

Volume 1: Community Indicators Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2-2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Planning Process Overview
Public Input Summary

Public Engagement



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Sun Prairie Neighborhood Forum (May 2018)

This chapter provides a summary of the planning process as well as a summary of the public participation that occurred during the planning process. Public participation in the planning process is important because it allows stakeholders the opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives. The range of stakeholder interests sought out during the planning process ensure that a wide range of views and concerns were brought forward during the planning process. These views and concerns helped shape the decision process and are reflected in the goals, policies and action items found throughout this plan.

Planning Process Overview

The City of Sun Prairie engaged MSA Professional Services, Inc. to assist in updating its Comprehensive Plan. This plan was drafted through a collaboration among MSA, City staff, and a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The City Council appointed this 19-member Committee to oversee the update to the City's 2009 Comprehensive Plan.

Public Participation Plan

As required by State Statutes (§66.1001), every community must adopt a Public Participation Plan at the beginning of the planning process. The purpose of the plan is to define the procedures for public involvement during every stage of the planning process (see Appendix A).

Highlights of the public participation plan include:

- » Two series of neighborhood forum meetings. One series near the beginning of the process to identify issues of concern and one near the end of the process to seek feedback on draft policies and actions.
- » A series of 17 focus group meetings with specific groups of stakeholders (e.g. renters, Sun Prairie Moves, Sun Prairie African American Parent Network) to facilitate discussion about issues and opportunities facing the city.
- » A series of 7 meetings with neighboring towns, villages, cities, Dane County and the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission to have discussion about land use and intergovernmental cooperation.
- » A community survey to gather input on all planning issues.

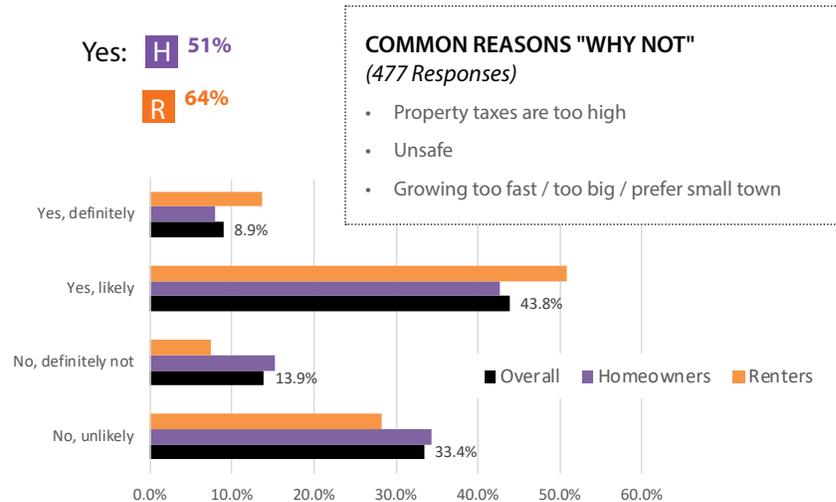
the underrepresented aspects of the City’s population correlate with renting (renters are more racially diverse, younger and have lower incomes than the overall population), and so in some cases we included in the survey summary the results for renters and owners separately.

Residents are generally quite satisfied with their neighborhoods, though only half of homeowners are confident they will stay in Sun Prairie if they move in the next five years. This planning process is attempting to orient residents to their needs and interests at the neighborhood level. We asked people to tell us what factors make a good neighborhood (Q. 28) and “safety”, “parks” and “walkability” topped the list. When asked about the condition of things like lighting, property upkeep, street trees, safety, walkability, etc. (Q. 9), 74% of respondents rated their neighborhoods either “good” or “excellent”. The responses of renters were slightly less positive than home owners, but not by much.

We also asked people if they will stay in Sun Prairie should they move in the next five years (Q. 24). While 64% of renters said “yes”, only 51% of owners said “yes”. Among the reasons given by those who answered “no” were taxes, safety and a desire for a smaller town with less growth.

