

Town of Bridge Creek Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for adopting County Zoning

The Town of Bridge Creek is currently an unzoned municipality, meaning there are no local rules about how land can be used. The Town is exploring the possibility of adopting zoning ordinances through Eau Claire County. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is designed to help residents understand the potential impacts of this change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. Zoning Basics	3
1.1 What Is Zoning	3
1.2 What Is The Difference Between County Zoning And Town Zoning	3
1.3 What Are The Potential Benefits Of Adopting County Zoning	3
1.4 What Are The Potential Drawbacks Of Adopting County Zoning	4
1.5 Why Is The Town Of Bridge Creek Considering County Zoning	5
2. Zoning Process	5
2.1 What Is The Timeframe For Adopting County Zoning In The Town Of Bridge Creek	5
2.2 How Can County Zoning Be Adopted By The Town Of Bridge Creek	5
2.3 What Are The Different County Zoning Districts	6
2.4 Is Any Of The Town Of Bridge Creek Already Covered By County Overlay Districts (Zoning Rules)	6
2.5 How Will Public Input Be Collected And Considered During The County Zoning Process	7
2.6 What Is The Role Of The Comprehensive Planning Committee	7
2.7 Who Make Up The Comprehensive Planning Committee	7
2.8 How Does The Comprehensive Planning Committee Communicate With The Public	7
2.9 What Is The County Board's Role In The Process Of The Town Adopting County Zoning	7
3. Property Rights, Changes And Costs	7
3.1 What Changes Should I Anticipate For My Property Following The Adopting Of County Zoning	7
3.2 Will Adopting County Zoning Require An Inspection Of My Property	8
3.3 Will I Be Obligated To Modify My Existing Building Use(S) If It Does Not Comply With New Zoning Requirements	8
3.4 Will I Be Required To Make Changes To My Current Land Use If It Does Not Conform To The New Zoning Map After Zoning Is Adopted	8
3.5 How Will Working From Home Or Running A Business On My Property Be Impacted If County Zoning Is Adopted	8
3.6 What Does Nonconforming Use And Legal Nonconforming Use Mean If County Zoning Is Adopted	9

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

3.7 What Is The 12-Month Rule For Nonconforming Uses	9
3.8 Can A Home Or Business Be Rebuilt For The Same Use Previously Allowed Under Legal Nonconforming Use If It Is Destroyed By A Natural Disaster Or Fire	9
3.9 Will My Property Assessment Increase Due To Zoning Changes In My Town	9
3.10 Does Adopting County Zoning Mean I Need To Update My Homeowner's Insurance Policy, Specifically For Ordinance And Law (O&L) Coverage?	10
4. Conflict Prevention And Management	10
4.1 What If My Neighbor Wants To Build Something Next To Me That I Disagree With	10
4.2 How Does County Zoning Impact Private Or Large-Scale Solar Panel Or Private Or Large-Scale Wind Turbine Installations	10
4.3 How Does County Zoning Impact Industrial-Scale Agricultural Facilities	10
4.4 In What County Zoning Districts Would A Sawmill Be Allowed To Be Built And Operated	11
4.5 What Is "Conditional Use" And What Is The Process For Obtaining A Conditional Use Permit	11
4.6 Can A Neighbor Stop Me From Building A Sawmill Or From Getting Conditional Use	11
4.7 How Does County Zoning Impact A Primary Residence That Wants To Build An Additional Dwelling (E.G. Grandparent's House)	11
4.8 Are Neighborhood Schools Allowed Under County Zoning	11
4.9 Are Short-Term Rentals Allowed If County Zoning Is Implemented	11
4.10 What Happens If A New Land Use (After Zoning Is Adopted) Is Deemed Not Compatible Within A Zoned Area	12
5. Setbacks, Permits, Codes And Resources	12
5.1 Do Uniform Dwelling Code Requirements Change When Adopting County Zoning In An Unzoned Town	12
5.2 Are There Additional Setbacks, Fees, Permits Or Inspections Needed For Construction Under County Zoning?	12
5.3 What Are The Setback Rules Currently And How Might That Change If County Zoning Is Adopted	13
5.4 What Is The Impact On The Current New Building Construction Permit And Notification Process If County Zoning Is Adopted	13
5.5 What Happens To The Existing Local Ordinances If County Zoning Is Adopted	13
5.6 Is It Possible For The Town To Reverse The Decision In The Future If County Zoning Is Adopted	13
5.7 Are There Examples Of Neighboring Communities Where Zoning Has Created Benefits Or Challenges	13
5.8 How Does Town Zoning Impact The City Of Augusta's Extraterritorial Zoning (Etz) Space	13
5.9 Is Financial Assistance Or Guidance Available For Property Owners Adapting To New Zoning Rules	14
5.10 Where Can I Find Resources To Better Understand How Zoning Might Affect My Land Use Options	14
Additional Resources	14

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Appendix A: Summary Checklist And Timeline For The Town Board	15
Appendix B: Eau Claire County Zoning Districts: Minimum Lot Size Chart	17
Appendix C: Record Of Nonconforming Use	21
Appendix D: Building Setback Requirement By Zoning District	22

1. Zoning Basics

1.1 What is Zoning?

Zoning is a land use planning tool used by local governments to regulate *how* parcels of land can be used and developed. It designates districts or "zones" and sets rules for each zone.

