



**CITY OF MERRILL**  
**CITY PLAN COMMISSION**  
**AGENDA • TUESDAY FEBRUARY 2, 2016**

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**Regular Meeting**

**City Hall Council Chambers**

**5:00 PM**

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- I. Call to Order
- II. Minutes of previous meeting(s):
  1. Minutes of January 5, 2016 meeting
- III. Agenda items related to update of City Comprehensive Plan:
  1. Comprehensive Plan status
  2. Natural Resources chapter review
  3. Utilities & Community Facilities chapter review
  4. Survey review and discussion
- IV. Other agenda items:
- V. Public Comment Period
- VI. Establish date, time and location of next meeting
- VII. Adjournment



CITY OF MERRILL
CITY PLAN COMMISSION
MINUTES • TUESDAY JANUARY 5, 2016

Regular Meeting City Hall Council Chambers 5:30 PM

I. Call to Order

Table with 4 columns: Attendee Name, Title, Status, Arrived. Rows include Pete Lokemoen, Bill Bialecki, Mike Willman, Ralph Sturm, Melissa Schroeder, Ken Maule, and Robert Reimann.

Also in attendance: City Administrator Dave Johnson, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Alderman Dave Sukow, Alderman Ryan Schwartzman, Alderwoman Kandy Peterson (arr. 5:32), Jim Dupke, Jeremy Ratliff, Duane Pfister and City Clerk Bill Heideman.

The following attended the public hearing portion of the meeting: Christine Vorpapel, Tim Haight, Erik Pfantz, Kyle Gulke, Greg Berlin, Linda Berlin and Gail Curren.

II. Minutes of previous meeting(s):

1. Minutes of October 6, 2015 meeting

A copy of the minutes was in the meeting packet.

Motion (Willman/Sturm) to approve the minutes.

RESULT: APPROVED

III. Agenda items for consideration:

1. Site Plan for Merrill Festival Grounds Multipurpose Building.

A copy of the site plan was in the meeting packet.

City Administrator Johnson reported that the building would be on the western side of the grounds and would replace the existing Schulz Building. The Merrill Enrichment Center will be relocated to that building.

Motion (Lokemoen/Willman) to approve the site plan.

RESULT: APPROVED & SENT TO COUNCIL Next: 1/12/2016 7:00 PM

2. Consider Certified Survey Map from Lincoln Storage for land located at the east end of Mathews Street in the City of Merrill.

A copy of the Certified Survey Map was in the meeting packet.

Attachment: 2016-01-05 Plan Commission minutes (1488 : Minutes of January 5, 2016 meeting)

Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Pagel reported that his only concern was the fact that the map did not meet the 50-foot minimum of frontage on the street. Jim Dupke replied that the land is unusable, and therefore he did not see a problem with less than 50 feet of lot frontage.

City Attorney Hayden suggested that this be delayed until the next meeting. An adjustment could be made to the map and the adjusted map could then be considered at that next meeting.

No action was taken at this time.

**3. A Resolution approving a Certified Survey Map on Rae Road in the Town of Scott by Lise Stefronik, Trustee.**

This was part of an amended agenda. Copies of the map were distributed at the meeting.

Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Pagel explained that the map requires City Plan Commission consideration because the land falls within the extraterritorial zone of the City. He has no concerns with the map as presented.

Motion (Schroeder/Reimann) to approve the Certified Survey Map.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED &amp; SENT TO COUNCIL</b>	<b>Next: 1/12/2016 7:00 PM</b>
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**4. Public Hearing (6:00 P.M.) on City of Merrill request for rezoning of property at 120 South Mill Street (former Lincoln House site) from Business District to Planned Unit Development (PUD) for residential/commercial development.**

At 5:38 P.M., Mayor Bialecki declared a recess until 6:00 P.M., the time scheduled for the public hearing portion of the meeting. At 6:00 P.M., he called the meeting back to order.

City Attorney Hayden read the public hearing notice.

Motion (Willman/Schroeder) to open the public hearing. Carried. The public hearing was opened at 6:02 P.M.

A copy of the proposal for redevelopment was distributed. Mayor Bialecki provided verbal information. A four-story building is being proposed. Mayor Bialecki added that a joint meeting made up of several City governmental bodies will be held later in January, to discuss this issue further.

Linda Berlin questions the reasoning for scheduling a public hearing before the proposal was made public.

Erik Pfantz spoke against using this property for an apartment building. He would rather see it used as a business.

Christine Vorpapel urged the City to join the Main Street group. She also urged a review of the Strategic Plan and how this project would fit in with that plan. Mayor Bialecki responded to her comments.

Attachment: 2016-01-05 Plan Commission minutes (1488 : Minutes of January 5, 2016 meeting)

Erik Pfantz questioned whether there is currently a need for this type of housing.

Tim Haight, who lives downtown, stated that he was not opposed to housing being on the property. However, he recalled that when the Lincoln House was inhabited by primarily low-income people, tenants frequently loitered in the downtown area. He expressed his concerns that this could be repeated if the housing involves primarily low-income people. He repeated that he was not opposed to housing on the property, but would prefer business there.

Motion (Maule/Lokemoen) to close the public hearing. Carried. The public hearing was closed at 6:28 P.M.

Motion (Maule/Lokemoen) to recommend considering the rezoning at this time, pending additional plan submittal and approval. Carried.

#### IV. Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

#### V. Establish date, time and location of next meeting

Sometime in January, there will be a special joint meeting of the Common Council, City Plan Commission and Redevelopment Authority.

The next regular City Plan Commission meeting will be Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 at 5:00 P.M. in the City Hall Common Council Chambers.

#### VI. Adjournment

Motion (Lokemoen/Reimann) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:32 P.M.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Background

This chapter reviews the natural environment and resources in the city, such as groundwater, forests, sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, stream corridors, surface water, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, metallic and nonmetallic mineral resources, parks, open spaces, historical and cultural resources, community design, recreational resources and other natural resources. These resources are the foundation of city.

#### A. Previous Studies

A variety of plans are reviewed as they relate to natural, agricultural, and cultural resources. These plans provide a starting point for the planning process.

##### 1. Merrill Comprehensive Plan, 2006

Natural resources were addressed in the previous plan. An inventory of the existing resources and a listing of various goals and objectives were developed. Much of that information is incorporated in this chapter.

##### 2. Merrill Wellhead Protection Plan, 1996

This plan focuses on preventing contaminants from entering the area of land around the public water supply. It identifies locations of the wells, surrounding land uses, and recharge areas. The plan also incorporates the groundwater recharge direction of flow, potential contamination sources within ½ mile radii of each well site, public education and conservation programs, and contains a management plan for addressing potential sources of contamination in the delineated well head protection areas.

All five of Merrill's municipal wells and two alternative well sites were incorporated. Two of the city's wells are on the far west side of the city, and the other three wells, as well as two potential sites, are located on the far east side of the city. According to the plan, the east side aquifer has untapped capacity for at least one more well.

##### 3. Merrill Sewer Service Area Plan, 1996-2016

The purpose of this plan is to develop a twenty-year sanitary sewer service boundary for the Merrill urban area. The urban sanitary sewer

service area boundary identifies the geographic land area within which sanitary sewer service could be made available by the year 2016 through a cost-effective, environmentally acceptable manner. In addition to delineating an urban sewer service boundary, the Sewer Service Area Plan provides a framework for future planning at each individual municipal level. The goals and policies developed throughout this planning process will also be applicable and useful in the development of local policy direction with respect to land use decisions within these communities.

4. Merrill Intensive Survey Report Architectural and Historical Survey Project, 1992

The purpose of this project was to identify buildings, sites, or structures within Merrill's city limits that are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as part of a historic district. About 125 structures of historic significance were identified. The majority of these are located in the following (proposed) historic districts:

- Center Avenue District
- West Main Street Residential District
- West Main Street Commercial District
- East Main Street Residential District
- East Third Street Residential District

5. Merrill Parks & Recreation Plan. 2013-2018

The outdoor recreation plan develops a 5-year plan to meet the current and future recreational needs of residents. The plan inventories the City's numerous parks and other recreational facilities, examines population growth and patterns, and proposes additional recreational needs. Adoption of this plan allows for continued eligibility for financial assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), the Stewardship Fund, and many other federal and state funding programs.

6. Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan 2000-2020

The Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan addresses natural, agricultural, and cultural resources for all of the surrounding towns. Most land in agricultural production is south and east of Merrill. The plan identifies the following recommendations:

- Minimize nonagricultural development in farming areas;
- Support the continuation of the family farm;
- Explore opportunities to expand the county forest; &

- Protect known historic and archeological sites.
- New development should generally be discouraged in environmental corridors

Environmental corridors are mapped in the county plan, and generally contain wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes of 15 percent or greater, and soils with a major hydric content as determined from the Lincoln County Soil Survey.

