The Fitchburg Agricultural Route (FAR) Concept Analysis
Executive Summary 2015
The FAR Vision

Imagine... It’s the first warm Saturday morning of the year and after a long cold winter; you begin to remember why you enjoy living in Wisconsin so much. The temperature is in the mid 70’s with a slight breeze coming out of the southwest, and there’s not a cloud in the sky. The birds are chirping and the trees are in full bloom. It has been a few months, but you still know the way by heart. You grab the bike from the garage, throw on your helmet, and you’re on your way. A few quick turns and you’ve made it to the Badger State Trail.

Soon, you pass the Roaring Judy Farm Brewery and Cafe. Too early for a drink on a non-Badger football game Saturday, you think to yourself as a smile creeps onto your face. Although, a Trail Pale Ale does sound pretty good right now... you can have your Spotted Cow, I’ll take a Trail Pale Ale any day.

Off to your right, you notice a rather large building and a sign for the Seminole Community Kitchen and Local Food Hub. Wonder what that is, you think to yourself...should look it up when I get home.

You pedal a few minutes more before stopping at the North Stoner Prairie Community Gardens to put a few tomato plants in the ground. While there, you stop and chat with a neighbor who is pulling weeds on her plot. You wish her a good day and hop back on the bike.

After a minute or two of pedaling, you glance off to your right and catch a glimpse of the O’Brien Dairy Farm and Ice Cream Gazebo. You see the bike racks just off the trail are full...and the gazebo is full of families, all with ice cream cones in their hands. A good day for ice cream....though I need to pedal a few more miles and work off some calories before I’m deserving of a few scoops, you think to yourself.

As you continue to pedal, the land opens up before you. Large, gently rolling agricultural fields with freshly tilled rich, black soil, interspersed woodlots, and the sunlight dancing off the bike trail ahead all offer a spectacular view. Soon, you notice your throat is a bit dry. You see a pull-off and bench just up ahead. You pull over, take a quick gulp from your water bottle, and notice an interpretive sign. You’ve seen a few others of these on the trail but have never stopped to read one. You begin reading:

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THE FAR IS FITCHBURG’S AGRICULTURAL “MAIN STREET”
Fitchburg is a unique city with approximately 11,000 acres of agricultural land within its borders. This “country in the city” is prominently displayed in land uses along the FAR, which include unique areas and enterprises vital to Fitchburg’s history, identity, and economy. FAR lands have many characteristics that make diverse agriculture enterprises viable, including proximity to major roads, the Badger State Trail, and urban markets, a strong agricultural heritage, and productive agricultural soils.

THE FAR’S FUTURE
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“What a great idea,” you think to yourself.

Refreshed and a bit enlightened you hop back on the bike and pedal on past Whalen Road. You see a sign on your right directing you to Eplegaarden, ½ a mile down the road. You remember that cool, crisp day last fall you spent out there with the family, picking apples that soon became part of a delicious apple pie. Got to make sure we get out there again this year, you think.

After a few more minutes of pedaling, you pass the Lowlands Winery and its neatly manicured row after row of grapes.....maybe I’ll pick up a bottle of red for dinner tonight on the way back.

As you pedal on, you see various small plots of land planted with all sorts of fruits and vegetables and holding small herds of livestock. On your left, you see a sign identifying these lands as part of the Fitchburg Slow Food Growers and Producers Association. You’ve seen their signs at the Capital Square Farmers Market. You remember seeing their sign somewhere else too...where was that? Then you remember....The Bubbler, that great new restaurant on State Street. You recall the article that you read in the Isthmus a few weeks ago...neat how so many businesses now are recognizing the value of using locally grown/produced foods.

Before you know it, you see a collection of buildings and a buzz of activity just up ahead. You pedal on and soon see a sign welcoming you to Old Fitchburg. You park your bike in one of the many bike racks and look up and down Wendt Road trying to decide where to direct your attention...The multiple food carts lined up just off the trail? Old Fitchburg Farmers Market? The Old Fitchburg Museum? You decide on the Polo Grounds Coffee and Bakery Food Cart for a scone and espresso.
You take a seat at one of the tables. The breeze feels cool against your face after the 4 mile ride….you take a bite of the scone and a sip of the espresso, let out a contented sigh, and take in your surroundings. You notice Fitchburg Slow Food Growers and Producers Association stickers on the front windows of multiple food carts. Using local food products must really save on transport costs you think to yourself. And I definitely don’t mind paying a bit more for food if it helps the local economy and causes less of a stress on the environment. On a different note, I bet the kids would get a kick out of all the old tractors and other farm equipment located at the Old Fitchburg Museum as well. We’ll come back out here next weekend and make a day of it.

You also notice all the bike racks are full. You see a couple Trek Madone bikes…must be some serious road riders coming back into town after an early morning ride. You wonder how far they’ve rode this morning….. maybe all the way down to New Glarus? You also see a couple of Schwinn Stingrays and remember the one you had as a kid. You think how cool it is that the Badger State Trail can serve so many different types of users. Having places to go along the trail really opens it up to a lot of different users….you feel fortunate to have such a great resource so close to home.

Then you remember why you rode out here. You need to pick up some hot peppers at the farmers market for the batch of chili you’re making tonight. You should plant some in your North Stoner Prairie Community Garden plot next year, you think to yourself. You wander over to the farmers market and gaze at all the varied produce. You hadn’t planned on getting any blackberries but they looked too good to pass up….glad you brought the backpack.

After popping a few berries into your mouth, you secure the peppers and berries in your backpack and decide it’s time to head back. Wandering back to your bike you notice a sign for the Wendt Road Bed and Breakfast. You didn’t see that last time…must be new. Now that would be a good place for your brother to stay when he comes up from Chicago, you think. It’s getting pretty hard to accommodate his growing family in our place when they visit. I’ll have to mention the B & B to him. And so much for him and the family to do, right on their doorstep…..I’ll tell him to bring their bikes.

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Content after a full morning of exercise, eating, and shopping, and ready for a nap, you pull into your garage, hop off your bike, and think, I can’t wait to do the same thing next weekend...but this time I’ll be sure to stop for some ice cream.

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The Fitchburg Agricultural Route (FAR) Concept Analysis – Existing Conditions Report is designed to present a contextual overview of the existing conditions affecting the FAR area, as they relate to geography, history, land use, transportation, regional market and economy, and perceptions of the FAR concept. This Executive Summary provides an overview of these conditions that will play a vital role in refining and further shaping the FAR concept.

What is the "FAR?"
The Fitchburg Agricultural Route (FAR) is a conceptual vision for the future of a 4.5 mile section of the Badger State Trail in the City of Fitchburg, Wisconsin. The FAR vision represents a unique opportunity for the City to drive social, economic, agricultural, growth, by creating a kind of “Agricultural Main Street” on and in close proximity to the FAR. The FAR vision centers on taking advantage of FAR characteristics and local market demand, and re-envisioning the FAR area as an “agricultural cluster” containing interdependent diverse local food production enterprises (orchards, gardens, livestock rearing, etc.) and agricultural-related value-added retail (artisan cheese production facility, ice cream shop, etc.), using the Badger State Trail as a “unifying corridor”.

Geography
The City of Fitchburg’s location in the heart of Dane County positions it as a vital geographic link between commerce, recreation, and agriculture. Bordering Madison, Wisconsin’s second-largest city, Fitchburg is ideally placed to capitalize on the region’s demand for local agricultural products and related tourism and recreational opportunities. As a result of its geography, the FAR represents a sustainable and unique community development opportunity for the City of Fitchburg.

History
The FAR concept supports an energetic, community-based marketplace for locally-grown agricultural products, and serves as a conceptual continuation of Fitchburg’s robust agricultural history. Stretching back over a century, the City has a long and strong identity grounded in agricultural activity and commerce. As Dane County’s economy moves into the 21st century the FAR seeks to be the latest agricultural extension of the City and region’s farming culture and heritage, while also providing a link to City’s and region’s agricultural past.

Land Use
Land use policy and regulation create the environment in which City landowners, farmers, and entrepreneurs operate. Various regulatory structures and community development planning documents that have implications for existing and potential land uses along the FAR include the City’s Comprehensive Plan, zoning ordinance, Agriculture Plan, North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood Plan, and Forward Fitchburg.

Transportation
Transportation systems govern how people and products arrive and leave marketplaces. Whether a person walks, bikes, uses transit, or drives to the FAR, any future planning must take
transportation data and logistics into account. Existing transportation infrastructure creates an ideal bicycling environment to the FAR from Madison.

**Regional Market and Economy**
The FAR seeks to capitalize on existing market and economic conditions within Dane County and the broader region. There is an established demand within the region for farm-to-table products and fresh produce, as well as agricultural tourism. The region also supports a diverse variety of farmers markets and agricultural co-ops. For example, the Dane County Farmers Market represents the largest producer only farmers market in the nation. The FAR vision, premised on the City’s unique attributes, is a commonsense response to this regional demand.

**Concept Perceptions**
Social and cultural values play a vital role in determining Fitchburg’s existing and future land use. As such, a variety of stakeholder engagement tools were utilized to gain insight into the social values which govern how local residents view the FAR concept. Engagement tools included direct stakeholder interviews, a focus group comprised of select stakeholders, a public opinion survey, and a public meeting. Using these tools, valuable insight was gained into local and regional preferences, perceptions, and values as they relate to the FAR concept. Overall it was found that the FAR was viewed as a positive proposal with different potential for all stakeholders interviewed.

**Issues/Conclusions**
This section will summarize the main findings for each of the above sections. Specifically it will focus on issues and conclusions realized through the public engagement and initial findings from relevant plans, studies, and ordinances.
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Acknowledgements
This plan was researched, written and edited by a partnership between the City of Fitchburg Planning Department and the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Department of Urban and Regional Planning Masters of Science students (Class of 2016).

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Qualitative research was sourced from a number of local and regional stakeholders such as residents of Fitchburg, civil servants, elected officials and City of Fitchburg staff. The insights, opinions and information shared with us through the public participation process is most appreciated, and we thank you for your support and input.
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**Issues/Conclusions**
This section will summarize the main findings for each of the above sections. Specifically it will focus on issues and conclusions realized through the public engagement and initial findings from relevant plans, studies, and ordinances.
Context of the FAR Concept
The City of Fitchburg Agricultural Route (FAR) consists of an area surrounding 4.5-mile segment of the Badger State Trail running north to south through the City (Map 1). The FAR extends from the North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood in the north to the Old Fitchburg/Wendt Road settlement in the south, and is part of the City’s larger 19-mile Heritage Circle Route, a proposed recreational trail/path encircling the City. Along the FAR are areas vital to Fitchburg’s history, as well as various existing enterprises that promote, sustain, and enhance agriculture in the City. These areas and enterprises collectively serve as a vital component of the City’s history, identity, and economy. The City has recently installed “Agriculture Past and Present” signs along the FAR to begin to tell the story of the importance of the aforementioned areas and enterprises to the City’s history, identity, and economy.

Lands surrounding the FAR have various characteristics that have potential to make diverse agricultural enterprises viable. These characteristics include proximity to major roads, the Badger State Trail, urban markets, a strong agricultural heritage, existing infrastructure, and existing agricultural enterprises. The highly productive agricultural soils make it especially attractive for agricultural use. The City is dedicated to working with landowners and business entrepreneurs to encourage various land uses adjacent and in close proximity to the FAR that promote, sustain, and enhance agriculture enterprises in the City; thus ensuring that these lands will continue to play a prominent role in writing Fitchburg’s story as the City grows and develops.

The intent and purpose of this concept analysis is to identify the feasibility of enhancing existing and developing new agricultural enterprises and uses on lands adjacent to the FAR; thereby creating a “place” out of a “space” by developing a holistic and integrated vision and identity for the City of Fitchburg’s agricultural community. This vision and identity will be consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and consists of an “agricultural cluster,” entailing diverse agricultural-related enterprises, interdependent and located in close proximity along the FAR; with the Badger State Trail serving as an “Agricultural Main Street.” Existing and potential elements of this “agricultural cluster” include a commercial apple orchard, community gardens, local food-growing collective, fresh produce sales, a winery/brewery, bed and breakfast, ice-cream shop, artisan cheese production/sales, and museum/interpretive center.
Geography

Fitchburg is a city of approximately 35 square miles located in the southern corner of the Madison metropolitan area in south-central Wisconsin, as illustrated in Map 1. It has the largest territory of any suburban municipality in the metro region. This territory ranges from U.S. Highways 12, 14, and 18 to the north, County Highway MM to the east, County Highway M to the south, and Fitchrona Road to the west. Fitchburg is bounded by the City of Madison and the Town of Madison to the north, the Town of Dunn to the east, the Village of Oregon to the south, and the City of Verona to the west. Fitchburg’s terrain is dominated by farmlands, wooded areas, and prairies. The city’s major natural features include Nevin’s State Fish Hatchery, Nine Springs Creek, and Dunn’s Marsh in the north, Swan’s Creek and Murphy’s Creek in the east, and Swan Pond and Lake Blarney in the south. Fitchburg sits within three different watersheds – the Yahara River and Lake Monona watershed in the northeast, the Badfish Creek watershed in the south, the Allen Creek and Middle Sugar River watershed in the southwest, and the Upper Sugar River watershed in the northwest.

