

UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

Community facilities are buildings, lands, services, and programs that serve the public, such as parks, schools, police and fire protection, health care facilities, solid waste and recycling facilities, and libraries. This element identifies and evaluates existing utilities and community facilities serving the Town of Mercer. Understanding the location, use, and capacity of community facilities and utilities is an important consideration when planning for the future.

EXISTING FACILITIES INVENTORY

Municipal Sewer and Water Services

The disposal of domestic and commercial wastewater in the Town of Mercer other than the unincorporated hamlet, is handled through the use of private wells and individual private onsite wastewater sewage systems (POWTS), often referred to as septic systems, which gradually discharge the wastewater to underground drainage fields.

The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services regulates the siting, design, installation, and inspection of most private onsite sewage systems (POWTS). In 2000, the state adopted a revised private system policy called COMM 83 (now referred to as SPS 383) that allows for conventional sewage systems and advanced pre-treatment sewage systems. There are five main types of onsite disposal system designs authorized for use today: conventional (underground), mound, pressure distribution, at-grade holding tank, and sand filter systems.

The Mercer Sanitary District #1 is located in the central portion of the town around the hamlet of Mercer and is included in all or part of sections 24, 25, and 36 in T.43N.-R.3E, sections 30 and 31 in T.43N.-R.4E, sections 5 and 6 in T.42N.-R.4E, and section 1 in T.42N.-R.3E.

The Mercer Sanitary District #1 went into operation in 1964. It consisted of a well, water tower, distribution mains, collection system, and a small, activated sludge treatment plant. The treated effluent was discharged to the mouth of the Turtle River where it left Mercer Lake. That system was upgraded in 1977 with a new well, an iron removal filter (for the first well), a 150,000-gallon water tower (Map 4.X), and several miles of water transmission main.

In 1995, the wastewater treatment plant was upgraded to a new style of activated sludge plant called a Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR) system (Map 4.X). Treated effluent from this system is now discharged to seepage cells. Associated with the 1995 upgrade was the installation of sewer lift stations, water and sewer main expansions, and grinder pumps. Altogether, the system consists of approximately ten miles of distribution and collection mains, a water tower, a wastewater treatment plant, six grinder pumps, three seepage cells, and **eight** lift stations.

The wastewater treatment plant has a design capacity of 82,000 GPD (Gallons Per Day) and is at 50% capacity (2004). Two wells (Well #3 and Well #2) can pump up to 600 GPM (Gallons Per Minute) of water into the distribution system. As of January 2024, the sanitary district serves **289** residences, **73** commercial businesses, **15** public authority establishments (i.e.-churches, schools

etc.), and 8 industrial businesses. The Mercer Sanitary District has located an area for a third well (Well #3) to that replaces the iron rich well that was installed in 1964 and had secured funding for construction of that new well. Well #3 construction will begin was completed in 2005 and Well #1 will be was abandoned. This well will provides adequate sewer and water management for the business park.

Stormwater Management

The Town of Mercer has some curb and guttered areas that assist in the collection of stormwater. These include curb and gutter on Lake View Avenue, U.S. Highway 51, Vaughn Street, Railroad Street, Margaret Street, and in selected alleys off of U.S. Highway 51. Most stormwater is discharged directly into Mercer Lake. Stormwater also drains through a series of ditches and culverts along town roadways and dissipates to local lakes, rivers, streams, or filters through the ground. Stormwater runoff from development and roads may have negative impacts on lakes and streams as sediment and nutrient delivery increases resulting in water quality degradation. Managing storm water to increase infiltration and reduce or eliminate direct delivery to surface waters is one of the most important steps that can be taken to protect water quality.

Over the planning horizon, stormwater management may become an issue in the Town of Mercer as development continues, especially in areas where natural drainage flows directly to lakes, rivers, and streams. The Town of Mercer must work cooperatively with the land conservation district, WDNR, and Iron County to mitigate the adverse impacts of stormwater runoff and ensure that environmental resources are adequately protected.

