

LAND USE

EXISTING LAND USE REGULATIONS

The Town of Star Prairie has adopted a variety of regulations that effect land use in the town. The chart below summarizes the regulations that the town has adopted, the year the regulation was adopted or last updated and additional land use regulations available to the town. The chart also identifies the land use regulations adopted by St. Croix County, many of which affect the town.

Regulation by Minor Civil Division - 2009 Town of Star Prairie & Neighboring Communities

REGULATION	STAR PRAIRIE	RICHMOND	SOMERSET	STANTON	ST. CROIX COUNTY
Village Powers Adopted	Yes '72	Yes '08	Yes '98	Yes '77	N/A
Official Map Ordinance	No	No	No	No	N/A
County Zoning	Yes '75	Yes '76	Yes '68	Yes '75	Yes '74
Exclusive Ag Zoning	Yes '86	No	Yes '	Yes '82	Yes
Standards to zone out of Exclusive Ag	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shoreland/Wetland Zoning	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes '74
Floodplain Zoning	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes '05
Land Division/Subdivision Ordinance	In Progress	No	Yes '09	Yes '96	Yes '06
Minimum Lot Size	N/A	N/A	Yes, 3 acre	Yes, 2 acre	Yes 1.5 acre min., 2 acre avg.
Allow Majors w/ POWTS*	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	Yes
Allow Minors w/ POWTS*	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes, 2 lots in 5 years	Yes
Monies in Lieu of Dedication	N/A	N/A	No	No	No
Erosion Control/Stormwater Mngt.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes '06
Sanitary Ordinance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes '05
Animal Waste Ordinance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes '85
Nonmetallic Mining Ordinance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes '04
Tire Management Ordinance	No	No	No	No	Yes '85
Agricultural Shoreland Mngt. Ordinance	No	No	No	No	No
Historic Preservation Ordinance	No	No	No	No	No
Town Mobile Home Park Ordinance	Yes '70	Yes '70	No	Yes '84	N/A
Development Impact Fees	Yes '06	Yes	No	No	N/A
Cooperative Boundary Agreement	In Progress	No	No	No	N/A
Water Utility District	In Progress	No	No	No	N/A
Reinvestment Neighborhoods	No	No	No	No	N/A
Business Improvement District	No	No	No	No	N/A
Architectural Conservancy Dist.	No	No	No	No	N/A
Sanitary District	No	Yes	No	No	N/A

*POWTS-- Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

Sources: Town of Star Prairie, St. Croix County Development Management Plan, 2000, St. Croix County Planning and Zoning Department.

The Town of Star Prairie adopted exclusive agriculture zoning as one of the tools used to regulate land use. The decision to adopt exclusive agriculture zoning generally came from information

provided in the St. Croix County Farmland Preservation Plan which was adopted in 1980 by the St. Croix County Board of Supervisors.

What is not well known is that the 1980 Farmland Preservation Plan was a very thorough and well thought out document. It covered farmland preservation, but it also looked at other land uses and the need for growth in St. Croix County. The following quotes from the Farmland Preservation Plan provide insight into the thinking behind the plan, the justification for creating the plan, the concepts behind the land use designations in the plan and the comprehensive approach to land use that was part of the plan:

“St. Croix County has grown considerably in the last 30 years and some population growth is expected to continue. Provisions must be made to accommodate this growth for residential commercial and industrial uses as well as agricultural.”

“In order that good agricultural land remain in agriculture and sprawl development be discouraged the Farmland Preservation Plan identifies areas around incorporated centers where residential, industrial and commercial development should occur.”

“Detailed land use planning decisions for incorporated and extraterritorial areas will remain the responsibility of the cities, villages and townships. The plan will further identify transitional areas where low-density development may be encouraged.”

“By identifying prime agricultural lands and by delineating urban service areas and low density rural areas the plan should serve as a tool to guide growth and divert development from prime agricultural areas.”

“St. Croix County has developed a rationale for farmland preservation based on three premises:

“The land at our disposal should be scrutinized to determine its capabilities and consideration should be given to its best use for present and future generations—whether it be development or preservation for farmland.

“A certain degree of regional self-sufficiency is a wise goal for metropolitan areas.