1.2 What is the difference between County zoning and Town zoning?

Currently, the Town of Bridge Creek is unzoned. The two zoning options available to the Town include adopting Eau Claire County zoning or developing distinct Town zoning. Adopting County zoning would come at no additional cost to the Taxpayer and use existing County ordinances and the Land Use Division as a resource. Developing Town zoning would require added taxpayer expenses for additional Town administration staff, increased law enforcement demands, and legal counsel for developing zoning standards and enforcing zoning practices. This was discussed at the Sept. 3, 2025, joint Planning Committee and Town Board meeting and the decision was made to explore County zoning for cost and resource advantages.

1.3 What are the potential benefits of adopting County zoning?

Protect Property Values: Zoning helps protect the value of property by preventing incompatible land uses nearby.

Economic and Planned Community Growth: Streamlined, professional zoning attracts investment. Fair application of rules builds trust and stability. Zoning ensures that development occurs in an orderly, logical manner that is supported by existing infrastructure and is consistent with the community's vision for the future.

Prevent Conflict: Zoning provides a clear set of rules that can prevent land use conflicts between neighbors.

Professional Administration: Eau Claire County's Land Use Division staff handles the technical aspects of zoning, including permits, inspections, and enforcement at no additional expense to the Town. They issue Land Use Permits (often referred to as Zoning Permits).

Agricultural Protection: Zoning can help preserve farmland, support local agriculture, and maintain open spaces. One example of protection is the **Eau Claire County Farmland Preservation Program (FPP)** which preserves agricultural land and protects land and water resources. The program includes various land designations, such as farmland preservation zoning ordinances and Agricultural Enterprise Areas, which are specifically designated zones for agricultural development and preservation.

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Landowners can enter into contracts known as farmland preservation agreements, which limit land use to agricultural purposes. These agreements require the land to remain in agricultural use for a specified period and must meet state soil and water conservation standards. In return, **landowners can claim a farmland preservation tax credit.**

Environmental Safeguards: The protection of Wisconsin's wetlands, shorelines, and water quality, along with the mitigation of flooding and erosion risks, is fundamentally addressed by Wisconsin Statutes. Section 18.02 of the Eau Claire County Zoning code highlights important environmental protections that help sustain the community and its natural assets by encouraging the use of land and natural resources in ways that respect their character and adaptability, promote the protection of groundwater resources, and help preserve wetlands. It also supports efforts to conserve soil, water, and forest resources, while protecting the beauty and amenities of landscapes and man-made developments.

Expertise & Resources: Access to professional staff, legal counsel, and Geographic Information System (GIS) support.

Efficient Enforcement: The County handles zoning violations and complaint resolution.

Cost Savings: No additional administrative or staffing costs for the Town.

Local Input: Town Boards and Planning Committees influence rezoning decisions based on local landowner input. Collaboration at the Town level with County Planning Commission ensures balanced oversight and consistency across municipalities. A landowner may file a petition for rezoning, which will then be reviewed by the Town's Planning Commission and the Town Board through a formal, public process. Approvals occur at the Town level before moving to the County level.

Comprehensive Planning: Aligns development with community goals. Prevents sprawl and supports orderly growth.

Community Character: Preserves aesthetics and ensures new development fits existing landscapes.

Public Health & Safety: Promotes safe, orderly living environments. Protects both public and private investments.

1.4 What are the potential drawbacks of adopting County zoning?

Loss of Full Local Control: The Town will be subject to the County's zoning ordinance and its amendments. While the Town has a voice in the process, the ultimate authority rests with the County.

New Regulations: Residents will need to follow new rules when building, remodeling, or changing the way they use their land.

Rules for Nonconforming Uses: While existing uses are protected when zoning is adopted, there may be limitations on the expansion, modification, or change of those uses in the future. For example, a use of property today that is not permitted post-zoning, will continue to be able to operate. However, expansion of the use may be limited in the future, a new use that is not consistent with the current zoning practice

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

would not be allowed without a rezoning petition being approved at the local and county level, additionally, the use would not be able to resume if inactive for 12 months or greater.

1.5 Why is the Town of Bridge Creek considering County zoning?

The goal of zoning is to balance individual property rights with the interests of the entire community, and promote public health, safety, and welfare. Without zoning, a property owner has very few protections from incompatible land uses being developed right next to them. For example, a factory could be built next to a family home, or a high-traffic business could be established on a quiet residential street. These kinds of situations can negatively impact a property owner's ability to enjoy their land, and can also decrease property values.

By adopting County zoning, the Town can:

Prevent neighbors from impeding on property enjoyment. Zoning can create a clear separation between residential, agricultural, and commercial areas. This prevents the development of noisy, high-traffic, or otherwise disruptive uses next to your home.

Allow for planned growth. A zoning plan helps guide future development in a way that makes sense for the community. It ensures that infrastructure like roads, water, and sewer systems can support new growth, and that development happens in a logical and sustainable way. Growth in industry, farming, and housing can occur without impediment because the Town's Comprehensive Plan designates appropriate areas for this growth.

