

# ROCK SPRINGS

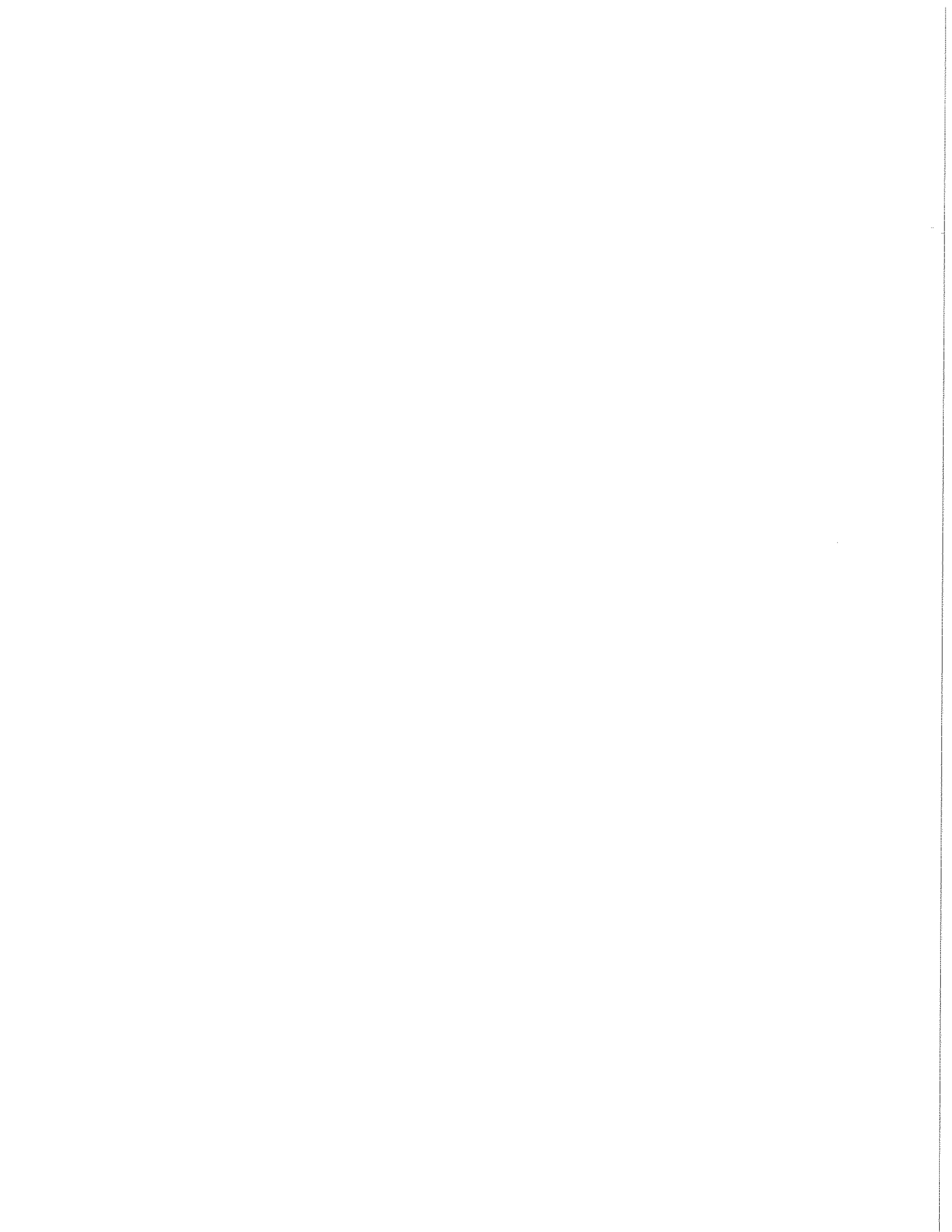
## FLOOD RECOVERY REPORT

October 30, 2008



FEMA







**FEMA**



**WISCONSIN**

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## **Mission, Issues, Goals & Objectives**

As the result of severe storms, tornadoes and flooding that began June 5, 2008, Governor Jim Doyle requested the President issue a disaster declaration for the State of Wisconsin. On June 14, 2008, the declaration was issued for 30 counties including Sauk County.

