

# Fitchburg Comprehensive Plan and Existing Planning Codes Analysis

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## Overarching Themes of the City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Plan

The Fitchburg Zoning Ordinance, on its face, is not adequate to the Comprehensive Plan’s goals of mixed use, compact development, preservation of heritage landscapes, and preservation of agricultural land. However, that is not quite a fair appraisal. The planning documents certainly do offer some support for those goals. If the developer wants to do a clustered development, the Plan Commission can require that a plan be reviewed as a Planned Development, and then use its broad discretionary power to demand that the project be compact, have a mixture of uses, and so on. Nevertheless, although such a process is possible, it is certainly unpredictable for the developer, and it offers no clear guidelines.

### 1. The Need for Standards

The Planned Development process is discretionary, and has no “set” standards. It can arguably be used to permit a mixed-use, compact development. Fitchburg seems to have no process to compel a developer to go through a Planned Development process, unless the developer requests clustering (22.39 (1)). Moreover, in the absence of such set standards, small developers in particular may be wary of taking on the unpredictable Planned Development process. Below, eight individual issues will be explored, but they all have a few points in common.

1. The CP proposes programs using specific guidance or standards. Throughout the CP, the text speaks of standards, procedures, and other “set” processes. They would the process more

predictable to any developer, and if they were carefully managed—if its decisions were taken pro-actively—they could be managed so that smaller developers simply have to comply with a plan.

2. The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes documented, planned procedures over discretionary ones. For example, heritage landscapes can arguably be preserved today. Yet, the procedures are ad-hoc, not coordinated with other preservation efforts for agricultural land, flood plains, wetlands, and recreational open space.

## **2. Natural infrastructure and visual character of Open Space**

Particularly in its Land Use and Natural Resources sections, the City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Plan (CP) is concerned with the natural environment. (See List 1. Land Use and Natural Resources are highlighted.) The various policies listed below do not appear anywhere as a unified policy in the planning codes I examined. For example, the Floodplain and Wetland Ordinance is not explicitly coordinated with an open space plan that protects development outside the Urban Service Area. A unified methodology for allocating development into specific areas and protecting flood-prone, historic, heritage, agricultural, and natural areas would help accomplish the listed goals, objectives and policies.

Fortunately, though, a number of provisions of the existing codes would help support a more coordinated approach to open space. The Land Division Ordinance requires the subdivider to dedicate land for parks, and in a location that gives consideration to preserving *scenic* as well as historic sites (15.02 (4) (B) and (C)). Of course, there is an upper limit on the amount of land required to be dedicated (15.02 (4) (D)), and the scenic and historic sites must be identified. (This latter issue is addressed in Cultural Resources section of the CP.) Moreover, the Zoning Ordinance provides for wetland overlay zoning (22.201), and it includes a method (22.217) to designate the district boundaries of wetlands. It could be applied within a coordinated process. Section 22.403 requires that new development prevent the increase in flood heights. While it is probably beyond the capability of an independent developer to model this threat, it may not be beyond the capability of Fitchburg—or better, of Fitchburg and its neighboring localities. Fortunately, too, the Zoning Ordinance identifies campgrounds as a potential use of such lands, so a land owner will not be left without an economically viable use for the land (22.430 (5)). Finally, the Zoning Ordinance allows land to be protected from vertical development, but used for forestry, wild crops, and grazing within parks (22.76). All of these provisions could be much more useful if they were combined with equally strong new ones within a policy for demarcating protected lands.

List 1: Natural Infrastructure and the Visual Character of Open Space (Items listed from the CP)

**Land Use**

*Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the natural and agricultural resources and features of the city.*

**Objective 1: Follow a pattern for development consistent with the long term urban growth map and its related phasing plan.**

Policy 3: Focus development away from high quality agricultural lands, by following the urban growth boundary map. Purpose: To maintain quality farmland for future agricultural use and as an infiltration area.

Policy 4: Preserve the rural character of land areas outside of the current urban service area, or the planned growth areas. Purpose: To maintain the characteristics and quality of the rural community.

**Objective 2: Protect environmental resources from development by promoting sustainable development and revitalization.**

Policy 1: Provide for a minimum 75 feet environmental corridor or buffer zone to protect manageable stream areas. Distance measurements will be consistent with Capital Area Regional Planning Commission policy. Neighborhood plans may provide for an environmental corridor width greater than 75 feet.

Policy 2: To protect wetlands, and the biological components of wetlands and related water bodies, provide for a 75 foot environmental corridor or buffer zone within the current (2007) urban service area and a 300 foot environmental corridor or buffer zone outside of the current (2007) urban service area. The environmental corridor or buffer zone is measured out from the wetland edge. For wetlands outside the current (2007) urban service area the environmental corridor or buffer width may be altered by the Plan Commission and Resource Conservation Commission in accord with the guidelines set forth in section 4, Land Use, of this Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 5: Examine the impact of development on existing wetlands and promote the re-establishment and re-generation of wetlands and related natural systems when and where appropriate.

*Goal 2: Develop a compact urban community that is visually and functionally distinct from its rural and agricultural community.*

**Objective 3: Preserve open space, natural areas, and rural and agricultural land by promoting compact development that contains a logical and sustainable mix of uses and building types.**

Policy 4: Retain the rural landscape of Fitchburg by limiting development outside of the urban service area to that which is consistent with the Rural Residential Development criteria.

**Objective 4: The City is to complete and adopt neighborhood plans based on established criteria, consistent with the phasing plan, as a basis for City judgments or activities for the relevant neighborhood area.**

Policy 2: The neighborhood plan will evaluate and examine the effects of proposed development to the natural and environmental systems, as well as the social and cultural systems. From this, a land use pattern is to be created consistent with this comprehensive plan.

**Natural Resources**

*Goal 1: Protect and rehabilitate the natural environment.*

**Objective 2: Encourage the protection and enhancement of sensitive natural areas.**

Policy 1: Map lands outside the Urban Service Area (USA) that would be part of the environmental corridor as if they were in the USA and designate them as a Rural Environmental Corridor, or resource system corridor. Purpose: The natural environment does not end at the USA boundary and water quality planning and protection is important in rural areas as well.

Policy 3: Develop guidelines for acceptable land uses within the Rural Environmental Corridor. Purpose: Protect sensitive natural areas from unsuitable land uses.

Policy 4: Determine gaps in both the Environmental Corridor and the Rural Environmental Corridor and determine logical areas for parkland or public ownership to provide environmental, and wildlife connections. Purpose: To make a true corridor that benefits wildlife

and their habitat and movements.

Policy 5: Examine linkages between environmental corridors, woodlands, steep slopes, pre-settlement areas, and other natural areas to determine any patterns for preservation of a resource system, and wildlife system through broadly scooped corridors. Purpose: To make a true corridor that benefits wildlife and their habitat and movements.

Policy 6: Promote the re-establishment and re-generation of wetlands and related natural systems when and where appropriate. Purpose: Recognize the crucial role wetlands play for flood control and water quality.

**Objective 3: Protect all Natural Resources**

Policy 3: Continue to enforce Floodplain and Wetland Ordinance(s). Purpose: To further the maintenance of safe and healthful conditions; to prevent and control water pollution; to protect fish spawning grounds, aquatic life, bird and other wildlife habitat; to protect buildings and lands from flooding and accelerated erosion; to protect archaeological and historic resources; to protect commercial fishing and maritime industries; to protect freshwater and coastal wetlands; to control building sites, placement of structures and land uses; to conserve shore cover, and to anticipate and respond to the impacts of development in shoreland areas.

*Goal 2: Provide public access to unique natural areas.*

**Objective 2: To preserve and maintain selected wooded areas, vegetative cover, streams, ponds, natural drainage ways, and other natural resources in and around the City.**

Policy 3: Natural public areas are to be maintained to retain their natural state and encourage appropriate public lands for hunting and fishing access, state parks, and other open space.

Purpose: Open space is a common preferred element among residents, and promotion of open space is critical to a strong community.

Policy 4: Provide environmental corridors of sufficient width to protect wildlife, water quality and biological components of wetland and stream corridors. Purpose: To have sufficient protection of wetlands, streams, and their related eco-systems.

**Housing**

*Goal 2: Promote the efficient use of land for housing.*

**Objective 1: Encourage compact neighborhood and development patterns.**

Policy 3: Housing development shall be undertaken with respect to the natural resources, environmental corridors and promotion of open space. Purpose: Respect environmental settings.

**Utilities and Community Facilities**

*Goal 4: To improve the Fitchburg Park and open space system by enhancing outdoor recreation, enhancing the community's natural resources and practicing ecological stewardship.*

**Objective 3: Plan and design parks and open space to sustain environmentally sensitive features and reduce negative environmental effects.**

Policy 2: Preserve and maintain selected wooded areas, vegetative cover, streams, ponds, natural drainage ways, and other natural resources in and around the City.

**Objective 5: Examine the creation of a central park and open space system.**

Policy 1: Integrate environmentally sensitive areas, active recreation, and resource protection into a parks and open space network.

