



WISCONSIN COUNTIES



Wisconsin's
Regional Planning
Commissions

Celebrate

60 Years of Service



R E G I O N A L
PLANNING
S I X T Y Y E A R S A N D
S T I L L G O I N G S T R O N G

—Dennis Lawrence, AICP, Executive Director, North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

For nearly 60 years, Wisconsin's Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) have been helping local governments in numerous ways throughout the state. Next year marks the 60th Anniversary of regional planning in Wisconsin. In 1959, ten counties in northwest Wisconsin petitioned the governor to create the state's first RPC. The following year, another RPC formed to serve southeast Wisconsin and by 1973 the ninth and final RPC was created. Nearly every county in Wisconsin is now part of an RPC.

Under Wisconsin law, regional planning commissions have the following functions:

1. Conduct research studies; collect and analyze data; prepare maps; and conduct necessary studies.
2. Make and adopt plans for the physical, social, and economic development of the region.
3. Publish and advertise their purposes, objectives and findings, and distribute reports thereon.
4. Provide advisory services on planning issues to the local governmental units within the region.

Today, Wisconsin's RPCs are a vital resource with the technical skills and administrative infrastructure to help local communities and counties address challenges that more and more frequently spill over established boundaries.



When originally established, RPCs introduced planning into the rural areas and coordinated planning across boundaries in the urban areas. Many of the initial programs and funding came from the federal government; however, over the decades, the demands on RPCs have changed, as have their funding structures. Today, Wisconsin's RPCs are a vital resource with the technical skills and administrative infrastructure to help local communities and counties address challenges that more and more frequently spill over established boundaries. The broad range of services provided by each RPC are the result of the different needs and levels of financial support provided by each RPC's member units of government. RPCs continue as one of the longest lived and best examples of intergovernmental cooperation within the state.

DIVERSITY OF SERVICES

Although similar, each RPC fills a unique role in its respective region. For instance, the Northwest RPC manages revolving loan funds and multiple business incubators, while the Southeastern Wisconsin RPC is heavily involved in regional land use and transportation planning, and the Bay-Lake RPC has worked on coastal beach improvement efforts. The West Central Wisconsin RPC has been involved in placemaking, which identifies and promotes public spaces, helping make communities more vibrant. The Mississippi River RPC has been heavily involved in flood recovery efforts over the years, while the Southwestern Wisconsin RPC has prepared numerous farmland preservation plans to protect agriculture lands. East Central Wisconsin RPC has recently coordinated a regional approach to diversifying its manufacturing

base and improving collaboration amongst economic development entities called Initiative 41. The Capital Area RPC, the only single county RPC, focuses much of its efforts on water quality issues, and the North Central Wisconsin RPC has prepared numerous community and county-level comprehensive plans throughout its region to help improve prosperity and quality of life. The one thing in common is the concept of regionalism or said another way – working cooperatively.

RPC PARTNERSHIPS

Regional planning develops and promotes partnerships among many entities. RPCs also serve an important role implementing state and federal plans in cooperation with local units of government. All nine RPCs are partners of the Wisconsin State Data Center, where they provide various data, including Census data, to local governments and the public. Seven of the RPCs are designated as Economic Development Districts by the federal government for purposes of multi-county economic planning to increase jobs in their regions. Four RPCs have been recognized by the U.S. Department of Transportation as Metropolitan Planning Organizations to carry out a comprehensive transportation planning process in several of the state's urban areas. In addition, two RPCs have been designated by the state as water quality planning agencies.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Each RPC is funded differently, but all receive some funds through a statutorily authorized membership charged directly to their member counties. RPCs

continues



RPCs often utilize these local funds to match with various state and federal grants, thus maximizing available planning funds for each region. Leveraging local funds to obtain state and federal funds, RPCs are able to create a positive return on investment.

S I X T Y Y E A R S
C O N T I N U E D

often utilize these local funds to match with various state and federal grants, thus maximizing available planning funds for each region. Leveraging local funds to obtain state and federal funds, RPCs are able to create a positive return on investment. Other RPC funding comes from continuing grants and local agreements.

The next sixty years will bring challenges, including workforce shortages, changing demographics, autonomous vehicles, and maybe even some things we do not know about today, but one thing is for sure, Wisconsin’s regional planning commissions will still be helping communities. For more information about Wisconsin’s RPCs, visit AWRPC.org.