FEMA's Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), Dolph Diemont, activated ESF-14 Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR). ESF -14 is activated when routine local, state, tribal and federal assistance mechanisms are insufficient to meet the extraordinary challenges of the affected communities. An important component of ESF -14 is sharing information, developing recovery plans, strategies and projects; providing long term recovery coordination and technical assistance; and then connecting these plans and projects to federal resources, foundations, state and corporate support.

The mission of ESF-14, Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) is:

- Assess the recovery needs of the community
- Coordinate resources from federal and state partners
- Provide technical expertise.

The State and FEMA identified two communities that would benefit from the recovery services provided by ESF-14, Rock Springs and Gays Mills . The subject of this report is the Village of Rock Springs, Wisconsin.

## Background



### Regional Context

The Village of Rock Springs is located in Sauk County, Wisconsin, at the confluence of Narrows Creek and the Baraboo River. The Village is situated at the crossroads of SR 136 and SR 154 between two of Sauk County's main cities Baraboo and Reedsburg. Although road improvements to SR 136, including a bridge replacement over the Narrows Creek, created a great inconvenience for the Village, these improvements will enhance Rock Springs' future viability.

The Village is well served by a mix of State, County, and town roads that provide convenient travel across the community and access to the region by local residents and commercial transporters. In addition to an excellent highway and local road network, the community is served has rail service to support its two major industries. The Wisconsin and Southern, a subsidiary of Union Pacific Railway, travels through the cities of Baraboo and Reedsburg to Madison, WI.

Located almost equidistant between the county's major cities of Baraboo, the County Seat, and Reedsburg, the Village has a unique opportunity to maximize its assets for economic development, especially tourism.

According to the 2000 US Census, the population of the Village was 425. By 2007, City-Data reported the total population to be 383, a decrease of nearly 10 percent. On the other hand, Baraboo and Reedsburg both experienced an increase in population during the same period of 2 percent and 8.5 percent, respectively. Baraboo's population in 2007 was reported by City-Data as 11,049 and Reedsburg was reported to be 8,594.

Most Village residents commute within Sauk County to work. The major county employers provide diverse employment opportunities for the residents. Within an approximate 30 minute commuting distance of the Village are three major employment centers: Baraboo, Reedsburg, and Lake Delton/Wisconsin Dells. According to the Sauk County Development Corporation (2005) lists the area's major manufacturing/distribution employers: Land's End; Grede Foundries, Seat's Inc, Flambeau Plastic Co, Baraboo Sysco Foods, and Perry Judds, Inc.

The area's primary non-manufacturing employers include: Ho-Chunk Casino, Hotel & Convention Center; Wilderness Lodge; Sauk County Government; Kalahari Resort and Convention Center; Baraboo School System; Noah's Ark; St. Clare Hospital; and Reedsburg School System. The Village has two major industries: a Grain Coop and a Quarry.

Rock Springs has no dedicated resources for planning or community development, however, the Sauk County Department of Planning and Zoning (SCDPZ) has resources that can be made available to the community on a limited basis. The SCDPZ submitted a grant application for preparation of comprehensive plans for municipalities within the County; however, Rock Springs declined to participate in this process. The County is in process of completing another grant application, due 11/3/08, which could include funding a comprehensive plan for Rock Springs if the community was to request it.



## **JUNE 2008 FLOOD**

As a result of the severe rains in June 2008, the Baraboo River and Narrows Creek overflowed their banks with record flooding of approximately 20 feet, well above flood stage. The flooding caused major damage to the Village of Rock Springs. The Village was severely impacted by the loss of approximately 26 residences and 7 businesses that were inundated with floodwaters.

In addition to the loss of private property, the Village lost the use of its primary public building, the Rock Springs Memorial Community Center. The building housed many community services including: the community center; the library; the village hall; and the Department of public works when almost 8 feet of water entered the building. The Community Center served as the heart of the Village. Many public and private functions were held in the Center and without it, the Village has suffered from its loss. Village government operations were moved to another building owned by the Village for temporary use, but the library and the community center have not reopened.

