

SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 288, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition  
A MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE FOR WALWORTH COUNTY

## Chapter 4

# UPDATE OF COUNTY AND REGIONAL PLANS

### INTRODUCTION

Previous chapters of this report have presented the results of inventories of existing population, land uses, natural resources, park and open space sites, other public facilities, and regulations in the County to be taken into consideration in the preparation of the update to the Walworth County comprehensive plan. This chapter describes important regional and County plans and studies that have been completed or updated since the completion of the County comprehensive plan in 2009 which should be considered in the development of the plan update.

### VISION 2050: A REGIONAL LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION PLAN

VISION 2050, the Region's advisory long-range land use and transportation plan,<sup>1</sup> sets forth the fundamental concepts that are recommended to guide the development of the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin Region through the year 2050. The plan includes two major components, a recommended land use component and a recommended transportation component. Implementation of the plan ultimately relies on the actions of local, county, State, and Federal agencies and units of government in conjunction with the private sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Documented in SEWRPC Planning Report No. 55, VISION 2050: A Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2050. The plan was adopted by the Regional Planning Commission on July 29, 2016.

VISION 2050 recognizes that the Region has reached a pivotal time in its development, and more than ever the Region will need to compete with other areas to attract residents and businesses. In that light, VISION 2050 proposes to build on our strengths and seeks to improve where we do not compete well with our peers. In short, VISION 2050 recommends:

- Preserving the Region’s most productive farmland and primary environmental corridors, which encompass the best remaining features of the natural landscape.
- Encouraging more compact development, ranging from high-density transit-oriented development to neighborhoods with homes within walking distance of parks, schools, and businesses.
- Keeping existing major streets in good repair and efficiently using the capacity of existing streets and highways.
- Strategically adding capacity on highly congested streets and highways, incorporating “complete streets” roadway design concepts to provide safe and convenient travel for all, and addressing key issues related to moving goods within and through the Region.
- Enhancing the Region’s bicycle and pedestrian network to improve access to activity centers, neighborhoods, and other destinations.
- Significantly improving and expanding public transit to support compact growth and enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of the Region.

Map 4.1 shows the recommended development pattern from the VISION 2050 land use component as it pertains to Walworth County. Development patterns are differentiated between urban service areas and areas outside the urban service areas. The arterial streets and highways recommendations in the VISION 2050 Plan are shown on Map 4.2.

### **Development in Urban Service Areas**

The land use component of VISION 2050 presents a development pattern and recommendations that accommodate projected growth in regional population, households, and employment with a focus on compact development within defined urban service areas. The compact development recommended under VISION 2050 ranges from high-density development such as transit-oriented development (TOD) to neighborhoods in smaller communities with housing within walking distance of amenities. VISION 2050 recommends that residential and urban development occur largely as infill, redevelopment, and new development within urban service areas at densities that can efficiently be supported by public sanitary sewerage, water supply, and other services, including parks, schools, and businesses. New urban development at lower densities, including Medium Lot Neighborhood (1/4 to 1/2-acre lots) and Large Lot Neighborhood (1/2-acre to one-acre lots) development, is encouraged to occur on existing vacant lots, as infill development in existing neighborhoods with similar densities, or where commitments have been made to such development through approved subdivision plats or certified survey maps.

#### **Development Outside Urban Service Areas**

In addition to preserving environmentally significant lands and productive agricultural lands, VISION 2050 seeks to maintain the rural character of other lands located outside planned urban service areas. The plan encourages minimizing impacts on natural and agricultural resources, maintaining rural character, and avoiding excessive demands on rural public facility and service systems in such areas. VISION 2050 recommends that local and county government land use policies limit Large Lot Neighborhood and Large Lot Exurban (1.5 to five-acre lots) development beyond urban service areas to commitments made prior to completion of the VISION 2050 planning process. VISION 2050 recommends that the demand for homes in rural areas be accommodated on a limited basis through Rural Estate development where there would be no more than one dwelling unit per five acres. Where Rural Estate development is accommodated, VISION 2050 encourages the use of cluster subdivision design, with homes grouped together on relatively small lots surrounded by permanently preserved agricultural, recreational, or natural resource areas such as woodlands, wetlands, or prairies sufficient to maintain the maximum recommended density of no more than one home per five acres. VISION 2050 also recommends limiting other development outside urban service areas to highway-oriented business, utility, and recreational uses.

