
Chapter One: Introduction

The City of Whitewater is an historic, independent community of 14,000 residents in south central Wisconsin. The City is the proud home of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Owing in part to the University's presence, Whitewater is characterized by a unique and vibrant culture, offering many of the amenities typical of a larger community—including a vibrant downtown; a variety of businesses and jobs; a full range of housing options; and numerous opportunities in the arts, education, and recreation. Whitewater is ideally located among Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago; at the doorstep of the Kettle Moraine; and among rich agricultural lands—all of which have also contributed to the City's success.



In the coming years, the City will be faced with ongoing growth and change. For instance, the establishment of a Whitewater University Technology Park will help bring “next generation” businesses and jobs to the community. In addition, the continued growth and evolving policies of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater will generate a growing influx of young people, who will continue to shape the City's character. Such changes will present both opportunities and challenges, as the City strives to maintain the quality and character of its residential neighborhoods, direct new development to appropriate locations, and contribute to a high quality of life and business activity.

Purpose of this Plan

This *City of Whitewater Comprehensive Plan* is intended to help the City guide growth and development to ensure continued and enhanced community prosperity. Specifically, the *Comprehensive Plan* will:

- Identify areas appropriate for development and preservation over the next 20 years.
- Recommend appropriate types of land use for specific areas in and around the City.
- Preserve natural, cultural, and agricultural resources in and around the City.
- Identify needed transportation and community facilities to serve future land uses.
- Direct housing, neighborhood, and economic investments in the City.
- Provide a framework for long-term community sustainability.
- Supply detailed strategies to implement plan recommendations, featuring a Neighborhood Preservation Strategy.
- Build from the rich array of City plans that have been adopted and implemented over the past several years.

The *Plan* is organized into chapters that specifically address each of the elements required by the State of Wisconsin (e.g., Transportation, Land Use). Each chapter presents background information on the element it is addressing and then presents an outline of the City’s goals, objectives, policies, and recommended programs for that element. The final chapter—Implementation—indicates priority steps and a timeline to ensure that the recommendations presented in this *Plan* become a reality.

Planning Process

This *Comprehensive Plan* was prepared under Wisconsin’s comprehensive planning legislation, adopted in 1999, and contained in §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. This *Plan* meets all of the statutory requirements of the legislation. Starting in 2010, only those plans that contain the nine required elements and adopted under the state’s prescribed procedures will have legal standing for zoning, subdivision, and official mapping actions.

The planning process was guided by the City’s Plan and Architectural Review Commission. In order to provide sound public policy guidance, a comprehensive planning process should incorporate inclusive public participation procedures to ensure that final recommendations reflect a broadly supported vision. In spring 2009, the Common Council adopted the City’s plan for public participation in this process plan by resolution. Public participation activities are described in the Vision and Opportunities chapter.