#### 7. Lincoln County Land & Water Resource Management Plan, 2010

The 2010 Land & Water Resource Management Plan identifies two primary goals. These are:

- Protect and improve surface water and groundwater quality; &
- Conserve and protect productive agricultural land, forestland, and other sensitive natural areas.

#### 8. Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2012-2016

The primary purpose of this recreation plan is to provide continued direction in meeting the current and future recreational needs of the County. This plan provides an inventory and analysis of existing outdoor recreational facilities, and provides recommendations to meet identified needs. Specific park and forest parcel improvement lists exist within the plan.

The City of Merrill has its own outdoor recreation plan, but one recommendation for Merrill was also listed in the county plan - general concern about snowmobile trail routes exists. A comprehensive review of snowmobile trails within the City may show a need to develop permanent trail corridors.

#### 9. Lincoln County Farmland Preservation Plan

The County is currently preparing a Farmland Preservation Plan which focuses on preserving agricultural production capacity, farmland, soil and water resources, and rural character in Lincoln County. The plan identifies issues and concerns and trends in farming practices, sets goals and policies to preserve agriculture, and identifies actions to achieve the set goals. It also sets criteria for farmland preservation areas and non-farmland preservation areas. This plan will identify preservation areas in the towns surrounding the city.

## B. Natural Resource Issues

- Maintaining environmental standards while continuing growth

Stormwater runoff may threaten the exceptional listing of local water bodies. Cities, construction sites, & farms all have runoff management rules that are set by the state as minimum standards that should be tightened locally to maintain exceptional water quality.

- Maintain and Improve Water Quality

Currently, two water bodies do not meet standards, and 3 water bodies are listed as exceptional water bodies.

- Contaminated Sites & Redevelopment

There are contaminated sites in the city, which is no surprise since all communities with commercial and industrial development have the potential for groundwater contamination, soil spills, and surface water contamination. Many of these sites are along the river and if remediated provide great redevelopment opportunities.

- Recreational Connections

There are numerous recreational opportunities in the city and in the immediate area, such as Council Grounds State Park and the Wisconsin and Prairie Rivers. Providing connections to these amenities helps to enhance the quality of life in the community.

## Inventory & Trends

### A. Physical Landscape

All plans must consider the natural environment in which a community exists. Understanding the physical landscape is critical to the growth of a community. Natural constraints and environmental issues need to be identified to plan properly.

- Topography

Merrill is located in the Northern Highland physiographic region of Wisconsin. The city is about 1,300 feet above sea level. The landscape has only a few lakes and undrained depressions. This is an area of relatively flat outwash plains in the major river valleys that meander

through broad swells of moraine upland where bedrock is close to the surface. Slopes are mostly long and smooth.

- Soils

Area soils are related to the physical geography, climate, and vegetation. By reviewing the soil maps and other information, it is possible to determine the best uses for a particular area. See the 1996 Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey of Lincoln County for more information. Generally, the soils in the city have few limitations for buildings with basements. An overview of the various soil types are displayed on the Soils Map.

Human activity also affects soil formation by altering and accelerating natural soil processes. Clearing, burning, cultivating, and urbanization can affect soil structure, porosity, and content of nutrients, thereby altering the soils.

- Climate

Winters are very cold, and summers are short and fairly warm. The short frost-free period in summer limits the production of crops to forage, small grain, and adapted vegetables. Precipitation is fairly well distributed throughout the year, reaching a peak in summer. Snow covers the ground during much of the period from late fall through early spring. The soils occasionally freeze to a depth of several feet when very cold temperatures occur before the ground is appreciably covered with snow. The soils usually freeze to a depth ranging from the top few inches to about one foot.

## B. Water Resources

A major component of the natural environment is water. This section of the plan overviews surface water, wetlands, floodplains, and groundwater.

### 1. Surface Water

The Wisconsin and Prairie Rivers flow through the heart of Merrill. The Wisconsin River travels from the northwest area of the city east to the furthest eastern area of the city and turns south. The Prairie River flows from the northeast and joins the Wisconsin River in the middle of downtown.

Lincoln County is located in the Upper Wisconsin River drainage basin. Within the county there are thirteen watersheds. The Prairie River watershed drains land within the Merrill city limits north of the Wisconsin River, and the Devil Creek watershed drains most land within the city limits south of the Wisconsin River. Both of these watersheds drain into the Wisconsin River.

Exceptional resource waters are defined by the WDNR as a stream or lake that has excellent water quality, high recreational and aesthetic value, and high quality fishing, but may be impacted by point source pollution or have the potential for future discharge from a small sewered community.

Three area water bodies are listed as exceptional resource waters. These are: the Prairie River, sections of the North Branch Prairie River, and Silver Creek.

Two area water bodies are listed as not meeting the standards set under the U.S. Clean Water Act, Section 303(d), these are Pesabic Lake and the Wisconsin River as it leaves the city limits. Pesabic Lake has mercury contamination, which has caused a fish consumption advisory to be issued by the WDNR. The Wisconsin River also has a fish consumption advisory on it due to of mercury and PCB contamination.

## 2. Wetlands

Wetlands perform many indispensable roles in the proper function of the hydrologic cycle and local ecological systems. Wetlands assist in hazard mitigation by acting as water storage devices in times of high water. Like sponges, wetlands are able to absorb excess water and release it back into the watershed slowly, preventing flooding and minimizing flood damage. As more impermeable surfaces are developed, this excess capacity for water runoff storage becomes increasingly important.

Wetland plants and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants ranging from pesticides to animal wastes. Calm wetland waters, with their flat surface and flow characteristics, allow particles of toxins and nutrients to settle out of the water column. Plants take up certain nutrients from the water. Other substances can be stored or transformed to a less toxic state within wetlands. As a result, our lakes, rivers and streams are cleaner and our drinking water is safer.

Wetlands that filter or store sediments or nutrients for extended periods may undergo fundamental changes. Sediments will eventually fill in wetlands and nutrients will eventually modify the vegetation. Such changes may result in the loss of this function over time. Eradication of

wetlands can occur through the use of fill material. This can destroy the hydrological function of the site and open the area to improper development. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has promulgated minimum standards for managing wetlands.

Wetlands to the north and west of Merrill are considered the source of water for two of the city's five municipal wells. The Wellhead Protection Plan states that the volume of water needed by the city cannot be met by the aquifer tapped on the west side of the city alone, so any expansion of well capacity will be sought in the eastern well field aquifer.

### 3. Floodplains

A floodplain is generally defined as land where there is a one percent chance of flooding in any year (also known as the 100-year floodplain). The primary value of floodplains is their role in natural flood control. Flood plains represent areas where excess water can be accommodated whether through drainage by streams or through storage by wetlands and other natural detention/retention areas. Specific areas that will be inundated will depend upon the amount of water, the distance and speed that water travels, and the topography of the area. If uninterrupted by development, the areas shown on a map as floodplains should be able to handle a severe (regional) flood, i.e. those that have a probability of occurring once every one hundred years.

There is a value in preserving and protecting these natural flood control areas from encroachment. First, by preventing development in the floodplain, the cost of building dikes, levies, or other man-made flood control devices will be saved. Second, for each structure that is constructed in a flood-prone area, that flood-prone area expands, potentially subjecting other structures originally built outside the delineated flood hazard area to the risk of flooding. Each new structure (or modification to existing) placed in the flood plain puts more life and property in danger.

Counties, cities, and villages are required to adopt reasonable and effective floodplain zoning ordinances. Floodplain zoning is designed to protect individuals, private property, and public investments from flood damage. These regulations prohibit development in the floodway, the most dangerous flood area.

In order to participate in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program, the County, City of Merrill, and City of Tomahawk have completed a Flood Insurance Study and a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) that encompasses Lincoln County. This FIRM delineates the "A" Zones including the floodway and flood

fringe which are those areas inundated by the 100-year flood within the County.

Floodplains occur along the Wisconsin River where levees are in poor condition. Flooding has occurred during periods of exceptionally heavy rainfall. Currently, there are no repetitive loss structures, those with multiple flood insurance claims, in Lincoln County.

#### 4. Groundwater

The groundwater in the Merrill area meets municipal, industrial, and rural needs. Well water is available at various depths, depending on the topography, the distance above permanent stream levels, and the character of the underlying aquifer. All of the wells are relatively shallow, gravel packed, screened and terminate in the glacial drift. The productive areas of the drift consist of sand and gravel underlain by granite bedrock. This productive layer varies significantly in thickness from place to place in the city. The municipal wells are located over ancient valleys in the granite bedrock, therefore the sand and gravel deposited by glaciers in these valleys is the source of the well's supply.