BAY-LAKE
A S S I S T I N G C O U N T I E S
W I T H M A N A G I N G
I N V A S I V E S P E C I E S



—Angela Kowalzek-Adrians, Natural Resource Planner, Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission

Invasive species are defined in Wisconsin State Statute as, “nonindigenous species whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.” Invasive species can be aquatic or terrestrial weeds, insect pests, nuisance animals, or disease-causing organisms. They can occur in all types of habitats, and affect both urban and rural areas throughout the state.

The negative consequences of invasive species are far-reaching, costing Wisconsin millions of dollars in damages every year. Compounding the problem is that invasive species spread at astonishing rates. In addition to the budgetary impact from management of these harmful invaders, invasive species can negatively affect property values, agricultural productivity, tourism, outdoor recreation, public utility operations, native fisheries, and the overall

health of an ecosystem. The most widely referenced paper (*Pimental et al. 2005*) on the economic impact of invasive species reports that there is more than \$120 billion in damages every year in the United States. And the environmental and socioeconomic costs resulting from invasive species infestations will continue to rise with new introductions.

Because of this toll, invasive species management has become a priority for government over recent decades. And the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (Bay-Lake RPC) is also engaged in work to control invasive species populations. Efforts began in 2015 with the receipt of nearly \$1 million in grant funding from the EPA under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) to manage invasive Phragmites in the shoreland areas of Brown County.



Phragmites in the county had become so dense in areas that the shoreland was merely a tall, thick wall of the invasive reed grass. Over a 3-year period, more than 2,200 acres of invasive Phragmites was managed in Brown County, which included chemically treating 1,488 acres and mowing 742 acres. More importantly, the effort has helped communities to see their shorelines and visualize new opportunities in terms of outdoor recreation, tourism, and property values. The Bay-Lake RPC's collaborative efforts took an unmanageable problem and turned it into an initiative local governments are fully equipped to manage on their own going forward.

The villages of Allouez and Bellevue are a case study of the successful outcomes from this project. Along the East River corridor in these villages, over \$23,000 was spent in 2016 and 2017 to manage 78 acres of Phragmites. The results were astounding and in an effort to ensure the maintenance of their improved river corridor, the two villages conducted follow-up Phragmites treatments in 2018. Working jointly, with coordination from the Bay-Lake RPC, the villages were able to complete the maintenance at a cost of just \$2,000 each.

With the success realized in Brown County, the Bay-Lake RPC reached out to another county struggling to gain control of invasive species management. Last year, Bay-Lake RPC was fortunate to be awarded another GLRI grant to manage invasive species. With this grant, efforts are now underway to address Phragmites, Japanese knotweed, and wild parsnip in Kewaunee County.

Over the next two years, the Bay-Lake RPC will work with the Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation Department to treat up to 1,000 acres of invasive species, develop a countywide invasive species management plan, and establish a sustainable invasive species management program.

Sustained management is critical to winning the battle against invasive species. Since invasive species do not follow jurisdictional boundaries, and economies of scale will help reduce costs when hiring treatment contractors, intergovernmental cooperation is a wise approach in this battle. Regional planning commissions in Wisconsin have been encouraging and aiding in intergovernmental cooperation since the early 1960s. RPCs may well serve as a key resource in municipal and county invasive species management efforts in the future.

Left: The East River corridor in Bellevue along the East River Trail before it was treated; Right: After the same section of land was treated (Photographs by Bay-Lake RPC).





CAPITOL AREA

A G R E A T E R M A D I S O N V I S I O N

—Steve Steinhoff, Deputy Director, Capital Area Regional Planning Commission

Like each of the nine regional planning commissions (RPCs) in Wisconsin, the Capital Area RPC is charged under state statute with the responsibility to develop a regional master, or comprehensive plan. Wisconsin statutes state, “The regional planning commission shall have the function and duty of making and adopting a master plan for the physical development of the region.” (Wis. Stat. 66.0309(9))

This charge is central to the Capital Area RPC’s mission, “to facilitate the creation of a shared vision and plan with communities.” To carry out this mission, the Capital Area RPC initiated a project in late 2015 to develop *A Greater Madison Vision*.

The Greater Madison area— Dane County and surrounding communities— can expect 150,000 more people in the next two to three decades. That is the equivalent of two Camp Randall Stadiums of people. Where and how this growth happens makes a difference to the health of the region.

