

V. Community Impacts

The ongoing, proposed, and possible future Highway 12 expansion and proposed realignment projects will have significant impacts on the communities in the Specific Planning Area (See Map 1). If properly planned and designed, these projects can help achieve or at least not impede the vision, goals, opportunities, and recommendations of this *Growth Management Plan*. Further, implementation of the recommendations of this *Plan* will also impact the future character of the General Planning Area, and adjacent communities in Adams, Columbia, Dane, and Juneau Counties, particularly the towns of Roxbury and West Point. This section provides a qualitative summary of the impacts of the various highway projects and the recommendations of this *Plan* on the affected communities over the next fifty years. Considered are impacts on:

- Relationships among planning districts
- Spin-off development
- Natural environment and farmland
- Local traffic
- Additional community facilities and services
- Tax base

A. Relationships among Planning Districts

The Tourist Entertainment Corridor and the Baraboo Area have a direct relationship. Without careful planning, design, and intergovernmental cooperation, these two districts could easily merge into one continuous mass of development of highly variable types, compatibility, visual character, quality, functionality, and long-term value. Affected governments, landowners, and private development interests will have to work together to achieve the vision for each district, and a successful transition between the two districts that retains the unique character of each. The comprehensive plans for the local communities should provide additional detail on land use, building and site design, and transportation recommendations for this critical transition area.

How well the recommended vision for the Tourist Entertainment Corridor is achieved could also have a significant impact on the Baraboo, Sauk Prairie, and Rural Areas. Providing housing to support future jobs in the Tourist Entertainment Corridor is a great challenge. The vision for the Tourist Entertainment Corridor suggests that communities within this planning district incorporate a mix of future housing types in direct relation to the number and compensation levels of the available jobs. If this vision is not realized, other communities in Sauk County will bear a greater burden of housing Tourist Entertainment Corridor workers, particularly in the Baraboo Area. This is why it is critical to implement the entire vision for the Tourist Entertainment Corridor, not just the most fiscally attractive pieces.

The Baraboo Area and the Sauk Prairie Area have a slightly more indirect relationship to one another. Both areas stand to benefit from a concerted effort to promote nature-based and heritage-based tourism opportunities. Both would also benefit from improved infrastructure—roads and electronic—for traditional economic development and improved travel for inter-community shoppers and commuters. Continued and expanded industrial development initiatives and industrial parks in both districts will continue to result in upward pressure on wages. Continued allowances for large retail uses in the Baraboo Area (and the West Madison/Middleton area), per the recommendations of this section, will reduce pressure for such development in the Sauk Prairie Area.

The Rural Area has a significant relationship with the Sauk Prairie Area, the Baraboo Area, and the Tourist Entertainment Corridor. In fact, most of the recommendations for the Rural Area can and should apply equally to lands within these other planning districts that are outside of the sanitary sewer service areas. Except for limited residential and crossroads development in appropriate areas, non-agricultural land uses should be directed to one of these three areas, which are more suitable for development. Successful implementation of the visions for the Sauk Prairie Area, the Baraboo Area, and the Tourist Entertainment Corridor will make them more attractive living environments, which in turn will minimize development pressure in the Rural Area districts. Conversely, successful implementation of

the Rural Area vision will help maintain unique free-standing communities, reduce car travel, reduce the potential for conflicts between agricultural and rural residential uses, and redirect housing to smaller urban lots resulting in less farmland used.

B. Spin-off Development

The various highway projects will increase the speed and safety of access into the Study Area from both the Madison area and the Interstate system. This will create additional economic development opportunities in planned growth areas. These include greater local economic and shopping opportunities as local, regional, and tourist populations continue to increase. There is no inherent reason why these additional opportunities would be inconsistent with the vision expressed in this *Growth Management Plan*.