## **Capacity for Recovery**

The Village of Rock Springs continues to recover, but with the challenge of rebuilding brick by brick, comes the challenge of rebuilding morale in the devastated community. The Village of Rock Springs is governed by a President and Board of Trustees and has limited paid staff. The Village Clerk works one day per week (Monday). The Village has received a grant from the Department of Labor for the employment of a temporary assistance for flood recovery documentation. The Village appears to be in financial distress and local matching funds for grants are not available.

## **ESF-14 Recovery Support for Rock Springs**

The LTCR team began its work to assist the Village of Rock Springs and its recovery from the June 2008 floods with a series of meetings with the Village President and the Board of Trustees.

The Village President and the Board of Trustees are concerned with the village's fiscal status and economic viability. In a September 5, 2008 meeting with the ESF-14 team, the Village advised that their current debt obligations exceed their ability to repay their existing debt and that the community does not have the ability to raise the funds necessary to pay their local 12.5 percent share required for the mitigation buy-outs of the 22 properties included in their mitigation grant application. The situation is exacerbated by the additional loss of tax revenue caused by the flood damage and debt incurred by a local cost share requirement for SR136 improvements.

## **ESF-14 Long Term Community Recovery Team Tasks:**

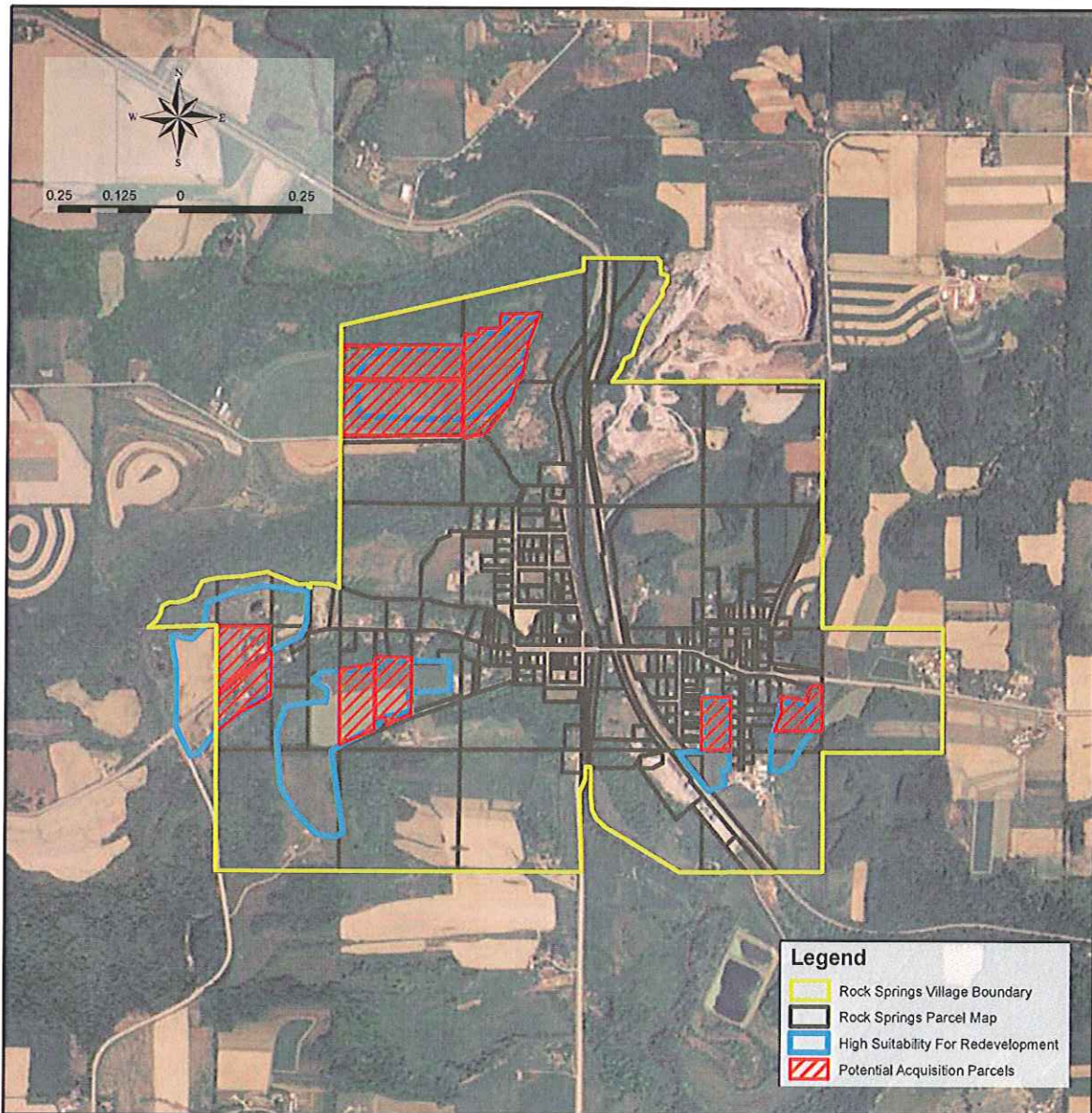
- Stakeholder Identification
- Land Use Assessment
- Community Workshops
- Technical Assistance Rock Springs Recovery Committee
- Technical Assistance for Affordable Housing
- Downtown Business District & Economic Recovery

