

Coordinated Plan Committee Gets First Look at GIS Maps

Monday, October 29, 2001. At this special meeting of the Coordinated Plan Committee, Doug Miskowiak and Larry Cutforth of the UW-Madison Land Information and Computer Graphics Facility (LICGF) presented a series of computer-generated maps of the City and Town of Brillion. These maps are part of the pilot project sponsored by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. The maps represent the first planning maps for the City and Town of Brillion that the Coordinated Plan Committee has had an opportunity to review.

The presentation began with a description of geographic information systems (GIS) technology. Simply stated, GIS is a method of computerized mapping that allows a map to be linked to a database of supporting information. To obtain more information about a particular property on a GIS-based map a user can simply “click on” a parcel to view attribute information (i.e. zoning, parcel acreage, assessment, etc.). GIS-based maps include multiple layers of information (i.e. roads, land uses, natural areas, etc.) that can be modified or arranged in any combination desired on a single map. The different combinations of map layers and attribute data provide countless ways to study the planning area. As an example, layers that portray lakes, rivers streams, and forested areas can be combined to outline areas that the City and Town may be preserved for open space and recreational uses.

During the presentation, three (3) maps were presented to the Coordinated Plan Committee: Growth Management Factors, Farmland Priority Zones, and Environmental Corridors. The Growth Management Factors Map included: existing land use, wetlands, surface water features, legal parcels and forest coverage. The Farmland Priority Zones Map illustrated prime agricultural areas based on soil type and productivity. The Environmental Corridors Map provided information about the location of hillsides, wetlands, water bodies, stream corridors, wooded areas and floodplains in the City and Town of Brillion.

Before the meeting adjourned, some time was available for a demonstration of interactive mapping. To begin this demonstration a Future Land Use Map for the City and Town of Brillion was presented. This map illustrated areas that were desirable for future development based on soil conditions, access to roadways, and slope conditions. While the map was interesting, the Committee agreed that the parameters used to make the map (i.e. soils, access to roadways, slope) were not the “right” conditions on which to base a Future Land Use Map of the City and Town of Brillion. The Committee was more interested in using the location of active farmland, soil suitability for development purposes, sanitary district boundaries, and the results of the cognitive mapping to create a future land use map of the area.

A follow-up interactive mapping meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, December 4, 2001. At this meeting, an updated copy of the Existing Land Use Map and the cognitive map results will be available. The Coordinated Plan Committee will then be able to ask “what if” questions about future development and “see” how the City and Town would look if these changes occurred. This interactive GIS display should yield some interesting results that will be helpful in the development of the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element and the Land Use Elements of the *City and Town of Brillion Coordinated Comprehensive Plan*.