#### **COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The Commission completed work on a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Southeastern Wisconsin Region in 2015. The CEDS is a strategic plan designed to strengthen the economy

in Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha Counties. SEWRPC prepared the plan on behalf of, and with the assistance of, the Regional Economic Partnership (REP). The REP includes a representative from each of the county economic development organizations or staffs within the Region, the City of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee 7 (M7), and We Energies, with additional assistance from staff from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

The strategy identifies six key business clusters as having the best potential for economic growth, expansion, and attraction in the Region. Those clusters are 1) energy, power, and controls; 2) water technologies; 3) food and beverage production and manufacturing; 4) finance and insurance services; 5) corporate headquarters and business services; and 6) medical technology, bioscience, and health services. The CEDS recommends that economic development efforts throughout the Region enhance the export capability of businesses; align workforce development with growth opportunities in the key clusters; enhance innovation and entrepreneurship; focus on economic place-making in the central cities and strategic locations throughout the Region; modernize regional infrastructure; and enhance inter-jurisdictional cooperation. The Walworth County Board adopted the CEDS on November 10th, 2015.

## **REGIONAL HOUSING PLAN**

A regional housing plan<sup>2</sup> was adopted by the Regional Planning Commission in March 2013 and endorsed by the Walworth County Board of Supervisors on July 9, 2013. The vision of the plan is to provide decent and affordable housing for all residents of the Region. The plan includes the following recommendations for county and local governments and other agencies and organizations to help achieve that vision:

- Support economic development in the Region by providing housing affordable to the existing and projected future workforce.
- Help provide enough accessible housing to meet the needs of people with disabilities.
- Help provide enough subsidized housing to meet the needs of very low income households, and also help address the problem of dilapidated, substandard, and unsafe housing in the Region.
- Help address the concentration of minority and low-income populations in the central cities of Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine, and increase diversity in all communities in the Region.

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<sup>2</sup> Documented in SEWRPC Planning Report No. 54, A Regional Housing Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2035, March 2013.

- Review local ordinance requirements (street widths and façade requirements, for example) that apply to new housing development to determine if changes could be made that would reduce the cost of housing without compromising the safety, functionality, and aesthetic quality of new development.

A key recommendation of the housing plan is that local governments with sanitary sewer service review their comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, and consider changing the plans and ordinances if necessary, to address the need for additional affordable housing for lower- and moderate-income households. Housing costs are considered affordable if they do not exceed 30 percent of a household's monthly income. Specifically, the housing plan recommends that plans and ordinances in sewered communities allow for the development of modest multi-family housing at a density of at least 10 housing units (apartments) per acre, and modest single-family housing at a density of about four units per acre (10,000 square foot lots or smaller) to provide market-rate (nonsubsidized) housing for households with incomes between 50 and 135 percent of the Region's median income (about \$27,000 to \$73,000 per year). Housing developed by non-profit agencies or subsidized by the public will likely be needed to provide affordable housing to households with incomes less than 50 percent of the median income. A variety of affordable market-rate housing is available to households with incomes more than 135 percent of median income.

### **WALWORTH COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN**

In 2009, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted an updated version of Chapter 91 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, which establishes the statutory framework for the State's Farmland Preservation Program. The law is also referred to as the "Working Lands Initiative." The Program continues to rely on county and local governments for implementation. Specifically, Walworth County was required to prepare and certify an updated County Farmland Preservation Plan by December 31, 2013, and to revise and certify a farmland preservation zoning district (the A-1 district) by December 31, 2015, to make landowners eligible to claim State farmland preservation tax credits. The plan update was approved by the Walworth County Board of Supervisors on July 10, 2012. The County Farmland Preservation Plan and the A-1 zoning district and zoning map were certified as meeting State program requirements in 2015 by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. **The Walworth County Farmland Preservation Plan Update was certified by the State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection on July 31,**

2012. The Walworth County Farmland Preservation Zoning Ordinance (text and map) was certified by the State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection on September 11, 2015.

