By Mark Roffers, AICP
Vandewalle & Associates

Several Wisconsin communities are now putting the promise of “Smart Growth” into practice. These communities have prepared comprehensive plans that comply with the 1999 Smart Growth legislation, spearheaded by 1000 Friends of Wisconsin. In the process, they have explored innovative community development strategies and embarked on extensive public participation efforts.

Vandewalle & Associates—a consulting firm based in Madison—has managed the preparation of four recently adopted Smart Growth plans. We are now receiving about one formal request each week from communities interested in completing new comprehensive plans. Clearly, this thing is catching on!

The following are case studies of four different Wisconsin communities which have recently completed comprehensive plans, or are in the planning process.

City of Oak Creek
Oak Creek, located directly south of Milwaukee and Mitchell International Airport, was the fastest growing mid-sized community in Wisconsin in the 1990s. Over 1,400 Oak Creek residents participated in the process to prepare Oak Creek’s recently completed comprehensive plan.

Participation efforts included a written community survey, a two-day Community Vision Forum, a student vision meeting, focus groups and public consideration of “alternative growth scenarios” and a recommended “growth concept plan.”

Wisconsin Communities Putting Smart Growth into Action

The growth concept plan illustrates eight different planning districts within the community. Included among these districts is a system of permanent “green corridors,” which define the city's image. The Lakeview Village district proposes an exciting, mixed-use redevelopment plan for Oak Creek’s Lake Michigan shoreline. The nine state-required elements within the comprehensive plan provide detailed guidance on how Oak Creek can achieve the vision within its growth concept plan.

City of Mauston
Mauston is a city of 3,700 located along Interstate 90/94 in central Wisconsin. Its interstate location and a recently opened state prison nearby have driven Mauston’s recent growth. The city's recently adopted comprehensive plan addresses an issue facing many rural Wisconsin places—protecting and enhancing “small town” character while still accommodating logical development. Specifically, Mauston’s recently adopted comprehensive plan:

- Recommends a land use phasing plan to manage community expansion;
- Proposes that new development be designed as traditional neighborhoods to reflect the existing community fabric; and
- Provides a roadmap for downtown redevelopment.

Mauston is now implementing its plan by preparing a new zoning ordinance, a detailed downtown redevelopment plan, and a community-wide park and open space plan.

Village of Cottage Grove
Cottage Grove, a small village located just east of Madison, grew by an incredible 12% per year in the 1990s. The community saw a large amount of “bedroom community” residential development early in this period, with strip commercial development following in the late 1990s.

The Village’s recently adopted comprehensive plan seeks to guide future community growth in a way that limits unplanned sprawl, enhances a sense of place and works in harmony with nearby communities. The land use element proposes a new downtown for a large undeveloped parcel at the center of the community. This mixed-use area will include uses like a village green, community buildings, and pedestrian-oriented retail and housing. The plan’s intergovernmental cooperation component calls for strong cooperation with nearby governments to ensure a permanent open space area between Cottage Grove and Madison.

(Continued on page 7)
The Need For Cold

I know exactly where I’ll be as the sun rises on the morning of Saturday, November 18th. I’ll be sitting in the woods with a hunting rifle cradled in my lap and a thermos of hot coffee rested against the closest tree, listening for the unmistakable sound of whitetail deer bounding through the fallen leaves.

I came to deer hunting relatively late in life. My friend, Harald Jordahl, invited me out to his family’s farm the day after Thanksgiving the year he had co-managed my failed campaign for the State Assembly. I owed him for all his hard work, and I went out of a sense of obligation. Harald and I clambered up a rickety ladder to his tree stand, which surveyed an open field, filled that day with snow and wind. The thermometer at the farmhouse read 10 degrees, but there were no such tropical temperatures in the tree stand. For three hours we sat there in almost complete silence so as not to scare off the whitetails. By the time we grappled our way back down the ladder, my teeth were chattering and my feet were numb and we had seen precisely zero deer. I did not yet understand the allure of deer hunting, but I did feel that I had gone a long way toward repaying my debt of gratitude.

