

## Chapter 7:

# NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

## INTRODUCTION

Washburn's past, present, and future are strongly tied to its natural, cultural, and agricultural resources. This chapter provides an inventory and analysis of these resources and it describes goals, objectives, policies, maps, and programs to manage these resources.

## INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

### NATURAL RESOURCES

As discussed in Chapter 3 of this Plan, natural resources have attracted people to the Washburn area for centuries. Over 600 years ago, wild rice and abundant fish and wildlife resources attracted the Anishinabe people to the Washburn area. Later, French and British fur traders settled in the area and used Chequamegon Bay and Lake Superior to transport their furs. Then in the late 1800s through the early 1900s, Washburn's industries harvested and extracted large quantities of lumber and brownstone in the area. Chequamegon Bay provided an excellent port to process and transport these resources. During this period, many people viewed the area's natural resources as a commodity to be bought, sold, and used. By the early 1900s, wood resources in the area were depleted and the demand for brownstone had waned. Consequently, natural resource based industries folded or downsized and the value of Chequamegon Bay as a shipping port declined.



*Chequamegon Bay (SWB, Inc.)*

Today, natural resources cannot be viewed simply as a commodity. There must be recognition that natural resources are of great value in and of themselves. They also contribute greatly to Washburn's quality of life and provide opportunities for recreation and tourism, which in turn help Washburn's economy. Natural resources help make Washburn a desirable and healthy community to

live in. Therefore, conservation and effective management of these natural resources are critical to Washburn's future. This section provides an overview of key natural resources in Washburn.

### Geographical Province and Topography

The City of Washburn is located in a geographical province known as the Lake Superior Lowland, which encompasses a relatively small area of land directly adjacent to Lake Superior in Bayfield, Douglas, and Ashland Counties. The province ranges in altitude from roughly 300 feet below sea level to roughly 1,000 feet above sea level. Lake Superior is about 602 feet above sea level.

The hills of the Northern Highland Province surround the Lake Superior Lowland and encroach into the north central part of Washburn. These surrounding hills formed the shoreline of glacial Lake Duluth, a predecessor of Lake Superior. Many years ago, Washburn was submerged under glacial Lake Duluth, which was estimated to be roughly 500 feet higher than present day Lake Superior.

The topography of Washburn was formed about 10,000 years ago, when the last of four glaciers that the once covered the area retreated. Red clay, which is the characteristic soil type in the area, is a result of deposition of materials during the last glacial retreat. Washburn's topography ranges from roughly 602 feet above sea level along the Lake Superior shoreline to roughly 995 feet above sea level at Woodland Cemetery in the north-central part of the City (see Figure 7-1: Shaded Relief Map). This change in elevation allows for good views of the lake, especially in the north-central part of the City where the topography change is the most dramatic. Most of the City has moderate, south-facing slopes of five to ten percent that do not present major development issues, and in fact, may present opportunities to integrate solar energy design into existing and future development.

The area surrounding Thompson Creek in the southwest corner of the City is a low-lying area with little relief. This area has numerous wetlands and is prone to flooding. Consequently, the topography in this area may present some development constraints. The lakeshore in the southwest part of the city has little relief, which allows for good beaches and easy access to the lake (see side photo). In contrast, the lakeshore in the northeast part of the city is more rugged with small cliffs that provide scenic overlooks of the lake (see side photo).



*View of Lake Superior from Washington Avenue roughly 400 feet above Lake Superior (SWB, Inc.)*



*Lakeshore in Thompson's West End Park in the Southwest Part of the City (SWB, Inc.)*



*Lakeshore in the Northeast Part of the City (SWB, Inc.)*

Insert Figure 7-1: Shaded Relief Map



In general, Washburn's topography is an amenity. The primary areas where the existing topography could present a development concern are steep areas near the lake and along creeks and ravines (see Figure 7-2: Representative Slopes for additional information).

### **Soils**

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service prepared a soil survey for Bayfield County that provides valuable information regarding potential development constraints, suitability for vegetation, and so on. However, detailed soil borings should always be taken and carefully analyzed before any site development takes place. The following summarizes key findings of the soil survey as they relate to Washburn. Refer to the soil survey for more information.

