

**CITY OF FORT ATKINSON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION WORKSHOP  
MAY 31, 2007**

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS = 74**

In May of 2007, the City held a Vision Workshop to provide an opportunity for residents to identify a shared vision for the City, express concerns for the future of the City, and to develop priority actions for the City to address over the next 20 years. During the workshop, the 74 participants in attendance were asked to describe their vision for the future of the City and identify key issues and opportunities for growth and development. Below is a compilation of all workshop results.

**WORKSHOP RESULTS**

Workshop participants were asked to take ten minutes working on their own to describe how the City of Fort Atkinson should ideally look, feel, and function in the year 2030. Participants were encouraged to be creative, to use their imaginations, and to be as general or as specific as they liked.

Participants' responses have been organized in bullet-point format below based on the different components of the comprehensive plan. This was intended to help bring out common themes or ideas and to facilitate overall analysis. A summary of the key points from each category of comments has also been provided.

**Comments related to agricultural resources:**

Summary of Key Points:

Preserve farmland in areas surrounding Fort Atkinson and establish a farmers market or other City-sponsored events to help maintain the viability of farming.

Visioning Statements from Workshop Participants:

- I would like farmland preservation to maintain the rural surroundings which have so defined Fort Atkinson.
- Active farmers' market with adjoining land in Ag use for food consumers in town

**Comments related to natural resources:**

Summary of Key Points:

Develop Fort Atkinson as a model of community-wide sustainability, focusing on efficient energy consumption and the reduction of fossil fuel use, the incorporation of "green" technologies, and initiatives to maintain water and air quality and preserve the Rock River.

Visioning Statements from Workshop Participants:

- I would like it to have a plan with energy as the focal point – efficiency in energy as a factor in planning transportation, building construction, where development occurs
- A city that is not dependant on fossil fuel
- Value placed on the river as a resource
- Houses are designed and built utilizing as much "green" technology as possible.
- A sustainable community – minimize energy consumption

- Sustainable buildings – smart conservation of energy and minimal use of toxic substance
- Old buildings renovated and made energy efficient
- Clean air and water
- Air and water quality
- River is cleaner; edible fish, decreased invasive species
- Is a model for implementing sustainability concepts on a community-wide level
- Refurbished homes and energy efficient apartment/town house (no additional subdivisions, unless are “green” constructed)
- Preserve green space at river – no further development
- Clean up of river and ponds (working regionally)

### **Comments related to cultural resources:**

#### Summary of Key Points:

Encourage and support a demographically and ethnically diverse population and celebrate this diversity by promoting services, housing, transportation, and community facilities that cater to these populations. Broaden the range of opportunities to experience different cultural or ethnic traditions (e.g. ethnic restaurants). Market the City as a tourist destination by promoting museums, historic resources, and other unique local attractions.

#### Visioning Statements from Workshop Participants:

- Has more varied, ethnic restaurants and ethnic diversity in its population
- Entertainment should be brought in the city – most important affordable entertainment
- The population is diverse
- Wide range of ethnic groups in every neighborhood
- Senior friendly – transportation available, sidewalk access, local businesses, residences for elderly, variety of medical facilities
- Senior friendly – public transport and walkways
- Embraces, respects, and provides opportunities for all its members, the youngest to the most senior
- Restaurants/shopping options have been expanded to include multi-cultural dining experiences
- One doesn’t need to leave for entertainment
- The city will support more retirees seeking to escape metropolitan congestion
- Tourism will be driven by the presence of an enhanced museum, bike trail, and Riverwalk
- Multi-ethnic/racial population – all welcome and integrated neighborhoods

### **Comments related to land use:**

#### Summary of Key Points:

Actively promote infill development and redevelopment, and direct new development areas primarily to the west and south of the existing City limits. New development should be compact and well-planned to minimize expansion into neighboring towns and to preserve farmland outside the City.

New neighborhoods should be designed around and complement natural resource features, and greenspaces and parks should be preserved and enhanced throughout the City.