Keep incompatible land uses separate. This is crucial for protecting property values. When a community separates a quiet residential neighborhood from an industrial area, it preserves the character of both zones and helps maintain the value of homes.

2. Zoning Process

2.1 What is the timeframe for adopting County zoning in the Town of Bridge Creek?

The Town Board and Planning Committee have developed a flexible timeline to outline required milestones and community engagement. This document serves as a strategic planning tool to prioritize next steps in the County zoning process, rather than a fixed schedule. (See Appendix A Summary Checklist and Timeline for the Town Board)

2.2 How can County zoning be adopted by the Town of Bridge Creek?

Under Wisconsin law, the process for adopting Eau Claire County's general zoning ordinance is straightforward. Because the Town is considering adopting an existing county-wide framework, "village powers" and formal elector approval are not required.

To finalize County zoning adoption, the Town Board must:

- **Vote** to approve a resolution adopting the Eau Claire County Zoning Ordinance.

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

- **File** a certified copy of the resolution and the ordinance with the County Clerk.
- **Post** a public notice of the resolution’s adoption in accordance with Wis. Stat. § 60.80.

Note on Referendums: Per 2023 Wisconsin Act 12, the Town lacks the authority to hold an advisory referendum on zoning. State law limits such referendums to specific areas like capital expenditures and boundary agreements.

Public Engagement: While formal elector approval is not required by law, the Town is committed to transparency. We strongly encourage residents to attend Planning Committee meetings, information sessions, and public hearings to share their input. (*Source: Wisconsin Towns Association: Under Wis. Stat. s. 66.0144, an advisory referendum regarding a capital expenditure to be funded with the tax levy is permissible under the new statutory language. Other types of advisory referenda are no longer allowed. Section 46.66.0144 of the statutes is created to read: 66.0144 Advisory referenda. No city, village, or town may conduct a referendum for advisory purposes, except as provided under s. 66.0305 (6), 66.0307 (4) (e), 66.0420 (12) (b) 2., 66.0422 (3) (b), or 196.204 (2m) (b) 2. or for an advisory referendum regarding capital expenditures proposed to be funded by the property tax levy of the city, village, or town. Binding referenda are only permissible if a specific statute allows for one, such as a referendum to exceed the levy limit when setting the property tax amount to be collected. See Wis. Stat. s. 66.0602(4).*)

2.3 What are the different County zoning districts?

There are 5 broad zoning descriptions. (See **Appendix B**)

Agricultural	Commercial
A-P: Agricultural Preservation	C-3: Commercial-Highway
A-1, A-2, A-3: Agricultural-Residential (varying lot sizes)	C-1: Commercial-Neighborhood
A-R: Floating Agricultural-Residential	C-2: Commercial-General
AC-R: Agriculture Conservation-Residential	
	Industrial
Residential	I-H: Industrial Heavy
RH: Rural Homes (includes Typical and Conservation)	I-L: Industrial Light
R-L: Residential Large Lot	
R-3: Residential Multi-Family	Forestry
R-2: Residential Two-Family	F-1: Forestry Exclusive
R-1: Residential Single-Family	F-2: Forestry Limited

2.4 Is any of the Town of Bridge Creek already covered by County overlay districts (zoning rules)?

Approximately 40% of the Town of Bridge Creek is subject to the County’s overlay districts (zoning rules). These areas include public forest (6%), and shoreland, floodplain, and wellhead protection districts (34.88%). (*Source: Eau Claire County Planning and Development.*)

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

2.5 How will public input be collected and considered during the County zoning process?

The process for adopting County zoning includes opportunities for public input. A public hearing is a required part of the process where residents can ask questions and provide comments. The Town Board will consider this input as they decide whether or not to adopt the resolution to adopt County zoning.

2.6 What is the role of the Comprehensive Planning Committee?

The role of the Comprehensive Planning Committee is to work cooperatively with the Town of Bridge Creek Board and the citizens of the Town to explore land use possibilities that understand, protect, and plan for future use; and update the official land use map of the Town. (The former land use map was last updated in the 1980's.) The Comprehensive Plan Committee also performs other planning-related tasks as assigned by the Town Board Ordinance 19.02 adopted February 18, 2019.

2.7 Who makes up the Comprehensive Planning Committee?

The committee is made up of Town of Bridge Creek citizens who serve 3-year terms and are appointed by the Town of Bridge Creek Board.

2.8 How does the Comprehensive Planning Committee communicate with the public?

The Comprehensive Planning Committee is conducting joint public meetings with the Town of Bridge Creek Board and Eau Claire County Land Use officials to update the Comprehensive Plan and official Land Use Maps, and to explore what zoning may mean in this Town. The joint meetings are open to the public, regularly scheduled, have published agendas, and allow for citizen participation. All published documents are available on the Town of Bridge Creek website and from the Town of Bridge Creek Clerk upon request. In addition, the Committee is also providing this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document electronically or in writing to anyone who seeks a copy to assist interested parties in gaining accurate information about zoning and the process. Committee members' names are public and may be contacted by landowners who seek additional information.

