

# Town of Wellington

## Comprehensive Plan

Monroe County, Wisconsin



Prepared by the Town of Wellington  
Planning Commission

February, 2022



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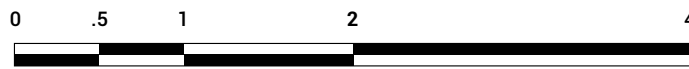
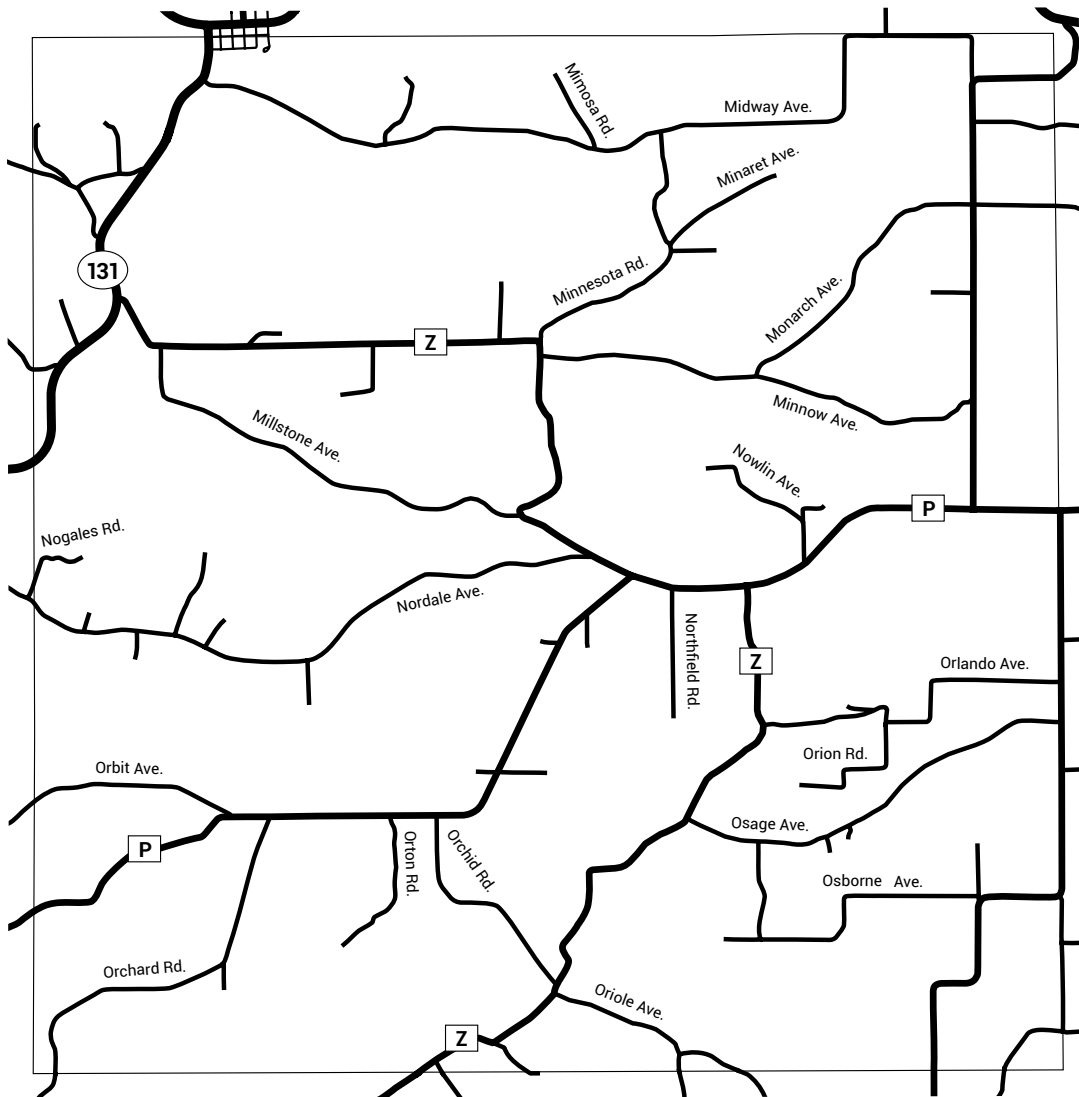
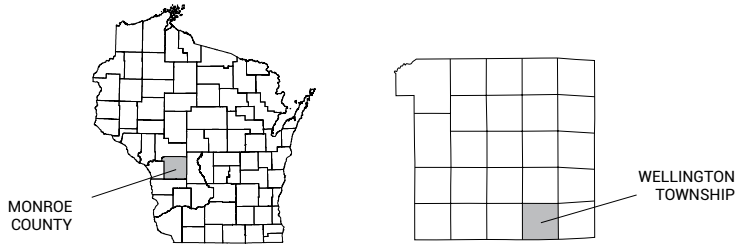
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*Front cover aerial photo courtesy of Dave Heilman*

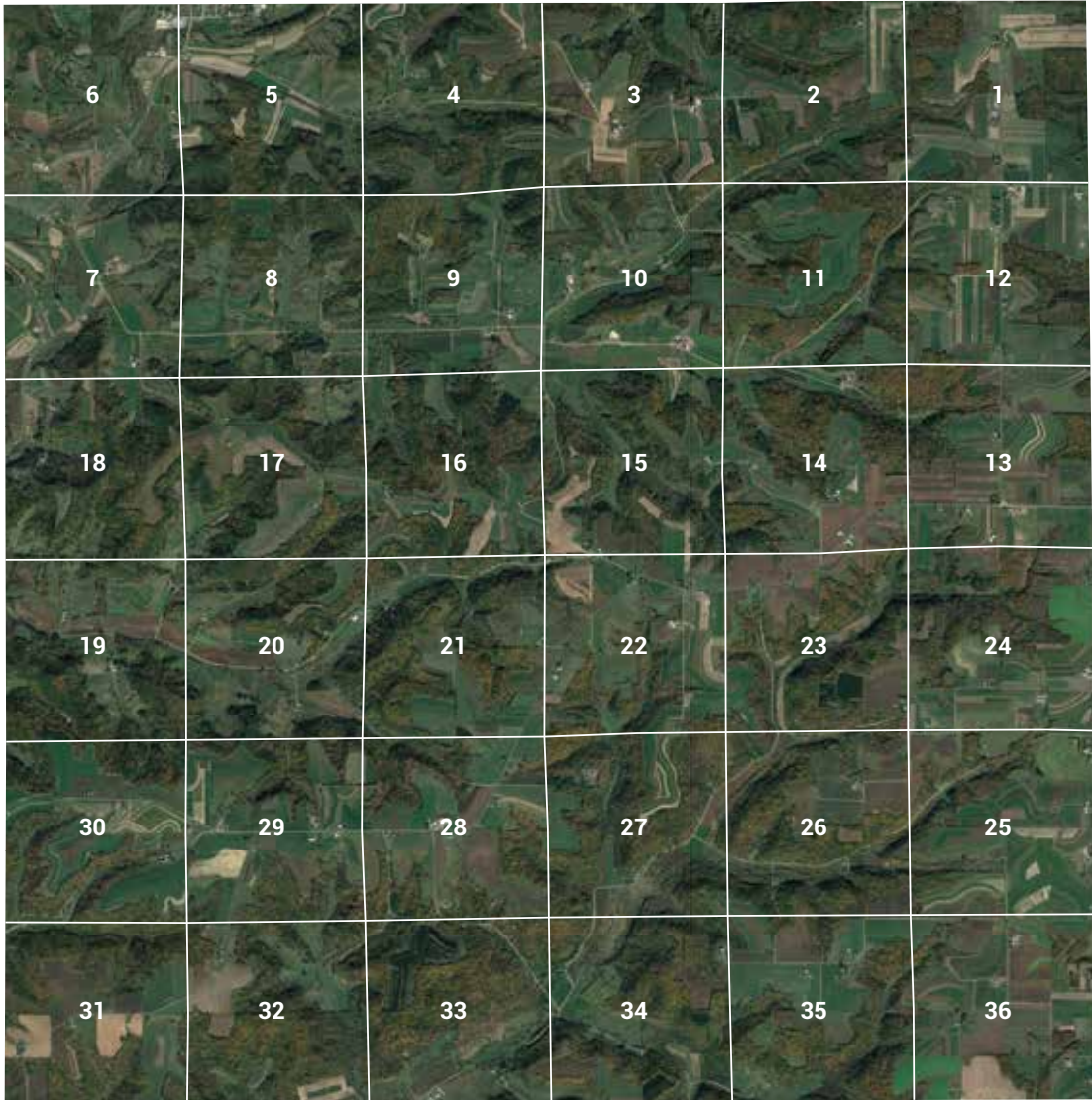
# Township of Wellington, Monroe County, WI



SCALE IN MILES

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# Township of Wellington, Monroe County, WI



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# ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Our township is great just the way it is today!  
But, we have to stay on top of things to keep it  
this way.

– Citizen survey comment

## Introduction

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### Comprehensive Planning Law

The Comprehensive Planning Law, Wis. Stats. sec. 66.1001, was originally adopted in 1999 and amended in 2000 and 2010. The law requires a city, village, or town, exercising village powers, to adopt a Comprehensive Plan in order to engage in certain land use activities, including subdivision regulation, zoning, and shoreland zoning. The law requires that a local governmental unit engaged in official mapping, subdivision regulation, zoning regulation, or shoreland zoning regulation be consistent with that local governmental unit's comprehensive plan.

### Purpose of Wellington's Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Wellington developed this comprehensive plan to meet the expectations of the Comprehensive Planning Law. However, it is anticipated that the time, effort and resources invested in producing this document does more than solely meet a state mandate.

This comprehensive plan also informs the Town of Wellington's residents, officials and other stakeholders regarding the Town's past history, its geography and physical features, statistics about the people who make their home here, and insights into how our Town may change in the future.

In addition, the 2020 Citizen Survey described in the comprehensive plan provided a forum for survey's respondents to express their hopes and their concerns for their town. The survey's tabulated results and verbatim respondent comments are distributed throughout this plan enabling readers to "hear" directly from the town's most invested stake holders—its residents and its land owners.

While it is hoped that readers find this comprehensive plan informative and interesting, its primary purpose is to act as a planning resource. The descriptive text and its suggested goals, objectives and activities provide residents, land owners and decision makers a means for recognizing and managing the Town of Wellington's existing issues and anticipated challenges.

### Wellington's Vision Statement

The Town of Wellington's comprehensive plan reviews the Town's past history, describes its current conditions, and prepares the Town's residents and decision makers for its future challenges.

# Town of Wellington Profile

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## Introduction to Wellington

Wellington is a 35.4 square mile township located in the scenic Driftless Region of west central Wisconsin. Wellington is located in the southeast corner of Monroe County bordered on the west by the Town of Sheldon, on the north by the Town of Wilton and on the east by the Town of Glendale. The Vernon County line forms Wellington's southern boundary.

The villages of Wilton, Kendall and Ontario lie just outside the town's borders while the small cities of Tomah and Sparta are located approximately twenty miles from Wellington. The city of La Crosse is fifty miles to the west and Madison, Wisconsin's capital city, is found ninety miles to the southeast.

With a mean elevation of 1371 feet, the Town of Wellington presents a rural landscape of forested hillsides and farmed ridgetops with valleys shaped by fast moving streams and the winding Kickapoo River. Settled in the 1850s, Wellington's families traditionally relied on farming for their livelihoods. Farming continues to be important to the Town economy. Increasingly, however, land is being transitioned from agriculture to residential and recreational uses.

Wellington is governed by a Town Board consisting of the chairperson and two supervisors elected to two-year terms. A town clerk and a town treasurer are non-voting officers hired by the Board. The Town employs a full-time patrolman as well as several part-time employees. A five-member Planning Commission, appointed for a three-year term by the Board, advises the Town's officers on regulatory and planning issues.

## Wellington's Population Demographics

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### Population Changes Over Time

Selected census counts reflect the changes over time in Wellington's population. For example, the population grew from 245 in 1860 to 1120 in 1890 before dropping to 566 by 1950. Like many of Monroe county's rural townships, Wellington's population growth, decline and then stabilization is likely tied to consolidation in the region's agricultural economy. The 2010 and 2020 census indicate a rebound in the town's population. As with most rural areas, the town's population density is relatively low at 19 persons per square mile.

**Table 1.1 Historical Population**

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2000-20 net
Town of Wellington	689	633	616	566	544	621	664	(+120)
Monroe County	31,241	31,610	35,074	36,633	40,899	44,673	46,889	(+5,990)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020



The Wisconsin Department of Administration’s population projections suggest that the Town of Wellington’s population will continue to increase over time. Factors that may influence such growth include the increasing number of individuals purchasing land for residential purposes as well as the continuing growth of the local Amish community.

**Table 1.2 Population Projections Compared to 2020**

	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Town of Wellington	664	720	750	770	780
Monroe County	46,889	50,975	52,950	53,970	54,410

Source: State of Wisconsin Department of Administration

### Population Characteristics

The characteristics of Wellington’s residents differs somewhat from the United States population as a whole. The Town has a higher proportion of men to women and its population is older. However, the percentage of young children in the town is higher than that of the United States.

**Table 1.3 Population Characteristics**

Gender & Age	Number	Percent	U.S.
Total population	621	100%	
Male	317	51%	49.2%
Female	304	49%	50.8%
Median age (years)	39.1		38.5
Under 5 years	38	6.1%	3.3%
18 years and over	443	71.3%	76%
65 years and over	94	15.1%	13%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

### Racial Characteristics

The Town of Wellington is more racially homogeneous than United States in its entirety. 97.7% of the town’s population identifies as white with the next largest race/ethnic group (1.8%) identifying as Hispanic or Latino. These figures result in a Diversity Index of 7%\*. Wellington was largely settled by individuals of European decent and its current population continues to reflect that history. 97.1% of Wellington’s citizens report that they are native-born.

\* The Diversity Index is a scale where 0% indicates all members of a given population are of one race/ethnic group and 100% when all members of a given population are evenly divided into two or more race/ethnic groups.

Source: Wisconsin Home Town Locator, 2020

**Table 1.4 Racial Characteristics**

	Number	Percent	U.S.
One race	619	99.7%	97.1%
White	607	97.7%	72.4%
Black or African-American	2	0.3%	12.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	0.8%	.09%
Asian	0	0.0%	4.8%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0.2%
Some other race	5	0.8%	6.2%
Two or more races	2	0.3%	2.9%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	11	1.8%	16.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

### Social Characteristics

Wellington's social characters show a community whose members served in the military at a slightly higher rate (8.3%) than other U. S. residents (7.5%). Wellington residents are predominately English speakers (76.7%) who were born in the United States (97.5%). Rates of disability are lower in Wellington than in the country collectively. Wellington couples also tend to remain married at a higher percentage than couples in the United States as a whole.

**Table 1.5 Social Characteristics**

	Number	Percent	U.S.
Civilian veterans	35	8.3%	7.5%
Disability status (5 years and over)	35	5.8%	12.6%
Foreign born	5	.08%	13.5%
Males, married, except separated (15 years or over)	144	58.3%	49.8%
Females, married, except separated (15 years or over)	142	67.3%	46.5%
Speak a language other than English (5 years or over)	70	13.3%	21.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

### The Amish Community

The Amish are a growing segment of Wisconsin's population. According to the Association of Religious Data Archives, there were 20 Amish congregations, with 3,174 individuals, present in the state in 1980. By 2010, those figures had increased in Wisconsin to 115 Amish congregations comprising 14,957 individuals.

A similar growth occurred in Monroe county as the Amish population in the county went from 318 in 1980 to 1,627 in 2010. Monroe county is third among Wisconsin's counties for the number of Amish residents. Neighboring Vernon county has the largest Amish population in the state.

**Table 1.6 Top Five Wisconsin Counties by Number of Amish**

County	Individuals
Vernon	2,786
Clark	1,986
Monroe	1,627
Green Lake	812
Eau Claire	794

Source: Association of Religious Data Archives, 2010

### **The Amish in Wellington**

By the mid 20th Century, it became apparent that the hills and valleys of the Kickapoo River Valley, including Wellington, did not lend themselves to large scale commercial farming. While that may have been an issue for today's mechanized farming operations, it was not a problem for the traditional farming methods of the Amish.

When the first six Amish families in this area moved from Missouri to north of the village of Wilton in 1969, it was the availability of small farms that attracted them. Wellington's Amish have strong ties to those original families.

Wellington's Old Order Amish comprise the southern-most district of the eight districts forming the larger Wilton Amish Community. The Southern District includes 22 families living mostly in the northern portion of the Town of Wellington. This is a growing community, and according to District leaders, has doubled its population since 1988.