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling Facilities

Prior to 1970, solid waste management in Iron County consisted of individuals hauling to open municipal landfills. Since that time, state and federal codes regulating landfills have become more restrictive with non-hazardous household wastes are now landfilled only in licensed facilities. Abandoned landfills are potential sources of groundwater contamination, as most facilities were not designed to capture environmentally hazardous runoff to surface or ground water. Table 4.1 shows information regarding landfill sites in the Town of Mercer.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..1: Town of Mercer Landfill Sites

Facility Name	Legal Description	Status
Camp Nokomis	S19 42N 03 E	Closed
Campbell Debarking Co.	SW SE S36 43N 03E	Closed
Cedar Island Resort	S14 43N 04E	Closed
Flambeau Resort	NE SE S24 42N 02E	Closed
Midwest Timber Landfill	NE SE S17 42N 03E	Closed
Town of Mercer	S08 42N 04E	Closed
Town of Mercer	NE NW S32 43N 03E	Closed
TN Mercer-Fischer Lake Site	SE NW S03 43N 04E	Closed
TN Mercer-Flambeau Site	NW NE S29 42N 02E	Closed
TN Mercer-Mercer Site	NE NE S01 42N 03E	Closed

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

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Waste Management is the largest provider of both garbage and recycling pick-up services to residents and businesses in Iron County. Solid waste collection in the Town of Mercer is sent to either Timberline Trails Landfill in Ladysmith, WI or K & W Landfill in Ontonagon, MI. Waste Management is one of the solid waste disposal companies serving Iron County, as town residents have their choice of garbage haulers.

The recycling program in Iron County consists of drop-off recycling sites. Drop-off sites are aimed at residents that do not have curbside garbage collection. There are currently five drop-off recycling centers in Iron County. These facilities are located in the communities of Hurley, Mercer, Oma, Saxon, and Sherman. Items accepted are paper and cardboard materials and co-mingled glass, metal, and aluminum cans.

Law Enforcement

The Iron County Sheriff's Department provides local law enforcement in the Town of Mercer. The department's administrative functions and jail facility are located at 300 Taconite Street in the City of Hurley.

The department consists of a sheriff, lieutenant, recreation officer, road sergeant, road officers, jail sergeant, jail lieutenant, jailers/dispatchers, and an administrative assistant

C. Schropefer to procure update for the following from Fire Department.

Fire & Rescue

The Mercer Volunteer Fire Department serves the Town of Mercer for fire protection services. The fire hall (Haines Fire Hall) is located at 5271 Vaughn Street (Map 4.X). Equipment includes three engine pumpers, one tanker, equipment van, pick-up truck, and an automobile that transports all extrication equipment. The department runs a paid-on-call service with mutual aid agreement with all surrounding communities. The department also aids in some rescue services in conjunction with the EMS service districts. Facility expansions or changes are the responsibility of the Mercer Volunteer Fire Department.



The Mercer EMS District provides rescue services with facilities located alongside the Fire Hall at 5271 Vaughn Street. Facilities include two ambulances and a snowmobile w/rescue sled. Emergencies are dispatched from the Hurley Sheriff's Department through the 911 emergency call center to Mercer EMS units.

Communication Facilities

Brightspeed serves the Town of Mercer for local telephone communications. Multiple companies are available to provide long-distance and Internet services.

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Access to wireless communication facilities is becoming more and more important. Currently, there is ~~one~~ **are three** cellular towers and no radio or television towers located in the Town of Mercer. The Iron County Zoning Ordinance Section 9.7.16 regulates by zoning permit the siting and construction of any new mobile service support structure and facilities. While the Town of Mercer has only ~~one~~ **three** cellular towers at this time, as technology changes and as demand for services increases, particularly in rural areas away from USH 51, tower demand may soon follow.

Power Plants, Substations, and Transmission Lines

Currently, there are no power plants or substations located in the Town of Mercer. Transmission lines are the largest and most visible electric lines on the landscape. One transmission line is located in the town and runs from the southwest corner at CTH FF diagonally, until it reaches USH 51 and follows 51 north to Hurley. These lines generate the most public interest because they are the most noticeable electric lines and because of the potential human and animal health effects associated with them. Transmission lines transport electricity from power plants to substations and operate at several hundred thousand volts (typically ranging from 46,000 to 345,000 volts), stand anywhere between 60 and 100 feet tall, and serve several hundred thousand customers. Map 4.X depicts transmission lines located in the Town of Mercer.

