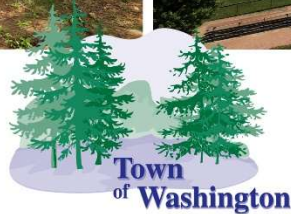


Incorporation Submittal

FOR THE VILLAGE OF WASHINGTON

Eau Claire County, Wisconsin



<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	5
<u>Strong Public and Community Support for Incorporation</u>	5
<u>Stakeholder and Public Engagement in the Incorporation Process</u>	5
<u>Community Development Support and Growth</u>	6
<u>Reasons for Seeking Incorporation</u>	6
<u>Impact of Annexations</u>	7
<u>INCORPORATION REVIEW PROCESS</u>	10
<u>SECTION 1(a): HOMOGENEITY AND COMPACTNESS</u>	12
<u>Section 1(a). A Compactness and Homogeneity Analysis</u>	13
<u>Regional Context</u>	14
<u>Components of the Incorporation Territory</u>	17
<u>Regional Boundary History</u>	18
<u>Proposed Village Boundary</u>	19
<u>Natural Features of the Territory</u>	20
<u>Municipal Services of the Territory</u>	22
<u>SECTION 1.(a).B Cohesion of the Incorporation Area</u>	23
<u>Cohesion and Unity</u>	23
<u>Socio-Economic Features of the Territory</u>	23
<u>Economy and Employment</u>	27
<u>Business</u>	29
<u>Social Opportunities</u>	30
<u>Recreational Opportunities</u>	36
<u>Schools</u>	39
<u>Volunteer Fire Department</u>	44
<u>Neighborhoods</u>	46
<u>SECTION 1.(a).C Businesses</u>	52
<u>List of Businesses</u>	52
<u>SECTION 1.(a).D School Enrollment</u>	57
<u>School District Enrollment</u>	57
<u>SECTION 1.(a).E Ordinances and Land Use Regulations</u>	58
<u>Ordinances</u>	58
<u>Zoning and Land Use</u>	59
<u>Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)</u>	61
<u>Official Map</u>	62
<u>SECTION 1.(a).F Development Trends</u>	63
<u>Land Use Trends</u>	63
<u>Rezones</u>	64
<u>Building Permits</u>	64
<u>Land Supply/Developable Acres</u>	69
<u>SECTION 1.(a).G Transportation Facilities</u>	71
<u>Transportation System Facilities</u>	71
<u>Transportation System Support Homogeneity and Compactness</u>	77

<u>SECTION 1.(a).H Town Comprehensive Plan</u>	78
<u>Town of Washington Comprehensive Plan</u>	78
<u>SECTION 1.(a).I Public Facilities and Services</u>	83
<u>Public Facilities Sewer and Water</u>	83
<u>Public Facilities Storm Water Management, MS4 Permit</u>	86
<u>Public Utilities Transmission, Distribution, Communication</u>	89
<u>SECTION 1.(a).J Landfills</u>	94
<u>Description of Landfills - None</u>	94
<u>SECTION 1.(a).K Village Borders</u>	95
<u>Irregular Borders</u>	95
<u>SECTION 1(b), TERRITORY BEYOND THE CORE</u>	98
<u>SECTION 1.(b).A Village Population</u>	99
<u>Population Estimate of Village</u>	99
<u>SECTION 1.(b).B</u>	102
<u>Isolated Village Not Applicable</u>	102
<u>SECTION 1.(b).C Future Development</u>	103
<u>Developable Territory</u>	103
<u>Availability of Sewer and Water</u>	107
<u>SECTION 2 (a) TAX REVENUE</u>	108
<u>SECTION 2.(a).A Taxes and Municipal Budgets</u>	109
<u>Tax Revenue</u>	109
<u>Village of Washington 2026 Proposed Budget</u>	110
<u>Fund Balance</u>	111
<u>Debt Service</u>	111
<u>Municipal Tax Rate</u>	112
<u>SECTION 2.(a).B Equalized Values</u>	114
<u>Estimate of Equalized Value</u>	114
<u>SECTION 2.(a).C Financial Reports</u>	115
<u>Town Financial Reports and Equalized Value – 5 Years</u>	115
<u>SECTION 2.(a).D Special Purpose Districts</u>	115
<u>No Special Service Districts in Territory</u>	115
<u>SECTION 2.(a).E Service Agreements</u>	116
<u>SECTION 2.(a).F Capital Improvement Plan</u>	117
<u>SECTION 2 (b) LEVEL OF SERVICES</u>	118
<u>SECTION 2.(b).A Current Town Services</u>	119
<u>Description of Services</u>	119
<u>Service Departments</u>	119
<u>SECTION 2.(b).B Resident Satisfaction with Current Services</u>	123
<u>Intervenors Sewer and Water</u>	123
<u>SECTION 2.(b).C Facilities and Assets</u>	124
<u>Buildings and Cemetery</u>	124
<u>Village Equipment Assets</u>	124

