

3. Existing Conditions

This chapter focuses on the existing conditions in the Village of Pleasant Prairie. The chapter provides an overview of the region, demographic information, the parks system, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and plans and policies currently in effect that impact bicycle and pedestrian planning and facilities. It should be noted that much of the demographic information is drawn from the 2000 Census, and the 2010 Census will provide a more accurate picture of current conditions in Pleasant Prairie when the data is released in 2011.

3.1 Regional Context

The Village of Pleasant Prairie is a rapidly growing community in Kenosha County in the far southeastern corner of Wisconsin. The Village is bordered by Illinois on the south, Lake Michigan on the east, the unincorporated Town of Bristol on the west and the City of Kenosha on the north. The Village is approximately 40 miles south of Milwaukee and 70 miles north of downtown Chicago.

The Village was incorporated in 1989 from the former Town of Pleasant Prairie. Because it incorporated from a Town with no central core, development is largely dispersed throughout the Village. Since incorporation Pleasant Prairie has grown rapidly: the population increased 63% while the number of housing units in the Village grew by 76%. Employment within the Village has increased rapidly as well, particularly with the industrial development of LakeView Corporate Park and commercial sites along 75th Street (State Highway 50) and near the I-94 corridor.

This rapid growth created a need for better bicycle and pedestrian planning and facilities. Many streets that were relatively quiet and safe for bicycling or walking 20 years ago are now busy and uncomfortable for cyclists and pedestrians. Additionally, while bicycle and pedestrian use may be safe and easy within many of the new office parks, industrial sites and residential developments, there are few good links or connections between these developments. Adequate links to popular destinations including Lake Michigan, schools, the RecPlex and IcePlex, and employment centers are also lacking.



It is important to provide bicycle parking at destinations throughout the Village.

3.2 Population and Demographics

Demographic characteristics help determine the amount of bicycle and pedestrian trails that the Village now requires and will need in the future. As part of the transportation network, it is important that trail facilities link not only current housing, employment, and recreation centers, but future ones as well.

Since incorporation, the Village of Pleasant Prairie has experienced a significant population increase. From 1990 to 2009, the population increased from 12,037 to 19,570. This increase of 63% is a far greater growth rate than Kenosha County (27%) and the State (16%). Additionally, the Village's work-day population is significantly higher than this number due to the large number of people who commute to the Village for employment or other opportunities. Pleasant Prairie's population is projected to continue growing rapidly over the next 20 years, although at a slightly lower rate than it has over the last 20 years. The Village's projected population in 2030 is 28,911, a 48% increase over the 2009 estimated population. This growth rate is again significantly higher than the rate for Kenosha County and the State.

The average age of residents of Pleasant Prairie slightly higher than their counterparts in Kenosha County or Wisconsin as a whole: in 2000, the residents of Pleasant Prairie had a median age of 37.0 years, while Kenosha County had a median of 34.8 years and the State of Wisconsin had a median of 36.0 years. In 2000, 34% of the Village's population was under the age of 25, while 11% of the population was 65 or older.

In 2000, the average household size in Pleasant Prairie was 2.73 persons per household, a decrease since the 1990 Census count of 2.83 persons. This average household size was slightly higher than that of the County and State.

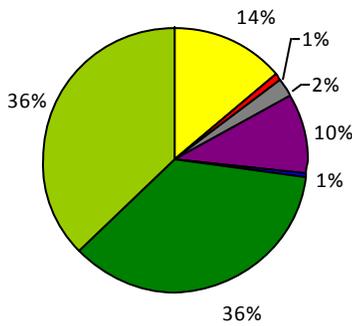
Although the size of the average household is decreasing, the statistical trends indicate that Pleasant Prairie has a growing population with many families. Providing a bicycle and pedestrian network that is comfortable and easy to use by users of all ages and skill levels will increase the quality of life of Village residents.



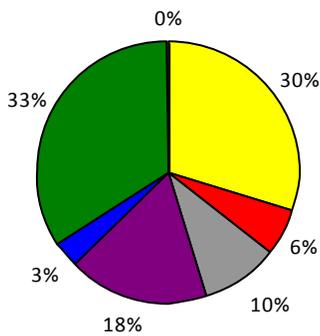
3.3 Land Use

Current and future land use is important for bicycle and pedestrian planning as the location of housing, employment centers, retail areas and recreational areas dictates where people will begin and end many of their trips. A well connected bicycle and pedestrian network should connect all of these areas so that residents can safely and conveniently travel from one location to another.