Fitchburg’s built environment is characterized by dense, urban development in the northern half of the city and rural farmland and open space in the southern half. City policy is committed to maintaining this development dichotomy for the foreseeable future. New growth is being channeled to the northeast side of the City, along the Fitchburg-Oregon rail corridor, leaving Fitchburg’s prime farmland, in the southwest corner, preserved and protected for at least the next several decades.

Fitchburg’s farmland is some of the best in the world, located in a state with deep agricultural roots, abundant resources, and a dedication to its farmers and the manufacturing, wholesale, and industrial firms tied to the production of food. The vast majority of Fitchburg’s soils on the southwestern side of town have virtually no growing limitations and the most common soil types found there are considered prime agricultural loam. These are the farmlands responsible for Fitchburg’s recognized success in corn and soybean production. A wide range of crops can be grown in these rolling farmlands, but corn and soybeans predominate due to market factors. Dairy and cheese production are also found here, and Dane County, where Fitchburg resides, is globally recognized as one of the world’s greatest producers of cheese.
Beyond agriculture, Fitchburg is also known locally in the metro area as a great biking community. The city’s farmlands and open spaces provide bicyclists a relaxing escape from city life as they traverse Fitchburg’s many commuter paths. These paths connect Fitchburg bicyclists with neighboring communities, counties, and states. The 17-mile long Capital City Trail connects Fitchburg to the Madison metro area. The 40-mile long Military Ridge Trail connects Fitchburg to the communities of Verona, Mount Horeb, and Blue Mounds west of town. The Badger State Trail, when complete, will connect Fitchburg bicyclists, via the Seminole Highway corridor in western Fitchburg, with Belleville, Monticello, Monroe, and the Jane Adams State Trail in Illinois. The trail hosts over 200,000 users each year, and points of interest include the Belleville railroad depot, the Stewart Tunnel south of Belleville, and the Woolen Mill in Monticello. The city of Fitchburg was recently awarded a silver designation by the League of American Bicyclists in its Bicycle Friendly America program.
History

Population and Demographic History

In 2015, Fitchburg is home to over 27,000 people and over 1,600 businesses. The city itself traces its origins to its incorporation in 1983. Before incorporation, Fitchburg existed as a township for over one hundred years. The first settlers came to Fitchburg in the late nineteenth century, attracted to its abundant farmlands and its proximity to Wisconsin’s capital city of Madison. The town, however, doesn’t appear on national census records until 1900, when the federal government first began tracking statistics for minor civil divisions. A review of census documents since 1900 reveals that Fitchburg has experienced a surge in population growth since the 1960’s, a pattern that has accelerated since its incorporation as a city in the 1980’s. Fitchburg is now larger than it has been at any other point in its history.

Fitchburg began as a township of only 1,000 residents. By 2015, Fitchburg’s estimated population is 27,154. Fitchburg’s population doubled in the decade between 1960-1970 and tripled between 1980-2000.

As Fitchburg has grown over the decades, there has been an increase in the number of young children, senior citizens, and ethnic minorities who live in the city. Today, 24.5% of residents, or approximately 6,200 people in the city, are children. Fitchburg is now a younger community than at any point in its past.

Fitchburg has also seen an increase in the number of residents who are 65 years old or older since 1960. This increase accelerated between 1980 and 1990, and then quickly escalated thereafter. The number of senior citizens calling Fitchburg home has increased both in total numbers and as a proportion of the population. At only 4% in 1990, the proportion of aging citizens has climbed to approximately 8% in 2015. Nearly one in five Fitchburg residents could be 65 years old or older as early as 2020.
Fitchburg had less than 2,000 children in 1970. By 2015, Fitchburg’s youth population is 6,200. Fitchburg’s youth population has tripled since 1980.

Fitchburg had less than 200 aging residents in 1960. By 2015, Fitchburg’s senior population is nearly 2,000. Fitchburg’s senior citizen population has nearly quadrupled since 1990.

The proportion of ethnic minorities who call Fitchburg home has also increased over the last twenty-five years. National census documents failed to track the proportion of minority residents for minor civil division until
1960, but it is certain that the vast majority of Fitchburg’s residents claimed European ancestry from the time of the town’s founding in the late nineteenth-century until as recently as 1990. Since 1990, the proportion of Fitchburg’s residents who are ethnic minorities has climbed from approximately 6% of the population to almost 35% in 2010. Trends indicate that as many as four in ten Fitchburg residents will be minorities by 2020. Fitchburg is now more ethnically diverse than it has ever been before.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fitchburg Minority Population Proportions (1960 - 2010)</th>
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<tr>
<td>0.0%</td>
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**Graphic 4: Fitchburg Proportion of Minorities in Population (1960-2010); Data Source: U.S. Census Historical Records**

**Ethnic minorities represented less than 5% of the population before 1980. By 2015, Fitchburg’s minority population has grown to 34.9%. Fitchburg’s minority population increased nearly 7-fold since 1990.**

A review of national census reports since 1900 reveals that Fitchburg is a much different place than it was 25 years ago. Fitchburg’s demographic history clearly reveals that, as the city’s population has boomed since incorporation in the early 1980’s, the number of children, senior citizens, and ethnic minorities living in Fitchburg has also increased. Fitchburg has more children, more senior citizens, and is a far more diverse community than it has been before in its century of existence as a township and municipality.

Fitchburg has experienced large demographic changes over the last three decades. Population growth has been accompanied by significant household economic change as well. A review of national census data since 1990 (the first complete decennial census taken by the newly minted city of Fitchburg after incorporation) reveals that both median household income and the household poverty rate increased between 1990-2010. Household median income nearly doubled from $35,550 in 1990 to $61,482 in 2010. Growth rates in median household income were stronger between 1990 – 2000 than they were between 2000 – 2010, but the overall trend has held steady. Fitchburg households have more disposable income than they have had in the past.
Twenty years of economic growth from 1990 – 2010 means that most residents have disposable income.

The number of residents living in poverty tripled during the same period, rising to nearly 4,000 people.

The proportion of Fitchburg households living in poverty has risen dramatically over the past twenty-five years. The growth in poverty has been uneven however. Despite rapid growth in population during the 1980’s and 1990’s, Fitchburg’s poverty rate measured at a relatively low 5% in the 2000 census. By 2010, Fitchburg’s poverty rate measured a stunning 15% in that year, tripling in only ten years. Nearly 3,800 Fitchburg residents now live in poverty.

The preceding historical demographic analysis reveals several trends. Fitchburg has a rapidly growing population. Fitchburg has many young families and nearly one in four Fitchburg residents is younger than 18 years old. Fitchburg’s aging population is also increasing. The city has become remarkably diverse in a short amount of time. The number of residents living in poverty has also grown.
**Fitchburg’s Economic and Agricultural History**

Fitchburg’s economy has grown in some key industries over the decades, including its agricultural sector. National economic census reports completed every five years since 1997 indicate that Fitchburg’s manufacturing, wholesale, and retail sectors have been successfully increasing sales over that time span.

![Fitchburg Sales by Industry Measured in Millions of Dollars (1997 - 2012)](image)

*Graphic 7: Fitchburg Sales by Industry (1997 – 2012)*

*Data Source: U.S. Economic Census Historical Records*

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**Fitchburg’s manufacturing sector has grown to a $1.3 billion industry.**  
**Fitchburg’s wholesale sector nearly matches manufacturing at $1.2 billion in 2012.**  
**Fitchburg’s retail sector peaked in 2007 at $200 million in sales.**

Fitchburg’s manufacturing sector experienced growth from 1997 – 2012, largely in part to manufacturers like Promega Corporation, a key regional agricultural manufacturer who provides the city with over 800 jobs. The city’s wholesaler sector continues to show growth, thanks to businesses like Sub Zero Freezer Company and Certgo, Incorporated. Retail sales growth has stalled since 2007, as has most retail has nationwide since the economic crash of 2008. Over the last decade Fitchburg’s economy has grown in key sectors. Continuing to attract new start-ups and new business to Fitchburg has been a big part of the success the city has witnessed over that time, and will continue to be crucial in the future.

Agriculture has always been a cornerstone of Fitchburg’s identity. The original town itself was founded by farmers. Yet, information pertaining to the local agricultural economy is scarce. The best information available is on the state level. Wisconsin is synonymous with agriculture and premier dairy products, yet productive farmland is decreasing since 1964. Total farmland acreage in the state exceeded 20 million acres in that year. In 2012, farmland acreage had dipped below 15 million acres.
**Total farmland acreage in Wisconsin has dropped 25% since 1964.**  
**Accelerated loss of farmland ceased in 1992. Levels have been stable since then.**

Wisconsin communities are preserving their best farmlands and richest soils from further encroachment by subdivision development and urban sprawl. Fitchburg is no different. Large swaths of prime farmland in southwestern Fitchburg are zoned for exclusive agriculture. The city has made a commitment to protect these farmlands for the next several decades.

**Agriculture product value stagnated for 15 years from 1982 – 1997. Values have increased rapidly from 1997 – 2012, more than doubling during that time.**
History of the Badger State Trail

The Badger State Trail opened to the public in 2007. It is 40 miles long and connects Fitchburg by bicycle trail to the state of Illinois. Running from north to south, the Badger State Trail runs through Madison, Fitchburg, Belleville, Monticello, and Monroe in Wisconsin and connects to the Jane Adams Trail in Illinois before continuing on into Freeport, Illinois. Currently, the trail is paved for six miles before turning to crushed gravel outside of Fitchburg and hosts over 200,000 users each year.

The Badger State Trail began as part of the Illinois Central Railroad way back in 1850. Then U.S. Congressman Abraham Lincoln and U.S. Senator Stephan Douglas were instrumental in the Illinois Central Railroad. Both men advocated for federal legislation granting Midwestern land to the railroad for expansion.

The section of rail that would become the Badger State Trail was operated first by the Illinois Central Railroad Company, and later by Illinois Central Gulf, for over a century. The rail line was completed in 1886, almost forty years after Lincoln and Douglas’ legislation was passed, and remained opened for passenger rail transport until 1942. The rails continued to haul freight until 1996.

The following year, in 1997, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) began working toward converting the rail line to a commuter trail, under the federal Rails to Trails Act. Wisconsin acquired the former rail line in 2000 and the Badger State Trail was opened to commuters in 2007. The Badger State Trail has been a part of Fitchburg, in one form or another, for over 100 years. It remains a vital conduit for commuters traveling by bicycle, in-line skates, or foot.
Land Use

General Land Use

The City of Fitchburg’s land base is approximately 50% agricultural land, with a total of 11,198 acres of crop and pasture as of 2014. The FAR will extend through the lower two-thirds of the city consisting of agricultural and open space lands. Rural development, centered in the Old Fitchburg Neighborhood, is also a component of the landscape. It is important to note the future urban development boundary will not interfere with Fitchburg’s agricultural heritage along the FAR study area.

Land Use within the city seeks to promote dense development within the Urban Development Boundary, and keep Fitchburg’s agricultural land in productive use

Traditional row-cropping agriculture (corn and soy) currently dominates the agricultural landscape surrounding the Badger State Trail. On the Northern edge of the FAR study area is the North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood (NSPN). Lying north of Lacy Road both east and west of Seminole Highway, NSPN accounts for 365 acres of majorly privately owned, and rural land uses including agricultural (84.5% of current NSPN land use) and non-metallic mineral extraction. The NSPN represents a transition neighborhood between the dominant agriculturally zoned land to the south, and the suburban/urban land to the north within the Urban Service Boundary.
Agriculture

Various landscape attributes make agriculture in Fitchburg a viable land use. Fitchburg’s soils are truly world-class. The most common soil types, including Dresden, Dodge, St. Charles Grays, Plano, and Ringwood, are considered prime agricultural loam. Soils in the FAR are directly correlated to farm productivity. Fitchburg contains Prime Soil and Statewide Significant Soil, as well as Soil Classes I, II, III, and IV. Prime Soil is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. In contrast, Statewide Significant Soil is land other than prime farmland that is used for production of specific high-value food and fiber crops. Out of the eight total soil classifications, I-IV is suitable for cultivation. According to Fitchburg’s Farmland Preservation plan, in 2010 over 92 percent of crop and pasture land within the City was within the top four soil classifications, as shown in Map 2.

Also fueling Fitchburg’s agricultural success is its proximity to a variety of water sources. Sitting within three different watersheds, and containing several streams, springs, and abundant groundwater, water is not scarce in Fitchburg. The City’s climate is humid continental, with humid summers and bitter winters, making for an eight-month annual growing season.

