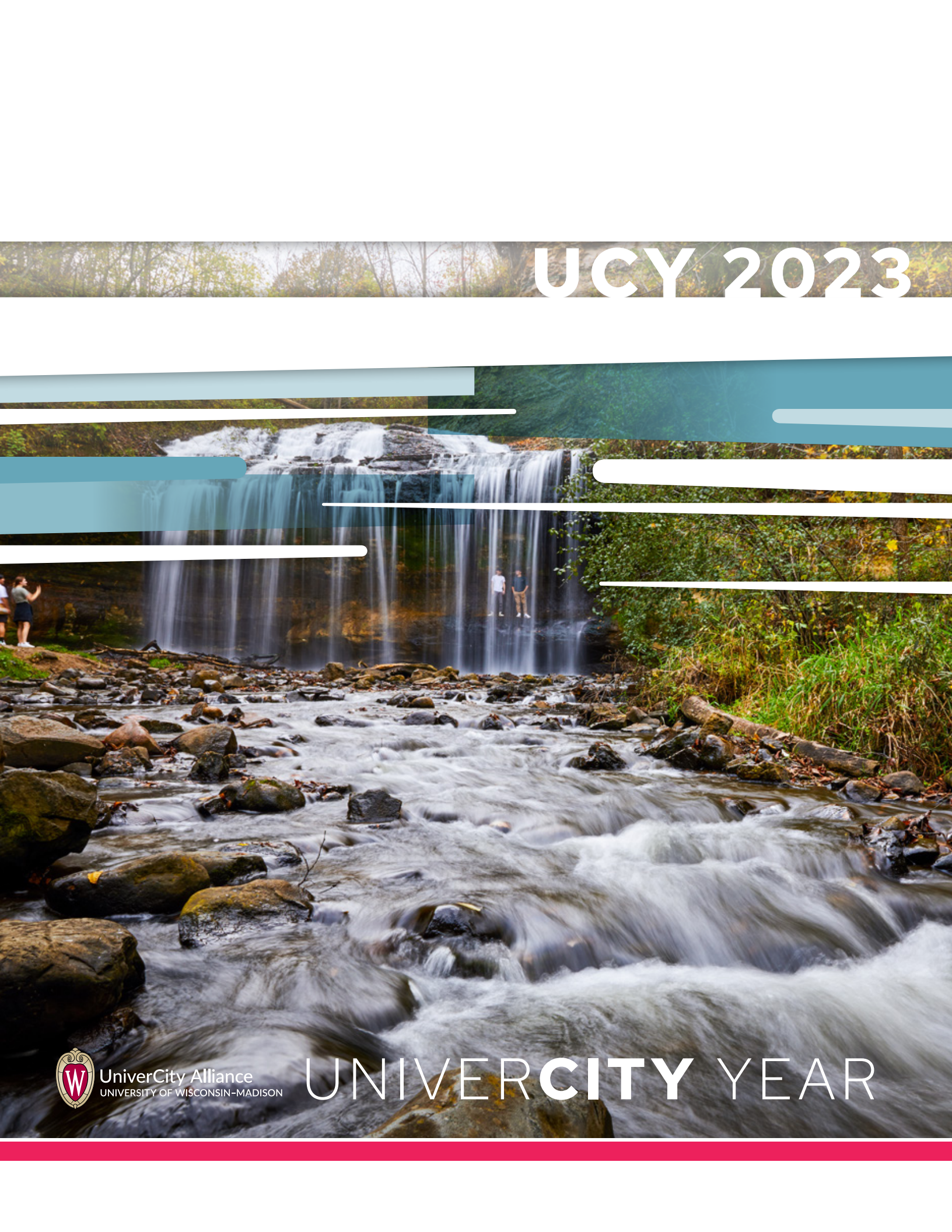


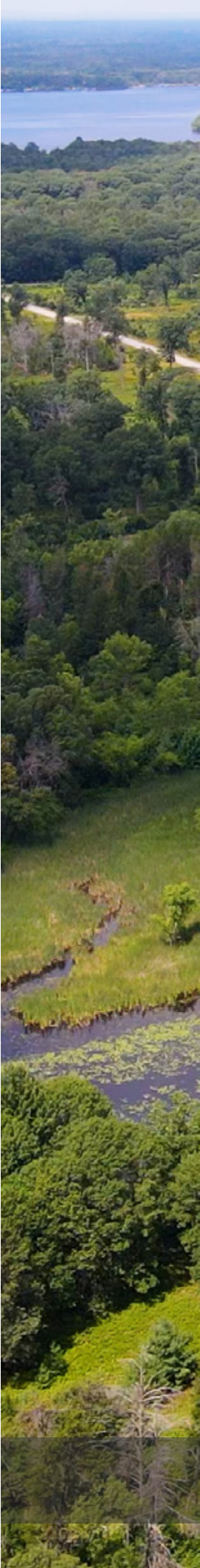


UCY 2023



UniverCity Alliance
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

UNIVERCITY YEAR



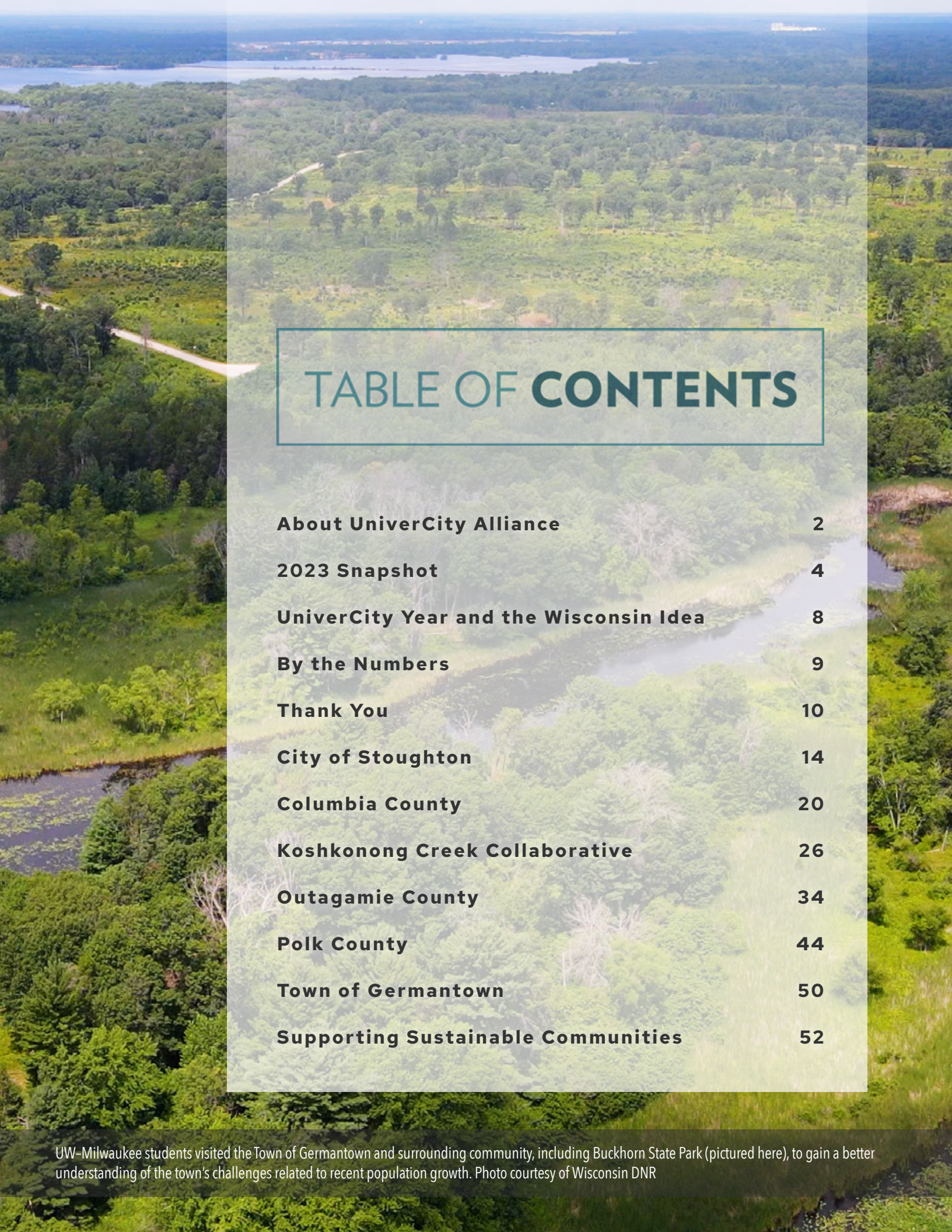


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UW-Milwaukee students visited the Town of Germantown and surrounding community, including Buckhorn State Park (pictured here), to gain a better understanding of the town's challenges related to recent population growth. Photo courtesy of Wisconsin DNR



About the Partnership

Creating Better Places Together

UniverCity Year 2021–24 partnerships involved Columbia, Polk, and Outagamie counties; the Town of Germantown; the City of Stoughton; and the Koshkonong Creek Collaborative, which consisted of the City of Sun Prairie, the Towns of Deerfield and Cottage Grove, and the nonprofit Friends of Koshkonong Creek with support from Badger Farms, LLC.

Local government leaders in each community identified priorities that would benefit from expertise at University of Wisconsin–Madison and partner campuses.

These local governments identified meaningful issues for their communities, with topics ranging from planning for population growth to recruiting new residents through strategic communications campaigns to studying sustainability at an airport, and more. The projects addressed:

Building an innovation center
Community branding
Community resilience
Economic development

Environmental sustainability
Optimizing county operations
Sustainable futures

Faculty and staff incorporated these projects into their courses and research programs, and UniverCity Year staff provided administrative support to ensure successful partnerships in the six communities. Communities received big ideas and recommendations — some have already been implemented — that are catalyzing a more sustainable, livable, and resilient future.

This report provides an overview of the work of hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and local government leaders. For more information on project goals, research methods, findings, and recommendations, download the final reports from the UniverCity Year website: <https://university.wisc.edu/university-year-communities/>



“UniverCity Year is a trifecta of applied student work, work with local governments, and work that is oriented toward sustainability, equity, and economic thriving around the state. There’s this synergy where we build something unique on the Wisconsin Idea.”

— **Lori DiPrete Brown**

UniverCity Alliance Advisory Board Cochair; Distinguished Teaching Faculty, Department of Civil Society and Community Studies, School of Human Ecology



“It’s reinventing the Wisconsin Idea, which is an evergreen idea that is in serious need of rebooting given changes in the state and in Wisconsin communities. UniverCity Year’s model fosters mindful interactions with communities.”

— **Joel Rogers**

UniverCity Alliance Advisory Board Cochair; Professor, UW Law School, LaFollette School of Public Affairs, and the College of Letters & Science (Department of Sociology); Director, COWS/High-Road Strategy Center



“UniverCity Year is everything that the university is supposed to do. You get incredibly lively educational experiences that are outside the classroom for students, and it starts from the community first.”

— **Paul Robbins**

UniverCity Alliance Advisory Board Cochair; Dean, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies



L-R: Abigail Becker, senior associate for communications and outreach, UniverCity Alliance (UCA); Robbins; DiPrete Brown; Gavin Luter, managing director, UCA; Rogers; Shelly Strom, program manager, UniverCity Year

About UniverCity Alliance

UniverCity Year is the hallmark program managed by the UniverCity Alliance, a network of interdisciplinary leaders across UW–Madison who are inspired to improve local governments and foster innovation in communities of all sizes.