A second group, the Schwartzentruber Amish, live mainly in the southern portion of the town. The Schwartzentrubers first arrived in Wellington in 2013. Currently, there are 54 individuals in the local Schwartzentruber community with 39 individuals living in Wellington and the remainder living in the adjoining Town of Glendale. Members of this group had originally lived in Ohio and then Minnesota before coming to Wisconsin. Like the Old Order Amish living nearby, the Schwartzentrubers were attracted by the availability of small farms as well as competitive prices and a market for their raw milk dairy products.

The Amish typically do not participate in government programs such as the United States Census. However, local Amish leaders have been very helpful in providing information about their community for inclusion in Wellington's comprehensive plan document.

## **Public Participation Plan**

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### **Comprehensive Planning Law**

The Comprehensive Planning Law, Wis. Stats. sec. 66.s1001, requires that the Board of the Town of Wellington produce and adopt written procedures that encourage public participation in the development and evaluation of its comprehensive plan. To fulfill this requirement, the Town Board approved a Public Participation Plan (Resolution 20.1) on January 21, 2020. This public participation plan describes a process that includes 1) public meetings of the Town Board and the Town Planning Commission; 2) distribution, collection and analysis of a citizen opinion survey; 3) public hearings

reviewing the draft comprehensive plan; 4) procedures for notifying interested parties of the plan; 5) a description of the plan approval process and 6) a means of distributing the approved comprehensive plan. The Public Participation Plan is included as Appendix A.

### **Town of Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey**

An important aspect of the Public Participation Plan was the creation, administration, and analysis of a Citizen Opinion Survey mailed to tax payers in the Town of Wellington. This 2020 Citizen Opinion was based on a citizen survey conducted in Wellington during 2008.

Three hundred and twenty-six (326) surveys were mailed out on February 20, 2020 to individuals listed on the town's tax role. Each envelope contained the survey form and a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the survey. Respondents were asked to return their surveys by March 16, 2020. One hundred and seventeen (117) surveys were returned. Among the respondents, seventy-one (71) identified themselves as residents and forty-six (46) identified themselves as non-resident land owners. The complete survey form and instructions, respondents' replies and analysis of those responses is included as Appendix B in this comprehensive plan.

The information and insights gleaned from the 2020 Citizen Opinion Survey have been essential in the creation of the Town of Wellington's comprehensive plan. The narratives of this plan's nine Elements include survey data and respondents' comments relevant to each element's topics as well as an interpretive summary.

### **Citizen Opinion Survey: Issues of Emphasis**

The twenty-seven (27) issues listed in Part II of the 2020 Survey were chosen to line up to elements addressed in Wellington's comprehensive plan. While respondents were asked to weigh these issues in the context of the comprehensive plan, it is also reasonable to think that their responses provide insight into how they value these issues. That is, how importantly they view a particular issue and how, in their opinion, one issue might compare to another.

### **Citizen Opinion Survey: Open-ended Questions**

Six open-ended questions were included in the Survey. The questions invited respondents to share their thoughts about the Town of Wellington. Direct comments from the survey's respondents provide useful insights into "states of mind" of Town residents and landowners. As a result, their comments will be used throughout the comprehensive plan to underscore the plan's narrative. Three of the six questions seem particularly relevant to the Element 1: Issues and Opportunities. They are ...

*What do you want our town to be like?*  
*What do you believe are our town's strengths?*  
*What do you believe are the town's weaknesses?*



### ***What do you want our town to be like?***

Most of those who responded to this question indicated that they wanted the town to remain much like it is at present: that is, mainly rural with an economy that is largely based on agriculture. Below are how some of the respondents answered this question:

- A safe healthy place to live and work, agriculture is very important but large factory farms deter from what our township should be
- A place you can be proud to call home
- Just the way it is
- Keep as a rural area
- As free as possible, as clean as possible, as friendly as possible, as humble as possible



### ***What do you believe are our town's strengths?***

Twenty-seven percent of the respondents directly addressed the work done by our town board, our board chairman and the town patrolman. Other strengths were thought to be the Town's small farms, its rural environment and the natural beauty of the area. A sampling of responses included:

- Good management by the town chairman and board, excellent attempts at road maintenance
- Neighborly residents, attractive landscape, mix of working and natural landscapes, reasonable taxes, decent roads and infrastructure
- The current board is working in the best interests of the residents - a rural township is a nice place to live
- Clean air, clean water, agriculture
- Rural life style, Amish neighbors, family farms



### ***What do you believe are the town's weaknesses?***

For rural townships, the costliest service provided is likely to be road maintenance. A number of our town's citizens mentioned dissatisfaction with the current quality of the town's road maintenance and repairs. Another weakness listed was the number of junked vehicles and the perceived lack of enforcement of the town's vehicle ordinance. Survey responses included:

- Lack of follow-up in violations of town ordinance
- Many of our rural roads are in bad shape
- Some places need to be cleaned up of junked vehicles, etc. and enforced
- Poor roads - they are not maintained or replaced as needed
- Communication to the town citizens, website is really out of date, very few mailings to keep citizens up to date

## Survey Summary

Survey responses indicate a general satisfaction with the “state” of the Town of Wellington. Respondents like it here and want to keep things as they are. The issues relating to town services (transportation, emergency services), a healthy environment (clean water and air) and a rural life style (agriculture, open landscapes) were emphasized more by the respondents than issues concerning economic development (job creation, business opportunities, population growth) or housing. Opinions, however, were diverse and indicate the challenges the town faces in meeting residents' expectations, respecting differences in perspective, enhancing communication and cooperation and managing the inevitability of change.

## Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Goals

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning legislation created 14 planning goals to coordinate holistic thinking among state, regional, and local government entities. The 14 planning goals are listed here for reference:

1. Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures.
2. Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
3. Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.
4. Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.
5. Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state government and utility costs.
6. Preservation of cultural, historic and archaeological sites.
7. Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
8. Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
9. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
10. Providing an adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
11. Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional and local levels.
12. Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
13. Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
14. Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

## **Wellington's Comprehensive Plan Goals**

The comprehensive plan's goals will be described at the end of each element's narrative with a complete listing of all the plan's goals found in Element 9: Implementation.





## HOUSING



A clean and safe place to live  
and build homes.

– Citizen survey comment

### Introduction

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Safe and secure housing is essential to the quality of life for individuals and families regardless of the setting. Citizens traditionally have supported a governments' regulatory role in helping to maintain "public health, safety, and general welfare" of its citizens. However, the scope of those regulations, and their enforcement, differ from locale to locale and can be a source of tension between those favoring more regulation and those favoring less. Like all governments, town boards frequently find themselves trying to balance the rights of individual residents with the broader community's welfare.

#### Town Government's Role in Housing

Wellington is not zoned and as a result, its housing regulations are largely determined by the rules imposed by Monroe County and the State of Wisconsin. Over the years, however, Wellington town boards have implemented a limited number of requirements and expectations.

Residents are required to complete and submit permits prior to constructing a residence, adding to a residence or erecting a non-residential building. Those seeking a permit must complete the appropriate forms, pay a fee and receive approval from the town board prior to initiating construction. Wellington has contracted with a local building inspector to review residential building permits and make onsite inspections to assure the construction aligns with town, county and state requirements.

In addition to the building permit process, Wellington also requires a driveway permit. This permit is accompanied by a site inspection by a town official to assure safe sightlines exist from the drive to the road. This permit also initiates the acquisition of a fire number that can be used to identify a particular property in case of emergencies.

The town's interest in housing also extends to related issues; such as, emergency services and road maintenance. These topics will be covered later in this comprehensive plan.

# Household Characteristics

Wellington's average family size had increased from 2.86 in 2010 to 3.0 persons in 2020. This is higher than Monroe County as a whole (2.49) but lower than the average of other areas of the United States (3.14). The number of total housing units increased over the ten-year period from 256 to 277. During that decade, the number of occupied homes also increased from 217 to 236.

In 2010, the occupancy rate of Wellington's homes was 84.7% and are similar to the occupancy rate of 85.1% in 2020. In 2020, 79.2% of occupied homes were occupied by the home's owner. This is a higher rate than Monroe County (62.8%) and the national average of 65.1%. The number of rentals in the town increased from 40 to 49 units. Rentals represented 20.7% of the occupied housing units in the town in 2020 as compared to 27.4% for Monroe County and a national average for rentals of 34.9%.

The number of vacant units in Wellington increased slightly since 2010 (from 39 to 41) but fell as a percentage of the total housing units from 15.2% to 14.8%. The percentage of vacant housing in the town was higher than the rate of the vacant housing for Monroe County (9.7%) and the United States (11.4%).

**Table 2.1 Wellington Household Characteristics: 2010 and 2020**

	2010	2020	Monroe	U.S.
Household population	621	664		
Average family size	2.86	3.0	2.49	3.14
Total housing units	256	277		
Occupied housing units	217	236		
Owner-occupied units	177	187	62.8%	65.1%
Renter-occupied units	40	49	27.4%	34.9%
Vacant housing units	39	41	9.7%	11.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2020

## Household Types

Most of the households in Wellington (73%) are families headed by married couples. Families lead by one adult account for 5% of households. The remaining 22% are one person households. In Monroe County as a whole, the percentage of families headed by married couples is lower than Wellington's while the percentages of family households headed by a single adult and the number of one person households are higher.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 5-Year Estimate

## Housing Trends

Since 2010, 23 residential permits were issued by the Wellington town board; 17 for new dwellings and 6 for additions to existing houses. Building permits issued between 2010 and 2020 did not indicate any particular construction trend in the town as the permits were pretty evenly distributed across the period.

Source: Town of Wellington, 2020

## Age of Housing

More than a third (38.4%) of Wellington's housing units were built prior to 1940. The majority of these homes were built when the number of active farms was much higher in Wellington than is the case currently. About 20% of the town's housing stock was constructed since 2000. Many of these newer homes reflect an increase in the number of non-farm residences.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 5-Year Estimate

## Residential Growth Forecast

The State of Wisconsin's Department of Administration projects an increase in population for the Town of Wellington of approximately 15% over the next twenty years.

**Table 2.2 Population Projections: 2020 to 2040**

	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Town of Wellington	664	720	750	770	780

Source: State of Wisconsin Department of Administration

## Value of Homes

The average value of a home in Wellington has risen from \$165,700 in 2010 to \$213,369 in 2020. This represents an increase in value of 22%. The 2020 average value of a home in Monroe County as a whole was \$188,002. The home values in 2010 may reflect a loss of value resulting from the 2008 mortgage crisis and resulting recession.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020

## Town of Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey: Housing

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The first four of the 2020 Citizen Opinion Survey's 27 Emphasis Issues addressed housing. An Emphasis Score was assigned each issue based on the percentage of participants who choose to give that issue "moderate emphasis" or "a lot of emphasis." The Emphasis Issues were then ranked from 1 to 27; that is, ranked from issues that the survey respondents felt should receive more emphasis to those that should receive less emphasis.

**Table 2.3 Scoring Housing-related Emphasis Issues**

Issue #	Issue Statement	Emphasis Score	Emphasis Rank
4.	Land fragmentation, housing density	62%	19 of 27
1.	Safe and affordable housing	54%	21 of 27
3.	Population growth	37%	24 of 27
2.	Availability of rental housing	28%	27 of 27

Source: Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey, 2020

## Survey Summary: Housing

It would appear that most of the respondents did not view housing as a particular important issue in terms of the town's comprehensive plan. Perhaps these individuals believe that housing is a matter best left up to residents and their families. Such a perspective would be consistent with Wellington's history of limited interest in government regulation such as zoning. Several participant comments would seem to support such a view:

*Too much regulation/ordinances as if it was a village or suburb ...*

*Adding "allowable use" and possible restrictions on future development within the township without becoming too regulatory or invasive of people's choices and lifestyles.*

*I have no desire to see the township zoned!*

There were concerns expressed about visual blight of deteriorating farms or "junky" properties and the effect those conditions may have on the property values of others. For example, one participant suggested that, *"We are a low-income magnet when it comes to housing. This brings down property values."* However, one individual was worried about the availability of affordable housing in the town, *"Considering the number of homeless people in Monroe County, it's a shame to see them (vacant houses) empty."*

Land fragmentation and housing density were issues of importance to many of those completing the survey. *"Rural, with low population density,"* was a description that captured what many respondents wanted for Wellington. Common concerns centered on farmland being broken into small parcels, houses being too close to one another or other perceived threats to the rural nature of the township. Maintaining a stable town population seemed to be preferred by the respondents over encouraging population growth. Generally, those surveyed were anxious about the loss of small family farms and the breakup and repurposing of farmland to residential and recreation purposes.

## Housing: Goals, Objectives, and Policies

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**Provide for the residential needs of all Wellington residents to meet existing and future housing demands.**

**Objective:**

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1. Encourage a range of housing that meets the needs of area residents of various income levels, household size, age, and health status.

**Policies:**

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1. **Single Family Housing.** Encourage the development of affordable single-family housing options that allow the younger population to remain in the community.
2. **Housing for Elderly and those with Special Needs.** Support improvements to existing residences that will allow for elderly or special needs citizens to remain within their residences providing that such improvements meet building code requirements.
3. **Fair Housing Information.** Coordinate with the Monroe County Housing Authority to provide Fair Housing Information for town officials and residents.

GOAL  
**2**

**Maintain housing properties, types and densities that reinforce Wellington's rural character.**

**Objectives:**

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1. Support farm-based and single-family residences as the preferred type of housing in Wellington.
2. Encourage low-density agricultural and residential developments that minimize conversion of productive agricultural, forested, or open space land.

**Policies:**

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1. **Building Permits.** Utilize Wellington's Site Permit for Dwellings requirements to manage density of residential properties.
2. **Maintain Housing.** Encourage voluntary efforts by homeowners to maintain, rehabilitate, update or otherwise make improvements to their homes.

GOAL  
**3**

**Provide safe and sanitary housing to meet existing and future needs of the community.**

**Objective:**

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1. Utilize the town's permitting process and building inspection requirement to verify that homes are built according to levels deemed safe by town, county, state, and industry standards.

**Policies:**

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1. **Housing Standards.** Support the State's Uniform Dwelling Code by requiring inspection of new structures and repair of unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions.
2. **Public Health and Safety Standards.** Cooperate with Monroe County Zoning and Health Departments to address properties that violate public health and safety standards.

3. **Avoid Certain Sites for Building.** Discourage development within flood-prone or environmentally sensitive areas.
4. **Removal of Undesirable Materials.** Utilize relevant town ordinances to discourage the accumulation of “junk” vehicles and machinery, debris, solid and hazardous or waste materials in the vicinity of housing.
5. **Assist in Removal or Renovation.** Identify opportunities to strengthen, replace, or remove structures that are structurally or environmentally vulnerable.
6. **Building Inspector Reports.** Establish an annual meeting between the town board and Wellington's building inspector to exchange information and discuss concerns.

## TRANSPORTATION



Keep quality roads without raising taxes.

– Citizen survey comment

### Introduction

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Citizens often have a long list of services they would like to see their government leaders deliver with the funding the taxpayers provide. Wellington's 2020 Citizen Survey clearly indicated that roads and road maintenance should be the top priority for their town's government. Respondents frequently listed maintaining road surfaces, repairing bridges, deepening ditches, clearing down trees, opening culverts, mowing roadsides, plowing snow, and salting ice among their survey comments. Meeting residents' expectations while holding the line on expenses is, and will be, an ongoing challenge for the town's leaders.

### Highways and Roads

A combination of state, county and town roads serve the transportation needs of Wellington's residents: 2.2 miles of State Highway 131 passes through the northwest corner of Wellington while 21.5 miles of county highways (P, V, and Z) cross the town's interior. There are 44.72 miles of town-maintained roads. Of those, 37.9 miles are paved and 6.8 miles are graveled. Two town roads, Nogales and Missouri, receive only limited use and are classified as "low maintenance."

### Bridges

Wellington's ridge and valley topography, with its many streams, have required the construction and maintenance of 22 bridges. Along with bridges, several box culverts have been installed and maintained. Tube culverts are also needed to move water under driveways and roads. Typically, driveway culverts are purchased by landowners and installed by the town employees.

### Funding

Funding to maintain Wellington's roads require a significant slice of the town's budget. In 2020, 60% (\$192,480) of the town's total budget of \$321,500 was targeted for roads and road maintenance. Severe flooding in recent years; 2007, 2017, and 2018 have placed an especially heavy burden on the town to repair or replace badly damaged bridges and roads as well as to repair eroded waterways. Federal, state and county assistance has helped the town mitigate some of the costs of weather-related emergencies. For example, town officials applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for reimbursement of \$150,000 for damages to road, bridge and infrastructure resulting from the August 2018 flood event.