The majority of Fitchburg’s farmlands are devoted to cash crop production, including corn, soybeans, and barley. Dairy farming, including milk and cheese production, also exists in Fitchburg. The following represent other agricultural uses found in the FAR study area: horse farms/pasture, small-scale agriculture (e.g. small-scale vegetable farming), community gardens, and orchards as shown in Map 3. Currently, the City of Fitchburg is home to a wide variety of farm enterprises and businesses committed to supporting the local food movement. The list below represents some of these entities found on the Fitchburg’s Chamber Visitor and Business Bureau website FITCHBURGCHAMBER.COM:
- Eplegaarden (commercial apple orchard)
- Fitchburg Farms LLC (non-profit community garden organization)
- Stoner Prairie Dairy
- K&A Greenhouse
- Liliana’s Restaurant
- True Coffee Roasters
- Promega Corporation

Additionally, every Thursday afternoon there is a farmers’ market at the Agora Pavilion, 5511 East Cheryl Parkway, in Fitchburg, which runs outdoors during the spring, summer and fall months, and indoors at the Fitchburg Community Center during winter months. This market features an average of 25 vendors, and has continued to grow since its launch in 1998.

Source: Fitchburg Farmers’ Market Facebook page.

Source: Eplegaarden’s Facebook page.
Map 3 – Source: City of Fitchburg: Map showing Fitchburg’s Agricultural resources surrounding the FAR study area
**Land Use Policy and Regulation**

The FAR vision builds on policies and regulations included in Fitchburg’s Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Agriculture Plan (Draft), North Stoner Prairie Plan, and the Forward Fitchburg Study. They each illustrate how current goals and conditions will set the stage for future success of the FAR’s vision of creating an “agricultural main street” centered along the Badger State Trail. This section outlines these policies and plans and describes their relevance to the FAR.

![Image of cyclists on a trail]

*Source: City of Fitchburg*

### City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Plan

The City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Plan was adopted in March, 2009 and sets the City’s vision for its future. The overall vision it presents includes emphasizing Fitchburg’s agricultural resources.

The City of Fitchburg has shown a strong commitment to protecting its diverse agricultural resources for their strong historical significance, and ecological and economic importance.

### Relevance to FAR

The Comprehensive Plan illustrates the importance of maintaining Fitchburg’s rural character and historical agricultural roots to the city’s diverse residents. Guiding new development and redevelopment relating to agriculture preservation and compact development within the urban service area represent Fitchburg’s main land use goals. The future land use categories are identified in the Land Use chapter of Fitchburg’s Comprehensive Plan and are as listed in map 4’s legend on the following page.
Rural Development (R-D)
Intended for commercial uses that support agricultural production. As of October 2010, no property shall be rezoned to the R-D district.

Agriculture and Open Space (AG&OS)
This category includes all agricultural uses, including the farm buildings and residences of the primary farm owners, some other limited single residences, DNR wetlands, open water and private open space. Certain passive recreational opportunities and hunting may occur in this area; except for public parks, it is not expected to accommodate active recreation, playfields, and related buildings or structures.

Map 4 – Source: City of Fitchburg: Map illustrating the future land use as specified in the city’s Comprehensive Plan
City of Fitchburg Zoning Ordinance

The City of Fitchburg Zoning Ordinance comprises Chapter 22 of the greater City of Fitchburg Code of Ordinances. The Code of Ordinances is intended to provide a set of standards and guidelines for city growth. The Code was adopted February 10, 2015, and updated April 30, 2015.

Relevance to FAR

The Fitchburg Zoning Code is the primary instrument governing the current land use conditions of the FAR. Through zoning, the City of Fitchburg has the tools to move the FAR from vision into reality. This section on the zoning code offers an overview of the primary zoning conditions which currently affect the FAR. It includes an examination of the types of activities envisioned along the FAR, as well as an exploration of acceptable uses for areas zoned A-X, Exclusive Agricultural District, which comprises the majority of zoning along the FAR.

Related points are listed below, with excerpts:

A-X Exclusive Agriculture District

The Exclusive Agricultural District (A-X) currently protects much of the FAR land area from incompatible uses. The primary purpose of the A-X designation is to preserve and promote productive agricultural land for food and fiber production. This purpose includes many other aspects and sub-purposes. Several of the stated objectives of the A-X zoning designation directly support the FAR vision, including items (3) and (6);

3. Maintain a viable agricultural base to support agricultural processing and service industries.
6. Pace and shape urban growth

The A-X zoning designation which overlays the majority of the FAR generally supports the FAR vision. Because the spirit of the FAR is based on supporting and expanding Fitchburg’s local and regional agricultural presence, there is overlap in certain envisioned FAR activities and the A-X zoning designation.

Permitted Uses of Agricultural District

Under existing zoning conditions, several uses pertinent to the FAR vision are currently allowable as permitted uses within the current zoning. For the A-X Exclusive Agriculture District, permitted uses are as follows:

1. Agricultural uses, provided that a facility used to keep cattle, swine, poultry, sheep or goats will have less than 500 animal units.
2. New farm residence that is the only residence on the farm and is occupied by an individual who earns more than 50 percent of his or her gross income on the farm, subject to the provisions of chapter 24, land division. For more than one farm residence, see section 22-483(1).

Under permitted uses, residency is allowable on A-X land if the resident earns more than 50% of gross income on-site.
Conditional Uses

In addition to the conditional use requirements in section 22-640 of the zoning code, no conditional use in the A-X District shall be approved by the plan commission unless the commission shall also find:

1. The use and its locations in the farmland preservation zoning district are consistent with the purposes of the farmland preservation zoning district.
2. The use and its location in the farmland preservation zoning district are reasonable and appropriate, considering alternative locations, or are specifically approved under state or federal law.
3. The use is reasonably designed to minimize the conversion of land, at and around the site of the use, from agricultural use or open space use.
4. The use does not substantially impair or limit the current or future agricultural use of surrounding parcels of land that are zoned for or legally restricted to agricultural use.
5. Construction damage to land remaining in agricultural use is minimized and repaired, to the extent feasible.

For the A-X Exclusive Agriculture District, conditional uses are as follows:

1. Governmental, institutional, or religious use.
2. Transportation, communications, pipeline, electric transmission, utility including wind energy, and drainage use.
3. Conversion of existing single-family farm residence to a two-family farm residence, if both residences are to be occupied by an individual who earns more than 50 percent of his or her gross income on the farm.
4. Separation of farm residences and related structures which existed prior to the effective date of the ordinance from which this article is derived and which remain after farm consolidation.
5. The following agricultural accessory uses, provided they meet the definition of Wis. Stats. § 91.01(1)(a)(b)(d)
6. Horse boarding, breeding, training and other equestrian facilities.
8. Agricultural entertainment activities anticipated to have an attendance of more than 500 persons at any one time during the day.

Analysis: Conditional Uses

Under current zoning, conditional uses are granted for FAR-related activities such as bed and breakfasts and agricultural entertainment activities anticipated to draw more than 500 persons at a given time.

Community Gardens

Community gardens are an essential component of the FAR vision. The current Zoning Code stipulates that community gardens shall be allowed in all zoning districts subject to the following:

1. Gardens shall be limited to the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, herbs, plants, and flowers.
2. Gardens shall be run by a nonprofit entity, community group, or neighborhood group acting as a garden coordinator.
3. The garden shall be served by a water supply sufficient to support the cultivation practices on the site. A small storage shed, 100 square feet or less, shall be permitted, but it shall meet the front setback for the respective district, shall be at least four feet from a side or rear lot line and shall not be greater than 15 feet in height.
4. Greenhouses and/or hoophouses associated with a community garden require a conditional use permit (except within the R-D Rural Development and A-X/A-T Agricultural Districts where they are permitted) and those structures shall follow the dimensional standards of the zoning district.

Analysis: Community Gardens

Under current zoning, community gardens are allowable in the FAR area, provided they meet certain conditions.

Existing Farm Residence

The following agricultural accessory uses are allowable within the FAR area, as long as they meet the definition of Wis. Stats. § 91.01(1)(a)(b) or (d);

a. Roadside stands for the sale of agricultural products produced primarily from that farm operation.

b. Wind tower or manure digester to serve a single farm.

c. Agricultural entertainment activities anticipated to have an attendance of less than 500 persons at any one time during the day.

Analysis: Existing Farm Residence

For existing farm residences along the FAR, there is a degree of freedom regarding the commercial operations that can be conducted on-site. “Roadside” stands are allowed if the agricultural products are produced from that farm operation. Additionally, agricultural entertainment activities anticipated to have an attendance of less than 500 persons are allowable in existing farm residences.

The FAR vision operates primarily within an agricultural context. As such, it is beneficial to explore what types of activities are currently allowable as “agricultural uses.” As defined as Related Uses and any other use that the department of agriculture, trade and consumer protection, by rule identifies as an agriculture-related use, such as:

a. Agricultural equipment dealership.

b. Agricultural research facilities.

c. Grain elevators.

d. Manure digesting facilities which serve more than one farm operation.

e. Dairy processing facilities.

f. Feed mills.

g. Animal feed storage facilities.

h. Agricultural related educational facilities, such as secondary schools, community college or university facilities to support agricultural course work.

i. Nonmetallic mineral extraction operations that comply with Wis. Stats. § 91.46(6).

j. A new or expanded facility that will be used to keep cattle, swine, poultry, sheep or goats, and that will have more than 500 animal units, if the proposed facility meets the standards prescribed in ch. ATCP 51, Wis. Adm. Code.

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### Table 1: Summary of State and City Zoning Codes which Support the FAR Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Zoning (Wis.Stats. §35.18.91)</th>
<th>Agriculture Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crop cultivation</td>
<td>Permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community gardens</td>
<td>Permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple/pumpkin pick</td>
<td>Permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niche crop production</td>
<td>Permitted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Accessory Uses |
|---|---|
| Dairy (cheesemaking, ice cream) | Permitted |
| Farm Café | Permitted |
| Brewery | Permitted |
| Winery | Permitted |

| City of Fitchburg A-X Zoning Ordinance |
|---|---|
| Bed and breakfast | Conditional |
| Community center/events | Conditional |
| Museum/Historical | Conditional |
Analysis: Agricultural Uses

Under current zoning, FAR activities allowable within the agricultural zone could potentially be; 1) the production end of a cheese-making operation, 2) agricultural-related educational facilities.

Article VI. Park and Recreation District

The future of the FAR could potentially be affected by Fitchburg’s existing Park and Recreation District land use designation. The purpose of the Park and Recreation District is threefold:

1. This district provides for those areas dedicated to or owned by the city for purposes of use as public park or open space.
2. This district provides protection against problems which may result from development in areas where development is inappropriate by reason of unsuitable soils, wetlands, floodplains, or steep slopes.
3. This district provides appropriate areas for commercially operated
4. Recreational uses of land within the city, including uses consistent with those of a recreational nature.

Permitted Uses of Park and Recreation Districts

For the Park and Recreation District, permitted uses are as follows:

1. Hunting, fishing and trapping.
2. Propagation and raising of game animals, fowl and fish.
3. Sustained yield forestry.
4. The harvesting of any wild crops.
5. Grazing.
6. Utility and governmental facilities.
7. Parks, recreation areas and other recreational facilities located on publicly owned or controlled land.
8. Greenways, drainageways and open space areas.
9. Golf courses, not lighted for operating during hours of darkness.
10. (Historic, natural and scientific areas.
11. Game farms and refuges.
12. Fish and wildlife habitat.
14. Pedestrian and bike trails (non-motor equipment only, except for maintenance and service vehicles).

Conditional Uses

Current conditional uses of land designated as a Park and Recreation district include:

1. Recreational facilities not otherwise allowed in section 22-562, located on privately owned lands.
2. Recreational camps, campgrounds and camping resorts.
3. Skeet, trap, rifle and pistol ranges.
4. Private hunting and shooting preserves.
5. Hotels and bed and breakfast places.
6. Parking areas.
7. Stables and horse shows.
8. Restaurants, class I, II and V.
9. Uses incidental to the operation of any permitted or conditional use.
10. Wireless communication facilities.
Analysis: Park and Recreational District

The existing Park and Recreational district is applicable to certain proposed FAR activities, particularly the community “Hub” which is envisioned to be community space where Fitchburg residents can enjoy weddings, family gatherings, and celebrate cultural festivities.

Land in proximity to the FAR is currently zoned (Map 5) for a variety of uses, including Specialized Industrial (I-S), General Industrial (I-G), Highway Business (B-H), and General Business (B-G). North of Lacy Road are several areas zoned for this industrial and commercial activity. These include the two zones just north of Lacy Road: Zoning Districts #7 and #8. Within these zones, industrial and commercial zoned areas can be found along Cottonwood Drive, Commerce Park Drive, Basswood Drive, Bud’s Way, and Executive Drive.

![Map 5 – Source: City of Fitchburg: Zoning Map of areas along the FAR](image)

Purposes for these zones are as follows:

Specialized Industrial (I-S):
(2) ...established to provide an aesthetically attractive working environment exclusively for and conducive to the development...of...certain specialized manufacturing establishments...

General Industrial (I-G):
(2) ...uses of an industrial or product processing nature including manufacturing [and] production...
(3) Manufacture of food products, food processing for shipment off site.

Highway Business
(7) Light industrial uses
(13) Amusement and recreation services
(14) Agricultural production
(15) Restaurants, all classes, drinking places
General Business
“...established for areas having general business...uses, mostly at small or medium scale.”