2.9 What is the County Board's role in the process of the Town adopting County zoning?

The County Board must enact a general zoning ordinance that adopts the official zoning map once the Town adopts County Zoning.

3. Property Rights, Changes and Costs

3.1 What changes should I anticipate for my property following the adoption of County zoning?

The most significant change is that the Town of Bridge Creek will have a clear set of rules for land use that provides a framework for what uses can occur in certain areas and prevent incompatible land uses next to one another. This should give you greater confidence that the property next to you will not be developed in a way that negatively impacts your quality of life or property value. For example, your

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

residential neighbor will not be able to build a business or an incompatible industrial use without going through a public process. Likewise, rural preservation areas may remain as is, preserving important farmland and forest resources without threat of development for dense housing projects or industrial use. For most residents, especially in agricultural and residential areas, the changes will be minimal unless they plan to construct new buildings or subdivide their property.

3.2 Will adopting County zoning require an inspection of my property?

No. The adoption of a zoning ordinance itself does not require a comprehensive inspection of all properties. However, if you apply for a permit for new construction, an addition, or a change in use, an inspection may be required as part of the permitting process to ensure the proposal complies with setback standards if it is within 15 feet of a minimum setback. No inspection will be required if the proposal is greater than 15 feet from a minimum setback.

3.3 Will I be obligated to modify my existing building use(s) if it does not comply with new zoning requirements?

No. Similar to a nonconforming use, a building or structure that was legal before the adoption of zoning is considered a "nonconforming structure." You are not required to tear down or modify a building that does not meet new setback, height, or size requirements. You are generally allowed to maintain and repair the structure. However, there may be limitations on reconstruction or enlargement.

3.4 Will I be required to make changes to my current land use if it does not conform to the new zoning map after zoning is adopted?

No. If a property use was legal before the adoption of a zoning ordinance, it is generally allowed to continue as a legal nonconforming use. This means you can keep using your property in the same way, even if that use would not be permitted under the new zoning rules. However, there are limitations on nonconforming uses. For example, you may not be able to expand or change the use to another nonconforming use. There are special rules for junk yards, salvage yards, and motor vehicle repair shops. Consult with the Land Management Use Manager regarding questions.

If the Town adopts County zoning and you think you have a nonconforming land use, you will be given the opportunity to notify the Town clerk to get it on record as a preexisting use (legal nonconforming use). This will allow for continued use of the property as is under the new zoning structure. A form for reporting this will become available on the Town website.

3.5 How will working from home or running a business on my property be impacted if County zoning is adopted?

Eau Claire County rules for small businesses, cottage industries, and home offices vary by the zoning district assigned to that area, but are generally allowed. If County zoning is adopted, no changes are required for you or your business for current operation. If the business does not match the zoning district assigned to the neighborhood, completion of a RECORD OF NONCONFORMING USE (**Appendix C**) document will protect the business operation by documenting that it existed prior to County zoning adoption. This allows the business to continue in perpetuity, even if it is sold to another person.

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Expansion of certain businesses may be limited to a specific number of employees that reside outside the property or limit certain practices by that business. Expansion of or changes to certain home-based operations may require a permit to ensure minimal neighborhood disruption for customer traffic, deliveries, parking, signage, etc. Large-scale businesses and commercial activities are restricted to designated zones.

3.6 What does Nonconforming Use and Legal Nonconforming Use mean if County zoning is adopted?

If County zoning is adopted, then the way land is used must be consistent with the zoning district chosen for that area. If the landowner is currently using that land differently, then the landowner would be required to submit an official document of existing Nonconforming Land Use at the time that County zoning is adopted. A Legal Nonconforming Use is a use of land that was lawful before a new zoning ordinance (or amendment) was made. This continuation of use is protected because forcing an immediate stop would be an unconstitutional taking of private property without just compensation. A new owner can purchase the property and continue the identified legal nonconforming use under the same nonconforming status as long as this use was previously identified and submitted as a Nonconforming Use at the time of County zoning adoption. (See **Appendix C: RECORD OF NONCONFORMING USE**)

3.7 What is the 12-Month Rule for nonconforming uses?

If any nonconforming use is discontinued for a period of 12 consecutive months, it shall be considered abandoned. This means that the past nonconforming use may no longer be allowed after the 12 months of non-use has elapsed.

3.8 Can a home or business be rebuilt for the same use previously allowed under Legal Nonconforming Use if it is destroyed by a natural disaster or fire?

Yes, if it is rebuilt within 12 months within the original parameters of the previous Nonconforming Use. A permit is required, but the fee is typically waived in these circumstances.

3.9 Will my property assessment increase due to zoning changes in my town?

Property assessments are based on the fair market value of the property, which is determined by a variety of factors, including sales of similar properties, condition, location, and potential uses. While zoning can influence what the market considers a "potential use" and therefore a property's value in the long term, a zoning change itself does not automatically trigger a change in assessed value. A property assessment may be reviewed after a zoning change, but it is typically done to ensure a fair and accurate assessment in light of the new land use rules. The state mandates how frequently assessments shall occur and the Town of Bridge Creek has been notified by the State of Wisconsin that it must conduct an assessment by 2028.

