

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Why Plan?

It is difficult to know what the future may bring for the Town of Verona, or for any community. As residents and businesses come and go and economic trends rise and fall, changes will occur. The purpose of this comprehensive plan is to establish a shared vision for the future of the Town that will guide future actions and decisions. By the year 2035, Dane County's population is expected to increase by 34%, or approximately 165,427 people. This increased population in the County will affect the Town with regard to the need for housing, services and transportation. These demands must be balanced with the desires of Town residents to maintain the rural character of the Town. In addition, the Town is challenged by the growth of adjacent cities that can annex land from the Town.

How should the Town of Verona prepare for and respond to these changes? What types of land uses should the Town encourage or discourage? Where should the encouraged uses be located? These are the types of questions this plan is intended to address.

1.2 Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law

Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" planning law [s. 66.1001 Wis. Stats.] was adopted in October of 1999. The law requires that, beginning January 1, 2010, the following activities must be consistent with a comprehensive plan:

- Official mapping established or amended under s. 62.23 (6)
- Local subdivision regulations under s. 236.45 or 236.46
- County zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 62.23 (7)
- Zoning of shore lands or wetlands in shore lands under s. 59.692, 61.351 or 62.231

The law defines a Comprehensive Plan as containing nine required elements: 1) Issues and Opportunities, 2) Housing, 3) Transportation, 4) Utilities and Community Facilities, 5) Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources, 6) Economic Development, 7) Intergovernmental Cooperation, 8) Land Uses, and 9) Implementation.

1.3 Planning Process

The current Comprehensive Plan (2006-2016) for the Town was adopted in 2006 and subsequently adopted by Dane County. In 2010 the Town of Verona Plan Commission and staff began work on a reorganization and update to the plan with the help of MSA Professional Services. These edits and updates were completed in 2012, after which the Town hosted a public hearing to review the draft update. However, that draft was never adopted, and the Plan Commission and staff began a revision of this draft in February 2016.

The Plan Commission started this process by reviewing definitions of land use categories, dividing the Town into eight areas, developing a survey document, and revising the 2012 version of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Town was divided into eight areas because of the diverse land uses in different regions and different potential annexation issues. For example, the northeast section of the Town has light

commercial and houses on small lots whereas the southwest section of the Town has the large farms and residential units on large lots. For each of the eight areas a survey was sent to all land owners, a draft land use plan was developed by the Plan Commission, and a public meeting was held for all land owners of each area. Once all eight public hearings had been held, the Plan Commission prepared a draft of the future land use map for the whole Town and decided on definitions of land use categories. Next two public meetings were held on the Future Land Use Map in January 2018. These meetings were advertised by placing a draft of the map and notice of the meeting in a newsletter that went out with all tax bills in December of 2017.

In May of 2018, the Town sought assistance on the plan from the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission and a local land use consultant, Vierbicher Associates, Inc. to review chapters, update data, and make recommendations about land supply. In July 2018, two more meetings were held and public input taken. The first focused on land supply and the second was a regular Plan Commission meeting in which the Plan Commission interactively finalized the draft future land use map. Also during this time, update draft chapters were placed on the Town's website.

The Plan Commission adopted the draft chapters and future land use map on August 23, 2018. After that, the plan was released for a formal public comment period and sent to adjacent jurisdictions and other stakeholders. A public hearing was held by the Town of Verona Board of Supervisors on October 2, 2018 and edits were made based on comments received. The plan is scheduled to be adopted by the Town Board on November 13, 2018. It will then be forwarded to Dane County for inclusion in the Dane County Comprehensive Plan.

1.4 Planning Area

The planning area includes all lands within the Town's jurisdiction boundaries as indicated in Map 1.1. The Town of Verona is located in Dane County, at the southwest edge of the Madison Metropolitan Area. The original Town boundaries encompassed approximately 23,000 acres, a standard six-mile by six-mile Wisconsin town. Annexations by the City of Verona and the City of Madison have reduced the area to 15,126. The 2010 population of the Town of Verona was 1,948 and there were 746 households. The estimated 2017 population was 1,981.

1.5 History of the Town of Verona

Three descriptions of the early history of the Verona area are available in the Verona Public Library and the following historical sketch was taken from these accounts.