A Greater Madison Vision kicked off three years ago by commissioning a “values study”— a scientific survey of what people in the region feel are the most important regional challenges, and how they relate to underlying values. The initiative developed a steering committee with the intention of analyzing trends, researching best practices, and preparing the public participation plan.

The 46-member steering committee of leaders from government, business, and non-profits guides the work of *A Greater Madison Vision*. They adopted the mission to “develop a shared vision and plan to guide public and private decisions about how the region grows, to foster exceptional quality of life, economic opportunities, and a healthy environment for all.”

In 2017, staff and steering committee members engaged stakeholders and the public through presentations, focus groups, workshops, and events. Focus groups and workshops explored the “driving forces” of future change to consider which forces will be most likely and impactful, and how to best prepare and respond to them.

This year steering committee members used data and stakeholder input to prepare four alternative possible futures. Each possible future is a “what if” scenario: what if communities in the region focused their resources on one major area of change: population growth and change, technology, environment, or political.

For example, in the Community Future, the region focuses on the challenge of growing, changing populations. In the other scenarios, the region focuses on challenges of rapid technology change, declining state and federal resources, and environmental challenges. Each scenario presents four actions, a map showing where growth occurs, and estimated impacts, such as change in household energy and transportation



costs, cost of new infrastructure, acres of agricultural land developed, and tons of greenhouse gas emission per household.

A Greater Madison Vision gathered public input about these scenarios through an online survey that ran from September 12 to November 12. The initiative generated more than 9,000 completed surveys, which captured broad public input while building awareness of the initiative.

Steering committee members will use survey results in 2019 to prepare a vision and plan for regional development. The Capital Area RPC will

work with local communities and other regional agencies to integrate vision goals and strategies into comprehensive and regional plan updates. Steering committee members will consider how they want to promote the regional strategies and actions of the plan. The RPC will track and report on progress towards achievement of goals through measurable performance metrics.

The intent is that *A Greater Madison Vision* continues as a living plan that serves as a guiding force for positive change and a stronger region. For more information, visit greatermadisonvision.com or capitalarearpc.org.

EAST CENTRAL

DRIVING HEALTH : 10 YEARS PLANNING FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION



—Kim Biedermann, Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Planner, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) understands the impact that planning has on public health. For over a decade, ECWRPC has collaborated with health partners and local coalitions on transportation projects to improve opportunities for health where people live, work, and play.

The commission's 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2008, identified shared goals for increasing safety and multimodal transportation opportunities, including walking, biking, and public transit. Community partnerships were initially established through ECWRPC's creation of the first regional Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in 2009. As the SRTS program grew, so did the interest and demand by local municipalities to

create community-wide and countywide bicycle and pedestrian plans.

In 2012, ECWRPC and community partners developed a bicycle and pedestrian plan to connect the 30 urbanized communities in Calumet, Outagamie, and Winnebago Counties. The resulting 2014 Appleton (Fox Cities) Transportation Management Area and Oshkosh Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan serves as a model for health in planning partnerships. This plan underlined ECWRPC's commitment to health and is guided by a steering committee of cross-sector community partners (including county representatives) who set both a five-year and an annual action plan. Implementation of the plan led to two

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Introducing public health professionals into the transportation corridor planning process for the first time, ECWRPC brought together local stakeholders to study how transportation affects the health and safety of roadway users.

D R I V I N G H E A L T H C O N T I N U E D

recent successes: the adoption of Complete Streets policies and the creation of regional wayfinding guidelines.

In 2016, Smart Growth America, through a technical assistance award, provided the region's communities with national-level expertise on the development of Complete Streets policies. In 2018, ECWRPC adopted its own regional Complete Streets Policy and a separate policy for the Appleton (Fox Cities) and Oshkosh MPOs. In conjunction with MPO transportation project review and development procedures, these policies support the region's communities in better designing and maintaining their roadways for all users, including motorists, freight operators, bicyclists, transit riders, and pedestrians.

In 2017, ECWRPC hired a consultant to work with partner organizations and local communities to create a bicycle and pedestrian wayfinding signage design guidebook. The intent of the guidebook is to create a framework for cohesive and consistent signage for all bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the eight-county East Central region to facilitate low-stress navigational support for both recreational and active transportation users. In October 2017, ECWRPC formally adopted the *East Central Trail Wayfinding Guidebook*. Since the guidebook's adoption, the cities of Neenah and Menasha and the Village of Fox Crossing have used this guidance to create wayfinding signage along the newly established Loop the Little Lake route that traverses through these three Winnebago County communities.