### 3. Transportation Corridors Coordinated with Land Use

Particularly in its Transportation section, the CP supports coordinating land uses with transportation. (See List 2. Transportation is highlighted.) The CP repeatedly advocates mixed use, denser infill development, and a continuous thoroughfare network for all travel modes. This is somewhat at odds with the existing planning codes' insistence on an arterial-collector-local structure, although engineers are increasingly re-interpreting that hierarchy for more mixed-use milieus (e.g. through the Institute of Transportation Engineers' new Proposed Recommended Practice, *Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities*). A unified methodology would help accomplish the listed goals, objectives and policies. It would have to allocate new thoroughfares to specific locations and organize higher-intensity development around those that are served by transit. In particular, a policy using the "Context Zones" or the similar "Transect Zones" of the SmartCode would accomplish two things. First, it would explicitly justify a menu of walkable thoroughfares such as those enumerated in the proposed Recommended Practice. Second, it would enable those thoroughfare types that could be coordinated through the widely accepted "Transect Zones." These are used by the SmartCode, as well as by several other zoning codes.

Certain specific provisions of the Land Division Ordinance make the coordination of land use with thoroughfare types difficult—at least if the intention is to develop mixed-use and livable places more intense than the limited vocational activities now permitted (e.g. at 22.22 (2)). The functional classification of thoroughfares and the requirement for reversed frontages on major streets (15.08 (1) (E)) may be a serious impediment to taming capacious arterials.

List 2: Transportation Corridors Coordinated with Land Use

**Land Use**

*Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the natural and agricultural resources and features of the city.*

**Objective 1: Follow a pattern for development consistent with the long term urban growth map and its related phasing plan.**

Policy 1: Focus development along the Fitchburg—Oregon (east) rail corridor. Purpose: Plan development along a mass-transit corridor.

*Goal 2: Develop a compact urban community that is visually and functionally distinct from its rural and agricultural community.*

**Objective 1: Promote infill, reinvestment and redevelopment of land and uses.**

Policy 2: Plans for infill, redevelopment or reinvestment shall, where appropriate transit service exists or is to be provided, be based on the principles of mixed-use transit oriented development.

**Objective 6: Promote development in areas that encourages options to alternative transit modes.**

Policy 1: The City will seek to develop transit-oriented development along the eastern rail corridor, and existing bus routes, by planning high density mixed-uses around current or future transit stops.

Policy 3: Provide for adequate connectivity of all mode choices among residential areas, employment centers and commercial areas.

**Housing**

*Goal 1: To provide for balanced residential growth in the City with a variety of housing types, to promote decent housing and a suitable living environment for all residents, regardless of age, income or family size, and to encourage an adequate supply of affordable housing in each new urban neighborhood.*

**Objective 1: Promote development of housing to meet forecasted needs.**

Policy 1: Encourage an overall net neighborhood density that is transit friendly. Purpose: To promote efficient use of land in the urban service area and to provide for multi-modal friendly densities.

*Goal 2: Promote the efficient use of land for housing.*

**Objective 2: Promote residential development to occur in areas with existing infrastructure and sewer prior to promoting growth at the periphery where new utility and service expansion are needed.**

Policy 1: Locate housing in areas that are served by full urban services, including sanitary sewers and public water within convenient access to community facilities, employment centers and to arterial highways. Purpose: A main function of government is to provide services to its citizens, and make the provision of these services more cost effective.

**Economic Development**

*Goal 1: Encourage economic development opportunities appropriate to the resources, character, and service levels in the City.*

**Objective 1: Encourage the creation of compact mixed-use activity centers as an alternative to suburban style, single use, low density office and research parks.**

Policy 3: Mixed use and employment centers are to be visible and easily accessible to existing or planned transit routes. Purpose: Increased visibility and access helps improve commercial opportunities.

Policy 7: Some areas of the community will be more appropriate for mixed use centers and in these locations such centers should be more than simply encouraged. Purpose: To assure that the land is being used for best possible uses.

*Goal 2: Business development projects should emphasize solid tax base, jobs that pay well, sensitivity to the environment, and a diversity of employment opportunities.*

**Objective 2: Use business and industrial land and related infrastructure efficiently to reduce negative impacts on the environment.**

Policy 1: Locate employment areas where multi-modal transportation is, or will be made available, and encourage businesses to promote alternative means of transportation. Purpose:

Foster a safe and efficient design of streets to be used by walkers, bikers, drivers, and transit riders.

### **Transportation**

*Goal 1: Develop and maintain a coordinated land use and transportation system*

**Objective 1: Plan transportation infrastructure, in redevelopment projects and new developments, to encourage compact, urban development patterns.**

Policy 1: Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND's) that include mixed-uses, buildings located adjacent to sidewalks, less private and more public open space, smaller blocks, narrow streets with wide sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian-scale and street lighting, plantings and public art, lower parking ratios, shared parking, structured parking, and parking behind buildings.

Policy 2: Encourage Transit Oriented Developments (TOD's) that include a train station and intermodal transfer points as the prominent feature of town centers with high-density, high-quality development within a 10 minute walk circle surrounding the train station and all qualities of a TND as described in Policy 1 above.

**Objective 3: Coordinate land use and transportation plans with other agencies to assure that regional projects affecting the city are consistent with City plans, policies, and priorities.**

Policy 1: Work closely with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), Madison Area Transportation Planning Board (TPB), Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC), Dane County Highway, and neighboring communities to ensure that regional transportation plans follow a coherent regional design.

Policy 4: Ensure that the City's transportation system connects with the transportation facilities of neighboring communities as well as regional and state facilities.

*Goal 2: Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that allows for the convenient movement of people and goods.*

**Objective 1: Improve transportation safety through design, operation and maintenance, and system improvements to minimize the risk of harm to persons and property and to allow users to feel confident and secure in and around all modes of travel.**

Policy 4: Establish truck routes. Purpose: To allow for proper road maintenance and to aid planning efforts for street design and traffic calming measures.

**Objective 2: Maintain a transportation system that allows for proper traffic management and travel time reliability.**

Policy 3: Within the urban service area, encourage an efficient urban style grid street network.

Purpose: To provide small blocks and straight roads, primarily following a north-south or east-west orientation where feasible.

*Goal 3: Develop and maintain a multi-modal transportation system that reduces automobile dependency and increases transportation choice*

**Objective 2: Improve the pedestrian and bicycle transportation system to support a continuous, safe, and desirable walking and biking environment.**

Policy 3: Design neighborhoods to provide for multiple, safe, and direct bike and pedestrian connections in all directions.

**Objective 4: Promote an efficient and reliable transit system that offers convenient alternatives to private vehicle travel.**

Policy 3: Annually develop a 5-yr transit improvement plan that designates and maps potential future bus routes and transfer points.

**Objective 6: Initiate passenger rail-based service along the Fitchburg-Oregon rail line.**

Policy 1: Promote and support the Transport 2020 initiative and the extension of the start-up system to provide commuter rail service to the City of Fitchburg along the Fitchburg-Oregon rail line.

Policy 2: Adopt and implement transit-oriented developments to support rail-based passenger transit along the Fitchburg-Oregon rail corridor.

#### 4. Compact, Pedestrian-oriented Mixed-use Centers

The CP frequently calls for compact mixed-use centers—often in connection with the Fitchburg—Oregon (east) rail corridor. (See List 3.) These centers may be very difficult for Fitchburg to coordinate without explicit standards. In mixed-use areas, a host of issues must be coordinated simultaneously, and across disciplines. Parking locations, parking ratios, transit, the design of thoroughfares, building entrances, building design, the design of civic spaces, and of course land use must be coordinated between different property owners, engineers, designers, and financiers. While it is theoretically possible that a Planned Development process could embrace such a scope, the task would effectively require Fitchburg to create a set of standards in any case. Ad-hoc adjustments will ramify endlessly when they are applied to a system of urbanism with many interdependent parts.

While it is certainly possible to do compact-mixed-use centers using Fitchburg’s flexible Zoning Ordinance, there are a number of practical impediments. First, the Planned Development process is a poor fit, and its procedure for approving alterations (22.93) can be interpreted to require that even minor alterations be sent through the entire process. In a mixed-use environment, each building may have to diverge from the plan, so the normal, constant process of variation could trigger an endless series of trips back to the first step.

The logic of urbanism often requires that many elements of urbanism be adjusted simultaneously to match their urban or rural context.

Fitchburg prefers one driveway per 125 feet (Driveways, 25.05 (3)), but in a walkable area, it is preferable to eliminate driveways in favor of alleys, so as to leave the sidewalks undisturbed. Thus, although the Plan Commission reserves to itself the discretion to require a “lesser or greater distance,” there is no explicit trigger requiring the insertion of alleys, except for industry.

The Land Division Ordinance, at 15.08 (7) (l), suggests that a 2:1 ratio of lot depth to width is desirable, but this one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient for a community with both farms and the vibrant urban life Fitchburg contemplates. Certainly, that ratio is acceptable for houses with individual driveways, but it is too stout for narrow houses and townhouses. For commercial and multifamily buildings in main-street settings (e.g. on 120-foot square lots), it is too narrow.

Section 22.105 (General Regulations) (3) of the Zoning Ordinance requires that parking be under the same control as the use for which it is provided. Certainly, that is rational in an area characterized by a low intensity of use and lightly used public transportation, but in an urban setting, the parking can be more efficiently provided centrally—be it by the city itself, a non-profit entity, or a for-profit business.

