AREA ANALYSIS & SITE SELECTION
Kenosha was settled in 1835 by a land company group from New York state. Hearing of the beautiful country north of Chicago, an area which had just been ceded by treaty by the native Americans, this group decided to move west.

The first contingent simply arrived in Chicago and began to walk north along the shore of Lake Michigan. When they reached the Pike River, they decided to stay. Kenosha is the local Indian word for pike.

These people immediately began to stake claims on the rich farmland west of the settlement. It is interesting that several small towns were begun in the county that same year. Pleasant Prairie, Somers and Bristol were all begun in 1835. These were joined by Wilmot, which began at Liberty Corners and then moved to its present site in 1844, and Salem, Paris, Brighton, Twin Lakes, Bassett and New Munster. Because most of these towns were built in rich farm areas rather than in the areas of lakes and hills which became the major attraction later, these towns have remained for the most part crossroads communities without actual town structures.

A wood plank road leading to Geneva (Lake Geneva) and a plank road which ended at Wilmot were built around 1850. The stage stop hotel in Wilmot was completed in 1848. It is still being used as a bar and restaurant.

Racine and Kenosha counties were divided in 1850. By the time of the Civil War, the county was so heavily settled that the pages and pages of names of Kenosha County volunteers are listed from all areas of the county.

Although most of the towns in the county grew very little, the city of Kenosha grew rapidly. The Chicago and Northwestern Railroad north line which eventually connected Chicago and Milwaukee (which in 1835 was only a trading post) came through Kenosha in 1855. Another rail line connected Kenosha and Rockford, Ill. in 1875. Kenosha city population reached 5000.

The civic core of Kenosha was formalized by the public library building designed by Daniel Burnham of Burnham and Root, dedicated in 1900. This civic core was emphasized in the overall plan for Kenosha by Harland Bartholomew in 1925. Further, Bartholomew recognized the lakefront as an important recreational resource and planned lake parks the length of the city. These beautiful parks are a prime feature of the city today.

The west part of the county where the lakes, rivers, hills and forests offered more resort than farm possibilities, developed as a recreational area, with population centering around the lakes, leaving the towns already established alone.

PIKE RIVER HARBOR - First settlement 1835

BRISTOL - Early farm & crossroads town 1835
The landscape of Kenosha County was last altered by glaciation only 10,000 years ago. Since this is a very short time geologically, the erosion and drainage patterns of the county, particularly the western half where eskers, drumlins and moraines were left by the retreating glacier, are very primitive and marshy areas are extensive.

The underlying bedrock in the entire county is Silurian Dolomite. At the shore of Lake Michigan this dolomite has been covered by glacial outwash. An area of Moraine follows the shoreline in Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee counties. The outwash from this moraine has, in Kenosha County created a small sand dune area just south of the city. Erosion in this area has been hastened lately by a rise in the lake level. This erosion is so dramatic that homes have been moved from the shore and attempts have been made to slow it with fingers of debris (broken concrete and masonry from demolition sites in the area). Unfortunately, the beauty of the shoreline has suffered.

Eskers are readily identifiable in the western part of the county by the line of sand and gravel mining areas. Eskers are ridges formed by streams running within glaciers. The water flow automatically grades the size of the particles in deposits so fairly uniform gravel and sand deposits exist.

In moraines and drumlins the deposits are undifferentiated, ungraded in size. Very large rocks may be left in anomalous positions. These rocks are frequently marked with striations from movement inside the glacier. In the western part of the county moraine areas and drumlins (oval hills which look like whalebacks) are also common.

The small lakes are classic kettle lakes formed when very large pieces of ice were buried by the glaciers. These later melted forming basins which intercepted the water table. Eventually these lakes will fill in with soil and water plants to form meadows again. This cycle is already visible in some lakes, notably Pest Lake. Man made pollution and the washing of farm fertilizers into lakes both speed water plant growth.

The entire landscape is rising at the rate of an eighth to a quarter of an inch per year. This is a result of the lightening of the load on the soil and underlying rock when the glaciers melted.
LAKE MICHIGAN SHORELINE

ANOMALOUS BOULDER – Left by glacier

DUNE AREA
SOIL ASSOCIATIONS

Varna-Elliott-Ashkum association: Well drained to poorly drained soils that have a silty clay loam to clay subsoil. Formed in thin loess and the underlying clay loam or silty clay loam glacial till on ridges and knobs.

