

# Planning and Zoning Department

2021 Annual Report



January 2022

## **Department Staff**

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## **Introduction**

In 2021 planning activity focused on rezoning, platting, and construction for single family and multifamily developments. The Planning & Zoning Department's operations continued to be impacted by COVID-19. While working remotely and with limited staff, the department continued providing a high level of service to residents and customers. This Annual Report will lay out the major 2021 activities of the Department. Additional information may be found at the Planning Department web site: <http://www.fitchburgwi.gov/206/Planning-Zoning>

## **Land Use Planning**

### ***Comprehensive Plan Minor Amendment***

The City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Plan allows the City to process amendments no more frequently than twice per year. In compliance with the State of Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, the planning department processed two minor Comprehensive Plan amendments in 2021. The spring amendment modified land uses in the Comprehensive Plan and the McGaw Park Neighborhood Plan, including: 1) reduced the area of Institutional land use from 10 acres to 5 acres in recognition that Oregon Public Schools built a new elementary school in the nearby Terravessa subdivision; 2) consolidated the R2 zoning district in the NW corner of Fahey South; and 3) expanded the R1 zoning district from 53 acres to approximately 71 acres to provide for a more appropriate balance of single-family to multifamily residential. The fall amendment modified the land use in Comprehensive Plan of approximately 3.9 acre parcel along the east side of Index Road. The amendment changed the future land use designation from the Business zoning district to the Mixed Use zoning district. This amendment facilitates the goals of the North Fish Hatchery Visioning by allowing for the development of arts and sports uses.

### ***Edgewood Urban Service Area Amendment***

Department staff, in conjunction with Edgewood College and Rettler Corporation, prepared and submitted an Urban Service Area Amendment application to the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC) in December, 2021. The Amendment proposes to bring approximately 41 acres of land into the City's USA, as a component of the North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood, and per said neighborhood Plan. Approximately 24 acres of the site entail an institutional land use, housing an "athletic and wellness campus" in support of the College's various athletic programs. Approximately 16 acres of the site is identified for wetland restoration/enhancement, and various educational/interpretive opportunities thereof.

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

### **Landmarks Preservation**

Exterior alterations to designated landmark properties require approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). In 2021, the Commission did not designate any historic structures or review any certificates of appropriateness.

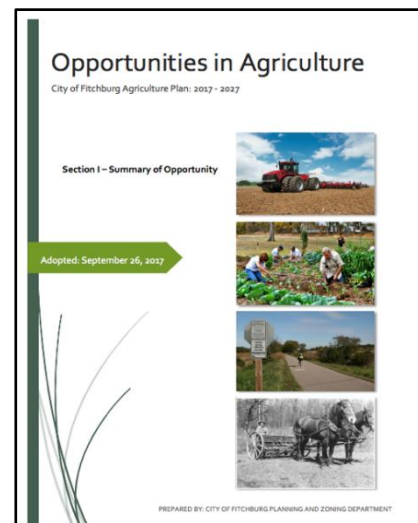


The McCoy house was built in 1860.

### **Agriculture and Rural Affairs**

Department staff continued implementation of the City's first Agriculture Plan, adopted in 2017. The Plan's general intent and purpose, conforming to and consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and long-term growth boundary contained therein, is to provide a holistic and integrated approach to agriculture in the City, and ensure continued, varied agricultural opportunities to City landowners. The Plan recognizes agriculture as a viable component of the City's economy and identity, and focuses on continued development of the local food system and enhancing agricultural diversity in the City, as well as other emerging trends in the agricultural sector. Implementation of Agriculture Plan action items in 2021 included:

- Modification of the City's agricultural zoning districts to allow for various agricultural accessory uses (processing, distribution, and agricultural entertainment) to advance the local food system, as well as allowance of "rural event venues" in the Small Lot Agriculture (A-S) district
- Management, including expansion, of the City's first community garden on public parkland (Swan Creek Park), as well as creation of three new park gardens (Briarwood, Huegel-Jamestown, and Quarry Hill Parks)
- Preparation of an RFP for development/management of a City Agriculture "Signature Theme" Park in the Northeast Neighborhood (RFP slated for release in March 2022).



