

10/12/2021

Sustainability Plan

Village of Cross Plains, WI

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Sustainability Plan 2021
Approved by the Sustainability Committee October 12, 2021

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Executive Summary

The Cross Plains Sustainability Committee, as directed by the Cross Plains Village Board, has prepared a Sustainability Plan for the Village of Cross Plains. This Sustainability Plan draws on community input as gathered through a community survey (print and online), a public forum, and engagement with neighboring communities. The Cross Plains Sustainability Committee recommends a set of 25 actions over the following one to three years to meet a set of sustainability goals around water use, energy use, solid waste, land use and transportation, and general sustainability.

The Sustainability Plan is comprised of 25 recommended actions which were vetted against four main criteria:

- Meets the needs of the present (e.g. cost)
- Meets the needs of future generations
- Environmental stewardship (e.g. reduces greenhouse gas emissions)
- Equity (e.g. advances racial, economic, and ability equity)

We believe these recommended actions, as prioritized by the committee, will enable the Village of Cross Plains to meet the needs of today without compromising the needs of the future. Recommendations include meeting Village energy needs with clean energy, updating urban agriculture ordinances, improving green infrastructure, reducing Village energy use, developing a transit plan (e.g. bus/ shuttle service) to connect Cross Plains with surrounding communities, and reducing solid waste through improved recycling and composting programs in the Village.

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Sustainability Committee

The Cross Plains Sustainability Committee was created by the Village Board in August, 2019. The mission of the Sustainability Committee is to guide and assist Cross Plains residents, businesses, and government in becoming a community that meets the needs of today without compromising the needs of the future. The goal of this committee is to identify and advocate for changes related to environmental stewardship, creating a more sustainable Village.

Public Participation Process

In August 2020 the Village Board approved the Sustainability Committee's recommendation to develop a sustainability plan for the Village of Cross Plains.

To develop a sustainability plan, the sustainability committee drew input from the community through three primary ways: a community survey (using both print and online survey methods), a public forum, and monthly meetings of the Sustainability Committee in which community members were able to provide public comment on the planning process. The goal was to engage the community robustly so that the community deeply informed the Village's sustainability plan.

Community Survey

Members of the Cross Plains community were engaged initially through a community-wide survey conducted in spring 2020. To develop survey questions, the Sustainability Committee drew heavily on sustainability surveys used by neighboring communities, particularly Middleton, Wisconsin. Using templates from Middleton and other communities, the committee developed a nine-question survey tailored for our community needs. The survey was offered online and in print. Print versions were delivered to community members as part of the Scouting for Food package of information in 2020. Physical surveys could also be picked up at the village offices. Links to the online version of the survey were also shared in the village newsletter and on the village website. Physical surveys were picked up through the Scouting for Food program, and could also be dropped off at the Village offices. The survey was open for a period of three weeks.

Survey Results

102 completed surveys were received. One of the goals of the survey was to see if there was support in the Village for the work of a sustainability committee and the creation of a sustainability plan. The creation of a sustainability plan was well received with a positive affirmation of 70.6%. The survey questions and responses were categorized into the following themes: Water, Energy, Solid Waste,

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Transportation and Land Use, and General Sustainability. The following sections describe overall results from the survey.

Water

The survey resulted in positive responses to questions concerning stormwater runoff and how to handle it. Respondents would like to see policies that would meet the demands for future weather events (70.6%) and implement water management methods that restore or mimic the natural water cycle (65.7%). Many people felt that the new developments and areas to the north and east of the village need to have water retention systems that would be responsible for more than just their water runoff. Other answers varied from more wetlands to larger storm drains to a stormwater utility. A comment was made to plan like the 1,000 year flood will happen next year.

Energy

The survey also saw a desire for renewable energy both for village operations (71.6%) and for homeowners (71.6%), with 44.2% willing to pay additional taxes to reduce carbon output and 52.9% not willing to pay additional costs. With regard to energy usage in homes, the survey found general approval for providing information about permitting for wind and solar, reduced building permit fees if installing a renewable energy system, and the creation of a shade tree/urban forest program. There were many responses wanting the village to plant more trees; areas mentioned were along Main Street, in Zander Park, and in newer developments. A resident would also like the sustainability committee to advocate for the use of nuclear power citing the safety of modern reactors.

Solid Waste

With regard to solid waste, the survey reflected a positive response (~65%) to the village selling compost bins at a discount and giving out instructions on how to compost. This compost can then be collected along with the trash and recycling or at a village designated drop-off area. There were also desires expressed for a recycling center, an expanded recycling program that could take more items (batteries, paper milk cartons), and a verification that recyclables were being recycled properly.

Transportation and Land Use

Transportation saw a need for a bike path to Middleton (53%) and a possible bus/shuttle service (45%). There were also many write in votes for commuter rail with 10 people indicating a preference for it. Electric car charging stations were also mentioned.

