

## Town of Washington

### Incorporating into a Village Frequently Asked Questions

#### **When was the petition to incorporate part of the Town of Washington filed with the state?**

The Town of Washington filed the petition on September 18, 2024. 625 qualified electors signed the petition – twelve and a half times the 50 signatures required for filing. In addition, 53 people outside of the proposed village territory signed a document in support of the petition.

#### **Why would the Town incorporate into a village?**

- The Town of Washington wants to ensure that it has the ability to control and determine its own land use, plan for its future, and act on behalf of its residents to preserve the landscape, character and community its residents have built together since 1866.
- Regulation, growth pressure, and annexation by the City of Eau Claire has and will continue to erode town borders and change the landscape, quality, and character of the Town of Washington. Village status would provide for fixed borders, local control, and area stability.
- On June 25<sup>th</sup> the City of Eau Claire passed a resolution stating its willingness to annex the territory of the proposed village. That area is more than half the size of the City of Eau Claire.

#### **Why do the City of Eau Claire and City of Altoona have the ability to determine the Town of Washington's land use?**

- Jurisdictional boundaries between cities and towns favor cities. The City of Eau Claire controls land use within three (3) miles of its borders with towns. That means that City priorities outweigh Town priorities in a large portion of the Town's territory. The City of Altoona controls land use within 1.5 miles of its borders.
- As it sits now, Town residents cannot elect those who determine a large part of the Town's land use. Only incorporation will give Washington residents the ability to control their own land uses - an issue more important than ever given the pace of growth and development.

#### **Can the City of Eau Claire continue to annex lands during the incorporation process?**

The filing of the incorporation petition stops all annexation in the proposed territory until the incorporation matter is decided.

#### **What land use regulations would village and new town landowners be subject to?**

- Village landowners will be regulated by the village. Incorporation reduces regulation and puts an end to regulation without representation.

- New Town landowners within 1.5 miles of the City of Altoona would still be subject to regulation from the City of Altoona.

### **Can the entire Town be incorporated into a village?**

Unfortunately, the Wisconsin Department of Administration incorporation criteria does not allow us to petition to incorporate the whole town. Standards for incorporation include a minimum area, population, density, compactness, ability to grow and positive regional impact.

### **What area is defined as the potential village in the petition for incorporation?**

In general, the area of the Town of Washington south of the City of Eau Claire to the Town of Pleasant Valley line and the pockets of the town near E. Hamilton Ave.

The proposed village would have an estimated population of 5,240, more than double the minimum standard required, and would be approximately 19.5 square miles, almost five times the minimum area required for incorporation within a metropolitan area within 5 miles of a 2<sup>nd</sup> class city (Eau Claire). The new Town of Washington would cover more than 34.5 square miles of predominantly agricultural land with an estimated population of 2,526.

### **Would this be a traditional village such as Fall Creek, Fairchild, or Elk Mound?**

No, the new village would be considered a metropolitan village. That means it is within a metropolitan community and therefore, would not necessarily have a village center or “downtown” like a traditional village.

### **What will the new Village’s name be?**

We imagine that the new Village’s Board of Supervisors will make naming the village one of its first orders of business once the petition has been approved and the referendum is passed.

### **What is the process to become a village?**

- **Petition Preparation:** Significant research in resident input is gathered to determine whether the town at least meets the standards set by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. With research and input, the Town has concluded that our petition exceeds these standards and has overwhelming support from residents. A comprehensive petition has been prepared.
- **Petition Signed:** After at least 10 days after notifying residents of the intention to circulate an incorporation petition, the petition can be signed by qualified residents in the proposed village area.
- **Circuit Court Review:** After the petition has enough signatures, the petition is submitted to the Circuit Court for initial review.
- **Incorporation Review Board:** If the petition meets basic standards, it is reviewed by the

Incorporation Review Board. Neighboring municipalities may support or oppose the incorporation.

- Referendum: If approved by the Review Board, the Town will hold a referendum on the incorporation. If successful, an incorporation certificate is issued by the Department of Administration.

You can see the process detailed by the Wisconsin Department of Administration [here](#).

### **If a portion of the Town of Washington becomes a village how would the Town and Village be managed?**

The new village and new town would each have their own governing bodies, ordinances, budgets, and elections. The village and town would move forward “separate but together,” sharing resources and staff by agreement, much like the Village of Lake Hallie and the Town of Hallie do now, 20 years after their successful incorporation process in 2004.

