

CHAPTER TWO: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

This chapter of *Volume 1* of the *Plan* contains background information related to agricultural preservation, natural resource conservation, and historical and cultural resource protection.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Character of Farming

The history of the settlement of Janesville lies in the vast tall grass prairie region that stretches across the Midwestern heart of the United States. It is among the world's richest agricultural regions. For Janesville and other communities located in this region, the prairie soil was the source of the natural wealth that early settlers used to establish themselves. Without the agricultural wealth around it, Janesville would not have developed as it did. Agriculture was the basis for the City's earliest industries – including milling (wheat and cotton), dairying, food processing (beets), and tobacco.



Some of the nation's highest quality farmland is located near Janesville.

Agriculture continues to play a role in shaping the character and history of the Janesville area. Known as the Rock Prairie, the farmland that surrounds the Rock River is some of the most fertile in the world. Rock County ranks among the top counties in Wisconsin in the production of corn, soybeans, and food-grade soybeans. The County is also home to numerous food processors and agricultural supply companies that support the production of agricultural products. Southern Wisconsin and Rock County are also emerging as a center-point of the alternative fuels industry, an enterprise that is gaining importance both statewide and nationally. Markets for corn-based ethanol and soybean-based biodiesel are expanding, resulting in several production plants in the area (Evansville, Jefferson, Sharon, Milton and Clinton), and higher prices for soybeans and corn – benefiting farmers in the County.

Assessment of Farmland Viability

Janesville is located near extremely productive “Rock Prairie soils”, generally located east of USH 51, south of CTH A and north of Avalon Road, as well as the other productive soil complexes to the north, west, and south. The least productive soils in the area are found in hilly topography – predominantly on land beyond the west side of the City.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) groups soils based on the soil's capability to produce common cultivated crops and pasture plants without deteriorating over a long period of time. These capability classifications are based on numerous criteria that include, but are not limited

to: the soil's salinity, capacity to hold moisture, potential for erosion, depth, and texture and structure, as well as local climatic limitations (e.g. temperature and rainfall). Under this system of classification, soils are separated into eight classes. Generally, Class I and Class II soils are the best suited for the cultivation of crops.

Class I soils have few limitations that restrict their use. These soils can sustain a wide variety of plants and are well suited for cultivated crops, pasture plants, range lands, and woodlands. Class II soils have moderate limitations that restrict the types of plants that can be grown or that require simple conservation practices or soil management techniques to prevent deterioration over time. However, these practices are generally easy to apply, and, therefore, these soils are still able to sustain cultivated crops, pasture plants, range lands, and woodlands.

Soils in Class III have limitations that, under natural circumstances, restrict the types of plants that can be grown, and/or that alter the timing of planting, tillage, and harvesting. However, with the application and careful management of special conservation practices, these soils may still be used for cultivated crops, pasture plants, woodlands, and range lands.

Soils in capability Classes IV through VIII present increasingly severe limitations to the cultivation of crops. Soils in Class VIII have limitations that entirely preclude their use for commercial plant production.



Map 3 depicts the locations of Class I, II, III and IV-VIII soils in the City of Janesville and the surrounding area. Generally, Class I soils are located in and beyond the northern and eastern portions of the City and comprise nearly 40 percent of the total land area (37.7%, or 8,378 acres). Class II soils are primarily concentrated in the central and southeastern portions of the City and beyond and account for virtually the same amount of acreage (37.6%, or 8,350 acres). Class III soils are concentrated in the northern portion of the City east of Highway 51 and comprise just over 10 percent of the City's land area (11.8%, or 2,611 acres).

For the entire planning area, there are large areas of Class I soils – particularly to the east of the City. Class II and III soils are scattered throughout the planning area. The locations for various soil types are an important consideration in developing future land use recommendations.

Farmland Preservation Efforts

Within the City, farming activities are considered an interim use. Farmers in communities in the area surrounding Janesville can participate in several federal, State, and countywide programs and initiatives that are intended to preserve long-term farming activities. The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized several federal programs, including:

- The **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**, which provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The national acreage cap for this program was increased to 27 million acres by 2023.

- The **Wetland Reserve Program**, which provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts.
- The **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program**, which provides both technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to landowners to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat on their property.
- The **Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative**, which focuses on providing technical assistance to help new grazers begin using rotational grazing methods. Trained grazing specialists work one-on-one with farmers, developing grazing plans, including seeding recommendations, fencing and watering plans.
- The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**, which provides a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

Additionally, the Wisconsin Department of Revenue administers the important Farmland Preservation Credit Program. The Farmland Preservation Credit Program strives to preserve Wisconsin farmland by means of local land use planning and soil conservation practices and provides property tax relief to farmland owners. To qualify for the credit, farmland must be 35 acres or more and zoned for exclusive agricultural use or be subject to a preservation agreement between the farmland owner and the State. All program participants must comply with soil and water conservation standards set by the State Land Conservation Board. It should be noted that claims for both of the Farmland Preservation Credit and the Farmland Tax Relief Credit are documented for the municipality in which the claimant lives, which may not be where the farm is actually located. The Towns of Rock, Harmony, Janesville, and La Prairie all have a significant amount of acreage of farmland taking advantage of DOR Farmland preservation programs:

- Town of Harmony: 4,644 enrolled acres, out of 10,038 available acres (46 percent)
- Town of Janesville: 2,978 enrolled acres, out of 9,707 available acres (31 percent)
- Town of Rock: 3,680 enrolled acres, out of 11,306 available acres (33 percent)
- Town of La Prairie (10,409 enrolled acres, out of 20,348 available acres (61 percent)

It is also important to note that most of the Town of La Prairie falls within a state-designated Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA). An AEA is a designation made by the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, made upon a petition by landowners in a given municipality to give protection to areas important to Wisconsin's agricultural future. Landowners within an AEA can voluntarily participate in the program and receive financial incentive for preserving existing agricultural lands. Landowners received a \$10/acre credit rate if the land falls under farmland preservation zoning and the landowners signed an AEA agreement with DATCP. Currently, 20,698 acres in the Town of La Prairie fall within the AEA.

SUMMARY OF KEY AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

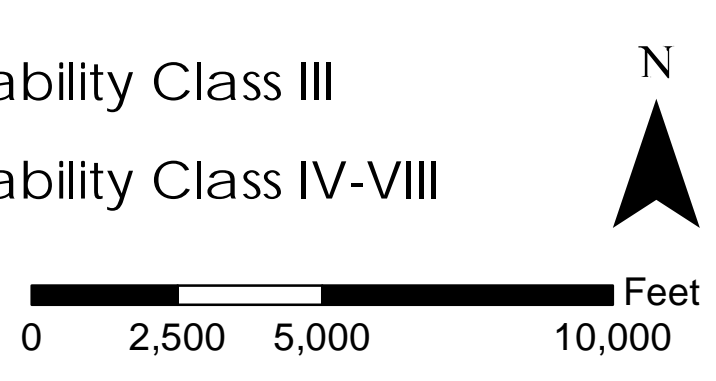
The following are some of the key issues and opportunities for the City identified in this Chapter and through public participation that will be considered in preparation of recommendations in Volume 2 of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

- The area's strong agricultural resources can form a basis for developing and expanding economic clusters around bio-based products (bio-fuels, bio-plastics, etc.), and continued food production and processing.
- Compact City development and minimizing rural sprawl are ways to promote the conservation of agricultural land.
- The long-term viability of agricultural operations, particularly on high-quality soils in neighboring towns to the east of the City, is important to the economic health and the character of the region.



3. Soil Suitability for Agriculture

- Municipal Boundaries
- Capability Class I
- Capability Class II
- Capability Class III
- Capability Class IV-VIII



CITY OF JANESVILLE
Wisconsin's Park Place

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NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Branded “Wisconsin’s Park Place” the quality and character of Janesville’s natural resources are central to its quality of life. The City grew up around the Rock River, and today this natural resource remains the geographic and recreational center of the City.

Understanding the Janesville area’s natural features sheds light on constraints and opportunities for particular land uses. For instance, while some areas of the City and surrounding area may have locational advantages for development, other areas are environmentally sensitive where development is not appropriate or desired. Still, few infill development opportunities remain in the City limits – making peripheral development essential in accommodating much the area’s population growth. Focusing development where it is most appropriate will prevent severe developmental or environmental problems that may be difficult or costly to correct in the future. Maintenance of natural features is also important for community appearance and the functions they perform for natural communities.

Map 4 depicts environmentally sensitive areas in and around the City of Janesville, many of which are described in more detail below. Sensitive natural features and protected species are primarily focused on the environmental corridors centered on rivers, streams and drainage ways. The City has historically protected these corridors from substantial development intrusions through its greenbelt and park systems.

Landscape and Topography

Janesville is part of the Southeast Glacial Plains ecological landscape – home to some of the world’s best examples of continental glacial activity. The topography in and around the City of Janesville was shaped over 10,000 years ago by Wisconsin’s most recent period of glacial activity. The landscape is characterized by gently rolling moraines and drumlins that were formed by material deposited along the edges of the ice sheet during the glacier’s retreat. Rolling hills defined the area to the west of the City, while relatively level agricultural land defines the east. Elevations in the City approach 1,100 feet above sea level on the northwest side and range to approximately 750 feet above sea level along the Rock River at the southern edge of the City.

Metallic and Non-Metallic Minerals

Glacial deposits consist of soil, subsoil, sediment, sand, gravel, and/or stone and are characterized by a variety of depths and patterns surrounding the City. Furthermore, the area’s glacial deposits provide valuable non-metallic minerals such as sand and gravel that are used for road construction, housing, and commercial developments. Substantial active non-metallic mining operation is the Janesville Sand and Gravel site on the north side of the City – just east of the Rock River. There are also gravel deposits on the north side of the City, north of Highway 14.

Currently, there are no active metallic mining activities anywhere in Rock County because metallic minerals are not present in high quantities.

Groundwater

Groundwater is comprised of the portion of rainfall that does not run off to streams or rivers and that does not evaporate or transpire from plants. This water percolates down through the soil until it reaches the saturated zone of an aquifer. Groundwater supplies all of the water for domestic, commercial and industrial uses in the City. However, groundwater contamination is of concern in many parts of the south-central Wisconsin as a result of the varied characteristics of the bedrock and surficial geology. Areas with sandy soils, thin soils, or fractured bedrock are the most susceptible to contamination from specific urban and rural land uses.