Soils of Statewide Importance for Farmland. The soil survey shows a relatively large portion of Washburn consists of soils of statewide importance for farmland (see Figure 7-3: Soils of Statewide Importance for Farmland). However, with the exception of a few hayfields in the northeast corner of the city, existing urban development covers most of these soils. No conventional farms exist within the city limits.

Soils with Potential Erosion Hazard. Certain soil types are susceptible to erosion (see Figure 7-4: Potential Erosion Hazard). In Washburn, soils with a potential for very severe erosion are located around the mouth of Thompson Creek. This area is also prone to flooding. Soils with a potential for severe erosion are located in areas of highly variable relief, including ravines and stream corridors. Development in these areas (including buildings, trails, and roads) must be carefully constructed and managed to minimize the adverse affects of erosion.

Infiltration. Most soils in Washburn consist of clays that have a slow to very slow rate of infiltration, which means they have a high runoff potential (see Figure 7-5: Infiltration). High runoff can contribute to erosion, sedimentation, damage to personal property, and so on. Therefore, it is important that Washburn implement best management techniques to handle storm water runoff effectively and to maximize infiltration.

Constraints for Septic Systems. The soil survey rates all soils in Washburn as having severe constraints for septic systems. This does not mean that septic systems cannot function appropriately in Washburn, but it does suggest that extra care must be taken to ensure that new and existing septic systems work properly and that they do not adversely affect the natural environment or health of the public.

Refer to the Bayfield County Soil Survey for more detailed information about Washburn's soils.

### **Surface Water and Groundwater**

Washburn has abundant and outstanding water resources that contribute to the economy, health, and identity of Washburn. Washburn's water resources also provide tremendous recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. The following provides a brief description of water resources in Washburn. Refer to Chapter 4 of this Plan for additional information.

Chequamegon Bay, Lake Superior. Chequamegon Bay is a relatively shallow and protected bay on the south shore of Lake Superior. It encompasses an



*Chequamegon Bay by the Commercial Dock (SWB, Inc.)*

area of roughly 53 square miles, has an average depth of 28 feet, and a maximum depth of 67 feet. The watershed that drains to Chequamegon Bay covers an area of 1,440 square miles. Throughout the history of Washburn, people have been attracted to the bay. During the late 1800s through the early 1900s, Washburn's waterfront was lined with sawmills and docks. At that time, the bay was valued as an industrial port. Today, the bay no longer functions as an industrial port, but it supports a marina, a commercial dock, recreation activities, and numerous plants and animals.

Watersheds. Washburn is located in the Bayfield Peninsula Southeast Watershed, one of Wisconsin's 16 watersheds that drain into the Lake Superior Basin. This watershed includes the eastern half of Bayfield Peninsula and most of the Apostle Islands. Because a watershed does not follow political boundaries, it is critical that neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions in the watershed cooperate on all matters affecting the watershed. The Bayfield Peninsula Southeast Watershed is particularly sensitive because the watershed consists of highly erodible, red clay soils that could eventually make their way to Chequamegon Bay where they could degrade water quality and plant and animal habitats. Poor land and water management anywhere in the watershed can adversely affect areas downstream and ultimately Chequamegon Bay. Washburn is at the lower end of the watershed, so it is the recipient of whatever occurs at the upper end of the watershed. This means Washburn also has the opportunity and/or responsibility to help address runoff problems in the City before they cause damage to Chequamegon Bay and other water resources in the city.

Wetlands. The Wisconsin Wetland Inventory generated by the WDNR identifies 80,252 acres or about 8.5% of Bayfield County as wetlands based on 1991 aerial photography. In Washburn, the majority of wetlands occur along and at the mouth of Thompson Creek (see Figure 7-6: Existing Natural Features). The Wisconsin Wetland Inventory is useful for general planning purposes, but it does not reflect the exact boundaries of all wetlands in the City. Consequently, it is important to delineate and evaluate all wetlands on a property before considering development.

Wetlands are not wasted lands that constrain development. On the contrary, wetlands provide many benefits, including water quality protection, groundwater recharge and discharge, flood protection, and wildlife habitat. To that end, the City should continue to ensure their protection.

