

# Most of southeastern Wisconsin remains undeveloped, study finds

Public Policy Forum group reports that 22 percent of Racine County is considered developed

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Nearly three-quarters of southeastern Wisconsin land remains undeveloped, according to a study of the region's land.

The report, released Monday by the nonpartisan Public Policy Forum research group, said the undeveloped land includes farms, wetlands, woods, lakes and open lands in Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha counties.

The report urged policy-makers to look at how land is used in the region as a whole to ensure the best use of undeveloped lands and preservation of open space.

"In spite of all the sprawl that's

gone on over the years, we still have a great deal of decision-making to do in the region about what we want to be," said Jeffrey C. Browne, president of the forum, which works to encourage regional cooperation in southeastern Wisconsin.

"We want people to have a big-picture perspective when they make land-use decisions and to understand that decisions made in one area have an impact on the whole region."

Twenty-seven percent of the region's land is considered developed, the report said.

The report found Milwaukee County is the region's most developed county at nearly 75 percent of its land and Walworth

County the least at 13 percent. In between are Washington County at 18 percent, Racine and Kenosha counties at 22 percent, Ozaukee County at 23 percent and Waukesha County at 36 percent.

The report said 47 percent of the region's 1.7 million acres of land is agricultural land, compared with 61 percent in 1963, indicating "growth has come at the expense of agriculture."

Milwaukee County has the least amount of farmland at 8 percent, compared with Waukesha County at 30 percent, Washington County at 51 percent, Kenosha County at 53 percent, Ozaukee County at 54 percent, Racine County at 57 percent and

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Walworth County at 64 percent. Undeveloped urban and rural lands, wetlands, landfills, woodlands, lakes, ponds and rivers constitute almost 26 percent of the land in the region, the report said.

Kenneth Yunker, deputy director of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, said local policy-makers have made progress in looking at the big picture when making land decisions, but more regional cooperation is needed.

"We can say we can do better," Yunker said. "But some positive things have happened and have been accomplished."