
SUMMARY

Why Plan?

The Sauk Prairie area is experiencing unprecedented pressure for growth and change. This creates both exciting opportunities and remarkable challenges. Growth pressures are a result of several factors converging on the area, including the expansion of Highway 12 to four lanes from Madison to the area's southern doorstep, metropolitan growth demands, reasonable land prices, utility expansions, exceptional schools, and a rich historic "rivertown" character unique to the metropolitan area. The Sauk Prairie area is clearly at a major crossroads. Will the communities be able to take advantage of its position to capture economic opportunities consistent with their historic character? Or will growth pressures turn the Sauk Prairie area into just another Madison suburb?

The *Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan* attempts to answer these and many other questions. It provides a blueprint for future growth, change, revitalization, and preservation of the Sauk Prairie area over the next 20 years. The directly participating communities included the Village of Sauk City, Village of Prairie du Sac and Town of Prairie du Sac. The *Plan* is intended to guide for decisions related to private development proposals, public investments, intergovernmental cooperation, economic policy, and a host of other factors that will help determine the future of the Sauk Prairie communities. Because of this critical function, the *Plan* was prepared with over two years of study, consideration of different alternatives, and extensive public input. The Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan also meets all requirements of the State's comprehensive planning legislation.

A Profile of Sauk Prairie

Sauk Prairie is rich in identity, initially defined by its extraordinary position along the scenic Wisconsin River and in among the fertile prairie that gave the area its name. Centuries of settlement and cultivation has resulted in the area as it exists today—a natural and farming area punctuated by historic downtowns, traditional neighborhood settlement patterns, and home-grown commercial and industrial operations.

The Sauk Prairie area is defined and influenced by the following factors:

- An estimated 3-community population of 7,800 residents in 2004.
- A population expected to grow to 10,300 people by 2025—if this *Plan's* policies are followed.
- Two historic downtowns with exceptional (but underutilized) riverfront locations.
- Exceptional schools, a well-educated workforce, and quality job opportunities in a variety of industries.
- Productive cropland, a strong farming ethic, and an economy that remains linked to agriculture.
- Exceptional scenery, natural areas, and wildlife habitat that provide economic opportunities and limits.
- A mix of high-quality housing in a variety of neighborhood settings.
- A spirit and practice of cooperation that extends from the people to organizations to local governments.

Our Vision

In the next 20 years, the Sauk Prairie Area will be recognized by its neighborhoods and downtown centers, rich with a unique historic and cultural character, and surrounded by the majestic Wisconsin River and productive farms intermingled with quality natural areas. Neighborhoods will be safe, attractive, and adjacent and interconnected to each other and the community. Economic vitality will be the result of a high-quality mix of clean production facilities, technology enterprises, agriculture, and retail and service businesses that reflect the area's unique cultural and natural attributes. This diverse economic mix will meet the needs of area residents, visitors, and regional and distant markets. Open spaces, natural resources, recreational opportunities, and high-quality education and health care will remain central to the area's quality-of-life and economic health. This vision will be promoted through cooperative efforts among the area's communities, districts, and people.

Implementing the Vision

To carry out this ambitious vision for the future of the Sauk Prairie area, the *Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan* includes more detailed goals, objectives, policies, and programs. These are generally organized in chapters according to the required comprehensive planning elements: agricultural, natural and cultural resources; land use; transportation; utilities and community facilities; housing and neighborhood development; economic development; intergovernmental cooperation; and implementation. The following is a brief summary of the key recommendations of this plan divided by these elements. The respective chapters of the full *Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan* explore these recommendations in significant greater detail.

Agricultural Resource Recommendations

- Protect agricultural land supply.
- Establish a 20-year urban growth boundary as a means to establish and protect long range farming areas.
- Promote density-based zoning and cluster development options.
- Promote local marketing and new uses for agricultural products.



Natural Resource Recommendations

- Protect environmental corridors.
- Work to maintain and improve surface water quality in the area's lakes and streams.
- Create and enforce low-impact development standards.
- Balance Wisconsin River access with resource and eagle habitat protection.
- Work with non-profit organizations on riverfront restoration planning.

Cultural Resources Recommendations

- Conduct a comprehensive survey of historic places, and preserve historic buildings through reuse and a demolition review process.
- Promote nature-based, heritage-based, and agricultural-based tourism.
- Develop interpretive signage and a walking tour for downtown trail and historic sites.
- Preserve the scenic landscape.





Land Use Recommendations

- Utilize the Future Land Use map when making decisions on rezonings, annexations, and other proposals.
- Establish a 20-year urban growth boundary as a means to encourage compact and orderly development.
- Preserve rural and agricultural lands by supporting very limited residential development in these areas.
- Support a Village neighborhood expansion area west of the current Village limits, out to Highway 12.
- Pursue revitalization of existing developed areas and expansion of existing business parks.

Transportation Recommendations

- Continue discussions with State and other interests to advance State-level Highway 12 planning.
- Adopt an Official Map to preserve key roadway corridors.
- Coordinate on abandonment or removal of the riverfront rail for trail purposes and a rail crossing at Carolina Street.
- Complete missing segments of the riverfront trail system between downtown Prairie du Sac and downtown Sauk City, using State and federal grants.
- Explore larger potential role for an airport in the Sauk Prairie area.



Utilities and Community Facilities Recommendations

- Coordinate future land development with utility improvements.
- Prepare a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan to provide more detailed recommendations for the park and trail systems.
- Create additional parks and acquire open space as Village growth occurs to the west.
- Plan for a large community park/recreation facility.
- Improve community facilities (e.g., trails, overlooks) associated with the Wisconsin River.

Housing and Neighborhood Development Recommendations

- Support provision of affordable housing.
- Enact design standards for multiple family housing.
- Consider anti-monotony ordinances for new Village neighborhoods.
- Enact development plan guidelines for rural housing.
- Prepare a residential growth phasing plan.



Economic Development Recommendations

- Develop a cooperative, progressive economic development strategy.
- Emphasize local business formation, development, and retention.
- Pursue appropriate retail expansion opportunities.
- Facilitate logical business park expansion.
- Support downtown revitalization and tourism.
- Pursue redevelopment and infill of underutilized lands.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Recommendations

- Pursue intergovernmental boundary and land use agreements both with the Villages and the Town participating in this *Plan* as well as with the Towns east of the Wisconsin River.
- Explore municipal water, fire service, and library consolidation or further cooperation through future studies when major capital investments and hiring decisions are considered.

