

Land Use Synthesis

1. Interconnectedness of Land Uses.

Land use planning through its many incarnations (Farmland Preservation Plan, community plans) has been a part of Dane County for many decades. We were reminded again by the survey that Planning for future growth is important in the Dane County community.

Through this process, participants have learned that an individual piece of land can serve several purposes: farmland as a home, an economic engine, and as open space; parks as water recharge basins, wildlife areas and recreational opportunities; and many others. The citizens have also realized that land use changes can have impacts over several issues: The loss of one farm changes: community, traffic, water, wildlife, and local economics.

The groups have looked at both preservation and development through multiple lenses, for example: not all wildlife is beneficial to a farmer; how does development of a community impact the watershed? Through Educational efforts many issues were clarified. For one of the first times the discussion of quarries moved away from location toward the fact that they represent transitional land uses. With an effective life of 25 years for a quarry, there is the potential for some sort of redevelopment.

2. Agriculture should be valued as a prized portion of the Dane County community.

Identify areas of Dane County suitable for long-term preservation and viability of diverse agricultural enterprises and resources. Encourage protection of those areas for the benefit and use of current and future generations. Maintain Dane County's status as one of the nation's most productive and economically viable agricultural areas.

Roughly 80% of Dane County is in agricultural, open or "undeveloped" lands. Dane County has a long agricultural tradition, originally wheat, changed to dairy & corn after disease wiped out the wheat. To this day Dane County remains one of the top producing counties in the US. The Dane County Comprehensive Planning working groups realized that the term agriculture encompasses far more than the land needed to sustain it, agriculture is is:

- **A Lifestyle** – many people choose to live and work in a rural environment;
- **An infrastructure system** – farms, veterinarians, coops, fuel suppliers, implement dealers, bankers, consumers (cheese makers), distributors must all come together to make this economic system function;
- **A Business** – \$3.19 Billion Industry, one of the largest employers, open land can be held in farming and agriculture as long as it is economically viable. Dane County has a responsibility to help keep farming viable through the 21st century.
- **Wildlife Sustaining** – forested lands, lowlands and many other wildlife rich areas are connected by pastures and field pastures as well as fields and pastures sustaining an abundance of wildlife in and of themselves. Not all wildlife that benefits the county benefits the farmers.
- **Open Space, Rural Character & Community Separation** – agricultural lands contribute to all of these vital community goals, without this vital resources, Dane County takes a step toward becoming a much more urban county.
- **Local Crop & Food Production** – a segment of local agriculture produces products for farmers market & other local consumption, reducing the traditional food costs. (Less transportation, more \$ directly to the farmer, etc.)

3. Natural Resources

Natural Resources and water resources have long been the pride of Dane County. The vote on the 1999 Parks and Open Space Referendum echoed that opinion. The comprehensive plan should reinforce and improve upon the great work that has been and is being done by the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan and other groups. Development of an integrated countywide system of open space utilizing both public and privately held lands can help to meet the recreation needs of the residents of Dane County. As well as provide for some critical community separation and natural resource protection.

Promotion of a holistic approach to natural resource protection can contribute to:

- Economic and efficient land use;
- Increased wildlife habitat;
- More effective erosion control;
- Increased preservation of natural beauty;
- Improved groundwater recharge;
- Water quality protection;
- Overall ecosystem health.

Importance of these issues emerged again when the comprehensive plan survey results stated that when Dane County allocates its resources, water resources should be the number one priority. The water resources of Dane County (surface and groundwater) represent an integral part of our natural resources. This project looks at the connections between land-use changes and the impact on surface water and groundwater issues. The comprehensive plan will strive to protect, improve and rehabilitate the quality and quantity of water resources in Dane County, from groundwater to lakes and streams. The project hopes to enhance recreational opportunities associated with water resources while minimizing flood related issues.

4. Housing

Dane County should help insure that each community has the ability to provide a full range and adequate supply of housing that meets the needs of all persons in Dane County regardless of income levels, age groups, household sizes, and specific needs. Various types of housing will be needed and they will modify the landscape at various rates. Effective and efficient use of land for housing should maintain the quality of life we have all come to enjoy.

5. Economic Development

The Dane County area has been shown to be the regional hub for business and economic development in Central Wisconsin. Many people commute to our area for employment and many businesses develop in nearby places because of the economic engine we have here. A community, like Dane County, that has a robust, sustainable economy can enhance quality of life through quality employment and various ownership opportunities. Dane County should strive to improve business, industry and agriculture as well as promote workforce improvements.

6. Utilities and Community Facilities

With these tough fiscal times, Dane County needs to find the most efficient and affordable way to provide services to both current and future citizens. Knowing there is no “Silver bullet” to solve any energy issue, Dane County would best serve its citizens (or help them serve themselves) if it promoted the balance between production and conservation of energy. When siting, Dane County should locate people as close as possible to where the services and utilities are as well as locating the services as close as possible to the people.

7. More Effective Transportation

As we know, transportation has a substantial impact on land use; Dane County should continue to provide a transportation network that improves the movement of people and goods. As well as work to coordinate land use and transportation plans to ensure that transportation planning examines the full range of costs associated with infrastructure improvements and programs. Where possible, mode choices should be provided to allow citizens flexibility in their movement.

8. Foster Cooperative Environment.

During the time this plan was being created, residents were witness to many Dane County communities creating and/or renewing multiple cooperative relationships. Many of these were situations where Dane County had a limited role or no role at all. Through the survey, it was pointed out that Dane County may not have a direct role in some of these agreements but would be more effective as an active coordinator, mediator or facilitator. Intergovernmental Cooperation, when done well, can limit the amount of taxpayer dollars spent on “turf battles” and litigation, focusing the money on community based critical services. These existing agreements should be held up as prime examples for others to follow. Additionally, the County should explore all possibilities to strengthen its own role as facilitator as well as pursue its own intergovernmental agreements where possible.

“Respondents clearly felt that Dane County government should play an active role in all of the areas assessed in the survey. Across most of the planning elements, the primary preference expressed by respondents for the role of Dane County Government was to build cooperative relationships between local city, town, and village government agencies and other privately owned service providers.” -- from the Dane County Comprehensive Plan Survey.

This project will also set up a process aimed at fairly resolving disputes between governmental entities.