

Verona Environmental Issues

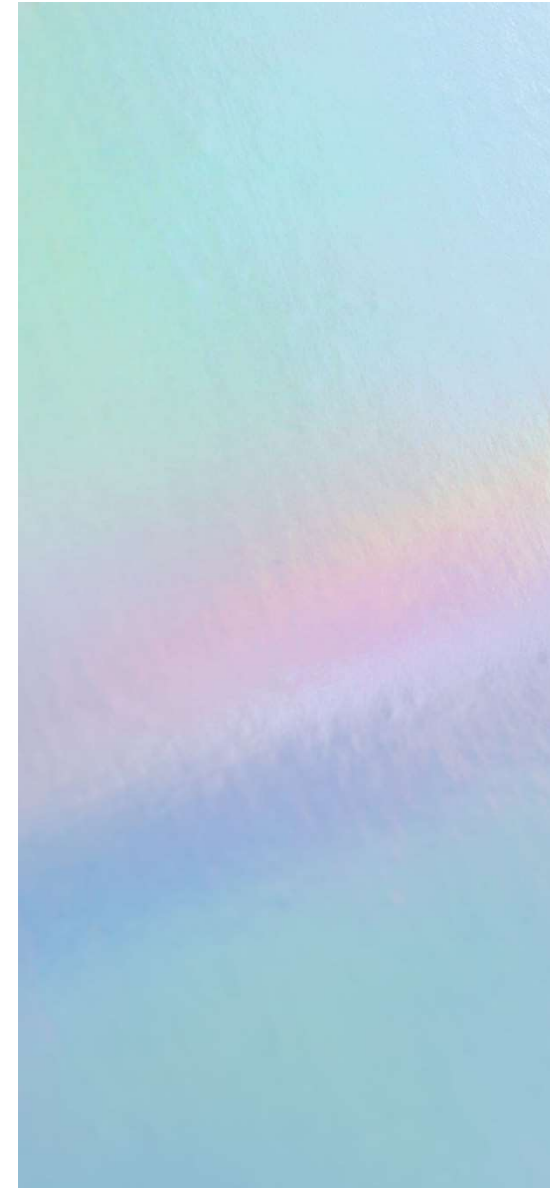
Global warming and climate change

Development pressure and loss of land

Verona Environmental Group

Now called **Sustain Verona**

March 19, 2024, updated October 11, 2024



Think Globally

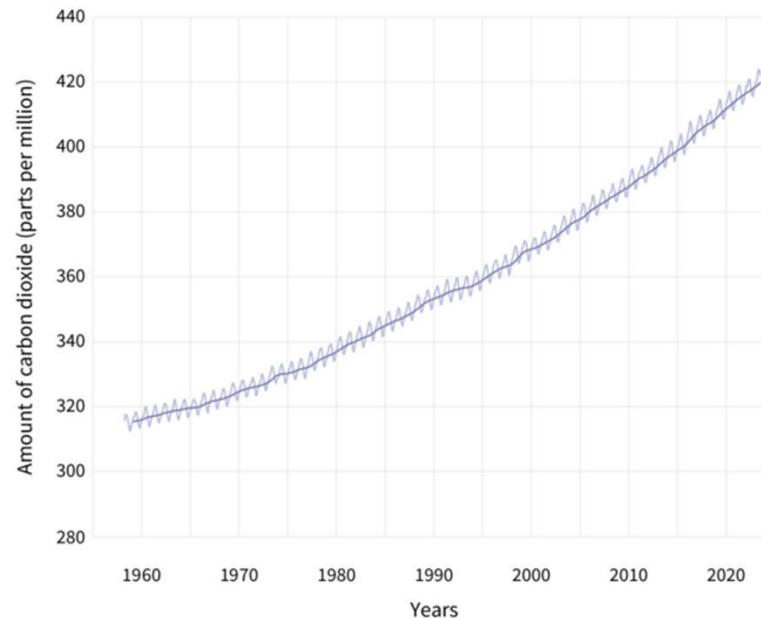
Act Locally

Global Warming

2023 was the **warmest year on earth** since record keeping started

Rising temperature is caused by rising carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere

ATMOSPHERIC CARBON DIOXIDE



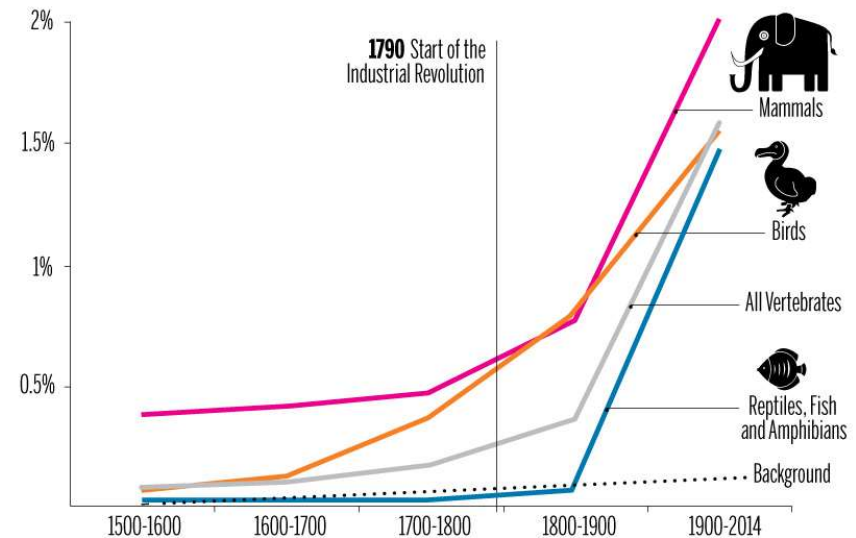
In Wisconsin

- + 2023-24 was the **warmest winter** ever recorded
- + February 2024 was the **warmest February**
- + Wisconsin just had its **first February tornado** ever
- + Lake Ice on Lake Superior was the **least ever**

Worldwide animal extinctions due to habitat loss and climate change

- + Sixth mass extinction (driven primarily by human activity)

VERTEBRATE SPECIES EXTINCTION RATES
Cumulative, recorded as “extinct” or “extinct in the wild”



SOURCE: Ceballos et al. Sci. Adv. 2015;1:e1400253 | GRAPHIC: Amanda Shendruk

MACLEAN'S

Rapid **local** development

- + Town of Verona - 100 new homes 2017-23, 100 more in planning stages.
- + City of Verona - 30% growth forecast 2020 to 2030
14,000 people → 18,000 people

The City annexes about **½ sq mile** of Town annually

The Town also develops about **½ sq mile** annually

The original Town of Verona was 36 sq miles

Development is planned

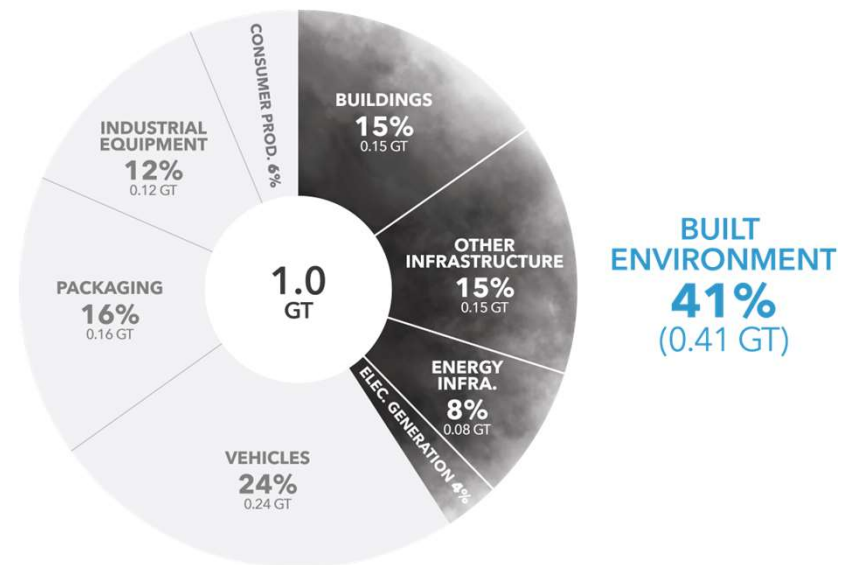
Land protection is not

- + Both the Town and the City have “Plan Commissions” that meet monthly to discuss and approve upcoming developments
- + Neither have any similar land protection committees

