

## WALWORTH COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### FACT SHEET NO. 5

July 2009  
Revised August 2009

## BACKGROUND

The land use plan element is arguably the most important element of the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan for Walworth County. It includes recommendations for land use within the unincorporated area of the County through the year 2035. The land use plan element is closely tied to, and coordinated with, other elements of the comprehensive plan, particularly the agricultural-natural-cultural resources, housing, transportation, utilities-community facilities, and economic development plan elements. This fact sheet provides a summary description of the preliminary land use element. The preliminary land use element is described in detail in Chapter IX, "Land Use Element," of the Walworth County multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan report. That report may be viewed online at the comprehensive planning website ([www.sewrpc.org/smartgrowth/walworthcounty/](http://www.sewrpc.org/smartgrowth/walworthcounty/)).

It should be noted that this fact sheet focuses on the countywide version of the land use plan. The countywide land use plan map was prepared from the respective town land use plans and is consistent with those plans.

## PREPARING THE COUNTYWIDE LAND USE PLAN

The countywide land use plan is essentially a compilation of town land use plans prepared as part of the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning process. The plan was prepared as follows:

1. A preliminary town land use plan map was prepared for each of the 13 participating towns<sup>1</sup> under the guidance of the concerned town plan commission and/or town smart growth committee, with staff assistance provided by the County Land Use and Resource Management Department and SEWRPC. The town land use plans were prepared based upon a consideration of any pre-existing town plans; land use goals and objectives; the year 2020 Walworth County land use plan; projections of population, households, and employment; and public input received during the course of the planning process. The preliminary town land use plan maps may be viewed on the comprehensive planning website.
2. The land use plans of the 13 participating towns were incorporated into the countywide land use plan map. For most of the towns, the land use categories shown on the respective town plans were transferred directly to the County plan map. For some towns, the land use categories shown on the town plan map were combined into more general categories on the countywide map.
3. For the nonparticipating towns (Bloomfield, Linn, and Lyons), the land use plan maps included in their respective comprehensive plans were incorporated into the countywide land use plan map; town plan categories were converted to similar categories on the countywide plan map, as appropriate.

The countywide land use plan map was developed in this manner in order to achieve basic consistency with the town land use plans, recognizing that the town plans may provide more detail than the County plan in certain areas.

The State planning law requires that a county comprehensive plan incorporate the comprehensive plans of its cities and villages. All land use plan maps that are now, or in the future may be, adopted by cities and villages in Walworth

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<sup>1</sup> Towns participating with Walworth County in the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan include the Towns of Darien, Delavan, East Troy, Geneva, LaFayette, LaGrange, Richmond, Sharon, Spring Prairie, Sugar Creek, Troy, Walworth, and Whitewater.

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County under the state comprehensive planning law are incorporated by reference into the countywide land use plan—*within the corporate limits of those cities and villages*. As of mid-2009, a majority of the cities and villages in Walworth County had not yet adopted a comprehensive plan under the State comprehensive planning law.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTYWIDE LAND USE PLAN

The countywide land use plan map presented on the next page shows the recommended pattern of land use in the unincorporated areas of Walworth County through the year 2035. While the plan map was prepared via a “grass-roots” approach—that, is prepared by compiling plans developed by each of the County’s towns—the resulting plan is generally consistent with long-standing County planning objectives of protecting important natural and agricultural resources and preserving the unique characteristics of the County, while accommodating expected growth and development. A summary of the year 2035 County land use plan by major land use category follows:

- ***Urban Density Residential Land***

Urban density residential land consists of residential development at a density of less than 5.0 acres per dwelling. The urban density residential areas shown on the plan map encompass about 20,100 acres, or 6.0 percent of the County’s unincorporated area (see accompanying table). Under the plan, much of the new urban density residential development would occur as infill in areas already committed to such use as well as adjacent to similar existing development. Determination of a specific density within the overall density range would depend upon the availability of sanitary sewer service and town and County goals and objectives for the area concerned.<sup>2</sup>

In unsewered areas, urban residential development would most commonly be accommodated through the R-1 Single-Family Residence zoning district (at least 40,000 square feet per dwelling), and, to a lesser extent, through the C-3 Conservancy-residential zoning district (at least 100,000 square feet per dwelling) or R-5 Planned Residential Development zoning district (at least 40,000 square feet per dwelling). In sewerred areas, urban residential development could be accommodated through a number of residential zoning districts, the maximum single-family density allowed for new development (excluding legal substandard lots) being at least 15,000 square feet per dwelling, in the R-2 Single-Family Residence district.

