

# 7. Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources

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## Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Vision

In 2035 all residents have convenient access to neighborhood parks and trails. Regional bicycle and pedestrian trails connect Evansville to neighboring communities. Parks are diverse in size and include both passive and active recreational opportunities.

Evansville's growth has occurred at an appropriate urban density in order to preserve the surrounding rural character, maintain prime farmland, and protect woodlands and wetlands.

Within the City, natural features are preserved through effective ordinances. Trees, undeveloped green space, environmental corridors, trails and creative landscaping contribute to community character.

Evansville is renowned for its historic character. Residents and business-owners have preserved, restored and maintained historic buildings and neighborhoods. Evansville offers an array of restaurants, parks and public spaces to provide cultural and entertainment choices to residents.

### Goals

- Carefully consider soil types and natural limitations when approving development projects to avoid environmental and developmental problems.
- Make Allen Creek an asset for the downtown, not an impediment to development
- Protect wetlands in the City of Evansville
- To preserve, protect, and expand natural resources of Evansville for the use and enjoyment by present residents, visitors, and future generations
- Work with the nearby townships to preserve agricultural lands for long-term agricultural use.
- Preserve and protect the historic resources of the City to promote the educational, cultural, and general welfare of residents of Evansville and provide for a more interesting, attractive and vital community
- Enhance the offering of cultural resources in the City

### Policies

It is Evansville's vision that the community will retain its small city charm in a rural setting. Objectives to support this vision are provided at the end of this chapter. Supporting policies are provided below:

- Consider the additional costs both for actual construction and needed services associated with developing in areas with engineering limitations (soil, slope, groundwater, bedrock) when determining the amount of the letter of credit that the developer must provide to guarantee the construction of public improvements.
- Regulate the type of industrial development near the City's municipal wells to minimize the chances of groundwater contamination. Encourage the proper handling of wastes and chemicals.
- Support the extension of public services in an orderly manner to minimize scattered rural development.
- Preserve the most significant aspects of the natural resource base, that is, primary environmental corridors and surrounding agricultural lands, which contribute to the maintenance of the ecological balance, natural beauty, agricultural production and economic wellbeing of the City and environs.
- Encourage development within the City corporate limits, connected to municipal sanitary and water systems, to promote efficient, compact urban development patterns that maximize available services and include adequate open space.

## Introduction

This chapter provides an inventory of existing agricultural, natural, and cultural resources in the City of Evansville. In addition, issues associated with these resources are discussed and a vision, with supporting goals and objectives, is presented.

Wisconsin's Smart Growth Law includes 14 goals for local comprehensive planning. The City of Evansville believes that the goals listed below specifically relate to planning for agricultural and natural resources:

- Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and environmental corridors.
- Protection of economically productive agricultural areas.
- Protection of agricultural lands for agricultural purposes.

During the 2005 Kick-Off Meeting, residents identified the following values related to this element:

- We value the history defined by historical buildings/ architecture, traditional downtown and beautiful homes.
- We value our well-maintained historic district.
- We value the peaceful, rural agricultural setting beyond City limits.

These sentiments have been found over proceeding plan updates in survey data.

## Agricultural Resources

There is agricultural land within the current City limits, but little of it would be considered prime farmland. The City anticipates that much of the agricultural land within the City limits will be developed, although the City believes substantial portions should be preserved as green space, including environmental corridors, when the land ceases to be actively cultivated.

The City will strongly support the nearby townships in preserving agricultural land in the townships, provided the land to be preserved is not identified in this plan's *Future Land Use Map* as being a likely site of future urban development. The City will consider and likely will attempt to implement any request by the townships for changes in City policy that would assist the townships in preserving agricultural land not marked for future urban development. The City also will consider requests to change this plan's *Future Land Use Map* to preserve as agricultural land areas marked for urban development, but the City will be more reluctant to accommodate such requests, because the areas marked for future urban development can be served efficiently with sanitary sewer service.

## Natural Resources and Environmental Concerns

Natural resources help to determine the potential for development. Geology, topography, drainage patterns, floodplains, wetlands, and soil characteristics are among the natural and environmental features that determine if an area is physically suitable for specific types of development.

Preservation of natural resources (wetlands, surface and groundwater, woodlands, shorelines) is an important priority for the City of Evansville. These resources provide recreation opportunities that help to sustain the local economy and enhance the quality of life.

### Geology and Topography

The City of Evansville is located approximately 900 feet above mean sea level, in the northwest corner of Rock County. Evansville is just south of where the last glacier advanced in Wisconsin. The area to the north is hilly, consisting of mounds of glacial till caused by melting of the most recent glacier. The area to the south of Evansville contains highly dissected stream valleys cut into the bedrock. The last glacial advance did not affect the area to the south, and the steep-sided stream valleys once found throughout this region of the state remain, since they escaped being ground down and filled in by glacial ground moraine or outwash.

Bedrock in the Evansville area consists of Ordovician-aged St. Peter sandstone, which in some places is overlain by more recent dolomites. The St. Peter sandstone ranges in thickness in the area. Municipal well records indicate the sandstone is approximately 115 – 135 feet thick in the City.

Underneath the St. Peter sandstone is approximately 60 feet of dolomite, below which is at least 600 feet of late Cambrian sandstones.

The City of Evansville is located over what used to be a valley for a tributary to the Yahara River. The tributary flowed to the east along a route that is now STH 14 from Evansville to a point north of Janesville. The tributary cut a steep-walled valley under the present city, and eventually flowed into the Yahara River, and then the Rock River. The tributary cut a steep-walled valley under the present city, and eventually flowed into the Yahara River, and then the Rock River. The floor of the ancient valley under Evansville is approximately 100 feet below the present land surface, while just east of the City the former valley floor is 260 feet below the surface.

When the last glacier started to melt and recede, outwash from the melting of the glacier filled in the ancient stream valley, leaving behind significant depths of relatively clean, permeable sands and gravels in the Evansville area.

