

# A FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN FOR RACINE COUNTY WISCONSIN



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**A FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN  
FOR RACINE COUNTY, WISCONSIN**

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# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

# 1



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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The loss of productive farms and agricultural resources is of increasing public concern. Agriculture is a vital part of Racine County's economic, cultural, and ecological landscape. It continues to provide important economic, social, and ecological functions by controlling floodwater, recharging groundwater supplies, sustaining wildlife habitat, and providing scenic beauty.

In 2009, the Wisconsin Legislature passed the landmark Wisconsin Act 28 to repeal and recreate the Wisconsin farmland preservation law under Chapter 91 of the *Wisconsin Statutes* and related tax credits under subchapter 4 of Chapter 71 of the *Statutes*. In addition, Chapter ATCP 49 (Farmland Preservation) implements Wisconsin's farmland preservation program as set forth in Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes and specifically states that the purposes of the farmland preservation program are to preserve agricultural lands, to promote soil and water conservation, to promote orderly land use planning and development, and to provide tax credits for owners of farmland covered by the program.

This new law, known as the "Working Lands Initiative," also created other new programs described later in this chapter. Importantly, the law requires counties to update their farmland preservation plans. The current Racine County farmland preservation plan, adopted in 2013, must be updated and recertified by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for farmers to be able to continue to participate in the State farmland preservation program. Racine County requested and was awarded a State farmland preservation planning grant to provide reimbursement for up to half of the County's cost of preparing the plan. Racine County requested that the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (Commission) assist the County in preparing an updated farmland preservation plan to meet the requirements set forth in Chapter 91 of the *Statutes*. To further help guide this planning process, a Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee was created. This report documents the planning effort and presents the resulting updated County farmland preservation plan, which replaces the plan adopted by the Racine County Board of Supervisors in 2013.

The main intent of the original program was to encourage farmland preservation by providing tax credits to eligible farmland owners who voluntarily chose to enter into an agreement with the State through farmland

preservation agreements or through exclusive agricultural zoning. The Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative (WLI) provides landowners the opportunity to continue to claim farmland preservation tax credits through participation in its program. To be eligible to enroll in the former State program and the WLI, farmland preservation areas had to be designated in the county farmland preservation plan. Farmland preservation areas identified in the 2013 plan are shown on Map 2.18 in Chapter 2. The tax credit program provides income tax credits that are applied against tax liability and are available annually and are no longer income based. The Working Lands Initiative program expands and modernizes the previous farmland preservation program, allows the establishment of Agricultural Enterprise Areas, and creates a Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program.

### **History and Overview of Farmland Preservation Planning in Racine County**

The initial Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program was enacted in 1977 to provide income tax credits to eligible farmland owners. The program was administered by County and local governments, but the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) had to first certify that the county farmland preservation plan met the standards specified in Chapter 91 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*. Of the 72 counties in Wisconsin, 70 had certified farmland preservation plans under the initial program. Racine County's Farmland Preservation Plan was adopted by the Racine County Board of Supervisors and certified in 1982.

At that time, qualified farm units had to contain a minimum of 35 contiguous acres and produce a minimum of \$6,000 in gross farm receipts in the previous year or \$18,000 in the previous three years. The 1982 County plan further identified "prime" agricultural land as being part of a relatively homogeneous concentration of similar farms or blocks of farmland having a minimum combined area of at least 100 acres in size, with at least 50 percent of each individual farm covered by soils meeting USDA-Soil Conservation Service (now known as the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)) criteria for national prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance. Generally, national prime farmlands are Class I or II soils and farmlands of Statewide significance are Class III soils. Map 2.3 in Chapter 2 shows the farmland classification of soils in the County. Farmland owners could participate in the program in one of two ways: through exclusive agricultural zoning or through individual farmland preservation agreements with DATCP. Participation through exclusive agricultural zoning could only occur if the jurisdiction's zoning ordinance were certified by the LWCB as meeting the then-existing standards of Chapter 91. The only uses permitted in exclusive agricultural zoning districts at that time were agricultural uses and uses consistent with or related to agricultural uses, which were specified in the *Statutes*.

The continued preservation of Wisconsin's working lands (farmlands and forest lands) is important to sustain the State and its residents by producing food, fiber, and sources for biofuel. Over the years, the acreage of Wisconsin's working lands has continued to decrease and be fragmented by encroaching urban development. In response to those concerns, the WLI was launched by DATCP in 2005 and a steering committee was established to improve the program and develop a consensus vision on managing Wisconsin's farm and forest lands. In August 2006, the WLI Steering Committee issued a report with a set of recommendations intended to modernize and expand policies and programs affecting Wisconsin farmlands and forests. The report recommended an update to the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program, which would include setting a flat per-acre tax credit for landowners instead of basing the credit on household income and streamline the process of applying for the program and claiming the tax credits. Proposed changes to the Farmland Preservation Program were included in DATCP's 2007-09 budget request. The Committee's report recommended establishing several new programs, including an Agricultural Enterprise Areas program under Subchapter 6 of Chapter 91 of the *Statutes* and a purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE) program under Chapter 93.73 of the *Statutes*. Changes to the old Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program were approved by the Wisconsin Legislature as part of the 2009-2011 budget bill. The 2011-2013 biennial budget amended the program to delete the provisions that required a conversion fee to be paid by property owners rezoning existing farmland preservation areas out of farmland preservation zoning districts in communities that have a State certified farmland preservation zoning ordinance.

### **Overview of Comprehensive Planning**

In 1999 the Wisconsin Legislature enacted a comprehensive planning law, set forth in Chapter 66.1001 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, requiring County and local governments that enforce general zoning, shoreland and floodplain zoning, subdivision, or official mapping ordinances to have an adopted comprehensive plan. The new requirements supplement earlier provisions in the *Statutes* for the preparation of county development

plans (Chapter 59.69 (3) of the *Statutes*) and local master plans (Chapter 62.23 of the *Statutes*). The new law further includes a “consistency” requirement, whereby zoning, subdivision, and official mapping ordinance actions of counties, cities, villages, and towns must be consistent with the comprehensive plan adopted by the county board, common council, village board, or town board, respectively, beginning on January 1, 2010. To address the State comprehensive planning requirements, a multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning process was undertaken by Racine County, all 17 local governments, UW-Extension, and the Commission. As a result of the multi-jurisdictional process, comprehensive plans that satisfy the planning requirements set forth in Chapter 66.1001 of the *Statutes* were developed for the County and each of the 17 local government partners. The Racine County Board of Supervisors adopted *A Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Racine County: 2035*, on October 13, 2009.

Chapter 91.10(2) of the *Statutes* requires that, if a county has a comprehensive plan, the county shall include the farmland preservation plan in its comprehensive plan and ensure that the farmland preservation plan is consistent with the comprehensive plan. The county may incorporate information contained in other parts of the comprehensive plan into the farmland preservation plan by reference. This updated Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan, therefore, was prepared as part of, and as an amendment to, the adopted multi-jurisdictional County comprehensive plan.

The County comprehensive plan provides long-range goals, objectives, policies, and programs for Racine County officials and residents to help guide future development and preserve significant natural resources, including productive farmlands, in Racine County to the plan design year 2035. Important agricultural and related natural resource data is also provided in the comprehensive plan document. Farmland preservation was one of many issues identified during the comprehensive planning process and was considered a high priority in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis conducted as part of that process. Valuable agricultural information can be found throughout the County’s comprehensive plan, including an inventory of agricultural resources. Relevant tables and maps found in the comprehensive plan report are cross-referenced or updated and included in this report.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF PROTECTING FARMLAND**

A vibrant agricultural presence in a rapidly urbanizing Racine County is important for economic health, quality of life, and business diversification. The preservation of agricultural lands can serve many purposes, including conserving energy, reducing urban sprawl, maintaining open space and rural character, retaining natural ecological systems, controlling public costs, preserving the local economic base, promoting sustainability or self-sufficiency, preserving the rural lifestyle and/or farm living, and preserving productive agricultural lands.

Farming is an important part of the Racine County economy. In 2017, the total net cash farm income for the County was \$19.9 million. Farming operations serve as a foundation supporting a variety of other businesses, such as implement dealers, feed mills, granaries, crop consultants, veterinarians, retail stores, restaurants, and food processing plants. This is a symbiotic relationship, however, where the farm operations need the support of businesses and vice versa. If farms are economically affected, support businesses will also be impacted. Thus, by promoting, supporting, and preserving agriculture and associated agricultural industries as a viable economic sector, communities also protect their local agricultural economic base.

The population of Racine County increased about 15 percent, from 170,838 residents in 1970 to 197,727 in 2020. This growth, combined with lower development densities in some areas, a decreasing number of persons per household, and a desire to live near open space, has created development pressures on the rural landscape of the County.

Farmers need lands with good soil to farm just as manufacturers need raw materials. Without basic resources, neither can survive. Productive agricultural soils require less energy to farm than other soils, and when maintained near primary markets such as urban centers, energy is conserved, and transportation costs are reduced. Energy savings are due mainly to the natural characteristics of the soil, good moisture content, depth and texture, biochemical composition, good drainage, adequate sunlight, and proper wind protection. Because of these natural qualities, less energy is expended on soil and water conservation practices, fertilizer and pesticide applications, the development and application of irrigation and drainage

systems, and the operation of farm equipment. By preserving highly productive, self-sufficient soils in agricultural use, including near urban centers, energy is conserved that would otherwise be spent in transportation and on the more energy-intensive practices required to farm inferior soils.

The historic urban growth map, Map 2.14 in Chapter 2, identifies areas of urban development expanding into rural portions of the County, away from municipal sewer and water services. This type of development frequently creates land use conflicts for the agricultural industry and the provision of community services can be costly. Communities that promote compact urban development discourage such growth into rural areas. The costs of supporting diffused low-density urban development are high in terms of dollars and loss of nonrenewable natural resources and surface and groundwater recharge areas made possible by open lands. Impervious roofs, roads, and parking lots do not allow rainwater to seep into the soil but direct it off-premises. By saving farmsteads, more compact and efficient forms of urban development can be attained.

Preserving farmland and open space provides locally grown food for markets, replenishes groundwater supplies, provides wildlife habitat, and preserves the County's rural heritage and scenic vistas. Farmland preservation helps maintain open space that can give desirable form and structure to urban and rural development and can significantly contribute to the overall environmental quality and scenic beauty of an area. In this context, farmland preservation may be considered as part of an overall program to protect resources by maintaining natural systems and natural processes, sometimes referred to as natural ecological systems, since farmland oftentimes contains natural features. These objectives are met by preserving wetlands, woodlands, floodplains, surface, and groundwater resources including recharge areas, and aquatic and wildlife habitat areas, in addition to the preservation of productive agricultural soils. The preservation of these features and farmstead characteristics such as barns, silos, and stone walls contribute to the visual natural and agrarian countryside character of an area. By preserving existing farms and farmland, communities can maintain their rural lifestyle and the unique agrarian cultural heritage associated with farm living.

The public service costs of farmsteads are low in comparison to scattered low-density urban development. In general, the tax returns to the community from farms are greater than the public service and facility outlays that farms require. Unplanned development and the conversion of productive land may increase a community's cost of services and impact its character. Scattered low-density urban development is less efficient and public costs to provide public services and facilities generally exceed tax revenues. By controlling the timing, rate, and/or location of such development through a farmland preservation program, communities maintain the stability of their tax base and control public costs.

Efforts to preserve farmland can provide increased certainty about the future to farmers who want to continue farming, as well as aspiring farmers. They will be more likely to invest in their operations. In addition, tools such as purchase of development rights (PDRs), or purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE) programs may make productive farmland affordable for the next generation of farmers. In addition, many County residents will continue to enjoy the unique agricultural heritage of Racine County. By establishing a farmland preservation program and promoting compact development, Racine County can support a significant part of its economy, agriculture, and its related businesses. Such a program will help farmers withstand some of the development pressures they face due to urban encroachment into rural areas.

In promoting compact urban development through preservation of local agricultural areas, communities also contribute to preserving agricultural resources. Without a farmland preservation program many farmers would likely be forced to turn to other more marginal lands for agricultural production. Additionally, the State and Nation would lack the reserves of good productive agricultural lands that may be required to meet or help sustain national and international needs in times of disasters as well as in times of changing market conditions, such as increasing demand for food and biofuel.



## 1.3 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The specific planning requirements for obtaining State certification of a county farmland preservation plan are identified in Chapter 91, Subchapter 2 of the *Statutes*, and are summarized in the following paragraphs.

### Plan Certification Expiration and Recertification Process

In accordance with Chapter 91 of the *Statutes*, certifications of all existing county farmland preservation plans under the initial Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program were scheduled to expire by December 31, 2015. As noted, 70 of the 72 counties in the State had an existing county farmland preservation plan when the revised Chapter 91 was enacted in 2009. The *Statute* established a staggered time frame for plan expirations based on population growth per square mile from 2000 to 2007. Based on these criteria, Racine County's initial plan would have expired on December 31, 2011, without an extension approved by DATCP. The County requested and received an extension to December 31, 2013, to prepare and update the existing County farmland preservation plan. The resulting second edition of the Racine County farmland preservation plan was adopted by Racine County and certified by DATCP in 2013. That plan would have expired on December 31, 2023, without a DATCP-approved extension. The County requested and was granted an extension to December 31, 2024, to prepare and update this third edition of the plan.

Once a farmland preservation plan is developed or updated, the county must apply to DATCP for plan certification or recertification. By completing the "County Application for Farmland Preservation Plan Certification,"<sup>1</sup> a county self-certifies to DATCP that the plan meets the applicable requirements for certification identified in State law. Based on a county's self-certification, DATCP can certify the plan if all certification requirements are met. DATCP must make a certification decision within 90 days if the application submitted is complete. There is no requirement to seek certification from a State level board such as the Land and Water Conservation Board, and a farmland preservation plan may be certified for a period of up to 10 years.

Self-certification of the plan requires the county corporation counsel and county planning director or county chief elected official to review the farmland preservation plan and certify that it meets State law. DATCP has the authority to conduct additional review of the plan to ensure that the plan meets the requirements of Chapter 91. If a county plan is denied certification, the county can re-submit a revised application that addresses the issues cited by DATCP in denying the earlier certification request.

### Inventory and Trends

Chapter 91.10(1)(c) of the *Statutes* requires farmland preservation plans to identify, describe, and document the following agricultural resources and trends:

1. Agricultural uses of land in the county at the time the farmland preservation plan is adopted, including key agricultural specialties, if any
2. Key agricultural resources, including available land, soil, and water resources
3. Key infrastructure for agriculture, including key processing, storage, transportation, and supply facilities
4. Significant trends in the county related to agricultural land use, agricultural production, enterprises related to agriculture, and the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses
5. Anticipated changes in the nature, scope, location, and focus of agricultural production, processing, supply, and distribution

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/FPPlanCounty.aspx](http://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/FPPlanCounty.aspx).



The plan must also identify, describe, and document development trends, plans, or needs that may affect farmland preservation and agricultural development in the county, including:

- Population and Economic Growth
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Communications
- Business Development
- Community Facilities and Services
- Energy
- Waste Management
- Municipal Expansion
- Environmental Preservation

### **Designation of Farmland Preservation Areas**

A key component of developing a county farmland preservation plan is the identification of “farmland preservation areas.” The *Statutes* define a farmland preservation area as an area that is planned primarily for agricultural use or agriculture-related use, or both, which is identified as an agricultural or farmland preservation area in a state-certified farmland preservation plan. Essentially, a farmland preservation area (FPA) is an area where the county plans to preserve agriculture and agricultural-related uses. The plan may also include undeveloped natural resource areas, such as wetlands and woodlands, and open space areas, but not areas planned for nonagricultural development within 15 years from the adoption date of the farmland preservation plan. The rationale used to determine which areas to designate as farmland preservation areas must also be described in the plan. The mapping of FPAs has direct implications for development of farmland preservation zoning ordinances, since certification of farmland preservation zoning districts requires that lands placed in the zoning district be located within an FPA. Similarly, agricultural enterprise areas and PACE easements must be located in an area identified as a FPA in order to receive grant funds from DATCP.

### **Designation of Agricultural Enterprise Areas**

As described in Subchapter 6 of Chapter 91 of the *Statutes*, DATCP may designate agricultural enterprise areas (AEAs) targeted for agricultural preservation and agricultural development, up to a combined area of not more than 1.0 million acres Statewide. Designation of an AEA allows owners of eligible land to enter into a Farmland Preservation Agreement with DATCP to receive farmland preservation tax credits. An AEA must meet the following criteria:

1. DATCP must receive a petition, which complies with Chapter 91.86 of the *Statutes*, requesting an AEA designation.
2. Parcels within an AEA must be contiguous. Parcels that are only separated by a lake, stream, or transportation or utility right-of-way are considered contiguous.
3. The area must be located entirely in a farmland preservation area identified in a certified County farmland preservation plan.
4. The area must be primarily in agricultural use.

DATCP will give preference to areas that include at least 1,000 acres of land when designating AEAs.

## Identification of Issues, Goals, Policies, Strategies, and Actions

A farmland preservation plan must state the county's policy related to farmland preservation, agricultural development, and the development of enterprises related to agriculture. In addition, the plan must identify, describe, and document the following:

- Key land issues related to preserving farmland and promoting agricultural development and plans for addressing these issues
- Goals for agricultural development in the county, including goals related to the development of enterprises related to agriculture
- Actions that the county will take to preserve farmland and actions that the county will take to promote agricultural development
- Programs and other actions that the county and local governmental units within the county may use to preserve designated farmland preservation areas
- Policies, goals, strategies, and proposed actions to increase housing density in certain areas planned for non-agricultural development within 15 years from the date on which the plan is adopted

## Public Participation Plan

In accordance with Chapter 91.10(3) of the *Statutes*, the adoption of a farmland preservation plan must follow the same procedures specified in Chapter 66.1001(4) of the *Statutes* for the adoption of a comprehensive plan, which includes the adoption of written procedures to ensure public participation in the development of a plan. The public participation plan (PPP) must be designed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services, and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage of the preparation of a plan. A PPP for amending the Racine County Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Racine County Board of Supervisors on November 9, 2006, the PPP further enabled the Racine County Comprehensive Board to approve additional public participation procedures or separately documented public participation plans to obtain public input. The Racine County Board of Supervisors approved a PPP for the farmland preservation plan on December 11, 2012. The approved public participation procedures for the development of this updated Farmland Preservation Plan for Racine County meet the requirements of Chapter 66.1001(4)(a) of the *Statutes*. This full PPP is included in Appendix A. The PPP describes the methods the County used to distribute the farmland preservation plan, the opportunity for the public to submit written comments on the plan, and the means used by the County to respond to such comments. The PPP also includes a description of public meetings and other methods used to solicit public input during the planning process, which are summarized in Chapter 4.

## Plan Review and Adoption

Chapter 91.10(3) of the *Statutes* requires that the County adopt the farmland preservation plan by following the same procedures under Chapter 66.1001(4) of the *Statutes* for the adoption of a comprehensive plan or amendments thereto. The farmland preservation plan or plan amendments, therefore, must be adopted by an ordinance enacted by the Racine County Board of Supervisors. The comprehensive planning law also requires that at least one public hearing be held prior to adopting the plan. Chapter 91.10(2) of the *Statutes* further requires that the County farmland preservation plan be included in its comprehensive plan and that the County ensure the two plans are consistent with each other. The farmland preservation plan will, therefore, be integrated into and be made a part of the multi-jurisdictional County comprehensive plan through a plan amendment process. Chapter 66.1001 requires that an adopted comprehensive plan, or an amendment to such a plan, be sent to all governmental units within and adjacent to the county or local government preparing or amending the plan; the Wisconsin Department of Administration; the Commission; and the public library that serves the area in which the county or local government is located. Information regarding the plan review and adoption process is provided in Chapter 4.

## **Consistency Between the Farmland Preservation Plan and Comprehensive Plans and Ordinances**

As indicated above, Chapter 91.10(2) of the *Statutes* requires counties to ensure that their farmland preservation plan is consistent with the county comprehensive plan if the county has such a plan. To comply with this consistency requirement of the farmland preservation planning law, Racine County will make the changes needed, if any, to ensure the multi-jurisdictional County comprehensive plan, as well as county shoreland and floodplain zoning regulations, are consistent with the County farmland preservation plan following its adoption. Each community participating in the State's farmland preservation program should also amend, if necessary, its comprehensive plan, as well as its zoning, subdivision, and official mapping ordinances, to ensure that their comprehensive plan and implementation tools are consistent with the farmland preservation plan. Additional information regarding consistency between the farmland preservation plan and comprehensive plans and implementing ordinances is provided in Chapter 4.

## **1.4 PLANNING COMMITTEE AND PROCESS**

This updated County farmland preservation plan was prepared under the guidance of the Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee (FPPAC) as established by the Racine County Executive. A complete membership list of the FPPAC is provided on the inside cover of this report. The Committee recommendations were forwarded to the Racine County Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee (EDLUPC) and to the County Board of Supervisors for their consideration.

### **Planning Process**

The farmland preservation plan presented in this report was developed through a process consisting of the following steps, along with ongoing public input during the process: 1) study organization, 2) inventory and analysis, 3) identification of trends and projections, 4) delineation of farmland preservation areas, 5) visioning, issue identification and recommendations, 6) preparation of implementation measures, and 7) plan review, refinement, and adoption. Another key step in the farmland preservation planning process will be the implementation of the plan by Racine County and local governments participating in the State farmland preservation program. Throughout the planning process, the active participation and input of citizens, farmers, landowners, County and local government officials, and interest groups was essential for identifying important issues and preparing a farmland preservation plan with realistic goals.

### **Plan Implementation**

While planning provides many important public benefits, it is important to recognize that an adopted plan is not an "end result," but rather provides recommendations for future action. Plan recommendations will be fulfilled over time in generally small, incremental steps. A farmland preservation plan provides a foundation and guide for implementing many preservation tools, which may include zoning ordinances and maps, subdivision ordinances, and other County and local ordinances, programs, and policies.

Suggestions for local government consideration are included in this document. Local governments will have an influence over farmland preservation along with County government, especially regarding preservation of agricultural lands through local comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and land division ordinances. Participating communities should review and refine farmland preservation goals, objectives, policies, and programs for potential inclusion in their local comprehensive plan. Alternatively, local governments may choose not to consider suggestions that are inconsistent with their local comprehensive plan, or which are not relevant to their community's needs.

Although a community may be participating in the farmland preservation planning process, some communities may decide not to designate areas for farmland preservation at this time. Nevertheless, it is still important that good inventory and analysis data be provided herein, as well as farmland preservation goals and objectives, since the community may change its policies in the future and wish to designate certain parts of the community as farmland preservation areas. At that time, the County farmland preservation plan, as well as the community's comprehensive plan, could be amended accordingly to include the designated farmland preservation areas. Or communities may desire to support and/or save some agricultural lands or activities in a different manner by, for example, locating a farmer's market in their urban center, city, or village; promoting connection or direct marketing of surrounding local farm produce to schools or restaurants in their urban setting; or implementing conservation subdivisions or small hobby farms under an agricultural

zoning classification that is less restrictive than the farmland preservation zoning requirements set forth in Chapter 91 (which would not allow owners of farmland in the less restrictive zoning district to collect farmland tax credits based on zoning).

## **1.5 REPORT FORMAT**

The findings and recommendations of the farmland preservation planning effort are set forth in this report. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 of this report is an inventory chapter which presents information on agricultural, natural, and cultural resources; historic, existing, and projected population, households, and employment; existing land use patterns; and existing plans, programs, and land use regulations affecting farmland preservation in the County. Chapter 3 provides farmland preservation goals, objectives, and policies. Chapter 4 sets forth the recommended farmland preservation plan and identifies the actions to facilitate the implementation of plan recommendations. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the plan.

This report was adopted as a component of and an amendment to the Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Racine County: 2035. The Statutes require the farmland preservation plan to be consistent with the County's comprehensive plan. To avoid the repetition of some information, such as extensive inventory data, and to conveniently include the farmland preservation plan as a part of the comprehensive plan, portions of the farmland preservation plan reference the comprehensive plan or parts thereof. The cross-references identify where the relevant information can be found within the comprehensive plan report.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *The Racine County comprehensive plan is documented in Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Community Assistance Planning Report No. 301, A Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Racine County: 2035, November 2009.*







*Credit: Unsplash User*

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides data about agricultural and natural resources, existing and projected demographic and economic activity levels, past and present land use patterns, and adopted plans, programs, and regulations affecting farmland preservation. Such data are essential for identifying farmlands best suited for preservation and for designing a plan to accomplish long-term preservation. The planning recommendations set forth in Chapter 4 are directly related to the information presented in this chapter.

## 2.2 SOILS

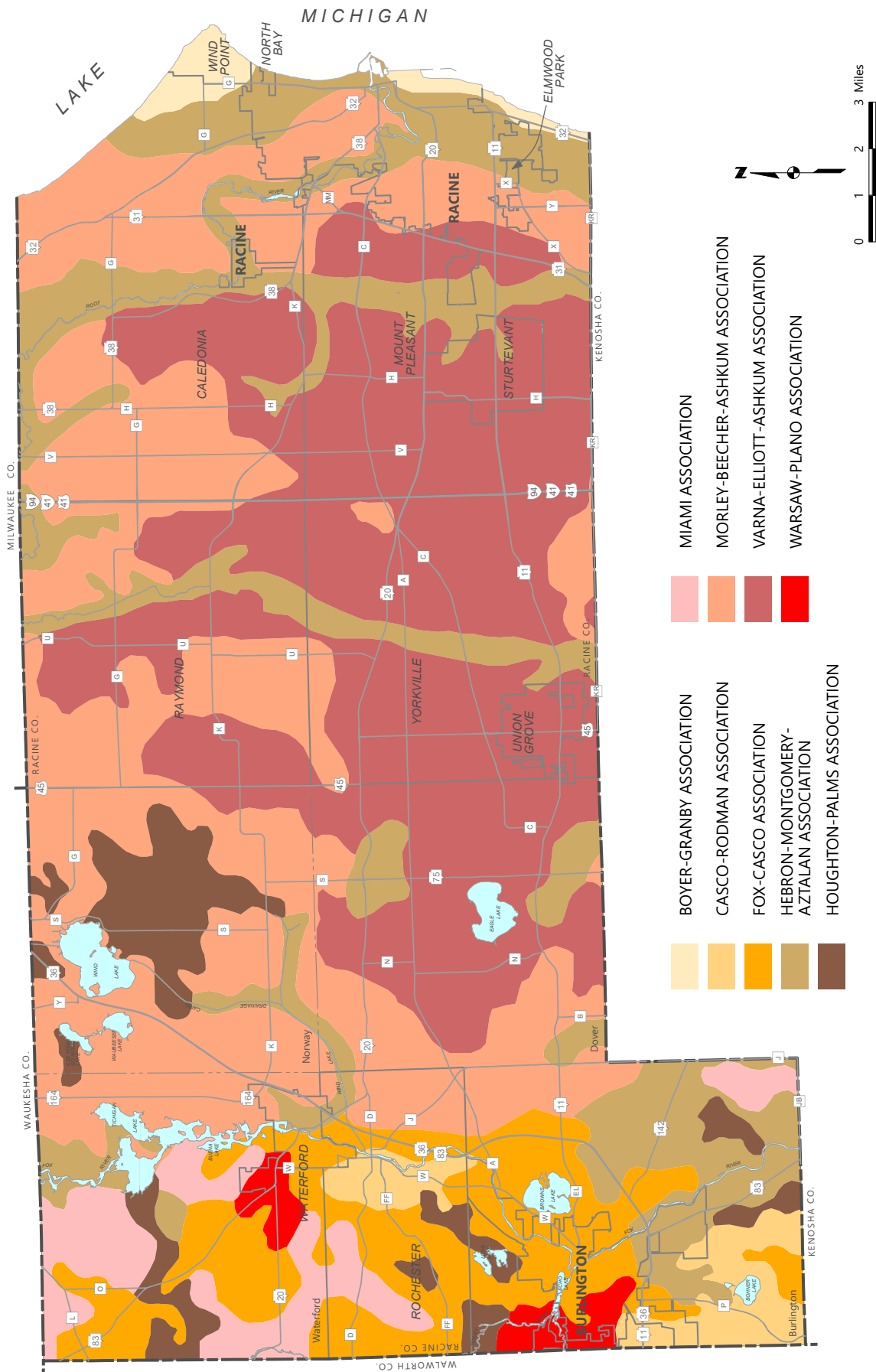
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Service, now the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), issued a soil survey for Racine County in 1970. Soils were identified and mapped and organized by soil association, soil series, and soil type. This information can be used in managing farms and to help identify areas of the County that are suitable for agriculture, vulnerable to erosion, or contain wet soils, shallow bedrock, or other features that could limit development or farming.

### Soil Associations

A soil association is a landscape that has a distinctive pattern of soils. It normally consists of one or more major soils and at least one minor soil and is named for the major soils. Soils associations provide an overview of the types and characteristics of the soils within a county. Planning decisions should be based on the more detailed soils information, including soil mapping units and interpretations for various land uses, contained in the soil survey. Map 2.1 shows soil associations in Racine County. The following paragraphs describe the nine soil associations in the County:

The **Boyer-Granby association** consists of well-drained to very poorly-drained soils that have a loam-to-sand subsoil, underlain by sandy glacial outwash. The soils are nearly level or gently sloping, occupying a low, long terrace adjoining Lake Michigan. This association encompasses about 1 percent of the County.

## Map 2.1 General Soil Associations in Racine County



The **Casco-Rodman association** consists of well-drained and excessively-drained soils that have a clay-loam or gravelly-loam subsoil, shallow over sand and gravel, on stream terraces and moraine ridges. This association encompasses about 3 percent of the County and is located along or near the Fox River in the western portion of the County in the Village of Rochester and Town of Burlington.

The **Fox-Casco association** consists of well-drained soils that have a clay loam and silty clay loam subsoil. The soils are nearly level to rolling and occur mainly on terraces and on hills. This association encompasses about 9 percent of the County and is located in the western portions of the County.

The **Hebron-Montgomery-Aztalan association** consists of well-drained to poorly-drained soils that have a loamy to silty clay subsoil. The soils are nearly level to rolling and are located on lake plains close to Lake Michigan, along the Fox, Root, North Branch of Root, and Pike Rivers, and along other streams. This association encompasses about 17 percent of the County and is the third largest soil association in the County.

The **Houghton-Palms association** consists of very poorly-drained organic soils occurring in basins and depressions. This association encompasses about 5 percent of the County and is located in areas in the western portion of the County with a large concentration located in the Town of Norway.

The **Miami association** consists of well-drained soils that have silty clay-loam and clay-loam subsoil, formed in thin loess and the underlying loamy glacial till on ridges and knobs. This association encompasses about 4 percent of the County and is located in the western portion of the County with a large concentration located in the Town of Waterford.

The **Morley-Beecher-Ashkum association** consists of well-drained to poorly-drained soils that have a silty clay or silty clay-loam subsoil. These soils are nearly level or gently sloping and occupy low, broad ridges and knobs that are dissected by drainageways and depressions. This association occurs throughout much of the County from the Fox River eastward, and is the second largest soil association, encompassing about 30 percent of the County.

The **Varna-Elliott-Ashkum association** consists of well-drained to poorly-drained soils that have a silty clay-loam-to-clay subsoil. These soils are nearly level or gently sloping and occur on low, broad ridges and knobs. This association is located throughout much of the central and eastern portions of the County. This is the largest soil association within the County, encompassing about 31 percent of the County.

The **Warsaw-Plano association** consists of well-drained soils that have a loam to silty clay-loam subsoil, moderately-deep to deep over sand and gravel on stream terraces. This association encompasses about 1 percent of the County and is located in limited areas in the western portion of the County in the City and Town of Burlington and the Village and Town of Waterford.

### **Saturated Soils**

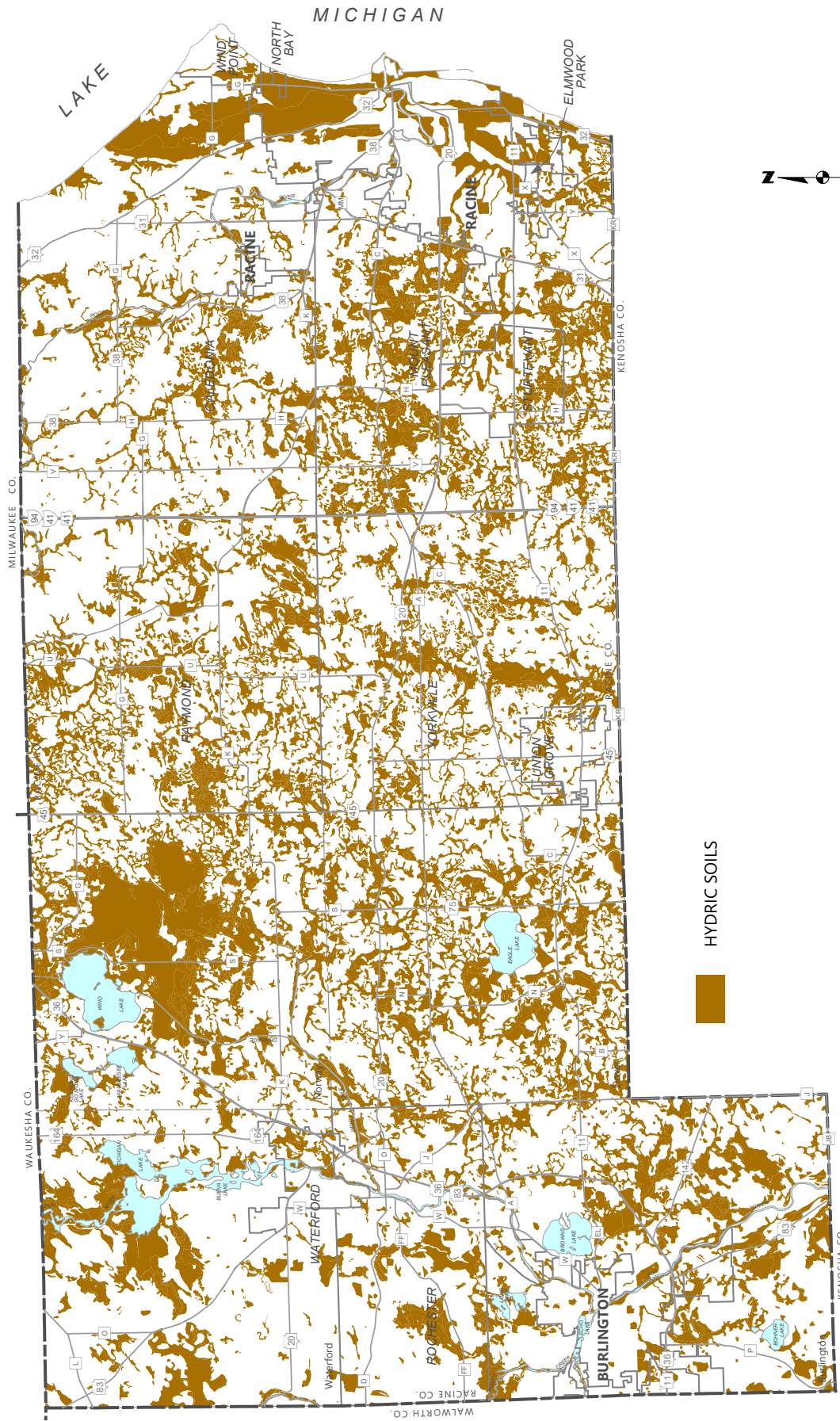
Soils that are saturated with water or that have a water table at or near the surface, also known as hydric soils, pose significant limitations for most types of development. High water tables often cause wet basements and poorly functioning septic tank absorption fields. The excess wetness may also restrict the growth of landscaping plants and trees or prevent the use of land for crops unless the land is artificially drained. Map 2.2 depicts hydric soils in Racine County, as identified by the NRCS. About 31 percent of the County, or about 105 square miles, is covered by hydric soils, not including surface water areas. Although hydric soils are generally unsuitable for development, they may serve as important locations for restoration of wetlands, as wildlife habitat, and for stormwater detention.

### **Agricultural Soil Capability**

The NRCS has classified soils into capability groupings that indicate their general suitability for most kinds of farming. The groupings are based upon composition and limitations of the soils, the risk of damage when used, and the way they respond to treatment. Under the NRCS system, there are eight capability classes ranging from Class I, which have few limitations, to Class VIII, which have severe limitations due to soils and land forms so rough, shallow, or otherwise limited that they do not produce economically



## Map 2.2 Hydric Soils in Racine County



Source: USDA - Natural Resources  
Conservation Service and the  
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional  
Planning Commission

worthwhile yields of crops, forage, or wood products.<sup>3</sup> In general, Class I soils are more arable and suitable for cropland; Class II soils have some limitations that reduce the choice of plants that can be grown, or require moderate conservation practices to reduce the risk of damage when used; Class III and IV soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require special conservation practices, or both. The soils in the remaining classes have progressively greater natural limitations not suitable for cropland, but can be used for pasture, grazing, woodland, wildlife, recreation, and aesthetic purposes. Generally, lands with Class I and II soils are considered “National Prime Farmlands” and lands with Class III soils are considered “Farmlands of Statewide Significance.”

The location and amount of Class I, II, and III soils were critical in identifying farmland preservation areas in the Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan, adopted by Racine County in 1982 and updated in 2013, and again in 2024. As part of that farmland preservation plan, prime farmlands were identified as consisting of farm units meeting all of the following criteria: 1) individual farm units of at least 35 acres in size; 2) individual farm units with at least 50 percent of soils classified as Class I, II, or III; and 3) individual farm units within a farming area of at least 100 acres.

Areas of Racine County covered by Class I, II, and III soils are shown on Map 2.3. As shown on that map, the majority of the County is covered by soils which are well suited for agricultural use (mainly Class II soils). This is comparable to the Region, with over 75 percent of the Region being covered by Class I, II, and III soils.

## 2.3 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

In addition to providing food and fiber, agricultural areas contribute to wildlife habitat; provide locations proximal to urban centers for production of certain food commodities which may require nearby population concentrations for an efficient production-distribution relationship; and provide open space which gives form and structure to community development. The maintenance of lands in agricultural use also serves to prevent urban sprawl, control public costs, maintain the local economic base, and preserve the rural lifestyle which is part of the cultural heritage of Racine County and southeastern Wisconsin.

The following section provides basic information on agricultural land distribution and uses, farms and farm production, and current farmland preservation programs.

### Existing Farmland

In 2020, approximately 168.8 square miles, or 49.5 percent of Racine County, were in agricultural use. Map 2.4 shows the extent of agricultural land in Racine County as identified in the year 2020 and also identifies those areas which are covered by soils in agricultural capability Class I, Class II, and Class III as classified by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Lands covered by such soils meet the criteria for national prime farmland (largely Class I and Class II soils) and farmland of statewide importance (largely Class III soils). Agricultural lands covered by Class I, Class II, and Class III soils encompassed about 161.5 square miles, or 96 percent of all agricultural land in the County.

### Number, Size, and Value of Farms

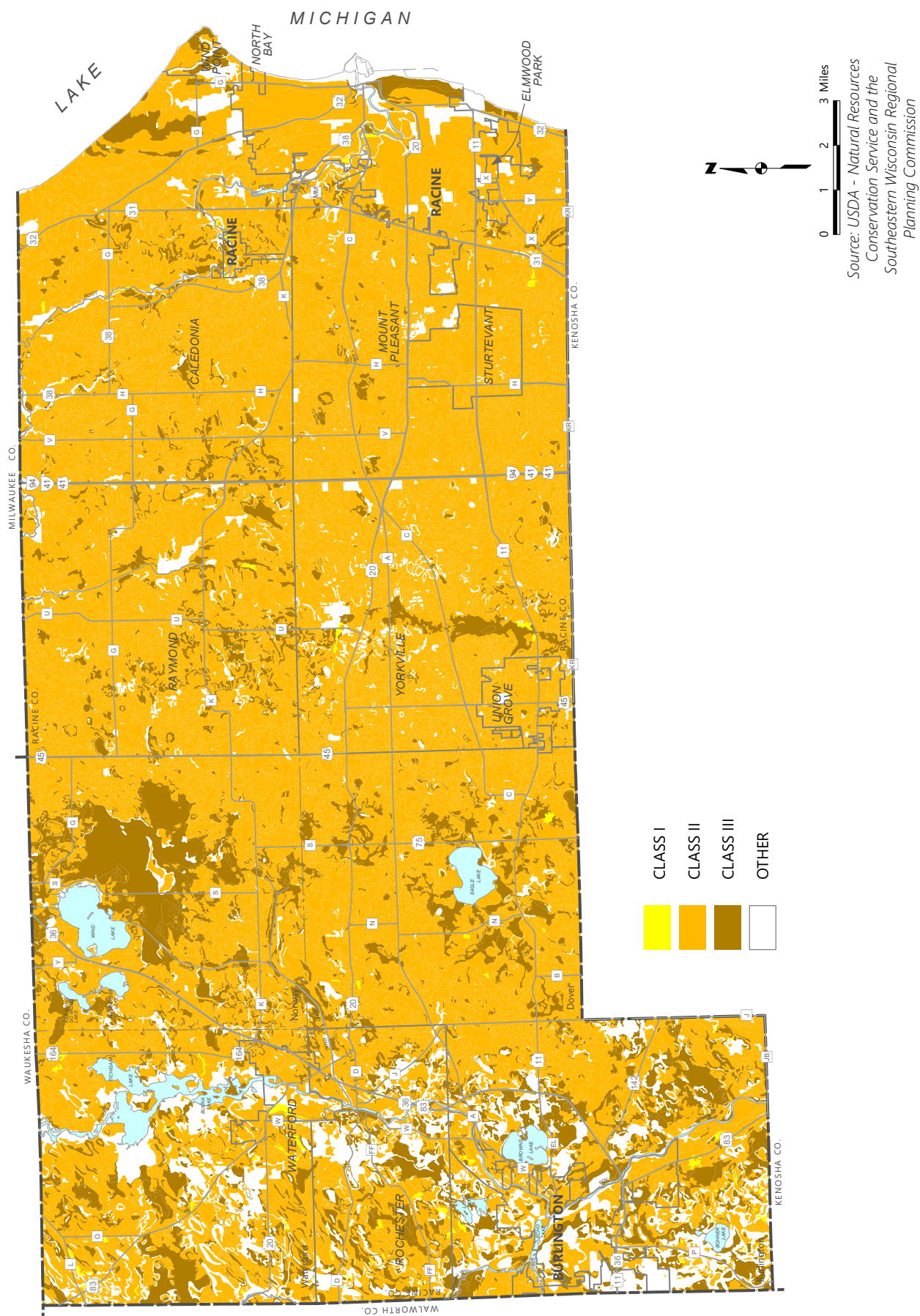
Farms and farm production are valuable indicators in determining the economic impact of agricultural operations in Racine County and major types of agricultural products and operations. As part of the Federal Census of Agriculture, farms are defined as operations from which \$1,000 or more agricultural products were sold, or normally would be sold, during the year. Further, a farm includes land owned and operated by the farmer as well as lands rented from others.

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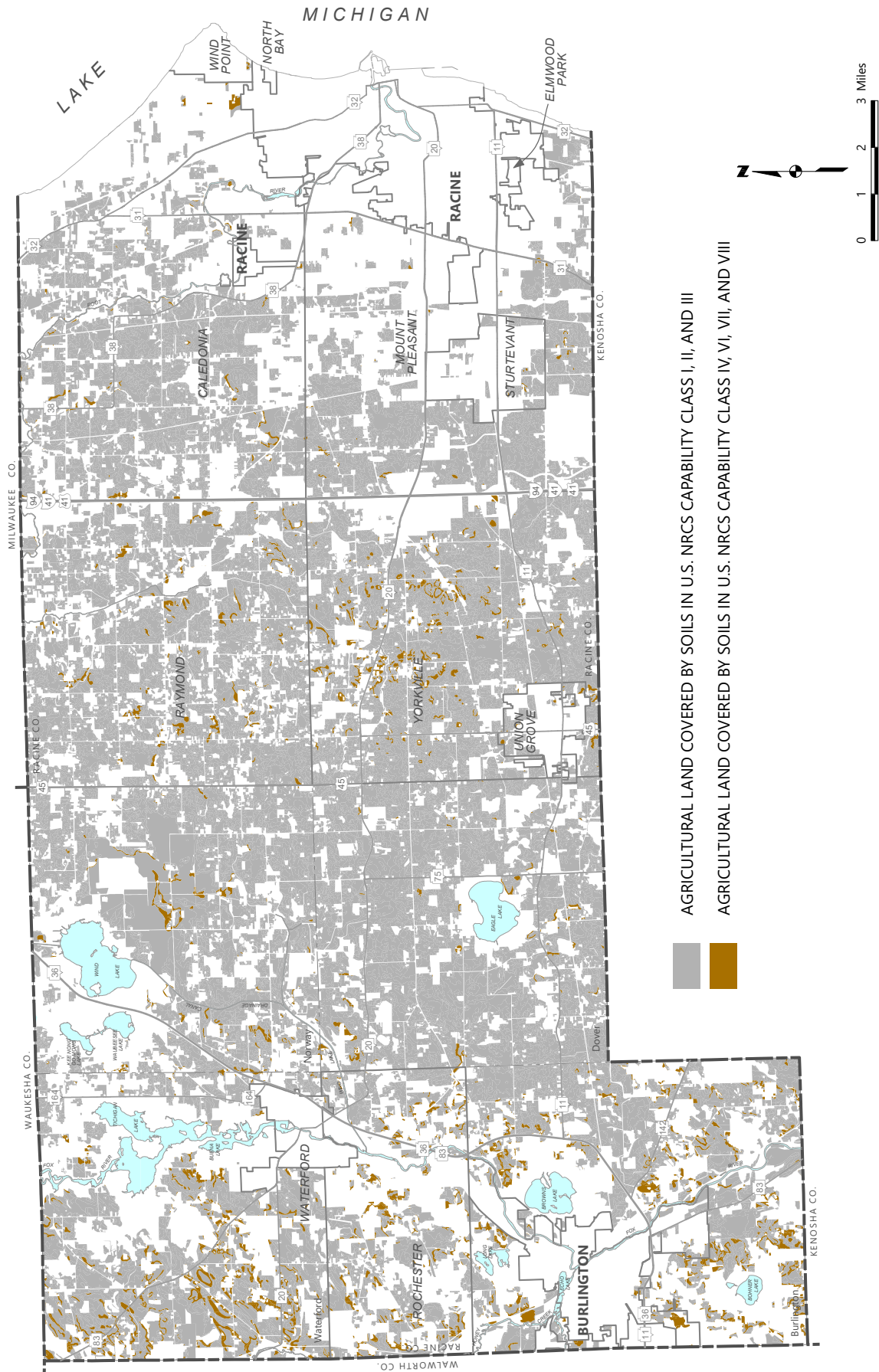
<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the NRCS has also developed a land evaluation system for farming that considers soil-based factors, including a soil productivity factor, the capability class, and others. The land evaluation rating may be combined with site assessment factors that are not related to soil characteristics, through a land evaluation and site assessment system (“LESA” system) that integrates soil-based and non-soil-based factors for evaluating farmland. Site assessment factors may include the level of on-farm investment, compatibility with adjacent uses, proximity to urban development, distance to public utilities, and others. Given the long history of reliance upon the capability class system in planning and zoning in Racine County and the widespread familiarity with that system, the capability class system was used for purposes of rating farmland under the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan and this farmland preservation plan update.



## Map 2.3



**Map 2.4**  
**Existing Agricultural Lands in Racine County: 2020**



Source: USDA - Natural Resources  
 Conservation Service and the  
 Southeastern Wisconsin Regional  
 Planning Commission



As reported in the most recent Census of Agriculture, there were a total of 611 farms in Racine County in 2017. The average (mean) farm size<sup>4</sup> in the County was 209 acres in 2017, while the median farm size was 45 acres. This compares to 221 acres and 90 acres, respectively, for farms in the State. In 2007, there were 652 farms in the County with an average farm size of 185 acres and a median farm size of 45 acres. For the State overall, the average farm size was 194 acres, while the median farm size was 95 acres in 2007.

Of the 611 farms in Racine County, 316 encompassed less than 50 acres; 154 encompassed 50 to 179 acres; 79 encompassed 180 to 499 acres; and 62 encompassed more than 500 acres. Farms less than 50 acres in size accounted for about 52 percent of all farms in the County in 2017, compared to 51 percent for the Region, and 35 percent for the State.

The total number of acres in farms in the County decreased by about 12 percent between 1978 and 2017 from 145,606 acres to 127,496 acres. During this time, the average sale price per acre of agricultural land in the County increased, from \$1,540 per acre in 1978 (equivalent to \$5,790 in 2017 dollars) to \$7,682 in 2017, or an increase of 33 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars.

