

Summary of Conditions and Issues



Green Bay Smart Growth 2022

Summary of Conditions and Issues

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Introduction to Volume I

Smart Growth 2022 is the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Green Bay. The plan, three years in the making, not only fulfills the requirements of Wisconsin planning law but will serve the following purposes for the City:

- A long-term strategy for the growth of the city
- An aid to short-term decisions about a variety of subjects
- A reference for development application reviews
- A foundation for a new zoning ordinance and map
- A guide to preparing the multi-year capital budget
- A basis for intergovernmental coordination
- Communication to and leadership for the private sector

What is Smart Growth?

“Smart growth,” the guiding principle of this plan, aims to accommodate development while protecting key resources, use land more efficiently, promote housing choice, reduce driving and promote walking bicycling and transit ridership.

Document Structure

Smart Growth 2022 is composed of two documents:

Volume I: Analysis of Conditions (Chapters 1 through 15). Describes current conditions, past plans, opportunities and major issues to be resolved in each of 13 subjects. The last two chapters

consist of Conceptual Plan Alternatives – three major, generalized courses of action for Green Bay – and a concept plan that incorporates elements of all three alternatives and forms the basis for the policy plan elements in Volume II.

Volume II: Objectives and Policies (Chapters 16 through 29). Includes objectives, policies, maps and implementation actions responding to the issues and giving direction on these twelve subjects:

Natural resources	Housing
Land use	Public utilities
Transportation	Public facilities
Urban design	Economic development
Neighborhoods and districts	Historic preservation
Parks, greenways and parkways	Intergovernmental coordination

Summary of Conditions and Issues

This section summarizes the major conditions and planning issues that were identified in the analyses of the various subjects. Issues are defined as questions that should be discussed and debated during the comprehensive planning process and resolved in light of other issues.

Subsequent chapters in Volume I present the analyses of conditions and a more detailed discussion of issues for each planning topic.

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Major Issues

The following appear to be the three most important planning questions facing Green Bay.

- **Stabilization and Redevelopment:** What should be the City's strategy for maintaining or improving the older parts of the community?
- **Fringe Growth:** Should Green Bay strive to annex land and grow beyond its present borders? What should be the future pattern of land use, major roads and major utilities on the City's perimeter? Should new neighborhoods on the fringe be designed more like the older areas in terms of interconnected streets, sidewalks, street trees, parks and garage placement?
- **Major Road Corridor Design:** To what extent is the City willing to change its regulation of private site design and public lighting and landscaping along the major road corridors in order to improve their appearance and function?

Land Use

In Green Bay, there are several factors influencing development, both in and outside of the City. These factors include the somewhat limited amount of undeveloped land remaining in the City and the State laws on annexing land. As a result, some new development, whether industrial, commercial, or residential, will occur on redevelopment sites, some will occur on open land within the City and some may occur on land that is annexed to Green Bay from an adjacent township.

Key Land Use Issues:

- **Strategic Focus:** Should the City focus more on planning for fringe development or focus on neighborhood revitalization and

redevelopment within the City?

- **Riverfront and Bayfront:** How should the City respond to its two greatest natural features – the Fox River and Green Bay? Should riverfront businesses that are not river-dependent be encouraged to relocate in order to free up land for uses that can take better advantage of either the transportation or aesthetic aspects of the river?
- **Public Access to the Riverfront:** To what extent should the City provide or require public access to the riverfront during property redevelopment? What should be the balance between public access and private control?
- **Neighborhood Stabilization or Improvement:** What should the City's strategy be to protect or revitalize older neighborhoods? How should the City work with other agencies and private organizations toward these objectives?
- **Housing Development in Perimeter Locations:** How much should the City spend with regard to utility extensions, environmental protection and road improvements, and to what extent should the City risk strained intergovernmental relations, to foster new housing development in fringe areas?
- **General Redevelopment:** Should the City expend public funds to assist with pollution clean-up costs, land assembly, or road improvements to stimulate private redevelopment in the City?
- **Major Institutions:** Are there adequate standards or guidelines in place for institutional expansion (e.g. new buildings and parking lots) into surrounding neighborhoods? How can the City respond to the needs of the health care industry as an important regional service and major employer?