Tax rates are a common concern. Questions that directly or indirectly relate to taxes reveal a prevalent focus on preventing budget and tax rate increases. A majority of respondents were opposed to additional spending for support job growth (Q. 48), city facilities or services other than street maintenance (Q. 49), and develop-

Q24* If you were to move in the next 5 years, are you likely to stay in Sun Prairie?

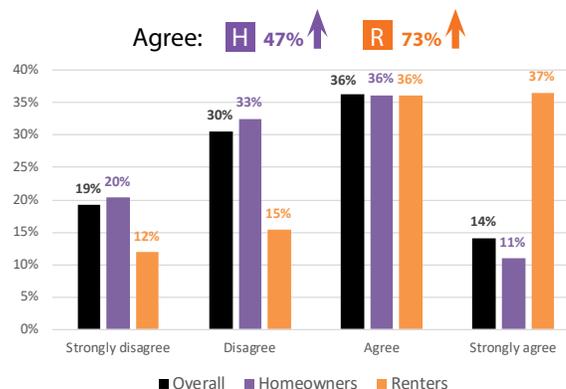


ment incentives (Q. 50). When we asked about park and recreation improvements (Q. 10), “none” was the third most popular answer.

There is widespread resistance to new rental units, mostly among homeowners. On all of the housing-related questions, considering images of different housing types (Questions 11-15), affordability (Q. 20), pace of growth (Q. 26) and unit mix (Q. 27), a majority of respondents opposed new multi-unit rental buildings, either implicitly or explicitly. Renters are far more open to the

addition of various attached housing formats in their neighborhoods. Comments throughout the survey reveal common misconceptions that rental housing and affordable housing are the same thing, and that all multi-unit buildings are rental (vs. condominiums). The strength of current opposition appears to be driven by the approval and construction of several larger housing complexes in the past 12-18 months. On the other hand, townhomes and duplexes are seen as relatively more appropriate in neighborhoods and more desirable as a housing choice. More than a third of renters and about 10% of

Q20 Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statement: *There is a need for more housing in the City of Sun Prairie affordable to working families and individuals.*



homeowners would consider these formats if moving in the next five years (Q. 22). For reference, the ownership rate was about 59% in 2016 based on 1-year Census Bureau estimates.

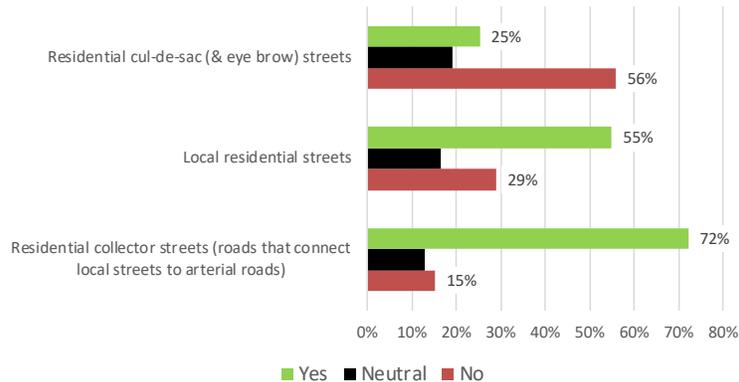
Renters are more concerned about affordability than owners. Among all respondents, fewer than 50% agreed that there is a need for more housing affordable to working families and individuals (Q. 20). However, nearly 75% of renters are concerned about affordability.

Urban design preferences tend toward “small town” character. The survey presented a variety of images of residential building types to see what people prefer within their neighborhood (Questions 11-15). Among the housing types, only townhome/duplex formats that would blend in well among single-family homes gained broad support.

The survey also presented images of a variety of commercial and mixed use developments (Questions 29-40) to see what people thought were appropriate for Sun Prairie and, if appropriate, where in the City should it be built (downtown, major/minor arterials, abutting 151). The majority of responses seemed to be comfortable with buildings up to four stories in height and massing that is vertically-proportioned. One possible exception to this overall sentiment is receptiveness to taller office buildings (5-8 stories) if built abutting Highway 151 (40% support).