2023 Snapshot



1. Creating a renovation plan for Stoughton's 1892 School Building
2. Envisioning Innovation Center Stoughton
3. Exploring cooperative options with stakeholders of Innovation Center Stoughton



1. Creating campaign message materials to rebrand Polk County
2. Developing a community engagement methodology for the Polk County rebranding initiative
3. Planning a Polk County community branding program via SWOT analysis
4. Rebranding Polk County: Multimedia tools for diverse audiences
5. Exploring digital tools to collect Polk County community input



1. Leveraging policy innovations to boost childcare worker wages in Outagamie County
2. Examining childcare workforce compensation as a driver of economic recovery in Outagamie County
3. Exploring supports for childcare business viability in Outagamie County
4. Exploring housing siting criteria and development strategies for the Fox Cities and Greater Outagamie County region
5. Researching childcare cooperatives for economic sustainability in Outagamie County
6. Guiding future best practices in managing stormwater ponds
7. Helping Outagamie County's rural communities plan for a sustainable future via residential zoning
8. Embracing sustainable growth in Outagamie County: A toolkit for change

9. Promoting positive communication between local governments and constituents about housing initiatives
 10. Developing a 10-acre parcel for residential housing in New London
 11. Creating opportunity for all: Homeless programs and resources for upward mobility in Outagamie County
 12. Disaster-proofing critical facilities of Outagamie County
-



1. Designing the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation website
 2. Evaluating Rio Fire Department infrastructure and future designs
 3. Developing a design for the Northside Dog Park in Portage
 4. Conducting a trade market analysis of Portage Business Park
 5. Attracting and retaining future emergency medical technicians in Rio
 6. Focusing on workforce development, attraction, and retention initiatives for the City of Portage
 7. Welcoming and integrating Latino community members into the Portage workforce
-



1. Amplifying the impact of the Friends of Koshkonong Creek website
2. Expanding the website for the Friends of Koshkonong Creek
3. Exploring green infrastructure ideas for the Koshkonong Creek Watershed
4. Growing a stakeholder network for Koshkonong Creek clean-up and maintenance
5. Exploring governance options for the Koshkonong Creek Watershed
6. Developing comprehensive water resources management strategies for Koshkonong Creek Watershed
7. Exploring engineering options for flood control, sediment, and nutrient reduction for Koshkonong Creek
8. Investigating flood control alternatives for Koshkonong Creek Watershed

9. **Creating a conservation action plan to improve water quality and ecosystem conditions in the Koshkonong Creek Watershed**
 10. **Establishing a citizen-science application for watershed data collection**
 11. **Mapping amenities in the Koshkonong Creek Watershed through geodesign**
 12. **Documenting land use and environmental change in a Wisconsin watershed: Addressing local needs for adaptive management**
-

1. **Exploring wetland mitigation banking opportunities in Outagamie County**
2. **Offering marketing insights for Mosquito Hill Nature Center**
3. **Creating outreach materials for Mosquito Hill Nature Center**
4. **Developing creative campaign materials for Mosquito Hill Nature Center**
5. **Developing marketing materials and video to showcase Appleton International Airport's sustainability for northern and central Wisconsin air travelers**
6. **Reviewing sustainability initiatives at the Appleton International Airport**
7. **Expanding the action plan for new sustainability initiatives at the Appleton International Airport**
8. **Developing a net-zero energy plan for Appleton International Airport**
9. **Exploring community geothermal for Appleton International Airport**
10. **Planning for a microgrid at the Appleton International Airport**
11. **Modernizing the Outagamie County highway access control ordinance**
12. **Guiding Outagamie County policy and regulatory framework to support electric vehicles**
13. **Exploring county-level conservation and sustainability initiatives for Outagamie County**
14. **Conducting a sustainability management assessment for Outagamie County departments**
15. **Creating a one-stop database of housing resources in Outagamie County**
16. **Aligning homelessness programming with the Community Health Improvement Plan priorities**

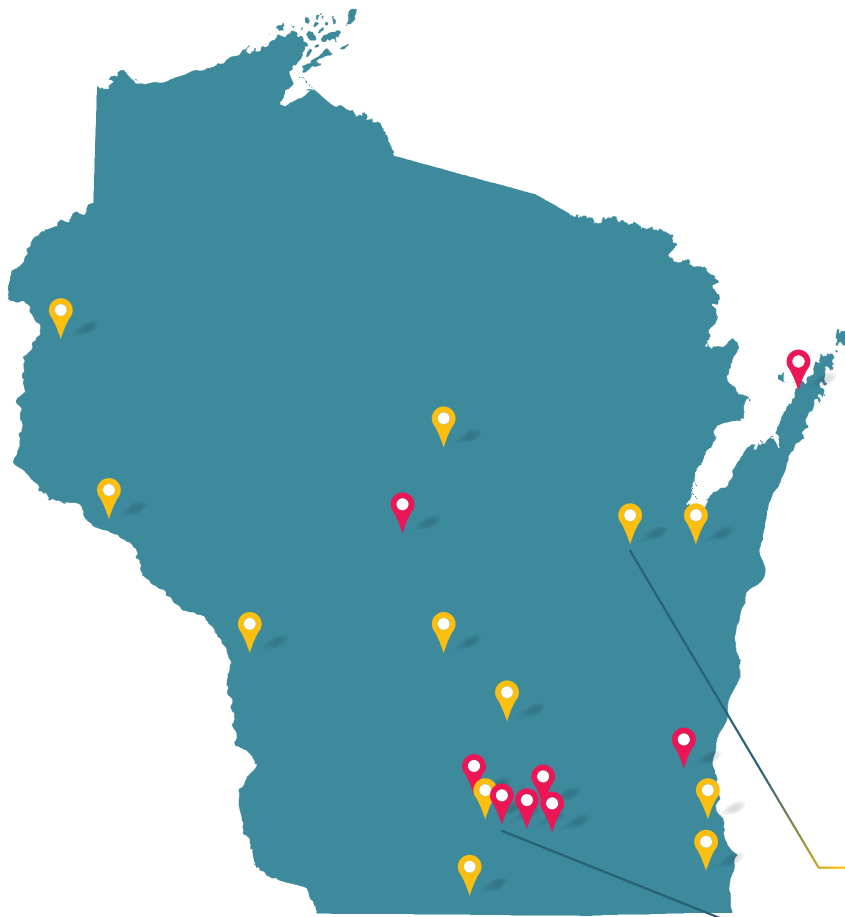


OPTIMIZING COUNTY OPERATIONS



- 1. Creating a system and process design for Innovation Center Stoughton**
- 2. Intersecting interests for Stoughton employers and the Innovation Center Stoughton**
- 3. Finding common threads for employees and sustainable workforce development in Stoughton**
- 4. Exploring downtown redesign and preservation of Stoughton's Depot Hill area**
- 5. Planning a redevelopment framework for Stoughton's Depot Hill area**
- 6. Planning strategic growth opportunities for the Town of Germantown**

UniverCity Year Amplifies the Wisconsin Idea: 2016–23



2,453

students

325

projects

9

partner institutions

*data collected from 2016–23

12 Counties

8 Cities, villages, towns, and groups

Adams County
Brown County
City of Monona
City of Stoughton
City of Wisconsin Rapids
Columbia County
Dane County

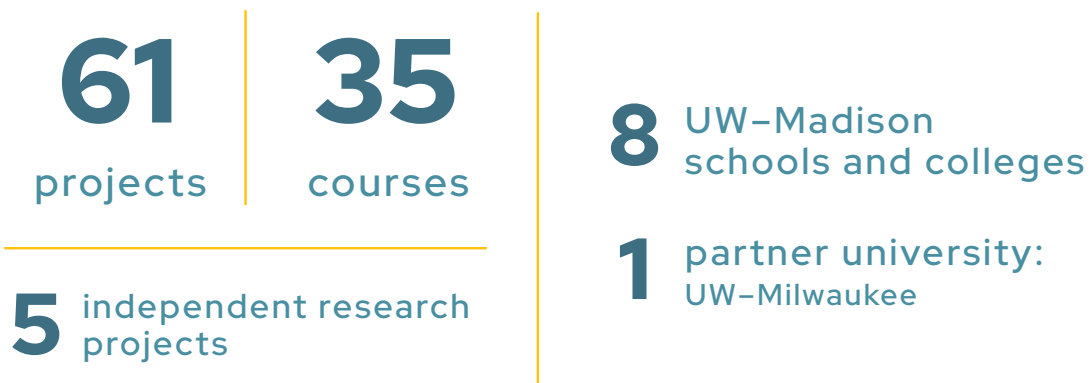
Green County
Koshkonong Creek Collaborative
La Crosse County
Marathon County
Milwaukee County
Outagamie County
Pepin County

Polk County
Racine County
Town of Germantown
Village of Egg Harbor
Village of Marshall
Village of Waunakee



UniverCity Year 2022–25 partners are Eau Claire and St. Croix counties; the Wood County Health Department; the cities of Marinette, Milton, River Falls, and Wausau; and the villages of Cottage Grove and Shorewood.

By the Numbers: UniverCity Year 2022-23



Thank You

Thank you to representatives from our partner communities, University of Wisconsin–Madison, and other Wisconsin campuses who were essential to the success of these projects.

Staff and community members from the City of Stoughton, Columbia County, the Koshkonong Creek Collaborative, Outagamie County, Polk County, and the Town of Germantown spent hundreds of hours guiding students and connecting campus coursework with community-based projects. They provided resources, advice, and feedback essential to UniverCity Year's success. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and wisdom.

On campus, faculty, staff, researchers, and extension specialists embodied the Wisconsin Idea by expanding their courses and research programs to incorporate community priorities. They helped address local challenges in collaboration with local government leaders, community members, and students. Their innovative work continues to impact the UW System, Wisconsin, and the world. Thank you, all!

City of Stoughton

Gary Becker
Katrina Becker
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Phil Caravello
Carl Chenoweth
Mike Connor
Sarah Ebert
Dan Glynn
Joanne Grassman
Ben Heili
Regina Hirsch
Greg Jenson
Dan Keyser
Jean Ligocki
Tom Majewski
Pete Manley
Tim Onsager
Daniel "DJ" Payton
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Frank Raff
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Lisa Reeves
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Brett Schumacher

Roger Springman
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Tim Swadley
Lukas Trow
Rachel Venegas

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Cheryl Fahrner
Steve Sobiek
Geoff Vine

Koshkonong Creek Collaborative

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Troy Eichoff
Steve Falter, Capitol Water Trails
Kris Hampton
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Tom Veith
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Polk County

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Scott Good

Terry Hauer

Claire Johnson

Timm Johnson

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Jay Luke

Vince Netherland

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Town of Germantown

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Susan Ganther

Gregg Haunrouth

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Jess Link Reeve, School of Medicine and Public Health

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Jeff Russell, Division of Continuing Studies
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Curt Witynski, UCA Advisory Board member
Xai Xiong, Morgridge Center for Public Service
John Zumbrunnen, Division of Teaching and Learning



CITY HALL

Welcome To
Stoughton
City Hall

STOUGHTON

The Innovation Center Stoughton and City of Stoughton are partnering with UniverCity Year from 2021-24 to support establishing a community-based innovation center in an effort to resolve workforce shortages and build resilience. Photo courtesy of Mayor Tim Swadley



City of Stoughton

1 **Creating a Renovation Plan for Stoughton's 1892 School Building** | *Jan Kucher and Mark Oleinik*

Civil and Environmental Engineering 578: Senior Capstone Design

This project manual includes concepts, drawings, and written materials to guide the revitalization of the historic 1892 School Building in a way that could host the proposed Innovation Center Stoughton.