Natural Resources

The City of Green Bay includes two rivers and several creeks, the bay, several large wetland remnants, and several fine woodlands. These features are important to our quality of life, health and the sustainable use of the overall ecosystem.

Urban development during the past 150 years has greatly impaired or reduced natural resources in our region, particularly the streams and wetlands. However, there are opportunities to protect several resources, such as Baird Creek, and to restore or enhance others, such as portions of the East River or perhaps even parts of the bayfront.

Key Natural Resources Issues:

- **Natural Resources Protection:** Which natural resources are most in need of added protection, and what actions should be taken to achieve identified levels of protection?
- **Public Open Space:** Which locations should be identified for open space preservation, and what techniques should be used to protect them? How should protected open space be used to advance other objectives of the Comprehensive Plan?
- **Linear Public Open Space:** What should the City do, if anything, to expand on its existing system of linear open space and trails. How could such facilities be used to promote and capture development, improve quality of life and protect water quality? How much is the community willing to pay for improved connections to natural open spaces?
- **Creek Corridors:** What should be done to protect the natural characteristics of the creek corridors and improve their function as public amenities?

- **Wetland Protection:** Should the City impose additional measures, such as requiring buffers and larger setbacks, to protect wetland water quality and wildlife habitat?
- **Wetland Restoration:** Should the City be more proactive in efforts to restore wetlands and create more opportunities for wildlife observation?
- **Floodplain Redevelopment:** Should the City consider removing existing structures and businesses within the floodplains and converting the property to land uses with low flood risks, such as parks or open space?

Transportation

In Green Bay, highways and roadways have become the main regional transportation routes for both people and freight. US Interstate 43 and US Highway 41 serve as the primary regional connections to the Green Bay region. Green Bay, like most American cities, experienced a substantial increase in the number of vehicle miles traveled over the last several decades. As a result, congestion has increased. In response, more and wider roadways have been built. This has generally provided incentives to build new commercial centers and residential subdivisions further from the central city.

While this pattern of outward expansion is evident in the Green Bay region – particularly along the Highway 41 corridor – the City contains many neighborhoods with nearby commercial shops and services that allow people to walk, bike, or take the bus to run errands and to get to and from work or school.

Key Transportation Issues:

- **Reduce Demand:** To what extent is the community willing to make changes in land use patterns and/or travel behavior to

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reduce auto trips and, therefore, reduce the need to construct more and/or wider roads? Is a certain amount of congestion tolerable in order to avoid road widening and closing driveway accesses to increase traffic flow?

- **Residential Street Design:** Should new minor residential streets be narrower? Should there be sidewalks and trees on both sides of all residential streets?
- **Access Management:** Limiting the number of driveway openings and turning movements on busy roadways can improve traffic flow. Should the number of driveway openings and/or left turn lanes be reduced in some areas? If so, where?
- **Transit:** Is the existing public transit system effectively serving the transit needs of the community? What should be done to encourage more transit use?
- **Pedestrians:** Does the City currently provide adequate sidewalks in the new neighborhoods? Are pedestrian linkages adequately addressed in commercial and industrial development and redevelopment?
- **Bicycles:** Does the existing network of bicycle trails and lanes provide adequate access to destinations throughout the City? What bicycle facility improvements would encourage more bicycle travel?
- **Parking:** Is it difficult or inconvenient to park downtown? Should the parking management system be improved to encourage longer downtown visits? How should parking be managed around large institutions such as the hospitals?
- **Freight Rail Impacts:** Does freight train activity harm the community or neighborhoods with noise or traffic delays? If so, what can or should be done to address these impacts?

Urban Design

“Urban design” often refers to the appearance and physical character of a community as expressed through its street corridors, parks and plazas, neighborhoods, architecture, historic preservation, overall layout and use of natural resources.

A major force in American urban design during the past 100 years has been the automobile, which has promoted the horizontal growth of our cities (sometimes called sprawl) and has affected the design of residential, commercial and industrial sites. Houses dominated by garage doors and shops behind a sea of parking are two notable examples of auto-oriented design.

Surveys conducted in Green Bay and many other cities consistently reveal strong preference for urban design features commonly found in those parts of cities built before 1945, after which the auto began to dramatically change practices and regulations.