In a quiet residential area, an accessory use (22.150 (2)), should certainly be clearly subordinate to the primary one (e.g. for limited vocational activities at 22.22 of the Zoning Ordinance), but in more complex and vibrant settings, it is often desirable to permit a visible mix. This is particularly true for live-work houses, townhouses, and small commercial buildings. In fact, the aesthetic resolution of such a mix is a



significant reason for Fitchburg to adopt a robust set of architectural design standards keyed to the urban or rural context.

Fitchburg's Land Division Ordinance, at 15.08 (6) (C), contemplates pedestrian walkways to break up long blocks. However, such walkways have other, more urban uses. They can connect parking areas in the rear to sidewalks in the front. Such walkways could also serve as public "streets" for the purpose of 22.136 (Standards for Lots and Setbacks) of the Zoning Ordinance, which requires that all lots front onto public streets. Particularly if Fitchburg wants to provide a number of smaller parks and greens, it may be desirable to attach them to block frontages, so some lots are only separated from the open space by a pedestrian way.

Such a suite of policies can be organized so that, for example, widely separated driveways, privately provided parking, and walkways across blocks are all encouraged in a quiet residential setting, while alleys, centrally provided (and paid) parking, and walkways from that parking all occur in more intense areas.

List 3: Compact, Pedestrian-oriented Mixed-use Centers

**Land Use**

*Goal 2: Develop a compact urban community that is visually and functionally distinct from its rural and agricultural community.*

**Objective 2: Restore underutilized, blighted, or underdeveloped properties within current commercial and residential neighborhoods.**

Policy 1: The City should engage in redevelopment studies within areas showing blight, economic despair, and commercial areas with low floor area ratios.

**Objective 3: Preserve open space, natural areas, and rural and agricultural land by promoting compact development that contains a logical and sustainable mix of uses and building types.**

Policy 3: Land uses within the neighborhood plans will be an integration of compatible uses to incorporate a neighborhood feeling in each development. Commercial and residential units will be mixed in higher density areas, to promote live-work areas and to offer day to-day needs within a neighborhood. Industrial uses will be within the designated business areas and designed to limit impact to the livelihood of residential neighborhoods. Mixed use areas are to be promoted. Business uses should move toward such mixed use areas or be a high density balanced developments rather than land extensive business parks.

**Housing**

*Goal 2: Promote the efficient use of land for housing.*

**Objective 1: Encourage compact neighborhood and development patterns.**

Policy 1: Promote Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) developments to create compactness, efficiency, livability and multimodal transportation. Purpose: Provide development patterns that are efficient to serve and preserve rural land resources.

Policy 2: Encourage the development of planned residential areas large enough to allow "mixed use" with a variety of housing types, complementary commercial and open space uses. Encourage use of innovative design and cluster development. Purpose: Balanced neighborhoods promote diversity and the potential for reduced trip lengths and varied methods of transportation.

Policy 5: Recognize that development at higher but livable densities promotes wise use of the land resource and reduces land required to meet housing demand. This helps to preserve agricultural and other open space land outside the urban service area. Purpose: Provide for efficient use of land to help preserve agricultural uses, yet meet City's share of population growth.

**Economic Development**

*Goal 1: Encourage economic development opportunities appropriate to the resources, character, and service levels in the City.*

**Objective 1: Encourage the creation of compact mixed-use activity centers as an alternative to suburban style, single use, low density office and research parks.**

Policy 3: Mixed use and employment centers are to be visible and easily accessible to existing or planned transit routes. Purpose: Increased visibility and access helps improve commercial opportunities.

Policy 5: Avoid strip commercial buildings. Encourage the clustering of commercial uses in planned centers or other compact commercial areas in order to maximize consumer safety and convenience, improve traffic safety and flow, and enhance economic viability. Purpose:

Reduce infrastructure costs and sprawl along highway frontages.

*Goal 2: Business development projects should emphasize solid tax base, jobs that pay well, sensitivity to the environment, and a diversity of employment opportunities.*

**Objective 2: Use business and industrial land and related infrastructure efficiently to reduce negative impacts on the environment.**

Policy 1: Locate employment areas where multi-modal transportation is, or will be made available, and encourage businesses to promote alternative means of transportation. Purpose: Foster a safe and efficient design of streets to be used by walkers, bikers, drivers, and transit riders.

**Transportation**

*Goal 1: Develop and maintain a coordinated land use and transportation system*

**Objective 1: Plan transportation infrastructure, in redevelopment projects and new developments, to encourage compact, urban development patterns.**

Policy 2: Encourage Transit Oriented Developments (TOD's) that include a train station and intermodal transfer points as the prominent feature of town centers with high-density, high-quality development within a 10 minute walk circle surrounding the train station and all qualities of a TND as described in Policy 1 above.

*Goal 3: Develop and maintain a multi-modal transportation system that reduces automobile dependency and increases transportation choice*

**Objective 2: Improve the pedestrian and bicycle transportation system to support a continuous, safe, and desirable walking and biking environment.**

Policy 3: Design neighborhoods to provide for multiple, safe, and direct bike and pedestrian connections in all directions.

## 5. Interconnected Thoroughfare Network Hierarchy

Within the Transportation section, the CP strongly advocates policies designed to engender a hierarchy of thoroughfares linked into a network. (See List 3.) This involves both coordination with area governments and the retention of rural roads' character and capacity. A comprehensive set of standards for designing and sizing thoroughfare networks—including a bundle of thoroughfare types—would help Fitchburg to keep congestion in check.

Very little in the existing planning codes explicitly precludes this network, but one prohibition does: Section 15.08 (5) (A), (B), & (C) of the Land Division Ordinance. The desired intersection spacing—1,200 feet—corresponds to three or four ordinary urban blocks. Despite the fact that they have proven themselves in both Chicago and in (famously) in Madison, thoroughfares that intersect at acute angles are prohibited as well.

Some well-known urban design options are eliminated. One tool that can be used where a capacious thoroughfare intersects a livable community is a *Multiway Boulevard*. This is a new term coined by Allan B Jacobs, Elizabeth Macdonald, and Yodan Rofé for the kind of subdivided thoroughfare found in Chicago and other older cities. Multiway boulevards allow through traffic to pass by locally-oriented frontage roads at their sides, but Fitchburg expressly prohibits them.

Like many subdivision ordinances, the Land Subdivision Ordinance does require that thoroughfares be extended to the edge of a development (15.08 (1) (D)), and it also contemplates that streets and half-streets will be required in developments. These provisions make it all the more necessary that Fitchburg pursue a bundle of methods for coordinating transportation corridors with land uses. Unlike quiet residential areas, urban settings benefit from having a grid with four-way intersections to help absorb motor traffic that would otherwise congest the main thoroughfares.

List 4: Interconnected Thoroughfare Network Hierarchy

**Transportation**

*Goal 1: Develop and maintain a coordinated land use and transportation system*

**Objective 1: Plan transportation infrastructure, in redevelopment projects and new developments, to encourage compact, urban development patterns.**

Policy 1: Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND's) that include mixed-uses, buildings located adjacent to sidewalks, less private and more public open space, smaller blocks, narrow streets with wide sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian-scale and street lighting, plantings and public art, lower parking ratios, shared parking, structured parking, and parking behind buildings.

**Objective 2: Preserve and maintain rural roads for agricultural uses, local traffic, and recreational uses.**

Policy 3: Direct community traffic and commuter traffic to major arterials to discourage their use of rural roadways.

**Objective 3: Coordinate land use and transportation plans with other agencies to assure that regional projects affecting the city are consistent with City plans, policies, and priorities.**

Policy 1: Work closely with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), Madison Area Transportation Planning Board (TPB), Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC), Dane County Highway, and neighboring communities to ensure that regional transportation plans follow a coherent regional design.

Policy 4: Ensure that the City's transportation system connects with the transportation facilities of neighboring communities as well as regional and state facilities.

*Goal 2: Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that allows for the convenient movement of people and goods.*

**Objective 2: Maintain a transportation system that allows for proper traffic management and travel time reliability.**

Policy 3: Within the urban service area, encourage an efficient urban style grid street network.

Purpose: To provide small blocks and straight roads, primarily following a north-south or east-west orientation where feasible.

Policy 4: Provide a continuous interconnected roadway system to preserve mobility and avoid travel delays.

*Goal 3: Develop and maintain a multi-modal transportation system that reduces automobile dependency and increases transportation choice*

**Objective 2: Improve the pedestrian and bicycle transportation system to support a continuous, safe, and desirable walking and biking environment.**

Policy 3: Design neighborhoods to provide for multiple, safe, and direct bike and pedestrian connections in all directions.

## **6. Demarcation of Preserved, Developed, and Developing Lands**

The CP advocates a number of policies that would be supported by mapping the locations toward which growth should be steered, and away from which it should be kept. These calls are concentrated in the Land Use, Natural Resources, and Agricultural Resources sections (highlighted). Most of the other sections would benefit from such a system of allocation. For example, the Housing section proposes that un-sewered subdivisions not be permitted, and sewers are, of course, a major force behind sprawl.

The policies listed below combine two areas of concern. One is to do with preserving precious or fragile land, and the other is to do with safeguarding the public purse. These two goals combine in policies (e.g. Land Use Goal 2, Objective 7, Policy 2 in List 5) designed to keep growth deliberate—and away from certain areas.