“Planning for growth is necessary and desirable for all sectors of society.”

The Farmland Preservation Plan took a comprehensive approach to land use regulation, however the actual implementation of the plan was not comprehensive and much of what was in the plan was never used. St. Croix County is in the process of updating the 1980 Farmland Preservation Plan to address changes in agriculture and changes in the state laws regarding farmland preservation zoning and other programs to protect farmland.

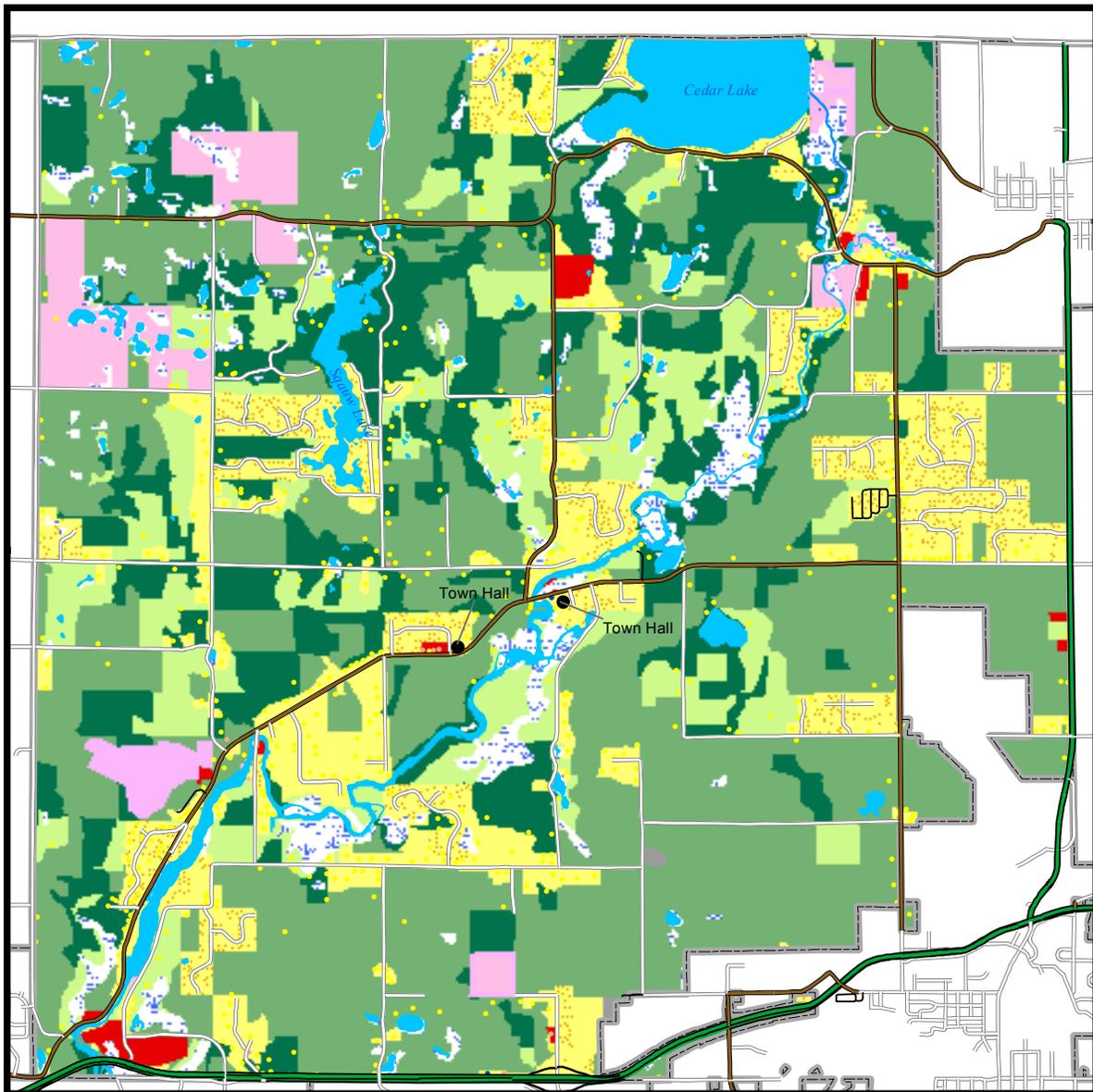
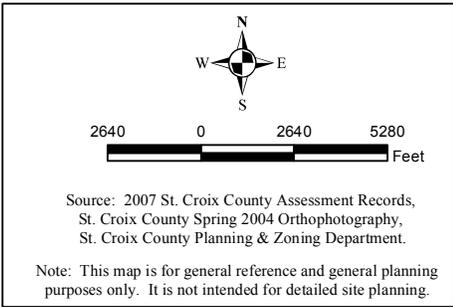
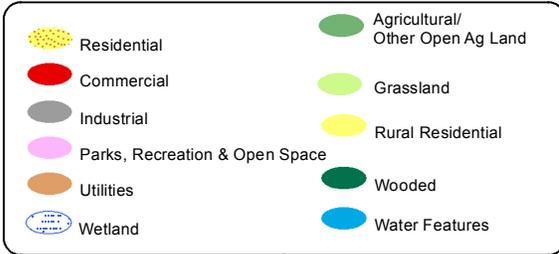
In addition to the regulations identified in the table above, the following County regulations are or can be in effect in the Town of Star Prairie. These regulations are adopted by the County and are in effect in all unincorporated areas of St. Croix County; no town adoption or action is required.

