

SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 305

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE CITY OF RACINE: 2035

Chapter IV

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the issues and opportunities element is to define the desired future of the City of Racine for 2035 through a vision statement and goals. The vision statement provides a clear sense of direction for the city and its neighborhoods. The goals serve as broad statements of desired outcomes supporting the vision. The vision statement and goals were developed based upon a careful consideration of the city’s built environment, demographic trends, and public input.

This chapter begins with a description of the visioning process. The visioning process section is intended to provide context for the sections that follow: public participation opportunities, strengths and weaknesses analysis, and development of the City goals.

VISIONING PROCESS

The purpose of the vision statement is to articulate what the city and its neighborhoods strive to build on and become in the future. The Racine City Plan Commission (CPC) adopted the following vision statement:

Vision Statement

The City of Racine will be a vibrant, dynamic, and diverse community that is safe, accessible to neighborhoods and neighboring communities, convenient for local and regional commuters, and attractive to residents, visitors, business owners and patrons. The City of Racine will be a refuge for its residents and a destination for the region.

The underlying theme of the vision statement is the increasing importance of addressing the environmental, social, and economical sustainability of the City of Racine in the future. Sustainability is commonly defined as the

capability to equitably meet the critical needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. While the definition of sustainability may vary from community to community, the concept in the vision statement refers to finding a balance among environmental stewardship, economic development, and recognition of individual rights. The movement toward a more sustainable community will make City residents more perceptive in safeguarding the environment, protecting the quality of community life, and recognizing positive social and economic benefits for future generations.

The process of creating a vision statement, the identification of issues and opportunities, and the development of the City goals, were based on a consideration of the following:

- Population, household, and employment projections; and
- Public participation efforts, including a countywide comprehensive planning public opinion survey conducted in spring 2007; a citywide public opinion survey conducted in winter 2009; a series of public informational meetings; the result of a strengths and weaknesses analysis; and City Plan Commission meetings.

Population, Household, and Employment Projections

The State comprehensive planning law requirements for the issues and opportunity element include forecasts of population, households, and employment. Chapter III of this report presents a range of projections of population, households, and employment through the year 2035. It presents projections prepared by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) and used in the preparation of the year 2035 regional land use plan. It also presents trend-based projections which assume that the City would continue to grow as it has in the past. These projections were intended to provide a frame of reference for the City of Racine in the selection of community-level population, household, and employment projections that best represent expectations for the year 2035. The selected projections relate directly to the future demand for land, housing, transportation facilities and services, and other community facilities that the comprehensive plan must address.

Public Participation Efforts

To ensure community input, the public participation¹ efforts included, but were not limited to, countywide and citywide surveys, public informational meetings, and a strengths and weaknesses analysis. The values, hopes, and concerns that residents and other stakeholders expressed through these efforts helped shape the City vision statement, issues and opportunities, and goals.

Countywide Survey

¹ A public participation plan was adopted by the City of Racine on April 4, 2007, as a basis for public involvement in the comprehensive planning program.

As part of the Racine County multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning effort, the primary means of obtaining public input was a random, mail-out countywide survey. In spring 2007, a countywide comprehensive planning public opinion survey was conducted by UW-Extension with assistance from the MJAC, the Racine County Planning & Development Department, and SEWRPC. The survey was designed to encompass all nine required elements of the comprehensive plan, and therefore, it included a wide range of questions on topics such as quality of life, housing, agricultural and natural resources, land use, transportation, and economic development. Approximately 4,000 surveys were mailed to a random sample of registered voters in Racine County. The sample was stratified by community in an effort to create a representative cross-section of County viewpoints and gain an accurate representation of the population. Of the approximately 4,000 surveys mailed, about 1,500 surveys were mailed to City of Racine residents. County residents could also participate in the survey by completing survey forms made available at all municipal halls and public libraries and on the Smart Growth website hosted by Racine County. The results of the survey are presented in a report entitled, *Countywide Public Opinion Survey of Racine County Residents*, November 2007, and is available at County and City offices.

Citywide Survey

As part of the City of Racine comprehensive planning effort, the City conducted an online survey to obtain input on comprehensive plan issues. Working with SEWRPC and UW-Extension, the City developed the survey that was conducted between January 15, 2009, and February 5, 2009. The survey consisted of a wide range of questions about growth and development in the City, including questions on housing, transportation, natural and cultural resources, economic development, and neighborhood plans. Information gathered from the survey helped guide the preparation of the City's comprehensive plan. The results of the survey are presented in a report entitled, *City of Racine Comprehensive Plan Public Opinion Survey*, Winter 2009, and is available at City offices.