Fitchburg’s existing planning and land division codes do not comprehensively address the issue of directing growth, although the agricultural zoning (A-X District - Exclusive Agriculture and A-T District Transitional Agriculture) protects agriculture. Nevertheless, there seems to be no overall scheme for considering infrastructure, land use, the intensity of development, and the allocation of civic open spaces.

The Land Division Ordinance and the Zoning Ordinance have a number of provisions that could support coordinated boundaries, or can help enable them. The Land Division Ordinance, at 15.02 (4), requires that developers dedicate land for thoroughfares, parks, and playgrounds. At 15.02 (6), it prohibits the division of land that is unsuitable for use by reason of flooding. As noted earlier, the Zoning Ordinance safeguards wetlands, agricultural land, and land in forestry. When combined with sewer, life-safety, and transportation issues, a coherent picture emerges—of lands that have been protected, of lands that should be protected, of lands that should be incrementally developed, of lands that should be left as-is, and of lands that should be re-developed.

List 5: Demarcation of Preserved, Developed, and Developing Lands

**Land Use**

*Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the natural and agricultural resources and features of the city.*

**Objective 1: Follow a pattern for development consistent with the long term urban growth map and its related phasing plan.**

Policy 2: Focus development in areas that can be serviced by gravity flow sanitary sewer.

Purpose: To reduce the costs of the City taxpayer from the maintenance of lift stations.

Policy 3: Focus development away from high quality agricultural lands, by following the urban growth boundary map. Purpose: To maintain quality farmland for future agricultural use and as an infiltration area.

Policy 4: Preserve the rural character of land areas outside of the current urban service area, or the planned growth areas. Purpose: To maintain the characteristics and quality of the rural community.

Policy 5: Retain the rural character within the planned growth areas until such time as a neighborhood plan is adopted and the land is added to an urban service area, at which time growth shall be consistent with the neighborhood plan

**Objective 2: Protect environmental resources from development by promoting sustainable development and revitalization.**

Policy 1: Provide for a minimum 75 feet environmental corridor or buffer zone to protect manageable stream areas. Distance measurements will be consistent with Capital Area Regional Planning Commission policy. Neighborhood plans may provide for an environmental corridor width greater than 75 feet.

Policy 2: To protect wetlands, and the biological components of wetlands and related water bodies, provide for a 75 foot environmental corridor or buffer zone within the current (2007) urban service area and a 300 foot environmental corridor or buffer zone outside of the current (2007) urban service area. The environmental corridor or buffer zone is measured out from the wetland edge. For wetlands outside the current (2007) urban service area the environmental corridor or buffer width may be altered by the Plan Commission and Resource Conservation Commission in accord with the guidelines set forth in section 4, Land Use, of this Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 3: Favor protection of groundwater recharge areas.

Policy 4: Examine hydric soils and hydric inclusions for situations in order to regenerate wetlands previously destroyed by human activity.

Policy 7: Protect life and property by not allowing development near or in identified floodplains.

*Goal 2: Develop a compact urban community that is visually and functionally distinct from its rural and agricultural community.*

**Objective 3: Preserve open space, natural areas, and rural and agricultural land by promoting compact development that contains a logical and sustainable mix of uses and building types.**

Policy 2: Neighborhood planning is to be sensitive to the context provided by existing environmental resources, and land uses.

Policy 4: Retain the rural landscape of Fitchburg by limiting development outside of the urban service area to that which is consistent with the Rural Residential Development criteria.

Policy 5: Non-residential development outside the urban service area is to be limited to those in areas already appropriately zoned for the intended use. Establishment or expansion of any non-residential uses, in areas appropriately zoned, provide the appropriate context for the use. If allowed, the use will need to provide proper storm water management and other impact mitigation measures.

**Objective 4: The City is to complete and adopt neighborhood plans based on established criteria, consistent with the phasing plan, as a basis for City judgments or activities for the relevant neighborhood area.**

Policy 1: The neighborhood plans will analyze the natural resources, environmental situation, transportation connections, storm water management, and utilities to determine the potential

as to where development should and should not occur within the boundary.

**Objective 5: Extend utilities and infrastructure in a way that balances market demand with an average annual growth rate not to exceed 75 acres per year, and using existing and proposed infrastructure in an efficient manner.**

Policy 1: Manage the outward growth of utilities, infrastructure, and land development by following the phasing of the Urban Development Boundary Map.

Policy 2: The City will seek expansion of the urban service area when there is demand for serviced land for housing and businesses, it is feasible to extend sewer and water lines to a new area and the action will be consistent with the phasing recommendations of this plan, and an expected average annual growth rate not to exceed 75 acres per year.

**Objective 7: Control the rate of new development outside the current urban service area.**

Policy 2: Provide for a 20-year urban service boundary with a 5- year flexibility factor at a 75 acre per year development rate. This boundary will be reviewed every 5 years for adjustments.

Purpose: To guide planners, developers, and City officials as to where the City will be expanding services and developing in the future.

**Natural Resources**

*Goal 1: Protect and rehabilitate the natural environment.*

**Objective 2: Encourage the protection and enhancement of sensitive natural areas.**

Policy 3: Develop guidelines for acceptable land uses within the Rural Environmental Corridor.

Purpose: Protect sensitive natural areas from unsuitable land uses.

Policy 4: Determine gaps in both the Environmental Corridor and the Rural Environmental Corridor and determine logical areas for parkland or public ownership to provide environmental, and wildlife connections. Purpose: To make a true corridor that benefits wildlife and their habitat and movements.

Policy 5: Examine linkages between environmental corridors, woodlands, steep slopes, pre-settlement areas, and other natural areas to determine any patterns for preservation of a resource system, and wildlife system through broadly scooped corridors. Purpose: To make a true corridor that benefits wildlife and their habitat and movements.

**Objective 3: Protect all Natural Resources**

Policy 3: Continue to enforce Floodplain and Wetland Ordinance(s). Purpose: To further the maintenance of safe and healthful conditions; to prevent and control water pollution; to protect fish spawning grounds, aquatic life, bird and other wildlife habitat; to protect buildings and lands from flooding and accelerated erosion; to protect archaeological and historic resources; to protect commercial fishing and maritime industries; to protect freshwater and coastal wetlands; to control building sites, placement of structures and land uses; to conserve shore cover, and to anticipate and respond to the impacts of development in shoreland areas.

Policy 7: Protect good natural infiltration areas from development. Purpose: To provide for groundwater recharge.

*Goal 2: Provide public access to unique natural areas.*

**Objective 2: To preserve and maintain selected wooded areas, vegetative cover, streams, ponds, natural drainage ways, and other natural resources in and around the City.**

Policy 3: Natural public areas are to be maintained to retain their natural state and encourage appropriate public lands for hunting and fishing access, state parks, and other open space.

Purpose: Open space is a common preferred element among residents, and promotion of open space is critical to a strong community.

Policy 4: Provide environmental corridors of sufficient width to protect wildlife, water quality and biological components of wetland and stream corridors. Purpose: To have sufficient protection of wetlands, streams, and their related eco-systems.

*Goal 3: Provide an opportunity for the use and harvest of significant commercial natural resources.*

**Objective 2: To ensure that all extraction of resources takes place under conditions which foster compatibility with existing surrounding land uses.**

Policy 1: Make note of key sand and gravel and timber sites that may exist in the City and plan for compatible land uses adjacent to key sites. Purpose: Map to avoid conflicts with other planned land uses.

**Agricultural Resources**

*Goal 1: To protect and maintain agriculture as a significant resource within Fitchburg.*



**Objective 1: Adopt a long-term growth area. Definition: A long-term growth area defines where future development will occur and helps preserve and protect agricultural land, wood lots, and other natural areas from development. If development occurs outside of the long-term growth area it is to be limited to agricultural development and necessary ancillary or accessory uses allowed within agricultural zoning districts of the City.**

Policy 1: Consider the creation or variations of either a Transfer or Purchase of Development Rights program to be used to compensate rural landowners who may be outside the long-term growth area. Purpose: Landowners outside of a long-term growth area may have inaccessible assets in land, and the transfer of development rights may assist landowners to access part of that value. The income they receive from the TDR or PDR program can be used to invest in their farm operation or to compensate them when they sell their land at a rate that is affordable to new or expanding farmers.

**Objective 2: Encourage farmers to invest in improvements to their farm operations, or to diversify their agricultural operations to address the changing farm economy.**

Policy 2: For current or future agricultural operations, discourage the location of incompatible land use near farms or agricultural land to avoid adverse impacts to farm operations or agricultural lands. Purpose: To prevent negative impacts from conflicting land uses

*Goal 2: Preserve agricultural land as a resource for the use and benefit of current and future generations.*

**Objective 1: To protect agricultural land and limit development of agricultural land to those areas adjacent to the existing urban service area and where not in conflict with the overall land use plan.**

Policy 1: Direct urban development away from prime or other highly productive agricultural lands except where such lands are adjacent to existing development and can be cost-effectively served by urban services. Purpose: Urban land use often impact and conflict with farm operations. Expanding septic systems and private well increase the possibility of septic system failures and well contaminations that can cause public health hazards.