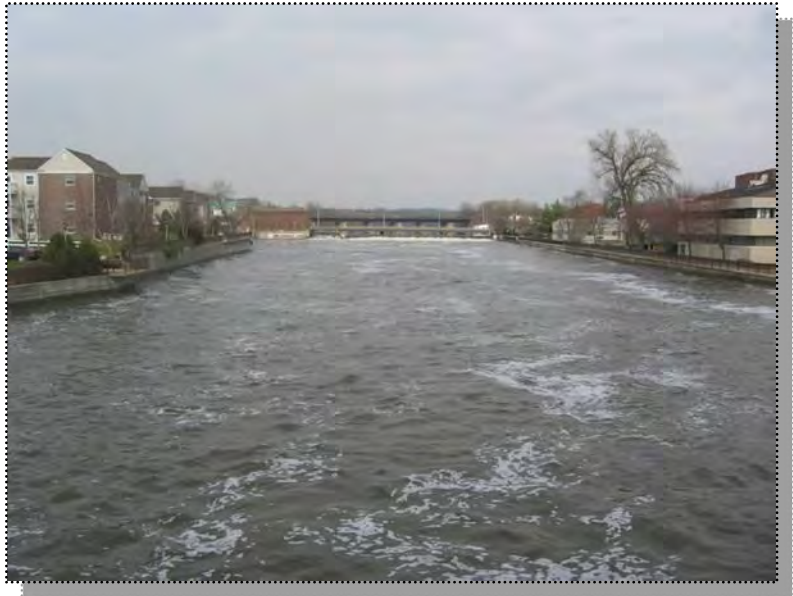
In rural areas, the most common groundwater contaminant is nitrate-nitrogen, which can come from improperly functioning on-site wastewater systems, animal feedlots, livestock waste facilities, sludge and septage application, lawn and agricultural fertilizers, and decaying plant debris.

The Rock County Public Health Department maintains a Nitrate Risk Mapping Tool to display potential risks of nitrate contamination in shallow groundwater in quadrants throughout the County. Risk factor is determined by four components: 1) Land cover and crop type; 2) Soil type; 3) Septic System Density; and 4) Irrigation. The vast majority of the City of Janesville is deemed to have “low to no nitrate risk.” However, areas of higher risks of nitrate contamination exist on the city periphery, with a significant portion of urban areas adjacent to rural land uses being identified as areas of “moderate nitrate risk.” Janesville is located in the lower Rock River Basin.

Rock River

The Rock River is a key identifying feature of the City of Janesville. The City is entirely within the Rock River drainage basin.

The City is further divided into three smaller watersheds: Blackhawk Creek in the eastern and southern areas, Rock River/Milton in the north central area, and Bass Creek in the western portion of the City. Originating just north of the Horicon Marsh, the Rock River collects water from 11 Wisconsin counties before entering Illinois on its way to the Mississippi River. In addition to the Rock River, there are smaller water bodies that flow through the City into the Rock, including Fisher Creek, Markham Creek, and Spring Brook Creek.



Within the Rock River watershed – which extends across a large portion of southeastern and south-central Wisconsin, a total of 128 streams, stream segments, and lakes have been identified and listed as “Impaired Waters of the State” and listed on the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) 303d list because they fail to meet surface water standards established by the federal Clean Water Act. Standards that are typically violated include high levels of nutrient, sediment, heavy metals, or chemical contamination. In the lower Rock River Basin and Janesville area, the Rock River and Markham Creek are on the 303d list. The Federal Clean Water Act requires development of a management plan to correct impairments for water bodies listed on the EPA 303d list. Water bodies on or named to the 303d list of impaired waters will have a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) calculated for it. A TMDL will be specific to the pollutant or pollutants impacting the water body. WDNR and Rock River Coalition are actively involved in monitoring TMDLs and water quality.

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designates floodplains. These are areas predicted to be inundated with flood waters in the 100-year storm event (e.g., a storm that has a one percent chance of happening in any given year). Development within floodplains is strongly discouraged so as to prevent property damage. [Map 4](#) shows the 623 acres of land in the City classified as

floodplain, comprising approximately three percent (2.8%) of the City's total land area. FEMA completed an exercise to re-map floodplains in the City in 2015 based on new topographical data.

Wetlands

According to the WDNR Wetland Inventory Maps, wetland habitats comprise less than one percent (about 184 acres) of the City's total land area, not including open water. These ecosystems play significant roles in maintaining the quality of groundwater and surface water and provide valuable habitats for fish, birds, and other wildlife. The City's Shoreland/Wetland Ordinance regulates the filling or modification of wetlands over five acres within 300 feet of navigable streams and 1,000 feet of lake and ponds.

Soils

Soil suitability is a key factor in determining the best and most cost-effective locations for new development. Problems that limit development on certain soils include slumping, poor drainage, erosion, steep slopes, and high-water tables. The soils in the majority of the City of Janesville, and the planning area, are porous and present some challenges for the use of on-site wastewater treatment systems, but do not present challenges for publicly sewered development.

Steep Slopes

As shown on [Map 4](#), steep slopes exceeding a 12 percent grade are mainly located in the far northwest portion of the City. Generally, slopes that have between 12 percent and 20 percent grade present challenges for building site development, and slopes that exceed a 20 percent grade are not recommended for any disturbance or development.

