



RACINE COUNTY TOMORROW

Racine County's Smart Growth Newsletter

Smart Growth Information and Comment Opportunities

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This summer, the Racine County Smart Growth project benefited from several opportunities to provide information to community members and stakeholders regarding the comprehensive plan while gathering input on current and future development in the County, and on the plan itself.

On July 23, Julie Anderson and Dave Schilling spoke at the Racine Board of Realtors meeting, presenting background information on the State comprehensive planning requirements and a detailed update on Racine County's multi-jurisdictional planning effort, including the recently completed housing element.

In the following days, the Smart Growth project took part in the Racine County Fair, which this year enjoyed ideal weather and near-record high attendance. Numerous fairgoers from around the County, Region and State stopped by the Smart Growth information table to examine maps and photos, pick up educational materials, and discuss their views about land use issues in the County.



On September 6, comprehensive planning information, from both Racine and Kenosha Counties, was displayed at the annual UW-Extension Southeastern Wisconsin Rural Landowners Workshop and Expo, held in the Town of Burlington. Over 100 people participated in the Expo, an all-day educational event aimed at rural landowners, horse owners, existing farmers, and people who are thinking about getting involved in an agricultural enterprise.

At both the County Fair and the Expo, aerial photos highlighting the change in land uses in the Towns of Burlington and Rochester and the Village of Wind Point between 1963 and 2005 generated the most interest, with people expressing positive reactions to the signs of progress and economic development, as well as concerns about the loss of farmland and natural resources. These photos were generated by SEWRPC and are now available on the Smart Growth website: <http://racine.uwex.edu/cnred/SmartGrowth.html>.



Draft Chapter X: Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Element

One of the nine State-required comprehensive plan elements, the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element must compile recommendations for the conservation and effective management of these resources in Racine County through the plan design year of 2035.

To identify agricultural and natural resource issues, community input from the countywide public opinion survey and public informational meetings was reviewed, along with data from the inventory of agricultural, natural and cultural resources (Chapter III). Specific goals, objectives and policies were developed to address these issues, and they can be found in the complete draft element, available on the Smart Growth website or at the County Planning & Development Department.

Through the advisory committee's review process, it was determined that additional information and recommendations—specifically addressing countywide drainage issues—were necessary for this element; these are now being drafted.

Agricultural Resources: In 2000, about 57% of Racine County (196 square miles) was farmland, rural residential land or open space. By 2035, it is anticipated that these lands will decrease by 6%—that is, a loss of approximately 11 square miles. Overall, the comprehensive plan recommends that land designated as “prime agricultural land” by communities, and areas that contain the most productive soils, should remain in agricultural or rural residential uses. Nonprime farmland that is within planned sanitary sewer service areas is expected to convert to urban uses, as market demand dictates and opportunities arise for significant economic growth.

Natural Resources: Primary environmental corridors are defined as natural resource areas that are at least two miles long, 200 feet wide, and 400 acres in area. These areas are essential to the overall environmental quality of the County, and should remain in natural, open space. Since environmental corridors are typically ill-suited for urban development due to soil limitations, steep slopes, or flooding potential, their preservation will also help to avoid creating new problems. In 2035, primary environmental corridors will encompass about 37 square miles, or 11%, of the County—a net increase of 1.4 square miles over the existing 2000 area.

The element also contains recommendations for the preservation and management of park and open space sites, groundwater resources, and nonmetallic mineral resources.

Cultural Resources: These resources provide the County and its communities with a sense of heritage, identity, and civic pride. Maintaining, developing, and enhancing cultural activities will not only improve tourism in Racine County, but also bolster the quality of life for residents.

Some techniques to preserve farmland and natural resources are described, such as conservation easements, conservation subdivisions (see page 4), and purchase of development rights programs. There are also a variety of programs offering financial and technical assistance to help protect resources in Racine County; these are summarized at the conclusion of Chapter XI.



OVERALL ELEMENT GOALS

- Maintain the agricultural base, preserving productive farmland and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Maintain the environmental assets of the community and develop methods to protect and preserve valuable natural features, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces, groundwater resources, and floodplains.
- Preserve open space to enhance the total quality of the environment, maximize essential natural resource availability, give form and structure to urban development, and provide opportunities for a full range of outdoor recreation activities.
- Protect and enhance cultural structures, historic sites and districts, and archaeological sites.
- Encourage a public participation process that provides equity and fairness to landowners and other stakeholders, balanced with responsible land use.
- Guide future growth in a manner that preserves and enhances the quality of life and character of urban and rural communities.



