC projections project a need for 76 additional acres of commercial (66 acres) and industrial (10 acres) lands by 2050. Should economic development efforts reverse the projected decrease in demand by DOA, and if trends continue to follow the NCWRPC projections more closely, then more land may be needed for these types of development.

It is also important to note that the City's two industrial parks are currently near capacity, which could result in the City needing to create a new industrial park in order to accommodate future commercial and industrial development. Another option to fulfill commercial and industrial land demand is redevelopment and infill development. There are currently underutilized properties, such as vacant lands, brownfields, and functionally obsolete buildings within the City that offer potential redevelopment and infill development opportunities within the City.

Land Values

Table 23 displays the assessed land values in the City of Eagle River. It is important to note that lands enrolled in the Managed Forest Law and Forest Crop Law programs and other tax-exempt lands are not included in values for Table 23. It should also be noted that improvements (structures) are included in these values. In 2025, the assessed value per acre in the City was valued at about $362,422 per acre. Properties classified as "Residential" have the highest value per acre within the City, followed by properties classified as "Commercial" and "Manufacturing".

Table 23: Assessed Land Value (per acre), 2025

Land Classification	Total Value of Land	Total Value per Acre
Residential	$154,622,800	$450,795
Commercial	$149,378,100	$304,853
Manufacturing	$3,332,900	$222,193
Agriculture	$0	$0.00
Undeveloped	$0	$0.00
Forest	$0	$0.00
Agricultural Forest	$0	$0.00
Other	$0	$0.00
Total	$307,333,800	$362,422

Source: WI Department of Revenue

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Opportunities for Redevelopment

There are numerous infill and redevelopment opportunities within the City of Eagle River. Pockets of vacant land, brownfields, and functionally obsolete buildings exist throughout the City where new industrial, commercial, and residential development could occur. There are also scattered vacant and underutilized buildings that once were industrial type uses throughout the City. Additionally, the City has an aging housing stock, as many of the City's residential areas are showing their age and could be revitalized.

There are also numerous previously contaminated sites within the City that could be redeveloped, provided proper remediation of these sites occurs. According to the WI DNR's Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS), there were 160 previously contaminated sites within the City as of Spring 2026. Of these sites, two have an open status and need remediation. The remaining 158 contaminated sites have been remediated to DNR standards and have either already been redeveloped or are ready for redevelopment. Several agencies such as the WI DNR, WEDC, and EPA all offer funding and assistance programs for cleaning up brownfields and contaminated sites. The DNR maintains a list of brownfield resources here: https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Brownfields/Financial.html.

Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts

Short-Term Rentals

The high number of housing units being used as short-term rentals pose potential conflicts for the City. Wisconsin's "Right-to-Rent" law (Wis. Stat. 66.1014) limits the ability of local governments to restrict short-term rentals. Local governments such as the City of Eagle River are limited to regulating aspects of the short-term rentals such as requiring licenses for short-term rental operators and regulating the maximum number of days a short-term rental unit can be rented out (no less than 180).

Data Centers

With data centers rapidly spreading throughout the country, it is important to consider the potential impacts of data centers. On one hand, data centers can potentially provide beneficial impacts such as increases in property tax revenues for communities and more jobs. On the other hand, there are significant public concerns regarding data centers, such as potential harmful impacts on the environment, increased utility costs for residents, and a negative impact on community aesthetics. Environmental and utility cost concerns are mainly due to the significant amounts of resources (water, electricity, etc.) that are needed for data centers to operate.

When it comes to regulating data centers, zoning is the strongest tool available to municipalities. Zoning allows municipalities to limit the districts where data centers are allowed via permitted or conditional use, or to outright prohibit data centers. Municipalities can also use zoning to impose conditions and restrictions on data center development such as setback, height, screening, and access requirements in an effort to help mitigate potential local concerns. Many municipalities and counties throughout Wisconsin are also considering temporary 12-month moratoriums on data center development. A moratorium on data center development gives the municipality time to determine the proper regulations and restrictions on data center development that would best serve their community.