- St. Croix County Development Management Plan
- St. Croix County Outdoor Recreation Plan
- St. Croix County Agriculture Preservation Plan
- St. Croix County Erosion Control Plan
- St. Croix County Solid Waste Management Plan
- St. Croix County Land and Water Conservation Plan
- St. Croix County Sanitary Ordinance
- St. Croix County Subdivision Ordinance
- St. Croix County Shoreland/Wetland District Regulations
- St. Croix County Floodplain District Regulations
- St. Croix County Erosion Control/Stormwater Management Regulations
- St. Croix County Nonmetallic Mining Regulations
- St. Croix County Animal Waste Regulations
- St. Croix County Solid Waste and Recycling Regulations

EXISTING LAND USES

The existing land uses in the Town of Star Prairie are shown on the following map. This map was created by combining the 1993 land use and land cover maps from the St. Croix County Development Management Plan with 2004 aerial photography, the 2007 data from the Real Property Lister's office on parcel assessment and the 2007 zoning maps for the town. Major subdivisions are categorized as residential while isolated rural homes and minor subdivisions of four lots or less are categorized as rural residential. Commercial and industrial land use is the land zoned commercial or industrial and/or used for commercial or industrial activities according to the town assessor. Parks, recreation and open space land uses include public, private and nonprofit parks, recreation and open space land uses.

