FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN
DADE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

A Part of the Master Plan
for Dane County

Adopted by the Dane County Board of Supervisors
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Prepared by Dane County Regional Planning Commission
in Cooperation With the
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Preface

Every day, four square miles of prime farmland in this country are converted to non-agricultural uses. That amounts to nearly a million acres, annually. If the non-prime farmlands are also added to lands converted to non-farm uses, the total is closer to 3 million acres each year. In Wisconsin, there has been a decline of 100,000 acres of farmland since 1979.\(^1\)

While local accurate data on the acres of farmland lost to other uses is not available, the following points bring the issue into focus in Dane County.

Dane County ranks first in Wisconsin in agricultural production, has 10 percent of all the state's Class I lands;\(^2\) and ranks first in the state among all counties in its share of the top three soil categories.

What makes these statistics compelling is the fact that rural lands in Dane County are in greater threat of alteration than in any other county in the state. Based on a 1977 report,\(^3\) Dane County ranked highest in the state in platting activity, and more particularly first in the number of rural lots created among Wisconsin counties. The 1,466 platted lots created in 1977 constituted 18 percent of the state total, or one out of every six lots.\(^4\)

While agriculture continues to thrive, the conflict between plats and plows is critical to Dane County's social and economic future. The Farmland Preservation Plan is an attempt to manage, if not resolve, these conflicting urban and rural needs for land.

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3. 1977 Wisconsin Land Subdivision Plat Reviews, D.L.A.D.

4. While no statewide record is kept of lots created by certified survey maps, Dane County had an additional 531 lots created through certified survey map procedures in 1977 for a total of 1907 lots in rural areas.
Introduction

This document along with the accompanying maps, data, analysis, policies and appendices is the Farmland Preservation Plan for Dane County, Wisconsin. Authorization for this plan is from: Sections 59.97 (County Development Plans); 91.51 (Agricultural Preservation Planning); and 66.945 (Regional Planning) of the Wisconsin Statutes. This plan was prepared in coordination with and is consistent with other pertinent local and regional plans.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this plan is threefold: (1) to identify and preserve the valuable agricultural land in the county; (2) to delineate and conserve natural resources; and (3) to identify those areas where new urban growth should be directed.

The plan is also intended to meet all of the criteria for farmland preservation plans laid out in Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes, thereby qualifying Dane County farmers for full participation in the state farmland preservation tax credit program.

Previous Agricultural Land Planning

Dane County has long been concerned with the preservation of its agricultural lands. In 1971, the Dane County Regional Planning Commission sponsored a countywide conference on agricultural land policies for the 70's in Dane County, in which problems caused by development pressure on rural lands were identified.

In 1972, the Regional Planning Commission completed the preparation of a Land Use Plan for Dane County which generally outlined areas for urban development; areas which should be preserved because of environmental sensitivity; and areas which should generally be retained in agriculture. An adopted policy in the plan prescribed that the Commission should prepare and adopt jointly with the affected towns, the delineation of specific agricultural lands that should be preserved, and to develop control measures in cooperation with rural landowners, that will prevent urban dispersal throughout agricultural areas (see Appendix 2 for the complete agricultural element of the Land Use Plan).
Late in 1973, the RPC prepared a detailed analysis of agriculture and open space land preservation techniques. The report was transmitted to the Wisconsin Department of Administration for use in formulating farmland preservation legislation for Wisconsin.

Organization of the Plan

The plan is comprised of three major sections. Part One explains the county farmland planning process and its relationship to local and state activities, and presents background data relevant to the plan. Part Two summarizes the policies and plan elements from a countywide perspective.

Part III consists of all 34 town plans, with maps and text. This section represents the "building blocks" of the county plan, and is the basis for town and county implementation measures.

Relevant statutes, ordinances and background information can be found in the appendix.