Policy 2: Follow the long-term growth boundary established in 2007 to protect the City's agricultural base. Purpose: Urban land use often impact and conflict with farm operations. Preservation of high quality agricultural lands was one area that was incorporated in the growth boundary.

**Objective 2: Protect the scenic character of the agricultural area and promote efficiency and compactness of growth.**

Policy 1: Use the City's zoning control to discourage development in designated agricultural preservation areas. Purpose: Urban land use often impact and conflict with farm operations.

Policy 2: Prohibit creation of rural subdivisions or establishment of new non-agricultural business developments outside the urban service area unless allowed in a planned rural development. Individual or small cluster rural home sites shall be limited to those meeting the rural residential development criteria. Purpose: To protect rural area and to maintain compact, more easily serviceable developments.

Policy 3: Understand that privately held agricultural lands are a large part of the rural character of the community and that measures such as transfer of development rights or purchase of development rights should be used to maintain this resource. Purpose: The entire community derives a benefit from open space farmland, and measures to assure preservation are important to community character.

**Objective 3: Recommend that no policy should be adopted or implemented which would substantially impair or diminish the present uses, values, or enjoyment of agricultural land.**

**Purpose: Promote the long term future of agriculture in Fitchburg.**

Policy 2: The City should be prepared to utilize extra-territorial plat review, and zoning jurisdiction to preserve adjacent agricultural lands and prevent potentially conflicting development. Purpose: To assure that Fitchburg agriculture does not face urbanization pressures from surrounding communities, and to assist in the provision of larger blocks of open space.

### **Cultural Resources**

*Goal 2: Actively seek to strengthen strong cultural and social history and community identity.*

**Objective 1: Retain, enhance, and promote the inviting atmosphere of the City of Fitchburg.**

Policy 3: The City will use the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Ordinance as tools to encourage locally appropriate development and to maintain the integrity

of undeveloped open space and agricultural areas. Purpose: Provide consistent decisions for each application.

### **Housing**

*Goal 2: Promote the efficient use of land for housing.*

**Objective 1: Encourage compact neighborhood and development patterns.**

Policy 3: Housing development shall be undertaken with respect to the natural resources, environmental corridors and promotion of open space. Purpose: Respect environmental settings.

**Objective 2: Promote residential development to occur in areas with existing infrastructure and sewer prior to promoting growth at the periphery where new utility and service expansion are needed.**

Policy 2: Do not allow unsewered subdivisions. Purpose: To prevent groundwater contamination; provide for a compact community and one that is efficient to service.

Policy 3: Rural residential development should be limited to dwelling sited in accord with rural residential siting criteria or in select planned rural cluster areas. The rural residential criteria is not created to allow subdivisions, but to limit rural housing to suitable areas. Purpose: Provide for limited rural housing opportunities where there will be compatibility with other land used.

Urban services should not subsidize services to non-urban service developments which are more costly to serve.

### **Utilities and Community Facilities**

*Goal 1: Provide and maintain high quality and energy/resource efficient public water supply, sanitary sewer and treatment, stormwater management, recycling and refuse.*

**Objective 1: Provide and maintain an adequate supply of safe water for drinking and fire protection needs at a reasonable price.**

Policy 6: Evaluate the feasibility of establishing or enhancing groundwater preservation areas, including potential land owner compensation.

*Goal 2: To maintain the existing public and private utility system and extend urban services within urban development boundary areas defined in a neighborhood plan, while minimizing the impacts to the environment.*

**Objective 1: Maintain and improve the condition of the existing sanitary sewer and water infrastructure.**

Policy 4: The City will favor gravity flow sewer growth, in accord with the long-term growth boundary and phasing policies.

*Goal 3: To locate and maintain public facilities and services so as to support the Goals of compact growth, neighborhood revitalization, promote active lifestyles, conservation of energy and sustainable neighborhood design.*

**Objective 1: Provide public facilities in a cost-effective manner and build them to a high standard of architectural quality and energy efficiency.**

Policy 3: Provide facilities and services with the intention of promoting compact, orderly urban growth and neighborhood revitalization.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation**

*Goal 1: Engage in mutually beneficial intergovernmental relations with local and overlapping governments or agencies to reduce or resolve conflicts.*

**Objective 3: Encourage land use and transportation plans in the adjacent Towns, Cities and Villages that are consistent with the objectives of the Fitchburg plan.**

Policy 1: Encourage the Towns of Dunn, Oregon and Verona to plan for agriculture and open space preservation adjoining similarly planned agriculture and open space preservation land use in Fitchburg.

Policy 3: Be cognizant of agriculture and open space uses planned by towns near Fitchburg's planned development areas by mitigating impacts of development on those adjoining agriculture and open space areas.

Policy 4: Communicate with nearby cities and villages to establish areas of community separation.

## 7. Community Design Process

Within Fitchburg’s jurisdiction, a unified community design process would support each of the Sections of the CP, and it would support the Land Use section (highlighted) most. This is the natural complement to the process of delineation. In fact, such a program of demarcation partly depends upon a coherent picture of how inward and outward development should occur as communities and parts of communities. Many of the items listed in List 6 are to do with organizing neighborhoods around transportation, common destinations, and infrastructure—against a background of open land. Land Use Goal 2, Objective 3, Policy 3, in particular, contemplates the clustering of mixed uses in certain areas.

Unfortunately, there is little sense within the existing planning codes that a city must be made up of parts configured into a whole—almost like the parts of a living thing. The Planned Development (PD) process is powerful and offers wide discretion, but it specifically lacks “set” standards. A bundle of standards, if applied to a stepwise process similar to the PD process, would alert developers and residents to the organic nature of the variety of uses, housing types, and thoroughfares. None of these varies randomly; they vary as do the organs and cells of a living thing, and so they must be designed and implemented through a process planned to convene viable communities.

Fitchburg’s highly discretionary code permits mixed-use development, but it does not permit plans to change incrementally in order to take account of changing circumstances. Quite appropriately, Fitchburg relies on having wise and knowledgeable staff, consultants, and Commission members. However, since its code can be interpreted to require that the Plan Commission continually revisit whole projects for minor alterations, the process used in Fitchburg could discourage the sort of minor tweaks that makes urban development a living thing. Moreover, a code can double as a framework for sharing knowledge across borders. The SmartCode, in particular, uses categories of land area, such as Sectors and Transect Zones, that are widely shared within the development community that is best positioned to provide walkable mixed-use urbanism: The New Urbanist community. If it were to use such a code, the code could also double as a framework on which to hang the various “modules” available, and through which local planners and officials can share best practices.

One of the aspects of an organic, evolving community is that its final population and mix of building types cannot be predicted in advance with the degree of certainty that a conventional subdivision can. In fact, slow growth and frequent minor changes in the direction of that growth are the norm for many new communities that integrate a mixture of uses. The Land Division Ordinance may require too much specificity. This is especially so because such communities combine both residential and commercial space, each of which can change each others’ plans. The Land Division Ordinance requires, in 15.07, that the projected population be broken down by unit type, with multi-family dwelling units further broken down by units and bedrooms. It also requires a strict development schedule. Fortunately, according to the Zoning Ordinance’s own procedures (22.100 (4)), the Zoning Administrator decides whether the staff can approve minor deviations after the development has commenced, but the question is whether Fitchburg’s Plan Commission would consider a change from, say, a smaller apartment unit size to a large condominium unit size “minor.” Still, for mixed use, a community design process specifically designed

for flexibility would be easier to administer. If the community were zoned not by use per se, but according to the intensity of land use, then the precise mix of uses and building types could be allowed to vary, but within reasonably predictable bounds of intensity.

The Zoning Ordinance wisely permits a project seeking approval under the Planned Development process to have segmented ownership. (22.86). At the time of a course-correction in the development, many properties will already have been sold off, though, so some owners of inhabited buildings may have to re-start the development process in order to accommodate changes that undeveloped lots' owners demand. Further, a charrette ten years after the development commences may identify a need to build on parking lots that have since been sold off to individual owners. A development design review process (perhaps based on that at 22.99) would allow the City to maintain control despite the segmented ownership. If development were to be managed through a regulatory plan, the process would be more predictable for all parties.

List 6: Community Design Process

**Land Use**

*Goal 2: Develop a compact urban community that is visually and functionally distinct from its rural and agricultural community.*

**Objective 1: Promote infill, reinvestment and redevelopment of land and uses.**

Policy 1: Infill, reinvestment, or redevelopment areas should be in accord with a plan adopted by the City. One such plan currently in place is the “North Fish Hatchery Road Opportunity Analysis and Concept Planning”. Prior to offering any incentives for redevelopment, the City should have approved a plan, properly vetted through a public process, to guide policy makers in the decision making process.

Policy 2: Plans for infill, redevelopment or reinvestment shall, where appropriate transit service exists or is to be provided, be based on the principles of mixed-use transit oriented development.

**Objective 3: Preserve open space, natural areas, and rural and agricultural land by promoting compact development that contains a logical and sustainable mix of uses and building types.**

Policy 1: Neighborhood Planning will generally provide for a land use arrangement that accommodates a range and mixture of housing and business options.