Development leads to **increased** global warming

- + Each traditionally built large house emits **10 to 15 Tons** of CO₂ per year
- + Each car associated with the house emits **5 Tons** of CO₂/year

ALUMINUM ANNUAL GLOBAL CO₂ EMISSIONS
Direct & Indirect Energy & Process Emissions



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Analysis & Aggregation by Architecture 2030 using data sources from IEA & Statista.
Note: pie charts are percents of total and are not comparable in scale.

This is **depressing.**

What can **I do about it ?**

You can have a **HUGE** impact locally

- + You may not be able to do much about the wars in Ukraine or Gaza.
- + You can have **A LOT of impact** about how our community deals with development and responds to climate change

Get informed about your local government.

- + **Sign up** for local government information about meetings, agendas, minutes of the board, the council, the plan commissions
- + **Go to meetings** and see who is making decisions.
- + **Talk** with them after or outside of the meetings and let them know your concerns
- + Consider **running for office** YOURSELF (almost all local elections have no opponent).

Global warming responses

- + Request that **solar panels** be put on all government buildings
- + Request that new construction be **all electric** (no gas line)
 - solar panels, heat pumps, geothermal heat and cooling
- + Request that **EV charging stations** be built locally
- + Request that Verona become a "**Sol-Smart**" community
- + Make your home **all electric!**

Lots of **Federal money** available for climate change

- + Bipartisan infrastructure law (**BIL**) and Inflation Reduction Act (**IRA**) made millions of dollars available to deal with climate change
- + For example - 30% instant rebate on solar panels
- + Dane County **Office of Energy and Climate Change** has lots of information
- + **Ask** your representative what they're doing about it.

Land Protection

- + Don't wait to try to stop a development project once it's been proposed (you're usually too late)
- + Help start a land protection program in Verona
- + Purchase of Developmental Rights (PDR) is a technique that has been successful in other Towns and Cities to protect:
 - + > Wetlands
 - + > Farmlands
 - + > Natural Areas

Land protection **slows** development

- + Groundswell has indicated interest in working with Verona to protect land in the Sugar River Valley if we can hire a city +/- or town **employee** to work with them
- + Both the City and the Town **can** afford it

Town Citizens want land **protected**

+ A 2018 Town survey showed that **80%** favored:

- > "environmental and wildlife preservation"
- > "preservation of large (>40 acres) wooded areas"
- > "preservation of the Sugar River Watershed"

70% of survey respondents wanted the Town to:

- > "connect bicycle and walking trails, including the Ice Age Trail"
- > "preserve farmland"

Encourage City or Town **Initiatives**

- + Clean Energy Resolution
- + Sol-smart designation
- + Sustainability Plan
- + LEED certified buildings
- + EV charging stations

 Fitchburg
WISCONSIN



Together, **we** can make a difference

- + Local efforts can have a huge effect and are **VERY LIKELY** to work
- + Small numbers of advocates can produce **big** changes
- + Becoming **aware and informed** is the first step

Sustain Verona

- + First meeting March 19
- + Monthly meetings since
- + We met with Mayor Diaz, and other members of the former City Sustainability Committee and in September, the City re-started the Committee!
- + We started a Webpage <https://sustainverona.com/>
- + We started Facebook and Instagram accounts
- + We're looking to get Verona residents interested in helping to prevent global warming!

City of Verona **sustainability efforts to date**

- + 2019 Sustainability Resolution R-19-018
- + COV Sustainability Committee formed 2019, met 6 times until 2021 but not since until now.
- + The Committee has had two meetings and has recommended budget money to put solar panels on City buildings

Meanwhile... in nearby cities

+ **City of Fitchburg**

Passed a Sustainability Resolution, Hired a Sustainability Specialist
Solar Panels on all City buildings, Awarded Sol-smart Bronze level
Built LEED Certified buildings, hired consultant to develop long term plan

+ **City of Middleton**

Hired Sustainability Coordinator, have an active city committee
Has received numerous grants and awards for Sustainability efforts
Gives out annual awards to citizens and groups for Sustainability efforts

More Neighboring city efforts ...