## **Town Employee Workload**

According to the Wellington's Town Chair, 80% of employee time is spent on road-related maintenance. This includes right-of-way work (mowing, tree removal, ditch cleaning), snow removal, adding and grading road materials, and repairing and replacing signage.

## **Intergovernmental Cooperation**

The Town of Wellington works closely with the Monroe County Highway Department to plan and finance major road and bridge projects. Recent cooperative projects included bridge repair on Nokomis Road and the installation of guard rails on Minnesota Road and Minoan Avenue. The county highway department is also the source of road signage and fire signs used in the town. Wellington and neighboring towns collaborate on maintaining roads that cross town boundaries; such as, Nordale, Orbit and Missouri Avenues. In addition, Wellington and nearby towns assist each other when emergency situations necessitate additional equipment or manpower.

## **Road Usage**

Roads in rural Wisconsin typically receive heavy use from trucks and farm equipment and Wellington is certainly no exception. Milk trucks, gravel trucks, fuel trucks, tractors and other agricultural implements use town roads. Passenger cars and pickup trucks move residents to their places of employment and to nearby villages, towns and cities. The local Amish community members, with their horse-drawn and steel-wheeled carriages and wagons, are a frequent sight on Wellington's roads. All of these modes of transportation require good roads and timely road maintenance.

## **Transportation Options**

Residents in the Town of Wellington are not served by mass transit. However, there are some options to the use of private vehicles. School buses carry local children to and from school and special educational services. The Amish frequently utilize hired vans when they need to travel some distance or transport families or other groups. ADRC, Monroe County's Aging and Disability Resource Center, provides transportation upon request for aged or disabled residents. Both Sparta and Tomah have cabs for hire. Otherwise, most of Wellington residents must provide their own transportation to get to where they need to go.

## **Town-Owned Buildings**

The purchase and maintenance of town-owned equipment is essential to the goal of maintaining the town's transportation infrastructure. In addition to housing for the town's trucks, tractors, road grader and related equipment, building space is required for equipment maintenance as well as the storing of necessary materials such as sand, road salt and blacktop mix.

Three town-owned buildings are used for transportation-related purposes. The town shop and sand/salt storage building are located at County Highway Z and Nordale Avenue. The town shop is a 54' by 44' building consisting of three vehicle bays. The building is primarily used for equipment maintenance and storage and was last remodeled in 1981. The sand/salt building, located next to the town shop, was built in 1994 and re-modeled and re-roofed in 2015. The Wellington Town Hall at the junction of County Highway V and P was built in the 1970's. The Town Hall's two garage bays house several pieces of road maintenance equipment.



## Town of Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey: Transportation

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Two of the 2020 Citizen Opinion Survey's Emphasis Issues considered transportation. Respondents were asked to rate how much emphasis each of the issues listed on the survey should receive in Wellington's comprehensive plan.

**Table 3.1 Scoring Transportation-related Emphasis Issues**

Issue #	Issue Statement	Emphasis Score	Emphasis Rank
6.	Town roads and bridges	95%	1 of 27
7.	Town buildings and equipment	69%	16 of 27

Source: Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey, 2020

### Survey Summary: Transportation

It's not surprising that something as highly valued as good, well maintained roads would elicit strong opinions from town residents on both positive and negative. Here are a few examples:

#### Transportation Strengths:

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- Care of the township roads for snow removal and maintenance
- Pretty good roads and maintenance. Roads are taken care of in a timely manner
- Most roads are plowed out so people can get to work in early morning

#### Transportation Weaknesses:

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- Poor roads – they are not maintained or replaced as necessary
- Not enough guard rails at dangerous areas, no posted speed limit, several roads need work

Several other comments suggested an understanding of the importance of the town's equipment and facilities to safe and well-maintained roads:

*"Spend our tax dollars to fix roads, buy equipment on a regular basis"*

*"Nice maintenance of vehicles and equipment"*

*"Perhaps a new municipal building"*

The Citizen Survey revealed that transportation was the respondents' top priority. This suggests the importance town residents place on town roads for getting to work and school, moving farm equipment, transporting goods and services, and the many other reasons people have for getting from place to place. There was general satisfaction with the town's transportation infrastructure and maintenance. However, some respondents were concerned about the deterioration of transportation infrastructure caused by limited financial resources and the impact of natural disasters. With sixty percent of the town's budget going towards equipment and road maintenance, it is likely Wellington's residents will continue to consider transportation a major responsibility of the town government.

## Transportation: Goals, Objectives, and Policies

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### **Provide for a safe, efficient, and well-maintained transportation network for residents, farmers, area businesses, and emergency services.**

#### **Objectives:**

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1. Maintain Wellington's transportation network at a level of service desired by town residents and businesses.
2. Manage access and design of the transportation network in order to effectively maintain the safe and functional integrity of town roads and recreational trails (ATV/UTV and snowmobile).
3. Consider the transportation needs of the town's Amish population and coordinate with local Amish community leaders.
4. Ensure that the transportation network is designed to withstand the effects of known hazardous impacts, such as flooding, so that they still function in the event of an emergency or disaster.
5. Coordinate major transportation projects with neighboring towns, villages, Monroe County, and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT).

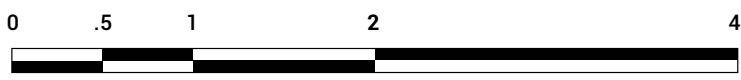
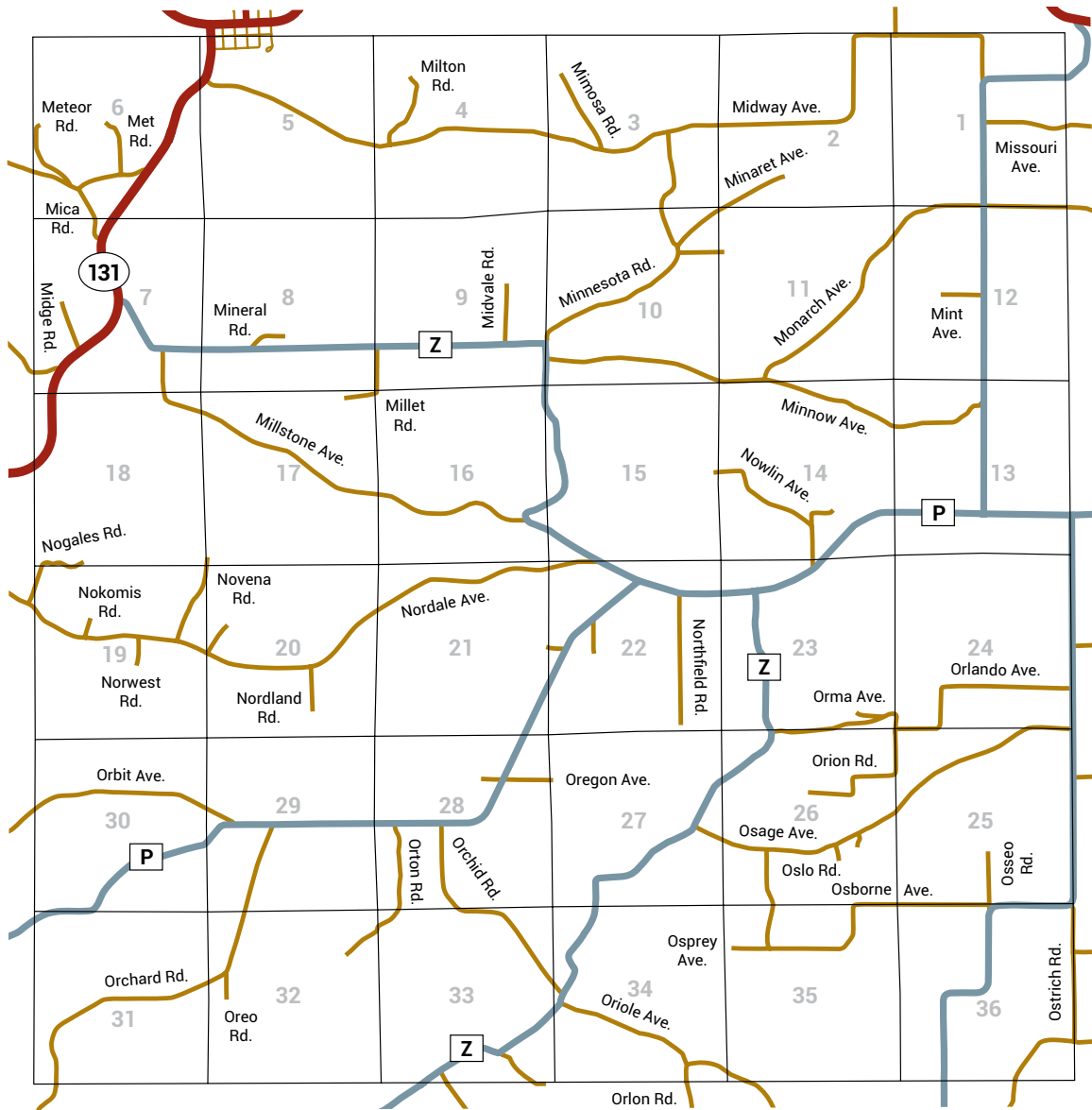
#### **Policies:**

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1. **Maintain Condition Standards for Town roads.** Utilize WisDOT's Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) to manage road conditions data and improve decision making. Strive to maintain an average PASER rating of 7 for all paved town roads.
2. **Address Transportation Concerns.** Respond to the public's special transportation needs and concerns in a timely manner. Maintain a log of transportation inquiries and requests including town official's actions and resulting outcomes.
3. **Protection of Town Roads.** Encourage developments and traffic patterns that do not increase traffic on town roads unnecessarily or impact weight restrictions of roads and bridges. Where appropriate, designate weight restrictions and truck routes, to protect local roads.
4. **Driveways and Road Access.** Enforce Wellington's driveway ordinance to manage access to the transportation network and to meet site and design requirements.

5. **Stream Crossings (fords, bridges, or culverts).** Consult with Monroe County Zoning and Land Conservation Department and WI Department of Natural Resources (WIDNR) for new or existing roads and driveways that require stream crossings. Work with the county and WIDNR to properly site and design crossings to withstand extreme flooding events and minimize other impacts such as downstream erosion, upstream flooding, and stream habitat alterations.
6. **ATV/UTV and Snowmobile Routes.** Cooperate with ATV/UTV and snowmobile clubs to ensure that Wellington has an active role in reviewing and providing input on designated routes through the town. Require that ATV/UTV and snowmobile routes provide adequate and visible signage along designated routes and at intersections to indicate multi-use. ATV/UTV operation should be in accordance to the provisions of Wisconsin State Statute Chapter 23.33 and Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 64.
7. **Transportation Alternatives.** Collaborate with Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Monroe County to identify and provide transportation services for disabled and elderly residents.
8. **Amish Community.** Identify potential conflicts between vehicles and horse and buggy traffic and address traffic concerns with effective signage. Maintain shoulders and ditches to improve passing width and visibility. Work with Amish Community leaders to address safety concerns of night-time travel.
9. **Coordination of Improvements to Local, County, and State Roadways.** Stay informed of WisDOT and Monroe County's efforts to maintain and improve state and county highways. Coordinate improvements to adjacent local roads whenever feasible. Work with adjoining towns and villages to plan, construct and maintain those roadways that affect multiple jurisdictions, including cost sharing where appropriate.
10. **Evacuation Plans.** Develop evacuation plans and identify emergency access or alternate routes to be used in case of emergencies.

# Roads – Township of Wellington, Monroe County, WI



SCALE IN MILES

- STATE HWY.
- COUNTY HWY.
- TOWN ROAD

## UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Our township is great just the way it is today!  
But, we have to stay on top of things to keep it  
this way.

– Citizen survey comment

### Introduction

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Historically, country people prided themselves on being self-sufficient: growing their own vegetables, raising or hunting their meat, cutting wood to warm their homes, and earning their living from their land. Such experiences have tended to shape rural perspectives and values. Today, the majority of rural residents depend on products, services and jobs that are sourced outside of their rural communities. Like residents in villages, suburbs and cities, rural residents want dependable sources of energy and communications, good schools and social programs, quality health care and effective government services. Their level of satisfaction with their community and its leaders may hinge on the degree to which their wants and needs are met.

### Utilities

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The Town of Wellington does not operate any utilities and the town-owned public facilities are limited to a Town Shop, a sand/salt storage building and the Town Hall.

Town residents receive electrical service from the Vernon Electric Cooperative or Alliant Energy. Century Link provides “landline” phone service and internet service in the town. Century Link has recently laid a new fiber optic system to support their local rural customers. Many town residents have mobile phone service available from a number of providers. Three telecommunication towers are located on high points within the town to facilitate phone and internet services. In addition, a growing number of residents use satellite receivers to provide their television and internet service.

### Rural Broadband Service

The Rebuild Rural Coalition has listed rural-broadband access as a greatly needed infrastructure improvement. Federal, state and local officials see value in better understanding rural communities’ broadband technical-assistance needs (source: *Farmoutlook* Spring 2021). Recently, much of Wellington was identified as “underserved” in terms of broadband service by the Public Service Commission. In addition, 78% of residents completing the Wellington 2020 Citizen Survey felt that “access to telecommunications” was an important issue for the town. The availability of reliable access to high-speed internet service is likely to be a crucial issue for the town’s residents and officials.

## **Fire, Ambulance, and Police Services**

Wellington is served by the volunteer fire departments located in the local villages of Kendall, Ontario, and Wilton. Calls for assistance are routed to the department closest to the location of the call. Ambulance and EMT service is located in the villages of Wilton and Ontario. Police protection is provided by the Monroe County Sheriff's department with assistance from the police departments in the three villages. The services described are supported by the Town of Wellington through property tax dollars as well as fees-for-services paid by town residents.

## **Health Care**

There are no health care providers located in Wellington or the three nearby villages. Most residents travel to Tomah (approximately 20 miles away) or Sparta (approximately 25 miles away) for routine health care. Both cities have hospitals as well as clinics affiliated with Gunderson Health System or Mayo Health System. Hillsboro (approximately 20 miles away) also has a hospital and clinic associated with the Gunderson Health System. The village of Norwalk and Cashton have health clinics owned and managed by the Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center. Two regional hospital systems, Gunderson Health System and Mayo Health System, are located in La Crosse 45 miles west of Wellington. Residents requiring a higher level of care or seeking more care options often utilize the health services available in La Crosse.

## **Services for the Elderly and the Disabled**

Monroe County Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) provides a range of services to elderly and disabled individuals throughout the county including the Town of Wellington. ADRC staff can assist with benefit access, dementia care, and family caregiver support. In addition, ADRC programs provide for meal deliveries, transportation assistance and age-appropriate exercise options.

Disabled individuals are those with difficulties in one or more of the following areas; hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care and/or independent living. Census figures indicate that 7.7% of Wellington's residents are disabled. The percentage of disabled individuals in the nation as a whole is 12.6%. Ambulatory, self-care and/or independent living difficulties are the most prevalent conditions for disabled individuals in Wellington.

Wellington is a rural community located at a distance from the types of amenities offered by larger town and cities. Programs and services such as those offered by ADRC are essential to helping our elderly and disabled residents maintain their quality of life.

## **Community Facilities**

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### **Town of Wellington Facilities**

The town owns three buildings. The Town Shop and sand/salt storage building are located at County Highway Z and Nordale Avenue. The Town Shop is primarily used for equipment maintenance and storage. The Town Shop was built prior to 1970 and was last remodeled in 1981. The sand/salt building, located next to the Town Shop, was built in 1994 and re-modeled and re-roofed in 2015. The Wellington Town Hall building at the junction of County Highway V and P was built in the 1980's on the site of the former Hoffman Corners Creamery. In addition to serving as the Town Hall, this building's garage houses several pieces of road maintenance equipment. The Town Hall building has structural and health/safety related issues. The town board is currently exploring the possibility of replacing the current building with a new and larger multipurpose structure.

## Schools

Those settling in Wellington after 1850 were focused on clearing land, planting crops, and providing shelter for their families and livestock. Once such primary needs were being met, these early settlers began to view themselves as more than just individuals or families; they were also members of a growing community. Common needs led to common actions and few of those actions were as important as providing education for the community's young people.

### Country Schools

Wellington's early public schools, like most rural schools for the era, were "country schools" located for the convenience of local kids walking to school. Often built, supplied and maintained by neighboring families, the schools were a source of community cohesion and a hub of community activity. Among the schools located in Wellington were Sunny Slope, Slabtown, Hoffman Corners, Black Valley, Webb School, Hart Valley, Sutcliff Corners, Kinney Valley, South Ridge, German School, Musch (Pleasant Ridge) School and Pleasant Valley.