ECWRPC has leveraged resources to access national level tools to increase the effectiveness of incorporating health into planning. In 2015, ECWRPC

was selected to beta test the Federal Highway Administration's *Framework for Integrating Health into Transportation Corridor Planning* on the College Avenue Corridor Study. This study looked at connecting Outagamie County's Appleton International Airport to downtown Appleton. Introducing public health professionals into the transportation corridor planning process for the first time, ECWRPC brought together local stakeholders to study how transportation affects the health and safety of roadway users.

That same year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Transportation, with support from the American Public Health Association, developed the *Transportation and Health Tool*. This tool provides transportation professionals with access to data and strategies to improve public health through transportation planning and policy. When the tool was released, ECWRPC introduced it as another way to strengthen the bond between sectors to improve health outcomes in the region.

Creating a region where safe and active transportation is a common thread across counties and municipalities can only be accomplished through strong collaboration. These types of meaningful and measurable accomplishments by the ECWRPC will have far reaching impacts of the health of its counties' residents and lessen the costly burdens of health care.

Parts of this article were adapted from the American Public Health Association Story from the Field – *Planning with a Public Health Focus: Connecting the Dots in the East Central Region of Wisconsin*. To read the full article, visit apha.org/topics-and-issues/transportation.



MISSISSIPPI RIVER

REGIONAL BENEFITS OF BEING DESIGNATED AN EDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

—Greg Flogstad, Director, Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission

Since 1976, Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau and Vernon Counties have cooperated annually through commissioner appointments to develop and update the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission's (MRRPC) *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*. This report documents the region's history, current conditions, economic challenges, and actions to improve the region's environment, economy, and quality of life.

By preparing the development of this strategy, the nine-county region maintains its Economic Development District (EDD) designation conferred upon it by the U.S. Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration (EDA). This district designation qualifies the region's counties, communities, institutions, and businesses to be eligible for EDA assistance under its public works and economic development facilities program, technical (research) assistance programs, loan programs, and planning programs. Through EDA's service delivery program, millions of dollars in federal EDA grants have funded industrial parks, economic research studies, public facility projects, and business loans.

Some of the public works and economic development facilities funded in the region include:

- La Crosse convention center - \$1,500,000
- La Crosse convention center parking ramp, \$1,000,000
- Industrial park in the City of Tomah, \$818,961
- Levee, bridge, floodwall, and drainage improvements to protect the CBD of the City of Black River Falls from flooding, \$1,800,000
- New water tower and infrastructure to industrial park in the City of Whitehall, \$580,000
- Water, sewer, street, curb, and gutter to serve 90-acre industrial park in Mondovi, \$527,800
- Water, sewer, and street infrastructure to develop industrial park in the City of Sparta, \$2,500,000
- Water, sewer, street, water tower, and spur line to develop business park in the Village of West Salem, \$700,000
- Street, water, sewer, wastewater treatment plant, and municipal well project to serve Organic Valley in the Village of La Farge, \$990,000
- Relocation and construction of new CBD with community-commerce center, mercantile center and funding for commercial district coordinator in Village of Gays Mills, \$4,310,000
- Business incubator in City of Viroqua, \$2,000,000
- Stormwater lift station and street improvements to mitigate flooding and disruption of commerce in the City of La Crosse, \$3,600,000

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E C O N O M I C D E V E L O P M E N T
C O N T I N U E D

Some of the technical assistance/research grants funded include:

- A building engineering study to assist with the G Heileman-Stroh Brewery project in the City of La Crosse, \$24,000
- A feasibility study to determine scope, need and approach to grow health education, technology and research in the La Crosse area that led to the Allied Health Center on UW–La Crosse campus, \$24,000
- Feasibility study to determine the scope, and need to develop a Technology Business Development Center at Western Technical College, \$24,000
- Feasibility study on the use of wood as an alternative to fossil fuels for home heat in the Kickapoo Valley, \$25,000
- Feasibility study for a fabrication lab, second stage food processing, packaging and distribution operation and a training facility for people needing workforce reentry assistance in the Coulee Region Business Center, \$45,000

EDA revolving loan funds also provide economic development benefits. The MRRPC administers four EDA funded revolving loan funds that have made 81 business loans totaling over \$4.8 million that have created or retained over 700 jobs and leveraged over \$46 million in bank and equity financing. These funds helped establish or retain grocery stores, restaurants, manufacturers, cafes, hardware stores, motels, marinas, craft breweries, printers, auto repair shops, beauty salons, and floral shops that are the fabric of the region’s communities.