- ***Commercial Land***

Commercial lands shown on the plan map encompass about 1,600 acres (0.5 percent of the County’s unincorporated area). Some towns have identified very little or no land for additional commercial development. Others have identified areas that would serve as neighborhood centers, town commercial centers, or commercial gateways to urban centers. Commercial development in the identified areas would generally be accommodated through the B-1 Local Business zoning district, B-2 General Business zoning district, B-3 Waterfront Business zoning district, or B-4 Highway Business zoning district.

- ***Industrial Land***

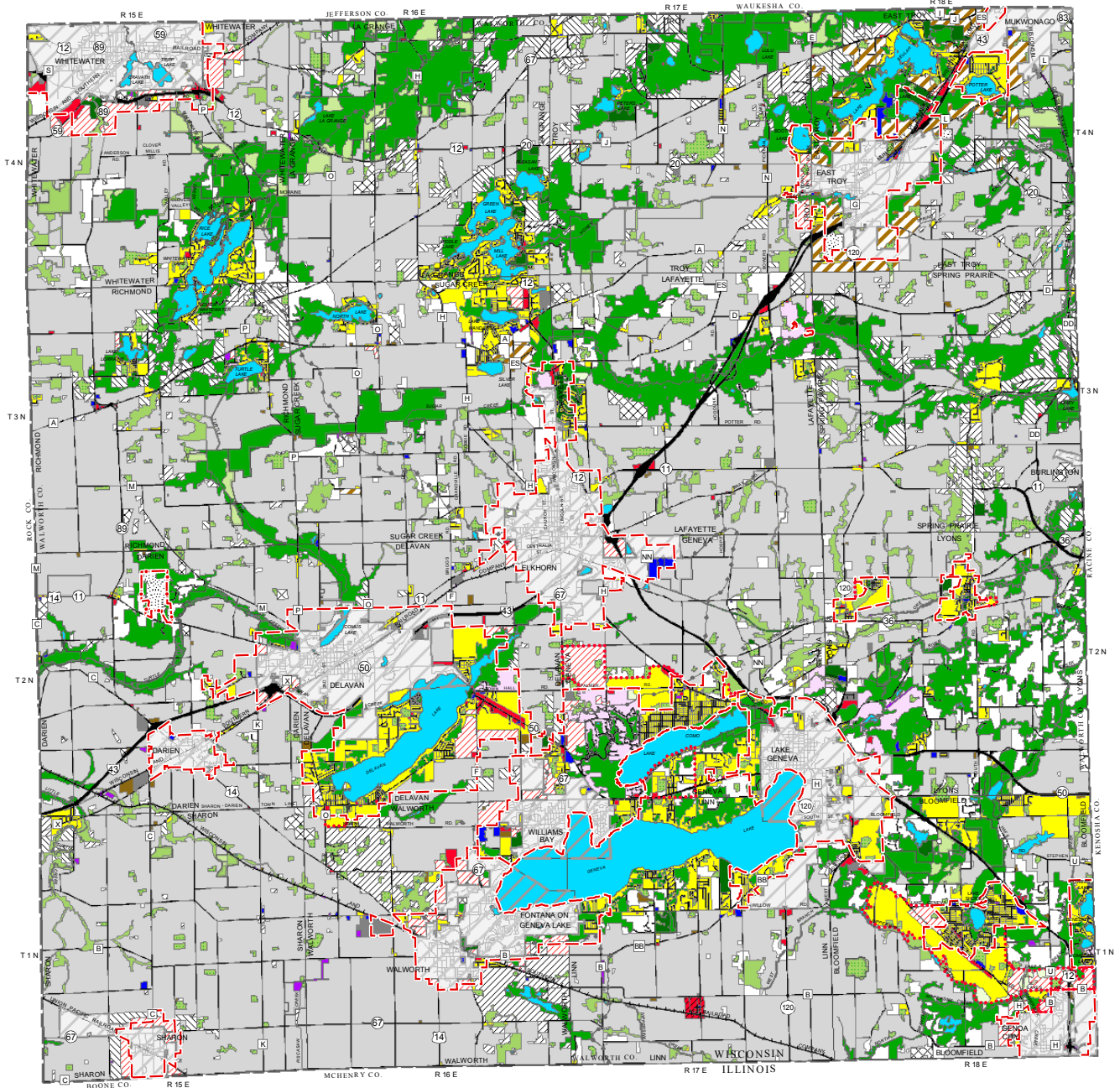
Industrial lands shown on the plan map encompass about 900 acres (0.3 percent of the County’s unincorporated area). None of the participating towns proposes a major expansion of manufacturing or other industrial activity. New industrial development would generally be limited to relatively small currently zoned industrial areas and small-scale infill of areas already in such use. Industrial development in the identified areas would generally be accommodated through the M-1 Industrial zoning district and, to a limited extent, the M-2 Heavy Industrial zoning district.