Public Informational Meetings

As part of the comprehensive planning process, two series of public informational meetings—one in fall 2007 and the other in spring 2009—were held at various locations in Racine County. This included two meetings—on November 8, 2007, and on April 27, 2009—in the City of Racine. The purpose of the meetings was to provide the public with background information about the comprehensive planning process and legal requirements, as well as to provide an update on the plan's progress and to present key findings and plan recommendations. Participants in these meetings included governmental officials, residents, and representatives of interest groups.

Neighborhood Public Informational Meetings

[To be completed]

Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis²

At a meeting on February 11, 2009, City of Racine residents and City Plan Commission members were invited to take part in a “strengths and weaknesses analysis” as part of which they were asked to identify and discuss the strengths and weaknesses facing the City of Racine. They were also asked to prioritize the issues they believed were most important. Information collected through the this strengths and weaknesses analysis has been used, along with results from the citywide public opinion survey, to help the City develop the comprehensive plan’s vision statement, issues and opportunities, and goals. The issues identified as top priorities in the City are listed below.

Top Priorities from the Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue talking about Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail • New, well-signed, bike trail extensions • Usability and cleanliness of North Beach • Infrastructure improvements and streetscapes – Downtown, Uptown, and West Racine • Architectural diversity • Historic housing • Racine Zoo • Downtown Plan • Bike trails • Replanting of community trees • Trainable workforce • Racine First Program³ – adopt more of this concept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of living wage jobs • Lack of household owner occupancy • Need Metra, not KRM • More service frequency (BUS) • Wayfinding is difficult • Regional Transit Authority (RTA) should be an elected, not appointed, body • Lack of affordable and safe housing rentals • Lack of incentives/assistance for green housing for individuals • Lack of an indoor water park • Inadequate tennis courts • Failure to advertise/market ourselves in an effective manner • Lack of distinction in Southside Historic District (e.g., signage, lamp posts) • Not finishing neighborhood plans – need implementation • Inviting green gateways to City (not cement types) • Lack of positive promotion of school system

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

² A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analyses workshop was conducted as part of the Racine County multi-jurisdiction comprehensive planning effort at the 2007 countywide public informational meetings. Many issues identified in the SWOT analyses are applicable to the City. The SWOT analyses findings are documented in SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 301, A Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Racine County 2035.

³ This City program requires companies that get city contracts worth more than \$200,000 to use residents of the City’s five lowest income census tracts to do at least 10 percent of the labor.

The following general City planning issues and opportunities were identified during the visioning process described in the previous section.

- **Community/Neighborhood Character and Identity:** The concept of community character and identity includes a broad range of quality of life factors, such as safety, convenience, quality of public services, and quality of schools. In addition, the architectural diversity of the homes and buildings in individual neighborhoods adds to the sense of place and history of the community. Results from the countywide and citywide surveys indicated that it is very important for the City to accommodate and promote infill development in order to make efficient use of existing infrastructure, thereby potentially providing affordable housing and promoting walkable neighborhoods that contain work places, homes, retail shopping and other services. During the public informational meetings, convenient access to grocery stores in particular was ranked as a high priority need that should be addressed as areas of the City develop or redevelop. Overall, City of Racine and County residents share a common connection as being environmental stewards of natural resources, recreational-related amenities, and the built environment. These commonly held values of environmental sustainability help convey a sense of Racine’s history and reinforce a sense of place and identity.
- **Planning for Coordinated and Sustainable Future Growth:** There is an extensive history of planning in the City of Racine. This includes the development of numerous area/neighborhood plans, as well as a City park and open space plan. The public input exercises revealed that many residents want to see continued neighborhood planning for development and redevelopment, including mixed-use developments, that considers the impacts on existing utilities and facilities, traffic congestion, parks, long range school facilities planning, preservation of historic character, maintenance of public spaces and existing buildings, safety, and other quality of life issues.
- **Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources:** There is a rich abundance of nationally and state registered historic sites and districts scattered throughout the City of Racine. In the surveys and other public input exercises, the identification and preservation of historic buildings and districts were viewed as essential to the urban character and sense of history in the City. Survey respondents indicated that cultural resource preservation and opportunities for cultural activities are viewed as strengths in the City, and should be continued and improved on for tourism purposes.
- **Natural Resources Preservation and Recreational Opportunities:** The protection of natural resources and existing park and open space sites is important not only for aesthetic and recreational purposes, but also provides wildlife habitat and positive impacts on water resource quality and management. Survey respondents placed a high priority on protecting forested lands, wildlife habitats,

Lake Michigan, river corridors, parks, and open spaces. Land conservation, expansion of bike and walking trails, and the preservation of the quantity and quality of parks were considered as high priorities in the City. Continued and improved access to parks, rivers, and Lake Michigan is viewed as very important to City residents and visitors alike.