Each school was similar and yet unique and their histories provide community insights that still resonant today. For example, on the top of South Ridge next to County Highway P, sits a small red brick building in a state of disrepair. In the past, this building was Pleasant Ridge School. The original log school was built around 1869 and located on a corner of land owned by the Hutchinson family. It was located across the road from the farm of a Civil War veteran, Louis Musch, and the original school was known as Musch School. After the log school burned around 1900, it was replaced by a larger building of red brick. Local farmers hauled bricks a long distance to the top of the ridge, while the community pitched in to build the school. The school was renamed Pleasant Ridge School and later renamed as Red Brick School. Children from the ridge and three nearby valleys attended Red Brick School. The valley children, of course, had uphill hikes to get there! "The History of Wellington" (see Appendix C) offers descriptions of other "county schools."

### School Consolidation

When schools began consolidating in Wisconsin in the late 1950's, county kids began attending schools in the villages of Ontario, Wilton and Kendall. Later, the village schools were closed in response to growing state education requirements and declining student enrollments. Local students were bussed further from home to consolidated schools that encompassed a wider geographic area including the Royall, Brookwood or Hillsboro school systems.

The formation of those school districts wasn't an easy task, the pain of losing country schools and joining other communities to form larger consolidated districts changed the nature of local schooling. Concerns over travel, quality of education, potential taxes assessments, loss of control, and mixing with children of other traditions and cultures were all issues of concern. Most parents, however, remained hopeful that any discomfort caused by these changes would ultimately result in a positive educational experience for their children.

Today, Wellington is divided into three public school districts; Norwalk, Ontario and Wilton (NOW), Royall and Hillsboro. Geographically, the western three quarters of the town are part of the NOW district while students in the eastern portion attend Royall and several families in the town's southeast corner attend the Hillsboro schools. Wellington's parents may choose to place their children in schools other than in the district where they reside. Families may also opt to home school their children. For example, among the families living in the Royall district's portion of Wellington, nine students attend Royall schools, four students went to schools other than Royall and two children were homeschooled (*source: Royall School District, Elroy, WI, 2020*). Each district receives a portion of the property taxes paid by landowners in the respective districts. The mill rate

multiplier differs from district to district based on their respective budgets and debt burdens. For Fiscal Year 2019-20, the mill rates for the local districts were; NOW 8.66, Royal 9.94 and Hillsboro 10.06.

**Table 4.1 2010 Wellington Property Parcels and Valuation by School District**

District	Parcels	Valuation
Royal	193	6,851,100
Hillsboro	27	978,400
NOW	740	20,780,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>28,610,300</b>

**Table 4.2 2020 Wellington Property Parcels and Valuation by School District**

District	Parcels	Valuation
Royal	191	8,738,600
Hillsboro	26	1,279,400
NOW	747	28,247,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>964</b>	<b>38,265,500</b>

### Amish Schools

The Amish provide schools for the children in their community. There are two schools serving the Old Amish district with 34 students. The Swartzentrauber community has one school with 11 students currently in attendance. Amish families fund their schools based on the number of children who are, or will be, attending school. Teachers are frequently young women from the local communities. As is the practice among the Amish, children are required to attend school through the eighth grade. The Amish schools, like the Wellington's earlier county schools, are located in a manner that enable students to walk to and from school.

### Post Offices

In 1877, the township had two post offices; one at Albanville in Section 13 and the other at Hart's Mills in Sections 33 and 34. The post office and general store at Albanville (now known as Hoffman Corners) was replaced in 1941 when Alvin Silbaugh built a general store. A third general store replaced Silbaugh's and was later converted into a residence. The Hoffman Corners Creamery was also built here in 1910 and operated until being destroyed by a fire in 1986. Today, the site is the location of the Wellington Town Hall. Currently, the township is divided among three municipal Zip Codes: 54651 (Ontario), 54638 (Kendall) and 54670 (Wilton). Roads within Monroe County are named using the letters of the alphabet to assist in locating addresses for the purposes of mail service, fire protection and safety. Typically, roads in Wellington are named starting with the letters M, N or O; as in, Midway, Nordale or Osage.

### Libraries

Each of the three villages nearest Wellington; Kendall, Ontario and Wilton, have public libraries. Wellington's residents are able to use any of these libraries provided they have a library card issued by the Winding Rivers Library System. While the libraries themselves are relatively small with limited collections of books, magazines, educational and entertainment materials; all library patrons have



access to materials held in any of the Winding Rivers Library System's more than thirty member libraries. In addition, each library provides free access to the Internet. In some villages and towns, libraries are supported by local public taxes. The Town of Wellington has, from year-to-year, included donations in its annual budget to help support the three local libraries.

**Additional Community Services**

The Town of Wellington provides garbage pickup and recycling to its residents. The garbage pickup occurs twice monthly and is supported by town funds and the sale of garbage bags. The recycling bin is located at the Town Hall. The recycling service is handled by contract with a local trash hauling/recycling business. The town also sponsors "Clean Up" events twice a year. Residents are able to bring in large items and appliances to dumpsters located at the Town Shop for a week in the spring and in the fall.

**Town of Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey: Utilities/Community Facilities**

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Five of the 2020 Citizen Opinion Survey's Emphasis Issues addressed the Utilities/Community Facilities Element. Survey respondents were asked how much emphasis each of these five issues should receive in Wellington's comprehensive plan.

**Table 4.3 Scoring Utilities/Community Facilities-related Emphasis Issues**

Issue #	Issue Statement	Emphasis Score	Emphasis Rank
19.	Emergency services	93%	2 of 27
24.	Residents' health, safety, and welfare	82%	10 of 27
20.	Town services: recycling, cemetery	79%	11 of 27
26.	Access to telecommunications	78%	12 of 27
25.	Access to energy	77%	13 of 27

Source: Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey, 2020

**Survey Summary: Utilities/Community Facilities**

The Utilities/Community Facilities emphasis scores and rankings indicate that most respondents were satisfied with their access to utilities and with the services provided by local, town and county governments and institutions. The fee and tax-based services are also reinforced by family and community networks of support. One respondent suggested, *"I think most of the residents can get by just fine with what resources are already available through local governments, hospitals, churches and friends and neighbors not to mention the services currently provided by the town."* There is, however, a level of concern about individuals, families and local governments abilities to afford the types of services and support residents desire. One survey participant worried about, *"Paying for the services we require."*

## Utilities and Community Facilities: Goals, Objectives, and Policies

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### Maintain cost-effective and reliable services, utilities, and facilities.

#### Objectives:

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1. Confirm that public and private utilities are constructed and maintained according to professional and governmental standards to protect the public health, minimize disruption to natural environment, and not detract from Wellington's rural character.
2. Ensure that the Town Hall, and other town facilities, meet the needs of residents.
3. Monitor satisfaction with local emergency services and other utility or community services. Seek adjustments as necessary to maintain adequate service levels and improve response time.
4. Support the expansion of broadband service and strengthen relationships with broadband service providers while protecting community interests.
5. Seek grant funding opportunities to improve community facilities and services.

#### Policies:

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1. **Sanitary Sewer.** Density and minimum lot sizes should be managed to allow adequate space for replacement of private on-site sewage systems. Wellington's building inspector will check that new private septic systems are sited, constructed, and inspected according to State and Monroe County regulations. Town officials encourage property owners to maintain and inspect their private on-site sewage systems on a regular basis.
2. **Private Wells.** Encourage landowners with private wells to properly maintain and monitor their wells through inspection and water testing as necessary or as required by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WIDNR) or Monroe County regulations. Landowners with private wells that are no longer in use will be urged to properly close abandoned wells according to WIDNR regulations.
3. **Groundwater Impact.** Wellington officials may require that the property owner, or their agent, fund the preparation of a groundwater impact analysis from an independent soil scientist, or other related professional, prior to approving new development.
4. **Stormwater Management.** Town officials should cooperate with Monroe County and the WIDNR to minimize stormwater impacts resulting from development. Whenever possible, protect and preserve natural drainage patterns, including existing drainage corridors, streams, floodplains, and wetlands. Developers will be responsible for stormwater and erosion control both during and after site preparation and construction activities and in accordance with WIDNR State regulations under Chapter NR216.
5. **Solid Waste and Recycling.** Provide solid waste collection, disposal and recycling services that protect public health and the natural environment. Monitor solid waste disposal and recycling services and address concerns raised by residents or local businesses.

6. **Utilities.** Ensure the provision of reliable, efficient, and well-planned utilities to adequately serve existing and planned development. Actively participate in the planning and siting of any major transmission lines, facilities, and natural gas lines.
7. **Mobile Tower Siting.** Ensure that applicants will site and construct or modify mobile towers in accordance with State statutes. Wellington officials should consider developing and enacting a Mobile Tower Siting ordinance to prescribe the application process.
8. **Broadband Access.** Cooperate with local, county, and state agencies and service providers to establish broadband access for town residents and businesses.
9. **Renewable Energy Facilities.** Support appropriate applications of renewable energy and utilization of onsite distributed energy generation (e.g., solar, wind, geo-thermal, biomass, solid waste).
10. **Hazards.** Limit the extension of town facilities and services in areas that are vulnerable to natural hazards, such as flooding, water contamination, sink holes, or fire.
11. **Emergency Services.** Work with Monroe County, local fire departments, and ambulance service to maintain adequate provision of emergency services (i.e. fire, police, EMS) for town residents and businesses. Designate a town official to serve as the liaison to emergency service officials.
12. **Emergency Preparedness.** Support and, if possible, implement emergency preparedness recommendations provided by Monroe County Emergency Management Department, Wisconsin Emergency Management or Federal Emergency Management Agency. When forewarning is possible, town officials will strive to keep residents apprised of the situation and possible outcomes. Town officials will cooperate with all relevant agencies to plan for efficient disaster response and the effective delivery of emergency services.
13. **Town Facilities.** Annually evaluate the condition of the Town Hall and associated equipment to ensure that it will continue to meet the town's needs. Search for grant opportunities or other resources to fund town facility and equipment upgrades. Upgrades for handicap accessibility will be considered for all town facilities whenever changes are made to those facilities.
14. **Town Fees.** Town officials may require fees to recoup costs associated with processing, reviewing, or inspecting building or land use proposals and permits, including pass through fees of consultants hired by the town to perform these services. The town may also assess impact fees to recoup costs to the town necessitated by its support of new developments (in accordance with State Statutes).
15. **Local Libraries.** Include a regular donation in the annual Town of Wellington budget to support each of the three village libraries that provide library services to Wellington residents.



## Enhance communication between town government and the Wellington community.

### Objectives:

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1. Continue to survey landowners and residents on a regular basis concerning issues of interest to citizens and town officials. Such surveys should be conducted at least once every ten years.
2. Enhance the capabilities of the town's website to provide timely information to residents and landowners as well as to facilitate citizen input and participation through the use of the website.
3. Institute a twice-a-year newsletter providing relevant information for residents and landowners as well as providing a calendar of upcoming town events. In addition, notices concerning upcoming official town meetings should be announced through local media outlets.
4. Institute a yearly meeting with the leadership of local Amish communities.

### Policies:

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1. **Citizen Survey.** The Town's Planning Commission will prepare and administer a citizen survey to residents and land owners every 10 years. The surveys will be tabulated, summarized and the results presented to the Town Board by the Chair of the Planning Commission. The survey results will be shared with the public at an open meeting and/or posted to the town's website. The next survey will be planned for 2030.
2. **Town Website.** The town's webmaster will be directed to create a Question/Comment section for the town's website. Town residents will be encouraged to post their questions and comments to that section. The "Public Comment" item on the Town Board's meeting agenda will be used as an opportunity to review any items posted to the website's Question/Comment section. The Question/Comment section will be available on the website by January 2022.
3. **Town Newsletter.** Town officials will prepare a newsletter twice a year for distribution during the months of June and December. The newsletter will be mailed to residents and landowners who request it. It will also be posted to the town's website. The newsletter will cover recent Board actions, review selected Board policies, include upcoming events of interest and solicit residents' comments on issues of importance. The Town Chair, Planning Commission Chair and Town Clerk will be responsible for getting the newsletter developed and distributed. The initial newsletter should be available in December 2021.
4. **Publication of Notices.** Beginning in January of 2022, notices will be published in the town's paper of record announcing the date, time and place of upcoming regular or special town meetings. The Town Clerk will be responsible for providing the notices to the paper in time for publication prior to the events.
5. **Meeting with Amish Leadership.** Leaders of Wellington's Amish communities will be invited to meet with the Town Board and/or Planning Commission on a yearly basis at a time convenient to the parties. An agenda will be developed with input from town officials and Amish leaders. The meeting will be posted and open to the public. A summary of the meeting will be provided to the Town Board and the Amish leadership.

## AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES



Our area was a rural farming paradise as I remember. We all worked and made a decent living for our families.

– Citizen survey comment

### Introduction

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A drive through our township will reveal much of what one might need to know about Wellington; now and in the past. The roads one travels pass across farmed ridges and through forested valleys. Woodlands and agricultural fields, in about equal measure, are dissected by many streams and the twisting Kickapoo River. A traveler would see farmsteads with older homes and leaning barns interspersed with newer residences and modern dairy operations. Amish buggies travel the roadways as Amish children walk to school with backpacks and lunch boxes. Don't look for a gas fill-up or an ice cream cone; a drive to one of the nearby villages will be required for those amenities. For our traveler, many of the town's resources would be apparent while others may require some investigation. What are Wellington's resources and how have those resources been used in past, in the present, and perhaps in the future? This element, Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources, should provide some answers.

### Agricultural Resources

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Farming has and continues to be viewed as an essential aspect of life in the Town of Wellington. Over 15,000 of Wellington's 21,000 acres are devoted to agriculture. However, the number of agricultural acres has declined in recent years with a decrease of 500 acres between 2010 and 2020. The state-wide trend towards fewer, but larger and more specialized, farms is also apparent locally. The impact of a growing Amish population, with their preference for smaller more diversified farms, could influence the future of agriculture in Wellington.

Dairy is Wellington's primary agricultural product. The impact of declining milk prices and a slowdown in international demand for American dairy products have hit the industry hard. This is especially true for family-owned farms such as those in Wellington. According to the Wisconsin's Department of Agriculture, 7200 family dairy farms have ceased operations between 2012 and 2019. The prospects for Wellington's dairy farmers, and for the town's current agricultural landscape in general, should be concerning for its residents and local government.

The threats posed by climate change have implications for the viability of Wellington's agricultural resources and the future of farming in the town. Heavy rains and fast-moving streams increase soil erosion and hasten the movement of agricultural chemicals and animal wastes from fields into

surface and ground water. County, state and federal programs are in place to help farmers conserve soils, protect water sources, and reduce the over use of farm chemicals. Such efforts, however, will be of limited value if Wellington's farmers are unable to make a living producing and marketing their products.

### **A Snapshot of Farming in Wellington**

A recent informal inventory identified over seventy farms in Wellington with a third of these farms worked by the Amish. Local farmers are generally involved in raising livestock, selling animal products, growing crops or cultivating fruit and vegetables. Livestock production; especially cows and cattle along with sheep, goats, hogs and poultry, are important sources of income for Wellington's farmers. Horses are especially significant for the Amish to power their buggies, wagons and farm implements. Amish farmers are more likely to have a wider variety of animals on their farms as a means to locally meet the various needs of their families. Dairy, of course, is Wisconsin's signature agricultural product. Wellington's dairy farms contribute to the 9 million pounds of milk produced annually on Wisconsin's 7,000 dairy farms (*source: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics, 2019*). Alfalfa, corn, soybeans, oats and wheat are also grown in Wellington as livestock feed or as grain for sale. Local Amish are also involved in raising fruits and vegetables for local and wholesale markets. In Wellington, farming may be a fulltime business or a source of supplementary income and food for the farmers' families (*source: Town of Wellington, 2021*).

### **Farmland Preservation Zoning**

The State of Wisconsin's Farmland Preservation Zoning (FPZ) law offers tax incentives to landowners to maintain existing agricultural lands. In March 2017, Wellington's Town Board and its Planning Commission, in cooperation with Monroe County's Land Conservation and Zoning Departments, hosted an information meeting on FPZ. Over 100 individuals attended the meeting. Following the meeting, an advisory referendum on FPZ was placed on the Town of Wellington April 2017 election ballot. The town's electorate voted against pursuing Farmland Preservation Zoning by a vote of 58 ("no") to 37 ("yes").

