

Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources



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INTRODUCTION

The Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources element establishes guidelines for the on-going management of natural and cultural features within the Sun Prairie area. Natural resources provide the foundation for human existence - from finite resources such as habitats and minerals to renewable resources, such as wood, water and air. In addition, cultural resources can provide a sense of place and can help define the identity of a community. The quality and quantity of these resources taken together play a key role in the quality of life for Sun Prairie residents. The degrees to which these resources are accessible and integrated into this growing community are important for the long-term viability of the city.

Volume 1 of this plan element includes a summary of the existing agricultural, natural, and cultural resources. Volume 2 analyzes the background information, along with public input on future needs, to plan the preservation, protection, expansion or improvement of natural and cultural resources to meet the needs of existing and future residents of the city.

The goals, objectives, policies and recommendations in this chapter are based on the issues identified by the public and background information of existing conditions presented in Volume 1. An understanding of the benefits and deficiencies in the existing system is needed to guide the proper management, preservation and protection of agricultural, natural, and cultural resources in Sun Prairie.

PUBLIC INPUT

STEERING COMMITTEE ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

At the beginning of the planning process, the Steering Committee completed a SWOT exercise to identify what they perceived to be the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the community. This exercise helped to identify some of the issues to be addressed in the plan.

The Steering Committee identified city parks, community identity, and neighborhood groups as strengths. Weaknesses include lack of a cultural center and the failing of local cultural organizations. The Steering Committee also recognized many opportunities for the community. These include the ability of parks and recreation facilities to keep up with the growing community, an emphasis on environmental attractions like Patrick Marsh, the continuation of existing, and initiation of new community events, and cultural resources such as Angell Park. The Committee did not identify any potential threats. The results of this exercise can be found in Appendix C.

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY/OPEN HOUSE

Other opportunities for public input regarding agricultural, natural and cultural resources included a household survey and open house meetings. The major results and issues from these sources are included in this chapter. Survey respondents were generally satisfied with the quality of the natural resources in the City and recreational opportunities in their neighborhoods. In addition, a majority of respondents expressed interest in connecting the City to the area bike and pedestrian trail system along with the creation of an area-wide open space network. Full results from the various methods of public input are located in the appendices.



Open House: July 2008

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Sun Prairie's connection to the agriculture industry has historically been strong and continues with the annual Sun Prairie Sweet Corn Festival. The festival has been held since 1953 and is the oldest sweet corn festival in Wisconsin. In addition, the City is surrounded by soils that are very well suited for agricultural uses.

Sun Prairie is also a growing community. The City has experienced a high rate of growth since the 1990's and is now Dane County's second-largest community. New growth in Sun Prairie and surrounding communities will continue to place pressure on agricultural lands to convert to more urban uses. How and where this growth takes place can have a positive or negative impact on existing agricultural lands and operations. The following issues and trends were identified to help create goals and objectives for agricultural resources:

- 1 There is a significant movement both nationally and locally for organic and/or local food.
- 2 There are regional efforts to get suppliers and growers in touch with retailers and buyers.
- 3 Efforts to facilitate the sale of locally grown products should be made to help grow the local retail sector as well.
- 4 Cooperative discussions on future land uses in growth areas need to continue with neighboring towns to mitigate impacts of City growth on adjacent farm operations.
- 5 To what extent should agricultural lands be protected for long-term agricultural use?
- 6 To what extent should agricultural lands be protected in order to accommodate future City growth?
- 7 To what extent should existing agricultural operations be encouraged and maintained?
- 8 To what extent should certain agricultural uses be incorporated into an urban environment?
- 9 To what extent should the City prioritize increased density and urban infill as a means of protecting farmland and farm operations?

GOAL 1

Preserve agricultural land in identified preservation areas

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Encourage the preservation of productive agricultural lands by preventing the proliferation of urban uses and unsewered urban development outside of the City's Urban Service Area.
- 2 Within the context of larger boundary agreements, work with surrounding Towns to protect identified agricultural preservation areas.
- 3 Encourage clustering of rural residential homes, when allowed, away from prime agricultural lands.
- 4 Promote infill development on under-utilized sites within the City to help reduce the pressure to expand into surrounding agricultural areas as the City grows.

GOAL 2

Increase opportunities for access to healthy and sustainable food choices within the City

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Allow appropriately scaled agricultural uses within the City.
- 2 Support local farm product processing and marketing initiatives.
- 3 Encourage Community Supported Agricultural operations in the area.

