

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the United States, "first-ring suburban" communities are seeing a renaissance, and the City of West Allis is no different. West Allis, located immediately west of the City of Milwaukee, is one of several first-ring suburbs - communities immediately adjacent to the core city of a metropolitan area - that witnessed a boom of development in the late 1800s. From that time forward, first-ring suburbs experienced a period of exponential growth that later encountered competition with the expanding outer-ring suburbs. In the latter half of the 20th century, many first-ring suburbs struggled to keep a hold of economic activity, often losing potential businesses to undeveloped land on the edge of the metropolitan area.

The past twenty years have allowed for a shift in this decline. As the general public has realized the value of these "first-ring" communities due to the range of amenities offered, cities like West Allis are seeing a renewed interest in economic development.

As the City of West Allis continues to make strides forward, this Comprehensive Plan shall serve as an overall guide for redevelopment, growth, and the implementation of sustainable practices. The remainder of this chapter provides general information about West Allis, an insight into the role of the comprehensive plan - the requirements set by the State of Wisconsin - and the process conducted during the creation of this plan.

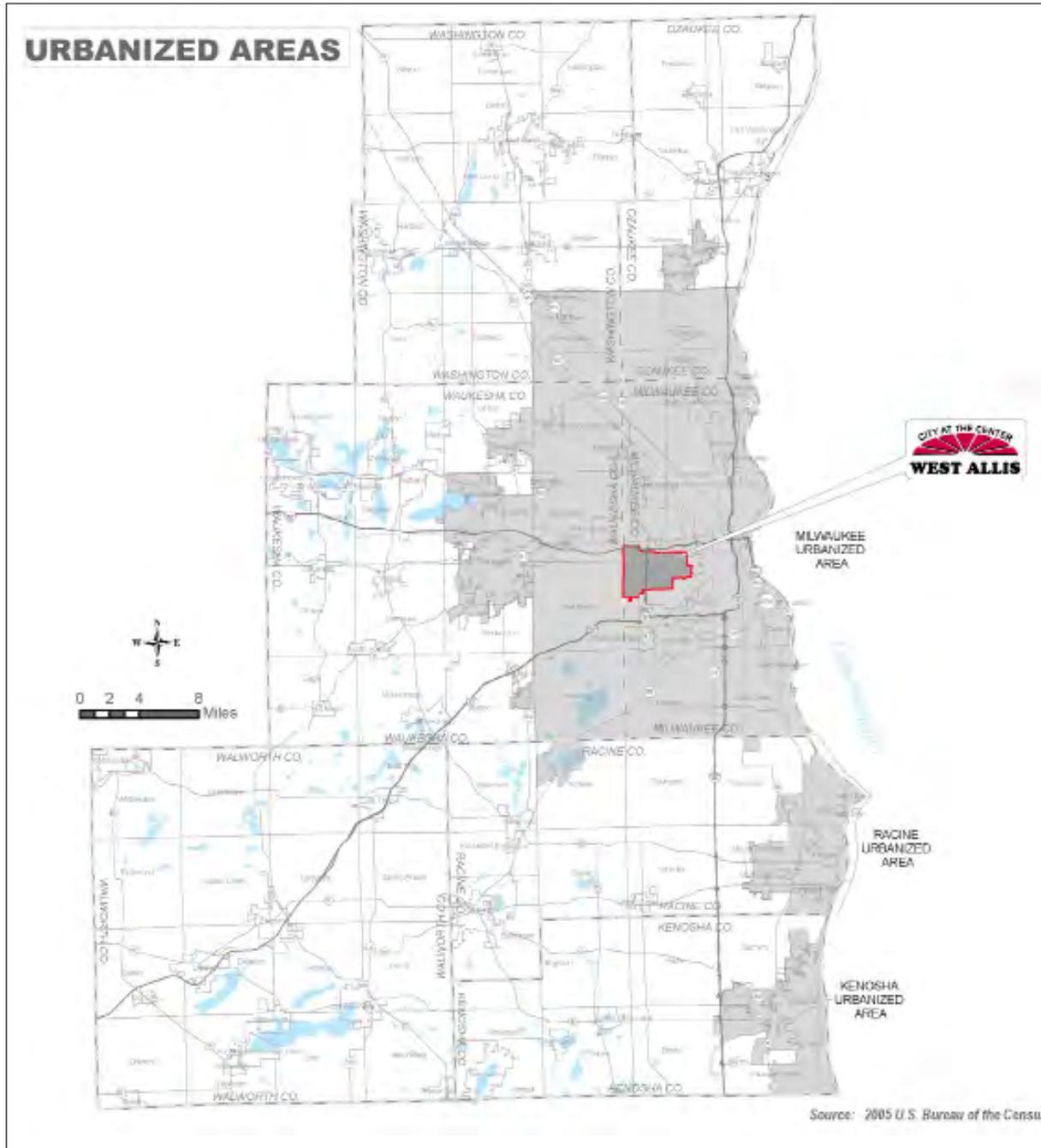
### LOCATION IN THE REGION

The City of West Allis is located approximately five miles west of Lake Michigan, and is a part of the Milwaukee metropolitan region (see Figure 1-1 on the following page). The city sits on the western edge of Milwaukee County, and shares boundaries with municipalities in both Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties. Adjacent municipalities include the Cities of Greenfield, Milwaukee, New Berlin, Wauwatosa, Brookfield, and the Village of West Milwaukee.