Electricity and Natural Gas

Xcel Energy, We Energies, and local cooperatives provide electricity and natural gas needs to portions of the town's residences and businesses. Map 4.X depicts electric utility territories in the Town of Mercer.

Cemeteries

Often overlooked, cemeteries are important community and cultural facilities. There is one cemetery in the Town of Mercer and is located south of USH 51 and SE of Mercer Lake (Map 4.X). The Mercer Cemetery is owned and maintained by the Town of Mercer.

Completion of the following section will hopefully occur later this year.

Medical/Health Care and Other Facilities

~~Marshfield Clinic-Mercer Center is located at 3181 Clinic Street in Mercer (Map 4.X). The center offers family practice health care, which includes, geriatrics, pediatrics, and offers such services and facilities as a small emergency room, EKG's, IV therapy, chemistry lab, basic x-ray, minor surgery, hearing screenings, diet education from a nutritionist, a once a month visit by a gynecologist, and referrals. A surgeon is now making once a month visits to the clinic. Marshfield Clinic-Mercer Center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Marshfield Clinic-Mercer Center also offers Urgent Care and 24-hour service in Minocqua. Dental services are offered at Rasmussen Dental located on USH 51.~~

Residents can receive full medical services at the Howard Young Medical Center located in Woodruff. This hospital operates a facility that is staffed 24 hours a day to respond to medical emergencies in Iron County, the Town of Mercer, and its surrounding area.

Child Care Facilities

The Iron County Human Services Department maintains a listing of all licensed childcare providers. While unlicensed child care operations may exist, the Human Services Department listed no licensed child care providers in Mercer as of March 2024.

Mercer Public Library and Community Center

The Mercer Public Library serves community members and is located at 2648 W. Margaret Street (Map 4.X). It opened its doors in the fall of 1997, and an addition was completed in the spring of 2013, which added a children’s room, meeting room, office, and main library space.



The library is part of the Northern Waters Library Service. The library has access to approximately 30 other libraries for inter-library loans of books and other materials. The Mercer Public Library has a WiFi network available to any wireless device within range and several library computers which are available to patrons. The Mercer Public Library Reading Room and Friends of the Library Room are available to reserve for use by individuals or organized groups in the library service area. These rooms may be used at no cost by local individuals, community organizations and nonprofit groups.

Mercer School District

The Town of Mercer is served entirely by the Mercer School District. The Mercer School is a K-12 facility located at 2680 Margaret Street in Mercer (Map 4.X). The district reported a 2022-23 student enrollment of 123 with a pupil to licensed instructor ratio of 6.39 students to 1 instructor. The school district boundaries are identical to the governmental unit boundary of the Town of Mercer.



Mercer Town Hall and Garage

The Mercer Town Hall (Haines Civic Building) is located at 2657 Railroad Street (Map 4.X). The town hall also provides space for the Mercer Area Food Pantry. ~~The Iron County Health and Human Services Department has office hours once a month and provides client services and immunization shots.~~ The town hall also has a meeting room available for area residents to reserve for meetings.



The following section will be updated by Chairman Snow.

The town garage is located at 5761N Hwy. 51N. ~~In addition to the garage, road equipment includes four pick-up trucks, four single axle dump trucks (plow trucks), three tandem axle dump trucks (gravel trucks), one semi tractor, two motor graders, two wheel loaders, two roadside mowers, one pulp truck, one bulldozer, one street sweeper, and one excavator.~~

Recreational Facilities

There are several recreational facilities owned and managed by the town, county, and state that are available to residents and visitors of Mercer. In addition to the maintained recreational facilities, county forests and area lakes also provide persons with countless other recreational opportunities. Map 4.X identifies many of the recreational facilities available in the town.

