

1 Issues and Opportunities

About this Plan

The Town of Shelby Comprehensive Plan has been developed to provide background and direction for a variety of land use decisions. Included in this plan are a variety of chapters, or elements, that provide baseline information and specific goals, objectives, and recommendations specific to each element. This plan should be used by the Plan Commission to make decisions about growth and development over the next 20-year period. Periodic updates are required to ensure this plan remains current over time. Specific requirements and procedures for use and maintenance of this plan are provided in the Implementation Element.

Elements of this plan include:

1. Issues and Opportunities
2. Housing
3. Transportation
4. Utilities and Community Facilities
5. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
6. Economic Development
7. Intergovernmental Cooperation
8. Land Use
9. Implementation

Setting and History

The Town of Shelby is an urban town with rural areas located in the southwest corner of La Crosse County. The City of La Crosse shares an irregular border, directly west of the Town. The Mississippi River borders the western edge of the Town, the Town of Greenfield is the eastern border, and Vernon County is the southern border. The towns of Medary and Barre border Shelby to the north.

While the area's original inhabitants were Native Americans, Mormons settled in the mid 1800's on what today is called Mormon Coulee and Mormon Creek. Following the Mormons, German and Swiss immigrants settled in the Town during the 1850's and 1860's, bringing with them great agricultural skill.

Agriculture has a long standing history in the Town, particularly along the Mormon Coulee where hay, oats, potatoes, and fruit trees have all been important crops over the past one hundred years. Productive agricultural land remains to this day, however, a majority of land within the Town is no longer utilized for agricultural purposes, giving way to a more urbanized environment.

The Town of Shelby was a growing area from the late 1950's to 1980 with a population ranging from 7,000 to 8,000 during this period. More recently, annexation has reduced the Town's population to 4,687 in 2000. Overall, the southern portion of La Crosse County slowed in population growth due to large-scale infrastructure improvements (primarily highways) in northern areas over the past two decades.

Today, Shelby can be described as an urbanized town with distinct urban, suburban, and rural areas. Rural and agricultural areas remain in the eastern portion of the Town near and adjacent to extreme topographical areas. The western portion of the Town contains a more urbanized landscape, especially in areas where it borders the City of La Crosse.

Summary of Key Findings

Growth Projections & Management

- Several factors (including proximity to a large urban center, and highway access) indicate that there will be increasing growth pressure in the Shelby area.
- Conservative growth estimates project 85 new homes by 2025, more aggressive estimates show up to 500 homes during that time.
- Projections show that the Town could expect between 140 and 580 acres of new development by 2025.
- The projections are based on historic growth trends; however, local policy will help determine the amount, location, character, and quality of growth.

Housing

- 72% of Shelby's housing units were built before 1980. Shelby is currently not seeing the same housing growth rate as found in the Holmen/Onalaska area.
- The Town has a median home value significantly higher than the County.
- Shelby's housing vacancy rate is less than comparable Towns surrounding La Crosse.

Employment

- Town residents have high levels of educational attainment compared to the County, overall with 45% of residents having a bachelor's degree, or higher.
- 50% of all residents work in management or professional occupations
- The median commute time for Shelby residents is 17 minutes
- Less than 1% are employed in agriculture.

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Shelby has over 8,100 acres of woodlands. 379 acres are enrolled in the State's Managed Forest Program.
- The Town has seven (7) sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places and six (6) sites designated on the State Register of Historic Places.
- The Town has recently updated its park plan, which includes a system of sixteen (16) parks.

Agriculture

- Prime farm soils that are best suited for growing a variety of crops (Classes I, II) are located in lowland areas throughout the township.
- In Shelby, Census 2000 indicated there were only 32 people living on farms, and only 22 residents working on farms.
- Regionally, the U.S. Department of Commerce reported that farm earnings in La Crosse County decreased by 48 percent between 1990 and 1998, which was a greater decline than in the State of Wisconsin (26 percent) or the United States (2 percent) over this same time period.

Demographic Analyses

This section includes comparisons to other local and regional governments. They are included to provide a better understanding of the trends emerging locally and within the County or State. Comparables include:

- Town of Medary: also borders the City of La Crosse, is subject to same development pressures;
- City of La Crosse: borders the Town, provides the local basis for "urban" characteristics on growth and service provision;
- La Crosse County: regional governmental jurisdiction, contains uniform topographical characteristics and a variety of local governmental entities for comparison.

