

Chapter 4 : Utilities and Community Facilities

Introduction

The county owns and operates 23 facilities around the county and provides a variety of direct services, ranging from the county land fill, recycling and compost facilities, to lake weed harvesting, as well as traditional services such as public safety and emergency services.

As Dane County's population continues to grow over the next 20 years, so too will the demand for community services, facilities, and utilities. From new school referenda to proposals for shared police, fire, and EMS services, Dane County communities constantly search for opportunities to meet growing demand in creative and fiscally responsible ways.

Purpose

This element of the plan outlines goals, objectives, and policies to ensure that Dane County residents continue to enjoy high quality community services and facilities, including:

- Sanitary sewer service;
- Water supply;
- Solid waste disposal;

- Recycling facilities;
- Onsite wastewater treatment technology;
- Telecommunication facilities;
- Power plants and transmission lines;
- Cemeteries;
- Health care facilities;
- Child care facilities;
- Police, Fire and Rescue;
- Libraries;
- Schools, and;
- Other community facilities.

Stakeholders

The Transportation, Utilities and Community Facilities workgroup (TUCF) developed the recommendations in this chapter, on a consensus basis. Many stakeholders participated in the planning process, including town officials, county government officials, energy providers, environmental groups, telecommunication experts, regional planning advocates, water source and sanitary sewer experts, and service providers.

Key Issues

Dane County's high quality public services, schools, infrastructure and community facilities have contributed to the county's quality of life and economic success. What can the county, local governments and partners do to maintain a high level of service under the following conditions?

- 80-85% of the energy consumed in Dane County comes from a non-local source.
- Transmission infrastructure is aging and frequently overloaded.
- Elderly populations will soon outnumber residents with school-age children, resulting in greater difficulty in maintaining support for schools.
- Volume of library usage has increased 10-20% per year over the last decade.
- Reliance on technology to treat wastewater creates higher level of risk as proper maintenance and operation is critical to systems functioning properly.
- The primary groundwater quality problems are nitrates and bacteria, pesticides and volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Survey Results

Strong majorities of survey respondents said that the county should pay “more” or “considerably more” attention to providing high quality facilities and services such as: healthcare and childcare (71%); sewer, solid waste and recycling (71%); public utilities (69%), and; rescue, police and fire services (62%). For community facilities and services, the survey revealed considerable differences between demographic groups. Renters expressed a stronger desire for greater availability of community services like childcare and health care than did home owners. This pattern was repeated based on income, gender and age, with the same issue being more important to those of lower income, women, and those in younger age groups. There were no notable demographic differences for utilities.

When asked to select the most important role county government should play in improving utilities and community facilities, respondents selected “strongly promote recycling” (31%), “build cooperative relationships between private industry and government” (17%), and “educate the public on solid waste” (16%) as the most popular choices.

Background and Orientation

Various county departments and entities have plans in place that are updated regularly. For instance, the Dane County Department of Public Works, Highways and Transportation, Dane County Library Services and the Dane County Sheriff’s Office have strategic and long-range plans that are regularly updated. Local town, village and city government typically provide facilities and services such as sewer service, garbage collection, recycling programs, and street maintenance. Private organizations, both for profit and non-profit, provide most healthcare and childcare facilities (although sometimes supplemented by local, state and federal funding). In most cases, Dane County’s role in these services is to provide funding, technical support and regulation. Examples include library support, regulating private waste water treatment systems and financial support for childcare through the county Department of Human Services.

Goals, Objectives, Policies and Programs

Overall Utilities and Community Facilities

Goals

1. *Provide Dane County residents with adequate and efficient public utility services, such as water, sewer, solid waste, recycling, telecommunications, natural gas, and electrical generation and transmission, in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.*
2. *Ensure availability of access to quality, affordable, efficient community services and facilities such as healthcare, childcare, and recreation to maintain the health, safety, and well being of Dane County residents.*
3. *Provide infrastructure, utilities and community facilities and services to meet existing and planned community needs.*

Supporting Objectives

- A. Locate future development where a full range of urban services can be efficiently provided while protecting environmental corridors, and minimizing conversion of agricultural land.
- B. Cooperate with other governmental units to avoid duplication of services and promote the development of shared facilities, services, and equipment.
- C. Create consolidated and/or contiguous “utility corridors” (electric, natural gas, phone, cable, etc.) to service new development.
- D. Work to make sure developers pay as much of the cost for new public infrastructure resulting from development as possible.
- E. Adopt “green” building practices for county facilities.
- F. Locate new public county facilities where accessible to transit services.
- G. Encourage all Dane County communities to examine the public service costs of developments and promote those developments that

have a desirable impact on existing local and regional facilities.