Existing Land Use / Land Cover Town of Star Prairie, St. Croix County, WI



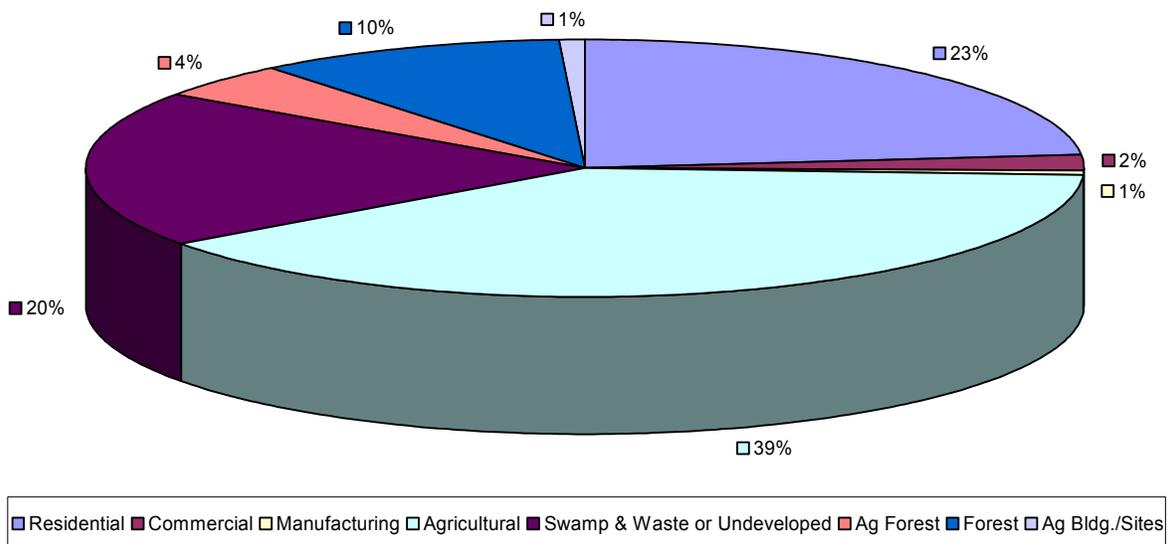
LAND USE TRENDS

**Property Tax Classifications – 1994 to 2006
Town of Star Prairie**

REAL ESTATE CLASS	1994		1997		2000		2003		2006	
	ACRES	% OF TOTAL								
Residential	2486	13%	3,164	17%	3,388	19%	3,835	22%	4,190	23%
Commercial	333	2%	329	2%	290	2%	287	2%	332	2%
Manufacturing	49	0%	51	0%	51	0%	152	1%	148	1%
Agricultural	13,067	70%	11,941	65%	8,708	48%	7,519	43%	7,016	39%
Swamp & Waste or Undeveloped	740	4%	705	4%	3,632	20%	3,661	21%	3,562	20%
Ag Forest	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0%	781	4%
Forest	1,892	10%	1,938	11%	2,018	11%	1,855	11%	1,820	10%
Ag Bldg. Sites	N/A	N/A	188	1%	159	1%	140	1%	138	1%
Totals	18,567	100%	18,316	100%	18,246	100%	17,449	100%	17,422	100%

Source: St. Croix County Statistical Report of Property Values 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003 & 2006 Wisconsin Department of Revenue

**Town of Star Prairie
Property Tax Classifications 2006**



- Exempt acres are exempt from assessment but not necessarily from property taxes. This category generally includes all publicly-owned local, county, state and federal land and institutionally-owned land. In 2006, the Town of Star Prairie had 1,640 exempt acres.
- Woodland Tax is another land classification not included in the general assessment categories because it is taxed at a special reduced rate. In 2006 the Town of Star Prairie had 287 acres in woodland tax.
- Undeveloped land includes areas commonly called marshes, swamps, thickets, bogs or wet meadows. This class also includes fallow tillable land (assuming agricultural use is the land’s highest and best use), road right-of-way, ponds, depleted gravel pits, and land

that, because of soil or site conditions, is not producing or capable of producing commercial forest products.

- Although there seems to be a significant decrease in the amount of land in the agricultural real estate classification from 1994 to 2003, there actually was only about a 1,500 acre decrease in this category. Use value assessment, which was implemented between 1996 and 2000, shifted land uses from the agricultural real estate classification to the undeveloped (which was formerly swamp and waste), ag forest and ag buildings and sites classifications.