- **Housing Development:** The type, mix, and design of existing housing and residential densities vary across the City. The common concern raised in the public informational meetings and surveys relate to the diversity of housing choices (e.g., size, type, cost, rental vs. owner occupied). Residents in the City of Racine recognize that housing concerns are inter-related with other planning issues such as transportation and economic development. A majority of survey respondents indicated that sufficient housing should be provided to meet the needs of elderly residents, likely reflecting an awareness of the aging of the baby-boom generation. Results from the surveys and other public input exercises indicate that residents prefer more mixed-use developments, an increase in the amount of affordable housing, the maintenance and upkeep of the existing housing stock, more energy efficient housing (“Green” building practices), appropriate balance of housing and jobs, and more access to multiple forms of public transit and an expansion of the pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly transportation network in residential areas.
- **Transit and Transportation Services:** The improvement of public transit services and accessibility and providing more multi-modal transportation options are considered important in the City of Racine, particularly in light of changing demographics and rising energy costs. The maintenance of existing roads, improved public transit, and increased bicycle and pedestrian friendliness were identified as important issues in the surveys and other public input exercises. Increased connectivity to adjacent communities, including Chicago and Milwaukee was also identified as an important goal. In this respect, the expansion of transportation facilities and services between eastern and western Racine County and the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail were seen as opportunities.
- **Public Utilities and Community Facilities:** The results of the public input exercises indicate that City residents would like to see continued consideration of the impact of proposed developments/redevelopments on fire/police protection, schools, sewer and water utilities, recreation facilities, and open space preservation. Stakeholders see opportunities for more energy efficient development and sustainable development practices through urban infill and redevelopment and energy conservation practices that help control utility and service costs. At the same time, results of the surveys and other public input exercises indicate that improving the quality of education at public K-12 schools and at technical colleges, developing incentives for alternative energy sources such as

wind and solar power, and expanding telecommunication service opportunities are important to the City of Racine.

- **Economic Development:** Long range economic development planning has become an increasingly important function as a partnership between County and local agencies. Through the Racine County Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC), an updated countywide economic development plan has been prepared. Major economic development concerns are documented in the most recent version of that plan. These include the economic impacts, including job creation, of installing sewer and water along I-94; more tax increment finance districts (TIFs); more brownfield redevelopment and main street revitalization projects; and the need for a more global perspective on economic development. Results from the public informational meetings also indicate that concerns about economic development are widespread, and centered predominantly on how to increase and diversify industries in the City of Racine and Racine County overall. Survey respondents support most types of industry groups, but most particularly, they were in favor of developing jobs in health care services, industrial and manufacturing, and emerging technology. In addition, although City and County residents are perceived to have a strong work ethic, there are concerns that the workforce does not have the education or training to match current or future job requirements. Overall, City of Racine residents recognize that the health and sustainability of the economy involve addressing a broad range of issues: quantity and quality of jobs, workforce development, commercial development and redevelopment, housing, education, health care, and access to resources and services.
- **Intergovernmental Cooperation and Communication:** One of the underlying goals of the State Smart Growth Law is to increase cooperation among local units of government. State law includes many provisions through which neighboring communities may establish intergovernmental agreements and share information and resources, as well as communicate visions and coordinate plans, goals, objectives, policies, and programs. In the surveys and other public input exercises, community awareness, understanding, and access to public processes through public meetings, newspaper notices, and the internet were identified as important components of the intergovernmental cooperation process. Residents want a mutually beneficial balance between the diverse strengths and needs of the City and surrounding communities, and they viewed successful intergovernmental cooperative efforts as a good start toward that goal. Also, Racine residents recognize that building multi-jurisdictional cooperation between government agencies and the private sector can lead to long term benefits ranging from coordinated planning on issues that lead to infrastructure cost savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, strong schools, and sustainable economy.

- **Implementation Strategies:** The implementation strategies of the comprehensive plan bring all of the elements together, with an emphasis on making the various goals, objectives, policies, and programs of these elements consistent with zoning ordinances, official mapping, and other regulations. Successful implementation strategies requires the support of elected officials, County and local government staff, citizens, and other stakeholders in making decisions that are consistent with the comprehensive plan. While the concept of implementation was not directly addressed in the surveys and other analyses, there was an indication that residents would like to see the City prioritize and take a more direct approach to the following:
 - preserving natural, water, and cultural resources;
 - promoting sustainable energy sources;
 - cooperating across boundary lines with neighboring jurisdictions and other stakeholders;
 - encouraging more housing choices for people of all ages, income levels, and special needs; and
 - linking land use, economic, and transportation decisions.