#### Visioning Statements from Workshop Participants:

- Population = 15,000. The city is infilled and there is land developed west and south of the city
- City is compact, with greenspace between it and its closest municipal neighbor
- City continues to be compact as growth options only allowed for tight fitting growth. Some of the township will be included in the city, so there will be much larger lots in those areas.
- A city that has taken advantage of its area resources to enhance the quality of life. A city that views quality in all phases of growth and development
- Buildings must be compact and green space preserved
- Minimize unsightly sprawl, unthoughtful development
- Development has been accomplished in a careful, considered manner – and folks are beginning another phase of their continued planning
- Limited sprawl
- About the same size, car volume some or less
- New residential areas that do not sprawl – 4 or 5 acre mixed with higher density residential and open spaces
- Historical preservation; commercial, residential contained sprawl retaining green space
- The city is compact, but with plenty of public parks
- Holds itself and those involved in development, accountable for their impact to out community in the near and long term
- Like today, but larger
- Many older houses have been restored and modest growth has occurred outward
- No overbuilding of subdivisions. More dense housing that use less spaces, has a lot of green space; city should remain compact; leave the countryside beautiful
- Maybe the population is close to 15,000 not over 20,000
- Growth to 18,000
- Growth out of city to Hwy C west – 26 Bypass south
- The population will increase by 5,000 – the city’s boundaries will be extended south and west
- Development would continue to infill areas and growth northwest along USH 12 and south Hackbarth Road and to the south
- Local landowners given some freedom
- County/city cooperation around land use issues

#### **Comments related to transportation:**

##### Summary of Key Points:

Evolve the infrastructure of the City to facilitate the use of alternative and more energy-efficient forms of transportation. This should include the provision of an inter-connected network of trails and bike lanes, sidewalks, and public transportation options. In the downtown, especially, walking and biking should be supported over other forms of transportation. At the same time, maintain the quality of streets and encourage efficiency in travel through the development of interconnected transportation networks. This may also involve locating and constructing a third bridge. Minimize the negative impacts of traffic throughout the community.

#### Visioning Statements from Workshop Participants:

- People are using mopeds and bikes

- It's easy to use the greenbelt to get to most businesses/grocery stores/schools by bicycle.
- A walkable, bike friendly community
- Streets will be in good shape (no potholes).
- Main Street will provide for transportation such as electronic carts, bicycles, and walking as well as automobiles
- Cars are quiet (electric, hybrid cars), no trucks.
- Safe biking and walking
- Bicycle lanes everywhere to get people to grocery/drugstore/hardware/library/post office
- Minimal car/truck noise
- Every child able to walk to school
- Walking, bicycles, and small energy-efficient means of transportation serve the populous.
- Planned sidewalk/bike trails/green space
- Residential areas fully sidewalked and bike friendly
- More transportation options
- Easy to navigate without a car (bike, sidewalks, buses).
- Is a walkable community, out to its farthest corners with many opportunities to access and enjoy its many natural resources
- Jefferson County has an integrated rail system to provide fast efficient travel between its communities as well as Madison and Milwaukee
- I see safe routes for kids and adults to walk and bike when going to school or running errands (bike lanes and paths)
- People are walking, biking – few are driving (no parking on side of Main Street)
- More accessible parks through bike routes and there are accessible exit ramps off of bike route to safely access downtown
- Light transportation – electric cars (golf cars) in town, bicycle traffic – special roads for this use
- Transportation same
- Another bridge will connect the north and south sides of the river
- People walking freely downtown – pedestrian friendly
- More use of public transportation – so more available
- Third bridge
- Enhance trail system (bike and walk)
- Streets are in good condition – modern and maintained
- Scooter friendly/bicycle friendly

### **Comments related to utilities and community facilities:**

#### Summary of Key Points:

Expand and enhance community facilities, including the library and the park system. Parks should be inter-connected and provide a range of recreational opportunities, both passive and active. Promote the establishment and growth of community organizations, clubs, and interest groups, and maintain the riverfront as a public resource and asset to the community. Emphasize the value of schools by continuing to invest wisely in education facilities and programs.

