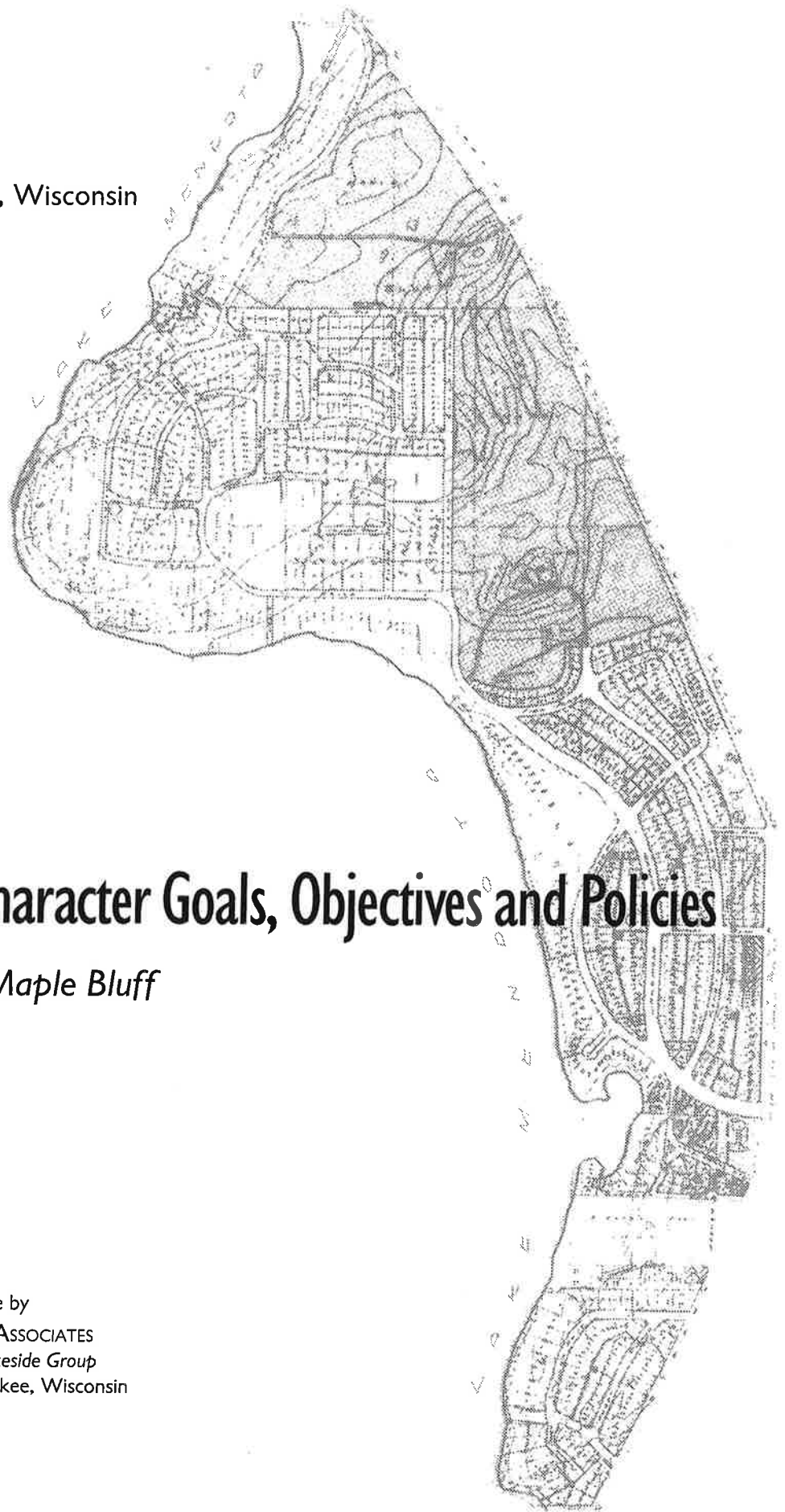


Village of Maple Bluff, Wisconsin



Community Character Goals, Objectives and Policies

a Master Plan for Maple Bluff

July 1995



Planning assistance by
VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES
Member of The Lakeside Group
Madison & Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Village Master Plan

This document — “Community Character Goals, Objectives and Policies” — is adopted as an official master plan and carries the force of a master plan as described under Section §61.35 of the Wisconsin Statutes. It has been prepared under the direction of the village plan commission pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes 61.35 and 62.23.

