

# Dane County in Action

## *A Strategic Vision*

### DELIVERING RESULTS THE DANE COUNTY WAY

Dane County is the fastest-growing county in Wisconsin. With that growth comes both opportunity and responsibility. The County must plan thoughtfully to ensure that investments in infrastructure, services, and natural resources keep pace with resident demand while preserving the qualities that make Dane County a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

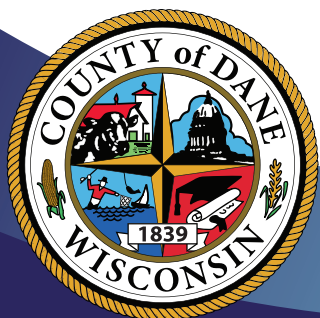
This strategic vision, developed in 2026, is designed to foster stronger coordination within County government. Like the Dane County Way, this plan is grounded in collaboration, responsible stewardship, and a commitment to leaving the County stronger for the next generation.

It is a privilege to serve as the County Executive of Dane County and to work with many dedicated employees and stakeholders who are helping to lead Dane County into the future.

In Service,

*Melissa*

County Executive Melissa Agard



# A COUNTY AT A PIVOTAL MOMENT

**Dane County is growing, and with that growth comes both opportunity and responsibility.**

As one of the fastest-growing regions in Wisconsin, our community is experiencing rising demand for services, pressure on infrastructure, and increasing expectations from residents. At the same time, we face real fiscal constraints that require thoughtful, disciplined decision-making.

County government plays a vital role in daily life, often behind the scenes. From public safety and human services to roads, parks, and environmental protection, these systems are foundational to our quality of life.

This strategic plan is about meeting this moment with clarity and purpose.

*Our focus is simple:*

Deliver results for residents today while preparing Dane County for the future.

## THE DANE COUNTY WAY

**How we do the work matters just as much as what we do.**

The Dane County Way reflects our shared commitment to collaboration, compassion, and responsible leadership. It is about balancing competing priorities while staying grounded in our values.

*Our guiding values:*

### Good Governance

Deliver high-quality, reliable services with transparency and accountability

### Inclusive Engagement

Listen to residents and ensure diverse voices shape decisions

### Sustainable Growth

Plan for the future while protecting natural and community assets

### Shared Prosperity

Ensure opportunity reaches all residents

### Responsible Stewardship

Manage financial, natural, and physical resources wisely

**These values guide every decision in this plan.**

## OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

This plan focuses on four core areas where Dane County can have the greatest impact.

Each pillar reflects both immediate needs and long-term priorities.



**Community  
Services  
Delivery**



**Economic  
Development**



**Justice System  
Improvement**



**Environmental  
Leadership**

## 1. Community Services Delivery



**Goal: Help residents meet basic needs, navigate crises, and build stable lives.**

Dane County provides essential services that support children, families, older adults, and people with disabilities. These systems must be accessible, coordinated, and responsive.

**What this means for you:**

Getting help when you need it and being able to move forward.

**Key priorities:**

- Ensure residents can meet basic needs like housing, health care, and support services
- Improve crisis response for mental health, substance use, and housing instability
- Strengthen long-term stability through prevention and early intervention

## 2. Economic Development



**Goal: Support growth that is inclusive, sustainable, and benefits all residents.**

Dane County plays a critical role in shaping the local economy through infrastructure, land use, and major public assets.

**What this means for you:**

A strong economy where people can afford to live, work, and stay.

**Key priorities:**

- Expand access to jobs, workforce pathways, and affordable housing
- Invest in infrastructure that supports long-term economic success
- Raise Dane County's profile as a destination for business, tourism, and events

## 3. Justice System Improvement



**Goal: Improve public safety outcomes through coordination, fairness, and prevention.**

Dane County's justice system includes many independent partners. Progress depends on working together.

**What this means for you:**

Safer communities and a justice system that is effective and fair.

**Key priorities:**

- Strengthen coordination in the justice system
- Expand diversion and community-based alternatives to incarceration
- Improve data sharing and system-wide decision-making

## 4. Environmental Leadership



**Goal: Protect natural resources while preparing for future environmental challenges.**

Dane County has long been a leader in conservation and sustainability. This work continues with a focus on resilience and access.

**What this means for you:**

Clean water, healthy environments, and access to the outdoors for everyone.

**Key priorities:**

- Preserve and protect Dane County's agricultural heritage
- Reduce pollution and protect public health
- Expand access to parks, natural areas, and environmental programs

# HOW WE WILL DELIVER RESULTS

**Strong plans only matter if they lead to action.**

This strategy focuses on improving how county government works across departments, partners, and communities.

## *Three key approaches:*



### **Engage the Community**

- Hold public listening sessions across the county
- Partner with municipalities, nonprofits, and community organizations
- Make services easier to navigate and access



### **Coordinate Internally**

- Align departments around shared priorities
- Break down silos through cross-functional teams
- Strengthen communication across county government



### **Track Progress**

- Use clear metrics to measure success
- Monitor outcomes and adjust as needed
- Share progress transparently with the public

## A FOUNDATION OF FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

**We must live within our means while continuing to deliver essential services.**

Like many communities, Dane County faces rising costs that outpace revenue growth. Ignoring this challenge would lead to deeper problems down the road.



### **We are taking action:**

- Reducing costs and improving efficiency
- Evaluating programs and contracts
- Protecting core services residents rely on




### **This approach ensures we can continue investing in priorities like:**

- Public safety and emergency response
- Infrastructure and transportation
- Environmental protection
- Community-based services

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