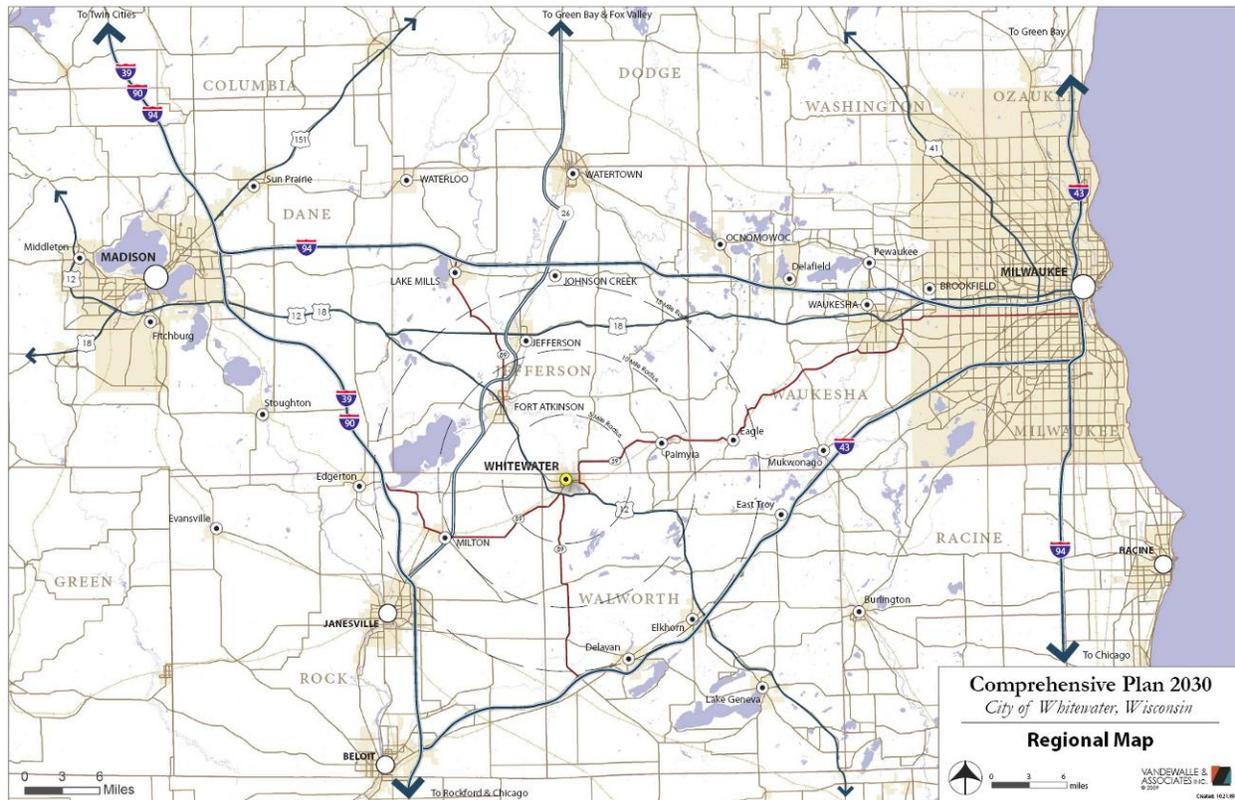
Regional Context

Understanding the region is critical to an informed exploration of Whitewater’s future opportunities. The City is located approximately 40 miles southeast of Madison, with the quickest connection being Highway N to Interstate 39/90, which itself is 15 miles to the City’s west. Whitewater is also located about 55 miles southwest of Milwaukee—and even closer to the burgeoning Waukesha County area. The best connection to Milwaukee and Waukesha is Highway 59. Finally, Whitewater is less than 100 miles from the “global city” of Chicago, which is accessible either via Highway 12 or Interstate 90. Highway 12 is the City’s major roadway connection to the region, but Highways 59, 89, and N are also important (Refer to the map on the following page).

City residents are within a 20-minute drive to the other incorporated communities of Fort Atkinson, Palmyra, Elkhorn, and Milton. Larger-scale shopping and employment opportunities are available in Janesville (population 65,000), which is about 30 minutes to the southwest.

Map 1 shows the relationship of the City to neighboring communities. The extent of the map covers the expansive boundaries of the Whitewater Unified School District, which has all of its schools within the City except for Lakeview Elementary School, which is located along the border between the Town of Whitewater and the Town of Richmond. The School District boundary can be understood as the boundary of the “Whitewater community,” which of course extends considerably beyond the City limits. The City straddles two counties (Walworth on the south and Jefferson to the north) and abuts a third (Rock to the west), which can complicate City decision making. The City abuts the Town of Whitewater to the south, the Town of Cold Spring to the north, and the towns of Lima and Koshkonong to the west.

The City of Whitewater's Regional Context



Selection of the Planning Area

Before beginning the *Comprehensive Plan*, it is important to understand the area for which the City is planning. Clearly, the *Plan* encompasses and provides recommendations for all lands within the approximately nine square miles that were within the City limits in 2009.

State Statutes enable the City to plan for those areas beyond the City limits that bear relation to the City's future development. The planning area for this *Plan* extends roughly one and a half miles from the City, which coincides with the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Within this area, the City also has land division review and approval authority, official mapping authority, and, under specific circumstances, extraterritorial zoning authority. Based on its population, the City of Whitewater has the legal right under Wisconsin Statutes to expand its ETJ to three miles beyond the City limits. In order to establish a three-mile ETJ, the City would first have to formally declare itself a City of the third class by action of the City Council. Both the one and a half-mile and three-mile ETJ boundaries have been illustrated on Map 1. Except for in cases where intergovernmental agreements preclude expansion, the City's ETJ boundary expands automatically as the City's municipal boundary expands (i.e., annexations occur). At the time this *Plan* was written, the City was not moving toward implementing a three-mile ETJ.

