



Town of
Pine River
Wisconsin

Comprehensive Plan
2019

DRAFT COPY

*prepared by:
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TOWN OF PINE RIVER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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These individuals, along with the participation of many other community residents, contributed to the creation of this Comprehensive Plan.

Each member of the Town Board and the Planning and Zoning Committee wish to express their gratitude and appreciation for everyone who attended meetings and all of those who expressed their views during the process.

Adopted [--month--year--]



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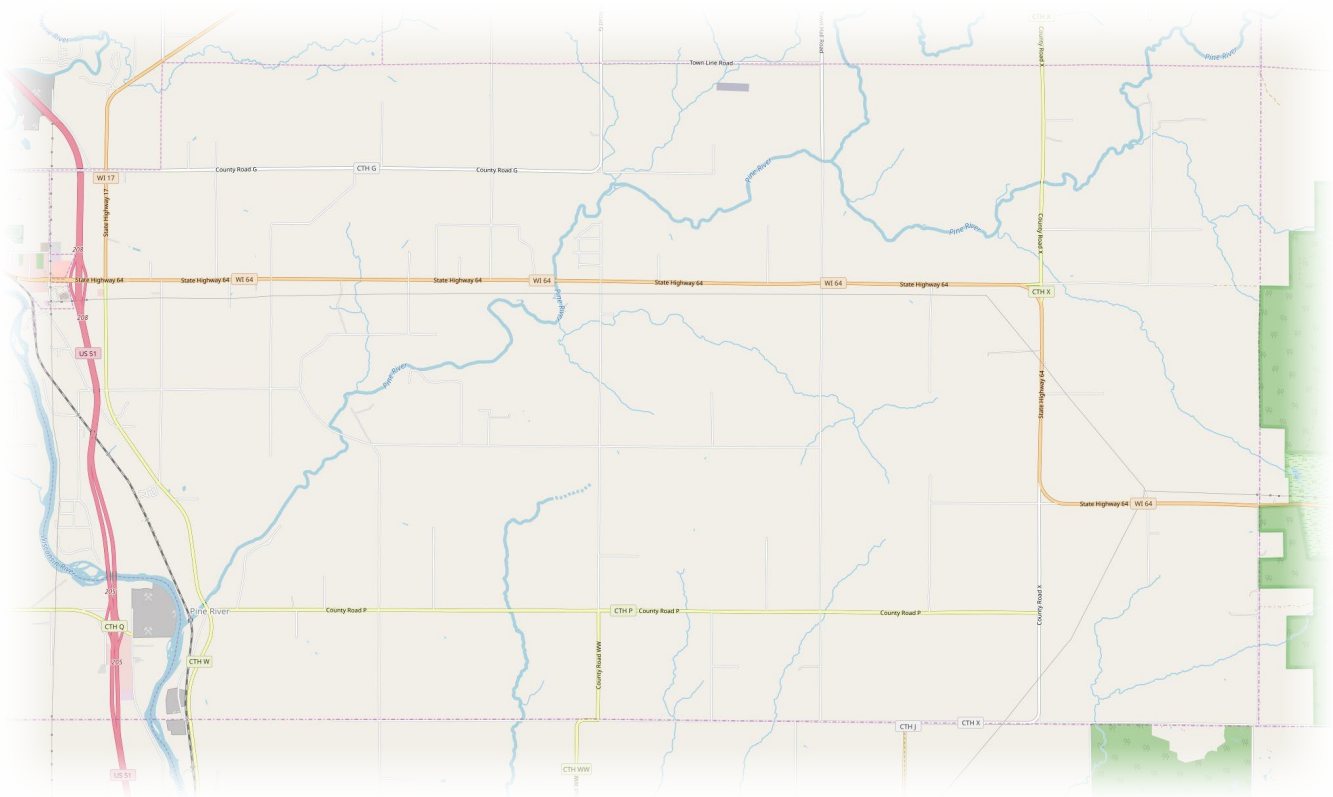
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CHAPTER ONE BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

BACKGROUND

The Town of Pine River is located in the southeast corner of Lincoln County, Wisconsin, and encompasses an area of approximately 64.3 square miles.

The City of Merrill is directly west of the Town, which is situated 15 miles north of the City of Wausau. Other bordering municipalities which are also located in Lincoln County include the Towns of Schley, Merrill, and Scott on the north and west. To the south lie the Towns of Texas and Hewitt in Marathon County, and to the east is the Town of Ackley in Langlade County.



Town of Pine River
source: OpenStreetMap

PREVIOUS PLAN

Town of Pine River Land Use Plan

On May 1, 2001, the Town Board approved the Town's first land use plan in order to comply with the the State's *1999 Comprehensive Planning Law*. At that time, the Town's plan was expected to prelude full participation in County zoning.

However, in 2003 with a newly elected Town Board and Chair, the decision was made to withdraw from County zoning and to become Town zoned, instead. This meant the Town was prepared to accept the responsibility for enforcement, as well. A new Planning and Zoning Committee was appointed and the process began which utilized resident involvement and input as the Town created it's own independent zoning and ordinances. The resulting framework has served the Town and its residents extremely well.

POPULATION

Over a span of the past thirty years, the Town of Pine River's population steadily increased, that is, up until the 2009 Recession which hit this area hard. Since then, the Town's population has not recouped the loss it suffered, however it has demonstrated stability all be it with a general lack of significant growth.

30-year Population Data

	1987	1990*	1997	2000*	2002	2007	2009	2010*	2018
all residents	1,328	1,552	1,711	1,877	1,932	1,964	1,982	1,869	1,874
children 0-17		467		506				387	370
adults 18-64		936		1,200				1,208	1,116**
seniors 65+		149		171				274	388**
all adults 18+		1,085		1,371				1,482	1,504
median age		31.8*		37.0*				46.0*	

sources: Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services Center; *US Census Bureau; **American Community Survey 2013-2017 5-year average overview of age distribution percentage applied to 2018 WI DOA data

According to the *North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Regional Livability Plan (2015)*, between the years of 2000-2010 Lincoln County sustained an outbound migration amounting to a loss of 42% of its population of young people who were between 20-29 years of age. As these young families relocated to other cities and states seeking employment

opportunities, the impact was felt by the local public schools, resulting in an alarming level of declining enrollment. The impact amounted to an approximate a one-third loss of K-12 students physically in attendance in classrooms since their peak enrollment in 1998. Due to the slow economic recovery, over time, these young families became well established in their careers, schools, and new communities with very few returning to this region.