Streams and Ravines. Thompson Creek is the most significant stream in the City (see Figure 7-6: Existing Natural Features). It is a cold-water stream classified as supporting a Class I brook, brown, and rainbow trout fishery, and runs of migratory trout and salmon species. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) lists Thompson Creek as an outstanding water resource. The stream has deep pools and undercut banks, with a gravel, sand, and clay bottom. It empties into Vanderverter Bay on Washburn's southwest edge. WDNR studies have found that streambank erosion, silt, and low flows are adversely affecting the habitat quality of the stream, and that livestock, barnyards; and cropland in the watershed contribute pollutants that adversely affect the stream. WDNR surveys of the creek have not found rare species or a rich diversity of species associated with Thompson Creek. Although Thompson Creek is not pristine, it is an important natural amenity that is highly valued by the community. Changes in land management can improve the quality of the creek's water and habitat. The City should be particularly careful about future development in the Thompson Creek watershed.



*Thompson Creek near State Highway 13  
(SWB, Inc.)*

Insert Figure 7-2: Representative Slopes



Insert Figure 7-3: Soils of Statewide Importance for Farmland



Insert Figure 7-4: Potential Erosion Hazard



Insert Figure 7-5: Infiltration



Insert Figure 7-6: Existing Natural Features



Numerous smaller streams and ravines also run through Washburn. Because the streams empty into Lake Superior, they affect the water quality of the lake. Careful planning and design are necessary to protect these streams and ravines, and ultimately Lake Superior, from potential adverse affects of development such as increased runoff, erosion, pesticides, and fertilizers.



*Mouth of Unnamed Stream in the Northeast Corner of Washburn (SWB, Inc.)*

**Floodplain.** Areas susceptible to flooding are unsuitable for development because of risks to lives and property. Any proposed development or redevelopment in or near the floodplain should be surveyed to ascertain the precise boundary of the floodplain. Most of the 100-year floodplain has a base elevation of 605 feet above sea level and lies in a relatively narrow band along Lake Superior. The floodplain widens and deepens around Thompson Creek. Refer to Figure 7-6: Existing Natural Features for additional information.

**Groundwater.** Washburn's drinking water comes from deep well sources. Although Washburn's drinking water quality is exceptional, the City will need to be diligent in ensuring that drinking water remains safe for future generations. Refer to Chapter 6: Utilities and Community Facilities for additional information.

**Impaired Waters.** There are no impaired waters in Washburn as defined by Section 303 of the Clean Water Act. Nevertheless, Washburn and neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions should work to maintain and/or improve surface water quality in the region.

### **Ecological Landscape and Vegetation**

Washburn is located in the ecological landscape known as the Superior Coastal Plain. This area encompasses the region along the southwest coast of Lake Superior stretching from Superior to the eastern edge of Ashland County. Lake Superior strongly influences the climate of the region by providing cooler summers, warmer winters, and more precipitation compared to inland locations. In the 1800s, a mixture of white pine, white spruce, balsam fir, paper birch, poplar, quaking aspen, and white cedar dominated most of the landscape, but by the 1900s, most of the forested areas were harvested. Today, second-growth forests that consist of 40% aspen and birch, dominate the region. In Washburn, white pine is still prevalent in areas. Roughly one-third of the area in the Superior Coastal Plain is open and used for pasture and agricultural use.



*Mixed Conifer and Deciduous Forest in Northeast Washburn (SWB, Inc.)*

Wetlands and woodlands make up much of the undeveloped areas of Washburn and contribute to Washburn's sense of place. Most wetlands are in the southwest part of the city (see Figure 7-6: Natural Features). Wetlands provide many benefits including water quality protection, groundwater recharge and discharge, flood protection, and wildlife habitat. To that end, the City should continue to ensure their protection.

Woodlands, consisting of a mixture of conifers and deciduous trees, cover most of the rural areas of the city. Some urban areas, particularly City parks, have significant stands of trees. For example, Memorial Park has many white pines that tower above the park and provide the park with a strong identity (see side photograph). Street trees also contribute greatly to the identity of the city. Refer to the City of Washburn's Urban Forestry Plan and Tree Inventory Summary completed in 2006 for more detailed information about the City's trees.

