

SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 301

A MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
FOR RACINE COUNTY: 2035

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

In 1999 the Wisconsin Legislature enacted a new comprehensive planning law, set forth in Section 66.1001 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*. The new requirements supplement earlier provisions in the *Statutes* for the preparation of county development plans (Section 59.69(3) of the *Statutes*) and local master plans (Section 62.23 of the *Statutes*). The new requirements, which are often referred to as the “Smart Growth” law, provide a new framework for the development, adoption, and implementation of comprehensive plans in Wisconsin. The law includes a “consistency” requirement, whereby zoning, subdivision, and official mapping ordinances adopted and enforced by counties, cities, villages, and towns must be consistent with the comprehensive plan adopted by the county or local unit of government. Under the comprehensive planning law (Section 66.1001 (3) of the *Statutes*), the consistency requirement will take effect on January 1, 2010.

To address the State comprehensive planning requirements, a cooperative comprehensive planning process was undertaken by Racine County, all of the cities, villages, and towns in the County, and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). That planning process was intended to result in a multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan that satisfies planning requirements set forth in Section 66.1001 of the *Statutes* for the County and each participating local government. The 18 local government bodies participating with the County in the planning process are listed below:

City of Burlington	Village of Waterford
City of Racine	Village of Wind Point
Village of Caledonia	Town of Burlington
Village of Elmwood Park	Town of Dover
Village of Mt. Pleasant	Town of Norway
Village of North Bay	Town of Raymond
Village of Rochester	Town of Rochester
Village of Sturtevant	Town of Waterford
Village of Union Grove	Town of Yorkville

After obtaining a resolution from all 18 local units of government, Racine County proceeded with the preparation of a multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning grant application. On September 27, 2005, the Racine County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution to submit a grant application to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) under Section 16.965 of the *Statutes* to help fund preparation of the plan. A grant was awarded in February 2006. Prior to accepting the grant, Racine County and SEWRPC signed a three-party Cooperative Agreement with each of the 18 participating local governments. Each agreement is a formal commitment among the local government, Racine County, and SEWRPC to participate in a coordinated, multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning effort. All

agreements were executed in the fall of 2005. The agreements are available for review at the office of the Racine County Planning and Development Department. On May 23, 2006, the Racine County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution accepting the awarded grant funds.

After the planning grant was awarded, and well after the comprehensive planning process began, the Town and Village of Rochester were consolidated as the Village of Rochester in December 2008, reducing the number of participating local units of government from 18 to 17. Inventory data in the comprehensive plan is presented for the Town and Village of Rochester as they existed at the time of the information presented. Comprehensive plan element information and recommendations are presented for the consolidated Village of Rochester.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

The State planning law specifies in detail the topics that must be addressed in a comprehensive plan, the elements that must be included, and procedures with respect to public participation and plan adoption. The multi-jurisdictional planning program for Racine County was carried out in a manner ensuring that the statutory requirements would be satisfied. Key statutory requirements are described below.

- **Plan Content**

The State planning law requires that a comprehensive plan include all of the following plan elements: 1) issues and opportunities; 2) housing; 3) transportation; 4) utilities and community facilities; 5) agricultural, natural, and cultural resources; 6) economic development; 7) intergovernmental cooperation; 8) land use; and 9) implementation. The specific items to be considered as part of each element are set forth in Section 66.1001 (2) of the *Statutes*. The multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan for Racine County was structured in a manner consistent with statutory requirements as to plan content.

- **Public Participation Requirements**

Section 66.1001(4) of the *Statutes* requires that the governing body of any County or local government preparing a comprehensive plan adopt written procedures that are “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 comprehensive plan.” Proposed plan elements of the comprehensive plan must be widely distributed, and opportunities must be provided for written comments to be submitted by the public to the governing body. A procedure for the governing body to respond to those comments must also be identified.

A public participation plan was adopted by the Racine County Board on November 9, 2006 as a basis for public involvement in the comprehensive planning program. The public participation plan is available for review at the office of the Racine County Planning and Development Department. In accordance with the public participation plan, many opportunities were provided for the public to learn about, and comment on, the planning process and the resulting plan, including at technical advisory committee meetings, numerous informational meetings and open houses, and public hearings. During the course of the planning process, pertinent information was widely disseminated through fact sheets, news releases, and a website (www.sewprc.org/smartgrowth/racinecounty/). A public opinion survey—seeking public input on many of the issues to be addressed in a comprehensive plan—was also conducted.

The State comprehensive planning law requires that each participating local government agency also adopt a public participation plan. Participating local governments had the option of adopting the Racine County public participation plan or adopting its own public participation plan. All of the participating local governments adopted the Racine County public participation plan.

- **Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan**

Section 66.1001 (4) of the *Statutes* requires that a comprehensive plan or plan amendment be adopted by an ordinance enacted by the concerned county board or local governing body. The law further requires that all

nine elements be adopted simultaneously, and that at least one public hearing be held prior to adopting county and local comprehensive plans.

- **Comprehensive Plan and Ordinance Consistency**

As previously indicated, under the State planning law, beginning on January 1, 2010, zoning, subdivision, and official mapping ordinances administered by county and local units of government must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. To comply with these consistency requirements, Racine County must make any changes that may be needed to bring the County zoning ordinance, shoreland ordinance, and subdivision zoning ordinance into compliance with the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan prior to January 1, 2010. Likewise, each participating local government that has a zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance or official map ordinance must make any changes that may be needed to bring these ordinances into compliance with the comprehensive plan by that date.

