

WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2010 TO 2030

adopted September 9, 2010



PREPARED BY WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
SERVING BARRON, CHIPPEWA, CLARK, DUNN, EAU CLAIRE, POLK, & ST. CROIX COUNTIES



WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2010-2030

2030 VISION STATEMENT

West Central Wisconsin is a region of sustainable and identifiable communities working cooperatively and globally with strong social, physical, and economic linkages. Our cities and villages are vibrant, and our rural character and diverse resources are preserved.



PREPARED BY:
WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

WWW.WCWRPC.ORG

Resolution No. 2010-5

**Adoption of the West Central Wisconsin
Regional Master Plan**

WHEREAS, the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) has the responsibility of preparing a Master Plan for the Region under ss. 66.0309; and

WHEREAS, the WCWRPC has received a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Administration to complete this plan; and

WHEREAS, the WCWRPC is required to include the nine planning elements as outlined in the comprehensive planning law ss. 66.1001(2); and

WHEREAS, in addition to the document entitled *WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2010-2030*, the grant contract included the development of several additional component documents, including: *INVENTORY OF PLANS PROGRAMS, AND LAND USE POLICIES IN WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN*; *PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN*; an individual conditions and trends report for each of the seven counties in the West Central Region, and a tenth element within the plan, "Energy and Sustainability"; and

WHEREAS, WCWRPC adopted and followed a public involvement process in the development and review of all stated documents; and

WHEREAS, the regional comprehensive plan, pursuant to ss. 66.1001(5), is only **advisory in its applicability to a political subdivision and a political subdivision's comprehensive plan**; and

WHEREAS, the purpose and effect of adoption of the master plan shall be solely to aid the regional planning commission and the local governments and local government officials comprising the region in the performance of their functions and duties; and

WHEREAS, WCWRPC held a public hearing on July 6, 2010, pursuant to ss. 66.1001(4)(d); and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission adopts the *WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2010-2030*, dated July, 2010; the *INVENTORY OF PLANS PROGRAMS, AND LAND USE POLICIES IN WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN*, dated October 24, 2008; *CONDITIONS AND TRENDS REPORTS* for Barron, Chippewa, and St. Croix counties, dated November, 2008, and for Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, and Polk counties, dated January, 2009; and the *PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN*, dated June, 2010:

Adopted this 9th day of September, 2010.



Jess Miller, Chair

ATTEST: I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted by the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission at a legal meeting held on this 9th day of September, 2010.



Richard Creaser, Secretary/Treasurer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission thanks the following for their participation in the development of this plan and the plan implementation guide:

Regional Intergovernmental Coordination Group

Local officials and representatives from the following communities:

- County Board representatives from all seven west central Wisconsin counties.
- City or village representatives from Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Menomonie, Owen, St. Croix Falls, Somerset, and Turtle Lake.
- Town representatives from Alden, Arthur, Doyle, Forest, Pine Valley, Rock Creek, and Union

Technical Advisory Group

TRANSPORTATION, UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES FOCUS GROUP: Wisconsin Department of Transportation-NW Region, Wisconsin State Patrol, Chippewa County Highway Department, Chippewa Falls Public Works, Dunn County Highway Department, Menomonie Public Works, Eau Claire Transit, St. Croix County Aging and Disability Resource Center, Altoona Outdoors, West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition

ECONOMIC FOCUS GROUP: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Chippewa Valley Technical College, EDA University Center, Barron County EDC, Chippewa County EDC, Clark County EDC, Dunn County EDC/Stout Technology Park, Eau Claire EDC, St. Croix County EDC, Clark County Farm Bureau, Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, WITC-Rice Lake, WITC-New Richmond, AgStar Financial Services, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development-Office of Economic Advisors

LAND USE & HOUSING FOCUS GROUP: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Dunn County Land Conservation, Polk County Land & Water Resources, Dunn County Planning, Eau Claire County Planning & Development, Polk County Land Information, St. Croix County Planning, Chippewa County Planning & Zoning, Barron County Housing Authority, Chippewa County Housing Authority, West Wisconsin Land Trust, Metropolitan Council, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, WestCAP, Realtors Association of Northwestern Wisconsin

SUSTAINABILITY & ENERGY FOCUS GROUP: Xcel Energy, Institute for Sustainable Community Development at UW-River Falls, Western Wisconsin Energy, LLC, UW-Extension—Barron County, UW-Extension—Chippewa County, UW-Extension—Polk County, Polk County Renewable Energy Committee, UW-Extension—St. Croix County, WestCAP, Barron County—Special Projects Coordinator

Additional Notable Participation in the Plan's Development

High school students from the school districts for Cornell, Eau Claire, and Somerset, Chippewa Valley Internetworking Consortium (CINC), CESA 10-Chippewa Falls, Barron Senior Center, L.E. Phillips Senior Center, County Health Departments (7), Amery Regional Medical Center, Baldwin Area Medical Center, Marshfield Clinic, Memorial Medical Center-Neillsville, Clark County Community Health Center, Chippewa County Community Health Center, Sacred Heart Hospital, UW-Eau Claire-Department of Geography, Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development International Center, City of Abbotsford, UW-Eau Claire Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Special Contributions to the Plan Implementation Guide

Community Design Solutions at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Village of Frederic, Norsman Architects, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, City of Stanley

Project Funding Assistance

Wisconsin Department of Administration-Division of Intergovernmental Relations. The thirteen towns, six villages, two cities, and three counties who agreed to partner with WCWRPC in a multi-jurisdictional grant application for the development of the regional and local comprehensive plans; many of these local planning efforts provided direction for the regional plan and this guide.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

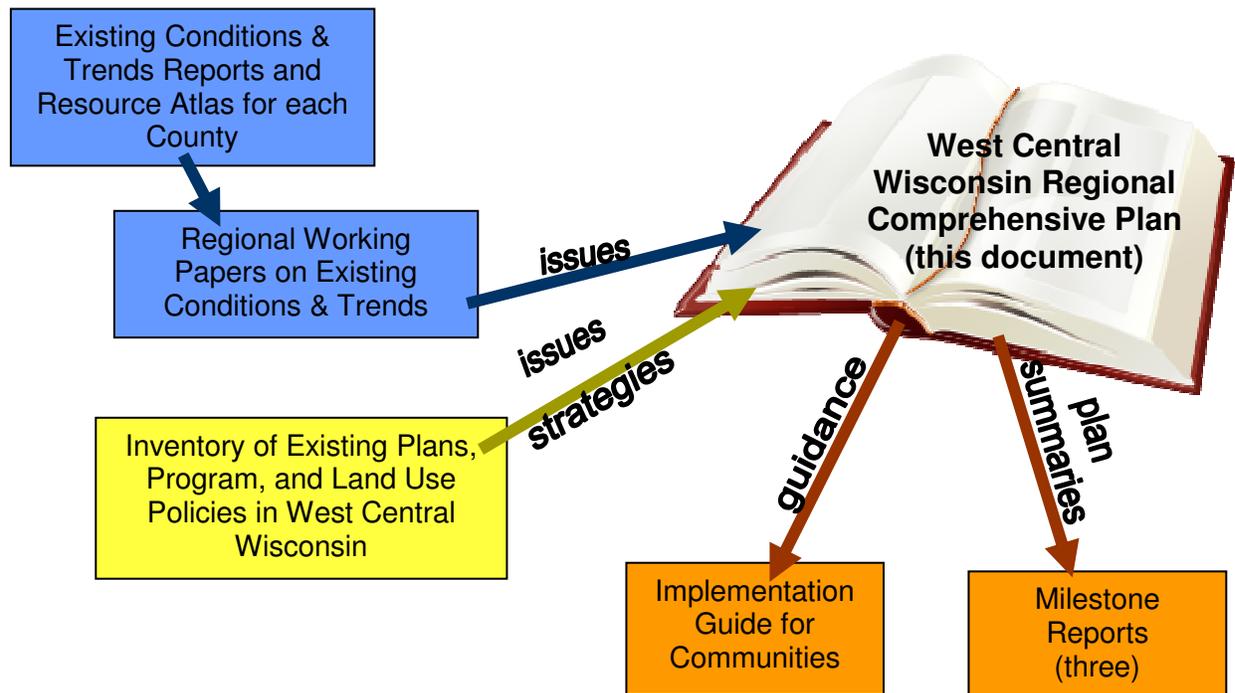
A. Plan Purpose

The West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) is one of eight regional planning commissions in Wisconsin formed under §66.0309 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Wisconsin Statutes §66.0309(9) requires regional planning commissions to develop and adopt a regional master plan with recommendations for the physical development of the Region. Beyond this mandate, the regional comprehensive planning process brought decision-makers and technical experts together to assess existing conditions, prioritize the issues facing our Region, establish a common vision, and identify ways in which we can work cooperatively to achieve that vision.

B. Plan Scope

This plan consists of broad, advisory goals and policy recommendations for the Region. In accordance with §66.0309(9), the Plan includes the required nine elements of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan Law. Due to interest levels in the Region, a tenth element, Energy and Sustainability, was added to the plan scope. Additional discussion regarding this element can be found in Section G.

This Regional Plan represents the final compilation of the regional planning effort, encompassing critical issues, regional vision, goals and objectives, and strategies. As shown in the graphic below, a number of additional documents produced by WCWRPC were also key components of this planning process and should be considered part of the Regional Plan.



C. Planning Process

This planning effort began in June 2008 following approval of a multi-jurisdictional grant application submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Administration in cooperation with three counties and 21 different cities, villages, and towns in the Region. Vital to the effort was the input of a plan steering committee consisting of 21 representatives from county and local governments and over 50 public and private sector technical experts from across west central Wisconsin.

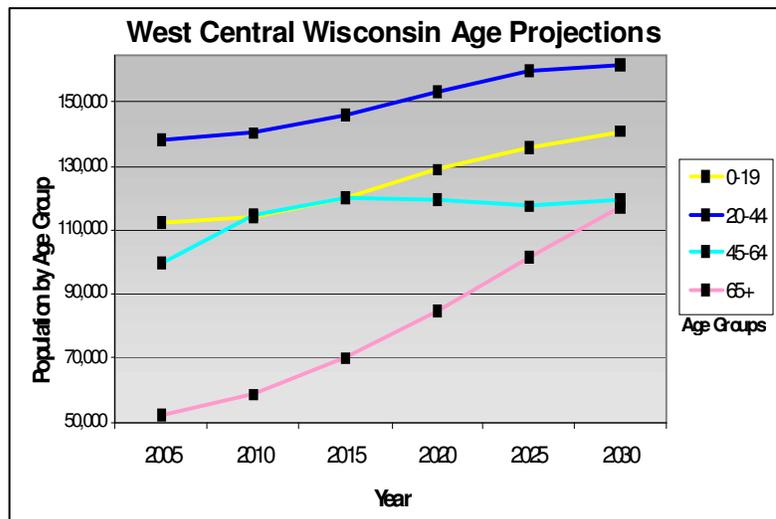
The steering committee met ten times during the process, as well as provided input through surveys, mailings, and e-mail. Meetings, direct mailings, press releases, three workshops, Synergy Conference presentations, and the Internet were used to encourage additional input and participation. WCWRPC conducted a public hearing on the draft plan in July 2010 prior to adoption.

D. Existing Conditions, Trends, and Critical Issues

Key regional conditions and trends were drawn from the seven county-level existing conditions and trends reports developed as part of this planning effort. This “state of the region” information was integrated into a series of working papers, largely organized by plan element, which are provided in Addendum III.

Based on these data, the steering committee identified and prioritized issues for each element which are critical for west central Wisconsin. Some of the top-rated critical issues include:

- Our aging population is changing the demands for housing and services.
- Out-migration of many younger people may result in insufficient workforce numbers in some areas of the Region.
- There is a need for more information and models regarding renewable energy and sustainability in order to meet the Governor’s 25x25 goal and other community sustainability initiatives.
- Revitalization of freight and passenger rail is important for the development of the Region.
- Increased service demands and aging infrastructure are making it increasingly difficult for local governments to meet expectations given budget limitations.
- From 1990 to 2007, the Region lost 500,000 acres of assessed farmland, which is approximately 1/8th of the entire area of the Region. If the current ratio of population growth to residential acres continues, the Region’s assessed residential acres would increase by over 150,000 between 2009 and 2030.
- More regional efforts are needed to analyze economic strengths, market our assets, and pursue economic opportunities, while reducing redundancies and harmful competition.
- Increased efforts are needed to manage stormwater run-offs and protect shorelands and streambanks.



- Increased intergovernmental cooperation is needed to protect valued resources and plan for land uses in the urban-rural fringe areas.
- High-quality ground water and surface water are extremely important and vital to the Region.

Milestone Report #1 prepared in July 2009 provided a summary of the Region’s conditions, trends, issues, and implications. Copies of the report were distributed widely, including copies sent to every county, city, village, and town in the Region.

E. A Regional Vision for 2030

With consideration of the issues and implications, the steering committee developed the following vision statement for the future of our Region:

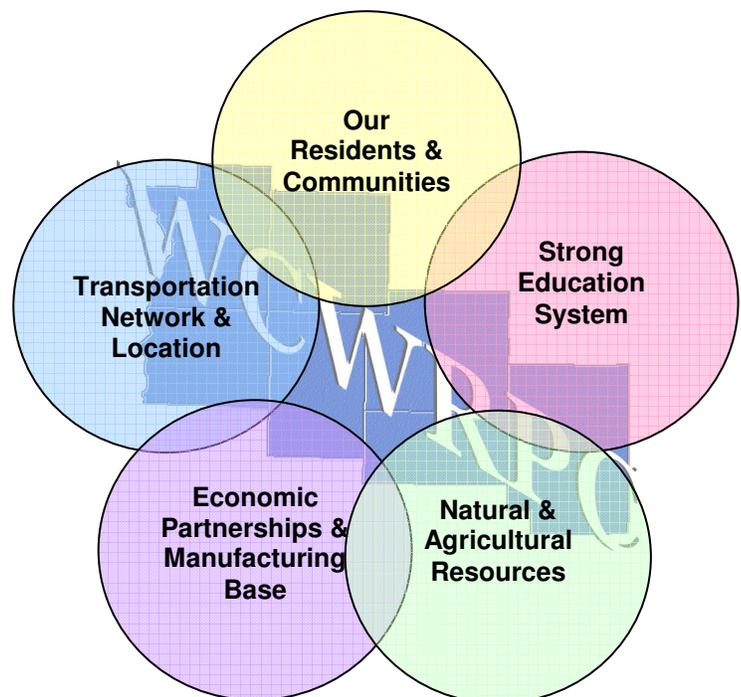
West Central Wisconsin is a region of sustainable and identifiable communities working cooperatively and globally with strong social, physical, and economic linkages. Our cities and villages are vibrant, and our rural character and diverse resources are preserved.



F. Plan Goals and Policy Recommendations

The plan goals, objectives, and strategies strongly reflect the prioritized issues and regional vision. In addition, the steering committee frequently returned to certain regional strengths while considering plan goals and strategies. These strengths are represented in the graphic below. Milestone Report #2 issued in March 2010 provided a summary of the goals and policies. Copies of the report were distributed to regional organizations, counties, cities, villages, and towns.

The implementation element provides an excellent overview of how the issues and strategies are related back to components of the regional vision. The following pages highlight some selected key strategy recommendations identified in the plan for each of the regional vision components by element.



SELECTED STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES	
Energy and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the Region's per capita energy use. • Compile and promote best practices of municipal financing options for sustainable activities.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage projects, programs, and policies that focus on sustainability and preservation of natural resources.
Agricultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage agricultural markets that include farm-to-table, direct market farms, organic farms, small family farms and farms for sales of local agricultural products and that produce non-traditional products and/or bio-energy feedstock.
Utilities and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate unsustainable development patterns to reveal its true costs to society. • Include active living and healthy community concepts in community plans.
IDENTIFIABLE COMMUNITIES/RURAL CHARACTER	
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage conservation design and other rural design alternatives. • Promote urban design that creates sense-of-place. • Cooperate intergovernmentally to eliminate development without sense-of-place.
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and revitalize downtown business districts. • Preserve existing areas that have a sense-of-place. • Incorporate sense-of-place discussion and design techniques.
Utilities and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate and encourage to preserve existing areas that have a sense-of-place, and incorporate sense-of-place discussion and design techniques for new development and redevelopment projects.
Energy and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure urban and suburban development be designed in a way that allows for accessible mass transit and non-motorized modes of transportation.
WORKING COOPERATIVELY	
Agriculture and Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a network for information sharing between agencies and organizations, so planning can better occur in consideration of the ecological context, and there are improvements in getting information to practitioners and the public. ▪ Promote and support groups and activities like the Chippewa Valley Stormwater Forum, St. Croix Basin Water Resources Planning Team, and the Western Wisconsin groundwater group.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan for bicycle/pedestrian facilities for every county, with state and regional coordination, and regional consistency in construction, use, and maintenance. ▪ Coordinate the development of a regional approach to uniform crash data collection. Such data would allow the State of Wisconsin to access High Risk Rural Roads Program funding from the USDOT, and allow improvements to be targeted to highest crash areas.
Utilities and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify regions or areas with critical water quantity issues and apply special management strategies, such as regional water authorities, etc.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate land use decisions and analysis between jurisdictions and evaluate the cumulative impacts of development across jurisdictions.



STRONG SOCIAL, PHYSICAL, AND ECONOMIC LINKAGES	
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledge the importance of the Twin Cities metro area to the regional economy. Develop regional and local initiatives to capitalize on the opportunities presented by this strong adjacent market. ▪ Promote the Region as a tourism destination through cooperative efforts with the State Department of Tourism and regional and local organizations.
Utilities and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a regional work group to explore strengthening broadband availability and related technology needs in the Region. ▪ Increase coordination between governmental entities and utility providers during planning and project review efforts. Encourage official mapping. ▪ Promote formal mutual aid agreements between communities and agencies for public safety and response.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate regional efforts to bring passenger rail service to west central Wisconsin. ▪ Coordinate a transit service system that interacts effectively region-wide, accommodating trips between counties and beyond the Region.
Energy and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage direct-market, diversified, and organic farming operations that provide food for the Region and greater Twin Cities metropolitan area.
VIBRANT COMMUNITIES	
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources related to preserving historic character of residential areas and traditional neighborhood design. • Enable our older citizens to be active members of our communities.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage bicycle and pedestrian planning for every county.
Utilities & Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of options to promote downtown revitalization. • Encourage outdoor recreational planning for all communities, as well as a regional framework plan which links resources.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a regional economic development strategy. • Update and better utilize quality-of-place information.
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote mixed use development and viable public spaces so more people can live in close proximity to daily life destinations. • Encourage redevelopment planning, infill, and adaptive reuse.
DIVERSE RESOURCES PRESERVED	
Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Working Lands Initiative. • Increase the viability and diversity of agriculture throughout the Region. • Support sustainable green practices to reduce impervious surfaces. • Encourage agricultural and land use practices that limit nutrient loads, maximize infiltration of clean runoff water, and minimize soil erosion. • Encourage economic development for nature-based recreation and promotion of compatible recreation that provides local economic opportunities.
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote pedestrian-oriented mixed uses, traditional neighborhood design, and infill development for urban areas. • Encourage rural development design & density alternatives to enhance rural character. • Inventory and compile information for a regional land use, land management, and resource protection data clearinghouse.

The above strategies are examples from the plan text and are not prioritized or inclusive.

G. Energy and Sustainability

The Plan stresses the importance of energy and sustainability. This can be seen in the presence of the Energy and Sustainability Element and green boxes which discuss energy and sustainability connections with each respective element. There are many definitions for sustainability. Simply, sustainability means the ability to endure. In regards to the environment and spatial planning, the most commonly used term is “sustainable development”, and the most-common definition used is, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition comes from the 1987 Brundtland Commission of the United Nations.

The concept of sustainability has evolved over the past two decades and now frequently includes the theory of the triple bottom line, which measures success at the economic, ecological, and social levels. The term “people, planet, and profit” is also commonly used to describe the triple bottom line theory. These criteria are dependent on each other, and the concept points to the fact that we cannot solve any one of these issues unless we solve all of the issues. For instance, we cannot solve environmental and economic issues without addressing social needs, like poverty and social justice. One has to understand that the economy is a portion of society as a whole and both are located in the environment.

Lastly, the goal should be to create a sustainable region that is located in a sustainable world. The Region should not push unsustainable enterprises and practices to other places of the nation or planet. The Region should be a partner in creating a sustainable planet where there is global human rights, economic justice, a value for nature, and a culture of peace.

H. Implementing the Plan

Wisconsin Statutes §66.0309(8)2 states that “[t]he functions of the regional planning commission shall be solely advisory to the local governments and local government officials comprising the region”. While WCWRPC can advocate for the vision, goals, and recommendations within this plan, it is decisions made locally that will most determine whether the regional vision is achieved. Since this plan is an advisory document, it is not surprising that the majority of plan strategies will be implemented through strategic partnerships, intergovernmental cooperation, education, and technical assistance.

Since detailed implementation discussion for every regional strategy is not practicable within this report, guidance for plan implementation is provided within this document through three primary ways:

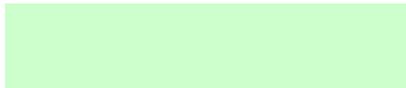
- 1) For each strategy, suggested parties to take a lead role in implementation, along with a timeframe, are identified.
- 2) Within the implementation element, some key plans and programs are identified for which coordination with the strategies of this plan may be desirable. The implementation element also includes a more detailed discussion for six key approaches to attaining the regional vision. The six detailed discussions are:
 - How to achieve the State’s 25x25 renewable energy goal at a regional level.
 - Encouraging the designing of “sense-of-place.”
 - Using education and outreach to encourage cooperation.
 - Coordinating regional efforts to bring passenger rail to the Region.
 - Developing a regional, shared economic strategy.
 - Coordinating regional efforts to protect groundwater quality.

- 3) Plan Implementation Guide: This guide provides ideas and examples for communities which can be implemented locally related to many of the key concepts discussed within this document.

The implementation element also describes WCWRPC's responsibility for tracking progress on plan implementation and advocating for the plan recommendations. Yet, all in the Region have a vested interest in working cooperatively to achieve and realize the vision of this plan. The true responsibility for plan implementation falls to the public officials, residents, businesses, and service providers of west central Wisconsin.

**West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
thanks everyone who participated in the planning effort!**





I. INTRODUCTION

A. West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) is one of eight regional planning commissions in the State of Wisconsin. WCWRPC is statutorily charged with the responsibility of planning for the physical, social, and economic development of the Region. To accomplish its mission, WCWRPC has conducted area-wide planning and has provided technical assistance to local governments since 1971. WCWRPC is governed by three representatives from each county in its seven-county service area. These representatives are appointed by their respective county boards.

B. Relationship of a Regional Comprehensive Plan to Local Plans

There are no State requirements regarding consistency between the regional comprehensive plan and local plans. Local communities are not required to adopt the policy recommendations within the regional plan. Wisconsin Statutes §66.0309(8)2 states that “[t]he functions of the regional planning commission shall be solely advisory to the local governments and local government officials comprising the region.” This advisory role extends to the regional comprehensive plan. Local communities do have the option of adopting this plan as a guide for their planning processes.

During the planning process, WCWRPC staff reviewed many local comprehensive planning documents to identify issues and potential strategies for incorporation into this document in a bottom-up fashion. Even though the recommendations of this plan are advisory to local governments, it is hoped that the recommendations will be considered during local planning and implementation efforts.

C. Plan Scope

This plan consists of broad, advisory goals and policy recommendations for the Region. In accordance with §66.0309(9), this plan includes the required nine elements of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law. The *West Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan* includes ten elements and meets the requirements of 1999 Wisconsin Act 9. Due to interest levels in the Region, an Energy and Sustainability Element was added to the plan scope. There are numerous definitions of sustainability. For the purpose of this plan, sustainability is defined per the 1987 Brundtland Report as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

The plan includes the following chapters:

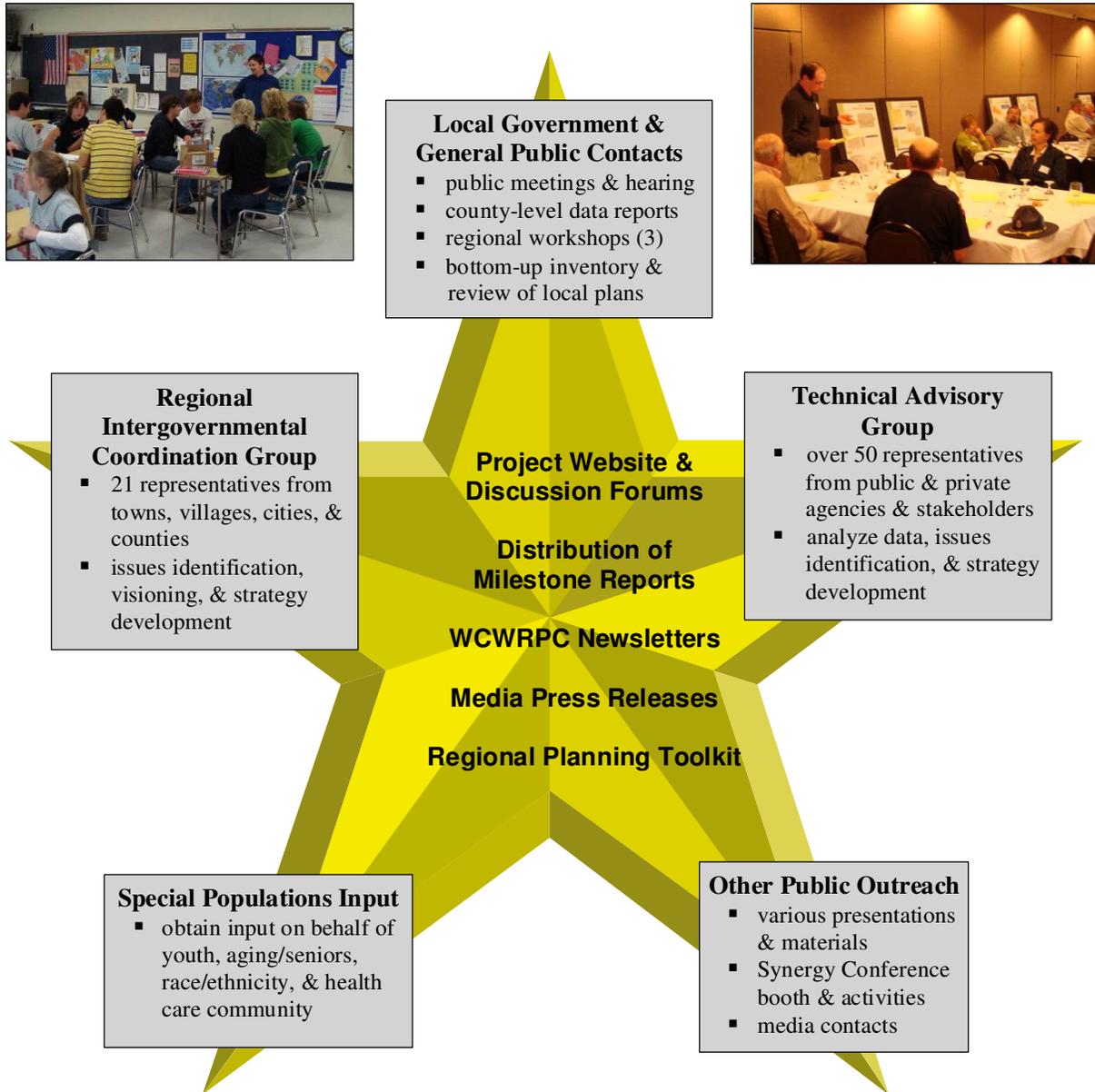
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|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1) Introduction | 8) Natural Resources |
| 2) Issues and Opportunities | 9) Cultural Resources |
| 3) Regional Vision | 10) Economic Development |
| 4) Housing | 11) Land Use |
| 5) Transportation | 12) Energy and Sustainability |
| 6) Utilities and Community Facilities | 13) Intergovernmental Cooperation |
| 7) Agricultural Resources | 14) Plan Implementation |

Further, each plan must incorporate 20-year land-use projections and encourage public participation during the planning process. The land-use projections are included in the Land Use Element.

D. Public Participation

Obtaining participation for a regional-level comprehensive plan is challenging; and opportunities are limited by time, resources, distances, and interest levels of the public. To overcome these challenges, a five-pronged participatory approach was implemented which encouraged input from our communities, service providers, businesses, and neighbors.

Our Gold-Star Participatory Approach



The process depended heavily on the guidance of the Regional Intergovernmental Coordination Group (RICG) and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Some of the more unique ways in which WCWRPC reached out to the public during this process included meetings with three high school classes and at two senior centers, a survey of health care agencies, contacts with representatives of various ethnic organizations,



an informational booth at two Synergy Conferences, three plan implementation guide workshops, and mailings of the three milestone reports and various announcements to each municipality. A brief show highlighting the project and regional trends was broadcasted on Chippewa Valley Community Television. WQOW-Channel 18 also covered the findings of the first milestone report as part of their news coverage.

E. West Central Wisconsin Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Effort

The West Central Wisconsin Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Effort consists of one region, three counties, two cities, six villages, and 13 towns. The multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning project, which includes the following 25 jurisdictions, represents a grassroots effort by local, county, and regional government officials to coordinate local planning efforts and address cross-jurisdictional issues and concerns:

Barron County	Village of New Auburn
Town of Dallas	City of Bloomer
Town of Lakeland	City of Stanley
Town of Maple Grove	St. Croix County
Town of Oak Grove	Town of Cady
Village of Cameron	Town of Emerald
Chippewa County	Town of Forest
Town of Eagle Point	Town of Richmond
Town of Lafayette	Town of Star Prairie
Town of Wheaton	Village of Deer Park
Town of Woodmohr	Village of Woodville
Village of Boyd	West Central Wisconsin RPC
Village of Cadott	

WCWRPC served as the lead entity in a process to generate interest among the communities to participate in a multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning project. WCWRPC invited communities within Barron, Chippewa, and St. Croix counties that had not begun their comprehensive planning process to approve the required resolution to authorize participation in a multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning project.

In 2008, a comprehensive planning grant was awarded by the Wisconsin Department of Administration for the West Central Wisconsin Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Effort. The multi-jurisdictional planning process began with a kick-off meeting in July 2008 led by WCWRPC. Communities decided on their respective consultant or chose to complete the plan on their own.

WCWRPC prepared Conditions and Trends Reports for all seven counties in the Region. Each community participating in the West Central Wisconsin Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Effort received their respective county's Conditions and Trends Report that contains background information for the entire County. Then, in consideration of these existing conditions, each participating municipality developed its individual comprehensive plan which is a policy-oriented document focusing on issues, goals, and action plans specific to each community.

This document, the *West Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan*, represents the plan policy document for the Region. The draft plan was submitted to Wisconsin Department of Administration, which certified that all requirements of the grant program had been met. WCWRPC concluded the process with a public hearing and adoption of the Plan and all accompanying documents.

F. The Planning Process

The overall planning process for the *West Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan* started in 2008 with the approval of the planning grant from the State. The creation of the Plan, which includes the goals, objectives,

and strategies, began in September 2008 after the completion and presentation of the seven county Conditions and Trends Reports and the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*. Each of the subsequent planning activities and meetings for the regional process is summarized below.

The planning process offered ample opportunities for public input and stressed a bottom-up approach. The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was made up of experts in their respective fields and came from all seven counties; a list of participating agencies is located in Appendix II. The Regional Intergovernmental Coordination Group (RICG) was made up of three elected officials from each of the seven counties. For each county, members came from the WCWRPC Board (1), city or village (1), and town (1). All applicable meetings were open to the public, properly noticed, and met the requirements of the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law. In addition, the process included a project website that included the project schedule, meeting information, plan documents, TAG specific discussion groups, and the variety of maps that were created during the process. Below are a list of the meetings and the timeline.

TAG Meeting #1: Project Kick-Off and Regional Conditions

The meeting consisted of the overview of the Regional comprehensive planning effort. Reviewed the Regional Conditions and Trends Report, looked for gaps and challenges in data, and reviewed the project timetable.

RICG Meeting #1 w/ TAG support: Regional Conditions & Issues Identification

The meeting consisted of the overview of the regional comprehensive planning effort. Reviewed the issues identification activity, presented the working papers, and group activity.

RICG Meeting #2 w/ TAG support: Issues and Visioning

The meeting consisted of issues prioritization results, report on special issues meetings, and the visioning exercise.

RICG/TAG Meeting #1: Goal and Policy Development

The meeting consisted of the reports on input from special populations/interests; presentation of the draft vision statement; and goals, objectives, and policy discussion by focus group (Economic Development; Energy and Sustainability; Land Use, Agricultural and Natural Resources, and Housing; and Transportation).

RICG/TAG Meeting #2: Goal and Policy Development

The meeting consisted of the reports on input from special populations/interests; selection of the vision statement; and goals, objectives, and policy discussion by focus group (Economic Development, Energy and Sustainability, Agricultural and Natural Resources, Housing, and Transportation).

RICG/TAG Meeting #3: Goal and Policy Development

The meeting consisted of goals, objectives, and policy discussion by focus group (Energy and Sustainability, Land Use, and Utilities and Community Facilities).

RICG/TAG Meeting #4: Goal and Policy Development

The meeting consisted of goals, objectives, and policy discussion by focus group (Cultural Resources, Land Use, and Utilities and Community Facilities).

RICG/TAG Meeting #5: Goal and Policy Development

The meeting consisted of discussing the issues, goals, objectives, and strategies of the Intergovernmental Coordination Element.

RICG/TAG Meeting #6: Implementation Element

The meeting consisted of discussing the implementation strategies and how they are presented in the Plan.



RICG/TAG Meeting #7: Plan Implementation Guide and Land Use Map

The Plan Implementation Guide and Land Use Map were discussed and reviewed.

RICG/TAG Review Period

During May 2010, the RICG and TAG were given time to review and comment on the draft plan and plan implementation guide.

Regional Plan Informational Meetings/Plan Implementation Guide Workshops

In June 2010, three meetings were held in Menomonie, Stanley, and Turtle Lake to gain input and answer questions on the draft regional plan and to provide to introduce and discuss the plan implementation guide. These meetings were open to the public and were announce through local media and by a postcard invitation sent to every municipality in the Region.

Open House and Public Hearing and Adoption

Upon approval of the resolution of the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission on September 9, 2010, the *West Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan* was adopted by the Commission, following an open house and public hearing conducted on July 6, 2010. A copy of the adopting resolution are included at the beginning of this document.

G. Accompanying Documents

The following documents were created during the planning process and adopted as part of the *West Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan*:

Barron County Conditions and Trends Report
Chippewa County Conditions and Trends Report
Clark County Conditions and Trends Report
Dunn County Conditions and Trends Report
Eau Claire County Conditions and Trends Report
Polk County Conditions and Trends Report
St. Croix County Conditions and Trends Report

Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin

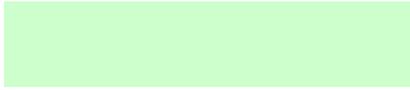
State of the Region Working Papers Compilation (see Appendix III)

- Population
- Transportation
- Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
- Land Use
- Housing
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Economic Development
- Energy and Sustainability

Milestone Report #1: Conditions, Trends, and Implications

Milestone Report #2: Vision, Goals, and Strategies

Plan Implementation Guide for West Central Wisconsin (Milestone Report #3)



II. REGIONAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A. Conditions and Trends

A region is a complex system that is continuously changing in terms of population, economy, technology, perception, barriers, and a host of other variables. In analyzing a complex system, or, in this instance, the Region, it needs to be looked at and understood within all its elements. Any element can influence, or be influenced by, many other elements. These interactions between elements are non-linear. Therefore small changes can result in large effects and vice-versa. However, what makes a region an extremely challenging organism is that most parts or elements of regions operate without knowledge about the behavior of the system as a whole. For one portion of the Region to know what is happening in the entire system is impossible. The complexity is a result of the interaction between the large quantities of elements, of which each one only reacts on the limited scope of information it can access.

To plan for the future, history needs to be understood and utilized to help guide the process in the appropriate direction. The history of each respective county is described in each of the county Conditions and Trends Reports. A brief look at regional history shows the Region was and continues to be largely rural, consisting of a scattering of smaller communities, with the Eau Claire area and more recently the Twin Cities area economically and culturally influencing their respective surrounding areas. From before settlers arrived to present day, the Region has been dependant on agricultural and natural resources. More recently, universities and colleges, newer industries, and Interstate Highway 94 have all impacted the Region.

Many of the trends and implications in all of the elements result from population and policies. First, population changes throughout the Region have significantly influenced the conditions. At the turn of the 20th Century, the populations of west central Wisconsin's seven counties were relatively comparable, all being fewer than 35,000 as shown in the chart on page 13. In roughly 1920, Chippewa and Eau Claire counties began to experience significant increases in population and have been growing at a relatively steady rate ever since. St. Croix County has grown at an increasing rate since the 1950s, and exploded in growth during the past two decades. Since about 1970, Barron and Dunn counties have been growing at a fairly slow, yet constant rate. Clark County's population has fluctuated less than the other six counties, growing since 1990, but its total population is still below its 1920 level. In addition to increasing, the Region's population has aged, migrated to cities and villages, become more racially diverse, and farms less.

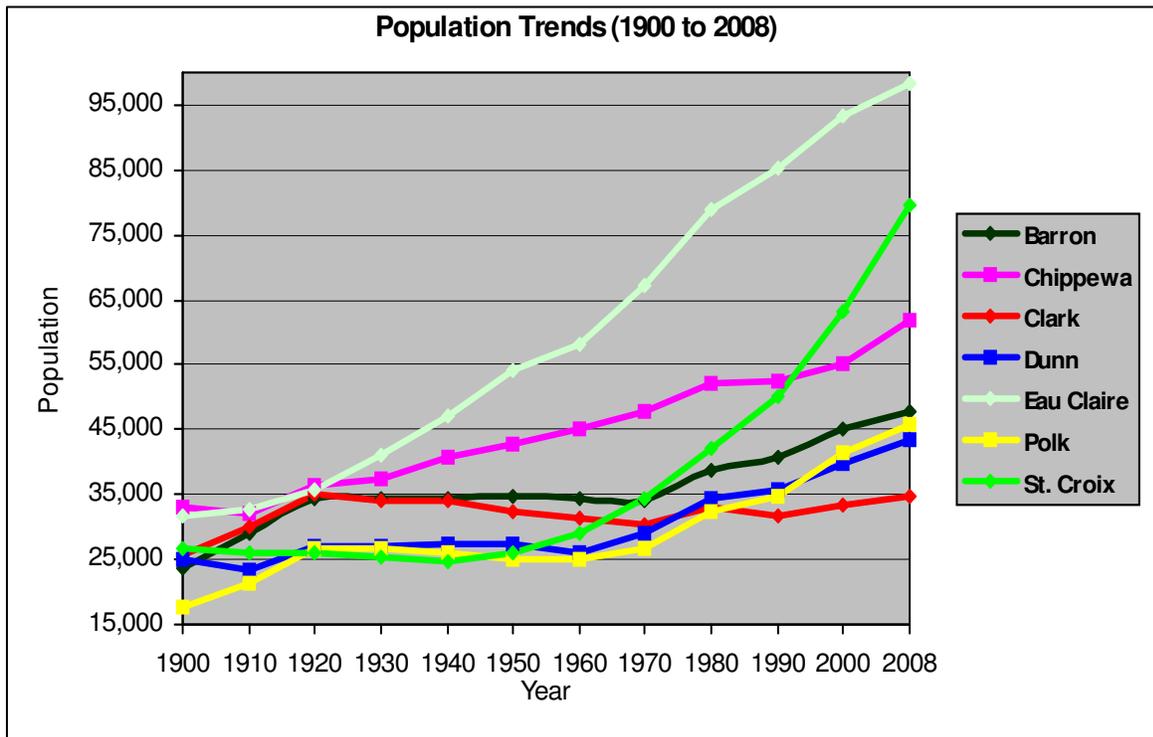
Several local, State, and Federal policies have impacted the Region, most notably agricultural policies. These policies, which currently reward large-scale agricultural operations, have played a significant role in the loss of small farms in the Region. Also, due to these policies, rural communities have struggled to stay vibrant and maintain economic opportunity for citizens. This has been a major force behind the loss of farms and population stagnation and decline in rural areas.

Over the past decade, there has been growing discussion on sustainability and how it relates to communities and the economy. Elements of a sustainable community and/or region consist of harmony between ecological, cultural, economic, institutional, political, and social conditions. Elements also include easing the burden on future generations and long-term stability, freedom for individuals to make choices, and sufficient governance. The aspect of creating a sustainable region cannot be lost in the process. Consequently, sustainability needs to be addressed and made a focal point in how it relates to each element during the planning process.

As technology has advanced and the world has become overwhelmingly connected, globalization has resulted in a need for communities and counties to work together and form a regional level of cooperation to maintain existing services, plan for the future, and to be economically competitive. Opportunities exist to eliminate barriers and create synergistic partnerships. Improving services, reducing fiscal impacts, and promoting similar economic endeavors play an important role in regional planning.

Without a regional understanding and mindset, competition between and among governments, other institutions, and stakeholders in the private sector is a major barrier in creating a vibrant and sustainable region and a region with communities that are also vibrant and sustainable.

During the preliminary planning process, WCWRPC produced Conditions and Trends Reports for all seven counties. The Conditions and Trends Reports provide a compilation of background information for the elements of the counties’ comprehensive plans. While the reports identify significant information and trends, they often do so in the context of each county and do not always identify trends specific to individual communities and the Region as a whole. Even though most of these trends are specific to individual counties, some of these trends cross county lines and in various instances are regional. An example of this is growth pressure from the Twin Cities, which is prevalent in much of St. Croix County and a growing portion of southwestern Polk County.



Source: U.S. Census & Wisconsin Dept. of Administration

WCWRPC analyzed the state of the Region by producing eight State of the Region Working Papers: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources; Economic Development; Energy and Sustainability; Housing; Land Use; Population; Transportation; and Utilities and Community Facilities. These Working Papers grew out of the county Conditions and Trends Reports. They summarized existing conditions and trends in the Region and looked at ongoing or future implications. The Working Papers are located in Appendix III.

This plan is an opportunity to redefine and clarify what is important to the Region. Things like living-wage jobs, reduction of individuals that need to go to the hospital or get sick, clean water and air, a limited small eco-footprint, healthy food for all, and extensive recreational opportunities often are forgotten and/or not tied to other important issues in comprehensive plans. It is the intent of this plan to be a catalyst in forming a Region where such things exist.

Conditions & Trends

- St. Croix Co. has been the fastest growing county in Wisconsin since 1990.
- Growth patterns vary within the region and even within counties.
- Farm population in our unincorporated towns has decreased from 25% in 1970 to less than 7% today.
- Median age is increasing.
- The region is becoming more ethnically diverse, in part due to employment opportunities in certain communities.

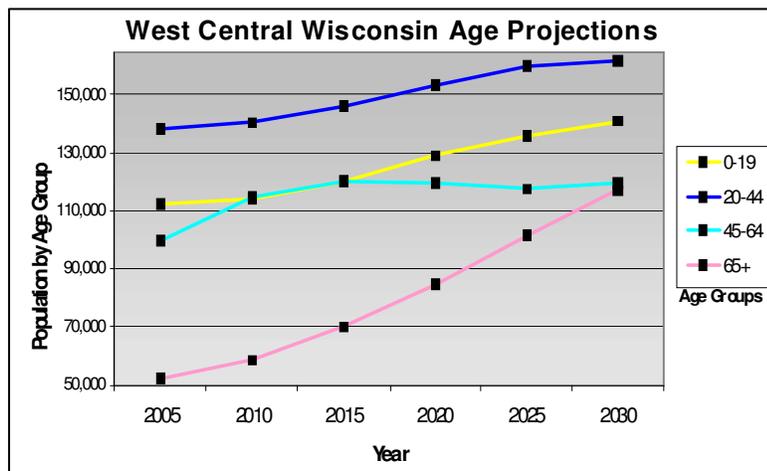
Projected Population Change (2008-2030)

Municipality	2008 Estimate	2030 Projected	Percent Change
Barron County	47,727	54,065	+ 13.3%
Chippewa County	61,872	75,152	+ 21.5%
Clark County	34,589	40,833	+ 18.1%
Dunn County	43,292	54,103	+ 25.0%
Eau Claire County	98,302	118,728	+ 20.8%
Polk County	45,892	58,866	+ 28.3%
St. Croix County	79,702	137,360	+ 72.3%
West Central Wisconsin	411,376	539,107	+31.1%

source: Wis. Dept. of Administration, Aug 2008

Top 3 Issues

- Our growing elderly population will continue to increase service demands.
- Many areas have been experiencing significant in-migration of new residents who may have different expectations for services, land use, etc.
- Our aging population and the out-migration of many younger people may result in insufficient workforce numbers in our region in the future.



Implications

- A “one size fits all” solution for issues in our region is often inappropriate given the differing growth rates and demographic trends across west central Wisconsin. This also creates challenges when attempting to identify a regional identity and regional strategies.
- Our communities are changing. Change is accompanied by new issues and opportunities. New solutions will be needed to accommodate these changes while still achieving the vision of our communities and residents.
- The population and growth trends in our region impact all plan elements on topics such as labor force availability, land use conflicts, and changing demands for housing, services, and infrastructure. Planning efforts must consider and reflect these population and demographic trends.

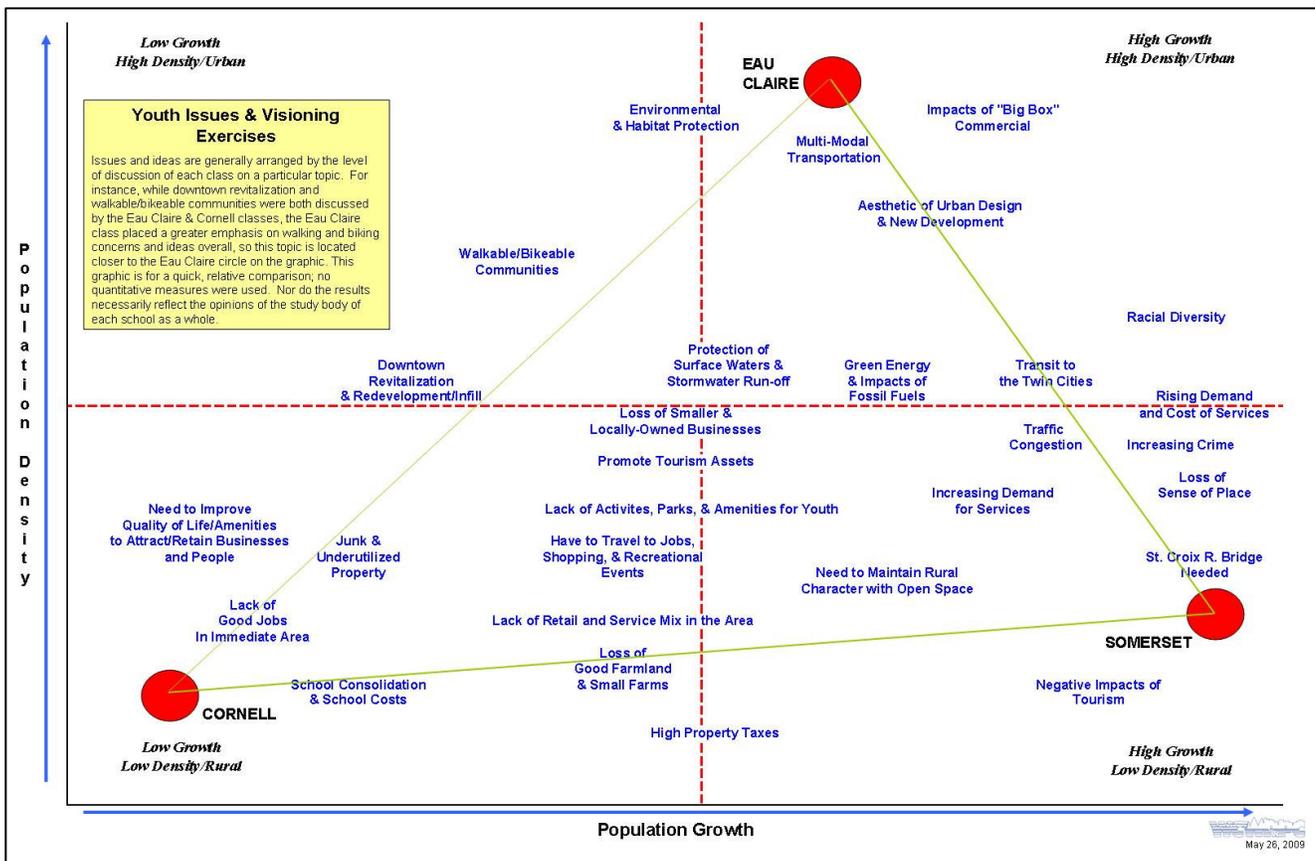
B. Special Population Input

To obtain unique perspectives during the process, input from targeted populations and interest groups was sought in Issues Generation Workshops, specifically the Region’s youth, seniors/aging, different race/cultural groups (e.g., Amish, Hmong, Saint Croix Chippewa Nation, Somali) and the health care community. Information was gathered from workshops, interviews, and surveys.

B.1. Youth

WCWRPC visited three high school classrooms in three strategically located school districts. These school districts represented a rural community with a declining population (Cornell), an urban area (Eau Claire), and a growing suburban area (Somerset). In Cornell, the participants’ questions and comments had a strong emphasis on economic challenges in the community and a lack of recreational amenities and options for youth. At Memorial High School in Eau Claire, questions and comments had a strong emphasis on urban, transportation, and community design/development challenges for the City of Eau Claire, as well as natural resource and environmental issues. In Somerset, questions and comments had a strong emphasis on population growth and related issues, while reflecting the lack of recreational options for youth and the limited retail and services diversity of a small town. The discussions often had the general tone that growth is inevitable, the options to guide this growth are limited, and the area was losing its “sense-of-place”.

The example below shows the three schools, the types of communities in which they are located (in relation to density and population growth), and what came out of the issues and visioning exercise. It details how each class compared to the other classes.



B.2. Seniors/Aging

Special outreach to our Region's elderly population was deemed important to this plan for several reasons. The elderly have often lived in the Region longer than the general population and have witnessed more change, therefore leading to more depth of experience in their input. Also, the seniors face different challenges in their life within the Region, and often have different issues than much of the younger population, especially in the areas of mobility, health care, and housing. It is often difficult for seniors to attend other public input opportunities, often due to mobility issues. There are also emerging issues related to people living longer, and more active lives, such as entertainment, social, and recreation opportunities that have appeal to these active older adults. Two meetings were held to gather input from this valuable and growing part of our population, one at the Barron Senior Center, and another at the L.E. Phillips Senior Center in Eau Claire, to capture any variation between urban and rural needs of this population. The following is a summary of the issues gathered from these meetings:

- Property taxes are too high making it difficult for the elderly to stay in their homes.
- Older housing stock is often not energy efficient, causing high heating bills.
- Assisted living facilities are very expensive and in short supply.
- Memory and behavior problems make nursing home placement difficult.
- Respite services are needed to relieve care-giving spouses and family members.
- Senior housing is often built too far away from supporting commercial services (e.g., grocery, hardware), especially in smaller communities.
- Recreation facilities, such as paved trails and accessible fishing piers, are greatly appreciated and help keep elderly active and independent.
- Senior centers are vital, providing educational, social, recreational, fitness, and often nutritional opportunities to the community's elderly populations.
- In urban areas, buses provide a good option when driving is no longer an option, but sometimes bus stops are too far away to access by walking.
- More volunteer driver programs are needed, especially in the rural areas where services are more dispersed.
- More information on available transportation services is needed.
- Elderly need to be considered in highway design (e.g., centerlines on all roads, bigger street signs, longer crossing times at signalized intersections, and more painted crosswalks).
- The proximity of cultural events, theaters, concerts, and community arts events is very important.
- Sidewalks need to be better maintained.

B.3. Race/Cultural Groups

A written survey was distributed to two Native American tribes and individuals identified in the Region who work with minorities, new immigrant populations, and diversity issues. The survey asked the following five open-ended questions:

1. What are the most pressing issues in western Wisconsin facing the minority, ethnic, or cultural group you identify or work with?
2. Have solutions to any of these issues been identified or are there current efforts underway to address them? Who is leading those efforts?
3. Are there changes or trends that are affecting your group? For example: economic or employment conditions, housing availability or cost, or transportation or energy costs.

4. Could local units of government play a role to better address the issues facing your group?
5. What issues facing your group could be addressed (or better addressed) at a regional level?

WCWRPC distributed the survey by email or mail with postage-paid envelopes. Follow-up phone calls and emails were conducted. Twelve surveys were distributed and only four were returned. Hence, anecdotal information was added by WCWRPC staff based on their experience in the Region.

The results of the survey and anecdotal information revealed the following highlights:

- All groups have some issues that prevent them from being fully integrated into the local society.
- Specific issues do not apply to all groups.
- College remains unaffordable and daunting for a higher-than-average minority population when compared to the general population.
- A gradual erosion or loss of Hmong culture exists among the younger generation of Hmong.
- Tensions exist in communities that have seen a significant Hispanic and Somali population increase. These populations have moved to these locations for specific employment opportunities. The tensions exist between traditional demographic groups and the new demographic groups.
- There are numerous barriers (e.g., education, language, skills, perceptions, racism, xenophobia) for many minority groups to enter the broader employment sector.
- Legalization issues create a complex environment where workers who are not in the country legally are working in industries that struggle to find employees for the wage that they are willing to pay, often in communities that are not accustomed to these new population groups.
- Since most of these groups are new to the Region, or lack much interaction outside of their community (e.g., Amish), it is currently difficult to determine how large these populations are and their issues and opportunities.