I have gone back every year since, not so much because of that morning but because of that afternoon. The sun was blazing and the temperatures soared into the mid-20’s and we gave up the deer stand to walk up and down the bluffs. At mid-afternoon, alone on another futile attempt to find deer and drive them Harald’s way, I took a break and laid down in the high grass and snow on the side of a south-facing hill. The sky above was flawless blue and the cold air felt good to a guy who had just trudged up a steep hill in a heavy coat and wool trousers.

That was eight years ago. The last three deer seasons there has been no snow and the temperatures have been so warm that one year I hunted on the last day of the season — a day which flirted with December — in a tee shirt and a light jacket that I wore only because it was regulation blaze-orange. I hated being comfortable. Without the freezing morning in the stand, I can’t earn the glorious afternoon on the hillside. I want the good Wisconsin cold back.

Facing the cold — and devising strategies to stay warm from long underwear to hot coffee — is part of who we are as Wisconsinites. It’s not just the natural environment that needs cold; our culture needs it as well. The time-honored production of maple syrup, for example, depends on cold as maple trees need prolonged temperatures under 40 degrees to survive.

Our cold is being taken from us by global warming, which is caused in large part by the carbon dioxide produced when we burn fossil fuels in our cars and trucks. We’re producing more carbon dioxide than ever because we’re driving more than ever because we’re living in ever-more-sprawling, auto-dependent places. If we want the cold back over the long-term we need to reverse direction. In the meantime, we can only hope that nature will throw us a curve ball now and then.

So, here’s hoping that this Fall will be a retrenchment in the warming trend. And if on that Saturday morning in late November — when my last sip of hot coffee is gone, there is nothing I can do to warm up and I have another hour in the woods — I curse the cold, I swear I’ll do it with a smile.
**What a Difference a Year Makes**

We are coming up on the one-year anniversary of the date Governor Thompson signed *Smart Growth for Wisconsin* into law. A great deal has happened in this past year. Some communities, as you read about in our cover article, have jumped on the Smart Growth band wagon and have started to develop plans for the future growth of their communities. Admittedly, the law has also gotten its share of negative feedback — with criticisms ranging from: “This law barely scratches the surface of what needs to be done to improve land use in Wisconsin” to “This law goes way too far in trying to force planning on the citizens of Wisconsin.”

Not surprisingly, I don’t take either of those positions. I see Smart Growth as an incredible opportunity for people throughout this state, to put on their work gloves and get their hands dirty while creatively thinking about what they want their homes to look and feel like over time. As director of the Institute, I have had a host of opportunities to visit and study how different communities are creatively addressing land use challenges — how they are refusing the status quo route of allowing their communities to embrace the Wal-Marts and generic neighborhood plans that so many places throughout the country since World War II have adopted — and instead are either returning to more traditional neighborhood plans, or are developing new ways of providing homes, shops, jobs and recreation for their residents.

This law is not a panacea; it was never meant to be. It is not a top-down mandate on how communities must plan. It is a significant step on a path that will ideally protect Wisconsin’s farmland and vital natural areas from irresponsible, unattractive and inefficient development that we all witness far too often. It is a step towards encouraging us to find ways to improve the livability of our cities and villages for families of all income levels. It is a chance for us to look around and find what we love about the state we live in and then ensure these things are around for a long time to come.

In an effort to make as much information about “smart growth” (the law and the idea) available to our members and others concerned about land use, we have created a new web site: [www.1kfriends.org](http://www.1kfriends.org) (thanks to a grant from the Joyce Foundation). The site offers technical information about the new law as well as information about creative development tools used throughout the country (see Dave’s article on Portland on page 4 of this newsletter) and the state that may serve as models for us as we tackle the challenge of planning for our own neighborhoods. You will find more information about the site on page 8 of this newsletter — we hope you will be pleased with the amount of information the site provides. And we invite our members and other visitors to the site to contact us with your comments, as the site is designed to evolve over time.

For now however, join me in wishing a happy first birthday to *Smart Growth for Wisconsin*. And let’s hope that as it ages, we will all grow to be proud of what we have accomplished with it.

**Andrea J. Dearlove**

**Director, 1000 Friends Land Use Institute**
Going to Graceland
Notes from a trip to the mecca for land use gurus — Portland, Oregon
By Dave Cieslewicz

For land use policy wonks, going to Portland, Oregon is like avid fans of the “King” making a pilgrimage to Graceland. Portland is mecca because for the last three decades it has been the nation’s laboratory for experiments in how to manage growth and build better communities.

