

Introduction

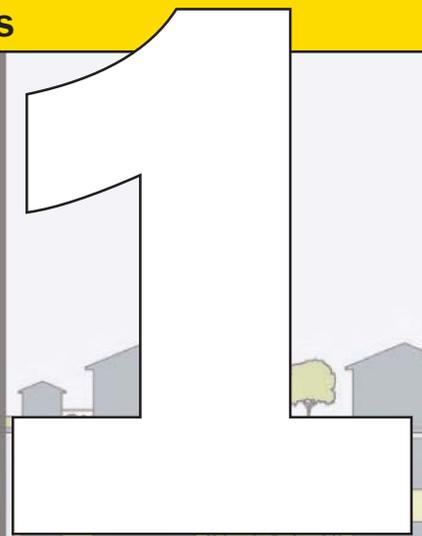


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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the City of Sun Prairie Comprehensive Plan! This plan is intended to guide future decision making regarding the growth and development of the City of Sun Prairie over the next two decades and beyond. It is also intended to satisfy the City’s requirements under Section 66.1001 Wisconsin Statutes, commonly known as Wisconsin’s “Smart Growth” laws or comprehensive planning statutes. As such, the plan will address, at a minimum, the nine planning elements listed below as required by the statutes.

PLAN ELEMENTS

- Issues and Opportunities
- Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Transportation
- Land Use
- Implementation

PLAN ORGANIZATION

This plan consists of two volumes. Volume 1 contains the background data and information necessary to understand the current planning context within the community at the time of preparation of the plan, as well as a set of appendices. The appendices contain information and studies related to the development of the plan, including details regarding the household survey and other public input received in association with the development of the plan. Volume 2 contains the goals, objectives, policies and recommendations that will be used to guide the urban growth of the City and its environs over the next several decades. This is Volume 2 – please refer to Volume 1 and the appendices for background data and more information providing the basis for the policies and recommendations contained herein.

Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide a clear and concise set of criteria that provides direction for the community for the future. It is organized around the nine required plan elements as outlined in the state statutes, and provides goals, objectives, policies and recommendations pertaining to each element. Recognizing that many of the issues facing the City do not always fall neatly into one single plan element, policies and recommendations dealing with some issues may be found in multiple plan elements. In addition, the issue of sustainability has emerged as an over-riding theme that weaves through all of the plan elements to varying degrees, and is covered as a topic within the Issues and Opportunities element.

SMART GROWTH

The term “Smart Growth” has become somewhat of a loaded term for those involved in the planning and development fields. Because it is often associated closely with movements such as the New Urbanism or Traditional Neighborhood Development, the term tends to raise questions and controversy for those who do not support these concepts. Although there is no single definition of what constitutes “Smart Growth,” it seems to be a widely misunderstood concept, and the term tends to be misused by both proponents and opponents, alike.

Sun Prairie believes that many of the goals and objectives of “Smart Growth” as a general concept are simply sound planning principles, and are key elements associated with building quality neighborhoods and attractive urban places. Nevertheless, this plan will avoid using this term wherever possible to avoid confusion and unnecessary debate over its meaning and intent, and instead shall refer to the state law as the “comprehensive planning statutes,” and this plan as the “City of Sun Prairie Comprehensive Plan” or just simply the “Comprehensive Plan.”

PURPOSE AND INTENT

The Comprehensive Plan is a resource for managing the short-range (within the next five to ten years) and long-range (ten years and beyond) growth of the City of Sun Prairie. It is designed to be a working document used by City officials and officials from neighboring jurisdictions as a policy guide to direct community development decisions, to assist with community facility budgeting, and as a tool to focus and stimulate private housing, business and industrial investment in the community.

Creating a comprehensive plan is only the first step in directing community development. Subsequent planning efforts must focus on providing direct connections between the plan’s recommendations and policies and actual land development activities. The most effective means of accomplishing this objective

is to adopt development regulations that directly implement Master Plan policies and recommendations, and for the Plan Commission to evaluate all development related proposals in the context of whether or not they are consistent with the plan. Reference to the recommendations and policies of the plan when development decisions are being made will help establish the legal defensibility of those decisions. Therefore, the City's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, Official Map and other relevant ordinances should be amended as needed to implement the plan.

In addition to modeling City ordinances and regulations after the policies and recommendations contained within the plan, the plan should be referenced as a tool to guide the day-to-day decision making of City officials. All zoning, land division, annexation, transportation, community service, development and redevelopment decisions affecting the City should be made consistent with the goals, objectives, policies and recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan. As a long-range comprehensive planning tool concerned with a wide variety of environmental, economic and social factors, the Comprehensive Plan must examine and provide recommendations for lands currently within the City limits as well as lands located outside the City limits but within strategic City expansion areas.