### **Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) Program**

Town of Wellington officials have partnered with neighboring townships in the Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) program. Farmers participating in the AEA program are eligible for a per acre tax credit from the State of Wisconsin. Participants are expected to meet soil and water conservation standards and pledge to continue the use of their land for agricultural purposes.

## **Natural Resources**

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### **Groundwater**

Wellington's residents and farmers rely on the groundwater to provide water for their families and their businesses. The town's underlying sedimentary bedrock has been a source of good water since the time of settlement. Abundant rainfall should continue to provide sufficient groundwater to maintain resident's wells and local springs, streams and river. Care must be taken to assure the quality of Wellington's groundwater is maintained. A well-water quality study is currently underway in Monroe County (*source: Monroe County Herald March 25, 2021*). Participants in the study represented all of the county's townships including Wellington. The wells were tested on a number of factors including bacteria and nitrates. Results could indicate whether there are threats to the groundwater due to

to chemical, animal and/or human waste contamination. The study may lead to more wide-spread water testing. Wellington's residents and town government have legitimate interests in safeguarding groundwater from various sources of contamination; such as, agricultural chemicals, human and livestock wastes, soil erosion and mineral extraction.

## **Surface Water**

Wellington, like the rest of the Driftless area, is characterized by ridge and valley topography dissected by spring-fed creeks and small rivers. The Kickapoo River watershed captures most of Wellington's rainfall and snow melt. Poe Creek and Billings Creek, and many smaller streams in the town, ultimately drain into the Kickapoo River. There are a few man-made ponds in the town but no naturally occurring lakes or ponds. Marshy wetlands do occur along stream and river corridors and near the town's many springs and seeps. Recent severe weather events have drawn attention in Wellington, and throughout the Driftless, as flooding impacts the land and man-made structures. The town's wetlands function as natural reservoirs promoting clean water and abating fast-moving floodwaters. Monroe County's Department of Land Conservation's Middle Kickapoo River Non-Point Pollution Watershed Project is an example of Wellington officials and landowners working together on conservation practices including manure storage systems, barnyards, dams, grass waterways, contour strips, and stream restoration. This is kind of cooperative effort will be needed to protect Wellington's surface water resource.

## **Forests**

In 1847, government surveyors reported that the timber in the future town of Wellington consisted of oak, hickory, aspen, basswood, elm, cherry, and maple with an undergrowth of prickly ash, hazel, and brambles. These tree and shrub species are still common to the woods that make up 20% of Wellington's landcover. Over 3000 acres of the town are categorized as agricultural or productive forests. Much of this acreage is enrolled in various forest management and conservation programs. Wellington's woodlands are also utilized for grazing, hunting and recreation. The future of Wellington's forested lands, as a valued resource for the town's residents and landowners, will be determined by issues relating to agriculture practices, residential growth, wildlife utilization and protection, land fragmentation and absentee land ownership.

## **Wildlife Resources**

Wellington's varied landscape offers critical habitat for animals and plants characteristic of southwestern Wisconsin's Driftless Region landscape. The town's mix of woodlands, open fields and undeveloped areas are home to a variety of game and non-game species. Hunting, hiking, and wildlife hobbies are enjoyed by many residents and visitors in the town.

## **Natural Resource Conservation Efforts**

Federal, state, and county conservation and wildlife enhancement programs such as the NRCS Conservation Reserve Program, USFWS Service Partners, and WIDNR LIP program provide technical and financial assistance to town landowners attempting to maintain or improve habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species. For example, local landowners have worked with USFWS staff to restore oak savannas, develop prairies and woodlands and eradicate invasive plant species. Town officials and employees, in cooperation with County and NRCS conservation staff, are currently working to control invasive plant species, such as Japanese knotweed, along town roadways.

## Parks and Open Spaces

There are no public parks in Wellington. The town's woodlands and open spaces are privately owned and access requires permission of the land's owners. Local trout streams, such as Billings Creek, are open to those interested in fishing and can be accessed from public roadways. Compliance with Wisconsin fishing regulations is required on all public fishing areas.

## Mineral Resources

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### Non-Metallic Mines

There is one nonmetallic mine operating within the Town of Wellington. Kendall Trucking and Excavating operates a sand pit located on Minnow Avenue. The Mathy Quarry is located near Logan Road in the Town of Wilton just to the north of the Town of Wellington. This is a hard rock quarry primarily producing stone and gravel. The Wellington Town Board and some of its residents have shown interest in this quarry and its operation because of its close proximity to the town.

## Cultural Resources

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### Town of Wellington's History

The land within Wellington Township was once native lands of the Ho-Chunk (formerly known as the Winnebago) nation. Oral history of the Ho-Chunk claims that, *"They have always lived here."* Archeological evidence suggests that the Ho-Chunk and their ancestors have been here through three ice ages. The rich heritage of these indigenous hunter/gatherers continues to be celebrated and practiced.

While recorded history of Wisconsin begins in the 1600's, there's little recorded history specific to Wellington Township from that period. Written accounts for Monroe County begin in the early-mid 1800's and commemorate the "taming of the land" by early settlers. The Monroe County Register of Deeds provides a record of the transfer of property from these early settlers to residents living in the town today. For example, a 40-acre parcel in Wellington has been shown to have 24 ownership changes from 1861 to 2002.

The Town of Wellington was created from the Town of Sheldon by the Monroe County Board on November 15, 1856. As a result, the early history of Wellington is closely entwined with that of Sheldon's. Local history states that Esau Johnson was the first white settler in the town of Sheldon. Johnson arrived in 1842 and started a lumber mill in what became to be known as Oil City. After taking the Kickapoo River from Wauzeka in 1842, he reportedly hollowed out a log into a canoe to travel home to his family. Esau even claimed to have spotted a moose standing in the river! When the Civil War broke out in 1861, many early settlers volunteered their services and some never returned. Many German settlers immigrated to the region, including Wellington, and found the land much like the country they left behind.

Some of the immigrants on Wellington's South Ridge included the Ziebarths, Popps, Clairs, Friskes, Brandenburgs and Kreigers. Trees were plentiful and the land needed to be cleared for farming. As a result, landowners found it profitable to sell hand-hewn timbers to the railroad for ties, bridges and wood to fuel their steam engine boilers. In the 1870's, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad was built through the local communities of Elroy, Kendall, Wilton and Norwalk. Many men, including local



residents, were hired to build tracks, bridges and tunnels. Railroads brought huge changes allowing development of local communities and the transport of people and products.

From the earliest indigenous people, through the township's pioneer families and into our current times, Wellington has been both a home and the ground on which a living can be made. It is responsibility of residents, landowners and decision makers alike to assure that this tradition will continue into the future.

A more detailed history of the Town of Wellington can be found in Appendix C.

**Table 5.1 Ancestry of Wellington Residents (self-reported)**

Nation	Number	Percent
German	283	48.0%
Norwegian	78	13.2%
English	69	11.7%
Irish	51	8.6%
Latvian	1	0.16%
Unclassified/Other	110	18.6%

Source: *Statisticalatlas.com, 2018*

### Churches

The only church currently located in the Town of Wellington is St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church. The congregation was organized and the church named in 1877. In 1881, a resolution was passed to construct a house of worship with construction beginning in 1886. That original church building still stands at the intersection of County Highway P and Z. The church has seen many upgrades over the years and celebrated many baptisms, weddings and burials. Forty of those burials, including twenty children, resulted from a diphtheria epidemic. Other faiths are celebrated in the town with members attending services outside the town. The Amish communities in Wellington gather in the homes of their members to learn and practice their faith.

### Cemeteries

Historically, four cemeteries served Wellington residents. Two of those, Cal Day and South Ridge, remain active. The Cal Day Cemetery is located in Section 28 along County Highway P. The land was originally donated to the town for use as a cemetery by Calvin Day whose farm was located on what was then called Pleasant Ridge. The upkeep and maintenance of the cemetery is provided by the Town of Wellington. The town holds two certificates of deposits to provide financial support for Cal Day. The second active cemetery, the South Ridge Cemetery, is located in Section 22 and is also bordered by County P. This cemetery is supported by the members of St Matthew's Lutheran Church.

The two inactive cemeteries are the J. C. Gordon Cemetery and Saint Paul Cemetery. The Gordon Cemetery is located in Section 31 and was named for a prominent Civil War veteran. The Saint Paul Cemetery is in Section 7 near State Highway 131 a few miles south of Wilton. Originally, it was near a saw mill along the Kickapoo River. Today, all that remains of this cemetery are few stones lying in a fence row near the old mill's dam.

## Town of Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

Seven of the 2020 Citizen Opinion Survey's Emphasis Issues have connections to the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element. It should be noted that many of the topics covered in this comprehensive plan do not belong exclusively in one element or another. For example, the topic of agriculture is considered in Element 5: Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources, Element 6: Economic Development and again in Element 8: Land Use.

**Table 5.2 Scoring Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources-related Emphasis Issues**

Issue #	Issue Statement	Emphasis Score	Emphasis Rank
10.	Breathable air and drinkable water	91%	3 of 27
9.	Surface water and ground water supplies	89%	4 of 27
13.	Agricultural-based economy	87%	5 of 27
12.	Town's rural character and scenic landscapes	82%	9 of 27
8.	Town's natural areas	70%	18 of 27
18.	Recreational/tourism development	36%	25 of 27
17.	Large scale agricultural, industrial, and commercial development	35%	24 of 27

Source: Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey, 2020

### Survey Summary: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

A high value was placed on the town's rural character and its land-based economy. Respondents were interested in holding on to the perceived rural character of the town (agricultural heritage, small farms, limited population, friendly neighbors, limited regulation). Wellington's natural resources; such as, clear air, clean water and its scenic aspects are also clearly important to the town's residents. Not much was written by the survey respondents concerning cultural, educational, or religious opportunities or institutions.

## Utilities and Community Facilities: Goals, Objectives, and Policies



**Maintain Wellington's rural character and natural scenic beauty by encouraging the preservation of farmland, sensitive environmental areas, wildlife habitat, rural vistas, and local cultural resources.**

#### Objectives:

1. Minimize where possible the fragmentation of productive agricultural or forest land or sensitive environmental areas.
2. Minimize where possible the potential impact on natural resources, environmental corridors, natural habitat areas or rural vistas when evaluating potential residential, commercial, industrial, and intensive agricultural uses.

3. Minimize where possible the potential impact on local cultural resources when evaluating new developments.

**Policies:**

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1. **Protect Agricultural Resources.** Discourage fragmentation of productive farmland, forested land, and natural areas to protect the continuity of these areas for future use. If development does occur, discourage its placement in the middle of parcels of agricultural cropland or on prime agricultural land.
2. **Limit Developmental Impacts.** Avoid development in areas that have severe limitations due to steep slopes, soils not suitable for building, or sensitive environmental areas such as wetlands, floodplains, and streams in order to protect these areas from degradation.
3. **Intergovernmental Cooperation.** Cooperate with Monroe County Zoning and Land Conservation Departments to protect severe steep slopes, waterways, wetlands and floodplain areas.
4. **Protect Cultural Resources.** Encourage maintenance and rehabilitation of historic areas and buildings. Ensure that any known cemeteries, human burials or archaeological sites are protected from encroachment by roads or other development activities.
5. **Local Archives.** Establish a designated space in the Town Hall for the collection and protection of materials of historical and cultural interest relating to the town and residents of Wellington.
6. **Non-metallic Mining.** Ensure that new gravel or sand mining operations comply with the procedures described in the Ordinance for the Licensing and Operation of Nonmetallic Mines in the Town of Wellington.



**Minimize land use conflicts between farm and non-farm uses.**

**Objectives:**

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1. Provide new residents and landowners with information about Wisconsin's "Right to Farm" law (WI Statute 823.08) and what they might expect concerning farm practices in the town.
2. Maintain buffers, where possible, between agricultural properties and residential and commercial properties.

**Policies:**

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1. **Right to Farm.** Inform new residents and landowners adjacent to agricultural lands and operations about Wisconsin's Right to Farm Act.
2. **Fencing and Animals-at-large.** Inform new residents and landowners concerning fencing regulations and loose livestock.
3. **Building Permits.** Utilize acreage and siting requirements outlined in Wellington's Building Permit for Dwellings ordinance to discourage non-farm development from locating near or adjacent to existing farm facilities or productive farmland.

4. **Best Practices.** Encourage farming or forestry operations to incorporate the most current “Best Management Practices” or “Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices” (GAAMPS) as identified by but not limited to the following agencies:

- Monroe County Land Conservation Department
- University of Wisconsin Extension
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Natural Resources Conservation Service

GOAL  
**3**

**Preserve and protect agricultural, natural, and water resources.**

**Objective:**

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1. Coordinate with landowners and Monroe County Land Conservation Department to identify and implement conservation programs to protect and preserve agricultural, natural, and water resources.

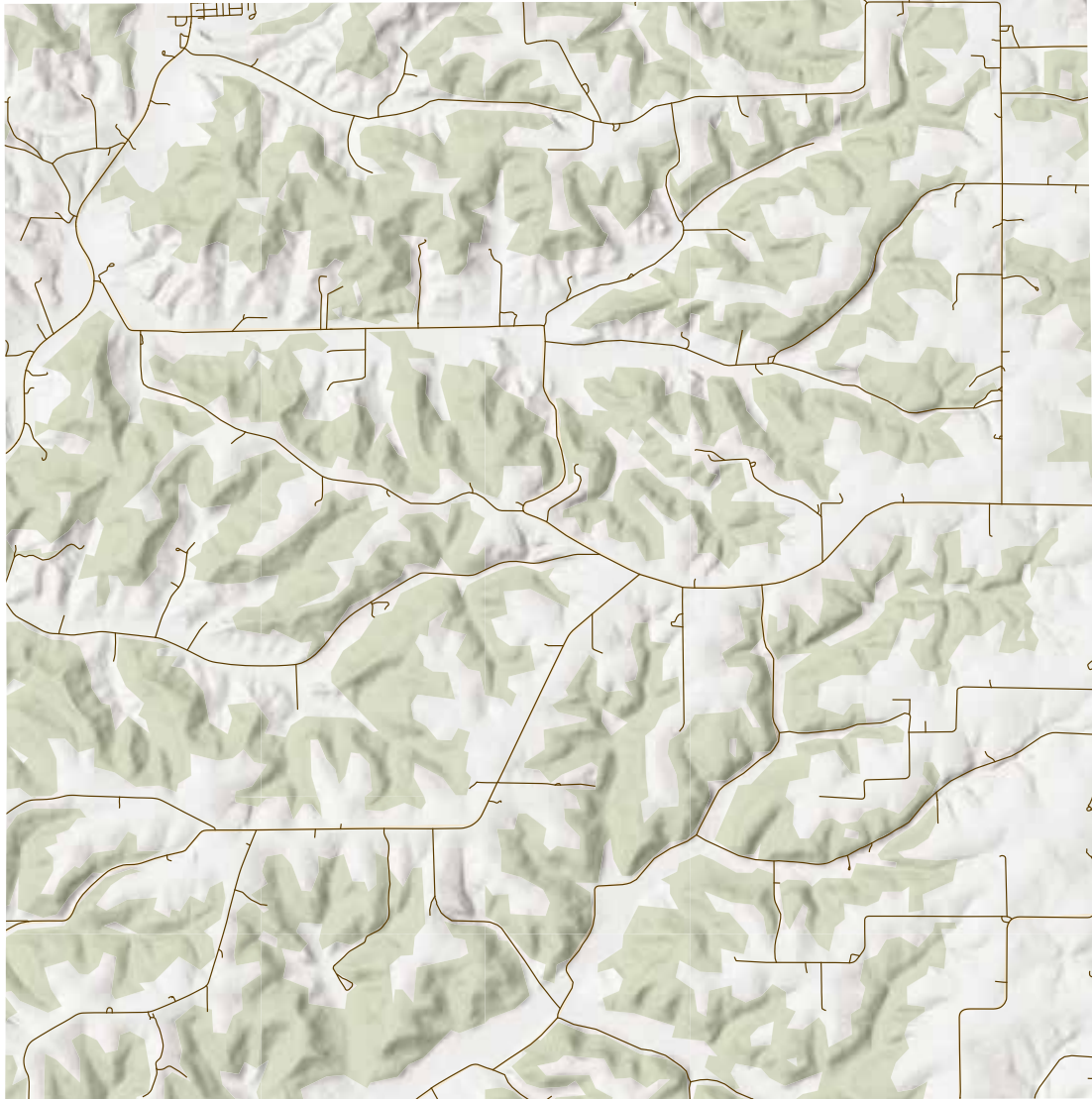
**Policies:**

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1. **Resource Conservation.** Encourage conservation programs that prevent the spread of invasive species, reduce soil erosion, restore natural areas, and reduce non-point and point source pollution into surface water and groundwater.
2. **Landowner Initiatives.** Encourage land stewardship programs that provide educational resources and opportunities to private landowners.
3. **Intergovernmental Cooperation.** Cooperate with Monroe County Land Conservation Department to encourage land stewardship programs that provide information and educational opportunities to landowners.
4. **Parks.** Determine if there are needs and opportunities to establish public park or natural open space areas in Wellington. If needs and opportunities are identified, work with Monroe County and WIDNR to plan and identify funding resources to establish a park or natural open space area.
5. **Cemeteries.** Provide burial and memorial services to the community by continuing to fund and maintain the Cal Day Cemetery.