#### Visioning Statements from Workshop Participants:

- Has a “green belt” network – parks linked via paths throughout the city.
- Fort High School just finished an ambitious addition
- Lots of neighborhood parks and playgrounds with nice play equipment.
- Natural areas that can be walked to, people biking/walking around
- Lots of recycling – more than trash
- Expanded library facilities will continue to meet needs of all ages
- Churches will continue to meet needs of residents

- Green spaces will be fewer due to greater needs for parking.
- Has maintained and built upon the excellence of its school system
- Schools the same, maybe one more
- More parks, green spaces
- library and other public service buildings
- River being a scenic park area
- Parks are many and used heavily by labor force
- Schools remain above average
- The riverfront will continue to be improved with additional accessible green space and trails
- The immediate area will support a YMCA and Boys & Girls Club
- Parks, bike paths, and recreation areas will continue to be improved and focus on our heritage
- Lake Koshkonong and Rock River basin will be improved with islands and nature areas
- Improved parks/natural space (handicapped facilities/play areas, bathrooms, community gardens/public botanical gardens)
- Additional public school location (elementary)
- Boys & Girls Club or other youth facility
- Schools offer more community/virtual learning opportunities; wireless zones in city; facilities for recreation
- Parks equal on all sides of city
- Green space and park space continues to be maintained
- Schools continue to be top notch
- Schools will be focused on training for employment

### **Comments related to housing and neighborhood development:**

#### Summary of Key Points:

Promote the development of well-designed, compact neighborhoods that feature a diversity of housing options and a mix of compatible land uses. Neighborhoods should be designed around centrally-located community facilities and gathering spaces and should facilitate and encourage the interaction of people. Property maintenance should be expected and enforced and residential streets should be inter-connected, safe, and walkable.

#### Visioning Statements from Workshop Participants:

- Mature landscaped neighborhoods – with sidewalks
- Suburban tract – homes are out of control, but people are looking at homes closer to the city center because the greenbelt system is so appealing. Less people commute to cities beyond Fort Atkinson. People see the benefits of working close to home.
- Mixture of old updated and new. Many with porches and all with sidewalks for staying close to your neighbors.
- Planning to focus on community building – dense neighborhoods
- Diverse mixture of housing – similar
- Neighborhoods created that encourage conversation and interaction
- The city zone would be relatively compact, but there would be planned neighborhoods with their own central park.
- All housing will be in good repair and look cared for.
- Neighborhoods that face open to green space (community gardens, play areas, etc.) with garages behind
- No cookie cutter housing. Mixed income and generations
- Housing is a mix – allowing for a considerable range of income, family size, and environmental choices.
- Neighborhood elementary schools
- Adequate assisted living facilities in accessible areas
- All neighborhoods are walkable (sidewalks or space), older neighborhoods provide canvas for character.

- Variety of housing – old neighborhoods, high density housing mixed with green space and retail/commercial
- Mixed housing – single, multi-family, and affordable
- Mixed neighborhoods as present – restricted growth
- The immediate area will induce more homes for the elderly (i.e., Fairhaven)
- Very few rundown houses (city help encourage homeowners to clean up with support, financially and aesthetically)
- Neighborhood school concept maintained

### **Comments related to economic development:**

#### Summary of Key Points:

Promote the development and expansion of small, local businesses and specialty shops that cater to the day-to-day needs of residents but that also invite shoppers and tourists from outside the community. Focus on the restoration of existing businesses, as well as redevelopment and infill in key areas of the City. Actively work to eliminate vacant buildings and store fronts and discourage the future development of strip malls, and “big box” stores. Invest in the downtown and allow for a mix of land uses to ensure that this important area of the City remains active and vibrant. Encourage a variety of business and employment options in the City, including hi-tech industries and professional offices, and direct future industrial development into appropriate locations such as the business parks.

#### Visioning Statements from Workshop Participants:

- Small boutiques, cafes, buildings are restored
- Lite industry located business parks and technology – perhaps centered in older former industrial buildings
- Certain patches of area in the city are now upgraded and functional (i.e., TI Complex, Lorman’s, Water Street NE)
- Storefronts on Main street have been restored to their earlier grandeur
- Has no vacant storefronts on Main Street
- Has individually owned shops rather than chain stores
- Downtown is mostly unchanged – a few more buildings filling in the cracks/replacing small buildings with larger ones.
- Bustling business center with people walking back and forth conducting their business and shopping
- City that is well balanced in the service sectors and industry. City that has the infrastructure to support this balance.
- I would like its current vital economy to continue, with an emphasis on a strong downtown
- Downtown – much the same, less vacancies
- Vibrant downtown with locally owned businesses
- Storefronts would be occupied and thriving. These would be maintained.
- The river would have a planned riverwalk to attract shoppers, walkers, out-of-towners.
- Strip malls would be gone.
- There wouldn’t be any businesses with large parking lots in front of them. Parking would be ample, but people would park in structures or in shared lots behind businesses.
- All the buildings will be occupied in the central city with prosperous enterprises.
- There will be a mix of jobs and employment opportunities – most higher paying.
- River bank will be developed on both sides with walkways and picnic areas.
- All currently empty commercial sites will be occupied and parking lots landscaped.