+ City of Sun Prairie

Sustainability coordinator, committee

Won PLATINUM Sol-smart award, 2nd in nation

Dane County Climate Champion 2021

Promotes EVs, Heat Pumps, other residential efforts to decrease Greenhouse Gases



Dane County Sustainability Efforts

- + Office of Energy and Climate change est. 2017
- + Implemented Climate Action Plan in 2020
- + Awards Climate Champions each year
- + 100% renewable electricity in 2023
- + 2024 - Sol-Smart Platinum award

First county in US to receive this award



What does SV want the City of Verona to do?

+ Replicate successful efforts of other cities!

Listen to the **Sustainability Committee**

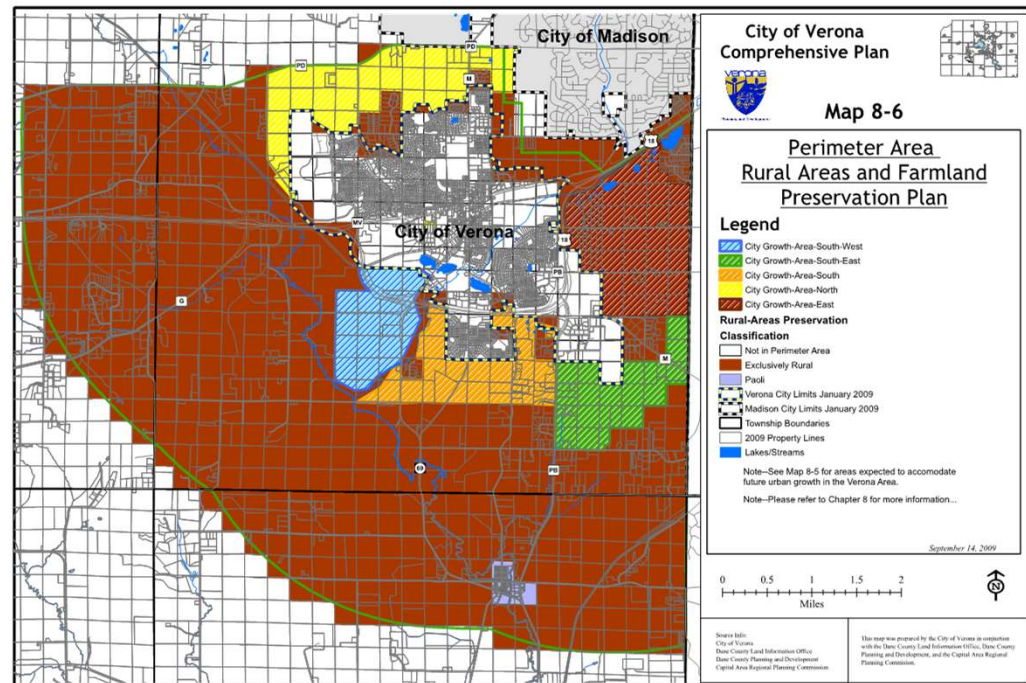
Hire a **Sustainability Coordinator**

Put **Solar Panels on all City buildings** and promote solar on all new buildings being permitted

Look at **2019 resolution** and **act** on it!