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Future Land Use

The previous portions of this comprehensive plan have presented a discussion on population trends, environmental conditions, transportation and infrastructure considerations, housing and economic conditions and trends, and existing land use patterns and goals, that are needed when considering growth expectations for the City of Eagle River. The **Future Land Use Map** (Map 7) takes into consideration all of these factors and illustrates graphically how the City of Eagle River is planned to grow for the next 20 years. It is important to note that the future land use plan map is not a zoning map, rather it is a depiction of the desired growth patterns for several years into the future. The City's zoning ordinance and zoning map are the actual documents that set standards for each of the land uses, including setbacks, height limitations, minimum lot sizes, etc. It is also important to note that the future land use plan is dynamic and can be amended as market trends or the local economy change. The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, Ch. 66.1001, requires that the comprehensive plan be updated no less than once every ten years, and the zoning ordinance must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. The future land use plan map often shows some areas to be used for purposes other than what the current use may be. That map is a blueprint for development and can be changed. It is dynamic. The following paragraphs, along with information presented throughout this plan, help explain the reasoning behind the future land use plan categories.

Future Land Use Map Classifications:

Future land use classifications are groups of land uses that are compatible and separates conflicting uses. The classifications are not zoning districts and do not have the authority of zoning but are intended for use as a guide when making land use and zoning decisions.

Downtown Commercial Use

This land use category encompasses the downtown commercial core and allows limited residential uses as described in the City of Eagle River Zoning Code. This district is intended to accommodate the wide variety of property uses, which were part of the historic development of the downtown area of Eagle River. Appropriate zoning districts for this land use category include Downtown Commercial or Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Highway Commercial Use

This land use category is intended to accommodate those motorist oriented commercial activities which may not be compatible with the downtown commercial district and whose services are community or region wide and to accommodate limited residential uses as described in the City of Eagle River Zoning Code. Appropriate zoning districts for this land use category include Highway Commercial and Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Industrial Use

This land use category is intended to accommodate manufacturing, warehousing, fabricating, packing, packaging, assembly, repairs, terminals, departments, storage and similar uses which do not include residential uses or short-term residential use or dwelling unit of any kind. Appropriate zoning districts for this land use category include Industrial.

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Park and Recreation Use

This land use category is intended to preserve and perpetuate in an open state certain areas, such as rivers and drainage ways, wetlands and marshes, parks, floodplains and green belts and natural habitats for plants and animal life. It is also intended to utilize these areas for parks, recreation and recreation facilities including, through conditional use, campgrounds. Appropriate zoning districts for this land use category include Park and Recreation and Government Use.

Government Use

This land use category applies to those lands where federal, state, local governmental and quasi-governmental activities are conducted and where governments or quasi-governmental units hold title to such lands for community or public use. Appropriate zoning districts for this land use district include the Government Use district.

Residential

There are several residential future land use classifications mapped in the Future Land Use Map which are described below. Types of residential development desired within the City range from single-family housing to multi-family housing options such as apartment complexes and condominiums.

2025 Wisconsin Act 173 requires residential densities to be mapped; see Map 7: Future Land Use. Residential land use categories and densities found on this map are as follows:

Single Family Use

This future land use category has a maximum density of 6.05 dwelling units per acre and is intended for low-density single-family residential. Appropriate zoning districts for this land use category include Single-Family Residence and Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Single/Two Family Use

This future land use category has a maximum density of 6.05 dwelling units per acre and is intended for moderate density, allowing both single-family and two-family units. Appropriate zoning districts for this land use category include Single/Two Family Residence and Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Multiple Family Use

This land use category has a maximum density of 6.05 dwelling units per acre and is intended for high-density, allowing for multi-family housing. Appropriate zoning districts for this land use category include Multiple-Family Residence and Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Mixed Use

This land use category has a maximum density of 6.05 dwelling units per acre and is intended for commercial, office, entertainment, institutional, and residential uses. The idea is to customize development to the land/water features bordering the property and the State Highway infrastructure. The following zoning districts are most appropriate for this future land use category: Highway Commercial, Multi-Family Residence, Single- and Two-Family Residence, Single-Family Residence, Office/Residence, and Planned Unit Development (PUD).

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Office/Residential Use

This land use category has a maximum density of 6.05 dwelling units per acre and is intended for moderate density residences with office buildings or civic, government, educational or institutional structures. Appropriate zoning districts for this land use category include Office/Residence, Planned Unit Development (PUD) or Government Use.