Overall, groundwater quality is good. Local differences in quality are the result of the composition, solubility, and surface area of the soil and rock through which the water moves and the length of time that the water is in contact with these materials.

The 1996 Wellhead Protection Plan for the city has maps delineating 5-years worth of groundwater flow toward municipal wells. The content of dissolved solids in the ground water is relatively low throughout the county. In many areas of the county, the soils have very porous layers that are poor filters for domestic waste and agricultural chemicals. The impact of development, agriculture, and gravel pits may cause deterioration of the groundwater quality in these areas.

The City has established Wellhead Protection Area overlay zoning to better control land uses that may contaminate the municipal water supply. Wellhead protection programs involve five components:

- 1) Delineation of a zone of contribution for a five-year time of travel;
- 2) An inventory of all potential contamination sources within that zone;
- 3) Education and conservation programs;
- 4) A management plan; and
- 5) A contingency plan for toxic spills and well contamination.

Land use activities with a history of creating groundwater problems can then be limited or closely monitored within the zone of contribution with overlay zoning.

### C. Woodlands

Significant tracts of woodland exist within the planning area. These forested areas are primarily associated with streams, and wetlands. Forest cover provides many vital functions, which are diverse in nature; forested lands provide for recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, and wildlife habitat as well as protection of sensitive environmental areas. Regulation of the removal of woodland plant material is desirable to protect scenic beauty, to control erosion, and to reduce effluent and nutrient flows into surface waters.

From the NCWRPC GIS Inventory, about 1,035 acres of woodland exist in the City of Merrill, which is about 20 percent of land area within the city. Tree cover is essential, especially for erosion control and to reduce effluent and nutrient flows into surface water bodies and courses.

Merrill has been a Tree City USA member since 1987. Trees add value to land for property owners, help cool buildings and neighborhoods, break the cold winds to lower heating costs, increase stormwater infiltration to reduce runoff, and provide food for wildlife. The Wisconsin DNR maintains records on the largest trees (Champion Trees) in the state to encourage the appreciation of Wisconsin's forests and trees. The City of Merrill has two Champion Trees, both of which are located in Stange's Park: Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), Rank #2 and Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), Rank #3. Many of the Champion Tree records are quite old and out of date. Some records are incomplete. Some trees listed may now be gone or have lost branches and leaders, so they may no longer be champions.

### D. Rare Species & Natural Communities

The City of Merrill and nearby towns contain 25 sections with occurrences of aquatic and terrestrial plants, animals, and/or natural communities of endangered status as identified in the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory. Each section identified may have several different species or just one species.

- Sixteen contiguous sections with aquatic occurrences exist along the east side of Merrill that are mainly associated with the Prairie and Wisconsin Rivers. Three of those sections are within the city.
- Eight contiguous sections with aquatic occurrences exist west of Merrill from the Wisconsin River. Most likely these aquatic species are related to the Copper River.
- One section with both aquatic and terrestrial occurrences exists within Council Grounds State Park.

Krueger Pines is State Natural Area #20, located in Council Grounds State Park. According to the DNR, Krueger Pines features an old-growth northern dry-mesic forest dominated by an even-aged stand of white pine, some as large as two feet in diameter. Red pine is also present along with paper birch, big-tooth aspen, white oak, and black oak. Beaked hazelnut, American hazelnut, downy arrowwood, and blackberries comprise the brushy understory. Characteristic groundlayer species are large-leaved aster, wild sarsaparilla, Canada mayflower, American starflower, partridgeberry, shinleaf, and bracken fern. Canopy birds include eastern wood pewee, red-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, red-eyed vireo, blackburnian and pine warblers, and scarlet tanager. The site was historically an old council or gathering area for Chippewa Indians. Krueger Pines is owned by the DNR and was designated a State Natural Area in 1953.

As an exceptional resource water that is now restored to its free flowing state, the Prairie River may now contain more aquatic plants and animals because light penetrates to the waterbed, which allows plants to grow that provide food and shelter for animals. This area currently contains occurrences of aquatic species listed as either: rare, threatened, or endangered in the Natural Heritage Inventory.

The additional land recovered from removing the Ward Paper Company dam may increase terrestrial species that city residents can passively enjoy on the newly created paths. Educational opportunities may be enhanced if schools take advantage of this new natural resource in their study plans.

Wisconsin's biodiversity goals are to identify, protect and manage native plants, animals, and natural communities from the very common to critically endangered for present and future generations. Knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship of Wisconsin's native species and ecosystems are critical to their survival and greater benefit to society. Original vegetation types for the City of Merrill and surrounding areas

were hemlock, sugar maple, yellow birch, white pine, and red pine, which came from a map of Finley's Original Vegetation.

#### E. Environmental Contamination

Land with known environmental concerns are listed on the following databases:

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Bureau For Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS);
- Wisconsin Department of Commerce – Brownfield Location Information System; and
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – EPA Enviromapper.

Contaminated sites originate when a property is used for such activities as a gas station, industrial processing facility, a landfill, or other industrial process.

According to BRRTS there are 9 contaminated sites that are currently open cases in the City of Merrill. Eight sites have soil contamination, six have groundwater contamination, one has surface water contamination, one has co-co contamination, and one site has off-site and direct contact contamination.

Every permit holding site shown on the EPA Enviromapper database transfers, creates, or uses substances that may cause pollution if not handled properly. The City of Merrill wastewater treatment facility is the only water discharger in the Enviromapper database.

#### F. Agriculture

The City of Merrill does not have any active farms or agricultural lands. Areas surrounding the city have vast areas of open space and agricultural lands.

#### Town of Merrill

According to the *Town Land Use Plan, Town of Merrill*, A majority of the Town remains in open space uses. There are areas of land being farmed throughout the Town, but there are few remaining large blocks of farmland. Much of the remaining open land is wooded, but these areas too are somewhat fragmented, particularly in the southern parts of the Town.

### Town of Pine River

According to the *Town Land Use Plan, Town of Pine River*, A vast majority of the Town remains in open space uses. There are large areas of land being farmed throughout the Town, but particularly in its southern and northwestern sections (including Christmas tree farms).

### Town of Scott

According to the *Town Land Use Plan, Town of Scott*, A vast majority of the Town remains in open space uses. There are large areas of land being farmed in all parts of the Town. Most of the developed lands within the Town are used for single family residences. Subdivisions and smaller clusters of lots are concentrated along portions Joe Snow Road, near the Wisconsin River on the eastern edge of the Town, and adjacent to the City.

## G. Recreational Resources

The Merrill area park and recreation system consists of 15 parks on approximately 1,110 acres of parkland and special use areas under the control of the city, and about 35 acres managed by the county, and school district. Descriptions of each park and their amenities are located in the City of Merrill Parks and Recreation Plan.

Council Grounds State Park is about 500 acres located along the Wisconsin River, adjacent to the northwest side of Merrill. A campground with modern rest rooms, swimming beach, picnic areas, shelter house and a physical fitness trail are some of the park's amenities. Parks and recreation are discussed further in Chapter 6 of the plan.

## H. Historic & Cultural Assets

There are a number of structures in the City of Merrill that are listed on the National Register of Historical Places. The Lincoln County Courthouse (ca. 1902), Merrill City Hall (ca. 1888-1889), Merrill Post Office (ca. 1915), First Street Bridge (ca. 1904), and the T.B. Scott Free Library (ca. 1911) are individual buildings listed on the national registry. The Center Avenue Historical District (ca. 1855-1930) is a residential housing cluster also on the register. A brief community history is discussed earlier in the plan.

## Goals, Objectives, & Policies

The following Goals, Objectives, and Policies will help guide the City of Merrill to better protect and utilize the natural, agricultural and cultural resources within the planning area.

### A. Natural Resources

#### Goal1:

Provide a safe, clean and orderly natural environment for residents.

#### Objectives:

1. Require enforcement of existing regulations in environmentally sensitive areas.
2. Conserve and enhance the presence of the city's distinctive natural amenities by recognizing the special attractiveness of the city's natural landscapes and open spaces.
3. Development adjacent to rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands needs to be carefully planned in order to not negatively impact these areas.

#### Policies:

1. Identify key natural resources.
2. The city will communicate with residents regarding regulations.
3. Maintain water levels and preserve surrounding natural areas.
4. Identify and protect the public open spaces and wildlife habitats from development to preserve the city's scenic areas.
5. Work with Lincoln County on informational programs and brochures regarding natural resources to educate and inform the public.
6. Encourage a buffer area around delineated wetlands, with no buildings.
7. Work to ensure enforcement of floodplain zoning, conservancy zoning and shoreland zoning ordinances to protect water quality.

Goal 2:

Future non-metallic mining sites will not negatively impact the planning area (3 mile area surrounding the city) or its residents.

