



Volume 2: Vision & Directions

Adopted: April 11, 2017
Amended: Oct. 12, 2021; Mar. 14, 2023

DRAFT AMENDMENTS
CHAPTERS 1-4
OCTOBER 2025

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND VISION

OUR VISION – SAUK PRAIRIE RIVERWAY

The Sauk Prairie Area aspires to be the leading, family-friendly community along the majestic Wisconsin River, highlighted by outstanding schools, vibrant arts and recreation, world-class healthcare, peaceful neighborhoods, productive farms, and a dynamic local economy.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Economic vitality will result from a mix of industries, medical and technology enterprises, retail and service businesses, and tourism.
2. Neighborhoods will be safe and attractive; interconnected with roads, walkways, and greenways; and provide a range of housing choices.
3. High-quality education, health care, agriculture, natural areas, parks, and trails will remain central to the Area's quality-of-life and economic health.
4. Extraordinary cooperation among Area communities, districts, organizations, and people will continue to enhance community health and bring positive change.

SAUK PRAIRIE AREA ASSETS

1. Extraordinary position along the scenic Wisconsin River and the fertile prairie that provided its name.
2. Midway along Highway 12 between the jobs, shopping, and culture of Madison/Middleton area and the Wisconsin Dells/Lake Delton regional tourism destination.
3. Growing 3-community population of 9,000 in 2024, with nearly 17,000 in the broader trade area.
4. Expanding supply of housing in a mix of types and settings.
5. Exceptional schools showcasing small class sizes, performing arts, early learning, special education, multi-language learning, and newer and upgraded facilities.
6. Two historic and vibrant riverfront downtowns where neighbors and visitors gather to dine, shop, work, and play.
7. Regional center of healthcare, wellness, and medical products.
8. Corporate headquarters of national and international operations and quality jobs in a variety of industries.
9. Productive farms and an economy that remains linked to agriculture, evolving to meet new opportunities and markets.
10. Exceptional scenery, natural areas, and wildlife habitat that draw visitors to year-round recreational opportunities.

PURPOSE OF THIS VISION AND DIRECTIONS VOLUME

This volume is the second of two parts of the Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan. Volume 1—Conditions and Issues contains background information, trends, and projections. This second volume builds upon the first volume by presenting goals, objectives, policies, and initiatives (programs) to guide future growth, development, and preservation over the next 10 to 20 years. This Volume 2 provides the Sauk Prairie Area’s “vision and directions” related to land use, farmland and natural resource protection, transportation, housing and economic development, investment opportunities for targeted areas, intergovernmental relations, and other factors.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Sauk Prairie Area has enjoyed success in implementing the 2017 Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan (see summary on next page). Through its two volumes, this Plan updates and replaces that 2017 Plan. Volume 2—Vision and Directions of the updated Plan guides growth, development, and preservation by:

- Identifying areas for development and preservation over the next 20+ years;
- Recommending different types of land use for specific areas, such as the downtowns and other “targeted investment areas”;
- Identifying transportation, community facilities, and utilities to serve future land uses;
- Directing housing, industrial, and commercial investment; and
- Collaborating with other governments and private groups.

Volume 2 is organized into twelve chapters to meet and exceed Wisconsin statutory requirements. Maps and figures are provided throughout this volume. Map numbering began within Volume 1 and continues in this Volume 2 sequentially. Figures are numbered according to chapter (e.g., figures in Chapter 4 are numbered 4.1, 4.2, etc.).

What is the Sauk Prairie Area?

For the purpose of this Plan, “Sauk Prairie” and the “Sauk Prairie Area” refer to the combined geographic area covered by the Town of Prairie du Sac, Village of Prairie du Sac, and Village of Sauk City. This is also the planning jurisdiction and representation of the Sauk Prairie Intergovernmental Planning Committee, which guided this Plan update effort. The terms “Sauk Prairie” and “Sauk Prairie Area” are also used by the School District and Chamber of Commerce, whose geographic range is broader, including nearby towns in Sauk, Dane, and Columbia Counties, and the Village of Merrimac.



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Successes in Implementing the 2017 Version of the Comprehensive Plan

Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources

Worked with the Chamber to enroll both Villages' downtowns in the State WEDC's Connect Communities Program to focus on facades and placemaking.

Welcomed an addition to the Ferry Bluff State Natural Area.

Achieved State certification of farmland preservation zoning districts, qualifying extraterritorial area farmers for tax credits.

Continued with the Chamber to advance the Sauk Prairie Riverway brand through digital communications and signage.

Land Use, Transportation, & Cooperation

Continued to direct development to the Villages, with agriculture remaining the economic focus in the Town.

Maintained and improved roads and utilities using capital improvements programming.

Supported private hangar expansion at the Sauk Prairie Airport.

Renewed and extended the three-municipality intergovernmental boundary agreement.

Housing & Economic Development

Accelerated new home and residential subdivision development to address the significant unmet need.

Collaborated with the Sauk Prairie School District on hotel/meeting center and housing redevelopment of its former Spruce Street School site, residential development on its former site north of Sauk Prairie Road, and the Sauk Prairie Early Learning Center.

Supported continued redevelopment in the downtowns, including a major brewpub redevelopment in Sauk City.

Community Facilities & Recreation

Villages jointly constructed a new police station on excess land donated by the Sauk Prairie School District, expanding policing services to reflect a commitment to public safety.

Collaborated on completion of the Great Sauk State Trail, including a new Wisconsin River recreational bridge.

Collaborated on development of Culver Community Park—a landmark gathering place and athletic complex.

Engaged in major expansions and repurposing of riverside parks in both Villages.



COMMUNITY INPUT PROVIDES PLAN DIRECTION

Like its predecessors, this Comprehensive Plan update was guided by a committed group of community leaders informed by input from an active Sauk Prairie community. The Intergovernmental Planning Committee (IPC)—formed in 2009 and comprised of three representatives from each of the three participating municipalities—provided policy direction for the Plan update.

The Committee took advice from two directions. One was the Boards and Plan Commissions from the participating municipalities, plus committees like the Sauk Prairie Economic Development Committee convened through the Chamber of Commerce. The other was the interested public, who participated mainly through a community survey, and interviews with community stakeholders and “knowledgeables.” The IPC and its staff guided stakeholder identification, with the project consultant conducting the interviews.

The community survey was conducted in winter 2024-25 and gathered residents’ visions for the future of the Sauk Prairie Area and advice on community development issues relevant to this Plan update. Survey results are the focus of the rest of this chapter.

This survey was conducted primarily online using Survey Monkey, though hard copies of the survey were also available. The municipalities used various means and media to direct residents to the survey. Respondents were characterized as follows:

- 654 responses were submitted (all but 16 online), with 584 residing in the Town or two Villages. This represents about 8% of the Sauk Prairie Area’s adult population.
- About 37% of respondents were Village of Sauk City residents, another 36% were Village of Prairie du Sac residents, and 17% were Town of Prairie du Sac residents.
- Survey respondents trended younger than the current overall Sauk Prairie Area adult population.
- Relatedly, a greater percentage of survey respondents had children under 19 years old in their household than indicated for the general population.
- About 50% respondents have lived in the Sauk Prairie Area for 20+ years while 16% have lived in the Sauk Prairie Area for five or fewer years.
- Survey respondents were more likely to own their own home than the general population.

The following pages feature the responses to each of the substantive questions in the survey, in some cases comparing responses to those from a similar survey conducted in 2003 supporting the Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan update at the time (for which 664 responses were received).