Many former agricultural lands and former waterfront industrial lands in Washburn have been converted to open meadows. If left alone, these areas will begin to transition to shrublands and forests. This transition is already occurring along the waterfront where aspens and willows are beginning to spread out from the ravines and shoreline into the open meadows (see side photograph).

### Threatened Species

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service identifies several federal threatened species in Bayfield County including the bald eagle, Canada lynx, gray wolf, and Fassett's locoweed. These species may or may not be found within the city limits. In addition, the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory identifies many rare plant and animal species and rare natural communities in Bayfield County. However, to protect these species, their specific locations are not readily available to the public. The City should coordinate with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that future development in Washburn does not adversely affect threatened or rare species.

### Environmentally Sensitive Areas

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources does not identify State Natural Areas within the City of Washburn. However, Thompson Creek and wetlands in southwest Washburn are important natural features that should be protected. Other areas in the city where the City should take special care to protect and enhance include the coastal area, bluffs, creeks, ravines, wetlands, and woodlands.



*White Pine in Memorial Park (SWB, Inc.)*



*Waterfront Meadow transitioning to Shrubland/Forest (SWB, Inc.)*

## Air Quality

Air quality in the Washburn area is excellent. According to the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, in 2005 Bayfield County was ranked the 20th healthiest county out of the 72 Wisconsin counties in health outcomes. This is partly due to its low air quality cancer risk at 21 incidences per 1,000,000, and the low air quality hazard index at 0.3.

## Mineral Resources

Mineral resources played an important role in the history of Washburn and the surrounding area. Brownstone was mined in the region from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. A relatively small amount of sand and gravel mining occurred in the City of Washburn and still occurs in the surrounding region. These mines help supply base material for road and building construction in the area. It is important that these mines be properly managed and reclaimed.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

Washburn has a rich history characterized by tremendous growth and prosperity as well as significant losses. Washburn's history is an important part of its current culture and identity. The publications "Wood, Stone and Water – Washburn Walking Tour" by the Washburn Heritage Preservation Association (2005), "Caring for Historic Houses and Buildings in Washburn" by the Washburn Historic Preservation Commission (2006), "Washburn Memories" by the Washburn Women's Civic Club (1983), "Washburn Pioneers" by the Washburn Area Historical Society (1986) and several other books, newsletters, and research articles provide excellent resources for understanding and experiencing Washburn's past. The following provides an overview of the history of Washburn followed by an overview of its current culture.

### Washburn's Past

As discussed in Chapter 3 of this Plan, the historic development of Washburn is tied to the area's natural resources – in particular, Chequamegon Bay. Although the railroad and major industries were critical to the historic physical development of Washburn, the City of Washburn exists because of the area's natural resources. The railroad and major industries came and went, but the area's natural resources remain and continue to be an important part of Washburn's economy and culture.

Washburn's Waterfront. Over 600 years ago, wild rice and abundant fish and wildlife resources attracted the Anishinabe people to Chequamegon Bay. Later, French and British fur traders settled in the area and used Chequamegon Bay and Lake Superior to transport their furs. While traces of these former developments can still be found in the Chequamegon Bay area, the development pattern that is most evident today originated in the late 1800s when industries began harvesting and extracting large quantities of lumber and brownstone in the area.

Chequamegon Bay provided an excellent port to process and transport these resources. As a result, sawmills, lumberyards, and auxiliary industries developed along Washburn's waterfront. The waterfront was Washburn's industrial park. Commercial and residential uses developed inland from the waterfront industries, and a railroad was constructed to transport goods to and from the waterfront.



*Washburn's Waterfront in 1890 (Washburn Historic Preservation Commission)*

However, by the early 1900s, the wood resources in the area were depleted and the demand for brownstone had waned. Existing industries on the waterfront folded and the value of the waterfront as a shipping port declined. The City of Washburn eventually acquired former industrial waterfront sites for public use and potential redevelopment. Today, the waterfront area accommodates parks, a marina, homes, some commercial uses, and the Lakefront Walking Trail.