2 **Creating a System and Process Design for Innovation Center Stoughton** | *Raj Veeramani*

Industrial and Systems Engineering 450: Industrial Engineering Design II

This report outlines system design recommendations that track tool and equipment metrics, record user learning outcomes, and ensure the safety of all Innovation Center Stoughton users.

3 **Intersecting Interests for Stoughton Employers and Innovation Center Stoughton** | *Paige LaPoint and Greg Harrington*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

Informed by a detailed analysis of similar centers, this report identifies important resources and programs that the Innovation Center Stoughton should include to strengthen the Stoughton community and local economy.

4 **Finding Common Threads for Employees and Sustainable Workforce Development in Stoughton** | *Paige LaPoint and Greg Harrington*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

This report offers recommendations for the Innovation Center Stoughton to alleviate workforce frictions and aid in workforce development.

5 Envisioning Innovation Center Stoughton | *Angela Richardson and John Syrdyk*

Management and Human Resources 746/747: Impact Consulting for Arts and Cultural Organizations

Using demographic research and community interviews, this student team offered three recommendations to best support Innovation Center Stoughton's next steps in their community: 1) solidify a value proposition, 2) expand target audiences, and 3) connect community resources.

6 Exploring Downtown Redesign and Preservation of Stoughton's Depot Hill Area | *Eric Schuchardt*

Landscape Architecture 610: Landscape Architecture Seminar – Capstone I

For a capstone project, a student analyzed and redesigned an area of Stoughton known as Depot Hill, considering elements like green space, murals, and signage to improve the space for residents and make it pedestrian friendly.

7 Planning a Redevelopment Framework for Stoughton's Depot Hill Area | *Eric Schuchardt*

Landscape Architecture 611: Senior Project in Landscape Architecture Studio – Capstone II

The final Depot Hill framework plan utilizes historic and cultural preservation strategies that promote historic and cultural tourism, connect new development to historical site uses, and create mixed use spaces which support the existing character.

8 Exploring Cooperative Options with Stakeholders of Innovation Center Stoughton | *Courtney Berner*

Agricultural and Applied Economics 323: Cooperatives and Alternative Forms Of Enterprise Ownership

Students prepared recommendations and business plans for childcare, education, housing, and transportation cooperatives in Stoughton.



UW–Madison Students Partner with Stoughton to Envision Innovation Center and Community Collaboration

Through UniverCity Year, Stoughton is partnering with students from the Bolz Center for Arts Administration, the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture, and the College of Engineering.

By Abigail Becker

UniverCity Year connected the Innovation Center Stoughton (ICS) and the City of Stoughton with the Bolz Center for Arts Administration to create a vision for ICS. Photo by iStock | Ben Krut

Growing up in Edgerton, University of Wisconsin–Madison graduate student Olivia Bratzke made many fond memories in the neighboring city of Stoughton. She recalled sharing breakfast at the Koffee Kup with her grandfather and celebrating her family’s Norwegian heritage at the annual Syttende Mai festival. “Stoughton has a special place in my heart,” Bratzke said.

Bratzke and a team of her student colleagues from the Bolz Center for Arts Administration completed a two-semester long consulting project focused on creating a vision for the Innovation Center Stoughton — a regional center for creativity and innovation in southeastern Dane County.

Bratzke’s familiarity not only with Stoughton but with the region was an added bonus for her team’s work. She enjoyed sharing Stoughton’s “curiosities” and fun local establishments with teammates Drew Alvarez, Ellie McShane, and Allison Secord.

“I have loved watching what Edgerton has done as a community, and I really have enjoyed learning

even more about Stoughton,” Bratzke said. “They’re booming with artists, and it’s really cool to see how much they’re growing.”

Stoughton is partnering with UniverCity Year to leverage university resources that will assist local partners in establishing a community-based innovation center in an effort to resolve work-force shortages and build resilience. The center would expand Wisconsin’s first FabLab — an MIT-developed program that engages middle and high school students in experiential learning — in the Stoughton Area School District. It would provide services like space for coworking, training, experiential learning events, and shared-use equipment.

“We love how this is pretty unique to this region,” Alvarez said. “It can incubate all sorts of ideas between arts and industry. There’s access to equipment through the FabLab and other businesses in town. We’re excited about the potential for Innovation Center Stoughton.”

In addition to the Bolz Center students, Stoughton worked with a landscape architecture student and four engineering courses. Two groups of students enrolled in Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership in Engineering are researching the intersecting interests for Stoughton employers and the Innovation Center and common threads for employees and sustainable workforce development in Stoughton.

The Civil and Environmental Engineering 578: Senior Capstone Design course created a renovation plan for the city's 1892 School Building. Finally, students in Industrial and Systems Engineering 450: Industrial Engineering Design II are creating a system design for the Innovation Center.

Lydia DeBauche, the landscape architecture student who completed a senior capstone project, along with the Bolz Center students, presented updates on December 9, 2022, in Stoughton to community groups including the Redevelopment Authority (RDA) and Sustainability Committee.

"Since these projects are a year long, it's really great to see their presentations now at this midway point to see where they're headed," said Katrina Becker, the Innovation Center's first

executive director, at the time. "Their perspectives are really helpful because they're bringing in an outside view. They can see things that those of us who are more embedded directly into the projects have a hard time seeing."

Becker said the student groups provided a forum to make connections across the community, which spurred the meeting with students and community groups with the goal of identifying areas of collaboration in Stoughton.

UniverCity Alliance and the Sustainability Committee were connected on another community sustainability initiative: together with the University of Wisconsin—Extension Dane County and the UW—Madison Office of Sustainability, these groups supported a community sustainability intern to assist with public input activities related to the city's future sustainability plan.

"This is what's possible when many different disciplines apply their work to one project. It's incredible to see what can happen when different parts of the university make a commitment to work together on a common goal. What would the world look like if this was the norm?" said UniverCity Alliance managing director Gavin Luter.



Yahara River winds its way through downtown Stoughton. Photo by iStock | Name in Fame



Students who partnered with Stoughton presented to community groups on Dec. 9, 2022. From left: Bolz Center students Ellie McShane, Drew Alvarez, and Olivia Bratzke stand with Katrina Becker, the executive director of Innovation Center Stoughton. Photo by Gavin Luter

The commitment from the community enhanced the students' learning experiences. "It's been great working with the city of Stoughton because there are so many groups here who are interested in improving the city," DeBauche said. "It's a perfect place to have a senior capstone project."

"Immeasurably Helpful"

Bratzke, Alvarez, McShane, and Secord were paired with Stoughton in their Impact Consulting for Arts and Cultural Organizations course that's a part of the one-year Master of Arts-Business Arts and Creative Enterprise Leadership program in the Wisconsin School of Business.

During their first semester, the team assessed the needs of the Innovation Center. They implemented their research and synthesized data collected through interviews, case studies, and a "deep dive of Stoughton," said Bratzke, during the second semester. "It's perfect timing," Becker said. "We really need that market research and community insight."

In addition to bringing new ideas, Becker noted

another advantage to working with the Bolz Center students. "Having the students be the ones to do the interviews as a third party can result in more honest and genuine responses from community members about their perspectives," Becker said.

DeBauche analyzed and redesigned an area of Stoughton known as Depot Hill for her capstone project. The goal is to consider elements like green space, murals, and signage to improve the space for residents and make it pedestrian friendly. DeBauche said working with the community has been rewarding and provided a different learning experience. "I've been going to meetings with the RDA and going to real city meetings," DeBauche said. "These are things I'll be doing as a landscape architect, so it's cool to have that experience as a student."

Alvarez agreed that working with Stoughton on a "very real" project makes the experience more rewarding. "It has been immeasurably helpful to have this in-person experience," added McShane.



COLUMBIA CO.

Columbia County, which includes downtown Wisconsin Dells shown here, is partnering with UniverCity Year from 2021-24 and was supported by the Alliant Energy Foundation to address a range of issues, including workforce development. Photo by Dusty Drew Baka



Columbia County

1 **Designing the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation Website**

Computer Science: Independent Student Project

A student developed a new website for the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation through an independent project in computer science.

2 **Evaluating Rio Fire Department's Infrastructure and Future Designs | Jan Kucher and Mark Oleinik**

Civil and Environmental Engineering 578: Senior Capstone Design

The fire station in Rio needs improvement and renovation to effectively serve the village and surrounding townships. This report provides three design alternatives informed by site visits and external research to understand current conditions.

3 **Developing a Design for the Northside Dog Park in Portage | Jan Kucher and Mark Oleinik**

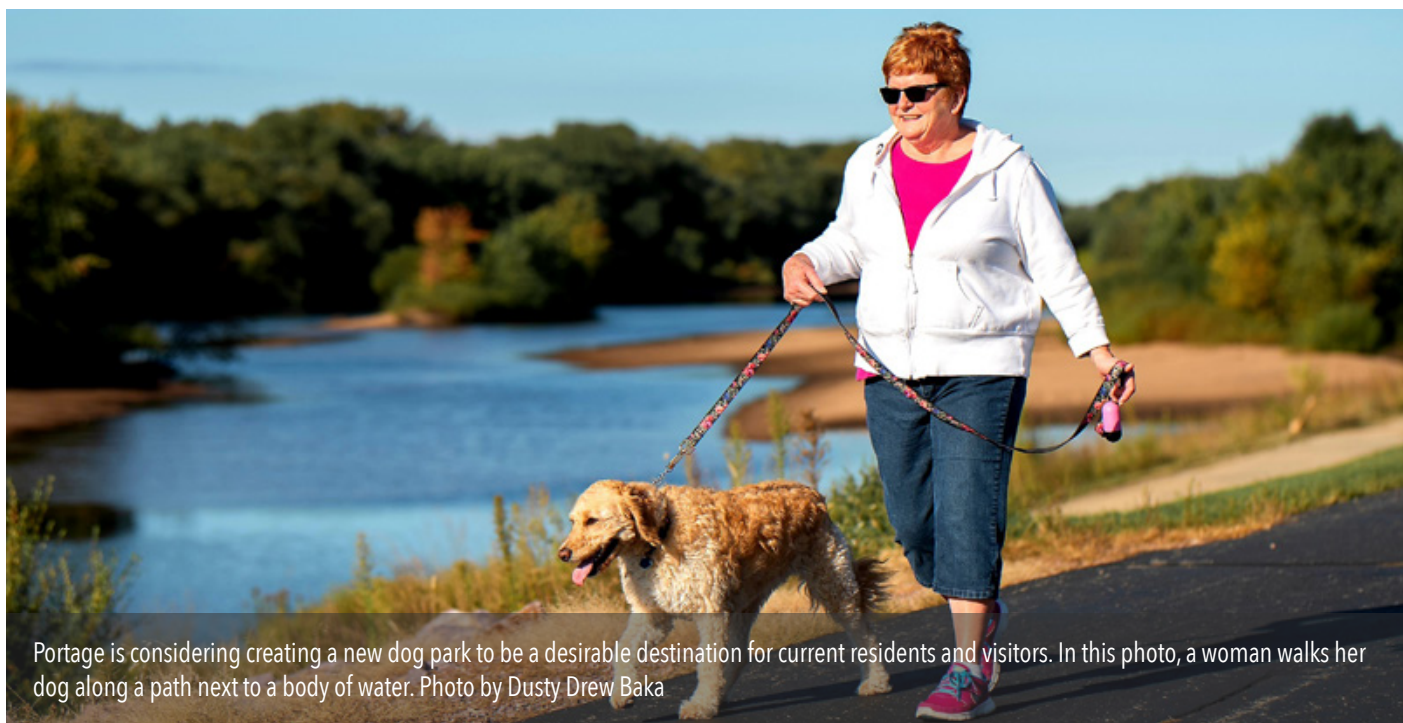
Civil and Environmental Engineering 578: Senior Capstone Design

Portage wants a newly designed dog park to be a desirable destination for people driving through the city and for current residents. This report includes designs for a recreation and dog park that includes a parking lot, shelter, and walking paths.