B.4. Health Care Community

A written survey was distributed to all County Health Departments in the Region and to seven hospitals/clinics. In the case of health departments, the survey was completed by the agency director. The hospitals and clinics determined who would be best suited to fill out the survey. The survey asked the following five open-ended questions:

1. What are the most pressing health care issues facing residents of our Region?
2. Have solutions to any of these issues been identified?
3. Are there changing trends that are making it more difficult to meet the health care needs of residents?
4. Could local units of government play a role in helping to better address health care needs?
5. Are there any health care issues that could be addressed (or better addressed) at the regional level?

Prior to the distribution of the surveys, WCWRPC staff contacted each of the surveyed entities by telephone to provide information on the comprehensive planning process and gain additional input from the health care community. The survey was then emailed and returned electronically.

The results of the survey revealed the following highlights:

- There was consensus on the top issues facing the Region. They included: access to health services/lack of health insurance, alcohol abuse, obesity, and limited options for mental health services.

- Other issues mentioned by multiple respondents included: suicide, cigarette smoking, motor vehicle injuries, nitrates in drinking water, Lyme disease, sexually transmitted diseases, aging population with more chronic illness, poor nutrition, and communication with immigrant populations.
- The trends that have made it more difficult to address these issues are: an aging population in need of assistance, a distressed economy leading to people losing jobs and health insurance, an increased homeless population, more single-parent households, loss of resources and services to address needs, less charitable giving, and a need for better public transportation.
- Efforts are underway in all counties to deal with these problems. In many cases, collaborative coalitions have been formed. These coalitions include governmental departments, private health care providers, nonprofits, etc. Addressing these issues in a larger geographic area is also important and is being initiated in many areas as well.

C. Program Inventory

Many of the issues and recommendations identified in this document and the implementation guide were created in a bottom-up fashion from the plans, programs, and policies of the counties, towns, cities, and villages in the Region. WCWRPC also integrated other regional, State, and federal plans were applicable.

C.1. Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies

The *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin* is a special addendum that documents the key existing programs, plans, and land use policies as of the summer 2008, which are pertinent to comprehensive planning efforts in west central Wisconsin. The State Comprehensive Planning Law (§66.1001) requires comprehensive plans to include such an inventory for numerous plan elements (e.g., housing, transportation, economic development). The results of this inventory not only identify current planning trends in our Region, but can be used by local jurisdictions to obtain insight into programs, plans, and land-use policies in their respective areas. Such insight is valuable to comprehensive planning efforts and encourages intergovernmental coordination which maximizes existing resources and mitigates potential conflicts.

This inventory was compiled from three general sources:

1. A review of pertinent Federal, State, county, and other plans, web pages, programmatic materials, and direct contacts. (*Examples: state housing programs; WisDOT projects; county land use controls; industrial parks*)
2. Readily available reports and other such previously completed inventories, often compiled at the state level for grant, tax, or other such purposes. (*Examples: outdoor recreation plans; TIF districts; cooperative boundary agreements*)
3. In September 2008, WCWRPC distributed a survey with a self-addressed stamped envelope by mail to town, city, and village clerks to obtain input on programs not inventoried elsewhere. A follow-up reminder e-mail was also sent to those clerks for whom we had e-mail addresses. Of 225 potential respondents, over 150 surveys were returned. This data was also supplemented from other sources when known for a community. (*Examples: extraterritorial plat review; historic preservation ordinances; conservation design standards*)

For many counties and communities in the Region, this inventory will sufficiently meet the comprehensive planning requirements. However, no such inventory can be all-inclusive. Counties and local communities may need to expand on this inventory to include additional programs, plans, and ordinances which are pertinent and unique to their community and relevant to their comprehensive planning efforts. Further, this inventory is a “snapshot in time” based on best-available data, yet such infrastructure is always changing, programs are

phased out and others created, additional plans are adopted, and new policies are implemented. Other excellent sources for additional programs and plans include:

- Comprehensive planning element guides available at the WisDOA website:
<http://www.doa.state.wi.us/category.asp?linkcatid=744&linkid=128&locid=9>
- *Guide to Community Planning in Wisconsin* by Brian W. Ohm which is available at:
<http://www.lic.wisc.edu/shapingdane/resources/planning/library/book/contents.htm>
- County or local clerk, planning/zoning office, or UW-Extension office

C.2. WCWRPC Plans and Regulations

This is the first comprehensive planning effort that focuses on the Region as a whole. WCWRPC completed the Land Use Policy Plan in 1978. Among other things, the WCWRPC staffs the Regional Business Fund, Inc., Metropolitan Planning Organization, and completes the U.S. Economic Development Administration's required document *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS) for the Region.

C.3. Other Applicable Regional Plans and Regulations

The list of applicable regional plans and regulations can be found in the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*. The TAG and RICG participants were another key way in which other regional plans were integrated into the process.

C.4. Other Applicable Plans and Regulations

Other applicable plans and regulations encompass or surround the seven-county region. These include State, regional, county, and local plans that abut the Region's boundaries. The issues and recommendations from these other plans were considered as WCWRPC developed its own plan. The TAG and RICG participants were another key way in which other local, regional, or State plans were integrated into the process

D. Issues Identification

As part of the issues and opportunities section of the planning process, the RICG & TAG compiled a list of the issues facing west central Wisconsin based on their experiences and the guidance from the State of the Region Working Papers in Appendix III. Members were then asked to individually identify their top five regional concerns and opinions for each category; a total of 40 surveys were returned. The results of this issues identification process on the following pages provided focus on the most important issues during the visioning process and during the creation of the goals, objectives, and strategies for each plan element.

Population	# of Votes
Our growing elderly population will continue to increase demands on our health care system and related senior services such as transportation and housing.	30
Many areas have been experiencing significant in-migration of new residents who may have different expectation levels for services, land use, etc.	26
Our aging population and the out-migration of many younger people may result in insufficient workforce numbers in our Region in the future.	20
Very high population growth has been occurring in portions of St. Croix and Polk counties and is projected to continue.	17
Loss of identity and sense of community in high growth areas.	17
Our Region is growing more culturally and ethnically diverse with unique social, housing, and economic impacts, potential cultural conflicts, and special needs related to these populations.	15
Over 85% of town residents are non-farmers in our Region compared to 1970 when the town farm and non-farm population was fairly evenly split.	14
Many of the fastest growing communities in our Region are unincorporated towns.	13
Generally, population growth during recent decades has been higher in communities with recreational lakes and this trend may be shifting to rivers as lakefront properties become more scarce.	13
Population in many rural areas is increasing as seasonal homes are converted to year-round homes and more residents are willing to commute farther to their places of employment.	11
With growth, there is concern with spreading crime in the Region.	5
Significant numbers of ethnic and racial minorities are moving into specific areas of the Region for job opportunities resulting in unique challenges for these communities.	5
Ethnic or minority groups are often under-counted in censuses and population estimates.	3

Housing	# of Votes
Existing regulations may not accommodate or support the growing demand for alternative housing options, such as green building methods, sustainable site design, and multi-generational housing trends (e.g., older parent in an accessory dwelling unit).	23
Increased housing options are needed in the Region (e.g., apartments, duplexes, condos, assisted living) and this demand will likely increase as our population grows and ages.	21
The Region will need more elderly housing in the future.	21
Increases in travel time and fuel costs may limit future housing in the Region if residents are less willing to commute long distances to their places of employment.	20
More low-income and affordable housing is needed in the Region.	16
Many of our rural areas are experiencing housing growth higher than incorporated areas.	16
The large amount of high-end construction that has occurred may result in a surplus of this type of housing in the future.	14
Seasonal homes are often increasingly being used full-time after the owner(s) retires.	11
Better communication and coordination is needed between the housing organizations in the Region.	12
Available housing assistance programs need to be better advertised so residents are aware of available funding and resources.	11
Higher end housing in rural areas may not have access to nearby services, transportation options, or other higher end housing alternatives as they age.	8
Housing values and property taxes of existing residences are being impacted by the development of new, larger homes or poor maintenance on adjacent properties.	8
Residents often believe that the cost of rental housing should be much less than it is resulting in builders avoiding the rental market and fewer rental units being available.	3
In some areas, adjacent lots are being purchased, combined, then used to construct one very large home and accessory structures.	2
Small resorts are being subdivided and sold in small parcels for residential use resulting in less tourism for the area.	1



Transportation	# of Votes
Revitalization of freight and passenger rail is important for the development of the Region, especially given rising fuel prices.	22
Maintenance of our aging transportation infrastructure will be a challenge in light of growth, increasing traffic volumes, and budget challenges.	20
Intergovernmental coordination and other partnerships are important to providing alternative modes of transportation.	20
It is difficult to travel across our Region without a car.	18
More transit services to the Twin Cities area and between our Region's cities are needed.	17
Additional transit services and the coordination of such services is needed to serve the growing elderly, disabled, and commuter populations.	17
Increased availability and use of alternative modes of transportation could reduce the demand for new roads and highways.	17
A more regional approach to transportation and recreational trail planning is needed, especially for high growth areas.	12
Increased guidance for local governments is needed on transportation-related issues, such as cost-benefits of paving, heavy equipment impacts to roadways, and street planning for development.	11
Our transportation systems need to better accommodate the growing demand for bicycle and pedestrian travel and facilities.	10
Different demands and conflicts on roadways exist between different user types (e.g., vehicles, ATVs, Amish buggies, bicycles, walking).	7
There is a lack of understanding as to the need for roads and rail to transport goods and bring in raw materials to maintain the Region's economy.	6
Different demands and conflicts on trail systems exist between different user types (e.g., ATVs, snowmobiles, horseback riding, bicycles, walking).	5
Direct access (e.g., driveways, side streets) has depleted the vehicle capacity of many roadways.	4
Communication and coordination with larger railroads is difficult.	4
Changes in air freight and passenger transportation could include consolidation of large carriers and the growth of smaller niche carriers.	2

Utilities & Community Facilities	# of Votes
Budget limitations for local governments are making it increasingly difficult to provide needed or mandated services.	27
With our aging population, there will be increasing demand for assisted living facilities, nursing home beds, and other related services.	23
Opportunities exist for the sharing of resources between communities.	21
It is increasingly difficult to balance school facility improvements and educational program expenses with costs to taxpayers.	18
More intergovernmental coordination is needed for the expansion of sewer districts and other utilities.	17
Water use in our Region has doubled since 1979, while some communities are struggling with water quantity issues and there is a general lack of related data overall.	15
Wider access to broadband is needed within the Region.	14
Preservation of right-of-way for utilities and roads in the Region and the related expenses and conflicts is a concern as infrastructure demands and development increases.	10
Some areas of the Region have significant groundwater quality contamination risks and concerns.	9
Communication systems and emergency services need to be better coordinated and linked between communities and counties.	8
Parks and trails planning is primarily performed at a community or county level, though regional opportunities exist.	7
There is a lack of funding for community activities (e.g., theater, sports) to engage families and children in smaller communities.	4
Emergency services often have long response times in rural areas.	4
Decentralization is contributing to the increasing cost of medical care.	4
Lack of volunteer networking and coordination within our Region.	4
Increasing demands are being placed on emergency management and response providers.	4
Consolidation of schools create longer travel times and reduces civic pride.	1

Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources	# of Votes
Farmland is being taken out of production and converted to other uses.	17
Intergovernmental cooperation is essential for the effective protection of valued resources.	16
Increased stormwater management is needed to prevent debris, pollutants, runoff, and sediment from entering surface waters.	16
There is increasing need for shoreland and streambank protection.	15
There are growing threats to agricultural and natural resources from disease and invasive species.	14
Increasing pesticide, herbicide, and fertilizer use in the Region and related water quality impacts (e.g., phosphorus loading).	13
Farming costs, fluctuating commodity prices, and low revenues are making it increasingly difficult for many small farms to stay in operation; many small farms are being bought up by larger farm operations.	13
Use conflicts can arise between existing agricultural and new residential development resulting in right-to-farm challenges.	12
Forests are often forgotten as important working lands with a variety of benefits and products such as lumber, maple syrup, recreation, habitat, and aesthetic value.	12
More consistent resource inventory and mapping is needed in the Region.	10
Potential conflicts and concerns often arise over large feedlot and large-scale agricultural operations while local control may be limited by State law.	10
The Region has experienced a significant loss in the number of dairy farms.	7
Non-metallic mining resources need to be protected for future use, while conflicts often arise from the development and operation of mines and quarries.	7
There is need for more education in order to preserve and revive the culture and history of our Region.	6
The inter-generational transfer of farms is becoming increasingly difficult.	6
As our Region's demographics, traditional small farm economy, and land use patterns change, there is often a loss of sense of place.	6
Many cultural events in the Region struggle with funding and attendance.	5
Productive forest lands are being increasingly fragmented.	5
Taxes are too high on farmland.	0

Economic Development	# of votes
While the Region has many higher education opportunities, fewer employment options for these graduates contribute to a “brain drain” and loss of a skilled workforce.	27
More regional efforts are needed to analyze strengths, market our assets, and pursue opportunities to attract new industry, while reducing programmatic redundancies and harmful competition between communities and agencies.	17
More efforts should be made to grow existing businesses.	14
More efforts should be made to infill or convert underutilized industrial and commercial areas to targeted industry types or alternative uses.	13
Our Region lacks a clear identity and cohesive economic strategy, in part due to the diversity within the Region.	13
Many traditional downtown business districts are deteriorating and may not have the same historic function requiring a new definition for “Main Street”.	12
There is no consensus among agencies and stakeholders in the Region on regional economic benchmarks and metrics on how best to track, monitor, and utilize such information.	11
Infrastructure improvements (e.g., roads, utilities, broadband, wireless) are needed in the Region to support economic development.	11
Most areas of the Region have income levels lower than state averages. Pay rate differences exist in the Region and with adjacent areas.	9
Lifestyle issues and quality of place are increasingly important factors in attracting and maintaining businesses, though our Region lacks a quantitative study of these issues and assets.	9
Different tax and regulatory policies between Wisconsin and Minnesota, as well as in different communities, impacts economic development in our Region.	9
Potential future workforce shortages will make it difficult to attract and retain businesses.	8
More information is needed on technology and innovation businesses and resources in our Region and the outlook for the future.	7
More business incubators are needed in the Region.	7
West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission services are under-utilized and not well defined to its constituents.	6
More economic development efforts should be tied to natural resources and tourism.	5
Momentum West is in its infancy with untapped opportunity and potential.	5
Our Region needs a strategy to make it more recession proof.	4
Many smaller communities lack essential businesses, such as grocery stores, gas station, etc.	4

Land Use	# of votes
There is a lack of intergovernmental cooperation on land use, in particular at the urban-rural fringe between cities and towns. More efforts needed to facilitate cooperation and take advantage of untapped opportunities.	22
Transportation systems impact land use, and vice versa. Land use and proposed transportation projects need to be planned concurrently.	17
More education on land use planning trends, issues, and tools is needed in our Region.	17
Rural development has a variety of negative consequences such as: undue land consumption, use conflicts, high costs for services, and increased commuter travel.	17
Different land use regulations in adjacent communities and for extra-territorial areas can drive growth towards less regulated areas.	17
More effort should be made to take advantage of redevelopment and infill opportunities, rather than greenfield development.	16
Land use patterns should develop or support the character of the community and a sense of place.	13
It is important to promote the Working Lands Initiative and available innovative tools to preserve farmland and productive forest lands while helping communities achieve their land use objectives.	11
Development can have a detrimental impact on natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.	11
Land use policies and regulations often conflict with farmland, forest, and open space preservation goals.	10
A more regionally consistent and systemic approach is needed for gathering and distributing land use, resource, and other geographic information.	8
Growing need and interest in walkable neighborhoods and traditional neighborhood design with mixed uses for redevelopment and new development.	8
Land use change is being driven by the influx of new residents from outside the Region.	6
There is a need to explore or encourage more socially and economically diverse residential development and neighborhoods.	5
There will be development pressure on high-speed rail stops.	4
County Farm properties are being converted to other uses and taking good land out of agricultural production.	3
New development and infill often occurs in a manner which is inconsistent with nearby existing development.	3
Annexation is decreasing tax revenues for towns and making service delivery difficult.	3

Energy & Sustainability	# of votes
There is a need for more information, education, models, and facts regarding the renewable energy potential (e.g., biomass, geo-thermal, wind, solar) and sustainability opportunities in our Region.	25
A regional strategy is needed to assist our communities and the Region in meeting the Governor’s 25x25 goal of producing 25% of the State’s electricity and transportation fuels from renewable resources by 2025.	20
Energy conservation and sustainability is not a priority for many communities in the Region and often not part of community planning efforts.	17
Energy demand is increasing in the Region and there will be a growing need to consider alternative energy sources.	15
Current regulations and land use policies for many areas of the Region do not allow or encourage alternative housing construction or other sustainable concepts (e.g., neighborhood electric vehicles, conservation subdivision design, wind turbines).	15
Increase the Region’s food independence with food being purchased from local producers.	13
More affordable and efficient energy options need to be made available to residents and businesses.	13
Continued efforts to increase waste reduction, re-use, and recycling is needed.	12
Financial assistance and innovative approaches are needed to assist individuals and businesses in implementing energy efficiency and sustainability efforts.	11
New development and residential construction is typically not designed and developed in a sustainable manner and form in the Region.	10
Government decision-making too often focuses on financial cost-benefits, rather than considering environmental and social impacts.	8
Our Region lacks a strategy for working towards a green economy.	8
Landfills could be better utilized for energy production.	7
There is a need for a centralized clearinghouse of information on current renewable energy and sustainability projects in the Region, as well as opportunities and related plans.	7
Waste from the industrial, commercial, and medical sectors needs to be better addressed.	5
The sustainability concept and market needs to mature before the entire Region can utilize many of these concepts.	5
More encouragement to participate in recycling and hazardous waste disposal is needed in some areas, meanwhile budget limitation are potentially cutting back on these programs.	3
Electric policies (net metering) for consumers who own renewable energy facilities is needed in some areas of the Region.	0

III. REGIONAL VISION

A vision statement defines the future that the Region wants, but it does not define how it gets there. Visioning helps build consensus, can emphasize assets, identifies desirable change, and provides direction and context for the planning goals and policies later in the process.

During the spring and summer of 2009, WCWRPC held several individual and joint meetings with the TAG and the RICG to discuss issues and opportunities. Along with these meetings, an in-depth issues-identification survey for each of the elements was distributed, the results of which were shown in the previous section. These meetings and survey allowed the stakeholders to review what was important to the Region.

During the visioning process, the following characteristics were frequently discussed or highlighted as being critical components of the vision of our Region's future:

- a strong, vital economy
- connectivity and linkages (internal, local, regionally, globally)
- diversity of places (urban and rural) and resources
- fiscal challenges and cost efficiencies
- intergovernmental coordination and partnerships
- maintain community identity
- preserve rural character
- protect our agricultural and natural resources
- become more sustainable
- produce more energy within the Region and focus on renewable energy

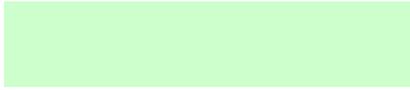
VISIONING:

The process by which a community defines the future it wants.

The above-referenced discussion and survey results were not only important for creating the vision statement, but they provided valuable direction for establishing Plan goals, objectives, and strategies, which are located later in the Plan. Due to the number and complexity of regional issues, there are many components, some of which are broad and many which have a variety of sub-categories and issues.

Based on the visioning exercises, the following 2030 vision statement for the Region was developed, and then finalized at the August 9, 2009, joint RICG and TAG meeting:

WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN 2030 VISION STATEMENT
West Central Wisconsin is a region of sustainable and identifiable communities working cooperatively and globally with strong social, physical, and economic linkages. Our cities and villages are vibrant, and our rural character and diverse resources are preserved.



IV. HOUSING

Housing costs are the single largest expenditure for most Wisconsin residents. However, affordability is just one reason a community may plan for housing. A variety of local and regional housing issues and demands can be addressed through planning, such as type (e.g., single-family, rental, manufactured), condition (e.g., age, aesthetics, rehabilitation), and safety (e.g., codes, disaster preparedness, accessibility). Various opportunities are available to bring resources and expertise together as a region to address housing issues.

Federal and State laws require that housing policies need to meet the needs of persons of all income levels, age groups, and other special needs. This is also a specific goal of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law. Specifically, policies have to allow for adequate and accessible housing for all. Accessibility includes both location within a community and physically entering the residence.

It is common for policies to differ depending on the type and size of community. The Region consists of rural, suburban, and different types and sizes of urban areas. All of these examples of living areas need to have appropriate policies that create a living environment that consists of safe and healthy living conditions. Greater attention is being placed on the physical context for new housing and how it relates to the natural environment and surrounding neighborhood.



Farm residence in the region



Downtown in-fill housing in Eau Claire

Many variables impact housing, and housing impacts many other elements in the Plan. For example, in order to build vibrant communities, it is vital that we as a region have an adequate supply of housing for workers in all price ranges. In order for communities to develop their economies, they must create jobs, and in turn, must have housing for workers who fill those jobs. In a world where energy prices will surely increase, housing will need to be located next to transit, shopping, and recreational opportunities and be built to limit energy use. In cities and villages, this is often located in or within proximity of downtown. In addition, historic homes and well-designed residential buildings improve the character and quality-of-place for a community, which is important for increasing economic development and sense-of-place.

SENSE-OF-PLACE:

The essential character and spirit of an area. It is often used in relation to those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging.

A. Conditions, Trends, and Issues Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- The number of housing units in the region increased 14% between 1990 and 2000, while population increased 12.2%.
- Seasonal housing is a large percentage of the housing stock in some areas, though the number of seasonal homes overall is decreasing as units are converted to year-round homes.
- About 75% of the region's housing stock is single-family units. 49% of the housing stock was constructed prior to 1970.
- Polk, St. Croix, and Dunn counties have had some of the highest foreclosure rates in the State.



Seasonal Units – 2000

COUNTY	Seasonal Units	
	Number of Units	% of Total Housing
BARRON	2,299	11.0%
CHIPPEWA	694	3.0%
CLARK	833	6.2%
DUNN	285	1.9%
EAU CLAIRE	375	1.0%
POLK	4,209	19.9%
ST. CROIX	281	1.2%
REGION	8,976	5.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

Top 3 Issues

- Existing regulations may not accommodate or support the growing demand for alternative housing options, such as green building methods, sustainable site design, and multi-generational housing trends.
- Increased housing options are needed in the region and this demand will likely increase as our population grows and ages; the region will need more elderly housing in the future.
- Increases in travel time and fuel costs may limit future housing in the region if residents are less willing to commute long distances to their places of employment.

Implications

- The region contains an older housing stock that is in need of rehabilitation and energy efficiency improvements. Continuation of programs to address these issues is of importance.
- The increasing conversion of seasonal units to year-round units has created new demands for services and infrastructure in many rural areas.
- Local communities must be prepared to meet the changing demands for different types of housing, in particular as our population ages and as more attention is given to alternative building methods.
- The great variety of housing authorities, non-profit housing programs, and other related service providers in our region provide an opportunity to work cooperatively to address our future housing issues and demands in an efficient and effective manner.

B. Special Subsections

Housing programs within the Region are identified within the county conditions and trends reports and the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*.

C. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1:

West central Wisconsin will have a range of affordable, efficient housing options that provide a safe, healthy living environment.

Objectives:

1. A mix of housing options and neighborhoods will be available to meet the needs of all residents.
2. Green and energy-efficient construction and renovation methods and materials will be commonplace.
3. Housing and residential developments should be designed, sited, and constructed in a manner which mitigates the potential impacts of man-made and natural hazards and other health and safety concerns.
4. Housing organizations, programs, and services will work cooperatively to best assist residents and utilize limited resources.
5. New housing development should be economically efficient in terms of its relationship to necessary services, facilities, and infrastructure.
6. Residents should have access to safe emergency or in-crisis housing should it be needed.

Goal 2:

Maintain our existing housing stock, preserve traditional residential neighborhoods, and encourage new housing to be developed in a manner which is consistent and compatible with the context of its surroundings.

Objectives:

1. Encourage the maintenance and renovation of the existing housing stock and our Region's historic homes.
2. Housing development will occur in a manner that considers and protects our natural resources and minimizes conflicts with adjacent uses.
3. Identify and promote the preservation and revitalization of our traditional residential neighborhoods and housing in urban areas.
4. Encourage diversity of housing choices and at higher densities where services are available.
5. The development pattern of new housing in our rural, unincorporated areas should be compatible with the rural character of its surroundings and preserve our working lands.

D. Strategies

Research & General Outreach

1. Prepare a report on the Region's housing stock mix, housing demands, rural homelessness, senior housing needs, and local trends, along with related general recommendations and resources availability. Disseminate this information widely to increase public awareness, and periodically update this report. *[WCWRPC, Housing authorities, Community action programs, Realtors, County social services, Other housing advocates – Short Range]*
2. Implement an educational campaign on the homelessness and in-crisis housing needs in the Region to increase awareness of these issues among the public and governmental officials. *[Determine involvement as part of Strategy #1 – Short Range, following completion of Strategy #1]*

3. Establish or maintain county-level housing resource informational centers which increase resident and local government knowledge of the wide variety of housing assistance programs available to residents and encourage local governments to incorporate these housing resources into their planning and development efforts. *[Housing authorities, County social services, Local housing advocates, 2-1-1 providers – Medium Range]*
4. Encourage increased fiscal literacy and homeownership counseling of prospective new homeowners on topics such as mortgages and avoiding foreclosure, basic home maintenance, utilities, and, if applicable, rural living. *[Financial/mortgage institutions, Community action programs, Realtors – Ongoing]*

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTIONS

Land Use:

- Locating housing options in areas where walking/cycling to transit and shopping opportunities exist increases the availability of walking and cycling as a means of transportation.
- Locating high-density housing options adjacent to transit allows more efficient transit operations.
- Urban cores are key locations to have high density residential development and mixed-use development that incorporates housing opportunities.

Construction:

- Energy-efficient construction, home improvements, and appliances reduce energy use.
- More efficient sized housing options reduce energy use and land consumption.

Planning and Regulatory

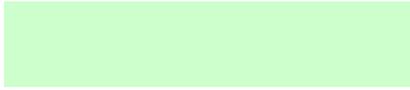
5. Encourage local governments to allow for and promote a mix of housing types and affordability options, including rental, multi-family, and manufactured housing, which eliminates barriers to fair housing choices and meets resident needs by providing example incentives, programs, models for working with developers, and regulatory language alternatives. *[WCWRPC, Housing advocacy groups, WI Division of Housing & Intergovernmental Relations – Short Range]*
6. Identify options and model regulatory language on how local governments may address secondary or accessory residential units on a single parcel, in anticipation of growing demand for such units for aging family members. *[WCWRPC, Housing advocacy groups – Short Range]*
7. Provide local governments with the tools, resources, alternatives, and related benefits of preserving the character of historic residential areas; increasing the use of traditional neighborhood design techniques within or adjacent to established residential or incorporated areas; and, prioritizing infill development and encouraging rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. *[WCWRPC, Historical societies, Historical districts, Local governments, DNR-Brownfields Program, WI Historical Society – Short Range]*
8. As the Region’s population ages and demand warrants, advocate for a mix of affordable housing and assisted living choices (e.g., nursing care, assisted living, in-home respite) which are sited in proximity to related goods and services, and contributes to keeping our older citizens as active members of our communities. Encourage new homes to be “visitable¹” for persons in all stages of life, while exploring opportunities to support the adaptive rehabilitation of existing homes. *[Local governments, WCWRPC, Housing advocacy groups, Housing authorities, Community action programs – Ongoing]*
9. Provide local governments model regulatory language which accommodates green construction techniques and energy efficiency strategies (e.g., building materials, landscaping, infrastructure, deep retrofits, site design) for consideration and incorporation into local plans, programs, and ordinances. *[WCWRPC, Building trade organizations, Energy companies, Focus on Energy – Immediate]*

¹ “Visitability” refers to designing housing in such a way that it can be lived in or visited by people who have trouble with steps or who use wheelchairs or walkers. A house is visitable if it has one zero-step entrance, doors with 32” of clear passage space, and one bathroom on the main floor that is accessible by wheelchair.

10. Housing strategies should be integrated as part of economic development plans and initiatives to ensure adequate housing for workforces and students. Explore successful employer-supported housing models, and, if appropriate, apply such models in our Region when opportunities allow. *[Local governments, EDCs, Universities – Medium Range]*
11. Maintain and protect housing and property values by encouraging continued code enforcement, maintenance of utilities and infrastructure, and the development or reuse of underutilized properties. *[Local governments, Applicable State regulatory agencies – Ongoing]*
12. Implement the housing safety strategies in county hazard mitigation plans. *[Local governments and emergency management offices as identified in mitigation plans – Ongoing]*
13. Given the relationship of housing development to many different comprehensive plan elements, implement those strategies found in other sections of this plan in a manner consistent with and supportive of the housing goals and objectives, while ensuring that housing is developed in a manner which is appropriate and compatible with its surroundings. *[Varies by strategy]*

Multi-Jurisdictional and Collaborative Efforts

14. Encourage communities and housing service providers in the Region to provide input to State and Federal agencies on housing needs and existing or proposed housing programs. *[WCWRPC, Housing authorities, Local governments, Community action programs, Housing advocacy groups, WI Division of Housing & Intergovernmental Relations, WHEDA - Ongoing]*
15. To better leverage existing resources, explore innovative projects, and increase local access to larger grant programs, encourage more coordination and multi-jurisdictional collaboration in the pursuit of grant funding for housing projects in the Region. Work cooperatively to pursue community development block grant funding and other housing assistance resources which encourage the development, renovation, and maintenance of a safe, healthy, energy-efficient, and affordable housing stock. *[WCWRPC, Community action programs, Housing authorities, Local governments, WI Division of Housing & Intergovernmental Relations, WHEDA – Immediate]*
16. The Region’s housing authorities, planning agencies, and related services providers should meet periodically to discuss housing trends, gaps in services, opportunities for resource sharing, and strategies for west central Wisconsin. *[Housing authorities, Community action programs, Planning agencies, Housing advocates – Medium Range]*
17. Strengthen the relationship and coordination between governmental entities in the Region and our local realtor associations to address housing issues and ensure potential new landowners are aware of responsibilities and local conditions. *[Local governments, Realtors/realtors associations, Housing advocacy groups – Medium Range]*
18. With the input of housing authorities, community action programs, and existing foundations in the Region, explore the potential of establishing a regional non-profit housing trust fund to assist local housing providers in meeting service gaps, promote creative collaborative efforts, and/or provide matching funds for housing grant applications. *[WCWRPC, Housing authorities, Community action programs, Foundations in the Region, WI Division of Housing & Intergovernmental Relations – Long Range]*
19. Explore collaborative opportunities to establish or support grant and/or revolving loan funds which encourage green “retrofit”, energy efficiency initiatives, and related construction methods for residential development. *[WCWRPC, Housing authorities, Community action program, WI Division of Housing & Intergovernmental Relations, Focus on Energy – Long Range]*



V. TRANSPORTATION



Railroad in Bloomer

Transportation can directly influence a region's growth. Transportation infrastructure can also be used as a tool to help guide and accommodate the growth that a community or region envisions. The transportation element is extremely interconnected with other elements. Economic development, housing, and land use decisions can increase or modify demands on the various modes of transportation (e.g., highways and roads, air, rail, pedestrian). Likewise, transportation decisions, such as the construction of new roadways or a commuter rail line, can

impact accessibility, land values, and land use. The Region has 13,400 miles of roads. Each of these roads offers some value to the Region.

Interstate Highway 94 travels through the southern portion of the Region. This freeway facility connects the Region with the Twin Cities metropolitan area to the west and the metropolitan areas of Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago to the southeast. The western stretch in St. Croix County is the most traveled Interstate Highway in the State. In addition, a full network of U.S., State, and County highways provides access to all portions of the Region. This highly developed highway network provides communities the opportunity to capture development and economic activity due to through-traffic volumes and accessibility from the surrounding areas.

Currently, there is discussion regarding passenger rail service that would connect the Twin Cities and Chicago metropolitan areas. This service could travel through Eau Claire and/or La Crosse. In addition, there is discussion regarding increasing freight rail service in different parts of the Region. More localized issues include the use of ATVs and snowmobiles on community roads, safer routes to schools, and the need for safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities.



Elementary school in Rice Lake

Travel conditions on the Region's highways can vary depending on the time of day and the season. As is common in many areas of the nation, a lack of employment opportunities in the rural areas of the Region forces many people to commute to cities and villages. This results in heavier traffic during the hours before and after traditional working hours, commonly referred to as "rush hour." In addition, recreational opportunities in the Region, and to the north of the Region, attract trips on specific roads during the summer months, or in the autumn for hunting-related activities. Any existing traffic congestion issues tend to be localized and are handled by the specific local community and the entity



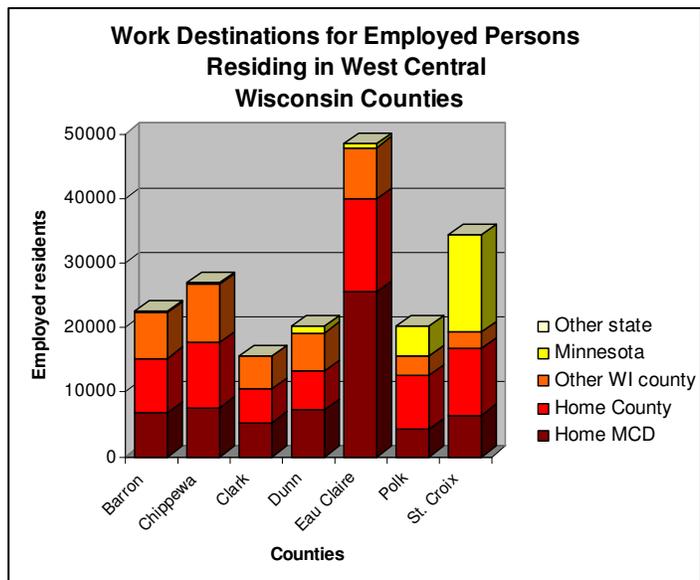
I-94 winter conditions

with jurisdiction over the facility. In the future, congestion in the I-94 corridor, especially in the western portions of the Region, is expected to be an issue. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has oversight on some issues in the Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls urban area.

A. Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- From 1998 to 2007, the percent increase in annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) in the region was double that of the State.
- Region's VMT is projected to increase 30% by 2030; +64% for trucks.
- By 2030, 31% of the region's 1,800 bridges will need significant maintenance.
- Vehicle crashes and related injuries are generally decreasing.
- Transit services in region are fairly limited, but demand is increasing as our population ages and commuting distances grow.
- Increasing attention to walking and biking as part of local transportation options.



source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

Change in Annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by County (1998-2007)

County	Annual VMT 1998	Annual VMT 2007	Percent Change (1998-2007)
Barron Co.	526,512,500	565,400,000	7.39%
Chippewa Co.	677,111,500	800,700,000	18.25%
Clark Co.	398,616,500	409,600,000	2.76%
Dunn Co.	613,419,000	662,200,000	7.95%
Eau Claire Co.	996,413,500	1,075,000,000	7.89%
Polk Co.	388,834,500	413,300,000	6.29%
St. Croix Co.	870,087,000	1,118,400,000	28.54%
State of Wisconsin	56,047,940,000	59,492,700,000	6.15%
WC Region total	4,470,994,500	5,044,600,000	12.83%

source: WisDOT.

Top 3 Issues

- Revitalization of freight and passenger rail is important for the development of the region, especially given rising fuel prices.
- Maintenance of our aging transportation infrastructure in light of growth, increasing traffic volumes, and budget challenges.
- Intergovernmental coordination and other partnerships are important to providing alternative modes of transportation.

Implications

- While our region is well connected for vehicle travel, connections by other transportation modes are more limited and will need to be expanded to better serve the region.
- Transportation projects influence land use and vice-versa, and require coordinated planning.
- With rising fuel prices, there is increasing attention to alternative modes for passenger and freight transportation. Likewise, the demand for transit services for seniors is also projected to increase.
- Roads constitute a large (if not the largest) portion of many local government budgets. It is a continuing challenge to maintain local transportation infrastructure, while meeting demands (e.g., road paving, access, bike lanes, curb & gutter) due to new growth.

B. Special Subsections

The related transportation plans discussed in the *Transportation Working Paper* and *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies* were reviewed. The below transportation goals, objectives, and strategies for the Region were determined to be compatible with the other related transportation plans. Many of the goals and policies of these other plans are expected to have impacts on the Region that require action within the scope of this planning effort.

C. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1:

Our transportation system will be safe, sustainable, and accessible while meeting the multi-modal mobility needs of all residents and enhancing their quality of life.

Objectives:

1. Continue to strive for a safe, crash-free transportation network.
2. Maintain and preserve our existing transportation infrastructure and services.
3. Support multiple modes of transportation, mitigate user conflicts, protect our resources, and improve the quality of life of residents in the planning and development of transportation projects, facilities, and policies.
4. Integrate alternative transportation modes, including pedestrian, biking, ride-share, transit, etc., as a vital part of communities.
5. Provide affordable and accessible transportation and transit services in an economically sustainable manner for all residents.
6. Recognize greater energy savings and fuel efficiency as a crucial component of the transportation network.



State Highway signage in rural St. Croix County

Goal 2:

The neighborhoods and communities of our Region will be efficiently connected with each other and the world, moving people and freight through a variety of transportation modal options.

Objectives:

1. Maintain and enhance our Region's historically strong highway and railway backbone systems.
2. Conduct region-wide transportation planning activities in a comprehensive, highly coordinated fashion to maximize connectivity, efficiency, and integration in land use and development plans.
3. Increase the amount of inter-connected, functional, and recreational, biking and walking amenities in the Region.
4. Develop transportation modal options for commuters and other riders in our Region to efficiently and sustainably connect neighborhoods, development areas, and communities within our Region, as well as better connecting our Region to the Twin Cities and the Midwest.
5. Consider freight rail, passenger rail, and airports as vital parts of our transportation network.

6. Continue to foster and support the economic goals of our Region in the planning and development of our transportation system.

Goal 3:

Our Region will work cooperatively to maintain, sustain, and enhance our transportation infrastructure and services.

Objectives:

1. Explore alternative funding sources for the maintenance and enhancement of our transportation network.
2. Encourage intergovernmental cooperation and planning as crucial to ensuring a connected, consistent, safe, and effective transportation network.
3. Strive for consistency between transportation decisions and the provisions of all applicable short- and long-term land use and development plans, considering the effects of each on the other.

D. Strategies

Highway

1. Coordinate the development of a regional approach to uniform crash data collection. Such data would allow the State of Wisconsin to access High Risk Rural Roads Program funding from the USDOT, and allow improvements to be targeted to highest crash areas. *[WCWRPC, Counties, WisDOT, Law enforcement agencies – Short Range]*

Transit/Rideshare

2. Form an entity that will be the arena for coordinated transit services discussion. *[County Human Services, Aging units, ARDCs, Service providers, Center for Independent Living, WCWRPC, WisDOT - Short Range]*
3. Inventory and coordinate park-and-ride lot and carpooling program development in appropriate locations, and the revenue to support and maintain them. *[WCWRPC, County highway commissioners, WisDOT – Medium Range]*
4. Coordinate a transit service system that interacts effectively region-wide, accommodating trips between counties and beyond the Region. *[Entity resulting from Strategy #2, above – Short Range]*

Bicycle/Pedestrian

5. Develop a regional concept plan for bike facilities, both on and off road. *[WCWRPC, DNR, County and local parks entities, Community groups – Medium Range]*

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTIONS

Location:

- Downtowns offer the best location for transportation/transit centers. Accessibility and opportunity for connections increases the viability of using multiple transportation modes.

Community Facilities:

- The existence of well-planned and accessible multi-modal paths increases the opportunity for recreational and functional non-motorized activity.
- On-street bike lanes provide safer and more accessible options for cycling, many of which are used by commuters.
- Park and ride lots and carpooling programs provide opportunities to reduce vehicle miles traveled along specific corridors.

Modes:

- Passenger rail between Madison, Eau Claire, and the Twin Cities would allow for a greater opportunity to travel outside of the region without a personal automobile.
- Increased freight rail opportunities would reduce the dependence on individual truck traffic, which uses more energy.

Intergovernmental Cooperation:

- Intercommunity transit options provide transit services for individuals that would like to travel to and from a variety of communities.



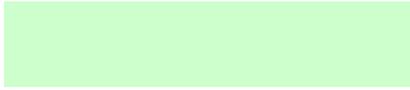
6. Encourage planning for bicycle and pedestrian facilities for every county, with state and regional coordination, and regional consistency in construction, use, and maintenance. *[WCWRPC, County park departments, County highway departments, Trail advocacy groups, Local public works departments - Medium Range]*

Rail

7. Upgrade rails to continuous-weld trackage to better serve both freight and passenger rail. *[WisDOT, Federal Rail Administration, Rail owners and operators - Medium Range]*
8. Coordinate regional efforts to support passenger service connecting west central Wisconsin to the Twin Cities and southeastward to Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago. *[Momentum West, West Central Wisconsin I-94 Corridor Coalition, West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition, WCWRPC, WisDOT - Short Range]*

Multi-modal

9. Encourage the establishment of a sustainable local funding source for safety enhancements. *[County highway commissioners and safety committees, Local traffic engineers, Law enforcement agencies, WCWRPC, WisDOT – Medium Range]*
10. Encourage the development of transportation safety improvement plans by all jurisdictions. *[WCWRPC, WisDOT, County safety committees, County highway departments, Law enforcement agencies – Medium Range]*
11. Designate routes of regional priority (rail, bicycle, freight, etc.), which serve a regional role or contribute to regional network. *[WCWRPC, County highway commissioners, Trail advocates, Wisconsin West Rail Transit Authority, West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition, WisDOT – Short Range]*
12. Examine alternative revenue sources dedicated to transportation (i.e. St. Croix Co. has wheel tax). *[WisDOT, WCWRPC, Regional transportation funding task force – Medium Range]*
13. Determine locations for multi-modal transfer sites within the Region (e.g. bicycle, pedestrian, rail, auto, transit). *[WCWRPC, Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO, WCWRC, WCWI94CC, ECT, County highway commissioners – Medium Range]*
14. Encourage and support establishment of sustainable revenue streams for all vehicle types. *[WisDOT, WCWRPC, Regional transportation funding task force – Medium Range]*
15. Promote planning techniques and accepted management tools to maintain the Region’s existing transportation infrastructure. *[WisDOT, Funding agencies, Infrastructure owners - Ongoing]*
16. Encourage regional coordination of transportation improvement plans. *[WCWRPC, County planning offices and highway commissioners - Ongoing]*
17. Address regional character in state transportation plans; seeking input on, and recognizing unique regional needs and preferences. *[WisDOT - Ongoing]*
18. Include airport, rail, and transit representation on transportation planning technical groups. *[WCWRPC, MPO - Ongoing]*
19. Work with economic development agencies on employment-related transportation issues. *[Economic development organizations, County transportation coordinating committees, WCWRPC – Ongoing]*
20. Ensure consideration of all transportation modes in development review processes and ordinances. *[Local planners/zoning administrators, WCWRPC - Ongoing]*
21. Develop and/or provide education materials and services to local planning officials through outreach to pertinent associations (Towns Association, Counties Association, etc.). *[WCWRPC - Ongoing]*



VI. UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Holcombe Town Hall

Utilities and community facilities provide the foundation on which communities and a region are built and maintained. Utilities may include sanitary sewer, storm water, and water systems as well as electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, and solid waste disposal. Community facilities can vary greatly by community, but typically include parks, schools, libraries, cemeteries, and various health and safety providers (e.g., police, fire, ambulance, hospitals). Special services deemed to be vital to a community may also be included as a community facility.

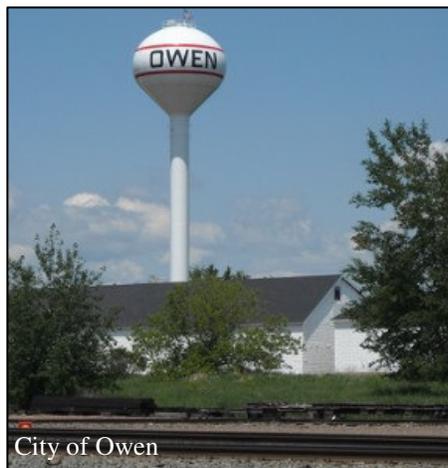
Utilities and community facilities can be used to guide growth, encourage development, or help establish community identity. Combined with

roads, the construction, maintenance, and operation of public utilities and community facilities often constitute the largest proportion of a community's budget. The location of community facilities is important when implementing land-use patterns that promote more sustainable development patterns, healthy communities, and communities that are walkable. Many of these facilities are integral parts of a community and locating them in areas that are easily accessible and walkable reduces the need to drive a vehicle and increases the number of people that have access to the facility.



Community facilities in Dallas

Regionally, the population is growing. There are increasing demands for services, while Federal and State mandates make it difficult to do more and meet all resident demands and government requirements with less funding.



City of Owen

For this reason, more partnerships between communities are expected. These partnerships would allow communities to work together for shared services and mutual aid, which is often driven by potential cost savings, through other factors such as natural resource limitations (e.g., water quality), growth patterns, and providing linkages (e.g., recreational trails). Discussion of intergovernmental cooperation opportunities should be considered for determining long-term solutions to the growing demand for community facilities and utilities.

A. Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- Groundwater quantity is a concern for some areas along Highway 29 while groundwater quality problems have arisen in western parts of our region.
- Increasing stormwater management requirements in recent years.
- Broadband and fiber optic service gaps.
- Strong educational offerings, but fiscal challenges for many local schools at all levels.
- Many aging governmental structures need maintenance, expansion, or replacement.

Assisted Living Facilities and Growing Demand

County	# of facilities (2008)	# of beds (2008)	nursing home occupancy rate (2005)	est. # of residents (2030)
Barron	34	797	89.6	1,440
Chippewa	69	978	76.1	1,552
Clark	27	597	90.7	764
Dunn	31	522	83.9	1,076
Eau Claire	79	1,533	90.8	2,920
Polk	22	616	89.6	1,269
St. Croix	43	893	86.7	2,498
Total	305	5,936	86.8 avg	11,531

source: Wis. Dept. of Health Services, 2009

Water Use by County (millions of gallons)

County	1979 Water Use	2005 Water Use	Primary Increases Due To:
Barron	9.6	19.4	irrigation & industrial
Chippewa	8.7	15.4	irrigation & industrial
Clark	5.4	6.1	livestock & public use; industry in some locations
Dunn	7.7	31.9	irrigation & some industry
Eau Claire	16.7	18.8	irrigation & domestic
Polk	5.4	10.9	domestic, aquaculture, & public use
St. Croix	6.2	15.8	domestic, industrial, & irrigation
Total	59.7	118.3	+98.2%

source: Wis. Dept. of Natural Resources

Top 3 Issues

- Budget limitations for local governments are making it increasingly difficult to provide needed or mandated services.
- With our aging population, there will be increasing demand for assisted living facilities, nursing home beds, and other related services.
- Opportunities exist for the sharing of resources between communities.

Implications

- It is becoming increasingly important that communities and local services providers consider all alternatives and cooperative opportunities to provide needed services. Partnerships are crucial given that many critical community services are provided by private sector or non-profit entities.
- Increasing growth will result in increasing demand for services, though studies show that the tax base gained from growth is not always sufficient to cover the needed community services.
- The expectation levels of new residents may be different than those of an existing community, resulting in local conflict or differing demands for facilities and services.
- The effectiveness of many services can be improved through regional analysis and multi-jurisdictional approaches, such as emergency management planning, trail planning, and shared public infrastructure.

B. Special Subsections

B.1. Review of Existing Facilities

Community facilities in the Region are extensive. Numerous local and regional utilities and community facilities exist within the Region. These utilities and facilities (e.g., health care, emergency services, recycling facilities, telecommunications, electric utilities, child care, libraries, parks, and schools) are listed and discussed in the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin* and the *Utilities and Community Facilities Working Paper*.

Due to many areas of our Region being rural in nature, many communities in the Region have limited community facilities, often times only a town hall and/or town garage. A majority of the Region's rural population travel from their home community to other communities to utilize needed community facilities, such as schools and libraries. In addition, many residents in small villages and cities travel to larger incorporated communities to utilize their facilities.

B.2. Assessment of Future Needs

Many utilities and community facilities in the Region will need to be improved and/or replaced in the near future. This is a result of many aging facilities, new and expanding technology that can upgrade construction, and a focus on more sustainable design. During the planning process a significant number of types of community facilities were highlighted as needing to be addressed. An example of this is an increasing need for elderly homes due to the aging population of the Region. Opportunities for a greater regional approach for various facilities (e.g., the linking of recreational trails) are addressed in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Element of this plan.

C. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1:

The utilities and community facilities of our Region will be provided in a sustainable manner which protects our natural environment.

Objectives:

1. The conservation of our waters, air, prime farmlands, and other natural resources will be a priority in the planning, maintenance, and operation of our utilities.
2. Maintain efficient, sustainable waste management, waste disposal sites, and solid waste practices in our Region with a strong emphasis on reduction, reuse, recycling, and the proper disposal of hazardous materials.

Goal 2:

Our utilities and community facilities will continue to ensure that our Region is a safe, healthy, and desirable place to live for our residents and supportive of our shared economic goals.

Objectives:

1. Community facilities and public spaces should be sited, designed, and maintained in a social-friendly, people-oriented manner which reflects and enhances a community's character, identity, and sense of place.
2. Our Region's excellent educational, health and social services, and emergency services systems will meet the growing and changing needs of our residents.
3. The recreational facilities of our Region will be coordinated and enhanced in a synergistic manner which reflects changing community needs and captures opportunities for connectivity and partnering.

4. Our Region will be well served with state-of-the-art electrical, technological, and communication infrastructure necessary to sustain a diverse economy and to support our communities, schools, emergency responders, services, and residents.

Goal 3:

Utilities, community facilities, and related services will be provided in an effective, cost-efficient, and coordinated manner.

Objectives:

1. Communities, governmental entities, and other stakeholders will work cooperatively to anticipate service demands and plan for future utility and community facility needs in a coordinated fashion.
2. Utilities and community facilities will be planned concurrently with land use development to ensure efficiency and avoid conflicts.
3. Cost savings, greater efficiencies, and related economic advantages will be achieved through partnerships and coordination between governmental bodies, private businesses, non-profit agencies, and other stakeholders.
4. Communities and governmental bodies in the Region will coordinate with school districts and local organizations to meet the educational and social needs of our youth.
5. Alternative funding sources will be explored for the maintenance and enhancement of our utilities and community facilities.

D. Strategies

General Utility and Community Facility

1. Work with the State to develop legislation and guidance to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation. *[WI Chapter of the American Planning Association, Wisconsin Towns Association, League of Wisconsin Municipalities – Long Range]*
2. Educate local governments on opportunities for coordinative solutions to utility needs. *[UWEX, WCWRPC, DNR – Ongoing]*
3. When development occurs, it should be done in a manner that allows for the most cost-effective and efficient provision of infrastructure and services by the municipality. *[Local governments – Ongoing]*
4. Encourage development of local capital improvement programs (CIPs). Create a CIP guide to help educate local governments on CIPs, alternative funding sources and impact fees. *[UWEX, WCWRPC – Short Range]*
5. Increase awareness among communities of available programs, alternatives, ideas, and standards to promote the preservation and revitalization of traditional downtown business districts as gathering places for arts, culture, events, entertainment, dining, specialty retail, etc. *[WI Dept. of Commerce, WCWRPC – Short Range]*
6. Involve youth in community activities and projects; look for positive intergenerational opportunities. *[All levels of government – Ongoing]*
7. Educate and encourage communities to preserve existing areas that have a sense-of-place, and incorporate sense-of-place discussion and design techniques for new development and redevelopment projects. *[Community members, Local historic and cultural organizations, WCWRPC, UWEX – Short Range]*
8. Perform cost of community services studies that also reveal land economics externalities generally not considered when making development management decisions. Evaluate unsustainable development patterns to reveal their true costs to society. *[UWEX/CLUE, WCWRPC – Medium Range]*

9. Promote public-private partnerships and volunteerism for the improvement of community facilities, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and community attachment. *[Local communities, Neighborhood and civic groups – Ongoing]*
10. Broaden local government knowledge of official mapping as a means of preserving rights-of-way for future roads, parks, utilities, and public infrastructure. *[WCWRPC, County planning offices – Short Range]*

Water/Wastewater

11. Continue development and maintenance of sewer service area plans. *[local governments, MPO, counties, WCWRPC, DNR – Ongoing]*
12. Encourage wellhead protection ordinances, based on sound engineering practices. *[DNR – Ongoing]*
13. Establish baseline data on water quantity and educate local officials and the public on related issues. *[DNR, UWEX, USDA-NRCS, Universities – Short Range]*
14. Identify regions or areas with critical water quantity issues and apply appropriate best management practices. *[DNR, UWEX, USDA-NRCS, Universities – Short Range]*
15. Institute an educational program on sewer service area planning to keep the program visible at all times. *[WCWRPC, DNR, Counties – Medium Range]*

16. Encourage water/sewer planning for large subdivisions in rural areas, which considers the potential for future connections, densification, and common on-site wastewater treatment facilities. Develop alternatives and models for large rural developments. *[Counties, Local governments, DNR, USDA-NRCS, UWEX, WCWRPC – Short Range]*

Stormwater Management

17. Keep local communities abreast of changing stormwater management planning requirements and encourage communities to prepare management plans. *[DNR, Counties, WCWRPC – Ongoing]*
18. Encourage stormwater utilities where appropriate, and track their formation. *[WCWRPC, DNR – Ongoing]*
19. Implement pertinent strategies appearing in Natural Resources element. *[see Natural Resources strategies]*

Solid Waste and Recycling

20. Promote continuation and strengthening of recycling and ‘Clean Sweep’ programs throughout the Region. *[UWEX, Counties, Local governments, Non-profits, Community groups, DNR – Ongoing]*

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTIONS

Energy Use:

- Renewable energy options reduce building and transportation energy costs.
- District heating offers one of the most efficient heating options for a community and would allow a community to use more localized energy stock.