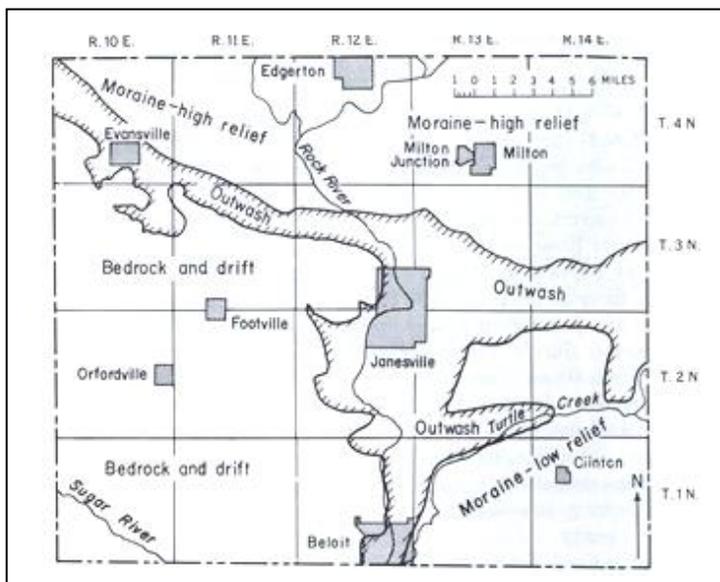


FIGURE 7A: MAP SHOWING PHYSIOGRAPHIC AREAS IN ROCK COUNTY, WI From E.F. LeRoux, *Geology and Ground-Water Resources of Rock County, Wisconsin* 1964

### Watersheds and Drainage

The City of Evansville falls within the Allen Creek and Middle Sugar River Watershed. This watershed covers northeast Green County, northwest Rock County and south central Dane County. The dominant land use in the watershed is agriculture. Municipal wastewater treatment plant discharges to surface waters in the watershed come from Belleville and Brooklyn. Treated water from Evansville's wastewater treatment plant is allowed to soak into the ground, and eventually some of it becomes spring water that feeds into Allen Creek

As is discussed in the Utilities and Community Facilities Element, Evansville has a storm water collection system. Storm water from undeveloped areas and older areas of the City flow to Allen Creek. In newer developments, greenways, detention and retention facilities are used to control storm water.

### Allen Creek

Allen Creek is the primary surface water feature in Evansville. It enters the City from the northwest and leaves to the south. Allen Creek is the source water for Lake Leota. Allen Creek rises in southern Dane County, flows through northwest Rock County and northeast Green County before emptying into the Sugar River. About 4.5 miles of the stream above Lake Leota are classified Class II and Class III trout waters (WDNR, 1980). Allen Creek below Evansville is on the State's antidegradation list (NR 102) as an exceptional resource water (ERW), affording it a greater level of protection. The stream below Evansville has a very good, diverse warm water sport fishery. There is some public ownership along the stream south of Evansville.

Evansville has a long history of volunteer, state, and municipal efforts to maintain the quality of Allen Creek:

- The earliest documented efforts date back to 1908 with the organization of the Union Drainage District. The purpose of the Union Drainage District was to dredge and rechannel the stream to create more tillable land.
- In 1909 and 1910, dredging the waterway from Butts Corners north to the Dane County line had deepened Allen Creek. During this first dredging of the creek, 77,000 cubic yards of material was removed. This allowed the surrounding land to drain into the creek and what had previously been swampland became tillable farmland.
- In 1951, the creek was dredged again and four laterals were constructed to extend the drainage ditch and drain more wetlands. An estimated 145,000 cubic yards of soil was removed in this process.
- In 1972, the Department of Natural Resources recommended improvements to Allen Creek to create a better Lake Leota environment. These actions were needed for many reasons, including the intensive farming of the land near the creek created erosion into the stream and increased the load of sediment carried into the lake. Actions included:
  - Riprapping the banks of the stream and placing retention ponds at the end of the draining ditch laterals to reduce the amount of silt that was carried by the stream. More than 4,000 tons of quarry rock was used to stabilize the creek banks.
  - Fencing along the shores of Lake Leota and Allen Creek to prevent farm animals from getting into the stream. Cattle were especially harmful to the stream banks, as the dirt gave way under their feet and caused further erosion of the stream.
  - Six cattle crossings were made at various points along Allen Creek.
  - The banks of the creek were also sloped with a dragline and seeded with grass to prevent further erosion.

## Lake Leota

Lake Leota is a 40-acre lake divided by a railroad bridge into a smaller, upper lake (north end) and a larger, lower lake (south end). The lower lake has a maximum depth of 18 feet, while the upper lake is much shallower. Pan fish, trout and walleye are present in the lake.

Many questions regarding the status of Lake Leota were in the original 2005 Smart Growth Plan. This plan prioritized the restoration of Lake Leota to be a useable amenity for the residents of Evansville. Since then, the Lake has been dredged to restore it. Public involvement for the 2015 Smart Growth Plan update has confirmed that Lake Leota and Leonard-Leota Park are valuable assets to the Evansville Community. Given the history of the Lake, it will be important to monitor the fore-bay to ensure the lake does not suffer from sedimentation, requiring another premature dredging to restore its usability.



**FIGURE 7B: IMAGE OF LAKE LEOTA FROM MILL POND.**  
Source: Don Thompson



**FIGURE 7C: LAKE LEOTA UPPER LAKE.**

## Shorelines

Shoreland areas in the City of Evansville are limited to Allen Creek and its tributaries and Lake Leota. The City has enacted a wetland and shoreland protection ordinance. However, the City does not currently have regulations to enforce what people who own non-wetland land adjacent to Lake Leota can do with their property that might have a negative impact on the lake. Rock County Shoreland Zoning protects the part of Lake Leota that is north of the railroad tracks, because that zoning was in place before the City annexed the property. However, there is nothing in the City regulations to protect the part of Lake Leota south of the railroad tracks. Shoreland zoning regulations are designed for efficient use, conservation, development, and protection of water resources.

## Groundwater & Aquifers

The area around Evansville is underlain by thick sequences of sandstone bedrock, which tend to yield higher volumes of water the deeper a well is cased. Many domestic, stock, and smaller industrial wells in western Rock County draw water from the St. Peter sandstone. Most municipal and larger industrial wells in Rock County draw water from the Cambrian sandstones, which underlie the St. Peter sandstone in the Evansville area.

Beneath the surface of Evansville is the valley of an ancient streambed, which has been filled in by fairly clean glacial outwash. This creates another permeable body capable of yielding water for consumptive use.

There are no significant confining layers separating the glacially laid near-surface materials, the St. Peter sandstone, and the Cambrian sandstones, so the entire groundwater system in the area is considered to be a single aquifer. Groundwater is recharged primarily from precipitation from above. Horizontal groundwater movement is to the east toward the Rock River.

Due to the relatively permeable materials in the area separating surface activities from the groundwater aquifer, wellhead protection programs<sup>1</sup> are necessary to safeguard water supplies in the area. Evansville currently has a wellhead protection overlay district, however, many properties that existed within the overlay district prior to adoption are of an industrial nature. It is important to ensure new industrial uses do not start up as existing uses discontinue.