Morley-Beecher-Ashkum association: Well-drained to poorly drained soils that have a silty clay or silty clay loam subsoil. Formed in thin loess and the underlying clay loam or silty clay loam glacial till on ridges.

Nebron-Montgomery-Aztalan association: Well-drained to poorly drained soils that have a loam to silty clay subsoil. Underlain by clayey to loamy lacustrine and outwash material on hills, knobs and lake plains.

Fox-Casco association: Well-drained soils that have a clay loam and silty clay loam subsoil. Moderately deep to shallow over sand and gravel on stream terraces.


Miami association: Well-drained soils that have a silty clay loam and clay loam subsoil. Formed in this loess and the underlying loamy glacial till on ridges and knobs.

Casco-Rodman association: Well-drained and excessively drained soils that have a clay loam or gravelly loam subsoil. Shallow over sand and gravel, on stream terraces and morainic ridges.

Boyer-Granby association: Well-drained to very poorly drained soils that have a loam to sand subsoil. Underlain by sandy glacial outwash on ridges and knobs and in drainageways and depressions.

Warsaw-Plano association: Well-drained soils that have a loam to silty clay loam subsoil. Moderately deep to deep over sand and gravel, on stream terraces.
LAND USES

PRIME FARMLAND

ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS

PROJECTED SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

7 - 17.9 units per acre

2.3 - 6.9

.2 - 2.2

(S.E.W.R.P.C.)
The best farmland in the county is in the flatter eastern section. Superior soil and drainage conditions make this more desirable.

In the western area environmental corridors identified by SEWRPC take precedence. Here much of the farmland is too hilly and rocky for crops so more land is used for grazing of cattle, particularly dairy cattle. The environmental corridors identified include dense wooded areas, marshes, lakes, ponds, rivers and streams.

Anticipated population growth in SEWRPC’s plan will center in existing population concentrations, allowing prime farmland and environmental corridors to remain without the burden of further housing. While this plan is certainly desirable, it is difficult to foresee the zoning boards of the townships and county preventing subdivisions of large tracts into one to five acre homsites. This practice has already spread the population rather evenly over a large portion of the available land. The land use in these small holdings is often unfortunate. many being simply lawn, providing no food or shelter for wildlife, no growing space for trees, and no crops to feed domestic animals or people.
Although early county development was tied heavily to rail lines, the advent of the automobile caused extensive highway development in post-World War I Kenosha County. The thinly scattered settlement patterns over most of the county ensure that people must use autos to get to stores, work, services, entertainment, etc.

Most industrial employers in the county are located in Kenosha. An American Motors plant, Snap-on-Tools, and other companies provide a large share of the employment available. Bristol has begun a new Industrial Park which currently has a few factories. One especially interesting one is Herk's Cheese, now sold in many areas of the U.S. The original Herk's Cheese store is still operating in Salem.

The other major sources of employment for county residents are located in Illinois. A large number of residents are former Illinoisans moving further and further out as suburban sprawl from Chicago continues to spread. Many of these people continue to work in Illinois, some even commuting to Chicago's loop daily (1.5 hour trip each way).

Within the county public transportation is limited to the city of Kenosha. C&NW Railroad carries commuters between Kenosha and Chicago. A city bus company carries passengers in Kenosha. A Milwaukee Road commuter line runs through northern Illinois. Many western county residents use the stop at Fox Lake (due south of Salem Township about 15 miles) to catch trains going toward Chicago.

Because there are so many lovely areas much closer to Milwaukee, most of the urban escapees in Kenosha County seem to be from Illinois. This means that the major north-south roads are filled with people heading south in the morning and north in the evening.

The major east-west roads used by workers going into Kenosha from the western county are County C, County K (which goes right to the American Motors Plant) and Route 50. U.S. 50 is the first road clear after a snow and is probably the busiest road in the western county. 50 leads to Lake Geneva, favorite vacation spot of many Chicagoans. Local people try to stay off 50 on summer weekends.

Especially scenic roads may be found in many areas of the county. County F around Silver Lake offers dense oak woods and lake views. Other lake views may be had on Lake Shore Drive in Twin Lakes, SA around Center and Camp Lakes, JF around Rock Lake, Voltz Lake and Lake Shangri-La. All from SA to Bristol goes through some lovely marsh areas with a few hilltop views along the way. County W along the Fox River is often scenic. Highway K passes

ROUTE 50 - Busiest east-west road

COUNTY F - Around Silver Lake
through some pretty farm areas and over some hills with excellent unobstructed views. Moving east at dawn on K can be magnificent in any season. Highways E and A near U.W. Parkside pass through Petrifying Springs park area with heavily wooded areas with ferny streams and landscaped grottoes.