Infrastructure:

- The construction of multi-modal paths and bike lanes allow greater opportunities for recreational and functional non-motorized transportation.
- New industry advancements and intergovernmental cooperation in water/wastewater/stormwater technologies can lead to a reduction in energy, improving the condition of the natural environment, and reducing water consumption.

Location:

- Downtowns offer the best location for community facilities that are for the public (e.g., libraries, civic centers, transportation centers). Downtowns allow for better accessibility for a variety of modes of transportation.

Planning:

- Various State and Federal programs (e.g., Safe Routes to School, WI Energy Independent Communities, Eco-communities) help communities reduce energy costs and energy use.

21. Encourage establishment of municipal and county composting programs for food and yard waste. *[Counties, Local governments, UWEX, Non-profits, Community groups – Medium Range]*
22. Encourage multi-jurisdictional coordination to discuss and address solid waste management in the Region, promote regional waste reduction strategies, and ensure adequate long-term capacity of sites for waste disposal. *[WCWRPC, DNR, Counties, Local governments, Waste management companies – Long Range]*

Communication and Power Distribution

23. Increase coordination between governmental entities and utility providers during planning and project review efforts. *[Local governments, Counties, Utility providers – Ongoing]*
24. Encourage official mapping to preserve transportation and utility corridors to meet future infrastructure needs and to avoid use conflicts and prevent unneeded expenses. *[Local governments, Counties, Utility providers, WCWRPC – Short Range]*
25. Provide local governments with tools and ideas regarding siting, co-location, and related alternatives for communication towers. *[Counties, WCWRPC, Public Service Commission, Tower owners – Short Range]*
26. Public- and private-sectors in the Region should work cooperatively to consider the regional and community implications of federal “smart grid” efforts; discuss community preparedness for implementation opportunities. *[Electric providers, Public Service Commission, Local governments, Potential key users – Varies depending on Federal action]*
27. Encourage regional and local discussion and planning for telecommunications, broadband availability, network connectivity, and other related technologies. *[Community area networks, CINC, CESAs, Telecommunications providers, Local governments, Educational and health institutions – Ongoing]*
28. Increase collaboration between the public, non-profit, and private sectors to address gaps or weaknesses in telecommunication services while increasing speed and reliability. Such partnerships are crucial to identifying solutions which may not be affordable if approached individually. *[Community area networks, CINC, CESAs, Telecommunications providers, Local governments, Educational and health institutions, Potential key users – Ongoing]*
29. Coordinate the timing of road and street improvements with potential telecommunications infrastructure projects through inter-agency communication and involvement during public-sector capital improvements and transportation projects planning. *[WisDOT, County Highway Departments, Public works departments, Plan commissions, Eau Claire-Chippewa MPO, Telecommunications providers - Ongoing]*
30. Identify weaknesses within the Region’s telecommunication infrastructure which are barriers to regional and local economic development goals, and incorporate needed projects within the West Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and other such economic strategies. *[WCWRPC, Local governments, EDCs, Business and non-profit leaders – Ongoing and Medium Range]*
31. Advocate for the consideration of west central Wisconsin’s broadband and telecommunication issues and goals into local, State, and Federal programs, plans, policies, such as in local comprehensive plans and the Wisconsin Broadband Data and Development Plan. *[WCWRPC, CINC, Community area networks, EDCs, Post-secondary institutions – Ongoing]*

Potential Education

32. Maintain demographic data and mapping useful to school districts in school siting, consolidation, and other planning needs. *[Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs), School districts, DPI, WCWRPC – medium Range]*
33. Engage school districts, CESAs, and other educational institutions in the planning process. *[Counties, Local governments – Ongoing]*

34. Consider all transportation costs, and student health and safety, in the siting of new schools. *[Local governments, School districts, CESAs – Ongoing]*
35. Promote and assist in the development of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plans and their implementation. *[WCWRPC, School districts, Local governments, Safety personnel – Ongoing]*
36. Encourage coordination between educational institutions to foster the sharing of data and the pursuit of common goals. *[CESAs, educational institutions - Ongoing]*
37. Encourage the continued presence of strong post-secondary educational institutions in the Region. *[Educational institutions, State legislators – Ongoing]*

Parks and Recreation

38. Encourage county-based outdoor recreational and forest management planning which encompasses all municipalities and school districts in the Region. *[County and local parks entities, DNR, WCWRPC – Ongoing]*
39. Plan for the linkages between major trails to form a regionwide network of multi-use trails. *[WCWRPC, DNR, County and local parks entities, Community groups – Medium Range]*
40. Develop a regional parks and outdoor recreation framework plan which builds upon state, county, and municipal plans, links recreational resources, identifies potential service gaps, provides strategies for separating or balancing incompatible activities, and explores opportunities for multi-jurisdictional cooperation and cost sharing. *[WCWRPC, DNR, Various stakeholders – Medium Range]*
41. Take a robust approach to outdoor recreation planning in west central Wisconsin, which involves private-sector recreation providers, accommodates our changing demographics and aging population, considers the economic benefits, and reflects our land use patterns. *[County and local parks entities, WCWRPC, Private-sector providers – Ongoing]*
42. Increase public and local government knowledge of west central Wisconsin’s many recreational resources and related plans, so these assets can be reflected in planning, tourism, and marketing efforts. *[WCWRPC, DNR, Tourism organizations – Ongoing]*

Public Safety

43. Encourage regional-level emergency response, recovery, and interoperability communications planning and exercises, and promote the integration of SafeGrowth concepts into local comprehensive and hazard mitigation plans. *[Wisconsin Emergency Management, County emergency management, WI Office of Justice Assistance, WCWRPC – Ongoing]*
44. Promote formal mutual aid agreements between communities and agencies for public safety and response, including the provision of public works support and policies pertaining to billing rates, required training, and liabilities. *[County emergency management and highway departments, Local communities – Ongoing in most areas]*
45. Maintain county-level hazard mitigation plans and pursue grant funding for multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation and emergency preparedness projects, such as communication and warning systems, specialized mapping, flood mitigation, educational efforts, and sheltering. *[County emergency management, Local governments, WCWRPC, Wisconsin Emergency Management – Ongoing]*
46. Encourage partnerships between the private and public sectors for emergency preparedness to identify and protect essential resources while ensuring our businesses and organizations are prepared. *[County emergency management, WI Office of Justice Assistance, WCWRPC, Private sector, Disaster Ready Chippewa Valley – Ongoing]*

SAFE GROWTH CONCEPTS:

A new style of prevention theory, one in which safe places emerge less from outside experts implementing strategies to or for neighborhoods, and more from neighbors creatively planning with prevention experts, police, and security.

47. Develop and maintain maps of hazard risks and critical facilities in the Region for hazard mitigation, emergency response, and recovery planning. *[County GIS programs & Emergency management offices, WCWRPC – Short Range]*
48. Compile a regional evaluation of the high and significant hazard dams in west central Wisconsin with accompanying recommendations regarding communications, planning for hydraulic shadows, and flood control. *[WCWRPC, County emergency management, DNR, Dam owners – Long Range]*
49. Increase public knowledge of the risks and hazards facing our Region, and that while risks and service demands are increasing on our responders and emergency management officials, many funding sources are decreasing. Encourage local governments to incorporate such considerations into their planning efforts. *[County emergency management, Wisconsin Emergency Management, WCWRPC, Local communities – Ongoing]*
50. Encourage inter-state emergency response and law enforcement agreements between Wisconsin and Minnesota to ensure our residents and communities are receiving the fastest, most affordable services available. *[Governor’s Offices, Wisconsin Emergency Management, Local Emergency Planning Committees – Ongoing, but progress to date limited]*

Health and Human

51. Increase awareness of future residential care needs for the elderly (e.g., assisted living, memory care). *[WCWRPC, County Aging Units, Private health care providers/foundations – Short Range]*
52. Determine gaps in available medical services throughout the Region. *[Health care industry/foundations, Task force – Medium Range]*
53. Promote and include active living and healthy community concepts as part of community plans. *[Local governments, Private healthcare providers/foundations, Health agencies, School districts, Park and recreation departments – Short Range]*
54. Form collaborative coalitions, including governmental departments, private healthcare providers, non-profits, etc., to address health issues, such as access to health services and insurance, alcohol abuse, overweight/obesity/lack of physical activity, limited options for mental healthcare and others that can be addressed at a community level, as appropriate. *[Private healthcare providers, Municipal/county health and park depts., Non-profits, Foundations – Medium Range]*
55. Establish linkages to human service networks to foster the sharing of data and the pursuit of common goals. *[County human service departments, ADRCs, managed care providers – Short Range]*

VII. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

For over a century, agriculture has been a significant land use and vital to local and regional economies. This agriculture ranges from small family farms to large corporations. Geography does not permit large row-crop operations throughout the Region, as often seen in the flatter portions of the Midwest. This geography plays a role in the wide range of types of agriculture in the Region. Clark County is always one of the top two counties in the State for milk production, while Barron County leads the State in turkey production. In addition to the limited row-crop operations and more common agricultural operations in the Region, like dairy and turkeys, small and/or locally focused direct-market farm operations (e.g., fruit orchards, bison and goat farms, Community Supported Agriculture) are becoming more common throughout the Region. The sum of these farming operations helps create the rural character that is often found in rural agricultural areas. The Plan's vision statement illustrates the importance of preserving the existing rural character and agricultural resources.



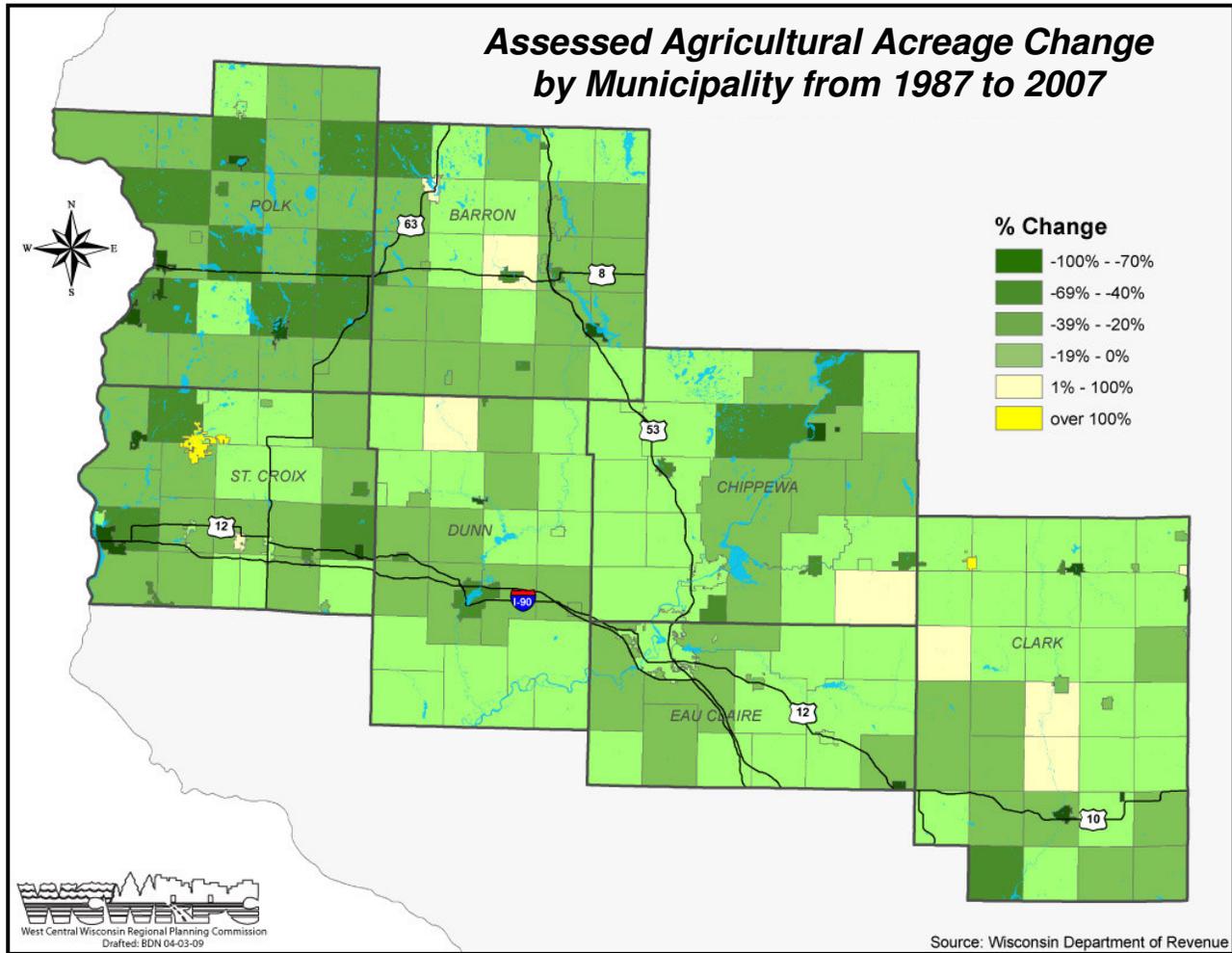
Typical rural landscape in the Region

In addition to the issues in Section II.D and the conditions, trends, and issues, listed below, an additional tool for determining importance of agriculture should be noted. During the community and county planning processes portion of the West Central Wisconsin Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Effort, community surveys were distributed to many of the communities and two of the counties. The results of the surveys emphasized the desire by respondents for preserving farmland and having high water quality in groundwater, lakes, rivers, and streams. These issues had the highest “essential or important” to preserve score in the survey and should be addressed when any new policy and/or development is in question. Due to the connection between agricultural and natural resources, the policies in this section also play a significant role in how natural resources are preserved and improved.

The premise behind the agricultural industry is to produce food for people to consume and, more recently, to produce energy feedstock. This concept is often lost during comprehensive planning processes where most plans promote the preservation of farmland in a general sense and do not indicate what is needed from the land to better the community or Region. It is also lost in the current environment of monoculture farming where farms produce primarily one crop, usually either corn or soybeans, as corn and soybeans are now a staple ingredient in most products found in grocery stores. This type of production is intensive in both energy and pollution. These crops travel hundreds, if not thousands of miles before they are used for their intended purposes and often require farming techniques and products that are harmful to the natural environment and use abundant amounts of energy.

Local, State, and Federal agricultural/farm policies impact the agricultural resources of the Region. Policies can influence size, productivity, and ownership of farms, and at the same time they can impact the

profitability of certain crops and/or unintentionally impact the feasibility of other crops. One of the most prevalent examples of this in the Region are policies that impact the dairy industry, as policies have been a catalyst to the enormous decline of family dairy farms in the Region. Policies that promote family farms and farms that produce food (e.g., produce, meat, and honey) and/or energy for the local/regional population improve the economic vitality of rural areas and small communities, improve the environmental condition of our natural resources, and reduce the Region's impact on the environment.

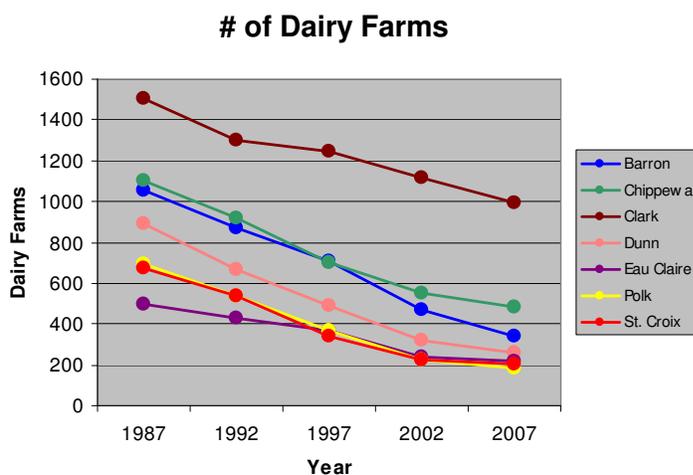
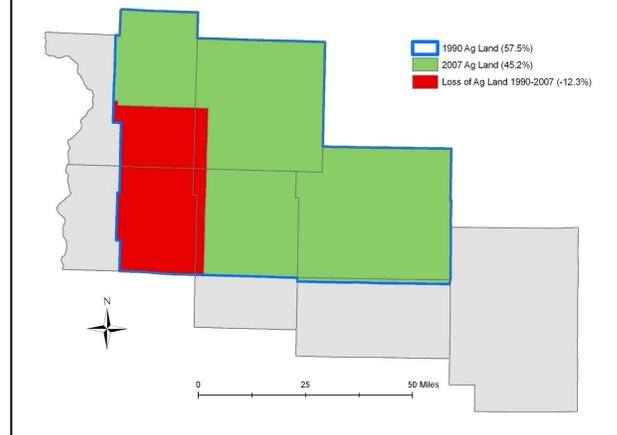


A. Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- From 1990 to 2007, the region lost 500,000 acres (780 square miles) of assessed farmland. This is 1/8 of the total size of the region.
- Total market value of agricultural products sold increased, in constant dollars, \$287 million from 2002 to 2007.
- Between 1987 and 2007, the region lost 58% of its dairy farms, 37% of its milk cows, and regional milk production dropped 18%.
- The region is experiencing a large increase in organic farms and direct market farms.
- Farms that sell over \$500,000/yr. are significantly increasing their percentage of the total value sold in the region.

Agricultural Acreage Trends in West Central Wisconsin



Top 3 Issues

- Farmland is being taken out of production and converted to other uses.
- Increasing pesticide, herbicide, and fertilizer use in the region and related water quality impacts.
- Farming costs, fluctuating commodity prices, low revenues, and barriers to intergenerational transfer are making it increasingly difficult for many farms to stay in operation.

Implications

- Due to the rural nature of our region, farming and agri-business will continue to be vital to our economy and must remain strong for the region to prosper.
- A substantial amount of the loss of farmland is the result of land-use policies and economic decisions in the region. These trends will continue if attitudes do not change.
- There is increased interest in the region and Twin Cities for organic food, buying from local farmers, and renewable energy. Given the availability of suitable land in our region which is less expensive than land immediately surrounding the Twin Cities, west central Wisconsin has an opportunity to be a food and renewable energy feedstock supplier to the greater region.
- Changing farm types, sizes, and practices can have environmental impacts and result in land use conflicts, in addition to influencing the economy and character of our communities.

B. Special Subsections

Agricultural-related programs and policies applicable to the Region are identified within the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*.

C. Goal and Objectives

Goal:

Protect and support agriculture and the rural landscape of the Region while maintaining strong natural resource stewardship principles and practices.

Objectives:

1. Protect the right to farm and minimize the loss and fragmentation of farmland in rural areas.
2. Reduce the fragmentation of economically productive forest lands.
3. Encourage and promote farming and forestry operations to follow best management practices and maintain strong stewardship principles.
4. Support efforts which increase the viability and diversity of agriculture throughout the Region.
5. Promote and embrace regional food and energy production and consumption in the Region.
6. Explore opportunities to meet objectives that are mutually beneficial to agriculture, ecological systems and the environment.

D. Strategies

Right to Farm

1. Support the Working Lands Initiative, including:
 - Update County Farmland Preservation Plans – encourage intergovernmental cooperation for plan updates.
 - Create or update Farmland Preservation Zoning - support towns and counties in adopting and enforcing zoning that preserves farmland.
 - Support the creation of Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA) – encourage counties, towns and landowners to develop AEAs.
 - Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) – leverage funds from local, state, federal and private sources for PACE.

[WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DATCP - Ongoing]

2. Support “Right-to-Farm” laws and ensure that non-farm residents in farming areas are familiar with these laws and typical farming practices. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Short Range]
3. Encourage to have recorded with the deed, Certified Survey Map, or Plat for newly created residential lots within agricultural areas a deed restriction which states that the new lot created for residential purposes is in or near a pre-existing agricultural area where agricultural uses predominate and are favored by the community. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, County Land Conservation Depts., Local governments, DATCP - Medium Range]

Loss and Fragmentation of Farmland

4. Encourage/direct new development to areas of existing urban or residential development. [Counties, Local governments - Medium Range]

Loss and Fragmentation of Forest Land

5. Promote intergovernmental cooperation that reduces forest fragmentation. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
6. Promote private forest management for timber production and wildlife habitat. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]
7. Promote updating zoning ordinances to limit development and parcelization in forested areas. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
8. Maintain existing public forests and expand public forests in accordance with plans created with public input. [Counties, DNR - Medium Range]

Best Management Practices and Stewardship Principles

9. Promote intergovernmental cooperation that reduces the loss of agricultural land and forest fragmentation. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
10. Promote farming and forestry practices that incorporate current best management practices from Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA Forest Service and respective counties. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
11. Promote coordination with private groups, such as land trusts and private conservation organizations to inform agencies on best management practices and stewardship principles. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
12. Encourage and support educational resources regarding local large livestock regulation. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Short Range]

Viability and Diversity of Agriculture

13. Support efforts which increase the viability and diversity of agriculture throughout the Region. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, DATCP – Ongoing]
14. Encourage agricultural markets that include farm-to-table, direct market farms, organic farms, small family farms and farms for sales of local agricultural products and that produce non-traditional products and/or bio-energy feedstock. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DATCP - Medium Range]

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTIONS

Practices:

- Reducing fertilizer and pesticide improves groundwater and surface water quality, reduces intrusion into food, and reduces the creation of greenhouse gases.
- Various farming practices (e.g., no till, pasture-raised animals) reduce the releasing of greenhouse gases.
- Organic farms have minimal impacts on the environment and in many instances work in harmony with the natural environment.

Diversification:

- A diverse food producing agricultural industry in the region will reduce energy used for food transportation.
- Farmers markets and the promotion of regionally produced foods provide a venue for direct-market farmers.

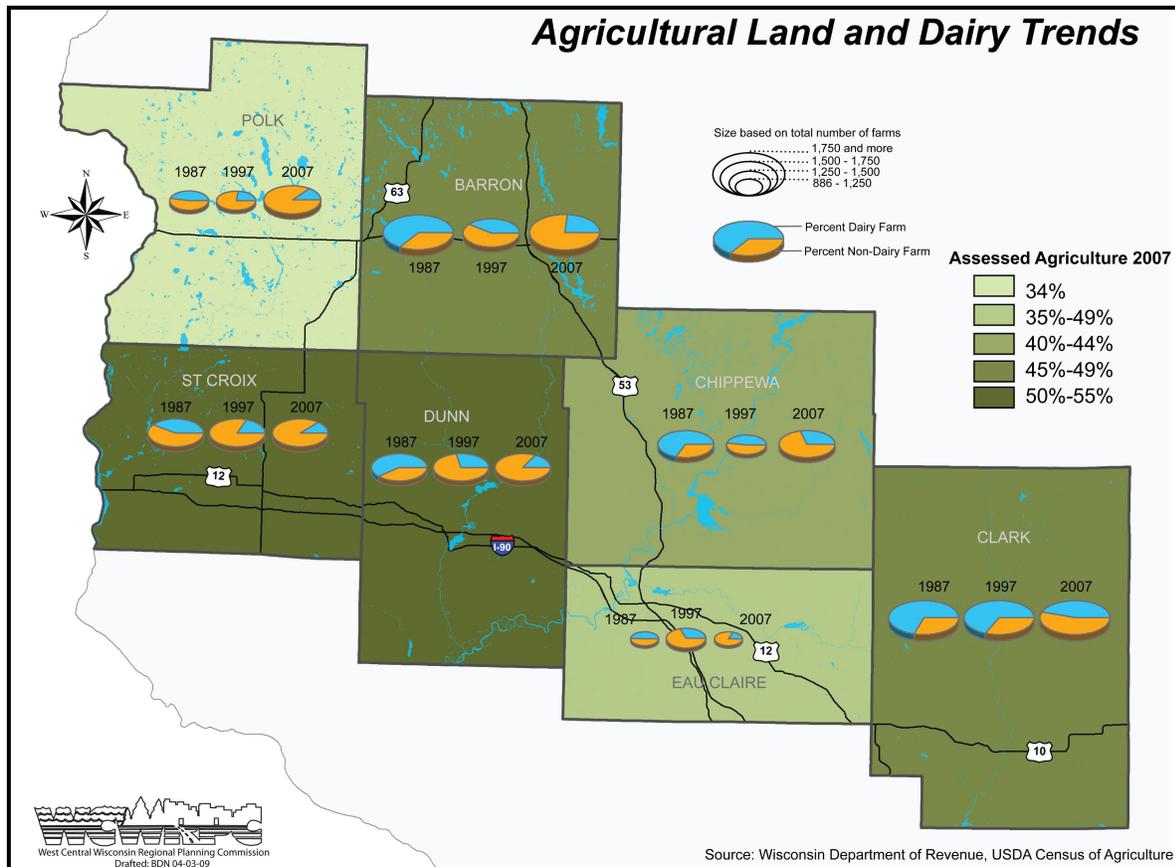
Technology:

- Existing (e.g., methane digesters) and future technology can reduce environmental impacts and provide more opportunities for regional food production and consumption.
- Existing technology allows farmers to grow crops that can be used for bio-energy. These crops can be used on-site or sold for off-site.

15. Support the maintenance and development of agricultural infrastructure and services that supply materials, equipment, and services to farms and that gets farm products to market. [WCWRPC, EDCs, DATCP, WI Commerce - Ongoing]
16. Support incentives and encourage knowledge sharing on the production and consumption of regional farm products. [WCWRPC, Counties, Local governments, DATCP, EDCs - Short Range]
17. Encourage flexible regulations and incentives that affect the farm economy and consider individual local conditions. [Counties, Local governments, DATCP, DNR - Short Range]
18. Support programs that foster intergeneration farm transfer and mentoring of new farmers. [UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DATCP - Medium Range]

Regional Food and Energy Production and Consumption

19. Explore alternative farming strategies such as off-season production of commodities, greenhouses, and vertical farming. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
20. Support the maintenance and enhancement of agricultural product processing infrastructure. [UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DATCP, WI Dept. of Commerce - Medium Range]
21. Develop guidance/rules for providing appropriate sites for bio-energy processing or production facilities. [UWEX, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
22. Elicit the cooperation of local agencies and enterprises to develop appropriate, low environmental impact, sustainable biofuel feedstock. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, EDCs, State agencies - Medium Range]
23. Support zoning and ordinances that allow for alternative forms of energy (solar, wind and biomass power, including distributed solar arrays, on farm wind systems and methane digesters) in agricultural areas. [Counties, Local governments - Immediate]



VIII. NATURAL RESOURCES

Unlike the other elements, natural resources were widely present prior to settlers and even indigenous populations. Healthy natural resources are paramount for a sustainable society. Some natural resources in the Region have experienced a significant reduction in quantity and quality. An example of this is limited ground water supply in some areas and contaminated groundwater and surface water supplies in other areas. In addition, for over a century natural resources, primarily trees, have played a significant economic role in many parts of the Region. The Region's vision statement recognizes the importance of preserving the rural character and natural resources.

Like the Agricultural Resources Element, in addition to the issues in Section II.D and listed conditions, trends, and issues, an additional tool for determining importance of natural resources should be noted. During the community and county planning processes portion of the West Central Wisconsin Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Effort, community surveys were distributed to many of the communities and two of the counties. These surveys emphasized the desire by respondents for preserving groundwater, lakes, rivers, and streams.



Typical lake scene in the northern portion of the region

These issues had the highest “essential or important” score in the survey and consistently scored over 90 percent. Due to the vision statement and high scores among all of the communities surveyed, these issues should be addressed when any new policy and/or development is in question. Other natural resource components like protecting forested lands, rural character, hunting and fishing, and wildlife habitat rated slightly below, but still had higher percentages of “essential or important” than other questions in the survey.

Natural resources play a significant role in day-to-day life, tourism, and recreation. The most important natural resources are air and water. Without

clean air and water, communities can struggle and are less environmentally and economically sustainable. Abundant clean water and air should be mainstay elements for all communities in the Region. One of the most prominent issues in the Region is the eutrophication on the Red Cedar River.

Combining rich natural resources with the Region's proximity to larger urban areas creates a scenario that makes parts of the Region a viable tourist destination. At the same time, citizens in the Region utilize the resources for outdoor recreational opportunities. A major segment of these recreational opportunities is hunting, which is also a significant cultural characteristic in the Region. In addition to hunting, natural resources allow for hiking, swimming, skiing, ice skating, fishing, and numerous other activities. These opportunities add to the quality-of-life in the Region.

Natural resources often cross administrative boundaries. In addition, changes to a natural resource in one location can have a range of impacts in a different location, in most cases an adjacent location. Intergovernmental coordination is extremely important in dealing with natural resources (e.g., link trail corridors, ground water pollution). If a community uses a natural resource for its own purpose, without regard for neighboring communities' needs, these natural resources are often depleted or reduced in quality for surrounding communities.

A. Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- In 2008, the region had over 780,000 acres of assessed farmland.
- The region is experiencing different trends of forestation. This includes increases and decreases of forested acres and the fragmentation of forested areas.
- Water consumption increased from 59.7 million gallons/day to 109.7 million gallons/day between 1979 and 2005.
- The region has 335 non-metallic mining sites.
- 68 different water bodies are impaired, much of this coming from sedimentation and agricultural run-off.



Estimated Forest Land

	2008 Forested Acres	2008 % of County
Barron County	135,883	23.1
Chippewa County	187,211	26.7
Clark County	264,048	28.8
Dunn County	124,382	21.7
Eau Claire County	132,898	28.4
Polk County	196,373	30.0
St. Croix County	63,072	13.0
West Central Wisconsin	1,103,867	25.2

Top 3 Issues

- Intergovernmental cooperation is essential for the effective protection of valued resources.
- Increased stormwater management is needed to prevent debris, pollutants, runoff, and sediment from entering surface waters.
- There is increasing need for shoreland and streambank protection.

Implications

- Due to the limited nature and sensitivity of the region's natural resources, these resources must be considered and addressed as part of planning and decision-making. Without consideration, these resources may be jeopardized.
- Water quality and quantity issues should be a top priority throughout the region and be addressed through intergovernmental cooperation. Without a change in current trends, ground and surface water conditions will continue to deteriorate.
- The amount of forest is increasing in some areas of the region, while decreasing in others. Yet, throughout the region, our woodlands are becoming increasingly fragmented which poses difficulties for effective timber harvesting, while decreasing habitat value for many species.
- Demand for non-metallic mineral resources is high, resulting in land use conflicts.
- The plethora of programs and regulations in place to protect our natural resources, as well as the threats to these resources, are always changing. It is challenging for local governments and residents to keep pace with such changes.

B. Special Subsections

Natural resources-related plans, programs, and policies applicable to the Region are identified within the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*.

C. Goal and Objectives

Goal:

Conserve the quantity and quality of the Region's natural resources.

Objectives:

1. Preserve the variety of natural communities in the appropriate ecological context.
2. Preserve and restore surface waters and wetlands.
3. Conserve groundwater quality and quantity.
4. Diseases, pathogens and parasites, contaminants, and invasive and exotic species with the potential to harm Wisconsin's flora or fauna or cause risk to human or domestic animal health are identified, monitored and managed.
5. Maintain and increase the opportunities for nature-based recreation.
6. Promote shoreland and streambank protection.
7. Consider the presence of non-metallic minerals, and their extraction with appropriate environmental protections, before development occurs on a site that may preclude their use.

ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES:

Ecological landscapes are areas that differ from each other in ecological attributes and management opportunities. They have unique combinations of physical and biological characteristics that make up the ecosystem, such as climate, geology, soils, water, or vegetation. They differ in levels of biological productivity, habitat suitability for wildlife, presence of rare species and natural communities, and in many other ways that affect land use and management.

The ecological landscapes of west central Wisconsin include Western Prairie, Western Coulee and Ridges, Central Sand Plains, Forest Transition, North Central Forest, Northwest Lowlands and Northwest Sands.

D. Strategies

Natural Communities and Ecological Context

1. Encourage analysis and planning based on ecological systems and context. Apply available inventory and research information in land use decision-making. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]
2. Create an ecological landscape clearinghouse, and maintain and update a database on location and character. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]
3. Create a network for information sharing between agencies and organizations, so planning can better occur in consideration of the ecological context, and there are improvements in getting information to practitioners and the public. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]
4. Inform and educate to influence land management decisions and promote conservation easements; native species and natural corridors; and wildlife conservation opportunity areas. Incorporate consideration of the ecological context into development regulations. Conduct a study to identify and characterize natural corridors in the Region. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Ongoing]
5. Produce a public information and education program to influence behavior, change attitudes, and work with property owners on development options to manage open land. This includes conservation design

development for rural areas, protecting high value habitat, sensitivity to natural communities, and creating opportunities for habitat protection. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Short Range]

6. Support and encourage conservation design subdivision development and other techniques that preserve open space, sensitive areas and natural corridors. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]

Surface Waters and Wetlands

7. Support and encourage agricultural and land use practices that limit nutrient or fertilizer applications to what is needed for plant growth, in accordance with USDA NRCS 590 standards. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DATCP, DNR, USDA - Medium Range]
8. Develop objective education programs to counter information from the fertilizer industry regarding surface water pollution, which is often in conflict with a variety of other data. [UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DATCP, DNR, Conservation NGOs- Medium Range]
9. Encourage stormwater management opportunities to upgrade old systems, including urban retrofit and new Best Management Practices (BMPs). [UWEX, Local governments, DNR - Ongoing]
10. Support and encourage agricultural and land use practices that maximize infiltration of clean runoff water and minimize soil erosion. [Counties, Local governments, DATCP, DNR, USDA, UWEX - Medium Range]
11. Encourage municipalities to develop stormwater management plans and facilities. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Ongoing]
12. Support sustainable green practices to reduce impervious surfaces. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]
13. Encourage construction site erosion control enforcement. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]
14. Promote and support water quality planning groups and activities like the Chippewa Valley Stormwater Forum, St. Croix Basin Water Resources Planning Team and the Western Wisconsin Groundwater Group. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]

Groundwater Quality and Quantity

15. Support and encourage urban and residential practices that conserve and infiltrate rain water, such as rain barrels, rain gardens, grassed swales, and pervious pavement. [UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Immediate]
16. Support local Clean Sweep programs and encourage the proper disposal of pharmaceuticals. [UWEX, Counties, Community groups, Non-profits, Local governments, DNR - Ongoing]
17. Promote proper well abandonment and wellhead protection. [UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Ongoing]
18. Groundwater capacity should be considered in decision making for uses or activities that place a high demand on public and private groundwater volumes. [Counties, Local governments, DNR - Short Range]

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTIONS

Bio-energy feedstock:

- Many indigenous and natural vegetation in the region can be used as fuel for bio-energy.
- The region's forestland and other natural vegetation help offset the region's releasing of green house gases.

Water:

- The reduction in chemicals and other pollutants (rural and urban) that enter the region's water supply improves the water quality of the region.

19. Encourage development of a regional database of groundwater resource mapping, such as aquifer recharge areas, pollutant attenuation, and groundwater capacity. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Short Range]
20. Encourage agricultural operations and practices that reduce the amount of pollutants in groundwater. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DATCP, DNR - Short Range]

Identify, Monitor and Manage Wild and Domestic Flora and Fauna Threats.

21. Continue a strong program of fish and wildlife disease monitoring, including surveillance of significant species to detect introduction of new diseases, changes in disease patterns, and significant impacts on fish or wildlife populations. [DNR - Ongoing]
22. Plan and develop necessary systems and staff training programs to be ready to respond to wildlife/plant disease and invasive emergencies. Foster education programs through cross-discipline, inter-agency, intergovernmental, interest group, and public cooperation. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR, USFWS - Medium Range]
23. Collaborate to monitor wildlife populations for diseases of importance to human and domestic animal health. [DNR, DATCP, DHS - Medium Range]
24. Monitor and investigate known and emerging environmental contaminant risks in wildlife. Participate in planning processes that focus on individual property and the ecosystem as needed to manage these risks. [UWEX, DNR - Medium Range]
25. Work with state and federal agencies and industries to manage disease risks such as Chronic Wasting Disease, game farms, feral pigs, and pseudo rabies. [DNR, DATCP, DHS - Medium Range]

Nature-Based Recreation

26. Promote urban greenspace. Examples include ordinances and education training. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Local governments, DNR - Short Range]
27. Encourage economic development for nature-based recreation and promotion of compatible recreation that provides local economic opportunities. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, EDCs, Dept. of Commerce - Medium Range]
28. The Region's local governments should work cooperatively to identify routes appropriate for the potential development of linked recreational trails. [WCWRPC, DNR, County and local parks entities, Community groups – Medium Range]
29. Preserve hunting access to traditional lands while addressing safety and conflicts. [Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]
30. Residences should be discouraged within 100 yards of traditional hunting areas to the maximum extent as is practicable (Parallels the s. 941.20(1)(d), Wisconsin Statutes standard). [Counties, Local governments, DNR - Immediate]
31. Promote education about the Region's ecological landscapes and the recreational opportunities they provide. [UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]

Shoreland and Streambank Protection

32. Promote effective shoreland buffers, setbacks and other practices that: reduce water runoff; contribute less fertilizer, soil and chemicals into lakes and rivers; maintain or propagate native plants and trees and provide critical habitat; help clean pollutants from water runoff; and, create more natural landscaping that better cleans runoff and provides habitat. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, DATCP, DNR, USDA - Medium Range]

33. Support and help implement the new shoreland protection rules in NR 115, Wisconsin Administrative Code. *[WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]*
34. Assist state and local agencies and interest groups in the development of a consistent navigable waters definition. *[WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR, Conservation NGOs - Medium Range]*
35. Provide protection for smaller unnavigable waters, including consideration of public ownership of headwaters. *[Counties, Local governments, DNR - Short Range]*
36. Promote incentives for shoreland or streambank restoration, such as allowing flexibility in structure rehabilitation or upgrading for providing additional protections. *[Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]*
37. Develop alternative and/or additional incentives to agricultural cost-sharing requirements for water protection measures. *[DNR, DATCP - Medium Range]*
38. Develop and disseminate information and education on the issues, impacts and solutions related to shoreland and streambank protection. *[WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR, DATCP - Immediate]*
39. Promote community participation in the Community Rating System for floodplain management. *[Counties, Local governments, DNR, FEMA - Medium Range]*

Non-Metallic Mining

40. Promote non-structural uses, such as farming and forestry, on lands overlaying non-metallic mineral deposits until extraction occurs. *[WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Immediate]*
41. Conduct a regional analysis to determine potential and appropriate places for extraction and processing. Such analysis should include determining how much of the resource is and will be extracted in the Region, how much is and will be used in the Region, and how much is and will be exported from the Region. This would include:
 - high-quality non-metallic resources and demand
 - population density
 - water resources
 - transportation routes
 - likely processing sites*[WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]*
42. Develop and disseminate information and education on the issues, impacts and solutions related to non-metallic mining and processing. *[WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]*
43. Decisions for the siting and operation of non-metallic mineral mines and processing should be made on objective information and overall public interest. *[Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]*
44. Develop models of regulations and fees for siting, operation, reclamation and mitigation of negative impacts. *[Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]*
45. Conduct additional studies on noise, traffic, real estate value, air quality and groundwater impacts from non-metallic mineral extraction and processing. *[WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local governments, DNR - Medium Range]*

IX. CULTURAL RESOURCES

In many plans, cultural resources are combined in the same element with agricultural and natural resources, relegating the topic to a lesser priority. In addition, the discussion of cultural resources is typically given less significance, since it is perceived as not being as concrete as elements like housing and transportation. To ensure that it has equal representation, the Cultural Resources Element is an individual chapter in this plan. This element is important in that it nurtures a sense-of-place, provides an important context for planning, and fosters civic pride, all of which are vital to creating a vibrant and unique region.

Cultural resources are located throughout the Region. They can include museums, festivals, theatres, historical buildings, and sites. It is common that larger communities have more cultural resources and smaller communities have fewer, based on population and the financial resources of the specific community. Many of the smaller communities in the Region have varying festivals and historical buildings. Larger communities in the Region often have theaters, museums, symphonies, etc. Communities that have a university have additional cultural resources, which is evident in Eau Claire, Menomonie, and River Falls.

In regards to sense-of-place, many areas in the Region have uniquely identifying elements that create a sense-of-place. A significant portion of these areas have a historical identity, which can be attributed to a past economic activity, a downtown area, a dominant agriculture endeavor, historical event, or an immigrant group that settled and spread their culture. Both urban and rural areas can have a sense-of-place. In urban areas (cities and villages), this could include main streets, downtowns, specific architecture, public spaces, and significant businesses in the city. For rural areas (most unincorporated areas), the sense-of-place is often attributed to the rural attributes of the area, which can include both agricultural and/or natural resources. This can include quiet and star-filled night skies, dairy herds along rural roads, agricultural buildings dotting the landscape, or lakes and forests full of wildlife.

Most areas that lack a sense-of-place are traditionally suburban areas that have large contiguous tracts of one specific land-use, often high-growth areas. Frequently, these areas are dominated by larger than average residential lots or commercial areas with large parking areas where cars become more important than people. Unlike the above mentioned examples of areas that have a sense-of-place, whether it is a historic downtown corner or the vast natural landscape in a rural area, these areas are often dominated by a monotonous landscape of one similar looking land-use. In addition, most of these areas do not offer accessible connections from residential to commercial areas and lack infrastructure that encourages walking, biking, and social interaction. Private automobiles dominate transportation choices, social interaction often is difficult, and cultural experiences are severely limited.



Somali restaurant and grocery store in Barron

For the purpose of this plan, the varying cultures in the Region are also considered a cultural resource. Even though the overall population of the Region is still overwhelmingly White, different White ethnic groups settled in the Region (e.g., German, Norwegian, Amish). These groups, along with American Indians, Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks are prevalent in the Region. Recently, the Region has experienced an increase in Hispanics and

Blacks in specific communities. This discussion can be found in the Population Working Paper. A major, broad goal in creating a healthy, working Region is eliminating social exclusion. This exclusion often happens with lower economic groups and can be intensified if these groups are minority and/or are immigrant groups that do not speak English and/or are unfamiliar with societal functions. It is anticipated that more communities will experience an influx of new population groups in the future.

A. Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- There are 53 historical societies and museums.
- Numerous cultural resources exist that are related to the arts and events.
- There are 127 locations on the National Register of Historic Places and 5,262 places and objects on the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory.
- The Twin Cities offers extensive cultural resources to residents in the region.
- As the region's population diversifies, new cultural resources will emerge.
- A sense of culture is experienced in established urban areas and rural areas. However, newly developed suburban areas



Top 3 Issues

- There is need for more education in order to preserve and revive the culture and history of our region.
- Many cultural events in the region struggle with funding and attendance.
- Development patterns of new growth often do not contribute to community identity or sense-of-place.

Implications

- The preservation of historic buildings and places receives limited attention or a low priority among many local governments, resulting in a lack of awareness of these resources. Non-profits often work to fill such gaps, but, like local governments, most also have limited financial resources.
- Even though the region is still very racially homogeneous, minority populations are emerging and growing in number. This diversifies the cultural resources of our region, which can increase economic development opportunities and attract new residents.
- Successful cooperation will be needed for funding and promotion in order to maintain the large number and variety of cultural events and opportunities in the region.
- New development which lacks a sense-of-place or community identity contributes to resident apathy and detachment, instead of encouraging belonging and involvement.



B. Special Subsections

Cultural resources-related programs within the Region are identified within the county conditions and trends reports and *Inventories of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*.

C. Goal and Objectives

Goal:

Culture and sense-of-place will continue to play a vital role in the evolution of our Region by respecting and preserving historical and current cultural resources, while recognizing that cultural resources and values are always changing.

Objectives:

1. Increase awareness and promote the development of cultural and historical organizations, events, services, and sites in the Region and the important roles they play in our communities and economy.
2. Expand the awareness of the different growing ethnic groups and cultures in the Region and address the related opportunities and challenges, and the interaction of these groups within the larger society.
3. Promote the rehabilitation or reuse of structures, sites, and districts of historical significance and community value.
4. Create a better understanding of our regional identity, including what makes our communities and landscapes unique or interesting and the importance of culture and sense-of-place to our quality of life.
5. A sense-of-place appropriate to the community should be sustained and nurtured by redevelopment, new development, and general community design.
6. Provide our communities with the tools to preserve their historical sites and foster community identity.

D. Strategies

1. Develop and maintain a regional inventory of cultural and historical organizations, places, events, and services. Disseminate the information for use as an educational, promotional, and economic development tool. *[Local historical and cultural organizations, Tourism organizations, Local governments, Economic development organizations, Schools, WCWRPC, Momentum West, WI Dept. of Tourism, State Historical Society – Ongoing]*
2. Through collaboration with historical preservation organizations, assess the status of our historical sites, structures, initiatives, and existing policies and formulate related recommendations. *[Local governments, Local historical & cultural organizations, State Historical Society, WCWRPC – Medium Range]*
3. Encourage the completion and/or update of historical and architectural resource surveys within the Region which are integrated into the Wisconsin Architecture & History Survey and promote the preservation and integrity of these sites. *[Local historical & cultural organizations, Local governments,, State Historical Society, WCWRPC – Long Range]*

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTIONS

Design:

- Land-use designs and patterns which foster an identity and sense-of-place often are relatively compact and are centered around downtowns. These patterns reduce energy use and make a community more sustainable.

Activities:

- A vibrant cultural environment allows people to take part in activities without having to travel outside of their community, which reduces energy costs.
- Locating cultural events downtown increases accessibility and reduces energy use.

4. Encourage the development of and collaboration between cultural organizations within the Region, including historic commissions, and the State Historical Society. Assist these organizations in accessing resources at the state and national levels and promote their coordination with local planning, educational, and economic development efforts. *[Local historic and cultural organizations, State Historical Society, K-12 schools, Economic development organizations, Counties, Local governments,, WCWRPC – Ongoing]*
5. Provide local governments with the tools, resources, and related benefits of preserving the character of historic residential areas and encouraging land use designs and patterns which foster an identity and sense-of-place. *[Local governments, Counties, Local historic and cultural organizations, State Historical Society, WCWRPC – Short Range]*
6. Increase awareness among communities of available programs, alternatives, ideas, and standards to promote the preservation and revitalization of traditional downtown business districts. *[WI Dept. of Commerce, WCWRPC, Main street organizations, Business development districts, Neighborhood organization, Economic development organizations – Short Range]*
7. Encourage communities to integrate signage, recognition programs, locally designated landmarks, etc., into public improvement and outdoor recreational strategies to increase the visibility and public knowledge of our Region’s history and diverse cultural resources. *[Local governments, Main street organizations, Recreation organizations, Local historic and cultural organizations, WI Dept. of Commerce, WI Dept. of Tourism, DNR – Medium Range]*
8. Develop a cultural resources toolkit that can help communities understand the broad range of cultural resources and the role these resources play in the evolution of their community and desirability to live in their community. *[Local governments,, Local historic and cultural organizations, Non-profits, WI Dept. of Social Services, WI Dept. of Commerce, State Historical Society, WCWRPC – Medium Range]*
9. Educate and encourage communities to preserve existing areas that have a sense-of-place, and incorporate sense-of-place discussion and design techniques for new development and redevelopment projects. *[Local governments,, Local historic and cultural organizations, WCWRPC, UWEX – Ongoing]*
10. Investigate collaborative ventures and initiatives between communities to promote common characteristics, heritage or activities. *[Local historic and cultural organizations, Local governments, Counties, WI Dept. of Tourism – Ongoing]*
11. Identify different ethnic communities in the Region and ways to accept and embrace diversity with an overall goal of creating respect and appreciation for differences that exist.. *[Local historic and cultural organizations, Local governments, Non-profits – Medium Range]*
12. In an effort to improve social and economic opportunity for all residents, promote social literacy while respecting cultural backgrounds. *[Local governments, Schools, Local cultural organizations, WI Dept. of Social Services – Medium Range]*
13. Encourage the development and promotion of cultural events such as plays, musicals, concerts, gallery showings, and the opera throughout the Region. *[Local historical and cultural organizations, Newspapers and other publications, WI Dept. of Tourism, Economic development organizations, Arts organizations, Schools, other Non-profits – Ongoing]*

X. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is about working together to maintain a strong and sustainable economy that provides a good standard of living for individuals and a reliable tax base for communities and a region. Through planning, a region can anticipate economic change and guide development to the best of its abilities to achieve the economic vision and objectives for the Region. A region's economic development plan should reflect the values of the community and must be carefully linked to the goals, objectives, and strategies of the other Plan elements.

More than most other comprehensive plan elements, the local economy and economic development are influenced by regional, state, national, and global factors. The economy is a complex system, always in flux, often occurring in cycles or periods of growth, prosperity, and expansion followed by periods of decline, contraction, or recession. There is no reliable methodology to predicting such cycles, and some economists argue that these fluctuations are the result of "shocks" to the economy in terms of productivity or demand changes, and the use of the term "cycle" is a misnomer. Predicting the short-term and long-term economic future of the Region is difficult.



Determining the process by which a community and region can have a strong and sustainable economy is also challenging. There are currently a variety of different theories and practices that are being used around the globe to help create a competitive and long-lasting regional economy. Currently, much discussion revolves around creating industry clusters; promoting partnerships between the private sector, public sector, and education institutions (Triple Helix); knowledge being the key driver behind economic growth; focusing on new economies like renewable energy; promoting locally produced and consumed food and goods; and the importance of the quality-of-life. To promote economic opportunities for all citizens, the overall goal of any region is to have economic cohesion in all areas inside its borders, while at the same time, support economic hubs that can help prime economies in the surrounding areas. Sometimes, these economic hubs are located outside of the Region. Examples of this are the Twin Cities metropolitan area, River Falls, and Marshfield, all of which economically impact areas in the Region. In addition, there are less significant communities just outside the Region that provide some economic opportunities to smaller areas of the Region.



When looking at the regional economy, it has been determined that three things are paramount. First, innovation, knowledge, and partnerships are critical keys to the growth of existing businesses and the creation of jobs and wealth. Second, the redistribution of regional money in the regional economy can only improve the economic condition of the Region. Therefore, producing and consuming regionally produced goods and services are important. Third, in the ever expanding global economy, the Region needs to give significant focus to what it can do well. In a global economy where many regions are focusing on specific industries, to be successful, one needs to give special attention to what the Region can do best. We need to carefully consider what we do best and then work toward capitalizing on that asset.

The Region must find its place in a global economy, which will nonetheless enable it to uphold its own distinctive choices about the social model that it wants to retain. The Plan needs to focus on creating jobs that will only strengthen the desired future social conditions of the Region. These jobs need to pay a livable wage and exist throughout the Region. Without these jobs, social and economic disparity will increase and the number of communities that struggle for a sustainable economy and/or existence will increase.

In conclusion, innovative activity is not uniformly distributed across any geographic landscape. Even though many communities have tried to attract specific knowledge-intensive economic activity, these industries have had the tendency to become more tightly clustered in specific areas. Spatial concentration has not decreased over time. All stakeholders in the Region need to find a working and synergetic balance between the local, regional, and global economies. There needs to be an understanding of the balance



Industrial Park in St. Croix County

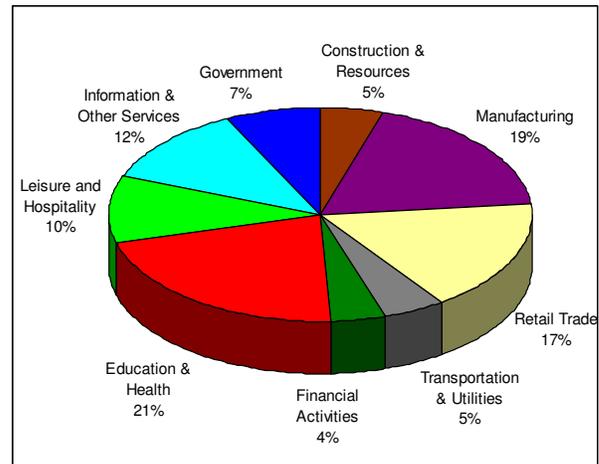
between the economic engines of large communities and smaller communities. Specifically in rural areas, any change on a local economic landscape could have dramatic changes to a variety of existing conditions. An example of this would include a large company locating in a small community. The new economic activity of this company would alter the economic activity of pre-existing companies in the impacted area, create an incentive for people to move closer to that new place of employment, and thus bring a host of other changes to the community and surrounding area. This model of looking how development impacts communities needs to be discussed more within the Region.

A. Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- Annual wages and income levels for our region remain below the State level, but are more comparable to non-metropolitan Wisconsin counties overall.
- The region has higher seasonal variability in unemployment than the State.
- Employment in health care is expected to grow at the quickest pace over the next 10 years, while manufacturing employment is expected to have little or no growth.
- Traveler expenditures increased nearly 53% between 1998 and 2007 in our region.

2006 Employment in our Workforce Development Area



source: Wis. Dept. of Workforce Development, 2008

Average Annual Wages, 2001 and 2007 (covered employees only)

County	2001	2007	Percent Change
Barron	\$25,514	\$27,608	+ 8.2%
Chippewa	\$27,315	\$29,901	+ 9.5%
Clark	\$23,690	\$27,533	+16.2%
Dunn	\$26,310	\$31,161	+18.4%
Eau Claire	\$27,842	\$32,484	+16.7%
Polk	\$24,564	\$28,320	+15.3%
St. Croix	\$26,763	\$31,184	+16.5%
Wisconsin	\$31,546	\$36,830	+16.8%

Top 3 Issues

- While our region has many higher education opportunities, fewer employment options for these graduates contributes to a “brain drain” and loss of a skilled workforce.
- More regional efforts are needed to analyze strengths, market our assets, and pursue opportunities to attract new industry, while reducing programmatic redundancies and harmful competition between communities and agencies.
- More efforts should be made to grow existing businesses.