The arsenic issues associated with drawing water from the St. Peter sandstone aquifer in northeastern Wisconsin have, for the most part, not been identified in southeastern Wisconsin. The elevated arsenic levels found in northeastern Wisconsin have been linked to a narrow sulfide-bearing zone in the top of the St. Peter sandstone. Wells that oxygenate that zone while producing groundwater from it have been found to release arsenic into the groundwater.

In the Evansville area, either the sulfide-bearing zone has been stripped away by past glacial activity, or wells are not oxygenating and drawing water from that zone. Nevertheless, testing potable wells for arsenic is a prudent means to assure a safe water supply.

## Wetlands & Floodplains

Wetlands act as a natural filtering system for sediment and nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrates. They also serve as a natural buffer, protecting shorelines and stream banks from erosion. Wetlands are also essential in providing wildlife habitat, flood control, and groundwater recharge. Floodplains serve many important functions related to flood and erosion control, water quality, groundwater recharge and fish and wildlife habitats. Areas susceptible to flooding are considered unsuitable for development because of risks to lives and property.

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<sup>1</sup> More than 200 Wisconsin communities have wellhead protection programs in place. For more information refer to <http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/gw/whp.htm>

Due to these benefits, regulations place limitations on the development and use of wetlands and floodplains. Under sections 87.3 and 144.26 of the Wisconsin Statutes, a municipality has the authority to give greater protection to wetlands, shoreland and floodplain areas. Evansville currently participates in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Community Rating System (CRS) program. The CRS recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) standards. The City of Evansville currently has a Class 7 CRS rating which earns Evansville residents a 15% discount on flood insurance premiums through the NFIP.

### **Woodlands**

Prior to settlement, the vegetation of Rock County was entirely forested with areas of mixed conifer-northern hardwood forest. As people moved to the area, much of the forests were cleared for agricultural crops. The City of Evansville was originally called "The Grove" because of a large stand of timber to the northwest. Early industries included a sawmill and gristmill on Allen Creek that cleared portions of the timber. Evansville has been designated as a Tree City USA for the number of trees planted by the City in 2001, 2002, and 2003 and has continued to receive this designation through 2014. The City planted many of these trees in the terraces along streets in new residential subdivisions, using funds donated by the developers and builders.

### **Wildlife Habitats**

Unfortunately, there is not a source of comprehensive habitat information for Evansville. To protect habitat areas from encroachment, detailed habitat information collected by the WDNR is not available to the public. Resident observation is the best available local resource about wildlife habitat areas.

Primary wildlife habitat areas correspond to the environmental corridors shown on the *Natural Features Map*. These areas provide food and cover for deer, raccoons, skunk and other small creatures common in the area. Nearby farm fields also serve as a food source for deer, sandhill cranes, turkeys and waterfowl in the area. Farmland is also a very important local wildlife habitat that provides travel corridors between waterways and woodlands. Farmland also provides cover opportunities and large contiguous open spaces needed by wildlife.

Aquatic habitats include Lake Leota and Allen Creek. The quality of these water resources as aquatic habitats was discussed in previous sections of this chapter.

It must be noted here that Rock County has had deer test positive for Chronic Wasting Disease. In 2004, the eradication zone expanded from the Wisconsin State Line to USH 14 in Rock County. Thankfully as of March 2015 there were no recent cases reported within Union Township, and the majority of positive samples were found east of Janesville. <sup>2</sup>

### **Evansville Wildlife Area**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources manages the Evansville Wildlife Area that is located approximately 1 mile south of the City on STH 213. This property includes 6,567 acres (564 of which is owned by the WDNR and 6,003 is leased). The property includes 12 parking lots for visitor use. Principal wildlife observed in the area includes pheasants, rabbits, deer, squirrels, quail, songbirds, and sandhill cranes. Trout fishing and bird watching are common recreational pursuits by visitors to the property. The Evansville Wildlife Area includes a variety of natural habitats including, marsh, woodlots, stream, cropland and grassland.

### **Threatened and Endangered Species**

There are many threatened and endangered plant and animal species in Rock County. Unfortunately, there is not a specific list or map available for Evansville. The WDNR does have county maps available of threatened and endangered species. These maps are very general and do not specially identify habitat areas within the county.

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<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource, *CWD positives by selection*, March 2015

The reason for this is because the WDNR does not want people to visit or otherwise intrude on the habitats of endangered and threatened species. The WDNR is attempting to identify and catalog endangered plant and animal species across the state. For a complete, up-to-date list, refer to [www.dnr.state.wi.us](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us). The state and federal government have programs and laws in effect to protect threatened and endangered plant and animal species in the City of Evansville and beyond.

### Exotic and Invasive Species

Non-native, or exotic, plant and animal species have been recognized in recent years as a major threat to the integrity of native habitats and species, as well as a potential economic threat (damage to crops, tourist economy, etc). The WDNR requires that any person seeking to bring a non-native fish or wild animal for introduction in Wisconsin obtain a permit. The City of Evansville can help combat exotic species by educating residents about non-native species, encouraging residents to use native plants in landscaping, and developing ordinances to limit exotic invasive species.

### Metallic and Non-Metallic Mining Resources

Since Evansville is located on a glacial outwash plain, it has a good supply of sand and gravel. These deposits are located along Allen Creek and also in the eastern half of the City. There are no metallic or non-metallic mining operations in the City of Evansville.

### Soils<sup>3 4</sup>

There are four general associations of soils in and around Evansville. North of the City is the **Kidder-St. Charles Association**. These are deep, well drained and moderately well drained. Most of this soil is cultivated and used to grow corn, soybeans, small grains and legumes. The major soil types in this association have slopes of less than 6% and no serious limitations for use as home sites and septic tank systems.

The **Plano-Warsaw-Dreden Association** covers most of the City. It consists of deep and moderately deep, well drained and moderately well drained, nearly level to sloping soils over stratified sand and gravel. Most of this association is cultivated and used to grow corn, soybeans, small grains, and legumes. The more sloping soils in this association are subject to erosion. There are many good sources of sand and gravel in this association. Due to the porous substratum, there is some danger of groundwater pollution from septic tank systems.

The **Sebewa-Kane Association** is found in the southern and central parts of the City. These are moderately deep, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained, nearly level and gently sloping soils over stratified sand and gravel.