I went there in June for a conference of state growth management organizations and I stayed an extra day to explore the city and the surrounding area. I studied the state’s laws and plans and I talked with some residents who have been living there for many years.

The first thing you notice about downtown Portland is that there are people there. A lot of people. All the time. The test of a public space is whether people use it and Portlanders use their downtown. Even on a Sunday evening, the place was alive.

While Portland attracts visitors from all over the world, the real measure of a city is how well it treats its own residents; and Portland treats its own very well. This is a city managed first for its citizens. The neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown are lively and safe. They’re not unlike the east side of Milwaukee or Willy Street in Madison, but they are much bigger and even healthier and more eclectic.

Away from the city, new transit oriented developments are being built along the extensive light rail line. I visited one of these, called Orenco, about 15 miles west of the city. Orenco is built to take advantage of its light rail connection. Condominiums, apartments and single-family homes are all built within about a half-mile (easy walking distance) of the train station and shops are conveniently located among the homes. Rows of live-work spaces are designed so that telecommuters can have their offices downstairs and their homes on the second floor. A coffee shop, restaurant and office supply store are all virtually outside their front doors. Orenco residents could go for days without ever having to get in their cars. In fact, there is no reason why they need to own a car at all.

Portland didn’t get this good by accident. The city, its metropolitan government and the State of Oregon made it happen through foresighted public policies and a spirit of innovation. Here are some lessons from Portland:

- Plan well and take those plans seriously. In 1973, Oregon enacted a land use planning law not unlike our new Smart Growth law. It required all communities to plan according to strong standards, just like our law. 1000 Friends of Oregon (great name) was founded to make sure that communities actually did what the law required. We plan to perform the same watchdog role.
- Set realistic but meaningful limits on growth. “Urban growth boundaries” were an innovation that grew out of the 1973 planning act. Each of the state’s 224 cities is required to set growth limits based on projected population and job growth and minimum densities. While Portland’s UGB was probably set too loosely in 1980, the psychological effect was to get developers and local governments to start thinking about building on smaller lots to avoid running out of land within the growth limit too soon. When setting UGB’s, it’s important to keep in mind that they are intended not to stifle cities, but to make them healthier by directing development inward. UGB’s alone would be a disaster if they were not accompanied by very tough limits on growth outside of them.
- Stop thinking that another highway is the answer. We have been pouring billions of dollars into highway building in the U.S. for fifty years in the vain hope that another ribbon of concrete will ease congestion. It never does. The new road just fills up and the highwaymen call for more billions to build more roads that just fill up again. In
Portland, a coalition led by 1000 Friends of Oregon killed plans for a beltline highway and, instead, persuaded the federal, state and local governments to embrace a really balanced transportation system that includes expansion of light rail and more transit oriented communities like Orenco. A light rail line can move as many as 40,000 people per hour compared to about 1,500 on a mile of parallel expressway.

- Think regionally, but make the city work first. Land use and transportation decisions are overseen by a metropolitan government covering the 24 cities in the Portland area. Metro government overcomes some of the petty bickering and tax base competition that drove so many bad land use decisions in Oregon... and still does in Wisconsin. But each city is given substantial leeway to make the goals of the metro government work in their communities. A careful balance of power is important. A metro government where suburbs could run roughshod over the city would not work.

- Expect progress, not perfection. One criticism of Portland is that it has plenty of sprawl development that looks as bad as anywhere in America. Of course that’s true because so much bad development took place between the end of WW II and the 1980’s, when Portland’s innovative policies started to have a noticeable effect. We can’t just erase decades of mistakes, but they will fade over time.

Another criticism is that the UGB has driven up housing costs. While that’s a debatable point, there is no question that housing costs in Portland have gone up faster than most communities in America. That’s the result of the high quality of life brought on in large part by solid growth management. Still, the pressure that growth management exerts on housing prices should not be ignored. The answer is to make more land available not by expanding the UGB but by breaking down barriers to affordable housing in all of the 24 cities that make up the Portland metro area and by increasing density.

