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## CHAPTER 4: AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

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This chapter provides a guiding framework for sustainably protecting, preserving, and managing the agricultural resources in the City of Janesville and its extraterritorial jurisdiction for future generations to come. The information provided in this chapter will be used to guide City decision-making regarding the overall physical and economic development of the area. This includes providing guidance to best support and maintain current agricultural operations occurring within the planning boundary alongside achieving social goals related to health and well-being.

**RECOGNIZING AND DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO PRESERVE AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES IN THE CITY OF JANESVILLE'S PLANNING AREA, AS PRESENTED IN THIS *COMPREHENSIVE PLAN* CHAPTER, CAN LEAD TO:**

- ◆ Reinvention of the City's urban form by encouraging efficient and compact development within the City to maximize preservation of agricultural lands outside of the City, and develop a well-defined edge between urban development and rural development.
- ◆ Connecting the City with the region through promoting economic activities that boost the regional agricultural economy and supporting economic growth based on competitive advantages in agriculture and ag-related businesses (e.g. biotech).
- ◆ Providing a high quality of life through growing the employment base in agriculture and ag-related businesses.
- ◆ Promoting health and sustainability by accommodating and supporting local and regional food production, processing, and consumption.

## **AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES GOAL, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS**

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### **Agricultural Resources Goal**

**Cooperate regionally to preserve agriculture as a component of the area’s landscape, economy, and culture.**



### **Agricultural Resources Objectives**

1. Encourage the preservation of agricultural lands and long-term viability of agricultural operations within Janesville’s planning area where agricultural landowners have committed to agriculture operations.
2. Advance the viability of agriculture through promoting agriculture-related economic development in the City.
3. Work with surrounding jurisdictions to preserve farming and farmland in areas consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.
4. Encourage the development of a local food system that serves to increase food sovereignty and food security by meeting the needs of local restaurants, grocery stores, ethnic and cultural groups, and private households.

### **Agricultural Resources Policies and Programs**

1. Capitalize on regional agricultural resources to develop economic clusters around bio-based products compatible with the urban environment, tapping into this expanding consumer market and global economy.



2. In cooperation with regional producers and processors, expand and strengthen the food production and processing economy through helping to link with potential markets more effectively for products.
3. Identify City growth and development areas and encourage continued agricultural uses outside of these areas on the City’s Future Land Use Map.
4. Enforce and amend, as necessary, the City’s zoning and subdivision ordinances to protect *Agriculture* areas consistent with the City’s Future Land Use Map.
5. Encourage compact, efficient urban development to help maximize the preservation of agricultural land. When appropriate, modify subdivision, zoning, and development incentives to accommodate smaller lot sizes, overall higher density, more mixed-use development, and reduced paving requirements.
6. Accommodate small scale urban and peri-urban agriculture, where appropriate, that results in local production of healthy foods for local and regional consumption.

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7. Develop a local food system plan that works to increase neighborhood access to healthy-foods, supports the creation of new food businesses and community-based food initiatives, furthers goals of food justice and food sovereignty, and provides for improved physical, mental, social, and economic well-being for residents.
8. Utilize intergovernmental agreements and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) powers to limit the intensity of development in agricultural areas. New building or improvement construction should be minimized on farmland or agriculturally viable soils. This can be enforced through the City's subdivision ordinance within the City's ETJ. Map 2.1: Future Land Use identifies future *Agriculture* areas where this standard will be exercised.
9. Continue to work with neighboring towns and Rock County to promote the use of agricultural conservation easements in areas appropriate and designated for long-term agricultural uses.

## **AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES PROGRAMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Janesville's planning area contains some of the country's highest quality farmland. Protection of farming as a land use, lifestyle, and economy in the Janesville area may include the following efforts:

### **Promote Efficient and Well-Planned City Development to Preserve Farmland**

Janesville's established density of four to five dwelling units per acre is efficient compared to development in neighboring rural areas. Two-acre density development in a town eats up farmland and open space *ten* times faster than development at the City's historic density, while five-acre density development eats up farmland and open space *twenty-five* times faster. This rate of land consumption threatens the long-term sustainability of Wisconsin's agricultural economy and agricultural lands. In southern Wisconsin, rural sprawl is a problem that continues to grow. The most sustainable solution to balancing the objectives of promoting economic growth in Rock County while preserving agricultural land is to ensure that residential growth occurs in cities and villages with the capacity and infrastructure to serve new infill development and subdivisions at densities greater than in exurban rural places. Failing to accommodate for increased density and overall growth within the City of Janesville will lead to less efficient use of land, and natural and agricultural resources. Rural, exurban growth creates problems in ensuring a high-quality of public services and in supporting sustainable future urban growth.