The Walworth County Farmland Preservation Plan Update reaffirms the County's long-range commitment to preserving farmlands and working farms in the County. According to the County plan, preservation and protection of the most productive agricultural soils is the primary land use goal for Walworth County. The County Farmland Preservation Plan also seeks to preserve large blocks of farmland to promote more efficient farming and minimize conflicts between farming operations and urban uses and to maintain agriculture as an important component of the County's economic base.

Farmland Preservation Areas (FPAs) designated in the Walworth County in the updated County Farmland Preservation Plan are shown on Map 4.3 and encompass 290 square miles.

#### **WALWORTH COUNTY PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN**

The regional park and open space plan was adopted by SEWRPC in 1977. Over time, the plan has been refined and updated on a county-by-county basis. The regional and county plans consist of two key elements, an open space preservation element and an outdoor recreation element. The open space preservation element provides recommendations for the preservation of environmentally significant open space lands throughout the Region, focusing on the environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas identified as part of the regional land use plan, as well as incorporating the findings and recommendations of the regional natural areas protection and management plan.

The outdoor recreation element provides recommendations regarding sites and facilities to meet existing and anticipated future outdoor recreation needs within the Region. The plan focuses on sites and facilities needed for "resource-oriented" activities—activities like beach swimming, nature study, camping, picnicking, hiking, and golf—which depend upon, or are significantly enhanced by, the presence of natural resource amenities. The plan includes recommendations for major parks, areawide recreation trails, and lake and river access sites, which provide opportunities for such activities.

An update to the Walworth County park and open space plan was completed and adopted by the County Board in 2014. The outdoor recreation element of the plan is shown on Map 3.5 in Chapter 3. One of the primary recommendations of the plan was the acquisition and development of a new County park. That

recommendation has been implemented with the acquisition and development of the White River County Park. The plan also recommends the development of additional bicycle/hiking trails in the Town, including a link from the White River State Trail to the White River County Park and a trail along the White River that would consist of on- and off-street segments.

In addition to trails for hiking and biking, the County park and open space plan identifies potential water trails on Honey Creek, Sugar Creek, Turtle Creek, and the White River from STH 12 east to its confluence with the Fox River. Efforts are currently underway to develop a Fox River water trail in Wisconsin and Illinois, which would be designated as a national water trail. Water trails, sometimes referred to as paddling trails or canoe/kayaking trails, are intended to accommodate low-impact, non-motorized watercraft such as a canoes and kayaks. Important factors for establishing water trails include safe and convenient access to a waterway with unobstructed passageways, launch areas, and safe portaging areas. One canoe access site has been developed in the White River County Park.

#### **NATURAL AREAS AND CRITICAL SPECIES HABITAT PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The County park and open space plan incorporates the recommendations of the Regional Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Protection and Management Plan, as amended in 2010, for the acquisition and protection of natural areas and critical species habitat sites in the County. Those recommendations, as they pertain to the Walworth County, are shown on Map 3.7 in Chapter 3.

#### **WALWORTH COUNTY JURISDICTIONAL HIGHWAY PLAN**

The regional transportation plan includes recommendations related to the jurisdictional responsibility for each segment of the regional arterial street and highway network. Jurisdictional highway system plans contain specific recommendations as to which level of government—State, county, or local—should logically be responsible for each of the various facilities that make up the arterial system. Such jurisdictional plan recommendations are developed on a county-by-county basis and are intended to provide for the efficient development and management of the arterial street and highway system. This would help to ensure that public resources are effectively invested in the provision of highway transportation, and that the costs associated with plan implementation are equitably accepted among the levels and agencies of government concerned.

The updated year 2035 jurisdictional highway system plan for Walworth County was adopted by the County Board in 2011. The plan is reflected in the Arterial Streets and Highways Recommended in VISION 2050 and is shown on Map 4.2.