



# ROCK COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2035

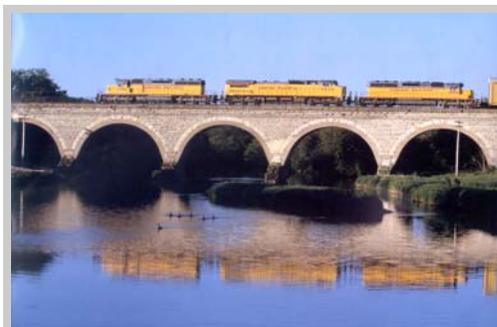
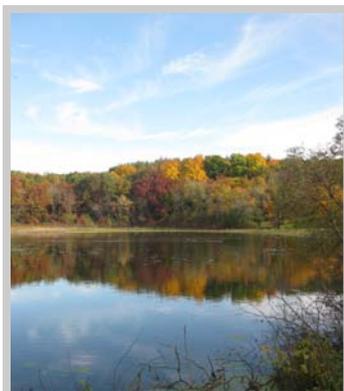
## SECTION I - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This Section provides an introduction and overview of the *Rock County Comprehensive Plan 2035 (Plan)*. Part I identifies Rock County’s (County) Vision Statement, the foundation upon which this *Plan* is built. Part II identifies the enabling legislation providing the impetus for this *Plan*. Part III states this *Plan’s* purpose, intent, and use, whereas Part IV states its structure and content. Part V identifies the process utilized to develop this *Plan*, whereas Part VI outlines *Plan* future directions.

## I. County Vision Statement

Rock County, comprised of vibrant and diverse urban areas, bucolic rural communities, productive agricultural lands, and environmentally significant open space areas, will maintain and enhance its high quality of life and continue to serve as an exceptional community in which to live, work, and recreate. Preservation of the County’s agricultural, natural, and cultural resources and orderly, responsible, and appropriate growth and development is vital in achieving this end. Thus, the County will utilize thoughtful, comprehensive, and participatory planning practices that balance private property rights with communal well-being, local authority with regional oversight, and preservation with growth, to ensure a stable, vibrant, diverse, and sustainable community for present and future County residents.



## II. *Plan* Enabling Legislation

State of Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 - Comprehensive Planning mandates that local government units (counties, cities, villages, and towns) develop and adopt comprehensive plans to guide the unit's planning and development through the year 2035. Per State of Wisconsin Statute 62.23(3) (a) - Master Plan, a local government unit's comprehensive plan is to be made:

*"With the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development.....which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity or the general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development."*

The County has developed this *Plan* for a 25-year planning horizon, 2010 to 2035, per the aforementioned Statutes.

## III. *Plan* Purpose, Intent, and Use

This *Plan*'s purpose and intent is to:

- Conform to State of Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 - Comprehensive Planning, promoting coordinated and consistent planning and development across government boundaries and through government layers, ensuring the following County actions are consistent with this *Plan*:
  - Official mapping
  - Zoning ordinance development or amendment
  - Subdivision regulation
  - Shoreland and wetland/shoreland zoning
- Inventory and analyze existing, historical, and future conditions in the County, and identify County planning and development issues and opportunities
- State goals (including County Vision Statement), objectives, and policies to guide County planning and development over the next 25 years, from 2010 to 2035, and identify tools and timelines to implement policies and achieve goals and objectives

This *Plan* is to be utilized:

- As a policy document, providing clear and consistent direction in which to specifically guide the County's day-to-day planning and development activities, from 2010 to 2035, including but not limited to, program maintenance, expansion, and development, ordinance revision and development, and rezone, sub-division, and other development proposal review
- As a visionary document, providing clear and consistent direction in which to broadly guide the County's planning and development activities from 2010 to 2035

Additionally, it is important to note that this *Plan* was initially developed (2005-2008) at a time of relative growth and stability in the local, County, State, and global economy. As recent events (2009) have shown, local economies are becoming increasingly interdependent on larger economies, subject to their broader trends of both growth and decline. Thus, this *Plan* is to be a fluid document, adaptable to changing conditions both locally and in the global marketplace.

