



Credit: Washington County

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Issues and Opportunities Element is to define a desired future for Washington County and each local government participating in the multi-jurisdictional planning process. Section 66.1001 (2) (a) of the *Wisconsin Statutes* requires that the Issues and Opportunities Element include a “statement of the overall objectives, policies, goals, and programs of the governmental unit to guide the future development and redevelopment of the governmental unit over the planning period.” Although not defined in the *Statutes*, the Wisconsin Department of Administration has provided the following definitions of those terms:

Goals: Broad and general expressions of a community’s aspirations, towards which the planning 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 from which they are derived. They are precise and measurable.

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

4.2 WASHINGTON COUNTY VISIONING PROCESS

Visioning Process

The visioning process was undertaken while preparing the first edition of this plan and included developing general goals and objectives with the Washington County Planning, Conservation and Parks Committee (PCPC) of the County Board and the Washington County Comprehensive Plan Technical Advisory Committee. In addition, several committees conducted brainstorming sessions to help develop countywide goals, objectives, and policies, including:



The Multi-Jurisdictional Advisory Committee is one of several committees that conducted brainstorming sessions contributing to the visioning process.

- Washington County Board of Health
- Washington County Health and Aging Committee
- Washington County Highway Committee
- Washington County Transit Committee
- Multi-jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (MJAC)
- Multi-jurisdictional Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element Work Group (ANCR WG)
- Multi-jurisdictional Land Use and Transportation Element Work Group (LUT WG)
- Multi-jurisdictional Housing, Utilities and Community Facilities and Economic Development Element Work Group (HUED WG)

The goals and objectives developed for the first edition of this plan are based on the following:

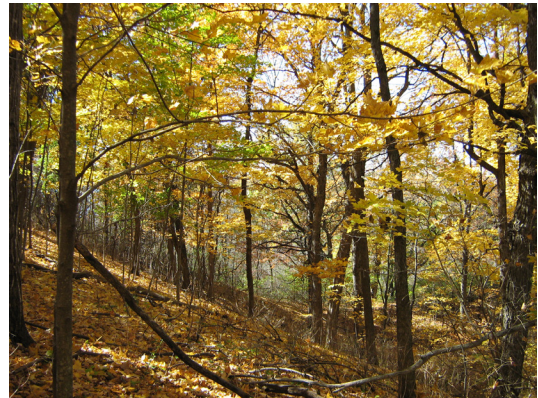
- Results of a countywide comprehensive planning kickoff meeting held in December 2005 that included a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis
- A countywide comprehensive planning public opinion survey conducted in February 2006
- Results of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis conducted in October and November 2005 with the Multi-jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and three element work groups
- Public comments obtained from the Washington County Comprehensive Plan Interactive Visioning Workshop held in July 2006
- Goals and objectives from adopted County plans
- Data collected and mapped during the inventory phase of the plan
- Other public comment obtained via the Washington County comprehensive planning website, e-mails, local government comprehensive planning public informational meetings, and other public meetings
- Consideration of the nine elements of the comprehensive plan

Detailed results of the visioning process are documented in the first edition of this plan.

Issues and Opportunities Identified for the Year 2035 Plan

The following general County planning issues and opportunities were identified during the visioning process undertaken while preparing the first edition of this plan:

- **Changing Age Structure of the Population:** The population projections in Chapter 2 of the first edition of this plan indicate that the population of Washington County in 2035 will be 157,265 residents. This is a projected increase of 39,769 residents, or about 34 percent, over the 2000 population level of 117,496. Age distribution has important implications for planning and the formation of public policies in the areas of education, recreation, health, housing, transportation, and economic development. In 2035, residents 65 years of age and older would comprise about 24 percent of the County population, compared to about 11 percent in 2000. The number of residents in this age group was projected to increase from 13,212 in 2000 to 38,325 in 2035. Changes in the age composition may be expected to have a range of impacts, including, importantly, impacts on the available labor force, as Baby Boomers move into their retirement years. The aging of the population may also be expected to result in a need for housing, health care, transportation, and other services for a more elderly population. Planning efforts for the County and its government agencies must consider these changes.
- **Rural and Small Town Character and Cultural Resources:** The public opinion survey indicated a strong desire among residents to preserve the small town character of Washington County. About 69 percent of respondents thought that preserving their community's small town character should be given a high priority. Strong support was also expressed for preserving historic buildings. About 35 percent of respondents felt that historic preservation should be given a high priority, and 43 percent thought it should have a medium priority. Cultural and historical facilities were indicated as strengths in the SWOT analysis.
- **Environmental Preservation:** Survey respondents gave a high priority to preserving woodlands and open space in the County. Over 76 percent of respondents indicated preserving woodlands should be given a high priority and 77 percent said that maintaining the existing parks and open spaces in the County should also be given a high priority. The Kettle Moraine, natural areas, lakes, wetlands, woodlands, and recreational and cultural opportunities were found to be strengths of the County in the SWOT analysis. Threats to water supply and quality and the loss of primary environmental corridors were identified as threats in the SWOT analysis. A common theme expressed by participants during the countywide visioning workshop was to preserve critical species habitat areas, natural areas, primary environmental corridors, and upland woodlands.
- **Farmland Preservation:** Preserving farmland was a high priority among residents as found from both the SWOT analysis and the survey. Almost 85 percent of survey respondents, either strongly agreed (44 percent) or agreed (39 percent) with the need to preserve farmland in Washington County. Opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis included the potential purchase of development rights (PDR) program and promoting family farms. A lack of farm product infrastructure was identified as a threat in the SWOT analysis. A common theme expressed by participants during the countywide visioning workshop was to preserve prime agricultural lands.