Support for specific, proactive “sustainability” initiatives is weak. Regarding municipal actions that could make the City more efficient and environmentally friendly, only green building technologies and high-efficiency street lights re-

Q45 Should Sun Prairie require the installation of sidewalks when reconstructing the following existing public streets?



ceived support from a majority of respondents (Q. 51). Regarding incentives to encourage the private sector to build more sustainable development, the most popular response was “none” (Q. 50). Less than a third of respondents supported any of the other suggested methods.

Support for investment in bike and pedestrian infrastructure is strong. Respondents supported the addition of sidewalks to most existing roads during reconstruction projects, except cul-de-sacs (Q. 45). The number one desired park and recreation improvement in every part of the City was “off-road walking/biking trails” (Q. 10). “Bike/ped facilities” was the second most common selection for increased tax dollar spending (43%) after “street maintenance” (Q. 49).

When asked to prioritize recreation improvement in the City from a list of eight options, “Sign/mark a City-wide bike trail” had the highest overall ranking with “Add more off-street pathways” ranked third (Q. 52).

There is a desire for bus transit service. The final question of the survey (Q. 54) asks about other desired improvements not previously addressed in the survey. The most common response to this, by far, was discussing the addition of “bus service” to Sun Prairie.

A complete copy of the survey results is provided in Appendix B.

Q54* Are there any improvements you would like to see in Sun Prairie's future that were not covered in this survey?

Top Responses (777 total)

1. Bus service - 112
2. Slow growth/Stop expansion - 63
3. Bike paths - 57
4. Lower taxes - 40
5. Less apartments - 40
6. Low-income housing - 32
7. High School expansion/improvement - 31
8. More local businesses - 24
9. Fix roads - 22
10. More greenery - 18
11. Recycling more frequently - 16
12. Improve safety - 15
13. More services for the elderly - 10
14. More space for the Museum - 6

Focus Groups

Between June and November 2018, MSA met with 17 different stakeholder groups and organizations from the community to gain additional perspectives about the future of Sun Prairie. MSA used a set of questions tailored to each group and explored topics and ideas that came up during conversation. The 17 groups/organizations MSA met with include:

- » Sun Prairie Business Park
- » Chamber of Commerce
- » Chamber of Workforce Housing Committee
- » Downtown Business Improvement District (BID)
- » Sun Prairie Moves
- » RISE Young Professionals Networking Group
- » Sun Prairie Area School District
- » CEO Networking Group
- » Realtors and developers
- » Seniors
- » Sun Prairie African American Parent Network
- » QBE employees
- » Renters
- » Hmong residents
- » Executive leadership team
- » Community Development Authority (CDA)
- » Sun Prairie Utilities Commission

Recurring comments from all of these groups are summarized below by topic.

1. How do you describe Sun Prairie?

- » Fast growing, friendly small-town
- » Great expanding school system
- » Suburb of Madison
- » Increasingly diverse and be-

coming more inclusive

- » A City in transition with some resistance to change
- » A divided City (old-downtown, new-west side)
- » A City with a “can do” attitude

2. Why do you live in Sun Prairie?

- » Good schools
- » Friendly place to live
- » Job, family or church
- » Community assets – library, aquatic center

3. Do you feel connected to your neighborhood?

- » Feel isolated, would like to see neighborhoods come together (no more east vs. west)
- » Love the mix of income and housing in Vandenberg, Wyncham Hills.