#### IV. *Plan* Structure and Content

State of Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 - Comprehensive Planning mandates that nine elements, as listed in the following (1.-9.), must be identified and addressed in a local government unit's comprehensive plan. It is appropriate that other plans, as listed in the following (10.-13.), be a component of, and consistent with, a local government unit's comprehensive plan.

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Issues and opportunities                      | 8. Intergovernmental cooperation     |
| 2. Land use                                      | 9. Implementation                    |
| 3. Agricultural, natural, and cultural resources | 10. Farmland preservation plan       |
| 4. Housing                                       | 11. Land records modernization plan  |
| 5. Transportation                                | 12. Natural hazard mitigation plan   |
| 6. Utilities and community facilities            | 13. Park and outdoor recreation plan |
| 7. Economic development                          |                                      |

This *Plan* is organized per Statute 66.1001, containing four Sections as follows:

- **Section I - Executive Summary**

This Section provides an introduction and overview of the *Plan*, including *Plan* enabling legislation, purpose, intent, and use, structure and content, development process, and future directions.

- **Section II - Inventory, Issues, and Opportunities Report**

This Section contains Chapters 1-11 covering the elements and existing, relevant plans, all as stated in the aforementioned (1.-13.). The following provides an abstract of each Chapter in Section II:

- *Chapter 1 - Issues and Opportunities*: This Chapter provides a profile of the County utilizing Geography, History, Existing Population and Demographics, Population and Demographic Trends, and Population Projections as profile categories. Analysis of this information allowed for formulation of County planning issues and opportunities, also stated in this Chapter. Planning issues and opportunities provide answers to the questions, "What are we planning for?" and "What will help us get there?"
- *Chapter 2 - Agricultural Resources*: This Chapter provides an inventory of existing agricultural resources by looking at the location of productive soils, agricultural preservation areas (as defined in the *Rock County Agricultural Preservation Plan: 2005 Update*), Town zoning, and municipal extraterritorial jurisdictions. The Chapter

then goes on to discuss issues for agricultural preservation such as the history of land conversions (zoning changes), fragmented development, personal property rights, annexation and the food versus fuel debate. Tools for how to more efficiently and effectively preserve agriculture are presented in this Chapter as well.

- *Chapter 3 - Natural Resources:* This Chapter presents and discusses natural resources that currently exist in the County that are included as part of environmentally significant open space areas (ESOSAs) as defined in the *Rock County, Wisconsin Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space (POROS) Plan: 2009-2014*. Additional important natural features that are not ESOSAs, but that are discussed in this Chapter include drainage basins and watersheds, forests and woodlands, threatened and endangered species, fish and wildlife habitat, non-metallic reclamation sites, and scenic and visual resources. 2.4. in Section II: Chapter 2 - Agricultural Resources of this *Plan* is referenced for subject matter that is also applicable to natural resources.
- *Chapter 4 - Historic and Cultural Resources:* This Chapter begins by identifying existing plans and inventories that are most relevant to historic and cultural resources in the County. The Chapter then goes on to identify, and in some cases map, existing architectural and historic sites and attractions, cemeteries, historical markers, archeological sites, rustic roads, the historic Ice Age Trail, and cultural sites, organizations, and activities currently existing in the County. The Chapter then discusses some of the issues, opportunities and available resources associated with the identification and preservation of historic and cultural sites. Issues, opportunities, and tools identified in Section II: Chapter 2 - Agricultural Resources of this *Plan* are referenced as items that may apply to historic preservation as well.
- *Chapter 5 - Land Use:* This Chapter is intended to serve as a tool to support and guide local land use plans and maps by providing information and education on planning principles and historic land use trends, as well as a discussion of current and possible future land use conflicts and opportunities. This Chapter goes on to demonstrate the future demand for additional residential, commercial, and industrial land uses based on accepted methodologies. The goals, objectives and policies of this Chapter are directed toward suggesting methods and strategies for local governments to achieve their land use goals through careful planning, intergovernmental cooperation, and effective policy.
- *Chapter 6 - Housing:* This Chapter provides an inventory of housing conditions in the County utilizing Existing Housing, Housing Trends, and Housing Projections as inventory categories. Housing aspects identified in this inventory include general composition, location, history, housing units/households and persons per household, occupancy and vacancy (including occupant type), structural type, age, value, affordability, and sales. Analysis of this inventory allowed for formulation of County housing issues, opportunities, goals, objectives, and policies, all stated in this Chapter.