All plans discussed in this section can be found online at Fitchburgwi.gov.
Agriculture Plan
This plan is a current project for the City of Fitchburg. The October 22nd, 2015 workshop and open house flier describes that “a major component of the Plan will be identifying agricultural land use opportunities (including local food and niche crop production) for City landowners, as well as ways in which the City can help landowners take advantage of these opportunities.”

Relevance to FAR
The FAR vision will be integrated into the City’s broader Agriculture Plan. This document will contribute to understanding of different agricultural land use opportunities in the surrounding area of the Badger State Trail making up the central component of the FAR.

Farmland Preservation Plan
The Farmland Preservation Plan (2014) was created “to be adopted as part of the Dane County Farmland Preservation Plan” in accordance with chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The plan includes goals, objectives and policies, current issues/trends facing farmland preservation in Fitchburg, a summary of current farmland uses, and a breakdown of the 8 different classifications identified in the Farmland Preservation Plan Map.

Relevance to FAR
The FAR vision is well in-line with the goals outlined in Fitchburg’s Farmland Preservation Plan. The policies outlined in the Farmland Preservation Plan that can be met through development of the FAR, in order to meet the wider goals of farmland preservation, are as follows:
- Evaluate city incentives to encourage farmers to invest in improvements to their farm operations or to diversify their agricultural operations to address the changing farm economy
- Encourage the purchase and consumption of local food production
- Maintain and promote agriculture infrastructure to enhance and sustain agriculture operations

North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood Plan
The North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood (NSPN) has been designated as a “Future Neighborhood” in the Fitchburg Comprehensive Plan meaning it represents a transition area with specific future economic development goals.

Relevance to FAR
The primary economic development goal specified in the plan is to “provide sufficient land resources to accommodate business development projects that...complement and respect the natural and cultural resource base of North Stoner Prairie,” and to “Foster business opportunities that tie to the North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood’s recreational resources, such as the Badger State Trail...” Currently agriculture dominates the neighborhood’s land use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Existing Land Use (2013) in the North Stoner Neighborhood as a percentage of acreage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Existing Land Use</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Park and Open Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered Rural Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities/Parking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Large industries like Sub Zero Wolf, Inc. lie north of the neighborhood, and largely suburban development lies to the east. Agricultural land owners/operators whose families were some of the first settlers in Fitchburg also own land in the NSPN emphasizing the city’s strong agricultural heritage. “The North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood planning area is an opportunity to celebrate this legacy while responsibly facilitating Fitchburg’s economic and community growth and development in the 21st Century and beyond”. Future land use goals in the NSPN also point to increasing park and open space land for a diverse number of recreational amenities. Increasing park and open space will also promote integration of elements emphasizing the NSPN’s agricultural heritage through encouraging “neighborhood gardens, farmers markets, and similar amenities in transitional areas within the North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood.”

**Forward Fitchburg**

City in Motion: Forward Fitchburg’s Place-Based Economic Development Vision and Strategy study was created to help Fitchburg create and solidify a unique sense of place.

*The report, Forward Fitchburg, identified the city’s recreational bicycle trails as an important economic tourism opportunity.*

**Relevance to FAR**

Forward Fitchburg identified the need for small business “incubator” or “accelerator” entrepreneurial support. The FAR vision to serve as a small agri-business incubator promotes this goal. The report also conducted several surveys, which revealed that engaging in recreation was a primary driver of city tourism. Another survey, reaching 1,263 respondents, gauged the attitudes and opinions of Fitchburg residents, businesses, and visitors and asked a series of questions about their impressions and connections to the City of Fitchburg. Individuals pointed to the City’s lack of identity as a problem. To help solve this central issue, one solution Forward Fitchburg recommended was to “Embrace Agriculture as a Vital Part of Fitchburg’s Identity and Economy” as
well as to “Support Innovative Early-Stage Business Development”. The FAR can serve to do both through promoting diversified and innovated agriculture enterprises.
**Transportation**

**Existing Road Infrastructure**

Fitchburg’s roadway network consists of 115 miles of federal highways, county highways, and local roads. The Badger State Trail intersects five main roads as it travels through Fitchburg: McKee Road, Lacy Road, South Seminole Highway, Whalen Road, and County Highway M. These locations and their Functional Roadway Classifications are shown in Map 6, along with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation’s most recent traffic counts for the intersections. The counts represent the average annual daily traffic (AADT) along that part of the road. They can be compared alongside each road’s design capacity, shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road</th>
<th>Most Recent Traffic Count (AADT with year)</th>
<th>Design Capacity (vehicles per day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McKee Road (County Highway PD)</td>
<td>29,400 (2015)</td>
<td>28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacy Road</td>
<td>7,100 (2012)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Seminole Highway</td>
<td>5,200 (2015)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whalen Road</td>
<td>2,200 (2009)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Highway M</td>
<td>9,900 (2015)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated, four of the five roads are operating as intended within their design capacities. McKee Road is the only road that, on average throughout the year, is exceeding its designed capacity.

**Existing Bicycle Infrastructure**

The City of Fitchburg is served by three commuter trails: the Badger State Trail, the Capital City Trail, and the Military Ridge State Trail. Together with a network of on-street bike lanes, these three trails provide bicycle access to the Madison metropolitan area and surrounding communities. The extent of bicycle infrastructure throughout Fitchburg can be seen in Map 6. The City of Fitchburg also recently completed construction of the Dawley Bike Hub, a small building with restrooms, a bike repair station, a water station, and several benches to rest on. This facility is located at 3041 Seminole Highway, along the Capital City Trail.

The Madison Area Transportation Planning Board completed a 2-hour bicycle count in May 2015, the results of which can also be seen in Map 7. The count was taken on a Tuesday from 4pm to 6pm at the bicycle roundabout pictured above, a spot just north of Fitchburg’s city limits where four bike trails intersect; 169 bikes were counted. Image Source: The Capital Times
Specific to the FAR, it is important to note that the Badger State Trail and the 30-foot easements on either side of it are owned and maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR operates the trail as a recreational asset and regulates all uses of the trail. Individuals wishing to use DNR-operated trails must pay $4.00 for a single-day pass or $20.00 for an annual pass (pedestrians are exempt from this); ATV and snowmobile users are prohibited from using the trail. Any modifications to the trail or the property owned as part of the trail must be approved by the DNR. This includes any new trail crossings that may be added.

**Existing Transit Infrastructure**

The City of Fitchburg currently contracts with Madison Metro for bus service into Fitchburg; bus stop locations can be seen in Map 6. The nearest bus stops to the FAR have been highlighted in red, and their corresponding routes and frequency can be found in Table 4. The 75 route connects the Capital Square in Madison to the Epic company campus in Verona. The 59 route is a circulator for southwestern Madison and northwestern Fitchburg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Service Schedule</th>
<th>Routes</th>
<th>Number of Daily Stops</th>
<th>Stop Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McKee at Commerce Park (east-bound)</td>
<td>4755</td>
<td>Weekday</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Morning/Evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKee at Commerce Park (west-bound)</td>
<td>4240</td>
<td>Weekday</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Morning/Evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive at Marketplace (east-bound)</td>
<td>4493</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hourly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2008 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan**

The 2008 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan outlines a series of recommendations for the continuous growth and improvement of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the city. The plan was prepared by JN Design and Planning as an improvement to the 2000 Bicycle and Pedestrian System Plan, and includes annual and 5-year goals for city staff. Recommendations and goals focus on design and location of facilities, public and private education and encouragement, user safety, maintenance, and law enforcement.

*The City of Fitchburg recognizes the economic, recreational, personal health, and accessibility benefits that bicycling and walking can produce; this plan provides a roadmap for the city to follow as it works to improve its infrastructure.*
**Railbanking**

The South Central Wisconsin Rail Transit Commission (SCWRTC) oversees the operation of trails in Green and Dane counties of Wisconsin. The Badger State Trail is a former rail line and it remains maintained as a potential rail corridor. The SCWRTC and the State of Wisconsin see rail as the highest and best use of the land that is currently the Badger State Trail. Thus, if the rail line was ever deemed profitable again, it is possible that the corridor could be converted back to a rail line and would have no access for recreation.

Former rail lines being converted to trails is a practice known as railbanking.

Railbanking was established in an amendment by Congress to the National Trails System Act in 1983. This was done for the purpose of preserving rail corridors that have fallen out of use by rail companies. While turning a corridor from rail to trail is considered a temporary use, the probability of a rail line returning to the Badger State Trail corridor appears to be low. Data regarding return to rail conversions seems to be limited, suggesting that of the thousands of miles of trails that exist in this country due to railbanking, relatively few have returned to rail use.

**Truck Routes**

Fitchburg’s Comprehensive Plan does not define any specific roads as truck routes, however it recommends using County, State, and Federal highways.

**Regional Perspective**

An extensive interstate highway network surrounds the Badger State Trail, connecting it to the entire Madison area and surrounding communities. This can be useful for farmers wishing to come to the FAR, for moving freight to and from enterprises along the FAR, and for visitors not wishing or able to bike to the FAR. Additionally, the FAR would be a part of an extensive network of bike paths within Dane County. Map 7 visualizes the extent of the interstate highway and bicycle path networks.

The FAR’s location is regionally advantageous for both its economic and recreational aspects.
Transportation Analysis
The FAR would be located in an area very accessible by bicycle and vehicle, but not very accessible by walking or transit. Two County highways intersect the Badger State Trail, and two Interstate highways are nearby, allowing anyone in the area with a vehicle to drive there fairly easily. The trail extends south beyond the border of Dane County, and north into the heart of downtown Madison via the Southwest Commuter Path. It is also one of four trails that meet at a roundabout, located just north of where the FAR would begin. The immediate area is not very dense, in terms of population or buildings, so walking to the FAR would be feasible for very few individuals. Transit service is also scarce near the FAR, with only two routes serving the area during the week and not very frequent in their stops. The lack of accessibility by walking and transit may present a barrier to individuals who do not own a vehicle but wish to access businesses and services located in the FAR area.

The FAR would be very accessible by bicycle and vehicle, but not by transit or walking. This disparity in access could present a barrier for individuals without the means to get to the FAR on their own.

Source: City of Fitchburg
Regional Market and Economy

The regional market and economy is focused on growing and supporting its agriculture, food and beverage industry. This is reflected in the 2014 Madison Regional Economic Partnership’s (MADRep) analysis, the *Madison Region Agriculture, Food & Beverage (AFB) Industry Cluster Analysis*. Graphic 10 displays the region’s AFB supply chain. Much of the land along the FAR contributes to the roles listed in Graphic 10; and thus, is a player in the regional market and economy, especially in terms of the AFB industry.

The AFB Industry Supply Chain

Raw Material Production

Processing, Packaging and Inspection

Warehousing and Distribution

Wholesale and Retail

Consumer

*Graphic 10: AFB Supply Chain*; Source: MADRep 2014 AFB Cluster Analysis

Image 1: Eplegaarden Orchard Sign; Source: FAR authors
**Wisconsin Farm Economy**

The majority of farms in Wisconsin (75%) are considered “small farms,” with less than $100,000 in annual sales. As summarized in graphics 12, 13 and 14, “About 75 percent of Wisconsin farms fall into the group of farms with less than $100,000 in annual sales. These ‘small farms’ control about 45 percent of Wisconsin’s farm equity but produce less than five percent of the state’s net farm income. The bulk of Wisconsin’s net farm income is generated by farms with sales of $1,000,000 or more per year. These ‘large farms,’ which are less than five percent of all Wisconsin farms, produce more than half of the state’s net farm income while controlling a bit less than 20 percent of farm equity.”

---

**Agricultural Market Trends**

*Table 5* Indicates farmer loan demands are up and repayments are down according to the Chicago Federal Reserve Bank survey of agricultural bankers. In the last few years, crop rents for cropland have risen dramatically in response to strong corn and soybean prices. Since crop prices have now fallen, cash rents should move down from recent points. This adjustment must occur in the long run. But in the short run, cash rents could change very little if producers are willing to incur some economic losses for a year or two in order to maintain control of rented cropland for use in future years.

---

**Table 5. Trends in Wisconsin Farming**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Stay Relatively Low</th>
<th>Risen in Response to Strong Crop Prices</th>
<th>Decrease in the Long Run, Little Change in Short Run</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer loan demands</td>
<td>(increase)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer loan repayment</td>
<td>(decrease)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest rates</td>
<td>(staying relatively low)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop rents for cropland</td>
<td>(risen in response to strong crop prices)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop prices</td>
<td>(decrease)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash rents in long run</td>
<td>(decrease in the long run, little change in short run)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: WI Agricultural Outlook Forum (2015)*
Table 6 and 7 show recent trends in agriculture land sales. Dane county agricultural land is valuable, but not little additional money can be made selling agricultural land to be diverted to a new use. Thus, preserving it as farmland is a viable option.

