



RACINE COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUMMARY SHEET

Issues & Opportunities Element (Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan Preliminary Draft Chapter VIII)

The purpose of the Issues and Opportunities Element is to define a desired future for Racine County and each participating local government. It is one of the nine elements of a comprehensive plan required by Section 66.1001 of the *Wisconsin State Statutes*, and must contain a statement of overall goals to guide the future development and redevelopment of the County through the year 2035.

Visioning Process

Racine County’s comprehensive plan vision statement is intended to articulate what the County and its communities strive to be in the future. The Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee (MJAC) was responsible for preparing and recommending the following vision statement:

“Racine County will work to preserve and enhance a vibrant, healthy, environmentally and economically sustainable community that enables opportunities for people of all ages, income levels, ethnicities, and cultural heritages.”

This vision, with its underlying themes of environmental, economic, and social sustainability, was created based on key findings from:

- information collected and mapped in the inventory chapters of the comprehensive plan (Draft Chapters II-VI);
- population, household, and employment projections (Draft Chapter VII); and
- public participation efforts, including the countywide comprehensive plan public opinion survey and three SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analyses conducted during public informational and MJAC meetings.

These findings were also strongly considered during the development of the plan’s issues and opportunities and the overall goals.

Summaries of all completed draft chapters, as well as reports on the public opinion survey and informational meetings, can be found on the Racine County Smart Growth website.

TOP PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY SWOT ANALYSES

STRENGTHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of people • Good schools • Good fire/rescue services • New businesses in the County • Rural character • Proximity to interstate (I-94) • Improved inter-governmental cooperation • Water resources
WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic congestion • Lack of affordable housing for seniors • Loss of agricultural land and natural resources • Perceived crime in inner city • Lack of funding for redevelopment projects • Too much unemployment • Certain types of development pressures
OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commuter rail • Cooperative services between neighboring municipalities • Good leadership • Planning — smart growth • Find mutually beneficial balance between urban and rural uses • Preserve and restore existing housing
THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of farmland • Runaway health care costs • Ability to maintain services within budget • Job-Population mismatch • Threats to the water table • Lack of public education and awareness • Higher taxes • Increase in crime — perceived and actual



ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

During the visioning process, the following planning issues, opportunities and concerns were identified for Racine County. This broad range of issues is intended to show the interconnected relationships among the nine comprehensive planning elements, as well as to encourage governments and other stakeholders to think strategically about the interaction of these elements on a regional, county, and local level.

Community Character and Identity

The concept of community character and identity includes a number of quality of life factors, such as livability and quality of schools. In Racine County, increased crime (both real and perceived) was identified as a major threat by residents. The preservation of the small town atmosphere, farmland, and open space that constitute much of the County's character also emerged as a high priority.

Planning for Coordinated and Sustainable Future Growth

Racine County and its communities have an extensive history of planning; 17 of the 18 local communities have land use plans, and there has been countywide planning for parks and open spaces and land use and water resource management. Concerns about the rate of development and a desire for planned growth (that is, growth that considers short- and long-term impacts on infrastructure, traffic congestion, schools, and other facilities) arose throughout the visioning process.

Agricultural Resources and Historic Preservation

The preservation of agricultural and historic resources is considered important to Racine County's character and economy. Over half the County is in agricultural uses, and many residents see the industry as having potential to grow in the future, particularly in light of new technologies and products such as bio-fuels. A majority of survey respondents indicated that the County and State should consider the implementation of financial programs that will preserve productive farmland while taking into account the continuing need for development and individual property rights.

Natural Resources and Recreational Preservation

Loss of natural resources—including groundwater, wildlife habitats, forested land, open space—was seen as a major threat to Racine County. In particular, there was concern about the depletion of groundwater supplies and deteriorating air and water quality. Protection of these resources was identified as a high priority, not only for environmental, aesthetic, and health purposes, but also for the influence such resources have on economic development, particularly tourism opportunities.

Built Environment: Housing Options, Land Use, Transportation, and Economic Development

Recognizing that the issues of housing, land use, transportation, economic development, utilities and community facilities, are interconnected, Racine County citizens indicated concerns about how to plan the built environment so as to provide all residents with adequate choices in housing, as well as easy access to quality jobs, schools, recreational opportunities, retail, and other services.

Transit and Transportation Services

Improving transit services and accessibility, and providing more multi-modal transportation options, are considered important in Racine County, particularly taking into consideration changing demographics and rising energy costs. The development of transit services in the western part of the County (especially services for seniors and youth), as well as the expansion of services connecting eastern and western Racine and the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail were seen as opportunities.

Environmental & Economical Sustainable Infrastructure Planning: Public Utilities & Community Facilities

The rate of development was a recurrent concern throughout the visioning process. Although residents recognize the inevitability and potential benefits of growth, they also foresee the opportunities for encouraging more energy-efficient lifestyles and sustainable development practices by promoting urban infill and redevelopment, energy conservation measures, and development of alternate energy sources.

Economic Development

Economic development concerns and opportunities in Racine County centered predominantly on how to increase jobs and diversify industries. Public input corresponds to the issues and opportunities raised in the countywide Economic Development Plan 4.0. In particular, the loss of manufacturing jobs since the 1980s has fueled concerns about how to attract new businesses to the area, and what types businesses and jobs are best suited for the County's population.



Intergovernmental Cooperation and Communication

The ability of local government units to work together, and the County's capacity to work across municipal lines and on a regional level are fundamental to future planning and policy efforts. Residents recognize that building intergovernmental cooperation among government agencies and the private sector could lead to benefits, such as saving on local infrastructure costs. There was some concern about the level of community participation in the land use planning and decision-making process.

Implementation Strategies

Successful implementation strategies bring together residents, businesses and organizations, local units of government, and the County to accomplish the goals, objectives, policies, and programs outlined in the comprehensive plan, as well as procedures to review and amend the plan as necessary.

OVERALL PLAN GOALS

General goals were developed by the MJAC using inventory data, projections, and public input, and they were designed to correlate with the fourteen State Smart Growth goals defined in the *Wisconsin Statutes*. These goals will be incorporated into all nine of the plan elements; additional detailed and specific objectives, policies, and programs, will be developed for each element.

Overall County Comprehensive Plan Goals

- Guide future growth in a manner that preserves and enhances the quality of life and character of urban and rural communities.
- 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.
- Maintain the agricultural base, preserving productive farmland and related environmentally sensitive areas.
- Maintain the environmental assets of the community 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 resources availability, give form and structure to urban development, and provide opportunities for a full range of outdoor recreational activities.
- Protect and enhance cultural structures, historic sites and districts, and archaeological sites.
- 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 changing trends in age-group composition, income, and household types.
- Promote the coordination between land use and housing design that supports a range of transportation choices.
- Provide a multi-modal transportation system that provides appropriate types of transportation needed by all residents of the County at an adequate level of service, provides choices among transportation modes, and provides inter-modal connectivity.
- 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.
- Promote the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities.
- Promote redevelopment and infill in areas with existing infrastructure and services, enhancing existing residential, commercial, and industrial areas.
- Review, revise, or create the regulatory ordinances necessary to ensure consistency with the comprehensive plan and implementation of the objectives, including zoning ordinances, land division ordinances, and official mapping ordinances.
- Encourage a public participation process that provides equity and fairness to landowners and other stakeholders, balanced with responsible land use.
- Reevaluate the comprehensive plan regularly (at least once every ten years) to ensure that it continues to reflect current County and community objectives.
- Encourage intercommunity planning efforts to make effective use of resources and to resolve conflicts.