CITY OF RACINE PLANNING GOALS

The comprehensive planning goals for the City of Racine were developed based upon a consideration of public input; goals developed as part of the Racine County multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan; inventory data; projections; the planning issues and opportunities described above; and the 14 State Smart Growth goals defined in the *Wisconsin Statutes*. The recommended goals are the basis for the comprehensive plan. Since many of the City goals are inter-related, the goals may be addressed in more than one of the plan elements presented in subsequent chapters of this report..

Furthermore, a series of more specific objectives, along with related policies and programs, are provided within the element chapters of the comprehensive plan. Although not defined in the Smart Growth *Wisconsin Statutes*, the Wisconsin Department of Administration has provided the following definitions of the terms “goals,” “objectives,” “policies,” and “programs”:

Goals: Broad and general expressions of a community’s aspirations, towards which planned effort is directed. Goals tend to be ends rather than means.

Objectives: More specific targets, derived from goals and necessary to achieve those goals. While still general in nature, objectives are more precise, concrete, and measurable than goals.

Policies: Rules or courses of action necessary to achieve the goals and objectives they are derived from. They are more precise and measurable.

Programs: A system of projects or services necessary to achieve plan goals, objectives, and policies.

City of Racine Comprehensive Plan Goals

- Guide future growth in a manner that preserves and enhances the quality of life and character of the City.
- Encourage efficient and sustainable growth that provides for the protection of natural systems and preserves the stability and diversity of the City's neighborhoods.
- Maintain and develop a land use pattern that strengthens the character and livability of the City's downtown core, commercial and industrial areas, and neighborhoods.
- Encourage development patterns that promote efficient and sustainable use of land, that can be readily linked by transportation systems, and that utilize existing public utilities and services.
- Encourage activities that support the agricultural economy of other communities in Racine County.
- Maintain the environmental assets of the City through the protection and preservation of valuable natural features including rivers, Lake Michigan, open spaces, and floodplains.
- Preserve open space to enhance the total quality of the environment, maximize essential natural resource availability, give form and structure to urban development, and provide opportunities for a full range of outdoor recreational activities.
- Protect and enhance cultural structures and activities and historic sites and districts.
- Provide opportunities for an adequate housing supply that will meet the needs of all residents and result in a broad range of choice among housing designs, sizes, types, and costs, recognizing changing trends in age-group composition, income, and household types.
- Promote the coordination between land use and housing development that supports a range of transportation choices.
- Provide a multi-modal transportation system that provides appropriate types of transportation needed by all residents of the County at an adequate level of service, provides choices among transportation modes, and provides inter-modal connectivity.
- Provide adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of land for development and redevelopment to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.
- Maintain and develop public services and community facilities that promote health, safety, and enhanced quality of life for all residents of the City.
- Promote the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities.
- Promote redevelopment and infill in areas with existing infrastructure and services, enhancing existing residential, commercial, and industrial areas.
- Review, revise, or create the regulatory ordinances necessary to ensure consistency with the comprehensive plan and implementation of the objectives, including zoning ordinances, land division ordinances, and official mapping ordinances.

- Encourage a public participation process that provides equity and fairness to property owners and other stakeholders, balanced with responsible land use.
- Reevaluate the comprehensive plan regularly (at least once every ten years) to ensure that it continues to reflect current County and community objectives.
- Encourage intercommunity planning efforts to make effective use of resources and to resolve conflicts.

CONCLUSION

The issues and opportunities element as presented in this chapter provides an overall framework for the comprehensive plan. The vision statement, issues and opportunities, and goals reflect an inclusive public participation process and technical findings. Each of the subsequent elements in the comprehensive plan will include the aforementioned goals as they relate to the planning topic. In addition, each element will contain a more specific set of objectives, policies, and programs through the year 2035. As required by the State of Wisconsin Smart Growth Comprehensive Planning Law, the City goals address the following 14 State Smart Growth comprehensive planning goals.

1. Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures.
2. Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
3. Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces, and groundwater resources.
4. Protection of economically productive areas including farmlands and forests.
5. Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.
6. Preservation of cultural, historic, and archaeological sites.
7. Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
8. Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.

9. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
10. Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
11. Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional, and local levels.
12. Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
13. Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
14. Providing an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.