**Table 6. Agricultural Land Sales: Land WITHOUT Buildings and Other Improvements, Wisconsin, 2014 - South Central District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>No. of Transactions</th>
<th>Acres Sold</th>
<th>USD ($) per acre</th>
<th>Lowest price ($)</th>
<th>Highest price ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>6,083</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dane</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>9,903</td>
<td>3,539</td>
<td>13,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1,825</td>
<td>6,363</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>12,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>5,687</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>8,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>5,694</td>
<td>4,450</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1,213</td>
<td>7,381</td>
<td>4,521</td>
<td>11,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Total</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>48,550</td>
<td>5,037</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>14,391</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: USDA Ag Census (2012)*

**Table 7. Agricultural land being diverted to other uses, Wisconsin, 2014-South Central District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>No. of Transactions</th>
<th>Acres Sold</th>
<th>Dollars per acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>$3,802.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dane</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>$13,056.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$5,925.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>$2,154.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$9,408.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>$8,522.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3,238</td>
<td>$5880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: USDA Ag Census (2012)*

In Dane County, agricultural land sold to remain in agricultural production showed a wide, nearly $10,000, range of sale prices. Agricultural land being diverted to other uses had much less sales, perhaps due to agricultural preservation controls. The average dollars per acre for agriculture land sales being diverted to other uses among the State of Wisconsin was about $800 more than agricultural land staying agricultural land after a sale.
Map 8 illustrates the land values of parcels proximate to the FAR area. Land availability and affordability are factors which influence crop diversification and agritourism along the FAR.
Agritourism

Agritourism, as defined by the USDA, “...involves attracting paying visitors to farms by offering farm tours, harvest festivals, petting zoos, and other attractions. Farms that provide agritourism services, referred to here as agritourism farms, also typically produce agricultural commodities and may provide a variety of other goods and services.” Across the country food-related tourism is rapidly rising, reflecting changing values relating to how people interact with their food. The FAR concept represents an opportunity to participate further in the $18.5 billion tourism industry in Wisconsin, as well as the overarching push towards local and regional food systems. In 2014, Dane County received $1.9 Billion in tourism dollars, and 20,300 jobs are sustained in Dane County by the tourism industry (Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism, 2015).

The tourism industry in Dane County is robust, contributing significantly to the region’s economic prosperity.

Moreover, Wisconsin’s agritourism sector has an identity and established reputation in the Midwest, as shown in Graphic 15.

Graphic 15, Source: Wisconsin Department of Tourism (2015)
Agritourism is one of the fastest growing tourism activities in the United States.


According to Agritourism in Wisconsin from the Consumer Perspective Report from the 2012 Wisconsin Agritourism Survey, agritourism participants tend to have a higher household income than the average Wisconsin resident, are more educated than the average state resident, and are older than the average state resident. In responding to this survey, 88% of respondents indicated that supporting local farmers/businesses was a somewhat or very important reason for participating in an agritourism activity. Understanding consumer preferences and demographics relates directly to the economic feasibility of the FAR.

Graphics 16 and 17 highlight two agritourism businesses in the Dane County region. Additional examples of agritourism-oriented establishments within the region include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Driftless Organics – Viroqua, WI
- Harmony Valley Farm – Viroqua, WI
- Hook’s Cheese Company, Inc. – LaValle, WI
- Renaissance Farm, Inc. – Spring Green, WI
- Stella’s Bakery – Madison, WI

Wisconsin’s Department of Tourism has grant programs to support tourism initiatives and provides several opportunities to gain marketing assistance.

Products
In addition to destinations, products are crucial parts of Wisconsin’s agritourism identity. While some products stand out as one drives across the rural landscape, such as corn, soy and livestock, other products such as value-added agriculture can be found at local farmers’ markets, lining the shelves of the local grocery store, or as exported goods to areas far from the region.

Value-Added Agriculture
The product type entitled “value-added” refers to a change in the physical state or form of the product in a manner that
enhances its value, such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam. Such products provide a viable way for farmers to increase profitability of their harvests, while simultaneously contributing to the identity of the place at which they are crafted.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds the Value Added Producer Grant Program, which supports planning activities and working capital expenses related to producing and marketing a value-added agricultural product. In Wisconsin, the Buy Local Buy Wisconsin Program, administered by the State’s Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protections (DATCP) aims to ease distribution, processing and marketing hurdles for local producers and businesses in the value-added food industry. The impact of this Wisconsin program has facilitated growth in sales within local food systems, as displayed in the following graphic.

*Graphic 18- Direct returns via Wisconsin’s Buy Local Buy Wisconsin Program from the 2008-2014 recipients*

**Local Products**

In addition to supporting value-added products, DATCP also supports locally-sourced food. Something Special from Wisconsin™ (SSfW) is a trademarked program administered by the Division of Agricultural Development at DATCP since 1983.

Demand for local food products is growing. An indicator of this is support from the City of Madison to develop and indoor public market facility, which will provide space for commercial agricultural businesses to sell their harvests and value-added products. In November, 2015, the City of Madison passed a budget that slates tax incremental financing for the planned development, which is to be constructed in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. The public market will contribute to the region’s overall agritourism identity and provide linkages to opportunity for Fitchburg-based commercial agriculture.

**Regional Comparisons**

*Map 9* illustrates the southern region of Wisconsin, drawing a distinction between the Driftless Agricultural region and the Madison Area region, the latter being Fitchburg’s region.

The following comparison of agricultural production shows the
Madison region to be diverse in its farms and products. In close proximity to food and beverage manufacturing capacity, combined with the variety of good produced in the region, the Madison Area Region maintains a strong, competitive market that supports its agriculture, food and beverage industry when compared to others. Data for the following comparison was extracted from the comprehensive industry analysis for the Madison Region’s Agriculture, Food & Beverage (AFB) sector, which examines the cluster in a way that identifies its potential comparative advantages. The Analysis, created in October 2014, published by MADRep.

Graphics 20-21 show market trends in product sales in the Madison Region. Direct sales, sales made through farmstands and farmers’ markets, have increased since 2007. It is unknown if the number of farmers’ markets

Map 9 - Source: MADRep 2014: Distinction between the Driftless region and the Madison region

Graphics 20-21 show market trends in product sales in the Madison Region. Direct sales, sales made through farmstands and farmers’ markets, have increased since 2007. It is unknown if the number of farmers’ markets
have increased between the years 2007 and 2012; regardless, average direct sales per farms has increased. While Dane County has the highest number of farms out of those compared to it, as shown in graphic 21, its average sales per farm figure is lower than the national average. Comparing graphic 21 and 22, direct farm sales equate to much less than general average farm sales in the Madison region. Graphic 23 explains the breakdown of how farmers in the Madison Region sold their goods in 2012 using selected practices such as to retail outlets, via value-added products, through a community supportive agriculture cooperative, or through an on-farm packing facility. The majority of products sold using the selected practices highlighted in graphic 23 were sold via value-added products.


Because Fitchburg is an inner-ring suburb adjacent to the City of Madison, it has a competitive advantage over several other municipalities within the Madison region in that it has a strong customer base.
The City of Fitchburg is considered a first-ring suburb of Madison, meaning a dense customer base is a 10-20 minute drive to the FAR, making it an ideal destination for agritourism. While Fitchburg already has some elements of agritourism, such as the family-owned apple orchard Epplegaarden, there is room for expansion of agritourism along the FAR. This comparison analyzes four notable agritourism establishments within the South-Central region of Wisconsin and seeks to understand why these businesses chose to situate themselves in a particular municipality. The objective of this analysis is to understand how the City of Fitchburg could impact its policy and regulations to be an amenable place for agritourism establishments. As shown in the map, the following regional agritourism destinations are analyzed in addition to the FAR:

- Sassy Cow Creamery in Columbus, WI
- Carr Valley Cheese Co. in Sauk County, WI
- Wollersheim Winery in Dane County
- New Glarus Brewing Company in New Glarus, WI

Table 8 shows the one-way travel times from the Wisconsin State Capital Building to regional agritourism destinations. The FAR intersection of Seminole Highway and Lacy Road is by far the closest establishment to the Capitol. That shown, the FAR has potential to capitalize on Madison’s dense customer base.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Mode of Transportation</th>
<th>Length of Trip (one-way)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sassy Cow Creamery</td>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>31 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Glarus Brewing Company</td>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>41 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carr Valley Cheese Co.</td>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>1 hr 24 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wollersheim Winery</td>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The FAR: Seminole HWY &amp; Lacy Road</td>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>17 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The FAR: Seminole HWY &amp; Lacy Road</td>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>43 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9. Regional Agritourism Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Fitchburg</th>
<th>New Glarus (new glarus brewery)</th>
<th>Sauk County (Carr Valley Cheese Co.)</th>
<th>Dane County (Wollersheim winery)</th>
<th>Columbus (Sassy Cow Creamery)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoning</td>
<td>Somewhat Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck routes</td>
<td>USH 12, USH 14, USH 18, USH 151</td>
<td>STH 69</td>
<td>STH 58</td>
<td>STH 60, STH 78, STH 188, USH 12</td>
<td>STH 60, USH 51, USH 151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Assessment</td>
<td>See Map 9</td>
<td>32.06 acres at $251,700</td>
<td>0.95 acres at $11,700</td>
<td>32.20 acres at $202,100</td>
<td>37.63 acres at $83,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agritourism identity</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows some of the important characteristics of four agritourism sites in South-central Wisconsin as compared to Fitchburg. The information in Table 9 is further explained below. These breakdowns of the table are meant to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of other agritourism sites to determine what needs must be met for the FAR to be successful.

**Fitchburg, Dane County – Fitchburg Agricultural Route (FAR)**

- The FAR area is located on a variety of parcels, currently zoned Exclusive Agricultural (A-X). See Map 9 for land values along the FAR. This zoning designation is intended to, “Preserve productive agricultural land for food and fiber production, preserve productive farms by preventing land use conflicts between incompatible uses and controlling public service costs, maintain a viable agricultural base to support agricultural processing and service industries, and prevent conflicts between incompatible uses.” (City of Fitchburg Zoning Ordinance) The existing zoning allows for a limited amount of conditional agritourism uses.

- The City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Plan does not define formal truck routes, however County, State, and Federal Highways are recommended if formal truck routes are to be adopted. In relation to the FAR, these would be USH 12, USH 14, USH 18, and USH 151.

- While it is clear that the City of Fitchburg strives to preserve the agricultural landscape, the presence of agritourism is weak, with the exception of Epplegaarden farms. This low sense of agritourism can be attributed in part to the City’s proximity to dense urban development. Nonetheless, the City has the structure to develop a stronger sense of agritourism.
New Glarus, Green County – New Glarus Brewing Co.

- The New Glarus Brewery covers 32.06 acres of land, assessed at $251,700, and is comprised of a variety of separate sites, all of which are zoned either Commercial or Industrial use. Commercial (C-1) is “...intended to provide an area for the business and commercial needs of the community...” Industrial (I) is, “...intended primarily for the conduct of manufacturing, assembling, and fabrication. It is designed to provide an environment suitable for industrial activities that do not create appreciable nuisances or hazards. The uses permitted in this district make it most desirable that they be separated from residential areas.” (New Glarus Zoning Ordinance) Although the brewery's parcel does not have this zoning, New Glarus also has a zone titled “Agriculture and Rural Business” which is intended to allow retail, among other uses, inside agriculturally-based facilities. The Ag and Rural Business zone caters to small-scale agritourism.

- State Highway 69, running right alongside New Glarus Brewing Co., serves as a formal truck route for the business.

- Whether it’s the sign welcoming you to New Glarus that reads “America’s Little Switzerland” or the pastoral-themed architecture dotting the structures along the local highway, it is clear that agriculture is a large part of the Village’s identity.

LaValle, Sauk County – Carr Valley Cheese Co.

- The Carr Valley Cheese Co. in LaValle, WI of Sauk County produces a variety of fine cheeses and is home to a Master Cheesemaker. The site is situated on 0.95 acres of land that holds an assessed value of $11,700.

- Although zoned “manufacturing” per Sauk County zoning, Sauk County does have a set of standards for “secondary agritourism,” which allows retail of products made on site.

- Despite having been, historically, a place for commercial agriculture and having a well-preserved agricultural landscape, Sauk County’s presence of agritourism is not advertised outright. However, mechanisms such as Planned Rural Development Easements established at the County-level, offer the landowner some additional monetary incentive to keep farming the land.

- The Town of La Valle Comprehensive Plan and the Sauk County Comprehensive Plan do not define or make reference to any formal truck routes. State Highway 58 is the nearest highway that serves as a truck route.

Columbus, Columbia County – Sassy Cow Creamery

- The Sassy Cow Creamery is zoned in the Agriculture Business District, “A-3 Agriculture Business District The A-3 district is intended to accommodate a variety of businesses that are related to or directly support agricultural production in the County; require a rural location due to extensive land area needs, impacts or proximity to resources; do not require urban services like public sanitary sewer or water service; and may not be appropriate in other agricultural, commercial, or industrial zoning districts...(Columbia County Rural Zoning Code)” In short, the A-3 zone allows for retail on the same premises as agricultural manufacturing, which is supportive of agritourism. Some drawbacks to the A-3 zone include a lack of urban services and lack of farmland tax credits.