- The City of Fort Atkinson will be technically on the cutting edge with business, consumers, and learners able to interact with each other on a broad band interactive network. Businesses will be able to display merchandise electronically and consumers will be able to secure purchases without physically being required to act in a fact-to-face manner.
- A city unique in shops (specialty stores), industries to hire technical personnel, service and research
- Development along Madison Avenue, but keep empty buildings occupied (specialty/service areas would encourage buildings to be occupied)
- Retail shops have been established on 3 to 4 story mall-like buildings.
- The river walkway has been developed on both side and contains retail and entertainment facilities.
- We are a destination for business conferences and gathering
- A vibrant downtown with mixed residential and commercial development, where able bodied residents can walk or bike to meet their needs – shopping, education, civic service, etc.
- Elimination of blighted structure and areas
- Business and industry is more geared towards information handling and skilled technical services than in 2007.
- thriving CBD
- no empty “big boxes” or other store buildings
- Downtown areas provides entertainment/restaurants
- Hi-tech industries
- Active, viable CBD; last strip mall built in 2008
- No big box retail and those empty converted to usable space, i.e., Piggly Wiggly, K-Mart, etc.
- Downtown is vibrant – businesses include service types needed by homeowners. It should include small stores so that residents do not need to travel outside of city for purchase of shoes and clothing desired by average citizens – not highly upscale
- Vital downtown – no empty stores
- Downtown will have gone thru a boom bust cycle.
- Family owned business will be gone since most will go to business established outside the 26 Bypass.
- Have good looking buildings holding quality stores on Main Street
- Vital central business district – pedestrian/bike friendly – unique businesses in restored/revitalized historic buildings
- Basic, day-to-day needs are within walking distance
- Industry in designated areas without strict appearance
- The downtown is vibrant and has expanded to accommodate addition shops, restaurants, and entertainment. It is alive with activity
- Local customers as well as tourists
- Places to shop for everyday items downtown, not requiring travel out of town
- In town movie theater
- Groceries, banks, second-hand shops, outdoor market – daily
- Buildings downtown have been adopted through grants to refurbish
- Retail and industrial in planned clusters
- Redeveloped industrial areas on west side Janesville Avenue (Jones Dairy Farm)
- Service retail and professional buildings
- Hwy 26 South and Hwy 12 West are center of retail
- Business parks full
- Diversified employment with few manufacturing and more service industrial
- The south side industrial park will be filled with industries and commercial businesses. The downtown area will visualize fore retail and office space.
- Main Street would be similar with professional offices and established storefronts scattered about
- No empty stores in downtown Main Street

- Other empty stores filled (ex: Piggly Wiggly)
- Preserve historic downtown and other landmarks
- Downtown mix of small retail cater to locals and visitors – not solely specialty items
- The city dwellers utilize the expanded riverwalk
- Vacant buildings are filled with vibrant businesses
- Good industry that provides living wages without pollution, noise
- The city center will be occupied with a mixture of small independent service businesses. They will cater to families and singles who seek food, entertainment, support services
- Has a new animal shelter

**Comments related to general community character:**

Summary of Key Points:

Preserve and enhance small-town character by preserving and enhancing historic buildings, providing ample greenspace, and encouraging tree-lined streets and high-quality, attractive development. Promote a safe, clean, and family-friendly atmosphere, and provide city-wide opportunities for people to interact. Maintain sidewalks and community gathering spaces throughout the community. Encourage growth that contributes to the City's unique character and that helps the City remain a distinguishable and definable place in which residents should feel a sense of pride.