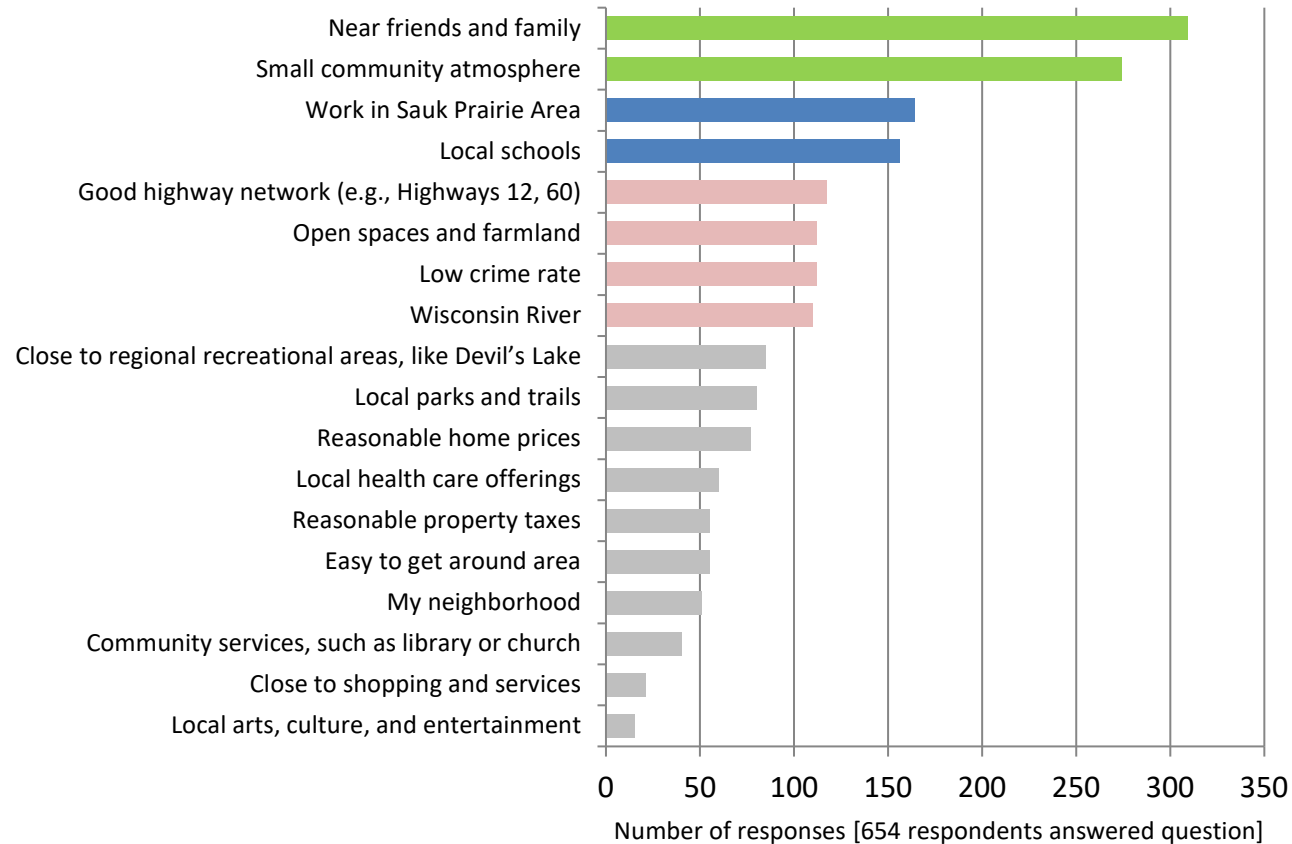


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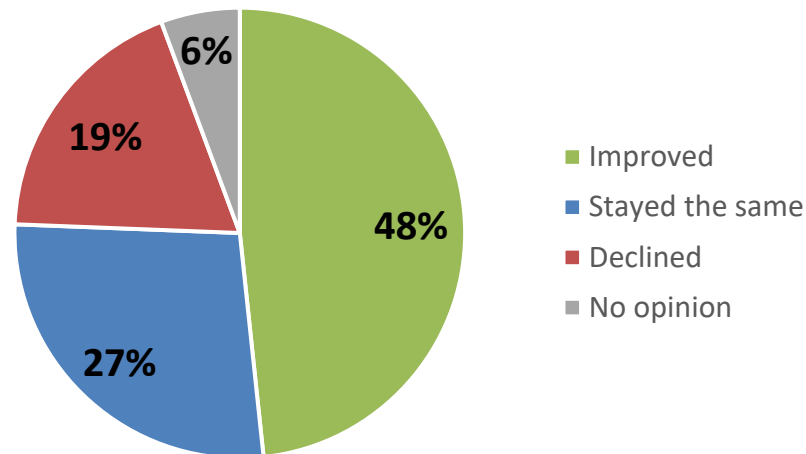
QUESTION 1: From among the choices below, please place a check next to the top THREE reasons why you or your family chooses to live in the Sauk Prairie Area.



From among the choices presented, “near friends and family” and “small community atmosphere” were separated at the top from other responses. The next tier included “work in Sauk Prairie Area” and “local schools”. Together, these responses generally reflect practical/functional reasons for living in the Sauk Prairie Area, plus an affinity for features that reflect “small community atmosphere” for which later responses provide some detail.



QUESTION 2: Do you believe the overall experience living in the Sauk Prairie Area has improved, stayed about the same, or declined over the past ten years (or since you have lived here, if less)?



About one-half of survey respondents stated that their overall experience living in the Sauk Prairie Area has improved. This supports the notion of Sauk Prairie Area residents as an optimistic group. In surveys of other communities, “stayed about the same” is usually the most common response to this same question.

QUESTION 3: Briefly explain why you answered the last question the way you did, please.

This question allowed for open-ended responses, which were offered by 515 participants. ChatGPT was used to help characterize and summarize responses. Of the “improved” responses, most mentioned business stability, new business growth, community improvements and amenities (such as Culver Community Park and libraries), and low crime rates as features improving the overall experience in the Sauk Prairie Area. Of the “declined” responses, some expressed concerns about lack of retail, services, specialty shops, and dining options. Other respondents pointed to evolving community dynamics due to societal and political changes. Some expressed concern that the Village of Sauk City seems stagnant, with the Village of Prairie du Sac believed to be receiving more recent growth and improvements.



QUESTION 4: How do you rate the following facilities and services available in the Sauk Prairie Area?

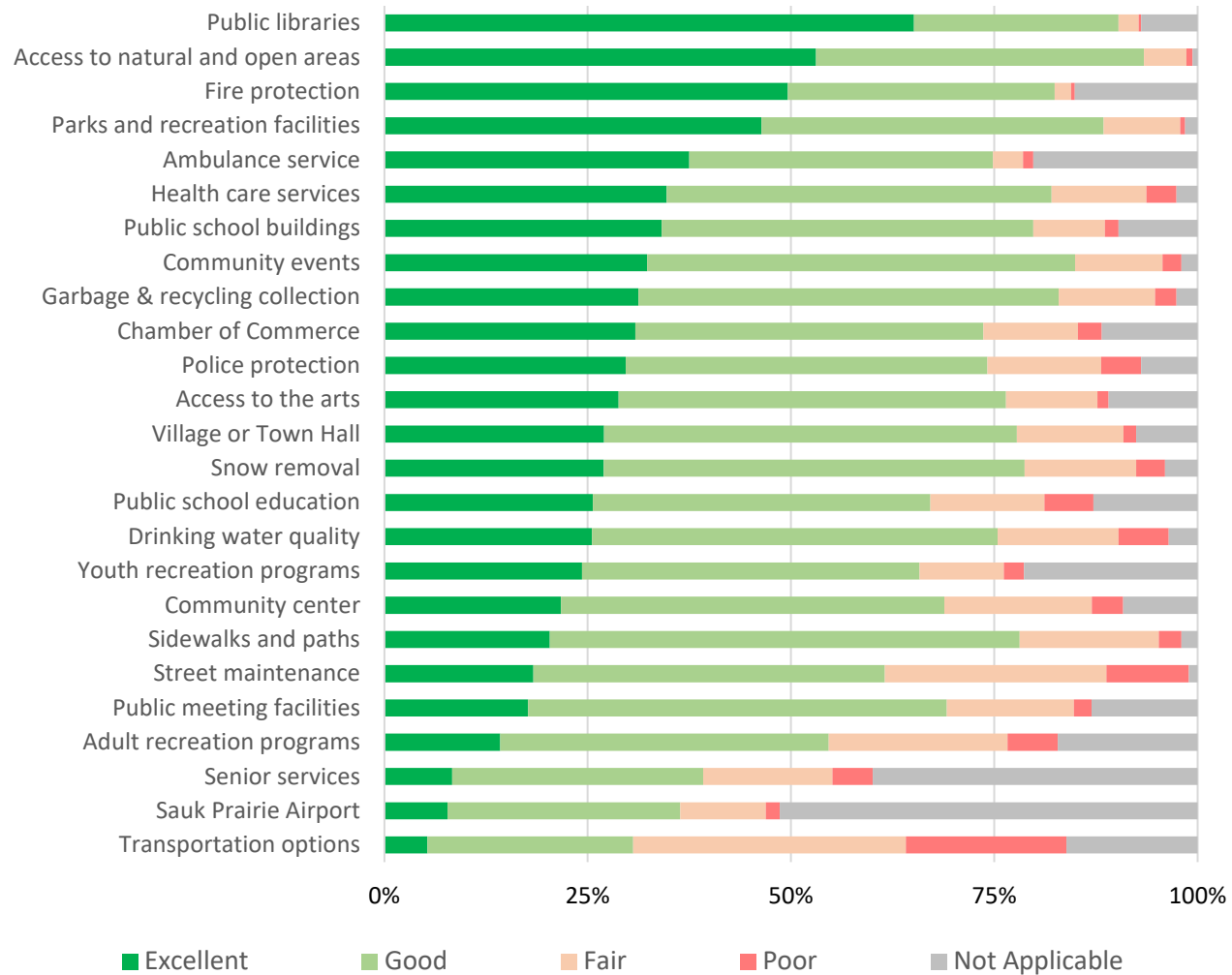


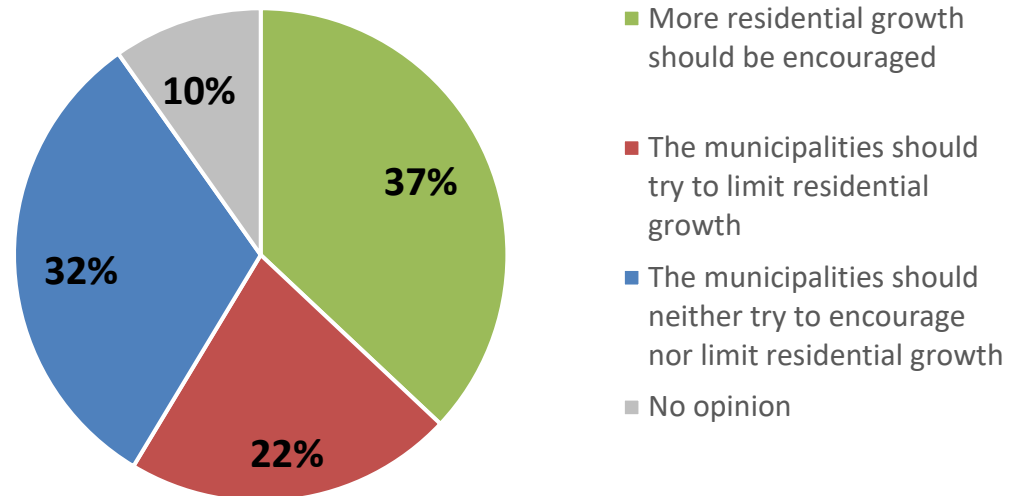
Exhibit A

More than one-half of survey respondents rated “public libraries” and “access to natural open areas” as excellent. Over the past two decades, both Villages have developed new libraries, improved their riverfronts, and contributed to completion of the Great Sauk State Trail. Relatedly, “parks and recreation” facilities may have been rated highly due to recent investments in Culver Community Park, Sauk City’s Riverfront Park, and Prairie du Sac’s Riverwalk Park and Overlook. Fire and emergency medical services were also highly rated. Though a majority responded that “street maintenance” was excellent or good, it received a fair number of poor responses too. This may be connected to the condition of Water Street, which the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is scheduled to rebuild in 2027 and 2028. The survey was also conducted in winter, when street maintenance issues become heightened.

Most of the other facilities and services in the Sauk Prairie Area were either rated as excellent or good by the majority of respondents, except for “senior services”, “Sauk Prairie Airport”, and “transportation options.” This being said, many respondents said these facilities or services were not applicable to them. About one-in-five respondents rated “transportation options” as poor. Options to travel from the Sauk Prairie Area to other areas are generally limited to private passenger vehicles.

QUESTION 5: Looking forward over the next ten years, which one of the following statements best reflects your attitude on future residential growth in the Sauk Prairie Area?

About one-third of respondents suggested that the Sauk Prairie Area ought to encourage more residential growth while another roughly one-third stated the municipalities should neither try to encourage nor limit residential growth. About one-in-five survey respondents stated the Sauk Prairie Area should try to limit residential growth. These responses are generally in line with Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan initiatives to “promote development of new residential subdivisions” and “advance different housing types to respond to generational and workforce needs”—and local efforts to get such projects built.