Village Land Use, 2000



Village Land Use, 2035



Current and Future Land Use

As mentioned in section 3.1, Pleasant Prairie incorporated in 1989. With this step, the new village gained the authority to zone land for specific uses including residential, industrial, commercial and other uses. This authority allows the Village to steer its growth and development in a desirable manner. The *Village of Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin 2035 Comprehensive Plan* provides a detailed description of existing land uses in the Village, as well as the planned growth over the next 25 years.

Reflecting its recent incorporation, the majority of Pleasant Prairie is comprised of agricultural land, natural open space, and natural resource areas such as woodlands, wetlands, and surface water. These land uses cover approximately 76% of Village land. The remaining land is more developed and is comprised primarily of residential land uses, although commercial, industrial, governmental, transportation, and recreational land uses also cover significant areas of the Village. The *2035 Comprehensive Plan* envisions significant growth in residential, mixed-use, and commercial areas, with additional growth in industrial, governmental and transportation land uses. This growth will occur primarily on land that is currently agricultural and in non-environmentally sensitive open space areas.

Land Use Impacts on Walking and Cycling

Development in Pleasant Prairie is relatively dispersed today, although much of it is clustered at the northern end of the Village, close to Kenosha. Because development is dispersed, it is often difficult for residents to rely on walking or cycling as transportation, as destinations may be too far away or they may not feel safe using the existing streets for walking or cycling. As the Village continues to develop, it should become easier for residents to walk or cycle to destinations as urban street sections with bicycle facilities, sidewalks, and multi-use paths are installed in areas not currently developed. These connections will make it easier for residents to reach destinations and will allow residents to more reliably use walking and cycling as transportation and recreation.

3.4 Parks and Open Space

The 2006 Village of Pleasant Prairie Park and Open Space Plan inventoried existing parks, open space and recreation facilities within the Village. These spaces offer residents the opportunity to participate in organized recreational activities, exercise in areas away from motor vehicles or simply enjoy nature. Residents should be able to safely and easily access these spaces on bicycle or foot.

Regional Park

Three large community parks exist in Pleasant Prairie. The largest of these parks is Prairie Springs Park. This 930-acre park is located in the western portion of the Village, north of 104th Street and west of 88th Avenue. The park offers numerous sporting and recreation activities in addition to playgrounds, softball fields, volleyball pits, and picnic areas. The park also contains some of the Village's only paved bicycle and pedestrian trails. Although Prairie Springs Park contains pedestrian and bicycle trails and other recreational opportunities, many residents noted that it is difficult to access on foot or bicycle.

Community Parks

Anderson Park is a large existing park just north of the Village in the City of Kenosha. The 95-acre park offers City and Village residents amenities including two baseball diamonds, 20 soccer fields, a swimming pool with water slides and picnicking and other opportunities. Village Green Park and Ingram Park are planned for future development in the Village. All of these parks provide or will provide numerous benefits and amenities to Pleasant Prairie residents and should be readily accessible by bicycle or on foot.

Neighborhood and School Parks

The Park and Open Space Plan identified six existing neighborhood parks distributed throughout the Village: Carol Beach Park, Becker Park, Woodlawn Park, Pleasant Prairie Park, Rolling Meadows Park and Lake Michigan Park. These parks range in size from 0.14 acres to 22 acres and offer residents recreational opportunities and open space near their homes. Park space also exists at three Kenosha Unified School District elementary school sites in the Village, with two additional sites planned for future schools. These smaller park spaces provide recreation and open space that is dispersed throughout Pleasant Prairie.



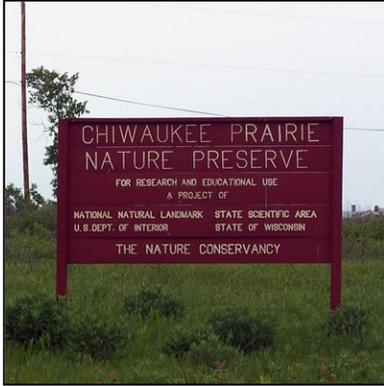
Prairie Springs Park is a large regional park located in the western portion of the Village. The park contains a popular shared-use path around Lake Andrea.



Carol Beach Park is one of six neighborhood parks dispersed throughout the Village.

Open Space and Natural Areas

Numerous other open spaces and recreation areas exist throughout the Village. These areas include recreation areas such as two private driving ranges and a golf course, a private marina and a significant amount of preserved open space and natural areas.



The Chiwaukee Prairie Nature Preserve is a popular destination for cyclists.

The open spaces and natural areas throughout the Village are very popular with local residents as well as visitors to the area. These lands preserve critical plant and animal habitats and environmental corridors. They also allow residents and others to experience outdoor environments that are more natural and less controlled than what they experience in formal park space. Bicycling and walking can be an ideal match for these areas as they are quite, nonpolluting forms of transportation and recreation that require minimal impact in the way of trails and other facilities.