The survey did not have a specific section related to land use but a few residents did comment about reducing the number of new housing developments and cautioned about building homes on top of the hills. Many responses dealt with how water, landscaping, and yard waste are interconnected. Many

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people would like to encourage the use of drought-tolerant native species (68.6%) both for landscaping and for along creek banks in order to reduce runoff and preventing erosion, ban or encourage a reduced use of fertilizers and pesticides, expand edible landscaping, see the creation of rain gardens, and promote the community garden. Respondents also felt there should be more street sweeping to keep the gutters clean and possibly consider curbside leaf pickup.

Additional Concerns

Villagers also commented on the need to reduce light pollution, light trespass, and street lighting in the village. This can be accomplished by informing the public about the village light ordinance and conducting an audit and evaluation of street lighting in the village.

Residents also used the survey to voice general concerns and opinions. These include a desire to not build structures in Zander Park, the need to reduce village buildings, an audit of public works, and a clean up of the Pott's Inn parking lot.

There were responses to the survey that indicated that they would only be supportive of sustainability programs if they did not increase taxes both in the short and long term. And there were also responses that praised the village for taking an active role in sustainability matters.

Another major aspect of this survey is the need to educate the residents of the Village of Cross Plains in various aspects of sustainability. Many of the topics listed above are educational in nature and forums held at the library or school could function to fill this information void. A sustainability webpage is forthcoming and will function as an information resource.

The next step would be the creation of a sustainability plan where many topics listed above can be turned into action items or village policy.

Public Forum

In November 2020, the Sustainability Committee hosted a public forum for community members to provide input into the plan as a supplement to survey results. It was hosted virtually, on Zoom, due to the pandemic. Additional ideas were generated on a variety of topics such as general education (for example, offer Village residents the opportunity for a "Solar Tour" to see existing installations) and relaxing restrictions on backyard poultry and beekeeping.

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Sustainability Goals

The following sustainability goals were developed by the Sustainability Committee to serve as a framework for recommended actions:

Water

The Village of Cross Plains, businesses, and residents use less water, increase the amount of infiltration for stormwater, and reduce the potential of flooding. The Village increases efforts to keep harmful substances out of all water resources.

Energy

Energy use in Cross Plains by the Village, businesses, and residents decreases. An increasing proportion of space heating, water heating, and transportation rely on electricity rather than gas. Electricity for all uses is sourced from renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.

Solid Waste

The Village of Cross Plains, businesses, and residents reduce the total output of solid waste by reducing consumption, encouraging re-use, and increasing recycling and composting.

Transportation

The Village has a network of multimodal transportation routes that incorporate green infrastructure concepts and reduce vehicle miles travelled.

Land Use

The Village has a responsible rate of balanced growth and development strives to positively impact the natural environment, health, safety, and overall quality of life.

General Sustainability

The Village of Cross Plains, businesses, and residents strive to meet the needs of the present without compromising the resources available for future generations through a culture that embraces environmental stewardship with a focus on equity across all ages, races, abilities, and income levels.

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Recommended Actions

The Sustainability Committee recommends the Village take the following actions to increase sustainability over the next one to three years. The actions are listed in order of priority, as assigned by the committee.

Priority	Recommended Action
1	Develop a solar farm to provide solar power to the Village and residents
2	Update ordinances related to urban agriculture to enable more food to be grown within the village (example, expanding chicken coop permits beyond owner-occupied housing, allowing ducks to be kept within Village limits, promoting edible landscaping, etc.)
3	Establish a water retainage project on 14 acres on Brewery Creek
4	Work with CARPC to reduce the threat of flooding
5	Update the light ordinance to incorporate LED technology resulting in less wasted energy and a reduction in light pollution
6	Develop a process/system for how sustainability should be considered in the decision process in committees, village board, and by employees
7	Establish a goal to meet 100 percent of all village operations energy needs with renewable energy by 2035
8	Market the Village’s medication drop location to community members
9	Promote the Focus on Energy programs to Village residents
10	Replace Village vehicles at the end of their life-cycle with electric, hybrid or alternative energy vehicles
11	Encourage new homes to meet ENERGY STAR home standards
12	Develop a set of standards/ordinances that ensure stormwater is managed to the greatest extent possible
13	Review zoning and building codes, identify impediments to green and sustainable building practices such as green roofs, grey water systems, etc., and suggest changes
14	Sustainability Committee to evaluate the Village’s Comprehensive Plan and determine areas of concern/improvement related to sustainability

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15	As a part of the Plan Commission design review process, encourage new residential subdivision over 10 units (both single and multi-family) to provide garden spaces for their residents.
16	Set a goal of electrifying all new buildings for which it is practical by 2025, and 25 percent of existing buildings by 2030
17	Prioritize energy efficiency and conservation in all new municipal purchases
18	Pursue a partnership with Middleton to expand recycling for items that cannot be recycled curbside
19	Implement Village wide food compost collection services
20	Complete energy audits of all village facilities and vehicles
21	Research current construction waste recycling efforts to determine how to improve recycling rates
22	Determine and map all the collector streets and whether or not they currently contain marked bike routes
23	Design and execute a transit plan (e.g. bus/ shuttle service) to connect Cross Plains with surrounding communities
24	Develop sustainability checklists (one page) formatted to the needs of each specific committee and handed out for consideration in decisions.
25	Enact ways for residents to reduce harmful pollutants from entering waterways