4 **Conducting a Trade Market Analysis of the Portage Business Park | Aaron Westling**

Planning and Landscape Architecture: Master's Professional Project

This independent master's project completed a trade market analysis. The student collected and analyzed demographic, economic, and market data to identify strategies for recruiting tenants to the new Northside Business Park.



Portage is considering creating a new dog park to be a desirable destination for current residents and visitors. In this photo, a woman walks her dog along a path next to a body of water. Photo by Dusty Drew Baka

5 **Attracting and Retaining Future Emergency Medical Technicians in Rio** | *Jess Link Reeve*

Public Health 780: Evidence-Based Decision-Making

This report outlines three proposals to increase the recruitment and retention of the Rio EMS Department: 1) creating core values, a mission statement, and policies and procedures; 2) implementing a high school mentorship program within the department; and 3) engaging in community outreach, especially in the schools.

6 **Focusing on Workforce Development through Attraction and Retention Initiatives for the City of Portage** | *Angela Kita*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

To attract and retain new residents, this report recommends supporting cultural community resources, downtown revitalization, pedestrian safety, and alternative mobility, tourism, social media, and housing cost-alleviation strategies like down-payment assistance programs.

7 **Welcoming and Integrating Latino Community Members into the Portage Workforce** | *Gavin Luter*

Public Affairs 827: Administrative Internship (Independent Student Project)

As the city struggles to find enough workers to fill its jobs, Portage is trying to become more welcoming to residents from countries that speak a language other than English. This report offers recommendations for how to make the community welcoming for new residents who speak Spanish.



Rio Partnership “Reignited Passion for Public Health”

As a result of the UniverCity Year partnership, the village of Rio in Columbia County is working with the local high school to implement new EMS outreach programs.

By Abigail Becker

The Rio EMS Department worked with public health graduate students to consider recommendations for recruiting and retaining EMS workers. Courtesy of the Rio Fire Department

Tia Dorshorst grew up with pagers in her family’s truck and house and spent several Christmas holidays waiting to open gifts while her dad responded to emergency calls.

Dorshorst’s familiarity with the emergency services field motivated her to work with the Village of Rio on challenges related to emergency medical technicians during the fall of 2022 as a first-year master of public health student (MPH) in the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s School of Medicine and Public Health. “That’s why I chose the project,” she said. “I have that connection personally.”

In the Public Health 780: Evidence-Based Decision-Making class taught by Jess Link Reeve, she worked with two other students pursuing master of public health degrees — Michael Elbing and Stuart Berry — who both have their own personal connections to medical services. Elbing is a certified EMT and worked in the Madison area prior to starting the MPH program. Berry, a former Navy medical officer,

is a first-year preventive medicine resident. “I wanted to get into public health to go upstream and help people before they got sick or prevent them from being sick,” said Berry.

Dorshorst and Elbing plan to attend medical and physician assistant schools, respectively, but chose the MPH program to enhance their future degrees. “I knew that there’s a lot that goes into medicine other than the medicine itself,” Elbing said. “I want to take this with me and focus upstream when I talk to future patients.”

They were connected to Rio through Columbia County’s partnership with the three-year UniverCity Year (UCY) partnership. In addition to the MPH students, Rio also worked with Civil and Environmental Engineering 578: Senior Capstone Design students taught by Jan Kucher and Mark Oleinik on improving Rio’s fire station. Fire department chief John Butterbaugh’s preferred design option included remodeling the existing building and added space for EMS services.

“It’s great to bring someone in from the outside, look at it with fresh eyes and kind of open the box and say, ‘Well, what about that, or what about this?’ ” Butterbaugh said. “They were all very professional, very easy to communicate with. Overall, I’d say it was a very positive experience.”

Butterbaugh has taken the reports created in both classes to the Rio Fire Association to spur a discussion on how to provide better service in the community. The association agreed to support a grant writer, and Butterbaugh has submitted an application for congressionally directed spending through U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin’s office to cover the cost of the remodel and construction project.

EMS Program in Schools among Recommended Solutions

Like many communities in Wisconsin, recruiting and retaining EMS workers is challenging in Rio. Low pay, high stress, and a lack of job satisfaction contribute to declining membership. The decline in EMT professionals has especially been

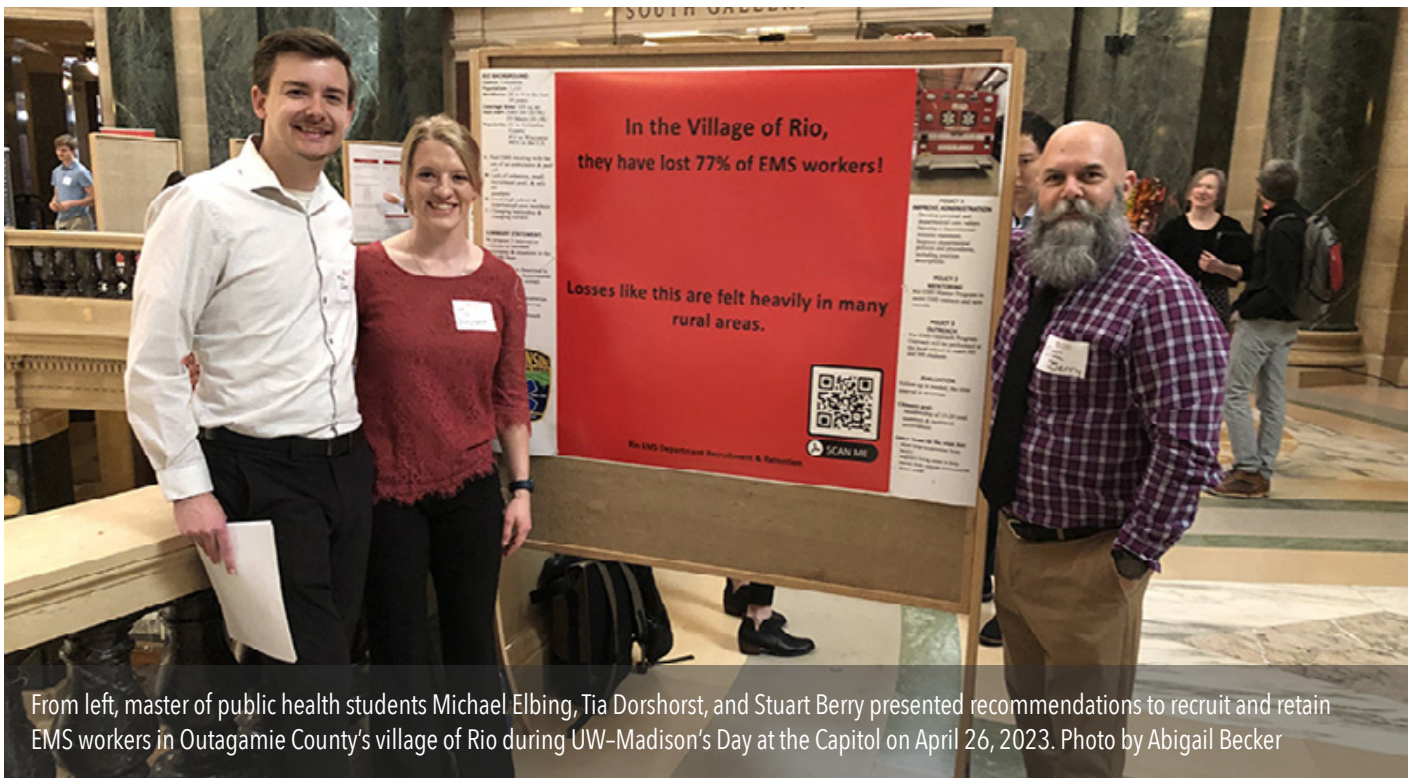
pronounced in rural communities that offer volunteer EMS services. “We have a small group of committed EMTs who continue to carry a large burden of hours without new members joining,” said Amy Stone, who is an EMT and the village’s clerk and treasurer.

During the semester, the students visited Rio and participated in a brainstorming session. “The team went above and beyond to listen to their partners,” Link Reeve said. “It was great to see them dive into a project that many rural EMS agencies are facing and find meaningful and innovative ways to impact the community.”

Visiting the community in person helped the group “get a grasp of what the community looked like,” Dorshorst said. After that visit, Berry felt like the partnership “turned a corner” in terms of their understanding of EMS in Rio. “We told them, ‘We’re outsiders. We don’t really know how your department works,’ ” Berry said. “But we just asked a lot of hard questions about their policies and their procedures and their culture.”



Rio partnered with UCY to find ways to increase the recruitment and retention of EMS workers. Photo courtesy of Rio Fire Department



From left, master of public health students Michael Elbing, Tia Dorshorst, and Stuart Berry presented recommendations to recruit and retain EMS workers in Outagamie County's village of Rio during UW-Madison's Day at the Capitol on April 26, 2023. Photo by Abigail Becker

Those questions and discussion ultimately led to the students recommending three solutions: 1) creating core values, mission statement, policies and procedures; 2) implementing a high school mentorship program and mentorship program within the department; and 3) engaging in community outreach, especially in the schools.

As a result, Rio met with the local high school to discuss an opportunity to offer an EMS class to students with the goal of creating a future viable candidate pool. "We are in the process of rolling out the program with the hopes that it will be ready for the fall semester," Stone said.

During the project, the students provided input for a new EMT director job description during a staffing transition. Butterbaugh said a recently hired medical director is moving forward with rewriting administrative policies and procedures.

Reigniting a Public Health Passion

Working with Rio as first semester MPH students solidified how Dorshorst, Elbing, and Berry can support communities in the area of

public health when they have completed their degree. "It got me excited. It made me see how impactful public health can be," Dorshorst said.

Likewise, Elbing reflected on starting at the beginning of the semester knowing little about Rio to helping the community. "We accomplished what we wanted to, and we helped people out," Elbing said. "Hopefully it keeps us going."

Berry's takeaway was witnessing the importance of meeting the community partners in Rio. "I don't think we would have accomplished what we had if we hadn't at least visited," Berry said. "It was just very rewarding to see — even before the end before our final presentation — that they were implementing some of our recommendations," he added. "The entire experience reignited my passion for public health."