Green Bay has many attractive residential neighborhoods that serve as models for future growth. It has rivers, woods and a bayfront that can provide beauty and value to the community. However, its commercial corridors are generally unattractive as a result of inadequate landscaping, sign control, utility control, and site planning and architecture.

Key Urban Design Issues:

- **Commercial Corridors:** Should the City improve its design review of commercial sites?
- **Multiple-Family Housing:** Should the City adopt design guidelines to promote better design of apartment buildings and townhouses?

- **Context-Sensitive Development:** To what extent should the City control the appearance of infill development in existing neighborhoods?
- **New Neighborhoods:** Should new neighborhoods be designed to emulate the attractive features of the older neighborhoods and include features such as street trees, garages in the rear and narrower, interconnected streets?
- **Pedestrian-Friendly Design:** What, if anything, should the City do to promote residential and commercial areas that are more walkable? Should pedestrian-friendly design be used to support development of the office and visitor industries in downtown?
- **Riverfront and Bayfront:** What should be done to better connect the community to the Fox River and the bay?

Parks and Recreation System

The City of Green Bay park system consists of 95 parks, school playgrounds and natural open space areas covering 2,600 acres. Individual parks range in size from less than one acre to 600 acres, serving neighborhoods, the community and the region. Many parks are created in conjunction with public schools and school playgrounds for mutual use and benefit.

In general, older neighborhoods lack large community parks but have more than adequate acreage in small parks. Conversely, newer neighborhoods are well served by large community parks but have insufficient small parks within walking distance. Recreation interests are changing (example: the rise of soccer) and the average age of the community is increasing.

Because there is very little land left for development in Green Bay, there is limited opportunity to set aside land to create new parks and

open spaces. However, new parks may be developed in conjunction with new subdivisions as development occurs on the City's fringe. In addition, opportunities to create new parks and open spaces may arise on property that is redeveloped.

Key Parks Issues:

- **Facilities:** Which types of recreational facilities are most needed – an aquatic center, hockey rinks, volleyball courts, indoor basketball courts or soccer fields?
- **Access:** Should access to the City's rivers be increased or improved by creating more trails, canoe or boat launches, etc.? Should improved access be designed for residents, visitors or both?
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections:** Should the City work to improve bike and pedestrian connections between parks and between major destinations?
- **Changing Demographics:** Do changing population trends in terms of age and ethnicity suggest different recreation needs? How will the parks system's priorities be affected?
- **Land Acquisition:** Should the City plan for and purchase land for future parks prior to an application for private land development, or should it continue with its present method of negotiating for sites during the subdivision process?
- **Baird Creek Parkway:** Should the City acquire land to extend and increase the width of the Baird Creek Parkway? How much land, if any, should be acquired? Should that land include pedestrian and bicycle paths ... a road for cars? Should the public land be on one or both sides of the creek?

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- **Environmental Concerns:** Should the City initiate more sustainable planting practices such as decreasing the amount of mowed turf and introducing more native species? Should the park department take an aggressive attitude toward improving wildlife habitat and protecting endangered species?

Neighborhoods

As a relatively old city, Green Bay contains a variety of neighborhoods reflecting various periods of growth. Because the City's growth boom occurred in the early parts of the 20th Century, many neighborhoods were developed more than 50 years ago. While the city's neighborhoods are generally very well kept, housing deterioration and inadequate property maintenance are continuing concerns.

Neighborhoods are often thought of as the "building blocks" that make up the larger city or community. A neighborhood can be defined as a residential area with a distinct identity, often centered on a park, a school or some other activity center. A community's quality of life can often be measured by the livability of its neighborhoods, which in turn can be measured by factors such as safety, housing quality and the presence of green space and other amenities.

Green Bay has six organized neighborhoods, all located near downtown; most were analyzed in the 1998 *Near Downtown Neighborhoods Plan*. The remainder of the City is not organized into neighborhoods.

The analysis of conditions in this plan divides the City into six districts, some of which contain several neighborhoods. There are many land use issues that are specific to each district, discussed in the Neighborhoods Analysis section of this plan. The following issues are pertinent to all neighborhoods to varying degrees.