3.10 Does adopting County zoning mean I need to update my homeowner's insurance policy, specifically for Ordinance and Law (O&L) coverage?

Adopting County zoning does not require you to update your homeowner's insurance policy or add Ordinance and Law (O&L) coverage. In Wisconsin, insurance for owner-occupied homes is optional, and zoning changes do not affect insurance rates or mandate O&L coverage. However, it's important to understand that some policies may not cover the additional costs of complying with updated building codes or ordinances after a covered loss, such as needing to rebuild in a different location on your property due to setback rules.

O&L coverage is designed to help pay for these extra costs. Most homeowner policies include a basic level of this coverage (usually around 10% of the dwelling limit) for a small fee, and expanded options are available to cover more extensive upgrades or reconstruction. While this coverage is rarely needed for homeowners, it is recommended that you review your existing policy and consult with your insurance agent to determine whether standard or expanded O&L coverage is appropriate for your situation. (Source: *The Wisconsin Office of the Insurance Commissioner. Frequently Asked Questions - Homeowner's Insurance. FAQ SHEET PI-232 (R 10/2024).*)

4. Conflict Prevention and Management

4.1 What if my neighbor wants to build something next to me that I disagree with?

If the neighbor's use is a permitted use within a zoned district, the use is allowed. If the proposal is a conditional use, neighbors can attend the public hearing and bring up their concerns. The application may be denied if the committee's findings are supported by substantial evidence that the proposal will have adverse impacts on surrounding properties.

4.2 How does County zoning impact private or large-scale solar panel or private or large-scale wind turbine installations?

The Comprehensive Plan can guide development but cannot ban personal-use wind or solar systems. Large-scale wind and solar energy systems are allowed under state law, but currently County zoning would require conditional use. Certain zoning districts may not allow large-scale wind or solar projects.

Solar Access Permits allows property owners to obtain permits to guarantee unobstructed sun/wind and prevent nearby development that interferes. Eau Claire County can regulate setbacks, noise and visual impacts if significant, and comprehensive plans can limit siting of large-scale wind projects (>1MW) in areas zoned for future residential/commercial growth. (Source: *Wisconsin Statute 66.0401, Wisconsin Statute 66.0403*)

4.3 How does County zoning impact industrial-scale agricultural facilities?

Large livestock facilities are permitted in the AP and A1 zoning districts only and must meet certain requirements based on state laws in these zoning districts. There are limits on size (number of animals) in all other zoning districts.

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

4.4 In what County zoning districts would a sawmill be allowed to be built and operated?

Sawmills (no size limits or specific definition) are permitted in the AP and IH zoning districts. They are considered a conditional use in the A1, A2, F1, and F2 zoning districts.

4.5 What is “conditional use” and what is the process for obtaining a conditional use permit?

Within each district certain uses which are deemed mutually compatible are permitted. In addition to such permitted uses, it is recognized that there are other uses which may be desirable within a given district, but because of their potential influence upon neighboring uses, public facilities, or the environment, these uses need to be carefully regulated with respect to their location and operation. Conditional use requires a public hearing and approval by the County Committee on Planning and Development.

4.6 Can a neighbor stop me from building a sawmill or from getting conditional use?

If a new sawmill is planned in an **AP** and **IH** zoning district, it is a permitted use and requires a land use permit, which is administratively reviewed by Eau Claire County. However, if a new sawmill is planned in an **A1, A2, F1, or F2** zoning district, this will require a conditional use permit, which goes through the public hearing process at the Town, a Town recommendation to the County, and then County approval or denial. A new sawmill would not be a permitted use in any other district (such as residential).

Neighbors are encouraged to attend public hearings and express legitimate concerns or support. If there will be negative impacts on surrounding properties a condition can be attached to the permit to mitigate those impacts.

A conditional use permit may be denied if the Town or County finds there is substantial evidence supporting denial of the application per 2017 Wisconsin Act 67.

4.7 How does County zoning impact a primary residence that wants to build an additional dwelling (e.g. Grandparent’s House)?

This depends on how the unit is constructed. Some structures are allowed as additions, accessory dwellings, farm residences, or in some cases, an extra structure may require a conditional use permit and be allowed if part of the family is making their livelihood from agriculture. For specific scenarios, you should consult the Land Use Manager, Technician or Building Inspector.

4.8 Are neighborhood schools allowed under County zoning?

Yes. A school is considered a conditional use in most of the agriculture and residential zoning districts.

4.9 Are short-term rentals allowed if County zoning is implemented?

Yes, state law oversees short term rental rules. Nuisance ordinances can address specific local concerns.

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

4.10 What happens if a new land use (after zoning is adopted) is deemed not compatible within a zoned area?

New land uses will need to be consistent with the existing zoning district.

5. Setbacks, Permits, Codes and Resources

5.1 Do Uniform Dwelling Code requirements change when adopting County zoning in an unzoned Town?

No, adopting County zoning in the Town of Bridge Creek does not change the statewide Uniform Dwelling Code (UDC) or its enforcement. (*Source: Chapters SPS 320–325 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code.*)

5.2 Are there additional setbacks, fees, permits or inspections needed for construction under County zoning?

Setbacks: The County zoning code would have new setbacks for property lines and town roads that are not currently administered in the Town of Bridge Creek (see **Appendix D**).

