

**DANE COUNTY, WISCONSIN
NATIONAL SPATIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE (NSDI)
COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT**

WHERE IS DANE COUNTY AND WHY IS IT A NSDI SITE?



Dane County is located in southern Wisconsin and is home to the state capital of Madison and the University of Wisconsin. Like so many areas of the nation, Dane County is experiencing significant increases in population growth and in commercial development in its traditionally rural areas. The Township and City of Verona were specifically chosen for this project because both they face development issues typical of many parts of the U.S; balancing growth while preserving a historically agricultural character, and attractive, convenient residential area.

During 1997, Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk conducted a series of land use workshops to determine what the citizens of Dane County valued most in their communities. Residents identified both farming as an economic activity and farmland as open space as highly valued. The results of these workshops were incorporated into the county's action plan entitled *Design Dane!, 1998*. The publication served as a foundation for communicating the need for land use planning, and strategies for incorporating resident input. Among those issues captured in the document was the need to use the latest available technology to assist in decision making.



WHO ARE THE PARTNERS IN THE DANE COUNTY PROJECT?

The Project's partners include: Dane County Planning & Development Department; Dane County Land Information Office; University of Wisconsin-Madison – Land Information and Computer Graphics Facility (LICGF); College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, Departments of Urban & Regional Planning, Soil Science and Institute for Environmental Studies; Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI); and, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Communication was a primary focus of the project from the onset. Facilitated by Dane County officials and the University of Wisconsin, numerous workshops were held to engage Dane citizens in the tools available to assist in the land use planning process. By having the ability to better understand, forecast, and visualize alternative land use scenarios, it was envisioned that citizens would have a stronger voice in the decision-making process.

HOW WE APPROACHED THE PROJECT



Working in a collaborative partnership, the County government of Dane and the University of Wisconsin developed a series of technical land use workshops. Each workshop series focused in areas that would increase the "citizen planners'" understanding of resources allocation and the interdependencies of socioeconomic, environmental, and financial issues. Participants were asked to allocate resources using a "what if" scenario, they were also provided with status and trend data on Dane County and lastly, participants were informed on a variety of technology and multi-media tools available to convey graphic information.

The Internet was used to facilitate citizen participation and involvement in the planning efforts. The Workshops were advertised on the County web sites. Class registration was accessible over the Internet. Additional technology that was pivotal to the success of the project was the development and implementation of a series of Internet accessible tools, which facilitated interactive mapping of Dane County resources. Citizen planners as well as the general public had the ability to access the Shaping Dane County web site, and view pre-generated thematic maps and also generate maps that may be of particular interest to them.

By generating an interactive web site where citizens can access data, maps, animated visualizations of projected development impacts and tools, Dane County residents began to design their own vision of development. As stated by Steve Ventura, director of the Land Information Computer Graphics Facility, “our goal is to provide a fact base so that people can talk about what their values and beliefs are instead of arguing about what projected growth will look like.” The integration of technology, communication and public policy was fully realized when on February 24, 2000, to a meeting at Verona City Hall where the *Shaping Dane* project maps and planning information featured and a simulcast of the meeting displayed over the Internet by Cybervic.com.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF THE DANE COUNTY PROJECT?

As a result of Dane County government efforts and the collaborative partnerships with other organizations, participants from the City of Verona have essentially re-designed their local land use planning efforts to incorporate information technologies. Participants were stimulated by the use of live interactive geographical data as part of the planning process. Additionally, participants were critical in identifying weakness of data, which supports the need for local input in data development, review, and maintenance. Though there is no supporting evidence to suggest that the entire planning process has changed due to this project, it is clear that those involved in the workshops and exposed to the power of the data analysis tools, support its future use.

The Dane County effort has resulted in several important products and also highlighted areas where effort can be focused in order to further improve collaborative data related initiatives. Primary products include a suite of software modules to support land use planning and resource allocation at the community level. An interactive web site (www.lic.wisc.edu/shapingdane/) which facilitates viewing existing maps and the interactive generation of new products, a wealth of survey results from the workshops which captures the interest and concerns of participants related to the future development of Dane county. To support the needs of the citizen planners, significant amounts of spatial data was aggregated and messaged to facilitate ease of use. Through the process of data aggregation and map development, the need for high quality, easily accessible data of many themes was highlighted.

WHAT ARE THE DANE COUNTY’S FUTURE PLANS FOR THE PROJECT?

The continued interest in *Shaping Dane* is primarily dependent on the citizens of the County and specifically the City of Verona. The County Executive is dedicated to supporting smart growth and implementing the technologies to support better decision making. This is evidenced by the continued funding for data development and use of GIS within the county government. The University intends to support the Planning Analyst tools, the interactive *Shaping Dane* web pages and support the planning process in collaboration with its partners. Areas of particular interest in the future are to observe the impact this effort has had on the actual planning decisions made at the local level and what additional data and tools may be needed by the citizen planner to support future growth concerns of the community.

