

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Burke is a great place to live in Dane County. It is a community that was founded on and grew from the area's abundant natural and agricultural resources. While these remain important defining characteristics of the community, the Town's residents have also benefited from its strategic location at the interchange of Interstates 39, 90, and 94, between the cities of Madison and Sun Prairie, and adjacent to the Dane County Regional Airport.

The beautiful countryside of Burke is rich with productive farmland. Generations of Burke families have enjoyed the quiet rural character and strong sense of community found here. However, the Town's population has been increasing steadily, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Economic growth has provided local employment opportunities, urban amenities, and a larger, diversified tax base. However, as population increases, so does the need for services to keep pace with growth and changing demands. In addition, growth brings with it additional pressure on the existing resource base that is necessary to sustain and improve the quality of life for future residents. In this context, it is essential to plan for development in a controlled, orderly, and predictable manner that will enhance the Town's ability to retain its rural character, avoid land use conflicts, provide housing and appropriate employment opportunities, and protect its natural, cultural, and agricultural resources.



Town of Burke Town Hall. Image courtesy Mead & Hunt, Inc., 2013

Great communities do not grow by accident or without public debate and agreed-upon guidelines. Collaborative planning processes and comprehensive plans are the building blocks of such great communities. Planning helps maintain and promote livable, vital communities. This Comprehensive Plan outlines how to maintain what we like about our community, and identifies key improvements to make our community even better.

PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

This Plan is intended to capture a shared vision for the Town. It is a statement reflecting community pride and how residents want the Town to manage growth and development in the future. This Plan will help elected officials make decisions that reflect the short- and long-term wishes of the community. It will help

prioritize the Town’s human and financial resources to provide the necessary public infrastructure and amenities needed to maintain a high quality of life.

A key theme in this Comprehensive Plan is the interrelationship among the various aspects of our daily lives. These interrelationships often extend well beyond municipal lines and are regional in nature. The Town of Burke is part of a broader geographic area and economic market that influences everything from where we choose to shop and live to what areas we visit for recreation.

An over-arching principle of the Plan is that the Town of Burke will work proactively with Dane County, adjacent cities and villages, nearby towns, and state and federal agencies to cooperatively address regional issues, such as natural resources, public infrastructure, and consumer, employment, and housing markets. The State of Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning legislation adopted in 1999 requires that municipalities work cooperatively to address regional issues. The Town has been effectively working with the Village of DeForest, the Cities of Sun Prairie and Madison, and Dane County over the past decade to discuss regional issues and seek agreement on inter-municipal planning issues.

The Town of Burke – Village of DeForest – City of Sun Prairie – City of Madison Cooperative Plan (Cooperative Plan), adopted in 2007, provides an orderly, planned transition for the current Town of Burke territory to DeForest, Sun Prairie, and Madison municipal jurisdiction over the next 30 years, and maintains the fiscal viability and operational efficiency of the Town of Burke during the transition period.

The Cooperative Plan provides that all Town territory will be attached to the designated Village or City no later than October 2036. In the interim, owners of property not located within a designated “Protected Area,” which will generally remain in the Town until 2036, may attach their property to the designated Village or City if that jurisdiction approves the attachment request.¹

“Protected Areas” are the residential, commercial or industrial territory of the Town that may not be attached to the adjacent Village or Cities until the end of the Protected Period (12:01am on October 27, 2036), except as specifically outlined in the Cooperative Plan.

PLANNING PROCESS

As part of the state’s 1999-2000 biennial budget, Governor Thompson signed into law what is referred to as the “Smart Growth” legislation (1999 Wisconsin Act 9). Smart Growth legislation significantly changed the stature of comprehensive planning in the state and placed it very high on the “to do” list. Although state statutes do not require local governmental units to adopt comprehensive plans consistent with the requirements, it provides that by January 1, 2010, if a local governmental unit enacts or amends any of

¹ City of Madison *Northeast Neighborhoods Development Plan*, Adopted October 20, 2009



the following ordinances, the ordinances shall be consistent with a locally adopted comprehensive plan: official mapping, local subdivision, county zoning, city or village zoning, town zoning, and shorelands or wetlands in shorelands zoning.

A community must follow various substantive and procedural requirements to prepare a comprehensive plan. State statutes define nine areas that need to be addressed in a community's comprehensive plan:

1. Issues and opportunities (Chapter 1)
2. Housing (Chapter 7)
3. Transportation (Chapter 5)
4. Utilities and community facilities (Chapter 6)
5. Agricultural, natural, and cultural resources (Chapter 3)
6. Economic development (Chapter 8)
7. Land use (Chapter 4)
8. Intergovernmental cooperation (Chapter 2)
9. Implementation (Chapter 9)

The Smart Growth legislation also outlines specific procedures for public participation that must be



The Town of Burke Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, photo courtesy Mead & Hunt, Inc. 2013

followed as part of the comprehensive planning process.

Specifically, a municipality must hold at least one public hearing on the plan and notify the public at least 30 days in advance of this hearing. In an effort to foster meaningful public input, the Town of Burke provided additional opportunities for public involvement, as outlined in Chapter 1: Issues & Opportunities. A copy of the Town of Burke Public Participation Plan can be found in Appendix A.

The planning process set out to celebrate and protect the diversity of lifestyles and interests within community, build on the strengths of the community in achieving its goals, and guide the future of the town. In order to fulfill this charge, the Steering Committee took seriously the process of engaging residents and businesses in the comprehensive planning process. The Steering Committee's job was not merely to produce a report, but to reach out and collaborate with the community, to educate

residents about planning, and to involve them in developing the plan. These goals stem from the fundamental aim of the planning process: to articulate Burke's community vision for the future.



Throughout the process, the Town website was used to inform citizens of meeting dates and to summarize the developments of the planning process. This ensured that everyone in the town was at least aware of the process, even if they weren't able to attend specific meetings.

TOWN OF BURKE LEGACY

The impetus for this plan is twofold: meet the requirements of Wisconsin law, and prepare a guide for making land use decisions within the Town. In carrying out the latter, Town leaders will be responsible for reassuring Town residents about the future, creating a positive environment for the municipalities absorbing the Town, and successfully transitioning the physical land and programs and policies of the Town.

This document and the decisions resulting from its implementation aim to leave a legacy that transcends the Town and cements the contributions of its citizens and leaders to the growth and transformation of the community of northeast Dane County. How the Town plans for and operates over the next 20 years will have a lasting impact. As the term of influence grows shorter, Town decisions makers must channel their energy, hopes, and fears toward helping their successors and the community they leave behind. This will help the next leaders be ready on Day 1.

Key factors that require attention for a successful transition include politics and practices. The Town decision makers must keep the greater good in mind and shape internal politics to be constructive and support outcomes beneficial to the community. Processes that draw groups in, build a shared vision of the future, create positive coalitions, and allow open expression of competing views will prepare the Town for the transition.

Within this document, the Town has laid out the elements of its shared vision that are critical to its legacy moving forward. This document is a host for that vision and is meant to communicate it to surrounding municipalities. The Town desires to create a strong relationship between the surrounding jurisdictions, which will ensure this legacy becomes reality.



Burke Lutheran Church is and will continue to be a recognizable place within the community, photo courtesy Mead & Hunt, Inc. 2013