Acknowledgments

This plan was produced by the Village of Maple Bluff plan commission with assistance from Vandewalle & Associates, planners, Madison, Wisconsin.

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Maple Bluff Land Use and Preservation Goals

“It is a matter of public policy that the design, appearance, beauty and aesthetics of all public and private buildings, structures, landscaping and open areas are a matter of public concern and as such must be controlled so as to promote the general welfare of the community...”

The development of goals, objectives and policies are critical steps in the planning process because these statements represent the basic values and desires of the Village, in addition to serving as a strategic guide for planning, and statutory basis, for ordinance development. Village priorities are reflected in the order and implementation of these goals and objectives.

Community goals are broad statements which express public preferences for the long-term. They specifically address key issues, opportunities and problems that affect the community. Objectives are narrower than goals and are usually attainable through direct action and strategic planning. The accomplishment of objectives contributes to the fulfillment of a goal. Policies are specific activities or regulatory actions which should be considered for implementation by the Village, which are intended to accomplish goals and objectives—thereby ensuring plan implementation.

The Village has identified and established the following planning goals to assure the highest quality of design and development for all public and private projects in the Village. These goals are primarily directed to encourage and promote a high quality in the design of new buildings, remodeling and additions so as to maintain and improve the established standards of property values within the Village. These goals are also adopted to protect and improve the general appearance of all structures, landscaping and open areas in the Village; to encourage the protection of economic values, to encourage an appropriate use of properties and to foster civic pride in the beauty of the Village that will assure a functionally efficient and visually attractive Village in the future.

Community Character

The Village of Maple Bluff has a “community character” that can be defined. Its compact size, historic development and evolution, its environmental features, its architecture and open spaces all contribute to this definition.

The Village is virtually “built out” and now reflects mature municipal stability. Planning and land use are much different than in growing periods. The character of the community is established; maintenance and enhancement of this character is in the public interest. Previous periods of modest growth in population, development and traffic have been accommodated with a blend of both elegant and disruptive results on the quality of life of the community as a whole.

In recognition of the more subtle and complicated challenges of character maintenance, progressive planning practice is evolving beyond project-based design review and publicly funded streetscape projects, and into the realm of planning, protecting and enhancing the desired character of development. This provides the basis of a comprehensive approach to community character planning in which professional planning provides direction for the Village board. It is the board, representing the heritage and current values of the community, that is the primary protector of value through its responsiveness to the residents and property owners.

Land Heritage

Settlement patterns of MacBride's point, as the upper bluffs of Maple Bluff were previously called, were predominately rural, shifting to large farms and estates. At each stage of subsequent land division, the objective of lakefront living— "summer life in the country" or simply allowing those with means to reside away from the more hectic city of Madison, continues to be valid. MacBride's Point went through a number of transactions that divided the land. The largest long-term landowners were James MacBride, who once owned all of the current Village area, John Alexander, Leonard Farwell, Halle Steensland, and later, Robert La Follette.

Platting of the upper bluffs, circa 1900, was done on speculation to accommodate lakefront cabins. The few cabins constructed were all along the lake edge and were architecturally atypical; "...they were large and more closely resembles houses. By 1920 many had been winterized and were yearlong dwellings." Subsequent plats have recognized this pattern of larger lots. This plat pattern is a defining element of the Village character and is to be preserved.

The Wisconsin historical society notes that there are at least four historic districts in the Village; none has been formally designated: Fuller's Woods area, Lakewood area—particularly as it relates to the John Nolen plat and its evolution, the area between Farwell Drive and Lake Mendota, and the MacBride/La Follette woods of the central upper bluff. Both geographically and architecturally, these areas are of historic importance to Maple Bluff and the Madison metropolitan area.