The ESF-14 team met with other local leaders to enlist support for the Village of Rock Springs. Sauk County, the Town of Excelsior, housing and economic experts were interviewed to determine support available to the Village. On September 23, 2008, ESF-14 coordinated a public meeting to enlist community support for recovery. The meeting included a presentation by ESF-14 discussing land suitability, development options and solicited community input. The meeting led to the formation of the Rock Springs Recovery Committee.



# Development Opportunities

## Village of Rock Springs



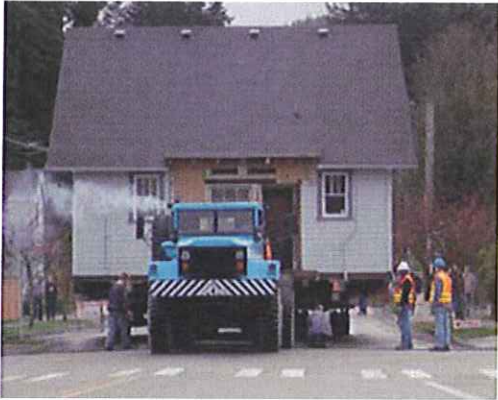
### Land Suitability Assessment

The Long Term Recovery Team conducted a land suitability analysis to assess available parcels for development. The analysis took into consideration floodplains, wetlands, soils, and slope. These data sets were "normalized" by converting the datasets into an indexed classification representing their suitability for development. The final result was a composite suitability map that was used to determine opportune areas for development within Rock Springs. Additional considerations were given to factors such as the availability of infrastructure (e.g., roads, water, and sewer) and the size of the parcels. The results were presented to the Rock Springs Recovery Committee for their consideration.

## **Goals for Community Recovery**

A meeting of the Recovery Committee was held October 21, 2008. The meeting was chaired by the Village President to establish a priority list for recovery projects. Planning and economic recovery were identified as high priority projects. Four sub-committees were created to focus recovery efforts on the following areas:

- Housing
- Economic development
- Finance
- Comprehensive planning



## Housing

### Acquisitions & Relocations

The Village of Rock Springs was one of the first communities to submit a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) application for the acquisition and demolition (buyouts) to Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) related to the 2008 flood. The breakdown of the 22 structures in the buy-out application follows: one (1) commercial building; twelve (12) primary residences; three (3) secondary residences; two (2) 2-4 family rental buildings; one (1) duplex; and three (3) single family rental houses.