Implications

- Our economy has steadily shifted toward the provision of services and retail, resulting in changes to per capita income, required workforce skills, infrastructure demands, and economic stability.
- Our labor force is expected to tighten considerably as the baby boomer generation retires. Likewise, our aging population will require goods and services, potentially opening the door to new economic opportunities.
- Our region is linked economically to the Twin Cities. The region’s location on the Interstate 94 corridor and proximity to the Twin Cities make it well positioned economically for the future.
- The region has a wealth of organizations involved in economic development and a strong educational system, though competition, lack of agreed-upon economic metrics, and economic variations within the region make effective cooperation more difficult at the regional level.

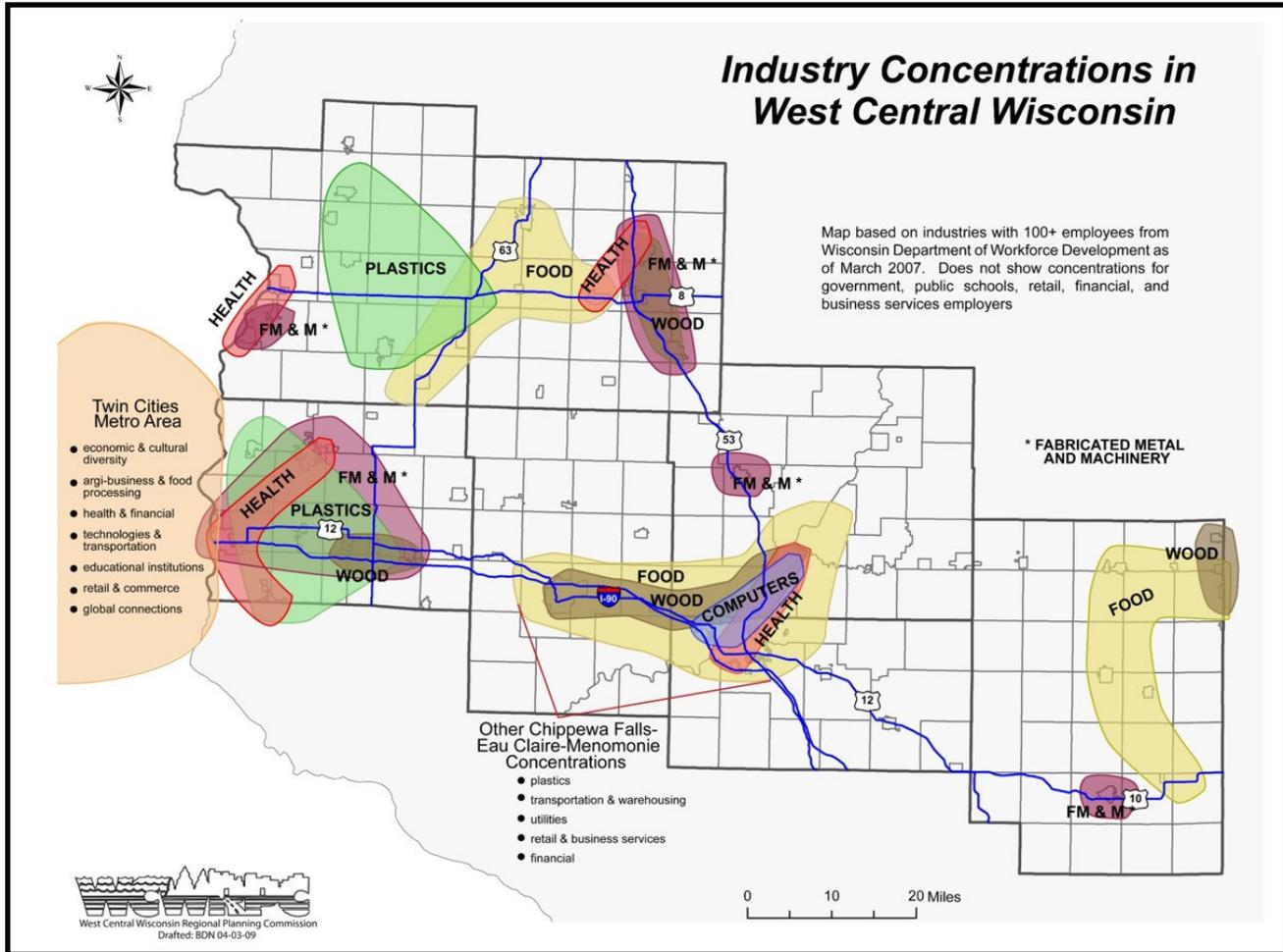
B. Special Subsections

B.1. Local Economic Development Plans and Programs

The Region has several local, county, regional, State, and Federal economic development programs identified in the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*.

B.2. New Businesses or Industry Desired

It is envisioned that the Region will continue to promote industries that are currently prosperous. These industries, minus agriculture, are often located in geographic “pockets”. The map below shows existing industry concentrations in the Region.



In the rural areas, the landscape and economic activity is to be primarily agricultural in nature, including forestry practices, with many residents continuing to commute to other areas in the Region for employment. Other commercial activities that occur within the rural areas are envisioned to be in-home businesses or local-serving businesses that complement agriculture, forestry, and the rural character of the specific community.

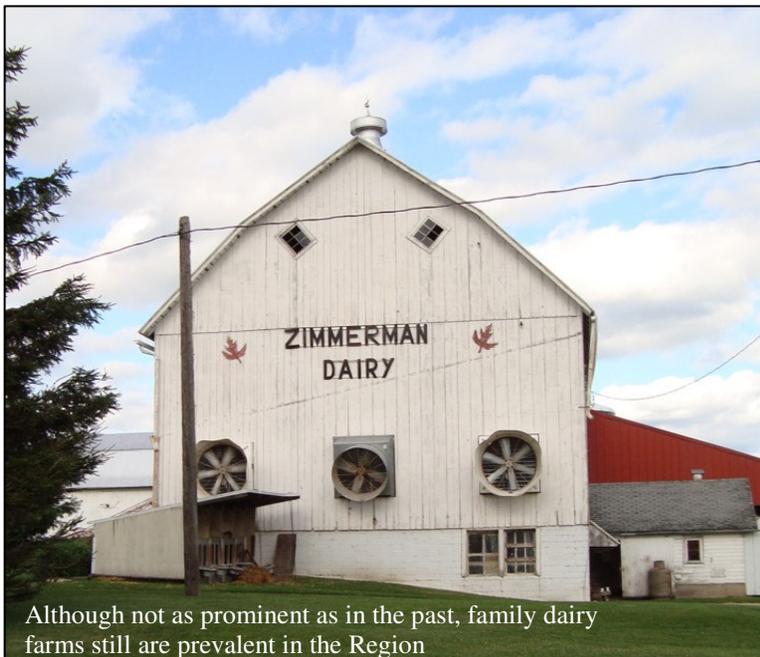
During the planning process, the following additional guidance on desired businesses and industry for west central Wisconsin were identified:

- The Region has a desire to promote businesses that utilize its strong natural resource base. This is evidenced by the educational opportunities offered through the universities and technical colleges, and the focus of the physical investments that have been made to promote this sector.

- As part of the Plan an emphasis has been placed on assisting with the start-up of new business ventures, and the growth of existing companies. This is in line with the economic gardening concept. While the area will continue to market itself as an attractive destination for businesses to relocate to, more emphasis will be placed on looking internally for job growth and investment.
- As the regional economy is shifting away from manufacturing, the development of innovative products and processes is essential. These products and processes are often high tech and some have links to alternative energy sources.
- While the Region needs to continue to look at defining itself in terms of what it does well, it must also remain diversified.
- One of the Region's strengths is the emphasis that is put on economic development at the local, county, and regional level. While it is true that better coordination could take place, the basic investment that has been made for a wide variety of organizations and programs is a great building block for success.
- There is a desire that more production and consumption of regional food and energy can create a more sustainable regional economy and be a catalyst for preserving and enhancing local economies.
- Increasing the feasibility and stability of traditional family-owned farms.

B.3. Strengths and Weaknesses

The Region has a variety of strengths. During the issues identification process and Economic Development TAG discussion, these strengths were highlighted. One of the most important strengths is the Region's road transportation network, which allows easy travel in all four directions on four-lane highways. With Interstate Highway 94 traveling through the Region, the Region needs to utilize this amenity to help take advantage of the markets in the Twin Cities, Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago metropolitan areas.



Although not as prominent as in the past, family dairy farms still are prevalent in the Region

A second important strength is the diversity of the Region. During economic development discussions, it is often discussed what attributes can be found region-wide and how is the Region known. This question is difficult to answer. The diversity of the landscape, varying community sizes, proximity to large metropolitan areas, and assorted economies are strengths for the Region, as the Region does not rely on one specific resource or industry sector.

A third major strength is the number of colleges and universities. Three State universities and two technical colleges are located in the Region. A variety of other public and private higher education institutions are also spread throughout the Region. Lastly, an additional strength is a

strong economic development network and financial programs to help businesses grow and create jobs.

Weaknesses were also discussed during the same process. One of the major weaknesses to economic development in the Region is the perception that communities in the Region are not ideal places to live, because they do not provide high quality-of-life amenities. This perception can be understood, in view of the

size of most communities and the close proximity to the Twin Cities, Madison, and Milwaukee. These larger metropolitan areas are commonly thought of as areas which have extremely high quality-of-life amenities and often are destinations for new graduates and younger professionals. All areas in the Region compete against all three urban areas to attract businesses, highly educated and skilled employees, and the post-high school population. This phenomenon also exists within the Region where the larger communities (e.g., Eau Claire, Menomonie) attract these businesses and individuals from the smaller communities.

The planning process revealed that these weaknesses are not acceptable for the Region. There is a desire to compete with larger metropolitan areas and promote and improve on the existing quality-of-life that exists in the Region. The process revealed that there is a feeling that the Region does have a high quality-of-life, and the communities in the Region and the Region as a whole could do a better job at identifying and promoting these resources. In addition, the planning process showed that there is a desire to have economic cohesion in the Region. This scenario would involve a region where opportunities for economic growth exist throughout the Region and would include all populations.

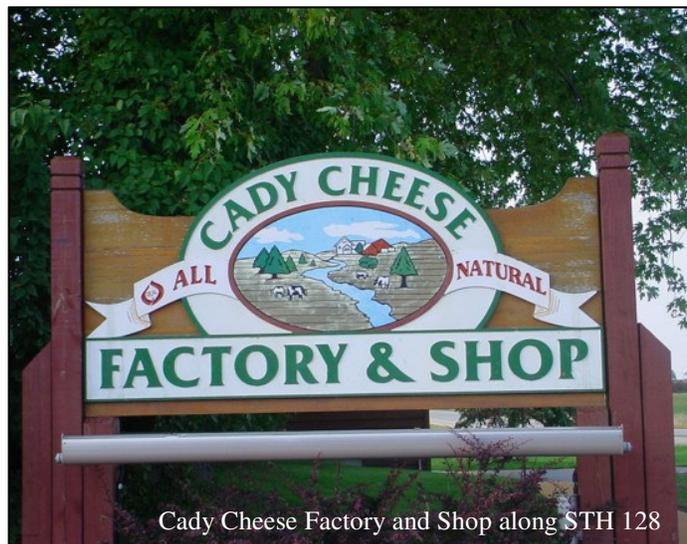
B.4. Opportunities for Brownfield Redevelopment

As a region with a variety of communities, there are many sites that are currently underutilized and/or vacant. Some of these sites have issues (e.g., underground storage tanks, areas where dumping has occurred). Many of these areas are conducive to brownfield redevelopment. The Region expects non-metallic mining sites to be reclaimed to a more natural setting and in some cases be made available for residential development once mining activities cease. These opportunities need to be addressed by the local units of government.

B.5. Designation of Sites

The intent of this document is to be advisory. Designating specific sites for commercial and industrial activity is impractical, due to the size of the Region and number of potential locations. Much commercial and industrial development in the past decades has not paid for the services that are required to serve them. Applicable policies in the Land Use Element state that economic activity should occur in areas that are accessible by multiple modes of transportation. In addition, all development should be sustainable and be developed in a way and location where it is not a drain on the tax base.

Proposed economic development projects and sites should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Foremost, the proposed projects should be consistent with the respective community's vision and comprehensive plan. The question, "Is it compatible with the rural nature of the community and does it pose a threat to farmland, woodlands, and most importantly surface water and groundwater of the community?" should be asked. Also, impacts of the proposed project on local roads and services and the scale and scope of the proposal in character with the nature of the community should be examined.



C. Goals and Objectives

Goal:

The west central Wisconsin region will foster a sustainable, diverse economy that is attractive to business and supported by quality employment and educational opportunities for all residents.

Objectives:

1. Broadcast a regional economic vision, identity, and marketing brand.
2. Foster coordination and collaboration between economic development entities.
3. Maintain a diversified economy based on regional and local strengths and opportunities.
4. Promote the start-up, retention, expansion, and attraction of businesses.
5. Encourage economic opportunity throughout the Region.
6. Support the area's strong educational institutions and the retention of, and connection to, its graduates. Encourage training programs to promote a well-educated and skilled workforce.
7. Assess, develop, and promote quality-of-place amenities to both retain and attract businesses and residents.
8. Promote and maintain downtowns and neighborhood commercial areas.
9. Promote the Region as a tourism destination.
10. Build on the agricultural and natural resource strengths of the regional economy.

D. Strategies

1. Maintain, strengthen, and coordinate a regional economic development network that shares resources and creates regional solutions to local problems. The network should be inclusive of entities and individuals at the national, state, region, county, and local levels. Benefits of the network should be promoted and participation by all parties encouraged. *[Momentum West, Economic development organizations, Counties, Local Governments, Universities & technical colleges, WCWRPC, Utilities, Energy companies, Work Force Development, Chambers of commerce, Funding agencies, Financial institutions, Businesses, Non-profits – Ongoing and Immediate]*
2. Develop a regional economic development vision, identity, marketing brand, and strategy. These activities should focus regional efforts, define appropriate responsibilities for all players, and incorporate activities that are already underway. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Momentum West, Economic development organizations, WCWRPC– Short Range]*
3. Determine what activities should take place on a regional level to assist with the start up and growth of new business ventures. These efforts should augment initiatives already taking place at the local level. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities list in Strategy #1, Economic development organizations, Universities & technical colleges, WCWRPC – Short Range]*
4. Determine what activities should take place on a regional level to retain existing businesses and assist them to grow. These efforts should augment initiatives already taking place at the local level. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Economic development organizations, Universities and technical colleges, WCWRPC – Short Range]*
5. Determine what activities should take place on a regional level to attract new businesses to the area. These efforts should augment initiatives already taking place at the local level. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Momentum West, Economic development organizations, WI Dept. of Commerce – Short Range]*

6. Commission a study that identifies key industries and/or sectors that are drivers of the regional economy. Specific programs and/or activities should be developed from the study to further grow these industries and the clusters which they are part of. Attention should be paid to the interaction of these industries within the global market. These efforts should augment initiatives already taking place at the local level. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Momentum West, Economic development organizations, WCWRPC, Universities & technical colleges – Medium Range]*

7. Acknowledge the importance of the Twin Cities metro area to the regional economy. Develop regional and local initiatives to capitalize on the opportunities presented by this strong adjacent market. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Momentum West, Economic development organizations, WCWRPC, Universities & technical colleges – Medium Range]*

8. Support projects that create jobs, increase incomes, stimulate investment, and diversify the economy in all areas of the Region. This support could come in the form of technical assistance to businesses and municipalities, coordination of resources, assistance with access to financing, and other activities as appropriate to the individual projects. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Momentum West, Economic development organizations, Universities and technical colleges, WCWRPC, SCORE, CAP Agencies, Financial institutions, Businesses, Local Governments, Counties – Ongoing]*

9. Encourage the creation of programs and projects that utilize the Region’s strong natural resource and agricultural assets. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, WCWRPC, communities, counties, Economic development organizations, UWEX, DNR –Ongoing]*

10. Review and update previous efforts in quality-of-place research. Based on this work, a plan should be developed to utilize and/or strengthen this aspect of the Region as appropriate. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Momentum West, Economic development organizations, Local governments, WCWRPC – Short Range]*

11. Create incubation centers and other similar efforts to coordinate efforts of regional educational institutions to advance business development and innovation. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Universities & technical colleges, Businesses, Economic development organizations, Momentum West, Workforce Development – Short Range]*

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTIONS

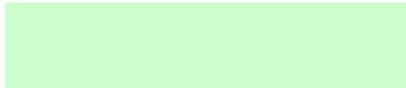
Location:

- Establishing commercial and industrial locations that are easily accessible for multiple transportation options reduces the dependence of private vehicles, which reduces energy use and pollution.
- Brownfield and other infill areas provide development opportunities that are often located in close proximity to established and more dense residential areas.
- The proximity to the 3.5 million population of the Twin Cities metropolitan area not only allows the region to be an exporter of traditional goods and services to the Twin Cities, but also allows west central Wisconsin to supply the metropolitan area with food and bio-energy. A regionalized food and bio-energy system drastically reduces energy use.

Industries:

- An economy that has industry that produces less carbon and greenhouse gases is on the horizon. Any regional economy that embraces the various nuances of this economy early in the process will be more competitive and successful.
- The industrial history, location, and educational resources of the Region gives it opportunities that do not exist for numerous other regions to be successful in any new green economy.

12. Encourage projects, programs, and policies that focus economic development opportunities that pertain to sustainability and preservation of natural resources. *[Counties, Local Governments, UWEX, Universities & technical colleges, WCWRPC, State agencies – Ongoing]*
13. Develop economic-development educational programming relating to sustainable energy practices and possible regulatory implications. *[Counties, Local Governments, UWEX, Universities & technical colleges, K-12 schools, WCWRPC – Ongoing]*
14. Utilize the loan funds and staffing resources of entities throughout the Region to assist with business start-up, retention, expansion, attraction, and downtown redevelopment. Investigate other resources that could augment these efforts as well. *[WCWRPC, Economic development organizations, Financial institutions, Businesses, Rural Development, Economic Development Administration, WI Dept. of Commerce, Universities & technical colleges, State agencies, Non-profits – Ongoing]*
15. Assist local units of government in accessing the necessary tools and resources to preserve and maintain their downtowns and neighborhood commercial areas. *[Local Governments, Main Street organizations, Neighborhood organizations, WI Dept. of Commerce, Businesses, WCWRPC, Economic development organizations – Short Range]*
16. Encourage the reuse of brownfield and underutilized sites for new industrial and commercial development. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Local Governments, Counties, Economic development organizations, WCWRPC, Businesses, WI Dept. of Commerce, DNR – Ongoing]*
17. Encourage collaboration at the regional level when examining the need for local infrastructure improvements. Focus and resources should also be directed to technologically advanced infrastructure suitable for business needs of the future. *[Local Governments, Counties, WCWRPC, funding agencies, Engineering consultants –Ongoing]*
18. Promote the Region as a tourism destination through cooperative efforts with the State Department of Tourism and regional and local organizations. *[WI Dept. of Tourism, Local economic development and tourism organizations, Local Governments, Chambers of commerce – Ongoing]*
19. Investigate potential solutions to employment and community issues resulting from racial and cultural diversification of the labor force, as well as those of an aging labor force. *[Workforce Development, WI Dept. of Social Services, Businesses, Local Governments, WI Dept. of Human Services, WI Dept. of Health, Local cultural organizations – Medium Range]*
20. Maintain and strengthen linkages with educational institutions, the business community, workforce development, and the economic development network. Develop resources to work cooperatively to continue boosting the skills of the Region’s workforce. *[Regional Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1, Universities & technical colleges, Workforce Development, Economic development organizations, Local Governments, Counties, WCWRPC, Businesses – Ongoing]*
21. Develop a common set of metrics for measurement of baseline regional economic indicators. These metrics could include data from the Department of Workforce Development, Office of Economic Advisors and others. *[Economic Development Network inclusive of entities listed in Strategy #1 – Long Range]*



XI. LAND USE

The use of land is a critical factor in guiding the future growth of any community, whether it is rural, urban, or suburban. Good land-use planning analyzes current conditions and trends, and provides a way in which both the public and private sectors can make informed decisions. Individual decisions and actions are coordinated so that the resulting development is complementary.

For local governments, land-use planning provides an opportunity to avoid conflicts, conserve valued resources, coordinate services efficiently, and protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the community. For the private sector, land-use planning provides a formal direction, so that investment decisions can be confidently made. For the general public, land-use planning can be used to maintain those community features that residents hold most dear, while helping to protect property values.



Suburban-style residential development

The majority of our Region is rural with agriculture and forest the predominant land uses. As was discussed earlier in the Plan, the Region has been experiencing significant losses of agricultural land. As residential development occurs in rural areas, not only are prime farmlands being lost, there are increasing costs for services, commuter pressures, and use conflicts. Land consumption trends are also influenced by access and proximity to employment centers and local land-use regulations.

During the issues identification phase of the Plan, the highest-rated land-use issue was the lack of intergovernmental cooperation. Instances exist where plans and regulations of neighboring jurisdictions, especially at the urban-rural fringe, conflict and work against each community's respective. Given these trends, it is easy to see how the Land Use Element brings together and integrates many different aspects of the other plan elements.

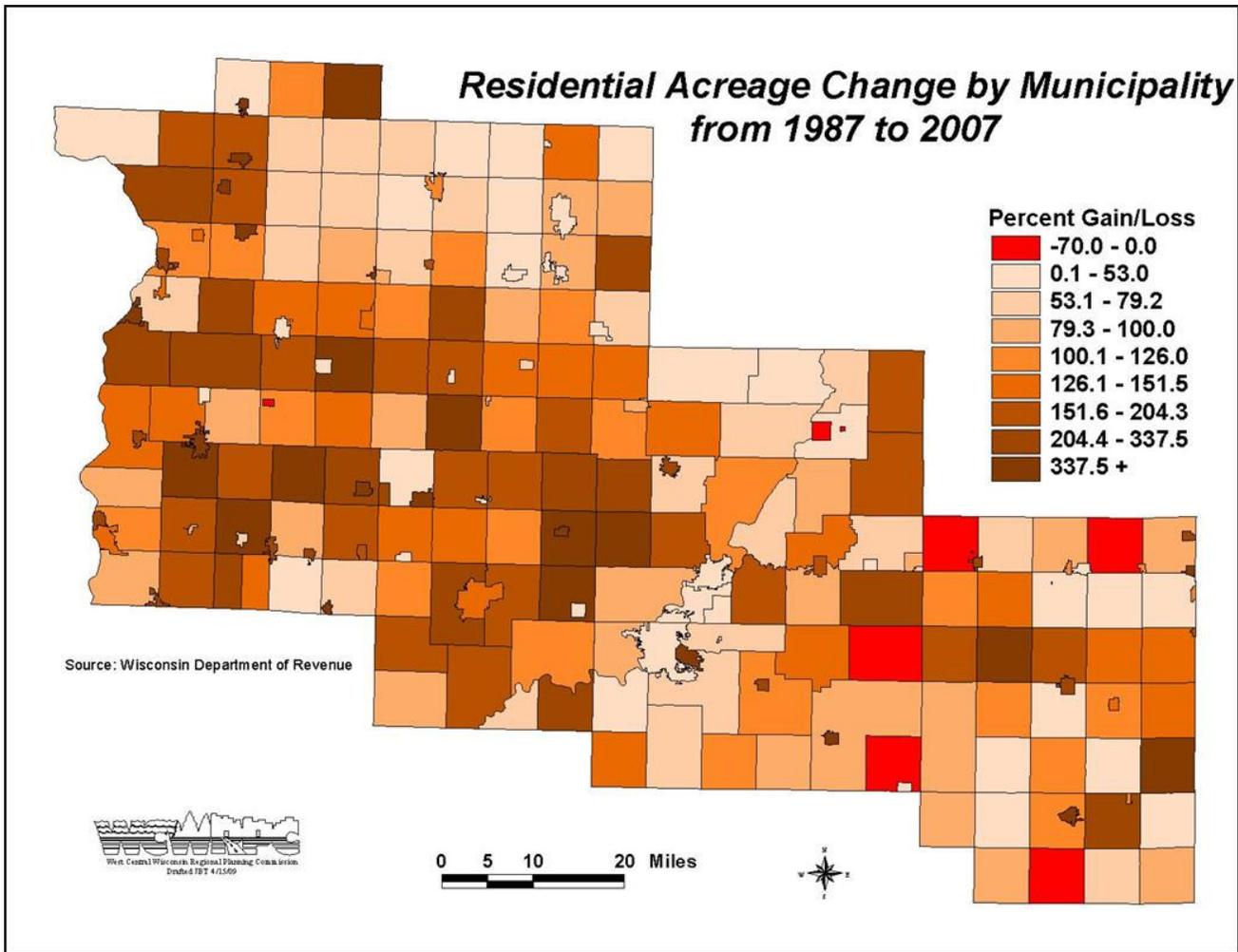
The regional land-use planning process relied heavily on a bottom-up process. This included analysis, maps, and discussion from the following primary sources:

- 1) Conditions and trends of regional significance were compiled from the seven county *Conditions and Trends Reports*.
- 2) A *Resource and Land Use Atlas* was created for each of the seven counties from which regional resource, development constraints, and land use maps were compiled. Key regional infrastructure maps and discussion can be found in the Transportation and Utilities & Community Facilities elements.
- 3) Local land-use regulatory trends from the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin* were considered.
- 4) Input from local officials on the RICG during the planning process provided crucial insight into local land-use issues.

WCWRPC staff have also facilitated or participated in numerous county, city, village, and town land-use, economic, transportation, and comprehensive planning efforts. From these experiences, commonalities were identified, such as the desire to conserve resources, protect water quality, preserve rural character, promote economic development, maintain a strong infrastructure, nurture vibrant communities, and balance the overall community vision with individual property owner rights. These aspects have land-use implications and were integrated into the goals, objectives, and strategies of this element.

The result of this process is an overview of the land-use trends and issues affecting numerous areas or the entire Region, and identifies an overarching framework of recommendations to address these trends and issues. Land-use analyses and prescriptive recommendations for specific communities or areas are not provided.

Given the Plan’s regional scope, it is not surprising that the policy recommendations in this section are heavily focused on education and intergovernmental coordination to integrate Smart Growth concepts, to address the regional issues, and to achieve the vision represented through the Regional Framework 2030 Map.



A. Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- Agriculture continues to be the predominant land use in our region, followed by forest lands.
- Residential acreage increases have been highest in western parts of the region, though agricultural land losses have been more wide-spread.
- Assessed forest lands have been decreasing in the eastern counties of our region and increasing in the western counties, while forested parcel sizes have been decreasing throughout west central Wisconsin.
- Land use regulations and controls differ significantly throughout our region, while cooperative land use planning has been generally limited.



Land Use Change (Assessed Acreage), 1987-2007

County	Residential	Commercial	Manufacturing	Agricultural	Forest+
Barron	65.8%	49.6%	-12.0%	-25.2%	7.2%
Chippewa	87.6%	97.6%	12.2%	-20.0%	-10.1%
Clark	71.3%	53.3%	-19.6%	-13.2%	-47.1%
Dunn	186.9%	181.7%	64.7%	-18.2%	-3.7%
Eau Claire	61.0%	86.2%	53.7%	-19.2%	-17.3%
Polk	139.9%	20.7%	43.4%	-38.2%	10.9%
St. Croix	138.1%	122.5%	63.2%	-27.6%	35.2%
WCWRPC Region	106.9%	77.7%	17.4%	-23.0%	-9.3%

source: Wis. Department of Revenue

+ 2007 Forest and Ag. Forest combined

Top 3 Issues

- A lack of intergovernmental cooperation on land use, in particular at the urban-rural fringe between cities and towns.
- Transportation systems impact land use, and vice versa. Land use and proposed transportation projects need to be planned concurrently.
- More education on land use planning trends, issues, and tools is needed in our region.

Implications

- The trends, goals, and policies for the other elements (e.g., transportation, housing, economic development, sustainability) all influence the land use patterns of our region.
- It is projected that our region's population will increase by 127,731 persons by 2030. If the trends from the past 20 years are used, the Region's assessed residential acreage would increase by over 150,000 acres by 2030, not including related rights-of-way, services, etc. This equals more than 230 square miles of assessed residential land.
- Assessed forest lands are increasing in many communities, but these are often occurring on smaller properties, sometimes converted from other uses, and often associated with residential uses. This fragmentation of forest lands reduces the economic value of our forests for timber production.
- Differences in regulations and the fiscal dependence on property taxes for programs and services are creating an environment of conflict, competitiveness, and mistrust between local governments.

B. Special Subsections

B.1. Existing Land Uses and Land Use Trends

Land use data and trends for the Region are discussed in the Issues and Opportunities Element. This includes a discussion of land supply, demand, and prices in the area. Each county Conditions and Trends Report includes school district maps and discusses emergency services. The agricultural and natural resources sections and maps in the county Conditions and Trends Reports identify and discuss the area's prime farmlands, floodplains, environmentally sensitive areas, and engineering constraints. Recent land-use trends by acreage are summarized in the table below:

	1987 acreage	1997 acreage	2007 acreage	2009 acreage	2009 parcels	1987-2009 Percent Change acres	1997-2009 Percent Change acres	Density (2009 avg. parcel size)
Agricultural	2,386,575	2,141,716	1,838,742	1,832,510	78,314	-23.2	-14.4	23.4
Residential	100,512	149,733	184,987	215,899	169,527	114.8	44.2	1.3
Commercial	12,794	17,162	24,270	25,705	14,679	100.9	49.8	1.8
Industrial	8,777	9,247	10,273	10,671	1,035	21.6	15.4	10.3

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue. 1987, 1997, 2007, and 2009 Statements of Assessments.

The above chart clearly shows the consistent loss of farmland in the Region over the past twenty years, which was highlighted as a concern in the issue identification process. While some of this acreage has become residential land, it is apparent that the largest percentage was converted to undeveloped and forest. Commercial and industrial acreage have both increased, with commercial acreage increasing 101 percent between 1987 and 2009. Residential land has exploded since 1987. In 1987, the Region had 100,000 acres of residential land. In 2009, this increased 115 percent to 216,000 acres. This increase equals over 180 square miles.

B.2. Opportunities for Redevelopment

As a region with numerous cities, villages, and hamlets, there are literally hundreds of sites in the Region that are opportunities for redevelopment. Following Plan policy, it is highly recommended that communities first develop in areas where redevelopment can occur. In most cases, these sites are serviced by public water and public sewer. In addition, these sites are often accessible via walking and biking and located in or near the downtown core of a community. There are limited opportunities for redevelopment in the rural areas. The Region expects non-metallic mining sites to be reclaimed to a more natural setting or, in some cases, be made available for new land-uses and recreational development once mining activities cease.

B.3. Land Use Conflicts

Early in the planning process, issues facing the Region were identified, discussed, and prioritized in the survey. Land-use compatibility and conflicts were implied in many of the top-ranked items. One highly ranked issue was to protect water resources from the adverse impacts of development and agriculture. In addition, concerns were expressed for the localized conflicts between farming operations and residential growth. This incompatibility is more evident in the case of factory farms or animal feedlot operations which some believe are more like industrial uses and not only incompatible with nearby residential uses, but are inconsistent with many communities' rural character. Large-scale commercial and industrial uses are seen as potential conflicts with the existing uses in rural areas. It is imperative that local units of government plan for large-scale commercial and industrial uses, and residential developments to avoid such conflicts.

C. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1:

Our land use patterns will reflect: distinct urban centers of sustainable, mixed-use design, efficient and cost-effective infrastructure and services, and multi-modal transportation options; and, rural areas where working lands, natural resources and traditional rural character are preserved.

Objectives:

1. Land use practices should maximize economies of services and infrastructure; reduce negative impacts on the environment, economic activity, and society; promote community identity; and employ incentives to achieve desired land use patterns.
2. Organize land use around vital, efficient activity centers with effective multi-modal transportation connections and systems.
3. Promote pedestrian-oriented mixed uses, traditional neighborhood design, and infill development for urban areas.
4. When rural development occurs, it is done in locations using design that minimizes impacts on infrastructure, working lands, natural resources, traditional landscape character and public services.
5. Improve communications between future and existing land owners and units of government regarding right-to-farm laws and practices.
6. Encourage local units of government to use available tools to effect the appropriate use of the land, the intensity, density, and design of development, and the protection of valued resources.



Agricultural operation in close proximity to a house

Goal 2:

All levels of government will work cooperatively to realize their respective land use goals and mutual benefits through open and responsive processes.

Objectives:

1. Work with village, city, town, and county governments to increase communication involving issues crossing jurisdictional boundaries.
2. Encourage joint planning and plan consistency between adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions, and state and federal agencies.
3. The public will continue to have a vital, active, and informed role in the development of the Region.

D. Strategies

Land Use Practices

1. Develop so that local jurisdictions can provide infrastructure and services in the most cost-effective and efficient manner. [*Counties, Local governments - Ongoing*]
2. Develop cost of community services information that also reveals land economics externalities generally not considered when making development management decisions. Evaluate unsustainable development patterns to reveal its true costs to society. [*WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Medium Range*]
3. Develop models for the built environment's "carrying" or development capacity that can be applied to local planning and development management efforts. [*WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Medium Range*]
4. Transportation systems impact land use, and vice versa. Land use and proposed transportation projects need to be planned concurrently. [*WisDOT, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing*]

Organizing Land Use

5. Coordination between different levels of government to enhance urban centers and develop multi-modal transportation potential. [*WCWRPC, WisDOT, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing*]
6. Optimize multi-modal connectivity within and between communities. [*WisDOT, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing*]
7. Evaluate higher urban density potential to promote transportation alternatives, such as light rail and intercity transit. [*WisDOT, WCWRPC, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing*]
8. Promote mixed use development, traditional neighborhood design, and viable public spaces so more people can live in proximity to daily life destinations such as work, shopping, schools, services, entertainment, parks, and social and civic activity. [*WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing*]
9. Integrate transit systems into the built environment to improve access to transportation alternatives. [*WisDOT, MPO, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing*]

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTIONS

Development Patterns:

- Designing urban and suburban development in a way that does not solely require automobile dependency and that allows for accessible mass transit and non-motorized modes of transportation are paramount to a more sustainable environment.
- Conservation design and other rural development design alternatives allow rural areas to keep their character, while at the same time reduces agricultural and forested land acreage that is taken out of production.
- Often higher density development options bring unwarranted misconceptions. Higher density development can be designed in a way that improves the aesthetics and quality-of-life of a neighborhood and community.

Site Locations:

- Sharing facilities (e.g. parking lots) that often go under-used and/or complement each other increases density and reduces impervious surfaces.
- Specific developments can be designed in a way that reduces and even eliminates their ecological impact versus an all-too-common design that impacts both water and air and uses significant amounts of energy. These design techniques bring more attention to the development and add to their economic viability.

Community Interaction:

- Surrounding communities often have similar development needs, related to issues and opportunities. When communities come together to resolve these issues and opportunities, the more efficient and environmentally conscious result can be implemented.

Urban Development Alternatives

10. Develop model alternative land use regulations, road standards and parking requirements that will promote these development objectives. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Short Range]
11. Explore potential incentives that will promote pedestrian-oriented mixed uses, traditional neighborhood design, and infill development for urban areas. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing]
12. Encourage communities to engage in redevelopment planning for infill development and the renovation and adaptive reuse of viable existing structures. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing]
13. Develop education for decision makers, developers, and the public about how the design of buildings and open spaces and quality, diverse development types and styles can overcome negative perceptions of higher density development. Products and presentations could include illustrations of good examples to demonstrate how such development patterns are supposed to work and why they work. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Short Range]

Rural Preservation and Development Alternatives

14. Encourage conservation design and other rural development design alternatives, and alternative density management concepts to enhance rural character. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing]
15. Promote state authorizing legislation and guidance for county and local transfer of development rights programs. [WCWRPC, Counties, Local Governments - Short Range]
16. Support the Working Lands Initiative and its various components of Farmland Preservation Planning, Farmland Preservation Zoning, Agricultural Enterprise Areas, Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements, and Farmland Preservation Tax Credits. [WCWRPC, Counties, Local Governments - Ongoing]
17. Provide the tools to address natural resources impacts caused by emerging pressure to develop marginal farmland and woodlands. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, Counties, Local Governments - Short Range]
18. Develop criteria and a model that results in performance standards for land evaluation and site assessment for areas that are most appropriate for rural development. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, DATCP - Short Range]
19. Work cooperatively to establish network facilitating alternative land protection strategies. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, DNR, Counties, Local Governments - Short Range]
20. Explore the possibility of a regional entity to do third party enforcement of conservation easements. [WCWRPC - Medium Range]
21. Create partnerships that can communicate to a broad audience the right-to-farm concepts outlined in the Agricultural Resources section. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, DATCP - Short Range]

Implementation Resources

22. Evaluate the cumulative impacts of development across jurisdictions through regional technical or area analysis studies. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Short Range]
23. Provide, to local governments and private developers, information on tools and resources on state-of-the-art development practices and community design, including available and emerging comprehensive plan implementation tools. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE, DNR, WI Dept. of Administration - Short Range]
24. Develop educational programs, perhaps for each county, for elected officials and plan commissioners on planning and development management roles and practice. This is an often hard to access audience with frequent turnover that suggests more frequent training brought closer to the audience. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Short Range]

25. Provide information on the contradictory position of preserving what we have while at the same time desiring to not have too many regulations or restrictions. There is a need for better information about achieving local land use objectives by balancing community interests and individual interests; examples are needed of win-win outcomes of informed local decisions using better tools. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Short Range]

Issues Crossing Jurisdictional Boundaries

26. Provide information on tools and resources for communities working together, including opportunities for joint planning and implementation. Such efforts must be broad and inclusive so stakeholders (those affected) are involved. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Short Range]
27. Develop a mediation entity with a regional perspective that helps parties focus on issues, look for common ground, and negotiate outcomes of the best possible benefit to all involved. [WCWRPC - Short Range]
28. Promote the memorandum of understanding as a tool to help build trust between parties by declaring past relationships and establishing or declaring positions and expectations, areas of mutual agreement, issues yet to be resolved and a process for moving toward solving those issues. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Short Range]
29. Coordinate decisions and analysis between jurisdictions and evaluate the cumulative impacts of development across jurisdictions. [Counties and local governments - Short Range]
30. All levels of government should document intergovernmental communications and encourage face-to-face communication. [Counties and local governments - Short Range]
31. Promote ongoing communication through intergovernmental advisory groups made up of bordering and overlapping jurisdictions. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties - Short Range]
32. Hold topical meetings by county, watershed, or several related counties to include periods of open discussion. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Short Range]
33. Convene an annual regional summit or conference on intergovernmental, planning, and development management topics of interest to local officials and staff. Develop sponsors for the annual event. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, State agencies - Short Range]

Joint Planning and Plan Consistency

34. Promote the idea that there are specific projects which need joint efforts (e.g. passenger rail initiatives or the St. Croix River crossing) and encourage participation early in projects. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, State agencies - Short Range]
35. Advocate the benefits of intergovernmental cooperation such as economies-of-scale, cost efficiencies, better service delivery and “doing the right thing”. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, State agencies - Short Range]
36. Build upon models and experience such as the Pierce, Polk and St. Croix County Groundwater Flow Study, St. Croix Basin Water Resources Planning Team, and the Chippewa Valley Stormwater Forum “Rain to Rivers” of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permittees working together to address a common requirement or need. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, State agencies - Short Range]
37. Promote land information coordination, workgroups, and data sharing. Consider creation of a regional land information plan. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, State agencies - Medium Range]

Public Engagement

38. Create more comprehensive and user-friendly websites with links to details and references. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
39. Use more visualization to communicate planning and development management concepts; a picture is worth a thousand words. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
40. Create a series of planning and development factsheets and keep them updated. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Short Range]
41. Establish a renowned resource library of plans, ordinances and implementation tools with diagrams that can be edited and inserted into studies, plans, and ordinances. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Medium Range]
42. Collect and disseminate comprehensive planning public participation resources. [WCWRPC, UWEX/CLUE - Medium Range]
43. Create more user-friendly versions of comprehensive plans with executive summaries, poster plans and web-based content. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, State agencies - Medium Range]
44. Promote educating the public about planning and development management including the public's role, local and state authority, and the tools used to implement plans. Use this as an opportunity to dispel common misperceptions, misinformation and myths about planning and development management. [WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments, State agencies, Towns Association, Counties Association, League of Municipalities. - Medium Range]

E. Land Use Projections

In accordance with State planning law, comprehensive plans must include 20-year land use projections in five-year increments. As such, this plan has a year 2030 planning horizon. The residential land-use projections for the Region are based upon population projections from the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Two alternative land use forecasts or scenarios are provided.

Scenario I – Current Trends/Status Quo

Scenario I is based on population and land-use growth trends between 1987 and 2007. The comparison of agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial land-use acreage to the increase in population over the time period sets the foundation for projections under the scenario. For example, for every one person increase in net population, there was a 1.382 increase in assessed residential acres. The remaining land-uses changed by: commercial (+.142 acres), industrial (+.019 acres), and agricultural (-4.918 acres), for each person increase in net population. This scenario takes what transpired between 1987 and 2007 and uses that for future projections from 2010 to 2030. This scenario is framed that development over the next 20 years will be of identical density and land-use composition to development between 1987 and 2007. This scenario is not consistent with policy recommendations in this plan. However, it provides a baseline for comparison and shows how the Region will almost certainly grow if policies and practices are not changed.

Scenario II – Plan Implementation

Scenario II projections are very consistent with the policy recommendations within this comprehensive plan. This scenario uses the average assessed lot size for each land-use category to determine what the average lot size will be for new development in the next 20 years. Unlike Scenario I, Scenario II is under the premise that development over the next 20 years will resemble what our communities look like now, on average, and not just the development between 1987 and 2007. Therefore, this scenario would include development that is denser and more compact, more similar to development patterns prior to the 1950's.

In addition, the projections are based on the decreasing average household size in the Region. In 2000, the regional household size was 2.55. After analysis of 1980, 1990, and 2000 data, along with data from the

2006-2008 American Community Survey, a decreasing household size of .07 was used for each successive five-year increment. However, due to 2030 being projected at an extremely low rate of 2.13, the 2.20 persons per household was used for both 2025 and 2030. The estimated populations were divided by the respective estimated household sizes (2015 = 2.34, 2020 = 2.27, 2025 = 2.20, and 2030 = 2.20) to get the projected number of parcels and acres, based on the current average lot size, resulting in residential acres consumed for each five-year increment.

REGIONAL LAND USE PROJECTIONS 2009-2030 (SCENARIO I - CURRENT TRENDS)

	2009 parcels/ acreage	2015 parcels/ acreage	2020 parcels/ acreage	2025 parcels/ acreage	2030 parcels/ acreage
Residential	169,527/ 215,899	195,199/ 256,299	214,345/ 297,478	233,824/ 335,967	245,354/ 371,022
Agricultural	78,314/ 1,832,510	76,535/ 1,688,742	75,360/ 1,542,200	74,173/ 1,405,234	73,437/ 1,280,489
Commercial	14,679/ 25,705	16,170/ 29,856	17,225/ 34,087	18,211/ 38,042	19,109/ 41,644
Industrial	1,035/ 10,671	1,144/ 11,226	1,219/ 11,793	1,289/ 12,322	1,352/ 12,804
Projected/Estimated Population	414,224	456,766 (+42,542)	486,563 (+29,797)	514,413 (+27,850)	539,778 (+25,365)

Sources: Wisconsin Department of Administration & West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

REGIONAL LAND USE PROJECTIONS 2009-2030 (SCENARIO II - PLAN IMPLEMENTATION)

	2009 parcels/ acreage	2015 parcels/ acreage	2020 parcels/ acreage	2025 parcels/ acreage	2030 parcels/ acreage
Residential	169,527/ 215,899	195,199/ 253,759	214,345/ 278,649	233,824/ 303,971	245,354/ 318,960
Agricultural	78,314/ 1,832,510	76,535/ 1,790,922	75,360/ 1,763,416	74,173/ 1,735,648	73,437/ 1,718,433
Commercial	14,679/ 25,705	16,170/ 28,319	17,225/ 30,167	18,211/ 31,894	19,109/ 33,466
Industrial	1,035/ 10,671	1,144/ 11,785	1,219/ 12,553	1,289/ 13,272	1,352/ 13,926
Projected/Estimated Population	414,224	456,766 (+42,542)	486,563 (+29,797)	514,413 (+27,850)	539,778 (+25,365)

Sources: Wisconsin Department of Administration & West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Given the size of the Region, large number of communities, and numerous variables that can impact all types of growth, it is extremely difficult to determine land-use projections at a regional scale. As such, these projections should be used with full understanding of the limitations and parameters used in their development. Again many variables can impact growth.

Residential Use Projections

Over the past few years, a global economic downturn has resulted in fewer building permits having been issued for new homes, and a similar trend is expected to continue in the near future. In some rural areas, there have been discussions regarding conservation design, transfer of development rights, and other measures to

reduce the size of residential lots. In urban areas, an apparent increase in the desire to construct in infill areas has occurred over the past few years.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA), projected population growth during the next 20 years is expected to be similar to the past twenty years. The average residential lot size is now 1.27 acres, versus .86 acres in 1987. This shows the enormous change in how residential parcels have been constructed over the past 20 years.

Agricultural Use Projections

A loss of agricultural land is expected to continue, though it is the goal that the rate of decrease be slowed and the loss of prime farmlands be significantly minimized. The decrease in agricultural acres comes directly from the increase of rural, suburban, and urban development and agricultural areas reverting to forested areas. Using data from 1987 to 2007, Scenario I shows that there will be a loss of over 550,000 acres, or roughly 860 square miles. Scenario II shows a decrease of 115,000 acres, or roughly 180 square miles. This number was calculated by subtracting the increases in residential, commercial, and industrial land. These numbers do not take in account any changes to forested areas. As can be seen, these two scenarios are significantly different. Assuming conversion of agricultural land occurs as predicted, there will be continued decreases in agricultural land over the next 20 years. This loss could be further slowed by more diligent implementation of the Plan policies.

Commercial Use Projections

Currently, there are approximately 26,000 acres that are assessed as commercial. During the past 20 years, the number of assessed commercial acres in the Region increased 13,000 acres, or 100 percent. In 1987, the average commercial parcel was 1.22 acres. Over the past 20 years, it has significantly increased to 1.75 acres. Due to the struggling economy at the time of Plan adoption, the Region is not experiencing much commercial development. There are numerous factors that will play a role in future commercial growth. This includes Interstate 94 traveling through the Region, numerous universities and colleges located in the Region, expansion of the Twin Cities sphere of influence into the Region, and the possibility of high-speed passenger rail service in the Region. All of these variables make it difficult to project for the planning horizon. Scenario I depicts the continued type of commercial development that has been normal in the past two decades. Much of this growth has been in the urban-rural fringe areas and consists of larger lot single-use areas that are often only accessible by car and have large parking areas. In rural areas, much of the future commercial growth is expected to be cottage industries or home occupations. In urban areas, if energy prices continue to increase, much of the future commercial growth is expected in infill areas, where transportation prices are cheaper. This would follow the policies of the Plan and are shown in Scenario II.

Industrial Use Projections

Currently, 10,700 acres in the Region are assessed as industrial, which is an increase of 1,900 acres or three square miles since 1987. There are no indications that this will change dramatically in the future. If there is a change projection of industrial land, in all likelihood, it will be extremely small. It is anticipated that all new industrial development will occur on the fringes of urban areas and infill areas. Policy recommendations focus on industrial reinvestment in urban infill areas. Scenario I shows an increase of 2,100 acres and Scenario II shows an increase of 3,300 acres. Unlike residential and commercial scenarios, Scenario II has a larger increase. This is due to the larger tracks of industrial land in urban areas that were developed prior to 1987 and are used in the Scenario II calculations. An example of this is the old Uniroyal tire factory in Eau Claire. Based on recent trends, it is anticipated that future projections will be somewhere between Scenario I and II, as it is difficult to imagine numerous large tract factories being built in the near future. However, if policy recommendations are used, future industrial land-use increases should be smaller than Scenario I.

F. Regional Framework 2030 Map

First, it is important to note that this map should not be considered a zoning map. The Regional Framework 2030 Map (page 91) is intended to be a general guide for development and a basis for applying the goals, objectives, and policies in the Plan. Urban and suburban development will occur in and around the existing cities and villages, and a handful of hamlets. Rural areas will see some development, but contiguous agricultural and forested land should be preserved, especially if it is prime farmland and native forested land. The planning areas describe the predominant uses found there, while it is recognized that there is variation intended within them. Hence, future development should follow the guidance and performance standards and very general location provided in this Plan. This guidance includes strategies that promote agriculture, open space, productive forests, clean and abundant natural resources, and more sustainable land-use patterns in and around incorporated areas. Given this approach, identifying the net density of planned land-uses by specific location is not possible.

The map should be used for general planning purposes only. For development management purposes, each specific site, property, or proposed subdivision should be analyzed on a case-by-case basis to determine the actual location and extent of public rights-of-way, surface waters, wetlands, shorelands, floodplains, steep slopes, and other significant features.

Agriculture and Forested Land

This area consists of existing tract of 100 or more of contiguous agricultural or forested land. In the overwhelming majority of these parcels, productive agricultural and forestry lands are considered the highest, best, and most sustainable use. Any development proposed for this area must consider potential negative impacts on agricultural production, contiguous forests, water quality, and community rural character. When multiple residences are planned, conservation subdivision design or other mitigation measures should be encouraged.

Higher Education Institutions

These institutions are the public universities and colleges, along with Globe University and Lakeland College. They play an important role in not only education, but economic development and various other elements.

Advanced Technology Innovation Centers

These facilities are located in various areas of the Region and play an important role bringing higher education and the private sector together.

Public Lands

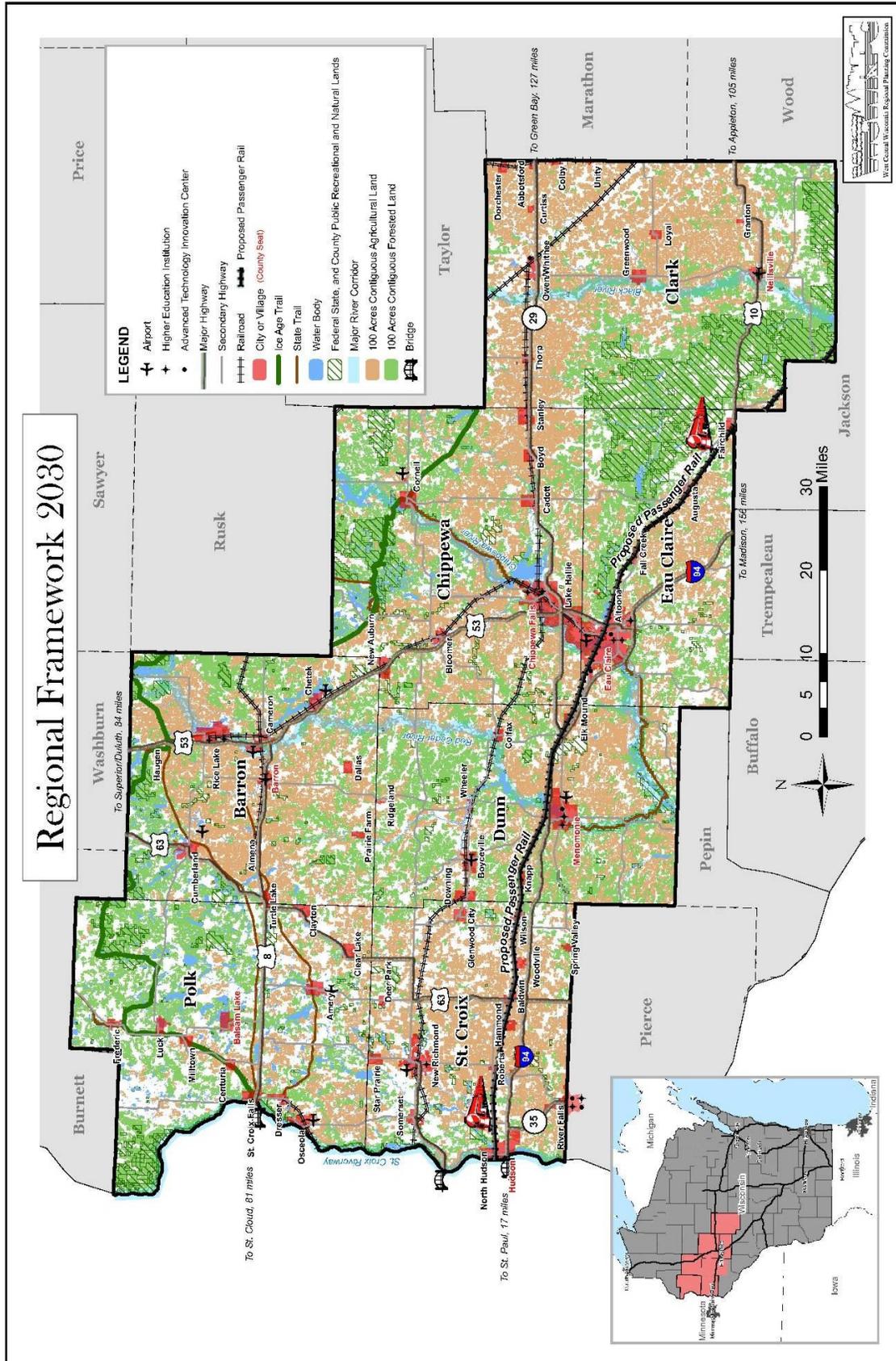
These are lands that are held by the State of Wisconsin or respective county. These lands are anticipated to stay public. It is a goal of the plan that over the next 20 years there will be significant building of natural resource and trail linkages and connections.