The state historical society also confirms the existence of effigy and burial mounds at Fuller's Point. There were a significant number of additional effigy and burial mounds in the Village area that have been mapped, but virtually all have been destroyed by Village expansion.

The MacBride/La Follette home, 733 Lakewood, is listed on the national register of historic places. Several prominent Wisconsin architects have work in these areas and these architectural styles—particularly the 1920s and mid 1930s era—are well defined and represented in the Village.

Community Character Values

A wide variety of elements contribute to the community character. These include:

Geography

The key element of the character of Maple Bluff is its setting on the Lake Mendota bluffs. Planning and development within the community must ensure that the relation of development to the lake emphasizes the proximity of the water.

The character of Maple Bluff is strongly influenced by the environmental components of steep slopes and woodlands. These highly visible attributes are to be protected. Maple Bluff has reached the point in its evolution at which it now has mature plantings, notably the trees. Past residents have clearly valued the wooded areas—their existence is testimony to the degree of value—the Village restates this value by protecting these mature wooded areas from haphazard clearing or development.

Boundaries & Entryways

Maple Bluff has well defined edges and entries that coincide with jurisdictional boundaries. Preservation of these edges is a value that supports the character of the community.

Entryways into Maple Bluff are unique and highly-valuable assets which set the tone of the community as its “front door,” as well as provide for residents’ security and safety. The Village establishes a “sense of entry” at these points that is to be protected.

Within the Village, a combination of views, open space features and architectural styles or urban forms creates informal entry areas that contribute to the character of the community and are to be preserved.

Urban Form

Maple Bluff values its small Village charms; emphasized by a combination of architectural styles, a clear pedestrian orientation, and a well-defined residential character. These attributes, and the relationship among them, are to be preserved and enhanced.

Land Division

The platting pattern of the Village is a defining element of the community. It is the intent of the Village to preserve and protect property values and community character within this pattern of estates and larger lakefront parcels. To ensure the preservation of this pattern additional land division of platted, or metes and bounds lots shall front on a public street.

Building Scale, Siting, Density and Intensity

The most visually successful land-use relationships are those in which density and intensity of neighboring uses remain relatively consistent, even though land uses may vary significantly. The use of zoning districts which encourage similar density or intensity make for more gradual and visually comforting transitions.

The consistency of building scale is a defining element of the Village character. With the exception of carefully designed and properly sited institutional uses, large differences in building scale are disruptive to a sense of community. The proportional relationship of a structure to its site is a defining element of the Village. Zoning classifications are substantially founded on this basis.

Building additions shall be in proportion to the primary structure and should compliment the existing design and scale of the primary structure.

Infill redevelopment, such as new construction as a result of teardowns, presents particular challenges for preserving scale. Proportional volumetric, or bulk, analysis — a function of neighboring properties range of values for height, setbacks, site coverage, impervious surfaces and landscape coverage — will be used to preserve a relationship of the structure to the site and its neighbors. These relationships are particularly important when adjacent parcels are acquired and re-platted, existing buildings razed and new construction uses the resulting, larger, parcel for a single, primary structure.

Architecture

Where it is possible to identify a dominant architectural style, infill development should be comparable. Where a wider variety of styles exist, common architectural themes or elements (such as materials, colors, roof pitches or stylistic appurtenances) should be incorporated. Use of high quality materials is required. Continuance of the dominant architectural elements should be emphasized.

Proposed construction—new or substantial modification or addition—is subject to professional project review at the direction of the building board. The village shall on a regular basis, contract with professional architects, planners and engineers. Such contracts will be for the specific purpose of project review as required by the village ordinances. The contract shall not require any payment by the village except when projects are submitted for review. The names of the professionals selected, and the term of their selection will be available for public review.