<u>SECTION 2.(b).D Continuation of Municipal Services</u>	125
<u>Service Agreements</u>	125
<u>Law Enforcement</u>	125
<u>Fire Protection</u>	126
<u>EMS</u>	128
<u>SECTION 2 (c) IMPACT ON THE REMAINDER OF THE TOWN</u>	129
<u>SECTION 2.(c).A Service Impacts</u>	130
<u>Service Impacts</u>	130
<u>Political Impacts</u>	130
<u>Environmental and Land Use Impacts</u>	130
<u>SECTION 2.(c).B Special Districts</u>	130
<u>Impact on Special Purpose Districts – None</u>	131
<u>SECTION 2.(c).C Financial Impacts to Remnant Town</u>	131
<u>Financial Impacts to Town</u>	131
<u>Town of Washington 2026 Proposed Budget</u>	132
<u>SECTION2 (d), IMPACT UPON THE METROPOLTIAN COMMUNITY</u>	135
<u>SECTION 2.(d).A Intergovernmental Cooperation</u>	136
<u>General</u>	136
<u>Cooperation with Area Jurisdictions</u>	136
<u>Emergency Services</u>	137
<u>Housing Diversity</u>	138
<u>SECTION 2.(d) B Positive Impact on Metropolitan Community</u>	139
<u>Consistency of Policy, Regulatory, Service Issues</u>	139
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	139
<u>List of APPENDICES</u>	141

Introduction

The Petitioners seek approval from the Incorporation Review Board (IRB) to hold a referendum to incorporate a portion of the Town of Washington as the Village of Washington as a metropolitan Village. The petitioners seek incorporation of the Village to protect the character of the proposed Village, control land uses and development within its boundaries, and preserve the jurisdictional boundaries. Incorporation would positively impact the entire metropolitan area by fostering better governmental relations and preserving the local character amidst an expanding urban landscape.

The Town of Washington is renowned for its natural beauty, charm, strong neighborhoods, and low crime rate. The Town's topography features steep slopes and ridges, rolling hills, and lowland areas that contrast sharply with the City of Eau Claire's flat terrain.

The following sections establish that the Incorporation Petition satisfies all of the necessary criteria and factors to allow for an incorporation referendum. Accordingly, the petitioners request that the Incorporation Review Board approve the Petition and that the circuit court order a referendum and to certify the incorporation of the Village.

Strong Public and Community Support for Incorporation

The incorporation has garnered overwhelming support from Town residents and leaders from surrounding municipalities, reflecting a shared commitment to a collective vision and proactive community and land use development. Incorporation would benefit the Town of Washington and the surrounding areas, enhance autonomy for Town residents, and provide a stronger framework for local governance.

Stakeholder and Public Engagement in the Incorporation Process

Lost acreage, non-unanimous annexations, and the placement of higher density city developments on annexed Town territory changing the landscape of the Town of Washington reignited a community conversation about annexation and incorporation. As a result, in December of 2023 and March of 2024 the Town Chair addressed residents in the Town newsletter to answer questions regarding annexation, extraterritorial jurisdiction, and possible incorporation into a village. As a result, Board members and staff heard from residents through phone calls, letters, and emails who encouraged the Town to explore becoming a village.

At the January 24, 2024, Town Board meeting, Becker Professional Services spoke to the Board regarding incorporation feasibility. On April 18, 2024, the Town Board approved hiring Becker Professional Services to evaluate case studies and to hold listening sessions with Town residents. Town residents were sent postcards inviting them to an Incorporation Listening Session at the Town Hall on June 18, 2024. 211 Town residents attended. The Town Board polled those in attendance with slips of paper, asking people to respond to the question "Do you favor filing a petition for incorporation?" The written responses were strongly in favor; 92 – Yes, 2 – No, and 6 – need more information.