- *Chapter 7 - Transportation:* This Chapter provides an inventory of existing transportation plans and projects in the County, the region, and the State, as well as existing conditions regarding all modes of transportation in the County. Current and future needs are examined in this Chapter, concerning conditions, congestion, safety, accessibility, connectivity standards, and enhancements and beautification.
- *Chapter 8 - Utilities and Community Facilities:* This Chapter provides an inventory of utilities and community facilities conditions in the County, utilizing Water, Wastewater, Stormwater, Energy, Care, Police/Law Enforcement, Fire/Rescue and Emergency Medical, Emergency, Education, Solid Waste, Communications and Media, and Recreation and Gathering Areas as inventory categories. Analysis of this inventory allowed for formulation of County utilities and community facilities issues, opportunities, goals, objectives, and policies, all stated in this Chapter.
- *Chapter 9 - Economic Development:* This Chapter provides a comprehensive analysis and overview of the County's economic landscape, noting past trends as well as projections. Indicators such as growth patterns, income/wages, labor force characteristics, commuting patterns, industry sectors, infrastructure, and real estate considerations are addressed. This Chapter also highlights the public/private resources most commonly applied toward economic development projects. Implementation strategies are reviewed, within the context of organizational capacities and market conditions. The compounded impacts of this information is summarized within the issues and opportunities section, and then articulated in this Chapter's goal, objectives, and policies.
- *Chapter 10 - Intergovernmental Cooperation:* This Chapter provides an inventory of government and administrative jurisdictions in the County, as well as information on their individual planning efforts. Neighboring counties and municipalities are also inventoried, as well as State and Federal agency jurisdictions. Current levels of cooperation among jurisdictions are examined, and potential causes of intergovernmental conflict are listed along with potential solutions. The information gathered for this Chapter culminates in a list of opportunities to improve intergovernmental cooperation.
- *Chapter 11 - Implementation:* This Chapter provides an inventory of *Plan* implementation, utilizing Policy Tools and Timelines, and *Plan* Updates, Amendments, and Adoption as inventory categories. Tools are the means by which a plan's policies can be implemented, so as to ultimately achieve its goals and objectives. This Chapter groups *Plan* policy tools into five categories:
  - Existing Government Agencies/Departments, Programs, and Plans
  - Potential Government Agencies/Departments, Programs, and Plans
  - Existing Government Regulations
  - Potential Government Regulations
  - Government and Non-Government Partnerships

Timelines delineate a specified time period in which a policy should be implemented, providing for an objective evaluation of *Plan* implementation. This Chapter identifies the two types of policy timelines to be utilized in this *Plan*, Ongoing, 2010-2035 and 2010-2015.

This Chapter also identifies the statutory requirements for *Plan* amendments and adoption, as well as the *Plan* updating process.