Key Neighborhood Issues:

- **Mixed Use:** Should small commercial uses (shops, offices) be allowed or encouraged within residential neighborhoods? What about parks and schools? Might a diversity of housing be appropriate surrounding neighborhood commercial nodes?
- **Neighborhood Amenities:** To what degree, if at all, does City investment in neighborhood amenities such as street tree planting and decorative lighting make neighborhoods more attractive to existing and potential residents?
- **New Neighborhoods:** Should new neighborhoods be designed to more closely resemble the patterns of older areas such as a neighborhood park, interconnected streets, sidewalks and trees along both sides of every street?
- **Nuisances:** What should be done to reduce harmful influences such as excessive traffic, speeding, noise, housing deterioration, etc.?
- **Appearance:** Is the appearance of the City's older neighborhoods acceptable? How might it be improved?

Historic Preservation

As one of the oldest settlements in Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest, Green Bay has a long and rich history. The region was settled as early as the mid-17th century by French fur traders and missionaries, and held successively by French, British and Americans. As the fur trade gave way to more permanent agricultural settlements, the Village of Navarino was founded in 1829 and the Village of Astor in 1835. The two villages merged as the Borough of Green Bay in 1838. Incorporation as a city followed in 1854, when Green Bay also became the county seat of Brown County. The City's 1895 merger with the Village of Fort Howard, on the west side of the Fox River, helped consolidate its status as a regional food processing, industrial and commercial center. Many of Green Bay's significant architectural resources date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The City contains four historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places and several individual National Register-listed properties. The historic districts are Astor, Oakland-Dousman and two districts on Broadway.

The Green Bay Historic Preservation Commission was founded in 1995 to serve an advisory and educational rather than a strongly regulatory role.

The concept of historic preservation has some acceptance in the community, and there is a growing recognition that preserving the community's historic buildings can lead to economic development and cultural tourism, particularly downtown. There is also growing recognition that historic preservation can contribute to reclamation of older neighborhoods that are showing signs of deterioration and decline.

Key Historic Preservation Issues:

- **Protection:** Are the City's historic resources adequately protected from threats such as demolition, inappropriate remodeling, loss of economic viability, etc.?
- **Design Guidelines:** Should design guidelines be established for rehabilitation of historic buildings in one or more districts (this approach has been suggested for the Broadway districts)? If so, should they be voluntary, linked to City grants or loans, or mandatory? Who might review proposals for compliance with guidelines?
- **Role of the Historic Preservation Commission:** What is the most appropriate role for the Green Bay Historic Preservation Commission? Should it continue to focus primarily on education? What other responsibilities might be appropriate for the HPC? Should the HPC be more closely integrated into planning activities, especially neighborhood planning?
- **Additional surveys:** Should additional neighborhoods or classes of historic resources (railroad-related structures, for example) be surveyed to assess their significance?

Sewer and Water Systems

Sewer: Sanitary sewer service is provided by the Metropolitan Sewerage District to Green Bay and several adjacent villages or townships with a combined population of 141,000. System planning is conducted by the Brown County Planning Commission. Thus, sewer service is outside the control of the City of Green Bay, which means that the City cannot use the sewer system as a means of attracting annexation requests.

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There is sufficient sewer capacity in the treatment plant and main pipes to accommodate the forecast growth of Green Bay and adjacent communities for more than 20 years. The system is well maintained and in good condition.

Water: The City of Green Bay controls the Water Utility, which draws water from Lake Michigan. No capacity improvements are needed to meet the demand forecast for the year 2050. Water consumption in the older parts of the city is forecast to remain stable while demand increases in fringe locations are anticipated.

The City has a policy of not providing water service without annexing the land that would receive that service.

Key Sewer and Water Issues:

- **Coordinated Planning:** What should be done to make water and sewer system planning more supportive of the City's comprehensive plan? Should the County limit the outward spread of sewer service so as to support the City of Green Bay?

Housing

The City is involved in numerous housing programs, many of them funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Programs are used for rehabilitation loans for owner-occupied housing and acquisition and rehabilitation of rental housing. Funds are targeted to specific neighborhoods and combined with infrastructure improvements such as street lighting.

- The percentage of single-family detached housing is lower than state average, but typical of mid-sized cities in Wisconsin.
- There are many fewer townhouses than are found in similar communities.