** - Note that, per State Statute, 100-year floodplains, wetlands, and lands owned by local, state, or federal government that are not intended for development do not count towards net density for any residential areas mapped in the Future Land Use Map.

Projected Residential Land Demand

Wisconsin Act 173 also requires comprehensive plans to project residential land demand in five-year increments. Because the State's official population projections are only available in ten-year increments (as shown earlier in Table 22), and Act 173 requires five-year increments, the five-year demand is calculated by dividing each decade in two as indicated below in **Table 24**. Note that the DOA projection reflects the "low" range of acreage demand and the NCWRPC projection reflects the "high" range of demand, with actual demand likely falling somewhere between the two.

Table 24: Act 173 Residential Demand Projections

Projection and Residential Land Use	2025-2030	2030-2035	2035-2040	2040-2045	2045-2050	Total 2025-2050
DOA Projected Land Demand	2	-6	-6	-12	-12	-35
NCWRPC Projected Land Demand	12	13	13	14	14	67

Source: DOA & NCWRPC

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Land Use Programs

A number of different programs directly and indirectly affect land use within the City. The principal land use programs utilized by the City include the Eagle River Zoning Ordinance, the City's Subdivision Ordinance, and extraterritorial zoning. See the Implementation Chapter for more on these ordinances.

Comprehensive Planning Programming

Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law was established in state statutes in 1999. The comprehensive plan is intended to be a local government's guide to community physical, social, and economic development. Comprehensive plans are not meant to serve as land use regulations in themselves; instead, they provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a twenty-year vision for future planning and community decisions.

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law does not mandate how a local community should grow, but it requires public participation at the local level in deciding a vision for the community's future. The uniqueness of individual comprehensive plans reflects community-specific and locally driven planning processes.

While a local government may choose to include additional elements, a comprehensive plan must include at least all of the nine elements below as defined by the Comprehensive Planning Law (s. 66.1001).

- Issues and Opportunities (Demographics)
- Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Housing
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Land Use
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Implementation

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Goals, Objectives, and Policies

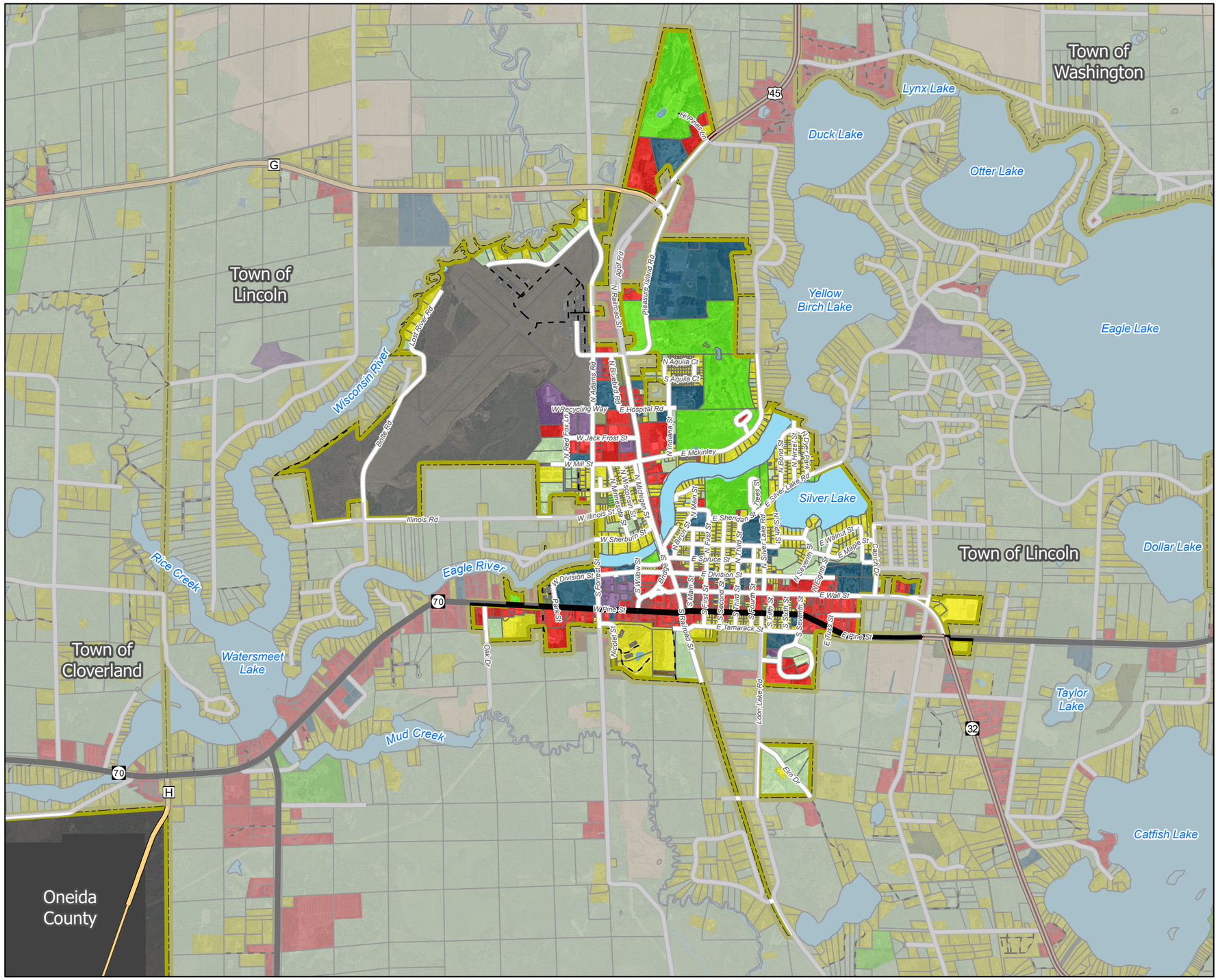
Goal: Guide future development and redevelopment of both public and private property.