West Allis sits just south of Interstate 94, a major transportation route connecting Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago. In addition, Interstate 894 runs north-



Figure 1-1. City of West Allis, Southeastern Wisconsin



south through the western portion of the city. West Allis is also home to several major transportation arterials, including state highways 59 (W. Greenfield Ave.) and 100 (S. 108th St.), and county highways D (W. Cleveland Ave.), ES (W. National Ave.), NN (W. Oklahoma Ave.), and T (W. Beloit Rd.). These arterials are further described in the transportation element of this Plan.

## PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In October 1999, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted a new comprehensive planning law, which is set forth in Section 66.1001 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The new requirements supplement earlier provisions in the Statutes for the preparation of county development plans (Section 59.69(3) of the Statutes) and local master plans (Section 62.23 of the Statutes). The new requirements, which are often referred to as the "Smart Growth" law, provide a new framework for the development, adoption, and implementation of comprehensive plans in Wisconsin.

The comprehensive plan is required to address nine elements:

- Issues and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Facilities
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use
- Implementation

Public participation is required at every stage of the comprehensive planning process including adoption of written procedures, broad notice provisions, the opportunity to review and comment on draft plans, and a required public hearing prior to plan adoption.

Milwaukee County has not entered into a comprehensive planning process. Thus, each local government in the County has chosen whether or not to compile and adopt an individual comprehensive plan document.

The City of West Allis has accepted grant funding from the State of Wisconsin to complete this document. The State set forth fourteen goals to be met in order to receive grant funding for the planning process:

- Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures
- Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices

- Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodland, open spaces and groundwater resources
- Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests
- Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state government and utility costs
- Preservation of cultural, historical and archeological sites
- Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government
- Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
- Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community
- Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future

market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses

- Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional and local levels
- Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals
- Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities
- Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependant and disabled citizens



## PLANNING PROCESS

### Past Planning Efforts

This Comprehensive Plan serves as an update to the City's 1990-2010 Comprehensive Land Use Plan adopted in 1991. The information provided in the 1990-2010 plan has been reviewed for incorporation into the current plan.



As part of the coordinated planning effort, the City reviewed several planning studies previously completed for West Allis and compiled a summary of these studies. This detailed review provides a consolidated list of plan recommendations, which allows this Plan to build on previous analyses and conclusions. The following studies are available at City Hall:

- Comprehensive Land Use Plan 1990-2010 (1991)
- Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (1996)
- Strategic Plan (2007)
- Historic Property Survey (2007)

Other planning documents include a proposed “Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan,” “Toward a Sustainable West Allis,” and “100 Years of West Allis Homes,” which are also available at City Hall.

### Public Participation

Public participation strategies in the City of West Allis were designed to gather input from a broad segment of the population who both live and invest in the city. West Allis engaged in the following participation techniques:

- Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee meetings
- Comprehensive Plan website
- Interviews with City Alderpersons
- Public review workshops
- Open house
- Public hearing

These techniques provided an opportunity for citizens to provide feedback that could be integrated into the elements of the Plan.

## PLAN VISION

The City of West Allis has established the following principles as documented through the comprehensive planning process. These goals will assist the City in achieving its vision for the future:

**NEIGHBORHOODS:** Preserve and enhance the existing diversity of uses within our neighborhoods.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Provide a competitive and diverse economic atmosphere that attracts investment and employment.

**HOUSING:** Maintain a variety of housing types at a range of densities, styles and costs to accommodate the needs and desires of existing and future residents.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Provide a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation network that will effectively serve the travel needs within the City and region.

**PARKS and OPEN SPACES:** Protect and enhance our existing parks and natural resources.

**CULTURAL RESOURCES:** Preserve the historic character of the community's social and architectural diversity.

**COMMUNITY FACILITIES:** Continue to provide efficient, affordable and sustainable services to our residents.

**REDEVELOPMENT:** Identify and transform underutilized properties throughout the City.

**LAND USE:** Encourage the continuation and future development of compatible land uses within our urban community.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION:** Continue to build upon collaborative efforts that achieve regionalism.