Visioning Statements from Workshop Participants:

- Fort is seen as a great place to live for young families
- I would like the city to preserve much of its current character and small-town flavor – its historic buildings, its green spaces, its landmarks, and its scenic views
- Approaching Fort – a welcoming presence that does not look like every other town
- A community that values quiet, the dark at night, clean air and water
- Streets would be busy with people.
- Landscaped streets – lots of green space.
- Larger lots need landscape
- The downtown area has been transformed into new buildings giving a forward looking appearance
- Preservation of rural feel and lots of green spaces
- Tree lined streets full of pedestrians
- On the busy street, I see smart people; well educated citizens are patronizing small businesses in appropriately designed buildings.
- Schools, parks, and the Rock River continue to be major attractions.
- Three words – Safe, Friendly, Educated
- Small town feeling
- Buildings look like traditional/contemporary, energy efficient
- Preserve rural character
- Has low crime rate, the city is a safe place to live
- 45ish – family groups
- Looks clear (along the riverwalk, in the park, along the streets)
- There will be interesting public areas throughout the city

Workshop participants were asked to take a few minutes to identify their five most important ideas from the first exercise to share with their small group. Participants wrote their ideas on the Post-It Notes -- one idea per Post-It. Each Post-It represented a “planning goal”

Afterwards, participants were asked to work with their group members to arrange everyone’s “planning goals” into similar categories on the table.

They were then asked to summarize 5-7 common themes or ideas that emerged based on everyone’s ideas. Group summaries are listed below.

### **Common Planning Goals: Group One**

1. Make downtown a commercial, cultural, and historic hub
2. Maintain and develop high quality community services accessible to all citizens
  - Health care
  - Schools
  - Library
3. Provide diverse transportation options
  - Pedestrian
  - Bicycle
  - Parking
  - Mass transit
  - Electric cars
4. Make Fort Atkinson an attractive place for businesses to locate and people to live and work
5. Preserve and develop open space

### **Common Planning Goals: Group Two**

1. Preserve small town feel – neighborliness
2. Increase workable livable community for all ages – transportation options
3. Promote and foster viable and quality business district
4. Maintain quality education (neighborhood elementary) and cultural diversity and cultural institutions
5. Increase respect/regard for natural areas and resources
6. Endorse and implement sustainable planning
7. Enhance historical preservation and restoration

### **Common Planning Goals: Group Three**

1. Create and maintain vibrant downtown
  - Preservation
  - Locally owned businesses
  - No empty storefronts
2. Create transportation alternatives in/out of town
  - Using walking/biking paths
  - Less need for fossil fuel
3. Extend, protect, and improve river as resource
  - No invasive species
  - Extend riverwalk
4. Achieve intergovernmental cooperation for growth needs and land use
  - Preserve natural areas and farm land
5. Create and maintain cultural vibrancy
  - Museum

- Library
  - Arts
6. Organized residential growth
    - Senior communities
    - Mixed-use housing/retail
    - Organized residential growth
    - Limit growth to 20,000
  7. Ensure beautification
    - Entrances/approaches
    - Sustainable buildings
    - Buildings function sustainably

#### **Common Planning Goals: Group Four**

1. Develop parks and green spaces
2. Preserve historical integrity of town
3. Neighborhood schools
4. Third bridge
5. Economic development – south business park
6. Develop senior housing

#### **Common Planning Goals: Group Five**

1. Downtown
  - Entertainment/art/theater hub/recreation center
  - Restoration of old buildings
  - Revitalization/lifestyle mall
2. River – Riverwalk
  - Community/recreation/arts center
  - Light pollution ordinances
  - Promotional activities
  - Grow farmers’ market/River events
3. Sustainability
  - Building incentives (waste disposal, green architecture)
  - Sustainable landscaping
4. Business Expansion/Development
  - Aesthetics – incentives (i.e., bury power lines)
  - Green space incentives
  - Job incentives for young professionals
  - Tax incentives for mixed-use buildings
5. Transportation
  - Truck route improvements
  - Better bike routes
  - Bike route to Jefferson
  - Bus/transit to Milwaukee/Madison corridor - light rail

#### **Common Planning Goals: Group Six**

1. Develop green space with river access
2. Compact housing
3. Mixed-use development downtown
4. Alternate transportation options (i.e., biking, walking, etc.)