- The Creamery’s site covers two parcels of land, totaling 37.63 acres that are valued at $83,300.
• Sassy Cow Creamery is served by three truck routes: STH 60, USH 51, and USH 151.

• Overall, there is not a strong agritourism identity present in Columbus beyond Sassy Cow Creamery and the landscape itself. Nonetheless, abundant farmland and open space contribute to the pastoral ambience found at Sassy Cow Creamery.

Dane County – Wollersheim Winery

• Despite having a Prairie du Sac (Sauk County) mailing address, the Wollersheim winery parcel is part of Dane County. It is situated on 32.20 acres along the eastern side of the Wisconsin River, with an assessed land value of $202,100.

• Its parcel is zoned A1-EX by Dane County zoning, which permits a variety of agriculture-related uses in addition to standard agriculture such as “agricultural entertainment activities” and “farm related exhibitions, sales or events.”

• Wollersheim Winery is served by four truck routes: STH 60, STH 78, STH 188, and USH 12.

• The agritourism identity in Dane County is overall strong, thanks in part to having the largest farmers’ market in the nation. However, it is unclear how the City of Madison’s strong reputation of agritourism is felt in the northwestern corner of the county where Wollersheim Winery exists. The Winery might identify more with its proximate neighbor, Prairie du Sac, than it does with the State Capitol.

National Comparisons

Table 10 displays the top 6 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in the United States for each respective AFB sector using the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) food manufacturing and beverage manufacturing establishments. The top 6 list depicts where concentrations of dairy manufacturing establishments are highest in the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAICS 3115 Dairy Product Manufacturing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA MSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Bay, WI MSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI MSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison, WI MSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI MSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA MSA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other important NAICS markets include:

• NAICS 3111 Animal Food Manufacturing
• NAICS 3112 Grain and Oilseed Milling
• NAICS 3114 Fruit and Vegetable Preserving and Specialty Food Manufacturing
• NAICS 31212 Breweries
• NAICS 31213 Wineries
• NAICS 31214 Distilleries
Perceptions

In order to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of area landowners and the entrepreneurial community, the preparers of this report employed a variety of public engagement initiatives. These consisted of individual interviews, a focus group, and a public workshop.

A focus group was held on October 22nd, 2015. Fitchburg residents were invited to share their perceptions of the FAR and its associated issues. The same day a public meeting and workshop was held at the Fitchburg City Hall. Roughly 40 people attended the meeting. Those in attendance consisted mainly of landowners in the agricultural zone, however there were other interested community members present.

Before the meeting an open house was held to give community members a chance to view conceptual materials for the FAR and ask project team members questions. The meeting began with a presentation by Wade Thompson of the City of Fitchburg Planning Department on the idea behind the FAR. The meeting then broke into two small group discussions to gain citizen input.

Landowner

Landowners in the FAR area were interviewed to find their opinions regarding the opportunities and obstacles they see in the project. The landowners interviewed owned agricultural operations and had many years of experience farming in the Fitchburg area. Their insights have played heavily into the shaping of this report.

The landowner interviews maintained a positive tone throughout. Those interviewed saw many opportunities in the FAR concept, both for themselves and others in the area. Their ideas revolve around three general categories: protecting cultural heritage, education, and retail.

Cultural Heritage

The landowners interviewed discussed the extensive history many of the farm families residing in Fitchburg had farming the Fitchburg area. As the current generation of farmers ages and retires from
farming, several of these families will no longer be farming. Those interviewed spoke of wanting to see the agricultural legacy of the area continue, and they see the FAR as a way to aid in preserving this history. Currently, those who are downsizing or ending their farming operations are renting out to other larger scale farms, often from outside the City of Fitchburg.

The FAR is seen as a way to be able to enhance the ability of landowners to rent or sell their land to both large and small scale farmers. Diversifying the crops of the area may help protect the farming legacy of the region for years to come.

Protecting cultural heritage also extends to historical sites within the area. Several sites were mentioned as being important to protect and highlight within the FAR. Old Fitchburg Neighborhood and Beanville Station were mentioned as being particularly important to those in the area.

Image: Focus group members discuss agritourism in Fitchburg; Source: Charles Androsky.

Education
Passing on the agricultural legacy of Fitchburg to others goes beyond simply continuing farming operations. Those interviewed felt very strongly about the FAR playing an educational role in teaching area people about farming operations and agricultural history. They spoke extensively about finding options to set up farm tours for local school children. Some of their ideas included:

- Increasing Involvement with Local FFA Organizations
- Facilitating local grade school tours of farms
- Tours for all age groups highlighting different agricultural practices in the area

These tours were mentioned as both ways to create revenue for the farms and educate the public. Education was also a key opportunity that was identified by many people in the public meeting.

Retail
The landowners spoke about their desire to sell agricultural products on their farms to capitalize on the flow of bicycle traffic in the area. No individuals interviewed mentioned a desire to have large
agricultural retail operations, but rather, smaller operations selling products such as apple cider or ice cream.

**Zoning**
The landowners interviewed identified zoning regulations that require food being sold in agricultural zones to be completely sourced from within the zone. They stated that if this regulation was changed in a way to allow them to sell ice cream or other products on their property that was not made there, it would help them realize the opportunity they see.

**Funding**
The landowners stated that in order to encourage new entrepreneurs to enter the area there may need to be funding available to incentivize their investment. They did not go into specifics regarding how much of a need for this type of funding they thought might be necessary.

The landowners present were generally optimistic about the concept of the FAR. The main opportunity identified was the chance to sell or rent land to farmers who are smaller scale than those currently in the area. Many of the landowners were not aware before the public meeting of the amount of interest in farming land in the Fitchburg area.

**Concerns**
Most of the concerns people present raised were regulatory in nature. The main concern was that a change in zoning code would allow some practices, but not others, and may need to change again with the market. People cited the need for any regulatory changes made in the creation of the FAR to be flexible enough to adapt with the market, but not too loose as to allow for the loss of the rural character that defines the area.

**Entrepreneur**
Local and regional entrepreneurs are a vital component of the FAR vision.

*Area businesspersons are a source of valuable insight into the economic and market processes that will dictate the FAR’s ultimate success.*

By working closely with local entrepreneurs, the City of Fitchburg can better cultivate conditions for growth and nurture the FAR into reality. Through a series of interviews, an understanding of the existing values, needs, and objectives of area entrepreneurs was obtained.Outlined below are the primary themes that govern entrepreneurial perspectives on the FAR.

The interviewee pool consisted of four local and regional entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs were ownership and management entitles of local agricultural-and food/beverage-related industries, including local food and crop growth, beer manufacturing, and dairy.

**Potential for New Business**
The interviews indicated that area entrepreneurs are responsive to the potential for new business. Local businesspersons expressed enthusiasm at the idea that the FAR could potentially represent a future business opportunity. Entrepreneurs expressed interest at the prospect of interacting with a new customer base in an innovative, exciting environment.
Viability
A prevailing concern is the viability of new business activity on the FAR. Retail-based and value-added entrepreneurs expressed concern about the amount of customer traffic and patronage that would be available, particularly in early stages. Understandably, basic business functionality is a principal interest. As one interviewee stated about potentially expanding onto the FAR, “If I’m going to run a company that’s focused on value-added agriculture, it has to make sense as a business first.” Another entrepreneur stated that locating geographically on the FAR would be the “cherry on top,” but business viability would be the most substantive issue taken into consideration.

Financial Incentives
Across the board, entrepreneurs stressed the importance of financial incentives for new business activity along the FAR. These incentives fall mainly under the designation of City land use and tax regulations. That is, the City of Fitchburg has a degree of control over the primary incentives that draw business investment. Issues of prime importance to local entrepreneurs were found to be:

- Site price. The prevailing consensus among interviewees was that land price is the primary variable in site selection. One interviewee’s first response to the question, “Can you see your business becoming a part of the FAR?” was “For the right price and the right amount of land.”

- Taxes and fees. Entrepreneurs indicated that an array of taxes are taken into consideration when selecting a site for expansion. Thus, local and City taxes could be potential tools for attracting new agricultural-related enterprise. This could include land, business, and excise taxes, among others.

Site Size
There is concern among entrepreneurs about the amount of land space available to encompass all aspects of sales, production and transportation. In addition to a point-of-sale area, the types of business operations envisioned for the FAR require land area for crop cultivation, processing, storage, and supply chain activities. As one interviewee stated, “It’s not just about setting up a pub. Value-added agriculture requires a processing facility and room to load and unload freight.”

Availability of Urban Services (Water and electrical)
Because the FAR is located outside the City urban service area, entrepreneurs expressed concern about obtaining these services. Some envisioned activities along the FAR are dependent on high levels of water, including crop irrigation, processing, and wastewater treatment. Depending on the activity, industrial-grade power may be required. Availability of services could play a deciding role in entrepreneurial calculations.

Availability of Transportation
Interviews indicate that the transportation of both of product and people are of concern to potential business development. One interviewee stressed, “Easy access to freight,” and another stated “[my] business requires a high amount of truck traffic for delivery and pickup.” Businesses requiring a high level of access to transportation routes expressed concern about the FAR’s ability to provide adequate access.

Zoning Restrictions
Interviewees indicated that zoning restrictions would play a role in site selection calculations. This is of particular importance because many of the types of business operations visualized for the FAR are multi-step. As an example, crop cultivation, storage, processing, and sale could all take place on the same site. In a zoning environment that divides land area by activity, a multi-activity space may require further consideration. One interviewee stated, “We’d like our meat farmer to possibly work on the same land with
us.” There is an additional concern about the current A-X zoning, which requires that goods sold on the FAR must be grown on site. This may present difficulty because the limited land area may prevent all goods from being grown on site.

Local Acceptance
Entrepreneurs expressed concern about several potential obstacles to developing along the FAR. Several indicated concern that the local residents would be reluctant to accept new development. As one interviewee stated, “...mad neighbors [would present an obstacle].” There is some unease about local residents response to increased activity, traffic, sounds, and odors of new activity along the FAR.

Site Competition
As a potential development site, the area along the FAR does face a degree of competition from surrounding areas and municipalities. As one interviewee stated, “We’d prefer a Madison address.” The preceding concerns of transportation, availability of urban services, and customer base all play a role in this competition.

City Officials Perspectives
Extensive interviews were conducted with multiple Fitchburg city officials to gauge their opinions and concerns regarding the Fitchburg Agricultural Route (FAR). City alders, committee members, and municipal employees made up the majority of interview participants for this group. Interviews were conducted at various locations to optimize convenience and the typical interview lasted for about 30 minutes. Interviews followed an informal structure with only two or three questions prepared beforehand to stimulate conversation as necessary.

Interviews with city officials were very beneficial and helped identify the regulatory structure surrounding the FAR concept and how that structure enables or hinders project prospects.

*Stimulating economic development by prioritizing agricultural production and investment is a priority.*

Every interview participant in this group expressed a strong conviction that investing in agriculture and improving farmland production is or should be a top priority for the city of Fitchburg. All thought that the FAR project achieved that goal by leveraging local assets that are uniquely Fitchburg. Participants expressed that the FAR project is a product of the intersection of these assets with the city’s most pressing needs. The project benefits the entire community, crossing ethnic and class boundaries in Fitchburg’s under-served minority neighborhoods, and improves public health by encouraging outdoor recreation and the sale, production, and consumption of locally grown, nutritious foods. Participants believe that an opportunity exists for Fitchburg to gain a growing share of the local food market in a high demand metropolitan area.

*Will Fitchburg’s regulatory framework be flexible enough to accommodate the FAR concept?*

Participants cautioned, however, that land problems associated with the FAR project, especially issues related to tenure and efficient production, must be addressed before project management emphasizes tourism. Land use and zoning codes were often mentioned as concerns that should be fully explored and
addressed to clear the regulatory groundwork for an agritourism rural cluster development of this kind. Concern was also expressed about the limits of the city to currently attract future entrepreneurs to a rural site with limited opportunities for growth due to problems associated with its distant location and the present boundaries of the urban service area.
Issues/Conclusions

This final section draws conclusions from the context surrounding the FAR concept. The issues and conclusions listed were considered by the preparers of this report in their drafting of the recommendations document that accompanies this report.

Land Use
The current and future land use and zoning protecting Fitchburg’s rural character and encompassing the FAR area support the vision of an agricultural main street along the Badger State Trail. The Farmland Preservation Plan and the working Agriculture Plan illustrate the importance of maintaining Fitchburg’s farming past and present.

The FAR vision also builds upon the goals already set by the North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood Plan, and the Forward Fitchburg study. The proposed FAR activities and their associated positive economic externalities will boost the North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood’s goals of employment creation and economic development. Additionally, by adhering to the design guidelines and agricultural activities, the FAR will bolster the North Stoner Prairie Neighborhood’s stated goals of strengthening the area’s pastoral identity. The Forward Fitchburg study outlines Fitchburg’s regional perception as an excellent recreational tourism destination, as well as highlights the importance of small business “incubator” zones and entrepreneurial support.