Early history of Verona by Alice Kunstman,

Verona Area History, 1847-1972 by Ken Behnke

A sesquicentennial History of Verona (1847-1997) by Karl Curtis

The Verona area was originally inhabited by Native Americans until it was ceded to the US Government in 1829 and in 1883. The Verona area was surveyed into sections in 1833 and at that time the land was part of Grant County in the Territory of Michigan. The Territory of Wisconsin and Dane County were created in 1836. The first grist mill in the county, called Badger Mill was opened in 1844 and was the hub of the surrounding settlement. The mill was located at the hill on highway M along Badger Mill Creek. The Town of Verona (Township 6 North, Range 8 East in Dane County) was established on February 11, 1847 by the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature. The name Verona originated from the town in New York named, Verona, which was the hometown of early settlers George and William Vroman. The Village of Verona was established in 1921 and became a city in 1978. The first Chairman of the Town Board of Supervisors was Samuel Taylor in 1857. Since then there have been 34

Chairman with Mark Geller as the current Chairman. The Town Hall and garages were at 355 Nine Mound Road in the City of Verona for many years and a new Town Hall, Salt Shed and Public Works Building at 7669 Highway PD was occupied in February 2017. For more detailed information on the history between 1999 and 2017, please see Appendix 1.1.

1.6 Geography and Topography

The Town of Verona was strongly impacted by its geological past. Two distinct regions in the Town differ not only in relief and drainage patterns, but also in soil-parent material. Four major ice invasions into Wisconsin took place during the past million years. The last glacial ice (Green Bay Glacier) melted away from Wisconsin's landscape about 8,000 years ago. The subsurface geology of the Town consists of mainly dolomite limestone and sandstone deposited 400 to 600 million years ago.

As the outer and receding edges of the ice sheet melted away, low ridges of stony earthen debris called terminal moraines, were deposited by the glacier. The eastern Kettle Moraine starts between Green Bay and Lake Michigan and continues southward branching into a southwesterly extension, which curves northward bisecting the Town of Verona (the Johnstown Terminal Moraine). The township area



west of the moraine is part of the "driftless" area of southwest Wisconsin, because it was never covered by the most recent scouring glacial ice and subsequent "drift" of deposits dropped as the ice sheet melted. The glaciated region of the Town lies mostly to the east of the Johnstown

terminal moraine. A triangular tract of land in the southeastern quarter of the Town, though outside the terminal moraine, is covered by glacial till. Also, a large portion of the western half of the township is covered by outwash materials of sand and gravel deposited by numerous streams fed by the melting glacier. The remaining driftless area is characterized by a landscape of rolling, dissected topography. Streams have carved narrow valleys through the deposits of ancient seas forming a dendritic drainage pattern resembling the branches of trees.

Topographic relief ranges from about 1,210 feet above sea level at its highest elevation on a ridge (end moraine) in Section 25, down to approximately 900 feet above sea level along the Sugar River in Section 34.

1.7 Regional Context

The Town of Verona is located in Dane County and at the southwestern edge of the City of Madison. The City of Fitchburg is to the east, the City of Madison to the North, the Town of Middleton to the northwest, the Town of Springdale to the west and Town of Montrose to the south. The City of Verona is near the center of the Township. Extraterritorial Jurisdictions from City of Fitchburg and City of Madison impact planning options for eastern and northern parts of the Town because the cities are allowed control over lot splits in those areas. A ten-year Boundary Area between the City of Verona and Town of Verona was adopted in June 2016 (See Chapter 10: Intergovernmental Cooperation for details).

Dane County is the fastest growing county in the State, it is also one of the most productive agricultural counties. Madison, the State capital, is home to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and outstanding medical facilities. Many people employed in Madison live outside the city and this creates heavy use of the roads feeding into and out of Madison. The Town of Verona is impacted in many ways by the arrival of Epic Systems Corporation in the City of Verona in 2005. This healthcare software company employees over 9,000 people and is still expanding. Many Epic employees travel to work via car from Madison and surrounding areas. In addition to the increase in traffic, there is an increase in demand for housing and other services for Epic employees. This is rapidly changing the expansion plans for the City of Verona, which is resulting in annexations of Town's land into the City, and has increased land prices for parcels in the Town of Verona. The increase in the City population is causing issues with space in the public schools and has resulted in a referendum to upgrade the school system. A new high school is planned to be completed in 2020 south of West Verona Ave and west of South Nine Mound Rd.