Growth in Rock County over the planning period is extremely likely. To ensure that farmland preservation efforts can be supported in the County's rural areas, growth should be directed to the City of Janesville and other urban areas. To accommodate Rock County population growth and address the rural sprawl issue, the City of Janesville employs a multi-faceted strategy of:

1. Stimulating infill, reuse, and redevelopment with the City of Janesville

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2. Keeping density consistent with historic development patterns while increasing density and the intensity of land use in targeted areas of Janesville
3. Reserving areas of undeveloped peripheral lands for long-term city expansion and preservation
4. Working with other cities and villages to capture a large share of Rock County population growth.
5. Directing City development away from the most productive soils in the southeast quadrant of the ETJ area, and towards the least productive soils in the other three quadrants of the ETJ area. However, City expansion areas should be compact and contiguous, rather than scattered and spotty.
6. Discourage rural residential development (development served by private on-site wastewater treatment systems and wells) in the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the City except in areas designated *Single Family Residential – Exurban* on the City’s Future Land Use Map.



Land Use Policies and Intergovernmental Agreements to help facilitate these strategies are discussed in the Land Use and Intergovernmental Cooperation chapters.

## Develop and Expand Economic Clusters Around Bio-Based Products and Food Production and Processing

Agriculture and its associated commerce have long been an economic driver for Rock County and the urban centers of Beloit and Janesville. More recently commerce has evolved to capitalize on “bio-industry” based processing and value-added operations. Rock County, like much of Wisconsin, has a unique opportunity to capture a large part of agricultural research coming out of UW-Madison due to its proximity to Madison and Dane County. Commercializing and producing bio-products is a great fit with Janesville’s relationship to agricultural land, historic strength in agri-business, and existing manufacturing infrastructure.

Janesville and southeastern Wisconsin’s regional position—proximity to transportation corridors, major metropolitan markets, and fertile, productive agricultural land—has contributed to a cluster of food-processing industries in the region.

Given that many of these opportunities are regional in nature, cooperative economic development strategies between Janesville and neighboring communities may allow for the region to more effectively capitalize on these opportunities to drive success. These opportunities and initiatives, and more specific information about Janesville’s role in advancing these opportunities, are discussed in greater depth in the Economic Development chapter.



## Promote and Support the Local Food System

Food insecurity affects more than 10% of U.S. households (2015, USDA Economic Research Services). Having low access to healthy foods is one critical barrier for individual and community well-being and can exacerbate issues of food security. A 2023 report by Rock County Public Health identified areas of Janesville that have low access to healthy foods. Engaging in planning around food system issues is one way to address the issues of access, opportunity, and in reconciling issues of food justice faced by many residents of the U.S.

A 2015 report from the USDA describes 8% of U.S. farms participated in local food systems through direct-to-consumer sales or through intermediaries. These sales have increased since the year 2000 and the presence of farmer's markets, farm-to-table restaurants, and farm-to-schools programs have become ubiquitous in many communities.

