

Issues and Opportunities

Statutory Requirements for this Chapter

Background information on the local governmental unit and a statement of overall objectives, policies, goals and programs of the local governmental unit to guide the future development and redevelopment of the local governmental unit over a 20-year planning period. Background information shall include population, household and employment forecasts that the local governmental unit uses in developing its comprehensive plan, and demographic trends, age distribution, educational levels, income levels and employment characteristics that exist within the local governmental unit.

Geology and Natural Surroundings

Nepeuskun’s gently rolling landscape and numerous wetlands are reflective of glacial activity. Of particular significance to the Nepeuskun area is Rush Lake, one of the largest “prairie potholes” east of the Mississippi River. Prairie potholes are depressional wetlands (primarily freshwater marshes) found most often in the Upper Midwest. These potholes fill with snowmelt and rain in the spring. Some prairie pothole marshes are temporary, while others, such as Rush Lake, are essentially permanent.

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About 90 percent of the 3,000-acre Rush Lake lies in the Town of Nepeuskun. The Lake is shallow, with a depth in most areas of around 2 feet and provides ideal conditions for waterfowl habitat. It is the major recreational resource in the area for fishing, hunting and light boating. Efforts are currently underway to restore this important resource.

Location and History of Settlement

The Town of Nepeuskun is located in southwestern Winnebago County. The Town generally has a rural character with many fine farms and productive soils. There are urban influences, however, with the City of Oshkosh and the greater Fox River Valley only a few minutes away via State Highway 91 and State Highway 44. The town is also influenced by its proximity to the Cities of Ripon, Green Lake, Berlin and Omro.

Native Americans were the first to live in the area, dating back about 8,000 to 11,000 years ago. Nomadic tribes took advantage of the rich hunting opportunities offered by Rush Lake and the abundance of edible native flora and fauna. Much later, agriculturally dominated tribes flourished. The entire shoreland around the lake is thought to have once been one continuous village site. Numerous mounds, earthworks,

an ancient human remains have been found throughout this area (Rush Lake/Upper Waukau Creek Resource Inventory and Strategic Planning Project).

Initially settled by Europeans around 1846 the Town of Nepeuskun quickly expanded to include a post office, six schools, three churches, homes, and businesses. By 1857 the Milwaukee and Horicon rail service was connecting the Town to commodities and settlers, contributing to growth in the area. Farming was the primary driving force for historic growth and prosperity in the Town.

Population Trends and Projections

In the early 1900s, Nepeuskun had a population of 888 residents. By 1990, the population of Nepeuskun had declined to 647 people, reflecting a general decline in the rural population across the United States. During the 1990s, however, population began to grow again in the Town and by 2000 the population had increased to 689.

This recent population increase is likely due in part to employment opportunities in nearby Fox Valley. People are also drawn to Nepeuskun by affordable land and housing, and the attractiveness of its rural character.

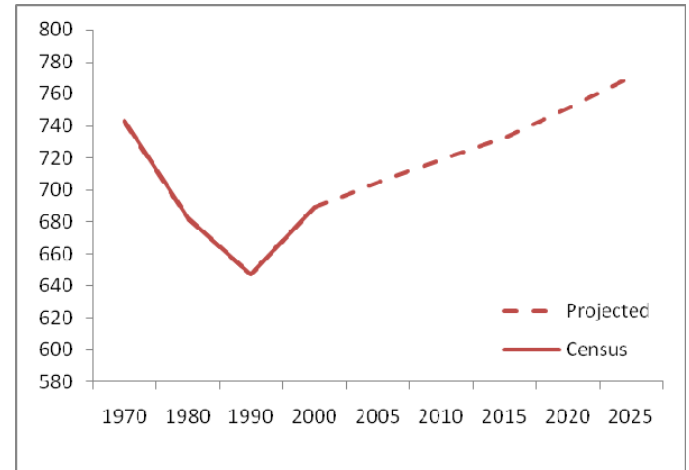
The Wisconsin Department of Administration projects that this trend will continue in Nepeuskun, with gradual growth resulting in a projected population of 719 in 2010 and 771 in 2025. This represents about 3.5 additional people per year.

As population increases, household size is expected to gradually decrease. This follows the national trend of smaller household size, and reflects a decrease in the number of children per family and an increase in the number of people who live by themselves. In 2000, the average household size in Nepeuskun was 2.7 people (US Census). By 2025, this is expected to decrease to 2.6 (ScanUS). This means that while the total population is only expected to increase by 12 percent between 2000 and 2025, the number of households in the town will increase by 16 percent from 254 to 295. Although this is a relatively modest increase, the forty plus new housing units needed to accommodate this growth could have a significant effect on the rural character of Nepeuskun unless they are appropriately located and designed.