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QUESTION 6: What types of NEW housing should the Sauk Prairie Area accommodate? Please check all that apply.

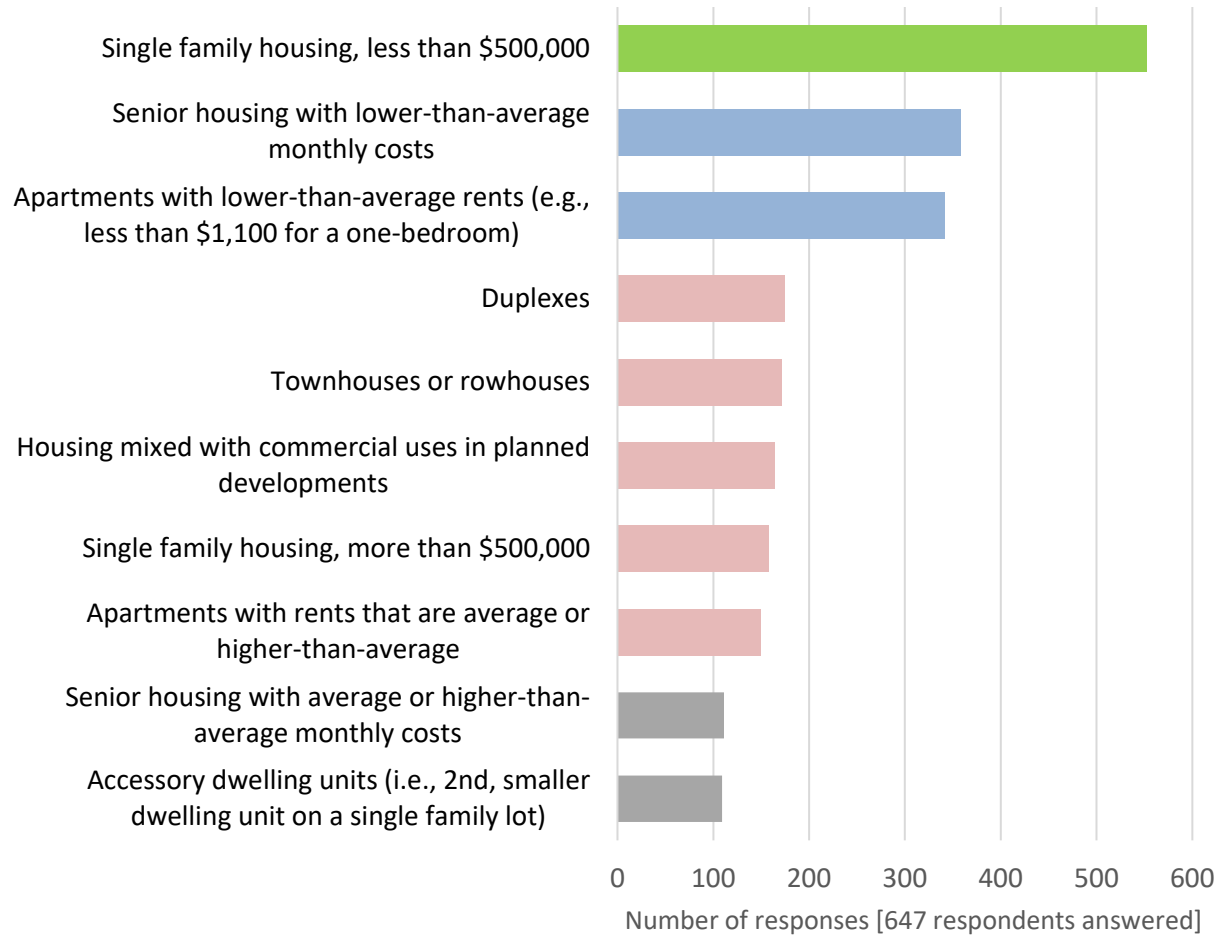


Exhibit A

The greatest levels of support among respondents were for new single-family homes with a price under \$500,000. This is increasingly difficult to attain. Before answering this question, respondents were provided with the following information: “Most new house + lot combinations cost \$500,000 or more.” In Madison-area communities, builders are increasingly relying on “zero-lot-line” duplexes and townhomes to hit the sub-\$500,000 price point, which also seemed to be reasonably supported among survey respondents.

Respondents also voiced significant support for “senior housing with lower-than-average monthly costs” and “apartments with lower-than-average rents”. These responses may be due to almost no new building activity in these categories over the past decade, which has contributed to significantly increased rents for the existing stock. It also supports a Comprehensive Plan initiative to “advance different housing types to respond to generational and workforce needs” and reflects more concern with affordable housing than observed from the 2003 survey.

QUESTION 7: What types of new NON-residential uses should the Sauk Prairie Area accommodate in appropriate areas? Please check all that apply.



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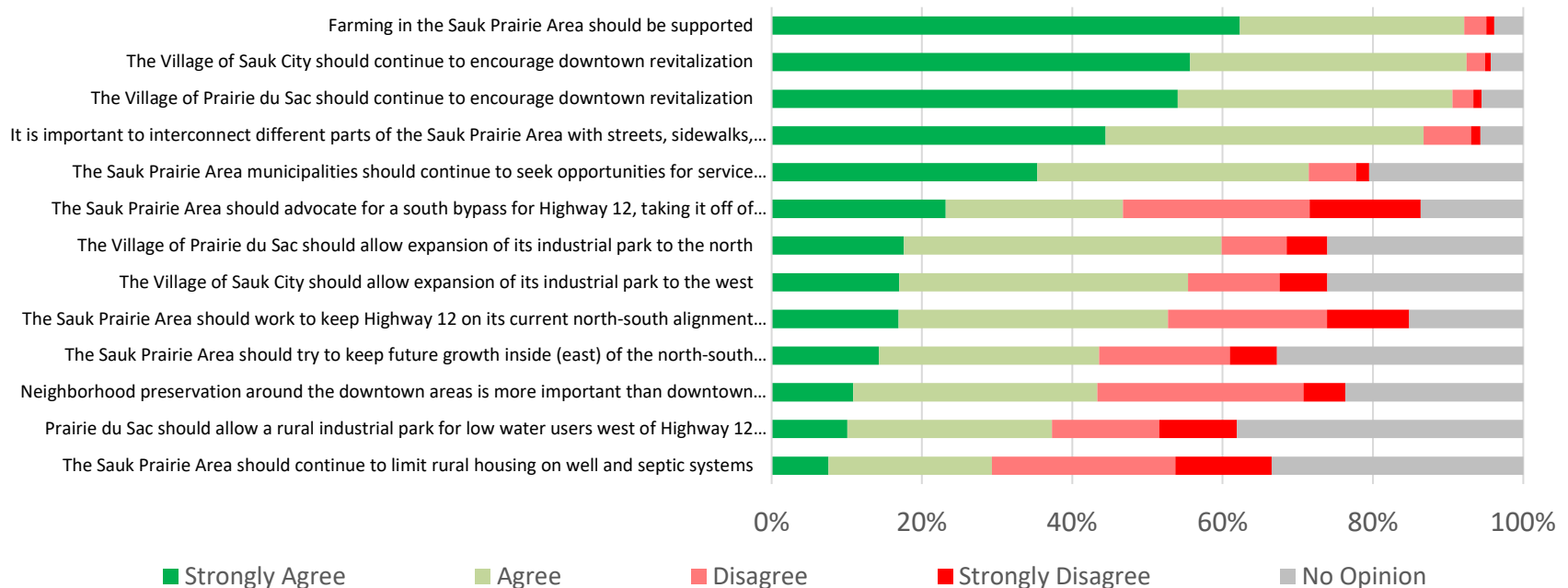
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Exhibit A

The greatest number of survey respondents indicated support for new “sit down restaurants and brewpubs”, followed by new “retail/shopping” options of various sizes. These responses reflect back to an earlier question, in which many respondents expressed concerns about lack of retail, services, and specialty shops as well as a lack of dining options. The above responses are generally similar to those to a similar question in the 2003 community survey, except for some reduced current support for both “additional or expanded industrial/manufacturing parks” and “farming operations” (but see next question responses).

QUESTION 8: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about future growth and preservation in the Sauk Prairie Area?



Support for farming appears to grow substantially compared to those from the previous question—maybe because it focuses more on the land use of farming than its impacts (“operations”). Other apparent interest for more rural housing may be at odds with support for farming.

Broadly speaking, responses to Question 8 signal support for infill and redevelopment over significant horizontal community expansion.



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Also reflecting back to the prior question, most respondents expressed support for expansions of Sauk City's and Prairie du Sac's existing industrial parks. Fewer than 40% believed that "Prairie du Sac should allow a rural industrial park for low water users west of Highway 12 between Highway PF and Sauk Prairie Road". Perhaps relatedly, more respondents than not agreed that "the Sauk Prairie Area should try to keep future growth inside (east) of the north-south segment of Highway 12"—still, support for this position declined from the 2003 survey.

Continued downtown revitalization and interconnecting different parts of the Sauk Prairie Area with streets, sidewalks, and paths were very popular—receiving support from over 85% of respondents. About 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "the Sauk Prairie Area municipalities should continue to seek opportunities for service consolidation".

Most respondents suggested that the Sauk Prairie Area should try to keep the north-south segment of Highway 12 on its current alignment with lane expansions, as necessary. At the same time, more respondents *disagreed* with the following statement than with any other statement: "The Sauk Prairie Area should advocate for a south bypass for Highway 12, taking it off of Phillips Boulevard." These responses lend support to efforts to keep Highway 12 on its current alignment, such as through keeping a wide corridor open (setbacks) and limiting driveways.

QUESTION 9: Please complete the following statement: As I look forward over the next several years, I wish the Sauk Prairie Area would...

This question required open-ended responses, offered by 505 participants. As summarized with ChatGPT's assistance, five main themes expressed in response to this question are:

- **Business Growth & Economic Development:** Many respondents emphasized the importance of attracting and supporting businesses, while maintaining a balance between more growth and small community character.
- **Preservation of Small-Town Identity:** Responses reinforced a strong desire to retain the Sauk Prairie Area's historical and small-town charm, and avoiding rapid expansion or development that could lead to challenges perceived as more common in larger areas.
- **Affordable & Senior Housing:** Several responses highlighted the need for more housing, particularly affordable and senior housing.
- **Infrastructure & Public Space Maintenance:** Concerns about road conditions, traffic management, and public spaces indicate interest in better upkeep and improvements.
- **Local Governance & Policy Priorities:** Some respondents express concern about spending, regulations, and school policies.