### Crops and Livestock

Racine County farms produce an array of agricultural products, including many varieties of crops and livestock. Field crops account for much of the overall agricultural acreage in the County. The areal extent of the major field crops in the County has changed over the past decades:

- **Corn.** About 32,600 acres were planted for corn in Racine County in 2020 (see Table 2.1). This is somewhat less than the acreage planted in 2010 (37,000 acres), in 2000 (40,800 acres), and in 1990 (45,400 acres).
- **Soybeans.** About 33,700 acres were planted for soybeans in 2020. Although this represents a slight decrease from 2010 (34,900), the soybean acreage in the County has increased dramatically since 1950, when the area planted for soybeans totaled just 1,400 acres.
- **Hay.** The hay acreage in the County has decreased over the past several decades, a trend that coincides with the reduction in dairy farming in the County.

Long-term trends in the number of farms involved in the production of selected field crops in Racine County are presented in Table 2.2.

Racine County farmers also grow significant amounts of vegetables and horticultural and nursery products. The primary form of agriculture involves cash-grain farming for corn and soybeans. Sod farming is predominant in the Wind Lake area. There also remains significant farm acreage devoted to cabbage and other vegetable production primarily in the eastern one-half of the County.<sup>5</sup> While much of the agricultural land in Racine County is devoted to field crops, dairy farming continues in some locations. The number of dairy cows stood at about 3,209 in 2017, compared to about 9,000 in the mid-1980s.

### Agricultural Product Sales

#### Agricultural Product Sales by Agricultural Sector

As indicated in Table 2.3, the agricultural sales for Racine County in 2017 totaled about \$86.4 million. This represents the total market value before taxes and production expenses of all agricultural products sold on farms. Of the total agricultural sales in the County in 2017, crops accounted for nearly \$64.7 million, or about 75 percent, and livestock, poultry, and their products accounted for nearly \$21.7 million, or about 25 percent. On a statewide basis, agricultural sales totaled just over \$11,427 million in 2017, consisting of about \$4,067 million, or about 36 percent, in crops and about \$7,359 million, or about 64 percent, in livestock, poultry, and associated products.

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<sup>4</sup> The farm size is the total land area of a farm as an operating unit and includes land owned and operated as well as land rented from others. Land rented to or assigned to a tenant was considered part of the tenant's farm and not part of the owner's.

<sup>5</sup> Racine County Public Works and Development Services Department, Land and Water Resource Management Plan for Racine County: 2023-2032, July 2022.



**Table 2.1**  
**Trends of Acres in Selected Field Crops in Racine County: 1950-2020**

Year	Acres of Corn Planted	Acres of Soybeans Planted	Acres of Hay Harvested
1950	40,400	1,400	NA
1960	44,000	7,600	NA
1970	35,500	17,000	18,400
1980	48,200	35,800	13,900
1990	45,400	30,300	10,800
2000	40,800	43,700	6,700
2010	37,000	34,900	NA <sup>a</sup>
2020	32,600	33,700	NA <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The acreage of hay harvested within the County was 7,200 acres in 2008, the last year for which data was available.

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

**Table 2.2**  
**Trends in Selected Agricultural Products by Farm in Racine County: 1997-2017**

Agricultural Product <sup>a</sup>	1997	2002	2007	2012	2017
Farms – Corn for Grain	225	213	205	192	189
Farms – Corn for Silage	78	62	40	50	36
Farms – Soybeans	213	199	195	207	244
Farms – Hay-Alfalfa (Forage)	234	260	254	215	224
Farms – Oats	62	59	33	16	5
Farms – Wheat	NA	111	100	112	95
Total Farms	554	631	652	575	611

<sup>a</sup> The total number of selected agricultural products by farm per year is greater than total farms because many farms produce more than one agricultural product.

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

**Table 2.3**  
**Value of Sales by Commodity or Commodity Group in Racine County and Wisconsin: 2017**

Commodity or Commodity Group	Racine County		Wisconsin	
	2017 Sales (\$1,000)	Percent of Total Agricultural Revenues	2017 Sales (\$1,000)	Percent of Total Agricultural Revenues
Crops				
Corn	18,641	21.6	1,757,433	15.4
Soybeans	18,457	21.4	938,273	8.2
Other Grains, Oilseeds, Dry Beans, and Dry Peas	14	-- <sup>b</sup>	21,255	0.2
Nursery, Greenhouses, Floriculture, and Sod	9,202	10.6	264,098	2.3
Other <sup>a</sup>	18,350	21.2	1,086,377	9.5
Crops Subtotal	64,664	74.8	4,067,436	35.6
Livestock				
Livestock, Poultry, and Their Products	21,777	25.2	7,359,987	64.4
Total	86,441	100.0	11,427,423	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Includes wheat, sorghum, barley, rice, tobacco, cotton and cottonseed, vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, berries, Christmas trees, and other crops and hay.

<sup>b</sup> Less than 0.05 percent.

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service, Agriculture Census (2017)

Of the crop-related sales in Racine County, the top commodity sold was corn at \$18.6 million, or 22 percent of all sales. Sales of other crops commodities included soybeans at \$18.5 million (21 percent); other grains at \$14,000 (less than 0.05 percent); nursery, greenhouses, floriculture, and sod at \$9.2 million (11 percent); and other crops such as wheat, sorghum, barley, rice, tobacco, cotton and cottonseed, vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, berries, Christmas trees, and hay at \$18.4 million (21 percent). It is apparent from the foregoing that Racine County agriculture is diverse and traditional crops such as corn, vegetables, and nurseries and greenhouses are very important for the County's farm economy.

### ***Agricultural Product Sales by Farm***

As reported in the Census of Agriculture, of the total of 611 reported farms in the County, 183 farms (30 percent) reported agricultural sales of less than \$2,500 in 2017; 115 farms (19 percent) reported agricultural sales of \$2,500 to \$9,999; 83 farms (14 percent) reported \$10,000 to \$24,999; 41 farms (7 percent) reported \$25,000 to \$49,999; 54 farms (9 percent) reported \$50,000 to \$99,999; and 135 farms (22 percent) reported \$100,000 or more. Since 2002, the number of farms in the County with sales of \$100,000 or more increased from 99 to 135. The number of farms with sales of less than \$2,500 decreased from 258 to 183. About 23 percent of farms in the Region, and 22 percent of farms in the State had sales of \$100,000 or more in 2017, comparatively, 33 percent of farms in the Region and 30 percent of farms in the State had sales of less than \$2,500.

The average value of agricultural product sales per farm in Racine County in 2017 was \$141,475, a 14 percent decrease from the 2012 average of \$164,887. The average value of agricultural product sales is much lower than the Region and State averages at \$171,595 and \$176,368, respectively, in 2017.

To qualify for State farmland preservation tax credits based on the State Farmland Preservation Program, the farmland must be in common ownership, devoted primarily to agricultural use, and produce a minimum of \$6,000 in gross farm receipts in the previous year (or \$18,000 in the previous three years).

### ***Farm Income and Labor***

Based on 2017 Census of Agriculture data, the average net cash income from a farm operation<sup>6</sup> in Racine County was \$32,600, compared to an average of \$36,842 for the State. Farming in the County was the principal occupation (50 percent or more of work time spent on farming or ranching) of 443 producers (43 percent) in the County and was not the principal occupation of 595 producers (57 percent). Statewide, farming was the principal occupation of 46 percent of producers and was not the principal occupation of the farm operator for about 54 percent of producers. Of the total 1,053 farm laborers hired on 150 farms in Racine County, 378 laborers, or about 36 percent, worked 150 days or more, while 675 laborers, or about 64 percent, worked less than 150 days in 2017. In comparison to the State, about 46 percent of the hired farm labor worked 150 days or more and about 54 percent worked less than 150 days.

### ***Farm Drainage Districts***

Farm drainage districts are special-purpose units of government authorized under Chapter 88 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*. Farm drainage districts are formed to plan and carry out areawide drainage improvements to address problems of high water tables and poor drainage that interfere with agricultural uses and practices. A drainage district may lie in more than one local government and may also cross county lines. Drainage districts are typically governed by a three member board appointed by the County Circuit Court; the Racine County drainage board has 5 members. The board has the authority to purchase land for the construction and maintenance of drainage systems, which may include ditches, canals, levees, reservoirs, silt basins, and pumps. The costs of improvements are assessed against the lands that are specifically benefited. A drainage board is also authorized to assess a single landowner for the costs of correction when a landowner adversely impacts downstream water quality. Landowners must receive drainage board approval before taking any drainage-related action.

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<sup>6</sup> Total revenue are fees for producing under a production contract, total sales not under production contract, government payments, and farm-related income minus total expenses paid by operator. This does not include the value of commodities produced under production contract by the contract growers. Also, depreciation is not used in the calculation of net cash farm income.

Approximately one-third of Wisconsin farms depend on constructed drains to remove excess water from their land, primarily through small-scale drains. Most drains are operated by a single landowner or by voluntary cooperation among adjacent landowners. There are approximately 190 known drainage districts in the State, mainly in the eastern and southeastern portions of the State. Drainage districts are required to include a 20-foot corridor on each side of the ditch to be used as a maintenance corridor. No row cropping is permitted, and vegetation is required. These requirements can be coordinated with soil and water conservation plans required under the Farmland Preservation Program.

There are five known active farm drainage districts in Racine County. The districts are shown on Map 2.5 and include the Eagle Creek Drainage District, the Hoosier Creek Drainage District, the Norway-Dover Drainage District, the Waterford Drainage District, and the Yorkville-Raymond Drainage District. The Hoosier Creek District also includes land in the Town of Brighton in Kenosha County. The five districts encompassed an area of about 85 square miles in Racine County in 2023. All of the districts are governed by the Racine County Farm Drainage Board, and all of the farm drainage districts are considered “active” by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), meaning all of the districts have had an assessment completed in recent years.

Wisconsin Act 121, enacted on March 20, 2008, amends Section 66.1001 (2) (g) of the *Statutes* to require that the Intergovernmental Cooperation Element of a comprehensive plan analyze the relationship of County and local governments to drainage boards located in the County or local government. The Act also requires the County or local government to notify the drainage board before taking action that would allow the development of a residential, commercial, or industrial property that would likely increase the amount of water that the main drain of the drainage district would have to accommodate. Drainage boards are required under Act 121 to file an annual report stating the practices and policies of the district with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; the town or village board or city council; the town, village, or city plan commission or plan committee; and the county zoning administrator in which the district is located.

Every three years, county drainage boards must also provide written notice to every person who owns land in the district that such land is in the district, along with contact information for every member of the drainage board. The drainage board is also required to annually provide contact information for every member of the drainage board to the State drainage engineer and to the clerk of every city, village, town, and county in which the drainage district is located, and to provide the clerk of each taxation district in which the drainage district is located a list of every assessment issued by the district from November 1 of the previous year to October 31 of the current year, specifying the assessment amount for every parcel in the district.<sup>7</sup>

### **Farms Enrolled in State and Federal Preservation Programs**

A number of government programs have been created to help protect farmland and other rural land. These include the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program and the Federal Conservation Reserve, Conservation Reserve Enhancement, Farmable Wetlands, and Emergency Conservation Programs. The utilization of these programs in Racine County is described below.

#### ***Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program***

The Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program helps farmers and local governments preserve farmland, protect soil and water resources, and minimize land use conflicts. The program provides tools for communities to limit the loss of productive farmland and also creates incentives for farmers to meet conservation standards and to keep the land in agricultural use. Through participation in this program, counties develop farmland preservation plans, local governments can develop farmland preservation zoning districts, landowners and local governments form Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs), and landowners meet soil and water conservation standards to become eligible to claim income tax credits.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Wisconsin Statutes § 88.212.

<sup>8</sup> For more information, visit: [datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/FarmlandPreservation.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/FarmlandPreservation.aspx).

## Map 2.5



In order to claim a tax credit under the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program, certain conditions must be met. In addition to being within an AEA or being in a farmland preservation zoning district, the person claiming the tax credit must be the landowner and a Wisconsin resident; the land must have produced \$6,000 in gross farm revenue in the past year, or \$18,000 in the past three years; and the farm must meet state soil and water conservation standards and have a certificate of compliance from the County conservation department. The amount of tax credit depends on how a landowner participates in the program. Tax credits are equal to:

- \$10.00 per acre for land covered by a farmland preservation agreement and in an AEA
- \$10.00 per acre for land in a certified farmland preservation zoning district
- \$12.50 per acre for land covered by a farmland preservation agreement, in an AEA, and a farmland preservation zoning district<sup>9</sup>

Map 2.6 shows the location of lands enrolled in the program in 2023. A total of 25 owners of farmland in Racine County claimed a Farmland Preservation Program tax credit in 2023. Lands enrolled in the program in Racine County encompassed 4,241 acres.

Previously, landowners could additionally claim an income tax credit under the Wisconsin Farmland Tax Relief Credit Program. This program was not affected by the claimant's household income and had no land use planning requirements or compliance requirements with soil and water conservation standards. In 2010, that farmland tax relief credit became no longer available.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Federal Conservation Reserve, Conservation Reserve Enhancement, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, Farmable Wetlands, and Emergency Conservation Programs***

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) oversees several voluntary programs that contribute to water quality, reduce erosion, and provide wildlife habitat in agricultural areas. The USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) encourages farmers to voluntarily convert environmentally sensitive farmland to permanent vegetative cover. Farmers receive an annual rent payment and cost-share assistance for a period of 10 to 15 years. The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers the CRP. The USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is an offshoot of the CRP. CREP is one option under CRP that farmers may select to enhance their land. The USDA uses CRP funding to cover a portion of the program's cost; non-Federal sources provide the balance of funding. In Racine County, the non-Federal funding is provided by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. CRP enrollment is limited to no more than 25 percent of the total cropland in a county. Lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs in Racine County totaled 475 acres and about 330 acres, respectively, in 2023.

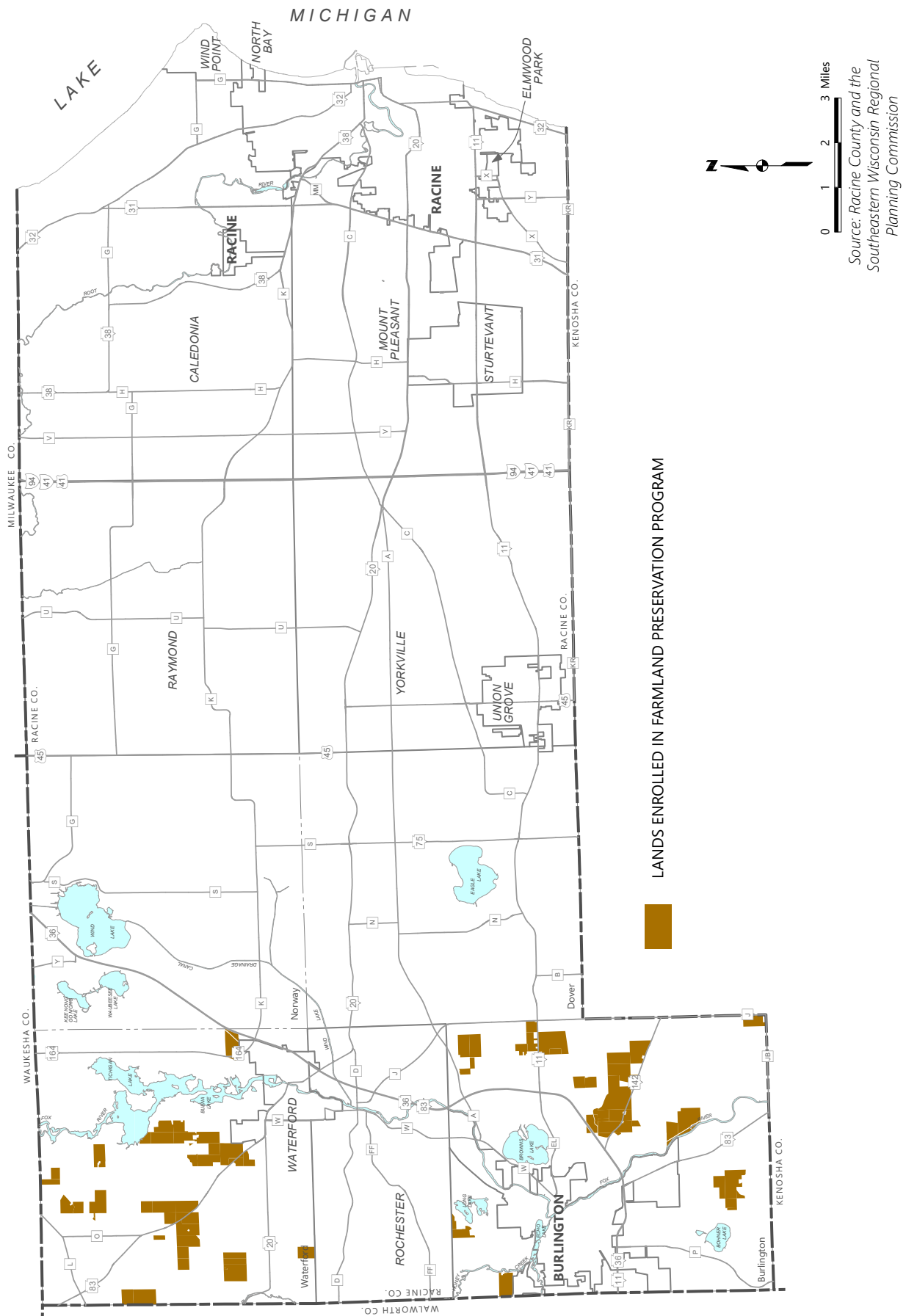
In 1990, the Farm Bill established the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). In 2014, the WRP was discontinued and consolidated into the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE). The two programs, WRP (retired) and ACEP-WRE (current), function identically as voluntary, incentive-based federal programs that offer private landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. ACEP is a voluntary program that helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands or protect working farms through conservation easements. It has two components: agricultural land easements (ALE) and wetland reserve easements (WRE). Landowners who enroll in ACEP retain their ownership of the land but must agree to follow certain land use requirements. A total of 420 acres were enrolled in these programs in Racine County in 2023. The Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP) is a voluntary program that provides financial incentives to landowners to restore and enhance wetlands, retiring marginal agricultural land. The FSA runs this program through the CRP as well, with assistance from other government agencies and local conservation groups. Under this program landowners receive financial assistance for wetland restoration projects.

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<sup>9</sup>For more information, visit: [datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/FPTaxCredits.aspx](http://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/FPTaxCredits.aspx) (note that the rules may be different for agreements signed prior to July 1, 2009).

<sup>10</sup>For more information on the Farmland Credit Changes for 2010, visit: [www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/TaxPro/2010/news-2010-101123a.aspx](http://www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/TaxPro/2010/news-2010-101123a.aspx).

**Map 2.6**  
**Enrolled Preservation Program Lands in Racine County: 2023**





The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) helps farmers repair farmlands damaged by natural disasters and helps implement measures for water conservation during severe drought through funding and technical assistance. The FSA state and county committees and county offices administer this program. Conservation problems existing prior to the applicable disaster event are ineligible for ECP assistance.

### ***Use-Value Assessment***

In 1995, the Wisconsin Legislature took additional action to lessen the property-tax burden on farmers by mandating the “use-value” assessment of agricultural land. Under this legislation, agricultural land is assessed based solely on its value for farming, without regard for its development potential. The legislation froze the assessed value agricultural land at 1995 levels through 1997; after that, assessed values were reduced to “use” values, gradually, over a 10-year period.

Landowners who sell their land after owning the land for less than five years are required to pay a modest penalty to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue—an amount equal to 5 percent of the difference between the sale price and the use value during the last year of ownership. Thus, while this program provides substantial property-tax relief to owners of farmland, it does so without attaching any additional restrictions to the land, so that there is no guarantee that the land will not be converted to urban use.

### **Agricultural Businesses and Support Services**

Existing agricultural businesses and services supporting agricultural industries are important in sustaining a viable agricultural industry in Racine County. Table 2.4 sets forth key agricultural businesses and support services located in or serving the County in 2023.

The relationship between farmers and agricultural support services and businesses is mutually beneficial; farmers depend on support businesses and vice versa. If the farming industry decreases, the need for agricultural support businesses and services will decrease. Thus, it is essential for units of government to cooperatively preserve the quality and character of the local agricultural economic base.

Sufficient internet access is also a concern for agricultural producers. Farmers often use the internet to purchase agricultural inputs, market agricultural activities, to conduct business with non-agricultural entities, and much more. Rural broadband and internet access is essential to agricultural producers; it allows them to stay up to date with commodity markets, communicate with customers and colleagues, and to access up-to-date information about agricultural practices. Up to 18 percent of the farms in Racine County lack internet service, reflecting a slightly lower percentage than the Region at 19 percent. This data, which was developed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), may be overstated. If even only one property in a census block has access, all properties within that census block are considered to have access in the method used by the FCC.

### **Alternative Types of Agriculture**

Alternative farming enterprises have gained in popularity throughout the State of Wisconsin. Alternative types of farming may provide stability and profitably to farming businesses and industries, and possibly limit urban development in agricultural areas, which would otherwise threaten such opportunities. Such alternative farming operations include:

- *Raising and harvesting exotic animals and exotic cattle.* Examples existing within Racine County include Adoption Acres, Oak Hollow Acres, and Sherwood Game Farm.
- *Organic farming.* Organic farming maintains and replenishes soil production and fertility without the use of synthetically produced fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators, and livestock feed additives. According to USDA’s Organic Integrity Database, the only certified organic farm in Racine County is Ephrata Farm in Union Grove. BSW Farm, LarryVille Gardens, Nature’s Niche Farm, and Piper Farms are examples of noncertified organic farming operations in the County.
- *Organic dairy farming.* In order to become a certified organic dairy operation, the pasture and cropland providing feed for the dairy herd must be managed organically for a minimum of 36 months, the dairy herd has to be fed 100 percent organic feed and receive organic health care for 12 months, and forage from grazing is required for all animals over six months of age.



**Table 2.4**

**Agricultural Businesses and Support Services Located in or Serving Racine County: 2023**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Processors</b>		
Annie's Country Pantry	City of Racine	Processor and manufacturer
Borzynski's Farm & Floral Market, Inc.	Village of Mount Pleasant	Processor and manufacturer
Butter Buds Food Ingredients	City of Racine	Processor of dairy
Brossman's Meat Market and Catering	Village of Caledonia	Processor and manufacturer of meat
DJK Foods	City of Racine	Processor and manufacturer
Echo Lake Foods	Town of Burlington	Processor of eggs
Frito-Lay, Inc.	Village of Union Grove	Processor and manufacturer
Greco & Sons	City of Oak Creek (Milwaukee County)	Processor and manufacturer
Hansen Meat Service	Town of Raymond	Processor and manufacturer of meat
Kerry, Inc.	Village of Sturtevant	Processor and manufacturer
Maple Leaf Farms	Town of Raymond	Processor of poultry
O & H Danish Bakery	City of Racine	Processor and manufacturer
Norm's Poultry	Town of Yorkville	Processor of poultry
R&S Foods	City of Racine	Processor of meat
Romari Farms	Town of East Troy (Walworth County)	Processor of meat
Sugar Creek Farm	Town of Spring Prairie (Walworth County)	Processor of meat
Sweet Spot	City of Racine	Processor and manufacturer
UNFI	Village of Sturtevant	Processor and manufacturer
World Pac International USA, Inc.	Village of Sturtevant	Processor of meat
<b>Cooperatives</b>		
Conserv FS	Town of Dover	Feed, seed, and other farm supplies
Henderson Seed Farm, Inc.	Town of Yorkville	Feed, seed, and other farm supplies
Klema Feeds	Village of Caledonia	Feed, seed, and other farm supplies
Landmark Services Cooperative	City of Burlington	Feed, seed, and other farm supplies
Landmark Services Cooperative	Town of Yorkville	Feed, seed, and other farm supplies
Racine Grain Company	Village of Union Grove	Feed, seed, and other farm supplies
<b>Supplier or Other Services</b>		
Baumeister's Blue Ridge, Inc.	Town of Lyons (Walworth County)	Hauling business
Blaine's Farm & Fleet	Village of Sturtevant	Farm supplies
Bob's Machinery Ranch	Town of Yorkville	Farm equipment dealer
Caledonia Feed & Supply Store	Village of Caledonia	Feed and other farm supplies
Case IH	Village of Mount Pleasant	Agriculture equipment manufacturer
CNH	Village of Mount Pleasant	Agriculture equipment business
D P Wigley	City of Racine	Feed, seed, and other farm supplies

**Table continued on next page.**

**Table 2.4 (Continued)**

Name	Location		Notes
	Supplier or Other Services (continued)		
Gypsoil Pelletized Products Horn Brothers, Inc. Ikadan System USA, Inc. Katzman Trucking Kerry, Inc. Mid-State Equipment Mike's Repair Service Otter Sales and Service, Inc. Proven Power R J Jansen Confectionary Equipment R.P. Home & Harvest Seda North America Spee-Dee Packaging Machinery, Inc. Tractor Supply Company Tri-County Dairy Supply	City of Racine	Farm supplies	
	City of Muskego (Waukesha County)	Feed and other farm supplies	
	Village of Sturtevant	Farm equipment wholesale and manufacturer	
	Town of Spring Prairie (Walworth County)	Hauling business	
	Village of Sturtevant	Food and nutrition researcher & developer	
	Town of Salem (Kenosha County)	Implement dealer	
	City of Burlington	Farm equipment parts and repair	
	City of Burlington	Implement dealer	
	Town of Burlington	Small agricultural equipment dealer	
	Village of Sturtevant	Food processing equipment and supplies	
	City of Burlington	Farm supplies	
	Village of Mount Pleasant	Food packaging manufacturer	
	Village of Sturtevant	Packaging machinery wholesaler and manufacturer	
	City of Burlington	Farm supplies and feed	
	Village of Union Grove	Dairy equipment and supplies	
	Agricultural By-Products		
Unco Industries	Village of Union Grove	Vermiculture	
Farm Veterinary Services			
Bristol Veterinary Services - Equine	Town of Paris (Kenosha County)	Equine care services	
Caledonia Veterinary Clinic	Village of Caledonia	Pet and farm animal services	
Fox Valley Veterinary Service and Clinic	City of Burlington	Pet and farm animal services	
Public Farmers' Market			
Borzynski's Farm & Floral Market	Village of Mt. Pleasant	Community public farmers market	
Burlington Farmers' Market	City of Burlington	Community public farmers market	
Ela Orchard	Village of Rochester	Community public farmers market	
Lange's Country Market	Town of Norway	Community public farmers market	
Matt's Produce	Village of Mt. Pleasant	Community public farmers market	
Milaeger's Great Lakes Farmers' Market	City of Racine	Community public farmers market	
Racine Farmers' Market – Downtown	City of Racine	Community public farmers market	
Racine Farmers' Market – St. Andrew's Church	Village of Caledonia	Community public farmers market	
Racine Farmers' Market – West	City of Racine	Community public farmers market	
Racine Harbor Market	City of Racine	Community public farmers market	
Southshore Outdoor Market – Fountain Banquet Hall	Village of Sturtevant	Community public farmers market	
Southshore Outdoor Market – St. Monica's	City of Racine	Community public farmers market	
Sturtevant Farmers' Market	Village of Sturtevant	Community public farmers market	
Union Grove Public Market	Village of Union Grove	Community public farmers market	

Table continued on next page.

**Table 2.4 (Continued)**

Name	Location	Notes
Waterford Saturday Morning Market 7 Mile Fair	Public Farmers' Market (continued) Village of Waterford Village of Caledonia	Community public farmers market Community public farmers market
Kenosha/Racine Farm Bureau Manor Sales and Marketing USDA – FSA – NRCS	Agricultural Assistance Village of Union Grove City of Burlington Village of Union Grove	Agriculture agency Agricultural marketer Agriculture agency

Source: Local Governments, Southeastern Wisconsin Farm Fresh Atlas, UW-Extension, Racine County, and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

- *Aquaculture.* This refers to the breeding, raising, and harvesting of plants and animals in all types of water environments, including ponds, rivers, and lakes, and can occur in natural or human-made environments. Techniques and technologies include growing, producing, culturing, and farming various types of freshwater and marine species. An example of aquaculture in Racine County is Happy Fish and Veggies, a controlled indoor farm that raises Nile Tilapia without antibiotics or growth hormones.
- *Aquaponics.* This system for producing food combines hydroponics (growing plants in water) with aquaculture. Toxins and waste products that accumulate in the water from aquaculture are filtered out by plants, which in turn use the waste products as nutrients. For example, Happy Fish and Veggies also uses aquaponics to grow lettuce, greens, and other produce by cycling the water from their fish tanks.
- *Specialty crops and foods.* Cabbage is an important crop produced in the County. A few of the many examples within Racine County include Borzynski's Farm, Gall's Garden Produce Farm, and Amy's Acre.
- *Orchards.* Examples existing within Racine County include Apple Holler, Ela Orchard, Klee's Out on a Limb Acres, Old Homestead Orchard, and Squire's Pumpkin Patch.
- *Horticulture.* This involves the creation, production, distribution, and use of fruits, vegetables, ornamentals (landscape nurseries/horticulture), greenhouse, turf (sod farms), and specialty crops, particularly plants used for flavoring and medicine.
- *Agri-tourism.* This involves the use of a farm or ranch as a venue for educating/entertaining visitors. Activities may include farm tours for families and school children, day camps, crop or barn art, rural weddings, hay or sleigh rides, bed-and-breakfasts, farm and cannery tours, vineyards, petting farms, corn mazes, "pick-your-own" farms, community supported agriculture farms, on-farm retail outlets, and farmers' markets. Examples existing within Racine County include Apple Holler, Bear Den Zoo and Petting Farm, and Swan's Pumpkin Farm.
- *Value-added agriculture.* This involves processing agricultural products, generally onsite, thereby enhancing the value of the products. Examples include converting strawberries into jam, processing meat into jerky, and converting milk into cheese products. There are many examples of farms that provide value-added products in Racine County including Ela Orchard, Nature's Niche Farm, and Serenity Soap Works & Oak Hollow Acres.
- *Equine industry.* This generally involves enterprises such as horse farms and commercial stables along with the associated recreation areas. Examples within Racine County include Stonehedge Farm, Remembrance Farms, and Hidden Pond Horse Farm.
- *Apiculture.* This involves raising bees to collect honey or wax, pollinate plants, or produce bees to sell to other beekeepers. Examples existing within Racine County are located at Old Homestead Orchard, Droughtville Farms, Flower Bee, Nature's Niche Farm, and Wick Place Candles & Farm.
- *Maple syrup farming.* This involves the collection of sap from maple trees and processing it as maple syrup. Examples in Racine County include Nature's Niche Farm and Old Homestead Orchard.
- *Renewable energy.* Includes wind, solar, and geothermal energy, and anaerobic digesters, which is the biological process in which bacteria digest biomass in an oxygen-free environment and produce a gas principally composed of methane and carbon dioxide, or biogas.
- *Farmers' market.* Farmers can market their products directly to consumers either onsite or at public markets. Examples existing within Racine County are listed on Table 2.4.
- *Community-supported agriculture (CSA) operations.* These operations allow consumers to subscribe to a season of produce at a local farm for a set fee. Products are usually provided weekly by the farmer with pick-ups or deliveries occurring on a designated day and time. Members purchase a portion of the farm's harvest either by the season or by the week. An example existing within Racine County is the Eco-J's Garden Supporter CSA through the Eco-Justice Center in the Village of Caledonia.

The scope of agriculture continues to become more diverse in Racine County as hobby farms and specialty farming operations have increased in popularity and have become as established as traditional dairy farming and crop and livestock farming.

### **Urban Agriculture**

Urban and peri-urban (perimeter of urban center) agriculture refers to the production, distribution, and marketing of food and other agricultural products within a metropolitan area, which includes community and school gardens, backyard and rooftop horticulture, or innovative food production methods. Types of urban agriculture may include the production of fruits and vegetables, institutional and demonstration gardens, and hobby farming, such as bee, poultry, or other small animal-related agriculture. Urban agriculture helps meet local food needs while promoting environmental sustainability, health, nutrition, and social interaction.

### **Agricultural Supply Chain**

Some supply chain concerns in Wisconsin include effects by climate change, soil degradation, and rising costs due to inflation. Higher temperatures invite additional bacteria and disease into livestock productions, leading to increased costs and demands for antibiotics and veterinary care. Rising temperatures and increased severe weather events such as droughts and intense storms in Wisconsin effect planting and harvesting times, along with changes in yields and increased storm damages. As yields decrease, conventional farmers are often pushed to use additional fertilizers and other inputs to their fields, which poses economic and environmental concerns. When fields are increasingly tilled and nutrients are added, soil health is degraded and often leads to increased erosion and nutrient runoff. Chemical fertilizers and herbicides also pose risks to biodiversity of insect and plant populations surrounding agricultural areas, negatively affecting not only the pollination of crops, but also beneficial predatory insects which assist in pest control.

Rising costs of chemical inputs, fuel and machinery, and labor also heavily affect the agricultural supply chain in Wisconsin. The pressure to increase yields to keep up with a growing population creates a secondary pressure to apply more chemicals, spend more time on the field, and hire more staff to assist with the higher anticipated yields. Because the costs of these necessities are rising, there is a reduced profit margin for farmers, further causing higher prices for consumers and affecting the sustainability of the agricultural sector in Wisconsin.

## **2.4 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

The conservation and wise use of natural resources and the preservation of cultural resources are fundamental to achieving strong and stable physical and economic development as well as maintaining community identity, including a rural or “countryside” character. Information on the characteristics and location of such resources in the County is needed to help properly locate future urban and rural land uses to avoid serious environmental problems and to ensure protection of natural resources, including productive soils for farming. Natural features such as wetlands and woodlands adjacent to or within cultivated areas also play an important part in proper land management by acting as groundwater recharge and discharge areas or trapping sediments while slowing stormwater runoff from cultivated areas. Racine County recognizes that agricultural, natural, and cultural resources are limited and difficult or impossible to replace if damaged or destroyed.

### **Physiography and Topography**

Glaciation has largely determined the physiography and topography, as well as the soils of Racine County. Of the four major stages of glaciation, the last and most influential in terms of present physiography and topography was the Wisconsin Stage, which is believed to have ended in this area about 11,000 years ago. Racine County varies from gently rolling glacial plains, or ground moraines, in the eastern half to steeper hills in the western half. Ground moraines are typically comprised of dense basal till, which frequently contains a combination of silt and clay. The eastern edge of Racine County also contains the lake terrace, which runs parallel to and contiguous with the shoreline of Lake Michigan. In the western area of Racine County, the western side of the Fox River is comprised of sand and gravel outwash deposits. Glacial outwash deposits are common along the major rivers and streams of Racine County. Outwash is alluvial in origin and was deposited by glacial meltwaters. A few places in the County also contain lacustrine deposits, which include the sediments of glacial lakebeds.

The topographic elevations in Racine County range from 580 feet above sea level at the Lake Michigan shoreline to approximately 950 feet in the far western portion of the County. It is important to recognize that the amount of slope or relief of the land is a main factor in soil erosion. Land surface slopes, based on soils classification interpretations, within Racine County range from 0 percent to over 20 percent. Most of the steeply sloped lands, slopes of at least 12 percent or greater, are located in the western portion of the County.

## **Geology**

The bedrock formations that underlie the unconsolidated surficial deposits in Racine County primarily consist of Silurian Age dolomite. Eastern Racine County has prominent areas in which the Racine formation, one of five Silurian formations of dolomite reef strata, are exposed either through natural outcroppings along the Root River and Lake Michigan or in old quarries. This reef strata has a rich diversity of fossil marine organisms. Southwestern Racine County provides good examples of glacial topography extending from Walworth County. Specifically, kettle and kame glacial formations can be found in this area. The advances of glacial ice sheets resulted in a wide range of glacial deposits over the bedrock. The most substantial glacial deposits, represented as depth to bedrock, are 100 to 300 feet thick, and located in the central portion of the County. Areas where bedrock ranges from zero to less than 100 feet are generally found in the eastern and western portions of the County.

## **Mineral Resources**

Mineral resources have significant commercial value and are an important economic source of construction materials. Similar to the entire region, Racine County only contains nonmetallic mineral resources in the form of crushed stone (gravel), building stone, sand, gravel, peat, and clay. Nonmetallic mines (quarries and pits) in Southeastern Wisconsin provide sand, gravel, and crushed limestone or dolomite for structural concrete and road building; clay for lining landfills; peat for gardening and horticulture; and stone for use in buildings, landscaping, and monuments. Nonmetallic mineral resources should be taken into careful consideration whenever land is being considered for development. Mineral resources, like other natural resources, occur where nature put them, which is not always convenient or desirable. Wise management of nonmetallic mineral resources is important to ensure an adequate supply of aggregate at a reasonable cost for new construction and for the maintenance of existing infrastructure in the future.

## **Existing Nonmetallic Mining Sites**

There were 18 mining sites in Racine County in 2020 with approximately 802 acres actively being mined or being used for stockpiles, driveways, wash ponds or other mining activities<sup>11</sup>. Most of the sites, 15 out of 18, are mined for sand and gravel. The exceptions are the mines operated by Cretex Materials Inc. in the Town of Burlington and Payne & Dolan Inc. All of the sites identified had permits in 2020 in accordance with the County's Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance (part of Chapter 12.5 of the County Code of Ordinances) which is intended to ensure the effective reclamation of nonmetallic mining sites in Racine County in compliance with Chapter 135 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code* and Chapter 295 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*. Seventeen of the 19 sites are located in the western portion of the County, which reflects the abundance of stone, sand, and gravel resources in that area.

## **Potential Sources of Nonmetallic Mineral Resources**

Racine County has significant potential for commercially workable sources for both building stone and crushed stone (limestone/dolomite) from the bedrock and sand and gravel from the overlying glacial deposits.

The highest potential for sand and gravel production in Racine County is in glacial outwash deposits, most of which are located in the western quarter of the County. The glacial till deposits which cover much of the County generally consist of fine clay and silt material but may contain local deposits of sand and gravel. These areas are considered to have medium to low potential for sand and gravel. In a number of areas, the outwash sand and gravel is overlain by lake deposits, which are too fine to be a source of aggregate but may contain clay deposits useful for landfill liners and caps and other construction uses. Peat deposits, which may also have economic value, are scattered throughout the County. The beach sediments along Lake Michigan are generally thin deposits of sand and sandy gravel, not considered to be a significant aggregate resource.

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<sup>11</sup> *Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2023-2032, 3rd Revision.*

Potential sources of crushed or building stone in Racine County include areas where the underlying bedrock is within 100 feet of the surface. Areas within 50 feet of the surface have the best potential for production of crushed or building stone. Such areas are located in eastern Racine County including the area of the existing Payne & Dolan mining operation in the Village of Caledonia, and in the Burlington and Waterford areas in western Racine County. The areas with bedrock from 50 to 100 feet deep should be considered as potential future resources. It is not yet economical to quarry at these depths, but in the future, as sources nearer the surface are exhausted, these areas may present a practical source of stone and crushed stone.

Maps 3.10 and 3.11 in the County comprehensive plan show the areas of potential sources of sand, gravel, clay, and peat and crushed and building stone, respectively, in Racine County.

### **Water Resources**

Water resources consist of lakes, rivers, streams and their associated wetlands and floodplains, as well as groundwater, which form important elements of the natural resource base of the County and local communities. The contribution of these resources is immeasurable to economic development, recreational activity, and aesthetic quality of the County.

### ***Surface Water Drainage***

Surface water resources, consisting of streams and lakes and their associated wetlands, floodplains, and shorelands, form a particularly important element of the natural resource base. Surface water resources provide recreational opportunities, influence the physical development of the County, and enhance its aesthetic quality. Watersheds, subwatersheds, and the subcontinental divide within the County are shown on Map 2.7.

As shown on Map 2.7, there are five major drainage systems within Racine County, and several minor drainage systems, based upon the direction of surface water flow. The Root River and Pike River and their tributaries are part of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River drainage system; together these watersheds encompass 145.5 square miles, or 43 percent of the County. The Fox River drainage system covers the western portions of the County which drains to the southwest, and ultimately discharges into the Mississippi River system. In addition, a small portion of the south-central area of the County comprises the headwaters of the Des Plaines River watershed and drains to the Mississippi River system. Together, the watersheds tributary to the Mississippi River system encompasses 175.0 square miles, or 51 percent of the County. A fifth watershed encompasses those areas adjacent to Lake Michigan which drain directly into the Lake through intermittent streams; this watershed encompasses 20.1 square miles, or 6 percent of the County.

### ***Lakes and Streams***

Surface water resources, consisting of streams and lakes, form a particularly important element of the natural resource base. Surface water resources provide recreational opportunities, influence the physical development of the County, provide for wildlife habitat, and enhance its aesthetic quality. Surface water resources in the County are shown on Map 2.8.

Perennial streams are defined as those which maintain, at a minimum, a small continuous flow throughout the year except under unusual drought conditions. As shown on Map 2.8, there are approximately 141 miles of such streams in Racine County. Perennial streams in the Des Plaines River watershed are the Des Plaines River and the Kilbourn Road Ditch. Perennial streams in the Fox River watershed are the Fox River, Eagle Creek, Honey Creek, Hoosier Creek, Wind Lake Drainage Canal, Goose Lake Drainage Canal, and Spring Brook. Perennial streams in the Pike River watershed are the Pike River and Pike Creek. Perennial streams in the Root River watershed are the Root River, East and West Branch Root River Canal, Husher Creek, and Hoods Creek.

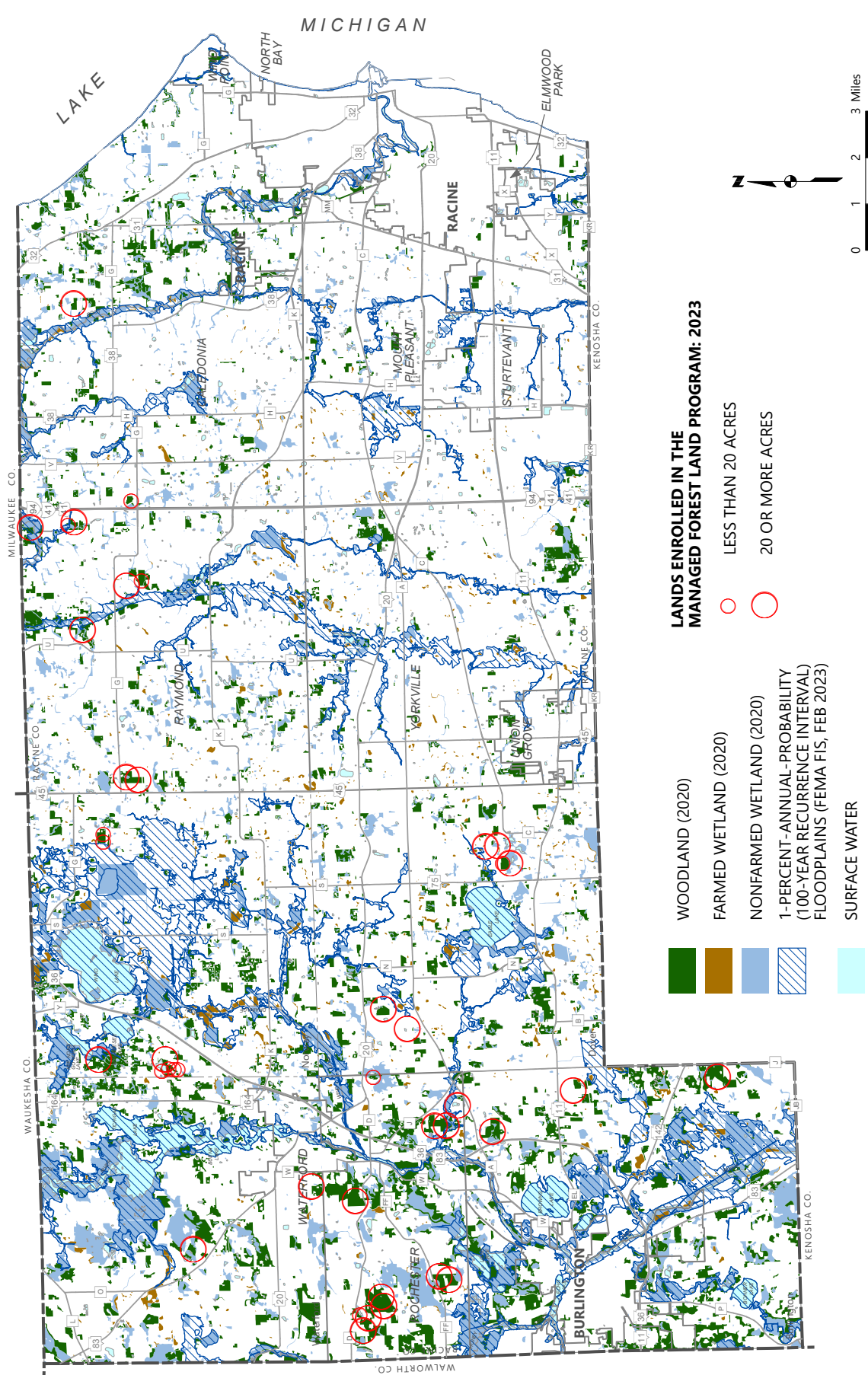
According to the WDNR, there are 10 major lakes, lakes of 50 or more acres, found entirely within Racine County. These lakes encompass a total of 2,629 acres within the County. The four largest lakes within Racine County are Wind Lake, with a surface area of about 919 acres; Eagle Lake, with a surface area of about 529 acres; Browns Lake, with a surface area of about 297 acres; and Tichigan Lake, with a surface area of about 279 acres. In addition, the entire eastern side of the County is bounded by Lake Michigan with approximately 15 miles of shoreline.



## Map 2.7



## Map 2.8 Woodlands, Managed Forest Lands, Floodplains, and Wetlands in Racine County



Lakes and streams are readily susceptible to degradation through improper land use development and management. Water quality can be degraded by excessive pollutant loads, including nutrient loads, which enter from malfunctioning and improperly located onsite sewage disposal systems, from sanitary sewer overflows, from construction and other urban runoff, and from careless agricultural practices. The water quality of lakes and streams may also be adversely affected by the excessive development of riparian areas and by the filling of peripheral wetlands, which removes valuable nutrient and sediment traps while adding nutrient and sediment sources. It is important that existing and future development in riparian areas be managed carefully to avoid further water quality degradation and to enhance the recreational, wildlife, and aesthetic values of surface water resources.

### ***Floodplains and Shorelands***

Floodplains are the wide, gently sloping areas contiguous to, and usually lying on both sides of, a stream channel. For planning and regulatory purposes, floodplains are normally defined as the areas, excluding the stream channel, subject to inundation by the 100-year recurrence interval flood event. This is the flood that may be expected to be reached or exceeded in severity once in every 100 years—or stated another way, there is a 1 percent chance of this event being reached or exceeded in severity in any given year. Floodplain areas are generally not well suited to urban development, not only because of the flood hazard, but also because of the presence of high water tables and, generally, of soils poorly suited to urban uses such as hydric soils. Floodplain areas often contain important natural resources, such as high-value woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife habitat and, therefore, constitute prime locations for parks and open space areas. Every effort should be made to discourage incompatible urban development on floodplains, while encouraging compatible park and open space uses.

Floodplain mapping for Racine County was updated in 2011 as part of a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) “Map Modernization Program.” Floodplains, as identified in the 2011 FEMA mapping are shown on Map 2.8. Approximately 42 square miles, or about 12 percent of the total area of the County, were located within the 100-year recurrence interval flood hazard area. Racine County is currently in the process of updating their mapping for 2024.

Per the requirements in Chapters NR 115 (shoreland regulations) and NR 116 (floodplain regulations) of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*, the County Zoning Ordinance includes overlay districts with provisions for the protection of floodplains and shoreland-wetlands in compliance with State-mandated floodplain and shoreland-wetland regulatory requirements. Floodplain regulations limit the uses allowed in the 100-year floodplain to prevent damage to structures and property and to protect floodwater conveyance and storage capacity of floodplains. Shoreland-wetland regulations effectively protect wetlands five acres or greater in size located in shoreland areas.<sup>12</sup> While the County is responsible for administering floodplain and shoreland-wetland zoning, the County routinely receives and considers input from the towns on shoreland zoning matters.

Under Chapter NR 117 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*, cities and villages are required to restrict uses in wetlands five acres or larger located in the shoreland area. The provisions of NR 115, which regulate uses in unincorporated portions of the shoreland, apply in cities and villages only in shoreland areas annexed to a city or village after July 22, 1986. The same floodplain regulations set forth in NR 116 for unincorporated areas also apply within cities and villages. Each city and village administers the floodplain regulations within its corporate limits.