The largest of these areas is the Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area which is home to one of the largest prairie complexes in the State and the largest coastal wetland in southeastern Wisconsin. The southern portion of the area is managed by The Nature Conservancy, and the northern parcels are managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, including the Kenosha Dunes, which contains open and stabilized sand dunes. Chiwaukee Prairie is recognized as a National Natural Landmark and a State Natural Area.

Other large open spaces and natural areas include the Carol Beach Natural Area Open Space, the Des Plaines River Natural Area Open Space and Momper’s Woods. These areas cover over 250 acres throughout the Village and combine with approximately 200 acres of privately held land to form a significant natural presence within the Village. These areas are popular destinations for cyclists and offer opportunities for hiking and other recreational activities.



The Des Plaines River Open Space includes over 750 acres of preserved environmentally sensitive land.

3.5 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Currently, the only major bicycle trail in Pleasant Prairie is the Kenosha County Bike Trail. This north-south trail runs from the Illinois border through the Village and the City of Kenosha and north to the Kenosha/Racine County line. The trail is built in a former railway corridor and lies at approximately 30th Avenue. The gravel trail is unpaved and is not maintained during the winter months. Although a popular facility, residents voiced concerns over maintenance issues with the trail and problems with crushed gravel from the trail spreading onto connecting roadways and creating hazards.

Prairie Springs Park contains an eight foot wide paved trail that forms a loop around Lake Andrea and other portions of the park. While this trail is a popular recreation facility, it is not connected with any larger network of bicycle or pedestrian facilities and is not useful as a transportation facility.

There are approximately five miles of bike lanes in Pleasant Prairie, primarily in the far northern section of the Village. Residential streets in Pleasant Prairie with low traffic volumes are safe and recommended for bicycling with no additional facilities. Arterial streets that have higher traffic volumes and speeds are in need of better facilities which may include bike lanes, wide curb lanes or paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles. In these cases, critical corridors connecting neighborhoods and destinations are recommended for either bicycle routes or lanes. Some arterial streets are wide enough to accommodate bike lanes without any additional pavement. In areas where there is not enough roadway width to add a full bike lane, bicycle routes may be recommended. Bicycle parking at key destinations is also needed.

Most streets in Pleasant Prairie developed prior to 1989 have a rural cross-section with no curb and gutter or sidewalk. On low-traffic minor residential streets the roadway may be able to safely serve as a pedestrian facility. However, pedestrian accommodations are needed on arterial and connector streets and intersections. A total of 44% of survey respondents reported that they do not feel Pleasant Prairie is pedestrian friendly because of personal safety concerns, and 61% thought the lack of sidewalks made Pleasant Prairie unfriendly for pedestrians. At the same time, 62% of respondents cited automobile traffic as a reason for Pleasant Prairie's pedestrian unfriendliness, a reason that is closely linked with the lack of sidewalks.

A map at the back of this plan depicts the existing as well as proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities.



Many residential streets with very low traffic volumes are safe and recommended for bicycling in their current condition.

3.6 Existing Plans and Policies

Numerous plans exist at the federal, state, regional and local levels that impact bicycling and walking in Pleasant Prairie. This section provides a brief summary of the most relevant of those plans. Additionally, Section 6.1 details federal and state guidance on the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Federal Plans and Policies

Congress firmly established the principle that the safe accommodation of bicycling and walking is the responsibility of state and local transportation agencies. This responsibility extends to the planning, design, operation, maintenance and management of the transportation system in federal transportation law, including the *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)*, and its reauthorizations, the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)* and the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)*.

http://www.americabikes.org/resources_policy_biyclefriendly.asp

The Federal Highway Administration Program guidance on the federal transportation bills states that “In the planning, design, and operation of transportation facilities bicyclists and pedestrians should be included as a matter of routine and the decision not to accommodate them should be the exception rather than the rule. There must be exceptional circumstances for denying bicycle and pedestrian access either by prohibition or by designing highways that are incompatible with safe, convenient walking and bicycling.”

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/Design.htm>

Wisconsin Plans and Policies

The *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020* (WisDOT September 1998) is intended “to establish bicycling as a viable, convenient, and safe transportation choice throughout Wisconsin.” The role of the state plan is “ensuring an interconnected transportation system across government boundaries and highway jurisdictions that can work safely for bicyclists....” The two primary goals of the state plan are doubling the number of bicycle trips by 2010 and reducing crashes involving bicyclists and motor vehicles by 10% or more by 2010.