Survey respondents gave a high priority to preserving woodlands and open space in the County.



Preserving farmland is a high priority among residents as found from both the SWOT analysis and the survey.

- **Development Patterns:** With regards to the pattern of new development in the County, slightly more than half (51 percent) of survey respondents would prefer that development be concentrated rather than scattered (37 percent). The SWOT results also indicated that respondents preferred contiguous development rather than scattered development, citing the need to control growth and limit urban sprawl. A common theme expressed by participants during the countywide visioning workshop was to concentrate urban development within the sewer service areas, promote opportunities for redevelopment in areas with existing infrastructure and downtown areas, and to minimize rural development.
- **Public Utilities and Energy:** Rising energy costs will have an impact on all aspects of life in the County. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (82 percent) indicated support for expanding wind power. In addition, survey respondents indicated support for expanding high-speed internet service (72 percent) and expanding public sewer and water service (61 percent).

- **Transportation:** Over 46 percent of survey respondents placed a high priority on expanding bike paths and lanes throughout the County and about 37 percent placed a high priority on expanding bus service to other counties. SWOT results also indicated the need for an expanded countywide trail system, improved transportation choices, and an increasing need for public transportation. Providing a variety of choices in transportation was viewed as important, particularly in light of the changing age structure of the County population and energy concerns. Constructing new streets and highways and widening streets and highways were given a low priority by survey respondents. SWOT results indicated that Washington County provides good road maintenance and has a good north-south transportation corridor, but lacks a major east-west transportation corridor. A common theme expressed by participants during the countywide visioning workshop was to expand countywide hiking and biking lanes.



Over 46 percent of survey respondents placed a high priority on expanding bike paths and lanes throughout the County.

- **Intergovernmental Cooperation:** The ability of adjacent communities and different levels of government to work together is a concern that will affect all future planning and policy efforts. Proximity to Milwaukee was viewed as both a strength and a weakness in the SWOT analysis. The ability to work regionally and across municipal boundaries were important issues expressed in the SWOT analysis including the need for intergovernmental cooperation including the use of boundary agreements, coordinated planning, and providing services to annexed lands. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (76 percent) indicated they would favor the sharing of municipal services.
- **Housing:** Over 60 percent of survey respondents indicated that the County needs more single-family housing that is priced under \$200,000. The median sale price of a home in Washington County was \$202,000 in 2006. The minimum annual household income needed to afford a median priced home was \$74,662 in 2006. In 2005, the average annual wage of those working in Washington County was \$33,398 per year. The average single-income household, consisting of a wage earner that works in the County, was not capable of purchasing a median priced home in the County. Further, the average two-income household, with both wage earners working in the County, was not capable of purchasing a median priced home in the County. The lack of affordable housing was cited as a threat during the countywide SWOT analysis and the SWOT analysis conducted by the MJAC and each of the three element work groups. The ability of those

working in the County to afford housing in the County should be considered when developing housing policies. Housing choices are important as the population ages and as a way to provide an adequate work force for future economic development in the County. A common theme expressed by participants during the countywide visioning workshop was the need to provide a wide range of housing types.