While most staff would be shared between the new Town and new Village, the two proposed municipalities require their own clerk.

### **What is the Town’s financial position today? What would change if incorporation passes?**

The Town of Washington is financially stable, debt free, and has ample funds available for planned and emergency capital expenditures. We are a “unicorn” among municipalities.

Assuming incorporation, the new Town and Village would divide the assets proportionally by agreement. We anticipate that both the new Town and the Village would be financially stable, debt free, with ample funds from day one.

### **What about the budget and tax levy?**

We have determined budgets for both the village and the new town. The new village has a slightly higher level of operating costs relative to the town and would likely have a higher share of assets - facilities, equipment, and infrastructure. Residents of the town would be taxed based on the tax rate established by the town. Residents of the village would be taxed based on the rate established by the village. The town has a long history of being fiscally astute and will look to continue that tradition.

### **Will the new Village need its own police department like the Village of Lake Hallie?**

No. The new Village would require additional law enforcement services to allow for focused coverage. This would be provided by contract through the Eau Claire County Sheriff’s Office.

**How will becoming a Village impact fire department service?**

The Township Fire Department is a successful decades-long collaboration that provides exceptional service to residents in the Towns of Washington, Pleasant Valley, Union, Seymour, and Brunswick. The Township Fire Department has mutual aid agreements with the City of Eau Claire, the City of Altoona, as well as many other municipalities.

Emergency services throughout the county work on a “everyone rolls” basis, where the closest fire or law enforcement resources go to reported fire or crisis to ensure the fastest response time possible. Jurisdiction is determined during the process but does not impede response time. The towns, cities, and villages in the county have a long history of working together in this way to serve and protect our larger community.

**What additional utilities and services would be offered by a Village, if any?**

Initially the village would not have additional utilities, and it would be up to the village board to determine the need for such items in the future. It is anticipated that fire, ambulance, and police service would be by agreement as it is now. The village would have its own zoning and land use regulations and the responsibility of administering these regulations whether by staff or contract.

**I live in the Town but have City of Eau Claire water. Will this change with incorporation?**

The Town filing for incorporation would not negate city services that you receive now related to the 1980’s City acquisition of the Washington Heights Sanitary District.

**Will the village special assess landowners for road reconstruction projects as the City of Eau Claire does?**

The City does special assess landowners for road projects affronting their property. The Town of Washington does **not** special-assess landowners for projects affronting their property. Road projects are funded through the general fund. We don’t intend to go to a special assessment model to fund road projects in the Town or Village for the foreseeable future due to large road frontages with the larger parcels that characterize this area. A change to the funding model would be a matter of the governing board.

**What are the costs and timeline to complete the incorporation process?**

This will be a major undertaking. Costs include consultants, attorneys, and staff to research, develop and submit the petition to the Circuit Court and the Incorporation Review Board and to establish data and framework for the operation of the new Town and Village. There is a fee involved for the Incorporation Review Board to review the petition. The initiative is estimated at \$200,000; more if things get complicated or combative. The process in total will take 1.5 to 2 years and up to 3 years with delays and possible resubmittals.

**Is public comment allowed at the circuit court hearing?**

While the public can attend the circuit court hearing, public comments are not permitted.

**Can residents in the new town annex their land to the new village?**

Yes, however there is a 5-year moratorium on such annexations. The property would also need to be contiguous to the village.

**What is the difference between city density and village density for development?**

For residential development, the city has low, medium, and high-density development. Low density housing is defined as one to two family housing with a density of 2.5 to 6 units per acre. Lot sizes are 6,000 sq ft and up. Medium and high-density housing includes townhouses, 4, 6 and 8-unit buildings, and low and high-rise apartment buildings.

The village housing will be low density with one to two family dwellings and may include limited condominium offerings. Village developments would likely include lot sizes from 20,000 sq ft to 2 acres.