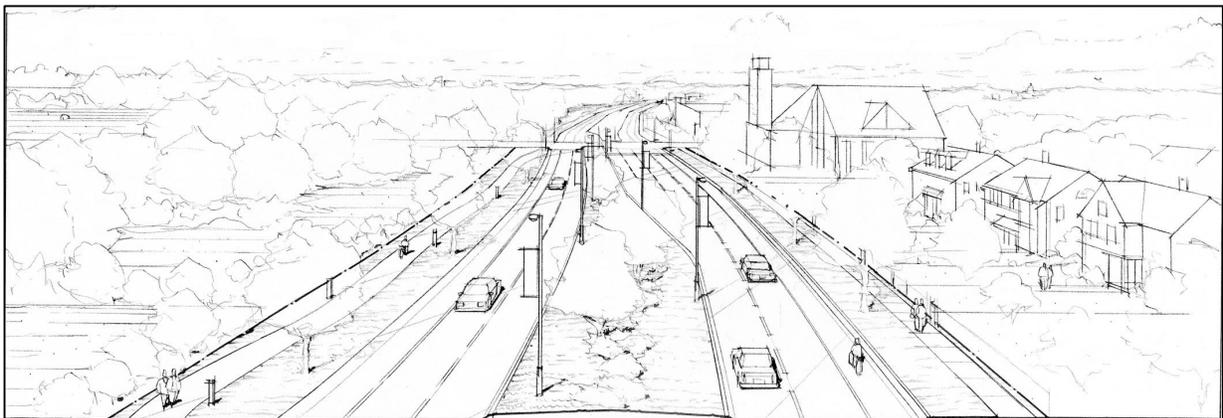
Pending and future highway projects will also result in pressure for spin-off development in areas where local communities have not planned for it. The Environmental Impact Analyses for these projects have or will have to evaluate these impacts. Potential unplanned spin-off development pressure includes:

1. Accelerated housing development associated with job growth on Madison's west side

With the completion of the 4-lane Highway 12 in Dane County, the Sauk Prairie Area will be roughly a 20-minute commute to large-scale industrial and office development on the west sides of Madison and Middleton. That shorter and more consistent travel time, coupled with greater highway safety, should increase residential development pressure and begin to attract the attention of large-scale Madison area developers, particularly to Sauk City and Prairie du Sac. Following 2005, these communities should be prepared to address community character, community facility, and utility impacts of 40-acre, 80-acre, or larger subdivisions.

2. Development spilling over existing Highway 12 and potential realignments

There appears to be broad community agreement that, aside from very low density rural uses, new development should be kept to the east or "inside" of proposed realignment projects and the north-south segment of existing Highway 12 in the Sauk Prairie Area. This will help preserve community character and connectivity, productive farmland, the integrity of natural basin edges, and cost-efficient public services. The greatest development pressure along the west side or "outside" of Highway 12 and its realignments will be for highway-oriented commercial development, particularly near planned interchanges. Tools such as access controls for intersecting roads, intergovernmental plans and agreements, zoning, sewer service areas that do not cross these highways, and preservation incentives like conservation easements are critical to assure that local governments can hold the line on these commitments. The following graphic shows a potential design of the concept of a realignment forming a community edge.



3. Additional rural residential development within “Rural Areas” districts

This pressure will result from job growth both within the Madison area and within the urban areas of Sauk County. This pressure will be particularly strong near accessible Highway 12 crossroads like Highways C, W, PF, and O, in scenic woodlands and shoreland areas, and adjacent to permanently-preserved natural areas. Where significant growth is not planned by the particular town, techniques such as highway access control, exclusive agricultural zoning, land and conservation easement purchases, and development siting standards are important considerations.

C. Natural Environment and Farmland

The potential impacts of development on the natural environment and farmland are significant. The extent of the impact greatly depends on whether the communities continue to accept the current development trend or work diligently to implement the visions included in this *Plan*. Allowing development to occur haphazardly on large lots spread out along highways and throughout the landscape will not only negatively affect the environment, but will destroy the small-town and rural character area residents cherish. In contrast, the visions for the four planning districts include recommendations to preserve the natural environment and the farming economy. The following are potential impacts on the natural environment and farmland if the visions are implemented:

1. Local farmers offered economic incentives to protect their productive farmland

Productive farmland will remain in agricultural use through a number of techniques that will also provide the property owner with some economic gain. Density-based zoning could allow property owners to sell-off less productive areas of their land while preserving the remainder for long-term agricultural use. Clustering techniques can direct rural residential development to these less productive areas, which will better preserve rural character and provide greater future flexibility for the property owner. Sauk County’s pending Preservation Program (SCPP) is also



designed to protect farmland and natural resources by providing local governments and landowners with a viable economic alternative to developing their property. This program should be implemented.