The majority of the FAR land area is zoned Exclusive Agricultural (A-X). Much of the FAR’s proposed agricultural activities are allowable and encouraged under this existing zoning definition, which states a purpose to “maintain a viable agricultural base to support agricultural processing and service industries.” However, the FAR vision is broader in scope than this traditional zoning.

Interviews conducted with local and regional entrepreneurs indicated that there are questions about business viability along the FAR. Business owners stated concerns regarding the FAR area population’s ability to support potential business investment.

Present zoning also affects entrepreneurial interest. A survey of entrepreneur interviewees indicated that zoning restrictions would play a role in site selection calculations. This is of particular importance because many of the types of business operations visualized for the FAR are multi-step. As an example, crop cultivation, storage, processing’s, and sale could potentially take place on the same site. In a zoning environment that divides land area by activity, a multi-activity space may require further consideration. One interview stated, “We’d like our meat farmer to possibly work on the same land with us.” There is an additional concern about the current A-X zoning, which requires that goods sold on the FAR must be grown on site. These may present difficult because the limited land area may prevent all goods from being grown on site.

Entrepreneurs expressed concern about the potential concern that local residents would be reluctant to accept new development. As one interviewee stated, “…mad neighbors [would present an obstacle].” There is some entrepreneur unease about local residents’ response to increased activity, traffic, sounds, and odors of new activity.

By seeking out and employing initiatives that enhance this sense of City identity, Fitchburg will continue to build upon its regional differentiation and identity.
As a potential development site, the FAR area does face a degree of competition from surrounding areas. As one interviewee stated, “We’d prefer a Madison address.” FAR advocates should examine possible routes to make the FAR more accessible to positive investment.

**Transportation**

The FAR is unlikely to be hindered by transportation issues. Car access is high with several major roads intersecting the FAR and easy connections to interstates and the Beltline Highway. Those without personal vehicles or bicycles will likely not be able to readily access the FAR. There are infrequent transit stops near the area and very few individuals live near enough to walk to the area to visit.

Traffic congestion is not likely to be an issue in the FAR area. While peak traffic may occur during certain weekends throughout the year, any congestion that occurs during these times will likely be isolated and relatively short in nature. As the FAR takes hold in the region this issue may need to be revisited but at this juncture there is no need to address road systems in terms of volume. Currently, no parking structures exist. Landowners or businesses wishing to draw customers to their property will need to provide adequate car and bicycle parking to ensure roadways remain clear.

The existence of the Badger State Trail within the FAR area makes bicycle access a hallmark of the FAR. The $20 annual fee or $4 daily fee may be a slight deterrent to potential bicyclists, but it is unlikely to majorly affect the number of people visiting the FAR. The nearby metro area of Madison was recently rated as a Platinum City for bicyclists by the Bike Federation. The acknowledgement proves the commitment to biking that exists in that community currently, which should translate to a high volume of bicyclists visiting the FAR.

**Regional Market and Economy**

Agritourism is the fastest growing tourism industry in the state, and offers promising potential for the FAR. Currently, numerous food-related businesses/entrepreneurs call Fitchburg home. This shows increasing interest in local food production and consumption within the region. This is a strong indicator that agriculture is a supported industry with room for future opportunity. The current farming landscape across the state also points to trends that support the FAR. Small farms control the majority of Wisconsin farm equity as well as comprise 75% of Wisconsin farm type. Federal and State governments have also shown support for value-added product growth in the agriculture sector as a whole. In order to fully support the FAR vision and development, the city of Fitchburg will need to address the high cost of land in Dane County, as it is currently the highest $/acre sales in the South Central region. Fitchburg also currently lacks a “Renters’ Toolkit” which would help provide information to current and perspective landowners/renters looking to expand their business. Agritourism on the FAR in Fitchburg has the potential to contribute to this rising industry. The benefits to this type of activity include providing positive economic impact to the city and to its farmers, providing access to local food and on-farm educational opportunities, and preserving farmland and open space.

**Stakeholder Perceptions**

1. **Landowners**
   
   Current agricultural landowners in Fitchburg illustrated the many potential opportunities that could come from the FAR development. Emphasis on expanded educational opportunities to area residents as well as interest in diversification of product was identified. Agricultural landowners also emphasized the historical significance of farming tradition in Fitchburg. This represents a chance to not only increase agritourism and food accessibility in the area, but also
a chance to increase Fitchburg’s overall identity as an agricultural destination within the South-central region. One concern landowners identified in the public participation process relates to the inflexible zoning code preventing certain sales of value-added product. This will need to be addressed for the FAR to succeed.

2. City Officials

City officials again illustrated the agricultural assets unique to Fitchburg. Playing on these assets, and recognizing Fitchburg’s commitment to protecting their agriculture and open space lands presents an avenue for the FAR’s success. At the same time as their regulatory structure enhances protection of agricultural land, it also can pose as a barrier to individual landowners realizing new opportunities. These constraints related to the regulatory structure of Fitchburg’s agriculture land, on top of issues relating to secure land tenure and agriculture diversification represent the largest barriers to the FAR success in the City Official’s interviewed.

3. Entrepreneurs

Local and regional entrepreneurs recognize the potential of the FAR as an economic driver of the city. By working closely with local entrepreneurs, the City of Fitchburg can better cultivate conditions for growth and nurture the FAR into reality. Entrepreneurs expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of mutual growth with the City. Concerns were raised about the viability of businesses along the trail, as well as the receptiveness of the local area to new investment.

Concluding Statement

In closing, the FAR project is a socially, economically, and culturally relevant concept that would enhance the agricultural identity of the City of Fitchburg. Agritourism is a growing industry in Wisconsin and the FAR’s proximity to and easy accessibility from one of the State’s major metropolitan areas is a major advantage for the area under consideration. The Madison Metro Area is well-known to be enthusiastic about bicycling and locally grown food, both hallmarks of the FAR. Given this, it is little wonder that those preparing this concept analysis found enthusiasm among potential stakeholders. While this concept analysis is only an initial step in the FAR creation process, its findings conclude that the FAR will have some hurdles, but in clearing them will it will be a concept that capitalizes on and expands the unique agricultural heritage that underlies the City of Fitchburg.
Appendix

City of Fitchburg Agricultural Landowners – Public Opinion Survey

Please complete this survey ONLY if you currently own agricultural land in the City of Fitchburg.

The City of Fitchburg's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee has recently begun the process of developing an "Agriculture Plan" to help maintain and enhance agriculture in the City into the foreseeable future. A major component of the Plan will be identifying agricultural land use opportunities for City landowners, as well as ways in which the City can help landowners take advantage of these opportunities. This survey is designed to get feedback from landowners on these opportunities. The survey is voluntary, anonymous, and only one person (age 18 or over) per household should complete the survey. The survey should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. If you have questions about this survey, please contact Wade Thompson, City of Fitchburg Resource/Project Planner, at wade.thompson@fitchburgwi.gov or 608.270.4258. Thank you for your time and effort.

1. Do you farm or rent your land? Please check all that apply:
   a. Farm
   b. Rent
   c. Both

2. How many acres of agricultural land do you own?
   a. Less than 20 acres
   b. 21 to 40 acres
   c. 41 to 120 acres
   d. Greater than 121 acres

3. What is your land currently being used for? Please check all that apply.
   a. Corn and soybean production
   b. Hay production
   c. Local food crop production (Vegetables, orchards, gardens, etc.)
   d. Niche crop production (Mint, hops, etc.)
   e. Dairy
   f. Livestock (Other than dairy or horse farm)
   g. Horse farm
   h. Open space (Fallow, wetland, etc.)
   i. Other (Please identify.)
   j. Have you ever considered any other agricultural uses for your land?
      i. Yes (Please proceed to Question 4.)
      ii. No (Please proceed to Question 5.)
4. What other agricultural uses have you considered for your land? Please check all that apply.
   a. Corn and soybean production
   b. Hay production
   c. Local food crop production (Vegetables, orchards, gardens, etc.)
   d. Niche crop production (Mint, hops, etc.)
   e. Dairy
   f. Livestock (Other than dairy or horse farm)
   g. Horse farm
   h. Value-added agriculture (Winery, ice-cream, cheese, cider, jam/jelly, salsa etc.)
   i. Agricultural tourism (Corn maze, hay rides, farm tours, farm stays/lodging, etc.)
   j. Other (Please identify.)

5. What is preventing you from undertaking the agricultural uses you identified in Question 5? Please check all that apply.
   a. Lack of financial resources
   b. Lack of technical knowledge
   c. Lack of necessary infrastructure
   d. Market uncertainty and risk
   e. Finding suitable renters or other required personnel
   f. Other (Please identify.)
   g. Unsure

6. What could the City of Fitchburg do to help you undertake the land uses you identified in Question 5? Please check all that apply.
   a. Financial incentives
   b. Technical assistance
   c. Marketing and promotion
   d. Assist in finding suitable renters or other required personnel
   e. Other (Please identify.)
   f. Unsure

7. Do you have concerns regarding any of the land uses identified in Question 5?

8. What could the City do to alleviate these concerns?
9. Have you ever considered selling your agricultural land?
   a. Yes
   b. No

10. How old are you?
    a. Under 40
    b. 41 – 50
    c. 51 – 60
    d. 61 or older

Thank you very much for taking time to participate in our survey. We truly value the information you have provided. Your responses are vital to helping our City continue to be a vibrant, friendly place to live and play.

Any further info and/or insight is greatly appreciated. Please submit further info to:

Email: Wade.Thompson@fitchburgwi.gov
Standard mail:
Wade Thompson
City of Fitchburg Department of Planning and Zoning
5520 Lacy Road
Fitchburg, WI 53711
Entrepreneur Interview Questions

What are your hopes for the FAR?
- What do you see as potential opportunities with the FAR?
- What are some potential obstacles for the FAR?

Can you see your business becoming part of the FAR? Why/why not?
- Does the idea of Agritourism intrigue you?
- What sort of incentives/amenities would persuade you to locate to the FAR, as a business?
  - For example, tax abatement on water? Creating an economy of scale; i.e. using grain from a nearby farmer for brewing, and then selling your spent grain to a nearby bakery?
The Fitchburg Agricultural Route (FAR) Concept Analysis Recommendations 2015
The FAR concept is an exciting new way for the City of Fitchburg to explore how to serve its community, grow its economy, and reinforce its agricultural identity. The recommendations below represent feasible opportunities to transition the current land use, administration, and community engagement structures into the FAR concept. The Existing Conditions Report identified several areas of potential improvement. To address these, a series of Recommendations was formulated. These Recommendations pertain to relevant and feasible opportunities that could be explored to make the FAR a reality.

This document’s recommendations were developed from an analysis of existing conditions, including interviews and discussions with various existing and potential FAR stakeholders. All Recommendations are "assumptive" and "contextual," and are subject to further discussion, and identification of common goals, among various relevant FAR stakeholders.

Administrative

1. Explore creation of a standing FAR Committee, staffed by the City’s Planning and Zoning Department, and tasked with developing and implementing the FAR concept to match the needs of FAR stakeholders and the City, with said Committee members to potentially include the following:
   a. City Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee member;
   b. City Plan Commission member;
   c. City Agricultural Landowner;
   d. City Chamber of Commerce Board member;
   e. Agriculture Entrepreneur member;
   f. Dane County appointee member;
   g. Wisconsin Bicycle Federation appointee member;
   h. South-central Wisconsin Rail Transit Commission appointee member;
   i. At-large appointee member;

Partnerships and Community Engagement

1. Explore opportunities for partnership with relevant private and public entities. Dane County offers various promising potential partnerships, including the Adaptive Nutrient Management,
Arts, Parks, Environmental, and Community grant programs. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) offers grants and financial aid programs for specialty crops, dairy production, and agricultural processing. Exploration should be given to private sponsorship of various potential FAR facilities and amenities, including but not limited to those related to the following:

a. “Agriculture-themed” City park north of Lacy Road (as identified in Land Use Recommendation 9);

b. Small-scale agriculture operations;

c. Trail lighting/benches and other related trail infrastructure;

2. Explore opportunities for community engagement initiatives, including but limited to the following:

a. Coordination with local schools to educate Fitchburg and surrounding community’s youth on basic agricultural practices, proper nutrition, the Fitchburgs’s farming heritage, and incorporation of locally-grown food products into school lunches;

b. Coordination with City neighborhoods, particularly those which lack proper food access and have related public health issues, including the North Fish Hatchery Road Neighborhood, to distribute locally-grown food products in said neighborhoods and provide nutrition education opportunities;

c. Coordination with the City’s minority communities to explore opportunities to grow specialty crops for production of culturally-relevant food;

d. Introduce children and teenagers to agricultural practices, including those “at-risk”, in the mold of Off The Block Salsa, a local food producer which specializes in employing and educating at-risk youth;

Source: Aldo Leopold Elementary School, Fitchburg, WI. The FAR may be an opportunity for Fitchburg’s youth to learn basic agricultural practices, nutrition, and the City’s farming heritage.
e. Enlist volunteer landowners for agricultural education opportunities and engage volunteer youth groups to assist in maintenance of bike path buffer zones;

f. Develop a FAR public arts and culture program, integrating art and culture into FAR land uses, facilities, and amenities;