Rare Species Occurrences

WDNR's Natural Heritage Inventory program maintains data on the general location and status of threatened or endangered plant and animal species and natural communities and species and communities of special concern. According to this inventory, there are occurrences of aquatic endangered species in the northwest, southwest, and southeast areas of the City, many are focused around the Rock River and its tributaries. There are occurrences of terrestrial endangered species in the northwest portion of the City. More specific information on location and type of species is available from the State's Bureau of Endangered Resources in the WDNR. Examples of endangered species present in the City of Janesville include the following:

- Gravel Chub (Fish)
- Pink Milkwort (Plant)
- Prairie Bush Clover (Plant)
- Purple Wartyback (Mussel)
- Rainbow Shell (Mussel)
- Rough Rattlesnake Root (Plant)
- Small Skullcap (Plant)

Places of Ecological Significance

The WDNR developed a Land Legacy Report that identifies and provides preservation directives for several unique ecological landscapes in the Janesville area.

- **Lake Koshkonong to Kettle Moraine Corridor:** The area between Janesville, Fort Atkinson, and Whitewater, this landscape is home to Lake Koshkonong and a variety of habitats – wetlands, open water, marshes, and meadows, farmland, scattered woodlots, and grassland. Under significant development pressure, the natural areas are being fragmented. WDNR

recommends protecting the open space corridor between Lake Koshkonong and the Kettle Moraine as a recreation area, and providing separation between hunting and residential uses. Maintaining farmland is highlighted as a long-term preservation strategy for this area.

- **Lower Rock River Corridor:** The lower Rock flows through some of the most productive agricultural land in the State. Protecting this corridor provides for river and land-based recreation opportunities, as well as habitat improvement for terrestrial and aquatic species. Urban waterfront projects in Janesville and Beloit are also a way to protect quality and increase exposure to this resource.

Other ecologically significant places in the area include the Johnstown Moraine, the southern Outwash Plain, and prairie remnants.

Janesville's Greenbelt System

The City's extensive greenbelt system of parks and preserved open spaces is another important natural resource that provides ecological protection and recreational benefits for residents. The foundation for the system was set within the 1920 Nolen Plan. Today the City's greenbelts are designated to serve several important functions including: maintaining buffers between conflicting land uses (shaping and supporting development trends); providing for natural resources conservation; enhancing the overall quality of the environment; providing bike corridors and safe routes to school; and linking parks, schools, and civic centers into a linear open space system. The greenbelt system permanently preserves many of the features described in the previous paragraphs.

Greenbelts are defined as areas, no less than 100 feet in width, that are reserved to be held by the City as permanent open space. They facilitate surface water run-off, provide areas for groundwater recharge, and preserve sensitive natural features (bluffs, steep slopes, woodlands, and significant plant and animal communities). The City has traditionally planned for its greenbelt system through its [Parks and Open Space Plan](#), as well as comprehensive and neighborhood plans.

The City's greenbelt system is illustrated on the Community Facilities Map in [Volume 2](#).

State Natural Areas/Wildlife Areas

There are no State Natural Areas or Wildlife Areas located in the City's planning area.

Air Quality

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute reports trends and concerns pertaining to various environmental and public health issues through the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Program, including air quality. The City of Janesville is located in an air quality attainment area, which means that the air quality in the region does not typically exceed standards for any criteria pollutants under the Clean Air Act. Although Janesville is not within a non-attainment area, several nearby counties in eastern Wisconsin are identified as part of a non-attainment area. This raises concerns about pollutants like ozone and particulate matter that can be transported to the area via sources hundreds of miles away. In Rock County in 2016, Rock County recorded nine micrograms per Cubic Meter of fine particulate matter and ozone. For comparison, this is somewhat higher than the average for the State of Wisconsin (seven micrograms) or for the Country (eight micrograms). However, it is important to note that Rock County has experienced a consistent trend of improvement in this measure. One facility in the City of Janesville – the Bjoin Limestone Crushing Plan – emits PM10 (particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter) above reporting levels in NR 438.03, *Wis. Adm. Code*.

Figure 10: Historical Air Emissions in Janesville (Tons), 2010-2019

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Carbon Monoxide	123	108	105	106	123	119	157	91	92	85
Nitrogen Oxides	170	165	145	155	163	144	189	160	151	155
Particulate Matter (10)	18	18	54	22	30	77	112	67	72	66
Reactive Organic Gas	148	187	90	105	178	207	288	189	202	175
Sulfur Dioxide	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
Total Tonnage	459	478	394	388	499	547	746	507	517	481