Policy 3: Land uses within the neighborhood plans will be an integration of compatible uses to incorporate a neighborhood feeling in each development. Commercial and residential units will be mixed in higher density areas, to promote live-work areas and to offer day to- day needs within a neighborhood. Industrial uses will be within the designated business areas and designed to limit impact to the livelihood of residential neighborhoods. Mixed use areas are to be promoted. Business uses should move toward such mixed use areas or be a high density balanced developments rather than land extensive business parks.

**Objective 4: The City is to complete and adopt neighborhood plans based on established criteria, consistent with the phasing plan, as a basis for City judgments or activities for the relevant neighborhood area.**

Policy 2: The neighborhood plan will evaluate and examine the effects of proposed development to the natural and environmental systems, as well as the social and cultural systems. From this, a land use pattern is to be created consistent with this comprehensive plan.

Policy 4: The neighborhood plan shall cover an area large enough to be considered a logical unit for service provision and to determine compatibility and consistency of the proposed change with adjacent areas and existing plans. This area may be substantially larger than the area that is requested for inclusion in the Central Urban Service Area.

Policy 5: Neighborhood plans with urban service area expansion requests must include 5-year staging boundaries.

**Objective 6: Promote development in areas that encourages options to alternative transit modes.**

Policy 1: The City will seek to develop transit-oriented development along the eastern rail corridor, and existing bus routes, by planning high density mixed-uses around current or future transit stops.

Policy 2: Transit-oriented development will be focused on the Planned Development zoning district and Traditional Neighborhood Developments.

**Natural Resources**

*Goal 1: Protect and rehabilitate the natural environment.*

**Objective 2: Encourage the protection and enhancement of sensitive natural areas.**

Policy 6: Promote the re-establishment and re-generation of wetlands and related natural systems when and where appropriate. Purpose: Recognize the crucial role wetlands play for flood control and water quality.

*Goal 2: Provide public access to unique natural areas.*

**Objective 1: Continue to require new developments or subdivisions to dedicate sufficient land acreage for recreational purposes, or contribute funds for future recreation and open space land acquisition.**

Policy 1: Provide accessible, well-maintained parks and playgrounds within convenient distance (1/4 mile) from all neighborhoods. Purpose: Make both active and passive outdoor recreational opportunities accessible to the group or area which they are designed to serve, and develop these in a safe and aesthetically pleasing way which is integrated into the existing land use pattern.

### **Agricultural Resources**

*Goal 2: Preserve agricultural land as a resource for the use and benefit of current and future generations.*

**Objective 1: To protect agricultural land and limit development of agricultural land to those areas adjacent to the existing urban service area and where not in conflict with the overall land use plan.**

Policy 3: Developments outside the urban service area are to be limited to those that meet the rural development criteria. Rural development criteria are intended to prevent development in conflict with goals 1 and 2. Purpose: Suburban sprawl often impacts and conflicts with farm operations. The criteria are designed to limit these impacts, as well as protect and preserve open space and agricultural and natural resources.

**Objective 3: Recommend that no policy should be adopted or implemented which would substantially impair or diminish the present uses, values, or enjoyment of agricultural land.**

**Purpose: Promote the long term future of agriculture in Fitchburg.**

Policy 1: Pursue development or boundary agreements with surrounding communities that would preserve agricultural land in those areas.

### **Cultural Resources**

*Goal 2: Actively seek to strengthen strong cultural and social history and community identity.*

**Objective 1: Retain, enhance, and promote the inviting atmosphere of the City of Fitchburg.**

Policy 3: The City will use the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Ordinance as tools to encourage locally appropriate development and to maintain the integrity of undeveloped open space and agricultural areas. Purpose: Provide consistent decisions for each application.

### **Housing**

*Goal 1: To provide for balanced residential growth in the City with a variety of housing types, to promote decent housing and a suitable living environment for all residents, regardless of age, income or family size, and to encourage an adequate supply of affordable housing in each new urban neighborhood.*

**Objective 1: Promote development of housing to meet forecasted needs.**

Policy 1: Encourage an overall net neighborhood density that is transit friendly. Purpose: To promote efficient use of land in the urban service area and to provide for multi-modal friendly densities.

**Objective 3: Recognize the value of existing housing and established neighborhoods, and support rehabilitation efforts, both public and private, while maintaining the historic, cultural and aesthetic values of the community.**

Policy 3: Transition between higher densities and existing lower density areas. Purpose: Transition areas allow the change in density to occur gradually.

*Goal 2: Promote the efficient use of land for housing.*

**Objective 1: Encourage compact neighborhood and development patterns.**

Policy 1: Promote Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) developments to create compactness, efficiency, livability and multimodal transportation. Purpose: Provide development patterns that are efficient to serve and preserve rural land resources.

Policy 2: Encourage the development of planned residential areas large enough to allow "mixed use" with a variety of housing types, complementary commercial and open space uses. Encourage use of innovative design and cluster development. Purpose: Balanced neighborhoods promote diversity and the potential for reduced trip lengths and varied methods of transportation.

**Objective 2: Promote residential development to occur in areas with existing infrastructure and sewer prior to promoting growth at the periphery where new utility and service expansion are needed.**

Policy 2: Do not allow unsewered subdivisions. Purpose: To prevent groundwater contamination; provide for a compact community and one that is efficient to service.

Policy 3: Rural residential development should be limited to dwelling sited in accord with rural residential siting criteria or in select planned rural cluster areas. The rural residential criteria is not created to allow subdivisions, but to limit rural housing to suitable areas. Purpose: Provide for limited rural housing opportunities where there will be compatibility with other land used. Urban services should not subsidize services to non-urban service developments which are more costly to serve.

### **Economic Development**

*Goal 1: Encourage economic development opportunities appropriate to the resources, character, and service levels in the City.*

**Objective 1: Encourage the creation of compact mixed-use activity centers as an alternative to suburban style, single use, low density office and research parks.**

Policy 1: Mixed use centers should contain a strategic mix of uses, taking into account market demand and economic analysis, including residential, retail, office, service and civic, and open space. Purpose: Foster compact, attractive, economically viable, and walkable developments.

Policy 7: Some areas of the community will be more appropriate for mixed use centers and in these locations such centers should be more than simply encouraged. Purpose: To assure that the land is being used for best possible uses.

Policy 8: Consider the creation of financial assistance programs or a parking utility to improve the fiscal viability of structured parking within a mixed-use compact development scenario.

Purpose: Compact development requires parking in a configuration other than surface lots; however, the cost of providing structured or underground parking is many times more per stall than surface lots. To meet other goals of the Plan, the City may need to consider funding mechanisms to increase financial feasibility.

*Goal 2: Business development projects should emphasize solid tax base, jobs that pay well, sensitivity to the environment, and a diversity of employment opportunities.*

**Objective 1: Use business and industrial land and related infrastructure efficiently to achieve strong commercial/industrial/manufacturing tax base.**

Policy 2: Develop financial incentives/guidelines that promote goals of efficiency and density for business and industrial zoning. Purpose: Promote land efficiency by offering incentives.

### **Utilities and Community Facilities**

*Goal 2: To maintain the existing public and private utility system and extend urban services within urban development boundary areas defined in a neighborhood plan, while minimizing the impacts to the environment.*

**Objective 2: The City will expand public utilities to areas without urban services only after a neighborhood plan has been approved and subsequent urban service adjustment requests have been approved by the local Regional Planning Commission (RPC) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Public utility extensions will be staged in a contiguous manner from the existing infrastructure with minimal disruption to the environment and in accord with any staging plans provided by the neighborhood plan.**

Policy 1: Discourage utility extensions across substantial vacant land.

Policy 3: Avoid utility placement in wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas.

*Goal 4: To improve the Fitchburg Park and open space system by enhancing outdoor recreation, enhancing the community's natural resources and practicing ecological stewardship.*

**Objective 3: Plan and design parks and open space to sustain environmentally sensitive features and reduce negative environmental effects.**

Policy 2: Preserve and maintain selected wooded areas, vegetative cover, streams, ponds, natural drainage ways, and other natural resources in and around the City.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation**

*Goal 1: Engage in mutually beneficial intergovernmental relations with local and overlapping governments or agencies to reduce or resolve conflicts.*

**Objective 2: Share some public resources and regional planning that have cross-jurisdictional use.**

Policy 1: Work with Dane County and the surrounding towns, cities, and villages on the implementation of regional transportation and land use plans.

**Objective 3: Encourage land use and transportation plans in the adjacent Towns, Cities and Villages that are consistent with the objectives of the Fitchburg plan.**

Policy 4: Communicate with nearby cities and villages to establish areas of community separation.

**Transportation**

*Goal 2: Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that allows for the convenient movement of people and goods.*

**Objective 1: Improve transportation safety through design, operation and maintenance, and system improvements to minimize the risk of harm to persons and property and to allow users to feel confident and secure in and around all modes of travel.**

Policy 4: Establish truck routes. Purpose: To allow for proper road maintenance and to aid planning efforts for street design and traffic calming measures.

*Goal 3: Develop and maintain a multi-modal transportation system that reduces automobile dependency and increases transportation choice*

**Objective 2: Improve the pedestrian and bicycle transportation system to support a continuous, safe, and desirable walking and biking environment.**

Policy 1: Identify major generators and destinations for potential bicycle and pedestrian trips, such as public buildings, parks, commercial districts, places of employment, transit stops, and other attractions and plan for pedestrian and bike connections among them.

