

Planning and Zoning Department

2020 Annual Report



January 2021

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Introduction

In 2020 planning activity focused on rezoning, platting, and construction for single family and multifamily developments. Staff continued to work on strategy development for distressed neighborhoods in the City. An update to the Comprehensive Plan was adopted on March 10th, 2020. The Planning & Zoning Department’s operations were impacted by COVID-19. While working remotely staff continued providing a high level of service to residents and customers. This Annual Report will lay out the major 2020 activities of the Department. Additional information may be found at the Planning Department web site: <http://www.fitchburgwi.gov/206/Planning-Zoning>

Land Use Planning

Comprehensive Plan

First adopted in March 2009, the Comprehensive Plan was completed to meet the requirements of the Comprehensive Planning Statute, also referred to as the Smart Growth law. The Plan acts as a land use constitution for the city and sets forth the goals, objectives and policies to guide city actions in land use matters. Under state law, the Comprehensive Plan must be updated at least once every 10 years. The updated Comprehensive Plan was adopted on March 10th, 2020. The update was a “re-fresh” of the existing plan, which included reformatting the plan and updating background information. The goals, objective, and policies were updated as needed, based on input from city staff, residents, committees, and elected officials. Council also directed staff to make four changes to the future land use map regarding parcel specific future land uses.



The minor Comprehensive Plan amendment process also took place in 2020. The minor amendment process changed when the updated Comprehensive Plan was adopted. It will now occur biannually in the spring and fall. Two amendments were submitted in Springs 2020 and no amendments were submitted in Fall 2020. One amendment was submitted in 2019, which was not approved until April 2020. The amendment proposed to change the future land use designation for properties associated with 2546 and 2556 South Fish Hatchery Road from High Density Residential (HDR) which may, at the discretion of the Plan Commission and Council, be suitable for Industrial-Commercial (I-C) to only Low Density Residential (LDR). The text on page 4-16 was amended to read, “The fifth area is the four tax parcels addressed as 2546 and 2556 S Fish Hatchery Road, which currently are designated Low Density Residential, provided that development shall not occur until sole access is provided on either Nobel Drive or Research Park Drive.”

Two amendments were submitted in spring 2020, including amendments to the land use designations for four parcels along Lacy Road (Lot 1 CSM 14487, Lot 2 CSM 14487, and Portions of Outlot 1 CSM 14487 and Lot 1 CSM 3060) and for four parcels along Rolfsmeyer Rd (Lot 1, Lot 3, Lot 5 and Lot 6 Brown Business Park). In July 2020 both ordinances were adopted by Common Council. Ordinance 2020-O-17 amended the land use designation for the four

parcels along Lacy Road. The land use designations for Lot 1 CSM 14487, Lot 2 CSM 14487, and portions of Lot 1 CSM 3060 were changed from only Mixed Use (M-U) to Mixed Use (M-U) or Low Density Residential (LDR) with an allowable density range of 2-5 dwelling units per acre. The land use designation for a portion of Outlot 1 CSM 14487 changed from Mixed-Use to R1 pursuant to the McGaw Park Neighborhood Plan. Ordinance 2020-O-18 amended the land use designation for the four parcels along Rolfsmeyer Drive from Industrial-Commercial (I-C) to Industrial-General (I-G).

McGaw Park Neighborhood Urban Service Area Amendment

In 2018 the Department met with a land developer regarding a potential amendment to the Urban Service Area affecting the southern portion of the McGaw Park Neighborhood. A third party created the Urban Service Area amendment application, and Department staff assisted with the application on an as needed basis. The proposed amendment would bring approximately 87 acres in the Urban Service Area. Land uses will be a mix of residential, institutional and open space. In 2020 to the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources approved the Urban Service Area amendment application.

Planning staff also continues to upkeep GIS data and mapping related to City development trends and patterns on an annual basis. Per the Comp Plan, this data/mapping is utilized in decision-making regarding phasing and timing of future Urban Service Area amendments.

Landmarks Preservation

Exterior alterations to designated landmark properties require approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC).



The McCoy house was built in 1860.