### ***Wetlands***

Wetlands are generally defined as areas that have a predominance of hydric soils and that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration that is sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. The location and extent of wetlands in the County in 2020, as delineated by the Regional

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<sup>12</sup> *Shorelands are defined as lands within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of navigable lakes, ponds, and flowages; or within 300 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of navigable rivers and streams or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever distance is greater. The shoreland protection established under the County Zoning Ordinance remains in effect on lands annexed to cities and villages after July 22, 1986; alternative administrative arrangements in this respect are set forth in Section 59.692(7) of the Wisconsin Statutes.*

Planning Commission, are shown on Map 2.8.<sup>13</sup> In 2020, wetlands covered about 31 square miles, or about 9 percent of the County.

Wetlands are important resources for the ecological health and diversity of the County. They provide essential breeding, nesting, resting, and feeding grounds and provide escape cover for many forms of fish and wildlife. Wetlands also contribute to flood control, because such areas naturally serve to store excess runoff temporarily, thereby tending to reduce peak flows. Wetlands may also serve as groundwater recharge and discharge areas. In addition, wetlands help to protect downstream water resources from siltation and pollution by trapping sediments, nutrients, and other water pollutants.

In consideration of the important natural functions of wetland areas and their recreational value for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing, continued efforts should be made to protect these areas by discouraging wetland draining, filling, and urbanization, which can be costly in both monetary and environmental terms.

Included in the 31 square miles of wetlands are about eight square miles which have been classified as “farmed wetlands.” These areas meet the definition of a wetland but were being actively farmed in 2020.

### **Groundwater Resources**

Like surface water, groundwater is susceptible to depletion in quantity and to deterioration in quality as a result of contamination and over-usage. The vulnerability of groundwater to contamination is a combination of several factors, including soil type, subsurface material characteristics, and depth to groundwater levels. Thus, land use and park and open space planning must appropriately consider the potential impacts of urban and rural development on this important resource.

The recharge of the aquifers underlying Racine County is derived largely by precipitation. Areas of groundwater recharge in 2020 are shown on Map 2.9. The map identifies areas based upon the rate of annual groundwater recharge from precipitation in the County. Areas were placed into the following classifications: very high (more than six inches of recharge per year), high (four to six inches of recharge per year), moderate (three to four inches of recharge per year), and low (less than three inches of recharge per year). The protection of recharge areas classified as having a high or very high recharge potential is particularly important in the long term protection and preservation of groundwater resources in Racine County. The protection of these areas may be expected to be largely achieved through the implementation of the County comprehensive plan since that plan recommends the preservation of environmental corridors, isolated natural resource areas, significant natural areas, prime agricultural lands, and other agricultural and open areas of the County. In addition, the use of low impact development designs, cluster developments, and other sustainable development designs have the potential to effectively maintain infiltration capabilities in urban areas.

As shown on Map 2.9, about 3 percent of the County is rated “very high” for recharge potential, and about 16 percent is rated “high” for recharge potential. High and very high recharge potential areas are scattered throughout the County, with the largest concentration found in the County’s western area. About one-half of the County (about 63 percent) is classified as having “moderate” recharge potential, and about 8 percent is classified as having a “low” potential.

### **Forest Resources**

#### **Woodlands**

Woodlands are defined as those upland areas one acre or more in size having 17 or more deciduous trees per acre, each measuring at least four inches in diameter at breast height and having 50 percent or more tree canopy coverage. Coniferous tree plantations and reforestation projects are also classified as woodlands.

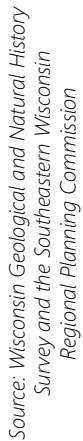
Woodlands have both economic and ecological value and provide an attractive natural resource of immeasurable value. Under good management, woodlands can serve a variety of beneficial functions. In addition to contributing to clean air and water and regulating surface water runoff, the maintenance of woodlands within the County can contribute to sustaining a diversity of plant and animal life. The existing woodlands in the County, some of which required a century or more to develop, can be destroyed

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<sup>13</sup> The wetlands shown on Map 2.8 are those identified under the 2005 Wisconsin Wetlands Inventory. Wetlands have since been updated to 2010 as part of the 2010 regional land use inventory.



## Map 2.9



through mismanagement within a comparatively short time. The deforestation of hillsides, ravines, and bluff areas contributes to rapid stormwater runoff, the siltation of lakes and streams, and the destruction of wildlife habitat.

Woodlands, as shown on Map 2.8, occur in scattered locations throughout the County, with some of the largest concentrations found in the western portions of the County. In 2020, woodland areas covered about 23 square miles, or about 9 percent of the County. These woodlands should be maintained for their scenic, wildlife habitat, recreational, and air and water quality protection values.

### **Managed Forest Lands**

The Managed Forest Law (MFL) Program is an incentive program intended to encourage sustainable forestry on private woodlands in Wisconsin with a primary focus on timber production. The MFL Program offers private owners of woodlands a reduced property tax rate as an incentive to participate. All Wisconsin private woodland owners with at least 10 acres of contiguous forestland in the same city, village, or town are eligible to apply provided the lands meet the other criteria: 1) a minimum of 80 percent of the land is in forest, 2) the land is primarily used for growing forest products (croplands, pastures, orchards, etc. are not eligible), and 3) there are no recreational uses that interfere with forest management.

A number of landowners in Racine County participate in the MFL Program. Lands are enrolled in either a “closed” category, which is not available to the public, or an “open” lands category, in which the public is allowed access for recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, and cross-country skiing. Enrollment is by contract between the WDNR and the landowner, and the landowner can choose a 25- or 50-year contract. Landowners must also agree to follow a forest management plan. The MFL Program was created in 1985, replacing similar programs—the Wisconsin Forest Crop Law Program and Wisconsin Woodland Tax Law Program. Map 2.8 shows land enrolled in the Managed Forest Law Program in 2023.

### **Natural Areas, Critical Species Habitats, and Geological Sites**

A comprehensive update to the inventory of natural and geological resources in the County was conducted by the Regional Planning Commission in 2010 as part of an amendment to the regional natural areas and critical species habitat protection and management plan.<sup>14</sup> This update systematically evaluated physical changes to high-quality natural areas, critical species habitat sites, and sites having geological significance within the Region, including Racine County, and reflects new findings since the preparation of the original natural areas plan.

#### **Natural Areas**

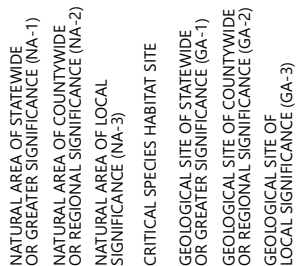
Natural areas are tracts of land or water so little modified by human activity, or sufficiently recovered from the effects of such activity, that they contain intact native plant and animal communities believed to be representative of the landscape before European settlement. Natural areas sites are classified into one of three categories: natural areas of statewide or greater significance (NA-1), natural areas of countywide or regional significance (NA-2), and natural areas of local significance (NA-3). Classification of an area into one of these three categories is based upon consideration of the diversity of plant and animal species and community types present; the structure and integrity of the native plant or animal community; the extent of disturbance from human activity, such as logging, agricultural use, and pollution; the commonness of the plant and animal community; unique natural features; the size of the site; and the educational value.

A total of 60 natural areas, encompassing about 5,677 acres, or about 3 percent of the County, were identified in Racine County in 2010. Of the 60 identified sites, seven are classified as NA-1 sites and encompass about 614 acres, 20 are classified as NA-2 sites and encompass about 2,970 acres, and 33 are classified as NA-3 sites and encompass about 2,092 acres. Map 2.10 depicts the locations of natural areas identified in 2010. A detailed description of each site can be found in the Racine County park and open space plan.

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<sup>14</sup> Documented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Report No. 42, A Regional Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Protection and Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, September 1997, as amended in 2010 and in Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Report No. 134, 3rd Edition, A Park and Open Space Plan for Racine County.*

## Map 2.10





### **Critical Species Habitat Sites**

Critical species habitat sites are those areas where the chief value lies in their ability to support rare, threatened, or endangered species. Such areas constitute “critical” habitat that is important to ensure survival of a particular species or group of species of special concern.

A total of 38 sites supporting threatened or rare plant or bird species have been identified in Racine County in 2010. These sites, which together encompass an area of about 1,392 acres, are shown on Map 2.10. A detailed description of each site can be found in the Racine County park and open space plan.

### **Significant Geological Sites**

A total of six sites of geological importance, including three glacial features and three bedrock geology sites, were identified in the County in 2010. The geological sites included in the inventory were selected on the basis of scientific importance, significance in industrial history, natural aesthetics, ecological qualities, educational value, and public access potential. The six sites selected in Racine County include one site of statewide significance (GA-1), one site of countywide or regional significance (GA-2), and four sites of local significance (GA-3). Together, these sites encompassed about 1,056 acres in Racine County in 2010, and are shown on Map 2.10. A detailed description of each site can be found in the Racine County park and open space plan.

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

One of the most important tasks completed under the regional planning program for Southeastern Wisconsin has been the identification and delineation of those areas in the Region in which concentrations of the best remaining elements of the natural resource base occur. The preservation of such areas in essentially natural, open uses is vital to maintaining a high level of environmental quality in the Region, protecting its natural heritage and beauty, and providing recreational opportunities in scenic outdoor settings.

Identification of environmental corridors is based upon the presence of one or more of the following important elements of the natural resource base: 1) rivers, streams, lakes and associated shorelands and floodlands; 2) wetlands; 3) woodlands; 4) prairies; 5) wildlife habitat areas; 6) wet (hydric), poorly drained, and organic soils; and 7) rugged terrain and high relief topography. The presence of elements that are closely related to the natural resource base, including park and open space sites, natural areas, historic sites, and scenic viewpoints, are also considered in the delineation of environmental corridors. Many of the natural resource elements which form the basis for corridor delineation have been described in the preceding sections of this chapter.

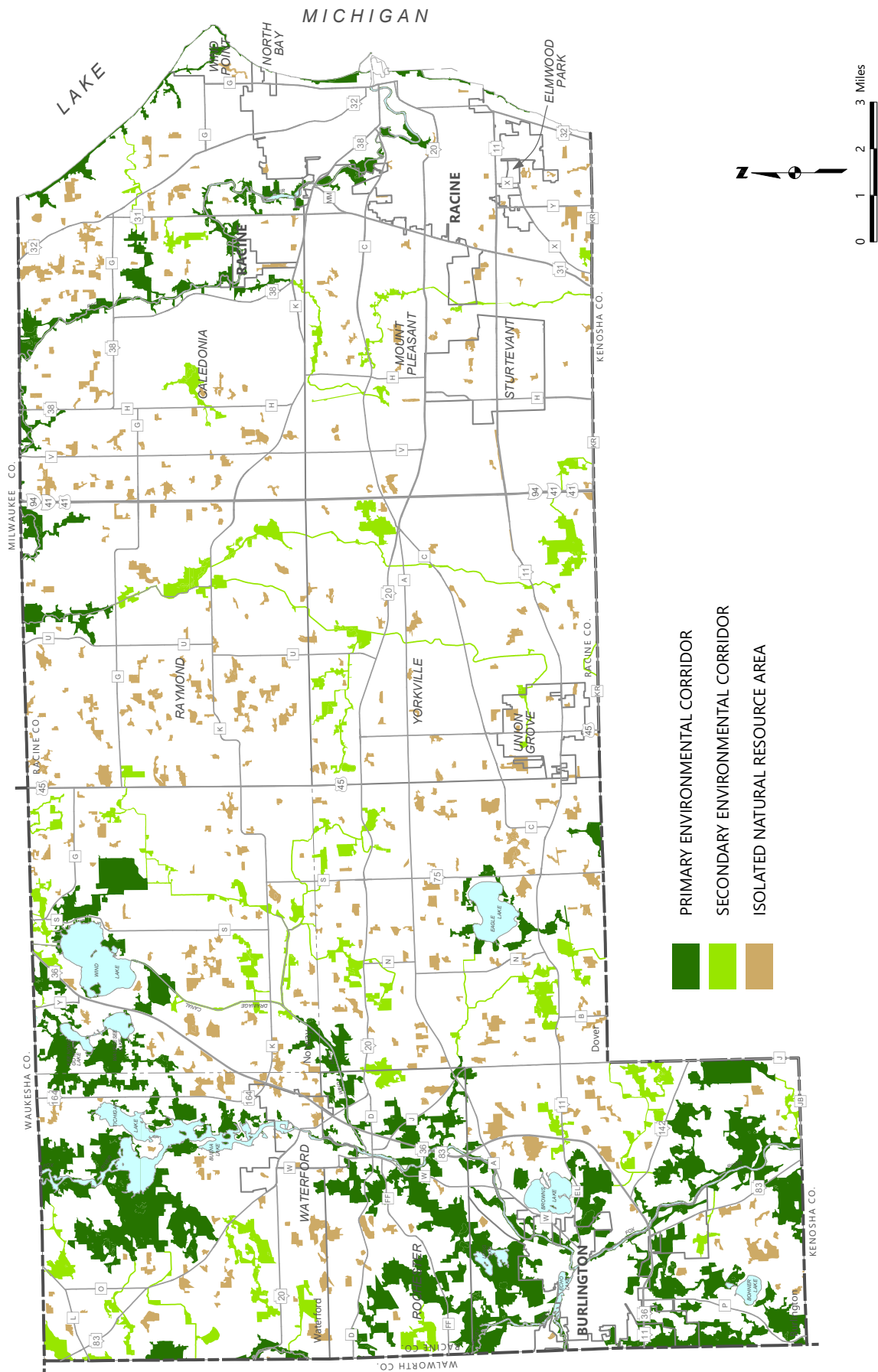
The delineation on a map of the natural resource and resource-related elements specified above results in an essentially linear pattern of relatively narrow, elongated areas which have been termed “environmental corridors” by the Regional Planning Commission.<sup>15</sup> Primary environmental corridors are a minimum of 400 acres in size, two miles in length, and 200 feet in width. Secondary environmental corridors connect with the primary environmental corridors and are at least 100 acres in size and one mile in length. Areas at least five acres in size which contain important natural resource base elements but are separated physically from primary and secondary environmental corridors by intensive urban or agricultural land uses have also been identified and have been termed “isolated natural resource areas”. Environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas within Racine County in 2015 are shown on Map 2.11. At that time, such areas encompassed about 62.5 square miles, or about 18 percent of the County.

In any consideration of environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas, it is important to note that the preservation of such resources serves many beneficial purposes, in addition to protecting the important natural resources that make up the corridors. Corridor lands provide areas for the storage of flood waters away from homes and other developed areas; help to protect water quality by filtering sediment and fertilizer from runoff before it enters surface waters; provide wildlife habitat and corridors for the movement of animals; and contribute to the scenic beauty of the County and the Region. Excluding urban development from environmental corridors helps to prevent problems such as water pollution, wet and flooded basements, and building and pavement failures.

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<sup>15</sup> A detailed description of the process of refining the delineation of environmental corridors in Southeastern Wisconsin is presented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Technical Record, Vol. 4, No. 2 (March 1981), pp. 1-21.*

**Map 2.11**  
**Environmental Corridors and Isolated Natural Resource Areas in Racine County: 2015**



Source: Southeastern Wisconsin  
Regional Planning Commission

In addition, because of the many interacting relationships between living organisms and their environment, the destruction or deterioration of any one element of the natural resource base may lead to a chain reaction of deterioration and destruction. The draining and filling of wetlands, for example, may destroy fish spawning grounds, wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge or discharge areas, and the natural filtration action and floodwater storage functions which contribute to maintaining high levels of water quality and stable streamflows and lake stages in a watershed. The resulting deterioration of surface water quality may, in turn, lead to the deterioration of the quality of the groundwater which serves as a source of domestic, municipal, and industrial water supply and on which low flows in rivers and streams may depend. Similarly, the destruction of woodland cover may result in soil erosion and stream siltation, more rapid stormwater runoff and attendant increased flood flows and stages, as well as destruction of wildlife habitat. Although the effects of any one of these environmental changes may not in and of itself be overwhelming, the combined effects will eventually create serious environmental and developmental problems. The need to maintain the integrity of the remaining environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas thus becomes apparent.

### ***Primary Environmental Corridors***

As shown on Map 2.11, the primary environmental corridors in Racine County are located along the major rivers and their tributaries, along Lake Michigan, around the major lakes in the County, and in large wetland areas. In 2015, about 37.3 square miles, comprising about 11 percent of the total area of the County, were encompassed within the primary environmental corridors.

The primary environmental corridors contain almost all of the best remaining woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife habitat areas in the County and are, in effect, a composite of the best remaining elements of the natural resource base. Such areas have immeasurable environmental and recreational value. The protection of the primary environmental corridors from additional intrusion by incompatible land uses, and thereby from degradation and destruction, is one of the objectives of this farmland preservation plan.

### ***Secondary Environmental Corridors and Isolated Natural Resource Areas***

As shown on Map 2.11, secondary environmental corridors in Racine County are located chiefly along the small perennial and intermittent streams within the County. About 11.5 square miles, comprising about 3 percent of the County, were encompassed within secondary environmental corridors in 2015. Secondary environmental corridors contain a variety of resource elements and are often remnant resources from primary environmental corridors that have been developed with agricultural or urban uses. Secondary environmental corridors facilitate surface water drainage and provide corridors for the movement of wildlife and for the dispersal of seeds for a variety of plant species. Such corridors should be considered for preservation in natural, open use or incorporated as drainage ways, stormwater detention or retention areas, or as local parks or recreation trails, in developing areas.

As also shown on Map 2.11, isolated natural resource areas within Racine County include a geographically well-distributed variety of isolated wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife habitat; in 2015, these areas encompassed about 13.7 square miles, or about 4 percent of the County. Isolated natural resource areas may provide the only available wildlife habitat in an area, provide good locations for local parks and nature areas, and lend aesthetic character and natural diversity to an area. Such areas should be preserved in natural open uses as far as practicable, being incorporated for use as parks and open space reservations or stormwater detention or retention areas where appropriate.

### ***Park and Open Space Sites***

A comprehensive region wide inventory of park and open space sites was conducted in 1973 under the initial regional park and open space planning program conducted by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (Commission). The inventory is updated periodically and was updated in 2010 as part of a new Racine County park and open space plan and updated again in preparation of this Plan. The inventory identified all park and open space sites owned by a public agency, including Federal, State, County, local units of government, and school districts. Also identified in the inventory were privately owned resource-oriented outdoor recreation sites and lands held in conservation easements, including those held by private organizations such as the Caledonia Conservancy.

### ***Park and Open Space Sites Owned by Racine County***

Park and open space sites owned by Racine County in 2020 are shown on Map 2.12 and listed on Table 2.5. In 2020, Racine County owned 40 park and open space sites, encompassing a total of 3,001 acres, or about 1 percent of the total area of the County. There are six existing major County parks<sup>16</sup> encompassing a total of 1,073 acres, which includes Browns Lake Golf Course in the Town of Burlington; Cliffside Park in the Village of Caledonia; Pritchard Park in the City of Racine; Case Eagle Park and W.R. Wadewitz Nature Camp in the Village of Rochester; and Ives Grove Golf Links in the Village of Yorkville.

There are 34 other County-owned park and outdoor recreation sites encompassing a total of 1,928 acres. These sites include parkway lands along the Fox River (39 acres) and Root River (706 acres).

### ***Park and Open Space Sites Owned by the State of Wisconsin***

As shown on Map 2.12 and indicated in Table 2.5, there were 21 State-owned park and open space sites in Racine County in 2020, encompassing 3,987 acres, or about 2 percent of the total area of the County. Of these 21 sites, 17 sites, encompassing 3,835 acres, were owned by the WDNR; two sites, encompassing 141 acres, were owned by the University of Wisconsin; and two sites, encompassing 11 acres, were owned by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

### ***Park and Open Space Sites Owned by Local Governments or School Districts***

In 2020, there were a total of 251 sites owned by local units of government or school districts. Those sites encompass 3,506 acres, or about 2 percent of the total area of the County. Local governments own 201 park and open space sites, and public school districts own 50 sites. The acreage attributed to school district sites includes only those portions of the site used for recreational or open space purposes. Of the 251 locally-owned public parks, the largest is the 335-acre Johnson Park and Golf Course, a major park owned by the City of Racine, that provides a variety of resource-oriented recreational facilities, including a golf course, picnic areas, playfields, and nature center.

### ***Private Resource-Oriented Park and Open Space Sites***

#### ***Private Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Sites***

In 2020, there was also a total of 125 privately-owned resource-oriented recreation sites. Together they encompassed 3,375 acres, or about 2 percent of the total area of the County. Examples of privately-owned recreation sites include hunting clubs, yacht clubs, golf courses, boat access sites, campgrounds, subdivision parks, and recreation areas associated with private schools.

#### ***Privately-Owned Resource Protection Sites***

In addition, the 2020 inventory of park and open space sites identified a total of 17 sites owned by private organizations for natural resource protection purposes in Racine County. Those sites are shown on Map 2.13 and listed on Table 2.6. The 17 open space area sites owned for resource preservation purposes encompass 293 acres. Those sites include 16 sites owned by the Caledonia Conservancy and one site owned by the River Bend Nature Center.

### ***Conservation Easements***

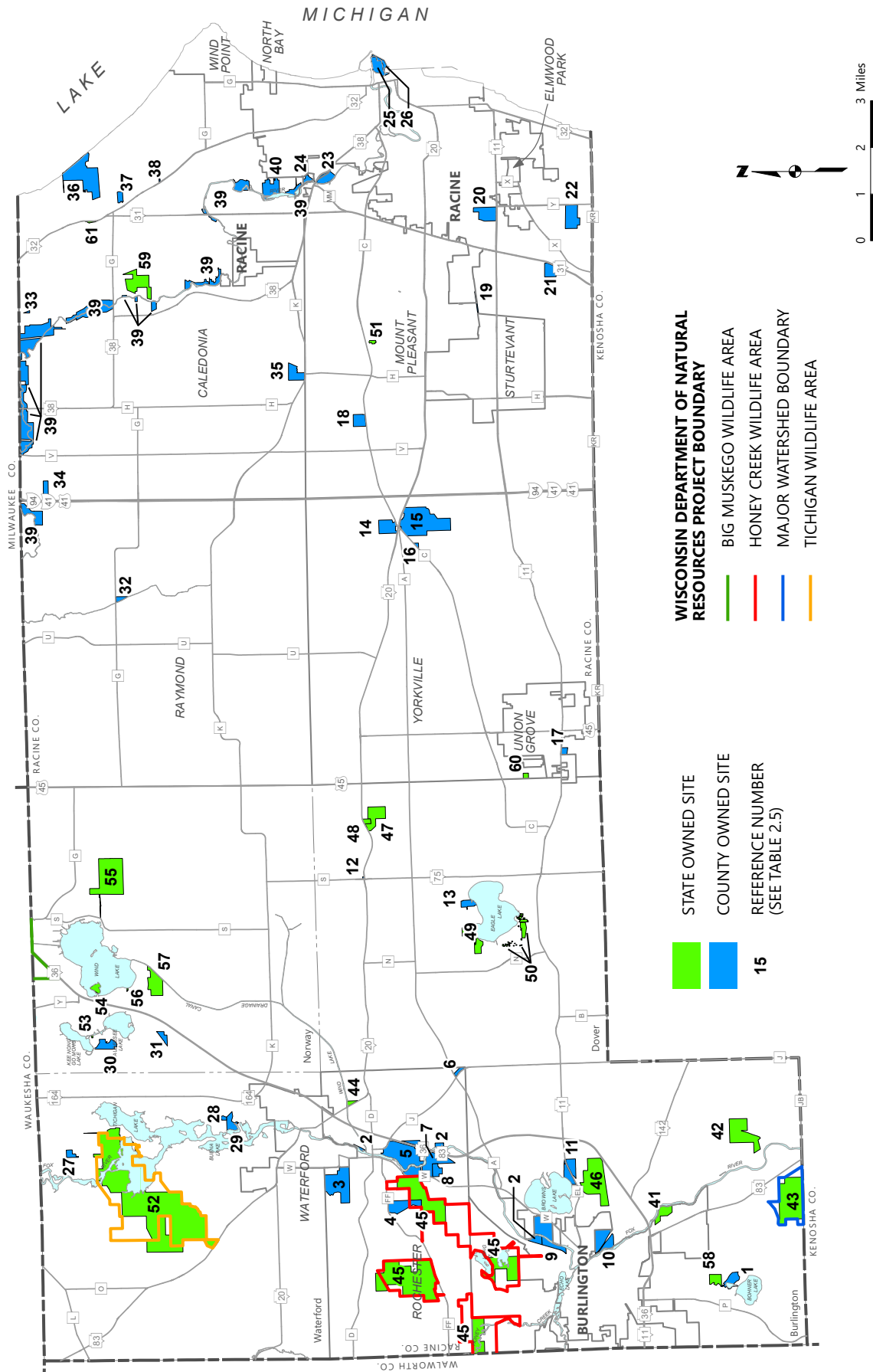
There are 24 privately-owned open space and environmentally sensitive sites in Racine County that are protected under conservation easements. In general, conservation easements are voluntary contracts between a private landowner and a land trust or government body that limit, or in some cases prohibit, future development of the parcel. The property owner sells or donates a conservation easement for the property to a land trust or government agency but retains ownership. The owner is not prohibited from selling the property, but future owners must abide by the terms of the conservation easement. Conservation easements typically do not include any provision for public access. The 24 easements in Racine County, shown on Map 2.13 and listed on Table 2.6, encompassed 702 acres in 2020. All of the conservation easements identified on the table and map provide for the permanent protection of resources on private land.

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<sup>16</sup> Major parks are defined as large, publicly-owned outdoor recreation sites containing significant natural resource amenities which provide opportunities for resource-oriented activities, and which are generally 100 acres or more in size.

## Map 2.12

### Racine County and State of Wisconsin Park and Open Space Sites: 2020



**Table 2.5**  
**Existing County and State Park and Open Space Sites in Racine County: 2020**

Number on Map	Site Name	Location <sup>a</sup>	Size (acres)
County			
1	John Margis, Jr. Wildlife Area	T2N, R19E, Section 17	44
2	Fox River Parkway	T2N, R19E, Section 2	39
3	W.R. Wadewitz Nature Camp	T2N, R19E, Section 3	176
4	Racine County Public Works – Rochester Shop	T2N, R19E, Section 10	85
5	Case Eagle Park	T2N, R19E, Section 11	245
6	Stenhouse Memorial Park	T2N, R19E, Section 13	10
7	Saller Woods	T2N, R19E, Section 14, 15	90
8	Saller Woods Addition	T2N, R19E, Section 15	28
9	Browns Lake Golf Course	T2N, R19E, Section 28	140
10	Bushnell Park	T2N, R19E, Section 33	95
11	Fischer Memorial Park	T2N, R19E, Section 34	65
12	Beaumont Park	T3N, R20E, Section 2	1
13	Eagle Lake Park	T3N, R20E, Section 22	25
14	Evans Park	T3N, R21E, Section 12	63
15	Ives Grove Golf Links	T3N, R21E, Section 13	289
16	Skewes Memorial Park	T3N, R21E, Section 14	4
17	Old Settler's Park	T3N, R21E, Section 31	12
18	Haban Park	T3N, R22E, Section 8	41
19	County Land	T3N, R22E, Section 22, 23	5
20	Pritchard Park	T3N, R22E, Section 19	73
21	County-Owned Land	T3N, R22E, Section 35	40
22	Sanders Park	T3N, R22E, Section 36	84
23	Quarry Lake Park	T3N, R23E, Section 6	39
24	Horlick Park	T3N, R23E, Section 6	15
25	Reef Point Marina	T3N, R23E, Section 9	45
26	Len Ziolkowski Harbor Park	T3N, R23E, Section 9	17
27	American Eagle Manor Outlot	T4N, R19E, Section 2	17
28	Fowler's Bay North	T4N, R19E, Section 24	6
29	Fowler's Bay Outlot 1	T4N, R19E, Section 25, 26	35
30	Whispering Hills Outlot	T4N, R20E, Section 7	43
31	Heg Park	T4N, R20E, Section 18	18
32	Koerber Property	T4N, R21E, Section 15	11
33	County Land	T4N, R22E, Section 2	2
34	County Land	T4N, R22E, Section 6	26
35	Franksville Memorial Park	T4, R22E, Section 33	52
36	Cliffside Park	T4N, R23E, Section 7, 8	223
37	County Land	T4N, R23E, Section 18	16
38	Tabor Sokol Memorial Park	T4N, R23E, Section 19	1
39	Root River Parkway	T3N, R23E, Section 6 T4N, R21E, Section 1 T4N, R22E, Sections 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 14, 23, 25 T4N, R23E, Sections 19, 30, 31	706
40	River Bend Nature Center	T4N, R23E, Sections 31	75
County Total – 40 Sites			3,001

**Table continued on next page.**



**Table 2.5 (Continued)**

Number on Map	Site Name	Location <sup>a</sup>	Size (acres)
State			
Department of Natural Resources Sites			
41	DNR Statewide Habitat Area	T2N, R19E, Section 4, 9	44
42	DNR Scattered Wetland	T2N, R19E, Sections 14, 23	156
43	Karcher Marsh Wildlife Area	T2N, R19E, Sections 21, 22	278
44	DNR Wind Lake Canal Access Site	T3N, R19E, Section 1	10
45	Honey Creek Wildlife Area	T3N, R19E, Sections 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20	1,010
46	DNR Statewide Habitat Area	T3N, R19E, Section 34	226
47	Conservation Commission Scattered Wetland	T3N, R20E, Section 12	81
48	DNR Statewide Habitat Area	T3N, R20E, Section 12	10
49	Eagle Lake Fishery Area (North)	T3N, R20E, Section 21	60
50	Eagle Lake Fishery Area (South)	T3N, R20E, Section 21, 27, 28	37
51	DNR Scattered Wetland	T3N, R22E, Section 10	5
52	Tichigan Wildlife Area	T4N, R19E, Sections 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22	1,552
53	Statewide Public Access – Waubeesee Lake	T4N, R20E, Section 7	1
54	Wind Lake Fishery Area	T4N, R20E, Section 8	20
55	State Wetland	T4N, R20E, Section 10, 11	259
56	Statewide Public Access-Wind Lake	T4N, R20E, Section 17	1
57	DNR Scattered Wetland	T4N, R20E, Section 17	85
University of Wisconsin Sites			
58	Ranger Mac Fen	T2N, R19E, Section 17	33
59	Renak-Polak Maple-Beech Woods	T4N, R22E, Section 14	108
Department of Transportation Sites			
60	WisDOT Site	T3N, R21E, Section 30	8
61	32nd Division Memorial Marker and Wayside	T4N, R22E, Section 12	3
State Total – 21 Sites			3,987

<sup>a</sup> U.S. Public Land Survey Township, Range, and Section.

Source: Racine County Public Works Division and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

## Cultural Resources

### Historic Sites

Historic sites in Racine County often have important recreational, educational, and cultural value. A number of inventories and surveys of potentially significant historic sites have been conducted by various units and agencies of government in Racine County. The results of these inventories and surveys, on file at such agencies as The Wisconsin Historical Society, indicate that there are more than 3,000 historic sites in Racine County. Certain sites of known historic significance are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2020, there were 58 individual sites and 10 historic districts<sup>17</sup> within the County listed on the National Register.<sup>18</sup>

### Archaeological Resources

Preservation of archaeological resources is also important in sustaining the sense of cultural heritage and identity in Racine County. Like historical places and districts, significant prehistoric and historic archaeological sites increase the understanding and awareness of the past and provide economic opportunities through tourism if properly identified and preserved. The Office of the State Archaeologist, Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society maintains a database on the location and nature of known archaeological sites in Wisconsin, the State Archaeological Site Inventory. This inventory has been compiled from a variety of sources. The information available for the sites varies considerably, and the Historical Society has not been able to verify all of the information. As of 2006, there were 335 known prehistoric and historic archaeological sites located in Racine County listed in the State Archaeological Site Inventory.

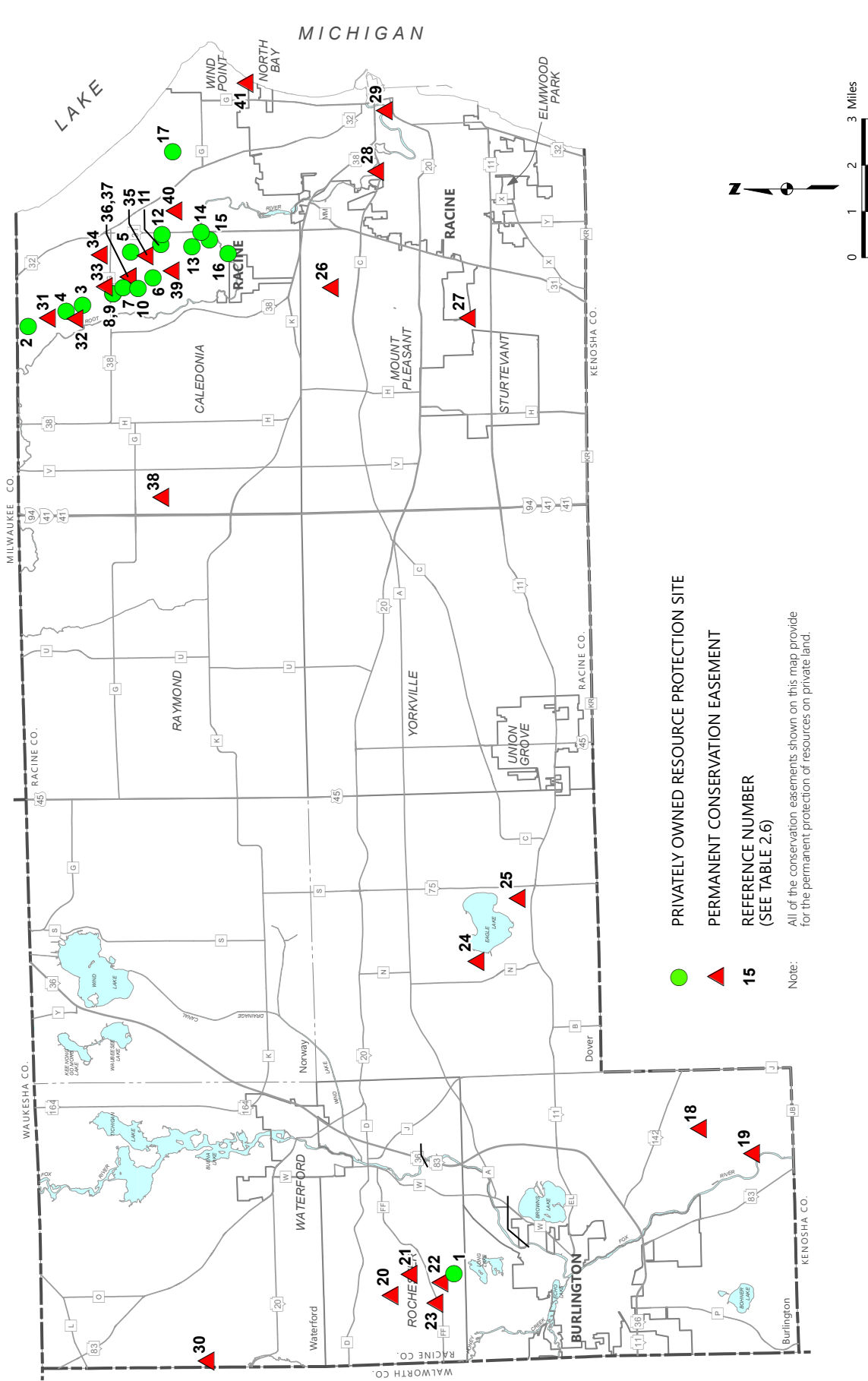
<sup>17</sup> A historic district is a geographically definable area, urban or rural, that contains a concentration of significant historic sites or structures from the same period of time.

<sup>18</sup> The location of sites and districts in Racine County listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2023 is available online. To learn more, visit: [www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/data-downloads.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/data-downloads.htm).



## Map 2.13

### Privately-Owned Resource Protection Sites in Racine County: 2020



**Table 2.6**  
**Privately-Owned Resource Protection Sites in Racine County: 2020**

Number on Map	Site Name	Owner/Holder of Easement	Location <sup>a</sup>	Size (acres)
Resource Protection Sites				
1	Wallace E. Zabler Nature Preserve	Geneva Lake Conservancy	T3N, R19E, Section 17	60
2	Schumann Right-of-Way	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 2	6
3	Rohner Right-of-Way	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 11	1
4	New Marshall Right-of-Way	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 11	2
5	Tabor Woods	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 13	34
6	Short Right-of-Way	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 13	1
7	Ehrlich Right-of-Way	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 13, 14	17
8	Halberstadt Right-of-Way	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 14	1
9	Estes Family Right-of-Way	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 14	1
10	Short Rd/Lorence Woods	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 13, 14	21
11	King's Corner	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 24	33
12	Ehrlich	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 24	2
13	Ehrlich	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 24	58
14	Tepley	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 24	4
15	Trout Ponds Prairie	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 24, 25	28
16	Aboagye Acquisition	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 25	7
17	Neighborhood Central Walk	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R23E, Section 20	17
Total – 17 Sites				293
Conservation Easements				
18	Easement	DNR	T2N, R19E, Section 14	4
19	Easement	DNR	T2N, R19E, Section 23	1
20	Easement	DNR	T3N, R19E, Section 8	31
21	Easement	DNR	T3N, R19E, Section 8	20
22	Haubrich Easement	Kenosha Racine Land Trust	T3N, R19E, Section 17	88
23	Easement	DNR	T3N, R19E, Section 17	1
24	Easement	DNR	T3N, R20E, Section 21	1
25	Easement	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	T3N, R20E, Section 27	72
26	Statewide Wetland Mitigation Program Site	DNR	T3N, R22E, Section 2	10
27	Pike River Corridor Easement	Village of Mt. Pleasant	T3N, R22E, Section 14, 22, 23	30
28	Easement	DNR	T3N, R23E, Section 8	1
29	Case Corporation Easement	City of Racine	T3N, R23E, Section 9	3
30	Streambank Easement Conservation Fund Himebauch	DNR	T4N, R19E, Section 19	93
31	Rehbein Right-of-Way Easement	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 2	13
32	Easement	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 11	1
33	Greater Racine Kennel Club Easement	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 11	1
34	McCalvy Easement	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 12	26
35	Erlandsson Easement	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 13	1
36	Ryder Easement	Kenosha Racine Land Trust	T4N, R22E, Section 13, 14	12
37	Duda Easement	Kenosha Racine Land Trust	T4N, R22E, Section 14	36
38	Statewide Wetland Mitigation Program Site	DNR	T4N, R22E, Section 19	5
39	Neubauer Trail Easement	Caledonia Conservancy	T4N, R22E, Section 24	12
40	Myers Easement	Kenosha Racine Land Trust	T4N, R23E, Section 19	224
41	Urhausen Easement	Kenosha Racine Land Trust	T4N, R23E, Section 27	16
Total – 24 Sites				702

Note: All of the conservation easements listed above provide for the permanent protection of resources on private land.

<sup>a</sup> Indicates location given in U.S. Public Land Survey Township, Range, and Section.

Source: Caledonia Conservancy, SENO K/RLT Conservancy, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

## **2.5 EXISTING AND PROJECTED POPULATION, HOUSEHOLD, AND EMPLOYMENT LEVELS**

Information on the size, characteristics, and distribution of the resident population, household, and employment levels in the County is needed to prepare projections of changes in these factors over time, which is essential for the preparation of a comprehensive plan including the farmland preservation plan component. This section provides information on existing and projected (2035) population, household, and employment levels.

### **Existing Population, Household, and Employment Data**

#### ***Population***

Population growth in Racine County from 1850 to 2020 is indicated in Table 2.7. The population grew steadily between 1850 and 1970. Since 1970, the population of the County continued to grow, but at a reduced rate, increasing to 197,727 in 2020. The population of Racine County increased more rapidly than the Southeastern Wisconsin Region and the State in each decade from 1940 to 1970. Between 1970 and 2020, the population of Racine County increased by 15 percent, compared to increases of 16 percent and 29 percent for the Southeastern Wisconsin Region and State, respectively.

The City of Racine is the most populous community in the County, with 77,816 residents, or about 39 percent of the County's population, in 2020. The next most populous communities are the Village of Mt. Pleasant (27,732 residents), the Village of Caledonia (25,361 residents), and the City of Burlington (11,047 residents)—accounting for a combined 32 percent of the County's population in 2020.

#### ***Households***

Trends in the number of households in Racine County and the Region are shown in Table 2.8. Both the County and Region experienced significant gains in the number of households between 1970 and 2020. The rate of increase in the number of households has exceeded the rate of population increase due to the decline in the average number of people per household. Between 1970 and 2020, the rate of increase in the number of households was about 59 percent in the County and about 56 percent in the Region, compared to a population increase of 16 percent in the County and 17 percent in the Region.

The number of households is of particular importance in land use and public facility planning, because it influences the demand for converting rural land to urban use to accommodate additional residential development. It should be noted that Section 91.10(1)(c)7 of the *Statutes* indicates that county farmland preservation plans must include policies, goals, strategies, and proposed actions, as provided in Chapter 3 of this document, to increase housing density in areas that are not identified as a farmland preservation area. The number of households in an area is also an important component in creating demand for transportation and other facilities and services.

#### ***Age Distribution***

The age distribution of the population may be expected to influence the continuation of farming by future generations. It will also have important implications for planning and the formation of public policies in the areas of health, education, housing, transportation, and economic development. The age distribution of the population in the County and Region in 2000, 2010, and 2020 is set forth in Table 2.9. Between 2000 and 2020, there was a significant increase in the number of adults aged 45 to 64 in Racine County. Conversely, the population of adults aged 25 to 44 decreased in number. The population under aged 18-24 in the County was relatively stable, although the population aged 5 to 17 decreased about 11 percent and the population under age 5 decreased about 15 percent from 2000 to 2020. The Region as a whole also experienced a significant increase in the number of adults aged 45 to 64 and a decrease in those aged 25 to 44, aged 5 to 17, and under age 5.

#### ***Employment***

Trends in job growth in Racine County and Region are set forth in Table 2.10. The jobs are enumerated at their location and the data therefore reflect the number of jobs within the County and Region, including both full- and part-time jobs. An increase in the number of jobs may be expected to attract additional residents to the County, thus influencing population growth.

**Table 2.7****Historic Resident Population Levels in Racine County, Southeastern Wisconsin, and the State of Wisconsin: Census Years 1850-2020**

Year	Racine County			Southeastern Wisconsin			Wisconsin		
	Population	Change from Preceding Census		Population	Change from Preceding Census		Population	Change from Preceding Census	
		Absolute	Percent		Absolute	Percent		Absolute	Percent
1850	14,973	--	--	113,389	--	--	305,391	--	--
1860	21,360	6,387	42.7	190,409	77,020	67.9	775,881	470,490	154.1
1870	26,740	5,380	25.2	223,546	33,137	17.4	1,054,670	278,789	35.9
1880	32,922	6,182	23.1	277,119	53,573	24.0	1,315,497	260,827	24.7
1890	36,268	3,346	10.2	386,774	109,655	39.6	1,693,330	377,833	28.7
1900	45,644	9,376	25.9	501,808	115,034	29.7	2,069,042	375,712	22.2
1910	57,424	11,780	25.8	631,161	129,353	25.8	2,333,860	264,818	12.8
1920	78,961	21,537	37.5	783,681	152,520	24.2	2,632,067	298,207	12.8
1930	90,217	11,256	14.3	1,006,118	222,437	28.4	2,939,006	306,939	11.7
1940	94,047	3,830	4.2	1,067,699	61,581	6.1	3,137,587	198,581	6.8
1950	109,585	15,538	16.5	1,240,618	172,919	16.2	3,434,575	296,988	9.5
1960	141,781	32,196	29.4	1,573,614	332,996	26.8	3,951,777	517,202	15.1
1970	170,838	29,057	20.5	1,756,083	182,469	11.6	4,417,821	466,044	11.8
1980	173,132	2,294	1.3	1,764,796	8,713	0.5	4,705,642	287,821	6.5
1990	175,034	1,902	1.1	1,810,364	45,568	2.6	4,891,769	186,127	4.0
2000	188,831	13,797	7.9	1,931,165	120,801	6.7	5,363,675	471,906	9.6
2010	195,408	6,577	3.5	2,019,970	88,805	4.6	5,686,986	323,271	6.0
2020	197,727	2,319	1.2	2,046,839	26,869	1.3	5,893,718	206,732	3.6

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

**Table 2.8****Number of Households in Racine County and Southeastern Wisconsin: Census Years 1970-2020**

Year	Racine County			Southeastern Wisconsin		
	Number of Households	Change from Previous Census		Number of Households	Change from Previous Census	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
1970	49,796	--	--	536,486	--	--
1980	59,418	9,622	19.3	627,955	91,469	17.0
1990	63,736	4,318	7.3	676,107	48,152	7.7
2000	70,819	7,083	11.1	749,039	72,932	10.8
2010	75,651	4,832	6.8	800,087	51,048	6.8
2020	78,959	3,308	4.4	839,211	39,124	4.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

As indicated in Table 2.10, employment in Racine County increased by 7,900 jobs during the 1980s; increased by 4,900 jobs during the 1990s; decreased by 5,600 jobs in the 2000s; and increased by 3,400 jobs in the 2010s. The overall 39 percent increase in the number of jobs in the County between 1980 and 2020 compares to an increase of 50 percent in the Region during the same period.

It should be noted that according to data from UW-Extension and the University of Wisconsin, agricultural processing is the main agricultural-related industry in Racine County, contributing an estimated \$496 million to the County's economy. The agricultural industry also provided about 3,255 jobs in Racine County in 2017.<sup>19</sup> This includes employment on farms and employment in other agricultural-related operations.

**Farm Employment**

Farm employment accounted for 716 jobs, or about 0.8 percent of the total number of jobs in Racine County in 2021. It should be noted that farm employment groups include sole proprietors, partners, or

<sup>19</sup> University of Wisconsin Extension, *Agriculture Works Hard for Racine County*, December 2021, [economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/files/2021/10/Racine.pdf](https://economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/files/2021/10/Racine.pdf).

**Table 2.9**  
**Age Distribution of the Population of Racine County and**  
**Southeastern Wisconsin: Census Years 2000-2020**

Age Group	Racine County							
	2000		2010		2020		Change 2000-2020	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent
Under 5	13,220	7.0	12,747	6.5	11,209	5.7	-2,011	-15.2
5-17	37,731	20.0	35,763	18.3	33,467	16.9	-4,264	-11.3
18-24	15,615	8.3	15,878	8.1	15,470	7.8	-145	-0.9
25-44	56,535	29.9	49,532	25.4	47,631	24.1	-8,904	-15.7
45-64	42,497	22.5	55,749	28.5	55,193	27.9	12,696	29.9
65 and Older	23,233	12.3	25,739	13.2	34,757	17.6	11,524	49.6
All Ages	188,831	100.0	195,408	100.0	197,727	100.0	8,896	4.7

Age Group	Southeastern Wisconsin							
	2000 <sup>a</sup>		2010		2020		Change 2000-2020	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent
Under 5	132,390	6.8	133,503	6.6	116,823	5.7	-15,567	-11.8
5-17	377,706	19.5	364,772	18.1	344,279	16.8	-33,427	-8.9
18-24	179,500	9.3	194,877	9.6	188,793	9.2	9,293	5.2
25-44	581,351	30.1	527,802	26.1	525,720	25.7	-55,631	-9.6
45-64	420,937	21.8	545,009	27.0	532,019	26.0	111,082	26.4
65 and Older	241,024	12.5	254,007	12.6	340,453	16.6	99,429	41.3
All Ages	1,932,908	100.0	2,019,970	100.0	2,048,087	100.0	115,179	6.0

<sup>a</sup> The total population by age for 2000 reported by the Census Bureau as indicated in this table differs slightly from the Census Bureau final total population count presented in Table 2.7.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

**Table 2.10**  
**Number of Jobs in Racine County and Southeastern Wisconsin: 1980-2020**

Year	Racine County			Southeastern Wisconsin		
	Number of Jobs	Change from Previous Time Period		Number of Jobs	Change from Previous Time Period	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
1980	81,000	16,400	25.4	945,900	161,000	20.5
1990	88,900	7,900	9.8	1,054,000	108,100	11.4
2000	93,800	4,900	5.5	1,209,800	155,800	14.8
2010	88,200	-5,600	-6.0	1,177,800	-32,000	-2.6
2020	91,600	3,400	3.9	1,247,500	69,700	5.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

hired laborers directly engaged in the production of agricultural commodities and excludes employment in some agricultural-related enterprises such as food processing plants, farm equipment and supply sales and services, and agricultural research and development laboratories. The number of jobs on farms has declined between 1980 and 2020 in the County, Region, and State. There was a 60 percent rate of decrease for the County from 1980 to 2020; this is only slightly higher of a decrease than the Region (56 percent decrease) and higher than the State (46 percent decrease).