# Topography – Township of Wellington, Monroe County, WI

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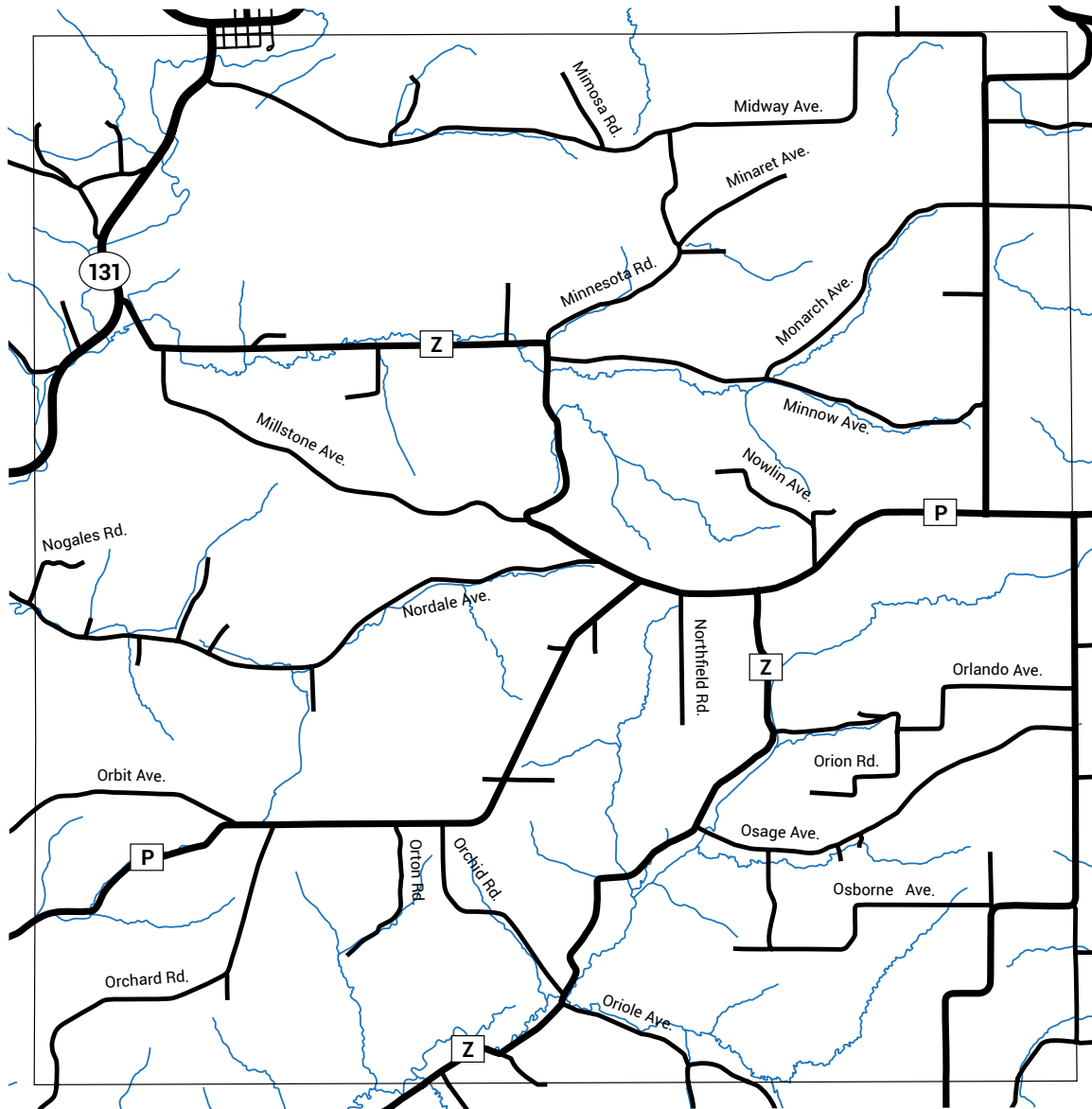


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SCALE IN MILES

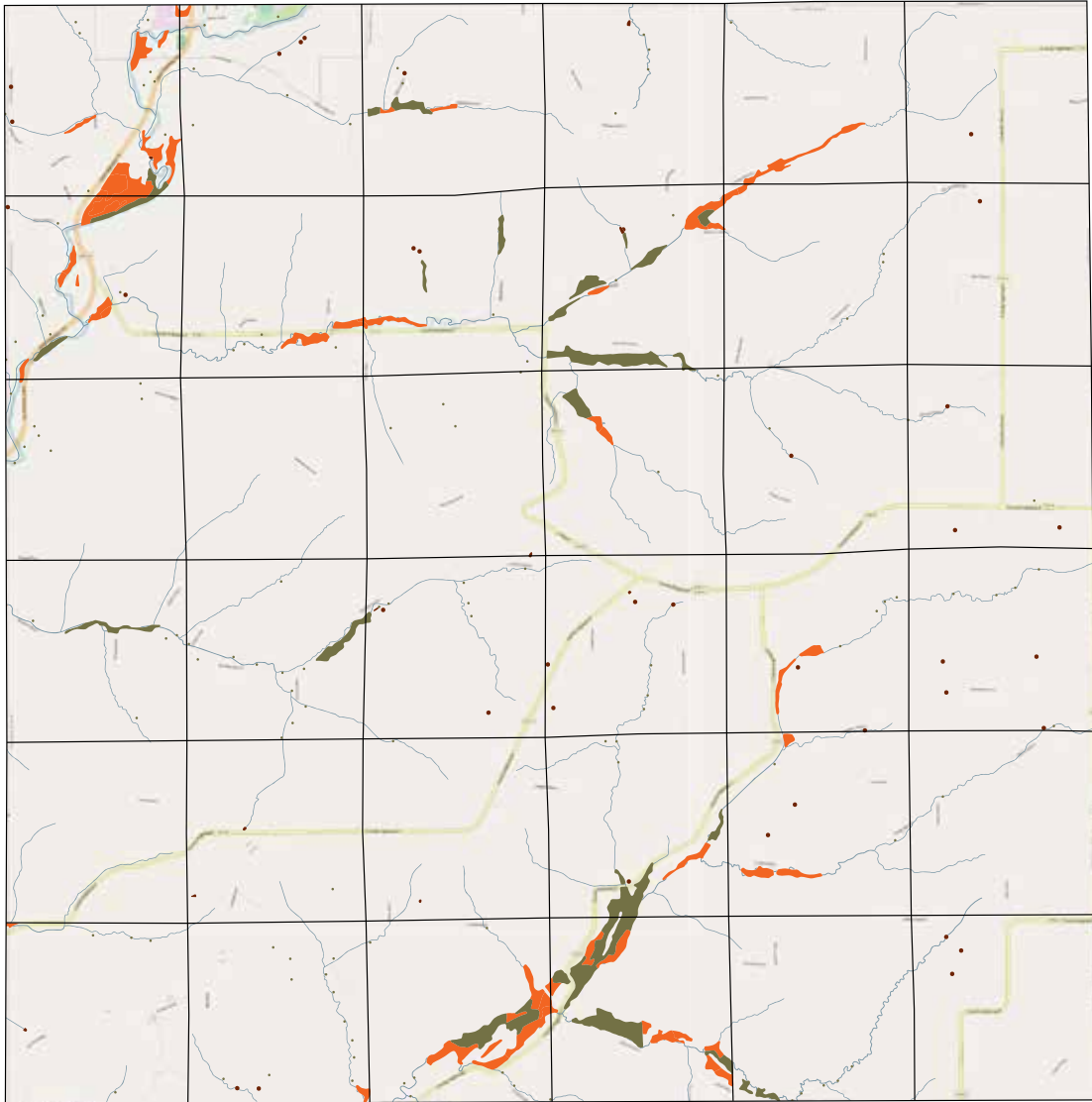
# Surface Waters – Township of Wellington, Monroe County, WI






Source: U.S. Geological Survey National Hydrography Dataset  
©OpenStreetMap contributors



# Wetlands – Township of Wellington, Monroe County, WI



SCALE IN MILES

-  FRESHWATER EMERGENT WETLAND
-  FRESHWATER FORESTED/SHRUB WETLAND
-  FRESHWATER POND

Source: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory  
©OpenStreetMap contributors





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Wellington should be a community of farmers, working families and people of all ages, talents and abilities who can share their knowledge, products, or services with other local people.

– Citizen survey comment

## Introduction

Earning a living enables Wellington's residents and their families to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and security. How that living is made, however, varies in our rural community just as it does in more populated areas. Element 6 provides a series of "snapshots" of the economic characteristics of our residents and, hopefully, offers insights to help our local officials plan for the economic future of our town.

## Economic Characteristics

### Educational Attainment

Census data shows that the Wellington's population has a higher percentage of high school graduates than the nation as a whole. However, a lower percentage of town residents (9.3%) have attained post-high school degrees than nationally (19.4%).

**Table 6.1 Educational Attainment**

	Wellington's No.	Wellington's %	U.S. %
Populations 25 years or over	375		
High School grad or higher	159	42.4%	27.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	35	9.3%	19.4%

### Income Characteristics

Census figures indicate that 66.4% of Wellington's population (16 years or older) are currently employed. This is a higher percentage than for the country as whole (63.3%). The median family income, \$68,000, and per capita income, \$22,236, are lower for the town than nationally. While the

percentage of families below the poverty level is lower in Wellington (7.3% compared to 10.1%), the percentage of individuals below the poverty line is similar to the national percentage (14.2% compared to 14.1%).

**Table 6.2 Income and Employment Characteristics**

	Wellington's No.	Wellington's %	U.S.
In labor force - 16 years of age +	297	66.4%	63.3%
Mean travel time to work in minutes	26.8		26.6
Median household income (dollars)	62,500		60,293
Median family income (dollars)	68,000		73,965
Per capita income (dollars)	22,236		32,621
Families below poverty level		7.3%	10.1%
Individuals below poverty level		14.2%	14.1%

### Employment Characteristics

Employment figures indicate that 63% of Wellington's adult residents are employed and 2.2% are unemployed. More men are employed (165) than women (128). Town residents are most likely to be employed in manufacturing, healthcare, and agriculture. Median incomes for Wellington's employed residents are generally lower than the national averages across the selected industries with retail, construction and transportation being the exceptions. The differences between Wellington residents' and national median incomes are most dramatic in agriculture, \$13,100 (Wellington) compared to \$31,500 (U.S.), and transportation, \$73,800 (Wellington) compared to \$47,700 (U.S.)). It would be useful to know what factors account for these wide disparities.

**Table 6.3 Wellington's Employed and Unemployed (25 - 64 years of age)**

	Number	Percentage
Employed	293	63%
Unemployed	10	2.2%
Not in labor force	162	34.8%

**Table 6.4 Wellington's Employment by Gender**

	Number	Percentage
Male	165	68.8%
Female	128	56.9%

**Table 6.5 Employment by Industry (Wellington's Top Eight Industries)**

	Wellington's No.	Wellington's %	U.S. %
Manufacturing	52	17.7%	10.3%
Healthcare	50	17.1%	13.8%
Agriculture	38	13.0%	1.3%
Retail	35	11.9%	11.5%
Construction	26	9.2%	6.3%
Education	20	6.8%	9.3%
Transportation	16	5.5%	4.2%
Government	15	5.1%	4.7%

**Table 6.6 Median Income by Industry (Wellington's Top Eight Industries)**

	Wellington's Income	U.S. Income
Manufacturing	\$31,300	\$47,800
Healthcare	\$31,800	\$41,600
Agriculture	\$13,100	\$31,500
Retail	\$36,600	\$33,200
Construction	\$42,900	\$42,200
Education	\$36,900	\$48,600
Transportation	\$73,800	\$47,700
Government	\$45,000	\$56,100

### Sectors of the Economy

More than half of Wellington's wage earners (163 individuals) are employed in the private sector. Wellington residents employed in economic sectors include sole proprietor (42), non-profit (32), federal government (20), state government (12) and local government (17).

### Amish Occupations

The Town of Wellington has a growing Amish population whose members display a range of skills and occupations. Agricultural pursuits such as dairy farming and growing vegetables for wholesale are primary sources of income for local Amish families. Sources of non-agricultural income include; saw mills, carpentry and construction and furniture production. The local sale of poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables and bakery goods also provide supplemental income for many Amish.

### Economic Development Programs

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Rural communities often struggle to grow their local economies. Some of factors include variable markets for agricultural products, low population densities, lack of modern transportation infrastructure, distances from population and economic centers and young people leaving the community due to limited educational and work opportunities. Wellington's Citizen Opinion Survey

also revealed some misgivings among the respondents concerning the role of government in local affairs. Regardless of these challenges, town residents and officials should be aware of programs that could assist rural communities, such as Wellington, to develop a more viable local economy.

## **State Level**

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### **Rural Economic Development Program**

This program administrated by Wisconsin Department of Commerce provides grants and low interest loans for small business (less than 50 employees) start-ups or expansions in rural areas. Funds may be used for "soft costs" only; such as, planning, engineering, and marketing assistance.

### **Wisconsin Neighborhood Stabilization Program**

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program provides assistance to acquire and redevelop foreclosed properties that might otherwise become sources of abandonment and blight. The program is authorized under Title III of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. Neighborhood Stabilization funds can be used to purchase foreclosed or abandoned homes and to rehabilitate, resell, or redevelop these homes in order to stabilize neighborhoods and stem the decline of property values of neighboring properties.

### **University of Wisconsin Extension Office**

The Center for Community Economic Development, University of Wisconsin Extension, creates, applies and transfers multidisciplinary knowledge to help people understand community change and identify opportunities.

### **The Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC)**

This non-profit organization is located at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater and specializes in new product and invention assessments and market expansion opportunities for innovative manufacturers, technology businesses, and independent inventors.

### **Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**

The UW SBDC is partially funded by the Small Business Administration and provides a variety of programs and training seminars to assist in the creation of small business in Wisconsin.

## **Federal Level**

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### **Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

EDA offers a guaranteed loan program as well as public works grant program. These are administered through local units of government for the benefit of the local economy and, indirectly, private enterprise.

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development (USDA - RD)**

The USDA Rural Development program is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in all of rural America. USDA-RD promotes economic development by supporting loans to

businesses through banks and community-managed lending pools. The program also offers technical assistance and information to help agricultural and other cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their member services.

### U.S. Department of Agriculture - Farm Service Agency

FSA makes direct and guaranteed farm ownership (FO) and operating loans (OL) to family-size farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank, Farm Credit System institution, or other lender. FSA loans can be used to purchase land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and supplies. Loans can also be used to construct buildings or make farm improvements. FSA loans are often provided to beginning farmers who cannot qualify for conventional loans because they have insufficient financial resources. FSA also helps established farmers who have suffered financial setbacks from natural disasters or whose resources are too limited to maintain profitable farming operations.

### Small Business Administration (SBA)

SBA provides business loan programs that will make or guarantee up to 90% of the principal and interest on loans to companies, individuals, or government entities for financing in rural areas. Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corporation acts as an agent for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) programs that provide financing for fixed asset loans and for working capital.

*Source: Town of Ridgeville, Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan*

## Town of Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey: Economic Development

Seven of the 2020 Citizen Opinion Survey's Emphasis Issues relate to the topic of economic development. The number of relevant emphasis issues indicates the importance of economic considerations.

**Table 6.7 Scoring Economic Development-related Emphasis Issues**

Issue #	Issue Statement	Emphasis Score	Emphasis Rank
13.	Agricultural-based economy	87%	5 of 27
26.	Access to telecommunication	78%	12 of 27
25.	Access to energy	77%	13 of 27
15.	Local employment opportunities	62%	20 of 27
16.	Small business development	51%	23 of 27
18.	Recreational/tourism development	36%	25 of 27
17.	Large scale agricultural, industrial, and commercial development	35%	24 of 27

*Source: Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey, 2020*

## Survey Summary: Economic Development

Respondent comments suggested that family farming is a highly valued economic activity. Here are a few of the many comments that echoed this perspective:

*Preservation of rural agricultural community  
Attract smaller sized family farms  
Need to encourage smaller family farms, possibly organic*

Family farming was valued even though relatively few residents are actually engaged in farming (see Figure 6.5). This would suggest that history and culture are important influences when survey respondents think about agriculture, especially "family farming." As one respondent suggested, "Be steadfast to who and what we are! Farmers and individuals who respect what farmers face and do to survive."