After receiving community feedback, the Town Board unanimously voted to authorize the Administrator and consultants to take all necessary steps to incorporate a portion of the Town into a village. As a result of this meeting and overwhelming community support, Robert Solberg and Jackie Vold moved forward as the representative and the alternative representative,

respectively, with the incorporation petition, and gathered the requisite number of signatures to commence incorporation, which is incorporated in Appendix M.

Residents in both the proposed Village and in the remnant Town areas approached Town officials as to how they could assist in the process. The required signatures for the petition were obtained in only a few days with hundreds coming forward to sign. In addition, 58 resident landowners in the remnant Town came to the office to sign a document showing support of the incorporation.

The Town has been providing updates on the incorporation process to residents through informational meetings, two of which were held on September 10 and 12, 2024, and through the Town newsletter and website.

Community Development Support and Growth

Washington residential and commercial development remains strong, making the community a hub for family living and recreation. Washington is home to manufacturing, retailers, small businesses, and parks centralized near the main thoroughfare of State Highway 93, with quality subdivisions extending both to the east and west. Washington has made investments in this area to carry on the tradition of highly sought after neighborhoods, beautiful landscapes, and recreational opportunities. Improvements have included residential and commercial on-site wastewater treatment facilities, interconnected recreational paths, a park and well positioned open spaces. The Town Board acknowledges the importance of these residential subdivisions and retail areas in enriching the community and leading to desirable growth.

While the Town is requesting a large area for incorporation, over 2,800 acres of land (27% of the territory) is impacted by water, through shoreland zoning, or steep slopes, limiting the area suitable for new development. The remaining territory beyond the densest square mile is expecting significant development within the next three years and beyond as much of the developable open land is zoned for transition from agriculture to developed land uses. There are significant market pressures to develop. Washington prefers a more clustered approach to development, aligning with the topographic and environmental challenges of developing in the area as well as resident preferences.

As a metropolitan village, Washington can determine its own destiny without the limitations placed on towns. This would include protection of boundaries, zoning authority, shoreland zoning authority, complete platting authority, extraterritorial zoning, and thriving economic development.

Reasons for Seeking Incorporation

The electors and freeholders in the territory to be incorporated have submitted the Incorporation Petition for numerous reasons. The key reasons are highlighted below, but the driving force behind the incorporation petition is preserving the community's identity and protecting its future as an independent governmental entity.

1. The area proposed for incorporation is an existing community of approximately 5,423 residents functioning for all practical purposes as a village. The residents of the proposed incorporation area strongly identify with the local government and culture they know as Washington and want to preserve and maintain high quality municipal services in a fiscally responsible and operationally responsive manner.

2. The residents of the area proposed for incorporation would gain full local control of zoning and land use for all property in the incorporated area and would no longer be subject to extraterritorial jurisdiction that limits development. Extraterritorial land division regulations from neighboring cities create large minimum lot sizes that effectively prohibit development within large portions of the Town. This curtails private property rights and means the Town and property owners cannot exercise autonomy.
3. As a Village, Washington would no longer be under County zoning control. This was a contentious issue in 2022, when the Town Board recommended rezoning land within the Town for a proposed rural subdivision that was consistent with the recently reviewed and revised Town and County Comprehensive Plans, the County Zoning Ordinance, and the County Farmland Preservation Plans and an Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Eau Claire. Yet, the County Planning and Development Committee and County Board ignored the recommendations for approval by their own staff and Comprehensive Plan and denied the request.
4. Incorporation will also eliminate the extra costs and time delays of multi-jurisdictional review by the Town, County and City for zoning and land use matters.
5. Incorporation will create permanent boundaries. This will provide a direct benefit to planning future infrastructure and development. Incorporation will reduce the inefficiencies that arise in the provision of services due to annexations by an adjacent city. It will also eliminate the loss of land and tax base from annexations.
6. Incorporation will protect the tax base by ensuring that annexations do not occur, which will allow the new Village to retain its low tax rate and continue to provide services at no less than the current level.
7. Currently the Town has very limited tax increment financing powers and city approval is required for any tax increment districts within the extra-territorial area. Incorporation would allow for the use of a full suite of financial instruments for larger infrastructure and facility projects to accommodate development demand.
8. An important reason for incorporation is to protect and enhance the Town's identity, character, and further improve its ability to be an economic engine in northwest Wisconsin. The Town is unique and is a highly sought after area in the real estate market. The Town has had success in supporting residential and commercial development but has been held back by the limitations inherent to town government. Limitations include regulation by other governmental entities that may prohibit development unless annexed or that increase development costs in terms of time and money spent with no increased benefits to the Town or the developer. Incorporation will also ensure that any major investments the Town makes in infrastructure, land acquisition for public and private use, and all other such investments will be protected.