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Unincorporated lands designated “Rural Area” and “Future Neighborhood Planning Area (Beyond 2030)” on the City of Sun Prairie’s Land Use Plan Map shall only be used for or developed with agriculture, agribusiness and farm-based residential uses.
- 2 The maximum density (i.e. the number of dwelling units per acre) of unsewered, non-farm residential uses and unsewered, farm-based residential uses within the City of Sun Prairie’s three-mile extraterritorial plat approval jurisdiction shall not exceed one dwelling unit per 35 acres, unless allowed through an adopted intergovernmental agreement.
- 3 The City of Sun Prairie strongly recommends that its neighboring townships implement policies within comprehensive plans that protect existing agricultural lands from unsewered urban development.
- 4 When allowed, unsewered, non-farm residential uses within the City’s extraterritorial plat approval jurisdiction area should be clustered.
- 5 Subject to intergovernmental agreements, clustering of farm or non-farm residential lots shall not inhibit future City growth.
- 6 Support the continuation and expansion of community gardens in areas that are compatible with surrounding uses.
- 7 If existing gardens are displaced by other civic uses, consider relocating the gardens to other available lands, such as portions of Sheehan Park that are currently being farmed.
- 8 Amend the City’s Ordinances as needed to allow agricultural uses, such as community gardens, roof top gardens, small-scale organic orchards and vineyards that are compatible with surrounding uses.
- 9 Continue to support the Farmers’ Market by providing space for the Market to operate and use of support facilities if available nearby.
- 10 Support and promote the continuation of the Sun Prairie Sweet Corn Festival.
- 11 Investigate the potential for the development of a public market as recommended in the City’s Downtown, Phase II Plan - as an outlet for more locally grown food products.
- 12 Provide public education and awareness of local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) opportunities and of the availability of county voucher and other sponsored programs available to support CSA efforts.
- 13 Encourage local institutional uses such as schools, hospitals, assisted living facilities, and other large businesses that serve food, to participate in the Dane County Institutional Food Market Coalition (IFM).
- 14 Encourage local businesses such as grocers and restaurants to buy more local food products.

NATURAL RESOURCES

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

When surveyed, Sun Prairie residents indicated that they are generally satisfied with recreational opportunities in their neighborhoods and the quality of natural resources in the City. Respondents were most satisfied with parks and recreation (80% satisfied or very satisfied), while quality of the natural resources garnered the second-highest level of satisfaction (69% satisfied or very satisfied). A majority of respondents also indicated that they were interested in the creation of an area-wide open space network and connecting the City to the area bike and pedestrian trail system.

Natural resource components including water (surface and groundwater), air, soil, wetlands, plant and animal communities often cross municipal boundaries. Proper management of these resources will often require intergovernmental cooperation. Recommendations for natural resource management strategies can also impact many of the other elements found within this plan. The following issues were identified to help create goals and objectives for natural resources:

- 1 How can community growth take place in a manner that balances the proper management of natural resources?
- 2 To what extent should natural resources be protected or restored?
- 3 To what extent will local governments work together to manage important natural resources?
- 4 How much consideration will be given to resource protection when evaluating development proposals?
- 5 To what extent will climate change impact natural resources?
- 6 How can the negative effects of climate change be addressed?
- 7 How will an increase of invasive species be addressed?
- 8 Should the City investigate the creation of improvements to promote and enhance public use and enjoyment of the City's natural areas (e.g. trails, signs, nature center, etc.)?

GOAL

Protect and preserve the natural resource features in the City and its environs

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Preserve natural resource protection areas and environmental corridor features including waterways, floodplains, wetlands, ground water recharge areas, steep slopes (greater than 12%), wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, and mature woodlands through the enforcement of the City's adopted natural resource protection zoning standards and through the use of the City's Subdivision Ordinance and Official Map.
- 2 Foster the protection of natural resource features from development by requiring those features to be accurately depicted on all site plans, certified survey maps, preliminary plats, and final plats.
- 3 Preserve planned green space corridors between the Cities of Madison and Sun Prairie.
- 4 Encourage compact, well-planned mixed-use developments which minimize reliance on the automobile for most day-to-day trips.
- 5 Locate transportation system improvements to minimize impacts on environmental corridors.
- 6 Maintain or improve groundwater quality and quantity.
- 7 Encourage landscaping practices in new and existing neighborhoods, which have no impact on ground water or surface water resources.
- 8 Discourage unsewered urban development in the unincorporated areas within the City's three-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction in order to protect sensitive natural resource features.
- 9 Work with neighboring communities to foster an orderly, efficient and sustainable development pattern that preserves natural resources and minimizes conflicts between urban and rural land uses through the use of zoning, official map and land division review powers.
- 10 Investigate the feasibility of restoring degraded natural systems.

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL

- 1 The City will protect natural resource features within the Sun Prairie city limits through the administration and enforcement of the City's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and Official Map.
- 2 The City shall require all site plans and land divisions to accurately depict all natural resource features located on the property proposed for development or division.
- 3 The City will utilize its land division approval authority and official mapping powers to protect all environmental corridors and resource protection areas within the City's three-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction.
- 4 Keep sewer urban development from encroaching into environmental corridors through sewer extension controls.
- 5 Promote public awareness of the negative impacts of invasive species.
- 6 Continue to eradicate invasive noxious species through implementation of the City's ordinances.