Objectives:

1. All existing and possible mining sites should be identified and mapped by Lincoln County.
2. Incompatible uses with mining will not develop adjacent to one another.
3. Views, the natural environment and rural characteristics will not be harmed by mining operations.

Policies:

1. The city will acquire the Lincoln County mining location maps and use them when deciding land use issues.
2. The city will steer incompatible uses away from identified mining sites.

Goal 3:

Maintain the area's diverse wildlife habitat.

Objectives:

1. Protect the city's areas of threatened and endangered species.
2. Maintain connections among wildlife habitat areas.

Policies:

1. Support the preservation of key habit areas and large undeveloped contiguous natural areas.
2. Support neighboring jurisdiction's wildlife preservation plans.
3. Incorporate natural resource areas in plans for parks and open spaces.
4. Promote native species landscaping.

5. The city will work with federal, state and county agencies to seek funding for habitat protection.

B. Agricultural Resources

Goal 1:

Provide for the future viability of the agricultural resources within the planning area (3 miles surrounding the city) until a time it can be converted to a higher best use.

Objectives:

1. Encourage efforts to keep agricultural uses in and adjacent to the city until a time that these lands can be converted to a higher best use.
2. Provide for an orderly changeover of agricultural land to other uses.
3. Buffer non-farming uses from agricultural lands in order to lower the number of possible nuisance complaints (by city residents) regarding these agricultural lands.
4. Cooperate with the Towns of Merrill, Pine River, and Scott on all land development within the planning area to limit locating incompatible land uses adjacent to one another.
5. Maximize existing vacant land and infill opportunities within the city before annexing and developing surrounding prime agricultural land.

Policies:

1. Develop an Official Map detailing future plats within the city and its planning area (Extraterritorial Plat Authority area). These areas adjacent to farmlands should be planned with adequate buffers.
2. Coordinate with the Towns of Merrill, Pine River, and Scott in the future planning of agricultural lands adjacent to the city. Areas that are to remain in agricultural production should be buffered from existing and future developments of the city.

3. The City Council and City Plan Commission will meet/consult with the Towns of Merrill, Pine River, and Scott, and the state to ensure cooperation in land use planning especially with those lands on the periphery of the city and within the extraterritorial planning area.
4. The city will continue to inform and work with its neighbors on future land use plans/changes according to s 66.1001.
5. The city will work with the Towns of Merrill, Pine River, and Scott in developing boundary agreements in areas that are not prime agricultural land.

### C. Cultural Resources

#### Goal 1:

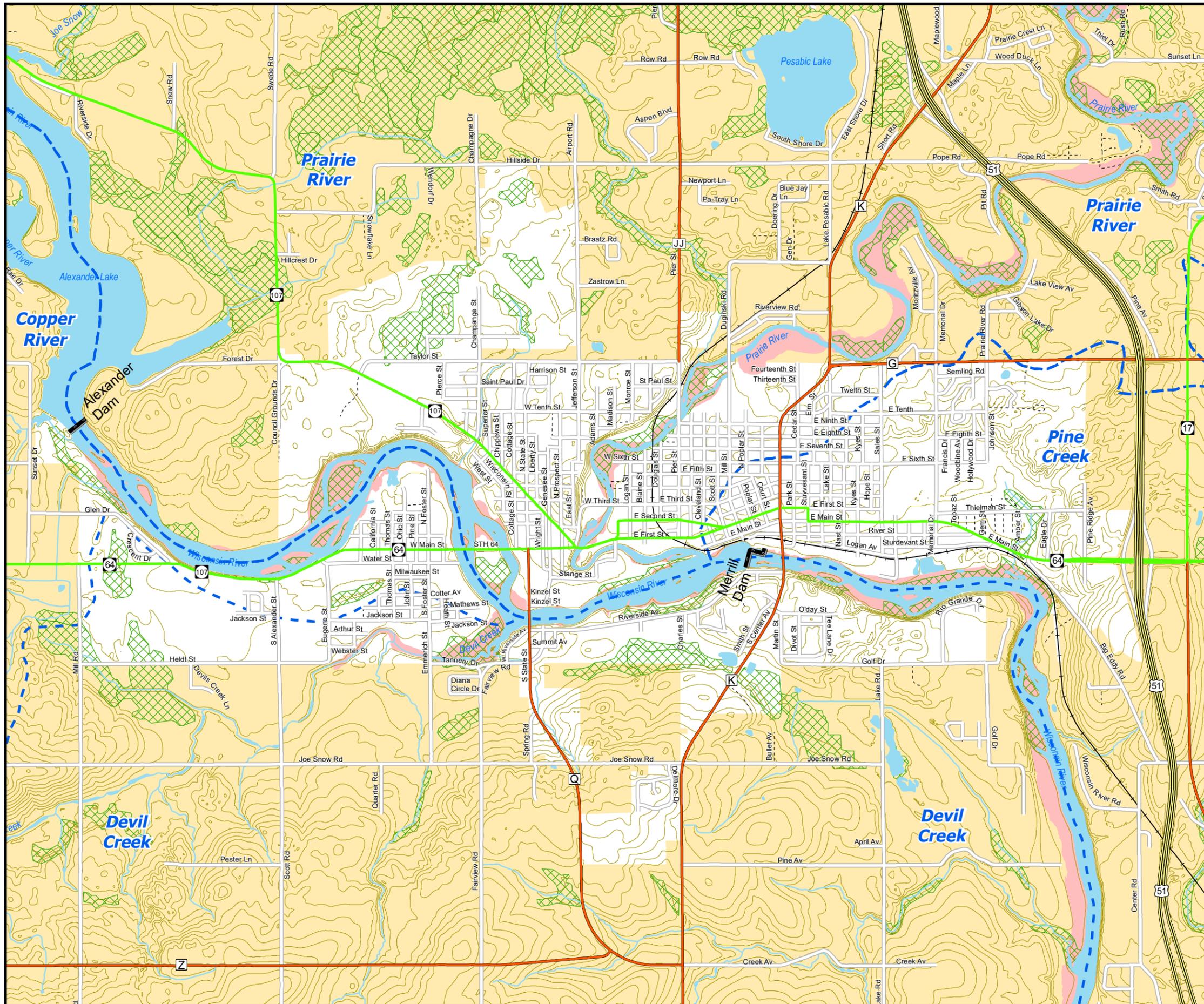
The city's historic, archeological and cultural locations and structures will remain preserved for the city residents.

#### Objectives:

1. To preserve buildings (churches, historic homes and buildings), structures (out buildings, bridges, etc.) and other landscape features (cemeteries, fence lines, etc.) that are the city's cultural history.
2. Promote public art throughout the community.

#### Policies:

1. Identify and preserve the locations of these sites.
2. The city will discourage the destruction of these sites and will not allow incompatible uses around them that would have negative impacts on the resource.
3. The city will work with federal, state and county agencies to ensure all sites are identified and properly protected.
4. Utilize festivals/celebrations to honor notable individuals and/or historic events.
5. Develop and maintain a list of all public art in the city.

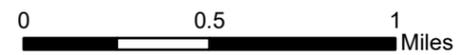


Map ?  
**Natural Resources**  
 City of Merrill

**DRAFT**

**Legend**

-  US Highway
-  State Highways
-  County Highways
-  Local Roads
-  Private Roads
-  Railroad
-  Dams
-  Watershed Boundaries
-  Contours 10ft
-  Wetlands
-  Floodplains
-  Water



Source: WI DNR, NCRWPC, FEMA

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. NCRWPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.



**North Central  
 Wisconsin Regional  
 Planning Commission**

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Attachment: Map\_NR (1485 : Natural Resources chapter review)

## UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### Background

This fourth chapter follows the same three-section format as previous chapters, starting with a background, followed by an inventory & trends, and finally the goals, objectives and policies section.

Utilities and community facilities, provided by either public or private entities, are critical for community development. Utilities include things such as electrical service, natural gas, telephone, and cable communications. Community facilities include local governmental buildings, libraries, educational institutions, and maintenance and storage facilities, as well as services like police and fire protection, medical, municipal water and wastewater.

#### A. Previous Studies

A variety of plans were reviewed as they relate to utilities and community facilities. These plans provide a starting point for the planning process.

##### 1. City of Merrill Comprehensive Plan, 2007

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan includes a Utilities and Community Facilities Chapter. The chapter focuses on issues ranging from water and public safety to parks and dams and levees. The chapter successfully inventories the utilities and community facilities located in the City of Merrill. The chapter does not include a list of issues concerning utilities and community facilities. The utilities and community facilities goal identified in the 2007 comprehensive plan is “Promote an effective and efficient supply of utilities, facilities, and services that meet the needs and expectations of residents.” There are 7 objectives and 11 policies identified to achieve this goal.

