

CITY OF ONALASKA MEETING NOTICE

COMMITTEE/BOARD: Historical Preservation Commission
DATE OF MEETING: March 2, 2015 (Monday)
PLACE OF MEETING: City Hall – 415 Main Street (Room 112)
TIME OF MEETING: 7:00 P.M.

PURPOSE OF MEETING

1. Call to Order and roll call.
2. Approval of minutes from the previous meeting.
3. Public Input: (limited to 3 minutes/individual)

Consideration and possible action on the following items:

4. Review and discussion of 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update, Chapter #6 – Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources.
5. Review and Consideration of Wisconsin Certified Local Government 2014 Historic Preservation Subgrant Application.
6. Discussion regarding Historic Preservation outreach efforts.
7. Consideration and Approval of 2015 Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Schedule.
8. Adjournment

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that members of the Common Council of the City of Onalaska who do not serve on the Board may attend this meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision making responsibility.

Therefore, further notice is hereby given that the above meeting may constitute a meeting of the Common Council and is hereby noticed as such, even though it is not contemplated that the Common Council will take any formal action at this meeting.

NOTICES MAILED TO:

Mayor Joe Chilsen
Ald. Erik Sjolander
Ald. Jim Olson
Ald. Bob Muth.
Ald. Jim Bialecki
*Ald. Harvey Bertrand - Chair
Ald. Jack Pogreba
City Attorney Dept Heads Charter Com. WXOW
La Crosse Tribune Onalaska Holmen Courier Life
WIZM WKTY WLXR WKBH WKBT WLSU

*Sandy Whiteman
*Gary Lass
*Jim Nelson
*Nancy Tolvstad
*Jon Grider
*Brent Larson

*Committee Members

Date Notices Mailed and Posted 2-24-15

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the City of Onalaska will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with a disability to ensure equal access to public meetings provided notification is given to the City Clerk within seventy-two (72) hours prior to the public meeting and that the requested accommodation does not create an undue hardship for the City.



CITY OF ONALASKA

STAFF REPORT

Historic Preservation Commission – March 2, 2015

Agenda Item: Review and discussion of 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update, Chapter 6 – Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources.

Background: The Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) is in the process of updating the existing 2005-2025 Comprehensive Plan into the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update.

The committee is seeking additional feedback on the revised chapters and other City Committees will have opportunities to review relevant chapters in addition to the LRPC.

Historic Preservation Commission comments will be provided to the LRPC.

All revised chapters are available on the City's Webpage www.cityofonalaska.com for review and comment by the public. Go to "Planning Department" and select "2015 Comprehensive Plan Update".

Chapters Reviewed By LRPC:

- Issues & Opportunities;
- Housing;
- Transportation;
- Utilities & Community Facilities;
- Agriculture, Natural, & Community Resources; and
- Economic Development.

6.0 Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources

6.1 Existing Conditions

6.2 Existing Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Programs

6.3 Summary of Existing Conditions

6.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

*Wis. Stats. 66.1001(2)(e)
(e) Agricultural, natural and cultural resources element. A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for the conservation, and promotion of the effective management, of natural resources such as groundwater, forests, productive agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, stream corridors, surface water, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, metallic and nonmetallic mineral resources consistent with zoning limitations under s. 295.20 (2), parks, open spaces, historical and cultural resources, community design, recreational resources and other natural resources.*

Understanding the resource base of a community provides an important context for the development of goals, objectives, and policies for the conservation and management of agricultural, natural, and cultural resources. Within the following element, various components of the community resource base are examined at a broad level, or “planning scale”. The purpose of this examination is to provide the City of Onalaska with the necessary information to make informed decisions and recommendations about future growth and preservation of these resources.

6.1 Existing Conditions

Agricultural resources are very important to the social and economic characteristics of the City of Onalaska, surrounding communities, and La Crosse County. Many area jobs are generated by agricultural businesses as well.

Natural resources are significant in the City of Onalaska as they contribute to how the area is developed. Many natural resources that are in close proximity to Onalaska also act as recreational amenities for residents and landowners, which contributes to the quality of life in and around the City.

Cultural resources are important because of the history they hold. These resources are often able to tell stories about past events and residents that have been influential to Onalaska, in addition to shaping current events.

Local Agricultural Industry Trends

Agriculture is an important element of the social and economic characteristics of Onalaska and La Crosse County. Historically, the Mississippi River has been used to transport goods, including produce, throughout the region and world. In 2014, there are 18 parcels and 288 acres within the City of Onalaska that are assessed as agricultural. Much of this is on the crest of bluffs and is not readily farmable. Productive agricultural acres most likely is near 50 acres within the City.



Changes in agriculture due to socio-economic conditions and the development pressures to convert agricultural land to other uses can have profound impacts on communities that have historically been tied closely to agricultural production. La Crosse County agriculture is diverse with a wide variety of products being produced. Table 6-1 indicates the agricultural-related commodities that generate the most sales in La Crosse County.

Table 6-1
La Crosse County's Top Commodities
(sales by dollar value, 2012)

Milk	\$29.6 million
Grains	\$15.6 million
Cattle and Calves	\$8.7 million
Hogs and Pigs	\$3.6 million
Other Crops and Hay	\$0.95 million

Source: University of Wisconsin-Extension

In 2012, there were 748 farms in La Crosse County, down from 821 in 1987. The average La Crosse County farm size was 235 acres in 1987. By 2012, that number had decreased to 212 acres.

The State of Wisconsin saw significant fluctuations as well. In 1987 there were 75,131 farms in Wisconsin. By 1997, this number had dropped to 65,602, a 12.7 percent decrease. However, by 2012, the number of farms had increased to 69,754, a seven percent decrease from 1987.

The average farm size in Wisconsin has been declining. In 1987, the average Wisconsin farm size was 221 acres. As of 2012, the average farm size was down to 209 acres, over a five percent decrease.

Most of the farms in La Crosse County are owned by individuals or families, as shown in Table 6-2 below.

Table 6-2
Number of Farms by Farm Ownership
– La Crosse County

Ownership	2007	2012
Individual/Family Farms	740	645
Partnership	81	58
Corporation - Family	12	27
Corporation - Other	4	4
Other (Co-op, Trust, etc.)	8	14
Total	845	748

Source: United States Department of Agriculture



Onalaska has seen a decrease of one agriculturally assessed parcel from 2010 to 2014. This is quite stagnant due more likely to the fact the City boundaries have been expanding, and those farming have the best land in the area for agricultural operations.

