

5 AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

5.4 Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve the bluffs, scenic views, waterfront, wetlands, woodlands and wildlife habitat within the City and encourage the protection of these resources on surrounding lands.

Objectives

- a. By continuing to require the protection of existing vegetation on new development sites to the greatest extent possible to minimize soil erosion during and after construction. This includes protecting existing stands of mature trees.
- b. By locating all public facilities (roads, buildings, etc.) to minimize impacts on environmental features, when possible.
- c. By encouraging the preservation of productive agricultural lands by discouraging the proliferation of unsewered urban developed on areas adjacent to the City.
- d. By avoiding development impacts to habitat for federally threatened, endangered or state listed species and natural communities.
- e. By requiring natural resource features to be accurately depicted on all site plans, certified survey maps, preliminary plats and final plats.
- f. By promoting compact development, especially in the coulee areas.
- g. By purchasing or acquiring through conservation easement environmentally important lands, when possible.
- h. By considering addressing the overpopulation of deer in the area.

Goal 2: Encourage land use patterns and practices that are environmentally sensitive and that do not disrupt the natural hydrologic system, including the balance between ground and surface waters.

Objectives

- a. By requiring proper stormwater management practices, such as rain gardens, detention, infiltration and wetland restoration, to maintain or increase groundwater recharge and reduce excess runoff.
- b. By preserving wetlands as essential components of the hydrologic system and as valuable wildlife habitat.

- c. By continuing to enforce the City's Wellhead Protection Plan and update the plan as necessary.
- d. By requiring Best Management Practices to control erosion and sedimentation during construction.
- e. By discouraging the regrading of large areas that alters natural topography and drainage patterns.
- f. By continuing to protect floodplain areas and natural drainageways from being filled or altered in any way that reduces their function.

Goal 3: Enhance public access, use and enjoyment of the community's natural and recreational resources.

Objectives

- a. By acquiring and developing the waterfront area in downtown Onalaska and making it a focal point for the community.
- b. By ensuring that public recreational use of natural resources is enhanced in a manner that is compatible with the resource. This will be especially true for the Greens Coulee Park development.
- c. By establishing and maintaining an efficient system of parks, trails, pedestrian pathways, bicycle routes and greenways to provide access and linkage to natural and recreational resources.
- d. By promoting the cooperation and coordination of acquisition and development of natural and recreational areas among state and local agencies, individuals, businesses and foundations.

Goal 4: Identify, conserve and protect Onalaska's cultural, historical and archaeological resources.

Objectives

- a. By encouraging the preservation of historically significant buildings and sites in Onalaska.
- b. By working with the Historic Preservation Commission to update the City's historic inventory as buildings and sites warrant such recognition.
- c. By continuing to protect important archaeological sites in and around the City.
- d. By ensuring Onalaska's environmental and aesthetic qualities, including the waterfront and scenic views, are preserved or enhanced.

- e. By considering creating an incentive program for building and property owners who apply to list their properties on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

5.5 Policies and Recommendations

Agricultural Resources

- 1) Encourage the use of conservation subdivisions for residential developments in agriculturally important areas within and adjacent to Onalaska. Within Onalaska, productive agricultural soils that are not located in conservancy or open space areas exist in Greens Coulee and Sand Lake Coulee.
- 2) Support private landowners who wish to protect their land by using conservation easements and other land protection tools, unless such measures conflict with the efficient, orderly and planned expansion of the City.
- 3) Work with neighboring jurisdictions to encourage an orderly, efficient development pattern that protects productive agricultural land and minimizes conflicts between urban and rural uses.

Natural Resources

- 4) Consider creating an ordinance to protect remnant oak savannas or mature oaks from being damaged or removed during development. Additionally, continue to work toward managing the oak wilt problem in the City.
- 5) Promote awareness of natural resources and critical resource issues in the City through public education and volunteer stewardship activities in public parks and through collaboration and partnership with local landowners, conservation groups (such as the Clearwater Farm Foundation and/or the Mississippi Valley Conservancy), public agencies, UW-La Crosse and other stakeholders.
- 6) Discourage large-scale disruptive development on ridge tops, which is visible for many miles and damages the scenic character of the Coulee Region. Small-scale planned development that blends with the natural landscape should be considered by the Plan Commission on a case by case basis. Where development does occur near ridgelines, the development should take place on the lowest portion of the parcel and in the area with the least slope.
- 7) Protect the bluffs through continued acquisition of land and/or easements along the bluff. Work with Menard's to acquire or obtain an easement on the bluffland they own near their site on Sand Lake Road.
- 8) Use the City's zoning, subdivision review and official mapping powers to protect the scenic views of the bluffs and Mississippi River Valley, the downtown riverfront area, the bluffs to the east of the City and any other significant natural