- **Economic Development:** A variety of economic development issues surfaced in the SWOT analysis. Although good job opportunities, a diverse manufacturing base, and a good workforce were identified as strengths in the SWOT analysis, the aging workforce, lack of high paying jobs, and loss of job growth were viewed as weaknesses for Washington County. Opportunities identified included promoting a variety of industries and concentrating industrial development along major transportation routes.
- **Community Facilities:** The SWOT results indicated the continued quality of schools and health care facilities as important issues. The existing educational and medical facilities in the County were viewed as strengths in the SWOT analysis. In addition, 78 percent of survey respondents rated the quality of public schools as very important (61 percent) or somewhat important (17 percent) in residents' decision to live in Washington County.
- **Implementation:** Implementing the County comprehensive plan was the subject of several discussions during the PCPC and other County committee meetings to develop goals and objectives for this element. Committee members stressed the need to follow the plan after its adoption and to identify a core set of data that can be routinely updated and disseminated to government officials, organizations, and citizens.



The existing health care facilities in the County were viewed as a strength in the SWOT analysis.

Each of the preceding general planning issues and opportunities affect the existing quality of life in the County, which was a reoccurring theme throughout each form of public comment. Ninety-four percent of respondents to the countywide public opinion survey found the quality of life in the County to be good or excellent.

Issues and Opportunities Identified for the Year 2050 Plan Update

A review of the current inventory and projected future information presented in the element chapters of this plan indicates that the general planning issues identified while developing the year 2035 plan are still relevant. This finding was validated by the results of a brainstorming session held with the Washington County Board of Supervisors in conjunction with the year 2050 plan update. The purpose of the brainstorming session was to provide direction in updating the goals, objectives, policies, and programs for the year 2050 plan update. Many of the issues that were discussed during the brainstorming session parallel the issues and opportunities that were identified while developing the year 2035 plan, including:

- **Changing Age Structure of the Population:** The updated population projections to the year 2050 presented in Chapter 3 show a continuing trend in the aging of the County's population. The year 2035 plan recognized that changes in the County's age distribution will have impacts on the County's workforce as well as the housing, health care, and transportation needs of County residents. These concerns were echoed during the County Board brainstorming session.
- **Rural and Small Town Character:** Preserving historic and cultural structures and archaeological sites was an issue identified during the brainstorming session. In addition, several comments were related to development patterns that would preserve the County's rural character.

- **Environmental Preservation:** Preserving natural resources, including surface water and groundwater, was a common issue identified during the brainstorming session. In addition, preserving open space was identified as an issue; however, some participants stated that park and open space acquisition should be undertaken by non-profit entities.



Preserving natural resources was a common issue identified during the brainstorming session.

- **Farmland Preservation:** Similar to preserving natural resources, farmland preservation was a common issue identified during the brainstorming session. The need for responsible growth patterns to protect both agricultural and natural resources was identified; however, the extent to which the County should have a role in land use regulation was questioned.



Farmland preservation was also a common issue identified during the brainstorming session.

- **Development Patterns:** As discussed under previous planning issues, development patterns and growth policies that preserve natural resources, agricultural resources, and rural character were common themes identified during the brainstorming session. However, participants recognized that the County's role in regulating development patterns is limited because it does not exercise general zoning authority. The need to preserve land with nonmetallic mining resources for extractive use and the need for land to expand the County's industrial base were also identified.

- **Public Utilities and Energy:** Access to the most current internet and telecommunications technology was an issue identified during the brainstorming session. That issue was also identified for the year 2035 plan.



There was support for expanding on-street and off-street bicycle facilities in the County expressed during the brainstorming session.

- **Transportation:** Similar to input obtained during the year 2035 plan, there was support for expanding and better connecting on-street and off-street bicycle facilities in the County expressed during the brainstorming session. In addition, there was support expressed for expanding transit connections across County boundaries, but no support for rail transit. There was also support expressed for providing corporate jet capacity at an airport within the County. There were mixed comments regarding the STH 60 reliever route.

- **Intergovernmental Cooperation:** Sharing municipal services was identified as an opportunity during the development of the year 2035 plan, and this theme was expanded upon during the brainstorming session. Opportunities for shared services were identified in areas such as transportation, parks, law enforcement, roadway maintenance, and public works equipment. The issue of consolidating with nearby counties, consolidating departments between counties, and educating the public on the benefits of intergovernmental cooperation were also discussed.

- **Housing:** A review of the information presented in the Housing Element (Chapter 7) indicates that affordable housing for those that work in the County may still be an issue, as it was identified while developing the year 2035 plan. Participants at the brainstorming session echoed this concern and identified the growing need for accessible housing due to the aging population structure of the County. Comments were also received supporting continued land use regulation at the local government level, which limits the influence County government has on housing development.
- **Economic Development:** Concerns regarding the aging workforce identified while developing the year 2035 plan were raised again during the brainstorming session. Providing a skilled workforce and quality of life amenities to attract and retain businesses were additional concerns identified during the brainstorming session.