The drive along the shore of Lake Michigan is lovely but marred in places by the broken concrete and jumbled debris intended to slow lakefront erosion.
The gathering places and landmarks in the city of Kenosha are more easily identified because of the recognizable city structure. There is a business core connected with a civic and cultural core surrounded by neighborhoods with distinctive characters. The tallest buildings in town are all in this central area, the port of Kenosha is there, some theaters, restaurants and even a bowling alley are in the core.

Some satellite business districts exist especially in strip developments along major access roads (Routes 50, 158 and Sheridan Road). Because of this decentralization trend, about 5 years ago Kenosha created a pedestrian mall on the main north-south downtown street. This area is landscaped, provided with benches and piped in music, and so far not very successful. Too many important stores had already moved out. Some new businesses have moved in, but it is unclear whether it will be enough.

The downtown parks, library park and the park between museum, courthouse and post office provide the right settings for these neo-classical buildings and shady places for lunchtime gatherings in good weather. The lake front parks are also favorite places for both summer and winter sports.

Throughout the rest of the county discovering landmarks is difficult because so many residents, particularly outside the city of Kenosha, are people relatively new to the area. Older residents giving directions often refer to things no longer extant, e.g. Liberty Corners, Brass Ball Corners, the old mink farm, etc.

With new residents, the roads are the reference points. The county streets run east-west, with 1st Street being the Racine-Kenosha county line, and 128th Street the Kenosha-Illinois line. The avenues run north-south, with the drive along Lake Michigan being 1st Avenue and the westernmost avenue in the county being 407th. This makes many landmarks seem superfluous to new residents because any address can be located quite easily. Diagonals are few and logically named, e.g. Highway C is called Wilmot Road, so movement through the county doesn't really require knowledge of historical or local special places.

The large percentage of "new" people in the western county are there because they are looking for the place in the country with privacy, but most can't afford a real farm which explains the "farmers" phenomenon, with residences scattered on 1 to 10 acre parcels. It also explains why the roads are so important to these people - they are virtual lifelines to work, stores, services, etc. Thus the experience of moving through the landscape is more important than any one place.

Probably the most used gathering places county-wide are the many taverns. Whether it seems good for Wisconsin's economy to consume so much of the local brew or whether there just isn't anything else to do in the evening - particularly the long winter evenings - these small businesses thrive no matter how many there are. Many ma and pa types also serve food. Some of the larger ones offer live entertainment.
PARKS & WATERFRONTS
Library Connections
Until Salem Community Library was established in 1977, the only public libraries in Kenosha County were all in the city of Kenosha. Kenosha’s main library, built in 1900 has established three branch libraries. These libraries serve Kenosha and also by contractual arrangement Pleasant Prairie, Somers and Bristol townships. These townships pay most of the cost of a nonresident library card for any of their residents wishing to use Kenosha libraries.

Union Grove Public Library is part of the Racing County system and is used by Paris and Brighton residents, again on a contractual basis.

Burlington Public Library is used by most of the western townships and two villages: Twin Lakes and Silver Lake. Twin Lakes and Randall Township also contract with Lake Geneva Public Library.

Salem Township was the only one providing no library service at all. Some Salem residents paid $25 per year to use Antioch Public Library.

The Salem Community Library was begun as a labor of love by volunteers collecting used books from every available source. The "parents" of the library were Jim and Jane Lonergan. Jim has since died, but Jane continues as the major organizer. Even though none of the original volunteers had library training, the professional librarians in Kenosha, Antioch and other surrounding villages cooperated to give advice and help (and used books.) Jane is currently pursuing further training in librarianship.

The Salem Grade School Board gave the fledgling library free space and levied a small tax to give the library some financial basis. This type of cooperative organization of funding and use by school district and public library is unusual, one might say unique, in Wisconsin. For the library to become a functioning part of an eventual county system, it must revert to more usual township funding. A bond issue has just been passed to form a joint municipal library between the village of Paddock Lake and the Township of Salem. As of yet, Silver Lake has not shown an interest in joining.

The library, using volunteers instead of paid staff, has been able to use all funds for new materials and supplies. The collection has grown so rapidly that the two rooms and workroom in the school are already overflowing. Plans are being made to move out of the school in 1981.