



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

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Date: July 14, 2025
To: Mayor Rhodes-Conway and Common Council
From: Meagan Tuttle, Planning Division Director
Subject: Proposed Updates to Area Plan Sequence

In August 2022 the Common Council adopted a resolution to establish a new planning framework for the Planning Division, which included a sequence for undertaking the 12 area plans that will eventually apply to the entire city (Leg File [71147](#)). In the nearly 3 years since this framework was implemented, the Northeast and West Area Plans have been adopted, and the Southeast and Southwest Area Plans are underway.

This framework largely outlined the Division's long-range planning work plan for a 10-year period. However, since this framework was established, the timelines associated with other planning efforts that require close coordination with certain Area Plans' development have become clearer. These include outside entities' planning work, such as the Downtown Madison, Inc.-led Greater Downtown Economic Investment Strategy, which will also cover the entire area of the Downtown Area Plan, and UW-Madison's Campus Framework Plan update, which will fall within the Downtown and Near West Area Plans. This also includes consideration for how the Generalized Future Land Use categories in the Comprehensive Plan are used when making recommendations for future land use changes in Area Plans. As the first four plans in the sequence have been prepared, the Division has worked to establish processes and procedures that will guide the development of future plans and has offered a better understanding of the staffing allocation required to manage these plans' creation. In particular, the Division recognizes the importance of not only coordinating its planning with other long-range planning but also ensuring that it can prepare multiple Area Plans concurrently.

As a result, the Planning Division proposes to make adjustments to the original Area Plan Sequence and anticipated schedule to ensure that necessary coordination with other planning efforts occurs and to continue to develop all 12 plans within a 10-year horizon as initially envisioned. Specifically, the following changes are proposed:

- Move up the anticipated start of the Downtown Area Plan slightly to coordinate with other planning efforts and run this plan on a unique timeline.
- Pair the North & Near West Area Plans, which results in a slight delay for the North Area Plan and a slight advancement of the Near West Area Plan, to run concurrently.
- Pair the South and Near East Area Plans, which results in a slight delay for the South Area Plan and a slight advancement of the Near East Area Plan, to run concurrently.
- Prepare the Far West, Far Northeast, and Far Southeast Area Plans concurrently, which results in a slight delay for the Far West Plan, and a slight advancement of the Far Northeast and Far Southeast Plans.

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While not part of the resolution adopting the Area Plan Sequence, it was anticipated that the next full update to the Comprehensive Plan would occur in 2027-2028. Based on the need to maintain a consistent future land use policy foundation for all 12 area plans, and to ensure adequate staffing for all long-range planning work, the attached schedule also reflects the Division's intent to prepare another Comprehensive Plan Interim Update in 2028 with a full update occurring in 2031-2032 following the completion of all 12 area plans. Interim Updates to the Plan in 2023 and 2028, as well as updates to the Comprehensive Plan consistent with each of the Area Plans' adoptions, will ensure the City remains compliant with requirements in state law to maintain a current Comprehensive Plan.

Please reach out in advance of the August 5, 2025 Common Council meeting if you have any questions about the proposed changes to the Area Plan sequence and timelines.