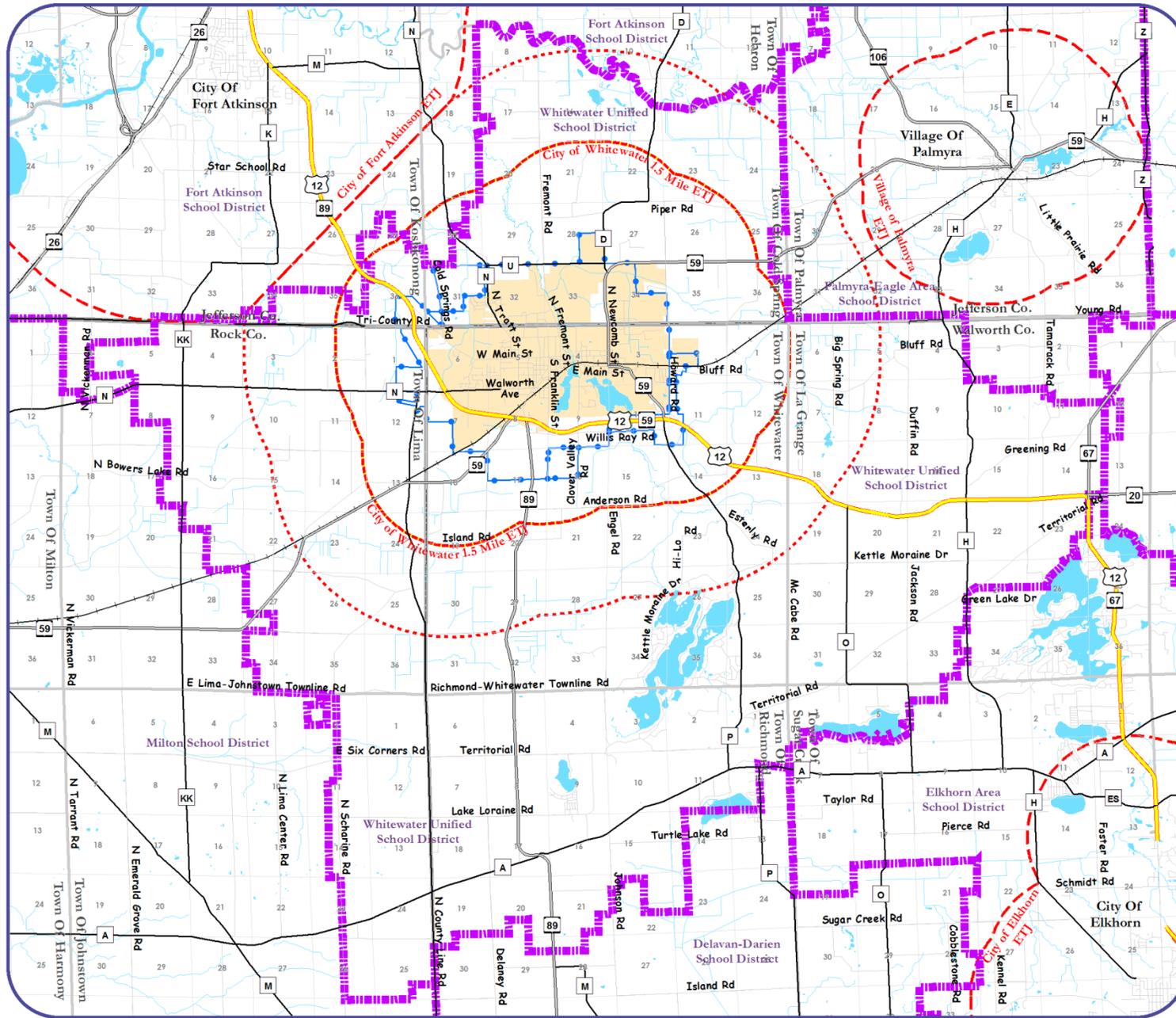
The recommendations within this *Plan* become more general as land gets further from the City limits. More specific recommendations are generally limited to lands within and near the City's 2009 Sewer Service Area (also shown on Map 1). This is the area within which the City may, as of 2009, legally extend municipal sanitary sewer service; it was designated by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. It is generally sized to accommodate about 20 years of growth; the last major update of the Sewer Service Area was in 1995. Adjustments following this comprehensive planning process may be in order.

Relationship to Other City Plans

Over the years, the City has prepared numerous plans and studies to help guide the growth and development of the community. This *City of Whitewater Comprehensive Plan* is intended to incorporate and generalize directions from the City's other plans, most of which are not intended to be incorporated as part of the City's comprehensive plan themselves. Where appropriate, this *Comprehensive Plan* document includes references to the other planning documents that provide more specific information about a particular subject or recommendation. Also, this *Comprehensive Plan* functions as an update and replacement to some of the City's older planning documents, particularly the City's 1997 Central Area Plan.

The graphic that follows summarizes the nine required elements of this *Comprehensive Plan* and for each element lists more detailed planning documents the City has already adopted. The neighborhood development plans that are referenced in this graphic (for the north, south, east, and west quadrants) are described in more detail in the Land Use chapter.

Map 1: Jurisdictional Boundaries



Jurisdictional Boundaries

City of Whitewater Comprehensive Plan

- Local Roads
- U.S. Highways
- State Highways
- County Highways
- School District Boundaries
- Township Boundaries
- Railroad
- Extraterritorial Jurisdictional Boundaries
- PLSS Sections
- Wisconsin Counties
- City of Whitewater Sewer Service Area Boundary
- Whitewater 1.5 mile ETJ
- Whitewater 3 mile ETJ
- Surface Water
- City Limits

City of
WHITEWATER

0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles

Created: July 18, 2017
By: Scott Weberpal
City of Whitewater GIS Technician

Source: SEWRPC, Rock County LIO, Jefferson County LIO, Walworth County LIO, City of Whitewater, and Vandewalle & Associates.

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