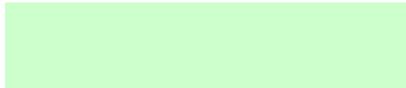
Passenger Rail

This route shows the existence of the currently proposed future passenger rail service along the Interstate 94 corridor.

Bridges

These bridges cross the St. Croix River and play an important role in connecting the local and regional economies in Wisconsin to the local and greater Twin Cities economies in Minnesota. Of these four bridges, the new Stillwater bridge crossing is anticipated.





XII. ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Discussions on energy and sustainability are vital for communities of all sizes. Often, larger communities have more opportunities than smaller communities to address sustainability and reduce their ecological footprint. However, there are many opportunities for rural communities with small populations as well. A community that is more sustainable can become a more desirable location to live and do business. The same

SUSTAINABILITY:

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. *(Brundtland Report 1987)*

can be said about a region. If a region can compete and become a leader in the future of energy and sustainability, that region will prosper and be a more attractive location for people to live, work, and recreate.

The concept of sustainability consists of three pillars: economy, society, and environment. Most agree that to achieve a more sustainable region, all three pillars need to be addressed and each needs to move towards becoming sustainable. For the purpose of the plan, WCWRPC decided to implement an innovative approach and include an Energy and Sustainability Element. This element addresses both energy issues and sustainability issues. In addition, each element in the plan contains a green box that specifically addresses energy and sustainability issues that are pertinent to that specific element. Throughout the plan, different policies address issues that relate to sustainability for the economy, society, and environment.

A foundation of this plan is to lead the State and be among the national leaders in renewable energy resource self-sufficiency and environmental sustainability. Two significant staples that are needed for a region to prosper are energy and food. Without either, the society within a region will deteriorate. The production and consumption of renewable energy and food help our Region depend less on other economies, weather, and governments.

The average American consumes significantly more energy than a person from any other country. However, with people coming out of poverty and more energy-consuming goods becoming cheaper, many citizens in developing countries are increasing their energy and food consumption. This only increases the need for the Region to focus on issues and opportunities related to energy and sustainability, as global demand for both energy and food is significantly increasing.



Farmers market in Polk County



Canola seed press machine in Barron County

In moving toward sustainability, communities should not ignore the needs for higher levels of organization. Certain problems cannot be solved by a community alone. For instance, air and water pollution does not stop at administrative boundaries and require a collaborative approach. At the same time, policies should do their best to forecast changes in the environment and economy, but flexibility will be required, and updates made as the exact future is always unknown.

It is difficult for stakeholders with varying roles to compromise on establishing a system where sustainability is interwoven into the networks that make-up the society. It is important to implement what stakeholders can all agree on, and then additional work needs to be done to reach consensus on other policies that can improve the sustainability of the Region.

A. Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

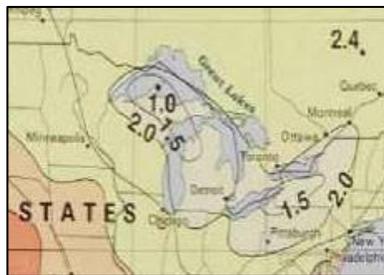
- In 2005, only 4.5% of Wisconsin energy was derived from renewable resources.
- From 1970 to 2005 in Wisconsin, energy consumption has increased 55%, which is more than double the population growth.
- From 1987 to 2007 for every one person increase in net population there was an increase of 1.4 acres of assessed residential land in our region.
- The value of direct sale of farm products increased 111% in our region between 2002 and 2007.



Luck K-12 School is one of two LEED-certified schools in the region.

Top 3 Issues

- There is a need for more information, education, models, and facts regarding the renewable energy potential and sustainability opportunities in our region.
- A regional strategy is needed to assist our communities and the region in meeting the Governor's 25x25 goal of producing 25 percent of the State's electricity and transportation fuels from renewable resources by 2025.
- Energy conservation and sustainability is not a priority for many communities in the region and is not part of community planning efforts.



Germany is the 2nd largest solar thermal market in the world, only behind Japan...

...yet our region has more solar potential per square mile than Germany.

source: www.solar4power.com



Implications

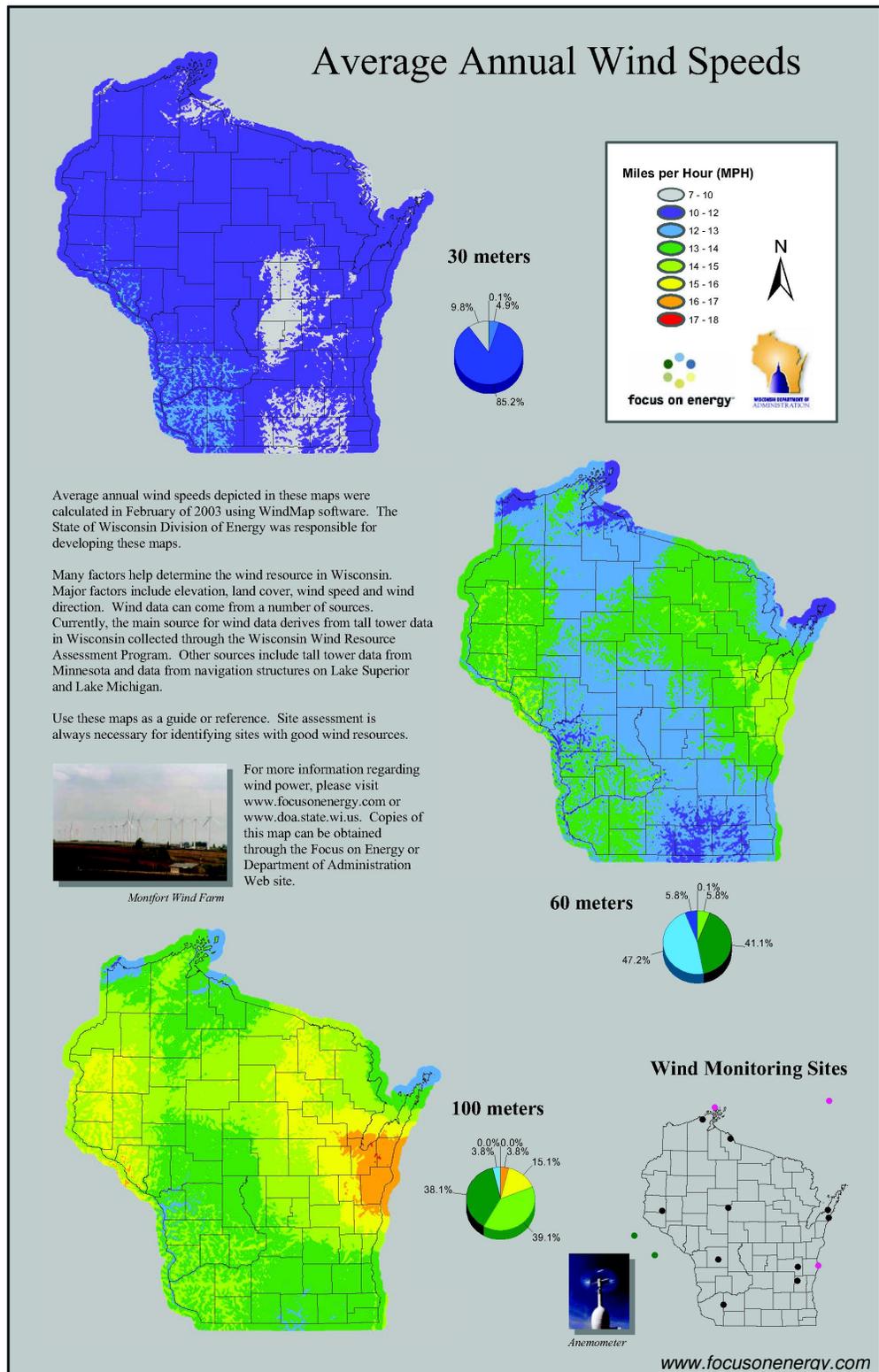
- Energy and sustainability must be considered when addressing all plan elements; it affects our quality of life and the energy and natural resources upon which we depend.
- Energy conservation and renewable resource options for the region exist and will receive increasing attention as fuel prices rise, environmental consequences are considered, and new technologies become available.
- Our region and its communities have opportunities to reduce costs while strengthening our economy through conservation, sustainable practices, and capturing emerging markets.
- The decisions of today affect future generations; we have an obligation to plan accordingly.

West Central Wisconsin also has potential for wind energy production as shown in the maps to the right, though this potential varies based on local site conditions.

Wind speeds increase with height. The maps show average annual wind speeds for different tower sizes.

On average, small wind turbines are about 25 meters (or 18 feet) tall, though they can vary between 10 to 43 meters (or 30-140 feet) in height. These types of turbines are most commonly used to produce power for individual homes, farms, and small businesses.

Larger utility-scale wind turbine towers typically range from about 50 meters to 80 meters (or 164-262 feet) in height at their hub, with rotors up to 300 feet in diameter.



B. Special Subsections

Energy and sustainability programs applicable to or located within the Region are identified in the Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin.

C. Goal and Objectives

Goal:

The Region will utilize its diverse resources to be a leader in sustainability endeavors and will create an environment and conditions necessary for a sustainable future.

Objectives:

1. Assist local municipalities across the Region to develop and meet their community sustainability goals.
2. Promote regional sustainable energy systems that provide our Region with long-term cost savings and energy security through energy efficiency, conservation, and local renewable energy production and consumption.
3. Utilize sustainability principles and practices to increase economic vitality and quality of life throughout the Region.
4. Promote regional food production, processing, and consumption within the Region.
5. Assist municipalities, individuals, and the private sector in securing resources and implementing programs that provide access to investment and financing for energy conservation and renewable energy production initiatives.
6. Work towards a carbon neutral living environment.
7. Communicate and build upon the concept of sustainability among community leaders.

CARBON NEUTRAL:

A net zero carbon emissions by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset, or buying enough carbon credits to make up the difference. It is used in the context of carbon dioxide releasing processes, associated with transportation, energy production, and industrial processes.

D. Strategies

Energy

1. Work with municipalities to benchmark current energy costs, demand, and performance. [*Local governments, Counties, Energy companies, Planning firms – Short Range*]
2. Educate units of government on the benefits of programs/initiatives that reduce their environmental footprint and reduce their energy costs (e.g., Energy Independent Communities; Green Counties; Cool Cities; Transition Towns; The Natural Step; and Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle Initiatives). [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Non-profits, Energy companies, UWEX, – Ongoing*]
3. Work with communities to address energy and sustainability in their comprehensive plans. This can be through model ordinances, technical support, etc. [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, UWEX, Planning firms – Immediate*]
4. Better coordinate the efforts of Focus on Energy, government offices, and non-profit agencies to educate homeowners and businesses on ways to conserve energy and be more efficient on energy use. [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Energy companies, Focus on Energy – Ongoing*]
5. Implement an educational campaign for west central Wisconsin which increases the awareness of homeowners and businesses on energy efficiency and conservation, which includes outreach via the Internet, schools, libraries, and government buildings. [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Energy companies, UWEX, Schools, Libraries – Ongoing*]

6. Establish a network of communities to show the impacts of public policy on reducing the Region’s per capita energy use. [WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Momentum West – Short Range]
7. Develop a better understanding of what combination of renewable energy technologies and operations is most advantageous for the Region. [WCWRPC, Counties, Energy companies, UWEX, Universities and technical colleges, Momentum West – Immediate]
8. Work with the K-16 education system to maximize educational opportunities, career training, and green jobs. [Local governments, School districts, Universities and technical colleges, Momentum West, EDCs, Synergy Conference – Short Range]
9. Identify regional strategies that will meet and/or exceed Wisconsin’s 25 x 25 goal regarding renewable energy. [WCWRPC, Counties, Energy companies – Immediate]

Community Desirability

10. Promote the Region as a desirable location for landowners and companies to grow food and utilize natural resources for bio-energy, within the carrying capacity of native eco-systems. [WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, EDCs, Momentum West – Immediate]
11. Promote the quality-of-life and community desirability to live, work, and recreate, as a result of the variety of sustainability practices, through economic development corporations, convention and visitors bureaus, and other agencies. [WCWRPC, Convention and visitor bureaus, EDCs, Momentum West – Immediate]
12. Work with all stakeholders (local units of government, chambers of commerce, educational systems, EDCs, etc) to develop toolkits that help communities, individuals, and the private sector to become more sustainable and energy independent. [WCWRPC, Counties, Local governments, Applicable universities, Energy companies, Focus on Energy, Non-profits– Short Range]

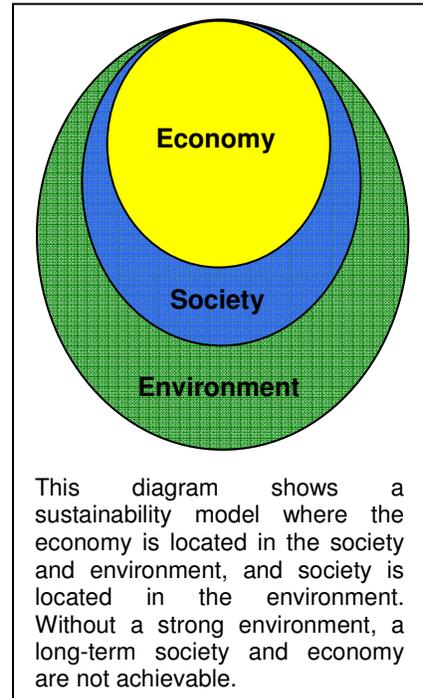
Regional Production and Consumption

13. Promote food and renewable energy producers in the Region through public awareness and education that includes publications, websites, etc. [WCWRPC, EDCs, UWEX, Non-profits – Ongoing]
14. Educate consumers on the benefits of producing and consuming food and renewable energy from the Region. [WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Non-profits, EDCs, UWEX – Ongoing]
15. Create a plan so that the Region leads the State and is among the national leaders in the amount of “direct-market sales of agricultural products to individuals for consumption” in the Region by the USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture. [WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Non-profits, UWEX – Short Range]
16. Identify barriers to functioning regional food and renewable energy systems and create a baseline of regional food and renewable energy consumption. [WCWRPC, Non-profits, UWEX – Ongoing]
17. Identify best practices of institutional regional food purchasing. [WCWRPC, Large corporations/institutions, Non-profits, UWEX – Immediate]
18. Identify existing entities that are currently implementing and working on regional food production, processing, and consumption. [Non-profits, UWEX – Short Range]
19. Continue to host regional events that promote innovation with renewable energy and food production. [Counties, Non-profits, EDCs, Momentum West, UWEX – Ongoing]
20. Encourage direct-market, diversified, and organic farming operations that provide food for the Region and greater Twin Cities metropolitan area. [WCWRPC, Counties, Non-profits, EDCs, State agencies, Momentum West, UWEX – Ongoing]

21. Promote and encourage the sustainable use of natural resources from our Region to reduce the use of resources from outside the Region (e.g. mineral extraction, forestry, waters). [*UWEX, UWEC, EDC's, Non-profits, private businesses - Short Range*]

Business Development

22. Identify and promote early adapters of green technology and promote development of entrepreneurial activities and incubators for the green economy. [*WCWRPC, EDCs, WI Dept. of Commerce, Universities and technical colleges, Momentum West – Ongoing*]
23. Create a regional green economy revolving loan fund. [*WCWRPC – Short Range*]
24. Compile and promote best practices of municipal financing options for sustainable activities. [*EDCs, Non-profits, WI Dept. of Commerce, Chambers of Commerce, Momentum West – Short Range*]
25. Promote activities and events where investors and entrepreneurs interact and network in regards to the green economy. [*WCWRPC, EDCs, Non-profits, Momentum West – Immediate*]



Carbon Reduction

26. Work with stakeholders to reduce regional per capita carbon production. [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Energy companies, Non-profits, Entrepreneurs, Universities and technical colleges – Immediate*]
27. Encourage agricultural and forestry sectors to be prepared for carbon trading opportunities. [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Non-profits, Entrepreneurs, Universities and technical colleges, UWEX – Short Range*]
28. Promote best design, fiscal, and management practices for carbon negative energy, food, and transportation systems. [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Non-profits, Entrepreneurs, Universities and technical colleges, UWEX – Medium Range*]

CARBON NEGATIVE:

- Any process that removes carbon.
- An organization or community's offsetting more than 100 percent of carbon emissions.

29. Promote carbon negative building practices, and develop and track regional carbon indicators. [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Non-profits, Entrepreneurs, Universities and technical colleges – Immediate*]

Community Design

30. Actively work with municipalities and counties to ensure existing and future urban and suburban development be designed in a way that does not solely require automobile dependency and that allows for accessible mass transit and non-motorized modes of transportation. [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, Non-profits – Immediate*]
31. Create a plan to effectively communicate and build upon the concept of sustainability, among community leaders, which would help stakeholders understand, plan, and design more sustainable communities. [*WCWRPC, Non-profits, UWEX – Short Range*]
32. Provide model regulations for community design and building requirements that include construction techniques, siting wind turbines, land-use policy, etc. [*WCWRPC, Non-profits, UWEX – Immediate*]

XIII. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION



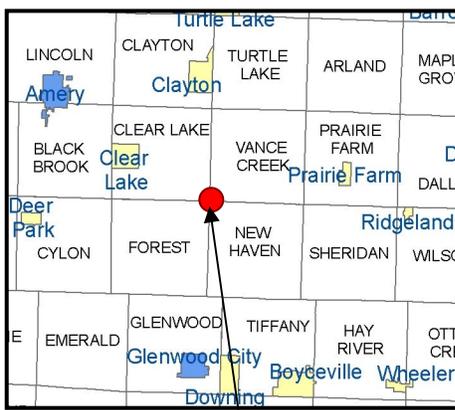
Advances in technology and improved mobility have resulted in the faster and easier movement of people, money, goods, and other resources across jurisdictions. Many issues (e.g., schools, natural resources) cross intergovernmental boundaries, and the decisions, plans, and policies of one community can impact neighboring jurisdictions. As the map below shows, there are many instances when entities abut and overlap with a variety of other entities. The environmental, economic, and social health of a community, surrounding areas, and the Region are interconnected.

Through intergovernmental cooperation, communities can anticipate conflicts in plans and policies in order to identify potential solutions to mitigate such conflicts. Governmental units may also work together to capture opportunities for cost-sharing, competitive bidding, and the leveraging of available resources to everyone's benefit. Cooperation is key to strengthening the Region economically while conserving and preserving our resources. Examples of some activities include extraterritorial zoning and plat review, boundary agreements, and cooperative partnerships.

Getting all communities in the Region to understand the benefits of the concept of regionalism and work together for both the benefit of the specific community and the Region is a difficult task. As former French President Charles De Gaulle once said about France, "How can anyone govern a nation that has two hundred and forty-six different kinds of cheese?" The regional plan is not a governing document. However, like the variables associated with the many cheeses and the regions they come from in France, a common goal of working together and strengthening the Region is needed to move towards prosperity and sustainability.

REGIONALISM:

The combination of the consciousness of a specific geographic area and ongoing working relationships among the public and private sectors within that geographic area. The consciousness and relationships are geared to create more prosperous and sustainable communities and region as a whole.



Intersection of four towns and four counties
(Barron, Dunn, Polk, and St. Croix).

Intergovernmental cooperation is a difficult task. If it was not difficult, there would be more cooperation and coordination occurring. Perhaps the most important attribute of a region where successful intergovernmental cooperation exists is trust. Trust plays a role in building relationships and creating regions where innovation is a common thread. Without trust, it is difficult to build relationships and without relationships, cooperation and innovation are less likely to occur, or to be productively sustained over time.

A. Conditions, Trends, and Issue Prioritization

During the planning process, the following potential intergovernmental issues and opportunities were identified in local plans:

Communication

Increase communication between adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions, school districts, including regular meetings, sharing of plans and upcoming projects, timely involvement in decision-making, joint meetings and joint training, and using alternative dispute resolution to avoid litigation.

Multi-jurisdictional planning

Define and formalize working relationships. Use coordination and joint planning to promote land-use compatibility, protect valued resources, and establish infrastructure linkages and systems. Explore using watersheds and other physical characteristics for planning boundaries. Streamline procedures and review processes with greater emphasis on consistency between communities. Transportation, resource planning, affordable housing, general land-use planning, and economic development, were the most common themes.

Planning at the urban fringe

Extra-territorial powers and cooperative boundary planning/agreements, with education on such tools needed. Cooperative planning is needed to identify the appropriate character for fringe or edge areas.

Shared services, facilities, equipment, and purchasing

Explore and capture opportunities for municipalities to coordinate or share services through formal agreements, if beneficial to all parties. Coordinate facilities and site planning with school districts and between jurisdictions, and share facilities if opportunities are available. Capture joint purchasing opportunities.

According to the RICG and TAG during the planning process, the most pressing intergovernmental issues were:

- Annexation conflicts and impacts.
- Lack of planning and/or land-use regulations in towns that surround cities and villages.
- Little coordinated planning with adjacent jurisdictions.
- Need for Cooperative Boundary Plans and Agreements.
- Poor communication with adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions. Need for regular meetings to discuss conditions and issues.
- Redundancy of equipment, employees, services, facilities, and purchasing.
- Intergovernmental cooperation will increase as State, county, and local budgets become more restrictive and partnerships are pursued.
- School districts will face increased challenges to maintain expected educational standards in the face of declining enrollments and budgets.
- Lack of opportunities to exchange information and increase public understanding and acceptance of innovative planning tools, programs, and regulatory procedures.
- In development of the Plan, it is important that communities be solicited for input as it relates to their comprehensive plan.

B. Special Subsections

B.1. Growth Trends and Planning Activities in Adjacent Communities

A regional comprehensive plan is vastly different than a local comprehensive plan, specifically because there are so many more stakeholders in the process, as every community in the Region presents numerous potential stakeholders. At the same time, there are countless trends and planning activities in the numerous adjacent communities impacting the Region. These trends and activities from the various communities and counties, in addition to the trends and activities from the surrounding counties in the State, greatly impact individual communities, counties, and the Region as a whole. Growth trends for communities surrounding the Region are relatively similar to where they abut the Region, and their issues are similar to the seven-county area. The Twin Cities metropolitan area, with dozens of units of government and a population of over three million, is the exception. The stakeholders in our Region play a very small role in what happens in the Twin Cities. However, growth and policies in the Twin Cities greatly impact a large part of the Region.

B.2. Intergovernmental Plans, Agreements, & Relationships

The number of existing intergovernmental plans, agreements, and relationships in the Region are extensive. Each community in the Region has some sort of plan, agreement, or relationship with an adjacent or overlapping government entity. In rural areas, the primary intergovernmental agreements involving towns are for emergency services and road maintenance agreements.

The counties, cities, and villages often have a greater variety of plans, agreements, and relationships than the Region. Often, these are with adjacent towns. A common example is a city/village having a cooperative boundary agreement with an adjacent town.

All of the school districts are mapped in the community facilities section of each of the County Conditions and Trends Reports. Often, there is little local government involvement in school district facilities planning and operations. This is because each school district operates independent of the communities it serves. With future financial constraints and the growing trend in partnerships, it is easy to predict that more relationships may occur between school districts and other entities with local and county governments.

There are a large number of county plans and ordinances within in the Region. Listings of these are located in each of the County Conditions and Trends Reports and the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*.

C. Goal and Objectives

Goal:

Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relations among all levels of government and other relevant organizations throughout and beyond the Region through communication, coordination, efficiency, planning, and sharing to achieve regional goals.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate development, resource protection, and planning activities within the Region.
2. Enhance relations and foster strategic opportunities with federal, state, regional, and county governmental entities with interests bordering the Region.
3. Implement the strategies from the other regional comprehensive plan elements that involve cooperation and coordination.

D. Strategies

Communication

1. Create and initiate venues to stimulate intergovernmental cooperation.
 - Continue dialogue within the Region regarding growth and development with regular local and areawide planning meetings.
 - Share reports, plans, plan amendments and ordinances and information on upcoming projects. Create a central location/inventory for posting plans, programs, documents, information.
 - Conduct workshops and public forums related to best-practices, issues, and opportunities at the county or multi-county level. Conduct joint training workshops for governmental officials and staff on procedures, innovative planning tools, model ordinances, and issues. Conduct joint public informational forums to increase public understanding and acceptance of programs, innovative planning tools and regulatory procedures.
 - Use electronic communication and networks as a means of sharing and discussing information. Explore beneficial ways to link relevant web content.
 - Survey potential participants to develop program content and agendas.
[Local governments, Counties, WCWRPC, UWEX - Immediate]
2. Involve adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions and school districts in planning process and decision-making. *[Local governments, Counties, School districts - Immediate]*
3. Pursue alternative dispute and conflict resolution to avoid litigation. *[Local governments, Counties – Short Range]*
4. Encourage joint advisory commissions in areas where development pressure is high and intergovernmental issues are complex. Use joint meetings to foster intergovernmental cooperation and address growth issues at both staff and decision-maker levels. An example of such coordination in the Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls metro area could be the development of a Metropolitan Advisory Commission or expanding the role of the Metropolitan Planning Organization. *[Local governments, Counties, School districts – Short Range]*
5. Work to change legislation that prohibits or does not encourage intergovernmental coordination. Identify barriers to coordination and develop solutions for legislative action. *[Local governments, Counties, WCWRPC, EDC's – Short Range]*

Multi-Jurisdictional Planning-General

6. Create alliances/coordination/organizations among communities to promote plan and land use compatibility. *[Local governments, Counties – Ongoing]*

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY CONNECTIONS

Transportation:

- Intercommunity transit options provide transit services for individuals that would like to travel to and from a variety of communities.
- To be truly effective, walking, biking, and transit facilities often cross jurisdictions. To be at their most effective use, these facilities need to be planned and connected via the various jurisdictions.

Community Facilities:

- Sharing community facilities allows communities to reduce energy use associated with constructing, maintaining, and using the facilities.

Interaction:

- Often, surrounding communities have similar issues and opportunities, and often these relate to energy and sustainability. Interaction and dialogue can help promote best practices related to energy and sustainability.



7. Encourage a consistent regional perspective on growth and development consistent with and promoting areas that will enable the development and redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and municipal, state and utility services, where practicable, or that will encourage efficient development patterns that are both contiguous to existing development and at densities which have relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs. [*WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties - Immediate*]
8. Coordinate information and education on broad sustainability efforts. [*WCWRPC, UWEX, Local governments, Counties, non-profits, EDC's - Ongoing*]
9. Coordinate to protect sensitive areas, resources, and working lands, including watersheds, environmental/wildlife corridors and park systems, stormwater drainage, wellheads/groundwater, and surface waters. [*Local governments, Counties, WCWRPC, UWEX – Short Range*]
10. Identify, develop, and coordinate regional transit and linked trail systems to ensure rural transportation requirements are incorporated into regional transportation service development and multi-modal transportation planning takes place at a regional level. [*WCWRPC, WisDOT, Counties - Short Range*]
11. Utilize Memoranda of Understanding to define working relationships and mutually beneficial outcomes between jurisdictions. [*Local governments, Counties - Ongoing*]
12. Encourage consistency in standards, regulations, and review procedures (zoning, subdivision, building, development and design standards, including in extraterritorial areas). [*Local governments, Counties, UWEX, WCWRPC – Short Range*]
13. Coordinate and streamline decision-making and review processes when possible, including exploring joint plan commissions. Improve timing of land management decisions where concurrent review occurs. [*Local governments, Counties – Medium Range*]
14. Support and coordinate regional economic development. [*Momentum West, WCWRPC, Local governments, Counties, EDC's - ongoing*]
15. Federal, state, and county agencies managing land should coordinate those activities with local governments. [*DNR, Federal agencies, Local governments, Counties – Short Range*]
16. In development of the regional comprehensive plan, it is important counties and communities be solicited for input as it relates to their respective comprehensive plans. [*Local governments, Counties, WCWRPC - Ongoing*]
17. Cooperate in emergency management and security. [*Local governments, Counties, WCWRPC, OJA - ongoing*]
18. Cooperate in waste reduction, reuse, and recycling such as Clean Sweep, composting, and e-waste and pharmaceutical collections. [*Local governments, Counties, Garbage collection companies, hospitals, UWEX, large institutions – Medium Range*]

Planning at the Urban Fringe

19. Explore interim development patterns to allow for eventual compact development with services, establish mutually agreeable edges and edge character, and coordinate attractive gateways to incorporated areas. [*Local governments, Counties, WCWRPC – Short Range*]
20. Use sub-area and urban transition area plans, cooperative boundary plans, and related agreements to reduce the uncertainty associated with development along community borders. [*Local governments, Counties - Ongoing*]
21. Encourage proactive conflict resolution. [*Local governments, Counties, WCWRPC – Short Range*]
22. Define required services for annexations and explore staged annexation coordination to prevent leap-frog development, irregular boundaries, and service delivery problems. [*Local governments, Counties - Ongoing*]

23. Coordinate official mapping, especially within Extraterritorial Plat Review areas. [*Local governments, Counties, WCWRPC – Short Range*]
24. Explore extraterritorial zoning where it might address land use and boundary conflicts. [*Local governments, Counties - Ongoing*]
25. Land available within incorporated boundaries should be used to accommodate growth and infill prior to those incorporated areas acquiring new lands with annexation. [*Local governments, Counties, DNR, WCWRPC, EDC's - Ongoing*]
26. Develop information and education on extra-territorial rights and growth management tools intended to address interjurisdictional planning. Analyze the potential disconnect between statutory extraterritorial areas and actual growth dynamics on the urban fringe. [*WCWRPC, UWEX, Counties, Local governments – Short Range*]

Shared Services, Facilities, Equipment and Purchasing

27. Work cooperatively to identify opportunities to reduce service costs and enter into agreements which are mutually beneficial. [*Local governments, Counties, School districts, UWEC, UWEX - Immediate*]
28. Collaborate on development of public buildings when shared use is possible. [*Local governments, Counties, School districts, State – Short Range*]
29. Explore opportunities for shared use facilities with school districts, technical colleges, and universities, considering siting needs for new facilities, including municipal representation for decisions regarding schools. [*Local governments, Counties, School districts, Higher education - Immediate*]
30. Maintain shared service and mutual aid agreements, and formalize them as needed. [*Local governments, Counties – Short Range*]
31. Explore revenue sharing opportunities. [*Local governments, Counties, School districts – Short Range*]
32. Explore municipal-county planning and service coordination involving large or fast growing communities. [*Local governments, Counties – Short Range*]
33. Explore ways to ensure adequate emergency services, including police services in rural areas, and continue and expand police, fire, and ambulance service cooperation. [*Local governments, Counties, Fire and ambulance districts, WCWRPC – Short Range*]
34. Explore opportunities to expand state purchasing contracts to include more items, supplies, and equipment used by local governments. [*Local governments, Counties, State agencies – Short Range*]
35. Explore regional and joint municipal opportunities for wastewater treatment collaboration. [*Local governments, Counties, WCWRPC - Ongoing*]
36. Cooperate in the dispensing of excess, surplus, or used property. [*Local governments, Counties, School districts, large institutions – Short Range*]
37. Be positioned to address the need for more intergovernmental cooperation as state, county, and local budgets become more restrictive and partnerships are pursued. [*Local governments, Counties, State agencies - Immediate*]

XIV. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

To achieve the Region's vision, the plan must be put into action. Direction for implementing the plan is provided within this document in three primary ways: specific guidance for each plan strategy, the plan implementation guide, and general guidance for realizing each major component of vision statement. This section also discusses plan consistency, evaluation, amendments, and updates.

A. Strategy Implementation Guidance

As can be seen in each element, all of the strategies have an implementation description. This description gives an overview of which organizations should take part in the implementation. This list is not meant to be all-inclusive, and it is certain that stakeholders could change. In addition, each description includes a suggested timeframe of when the implementation should begin. The five different timeframes include the following:

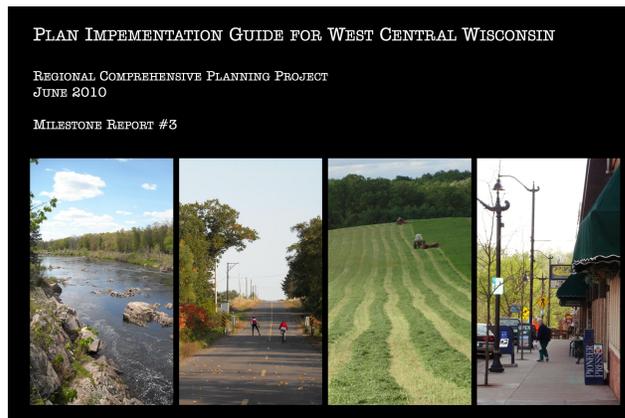
<u>Ongoing:</u>	Strategy is currently ongoing and should be continued. Some of these strategies are only occurring in specific areas of the Region. The intent is that the strategy would be implemented in all applicable areas of the Region.		
<u>Immediate:</u>	Year 1	<u>Short Range:</u>	Years 2 - 5
<u>Medium Range:</u>	Years 6 – 10	<u>Long Range:</u>	Years 11 - 20

Identified timeframes are approximate and implementation of the individual action items is subject to available resources and conditions at the time of implementation.

B. Plan Implementation Guide for West Central Wisconsin

The Plan Implementation Guide is a companion piece to this plan and constitutes the third milestone report issued during the plan's development. The Guide provides further explanation, suggestions, and examples from our Region for many of the strategy recommendations found herein.

Given that this plan is an advisory document, and that successful implementation will rely largely on the participation and action of local municipalities, the Guide was developed for the use of local officials and organizations during their own planning-related efforts.



C. Implementation of the Regional Vision

A unique aspect of this plan was to show the relationship between plan implementation and each component of the vision statement, including related key issues, strategies, and programs/plans. Six primary vision components were identified:

<i>Diverse resources preserved</i>	<i>Sustainable communities</i>
<i>Identifiable communities/rural character</i>	<i>Vibrant communities</i>
<i>Strong social, physical, and economic linkages</i>	<i>Working cooperatively</i>

Implementation guidance for each of the six vision components is provided on the following 12 pages. Key regional issues and strategies related to the vision component are identified, largely selected based on the issues prioritization exercise conducted in May 2009. A detailed example approach for one of the strategies is also provided to more fully demonstrate how the guidance within this plan can be implemented.

DIVERSE RESOURCES PRESERVED

What are our diverse resources?

Working lands such as productive agricultural and forested areas; water resources including lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, groundwater, floodplains, wetlands, shorelands and stream corridors; natural resources such as wildlife habitat, environmentally sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, metallic and nonmetallic mineral resources; and, recreational resources represented by parks, open spaces and natural areas.

Key Issues & Trends

- Intergovernmental cooperation is essential for the effective protection of valued resources.
- Use conflicts can arise between existing agricultural activity and new residential development resulting in right-to-farm challenges.
- Farmland is being taken out of production and converted to other uses.
- Increased stormwater management is needed to prevent debris, pollutants, runoff, and sediment from entering surface waters.
- There is increasing need for shoreland and streambank protection.
- There are growing threats to agricultural and natural resources from disease and invasive species.
- Productive forest lands are being increasingly fragmented.
- Groundwater quality and quantity is increasingly threatened.

Example Related Plans & Programs

- Wetland/Shoreland Zoning
- County and Local Zoning
- Livestock Facility Siting Rules
- Groundwater Quality Standards
- Working Lands Initiative
- Riverway Districts & Lake Assoc.
- County Land & Water Plans
- Farmland Preservation Plans
- Local Comprehensive Plans
- Outdoor Recreation Plans
- State of the Basin Reports
- Wisconsin Watersheds: Planning for Tomorrow
- Other Resource Studies and Plans

Related Plan Elements and Strategies

Plan Element	Selected Key Strategies
Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Working Lands Initiative. • Increase the viability and diversity of agriculture throughout the Region. • Support sustainable green practices to reduce impervious surfaces. • Encourage analysis and planning based on ecological systems and context. • Encourage agricultural and land use practices that limit nutrient loads, maximize infiltration of clean runoff water, and minimize soil erosion.
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide infrastructure/services in the most cost-effective and efficient manner. • Seek to optimize multi-modal connectivity within and between communities. • Promote pedestrian-oriented mixed uses, traditional neighborhood design, and infill development for urban areas. • Encourage rural development alternatives to enhance character. • Inventory and compile information for a regional land use, land management and resource protection data clearinghouse.

A Key Approach: Coordinate regional efforts to protect water quality.

Stormwater management requirements in urban areas, multi-county cooperative groundwater studies, and addressing phosphorus loading in the St. Croix River watershed are some of the efforts in the Region addressing water quality protection. While such efforts are valuable, there is modest coordination between them, resulting in insufficient information and resource exchange. With continued threats to surface water and groundwater, a coordinated approach is extremely vital. It will help focus attention and resources on desirable consensus outcomes. A coordinated approach will also help to ensure that information is clear, accurate, and consistent, and that efforts are not duplicated.

Why is this key?

- There are 68 waterbodies in the region listed as impaired and 73 listed as outstanding or excellent.
- Most surface waters of significant size in the region have associated 100-years floodplains. Based on past disaster declarations, serious flooding events can be expected in the region every four to six years.
- Groundwater quality and quantity problems are evident in the region.
- Our water resources support economic activity and our quality of life.

Coordination and planning

- Common vision
- Cross-membership
- Open communication
- Consistent, accurate data
- Analysis of data to explore relationships
- Sound process with wide outreach for public information and participation

Environmental and Impact Analysis

- Solid foundation and resource for water quality studies
- Information for coordinated action to protect water quality
- Solid facts and support to advocate for water quality protection
- Build political support for water protection measures
- Good foundation for public support & interest



Surface Water Quality and Ground Water Quality Protection

Implementation and benefits

- Moving toward a common vision together
- Prioritize and target conservation efforts
- Maintain and restore ecosystem services
- Help stakeholders, decision-makers and public understand the cost and benefits of water quality conservation
- Enhance aesthetics, recreation and quality of place
- Develop and distribute toolkit and technical resources
- Develop a consensus on region-wide water quality issues
- Improved water quality will support sustainable development

How do we get started?

- Build upon the existing models of cooperation to create new groups of local, multi-jurisdictional, and private interests.
- Extend the existing models of cooperation to create a cross-member coordinating entity with a common vision.
- Communication, education, and information.
- Inventory, verify, and compile regional water resource info.
- Explore interrelationships between water resources, economy, government, and greater society. Define costs and benefits.
- Identify best practices to achieve consensus goals.

Key Players

- State Agencies: DNR, DATCP, COMM
- UWEX, Basin Educators
- County Land Conservation & Zoning Departments
- Local Governments
- USDA, NRCS, FSA, FWS, NPS
- Conservation NGOs
- WCWRPC

IDENTIFIABLE COMMUNITIES / RURAL CHARACTER

What are identifiable communities?

Identifiable communities have places, objects, design, populations, or events that make them different and distinct from other communities. These attributes give the community a sense-of-place, unique character, and an identifiable quality.

What is rural character?

Similar to identifiable communities, rural character consists of the attributes in rural areas that give it a rural feel and create a sense-of-place. For our region, this could include a small dairy farm, forestland, wetlands, and areas of limited development. During the planning process, the importance of eliminating rural land-use conflicts, protecting natural resources, and saving farmland and family farms was stressed. Often, suburban-style developments disrupt and ruin the traditional rural character of an area.

Key Issues & Trends

- Lack of intergovernmental cooperation on land use at the urban-rural fringe. What results is often competition for development, which often results in negative impacts on rural character.
- A significant amount of new development that occurs at the urban-rural fringe consists of larger developments that have limited urban character and lessens existing rural character. Many times, these developments lack any sense-of-place.
- Many communities lack a central public space in their downtown. These spaces can add to the identifiable nature of a community.
- Without a sense-of-place, it is often more difficult to entice younger generations to stay or return to a community.

Related Plans & Programs

- Comprehensive Plans
- Community Design Standards
- Historical Societies
- Main Street Programs
- Farmland Preservation
- Local Zoning and Subdivision Regulations
- Cultural Organizations
- Regional Business Fund, Inc.
- Historical Districts
- Outdoor Recreational Plans

Related Plan Elements and Strategies

Plan Element	Selected Key Strategies
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage conservation design and other rural design alternatives. • Promote urban design that creates sense-of-place. • Intergovernmental cooperation to create development with sense-of-place.
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and revitalize downtown business districts. • Preserve existing areas that have a sense-of-place. • Incorporate sense of place discussion and design techniques.
Utilities and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate and encourage to preserve existing areas that have a sense-of-place, and incorporate sense-of-place discussion and design techniques for new development and redevelopment projects.
Energy and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure urban and suburban development be designed in a way that allows for accessible mass transit and non-motorized modes of transportation.

A Key Approach: Designing Sense-of-Place

Sense-of-place plays a large role in community desirability and can come from a variety of attributes within a community. Design-oriented development is one of these attributes. Successful design is different depending on if it is located in an urban, rural, or suburban area. The Region is predominantly rural, but all three types of areas are important and often impact each other. Some of the below concepts were expressed during the three meetings with high school classes during the process.

Why is this key?

- A community that has sense-of-place will be more desirable to live. With no sense-of-place, there is less to hold you to that community.
- Many communities in our region are growing in a way that makes more of that community less identifiable.
- Downtowns are a key to identifiable communities. Their vitality is disappearing with new commercial developments and big box stores.

URBAN



Challenges

- Older deteriorated neighborhoods/brownfields
- Newer large commercial areas reduce vibrancy of downtowns and provide no sense-of-place
- Lack of public gathering locations/squares where organized and unorganized interaction occurs
- Lack of pedestrian friendly land-use patterns

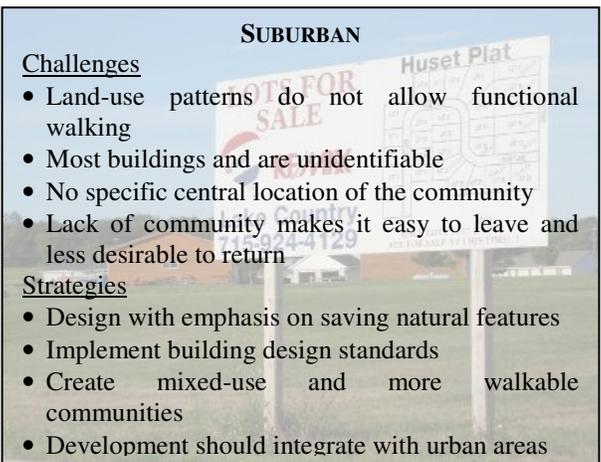
Strategies

- Invest in downtowns
- Require development that allows functional walking
- Create human-scale development
- Incorporate art and sculptures in design

The participants' questions and comments had a strong emphasis on urban, transportation, and community design/development challenges.
– Eau Claire Memorial High School

The discussions often had a general tone that growth is inevitable, the options to guide this growth are limited, and the area was losing its "sense of place".
Somerset High School –

SUBURBAN



Challenges

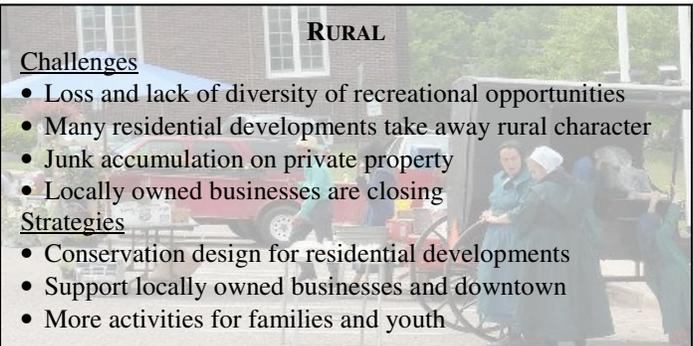
- Land-use patterns do not allow functional walking
- Most buildings are unidentifiable
- No specific central location of the community
- Lack of community makes it easy to leave and less desirable to return

Strategies

- Design with emphasis on saving natural features
- Implement building design standards
- Create mixed-use and more walkable communities
- Development should integrate with urban areas

The participants' questions and comments had a strong emphasis on economic challenges in the community and a lack of recreational amenities and options for youth.
– Cornell High School

RURAL



Challenges

- Loss and lack of diversity of recreational opportunities
- Many residential developments take away rural character
- Junk accumulation on private property
- Locally owned businesses are closing

Strategies

- Conservation design for residential developments
- Support locally owned businesses and downtown
- More activities for families and youth

How do we get started?

- Much community pride is located at the K-12 education level. Utilize this interest/enthusiasm as a means as promoting sense-of-place.
- Utilize natural corridors (i.e. rivers) in community design.
- Distribute Plan Toolkit that provides design options (i.e. conservation design subdivisions, human-scale development).
- Create working relationships and increase trust between communities that have urban-rural development issues.

Key Players

- Local/County Planners
- Business Districts
- Elected Officials
- Chamber of Commerce
- WCWRPC
- Design Professionals
- Loan Programs
- Cultural Organizations
- K – 12 Schools

STRONG SOCIAL, PHYSICAL, AND ECONOMIC LINKAGES

What are strong linkages?

Linkages are the ties that make our communities, and region, stronger by making them a part of a bigger whole. The linkages can be physical, infrastructure-driven things, like highways, passenger rail service, energy distribution corridors, natural corridors, or broadband capabilities. Linkages could also be policy-driven, such as shared-use agreements, or collaborative efforts in marketing the products or assets of the region.

Key Issues & Trends

- Changes in our farm economy impacts our small communities, often resulting in the flight of young people to different areas for employment.
- Region’s vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is projected to increase 30% by 2030; +64% for trucks.
- There are major gaps in broadband and fiber optic service, especially in rural areas.
- Revitalization of freight and passenger rail is important for the development of the region, especially given rising fuel prices.
- Opportunities exist for the sharing of resources between communities.
- The western portions of the region are in a separate media market (Twin Cities) from the rest of the region.

Related Plans and Programs

- WisDOT plans
- Public Service Commission efforts
- Local comprehensive plans
- Shared-use agreements
- Regional transit coordination plans
- UW-Extension programs
- Media webpages

Related Plan Elements and Strategies

Plan Element	Selected Key Strategies.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledge the importance of the Twin Cities metro area to the regional economy; develop regional and local initiatives to capitalize on the opportunities presented by this strong adjacent market. ▪ Promote the Region as a tourism destination through cooperative efforts with the State Department of Tourism and regional and local organizations.
Utilities and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a regional work group to explore strengthening broadband availability, fiber optic service, wireless communications, and related technology needs in the Region. ▪ Increase coordination between governmental entities and utility providers during planning and project review efforts; encourage official mapping to preserve transportation and utility corridors to meet future infrastructure needs, and avoid use conflicts and other avoidable expenses. ▪ Encourage the continued presence of strong post-secondary educational institutions in the Region. ▪ Promote formal mutual aid agreements between communities and agencies for public safety and response, including the provision of public works support and policies pertaining to billing rates, required training, and liabilities.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate regional efforts to bring passenger rail service to west central Wisconsin. ▪ Coordinate a transit service system that interacts effectively region-wide, accommodating trips between counties and beyond the Region.
Energy and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage direct-market, diversified, and organic farming operations that provide food for the Region and greater Twin Cities metropolitan area.

A Key Approach: Coordinate regional efforts to bring passenger rail service to west central Wisconsin.

There are currently several efforts underway to bring passenger rail service, in several forms, to the Region. From high speed rail through Eau Claire, Menomonie, and Hudson enroute between Chicago and the Twin Cities, to short-distance, intercity passenger rail between the Twin Cities and Eau Claire. The two potential services are, by no means, mutually exclusive. In fact, infrastructure investment necessary for one type of service, would accommodate the other, while serving two distinctly different needs. Both modes of passenger rail in the Region are currently under study, and several groups have formed to contribute to the effort and to advocate for the services. A coordinated approach will help to ensure that information is clear, accurate, and consistent.

Why is this key?

- Ability to work while traveling gives passenger rail a major advantage over the auto for business travel.
- Economic development increases in transit oriented development. Over 2,000 acres of vacant land exist in industrial and business parks located along or near the line.
- Uses existing transportation corridors and takes up less land than freeways
- Alternative to adding lanes to accommodate increasing Interstate 94 congestion.
- Accessibility and attractiveness for regional educational institutions.
- Greenhouse gas reduction.

Early advocacy and planning

- Common vision
- Cross-membership
- Open communication
- Consistent, accurate data
- Resource for early environmental and alternative selection analysis
- Sound planning process with wide outreach for public participation
- Best alternative selection



Environmental Analysis/Design

- Solid foundation and resource for environmental study
- Info for community sensitive design and station locations
- Solid facts and support to advocate for plans
- Good advocacy and political support for final design and infrastructure funding
- Good foundation for public support & interest



Implementation and ancillary benefits

- Direct jobs for rail improvements and station construction
- Related development around stations
- Marketing for use of service
- Available alternative transportation service
- More productive business travel to/from Twin Cities/Madison/Milwaukee/Chicago
- More attractive locations for employment centers and business/industrial park development
- New concentrated residential development
- Less congestion on I-94, and reduction of greenhouse gases



How do we get started?

- Promote cross membership on related study and advocacy groups, merge when appropriate.
- Keep communication open and operations transparent.
- Encourage participation by local elected officials and agency representatives.
- Coordinate media coverage and public involvement to keep messages clear, consistent, and accurate.
- Establish a resource for studies and contact information.
- Coordinate funding requests.

Key Players

West Central WI I-94 Corridor Coalition
 West Central WI Rail Coalition
 MN I-94 Corridor Commission
 WisDOT
 MnDOT
 Rail Companies
 Federal Rail Administration
 State and Federal Legislators

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

What are sustainable communities?

Within the context of the vision statement, sustainable communities relates to economic, environmental, and social sustainability. Sustainability is complex because various attributes contribute to a community becoming more sustainable (e.g., strong economy, small ecological footprint, limited poverty, healthy residents). All of the relationships between the various attributes are non-linear, so small changes in one attribute can result in large impacts, and vice-versa. Participants in the regional planning process stressed the importance of a region that embraced the concepts of sustainability. Embracing sustainability will allow a community to be less dependent on outside markets, reduce its impact on the natural environment, move towards economic and social cohesion, and create a more desirable community in which to live, work, and play. The only way to have a more sustainable region is to have communities become more sustainable and work on the linkages and cooperation between communities.

Key Issues & Trends

- Lack of information, education, models, and facts regarding the renewable energy potential and sustainability opportunities in the region.
- Energy conservation and sustainability is not a priority and often not part of community planning.
- A strategy is needed to assist communities and the region in meeting the State’s 25 x 25 goals.
- Energy demand in the region is increasing.
- Opportunities exist for a more sustainable region.
- Region is experiencing a significant increase in local food production and consumption.
- Budget limitations for local governments.

Related Plans & Programs

- Wisconsin Energy Independent Communities
- Comprehensive Plans
- Buy Fresh Buy Local
- Wisconsin 25 x 25 goals
- Eco-Municipalities/The Natural Step
- Shared Service Agreements
- Local Budgets
- Clark County Multi-Cultural Task Force

Related Plan Elements and Strategies

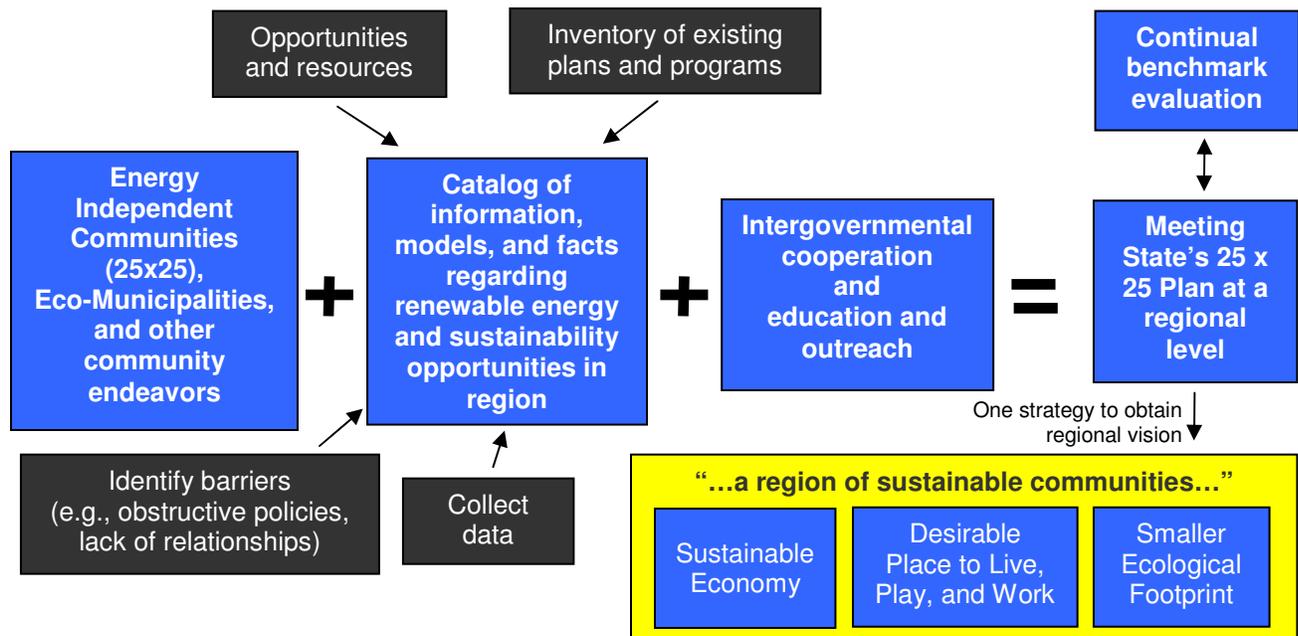
Plan Element	Selected Key Strategies
Energy and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the Region’s per capita energy use. • Compile and promote best practices of municipal financing options for sustainable activities.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage projects, programs, and policies that focus on sustainability and preservation of natural resources. • Investigate potential solutions to employment and community issues resulting from racial and cultural diversification of the labor force.
Agricultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support zoning and ordinances that allow for alternative forms of energy. • Encourage agricultural markets that include farm-to-table, direct market farms, organic farms, and farms for sales of local agricultural products and that produce non-traditional products and/or bio-energy feedstock.
Utilities and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate unsustainable development patterns to reveal its true costs to society. • Include active living and healthy community concepts in community plans.