Access to telecommunications and energy certainly have implications for economic development but it's unclear whether the respondents were thinking about their own personal telecommunications and energy use versus energy and technology as drivers of economic development.

Survey respondents indicated only a limited interest in using economic development (i.e. major agricultural, commercial, industrial, housing, recreation or tourism development) to create jobs or enhance the local tax base.

The lack of local employment opportunities, the driving distances to work, and an aging population were mentioned as concerns by the respondents. Several comments did show an interest in the town's economic development.

*Job opportunities, need to bring in more families  
Help and encourage current business and  
help to build new businesses*

However, such sentiments seem to be outweighed by the desire to maintain the status quo or, in the words of one respondent, "*Keep it (the town) just the way it is.*"

## Economic Development: Goals, Objectives, and Policies

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GOAL  
**1**

**Support the retention and development of businesses that strengthen and diversify the local economy without detracting from the rural character of the town.**

**Objectives:**

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1. Acknowledge agriculture-related businesses and services as the major economic development type in the town.
2. Support policies intended to sustain Wellington's "family farm" traditions rather than policies that encourage large-scale agricultural operations.
3. Encourage participation of the town's farmers, landowners, and residents in discussions about local economic development.

**Policies:**

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1. **Agricultural Businesses and Services.** The primary focus for economic development in the town will be the support of agriculture businesses and services.
2. **Small Businesses.** Promote and encourage small entrepreneurial businesses in the town.
3. **Promoting Wellington.** Collaborate with neighboring local governments, Monroe County, and economic development organizations to develop programs and marketing initiatives that promote the town and its attributes.

GOAL  
**2**

**Minimize land use conflicts between business and residential or agricultural uses.**

**Objectives:**

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1. Discourage commercial, industrial development or large-scale agricultural operations that could negatively impact local farms, residences and businesses or stress the existing transportation infrastructure and emergency services.
2. Discourage economic development that has the potential to damage or overly utilize the town's natural resources.

**Policies:**

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1. **Light Commercial and Industrial Development.** Encourage light commercial and industrial development that is consistent with the town's rural character, minimizes disruption to local businesses, residences or transportation infrastructure and offers employment opportunities for local residents.
2. **Impact of New Developments.** Carefully consider the impacts any new commercial, industrial or agricultural developments may have on the local environment and the health, safety and welfare of residents and landowners.







We like the small town atmosphere, keeping the balance between nature and development.

– Citizen survey comment

## Introduction

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Thomas Jefferson believed that “yeoman farmers” would be essential to the development of our new nation. To encourage land ownership and settlement, Jefferson proposed a survey method that would lay a grid of township and range lines, east to west, across the America. The American Public Land Survey System was established in 1795 to accomplish this goal. Government surveyors arrived, in what would become the Town of Wellington, in September of 1847. Each section of the yet unnamed township was walked, measured, marked and described. The surveyors reported the land was rolling to hilly and watered by numerous brooks. Its timber consisted of oak, hickory, aspen, basswood, elm, cherry, and maple. The township's soils were rated as “thin to second rate.” Element #7 will consider how Wellington's land is being used 175 years after that initial survey.

## Current Land Use and Land Values

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The Town of Wellington is 35.4 square miles in area and includes just under 21,000 acres. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 indicate the break out of Wellington's land use categories, acreages and assessment valuations for 2010 and 2020.

In 2020 (see Table 7.2), 15,700 acres, approximately 75% of the town's total acreage, is classified as agricultural lands. Agricultural forests and productive forests comprise the next largest land category of approximately 3100 acres or 15% of the town's total. Undeveloped lands equal about 1000 acres. The town's residential properties total 337 acres. A minimal amount of land in Wellington is utilized for commercial or manufacturing purposes.

Wellington's residential property's total assessment value (land value + improved value) in 2020 was \$16,667,500 making up 44% of the town's total assessment value. The total assessment value of agricultural forest lands constituted 8% of the total followed by agricultural (5%) productive forest lands (3%).

Comparing the 2010 and 2020 figures indicates that the amount of residential land and agricultural forest land increased. The number of acres classified as agricultural and productive forest land has decreased in the last ten years. Wellington's total assessment valuation grew approximately \$10,000,000 in the last decade. The largest portion of that increase was in the residential property and agricultural forest lands. Agricultural lands and productive forest lands lost value in that same period.

**Table 7.1 Property Assessment: Classification, Acreage, and Value for 2010 & 2020**

Type	2010 Acres	2010 Value	2020 Acres	2020 Value
Residential	233	10,694,900	337	16,842,100
Commercial	0	0	1	37,000
Manufacturing	23	0	0	0
Agricultural	16,387	2,015,900	15,714	1,932,500
Undeveloped	1,292	691,700	1,044	647,700
Agricultural forest	1,576	1,667,500	2,639	3,203,600
Productive forest	875	1,925,900	531	1,284,900
Other	396	11,614,400	290	14,317,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,784</b>	<b>28,610,300</b>	<b>20,559</b>	<b>38,265,500</b>

### Property Classes Defined\*

**Residential:** Any parcel (or part of a parcel) of untilled land not suitable for the production of row crops, on which a dwelling or other form of human abode is located.

**Commercial:** Land and improvements primarily devoted to buying and reselling goods.

**Manufacturing:** All lands, buildings, structures and other real property used in manufacturing, assembling, processing, fabricating, making or milling tangible personal property for profit.

**Agricultural:** Land, exclusive of buildings and improvements, which is devoted primarily to agricultural use.

**Undeveloped:** Areas commonly called marshes, swamps, thickets, bogs or wet meadows.

**Agricultural forest:** Land producing or is capable of producing commercial forest products and is contiguous to agricultural land.

**Productive forest land:** Land producing or capable of producing commercial forest products.

**Other:** Buildings and improvements on a farm (ex: houses, barns and silos along with the land necessary for their location and convenience).

*Source: 2021 Guide for Property Owners (WI Dept of Revenue)*

*\* Note: See Guide for Property Owners for further details defining each class of property.*

## Public Lands

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Wellington includes a limited amount of public land consisting of road right-of-ways and fishing access to local streams. The State of Wisconsin owns 77 acres in the town while Monroe County owns 17 acres.

## Recreational Uses

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Recreational opportunities for Town of Wellington residents are largely restricted to private property or nearby public lands beyond the town's borders. Hunting and fishing are popular among Wellington residents and visitors. Hunting requires permission of local land owners while trout fishing is available in local streams. Access to fishing streams is possible from public roads and follows Wisconsin DNR's fishing license requirements and guidelines. The Elroy-Sparta State Trail lies just north of Wellington and provides seasonal use for biking and snowmobiling. Monroe County snowmobile routes are maintained by the Monroe County Snowmobile Club. Snowmobile trails run through many parts of Wellington and are open to the public when winter weather cooperates. Wellington town roads are open to ATV/UTV users and have connections to local county highways. Wildcat Mountain State Park is just a few miles south of the Town of Wellington and offers camping, hiking, and access to the Kickapoo River. The Kickapoo River runs through the western edge of Wellington and canoe and kayak rentals can be found in the nearby village of Ontario.

## Town of Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey: Land Use

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Ten of the 2020 Citizen Opinion Survey's emphasis issues relate to land use. This is the largest number of emphasis issues for any of the comprehensive plan's elements. Not surprisingly, land and its utilization is likely to be a core interest in a rural community with a history of farming and natural resource use. The exploitation, management and/or preservation of the land, as well as the land's varied aspects, generate strongly held opinions among the town's residents.

**Table 7.4 Scoring Land Use-related Emphasis Issues**

Issue #	Issue Statement	Emphasis Score	Emphasis Rank
10.	Breathable air and drinkable water	91%	3 of 27
9.	Surface water/ground water supplies	89%	4 of 27
13.	Agricultural-based economy	87%	5 of 27
11.	Town's productive lands	85%	6 of 27
14.	Sustainable agriculture and forestry	84%	7 of 27
12.	Town's rural character and scenic landscapes	82%	9 of 27
8.	Town's natural areas	70%	18 of 27
4.	Land fragmentation	64%	19 of 27
18.	Recreational/tourism development	36%	25 of 27
17.	Large scale agricultural, industrial, and commercial development	35%	24 of 27

Source: Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey, 2020

### Survey Summary: Land Use

A survey respondent listed *clean air, clean water, and agriculture* as the Town of Wellington's strengths. Based on the above emphasis scores, it is clear that many individuals taking the survey agreed with those sentiments. Most of those surveyed, valued both the town's natural lands and its working lands and share the hope that Wellington can be kept just the way it is. Of course, keeping land as it is will likely require commitment on the part of town residents and town officials.

Regardless, there is apparently little enthusiasm among town residents for large agricultural operations (#17) or commercial tourism (#18).

Finding a balance between using or protecting the land and its resources has been, and will continue to be, a challenge for the town's residents and leaders. One survey respondent summarized Wellington's land use dilemma by writing, *"Area residents are good people who generally do the right thing. Unfortunately, forming a consensus as to what the right thing might be is the issue."*

## Land Use: Goals, Objectives, and Policies

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### Encourage land uses that support Wellington's rural character and sense of place.

#### Objectives:

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1. Encourage development in areas where adequate land, utilities, town services are available and can be provided in a cost-effective manner. Development should not exceed the town's capacity to provide services.
2. Discourage development in areas shown to be unsuitable for development due to topography, natural or man-made hazards.

#### Policies:

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1. **Town Maps.** Cooperate with Monroe County Land Conservation and Land Information Departments to create, maintain, and periodically update the following land use planning maps.
  - a. **Sensitive Environmental Areas Map** indicates the town's sensitive environmental features; such as, steep slopes, wetlands and floodplains where development should be discouraged.
  - b. **Productive Agricultural Areas Map** shows the town's areas in agricultural use or areas that have highly productive soils for agricultural use. The town should support continued agricultural uses in these areas.
  - c. **Existing Land Uses Map** locates the town's commercial, industrial, agricultural, and residential areas. This map should also identify public lands, forested lands, and wetlands.



### Encourage developments within the town that will uphold property values and reinforce the rural character of Wellington.

#### Objectives:

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1. Discourage developments that would alter the rural character of the town.
2. Encourage new development that is compatible with current land uses.

**Policies:**

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1. **Building Permits.** Follow the town's building permit ordinances for dwellings and non-dwellings as a means of supporting residents' health, safety and welfare; protecting land owners' property values, and maintaining the town's rural character and aesthetic views.



**Balance land use regulations and individual property rights with community interests.**

**Objectives:**

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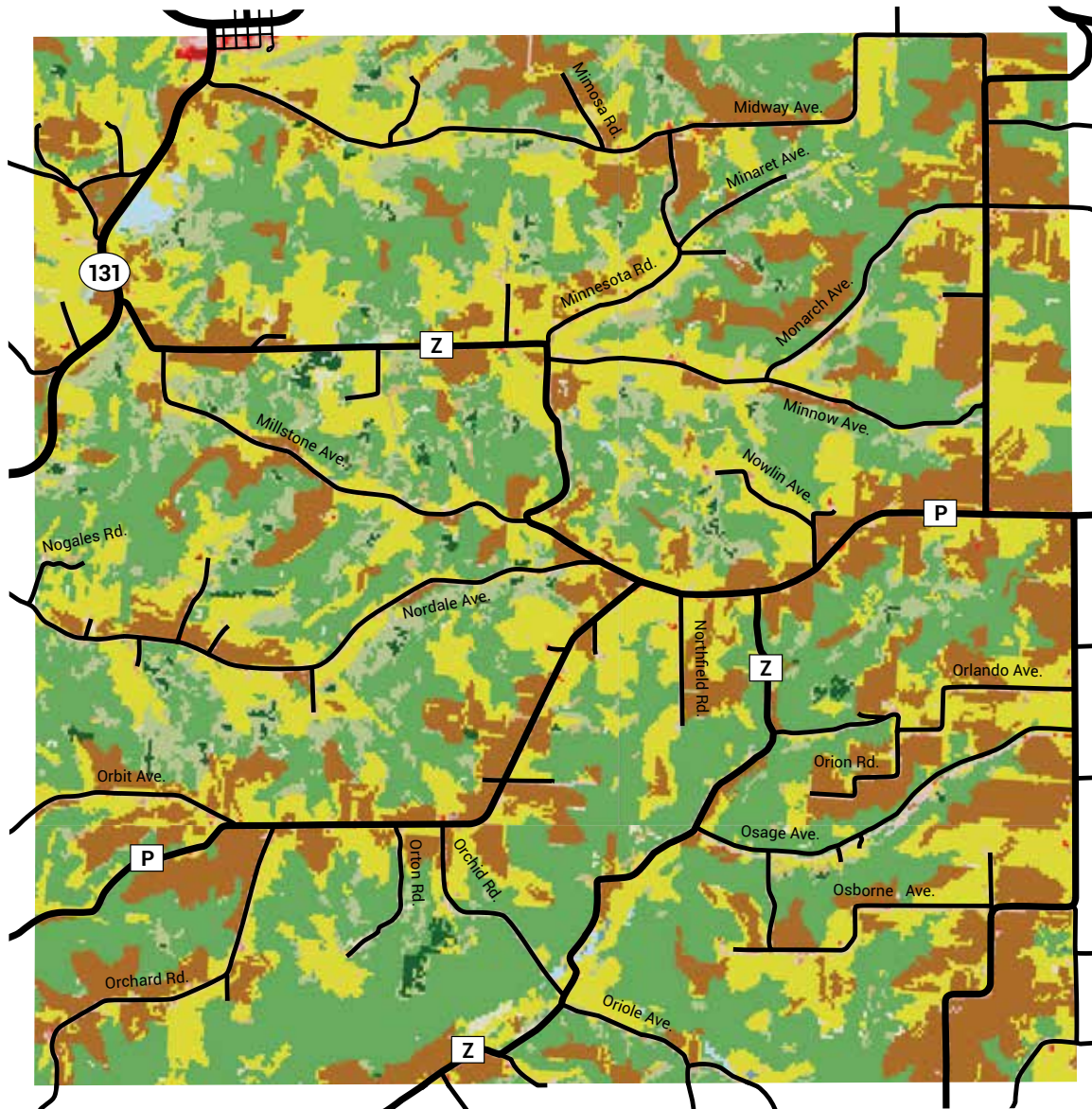
1. Discourage developments that may have an undue impact on Wellington's residents, land owners or businesses.

**Policies:**

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1. **Property Values.** New developments should not have negative impacts on existing neighboring properties.
2. **Regulations.** New developments will follow applicable town, county and state regulations.
3. **Non-metallic Mines.** New non-metallic mining operations will comply with Ordinance for the Licensing and Operation of Nonmetallic Mines in the Town of Wellington and follow applicable county and state regulations.

# Land Cover – Township of Wellington, Monroe County, WI



Source: National Landcover Database, 2019 Dataset  
©OpenStreetMap contributors



SCALE IN MILES

- DECIDUOUS FOREST
- EVERGREEN FOREST
- MIXED FOREST
- HAY/PASTURE
- CULTIVATED CROPS
- WOODY WETLANDS
- DEVELOPED

# TOWN GOVERNMENT AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION



We don't hear many people complain about Wellington like we do a lot of other townships so you must be doing something right.

— Citizen survey comment

## Introduction

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Wellington's town officials are expected to be local residents who share the concerns and values of their community. Traditionally, residents have wanted their officials to focus on maintaining roads and to do so economically. Or as one survey respondent writes, *"Keep quality roads without raising taxes significantly."* Today's citizens, however, want more than just good roads and their governments may require more than just tax dollars. Finding the right balance among desired services, necessary regulations and available resources is an ongoing challenge faced by most government officials including Wellington's Town Board.

## Town Government

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### Early Town Government

When Monroe County was in the early stages of its organization, Sheldon Township included the land that would later constitute the Town of Wellington. A temporary town government for Sheldon was organized in July 5, 1848. Millen Graham was elected chairman; William Hubbard and Minor Moore, supervisors; W.J. Heath clerk and assessor; William Abbott, treasurer and Henry Heath, assistant assessor. Henry Pennewal, who operated Pennewal's Tavern in what would become the northeast corner of Wellington Township, is credited as the first settler to have his land recorded at the Monroe County seat in Sparta. In November 2, 1858, two years after Wellington was disconnected from Sheldon, and an election was held for Wellington's first set of township officials.