Partner with Dane County and other cities to reduce GHG emissions

City's plans for land preservation and development

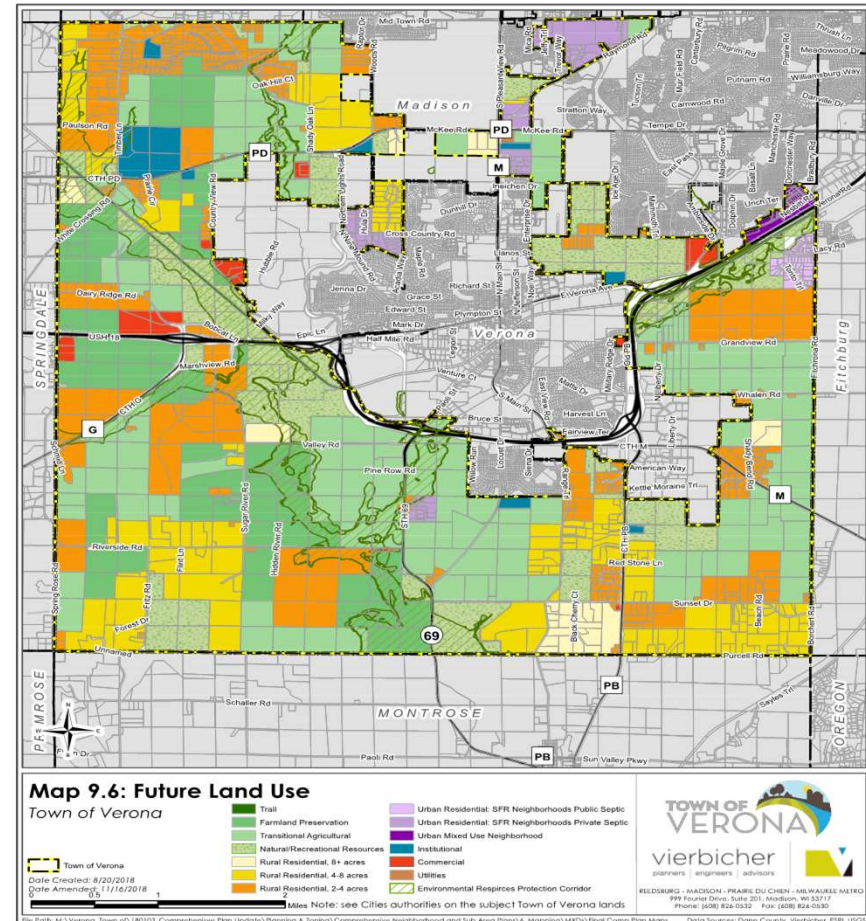


Town's View of Land Preservation and Development

Orange and yellow boxes are open to development or already developed

Light green is "Transitional Ag" for future development

Dark Green is "Farmland Preservation"



What's left in the Town for Preservation and how is it protected ?