**Branding and Marketing**

1. Explore methods to **brand and market the FAR’s image and identity**, to include but not limited to the following:
   a. Place FAR “welcome” signs at the FAR’s northern and southern terminus;
   b. Promote the FAR as a **regional and statewide agritourism destination**, through attendance at relevant conferences and seminars, and by formalizing a relationship with the Fitchburg Chamber of Commerce, Madison Area Visitors and Convention Bureau and the Wisconsin Department of Tourism;
   c. Develop a 5-Year City Agricultural Census identifying key aspects of local food production, distribution, and consumption in the City;

**Land Use**

1. Explore **revision to the City’s zoning ordinance** to allow for expanded agricultural activities along the FAR as conditional uses, including but not limited to the retail sale of value-added agricultural and agricultural-related products;

*Source: Natalie Cotter. Land along the FAR has potential expanded agricultural activities.*
2. Explore methods to encourage large agricultural landowners in the City to rent their land to small-scale agriculture producers;

3. Explore methods to encourage use of shared equipment and facilities suitable for small-scale agriculture, including but not limited to the following:
   a. Agriculture implements;
   b. Cold storage;
   c. Packing shed and wash facility;
   d. Kitchen space;

4. Explore development of a partnership with a private non-profit entity, for management of multiple small-scale farmers on private agricultural lands in the City;

5. Develop a “Gardening the Gaps” inventory and database, including a map and other associated information, illustrating locations currently inaccessible by large agriculture implements, and therefore potentially suitable for small-scale agricultural activities;

6. Develop a directory of City agricultural landowners who have interest in selling/renting all or portions of their land;

7. Develop a “toolbox” of financial incentives to diversity agricultural activities in the City;

8. Explore identification of FAR Land Use Zones, potentially including but not limited to an Agriculture – Processing and Distribution Zone north of Lacy Road and an Agriculture – Production zone south of Lacy Road;

9. Explore development of an “Agriculture-themed” City park north of Lacy Road, along the Badger State Trail, to potentially consist of uses, facilities, and amenities as follows:
   a. A four-season public gathering space;
   b. A shared, commercial kitchen space;
   c. A farmers market vending space;
   d. An area for food trucks to access power and sell products;
   e. Edible landscapes (orchards) and community gardens;
Placemaking

1. Explore development of the FAR’s natural and built environment that utilize features and amenities that create identity, and provide for safe, fun, and educational agritourism opportunities, attracting users from throughout the region, including but not limited to the following:
   a. Historic water pump and windmill;
   b. Edible landscapes and community gardens;
   c. Plant identification station;
   d. Bike-share, bike cargo trailer rental, and bike tune-up stations;
   e. Bird watching platform;
   f. Guestbook or map in which users indicate from where they are traveling;
   g. Educational, outdoor, agricultural-themed museum that highlighting the area’s anthropology through artistic sculptures and/or museum items such as old farm equipment;

![Source: Fine Art America. Example of potential placemaking along the FAR](image)

2. Explore methods to address basic user needs and public safety on the FAR, including but not limited to the following:
   a. Restroom and bicycle parking facilities;
b. Seating and rest points;

c. Access to water and shade;

d. Trail lighting/benches and other related trail infrastructure that compliments the pastoral landscape;

e. Police patrols;

f. Snowplowing;

3. Explore opportunities to encourage both warm and cold weather recreational activities along the FAR, with an equity-lens that encourages low-impact uses that are culturally relevant and economically feasible;

4. Explore options for reducing the Badger State Trail use fee to increase accessibility, including but not limited to the following:

   a. Corporate sponsorship/subsidy;

   b. Partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to create a Bicycle Benefits program;

   c. Development of a FAR business improvement district (BID);

5. Explore development of seasonally-themed public festivals, to include events such as organized run/walks, that promote the FAR’s agritourism identity;

6. Explore development of shared, commercial kitchen space, and use thereof, to host public food-related activities, demonstrations, or events;

**Transportation**

1. Explore options for bicycle and pedestrian-oriented development along the FAR, including but not limited to adopting the FAR as a bicycle-oriented agriculture avenue;

2. Explore methods to increase multi-modal access to the FAR from all areas of the City, in accordance with future Madison Metro route designations, and by potentially locating off-street vehicle parking facilities near the agriculture-themed City park or near the FAR’s northern border near McKee Road;

3. Explore development of effective traffic infrastructure design and location, in accordance with the City’s 2008 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, to ensure user satisfaction and safety on the FAR, as follows:
a. Location, design, and safety guidelines for current and future shared-use paths, sidewalks, and streets, including lighting;

b. Design of all roadway/FAR intersections to ensure users of both facilities are aware of the upcoming intersection;

c. Install bike-share stations and bike cargo trailer rental stations near the northern border of the FAR, a bicycle maintenance station located south of this point along the FAR, and bicycle parking facilities throughout the FAR;

d. Implement a natural screen of trees, bushes, and/or other plants around all vehicle parking facilities;

e. Adhere to the Fitchburg Comprehensive Plan’s recommendations for designation of truck routes;

4. Explore methods to ensure user safety for all modes of transportation along and around the FAR, as follows:

   a. Develop and promote educational programs and materials regarding safe interaction between pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles on streets and shared-use paths;

   b. Provide for adequate traffic law enforcement and general transportation safety;

5. Explore development of a Trail-to-Rail Contingency Plan in the unlikely event of the Badger State Trail is converted back to an operating rail line;

**Natural Resources**

1. Explore methods to preserve and protect existing natural waterways and wetlands in accordance with relevant State regulations and highlight the FAR’s current water resources areas, as follows:

   a. Implementing soil conservation practices such as riparian buffer conservation and restoration;

   b. Protecting wetlands and hydric soils;

2. Explore methods for showcasing best water management practices in agriculture through interpretive signage or other educational efforts, as follows:

   a. Emphasize how the FAR’s agricultural heritage is symbiotic with the rich natural resources of the area;

   b. Explore the FAR’s role in Dane County’s Adaptive Nutrient Management Program;
c. Highlight the benefits of soil conservation practices for farmers and environment;

d. Create opportunities for visitors to better appreciate the wildlife that share the FAR landscape with agriculture;

3. Explore methods for water conservation at small-scale agriculture sites, including but not limited to the following:
   a. Catchment installation:

   b. Cistern installation at agriculture-themed park north of Lacy Road, with water from cistern utilized for surrounding agricultural activities;
Potential Funding Sources

Many financial incentives exist for both public and private organizations to take advantage of. It is recommended that the City of Fitchburg explore relevant funding options as they pertain to the various aspects of the FAR.

Financial Incentives for which Organizations and individuals other than City Government may apply.

Farmland Preservation Tax Credits
- The Farmland Preservation tax credit program comes out of the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative beginning in the tax year 2010. Landowners can collect these income tax credits on per acre amounts with a state cap set at $27 million.
  - $5.00 (per acre) for farmers with a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009 and located in an agricultural enterprise area
  - $7.50 for farmers in an area zoned for farmland preservation
  - $10.00 for farmers in an area zoned and certified for farmland preservation and in an agricultural enterprise area, with a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009
  - This program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Revolving City Loan Fund
- $375,000 for a revolving loan fund has been provided by the City of Fitchburg to the Fitchburg Community and Economic Development Authority in order:
  - To encourage a proactive and positive business climate
  - To expand and diversify the tax base
  - To facilitate existing business expansions
  - To assist small businesses and startups
  - To target clean industries, especially high tech manufacturers, research and development companies, and businesses that export
  - To attract new businesses to Fitchburg
  - To promote a diverse mix of employment opportunities that offer good wages and comprehensive benefit packages.
- This represents an opportunity to farmers and entrepreneurs looking to expand, or start a new business venture on the FAR. One of the activities eligible for funds is land acquisition.

Wisconsin Farm Asset Reinvestment Management Program (FARM)
- The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority Farm Asset Reinvestment Management program (FARM) is a loan guarantee for agricultural producers who want
to start, expand or modernize their operations. FARM assists in the start-up, expansion or the modernization of an existing farming operation
  o This program is administered by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

SARE Grants
  o Go-to USDA grants and outreach program for farmers, ranchers, researchers and educators who want to develop innovations that improve farm profitability, protect water and land, and revitalize communities
  o Applicable to FAR’s goal of promoting sustainable, local, and equitable food systems
  o This grant is administered by the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) program

USDA Microloans
  o financing needs of small, beginning farmer, niche and non-traditional farm operations
  o Maximum loan amount is $50,000
  o This loan is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program
  o Grants for projects that support bicycling in communities, including bike paths and rail trails
  o Awarded to communities that also leverage federal funding
  o NGOs and local governments can apply

Dane Arts Grant Program
  o Supports equitable access to arts, culture, and local history activities in Dane County, Wisconsin and opportunities for creative expression, engagement, and connection with one another.
  o In 2 grant cycles per year, several hundred thousand dollars from local public and private sources are distributed among approximately 150 awards.
  o Individual grants ranging from $500 to several thousand dollars serve citizens and residents of Dane County

Bicycle Benefits Program.org
  o This program is designed to encourage bicycling by offering retail rewards to users of the program
  o An organization is to reach out to the businesses community and explain the Bike Benefits program and the benefits of encouraging and rewarding biking to their businesses through an incentive/reward which is awarded to patrons who show up on bike and show their Bike Benefits helmet sticker

Value Added Producer Grant Program
  o This program supports planning activities and working capital expenses related to producing and marketing a value-added agricultural product
  o Administered by the United States Department of Agriculture
Buy Local Buy Wisconsin Program
- Aims to ease distribution, processing and marketing hurdles for local producers and businesses in the value-added food industry.
- Administered by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protections (DATCP)

Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program
- Provides microloans for microenterprise startups and growth through a Rural Microloan Revolving Fund (Businesses with 10 or fewer full time employees, and located in an eligible area)
- Administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Wetlands Reserve Program
- The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) was a voluntary program that offered landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property through providing technical and financial support for restoration work
- Administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Transition Incentives Program
- Offers assistance for retired or retiring land owners and operators, as well as opportunities for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
- Provides two additional annual rental payments on land enrolled in expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts
- Administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Financial Incentives for which the City of Fitchburg is Eligible to Apply

Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Grants
- Offer grants to municipalities for land acquisition and recreational development (including development of local parks)
- For use in “Agricultural Hub” City Park

Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE)
- A voluntary program out of the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative, which supports local municipalities preserve agricultural land via a matching grant program
- This program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
- Provides funding for transportation alternatives, including but not limited to:
  - On- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure
  - Improving non-driver access to public transportation
  - Community improvement programs
- Administered by the Federal Highway Administration
Surface Transportation Program (STP)
- Provides funding to preserve and/or improve conditions and performance of transportation infrastructure, including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
- Administered by the Federal Highway Administration

Recreational Trail Aids (RTAs)
- Provides reimbursement for development and maintenance of recreational trails
- May be used in conjunction with Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program
- Administered by the Department of Natural Resources

National Endowment for the Arts: Challenge America, Our Town
- Challenge America supports projects that extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations.
  - Matching grants are for $10,000. A minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount is required
- Our Town supports creative placemaking projects that contribute to the livability of communities and place the arts at their core through two pots of funding:
  - Arts Engagement, Cultural Planning, and Design Projects that represent the distinct character and quality of their communities. These projects require a partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government entity, with one of the partners being a cultural organization. Matching grants range from $25,000 to $200,000.
  - Projects that Build Knowledge About Creative Placemaking. These projects are available to arts and design service organizations, and industry or university organizations that provide technical assistance to those doing place-based work. Matching grants range from $25,000 to $100,000.

National Endowment for the Humanities: Libraries, and Cultural Organizations- Implementation Grants
- This grant program supports projects for general audiences that encourage active engagement with humanities ideas in creative and appealing ways. Many different formats are supported, including permanent and traveling exhibitions, book or film discussion programs, historic site or district interpretations, living history presentations, and other face-to-face programs in public venues.
- Implementation grants are for projects in the final stages of preparation to “go live” before the public. Grants support final scholarly research and consultation, design development, production, and installation of a project for presentation to the public.

Joint Effort Marketing Grant Program Administered by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism
- Offers financial support and guidance for destination marketing
- To be eligible, a partnership must consist of three communities working together for a maximum total award of $39,500
- Helps fund strategic planning and promotions
- Destination Marketing grant applications are reviewed twice a year, in September and April
Business Improvement District (BID)
- Wisconsin Act 184 gives Wisconsin municipalities (i.e., cities, villages and towns) the power to establish one or more Business Improvement Districts within their community and an assessment methodology that allows properties within that geographic area to contribute to programs aimed at promotion, management, maintenance and development of that district.
- Assessments are restricted to commercial and industrial properties within a municipality that are subject to real estate tax.

Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)
- TIF is a mechanism to capture the net new or incremental taxes that are created when a property is redeveloped and use those revenues to help finance the project.
- A tax increment district (TID) is authorized through the Wisconsin Department of Revenue and is typically granted to help finance large developments, as well as the redevelopment of blighted or underused sites.