Detailed results of the brainstorming session are documented in Appendix D of this report.

4.3 WASHINGTON COUNTY VISION, MISSION, AND GOALS

The Issues and Opportunities Element of the first edition of this plan included an overall statement of objectives and goals that defined the desired future for Washington County by addressing the previously listed year 2035 general planning issues. The goals and corresponding objectives were intended to lead to the creation of County plans and policies that sustain and enhance the quality of life of all County residents while guiding development and redevelopment through the first edition plan design year of 2035. They also provided the framework within which specific goals were developed for the other plan elements. Because they were intended to be general rather than specific, no policies or programs were associated with the goals and objectives presented in the first edition Issues and Opportunities Element. Policies and programs were presented in the other element chapters of the first edition report, in association with more specific element goals and objectives.

In 2015, the Washington County Board of Supervisors identified a vision, mission, and five strategic goals for County services that are provided directly to citizens along with a set of objectives designed to achieve each goal. The County board updated the vision and mission in 2018 (see Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1). While the general planning issues identified for the year 2035 plan remain relevant, the adoption of the County vision, mission, and strategic goals made it necessary to revisit the overall statement of objectives, and goals, objectives, policies, and programs adopted by the County Board as part of the year 2035 plan.

The focus of the County vision and mission is providing innovative and cost effective core public services. Due to the focus on providing core public services, it was necessary to reorganize the comprehensive plan goals, objectives, policies, and programs to align with the County's five strategic goals. As part of the reorganization, the original comprehensive plan goals and objectives were replaced by the County strategic goals and objectives. In addition, a number of policies and programs were revised or repealed to align with the core public services provided by the County. All comprehensive plan goals, objectives, policies, and programs are now presented in the new Recommendations Element, which is documented in Chapter 12 of this report.

4.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT VISION STATEMENTS

As part of the multi-jurisdictional planning process undertaken for the first edition of this plan, a comprehensive plan was developed for Washington County and for each participating local government. Each comprehensive plan includes a vision statement developed as part of the planning process. Local background information, population and household projections, and existing plans were reviewed by local comprehensive planning committees, plan commissions, and governing bodies to develop the vision statements. In addition, public comment was gathered through a variety of activities including:

- Eleven local kickoff meetings held from January 2006 to March 2006 for each partnering local government. The kickoff meetings included a presentation of the comprehensive planning process and a SWOT analysis to identify community concerns and guide preparation of the local vision, goals, and objectives.

- Eleven interactive visioning workshops held during the months of August and September 2006 for each partnering local government. There were a total of six stations where participants had an opportunity to learn about the comprehensive plan, to participate in hands-on visioning activities, and provide comment on local issues important to their community.
- The countywide comprehensive planning public opinion survey results of over 1,200 residents included an analysis of results by town/city/village resident, gender, and age. Several communities also conducted local public opinion surveys to supplement the countywide survey.

A “vision” statement was developed by each participating local government through a joint brainstorming session of the local Town/Village Plan Commission and Board during May and June 2007. The “vision” statements help provide an overall framework for the development of local comprehensive plans. The vision statements express the preferred future, key characteristics, and/or expectations for the future desired by each community. None of the communities elected to revise their vision statements during the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan update process. Community vision statements include:

Town of Addison

In 2035, the Town of Addison is a vital and vibrant “place”. It is a community people enjoy living in, where good development decisions add jobs and broaden the tax base. Growth concentrated in designated areas preserves farmland and open space and does not harm but, in fact, enhances the physical beauty and community identity. Great schools, easy access to transportation options, and appropriate infrastructure improvements help to maintain and enhance the quality of life.

Town of Barton

In 2035, the Town of Barton retains its identity and independence. The Town’s access to major highways is attractive to a mix of land uses, especially businesses, which helps keep property taxes low. Rural character is maintained by encouraging development that is compact and includes open space. Residents appreciate being able to live close to nearby urban amenities while still enjoying Barton’s small town atmosphere.

Town of Erin

In 2035, the Town of Erin is a community known for its natural beauty and unique heritage. Traditional and alternative forms of agriculture are encouraged while allowing quality residential development at densities and locations compatible with preserving the Town’s rural character. The Town takes protection of the environment seriously and works cooperatively with neighboring communities for the benefit of all.

Town of Farmington

In 2035, the Town of Farmington offers a safe, high quality of life for its residents. By concentrating growth in designated locations, and encouraging agricultural activity and the preservation of farmland and critical natural areas, the Town is able to retain its rural character. Town government encourages citizen involvement, and good schools, churches and recreational opportunities, along with historic places in the Town, continue to foster an enduring sense of community.