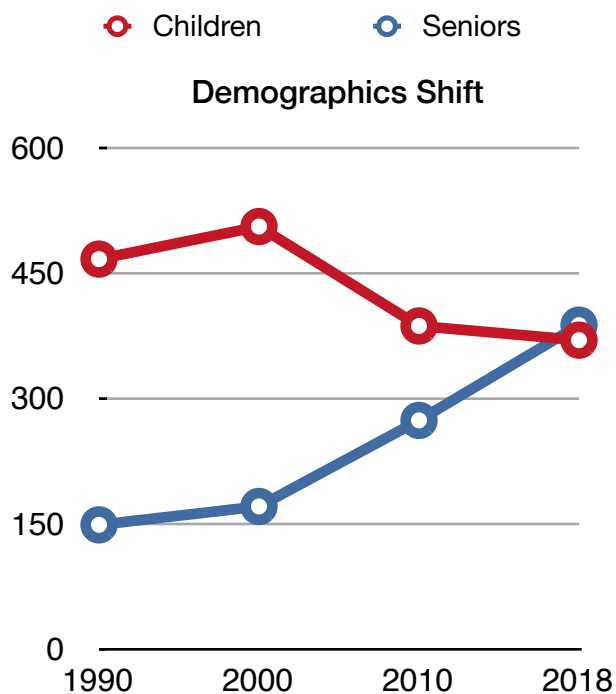
As a direct result of the 2009 Recession, the Town of Pine River experienced a sudden drop of 113 persons, which effectively erased a decade of population gains.



Meanwhile, the number of children, which in 1990 outnumbered seniors by more than a three to one margin, has shifted. (With the assistance of the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) statistician, 2018 age bracket calculations were completed.)

An occurrence of a demographics flip is evidenced as the 2010 Census identified a child to senior ratio of 387:274 while the most current data set this ratio at 370:388, demonstrating the population shift supporting the phenomena of an aging population.

For the first time, the Town has *more* senior citizens than children. The trend has become a new reality.



source: Wisconsin DOA; US Census Bureau; and American Community Survey

Over time, previously published US Census Bureau data median age projections bears out the shift in age groups. In the 1990 Census, the median age was 31.8, rising to 37 years by 2000, while the most current census figures available (2010) set that figure at 46 years. Comparably, the 2010 average state-wide was 38.5 years of age.

The good news is the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) population projections demonstrate an expectation for the Town of Pine River to fully regain its Recession losses by 2025 and the state estimates by the year 2030 the Town's population will grow to more than 2,000 residents. However the state's projected demographic make up

for the Town is expected to remain on an aging trajectory.

Similar to the majority of Wisconsin's northern counties, the State predicts a greater portion of Lincoln County residents, perhaps as high as 33.7%, to fall into the age category of 65 or older by the year 2040, significantly up and nearly doubled from the 18.3% figure in 2010.

How will aging demographics impact the Town?

The aging demographic has already affected the Town in that there are less people involved in traditional dairy farming so there has been a transition to a more diversified array of crops raised and land uses.

In addition to the native aging population, retirees and soon-to-be retirees from other areas are purchasing properties and retirement homes within the Town. It is an attractive location due to its natural beauty, excellent quality of life, and favorable proximity to the nearby cities of Wausau and Merrill for convenient shopping, a wide array of medical services, cultural activities, and various entertainment venues. The Town of Pine River is an ideal place for active retirees to enjoy their golden years.

This influx of adults who are aged 55+ with disposable income can provide an attractive opportunity for savvy business investment in the Town to cater to this expanding demographic.

Perhaps the most significant concern of many older residents is their access to health care. Fortunately, the Town of Pine River's location is particularly beneficial to an aging population because residents have easy access to a variety of choices in health care ranging from traditional medical professionals to chiropractic care as well as various alternative options. Available options include: private practice physicians, several chiropractic clinics, dentists, ophthalmologists, optometrists, orthopedic, massage, speech, and physical therapy services which are available at Merrill with many additional providers located within the nearby region.

Aspirus and Marshfield each operate well-staffed satellite health care clinics at Merrill while augmenting patients' needs with a full spectrum of specialists and hospital facilities located nearby in the greater Wausau area. Merrill's Ascension Good Samaritan Hospital also serves the community.



A majority of senior citizens within the Town choose to remain in their own homes living independently. Some may manage to do so with their family's assistance, if necessary. Elderly community members without the benefit of other family members residing nearby may find it more challenging to age in place.

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin (ADRC) operates a branch office at Merrill serving all Lincoln County residents. The ADRC is the local agency which oversees Meals for Seniors, provides reliable information on the availability of a variety of community resources, individual benefits, healthy living classes, medical equipment lending, as well as offering excellent caregiver support and education services for community members.

Home medical equipment and supplies are available for purchase at locations in Merrill. These items can also be ordered over the internet for home delivery.

Currently, the availability of businesses or individuals providing in home assistance or private nursing care are very limited and difficult to find, if at all.

There are several assisted living or nursing care facilities located at Merrill and within the surrounding communities, including the newly

expanded Pine Crest Nursing Home, which specializes in long-term dementia care and also offers short-term physical rehabilitation services for adults. This facility is operated by Lincoln County and is subsidized by local tax revenues.

As the Town of Pine River's aging population increases, there will undoubtedly be an even greater need for these and other ancillary services. Perhaps the silver lining is that new businesses to meet these needs will also provide employment opportunities, which in turn, will naturally attract younger people and their families into the area.