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CHAPTER 2

AGRICULTURE

GOAL

Preserve farming as an occupation for future generations and as a key aspect of the Sauk Prairie Area's landscape.

OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain farmland as the predominate land use across most of the Town, and within such areas prioritize agriculture as the preferred land use.
2. In areas planned for farmland preservation, limit non-farm uses, guide placement of limited new homes to less productive soils and other locations that promote continued farming elsewhere, and support continuation of agricultural support businesses.
3. Support policies, practices, incentives, workforce development, housing options, and a culture that promote farming and help it evolve to meet farmer and societal needs.

INITIATIVES

(SEE FULL CHAPTER TO READ MORE)

1. **Continue and refine land use policies that preserve farmland.** These policies include maintaining a clear urban growth boundary, limiting housing beyond that boundary, directing intensive development to the Villages, maintaining farmland preservation zoning eligibility, and partnering with Sauk County on these and related efforts.
2. **Support efforts to sustain farming.** Preserving farmland is cosmetic at best if the occupation of farming loses viability. The communities support efforts to make farming viable for the next generation. Such efforts may include education, training, and mental health services; diversification for greater economic opportunity and resiliency; increasing housing options; and increasing or at least redirecting government funding.
3. **Help expand markets for local farm products.** Farmers are encouraged to expand the scopes of their operations and develop new markets for their products. Direct marketing to grocers, restaurants, institutions, and consumers is a commonly used strategy to add value to locally produced agricultural products. The business parks in the Area could house more industries that process these local products, for food and newer uses for farm products.

CHAPTER PURPOSE

Quality food is required for a thriving society. Agricultural preservation in the Sauk Prairie Area is essential to its economic, land use, and cultural future. Area communities will cooperate with farmers, Sauk County, allied non-profits, and the State on a multi-faceted farmland preservation strategy to ensure adequate farmland and promote a thriving farm economy. This chapter contains policies and initiatives to guide farmland and farming preservation, and is supplemented by the Sauk County Farmland Preservation Plan and zoning code.

AGRICULTURE POLICIES

1. Maintain an urban growth boundary via intergovernmental plans and agreements, with farming being the predominate land use and activity beyond this boundary.
2. Guide homes, driveways, and other uses in long-term agricultural areas to less productive soils, farm field edges, and other spots that preserve rural character.
3. Limit homes in long-term agricultural areas via design, density, lot size, and clustering policies in Chapter 7: Land Use, the Sauk County Farmland Preservation Plan, and applicable zoning and land division ordinances.
4. Allow home occupations, farm family businesses, and worker housing on farms to supplement farming income, consistent with zoning and State rules.
5. Promote maintenance and success of local farm support businesses, like equipment sales, service, and repair; farm product sales and distribution; mixing, blending, and storage of feeds, seeds, and fertilizers; livestock and commodity shipping; and sales of nursery stock.
6. Continue to allow farming to adapt to changing needs and markets, for example to expand crops to perennials where appropriate and extract sand for animal bedding.
7. Support State and federal fiscal policies that encourage the continued use of land for farming in planned long-term agricultural areas.
8. Support agricultural education and information exchange where practical and in collaboration with Sauk County and the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP).
9. Expand the linkages among sustainable agriculture, natural resource preservation and restoration, and cultural and artistic endeavors.



Homes placed in woodlots instead of farm fields help preserve farmland and rural character, while increasing housing options.

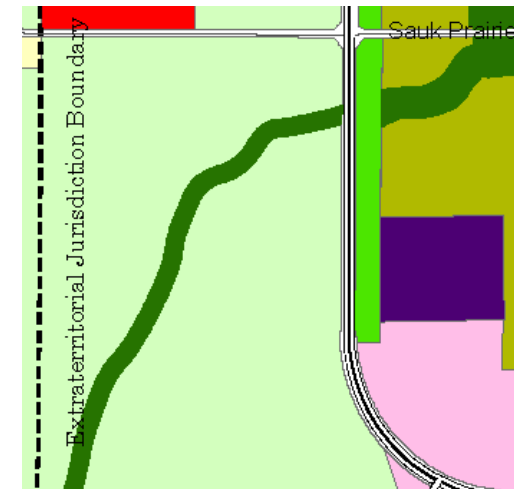


AGRICULTURE INITIATIVES

1. CONTINUE AND REFINE LAND USE POLICIES THAT SUPPORT AGRICULTURE

The Sauk Prairie Area has refined and advanced its intergovernmental cooperation, planning, and zoning approaches for agricultural preservation. This has included achieving State certification of farmland preservation zoning districts for the Village's extraterritorial areas in 2018 and participating in Sauk County's 2025 update to its Farmland Preservation Plan. The Sauk Prairie Area municipalities intend to engage in the following general land use policies that support continued farmland preservation:

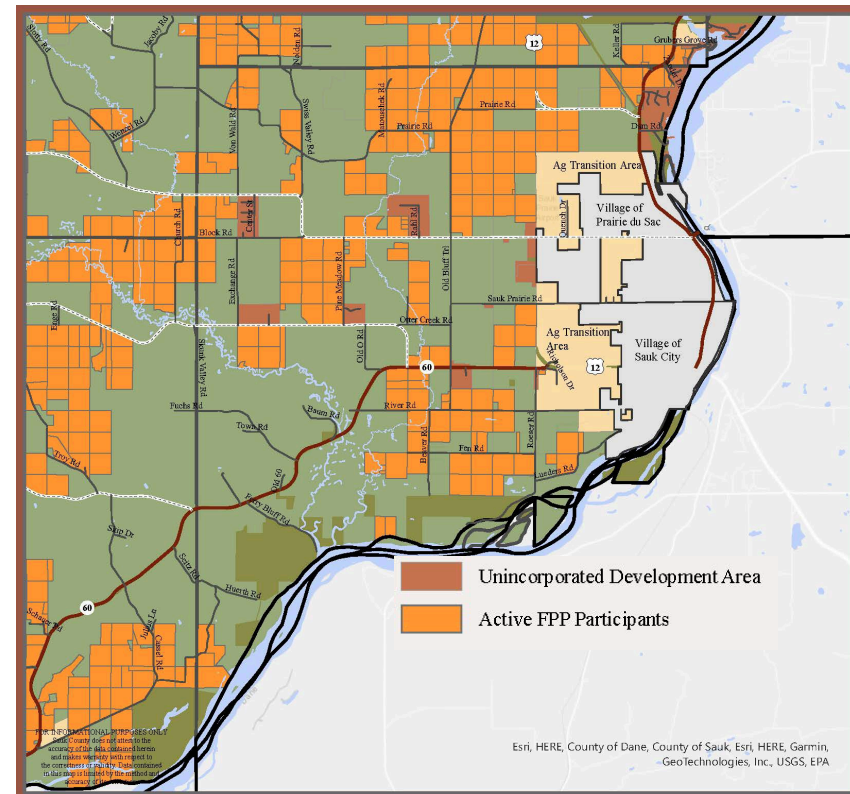
- **Maintaining a clear 20-year urban growth boundary.** The Town and two Villages have established—through this Plan and an intergovernmental agreement—a designated area for urban growth. For areas within this growth boundary, urban development is encouraged or at least accepted. In areas outside of this growth boundary, agriculture should be the primary land use. Subdivisions, sewer extensions, and annexations should not occur—at least within designated planning and agreement periods. Farm-supporting uses will be encouraged, and non-farm development like rural housing will be of limited density compatible with agricultural uses. Such compatibility is guided by the policies in Chapter 7: Land Use, along with applicable zoning and land division ordinances.
- **Promoting density-based zoning and cluster development options in long-term agricultural areas.** The Sauk Prairie Area municipalities promote a density-based zoning approach emphasizing few houses, clustering, and smaller residential lots to avoid breaking up large farm parcels and natural areas. This approach—exemplified by the Sauk County's Planned Residential Development (PRD) zoning option and described in Figure 7-1 of Chapter 7: Land Use—provides some non-farm economic return for farmers. There is a clear difference between maximum density and minimum lot size. Minimum lot size requirements set how big individual home sites must be, while maximum density requirements set how many home sites or lots can be divided from a larger parcel.



This Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan is focused on establishing a clear urban-rural growth boundary—often using Highway 12 as that edge.



- **Directing higher-density development to the Villages.** Due to the potential conflicts between housing and farming operations, large-scale development projects (e.g., large subdivisions, multi-family residential, commercial, industrial) will be directed inside the urban growth boundary and away from productive agricultural lands and sensitive natural features. Directing urban development within this boundary is a primary function of the extraterritorial zoning programs. Very limited development is allowed within extraterritorial zoning areas in advance of annexation and utility provision, and outside of this boundary in general.
- **Support ordinance refinement focused on farmland preservation.** Through DATCP, the State generally requires recertification of farmland preservation ordinances every five years and of County farmland preservation plans every 10 years. The Sauk Prairie Area municipalities will continue to work with the County and State to keep owners planned long-term agricultural areas eligible for associated program benefits (mainly income tax credits), with the ancillary advantage of advancing land conservation compliance in these areas. The map to the right shows the significant extent of program participation in the Town of Prairie du Sac. Also, at time of writing, Sauk County was updating its zoning ordinance, which will affect farmland preservation policies. Particularly the Town of Prairie du Sac will be active in commenting on and helping to implement that ordinance update.



The above map, courtesy of Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department, shows in light orange those farms enrolled in the State's farmland preservation program—totaling nearly 8 square miles of the Town of Prairie du Sac.

