

Village of Dane

Trustees

Additional Packet

Information



FACT SHEET

Environmental Corridors

Overview

Environmental Corridors are generally contiguous systems of open space and natural areas in places that are otherwise urbanized or planned for urban development. These corridors include environmentally sensitive lands such as drainageways and stream channels, floodplains, wetlands, riparian steep slopes, natural and cultural resources requiring protection from disturbance and development, and lands needed for open space, stormwater management, and recreational use. Together, Environmental Corridors form a network of concentrated natural resources that are generally connected by open space and protected from urban development.

Placing lands in environmental corridors protects and preserves certain natural resources critical to water quality and healthy ecosystems, helps protect our rich cultural history, provides scenic beauty and recreational opportunities, and makes the region more climate resilient.

Delineating Environmental Corridors

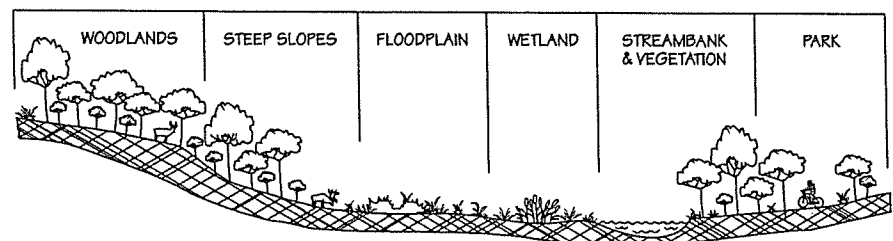
Delineating environmental corridors is a key component of sewer service area planning and implementation of the *Dane County Water Quality Plan*. When identifying areas suitable for urban development, it is critically important to also identify sensitive areas where development should be avoided. Environmental Corridors have been mapped for all Urban and Limited Service Areas in Dane County. Corridor boundaries are continually revised, updated, and expanded based on best-available information.

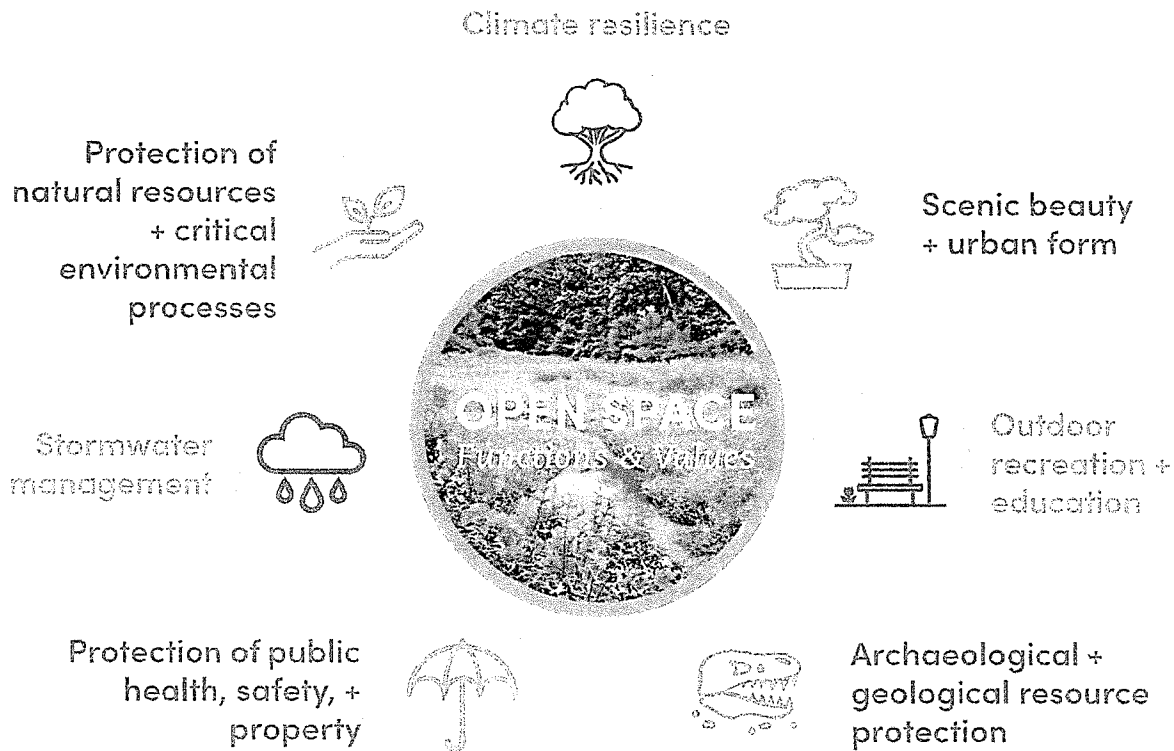
The *Policies and Criteria for Environmental Corridors* document was adopted in 2008 as part of the *Dane County Water Quality Plan*. This policy sets the basic, minimum criteria for resources that **must** be included in environmental corridors, including:

- Wetlands under WDNR jurisdiction with a 75-foot minimum vegetative buffer
- 1% annual chance (100-year) floodplains and floodways
- Riparian (within 75 feet of the ordinary high water mark of water bodies or from the top of each bank) steep, wooded slopes (12% gradient and higher in the glaciated portions of the county; 20% gradient and higher for the driftless portion of the county)
- Navigable water bodies based on WDNR determination (or confirmation) of navigability (plus the 75-foot shoreland buffer on each side of the waterway and a 200-foot minimum total width)
- Non-navigable waterways based on WDNR determination (or confirmation) of navigability (plus the 25-foot shoreland buffer on each side of the waterway and a 75-foot minimum total width)
- Public lands, parks, and conservancy areas
- Problem soil areas and unique geologic formations (such as Karst features and known critical recharge areas)
- Archaeological sites
- Endangered and sensitive habitats (such as savanna and prairie remnants)
- Stormwater facilities

TYPICAL ELEMENTS

This diagram depicts the resource elements found in a typical environmental corridor. Often one or more elements occur together, such as woodlands and steep slopes.