Draft Chapter IX: Land Use Element

The Land Use Element provides the base and support for all the comprehensive plan's goals and objectives, and relates day-to-day development decisions to the County's long-range vision for its communities. According to State law, this element must contain goals, objectives, policies, programs and maps to guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property through the year 2035. When complete, the element will include the following:

- Existing land use conditions and trends
- Projected land use needs
- County land use plan map and each local community's land use map
- Urban development tools and techniques
- Goals, objectives, policies, and programs to guide the future development of the County through the year 2035

The land use element is intended to balance long-term growth in Racine County with a safe and sustainable environment, a strong agricultural base, and a well-preserved sense of the County's culture and heritage.

2035 Land Use Maps

Racine County began work on this element last year, with a series of meetings to develop community-level land use plan maps. Since the fall of 2007, every city, village, and town in Racine County has been working with the comprehensive planning team to update their land use map through the plan design year of 2035. When this process is complete, the maps will be combined to create the Racine County 2035 land use plan map. Any disagreements between jurisdictions regarding land uses that cannot be resolved through the comprehensive planning process will be addressed in the intergovernmental element of the plan.

Town of Norway Land Use Map

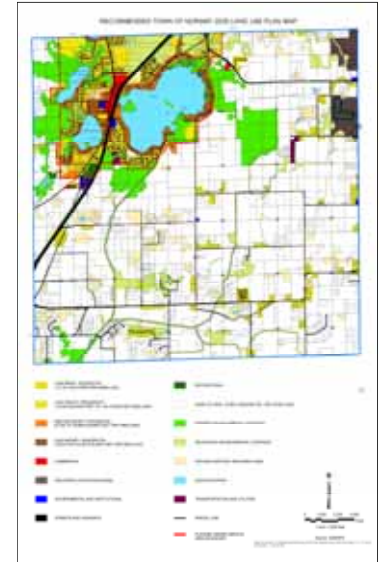
Of the County's eighteen communities, only the Town of Norway did not have an adopted land use map or master plan in place at the start of the comprehensive planning process. Through the efforts of a specially convened group of elected officials and residents, the Town endorsed its first land use map in July 2008 after an eight-month process. On July 9, residents and community stakeholders gathered for a public hearing at the municipal hall to examine the newly created map, and to learn about the Smart Growth project and how it may impact their town over the next 25 years.

By 2035, the Town of Norway projects that it will increase by about 400 households, which amounts to just under 800 new residents. Consideration was also given to the current and anticipated effects of development along the Highway 36 corridor. In order to accommodate this future growth, the Town designated areas that would be most suitable for urban residential uses, as well as additional land for commercial and industrial uses.

All 2035 land use maps that have been endorsed by local communities can be found on the Smart Growth website.

SOME PUBLIC INPUT ON LAND USE ISSUES

- Maintain and enhance community character and identity
- Balance urban and rural land uses
- Consider the impacts of growth in public infrastructure and environmental and economic sustainability
- Redevelop older urban and downtown areas
- Identify sufficient land to accommodate job growth and economic development
- Encourage the implementation of financial tools and incentives to preserve farmland and open space
- Protect surface water and ground water quality and quantity



TOWN OF NORWAY 2035 LAND USE MAP



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Send us your e-mail address and we can e-mail you the next newsletter!
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Development Techniques for Sustainability

There are numerous planning tools and techniques that promote integrated sustainable community development through the careful consideration of the interconnectivity of land use, housing, jobs, transportation options, schools, parks and other elements that comprise a community to meet overall density and community goals. Sustainability also involves resiliency of urban form and character, such as green infrastructure and green building techniques, to ease the strain on conventional municipal infrastructure and to reduce one's carbon footprint with more durable and energy efficient homes.

Conservation subdivisions are an example of a residential development technique designed to protect agricultural and natural areas and open space. These subdivisions preserve a significant portion of a site in common open space by minimizing individual lot sizes, while keeping the overall site density as specified by zoning ordinances. Locally, conservation subdivisions have been developed in the Village of Caledonia.

Planned unit development (PUD) is another technique to support sustainable community design, often used in urban areas. PUD is a type of overlay zoning district which encourages coordinated area site planning. This can lead to more efficient site design, preservation of common green space, inclusion of alternate transportation modes such as bike and pedestrian trails, lower costs for street construction and utility extension, and lower costs for maintenance. An area example of a PUD is Spring Brook Landing in the City of Burlington.