MINERAL RESOURCES

- 1 Mineral extraction uses should be sited and operated in a manner that minimizes conflicts and impacts on surrounding uses to the greatest extent possible.
- 2 Consider adoption of ordinances that provide protection of potential mineral resource areas.
- 3 Protect resource areas from development until extracted for use.
- 4 Implement policies/measures that require a percentage of materials to be extracted/to be used locally and not transported elsewhere.

WILDLIFE

- 1 Continue to work cooperatively with landowners and other organizations to protect the Patrick Marsh Wildlife Area.
- 2 Encourage the incorporation of wildlife corridors or greenways into and between new developments.
- 3 Impacts on wildlife shall be taken into consideration when reviewing development proposals.

AIR

- 1 Discourage the unnecessary idling of vehicles and engine powered equipment.

VEGETATION

- 1 Preserve existing stands of mature trees to the greatest degree possible by implementing the City's tree protection zoning standards.
- 2 Encourage landscaping practices that incorporate a variety of noninvasive, native species.
- 3 Educate the public about the benefits of native vegetation.
- 4 Encourage the use of native vegetation within stormwater facilities.
- 5 Expand use of native vegetation where appropriate on public lands, including:
 - a. Around and near stormwater management basins
 - b. On excess or "land banked" public lands
 - c. In rain gardens or other infiltration areas on public properties

WATER

- 1 Encourage the use of rain gardens and other infiltration devices to enhance water, soil and wild-life resources.
- 2 Encourage the restoration of, and protection of, waterways such as Token and Koshkonong Creeks.
- 3 Identify and protect valued springs and water recharge areas.
- 4 Encourage minimizing impervious surfaces through stormwater utility credits and good site planning practices.
- 5 Continue working relationship with the Token Creek Watershed Association to improve water resources.
- 6 Continue to participate and consider expansion of the Green Tier erosion control/storm water management program.
- 7 Consider the use of rain gardens and rain barrels at City facilities.
- 8 Continue to keep residents informed about stormwater quality and measures that they can take to assist with these efforts, including:
 - a. Information and programming on local cable access
 - b. Information in City newsletters, website, regular mailings, etc.
 - c. Decals on storm sewer inlets
 - d. Other education/outreach activities as deemed appropriate

CULTURAL RESOURCES

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Sun Prairie's identity and quality of life are tied closely to its many events and historic places. In addition, a number of organizations meet throughout the year to enhance the Sun Prairie experience.

Support for maintaining the historic and cultural character of downtown was shown by a majority of survey respondents disagreeing (67% disagree or strongly disagree) with the survey statement that maintaining the historical and cultural character of downtown Sun Prairie is not important.

A public market ranked the highest among preferred cultural and community facilities according to an open house questionnaire. The choices receiving the next highest preference could be grouped into a general arts and performance category - including such things as a cultural arts center, amphitheater, public art, monuments and fountains, band shell, community theater, and arts center. Maintaining and enhancing Sun Prairie's historic and cultural resources will be an important factor in sustaining a high quality living environment.

The following issues were identified to help create goals and objectives for cultural and historic resources:

- 1 To what extent should historic buildings be protected?
- 2 Should the City examine the creation of historic districts?
- 3 How can the City provide stronger support for local organizations?
- 4 Should the City investigate the creation of a cultural center?
- 5 A number of historic or landmark sites are located near, but outside of the City. To what extent can or should the City work with surrounding Towns to identify and preserve historic sites, especially near the City's corporate boundary?

GOAL

Preserve places and events that contribute to the history and identity of Sun Prairie

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Increase public awareness of the City's cultural and historic resources.
- 2 Preserve the historic residential and commercial characteristics of the downtown area.
- 3 Maintain an inventory of historic sites and buildings within the City.
- 4 Maintain downtown Sun Prairie as a traditional commercial center with an emphasis on specialty retail and cultural facilities.
- 5 Encourage the preservation of architecturally, historically, and culturally significant sites, buildings and structures in the City and its environs.

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL

- 1 Continue to educate the public about the contributions provided by historic and cultural resources to the character and identity of a community.
- 2 Support the Sun Prairie Historical Museum through continued funding.
- 3 Work with the Historical Library and Museum Board to develop a plan for the long-term viability of the Sun Prairie Historic Museum.
- 4 Consider a historic district or landmark program if supported by the community.
- 5 Continue to fund the Façade Improvement Grant program to provide incentives for historic rehabilitation.
- 6 Pursue public/private ventures for public art.
- 7 Support cultural organizations and events.
- 8 Incorporate the display of art in public buildings.
- 9 Ensure that downtown redevelopment is consistent with the character and architectural features of existing historic resources.
- 10 Continue to explore the possibility of a cultural center (e.g. bandshell, performing arts center, etc.) on the lands next to the public library.
- 11 As city growth occurs at the edges, the City should be cognizant of, and work to protect, architecturally, culturally, and historically significant features.