##### 2. City of Merrill Sewer Service Area Plan, 1996-2016

The purpose of this plan is to develop a twenty-year sanitary sewer service boundary for the Merrill urban area. The urban sanitary sewer service area boundary identifies the geographic land area within which sanitary sewer service could be made available by the year 2016 through a cost-effective, environmentally acceptable manner. In addition to delineating an urban sewer service boundary, the Sewer Service Area Plan provides a framework for future planning at each individual

municipal level. The goals and policies developed throughout this planning process will also be applicable and useful in the development of local policy direction with respect to land use decisions within these communities. The Sewer Service Area Plan serves the following overall purposes:

- 1) It established the geographic boundaries for possible sanitary sewer service to the year 2016.
- 2) It provides a technical basis to anticipate future needs for wastewater collection and centralized treatment facilities for the palling area;
- 3) It establishes an institutional structure for reviewing boundary and plan amendments and for approving sewer extensions and expansions of sewage treatment plants;
- 4) It serves as a guide for community officials as they make land development decisions within their respective communities;
- 5) It identifies areas to be protected from development by designating them as environmentally sensitive areas. Such areas will control and direct the growth of communities in order to protect environmental, social, and economic concerns; and
- 6) The plan will become a component of the Wisconsin River Basin Water Quality Management Plan.

The current SSA is displayed on the land use maps in Chapter 7.

### 3. City of Merrill Wellhead Protection Plan, 1996

This plan focuses on preventing contaminants from entering the area of land around the public water supply. It identifies well locations, surrounding land uses, and recharge areas. The plan also incorporates recharge direction of flow, potential contamination sources within ½ mile radii of each well site, public education and conservation programs, and contains a management plan for addressing potential sources of contamination in the delineated well head protection areas.

All five of Merrill's municipal wells and two alternative well sites were incorporated. Two of the city's wells are on the far west side of the city, and the other three wells, as well as two potential sites, are located on the far east side of the city. According to the plan, the east side aquifer has untapped capacity for at least one more well.

The Composite Groundwater Recharge Area map is located in attachments.

### 3. City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2013-2018

In February of 2013, Merrill Parks and Recreation Commission contracted with University of Wisconsin-Extension and North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to update their outdoor recreation plan. The plan includes a background of Merrill including existing land use, demographics, and economic development in relation to outdoor recreation. The plan also identifies all existing trails, parks, conservancy areas, and services in the City and identifies on-going and future outdoor recreation projects. The plan ultimately identifies a number of recommendations and capital improvements to achieve 7 goals created by key community stakeholders.

### 4. Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan, 2012-2021

The plan covers utilities and community facilities development in both the inventory and plan recommendation sections. The County plan identifies all municipal facilities and services in the City of Merrill, City of Tomahawk, and briefly identifies the facilities and services in the Towns of Corning, Russell, and Pine River. The County Comprehensive Plan also discusses County owned Facilities and Services including: Courthouse and Administrative Buildings, Fairgrounds (since sold to the City of Merrill), Law Enforcement, Library Service, Medical Facilities, Post Offices, and Park and Recreation facilities. The County plan specifically lists the goals and objectives in the City of Merrill Comprehensive Plan for both Utilities and Community Facilities and the Fire and Police Departments.

### 5. Lincoln County All Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2012

This plan's primary purpose is to identify how to prevent injury and property damage from natural hazards. Understanding how the natural environment works is a first step in mitigating natural disasters. The plan shows how the natural environment and the built environment are in conflict, and how to mitigate that conflict (e.g. Development in a floodplain is at risk of damage caused by flooding). Dam breaks and the low probability for occurring, but high damage potential are listed in the Mitigation Plan, along with floodplain damage possibilities in Merrill. Hazards covered in the plan include flooding, tornadoes, temperature extremes, wildfire, and others. The plan maintains County eligibility for federal mitigation grants.

## 6. Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2012-2016

This plan assesses the existing recreation system in Lincoln County, identifies recreation needs based on public input, reviews past plans for coordination, sets forth goals and objectives to be used as guidelines in formulating outdoor recreation improvements, and establishes recommendations for improving the recreation system over the five year period. Submission of the plan to the Wisconsin DNR establishes eligibility for the County and local units of government for a variety of Federal and State Aids.

## 7. 10-Year Transmission System Assessment, 2015

This 2015 – 2025 report by American Transmission Company summarizes proposed additions and expansions to the electric transmission system to ensure electric system reliability. Lincoln County is one of 19 Counties that are included in zone 1 and is located in the northern portion. Key performance issues in the northern portion of the zone include voltage and thermal limitations. The most severe limitations occur during peak and off-peak periods. Peak electricity demand typically occurs during the summer months. There are currently no transmission projects occurring in the Merrill or Lincoln County area.

## 8. Lincoln County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 2006-2020

The primary goal of the plan is “to administer the County Forest Law as stated in chapter 28.11, Wisconsin Statutes, giving consideration to input from citizens and groups.” The law requires that the county “provide the basis for a permanent program for County forests and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of County forests for optimum production of forest products together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple use to assure maximum public benefits, to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the Counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to towns in which such land lie.”

## Inventory & Trends

Utilities and community facilities provided by the City of Merrill or by other public or private entities are inventoried and evaluated as to their present condition and adequacy to meet the current and future needs of the City. Many of the major facilities are identified on either the Utilities or Community Facilities Map.

### A. Water

#### 1. Drinking Water

The City's water system consists of wells, storage, treatment, and distribution facilities.

##### Water Supply

The water is supplied by 5 groundwater wells. The City of Merrill has a wellhead protection plan in place to prevent contamination of the water supply.

##### Storage

The city has 2 water towers that provide 400,000 gallons of storage. They are located at 4<sup>th</sup> & East Streets and at Champagne & Taylor Streets.

##### Treatment

Chemicals are added into the distribution system at each well. Caustic soda is added for pH control, Hydrofluosilicic acid is Fluoride, poly-orthophosphate is added to sequester iron and control concentrations of manganese, lead & copper.

##### Distribution System

The City's water distribution system serves most of the City. The City has approximately 575 fire hydrants. The Merrill Water Utility policy is to upgrade water mains in conjunction with street construction projects.

#### 2. Waste Water

The City of Merrill Wastewater Treatment Plant is located at 605 Sturdevant St was last upgraded in 1992. The plant has an average design flow of 1.10 million gallons per day (MGD) and a maximum capacity of 3.06 MGD. During a typical year, the plant has an average flow of about 1.10 MGD.

Most of the City is currently served by a sanitary sewer collection system, shown on the Sanitary Sewer Map. Most of the system is comprised of eight-inch diameter clay pipes, which were constructed and laid over 50 years ago. Newer subdivision areas within the City have sewers made of PVC plastic. Pipes are upgraded with road reconstructions.

### 3. Storm Water

The majority of Merrill is currently served by the City's concrete pipe storm sewer system. The City of Merrill is a member of the North Central Wisconsin Stormwater Coalition. The coalition is working to address stormwater issues in North Central Wisconsin. Stormwater is water that accumulates on land as a result of storms and can include runoff from urban areas such as roads and roofs.

#### B. Public Works

##### 1. Street Department

The City's street department garage is located at 315 E 1<sup>st</sup> Street, houses the vehicles and equipment to perform the maintenance of the local road system, storm sewers and waste & recycling removal. The local road network is discussed in the transportation chapter.

##### 2. Solid Waste and Recycling Facility

The City of Merrill Garage operates a weekly curbside pick-up of solid waste, recycling, and yard-waste for both business and residents. Unlimited amounts of recyclables are accepted from all households and all businesses. Garbage pick-up is limited based on the intensity of the land use. Private waste haulers are also available for larger waste disposal needs. Large pickups are arranged on a case-by-case basis.

The City of Merrill has a single stream recycling system. Residents and businesses can place all recyclable items together in a single stream container. Acceptable items include: aluminum, glass, plastics, scrap metal, tin and steel cans, and all paper products.

Yard waste is composted and sold to the public for their use. Grass, leaves/needles, tree trimmings and brush under  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch diameter are the types of yard waste accepted.

## C. Public Safety

### 1. Police Department

Three departments provide police protection in the City.

The Merrill Police Department Administration consists of the Chief of Police, Captain, Administrative Assistant, and two Clerk/Transcriptionists. The Merrill Police Department is a full time around the clock service. It is located in City Hall.

Merrill, along with the rest of the County, is served by enhanced 911 emergency response system that is operated by the County. As of January 1, 2006 all 911 cellular calls are located within 50 to 300 meters from the actual location. The police department's jurisdiction includes the City of Merrill, and through a mutual aid agreement, the surrounding towns of Merrill, Pine River, and Scott.