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<sup>2</sup> *The land use plans for five of the participating towns (Delavan, Geneva, LaGrange, Sugar Creek, and Troy) and two nonparticipating towns (Bloomfield and Lyons) divide the urban density category into three or more density ranges.*

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# PRELIMINARY LAND USE PLAN FOR WALWORTH COUNTY: 2035



- URBAN DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (LESS THAN 5.0 ACRES PER DWELLING)
- RURAL DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (AT LEAST 5.0 ACRES PER DWELLING)
- COMMERCIAL
- COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL
- MIXED USE
- INDUSTRIAL
- GOVERNMENTAL AND INSTITUTIONAL
- RECREATIONAL
- TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATION, AND UTILITIES
- AGRICULTURAL RELATED MANUFACTURING, WAREHOUSING, AND MARKETING
- STREETS AND HIGHWAYS
- URBAN RESERVE
- EXTRACTIVE
- SANITARY LANDFILL

- PRIME AGRICULTURAL (MINIMUM PARCEL SIZE: 35 ACRES)
- OTHER AGRICULTURAL, RURAL RESIDENTIAL, AND OTHER OPEN LAND (5 TO 34 ACRES PER DWELLING)
- OTHER AGRICULTURAL, RURAL RESIDENTIAL, AND OTHER OPEN LAND (5 TO 19 ACRES PER DWELLING)
- OTHER AGRICULTURAL, RURAL RESIDENTIAL, AND OTHER OPEN LAND (20 TO 34 ACRES PER DWELLING)
- PRIMARY ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDOR
- SECONDARY ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDOR
- ISOLATED NATURAL RESOURCE AREA
- DNR/DOT LAND OUTSIDE ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS
- OTHER OPEN LAND TO BE PRESERVED
- SURFACE WATER
- PLANNED SEWER SERVICE AREA
- TOWN PROPOSED ADDITION TO SEWER SERVICE AREA
- SPECIAL SEWER SERVICE AREA (MALLARD RIDGE)