Wisconsin can do what Oregon did and more. In fact, our new Smart Growth law contains home-grown innovations that no other state has — not even Oregon — including the Smart Growth Dividend and the model traditional neighborhoods ordinance (see the Legislative Update elsewhere in this newsletter).

Fortunately, our growth rate is about half that of Oregon’s, so there is still time to get it right. As in Oregon, we’ve started with a comprehensive planning law, but that is just a beginning. Now we need to make sure the law actually works on the ground and we need to change our transportation priorities and renew our cities and their neighborhoods.

We are not Oregon. We have our own history, politics and natural resources. We’ll do it our way, but let’s keep going.
Legislative Update: Setting the Next Agenda

With the Legislature out of town until January, when they begin a new two-year term, 1000 Friends is researching and drafting new initiatives and retooling our WisConservation legislative agenda.

While the complete agenda will be extensive with about 40 items, the following items are likely to be our top priorities.

Fully Fund Smart Growth Planning

The new Smart Growth law, enacted a year ago, promises local communities state financial and technical support for land use planning. A good start was made with $3.5 million in the current state budget, but an annual budget of about $5 to $10 million is needed to provide adequate support. We are working to get the needed funding included in the new state budget, which will be introduced in February.

Complete Design of the Smart Growth Dividend

The Smart Growth law also called for an incentive program of financial help for local governments if they write a comprehensive plan and then actually grow in ways that are not sprawling. The idea is that smart growth results in a dividend because it is less expensive to provide public services to less sprawling developments. Because the largest share of the state budget is aids to local governments, it makes sense for the state to provide them with an incentive to grow more efficiently. The outlines of the program were included in the Smart Growth law, but details need to be worked out in the new state budget. We are working to write a program that provides a substantial incentive to grow efficiently in urban areas and to protect land from development in rural places.

Enact the Smart Growth Model Ordinances

Smart Growth requires the University of Wisconsin Extension to write model ordinances for traditional neighborhood developments and conservation subdivisions. Traditional neighborhoods have urban amenities like sidewalks, small neighborhood parks and corner stores and they are built at a density that makes driving optional, not mandatory. Conservation subdivisions are rural developments that leave more land for open space. The model ordinances, designed to be used by local governments, must be approved by legislative committees early next year. Our board member, Professor Brian Ohm, is overseeing their drafting. We are working to make sure these ordinances are approved by the Legislature.

Reform TIF

Tax incremental financing (TIF) is a taxpayer subsidy for development that was intended, when the law was enacted twenty years ago, to help in the redevelopment of blighted urban areas. But the law has gone astray and we found that it has been responsible for the development of about 30,000 acres of open space. We are working to close loopholes that allow this to happen. We served on a Governor’s TIF task force where our recommendations to tighten up on “greenfield” TIFs were approved. Now, we’ll work to get the Governor to accept the recommendations of his task force and for the Legislature to enact them.

Improve the Farmland Preservation Program

The state’s 20-year old program designed to protect farmland from development is fundamentally sound, but it needs an overhaul. We are proposing a bold new initiative that would bolster the program with an additional $6 million a year, target its benefits where they are needed most, provide more permanent protections through a new purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE) program, stiffen penalties for developing land on which taxes have been reduced under the program, mesh it with the new Smart Growth planning law and slow both annexations of farmland and the helter-skelter building of houses in the countryside. We can do all this while making the program easier for farmers to access and for the state and local governments to administer. We are working to build a coalition behind our proposal.

In addition to these items, we will continue our support for a Wisconsin Historic Trust, a billboard reduction bill and transportation policy reform that slows road-building and provides more support for mass transit.

The full agenda should be finalized in October and some of the legislation should be drafted and ready to go when the Legislature convenes just after New Year’s Day. The updated agenda will be on our web site in November.
Each detailed town land use plan will (ideally) fit within the broad framework offered by the preferred countywide framework plan. The remaining nine comprehensive plan elements will then be completed to serve the recommended framework and land use plans.

Lessons Learned
The first batch of “Smart Growth” compliant comprehensive plans teaches us several lessons, including:

• Communities have the power to define a vision and successfully manage growth through preparation and implementation of “Smart Growth” comprehensive plans. Implementation gets much easier when intergovernmental cooperation is a part of the planning process.