As noted earlier in this chapter, in 2017, farming was the principal occupation of 43 percent of the farm operators in the County, while it was not the primary occupation for the other 57 percent of the farms. Also as indicated earlier, in 2017, about 183 farms, or about 30 percent, in the County had sales of agricultural products that accumulated less than \$2,500, while 135 farms, or about 22 percent, had sales of \$100,000 or more.

## **Projected Population, Household, and Employment Data**

In 2004, the Commission prepared a set of population, household, and employment projections for the Southeastern Wisconsin Region and its seven counties, looking ahead to the year 2035. As in prior projection efforts, the Commission prepared a range of projections: low, intermediate, and high. The intermediate projection is considered to be the most likely to be achieved and was used as the basis for the preparation of the year 2035 regional land use plan, and for the projections provided in this section. The high and low projections are intended to provide an indication of population, household, and employment levels that could conceivably be achieved under significantly higher and lower, but nevertheless plausible, growth scenarios. The Commission's projections were considered in the formulation of population, household, and employment projections under the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning program for Racine County.

### ***Population Projections***

During the preparation of the Racine County comprehensive plan, each of the cities, villages, and towns in Racine County chose a set of population projections for use in preparing the local components of the comprehensive plan. The community-level population projections that were used in the preparation of the County comprehensive plan sum to a total of 224,300 people for the County overall in 2035. This is between the Commission year 2035 intermediate population projection for the County (213,600 people) and the Commission year 2035 high population projection for the County (243,500 people).

The population for Racine County, under the comprehensive plan projection, would increase by 26,573 people, or 13.4 percent, over the 15-year projection period, from 197,727 people in 2020 to 224,300 people in 2035.

Population projections also indicate that changes may be expected in the age composition of the population in the coming decades. The large baby-boom generation is expected to have a significant influence on the future age structure. By 2030, all baby-boomers will be 65 years of age or older. Changes in the age composition of the population may be expected to have many impacts, ranging from impacts on housing needs to impacts on the available labor force, particularly as baby-boomers move into their retirement years.

### ***Household Projections***

During the preparation of the Racine County comprehensive plan, each of the cities, villages, and towns in Racine County also chose a set of household projections for use in preparing the local components of the comprehensive plan. The community-level household projections that were used in the preparation of the County comprehensive plan sum to a total of 88,200 households for the County overall in 2035. This figure is between the Commission year 2035 intermediate household projection for the County (84,000 households) and the Commission year 2035 high household projection for the County (95,700 households).

Commission projections indicate that the average size of households throughout the Region including Racine County may be expected to continue to decrease in the years ahead, though not as rapidly as in the past. In Racine County, the average household size is projected to decrease by 2 percent, from 2.52 people per household in 2010 to 2.46 in 2035. The decrease in household size is anticipated as a result of a number of factors, including a continued change in household types, as well as the projected increase in the older population age groups for which average household sizes tend to be smaller than for the total population. The proportion of the population living in group quarters, as opposed to the population living in households, is projected to increase slightly.

### ***Employment Projections***

During the preparation of the Racine County comprehensive plan, each of the cities, villages, and towns in Racine County chose an employment projection for use in preparing the local components of the comprehensive plan. The community-level employment projections that were used in the preparation of the County comprehensive plan sum to a total of 115,100 jobs for the County overall in 2035. This projection is essentially the same as the Commission year 2035 high employment projection for the County (114,700 jobs).

Total employment in the County is projected to increase from 91,600 jobs in 2020 to 115,100 jobs in 2035, a 26 percent increase. This is expected to occur due to a combination of factors, including a continued change in household types and the increase in the older population age groups.



## 2.6 EXISTING LAND USES

This section of the chapter presents an inventory of land uses and identifies existing transportation infrastructure, utilities, and community facilities to support urban and rural land uses. An understanding of the amount, type, and spatial distribution of urban, agricultural, and other rural land uses, as well as the historic conversion of rural lands to urban use, is essential to the preparation of a farmland preservation plan.

### **Historical and Existing Land Uses**

The Regional Planning Commission utilizes an urban growth analysis and a land use inventory to monitor urban growth and development in the Region. The urban growth analysis delineates concentrations of urban development and depicts the urbanization of the Region over the past 150 years. The Commission land use inventory places all land and water areas in the Region into detailed land use categories, providing a basis for analyzing specific urban and non-urban land uses. Both the urban growth analysis and the land use inventory for the Region have been updated to the year 2010 under the continuing regional planning program.

### ***Historical Urban Growth***

The historical urban development of Racine County from 1850 to 2010 is shown on Map 2.14. Prior to 1900, urban development was largely confined to the City of Racine and the smaller settlement communities of Burlington, Rochester, Union Grove, and Waterford. The period from 1900 to 1950 saw expansion of urban development in the Cities of Burlington and Racine and around the County's inland lakes. The period from 1950 to 2000 saw significant urban growth adjacent to existing urban areas, along with growth in the form of small, isolated enclaves scattered throughout the County. The period from 2000 to 2010 saw a continuation of this pattern, with considerable development occurring within and adjacent to existing urban centers, along with some additional development in scattered enclaves in outlying areas.

Despite significant urbanization, large tracts of agricultural and other open space and environmentally sensitive lands remain intact, relatively free of encroachment by urban development, particularly in portions of the County west of IH 94. Racine County has the opportunity to continue to plan for widespread preservation of these agricultural and other open space and environmentally sensitive lands.

### ***Existing Land Uses***

#### Urban Land Uses

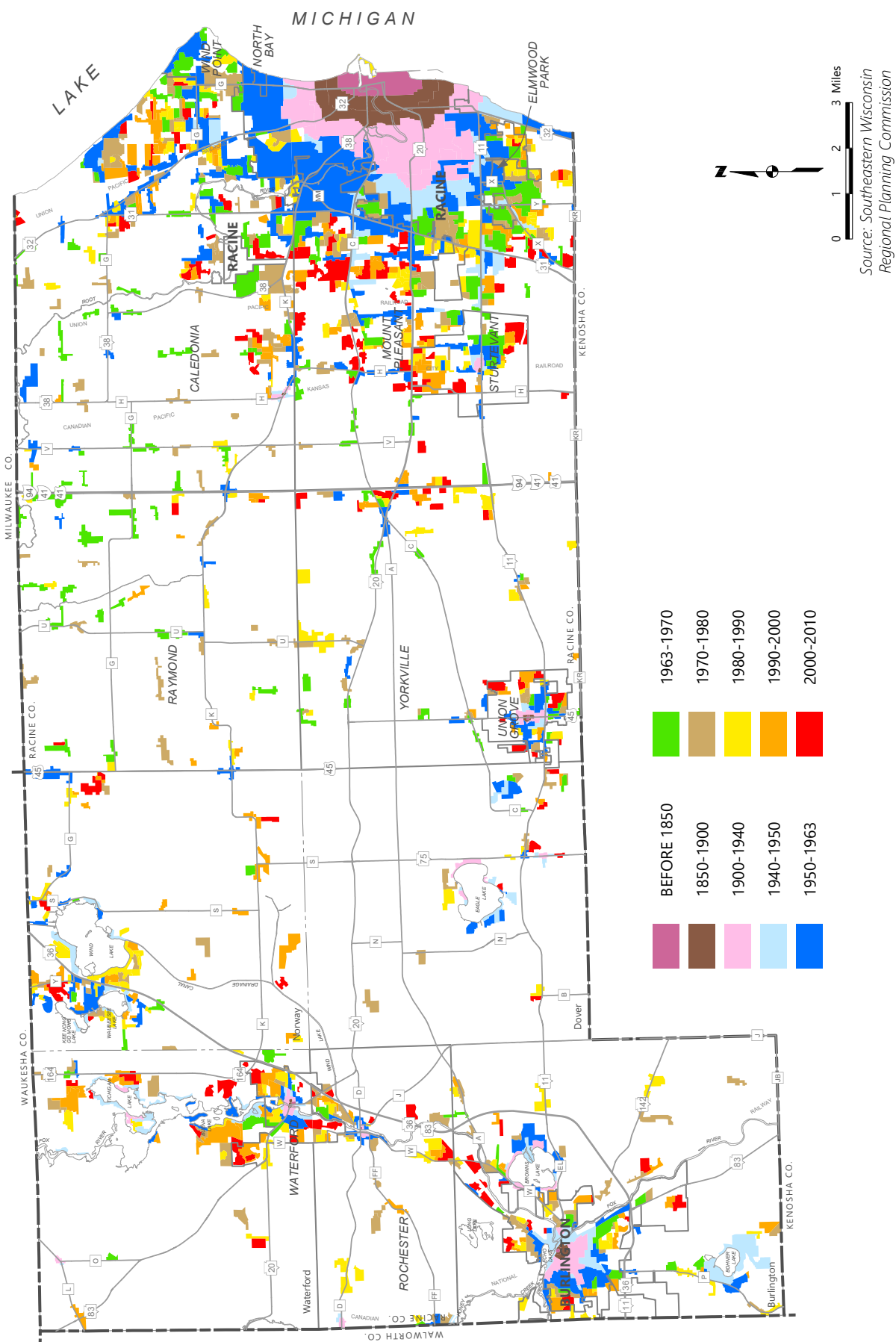
Land uses in Racine County in 2020 are set forth on Map 2.15 and in Table 2.11. In 2020, urban land uses—consisting of residential, commercial, industrial, governmental, and institutional, recreational, and transportation, communication, and utility uses—encompassed about 86 square miles, or 25 percent of the total area of the County. Residential land comprised the largest urban land use category, encompassing 43.5 square miles, or about 51 percent of all urban land use and 13 percent of the total area of the County.

Land uses categorized as transportation, communications, and utilities constituted the second largest urban land use category in 2020, encompassing about 23.5 square miles, or about 27 percent of all urban land and about 7 percent of the total area of the County. Streets and highways occupied about 20.5 square miles, or just over 87 percent of this category. Major arterial highways serving the County include, IH 94/USH 41, which traverses the County in a north-south direction; US Highway 45; and State Trunk Highways 11, 20, 31, 32, 36, 38, 75, 83, 142 and 164. Other uses in the transportation, communications, and utilities category within the County include railway freight service lines—operated by the Union Pacific Railroad, Canadian National Railway, and Canadian Pacific Railroad—and the John H. Batten and Burlington Municipal Airports.

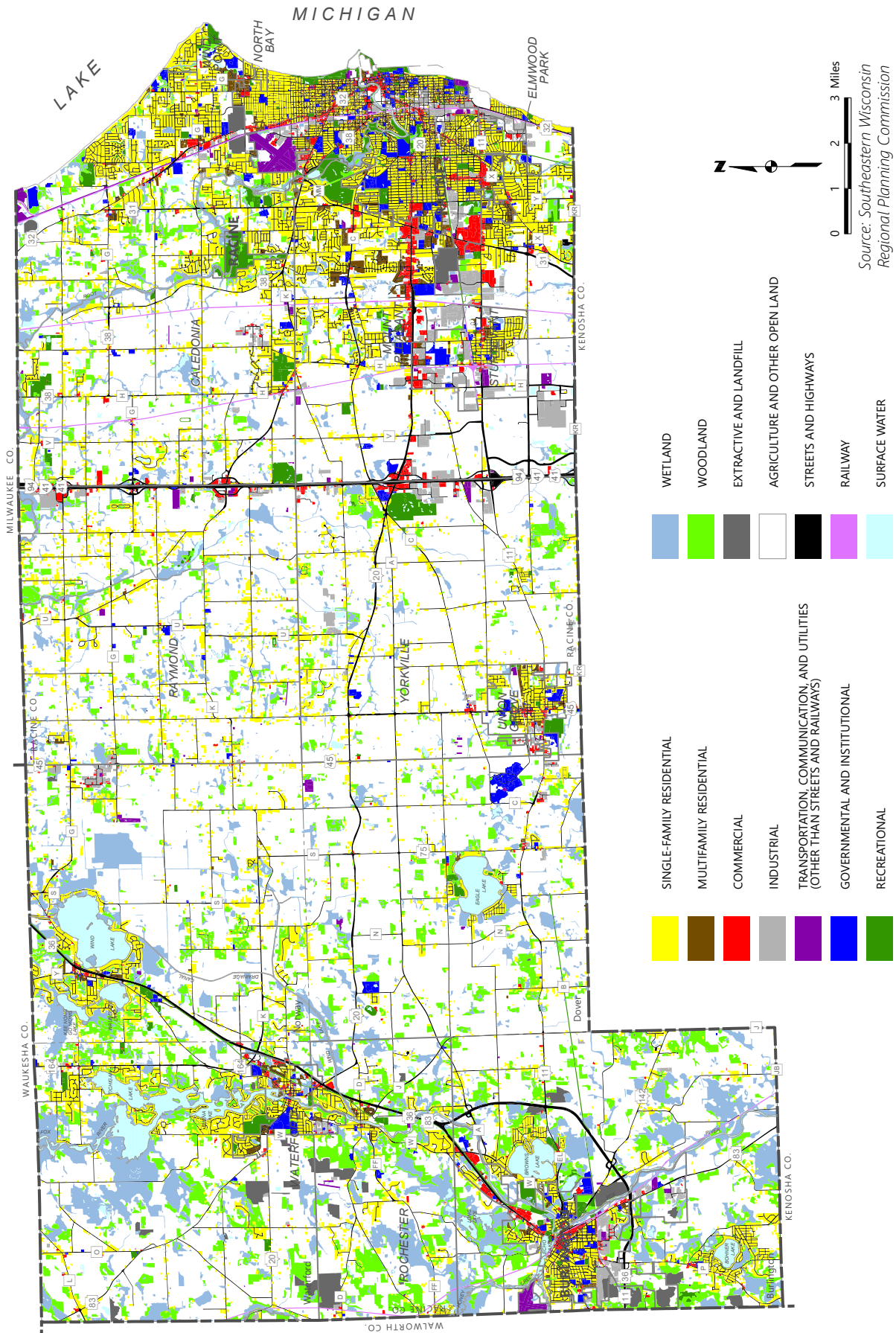
Recreational land uses constituted the third largest urban land use category within the County in 2020, encompassing about 5.3 square miles, or about 6 percent of all urban land and about 2 percent of the total area of the County. These figures include only those areas that are developed for intensive recreational use, such as tennis courts, baseball diamonds, playfields, golf courses, and accessory uses. Areas used for passive recreational purposes, such as hiking and nature study, are generally designated as open lands or woodlands.



## Map 2.14



**Map 2.15**  
**Generalized Land Use in Racine County: 2020**



**Table 2.11**  
**Land Uses in Racine County: 2020**

Land Use Category	Square Miles	Percent of Subtotal	Percent of County
Urban <sup>a</sup>			
Single-Family Residential	40.5	47.1	11.9
Multifamily Residential <sup>b</sup>	3.0	3.5	0.9
Commercial	3.9	4.5	1.1
Industrial	5.6	6.5	1.6
Government and Institutional	4.2	4.9	1.2
Recreational	5.3	6.2	1.6
Transportation, Communications, and Utilities	23.5	27.3	6.9
Urban Subtotal	86.0	100.0	25.2
Rural			
Agricultural	166.0	65.2	48.7
Woodland	23.1	9.1	6.8
Nonfarmed Wetlands	31.0	12.2	9.1
Farmed Wetlands	2.8	1.1	0.8
Water	9.5	3.7	2.8
Landfill and Extractive	2.8	1.1	0.8
Other Open Lands	19.4	7.6	5.7
Rural Subtotal	254.6	100.0	74.8
Total	340.6	--	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Parking lots are included with the associated use.

<sup>b</sup> Includes two-family residential.

Source: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

## Rural Land Uses

Rural land uses consisting of agricultural lands, wetlands, woodlands, surface water, landfill and extractive, and other open lands encompassed about 255 square miles, or about 75 percent of the total area of the County. Agriculture was the largest single land use in the County, accounting for about 169 square miles (including “farmed wetlands”), or about 50 percent of the area of the County, in 2020.

## Transportation

This section presents inventories of key transportation facilities in Racine County that are of particular importance to the agricultural industry. Much of the existing transportation facilities and services inventory information for Racine County was derived from VISION 2050. Key facilities include arterial streets and highways, public transportation, and rail facilities, which are described below.

### Streets and Highways

The street and highway system serves several important functions, including providing for the movement of through vehicular traffic; access of vehicular traffic to abutting land uses; movement of pedestrian and bicycle traffic; and location for utilities and stormwater drainage facilities. Street and highway system design is based on a functional grouping or classification of streets and highways, based on the primary function served, such as traffic movement or land access. The three functional classifications of streets and highways are: 1) arterial streets; 2) collector streets; and 3) land access streets. The arterial street and highway system is intended to provide a high degree of travel mobility, serving the through movement of traffic between and through urban areas. Racine County is well served by an extensive system of State, County, and local trunk highways consisting of 462 miles within Racine County. The primary function of land access streets is to provide access to abutting property. Collector streets are intended to serve primarily as connections between the arterial street system and the land access streets. Farmers rely on the street and highway system, including County and town roads, to receive many of the products they use in farming activities, to transport raw milk from dairy farms for processing and distribution, and to transport crops and other products produced on the farm to processing facilities and/or markets.

## **Public Transportation**

General public transportation service in Racine County includes the following:

- Scheduled intercity passenger train service serving Racine County provided by Amtrak over Canadian Pacific Railway trackage
- The Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Commuter Bus, operated by Wisconsin Coach Lines (WCL)/Coach USA
- Local public transit provided by the Belle Urban System (BUS/RIDE) in the City of Racine and surrounding area

Special public transportation service in Racine County includes paratransit service for disabled residents in the City of Racine, door-to-door service for elderly and disabled residents in the County, and fixed-route, fixed-schedule service to developmentally disabled individuals in the County. All of the services are administered by the Racine County Human Services Department.

## **Rail Freight Services**

Three railway companies provide active mainline rail freight service within Racine County. The Union Pacific (UP) Railroad provided freight service over two parallel segments emanating from Chicago, and traversing the eastern tier of communities in a north-south direction. The Canadian Pacific (CP) Rail System, formerly known as the Soo Line, also provided freight service over a line emanating from Chicago and traversing the entire County east of IH 94 in a north-south direction. In addition, a short spur line served industries east of the main CP Rail line, and branch line connections to the west served customers in the Village of Union Grove. The Canadian National (CN) Railway, formerly the Wisconsin Central, Ltd., provided freight service over a north-south main line, traversing the western edge of the County.

## **Utilities**

Development in Racine County is dependent on public and private utilities that provide residents and businesses with electric power, natural gas, water, sewage disposal, and solid waste management facilities and services. This section inventories utilities in Racine County, with additional detailed information provided in Chapter 5 of the Racine County comprehensive plan.

## **Public Sanitary Sewer Service**

Public sanitary sewer service allows for relatively dense residential, commercial, and industrial uses, which characterize urban areas. These areas are also generally served by a municipal water utility or, in some cases, a private water supply system. The area of Racine County that was served by public sanitary sewer service in 2010 is shown on Map 2.16. About 36,487 acres (57 square miles), or 17 percent of the total area of the County, were served by public sanitary sewers in 2010. In 2010, about 90 percent of the Racine County population was served by public sanitary sewers. Nearly all of the sewered area in the County is tributary to one of seven public sewage treatment facilities located within the County, the locations of which are also shown on Map 2.16. The Caddy Vista area and the portion of the WE Energies power plant site, both located in the Village of Caledonia, are tributary to the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District sewerage system.

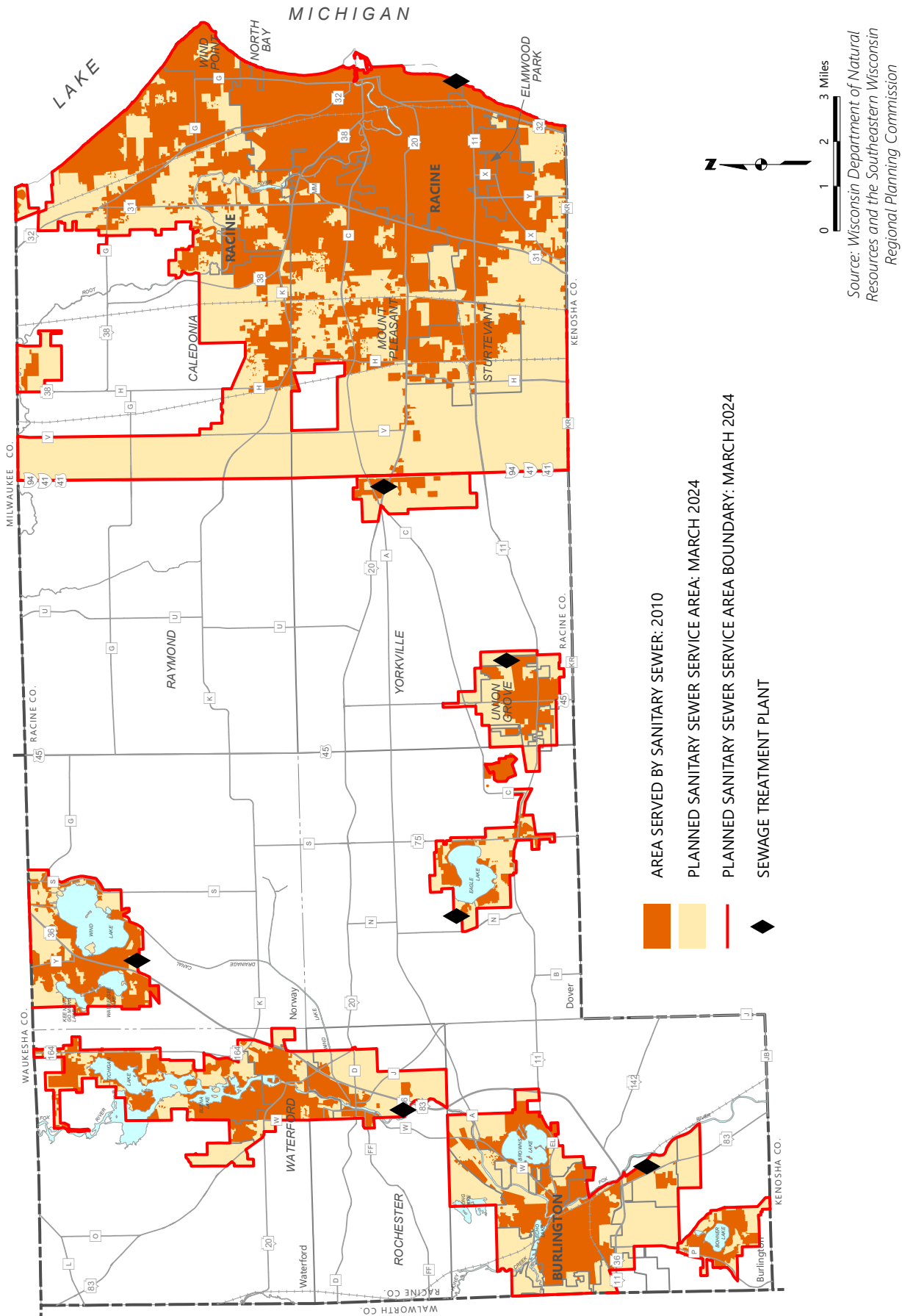
Also shown on Map 2.16 are the boundaries of planned sanitary sewer service areas in Racine County. Those boundaries are established in local sanitary sewer service area plans, which are long-range plans intended to guide the provision of sanitary sewer service over an approximately 20-year period. Sanitary sewer service area plans comprise a component of the regional water quality management plan, which is described later in this chapter. As of 2022, the planned sanitary sewer service areas outside of areas currently served by sanitary sewers in Racine County encompassed approximately 43,696 acres (68 square miles), or 20 percent of the total area of the County.

## **Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment**

Sewage treatment and disposal in areas of the County not served by public sanitary sewer service is provided through private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS), for the most part serving individual landowners. There are a number of types of such systems, including, but not limited to, conventional soil absorption systems, in-ground pressure systems, mound systems, and holding tanks. Racine County regulates POWTS throughout the County in accordance with Chapter Comm 83 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*.



**Map 2.16**  
**Planned Sanitary Sewer Service Areas and Areas Served by Sewer in Racine County**





## ***Water Supply***

Map 5.3 in Chapter 5 of the County comprehensive plan shows areas of existing development within Racine County served by public water utilities. Twelve municipal water supply systems provide water supply to about 38 square miles, or about 11 percent of the area of Racine County. These systems serve a population of about 147,000 people, or about 76 percent of the residential population in Racine County in 2005. Eight of the municipal water supply systems in Racine County rely on Lake Michigan as the source of supply, either directly or indirectly through wholesale or retail purchase, and the remainder relies on groundwater as the source of supply. The City of Racine Water and Wastewater Utility, which owns and operates a water treatment plant with three intakes on Lake Michigan, is the largest supplier of treated water in Racine County and provides retail and wholesale water to several municipal water systems within the County. Additionally, the City of Oak Creek Water and Sewer Utility, located in Milwaukee County, provides treated Lake Michigan water to portions of the Village of Caledonia on a wholesale basis.

In addition to the 12 municipal water supply systems, there was one other public water supply system in Racine County—the system operated in the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Southern Wisconsin Center, which supplies public water to approximately 950 residents.

The regional water supply plan includes recommended generalized water supply service areas for public water supply systems in the Southeastern Wisconsin Region, including Racine County. The recommended water supply service areas in Racine County are shown on Map 2.17. The plan identifies certain areas of existing urban development that are currently served by private onsite wells that could potentially be served by new water supply systems (see “New Systems” on Map 2.17). Service by a municipal water supply system in such areas is envisioned only if a local demonstrated need were to arise based upon groundwater quality or quantity issues, and if a local initiative were then undertaken to implement a municipal system. In the absence of such a need and initiative, the residents and businesses in these areas would be expected to continue to rely on private wells. The water supply plan is described later in this chapter.

In addition to public water supply systems, a number of smaller “private community” water supply systems operate in Racine County. Such systems served an estimated population of about 1,600 people in the County in 2005—primarily in residential subdivisions, apartments, and condominiums. The areas of the County served by private community water supply systems are shown on Map 5.4 in Chapter 5 of the County comprehensive plan.

Existing development not served by a municipal or private community water supply system, including most farms, relies for the most part on individual private wells for water supply.

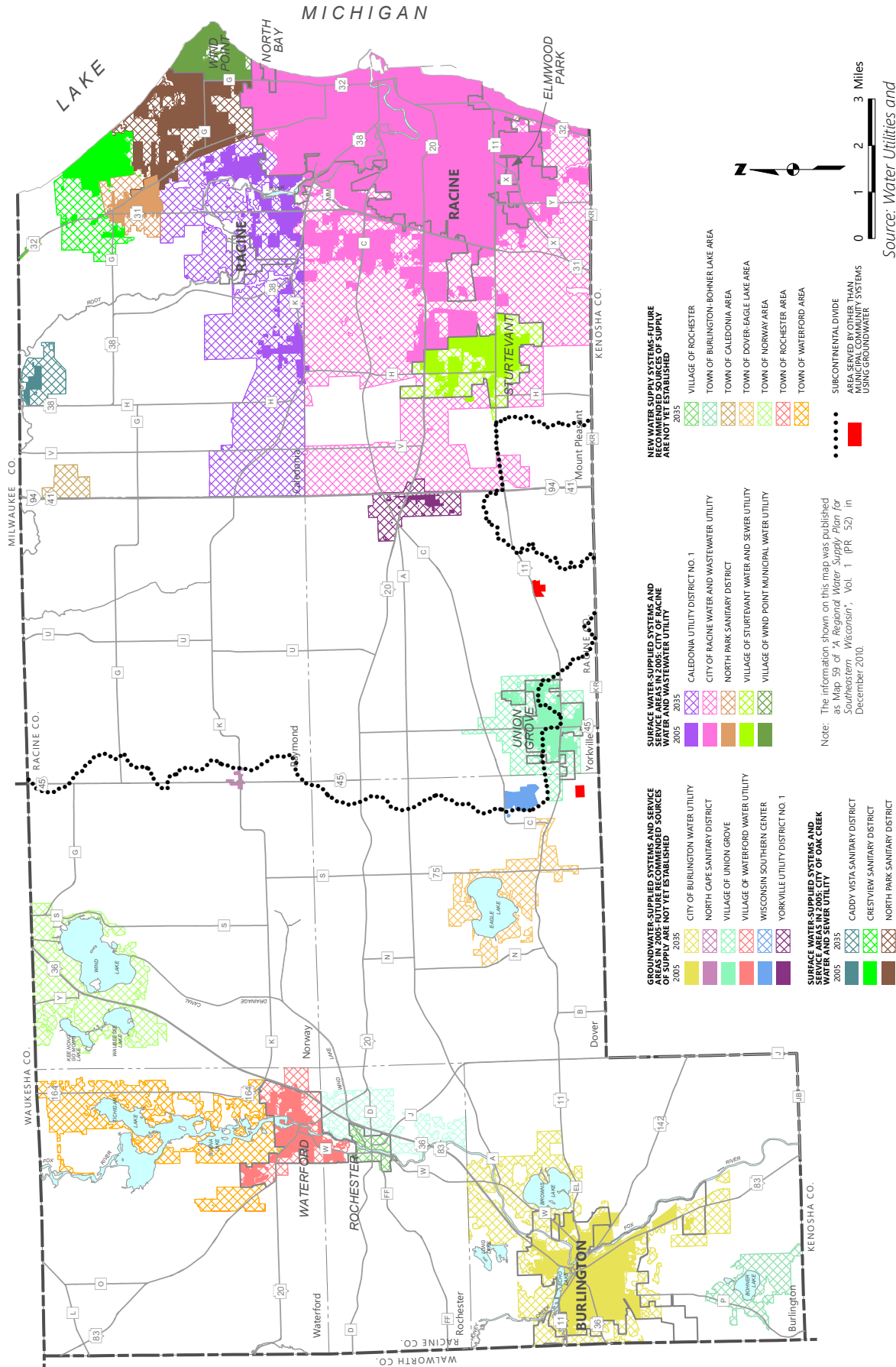
## ***Stormwater Management Facilities***

Through a variety of planning and engineering methods, stormwater management facilities are designed to convey runoff, remove pollutants, and control flow rates. These facilities range from conventional curb and gutter storm sewers, catch basins, inlets, and underground storage facilities to systems such as ditches and swales. Within Racine County, the Cities of Burlington and Racine and the Village of North Bay primarily rely on a curb and gutter storm sewer system for stormwater drainage. The Villages of Caledonia, Elmwood Park, Mt. Pleasant, Rochester, Sturtevant, Union Grove, Waterford, and Yorkville, and the urban areas of the Towns of Dover, Waterford, and Norway rely on a combination of curb and gutter systems and roadside swales and ditches for stormwater drainage. Stormwater drainage in the rural areas of the aforementioned Towns, as well as in the Towns of Burlington, Dover, Norway, and Waterford is generally provided by swales, roadside ditches, and natural watercourses.

Other engineered stormwater management facilities used in both urban and rural areas of the County include detention, retention, and infiltration basins. These facilities are specifically designed to capture, store, and then slowly release stormwater runoff downstream, or allow for infiltration, following rainstorms. In addition to the foregoing stormwater management facilities, municipalities, developers, and landowners may employ more innovative and low-impact design approaches including, but not limited to, the use of porous pavement surfaces and rain gardens.

## Map 2.17

### Areas Recommended to be Served by Public Water Utilities in Racine County: 2035



Source: Water Utilities and  
the Southeastern Wisconsin  
Regional Planning Commission

### ***Electric Power Service***

Racine County is provided with electric power service by We Energies. Electric power service is available on demand throughout the County and does not constitute a constraint on the location or intensity of urban development in the County. There are no electric power generation facilities located within the County. An independent company, American Transmission Company, owns, maintains, and operates the major transmission facilities within Racine County. The general location of the major electrical transmission lines are shown on Map 5.5 of the County comprehensive plan.

### ***Natural Gas Service***

We Energies-Gas Operations provide and distribute natural gas service in Racine County. ANR Pipeline provides the main gas supply, which owns main and branch gas pipelines in Racine County and the surrounding area. The major natural gas pipelines are shown on Map 5.5 of the County comprehensive plan. The first natural gas-based combustion turbine power plant in the WE Energies system, Paris Generating Station, came on line in 1995 and is located in the Village of Union Grove. The plant is a peak-load plant used during hours of high demand.

### ***Renewable Energy Service***

There are currently no large scale renewable energy facilities located in Racine County. However, a roughly 2,000-panel solar project was announced in 2023, proposed to be located in the Village of Mt. Pleasant.

We Energies announced the potential new partnership with a communications equipment manufacturer that is located in the Village and it is estimated that the project will generate enough energy to power about 300 homes. The facilities will be located on the manufacturer's property and any energy that the manufacturer does not use would go into the State's power grid. According to WE Energies, it is anticipated that annual energy production from this solar project would offset more than 1,200 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, equivalent to taking 260 cars off the roads or planting 20,000 trees.

On a smaller scale, the Racine Dominican Ministries Eco-Justice Center, located in the Village of Caledonia, installed a 55-panel 11-kilowatt solar electric photovoltaic (PV) system which was constructed using incentives from WE Energies and Focus On Energy. The purpose of the system is to generate energy for the facilities as well as highlight the Eco-Justice Center's dedication to demonstrating simple living and conservative energy use.

Lastly, the Racine County Clean Energy Initiative educates and assists residents on how to receive tax credits and other incentives via the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for pursuing clean energy solutions, such as battery storage and rooftop solar installation, geothermal heating installation, and electric vehicle purchase and charger installation, as well as reducing emissions.

### ***Solid Waste Management Facilities***

Landfills and recycling centers are the primary methods of managing solid wastes generated in Racine County. There is one active, licensed, privately-owned landfill in the County in the Village of Caledonia, which is also licensed to accept fly ash. While the majority of communities provide curbside pick-up service through contract with private haulers, residents in certain communities may transport their solid waste and recyclables to local drop-off sites.

There is no consolidated countywide household hazardous waste drop-off program. However, a community may establish its own program for handling and disposing such items.

### ***Community Facilities and Services***

Development in Racine County is also dependent on various types of community facilities that provide residents and businesses with administrative, educational, fire and police protection, health, and other services. This section inventories community facilities and services in Racine County with additional detailed information provided in Chapter 5 of the County comprehensive plan.

### ***Health Care Facilities***

There were a number of hospitals and medical centers in Racine County offering a full range of medical services, including but not limited to: Ascension All Saints Hospital – Spring Street Campus and Ascension All Saints – Wisconsin Avenue, both located in the City of Racine; Aurora Health Center in the City of Racine; Aurora Medical Center and Aurora Health Center, both located in the Village of Mt. Pleasant; and Aurora Medical Center – Burlington, located in the City of Burlington.

### ***Government and Public Institutional Centers***

Among the government administration and public institutional buildings in the County are 17 municipal halls, five local public libraries, seven County offices, six State offices, and 11 U.S. post offices. Table 5.7 of the County comprehensive plan indicates the name and location of each government and public institutional building in the County.

### ***Police Services***

In Racine County in 2007, there were 10 municipal police department facilities and two Racine County Sheriff's Department facilities. Table 5.8 of the County comprehensive plan lists the number of full- and part-time officers employed by each municipal police department and the County Sheriff's Department. The Villages of Elmwood Park and North Bay and the Village of Yorkville also have appointed constables who provide law enforcement and related services consistent with municipal codes.

### ***Fire Protection Services***

A total of 14 fire departments, including 11 public departments and three private fire companies, serve the County. Map 5.10 of the County comprehensive plan shows the locations of 27 fire department facilities and the fire protection service area of each of the 14 departments in the County. As indicated on Table 5.9 of the County comprehensive plan, the City of Racine and the Villages of Caledonia and Mt. Pleasant rely heavily on full-time firefighter/emergency medical technicians (EMTs). The Villages of Elmwood Park and Wind Point contract with the City of Racine for firefighter/EMT services. The Village of North Bay contracts with the Village of Caledonia for firefighter/EMT services. The City of Burlington, the remaining Villages, and all of the Towns primarily rely on on-call firefighters and EMTs.

### ***Emergency Medical Services***

There are 12 emergency medical service (EMS) zones in the County. As further indicated on Table 5.9 of the County comprehensive plan, 11 fire departments provide both fire protection and emergency medical services and four private ambulance companies respond to emergency medical calls in service areas throughout the County.

### ***Public and Private Schools***

Most of Racine County was served by three PK-12 school districts (Burlington Area, Muskego/Norway, and Racine Unified) and two 9-12 union high school districts (U.H.S.) (Union Grove and Waterford). The Union Grove U.H.S. District includes four feeder elementary school districts: Kansasville; Raymond; Union Grove; and Yorkville. The Waterford U.H.S. District includes four feeder elementary school districts: Drought J7; North Cape; Washington-Caldwell; and Waterford. In addition, a very small area of the Town of Dover is served by the Central/Westosha U.H.S. District (largely in Kenosha County) and includes the feeder elementary school district of Brighton. These districts include 56 public elementary, middle, and high school facilities in the County.

### ***Technical College Facilities***

Racine County is also home to three technical college facilities, all operated by Gateway Technical College. Gateway Technical College campuses are located in the Cities of Burlington and Racine and the Village of Sturtevant. The Racine campus specializes in cosmetology, auto shop and machine tool technology, engineering, health information technology, and nursing; the Burlington campus is designed to teach health care professionals as well as collaborate with Burlington High School and Union Grove High School through a program for students to earn college credits; the Center for Advanced Technology and Innovation (CATI) Resource Center in Sturtevant offers classes in supervisory management, accounting, and entrepreneurship.

### ***Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities***

The demand for nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Racine County may be expected to increase, particularly with the aging of the baby-boom population, in the years ahead. In 2020, the number of people 65 years of age and over in the County was about 34,757, representing about 18 percent of the total County population. Regional Planning Commission projections indicate that by 2050, the population 65 years of age and over may be expected to increase to about 52,169 people, representing about 23 percent of the projected population. In 2023, there were six nursing homes providing skilled nursing care and 41 licensed assisted living facilities in Racine County.

## **2.7 EXISTING PLANS AND PROGRAMS AFFECTING FARMLAND PRESERVATION**

The farmland preservation plan for Racine County is intended, in part, to review past agricultural/farmland preservation planning efforts and update those plans as necessary to comply with the State farmland preservation planning law enacted in 2009, and to reflect changes that have occurred since the previous County farmland preservation plan was adopted in 2013 for the design year 2035. This plan also takes into consideration areawide and local planning recommendations as those plans affect or relate to agricultural and other natural resource preservation in Racine County. Accordingly, an important step in the planning process was a review of the existing framework of areawide and local plans, summarized below.

### **Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan**

Prime agricultural lands in Racine County were identified as part of the previous Racine County farmland preservation plan,<sup>20</sup> which was adopted by the Racine County Board in 2013. The 2013 farmland preservation plan is shown on Map 2.18. The County farmland preservation plan was certified by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. The plan qualifies eligible owners of farmland in Racine County to apply for Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program tax credits.

### **Land Use and Comprehensive Plans**

#### ***Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan***

A regional land use plan<sup>21</sup> for the year 2035 was adopted by the Regional Planning Commission in 2006 and endorsed by the Racine County Board in 2007. The regional plan sets forth the fundamental concepts that are recommended to guide the development of the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin Region and was used as a basis for the development of the County comprehensive plan. A regional transportation system plan for the year 2035 was adopted by the Regional Planning Commission in 2006 and endorsed by the Racine County Board in 2007. In 2017, the Commission adopted VISION 2050: A Long Range Land Use and Transportation Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin. VISION 2050 recommends:

- Encouraging sustainable and cost-effective growth
- Preserving the Region's most productive farmland and primary environmental corridors, which encompass the best remaining features of the Region's natural landscape
- Encouraging more compact development, ranging from high-density transit-oriented development to traditional neighborhoods with homes within walking distance of parks, schools, and businesses
- Significantly improving and expanding public transit, including adding rapid transit and commuter rail, and improving and expanding local and express transit services to support compact growth and enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of the Region
- Enhancing the Region's bicycle and pedestrian network to improve access to activity centers, neighborhoods, and other destinations

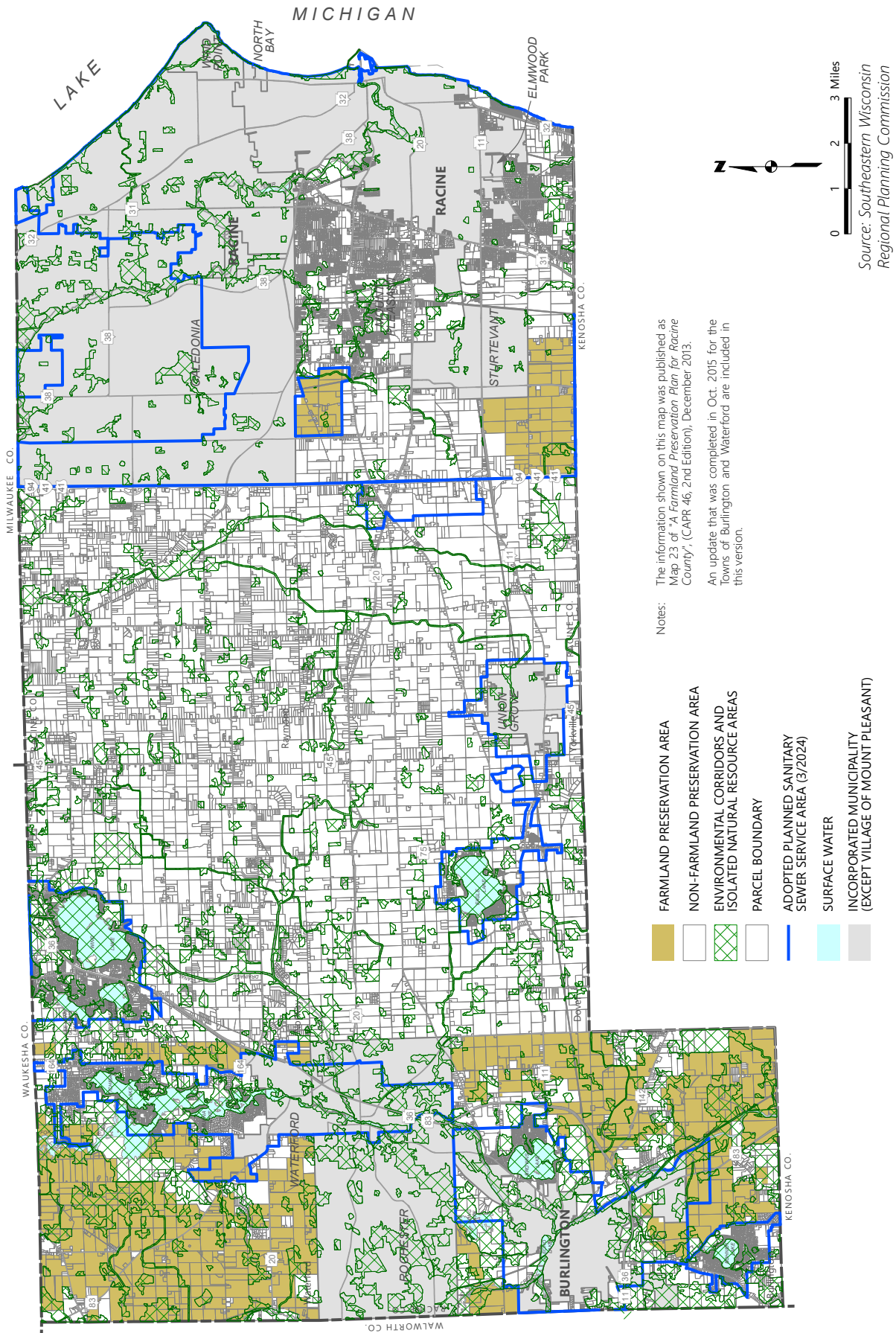
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<sup>20</sup> Documented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Community Assistance Planning Report No. 46 (2nd Edition)*, A Farmland Preservation Plan for Racine County, Wisconsin, December 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Documented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Report No. 48*, A Regional Land Use Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2035, June 2006.



**Map 2.18**  
**Farmland Preservation Areas in Racine County: 2035**



- Keeping existing major streets in a state of good repair and efficiently using the capacity of existing streets and highways
- Strategically adding capacity on high congested roadways, incorporating “complete streets” roadway design concepts to provide safe and convenient travel for all, and addressing key issues related to moving goods into and through the Region

Of particular importance to the farmland preservation plan are the VISION 2050 recommendations related to arterial streets and highways because those facilities are heavily relied on by farmers in transporting their products to markets. The plan includes recommendations for functional improvements to the arterial street and highway system as well as recommendations regarding which unit of government should have jurisdiction over each arterial street and highway, with responsibility for maintaining and improving the facility. Map 2.19 presents the arterial street and highway system recommended for Racine County under the VISION 2050. Like all regional plans, VISION 2050 is advisory and depends upon the willingness and ability of State, county, and local governments for implementation.

### ***Racine County Multi-Jurisdictional and Local Comprehensive Plans***

Racine County and all of the cities, villages, and towns in the County completed a multi-jurisdictional County comprehensive plan in 2009.<sup>22</sup> As part of the planning process, the County and local governments identified existing and future land uses and important natural resources that should be preserved to maintain the high quality of life in Racine County. The desired land use pattern as adopted by all 17 local units of government and the Racine County Board of Supervisors is reflected on Map 2.20.

The multi-jurisdictional County comprehensive plan was prepared to comply with the requirements of Wisconsin’s comprehensive planning law, which took effect in 1999. The law, set forth in Section 66.1001 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, requires County and local governments that enforce zoning, subdivision, or official mapping ordinances to have an adopted comprehensive plan. The law requires nine plan elements to be included as part of the comprehensive plan: an issues and opportunities element; agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element; land use element; housing element; transportation element; utilities and community facilities element; economic development element; intergovernmental cooperation element; and implementation element. The land use element includes the land use plan map for Racine County for the design year 2035, as shown on Map 2.20.

Essentially, Racine County and participating local communities envision urban development to continue to occur mostly within planned urban (sanitary) service areas. The County and local communities also desire the preservation of agricultural resources, environmentally sensitive areas, and rural character. Many of the agricultural, natural, and cultural resource goals and objectives identified in Chapter 10 of the County comprehensive plan address these desires and are included in Chapter 3 of this farmland preservation plan report.

### **Park and Open Space Plans**

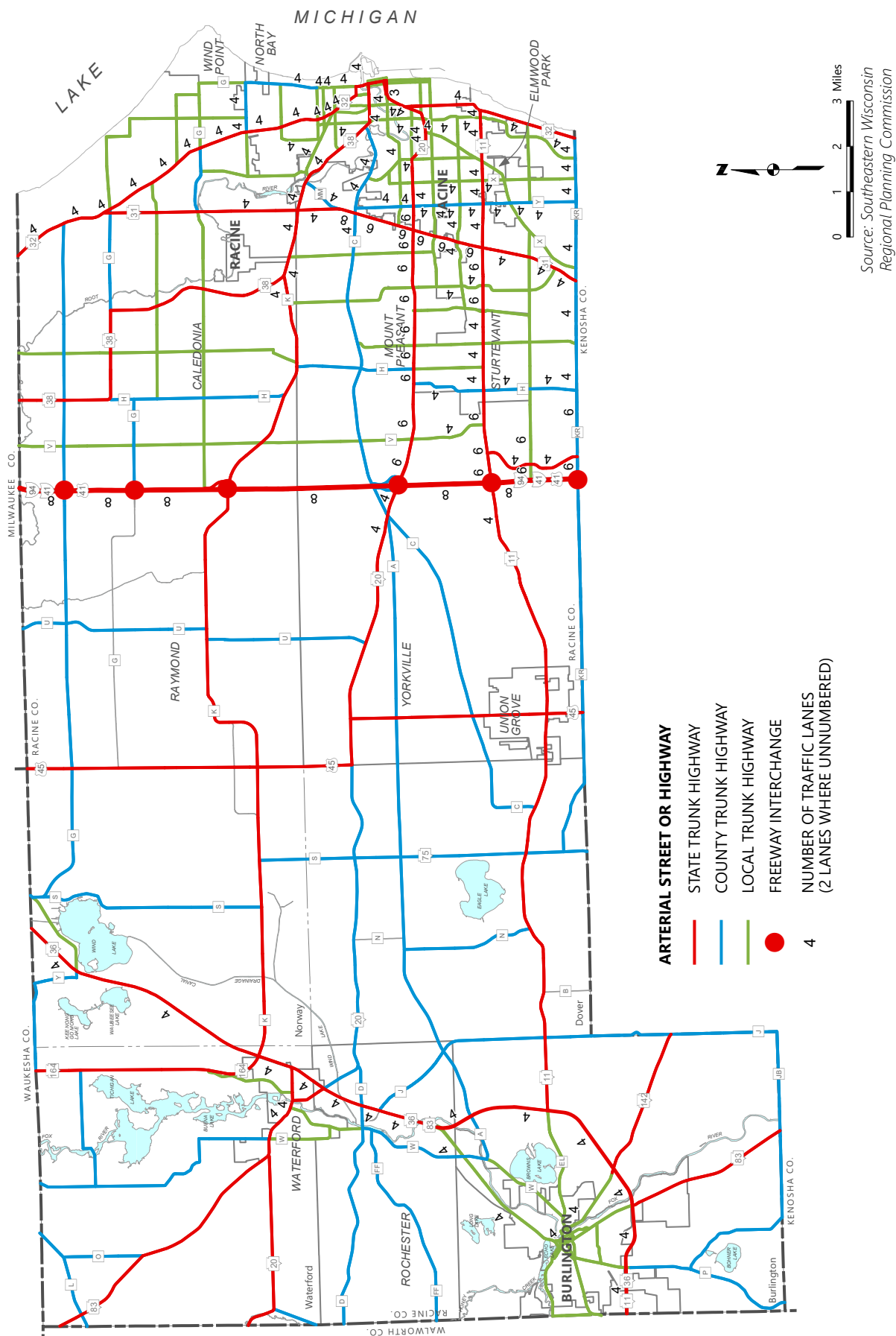
#### ***Racine County Park and Open Space Plan***

Racine County first adopted a county park and open space plan in 1989. That plan had a design year of 2000. In 2001, the County adopted a second-edition plan that looked ahead to the year 2020. An update to the County park and open space plan with a design year of 2035 was completed in 2012.<sup>23</sup> The County park and open space plan consists of an open space preservation element and an outdoor recreation element and is intended to maintain County eligibility to apply for and receive Federal and State aids in partial support of the acquisition and development of park and open space sites and facilities. The open space preservation element of the plan is particularly relevant to the farmland preservation plan update as

<sup>22</sup> Documented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Community Assistance Planning Report No. 301, A Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Racine County: 2035*. In addition, the City of Racine prepared a comprehensive plan report that was drawn from the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan, focusing on aspects of the multi-jurisdictional plan that pertain to the City. That plan report is published as *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Community Assistance Planning Report No. 305, A Comprehensive Plan for the City of Racine: 2035*.