DENSITIES

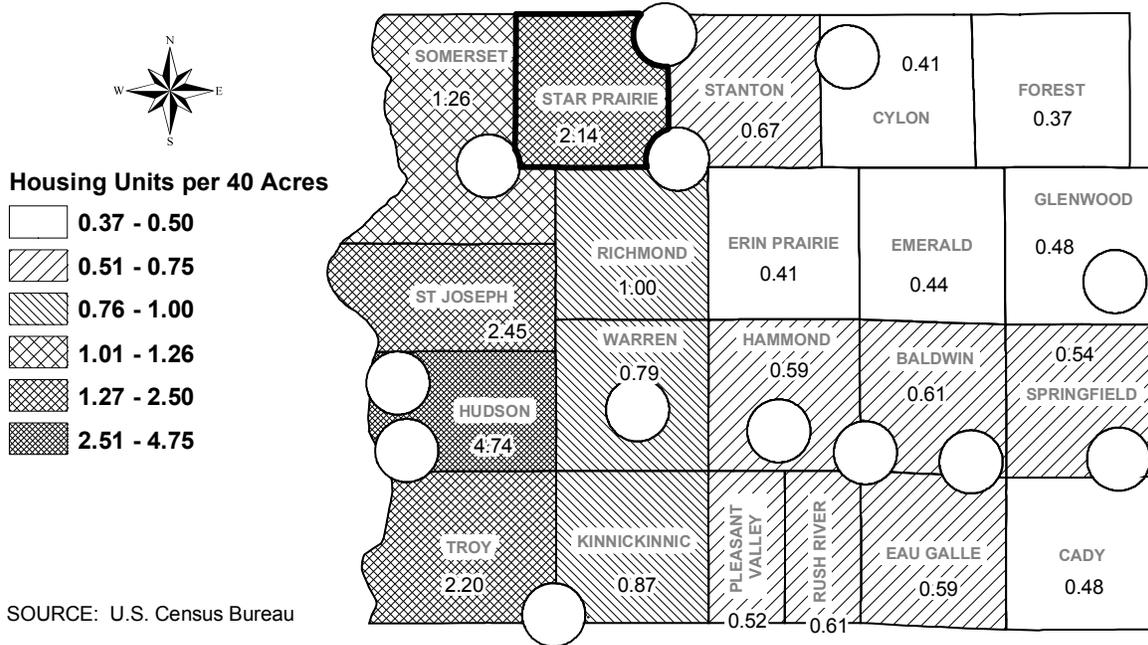
***Housing Unit Density - 2000
Town of Star Prairie & Neighboring Communities***

COMMUNITY	HOUSING UNITS PER SQ. MILE	HOUSING UNITS PER 40 ACRES
Star Prairie	34.3	2.14
Richmond	16.0	1.00
Somerset	20.1	1.26
Stanton	10.7	0.67
C. New Richmond	521.0	N/A
V. Star Prairie	102.4	N/A
V. Somerset	357.5	N/A
St. Croix County	33.6	2.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

- The Town of Star Prairie’s housing unit density is fairly low and it closely mirrors St. Croix County’s overall density. This indicates that Star Prairie is still very rural in nature and the majority of housing in the town is very spread out.
- In comparison, the densities per square mile indicate the much higher density of the incorporated villages and city.
- As the graphic below shows, density throughout St. Croix County is higher in the west than in the east and higher along the I-94 corridor. The Twin Cities’ job market has heavily influenced housing preferences in the western half of the county.

**Housing Units Per 40 Acres - 2000
St. Croix County - Star Prairie**



SUPPLY & DEMAND

The supply, demand and price of land affect the location, type and intensity of land use. The tables above show that the existing land uses in Star Prairie are primarily residential, agricultural and open land. One method of analyzing supply, demand and price for open land is to review data compiled by the Department of Revenue Fielded Sales System. The Fielded Sales System tracks parcels sold and what their identified use is, including whether the sale is converted out of agriculture or remains in agriculture. The system tracks only “arms length transactions” or those transactions to non-family members.

**Fielded Sales Data - 1997 to 2005
Town of Star Prairie**

YEAR	ACRES OUT	VALUE OUT PER ACRE	ACRES IN	VALUE IN PER ACRE
1997	0		247	\$915
1998	116	\$1,791	37	\$1,400
1999	128	\$3,283	111	\$1,811
2000	35	\$3,569	20	\$2,233
2001	78	\$4,596	105	\$1,995
2002	22	\$5,705	50	\$5,030
2003	55	\$11,377	190	\$6,090
2004	75	\$10,945	79	\$6,000
2005	3	\$12,000	50	\$7,836
Total	512	\$53,266	889	\$33,310

Source: WI Department of Revenue 2006

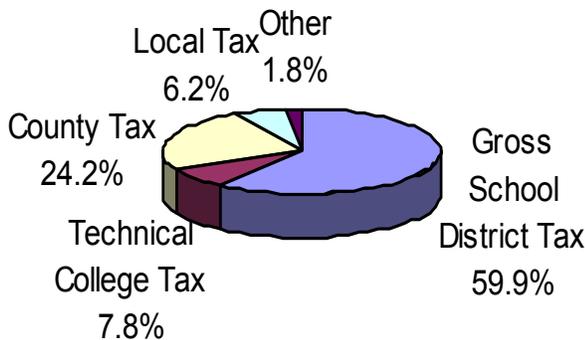
- Agricultural land sale prices for land both going out of agriculture and staying in agriculture have risen significantly over the past 10 years.
- The gap between the price of ag land and development land has also increased significantly in that timeframe, from a few hundred dollars to around \$4,000.
- The Department of Revenue has indicated that in recent years the reported use for agricultural land may be misleading. There is a significant tax advantage from use-value assessment so sales may be reporting future land use as agriculture when the development is intended in a short timeframe of one to two years.