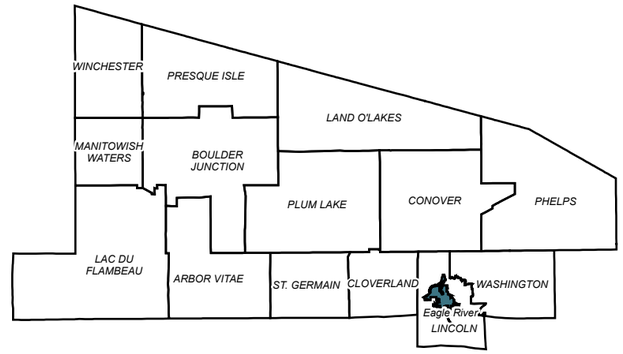
Objectives:

1. Plan for future residential, light industrial, commercial, urban forestry, recreation conservancy and other uses in accordance with public input.
2. Recommend development patterns.
3. Guide future development for compatibility.
4. Develop a future land use map for the future potential land uses considering existing land use, economic conditions, location and density over the next 20 years.
5. Continue to review and update City ordinances and policies to ensure that they can effectively guide land use development throughout the City in an effort to mitigate and prevent land use conflicts.

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City of Eagle River - Vilas County DRAFT Existing Land Use Map 6





- Minor Civil Division
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Parcels

Existing Land Use 2025

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Governmental / Institutional
- Industrial
- Open Lands
- Outdoor Recreation
- Residential
- Transportation
- Utility
- Woodlands
- Water