Table 6-3
Assessed Agricultural Parcels and Acreage – La Crosse County - 2010 and 2014

Unit of Government	Agricultural Parcels			Agricultural Acres			
	2010	2014	Number Change	2010	2014	Number Change	Percent Change
Onalaska	19	18	-1	282	288	+6	2.1%
Village of Holmen	55	92	37	912	1,055	+143	15.7%
Village of West Salem	20	17	-3	327	322	-5	-1.5%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Table 6-4 shows the amount of La Crosse County agricultural land that was sold from 1998 to 2013. For the most part, agricultural land being sold remains in agricultural use. However, a substantial portion of this land is being converted to other uses. Typically, land being converted to other uses is paid a premium, however we see the opposite happening in La Crosse County.

Table 6-4
La Crosse County Farmland Sold and Converted to Non-Ag Uses - 1998 to 2013

Year	All Agricultural Land			Ag. Land Remaining as Ag. Use			Ag. Land Converted to Non-Ag. Uses			Percent of Ag. Land Converted to Non-Ag Uses
	Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars per Acre	Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars per Acre	Transactions	Acres Sold	Dollars per Acre	
1998	57	2,958	\$1,931	40	2,265	\$1,794	17	693	\$2,380	23.4%
1999	35	1,391	\$2,487	19	751	\$2,689	16	640	\$2,250	46.0%
2000	29	1,419	\$2,378	21	1,182	\$2,043	8	237	\$4,045	16.7%
2001	33	1,263	\$2,156	17	742	\$1,668	16	521	\$2,851	41.3%
2002	22	572	\$2,389	13	239	\$1,919	9	333	\$2,727	58.2%
2003	33	1,656	\$3,816	7	259	\$2,930	26	1,397	\$3,980	84.4%
2004	25	1,483	\$3,419	11	1,082	\$2,749	14	401	\$5,228	27.0%
2005	23	1,314	\$6,419	9	730	\$3,824	14	584	\$9,663	44.4%
2006	11	841	\$5,670	6	516	\$4,069	5	325	\$8,212	38.6%
2007	8	291	\$3,200	4	190	\$2,944	4	101	\$3,681	34.7%
2008	9	504	\$4,154	8	478	\$4,191	1	26	\$3,460	5.2%
2009	11	846	\$3,980	10	826	\$3,969	1	20	\$4,450	2.4%
2010	18	560	\$5,233	13	441	\$5,558	5	119	\$4,029	21.3%
2011	15	850	\$3,594	15	850	\$3,594	-	-	-	0.0%
2012	18	1,383	\$4,445	17	1,363	\$4,468	1	20	\$2,850	1.4%
2013	18	1,030	\$6,290	16	988	\$6,368	2	42	\$4,450	4.1%

Source: Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service

Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture has been discussed at the City-level recently. Currently, there are very few practices. No livestock operations (including chickens) are allowed outside of agriculture zoned districts. However, beekeeping is allowed as a Conditional Use. Community gardening has been increasing in popularity. There are two and sometimes three community gardens in the City during the productive seasons.



A Farmers Market is held seasonally on Sundays at the Crossing Meadows parking lot. This event has grown in popularity significantly.

The Clearwater Farm is a community asset that is focused on productive agriculture. Established in 1999, this non-profit preserves parts of a 19th century Onalaska dairy farm for education, recreation and history. The farm was operational until 1998 when it was sold to a developer who opted to work with the City and residents to preserve part of the area's agricultural history. There are animals and gardens on site that need daily attention which volunteers can provide.