No matter what the level of involvement of MRRPC, these projects would not have occurred at the pace or the level they did if not for the regional EDD designation, which started with nine county boards and their willingness to participate with MRRPC and the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*. Both past and present county boards of supervisors are to be commended for this as they were critical partners in bringing these projects to fruition.

NORTH CENTRAL

A D D R E S S I N G
H O U S I N G N E E D S

–Dennis Lawrence, AICP, Executive Director, North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission



Over the last few years, housing has become a major planning issue throughout the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission’s (NCWRPC) ten-county region. It was first identified during the last update of the Regional Comprehensive Plan, now called the Regional Livability Plan (RLP). That effort examined housing, along with land use, transportation, and economic development.

The RLP identified two major components related to housing. The first was the lack of housing options in the region. In 2010, single family homes accounted for over 82% of the region’s housing stock, compared to 77.5% statewide. Only 10.2% of the housing units in the region were multifamily units, while multifamily units account for 18.6% of the housing units statewide. The second was affordability, an increase in home values and rent, combined with a decrease in median



The primary housing issue identified during that process was the lack of affordable workforce housing. Without affordable workforce housing, retaining and recruiting employees becomes a challenge.

household incomes between 2000 and 2010, has increased the percentage of people spending more than 30% of their income on housing. In 2010, 29.8% of owners and 45.8% of renters spent greater than 30% of their income on housing in the region. The greater portion of income spent on housing decreases the amount of disposable income that can be spent in the community to support local businesses.

Housing was also identified as an issue during the recent update of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). As a federally designated Economic Development District, the NCWRPC prepares a CEDS, which is a strategy-driven plan for economic development. The primary housing issue identified during that process was the lack of affordable workforce housing. Without affordable workforce housing, retaining and recruiting employees becomes a challenge.

Last year Juneau County requested assistance to examine housing, especially as it related to workforce housing. Local leaders identified housing as a critical issue for economic development and growth, while employers were seeing housing as a way to recruit employees. Housing was also identified as a major component of overall community quality of life. Together with the Juneau County Economic Development Corporation, business, and community leaders, the NCWRPC went to work.

Building off the previous RLP and CEDS efforts, the Juneau County Housing Study was prepared. The study found supply and affordability as the two major areas of concern. In 2015, there were a total of

14,748 housing units with an overall median value of \$116,800 in the county. Housing options are limited since single family housing is the dominant housing type available. Meanwhile, 30.1% of owner-occupied households and 42.7% of renters are spending more than 30% of total income toward housing—higher than regional and state averages. In addition, nearly 50% of the housing stock was built before 1980, which creates issues related to upkeep and maintenance. The lack of local builders was another concern identified. Many builders disappeared during the Great Recession, leaving a void to build the housing needed today. The study also provides several recommendations, including: utilizing the “affordable housing extension” for TIF; promoting awareness of various housing programs, especially for first time buyers; and, updating various local regulations to allow for a greater mix and variety of housing types.

As part of this effort, working with many of the area’s major employers, an employee survey was conducted to quantify housing concerns and obtain current market demands. That information was recently presented and will be useful for both communities and developers to help address the county’s housing needs.

More housing studies will likely be undertaken in other counties to address this issue. The NCWRPC provides planning assistance throughout the region on many topics, from economic development to land use to transportation. All of the plans referenced can be found on the NCWRPC’s website at ncwrpc.org.



NORTHWEST

ENTERPRISE CENTER INCUBATION NETWORK

—Sheldon Johnson, Executive Director, Northwest Regional Planning Commission

January 2, 2019 will mark the 60th anniversary of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC). As the first Regional Planning Commission (RPC) created in Wisconsin, NWRPC has assisted the region in developing community-based projects and plans, secured funding resources to advance community and economic development projects, and developed partnerships with other organizations to advance growth and prosperity. As an advocate for northwest Wisconsin, NWRPC serves as a leader, a coordinator, and an advisor. This is accomplished through implementation of the commissions core functions of planning, community development, and economic development. One of the unique economic development programs developed by the NWRPC has been the regionally-based enterprise center incubation network.