A Key Approach: Wisconsin's 25 x 25 Goals

Through the planning process, creating a Region that is more environmentally sustainable was highlighted as not only a desire, but also a crucial need. If the Region does not become more sustainable, it will continue to rely significantly on outside resources and be subject to more outside and uncontrollable influences. Embracing sustainability concepts (e.g., regional energy and food production and consumption, sustainable land-use design, multi-modal transportation options) will allow the Region to have a smaller ecological footprint, be a more desirable place to live, and have a highly sustainable economy. While many such issues can and should be addressed at a local level, a coordinated approach would strengthen and support individual community efforts. An example of a strategy for this is meeting the State's 25 x 25 Plan at a regional level. Three important components to complete this strategy are shown below. These components were also highly rated issues during the issue identification process.

Why is this key?

- Working regionally is more efficient than by individual stakeholder.
- A more sustainable region is a more desirable place to live, play, and work.
- A plan would allow stakeholders to learn from other stakeholders who have already done similar work.
- Global environment makes this vital.



How do we get started?

- Gather and catalog baseline information and data of existing conditions and ongoing endeavors.
- Educate communities on opportunities for energy conservation and sustainability. Work with communities to create and implement 25 x 25 plans and become eco-municipalities.
- Set local and regional benchmarks.
- Utilize local endeavors as examples of what can be done regionally.
- Identify roles for stakeholders.

Key Players

WCWRPC
 Energy Companies
 Towns, Villages, Cities, and Counties
 WI Departments/Programs
 Education Systems
 Elected Officials
 Local Sustainability Groups
 EDCs
 UW – River Falls

MAINTAINING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

What are vibrant communities?

Vibrancy is comprehensive, including social, economic, and physical aspects. Participants in the regional planning process stressed the importance of maintaining active, living communities in which residents can live, work, and play. Other times, the need for vibrant communities was expressed through concerns with a lack of employment opportunities or amenities, or deteriorating infrastructure and downtowns.

Key Issues & Trends

- Changes in the farm economy and the decreasing number of farms is impacting many rural communities.
- Large numbers of post-secondary graduates at the Region’s multiple higher education institutions leave the Region after graduation.
- While manufacturing has been strong in the Region and certain sectors are growing, the loss of manufacturing jobs overall is projected to continue.
- Outside influences, such as State and Federal farm/food policies and the global economy, influences community vibrancy.
- Between 2005 - 2030, the number of residents ages 65 and over in the Region is projected to increase 141%.
- Retirees, immigrant workers, new technologies, and the millennial generation offer challenges and opportunities, such as labor force changes, new markets, cultural differences, and telecommuting.

Example Related Plans & Programs

- Region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Local comprehensive plans
- County EDCs, Chambers, Main Street programs, etc.
- Redevelopment authorities
- Design standards in zoning, subdivision ordinances, etc.
- Tourism, outdoor recreation, and trail/multi-modal plans
- Transit, commuting, and other infrastructure studies and plans (i.e., roads, rail, broadband)
- Safe-Routes-to-School plans
- Arts & cultural organizations

Related Plan Elements and Strategies

Plan Element	Selected Key Strategies
Energy & Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote quality-of-life through a variety of sustainability practices. • Support development of green economy and related financing.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources related to preserving historic character of residential areas and traditional neighborhood design. • Enable our older citizens to be active members of our communities.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage bicycle and pedestrian planning for every county.
Utilities & Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of options to promote downtown revitalization. • Encourage outdoor recreational planning for all communities, as well as a regional framework plan which links resources.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a regional economic development strategy. • Update and better utilize quality-of-place information.
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote mixed use development and viable public spaces so more people can live in close proximity to daily life destinations. • Encourage redevelopment planning, infill, and adaptive reuse.

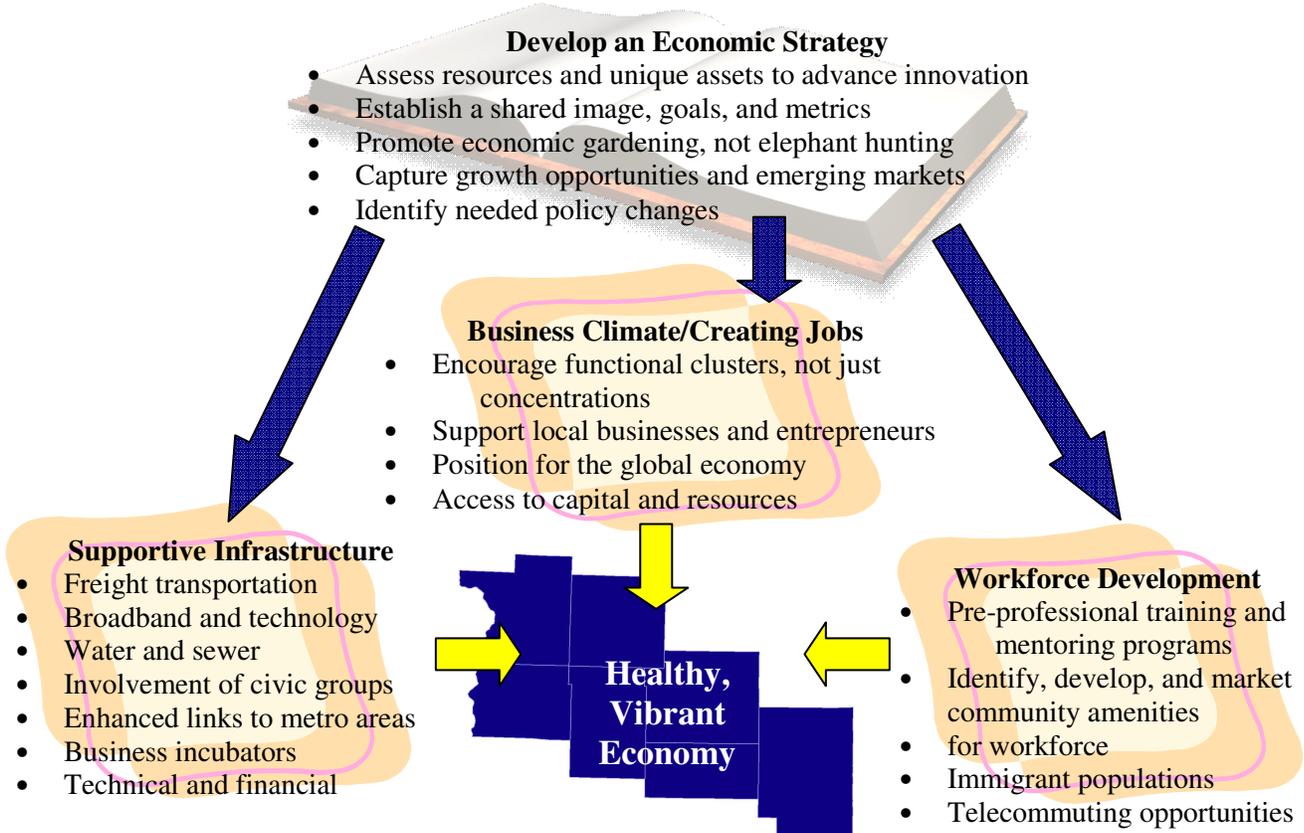
A Key Approach: A Shared Economic Strategy

The development of a regional economic development strategy is a key policy recommendation within the Economic Development element.

As shown in the graphic below, a regional strategy is a needed first step which will guide and focus other job creation, training, community marketing, and infrastructure efforts to ensure a healthy, vibrant economy. For instance, the strategy will help answer if our educational efforts and infrastructure plans are best aligned with the economic goals and opportunities for our Region.

Why is this key?

- Lack of employment opportunities results in loss of population.
- Loss of business results in fewer local resources and amenities.
- Without consensus on a shared strategy, there is more competition, more duplication, and less coordination.



How do we get started?

- WCWRPC develops a model approach for an economic development strategy with input from key players and pursues grant funding for the plan's development.
- The strategy should consider and build upon the Region's Comprehensive Plan and the efforts of Momentum West, such as the branding study currently under development.
- The strategy should provide a regional consensus on those topics listed above, including metrics or benchmarks upon which success can be evaluated.

Some Key Partners

Momentum West
 Economic Development Corps.
 WI Office of Economic Advisors
 Local municipalities & foundations
 Universities & Tech colleges
 CESAs & School districts
 Chambers & Visitors bureaus
 Main Street & Downtown programs
 WCWRPC

WORKING COOPERATIVELY

How can we work cooperatively?

By its nature, a regional comprehensive plan tends to be strong on recommendations to “work cooperatively”. While all of the communities in west central Wisconsin have their own individual strengths and character, we also have the common need to provide services to our residents more effectively and efficiently, often an opportunity for cooperative efforts. Working cooperatively can also give our region a larger voice in an ever-growing market place. Whether we are attracting employers, tourists, funding, or marketing our products beyond our borders, there are often better solutions and greater visibility when we combine our efforts and work cooperatively.

Key Issues and Trends

- Transit services in region are fairly limited, but demand is increasing as our population ages and commuting distances grow.
- 68 different water bodies are impaired, much of this coming from sedimentation and agricultural run-off.
- Land use regulations and controls differ significantly throughout our region, while cooperative land use planning has been generally limited.
- Lack of intergovernmental cooperation on land use, in particular at the urban-rural fringe between cities and towns
- Budget limitations for local governments are making it increasingly difficult to provide needed or mandated services.
- There is a lack of intergovernmental cooperation on land use, in particular at the urban-rural fringe between cities and towns.
- More transportation services to the Twin Cities area and between our region’s cities are needed.
- More regional efforts are needed to analyze strengths, market our assets, and pursue opportunities to attract new industry, while reducing programmatic redundancies and harmful competition between communities and agencies.
- Intergovernmental cooperation is essential for the effective protection of valued resource

Related Plan Elements and Strategies

Plan Elements	Selected Key Strategies
Agriculture and Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a network for information sharing between agencies and organizations, so planning can better occur in consideration of the ecological context, and there are improvements in getting information to practitioners and the public. ▪ Promote and support groups and activities like the Chippewa Valley Stormwater Forum, St. Croix Basin Water Resources Planning Team and the Western Wisconsin groundwater group.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore collaborative opportunities to establish or support grant and/or revolving loan funds which encourage green “retrofit”, energy efficiency initiatives, and related construction methods for residential development.
Energy and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a better understanding of what combination of renewable energy technologies and operations is most advantageous for the Region.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan for bicycle/pedestrian facilities for every county, with state and regional coordination, and regional consistency in construction, use, and maintenance. ▪ Coordinate development of a regional approach to uniform crash data collection. Data would allow WI to access High Risk Rural Roads Program funding from USDOT and allow improvements to be targeted to highest crash areas.
Utilities and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify regions or areas with critical water quantity issues and apply special management strategies, such as regional water authorities, etc.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate land use decisions and analysis between jurisdictions and evaluate the cumulative impacts of development across jurisdictions.

A Key Approach: Education and Outreach

During the initial issue identification phase of the planning process, there was discussion regarding the desire and need to work cooperatively within communities and with other communities. Working cooperatively strengthens the Region and helps mitigate some of the issues that hinder our respective goals. The importance of this is reflected in the numerous strategies throughout the plan that emphasize working cooperatively. At the same time, in most of the elements there is discussion about better understanding and broadening the knowledge about issues in that element, and in instances how it impacts other elements. A vital component to this process is interaction between stakeholders, as this is the only way to eliminate barriers and increase trust, which are both needed in a good, healthy working relationship. One approach to building relationships as contemplated in the land-use element, is for regional educational and discussion forums on a wide variety of planning topics.

Why is this key?

- Dialogue is a key component of creating trust and starting synergistic working relationships.
- Education and outreach would allow stakeholders to learn from other stakeholders who have already done similar work.
- In numerous areas, working cooperatively is more efficient than by individual stakeholder.



Example Possible Outcomes

- Planning for natural resource issues which do not stop at administrative borders.
- Communities with similar issues work together, even across county lines.
- Solving common issues (e.g., water quantity) improves efficiency and reduces costs.

Example Strategy To Eliminate Barriers

- Education and Outreach Forums/Meetings (example issue)

- Natural Resource Protection
- Economic Development Strategies
- Working Lands Preservation
- Energy Efficiency Projects
- Inter-City Transportation Programs
- Land-Use Regulations

How do we get started?

- Identify what issues are priorities for education/outreach.
- Find common ground that all parties can agree on are important.
- Determine if approach for each specific issue is better suited at a county, sub-region, or region level.
- WCWRPC can help facilitate meetings as charged by the Regional plan.

Key Players

Towns, Villages, Cities, and Counties
State of WI Departments
WCWRPC
UW – Extension
Universities and Colleges

D. Plan Integration and Consistency

The West Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan has an important role as a guide for future action and policy decisions in the Region. In addition to using their local plans, communities and counties should consider the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies of the Regional Plan for consistency and opportunities. When any community, county, or WCWRPC is requested to comment on proposed policy changes the Plan can provide important guidance to officials and other stakeholders.

The elements of the Plan are also internally consistent. Indeed, there is much overlap in issues and policies between many of the elements. A review of all Plan data, goals, and policies has been performed to ensure consistency. As the Plan developed, major consistent themes emerged which moved the Plan toward consistent conclusions and compatible approaches to solving identified problems among the elements. These themes can be found in the Executive Summary. Any future Plan amendments must be evaluated for consistency with the overall Plan.

E. Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

Any plan is subject to the passage of time and the likelihood that its policies and recommendations may become obsolete. WCWRPC staff is responsible for monitoring changing conditions and implementation of the Plan's recommendations to evaluate whether an amendment or update is needed. The Plan must also be a living document that considers or allows for change in the Region. An evaluation strategy provides a mechanism to measure progress towards achieving all aspects of the Plan and monitors progress in the context of local change. A process for Plan amendments and updates is described.

WCWRPC will review the strategies annually to evaluate progress on plan implementation and monitor the consistency of ongoing operations and proposed new policies with the vision, goals, and objectives of the Plan. This evaluation will take place during the first quarter of each calendar year, beginning in 2011. WCWRPC will conduct an annual review and evaluation on: (a) progress of Plan implementation, (b) growth trends in past year, (c) issues and conflicts with the Plan, and (d) any needed Plan amendments. WCWRPC staff will submit a brief written report of its findings to the appointed members of the WCWRPC Board.

Prior to the implementation of strategies, the different organizations should consider and reassess each strategy to further determine if each is in the best interests of the Region and/or local entity. Changing conditions may necessitate an addition or modification to the implementation actions identified below.

F. Plan Amendments and Updates

Plan monitoring and evaluation is an ongoing process and will, at some time, lead to the realization that the Plan requires an amendment or updating. Plan Amendments are minor changes or additions to Plan maps or text as deemed necessary and appropriate. WCWRPC staff must be given sufficient opportunity to make a recommendation to the WCWRPC Board on proposed amendments prior the Board decision.

The Plan needs to be updated at least every 10 years as required by State law. It is the intent of the WCWRPC to update the plan every 10 years or more frequently if an update is deemed necessary by the WCWRPC Board. WCWRPC staff is responsible for facilitating the Plan update, working within any general guidelines provided by the WCWRPC Board.

The adoption process for new plans, plan amendments, and plan updates are similar. Consistent with State law, a public hearing of the WCWRPC Board will be held. The WCWRPC Board will then adopt by resolution the Plan changes or update. WCWRPC will encourage public participation during plan amendment and update processes. Frequent Plan amendments and updates should be avoided.

APPENDIX I

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Public Participation Procedures for the West Central Wisconsin Multijurisdictional Planning Project

INTRODUCTION

§66.1001 (4) (a), Wisconsin Statutes, requires that the governing body of the local governmental unit adopt written procedures designed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, at every stage of comprehensive plan preparation, and that such written procedures provide for wide distribution of proposed, alternative or amended comprehensive elements, an opportunity for the public to submit written comments on the comprehensive plan, and a process for the local governing body to respond to such comments.

The governing body of each local governmental unit participating in the West Central Wisconsin Multijurisdictional Planning Project recognizes the need for an open and active public participation process to foster a strong community commitment to the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan to guide the community's future growth and development. To ensure that the public has an opportunity to be involved in every stage of the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, the participants identify the following actions to promote an active public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing the plan.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES

- Each participating local governmental unit shall have a duly appointed Plan Commission pursuant with §66.23 (1) and/or §60.62 (4), Wisconsin Statutes.
- All Plan Commission meetings are open to the public and are officially posted to notify the public as required by law. A period for public comment is provided.
- One Issues and Opportunities Identification workshop where the Plan Commission and the public will participate in a facilitated session to develop and prioritize key issues to be considered in the planning process, explore community values and problems, as well as strengths and weaknesses in being able to address the issues. The workshop is noticed and the public is invited to participate.
- One statistically valid Community Opinion Survey developed with consideration of the Issues and Opportunities Identification workshop outcome.
- One Community Vision and Development Design workshop where the Plan Commission and the public will participate in roundtable discussions, design preference activities and develop a community vision. The workshop is noticed and the public is invited to participate.
- At least one Open House and Information/Education meeting where information about planning activities and plan products will be presented. The meeting is noticed and the public is invited to participate.
- The governmental units of adjacent or overlapping jurisdiction will be notified of the community's undertaking of the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan and their input sought on interjurisdictional issues concerning land use, municipal boundaries and service provision.
- The governing body of the local governmental unit will receive periodic reports from the Plan Commission during the preparation of the plan and will have the opportunity to review and comment on materials developed for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan.
- Where practicable, provide information about planning activities and plan outcomes on an Internet website. (WCWRPC will assist participants lacking such resources)
- All meetings of the governing body of the local governmental unit are open to the public and are officially posted to notify the public as required by law.
- Draft copies of the recommended Comprehensive Plan will be available at offices of the local governmental unit and other public places for the public to review and to submit written comments.
- A joint Plan Commission and governing body Public Hearing will be conducted on the recommended Comprehensive Plan prior to Plan Commission recommendation and the governing body enacting the plan by ordinance. The Public Hearing will be preceded by Class 1 notice under Chapter 985, Wisconsin Statutes, published at least 30 days before the hearing is held. Additional notice will be provided pursuant to §66.1001 (4) (e), Wisconsin Statutes. The public is invited to comment and submit written comments.
- The governing body will consider and respond to written comments regarding the plan before enacting it by ordinance.
- The adopted comprehensive plan will be distributed to:
 1. Every governmental body that is located in whole or in part within the boundaries of the local governmental unit.
 2. The clerk of every local governmental unit that is adjacent to the local governmental unit which is the subject of the plan.
 3. The Wisconsin Land Council.
 4. The Wisconsin Department of Administration.
 5. The West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.
 6. The public library that serves the area in which the local governmental unit is located.



APPENDIX II

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP PARTICIPATING AGENCY LIST

Transportation Focus Group

Chippewa County Highway Department
Chippewa Falls Public Works
Dunn County Highway Department
Eau Claire Transit
Menomonie Public Works
St. Croix County Department of Aging
West Wisconsin Rail Coalition
Wisconsin Department of Transportation - NW Region
Wisconsin State Patrol

Economic Development Focus Group

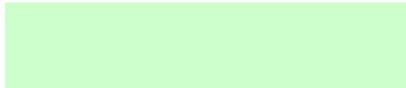
AgStar Financial Services
Barron County Economic Development Corporation
Chippewa County Economic Development Corporation
Chippewa Valley Technical College
Clark County Economic Development Corporation
Clark County Farm Bureau
Dunn County Economic Development Corporation/
Stout Technology Park
Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation
EDA University Center
St. Croix County Economic Development Corporation
Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College - New
Richmond
Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College - Rice Lake
Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development
Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development -
Office of Economic Advisors

Land Use Focus Group

Barron County Housing Authority
Chippewa County Housing Authority
Chippewa County Planning and Zoning
Dunn County Land Conservation
Dunn County Planning
Eau Claire County Planning and Development
Metropolitan Council
Polk County Land and Water Resources
Polk County Land Information
Realtors Association of Northwestern Wisconsin
St. Croix County Planning
St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
West Wisconsin Land Trust
WestCAP
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Sustainability & Energy Focus Group

Altoona Outdoors
Barron County – Comprehensive Planning
Chippewa County – Land Conservation
Institute for Sustainable Community Development at
UW-River Falls
Polk County Renewable Energy Committee
UW-Extension – Barron County
UW-Extension – Chippewa County
UW-Extension – Polk County
UW-Extension – St. Croix County
WestCAP
Western Wisconsin Energy, LLC
Xcel Energy



APPENDIX III

STATE OF THE REGION WORKING PAPERS

Appendix III contains seven working papers on the following topics:

- Population
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Energy and Sustainability

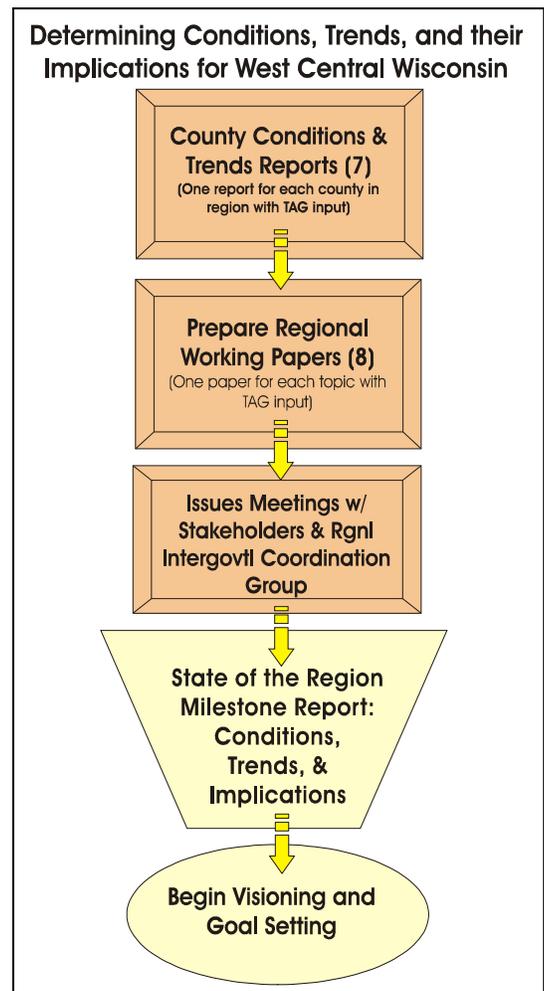
The State of the Region Working Papers were prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) as part of its comprehensive planning effort with the input from the project's Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

As shown in the diagram to the right, these working papers largely build upon the seven county conditions and trends reports prepared by WCWRPC with TAG input. The working papers place the county data in a regional context, highlighting conditions and trends of regional significance.

As such, the information found within this document is discussed at a regional level. Each county's conditions and trends report should be referred to for additional details and background information at the county and municipal level.

These working papers provided a foundation upon which regional issues were identified and discussed. Only by building a consensus on our region's key conditions and trends, can the issues, their implications, and the remainder of the regional comprehensive planning effort for west central Wisconsin proceed.

The Working Papers were originally developed as stand-alone documents, thus each is page numbered independently.



**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN
STATE OF THE REGION WORKING PAPER**

POPULATION

CONTENTS

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2. *Our Exploding Population (General Population Growth)*..... 2

3. *Where Our Hearts Are (Population Distribution)* 5

4. *Change Alone is Eternal (Population Growth Characteristics)*..... 7

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5. *Our Future (Population Projections)*..... 15

**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING
MARCH 2009**



Prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

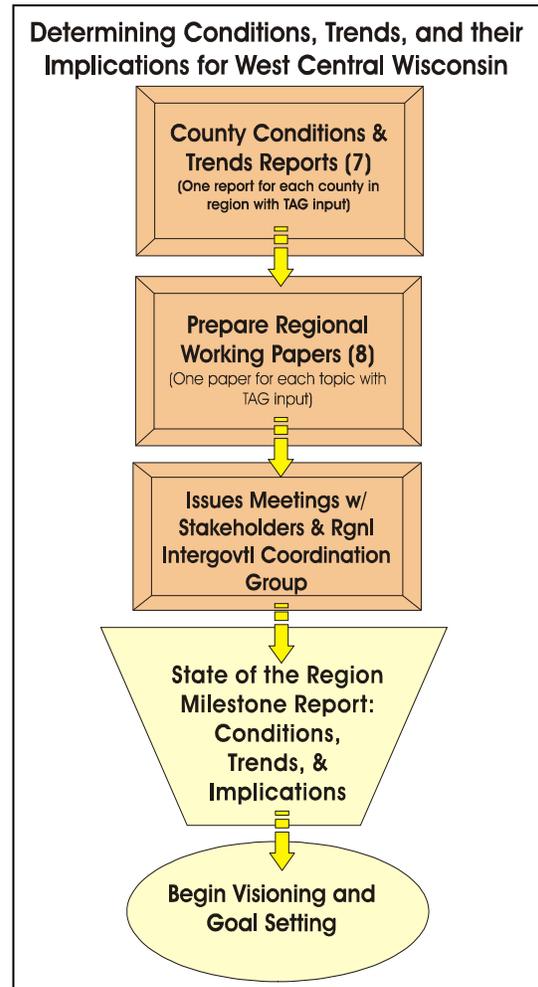
1. INTRODUCTION

This document is one of eight working papers prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) as part of its comprehensive planning effort with input from the project's Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

As shown in the diagram to the right, these working papers largely build upon the seven county conditions and trends reports prepared by WCWRPC with TAG input. The working papers place the county data in a regional context, highlighting conditions and trends of regional significance.

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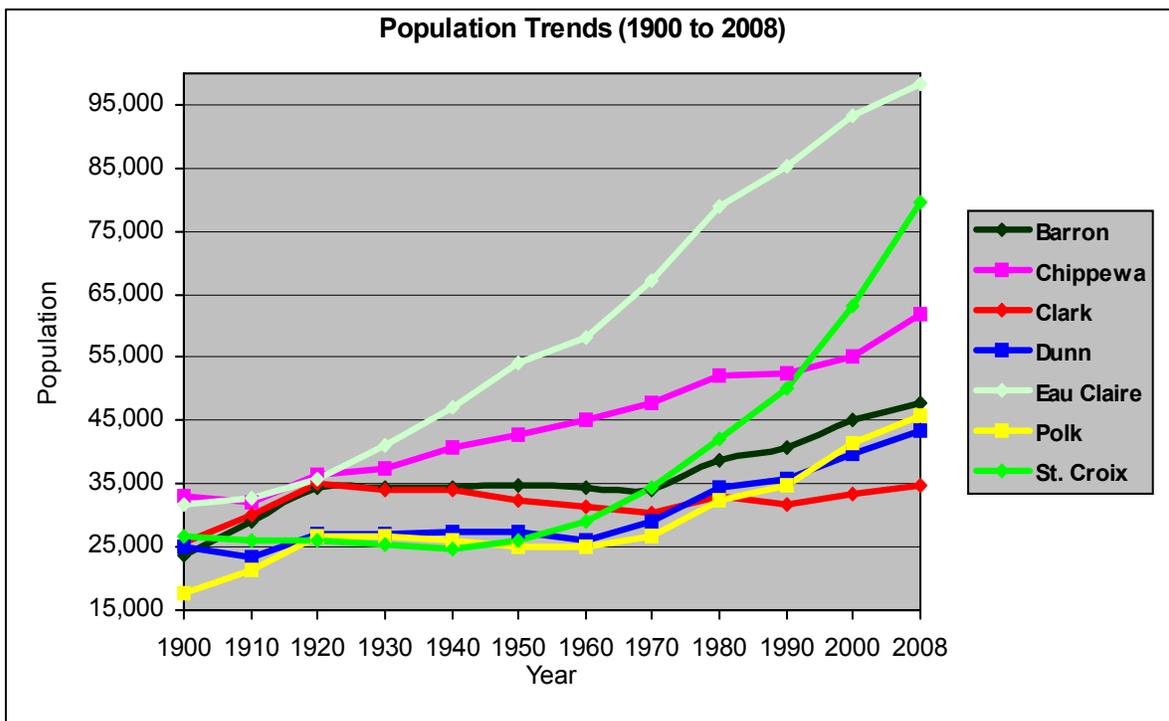
These working papers provide a foundation upon which regional issues can be identified and discussed. Only by building a consensus on our region's key conditions and trends, can the issues, their implications, and the remainder of the regional comprehensive planning effort for west central Wisconsin proceed.



2. OUR EXPLODING POPULATION (GENERAL POPULATION GROWTH)

*“We all worry about the population explosion, but we don’t worry about it at the right time.”
– Arthur Hoppe, San Francisco Chronicle columnist (1925-2000)*

At the turn of the 20th Century, the populations of west central Wisconsin’s seven counties were relatively comparable, all being less than 35,000 in population as shown in the chart below. About 1920, Chippewa and Eau Claire counties began to experience significant increases in population and have been growing at a relatively steady rate ever since. St. Croix County has generally been growing at an increasing rate since the 1950’s, and exploding in growth during recent decades. And since about 1970, Barron and Dunn counties have been growing at a fairly slow, but constant rate. Clark County’s population has fluctuated more than the other six counties, growing since 1990, but still just below its 1920 population.



source: U.S. Census & Wisconsin Dept. of Administration

As reflected in the chart above and the table to the right, over 62 percent of the population growth in west central Wisconsin since the beginning of the 20th Century has occurred over the last 38 years. In fact, the region lagged significantly behind Wisconsin and the United States in growth between 1900 to 1970.

	1900-1970	1970-2000	1990-2008
Region	46.5%	37.8%	24.3%
Wisconsin	113.5%	21.4%	16.0%
U.S.	169.5%	37.2%	22.3%

source: U.S. Census & Wisconsin Dept. of Administration

Since 1970, population growth in the region has kept pace with U.S. growth, while significantly outpacing growth in Wisconsin overall. In fact, St. Croix County has been the fastest growing county in Wisconsin since 1990, with Polk County the sixth fastest. St. Croix County was also the 95th fastest growing county in the nation from 2000 to 2007. On the eastern side of the

region, Clark County, with only 9.3 percent growth from 1990 to 2008, ranked 58th of Wisconsin's 73 counties.

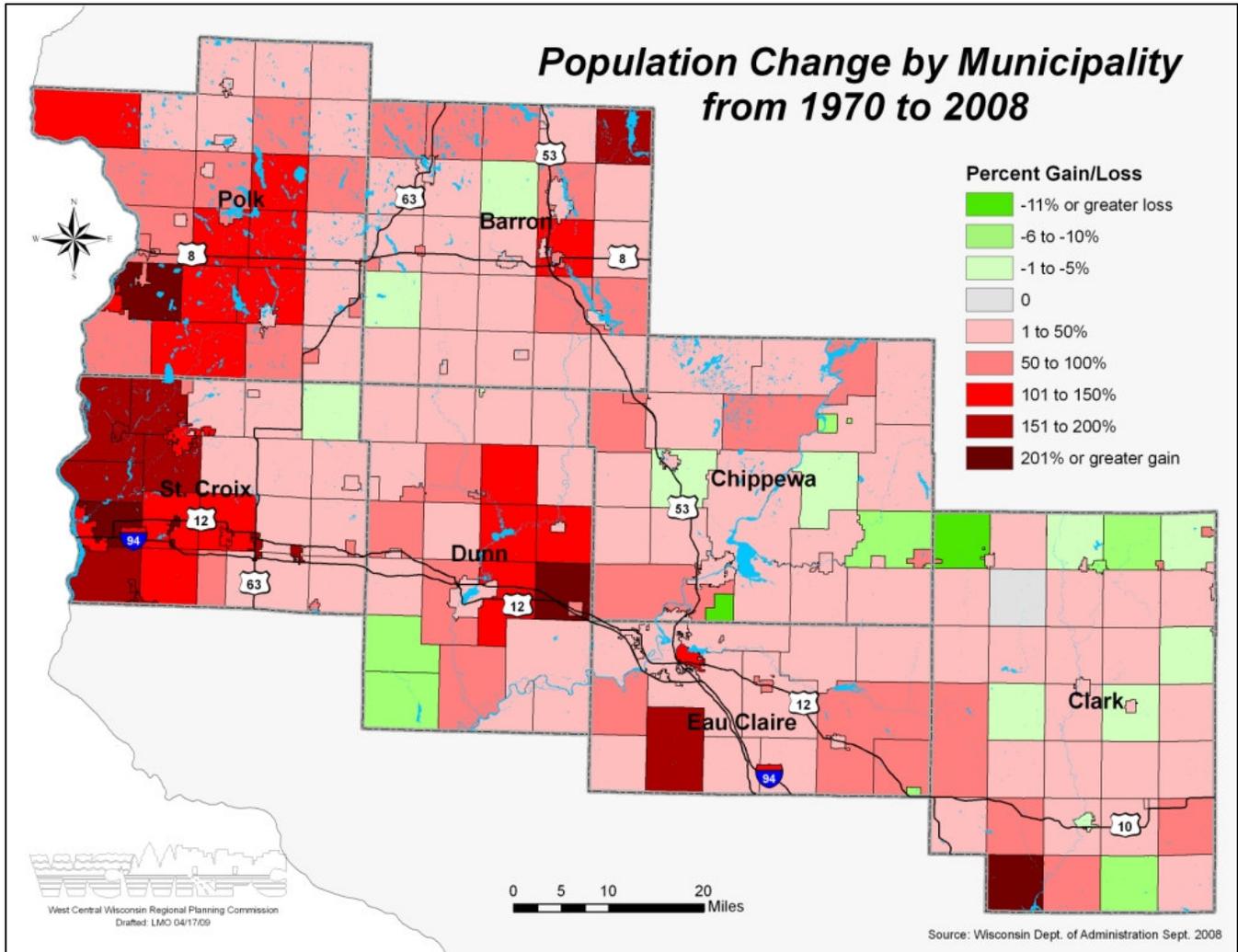
Population Change for Cities, Villages, & Towns			
County	1970 Population	2008 Population	% change (1970-2008)
Barron			
Towns	17,887	26,354	47.3%
Cities & Villages	16,068	21,373	33.0%
Chippewa			
Towns	25,682	29,274	14.0%
Cities & Villages	22,035	32,598	47.9%
Clark			
Towns	19,408	22,401	15.4%
Cities & Villages	10,953	12,188	11.3%
Dunn			
Towns	14,595	22,986	57.5%
Cities & Villages	14,396	20,306	41.1%
Eau Claire			
Towns	18,086	24,827	37.3%
Cities & Villages	49,133	73,475	49.5%
Polk			
Towns	9,933	15,972	60.8%
Cities & Villages	16,733	29,921	78.8%
St. Croix			
Towns	17,578	40,631	131.1%
Cities & Villages	16,776	39,071	132.9%
Region Totals			
Towns	123,169	182,445	48.1%
Cities & Villages	146,094	228,932	56.7%

source: U.S. Census, 1970 & 2000

Based on Wisconsin Dept. of Administration estimates, these growth trends appeared to have continued for much of the first part of this decade with the region growing at 1.3 percent to 1.8 percent per year in population overall. However, more recently with the slow down of the economy and housing market woes, population growth has also slowed. From 2006 to 2007, our region's population only increased by 0.8 percent, which shrank to 0.5 percent in 2007 to 2008.

The table to the left shows that the population growth in the region as a whole between 1970 and 2008 has been slightly faster in the cities and villages. However, the table also shows that there are great variations in these growth patterns by county.

The map below shows the population change in our region by municipality from 1970 to 2008. While population growth in the cities and villages may have outpaced towns as a whole, some of the highest growth rates in the region have occurred in towns. Of the 37 communities which grew by over 100 percent since 1970, seventeen were located in St. Croix County and nine in Polk County. Of these 37 communities, 26 were towns, eight were villages, and three were cities.



The map clearly shows the high rates of growth in the western communities of our region. Higher rates of growth also tended to be experienced in towns with considerable surface water features, such as the Town of Cedar Lake in Barron County, Tainter in Dunn County, Dewhurst in Clark County, and central Polk County. It should be noted that the growth of some towns have been moderated by annexation to an adjacent city or village.

3. WHERE OUR HEARTS ARE (POPULATION DISTRIBUTION)

“Home is where the heart is.”
 – Pliny the Elder, Roman author (23 AD – 79 AD)

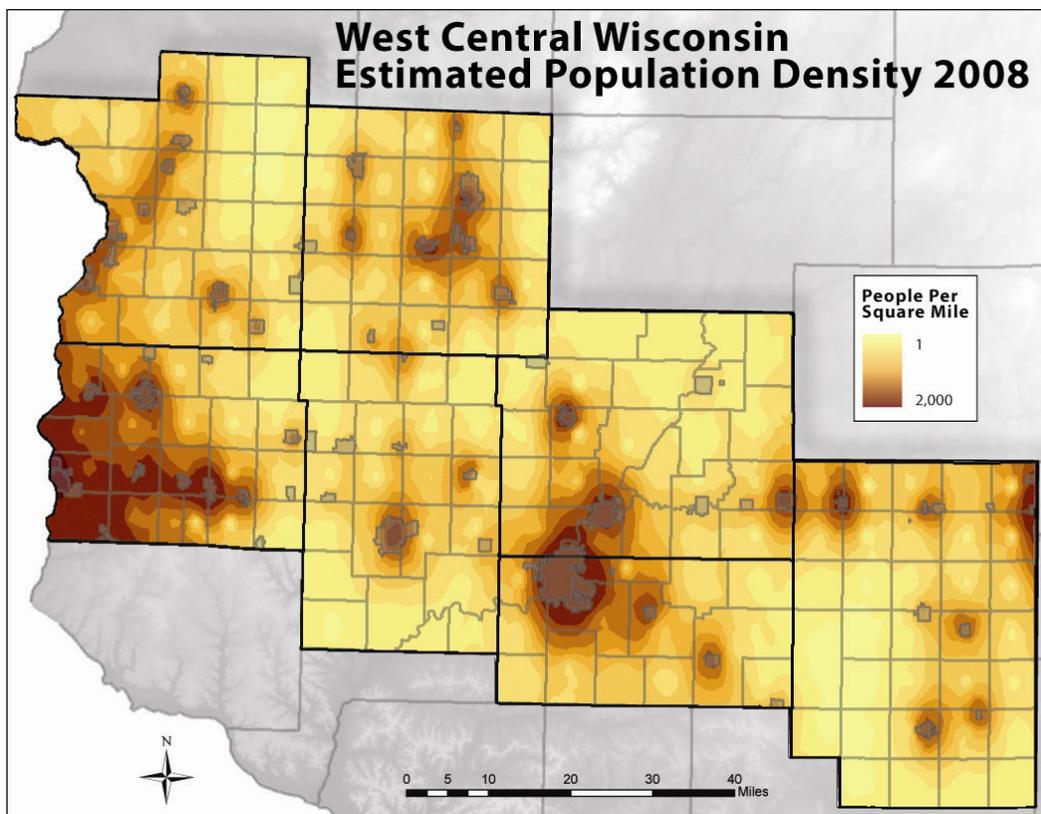
The distribution of the population in west central Wisconsin varies significantly as shown in the table to the right. As of January 1, 2008, west central Wisconsin had an estimated population of 411,376. The highest concentrations of population in the region are in the Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls metropolitan area and in western St. Croix County nearest the Twin Cities and along Interstate 94.

2008 Population by County

Municipality	2008 Population
Barron County	47,727
Chippewa County	61,872
Clark County	34,589
Dunn County	43,292
Eau Claire County	98,302
Polk County	45,892
St. Croix County	79,702
West Central Wisconsin	411,376

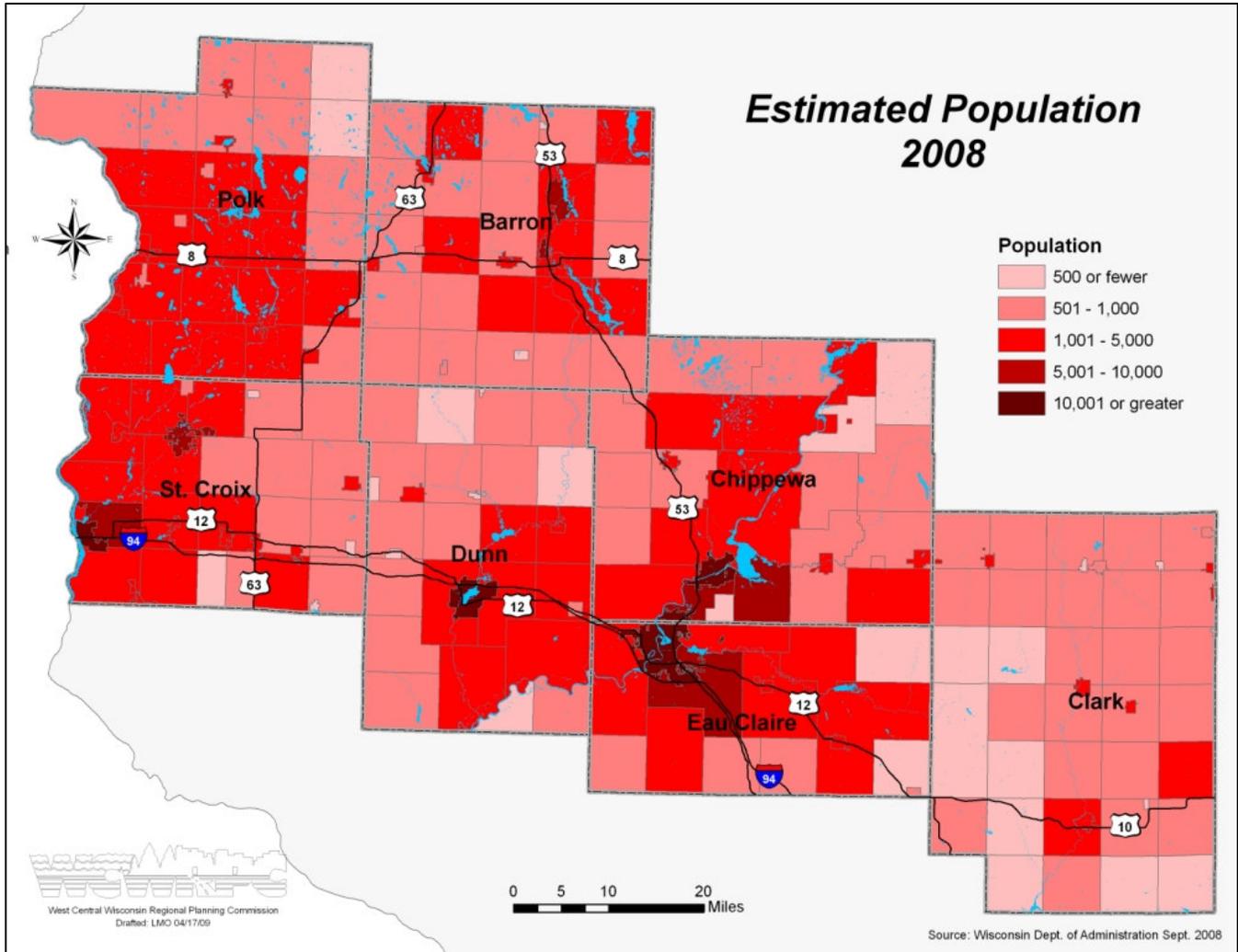
source: Wis. Dept. of Administration, 2008

The map below provides a general visualization of the population density of west central Wisconsin using 2008 population estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Administration¹.



¹ Use of this map is for regional planning purposes only. The map was created by a technique called kriging, which interpolates population density for a given location based on data from nearby locations. While the map shows the general population density pattern using density estimates for areas smaller than the municipal level, local variations do exist (e.g., does not account for certain landforms or surface waters).

The map below shows our region’s population distribution by municipality. While Eau Claire County has the highest population in the region, 79 percent of its population is clustered within the City of Eau Claire and adjacent City of Altoona and Town of Washington.



Also as reflected in the previous two maps, other population clusters exist in the region, such as the Osceola-Dresser-St. Croix Falls area of Polk County and the Barron-Cameron-Rice Lake area of Barron County.

These maps reflect that much of the region’s population is concentrated along major highway arterials (e.g., I-94, USH 53, USH 8, STH 29), while those areas further removed from such principal arterials tend to be more sparsely populated, such as northeastern Polk County. The large acreage of public forest lands and more sparsely populated areas of western Clark County are also reflected on the maps. Other more sparsely populated areas include southern Dunn County and northern Chippewa County.

4. CHANGE ALONE IS ETERNAL (POPULATION GROWTH CHARACTERISTICS)

“Change alone is eternal, perpetual, immortal.”
– Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher (1788-1860)

While the previous two sections review the growth and distribution of our region’s population, this section delves deeper into who are the residents of west central Wisconsin and how our population is changing.

West Central Wisconsin Attracting New Residents

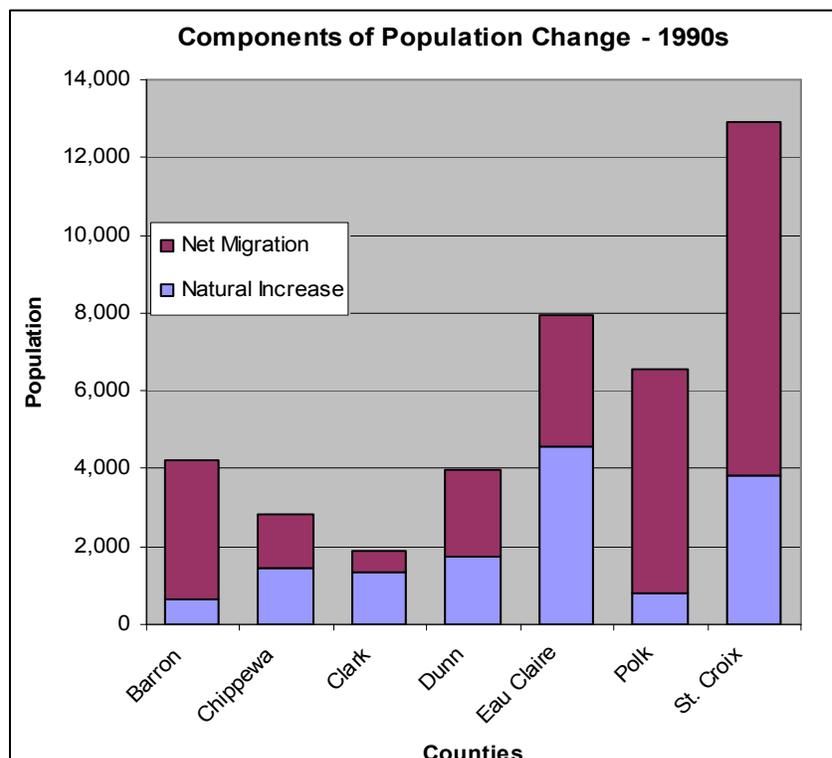
From 1950 to 1970, the population of our region primarily grew through natural increase (i.e., births minus deaths). Many west central Wisconsin counties experienced a negative net migration during this time period as residents moved elsewhere.

The 1970s was a period of significant growth for the region. This was the decade of the urban-to-rural “turnaround” throughout much of the Midwest, when droves of people left their urban homes for a life in lower density nonmetropolitan areas. Net in-migration of new residents outpaced natural increases in all counties in our region during the 1970s, except for Clark County and Barron County. Growth during the 1980’s was mixed and returned to trends more comparable to the 50s and 60s. Natural increase once again outpaced net migration within the region, with many counties experiencing a negative net migration and Clark County losing total population overall.

As shown in the chart to the right, a second turnaround in net migration occurred during the 1990s. All counties in the region increased in population and 64.5 percent of the region’s total population gain was through net migration.

Natural increase only outpaced net migration in Chippewa, Clark, and Eau Claire Counties during the 1990s.

And as discussed in the previous section, such population growth trends continued for the first part of this decade. However, during the past two years, as population growth overall has



source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

slowed, we would expect that natural increase may have once again outpaced in-migration as the primary source of growth in many parts of the region.

The Changing Rural Demographic

Section 3 showed that the unincorporated areas of our region have been experiencing significant population growth. Between 1970 and 2008, growth in towns outpaced that of cities and villages in the counties of Barron, Clark, and Dunn. And during this same timeframe, population growth

in the unincorporated areas of Dunn, Polk, and St. Croix counties was 50 percent or more. Yet, overall in west central Wisconsin, the ratio of the total population in the towns compared to cities and villages has changed very little since 1970.

Town Farm & Non-Farm Population

County	% of 1970 Population	% of 2000 Population
Barron		
Town Farm	26.0	6.9
Town Non-Farm	26.7	47.6
Chippewa		
Town Farm	20.6	5.6
Town Non-Farm	33.2	50.7
Clark		
Town Farm	40.8	16.5
Town Non-Farm	23.1	47.0
Dunn		
Town Farm	27.1	7.3
Town Non-Farm	23.2	44.6
Eau Claire		
Town Farm	6.5	2.2
Town Non-Farm	20.4	22.9
Polk		
Town Farm	31.4	5.6
Town Non-Farm	31.3	58.5
St. Croix		
Town Farm	22.8	4.5
Town Non-Farm	28.4	47.2
Region Totals		
Town Farm	25.0	6.9
Town Non-Farm	26.6	45.5

source: U.S. Census, 1970 & 2000

What has changed most dramatically during this timeframe is the percentage of the farm population in our unincorporated towns as shown in the table to the left. Across the entire region, farm population in the towns has decreased substantially in recent decades. The in-migration of new residents to our rural areas, as discussed in the previous sub-section, has not been farmers.

This changing rural demographic can pose challenges for local governments. Demands for services increase and the expectation levels of new residents for such services (e.g., paved roads, garbage collection) may be different than those of existing residents. Costs for such services may also rise since rural populations are typically less densely located. And with rural growth, the potential for land use conflicts also increases.

Additional farm-related trends are discussed in the *Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources Working Paper*.

Our Region's Aging Population

West central Wisconsin is growing older, though the median age varies significantly among our region's counties and municipalities.

As shown in the table to the right, Barron and Polk counties were the oldest in the region in terms of median age in 2000, and significantly above State and national averages. Yet, it has been Chippewa County which has been aging fastest in the region.

Dunn and Eau Claire County have the lowest median ages in the region, in large part due to their student populations at UW-Stout and UW-Eau Claire. This is exemplified by the 2000 median

ages of the cities of Menomonie and Eau Claire which were 23.2 years and 28.4 years, respectively. And, as compared in the previous components of population change graph, those counties with a relatively high proportion of natural increase (births), also tended to have a relatively lower median age, such as Clark County.

The map on the following page shows median age by municipality. In 2000, there were 47 municipalities in our region with a median age of 40 or more years, which is considered an older population. Only eight had a median age less than 30 years. No generalities can be made regarding unincorporated communities being older than the incorporated cities and villages. However, some interesting trends are apparent.

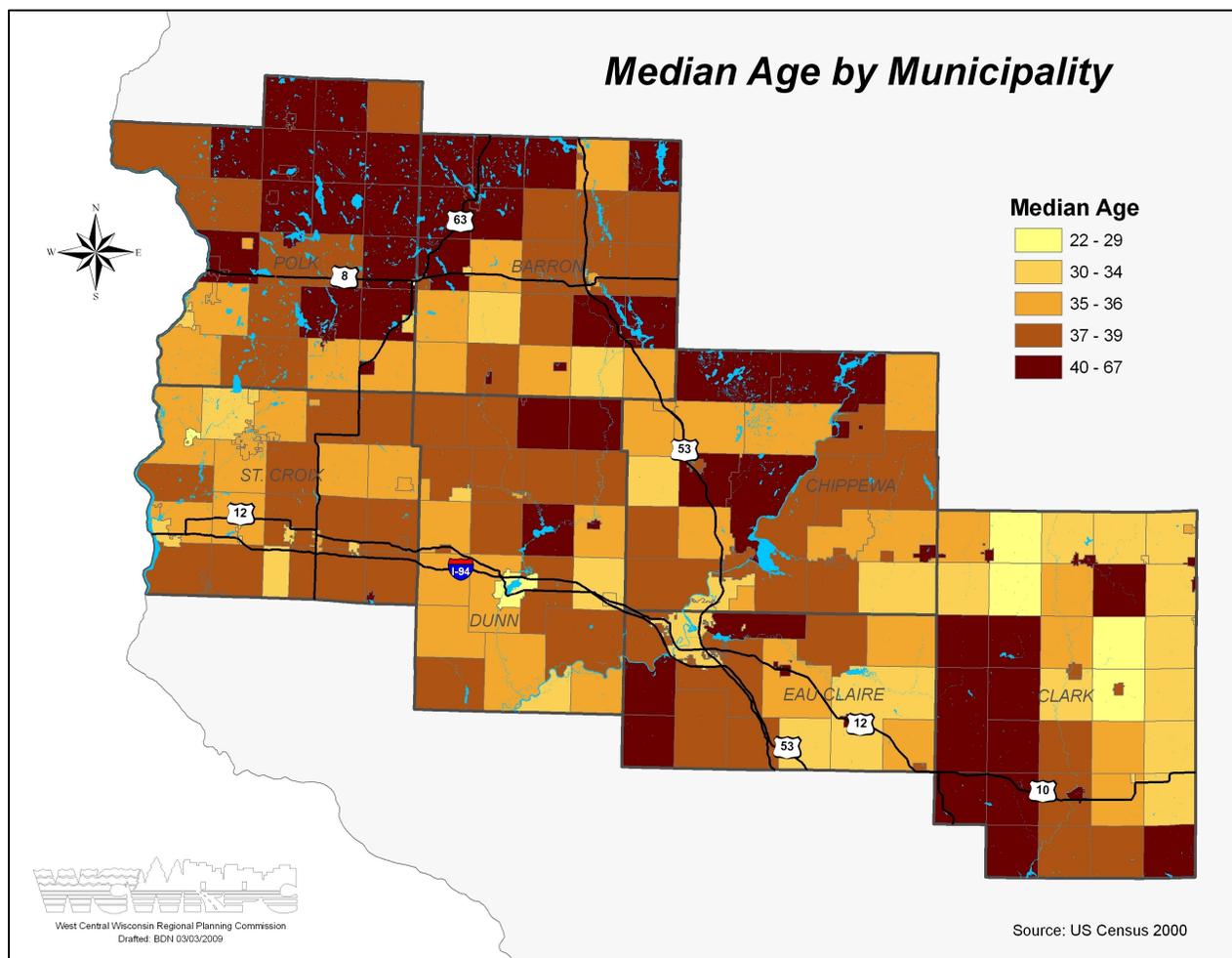
A comparison to the previous population maps shows that those municipalities with the highest median ages do tend to be less populated and often growing more slowly, such as northern Polk County and southwest Clark County.