4. Transportation

- » Need fixed route public transportation (i.e. inter- and intra-City)
- » Sidewalks should exist on all streets and City should close existing gaps
- » Need to close existing gaps in off-street bike path network
- » Consider a park and ride location on US 151
- » Take parking off Hwy 19 during peak traffic hours
- » Complete a bicycle/pedestrian plan
- » Issues with the current shared ride taxi – can take an hour to get picked up, requires debit card – no cash, needs to be expanded to Windsor and DeForest

5. Neighborhood improvements

- » Need more streetlights
- » Need more trees
- » Need more places to walk to

(e.g. grocery store)

6. Miscellaneous

- » Need wider selection of activities for all age groups and income levels, families
- » City needs an identity
- » Increase in taxes could drive out long-time Sun Prairie residents
- » Need to improve communication on issues affecting community and ensure consistency –need to communicate ‘why’
- » Decisions seems to always be made by cost, not always value
- » Need nicer restaurants
- » Host more events that attract tourists and events that get existing residents out and exploring the community

7. Things elected officials should hear

- » Don’t feel like the City hears us
- » Don’t like the tax breaks City is giving to businesses because more burden is placed on residents
- » Think long-term
- » Get back to thinking about big ideas

8. Downtown

- » Revitalize downtown – add more public spaces, apartments, mix of housing prices, accessibility to grocery store, restaurants, retail, mixed uses, co-op, experiential businesses
- » City needs to be proactive with adding parking when new businesses opening
- » Need a major draw (e.g. Duluth Trading in Mt. Horeb)
- » Need infrastructure improvements (sidewalk repair, light-

ing, etc.)

- » City should chart the course before development happens at Bristol/Main

9. Economic development

- » Focus on diversity: incentives for women and minority businesses
- » Need amenities that pull employees to live in Sun Prairie. Businesses go where employees are. (more amenities to draw younger tech demographic – e.g. ethnic food)
- » Focus on quality of jobs vs. total jobs
- » It's challenging to do business in Sun Prairie due to raising property taxes, downtown feels like it's struggling, rents are high, Sun Prairie residents don't spend as much as residents from other communities and City lacks public transit
- » Focus on recruiting businesses that employ IT workers, law firms, insurance agents
- » Create a climate that grows existing businesses and entices new business to locate here
- » Partnership between businesses and city government are excellent, the Chamber could do more.
- » SP business park is full and should be expanded north
- » Need a balance between chain stores and local businesses

10. Housing

- » Housing affordability is a big issue – will likely impact long term cultural diversity
- » Focus on workforce housing: proper distribution throughout City near jobs and public transportation

- » Need affordable, walkable apartment communities for 55+
- » Currently too many apartments
- » People who work here need to be able to afford to live here
- » Inventory of housing is generally low – particularly small starter homes for young families
- » We need to provide education on how mixed income residential developments do not have a negative impact on neighborhoods
- » There isn't enough incentive for developers to develop affordable housing
- » Need a variety of housing, especially within older neighborhoods
- » Need more high end rentals for interns and recent graduates who are entering the workforce

11. Utilities & community facilities

- » Current school boundaries result in a high number of minority students in some schools and no diversity in others
- » Need more green space
- » Improve Public safety – growth brings additional crime/ perception of crime
- » Need more trails – more walkability, bike path connections, lighted walking paths
- » Concern about taxes and the amount of money the City is spending on school buildings vs. teachers/programming

12. Land use & development

- » Concerned about City being reactive vs. proactive to growth
- » Focus on infill development

- » More mixed-use nodes with neighborhood commercial
- » Need more density, retailers, and manufacturing
- » Improvement of Main Street Corridor a top priority: need a Central Main Street Corridor Plan, explosion area is a high priority



May 2018 Neighborhood Forums

Neighborhood Forums: Round 1

An initial round of three neighborhood forums were held during May 2018. The forums were held at Bird Elementary School, Sunshine Place and City Hall. These forums provided the public with an overview of the planning project, objectives and schedule. The forums included two activities intended to gather resident feedback on issues and opportunities in the community.

One activity was a visioning exercise which asked participants several questions. Common responses/themes are indicated after each question.