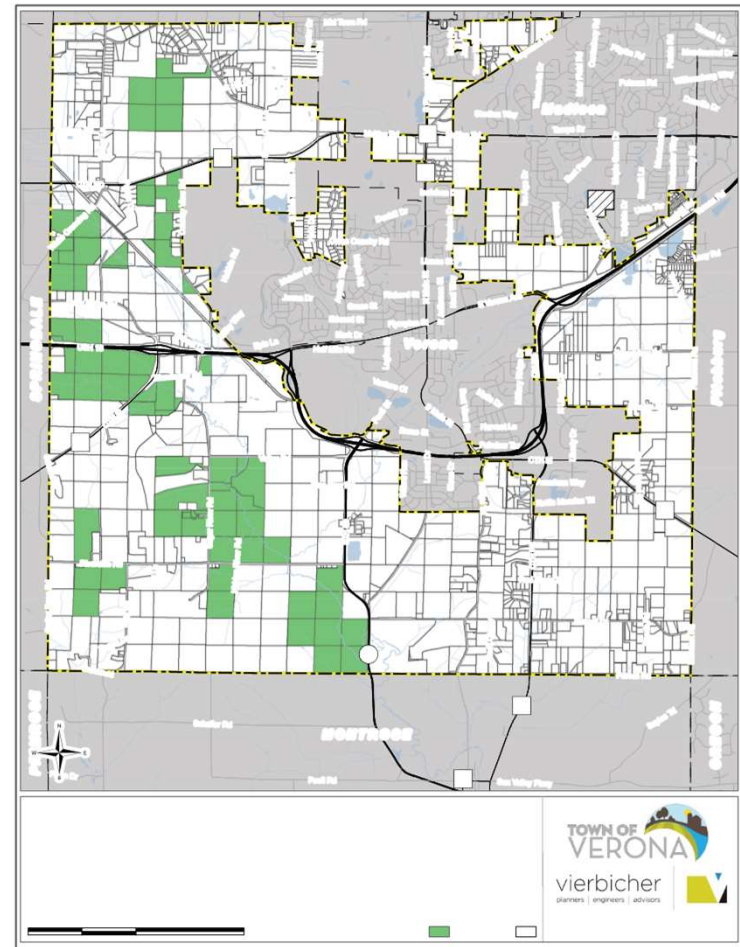
+ Farmland Preservation program

\$10/acre tax break

10-15-year horizon

Not permanent - can be broken with a small fine

Not applied to natural areas



Conservation Easements provide permanent land protection

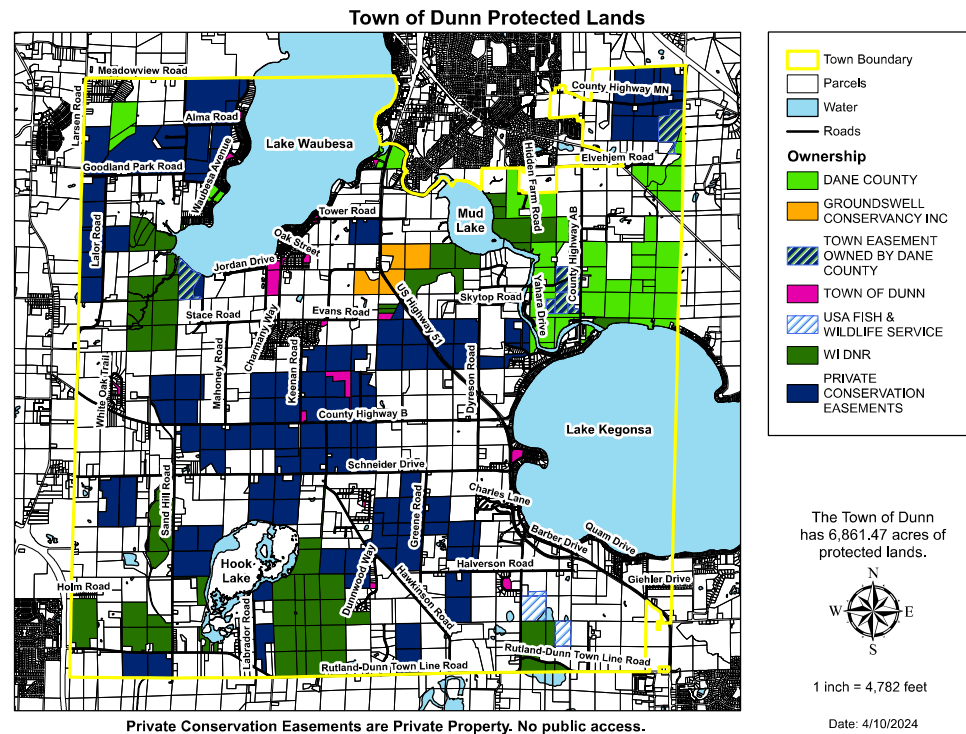
- + Purchase of Developmental Rights (**PDR**)
- + Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (**ACEP**)

These programs (and others) can use state and federal funds to permanently protect land from development

The Towns of Dunn, Westport, Black Earth, Dunkirk have used this method to permanently protect lands from development

Town of Dunn Protected lands

Partnered with
Groundswell (land
trust) for 30 years to
protect land with a PDR
program



Town's proposed PDR program halted in 2022 by board vote

- + Town's Natural and Recreational Areas Committee (NRAC) was in the process of developing a proposed PDR program to help conserve lands in the Town
- + Board vote 4-1 to cease any further efforts, before the plan could be fully developed and presented to citizens



What does Sustain Verona want the Town of Verona to do?

- + Reconsider starting a **PDR** program and let voters decide
- + Work with the City of Verona to **comprehensively protect land**

Wetlands

Natural areas

Prime Farmlands

Conclusions

- + The City and Town of Verona **lag behind** many neighboring Cities and Towns in addressing environmental issues
- + **Local political action** can encourage governments to address climate change and land protection
- + We need citizens to **get informed and involved** by:
 - Speaking up
 - Attending meetings
 - Talk with friends
 - Run for office
 - Write letters
 - Make your home all-electric