PLANNING HORIZON

This Comprehensive Plan is being prepared to guide the growth and development of Sun Prairie through 2030. In general, population and land use forecasts, housing forecasts, and other recommended policies and programs have been made with this time frame in mind. However, many of the recommendations contained herein are intended to be implemented over a much shorter time frame, and there are specific components of the plan for which alternative time frames will be used in order to better coordinate with the plans and policies of other agencies or units of government. As an example, recently adopted policies by the Capital Area Regional Plan Commission call for 25-year land use and urban service area forecasts, and therefore it makes sense to work within this time frame for certain components of this plan. In general, it can be assumed that the planning horizon for the various recommendations and forecasts contained within this plan is twenty years, or roughly 2030, unless noted otherwise.

PLANNING AREA

Map 1-1 illustrates the City of Sun Prairie and its extraterritorial review area in relation to surrounding communities. Also illustrated is information pertaining to growth boundaries adopted by mutual agreement with surrounding municipalities. This information has been used to identify a primary planning area within which the City should focus most of its efforts. This does not mean that the City will develop all of the land within this planning area over the next twenty year period, or that this is a boundary showing the City's intentions for future expansion. Rather, it is the area within which Sun Prairie has or could have some influence in terms of future development, and as such the City has a strong interest in studying this area closely as part of this planning process. For the purposes of this plan, most of the goals, objectives, recommendations, and policies contained in this plan will focus on and/or apply to the "Planning Area".

PLAN ADOPTION/AMENDMENTS

Under Wisconsin's comprehensive planning statutes, a comprehensive plan must be adopted by ordinance by the Common Council, after receiving a public hearing before the Plan Commission. In the past, master plans prepared under the prior statutes were adopted by resolution of the Plan Commission, whose decision was then forwarded for certification to the Common Council. The ordinance requirement is intended to make the plan a stronger document that must be adhered to more closely than the master plans of the past. Thus, the comprehensive plan will be elevated in status from an advisory document to a legal document that will be the basis for all local actions or programs that affect land use and development, public facilities, and the delivery of urban services.

Despite this change, a comprehensive plan is still largely a guide for the community, and interpretations of plan policies and maps should keep this in mind. This plan is not intended to be a literal "road map" for the City that provides a clear path from the present to a point twenty years into the future. Rather, the City needs to recognize that over the course of time many factors will arise that will significantly influence the day-to-day decision making that occurs at the local government level, and in the community in general. Interpretation of the plan needs to be flexible enough to account for these changing factors, while keeping the long-term vision of creating a high quality living environment intact.

To ensure that the plan remains relevant and in touch with the goals of the community, it should be updated periodically. It is recommended that the plan be updated regularly every five to ten years, depending on the pace of growth and other changes in the community. In addition, changing conditions and new opportunities may warrant periodic amendments and updates to plan policies and recommendations on an as-needed basis. All plan amendments should follow a similar process to the adoption of this plan, with a public hearing before the Plan Commission, a recommendation from the Plan Commission to the Common Council, and the adoption of an ordinance amending the plan by the Common Council. Such amendments can be initiated by referral by the Plan Commission or Common Council, or may be requested by application from a member of the public. For amendments affecting a large geographical area of the City or proposing major changes to plan policies, a more involved public input process should be considered to ensure that proposed amendments are in the best interest of and are well supported by the community.

PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

An amendment to the Comprehensive Plan can be initiated by:

- *Application from a member of the public, or*
- *Direction from the Plan Commission or Common Council*

A public hearing is required and shall:

- *Be held before the Plan Commission*
- *Receive proper notice and agenda posting*
- *Be considered for approval, rejection, or approval with modifications*

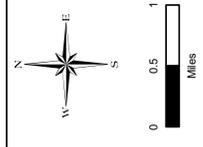
Upon approval by the Plan Commission, the request/application is presented to the Common Council for consideration. The outcome will result in either:

- *A plan amendment adopted by ordinance, or*
- *Rejection of the request*



City of Sun Prairie Planning Area January 1, 2008

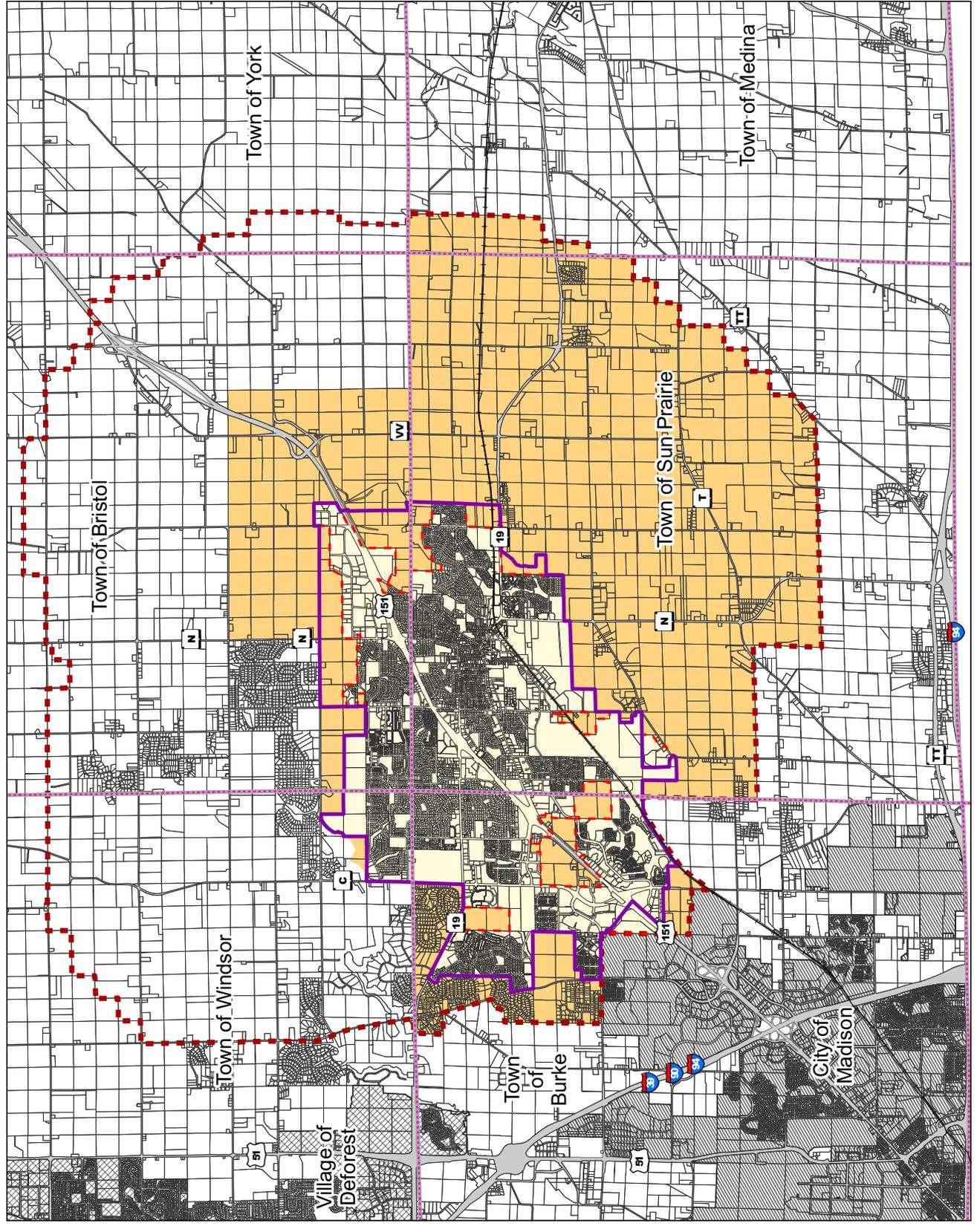
- Legend**
- City Limit
 - Urban Service Area
 - Planning Area
 - City of Sun Prairie ETJ
 - Township Boundary



Notes:

Source: City of Sun Prairie

Date Adopted: November 3, 2009



PLAN COMPONENTS

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to update and replace the Master Plan 2020. However, many of the neighborhood plans and special plans that were adopted as components of the Master Plan 2020 remain in place and should continue to guide the development and decision making for their respective areas of interest as components of this Comprehensive Plan. These plans include the following:

- Business District Revitalization Plan (2001)
- Westside Neighborhood Plan (2004)
- Downtown Phase II Plan (2004)
- Residential Development Phasing Plan (2004)
- West Main Street Corridor Plan (2006)
- Parks and Open Space Plan (2009)

It should be noted that the Sun Prairie Peripheral Area Plan, adopted in 1991, has not been actively implemented in recent years and in many aspects is no longer relevant. The Peripheral Area Plan is not being recommended for incorporation as a component of this Comprehensive Plan, and instead the recommendations and policies of this plan are intended to replace those of the previously adopted Peripheral Area Plan.