1. **What do you like best about Sun Prairie?**
 - » Parks and public spaces
 - » Good schools
 - » Friendly people who care about the community
 - » Small-town atmosphere
 - » Good mix of businesses
2. **What do you like least about Sun Prairie?**
 - » Lack of affordable housing
 - » Taxes are high
 - » Lack of public transportation
 - » Recent increase in multi-family unit construction
 - » Gaps in bike/ped system
 - » Increase in traffic
3. **What makes Sun Prairie unique?**
 - » It's a small community that is a short distance to "big city" amenities
 - » It's continued growth and diversity
 - » It's services and amenities (e.g. Library, YMCA, Schools, Parks)

4. What are your big ideas and aspirations for our community? What would you change or improve?

- » Public transportation to Madison
- » Need free or low cost entertainment for families and teens
- » Need more affordable housing
- » Need to revitalize downtown and bring in unique shops and restaurants
- » Need to embrace diversity among business owners and in city representatives

The other activity was a map-based activity which provided participants an opportunity to provide specific comments regarding:

1. **Bike/Pedestrian Improvements.** Locations that you feel need a better connection or safety improvement for walking or biking (e.g. sidewalk, crosswalk, on-road bike lane, etc.)
2. **Traffic Safety Concerns.** Locations where you feel a current road is unsafe for motorists.
3. **Park Improvements.** The one most important park improvement you would like to see.
4. **(Re)Development Sites.** Existing sites or buildings you feel could be (re)developed over the next 10-20 years. Suggest a preferred use.
5. **Preservation Sites.** Existing uses, buildings or natural areas you feel should be preserved or left unchanged over the next 10-20 years.

Neighborhood Forums: Round 2

A second round of three neighborhood forums were held during April/May 2019. The forums were held at Westside Elementary School, Meadow View Elementary School and City Hall. These forums provided the public with a summary of the planning process to-date and major issues and opportunities that were identified during the process. The forums included a series of poster boards summarizing the goals and high priority policy and action recommendations from each plan element as well as future land use maps broken out by planning areas. Participants were asked to review the boards and maps and respond to a series of questions. A summary of the responses to these questions follows:

1. Do you have any suggestions or changes for the proposed land use map, policies and actions, specifically regarding Neighborhood Residential areas and design guidance?

- » Concern about mixing single family and multi-unit complexes
- » Need to encourage more affordable housing
- » Older multi-unit complexes need revamping
- » Need neighborhoods with mix of unit type and price point
- » Need daycare near multi-unit complexes

2. Do you have any suggestions or changes for the proposed land use map, policies and actions, specifically regarding Commercial and Employment areas and uses?

- » Need more business and manufacturing jobs
- » Ensure all neighborhoods are well-served by grocery stores

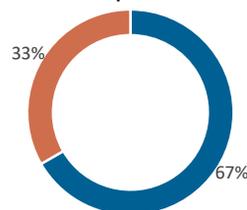
- » Consider traffic management

3. Do you have any suggestions or changes for the proposed land use map, policies and actions, specifically regarding Mixed Use areas?

- » Promote walkable destinations - need safe walking and bike paths
- » Limit the number of multi-family complexes
- » Access drives from major roads need careful thought

4. Are you supportive of the City's goals to make housing a priority and ensure that all residents have safe and affordable housing options in Sun Prairie. This includes providing a mix of housing types throughout the City.

- » City and School District need to work together more
- » This will make public transit and bicycle paths increasingly important
- » Integrate multi-unit housing into neighborhoods
- » Ensure multi-unit housing is compatible with surrounding uses
- » Encourage opportunities for neighbors to get to know one another
- » Concern about too much multi-unit housing being built
- » Need small, ranch-style housing for aging baby boomers and young families
- » Of the 33 people who answered this question:



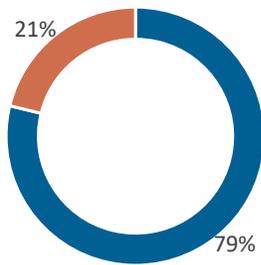
■ Yes I support these goals
■ No, I do not support these goals



April/May 2019 Neighborhood Forums

5. Are you supportive of the City’s goals to provide multi-modal transportation options to connect all residents to jobs, services and other regional amenities? This includes things like bike lanes and paths, sidewalk construction, and the upcoming launch of an express transit route between Sun Prairie and the City of Madison.