The following County plans are not contained herein, but are designated as a component of and are consistent with this *Plan*:

- *Chapter 12 - Rock County, Wisconsin Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space (POROS) Plan: 2009-2014*: This plan, updated in 2009, outlines policies to ensure the effective and efficient management of the County's park properties and its environmentally sensitive open space lands, ensuring diverse outdoor recreational opportunities and preservation of the County's natural amenities.
- *Chapter 13 - Rock County Agricultural Preservation Plan: 2005 Update*: This plan, updated in 2005, aims to ensure preservation and continued utilization of productive agricultural lands in the County. A County agricultural preservation plan, certified by the State of Wisconsin, is a requirement of the State's Farmland Preservation Program, offering tax credits to County agricultural landowners enrolled in the program.
- *Chapter 14 - Rock County Natural Hazard Mitigation Planning Manual and Plan*: This plan, completed in 2004, outlines policies designed to protect the County's residents, critical facilities, infrastructure, private property, and environment in the event of a natural disaster, including but not limited to, floods, high winds, extreme winter weather events, and agricultural drought.
- *Chapter 15 - Rock County Land Records and Modernization Plan: 1998-2003*: This plan, completed in 2003, is designed to guide the process of land records modernization in the County, including development and maintenance of a fully functional geographic information system (GIS). This plan is scheduled for update in 2009.
- *Chapter 16 - Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport Land Use Plan & Zoning Ordinance*: This plan, completed in 2009, is designed to assist local zoning administrators in the implementation and enforcement of the Airport Overlay Zoning District Ordinance, and is to be utilized in conjunction with the master plan for the Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport located in the City of Janesville.

- **Section III - Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

This Section states this *Plan's* goals (including County Vision Statement), objectives, and policies, along with corresponding policy timelines. Goals, objectives, and policies provide this *Plan* with its ultimate worth. This *Plan's* goals are ideas and values in the public interest that provide an end in which to direct the planning process. This *Plan's* objectives are more specific, providing detailed direction towards achievement of goals. This *Plan's* policies consist of rules or courses of action utilized to ensure *Plan* implementation and achievement of goals and objectives. Timelines delineate a specified time period in which a policy should be implemented, providing for an objective evaluation of *Plan* implementation.

It is important to note that all policy timelines presented herein are intended to serve as a guide, providing only an indication of the possible future date of policy implementation. These timelines cannot account for the myriad of future factors, including but not limited to, additional workload, resource limitations, new and unforeseen issues, opportunities, trends, and concepts, and political and public sentiment, that will affect implementation of this *Plan's* policies.

This *Plan's* goals, objectives, policies, and policy timelines were formulated to address the issues and opportunities presented in Section II of this *Plan*. The goals, objectives, and policies of the following County Plan are not contained herein, but are designated as a component of and are consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and timelines of this *Plan*.

- *Rock County, Wisconsin Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space (POROS) Plan: 2009-2014*
- *Rock County Agricultural Preservation Plan: 2005 Update*
- *Rock County Natural Hazards Mitigation Planning Manual and Plan*
- *Rock County Land Records and Modernization Plan: 2003-2008*
- *Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport Land Use Plan & Zoning Ordinance*

- **Section IV - Appendices**

This Section contains appendices to this *Plan*, including:

- *Appendix A - Grant Agreement*
- *Appendix B - Citizen Participation Plan*
- *Appendix C - Visioning Session - Questions and Attendee Responses*
- *Appendix D - Survey Instrument, Results, and Return Statistics*
- *Appendix E - Citizen Advisory Committee/Public Workshops Agendas and Minutes*
- *Appendix F - Projection Sources and Formulation Methodologies*
- *Appendix G - State of Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 - Comprehensive Planning*
- *Appendix H - Land Use Inventory by LCBS Category*
- *Appendix I - City and Village Future Land Use Maps*
- *Appendix J - Legal and Grant Consistency*

## V. *Plan Development Process*

In 2005, the County, in conjunction with thirteen other County municipalities, was awarded a Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Planning Grant (Appendix A) from the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) Comprehensive Planning Grant program to aid in *Plan* development, subject to State of Wisconsin Statute 16.965 - Planning Grants to Local Governments Units. The County's Planning, Economic & Community Development Agency (Agency), the administrator of the grant, determined how the *Plan* was to be developed, compliant with State of Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001 and 16.965.