Lakefront Walking Trail. The demise of the waterfront industries did not lessen the value of the waterfront to the residents of Washburn. Washburn rallied around the efforts of William (Bud) Robinson, Jan Nordlin, and Harold Moe to construct a public lakefront walking trail that tells the story of Washburn's past. The trail follows the Lake Superior shoreline from Thompson's West End Park to the City's Athletic Fields (see Figure 7-7: Cultural Features). It traverses along side so many significant artifacts that the Wisconsin Historical Society designated the Lakefront Walking Trail as part of the Wisconsin Maritime Trail System. Maritime interpretive signs and accessibility improvements were added to the trail. The trail is a unique, cultural amenity that is valued by the community.

Washburn's Architectural Resources. Washburn has many historically significant buildings, most of which were constructed in the late 1800s or early 1900s. Fortunately, many of these buildings are in relatively good shape today. Three buildings are on the National Historic Register of Historic Places:

1. The Bank of Washburn (also known as the Washburn Historical Museum and Cultural Center). This brownstone, Romanesque building was constructed in 1890 and is located at the intersection of Bayfield Street and Central Avenue. It currently houses the Washburn Historical Museum and Cultural Center.
2. The Bayfield County Courthouse. This brownstone, classical revival building was constructed in 1896 and is located at 117 East 5th Street. There was an attempt to demolish



*An Original Sign along the Lakefront Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)*



*Newer Maritime Interpretive Sign along the Lakefront Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)*



*Bank of Washburn (Washburn Historical Museum and Cultural Center) (SWB, Inc.)*

Insert Figure 7-7: Existing Cultural Features



the building in 1974 to allow for construction of a new courthouse. However, residents rejected the idea and the County opted to renovate the building instead. In 1975, it became the first Washburn building added to the National Register of Historic Places. The building still functions as the County Courthouse.

3. The Washburn Public Library. This brownstone, classical revival building was constructed in 1905 and is located at 307 Washington Avenue. The building was built with funding from Andrew Carnegie. The library has always been an important part of Washburn.

Dozens of other historically significant commercial and residential buildings that are not on the National Register still exist in Washburn (see Figure 7-7: Cultural Features). Unfortunately, some historically significant buildings (for example, the Sheriff's Office and Jail) were demolished or destroyed. Others were renovated in a manner inconsistent with the original character of the building. This loss of significant buildings reinforces the importance of protecting the City's remaining historically significant buildings and structures. Refer to the publication "Wood, Stone and Water – Washburn Walking Tour" by the Washburn Heritage Preservation Association (2005) for additional information.

The rise and fall of major industries in and around Washburn also affected the culture of Washburn. The DuPont Barksdale Explosive Plant operated in the Town of Barksdale west of Washburn between 1905 and 1971. Washburn's population grew to roughly 9,000 people in 1918, in large part to help meet the employment needs of the plant. To accommodate its employees, DuPont constructed housing and community facilities in the City of Washburn, some of which still exist today – most notably Memorial Park and the DuPont Club (commonly known as the Washburn Civic Center). Though the DuPont Plant, sawmills, grain elevator, and other industries no longer exist in or near Washburn, many of the grand buildings and places spawned by these industries still exist and are an important part of the culture of Washburn.



*Bayfield County Courthouse (SWB, Inc.)*



*Washburn Library (SWB, Inc.)*



*DuPont Superintendent's House – A Historically Significant House (SWB, Inc.)*



*Washburn (DuPont) Civic Center (SWB, Inc.)*

### Washburn's Present

At its core, Washburn's cultural identity is tied to Chequamegon Bay and the area's natural resources. Washburn's waterfront was bustling with activity in the late 1800s through the early 1900s as industries processed and shipped natural resources that helped the country grow. While these early industries no longer exist in Washburn, the community still identifies itself with that era. Washburn has done a good job of preserving and celebrating its historically significant buildings and places from the late 1800s and early 1900s. For example, Washburn's annual Brownstone Days Festival celebrates and honors the city's historic brownstone buildings. Likewise, the Lakefront Walking Trail tells the history of Washburn's waterfront.