Most of this association is cultivated and used to grow corn, soybeans, small grains and legumes. Wet soils that have not been drained are either used as pasture land or wildlife habitat. Proper drainage is the main concern in maintaining the wet soils for dependable crop production. The loose sand that underlies the Kan and Sebewa soils can clog tile lines unless precautions are taken to prevent the sand from entering the tile.

The fourth association, **Edmund-Rockton-Whalan Association**, lies to the west and southwest of Evansville. These are shallow and moderately deep, well-drained soils over dolomite bedrock. Much of this association is cultivated and used to grow corn, small grains and legumes. The major soils in this association are not suitable for septic systems. There is a danger of groundwater contamination by unfiltered materials moving through crevasses in the dolomite.

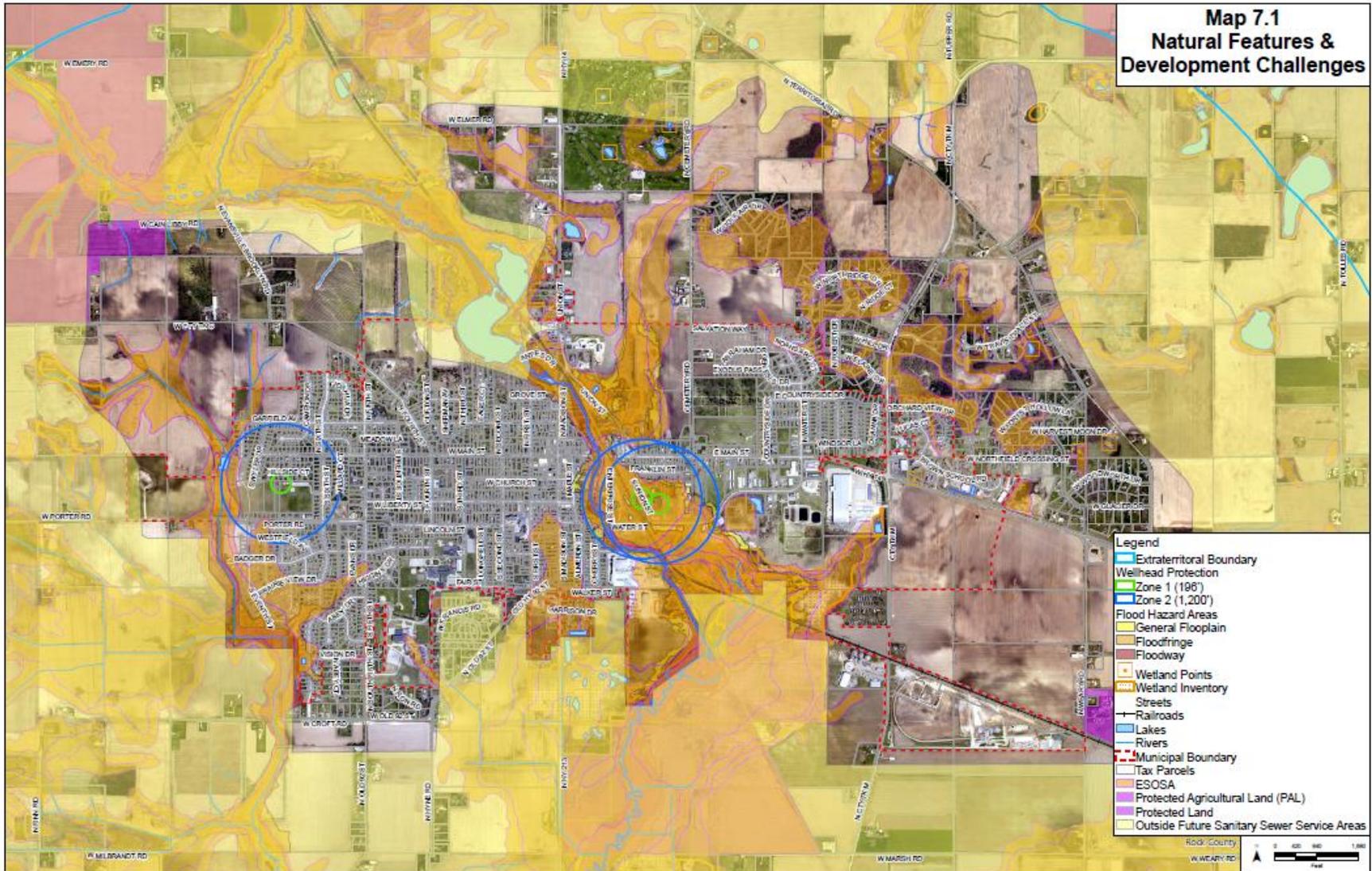
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<sup>3</sup> Rock County Planning Department. *Evansville Master Planning Program*, Volume 1, February 1977.

<sup>4</sup> United States Dept of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, *Soil Survey of Rock County*, 1974.



# Map 7.1: Natural Features and Development Challenges Map



Map 7.1: Natural Features and Development Challenges Map is based on soils data, which reflect areas of special concern. Specific use of a parcel would depend on further testing of the soils involved.

This map shows areas within the Evansville area with noted engineering limitations. These soils are poorly or somewhat poorly drained and would require special engineering to be built upon. Engineering problems include:

- A high shrink-swell potential (the difference in volume of a given weight of particular soil when dry and when moist)
- A high water table that can cause problems such as flotation of pipes and frost-heave
- The soil may have a low bearing capacity and not be suitable to support the weight of construction
- Bedrock near the surface makes digging basements or location of wastewater and water mains difficult

### Environmental Corridors<sup>5</sup>

The *Natural Features Map* provided in this chapter includes environmental corridors. What follows is a definition of the areas included in this environmental corridor.

Lowland areas include wetlands, lands in floodplains, shorelands, and lands having wet soils. Much of this land is restricted from development by wetland protection laws. Most of these soils are also restricted from development because of the difficulty in having on-site sewer. These lowland areas include Allen Creek, areas to the North of Lake Leota, and the Evansville Wildlife Area.

Upland areas included in the environmental corridor have slopes greater than 20% and lands within the managed forest law. Areas with 20% or greater slope are very difficult to build upon because they are easily eroded. The intent of protecting these upland areas is to preserve, protect, enhance, and restore significant woodlands, scenic areas, submarginal farmlands and areas having slopes in excess of 20%; to limit erosion and sedimentation; to promote and maintain the natural beauty of the area; and to preserve areas having significant topography, potential recreation sites, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources that contribute to environmental quality.