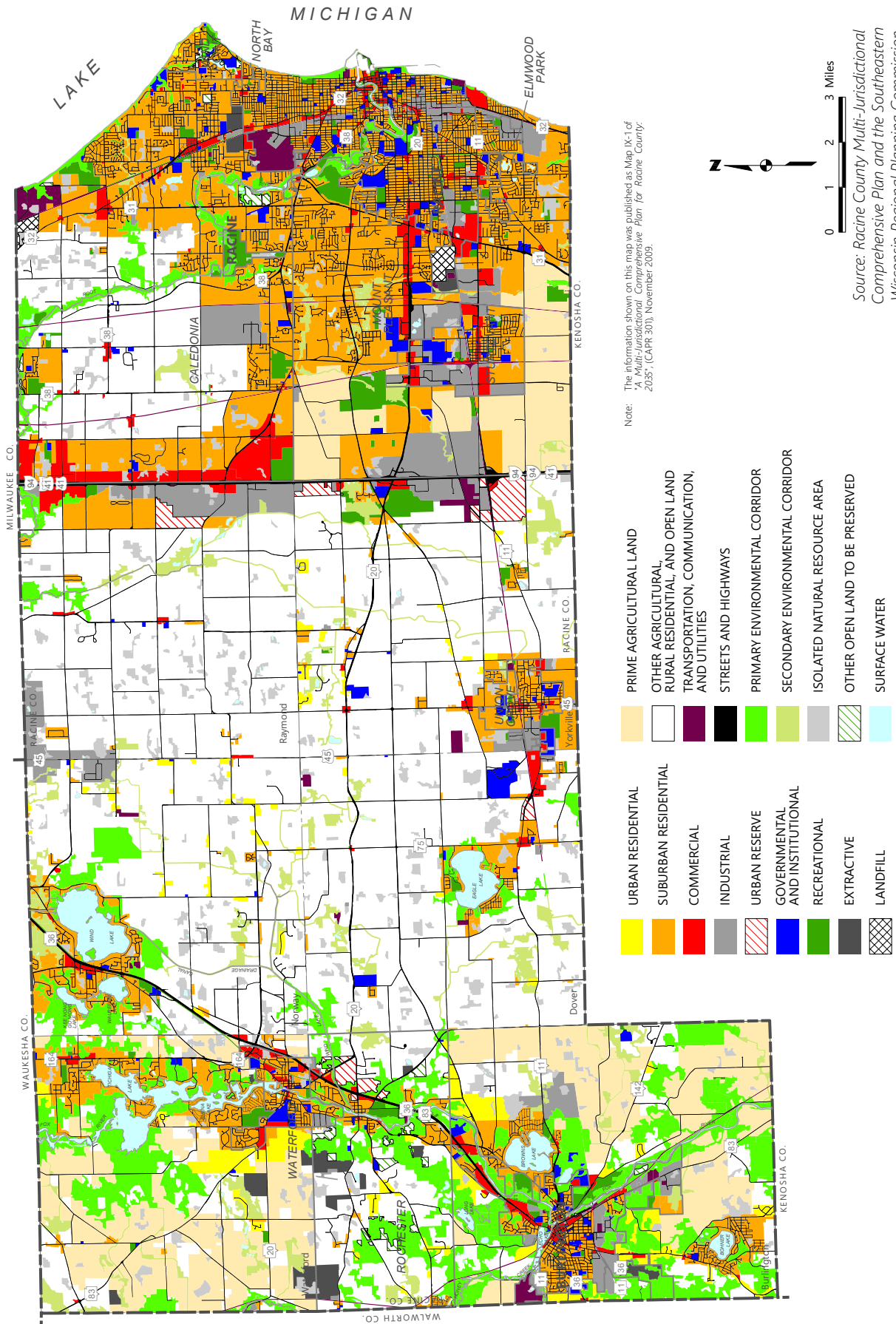
<sup>23</sup> The County park and open space plan is documented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Community Assistance Planning Report No. 134 (3rd Edition), A Park and Open Space Plan for Racine County*.

**Map 2.19**  
**Jurisdictional Highway System Plan for Racine County Recommended for VISION 2050 Regional Transportation System Plan**





**Map 2.20**  
**Planned Land Use in Racine County: 2035**



far as it includes specific recommendations for the preservation of environmental corridors, isolated natural resource areas, and other open space lands in the County.

### ***City, Village, and Town Park and Open Space Plans***

Eleven communities in Racine County, including two cities, six villages, and three towns, have adopted park and open space plans. Such plans are intended to guide the preservation, acquisition, and development of land for park, outdoor recreation, and related open space purposes as needed to satisfy the recreational needs of local residents. These plans typically include recommendations for the provision of park sites, related facilities, and recreational trails and the preservation of open space sites within the community. Each plan is intended to further establish or maintain eligibility for Federal and State park and open space grants.

### ***Regional Natural Areas Plan***

The regional natural areas plan identifies the most significant remaining natural areas, critical species habitats, geological sites, and archaeological sites in the Region.<sup>24</sup> These sites were described earlier in this chapter (see Map 2.10). The plan recommends which sites should be considered for public or private protective ownership and recommends which sites should be protected, as far as it is possible, through zoning and other regulatory means without protective ownership. The County park plan incorporates the recommendations of the regional natural areas plan (see Tables 2.6, 2.7, and 2.8 of the County park and open space plan).

### ***Regional Water Quality and Supply Plans***

#### ***Regional Water Quality Management Plan***

In 1979, the Regional Planning Commission completed and adopted a regional water quality management plan for southeastern Wisconsin.<sup>25</sup> The plan consists of the following five major elements: land use; point source pollution abatement; nonpoint source pollution abatement; sludge management; and water quality monitoring. In 1995, the Commission updated the content and documented the implementation status of the regional water quality management plan.<sup>26</sup> In 2007, the Commission, in cooperation with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, updated the regional water quality management plan for the area encompassing the Kinnickinnic River, Menomonee River, Milwaukee River, Root River, and Oak Creek watersheds; the Milwaukee Harbor estuary; and adjacent near-shore areas draining to Lake Michigan.<sup>27</sup>

Much of the Commission's work on implementing the plan relates to the point source pollution abatement element of the regional water quality management plan. This element includes recommendations for major sewage conveyance and treatment facilities and identifies planned sanitary sewer service areas for each of the public sewerage systems in the Region. Under Wisconsin law, major sewerage system improvements and all sanitary sewer extensions must conform to the water quality management plan. Sanitary sewers may be extended only to areas located within planned sanitary sewer service areas adopted as part of the regional water quality management plan. Sewer service area plans are prepared through a cooperative planning process involving the concerned local units of government, including the governmental unit responsible for the operation of the sewage treatment facility, the Commission, and the WDNR. Such plans may be amended in response to changing local conditions as well as in response to new population projections, subject to the provisions of Chapter NR 121 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*. Currently adopted sanitary sewer service areas in Racine County are shown on Map 2.16 of this report.

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<sup>24</sup> Documented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Report No. 42, A Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Protection and Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, September 1997. The plan was updated and amended in 2010.*

<sup>25</sup> Documented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Report No. 30, A Regional Water Quality Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin—2000, Volume One, Inventory Findings; Volume Two, Alternative Plans; and Volume Three, Recommended Plan, dated September 1978, February 1979, and July 1979, respectively.*

<sup>26</sup> Documented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Memorandum Report No. 93, A Regional Water Quality Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: An Update and Status Report, dated March 1995.*

<sup>27</sup> Documented in *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Report No. 50, A Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update for the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds, December 2007.*



### **Regional Water Supply Plan**

The Commission completed a regional water supply plan for the Southeastern Wisconsin Region in 2010.<sup>28</sup> The regional water supply plan includes the following major components:

- Recommended water supply service areas for public water utilities and forecast demand for water use
- Recommended for water conservation efforts to reduce water demand
- Recommended sources of supply for each service area, and recommendations for development of the basic infrastructure required to deliver that supply
- Identification of groundwater recharge areas to be protected from incompatible development
- Recommended new institutional structures necessary to carry out plan

The recommended water supply service areas for public water utilities in Racine County are shown on Map 2.17 of this report. Those areas are generalized in nature. It is intended that the areas will be refined and detailed in local water supply planning efforts.

### **Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan**

The county land and water resources management plan is intended to provide a comprehensive guide for addressing the full range of land and water resource management issues facing Racine County. Racine County adopted its first land and water resource management plan in 2000 and completed updates of the plan in 2007, 2012, and 2022.<sup>29</sup> The plan includes an assessment of land and water resource conditions in the County and describes land and water resource issues and concerns. The plan establishes goals ranging from reduction in sediment nutrient delivery to waterbodies from agricultural land; to protection of groundwater and surface water resources; to the improvement of overall water quality and wildlife habitat. For each goal, the plan identifies implementation actions and activities. In this way, the plan provides the residents of Racine County with a guide for targeting available staff and financial resources to land and water resource management issues.

## **2.8 EXISTING LAND USE CONTROLS**

Good community development depends not only on quality planning at all levels of government, but on practical implementation measures as well. Land use and development regulations affect the extent of agricultural and natural resources preserved and the type of uses allowed, as well as the detailed design of proposed developments. The following presents a summary of existing zoning, subdivision, official mapping, and other land use regulations adopted by Racine County and local governments.

Section 66.1001(3) of the *Wisconsin Statutes* requires the adoption or amendment of zoning, subdivision, or official mapping ordinances by local and county governments to be consistent with their comprehensive plans. Section 91.10(2) of the *Statutes* further requires that, if a county has a comprehensive plan, the county shall include the farmland preservation plan in its comprehensive plan and ensure that the farmland preservation plan is consistent with the comprehensive plan. This updated Racine County farmland preservation plan was prepared as part of, and as an amendment to, the adopted Racine County comprehensive plan.

### **Zoning**

A zoning ordinance is a public law that regulates and restricts the use of property in the public interest. The primary function of zoning should be to implement an adopted comprehensive plan and plan elements or components thereof, including land use and farmland preservation plans. A zoning ordinance divides a community into districts for the purpose of regulating the use of land and structures, including identifying

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<sup>28</sup> Documented in the two-volume *Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Planning Report No. 52, A Regional Water Supply Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, Volume One – Chapters 1 through 12; Volume Two – Appendices.*

<sup>29</sup> The most recent update is documented in a report titled, *Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2023-2032, 3rd Revision.*

areas to be preserved; the height, size, shape, and placement of structures; and the density of housing. A zoning ordinance typically consists of two parts: a text setting forth regulations that apply to each of the various zoning districts, together with related procedural and administrative requirements; and a map delineating the boundaries of zoning districts.

### **County Zoning Ordinance**

The unincorporated areas of Racine County are under the jurisdiction of the Racine County Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 20 of the County Code of Ordinances). The County Zoning Ordinance has been approved by each town in Racine County; it is jointly administered by the County and the towns. Map 2.21 shows the generalized pattern of zoning in Racine County towns based on zoning districts established under the Racine County Zoning Ordinance. Currently, Racine County has certified Farmland Preservation Zoning in the Town of Burlington and the Town of Waterford.

### **County Shoreland and Floodplain Zoning Ordinances**

In addition to basic zoning districts, the County Zoning Ordinance includes overlay districts with provisions for the protection of floodplains and shoreland-wetlands in compliance with State-mandated floodplain and shoreland-wetland regulatory requirements. These overlay districts apply to 100-year recurrence interval floodplains and statutorily-defined shorelands within unincorporated areas of the County. While the County is responsible for administering floodplain and shoreland-wetland zoning, the County routinely receives and considers input from the towns on shoreland zoning matters. Shoreland and floodplain zoning areas in the unincorporated portions of Racine County in 2010 are shown on Map 2.22.

### **Local Zoning Ordinances**

The entire area of Racine County is subject to zoning. As already noted, town areas throughout Racine County are under the jurisdiction of the Racine County Zoning Ordinance. Each of the cities and villages in Racine County has adopted and administer its own general zoning ordinance governing the use of land within its incorporated area. In addition, all of the cities and villages that were required to do so, have adopted, and administer floodplain zoning and shoreland-wetland zoning as required under the *Wisconsin Statutes*.

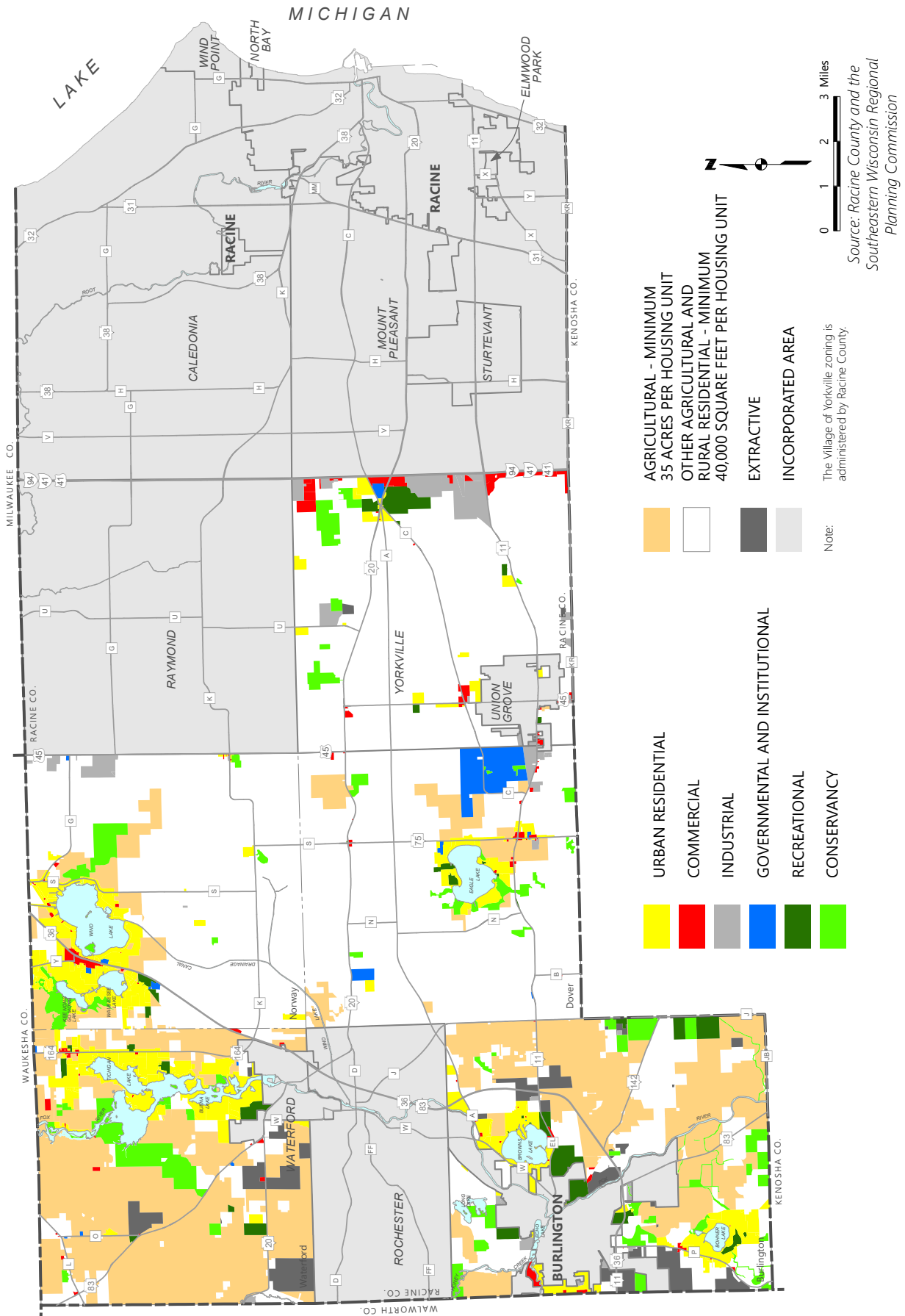
### **County and Local Subdivision Regulations**

A land division ordinance is a public law that regulates the division of land into smaller parcels. Land division ordinances provide for appropriate public oversight of the creation of new parcels and help ensure that new development is appropriately located; lot size minimums specified in zoning ordinances are observed; arterial street rights-of-way are appropriately dedicated or reserved; access to arterial streets and highways is limited in order to preserve the traffic-carrying capacity and safety of such facilities; adequate land for parks, drainageways, and other open spaces is appropriately located and preserved; street, block, and lot layouts are appropriate; and adequate public improvements are provided. Land division ordinances can be enacted by cities, villages, towns, and counties, with the latter's approval authority applying only to unincorporated (town) areas and limited objecting authority applying within cities and villages. Thus, within towns, it is possible for both counties and towns to have concurrent jurisdiction over land divisions. Cities and villages also have "extraterritorial" plat approval jurisdiction over subdivisions proposed in town areas near their corporate boundaries, under the provisions of Section 236.10 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*.

Chapter 236 of the *Wisconsin Statutes* sets forth general requirements governing the subdivision of land, including, among others, surveying and monumenting requirements, necessary approvals, recording procedures, and requirements for amending or changing subdivision maps. The *Statutes* also grant authority to county and local governments to review subdivision maps, commonly referred to as plats, with respect to local plans and ordinances. Section 236.45 authorizes county and local governments to adopt their own land division ordinances, which may be more restrictive than State requirements.

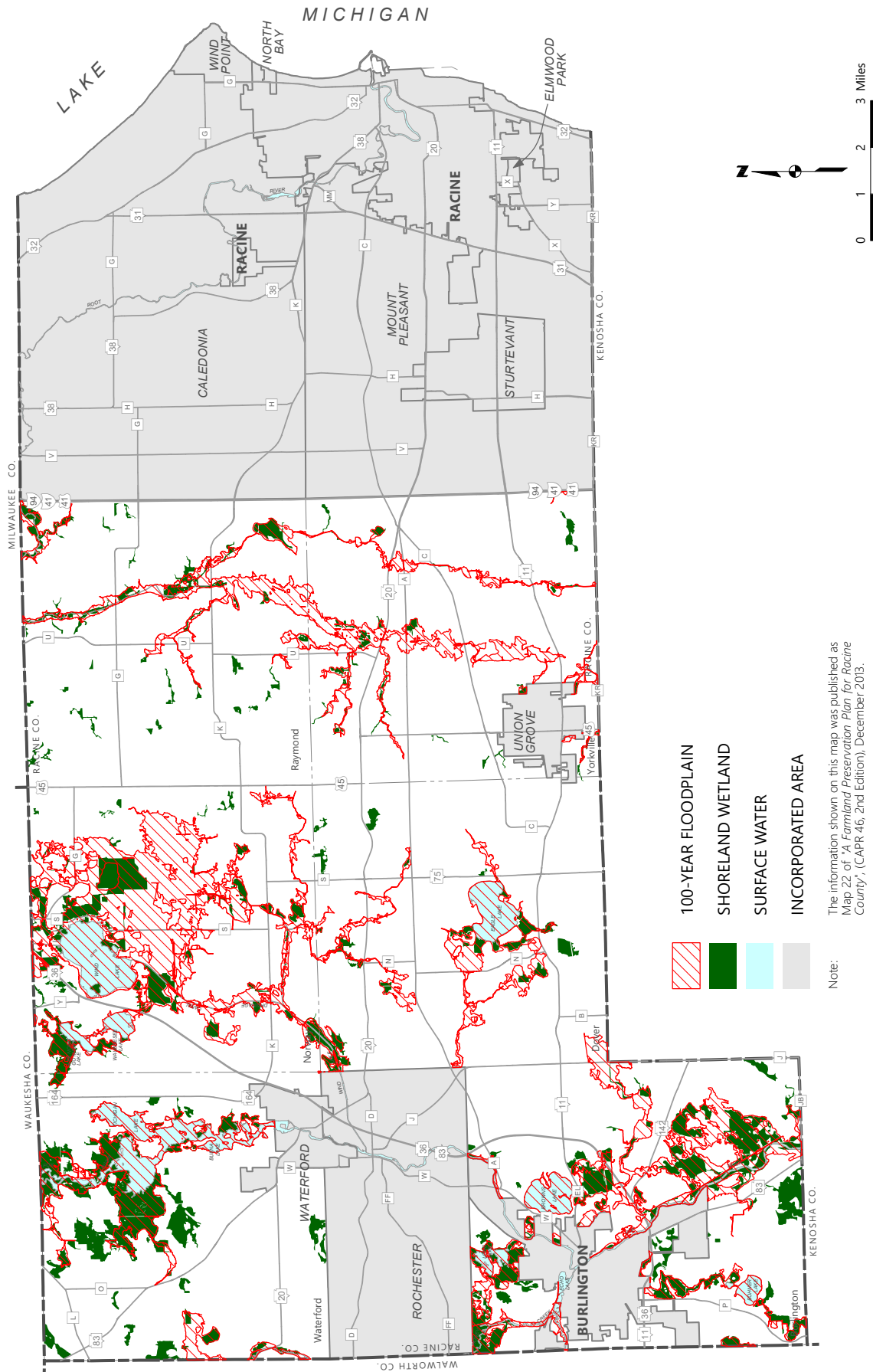
Racine County has a subdivision ordinance that applies throughout the unincorporated areas of the County. All towns, villages, and cities in Racine County have also adopted land subdivision ordinances. Within the unincorporated areas of Racine County, land divisions are regulated under the Racine County Subdivision Control Ordinance (Chapter 18 of the County Code of Ordinances) and any town-adopted ordinance.

**Map 2.2.1**  
**Generalized Existing Basic Zoning in Racine County: 2023**



## Map 2.22

### Shoreland and Floodplain Zoning in Unincorporated Areas in Racine County: 2010



### **Official Mapping Ordinances**

Section 62.23(6) of the *Wisconsin Statutes* allows the Common Council of any City to establish an official map for the precise identification of right-of-way lines and boundaries of streets, highways, and parkways and the location and extent of railroad rights-of-way, public transit facilities, parks, and playgrounds. An official map is intended to be used as a precise planning tool for implementing master and comprehensive plans and for insuring the availability of land for the above features. Villages and towns are also authorized to establish such maps. In Racine County, six local units of government—the Cities of Burlington and Racine and the Villages of Caledonia, Rochester, Union Grove, Waterford, and Yorkville—have adopted official maps.

### **Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation**

The Racine County nonmetallic mining reclamation ordinance (part of Chapter 12.5 of the County Code of Ordinances) was established to ensure the effective reclamation of nonmetallic mining sites in Racine County. The ordinance applies throughout Racine County. The ordinance adopts the uniform Statewide standards for nonmetallic mining required by Section 295.12(1)(a) of the *Statutes* and Chapter NR 135 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*. The requirements of the ordinance apply to most operators of nonmetallic mining sites within Racine County operating or commencing operation after May 22, 2001. All reclamation plans must meet the standards set forth by the Racine County nonmetallic mining reclamation ordinance including those addressing surface water and wetland protection, groundwater protection, topsoil management, final grading and slopes, topsoil redistribution for reclamation, and revegetation and site stabilization. Reclamation plans prepared under the County ordinance may specify that all or parts of former mining sites will be restored to agricultural use.

### **Soil Erosion Control**

Sections 62.234 and 61.354 of the *Statutes* grant authority to cities and villages, respectively, to adopt ordinances for the prevention of erosion from construction sites and the management of stormwater runoff from lands within their jurisdiction. Under Section 60.627 of the *Statutes*, towns may adopt village powers and subsequently utilize the authority conferred on villages to adopt their own erosion control and stormwater management ordinances. Racine County does not have a construction erosion control ordinance. The Racine County Land Conservation Division regulates erosion control measures for development within shoreland areas.

In addition, a soil erosion control plan was completed for Racine County in 1988 and contained an inventory of cropland soil erosion in the County, set forth a goal to achieve countywide soil loss standards, and identified needed soil conservation practices. While the soil erosion inventory contained in that plan has not been updated, Racine County staff conduct annual transect surveys to determine the trend in cropland soil loss and tillage practices.

Chapter NR 216 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*, which is intended to reduce the discharge of pollutants carried by stormwater, requires county and local governments in urbanized areas, which are identified based on population and density, to obtain a Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) Stormwater Discharge Permit. The code requires that the designated county or local government meet State standards to control pollution that enters a municipal storm sewer system and develop a storm sewer system map, a public information and education program, a stormwater and erosion control ordinance, an illicit discharge detection program, and a plan to reduce suspended solids. An annual report on progress in meeting the requirements must be submitted to the WDNR.

### **Foreign Ownership of Farmland**

In recent years bipartisan momentum has been building at the Federal level to restrict foreign entities from purchasing U.S. farmland, a reflection of a similar push by some states as well as concern over rising land prices, growing international competition, the threat to small family farms, and overall health of the agricultural supply chain. Currently, under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) of 1978, foreign investors who buy, sell, or hold a direct or indirect interest in U.S. agricultural land must report their holdings and transactions to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. The reporting requirement became law in late 1978 when the President signed AFIDA.



The USDA reports that foreign people and entities held an interest in just over 40 million acres of U.S. agricultural land in 2021, an increase of over 2.4 million acres, or approximately 6.4 percent, from 2020. The agency added that foreign land holdings have increased an average of 2.2 million acres per year since 2015. As of December 31, 2022, foreign people held an interest in over 43.4 million acres of U.S. agricultural land. This represents 3.4 percent of all privately held agricultural land and nearly 2 percent of all land in the United States.

According to USDA's analysis of Foreign Holdings of U.S. Agricultural Land through December 31, 2020, as of December 31, 2019, foreign held agricultural land in the state of Wisconsin was 476,241 acres. On December 31, 2020, foreign held agricultural land in the State of Wisconsin was 502,051 acres, an increase of 5.4 percent.

Currently, there is no federal law that restricts foreign investors from acquiring U.S. farmland. However, according to the National Agricultural Law Center, 14 states, including the State of Wisconsin, currently have laws restricting foreign private investment in agricultural land. These state laws vary widely, and the enacted relevant state statutory provisions range from prohibitions on foreign ownership of agricultural land to permissions on foreign ownership of other real property to reporting requirements, and corporate farming restrictions. The relevant provisions for the State of Wisconsin as they relate to this subject include *Wisconsin Constitution*, Article I, Section 15, and Sections 182.001 and 710.01 to 710.02 of the *Statutes*.

As a result of concerns about issues related to foreign ownership of farmland within Racine County, the Racine County Board, on June 29, 2023, passed Resolution Number 2023-15 requesting the State of Wisconsin review and revise its policy on foreign ownership of farmland.



Credit: Unsplash User Jed Owen

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Planning is a rational process for formulating and meeting goals and objectives. As part of the farmland preservation planning process, a set of planning goals and objectives, along with supporting policies and programs, were formulated and are presented in this chapter. The goals and objectives help provide an overall framework for preparing the County farmland preservation plan. Key land use issues related to preserving farmland are also identified.

## 3.2 BASIC CONCEPT AND DEFINITIONS

This chapter sets forth goals, objectives, policies, and programs intended to promote the conservation and effective management of agricultural resources, including productive farmland, and to promote the economic viability of working farms in Racine County. The goals, objectives, policies, and programs for the Racine County farmland preservation plan are based largely on those prepared and developed under the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element and other related elements of the adopted multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan for Racine County. The Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee refined comprehensive plan goals, objectives, policies, and programs as appropriate based on the information presented in this document. Section 91.10(2) of the *Wisconsin Statutes* requires county farmland preservation plans and county comprehensive plans to be consistent with each other.

In accordance with the State comprehensive planning law (Section 66.1001 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*), the Racine County multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan consists of nine plan elements, including an “agricultural, natural, and cultural resources” element. The agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element of the County comprehensive plan includes “goals,” “objectives,” “policies,” and “programs” for the management and preservation of such resources, as required under the comprehensive planning law (Section 66.1001(2)(e) of the *Statutes*). As suggested by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (which oversees the comprehensive planning program in Wisconsin), these terms were defined in the County comprehensive plan as follows:

- **Goals:** Broad and general expressions of a community's aspirations, towards which the planning effort is directed. Goals tend to be the ends rather than the means.
- **Objectives:** More specific targets, derived from goals and necessary to achieve those goals. While still general in nature, objectives are more precise, concrete, and measurable than goals.
- **Policies:** Rules or courses of action necessary to achieve the goals and objectives from which they are derived. They are precise and measurable.
- **Programs:** A system of projects or services necessary to achieve plan goals, objectives, and policies.

Section 91.10 of the *Statutes* (the Farmland Preservation Statute) requires county farmland preservation plans to identify goals for agricultural development in the county; actions the county will take to preserve farmland and promote agricultural development; policies, goals, strategies, and proposed actions to increase housing density in areas outside designated farmland preservation areas; and key land use issues related to preserving farmland. Although these terms are not defined in Chapter 91 of the *Statutes*, "strategies" are considered to be the same as "objectives" and "actions" are considered to be the same as "policies and programs" in this report.

### 3.3 KEY LAND USE ISSUES RELATED TO PRESERVING FARMLAND

Chapter 91, "Farmland Preservation," of the *Statutes* requires the County farmland preservation plan to identify key land use issues related to preserving farmland and to promoting agricultural development and plans for addressing those issues. These issues were identified based upon a review of the inventory data summarized in Chapter 2; existing plans, including the County comprehensive plan and the recently updated *Racine County Land and Water Resources Management Plan 2023-2032*; and related public input obtained as part of the County comprehensive planning program. Additional information on public participation opportunities pertaining to farmland preservation is included in Chapter 4. Overall, Racine County residents placed a high priority on farmland preservation, environmental conservation, and the preservation of rural character.

#### Land Use and Urban Development

Agriculture and urban land use inventory data presented in Chapter 2 indicate there are significant areas of the County with soils that are suitable for agricultural production. The inventory data further indicates that there is a high level of agricultural activity in the County and that agriculture and agricultural-related businesses are an important segment of the County economy.

The data, however, indicates that certain agricultural lands have been converted to urban uses over the years. Much of the urban development occurred on farmland located on the periphery of expanding urban areas, predominantly as residential uses in the Village of Mt. Pleasant and, to a lesser extent, in the Villages of Caledonia, Yorkville, and Raymond. Additionally, relatively large areas along the IH94 corridor have been, and continue to be, converted to industrial uses primarily for distribution, logistics, and manufacturing. Some of the urban development occurred as isolated enclaves on farmland in outlying rural areas as well. In 2010, agricultural land in Racine County encompassed approximately 115,641 acres, of which approximately 2,336 acres, or 2.0% were converted to urban use by 2020. Residential, industrial, and transportation uses accounted for the largest areal conversions of agricultural land from 2010 to 2020 at 884 acres, or 0.76%, 596 acres, or 0.52%, and 476 acres, or 0.41%, respectively. The conversion of agricultural land to urban development is one of the key issues affecting farmland preservation in Racine County.

#### Public Input—Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Issues

The County comprehensive planning program included extensive public participation efforts providing the opportunity for County residents to raise issues and express concerns regarding farmland preservation and the conservation of natural and cultural resources. In particular, the countywide public opinion survey, and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analyses—conducted as part of the comprehensive planning process—resulted in the identification of a number of agricultural, natural, and cultural resources related issues that should be addressed in the County farmland preservation plan. These issues include:

- The preservation of rural and small town character

- The recognition of the importance of balancing urban and rural land uses
- The preservation of open space land
- The loss of productive farmland and natural resources
- The continuation of farming as an important part of the County economy
- The implementation of financial tools and incentives to preserve agricultural and open space lands
- The balancing of the preservation of open space lands with property rights
- The protection of wetlands, forest lands, areas of wildlife habitat, Lake Michigan, inland lakes, and park and open space lands
- The protection of surface water and ground water quality and quantity
- The maintenance of the environmental health of the County
- The consideration of the impacts of new developments on agricultural and open space lands and uses
- The preservation of cultural resources and historic sites and districts

### **3.4 AGRICULTURAL-RELATED GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

This section sets forth agricultural resource goals, objectives, policies, and programs for Racine County. These were developed based upon a consideration of the agricultural resource data inventoried in Chapter 2, the planning issue statements and goals and objectives related to agricultural resources identified in the comprehensive plan, and the key issues identified in the preceding section. This section also includes agricultural resource policies for local government consideration. Local policies were prepared because local governments have influence over agricultural resources in the County, especially with regard to protecting agricultural lands through zoning and land division ordinances and implementation of the adopted comprehensive plan.

Goals, objectives, policies, and programs related to natural resources and land uses other than agriculture are set forth in the last section of this chapter. Planned farmland preservation areas are identified in Chapter 4.

#### **Racine County Agricultural Resources Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs**

##### ***Agricultural Resources Goals***

- Maintain the agricultural base, preserving productive farmland and environmentally sensitive areas
- Guide future growth in a manner that preserves and enhances the quality of life and character of urban and rural communities

##### ***Agricultural Resources Objectives***

- Preserve the most productive farmlands within Racine County—lands covered by agricultural capability Class I, Class II, and Class III soils, as identified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)—to provide an agricultural reserve for future generations, to protect the agricultural economy and associated supply chain of Racine County, and to preserve the rural character of its farming areas.
- Retain, identify, and encourage desirable and sustainable agri-businesses.
- Reduce farmland erosion and sustain and increase farmland productivity through the utilization of soil conservation practices

- Preserve rural (agrarian) character and vistas outside of planned urban service areas

### ***Agricultural Resources Policies and Programs***

- Protect farmland identified as prime agricultural land in the Racine County farmland preservation plan. with the intent to maintain highly productive agricultural lands in food and fiber production by effectively limiting the encroachment of non-agricultural development and minimizing land use conflicts among incompatible uses.
- For agricultural lands not identified as “prime agricultural land”, encourage the continuation of agricultural uses. In particular, the plan seeks to preserve, insofar as practicable, the most productive soils within these areas, namely NRCS capability Class I, Class II, and Class III soils. This could be in the form of traditional agricultural use or alternative agricultural uses such as smaller hobby farms or specialty farms including community supported agricultural operations.
- Where feasible, require new homes and other buildings to be located in areas that would have minimal impacts on the natural, scenic, and cultural resources of the site, that minimize impacts on adjacent agriculture land and avoid conflicts with agricultural practices, and that would not adversely impact the surface water drainage of the area.
- In areas of nonprime agriculture land outside of planned sewer service areas, where it is determined by the County and local unit of government that residential development could be accommodated, such development should be limited to rural residential development. Rural residential development at a density of no more than one dwelling unit per five acres would be allowed in the Villages of Caledonia and Raymond (one dwelling unit per six acres if a conservation subdivision design is utilized) and the Towns of Burlington and Waterford. Rural residential development at a density of no more than one dwelling unit per three acres would be allowed in the Towns of Dover and Norway, and the Villages of Rochester and Yorkville.
- Encourage the use of conservation subdivision designs for new rural residential developments with an emphasis on clustering homesites in areas not covered by NRCS capability Class I, Class II, and Class III soils.
- For rural developments that utilize conservation subdivision designs, consider a minimum of 50 percent of the development parcel to be permanently maintained in open space or agricultural uses. Racine County and its communities should be encouraged to exceed the minimum open space requirements where feasible. An ordinance for conservation subdivision design should include the minimum open space requirements and define specific lands that can be counted toward the open space requirements. Generally, open space should be defined as undeveloped land consisting of agricultural land, woodlands, wetlands, waterways, floodlands, wildlife habitat, environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas, significant historic or archaeological sites, and areas of steep slopes.
- Farmlands in planned sewer service areas should be encouraged to remain in agricultural use until public sewer service is extended to the parcel.
- Protect agricultural infrastructure in Racine County to support farm operations.
- Encourage niche farming operations in Racine County, such as organic farms, orchards, and landscape nurseries, and other community supported agriculture.
- Support local government efforts to preserve farmlands.
- Encourage the use of development transitions between urban development (served with sanitary sewer) and agricultural areas using, where practicable, open space development concepts such as cluster development as the transition development.



- Encourage the development of boundary agreements between towns and adjacent cities and villages to limit the conversion of farmland to urban uses.
- Encourage denser, more compact development within urban service areas to minimize the development of farmland.
- Consider developing growth control ordinances in rural areas to ensure a growth rate compatible with local services and long-term land use objectives.
- Encourage development of streets, highways, and utilities in a manner that minimizes disruption of productive farmlands.
- Discourage development that is incompatible with agricultural uses.
- Implement strategies regarding soil sustainability and sedimentation as recommended in *Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2023-2032 – 3rd Revision*, and subsequent updates.
- Continue to update the County's land and water resource management plan every ten years.
- Enforce the land and water management standards required of participants in the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program.
- Promote the removal of highly erodible land from agricultural use through implementation of the County Soil and Water Resource Management Program.
- Continue to identify croplands that do not have a conservation plan and help develop these plans. Also, continue to assist in updating existing conservation plans.
- Encourage wise soil management practices to protect farmland for continued agricultural use.
- Encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) by farmers.
- Develop methods to ensure that nutrient management plans required by Section NR 151.07 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code* are implemented in the County.
- Continue to support the Racine County Land and Water Conservation Division (LCWD) in its efforts to protect and improve land and water resources: to implement recommendations set forth in the County land and water resource management plan; to provide technical assistance on controlling soil erosion and water pollution; and to implement and administer County and State soil and water conservation programs.
- Support educational programs which distribute educational materials regarding farming techniques that support soil conservation, such as no till and zone tilling farming, contour stripping, grass waterways, terracing, crop rotation, and nutrient management through soil sampling. The educational programs should include UW-Extension, local governments, and individual farmers and should include information and application assistance for Federal and State programs to implement farming practices that promote soil conservation.
- Review County and local regulatory tools, such as zoning and land division ordinances and zoning maps, to identify any necessary revisions to protect the agricultural uses.
- County and local governments should continue to participate in and support the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program which provides income tax credits to eligible farmland owners.

- Consider the establishment of an Agricultural Enterprise Area(s) containing contiguous lands devoted primarily to agricultural use. An AEA would be part of a broader strategy to protect farmland and promote agriculture and agricultural-related development.
- Study and develop a transfer of development rights (TDR) program and/or a purchase of development rights (PDR) program for local and County government use that focuses on the protection of agricultural areas.
- Develop and adopt a County right-to-farm ordinance that defines agricultural operations, normal agricultural practices, and the specific farmland that is affected by the ordinance; includes a reference to the State Statute<sup>30</sup> that protects farmers from nuisance lawsuits; and establishes a grievance procedure that outlines how complaints against agricultural operations will be resolved.
- Comply with Article XI Wind Energy Facilities and Article XIV Solar Energy Facilities of the Racine County zoning ordinance when reviewing future wind farm and solar energy facility development proposals. Specifically, as it relates to farmland preservation, the Ordinance does not allow construction of solar energy farms/facilities in the A1 (Farmland Preservation) Zoning District, but such facilities are allowed in the A2 and A3 (Other Agricultural) Zoning Districts.
- Explore other approaches to preserve agricultural and open space land that would reduce the financial burden of preserving such lands on landowners.
- Work with the SENO K/RLT Conservancy and other land trusts to protect productive agricultural lands through PDR, easements, and/or land purchases.
- Work cooperatively with appropriate State and Federal agencies to identify programs, grants, and tax credits that are available to help fund the implementation of the farmland preservation plan.
- Continue to support development of a cost/revenue model comparing the cost of County and local government services to various types of land use compared to agricultural land uses.
- Continue to support development of a fact sheet outlining the impact of agricultural land conversion in Racine County.
- Continue to support development of a public educational program and distribute educational materials to the public regarding the benefits of farming, including economic impacts, and the need to protect enough farmland in Racine County for farming to remain viable in the future.
- Support economic initiatives to ensure that farming remains viable in Racine County, including agritourism and direct marketing of farm products.

### **3.5 OTHER RELATED GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

In addition to the agricultural goals, objectives, policies, and programs set forth in the previous section, there are a number of goals, objectives, policies, and programs set forth in other elements of the County comprehensive plan that impact the preservation and management of agricultural lands. For example, concentrating urban development in compact urban centers or urban service areas will help preserve large blocks of farmland in outlying areas. Another example is preserving historic farmsteads including barns, silos, hedgerows, and stone fencerows, thereby preserving the rural character of an area and maintaining the agrarian heritage. The preservation of pockets of natural vegetation that often exist on agricultural sites also contributes to the natural rural character of an area and helps improve water quality on the site (wetlands on the site capture sedimentation and may serve as groundwater recharge areas).

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<sup>30</sup> A "right-to-farm" ordinance is intended to provide protection to farmers from nuisance claims due to noise, dust, odors, and other effects of farm operations. Wisconsin's right-to-farm law is set forth in Section 823.08 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Other policies that may affect farmland preservation include providing a range of affordable housing choices for all income levels and age groups, including persons who work in the farming industry; improving transportation infrastructure, including railway and trucking infrastructure, to help transport farm produce; maintaining and enhancing the existing level of public services, including those for the farming community such as health, education, and fire protection services; and supporting and encouraging sustainable and renewable energy options in public and private development, such as solar, wind, and geothermal.

The balance of this section presents goals, objectives, policies, and programs from other elements of the County comprehensive plan which directly or indirectly affect agriculture in Racine County.

## **Racine County Natural Resources Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs**

### ***Natural Resources Goals***

- Maintain the environmental assets of the County and develop methods to protect and preserve valuable natural features, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces, groundwater resources, and floodplains
- Preserve open space to enhance the total quality of the environment, maximize essential natural resource availability, give form and structure to urban development, and provide opportunities for a full range of outdoor recreation activities

### ***Natural Resources Objectives***

- Preserve the remaining primary environmental corridor lands in Racine County and, to the extent practicable, preserve the remaining secondary environmental corridor lands and isolated natural resource areas in Racine County in order to maintain the overall quality of the environment; to provide opportunities for recreational and educational activities; and to avoid serious environmental and developmental problems.
- Preserve the remaining natural areas and critical species habitat sites in Racine County as identified in the regional natural areas and critical species habitat protection and management plan
- Preserve surface water and groundwater quality and quantity in Racine County
- Protect floodplains from incompatible land uses
- Protect natural and manmade/engineered drainage ways in the County to minimize the impacts of stormwater runoff on existing natural resources and urban and agricultural land uses
- Preserve habitat for native plants and wildlife thereby preserving the biodiversity of Racine County
- Preserve significant geological sites in Racine County
- Preserve the natural character and vistas in Racine County
- Preserve open spaces and natural resources as part of future development proposals in the County
- Provide a comprehensive system of parks and open spaces within Racine County to enhance the quality of the environment and life
- Ensure an adequate supply of nonmetallic resources at a reasonable cost for new construction and maintenance of existing infrastructure in the future through wise management of such resources in Racine County

### ***Natural Resources Policies and Programs***

- Encourage development to occur in areas outside of environmental corridors, isolated natural resource areas, natural areas, floodplains, wetlands, and critical species habitat sites in Racine County.

- Review County and local regulatory tools, such as zoning and land division ordinances and zoning maps, to identify any necessary revisions to protect the primary environmental corridors in Racine County.
- Based on local needs and concerns, review County and local regulatory tools, such as zoning and land division ordinances, to identify any necessary revisions to protect the secondary environmental corridors and isolated natural resources in Racine County.
- Encourage the protection of environmental corridors, natural areas, and critical species habitat sites through public and non-profit conservation organization (NCOs) fee simple purchase and conservation easements.
- Implement strategies regarding the preservation and protection of environmental corridors, natural areas, and critical species habitat sites recommended in the County land and water resource management plan, and the Racine County park and open space plan, including updates to the plans.
- Continue to support the Racine County LCWD in its efforts to: protect and improve land and water resources; implement recommendations set forth in the County land and water resource management plan; provide technical assistance on controlling soil erosion and water pollution; and implement and administer County and State soil and water conservation programs.
- Implement strategies regarding the protection and restoration of wetlands, stream corridors, floodplain areas, the Lake Michigan shoreline and bluff; protection of natural systems; pollution reduction and control; and protection of public safety and public recreation and access recommended in the County land and water resource management plan.
- Implement the recommendations for acquisition and management of natural areas, critical habitat sites, and significant geological areas as set forth in the regional natural areas plan.
- Encourage the preservation of natural resources outside the environmental corridor network.
- Develop and implement programs to control and reduce the spread of invasive species in Racine County.
- Continue to administer and enforce existing Federal, State, County, and local regulations that protect wetlands, woodlands, floodlands, surface water, and groundwater resources.
- Implement the recommendations of the Racine County park and open space plan and any subsequent updates.
- Update County and local park and open space plans as necessary to maintain eligibility for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Stewardship funding.
- Support, and, where applicable, implement sanitary sewer and stormwater management standards recommended in the regional water quality management plan update and subsequent amendments.
- Continue to partner with appropriate Federal, State, and NCOs to promote natural resource enhancements and restorations in Racine County.
- Support carefully planned efforts to restore open space lands to more natural conditions that could result in the expansion of the environmental corridor network. This should include linkages between existing environmental corridors and isolated natural resources, especially those areas that are identified in local and neighborhood land use plans.
- Develop an incentive program to promote the use of BMPs and new technologies to improve water quality and to reduce stormwater runoff, such as rain gardens and permeable pavement.

- Support educational programs that distribute educational materials regarding techniques that promote land use patterns that are sensitive to natural resource conservation such as overlay zoning, planned unit developments, conservation subdivision designs, and PDR/TDR programs, and promote the benefits of natural resources and the need to protect them from degradation. The educational programs should include UW-Extension, local governments, NCOs, and individual landowners, and should include information and application assistance for Federal and State programs to implement natural resource management and conservation activity.
- Study and develop a TDR program and/or a PDR program for local and County government use that focuses on the protection of natural resource areas. This program may be implemented in association with an agricultural TDR/PDR program.
- Explore other approaches to preserve agricultural and open space land that would reduce the financial burden of preserving such lands on landowners.
- Encourage the preservation of open spaces including, for example, natural and agricultural areas in conservation subdivisions as part of future development proposals in the County.
- Study the potential to establish a development-funded open space preservation program.
- Work with the SENO K/RLT Conservancy and other NCOs to protect environmental corridors, natural areas, and critical species habitat sites through PDR, easements, and/or land purchases.
- Support local government efforts to preserve open space lands.
- Support and, where applicable, implement the objectives, principles, and standards recommended by the regional water supply plan.
- Support the development of land use patterns that minimize potential adverse impacts on surface and groundwater resources and that are sustainable relative to the long-term water supply needs of the County.
- Retain areas shown on Map 2.9 as having high or very high potential for groundwater recharge in rural land uses in order to preserve the recharge potential.
- Consider the development of a Countywide mapping program to identify and map existing farm drain tiles as recommended in the *Racine County Updated Land Records Modernization Plan: 1999*, dated August 1999.
- Encourage the expansion, creation, and maintenance of stormwater utility districts and farmland drainage districts in the County and utilize the authority granted to them to maintain drainage systems and control flooding.
- Develop local ordinances that require landowners to maintain drainage systems on individual properties and that in lieu of landowner compliance with the ordinance, grant the local municipality the authority to repair and maintain drainage systems at the landowners' expense.
- Prepare, update, and implement comprehensive stormwater management plans on a watershed, or sub-watershed, basis to facilitate the implementation of the Racine County land and water resource management plan and the regional water quality management plan.
- Support the development of land use patterns and regulations to effectively meet the nonmetallic needs of the County while limiting the effects of extractive operations (dust, noise, and truck traffic) on County residents and without adversely impacting or destroying environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas.