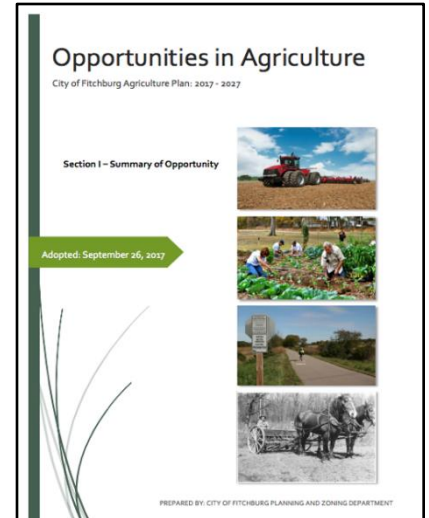
Fitchburg is a Certified Local Government (CLG) under the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Wisconsin Historical Society. As a CLG, the City is eligible to apply for grant funds on an annual basis for various preservation efforts. In 2018, the Planning Department was awarded a Historic Preservation Fund “Subgrant” to undertake an intensive survey of the City of Fitchburg’s historic architectural resources. The final report was submitted in October 2019. The report identified 2 historic districts and 7 individual properties that are considered potentially eligible National Register of Historic Places. One historic district and three individual properties were included in the report but are not yet 50 years of age. These resources may be potentially eligible once they are 50 years old. The survey also identified 3 properties which require additional information in order to determine their eligibility. In 2020 the Landmarks Committee voted to contact the owners of the potentially eligible properties to gauge their interest in listing their property on the National Register of Historic Places. As a CLG, the city would be able to apply for a subgrant to cover the cost of the application process. Staff did receive interest from a few property owners, however no property owners agreed to go through the nomination process at this time.

Agriculture and Rural Affairs

The Planning and Zoning Department continued implementation of the City’s first Agriculture Plan, adopted in 2017. The Plan’s general intent and purpose, conforming to and consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and long-term growth boundary contained therein, is to

provide a holistic and integrated approach to agriculture in the City, and ensure continued, varied agricultural opportunities to City landowners. The Plan recognizes agriculture as a viable component of the City's economy and identity, and focuses on continued development of the local food system and enhancing agricultural diversity in the City, as well as other emerging trends in the agricultural sector. Implementation of Agriculture Plan action items in 2020 included:

- Preliminary research on allowance of additional agricultural accessory and related uses in the City's agricultural zoning districts, to advance the local food system (adoption in to the City's zoning ordinance, via amendment, expected in early 2021)
- Management, including expansion, of the City's first community garden on public parkland (Swan Creek Park)
- Continuation of discussions with other non-profit and governmental partners on development of a City Agriculture "Signature Theme" Park in the Northeast Neighborhood



Additionally, the Committee continued to provide recommendations to the Plan Commission on all rezoning/land divisions that took place on the City's agricultural-zoned lands. Finally, the Committee had made initial plans for a third annual listening session in 2020, to get a better sense of issues and concerns from the City's rural residents and agricultural landowners. However, this session was cancelled due to the onset of the Covid pandemic.

Code Development

There were no amendments to the Zoning Ordinance or Land Division Ordinance in 2020.

Sign Code

There was one amendment to the Sign Ordinance. The amendment created standards for flag signs. Before the amendment the Sign Ordinance did not regulate flag signs. In residential zoning districts one flagpole is permitted, not to exceed 25 feet in height with the flag not to exceed 24 square feet. In all other zoning districts three flagpoles are permitted, not to exceed 35 feet in height with the flag not to exceed 40 square feet. Additional flagpoles will be permitted by issuance of a conditional use permit by the Plan Commission.

SmartCode

The SmartCode is an integrated land development ordinance that sets forth a variety of development types to form neighborhoods offering a diversity of land use opportunities at a pedestrian scale. As an integrated development code it combines aspects of public works construction, such as street types, with zoning and land use. Land use is important, but it should work with the development form. A transect based approach is used within the SmartCode, with each transect zone representing certain development patterns. T3, for example, is representative of a typical single-family subdivision, while T5 is a multi-family and commercial district that provides for a mix of office, business, and residential uses. T4 falls between T3 and T5, and allows some corner commercial property, although limited in size. T4 allows for narrow single-

family lots usually served by an alley, and attached row houses or other medium density multi-unit options. It is crucial that the code retain and work off its key principles.