Landscaping

Maple Bluff has a significant stand of mature trees throughout its residential and open spaces. These trees are a primary defining element of Maple Bluff that significantly contribute to the sense of community and quality of life in the Village. Trees identified by the forestry committee are those to which the Village has designated special status. These trees are to be protected as a defining element for future Maple Bluff residents.

For all uses, landscaping will be required in proportional relationship to the scale of development. New landscaping should be related to the existing plant materials. Landscaping should not unduly block views of the lake along visual corridors. Landscape elements, such as fences, shall be "transparent" to the degree practicable.

Landscaping materials shall be of adequate size to ensure both a high degree of survivability and immediate visual effectiveness. Nonnative, invasionary plant species, low-durability species should be avoided, as should dangerous or toxic plants such as certain hawthorns or poison sumac.

Lighting

A comprehensive lighting program serves as a unifying element for the Village. It shows a wayfinding hierarchy for vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Special areas can be highlighted with unique, but consistent lighting. Accent lighting may be used in areas of high aesthetic or cultural interest.

Residential lighting is intended to augment the quality of architecture and landscape architecture as well as provide for safety and security. Light spillage into public spaces, rights of way, or neighboring private property is not allowed above illuminations standards set by the building board. Security lighting shall be maintained to minimize nuisance activation.

Signage

Limited, high-quality signage is a distinguishing feature of the Village. New freestanding signs should be low monument signs that can be effectively landscaped. All signs shall be in conformance with Village ordinance.

Exterior storage

The sense of community and quality of life in Maple Bluff is defined by its boating heritage. Non-nautical exterior storage, including permanent parking of recreational vehicles, is prohibited. Boat storage shall be by permit only.

Open Spaces and the Golf Course

Open space in Maple Bluff is dominated by the golf course. The edge of the golf course is a defining element of the Village and is to be preserved and maintained.

Parks and smaller open spaces, including the traffic triangles, are a community attribute and should be preserved and maintained. The relationship with the city of Madison for Burrows Park serves the public interest of the Village and is to be maintained.

Waterfront areas

Lake Mendota waterfront is a defining element of the Village character. The waterfront and its geologically unique bluffs are to be protected. Any proposed activities in the setback areas must meet the requirements of Village and state waterfront regulation. Development must be consistent with neighboring uses.

Landscaping in riparian areas shall not block views of neighboring parcels. Fences and other built elements shall not be allowed in any waterfront setback areas.

Views

The protection of important views is particularly challenging because the desire of the private party, especially a single-family home, to capture and protect the view often requires the erection of visual barriers to the general public. It is generally impossible for a community to protect all aesthetically pleasing views. However, in Maple Bluff, certain views are essential defining elements of a neighborhood, an entry experience or the community as a whole. It is due to current and previous owners that many of these views exist today. The sense of community that allowed these to grow with the community is encouraged.

Infrastructure

The Maple Bluff street grid shapes current community access and should be maintained in high quality to preserve the property values of adjacent parcels, to promote safety for shared pedestrian, bicycle and automobile use, and to form a vehicular wayfinding system for visitors and deliveries.

As a means to preserve Village character and to allow provision of Village police, fire, collection and emergency services, all development must front on, and be served by, public rights of way. Existing, substandard private roads must be brought up to public safety standards. Public safety standards will be as defined in the village code as well as applicable state codes and statutes.

The quality of development in the Village is generally inconsistent with above-grade utility distribution. Utilities shall be underground for any new development and shall be relocated underground as a condition of permit approval. The Village will require all utilities to be relocated underground by 1 January, 2000.

Historic lake-edge area

The area along Lake Mendota is recognized as unique and defining elements of the Village due to their estate heritage, their lake orientation, and their distinctive scale difference from adjoining, inland, residential areas. The Village board will ensure that development which occurs in the Village in, or adjacent to, these areas reflects the dominant architectural character in these areas or provides clearly sufficient buffering and related mitigation techniques.

Adopted this 11th day of July, 1995, by the Maple Bluff Village Board of Trustees.

Robert A. Cooper Village President

Andrea Stein Crawford Village Administrator/ Clerk