Fees and Permits: There will be no change in the building permit criteria under County zoning. Building permits are already required by the County when the building is considered a dwelling, and building notifications are required by the Town for nearly any structure. The Town will reassess the Building Notification process if adopting County zoning based on better coordination with the County. All other currently required permits (e.g. shoreland, floodplain, sanitary, driveway, erosion control & stormwater, electrical, plumbing, and HVAC) will remain unchanged with adopting County zoning. Permit fees cover the cost of routine inspections.

A land use permit will be required for new structures in all areas of the Town under County zoning (with exemptions for specific, smaller, or temporary shelters). Currently, land use permits are only required within shoreland, floodplain, and wellhead protection districts. Fees range from \$60-\$270 for residential and agricultural districts, and \$300-\$3,600 for commercial and industrial districts.

Inspections: Eau Claire County zoning codes do not require all structures to meet the uniform dwelling code (State building codes). The building inspector will not inspect new structures that do not contain a living space, except for an electrical inspection, if that is planned. Staff may need to make an initial onsite inspection to verify the minimum setbacks are met when issuing a land use permit if the proposal is within 15 feet of a minimum setback.

5.3 What are the setback rules currently and how might that change if County zoning is adopted?

Regardless of zoning, certain setbacks in certain areas (shoreland, wetland, etc) already exist and will not change. Road right-of-way setbacks for State and County roads will not change. Town roads will now have an enforceable setback. (see **Appendix D**)

Setbacks for sideyard, corner lot sideyard, and rear yard will be designated according to the zoning district and will be an enforceable setback. (see **Appendix D**)

5.4 What is the impact on the current new building construction permit and notification process if County zoning is adopted?

Building permits will continue to be needed for additions, certain modifications, and new construction. However, the building notification process for the Town may be amended or withdrawn if County zoning is adopted.

5.5 What happens to existing local ordinances if County zoning is adopted?

If the Town of Bridge Creek adopts the County zoning ordinance, the County's ordinance will supersede any existing Town ordinances that conflict with or are concerned with zoning. Ordinances that address issues not covered by the County's zoning code may remain in effect.

5.6 Is it possible for the Town to reverse the decision in the future if County zoning is adopted?

Yes, 2023 Wisconsin Act 264 established a structured procedure for Towns to exit County zoning. The process requires a series of resolutions and the Town to first adopt its own zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan. This act gives Towns more flexibility than they had in the past to withdraw from County zoning. (Source: [2023 Wisconsin Act 264](#).)

5.7 Are there examples of neighboring communities where zoning has created benefits or challenges?

Many Towns in Eau Claire County have adopted County zoning, including the Towns of Washington, Seymour, Otter Creek, Brunswick, Drammen, Union, and Pleasant Valley. The Town of Lincoln recently adopted their own Town zoning and the rest are unzoned. You can look at the land use patterns in these communities and speak with their officials to learn about their experiences, both positive and negative.

5.8 How does County zoning impact the City of Augusta's extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction (ETZ) space?

Adopting County zoning does not impact this process.

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

5.9 Is financial assistance or guidance available for property owners adapting to new zoning rules?

The Eau Claire County Land Use Controls Division provides guidance and resources to property owners regarding zoning and permits. While there is no direct financial assistance for complying with zoning, their staff is available to help you understand the requirements for your property and how to apply for the necessary permits.

5.10 Where can I find resources to better understand how zoning might affect my land use options?

The best resource is the Eau Claire County Land Use Controls Division. You can visit their website or contact their office directly for copies of the ordinances, maps, and other informational materials (fees may apply). The Town Board and Clerk also have information and can help point you in the right direction.

Supplemental Sources:

Eau Claire County [Land Development Ordinance](#) (effective 10/1/2025)

Eau Claire County [Zoning Ordinances](#) (prior to 10/1/2025)

[Farmland Preservation Program \(FPP\) of Eau Claire County:](#) Overview of the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program.

[Eau Claire County Land Use Controls Division website:](#) Overview of the Land Use Controls Division Department's responsibilities, which include the administration and enforcement of zoning, building and construction codes, and other land use ordinances for the unincorporated areas of the County.

[Eau Claire County Code of Ordinances:](#) This is Eau Claire County's official ordinance code, specifically those related to zoning (Title 18), shoreland protection (Title 20), and subdivisions (Title 17).

[Town of Washington Comprehensive Plan:](#) Illustrates how a zoned Town within Eau Claire County works with the County's zoning ordinances.

[Land Use Training and Resources.](#) UW - Madison Division of Extension. Online training modules for plan commissions and zoning boards.