Figure 1. Nepeuskun Population and Households Table

YEAR	POPULATION	HOUSEHOLDS
US Census of Population and Housing		
1970	743	190
1980	682	224
1990	647	230
2000	689	254
Wisconsin DOA Projections		
2005	705	262
2010	719	271
2015	733	278
2020	751	287
2025	771	295

Figure 2. Town of Nepeuskun Population Chart



It's important to understand the significant uncertainty inherent in population projections. Projections are based on past population and household trends; however, it is difficult if not impossible to predict future deviations from these trends. Gas prices, for example, may discourage people from living away from their place of employment. Similarly, the closure of a major nearby employment center can force people to leave the community in search of work. On the other hand, new employment opportunities can significantly increase population growth. Population projections should therefore be viewed with a grain of salt, and potential population growth beyond what is anticipated should be accommodated in future plans.

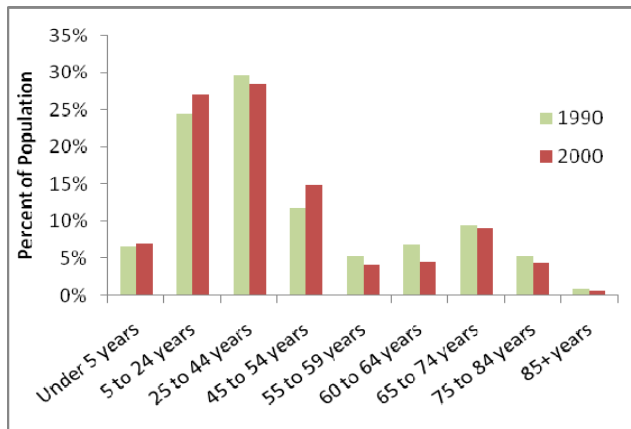
Age Distribution

The population under the age of 25 increased between 1990 and 2000 from 201 (31% of population) to 234 (34 % of population). This is counter to trends at the County level, where the population under the age of 25 has *decreased* slightly from 37 percent of the population to 36 percent of the population. The percent of the population age 45 to 54 has also increased, from 12 percent of the total population in 1990 to 15 percent of the population in 2000. This is consistent with what has

happened at the county-level. All other age groups have decreased as a percent of the total population.

These changing demographics suggest that young families with children are drawn to Nepeuskun and the high quality of life that it offers. Retirement-age people, however, are choosing to leave the community, most likely because of the lack of senior services and senior housing opportunities in the Town.

Figure 3 Nepeuskun Age Distribution



Education and Employment Trends and Projections

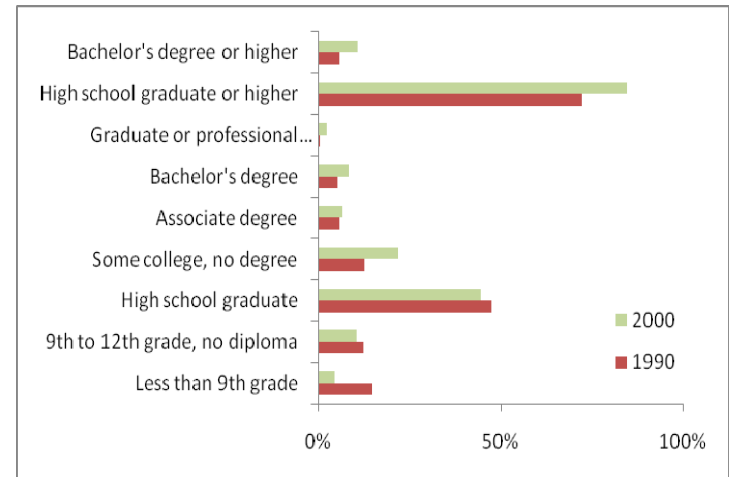
Nepeuskun has historically been an agricultural community. While employment in farming-related occupations is declining, these rural roots still influence employment and education patterns in the Town.

Nepeuskun residents generally have less formal education than the rest of Winnebago County. About 85 percent (382 people) of the Town’s population has a high school degree or higher. This is fairly comparable to Winnebago County and to the State of Wisconsin. However, only 11 percent (52 people) of the town’s population has a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 23 percent of the county and state population. The percent of the town’s population with a bachelor’s degree or higher has, however, significantly increased since 1990, when

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only 6 percent of the population had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Figure 4 Nepeuskun Education Levels



There has also been a corresponding increase in income levels. In 1989, the median household income in Nepeuskun was \$32,083. By 1999, this had increased to \$47,344. Taking inflation into account, this represents a 10 percent increase in average household income over a 10-year period. The most significant increase was seen in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range. In 1989, only 17 percent (37 households) of the households made this much money. In 1999, 44 percent (113 households) of the households fell into this income category.