**Objective 4: Promote an efficient and reliable transit system that offers convenient alternatives to private vehicle travel.**

Policy 2: Where demand exists, improve existing bus stop conditions with the addition of amenities such as bus shelters, trash receptacles, sidewalks, and accessible concrete bus pads.



## 8. Historic Preservation of Heritage Landscapes

Several goals in both the Agricultural Resources and Cultural Resources sections of the CP (highlighted) would be buttressed by a strong process for safeguarding historic and culturally significant landscapes. Fitchburg, of course, has the tools to safeguard historic structures and sites, but the CP implies that those tools may not be sufficient to preserve historic landscapes. If Fitchburg were to include criteria to do with the preservation of its heritage landscapes within a demarcated urban boundary and a rural boundary, then it might be better able to safeguard these lands. The police powers recited within the Land Division Ordinance (“aesthetics and general welfare,” 15.01 (2)) may be broad enough to provide that level of control.

One provision of the Historic Preservation Ordinance may need special attention when scaling up to preserving landscapes. Where a whole urban environment is to be preserved, along with all its “contributing” structures and qualities, the Secretary of the Interior’s guidelines make continuity difficult. Human pattern recognition is sufficiently advanced to be alarmed by differences in formal design, even where color and texture are consistent. Section 29.05 (4) says that:

*Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural materials, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, materials, and character of the structure or site.*

There is a sound argument to be made that the “character” mentioned above should be explicitly interpreted as being more than just a generalized sense alongside size, scale, color, and materials. This is particularly true when protecting a landscape rather than just a single structure.

Agricultural lands may need specific protection not only as valuable income and food-producing properties, but as heritage lands. One option is “community supported agriculture.” Within a community design process, it could be combined with clustered development, in order to create livable hamlets that support agriculture on part of a project’s land. It may be possible to configure the community-supported agriculture to act as a buffer to the remaining agriculture (See Agricultural Resources Goal 1, Objective 2, Policy 2, below).

List 7: Historic Preservation of Heritage Landscapes

**Natural Resources**

*Goal 1: Protect and rehabilitate the natural environment.*

**Objective 1: Protect natural areas of pre-settlement natural environment, particularly endangered or threatened species.**

Policy 1: Consult with the University of Wisconsin (UW) Arboretum, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Dane County, The Fitchburg Historical Society, and other interested parties to determine if Fitchburg has any pre-settlement sites and if those sites are unique to Dane County and/or the State of Wisconsin. Purpose: To know how unique a specific site is; whether on a local or greater scale.

Policy 2: Encourage where appropriate the protection and preservation of unique pre-settlement sites through methods of City of Fitchburg funds or other methods, such as Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), Dane County or DNR grants or funds, or like sources. Purpose: Protection is important and utilize other government resources.

Policy 3: Where tied to other resource systems, combine unique pre-settlement areas into environmental corridors to help assure preservation. Purpose: Provides site ability to be within an overall open space system.

**Agricultural Resources**

*Goal 1: To protect and maintain agriculture as a significant resource within Fitchburg.*

**Objective 1: Adopt a long-term growth area. Definition: A long-term growth area defines where future development will occur and helps preserve and protect agricultural land, wood lots, and other natural areas from development. If development occurs outside of the long-term growth area it is to be limited to agricultural development and necessary ancillary or accessory uses allowed within agricultural zoning districts of the City.**

Policy 2: Continue to provide exclusive agricultural zoning that qualifies farmers to claim Farmland Tax Credits. Purpose: Farmland Tax Credits allow farmers to reduce their income tax payments. This savings can be used to invest in their farm operations or to make a farm that is experiencing tough times profitable.

Policy 3: Encourage the State of Wisconsin to continue the use of Agricultural Use Value assessment on farm and pasture land. Purpose: Agricultural Use Value assessment allows farm and pasture land to be assessed on the value of their crops instead of on the market value of their land, which reduces their property tax payment.

**Objective 2: Encourage farmers to invest in improvements to their farm operations, or to diversify their agricultural operations to address the changing farm economy.**

Policy 2: For current or future agricultural operations, discourage the location of incompatible land use near farms or agricultural land to avoid adverse impacts to farm operations or agricultural lands. Purpose: To prevent negative impacts from conflicting land uses

*Goal 2: Preserve agricultural land as a resource for the use and benefit of current and future generations.*

**Objective 1: To protect agricultural land and limit development of agricultural land to those areas adjacent to the existing urban service area and where not in conflict with the overall land use plan.**

Policy 1: Direct urban development away from prime or other highly productive agricultural lands except where such lands are adjacent to existing development and can be cost-effectively served by urban services. Purpose: Urban land use often impact and conflict with farm operations. Expanding septic systems and private well increase the possibility of septic system failures and well contaminations that can cause public health hazards.

**Objective 2: Protect the scenic character of the agricultural area and promote efficiency and compactness of growth.**

Policy 1: Use the City's zoning control to discourage development in designated agricultural preservation areas. Purpose: Urban land use often impact and conflict with farm operations.

Policy 2: Prohibit creation of rural subdivisions or establishment of new non-agricultural business developments outside the urban service area unless allowed in a planned rural development. Individual or small cluster rural home sites shall be limited to those meeting the

rural residential development criteria. Purpose: To protect rural area and to maintain compact, more easily serviceable developments.

### **Cultural Resources**

*Goal 1: Promote and preserve the City's cultural resource base.*

#### **Objective 1: Encourage the preservation of significant natural, cultural, and historical features.**

Policy 2: Encourage the preservation or avoidance of significant cultural, historical, and natural features in development proposals. Where preservation and avoidance of such features is not practical, the City encourages the integration of such features into the design of projects to the extent practical. Purpose: To allow creative and alternative design options for preservation of cultural, historical, and natural features.

Policy 3: Examine funding opportunities to undertake comprehensive historic and cultural resource inventory.

Policy 4: Utilize state and federal programs, or grants, when available and appropriate to educate, enhance and protect historical properties.

#### **Objective 2: Encourage compliance with applicable federal, state, and local environmental, cultural resource, and historical preservation laws and ordinances.**

Policy 1: Continue to use the Historic Landmark Preservation Ordinance to designate locally significant historical buildings and sites. Purpose: To accomplish the protection, enhancement, and perpetration of such improvements which represent or reflect elements of Fitchburg's cultural, social, economic, political, engineering, and architectural history; safeguard Fitchburg's historic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such historic structures and sites; foster civic pride in the beauty and noble accomplishments of the past; protect and enhance the City's attractions to residents and visitors and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry; strengthen the economy of the City; and promote the use of historic districts and landmarks for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the people of the City.

Policy 2: Encourage applicants who must obtain permits pursuant to federal, state, and local environmental, cultural resource, and historical preservation laws and ordinances to share with the City such permits and related background information at the time of application submittal. Purpose: Build database of all available information, and the ability to share knowledge and experiences with later applicants.

Policy 3: Maintain contact with the local and/or state Historical Society representatives to better understand programs and opportunities. Purpose: City should continue to pursue use of non-local resources to the greatest extent possible.

Policy 4: Work with local, regional, and state tourism promotional groups such as the State Heritage Tourism Council and the WI Department of Tourism to promote and protect local cultural resources. Purpose: City should continue to pursue use of non-local resources to the greatest extent possible.

*Goal 2: Actively seek to strengthen strong cultural and social history and community identity.*

#### **Objective 1: Retain, enhance, and promote the inviting atmosphere of the City of Fitchburg.**

Policy 4: Provide educational material regarding the City's unique historic sites to encourage their protection. Purpose: Provides a sense of local history and encourages private owners to protect their cultural resources.

### **Economic Development**

*Goal 1: Encourage economic development opportunities appropriate to the resources, character, and service levels in the City.*

#### **Objective 3: Recognize and support the changing needs and preserve agricultural based businesses as an economic opportunity.**

Policy 1: Support the economic health of agriculture production in the City. Purpose: To protect and maintain agriculture as a significant resource in Fitchburg.

## 9. A Set of Specifications for Thoroughfares

Throughout the Transportation section, there are a number of policies that could be strongly supported by a set of thoroughfare cross-sections designed to work for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit. Some of the CP's goals for industry could also be supported by providing a menu of thoroughfare types (besides alleys) specifically designed for heavy vehicles used in industry and mineral resource extraction. Both the existing planning codes and the CP refer to "functional classification." Unfortunately, the functional classification system is somewhat at odds with the making of walkable places. While walkable thoroughfare sections and specifications may be graded roughly according to functional classification, they could also be chosen for their context-sensitivity.

Most thoroughfare designs in use today are not sufficient to meet the goals for cycling and pedestrian access—and can even be problematic for transit. Transportation Goal 2, Objective 2, Policy 5 is to "Promote street designs that are sensitive to the land use context and placement in the street hierarchy." This suggests a matrix of thoroughfare capacity arrayed against the character of the surrounding context. Such a matrix-like organization could provide Fitchburg with a ready set of thoroughfare types through which to coordinate with the state and neighboring localities.