Parks

- **Carrow Park** - This town park is located on Grand Portage Lake, **1** miles east on CTH J. Facilities include picnic area with tables, public pavilion, restrooms, playground, swimming beach, **walking trail, tennis and pickleball courts**, and two baseball parks directly across the street (Map 4.X).
- **Lake of the Falls County Park** - A 40-acre county park and campground located on the Turtle River between Lake of the Falls and the Turtle Flambeau Flowage, about five miles west of Mercer on CTH FF. The campground has 3 separate camping areas. Side 1 has electrical campsites, pavilion, pit toilets, water, and a boat ramp. Side 2 has lakeside campsites, no electricity, pit toilet, and water. Side 3 has electrical campsites, flush toilets and showers, pit toilets, dump station, and potable water fill.
- **Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area** - The Turtle Flambeau Flowage offers designated remote campsites accessible by water only. The sites are managed by the WDNR. All sites include a steel fire ring and open air pit toilet, while some family campsites also include a picnic table. Camping is year round at no charge. Maps are available at the Mercer Ranger Station and the Mercer Area Chamber of Commerce.

Trails

- **MECCA Trails** – **The MECCA Cross Country Ski Club maintains the trail system which is open for hiking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, birding and hunting. The Ski Club is a non-profit 501c3 corporation that is volunteer driven and funded by donations, memberships, and events. Trails are on property owned by the Town of Mercer, Mercer Sanitary District, Iron County, and State of Wisconsin. The Ski Club has land use agreements with the property owners. There are two trailheads. The chalet trailhead on Fierick Road has a heated log chalet open daily during the winter season, vault toilet and maintenance garage on town property. The flowage trailhead off Joes Shack Road is at the Little Turtle Waterfowl Management Area has a parking lot and porta potty and is on state property managed by the DNR. There is a rustic cabin on the Little Turtle River that was built by the WCC in 1991. Improvements to the trail system being planned with the town and state include an additional maintenance building and repair /replacement of the rustic cabin.**
- **Pines and Mines Mountain Bike Trails** - The trail system meanders through the forests of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Northern Wisconsin. Trails range from quiet gravel roads to single track backcountry trails. Part of this trail is located in the Town of Mercer.

The following will be updated by C. Schroepfer

- **Snowmobile Trails** - The Town of Mercer is a hub for hundreds of miles of snowmobile trails that crisscross the Town of Mercer and Iron County. These trails provide connections to adjoining counties and the State of Michigan. The Mercer Area Sno-Goers club consists of 38 volunteer drivers who maintain approximately 167 miles of trails with five grooming units, seven days a week in winter.
- **ATV/UTV Trails** - The Iron County ATV Association owns and operates a grader, a clubhouse, and maintains more than 200 miles of trails. The association consists of 60-65 members. Plans are in development to open two ATV Parks in Iron County. One would be located outside Hurley off Trail #2 and the other in the Town of Mercer.

Downtown Mercer Biking/Walking Trail Project - The town is working toward the development of a pedestrian trail along portions of existing road right-of-ways and adjacent to a segment of abandoned railroad right-of-way. The proposed trail would provide areas of the community with a safe walkable route to the central business district and would enhance tourism by connecting to neighboring communities such as Manitowish Waters and Winchester. **A nonmotorized, asphalt pedestrian/multi-purpose trail begins along US Highway 51 in downtown Mercer and continues seven miles to the Vilas County line. There it connects to the neighboring Manitowish Waters trail system and eventually the Boulder Junction trails. The trail system provides the Town of Mercer with a safe route to areas of the town, as well as other communities, that were previously only accessible by motorized vehicles.**

- **Camp Mercer Interpretive Trail – Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) Camp Mercer, 660th Company SF-79 has a 2-mile trail with interpretive signage describing the camp that housed hundreds of men from 1933-1942. The trail is in the Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest along the Manitowish River. The Manitowish Historical Society created the trail system with partners including Iron County Outdoor Recreational Enthusiasts (ICORE) and MECCA Ski Club, who help to maintain the trail system.**

Waterfalls

Within the Mercer area, waterfalls provide another recreational opportunity. There are two waterfalls in the Town of Mercer.

- **Shay’s Dam Falls** – Located on Turtle River, Shay’s Dam Falls (15’) has a park with picnic area **and vault toilet.**
- **Lake of the Falls** – Located on Turtle River (Mercer-Turtle Flambeau Flowage Area), Lake of the Falls (10’) has picnic area and rustic camping facilities, boat landing with access to Turtle Flambeau Flowage via Turtle River.