- » Park and ride is not convenient for people that need it
- » Of the 33 people who answered this question:

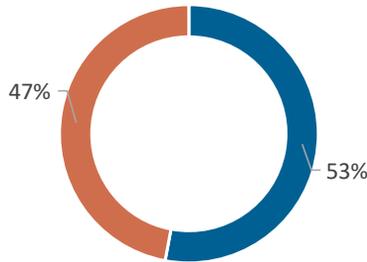


- Yes I support these goals
- No, I do not support these goals

Are you in support of the proposed sidewalk and multi-use path policy requiring sidewalks/paths as summarized below? 1) On both sides of all new and reconstructed public streets, including cul-de-sac streets and eyebrows; 2) On one or both sides of rehabilitated streets (pavement replacement only), when it is determined to be in the public interest by the City Engineer and City Planner; and, 3) Along private streets, when it is determined to be in the public interest by the City Engineer (or designee).

- » Not supportive of sidewalks on cul-de-sacs and dead end streets
- » Sidewalks are needed in neighborhoods

- » Paths need to be maintained once they are created
- » Sidewalks are only needed on one side of a street



- Yes I support these goals
- No, I do not support these goals

- » Of the 34 people who answered this question:

7. Please review the boards on the following topics: Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources; Utilities & Community Facilities; Intergovernmental Cooperation; and Economic Development. Do you have any suggestions or changes for these other goals and high priority policies and action items?

- » Supportive of preserving agricultural lands and greenspace
- » Economic development should be focused on attracting higher paying employers
- » Need more parking downtown
- » Supportive of public transit

Polco Questions

Polco was also used to pose a series of single questions to the community throughout the planning process. The following questions were asked and responses received:

1. What are the BEST ways for YOU to get informed during the process?

- » 60% - emails from the City through Notify Me
- » 52% - City social media (Facebook/Twitter)
- » 46% - Clock Tower Express
- » 44% - Sun Prairie Star

2. If we make smart choices today, how will people describe our community 10 years from now? Select TWO phrases that best describe Sun Prairie...

- » 63% - “small town comfort with urban amenities”
- » 33% - “warm and welcoming” and “healthy people, healthy neighborhoods”

3. Which of the following activities by the CITY would you support to address the issue of local employers having difficulty finding qualified staff?

- » 52% - develop a transit system to improve commuter access to employers
- » 51% advocate for the development of more employer-led training, such as apprenticeships
- » 47% - host or coordinate job fairs in the City
- » 42% - convene more conversations between the Sun Prairie School Dis-

trict and local employers about curriculum that fits the needs of local employers

4. In an effort to clarify the community's thoughts on cul-de-sacs, which of the following sidewalk policy amendments do you support?

- » 35% - do not require sidewalks on cul-de-sacs at all
- » 28% - do not change the current policy-continue to require sidewalks on all cul-de-sacs, including around the bulb/circle

Municipal & Regional Partner Meetings

MSA and City staff met in late 2018 and early 2019 with each of the neighboring towns, villages and city with which the City shares a border or overlapping extraterritorial authorities, plus the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission, to discuss issues of common interest. A brief summary of the most prominent issues in each discussion follows. The municipal relationships are also addressed in [Volume 1: Chapter 5](#).

City of Madison

At the time of the meeting with Madison planning staff in 2018 the City of Madison was in the process of updating the Nelson and Rattman Neighborhood Development Plan Areas, both adjacent to Sun Prairie, with no major changes to land use anticipated. The conversation focused on opportunities to connect trails between the two cities (e.g. Reiner Road to the south, Blue Aster when it is eventually extended to the west). Park and open space lands were also

discussed, including Madison's 260 acres south of Hoepker Road (opportunity for a joint project, to include soccer fields?) and the former mine site between Nelson Road and Sun Prairie's Smith's Crossing neighborhood.