There were three amendments to the SmartCode in 2020. Ordinance 2020-O-16 increased the maximum lot coverage for rear yard multifamily (townhouse) lots from 70% to 80%. The amendment was proposed because staff recognized that the lot coverage maximum was not sufficient for townhouse lots. Ordinance 2020-O-19 amended the signage standards for civic spaces to allow a monument sign if certain design standards are met. The amendment was proposed primarily to accommodate signage at the Oregon Elementary School. However, a detached sign would also be appropriate to identify a public park or other civic space. Ordinance 2020-O-22 amended the signage standards for Transect 5 to allow three signs on a building instead of two.

Fitchburg’s three SmartCode neighborhoods, Terravessa, Nine Springs, and North Park, continued development throughout 2020. Significantly, the First Addition to Terravessa was approved in 2020.

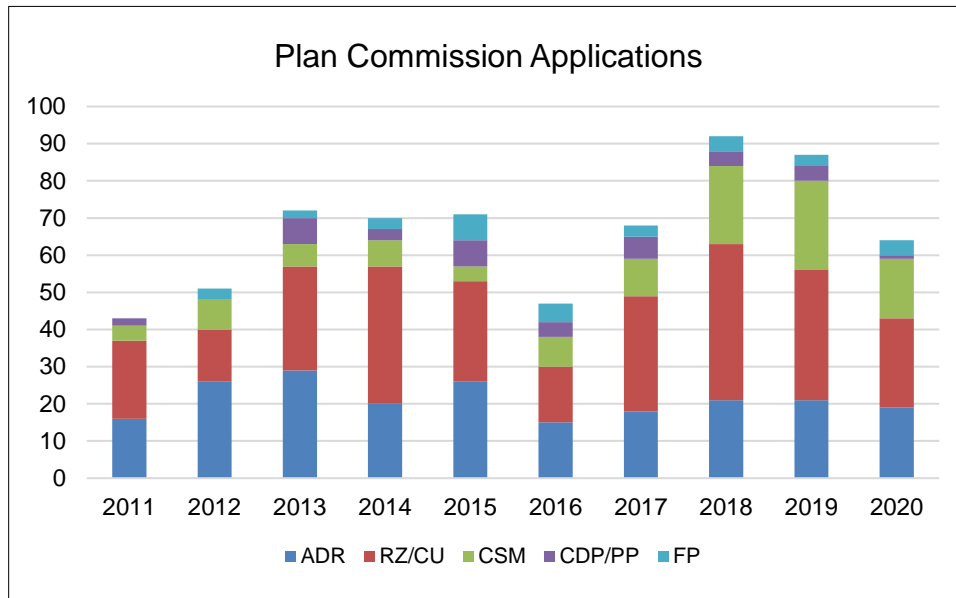
Application Activity

General Application Information

	Submitted Requests	
	2019	2020
Architectural & Design Review Requests	21	19
Rezoning and Conditional Use Permits	35	24
Certified Survey Map Requests	24	16
CDP’s and/or Preliminary Plats	4	1
Final Plats	3	4
Variances / Administrative Appeals	0	3
Other Requests to Plan Commission*	43	47
Telecommunication Permits to Plan Comm.	1	0
Demolition Permits to Plan Comm.	0	0

*These issues include, but are not limited to, resolutions, ordinance text amendments, planning document approvals, and other matters referred to the Plan Commission for action or reports such as easements, pre-submission conferences, ordinance amendments, TID consideration, land use planning activities, review of standards or policies and other activities that do not fall under a specifically identified category noted under Commission and Board activity.

The below graph shows the number of Plan Commission applications submitted from 2011-2020. This includes architectural design review, rezones/conditional use permits, certified survey maps, comprehensive development plans/preliminary plats, and final plats. This graph does not include telecommunications permits, demolition permits or other items. The busiest year was 2018, when 92 applications were considered. Since then the number of applications has decreased. In 2020 there were 64 applications. Over the last three years the proportion of certified survey maps has increased significantly.