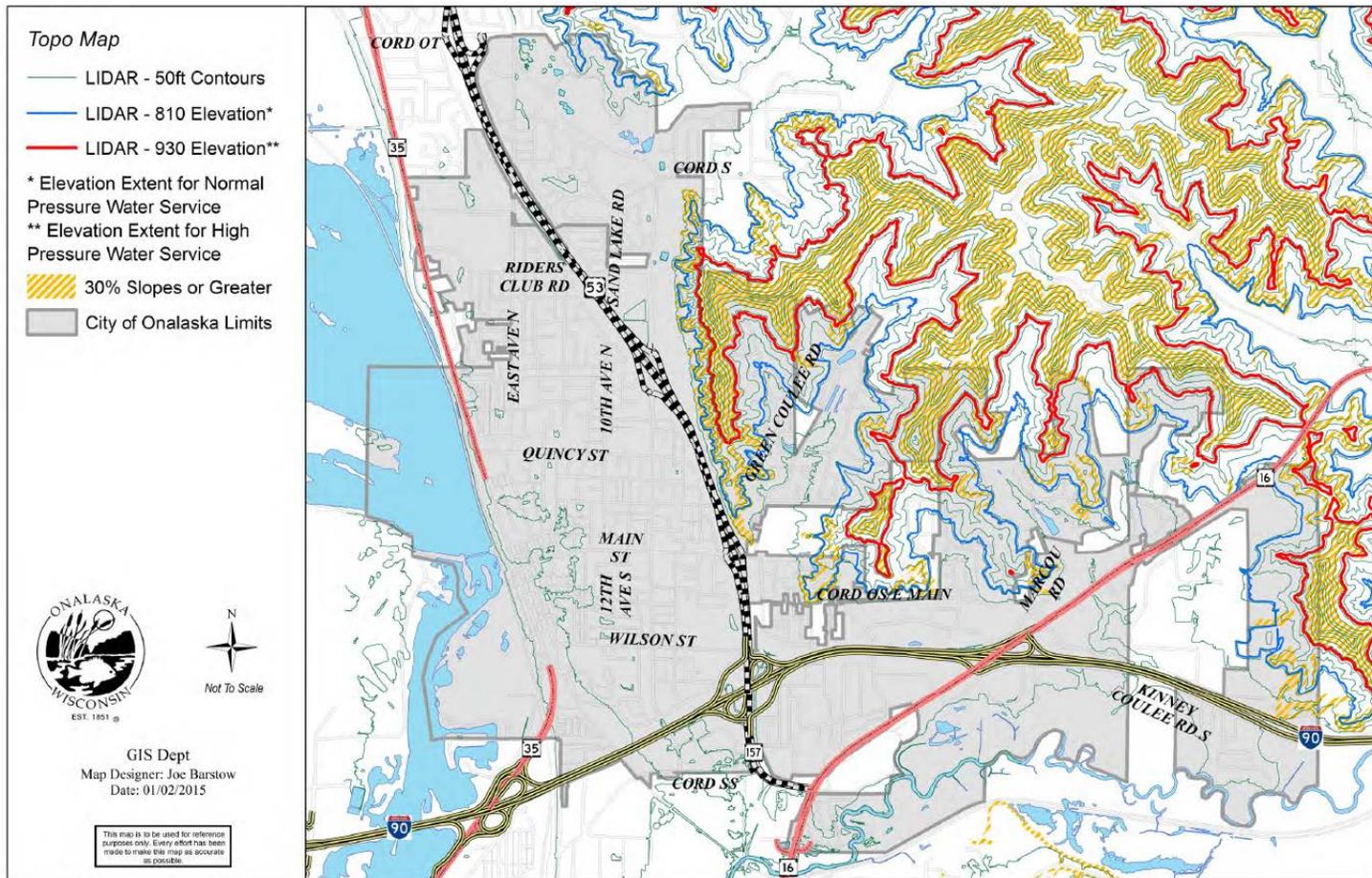
Topography

Onalaska is in the heart of the Driftless Area, which covers southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota and northeast Iowa. The most recent glacial advance missed the area; however, the region was dissected by the glacial melt water created 11,000 years ago by the retreating glacier. The area was submerged below the meltwater, emerged and draining the land, transporting silt, sand, clay, and sediments, creating layers of sedimentary rocks. The last glacial period went around the Onalaska area, leaving the Driftless Area intact with the region's scenic ridges and valleys. Early French settlers termed the valleys as "coulees", giving the region the name the "Coulee Region". Many of the ridges have bluffs of exposed limestone, sandstone and dolomite outcroppings. Protecting these bluffs and ridgetops from poor development practices is extremely important as the population of the Coulee Region continues to grow.

The City of Onalaska elevation ranges from 700 feet to approximately 1,200 feet above sea-level. The City recognizes the importance to the bluffs and has in place bluffland protection regulations to protect the development of the blufflands.



Figure 6-1
Onalaska Elevations



Source: City of Onalaska

Bedrock Geology

The geology of the area is of the Cambrian System and the Prairie du Chien group of the Ordovician System. The geology is comprised of sandstone with some dolomite and shale. There are distinct terraces of sandy and gravelly materials that were formed during the Late Pleistocene era, some 5-12,000 years ago. Some refer to this as an Onalaska Shelf or Ledge.

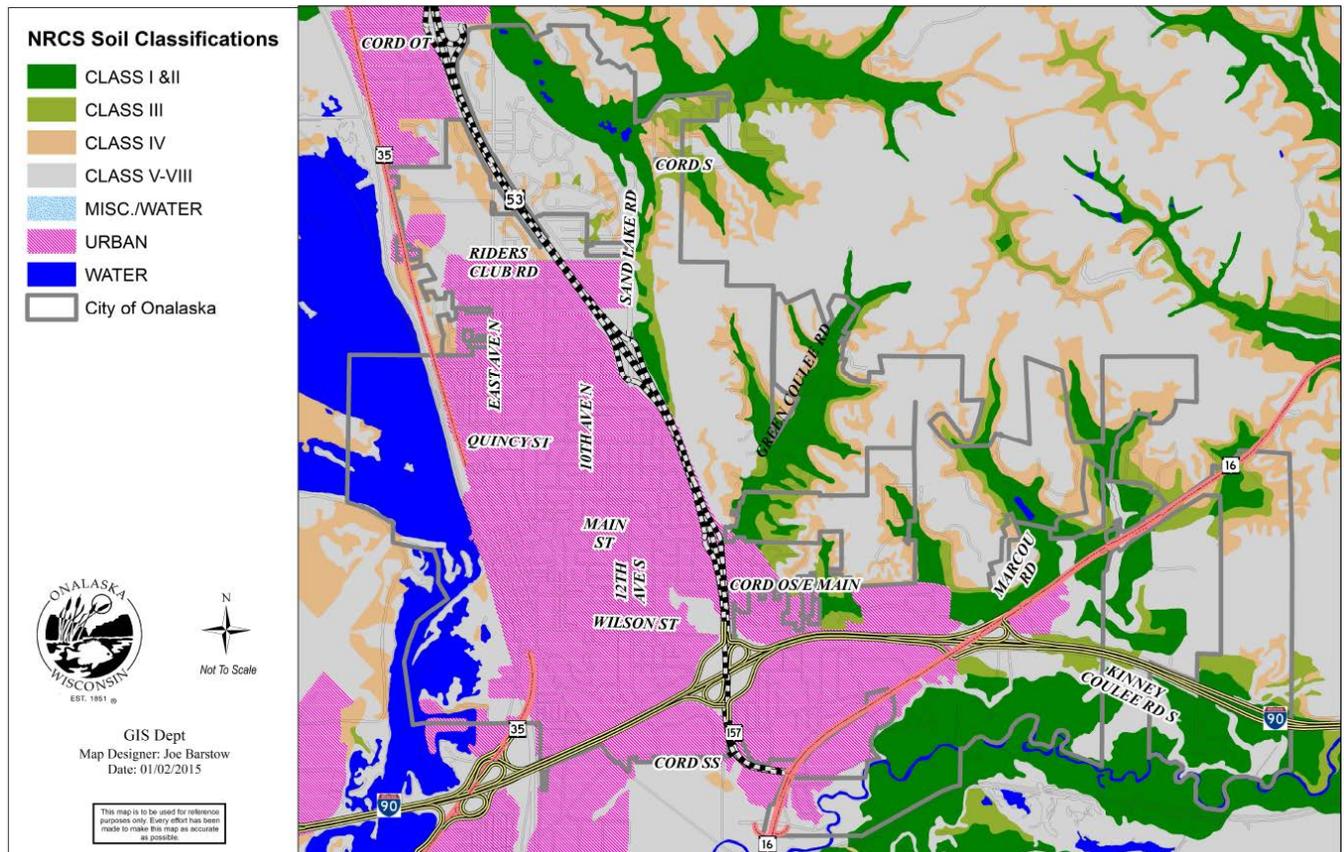
Soils

A soils map below indicates the various soil suitability classes. Because of the steep topography of the City, generalities are difficult to make. Site-specific soil studies need to occur when development is proposed to be certain of the drainage, erosion, and overall suitability it has for development or agricultural practices.

Soils matter significantly when determining the best use of the land. Soils are divided into classes to evaluate farming viability. Soil classes I-III are

considered to be the land best suited for farming, while soils classes IV-VIII have features that make farming difficult, if not impossible.

Figure 6-2
Onalaska Soil Associations



Source: City of Onalaska

Mineral Resources

No mining exists within the City of Onalaska. Areas north of La Crosse County have seen large increases in non-metallic mineral extraction activities. These provide the region many jobs and employment opportunities.

Watersheds and Surface Water

Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, intermittent waterways, and natural drainage ways make up the surface waters of La Crosse County. These resources are all water bodies, standing still or flowing, navigable and intermittent, including natural drainage ways that collect and channel overland rainwater or snowmelt runoff. Natural drainage ways are characterized by intermittent streams, threads, rills, gullies, and dry washes that periodically contribute water to first-order streams. There are also many artificial drainage ways where the natural drainage ways have been altered by human activity. All of

these features have the ability to transport sediment and pollutants and are affected by their watersheds, the land that surrounds them.