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Methodology

Drawing on ideas that emerged from the 2020 community survey, public forum, and actions included in neighboring communities' climate action or sustainability plans, the Cross Plains Sustainability Committee developed an initial list of 58 potential actions. To develop the final set of 25 recommended actions included in this plan, the Sustainability Committee used the following process:

1. Potential actions were rated by each committee member against the following four criteria using a five point scale:
 - a. Meets the needs of the present (e.g. cost)
 - b. Meets the needs of future generations
 - c. Environmental stewardship (e.g. reduces greenhouse gas emissions)
 - d. Equity (e.g. advances racial, economic, and ability equity)

The results were tabulated and overall scores were shared with the full committee.

2. The committee then met to discuss the results including rating deviations outside of the norm, enabling committee members to explore the strengths and weaknesses of proposed actions with the full committee.
3. Following discussion with the full committee, committee members rated potential actions again.
4. The re-prioritized results were tabulated and listed in order of highest average score to lowest. The final results included in this plan are the 25 highest rated actions by the Sustainability Committee based on the data and themes that emerged from community engagement and scoring against the four criteria shared above.

Appendix: Community Survey



Sick of throwing money down the drain?

The Cross Plains Sustainability Committee was tasked by the Village Board to find ways to meet the resource needs of today without compromising the needs of the future through environmental stewardship. **WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU.** Please complete this survey and return it by including it with your Scouting for Food pick-up on March 14th or delivering it to the Village Hall at 2417 Brewery Road. The survey may also be completed electronically at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VoCPSustainability>. **The deadline to submit a survey is March 31, 2020.** *Survey answers are anonymous.*

1. Stormwater runoff pollutes our water resources including Black Earth Creek and increases the risk of flooding as we saw in August 2018. What should the Village do to further reduce stormwater runoff? (Check all that apply)
 - Reduce impervious surfaces in the Village
 - Community education (examples: stormwater management, how to build a rain garden, lawn and garden care, etc.)
 - Explore policy on stormwater runoff that would meet the demands for current and future weather events
 - Implement water management methods that restore or mimic the natural water cycle
 - Other (please describe)

2. The average Cross Plains household uses 120 gallons of water each day. Should the Village do any of the following to help households and businesses reduce water usage? (Check all that apply)
 - Provide information on indoor and outdoor water efficiency
 - Prohibit lawn watering during extended dry weather
 - Offer water efficiency audits
 - Encourage use of plants that are drought-tolerant, native species for residential and business landscaping
 - Other (please describe)

3. The Village used 1,090,310 kWh of electricity and 38,198 therms of natural gas last year for municipal operations, at a cost of about \$187,000. Should the Village implement strategies and technologies to reduce electricity and natural gas usage? (Check only one)
 - Yes, but only if it doesn't cost anything or the new technology pays for itself in energy savings.
 - Yes, even if the energy savings may not cover the cost of the new technology. I am willing to pay more in taxes to help us reduce our carbon footprint.
 - No

4. Which of the following, if any, would you use to commute to Middleton/Madison?
 - Park-and-Ride
 - Bus/shuttle
 - Bike path
 - Other (please describe)
 - I don't commute

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- 5. As it pertains to energy usage in homes, which of the following should the Village provide? (Check all that apply)
 - Education and information about energy efficiency and conservation
 - Require more energy-efficient building construction standards than current code requires
 - Establish a loan fund for residents and businesses for energy efficiency upgrades
 - Provide rebates for Focus on Energy Home Energy audits
 - Waive or reduce the building permit fee if installing a renewable energy system
 - Explore an shade tree/urban forest program to reduce cooling costs
 - I do not think that it is the role of the Village to be involved in these
 - Other (please describe)

- 6. What options would you support to encourage greater sustainability in the Village? (Check all that apply)
 - Develop a Village sustainability action plan
 - Renewable energy for Village operations
 - Renewable energy options for homeowners
 - Educational forums at a school or the library
 - Environmental service-learning projects with the schools (students do service work)
 - None – The Village should not take an active role in this effort
 - Other (please describe)

- 7. Food composting reduces the amount of trash collected by the Village. Should the Village do any of the following? (Check all that apply)
 - Give out instructions on how to compost
 - Sell compost bins at a discounted cost
 - Collect compost in a separate container along with trash and recycling
 - The Village should not be involved in this matter
 - Other (please describe)

- 8. How old are you?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 17 or younger ● 18-25 ● 26-35 ● 36-45 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 46-55 ● 56-65 ● 66 and or older ● Prefer not answer
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- 9. What other things should Cross Plains, as a municipality, do to reduce the impact on the environment?

To be included on email lists pertaining to sustainability, please email Village Administrator Bill Chang at bchang@cross-plains.wi.us