INCORPORATED AREA

**PLANNED LAND USE IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF WALWORTH COUNTY: 2035**

Land Use Category	Acres	Percent of Unincorporated Area
<b>Urban</b>		
Urban Density Residential (less than 5.0 acres per dwelling) <sup>a</sup> .....	20,132	6.0
Commercial.....	1,605	0.5
Industrial .....	887	0.3
Governmental and Institutional.....	840	0.2
Transportation, Communication, Utilities <sup>b</sup> .....	12,892	3.8
Recreational .....	1,936	0.6
Commercial/Recreational .....	2,303	0.7
Mixed-Use.....	131	- <sup>c</sup>
Urban Reserve .....	5,493	1.6
<b>Urban Subtotal</b>	<b>46,219</b>	<b>13.7</b>
<b>Nonurban</b>		
Prime Agricultural (minimum parcel size: 35 acres) .....	171,448	50.9
Other Agricultural, Rural Residential, and Other Open Land:		
5 to 34 acres per dwelling .....	15,963	4.7
5 to 19 acres per dwelling .....	10,463	3.1
20 to 34 acres per dwelling .....	7,737	2.3
Rural Density Residential (at least 5.0 acres per dwelling) .....	3,259	1.0
Agricultural Related Manufacturing, Warehousing, and Marketing .....	540	0.2
Extractive.....	1,725	0.5
Landfill .....	452	0.1
Environmental Corridors and Isolated Natural Resource Areas:		
Primary Environmental Corridor.....	47,681	14.2
Secondary Environmental Corridor .....	8,531	2.5
Isolated Natural Resource Area .....	7,743	2.3
WDNR/WisDOT Lands Outside Environmental Corridor.....	2,858	0.8
Other Open Land to Be Preserved .....	399	0.1
Surface Water.....	12,085	3.6
<b>Nonurban Subtotal</b>	<b>290,884</b>	<b>86.3</b>
<b>County Total</b>	<b>337,103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> Does not include residential land on lots scattered throughout areas identified on the plan map as prime agricultural land; other agricultural, rural residential, and other open land; or environmental corridors.

<sup>b</sup> Includes streets, railways, and other transportation, communication, and utility uses.

<sup>c</sup> Less than 0.1 percent.

Source: Walworth County, Towns in Walworth County, and SEWRPC.

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- ***Governmental and Institutional Land***

Governmental and institutional lands shown on the plan map encompass about 800 acres (0.2 percent of the County's unincorporated area). These areas are comprised for the most part of lands in the P-2 Institutional Park zoning district, and include areas that are wholly or partially developed as schools, churches, and government buildings such as town halls and fire stations, as well as cemeteries.
  - ***Transportation, Communication, and Utility Land***

Transportation, communication, and utility uses are comprised of street and highway right-of-ways and railroad right-of-ways, as well as areas that are wholly or partially developed for communication or utility uses, such as transmission towers or sewage treatment plants. These uses encompass about 12,900 acres (3.8 percent of the County's unincorporated area).
  - ***Recreational Land***

Recreational lands shown on the plan map encompass about 1,900 acres (0.6 percent of the County's unincorporated area). These areas consist primarily of parks, golf courses, campgrounds, and similar outdoor recreation uses, and are generally accommodated in the P-1 Recreational Park zoning district. Wetlands and woodlands within such recreational sites are generally identified on the plan map as part of an environmental corridor or isolated natural resource area.
  - ***Commercial/Recreational Land***

Commercial/recreational lands shown on the plan map encompass about 2,300 acres (0.7 percent of the County's unincorporated area). These areas are characterized by commercial/recreational facilities, often with a residential component, and are typically accommodated through the B-5 Planned Commercial-Recreational Business zoning district. Large recreational-resort complexes, such as Grand Geneva and Geneva National, account for much of the identified commercial/recreational land. Two towns, Delavan and Geneva, have identified significant additional areas for future commercial/recreational development.
  - ***Mixed-Use Land***

Mixed-use areas have been identified in two towns—Richmond and Linn. Located near the intersection of STH 89 and CTH A, the mixed use area in the Town of Richmond would be further developed and redeveloped for a mix of business and residential uses. The mixed-use area in the community of Zenda in the Town of Linn would utilize traditional neighborhood development concepts to accommodate a mix of residential, commercial, recreational, and light industrial uses. Mixed-use areas encompass just over 100 acres (less than 0.1 percent of the County's unincorporated area).
  - ***Urban Reserve***