Although Washburn's cultural identity is tied to its industrial past, it is also tied to a new era that supports creative professionals, recreation, and tourism. Unlike the late 1800s and early 1900s when the area's natural resources were a commodity to be bought, sold, and shipped out of the area, Washburn today is seen as a community that respects and celebrates nature. People live and work in Washburn, in part, because Washburn has outstanding natural amenities, recreation opportunities, and cultural resources.

Washburn's identity is also strongly tied to the creative professions (including visual and performing artists). Numerous creative professionals have chosen to live and work in Washburn because of Washburn's high quality of life.

### AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

As stated earlier in this chapter, soils of statewide importance for farmland exist in Washburn, but there are no conventional farms within the city limits. However, in 2006, some hayfields existed in the northeast corner of the city. Agriculture continues to be an important part of the surrounding towns.

### PUBLIC INPUT

The community survey conducted as part of this planning process provided residents with a list of nine existing natural, cultural, and historical resources in the city. Residents were asked to rate the value of each item in the list as either high, moderate, or low.



Wood Statue on Bayfield Street that reflects Washburn's Past (SWB, Inc.)



View of Chequamegon Bay from Thompson's West End Park (SWB, Inc.)



Hayfield in Northeast Corner of Washburn (SWB, Inc.)

At least half of the participants identified the following items as having high value to them:

- Surface water quality along the lakeshore (73.3%);
- Public access to Lake Superior (70.7%);
- Scenic views of Lake Superior (67.3%);
- Outdoor recreation and education (51.7%); and
- Historical structures and artifacts (50.5%).

The survey shows that residents highly value Lake Superior and the waterfront. Refer to Appendix A for detailed survey results.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

### **Goal 1: Washburn protects and enhances its natural and agricultural areas.**

Objective 7.1: Protect and enhance natural habitats including creeks, wetlands, coastal resources, and forests to provide habitat for plant and animal species and to allow for sensitive use and enjoyment by humans.

Policy 7.1.a: Work with government agencies and other stakeholders to develop a natural resource plan to identify, preserve, restore, and manage natural and coastal resources in the city.

Policy 7.1.b: Maintain and enhance the water quality of creeks and drainage corridors within the City to prevent floods and erosion, and to preserve and protect the floodplain.

Policy 7.1.c: Discourage development (public or private) along Lake Superior that would cause erosion, endanger water quality, or otherwise adversely affect coastal resources.

Policy 7.1.d: Work with government agencies, schools, and others to provide and/or promote educational opportunities regarding the protection and enhancement of coastal areas.

Policy 7.1.e: Coordinate with government agencies and stakeholders to implement a boat washing program and facilities at public launch sites in order to minimize the spread of exotic aquatic species.

Policy 7.1.f: Promote sustainable development and preservation of natural resources in public and private developments.

Policy 7.1.g: Recognize Chequamegon Bay and the waterfront as unique resources and plan for, encourage, and manage development and redevelopment activities in coastal areas to maximize aesthetic, environmental, recreational, and economic values.

Policy 7.1.h: Develop and implement performance standards for all development in coastal areas. Address the need to provide public access to Lake Superior and to preserve views of and from Lake Superior.

Objective 7.2: Protect existing agricultural resources in the city.

Policy 7.2.a: Promote the preservation of productive agricultural land holdings.

Policy 7.2.b: Study the feasibility of developing a City tree nursery as part of an urban forestry program.

Policy 7.2.c: Explore the development of community produce gardens.

**Goal 2: Washburn protects and promotes its historic, archaeological and cultural resources.**

Objective 7.3: Identify and preserve sites, features, structures, access points or routes having unique local historical, archaeological, aesthetic, scenic or natural value for present and future enjoyment. Protect, preserve or use them in such a manner that will assure their continued existence.

Policy 7.3.a: Identify, preserve, and protect resources and structures that contribute to Washburn's architectural, historic, and cultural heritage.

Policy 7.3.b: Support community events and programs that celebrate the history and culture of Washburn.

Policy 7.3.c: Encourage restoration and adaptive re-use of historic buildings.

Policy 7.3.d: Explore the preservation and/or restoration of the Washburn Civic Center (DuPont Club Building) and the old pumphouse. Consider designating the pumphouse as a building with special significance.

## NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN

This section summarizes and expands on the key concepts and actions discussed in the inventory and analysis section, and the goals, objectives, and policies section of this chapter.