Conceptualized in the early 1990s as a regional strategy, NWRPC created the Northwest Enterprise Center Incubation Network. The mission of the network was to encourage entrepreneurship and to provide the critical resources required to establish technology-based businesses in a rural setting, as well as address the need to increase per-capita personal income and decrease unemployment within the area.

The first enterprise center facility was acquired in 1995 and was a 50-year-old manufacturing

facility. Much was learned from that early start and in 1998, the construction of a brand new 20,000 sq. ft. facility was completed. Since the program's inception, an additional ten facilities totaling 197,500 sq. ft. have been constructed. This space is spread out across five counties in the region. It is important to note that while NWRPC was leading its own enterprise center network system, NWRPC shared information and collaborated with other community-based incubators in the region. The impact of NWRPC's enterprise center network on the region's economy has been significant.

Nearly \$9.5 million in local and federal funds has been invested in the acquisition and construction of the enterprise center network facilities. NWRPC could not have advanced this initiative without key partnerships with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, and other state and federal agencies. The result of this investment has led to the creation of new jobs and private sector investment from companies transitioning from the enterprise center network to their own manufacturing buildings.

Direct economic impact of NWRPC's Northwest Enterprise Center Incubation Network (as of August 2017) has resulted in 44 businesses being assisted, creation of 403 jobs, nearly \$60 million in annual revenue, nearly \$18 million in



annual payroll, and private investment topping \$67 million. This investment has resulted in a positive return of federal tax dollars used to construct the enterprise center network. Annual estimated payroll income tax generated to the federal government is \$2.7 million and nearly \$273,000 paid in Wisconsin property taxes.

At its inception, development of this rural-based enterprise center network was considered a

risky endeavor due to the rural setting, unknown operational success, and potential financial impact due to failure. The program has proven to be extremely successful and other organizations from Wisconsin and across the country have used this model of success to pursue their own enterprise center facilities.



SOUTHEASTERN

VISION 2050: A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

—Michael G. Hahn, P.E., P.H., Executive Director, Southeastern Regional Planning Commission

In 2016, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) completed VISION 2050, a new long-range plan for land use and transportation in southeastern Wisconsin. Developed over three years, VISION 2050 establishes an long-range vision for how the seven-county region can build on its existing strengths, increase the quality of life for residents, help attract new talent, and encourage economic growth in the region.

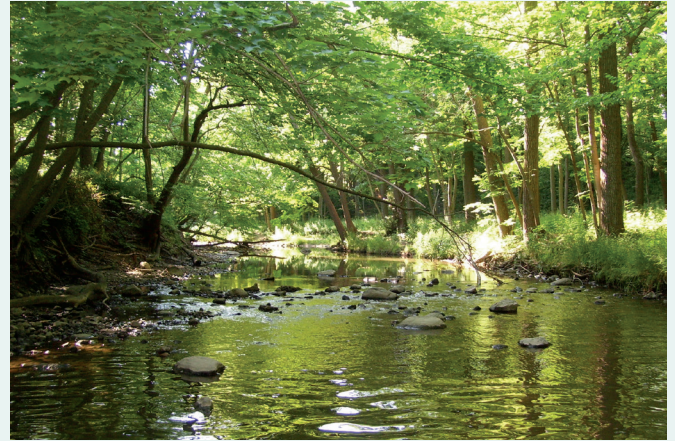
For the past several decades, the region has been able to grow its labor force from within the existing population. But with coming demographic changes, the region will face a shortage of working age residents. The region will need to attract tens of thousands of new residents for the first time since the 1950s. The entire nation faces this same challenge and fierce competition may be expected among the nation’s metropolitan areas. This will be a significant challenge for southeastern Wisconsin when compared to peer metro areas across the nation because over the last 15 years the region has had slower population and

job growth; significant declines in transit service; and higher racial disparities in education, income, and poverty.

In creating VISION 2050, SEWRPC considered existing and historical land use and transportation system development and performance, prepared forecasts of future regional growth, and analyzed and evaluated a wide range of potential land use and transportation options. Broad public input was also incorporated from tens of thousands of residents through an extensive public information and outreach program. This was conducted throughout the three-year plan development period through regional advisory committees, task forces, workshops, travel and telephone surveys, and interactive web tools.