Administrative Permits

	Submitted Requests	
	2019	2020
SmartCode Article 3	0	0
SmartCode Article 3 Amendments	1	3
SmartCode Article 5	28	69
Architectural Design Review	8	7
Demolition permits—Zoning action	1	0
Sign Permits	82	73
Zoning Permits	154	185
Early Start Permits	41	75

Rezoning

Planned Development District (PDD) zoning was approved for one project. Two properties went through the rezone process in order to amend PDD zoning that was previously approved. PDD zoning has no set standards or specifications; rather, developers can propose uses or combination of uses and configurations of intensity and density of development. The purpose is to encourage improved environmental design by allowing flexibility in the development while ensuring compliance with the basic intent of the zoning ordinance and with the comprehensive plan. PDD zoning was approved for a 157-unit mixed use building at 3101 Fish Hatchery Road. The project will be completed in 2021. PDD zoning was approved for Agrace Hospice to modify parking requirements that were approved with the original PDD zoning. PDD zoning was approved for Lot 10 Orchard Pointe to allow a 4-story, 116-unit workforce housing project. PDD zoning had previously been approved to allow a 3-story, 24-unit and 4-story, 111-unit workforce housing project.

Tax Incremental Districts

Planning staff assisted with the amendment to Tax Increment District #13. Planning staff assisted with map creation and evaluated the impact on land uses within the TID. Additionally, staff provided assistance to the Plan Commission during the public hearing and approval process.

The original TID #13 was created to assist with development in the Nine Springs neighborhood. The amendment brought several additional parcels into the district. Proposed improvements in the environmental analysis & remediation, geotechnical work for subsurface conditions, infrastructure improvements, and development incentives related to structured parking and other infrastructure.



Special Projects

Bicycle Committee

The 2020 calendar year was one of planning and prioritizing for the Fitchburg Bicycle Committee. In its second full year of existence, and working with a new city liaison, the Bicycle Committee set out to improve upon its twice-awarded Silver designation as a Bicycle-Friendly Community. The Committee created a working group tasked with documenting and prioritizing the steps needed to reach Gold status, based on gaps identified by the League of American Bicyclists, and then began the process of working with the City staff liaison and Bike Fitchburg to address each of those areas.

The Bicycle Committee also continued informally working with local nonprofit Bike Fitchburg on several priorities, from counting local bike traffic, to exploring the possibility of a citywide bike share program, to removing the potential barrier created by Fitchburg's mandatory bicycle-registration ordinance. The Committee communicated with Public Works staff on various projects as well, most notably helping to design the detour route needed throughout the summer as part of the McKee Rd and Badger State Trail bridge projects.

In 2021, the Bicycle Committee will look to complete work on addressing the registration ordinance, develop a plan for a bike-share pilot, and determine how best to count local bike traffic to generate the most accurate possible estimate of total bike network usage.

Clean Energy Resolution

Fitchburg continued building on the pledges made in its 2019 Clean Energy Resolution in 2020, with two notable projects contributing to significant increases in the city's investment in renewable energy:

- The East Fire Station on S Syene Rd was outfitted with a 101.6kW rooftop solar array, projected to generate over 120,000 kWh of electricity per year and save Fitchburg over \$10,000 annually in energy bills. This project brings the City's total rooftop solar capacity to over 460kW, with these net-metered solar arrays providing nearly 10% of municipal electricity needs.

- Fitchburg signed a Renewable Energy Rider contract with Madison Gas & Electric, to purchase 1/40th of the electricity generated by the 20-megawatt solar array at the O'Brien farm in Fitchburg. By purchasing the equivalent of 500kW of additional solar capacity from the higher-efficiency ground-mounted panels currently under construction, the City will add nearly 1 million more kWh to its annual renewable energy inputs (roughly half that figure in 2021, as the O'Brien project will be completed in early summer).

Between these two projects, Fitchburg will approximately double its direct solar load, powering over 25% of its annual electricity needs through the O'Brien solar purchases and its rooftop panels. Adding in the proportion of MG&E's general grid that is already sourced from renewable technologies, Fitchburg expects to have over 1/3 of its electricity generated by clean energy in 2021, and closer to 40% in 2022 when the O'Brien solar array will be operational for the full calendar year.

Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative

The Planning and Zoning Department continued development of the City's Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative in 2020. The Initiative, with overall coordination provided by Department staff, is designed to formulate and implement a collaborative, integrated, holistic, and proactive approach to address specific barriers to opportunities in three City neighborhoods (Verona Road West, Belmar/Renaissance on the Park, and North Fish Hatchery Road), in conjunction with community/neighborhood partners.

Implementation of the HNI is guided by a strategic plan that was adopted in early 2019.