PROPERTY TAXES

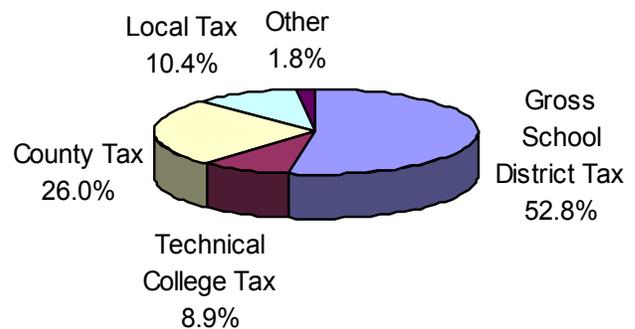
Property taxes can have a significant impact on land use and land use decisions. The state’s use value assessment of agricultural land is a good example of how taxation can impact decisions. Because the holding cost of agricultural land has been decreased by use value assessment, there are more opportunities for investors in the agricultural land market.

Taxation is analyzed for each town based on the 2005 taxes using Department of Revenue data and tax analysis software. The first set of graphs looks at the breakdown of each municipality’s tax bill.

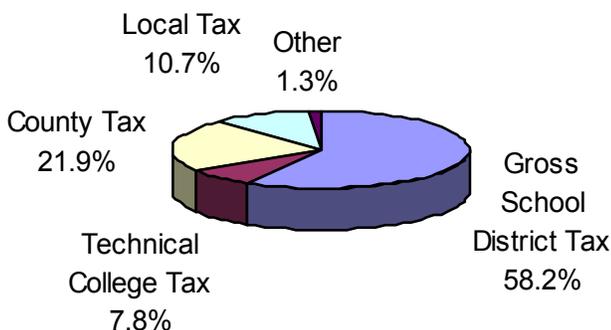
**Property Taxes by Source – 2005
Town of Star Prairie**



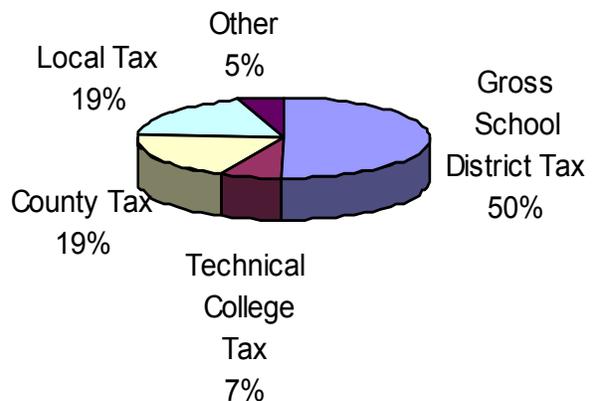
**Property Taxes by Source – 2005
All County Towns Over 2501 People**