2. SUPPORT EFFORTS TO SUSTAIN FARMING

Farming in Sauk County is in a significant period of transition. Commodity prices are volatile and land and input prices keep increasing. Per the USDA's 2022 Agricultural Census, a majority of farm operators in the County are 55 years old or older. Transitions to a younger generation have been challenged by a variety of factors, many focused around uncertain future income combined with the prospect of hard work. The Sauk Prairie Area community supports efforts to make farming the following:



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- **Supporting education, training, and health services:** Farmers and farm interests report significant barriers to enter farming and also after getting started. Many prospective farmers are unable to secure the necessary capital to purchase farmland (especially when competing with development prices) or equipment, have challenges in developing a viable business plan, and/or report pursuing the occupation of farming as intimidating and isolating. Training on proper use of equipment and technological advances to make farming more efficient would also be beneficial. The Sauk Prairie Area municipalities will rely on Sauk County, UW-Extension, private farm-based organizations, and even the local wellness initiative (see Chapter 4) for educational, training, and support efforts. Area municipalities also support the maintenance and restoration of agricultural education in curricula, such as at in Sauk Prairie schools and at Madison College, and English language education where necessary.
- **Promoting farm diversification.** A farm system dominated by corn and soybean production is susceptible to increasingly volatile markets and commodity price shifts (at a low point at time of writing). Diversification to include grazing-based systems, other grains such as wheat, nursery stock (in very short supply at time of writing), and agroforestry (see sidebar) can create economic, labor, environmental, and air quality benefits. Diversification often also promotes adaptability to climate change and resource conservation.
- **Increasing the local supply of housing for farm workers.** Local farming has a labor shortage, and part of that ties to a housing shortage. Sauk Prairie Area municipalities will work with Sauk County and within State farmland preservation rules to enable on-farm worker housing. More generally, the Sauk Prairie Area will work to increase affordable housing within the community for these and other moderate income workers. See the Housing and Neighborhoods chapter for more information.
- **Supporting increases and redirection to farm funding.** Area farmers may initiate the nomination to the DATCP of much of its long-term agricultural area as an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA). Farmers within an AEA who sign a 15-year farmland preservation agreement may collect a tax credit of \$10 per acre—an increase from the normal \$7.50 per acre credit. More details are available on the [DATCP AEA program site](#). Also, the communities support federal and state programs that provide or support catastrophic insurance over price supports.

What is Agroforestry?

Agroforestry describes regenerative farming practices that integrate trees, shrubs, and other perennials with annual crops or livestock in agricultural systems. Techniques may include incorporating tree and shrub fruit and nut crops into windbreaks, riparian buffers, and alleys in farm fields. Such techniques facilitate greater water availability to nearby crops to support yield and can also filter and block dust and pesticide drift. Other techniques include trees integrated into livestock pastures, or under which shade-tolerant crops may be grown. These techniques are on display at farms in and near Spring Green, run by the [Savanna Institute](#), which is also the source of this information.



3. HELP EXPAND MARKETS FOR LOCAL FARM PRODUCTS

The Town and two Villages encourage farmers to expand the scopes of their operations and will help develop markets for local agricultural products. Producing, processing, and marketing farm products to local, Madison-area, and Midwest metro consumers will bring more income to Sauk Prairie Area farm families. It could also mean more home-based businesses, value-added on-site processing, organic food production, agricultural tourism, and direct marketing.

Direct marketing to consumers adds value to locally produced agricultural products. This approach will become increasingly viable for the Sauk Prairie Area as local and regional population and tourism increases. The Sauk Prairie communities are well-positioned to take advantage of the local food movement as an economic, farmland preservation, and community health initiative. Some direct marketing techniques that may be considered, continued, or expanded include:

- **Farmers markets.** These provide an outlet for locally-produced food, contribute to the local economy, and enhance a sense of place and downtown activity. Having operated for 20+ years already, Sauk Prairie’s farmers markets could be expanded. Meyer Oak Grove Market was formed in 2021 to connect local makers/producers with the community.
- **Community-supported agriculture (CSA).** CSA programs are defined by farmers selling shares of their products to consumers in advance of the growing season. This cooperation can provide healthful food choices that support local farms, while relieving some of the burdens and uncertainties of conventional marketing. More information on local CSAs may be found [here](#).
- **On-farm sales and events.** The Town (and the Villages through extraterritorial zoning) intend to support permit requests for value added farming operations such as road side stands and on-farm meat or produce markets. On-farm events also can enhance the bottom line for farmers and provide educational and recreational opportunities for visitors. Events like the “Farm Art D’tour” and pick-your-own events generate enthusiasm for farming, local products, and linkages to nature and culture.
- **Local restaurant and grocery store linkages.** Groceries and restaurants are finding new opportunities by promoting locally grown produce and meats on their menus and in their stores. A prominent local example is the Ranch and Root Farmers Co-op in Downtown Sauk City. Forward-thinking market buyers can provide the freshest food products to their customers, support local farms, ensure an increasingly wary public of the quality of its food products, and use this approach as a marketing strategy to attract local residents and visitors. The Sauk Prairie Area would



Connecting local restaurants to local farms can help grow the farm economy, expand restaurant business, and promote healthier food and drink choices.



also benefit from more restaurants specializing in locally-grown food.

- **Institutional purchases.** Institutions purchase large quantities of food and are focused on wellness. This seems to be a particular opportunity for the Sauk Prairie Area, given the hospital, cluster of schools, elderly housing, and wellness initiative. Institutions purchase directly from local producers or grower cooperatives for seasonally-available produce and animal products. Eating fresh, in-season produce could be promoted even more widely for the health of students, elderly, and hospital patients.
- **Local processing.** Business parks in the Sauk Prairie Area provide space for value-added production for locally grown farm products, including new uses. The “new uses” economy is focused on finding new ways to use and process corn, soybeans, and other carbohydrate-rich farm products into plastics, fuel, and even pharmaceuticals. The Villages will consider criteria to support development of businesses incorporating new uses technology and/or are using local farm products.



CHAPTER 3

NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL

Protect the Sauk Prairie Area's natural areas and resources, focusing particularly on water quality and wildlife habitat.

OBJECTIVES

1. Preserve streams, drainageways, floodplains, wetlands, groundwater, eagle and other wildlife habitat, steep slopes, large woodlands, and other natural features.
2. Designate environmental corridors around these features, restrict development within them, and carefully manage development near them.
3. Protect ground and surface water quality, focusing on the Wisconsin River and its tributaries.
4. Cooperate with other units of government and non-profit groups on resources under shared authority and interest.

INITIATIVES

(SEE FULL CHAPTER TO READ MORE)

1. **Protect and Establish Environmental Corridors.** Environmental corridors provide stormwater management, flood control, groundwater protection and recharge, erosion control, wildlife habitat, scenic beauty, and passive recreation like trails. In new development areas, environmental corridors often have to be (re)established after generations of farming—particularly around major drainageways.
2. **Maintain and Enhance the Natural Experience Along the Wisconsin River.** The communities intend to continue to honor the River, its resident Bald Eagle population, and other birds and river life. Restoration, river clean-up events, and partnerships will be a continued focus. Other agencies and non-profits often have leadership and advocacy roles.
3. **Maintain and Improve Water Quality.** Limiting development in environmental corridors; updating plans and ordinances; limiting pesticides, herbicides, and road salt; and requiring best management practices for stormwater and groundwater protection will help assure clean waters.

CHAPTER PURPOSE

The Wisconsin River, pristine rural areas and stream corridors, and the Bald Eagle and other habitats they provide help define the Sauk Prairie Area and differentiate it from other communities—particularly those towards Madison. These and other natural areas and resources will require concerted, ongoing, and coordinated efforts to maintain and restore. This chapter is the Area’s general strategy for natural resource preservation.

NATURAL RESOURCE POLICIES

1. Before approving any land use change, ensure that it will meet all applicable local regulations and consider its impact on environmental corridors, water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat including potential rare or threatened plant and animal species locations, and archeologic and historic sites (see Map 5 in Volume 1), using and expanding tools like Prairie du Sac’s “site assessment checklist” to the right.
2. For any new major development or infrastructure project, require or submit to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR) a [request for an endangered resources preliminary assessment](#).
3. Partner with other agencies and non-profit organizations on natural resource preservation and to manage greenhouse gas emissions, including WisDNR, Sauk County, Ferry Bluff Eagle Council (FBEC), Friends of the Lower Wisconsin River Waterway (FLOW), and the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance.
4. Participate in local, County, and State water quality preservation and enhancement, particularly associated with the Wisconsin River, and Otter and Honey Creeks.
5. Encourage the permanent preservation of the most significant natural areas and wildlife habitat (such as Bald Eagle roosting and nesting areas) through techniques like conservation easements and fee simple acquisition.
6. Site future parks in areas that also forward the communities’ natural resource protection objectives, and promote native vegetation restoration areas as passive recreational areas and outdoor laboratories.



PRELIMINARY PLAT APPLICATION

Parcel Address or ID #: _____

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Land Division/Subdivision Site Assessment Checklist

The Site Assessment Checklist, attached information, and Village assessment of these materials, will be considered in the determination of land suitability for division under Section 10-03-0105(e) and compliance with other Village ordinance standards. Please answer the following questions about the proposed site and division, clicking on the listed “potential source” or using another reliable source. Explain all “yes” answers by attaching documentation on the type, location, and extent of the identified feature; and on the expected impact of the proposed development. Adjustments to the proposed division to minimize the impact of “yes” answers may be required.

| I. LAND RESOURCES. Does the land area include: | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. A 100-year floodplain, or other flood prone area? Potential Source: FEMA Flood Map Service Center or Sauk County FEMA Floodplain Finder Map | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. An area of with high potential for gravel or other mineral deposits? Potential Source: Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan Map 4 or Sauk County Comprehensive Plan Map 3.5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Slopes of 12% or greater? Potential Source: Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan Map 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. An area of existing or former wetlands, or wetland indicators? Potential Source: Wisconsin DNR Surface Water Data Viewer . In Map Layers, select “Wetland & Wetland Indicators”, “Mapped Wetlands” and then “Wisconsin Wetland Inventory”. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. An area with water table within 200 cm (about 6 feet) of the soil surface? Potential Source: USDA Soil Survey . Use Soil Data Explorer, select tab for Soil Uses and Properties. Under “Water Features”, select “Depth to Water Table.” | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F. An area of bedrock within 150 cm (about 5 feet) of the soil surface? Potential Source: USDA Soil Survey . Use Soil Data Explorer, select tab for Soil Uses and Properties. Under “Soil Qualities and Features”, select “Depth to a Selected Soil Restrictive Layer.” | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| G. Soils having very limited site potential for dwellings with basements? Potential Source: USDA Soil Survey . Use Soil Data Explorer, select tab for Suitabilities and Limitations for Use. Under “Building Site Development”, select “Buildings with Basements”. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| H. Designated environmental or open space corridors? Potential Source: Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan Map 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I. A natural drainageway or dry run with a tributary area of 5+ acres? Potential Sources: West Side Stormwater Management Plan or site survey | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| J. Group I agricultural soils? Potential Source: Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan Map 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| II. WATER RESOURCES. Does the land area/development involve: | Yes | No |
| A. A navigable lake, pond, river, stream, or other waterway? Potential Source: Wisconsin DNR Surface Water Data Viewer . In Map Layers, select “Dam and Floodplain Information”, choose the “Priority Navigable Waterways”. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Expanded use of “site assessment checklists” like the above, in advance of major new developments, can help flag and resolve environmental issues early in the development process.