CORE FUNCTIONS AND VALUES OF OPEN SPACE

FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS

Outside of urban service areas, most of these same areas are mapped as **Estimated Environmental Corridors** which represent areas that will likely require mapping as Environmental Corridor if/when they are added to an urban service area. However, this mapping does not include all resource features and does not necessarily imply approval, adoption, or inclusion (or omission) of lands in a future environmental corridor.

Other natural resources do not have legal protection from development or disturbance, yet still provide important benefits to the region. These resources are recommended for voluntary inclusion in environmental corridors and are mapped as **Voluntary Environmental Corridors**, and include:

- Potentially restorable wetlands and hydric soils
- Old-growth woodlands
- 0.2% annual chance (500-year) floodplain
- Ice Age Trail corridor
- Natural Resource Area Boundaries
- Internally drained areas

Implementation

Environmentally sensitive features associated with surface waters must always be included in environmental corridors; meanwhile, the requirements for inclusion of other non-sensitive elements (parks and stormwater management areas) or elements not associated with surface waters (problem soils and unique geologic formations, archaeological sites, and endangered and sensitive habitats) allow for site-specific considerations. Lands in environmental corridors are generally restricted from development and are ineligible to receive public sanitary sewer service.

EXCEPTIONS

Certain exceptions may be allowed for compatible uses (e.g., recreational paths, park facilities) and public utility and transportation facilities necessary to serve areas outside of the Environmental Corridor. For any such development within the environmental corridor, the following best practices should be followed:

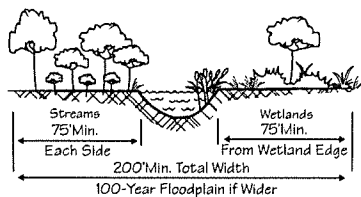
- Design and locate improvements to protect corridor functions and the elements within.
- Place improvements as far away from any environmentally sensitive resources as possible.

WETLAND AND STREAM BUFFER STRIPS

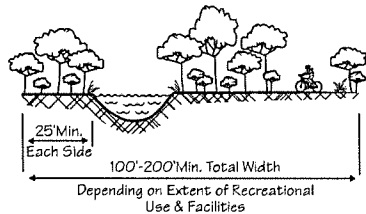
Configuration of common scenarios to meet buffer strip requirements for waterways.

BUFFER STRIP GUIDELINES

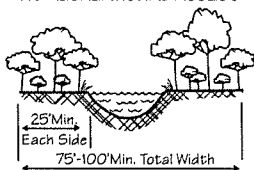
NAVIGABLE STREAMS & WETLANDS



INTERMITTENT STREAMS & DRAINAGEWAYS WITH PUBLIC ACCESS FOR RECREATION



INTERMITTENT STREAMS & DRAINAGEWAYS NO RECREATIONAL ACCESS



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LEARN MORE

View the adopted Policies and Criteria for Environmental Corridors and complete Environmental Corridors Report at capitalarearpc.org.



SCAN TO
LEARN MORE

- Impervious surfaces should be limited (e.g., the use of porous pavements is encouraged).
- Stormwater runoff should be properly managed.
- Native vegetation should be used wherever feasible, especially within the immediate buffers around sensitive water resources.

CHANGING ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS

To maintain a flexible but principled administration of environmental corridors, the Policies and Criteria for Environmental Corridors include provisions for changes to corridors which can be classified into two general categories: minor changes and major changes. All changes must be coordinated with CARPC staff prior to implementation.

Minor Changes

Minor changes (refinements and administrative changes) do not have the potential for significant adverse impacts on water quality and are handled at the CARPC staff level. Minor changes are generally of two types: changes resulting from revised, improved, or more detailed resource information; and minor adjustments or changes supported by the local municipality which, in the judgement of CARPC staff, would not seriously affect water quality.

Major Changes

Major changes have the potential for significant adverse impacts on water quality. These changes constitute a formal amendment to the Dane County Water Quality Plan, and require action by the Commission and WDNR approval following a public hearing and detailed staff analysis of the impact of the change and the likelihood that proposed mitigation measures will be successful in meeting water quality standards (typically a 90-day process). Major change requests must be initiated or supported by the municipality that governs the area in question. Major changes may include:

- Removing any mapped floodplain or wetland area, unless exempted by DNR-approved rezoning or permitting (e.g., wetland fill permit, artificial exemption, or LOMC).
- Removing any area below the ordinary high-water mark of a stream, pond, or lake.
- Any change resulting in the elimination or interruption in the continuity of any corridor segment which includes woodlands determined to be endangered or sensitive, floodplains, wetlands, shoreland buffer strips, sensitive habitat areas, or steep wooded slopes adjacent to water bodies (defined as slopes over 12 percent where the base of the slope is within 75 feet of the ordinary high water mark or top of bank of streams, ponds, and lakes).
- Any change that reduces the width of vegetated shoreland buffer strips along streams, wetlands, and drainageways below the minimum criteria.
- Grading (or other similarly soil disturbing activities) within a wetland vegetative buffer and within 30 feet of the wetland edge, where the buffer has been delineated in environmental corridors, unless the grading is intended to re-establish natural grades or to restore wetland habitat.