The Land Division Ordinance, at 15.08 (4), specifies thoroughfare widths according to functional classification. Some widths are wider than necessary, and others are too narrow, should multiway boulevards be desired. In any case, a full set of thoroughfare sections would help assure that sufficient—but not excessive—widths are set aside through the land division process. Moreover, a full set of thoroughfare cross-sections would support flexibility in the design of communities—as when pedestrian ways (15.09 of the Land Division Ordinance) and sidewalks (Driveways, 25.20) are required.

List 8: A Set of Specifications for Thoroughfares

**Land Use**

*Goal 2: Develop a compact urban community that is visually and functionally distinct from its rural and agricultural community.*

**Objective 5: Extend utilities and infrastructure in a way that balances market demand with an average annual growth rate not to exceed 75 acres per year, and using existing and proposed infrastructure in an efficient manner.**

Policy 3: Plan land use along road corridors in a manner supportive of the functional classification of the road.

**Transportation**

*Goal 1: Develop and maintain a coordinated land use and transportation system*

**Objective 1: Plan transportation infrastructure, in redevelopment projects and new developments, to encourage compact, urban development patterns.**

Policy 1: Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND's) that include mixed-uses, buildings located adjacent to sidewalks, less private and more public open space, smaller blocks, narrow streets with wide sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian-scale and street lighting, plantings and public art, lower parking ratios, shared parking, structured parking, and parking behind buildings.

**Objective 2: Preserve and maintain rural roads for agricultural uses, local traffic, and recreational uses.**

Policy 1: Discourage the development of new limited access highways in rural areas to lessen the demand for potential development at the interchanges.

*Goal 2: Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that allows for the convenient movement of people and goods.*

**Objective 1: Improve transportation safety through design, operation and maintenance, and system improvements to minimize the risk of harm to persons and property and to allow users to feel confident and secure in and around all modes of travel.**

Policy 4: Establish truck routes. Purpose: To allow for proper road maintenance and to aid planning efforts for street design and traffic calming measures.

**Objective 2: Maintain a transportation system that allows for proper traffic management and travel time reliability.**

Policy 1: Improve existing roads, as needed and feasible, to provide sufficient travel capacity. The addition of travel lanes should only be considered after all other alternatives have been examined.

Policy 2: In new neighborhoods, plan a pattern of streets, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and public transit facilities that maximizes the connectivity of land uses within the neighborhood and to areas outside the neighborhood.

Policy 4: Provide a continuous interconnected roadway system to preserve mobility and avoid travel delays.

Policy 5: Promote street designs that are sensitive to the land use context and placement in the street hierarchy.

Policy 6: Utilize street and roadway access control measures where appropriate to aid in preserving travel capacity along major streets and roadways. Maintain bike and pedestrian connectivity when road access is limited. Purpose: Limiting roadway access can cause a loss of access and convenience to pedestrians and bikes. Efficient pedestrian and bike transportation relies heavily on minimizing distance and providing direct routes. When roadway access control is required, measures should be taken to minimize the associated impacts to pedestrian and bicycle travel.

Policy 7: Control driveway access of housing developments along arterial and major collector roadways.

**Objective 3: Maximize the use of existing transportation investments.**

Policy 2: Prioritize investments to support Fitchburg residents, employers, and visitors over through travelers.

*Goal 3: Develop and maintain a multi-modal transportation system that reduces automobile*

*dependency and increases transportation choice*

**Objective 1: Plan for and consider the needs of all road users within the existing transportation system and in new developments including roadway surfaces, safety, intersection design, and roadway width.**

Policy 1: Establish and follow a “Complete Streets” policy that is equally sensitive to the needs of motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

Policy 2: Develop context-sensitive street cross section standards, using minimum pavement widths, based on the use of the right of way and the varied needs including, but not limited to, transit routes, parking, bicycle routes, pedestrian use, and expected type, volume and speed of vehicular traffic.

**Objective 2: Improve the pedestrian and bicycle transportation system to support a continuous, safe, and desirable walking and biking environment.**

Policy 1: Identify major generators and destinations for potential bicycle and pedestrian trips, such as public buildings, parks, commercial districts, places of employment, transit stops, and other attractions and plan for pedestrian and bike connections among them.

Policy 2: Sidewalks shall be added to both sides of the street in all new developments and considered on streets without sidewalks in the urban service area, except cul-de-sacs, when major reconstruction (curb and gutter and/or base course) occurs.

Policy 3: Design neighborhoods to provide for multiple, safe, and direct bike and pedestrian connections in all directions.

Policy 4: On most two lane streets and highways having a rural cross section, a striped paved shoulder with a minimum width of four feet (preferably five feet) should be provided on both sides when a road is reconstructed.

Policy 6: Design new developments to enhance pedestrian comfort and create a pedestrian-oriented environment by providing pedestrian facilities and amenities such as trees, planters, street furniture, awnings, and building windows.

## **10. Retrofitting Existing Development**

A careful program for retrofitting currently sprawling areas would be especially useful to further Economic Development goals (highlighted). Existing sprawl areas—particularly commercial ones—can be intensified and better-connected. Moreover, that intensification could help change the retail landscape. It could help provide the impetus to concentrate retail at key locations well-served by transit (particularly as fuel prices rise). The current planning documents offer very little help for such an effort, and the PD process may not be of much help, since it is organized primarily to support new development. A new, comprehensive program could also help primarily residential neighborhoods incorporate retail. A range of retail options arrayed against a range of intensities of urbanism, transportation access, and retail catchments would give Fitchburg a sensible way to coordinate retail and land use in general through future planning.

It may be necessary to create guidelines to retrofit existing properties. The Zoning Ordinance states that, “. . . Non-conforming uses of structures or premises may not be extended, expanded, enlarged or increased in intensity.” However, such inflexibility may be counterproductive. Many properties can be made to conform well enough by building additions at the front of the property while remaining as-is in the rear. It may be that the best option is to ensure that the public side of buildings conforms, while the rear portions need not.

List 9: Retrofitting Existing Development

**Land Use**

*Goal 2: Develop a compact urban community that is visually and functionally distinct from its rural and agricultural community.*

**Objective 2: Restore underutilized, blighted, or underdeveloped properties within current commercial and residential neighborhoods.**

Policy 1: The City should engage in redevelopment studies within areas showing blight, economic despair, and commercial areas with low floor area ratios.

**Economic Development**

*Goal 1: Encourage economic development opportunities appropriate to the resources, character, and service levels in the City.*

**Objective 1: Encourage the creation of compact mixed-use activity centers as an alternative to suburban style, single use, low density office and research parks.**

Policy 4: Focus on providing neighborhood or community commercial activities, including soft goods destination shopping, that meets the needs of Fitchburg residents and businesses.

Recognize that retail anchors that are well designed and sited in appropriate areas, generate customers that strengthen the trade area providing a more economically viable market for the locally owned shops and restaurants, while recognizing the market role played by existing retail activities. Mixed use center retail/services activities shall relate to the planned retail hierarchy within the City. Purpose: Promote local shopping that meets the needs of Fitchburg residents and businesses.

Policy 5: Avoid strip commercial buildings. Encourage the clustering of commercial uses in planned centers or other compact commercial areas in order to maximize consumer safety and convenience, improve traffic safety and flow, and enhance economic viability. Purpose: Reduce infrastructure costs and sprawl along highway frontages.

Policy 6: Carefully integrate commercial development and mixed use developments with predominately residential areas. Purpose: Residential is served by commercial, but careful planning are required to limit impacts of commercial centers on residential neighborhoods while recognizing the operational needs of these businesses.

Policy 7: Some areas of the community will be more appropriate for mixed use centers and in these locations such centers should be more than simply encouraged. Purpose: To assure that the land is being used for best possible uses.

**Objective 2: Provide that retail and service areas are adequately sized and appropriately placed within neighborhoods and the community.**

Policy 1: Retail and service developments are to be adequately sized and timed and located so as to meet the demands of the targeted service population. Purpose: Avoid an overabundance of retail and promotes proper timing with the population base while recognizing market voids, demand, and trade ring analysis.

Policy 3: Avoid over-establishment of retail centers that only serve to weaken existing retail areas, and underutilization of the land resource. Market research and demand should be the basis for determining the appropriate square footage of mixed use/retail components of neighborhood plans to ensure that they are economically viable and sustainable. Purpose: Avoids leap-frogging.

*Goal 2: Business development projects should emphasize solid tax base, jobs that pay well, sensitivity to the environment, and a diversity of employment opportunities.*

**Objective 3: Expand and promote business revitalization efforts.**

Policy 1: Support long-term planning for commercial and business areas to identify future needs and potential for revitalization. Purpose: Promote sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future development to meet their needs.

Policy 3: Develop guidelines and implementation strategies to affect the planning and redevelopment of underdeveloped or infill properties in the current urban service area, with an eye toward diversity of land use. Purpose: Clarify the City's interest in addressing development impacts with a focus on seamlessly integrating new development with existing development.



***Transportation***

*Goal 1: Develop and maintain a coordinated land use and transportation system*

**Objective 1: Plan transportation infrastructure, in redevelopment projects and new developments, to encourage compact, urban development patterns.**

Policy 2: Encourage Transit Oriented Developments (TOD's) that include a train station and intermodal transfer points as the prominent feature of town centers with high-density, high-quality development within a 10 minute walk circle surrounding the train station and all qualities of a TND as described in Policy 1 above.