FUTURE NEEDS

Existing utilities and community facilities serving the town have been identified. To assess future needs for services related to such utilities and community facilities, Table 4.2 forecasts the need to expand, rehabilitate, or provide new utilities and facilities.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.:2: Future Utilities and Community Facilities Timetable

	Future Needs	Over the 20-year planning horizon...			Comment
		Expand	Rehab	New	
Sanitary Sewer Service	Yes	X			NA
Storm Water Management	None		X		
Water Supply	None				NA
Solid Waste Disposal	None				NA
Recycling Facilities	Yes			X	
Communication Facilities	Yes	X			
Power Plants and Transmission Lines	None				
Cemeteries	None				OK
Health Care Facilities	Yes				
Child Care Facilities	Yes				
Law Enforcement	Yes	X			
Fire	Yes	X			
Rescue	Yes	X			
Libraries	Yes	X			
Schools	Yes	x			
Parks	Yes				OK
Trails	Yes	X			
Town Hall/Garage	Yes	X		X	
Other Govt. Facilities (Salt Shed)				X	

Source: Town of Mercer

UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & ACTIONS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions has been developed to assist in addressing utility and community facilities. Implementation of the statements will assist Mercer in supporting facilities and services that continue to contribute to the well being of the town.

Residential, commercial, and industrial development within the sanitary district is anticipated to continue. As a result, it is important the town continue to develop and enhance the overall utility and community facilities vital in sustaining growth and existing development. Additionally, infill of abandoned structures and vacant lots will allow the sanitary district to capture users along existing water and sewer routes versus developing new areas. As opportunities arise, development of new water and sewer segments should be explored.

GOAL: Provide and maintain community facilities and public utilities and services to encourage economic growth and orderly development within the Town of Mercer.

Objectives:

1. Proactively identify future needs for community facilities and public utilities and services, including the infrastructure, which accompanies growth.

Action 1: Work with bordering municipalities in regard to new developments.

Action 2: Improve the storm water sewers, sidewalks, street lighting, signage, and landscaping in Mercer's downtown area.

*Action 3: **Expand** pedestrian/bike paths from the town's downtown area, which will link with internal parks and trails and also connect to regional trail systems.*

*Action 4: **Encourage** the Iron County Sheriff's Department to escalate police presence and protection in all areas of the town.*

*Action 5: Provide and maintain adequate fire protection **and EMS services** to all areas in the Town of Mercer.*

Action 6: Improve and Expand Internet Infrastructure in Mercer

2. Encourage a gamut of opportunities and activities for the benefit and enjoyment of both tourists and Town of Mercer residents.

Action 1: Support multi-purpose use of community facilities in order to maximize their utilization

Action 2: Assist MECCA in its efforts to provide trails and infrastructure.

3. Coordinate utility- and community-facility-systems plans with land use, transportation, and natural resources plans.

Action 1: Review long-range plans of utility companies regarding how they will impact the town.

4. Continue to protect the town's public health and natural environment.

Action 1: Address the proper siting of on-site wastewater disposal systems and a storm water management plan.

Action 1: Address the solid waste disposal process so that it becomes more user and environmentally friendly.

Action 2: Cooperate with Iron County governing body to enforce the public blight ordinance.

5. Whenever possible, promote the maintenance, use, and logical expansions of existing public facilities for future development (i.e., library, community center).

Action 1: Seek additional funding for public facility improvements & expansions.

*Action 2: Continue to maintain Mercer parks, cemetery, **library**, community center & town hall.*

6. Promote high-quality educational opportunities for both traditional and nontraditional students, including adult education and job training, to meet existing and future academic requirements and the needs of tomorrow's world.

Action 1: Encourage the development of after-school activity and job shadowing opportunities programs for the town's youth.

Action 2: Encourage the use of the Mercer School for adult education opportunities through nonprofit, technical and state college affiliations.

Action 3: Continue to correct and update cemetery records.

Action 4: Establish a unique program facility that takes advantage of the local resources.