- H. Sustain and implement further coordination and cooperation between agencies and disciplines.
- I. Support recommendations of the Facility Planning Task Force for the Badger Prairie Health Care Center (2003).

Utilities

Energy and Transmission

Goals

1. *Promote the adequate provision of affordable, efficient, reliable and environmentally sound energy to meet the current and future energy needs of Dane County residents and businesses.*
2. *Promote the adequate provision of affordable, efficient, reliable, environmentally sound, and aesthetically unobtrusive telecommunications facilities to meet the current and future needs of Dane County residents and businesses.*

Supporting Objectives

- A. Encourage adoption of green energy policies.
- B. Explore the establishment of a public utility company for electric power / transmission and telecommunications.
- C. Establish working relationships with private sector electrical power generation and transmission utility companies and other local units of government to monitor energy generation and transmission issues, and study/promote new technologies.
- D. Incorporate energy conservation methods and renewable energy alternatives as part of a strategy to meet Dane County's future energy needs.
- E. Develop ways to reduce dependency on energy sources outside Dane County while also promoting sound conservation practices.
- F. Reduce pollution from coal and other polluting energy sources.

Policies and Programs

1. Develop and promote appropriate applications of renewable energy and support utilization of onsite distributed energy generation (e.g., solar, wind, geo-thermal, biomass, solid waste).
 - A. Support initiatives and industries that pursue production of renewable energy as well as associated technologies.
 - B. Encourage the use of bio-diesels using crops and other products for power generation.
2. Sponsor educational programs on energy conservation.
3. Develop procedures and standards to ensure that any future siting decisions for energy generation, transmission, and distribution facilities will be evaluated to ensure consistency with community and regional development objectives, and the overall protection of public health, safety and the environment.



4. Develop guidelines and codes for energy efficient site planning and building methods that promote and take advantage of conservation opportunities.
 5. Support programs to increase energy efficiency and reduce life-cycle costs of public and institutional construction projects.
 6. Recognize that energy generation, including alternate forms of energy, is an important economic development activity.
 7. Recommend that the siting of “merchant” plants be re-regulated.
 8. Require multiple, redundant transmission lines to bring power into the county (to serve as back-up).
 9. Require additional power generation facilities to be sited close to demand to reduce transmission lines and excess energy loss.
 10. Encourage incentives for conservation such as tax credits for commercial use during non-peak hours.
- B. Wastewater facilities planning and improvements should be conducted in the context of comprehensive area wide and watershed plans for pollution control and resource protection.
 - C. Review proposed expansion of sanitary sewer service in the context of local plans, projected population growth and demand, and water quality considerations.
 - D. Support the continued monitoring and inspection of privately owned onsite wastewater treatment systems by Public Health of Madison and Dane County (PHMDC).
 - E. Limit public sewer service to those areas designated as urban service or limited service areas.
 - F. Explore possibilities of urban / subdivision growth using onsite wastewater treatment in conjunction with municipal water use and fire.
 - G. Investigate processes to infiltrate effluent water back into the aquifer to maintain or increase water level.

Sanitary Sewer and Private Wastewater Facilities

Goal

1. *Plan for efficient use of sanitary sewer service facilities and infrastructure.*

Supporting Objectives

- A. Prevent and control pollution of surface and subsurface waters by regulating the location, construction, installation, alteration, design, and use of private sewage systems.

Policies and Programs

1. Ensure long-term viability of onsite sewerage disposal systems through continued support of the Dane County private sewerage system ordinance.
2. Sponsor cooperative efforts for municipalities and agencies to work closely with one another to jointly plan the extension of infrastructure, including onsite sewerage disposal systems, and possible decentralized sewer systems (small community collection and treatment systems) so that such services complement, rather than conflict with one another.



3. Promote use and development of new technologies for private septic systems, as compatible with the other goals and objectives of the *Dane County Comprehensive Plan*.
4. Look at county policy to allow limited services if necessary to existing subdivisions. Promote sharing of limited service areas between towns and municipalities if they mutually agree.
5. Encourage the use of recycled waste water (a.k.a. “gray water”) for nonpotable water uses including but not limited to landscaping and refiltration beds.
6. Limit growth in areas if water recharge cannot keep up with water use.
7. Promote recharge of groundwater.