Town of Germantown

The Town of Germantown is the oldest town in Washington County and the smallest in land area in the State. Residents take a certain pride in the Town’s capacity to adapt and survive. The ability of residents to “stick together” serves the Town well into the future as the Town strives to remain in control of its own destiny. In 2035, Town residents continue to enjoy a safe, quiet, primarily residential community, while still being able to access the amenities of nearby urban areas. A higher than normal ratio of jobs to residents allows the Town to provide employment for the surrounding region, keep local taxes low, and provide above average services.

Town of Hartford

In 2035, the Town of Hartford remains a place known for its abundant natural resources and the beauty of areas like Pike Lake. The Town actively utilizes sound land use planning and policies for retaining productive farmland, maintaining rural character, and co-existing with nearby municipalities.

Town of Kewaskum

In 2035, the Town of Kewaskum remains the “Gateway to the Northern Kettle Moraine” and all of its scenic beauty and recreational opportunities. The Town’s safe and quiet rural atmosphere is made up of farmland, open space, and mostly single-family residential development that has a minimal impact on the landscape and the local tax levy. The Town has a working relationship with the Village of Kewaskum that includes cooperating on boundary issues and public services.

Village of Kewaskum

In 2035, the Village of Kewaskum retains its “small-town” atmosphere while providing housing choices and well-planned commercial and industrial growth. Development remains within the capacities of Village infrastructure, facilities, and services. Residents enjoy a high quality of life, recreational opportunities, and good access to a balanced mix of land uses. The preservation of natural resources is encouraged.

Village of Newburg (developed as part of the Ozaukee County multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning process)

Village living with a country feel.

Town of Polk

In 2035, the Town of Polk remains a beautiful place to live and raise a family. Its convenient location, large lots, and low residential density help the Town retain its rural character and remain distinct from nearby urban areas. Town government is responsive to citizens, is fiscally responsible, and makes the protection of natural resources a priority.

Town of Trenton

In 2035, the Town of Trenton continues to preserve the natural amenities and prime agricultural lands within its stable borders. When development occurs, it is appropriate for the capacity of the Town’s infrastructure and does not detract from the Town’s rural character. Good local government uses funds wisely and provides better than average services for a town its size.

Town of Wayne

In 2035, the Town of Wayne remains a rural community in which farms share the landscape with a limited number of non-farm homesites. Active land use planning ensures that residential development occurs at appropriate densities and does not detract from the Town’s rural character, unique natural features, or recreational opportunities. Most non-residential development occurs at the interchanges of USH 41 with CTH D and STH 28. Environmental corridors, isolated natural resource areas, and agricultural lands are recognized as essential to the Town’s rural character, and are preserved. Local government that is open to an involved citizenry strives to provide adequate services while keeping taxes low.

Village of Jackson and Town of Jackson

Although the Village of Jackson and Town of Jackson did not participate in the original Washington County multi-jurisdictional planning process, the Village and Town did prepare a joint comprehensive plan with assistance from the Washington County UW-Extension Office and are participating in the current Washington County multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan update process. The vision statements developed as part of the original Village/Town joint planning process follow.

Village of Jackson

The Village of Jackson welcomes carefully managed growth while retaining its attractive appearance and “small town” feel. Businesses are concentrated in commercial nodes and office parks, which enable Main Street to maintain its residential character. Up-to-date technology infrastructure helps businesses be competitive and increases the efficiency of Village government. The Village recognizes the importance of a robust transportation system; at the same time the Village is pedestrian friendly and offers a variety of recreational opportunities for area residents. Cooperation with the Town of Jackson and other nearby communities promotes the sharing of services and sound land use policies.

Town of Jackson

In 2035, the Town of Jackson is a community offering a safe, high quality of life for all ages. The Town strives to keep pace with changing technology and local transportation needs while protecting the quiet areas and distinctive open spaces residents value. Measured growth, concentrated in designated locations, occurs in ways respectful of natural habitats, agricultural productivity, and the Town's rural character. Town government is fiscally responsible, encourages citizen involvement, and cooperates with other public entities for the benefit of all.

4.5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives developed by each participating local government for their local comprehensive plan are set forth in Appendix F of the first edition of this plan. Similar to the vision statements, none of the partnering local governments elected to revise the goals and objectives for their plan updates. Appendix E sets forth goals and objectives and other plan recommendations specific to the Town of Germantown, which is expected to adopt this multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan update as the Town comprehensive plan update.