



RACINE COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUMMARY SHEET

Land Use Element (Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan Preliminary Draft Chapter IX)

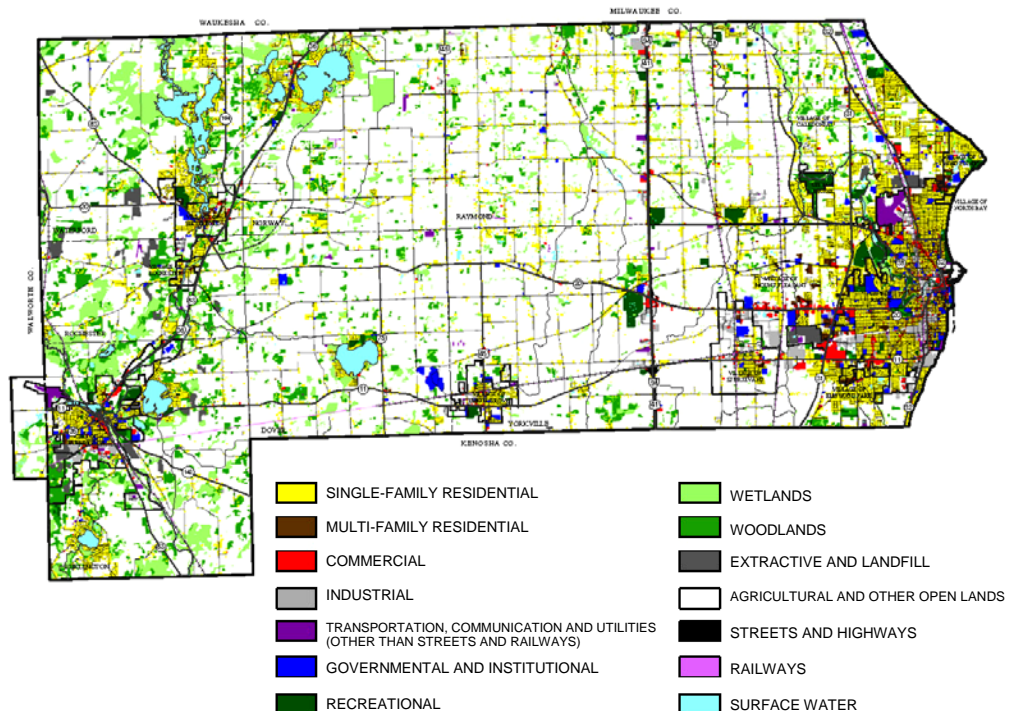
Together with the agricultural, natural and cultural resources element, the land use element seeks to balance long term growth in Racine County with the environmental well-being, agricultural activities, and cultural history of the County. One of the nine State-required plan elements, the land use element must identify goals, objectives, policies and programs to guide future development and redevelopment of public and private property. Arguably the most important chapter of the plan, the land use element provides a means of relating day-to-day development decisions to long-range development goals.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A detailed description of existing land uses in Racine County as of 2000 is compiled and mapped in Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV, "Inventory of Existing Land Use and Transportation Services and Facilities," available on the Racine County Smart Growth website. Some of the key inventory findings include:

- According to the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC)'s land use inventory, in 2000, urban land uses encompassed about 79 square miles, of 23% of Racine County's total planning area. The largest urban land use was residential, which encompassed about 37 square miles, or approximately 46% of all urban land (11% of the total planning area).
- In 2000, nonurban land uses encompassed about 262 square miles of Racine County, or about 76%. Agricultural land was the largest nonurban land use, covering about 196 square miles, 75% of all nonurban land (58% of the total planning area).
- Between 1963 and 2000, urban land uses increased about 70%. Between 2000 and 2007, about 4,240 residential lots were created by subdivision in Racine County.
- Between 1963 and 2000, nonurban land uses decreased by about 11% (32.4 square miles), much of which can be attributed to the conversion of farmland to urban uses. This trend is expected to continue, and poses several challenges to the County's goals of preserving and enhancing rural character and the agriculture sector.

EXISTING LAND USE IN THE RACINE COUNTY PLANNING AREA: 2000



Source: SEWRPC
From Chapter IV, "Inventory of Existing Land Uses and Transportation Services and Facilities"

PUBLIC INPUT

Based on the countywide public opinion survey, and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analyses conducted in 2007, some of the land use issues identified by the community included:

- The plan should strive to preserve rural and small town character.
- The plan should recognize the importance of balancing urban and rural land uses.
- The plan should consider the impacts of growth on public infrastructure and environmental and economic sustainability.
- The plan should strive to accommodate mixed use developments that could include housing, jobs, shopping, and schools.
- The plan should identify sufficient lands to accommodate job growth and economic development in the County.
- The plan should seek to balance the preservation of open space lands with private property rights.
- The plan should recognize and take into consideration the impacts of new developments on agricultural and open space lands and uses.



