

## Chapter Two: Agricultural Resources

The Agricultural Resources element provides background on these resources in the Village of Cottage Grove and the surrounding areas. The information will be used to guide future land use decisions so that agricultural resources may be protected to the greatest extent desirable. The protection of agricultural resources is a regional priority that requires regional solutions.

### A. Character of Farming

Throughout Dane County, the declining number of farms (both dairy and non-dairy), the amount of land converted out of agricultural uses, and the rising premiums on land value for non-agricultural uses are indicative of escalating pressure on agricultural lands that can result in the transformation of a rural to a developed landscape. These trends hold in the unincorporated areas surrounding the Village of Cottage Grove. Despite the push for development of agricultural land, farming and agriculture remain an important component of the livelihood and economy in Dane County, and the Village of Cottage Grove and surrounding communities have expressed that continuation of agriculture is a high priority.

### B. Assessment of Farmland Viability

Map 2 illustrates the abundance of high-quality agricultural soils in and around the Village of Cottage Grove—some of the highest quality agricultural soils in the country. These lands include cultivated land, woodlands, and land used for resource extraction. Parcel sizes range from large lots—a minimum of 40 acres or more, to isolated rural lots that have been divided from farmlands for family residence construction, to concentrations of rural housing. Large areas of productive agricultural soils are present in the planning area. These high quality agricultural soils should be one key factor for determining areas planned for long-term agricultural and rural preservation.

The predominant soil capability classes in the area are II and III. Because of the drumlin field topography, soil patterns are very dispersed and irregular. The importance of this resource to the community and the region is widely recognized. An important goal of this chapter is to help preserve the extent and integrity of this resource as long as possible, while accommodating well planned, high-quality, compact urban development. This will mean gradual urbanization of some areas of good soils surrounding the current urban area—particularly in areas where sanitary sewer and public water can be provided at a reasonable cost. In other areas, where the cost-effective provision of full urban services is not possible, long-term agricultural preservation is called for.



#### SOIL CAPABILITY CLASSES

Class I soils have few limitations that restrict their use. These soils can sustain a wide variety of plants and are well suited for cultivated crops, pasture plants, range lands, and woodlands. Class II soils have moderate limitations that restrict the types of plants that can be grown or that require simple conservation practices or soil management techniques to prevent deterioration over time. However, these practices are generally easy to apply, and, therefore, these soils are still able to sustain cultivated crops, pasture plants, range lands, and woodlands.

Soils in Class III have limitations that, under natural circumstances, restrict the types of plants that can be grown, and/or that alter the timing of planting, tillage, and harvesting. However, with the application and careful management of special conservation practices, these soils may still be used for cultivated crops, pasture plants, woodlands, and range lands.

Soils in capability Classes IV through VIII present increasingly severe limitations to the cultivation of crops. Soils in Class VIII have limitations that entirely preclude their use for commercial plant production.