Additionally, Department staff continues to serve as liaison to the City's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. The Committee continues to provide recommendations to the Plan Commission on all rezoning/land divisions that take place on the City's agricultural-zoned lands.

**Code Development**

Department staff, in conjunction with the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, modified the City’s agricultural zoning districts to allow for various agricultural accessory uses (processing, distribution, and agricultural entertainment) to advance the local food system, as well as allowance of “rural event venues” in the Small Lot Agriculture (A-S) district.

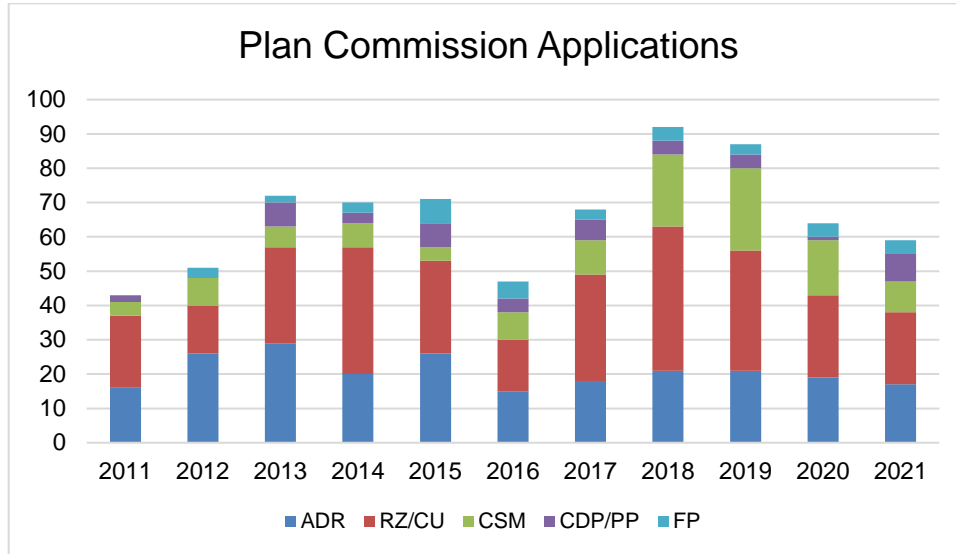
**Application Activity**

**General Application Information**

|   | Submitted Requests |      |
|---|--------------------|------|
|   | 2020               | 2021 |
| Architectural & Design Review Requests  | 19                 | 17   |
| Rezoning and Conditional Use Permits    | 24                 | 21   |
| Certified Survey Map Requests           | 16                 | 9    |
| CDP’s and/or Preliminary Plats          | 1                  | 8    |
| Final Plats                             | 4                  | 4    |
| Variances / Administrative Appeals      | 3                  | 0    |
| Other Requests to Plan Commission*      | 47                 | 42   |
| Telecommunication Permits to Plan Comm. | 0                  | 1    |
| Demolition Permits to Plan Comm.        | 0                  | 0    |

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

The below graph shows the number of Plan Commission applications submitted from 2011-2021. This includes architectural design review, rezones/conditional use permits, certified survey maps, comprehensive development plans/preliminary plats, and final plats. This graph does not include telecommunications permits, demolition permits or other items. The busiest year was 2018, when 92 applications were considered. Since then the number of applications has decreased.