LAND USE PLAN: 2035

The land use plan for Racine County is intended to guide the physical development of the planning area so that the County grows in a more efficient and attractive pattern, as well as to promote public health and safety and the general welfare of all residents. The recommended land use plan map for Racine County is a composite of the maps prepared by every city, village and town, and indicates where certain types of urban development should occur and areas that should be preserved for farmland and natural resources. Land use conflicts between adjacent communities, most commonly found between towns and neighboring cities or villages, are mapped and addressed in Chapter XVI, "Intergovernmental Cooperation Element."

It should be noted that the timing and location of future development is dependent on a number of factors, including political and economic climate and the availability of essential services (for example, sewer/water), and it is possible that not all lands identified for urban development will be fully developed by the year 2035.

Urban Uses

Residential Development

The plan envisions that additional urban residential development would be accommodated through the infilling of existing vacant lots in areas already committed to such use, on vacant developable land in designated urban residential areas, and on lands designated for redevelopment to urban residential or mixed-use residential uses. Between 2000 and 2035, urban residential lands are anticipated to increase by about 12,400 acres, or about 70%, while suburban residential lands are expected to increase by about 1,260 acres, or 115%.

Commercial and Industrial Development

Additional commercial and industrial land uses are expected to be created through the development of vacant land in the respective designated areas and on lands designated for redevelopment. Between 2000 and 2035, commercial land uses are anticipated to increase by about 2,700 acres, or 140%, while industrial land uses are anticipated to increase by about 5,000 acres, or 205%.

Transportation, Communication, and Utility Development

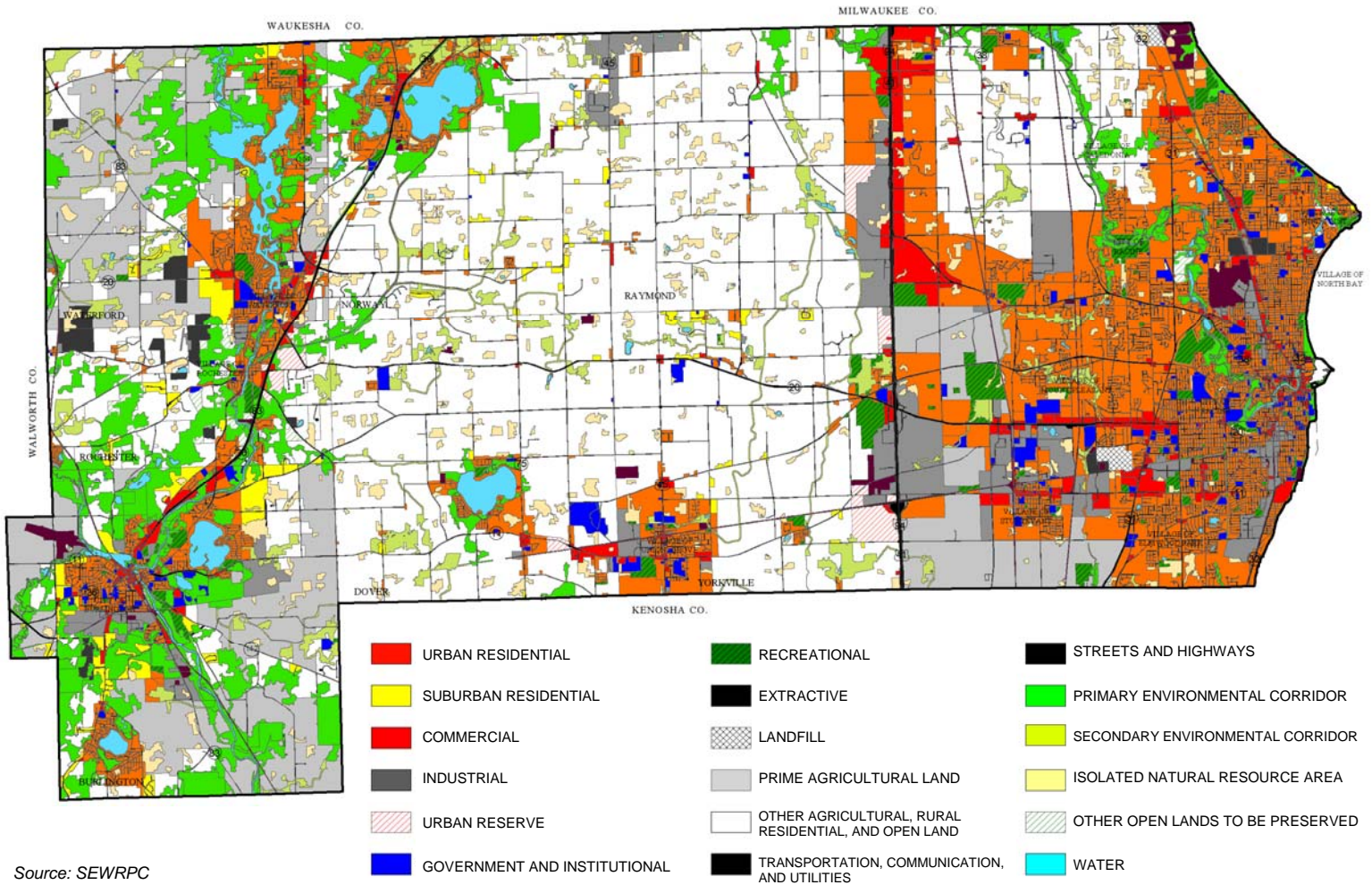
Additional transportation, communication and utility land uses would be created through the development of needed streets and highways in developing urban areas, airport expansions, and the expansion of utility facilities, such as sewage treatment plants. Between 2000 and 2035, these uses are anticipated to increase by about 5,200 acres, or 39%.