HOUSING

According to American Community Survey data collected by the US Census Bureau, there are 851 housing units located within the Town, 802 of which are occupied. Of the total housing units, 718 are single family units, 93 are mobile homes, and 40 are duplex or apartment type units.

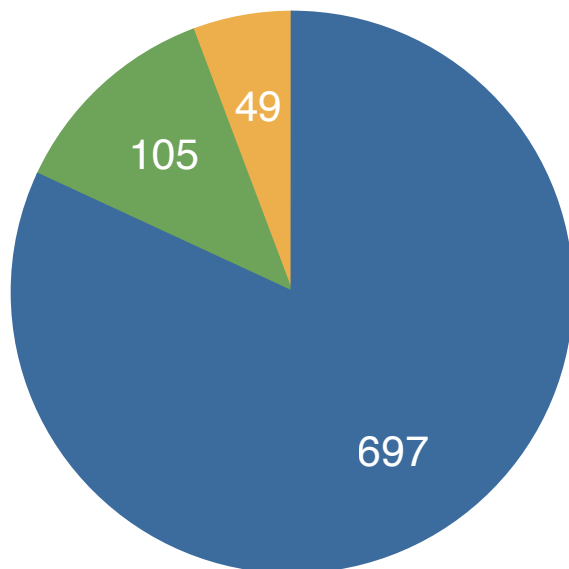
There are 697 homes which are owner-occupied while 105 are reported as renter-occupied. The average household size is 2.36 people for owner-occupied homes and 2.35 residing in rentals. Owner inhabited single family housing is predominant throughout the Town.

The median value of an owner-occupied home in the Town was \$163,200 with owners paying mortgages on 376 properties while 321 homes were owned free and clear. The average rental cost in the Town of Pine River is \$753 per month. There are several housing subdivisions located within the Town's

western sector. North of State Highway 64 with easy access to this major thoroughfare are found the following housing subdivisions: Zastrowland at Short Avenue; the Renken Addition which is visible from State Highway 64 and is accessed from Range Line Road; plus Breckenridge on Monterey Drive.

- owner occupied
- renter occupied
- unoccupied

Housing in the Town of Pine River



source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimate per US Census Bureau

Two residential subdivisions are southeast of the US Highway 51 / State Highway 64 interchange.

Approximately four miles east is Whispering Woods on the Pine which is nestled along the thickly wooded southern bank of the peaceful Pine River between Hillview and Center Roads. This development is found a short distance north from Center Road with all-season paved access provided by Pine River Road.

The second of these subdivisions is located just southeast of the intersection of County W and Center Road. Homes in the Briarwood development are tucked into the woods on generously sized lots along a picturesque winding road.

Clusters of housing developments are found west of US Highway 51 and south of State Road 64 within the Town of Pine River's western most region.

The northernmost development is the Birch Acres Addition which abuts the west side of Big Eddy Road. Along the far western section of Center Road are the River Meadows Estates and Sun Ridge Acres plus the E. L. Sunset Acres on the riverfront side of the Wisconsin River Road. Further south from these subdivisions, lies G. H. Majestic Pines and another sizable unnamed development also fronting along the Wisconsin River.

There are a limited number of duplex style housing units which are mostly scattered within the far western region of the Town. Although some manufactured or mobile homes are found throughout rural areas, only one trailer park is located and operating within the Town of Pine River. It is known as Deer Run Estates, which is on County W at the intersection of Deer Run Avenue.

POVERTY

The poverty rate of residents within the Town is set at 8.7% per the 2013-2017 American Community Survey. For families with children, 5.7% are estimated to be below the poverty level. Among residents who are 65 or older, 8% are living below the poverty line.

EDUCATION

Children residing within the Town of Pine River generally attend public, online charter, or private parochial schools in nearby Merrill or Wausau.

Homeschooling is another alternative chosen by some families. There's an active group of homeschool families in the area who participate in a variety of outings and other extra-curricular activities with their students.

The former Pine River Elementary school is located on the western section of State Highway 64, just east of the Highways 51 / 64 interchange. This neighborhood rural elementary school had previously been operated by the Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS) but was closed in 2011, at which time the

facility was converted to house the district's Head Start preschool program.

2017 Educational Attainment Data

25 yrs or older	total	males	females
less than 9th grade	32	27	5
9-12 no diploma	81	51	30
high school grad	567	315	252
college, no degree	251	132	119
associate's degree	167	78	89
bachelor's degree	178	75	103
graduate or professional degree	110	47	63

source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimates per US Census Bureau

The Town of Pine River is within an easy commuting distance to several options in higher education: Northcentral Technical College, Rasmussen College, State College of Beauty, and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point at Wausau are all conveniently located at Wausau. Also in the nearby region are Globe University at Rothschild along with Nicolet Area Technical College at Rhinelander.

Adults who are 25 or older and are residents of the Town tend to be well educated with 91.8% having earned a high school diploma or college degree.

EMPLOYMENT

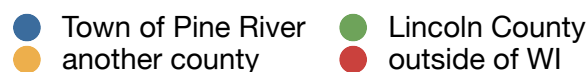
Residents are employed in a wide variety of industry sectors and unemployment in the Town of Pine River is generally low.

Due to the Town's close proximity to the Cities of Wausau and Merrill, its residents are fortunate to enjoy convenient access to the area's major employment markets. In addition, the community

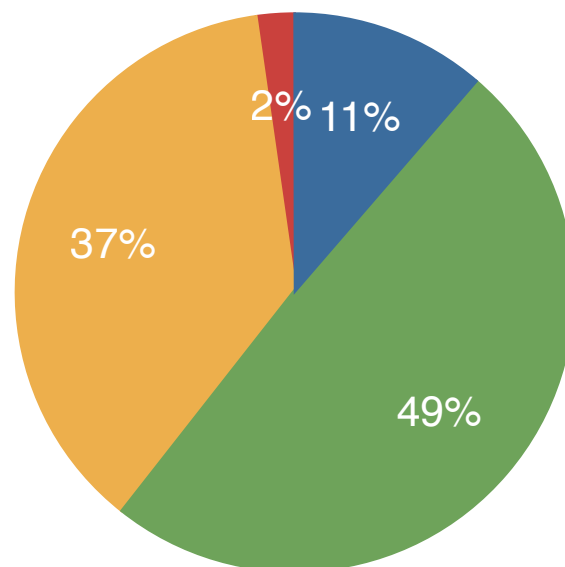
members benefit by job opportunities at businesses located within the Town or in smaller neighboring municipalities. The creative spirit of entrepreneurship is alive and active with self-employment serving as another means of livelihood for residents.

