



# Comprehensive Planning Survey of Dane County Residents

*Prepared for:  
Dane County, Wisconsin  
June 9, 2005*



710 John Nolen Drive, Madison, WI 53713  
phone 608.246.3010 - fax 608.246.3019  
[www.ChamberlainResearch.com](http://www.ChamberlainResearch.com)

## Executive Summary

Dane County, like many counties in Wisconsin, is faced with developing a balanced approach to managing growth. A key component in the process of developing an effective and informed comprehensive plan is public awareness and involvement. Chamberlain Research Consultants, Inc., a full-service market research and consulting firm, was contracted to conduct a survey of Dane County residents to identify the breadth and depth of opinion of county residents. The Steering Committee for Dane County's Comprehensive Plan, along with the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources (ANCR); Housing and Economic Development (HED); and Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities (TUCF) working groups, gave guidance and direction during the process of designing and conducting the survey.

The steering committee and working groups developed goals and objectives and identified specific issues for nine of the comprehensive planning elements. The survey instrument itself was organized around the planning elements, with each element receiving its own section of the survey. Due to space and time constraints, along with issue priority, not all elements were included in the final survey. The eight elements evaluated during this survey consisted of Dane County housing; economic development; transportation; utilities and community facilities; agricultural, natural, and cultural resources; land use; intergovernmental cooperation; and public participation. This report summarizes the results from this collaborative survey effort to obtain the voice of Dane County residents to fully inform the comprehensive planning process.

The Dane County comprehensive planning survey was completed by 500 residents of Dane County during the spring of 2005. Eligible Dane County residents participated in this survey on-line or by completing a mailed paper survey. The extensive recruitment process entailed a multi-mode design of telephone recruits, on-line recruits, and on-line and mail surveys. The survey, which was organized into sections around the core planning elements, asked respondents to evaluate planning goals, offer recommendations on the roles Dane County should be playing in each area, and prioritize resource allocation.

## Planning Goals

Across all of the planning elements, the five goals with the largest percentage of respondents indicating that “considerably more attention is needed” in the future were:

Planning Element	Goal	Percentage of “Considerably More Attention is Needed” Responses
Land Use	Planning for future growth	55%
Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources	Managing water resources	54%
Economic Development	Keeping established businesses and industries in Dane County	52%
Economic Development	Creating quality employment and business ownership opportunities	46%
Economic Development	Attracting new businesses to Dane County	45%

The five goals where the largest percentage of respondents indicated that the current amount of attention is sufficient are listed in the table below. Note that this does not necessarily indicate that these are the areas respondents feel are currently best served, merely those with the least need for change.

Planning Element	Goal	Percentage of “Neither More nor Less Attention is Needed” Responses
1. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources	Managing mineral resources	37%
2. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources	Managing historical and archaeological resources	36%
3. Utilities and Community Facilities	Making available high-quality and affordable community services like rescue, police and fire protection	32%
4. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources	Managing wildlife resources	29%
5. Housing	Ensuring housing close to shopping and commercial centers	29%

Very few respondents indicated that any goal should receive less attention than it currently does.

## Role of County Government

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, or village government agencies and other privately owned service providers. There were a few exceptions to this general preference. These exceptions are:

1. In the Providing Utilities and Community Facilities section, the most frequently cited roles that Dane County Government should play were:
  - a. Promoting recycling
  - b. Promoting the development of renewable energy
  - c. Avoiding duplication of community services
  - d. Requiring housing developers to pay a share of the community facility cost
  
2. In the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resource Management section, as well as the Land Use section, there was not one definitive answer as to the role Dane County Government should play. Rather, there is an overarching theme across resource management areas to preserve the resource—whether it is productive farmland, water, or mineral resources—by steering new housing development away from the resource and toward more urban and suburban areas that have already been developed, in conjunction with tightening zoning regulations to limit development.

Across the elements, only a relative handful of respondents thought that government should step back and let markets decide, and few respondents expressed a preference for letting more local governments decide such issues. Respondents expressed a clear preference for county government to build cooperative relationships between governmental agencies of various levels and with private interests.

### **Prioritized Resource Allocation**

Respondents were asked to prioritize resource allocation in the Transportation; Utilities and Community Facilities; and Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resource Planning elements. The table below summarizes the respondents’ top priorities in these areas. Respondents clearly expressed that they prioritized water resources over other natural resources and roads and highways over other transportation options. In terms of utility and community facilities, respondents expressed a higher priority for making available services such as healthcare and childcare than for environmentally sound sewer, waste, recycling, and public utilities and affordable rescue services. In terms of promoting safe and efficient public utilities, respondents prioritized natural gas and electricity over recycling, water and sewer, solid waste, and telecommunications.

<b>Planning Element</b>	<b>Highest Priority</b>	<b>Percentage giving a rating of 1 – Highest Priority</b>
Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources	Water resources	51%
Transportation	Roads	50%
	Highways	47%
Utilities and Community Facilities	Healthcare	41%
	Gas and electricity	37%