Because of the lack of available land within the Village, some families may be forced to relocate elsewhere. Many areas within the state do not suffer from the lack of vacant existing home inventory that faces Rock Springs. FEMA ESF-14 identified a number of possible development sites for construction of replacement homes. The sites were presented to the Village; however, the Village did not think that any of the property owners were willing sellers. In order to provide affordable housing replacements for the families, the Village must provide the leadership necessary to move forward in identifying potential development sites and developers that can implement the creation of new housing in the Village. ESF - 14 identified potential developers with an interest in creating affordable housing and provided liaison between the developer and the Village.

### Rental Housing

Prior to the 2008 flood, there were approximately 174 housing units of which 36 units were renter occupied. The community lost 15 units of its rental properties deemed substantially damaged by the flood. These properties are included in the HMGP application for acquisition. The damaged units were typically greater than 50 years in age and in fair condition. The loss of this rental housing has been a detriment to the community and its replacement is key to the community's recovery.

Replacing these rental housing units will be an opportunity for the community to construct new housing to meet new standards for energy efficiency and handicap accessibility. Based on available demographic data, the average household size for the community is 2.7 people per housing unit. Using this as a parameter for new housing development, proposed rental units could include a mixture of two bedroom and three bedroom units.

Government programs for affordable rental units are available for Rock Springs. These programs typically require a governmental or non-profit sponsor. The Central Wisconsin Community Action, Inc. (CWCAC) could qualify for this role and has begun communication with the Village for the development of six to twelve affordable rental units. If CWCAC is to move forward with this project, the community must provide its support for the project.

## Economic Development

The commercial district in Rock Springs was not only the center of commerce, but created a sense of place and identity for the community. The 2008 flood event caused flood damages to most of the downtown area. Seven of the businesses in the commercial district, as well as the village's community center and library; which were all key components to the commercial district's economic stability were destroyed. Two of the businesses have been re-opened after the flood; however, it is unknown whether the other businesses will remain in the Village. It is vital to the economic health of the community that they work to restore the commercial district. This may include a combination of alternatives that include flood proofing and creation of new businesses outside of the floodplain.



One of the community's greatest opportunities for economic recovery is tourism. The Village has attractions that draw visitors from around the world. The Van Hise Rock is one of only two located in the world. Many geologists and students visit the area to see this unique geologic formation. Other important attractions bringing tourists to Rock Springs are the Big Cat Rescue and the natural artesian wells.

The close proximity of the Village of Rock Springs to Wisconsin Dells, Lake Delton, Devil's Lake and Mirror Lake, the Ringling Brothers Circus Museum, the International Crane Foundation, and the quaint cities of Reedsburg and Baraboo creates a unique opportunity for the Village to re-invent its economic base. A strategic marketing plan could be implemented to attract visitors and tourists to the area. Creation of businesses to support these attractions such as lodging, restaurants, gift shops and art galleries would establish a unique identity and boost the economy of Rock Springs.



Sauk County, birthplace to the Ringling Brothers Circus, has a population of 55,225, includes Devils Lake State Park, International Crane Foundation, and is home to Circus World Museum as well as numerous other recreational opportunities. Tourism plays a vital role in Sauk County and businesses that cater to tourism such as resorts, motels, campgrounds, bed & breakfasts and retail stores complement the hundred miles of snowmobiling and biking trails as well as the many parks, golf courses, historic sites, and area attractions.