The Lincoln County Sheriff's Department, located in Merrill, provides service to all the towns and the cities in Lincoln County. The department also staffs the 911 dispatch center. The Lincoln County Jail is located in Merrill.

The Wisconsin State Patrol, located in Wausau, has statewide jurisdiction on all public roads but operates mainly on State and U.S. highways as a matter of general practice to enforce traffic and criminal laws, & help motorists in need. They also help local law enforcement by reconstructing traffic accidents; inspecting trucks, school buses and ambulances; and helping local agencies with natural disasters and civil disturbances.

### 2. Fire Department / Emergency Medical Services

The fire departments of Merrill, Corning, & Pine River provide fire protection to the greater Merrill area. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is provided to the southern half of Lincoln County by the Merrill Fire Department at level: EMT-Paramedic, the highest level possible. As of February 2006, Paramedic coverage was expanded to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

#### City of Merrill

The City maintains one fire station. The station is located at 110 Pier Street Merrill, WI.

The fire department has full-time cross trained Firefighter/Paramedics. All hazard training allows each personnel to work as a firefighter or an

emergency medical technician. This flexibility is paramount for the Fire Department staff to handle all fire rescue and medical emergencies within the coverage area.

The department covers all fire and rescue emergencies for the City of Merrill, along with the Towns of Merrill, Scott, and Rock Falls. The department provides full time ambulance service protection to the southern half of Lincoln County, which includes the City of Merrill and the surrounding 9 Towns.

The department maintains a variety of equipment that is used for land and water based emergency response and rescue operations. The department is equipped to handle some hazmat and spill containment operations, rural and urban fires, surface water rescues, wildfires, and forest rescues. Some equipment is jointly owned with other jurisdictions.

Merrill currently has an Insurance Services Offices (ISO) fire insurance rating of three (3). ISO's fire protection insurance is rated on a scale of one to ten, with one representing the best protection and 10 representing an essentially unprotected community.

Volunteer fire departments exist in the Towns of Corning and Pine River.

#### Town of Corning

The Town of Corning fire hall is located 6 miles west of Merrill. The department maintains a variety of equipment, including an engine and two tankers.

The Town of Corning has an ISO insurance rating of eight (8) for its fire protection service. The Department has mutual aid agreements with: the Towns of Hamburg, Maine, Taylor County Fire Association (Medford, Rib Lake) the City of Merrill, & the WDNR.

#### Town of Pine River

The Town of Pine River Volunteer Fire Department is located 5 miles east of Merrill on STH 64. The department maintains a variety of equipment for rural fires and wildfires.

The Town of Pine River has not been rated since its fire department was activated in January 1, 2006. The Department has mutual aid agreements with some adjoining towns and the WDNR.

#### D. Medical Facilities

Good Samaritan Hospital, affiliated with Ministry Health Care, is located at 601 South Center Avenue. The 73-bed, primary care facility has been part of the community since 1926. A wide variety of inpatient and outpatient services are provided; including Emergency, Intensive Care, Obstetrics, Surgery, Rehab Services, Outpatient Care, Extended Care, and Hospice.

Marshfield Clinic Merrill Center is located next to Good Samaritan Health Care Center. Merrill Center staff provides outreach to Good Samaritan Hospital and offers services in family practice, cardiology, diabetic education, endocrinology, general surgery, nutrition services, obstetrics and gynecology, oncology, urology, foreign travel counseling and urgent care.

Aspirus Merrill Clinic is located at 3333 E. Main Street within blocks of USH 51. Services include primary care, family practice, walk-in, oncology, laboratory, imaging services, and regular specialty care.

The City of Merrill also includes dental offices, eye care, chiropractors, sports/foot/rehabilitation, and drug abuse/addiction care.

#### E. Nursing Home

Pine Crest Nursing Home, located at 2100 East Sixth Street, is a 180-bed skilled nursing facility owned by Lincoln County and in operation since the 1950's. The facility consists of two main nursing units and one 20-bed specialized care wing. Part of the building was constructed in 1976 with an addition being completed in 1993. They also have a hospice program administrated by Aspirus Wausau Hospital.

Pine Crest is primarily a geriatric facility and most of their residents are from Lincoln County. Less than 8% of their residents are under the age of 75 and more the 62% are over the age of 85. Slightly more the 92% of the residents require skilled nursing care and just less than 8% require intermediate nursing care. Pine Crest employs 180 full and part-time employees. The City of Merrill has one Nursing Home, two Group Homes, and three Assisted Living Facilities.

#### F. Day Care Facilities

The most recent data from Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services identifies there are 35 licensed day care facilities in the city.

- 25 Family Daycare (4-8 children)
- 5 Childcare Centers (8+ children)
- 5 School Age Programs

G. Educational Facilities

Public Schools

The City and surrounding area is served by the Merrill Area School District. The district includes a total of eight schools with a student population (2014-2015) of 3,363 students. The district employs approximately 366 staff members, including 227 professionally certified teachers. Of these 366 employees, 127 have received master’s degrees and most have additional education credits. The average tenure in the Merrill School District is 12 years. Average class sizes are 13.72 students in elementary school, 13.97 in middle school and 16.22 in high school.

The eight public schools located in the Merrill area are:

Bridges Virtual Academy	K4-12
Jefferson Elementary	KG-5
Kate Goodrich Elementary	KG-5
Pine River School Young Learners	KG-5
Maple Grove School	KG-5
Washington Elementary	KG-5
Prairie River Middle School	6-8
Merrill High School	9-12

Elementary enrollment (K-5) was 1,263, Middle School enrollment was 563, and High School enrollment was 882. Enrollment in the Bridges Virtual Academy was 1,184.

Parochial Schools

There are four parochial schools that serve the area:

- NTC Christian Academy (3K-12), located at N2519 CTH K in the Town of Merrill.
- St. Francis Xavier Grade School (4K-8) located at 1708 E 10<sup>th</sup> Street.
- St. John's Lutheran School (3K-8) located at 1104 E 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.
- Trinity Lutheran School (5K-8) located at 611 W Main Street.

The total combined enrollment in these schools is about 500.

### Higher Education:

The City of Merrill is located in the Northcentral Technical College (NTC) District. The NTC Wausau campus is 15 miles from Merrill. NTC's Public Safety Center of Excellence is located in Merrill at 1603 Champagne Street. The 37 acre site is a comprehensive training complex serving both NTC program students and those seeking continuing education training. Training courses offered include law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire/rescue, emergency management, and general education.

The University of Wisconsin – Marathon County, a two-year college, is located 17 miles from Merrill in Wausau. There are also private institutions located in Wausau. UW - Stevens Point is about 50 miles to the south.

### H. Parks

Merrill has been known as the “City of Parks” due to the numerous parks located in and near the city. The Merrill area park and recreation system consists of approximately 1,200 total acres of parkland and special use areas under the management of the City, County, and School District. The City owns about 1,110 of the 1,200 acres of parkland. The parks system includes a full range of developed facilities including community parks, neighborhood parks, mini-parks, dog parks, linear park, special use areas located throughout the City, a community forest wildlife area north of the City, and Council Grounds State Park (500 acres of additional park land) just west of Merrill. Overall, 14 parks make up the park system.

One of the largest parks, the Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC), is a 95 acre recreation complex. The complex includes 3 adult softball/ baseball fields, 4 youth softball/ baseball fields, 4 soccer fields, 2 sand volleyball courts, one outdoor hockey rink, a 1.2 mile walking trail, playground equipment, picnic shelter, and an outdoor concession building. The complex also includes the Smith Center and houses an indoor ice skating rink, a multi-purpose community room, a 17,000 foot convention area during non-ice months, and a concession kitchen.

Merrill's newest park, River Bend Trail, was established by the hard work of the River District Development Foundation. Comprised of extremely dedicated volunteers throughout the community, the Foundation raised almost \$1 million dollars to purchase and develop over 1.25 miles of old railroad corridor from Canadian National. Paving began in 2014 and was completed in 2015. The trail features paved walking/biking/hiking trails, the renovated Nicklaus Bridge over the confluence of the Prairie and

Wisconsin Rivers, scenic rest areas with benches, interpretative education panels, wayfinding signs, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities, and access to the beautiful Wisconsin River that hasn't been possible for over 100 years. Detailed park information exists in the City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2013-2018.

## I. Energy & Telecommunications

The electrical service in the City of Merrill is provided by the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation.

There are two dams located in Merrill on the Wisconsin River, both of which produce electrical power.

The Alexander Dam, located west of Council Grounds State Park, is owned by Wisconsin Public Service Corporation. Generation capacity is 4,200 kW, which serves a population of about 8,000 (based on average annual residential electrical use of 3 mwh per person).