### NATURAL RESOURCES PLAN

Natural resources brought people to Washburn, they helped build the City of Washburn, and they will help sustain the City of Washburn. The following describes key concepts of the Natural Resources Plan (see Figure 7-8: Natural and Agricultural Resources Plan). However, this is a general plan that provides a starting point for protection, enhancement, and management of Washburn's natural resources. In consultation with others, the City should prepare a more detailed plan for Washburn's natural resources.

#### Lake Superior and the Waterfront

The Plan recognizes Lake Superior as Washburn's greatest natural amenity. The results of the community survey show that residents highly value the water quality of the lake, public access to the lake, and views of the lake. Fortunately, the City owns most of the waterfront in Washburn. This gives the City a unique opportunity to preserve, enhance, and manage the natural resources associated with the waterfront. The City has done much to enhance the waterfront, but it can do more, especially in regard to native plantings. Refer to Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of the waterfront.



*Opportunity to Enhance the Natural Landscape along the Waterfront (SWB, Inc.)*

Insert Figure 7-8: Natural and Agricultural Resources Plan



### **Integrate Natural Features into the Existing Built Environment**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Washburn's cultural identity is tied to its natural resources. Therefore, as a means to preserve and enhance its identity, Washburn should develop and implement a plan to integrate natural areas and native plantings into the built environment, where appropriate. For example, street corridors, parking lots, public plazas, and parks may include native plantings. In particular, the street corridors leading to the lake (like Central Avenue) could benefit from strategically placed native plants that provide a tie to nature, but that also allow views of the lake. Bayfield Street could also benefit from native plantings that are conducive to an urban streetscape (see side photograph).



*Opportunity on Bayfield Street to Integrate Natural Features into the Built Environment (SWB, Inc.)*

### **Sustainable, Environmentally Sensitive Development**

The Comprehensive Plan promotes development and redevelopment within the existing urban areas of the city served by public sewer and water. It discourages encroachment into natural areas, but in accordance with the City's Ordinances, it does not prohibit development on private or public land. The Plan encourages all development to implement sustainable, environmentally friendly development techniques. Possible techniques include cluster development (or conservation subdivision design) in rural areas of the city, native landscaping to reduce maintenance and energy costs and reduce storm water runoff, and so on.

### **Awareness and Education**

Awareness and education are critical components of Washburn's efforts to protect and enhance its natural resources. Washburn's quality of life is not only tied to social and economic issues, but also to environmental issues. If Washburn's natural resources are adversely affected, the social and economic components of the City will also be adversely affected. The following describes a few of many things the City can do to strengthen awareness and education of natural resources in Washburn:

1. Use print, broadcast, and website media to promote an understanding of the value of open spaces.
2. Work with the other government jurisdictions, environmental organizations, educational institutions, and others to promote and facilitate community presentations dealing with natural resources in Washburn.
3. Install interpretive signs that help people understand the natural resources in the area. Develop demonstration areas to help communicate open space protection and enhancement techniques.



*Native Plantings with an Interpretive Sign at the US Forest Service District Headquarters on Bayfield Street (SWB, Inc.)*

Many residents choose to live in Washburn because of its natural resources. However, residents, developers, and others are not always aware of things they can and should do to protect and enhance natural resources. Aware residents that are equipped with pertinent information are perhaps the most important resource the City has in protecting and enhancing its natural resources.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN

The following describes key concepts of the Cultural Resources Plan. However, this is a general plan that provides a starting point for protection and enhancement of Washburn's cultural resources. In consultation with others, the City may prepare a more detailed plan for Washburn's cultural resources.

### Preservation and Restoration of Historic Structures and Sites

Overall, the City and property owners have done a good job of preserving and restoring many of Washburn's historic structures and sites. However, several historic structures in Washburn are in need of repair. In some cases, structures may be in such poor condition that property owners may be tempted to demolish the structures rather than repair and restore them. However, wherever possible property owners should be encouraged to preserve or reuse the existing buildings. The publication "Caring for Historic Houses and Buildings in Washburn" by the Washburn Historic Preservation Commission (2006) is an excellent resource for property owners. Several economic incentives, including federal and state investment tax credits, may be available to owners of historically significant property. Property owners can also apply for financial assistance from the Wisconsin Heritage Trust Program. More information about financial assistance is available from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the State Historical Society, and the State's Division of Historic Preservation.



