

Section E: Agricultural, Cultural, & Natural Resources

Village of Ridgeway 2018 Comprehensive Plan

SUMMARY:

As required by *Wisconsin State Statute 66.1001(2)(e)*, this section deals with conservation promotion & effective management of the agricultural, cultural, and natural resources that have historically defined the village of Ridgeway, with the intention of protecting our heritage even as we pursue economic development.

GUIDING POLICIES:

- **Promote tourism opportunities, with an emphasis on local resources/features, such as trails, walking tours, the depot & other historical areas, etc.**
- **Note the value of local agricultural, cultural, & natural resources/heritage, and recommend protecting and leveraging them for community development.**
- **Enforce noxious weed control ordinances.**
- **Support municipal tree planting programs & encourage the preservation of worthy specimens.**
- **Utilize available county, state, & federal programs to conserve, maintain, & protect local resources.**
- **Consider revising the village's land development ordinance to require businesses along Main Street to conform to certain visual & performance criteria.**
- **Promote businesses along Main Street that have outdoor seating & other amenities catering to a walking clientele, further enhancing the village's small-town character.**
- **Review zoning plan to ensure proper separation distances between urban & rural land uses so as to avoid conflicts.**

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES:

Agriculture plays an important role in southwestern Wisconsin, being somewhat economically important to the Village of Ridgeway. Some things to consider:

Farming Conflicts

Previous village planners noted manure spreaders soil the streets & foul the air when driven through the village. Consider forbidding them along key village streets.

Farm Expansion

A strategy to cope with running a farm in today's market. It may lead to farm job losses as more automation occurs, as well as greater potential for soil/water contamination. Previous Village of Ridgeway Plan Commission felt that farm expansion should be outside village.

Young Farmers

A challenge facing this area of the state is enticing a new generation to take up farming. Having local resident garden tours, starting a community garden, building a nature center may spark interest in agriculture & related fields—especially if a partnership with Ridgeway Elementary School is forged.

Farming Infrastructure

These are businesses and services catering to the needs of farmers, such as feed mills, veterinarians, equipment vendors, etc. The village doesn't have farming infrastructure.

Farm Types

- The previous plan commission didn't want to encourage either single or multi-enterprise farms within the village limits.
- The following farming operations were also discouraged:
 - Beef-Cow/Calf Operations
 - Beef-Finishing Operations
 - Cash Crop Operations
 - Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
 - Dairy Operations
 - Hog Operations
 - Organic Operations
 - Sheep Operations

Farmer Retirement

Another state-wide issue is farmland conservation vs. farmer retirement. The planning & development committee feels this is not a village-level issue and is best left to the state.

Farming & Community Vision

The planning & development committee feels that farm operations within the village aren't a priority. However, because of their historical and social impacts to the area, we recognize the importance of agriculture to the village.

FARMLAND POTENTIAL:

In Iowa County, 72 percent of soils are classified as being of prime, state, and/or local importance, defined as follows:

Farmland Potential

In Iowa County, 72 percent of soils are classified as being of prime, state, and/or local importance, defined as follows:

- Prime Farm Land: Most Capability Group I & II Soils (25% of soils in county)
- State Importance: Most Capability Group III Soils (20% of soils in county)
- Local Importance: Varies, but in SW WI some Capability Group IV, V, & VI Soils, valuable for pasture and hay production due to their moisture holding capacity.
- Other: Soil groups of importance (Capability Group VII, VIII) not noted in the categories above

LAND COVER:

Map E.1 in the Appendices Section shows the amount of agricultural land near the Village of Ridgeway, as well as natural resources such as forested lands, open water, and wetlands.

NATURAL RESOURCES:

The natural environment, and its natural resources provide the both the wellspring of materials and inspiration for rural communities to develop and grow, as well as the context that anchors their built environment to the surrounding landscape. Ideally, the natural surroundings to settlement should be cared for as negative impacts can have adverse effects for our communities.

Water Resources

Water is necessary for both life and industry. It's also one of the most easily contaminated resources. Because of its mobile nature, contaminants can travel far from their source through the water cycle, known as non-point source pollution, or NPSP. NPSP come from a variety of human activities. The village doesn't actively protect its ground and surface waters from NPSP.

Floodplains

Iowa County's overall flood risk is quite high, also making The Village of Ridgeway susceptible to flooding due to its topography and soil makeup. Potential development near floodplains should be avoided. Appendix Map E.2 has the FEMA floodplain map relevant to the village.

Wetlands

- Important for aquifer recharge, wildlife, flood control, recreation, etc.
- Most wetlands in southwest Wisconsin are riparian in nature due to topography.
- DNR updating state-wide wetlands survey from 1985.
- The Village of Ridgeway actively protects wetlands through conservation easements and road construction controls.