0 0.33 0.65 1.3 Miles

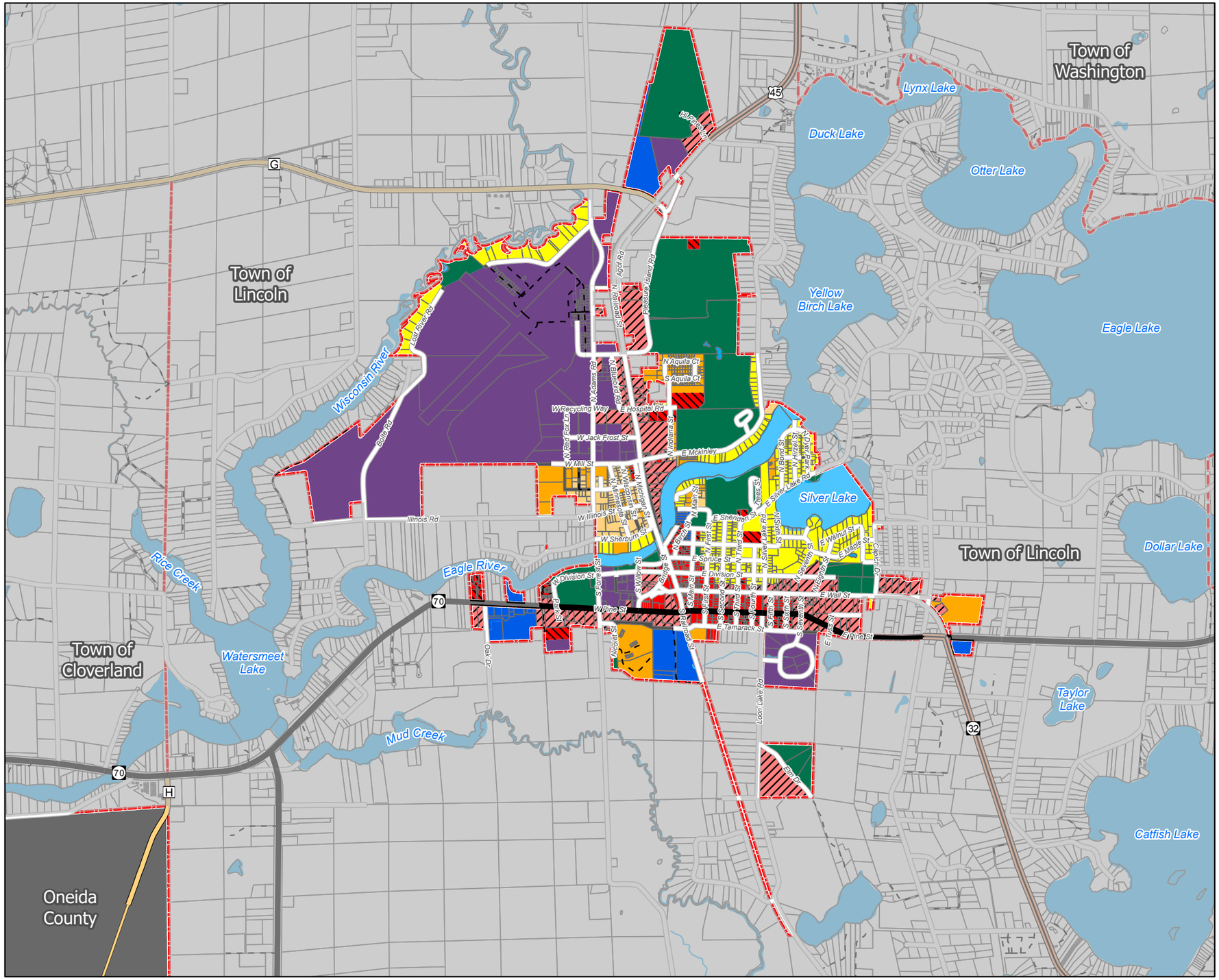
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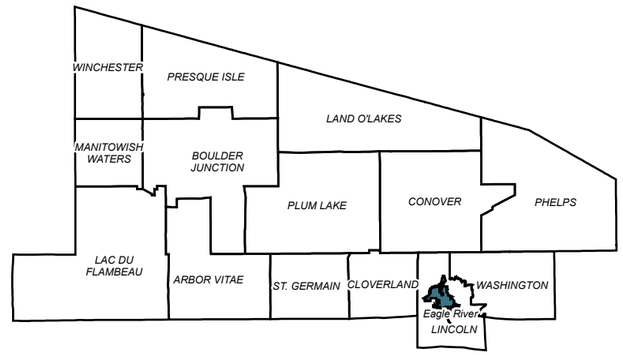
Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Vilas Co

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City of Eagle River - Vilas County DRAFT Future Land Use Map 7





- Minor Civil Division
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Parcels

Future Land Use

- Forestry
- Single Family Residential
- Single & Two Family Residential
- Multi-Family
- Downtown Commercial
- Highway Commercial
- General Business
- Office/Residential
- Recreation/Recreation Business
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Parks & Recreation
- Transportation
- Water

0 0.33 0.65 1.3 Miles

N W E S

Source: WisDOT, WI DNR, NCWRPC, Vilas Co

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