Recreational Development

Recreational land will increase through the expansion of existing park sites and the development of new park sites in developing urban areas in association with new residential neighborhoods. Between 2000 and 2035, recreational land uses are expected to increase by about 1,400 acres, or about 47%.



RECOMMENDED LAND USE PLAN FOR THE RACINE COUNTY PLANNING AREA: 2035



Source: SEWRPC

Nonurban Uses

Agricultural Lands

Of Racine County's 17 local units of government, only the Village of Mt. Pleasant and the Towns of Burlington and Waterford have identified lands as prime agricultural land. These lands will be preserved in agricultural use, and may constitute about 19% of all the County's farmland in the year 2035.

Between 2000 and 2035, agricultural and open lands are anticipated to decrease by about 32,000 acres, or about 23%. About 77% of this converted land would be farmland; the remainder would be open space lands. About 1,800 acres of this decrease can be attributed to the planned restoration of farmland to more natural uses as environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas.

Environmental Corridors and Isolated Natural Resource Areas

Primary environmental corridors—defined as areas rich in natural resources that are at least 2 miles long, 200 acres wide, and 400 acres in area—will be preserved in natural open uses, and are expected to increase by about 1,050 acres between 2000 and 2035. Secondary environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas should be considered for preservation as urban and rural development occurs; these are anticipated to increase by about 720 acres. As mentioned above, these increases are likely to come from the reversion of currently farmed floodplains that are adjacent to existing environmental corridors or natural resource areas to more natural conditions.

Other land uses addressed in this element include: governmental and institutional development, urban reserve, other open lands to be preserved, and extractive and landfill uses.



POTENTIAL FOR REDEVELOPMENT AND SMART GROWTH

Wisconsin State Statutes define potential smart growth areas as “an area that will enable development and redevelopment of land with existing infrastructure and municipal, State, and utility services, where practicable, or that will encourage efficient development patterns that are both contiguous to existing development and at densities which have relative low municipal, State governmental, and utility costs.” In Racine County, these areas include:

- Environmentally contaminated sites identified by local governments as suitable for redevelopment
- Underutilized land parcels in or adjacent to traditional downtowns
- Aging commercial and industrial districts located in urban service areas
- Undeveloped land within planned urban service areas that is adjacent to existing development and does not encompass lands with significant environmental features or potential for long-term agricultural use

Opportunities for redevelopment and smart growth in Racine County envisioned in the comprehensive plan are consistent with those put forth in the regional land use plan. The regional plan envisions that about 90% of residential growth will be accommodated in medium and high density ranges within planned urban service areas, which will facilitate the efficient provision of utilities and other urban services. Compact development within urban areas is also expected to help moderate the amount of agricultural land that will be converted to urban use in order to accommodate increased population growth.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

In addition to public land use regulations, it is expected that urban development tools and techniques may be used to implement future development and redevelopment as envisioned by the comprehensive plan. Conservation techniques that are more applicable to development in rural areas (e.g., conservation subdivision design) are discussed in Chapter X, “Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element.” Some tools and techniques summarized in the land use element include:

Neighborhood and Special District Planning: Within county and community-level plans, neighborhood development plans may be prepared for each residential neighborhood or special district where significant growth is expected to occur. These plans should consider: transportation (e.g., streets, bicycle and pedestrian paths); housing (mix of housing types and densities), sites for parks, schools, and retail centers; environmentally significant areas to be preserved; and stormwater management and utility easement areas. Older neighborhoods should identify areas recommended for redevelopment to a different use, areas recommended for rehabilitation, any local street improvements or realignments; these plans should also seek to preserve historic, cultural, and natural features which provide character.

Community Design and Sustainability: One of Racine County’s comprehensive planning goals is to develop a communities that are visually pleasing and efficient while promoting a sustainable land use pattern that meets the social, economic, physical, ecological, and quality-of-life needs of all residents. Sustainable development, or “green” development, is a pattern of resource use that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This should be practiced throughout the County to improve air and water quality and to conserve energy.

Official Mapping: Official mapping provides a means for reserving land for future public use, such as streets, highways, waterways, railways, transit facilities, and parkways. It is recommended that all cities, villages and towns adopt official maps.

OVERALL ELEMENT GOALS

- Goal X-1: Maintain the agricultural base, preserving productive farmland and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Goal X-2: 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.
- Goal X-3: 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.
- Goal X-4: Protect and enhance cultural structures, historic sites and districts, and archaeological sites.
- Goal X-5: Encourage a public participation process that provides equity and fairness to landowners and other stakeholders, balanced with responsible land use.
- Goal X-6: Guide future growth in a manner that preserves and enhances the quality of life and character of urban and rural communities.