Groundwater

- Depended upon for drinking water, farming, etc.
- Due to area's geology, very easy to contaminate.
- Village drinking water is chlorinated & under full-time monitoring.
- Water table is more than 20 feet below the surface for added protection.
- The planning & development committee is unsure if there are any potential contaminants in the well recharge areas.
- Further, the planning & development committee doesn't see increasing water demands as a potential problem for the village, or as having potentially negative effects to the village's streams, springs, or vegetative communities. Some sources of pollution that can adversely affect groundwater are:
 - Abandoned Wells
 - Chemical Spills
 - Gas Stations
 - Household Cleaners & Detergents
 - Junkyards
 - Leaking Sewer Lines
 - On-site Septic Systems
 - Pesticide & Fertilizer Applications

- Road Salt
- Sewage Treatment Plants
- Surface Waste Water Discharge
- Underground Storage Tanks
- Unsewered Subdivisions

Wildlife & Natural Communities

- Wildlife enriches our lives from provoking curiosity about the natural world, to providing a variety of hobby-related activities.
- Due to the potential for damage to property and transmission of disease, natural habitat is best kept at a distance from human residences.
- The Village of Ridgeway is located at the intersection of the Southwest Savanna and the Western Coulee and Ridge ecological landscapes. The former is characterized by rolling hills, defined ridges, and little forest. The later consists of steep sided hills that are heavily forested.
- These landscapes provide a habitat for a variety of birds, amphibians, and reptiles.
- The village protects natural areas and wildlife habitat via conservancy-zoned land, but doesn't have policies regarding wildlife-friendly agricultural practices. The village should explore wildflower & prairie restoration along highway 18/151's frontage and median strip.

Threatened & Endangered Species

- Occurrences of threatened and endangered species are not reported under the town level.
- Village doesn't control for non-native invasive plant species.

Forest Resources

- Forests provide habitat for wildlife, help sustain water resource, and a host of recreational activities. In addition, they are a source of products for a variety of industries.
- See Map E.1 in the Appendices Section for forest cover & other resources in the village.

Rural Forests

Occupying 46% of the state's land, forests are an important land use.

Urban Forests

- Urban forests consist of all the trees and vegetation in and around a human settlement, such as street trees, home landscapes, school yards, parks, cemeteries, adjacent woodlands, empty lots—anywhere vegetation can grow. Benefits associated with them are:
 - Alleviates pressure on drainage ways
 - Intercepts and absorbs rainwater
 - Provides relief against wind, heat, and cold
 - Provides wildlife habitat
 - Slows stormwater flow
- Tree ordinances are a popular and effective way of conserving and improving an urban forest.
- The previous planning & development committee didn't want to invest in sustainable forestry practices within the village, nor did it have a municipal tree planting program—however, they did express interest in learning about them. They were also interested in recommending that trees be planted for about a mile between Hwy 18/151 and any future residential developments, as a sound barrier. Given the feedback expressed in the February 2018 community survey, these ideas should be revisited.

Environmental Corridors

- Environmental landscape features that link different habitats, facilitating wildlife population movement, plant colonization, and helping to keep surface water clean.
- Most environmental corridors in the USA are riparian in nature.
- Map E.3 in the Appendices Section shows potential environmental corridors within the Town of Ridgeway.

Air & Light

The previous planning & development committee identified large, odor producing livestock operations as an air pollution/quality issue. Light pollution was also noted, with regards to billboard signage and lighting. However, given the surrounding countryside, not much can be done about the former. The later may be addressed by zoning revisions.

Geologic & Soil Resources

- Many mines and quarries in Iowa County, for both metallic & non-metallic resources.
- None located within village limits.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES:

Serving many important functions, open spaces help protect ecologically sensitive areas, shape the character of our communities, and connect individuals to the rest of creation. Preserving them not only protects resources, but the open space becomes a buffer zone, protecting nature from us, and us from it, as well as providing a visual context distinguishing our community from its surroundings. Open space can take many forms, such as parks, cropland and pastures, greenbelts, and wetlands or floodplains. In addition, beyond the many recreational functions they can serve, open spaces can serve in:

- **Buffering Incompatible Land Uses**
- **Flood Management**
- **Limiting/Guiding Development**
- **Preserving Prime Agricultural Land**
- **Structuring Community Environment**

Local Park & Recreational Resources

Parks can serve a limited neighborhood area, a portion of the community, or the entire community or region and can provide area and facilities for outdoor recreation for residents and visitors.