- Encourage full use of existing and future mining sites, in accordance with approved reclamation plans without adversely impacting or destroying environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas.
- For future sites or the expansion of existing mining sites, promote the expansion as close as possible or adjacent to existing sites. Where a new site is not adjacent to an existing site, allow for the transportation of raw material to an existing site for processing where possible.
- Continue to enforce the County nonmetallic mining reclamation ordinance.
- The County and local governments should work cooperatively with aggregate producers to identify suitable areas with commercially viable sources of nonmetallic resources. Ideally, suitable areas should be located in sparsely populated areas and not have significant impacts on environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas.

## **Racine County Cultural Resources Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs**

### ***Cultural Resources Goals***

- Protect and enhance cultural structures, historic sites and districts, and archaeological sites

### ***Cultural Resources Objectives***

- Preserve and enhance the archaeological, historic, and cultural resources and character of Racine County
- Preserve archaeological and historical resources that contribute to Racine County's heritage
- Preserve archaeological and historical resources that contribute to Racine County's distinct urban, rural, and small town characteristics
- Preserve archaeological, historical, and cultural resources that contribute to tourism and educational opportunities in Racine County

### ***Cultural Resources Policies and Programs***

- Preserve historic structures, sites, and districts that have been listed on the National and/or State Registers of Historic Places
- Encourage the preservation of local landmarks
- Encourage the preservation of historical resources that contribute to the heritage and economy of Racine County but have not yet been recognized or designated by a Federal, State, or local unit of government
- Preserve known archaeological sites in Racine County, as well as any new sites that may be discovered in the future
- Encourage development and redevelopment that is sensitive to the preservation of archaeological, historic, and cultural features, and is compatible with such uses
- Encourage the development of site and architectural design guidelines that preserve the aesthetics that contribute to the County's rural and small town character
- Encourage the preservation and reuse of older structures that reflect the historic rural character of Racine County such as farmsteads, barns, silos, fences, rock walls, and similar structures
- Consider the development of model archaeological and historic preservation ordinances to help guide the County and its communities in their efforts to protect and preserve such areas

- Continue to support the institutional framework for historic preservation, such as local landmark commissions, historical societies, and museums
- Review County and local regulatory tools, such as zoning and land division ordinances and zoning maps, to identify any necessary revisions to promote the protection, reuse, and rehabilitation of historic structures
- As appropriate, Racine County, local units of government, chambers of commerce, local historical societies, and private organizations should work cooperatively to promote archaeological, historic, and cultural resources with respect to tourism and educational opportunities.

## **Racine County Land Use Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs**

### ***Land Use Goals***

- Guide future growth in a manner that preserves and enhances the quality of life and character of urban and rural communities
- Promote redevelopment and infill in areas with existing infrastructure and services, enhancing existing residential, commercial, and industrial areas

### ***Land Use Objectives***

- Provide a balanced allocation of space to each of the various land uses in order to meet the social, physical, and economic needs of Racine County and its communities
- Provide for development of communities having distinctive individual character, based on physical and functional conditions, historical factors, and local desires
- Provide for the conservation, renewal, and full use of existing urban areas of Racine County
- Encourage compact and efficient development patterns within planned urban service areas
- Maintain and enhance the economic vitality of the County by encouraging a diversified tax base of agricultural, commercial, industrial, and residential uses
- Preserve open spaces and natural resources as part of future development proposals in the County
- Seek to reduce conflicts between neighboring jurisdictions concerning annexations, urban and rural development, and development in transitional areas

### ***Land Use Policies and Programs***

- Accommodate future land use development in areas recommended to be developed or redeveloped for the specific land use as identified on the land use plan map in the County comprehensive plan.
- Encourage concentrated urban and infill development within urban (sewer) service areas to minimize the conversion of farmland to urban uses.
- Locate and design rural and suburban residential development to minimize impact on the natural resource base, minimize impacts on the scenic beauty and character of rural areas, and minimize the loss of farmland covered by agricultural soil suitability Class I, Class II, and Class III soils. When accommodated, rural residential development should be located in such a way as to minimize conflicts associated with dust, odors, and noise from farming activity that may arise when residences are located in the vicinity of agricultural operations.
- Encourage the use of conservation subdivision design concepts with attendant stewardship plans in rural- and suburban-density residential development to the extent practicable.

## **Racine County Housing Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs**

### ***Housing Goals***

- Provide opportunities for an adequate housing supply that will meet the needs of all residents and a broad range of choice among housing designs, sizes, types, and costs, recognizing the changing trends in age-group composition, income, and household types
- Promote redevelopment and infill in areas with existing infrastructure and services, enhancing residential, commercial, and industrial uses

### ***Housing Objectives***

- Provision of additional housing, including an appropriate mix of housing types and styles, sufficient to accommodate the projected increase in population, matching housing types to changing household characteristics and needs
- Provision of housing at densities that are properly related to the availability of sanitary sewer service, water supply, and basic urban services and facilities

### ***Housing Policies and Programs Policies***

- Support the full range and variety of housing structure types, including single-, two-, and multi-family, accessory, and live/work dwellings, at flexible densities, as appropriate, including mixed-use development patterns
- Encourage new housing to occur at urban densities in sewer service areas, thereby reducing the loss of farmland in rural areas of the County
- Encourage the use of conservation design residential developments in areas suitable for limited residential development, to minimize impacts on farming areas and environmentally sensitive areas
- Encourage infill housing development and redevelopment

## **Racine County Economic Development Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs**

### ***Economic Development Goals***

- Promote the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities
- Maintain the agricultural base, preserving productive farmland and environmentally sensitive areas

### ***Economic Development Objectives***

- Promote a wide range of employment opportunities and resources for all residents that improve and enhance the economic vitality of Racine County
- Maintain and enhance the economic vitality of Racine County by encouraging a diversified tax base of agricultural, commercial, industrial, and residential uses
- Encourage and promote a viable and sustainable agricultural economy through existing and new programs designed to support the farm economy
- Foster tourism that promotes the natural features, cultural resources, and unique heritage of Racine County

### ***Economic Development Policies and Programs***

- Develop guidelines and implementation strategies to seamlessly integrate existing development with the planning and redevelopment of underdeveloped or in-fill properties in the current urban service area

- Promote the redevelopment of underutilized, vacant, blighted, brownfield, or other environmentally contaminated industrial and commercial buildings to efficiently utilize existing public utilities and services
- Support economic initiatives to ensure that farming remains viable in Racine County, including agritourism, and direct marketing of farm products
- Protect the lands identified as best suited for long-term farmland preservation, in order to provide the land base needed to maintain agriculture and associated agricultural businesses
- Promote coordination and cooperation between all of the communities in the County on economic development related issues including business creation, retention, expansion, programs, and design
- Promote an adequate amount of available and suitable land with supporting infrastructure for businesses retention, expansion, and attraction
- Promote educational programs to prepare workers for jobs in agricultural related businesses, including niche agriculture, crop production for bio-fuel industry, dairy farming, and other existing types of agriculture in the County
- Promote agriculture and associated agricultural industries in Racine County
- Promote the tourism industry, including agritourism and eco-tourism in Racine County.

## **Racine County Transportation Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs**

### ***Transportation Goals***

- Provide a multi-modal transportation system that provides appropriate types of transportation needed by all residents and businesses of the County at an adequate level of service, provides choices among transportation modes, and provides inter-modal connectivity

### ***Transportation Objectives***

- Implementation of the recommendations of the regional transportation system plan that pertain to Racine County
- A multi-modal transportation system which, through its location, capacity and design will effectively serve the existing land use pattern and promote the implementation of County and local plans, meeting and managing the anticipated travel demand generated by the existing and proposed land uses
- A multi-modal transportation system which facilitates the convenient and efficient movement of people and goods between component parts of the County, Region, State, and Nation
- A multi-modal transportation system which serves to protect the overall quality of the natural environment and preserve scenic and aesthetic features in the rural areas of the County

### ***Transportation Policies and Programs***

- Work to implement the recommendations of the Racine County jurisdictional highway system plan and the regional transportation system plan
- Work to ensure a balanced system of transportation options for the movement of agricultural goods and services in the County, Region, State, and Nation

## **Racine County Utilities and Community Facilities Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs**

### ***Utilities and Community Facilities Goals***

- Encourage development patterns that promote efficient and sustainable use of land, that can be readily linked by transportation systems and utilize existing public utilities and services
- Provide adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses
- Expand internet access points throughout Racine County to improve internet/broadband connectivity and close the “Digital Divide” with the addition of several new internet access points in underserved areas of western and eastern Racine County

### ***Utilities and Community Facilities Objectives***

- Utilities and community facilities should be maintained or enhanced to adequately serve future County and local population and business needs and be consistent with County and local land use plans.
- Provide efficient and economical utility and community facilities and services at the lowest possible costs
- Encourage future development to be concentrated within planned urban service areas
- Encourage reinvestment in existing developed areas, including the promotion of green building and green infrastructure components
- Continue to partner with public, private, and non-profit organizations to collectively commit additional funding to provide additional internet access points across Racine County high-need areas

### ***Utilities and Facilities Policies and Programs***

- Implement, where appropriate, the recommendations of the regional water supply plan to help ensure an adequate supply of safe water for County residents and businesses
- Develop educational programs that promote alternatives to greenfield development, such as infill and brownfield development
- Support utility efforts to develop alternative sources of energy, such as solar, wind, and geothermal
- Leverage data from the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin - Broadband Office to identify areas that are unserved or underserved and actively pursue grants to address these broadband access needs; actively participate in the M7 region Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, including identifying community anchor institutions to ensure they are either documented as having or needing broadband internet access





*Credit: Unsplash User John Reed*

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the adoption of the farmland preservation plan in 2013, the County has experienced a substantial conversion of farmlands and other open lands to urban uses. Despite that trend, the County still encompasses significant amounts of farmland and environmentally sensitive areas. Future population and employment increases may be expected to result in the conversion of additional land in the County from rural to urban uses. The impact of future development on remaining agricultural and other open lands can be managed through proper planning.

This chapter presents a farmland preservation plan for Racine County that is intended to meet, insofar as practicable, the agricultural land preservation and open space preservation goals and objectives presented in Chapter 3 of this report. The plan presented herein identifies farmland preservation areas that are recommended to be preserved through farmland preservation zoning. The plan reaffirms the recommendations of the County comprehensive plan for other agricultural lands not specifically identified for farmland preservation. This chapter also identifies programs and measures that can contribute to preserving agricultural and natural resources in the County. In addition, it recommends priorities for policies to be followed to implement the plan.

## 4.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

For any planning process, it is good practice to provide opportunities for the public to become acquainted with the planning process and to solicit public involvement to develop plan recommendations. In the case of a farmland preservation plan, it is beneficial to gather information related to public perceptions of agriculture as well as other related natural resources and open space lands. To ensure community involvement, a public participation plan (PPP) for the preparation of a farmland preservation plan was adopted by the Racine County Board of Supervisors, as presented in Appendix A. The PPP outlines a series of outreach efforts and public participation sessions designed to gain input from County farmers as well as residents and business owners throughout the farmland preservation planning process.

The recommended farmland preservation plan for Racine County was presented in preliminary form at a public informational meeting hosted by the Racine County Land and Water Conservation Division. The meeting was held on October 16, 2024, at the Town of Burlington Town Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to acquaint public officials, interested citizens, and landowners with the key recommendations of the plan and to receive comments on and answer questions pertaining to the plan.

### 4.3 FARMLAND PRESERVATION AREAS AND ZONING

#### Criteria Used to Identify Farmland Preservation Areas (FPAs)

In accordance with Section 91.10(1)(d) of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, a county farmland preservation plan must clearly identify areas that the county plans to preserve for agricultural and agricultural-related uses. Such farmland preservation areas (FPAs) may include undeveloped natural resource and open space lands but may not include any areas that are planned for nonagricultural development within 15 years after the date on which the plan is adopted. This section describes the criteria used to identify FPAs in this update of the Racine County farmland preservation plan.

Section 91.10 of the Statutes requires that the rationale used to identify farmland preservation areas be described in the County plan and that maps be included that clearly delineate farmland preservation areas and parcels within such areas planned to be preserved for agricultural and agricultural-related uses. The rationale may include criteria such as soil type, topography, agricultural productivity, current agricultural use, and proximity to incorporated areas, major arterials, and rural subdivisions.<sup>31</sup>

As part of the County farmland preservation plan update, a set of criteria for delineating FPAs in Racine County was established by the Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee, with assistance from the Racine County Land and Water Conservation Division staff and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (Commission) staff. Parcels in Racine County must meet all the following criteria to be eligible for inclusion as a FPA, with minor exceptions as footnoted:

1. Are predominantly in active agriculture, agricultural accessory, agricultural-related, or natural resource use
2. Are planned to support a predominance of agricultural, agricultural accessory, agricultural-related, or natural resource uses for 15 years or more from the time of plan adoption (generally, lands located outside of adopted planned sewer service areas)<sup>32</sup>
3. Include areas of productive soils, with at least 50 percent of the parcel covered by soils that meet the U.S. Department of Agricultural, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) standards for "National Prime Farmlands" (Class I and II soils) or "Farmlands of Statewide Significance" (Class III soils)
4. Are located in a block of similar parcels which together encompass at least 100 acres<sup>33</sup>
5. Are identified as prime agricultural land or agricultural preservation on planned land use maps in town and village plans adopted as part of the Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Racine County: 2035
6. Are currently zoned for agricultural preservation

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<sup>31</sup> Criteria are listed in the document entitled "County Application for Farmland Preservation Plan Certification" prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Criteria for identifying farmland preservation areas are not specified in Chapter 91 of the Statutes.

<sup>32</sup> Exceptions include areas in the Town of Burlington (Sections 8, 15, and 16) and the Town of Waterford (Sections 14 and 36) that are included as farmland preservation areas to be consistent with the Town comprehensive plan, and small areas in the Town of Burlington (Sections 17, 20, and 30), Town of Waterford (Section 13), and the Village of Mt. Pleasant (Section 5) that are part of larger parcels and which are unlikely to be developed for urban uses in the near future.

<sup>33</sup> Exceptions include two areas in the Town of Waterford (Sections 1 and 36) that are less than 100 acres in size but are included in the farmland preservation area to be consistent with the Town comprehensive plan.

## **Farmland Preservation Areas**

Farmland preservation areas in Racine County were identified based upon the criteria described in the previous section. The resulting planned farmland preservation areas in Racine County are presented on Map Quantitative data relative to the plan is provided on Table 4.1. As shown on Map 4.1 and in Table 4.1, FPAs consist of about 23,746 acres, or about 11 percent of the County. Consistent with State guidelines, the FPAs include lands in agricultural or agricultural-related uses, as well as undeveloped natural resource and open space areas that are an integral part of the farming area. These undeveloped natural resource areas—consisting of environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas—located within farmland preservation areas encompass about 5,815 acres, or about 25 percent of the FPAs.<sup>34</sup>

As further shown on Map 4.1, the identified farmland preservation areas in Racine County are located within the Towns of Burlington and Waterford and the Village of Mt. Pleasant. These areas have long been identified for farmland preservation under County and local plans and zoning. More detailed mapping of the farmland preservation areas within the Towns of Burlington and Waterford and the Village of Mt. Pleasant is presented on Maps 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4, respectively.

In general, the identified farmland preservation areas are intended to be preserved for agricultural and related uses, including resource protection. The specific types of uses recommended within farmland preservation areas are described in the next section of this chapter, which deals with farmland preservation zoning.

## **Farmland Preservation Zoning**

One of the most effective tools available to local governments to preserve farmland is zoning. In Racine County, all towns are subject to the County zoning ordinance, including general zoning and floodplain and shoreland zoning provisions. Cities and Villages administer their own zoning ordinances.

Section 91.44 of the *Wisconsin Statutes* specifies standards for farmland preservation zoning that must be met to obtain State certification of that zoning for purposes of the amended Wisconsin Farmland Preservation program. A certifiable farmland preservation district must limit land use to agricultural uses; specified accessory uses (including farm residences); specified agriculture-related uses; and very limited nonfarm residential development—this being allowed as a conditional use under certain circumstances, as explained later. Certifiable farmland preservation zoning must be substantially consistent with a State-certified farmland preservation plan. Land included in a farmland preservation zoning district must be included in a farmland preservation area identified in the farmland preservation plan. Under the law, an overlay zoning district intended to protect natural resource features may be superimposed on a farmland preservation zoning district, provided the overlay district does not remove land use restrictions from the underlying farmland preservation zoning district.

The designated farmland preservation areas in the Towns of Burlington and Waterford are in the A-1 Farmland Preservation District of the Racine County zoning ordinance. The ratio of all non-farm residential acreage to farm acreage on the base farm tract on which the residence is or will be located will not be greater than one to twenty after the residence is constructed or converted to a non-farm residence. There will not be more than four dwelling units in non-farm residences, nor more than five dwelling units in residences of any kind, on the base farm tract after the residence is constructed or converted to a non-farm residence.

The designated farmland preservation area in the Village of Mt. Pleasant is in the AG Agriculture District of Village zoning ordinance. This district establishes a minimum parcel size of 20 acres and generally limits land use to agriculture-related uses. The Village of Mt. Pleasant should review the current district regulations of its AG Agriculture Zoning District to determine whether any revisions are needed to comply with the zoning standards of the State Farmland Preservation program, consulting with the DATCP staff in this regard.

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<sup>34</sup> *The environmental areas are shown on the map in order to indicate the extent and general type of natural features that exist on parcels within farmland preservation areas and thereby assist in the identification of conservancy areas on zoning maps, as appropriate.*

**Table 4.1**  
**Farmland Preservation Areas in Racine County: 2050**

Community	Farmland Preservation Area (Acres)	Environmental Corridors <sup>a</sup> Within Farmland Preservation Areas (Acres)	Total (Acres)
Town of Burlington	7,571	2,401	9,972
Town of Waterford	9,565	3,380	12,945
Village of Mt. Pleasant	794	35	829
Racine County	17,930	5,816	23,746

<sup>a</sup> Includes primary environmental corridors, secondary environmental corridors, isolated natural resource areas, and associated surface water.

Source: Racine County and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

### **Conditional Use Provisions to Accommodate Limited Nonfarm Residential Development**

The zoning standards established under the amended State Farmland Preservation program provide the option of allowing very limited nonfarm residential development as a conditional use within a farmland preservation zoning district. To comply with the State standards, the conditional use zoning provisions would have to meet the following standards:

- The ratio of nonfarm residential acreage to farm acreage on the base farm tract<sup>35</sup> on which the residence is or will be located will not be greater than one to 20 after the residence is constructed or converted to a nonfarm residence
- There will not be more than four dwelling units in nonfarm residences, nor, for a new nonfarm residence, more than five dwelling units in residences of any kind, on the base farm tract if a residence is constructed or converted to a nonfarm residence
- The location and size of the proposed nonfarm residential parcel, and, for a new nonfarm residence, the location of the nonfarm residence on that nonfarm residential parcel, will not do any of the following:
  - Convert prime farmland from agricultural use or convert land previously used as cropland, other than a woodlot, from agricultural use if there is a reasonable alternative location or size on the farm for a nonfarm residential parcel or nonfarm residence
  - Significantly impair or limit the current or future agricultural use of other protected farmland

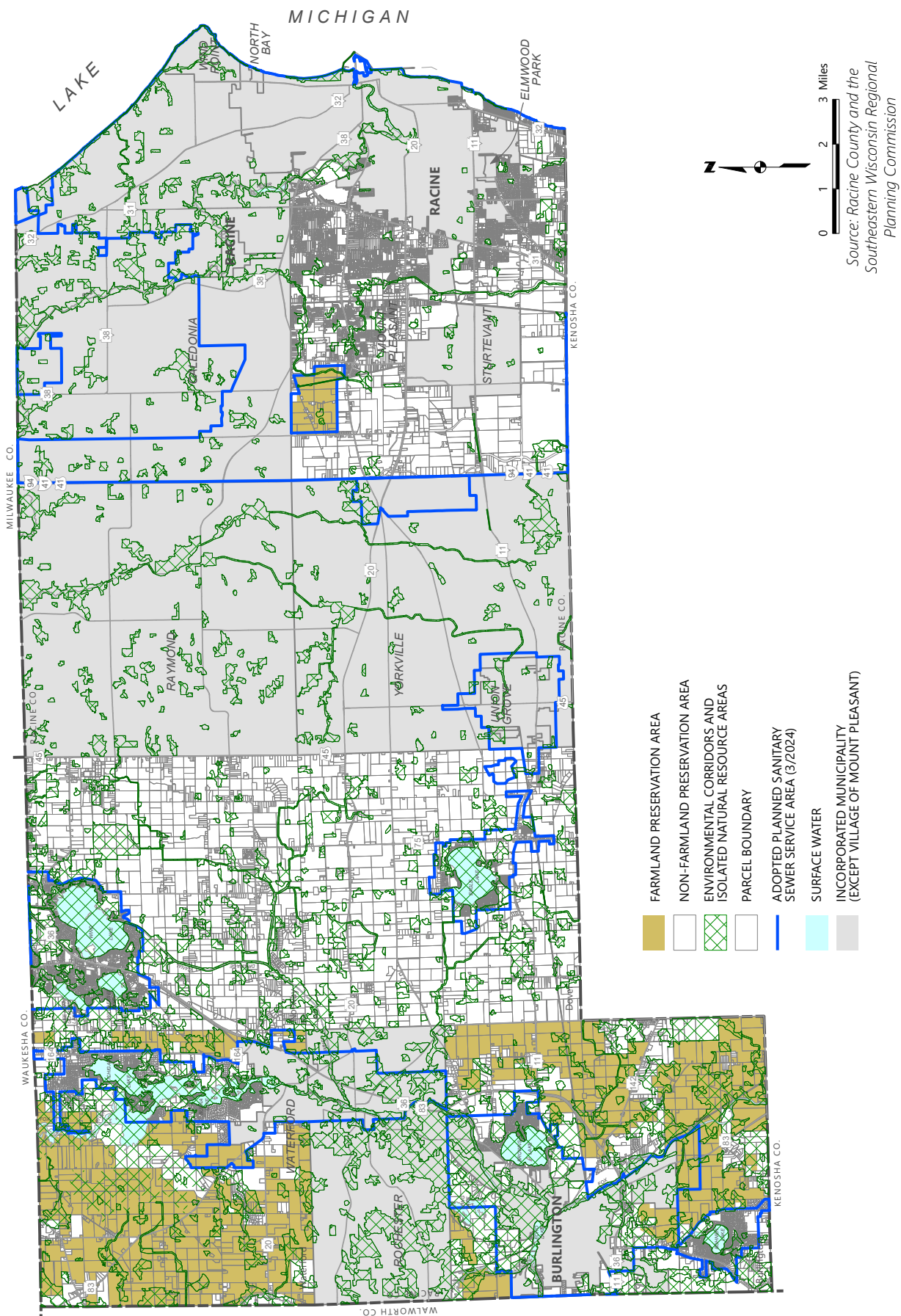
A political subdivision may issue a conditional use permit that includes more than one nonfarm residence in a qualifying nonfarm residential cluster. The *Statutes* specify the following criteria for developing a nonfarm residential cluster:

- The parcels on which the nonfarm residences would be located are contiguous
- The political subdivision imposes legal restrictions on the construction of the nonfarm residences so that if all the nonfarm residences were constructed, each would satisfy the requirements listed previously for nonfarm residences

<sup>35</sup> Section 91.01(5) of the Statutes defines a base farm tract as one of the following: 1) all land, whether one parcel or two or more contiguous parcels, that is in a farmland preservation zoning district and that is part of a single farm (all land under common ownership that is primarily devoted to agricultural use) on the date that DATCP first certifies the farmland preservation zoning ordinance covering the land or on an earlier date specified in the farmland preservation zoning ordinance, regardless of subsequent changes in the size of the farm, or 2) any other tract that DATCP by rule defines as a base farm tract. According to DATCP staff, contiguous means parcels which are part of a single farm operation under common ownership that are abutting or immediately adjacent to each other with the exception of being separated by a waterway or street, railway, or utility right-of-way. Contiguous does not include a situation where only the corner points of parcels are touching.

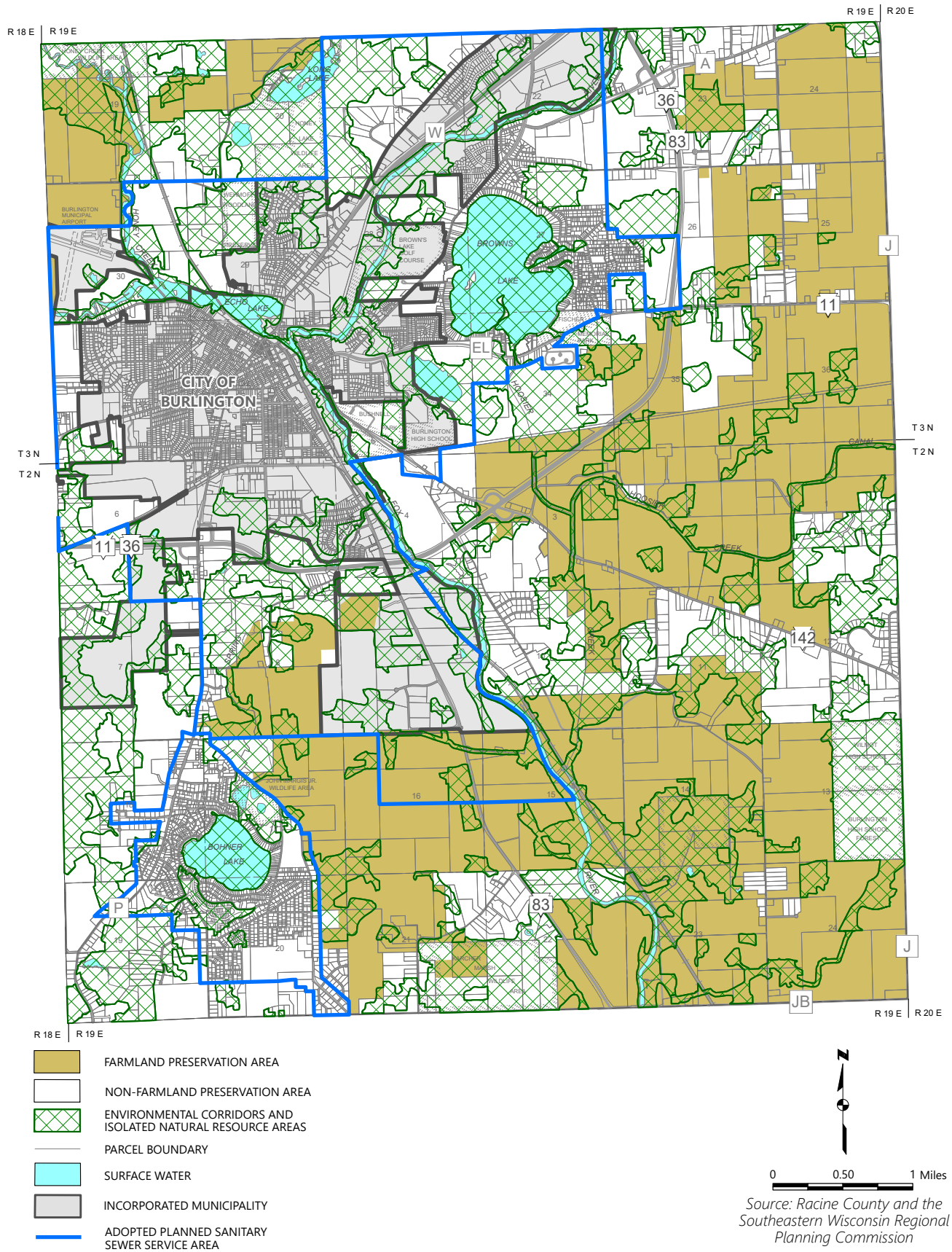


**Map 4.1**  
**Farmland Preservation Areas in Racine County: 2050**

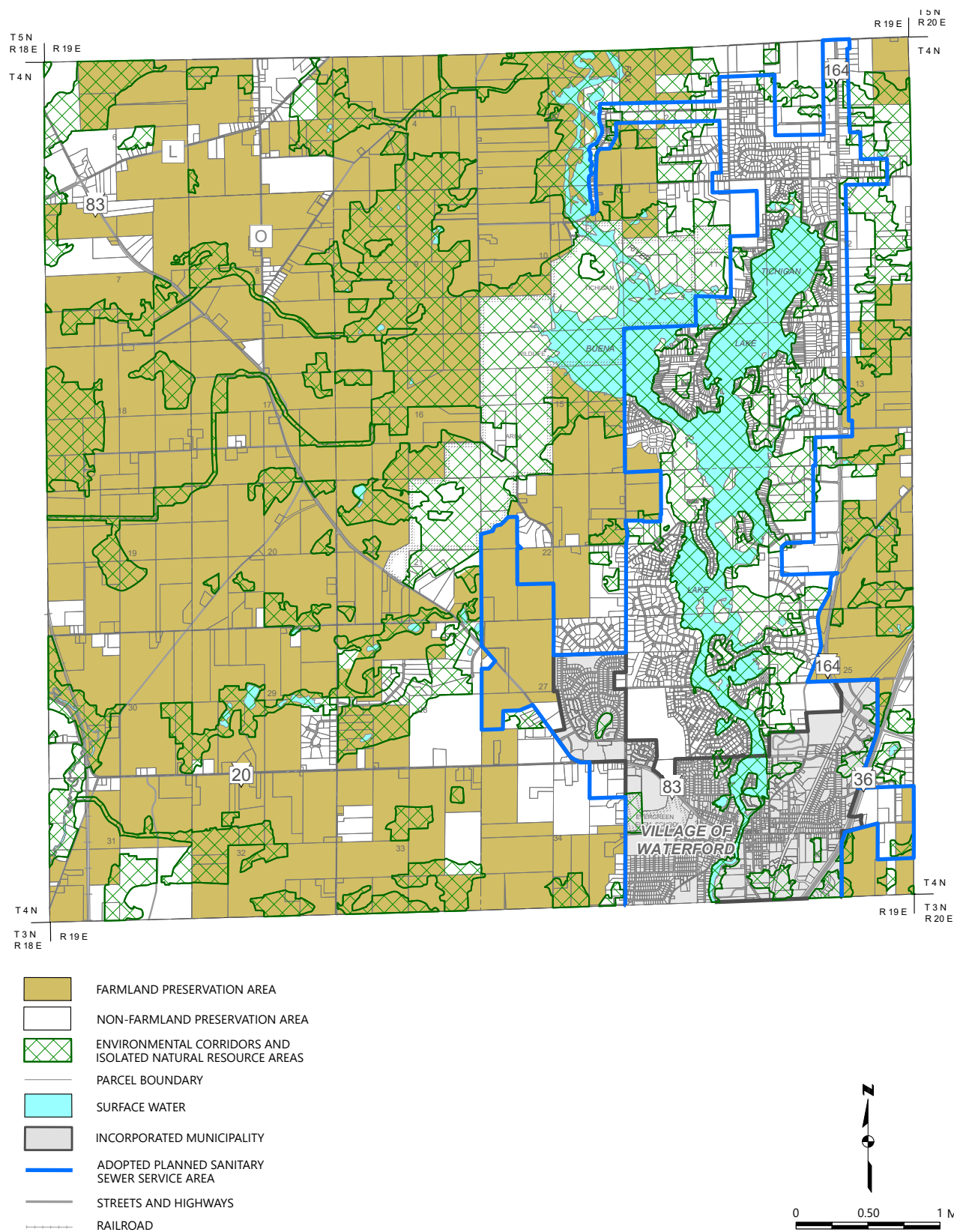




## Map 4.2 Farmland Preservation Areas Within the Town of Burlington: 2050



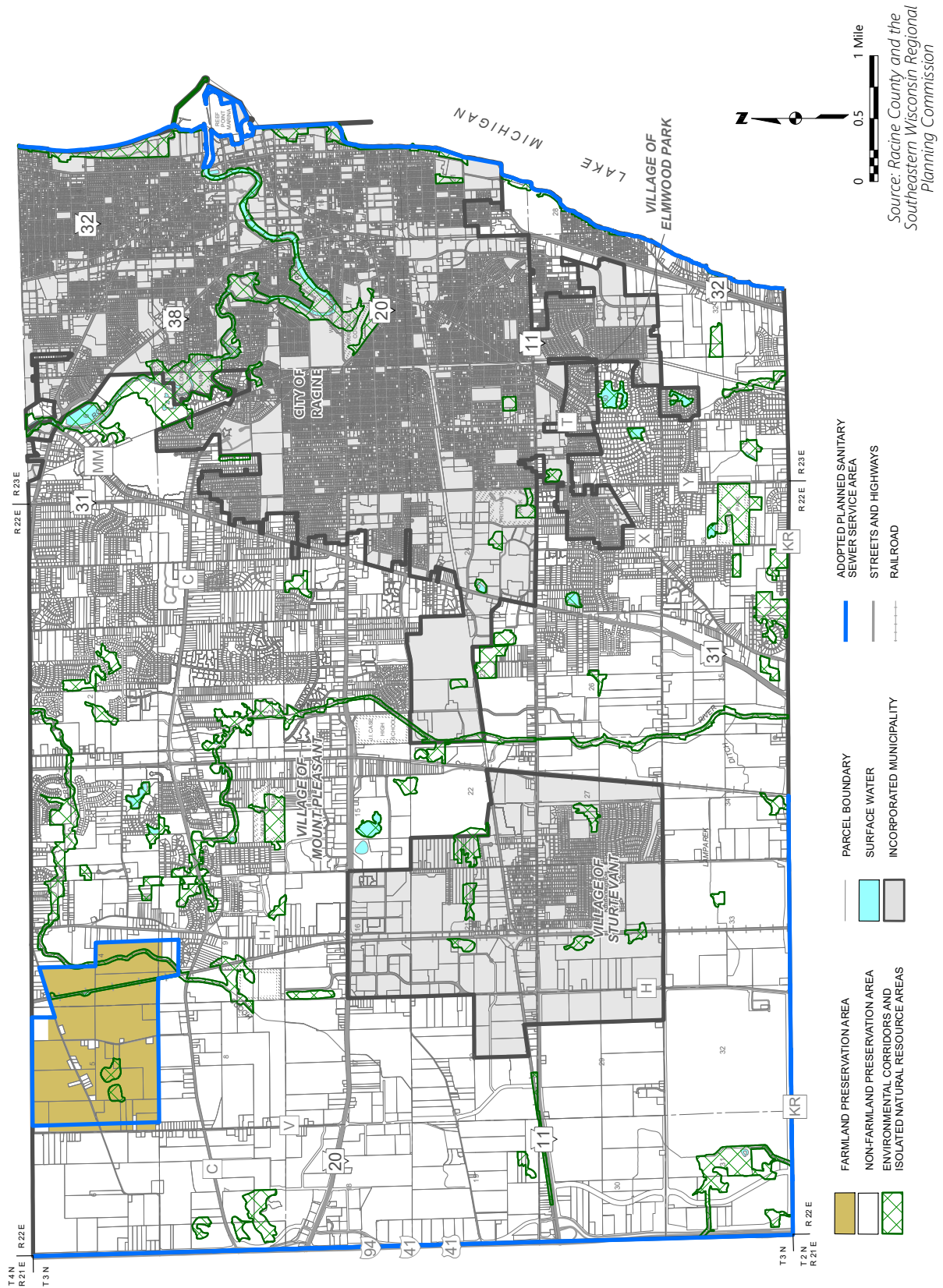
## Map 4.3 Farmland Preservation Areas Within the Town of Waterford: 2050





## Map 4.4

### Farmland Preservation Areas Within the Village of Mount Pleasant: 2050



County and local governments that choose to include the conditional use option for allowing nonfarm residential development in farmland preservation zoning districts must delineate the location and actual configuration of base farm tracts on zoning maps which are then “frozen” at the time of zoning certification by DATCP. Reconfiguration or removal of an established base farm tract may occur by amending the farmland preservation zoning ordinance and submitting it to DATCP for recertification.

Racine County and the Village of Mt. Pleasant have the option of including these conditional use provisions to accommodate limited nonfarm residential development in their respective farmland preservation zoning districts.

### ***Farmland Preservation Zoning Certification***

DATCP determines if a farmland preservation zoning ordinance meets the statutory requirements and is eligible for certification. DATCP also determines the certification period, which may not exceed 10 years. Near the end of that certification period, the local zoning jurisdiction would review its farmland preservation zoning provisions, make any necessary amendments, and submit the farmland preservation zoning for recertification. State certification is needed to enable eligible farmers to apply for the Wisconsin Preservation program tax credit on the basis of farmland preservation.

### ***Rezoning from the Farmland Preservation Zoning District***

The conditions to rezone land from a certified farmland preservation zoning district are specified in Section 91.48 of the *Statutes*. A county or local government may rezone land out of a farmland preservation zoning district without having to submit the local zoning ordinance and map to DATCP for recertification if the county or local government finds all the following, after holding a public hearing on the requested rezoning:

- The rezoned land is better suited for a use not allowed in the farmland preservation zoning district
- The rezoning is consistent with the any applicable comprehensive plan
- The rezoning is substantially consistent with the county’s certified farmland preservation plan
- The rezoning will not substantially impair or limit current or future agricultural use of surrounding parcels that are zoned for or legally restricted to agricultural use

A county or local government with a certified farmland preservation zoning ordinance is required to provide a report to DATCP by March 1 of each year indicating the number of acres that the local government has rezoned out of a farmland preservation zoning district. The report must include a map that specifically identifies the location of the lands that were rezoned.

## **4.4 OTHER AGRICULTURAL LANDS**

It should be noted that, in addition to the farmland preservation areas shown on Map 4.1, there are large farming areas in other areas of the County, including the Town of Dover and the Town of Norway. While they contain large areas of agricultural land having productive agricultural soils (largely Class II and Class III soils), these Towns have historically chosen to try to preserve their agricultural resources without specifically identifying farmland preservation areas in their local comprehensive plans and without applying farmland preservation zoning. These Towns reaffirmed this position in their current comprehensive plans.

In general, this update of the farmland preservation plan reaffirms the recommendations of the Racine County comprehensive plan pertaining to other agricultural and rural lands not specifically included in the planned farmland preservation area. This plan encourages the continuation of agricultural-related activity in such areas, including conventional farming as well as niche agricultural uses such as orchards, hobby farms, equestrian farms, organic farming operations, and community-supported agriculture. The plan would accommodate rural-density residential development at locally determined densities as appropriate, recommending the use of conservation subdivisions where possible to minimize the loss of farmland and other open land.

## 4.5 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS AND MEASURES

There are a number of programs and measures available to help implement this farmland preservation plan. Perhaps the most important of these, the application of farmland preservation zoning to lands within the identified farmland preservation areas, was described earlier in this chapter. A variety of other programs and measures exist that may contribute to the preservation of agricultural resources in Racine County. Some of these pertain to the identified farmland preservation areas and are linked to the State Farmland Preservation program, while others pertain more broadly to agricultural areas throughout the County. These programs and measures are described below.

### Farmland Preservation Program Tax Credits

Tax credits available to eligible farmers with land in the planned farmland preservation areas provide financial benefits that help to maintain the economic viability of farming. In tax year 2021, there were 9,489 farmland preservation tax credit claims reported under the farmland preservation program, and those claims totaled about \$14 million Statewide with an average credit per claim of \$1,044.<sup>36</sup> The total acreage reported as the base for all claims was nearly 2 million acres with an average of about 184 acres per claim. There is no cap on the amount of credit that an individual can claim or on the amount of acreage eligible for a credit; however, if the total amount of claims Statewide exceeds \$27 million in a given year, the State is obligated to pro-rate the value of the credits available.

Chapter 91 of the *Statutes* requires landowners to meet the following criteria in order to be eligible to claim farmland preservation tax credits:

- Own land that is located in a certified farmland preservation zoning district and/or covered by an effective farmland preservation agreement<sup>37</sup>
- Be Wisconsin residents. Corporations who wish to claim the credit must be organized under the rules of Wisconsin
- Produced at least \$6,000 gross farm revenue during the preceding year or \$18,000 during the previous three tax years
- Claimants must be able to certify that all property taxes owed from the previous year have been paid
- Be in compliance with state soil and water conservation standards
- Must not have claimed the homestead credit or the veterans and surviving spouses' property tax credit for the same tax year

If landowners achieve all of the above requirements, they may be considered eligible to collect tax credits with their income tax return for one of the following amounts<sup>38</sup>:

- \$10 per acre for qualifying acres that are in a farmland preservation zoning district but are not subject to a farmland preservation agreement
- \$10 per acre for qualifying acres that are subject to a farmland preservation agreement in an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) but are not located in a farmland preservation zoning district, OR qualifying acres that are subject to a farmland preservation agreement signed before July 1, 2009 that has been modified to meet current eligibility requirements

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<sup>36</sup> Documented in a report titled, *Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program: 2021-2023 Biennial Report, March 2024, prepared by DATCP.*

<sup>37</sup> *Agricultural enterprise areas and farmland preservation agreements are described later in this chapter.*

<sup>38</sup> *On December 6, 2023, Assembly Bill 133, now Wisconsin Act 42, was passed which made changes to farmland preservation agreements minimum term lengths and increased farmland preservation tax credits for all current participants. These changes went into effect starting on December 8, 2023, and affected tax credit claims beginning tax year 2023.*



- \$12.50 per acre for qualifying acres that are in a farmland preservation zoning district and subject to a farmland preservation agreement in an AEA or a farmland preservation agreement signed before July 1, 2009, that has been modified to meet current eligibility requirements

### **Soil and Water Conservation Compliance**

As part of the Working Lands Program under Sections 91.80 and 91.82 of the *Statutes*, farmers who claim a farmland preservation tax credit must comply with State soil and water conservation standards. Beginning with tax year 2010, farmers cannot claim the farmland preservation tax credit under the program unless they certify on their tax returns that they comply with State conservation standards. For a claimant to certify compliance on a tax return, the claimant's farm must:

- Comply with Chapter NR 151, "Runoff Management," of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code* runoff pollution performance standards and prohibitions incorporated into Chapter ATCP 50, "Soil and Water Resource Management Program," of the *Administrative Code*, or
- Have a schedule of compliance designed to meet State conservation standards by a specific deadline set by the County

Farmers who are uncertain about their compliance status can remain eligible for tax credits only if they contact a conservation professional to assess their farm's compliance status and take further actions to achieve compliance, if needed.

Counties have responsibilities to monitor compliance with the standards, including farm inspections at least once every four years. If a claimant is found not to be in compliance with the standards, the County will take appropriate actions to address the concerns, and in certain cases, may issue a notice of noncompliance to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. Once the claimant regains compliance, the County will notify the Department of Revenue that the claimant is again eligible to receive tax credits.

### **Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs)**

Under the existing farmland preservation law, DATCP is allowed to designate, by administrative rule, certain lands as AEAs. AEAs may be established in response to resolutions adopted by local governing bodies petitioning identified contiguous farmlands to be preserved. DATCP defines an AEA as a contiguous land area devoted primarily to agricultural use and locally targeted for agricultural preservation or agricultural development. AEAs must be located within a farmland preservation area as identified in a certified farmland preservation plan. They may be established whether or not the local government adopts a farmland preservation zoning ordinance. Farmers within designated AEAs may enter into voluntary farmland preservation agreements with DATCP to establish eligibility to collect farmland preservation tax credits in exchange for agreeing to keep their farm in agricultural use for at least 10 years. The program requires a minimum of five individual farm owners to submit a petition for consideration with the support of their local government. There currently is no minimum size requirement for an AEA, but State law requires DATCP to give higher priority to any AEA application that contains at least 1,000 contiguous acres. "Contiguous" means parcels that meet at more than one point and are only separated by a lake, stream, or transportation or utility right-of-way. Eligible farms must have at least \$6,000 in gross farm revenues in the previous year, or \$18,000 over the previous three years. AEAs may also span political jurisdictions, which may involve two or more towns or counties. Chapter 91 of the *Statutes* gives DATCP the authority to designate AEAs with a combined area of not more than one million acres Statewide.

The overall boundary of a proposed AEA must enclose a contiguous area containing at least the land owned by each of the farm owners petitioning; however, the land owned by the petitioners need not be contiguous, and the boundary may include lands owned by others who are not petitioners. While AEAs are oriented towards agricultural preservation and agricultural development, they may include other compatible land uses such as significant natural resources or compatible infrastructure that supports agriculture.

The designation of an AEA does not control or limit land uses within the designated area, nor does it protect such areas from encroaching incompatible development or land use conflicts. The designation of an AEA identifies the area as valuable for current and future agricultural use, with the potential to promote investment in agriculture and agricultural-related businesses. County and local governments may establish

and enforce land use controls, such as farmland preservation zoning, to preserve, protect, and promote agricultural enterprises as appropriate. The designation of an AEA remains in effect unless the designation is terminated by the State through administrative rule, an action which requires a public hearing.

Agricultural enterprise areas could potentially be established in Racine County in the Towns of Burlington and Waterford as shown on Map 4.5. AEAs in the Town of Burlington could potentially encompass about 9,972 acres. This AEA could also include lands to the south in the Town of Brighton in Kenosha County and/or lands to the west in the Town of Spring Prairie in Walworth County. An AEA in the Town of Waterford could potentially encompass about 12,944 acres. This AEA could also include lands to the west in the Town of East Troy in Walworth County and/or to the north in the Town of Vernon in Waukesha County. If Racine County and adjacent counties consider creating a joint AEA, the counties involved must jointly petition DATCP to be officially certified.

### **Farmland Preservation Agreements**

Landowners within an AEA may voluntarily sign a farmland preservation agreement with DATCP to be eligible to receive tax credits where there is no farmland preservation zoning—or to receive a higher level of credit where such zoning is in place. The agreement requires the land to be in agricultural use for a minimum of 10<sup>39</sup> years. Proposed agreements must be submitted to the County for confirmation that the land subject to the proposed agreement is located within a farmland preservation area and an AEA. The County then forwards the proposed agreement to DATCP. Tax credits available to landowners in an AEA are:

- \$10 per acre for qualifying acres that are subject to a farmland preservation agreement in an AEA but are not located in a farmland preservation zoning district, OR qualifying acres that are subject to a farmland preservation agreement signed before July 1, 2009, that has been modified to meet current eligibility requirements, or
- \$12.50 per acre for qualifying acres that are in a farmland preservation zoning district and subject to a farmland preservation agreement in an AEA or a farmland preservation agreement signed before July 1, 2009, that has been modified to meet current eligibility requirements

A landowner that signed and agreed to the terms of a farmland preservation agreement has the option to release all or a portion of their land from the agreement prior to the natural expiration of an agreement, a minimum 10-year term, by paying a conversion fee. The conversion fee is equal to three times the per acre value of the highest value category of tillable cropland in the town in which the land is located in, as specified by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue under 73.03(2a) of the *Statutes* for the year in which the land is released. If the land is sold, it still remains part of the designated AEA.