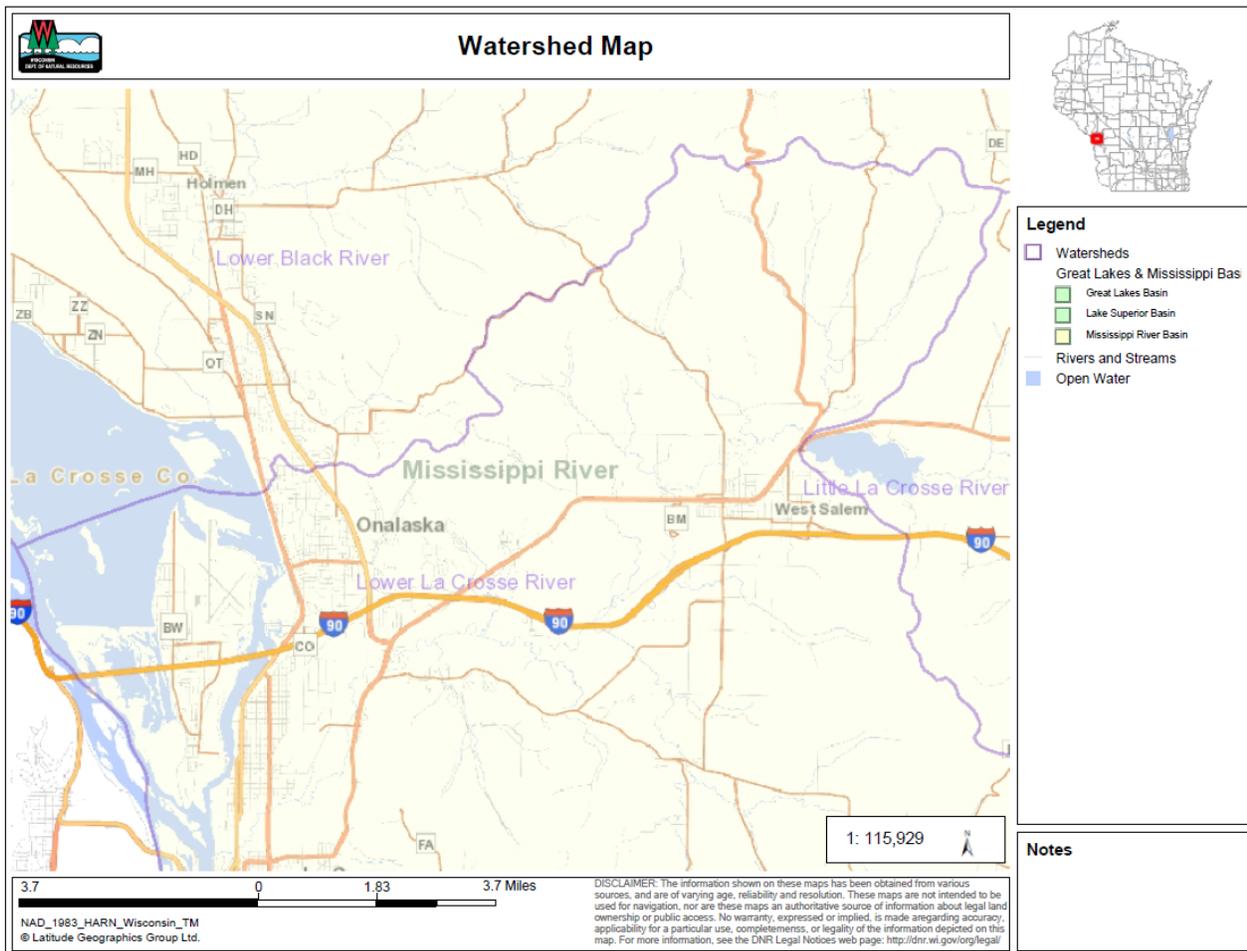
Onalaska is located in the Lower La Crosse River Watershed, which is in the northwestern part of the La Crosse-Bad Axe River Basin, which encompasses approximately 126 square miles with approximately 100 miles of streams.

The La Crosse River and the Black River are the major river corridors in Onalaska. The La Crosse River flows along the southern limits of the City and empties into the Mississippi River in La Crosse. The Black River runs along the western limits of Onalaska and flows to the Mississippi River after passing the spillway through Lake Onalaska. The City recently developed the “Building the Great River Landing” Project to improve access to the Black River and recreational opportunities.

Lake Onalaska is a heavily utilized community asset. The 7,000 acre lake has depths of up to 40 feet, but the average is eight feet deep. The lake was formed by 1937 when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finished the Dresbach, Minnesota Lake and Dam 7. Lake Onalaska is used for boating, sailing, fishing, hunting, birdwatching and wildlife viewing.



Figure 6-3
Onalaska Watersheds



Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Waters can be added to the 303(d) list for two reasons:

- 1) when water quality standards are not being met
- or 2) when designated uses are not being achieved.

Impaired Waters

The La Crosse River is on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) 303d impaired waters list for having a high phosphorus sample in 2012, however, available biological data do not indicate impairment. Fish consumption and recreation appear to be unaffected.

These determinations indicate that the water bodies are not meeting state or federal water quality standards, and are used to establish a method to protect and restore the quality of Wisconsin's surface waters.

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

Through the Wisconsin's Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters Program, the WDNR is working to maintain the water quality in Wisconsin's cleanest waters. These waters have been classified into outstanding and exceptional waters. Outstanding resource water is defined as a lake or stream which has excellent water quality, high recreational and aesthetic value, and



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high quality fishing and is free from point source or non-point source pollution. Exceptional resource water is defined as a stream which exhibits the same high quality resource values as outstanding waters, but which may be impacted by point source pollution or has the potential for future discharge from a small sewer community.

There are no outstanding or exceptional water resources as identified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources within Onalaska's boundaries.

Point Source Discharges

The WDNR regulates the discharge of pollutants to waters of the state through the Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) program. This limits and sets forth a process to monitor discharges for pollutants. There are no organizations with a WPDES permit in the City. Metallics, Inc., located on CTH Z has an active WPDES permit, as does Bostwick Valley Mobile Home Park, both of which are near, but not in, the City.

Area High Capacity Wells

Many western Wisconsin municipalities utilize deeper aquifers for obtaining water supply. There are 16 existing high capacity wells in the City, including several that are for golf courses and other irrigation needs.