Appendix A: SUMMARY CHECKLIST AND TIMELINE FOR THE TOWN BOARD

<u>Task</u>	<u>Legal Reference</u>	<u>Goal/Complete</u>
Resolution by Town Board to Explore Zoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolution 2025-2 adopted 7/17/2025 	Wis. Stat. s. 60.80	7/17/2025
Finalize FAQs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee meeting review 12/3/25 & 1/7/26 Sub-Committee to complete FAQs; Created 1/7/26 Next - Present Final FAQ Document to Committee February 2026 	n/a	3/4/2026
Farmland Preservation Presentation	n/a	2/4/2026
Verify Consistency with Comp Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee Zoning Map Review with County Land Use & Resource Staff Ongoing at Plan Committee Meetings 	Wis. Stat. § 66.1001	Ongoing-June 2026
Draft Map and Text (Districts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan Committee approve a Draft Map Open Houses on Draft Map Plan Committee review/edit Draft Map based on Open House Feedback Plan Committee Recommend Map Draft to Board Town Board Approves Draft Map for Class 2 Public Notice & Hearings 	Wis. Stat. § 59.69(5)(c) Wis. Stat. § 60.61/62	4/01/2026 5/6/2026 & 5/9/2026 June 2026
Publish Class 2 Notice (including AdDelite)	Wis. Stat. § 985	July - August 2026
Hold Public Hearing(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host Public Hearings Plan Committee review/edit Draft Map based on Public Hearings Plan Committee Recommend Updated Finalized Map to Board 	Wis. Stat. § 59.69(5) Wis. Stat. § 62.23(7) <i>While statutes do not mandate a separate town-level public hearing for the adoption of County Zoning, TBC plans to hold public informational meetings or hearings under Open Meetings laws for feedback from residents. .</i>	July - August 2026
Nonconforming Outreach	n/a	July - October 2026
Town Board Adoption Vote	Wis. Stat. § 60.62 Wis. Stat. § 59.69(5)	September 2026

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Submit to County Board for Approval

Wis. Stat. § 60.62(3)

September 2026

Record Nonconforming Uses

Wis. Stat. § 60.61(5)



October -
December 2026

**This timeline is based on the Town of Bridge Creek adopting County Zoning. Should the Town decide to implement their own zoning, there would be different legal requirements and a different timeline would need to be created - Wis. Stat. § 60.62(2), Wis. Stat. § 66.0144, Wis. Stat. § 66.0602(4), Wis. State. § 60.61(4)(b).*

Official

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Appendix B: EAU CLAIRE COUNTY ZONING DISTRICTS: MINIMUM LOT SIZE CHART (last updated June 13, 2024)

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY ZONING DISTRICTS: MINIMUM LOT SIZE CHART		LAST UPDATED JUNE 13, 2024
<h2>Agricultural Zoning</h2> <p>IN DESCENDING ORDER OF MIN. LOT SIZE</p> 		
A-P: Agricultural Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum Lot Size: 35 acres Minimum Lot Width: 150ft 	35ac
A-1: Agricultural- Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum Lot Size: 35 acres Minimum Lot Width: 150ft 	35ac
A-3: Agricultural- Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum Lot Size: 20 acres Minimum Lot Width: 330ft 	20ac
A-2: Agricultural- Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum Lot Size: 5 acres Minimum Lot Width: 250ft 	5ac
A-R: Floating Agricultural- Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum Lot Size: 5 acres Minimum Lot Width: 150ft 	5ac
AC-R: Agriculture Conservation- Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum Lot Size: 1 acre Maximum Lot Size: 5 acres Minimum Lot Width: 150ft 	1ac (min)  5ac (max)

*Size graphics for relative area comparison only.

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Residential Zoning

IN DESCENDING ORDER OF MIN.
LOT SIZE



<p>RH: Rural Homes (Typical)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 43,560sqft (1 Acre) • Minimum Lot Width: 100ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 30% 	<p>43,560sqft</p>
<p>RH: Rural Homes (Conservation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 10,000sqft (on-site wastewater) ◦ 20,000sqft (cluster wastewater) • Minimum Lot Width: 70ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 40% 	<p>10,000sqft</p> <p>20,000sqft</p>
<p>R-L: Residential Large Lot</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 12,000sqft (w/ public sewer & water) ◦ 20,000sqft (w/o public sewer & water) • Minimum Lot Width: 100ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 30% 	<p>12,000sqft</p> <p>20,000sqft</p>
<p>R-3: Residential Multi-Family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 10,000sqft (1 to 3du**) ◦ 10,000sqft + 1,500sqft per du (4du+) • Minimum Lot Width: 80ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 35% 	<p>10,000sqft</p> <p>1,500sqft</p>
<p>R-2: Residential Two-Family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 8,000sqft • Minimum Lot Width: 80ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 40% 	<p>8,000sqft</p>
<p>R-1: Residential Single-Family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 8,000sqft • Minimum Lot Width: 80ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 40% 	<p>8,000sqft</p>

*Size graphics for relative area comparison only.
**du = dwelling unit

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Commercial Zoning

IN DESCENDING ORDER OF MIN.
LOT SIZE



<p>C-3: Commercial- Highway</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 43,560sqft (1 Acre) • Minimum Lot Width: 200ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 50% • Min. Landscaping Coverage: 10% 	<p>43,560sqft</p> 
<p>C-1: Commercial- Neighborhood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 10,000sqft • Minimum Lot Width: 100ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 50% • Min. Landscaping Coverage: 5% 	<p>10,000sqft</p> 
<p>C-2: Commercial- General</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 8,000sqft • Minimum Lot Width: 80ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 50% • Min. Landscaping Coverage: 5% 	<p>8,000sqft</p> 

*Size graphics for relative area comparison only.