**Property Taxes by Source – 2005
All St. Croix County Towns**



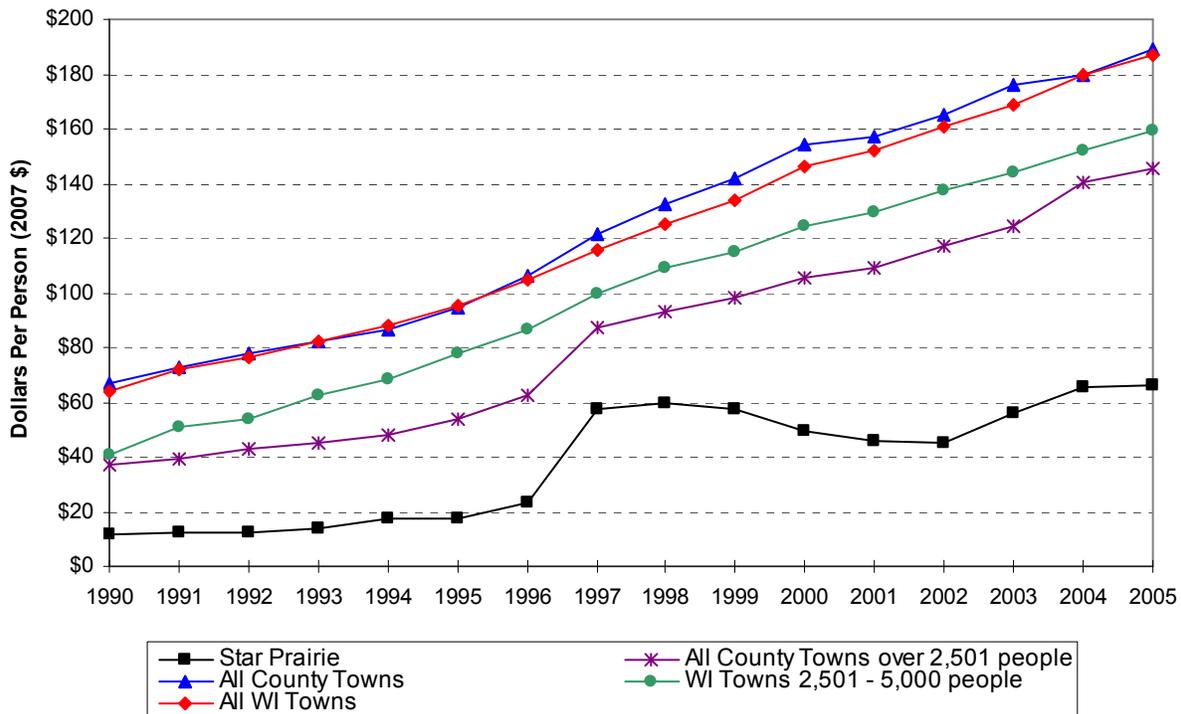
**Property Taxes by Source - 2005
St. Croix County**



- Generally, the local schools account for approximately 50-60 percent of all property taxes, with the higher percentage in smaller communities like Star Prairie.
- The property tax breakdown between schools, county, and local taxes remains consistent regardless of a town’s population.
- In 2005, Star Prairie’s local tax rate was low relative to similar-sized towns, all towns and all local government in St. Croix County.

The next two graphs show how taxes per citizen have changed over a 15-year timeframe and the break down of local taxes per capita by budget categories in 2005.

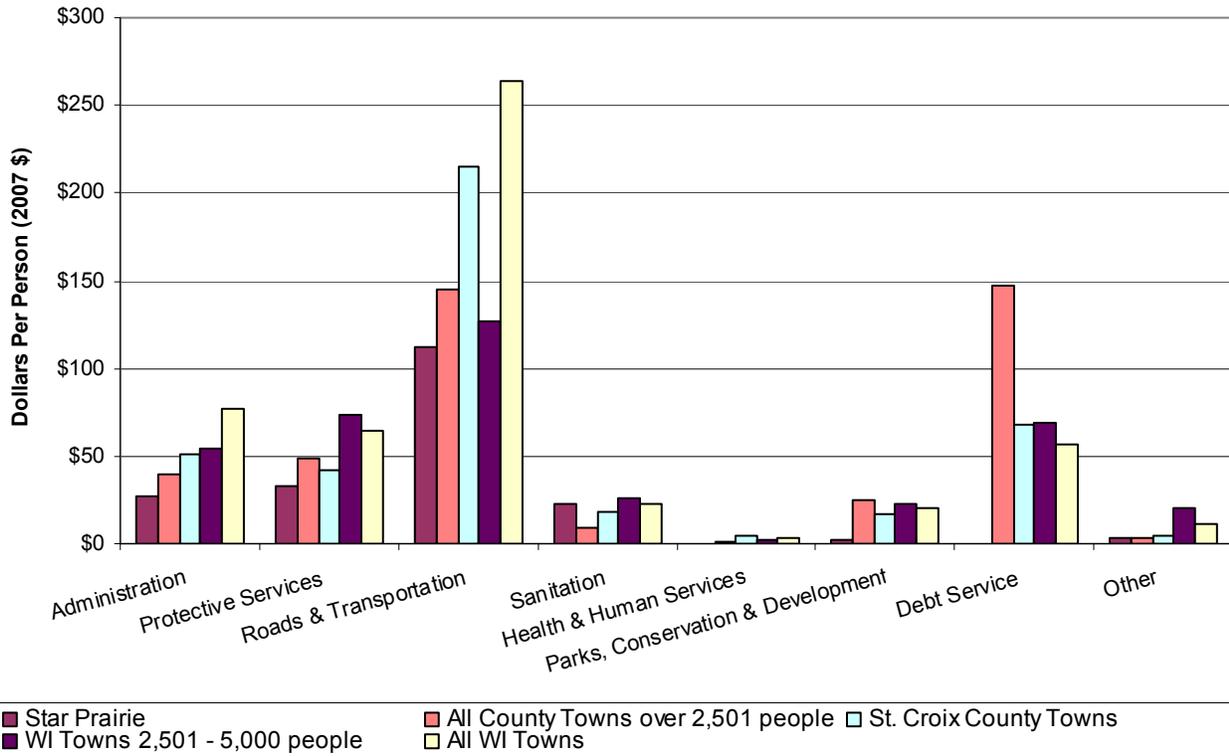
Per Capita Local Tax -1990 to 2005
Town of Star Prairie