### Current Town Government

**Town Board:** The Board consists of the Town Chairperson, two Town Supervisors, a Town Clerk and a Town Treasurer. The chairperson and supervisors are elected to two-year terms by the citizens of the Town. Town Board elections are non-partisan, that is, candidates run for office without a party affiliation. While the town consists of two wards for the purpose of conducting elections, both supervisors, like the chairperson, are elected at large and represent all the town's citizens. The Town Clerk and Town Treasurer are appointed by the Town Board.

**Town Employees:** The Town Patrolman is a full-time town employee. The town also employs several other individuals on a part-time basis.

**Contracted Personnel:** The Town contracts with outside individuals who act as the town's property assessor and the town's building inspector.

**Planning Commission:** The five members of the Planning Commission are Wellington landowners who are appointed by the Town Board for three-year terms. The Planning Commission members are volunteers. The Planning Commission advises the Town Board concerning ordinances and planning issues including the development of a comprehensive plan.

## Town Finances

Town government is funded by real estate taxes paid by its land owners. Property taxes are based on the amount and value of land and the value of its structures as determined by the town's assessor. Other taxing units; such as, the county government, public school districts and a technical college district are also funded through the tax bill issued by the town's treasurer. Typically, the tax bill for a given year is sent to land owners by the Treasurer in November.

Property values and property assessments can be a source of tension between a town government and its taxpayers. It's crucial that taxpayers believe their tax bills are fairly determined and equitable applied especially when compared to those of their neighbors. For example, citizen comments on the town's Citizens Opinion Survey in 2008 indicated strong opposition to the manner in which assessments were being conducted. Those survey results supported the Town Board's decision to replace the town's assessor.

## Town Zoning and Ordinances

There are 24 townships in Monroe County. Of those townships, 13, including Wellington, are not zoned. Unzoned Towns have not adopted County zoning. The county's floodplain zoning, shoreland zoning and subdivision ordinance do apply whether towns are zoned or not. The county's sanitary requirements (such as, septic systems) also apply to residences in Wellington.

In lieu of zoning, Wellington Township has utilized its Village Powers [Wisconsin Statutes sections 60.10(2) and 60.22(3)] to develop, adopt, and enforce ordinances for use within the town's borders. Such ordinances are intended to promote the public health, safety, general welfare and good order of the Town of Wellington's residents.

Typically, ordinances are intended to solve current problems or to prevent potential problems from developing. New ordinances, or revisions of current ordinances, are usually initiated by the Town Board. Once an issue has been identified by the Board, it is referred to the town's Planning Commission. Wellington's Citizen Surveys have also suggested issues that have prompted ordinance development. For example, several respondents to the 2008 survey expressed concerns about the appearance of some properties in the town. "*Get some owners to clean up eyesores,*" was typical of the suggestions from that survey. This, and similar comments, led to the creation of several ordinances dealing with junk vehicles, debris, and hazardous materials.

The members of the Planning Commission create a draft ordinance using guidance from the Wisconsin Town Association (WTA), Wisconsin State Statutes and the town's attorney. Subsequently, drafts of an ordinance are prepared, reviewed and revised by the Planning Commission. The draft ordinance is then forwarded to the Board for its action. Ordinances that are approved by the Board are posted for public notice and given a final review by the Town of Wellington's attorney prior to going into effect.



A difference of opinions about the role of regulation was apparent from the residents' comments on Wellington Citizen Survey. Individual responses ranged from, "***Please, no zoning!***" to, "***A lack of zoning leads to a Wild West mentality.***" The Town Board's dilemma is to develop enforceable regulations that protect residents' health, safety, and general welfare without being overly restrictive. Not an easy task.

See Appendix A for a current listing of the Town of Wellington Ordinances.

## Village Powers

The State of Wisconsin has recognized that the "Home Rule" powers provided to villages can also be of value to towns. By granting the town board "Village Powers," the town's electors provide their elected representatives with authority similar to that granted to village officials. Village Powers for the Town of Wellington were approved by electors attending the town's Annual Meeting on April 19, 2016.

"Village Powers" enable town boards to...

- Provide for the health, safety, welfare and convenience of town residents,
- Cooperate with other governing bodies,
- Acquire and dispose of property and
- Acquire property easements.

## Non-Metallic Mines

There is one nonmetallic mine operating within the Town of Wellington. Kendall Trucking and Excavating operates a sand pit located on Minnow Avenue. The Mathy Quarry operates a hard rock quarry on Logan Road in the Town of Wilton just to the north of the Town of Wellington. This quarry has been of interest to Wellington's officials and residents because of its close proximity to the town. Wellington does have an ordinance regulating nonmetallic mines entitled Licensing and Operation of Nonmetallic Mines in the Town of Wellington (#16.05).

## Intergovernmental Cooperation

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Work with other townships to share equipment/manpower to be more productive.

– Citizen survey comment

## Cooperative Efforts

As mentioned in Element 4: Utilities/Community Facilities, Wellington is served by the volunteer fire departments located in the local villages of Kendall, Ontario, and Wilton. Calls for assistance are routed to the department that is located closest to the site of the emergency. Ambulance and EMT service is located in Village of Wilton. Police protection is provided by the Monroe County Sheriff's department with assistance from the police department in the three villages. The services described

are supported by the Town of Wellington through property tax dollars as well as fees for services from town residents.

Transportation, being the number one priority of most rural townships, implies a close working relationship among towns and their respective county departments of transportation. The Town of Wellington cooperates with Monroe County on planning, construction and maintenance issues of mutual interest. Such projects involve three county highways (P, Z and V) and county highway bridges as well as the town's roads and bridges. The county's Highway Department assists the town to acquire flow-through and cost-share transportation funds available from county, state and federal sources. State Highway 131 passes through a portion of Wellington necessitating cooperation between the State of Wisconsin and the town. For example, town, village, county and state governments worked together to define and approve routes for local ATV/UTV traffic.

While the formal arrangements made between various governments are important, local cooperative efforts highlight informal governmental relationships. Wellington's patrolman and other officials and employees are able to assist neighboring towns by sharing equipment, providing help during personnel emergencies and assisting local residents in need. A willingness to help others is a characteristic of country folks that carries over as an expectation for their local government officials.

Further details on governmental cooperation and emergency planning relating to roads can be found in Element 3: Transportation.

## Emergency Planning

Residents expect their town governments to plan for timely and effective fire protection and ambulance services. The Town of Wellington contracts with the local villages to provide such services to our residents. The Town of Wellington, like most townships in the county, does not have their own police force and relies on the county's Sheriff's Office or the Wisconsin State Patrol. All of these services require coordination between and among the local and county governments.

Severe weather events, related to climate change, have become increasingly important aspect of Wellington's emergency planning. According to Dr. Dan Vimont, Director of the UW-Madison's Center for Climatic Research, *"we are never going back to the climate we had in the 20th Century."* (*The County Line* January 14, 2021). Atmospheric warming has led to a 2 to 3 Fahrenheit degree increase in annual warming since 1950 with an additional 2 to 8 Fahrenheit degrees of warming predicted by 2050. This warming trend has had a dramatic impact on the amount and distribution of rainfall. In 2020, Wisconsin completed its wettest decade in history. Southwestern Wisconsin was especially hard hit with precipitation levels up 10% during that period. The increase in precipitation was characterized by heavy rain events leading to major flooding in Wellington in 2007, 2017, and 2018.

Flooding is particularly problematic in the ridge and valley terrain of the Driftless area. Local streams and rivers can rise quickly and move downslope with remarkable force. Roads, bridges, culverts, hillsides, ag fields, and structures can all be severely impacted by rushing water. All governments may struggle in their efforts to save lives and minimize property damage during such weather emergencies. For local governments, such as the Town of Wellington, the challenges of severe weather events can be especially daunting.

Because recent flood damage has been so wide-spread, local authorities have had to work together to put roads and bridges back in operation. As the scope of the damage has exceeded available resources, local governments like Wellington's, have looked to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for financial assistance.

The Monroe County Climate Change Task Force was formed in 2020 to help the county and local governments prepare for the threats posed by climate change. Among the Task Force's initiatives are improving the monitoring of streams and rainfall, preparing early warning systems and

surveying the flood readiness of bridges and culverts (*Monroe County Herald* February 18, 2021). Active participation by town officials and residents in such county-wide climate change mitigation efforts is certainly advisable.

It seems likely that severe weather events will increase in frequency and strength in the coming years. The Town of Wellington will need to plan cooperatively with local, county, state, and national authorities to prepare for such emergencies. As one survey respondent warned, *“Climate change will continue to be a major challenge with flooding, severe weather, damage to infrastructure and their associated costs.”*

## Town of Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey: Town Government and Intergovernmental Cooperation

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Seven of the 2020 Citizen Opinion Survey's Emphasis Issues have connections to the Town Government and Intergovernmental Cooperation Element. A number of the emphasis issues listed below have also been included with other of the comprehensive plan's elements.

**Table 8.1 Scoring Government and Cooperation-related Emphasis Issues**

Issue #	Issue Statement	Emphasis Score	Emphasis Rank
19.	Emergency services	93%	2 of 27
23.	Intergovernmental cooperation	83%	8 of 27
24.	Residents' health, safety, welfare	82%	10 of 27
20.	Town-provided services	79%	11 of 27
22.	Services for disabled and elderly	74%	17 of 27
5.	Maintenance of property values	76%	15 of 27
21.	Services for disadvantaged families	54%	22 of 27

Source: Wellington Citizen Opinion Survey, 2020

### Survey Summary: Town Government and Intergovernmental Cooperation

Wellington's survey results suggest residents generally approve of the job being done by their Town officials. Many survey comments echoed the feeling of this individual, *“The current board is working in the best interests of the residents.”* Residents expect their town government to maintain roads, facilitate emergency services, provide basic services and respond to the concerns of its residents. Survey respondents want their town officials to work closely with other local governments to acquire necessary services and to provided mutual assistance when needed. Wellington's residents seem mostly satisfied with the performance of their officials but remain concerned about governmental “overreach” that might threatened residents' freedom of action. As one respondent cautioned, *“Don't become too regulatory and invasive of people's choices and lifestyles. Find the balance between “regulation,” “suggestion,” and “choice.””*

## Land Use: Goals, Objectives, and Policies

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**Maintain mutually beneficial relationships with local school districts, neighboring municipalities, Monroe County, State and Federal agencies.**

**Objectives:**

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1. Cooperate with Monroe County and neighboring townships and villages to identify opportunities for cost-sharing services and facilities in order to increase efficiencies and improve quality of services.
2. Cooperate with local school districts to maintain school bus routes during weather or other road emergencies.
3. Stay apprised of planning efforts and activities that would affect Wellington.

**Policies:**

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1. Encourage compatible land use patterns that minimize conflicts between land uses across governmental boundaries.
2. To the extent possible, coordinate the Wellington's Comprehensive Plan with any future comprehensive plans for neighboring townships, villages, and Monroe County.
3. When appropriate, create intergovernmental agreements or adopt resolutions to establish written terms and policies for shared services or facilities or joint planning activities.
4. Establish relationships with Amish community leaders in order to stay apprised of the Amish communities' concerns and activities and to provide updates from town officials on town events, regulations, and planning activities.

### Additional Goals

The two goals listed in **Element #4 Utilities and Community Facilities**;

**Goal 1: Maintain cost-effective and reliable services, utilities, and facilities.**

**Goal 2: Enhance communication between town government and the Wellington community.**

as well as those two goals' objectives and policies, are also applicable to this Town Government and Intergovernmental Cooperation Element.

# IMPLEMENTATION



Wellington should be a community of farmers, working families and people of all ages, talents and abilities who can share their knowledge, products, or services with other local people.

– Citizen survey comment

## Introduction

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The Town of Wellington's comprehensive plan includes narratives, facts and figures and maps to provide a description of the town's past history, present condition and outlook for the future. In addition, the perspectives of residents and landowners offered in the town's 2020 Citizen Opinion Survey furnishes context and direction to the plan. Ultimately, the value of this document rests with its usefulness to Wellington's residents and the local officials who act on their behalf.

## Comprehensive Plan Goals

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According to the State of Wisconsin's Department of Administration (2010) "Goals are broad and general expressions of a community's aspirations towards which planned effort is directed." Wellington's comprehensive plan's goals represent what such aspirations might look like to Town of Wellington town officials and residents. The objectives and policies that would likely be necessary to achieve these goals are found in plan's Element chapters.

### Element #2: Housing Goals

Goal 1: Provide for the residential needs of all Wellington residents to meet existing and future housing demands.

Goal 2: Maintain housing properties, types and densities that reinforce Wellington's rural character.

Goal 3: Provide safe and sanitary housing to meet existing and future needs of the community.

### Element #3: Transportation Goals

Goal 1: Provide for a safe, efficient, and well-maintained transportation network for residents, farmers, area businesses, and emergency services.

#### **Element #4: Utilities and Community Facilities Goals**

Goal 1: Maintain cost-effective and reliable services, utilities, and facilities.

Goal 2: Enhance communication between town government and the Wellington community.

#### **Element #5: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Goals**

Goal 1: Maintain Wellington's rural character and natural scenic beauty by encouraging the preservation of farmland, sensitive environmental areas, wildlife habitat, rural vistas, and local cultural resources.

Goal 2: Minimize land use conflicts between farm and non-farm uses.

Goal 3: Preserve and protect agricultural, natural, and water resources.

#### **Element #6: Economic Development Goals**

Goal 1: Support the retention and development of businesses that strengthen and diversify the local economy without detracting from the rural character of the town.

Goal 2: Minimize land use conflicts between business and residential or agricultural uses.

#### **Element #7: Land Use Goals**

Goal 1: Encourage land uses that support Wellington's rural character and sense of place.

Goal 2: Encourage developments within the town that will uphold property values and reinforce the rural character of Wellington.

Goal 3: Balance land use regulations and individual property rights with community interests.

#### **Element #8: Town Government and Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals**

Goal 1: Maintain mutually beneficial relationships with local school districts, neighboring municipalities, Monroe County, State and Federal agencies.

### **Town of Wellington Comprehensive Plan Approval Process**

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The following steps included in Wellington's Public Participation Plan describe the process that will be followed to present, review and approve the Town of Wellington comprehensive plan. The complete Public Participation Plan is included as Appendix A.

#### **1. Public Hearing**

As required by Section 66.1001(4)(d), the town will hold a public hearing on the proposed comprehensive plan. The hearing will include a presentation by the Planning Commission describing the comprehensive plan followed by an opportunity for the public to comment. The Town Planning Commission and Town Board will consider public testimony provided at the hearing and any written comments submitted to the town prior to the hearing during their deliberations on the proposed comprehensive plan.

## **2. Notification to Interested Parties**

The Town Clerk will provide a copy of the public hearing notice and the proposed comprehensive plan at least 30 days prior to the public hearing to any person who submits a written request to receive notice of a proposed comprehensive plan under Section 66.1001(4)(f). The town may charge a fee to cover the cost of providing such notice. In accordance with Section 66.1001(4)(e), the Town Clerk will also provide notice to nonmetallic mining operators within the town; to persons who have registered a marketable nonmetallic mineral deposit within the town; or to persons who own or lease property on which nonmetallic minerals may be extracted, if such person has requested notification in writing. An electronic copy of the proposed comprehensive plan will also be provided to neighboring jurisdictions and appropriate governments at least 30 days prior to the public hearing. The Town Clerk will maintain a list of persons who have submitted a written request to receive notices of public hearings under Section 66.1001(4)(e)(3) and Section (4)(f).

## **3. Planning Commission Recommendations**

Following the public hearing, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Town Board to approve, deny, or modify the proposed comprehensive plan. The Planning Commission's recommendation will be in the form of a resolution approved by a majority of the full membership of the Planning Commission.

## **4. Town Board Action**

Following Planning Commission action, the Town Board will consider the comprehensive plan and the Planning Commission's recommendation and approve, deny, or refer the proposed comprehensive plan back to the Planning Commission. If approved, Town Board approval will be in the form of an ordinance adopted by a majority of the full membership of the Town Board.

## **5. Distribution of Plan**

If approved by the Town Board, printed or electronic copies of the comprehensive plan will be sent by the Town Clerk to the parties listed in Section 66.1001(4)(b).

## **Updating the Town of Wellington Comprehensive Plan**

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The current comprehensive plan is intended to provide guidance to local officials when making decisions that affect the town's residents and operations. It is likely that this plan will need to be reviewed and revised over time. It is suggested that the Wellington Town Board and Planning Commission formally review the comprehensive plan on a ten-year basis. This review and revision should be informed by the next edition of the Wellington Opinion Citizen Survey projected for 2030.