The Merrill Dam, located two blocks west of Center St., is owned by Wisconsin Public Service Corporation. Generation capacity is 2,340 kW, and 2,036 people are served by this dam (based on average annual residential electrical use of 3 mwh per person).

Other electrical needs in Merrill are served by the electrical transmission system. Generating capacity comes from various sources throughout the American Transmission Company (ATC) network of Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and from other states that the network is connected to.

Natural gas service in the City of Merrill is provided by Wisconsin Public Service Corporation.

Telephone service in the City of Merrill is provided by Verizon. This service features digital switches and is linked to a fiber optics & digital microwave network. The City has reserved some space on a tower at the public works facility for future City wireless communications.

Cable and Internet service is provided by Charter Communications.

Various cellular telecommunication service providers have coverage in the City and outlying area. Roaming agreements between antenna owners and cellular and PCS providers make creating a comprehensive list of providers very difficult.

## J. Dams & Levees

There are two dams and five levees located in Merrill on the Wisconsin River. No dam breaks have been identified within Lincoln County. Therefore, there is no historic frequency upon which to base a future probability, other than to say that the probability of a dam failure is very low. The Lincoln County All Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2012, provides greater detail about all natural hazards and dam failures.

Flood events in Lincoln County have caused substantial property and infrastructure damage in the past and have the potential to cause future damage since a significant number of structures still exist in the floodplain. Opening the Alexander Dam gates during a heavy rain so the dam does not fail could cause a flood event in the City of Merrill.

The five levees are located on the north bank of the Wisconsin River throughout the city. There is no levee failure inundation area for these levees. The WDNR has not classified these levees, which are listed as having 5-foot heights and no hazard rating was assigned.

It is unclear how well the earthen levees in Merrill will work in a flood event, because no mention of them existed in the year 2004 Emergency Action Plan for the Alexander Dam that includes the inundation area map.

The Alexander Dam, located west of Council Grounds State Park, is owned by Wisconsin Public Service Corporation. The WDNR has classified this dam as large (40 feet high) and assigned a high hazard rating, meaning that a failure would most probably result in the loss of life.

The Merrill Dam, located two blocks west of Center St., is owned by Wisconsin Public Service Corporation. There is no dam failure inundation area for this dam. The WDNR has classified this dam as large (20 feet high) and assigned a low hazard rating, meaning that a failure would result in only minimal property damage and the loss of life is unlikely.

## K. Other Government Facilities

### City Hall

Merrill City Hall is located at 1004 East First Street. City Hall contains the administrative offices of most city departments and the police station. Part of the west end of the building was constructed in 1926 for Church Mutual Insurance. The west end was added on to in 1950, and then the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor was added in 1954. The east end was added in 1963. The

building became City Hall in 1978, and the police department was added in 1994.

### Library

The T.B. Scott Library is a member of the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) and is also a member of V-Cat, a shared information system administered by WVLS that provides local library users with direct access to over one million items in the collections of the twenty-two system members. Additionally, access to library materials from throughout the state and nation is available via the statewide interlibrary loan network. The T. B. Scott Library earned the Wisconsin Library Association's Library of the Year award in 1977 and again in 2002, one of the few state libraries to achieve this honor.

The library was established with a bequest from Thomas B. Scott upon his death in October of 1886. The library is currently located at 106 West First Street, a building designed in the Prairie School architectural style that was funded by a grant from the Andrew Carnegie Foundation. A number of additions have increased the size of the facility to 27,000 square feet.

According to the 2014 annual report, the library's total circulation was roughly 224,955 materials. The library registered 135,236 visits, 16,876 computer users, and 16,172 Wifi users in 2014. The library also has a 3D printer available for use at no charge. The library offers a full range of programs and services for youths and adults.

### Fairgrounds

In 2015, the City of Merrill acquired the fairgrounds from Lincoln County. The Fair Grounds is 25 acres on the northeast side of Merrill. Located on the land are four main buildings, a grandstand and three restrooms. Other buildings are owned by a separate Fair Board or by various community organizations. Part of the purchase of the fairgrounds includes up to \$1.2 million from the County for improvements. The \$1.2 million comes from an insurance payment for the fairgrounds' grandstand after it was damaged in a storm and razed in 2012.

Other public buildings and facilities in the city include the County Courthouse and the County Annex.

### **Any Planned/Needed Future Projects**

List:

## Goals, Objectives, & Policies

### Goal:

Promote an effective and efficient supply of utilities, facilities and services that meet the needs and expectations of residents

### Objectives:

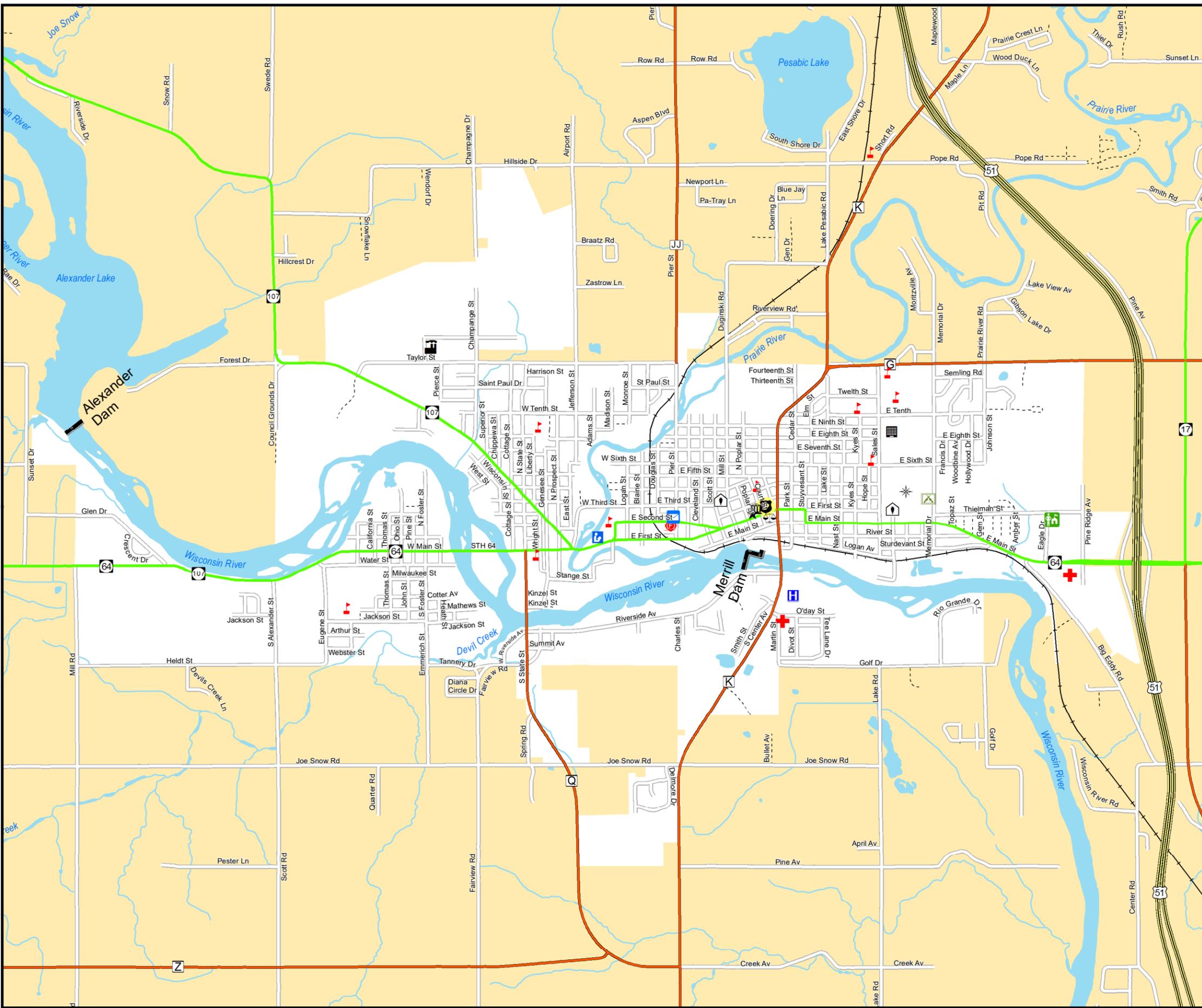
1. Coordinate community facilities and utility systems development and use with land use, transportation, and natural resource planning.
2. Direct intensive land development to areas where a full array of utilities, community facilities, and public services are available.
3. Provide the appropriate level of community services and administrative facilities and practices, while striving for a low tax levy.
4. Protect public and environmental health through proper waste disposal.
5. Provide quality and accessible parks and recreational facilities, areas, and services for all residents, including persons with disabilities and the elderly.
6. Protect the lives, property, and rights of all residents through law enforcement and fire services.
7. Support high quality educational opportunities for all residents.