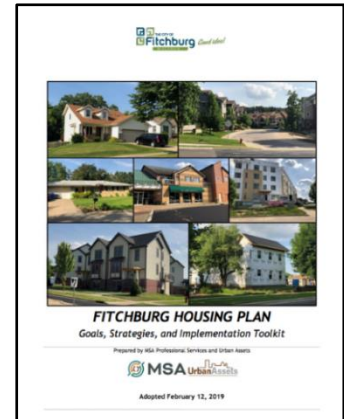
Specific pieces of the HNI strategic plan that were implemented by the Department in 2020 include the following:

- Completed concept planning for a "neighborhood hub" in the North Fish Hatchery Road neighborhood, including enhanced park space, a potential neighborhood-center type facility, and options for Nine Springs Golf Course improvements. Construction of Phase 1 of the hub (enhanced park space) has been included in the 2021 City budget, with groundbreaking expected in late 2021 or early 2022.
- Garnered approximately \$20,000 in Dane County funds to continue implementation of the "neighborhood navigator" program, consisting of hiring two HNI neighborhood resident(s) as part-time Department staff to facilitate better program/service/resource awareness and delivery in said neighborhoods. The navigators connected with approximately 300 unique/unduplicated residents of HNI priority neighborhoods in 2020.
- Awarded \$68,000 in City funds, via the City's HNI Grant Program, to fund eight non-profit partners working to provide programs/services/ resources in HNI neighborhoods. The City received ten total Program applications entailing approximately \$89,000 in funding requests.
- Partnered with United Way of Dane County to implement the Fitchburg Fund, a pilot, Fitchburg-focused fund-raising campaign. The campaign raised approximately \$3,000 in private donations, with said monies to be "matched" by the City and utilized to support the HNI in 2021.

Housing Plan

Housing Plan was adopted in 2019. The Housing plans covers issues related to the multi-family housing stock, a 50/50 mix of owner versus rental occupied housing for the community,

affordability of owner-occupied housing, vacancy rates, household income discrepancies, quality of affordable rental units, a suppressed annual rate of new single-family homes, and the cost of developing in Fitchburg, including park fees. Since 2019 the City has followed up on two recommendations of the Housing Plan by creating the Housing Advisory Committee and enabling the Dane County Housing Authority to operate in the City. While the Economic Development Department lead development of the Plan, it is expected that Planning Department staff will assist with implementation efforts.



Housing Reports

In accordance with 2017 Wisconsin Act 243, the City prepared Housing Affordability Report. This was the second year the City was required to prepare the report. The Report identified how the City could modify residential development regulations to meet existing and forecasted housing demand and provide a 20% reduction in the time and cost required to approve a new residential subdivision. In addition to this analysis the report included a list and map of undeveloped parcels suitable for residential development. The report found that the City met the forecasted housing demand in 2019. The Housing Plan states that the City needs to develop 1,300 owner-occupied units (108/year) and 1,400 rental units (117/year) over the next 12 years. In 2019 the city issued building permits for 95 potentially owner-occupied units (including detached single-family homes, and zero-lot line duplexes,) and 362 multi-family apartment rental units. The city also approved various land division requests which would allow for the development of 3 owner-occupied units and a multifamily development in the future. The report made several recommendations that could be implemented to reduce the cost of developing a new subdivision:

- Biannual minor Comprehensive Plan amendments
- Streamline internal review
- Waive or reduce impact fees
- Review park fees
- Review development oversight costs
- Enable Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- Reduce minimum lot size requirements
- Create an affordable housing trust

Per state statute, the Planning Department will update the Housing Affordability Report annually.

Conclusion

Work efforts for 2021 will focus on development of the varied plats and development projects that arise, advancing strategy development for distressed neighborhoods, and implementation of the Agriculture Plan. Planning staff anticipates supporting planned redevelopment and place making efforts along the Fish Hatchery Road corridor. The Department will begin preparing for the attachment of portions of the Town of Madison to the City of Fitchburg.

The continued pursuit of responsible planning is vital to a strong and well-functioning community. The Planning and Zoning Department continues to analyze and engage in activities that will

benefit the entire Fitchburg community, including promoting and maintaining healthy neighborhoods. A well-planned city can provide efficient and cost-effective services. The Planning and Zoning Department is committed to continuing its provision of strong, sound, and smart planning, as historically demanded by Fitchburg citizens.