- The primary eras of homebuilding were pre-1940, the 1970s and the 1980s. Rental units were built in the largest numbers in the 1970s and 1980s. Renters also occupy a high proportion of the oldest housing (many of these being conversions to rental units).
- According to HUD estimates, 40 percent of all rental units and 16 percent of owner units are estimated to have at least one housing condition problem.

Key Housing Issues

- **Housing Mix:** Do neighborhoods in Green Bay currently provide a satisfactory mix of housing choices in terms of type (e.g., apartment, townhouse, single-family home, senior housing) and cost? How should the mix of housing types change during the plan period? Should greater diversification of the City's housing stock be encouraged?
- **Market:** Is there a market demand for housing types not represented? (Examples might include higher-end apartments in mixed-use buildings; urban townhouses or rowhouses; live-work units; small-lot single-family homes with common amenities; larger rental apartments; senior housing for independent living.)
- **Compatibility:** To what degree is a diversity of housing types desirable within single neighborhoods? Could design standards help to create a compatible mix of housing types and densities? Should the greatest variety of housing types be concentrated around neighborhood commercial nodes?
- **Infill.** Should design standards be developed for new infill housing in existing older neighborhoods? These might include basic criteria such as similar setbacks, building massing and garage placement.

- **Elderly Housing.** Should programs be developed to assist the City’s elderly now residing in large single-family homes, to provide for shared living arrangements, maintenance assistance, or rehabilitation for accessibility?
- **Preservation.** How can the City’s existing housing stock best be preserved and upgraded? Are additional incentives needed to stimulate private sector investment in housing in the City’s older neighborhoods?
- **Updating.** How can the City’s large stock of 1950s – 1960s single-family homes best be updated to meet current market needs and ensure the continued viability of their neighborhoods?
- **Retention and Replacement.** Should certain housing types be targeted for selective replacement? (Examples might include small multifamily buildings in poor condition.) If so, what kind of housing should replace them? What is the ideal balance between “retention” and “replacement”?
- **Fair Housing.** Are fair housing issues being adequately addressed? (This includes non-discrimination in provision of housing and housing assistance.) Are additional efforts needed?
- **Zoning.** Should the City’s zoning code be made more flexible to accommodate a greater variety of housing types and site designs?

Demographics

Green Bay had 102,313 residents in the year 2000. This compared to the 1990 population of 96,644, an increase of 6 percent. Brown County experienced a 16 percent population increase over the same period.

Green Bay’s population has been steadily increasing since 1930, as shown by Table 1-1. The greatest growth occurred between 1960 and 1970 when the population grew by 24,921. However, the main reason for that high growth rate was the consolidation of Green Bay and the Town of Preble. Since 1930, the City’s share of the County population has decreased to 45 percent from 53 percent.

Table 1-1: City of Green Bay Population Trend, 1930 to 2000

Year	Population	Population Growth	Percent Growth	Brown County Percentage Growth
1930	37,415	-	-	-
1940	46,235	8,820	24	18
1950	52,735	6,500	14	18
1960	62,888	10,153	19	27
1970	87,809	24,921	40	26
1980	87,899	90	0.1	11
1990	96,466	8,567	10	11
2000	102,313	5,847	6	16

Key Demographic Issues

- **Changes in Age and Race:** What are the planning implications of the aging of the population and the growing racial and ethnic diversity of the population?
- **Changes in Household Income:** What, if anything, should the City do to ensure that it retains an adequate diversity of household incomes?
- **Capturing Growth:** What, if anything, should the City do to capture more of the region’s forecast population and job

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growth? Should the City be more proactive in annexing areas that are growing?

- **Sustaining Employment Base:** Green Bay still has the majority of the regional employment base. What, if anything, should the City do to retain its share of regional employment?

Economic Development

The key industries in Green Bay are:

- Paper
- Food processing
- Health care
- Logistics (transportation, warehousing and packaging of goods)
- Tourism
- Insurance and other “back office” operations
- Education

Businesses compete in a global economy and need efficient transportation, reasonable, predictable costs, the ability to expand and a community that offers the quality of life amenities attractive to employees and prospective employees.