Groundwater

Groundwater from the Mt. Simon Sandstone Formation is the primary source of potable water. The aquifer was created by sandstone and dolomite deposited hundreds of millions of years ago. The City of Onalaska has a Wellhead Protection Plan and ordinance in place to help protect water quality. Well and drinking water information, including plans for the City to reconstruct Well #9 is further described in the previous chapter.

Shorelands

Shorelands provide valuable habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial animals and vegetation, and also act as buffers and thus serve to protect water quality. However, shorelands are also considered prime residential building areas because of their scenic beauty.

Recognizing this conflict, and in order to maintain the environmental, recreational, and economical quality of our water resources, the State of Wisconsin requires counties to adopt and enforce a shoreland ordinance.

As required by the State, shorelands are defined as:

- all land within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a lake, pond or flowage; or
- all land within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a river or stream or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever is greater.

*"A high capacity well is any well on a high capacity property. A high capacity property is one property that has or will have one or more wells with a combined capacity of 70 gallons per minute (gpm) or more."
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.*



Incorporated municipalities are allowed to create and enforce their own shoreland zoning ordinances that differ from the State's regulations. The City of Onalaska defines shorelands in the same regard as the State, and is planning on updating their shoreland and wetland zoning.

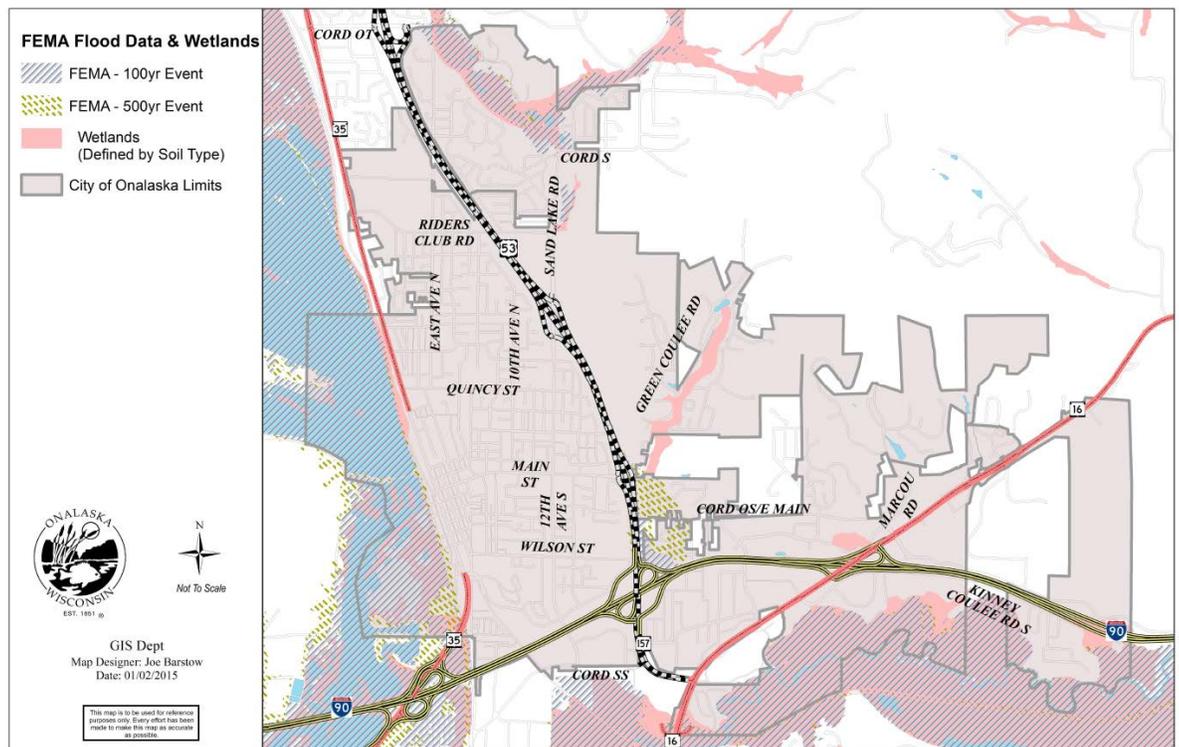
Floodplains

One sensitive land feature that most residents are aware of is the floodplain, the flood-prone lands adjacent to water bodies. Floodplains can be desirable development areas due to the proximity to lakes, rivers and streams, but pose additional problems by possibly putting residents and property at risk. Development in floodplains can also affect the environmental quality of the waterway.

According to FEMA, floodplains exist along the La Crosse River, locations adjacent to Lake Onalaska and in several spots to the east of Sand Lake Road; development is strictly prohibited in these areas. Development within the floodplain is usually assessed through the use of the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"According to the Wisconsin Emergency Management Division, Wisconsin communities experienced significant flooding each year from 1990-2001, except 1994. A Federal Disaster Declaration was granted for nine of those years. Total damages to public and private property (including agricultural damages) during that time period totaled more than one billion dollars"
(Ohm, Brian. Planning for Natural Resources. P. 28, 2002.)

Figure 6-4
Onalaska Flood Hazard Zones



Source: FEMA and City of Onalaska

“...wetlands serve a vital role in nature, are part of the balance of nature and are essential to the purity of the water in our lakes and streams. Swamps and wetlands are a necessary part of the ecological creation and now, even to the uninitiated, possess their own beauty in nature.” (The Wisconsin Supreme Court in Just v. Marinette County (1972).



It is important to remember that these maps are no substitute for site specific analysis. Natural and man-made changes in the landscape, and the age and accuracy of flood insurance maps have in some cases limited their reliability for the identification and designation of floodplains. The City also has floodplain development regulations in their zoning ordinance which should be consulted prior to any construction activity.

Wetlands

There are a number of wetland areas within the watersheds that can affect water levels of rivers and creeks flowing through the City of Onalaska. Wetlands are defined by the state statute as “an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions.” Wetlands may be seasonal or permanent and are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, or bogs. Wetland plants and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants, replenish groundwater supplies, store floodwaters and maintain stream flows.

Due to the steep topography, isolated wetlands are relatively uncommon in Onalaska. However, there are larger wetland areas adjacent to the Black and La Crosse Rivers and along Lake Onalaska.

The Wittenberg Marsh is a 120 acre marsh located near downtown Onalaska that is subject to flooding and is used as a nesting area for Bald Eagles.

The La Crosse River Marsh is located east of STH 16 includes approximately 1,600 acres of public and private land between La Crosse and West Salem.

Steep Slopes

It is generally more desirable, both environmentally and economically, to avoid steep slopes and disrupting natural drainage ways with construction and land development. Problems with erosion and runoff pollution can occur with development on steep slopes, and flooding and wet basements can occur with drainage way disruptions.

There are numerous areas with steep slopes in the City of Onalaska, particularly to the north and east. Onalaska has an erosion control ordinance that requires an erosion control plan for land disturbance activity and requires approval of the plan before development can occur.