All things considered, the Town's unemployment rate of 3.7%, for those who are age 16 or older, closely mirrors the national rate. (per October 2018 data).

Data indicates 11.3% of employed residents worked within the Town of Pine River and 49.3% worked elsewhere in Lincoln County, while 37.1% commuted to work in another county. In addition to these locations, 2.2% of residents' workplaces were outside of the state of Wisconsin.



Where Residents Are Employed



source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimates per US Census Bureau

Drilling down into the data reveals Town of Pine River residents procure employment within a broad scope of classifications. Careers in (1) management, (2) office or administration support, (3) production, (4) sales, and (5) transportation rounding out the top five categories employing 494 people combined. This is nearly half the total amount employed at 998 people.

2017 Employment Sector Data

employment category	number of residents
management	123
office & administration support	123
production	99
sales	90
transportation	59
construction	55
installation, maintenance & repair	51
material moving	49
business & financial	47
education, training & library	40
food preparation & serving	34
health practitioners	33
healthcare support	32
personal care services	32
buildings & grounds maintenance	30
farming, fishing & forestry	19
architecture & engineering	16
community & social services	16
health technologists & technicians	16
computer & mathematical	14
arts, entertainment, sports & media	9
protective services, fire fighters & law	7
life, physical & social science	4
Civilian employed population:	998

source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimates per US Census Bureau

INCOME

The 2013-2017 American Community Survey, identified the average annual earnings for adult residents in the Town of Pine River, who were at least 25 years or older, at \$33,182. This source of data further estimates Town residents' median household annual income was \$56,875 (2017).

2017 Median Earnings Data

25 yrs or older	total	males	females
median earnings	\$33,182	\$42,264	\$30,196
high school grad	\$30,000	\$40,667	\$23,750
some college or associate's degree	\$35,474	\$42,500	\$31,509
bachelor's degree	\$31,750	\$79,583	\$30,662
graduate or professional degree	\$77,614	\$73,929	\$78,295

source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey
5-year estimates per US Census Bureau

VETERANS

Patriotism and a strong sense of pride in fulfilling a duty to serve in the military is evident among Town of Pine River residents.

The American Community Survey indicates there are 122 veterans who live in the Town, accounting for 8.2% of the total population.

Nearly 40% of resident veterans served during the Vietnam era and 19% participated in the Korean War. The remaining are Gulf War veterans with 9.8% who served between 8/1990-8/2001 and another 9.8% with military service since 9/2001.

CEMETERIES

There are four cemeteries located within the Town. Springbrook is on the south side of State Highway 64. St Paul's and Calvary are both located on Center Road, and St James is found on High Ridge Road, just north of the intersection with Center Road.

CHAPTER TWO NATURAL RESOURCES AND LAND USE

NATURAL RESOURCES

Geography

The geography of the Town of Pine River consists of 64 square miles of land and 0.3 square miles of water for a total area of 64.3 square miles per US Census Bureau data.



Topography

The Town of Pine River is located within the Northern Highland region of Wisconsin and is at an elevation of 1,510 feet above sea level.

A patchwork of forestry, grasslands, and farms tied together with sparkling rivers and meandering streams blanket the rolling hills, creating a beautiful landscape of rural vistas.

Soils

Soils vary across the Town but are primarily types of silt loam. Lesser amounts of soils are classified by the USDA as having the composition of muck, sandy loam, very stony, loam, gravel, peat, or sand. The

National Commodity Crop Productivity Index ranks most of the Town's soils as having "moderate inherent productivity".

Climate

The Town's four seasons climate is continental consisting of long, frigid winters and pleasantly warm summers with refreshing cool nights.

Winter's snow retreats as days become longer heralding spring's sunshine and warm rains which dress fields and woodlands in blossoms and greenery. Summers are savored with a tasty array of seasonal fresh produce, an abundance of bird and wildlife watching, and starry skies which sparkle like diamonds overhead. As the harvest is gathered, Autumn paints the countryside with a brilliant kaleidoscope of bright jewel tones, often continuing until mid-October. Invariably, when the last leaf falls, cold winds warn of winter's approach.

Often, temperatures will sharply plummet before the ground has received much, if any, insulating snow cover. Consequently, winter frost can penetrate as deep as 70" per the US Department of Commerce's Wisconsin Extreme Frost Line Penetration map.



The Town has a USDA Plant Hardiness rating of Zone 4a, with the average extreme winter lows reaching -30 to -25 (F). Typically, snow and ice cover begins in December, persisting until April. The growing season spans 124 days from late May through the end of September. The average annual precipitation within the Town of Pine River includes 32.31" of rain and 49.38" of snow.

Winter's average high temperature is 26 degrees and the average low is 8 degrees above zero (Dec / Jan / Feb). During the Spring months (Mar / Apr / May) highs, on average, are 53 degrees and the low temperature average is 31 degrees. Summer (Jun / Jul / Aug) brings average highs of 77 degrees and lows averaging at 55 degrees. Autumns (Sep / Oct / Nov) are crisp with highs averaging 56 while the low average is 36 degrees.