Village of Windsor

The meeting with Village planning and development staff included general discussion about development trends and housing policy, park and rec investments near the shared boundaries, and opportunities to coordinate and share emergency service investments. The Village's 2019 improvements to Egge Road were discussed, including the City's desire for bike lane or path connections to CTH C. Both parties reaffirmed the terms of the existing boundary agreement regarding the transfer of several properties east of Token Creek from the Village to the City if and when they develop.

Village of Cottage Grove

Though lacking a shared border the Village and City have overlapping extraterritorial plat review authority in the vicinity of CTH N and CTH T, due to the Village's annexation of lands north of Interstate 94. As discussed with Village planning staff, neither community expects annexation or development near CTH T within the next 20 years, in part due to challenges with sanitary sewer service. The possibility of a mutual boundary agreement to decide the location of a long term boundary between the City and Village was discussed, likely near CTH T but not necessarily using that road as the boundary. The prospect of regional emergency service provisions was also discussed.

Town of Burke

The City and Town have many points of shared interest and many miles of shared boundaries. The discussion with Town staff started with various properties that could be annexed to the City for development before the Town dissolves in 2036 and remaining lands are attached to Sun Prairie (per a 2007 boundary agreement). Coordination between Town and City staff to discuss planned construction projects is good (annually in the spring), but could be expanded to include coordination of five-year Capital Improvement Plans. Staff also discussed private property encroachments into the Town's Hagen Park and the blockades preventing the connection of Token Rd., Rebel Dr., and Bull Run, The City would like to connect those streets but neighborhood residents in the Town still prefer the barriers.

Town of Bristol

The Town and City have a boundary agreement adopted in 2005 that describes how they will work together (or defer to the other) on land use planning in various parts of the Town. The discussion with Town officials affirmed a positive working relationship, though there have been few active coordination efforts in recent years. The Town's role in approving annexations in the joint planning area north of the Sun Prairie Business Park was discussed and affirmed. Lands around Patrick Marsh were also discussed, including the possibility that a land owner could propose development. Both the City and the Town have approval authority for land division and zoning decisions in this area. The Town is supportive of efforts to extend off-street paths toward the Town along Bird St. and Broadway Dr.

Town of Sun Prairie

Discussions with Town officials occurred both in February and in May 2019. Though there is not a boundary agreement in place, the City and Town both indicated a willingness to explore an agreement that would address issues such as road maintenance, City growth areas, and limited Town growth areas. The Town would like allowance for a new rural neighborhoods, where new homes could offset the loss of taxable value due to annexation. Roads of greatest concern to the Town include Bird St., Town Hall Rd., and Bailey Rd. The prospects for regional EMS services and a bike path connecting Patrick Marsh to McCarthy County Park along Town Hall Rd. were discussed.

Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC)

As the regional entity responsible for sewer service area planning and approvals, CARPC is involved in growth planning throughout Dane County and had engaged with Sun Prairie and its neighbors on a regional land use planning effort in 2013 (the Sun Prairie Future Urban Development Area Study. On the topic of regional growth trends, CARPC staff described the results of the Greater Madison Vision Survey, especially the prominence of concern about climate change, flooding, and desire for investments in renewable energy.

After discussing general land use and development trends and various existing boundary agreements, the conversation focused on the urban service area amendment process. The City hasn't had an amendment to the urban service area recently but will likely be bringing one forward to facilitate service connection to lands at the east edge of the City near STH

19. CARPC staff noted that environmental corridors as mapped and regulated by CARPC are adjusted during this process, using data provided by the City. CARPC staff also noted a desire to review preliminary plats for any issues related to environmental corridors prior to City approval.

The discussion also touched on long-term concerns about flooding in the Koshkonong Creek corridor and the impact of flow from Sun Prairie's wastewater treatment plant. CARPC's regional groundwater model may be useful as part of regional watershed planning.