The exceptions to this relationship tended to be those municipalities with significant water resources, such as the Chetek and Balsam Lake areas. This become even more apparent when comparing the median age map to the season housing map in the Housing Working Paper. Generally, those communities with higher numbers of seasonal housing units also tended to have higher median ages as more persons are moving to such area to retire.

Median Age (1980-2000)

Jurisdiction	1980 Median Age	2000 Median Age	1980-2000 Change
Barron Co.	31.0	38.8	7.8
Chippewa Co.	27.1	37.6	10.5
Clark Co.	30.4	35.9	5.5
Dunn Co.	25.4	30.6	5.2
Eau Claire Co.	27.0	32.4	5.4
Polk Co.	31.4	38.7	7.3
St. Croix Co.	28.0	35.0	7.0
State of Wisconsin	29.4	36.0	6.6
United States	30.0	36.5	6.5

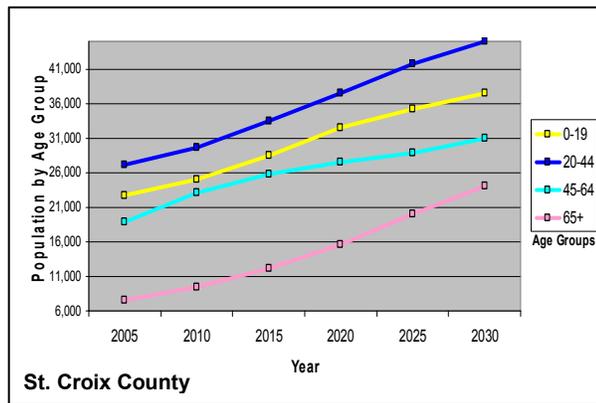
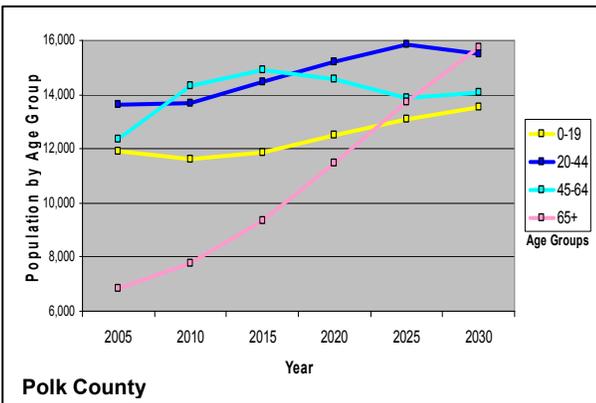
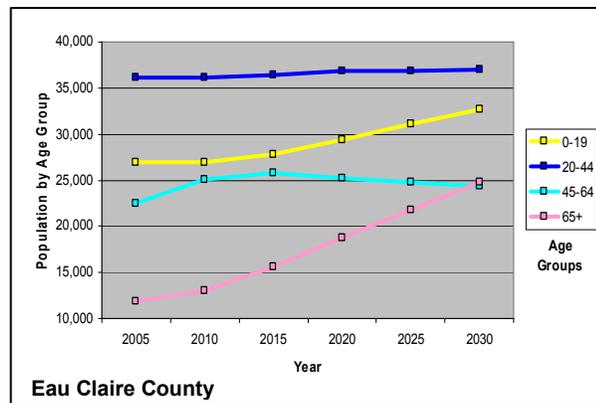
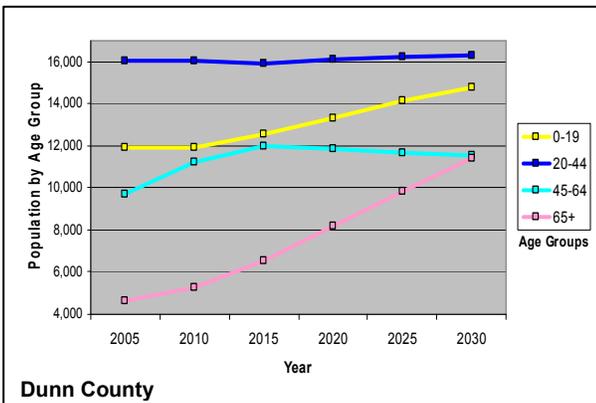
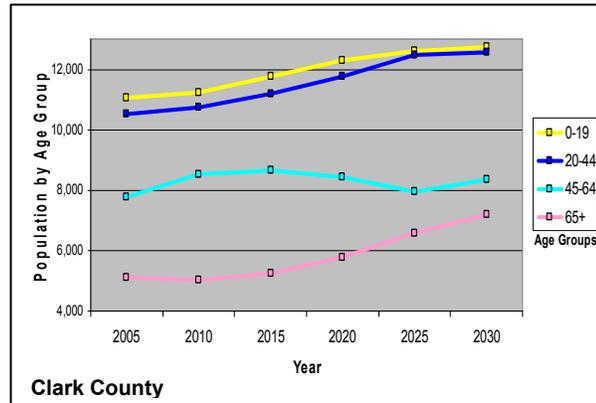
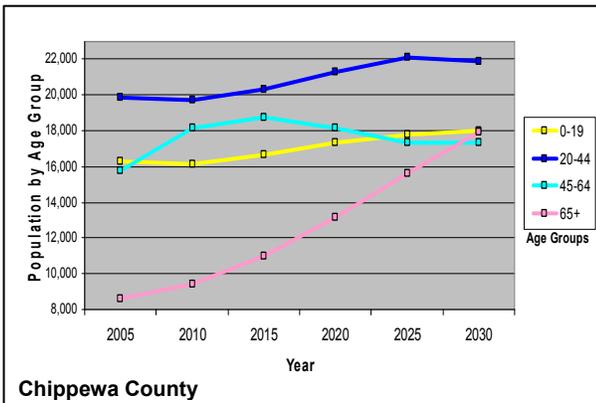
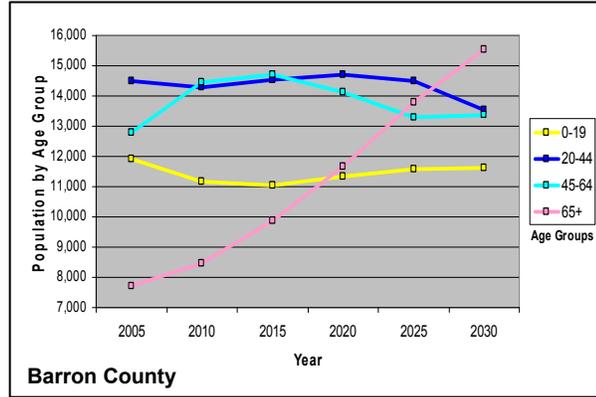
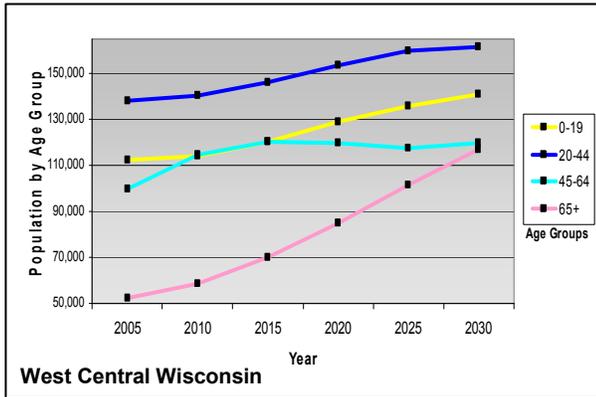
source: U.S. Census, 1980 & 2000



The series of charts on the following page shows the projected population change for various age groups in west central Wisconsin. Most apparent is the significant growth in the 65+ age group over the next 25 years as the baby boomers reach retirement. The charts also show a considerable range of circumstances for each county in our region, reflecting the differences in migration and natural increase trends discussed previously.

These changes will have a variety of policy, economic, and land use implications for our region as the labor force as a percentage of the total population shrinks, while the demand for senior services (e.g., housing, transportation, health, social, recreation) increases. The *Economic Development Working Paper* will further discuss some of these related trends.

West Central Wisconsin Age and Labor Force Projections (2005-2030)



source: Wis. Dept. of Administration, Aug 2008

Growing More Diverse

Our region is quite homogenous overall, with 96.9 percent of our population being white (one race, non-Hispanic) as of 2000, compared to 88.9 percent for the State of Wisconsin and 75.1 percent of the nation. Even so, the population of west central Wisconsin is becoming more diverse.

According to U.S. Census figures, the number of Hispanic and non-white residents recorded in the census in our region grew by 84.2 percent from 1990 to 2000, with the largest percentage increases experienced in St. Croix, Clark, and Barron counties. By far, the Hispanic population constituted the largest portion of this increase, though the Asian population continues to be our largest minority group. As of 2000, the City of Eau Claire was the most racially and ethnically diverse municipality in the region and the ninth most diverse in Wisconsin.

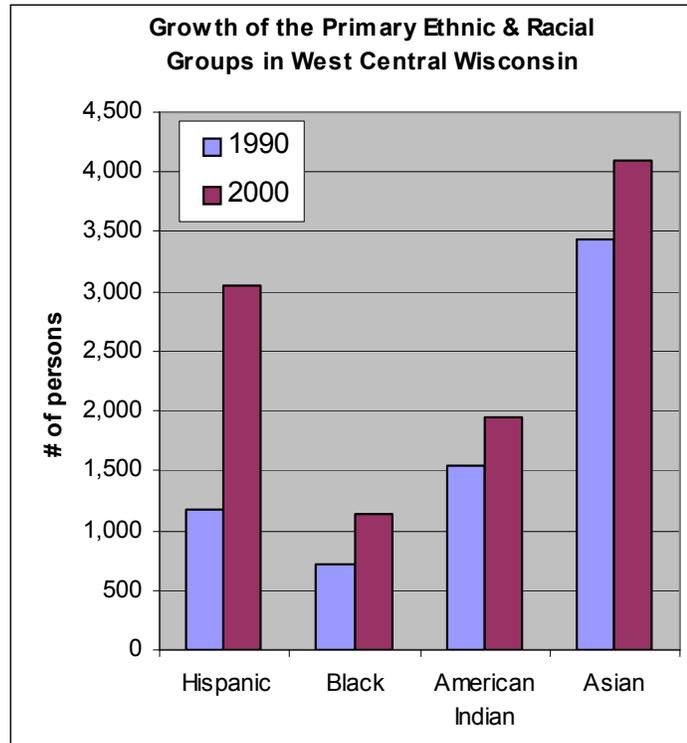
And while these other racial and ethnic groups still only made up 3.6 percent of the region's total population in 2000, such demographic changes can potentially result in new challenges for

local communities, such as language barriers, cultural differences, changes in economic patterns, different agricultural practices, or a lack of understanding of governmental systems and services.

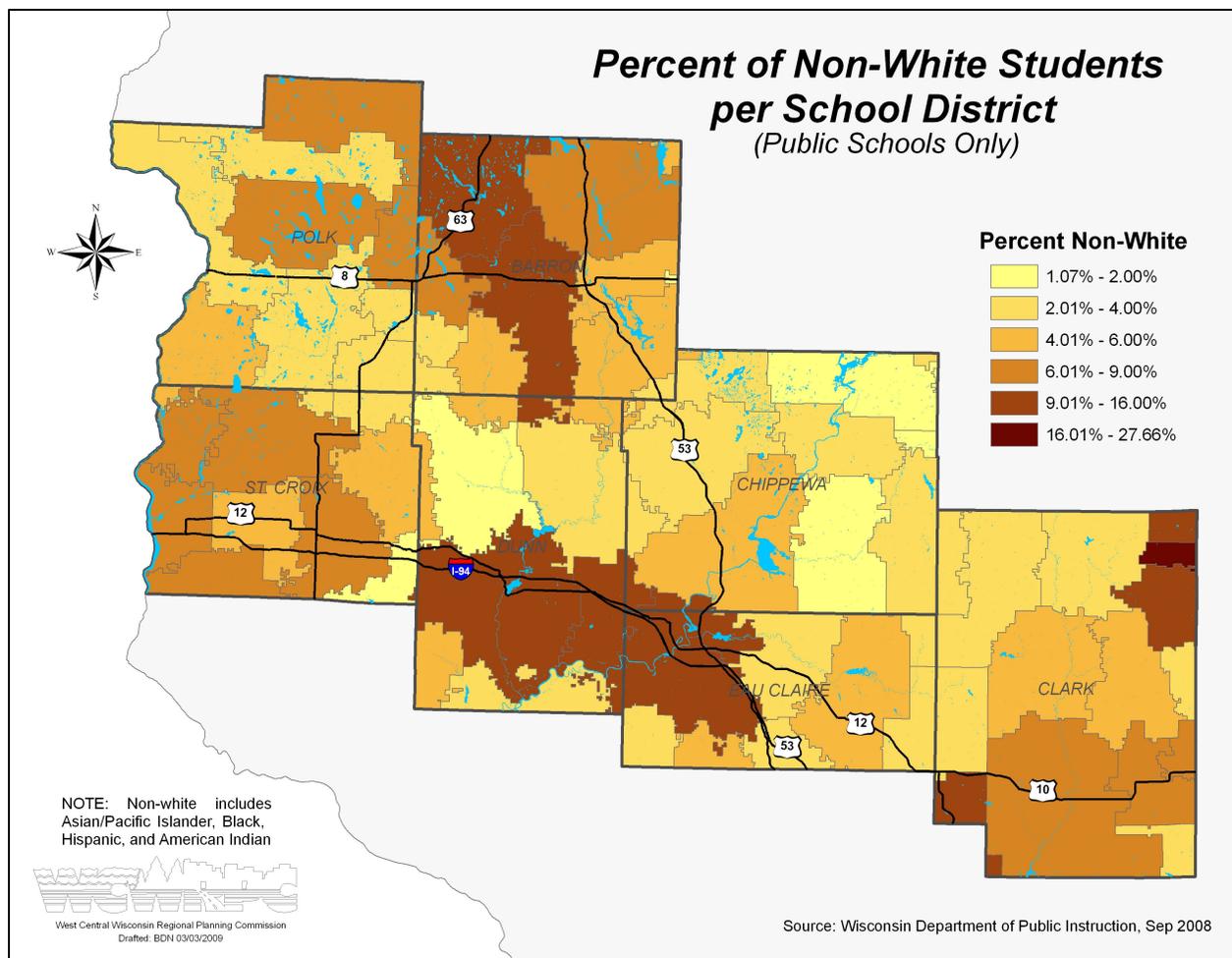
The map on the following page shows the percent of non-white students (includes White Hispanic) enrolled in public schools by district as of September 2008. This information is used as a proxy to show the distribution of non-white populations (e.g., Asian, Hispanic, Black, American Indian) across our region since U.S. Census data is currently outdated and census data often under reports the number of minorities, especially in rural areas. Also, by looking at enrolled students, we receive an indication of the number of established families who may likely be in a community for an extended time since they have enrolled their children in school.

The map shows four concentrations of non-white student populations of particular note:

- Abbotsford Area Hispanic Population – The Abbotsford School District, with a 27.7 percent non-white enrollment, has the highest concentration of minority students of any school district in our region. The adjacent Colby School District has a 10.9 percent non-white enrollment.



source: U.S. Census, 1990 & 2000



The far majority of the non-white students in these two districts are Hispanic, with many of their families attracted to the area by food processing employment opportunities. There is also a significant Hispanic population in the Alma Center School District which overlaps the far southwestern corner of Clark County, though the majority of these families reside in Jackson County.

- Interstate 94 Corridor Diversity – Those school districts along Interstate 94 generally have higher percentages of non-white students. The Eau Claire School District, with a 15.5 percent non-white enrollment, is the second highest of any school district in our region. Though there is a diversity of ethnic groups in these districts, it is Asian students that make up the largest percentage of non-white enrollment. While the Asian students in the Eau Claire, Elk Mound, and Menomonie districts are primarily of Hmong descent, the St. Croix County districts have a more ethnically diverse Asian student population. Also in St. Croix County, there is a greater mix of Asian and Hispanic populations, with higher percentages of Hispanic students as one moves towards the north parts of the county.
- Barron County Food Processing - Like Abbotsford, employment opportunities at food processing facilities in the Cumberland and Barron areas have attracted a sizable non-white population. The Cumberland School District has the third highest non-white enrollment in the region at 12.4 percent, with these students split fairly evenly between

Hispanic and American Indian families. Almost seven percent of the enrollment in the Barron School District is Black (largely Somali), with a significant Hispanic population as well. The Rice Lake district also has a sizable Hispanic enrollment.

- St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin – The St. Croix Chippewa have scattered tribal lands across northwest Wisconsin, including villages and facilities in northwestern Barron County and northeastern Polk County. The significant minority enrollment in school districts such as Unity, Frederic, Turtle Lake, and Cumberland all reflect a sizable American Indian population.

Eau Claire, Clark, and Barron counties are also home to substantial Amish and Mennonite communities. Estimating the Amish and Mennonite population is difficult. One method is using those persons of “Pennsylvania German” ancestry as reported in the U.S. Census. But the Wisconsin Applied Population Laboratory cautions that the actual population is likely 3-4 times higher than using ancestry as a proxy for Amish. Even so, these census numbers do provide a relatively good understanding of the distribution of Amish and Mennonite populations in our region.

Distribution of Pennsylvania German (2000)

Municipality	County	# of Pennsylvania German (2000)
Town of Bridge Creek	Eau Claire	78
Town of Lynn	Clark	33
Town of Reseburg	Clark	29
Town of Withee	Clark	17
Town of Vance Creek	Barron	17
Town of Fairchild	Eau Claire	16
All remaining Clark County	Clark	44
All remaining Barron County	Barron	33
All remaining Eau Claire County	Eau Claire	11
All of Chippewa County	Chippewa	9
All of Dunn County	Dunn	7
All of St. Croix County	St. Croix	7

source: U.S. Census, 2000

The Town of Bridge Creek in southeastern Eau Claire County not only had the highest concentration of persons of Pennsylvania German ancestry in the region in 2000, but the second highest in Wisconsin. The Town of Lynn in Clark County was sixth highest in the state. The above table demonstrates that the Amish and Mennonite of our region tend to be most concentrated in the areas of southeastern Eau Claire County, southern Clark County, and various rural parts of Barron County.

5. OUR FUTURE (POPULATION PROJECTIONS)

“Children are one-third of our population and all of our future.”
 – Select Panel for the Promotion of Child Health (1981)

The Wisconsin Department of Administration is statutorily charged with estimating and projecting the population of Wisconsin. These same projections were used to develop the age and labor force charts provided previously, supplying insight into our region’s growth.

As the table to the right shows, our region’s population is projected to increase by over 30 percent in the next 22 years, with St. Croix County continuing to lead our region in growth. The first map on the following page shows the project population totals by municipality in 2030.

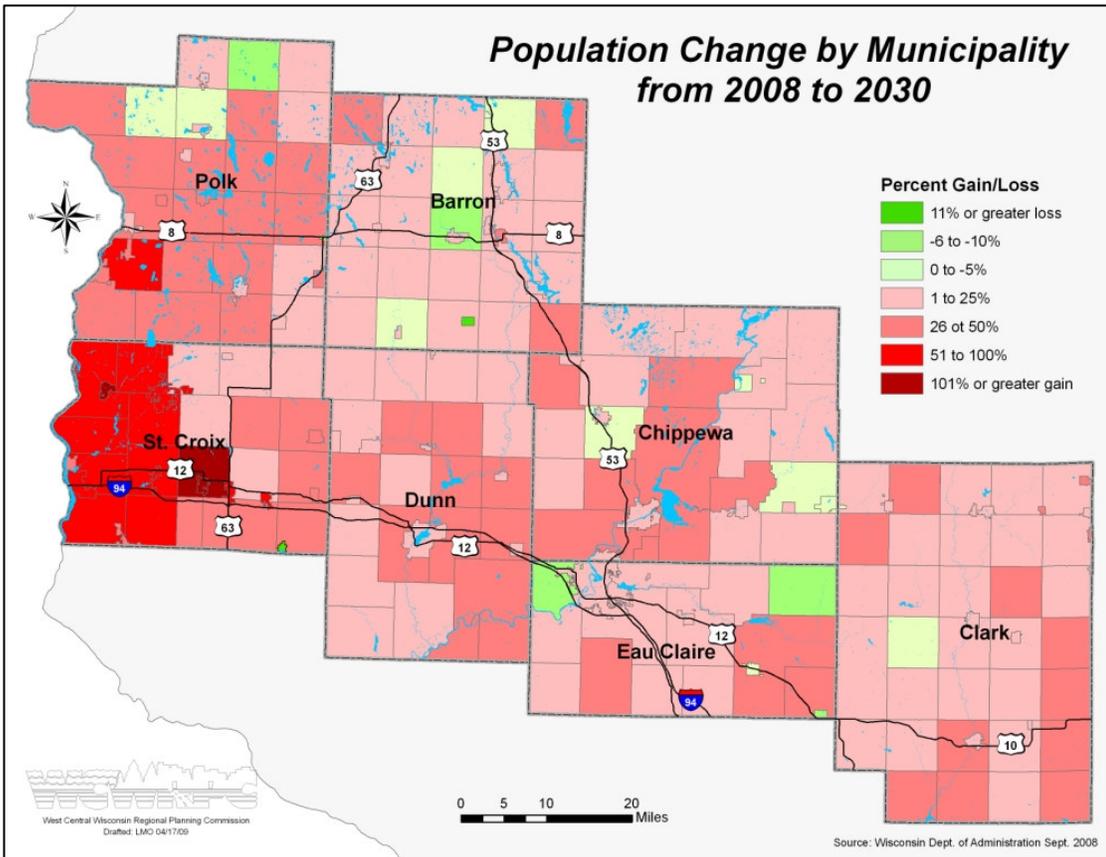
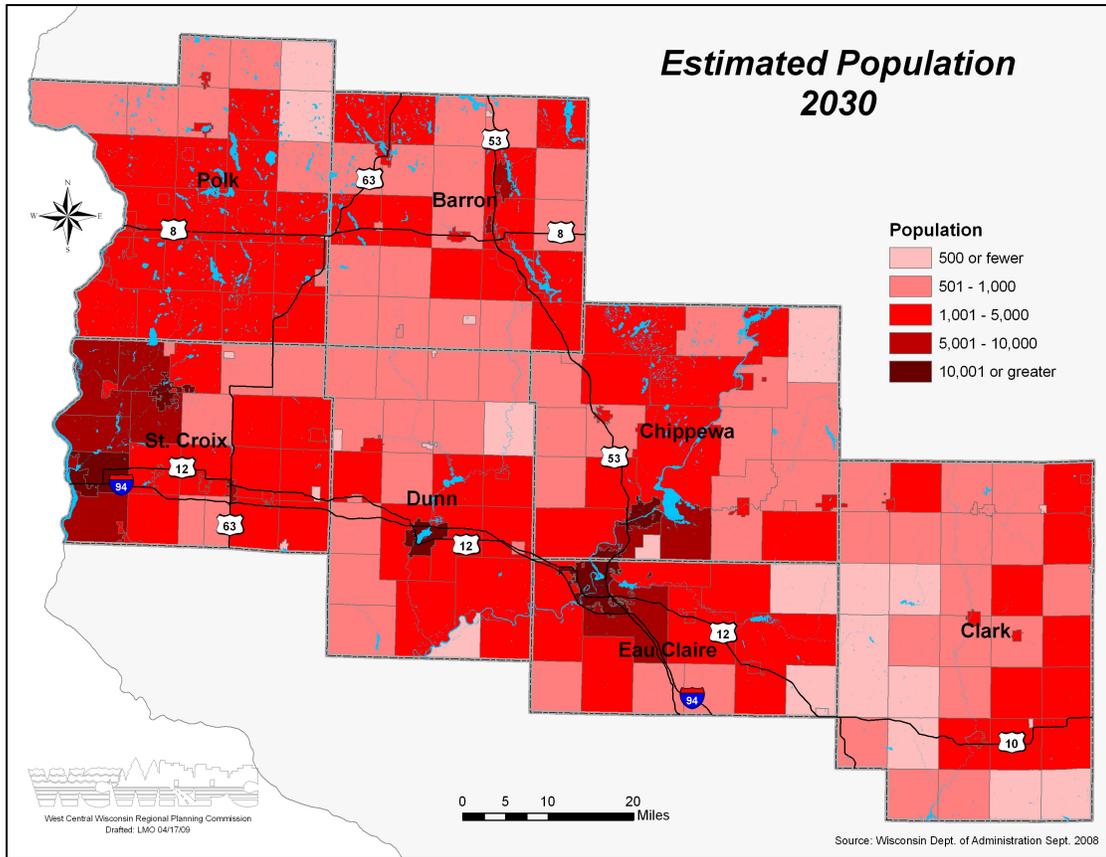
Projected Population Change (2008-2030)

Municipality	2008 Estimate	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Barron County	47,727	54,065	+ 13.3%
Chippewa County	61,872	75,152	+ 21.5%
Clark County	34,589	40,833	+ 18.1%
Dunn County	43,292	54,103	+ 25.0%
Eau Claire County	98,302	118,728	+ 20.8%
Polk County	45,892	58,866	+ 28.3%
St. Croix County	79,702	137,360	+ 72.3%
West Central Wisconsin	411,376	539,107	+31.1%

source: Wis. Dept. of Administration, Aug 2008

The projected population change from 2000 to 2030 by municipality is shown on the second map on the following page. Generally, the map is comparable to the 1970 to 2008 population change map with western St. Croix County continuing to have the highest rates of growth. And growth is projected to continue to be slow, or even negative, in many of the more rural, less populated areas of the region.

It is important to note that these population projections are based on historical trends and assume that the factors behind these trends will largely continue to some point in the future. But some caution is needed since changes in the economy, housing market, municipal boundaries, and fuel costs can influence population movement. And obtaining accurate growth projections are more difficult for less populated municipalities since such factors can have proportionately greater influence. Intimate knowledge of local conditions can help build local variables into population projections to enhance their validity.



**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN
STATE OF THE REGION WORKING PAPER**

HOUSING

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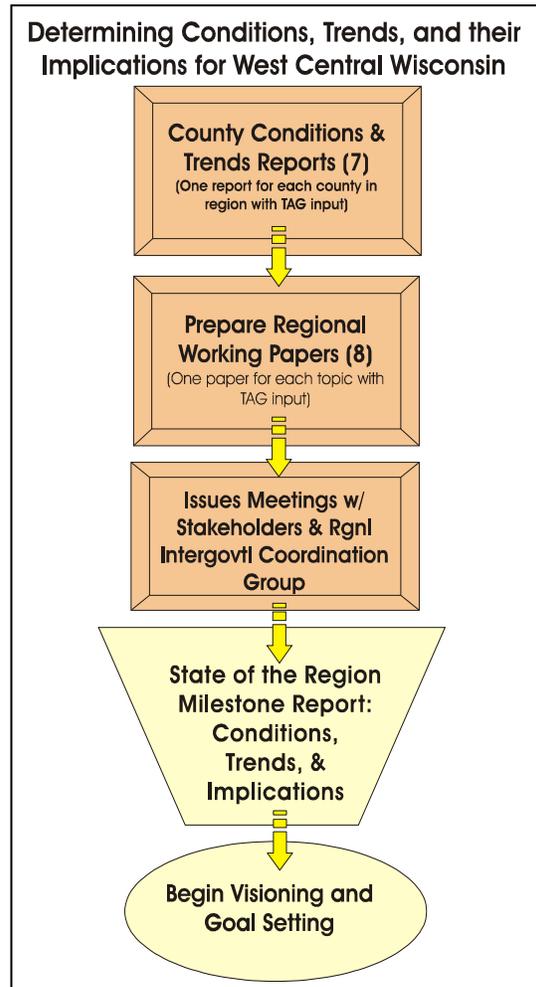
1. INTRODUCTION

This document is one of eight working papers prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) as part of its comprehensive planning effort with input from the project's Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

As shown in the diagram to the right, these working papers largely build upon the seven county conditions and trends reports prepared by WCWRPC with TAG input. The working papers place the county data in a regional context, highlighting conditions and trends of regional significance.

As such, the information found within this document is discussed at a regional level. Each county's conditions and trends report should be referred to for additional details and background information at the county and municipal level.

These working papers provide a foundation upon which regional issues can be identified and discussed. Only by building a consensus on our region's key conditions and trends, can the issues, their implications, and the remainder of the regional comprehensive planning effort for west central Wisconsin proceed.



2. THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME (HOUSING SUPPLY)

“Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam, be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home.” - John Howard Payne, actor (1791-1852)

Analyzing housing trends is an important activity when preparing plans for west central wisconsin’s future. The table below provides the historic and current count of housing units in the region’s seven counties.

For the depicted time frame, housing units have been added at a slightly higher rate in the region than in the state as a whole. Between 1980 and 2000, 34,713 housing units were added to the region, a growth rate of 28.7 percent. The state increased by 24.5 percent for the same period. Counties adding to their housing stock at a faster rate than the state or region during the twenty year period include St. Croix County (62.6%), Polk County (30.2%), and Eau Claire County (29.3%). Dunn County’s growth rate was about the same as the region at 28.5 percent.

Housing Units

County	Percent Change				
	1980	1990	2000	1980-90	1990-00
Barron County	17,153	19,365	20,969	12.9%	8.3%
Chippewa County	19,203	21,024	22,821	9.5%	8.5%
Clark County	12,384	12,904	13,531	4.2%	4.9%
Dunn County	11,886	13,252	15,277	11.5%	15.3%
Eau Claire County	28,973	32,741	37,474	13.0%	14.5%
Polk County	16,228	18,562	21,129	14.4%	13.8%
St. Croix County	14,924	18,519	24,263	24.1%	31.0%
West Central Wisconsin	120,751	136,367	155,464	12.9%	14.0%

source: U.S. Census.

A combination of factors contribute to the growth of the housing stock including:

- An increasing population base. Between 1980 and 2000 population growth for the region was 19.4 percent.
- An increasing number of households. While the population grew by 19.4 percent, the number of households in the region grew by 33.2 percent for the twenty-year period. This household growth outpaces housing unit growth.
- A decreasing household size. As depicted in the table on page three, household size for every county in the region has been decreasing. An increasing number of people, in smaller households, creates a need for additional housing units.
- Home mortgage financing that was relatively easy to get.

Persons Per Household*

County	1980	2000
Barron County	2.77	2.48
Chippewa County	2.95	2.53
Clark County	2.92	2.73
Dunn County	2.80	2.57
Eau Claire County	2.71	2.46
Polk County	2.80	2.51
St. Croix County	2.99	2.66
Wisconsin	2.77	2.50

source: U.S. Census

*A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit. A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied as separate living quarters.

These trends have created demands for additional housing. The result has been the conversion of large amounts of undeveloped land (crop, forested, pasture) into residential development. In turn, land use conflicts and concerns have surfaced and should be addressed when preparing plans and regulations. For a further discussion on land conversion see the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources working paper.

3. SOMETHING TO RETIRE TO (CHANGES IN SEASONAL HOUSING)

“Don’t simply retire from something; have something to retire to.”
 - Harry Emerson Fosdick, clergyman (1878-1969)

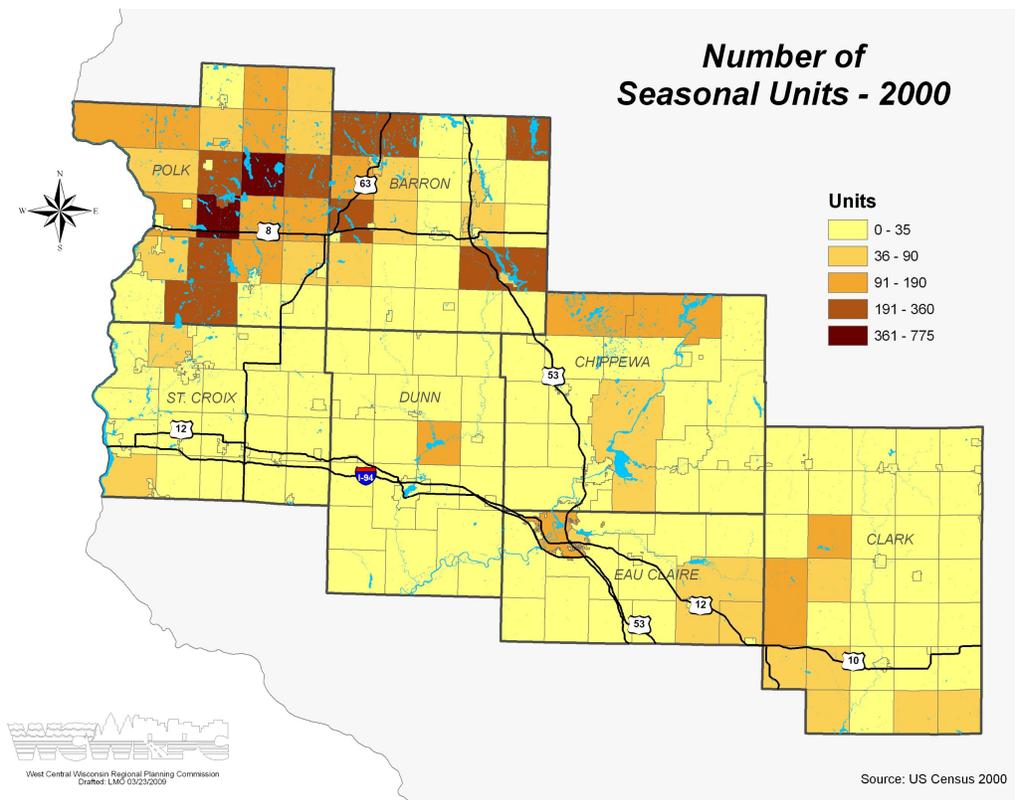
Seasonal units are used or intended for use only in certain seasons (e.g., beach cottages and hunting cabins) or for weekend or occasional use throughout the year. Seasonal units may also include quarters used for seasonal workers such as loggers. They typically demand less of public services than housing units that are occupied throughout the year.

Seasonal Units – 2000

County	Seasonal Units	
	Number of Units	% of Total Housing
Barron County	2,299	11.0%
Chippewa County	694	3.0%
Clark County	833	6.2%
Dunn County	285	1.9%
Eau Claire County	375	1.0%
Polk County	4,209	19.9%
St. Croix County	281	1.2%
West Central Wisconsin	8,976	5.8%

source: U.S. Census.

In 2000 there were a total of 8,976 seasonal units in the region. 47 percent (4,209) of these units were located in Polk County, with another 26 percent (2,299) located in Barron County. Polk County’s seasonal units make up almost 20 percent of the housing stock, Barron County’s seasonal units comprise 11 percent. The map on page four shows seasonal unit distribution by county. As shown, the areas with the largest number of seasonal units are in county's with large amounts of water and other natural resources.



While the region does contain a large number of seasonal units, the 2000 figures represent a decrease of 1,710 units (16%) from 1990. This is a trend that is being seen throughout northern Wisconsin wherein seasonal homes are being converted to year-round residences in high-amenity areas. Realtors, local officials and residents have indicated that several things are happening to explain the decreasing number of seasonal units:

- Higher-income households seeking to live on lake property are purchasing seasonal units. The units are then being converted into permanent single-family homes. Lakeside seasonal units are also being purchased, torn down and replaced by permanent single-family homes.
- Higher-income households are purchasing seasonal units as future retirement homes. As these households retire, more seasonal housing is becoming permanent single family homes.
- Fewer traditional “cabins” used only for weekend recreation are present. More units that were previously seasonal are now being used year-round.

An increasing permanent population base showing up in those areas that have traditionally had a large number of seasonal homes verifies this explanation. As large numbers of seasonal units are converted to permanent homes there will be an increasing need for more services and monitoring of sensitive shorelines along lakes and rivers.

4. WITHIN THE WALLS (OCCUPANCY & STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS)

“The most important work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes.”
 - Harold B. Lee, clergyman (1899-1973)

Housing occupancy helps determine whether the housing supply is adequate to meet demand. A stable housing market is one where the availability of new and existing housing units roughly matches the needs of the population. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an overall housing vacancy rate of 3 percent is considered optimal. Vacancy rates under the 3 percent standard may imply a tight housing market where demand exceeds supply, causing housing prices to rise. Conversely, a vacancy rate greater than 3 percent may imply an over-supply of housing units, causing housing prices to stagnate.

Census data shows that several counties in the region were near the optimal 3 percent vacancy rate in 2000. Those Counties include Barron (3.9%), Eau Claire (4.4%), and St. Croix (3.5%). No counties had vacancy rates below 3 percent. Other counties including Chippewa (6.4%), Clark (6.2%), Dunn (6.2%), and Polk (23.1%) had vacancy rates higher than the optimal 3 percent. Higher vacancy rates may signify that it has become more difficult for property owners to find buyers or tenants for housing in the County. In other words, people seeking housing in aggregate have more choices, and the housing market is swinging towards more of a buyers’ market. More current vacancy rates are not yet available, but they will have most likely changed with the current economic downturn.

As shown in the table below, the majority of housing units in the region are owner occupied. In 2000, 103,561 (73%) were identified as owner occupied. 37,516 (27%) housing units were identified as rental units. Approximately 75 percent of the region’s housing stock is considered single family units. 18 percent are multi-family units and 7 percent are mobile homes. Almost 40 percent of the region’s multifamily housing is located in Eau Claire County. 18 percent of the region’s mobile homes are located in Polk County.

Housing Characteristics – 2000

County	Occupied Units	Owner Occupied Units	Renter Occupied Units	Single Family Units	Multi-Family Units	Mobile Homes
Barron Co.	17,851	13,543	4,308	16,369	2,812	1,760
Chippewa Co.	21,356	16,152	5,204	17,570	4,301	1,436
Clark Co.	12,047	9,790	2,257	11,085	1,140	1,284
Dunn Co.	14,337	9,895	4,442	10,438	2,915	1,915
Eau Claire Co.	35,822	23,271	12,551	25,196	10,536	1,721
Polk Co.	16,254	13,025	3,229	16,801	2,040	2,068
St.Croix Co.	23,410	17,885	5,525	18,610	4,519	1,131
West Central WI	141,077	103,561	37,516	116,069	28,263	11,315

source: U.S. Census.

Over the past 10-20 years the composition of persons living in the region's housing stock has started to change slightly. Many of these variations are predicted to shift even more dramatically in the future, creating a need to examine alternative types or designs of housing. These changes include the following:

- The population has been growing older. Median age per county increased by between five and ten years between 1980 and 2000 throughout the region.
- Due to out-migration of people over 18, overall smaller family sizes, fewer families with children, a steady divorce rate, and an aging population – the number of persons per household has been declining.
- Minority concentrations with unique housing and cultural needs have created pressures in several areas of the region including Eau Claire, Menomonie, Abbotsford, Curtiss, Barron and others. The Abbotsford school district for example has a 27.7 percent non-white enrollment, the highest in the region.

As these shifts occur there will be a continuing need to monitor housing options that are available. For a more in-depth discussion of demographic changes occurring in the region see the population working paper.

5. PRICE IS WHAT YOU PAY (HOUSING AFFORDABILITY)

“Price is what you pay. Value is what you get.”

- Warren Buffet, financier and investment businessman (1930 -)

Providing affordable housing that meets the needs of current and future residents is an important element in planning for the future. A lack of quality affordable housing has overriding impacts on population migration patterns, economic development and the county's tax base.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as housing that does not cost a household more than 30 percent of its household income. This affordability benchmark is not an underwriting standard; it does not address the ability to pay for housing. Households may choose to pay more to get the housing they need or want; however, according to HUD standards, people should have the choice of having decent and safe housing for no more than 30 percent or more of their monthly income.

The table on page seven shows affordability as per the HUD definition. In 2000 16.3 percent of owner occupied households and 34.0 percent of renter occupied households were paying more than 30 percent of their income towards housing costs.

Housing Affordability - 1999

County	Households Paying Over 30% of Income Towards Owner Occupied Housing Costs	Households Paying Over 30% of Income Towards Renter Occupied Housing Costs
Barron County	1,423 (16.2%)	1,320 (35.4%)
Chippewa County	1,738 (14.9%)	1,400 (30.5%)
Clark County	845 (15.1%)	401 (24.5%)
Dunn County	1,105 (17.2%)	1,363 (35.9%)
Eau Claire County	2,695 (14.6%)	4,367 (36.5%)
Polk County	1,214 (23.0%)	864 (33.0%)
St. Croix County	2,284 (17.6%)	1,608 (32.0%)
West Central WI	11,214 (16.3%)	11,323 (34.0%)
Wisconsin	204,737 (17.8%)	240,467 (32.3%)

source: U.S. Census.

The table to the right shows median housing values for 1990 and 2000. For the ten-year period housing values in Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Polk and St. Croix Counties all increased at a rate greater than the state.

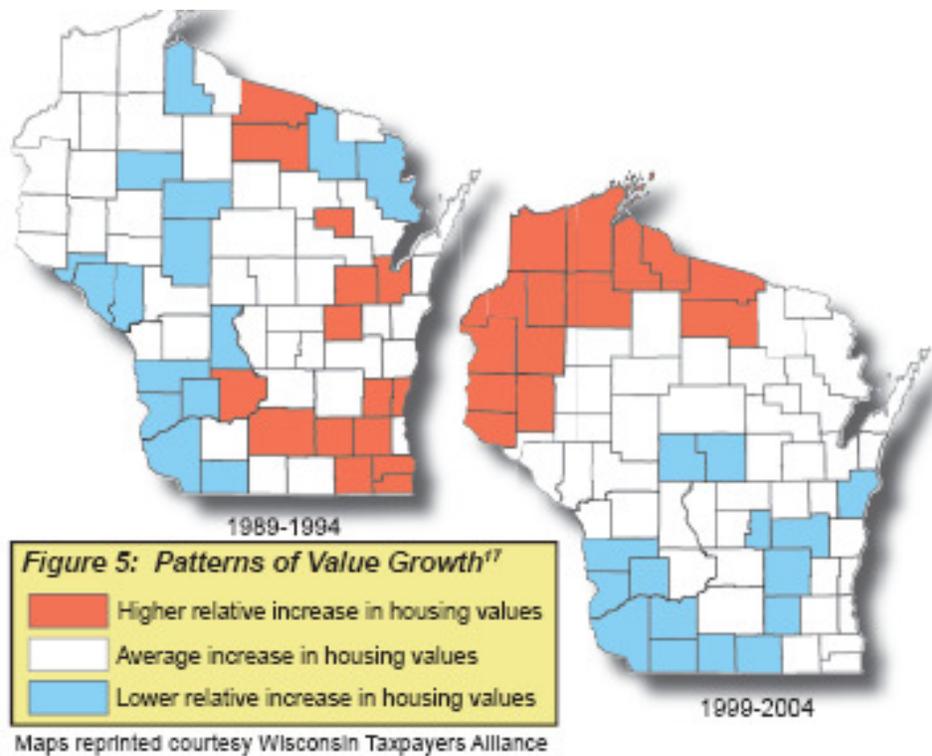
Median Housing Values

County	1990	2000	Change
Barron County	\$47,000	\$78,000	66.0%
Chippewa Co.	\$46,500	\$88,100	89.5%
Clark County	\$36,900	\$64,700	75.3%
Dunn County	\$49,000	\$92,900	90.0%
Eau Claire Co.	\$53,500	\$96,300	80.0%
Polk County	\$53,600	\$100,200	86.9%
St. Croix	\$74,400	\$139,500	87.5%
Wisconsin	\$62,500	\$112,200	79.5%

source: U.S. Census

The above housing value increases can be compared to a 31.8 percent inflation rate for the period. Incomes during this time increased from a low of 49.6 percent in St. Croix County to a high of 69.7 percent in Polk County

As depicted on the map on page eight, between 1989 and 1994 all counties in the region experienced average increases in housing values compared to other counties in the state. This shifted between 1999 and 2004 when Polk, St. Croix, Barron, and Dunn Counties experienced higher relative increases in home values.



6. PREDICT THE FUTURE (HOUSING PROJECTIONS)

“The function of science fiction is not always to predict the future, but sometimes to prevent it.”
 - Frank Herbert, science fiction novelist (1920-1986)

Housing projections are helpful to estimate the amount of land that may be consumed by future housing development. As the number of households and housing units in the region continues to grow, there is a resulting need to provide additional public facilities and services such as roads, sewer and water extensions, fire and police protection, schools, etc. It may also create a need to develop and enforce additional regulations and ordinances. These are important planning issues for consideration.

Housing Unit Projections

County	2000	Projection 2005	Projection 2010	Projection 2015	Projection 2020	Projection 2025	Projection 2030
Barron County	21,000	22,021	22,899	23,838	24,826	25,612	26,398
Chippewa County	21,356	23,128	24,811	26,520	28,161	29,670	31,038
Clark County	13,531	13,725	14,206	14,814	15,301	15,957	16,666
Dunn County	15,277	16,641	17,739	19,063	20,290	21,445	22,461
Eau Claire County	37,474	39,262	41,826	44,127	46,343	48,419	50,227
Polk County	21,129	23,214	25,374	27,660	29,851	31,735	33,738
St. Croix County	24,263	29,546	34,173	39,517	45,105	50,487	55,944
West Central Wisconsin	154,030	167,537	181,028	195,539	209,877	223,325	236,472

source: U.S. Census.

As shown in the above table, by the year 2030 it is estimated that the region will have 236,472 housing units. This is an increase of 82,442 housing units, or 54 percent, from the 2000 Census. It is projected that 2,748 units will be added to the region per year. St. Croix County is projected to experience the most growth with the addition of 31,681 units, a growth rate of 131 percent.

It is important to note that these housing unit projections are based on historic trends and assume that the factors behind these trends will largely continue to some point in the future. However, some caution is needed since changes in population growth, household size, economy, transportation costs, and the housing market can influence the development of new units.

7. HELPING OTHER PEOPLE (HOUSING ASSISTANCE)

“An idealist is a person who helps other people to be prosperous.”
- Henry Ford, automobile industrialist (1863-1947)

There are a wide variety of housing organizations and programs available throughout the region to assist residents. Many of these organizations provide services to low income populations and work towards addressing housing needs. Below is a listing of many of these organizations. Please note that a more exhaustive listing is available in the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin* compiled by the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

County Housing Authorities

Barron, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire and Polk Counties all have countywide public housing authorities. These organizations are created by resolution of the county board and operate as separate non-profit entities. The programs offered by these organizations are varied but can include operation of subsidized housing units, administration of Section 8 programs, CDBG rehabilitation and homeownership programs, lead abatement, neighborhood stabilization, homelessness assistance, rental assistance, low income housing development and many other specialized programs.

Community Housing Authorities

In addition to county housing authorities, some communities operate their own local housing authorities or departments. Community housing authorities often provide some of the same programs listed above, but to smaller geographic areas and often on a more limited or focused

scale. Communities with local housing authorities include Barron, Chetek, Cumberland, Rice Lake, Stanley, New Auburn, Abbotsford, Greenwood, Loyal, Thorp, Menomonie, Altoona, Eau Claire, Amery, Clear Lake, Frederic, Luck, Osceola, Hudson, New Richmond and River Falls.

Non-Profit Organizations

West Central Wisconsin Community Action Agency (WestCap), Indianhead Community Action Agency, Western Dairyland, Impact Seven, Bolton Refuge House, Beacon House, Starting Points, Grace Place, Northwoods Homeless Shelters and Habitat for Humanity are just a sample of housing assistance non-profits in the region. These non-profits provide everything from physical shelter to counseling, weatherization, and home financing. Some for profit organizations in the region provide similar services as well.

State and Federal Organizations

A variety of funding and assistance organizations are available at the state and federal level. Some of these organizations will provide assistance directly to residents, but most fund local organizations or municipalities that in turn deliver services. Among these organizations are WHEDA (Wisconsin Housing & Economic Development Authority), Department of Commerce-Division of Housing (Community Development Block Grant, Housing Cost Reduction Initiative, HOME Program, Lead Abatement and other programs), and Rural Development.

8. BORROWING MONEY (MORTGAGE CRISIS)

“To shorten the winter, borrow some money due in spring.” - W. J. Vogel, author

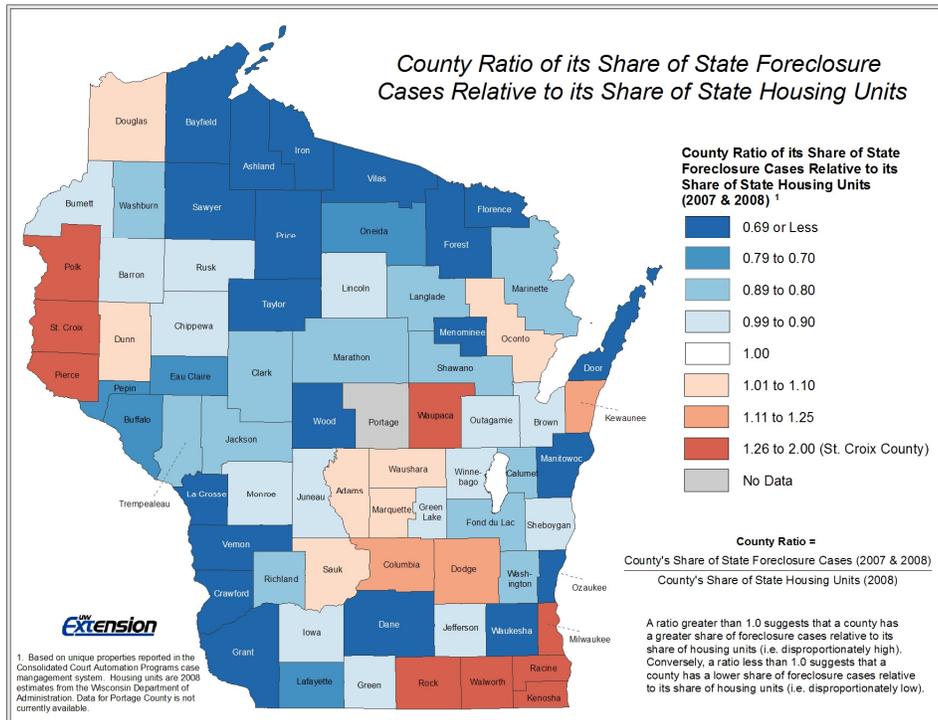
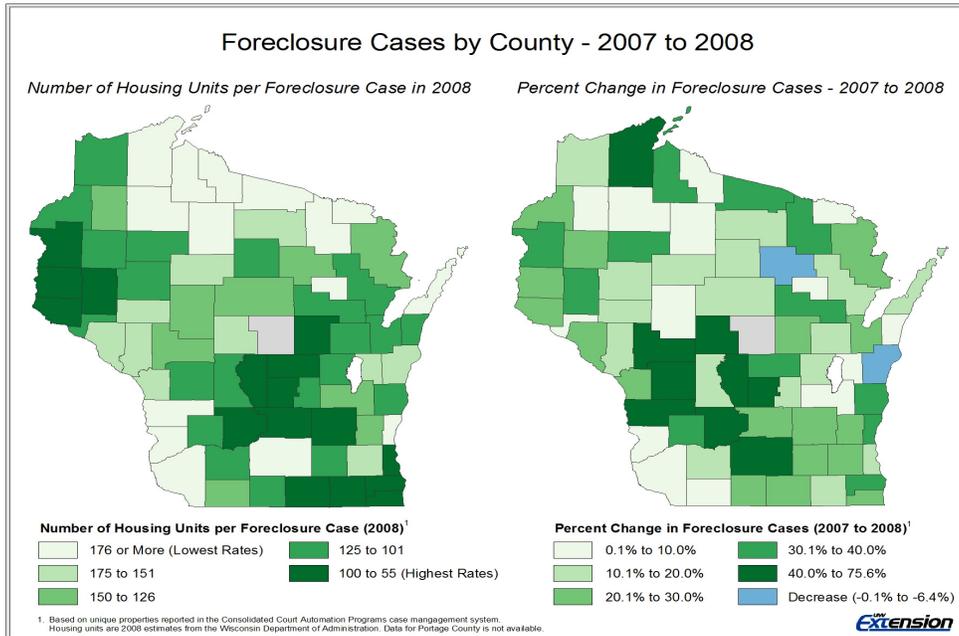
Between 2008 and 2009, high home foreclosure rates have had a large impact on the state and region. The number of foreclosure court cases in Wisconsin rose from 6,407 in 2000 to 23,263, according to Andy Lewis, University of Wisconsin-Extension community development specialist. State foreclosure cases increased 21 percent over the past year.