The Village of Ridgeway offers a variety of recreational amenities to recreational users and visitors including:

- Military Ridge bike trail
- Village Park with picnic shelter, baseball diamond, playground, both basketball and volleyball courts, restrooms, and drinking fountains
- Village Depot

The Village of Ridgeway actively promotes its natural resources to recreational visitors through the sale of bike passes to the Military Ridge bike trail. The village also promotes trail tourism by supporting the depot restoration. The village is also near two large regional parks—Governor Dodge and Blue Mound.

The previous planning & development committee saw a need for additional parks, trails, or other outdoor recreational spaces within the village. They were particularly interested in small playgrounds and greenspaces (1 to 2 acres) in future developments within the village. Perhaps beautifying village triangles, provide benches, etc. would be a good starting point, as it would appeal to pedestrians and may help crowds visiting for festivals, craft fairs, farmers markets, etc.

CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES:

Cultural and historic resources are often ignored, but are vital to the long-term success of a community. Leveraging them increases the overall quality of life and provides opportunities for tourism.

For the purposes of this work, historic resources include historic buildings and sites (on the National Register of Historic Places), museums, churches, cemeteries, old country schools, and others deemed appropriate by the community.

Historic Places

There are no State or National Register sites listed within the Village of Ridgeway.

Churches

Churches have had a significant impact on the culture of the Village of Ridgeway. Churches within the village limits include:

- St. Bridget's Catholic Church
- Ridgeway United Methodist Church

Cemeteries

Cemeteries are an important historic and cultural resource, providing dates, names, and ethnicities of previous residents. The Ridgeway Community Cemetery is within the village limits. See Map E.4 in the Appendices Section for locations.

Rural Schools

No one-room schoolhouses exist within the village limits.

Historic Places

The previous planning & development committee identified four historic sites of cultural significance within the Village of Ridgeway:

- Main Street business district
- Military Ridge bike trail
- Park and baseball field on Hughett Street
- Train Depot on Main Street/village green

Cultural Resources & Historic Preservation Programs & Special Events

The Village of Ridgeway does a number of things to support and promote its culture, including Labor Day celebrations, 4th of July celebrations, and the Ridgeway Advancement Corporation. The following are the village's most important cultural resources and the threats they face:

- **Main Street Business District:**
Loosing businesses—buildings are being converted to residential use
- **Ridgeway Advancement Corporation:**
Difficulty in attracting volunteers
- **Meeting Hall/Community Center:**
Needs a proper building

Response to Threats to Cultural Resources in Your Community

The previous planning committee reported that poor zoning decisions and apathy had been the responses to threats to the village's cultural resources. This has remained more or less the same.

Archeological Resources

None noted/known within village limits.

Historic Ordinance

At the time of the last comprehensive plan, the village didn't have a historic preservation ordinance, nor wanted to form a historic preservation committee.

AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCE AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS:

The following are some agencies and programs to assist with agricultural, natural, and cultural resource planning and protection:

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Dedicated to the preservation, protection, effective management, and maintenance of Wisconsin's natural resources, it's responsible for implementing and coordinating various state and federal programs to that end. The Bureau of Community Financial Assistance (CFA) administers grants and loans for projects that protect public health and the environment, as well as provide recreational opportunities.

Wisconsin DNR—Community Financial Assistance
101 S. Webster Street
PO Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707
<http://dnr.wi.gov/aid>

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection

This department licenses businesses and individuals, analyses lab samples, educates business and consumers about best practices, and promotes Wisconsin agriculture at home and abroad, amongst other functions. There are two divisions that directly relate to agriculture and natural resources: The Trade and Consumer Protection Division focuses on, amongst others, the environmental regulation of consumer products. The Agricultural Division focuses on animals, crops, agricultural resources, and land and water resources.

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection
2811 Agriculture Drive
PO Box 8911
Madison, WI 53708-8911
<https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Homepage.aspx>

Wisconsin Natural Resource Conservation Service

This is the federal agency that works with landowners on private lands to conserve natural resources. Most of its technical assistance goes to helping farmers and ranchers develop tailor-made conservation systems uniquely suited to their land and situation.

Wisconsin Natural Resource Conservation Service
8030 Excelsior Drive, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53717-2906
(608) 662-4422 / (608) 662-4430 (fax)
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/wi/home/>

Wisconsin Historical Society

This organization serves as the archives of the State of Wisconsin. In addition to the facilities and programs it runs, such as museums, state historic sites, research centers, etc., it can also provide assistance for various state and federal programs, such as tax credits for historic building rehabilitation.

Wisconsin Historical Society
816 State Street
Madison, WI 53706
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org>