• The public will participate in comprehensive planning if the local government is serious about providing a broad range of meaningful participation opportunities. An active, supportive public then makes it easier for local officials to take a stand on difficult issues.

• Basic education regarding the functions and importance of comprehensive planning will be required in places where “planning” has been a foreign or dirty word. In addition, a significant additional amount of local and professional expertise will need to be developed over the next several years to handle the work.

• The new legislation has raised the bar over what the community must consider in a comprehensive planning process. However, the legislation in itself does not guarantee that good planning will result.

• Further refinements, rules, and interpretations on Smart Growth should make it easier for communities to meet requirements, not more difficult. For example, the legislation

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**Cover story, from page**

**Lincoln County**

Lincoln County is located at the southern edge of Wisconsin’s “North Woods” along Highway 51. The County and 15 of its towns are midway through a challenging process to prepare the County’s first comprehensive plan. Over one-half of the County’s budget has been devoted to public involvement at both the town and county levels.

Lincoln County and Vandewalle are working directly with locally appointed town land use committees to develop town vision statements and prepare town land use plans. Nearly 250 town residents participated in highly interactive town vision setting workshops this past Spring.

At the same time, a county advisory committee is working to develop a countywide framework plan through the preparation of three different growth alternatives. These alternatives have recently been presented for public consideration.

**Voters First Plan Offers Recipe for Bipartisan Campaign Reform**

Campaign finance reform is an important topic in this year’s presidential election — and it is also an issue we are struggling with in Wisconsin. Although both the Wisconsin Senate and Assembly passed versions of campaign finance reform, the two sides were not able to work out their differences and no progress was made.

Passing campaign finance reform requires bipartisan cooperation and compromise, which is why an alliance of 20 public interest organizations, 1000 Friends included, has developed an approach for breaking partisan gridlock.

The Voters First bill takes some provisions from both the Republican and Democratic reform proposals. It includes the following features:

• Nearly triples the size of public grants to candidates, creating a much greater incentive to limit spending.

• Establishes stringent spending limits that allow candidates to spend less than a third as much as the highest spending gubernatorial and senate candidates spent in 1998 and just over half as much as the highest spending assembly candidate spent.

• Reduces the clout of big donors by cutting in half the maximum contribution limits to legislative candidates from individuals and reduces the individual contribution limit for the governor’s race from $10,000 to $1,000.

• Remedies the problem of independent electioneering by special interest groups by providing matching grants to candidates who face special interest campaigns and requiring groups that run “issues ads” to identify themselves and disclose their funding source.

The Voters First coalition has initiated a pledge campaign to ask for candidate support of the proposal. For more information, contact the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign at 608/255-4260.
New Web Site for 1000 Friends!

This summer, 1000 Friends received a grant from the Joyce Foundation to help with our efforts towards implementing Smart Growth. In order to get as much information as possible to as many people as possible, we decided to create a new web site that would offer one-stop shopping for all your Smart Growth needs.

Visitors to the site (www.1kfriends.org) will find an overview of the law, a break-down and description of its components, links to the state’s site to find the exact statutory language, and links to other important sites for guidance on developing many of the comprehensive plan elements defined by the law.

The information provided is not all technical, however. One of the biggest barriers to finding responsible development alternatives is a scarcity of creative options for people to imagine when envisioning their community’s growth. These options and alternatives do exist, though, and we hope to make some of them more readily available through this site. One section of the web site will be accurately called, “Picture Smart Growth.” In it you will find images of “smart growth” and references to those places or developers responsible for them.

For example, in a section called “Picture Conservation Subdivisions,” we show pictures of a conservation subdivision in Grays Lake, Illinois called Prairie Crossing. This subdivision combines elements of conservation and traditional neighborhood design to offer its residents beautiful, unique houses with prairie garden landscaping, quick access to Chicago’s Metra line, an on-site organic farm, a school and hundreds of acres of protected prairie. We will also include background about the development and contact information for those visitors who want to learn more. We will offer more images and contact information in various stages of the web site’s development.