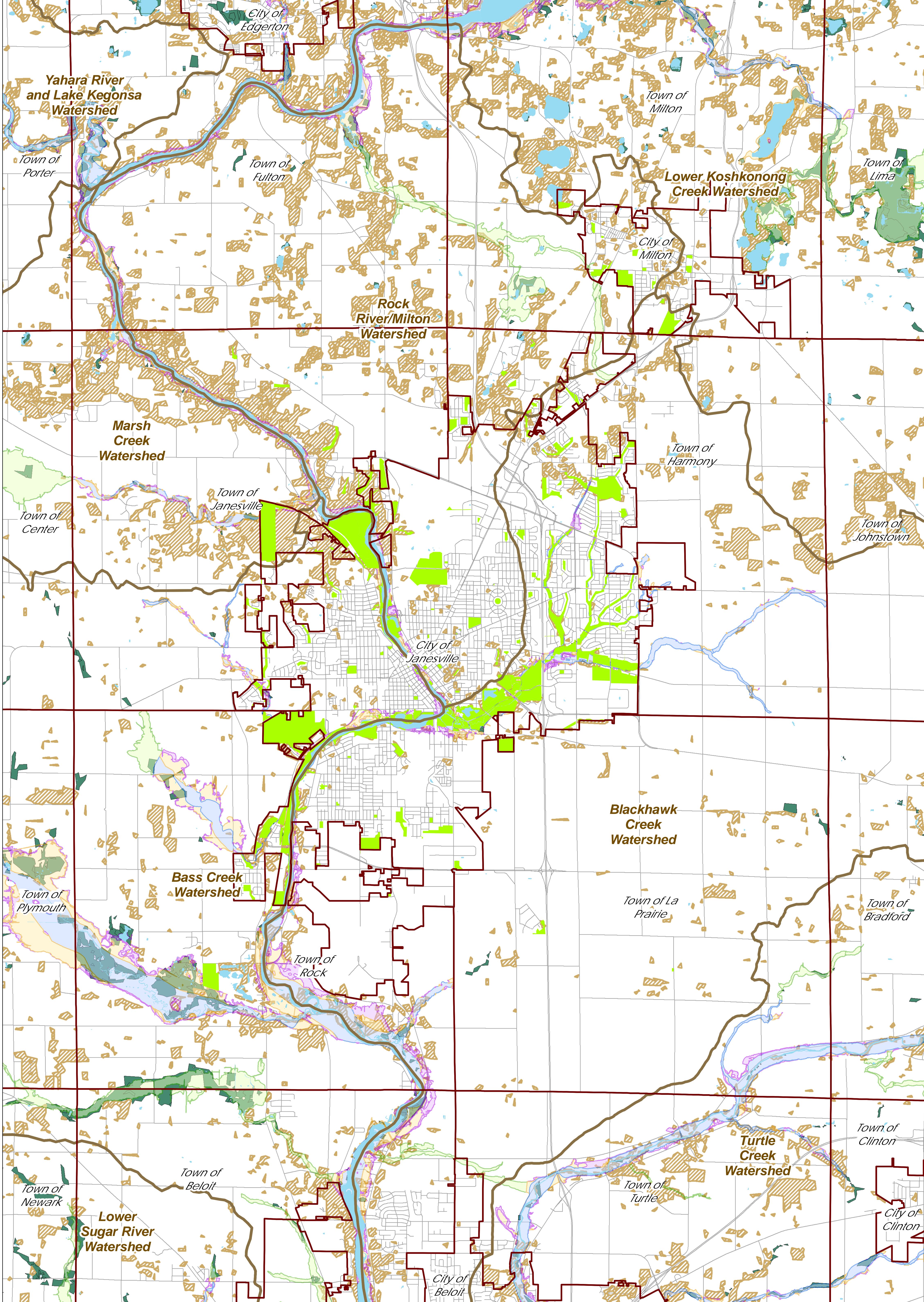
Source: WDNR Historic Air Emissions Information, 2021

KEY NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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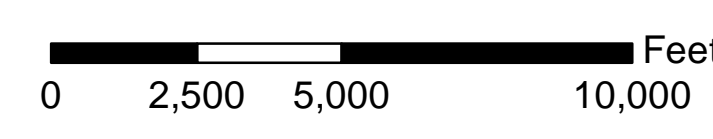
- The City's distinct greenbelt and park system holds many of the City's ecologically sensitive areas, and provides recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
- Innovative sustainable development practices (stormwater management, conservation neighborhood design) can help facilitate growth in the right places from an environmental perspective, while protecting natural resources and water quality.
- The Rock River corridor is a major City asset, which the City may enhance through improving water quality, acquiring additional land along the River, and continuing development patterns that embrace the River.
- Air quality is a growing issue both from stationary sources, and from population and traffic increases in the City and region.

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4. Natural Features

- Municipal Boundaries
- Watershed Boundaries
- Parks
- woods
- wetlands
- Special Flood Areas
- Floodway (AE)
- 100-Year Flood (AE)
- 100-Year Flood (A)
- 500-Year Flood (X)



CITY OF JANESVILLE
Wisconsin's Park Place

S:\Projects\Planning\Comprehensive_Plan\Update_Comp Plan Maps\Vol 1\Update March 2020\Map 4 Natural Features.mxd 3/11/2022; Z.Pennycook, Engineering Division

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HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The history and culture of the City of Janesville and the surrounding area has been recorded and celebrated. Today residents can experience the history of the City through published research and essays, and by touring the City and the many remaining structures that tell the story of the City's rich past. Through its thorough historic planning, the City has been successful in preserving many of its historic and cultural resources. This section of the *Plan* provides a brief overview of the history of the City, cross-referencing previous planning and documentation of the City's historic and cultural resources.