Water Resources

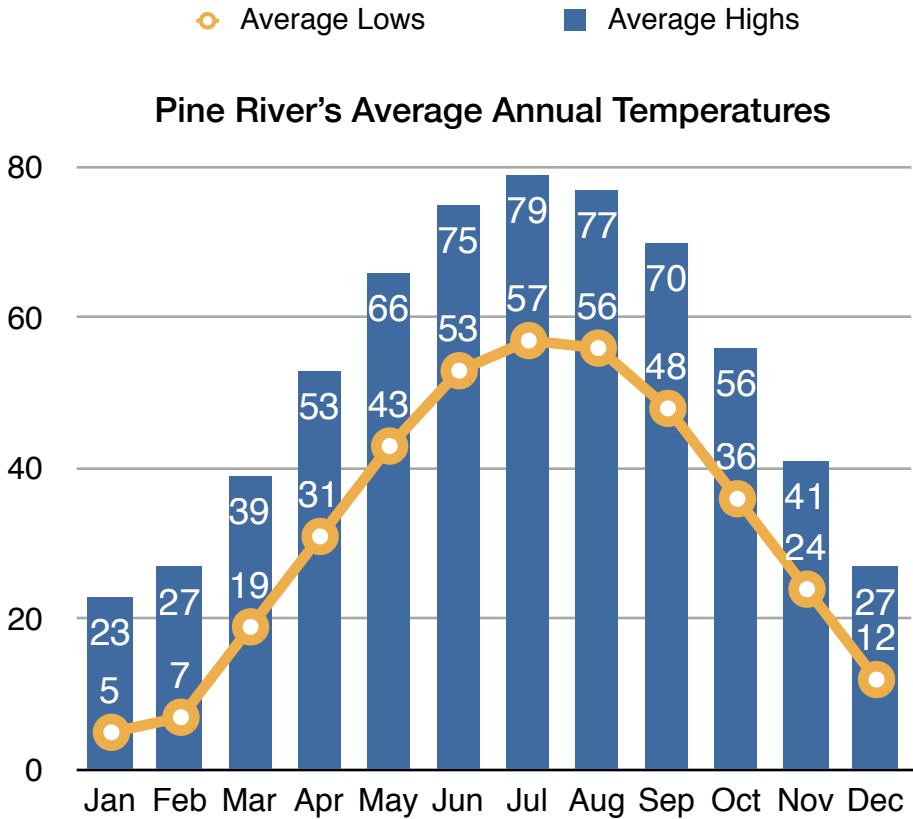
Clean and abundant describes the water resources within the Town of Pine River.

As there are no named lakes, the Pine River, North Branch

Pine River, and Little Trappe River along with their tributaries and some wetlands compose most of the small percentage of surface water in the Town.



Named tributaries of the Pine River are as follows: Rajek Creek, North Branch Pine River, Oxbo Creek, Little Oxbo Creek, and Pat Smith Creek. Barnes Creek winds through the northwest sector eventually exiting the Town to empty into the Prairie River. Across the southern portion of the Town are the Little Trappe River, Little Cain Creek, Big Cain Creek, Prospect Creek, Skunk Creek, unnamed creeks, and the headwaters of Camp Creek all of which flow into Marathon County.



source: Weather Trends

The Town proudly hosts 11.66 miles of Class I and more than 25 miles of Class II trout waters. Oxbo Creek (2.03 miles), Little Oxbo Creek (3.77 miles) and Rajek Creek (5.86 miles) are Class I trout waters. The North Branch Pine River (16.53 miles), Pat Smith Creek (4.39 miles), part of the Pine River, and numerous unnamed creeks are rated as Class II trout waters.

Oxbo, Little Oxbo, and Rajek Creeks have been identified as an Exceptional Resource Water (ERW) by the DNR.

A small section of the Town's southwestern border fronts along the Wisconsin River. The only body of water within the Town which the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has identified as an impaired waterbody is the Wisconsin River. The DNR has ascertained it to be tainted with mercury, PCBs, and an unknown pollutant causing contaminated fish tissue and chronic aquatic toxicity. It has been on the 303(d) list for these contaminants since 1998.



LAND USE

The Town has of a mix of open fields and thick northern woodlands. It is predominantly zoned Rural Residential 2 (RR2) with patches of Agricultural, along with a relatively small amount of Subdivision and Quarrying zoning which are scattered among sectors in the western regions.



One small area of Quarrying zoning abuts both sides of Center Road at the location where it crosses the Pine River, however, neither are in production and both are currently in the process of reclamation. The only non-Rural zoned land use in the Town's northeast region is a narrow strip of Business zoning located on the south side of State Highway 64 at Spile Dam Road.

Areas of the Town positioned to the west of County Road W and Deer Run Avenue, south to Old Highway W and north to County Road G

contain a mix of Residential, Business, Subdivisions, Rural, and Public / Semi-Public zoning districts. Most of the commercial development in the Town is located in the portion closest to the Highways 51 / 64 interchange and extending both north and south along State Road 17 and County W.

With the exception of Pine River Park, the Town Hall, Town Public Works buildings, and the Pine River Fire Department facility all of the land within the Town is publicly owned. No County, State, or Federal forests or any other government owned real estate parcels exist in the Town.

CHAPTER THREE TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

TRANSPORTATION

The four-lane US Highway 51 spans north and south through the far western portion of the Town, with an access interchange at State Highway 64 (exit 208) providing excellent connectivity between the Town of Pine River and other localities within the region and beyond.

State Road 17 runs north from this interchange area 43 miles to the City of Rhinelander. Extending south from State Highway 64, State Road 17 becomes County W, which is a popular route among local residents leading directly to the City of Wausau. State Highway 64 is a main east-west arterial highway crossing the entire State. Traveling approximately 26 miles east from the interchange on State Highway 64 is the City of Antigo in neighboring Langlade County.

Other main roads through the Town of Pine River include County Roads W, P, X, G, and WW, which sufficiently serve the community as collector roads. Local roads managed and maintained by the Town serve the populace well and completes the existing roadway network.

Along the Town's western edge, running north and south, is the only railroad which is operated by Wisconsin Central Limited. There are no public airport facilities within the Town. Central Wisconsin Airport is located at Mosinee, just 30 miles south of the Highways 51 / 64 interchange, providing major commercial domestic airline service

with three major carriers operating from their modern terminal.