Population Trends and Forecasts

The population of Shelby has fluctuated over the years. During the 1960's, the population decreased by sixteen (16) percent, probably due to an annexation by the City of La Crosse. The population then rose again, only to experience an eleven percent drop during the 1980's for the same reason. The most recent population estimates show that Shelby's population decreased by six (6) percent during the 1990s. Projections from the Wisconsin DOA indicate that the population will remain stable. The DOA considers and monitors changes and patterns in fertility, mortality, and migration. DOA's projections indicate modest growth in towns of Barre (+234 people) and Greenfield (+113 people).

Table 1.1: Historic Population and Growth Projections

	Census			Projections				
	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Town of Shelby	5,620	5,002	4,687	4,676	4,655	4,613	4,589	4,617
Town of Medary	1,794	1,539	1,463	1,493	1,519	1,538	1,562	1,604
City of La Crosse	48,347	51,140	51,818	51,718	51,507	51,059	50,810	51,141
La Crosse County	91,056	97,904	107,120	110,302	113,211	115,538	118,246	122,291

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 and State of Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2005

Age and Gender

According to the U.S. Census, conducted in 2000, the median age for the Town of Shelby is 41.9 years, which is higher than La Crosse County's median age of 35.2 and the State's median age of 36. The median age for males within the Town is 41.2, while females have a median age of 42.7. Table 2.2 outlines the Town's population by age group. Nearly thirty percent (30%) of Town residents are under the age of 20, while an additional twenty-five percent (25%) are over age 55. Forty-five percent (45%) of the Town's population falls between the ages of 25 and 55 years old.

Table 1.2: Population by Age, 2000

	Town of Shelby		Town of Medary		City of La Crosse		La Crosse County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 5 Years	235	5.0%	93	6.4%	2,496	4.8%	6,042	5.6%
5 to 19 Years	1111	23.7%	350	23.9%	10,920	21.1%	22,787	21.3%
20 to 24 Years	142	3.0%	68	4.6%	8,984	17.3%	11,503	10.7%
25 to 44 Years	1,104	23.5%	399	27.3%	12,926	25.0%	28,021	26.2%
45 to 54 Years	951	20.3%	283	19.3%	5,340	10.3%	13,340	12.5%
55 to 74 Years	938	20.0%	224	15.3%	6,854	13.3%	14,146	13.2%
75 Years and Over	206	4.4%	46	3.2%	4,298	8.3%	6,544	6.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

Race

A majority of Shelby residents are white. Residents of Asian descent comprise nearly two percent (2%) of the Town's population, which makes them the second largest race population in the Town. The racial composition is similar to that of the County.

Table 1.3: Population by Race, 2000

	Town of Shelby		Town of Medary		City of La Crosse		La Crosse County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	4,541	96.9%	1,438	98.3%	47,454	91.6%	100,883	94.2%
Black or African American	15	0.3%	2	0.1%	806	1.6%	1,016	0.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native	13	0.3%	0	0.0%	266	0.5%	440	0.4%
Asian	79	1.7%	7	0.5%	2,410	4.7%	3,376	3.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	18	0.0%	21	0.0%
Some Other Race	5	0.1%	2	0.1%	185	0.4%	286	0.3%
Two or More Races	33	0.7%	14	1.0%	679	1.3%	1,098	1.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

Income Levels

Table 1.4 depicts three measures of income for the Town and surrounding communities.

- ✓ Median Household Income considers income for all people who occupy a housing unit whether or not they are related.
- ✓ Median Family Income considers income for people who reside together and are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. It is typically higher than the Median Household Income.
- ✓ Per Capita Income is the total income of the area divided by the total population.

Table 1.4: Median Household Income, Median Family Income, and Per Capita Income, 2000

	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income
Town of Shelby	\$64,890	\$76,559	\$32,899
Town of Medary	\$57,431	\$65,469	\$25,395
City of La Crosse	\$31,103	\$43,047	\$17,650
La Crosse County	\$39,472	\$50,380	\$19,800
State of Wisconsin	\$43,791	\$52,911	\$21,271

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

The Town of Shelby has no families that are living in poverty; however, one percent (1%) of individuals are living in poverty. This rate of poverty is low compared to surrounding Townships and the County. La Crosse County has over five percent (5%) of families and ten percent (10%) of individuals living in poverty.