### **Conservation Easements**

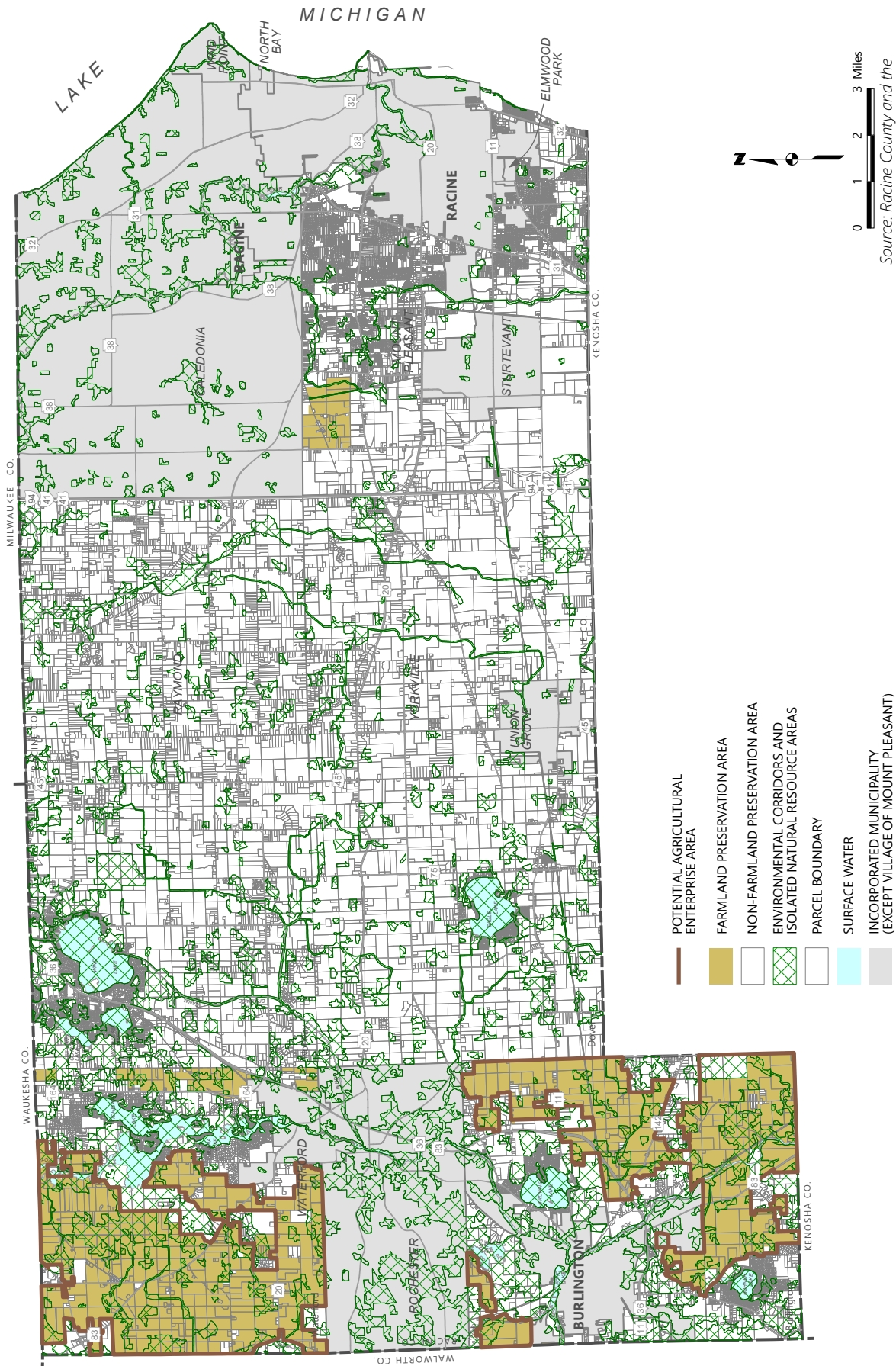
A conservation easement is a legally recorded agreement of restrictions that landowners voluntarily place on their property to protect agricultural, natural, or cultural resources, such as farmland, water resources, open space, wildlife habitat, or historic sites, by prohibiting specified uses. For example, most agricultural easements restrict uses other than those associated with agricultural practices, such as residential, commercial, or industrial uses. Land remains on the tax roll, sometimes at a reduced value. Easements could be conveyed to either a governmental unit or a qualified conservation organization such as a land trust (e.g., the SENO K/RLT Conservancy) to monitor and enforce the restrictions set forth in the easement. In return, landowners can receive tax benefits for granting easements.

Usually, the terms of an easement are specific and include restrictions on allowable uses on the property and the time period set for the easement. Although most conservation easements are permanent, some impose restrictions for a specified number of years. The easement also binds future landowners to the terms set forth in a legally recorded easement attached to the land.

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<sup>39</sup> On December 6, 2023, Assembly Bill 133, now Wisconsin Act 42, was passed which made changes to farmland preservation agreements minimum term lengths and increased farmland preservation tax credits for all current participants. These changes went into effect starting on December 8, 2023, and affected tax credit claims beginning tax year 2023.

**Map 4.5**  
**Potential Agricultural Enterprise Areas in Racine County**



Source: Racine County and the  
 Southeastern Wisconsin Regional  
 Planning Commission

## **Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE)**

Purchase of Development Rights, or “PDR” programs, represent another potential means to ensure the preservation of agricultural lands as well as other natural areas and open space. Under a PDR program, landowners are compensated for permanently committing their land to agricultural and open space use. Deed restrictions or easements are used to ensure that the lands concerned remain in agricultural or other open space use. Such restrictions are attached to the land in perpetuity and remain in effect regardless of future sale or other transfer of the land.

PDR programs may be administered and funded by State, county, or local units of government, land trusts and other private organizations, or combinations of these. The amounts paid to farmland owners under PDR programs may be calculated on the basis of the number of dwelling units permitted under existing zoning, on the basis of the difference between the market value of the land and its value solely for agricultural purposes, or on some other basis.

PDR programs provide assurance that farmland or other open space areas will be permanently retained in open use. Landowners receive a cash payment while retaining all other rights to the land, including the right to continue farming. The money paid to the landowner may be used for any purpose, such as debt reduction, capital improvement to the farm, or retirement income. Lands included in a PDR program remain on the tax roll and continue to generate property taxes.

Section 93.73 of the *Statutes* includes a voluntary program for the purchase of development rights, the PACE program. Under this program, landowners would sell an agricultural conservation easement to a qualified government agency or nonprofit conservation organization. Presumed development rights to the land are relinquished in exchange for compensation. The landowner retains full ownership and uses the land for agricultural purposes. Only lands designated for farmland preservation in a certified County farmland preservation plan are eligible for participation in this program. Easements are voluntary and allow a landowner to be compensated for limiting development on their farmland. Easements are permanent and are transferred to subsequent landowners if the property is sold.

The PACE program provides State funds to cooperating local governments or nonprofit conservation organizations for up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural conservation easement, plus reasonable transaction costs. Land with an agricultural conservation easement cannot be developed for any purpose that would prevent its use for agriculture. Easements are intended to strengthen areas that have been planned and designated as a farmland preservation area in a certified county farmland preservation plan. Such easements may also provide additional protection to areas that have been designated as agricultural enterprise areas (AEAs). Permanent deed restrictions must be recorded with the land through the County Register of Deeds, which explicitly states the restrictions on the land’s future use.

When appraising land for an agricultural conservation easement, both the development value and the agricultural value of the land must be computed. Consequently, the difference between the two values is the easement value, of which the State can fund up to 50 percent of the cost.

PACE is a competitive program where various criteria are used to rank applications for funding consideration. The State allocated \$12 million for the program during the 2009-2011 State fiscal years. In 2011, the Legislature eliminated funding for the program. Easement purchases that had been initiated in 2010 were funded through the Wisconsin Stewardship program. No new applications for the PACE program are being accepted at this time. The Legislature directed DATCP to identify options to replace the PACE program with a less costly program. DATCP completed its evaluative report on the PACE program, and as a result, the DATCP Board voted unanimously to develop a resolution supporting PACE and request the Legislature to find an appropriate funding source. While the PACE program is still active, it has not been funded since 2010.



### **Other Conservation Techniques<sup>40</sup>**

Most of the plan implementation measures described to this point are linked to the State Farmland Preservation Program. Other conservation programs and techniques that have been successful in Wisconsin communities and across the nation in areas that have experienced development pressures may have relevance for Racine County communities. Examples of these are described in this section. Communities that do not include certified farmland preservation areas may use or encourage these alternative conservation methods to preserve other agricultural lands and natural resource areas, while allowing limited development.

#### ***Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)***

A TDR program is a voluntary, incentive-based program that allows landowners to transfer the number of dwelling units allowed on a parcel under existing zoning from that parcel, which would be maintained in open space use, to a different parcel, where the number of dwelling units allowed would be correspondingly increased. When the parcels are held by the same owner, the development rights are, in effect, simply transferred from one parcel to the other by the owner. When the parcels are held by different landowners, the transfer of development rights involves a sale of rights from one owner to another, at fair market value. In either case, the result is a shift in density away from areas proposed to be maintained in farming or other open space use toward areas recommended for development. This allows a community to preserve natural features and agricultural land and at the same time concentrate urban development around existing urban centers and infrastructure. The process is managed through dual zoning that provides property owners a choice whether or not to participate. Landowners who sell development rights are compensated without having to develop their parcel. They can continue to generate income from agricultural, forestry, or other natural land uses. TDRs are primarily feasible in areas where high-density urban development threatens valuable agricultural resources. The transfer of development rights may be permanent or may be for a specific period of time or set of conditions.

The transfer of development rights may be implemented only if authorized under local zoning. To enable the transfer of development rights, the zoning ordinance must establish procedures by which the TDR technique will be administered, including the formula for calculating the number of residential dwelling units which may be transferred from the “sending” area to the “receiving” area. The zoning district map must identify the sending and receiving areas, or at least identify the districts within which development rights can be transferred from one parcel to another.

While the creation and administration of a TDR program is somewhat complicated, the technique remains a potentially effective means for preserving open space and maintaining rural densities, while directing development to areas where it may best be accommodated.

#### ***Conservation Subdivisions***

Conservation subdivision design, sometimes referred to as cluster development design, involves the grouping of dwellings on a portion of a development parcel in order to preserve the remainder of the parcel in open space. Management options for the open space areas include, among others, preservation of existing natural features, restoration of natural conditions, and new or continued agricultural use. The open space may be owned by a homeowner’s association, the local municipality or County, the State, a land trust or other non-profit conservation organization, or the original landowner. Conservation easements and attendant deed restrictions should be used to protect the common open space from future conversion to more intensive uses. Stewardship plans are also typically required to ensure proper management and maintenance of the common open space areas.

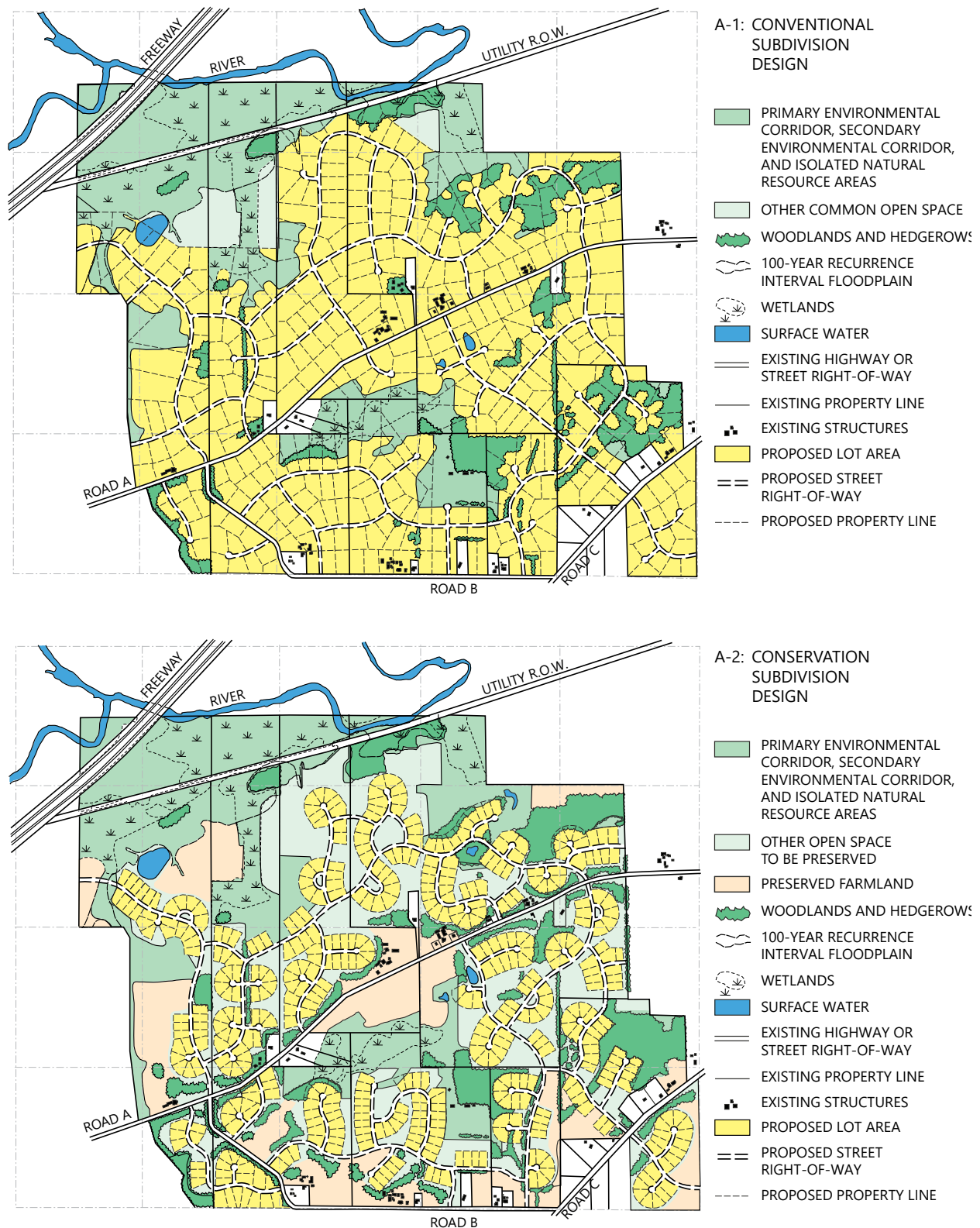
In comparison to conventional subdivision designs, conservation subdivisions afford greater opportunity for preserving open space, including farmland, and maintaining the natural resources of the parcel being developed, as illustrated in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. When properly designed, the visual impact of new residential development from surrounding streets and adjoining parcels can be minimized and significant natural features and agricultural lands can be protected from development. Infrastructure installation and maintenance costs may be reduced due to shortened street and utility lengths.

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<sup>40</sup> Additional information relative to farmland preservation can be found in the report, *Saving American Farmland: What Works*, American Farmland Trust, 1997.

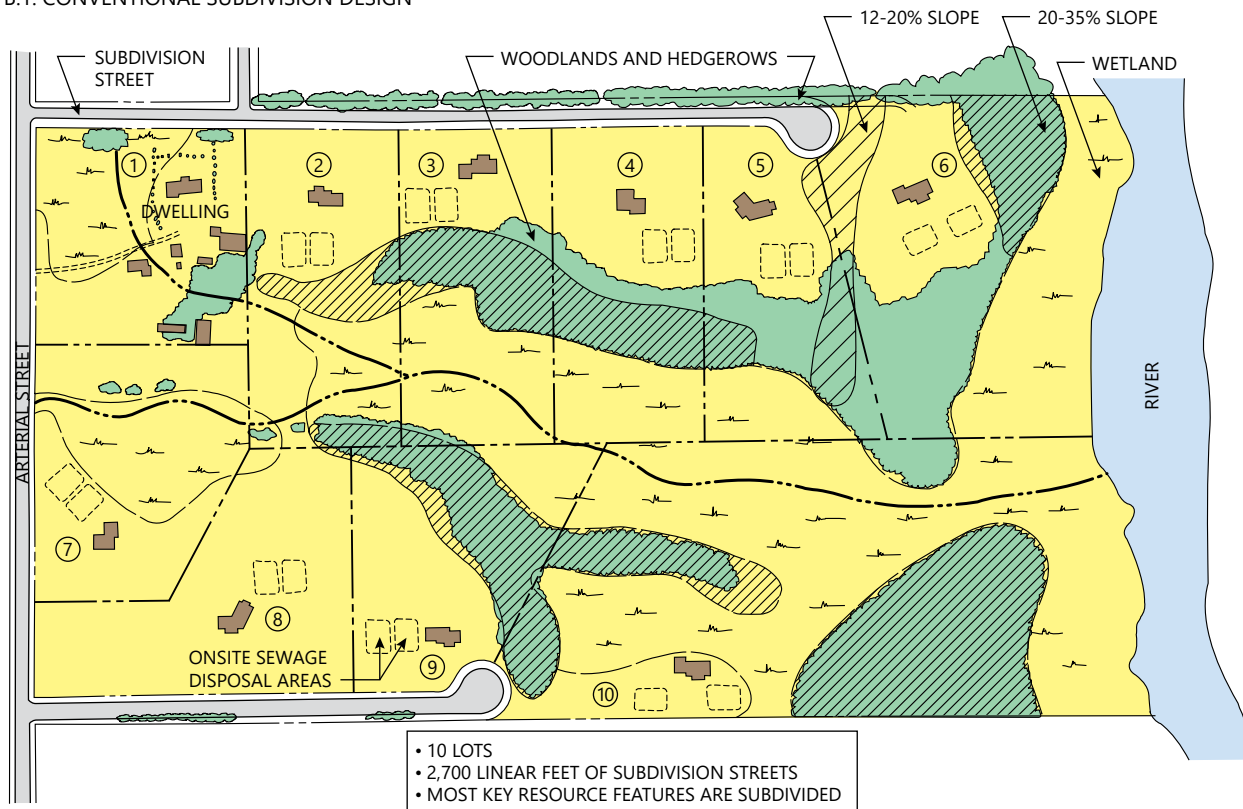


**Figure 4.1**  
**Comparison of Conventional and Conservation Subdivision Designs**

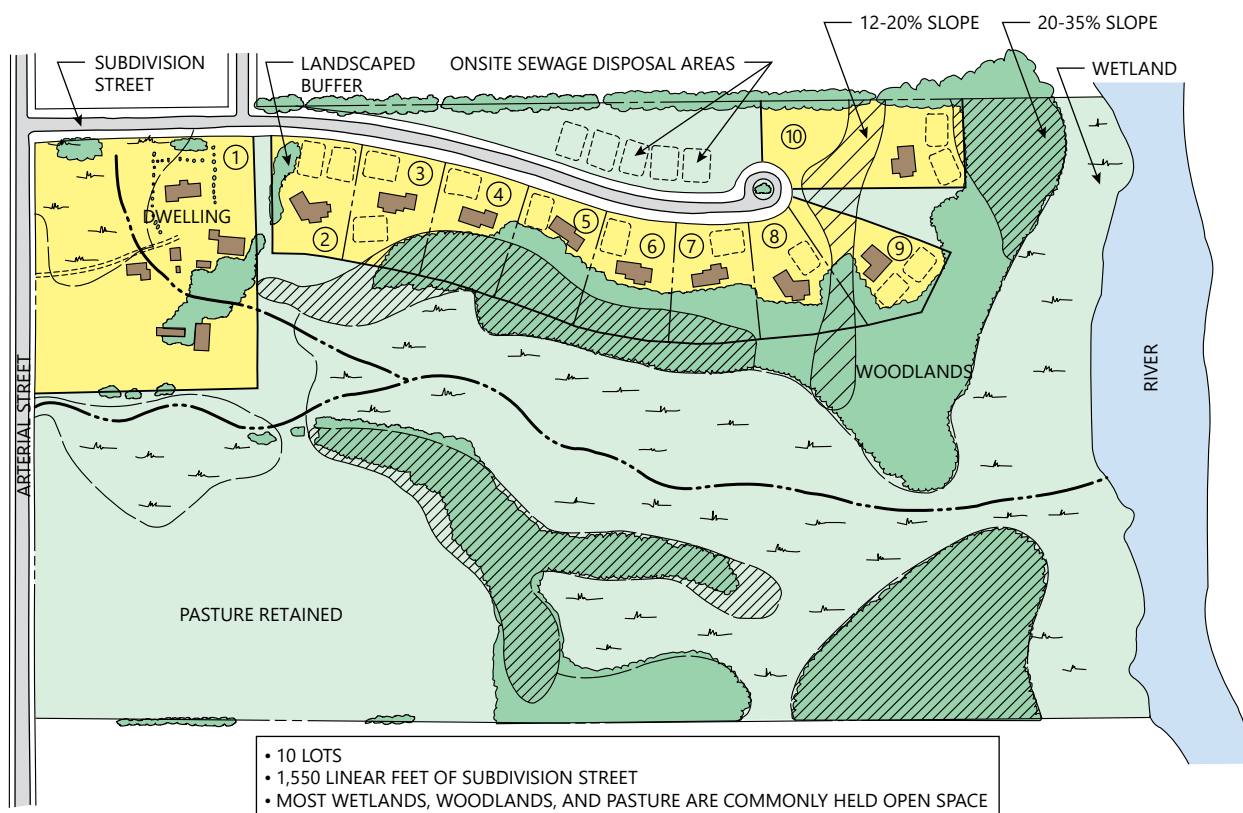


**Figure 4.1 (Continued)**

**B.1: CONVENTIONAL SUBDIVISION DESIGN**

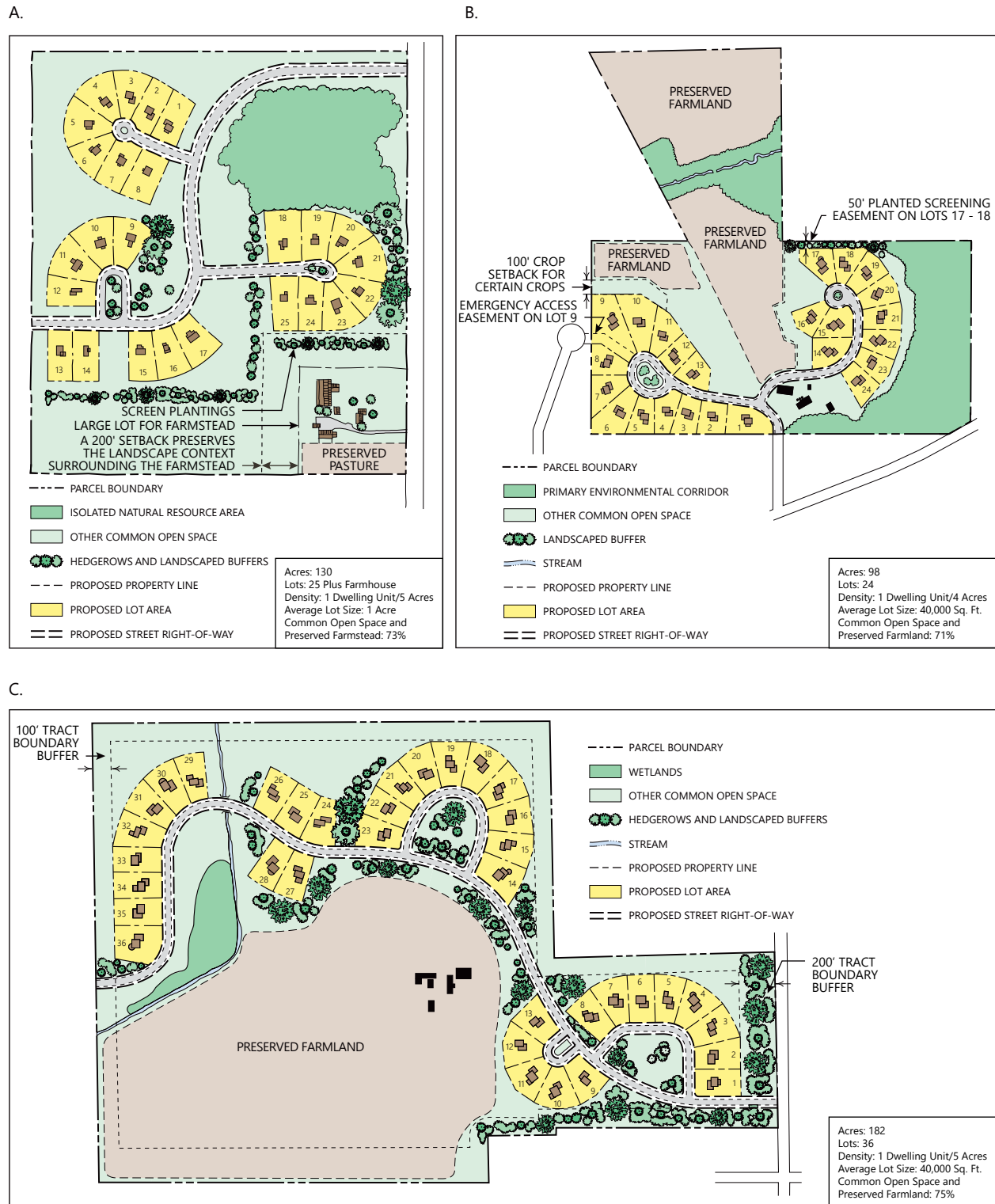


**B.2: CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION DESIGN**



Source: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

**Figure 4.2**  
**Conservation Subdivision Designs Within Agricultural Areas**



Source: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

### ***Lot Averaging***

In some cases, it may be determined that a cluster development is not appropriate for a particular parcel. In other cases, the community may be uncomfortable with the idea of joint ownership of common open space. In such cases, the community concerned could consider allowing lot averaging as a means of preserving rural areas, as illustrated in Figure 4.3. Maintaining an overall rural density, the lot sizes would be permitted to vary as long as the lot area that is taken from one lot is transferred to one or more other lots in the tract of land being developed, so that a minimum “average” lot size required by the zoning ordinance is maintained within the development site. Lots within the development larger than the minimum lot size required by the zoning ordinance would be deed restricted to prevent further division. Although no common open space is created, the advantage of lot averaging is flexibility of site design and the ability to concentrate some of the permitted dwellings on smaller lots in certain areas of the development parcel while the remaining dwellings would be located on a few larger lots. Alternatively, a large parcel could be maintained in agricultural use with smaller lots developed with homes. Features of the rural landscape or environmentally sensitive areas can be preserved, albeit on private lots.

### ***Density Bonus Incentive***

A density bonus is an incentive-based tool that permits developers to increase the maximum allowable development on a property if certain conditions are met. A density bonus is commonly used to promote the conservation or enhancement of natural resources, such as agricultural land and open space. A municipality may allow a developer to build more units than is permitted in an area, except State certified farmland preservation areas, in exchange for permanently protecting natural resource areas, restoring environmental lands, or providing environmental improvements such as landscaping or developing a nature trail.

Density bonuses may be used to achieve an array of local government objectives, such as the preservation of agricultural land, open space, and vistas, and the conservation of wetlands, water bodies, woodlands, prairies, or other natural features that a local government values. Density bonus standards typically vary among local governments and must be incorporated into a local government’s subdivision, zoning, or other development review regulations, if such regulations are to be implemented.

Within Racine County, the Village of Caledonia provides an example of how density bonuses may be used to promote resource conservation. The Village includes the mandatory use of conservation design within its land division ordinance. The Village offers developers up to an additional 20 percent density bonus in the number of lots initially allowed if the developers are willing to meet standards such as self-funding for open space management and designing external connections for trails and open space.

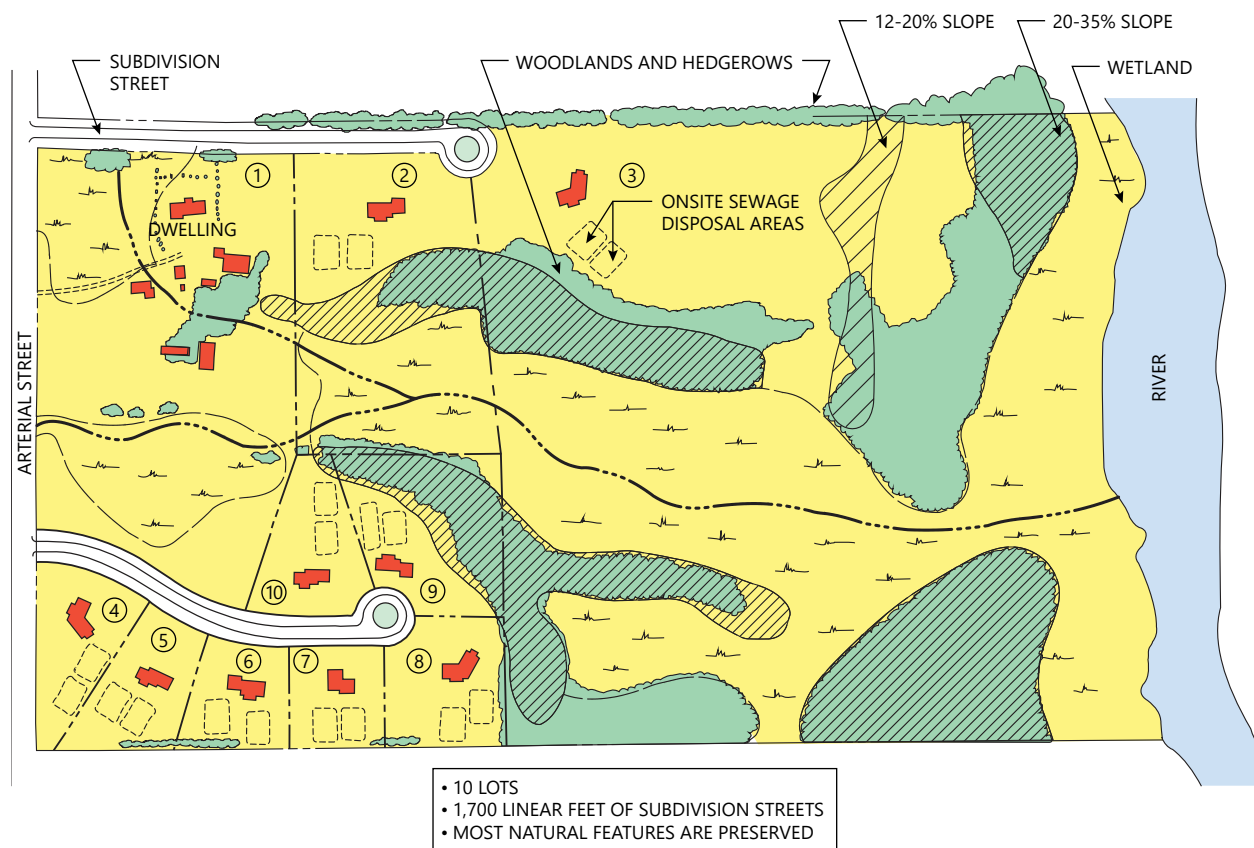
### ***Fee-Simple Purchase***

A fee-simple land purchase involves the acquisition of the full title to a parcel, along with the rights associated with it. This type of purchase allows for permanent open space protection. In most cases, fee-simple acquisition for open space is on a willing seller-willing buyer basis to obtain property. With open space preservation, fee-simple acquisition primarily involves a conservation organization, or the State, County, or local government working with a willing landowner.

Often, nonprofit conservation organizations purchase land and then lease it to the original owner or another individual. A conservation group may lease the land to a local farmer who may use the land for grazing or crop production. The conservation group benefits from this partnership by receiving rent and by having the land managed. The land also generates products and activities for the public, such as farm produce and recreational opportunities.

Fee-simple acquisition for open space purposes has its limitations, including, most importantly, the considerable cost of the outright purchase of lands. In addition, if a nonprofit agency purchases the land, it may or may not allow public access. Also, as land is acquired, it may be taken off the tax rolls, although studies indicate that land adjoining preserved open space typically increases in value, possibly offsetting some of the loss of taxes.

**Figure 4.3**  
**Example of Lot Averaging**



Source: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

### **Donations**

A donation occurs when a landowner transfers agricultural land or open space to a governmental entity or to a land trust in the form of a charitable gift. Land donations of real property can be arranged in various ways to suit the needs and desires of a donor. The potential recipients of donated property should encourage donors to disclose their plans for a bequest, in advance, in order to assure that the donation is appropriate, and to discuss financial arrangements for the property's maintenance and operation.

Donations may also occur in the form of a conservation easement. As discussed earlier, land with such easements would remain under ownership of the property owner donating the easement while voluntarily placing deed restrictions on the land to protect agricultural, natural, or cultural resources. The land would remain on the tax roll, sometimes at a reduced rate.

### **Right-To-Farm Ordinances**

Conflicts can occur between long-standing farming operations and new development near farming areas. The County comprehensive plan and this farmland preservation plan update recognize the need to protect farm operations that use good management practices from nuisance lawsuits that challenge acceptable farming practices and the ability to farm responsibly—in accordance with Wisconsin's "right-to-farm" law (*Wisconsin Statutes* Section 823.08). Implementation of this farmland preservation plan should help prevent the creation of conflicts between urban and agricultural uses.

### **Agricultural Nuisance Notices**

Agricultural nuisance notices are used to alert buyers of agricultural land that agriculture is the primary economic activity of that area, and that the buyer may experience inconvenience or discomfort arising from accepted agricultural practices. In some cases, the notice may be recorded on the deeds to new homes.



Such notices may help to ensure that people who purchase houses in an agricultural area will recognize and be more tolerant of the sometimes inconvenient impacts of agricultural activities.

### **Conservation-Related Funding/Support Programs**

Although this report focuses on farmland preservation, farms may also contain natural features that play an important role in land management, including wetlands and woodlands adjacent to cultivated areas. These areas may act as groundwater recharge areas or help trap sediments or slow stormwater runoff from fields that may otherwise harm nearby streams or lakes. Farmers often may claim both farmland and conservation tax credits by voluntarily preserving agricultural and natural features while practicing certain land management measures. Programs that may help conserve natural features are also described on the following pages.

### **Federal Programs**

#### ***Farm Loan Program (FLP)***

The USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA) administers the Farm Loan Programs of the Federal Farm Bill. This includes making direct and guaranteed farm ownership (FO) and operating loans (OL) to family-size farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank, Farm Credit System institution, or other lender. FSA loans can be used to purchase land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and supplies and can also be used to construct buildings or make farm improvements.

#### ***Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)***

The CRP is a voluntary land conservation program administered by the FSA. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are from 10 to 15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. The CRP goal is to reduce soil erosion, protect the Nation's ability to produce food and fiber, reduce sedimentation in streams and lakes, improve water quality, establish wildlife habitat, and enhance forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive areas to vegetative cover, such as a prairie-compatible, noninvasive forage mix; wildlife plantings; trees; filter strips; or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract based on the agriculture rental value of the land, and up to 50 percent Federal cost sharing is provided to establish vegetative cover. The program is administered by the FSA, with technical assistance provided by the NRCS. NRCS works with landowners to develop their application, and to plan, design, and install conservation practices on the land.

As noted in Chapter 2 of this report, lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program in Racine County totaled 475 acres in 2023. Under the 2008 Federal Farm Bill, however, municipalities are no longer eligible to receive CRP payments, but private landowners remain eligible. The County-owned CRP land enrolled prior to the current Farm Bill will continue to receive an annual rental rate until the CRP contracts for these parcels expire.

#### ***Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)***

Like CRP, CREP is administered by the FSA along with DATCP and the Racine LWCD, and contracts require a 15-year to perpetual commitment to keep lands out of agricultural production. By combining CRP resources with State and private programs, CREP provides farmers and ranchers with a sound financial package for conserving and enhancing the natural resources of farms.

The program is intended to help protect water quality and wildlife habitat. Farmers enrolled in CREP remove land from agricultural production and plant native grasses, trees, and other vegetation to improve water quality, soil conditions, and wildlife habitat. CREP provides rental payments and other financial incentives to encourage producers to voluntarily enroll in 15-year to perpetual contracts. Goals of CREP are to reduce fertilizer and sedimentation runoffs (non-point pollution runoff) and establish riparian buffers and grassland habitat. It can provide a viable option to supplement farm income as well. Such land usually contains poor soils for agricultural production including flood-prone areas (low-yielding land). As noted in Chapter 2 of this report, lands enrolled in CREP in Racine County totaled about 475 acres in 2023.

### ***Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)***

The CSP is a voluntary program that helps producers build on their existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation. The NRCS works one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines and enhances existing efforts, using new conservation practices or activities, based on management objectives for their operation. Producers implement practices and activities in their conservation plan that expands on the benefits of cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving their agricultural operations. Participants enter into a five-year contract and are offered annual payments for implementing these practices on their land and operating and maintaining existing conservation efforts. . Beginning in fiscal year 2024, the USDA increased the minimum annual payment for new and renewed contracts for agricultural producers participating in the CSP from \$1,500 to \$4,000. Contract payments are based on two components:

- Payments to maintain the existing level of conservation, based on the land uses included in the contract and an NRCS assessment of existing stewardship at the time of enrollment
- Payments to implement additional conservation activities

Most participants will be eligible for a \$4000 minimum payment during any year that their total annual contract payment falls below the minimum payment amount.

### ***Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)***

The voluntary EQIP is NRCS' 'flagship conservation' program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands. The EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that supports agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land. EQIP offers contracts through the NRCS for conservation practice implementation for periods ranging from one to 10 years, and it pays up to 75 percent of the costs of eligible conservation practices. Incentive payments and cost share payments may also be made to encourage a farmer to adopt land management practices such as nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, or wildlife habitat management.

### ***Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)***

The NRCS helps to keep productive farmland in agricultural use by providing assistance in purchasing development rights from farmers and placing an agricultural or conservation easement on eligible farmlands through the FRPP, commonly referred to as purchase of development rights (PDR). The FRPP provides State or local governments, or non-profit organizations, with up to 50 percent of the purchase price of such perpetual voluntary easements. In order to be eligible, the farmland must be "prime" or of statewide importance, unique, or other productive farmland; meet highly erodible land provisions set forth in the Food Security Act; or include important historical or archaeological sites. Additionally, the farmland must have the location, size, and existing protections, including appropriate zoning, that support long-term agricultural use. The 2014 Farm Bill consolidated FRPP with two other programs, GRP and WRP, into the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

### ***Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE)***

As noted in Chapter 2 of this report, the WRP was discontinued in 2014 and consolidated into the ACEP-WRE. The two programs, WRP (retired) and ACEP-WRE (current), function identically as voluntary, incentive-based federal programs that offer private landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. ACEP is a voluntary program that helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands or protect working farms through conservation easements. It has two components:

- Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) help private and tribal landowners, land trusts, and other entities such as state and local governments protect croplands and grasslands on working farms and ranches by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land through conservation easements
- Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) help private and tribal landowners protect, restore and enhance wetlands which have been previously degraded due to agricultural uses

Landowners who enroll in ACEP retain their ownership of the land but must agree to follow certain land use requirements. A total of 420 acres were enrolled in these programs in Racine County in 2023. The Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP) is a voluntary program that provides financial incentives to landowners to restore and enhance wetlands, retiring marginal agricultural land. The FSA runs this program through the CRP as well, with assistance from other government agencies and local conservation groups. Under this program landowners receive financial assistance for wetland restoration projects. A total of 420 acres were enrolled in these programs in Racine County in 2023.

### ***Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)***

The GRP is a voluntary program through the NRCS for landowners and operators to protect grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including rangeland, pastureland, shrubland, and certain other lands. Participants voluntarily limit future development and cropping uses of the land while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices and operations related to the production of forage and seed. The program offers eligible landowners and operators two options: permanent easements and rental contracts of 10-year, 15-year, or 20-year duration. For permanent easements, the GRP offers compensation up to the fair market value of the land concerned less the grazing value of the land. For rental contracts, the GRP provides annual payments of 75 percent of the grazing value established by the Federal Farm Service Agency, up to \$50,000 to a single person or legal entity. Certain grassland easements or rental contracts may also be eligible for cost-share assistance of up to 50 percent of the cost to reestablish grassland functions and values where land has been degraded or converted to other uses. Payments of this cost-share assistance may not exceed \$50,000 per year to a single person or legal entity. The Agricultural Act of 2014 repealed the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) but does not affect the validity or terms of any GRP contract, agreement or easement entered into prior to the date of enactment on February 7, 2014, or any associated payments required to be made in connection with an existing GRP contract, agreement or easement.

### ***Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)***

The (RC&D) program was established by the Federal Agricultural Act of 1962. This act directs the USDA to help units of government conserve and properly utilize all resources in solving local issues. Wisconsin has four RC&Ds, covering numerous Wisconsin counties.

### ***Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON or LWCF) Program***

The LWCF program was established by the U.S. Congress in 1964 to provide funding for the acquisition of land for park or open space preservation purposes and the development of outdoor recreation facilities. In Wisconsin, LWCF funds are administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). Up to 50 percent of project costs are eligible for funding under this program. A portion of the awarded amount is available to local and county units of government for the acquisition of land and the development of parks and trails.

### ***Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program***

The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program, officially the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, administered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides grants to State fish and wildlife agencies for projects to restore, conserve, manage, and enhance wildlife and wildlife habitat. This program provides up to 75 percent Federal cost-share assistance for eligible projects and requires a 25 percent match from non-Federal sources. Eligible projects include the acquisition and improvement of wildlife habitats, research, management programs, and the construction and maintenance of facilities for the public.

### ***State Wildlife Grants Program***

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the State Wildlife Grants Program provides Federal grant funds to State fish and wildlife agencies for the development and implementation of projects for the benefit of fish and wildlife and their habitats, including species that are not hunted or fished. Priority is placed on projects that protect species of greatest conservation need, as identified within a State's Wildlife Action Plan. Two types of grants are made under this program: planning grants and implementation grants. Planning grants provide up to 75 percent Federal cost-share assistance for eligible projects and require a 25 percent match from non-Federal sources. Plan Implementation grants under this program provide up to 65 percent Federal cost-share assistance for eligible projects.

### ***Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)***

The GLRI is a multiagency Federal effort that targets the most significant environmental problems affecting the Great Lakes, including toxic substances and areas of concern, aquatic invasive species, and nearshore health and nonpoint source pollution. The GLRI is also intended to address accountability, education, monitoring, evaluation, communication, and partnerships. Funds are allocated strategically to implement both Federal programs and projects initiated by states, tribes, municipalities, universities, and other organizations. Grant funds are awarded competitively to projects which focus on achieving results in the identified target areas. From 2010 to 2021, a total of approximately \$3.8 billion in Federal funds was appropriated for the GLRI. Bipartisan legislation, known as The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024, has been introduced that would reauthorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) through 2031 and increase the program's annual funding levels from \$475 million in 2026 to \$500 million from 2027 through 2031.

### ***Farmers Market Promotional Program (FMPP) and Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)***

The FMPP is a Federal program administered by the USDA-Agricultural Marketing Service. The FMPP offers grants to help improve and increase the availability of local agricultural products through farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Agricultural cooperatives, producer networks and associations, local governments, nonprofit organizations, public benefit and economic development corporations, regional farmers' market authorities, and tribal governments are among those eligible to apply. FMPP offers four types of projects, 36-month Capacity Building, 36-month Community Development Training and Technical Assistance, 24-month Turnkey Marketing and Promotion, and 24-month Turnkey Recruitment and Training. Capacity Building projects range from \$50,000 to \$250,000, while Community Development Training and Technical Assistance projects range from \$100,000 to \$500,000. Each of the turnkey project options are available for a defined set of activities, with funding amounts ranging from \$50,000 and \$100,000. LFPP offers four types of projects, 24-month Planning, 36-month Implementation, 24-month Turnkey Marketing and Promotion, and 24-month Turnkey Recruitment and Training. Planning projects range from \$25,000 to \$100,000, while implementation projects range from \$100,000 to \$500,000. Each of the turnkey project options is available for a defined set of activities, with funding amounts ranging from \$50,000 and \$100,000. The program requires matching fund contributions in an amount equal to 25 percent of the total Federal portion of the grant.

## **State and Local Programs**

### ***Soil and Water Resource Management Program***

DATCP administers Wisconsin's Soil and Water Resource Management Program (SWRM) under the provisions of Chapter 92 of the *Wisconsin Statutes* and Chapter ATCP 50 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*. The SWRM was developed to support locally led conservation efforts. County conservation committees and other cooperators are awarded annual grant funds to pay for conservation staff and provide landowner cost-sharing to implement their land and water resources management plan. ATCP 50, as revised in June 2024, relates specifically to agricultural programs and it establishes requirements and/or standards for:

- Soil and water conservation on farms
- County soil and water programs, including land and water resource management plans
- Grants to counties to support county conservation staff
- Cost-share grants to landowners for implementation of conservation practices
- Design certifications by soil and water professionals
- Local regulations and ordinances
- Cost-share practice eligibility and design, construction, and maintenance

### ***Wildlife Damage and Abatement Claims Program***

This program is a cooperative effort with the County, WDNR, and U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services to control damage to agricultural crops caused by deer, geese, turkey, bear, cougars, elk, and sandhill cranes.

### ***Racine County Tree Program***

The Racine County Tree Program provides Racine County citizens the opportunity to plant seedling trees at a minimal price for conservation uses such as wind breaks, woodlots, reforestation and the promotion of wildlife habitat and includes native prairie seed and wildflowers for owners interested in native conservation cover.

### ***Watershed Protection Committee of Racine County (WPCRC)***

The (WPCRC) is a Producer-Led Group of local farmers leading efforts in regenerative agriculture, erosion control, water and soil quality improvements, and provides information to farmers and rural landowners on conservation practices. The WPCRC supports regenerative agriculture which is the process of restoring degraded soils by using five soil health principles. The soil health principles are to minimize soil disturbance, maximize soil cover, maximize biodiversity, maximize biodiversity and incorporating livestock using adaptive grazing.

### ***Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Targeted Runoff Management and Notice of Discharge Grant Program (TRM)***

The TRM Grant Program, in operation since 1999, provides grants for local governments that are administered under Chapters NR 153 and NR 154 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*. These competitive grants provide technical and financial assistance to local governments for the control of pollution that comes from diffuse sources, also called “nonpoint source (NPS)” pollution. Grants from the TRM Program reimburse costs for agricultural or urban runoff management practices in targeted, critical geographic areas with surface water or groundwater quality concerns.

All TRM grants provide 70 percent cost sharing for construction of management practices, with up to 90 percent cost sharing available for agricultural projects where the farmer qualifies for economic hardship whether the cost-share amount is based on a cost-share rate, or the amount is based on a flat rate. Large scale TRM projects may also provide limited funding for staff support. Each year, the WDNR establishes caps on grant amounts consistent with available funding.

Chapter NR 153 is also used to administer Notice of Discharge Grants. Notices of Discharge Grants are issued by the WDNR under Chapter NR 243, “Animal Feeding Operations.” WDNR issues Notices of Discharge Grants to small and medium livestock operations that fail to meet Federal point source discharge requirements or that are causing fecal contamination of a drinking water well. In many of these cases, the farmer is required to correct the problem regardless of cost sharing. However, the WDNR may decide to offer a grant to help facilitate site clean-up. Problem sites that are not cleaned up are issued Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits or referred directly to the Wisconsin Department of Justice for prosecution. The WDNR and DATCP work jointly to address these sites.

### ***Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (Stewardship Fund)***

The Stewardship Fund was established in 1989 to preserve the State’s most valuable wildlife habitat and natural areas, protect water quality and fisheries, and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation. The program achieves these goals by funding the acquisition of land and easements for conservation and recreation purposes, supporting recreational infrastructure on state properties, including campsite, restroom and trail improvements, and restoring wildlife habitat. The administrative rules for the program are set forth in Chapters NR 50 and NR 51 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*. The program provides 50 percent matching grants to local units of government and qualified nonprofit conservation organizations for the acquisition of land and easements.



### ***Wisconsin Coastal Management Program (WCMP)***

The WCMP is administered by the Department of Administration. The WCMP is a voluntary State-Federal partnership that works through a council appointed by the Governor to provide policy coordination among State agencies and to award Federal funds to local governments and other entities for the implementation of initiatives related to the management of coastal zones in the State. The program has identified wetlands protection, habitat restoration, public access, land acquisition, nonpoint source pollution control, land use and community planning, and Great Lakes education projects as current priorities. The program also provides assistance to local governments in the management and protection of shorelands, wetlands, and floodplains through zoning and permitting.

### ***Working Lands Initiative***

In 2005, DATCP launched the Working Lands Initiative and established a steering committee to develop a consensus vision on managing Wisconsin's farm and forest lands. The Working Lands Initiative Steering Committee in August 2006 issued a report with a set of recommendations intended to modernize and expand policies and programs affecting Wisconsin farmlands and forests. The report recommended an update to the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program, established in 1976, which would include setting a flat per-acre tax credit for landowners instead of basing the credit on household income and streamlining the process of applying for the program and claiming the tax credits. Proposed changes to the Farmland Preservation Program were included in DATCP's budget request and were enacted as part of the State's 2009-2011 biennial budget. The 2011-2013 biennial budget amended the program to delete the provisions that required a conversion fee to be paid by property owners rezoning parcels out of farmland preservation zoning districts where the community has a State certified farmland preservation zoning ordinance. The present Farmland Preservation Program can be found in Chapter 91, "Farmland Preservation," of the *Wisconsin Statutes*. The updated Farmland Preservation Plan documented in this report was prepared to comply with the requirements of Chapter 91. On December 6, 2023, the State passed Assembly Bill 133, now Wisconsin Act 42, which made changes to farmland preservation agreements minimum term lengths and increased farmland preservation tax credits for all current participants. These changes went into effect starting on December 8, 2023, and affected tax credit claims beginning tax year 2023.

### ***Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program***

In accordance with Sections 93.45 and 93.48 of the *Statutes*, DATCP may award grants to individuals or organizations to fund projects that are designed to increase the sale of agricultural products grown in Wisconsin which are purchased in close proximity to where they are produced. Specific intents of the program are to create, promote, and support regional food and cultural tourism trails and to promote development of regional food systems through activities such as creating or expanding facilities for the processing or distribution of food for local consumption; creating or supporting networks of producers; and strengthening connections between producers, retailers, institutions, and consumers and nearby producers. The applicant is required to contribute matching funds equal to at least 50 percent of the costs of the project.