Impact of Annexations

Annexation is a community concern. Since 2005, over 1,800 acres (2.8 square miles) have been annexed from the Town of Washington. Annexations from neighboring municipalities and subsequent city development has made long range Town planning very difficult and uncertain, has changed the landscape and uniqueness of the community, and has proved very costly to

the Town. Annexations have fragmented the community, created Town islands in Eau Claire and city islands in the Town affecting government efficiency.

The Town of Washington has been affected by 203 annexations, primarily to the City of Eau Claire, with a smaller number to the City of Altoona. The tables below show the annexations that have occurred over the past twenty years. Altogether over 1,811.34 acres of land have been annexed from the Town of Washington to adjacent municipalities over the past twenty years alone. Figures 1 and 2 below shows historical annexations from Washington to Eau Claire, 2005 – 2025 and annexations from Washington to Altoona, 2005 – 2025.

Figure 1: Annexations From Washington to Eau Claire, 2005 – 2025

Petition ID	Annexor	Annexee	Ord #	Date	Population	Acreage
<u>14744</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7577	04/29/2025	2	0.49
<u>14743</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7576	04/29/2025	0	2.32
<u>14740</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7575	04/29/2025	0	32.62
<u>14741</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7574	04/29/2025	0	2.24
<u>14684</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7546	08/20/2024	0	18.4
<u>14616</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7523	10/03/2023	1	0.45
<u>14607</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7522	10/03/2023	0	2
<u>14570</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7503	04/03/2023	2	438.34
<u>14533</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7488	11/01/2022	0	18.2
-	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7483	10/04/2022	0	90.45
<u>14514</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7478	08/02/2022	0	7.84
<u>14427</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7445	09/21/2021	0	6.34
<u>14384</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7427	05/18/2021	0	0.47
<u>14375</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7423	05/04/2021	0	0.74
<u>14361</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7410	03/02/2021	0	70.5
<u>14354</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7403	12/08/2020	7	0.7
<u>14324</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7384	08/11/2020	0	0.75
<u>14229</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7333	08/27/2019	0	15.24
<u>14222</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7331	08/13/2019	0	40.8
<u>14174</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7312	12/11/2018	0	35.77
<u>14056</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7253	12/19/2017	0	32.75
<u>14045</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7245	09/12/2017	0	2.08
<u>14019</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7232	07/02/2017	0	54.15
<u>14008</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7223	05/14/2017	2	1.89
<u>13902</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7169	12/27/2015	0	3.6
<u>13838</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7132	04/19/2015	4	0.8
<u>13837</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7133	04/19/2015	2	17
<u>13829</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7129	03/15/2015	0	2.8
<u>13790</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7098	08/31/2014	3	1
<u>13704</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7063	09/15/2013	0	1
<u>13647</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7046	02/17/2013	1	1.2
<u>13617</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7019	09/16/2012	0	50.7

Petition ID	Annexor	Annexee	Ord #	Date	Population	Acreage
<u>13619</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	7021	10/14/2012	0	3
<u>13535</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6970	07/03/2011	2	0.94
<u>13531</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6966	06/19/2011	1	0.97
<u>13441</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6918	04/18/2010	2	7.1
<u>13378</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6887	09/27/2009	0	66.5
<u>13294</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6837	09/14/2008	0	0.44
<u>13263</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6827	06/15/2008	1	0.49
<u>13236</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6820	04/08/2008	0	3.96
<u>13047</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6757	05/08/2007	0	7.6
<u>12956</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6723	11/14/2006	0	134.3
<u>12954</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6724	11/14/2006	0	2.42
<u>12948</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6717	10/24/2006	6	1.3
<u>12919</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6704	08/22/2006	2	
<u>12689</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6630	09/27/2005	2	
<u>12688</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6629	09/27/2005	0	
<u>12514</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6576	03/08/2005	0	
<u>12518</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6575	03/08/2005	0	
<u>12502</u>	18221 C Eau Claire	18024 T Washington	6570	02/08/2005	0	35.7
Total						1,218.35