UTILITIES

Electricity is provided to residents and businesses within the Town through the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation.



Natural Gas service is available at the State Highways 64 / 17 interchange, north a short distance on 17 and south on County W, as well as areas located to the west of US Highway 51. The remainder of the Town generally utilizes either liquid petroleum (LP) or fuel oil with numerous local suppliers.

Cell Phone service is dependable and widespread throughout the Town. Residents enjoy their choice of service carriers.

Broadband internet has recently arrived. In 2018, the Town of Pine River was included in the FCC's Connect America Fund (Phase II) broadband expansion project as fiber optic cables were installed to provide services for the majority of the Town's residents. Small areas excluded from fiber optics servicing and any resident so choosing, can purchase high speed satellite internet services via other providers.

Water and Sewer service within the Town is entirely by private wells and septic systems.

CHAPTER FOUR TOWN FACILITIES AND SERVICES

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Town of Pine River Town Hall is located on Deer Run Avenue, just south of State Highway 64 in the western section of the Town. It serves as the venue for Town board, committee, and other meetings as well as the Town's voting precinct. It is also where the Town's Public Works facility is located.



Recycling

Currently, the Town operates a recycling program for its residents on the third Thursday's evening along with morning hours on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month. Items accepted include: glass, plastic, tin or steel cans, paper products, aluminum, and waste oil.

The Town also hosts *Clean Sweep Day* which is an opportunity in the spring for Town residents to recycle larger items such as: old appliances, batteries, used oils, lawn mowers, old farm equipment, tires on metal rims, and other metal items which are typically hauled away at

no charge. Electronics and used tires are generally accepted with a nominal fee.

PUBLIC WORKS

Roads within the Town of Pine River include 56 miles which are paved and 10 miles of gravel roads, all of which are maintained in excellent condition by the Public Works. Roads Maintenance Supervisor, Brian Oppen, leads his conscientious crew ensuring all roads, equipment, and Town properties are in top-notch shape.

Specific responsibilities of this department include: replacing culverts, hauling road gravel, crack filling, reconstruction of roads, and grading roads. Other duties of brush cutting, sign maintenance, and blade patching along with lawn care, facilities, and equipment maintenance for the Town Hall, Pine River Park, and the Pine River Volunteer Fire Department occupy their time in warmer months.

During the winter, a staff of three performs exceptionally well, often working extra long hours to make sure Town roads are plowed and safe for travel. Roads Maintenance Supervisor Oppen also shoulders the responsibility of declaring a snow emergency, when warranted.



The ability of the Town's Public Works to efficiently achieve and maintain such a high standard of excellence is highly commendable.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The creation of a Town fire department and first responders was proposed by concerned community members Marv Hartwig, Heath Heidemann, and John Uttech. These dedicated men also put in the necessary hard work to make the dream into a reality and a success.

In November 2004, the Pine River Volunteer Fire Department was established followed in 2007 with the creation of the First Responders, which proudly serves the community.



A centrally located parcel of land, at N1622 Rangeline Road just south of State Highway 64, was obtained upon which the Town constructed the fire department. Staff training commenced in December 2004 and the building was completed by October 2005. Construction debt was paid in full by 2015.

Under the capable leadership of Chief John Uttech, the department staff consists of twenty-four fire fighters and eight first responder personnel. These dedicated men and women are, at the least, entry level fire fighter certified having completed 60 hours of training. Some members have advanced to achieve state certified level I, II, and driver / operator status.



The department has two certified CPR instructors who teach the technique to local dental and chiropractic staff, school and bus service employees, as well as the general public. In addition, two department members are state fire instructors who serve as adjuncts.

Currently, the department is equipped with: 1 engine, 2 tenders, 1 utility, 1 6x6 off road vehicle, 1 brush truck, and 1 rescue truck. The Town has just purchased a new custom-built Pierce engine with the capability to pump 1500 gallons per minute. This new primary engine is expected to be in service by August 2019.

Typically, the department responds to approximately thirty fire calls and between 70-80 EMS calls on an annual basis. Members of the department also conduct school fire prevention programs and they perform fire inspections twice each year.

During the summer of 2018, the department was audited by the Insurance Services Office (ISO), which provides independent ratings of more than 45,000 fire departments across the nation.



Every aspect of the department's readiness, ability to respond to fires, and performance was examined at length. Following the extensive process and in depth analysis, the department received an ISO fire protection class 6 rating.

The Pine River Volunteer Fire Department and First Responders are funded by local tax levy along with numerous grants and annual fundraisers. Baked good sales are held at the Town Hall during elections and each September



an annual pig roast and open house takes place at the fire department. This event consistently draws large crowds throughout the day and well into the evening. Safety presentations are included and a fireworks display caps off the festivities.

Area citizens and merchants generously donate

items for raffle drawings held during the pig roast. The public's loyal support and participation in these fundraisers speaks volumes to the quality of the department and the public's deep gratitude for their valuable service to the community.

TOWN PARK & RECREATION

The Town operates one small public park which is located along the east bank of the Pine River. It features



beautiful woodland habitat while providing public access to the water, a picnic table, parking, and primitive facilities. The access drive for the park is from Center Road between Hill View Road and Shady Lane Avenue. It is aptly named Pine River Park.

A regional snowmobile trail runs east-west through the center of Town. Town roads, with the exception of Bunker Hill Road, are open to ATV / UTVs. Horseback riding along scenic trails and an indoor arena for a variety of activities including therapeutic riding are available. Bicycling is another popular activity.

CHAPTER FIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Pine River is a great place to live and work. Its location is ideal with easy access to US Highway 51 and State Highway 64 providing excellent connectivity. The Town is convenient to the City of Wausau for commuters while providing residents with a highly desirable rural lifestyle. Many prime sites for business development exist in the Town along main thoroughfares with excellent visibility.



The Town of Pine River is unique in its track record and commitment to maintaining a lower tax structure along with less regulations.