This reflects both the changing education levels of residents as well as changes in the employment characteristics of the community. The most significant changes in employment can be seen in the agricultural, professional, health/education, and recreation/lodging sectors. Employment in the agricultural sector decreased substantially between 1990 and 2000. In 1990, 26 percent (88 people) of the workforce population was employed in agricultural, forestry, or fishing (with agricultural most likely making up most if not all of this employment). By 2000, this had decreased to only 7 percent (29 people) of the workforce population.

At the same time, the number of people employed in the education, health care, professional positions, recreation, and lodging sectors has increased. Employment in the “professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services” sector accounts for the greatest increase. In 1990 only 2 percent of the workforce population was employed in this sector. By 2000, this had increased to 9 percent. Similarly, the “arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services” sector increased from 0 percent of the workforce in 1990 to 6 percent of the workforce in 2000. The “educational, health and social services” increased from 9 percent of the workforce to 13 percent of the workforce.

It is difficult to predict future employment at the town level. In the Fox Valley region of Wisconsin, however, jobs are expected to grow from 283,330 non-farm jobs in 2004 to 359,558 by 2030 (based on Wisconsin OEA economic projections). Education/health services, construction/ mining/natural resources, leisure/hospitality, and Information/Profession Services/Other Services are expected to lead this growth, with a combined projected growth of 24,210 jobs between 2004 and 2014. While much of this growth will likely occur outside of Nepeuskun, these trends suggest the types of job opportunities that might be available in the future for town residents. More details on employment growth can be found in the Economic Development chapter of this plan.

Key Issues and Opportunities Identified by Residents

Town residents are proud to call Nepeuskun home, but at the same time recognize that there are a number of challenges and opportunities that they collectively face as residents of the town. This plan is designed to help focus the collective energy of residents and elected officials, and offers a blueprint for the physical, economic and cultural growth and preservation of the Town of Nepeuskun.

A wide variety of issues and opportunities were identified throughout the planning process. The community survey, visioning workshops, and interviews with key stakeholders and decision makers highlighted several critical issues and opportunities that the community is facing. This public participation process, discussed in the Introduction, was integral to the process and helped shape the focus of this plan. Detailed information on the issues and opportunities are incorporated into each chapter of the plan. The most important of these are summarized below.

[This section will be completed after additional input from the public and key stakeholders. Key issues identified by the Plan Commission are listed below for reference purposes and will be incorporated into the final version of this section.]

Limit the visual impact of new housing development

- Need vegetation buffers – encourage new homes to “settle” into the landscape
- Don’t permit houses to “line up” along roadways without some screening

Protect prime farmland while allowing farmers some flexibility to sell off lots.

- Limit the number of new houses, especially in agricultural areas.
- Limit the size of non-farm lots.
- Limit conflicts between farm and residential uses.

Support farming that is compatible with Nepeuskun’s character and goals

- Restrict mega farms
- Help to connect new or next generation farmers with farmland in the town.
- Educate non-farm neighbors about the reality of farming

Pursue opportunities to enhance tax base

- Encourage some commercial development that is related to agriculture and/or recreation/tourism.

Safe rural roads

- Improve pedestrian and bike safety along County Road E
- Improve safety of key intersections and roads (V, E, and Loop Road; and Rabbit Trail)

Improve Access to Rush Lake

- Promote as hunting and bird-watching destination
- Evaluate opportunities for additional public access on east-side of lake.

Balance regulations and property rights

- Establish and enforce regulations needed to protect what people like about Nepeuskun
- Maintain property rights and freedoms associated with rural living

Town of Nepeuskun 20-Year Vision

The purpose of comprehensive planning is to identify a clear and compelling vision for the future and to develop strategies to reach that vision. Each section of the Plan contains goals, objectives, and action items that will help lead our community to a bright future. The following vision statement paints a picture of what this future will look like.

Working together, we envision Nepeuskun twenty years from now as a place where:

[Note: Right now this is just a place holder. The vision statement will be drafted with detailed input from the Plan Commission].

- Housing vision

- Transportation vision
- Utilities and community facilities vision
- Agricultural, natural, and cultural resources vision
- Economic development vision
- Intergovernmental Cooperation vision
- Land use vision

Definition of Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goals are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the Town should approach preservation and development issues. These goals are based on key issues, opportunities and problems that affect the Town.

Objectives suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishments of an objective contribute to the fulfillment of a goal. While achievement of an objective is often not easily measured, objectives are usually attainable through policies and specific implementation activities.

Policies are rules, courses of action, or programs used to ensure *Plan* implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. Town decision makers should use policies on a day-to-day basis. Success in achieving policies is usually measurable.

Town of Nepeuskun Overall Planning Goals

Overall planning goals set the stage for what we’re trying to accomplish in Nepeuskun. Just as the vision paints a picture of Nepeuskun in twenty years, these goals help to describe what we’re trying to achieve over the long-term. The specific goals contained in each chapter of the plan reflect and support the overall planning goals outlined below.

[Note: Right now this is just a place holder. These goals will be developed based on the vision statement]