In the Spring of 2001, we will include another section of the site intended to help communities tackle the challenges of implementing Smart Growth. We will study and document the efforts of four communities of different sizes and locations throughout the state who are in the process of completing comprehensive plans. The site will include information about their public surveys, mapping, visioning exercises and the extensive discussions among community members about how they will grow. We hope that providing this look into the process will give other communities creative ideas about how they might proceed.

The site will not be exclusively devoted to Smart Growth, however. Two other sections of note will be our Legislative Page — which will give visitors up-to-date information on our legislative efforts and how to contact legislators; and our Land Use Projects page — which outlines the many different initiatives of the Institute including our Rural Counsel Project, our Cities Project and our Benchmarks Project among others.

Finally, you will find archived newsletters, a list of our publications, important links and resources, information about the history and mission of the organization, information about the staff and board, and of course, information about how to join our efforts towards responsible land use reform in Wisconsin.

We hope you will find all of the above information in a format that is easy to read — we welcome your feedback.

Please note that in addition to a new address for our web site, the office has a new email address as well: friends@1kfriends.org.

Our old address will continue to work for another year while we make the transition.

Coming in November

In My Neighborhood: Celebrating Wisconsin Cities

Just in time for the holiday season, our second anthology, In My Neighborhood, will be published in November. The full-color 164-page book encourages analysis, discussion and celebration of the role healthy cities play in a healthy environment.

The talented contributors, (including former NPR host Ray Suarez, screenwriter John Roach, Green Bay Packer board member Tom Olejniczak, poets Jim Hazard and Bruce Taylor, and photographers Zane Williams, Brent Nicastro and Tom Bamberger) remind us of those uniquely urban things that deserve celebration as they also address the challenges of urban life.

The book will be available in bookstores throughout the state, as well as through the 1000 Friends office.

More information will be available in our Winter newsletter. Stay tuned!
We would like to thank those who have joined our efforts to promote sound land use decision making in Wisconsin. We also thank those who have increased their investment in our organization’s work. Thank You and Welcome New 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Inc. Members!

**Friends Circle ($1000 and greater)**
- Taylor, John Guest, 1840

**Friends ($100 to $249)**
- Bradley, Marcia, 1848
- Herb, Anne W., 1862
- Jones, Lee & Rosemary, 1863
- Smithies, Lois K., 1843

**Regular Membership ($35 to $99)**
- Austin, Cheryl & Wilbur, 1872
- Balcer, Jane, 1838
- Burton, Barbara & Thomas, 1849
- Chover, Flo & Josh, 1847
- Cutforth, Larry, 1869
- Dalrymple, Alison, 1836
- Eagan, Patrick & Lloyd, 1857
- Farmilo, Mary C., 1850
- Frank, Peder, 1861
- Green, Katherine, 1856

**Friends ($100 to $249)**
- Saar, Elizabeth A., 1864
- Savonne, Kathryn, 1841
- White, Maurice & Grace, 1855

**Regular Membership ($35 to $99)**
- Bradley, Kay M., 1865
- Brethauer, Douglas P., 1871
- Czynszak-Lyne, Mary & Paul Lyne, 1852
- Diener, Tom & Bettygene, 1834
- Giltz, Carol, 1844
- Good, Laura Ward, 1846
- Huxmann, Jean & Steve, 1859
- Laird, A.K., 1839
- McEntire, Margaret, 1870
- Schwahn, Phyllis Lathrope, 1832
- Severance, Jim, 1835

**Friends Circle ($1000 and greater)**
- Jeffries, Mark, 1853
- Johnson, Ralph & Jeannine, 1831
- Kelley, John J. & Jacqueline, 1866
- Lazaris, Pam, Planning Service & Solutions, 1862
- Mouchan, Marc, 1874
- Roberts, Barbara Z., 1843
- Sromovsky, Jason, 1846
- Sugden, Nancy & Robert Newbery, 1860
- Tande, Dennis, 1833
- Wilson, Judith, 1854

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Your 1000 Friends of Wisconsin
Fall 2000 Newsletter is Here!

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- A Trip to „Graceland”
- Legislative Update
- www.1kfriends.org: For All Your Smart Growth Needs

1000 Friends of Wisconsin
16 North Carroll Street
Suite 810

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