With unanimous agreement, residents expressed their desire for the Town to take a proactive approach in seeking out new business development, which is compatible with our vision. Achieving a balanced approach towards business and residential development

while maintaining the Town's rural charm will be the focus of efforts to attract new growth.

Encouraging and promoting Agritourism is another aspect of the Town's economic development goals.

Without a doubt, the Town of Pine River is an undiscovered gem with much potential for a very bright economic future of opportunities benefitting the Town and its residents. The "welcome" mat is out!

AGRICULTURE & AGRITOURISM

Agriculture activity within the Town of Pine River has transitioned from primarily consisting of a community of family farms raising dairy and crops, to having far less farmers, but gaining more crop diversity.



Although much of the Town's soil is excellent for farming, the short growing season and long frigid winters presents a significant challenge which limits the types of produce suitable to the climate. Current crops which are

commonly grown include: corn, soybeans, oats, hay, wheat, ginseng, and Christmas trees. Beef, dairy, and elk are raised. Grass-fed meats and dairy are popular and in demand. Evergreen wreaths, garland, and other decorations which are crafted within the Town are sold across the nation. Landscaping trees, high quality maple syrup, and honey are also produced. Resourceful agriculturalists are rising to the challenge.

Agritourism promotes the rural lifestyle and is gaining a foothold in the Town of Pine River. It employs farm land, farm buildings, or farm equipment and animals for rural recreation and or amusement enterprises. The umbrella of Agritourism encompasses, but is not limited to the following activities: arts and crafts sales, bicycle and hiking trails, birding, membership produce co-ops, crop mazes, dairy farms, deer and elk ranches, farm-raised eggs and meats (beef, pork, poultry, etc...), farmers markets, fresh-cut-Christmas trees and wreaths, fresh produce stands, field trips, festivals, greenhouses and nurseries, group tours, hay rides, honey, horseback riding, maple syrup, pick-your-own produce, petting farms, pumpkin patches, sled dog races, sleigh rides, summer camps, square dances, trail rides, wagon rides, and wineries.



Wedding barn event venues are appearing within the Town. Such enterprises benefit the Town and community because operators utilize and preserve some of these beautiful old structures while bolstering farm family income.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Town Board appointed the Planning and Zoning Committee tasking them with the responsibility of reviewing and updating the Town's Land Use Plan. The Committee decided it was imperative to involve

the public and solicit their input throughout the process during monthly meetings, as well as with multiple public participation meetings, prior to the statutory required official public hearing as the process is completed.

September Public Participation Meeting

The first informal public participation meeting was held on the 4th of September 2018 at the Town Hall with a dozen participants in attendance. Information was gathered on the topics of agricultural crops produced within the Town. With the shift in land use from having mainly full time family farms to few as farmers retire, the public's views on how land use should evolve was discussed. A preference to avoid "mega farms" was expressed and prevalent among those in attendance.

The topic of how residents envision the Town's economic future ranged from concern related to being able to earn a living wage to expanded entrepreneurial forays into Agritourism or organic tourism, home occupations, and increased recreational opportunities.

January Public Discussion Meeting

In January, a display ad was published in the local *FOTO News* weekly newspaper inviting Town of Pine River residents to participate in a "discussion about the future of our Town", hosted by the Planning and Zoning Committee, with refreshments to be served. In spite of very poor weather, the meeting was held on Tuesday evening, January 8, 2019, with a significant turnout of thirty-seven residents in attendance.

A productive discussion began on the topic of the aging population trajectory, economic development, and whether or not the Town ought to take purposeful steps to pursue new businesses. The general consensus among those present was overwhelmingly in favor of doing so. The question was posed: "should the Town take a proactive approach to growth" and by raised hands, the thirty-one attendees, who were present at this point in the meeting, agreed unanimously.

Moving on to the topic of what kind of future was envisioned for the Town, the decline of dairy farming was discussed. A gentleman who hauls livestock to the butcher expressed his view how not only has dairy farming significantly diminished, but the raising of beef may also be declining.

A woman advanced the point that the community is "losing it's animal infrastructure". It was stated how a number of years ago, there were more businesses in the immediate area serving the needs of farmers, such as the feed mill, farm implement dealers, and large animal veterinarians, but these types of businesses are either gone or have adapted and are no longer primarily focused on the farming sector.

The three-part question was posed "Should the Town 1. remain rural; 2. focus on residential development; or 3. promote a balance of both?" By a show of hands, the results were as follows: seven (7) chose "remain rural", zero (0) were in favor of an emphasis on primarily residential development, with the majority of twenty-four (24) residents who voted for a "balance of both rural and residential development".



Next, the committee sought to learn how community members felt about reducing minimum lot size in Rural Residential 2 (RR2) zoning districts. Current minimum is five acre parcels, but by variance, people can request the creation of smaller parcels. Often, these cases have involved properties where an old farm house and outbuildings were being separated from the acreage, which often remained in crop farming. The Planning and Zoning Committee as well as the Town Board has always approved these requests, provided the smaller parcel would be self contained as far as having it's own well and septic system. By reducing the minimum to two acre parcels with the caveat of being self-contained, it would save residents both time and money if they wished to divide a larger piece of land. When asked, twenty-seven (27) of those in attendance voted

by raised hand to approve reducing the minimum lot size in RR2 to two acre parcels, while six (6) people preferred to preserve the current five acre minimum.

The meeting closed with a brief discussion on the various aspects of Agritourism and how it can benefit small family farms in the community, many of which are already participating in these activities, while promoting the Town, as a whole. The general consensus among attendees was quite favorable towards this vision.

June Public Hearing

[--Additional details on public comment and summary of the formal hearing...]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Neighboring local governments in Lincoln, Marathon, and Langlade Counties will receive a final copy of this *Town of Pine River 2019 Comprehensive Plan*.

Several years ago, the Town of Pine River participated in a series of meetings and discussions with the City of Merrill in a sincere effort to develop and finalize an intergovernmental agreement. The purpose of which was to address mutual concerns related to Town lands within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction, primarily on issues involving annexation and service delivery, as well as future development along the US Highway 51 corridor. Although a good faith attempt was made, it is unfortunate these meetings did not bear fruit nor yield positive results.