The urban reserve category shown on the plan map includes areas identified as “urban reserve” on town plans as well as areas variously identified on town plans as “agricultural holding,” “development reserve,” and “development holding area.” The urban reserve designation is an indication that towns recognize that the areas so identified may be developed at some point in time, but that specific future uses have not been determined. In many cases, the identified urban reserve areas are located adjacent to cities and villages, often being located wholly or partially within the planned sewer service areas of cities and villages, and could be annexed to cities and villages prior to development. In other cases, the urban reserve areas would remain part of the town concerned. Some towns envision a broad range of future land uses within the urban reserve areas, while others envision a narrower range of uses. The types of uses that would be accommodated depend upon services available and town objectives for the areas concerned. The “urban reserve” designation is not to be construed as limiting future development to urban density residential (less than 5 acres per dwelling) or other urban use. Rural density residential development (5 acres or more per dwelling) is an option for such areas. Urban reserve areas encompass about 5,500 acres (1.6 percent of the County's unincorporated area).
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- ***Prime Agricultural Land***

Prime agricultural land consists largely of agricultural lands covered by Capability Class I, II, and III soils as identified by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service. The prime agricultural lands shown on the land use plan map generally correspond to the County's A-1 Prime Agricultural Land zoning district with certain exclusions in areas where the respective town plans recommend future urban or rural development. The prime agricultural land area includes scattered homesites and vacant lots within essentially agricultural areas that have been "blended in" as a mapping convention. The prime agricultural land area shown on the plan map encompasses about 171,400 acres (50.9 percent of the County's unincorporated area).

With certain exceptions, the lands identified as prime agricultural on the land use plan map will be retained in agricultural use and in related uses that are allowed as principal or conditional uses in the A-1 Prime Agricultural Land zoning district of the County zoning ordinance, with a minimum parcel size of 35 acres. The exceptions are:

- Parcels with nonprime soils which are found to meet the criteria for rezoning from the A-1 Prime Agricultural Land zoning district established by the Smart Growth Committee.
- Parcels which may be developed in accordance with the substandard lot provisions of the County Zoning Ordinance.
- Areas which are in the future proposed for agricultural manufacturing, warehousing, and marketing uses (uses permitted in the A-4 zoning district)—where the proposed use is compatible with adjacent agricultural areas and consistent with County and town goals and objectives.
- Areas which are in the future proposed for mineral extraction use where the proposed use is compatible with adjacent agricultural use and consistent with County and town goals and objectives.
- The plan specifically permits the development of lands identified as prime agricultural for any use allowed under the zoning in effect as to that parcel.

- ***Other Agricultural, Rural Residential, and Other Open Land***

Under the land use plan, areas which have been designated neither for future urban use nor for preservation as environmental corridors, isolated natural resource areas, or prime agricultural land are identified as "other agricultural, rural residential, and other open land." Such lands encompass about 34,200 acres (10.1 percent of the County's unincorporated area).

The overriding recommendation for these areas is that they be retained in rural use: agricultural use, other open use, or rural residential development. Rural residential development may be accommodated at densities indicated on the plan map—including 5 to 19 acres per dwelling, 20 to 34 acres per dwelling, or 5 to 34 acres per dwelling. Rural residential development would be accommodated through the C-2 Upland Resource Conservation zoning district or A-2 Agricultural Land zoning district as appropriate.

- ***Rural Density Residential Land***

Two towns, East Troy and Sugar Creek, specifically designate certain areas for future rural density residential use, with a maximum density of no more than one dwelling per five acres. Such development would be accommodated through the C-2 Upland Resource Conservation zoning district. The identified rural density residential land encompasses about 3,300 acres (1.0 percent of the County's unincorporated area).

- ***Agricultural Related Manufacturing, Warehousing, and Marketing***

Lands in this category encompass about 500 acres (0.2 percent of the County's unincorporated area). These lands are in the A-4 Agricultural Related Manufacturing, Warehousing, and Marketing zoning

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district, which is intended to accommodate manufacturing, warehousing, storage, and marketing activities that are dependent upon or closely allied to agriculture.