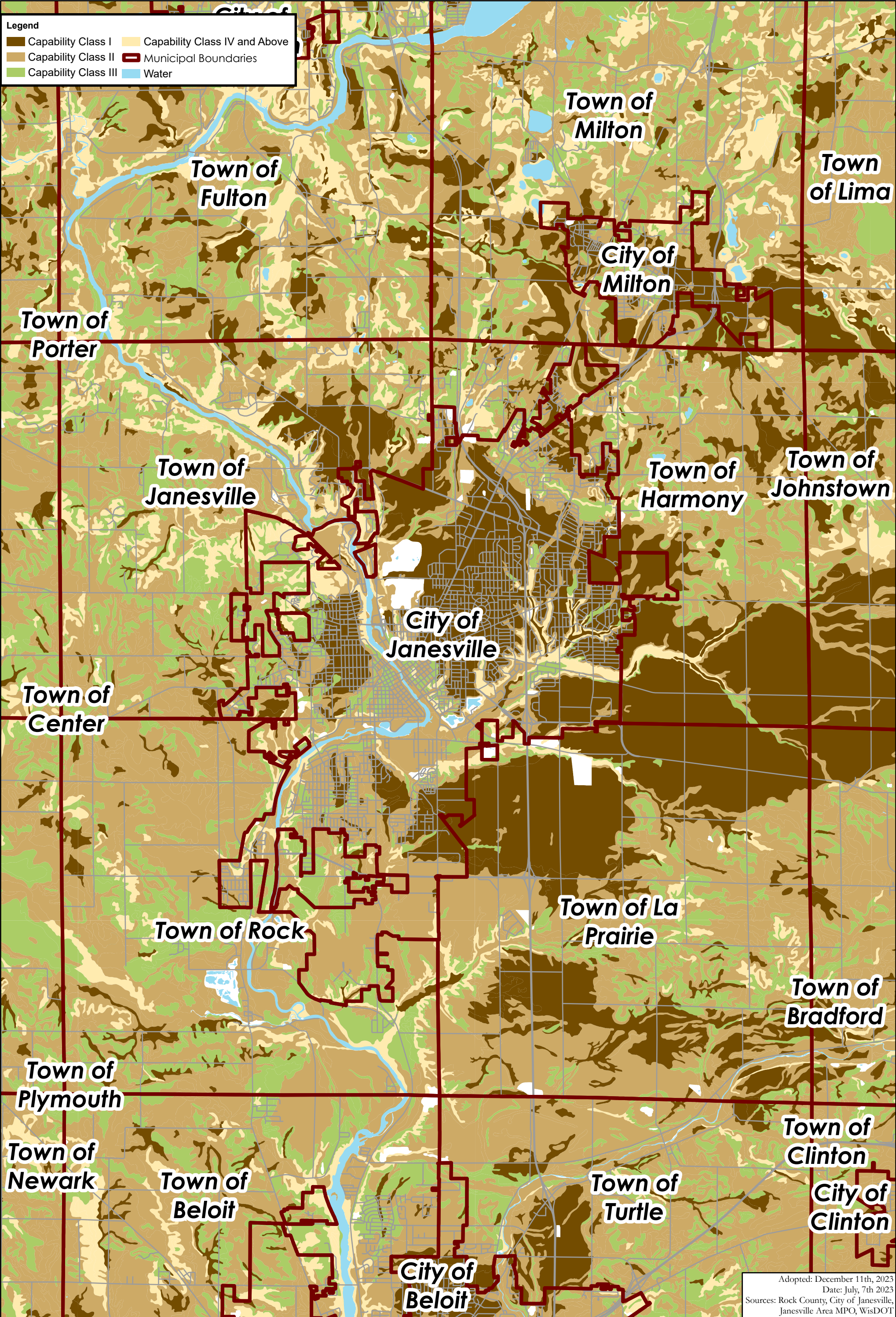
### FOOD JUSTICE

Is “a holistic and structural view of the food system that sees healthy food as a human right and addresses structural barriers to that right... A food justice lens examines questions of access to healthy, nutritious, culturally appropriate food, as well as: ownership and control of land, credit, knowledge, technology and other resources; the constituent labor of food production; what kind of food traditions are valued; how colonialism has affected the food system's development and more.” – FoodPrint 2021 “What is Food Justice and Why is it necessary?”

With systemic food access issues posing challenges to the community's well-being and with the local food movement continuing to grow, there are new avenues to help address healthy food access, security in Janesville. Consideration should be given to the development of a local/regional food system plan as a framework to address:

- Local food production such as urban agriculture, community gardens, chicken and beekeeping, and other production methods.
- Issues of equity in access to healthy foods through community-supported agriculture, direct-to-consumer sales, neighborhood-based farmers markets, increased local food production, diversified, and dispersed retail establishments that provide healthy foods, sales of local foods to institutions and regional distributors, and encouraging other innovative community-based strategies.
- Reducing food miles and the environmental impact of food consumption.
- Reducing food waste through community-based reduction, reuse, and composting strategies.
- Supporting low-income residents with programs to increase the purchasing power of Foodshare/SNAP benefits.
- Issues of food justice and food sovereignty in Janesville and Rock County.
- Incubating small-medium scale local food businesses for disadvantaged, low-income, people of color, other traditionally marginalized groups, and the community at-large.
- Workforce training and general education related to food production, food preparation, food preservation, healthy eating, and food justice.
- Encouraging redevelopment of areas with limited access to grocery stores to include space for a small to medium footprint grocery store along with additional new households to support the health of the commercial area.



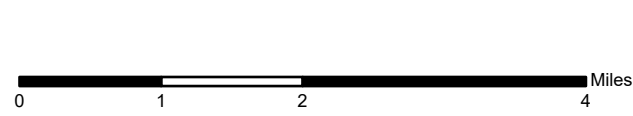


**Legend**

- Capability Class I
- Capability Class II
- Capability Class III
- Capability Class IV and Above
- Municipal Boundaries
- Water

Adopted: December 11th, 2023  
 Date: July, 7th 2023  
 Sources: Rock County, City of Janesville,  
 Janesville Area MPO, WisDOT

**Map 4.1 Soils**



**CITY OF JANESVILLE**  
*Wisconsin's Park Place*

6/26/2023; D.Salmon, Planning Division  
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