Channels of communication remain open with all of the Town's neighbors while pertinent discussions and cooperation in achieving mutually beneficial solutions occur, as the need arises.

One example is an agreement which was reached with the neighboring town to the east which involved maintenance of Ackley Pine Road, a border road between the Town of Pine River and the Town of Ackley. Road maintenance and snow plowing duties for the road are performed by Pine River with monetary reimbursements from Ackley.

Another similar situation exists with the Town of Schley and the bordering Townline Road. In this case, both Towns have cooperated with a plan to alternate years when each takes on the responsibility to plow snow. The Town is willing to consider another effort to pursue a cooperative agreement with the City of Merrill, in the future, if circumstances were to improve.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Town of Pine River Vision Statement

The Town of Pine River will strive to preserve its quality of life and meet the broad needs of our growing community. We hope to promote thoughtfully planned housing and commercial development along with agricultural and recreational enterprises that meet the needs of our diverse population while minimizing their impact on our rural landscape and natural resources. (2019)

The Town Vision Statement and the takeaway from the committee's effort to gather public opinions throughout the planning process are supportive of the following Goals and Objectives for moving forward:



Goal 1: Preserve land owners' property rights

Objectives:

1. Maintain the Town's solemn commitment to support and protect its residents' right to self-determination in utilizing their own property while respecting their neighbors' right to do the same; and without interfering in adjacent property owners' right to enjoy their own properties.
2. Uphold and respect these important community value as updates and changes to the Town Ordinances are considered.
3. Avoid excessive regulations which drive up costs for housing, land development, and site development.

Goal 2: Promote a balanced approach towards development while preserving rural character

Objectives:

1. The Town of Pine River is a great place to live and work. Both homes and businesses are welcome!
2. Conduct a full update of Town Ordinances.
3. Uphold the "good neighbor" ideal by maintaining buffers between commercial and adjacent residential properties.
4. Include regulations in the Town Ordinances which will shield residential properties from commercial lighting, noise, and offensive odors.

5. In rural areas of the Town, establish limitations on noise and shield residential properties from lights on adjacent properties which conduct business during nighttime hours in Town ordinances.
6. Follow through with residents' desire to reduce lot size from the current 5 acre minimum.

Goal 3: Utilize a proactive approach to encourage economic development

Objectives:

1. Identify categories of businesses which are compatible with the Town's Vision and its rural character.
2. Contact Highway 51 corridor land owners with properties suitable for commercial development to identify those who are interested in selling.
3. Prepare a promotional packet for prospective businesses to acquaint them with the Town and the benefits of locating within the Town of Pine River.
4. Develop a marketing plan to communicate development opportunities within the Town.
5. Promote the Town to specific businesses which are a good fit for the Town emphasizing highly desirable location, visibility, lower tax structure, and less regulations.
6. Maintain an attractive lower tax structure.
7. Encourage entrepreneurial business startups.
8. Encourage projects which cater to the Town's aging population.
9. Consider creating a future land use map.
10. Explore the possibility and benefits of offering municipal bonds to aid business development within the Town.
11. Consider establishing relationships with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA), and any other similar organization deemed appropriate to aid in achieving increased economic development.

Goal 4: Promote Agritourism

Objectives:

1. Consider establishing a Farmers Market to promote local agriculture and goods.
2. Create an "Agritourism Guide" brochure identifying Agritourism businesses and attractions with their descriptions and locations within the Town.
3. Create a webpage supporting the Town's Agritourism directory.
4. Distribute Town Agritourism brochures to area hotels, motels, businesses, tourism offices, and also have it available for downloading on website.

Goal 5: Transportation

Objectives:

1. Continue to invest in an annual roadway maintenance schedule to efficiently utilize tax dollars.
2. Consider providing signage at the main entrances to the Town along State Road 64 (east and west), County W (south), and on Highway 17 (north).
3. Continue to monitor roadway signage to ensure good visibility and safe vehicle travel within the Town.
4. Continue to monitor traffic accident data to identify any problem intersections or roadway sections.

Goal 6: Encourage Public Engagement

Objectives:

1. Continue to provide opportunities for public comment at all Town and Committee meetings.
2. Continue the long-standing tradition of following the Town's annual meeting with a luncheon for community members.

3. Increase public awareness of the Town's website as a hub for information, applications, meeting agendas, contact details, and other pertinent resources.

IMPLEMENTATION & UPDATING

The *Town of Pine River 2019 Comprehensive Plan* will serve as a longterm framework to guide the Town as decisions are made related to achieving these goals, establishing a planning process, developing Town policies, as well as updates to the Town ordinances and the zoning map. It may also be beneficial to develop a future land use map and review it each year to keep it current.

Once the Planning & Zoning Committee has completed the draft *Town of Pine River 2019 Comprehensive Plan*, the recommendation for approval is forwarded to the Town Board. It is posted and a Class 1 notice for the formal public hearing is published and held. The *Plan* draft will be distributed in accordance with State law. It will be available for public review at the Town Hall and will also be posted on the Town's website prior to the public hearing. Copies will be available at the public hearing.

The adoption by the Town Board will formalize the plan as the framework to guide local decisions over the next twenty (20) years. The final approved *Plan* is submitted to the State of Wisconsin and distributed as directed in State law.

Periodic reviews of the *Plan* should take place on a continuing basis which may determine a need for updates or amendments. Reviews should consider relevance and community standards related to the goals and objectives, completion of these, and / or any need for additional goals and objectives. Evaluations of the *Plan* are recommended to take place at least every five (5) years and an update at least every ten (10) years. Any changes to the *Plan* will be made in accordance with State law following the original adoption procedure and shall be consistent with the existing *Plan*.

[Copies of the formal resolutions related to the plan to be included.]

additional source details:

1. Photos used with permission and courtesy of: Loretta Baughan, Craig Brown, Jessica Gruetzmacher, and the Pine River Volunteer Fire Department
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