5. Develop and expand education opportunities

#### **Common Planning Goals: Group Seven**

1. Make the downtown a vibrant place, without empty storefronts, with variety of retail services and specialty shops, with preserved historic buildings – a strong urban center
2. Take care of existing base while recruiting new ones which compliment economic diversity and health – family supporting jobs
3. Make and preserve quality of life – mixed affordable housing, continued commitment to green space, air and water quality, well planned growth
4. Comprehensive approach to intranet and extranet transportation to facilitate business transportation, pedestrian and bike, mass transit
5. Continued commitment to strong local government, municipality, schools, and county while being mindful of tax climate

#### **Common Planning Goals: Group Eight**

1. Planned residential growth with emphasis on:
  - Transportation
    - Sidewalks
    - Mass transit
    - Access to daily needs
  - Diversity
    - Ages
    - Ethnicity
  - Green space
  - Senior friendly
    - Residences
2. Create a business community that is responsible – Responsible Business Growth
  - Jobs – living wage
  - Environment
  - Vibrant economy
    - Retain old business
    - New business should be environmentally conscientious and living wage
3. Maintain natural resources, quality of life, and agricultural heritage
4. Build upon quality schools and create a learning community
5. Fiscally responsible growth

#### **Common Planning Goals: Group Nine**

1. Develop and maintain quality green space including the Rock River Corridor
2. Retain and attract clean, high quality environmentally friendly industrial business in planned developments
3. Promote tourism
4. Keep downtown vibrant with mixed use
5. Promote alternative transportation including bicycle, pedestrian, and high efficient cars
6. Affordable mid-range housing

#### **Common Planning Goals: Group Ten**

1. Develop, promote, and maintain green spaces/parks; including all waterways
2. Pursue historical preservation and restoration
3. Implement alternative/sustainable energy options

4. Create more business opportunities for downtown area (in an effort to reduce vacant storefronts)
5. Attend to the need of emerging diverse populations: retirees, influx of immigrants

---

The common planning goals from each of the small groups were recorded on large sheets of paper and taped to the wall (repeated ideas were combined). Participants were given a set a five stickers and asked to use the stickers to “vote” on the planning goals that they thought should be a priority for the City over the next 20-25 years. Below are the results of the voting exercise.

<b>Identified Planning Goals</b>	<b># of Votes</b>
• Retain and attract clean, sustainable industry	27
• Planned residential growth with mix of uses and transit	24
• Provide diverse transportation options (including bike trails)	20
• Preserve small town feel/neighborliness	17
• Protect Rock River as ecological resource	17
• Maintain quality education	16
• Attend to needs of diverse population, including housing needs	16
• Make downtown commercial, cultural, historical hub	14
• Increase walkable, livable community with transit options	13
• Keep downtown vibrant with mixed use	13
• Maintain agricultural heritage	12
• Enhance historical preservation	11
• Build 3 <sup>rd</sup> Bridge	11
• Make Fort Atkinson attractive for businesses and residents	9
• Work with incentives for sustainable development practices	9
• Promote sustainable/green building design	9
• Preserve green space with residential growth	9
• Create responsible business growth	8
• Develop parks and trails	7
• Create more downtown business opportunities (especially, locally owned)	7
• Create/Maintain cultural vibrancy	7
• Endorse sustainable planning	6
• Develop senior housing	6
• Implement sustainable energy options	5

<b>Identified Planning Goals</b>	<b># of Votes</b>
• Continue present industrial and downtown economic activities	5
• Maintain natural resources	4
• Create incentives to bring/keep young people here	4
• Develop entertainment and arts in downtown	4
• Achieve intergovernmental cooperation for land use and natural resources	4
• Promote tourism	3
• Preserve historical integrity	3
• Ensure fiscally responsible growth	2
• Increase respect for natural areas	2
• Continue to grow river events	2
• Promote economic development	2
• Organize residential growth	2
• Continue commitment to strong local government services but be mindful of tax dollars	2
• Promote and foster a viable central business district	1
• Preserve open space including Rock River Corridor	1
• Neighborhood school system	1
• Protect watersheds	1
• Ensure beautification of entrances and approaches	1
• Compact housing growth	1
• Expand educational opportunities	1
• Create learning community and culture	0
• Maintain high quality community options for all	0
• Promote affordable mid-range housing	0
• Mass transit (inter-city)	0

Participants were asked to work with their small groups to identify specific areas in and around the City to be singled out for special focus in the plan. Each table was provided with star stickers and markers in several different colors that corresponded to different types of issues, opportunities, and land uses. The attached map represents a compilation of all of the maps.