### Administrative Permits

|                                  | Submitted Requests |      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|------|
|                                  | 2020               | 2021 |
| SmartCode Article 3              | 0                  | 0    |
| SmartCode Article 3 Amendments   | 3                  | 2    |
| SmartCode Article 5              | 69                 | 59   |
| Architectural Design Review      | 7                  | 10   |
| Demolition permits—Zoning action | 0                  | 0    |
| Sign Permits                     | 73                 | 59   |
| Zoning Permits                   | 185                | 239  |
| Early Start Permits              | 75                 | 80   |

### Rezoning

In 2021, the Plan Commission approved rezones including at 5215 Verona Road for vocational school, a dog park for residents at 1 Glenn Place, and the Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Fitchburg in the Fitchburg Technology Campus. Four developments completed rezones for Planning Development Districts (PDD). PDD zoning has no set standards or specifications; rather, developers can propose a more flexible mix and intensity of uses. The purpose is to encourage higher-quality design while ensuring compliance with the basic intent of the zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan. PDD-Specific Implementation Plan was approved for the Usona Institute’s administrative offices and training center, a 16-acre campus off Woods Hollow Road. Inspiration at Swan Creek secured PPD zoning approvals to construct an intergeneration community of duplexes, townhomes, and community-based residential facilities. A 108-unit residential facility serving 55-years and older residents, the Courtyard at Fitchburg, received PDD approval. The Plan Commission also approved the Ochalla Drive PDD-General Implementation Plan for a mixed use residential development of a maximum of 60 units per acre with approximately 10,000 square feet of commercial/retail space. This proposed development will be located at the corner of Index Road and the new Ochalla Drive. The Plan Commission also approved four minor Planned Development District (PDD) modifications.

## **Special Projects**

### ***Bicycle Committee***

In 2021, the Bicycle Committee and Planning Department staff led an active push to improve Fitchburg's bicycle network and data-gathering system. In partnership with the Fitchburg Chamber Visitor & Business Bureau, the City's bicycle leaders planned the first stages of a bike-share system set to expand Madison's BCycle network into Fitchburg in 2022. This bike-share system is set to begin in Fitchburg's central recreation and commercial corridor on Fish Hatchery Rd and McKee Rd, with a Phase 2 expansion, planned for a future year, intended to be partially funded by a Wisconsin Department of Transportation grant applied for in January 2022.

Using unspent City budget due to a positional vacancy, the City purchased seven infrared trail counters from TRAFx, the counters stationed around the City's multiuse paths to collect data on trail usage. This data will help inform the 2023 Bicycle-Friendly Community application update, with the expectation that it will indicate a higher level of bicycling in Fitchburg than the previous application suggested, supporting Fitchburg's push to attain the level of Gold in this rating system.

City Staff and the Bicycle Committee also worked together to repeal Fitchburg's mandatory bicycle-registration ordinance, removing a potential barrier to cycling that has been identified by bicycle advocacy organizations nationwide as outdated and no longer necessary. The Committee communicated with Public Works staff on various projects as well, most notably helping to inform detour routes needed throughout the summer as part of the second stage of Fish Hatchery Rd reconstruction.

### ***Clean Energy Resolution***

Fitchburg continued building on the pledges made in its 2019 Clean Energy Resolution in 2021, with a notable addition to the city's investment in renewable energy achieving completion. The O'Brien Solar Farm, a partnership between the O'Brien Family, EDF Renewables, and Madison Gas & Electric (MG&E), was completed and began generating electricity in June 2021. Having signed a Renewable Energy Rider contract with MG&E to purchase 1/40<sup>th</sup> of the electricity produced by this array, the City of Fitchburg added over 500,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of renewable energy to its total electricity usage, increasing the City's total renewable usage to 1.6 million kWh in 2021, or over 30% of total municipal electricity needs.

This addition takes Fitchburg past its Clean Energy Resolution goal of generating 25% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2025. The next goals to be achieved are realizing 25% renewable energy for electricity and fleet vehicles combined (2009 Energy Independent Communities pledge), 100% renewable electricity generation by 2030 (Clean Energy Resolution), and 30% per-capita reduction in carbon emissions from total City energy usage by 2030 (Clean Energy Resolution).

### ***Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative***

Department staff continued implementation of the City's Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative in 2021. The Initiative, with overall coordination provided by Department staff, is designed to formulate and implement a collaborative, integrated, holistic, and proactive approach to address specific barriers to opportunities in three City neighborhoods (Verona Road West,

Belmar/Renaissance on the Park, and North Fish Hatchery Road), in conjunction with community/neighborhood partners.