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS

County Plans

Racine County has a long history of planning for many of the elements that are required to be included in a comprehensive plan under the State planning law. The County jurisdictional highway plan, park and open space plan, farmland preservation plan, and economic development plan address a number of the required elements of a comprehensive plan. The multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning process was structured to build upon prior planning for the County. The planning effort thus involved updating the planning database for the County, supplementing it with other inventory information specified in the State planning law; reviewing and re-affirming or revising, as appropriate, the recommendations of prior plans; and adding other plan elements that are now required, but not previously addressed.

Local Plans

Many cities, villages, and towns in Racine County have prepared and adopted local land use or master plans. At the outset of the planning process, Racine County made clear its intent, as part of the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning effort, to build upon locally adopted land use and master plans. Section 59.69(3) of the *Wisconsin Statutes* explicitly requires Racine County to “incorporate” into the County plan such plans and maps that have been formally adopted by cities and villages. It is the County’s intent to also “incorporate” such plans and maps that have been adopted by towns. While all such plans—cities, villages, and towns—will be “incorporated” into the planning report, it is recognized that Racine County, in preparing its plan and readying that plan for adoption by the County Board, may choose to disagree with one or more proposals included in the city, village, or town plans. Every effort will be made to discuss and resolve issues between Racine County and the cities, villages, and towns in the County. Where conflicts cannot be resolved, they will be documented in the intergovernmental cooperation element of the plan report. Racine County explicitly recognizes that cities, villages, and towns may choose, on certain matters and issues, to disagree with a position that the County may take. The County respects the rights of cities, villages, and towns to adopt plans that differ from the County plan.

Regional Plans

Racine County is an integral part of the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin Region, which also includes Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha Counties. As the areawide planning agency for the Region, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has prepared and adopted a number of areawide plans—including a regional land use, transportation, park and open space, and water quality management plan. A regional water supply system plan was underway in 2006. The regional plans are systems-level plans that require refinement and detailing at the county and local level. Together these plans provide an overall framework and point of departure for county and local comprehensive planning efforts. Historically, Racine County and many of the local governments have embraced the key concepts of the regional plan in developing county and local land use plans.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

The comprehensive plan presented in this report was developed through a three-year planning process consisting of the following steps: 1) start up tasks, including the identification of participating local governments and the execution of agreements governing the planning process; 2) inventory, or collection of basic data required for the plan; 3) the preparation of projections of future population and employment levels to be considered in developing the plan; 4) issue identification and the formulation of goals and objectives; 5) preparation of the various plan elements which together comprise to the comprehensive plan; 6) identification of plan implementation measures; and 7) plan review, refinement, and adoption.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The multi-jurisdictional planning effort was carried out under the guidance of the Racine County Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee. As created by the Racine County Board, the Racine County Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee is comprised of one representative appointed by each of the participating local governments and one member of the Racine County Board Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee. The role of the Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee is to advise, and make recommendations to, the Racine County Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee, including a recommended multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan for Racine County. The role of the Economic Development and Land Use Planning Committee is to review the recommendations of the Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee and recommend a plan for adoption by the County Board. The Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee provides a formal role for participating local governments to work with County officials to shape the recommended comprehensive plan.

REPORT FORMAT

This planning report documents the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning process and the resulting comprehensive plan. It consists of 17 chapters:

Chapter I	Introduction and Background
Chapter II	Inventory of Population, Housing Stock, and Economic Base
Chapter III	Inventory of Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
Chapter IV	Inventory of Existing Land Use and Transportation Facilities and Services
Chapter V	Inventory of Utilities and Community Facilities
Chapter VI	Inventory of Existing Plans and Ordinances
Chapter VII	Population, Household, and Employment Projections
Chapter VIII	Issues and Opportunities Element
Chapter IX	Land Use Element
Chapter X	Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element
Chapter XI	Housing Element
Chapter XII	Transportation Element
Chapter XIII	Utilities and Community Facilities Element
Chapter XIV	Economic Development Element
Chapter XV	Implementation Element
Chapter XVI	Intergovernmental Cooperation Element
Chapter XVII	Summary

As indicated above, following this introductory chapter, Chapters II through VI present basic planning inventory data required as a basis for the comprehensive plan. Chapter VII presents the projections of population and employment considered in developing the comprehensive plan. Chapters VIII through XVI present the comprehensive plan, with each chapter dealing with one of the nine elements of a comprehensive plan as prescribed under the State comprehensive planning law. Chapter XVII provides a summary of the comprehensive plan.

CONCLUDING REMARK

The comprehensive plan presented in this report serves a number of functions. Most importantly, it provides a basis for decision-making on land use-related matters by County and local government officials. The very structure of the comprehensive plan as prescribed under the State planning law, including the nine required plan elements, seeks to ensure that such land use decision-making is truly broad-based in nature. The importance of the comprehensive plan as a basis for decision-making is reinforced by consistency requirements in the State planning law, which specify that, beginning on January 1, 2010, zoning, land division, and official mapping regulations must be consistent with the plan.

In addition, the comprehensive plan serves to increase the awareness and understanding of County and city, village and town planning goals and objectives by landowners, developers, and other private interests. With an adopted comprehensive plan in place, private sector interests can proceed with greater assurance that proposals developed in accordance with the plan will receive required approvals.

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