### ***Farm to School Program***

DATCP administers the "farm to school program" in accordance with Section 93.49 of the *Statutes* to connect schools with nearby farms to provide children with locally produced fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and other, nutritious, locally produced foods in school breakfasts, lunches, and snacks; help children develop healthy eating habits; provide nutritional and agricultural education; and improve farmer's incomes and direct access to markets. DATCP provides grants under this program to school districts, in coordination with the Department of Public Instruction, and to nonprofit organizations, farmers, and other entities for the creation and expansion of farm to school programs. DATCP will give preference to proposals that are innovative or that provide models that other school districts can adopt.

### ***Nonprofit Conservation Organizations***

The SENO K/RLT Conservancy and the Caledonia Conservancy have worked with Racine County and its communities to implement plans for acquiring or otherwise preserving lands with important natural resources and farmlands. The SENO K/RLT Conservancy was formed in 1993 by a group of Kenosha and Racine County citizens concerned about the loss of natural areas. The land trust is focused on protecting open space and natural areas and identifying and prioritizing the most critical resources in Kenosha and Racine Counties. The land trust owns one property, but mainly holds private easements and monitors

conservation subdivisions. The SENO K/RLT Conservancy was established in 2014 through a merger of the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust (K/RLT) and the WWOA Foundation, Inc. which owned and managed Seno Woodland Education Center and Drumlin Farm. The Caledonia Conservancy was founded in 1994 as an effort to protect the Village of Caledonia's network of equestrian trails. In addition to protecting land, the Conservancy partners with landowners to maintain trails east of the Root River, including trail segments that are owned by the Conservancy and open to the public.

#### **4.6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN AND THE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

This update of the Racine County farmland preservation plan was prepared within the framework of the Racine County comprehensive plan. The farmland preservation plan update reaffirms the basic goals and policies of the County comprehensive plan related to farmland preservation and provides detailed mapping of farmland preservation areas, refining the mapping of prime agricultural lands and related open space lands set forth in the County comprehensive plan.

Map B.1 in Appendix B shows the farmland preservation areas identified in this County farmland preservation plan update in relation to other planned urban land and other planned open space as recommended in the County comprehensive plan. It should be noted that, in preparing Map B.1, individual urban land use categories shown on the comprehensive plan—residential, commercial, industrial, and governmental/institutional—were combined and shown as “existing and planned urban uses.” Similar community-level maps are presented for the Towns of Burlington and Waterford and the Village of Mt. Pleasant in Appendix B.

#### **4.7 HIGH PRIORITY POLICIES AND PROGRAMS**


In Section 66.1001(2)(i) of the *Statutes*, the State comprehensive planning law requires that comprehensive plans include a compilation of policies and programs, in a specified sequence, to implement the recommendations of the comprehensive plan. This requirement applies to this update of the County farmland preservation plan since it is intended to be adopted as part of the County comprehensive plan. To fulfill this requirement, the Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee reviewed the policies and programs developed for the farmland preservation plan and established a priority ranking for their implementation. Most of the policies and programs related to farmland preservation were previously identified in the comprehensive plan. The highest priority policies and programs are as follows:

- Protect farmland identified as farmland preservation areas in the Racine County farmland preservation plan. Such land should be preserved for agriculture use, with residential development generally limited to no more than one dwelling unit per 20 acres in the Village of Mt. Pleasant. In the Towns of Waterford and Burlington, the ratio of all non-farm residential acreage to farm acreage on the base farm tract on which the residence is or will be located will not be greater than one to twenty after the residence is constructed or converted to a non-farm residence. There will not be more than four dwelling units in non-farm residences, nor more than five dwelling units in residences of any kind, on the base farm tract after the residence is constructed or converted to a non-farm residence.
- For agricultural lands not identified as farmland preservation areas, encourage the continuation of agricultural uses. In particular, the plan seeks to preserve, insofar as practicable, the most productive soils within these areas, namely NRCS capability Class I, Class II, and Class III soils. This could be in the form of traditional agricultural use or alternative agricultural uses such as smaller hobby farms or specialty farms including community supported agricultural operations.
- Implement strategies regarding soil sustainability and sedimentation as recommended in *Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2023-2032 – 3rd Revision*, and subsequent updates.
- Enforce the land and water management standards required of participants in the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program (FPP).

- Encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) by farmers.
- Consider the establishment of an Agricultural Enterprise Area(s) containing contiguous lands devoted primarily to agricultural use. An AEA would be part of a broader strategy to protect farmland and promote agriculture and agricultural-related development.
- Encourage development to occur in areas outside of environmental corridors, isolated natural resource areas, natural areas, floodplains, wetlands, and critical species habitat sites in Racine County.
- Implement strategies regarding the preservation and protection of environmental corridors, natural areas, and critical species habitat sites recommended in the County land and water resource management plan, and the Racine County park and open space plan, including updates to the plans.
- Encourage the use of conservation subdivision design concepts with attendant stewardship plans in rural- and suburban-density residential development to the extent practicable.<sup>41</sup> In general, in conservation subdivisions, at least 50 percent of the development parcel should be permanently maintained in open space use, in order to preserve existing farmland and natural resource features.
- Encourage concentrated urban and infill development within urban (sewer) service areas to minimize the conversion of farmland to urban uses.
- Encourage new housing to occur at urban densities in urban (sewer) service areas, thereby reducing the loss of farmland in rural areas of the County.
- Support economic initiatives to ensure that farming remains viable in Racine County, including agritourism, and direct marketing of farm products.
- Provide a balanced system of transportation options for the movement of agricultural goods and services in the County, Region, State, and Nation.

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<sup>41</sup> This recommendation is most applicable to nonfarm residential development that may be accommodated outside the identified farmland preservation areas. Conservation subdivisions could potentially be used to accommodate limited nonfarm residential development in the identified farmland preservation areas provided that the farmland zoning includes conditional use provisions for nonfarm residential cluster development consistent with Section 91.46(2) of the Wisconsin Statutes.



*Credit: Unsplash User*

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2009, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted Wisconsin Act 28, which repealed and recreated the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program set forth in Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes, and related tax credits under subchapter 4 of Chapter 71 of the *Statutes*. The new law, known as the “Working Lands Initiative,” created new tools to help identify and preserve important farmland. The law also required counties to update their farmland preservation plans.

The first edition of the Racine County farmland preservation plan (FPP) was adopted in 1982 and would have expired on December 31, 2011, without an extension approved by DATCP. The County received an extension to December 31, 2013, to prepare and update that County FPP. The resulting second edition of the Racine County FPP was adopted by Racine County and certified by DATCP in 2013. That plan would have expired on December 31, 2023, without a DATCP-approved extension. The County requested and was granted an extension to December 31, 2024, to prepare and update this third edition of the plan. With assistance from the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (Commission), Racine County in conjunction with cooperating local governments has prepared this updated farmland preservation plan to meet the requirements set forth in Chapter 91 of the *Statutes*. The Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee was formed to help guide the planning work and to encourage public participation throughout the process. This new County farmland preservation plan updates and replaces the plan adopted by the Racine County Board of Supervisors in 2013.

The intent of the original farmland preservation program was to encourage farmland preservation by providing tax credits to eligible farmland owners who voluntarily chose to enter into an agreement with the State through farmland preservation agreements, or through the enactment of exclusive agricultural zoning by the local government in which the land is located. The new Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program provided landowners the opportunity to continue to claim farmland preservation tax credits through zoning or through agreements with DATCP for areas within Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs). The new State program also included a process for establishing AEAs and created a Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) Program. As previously noted, the PACE program is still active but has not been funded since 2010. Additionally, on December 6, 2023, the State passed Assembly Bill 133, now Wisconsin Act 42,



which made changes to farmland preservation agreements minimum term lengths and increased farmland preservation tax credits for all current participants. These changes went into effect starting on December 8, 2023, and affected tax credit claims beginning tax year 2023.

Agriculture is an important part of the County's economy and, due to changes in agricultural practices as well as the demand for new agricultural products and technologies, there is potential growth for agricultural industries and supporting businesses. In addition to its impact on the economy, farmland preservation is considered important to providing scenic beauty, preserving natural ecological systems, producing fresh locally-grown produce, and preserving the rural character and lifestyle in much of the County. Agriculture continues to be a vital element of Racine County's economic, cultural, and ecological landscape. The new farmland preservation plan will help retain these values, providing a foundation and guide for many preservation methods and tools that can be utilized by County and local governments and nonprofit conservation organizations to protect farmlands.

## **5.2 PLANNING COMMITTEE AND PROCESS**

The new County farmland preservation plan was prepared under the guidance of the Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee. The Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee recommendations were forwarded to the Racine County Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee and to the County Board of Supervisors for their consideration. The farmland preservation plan presented in this report was developed through a process intended to meet all of the planning requirements set forth in the State farmland preservation law.

### **Public Participation**

For any planning process, it is good practice to provide opportunities for the public to become acquainted with the planning process and to solicit public involvement in the development of plan recommendations. To ensure community involvement for the new Racine County FPP, a public participation plan (PPP) for the preparation of the previous FPP, adopted by the Racine County Board of Supervisors in December 2012, was utilized and is presented in Appendix A of this report. The PPP outlines a series of outreach efforts and public participation sessions designed to gain input from County farmers as well as residents and business owners throughout the farmland preservation planning process. Throughout the planning process, the active participation and input of residents, farmers, landowners, County and local government officials, and interest groups were essential for identifying important issues and preparing a farmland preservation plan with realistic goals.

## **5.3 INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**

The first step in the planning process involved collecting basic information on the agricultural resource base, the natural resource base, and the man-made environment of Racine County. Such data is needed for identifying farmland preservation areas and designing a plan to achieve long-term preservation. Inventory data assembled for and considered in the planning process is presented in Chapter II of this report. The types of data presented in Chapter II include the following:

- Soils including information on agricultural soil capability and hydric soils
- Agricultural resources and activity including information on existing agricultural lands; trends in major crops, agricultural products, and commodity sales; agricultural business and support services; and farmland drainage districts
- Natural resources including individual components of the natural resource base (e.g., wetlands, woodlands, and surface water) and environmental corridors, which contain concentrations of natural resource and resource-related features
- Existing land use and historic development trends
- Existing transportation facilities and utilities



- Community facilities and services
- Existing regional, county, and local plans that affect or relate to agricultural land preservation
- Existing zoning and other land use regulations
- Existing and projected population, household, and employment levels

## 5.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

As part of the farmland preservation planning process, a set of planning goals and objectives, along with supporting policies and programs, were formulated and are presented in Chapter 3 of this report. The goals and objectives help provide an overall framework for preparing the Racine County FPP. In addition, key land use issues related to preserving farmland are also identified. The goals, objectives, policies, and programs for the updated farmland preservation plan are based largely on those prepared and developed under the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element and other related elements of the adopted multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan for Racine County. The Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee refined the comprehensive plan goals, objectives, policies, and programs, as appropriate, based on the information presented in this report.

## 5.5 FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

The farmland preservation plan presented in Chapter 4 seeks to retain, in essentially rural uses, the most productive farming areas of Racine County. The plan also seeks to discourage incompatible urban uses in agricultural and environmentally significant areas, and recommends that intensive urban development occur only in the planned sewer service areas of the County. In addition, the plan outlines the actions that should be taken by various units and agencies of government to help implement the plan and describes program priorities associated with implementing the farmland preservation plan.

Since the adoption of the County farmland preservation plan in 2013, the County has experienced a substantial conversion of farmlands and other open lands to urban uses. Despite that trend, the County still consists of significant amounts of farmland and environmentally sensitive areas. Future population and employment increases may be expected to result in the conversion of additional land in the County from rural to urban uses, which will have an impact on remaining agricultural and other open lands. Urban development and preserving agricultural and other open lands can be managed through proper planning.

### Farmland Preservation Areas and Zoning

In accordance with Section 91.10(1)(d) of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, a county farmland preservation plan must clearly identify areas that the county plans to preserve for agricultural and agricultural-related uses. Farmland preservation areas may include undeveloped natural resource and open space lands but may not include any areas that are planned for nonagricultural development within 15 years after the date on which the plan is adopted, in accordance with the *Statutes*. Criteria for identifying farmland preservation areas (FPAs) were developed as part of the planning process. Parcels in Racine County must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible for inclusion as a farmland preservation area:

1. Are predominantly in active agriculture, agricultural accessory, agricultural-related, or natural resource use
2. Are planned to support a predominance of agricultural, agricultural accessory, agricultural-related, or natural resource uses for 15 years or more from the time of plan adoption (generally, lands located outside of adopted planned sewer service areas)
3. Include areas of productive soils, with at least 50 percent of the parcel covered by soils which meet the U.S. Department of Agricultural, NRCS, standards for "National Prime Farmlands" (Class I and II soils) or "Farmlands of Statewide Significance" (Class III soils)
4. Are located in a block of similar parcels which together encompass at least 100 acres

5. Are identified as prime agricultural land/area or agricultural preservation on planned land use maps in town and village plans adopted as part of the Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Racine County: 2035
6. Are currently zoned for agricultural preservation

FPAs for Racine County are shown on Map 4.1 in Chapter 4 and encompass about 23,745 acres, or about 11 percent of the County. Consistent with State guidelines, FPAs include lands in agricultural or agricultural-related uses, as well as undeveloped natural resource and open space areas. Undeveloped natural resource areas consisting of environmental corridors located within farmland preservation areas encompasses about 5,815 acres, or about 25 percent of the FPAs. FPAs have been identified in the Towns of Burlington and Waterford, and in the Village of Mt. Pleasant. Uses within farmland preservation areas are set forth in Chapter 91 of the *Statutes*, and include crop production; keeping livestock; beekeeping; nursery, sod, and Christmas tree production; floriculture; fur farming; forest management; and land enrolled in a Federal or State agricultural land conservation or agricultural commodity payment program. Agricultural-related uses such as agricultural equipment dealerships and storage and processing facilities for agricultural products are also listed as allowable uses in Chapter 91.

One of the most effective tools available to local governments to preserve farmland is zoning. Section 91.44 of the *Wisconsin Statutes* specifies standards for farmland preservation zoning which must be met to obtain State certification of that zoning for purposes of the amended Wisconsin Farmland Preservation program. A certifiable farmland preservation district must limit land use to agricultural uses; specified accessory uses (including farm residences); specified agriculture-related uses; and very limited nonfarm residential development. Certifiable farmland preservation zoning must be substantially consistent with a county farmland preservation plan. Land included in a farmland preservation zoning district must be included in a farmland preservation area identified in the farmland preservation plan. The designated farmland preservation areas in the Towns of Burlington and Waterford are in the A-1 Farmland Preservation District of the Racine County zoning ordinance, while the designated farmland preservation areas in the Village of Mt. Pleasant are in the AG Agriculture District of the Village zoning ordinance.

### **Other Agricultural Lands**

In addition to identified farmland preservation areas, there are large farming areas in certain other communities in the County. Even though there are large areas of agricultural land having productive agricultural soils (largely Class II and Class III soils), the governing bodies of these communities have historically chosen to try to preserve their agricultural resources without specifically identifying farmland preservation areas in their local land use plans and without applying farmland preservation zoning. These local governments have reaffirmed local policies along these lines in their comprehensive plans.

### **Plan Implementation Programs and Measures**

In addition to zoning, a variety of other programs and measures exist that may contribute to the preservation of agricultural resources in Racine County. Some of these pertain to the identified farmland preservation areas and are linked to the State Farmland Preservation program, while others pertain more broadly to agricultural areas throughout the County. Chapter 4 of this report also provides a description of a number of Federal, State, and local programs and measures that are available to help implement this farmland preservation plan.

### **Potential Agricultural Enterprise Areas**

The farmland preservation law authorizes DATCP to designate by administrative rule certain lands as Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA) to foster agriculture in specific geographical areas. DATCP defines an AEA as a contiguous land area devoted primarily to agricultural use and locally targeted for agricultural preservation and agricultural development. Designation as an AEA is voluntary, with those who elect to participate being eligible for greater tax benefits. Once an area is officially designated as an AEA, eligible farmers owning land within the area may enter into a farmland preservation agreement with the State. This enables the landowners to receive tax credits in exchange for agreeing to keep their land in agricultural use for at least 10 years. The program allows for a minimum of five individual farm owners to submit a petition for consideration with the support of their local government. There currently is no minimum size

for an AEA, but state law requires DATCP to give higher priority to any AEA application that contains at least 1,000 contiguous acres. As shown on Map 4.5 in Chapter 4, AEAs could potentially be established in Racine County in the Towns of Burlington and Waterford.

### **Relationship Between the County Farmland Preservation Plan and the County Comprehensive Plan**

Section 91.10(2) of the *Statutes* requires that, if a county has a comprehensive plan, the county shall include the farmland preservation plan in its comprehensive plan and ensure that it is consistent with the comprehensive plan. This updated Racine County farmland preservation plan was prepared as part of, and as an amendment to, the adopted Racine County comprehensive plan.

This farmland preservation plan update reaffirms the basic goals and policies of the County comprehensive plan related to farmland preservation and provides detailed mapping of farmland preservation areas, refining the mapping of prime agricultural lands and related open space lands set forth in the County comprehensive plan. The farmland preservation areas for Racine County are shown in Appendix B (Map B.1). The map depicts FPAs in relation to primary environmental corridors, secondary environmental corridors, isolated natural resource areas, existing and planned urban land uses, open space and recreational land uses, and rural and agricultural land uses outside FPAs—providing a general overview of farmland preservation in relation to other land uses and natural resources in the County, as recommended in the County comprehensive plan.

### **High Priority Policies and Programs**

State comprehensive planning law requires that comprehensive plans and all plan components, including the farmland preservation plan, provide a compilation of policies and programs, in a specified sequence, to implement the recommendations of the comprehensive plan, per Section 66.1001(2)(i) of the *Statutes*. To fulfill this requirement, the Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee reviewed the policies and programs developed for the farmland preservation plan and established a priority ranking for their implementation. Most of the policies and programs related to farmland preservation were previously identified in the County comprehensive plan.

## **5.6 PLAN REVIEW AND ADOPTION**

In accordance with the public participation plan described earlier, a preliminary draft of the Racine County FPP was presented for public review and comment at a public informational meeting in the County, the meeting being held on October 16, 2024. No objections to the plan were expressed at the meeting and no revisions were necessary as a result of the meeting. The plan was subsequently approved by the Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee.

A public hearing on the plan was held at a meeting of the Racine County Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee (EDLUPC) on October 21, 2024. No objections to the plan were expressed at the hearing and no revisions were necessary as a result of the hearing. Following the public hearing, the EDLUPC approved a resolution for adoption of the plan to be forwarded to the Racine County Board for their consideration.

The Racine County farmland preservation plan was adopted by the Racine County Board on November 12, 2024. A copy of the County Board resolution to adopt the plan is included in Appendix C.

The draft plan was submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for review and certification in December 2024. DATCP determined the application for certification of the plan to be administratively complete on December 6, 2024, and subsequently requested minor revisions to the text of the plan and plan maps. The text and map revisions were received and approved by DATCP staff, and the plan was certified by DATCP on December 16, 2024. A copy of the DATCP order certifying the plan is included in Appendix D.

Following publication of the plan report, the plan will be adopted by ordinance as a formal amendment to the Racine County comprehensive plan.

### **Plan Amendment Procedure**

Section 91.10(3) of the *Statutes* requires a county to follow the procedures outlined in Section 66.1001(4), the comprehensive planning law, when amending, as well as adopting, a farmland preservation plan. These adoption and amendment procedures are summarized in Chapter 15 (Implementation Element) of the Racine County comprehensive plan. Any amendment to this farmland preservation plan requires a review and recertification of the farmland preservation plan by DATCP, which involves a timeframe not to exceed 90 days.

A plan amendment may be initiated by the County Board, a County Board committee, a Common Council, a Village Board, or a Town Board. Because land use within cities and villages is regulated under city and village zoning ordinances, landowners wanting to amend the plan must first receive approval from the common council or village board. Within Towns in Racine County, land use is regulated under the County zoning ordinance, so town landowners wanting to amend the plan should work cooperatively with their town board and the County. The mayor, village president, or town chairman should then submit a written request to amend the County FPP to the Racine County Public Works and Development Services Department prior to approving local plan or zoning amendments. Racine County and the respective local government(s) will coordinate and work cooperatively through the amendment process.

County-local government cooperation is important because Chapter 91 of the *Statutes* requires farmland preservation zoning to be consistent with the County farmland preservation plan. Continuing intergovernmental cooperation provides effective communication and coordination between units of government with the goal of establishing consistent development policies for urbanized areas and the preservation of farmlands. Cooperation is especially important with regard to the implementation of this plan because Chapter 91 of the *Statutes* assigns the responsibility for identifying farmland preservation areas to the County; but the authority to adopt and map farmland preservation zoning districts is under the authority of both the County and local governments.

### **Plan Updates**

Section 91.16(2) of the *Statutes* defines the certification period for a farmland preservation plan. DATCP may certify a farmland preservation plan for a period that does not exceed 10 years; therefore, this farmland preservation plan must be updated at least every 10 years to remain in compliance with the law. The County may choose to update the FPP prior to the 10-year maximum certification period, to coincide with an update to the Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Racine County. Procedures such as public participation, plan review, and plan adoption that are required for a comprehensive plan also apply to the farmland preservation plan.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this County FPP is to provide information and recommendations that the general public and County and local officials can use when making decisions about future development and the preservation of agricultural lands and environmentally significant areas in Racine County. The plan provides farmers and other private interests, such as supporting businesses that provide supplies and services to the farmers, a clear indication of the County's agricultural planning goals and objectives. This enables farmers, developers, and the public to understand the goals and objectives when development and redevelopment proposals are prepared or reviewed. It also provides the basis for the enactment of farmland preservation zoning in county and local governments and makes owners of parcels within designated farmland preservation areas eligible to receive tax credits available under the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program, if other statutory requirements are met.

# APPENDICES





**Adopted by the Racine County Board of Supervisors on  
December 11, 2012**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Under Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes known as the “Working Lands Initiative,” counties are required to update their farmland preservation plans every ten years. The most recent farmland preservation plan for Racine County was adopted by Racine County and certified by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) in 2013. In accordance with Section 91.10(3) of the *Statutes*, the adoption of a farmland preservation plan must follow the same procedures specified in Section 66.1001(4) of the *Statutes* for the adoption of a comprehensive plan, which includes the adoption of written procedures to ensure public participation in the development of the plan. Such procedures are set forth in this document.

## **NEED FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Citizens participating in government decision-making are fundamental to our system of governance. While it is true that our government officials are elected to represent citizens, it is also true that elected officials need to interact with the public on an ongoing basis if their representation is to be meaningful. Regular and continuing involvement in government decision-making is the very basis for the idea of citizenship.

Citizens and interest groups are the source of tremendous creativity, and their creativity and comments will help produce better planning decisions. Because the decisions represented by Racine County’s farmland preservation plan will help influence what Racine County will look like for many years to come, public participation is critical.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES**

There are many methods of public participation available to provide meaningful public involvement, while meeting the requirements of Section 66.1001(4) of the *Wisconsin Statutes*. A description of the methods approved by the Racine County Board is given below and updated as they relate specifically to this 3rd Edition of the Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan.

# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR THE RACINE COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN APPENDIX A**

- A Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan Advisory Committee (FPPAC) was formed at the onset of the planning process. The FPPAC is intended to guide the development of the plan and to make recommendations to the Racine County Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee. The FPPAC will hold regular meetings that will be open to the public.
- The County comprehensive planning program included extensive public participation efforts providing the opportunity for County residents to raise issues regarding farmland preservation. In particular, the countywide public opinion survey, and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analyses—conducted as part of the comprehensive planning process—resulted in the identification of a number of agricultural, natural, and cultural resources related issues that should be addressed in the County farmland preservation plan.
- Racine County staff contacted Racine County towns and villages in July 2023, offering to provide a presentation on the farmland preservation plan update to planning commissions/boards.
- Racine County staff made a presentation on the farmland preservation plan update to the Village of Yorkville Planning Commission in October 2023.
- A public informational meeting was held on October 16, 2024, to provide information on farmland preservation planning and to solicit additional citizen input.
- If necessary, meetings will be held with individual communities to review the farmland preservation plan as it relates to the individual Town/Village.
- Consistent with the requirements established in Section 66.1001 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, a public hearing on the recommended Racine County farmland preservation plan will be held.

The County will provide opportunities for the public review of materials describing the proposed farmland preservation plan, including the following:

- Printed copies of the draft farmland preservation plan will be made available at the following locations:
  - Racine County Public Works and Development Services Department  
Ives Grove Office Complex  
14200 Washington Avenue  
Sturtevant, WI 53177
  - Public libraries serving Racine County
- Printed or electronic copies of the farmland preservation plan will be provided to all units and agencies of government and other parties listed in Section 66.1001(4)(b)
- Electronic copies of materials describing the proposed farmland preservation plan and related materials will be posted on the County website: [www.racinecounty.com](http://www.racinecounty.com)

### **Consideration of Public Comments**

The following procedures will be followed to ensure that decision-makers have the opportunity to consider public comments:

- Time will be reserved subsequent to the close of a meeting, hearing, or comment deadline and prior to the actual decision or recommendation being made to ensure that decision-makers can adequately review all relevant materials or comments
- The record (written comments or testimony, tape recordings, or minutes) of hearings and meetings will be compiled by County staff and made available to decision makers for their review and consideration prior to a recommendation or decision being made

### **Racine County Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee Recommendation**

The Racine County Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee (EDLUPC) will hold a public hearing on the proposed farmland preservation plan. The hearing will include a presentation describing the proposed plan and provide an opportunity for the public to comment orally or to submit written comments on the proposed plan. The EDLUPC will take the public testimony into account in its deliberations and actions on the proposed plan.

The public hearing will be preceded by a Class 1 notice that is published at least 30 days before the hearing is held. In accordance with Section 66.1001(4)(d), the notice will include the date, time, and place of the hearing; a brief summary of the proposed farmland preservation plan; a person who may be contacted for additional information about the proposed plan; and information regarding where and when the proposed plan may be inspected before the hearing and how a copy of the proposed plan may be obtained.

Following the public hearing, the EDLUPC will make a recommendation to the County Board to approve, deny, or modify the farmland preservation plan. The Committee's recommendation will be in the form of a resolution approved by a majority of the full membership of the Committee.

### **County Board Action**

Following EDLUPC action, the County Board will consider the farmland preservation plan and the EDLUPC recommendation and approve, deny, or refer the proposed amendment back to the EDLUPC. If approved, County Board approval will be in the form of an ordinance adopted by a majority of the full membership of the Board.

### **Distribution of Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan**

If approved by the County Board, printed or electronic copies of the farmland preservation plan will be sent by the County Clerk to the parties listed in Section 66.1001(4)(b) of the *Statutes*. Plan amendments may be distributed by e-mail to the required parties.





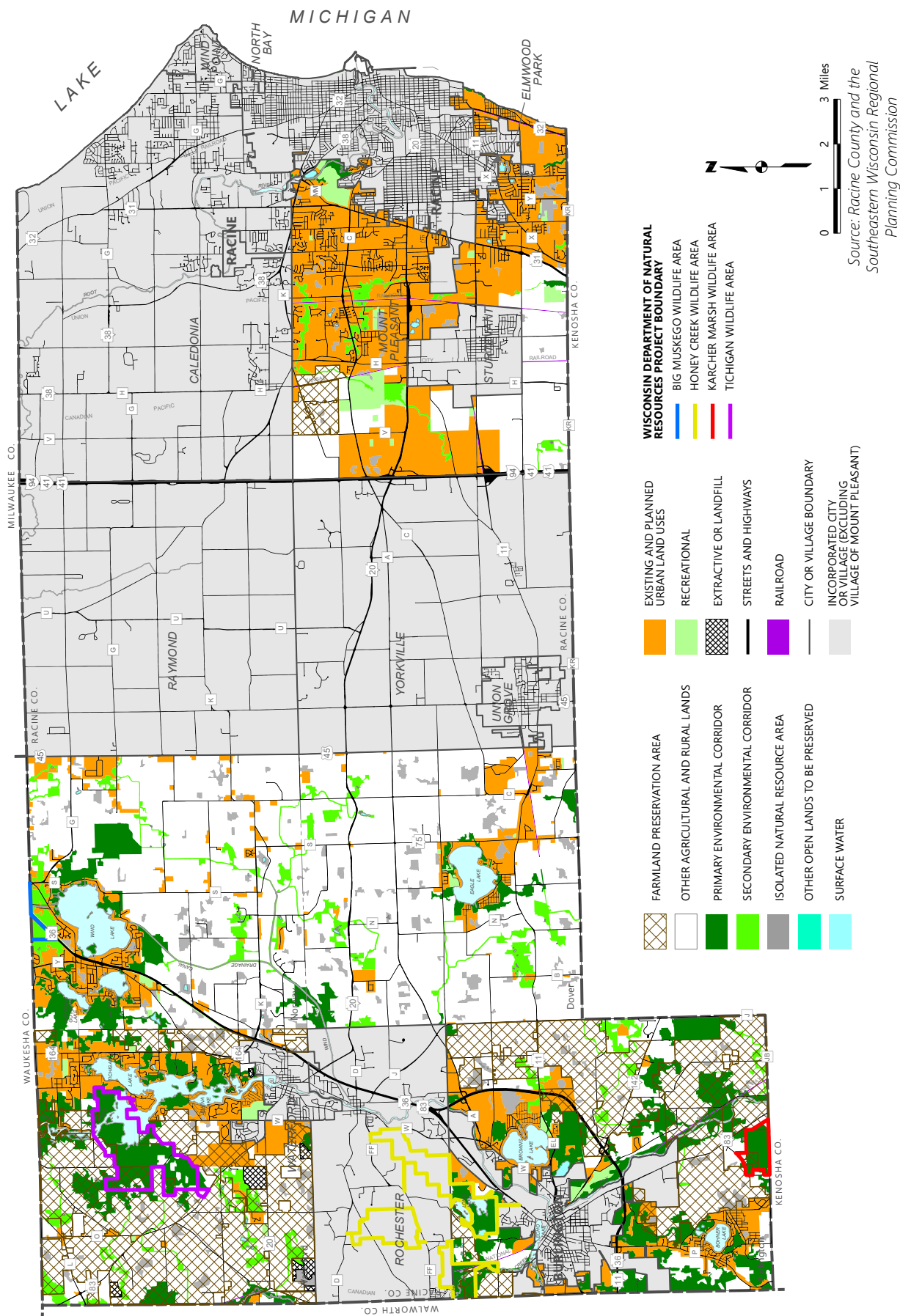
# **FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN AS IT RELATES TO ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLANS**

## **APPENDIX B**



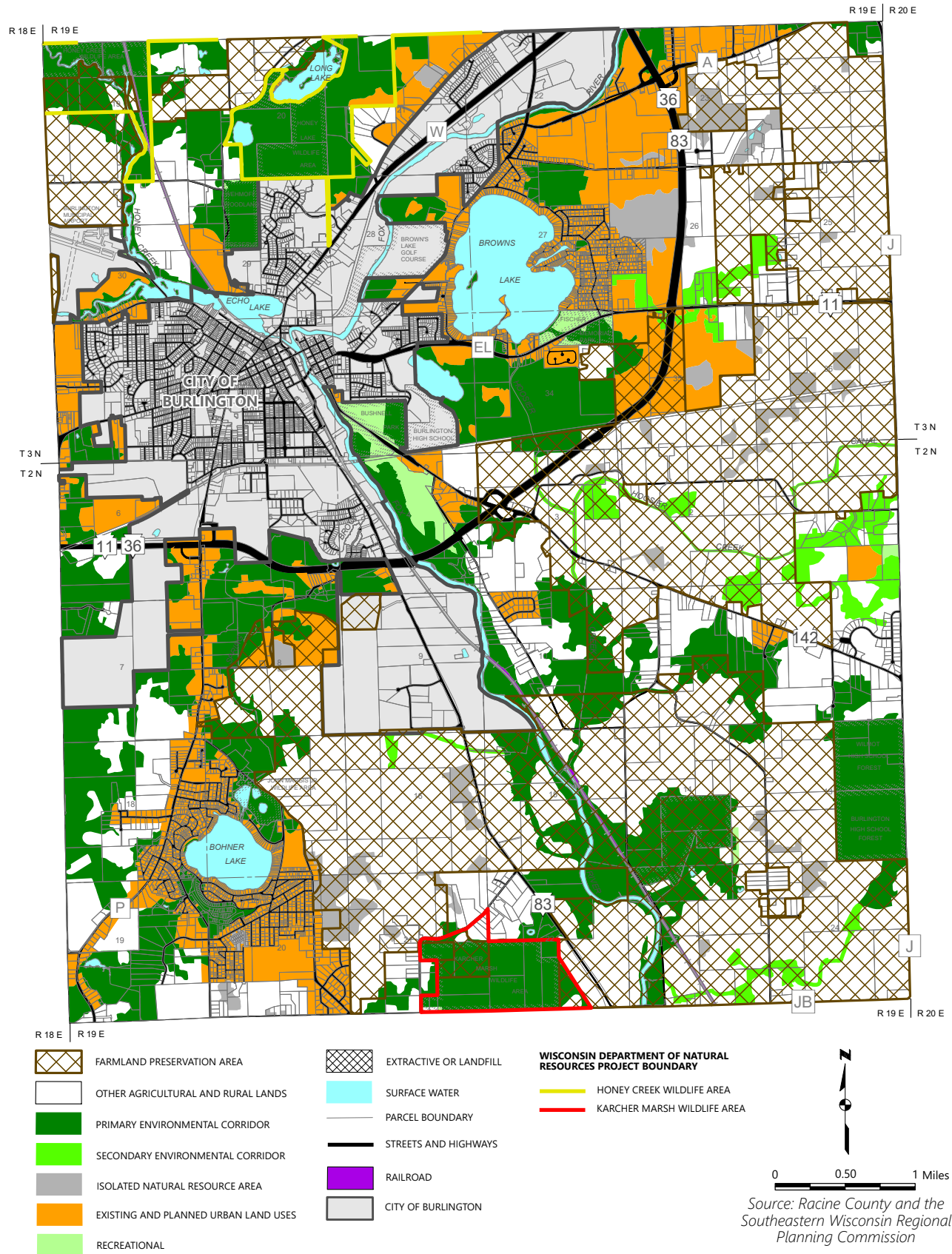
# Map B.1

## Farmland Preservation Plan as it Relates to the Racine County Comprehensive Plan: 2035



## Map B.2

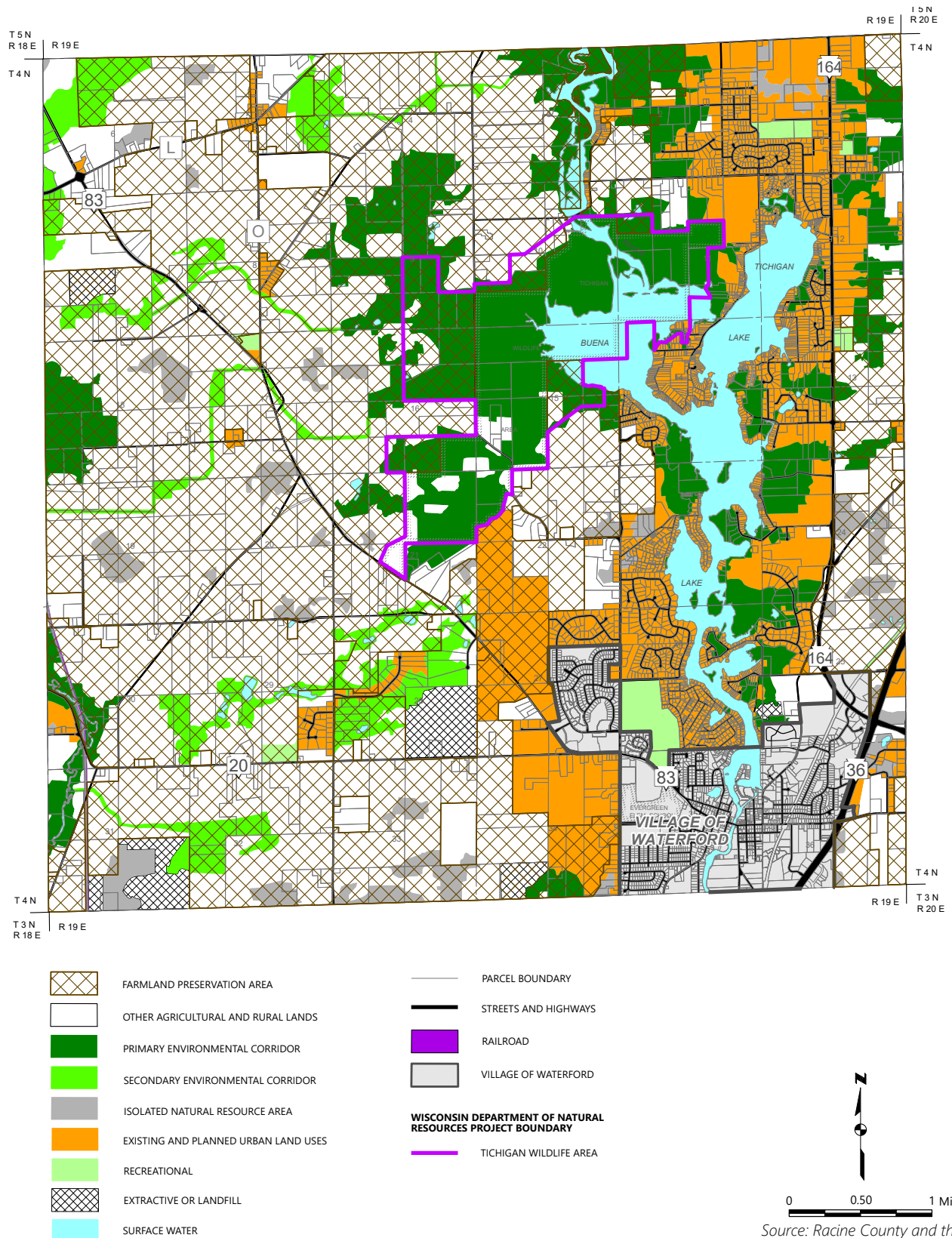
### Farmland Preservation Plan as it Relates to the Racine County Comprehensive Plan Within the Town of Burlington: 2035





## Map B.3

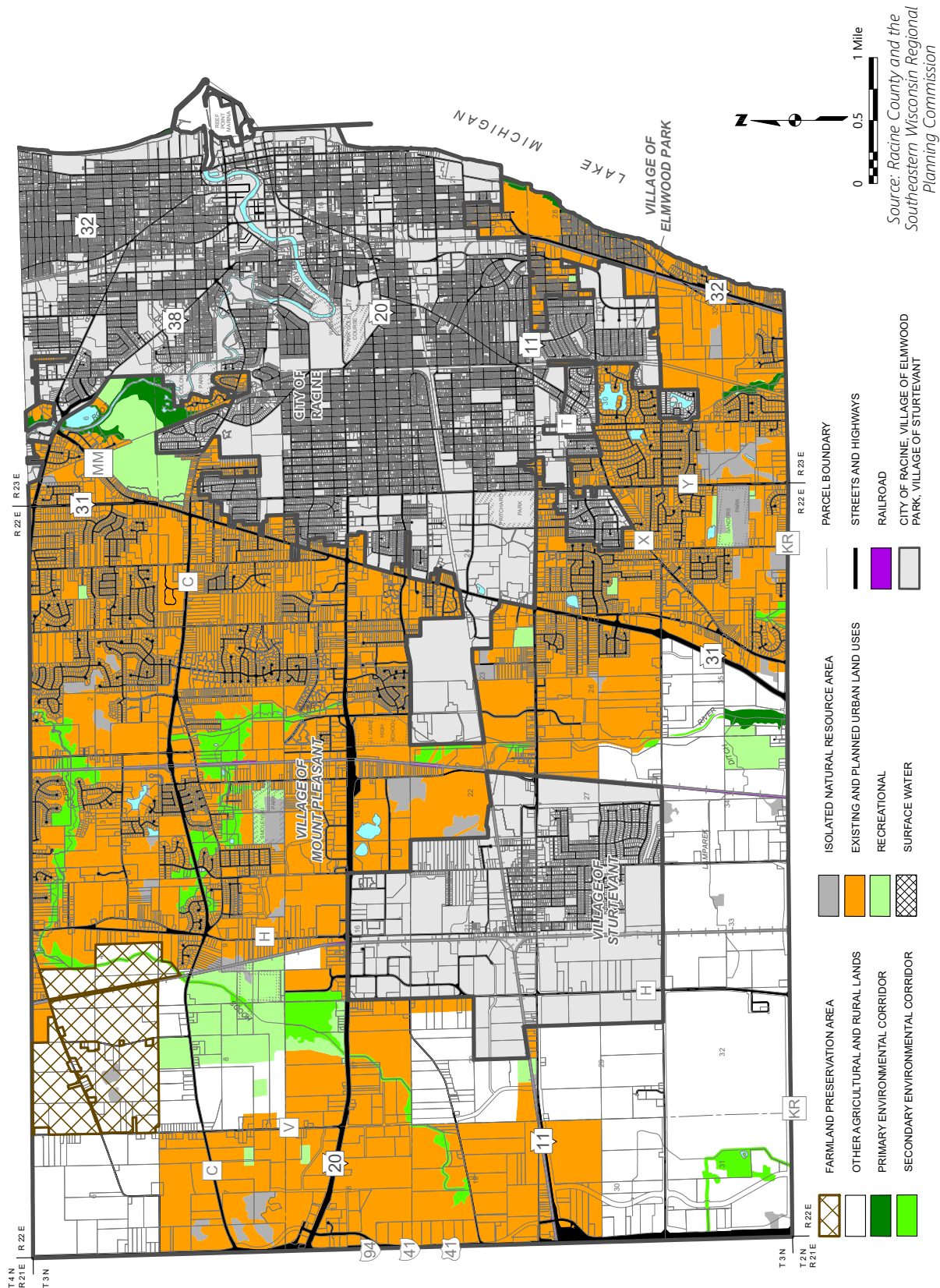
### Farmland Preservation Plan as it Relates to the Racine County Comprehensive Plan Within the Town of Waterford: 2035





## Map B.4

### Farmland Preservation Plan as it Relates to the Racine County Comprehensive Plan Within the Village of Mount Pleasant: 2035



Source: Racine County and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

# COUNTY BOARD ADOPTION OF THE RACINE COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN APPENDIX C



2  
3  
4 RESOLUTION BY THE RACINE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LAND  
5 USE PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDING ADOPTION OF SEWRPC PLANNING  
6 REPORT NO. 46 (3rd Edition), "A FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN FOR RACINE  
7 COUNTY"

8  
9 TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS of the Racine County Board of Supervisors:

10  
11 WHEREAS, Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes requires counties to adopt a  
12 state-certified farmland preservation plan if the county intends to participate in the State's  
13 farmland preservation program; and

14  
15 WHEREAS, Racine County adopted such a plan in 1982, a second edition was  
16 adopted in 2013, and since that time, the Wisconsin's Working Lands Initiative law set forth  
17 in Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes requires that the Racine County farmland  
18 preservation plan be updated and recertified by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,  
19 Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) by the end of 2024 to continue to participate in  
20 the State's farmland preservation program; and

21  
22 WHEREAS, Racine County, in cooperation with the Southeastern Wisconsin  
23 Regional Planning Commission, has agreed to develop an updated farmland preservation  
24 plan that meets the requirements set forth in Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

25  
26 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Racine County Board of  
27 Supervisors hereby adopts SEWRPC Planning Report No. 46 (3rd Edition), *A Farmland*  
28 *Preservation Plan for Racine County*, to fulfill the requirements for certification as listed in  
29 Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

30  
31  
32 Respectfully submitted,

33  
34 1st Reading  
35 USE

11/4/24

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LAND  
PLANNING COMMITTEE

36  
37 2nd Reading

11/12/24

38  
39  
40 BOARD ACTION

41 Adopted

X

42 For

18

43 Against

44 Absent

2

Jason Eckman, Chairman

Greg Horeth, Vice-Chairman

45  
46 VOTE REQUIRED: MAJORITY

Taylor Wishau, Secretary

47  
48 Prepared by:

49 Public Works & Development  
50 Services Department

Tom Rutkowski





**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION  
CERTIFICATION OF THE RACINE COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN**

**APPENDIX D**





State of Wisconsin  
Governor Tony Evers

**Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection**  
Secretary Randy Romanski

December 16, 2024

Don Heckel, Senior Planner  
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission  
Via email  
[dheckel@sewrpc.org](mailto:dheckel@sewrpc.org)

**Re: Certification of the Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan**

Dear Don:

Attached is a department order certifying Racine County's Farmland Preservation Plan under s. 91.16, Wis. Stats. The certification process is now complete.

We look forward to working with you in the future on farmland preservation in Racine County. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Jackson".

Tim Jackson  
Farmland Preservation Program  
608-224-4630

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**STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION**

<b>RACINE COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN</b>	<b>ARM Division Docket No. 101-00000-P-24 F-1224</b>  <b>ORDER CERTIFYING RACINE COUNTY’S FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2034</b>
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**INTRODUCTION**

Racine County has asked the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (“DATCP”) to certify a comprehensively revised farmland preservation plan pursuant to s. 91.16, Wis. Stats. DATCP has considered the request and adopts the following decision:

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

(1) DATCP is an agency of the State of Wisconsin, and is responsible for administering Wisconsin’s farmland preservation law under ch. 91, Wis. Stats., as repealed and recreated by 2009 Wis. Act 28.

(2) Racine County is a county of the State of Wisconsin.

(3) In order for a county and its residents to participate in the farmland preservation program, a county must have a state-certified farmland preservation plan. Among other things, the certified plan must clearly designate farmland preservation areas that the county plans to preserve for agricultural use.

(4) Racine County currently has a state-certified farmland preservation plan that expires on December 31, 2024.

(5) Under s. 91.16(8), Wis. Stats., the certification of a farmland preservation plan does not cover any subsequent plan revision (adopted after July 1, 2009) unless DATCP certifies that plan revision.

(6) On December 4, 2024, DATCP received from Racine County a request to certify a comprehensively revised county farmland preservation plan under s. 91.16, Wis. Stats. The county submitted the application in the form required under s. 91.20, Wis. Stats. The application included the certifications required under s. 91.20(3), Wis. Stats.

(7) On December 6, 2024, DATCP confirmed by letter that the Racine County farmland preservation plan certification application was complete, and that DATCP would proceed to review the complete application.

(8) Under s. 91.16(3)(a), Wis. Stats., DATCP may certify a county plan based on the county’s certification under s. 91.20(3), Wis. Stats., that the plan meets applicable certification standards under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats.

(9) DATCP may certify a farmland preservation plan if the plan meets applicable statutory standards under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats. DATCP may certify based on the representations contained in the county's application but may conduct its own review and verification as it deems appropriate.

(10) Under s. 91.10(2), Wis. Stats., the farmland preservation plan must be consistent with the Racine County Comprehensive Plan, and the County must include the farmland preservation plan in the County Comprehensive Plan.

(11) Under s. 91.16(2)(a), Wis. Stats., DATCP may certify a county farmland preservation plan for a specified period of up to 10 years. Under s. 91.16(6), Wis. Stats., DATCP may make its certification contingent upon the county adoption of the certified plan text and maps, in the form certified.

(12) Under s. 91.16(9), Wis. Stats., DATCP may withdraw its certification at any time if DATCP finds that the certified plan materially fails to meet applicable certification standards under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

(1) Based on Racine County's certification that the attached county farmland preservation plan meets applicable certification requirements under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats., DATCP may certify that plan for up to 10 years.

(2) DATCP may make its certification contingent upon the county adoption of the certified plan text and maps, in the form certified, and contingent upon its adoption as part of the County comprehensive plan.

(3) Certification does not apply to plan amendments made after the certification date, unless DATCP certifies those amendments.

(4) DATCP may withdraw its certification at any time if DATCP finds that the certified plan text and maps materially fail to meet applicable certification standards under s. 91.18, Wis. Stats.

### **ORDER**

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED THAT:

(1) The attached Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan text (dated November 4, 2024) and maps (dated December 4, 2024) are hereby certified under s. 91.16, Wis. Stats.

(2) The certified farmland preservation plan area for Racine County is titled "Farmland Preservation Plan Area".

(3) This order takes effect on the date on which it is signed.

(4) This certification expires at the end of the day on December 31, 2034.



Dated this 12th day of December, 2024.

STATE OF WISCONSIN,  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

By Timothy Anderson  
Timothy P. Anderson, Administrator  
Division of Agricultural Resource Management

Parties for Purposes of Review Under s. 227.53, Wis. Stats.: **Racine County**

Copies to:

Don Heckel, Senior Planner  
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission  
Via email  
[dheckel@sewrpc.org](mailto:dheckel@sewrpc.org)

&

Chad Sampson, Land Resource Manager  
Racine County Land & Water Conservation  
Via email  
[Chad.sampson@racinecounty.com](mailto:Chad.sampson@racinecounty.com)