Telecommunications

Policies and Programs

1. Encourage Dane County communities to adopt enforceable guidelines for siting and removing telecommunications facilities.
2. Strengthen consideration of aesthetics in the building of towers (e.g., education, design competition, exhibits).
3. Maximize coordination of telecommunication facility needs with existing structures, buildings, water towers, etc.
4. Adopt ordinance requiring feasibility study of alternatives before allowing new tower construction.
5. Because Internet communication has become necessary in the conduct of commerce and provision of services in the county, promote countywide wireless Internet service (WiFi).
6. Encourage exploration of municipally owned telecommunication facilities to furnish wireless service to all areas of the county.

Water Supply

Goal

1. *Protect, improve, and preserve the quality and quantity of water resources. Water resources include, but are not limited to, lakes, rivers, wetlands, watersheds and groundwater.*

Supporting Objectives

- A. Ensure that public water provide capacity in public utility systems that is sized to accommodate anticipated population growth.
- B. Locate and design urban development in order to minimize potential adverse impacts on the quality of ground and surface waters.
- C. Explore innovative methods of improving water quality and waste disposal by coordinating land use patterns with applications of new technology.

- D. Include evaluation of potential groundwater and hydrological impacts when making land use and siting decisions in Dane County.
- E. Recommend groundwater protection strategies to improve existing management and prevent groundwater pollution.
- F. Promote the cooperative planning for future water needs among neighboring municipalities, including consideration of regional municipal wells.

Policies and Programs

- 1. Continue to implement the policies and recommendations of the *Dane County Water Quality Plan* and the *Dane County Groundwater Protection Plan* (continued water quality monitoring; non-point source pollution mitigation; Priority Watershed Projects, etc.).
- 2. Work cooperatively with Dane County communities to maintain water quality planning functions at the county or regional level, including review and oversight of Urban Service Area extensions, [ensure they are related to the *Dane County Comprehensive Plan* decisions and 5-year phasing maps], and protection of environmental corridors.
- 3. Support the continuation of Phase II (management program) of the recently completed water body classification study to guide protection, restoration, and mitigation efforts on Dane County water bodies.
- 4. Support through incentives, and where established, regulations, the continued implementation of agricultural conservation practices (e.g., contour farming, grassed buffer strips, etc.).
- 5. Convene a summit of local elected officials and staff to analyze future water needs throughout Dane County and determine possible areas for cooperative planning of future water supply infrastructure, conservation and mitigation efforts, etc.
- 6. Maintain a county office that has an adequate level of funding and number of staff to oversee erosion control and stormwater management compliance issues in an expeditious manner.

- 7. Require all county facilities to install rain gardens and other runoff containment and infiltration systems/methods.

Community Facilities

Cemeteries

Goals

- 1. *Determine and accommodate future cemetery growth.*
- 2. *Preserve and maintain existing cemeteries.*

Supporting Objectives

- A. Encourage local governmental units to include future cemetery growth in comprehensive plans and subsequent updates.

Policies and Programs

- 1. Ensure that existing cemeteries, public and private, are protected from development including transportation corridors.
- 2. Research projected internments to plan for future needs.
- 3. Continue to maintain the cemetery at Badger Prairie and plan for projected need at any new facilities.

Childcare Facilities

Goal

- 1. *Encourage availability and access to quality childcare services in Dane County.*

Supporting Objectives

- A. Develop local community linkages related to childcare to create an available information clearinghouse for broad dissemination.
- B. Explore the potential economic impacts of 4-year old kindergarten programs on other childcare facilities and onsite employer provision of childcare.

- C. Study child demographics and project future childcare needs.
- D. Make information on childcare providers available through county website.
- E. Develop a childcare provider informational phone line.

Policies and Programs

- 1. Provide incentives for employers to provide onsite childcare.
- 2. Develop a program similar to the state's in which a sponsored center offers a preference and discount to county employees.
- 3. Improve availability of information about childcare including development of a page on the county website and a childcare provider informational phone line.
- 4. Encourage communities to scrutinize location and site design of new facilities where children can be dropped off and picked up safely from childcare.



- 2. Continue county-funded special transit programs that provide transportation to and from health care facilities.
- 3. Implement recommendations of the Facility Planning Task Force for the Badger Prairie Health Care Center (2003).
 - A. Provide enough capacity and service to cover projected need.
 - B. Ensure that transit service is given great weight in site assessment.