Historical Overview

Janesville is one of several southern Wisconsin river cities founded in the 1830s. Permanently occupied by Euro-Americans since this time, historians believe the area was visited periodically by European explorers as early as the late seventeenth century. Prior to this period, the area was home to various groups of Native Americans for 10,000 years or more. Prehistoric and Historic Native American occupation is well documented in the publication *City on the Rock River: Chapters in Janesville's History* prepared by the Janesville Historic Commission.



Downtown Janesville, along West Milwaukee Street, showcases several of the City's historically significant buildings.

The first permanent settlers arrived to the area in 1835. John Inman and William Holmes set out from the Milwaukee area to seek land in the Rock River Valley from the Milwaukee area. Impressed with the Rock River Valley's resources, they returned to Milwaukee to gather supplies for homesteading. Returning with Joshua Holmes and George Follmer, they returned, erected a small cabin on the south bank of the Rock River, across from the "Big Rock." Historians document that this was the first settlement in what would eventually become Rock County.

Over the next few years several others arrived to settle the site. Among those was Henry F. Janes, who in the spring of 1836, claimed and settled a half-section on the east side of the Rock River. He built a cabin in the center of what is today downtown Janesville. He then platted the Original Plat of Janesville. Other rival settlements followed – Rockport in the Old Fourth Ward Area and Wisconsin City. These and other plats were eventually incorporated into Janesville. Following the designation of Janesville as the county seat in 1839, the Downtown grew rapidly as a center of manufacturing and trade until about 1870. Between 1870 and 1950, Janesville's population grew slowly and the Downtown remained the only business district in the community.

As was the case through much of Wisconsin, agriculture on the rich Rock County soils was essential to early settlement. By 1900 dairying was the major source of income for Rock County farmers. The historic resources related to agriculture in Janesville include facilities that processed agricultural products – gristmills processing wheat; cotton and woolen mills; tobacco warehouses and small cigar factories; vegetable canning factories; creameries and dairy processing facilities.

During the 20th century, Janesville’s industrial base expanded beyond agricultural-related industry to produce a variety of consumer products for the national market. During the 1920’s General Motors and Parker Pen Company were the predominant employers in the City. Historically industries were located at the sources of waterpower and along rail lines. Later in the 20th century industry moved out to larger industrial parks. Many of the historic industrial building stock remains in the City today. Today the historic resources related to this early industrial activity include Hodge and Bucholz Carriage Works, Bennison Lane Company, Janesville Cotton Mill, and Tallman and Collins Perfume Factory.

The influence of commercial activity in the City began with Henry Janes, the original platter of the City. An entrepreneur, Janes operated as ferry service across the River, and a combination inn, tavern, and post office out of his cabin. Janesville’s commercial district grew up along Main and Milwaukee Streets – eventually becoming a large downtown shopping district with retail and services. As with many cities, Janesville’s downtown was a regional commerce center until after World War II. After World War II, the increase in personal incomes and the concurrent rise of the automobile dramatically changed the character of commercial development in the City. Construction of Interstate 90/39 in the early 1960s and the Janesville Mall in the early 1970s eventually led to the closing of many businesses in the Downtown district followed by a cycle of vacancy, demolition, and drastic remodeling.

The late 1990s saw further changes take place in the City, with the redevelopment of the Janesville Mall (today known as “Uptown Janesville”) and Pine Tree Plaza growing the commercial presence on the northeast side of the City; additionally, the library was completely renovated in large part due to a \$4.6 million donation from Don and Gerry Hedberg (the Hedberg Public Library now bears the name of these philanthropists).

The Great Recession of 2008 presented challenges to the City, and these challenges were compounded by the closure of the Janesville General Motors Assembly Plant in December 2008. Between the closure of the plant and other companies that supplied the plant, many hundreds of Janesville residents became unemployed. While the City’s economy and growth have proven resilient, and rebounded since the plant closure, the legacy of the General Motors plant remains an important staple of Janesville history and heritage.

Several resources provide a thorough and entertaining discussion of the City’s rich history, including:

- *City on the Rock River: Chapter in Janesville’s History*. Written in 1998 by Carol Lohry Cartwright, Scott Shaffer, and Randal Waller on behalf of the Janesville Historic Commission; and
- *Historic Janesville: An Architectural History of Janesville, Wisconsin*. Written in 1982 (reprinted in 1994) by Heritage Preservation Associates, Inc. and MacDonald and Mack Partnership on behalf of the City of Janesville Department of Community Development.

Summary of Historic Resources

Districts in the National Register of Historic Places

The City of Janesville has an impressively high concentration of historic resources within the City. Many of these are located within the downtown area, but reminders of the various stages of development throughout the City's history are located throughout the City. The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act created the National Register of Historic Places, which recognizes properties of local, state, and national significance. Properties are listed in the National Register because of their associations with particular persons or events, their architectural or engineering significance, or their importance to our history. Designation on the National Register confers certain benefits to private properties, including federal and state investment tax credits for historic preservation projects. Designation also provides limited protection from federally financed or licensed actions that may adversely affect such buildings.



Buildings of historic significance along South Main Street.