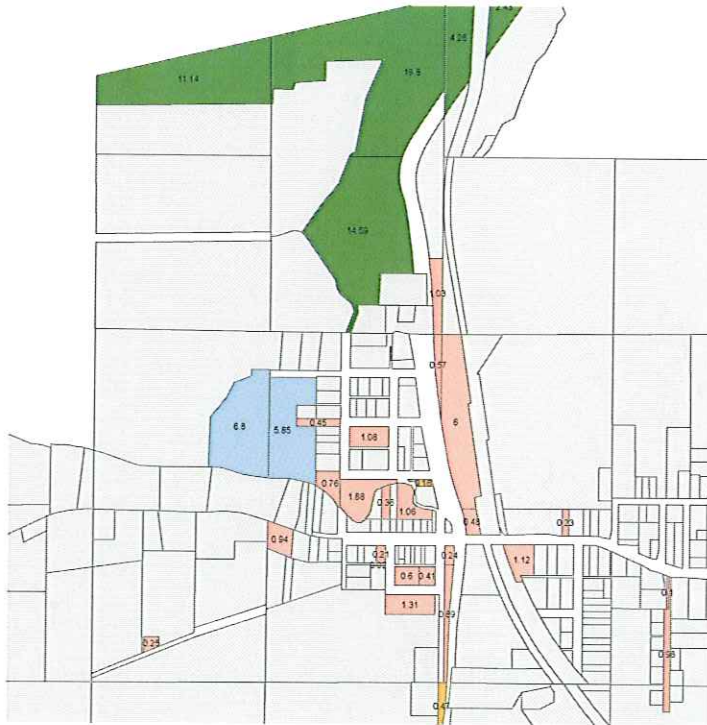
In a report, *The Economic Impact of Expenditures by Travelers on Wisconsin 2002*, Davidson- Peterson & Associates, Sauk County ranks 3rd in the State for traveler spending, contributing 7.3 percent of all traveler expenditures. Travelers spent an estimated \$856 million in Sauk County in 2002. Statewide it is estimated that employees earned \$531 million in wages generated from tourist spending, an increase of 5.5% from 2001, and that travelers spending in 2002 supported 24,532 full-time equivalent jobs, compared to 23,664 jobs in 2001. Summer is the biggest season and generated traveler expenditures amounting to \$434 million. Fall travelers spent \$151 million and winter/spring visitors spent \$271 million. When this study was first initiated in 1993, travelers spent \$246 million in Sauk County. In the year 2002 travelers spent \$856 million, representing an increase of 248%.



## Finance

The devastating flooding has put Rock Springs into a precarious financial situation. In addition to the direct costs the community will need to cover as part of its local match to federal funding; it also is faced with the challenge of less tax revenue from properties slated for acquisition and demolition. Dr. Karl Nollenberger from the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, who is an expert in local government finance, has volunteered his time to assist Rock Springs with their finances. Dr. Nollenberger has been working with the community by reviewing their financial books and latest government audit. Through this, he will be able to assist Rock Springs with a comprehensive evaluation of the loss of property tax revenue from the planned acquisitions from the flooding. The assessment will include an analysis of the village's total assessed value and its debt-carrying capacity. This comprehensive financial evaluation will help the board to make prudent fiscal decisions regarding whether it elects to unincorporate the village, disband the local fire department, or to maintain the status quo.

It is important for communities to maintain appropriate records and to track finances to ensure that they are prudently utilizing tax dollars. Additionally, as village boards change over time; detailed record keeping is essential for new boards to have continuity. Training for elected officials and the village clerk are available from professional organizations within the state. The Wisconsin League of Municipalities offers training courses annually to elected officials, finance officers, and village clerks.



## Comprehensive Planning

Rock Springs does not currently have a comprehensive plan; but is required under Wisconsin State Statute to adopt a comprehensive plan by 2010. Communities without comprehensive plans in place will not be able to defend land use or zoning decisions in the court of law. A comprehensive plan will benefit the community as it provides the needed framework for the community to make decisions regarding how and where it should redevelop and grow.

Rock Springs will need to enlist the assistance of professional planners in the development of a comprehensive plan for the community. The most reasonable and affordable way for this to be done would be to utilize the resources of the Sauk County Planning and Zoning Department. The Department has indicated their willingness to provide assistance to Rock Springs if the Village requests it. Sauk County Planning and Zoning Department is in the process of preparing a new grant application for comprehensive planning in Sauk County. If Rock Springs makes a request, the application could include funding for a Comprehensive Plan for Rock Springs. The grant deadline is November 3, 2008.