2. Baraboo Range Protection Program continues to permanently preserve land

As willing sellers agree to sell either their land or development rights, lands in the Baraboo Range threatened by development pressures will be permanently preserved in their natural state, which in turn will preserve the integrity of the Baraboo Range National Natural Landmark.

3. Compact development preserves agricultural lands on the edge

Some of the best agricultural soils are often located in the most logical areas for urban growth. Although some of this farmland directly adjacent to existing communities will be developed, recommendations for infill, redevelopment, and compact development included in the “visions” will result in less of an impact on these areas than if land were developed in accordance with current trends. Smaller residential lots will also decrease the amount of farmland lost for development.

4. Sauk Prairie Area bypass alternative will have an environmental impact

When WisDOT studies a future bypass of the Sauk Prairie Area, an Environmental Impact Statement will need to consider all potential alternative locations for a bypass. Each location, whether south of Sauk City or North of Prairie du Sac, could have a significant impact on environmentally sensitive features and productive farmland. The communities and WisDOT will need to evaluate all of these impacts prior to determining if, when, and where a bypass of the Sauk Prairie Area is constructed.

5. Proposed Highway 12 realignment around Baraboo Area and Tourist Entertainment Corridor designed to minimize impacts on adjacent farmland

By following property lines and natural features wherever possible, the number of large farmland parcels divided by the proposed realignment has been minimized. In addition, the proposed access controls and natural landscaping scheme planned along the corridor, especially within the Tourist Entertainment Corridor, should preserve the rural character in the area and reduce the potential for development along the west side of the proposed realignment.

6. Improved farming economy reduces farmland conversion

The profits from selling their property for development are often the retirement funds for area farmers. By improving the viability and profitability of farming through value-added techniques such as niche-farming and direct marketing as suggested by the “Rural Areas Vision”, property owners will be less likely to convert their land out of agricultural use. Retiring farmers will have greater opportunities to sell their farms to new farmers for continued agricultural use.



D. Traffic

The ongoing and proposed Highway 12 projects and the recommended visions for the Study Area have the following projected traffic impacts:

1. Increases in congestion along Highway 12 and alternate routes until proposed Baraboo and Sauk Prairie realignments are constructed

Before construction of the proposed realignments, traffic on existing Highway 12 will become increasingly congested. The visions for the three main planning districts suggest a focus of development and redevelopment activities along these roads, which will certainly contribute to traffic increases. This increased congestion on Highway 12 in the short term will result in drivers continuing to seek alternate routes, including Highway A, Fox Hill Road, Old Bluff Trail, and various combinations of Highways 188, 60, PF, 78, C and local roads to “bypass” the Baraboo and Sauk Prairie Areas. Suggested remedies include improving appropriate north-south routes for local traffic; planning for additional loop roads as appropriate; and establishing weight limits, speed limits, and other traffic control devices to discourage through traffic on inappropriate roads.

2. Highway 12 improvements in Dane County impact traffic and development in Sauk Prairie Area

Sauk City will certainly have the greatest short-term impact from the Highway 12 expansion in Dane County. The transition from four lanes in Dane County to two lanes in Sauk County will occur in Sauk City on Phillips Boulevard—at least for two to four years before it is planned for reconstruction. Traffic will increase on the new Highway 12 in Dane County once it is expanded, as some drivers currently taking alternate routes may be drawn to it for greater speed and safety. New development spurred in part by the four-lane expansion will likely not overwhelm the Sauk Prairie Area immediately following its opening, but will certainly affect the long-term traffic situation in Sauk City. Arriving at both a short- and long-term solution for handling this increased traffic through the Sauk Prairie Area should be a priority.

3. With realignment construction, safety on existing Highway 12 is improved

Following Highway 12 realignment construction in the Baraboo/Delton area, traffic on existing Highway 12 will decrease and be more directed to local traffic, rather than a mix of local and through traffic. This should significantly increase traffic safety on the existing Highway 12, and provide better crossing opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and farmers. It will also challenge the future of some commercial uses dependent on through traffic for a significant portion of their business, such as gas stations and motels. Businesses serving the local market and “destination” uses (like the casino, Wal-Mart, larger hotels, and specialty shops) may actually benefit from smoother and safer traffic flow.