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

Specific pieces of the HNI strategic plan that were implemented by the Department in 2021 include the following:

- Executed consultant contract and made substantial progress towards completion of final design for N. Fish Hatchery Road Hub Phase 1, entailing a multi-million dollar City investment in creating an “enhanced” park space on the north side of Traceway Drive.
- Prepared and submitted five grant applications for said Hub Phase 1 implementation, and garnered \$100,000 in grant awards.
- Executed consultant contract, and oversaw management thereof, entailing community engagement services for potential teen center facility in Verona Road West neighborhood.
- Garnered approximately \$21,000 in Dane County funds to continue implementation/management of the “neighborhood navigator” program, consisting of funding two HNI neighborhood resident(s) as part-time Department staff to facilitate better program/service/resource awareness and delivery in said neighborhoods. The navigators connected with hundreds of HNI priority neighborhoods in 2021.
- Awarded \$81,000 in City funds, and managed awards thereof, via the City’s HNI Grant Program, funding nine non-profit partners working to provide programs/services/resources in HNI neighborhoods. The City received thirteen total Program applications entailing approximately \$173,428 in funding requests.

### ***Housing Reports***

In accordance with 2017 Wisconsin Act 243, the City prepared Housing Affordability Report. This was the third year the City was required to prepare the report. The Report identified how the City could modify residential development regulations to meet existing and forecasted housing demand and provide a 20% reduction in the time and cost required to approve a new residential subdivision. In addition to this analysis the report included a list and map of undeveloped parcels suitable for residential development.

The report found that the City met the forecasted housing demand in 2021. The Housing Plan states that the City needs to develop 1,300 owner-occupied units (108/year) and 1,400 rental units (117/year) over the next 12 years. In 2021 the city issued building permits for 108 potentially owner-occupied units (including detached single-family homes, and zero-lot line duplexes,) and 188 multi-family apartment rental units. The report made several recommendations that could be implemented to reduce the cost of developing a new subdivision:

- Biannual minor Comprehensive Plan amendments
- Streamline internal review
- Waive or reduce impact fees
- Review park fees
- Review development oversight costs
- Enable Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

- Reduce minimum lot size requirements
- Create an affordable housing trust

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

### ***Redistricting***

Department staff oversaw the City's redistricting mapping effort as a required component of the 2020 Census, including preparation of various new City alder district map options and serving as staff liaison to the City's Redistricting Committee (ad hoc). The City completed its redistricting efforts per Federal law and in cooperation with Dane County in late 2021, by adopting new City alder district maps.

### ***Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan – 5-Year Update***

Department staff provided support to the City's Parks Department by serving as project manager for the 5-year update to their Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, including coordinating community engagement efforts and identifying plan revisions. The update process began in mid to late 2021 and is scheduled for completion in early/mid 2022.

### ***Town of Madison Attachment***

Department staff partnered with City of Madison staff to prepare and implement a coordinated communication plan in advance of the dissolution of the Town of Madison in October 2022, and annexation of Town lands by City of Madison and Fitchburg. Said plan included creation of an informational website and a postcard mailing to affected Town residents and property owners.

### **Conclusion**

Work efforts for 2022 will focus on development of the varied plats and development projects that arise, and continuing to advance sound planning and community development principles throughout the City. Planning staff anticipates supporting planned redevelopment and place making efforts along the Fish Hatchery Road corridor. The Department continue preparing for the attachment of portions of the Town of Madison to the City of Fitchburg. The Department will also, with input from the Resource Conservation Commission, initiate the development of Fitchburg's first Sustainability Plan.

The continued pursuit of responsible planning is vital to a strong and well-functioning community. The Planning and Zoning Department continues to analyze and engage in activities that will benefit the entire Fitchburg community, including promoting and maintaining healthy neighborhoods. A well-planned city can provide efficient and cost-effective services. The Planning and Zoning Department is committed to continuing its provision of strong, sound, and smart planning, as historically demanded by Fitchburg citizens.