Forest and Woodlands

Woodlands are an important feature of Onalaska. The City is located in a region of the country known as the Prairie-Forest Border, which is a transition zone between plains and forests. Vegetation typically consists of oak forest, degraded oak savanna, grassland, dry prairie and bottomland hardwoods.

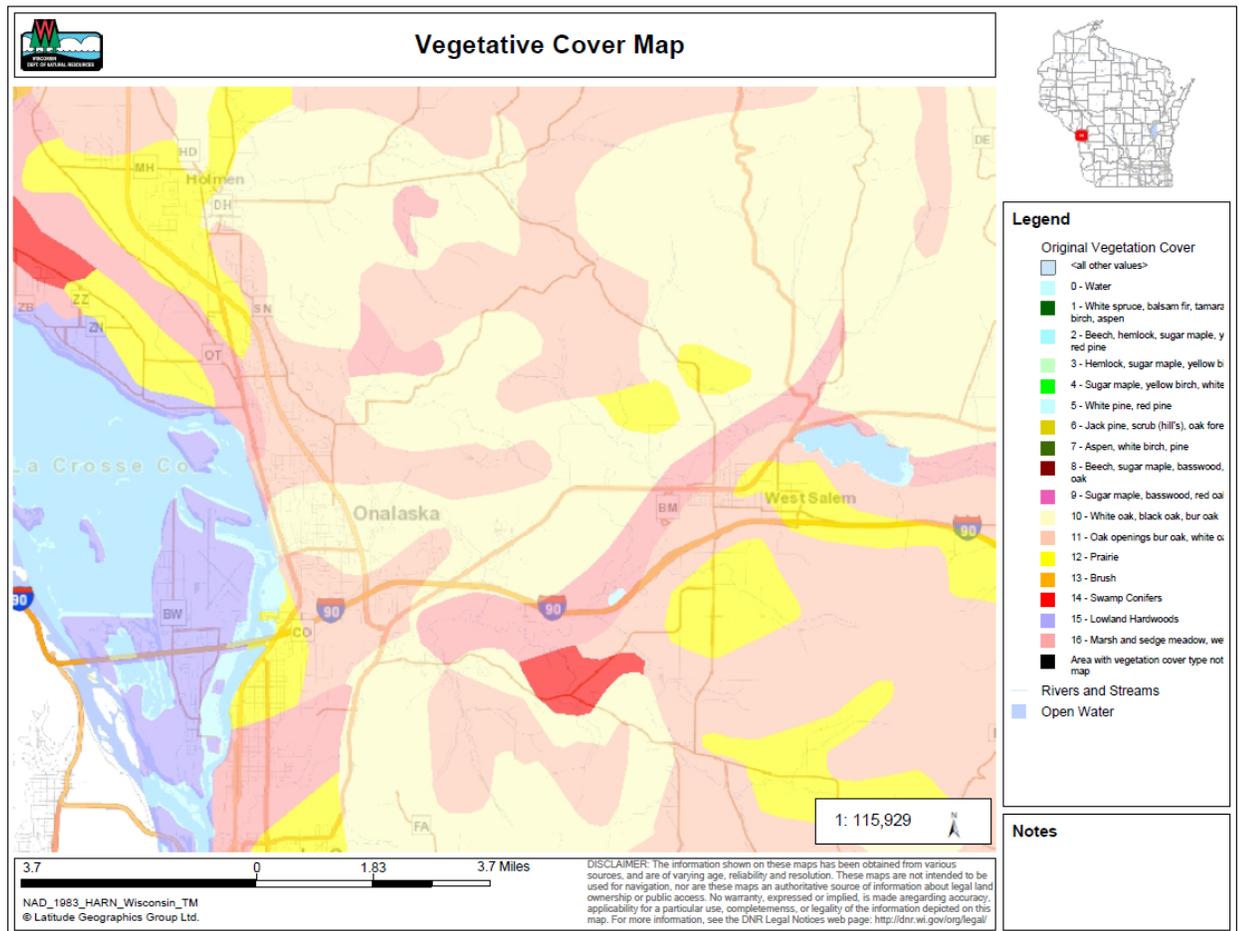


Urban forestry has been practiced by the City as the importance of trees in providing economic, ecological and environmental benefits are realized.

Onalaska is also a Tree City USA, a designation given by the National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters to communities who promote urban forestry programs. The City has been a member of this program for over 14 years, and recently applied for a Growth Award for having higher levels of tree care.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has been confirmed in the City in 2013. An Action Plan was developed to address the impacts this disease will have on city-owned trees (i.e., boulevard, parks, and cemetery trees). There are over 1,700 trees in rights-of-way slated to come down in a phased approach over the next three years. Replanting is recommended and will occur as budgets allow.

Figure 6-5
Vegetative Cover Map



Source: WDNR



Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat and Open Space

Scattered throughout La Crosse County are various federal, state, and local wildlife, fishery, natural and scientific areas, including private conservancy areas. These often encompass one or more of the sensitive land areas discussed previously (e.g., wetlands, forests, shorelands, prairies). These areas are managed as open space to provide important feeding, breeding, nesting, cover, and other habitat values to a wide variety of plant and animal species.

Lake Onalaska is home to and a stop-over for many animal species. Many panfish are harvested from Lake Onalaska, and waterfowl use this area as a migration rest-spot. Onalaska is known as a great bird-watching location as well, particularly near the Van Loon Wildlife Area, Perrot State Park, and Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, all of which are located near the City. Other birding sites include Myrick Marsh, Hixon Forest Nature Center and Goose Island.

The La Crosse River Conservancy Project contains over 1,000 acres of wetlands, floodplain and woodlands for nature-based recreation and education facilities. Access can occur through several existing community parks.

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, which includes Lake Onalaska, was established in 1924 and sees many visitors annually for fishing, boating, hiking, birdwatching, hunting and general sightseeing.

The Onalaska bluffs contain over 700 acres that provide many scenic views, and have large forests and rock outcroppings.

Rare and Endangered Species and Natural Communities

According to the WDNR Natural History Inventory, La Crosse County is home to many animal and plant species, as well as natural communities that can be considered rare or endangered.

Onalaska lies within two town ranges in La Crosse County. The areas where Onalaska lies have been identified as having many endangered species and natural communities by the WDNR's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/NHI/data.asp>). Due to the fluidity of this list, a comprehensive list is not provided here. References to the weblink above should be made when exploring areas and the potential for rare and endangered species presence.

These species are protected, and as such, are preserved to the extent possible.