Seven designated National Register historic districts are designated in Janesville. Several of those are located in or near downtown, including:

- **Courthouse Hill Historic District (1851-1931):** This 30-block, primarily residential historic district incorporates the area near the Rock County Courthouse, and along South Parker Drive and South Main Street. This neighborhood contains many of Janesville's most historically and architecturally significant residences. This district contains several large residential structures on St. Lawrence Avenue and East Court Street across from the Courthouse. Slightly smaller but still significant houses are located on South Parker Drive and South Main Street.
- **East Milwaukee Street Historic District (1849-1915):** The East Milwaukee Street District is composed of five commercial buildings on the north side of East Milwaukee Street at its intersection with North Parker Drive. The London Hotel and Janesville Carriage Company buildings are the two most significant buildings in this district.
- **North Main Street Historic District (1850-1900):** This district includes several historic (generally pre-Civil War) commercial buildings along North Main Street between Milwaukee and Wall Streets. The buildings are small-scale commercial structures; two to three stories high and one to two storefronts wide. The district also includes East Wall Street—one of the few Janesville streets still paved with brick.
- **Prospect Hill Historic District (1847-1937):** This 15-block, primarily residential district is located on the upper slope of one of the City's highest hills.
- **South Main Street Historic District (1851-1930):** This district includes 14 commercial buildings on South Main Street between Milwaukee Street and St. Lawrence Avenue. Buildings were generally constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There are several

larger commercial buildings in this district; however, smaller commercial buildings physically join these larger buildings together in continuous block faces. Vacant lots, open space, and parking lots surrounding this district add to its cohesiveness and distinction. Significant buildings include the Lappin-Hayes Block, the Fredendall Block, and the Court Street Methodist Church (Rock County Appliance).

- **West Milwaukee Street Historic District (1855-1938):** The City's largest downtown historic district contains a total of 54 primarily commercial buildings on the west side of the Rock River. The West Milwaukee Street Historic District is very cohesive in size, scale, building materials, and type of construction, and has been home to a variety of retail businesses over Janesville's history. Two- and three-story commercial vernacular and Italianate structures characterize this district, although there are excellent examples of later Queen Anne and Art Deco styles. The most imposing structure in this district is the six-story Monterey Hotel, built in 1930.
- **Old Fourth Ward Historic District (1853-1929):** This large, primarily residential district is located directly south of Downtown Janesville, south of the River. The homes in this district were primarily built to house Janesville's working class.

Other historically significant designated districts are located outside of downtown Janesville. These include:

- Conrad Cottages Historic District, 235-330 Milton Avenue
- Columbus Circle Historic District, bounded by North Adams East Milwaukee and North Garfield Ave
- Bostwick Avenue Historic District, 404-439 Bostwick Ave and 1118-1128 Grace Street
- Benton Avenue Historic District, bounded by Benton Ave, Wilton Ave, Sherman Ave, Richardson Street, Blaine Ave, and Prairie Ave
- Jefferson Avenue Historic District, bounded by Oakland, Garfield, and Ruger Avenues and Forest Park Blvd
- Look West Historic District, roughly bounded by Laurel Avenue and North Madison, West Court and North Palms Streets

Buildings in National Register of Historic Places

In addition to the above districts, the following buildings are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places because of their outstanding architectural and/or historical characteristics:

Those in the downtown area include:

- Court Street Methodist Church, 36 South Main Street, 1868
- Fredendall Block, 33-39 South Main Street, 1868-69
- Janesville Cotton Mill, 220 North Franklin Street, 1874
- Janesville Public Library (Senior Center), 64 South Main Street, 1902
- The Armory, 10 South High Street, 1930
- H. Merrill and A.P. Lovejoy Houses, 202 & 220 St. Lawrence Avenue, 1904 & 1881-83
- Lappin-Hayes Block, 20 East Milwaukee Street, 1855/1899
- London Hotel, 121-123 East Milwaukee Street, 1892-93
- Myers-Newhoff House, 121 North Parker Drive, c. 1848
- Myers Pork Packing Plant & Coleman Building, 117-123 N. Main Street, 1850-80 & 1900

The following are located outside of the downtown area:

- James B. Crosby House, 1005 Sutherland Avenue
- Janesville High School, 408 South Main Street
- Janesville Pumping Station, 500 Block River Street
- Payne-Craig House, 2200 West Memorial Drive
- Randall-Brewster House, 1412 Ruger Avenue
- Richardson-Hamilton House, 429 Prospect Avenue
- Lincoln - Tallman House, 440 North Jackson Street
- Willard-Frances Schoolhouse, 429 N. Franklin Street
- Whiton-Parker House, 1000 E. Milwaukee Street
- John H. Jones House, 538 S. Main Street

Wisconsin Historical Society's Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) contains data on a wide range of historic properties throughout the State. The AHI identifies over 3,300 documented structures in the City of Janesville. While there are several landmark properties like the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad Depot, the Janesville Public Library, the Rock County Court House, and the Fourth Ward Park, this list is mainly comprised of residences that make up the City's historic districts – both those listed on the National Register, as well as historic housing areas not formally recognized.