<http://www.dot.state.wi.us/projects/state/bike2020.htm>

The *Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020* outlines statewide and local measures to promote pedestrian comfort and safety. The plan lays out a policy framework to better integrate pedestrians into the transportation network by 2020 and describes WisDOT’s role in meeting pedestrian needs.

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/projects/state/ped2020.htm>

Regional Plans and Policies

The *Regional [I-94] Freeway System Reconstruction Plan for SE WI* (SEWRPC) includes plans to reconstruct the I-94 interchange at County Highway C in Pleasant Prairie. The interchange reconstruction includes a redesign of portions of East Frontage Road and West Frontage Road that will separate the frontage roads from the highway interchange ramps. This should be safer for bicycles and still accommodate motor vehicle traffic. A separate paved shared-use path and wide



shoulders on the West Frontage Road are included as part of this reconstruction. Construction was completed in November 2009.

<http://www.sewrpc.org/freewaystudy>

The *Regional Transportation System Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2035* (SEWRPC Planning Report No. 49) includes SEWRPC's vision for transportation in the region: "A multimodal system with high quality public transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and arterial street and highway elements which add to the quality of life of Region residents and support and promote expansion of the Region's economy, by providing for convenient, efficient, and safe travel by each mode...."

<http://www.sewrpc.org/regionalplans/regionaltransysplan.shtm>

The *Amendment to the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities System Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2020* (SEWRPC) "seeks to remove existing impediments to bicycle travel related to the lack of bicycle paths, the lack of safe accommodation on streets and highways, and the lack of support facilities such as bicycle parking and storage lockers. The plan recommends that improvements such as extra-wide outside travel lanes or paved shoulders be considered to be provided whenever an arterial street or highway is constructed or reconstructed to better accommodate shared roadway use by bicycles and motor vehicles."

<http://www.sewrpc.org/transportation/amendmentbikeped.asp>

SEWRPC has identified several roads in and around the Village for expansion and/or extension. These projects will have significant impacts on bicyclists' ability to move safely and conveniently around the region. If the goals of the state and SEWRPC's own plans regarding bicyclists are to be realized, it is imperative that the bicyclists be accommodated as an integral part of every project.

While SEWRPC has proposed many projects in and around Pleasant Prairie in the future, the following projects are specifically identified in the 2009 – 2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):

- Project 510 (2009): Resurfacing of State Highway 50 (75th Street) from I-94 to State Highway 31
- Project 513 (2009): Reconstruct State Highway 165 (104th Street) intersections with County Highway ML and County Highway EZ
- Project 516 (2009): Install flashing lights and gates at the 113th Street at-grade crossing of the Canadian Pacific railroad tracks
- Project 523 (2010) Preliminary engineering for reconstruction with additional lanes of County Highway C from County Highway U to West Frontage Road

It is critical that these projects properly accommodate pedestrians and bicycles, particularly since many of these are high-volume roads that are often difficult for cyclists and pedestrians to negotiate.

http://www.sewrpc.org/publications/tip/TIP_2009-2012.pdf



Local Eagle Scouts constructed boardwalks through environmentally sensitive areas to allow bicycle and pedestrian access.

Local Policies and Plans

The Village of Pleasant Prairie 2035 Comprehensive Plan will guide development in the Village for the next 25 years. The plan includes numerous chapters that will impact bicycling and pedestrian facilities in the Village, including the Transportation; Utilities and Community Facilities; Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources; and Land Use chapters. The Comprehensive Plan is Pleasant Prairie's definitive guiding document regarding land use, transportation and other planning and the Transportation chapter has the following goal:

Provide an accessible interconnected network of highways, streets, and bicycle and pedestrian trails within the Village in order to present a safe, affordable, and efficient transportation system that meets the needs of multiple users; and to assure the functionality of the transportation network within Pleasant Prairie and the surrounding region while minimizing the impacts upon the transportation system.



Appropriate signage can draw attention to locations where shared-use paths intersect local streets.

The Village of Pleasant Prairie 2006 Parks and Open Space Plan serves as the planning document guiding park and open space development in the Village. The plan includes a number of policies and recommendations regarding bicycle facilities. The top priority to emerge from public participation in the planning process was the development of a multi-use trail system. Accordingly, the plan includes a map of existing and future bicycle trails and facilities. Additionally, a number of objectives and policies in the plan recommend or support the development of a robust bicycle and pedestrian trail network. No additional bicycle or pedestrian trails have been developed since the adoption of the plan.

It is important for the Village of Pleasant Prairie to work with surrounding jurisdictions to ensure that connections between the various jurisdictions are created concurrently with any new development or redevelopment. Additionally, Pleasant Prairie should encourage the other municipalities to begin creating bicycle plans of their own to incorporate into their long range transportation and land use plans.