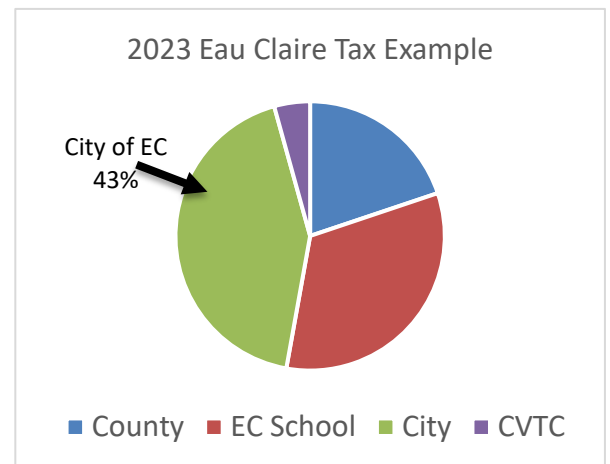
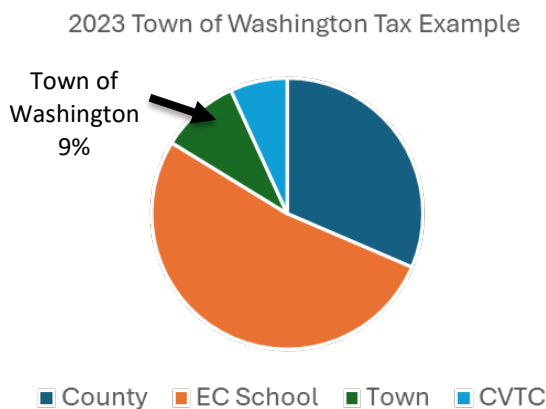
**What’s the difference between Town taxes and City of Eau Claire taxes today?**

In 2023 the town tax rate per \$1,000 assessed home value is \$1.09, the City of Eau Claire’s tax rate is \$7.85. The Town’s net tax rate is \$11.57, while the City’s net tax rate is \$18.33.

You can see how taxes compare today between the Town and the City, as well as the percentage of the total tax that the Town of Washington receives, and the City of Eau Claire receives accordingly below.

The calculations on these charts and tables are based on your current bill (2023).

***Portion of 2023 Tax Bill That Goes to Town of Washington or City of Eau Claire***



### Tax Comparison 2023 Town of Washington to City of Eau Claire

2023 Town Home Assessment	2023 Total Tax Bill Town of Washington	2023 Total Tax Bill Eau Claire	Total Difference	2023 Town of Washington Tax Portion (9%)	2023 City of Eau Claire Portion (43%)
	<i>Total Net Tax Rate \$11.57 per \$1,000</i>	<i>Total Net Tax Rate \$18.33 per \$1,000</i>	Difference	<i>\$1.09 per \$1,000 assessed value</i>	<i>\$7.85 per \$1,000 assessed value</i>
\$170,000	\$1,960	\$3,110	+\$1,150	\$185	\$1,334
\$350,000	\$4,050	\$6,420	+\$2,370	\$382	\$2,748
\$500,000	\$5,780	\$9,160	+\$3,380	\$545	\$3,925
\$750,000	\$8,680	\$13,750	+\$5,070	\$818	\$5,888
\$900,000	\$10,400	\$16,500	+\$6,100	\$981	\$7,065

### Estimated Tax Example with Incorporation

The calculations on these charts and tables utilize the 2023 tax figures for taxes collected in 2024. The new Village and Town tax rates are based on budget estimates for 2025. The new Village's tax rate is estimated at \$1.90, and the new Town's tax rate is estimated at \$1.22.

2023 Town Home Assessment	2023 Town of Washington	2024 New Village of Washington	2024 New Town of Washington	2023 Total Tax Bill EC
	<i>\$1.09 per \$1,000 assessed value</i>	<i>\$1.90 per \$1,000 assessed value estimated</i>	<i>\$1.22 per \$1,000 assessed value estimated</i>	<i>\$7.85 per \$1,000 assessed value</i>
\$170,000	\$1,960	\$2,100	\$1,990	\$3,110
\$350,000	\$4,050	\$4,330	\$4,090	\$6,420

\$500,000	\$5,780	\$6,190	\$5,850		\$9,160
\$750,000	\$8,670	\$9,280	\$8,770		\$13,750
\$900,000	\$10,400	\$11,140	\$10,530		\$16,500

*Note: Additionally, The City of Eau Claire charges sewer and water user fees and assesses special charges to landowners for road construction, reconstruction, associated improvements, and utility extensions affording landowner's property based on linear feet of frontage. The City has also imposed a wheel tax on city residents to supplement funds for road projects.*