Healthcare Facilities

Goal

- 1. *Make available and accessible high quality health care facilities and services in Dane County.*

Supporting Objectives

- A. Continue to support the implementation of the Public Health of Madison and Dane County (PHMDC) service.
- B. Communicate and coordinate with health care facilities and providers to anticipate and address future needs.

Policies and Programs

- 1. Encourage health care providers to consider locating near multiple modes of transportation when making siting decisions.



Libraries and Schools

Goals

- 1. *Recognize and promote the social, educational and economic benefits provided by libraries.*
- 2. *Recognize and promote the important role schools play in developing an educated, productive citizenry.*



4. Encourage communities and school districts to implement “safe routes to school” programs to improve ability of students to walk and bicycle safely to schools.
5. Encourage local school districts to build/rebuild in existing neighborhoods to accommodate existing infrastructure (transportation, etc.).
6. Encourage communities to inform school districts of planned development areas as well as pending development proposals.
7. Promote energy efficient/green school facilities including retrofitted facilities.
8. Encourage communities to adopt ordinances to require land for schools be set aside for development of a given size or when a critical number of home sites are approved.
9. Continue to support the Dane County Library Service.
10. Support implementation of the recommendations of the Dane County Library Board, including current and future updates to the *Plan for Library Service*.
11. Support implementation of Dane County-related aspects and initiatives recommended by South Central Library System planning efforts.
12. Explore the merger/consolidation of the Dane County Library Service with the South Central Library System or a member library.
13. Encourage municipalities to establish and support their own public libraries.

Supporting Objectives

- A. Recognize and support the planning processes of the Dane County Library Board including the 2004 update to the *Plan for Library Service*.
- B. Recognize and support annual planning efforts of the South Central Library System (SCLS).
- C. Encourage the timely expansion and improvement of public schools.

Policies and Programs

1. Encourage efficient and cost-effective provision of infrastructure, utilities and services to proposed new school sites.
2. Encourage communities and school districts to locate new schools near other community facilities.
3. Encourage local communities and school districts to locate new schools near mass transit corridors/routes.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

(See Chapter 5: Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources)

Police, Fire and Rescue

Goal

1. *Ensure availability of access to quality, affordable, efficient community services such as police, fire protection and rescue, to maintain the health, safety and well being of all in Dane County.*

Supporting Objectives

- A. Recognize and support the strategic planning processes of the Dane County Sheriff's office.

Policies and Programs

1. Work with towns in supporting local fire departments through adequate funding, facilities and equipment.
2. Encourage less populated municipalities (towns, villages and cities) to explore joint service agreements with neighboring municipalities where consolidating and coordinating services will result in better services and/or cost savings.
3. Continue to support cooperative fire service agreements and the operation of volunteer fire departments in some areas of the county.



4. Work with towns and the state to ensure that departments have adequate equipment and training.
5. Work with towns in addressing specific deficiencies in water supply and/or water storage areas that impact fire protection.
6. Provide funding for a study of EMS in Dane County to identify strengths and weaknesses of the current system and methods to maximize the efficient and cost-effective delivery of services over all districts.
7. Continue support of the mutual aid pacts.
8. Educate rapidly growing communities that they should not depend entirely on volunteer fire service.
9. Support ongoing cooperative strategies for county law enforcement.
10. Study the Madison Urban Area with the objective of providing uniform fire, police and rescue service over the whole area.
11. Explore opportunities for service impact fees for new development, including development of model guidelines for town, city and village governments.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Goal

1. *Promote solid waste reduction, resource recovery, recycling and conservation efforts in Dane County.*

Supporting Objectives

- A. Identify and assess new opportunities for developing resource recovery systems as part of county or municipal solid waste management programs.
- B. Develop strategies and other appropriate technical guidelines necessary to implement a more comprehensive county/local solid waste management program.

- C. Promote composting and paper recycling, and explore other uses for biodegradable waste.
- D. Continue to investigate all economically viable uses for methane gas recovered at Dane County landfills.

Policies and Programs

1. Continue to support the *Dane County Solid Waste Management Plan* processes and recommendations including regular updates to the plan.
2. Through the *County Solid Waste Management Plan* process or as a separate process, seek municipal interest in regionalizing recycling facilities and/or drop-off sites in more populated areas.
3. Utilize sustainable practices (those that will lengthen the life of the landfill) including bioreactor and other technologies.
4. Study potential siting issues with respect to integrated solid waste management facilities.
5. Explore new methods of recycling especially for electronics, etc.
6. Partner with the City of Madison to expand the Computer Recycling Round-up.

Stormwater Management

(See Chapter 5: Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources.)