Downtown Janesville

The Rock County Historical Society (RCHS) was founded in 1948 and is located in Janesville on North Jackson Street, in the Helen Jeffris Wood Museum Center. Its mission is to provide “education through preservation,” fostering community appreciation through the recognition of the cultural heritage of the area. The archives of the Historical Society are kept in the Wilson King Stone House, located at 931 Mineral Point Road, a historic building that is also home to the Rock County Genealogical Society. The archive preserves tens of thousands of historic public records, photographs, maps and other documents. RCHS also operates the Lincoln-Tallman House Museum, a building on the National Historic Register cited as the only standing private residence in Wisconsin where President Lincoln stayed overnight. In addition, Janesville's Hedberg Public Library has many resources devoted to the history of Janesville, its people, and historic features.

Archeological Resources

There are over 16 archeological sites within the City of Janesville designated by the Wisconsin State Historical Society. These sites include cemeteries/burial sites, effigy mounds, and campsites/villages. All human burial sites, including cemeteries and Indian mounds, are protected under State law. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to ensure that their actions do not adversely affect archeological sites on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Archeological sites can be protected during the course of state agency activities if the sites have been recorded with the Office of the State Archeologist.

Previous Historic Resource Planning and Preservation Initiatives

Janesville Downtown Historic Preservation Plan (2000)

The City commissioned Vandewalle & Associates to prepare a plan to protect Downtown Janesville's historic resources by prioritizing individual buildings and districts for preservation and reinvestment, identifying specific areas and opportunities for rehabilitation and redevelopment, and providing design guidelines that promote appropriate development and rehabilitation in a manner compatible with the Downtown's historic character.

The key findings of this study indicated that:

- The greatest concentrations of historically significant buildings with a high preservation priority are located along Main Street between Wall Street and St. Lawrence Avenue and along West Milwaukee Street between the Rock River and Jackson Street.
- Smaller concentrations of historically significant buildings with a high to medium preservation priority are located along and near Dodge Street, near the corner of Parker Drive and East Milwaukee Street, near the old Marshall Middle School, and both north and south of the primary concentration of buildings on Main Street.



Lincoln-Tallman House.

That plan identified the sites most appropriate for preservation, redevelopment, or some combination of preservation and redevelopment. Areas in the Downtown recommended for complete historic preservation and restoration included:

- 400 Block of West Milwaukee Street (both sides)
- 100 Block of West Milwaukee Street, and adjacent area of South River Street
- Main Street (between Wall Street and St. Lawrence Avenue)
- Select Residential structures in the Fourth Ward and Courthouse Hill neighborhoods
- A "West Side Preservation Boundary" along Centerway Avenue, west of the river
- Lower Courthouse Park

Areas in the Downtown deemed appropriate for a mix of preservation, redevelopment, and infill development included:

- 300 Block of West Milwaukee Street (south side) and Dodge Street
- Centerway/West Wall/North Franklin Streets
- 200 Block West Milwaukee Street
- West Court Street
- First Block of West Milwaukee Street, adjacent to river
- West Side Industrial Structures (between S. Franklin Street and River Street)
- South Main Street/Racine Street/Riverfront

- Main Street/East Court Street/East Wall Street
- East Milwaukee Street
- North Main Street, north of Wall Street

Areas in the Downtown deemed appropriate for compatible redevelopment included:

- Centerway Triangle (between Centerway/West Court Street/South Academy Street)
- First Block of North Franklin Street
- South River Street/Parking Plaza
- South Water Street
- North Main Street, near Centerway
- 300 Block of West Milwaukee Street (north side)

The plan also included a general design guidelines and recommended implementation strategies.

Janesville Cultural Resources

Janesville residents have access to a rich and growing array of cultural offerings. These range from parks and trails, to entertainment venues, to festivals and events, to groups and civic organization. These cultural offerings are part of the fabric of the community – that make the City unique, attract visitors, and shape the quality of life that make the City a desirable place to residents and businesses.

Rotary Gardens and the Lincoln-Tallman House are two of the “trademark” attractions of the City – drawing visitors to the facilities and into the City. Several entertainment and cultural venues are located in downtown Janesville: including the

Janesville Performing Arts Center (JPAC), the Hedberg Public Library, the Senior Center, the Town Square, and the YMCA/Boys and Girls Club. The west side of downtown is also the site of an emerging entertainment area – including the beautifully restored Armory and an emerging collection of dining establishments. The City’s rich network of parks, open spaces and bicycle trails provide a significant cultural asset to the City. Traxler Park is home to the Rock Aqua Jays – which attracts thousands of viewers to their shows. The City’s primary and secondary schools also serve as cultural centers in the community. Civic organizations are another important strength of the City.

Regular and special events and activities promote a cultural appreciation of what is uniquely Janesville – including special events like Music by the Marv and the weekly farmer’s market – which started in 2005. Tours of historically significant areas, mentioned earlier in this Chapter, are additional examples.

More information on several of these locations is provided in other sections of *Volume 1* of this *Plan*.



Janesville Performing Arts Center (JPAC) and Marshall Apart-

KEY CULTURAL RESOURCE ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following are some of the key issues and opportunities for the City identified in this Chapter and through public input that will be considered in preparation of recommendations in Volume 2 of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

- Preservation of significant historical and cultural resources in the Downtown and City-wide helps define the City and its heritage.
- Historic preservation goals should be balanced with compatible redevelopment, particularly in the Downtown area – including adaptive re-use of buildings with historic significance and character.
- Embracing, promoting and linking the City’s cultural and historical assets and manufacturing heritage can be a draw for tourism and recreation.