### Policies:

1. Encourage compact and well-planned urban development areas, so that community facilities and services (e.g., school bus routes, snow removal, police patrol) can be provided in a cost-effective manner.
2. Promote and continue joint service agreements as a means to consolidate and coordinate services among the City, County, and Towns to achieve better services and/or cost savings.
3. Promote long-range sanitary sewer system planning to accommodate projected growth and development.
4. Assure a high-quality and abundant supply of water.
5. Follow the recommendations of the City's Outdoor Recreation Plan and update that plan to correspond with the recommendations of this Plan.

6. Help coordinate and support local emergency services and facilities (e.g., police, fire, rescue/EMS) through adequate funding, training, facilities, and equipment.
7. Study long-term space needs for City administrative and departmental functions (e.g., jail, EMS, human services), and address facility needs based on further discussions. Maybe explore joint facilities with the County.
8. Support strategies for enhancing telecommunication capabilities.
9. Support recycling by residents to reduce solid waste disposal.
10. Encourage the provision of new and improved services and facilities geared to the elderly.

# Map ? Utilities and Community Facilities City of Merrill **DRAFT**



- Legend**
- US Highway
  - State Highways
  - County Highways
  - Local Roads
  - Private Roads
  - Railroad
  - Dams
  - Water
  - City Hall
  - Court House
  - Fairgrounds
  - Fire Station
  - Health Services
  - Hospital
  - Industrial Park
  - Library
  - Municipal Building
  - Museum
  - National Guard
  - Police Department
  - Post Office
  - Ranger Station
  - School
  - Sheriff Department



Source: WI DNR, NCWRPC

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. NCWRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.

**North Central  
Wisconsin Regional  
Planning Commission**

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Attachment: Map\_Uilities\_Com\_Fac (1486 : Utilities & Community Facilities chapter review)

**DRAFT Survey for Merrill Comp Plan**

2015 DRAFT

[Insert an introduction paragraph here. Or add a cover letter.]

**QUALITY OF LIFE**

1. How would you rate the overall quality of life in the City of Merrill?  
**Excellent                      Good                      Average                      Poor                      Very Poor**

The City of Merrill wants to present a friendly and welcoming appearance to visitors and residents.

2. Do you think Merrill looks attractive when you enter the city?  
 Yes or No    Comments: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you feel the appearance of Merrill is well maintained (trees are pruned, sidewalks are not overgrown, private property is well maintained)?  
 Yes or No    Comments: \_\_\_\_\_
4. If asked by a friend who is thinking of moving to Merrill, how would you rate your level of satisfaction about the following:

	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>
Cost of living					
Safety					
Fire service					
Emergency Medical Service (EMS)					
Health Care infrastructure					
Natural environment					
Parks & recreation					
Downtown Merrill					
Schools					
Internet access					
TV access (cable, satellite, over-the-air)					

5. Which reason BEST describes why you choose to live in the Merrill area?  
 \_\_\_ I have a good job  
 \_\_\_ My spouse/partner found a job here  
 \_\_\_ I am a student here  
 \_\_\_ I have family here  
 \_\_\_ I was attracted to living in the area because of its amenities  
 \_\_\_ I feel stuck here  
 \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Attachment: Survey DRAFT 2015 (1487 : Survey review and discussion)

**DRAFT Survey for Merrill Comp Plan**

2015 DRAFT

**COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

6. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>
I am <u>satisfied</u> with the employment opportunities in Merrill.					
I am <u>satisfied</u> with efforts to revitalize downtown Merrill.					
I am <u>satisfied</u> with the shopping opportunities in Merrill.					
I am <u>satisfied</u> with the professional services (e.g. banks, insurance, dentist) in Merrill.					

7. Where do you regularly access the internet for personal use? (Choose all that apply)

- Home
- Work
- Library
- Smart Phone
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**PARKS AND RECREATION**

8. How often do you visit parks or playgrounds in the City of Merrill?

- \_\_\_ several times on a typical week  
 \_\_\_ at least weekly  
 \_\_\_ at least monthly  
 \_\_\_ a few times a year  
 \_\_\_ I don't visit parks or playgrounds in the City of Merrill.

9. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement:

“Merrill has insufficient park space and more parks should be developed.”

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**DRAFT Survey for Merrill Comp Plan**

2015 DRAFT

10. Which local parks (or school playgrounds after school hours) have you visited in the past year?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stange Park                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Council Grounds State Park            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stange Kitchenette Park                | <input type="checkbox"/> Gebert Park                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC) | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorial Forest Wildlife Area         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lion's Park                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Trails                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Normal Park                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Prairie River Middle School           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ott's Park                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Jefferson Elementary                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Riverside Park                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Washington Elementary                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic Park                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Kate Goodrich Elementary              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Polk St Tennis Court & Skate Park      | <input type="checkbox"/> St John's Lutheran Elementary         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cenotaph Park                          | <input type="checkbox"/> St Francis Xavier Catholic Elementary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jack Pines County Park                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Trinity Lutheran Elementary           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lincoln County Fairgrounds             | <input type="checkbox"/> NTC Christian Academy                 |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                |

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Which of the following recreational activities did you participate in during 2015?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boating, Canoeing, or Kayaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Volleyball                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking/Hiking                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Baseball/Softball/T-ball         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Running                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog Park Activities              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inline Skating                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Cross Country Skiing/Snowshoeing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skateboarding                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Downhill Skiing                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Watching/Nature Viewing   | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice Skating                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping (tent)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Disc Golf                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping (RV)                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Golf                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Driving for pleasure           | <input type="checkbox"/> Horse Riding                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting                        | <input type="checkbox"/> ATV Riding                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archery/Rifle Shooting         | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiling                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geocaching                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling mainly on roads        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling mainly on trails       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basketball                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                     |

## DRAFT Survey for Merrill Comp Plan

2015 DRAFT

**TRANSPORTATION**

12. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I support the use of local taxes to construct sidewalks and pathways to promote walking and bicycling.					
I support continued tax support for Merrill Go Round transit service that is partially subsidized by Federal & State grants as the City's local transit provider.					
I support expansion of river access and trails.					

13. How would you rate the following in Merrill?

	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Good	Very Good
Road Conditions					
Sidewalks					
Snow Removal					
Merrill Go Round					
Bicycle Lanes and Paths					
Parks and Trails					

14. What type of bicyclist are you?

**-No way, no how.** (I'm not interested in bicycling at all, not even for recreation.)

**-Interested but concerned.** (I like riding, but don't do it regularly. I am generally concerned that my route is not safe to ride, so I don't ride often, and I definitely do not ride when the weather is bad.)

**-Enthusiastic and confident.** (I feel comfortable sharing the road with motor vehicles, but I prefer to ride on separate facilities like bike lanes. I may or may not ride in inclement weather.)

**-Strong and fearless.** (I am confident in my abilities and will ride regardless of roadway conditions, amount of traffic, or inclement weather.)

Attachment: Survey DRAFT 2015 (1487 : Survey review and discussion)

**DRAFT Survey for Merrill Comp Plan**

2015 DRAFT

**HOUSING**

15. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following housing statements.

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Housing in my neighborhood is well maintained.					
Merrill has diverse housing options available (e.g. house, apt. condo, etc.)					
Merrill needs more land for new residential development.					
Merrill needs more affordable housing.					
The City needs additional multifamily housing.					
The City needs additional senior housing development.					

16. If new housing is developed, I would prefer it be (pick one):

- above storefronts
- in traditional city neighborhoods.
- in multi-unit buildings
- on large wooded lots.
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**CULTURAL RESOURCES**

17. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Maintaining the historical and cultural character of downtown Merrill is important.					
The City should support preservation of historic buildings in downtown Merrill.					
Merrill has adequate performing arts space available.					
More events and festivals should take place in the City.					
I enjoy having the county fair in Merrill.					

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

Demographic information will be used by survey staff to compile a picture of respondents and will not be used to identify you in any way. Respondents will be kept anonymous.

18. Gender:    \_\_\_ Male       \_\_\_ Female

**DRAFT Survey for Merrill Comp Plan**

2015 DRAFT

**19. Age**

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+

**20. How many children live in your home at least part-time?**

- None  
 1  
 2  
 3 or more

**21. What is the nearest intersection to your house?**


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**22. If you are employed, then where do you work?**

- In Merrill
- Outside of Merrill, but within Lincoln County
- Outside of Lincoln County

**23. Which category BEST describes your employment situation?**

- Employed full time
- Employed part time
- Unemployed
- Full time student
- Retired
- Stay at home parent
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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***Thank You for Your Participation!***