

We are a community with a distinguished record of success over 30 years in maintaining and restoring the integrity of our landscape and community. Dunn is a town that is recognized across America for our stewardship ethic. This also is widely-recognized across Dane County, including our good neighbor, Fitchburg, that joins us along our western border.

In the 1970s, we and our neighbor—then the Town of Fitchburg—were working to find ways of preventing sprawl within our own communities and from our neighbor to the north, the City of Madison. We took different approaches. Our town developed a land stewardship ethic and land use plan—eventually including the purchase of development rights. The Town of Fitchburg applied for the status of a city and became the City of Fitchburg.

Our aims in Fitchburg and Dunn were basically similar: organize ourselves in a way that will give each of our municipalities control over our own futures, over our own stewardship of the land. Fitchburg and Dunn cooperated, exchanged ideas, and discussed our options. Dunn respected and supported the approach Fitchburg took to gain control of their own future; and Fitchburg respected ours. We continued to be good neighbors as municipalities, and also did so at the local and neighborhood levels. People in the northwest corner of Dunn, for example, maintained friendships “over the back fence” with the people of the northeast corner of Fitchburg as they had since Northwest Territory times: Margaret Lalor and the Lalor Family in Dunn—with their record of producing two Town Chairmen, for example, shared conversations across the fence (and the Dunn-Fitchburg townline) with the Cohee family in Fitchburg—with their record of promoting soil conservation and land stewardship in the state and region.

Today, the peace and harmony within this region of northwest Dunn and northeast Fitchburg is seriously threatened. The community, however, is not fragmenting, however—quite the opposite! This long-standing community is revitalizing itself and is pulling together to meet, talk, and discuss the issues being raised by the green signs they are posting on their property. These green signs say:

NO
Urban Service Area
in the Northeast
Neighborhood

The appellation—“Northeast Neighborhood”—is a new one for the people here. It comes not from them but from the firm hired by Fitchburg to sketch plans for development of the places they live. This is a neighborhood, and a long-standing one at that. It is a neighborhood with a rich and deep history—one that spans back to its origins in Northwest Territory days. It has roots within the old Swan Creek Sewing Circle and also the Swan Creek Cheese Factory that still stands (converted to a residence) at the junction of Larsen and Goodland Park Roads—at the interface of Fitchburg and Dunn along their shared townline. Today, “Swan Creek”—the name of their Sewing Circle and their Cheese Factory, as well as the name of their Creek—has recently been taken over by a new and distant subdivision in Fitchburg. They are a neighborhood—some would call it the Swan Creek Neighborhood—and from all appearances from their meetings, picnics, and activities over the past many months—a neighborhood that intends to remain a

strong one.

This long-standing neighborhood and their long-standing neighborliness respects the land and its natural and social heritage. It is a neighborhood that treasures the vitality of Swan Creek as a vibrant cold-water stream—a stream that, together with Deep Spring Creek and Murphy Creek, bring refreshing cold 55 degree water to the southern basin of Lake Waubesa—a shallow basin that without their refreshing flows would become a eutrophic dead end, choked with excessive algae, aquatic plant life, and Asian Carp. “Waubesa”—the Algonquin Indian name for “Swan”—appropriately ties together the creek and the lake. Swan Creek refreshes Swan Lake (Waubesa), making it a remarkable and outstanding resource for lake-shore dwellers, Northern Pike fisherfolk, the wider region and for the State of Wisconsin.

The “Swan Lake Community” as we also can call it—consisting of the people of northeast Fitchburg and northwest Dunn—has recently organized in protest against what they see as a potential serious infringement of the integrity of their community, the Swan Creek Watershed, the Swan Creek Fishery, the landscape, and Lake Waubesa. Organized as the West Waubesa Preservation Coalition (www.westwaubesa.org), the community is gathering wide support in its efforts to preserve its natural and agricultural neighborhood. This community, now as in times past, treasures the abundant springs along Swan Creek and Waubesa Wetlands, including a spring that for over a century has had a metal cup hanging just above its waters—Drinking Water Spring—that has satisfied the thirst of many a hiker and traveller back to the beginnings of Wisconsin as a state.

The omnipresent green signs are signs of the times. They are sprouting everywhere across this neighborhood of the Swan Creek and Swan Lake community. The new term, “The Northeast Neighborhood” as it has recently emerged in the planning documents of Ruckert-Mielke Engineering—the firm that has been hired by the City of Fitchburg to plan the development of the northeast corner of Fitchburg—is troublesome to them. It is troublesome because the “Northeast Neighborhood” threatens to displace and eventually destroy the neighborhood they enjoy and cherish.