KOSHKONONG CREEK

Water resources management student Germán González (left) and Ed Boswell, a teaching faculty member in GIS and geodesign (right), use the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) receiver in Koshkonong Creek to measure sediment depth and a tape measure to calculate the width of the creek. With the data collected, they can then determine the volume of sediment in the creek. Photo by Bryce Richter / UW-Madison (6)



Koshkonong Creek Collaborative

1 **Amplifying the Impact of the Friends of Koshkonong Creek Website** | *Holly Gibbs and Jules Reynolds*

Geography 309: People, Land, and Food

To meet the needs of the nonprofit Friends of Koshkonong Creek, students improved the group's website to better communicate with stakeholders about the long-term vision for creek conservation.

2 **Expanding the Website for Friends of Koshkonong Creek** | *Amy Schultz*

Communication Arts 605: Digital Studies Capstone

A digital studies student continued the website improvement project for Friends of Koshkonong Creek, enhancing the design, adding photos, and refining the information presented to best communicate with site users.

3 **Exploring Green Infrastructure Ideas for the Koshkonong Creek Watershed** | *Andrea Hicks*

Civil and Environmental Engineering 421: Environmental Sustainability Engineering

This report is a compilation of seven unique strategies that address Koshkonong Creek flooding through environmental sustainability engineering solutions.

4 **Growing a Stakeholder Network for Koshkonong Creek Clean-up and Maintenance** | *Greg Harrington and Dane Mattila*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

By collaborating and getting involved with Koshkonong Creek, stakeholders can ensure it is protected and preserved for future generations. This report offers a plan for different ways stakeholders can be involved in conservation activities.

5 Exploring Governance Options for the Koshkonong Creek Watershed | *Ken Genskow*

Environmental Studies/Urban and Regional Planning 865: Water Resources, Institutions, and Policies

A group of nine students explored ways to improve governance of the Koshkonong Creek Watershed, ultimately recommending the formation of an expanded watershed group or association.

6 Developing Comprehensive Water Resources Management Strategies for the Koshkonong Creek Watershed | *Ed Boswell and Ken Genskow*

Environmental Studies 717/718/719: Water Resources Management Practicum

Students are working over four semesters to study the watershed, conduct field work, and recommend a comprehensive water resources management strategy that addresses water flow, water quality, governance, and stakeholder engagement. This project will be complete in Spring 2024.

7 Exploring Engineering Options for Flood Control, Sediment, and Nutrient Reduction for Koshkonong Creek | *Jan Kucher and Mark Oleinik*

Civil and Environmental Engineering 578: Senior Capstone

This report recommends reducing the duration of flood events in the watershed by implementing a side-channel storage that retains flood waters for a controlled, slow-release after a peak flooding event along one of the northern choke points of the creek.

8 Investigating Flood Control Alternatives for the Koshkonong Creek Watershed | *Jan Kucher and Mark Oleinik*

Civil and Environmental Engineering 578: Senior Capstone

To address annual flooding in the Koshkonong Creek Watershed located near the Badger Farms property, students designed an alternative that recommends creating a community recreational area with the goal of reducing the severity and duration of these events.

9 Creating a Conservation Action Plan to Improve Water Quality and Ecosystem Conditions in the Koshkonong Creek Watershed | *Hilary Hunt and Arlyne Johnson*

Environmental Studies 972: Conservation Planning

Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies graduate students worked collaboratively with the Friends of Koshkonong Creek to create a conservation action plan to improve water quality and ecosystem conditions in Koshkonong Creek.

10 **Establishing a Citizen-Science Application for Watershed Data Collection** | *Ed Boswell*

Landscape Architecture 590: Applications of GIS to Watershed Management

This class took initial steps to create a GIS geodatabase, hub website, and citizen-science application for the Friends of Koshkonong Creek and local stakeholders.

11 **Mapping Amenities in the Koshkonong Creek Watershed through Geodesign** | *Ed Boswell*

Landscape Architecture 511: Geodesign Methods and Applications

Students explored geodesign methods and technologies to map and create urban green infrastructure, bike and kayak recreation, and restoration opportunities in the Koshkonong Creek Watershed.

12 **Documenting Land Use and Environmental Change in a Wisconsin Watershed: Addressing Local Needs for Adaptive Management** | *Leif Brottem*

Environmental Studies 978: Conservation GIS Part 1

This project studied the expansion of the City of Sun Prairie, explored the background on how climate change is projected to affect this area of Wisconsin, and conducted an analysis of how land cover types have changed in the area bordering Koshkonong Creek.



Dave Muehl, owner of Badger Farms, looks out at Koshkonong Creek on his property in Deerfield. Photo by Anica Graney

Hands-On Watershed Management

Nelson graduate students shared research on watershed management with Wisconsin's Koshkonong Creek.

By Abigail Becker



Steve Falter, founder of Capitol Water Trails, speaks during the educational event for the Koshkonong Creek Watershed held at Badger Farms in Deerfield, Wisconsin.

Determined to remove a log from a large pile, several Nelson Institute water resources management students attempted to pull on a system of connected several ropes by leveraging their bodyweight backwards across a field at Badger Farms in Deerfield.

“You don’t think that just tying a rope around the log and yanking on it is going to do much, especially for me who’s barely over five feet tall,” said Hannah Agner, a water resources management (WRM) student. But the log slowly creaked its way out of the stack and was met with cheers when it finally broke free.

With the guidance of experienced water trail volunteers from Capitol Water Trails, Mauneshia River Alliance, and Friends of Koshkonong Creek, the students were practicing different strategies that can be used to clear blocked waterways during a Wisconsin Water Trail Development 101 seminar on April 29.

“They’ve come up with a pretty unique and interesting method of removing stream obstructions, so it was interesting to be able to pull on that and actually move the log out of it using the techniques that they’ve developed,” Agner said.

This was also the WRM students’ first time seeing the land they had been researching for the past semester. “Because we’ve just been studying this creek, we haven’t actually gotten to go out and do any type of field work,” WRM student Colleen Dickey said. “To actually be here is very motivating. It’s giving me the bigger picture that I need.”

During their two-year graduate program, the students are partnering with the Friends of Koshkonong Creek and Badger Farms through UniverCity Year (UCY). From 2021–24, a collaborative that includes the city of Sun Prairie, towns of Deerfield and Cottage Grove, and Friends of Koshkonong Creek, with support from Badger Farms, partnered with UCY to work toward a

healthier creek that can support a variety of wild-life and human activities for generations to come.

“As an ambassador of UW–Madison, we don’t think we know all the answers,” said UCA managing director Gavin Luter, addressing the community members who attended the event. “We want to learn from you as the experts on Koshkonong Creek.”

The April 29 event drew participants from the community, including nearby property owners, nonprofit volunteers, and interested residents. Representing UW–Madison were Ken Genskow, a professor of planning and landscape architecture, Division of Extension statewide specialist, and interim chair of the Nelson Institute’s water resources management program; as well as Ed Boswell, a teaching faculty member in GIS and geodesign.

Prior to the demonstrations, the audience heard from Capitol Water Trails’ Steve Falter on best practices for clearing waterways, safety tips, and rights of water users and land owners.

Genskow and PhD student Andrew Hillman shared the results of a study exploring governance

options for the Koshkonong Creek Watershed, which resulted from a class taught by Genskow called Water Resources, Institutions, and Policies.

Genskow said the students have benefited from hearing directly from individuals and organizations who care about improving the quality of the creek, public access to it, and recreational opportunities on the waterway.

“As an instructor, it’s helpful to have real, unresolved challenges that emphasize the lessons discussed in class and published literature,” Genskow said. “Projects like this one help keep our educational experiences grounded and raise all sorts of applied research questions for the university to explore in partnership with community members.”

Boswell showed participants how to use an interactive website to report situations, like downed trees or other blockages, along the creek. These projects align with the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture’s Geodesign Collaborative that provides digital tools to engage stakeholders and assist communities with planning and design challenges.



From left, Ethan Hanewell, Joshua Nemser-sheer, Dave Muehl, and Megan Beaulieu evaluating the Badger Farms property during winter. Photo by Abigail Becker



Terry Bradshaw (left), president of the Menasha River Alliance, gives a rope technique demonstration to Ed Boswell, a teaching faculty member in GIS and geodesign, during the educational event.

Boswell said the event fostered interaction between the students and community partners with varying interests, from landowners who want to recover flooded farmland to people interested in developing innovative watershed governance structures. He's already seeing the students' appreciation for these different perspectives reflected in group discussions.

"Students choose programs like the MS in water resources management at UW–Madison because they want to make a difference," Boswell said. "Community-based projects provide amazing opportunities for students to apply their skill sets and interests toward solving complex problems while developing empathy for diverse stakeholder perspectives."

Agner said making those connections was the most important part of the event. "That can really help us in the early stages," she elaborated, "to figure out where we want to take this project and what could actually be of use to them, rather than just us writing a report that's going to get dusty on the shelf."

This summer, the WRM students will be conducting field work, communicating with neighbors about the issues affecting Koshkonong Creek, and investigating the waterway's hydrology to see how incorporating wetlands might address flooding issues. This research will inform a watershed management plan.



Terry Bradshaw, gives a rope technique demonstration during the educational event.

Heidi Putnam, who is pursuing dual master's degrees in WRM and urban and regional planning, emphasized the importance of gathering information from those closest to the issue. "You can have the best plan or idea in the world, but if you haven't talked to someone that actually has lived experience in that area, it's really hard to make that connection, to understand [if] this validates or invalidates our ideas or opinions about what might work for a place," Putnam said. "If you aren't having a direct conversation from the beginning, you're not going to have a successful project."

Both Dickey and Putnam have experience with UCY collaborations. While an undergraduate student, Dickey worked on a project addressing water quality in Pepin County. Putnam recently partnered with Polk County during Fall 2022 as part of her urban and regional planning degree.

These experiences provide the opportunity for students to connect with community partners across Wisconsin and put the skills they learn in the classroom into practice. It also reinforces the importance of building relationships. "Being in the community is invaluable," Dickey said. "You can't read this online. Being in this space, you learn way more than you can on your own."



Gavin Luter, managing director for UniverCity Alliance, speaks during the event.



Abigail Becker, senior associate for communications and outreach with UniverCity Alliance, hands out informational materials during an educational event.




Appleton
FLIGHT CENTER

OUTAGAMIE CO.

The Appleton International Airport features sustainable elements such as solar panels, a biofiltration basin, and a net-zero energy building.
Photo by Karina Lisogor



Outagamie County

1 **Leveraging Policy Innovations to Boost Childcare Worker Wages in Outagamie County** | *Mindy Walker*

Public Affairs 869: Workshop in Public Affairs

Students interviewed several local business leaders to gather their perspectives on childcare. They recommended creating a community fund for supplementing childcare worker wages, leveraging state investments, and encouraging businesses to offer explicit childcare benefits.

2 **Examining Childcare Workforce Compensation as a Driver of Economic Recovery in Outagamie County** | *Loren Kuzuhara*

Management and Human Resources 705: Human Resource Management

Human resource management students studied how childcare worker compensation can be a major driver of overall economic development strategies in the county. They recommended seeking innovative opportunities to boost wages.

3 **Exploring Supports for Childcare Business Viability in Outagamie County** | *Bonnie MacRitchie*

Public Affairs 869: Workshop in Public Affairs

Many childcare providers struggle to remain financially viable because programs are expensive to operate and tuition revenue may not cover the costs of high-quality care. This report provides recommendations for supporting childcare business viability in Outagamie County through leveraging shared service models.