The quality and value of a comprehensive plan is dependent on citizen participation and input gathered throughout the plan development process. As a comprehensive plan is a blueprint for a community's development pace and pattern, it is essential that the opinions of its citizens are voiced throughout the plan development process and formulated in the plan document.

This *Plan's* Citizen Participation Plan (Appendix B) was developed by the Agency to guide the *Plan* development process, ensuring input and participation from stakeholders, including County residents and elected officials, and all other interested parties. Key elements of the Citizen Participation Plan included:

- *Visioning*

The visioning process provides a planning effort with focus and direction. The Agency held two public visioning sessions in September 2005. The sessions were advertised in the local media, on flyers posted throughout the County, and on the County's website. The input gathered from these sessions established the County Vision Statement, the framework upon which this *Plan* is based.

  - *Session One - September 20, 2005*: Twenty-five citizens attended this session and were divided into small groups, with Agency staff included in each group. Staff guided discussion within each group by asking questions addressing all elements of the *Plan*. Questions were directed and specific, ambiguous and open-ended, allowing for open discussion and brainstorming. Themes derived from citizen input included planning for a growing and aging population, protecting farmland and the environment, maintenance of facilities and roads, and the desire for local control over zoning and land use decisions. Appendix C displays the complete list of session questions, along with attendee responses.
  - *Session Two - September 27, 2005*: Seventeen citizens attended this session and rated responses to specific questions presented at the first session. Appendix C displays the complete list of session two questions, along with attendee responses.
- *Survey*

Surveys are often utilized in plan development to gauge general public opinion and sentiment. The Agency developed and distributed the *2035 Comprehensive Plan*

*Countywide Citizen Survey* in an initial effort to gather County residents opinion on County planning issues and opportunities. 5,000 surveys were distributed in April 2006 to a random County resident sample, derived from a mailing list acquired from A M Mailing Services Inc. located in the City of Edgerton. 1,288 surveys were returned, a return rate of 25.75%. Residents of the Cities of Janesville and Beloit returned the highest number of surveys, 637 and 311 respectively. Appendix D contains the survey instrument, cumulative survey results, and return statistics.

- *Citizen Advisory Committee and Public Workshops*

Citizen advisory committees add to the productivity of the plan development process by offering an efficient method of ensuring a wide range of citizen input and review, ultimately assuring the formulated plan reflects the desires of a broad and diverse constituency. Workshops offer stakeholders an opportunity to review and comment on a comprehensive plan in its formative stages, ultimately shaping the plan's content and structure.

A *Plan* Citizen Advisory Committee was formed by the Agency in September 2006 to review *Plan* drafts and recommend a final *Plan* to the County Board. The Committee originally consisted of 17 members, solicited by the Agency as they represented a cross section of the County population, including elected officials, government employees, leaders in the business, industry, and non-profit fields, and interested citizens. The Committee met 16 times during the *Plan* development process.

These publicly-noticed Advisory Committee meetings also served as public workshops for all *Plan* elements. These workshops consisted of Agency staff presenting general *Plan* material and drafts to the public for review and comment.

Appendix E contains the agendas and minutes of the Citizen Advisory Committee meetings and public workshops.

- *Open Houses*

Open houses are another method in which to educate the public, ensuring stakeholder input during the plan development process. The Agency held annual open houses (2007-2009) at which the *Plan's* status and drafts were presented for public review and comment.

## VI. *Plan* Future Directions

Completion of this *Plan*, and adoption by the County Board, is not the end of the County planning process. This *Plan* will be updated within five years of adoption, in 2014, and thereafter at a minimum of once every five years. This periodic review and update ensures that County planning will continue to evolve and adapt to unforeseen issues and opportunities, new trends and concepts, and political and public sentiment.