- resources.
- 9) Follow the goals and guidelines in the Street Tree Inventory Report and Management Plan, including the Plan's four principal goals:
 - Maintain Safety in the Urban Forest
 - Maintain the Health of the Urban Forest
 - Perpetuate the Urban Forest
 - Establish Good Public Relations
 - 10) Continue to update the Environmental Features Map to show environmentally sensitive areas such as threatened and endangered species habitats, wetlands, lakes, rivers, streams, floodplains, woodlands, remnant prairies/grasslands, steep slopes and bluffs. Consult this map when considering major development proposals.
 - 11) Continue to require important natural resource features to be depicted on all site plans and preliminary plats and certified survey maps in order to facilitate preservation of these resources.
 - 12) The City should encourage the preservation of wildlife corridors and open space in new developments through the use of incentives and flexible regulations, such as land trusts, open space and cluster zoning, density bonuses and conservation easements.
 - 13) Continue to consult the Onalaska Central Greenway Conceptual Master Plan to identify and protect key linkages and provide greenway corridors and connections within Onalaska and between Onalaska and surrounding communities.
 - 14) The City should work with the DNR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and environmental groups to identify the locations where sensitive species occur within the City of Onalaska and they should cooperate with these agencies on creating maintenance plans and development guidelines to protect these species.
 - 15) Continue to strictly enforce the City's erosion control ordinance.
 - 16) The City should amend its zoning and subdivision regulations as necessary to incorporate low-impact development and conservation design techniques that:
 - Limit total impervious area;
 - Minimize site disturbance and soil compaction to preserve natural topography and minimize erosion;
 - Ensure sound water quality and run-off controls while minimizing the use of storm drain pipes (this includes allowing, where applicable, the use of rain gardens, permeable pavements, etc.);
 - Require adequate buffer areas and setbacks to minimize encroachment and preserve the natural character and scenic quality of sensitive resources, including the bluffs and coulee slopes; and
 - Utilize native vegetation in new plantings.

Cultural Resources

- 17) Make the downtown riverfront area a significant community amenity. Continue to partner with organizations such as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Department of Natural Resources, environmental groups and private landowners to acquire the land along Lake Onalaska at the Main Street and Hwy 35 intersection to be used for ecotourism purposes. Work with Centering Onalaska on overall streetscape design plans for the waterfront and downtown area. Lead a public process if and when the land is acquired to determine what citizens want for the area; possible amenities could include a public boat landing, trails, a riverwalk, observation points, camping facilities and/or a beach.
- 18) Continue to celebrate downtown Onalaska and the important archaeological sites in the City by participating in Historic Preservation and Archaeology Week, a statewide celebration to showcase grassroots preservation activities. Work with Onalaska's Historic Preservation Commission to plan and implement the event.
- 19) Consider updating Section 13-5-6 (d) of the Historic Preservation chapter of the Zoning Code to include specific design guidelines for historic districts. The design guidelines should:
 - Provide an overview of the architectural styles and types of buildings found in the community.
 - Recommend preserving the general integrity of the historic architectural features of buildings and of the historic district as a whole.
 - Guide new development that respects and enhances the existing character of the area, particularly as it pertains to encouraging "compatible infill".

Additionally, adopt and implement the Centering Onalaska guidelines for historic districts.
- 20) Continue to encourage and support property owners who wish to rehabilitate and designate their historic properties. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings, such as the Lumber Baron Inn Bed and Breakfast, should be strongly encouraged.
- 21) During public development projects that have federal, state or local government involvement, continue to be aware of and enforce applicable laws to protect cultural resources, including:
 - Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for federal projects
 - Wisconsin Statute § 44.40 for state projects
 - Wisconsin Statute § 66.1111 for local projects
 - Wisconsin Statute § 120.12 (21) for projects involving schools
- 22) Continue to enact the Archaeological Zoning Ordinance to protect areas that may have important artifacts. Update the ordinance as needed.

