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FUDA has area plans on same page

By Ryan Dostalek

Tribune Reporter

For years Dane County municipalities have long fought with how growth within the county's boundaries should be handled. Some municipalities hold an eco-friendly view of expansion, keeping the lakes and watershed in the forefront of decisions. Other communities remain steadfast on maintaining agriculture and a rural way of life.

Several organizations have come and gone to help facilitate that growth and the differing opinions on how to do so. The most recent body – the Capital Region Plan Commission (CARPC) – has taken regional planning to a new level by requiring neighboring communities to band together to meld their growth plans.

The communities along the north shore of Lake Mendota – namely Middleton, Springfield, Waunakee and Westport – have joined forces to in an unprecedented planning partnership to identify areas of growth that could impact their neighbors. And to many planners' surprise, it's been highly successful.

The process, dubbed FUDA – or Future Urban Development Area – has the communities going through their comprehensive plans to determine where and how they would like to grow and sharing those ideas with their neighbors.

"We will all be adopting the same plans," village engineer Kevin Even said. "When we pick up a plan in Waunakee and it shows a growth area in (the Town) of Springfield, it will show the same growth area in Springfield's plan. That typically isn't the case when you compare neighboring plans."

Even said it's helping smooth the relationship with those municipalities dedicated to preserving agricultural areas and those communities hoping for growth. Yet Even admits it wasn't the first thought that went through planners' minds when CARPC required FUDA plans.

"Initially me and others were hesitant because we thought all of this work has already been done," Even said. "In reality, we're doing more than that. From a village perspective (the relationship) is great."

Tom Wilson, administrator for the Town of Westport agrees.

"Communities are working together," Wilson said enthusiastically, adding Westport FUDA steering committee members Tom Liebe and Ken Sipsma are "glowing" about how well the relationships are going.

Because FUDA has now become a requirement from CARPC, municipalities have had to continue a positive working relationship with the regional planning organization. But Even said that hasn't been a problem from a village perspective.

"I think we're all pleasantly surprised at how all of the communities, at least on the north side of Lake Mendota, are working with the CARPC staff," Even said. "There have been a lot of good initiatives coming from (CARPC); the CARPC staff has been outstanding."

CARPC is requiring all communities to be a part of FUDA planning before it approves any new growth initiatives. Even said that's going to make things much smoother in future planning changes.

At first Even said it seemed as if FUDA was going to add another level of bureaucracy when it comes to planning, but he said that hasn't been the case so far. He's recognized some conflict between some communities and CARPC, but said the village has yet to have much resistance from the organization for its growth areas.

"When we go into CARPC for urban expansion – for areas we want to grow – we'll have the supporting planning documents that allow us to continue to grow in a way we think is responsible, and that now CARPC staff thinks is responsible," he said. "It should ease the pain when we go and seek approval for our growth areas."

Even said the added planning through the FUDA and CARPC relationships have solidified already good working relationships with area communities, and it also should give confidence to residents that their local governments are exercising due diligence when it comes to planning for growth.

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