4 **Exploring Housing Siting Criteria and Development Strategies for the Fox Cities and Greater Outagamie County Region** | *Bonnie MacRitchie*

Public Affairs 869: Workshop in Public Affairs

Given population trends, the Fox Cities and Greater Outagamie County region is projected to need 11,000 more housing units between 2020 and 2030. A student group used the principles of smart growth to build a decision-making framework that identifies existing community resources and ideal areas for development.

5 **Researching Childcare Cooperatives for Economic Sustainability in Outagamie County** | *Courtney Berner*

Agricultural and Applied Economics 323: Cooperatives

To help Outagamie County understand and evaluate cooperative business model solutions to childcare challenges, students analyzed different types of cooperatives and how well they might work in the county's childcare market.

6 **Guiding Future Best Practices in Managing Stormwater Ponds** | *Angela Kita*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

This report offers data on best practices and suggestions that aim to improve Outagamie County's management of stormwater ponds while ensuring transparency on ownership and maintenance duties.

7 **Helping Outagamie County's Rural Communities Plan for a Sustainable Future via Residential Zoning** | *Dane Mattila*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

This report provides the cities of New London and Seymour with recommendations to adapt current zoning codes to support additional housing.

8 **Embracing Sustainable Growth in Outagamie County: A Toolkit for Change** | *Dane Mattila*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

As Outagamie County experiences growth, especially in the rural areas, this student-created toolkit provides local officials with ways to proactively engage residents about what that growth will mean for their community.

9 **Promoting Positive Communication between Local Governments and Constituents about Housing Initiatives** | *Todd Newman*

Life Sciences Communication 435: Theory and Practice of Integrated Marketing Communication

Students presented ideas for fostering positive perceptions of economic development to county, village, and town officials. These communication strategies can be used to understand community opinions about local projects early in the development process.

10 **Developing a 10-Acre Parcel for Residential Housing in New London** | *Derrek Hungness, Jan Kucher, and Mark Oleinik*

Civil and Environmental Engineering 578: Senior Capstone

Students will help the community evaluate a site for future residential housing. This project will be completed in the 2023–24 academic year.

11 Creating Opportunity for All: Homeless Programs and Resources for Upward Mobility in Outagamie County | *Jess Link Reeve*

Public Health 780: Evidence-Based Decision-Making

People experiencing homelessness is a prominent issue across many social groups in Appleton. This report outlines three approaches focused on increasing fidelity on a case management level, using an interorganizational specialist to lobby for more resources, and developing an efficient central organization structure.

12 Disaster-Proofing Critical Facilities of Outagamie County | *Dane Mattila*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

Outagamie County is currently updating a five-year hazard mitigation plan. This report focuses on the risks facing farmland and county roads and recommends areas where the county should focus its mitigation planning.

13 Exploring Wetland Mitigation Banking Opportunities in Outagamie County | *Morgan Edwards*

Public Affairs 881: Cost-Benefit Analysis

A team of students evaluated the feasibility of a wetland mitigation banking program based on 10 potential sites. This included examining expected costs, such as initial land purchase, design, construction, and upkeep, as well as benefits like credits the county would receive to sell to potential developers.

14 Offering Marketing Insights for the Mosquito Hill Nature Center | *Mary Kay Malone*

General Business 790: Applied Consulting Practicum

Three Wisconsin School of Business graduate students created a sustainable business plan to draw more families to the Mosquito Hill Nature Center, establish an easier online payment system, develop new programming, and encourage visitors to participate in revenue-generating events.

15 Creating Outreach Materials for Mosquito Hill Nature Center | *Holly Gibbs and Jules Reynolds*

Geography 309: People, Land, and Food

This project resulted in revised communications materials outlining the educational programs, outdoor recreation opportunities, and biodiversity efforts available at the Mosquito Hill Nature Center.

16 **Developing Creative Campaign Materials for Mosquito Hill Nature Center** | *Doug McLeod*

Journalism and Mass Communication 455: Creative Campaign Messages

Two groups of students created marketing strategies and tools, including newly developed websites, draft social media posts, recorded radio advertisements, ready-to-print educational and informational pamphlets, interactive events calendars, and promotional videos. The purpose of these materials was to create a coordinated communications campaign promoting the variety of offerings at the center.



The Mosquito Hill Nature Center in New London is part of the Outagamie County Parks System. Photo courtesy of Outagamie County

17 **Developing Marketing Materials and Videos to showcase Appleton International Airport Sustainability for Northern and Central Wisconsin Air Travelers** | *Holly Gibbs and Jules Reynolds*

Geography 309: People, Land, and Food

Geography students learned about the sustainability features at the Appleton International Airport and created a video, infographics, social media templates, and photos that highlight the terminal's skylights, solar panels, biofiltration basin, and the net-zero energy private terminal.

18 **Reviewing Sustainability Initiatives at the Appleton International Airport** | *Paige LaPoint*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

Appleton International Airport aims to be a net-zero energy facility by 2050. To accomplish this goal, this report recommends installing a microgrid system; implementing a waste plan, efficient bathroom systems, LED runway lights, efficient heat regulation, and remote control air tugs; and publicly reflecting the airport's sustainability goals through electrochromic glass and a living wall.

19 **Expanding the Action Plan for New Sustainability Initiatives at the Appleton International Airport** | *Jim Tinjum*

Engineering Professional Development 669: Sustainable Systems Engineering Capstone

This report organized an overall Sustainability Action Plan, which recommends 60 sustainability initiatives grouped into five focus areas. Students created a matrix to identify ideal completion dates and suggested completion dates to achieve net-zero energy by 2050.

20 **Developing a Net-Zero Energy Plan for Appleton International Airport** | *Jim Tinjum*

Engineering Professional Development 669: Sustainable Systems Engineering Capstone

This report proposes solutions that the airport can implement to expand its sustainability goals to achieve net-zero energy, including airport vehicle and equipment electrification, on-site solar photovoltaic installations, on-site anaerobic digestion and zero waste, inland offshore wind farm and on-site vertical axis wind turbines, water conservation and greywater use, investments in utility scale renewable energy, infrastructure improvements, and far-reaching solutions like harnessing passenger footsteps.

21 **Exploring community geothermal for Appleton International Airport** | *Jim Tinjum*

Engineering Professional Development 690: Distributed Sustainable Energy Resource Design

Four groups of students created unique geothermal system design proposals for the Appleton International Airport that would support at least 25 percent of total heating and cooling demands in passenger terminal and ancillary buildings.



Solar panels at the Appleton International Airport power water heaters and provide a portion of the terminal's energy.
Photo courtesy of Karina Lisogor

22 **Planning for a Microgrid at the Appleton International Airport** | *Derrek Hungness, Jan Kucher, and Mark Oleinik*

Civil and Environmental Engineering 578: Senior Capstone

This project explores the configuration, size, and location of a microgrid, energy storage, sustainability, and expandable solutions. Students ultimately recommended installing a solar farm near the airport terminal.

23 **Modernizing the Outagamie County Highway Access Control Ordinance** | *Angela Kita*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

Outagamie County's growth from a rural to a suburban and urban county means that some highways need to change speed limits and other regulations that control how cars access them. This project offered recommendations to modernize Outagamie County's highway access control ordinance, which has not been updated in more than 30 years, and analyzed crash data to ensure the potential regulatory changes would be safe.

24 **Guiding Outagamie County Policy and Regulatory Framework to Support Electric Vehicles** | *Scott Williams*

Environmental Studies 810: Energy Analysis and Policy Capstone

A team of capstone students prepared recommendations that Outagamie County can use to electrify the public transportation sector. These include establishing a charging rebate program, changing building codes and zoning permits, staying updated on state and federal funding opportunities, and creating a committee of stakeholders to stay engaged on the issue.

25 Exploring County-Level Conservation and Sustainability Initiatives for Outagamie County | *Holly Gibbs and Jules Reynolds*

Geography 309: People, Land, and Food

This report presents conservation and sustainability initiatives addressing land and water conservation, renewable energy, transportation, food sustainability, and sustainable development that can be implemented on the county level with the support of government, nonprofit, and commercial organizations.

26 Conducting a Sustainability Management Assessment for Outagamie County Departments | *Terry Mann*

Industrial and Systems Engineering 515: Engineering Management of Continuous Process Improvement

The county wants to revive its sustainability to reduce its impact on the environment and save money. To move beyond addressing energy efficiency efforts, this report assesses Outagamie County's current state of sustainability management and recommendations for jumpstarting the county's Sustainability Committee.

27 Creating a One-Stop Database of Housing Resources in Outagamie County | *Jess Link Reeve*

Public Health 780: Evidence-Based Decision-Making

This report identifies models for accessible, navigable, and sustainable resource compendiums in support of the Outagamie County housing task force's goal of maintaining an inventory of housing services and programs.

28 Aligning Homelessness Programming with the Community Health Improvement Plan Priorities | *Tarakee Jackson*

Public Health 787: Applied Practice Experience

A public health graduate student will be working with Outagamie County Public Health to explore programming for people experiencing homelessness. This project will be completed in Summer 2023.



UW—Madison Students Create Buzz for Mosquito Hill Nature Center

Wisconsin School of Business graduate and journalism undergraduate students provided tools to the nature center to bolster the number of visitors and revenue.

By Abigail Becker

Mosquito Hill Nature Center implemented a new payment system after receiving recommendations from Wisconsin School of Business graduate students. Photo courtesy of Outagamie County

Prior to working with University of Wisconsin—Madison students this fall, registering and paying for events at Mosquito Hill Nature Center in Outagamie County wasn't the most user-friendly process. Attendees needed to call the office weeks in advance to sign up and pay over the phone or drop off a check. Addressing this system was a targeted recommendation from three students pursuing a master's degree in business administration from the Wisconsin School of Business (WSB).

"We want to make this easier and we can do that by using the Square [online payment platform] to eliminate this friction in the registration process and to capture that payment," MBA student Heather VanderWielen said. "Through this, we hope to increase event revenue and attendance."

As of December 15, Mosquito Hill Nature Center (MHNC), which is a part of the Outagamie County Parks System, had already implemented the new payment tool. MHNC naturalist Mike Hibbard credited the instructions provided by the students for jumpstarting the new system. "It was a huge

boost to help us on our way," Hibbard said.

MHNC is working with the UW—Madison students through a partnership with UniverCity Year (UCY). From 2021-24, Outagamie County is working with UCY on projects that aim to build a more resilient community, expand opportunity for all residents, and optimize county operations.

While the WSB students were helping MHNC create a sustainable business plan to enhance programs and boost program participation, School of Journalism and Mass Communication students were creating creative campaign messages for the nature center.

To kick off the students' projects, the students visited MHNC on a brisk October afternoon to fully experience the outdoor community resource. During their day-long visit, the students learned about the history of the nature center and existing activities from staff. They toured the indoor educational exhibits in the interpretive building, visited the center's library, and said "hello" to the turtles.

The nature center's outdoor activities include hiking and snowshoe trails (both wooded and prairie), observatory for stargazing, and a natural playscape for children. "We're glad you had the opportunity to come out and see the site," Hibbard said. "That made a big difference."