Adopted: April 11, 2017

Amended: October 15, 2021; March 14, 2023

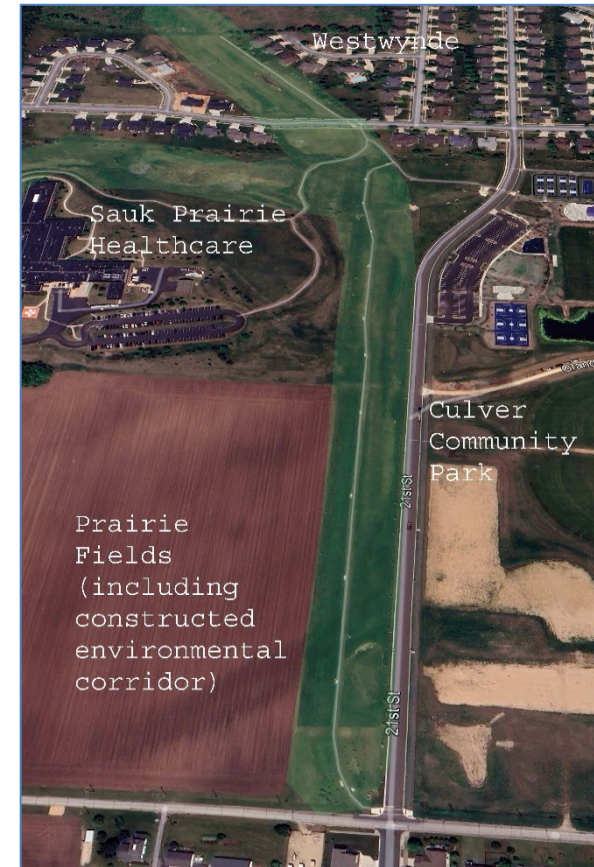
NATURAL RESOURCE INITIATIVES

1. PROTECT AND ESTABLISH ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS

The Sauk Prairie Area municipalities support and practice the layering of natural areas and features into “environmental corridors.” Environmental corridors provide a construct for natural area preservation, land use planning and guidance, and land regulation in the Sauk Prairie Area. Environmental corridors have environmental, ecological, passive recreational (e.g., trails, birding), flood control, stormwater management, groundwater protection and recharge, erosion control, wildlife, and scenic values. Environmental corridors also have limitations for development, so minimizing development there also protects private property.

Environmental corridors are depicted on Maps 9A and 9B in the Land Use chapter and on Map 18 in the Transportation chapter. For the Sauk Prairie Area, environmental corridors are a layering of the following features:

- **Wetlands.** These may be as designated by the WisDNR or through more detailed field surveys where wetland indicators are present (see WisDNR’s [Surface Water Data Viewer](#)). The disturbance of wetlands are subject to regulation at several levels of government. Minimizing impervious surfaces within at least 35 feet of wetlands (i.e., buffer) is also advised.
- **Floodplains.** These are designated by the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA). The County and the Villages are required to limit development in 100-year (1% chance) floodplains.
- **Shoreland setbacks.** These are 75-foot setbacks from navigable waters, which are subject to County and in some cases Village shoreland zoning regulations.
- **Major drainageways.** These are often identified in local stormwater and neighborhood plans. Many are focused in between the two Villages and Highway 12, where the Sauk Prairie Area plans future development. These drainageways have often been focused into more defined but wide corridors when adjacent land



Environmental corridors on Prairie du Sac’s western edge have been established with development of adjacent lands, graded and vegetated for stormwater infiltration and movement, and outfitted with trails for passive recreation. (Image Google Earth, 2025)



develops, providing both places to retain and infiltrate stormwater generated from on-site and convey water from off-site generally in accordance with historic patterns.

- **Steepest slopes.** Limited slopes of 20+ percent—largely confined to the northwest and southwest corners of the Town—are included.
- **Critical Eagle habitat.** “Critical roosting” and “critical perching” areas for wintering Bald Eagle populations, as identified by the FBEC, are the final feature that are part of environmental corridors. These are east of the Wisconsin River in the Towns of Westport, Roxbury, and Mazomanie and also at Ferry Bluff near the southwest corner of the Town of Prairie du Sac and on certain islands within the River (see Map 5 in the Conditions and Issues volume for locations).

Existing development and farming may continue within mapped environmental corridors, but some improvements may be limited. Farmers within and near environmental corridors are encouraged to implement agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as those advanced by the [UW-Extension](#). New buildings that do not replace old buildings and significant building expansions will generally not be allowed in environmental corridors. Low-impact trails and other passive recreational opportunities are allowed and sometimes encouraged in environmental corridors.

Environmental corridors depicted on Maps 9A, 9B, and 18 are general, and based on secondary sources of information and planning studies. As such, actual environmental corridor boundaries may differ on a site-specific basis as prescribed in Figure 7-2 of the Land Use chapter.

2. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL EXPERIENCE ALONG THE WISCONSIN RIVER

The Wisconsin River is arguably the Sauk Prairie Area’s most important asset. In recent decades there has been increased recreational, residential, and economic development near the River. Natural, recreational, viewshed, and community development functions can complement one another and be further advanced with careful planning and execution. To protect the natural functions of the River and the environmental corridor that abuts it, Area municipalities intend to support and practice:

- **Riverfront restoration.** This includes continued opportunities for native and adaptive plantings and shoreline stabilization. Ideas provided by the environmental community include planting willow and cottonwood live stakes.



- **Mowing limits.** Limiting near-bank mowing to narrow corridors, or to just before limited events like Fire on the River help maintain a natural shoreline and limit goose populations. Geese defecate on the riverbank, which has negative water quality, recreational, and public health impacts (especially for young children).
- **Trail management.** Supporting management of the Great Sauk State Trail in a manner that is sensitive to the River ecosystem including the Bald Eagle population is a priority. These focus on winter season access limitations pegged to Eagle counts provided by the FBEC.
- **Bald Eagle management.** The communities will continue to learn from groups like the FBEC and WisDNR to identify critical habitats of the wintering eagle population that can and should be avoided by any major infrastructure or community development project. The FBEC indicates that aspects of the “Eagle world” do not typically change much (e.g., roosting sites), while others such as how many Eagles winter in the Area, and where exactly, is dynamic among years depending upon factors like ice and snow cover. This dynamism enables FBEC to make specific recommendations on impact of development projects that are suited to individual years or times of the year, which the municipalities intend to seek when development or other proposals warrant.
- **River clean-up and view opening.** In the past, local organizations, such as the Sauk Prairie River Alliance or Sauk Prairie River PAL, organized major shoreline cleanup events to remove dumped materials, debris, and invasives from along the River and its tributaries. While much of the “heavy lifting” may be completed, Riverfront clean-up south of the Highway 12 bridge is reportedly a remaining need. More generally, collaboration with trail user groups on River clean-up may be a productive avenue going forward. Further, opening view corridors in the “midway” area between the two downtowns may be beneficial and welcome, though ownership issues, available resources, and mixed opinions on view enhancement versus tree preservation are challenges.
- **Lower Wisconsin Riverway Collaboration.** Understanding the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board and FLOW—and collaborating with that Board, its staff, and FLOW on projects of joint interest—has obvious benefits. The Board administers a system of performance standards which are designed to protect the aesthetic integrity of the Riverway. Permits are required for structures, timber harvesting, and utilities down-river from the Village of Sauk City.
- **Emergency Management.** The Sauk Prairie Area municipalities—and associated police and fire departments—will continue to practice emergency management and preparedness, including for the unlikely event of a dam failure but also for other occurrences.



- **Interpretive space provision.** Incorporating and managing respites for people to access, view, and understand the River and its importance is critical for community health and enjoyment. The Overlook at Prairie du Sac's Riverwalk Park and other smaller spaces provide these opportunities.
- **Education.** The Overlook at Prairie du Sac's Riverwalk Park provides rotating opportunities to learn about the River and its habitat. The municipalities also encourage including conservation of the Lower Wisconsin River corridor into the Sauk Prairie school curriculum. Finally, continued public education on the safe use of the River and adjoining shorelands and bluffs is necessary. There are real hazards associated with the River, which change on a seasonal and even daily basis.



Riverwalk Park and Overlook in Downtown Prairie du Sac provides opportunities for River, bluff, Bald Eagle, and other wildlife viewing—and is photoworthy in its own right.

3. MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE WATER QUALITY

In addition to managing stormwater to the River, plentiful and clean water are essential in other ways to the long-term health and success of the Area. Protection of ground and surface water resources depends on management of both point and diffuse sources of contamination, including urban and agricultural runoff. The Town and Villages will undertake efforts, including the following, to help ensure plentiful clean water:

- **Limit development in environmental corridors.** See the earlier initiative for further details and ideas.
- **Adopt and update comprehensive erosion control and stormwater management plans, ordinances, and utilities.** As further described in the Community Facilities and Utilities chapter, both Villages intend to prepare, require of developers, and/or keep up to date stormwater management plans for their planned growth areas. In addition, the Village of Sauk City will consider adoption of an erosion control and stormwater ordinance, and a stormwater utility to fund and manage the stormwater system.
- **Practice and encourage progressive stormwater management.** Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) decrease peak stormwater quantities, promote on-site infiltration, and improve the overall quality of stormwater entering the River and creeks. BMPs often mimic natural patterns and may include constructed wetlands/bogs natural drainageways, native lowland plantings, deltas and other periodic flat areas. Where development occurs, BMPs may include lower impervious footprints of buildings and pavement, vegetative buffers around pavement, permeable surfaces and/or vegetation within larger parking lots, residential rain gardens, green (vegetated) roofs,



roof runoff directed to pervious yard areas, organic layers added to the yards to aid decomposition and filter pollutants, and deep tilling of yards near the end of the site development process. Constructed stormwater basins and conveyance routes should carefully be integrated into the surrounding development pattern and incorporate native/natural edge vegetation.