And this makes significant the photo taken a month ago by the WWPC from a tiny Piper plane whose pilot donated his time to give them a hand in their work. This photo gives a view toward the northwest corner of the Town of Dunn, and upward beyond Lalor and Larsen Roads into Fitchburg. At the photo’s center is one of the largest woodlands in the region that, with a few breaks, connects to the woodlands that border a portion of Waubesa Wetlands. The three major streams of Waubesa Wetlands—Murphy Creek, Deep Spring Creek, and Swan Creek flow into the terminus of Lake Waubesa’s south basin, injecting freshwater into Swan Lake’s “cul de sac” thereby preventing Waubesa’s south basin from become a stagnant bay. Deep Spring, at the head of Deep Spring Creek is one of the largest springs in Dane County, and from the air and from canoe often shows itself in the color of bright lavender—much like a giant Morning Glory. Deep Spring’s Glory comes from light, reflected from its cone of peat—15 feet in diameter and 12 feet deep—that is lined with Purple Sulfur Bacteria of at least seven different species. Deep Spring—donated with its surrounding 40 acres by Carl and Julia Bogholt—is quite literally a magnificent jewel in the landscape, brilliantly reflecting the sun’s light, now with lavender

Purple Sulfurs, and then with the brilliant greens of Spirogyra. It is joined by another jewel immediately south of it—the Great Fen—that is built upon an extremely sensitive hydrology of a widespread sheet of upwelling cold water that supports a unique community of plants that includes a broad expanse of the Lesser Fringed Gentian, a state threatened species.

These two jewels are but a small part of the reason that the other side of the WWPC signs say what they do. The other side says:

Keep Northeast
Fitchburg Rural:
Save the Wetlands!

The development being considered by the Fitchburg Council for “extension” of urban services includes the white rectangle on this photo. But it includes much more. The area under study also includes the land to the west of this white area all the way to U. S. Highway 14. And so, the potential development area goes well beyond 1000 acres and would largely be covered by residential and business buildings, streets, and roads. The well serving the community would be in or near the white area and would be deep—about 1000 feet—and at first would draw but a small amount of water, and ultimately would draw more and more, contributing to the regional withdrawal, whose east-most effects already reach the western shore of Lake Waubesa and Waubesa Wetlands.

Traffic generated by the proposed development would be prevented from going east by Lake Waubesa and would be severely restricted to very few access points along the Nine Springs E-Way to the north. And it most certainly would increase the flow of vehicles through our new Capital Springs Centennial State Park and Lake Farms County Park along our lake’s northwestern shore. Capital Springs, as we know from the difficult work the Town of Dunn, the Lake Waubesa Conservation Association and the Swan Lake Neighborhood accomplished together in our legal fight to prevent it from becoming the Libby Landfill, owes much of its substance to our persistence in combating its development into a landfill. Moreover, a development here would generate much greater traffic on County Highway MM toward Madison. And, should a new expressway interchange be built on Highway 14—as is proposed at some point in the future—there also would be greatly increased traffic flow north onto the Beltline and Park Street.

Most importantly however is what can plainly be seen in this air photo: the location of the Fitchburg Center a great distance to the west of the white area. Good urban design in our day comes through extension out from the city core, not by jumping across large expanses of open land, as this development would do. Clearly, developments in the white area will require wholly new service facilities would be needed, not merely an extension of services from the current Fitchburg Center. This means at very least a new municipal well and a new water tower. And new police and fire service would seem to be required over and above what would be required if it grew progressively out from the current Fitchburg Center. And the pumped water from aquifers below must be recharged, eventually by surface waters.

Why even consider developing right along the border with its good neighbor, the Town of Dunn? The *Town of Dunn Open Space Preservation Handbook* that for decades has provided the basis for sound land use in the Town of Dunn puts a very high value on “Community Separation” through appropriate use of open space and agricultural lands. Fitchburg’s development along our border with them seriously violates this principle, according to the WWPC. And why would city officials of Fitchburg not respect the work of 30 and more years by its neighboring Town of Dunn, and beyond this the inter-municipal Swan Lake Community? Could they not celebrate with us our land stewardship ethic as this has been expressed in our distinguished record of success of over 30 years in maintaining and restoring the integrity of our landscape and community, as our Swan Lake Community and the Town of Dunn has over three decades?

In the 1970s, we and our neighbor—the Town of Fitchburg—were working to find ways of preventing sprawl within our own communities and from our neighbor to the north, the City of Madison. We have taken different approaches, while remaining good neighbors. Our aims remain similar then as now: organize ourselves in a way that will give each of our municipalities control over our own futures, over our own stewardship of the land we hold in trust. We must remind the Alders and the Mayor of Fitchburg of these shared aims, expecting them to respond by withdrawing threats to the land, wetlands, and lake we hold dear.