Recommendations

Together, the recommendations from the students were aimed at addressing MHNC's goals of drawing more families to Mosquito Hill, developing new programming, and encouraging visitors to participate in events that raise revenue like Honey Sunday and the Harvest Moon Festival. "There's a lot of ideas that we can implement in the real short term and then things we need to look into for the long term," Hibbard said.

The WSB students offered MHNC five suggestions, including utilizing Square, to increase revenue by \$10,000 to \$15,000. The remaining action items included the following: (1) brand MHNC as a destination for outdoor family activities; (2) implement a multi-program discount structure; (3) expand revenue-generating activities by taking MHNC educational programs into schools; and (4) leverage digital marketing tools like social media and a digital newsletter.

"We should be able to take action on the recommendations right away," Hibbard said.

These recommendations also fit well with suggestions from the journalism students in Evjue Centennial Professor Doug McLeod's Journalism 455: Creative Campaign Messages class who developed marketing strategies and tools for MHNC to use. "Even though marketing is a priority, the day-to-day limits what we can do on that," Hibbard said. "This helps us tremendously."

The class was divided into two groups, which offered MHNC updated logos and campaign goals to "discover what's in our backyard" and associate MHNC as a place to enrich the "body, mind, and soul." "There's so much about Mosquito Hill that is ready to be elevated and shared," journalism student Sabrina Bernstein said.

The groups offered MHNC newly developed websites, draft social media posts, recorded radio advertisements, educational and informational pamphlets, interactive events calendars, and promotional videos. Also, they recommended using a QR code for trail guides to enhance users' experiences at the nature center. One group also suggested creating a coffee shop at MHNC to further solidify the nature center as a destination.

"There's a lot of great content and ideas that we can — and likely will — implement," Outagamie County Parks System director Loren Dieck said.



Hibbard speaks to a class of students discussing programming strategy efforts. Photo by Abigail Becker



POLK CO.

Polk County is at a crossroads of emerging opportunity and vitality and wants to develop a unique identity and brand for the area. Photo by Hoskovec Photograph



Polk County

1 **Creating Campaign Message Materials to Rebrand Polk County** | *Doug McLeod*

Journalism and Mass Communication 445: Creative Campaign Messages

School of Journalism and Mass Communication students created strategic messaging tools, including a mission and vision statement, social media plans, external communication strategy, a brand book, and a logo to help reflect a new identity for Polk County's future.

2 **Developing a Community Engagement Methodology for the Polk County Rebranding Initiative** | *Carey McAndrews*

Urban and Regional Planning 721: Methods of Planning Analysis

To ensure that the perspectives of community members are included in a rebranding initiative, graduate students created a roadmap for meaningfully incorporating community voices through outreach.

3 **Planning a Polk County Community Branding Program via SWOT Analysis** | *Carey McAndrews*

Urban and Regional Planning 721: Methods of Planning Analysis

Graduate students completed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to inform a community branding initiative.

4 **Rebranding Polk County: Multimedia Tools for Diverse Audiences** | *Kathleen Culver*

Journalism and Mass Communication 411: Multimedia Design

These design tools, including new logos, slogans, social media branding, and website ideas, supported Polk County's goal of creating a community rebranding initiative.

5 **Exploring Digital Tools to Collect Polk County Community Input** | *Angela Kita*

Interdisciplinary Engineering 303: Applied Leadership Competencies in Engineering

This report addressed Polk County's needs for a standardized system of conducting and collecting community input on a variety of issues related to the rebranding effort.



UW–Madison students explore Polk County through UniverCity Year partnership

Through a UniverCity Year partnership, School of Journalism and Mass Communication students visited Polk County to inform a strategic messaging campaign project.

By Abigail Becker

A group of journalism students explored Balsam Lake (seen here) Amery, St. Croix Falls, and Osceola during a visit to Polk County on March 23, 2023. Photo by Hoskovec Photography (3)

With her phone camera focused on the snow-covered fields lining either side of the highway, University of Wisconsin–Madison senior Minji Hong reflects on a day trip up to Polk County in northwestern Wisconsin.

The trip was Hong’s first experience outside of the downtown campus area and into another part of Wisconsin. As an undergraduate and international student from South Korea, Hong said there have been few opportunities for her to interact with local elected officials during her academic career. “This road trip on a big bus is a really precious experience for me,” said Hong, who is majoring in journalism and communication arts. “This is so new to me. I just want to write all of it down.”

Hong and her School of Journalism and Mass Communication classmates boarded a coach bus early on March 23, 2023, to make the four-hour drive to the Polk County Government Center in Balsam Lake. Two days prior, their instructor, Evjue Centennial Professor Doug McLeod, advised

them to “take in as much of Polk County as you can.” McLeod said, “The more we can understand by talking to [Polk County stakeholders] and asking smart questions, the easier that transition will be when we return.”

Their goal was to immerse themselves in some of the county’s communities and gather as much information as possible to inform strategic messaging tools — mission and vision statement, social media plans, external communication strategy, brand book, and logo — for Polk County. Polk County is partnering with McLeod’s Journalism 455: Creative Campaign Messages class through the three-year UniverCity Year (UCY) partnership.

Hong and her classmates are expanding on an in-depth analysis of the region’s demographics and economic opportunities conducted by Urban and Regional Planning 721: Methods of Planning Analysis taught by Carey McAndrews, as well as rebranding tools created by Journalism and Mass

Communication: 411 Multimedia Design students taught by Professor Kathleen Bartzen Culver.

“Visiting Polk County not only makes the project come to life for the students, it also facilitates two-way learning between the students and UCY’s partners in Polk County,” UniverCity Alliance managing director Gavin Luter said.

Claire Johnson, communications and public information specialist for the county, said the experience was “extremely helpful” for Polk County staff and will be more “memorable” for the students than if the meeting had occurred over the phone or Zoom. “Not only did it allow us to establish a personal connection with the students, but it also gave us the opportunity to showcase our community and its unique features that words and photos can’t really do justice,” Johnson said.

“Valuable” Visit

Polk County is at a crossroads of emerging opportunity and vitality. It’s seeing increased suburbanization in some areas yet large parts of the county remain agricultural. The county is seeking a way to promote Polk County as a

familiar and welcoming place for new, young workers.

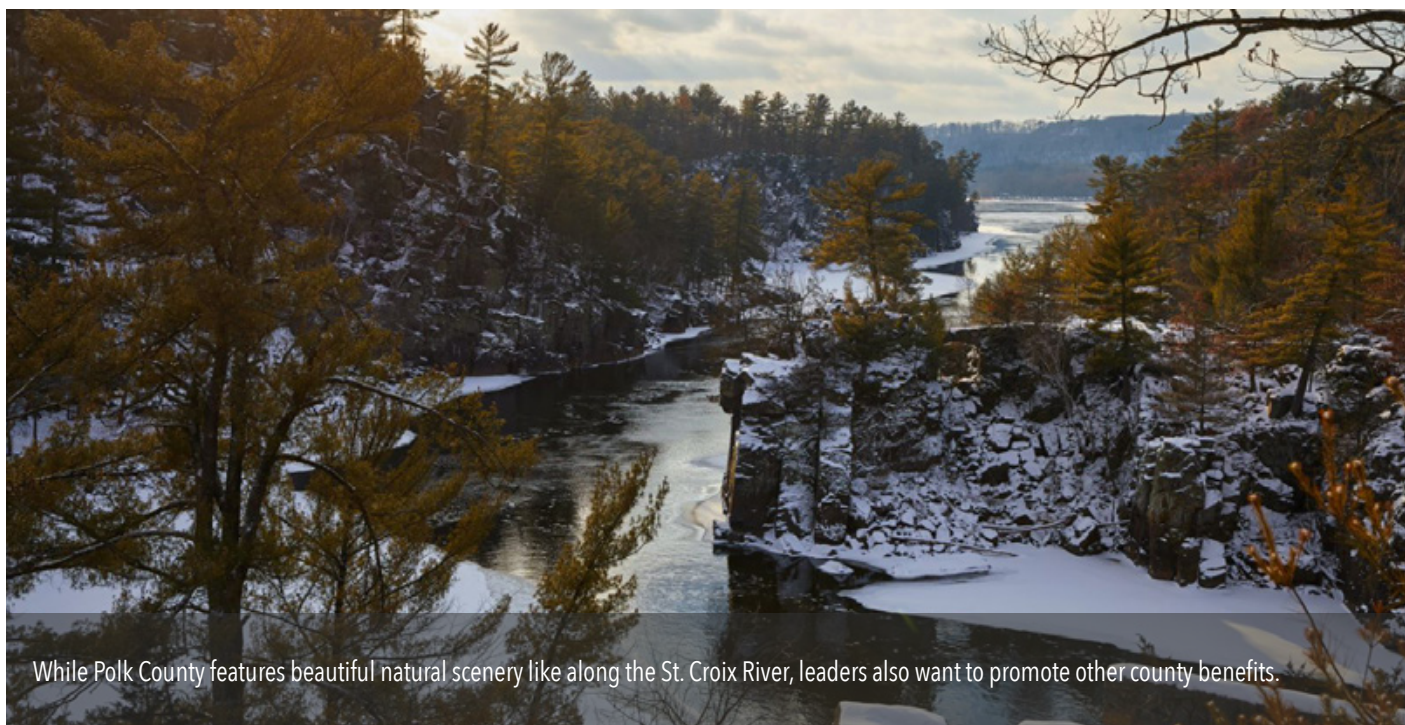
During the meeting, Johnson, county staff, and community partners discussed how Polk County is looking to attract and retain new businesses and workers, particularly those from the Twin Cities and surrounding areas. The students asked questions about current public transit options, public school systems, and the affordability of housing in the area.

“This is a group of highly motivated and passionate professionals, and it definitely speaks to the quality of this partnership,” Johnson said. “The students showed a genuine interest in learning about Polk County, and their questions have helped us better understand their perspective and the priorities of young workers like themselves.”

Paul Shafer, director of the Amery Economic Development Corporation, said he was “really impressed” by the conversations. In Amery, Shafer said community discussions often lack the perspective of younger people, which is



Claire Johnson, communications and public information specialist for Polk County, points to a map of the region during a visit with UW-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication students. Photo by Abigail Becker



While Polk County features beautiful natural scenery like along the St. Croix River, leaders also want to promote other county benefits.

the demographic the city is hoping to attract. The discussions with UW–Madison students provided better insight into what might motivate a younger generation to move to Polk County. “It was eye opening for me,” Shafer said.

While Polk boasts outdoor recreation and beautiful natural scenery, leaders also want to promote the county’s strong manufacturing industry, substantial healthcare sector employment, affordable cost of living, and desirable school districts.

This is exactly the message that Terry Hauer, executive director of the Polk County Economic Development Corporation, wants to convey. “This isn’t just fishing, and hanging out at the cabins,” Terry Hauer said. “There’s industry here and there’s good opportunities here.”

Getting a feel for Amery by walking along Keller Avenue, talking to a local business owner, meeting pedestrians outside of Wilke Glen and Cascade Falls, and witnessing the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway were “pivotal” steps for the students to take to “actually see, feel, touch Polk County, so they could get a feel for what it’s like here.”

“Anyone could sit at their desk or in their dorm room philosophizing, but to actually come and visit was extremely valuable,” Hauer said. “I appreciate the time and effort that the program and the students took to do that.”