The implementation of VISION 2050 will bring significant new benefits to the region by improving competitiveness with other metro areas, increasing accessibility to jobs, and reducing resident and local government costs for infrastructure and services.

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Left: VISION 2050 recommends a more than doubling of transit service by 2050, including new rapid transit and commuter rail lines, and significantly expanded local bus, express bus, commuter bus, and shared-ride taxi services (Photo Credit: Milwaukee County Transit System). Right: VISION 2050 recommends preserving environmental corridors, like this one in southern Milwaukee County, which contain the best remaining features of the Region’s natural resource base (Photo Credit: SEWRPC staff).

Implementing the transit element of the plan will require significant additional funding. Rebuilding the regional street and highway network— particularly the regional freeway system— will require increased funding as compared to the current state budget.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF VISION 2050

- Preserving the region’s primary environmental corridors, which encompass the best remaining features of the region’s natural landscape, and areas in the region with the highest groundwater recharge potential.
- Preserving the most productive farmland in the region.
- Encouraging more compact development, ranging from high-density, transit-oriented development to traditional neighborhoods with homes within walking distance of parks, schools, and businesses.
- Significantly improving and expanding public transit, including adding rapid transit to provide an attractive travel option that supports compact growth, links workers to jobs, and enhances the attractiveness and accessibility of the region.

- Enhancing the region’s bicycle and pedestrian network to improve access to activity centers, neighborhoods, and other destinations.
- Keeping existing major streets in a state of good repair and efficiently using the capacity of existing streets and highways.
- Strategically adding capacity on congested roadways and incorporating “complete streets” roadway design concepts to provide safe and convenient travel for all citizens.

VISION 2050 was adopted in July 2016 prior to knowledge of the extensive Foxconn manufacturing complex that is being constructed in the Village of Mount Pleasant in Racine County. Given the size and significance of this development, VISION 2050 was recently amended to incorporate land use changes to accommodate additional residents and jobs related to the Foxconn campus. In addition, the plan amendment incorporates transportation improvements to serve the Foxconn development area. For more information on VISION 2050, visit vision2050.sewis.org.



WEST CENTRAL

REGIONAL BUSINESS FUND

—Lynn Nelson, Executive Director, West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) regularly assists local governments with coordinating and solving issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries— issues that are too large or complex for any one unit of government to solve alone.

One such instance of regional cooperation is the creation of the Regional Business Fund, Inc. (RBF), a non-profit entity whose purpose is to promote business and economic development in west central Wisconsin. WCWRPC originally created the RBF to administer a regional revolving loan fund, and provides staffing to the nonprofit.

In the early 2000s, the Wisconsin Department of Commerce (DOC) oversaw Community Development

Block Grant (CDBG) funds for the non-entitlement areas of Wisconsin including the CDBG Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program. The RLF program granted federal funds from DOC to rural municipalities and counties for the purpose of providing loans to businesses when traditional financing was not fully available. In 2005, DOC introduced an innovative, voluntary program, the *Regional Non-Profits Initiative*, a collaborative state-local effort designed to regionally consolidate the local municipal and county business revolving loan funds. The initiative was designed to encourage local governments to work regionally, streamline the management of RLFs, and improve local capacity for economic development. The consolidation required the funds to be managed

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Left: Kage Innovation, Osceola, Wisconsin (photo credit: RBF, Inc.). Right: Trend Stone, Town of Washington, Wisconsin (photo credit: RBF, Inc.)



Following two years of discussion and planning, thirty-one community and county RLFs ultimately decided to consolidate their funds of approximately \$5 million in cash and \$11 million in outstanding loans into the Regional Business Fund, Inc.

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C O N T I N U E D

by a regional non-profit organization; and, if done correctly, the federal requirements associated with the funds would be eliminated and all repayments would be retained locally for future business loans.

WCWRPC began discussions with local officials, economic development organizations, and community members regarding this opportunity to consolidate the existing CDBG revolving loan funds in seven counties in west central Wisconsin. Following

two years of discussion and planning, thirty-one community and county RLFs ultimately decided to consolidate their funds of approximately \$5 million in cash and \$11 million in outstanding loans into the Regional Business Fund, Inc. The consolidation was finalized in 2007 and RBF began lending. The WCWRPC region is only one of three in Wisconsin that successfully participated in the DOC program.

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