In addition to the above referenced neighborhood and special plans, this Comprehensive Plan also incorporates updates to the City's Official Map, which is included as a component of the plan. The Official Map serves to identify future transportation needs and corridors, as well as future open space areas, to accommodate future urban growth. Maps 4-1, 8-1, 8-2 and 8-3 in Volume 2 of this plan make up the City's Official Map. The City should take steps to adopt these maps by resolution, establishing them as the City's Official Map.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

It is important that the public is provided with an opportunity to be actively involved in the planning process. This helps to ensure that the plan is based on the needs and desires of the community, and helps legitimize the planning effort and garner support for the implementation of the resulting plan. Toward this end the City has adopted a Public Participation Plan, which is included in this plan as Appendix B. In addition to presentations to the Plan Commission, School Board, Transit Committee, Business Roundtable events sponsored by the Economic Development Council, and various other groups in the community, public participation activities associated with this planning process included the following:

STEERING COMMITTEE

The plan update process began with the establishment of an ad hoc Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, which met monthly beginning in August of 2007 to discuss the development of the plan. The Steering Committee was made up of residents from all four aldermanic districts, and representing a variety of interests and perspectives. The Committee provided general direction for the process and reviewed all plan materials prior to the release of public drafts of the document. For specific topics and plan elements, smaller subcommittees consisting of Steering Committee members were also utilized. All of the Steering Committee and Subcommittee meetings were open to the public.

SWOT EXERCISE

An exercise aimed at developing and prioritizing an inventory of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) was completed with the Steering Committee early on in the process as a means of identifying important issues and topics for further exploration and discussion. The results of this exercise can be found in Appendix C.

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

A mail survey to a random sample of Sun Prairie residents was conducted in the spring of 2008. The survey was prepared by the Survey Research Center at University of Wisconsin River Falls, with input from City staff and the Steering Committee. The results of the survey are summarized in Appendix D, and information related to specific topics and plan elements are referenced throughout Volume 2 of the plan. The survey provided useful information regarding community attitudes and opinions across all plan elements, and helped to guide the recommendations and policies contained in the final plan.



AD HOC COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Concurrent with the development of this Comprehensive Plan, the City formed an ad hoc Committee for Economic Development to discuss in detail the issue of developing a strategic plan to guide economic development in the City. Rather than duplicate efforts, this process was utilized to form the Economic Development element of this plan. Because of this, the recommended strategies contained in the Economic Development element of Volume 2 are presented in more of a strategic plan format, and are different in appearance and orientation than the goals, objectives, policies and recommendations contained in the other plan elements.

This process involved numerous public meetings of the ad hoc Committee, as well as several focus group meetings that explored Sun Prairie's positioning and potential with respect to various market sectors that the City may or may not be in position to capitalize on. The Economic Development chapters of both Volume 1 and Volume 2 of this plan were assembled directly from the final report issued by the Committee.

LAND USE WORKSHOP

The City hosted a land use workshop on June 15, 2009 to gain input with respect to the Land Use element of the Comprehensive Plan. About two dozen individuals participated in the workshop. The workshop included a short design preference survey aimed at gauging single-family streetscape preferences, as well as hands-on neighborhood planning for three detailed planning areas in the City, with participants working in a small-group discussion format. Participants were provided with a presentation of background information preceding these activities, and a member of the Planning Department staff served as a facilitator at each small-group discussion. The results of the workshop are summarized in Appendix F.



PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

The City hosted a public open house on July 23, 2008, to present the household survey results and follow up on several of the issues that were raised in the survey. The intent was to update the public on the progress of the plan, encourage people to stay involved, and gain additional insight on specific issues under each plan element. Results of the public input exercises are summarized in Appendix E.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE - DRAFT PLAN PRESENTATION

A presentation of the draft plan was provided at a public forum held on September 10, 2009. This provided an opportunity for members of the public to learn more about the proposed plan and ask questions prior to the required public hearing.

Once assembled, the draft plan was presented at a series of public meetings before the Plan Commission and the Common Council's Committee of the Whole, beginning on July 28, 2009, and continuing at several subsequent meetings. The intent was to let these bodies become familiar with the plan and its recommendations, and raise questions and suggest changes to refine the plan, prior to the public hearing and adoption process.

PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan was held before the Plan Commission on October 13 and October 27, 2009. Public comments received are on record in the City Clerk's office.

PLAN ADOPTION

The plan was brought before the Common Council for consideration at a public meeting on November 3, 2009, and adopted by Ordinance No. 413.



ABOUT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Within Volume 2, most elements of this Comprehensive Plan include a set of goals, objectives, policies and recommendations. Aside from being a requirement of Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law, these items are important components of any comprehensive plan, providing the context upon which a community's priorities and aspirations regarding future growth and development are organized. To clarify how these terms are used in this plan, descriptions are provided below:

GOALS

A goal is a general statement about a desired future outcome. Goals provide the long-term vision and serve as the foundation of the plan, but do not indicate specific actions to be taken to achieve the desired outcomes. Goals provide the basis for the more specific direction provided by the objectives, policies and recommendations.

OBJECTIVES

An objective is a more specific statement that provides direction for implementing measures to achieve progress toward a given goal. There are typically several objectives associated with each goal contained in the plan.

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Policies and recommendations are specific courses of action or rules of conduct to be used to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan. They are intended to be used regularly to guide day-to-day decision-making and direct actions to be taken by the City to implement the plan.