Hauer said student experiences like those provided by UCY are important from the lens of growth and economic prosperity. “Programs like this are incredibly vital, not only to the university but to the surrounding communities, especially in this environment where our employers are looking for workers and they’re looking for workers that can step in and be productive from right out of the gate,” Hauer said.

Wisconsin: “A Special Place”

For the students, it was especially important to meet with Polk County government staff and community partners in person and to visit Amery, St. Croix Falls, and Osceola. After the trip, Hong said she felt more “official” and “motivated.” “My recent visit to Polk County made the research and analysis process more manageable,” Hong said. “The county’s serene environment and laid-back atmosphere made me feel relaxed and refreshed, enhancing my productivity.”

The experience gave senior Ally McNeive more confidence to move forward with materials that will resonate with Polk County residents. “It’s kind of hard to create marketing materials and promote people to come to this area if you’ve never been there yourself,” McNeive said.

Isabel Garlough-Shah, a senior, said the in-person discussion was helpful for gathering specific details about what Polk County wants to accomplish from the marketing campaigns. “Meeting in person helped us understand the personality of Polk and the important aspects to highlight throughout our campaign,” Garlough-Shah said. “[You] can see how much these important figures care about Polk County and its citizens.”

McLeod said the impacts of the trip were “reflected in their energy” as they began working on the Polk County projects. “There is only so much you can get from looking at maps and pictures, and meeting with [Polk County partners] online,” McLeod said. “By immersing themselves in Polk County, the perceptions of [the community partners], the residents, and the environs of Polk County become more real, more three-dimen-

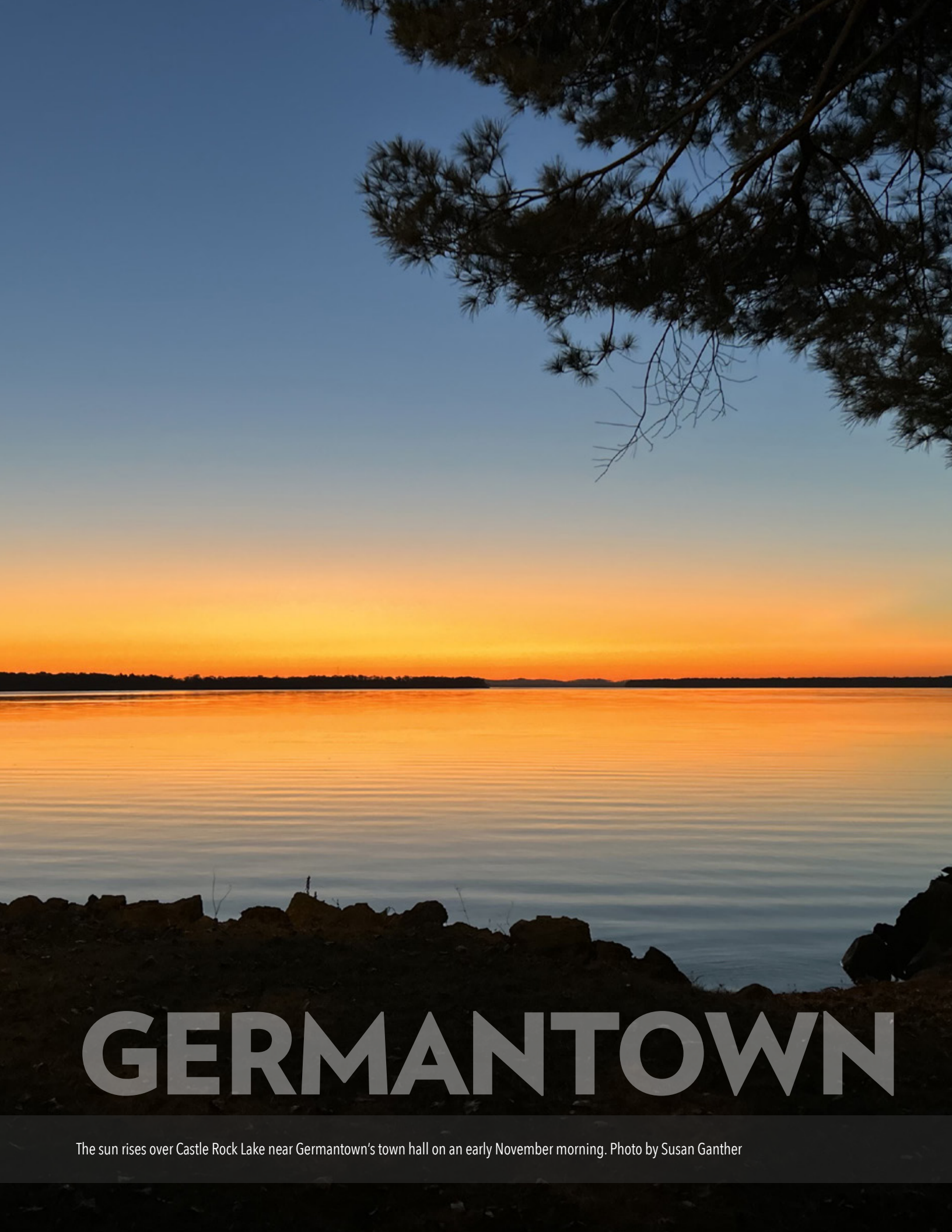
sional, and more important to the students.”

Many of McLeod’s students are not from Wisconsin, so his class is often the first time students have been outside of Dane County, much less northern Wisconsin. Through these community-engaged learning opportunities, McLeod hopes that the entire state will leave a mark on his students.

“For many UW–Madison students, Madison becomes a special place that they return to many times later in life, perhaps as a temporary escape from the reality of their own lives wherever they may reside,” McLeod said. “Visiting other parts of Wisconsin and conducting projects with communities outside Madison helps them to realize that the entire state of Wisconsin is itself a special place, a reality worthy of returning to again and again.”



People enjoying a waterfall in Polk County.



GERMANTOWN

The sun rises over Castle Rock Lake near Germantown's town hall on an early November morning. Photo by Susan Ganther



Germantown

1 **Planning Strategic Growth Opportunities for the Town of Germantown** | *Carolyn Esswein*

UW–Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning: Independent student research

Students provided the Town of Germantown with strategic opportunities in conservation, economic development, and fiscal management as the town expands and adds new development.

The Town of Germantown in Juneau County is seeking ways to address the effects of rapid residential development and an unprecedented increase of part-time and seasonal residents. Known for its lakes, forests, and outdoor recreational activities, Germantown has become a recreational rural getaway. The overall population has increased by nine percent from 2010–20 and is projected to increase over the coming decades.

UCY connected Germantown with applied planning workshop master students at UW–Milwaukee to address these challenges. The project team offered strategic recommendations on conservation, economic development,

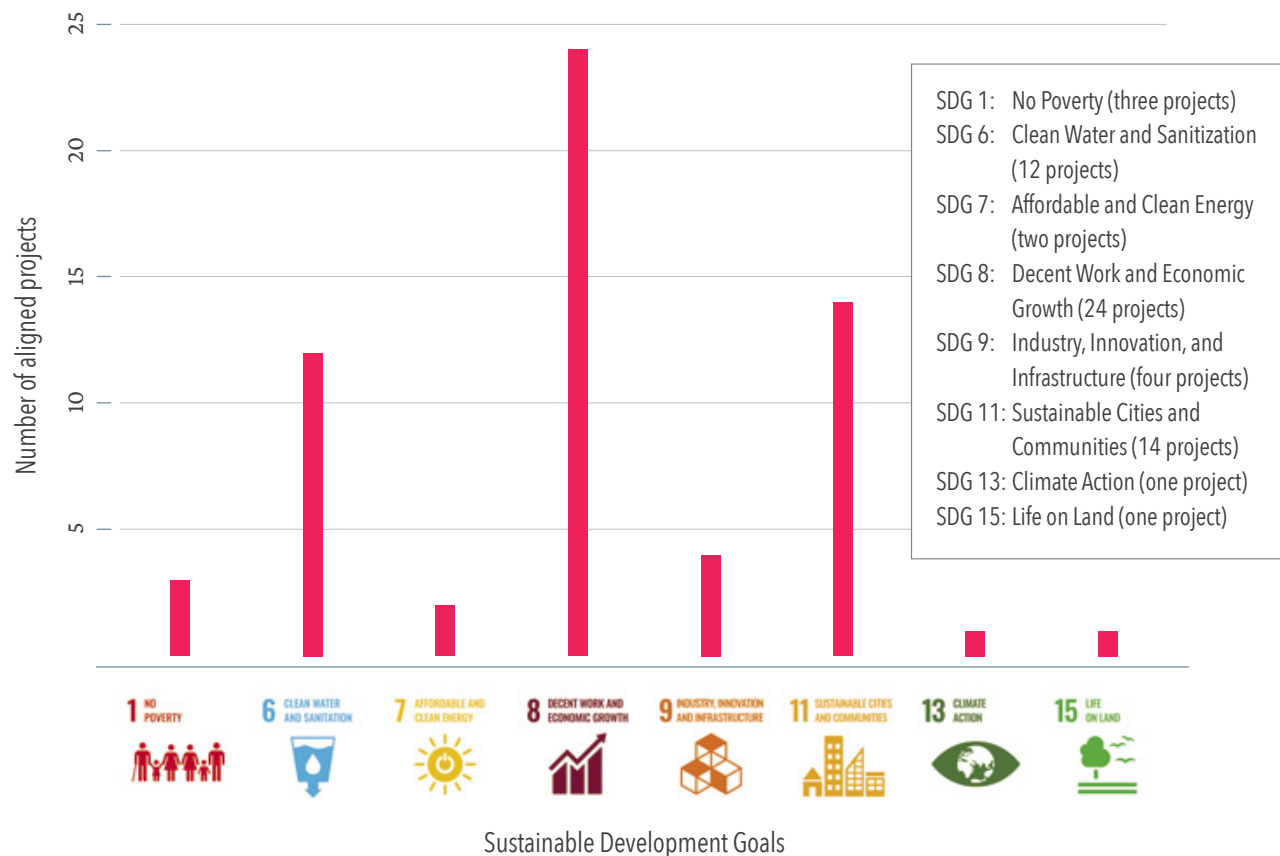
and fiscal management for the town board to consider. Specifically, the students recommended pursuing subdivision conservation guidelines and design standards and a lake management district, fostering a specialized bird watching recreational economy, promoting the Managed Forest Law program and carbon credits, and revising its zoning code to limit extensive development in woodlands and sensitive natural areas. The students also suggested contracting out garbage collection, applying for road maintenance grants/loans, and creating a Capital Improvement Plan.

Supporting Sustainable Communities

UniverCity Alliance (UCA) works with and for local governments of all sizes to build strong, thriving, and sustainable communities. Sustainability can mean many things to many people. One way to frame the conversation is to focus on local priorities through the lens of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are about what matters to communities – food, education, health care, a prosperous economy, and a clean and healthy environment.

While the initial strategy was designed for national governments, UCA focuses on SDG 11, sustainable cities and communities, and joins cities and universities across the country to link the goals to priorities of local governments of all sizes. UCA applied the goals to the projects defined by Wisconsin cities, counties, towns, and villages working with UCA. Applying this framework helps us identify common challenges, shared solutions, and collective impacts.

UniverCity Year projects in this report align with the following SDGs:



In addition to these goals that align with specific projects, the UniverCity Alliance initiative embodies SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

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