Cultural Resources Existing Conditions

Preservation of historic and cultural resources is important to the vitality of any community. The City of Onalaska has a rich history that originally



centered on logging and railroads. While the importance of these to the region have become less prominent, they are still an important part of the City's character and history.

Archaeological

Onalaska has a rich archeological history. Native Americans inhabited the area as early as 8,000 B.C. The Oneota arrived in the Onalaska area around 1300 A.D. and were noted for their farming methods, as well as fishing and hunting. Ancestors of the HoChunk Nation settled into the area in 1634, but most left between 1848 and 1874 because of treaties with the U.S. Government. However, some descendants still live in the area today.

Onalaska has an archaeological zoning ordinance that requires developers to hire an archeologist to conduct an inventory in certain areas before they are developed. The City has identified Sensitive Areas and Highly Sensitive Areas that require careful oversight during construction. In 2003 archeologists discovered pottery that links the Woodland people, who lived in the Onalaska area, with the legendary prehistoric city of Cahokia (in modern-day Collinsville, Illinois), which dates to about 1100 A.D. Cahokia was the largest and only known prehistoric Indian settlement north of Mexico.

Along Onalaska's Highway 35 corridor and adjacent blocks, two large uncatalogued burial sites have been identified. The Onalaska Village and Cemetery site is an Oneota village site that was initially defined based on historic records. During the reconstruction of Highway 35 in 2012 a number of artifacts were uncovered. The Boat Ramp Mound Group is a mound group that included at least one effigy, documented in the late 1800s. Scattered Woodland artifacts have been found in the area.

Historic Preservation

Onalaska was founded in 1851 by Thomas G. Rowe from New York. The original plat for the City of Onalaska was registered at the State's Land Office in August 1851. By 1856 three steam sawmills were in operation and two more were under construction. A sash and blind factory, a brewery, a bakery, two blacksmith shops, a cooper shop and eight stores were doing business. By 1875 the population was listed as 680. Because of the wealth of White Pine to the north and the ability to send the pine down the Mississippi River to lumber mills in Onalaska and La Crosse, Onalaska became a flourishing lumber town. Onalaska's history is detailed in the book *From Sawmills to Sunfish* by John and Joan Dolbier.

The Onalaska Area Historical Society was formed in 1988 for the promotion and preservation of items having historical interest to the Onalaska area and the reinforcement and strengthening of awareness of our local heritage. The community created an Onalaska Historical Museum in 1989, which shares



the same building as the La Crosse County Public Library in Onalaska and houses artifacts and documents related to Onalaska's history.

In 1996, the City of Onalaska adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance with the purpose and intent is to protect, enhance sites of special character or architectural or historic interest or value to the public. In 1997, the City of Onalaska established a Historic Preservation Commission to implement the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

The City of Onalaska was granted Certified Local Government Status for the Historic Preservation Program by the Wisconsin State Historical Society in 2001, which makes the City eligible for grant funding and recognition through the State Historical Society for Historic Preservation Efforts.

The City of Onalaska Common Council and Historic Preservation Commission designated three structures as historic in February 2000.

Onalaska Brewery / Onalaska Pickle & Canning Factory	841 2 nd Avenue SW	1884
F.E. Nichols House	421 2 nd Avenue N	1888
Onalaska State Bank	201 Main Street	1911

Two structures in Onalaska have been designed as historic structures on the National and State Register.

F.E. Nichols House	421 2 nd Avenue N	1888
La Crosse County School of Agriculture & Domestic Economy	700 Wilson Ave	1909

The City of Onalaska recently applied for a grant through the Wisconsin Historical Society to complete its very first historical survey to determine which structures may be eligible for future local, state, and/or national designation, as well as potential districts within City limits that may be eligible based on architecture and local historical knowledge. The City has identified a total of 943 residential and commercial structures within City limits that have a construction date prior to 1964 as well as a number of sites with interesting historical backgrounds. The proposed historical survey would survey residential and commercial structures constructed prior to 1974. As part of the historical survey project, education and outreach with the community would occur.



6.2 Existing Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Programs

Numerous Federal, State, Regional, Local, and Private plans and programs exist which contribute to preservation, conservation, or management of agricultural, natural, and cultural resources in La Crosse County. Although no list can be exhaustive, a partial list is shown below.

- Farmland Value Use Assessment

This program allows farmland to be assessed based on the lands ability to produce income from agricultural uses, rather than its potential market value to developers.

- Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program

Wisconsin farm owners are eligible to receive a state income tax credit, provided their county has a Farmland Preservation Plan in place.

- Forest Land Tax Program

These programs are run by the Wisconsin DNR and encourage sustainable forestry on private lands by offering tax incentives to landowners.

- Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permits (WPDES)

This DNR operated program regulates municipal and industrial operations discharging wastewater to surface or groundwater.

- Wisconsin Historical Society

The Historical Society was founded in 1846 and helps people to connect with the past by maintaining and collecting stories and items. This organization also has grant funding available to help local communities identify and preserve historical features.

- Wisconsin's Historical Preservation Plan 2006-2015

This plan outlines specific goals and objectives to protect and enhance the state's cultural resources.

- La Crosse County Land and Water Resource Management Plan 2012-2017

Each Wisconsin county is required by state law to develop a County Land and Water Plan. It is meant to serve as a guide for local conservation efforts that are administered by various regulatory organizations.

- City of Onalaska Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2010-2015

This plan inventoried existing recreational facilities and identified future needs.



- City of Onalaska Ordinances

Ordinances have been adopted to aid in the effort of conserving resources and protecting landowner rights, land values, and the public health and safety.

- *Building* The Great River Landing Plan

This plan discussed appropriate public investments to make Lake Onalaska more accessible and enjoyable.

6.3 Summary of Existing Conditions

This element provides an important foundation and vision for City land-use planning and decisions. In addition, numerous programs at the state and county level are available to assist the City in their planning efforts and in the protection of local agricultural, natural, and cultural resources. Protection of such resources needs to be balanced with, and can be complementary to, other community goals as discussed in the Issues & Opportunities, Land Use, and Economic Development elements.

Agricultural Resources - Existing Conditions Summary

Agriculture is a very important part of Onalaska's history. While not a dominant land class, the region's economy, including Onalaska's to a slightly lesser degree, depends on the agricultural industry for jobs.

Natural Resources – Existing Conditions Summary

The topography of Onalaska is one of slopes, some severe. Lake Onalaska, and the Black and La Crosse Rivers are the primary surface waters. These provide many recreational opportunities, but also cause hazards for building due to floodplains and wetlands.

Groundwater quality is generally good and the City has adequate capacity to serve its residents for quite some time. Land supply has been in great demand, and the City has proactively preserved the bluffs from development. These areas are also more difficult, or even impossible, to serve with the municipal water system. Wetlands play an important role in the ecology of the community, and are often viewed as unique natural amenities of the area. Future development should consider environmental features and be built in such a manner that protects them and is consistent with the character of the community.