### Air Quality

The following information is from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources:

"A few common air pollutants are found all over the United States. These pollutants can injure health, harm the environment and cause property damage. EPA calls these pollutants **criteria air pollutants** because the agency has regulated them by first developing health-based **criteria** (science-based guidelines) as the basis for setting permissible levels. One set of limits (**primary standard**) protects health; another set of limits (**secondary standard**) is intended to prevent environmental and property damage. A geographic area that meets or does better than the primary standard is called an **attainment area**; areas that don't meet the primary standard are called **nonattainment areas**."

Rock County is an attainment area. Based on available data from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Evansville appears to have good-moderate air quality. Nearby areas to the east along USH 14 and to the south (in Illinois) are classified as having unhealthy conditions for sensitive groups of people (e.g. elderly, children, asthmatics). The nearest air quality monitoring stations are located in Madison and Beloit. More information on air quality is available at [www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/air/](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/air/).

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<sup>5</sup> Much of this section was referenced from the 1996 Evansville Master Plan Update.

## Historical Resources

Historical resources, like natural resources, are valuable assets, which should be preserved. The City of Evansville takes great pride in its history. This was clearly expressed in the community's values and strengths listed in the beginning chapters of this plan.

Settled as a village in 1839, Evansville grew as a rural market community. Much of Evansville's heritage architecture is due to the steady growth of the community. A rich variety of architectural styles can be seen in the City. A walk up Main Street is a tour of more than a century of diverse styles in building. The Wisconsin State Historical Society's designation states that Evansville has "the finest collection of 1840's to 1915 architecture of any small town in Wisconsin."

In Wisconsin, Evansville is one of the pioneers in the preservation of heritage resources. During the 1970's evolution of the preservation movement, Evansville civic leaders actively pursued the foundations for the preservation of local historic resources.

In 1976, 22 citizens appointed to a steering committee facilitated a comprehensive survey of the historic structures in the City. A result of this survey was the Evansville Historic District, a 120-acre, 22-block area consisting of most of the downtown commercial buildings and near west side residences. Evansville has eight listings in the National Register of Historic Places. The Eager Free Public Library was listed in 1977 and the Evansville Historic District was designated in 1978. The Historic District listing is 332 structures, 299 contributing and 33 non-contributing. The National Register of Historic Places is maintained by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. Listed properties are eligible for state and federal tax incentives for qualified rehabilitation and any federally funded project substantially altering a listed structure is subject to review.

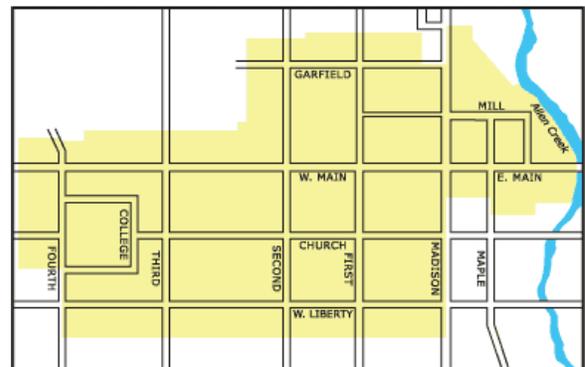
Wisconsin statutes require any city, like Evansville, that contains any property listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the State Register of Historic Places to have an ordinance to regulate "any place, structure or object with a special character, historic, archaeological or aesthetic interest, or other significant value, for the purpose of preserving the place, structure or object and its significant characteristics". The same statute also requires cities like Evansville to regulate "all historical or archaeological landmarks and all property within each historic district to preserve the historic or archaeological landmarks and property within the district and the character of the district". Finally, the statutes provide for creation of a city historic preservation commission to designate landmarks and establish historic districts. (Sec. 62.23 (7)(em), Wisconsin Statutes.)



FIGURE 7D: (TOP) EXAMPLE OF GREEK REVIVAL ARCHITECTURE IN EVANSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT.

(BOTTOM) EXAMPLE OF HIGH VICTORIAN ITALIANATE ARCHITECTURE IN EVANSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT.

### EVANSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP



**District Boundaries**   
Source: Evansville Architectural Survey and Preservation Plan, revised second edition, 1977

FIGURE 7E: EVANSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP.

The Evansville Historic Preservation Commission was formed in 1978. The Commission currently consists of seven members appointed by the Mayor, six for staggered two-year terms and an alderperson with a one-year term. The Commission meets monthly and is charged with designation, review and education authority. The Commission receives annual funding from the City budget.

Monies have been used to purchase historical reference materials for the City library, assist in the production of a City brochure, support historic education projects in the school system, supplement restoration funding for projects such as the Baker Building Project of the Evansville Grove Society, the local historical society, and provide funding assistance to the signage component of the downtown building facade improvement program. The Zoning Ordinance, in *Section 130-1121*, also establishes the Historic Conservation Overlay District. It provides regulations in addition to the regulations of the underlying zoning district. The Section states:

These regulations are intended to protect against destruction of or encroachment upon such areas, structures or premises; to encourage uses which will lead to their continuance, conservation and improvement in a manner appropriate to preservation of the cultural and historic heritage of the city, to prevent creation of environmental influences adverse to such purposes, and to ensure that new structures and uses within such districts will be in keeping with the character to be preserved and enhanced, thereby to protect and promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing property values and making the district a more attractive and desirable place in which to live.

The Evansville Historic Preservation Commission receives notification of all applications for conditional use permits in the Historic Conservation Overlay District and is charged with reviewing the applications and advising the Plan Commission as to whether the conditional use plans are compatible with the surrounding areas.

Since 1978, the Commission acquired 44 preservation easements for significant City historic residences. The City residences with easements display plaques signifying their special historic value to the community. Six of the residences with restrictive covenants are located outside of the Historic District. A preservation easement, also known as a restrictive covenant, is a legal agreement that grants an interest in a historic property, usually to a qualified nonprofit organization or government to accomplish preservation objectives. A property owner transfers to the organization the responsibility to protect the property from changes that would compromise its historical/architectural character. The covenants held by the Evansville Historic Preservation Commission provide protection for structural and/or exterior changes to the property. The easements are recorded in the county records office. The easement is permanently attached to the property title and granted in perpetuity. An easement is therefore binding on all future owners. Preservation easements provide the best protection, other than outright acquisition, against inappropriate alteration of heritage buildings.