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Municipal Data System

Figure 2: Annexations from Washington to Altoona, 2005 – 2025

Petition ID	Annexor	Annexee	Ord #	Date	Population	Acreage
<u>14574</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	5A-23	06/26/2023	2	122.13
<u>14508</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	6A-22	07/26/2022	4	19.64
<u>14476</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	3B-22	03/31/2022	0	122.1
<u>14437</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	10B-21	10/22/2021	0	5.27
-	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	4B-18	05/10/2018	0	30
-	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	11B-15	12/01/2015	0	5
<u>13890</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	11A-15	11/23/2015	0	0.48
<u>13502</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	10A-10	01/15/2014	1	28.24
<u>13655</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	3C-13	04/22/2013	0	11.8
-	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	8C-11	09/27/2011	1	2.41
<u>13261</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	5C-08	07/09/2008	7	
<u>13240</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	4C-08	05/27/2008	0	32
<u>12566</u>	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	4B-05	10/26/2005	0	50.92
-	18201 C Altoona	18024 T Washington	10A-02	10/26/2005	1	163
Total						592.99

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Municipal Data System

Incorporation Review Process

The incorporation process involves three main approvals before the proposed Village can formally incorporate. First, since this is a petition for a metropolitan village, the circuit court must determine that the proposed incorporated area satisfies the following criteria:

1. The territory is at least four-square miles. Wis. Stat. § 66.0205(5).
2. The population is at least 2,500. Wis. Stat. § 66.0205(3).
3. The territory includes at least one square mile of land with at least 500 residents. Wis. Stat. § 66.0205(3).

On July 23, 2025 the Eau Claire County Circuit Court held a court hearing with the Honorable Jon Theisen presiding. The Town of Washington and the City of Eau Claire were the only parties to the case. All parties stipulated that the proposed incorporated area, as amended by stipulation, met the circuit court standards. Judge Theisen determined that the Petition satisfied the above criteria and referred the Petition to the Incorporation Review Board for further review, with a modified legal description of the territory stipulated to by the parties. The order is incorporated as Appendix N. The revised legal description approved by the circuit court is included as Appendix O.

Next, the Incorporation Review Board must evaluate the following criteria to determine if the standards of state law have been met and an incorporation referendum can be held.

1. Whether the incorporated territory is reasonably homogeneous and compact, considering the natural boundaries, “natural drainage basin, soil conditions, present and potential transportation facilities, previous political boundaries, boundaries of school districts, shopping and social customs.” Wis. Stat. § 66.0207(1)(a).
2. “The territory beyond the most densely populated square mile shall have the potential for residential or other urban land use development on a substantial scale within the next 3 years.” §66.0207(1)(bc).
3. The IRB must also determine that incorporation is in the public interest after considering the following factors:
 - a. “The present and potential sources of tax revenue appear sufficient to defray the anticipated cost of governmental services at a local tax rate which compares favorably with the tax rate in a similar area for the same level of services.” Wis. Stat. § 66.0207(2)(a).
 - b. “The level of governmental services desired or needed by the residents of the territory compared to the level of services offered by the proposed village ... and the level available from a contiguous municipality” that has intervened. Wis. Stat. § 66.0207(2)(b).
 - c. “The impact, financial and otherwise, upon the remainder of the town from which the territory is to be incorporated.” Wis. Stat. § 66.0207(2)(c).
 - d. “The effect upon the future rendering of governmental services both inside the territory proposed for incorporation and elsewhere within the metropolitan community.” Wis. Stat. § 66.0207(2)(d).

If the Incorporation Review Board determines that the petition complies with Wis. Stat. § 66.0207, then the Incorporation Review Board approves the proposed incorporation for referendum, and the circuit court orders an incorporation referendum. Wis. Stat. §§ 66.0207(1) and 66.0211(1). If a majority of votes at the referendum are in favor of incorporation, the circuit court clerk certifies that fact with the Secretary of Administration, and then the Secretary of Administration issues a certificate of incorporation. Wis. Stat. § 66.0211(5).