*Opportunity for Building Restoration or Enhancements on Bayfield Street (SWB, Inc.)*

### New Development

Bayfield Street has many vacant lots that could provide good opportunities for infill development. However, it is important that new and infill development relate to the historic character of the city and surrounding development. Unfortunately, many of the buildings in Washburn are inconsistent with the historic character of Washburn (see side photograph). The City should prepare design guidelines or design standards to help buildings relate to each other and to the overall community.



*An Example of an Existing Building on Bayfield Street and Central Avenue that is Inconsistent with the Historic Character of the Area (SWB, Inc.)*

### The Arts and Other Creative Professions

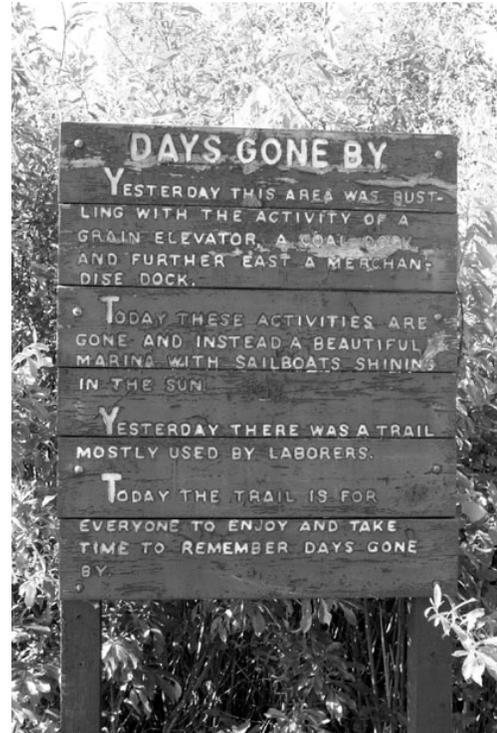
Washburn has a relatively high percentage of creative professionals including visual and performing artists, artisans, craftsmen, musicians, and writers that could potentially work in any city, but who have chosen to live in Washburn because of the amenities and quality of life associated with the community and the surrounding region. The City is committed to working with the Chamber of

Commerce and other community organizations to promote the arts in Washburn and the surrounding region.

### Awareness and Education

Awareness and education are critical components of Washburn's efforts to protect and enhance its cultural resources. Washburn has a reasonably good supply of historic structures and places. However, without an understanding of why these structures are important to the cultural identity of the community, many of these buildings may eventually be demolished or insensitively altered. The following describes a few of many things the City can do to strengthen awareness and education of cultural resources in Washburn:

1. Use print, broadcast, and website media to promote an understanding of the value of open spaces. Promote publications like "Wood, Stone and Water – Washburn Waking Tour" and "Caring for Historic Houses and Buildings in Washburn" to help raise awareness of these historic resources.
2. Work with the other government jurisdictions, historical and cultural organizations, educational institutions, and others to promote and facilitate community presentations dealing with cultural resources in Washburn.
3. Install interpretive signs that help people understand the cultural resources in the area. Develop brochures and place them in key areas around the city.
4. Promote celebrations, like Brownstone Days and Book Across the Bay that celebrate and honor Washburn's culture.



*Interpretive Sign along the Lakefront Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)*

## AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN

Conventional farms do not exist within the city limits, but several hayfields in the northeast corner of the city are located on soils of statewide importance for farmland (see Figure 7-8: Natural and Agricultural Resources Plan). The Comprehensive Plan guides these areas for rural or agricultural use at least through the year 2027. While the Plan does not dictate continued agricultural use of the land, the Plan suggests that these lands provide an opportunity to help Washburn become more self-sustaining. The agricultural lands could potentially be converted to vegetable gardens that could help feed Washburn and contribute to the local economy. Conversely, these agricultural lands could be used to establish a nursery of native plants that could be transplanted elsewhere in the city. The existing agricultural lands in Washburn are an important resource that should be used wisely.