In 1985, the City of Evansville was approved as one of the first Certified Local Governments (CLGs) by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Additional administrative procedures are required of CLGs, such as forwarding of monthly minutes of the local preservation commission to the Wisconsin Historical Society and annual reporting to the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. Certified Local Government status provides eligibility for annual grants administered by the Wisconsin Historical Society with funds provided by the National Park Service. Past CLG funds were awarded to Evansville for the development of rehabilitation guidelines for the Evansville Historic District, heritage architecture educational materials, a walking tour guide of historic structures. Currently,

#### For More Information...

The **Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory (AHI)** includes 494 listings for the City of Evansville's. Properties listed in the AHI are part of the State of Wisconsin official historic catalogue. The AHI is comprised of written text (and some photographs) of each property, which documents the property's architecture and history. The AHI inventory is housed at the **State Historical Society** of Wisconsin in Madison and is maintained by the Society's Division of Historic Preservation. For a complete list of catalogued historic sites in the City of Evansville, visit the AHI on the Internet at: [www.wisconsinhistory.org/](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/)

there are 68 CLGs in Wisconsin and \$75,000-\$100,000 in annual grant funds available. The CLG grant application to update the 1976 inventory resulted in a 2006 intensive resurvey and 6 nominations to the State and National Registers of Historic Places, all of which were successful.

The City of Evansville has shown its commitment to preservation of publicly owned cultural resources. A recent remodeling of City Hall that included making the facility ADA-compliant and updating administrative offices was accomplished while maintaining the integrity of the building interior and exterior. A 1996 and 2019 addition to the City Library was completed with utmost attention to preservation of the nationally designated historic building.

Infrastructure improvements can have significant impacts on local cultural resources and the City has provided historic street lighting in the downtown and is sensitive to appropriate street, sidewalk and landscaping improvements. The City's role as steward of publicly owned cultural resources serves as a model for the community.

## Cultural Resources

Evansville is a community with a strong sense of local culture. There are nine churches in the City that promote social, cultural, and spiritual growth:

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
312 S. Third St. • 608-882-4044

**ST. PAUL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
35 Garfield St. • 608-882-0490

**UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
21 S. Madison St. • 608-882-4622

**OAK GROVE CHURCH**  
101 W. Church St • 608-882-4488

**CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
112 W. Church St • 608-882-5475

**GRACE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH**  
23 W. Church St. • 608-882-5576

**EVANSVILLE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**  
463 West Main St. • 608-882-2170

**EVANSVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
457 W. Main St. • 608-882-6552

**FAITH COMMUNITY CHURCH EVANSVILLE**  
811 Brown School Plaza • 608-436-9778



FIGURE 7F: IMAGES OF EVANSVILLE'S HISTORIC CHURCHES. (A) UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, (B) CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, (C) GRACE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH, (D), OAK GROVE CHURCH, (E) ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, (F) ST. PAUL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH.

## Programs and Trends

The following portion of this chapter highlights programs and trends, including city ordinances and downtown revitalization,

### City Regulations

Since a significant rewrite of Chapter 62 of the Municipal Code, The Evansville Zoning Ordinance includes advanced provisions for historic preservation). City ordinances also address floodplains, wetlands and stormwater retention and detention (refer to the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element for more information). These codes lay the foundation for protection of natural and cultural resources. This plan suggests changes and new ordinances that should be considered.

### Downtown Revitalization

In 2004, the City created a tax incremental district, TID No. 5, which encompasses much of the downtown. The City intends to attract redevelopment and rehabilitation projects to the downtown by providing "pay as you go" financial assistance to these private development projects. The City is particularly interested in projects that involve development of new housing, such as condominiums or apartments, which will increase the population density in and around the downtown. Increasing the downtown population density will provide more potential customers within walking distance of the downtown shops and restaurants, which will strengthen the downtown's retail sector. If existing buildings will be demolished as part of downtown redevelopment projects that receive financial assistance from the City, the City will insist that the new buildings have historic appearing façades.

The City anticipates these redevelopment or rehabilitation projects will produce far more tax increment than they consume. This additional tax increment will be used to pay debt service on public infrastructure projects such as the 2007 Main Street Reconstruction Project. This public infrastructure project included enhancements such as historic appearing street lighting, benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles, and a TEA Grant and donated funds allowed restoration of the 1914 brick street. In addition, the City will use tax increment to finance incentive grants for façade improvements to private buildings or to interior renovations needed to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses. The use of tax increment to improve the downtown is coordinated by the Evansville Redevelopment Authority, which the City created in 2004 for this purpose.

### ECP Downtown Activities

Since its inception, the Evansville Community Partnership (ECP) has recognized Evansville's downtown as an important aspect of the community's identity and has sought to foster the community's participation in preserving the downtown. Once or twice a year, the ECP recruits volunteers to clean up the downtown, with assistance from personnel from the City's Municipal Services Department. ECP also organizes the downtown flower basket program.

## Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Issues

What follows is a description of the major concerns expressed during the planning process. Strategies to address these concerns are included in the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of this element.

### Park Planning

There are a number of projects that have been completed since the original Smart Growth Plan or will be completed in 2015, including resurfacing the tennis courts and basketball courts, dredging, and fish stocking at Lake Leota, improvements to historic aspects of Leonard-Leota Park, acquiring land at West Side Park, and a community garden at West Side Park. Future needs include expanding Leonard Leota Park to include more land around the Lake, developing West Side Park, continued maintenance and improvements at the pocket and neighborhood parks, bicycle and walking trails, and a more centralized sports complex.

Additional opportunities exist to share facilities with the Evansville Community School District. Sharing facilities will allow the community to provide more facilities at lower costs to Evansville residents.

## Preservation of Environmental Corridors

Participants in the planning effort clearly indicated that natural features are an important part of the community, and residents' support for protecting natural areas, including woodlands, floodplains, wetlands and creeks is strong. Furthermore, protecting environmental corridors is consistent with the overall planning theme aimed at balancing the desire for continued growth with the desire to maintain the City's small-town atmosphere. The environmental corridor consists of floodplains, wetlands, hydric soils, WDNR lands, areas of severe slope, and shoreland/wetland zoning.

Environmental corridors are components of the landscape connecting natural areas, open space, and wildlife habitat. They provide physical linkages between fragmented habitat areas and provide animals and insects a means of travel to and from feeding and breeding places. Fish and wildlife populations, native plant distribution, and even clean water all depend upon movement through corridors. Most native species decline when habitat areas are fragmented due to agricultural operations or residential and commercial development. Wildlife populations isolated in one location, like a stand of trees or a secluded wetland, can overpopulate or die out without adequate corridors allowing free and unimpeded movement.