Key Economic Development Issues:

- **Business Parks:** Where should the next office and industrial park(s) be located? Should all of the business parks be located in areas with “beltway” transportation access? Are there other areas of the city that should be redeveloped for business/industrial parks? In future developments, does the city want to encourage more efficient use of infrastructure and increase the tax base density?
- **Downtown:** To what extent should the City invest in the continued economic development of downtown including

property redevelopment, infrastructure improvements (e.g., access, parking) and public space improvements (e.g., riverfront, plazas, sidewalk spaces)? What should the City do to solidify the regional economic significance of the central business district?

- **Port:** Does it seem possible or desirable to gradually relocate and concentrate most port activities north of Main Street? What problems or advantages might result?
- **Paper Industry:** Should the city consider the area between Quincy and Webster east of the Georgia Pacific mill a redevelopment area for future paper mill related activity?
- **Food Processing:** How can affordable housing needs be accommodated with proximity or good transit access to area food processing industries? Where could the city create space for “further processing” operations associated with the current “primary processing” operations?
- **Health Care:** How can the needs of the growing health care industry for employee and patient-related parking be accommodated? Can the redevelopment of Mason Street provide expansion space for growth of the health care industry near the downtown hospitals? How can this be done in a manner that enhances the neighborhood?
- **Trucking and Warehousing:** How can the trucking and warehousing needs of key industries like paper and food processing be best accommodated?
- **Visitor Industry:** What features of Green Bay are attractive or could be attractive to visitors? How could these features be enhanced?
- **Finance, Insurance, Government and Office:** What can the City of Green Bay do to make downtown and other

locations in the City more competitive for finance, insurance, government and back office operations?

stimulate redevelopment? What should be the role of the City compared to the roles of state and federal agencies?

Environmental Pollution

“Brownfield” is the term commonly applied to a site or building that has been harmed by the prior misuse of hazardous substances, including petroleum products or synthetic chemicals. Our understanding and regulation of these substances was poor for many decades, resulting in practices that would not be tolerated today. The presence of hazardous waste in soil or a building is a major hindrance to its redevelopment or even its sale.

There are many such environmentally-impaired sites in Green Bay because this community has a long history of heavy industry, storage and shipping of coal, oil or liquid asphalt, and railroad traffic, plus the usual gas stations, dry cleaning shops, fuel oil tanks and other small generators of toxic waste. In addition to these major sites, thousands of buildings are contaminated with asbestos (linked to lung disease) or lead-based paint (used into the 1970s and associated especially with mental retardation in children).

The City of Green Bay is working with state and federal agencies to remediate sites that it owns or seeks to own, and it provides advice to private owners of sites being marketed by the City on their behalf. The major problem sites in Green Bay include the Fox River and its vicinity, the Quincy-Webster corridor north of the East River, and the vicinity of Broadway and Ashland.

Key Environmental Pollution Issues:

- **Brownfield Redevelopment:** To what extent, if at all, should the City expend funds to help cover costs related to pollution clean up, land assembly or access improvements to

Schools

Public facilities serve the public interest and contribute to the sense of community in Green Bay. These include facilities and services such as schools, libraries, police and fire protection.

The Green Bay Area Public School District covers all of the City of Green Bay, the Village of Allouez, the Town of Scott and most of the Town of Bellevue. The District operates four high schools, five middle schools, 25 elementary school and two special schools. There are also 27 private or parochial schools in the district. Colleges and universities include the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and Northeastern Wisconsin Technical College.

Elementary school enrollment has declined since the mid-1990s but is expected to increase slightly after 2010. However, some elementary schools close to downtown are currently overcrowded.

Approximately 11 percent of the student population has limited proficiency in English, about 34 percent are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (an indicator of poverty) and 14 percent receive some type of special education.

The school district has acquired four sites, two of them on the east side of the City, for expansion.

Key Schools Issues:

- **Site Planning and Locations:** How should future school and school-park sites be designed in order to enhance future neighborhoods? Should schools be designed so that some students can walk or bike to them?

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- **Schools with Declining Enrollments:** Should schools with declining enrollments be closed or consolidated? If these schools are closed, how should the buildings be re-used? Should they be retained for possible future conversion back to schools?
- **Parks and Schools:** Should parks continue to be co-located with schools? Are there additional park facilities that might also benefit school populations?