Cultural Resources – Existing Conditions Summary

The City of Onalaska is rich in history. While many historic resources are present in the City, it is a goal of the City's to continue working with the appropriate committees to continue documenting and preserving these resources.

The effects of natural and man-made systems often resonate beyond any one community's borders."

- McKnight Foundation, re: *focus: Making Choices for Future Generations.*



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6.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve the bluffs, scenic views, waterfront, wetlands, woodlands and wildlife habitat within the City and encourage the protection of these resources on surrounding lands.

Objectives

- a. By minimizing soil erosion through development regulation.
- b. By protecting habitats for federally threatened, endangered or state listed species and natural communities.
- c. By requiring natural resource features to be accurately depicted on all site plans, certified survey maps, preliminary plats and final plats.
- d. By promoting compact development, especially in the coulee areas and on or near bluffs.
- e. By utilizing purchase or conservation easements on environmentally sensitive lands when possible.
- f. Redevelop shoreland and wetland zoning regulations.



Goal 2: Encourage land use patterns and practices that are environmentally sensitive and complement the natural hydrologic system, including the balance between ground and surface waters.

Objectives

- a. By requiring proper stormwater management practices to increase groundwater recharge and minimize runoff.
- b. By preserving wetlands as essential components of the hydrologic system and as valuable wildlife habitat.
- c. By continuing to enforce the City's Wellhead Protection Plan and update the plan as necessary.
- d. By discouraging the regrading of large areas that alters natural topography and drainage patterns.
- e. By continuing to protect floodplain areas and natural drainageways from being filled or altered in any way that reduces their function.

Goal 3: Enhance public access, use and enjoyment of the community's natural and recreational resources.

Objectives

- a. By implementing the Building the Great River Landing plan.
- b. By establishing and maintaining a safe and efficient and connected system of parks, trails, pedestrian pathways, bicycle routes and greenways to provide access and safe linkage to natural and recreational resources.
- c. By promoting the cooperation and coordination of acquisition and development of natural and recreational areas among state and local agencies, individuals, businesses and foundations.

Goal 4: Identify, conserve and protect Onalaska's cultural, historical and archaeological resources.

Objectives

- a. By encouraging the preservation or rehabilitation of historically significant buildings and sites in Onalaska.
- b. By working with the Historic Preservation Commission to create a



historic inventory as buildings and sites warrant such recognition.

- c. Continue to protect important archaeological sites in and around the City via historic tax credits.

Policies and Recommendations

Agricultural Resources

- 1) Encourage the use of conservation or cluster subdivisions for residential developments in agriculturally and environmentally important areas within and adjacent to Onalaska.
- 2) Support private landowners who wish to protect their land by using conservation easements and other land protection tools, unless such measures conflict with the efficient, orderly and planned expansion of the City.
- 3) Work with neighboring jurisdictions to encourage an orderly, efficient development pattern that takes into consideration productive agricultural land and minimizes conflicts between urban and rural uses.

Natural Resources

- 1) Continue to implement tree preservation ordinance maintain a more mature urban forest post-development.
- 2) Implement the EAB Action Plan and work with property owners to encourage diverse tree plantings throughout the community.
- 3) Promote awareness of natural resources and critical resource issues in the City through public education and volunteer stewardship activities in public parks and through collaboration and partnership with local landowners, conservation groups (such as the Clearwater Farm Foundation and/or the Mississippi Valley Conservancy), public agencies, UW-La Crosse and other stakeholders.
- 4) Protect the bluffs through continued acquisition of land and/or easements along the bluff, as well as through ordinance development and enforcement.
- 5) Use the City's zoning, subdivision review and official mapping powers to protect scenic views of the bluffs and Mississippi River Valley, the downtown riverfront area, the bluffs to the east of the City and any other significant natural resources.
- 6) Maintain the City's status as a Tree City USA.



- 7) Follow the goals and guidelines in the Street Tree Inventory Report and EAB Management Plan.
- 8) The City should encourage the preservation of wildlife corridors and open space in new developments through the use of incentives and flexible regulations, such as land trusts, open space and cluster zoning, density bonuses and conservation easements.
- 9) Continue to consult the Onalaska Central Greenway Master Plan to identify and protect key linkages and provide greenway corridors and connections within Onalaska and surrounding communities.
- 10) The City should work with the DNR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and environmental groups to identify the locations where sensitive species occur within the City of Onalaska and they should cooperate with these agencies on creating maintenance plans and development guidelines to protect these species.

Cultural Resources

- 1) Work with Centering Onalaska to continue to promote downtown Onalaska and its beautification.
- 2) Consider opportunities to develop key themes and identities for the downtown, including but not limited to a public art program.
- 3) Continue to document and protect the important archaeological sites in the City.
- 4) Consider updating the Historic Preservation chapter of the Zoning Code to include specific design guidelines for historic districts.
- 5) Inventory historic properties as identified by the Historic Preservation Commission.
- 6) Continue to encourage and support property owners who wish to rehabilitate and designate their historic properties. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings should be strongly encouraged.
- 7) Maintain Certified Local Government Status through the National Park Service.





CITY OF ONALASKA

STAFF REPORT

Historic Preservation Commission – March 2, 2015

Agenda Item:

5

Agenda Item: Review and Consideration of Wisconsin Certified Local Government 2014 Historic Preservation Subgrant Application.

Background: On November 14, 2015 the City of Onalaska formally applied to the Wisconsin Historical Society for funding to complete its very first historical survey to determine which structures may be eligible for future local, state, and/or national designation, as well as potential districts within City limits that may be eligible based on architecture and local historical significance. The City has identified a total of 943 residential and commercial structures within City limits that have a construction date prior to 1964 as well as a number of sites with interesting historical backgrounds. The proposed historical survey would inventory residential and commercial structures constructed prior to 1974.

As part of the historical survey project, education of the process and discussion about the final survey will be reviewed by Onalaska's Historic Preservation Commission. As the project nears completion, the City of Onalaska will work with local media to publicize the work completed in the City, and create a summary of the project which will be published on the City of Onalaska website. Additionally Onalaska's website will include a list of related resources and a link to the National Register's summary for each property listed in the district.



CITY OF ONALASKA

STAFF REPORT

Historic Preservation Commission – March 2, 2015

CITY OF ONALASKA MEETING SCHEDULE - 2015

Historic Preservation Commission

Historic Preservation Commission Meetings (7:00 P.M.)
March 2, 2015
June 18 th
August 20 th
November 19 th

*Note: Additional meetings may be necessary and will be scheduled as needed.