1.8 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This planning document is a “living” guide for the future overall development of the Town of Verona. It serves the following purposes:

- ✓ The plan acts as a benchmark to where the community is now in terms of current strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.
- ✓ It provides a means of measuring progress for existing and future Town leaders.
- ✓ It defines areas appropriate for development, redevelopment, and preservation.
- ✓ It identifies opportunities to update and strengthen the Town of Verona's land use implementation tools.
- ✓ It provides supporting documentation for Town policies and regulations as well as for grant funding requests for public and private projects.

Most importantly the plan will serve as a resource manual assisting in the evaluation of land use and development requests for the future, specifically:

- ✓ Establishment of Development Guidelines - The comprehensive plan addresses the location, type, design, and impact of new development.
- ✓ Continued Preservation of Undeveloped Areas Where Feasible - The comprehensive plan addresses the preservation of open space and agricultural land.
- ✓ Planned Mitigation of Loss of Tax Base - The comprehensive plan addresses the loss of tax base to neighboring municipalities through annexation and through proposed land use and other policies attempt to mitigate that impact.

1.9 ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

The following assets and liabilities were identified during the update process:

ASSETS

1. The Town has the Sugar River and Badger Mill Creek, hilly terrain, and beautiful views
2. There are ample lands in the Town for recreation
3. Many woodlands and wildlife areas have been preserved
4. The Verona Area School District is well regarded and new school construction is underway
5. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail and Military Ridge Trail are located in the Town
6. New Town Facilities were recently constructed on Hwy PD
7. There is active involvement of residents in Town governance

LIABILITIES

1. Extraterritorial jurisdiction of parts of the Town by the Cities of Madison and Fitchburg will result in conflicting land uses (the Town has a boundary agreement with the City of Verona)
2. Land and tax base will be lost through annexation by Cities of Madison and Verona
3. Residential tax base is primary source of funding for Town services
4. Changing economics of agriculture has made it more difficult to maintain family farms
5. The aging of residents is resulting in their need to sell land for higher prices for development than for continued agricultural uses
6. There is increased traffic on Town roads
7. Maintaining rural character of the Town will be challenging as development pressures continue and lands are lost through annexation

1.10 Vision, Goals, Objectives, Policies and Guiding Principles

In late 2017 and early 2018, a strategic planning process was held to arrive at a shared vision statement and guiding principles for the Town. Members of the Town Board, the Plan Commission, the Public Works Committee, the Financial Sustainability Committee, the Ordinance Committee and the Natural and Recreational Areas Committee participated in two work sessions. The vision statement identifies where the Town of Verona intends to be in the future and how to meet the future needs of the citizens. This vision statement incorporates a shared understanding of the nature and purpose of Town. The strategic planning process also identified guiding principles to be followed for the Town to implement the vision.

VISION

The Town of Verona will strive to maintain the Town as an independent, financially sustainable, safe, and healthy rural community.

Guiding Principles:

Six guiding principles emerged from the strategic planning process:

- Maintain an open and transparent government that encourages active participation of residents
- Provide efficient services
- Be fiscally responsible
- Anticipate and plan for growth
- Protect and enhance cultural and natural resources
- Coordinate and collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions

For each of these guiding principles, a set of action items was identified (see Appendix 1.2 for a full summary.) Those items that are relevant to this comprehensive plan are listed as part of the Implementation Chapter.

Goals, Objectives, and policies:

Each element of the comprehensive plan contains goals, objectives, and policies established during the planning process. Goals, objectives, and policies are defined as follows:

Goal: A goal is a long-term target that states what the Town wants to accomplish.

Objective: An objective is a statement that identifies a course of action to achieve a goal. They are more specific than goals and are usually attainable through planning and implementation activities.

Policy: A policy is a specific course of action or rule of conduct that should be followed in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan. Policies are written as actions that can be implemented, or as specific rules to be followed by decision-makers. Policies that direct action using the words “shall” or “will” are mandatory aspects of the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Those policies using the words “should,” “encourage,” “discourage,” or “may” are advisory and intended to serve as a guide.

Each chapter of this plan contains goals specific to one of required elements of the comprehensive plan. If there is a question regarding a land use decision, not clearly conveyed in the details of this comprehensive plan, then the decision shall be based on the intent of the vision statement and the goals.