## Summary

The financial situation of the Village was made even more severe by the 2008 flood damages to community services, single family homes, businesses and multi-family rental units. Although the State of Wisconsin cannot commit at this time to help the Village meet its 12.5% local match requirement for the buy-out program, it does look promising that the WI Dept. of Commerce will be able to use supplemental disaster funding from Housing and Urban Development (CDBG) to fill that need. Unfortunately that only makes the Village's financial situation more perilous, by removing one business and up to 20 homes from the local property tax base.

The Village of Gays Mills cannot recover from the 2008 flooding event on its own. It cannot recover solely by the actions of the Village President, nor from the combined efforts of a dedicated Village Board. The recent creation of the Recovery Committee and four subcommittees addressing governance, housing, economic development, and comprehensive plan is the first major step forward along a path to full disaster recovery. The next step toward recovery will be to create alliances with the Town of Excelsior and Sauk County, along with State and federal recovery partners, to provide technical and financial assistance. The following section briefly describes a range of potential partners that may be able to assist Rock Springs. We strongly encourage the community to reach out to these partners.

The long term community recovery planning effort for Rock Springs was hampered by the limited time available to work with the recovery committee. By the time that the community was willing to engage the LTRC Team, 60 days of the 90 day FEMA mission assignment had already expired. As the LTRC effort winds down at the end of October, the recovery effort will transition over to Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) and the Wisconsin Recovery Task Force. FEMA Region V will continue to support the Village by funding a temporary position housed within WEM to assist with long term recovery initiatives in Rock Springs, Gays Mills and other targeted communities.



## Resources for Rock Springs

The following table provides a list of agencies and organizations that have been identified as potential partners for assisting in the recovery of Rock Springs. It will be essential for the Rock Springs Recovery Committee to seek out assistance from these partners.

Agency/ Organization	Available Assistance	Contact
State of Wisconsin Department of Commerce	Revolving Loan Fund, Bureau of Entrepreneurship, Division of Business Development	Amy Young Cumblad 201 W. Washington Av 5th Floor Madison, WI 53707 (608) 266-2688 Email: amy.cumblad@ wisconsin.gov <a href="http://commerce.wi.gov">http://commerce.wi.gov</a>
Elected Officials		
Sauk County, WI	<p>FLOOD RECOVERY SMALL BUSINESS (FRSB) LOAN PROGRAM</p> <p>Sauk County has recently been awarded funds through the Community Development Block Grant-Flood Relief Small Business (CDBG-FRSB) program from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.</p> <p>This program will assist Sauk County businesses who suffered physical or economic damage during the June 2008 rain, storms, and subsequent flooding.</p>	<p>Sauk County RLF Administrator</p> <p>c/o Sauk County Administrative Coordinator</p> <p>505 Broadway Street Baraboo, WI 53913 608-355-3274 phone 608-355-3841 fax Floodassist@co.sauk.wi.us</p>

Agency/ Organization	Available Assistance	Contact
Sauk County, Department of Planning & Zoning	While the county planning department does not have jurisdiction over Rock Springs, they are willing to assist the community with the development of a comprehensive plan at the community's request.	Mark Steward, Director Sauk County West Square Bldg. 505 Broadway Baraboo, WI 53913 (608) 355-3285 Email: mstward@co.sauk.wi.us
Town of Excelsior	Possibilities exist for Rock Springs and the Town of Excelsior to share resources or provide joint services.	Joe Fish, Board President
UW – Extension	<p>Provides assistance with community development, strategic planning, and agribusiness development.</p> <p>The Center for Community and Economic Development, University of Wisconsin Extension, creates, applies and transfers multidisciplinary knowledge to help people understand community change and identify opportunities.</p>	<p>Jenny Erickson Sauk County - UW Extension West Square Administration Bldg 505 Broadway Baraboo, WI 53913-2404 Phone: 608-355-3250 <a href="http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/sauk/">http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/sauk/</a></p> <p>610 Langdon Street Room 336 Madison, WI 53703 Phone: (608) 265-8136 FAX: (608) 263-4999 TTY: 1-800-947-3529 Email: cced@uwex.edu</p>
USDA Rural Development Fund	May have funding available to assist in the recovery of the community center and library.	Carolyn Wetuski Area Director 138 s. Iowa St. Dodgeville, WI 53533 (608) 935-2791 Email: carol.wetuski@wi.usda.gov <a href="http://www.rudev.usda.gov/wi">www.rudev.usda.gov/wi</a>
Thrive – Economic Development Enterprise	<p>Provides a regional approach to economic development and may be able to provide information or assistance.</p> <p>Vision: To grow the Madison Region's economy in ways that preserves and enhances the quality of life.</p> <p>Target Sectors: Agriculture, biotechnology, and healthcare.</p>	<a href="http://www.thrivehear.org">www.thrivehear.org</a>