- Between 1990 and 2005, the Town of Star Prairie has generally had a very low tax rate per capita. The tax rate has consistently been well below the rates for all St. Croix County and Wisconsin towns and those County and Wisconsin towns in a similar population category.
- The Town’s per capita tax rate is two and a half times lower than the average rate for all towns in St. Croix County and is a third of that for similar-sized towns in the County.
- The rate has increased steadily while still remaining well below the per capita rate for similar sized towns and all towns in St. Croix County and Wisconsin.
- While the Town’s tax rate is low in comparison to other towns, it has seen tremendous increases.
- Taxes per capita have increased steadily in the Town of Star Prairie, over 600 percent from 1990 to 2005.

- The largest single increase occurred in 1997 when the tax rate per capita jumped from \$20 to almost \$60.
- Since that time per capita taxes have seen normal dips and increases.

Per Capita Expenditures of Town Revenues - 2005
Town of Star Prairie



- In 2005, the Town of Star Prairie’s largest local expenses were town roads, protective services, administration and sanitation.
- At \$112 per person, road cost are approximately three and a half times the cost of the next largest budget item.
- Protective services costs about \$33 per person, administration \$27 per person and sanitation \$22 per person.
- Generally Star Prairie’s expenses are less than similar-sized communities and all towns in the County and State, except for sanitation.
- Star Prairie’s sanitation expenses are relatively high because they include the landfill remediation fees which are being paid from operating capital. The town has chosen not to use debt service for this expense.
- As of 2005 the town had no debt service; however the new town hall was financed with long-term debt.

CONFLICTING LAND USES

Conflicting land uses in the Town of Star Prairie are related to the rural and generally agricultural nature of the town. Conflicts may be seen between residential uses and agricultural or recreational or tourism uses. There are also conflicts from non-metallic mining operations and residential uses whether in conjunction with agricultural operations or rural residential housing. Other possible conflicts stem from the diverse expectations of those people moving to the country and long-time residents. Another conflict occurs between the residents and the New Richmond Airport. A final conflict is seen in the limited commercial, industrial and home occupation activities which occur in rural areas. The lack of convenient access to commercial facilities can be viewed very differently by rural residents.

Generally the Town of Star Prairie finds that information is one of the best ways to decrease or control conflicts. A rural living guide to help educate new rural residential residents about what to expect when choosing to live in a rural agricultural community has been developed by St. Croix County and should improve understanding about conflicting uses. The guide can be customized with local information regarding issues of concern, rules and regulations and where to find assistance specific to the Town of Star Prairie.

Also the town has developed a website where information on living in the community, upcoming meetings, minutes, plans and regulations are or will be posted for convenient public access. The link is: <http://www.townofstarprairie.com/>.