- ***Extractive and Landfill***

Extractive lands shown on the plan map encompass about 1,700 acres (0.5 percent of the County's unincorporated area). These lands were identified based largely on existing zoning. This plan recognizes that additional land for mineral extraction (sand, gravel, clay, stone) may be needed during the planning period, although the specific locations have not been determined. The County and the concerned town will consider proposals for new or expanded mineral extraction areas on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the impacts on adjacent land uses, impacts on the natural resource base, impacts on highways, and other factors.

Areas identified as landfill encompass over 400 acres (0.1 percent of the County's unincorporated area). This includes the Mallard Ridge landfill in the Town of Darien and two sites in the Town of East Troy.

- ***Environmental Corridors and Isolated Natural Resource Areas***

Environmental corridors are linear areas in the landscape that contain concentrations of wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitat, surface water, and other natural resource features. Primary environmental corridors are the largest of these, by definition being at least 400 acres in area, two miles in length, and 200 feet in width. Secondary environmental corridors may have similar types of resources as primary environmental corridors but are smaller in size; they are by definition at least 100 acres in area and one mile in length. Primary environmental corridors shown on the plan map encompass about 47,700 acres (excluding surface water), or 14.2 percent of the unincorporated area of the County. Secondary environmental corridors encompass about 8,500 acres (excluding surface water), or 2.5 percent of the unincorporated area of the County.

Isolated natural resource areas are comprised of tracts of wetlands, woodlands, and surface water—by definition, at least 5 acres in area and 200 feet in width—that are separated from the environmental corridors. The isolated natural resource areas shown on the plan map encompass about 7,700 acres (excluding surface water), or 2.3 percent of the unincorporated area of the County.

The land use plan for these areas includes these provisions:

- Wetland and floodplain portions of the environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas will be retained in open use, as allowed in the C-1 Lowland Resource Conservation zoning district, C-4 Lowland Resource Conservation (Shoreland) zoning district, and in 100-year recurrence interval floodplains.
- Upland portions of the environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas (areas other than wetlands and floodplains) will accommodate any of the uses allowed as principal or conditional uses under the C-2 Upland Resource Conservation district of the County zoning ordinance. This includes single-family residential development on minimum five-acre lots—or, at a maximum density of one dwelling unit per five acres, in the case of conservation developments.
- This plan specifically permits the development of lands identified as primary or secondary environmental corridor or isolated natural resource area for any use allowed under the zoning in effect as to that parcel.

It is expected that in many cases, as specific development proposals arise, a field survey will be conducted to more precisely identify the boundaries of the environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas in the area of the proposed development, effectively refining the corridor and isolated natural resource area delineations. The results of the field survey can be incorporated directly into the site design for the proposed development.

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- ***WDNR and WisDOT Lands Outside Environmental Corridors***

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) owns large tracts of open space lands in Walworth County, and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) owns certain open space lands acquired for wetland mitigation purposes. Much of these lands consists of environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas and are identified as such on the plan map. WDNR and WisDOT lands that do not have the resource features found in environmental corridors are identified on the plan map as “WDNR and WisDOT lands outside environmental corridors.” These lands encompass about 2,900 acres (0.8 percent of the County’s unincorporated area). Some of these lands may be expected to revert to more natural conditions, with the potential to become part of the environmental corridor network in the years ahead.

- ***Other Open Land to be Preserved***

This category is comprised of other small wetland and/or floodplain areas, typically located near planned urban or rural development, specifically identified in certain town plans as “other open land to be preserved,” thereby effectively designating such lands as unsuitable for development. These lands encompass about 400 acres (0.1 percent of the County’s unincorporated area).

### **Relationship to Zoning and Land Subdivision Regulations**

The State comprehensive planning law requires that, beginning on January 1, 2010, County and town government actions with respect to zoning and land subdivision regulations must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. With respect to zoning, in order to meet this requirement, rezonings that may be needed to accommodate new urban or rural development that is consistent with the plan would be made at the request of the property owner. Town and County decisions on proposed rezones should be consistent with the land use plan and other elements of the comprehensive plan. As in the past, proposed land divisions would be considered by the County and concerned town at the time they are submitted. Town and County actions on proposed land divisions should also be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

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