The functional effectiveness of a corridor depends on the type of species that use it, its size and shape, and its edge effects. Larger corridors offer greater habitat diversity. Linear corridors tend to be less diverse but offer important migration routes. Edge effects include the penetration of wind, light, and sound, as well as visibility beyond and into surrounding areas. They are crucial in determining the type of habitat a corridor will provide.

One way to think of environmental corridors is to compare them to hallways. A building contains hallways, which are places of concentrated movement back and forth; and rooms, which are destination points where people eat, work, play, and sleep. The hallways serve to link places of activity. Environmental corridors increase the value of natural resource areas; Areas of concentrated natural resource activity ("rooms"), such as wetlands, highlands, woodlands, prairies, lakes, and other features, become more functional when linked by environmental corridors ("hallways").<sup>6</sup>

In suburban environments, corridors often lie along stream and riverbanks. More than seventy-percent of all terrestrial wildlife species use riparian corridors. Conservation design and open space development patterns in urbanizing areas have begun to address the importance of maintaining and restoring environmental corridors. Economic benefits of preserving and enhancing these habitat areas include increasing the value of nearby housing sites, reducing the risks of building in areas with soils rated poor for development, providing flood protection, reducing the cost of stabilizing eroding stream banks, and protecting water quality. It is important for the economic health and for hazard mitigation to treat sensitive environmental areas as amenities, rather than obstacles to development.

## Shoreland Zoning

There is a need to consider adopting a shoreland protection zone as part of the zoning ordinance. Evansville has a wetland shoreland ordinance to protect wetlands adjacent to bodies of water. But Evansville does not currently have provisions in the zoning code to regulate what people who own land adjacent to Lake Leota can do with

### What is Habitat Fragmentation?

A primary threat to wildlife is **fragmentation** -- the breaking up of larger habitat areas into smaller sections.

Fragmentation decreases wildlife population sizes, isolates habitat areas and creates more edges – where two dissimilar habitats meet (i.e. grassland and residential subdivisions).

Carefully planned environmental corridors provide opportunities to reconnect fragmented natural areas and improve habitat for important plant, animal and insect species.

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<sup>6</sup> Environmental Corridors: "Lifelines for Living"; University of Illinois Extension; Fact Sheet Series, 2001-013.

their property that might have a negative impact on the lake. Rock County's shoreland zoning protects Lake Leota from harmful land uses near the lake's shore north of the railroad tracks, because that zoning ordinance was in force at the time the City annexed that part of the lake shore. There is nothing in the City or Rock County ordinances that protects Lake Leota from harmful land uses near the lake's shore south of the railroad tracks.

Similarly, if the City annexes property that contains or borders on a navigable stream, the City will have to choose among the following three options: (1) enforce Rock County's shoreland zoning ordinance, (2) ask Rock County to enforce its shoreland zoning ordinance, even though the property has been annexed into the City, or (3) enact and enforce the City's own shoreland zoning ordinance.

### **Long-Term Preservation of Evansville's History**

At the Kick-Off Meeting, some participants expressed concern that while the City has a significant Historic District and Historic Preservation Commission, Evansville does not do enough to honor local history. Much of this concern seems to stem from the fact that:

- The zoning ordinance has limited detail and enforcement provisions.
- The City could do more to market its unique parks and historic resources to attract new residents, businesses and tourists.

The City has not maximized its opportunities for historic preservation. For example, the Historic Preservation Commission's preservation easement program was dormant from the mid 1990s to 2004. Discussions with individuals at the Wisconsin Historical Society have indicated that the large number of easements held by the Commission is unique and remarkable, and to their knowledge no other community holds more than one or two easements. Residential property owners have recently approached the Commission about protecting their historic properties through easements. In 2004, Commission members presented information on easements to the historic homeowners group of the Evansville Grove Society. Several homeowners indicated their willingness to pursue easement protection. In addition, because City of Evansville is a Certified Local Government, the City is eligible to receive historic preservation grants, but has made few applications for such grants. The Historic Preservation Commission should become more knowledgeable about funding sources and more adept at writing grant applications.

Strategic planning activities by the Historic Preservation Commission are needed to accomplish Commission training, provide community education of the importance of cultural resource preservation and re-establish designation efforts, among other priorities. The culmination of Commission training and planning efforts would be the development of a community preservation plan. A City preservation plan would provide a road map of preservation strategy and activities for the community and would guide and prioritize the work of the Historic Preservation Commission.

The revitalization of downtown is critical to maintaining important aspects of the character and identity of the City of Evansville as it experiences rapid growth. Refinement of design guidelines for historic storefronts and infill construction in the commercial district, and development of funding sources for renovation/ rehabilitation are items needing exploration.

For it to be financially viable to maintain and renovate historic commercial buildings in the downtown over the long term, downtown businesses need more customers and sales. A considerable amount of vehicle traffic bypasses the current downtown commercial district on Union Street. One of the goals of TID No. 5 is to enlarge the downtown commercial district to the east to include the area between Union Street and Allen Creek. If the Union Street area is redeveloped to entice drivers passing through the city to stop and shop or eat, then the City should explore ways to encourage these visitors to stay longer and visit the shops and restaurants in the existing downtown commercial district.

### **Loss of Natural Resources**

Given the rapid growth rate in the City and surrounding area, and the population projections that indicate this trend will continue, there is a real concern about the impact development is having on natural areas. Preservation of natural resources is important to preserving the rural character of the area, maintaining wildlife habitat, and providing green infrastructure (e.g. wetlands and floodplains for storm water management, scenic areas, etc.) needed to sustain Evansville's high quality of living. The City should watch for environmentally sensitive land near the City's limits to become available for sale and seek assistance from the WDNR, non-profit organizations or private donors to purchase the land for conservation and low-impact recreation uses (e.g., hiking and bicycling).

The City of Evansville can use indicators developed by the Partnership for Sustainable Communities to measure sustainability and track progress towards achieving sustainability goals. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities is an interagency partnership between HUD, the DOT, and the EPA. Indicators include metrics such as city vehicle fleet gas mileage, intersection density, access to safe parks and recreation, access to healthy food options, and many more.

### **Recreational Opportunities**

Public input has demonstrated the strong desire for walking and bicycling trails within the community. Linear recreational areas present opportunities not only for trails but to double as environmental corridors to promote the movement of wildlife. Evansville also has a guided walking tour of the historic district, which requires that sidewalks be well maintained to accommodate the walking tour.

## Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Goals

These Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources goals and objectives serve as a way to put the vision statement into action, through a series of to dos. Below are Goals and objectives for the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Chapter:

<b>Agricultural, Natural &amp; Cultural Resources Goal #1</b>			
<b>Carefully consider soil types and natural limitations when approving development projects to avoid environmental and developmental problems.</b>			
<b>Supporting Objectives</b>	<b>Champion / Partner</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>1. Require additional analysis for potential development sites prior to approval.</b>	M.S Committee	Private Development Investment	Continuous
<b>2. Coordinate with neighboring communities, to prevent unsewered suburban and rural residential developments in areas covered by soils identified as being unsuitable for such developments.</b>	Community Development Director	NA	Continuous
<b>Agricultural, Natural &amp; Cultural Resources Goal #2</b>			
<b>Make Allen Creek an asset for the downtown, not an impediment to development.</b>			
<b>Supporting Objectives</b>	<b>Champion / Partner</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>1. Encourage appropriate urban development along Allen Creek near the downtown, provided the developer can demonstrate it can be done without creating a high risk of flooding.</b>	Community Development Director, M.S Committee, City Engineer	NA	Continuous
<b>2. In the downtown, construct public trails along Allen Creek and clean up its banks so residents and visitors can enjoy walking along the creek between shops and restaurants.</b>	M.S Committee & Parks Board, RDA	City Budget DNR Grants	2025
<b>3. Install coordinated signage, street lighting, trash cans, and benches along existing Allen Creek Trail</b>	M.S Committee & Parks Board, RDA	City Budget DNR Grants	2025

<b>Agricultural, Natural &amp; Cultural Resources Goal #3</b>			
<b>Protect wetlands in the City of Evansville.</b>			
<b>Supporting Objectives</b>	<b>Champion / Partner</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>1. Use wetland areas adjacent to development as opportunities for recreational trail corridors to connect parks such as Leonard Leota and West Side</b>	M.S Committee	NA	Continuous
<b>2. To the extent practicable, areas immediately adjacent to and surrounding wetlands should be developed in such a way as to minimize effects on wetlands.</b>	M.S Committee, City Engineer, Building Inspection	NA	Continuous
<b>Agricultural, Natural &amp; Cultural Resources Goal #4</b>			
<b>To preserve, protect and expand the natural resources of Evansville for the use and enjoyment by present residents visitors, and future generations</b>			
<b>Supporting Objectives</b>	<b>Champion / Partner</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>1. Undeveloped lands within designated environmental corridors should be preserved in essentially natural, open uses.</b>	Plan Commission	NA	Continuous
<b>2. Enforce the wellhead protection program the City has initiated.</b>	Municipal Services Committee	City Budget	Continuous
<b>3. Environmentally sensitive land near the City's limits should be aquired through assistance from the WNDR, non-profit organizations or private donors to provide low-impact recreational uses</b>	City Administrator	Non-Profit Orgs., Donations & WDNR Grants	Continuous
<b>4. Ensure a diversity of species and genus for street trees to avoid widespread loss of a monoculture due to disease or pest such as Emerald Ash Borer or Dutch Elm Disease.</b>	M.S Committee	City Budget	Continuous
<b>5. Check the fore-bay of Lake Leota every 5 years to assess sediment deposits.</b>	M.S Committee	City Budget	2025, 2030, 2035
<b>6. Use the Partnership for Sustainable Communities indicators to measure Evansville's progress in natural</b>	E.I.T, M.S Committee	City Budget	Continuous

resource protection and sustainability.			
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**Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Goal #5**

**The City should work with the nearby townships to preserve agricultural lands in the townships for long-term agricultural use.**

Supporting Objectives	Champion / Partner	Potential Funding Source	Milestone Date
1. Implement the preservation of certain lands in the nearby townships for long-term agricultural use through the City's extra-territorial land division authority.	Community Development Director	Continuous	Continuous
2. Explore with the Town of Union the possibility of re-establishing joint zoning in the extra-territorial jurisdiction area and/or entering into a boundary agreement.	City Administrator, Mayor, Common Council	City Budget	Continuous

**Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Goal #6**

**Preserve and protect the historic resources of the City to promote the educational, cultural, and general welfare of residents of Evansville and provide for a more interesting, attractive and vital community.**

Supporting Objectives	Champion / Partner	Potential Funding Source	Milestone Date
1. Update inventory of historic properties in the City and surrounding area. As available share updated information with the SHPO and encourage other historic preservation groups to do the same.	Evansville Historic Preservation Commission (EHPC)	State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO)	Continuous
2. Promote Evansville's unique parks and historic district to attract new businesses and tourism.	EHPC, Economic Development Commission, Tourism Committee	SHPO	Continuous
3. Encourage property owners and developers to expand the downtown commercial district.	Chamber of Commerce, Community Development Director, Economic Development Commission	NA	Continuous
4. Amend the B-2 Design Guidelines to provide more protection to historic structures and consider establishing residential design guidelines.	EHPC & Community Development Director	City Budget	2017

5. Promote the historic resources of the community by supporting local preservation groups.	EHPC	NA	Continuous
6. Continue to assist in a facade improvement program for the central business district.	Economic Dev. Committee (EDC) & ERA	Tax Increment or Local Financial Institutions	Continuous
7. Seek available grant money to improve historic structures, promote heritage resources and develop educational materials.	EHPC, Tourism Committee	ECP	Continuous
8. Coordinate with the Rock County Historic Society and SHPO.	EHPC	SHPO	Continuous
9. Coordinate with and require utility and telecommunications providers to screen, underground, or relocate equipment.	EHPC, Common Council, Plan Commission	City Budget	Continuous
10. Educate and train the building inspector and citizens on the historic preservation process.	EHPC, Community Development Director, Building Inspection	City Budget	Continuous
11. Review and refresh easement program with voluntary covenants prohibiting alterations of buildings in the historic district.	EHPC, Common Council	City Budget	Continuous
12. Utilize the standards promulgated by the U.S. Secretary of Interior for historic preservation projects.	EHPC	Private Landowners	Continuous
13. Preserve historic sidewalk markings in place and prohibit solar panels on historic buildings that are visible from the street	EHPC, Common Council	City Budget	Continuous

**Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Goal #7**

**Enhance the offering of cultural resources in the City.**

<p><b>1. Expand parks and public spaces to promote cultural and community activities.</b></p>	<p>Economic Dev. Committee, Common Council, Park &amp; Rec. Department</p>	<p>City Budget</p>	<p>Continuous</p>
<p><b>2. Create and prioritize civic street scaping that adds landscaping, benches and street amenities in place of existing hardscape</b></p>		<p>City Budget</p>	<p>Continuous</p>