Agency/ Organization	Available Assistance	Contact
Sauk County Development Corporation	Provides assistance to its members to retain and attract businesses in Sauk County. They are in the process of conducting a study on how businesses were impacted by the floods.	Karna Hannah, Director <a href="http://www.scdc.com">www.scdc.com</a>
Sauk County Community Foundation	A philanthropic resource that makes a meaningful contribution to the quality of life for the citizens of Sauk County through partnering with other charitable organizations and community initiatives. Also makes philanthropic grants to selected projects and causes.	Greater Sauk County Community Foundation 600 W. Chestnut St. PO Box 544 Baraboo, WI 53913 608-355-0884 <a href="http://www.greatersaukcountycf.org">www.greatersaukcountycf.org</a>
Alliant Energy Foundation, Inc	Awards community grants for human needs, education, culture and art, & civic and environment.	<a href="http://www.alliantenergy.com">www.alliantenergy.com</a>
State of Wisconsin, Department of Commerce, Division of Housing and Community Development	Provide funds to help communities finance extraordinary clean up costs and expenditures associated with the repair or replacement of public infrastructure needed to restore basic public services, as well as to repair uninsured housing damage caused by storms, floods or other disasters or replace housing units destroyed in the disaster.	Caryn Stone, Division of Housing and Community Development <a href="http://commerce.wi.gov">http://commerce.wi.gov</a>
Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)	WHEDA offers innovative products and services in partnership with others to link Wisconsin residents and communities with affordable housing and economic development opportunities.	David Sheperd <a href="http://www.wheda.com">www.wheda.com</a>
Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development, Inc.	Works with community-based nonprofit corporations, for-profit developers, local governments and the private sector to make affordable housing projects happen.	Michael Heidkamp <a href="http://www.wphd.org">www.wphd.org</a>
Central Wisconsin Community Action Council (CWCAC)	Serves as a conduit for resource development needs, advocating for public policy conducive to the locally-developed goals of its member agencies and advocating for laws, rules and regulations which support economic opportunity efforts, community development, and locally-designed strategies and procedures.	Fred Hebert, (608) 254-8353
Habitat for Humanity, Lower Wisconsin River	Provides affordable housing assistance.	(608) 935-9421

Agency/ Organization	Available Assistance	Contact
Wisconsin League of Municipalities	This organization is a resource for the community for general legal assistance and technical assistance regarding municipal law and finance.	Dan Thompson, Executive Director 122 W Washington Ave, Suite 300 Madison, WI 53703 (608) 267-2380 Email: danthomp@lwm-info.org www.lwm-info.org
Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE)	SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business" is a nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and the formation, growth and success of small business nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). SCORE is committed to helping small business owners with disaster preparedness and relief through its SCORE Disaster Recovery Fund.	SCORE Madison MG&E Innovation Center 505 South Rosa Road Madison, WI 53719 (608) 441-2820 contactscore@scoremadison145.org www.score.org
US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA)	2008 Supplemental disaster funding may be available to support economic recovery in Rock Springs.	Jack D Price Area Director Chicago Regional Office 111 N. Canal St, Suite 855 Chicago, IL 60606 (312) 353-7148, ext. 159 Email: jprice@eda.doc.gov
U.S Small Business Administration (SBA)	Provides low interest loans for disaster recovery.	Eric M. Ness District Director 310 W. Wisconsin Av, Suite 400 Milwaukee, WI 53203 (414) 297-1471 Email: eric.ness@sba.gov www.sba.gov/wi