4. Additional traffic along Highway 12 increases potential for transit as an alternative

Transit will become a viable alternative to typical vehicular travel as development, especially within the Tourist Entertainment Corridor and the Baraboo Area, increases traffic along existing Highway 12. Shuttle systems between the Baraboo Area and Wisconsin Dells, Amtrak service in the Dells, and excursion rail from Madison to Devils Lake and beyond are potential opportunities to reduce the number of cars on the road through the provision of alternate means. Local ridesharing, vanpooling, park and ride lots, flexible work shifts, and the provision of bike and pedestrian facilities will also provide options to reduce traffic on Highway 12.

E. Tax Base

Implementing the recommended visions for the Study Area will have the following projected tax base impacts:

1. Additional development increases local tax base

The tax base in the Baraboo Area, Sauk Prairie Area, and Tourist Entertainment Corridor will significantly increase as a result of new development projected to occur. There is a potential for very high value development and tax base return, particularly in the Tourist Entertainment Corridor. Tax base in the Rural Areas will also continue to increase with limited, clustered residential development and with a coordinated effort to add value to agricultural products and the overall farm economy. However the communities should be aware that with increased tax base comes increased service demands. Studies in other communities have suggested that, except for high-value housing, many types of residential development may not “pay for themselves” when comparing additional tax base to additional service costs. While commercial and industrial developments typically do pay for themselves, these types of developments need a supply of affordable housing nearby to prosper (i.e., employees, customers).

2. High quality development leads to significant increases in local and regional tax base

The market is and will continue to be strong, based on the regional and local opportunities available. With a strong market, communities have the ability to require high building and site design standards. This is a key element of the visions for each of the planning districts. High quality building and site design standards have a direct impact on increased tax base, since high quality development generally encourages additional high quality development, which results in higher potential land prices for property sellers. High-quality development standards also result in more investment dollars per acre and an increased appreciation of developed property values. These factors combine to put more dollars into the local economy on a per acre basis, which in turn results in a significantly higher tax base than would have been created without sound planning and quality development standards.

F. Additional Community Facilities and Services

New development will certainly generate the need for new services. Some types of development “pay for themselves” more than other types when considering the tax base generated versus service costs. Communities will need to consider the fiscal impact on municipal services and facilities when reviewing new development proposals. Implementation of the recommended visions for the planning districts will have the following projected service impacts:

1. Increase in demand for municipal services and communities facilities

As development occurs, increasing demands will be placed on municipal services and facilities, including police and fire departments, EMS and ambulance services, and public works facilities. County and local governments will need to begin planning for expanded services and facilities to meet this increased demand. There will also be an increase in demand for community facilities. Local library systems, senior centers, medical clinics, day care centers, and continuing education programs will need to accommodate the needs of an increasing population. It will be important to provide facilities that meet the needs of aging baby boomers, while also meeting the needs of and attracting a younger workforce. Communities should continue to explore opportunities for cooperation and consolidation of services to minimize costs and provide more efficient services.

2. Long-term need for new elementary, middle, and high schools

The Sauk Prairie Area is served by the Sauk Prairie School District. The Baraboo Area and Tourist Entertainment Corridor are served by the Baraboo School District. New growth forecasted in the Study Area in the next 50 years will result in a demand for multiple new elementary, middle, and high schools. These demands would be similar regardless of whether the trend or vision scenarios are followed. The communities should work closely with the school districts, particularly on upcoming comprehensive planning efforts, to further understand and do advance planning for these school impacts.



3. Expansion of water and sewer utility systems, including treatment plant expansions

Additional development within existing, expanding, and new water and sanitary sewer districts will require the extension of water and sewer utility mains. Communities in the Tourist Entertainment Corridor will need to work together to determine how the area will be served by sewer and water. Possibilities include an expansion of the Ho-Chunk system, extensions from Lake Delton or Baraboo, or a completely new utility district (s) for the area. Communities in the Baraboo Area and the Sauk Prairie Area will also need to work together to determine logical locations for new development that can be adequately served by the utility systems. The Sauk Prairie Area communities will need to consider capacity expansions of the existing treatment plant in the near future to accommodate additional growth.