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Industrial Zoning

IN DESCENDING ORDER OF MIN.
LOT SIZE



<p>I-H: Industrial Heavy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 2 Acres • Minimum Lot Width: 200ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 30% 	<p>2ac</p>
<p>I-L: Light Industrial</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 1 Acre • Minimum Lot Width: 150ft • Max. Lot Coverage: 50% • Min. Landscaping Coverage: 10% 	<p>1ac</p>

*Size graphics for relative area comparison only.

Forestry Zoning

IN DESCENDING ORDER OF MIN.
LOT SIZE



<p>F-1: Forestry Exclusive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 40 Acres • Minimum Lot Width: 660ft • Residential Use Permitted: NO 	<p>40ac</p>
<p>F-2: Forestry Limited</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Lot Size: 20 Acres • Minimum Lot Width: 330ft • Residential Use Permitted: YES 	<p>20ac</p>

*Size graphics for relative area comparison only.

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Appendix C: RECORD OF NONCONFORMING USE

RECORD OF NONCONFORMING USE

COMPUTER# _____ **PIN#** _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, ZIP _____

PHONE _____

ZONING DISTRICT _____ **LOT SIZE** _____

TYPE OF USE _____

DESCRIPTION OF USE:

ATTACHMENTS (PHOTOS, SITE PLAN, RELEVANT DOCUMENTS):

REVIEWER _____ **DATE** _____

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)

Appendix D: BUILDING SETBACK REQUIREMENTS BY ZONING DISTRICT (found at <https://cms2.revize.com/revize/eauclaireCountywi/Documents/Departments/Infrastructure/Planning%20and%20Development/Land%20Use/Land%20Use%20Permits/Setback%20Chart.pdf?t=202510031520470&t=202510031520470>)

BUILDING SETBACK REQUIREMENTS BY ZONING DISTRICT														
ZONE CATEGORY	AC-R	A-1 A-P	A-2 A-3	A-R (Historical)	R-H	R-L R-1 R-2	R-3	C-1	C-2	C-3	I-L	I-H	F-1	F-2
‡Front Yard Setbacks														
Road centerline top number, right of way (ROW) bottom number														
FEDERAL OR STATE HIGHWAY (Class A not divided)	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50	<u>110</u> 50
FEDERAL OR STATE HIGHWAY (Class A divided)	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50
COUNTY OR TOWN ROADS (Class B)	<u>83</u> 50	<u>83</u> 50	<u>83</u> 50	<u>83</u> 50	<u>83</u> 50	<u>63</u> 30	<u>63</u> 30	<u>63</u> 30	<u>63</u> 30	<u>83</u> 50	<u>83</u> 50	<u>83</u> 50	<u>83</u> 50	<u>83</u> 50
LOCAL ROADS & ROADS WITHIN SUBDIVISIONS (Class C)	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 30	ROW 30	ROW 30	ROW 30	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50	ROW 50
Principal structures (top number) - Accessory structures (bottom number)														
SIDEYARD SETBACK	<u>50</u> 20	<u>20</u> 20G 50	<u>20</u> 20G 50	<u>20</u> 20G 50	<u>10</u> 5	<u>10</u> 5	<u>20</u> 10	15 30RE	<u>0</u> Shared Wall <u>15</u> 30RE	50RE <u>20</u> 20	<u>25</u> 20	50RE <u>25</u> 20	20	20
CORNER LOT SIDEYARD SETBACK	X	X	X	X	<u>25</u> 10	<u>25</u> 10	30	15 30RE	<u>0</u> Shared Wall <u>15</u> 30RE	50RE <u>20</u> 20	X	X	20	25
REAR YARD SETBACK	50	50	<u>20</u> 20G 50	<u>20</u> 50	<u>25</u> 10	<u>25</u> 5	<u>30</u> 10	15 30RE	<u>0</u> Shared Wall <u>15</u> 30RE	50RE 20	<u>25</u> 20	50RE <u>25</u> 20	20	50
Miscellaneous Setbacks														
NAVIGABLE WATER	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
VISUAL CLEARANCE TRIANGLE	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1	SEE *1

Staff will verify all building setbacks where the proposed structure is within 15 feet of a required minimum setback.

NOTES:

‡ = Use distance set furthest back into property.

*1 = See Section 18.71.050 of Eau Claire County Code.

RE = When adjacent to a Residential District.

G = Private Garage.

*If it is necessary to place a structure very close to, or at the minimum required structure setback, a surveyor may be needed to verify compliance by locating the planned structure and/or the lot corner stakes.

C:\Users\valerie.desio\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\EO51YI27\Setback Chart_Revised 2025 hannahs updates.docx Updated 9/5/2025

The information provided in this document is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. We make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the information. In no event will the Town of Bridge Creek or its representatives be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of this information. (Approved 3/4/2026, updated 4/3/2026)