- **Identify and manage municipal wellhead protection areas.** Wellhead protection overlay zoning seeks to minimize and manage land uses and activities with reasonable potential to contaminate the well recharge area. Both Villages currently have unique land use and activity standards applied to mapped wellhead protection zones. Uses with higher potential for groundwater contamination are discouraged in these areas. These include chemical storage facilities, road salt usage and storage, animal feedlots, fertilizer and pesticide use, manure storage, and underground storage tanks.
- **Help prevent and mitigate accidental spills.** Statutes require that spills of hazardous materials be immediately reported and cleaned. The three jurisdictions may cooperatively prepare a contingency plan for accidental spills, in coordination with WisDNR, fire and police departments, and Sauk County Emergency Management. Finally, new developments with reasonable probability of spills should prepare, file, and communicate contingency plans as part of development approval processes.
- **Manage storage and use of road salt and plowed snow.** Chloride from salt infiltrates into surface and ground waters. The Sauk Prairie Area municipalities will work to limit the use of salt on roads, exploring environmentally friendly options and techniques. Snow and salt storage areas locations should be selected to minimize the chances of ground and surface water pollution. The [Wisconsin Salt Wise Partnership](#) has more information and advice.
- **Encourage responsible management of livestock waste storage and spreading.** County and State agencies are generally responsible for managing livestock waste storage facilities. WisDNR requires a separation of at least 250 feet between such facilities and wells. Concentrated animal feedlot operations should also be located away from waterways. Site-specific factors are most important in determining the threat of groundwater pollution from animal waste. Also, responsible nutrient management, chemical application (if any), organic farming, agroforestry, all reduce the potential for groundwater pollution from agriculture.



Progressive stormwater management approach in the Area using Best Management Practices.



- **Promote agricultural best practices.** Efforts to limit soil loss, fertilizer use, and pesticide use on farms aid in promoting surface water quality. Encouraging participation in the farmland preservation program is one means to help, as participating farms must have a soil conservation and nutrient management plan.
- **Limit domestic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.** The municipalities will practice and encourage limited use of chemical lawn and garden fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides that diminish water quality and promote algae in the Wisconsin River and its tributaries.
- **Encourage careful placement and management of septic systems.** Concentrations of older (pre-1980) septic systems, such as along the Wisconsin River and in other scattered areas of the Town, can threaten groundwater supply when not properly maintained or replaced. Area communities encourage the County to ensure the proper placement and maintenance of on-site waste treatment (septic) systems. Also, new rural (septic) development should be limited near closed landfill sites. WisDNR generally requires separation of 1,200 feet between open or closed landfills and nearby private wells.
- **Support continued cleanup of former Badger Army Ammunition Plant.** This may include participation in the Badger Reuse and Oversight committees and involvement in any proposal for public water service to places now served by private wells in the affected area.



CHAPTER 4

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

GOAL

Preserve and enhance the Area's "rivertown" character, sense of place, and cultural resources.

OBJECTIVES

1. Advance and celebrate the Sauk Prairie Area's character—defined by the Wisconsin River, gently rolling agricultural land, and the two historic Villages nestled between them.
2. Collaborate with landowners on protecting and enhancing unique and historic buildings, districts, and archeological areas.
3. Maintain and enhance scenic, natural, and recreational experiences and places.
4. Reinforce the relationship between thoughtful community development and services and the physical and mental health of Sauk Prairie Area residents.

INITIATIVES

(SEE FULL CHAPTER TO READ MORE)

1. **Support Preservation and Enhancement of Key Buildings and Gathering Places.** The communities will support preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation as a way to show their commitment to their combined heritage and grow the local economy. Participation in the State WEDC's Connect Communities Program will expand focus on façade improvement and placemaking in the downtowns.
2. **Advance Tourism and the Sauk Prairie Riverway Brand.** The Sauk Prairie Area is particularly suited to nature- and heritage-based tourism, and already has several events and businesses geared to serve tourists. In collaboration with the Chamber, the communities will continue to embrace and advance tourism and the Sauk Prairie Riverway brand in a number of ways, including expanding signage.
3. **Advance "River and Prairie" Community Character.** Decisions about community change will be based upon preserving this essential character. For example, new and remodeled buildings along the east side of Water Street should essentially have a second facade facing the River.
4. **Expand Commitment to Community Wellness.** The Sauk Prairie Wellness Movement will spearhead efforts to improve the mental and physical health of the community and its residents. These include emphasizes on mental health, addressing chronic disease like obesity, reducing social isolation, and increasing access to affordable housing and child and elder care.

CHAPTER PURPOSE

The Sauk Prairie Area is rich in cultural resources and community character. Community character is defined as the unique expression or quality of a place, or more simply the way a community looks and feels to its residents and visitors. This chapter guides the preservation, enhancement, and celebration of historic and cultural resources that distinguish the Sauk Prairie Area—integral both to celebrating its past and advancing its future.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER POLICIES

1. Work through and with the local historic commissions and societies and landowners to protect historic and archaeological resources that help define and contribute to the Area's character.
2. Assure that new development near historic buildings or sites, natural areas, or wildlife habitat respects the integrity, function, and scale of these buildings and areas as well as their typically small scale.
3. Emphasize the value of natural areas and wildlife—particularly the Bald Eagle—as focal points of beauty, recreation, tourism, and community and personal health.
4. In largely undeveloped areas, promote the use of existing topographic changes and vegetation to screen new development from public roads.
5. Treat Highway 12 as the Sauk Prairie Area's front door, emphasizing welcoming signage and high quality building and landscape design.
6. Promote limited and "dark sky" compliant exterior lighting. If a business is to operate at night, design all outdoor lighting so as not to create glare, not to shine directly on neighboring residences or into the dark sky, and otherwise to meet zoning requirements. Require within subdivision covenants exterior lighting provisions intended to preserve the dark night sky and use village newsletters to promote a reduction of outside residential lighting.
7. Support local concerts, festivals, fairs, farm-related events, and markets that celebrate the Area's heritage, health, and way of life.



The Tripp Memorial Museum is home to the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society. It houses a substantial archive of photographs, historical information, and rotating displays.



CULTURE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER INITIATIVES

1. SUPPORT PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF KEY BUILDINGS AND DISTRICTS

The Sauk Prairie Area has a significant collection of older and architecturally interesting buildings, historic sites, and downtown districts. These reflect the Area's past, contribute to its community character and aesthetics, and provide homes for residents and businesses. The [Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society](#) is also active, hosting speakers and events to keep the Sauk Prairie story alive and well.

The municipalities encourage preservation of historically and architecturally significant structures/districts and archeological resources, especially historic residences (including unique “block and stack” residences in the Honey Creek Swiss Rural Historic District) and in the two Village downtowns. Both Villages have downtown design guidelines that emphasize historic preservation and restoration. Economic incentives may be offered, such as Federal and State preservation tax credits and grants or low-interest loans for façade restoration. Through its recent addition to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's (WEDC) Connect Communities Program, the two Villages are poised to advance their façade improvement and placemaking efforts within their downtowns as early as 2026.

2. ADVANCE TOURISM AND THE SAUK PRAIRIE RIVERWAY BRAND

The Sauk Prairie Area is widely known for fun and informative events, with examples including Bald Eagle Watching Days, Sauk Prairie FFA Alumni Spring Fling Tractor Pull, “June Tunes” Concerts in the Park, Prairie du Sac Night Market, Summer Solstice Festival, Fire on the River, Wisconsin State Cow Chip Throw and Fair, and Parktoberfest. These activities provide a way for people to experience the Area's distinct character. Over the past decade, venues for these and other arts and recreational activities have expanded and become significantly enhanced, including Great Sauk State Trail, Culver Community Park, enhanced waterfront parks in both

Connect Communities Program

WEDC's two downtown programs—the Connect Communities Program and the Wisconsin Main Street Program. The two Sauk Prairie Area Villages are new participants in the Connect Communities Program. As it relates to Culture and Community Character, the Villages hope to capitalize on the following program design objectives:

- Create inviting, inclusive atmosphere.
- Celebrate historic character.
- Foster accessible, people-centered public spaces.



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Amended: October 12, 2021; March 14, 2023

Villages, and other larger and smaller community spaces. These were added to the recently-improved River Arts Center—a 500-seat performing arts venue and gallery space for local and regional groups to showcase their talents.

Residents and the business community collaborate and engage around such events. The Sauk Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce serves as the community’s tourism and marketing entity, but largely relies on local groups, businesses, and volunteers to have products and events to market. River Arts Inc. (for performing and static arts) and Friends of the Sauk Prairie Parks and Recreation are key and frequent partners. Together, the municipalities intend to:

- **Support current events.** The municipalities will continue to sponsor, help market, and help grow regular events such as those listed above, to the extent that competing demands on limited municipal resources allow.
- **Actively and creatively program and maintain current spaces.** Sauk Prairie Area partners have made an array of major investments in community recreational and performance spaces over the past decade or so. Major activation of those spaces through regular community events—large and small—serves the local population and provides a reliable and frequent destination for tourists. Continued maintenance is also necessary to keep these new spaces fresh over time, including community clean-up efforts and organizations to lead them.
- **Cultivate community volunteers.** Sauk Prairie’s many community events and efforts have been driven in part by local volunteers. There is a need to recruit a new generation of volunteers. Some of these new volunteers may also become Sauk Prairie’s next generation of leaders. Volunteering and participation in groups also has proven health benefits.
- **Explore new opportunities.** The municipalities will partner to advance further “placemaking” improvements, particularly in the downtown areas as part of Connect Communities Program efforts. More broadly, new opportunities in the areas of nature, heritage, and agricultural-based tourism—Sauk Prairie Area strengths—will be explored.



Sauk City has remade its Riverfront Park to provide a venue for a wide variety of community activities and recreation.



- **Support Compatible Business Development.**

Spurring compatible business development opportunities, such as new and improved restaurants, will help spur the tourist economy and serve local residents with more “third spaces” to relax and play. The Vintage in Downtown Sauk City is just one example of a compatible business investment.

- **Continue marketing efforts.** The Chamber has a clear marketing strategy that will no doubt be refined over time. The Chamber intends to continue to tap available regional marketing publications and web-based resources to market existing Sauk Prairie Area festivals and events to the regional day-trip tourist market. Through their participation in the Chamber’s Economic Development Committee and funding support, the municipalities intend to continue their involvement in refining and implementing that strategy.

- **Advance “Riverway” branding.** Though the Villages and Town are three distinct entities, the consistent brand effectively links the communities into a single destination for visitors. Banners along Water Street; welcome, wayfinding, and park signs; and marketing materials all also utilize the Sauk Prairie Riverway brand (see also the logo below!).



Residents and visitors awaiting the annual Fire on the River fireworks—both on public land and within the adjacent Vintage Brewing Company building.



3. ADVANCE “RIVER AND PRAIRIE” COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The Sauk Prairie Area has two distinctive and authentic character images that carry through much of its architecture, landscape, and activities: River and Prairie. These are defined in the sidebar.

Cookie cutter developments could overwhelm the Sauk Prairie Area and its character, converting it to “just another suburb” of Madison. The communities will utilize communication, planning, zoning, incentive, and other programs to advance River and Prairie character, including:

- High-quality, context-sensitive building, site, landscaping, signage, and lighting design for new developments. River-based architectural character is defined in the downtown design guidelines of the two Villages. Prairie character is explored in the Highway 12/PF/Airport Area Plan.
- New neighborhoods developed in more historic forms, such as Traditional Neighborhood Design, which favor smaller lots, houses (not garages) dominating the view and promoting neighbor interaction, and interconnected streets serving many functions.
- Preservation and restoration of remaining prairie remnants in visible locations. The Moely Prairie on Prairie Street is a prime example.
- Protection of undeveloped forested bluffs on the east side of the Wisconsin River through intergovernmental cooperation. Poorly planned development there could spoil natural beauty, wildlife habitat, and west bank views.
- Continuing to open views, access, and redevelopment potential near the River without damaging the River character or ecosystem—particularly in the “midway” area between the two downtowns. Orientation of new and remodeled buildings should be consciously towards the River to capitalize on scenic views, such as through use of large banks of windows, balconies, and outdoor seating areas.

What is “River and Prairie” Character?

The “**river**” component of the Sauk Prairie Area’s predominant character is defined by:

1. The majestic Wisconsin River itself
2. Its 1800s-era waterfront downtown form
3. Neighborhoods extending in a grid from the River
4. The River’s bridges as entryways
5. Eagles and other River-based wildlife
6. Relationship of people to the River
7. River-based recreation, like paddling
8. River-oriented community events

The “**prairie**” component is defined by:

9. The predominate pre-settlement vegetation and landform in the Area.
10. The farmland that mostly replaced it.
11. An indigenous architectural style marked by horizontal lines that evoke and relate to the prairie landscape, flat or hipped roofs with broad overhanging eaves, and windows grouped in horizontal bands.
12. Modern local buildings with strong Prairie elements, including the Culver’s and Mueller Sports Medicine corporate headquarters, Sauk Prairie Healthcare’s building, and the Chamber building.



5. EXPAND COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Ensuring that everyone in the Sauk Prairie community lives long, healthy lives requires more than the traditional work of health care providers. The Sauk Prairie Area community will invest the time, effort, and resources into conditions that support healthy lifestyles and improve the overall health and well-being of all residents. By doing so, the community will also invest in its economic and cultural vitality. This commitment extends to the partnership between community residents and the organizations that serve them, including municipal governments and the Sauk Prairie Wellness Movement.

The Sauk Prairie Wellness Movement is a coalition whose members represent local municipalities, the Sauk Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce, local healthcare providers, the Sauk Prairie School District, the Sauk Prairie Community Education and Recreation Department, local churches, several local employers, active citizens, and the 6:8 Inc. service organization. Other community service organizations have been invited and are welcome to participate. The Wellness Movement's goal is to work together as a community to champion the overall health and well-being of ALL Sauk Prairie residents.

The exact initiatives to achieve this goal will vary and evolve. The following priorities serve as a working outline guiding specific initiatives that may be undertaken through a partnership between the Villages, the Town, and the Wellness Movement:

- **Improving Mental Health.** Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to his or her community. Without treatment, common consequences of mental illness for the individual and society are disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, incarceration, and

Community Health Needs Assessment

A Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) entails collecting demographic and health statistics of a community, discussing issues with community leaders and organizations, and prioritizing the highest health needs of area residents. The goal of a CHNA is to provide residents with a deeper understanding of the health needs in their community, as well as help guide community benefit planning efforts and develop an implementation strategy to address the needs. A Community Health Improvement Implementation Plan (CHIIP) is then typically created and implemented to address the health needs of the community.

Sauk Prairie Healthcare's most recent local CHNA and CHIIP can be found at www.saukprairiehealthcare.org/About/Community-Health. Many of the ideas in this Community Wellness initiative are from the CHNA and CHIIP.



suicide. The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than \$193 billion in lost earnings each year in the U.S, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

A 2024 Sauk County survey revealed that 62% of Sauk Prairie Area respondents labeled “mental health” is the Area’s most important community problem—just behind the #1 problem of “housing”. As learned during 2019 listening sessions and reinforced through discussions with key informant groups in 2021, “alienation” and “isolation” are central mental health-related factors among youth and the elderly.

The main concern with mental health in the Sauk Prairie Area is limited access and the lack of mental health facilities and providers. Short-term solutions may include supporting tele-health services. Long-term strategies could involve high schools and post-secondary schools to support career development for future behavioral health providers. There is also a need for more community education and awareness about mental health, including to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues.

Various initiatives are underway to address near-term needs. In 2022 the Sauk Prairie School District invested in a program designed to help students, staff, and families get access to mental health care, and in 2023, the District was awarded a federal grant to make schools a hub for mental health. Additionally, Sauk Prairie Healthcare has developed a behavioral health program to address patient needs with a comprehensive, patient-centered program and offers mental health first aid classes to adults in the community.

- **Promoting Healthy Lifestyles—Eating Smart and Moving More to Prevent Chronic Disease.** Chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity are significant health concerns. Obesity is defined as a life-long, progressive, life-threatening, genetically-related, and costly disease of excess fat storage. This disorder is associated with illnesses directly caused or worsened by significant weight. In addition to being costly for the nation’s health care system, obesity and unhealthy weight management also can lead to, or complicate, other health conditions including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

According to County Health Rankings, obesity continues to be a growing issue in the Sauk and Columbia County communities. The adult obesity rate in Sauk County is 37%, with the Wisconsin and national averages being 34%. Lack of physical activity is one of the main contributors of obesity.

The Sauk Prairie Area has done impressive work to create welcoming and equitable places for physical activity, including new and improved parks, recreation facilities, and walking/biking paths. Other efforts are needed. Sauk Prairie Healthcare provides its Community Population Health Management program to improve health outcomes across a defined group of patients; a Diabetes Pre-Diabetic Classroom Program; and various community education classes including those focused on nutrition.



- **Addressing Substance (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs) Misuse.** Substance misuse is a serious concern, in large part because this category of health issues is very broad, so many people are directly or indirectly impacted. Recent data suggests that nearly one-quarter (22.4%) of Sauk County adults engage in binge drinking, which exceeds the State (21.1%) and National (16.6%) rates. Tobacco/nicotine use among Sauk County adults exceeds the State (17.7%) and national (15.5%) averages.

Usage among young people is a particular concern. Over ¼ of local high school students currently drink alcohol. Of rising concern is the adolescent use of nicotine delivery devices like pouches, which have largely replaced vaping and cigarettes as the common way to ingest nicotine among the young.

Strategies include prevention programs, targeted youth education, and increasing access to treatment. For example, St. Vincent de Paul Sauk Prairie offers its CARE Recovery Program, which addresses substance abuse recovery in the community. The Sauk Prairie municipalities can also help to reducing the normalization of tobacco, THC, and alcohol use in parks and other public spaces through ordinance and policy adjustments. The Chamber has made clear strides in this direction.

- **Reducing Social Isolation.** According to the 2021 County Health Rankings, minimal contact with others and limited involvement in community life are associated with increased morbidity and early mortality. Research suggests that the magnitude of risk associated with social isolation is similar to the risk of cigarette smoking. Furthermore, social support networks have been identified as powerful predictors of health behaviors, suggesting that individuals without a strong social network are less likely to make healthy lifestyle choices than individuals with a strong network.

The Sauk Prairie Area appears on par with the State with respect to social isolation data elements included the County Health Rankings. What is clear is the unanimous recognition by the Wellness Movement's key informants that social isolation as a local problem to be addressed. Additionally, focus group members believed there is grassroots community support for attempting to address this problem.

Potential solutions are several. They include more and more frequent community events, enhanced volunteer programs, and greater transportation options (especially for the young and the old). Bolder ideas include “intergenerational connection hubs”—intentional spaces that bring people together and bridge generations—and “trauma-informed community design” to acknowledge that the built environment, programming, and policies can either exacerbate or ease emotional stress and isolation. The Sauk Prairie Wellness Movement intends to convene existing community organizations (e.g., churches, 6:8, Community Club, Optimists) to examine and address this issue further.

- **Supporting Housing That People Can Afford.** Housing cost and availability is an important issue in the Area, as is also addressed in the Housing and Neighborhoods chapter. The Area is not unlike the vast majority of the nation in this regard. Safe, affordable housing is connected to health in four pathways: health impacts of not having a stable home (the “stability pathway”), of conditions inside the home (the



“safety and quality” pathway), of financial burdens resulting from high-cost housing (the “affordability pathway”), an environmental and social characteristics of where people live (the “neighborhood pathway”). When more than one of these pathways is compromised, physical and mental health are put at greater risk.

The American Community Survey reports that more than one-quarter of Sauk County residents spend 30% or more of total household income on housing—a measure of unaffordability. Further, 7 in 10 Sauk Prairie Area respondents to a 2024 Sauk County survey listed “housing” as the most important problem in the Sauk Prairie Area—the #1 response.

The Housing and Neighborhoods chapter has a variety of recommendations to increase the supply of affordable housing in the community, and there have been recent positive movements in getting such housing built, such as through the Prairie Fields development. Additional affordable housing options of different types—including those that address other wellness needs—are also needed.

- **Increasing Dependent Care Options.** As described in the Economic Development chapter, affordable and readily-available childcare is a substantial community need. Lack of affordable childcare, coupled with high housing costs, put many in financial distress which can lead to untreated medical and mental health issues. The opening of the Sauk Prairie Early Learning Center is a major first step. Further, the aging population requires additional eldercare services. Proposed solutions include building and finding adequate staff for such facilities.



The Sauk Prairie Early Learning Center resulted from a community partnership and welcomed its first group of preschoolers in fall 2025.