“While nearly half of the state’s foreclosure court cases in the last two years have been located in urban counties—Milwaukee, Waukesha, Dane, Brown, Kenosha, Racine and Rock County—rural counties are also feeling the pain,” says Lewis. St. Croix County tops the list of rural counties with high foreclosure rates reporting one foreclosure for every 55 housing units in the county.

Lewis points out that while the situation in Wisconsin is serious, the state is not faring as badly as some other parts of the country. Foreclosure rates in Wisconsin are lower than the national average. For example, the Mortgage Bankers Association reports that 2.57 percent of the loans in inventory in Wisconsin in the third quarter of 2008 were being foreclosed. That compared to 2.97 percent for the nation, or 7.32 percent in Florida, 5.58 percent in Nevada, and 3.9 percent in California, Arizona, and Ohio.

The first map on the following page provides county information on the number and percent change in housing foreclosures between 2007 and 2008. The second map provides a ratio of foreclosures by county. As you will note, regionally Polk, St. Croix, and Dunn County have been hit hardest by the crisis, having some of the highest foreclosure rates in the state. These high

rates of foreclosure have many implications that could impact the housing market and in turn how the region should react to it.



In addition to foreclosures, the area has also seen a reduction in home prices. According to the Wisconsin Realtors Association, for 2008, home prices in Wisconsin fell 3.7%. This is less than the average national price decline of 9.5%. However, in 2008 the volume of home sales in the state decreased by 19.1%, worse than the national decline of 13.1%. The average sale price of a home in Wisconsin last year was \$158,000 compared with \$164,000 in 2007.

**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN
STATE OF THE REGION WORKING PAPER**

TRANSPORTATION

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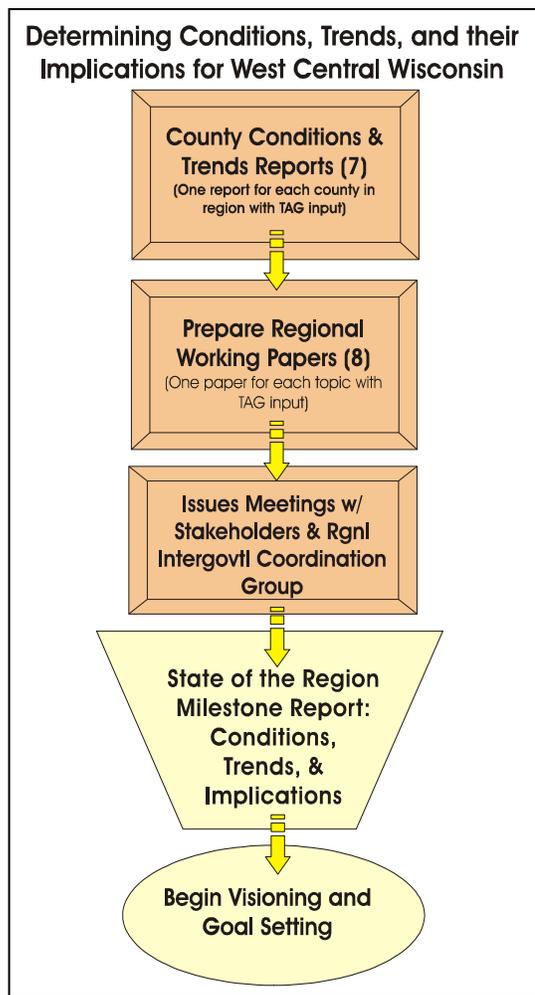
1. INTRODUCTION

This document is one of eight working papers prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) as part of its comprehensive planning effort with input from the project's Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

As shown in the diagram to the right, these working papers largely build upon the seven county conditions and trends reports prepared by WCWRPC with TAG input. The working papers place the county data in a regional context, highlighting conditions and trends of regional significance.

As such, the information found within this document is discussed at a regional level. Each county's conditions and trends report should be referred to for additional details and background information at the county and municipal level.

These working papers provide a foundation upon which regional issues can be identified and discussed. Only by building a consensus on our region's key conditions and trends, can the issues, their implications, and the remainder of the regional comprehensive planning effort for west central Wisconsin proceed.



2. MAKING ALL THE DIFFERENCE - (TRANSPORTATION CHOICES)

“Two Roads Diverged in a wood, and I - I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.” – Robert Frost, poet (1874-1963)

There are a number of modes of transportation available to get people and goods from one place to another, within and beyond west central Wisconsin. These modes, to varying degrees across the region, offer choices to the traveling public.

Linking Our Nation Together (Highways and Bridges)

“America’s highways, roads, and bridges, are an indispensable part of our lives. They link one end of our nation to the other. We use them each and every day, for every conceivable purpose.” – Christopher Dodd, U.S. Senator from Connecticut (1944-)

West central Wisconsin has a well-developed network of highways that have largely been expanded and maintained to meet the personal and freight needs of the region and to provide routes for trips through and beyond our regional borders. Within the our region, three highways are classified as backbone routes and several as connector routes in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) *Corridors 2020 Plan*, as shown on the map to the right. The backbone system is a collection of multilane highways such as the interstate system and much of the state trunk highway system that serve longer interregional trips within the state and between Wisconsin and the nation. Connector routes link significant economic and tourism centers into the backbone system. Corridors 2020 Plan is currently being updated to “Corridors 2030”, a part of WisDOT’s comprehensive plan, known as Connections 2030.



All backbone and connector routes are corridors that provide significant economic and mobility or level of service connections with and between states. A high degree of mobility is emphasized on these routes which is accomplished through increased highway capacity, additional travel lanes and/or higher levels of access management. Typically, a two-lane Backbone or Connector route can carry an average daily traffic volume (ADT) of 13,500 vehicles per day before the routes level of service degrades and additional traffic lanes are needed. WisDOT applies higher levels of access control on the two lane Backbone and Connector routes either through the purchase of access or more appropriately the limitation of access via a controlled access highway designation. Limiting access to a highway can significantly increase carrying capacity and improve safety by reducing or eliminating turning maneuvers and entering and exiting vehicles. Backbone and Connector routes comprise only three percent of Wisconsin's roadway miles, yet carry 34 percent of all auto traffic and 57 percent of all truck traffic within the state. Traffic volume trends on these highways can be seen in the following table, and relate to locations noted on the preceding map.

Traffic Volume Trends for Selected Locations in West Central Wisconsin

Map ID (Map 3.1)	Location	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2006	2007	Avg. Annual Increase
1	Interstate 94 (east of St. Croix River Br.)			48,100	63,600			65,100			8.84%
2	Interstate 94 (east of US 63)			28,900	30,100				32,600		2.56%
3	Interstate 94 (west of WIS 29)			30,500			32,100		36,000		3.61%
4	Interstate 94 (west of US 93)			24,200		32,000		25,900			1.76%
5	Interstate 94 (SE Eau Claire Co.)			26,300		28,100		25,700			-0.57%
6	US 8 (east of WIS 35, St. Croix Falls)		11,500			13,700			17,600		8.84%
7	US 8 (east of US 63)	6,900			5,600			7,500			1.45%
8	US 8 (west of US 53)	8,600			7,800			11,800			6.20%
9	US 63 (n. of Turtle Lake, Barron Co.)	3,700			4,500			4,300			2.70%
10	US 63 (s. of Clear Lake, Polk Co.)		4,000			5,200			4,300		1.25%
11	WIS 64 (w. of New Richmond)	6,200			5,900				9,400		7.37%
12	WIS 64 (east of St. Croix River)	15,300			16,700				17,300		1.87%
13	WIS 29 (west of C. Chippewa Falls)		6,700			7,600		10,500			11.34%
14	WIS 29 (east of Cadott, Chippewa Co.)		10,000			10,300		12,200			4.40%
15	WIS 29 (west of Abbotsford, Clark Co.)			8,800			10,100			12,600	7.20%
16	US 53 (north of US 12, C. Eau Claire)		42,000			41,300		47,100			2.43%
17	US 53 (near Tilden)		11,200			15,300		13,400			3.93%
18	US 53 (south of US 8)	8,600			9,200			10,000			2.71%
19	US 53 (near Haugen)	8,100			9,400			10,000			3.91%
20	WIS 93 (south of I-94)		9,400			9,600		9,600			0.43%
21	WIS 93 (southern Eau Claire Co.)		3,200			4,000		3,700			3.13%
22	WIS 13 (north of Unity, Clark Co.)		6,500			6,400				6,900	0.88%

source: Wisconsin Highway Traffic Volume Data, WisDOT.

In terms of regional trends, it may be more telling to look at another traffic measure, vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The following table shows the annual VMT by county in the region in 1998 and 2007. St. Croix County stands out as having, by far, the most significant increase in VMT over this period.

Change in Annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by County (1998-2007)

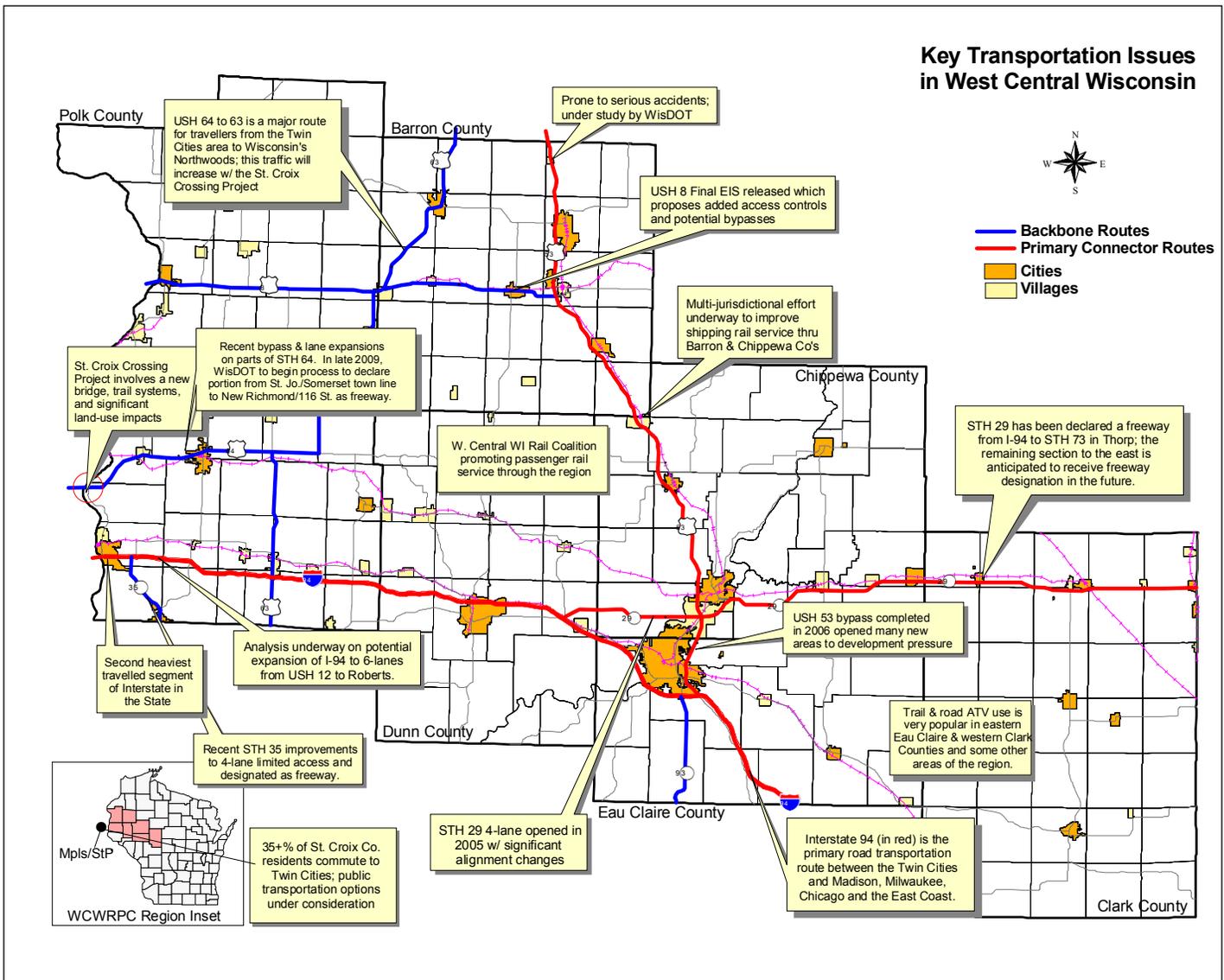
County	Annual VMT 1998	Annual VMT 2007	Percent Change (1998-2007)
Barron Co.	526,512,500	565,400,000	7.39%
Chippewa Co.	677,111,500	800,700,000	18.25%
Clark Co.	398,616,500	409,600,000	2.76%
Dunn Co.	613,419,000	662,200,000	7.95%
Eau Claire Co.	996,413,500	1,075,000,000	7.89%
Polk Co.	388,834,500	413,300,000	6.29%
St. Croix Co.	870,087,000	1,118,400,000	28.54%
State of Wisconsin	56,047,940,000	59,492,700,000	6.15%
WC Region total	4,470,994,500	5,044,600,000	12.83%

source: WisDOT.

Of the backbone and connector highways in the region, several are expected to experience some level of congestion by the year 2020, according to the State's *Corridors 2020 Plan*. Since that plan's publication in 2000, some of the regional level issues have been addressed, yet some remain. The following map gives a summary of these projects and needs. Some updated figures from WisDOT anticipate an increase in VMT by

over 30 percent from 2006 to 2030, with truck VMT increasing 64 percent, a factor sure to have a big impact on the busy trucking corridor of Interstate 94 through the region.

Key Transportation Issues in West Central Wisconsin



Transportation will be Mass Transportation (Transit)

“I think the internal combustion engine will disappear from the streets of our cities in the next thirty years because transportation will be mass transportation, or probably electrical power.” - Gaylord Nelson, U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, founder of Earth Day (1916-2005)

For many people in the region, driving a car is not an option, or in some cases not the preferred option. The elderly, persons with disabilities, and those in poverty, are commonly those in greatest need of other transportation options. As shown in the following table, our region has just a slightly higher incidence in each of these categories than the State of Wisconsin average, but there is also significant variation within our region. Once again, St. Croix County stands out, with the lowest percentage in each of the three categories. Most notably, St. Croix County has just over four percent of its population below the poverty level, less than half the State average. In comparison, Clark and Dunn counties have nearly 13 percent of their population in poverty. The more rural counties of Barron, Polk, and Clark have the highest percentage of elderly, persons over 64 years of age, which presents some of the biggest challenges in providing cost-effective transportation services for those who cannot drive.

Percent Elderly, Disabled, and Poverty Populations

	Percent of Persons, Age 21-64, with a Disability	Percent of Persons 65 Years and Over	Percent of Population Below the Poverty Level in 1999
Barron	16.37%	16.40%	8.82%
Chippewa	16.32%	14.56%	8.23%
Clark	14.95%	16.01%	12.70%
Dunn	13.40%	11.23%	12.91%
Eau Claire	13.60%	12.23%	10.87%
Polk	16.49%	15.12%	7.11%
St. Croix	11.66%	9.85%	4.01%
State of Wisconsin	14.90%	13.10%	8.66%
WC Region	14.39%	13.23%	8.98%

source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

Existing transit services in west central Wisconsin strive to provide services appropriate to the population density, size, and needs of their public. Eau Claire Transit (ECT) provides an urban fixed route transit service in Eau Claire and Altoona. The service is made up of eleven routes, mostly radiating from Eau Claire’s downtown transit center. In addition to the fixed route service, a demand-responsive paratransit service is provided for those persons who cannot access the fixed route service due to a disability. The lower population density throughout most of the region is not conducive to this type of service, and other service levels are provided as appropriate.

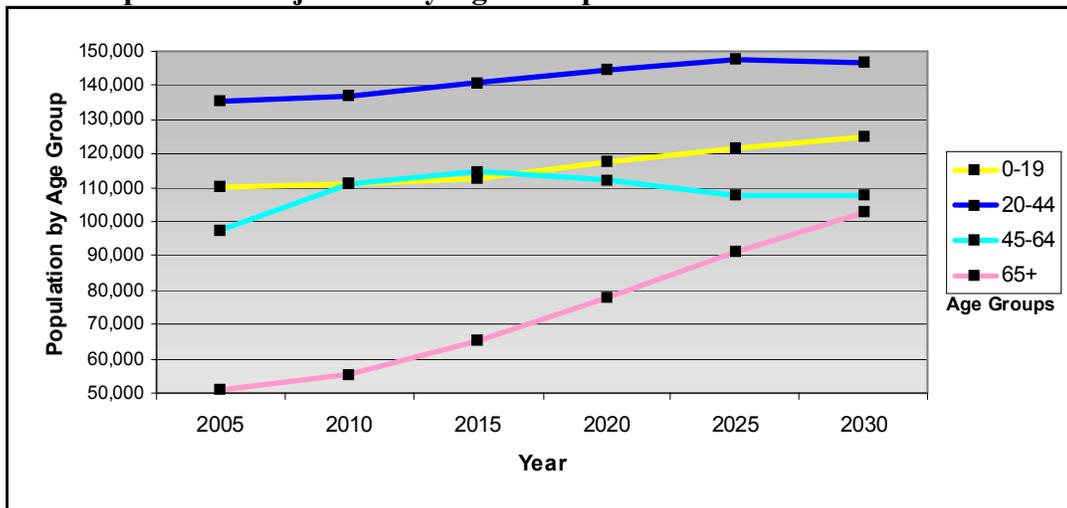
A number of other communities in the region, such as Chippewa Falls, Menomonie, New Richmond, and Neillsville, have shared-ride taxi services, a demand responsive service available for trips within the community and usually reaching into the immediate surrounding area.

For the remainder of west central Wisconsin, most existing transit services are specific to a given agency’s clientele, or available to a limited portion of population defined by age or disability. These services can be provided through a demand responsive service, on specific routes to a nutrition site or worksite, or by volunteer drivers. The largest gaps in transit services in these large rural areas include services for longer trips, between counties or to more distant locations, such as medical facilities in the Twin Cities. Some volunteer driver programs can accommodate occasional longer trips, but regular work, education, recurring medical visits, and shopping trips to communities in neighboring counties are more difficult to serve.

Funding for many human service and rural transportation programs is distributed by county, leading to the development of county-, or agency-specific program, leaving cross-county cooperation structurally unencouraged. In recent years, federal requirements for human service transportation coordination plans have attempted to counteract this programmatic dysfunction and encourage more efficient use of funds and capital assets. In our region, several counties are beginning to work together to find ways to meet the needs for longer trips and to generally provide a more efficient and effective public transportation service in rural areas. A new program, funded by a federal New Freedom grant, is currently developing a volunteer driver pool, in a ten-county region, to provide trips that are not eligible under other existing programs, with the goal of filling the gaps left by more agency-specific or geographically-restricted services. The program is in its early stages, but is growing and currently serves about 700 trips per month.

Demand for transportation services, particularly for the elderly, is expected to increase rapidly over the next 20 years. As baby-boomers, most of them accustomed to being very active and mobile, reach a point where they can no longer drive, sharp increases in demand and ridership can be expected. The following table shows the disproportionate rate of growth for the elderly age group expected in the region in the coming decades. The dispersed development patterns of the last 50 years will make meeting that demand more costly, assuming that many of the baby-boomers will choose to remain in their suburban or rural homes.

Population Projections by Age Group in West Central Wisconsin



source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

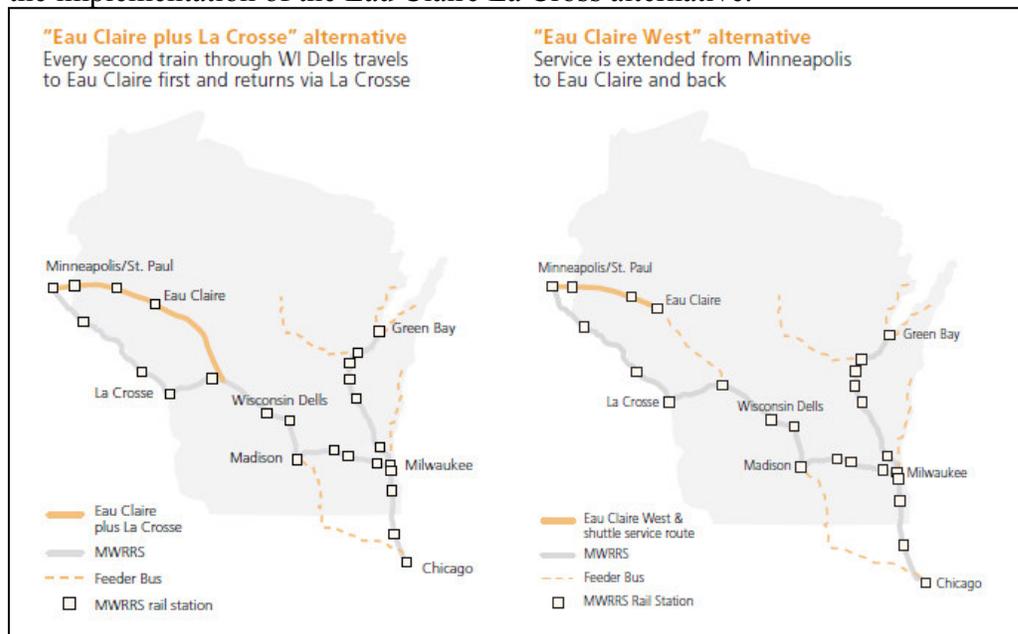
As the Train Goes By (Passenger Rail)

“A critic is a gong at a railroad crossing clanging loudly and vainly as the train goes by.” – Christopher Morley, US author & journalist (1890 – 1957)

There is currently no passenger rail service in west central Wisconsin. The nearest access to passenger rail is an Amtrak station in Tomah, on the existing Amtrak line between Chicago and Minneapolis. The Midwest Regional Rail Service proposal developed by a multi-state study initiative includes improvement of this line, with service into Madison, on to La Crosse, and up to the Twin Cities on the Minnesota side of the border. As a result of WisDOT’s ongoing study of the proposed MWRRS, public officials and citizens from other Wisconsin communities have expressed interest in having passenger rail service return to their communities. Several regions, and options within those regions, have undergone preliminary examination to assess their potential for implementation after completion of the MWRRS.

Several different passenger rail options for the rapidly growing region of west central Wisconsin (including the cities of Eau Claire, Menomonie and Hudson) were examined for feasibility after completion of the MWRRS. The following figures depict two options that are expected to be more closely examined at a later date.

Both the “Eau Claire Plus La Crosse” and “Eau Claire West” routes were considered likely to produce ridership and revenue figures that could improve the overall financial performance of the base Midwest Regional Rail System. The “Eau Claire plus La Crosse” alternative would require a much greater capital investment. The Rail Advisory Committee was on record supporting the closer examination of these options only after completion of the proposed MWRRS route through La Crosse. A local grass routes advocacy group, West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition, has been working for over ten years to build awareness and support for passenger rail in the region, most specifically for the implementation of the Eau Claire La Crosse alternative.



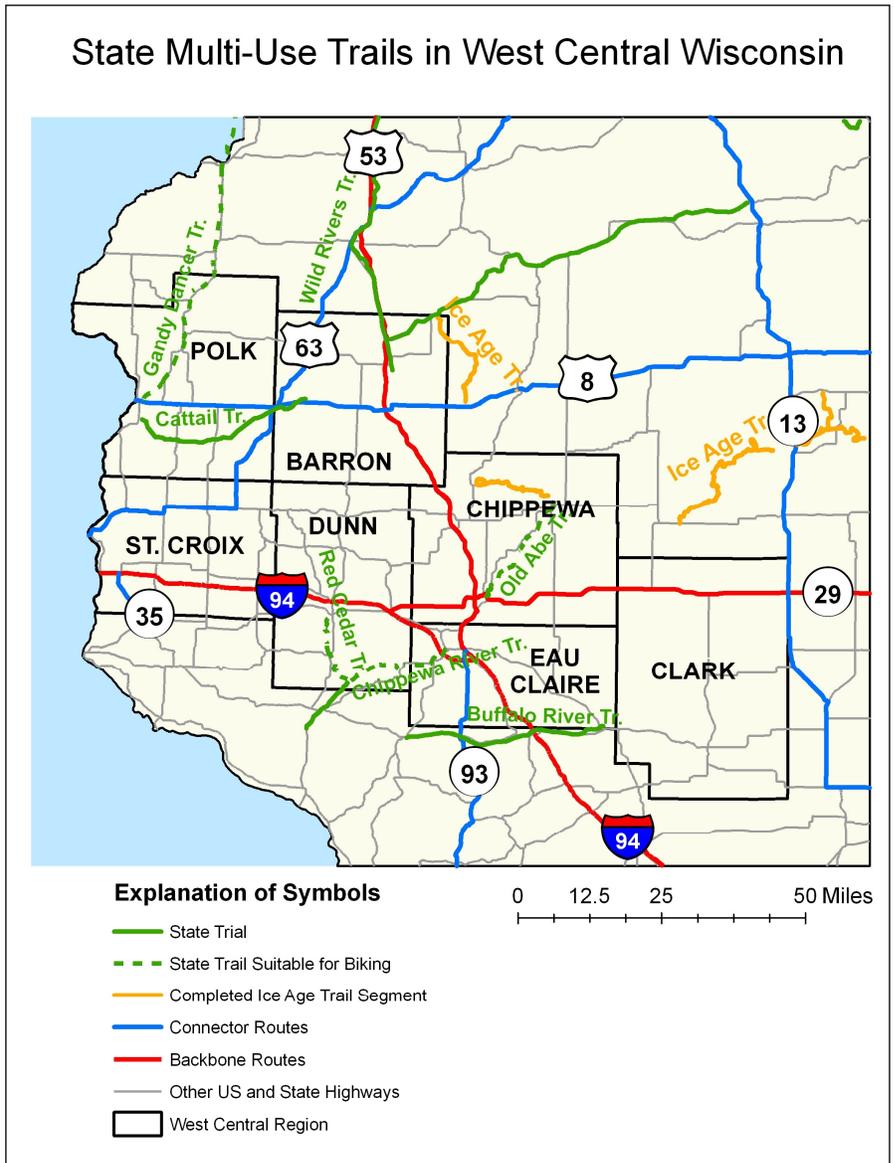
source: Wisconsin Rail Issues and Opportunities Report, WisDOT, Division of Investment Management Bureau of Planning, 2004.

Everywhere is Walking Distance (Bicycle and Pedestrian)

“Everywhere is walking distance, if you have the time.” – Steven Wright, Comedian, Actor, (1955-)

Most trips that are, or could be, taken by bicycle or walking are relatively short trips, usually within a city or village. The choice of bicycling or walking for these trips can be encouraged by providing facilities such as bike lanes, trails, or bicycle parking, as appropriate, or through educational and promotional programs. Results can include: a reduction of localized traffic congestion near schools or in a downtown area; reduced demand for parking; improved safety in the vicinity of schools and parks; improved health of individuals through increased activity levels; and potentially improved air quality.

While the need for more and safer facilities to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians is widespread in a number of the region’s communities, regional impact is really only felt in the context of connectivity. Bicycle travel between and through communities is sometimes on off-road trails. There are a number of off-road trails of regional significance in west central Wisconsin. Most are designated as multi-user trails, and vary in their suitability for bicycling, as shown on the map to the right. In some cases, lack of pavement or rough terrain makes the trail unsuitable for bicycling. In other cases, conflicting uses, such as ATV or horses, reduce the attractiveness of trails, or portions of trails, for bicyclists or pedestrians. Connecting trails that are suitable for bicycles, both in rural areas and connections of rural trails to and through urban areas, can markedly improve their value, especially for transportation purposes (to school, work, etc).



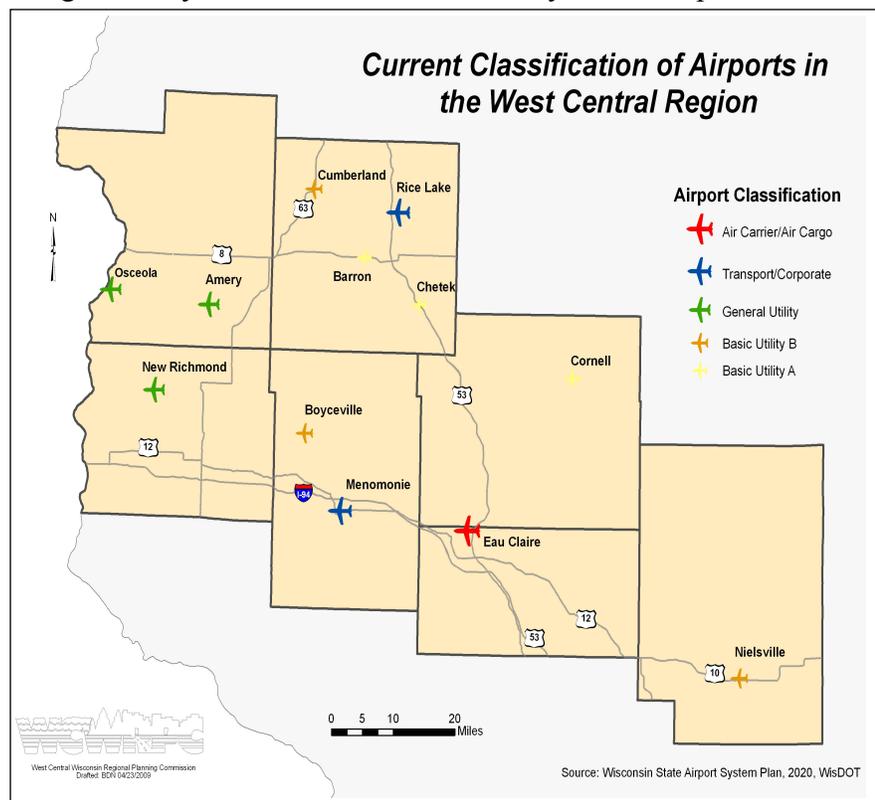
All of the trails shown on the map were built on corridors formerly occupied by rail lines, but three of them were created under the "interim trail use" authority. The Surface Transportation Board, once rail line abandonment is approved, can allow the railroad to negotiate with a public agency for conversion of the corridor to trail use. This process essentially "railbanks" a corridor for possible future rail use. The Surface Transportation Board assigns interim use of the corridor to a qualified public or private agency if that agency agrees to manage the trail and cover all associated expenses, including taxes and liability. The three trails that are under interim trail use are: Amery-Dresser State Trail, Cattail State Trail, and Wild Rivers State Trail.

Flying Machines (Airports)

“No flying machine will ever fly from New York to Paris.” – Orville Wright, inventor (1871-1948)

There are twelve public use airports in west central Wisconsin. Airports are categorized by WisDOT based on the length of their main runway and the size of craft they are able to accommodate. By descending order of classifications, there is one Air Carrier/Cargo airport (Chippewa Valley), two Transport/Corporate airports (Rice Lake and Menomonie), three General Utility airports (New Richmond, Amery, and Osceola), and five Basic Utility airports (Barron, Chetek, Cumberland, Neillsville, and Boyceville).

One of the biggest challenges faced by many airports in the region, as is the case nationwide, is the increasing intensity of land uses in the vicinity of the airports. This causes airport operations to become increasingly unsafe, can make an airport less viable in the future, and increases the expense for future expansions as they become necessary. WisDOT is encouraging airports and their adjacent communities to develop airport area land use plans to lay out anticipated airport growth, safety needs, and provide for safe and compatible land use development.



3. THE NEGLECT OF TIMELY REPAIR (MAINTENANCE OF HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES)

“The best security against revolution is in constant correction of abuses and the introduction of needed improvements. It is the neglect of timely repair that makes rebuilding necessary.” – Richard Whately (1787-1863), English logician and theological writer, archbishop of Dublin

There are approximately 1,800 bridges in west central Wisconsin’s seven counties, over a third of those in the State. Most bridges are designed to have a life expectancy of up to 75 years, but this life expectancy is dependent upon regular inspection and maintenance. WisDOT performs regular inspections on all bridges, and stores the inspection data in the department’s Bridge Management System (BMS). According to WisDOT’s BMS, 102 (nearly 6%) of the region’s approximately 1,800 bridges will require replacement by 2030. In addition, 92 (approximately 5%) will need deck replacements and 360 (approximately 20%) will need a bridge deck overlay.

Similarly, from the State’s Pavement Management System (PMS) for state trunk highways, we know that about 238 miles, or about 20% of the 1,229 miles of state and federal highways in the region are currently in some level of need, either of resurfacing or reconstruction.

Highway Mileage by County and Jurisdiction

County	Highway Jurisdiction					Total Mileage
	State	County	Town	Village	City	
Barron	141.8	290.7	131.4	41.9	1386.7	1992.5
Chippewa	210.4	489.6	1126.1	102.9	155.6	2084.6
Clark	157.4	300.9	2597.6	23.3	91.4	3170.6
Dunn	205.8	425.4	989.2	42.4	91.3	1754.0
Eau Claire	150.4	421.0	613.4	14.1	367.7	1566.6
Polk	159.2	331.4	1300.0	105.4	43.3	1939.3
St. Croix	204.1	338.6	1117.8	106.3	156.1	1922.9
WC Region	1229.0	2597.6	7875.5	436.3	2292.0	14430.4

source: WisDOT, Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads, January 1, 2008.

4. THE NEXT CAR BACK (COMMUTING PATTERNS)

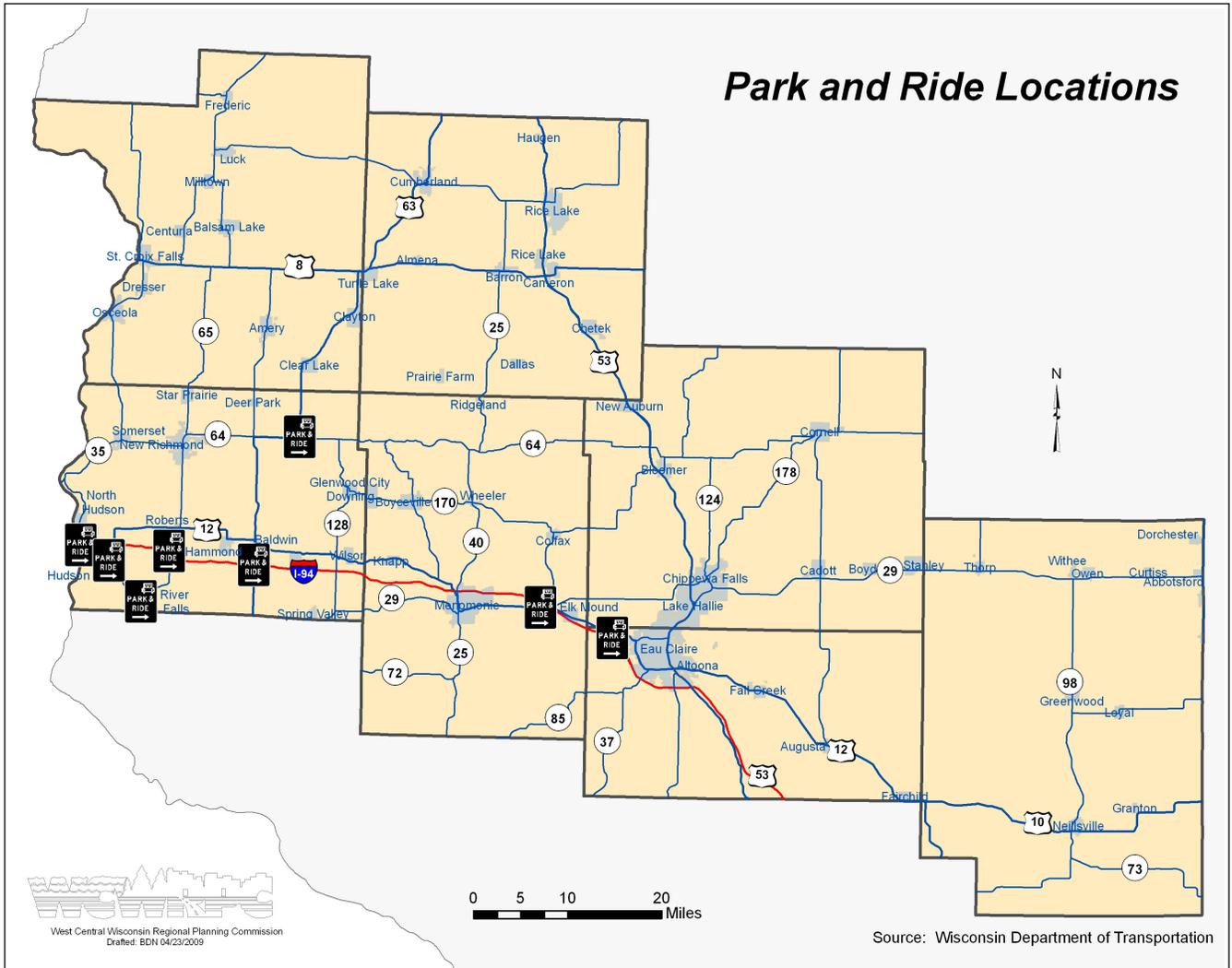
“Now, I almost had a heart attack - Looking in my rear view mirror. I saw myself the next car back, looking in the rear view mirror, 'bout to have a heart attack...” – James Taylor, songwriter, singer (1948 -).

Commuting patterns vary across the region. The most obvious pattern, depicted on the following graph, is the number of workers commuting across the state line, into Minnesota, from the western counties of St. Croix and Polk. In 2000, nearly half (43.5%) of the employed persons living in St. Croix County worked in Minnesota. In Eau Claire County, with the largest number of employed persons in the region, over half of residents (52.6%) work in the same community, or minor civil division (MCD), where they live. The majority of these people live and work in the City of Eau Claire. See the graph below for more commuting pattern information. People working at home are included in the data shown.



source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

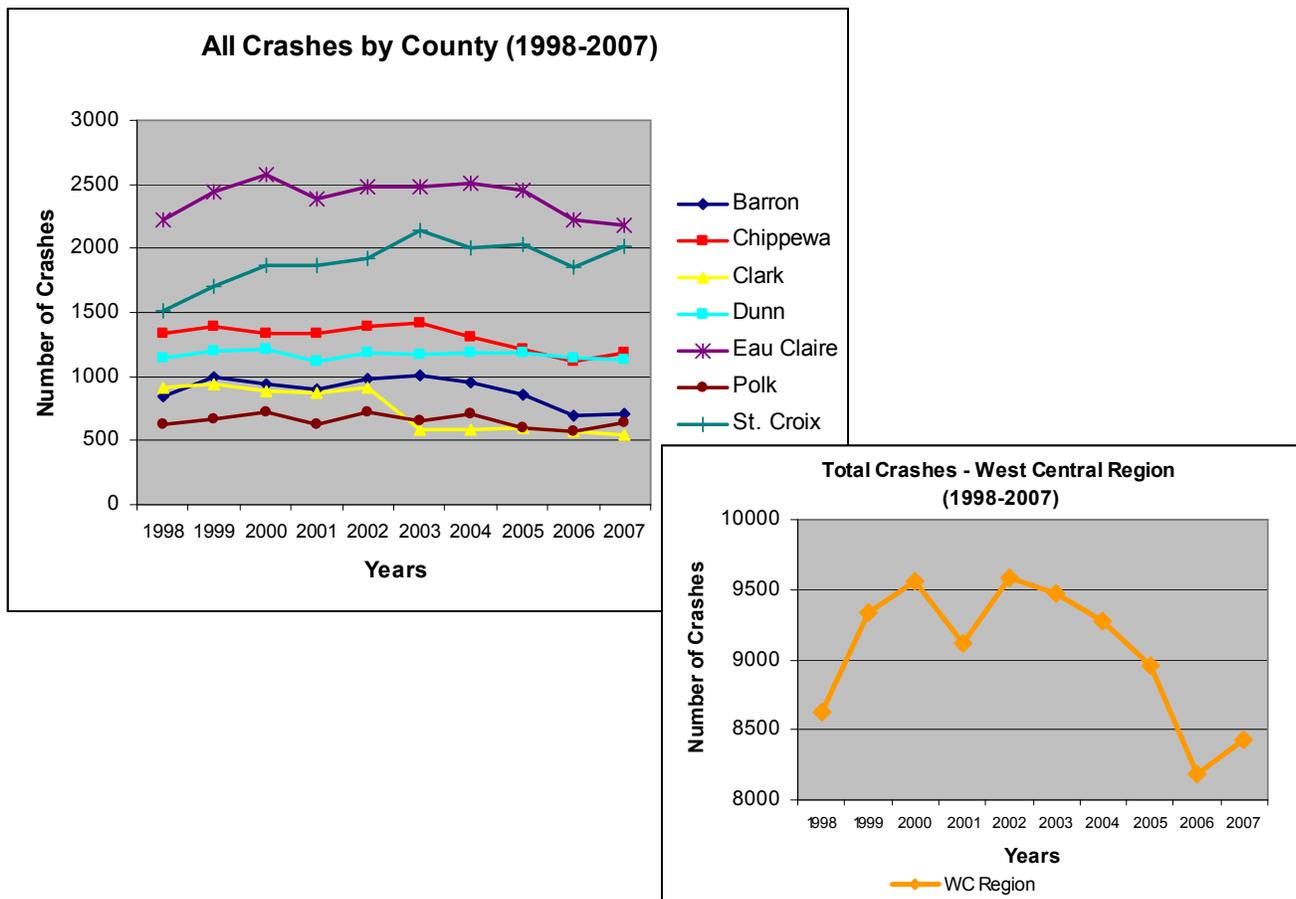
There are a number of designated park and ride lots in the region, as shown on the following map. All of those shown were established by WisDOT. There are many informal park and ride operations in retail parking lots and near major highway intersections wherever commuters find a convenient location for meeting and carpooling.



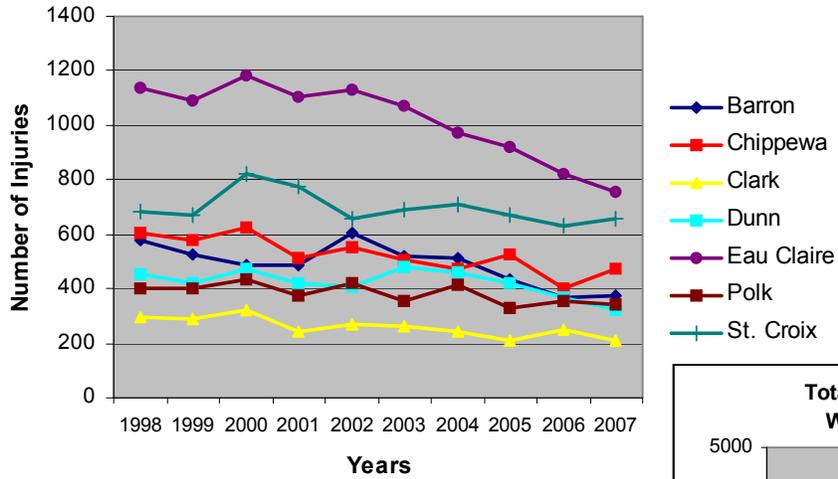
5. HIT FROM BOTH SIDES (SAFETY)

“ ***He who walks in the middle of the road gets hit from both sides.***” - George P. Shultz, economist, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, Treasury, and State (1920 -)

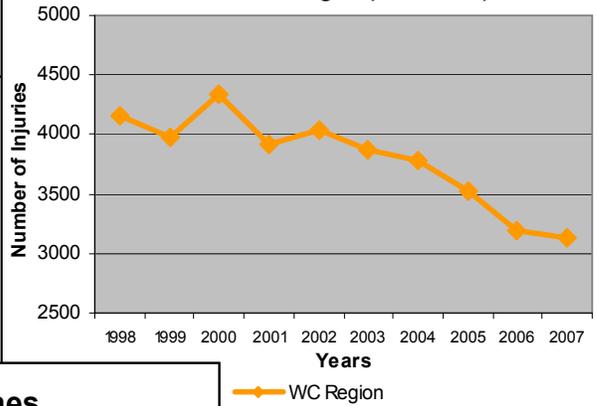
By examining crash history over time, we can get a general idea of the safety of our region’s highways. The following graphs show the crash history, for each of the seven counties in the west central region from 1998 to 2007, a ten year span, as well as a total for the region in an accompanying graph. The graphs show total crashes, total injuries from crashes, total fatalities from crashes, total reported bicycle crashes, and total reported pedestrian crashes. Total traffic crashes and resulting injuries show a general downward trend. By county, traffic crash fatalities, bicycle crashes, and pedestrian crashes are a little more difficult to trend, partly due to small numbers in each county. The regional graphs for both, bicycle and pedestrian crashes, show some decline over the ten year period. In times of significantly increasing traffic volumes in most parts of the region, declining crash numbers of crashes and injuries, is a pleasant result.



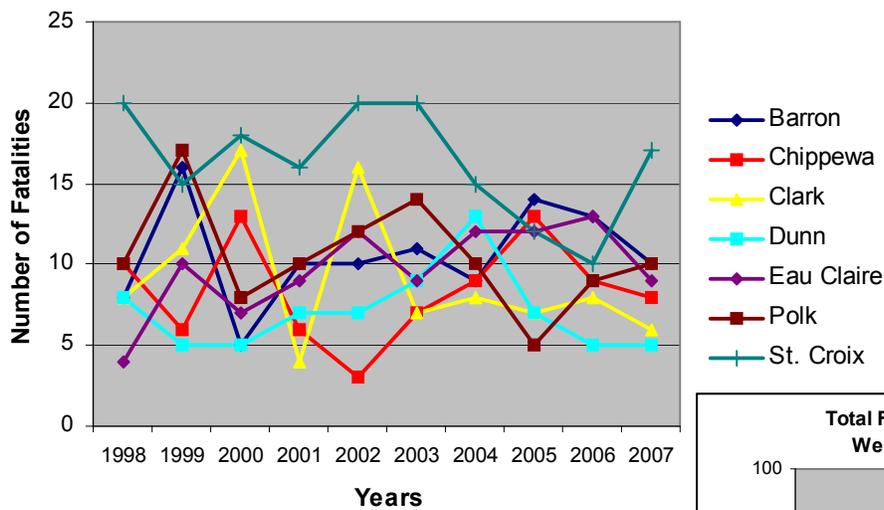
Total Injuries Resulting from Crashes by County (1998-2007)



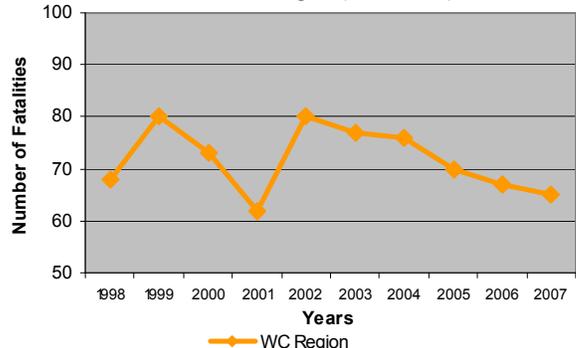
Total Injuries Resulting from Crashes West Central Region (1998-2007)



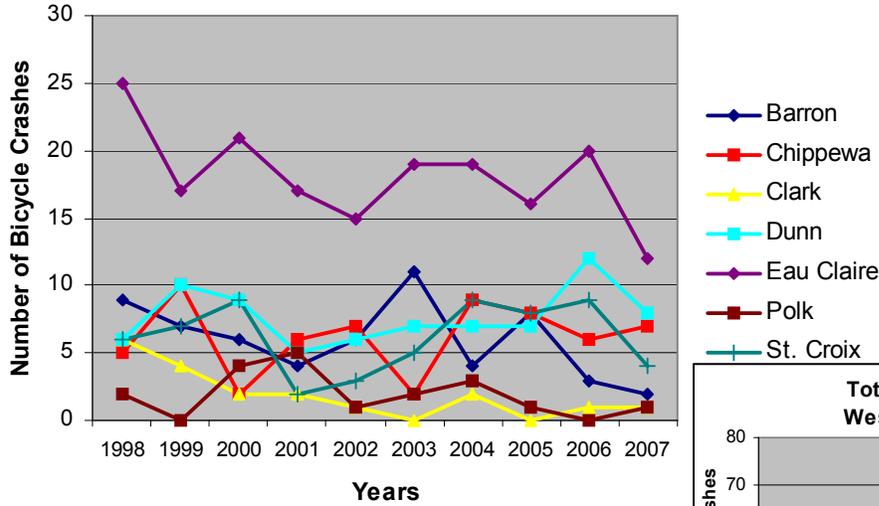
Total Fatalities Resulting from Crashes by County (1998-2007)



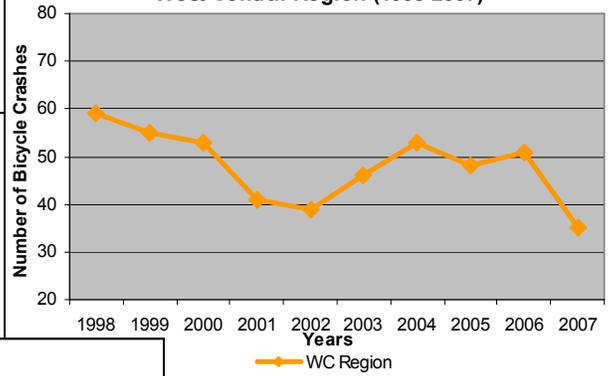
Total Fatalities Resulting from Crashes West Central Region (1998-2007)



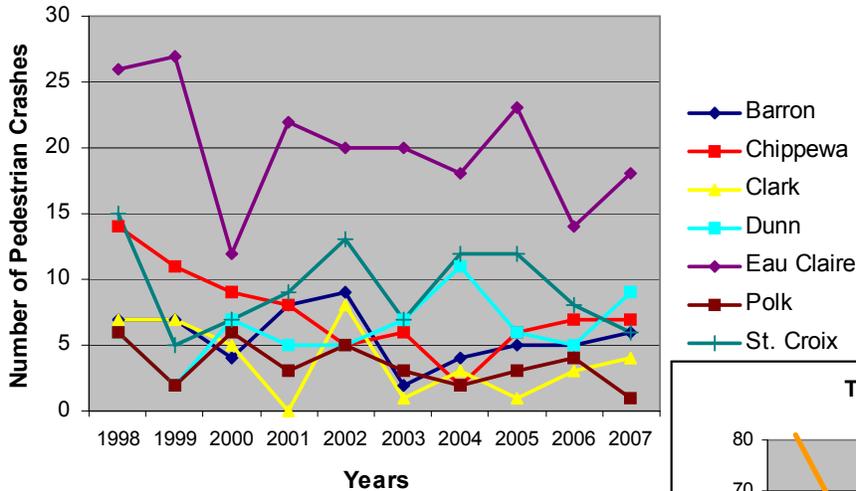
Total Reported Bicycle Crashes by County (1998-2007)



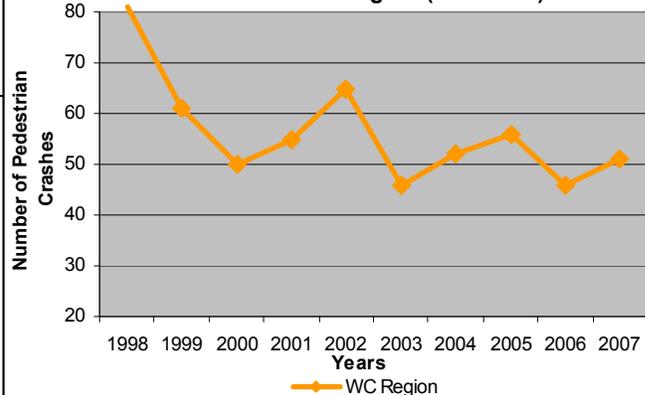
Total Reported Bicycle Crashes West Central Region (1998-2007)



Total Reported Pedestrian Crashes by County (1998-2007)



Total Reported Pedestrian Crashes West Central Region (1998-2007)



6. THE PROPENSITY TO TRUCK (FREIGHT MOVEMENT)

“The propensity to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another is common to all men, and to be found in no other race of animals.” - Adam Smith, Scottish, Scottish moral philosopher, father of modern economics (1723-1790)

In 2005, WisDOT recently conducted a study of the west central regional freeway system in response to a request from nine area state legislators. The study analyzed the interdependent highways connecting western Wisconsin and the Chippewa Valley metropolitan area with the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The backbone of the West Central Freeway (WCF) is I-94. On the east end, I-94 connects with USH 53 and STH 29. On the west end STH 35, STH 65, and USH 63 connect the rapidly growing western border counties with I-94. The study includes a commodity flow analysis, which looked at freight flows in and through the four counties of Eau Claire, Chippewa, Dunn, and St. Croix. The commodity flow analysis shows a large volume of truck freight moving into, from, and through the Wisconsin I-94 study corridor region, illustrating the region's economic significance. Consumers and producers in the four-county area receive and transport over 15 million tons of freight. Moreover, the Interstate highway system is responsible for handling another 38 million tons of freight that just passes through the region. This overhead tonnage (38 million tons) represents 84% of all of the freight shipped by trucks through the state.

While the majority of freight in the region is carried by truck, several freight rail lines are of great importance to a number of businesses in our region. The following map shows the ownership of currently operating rail lines in the region. In recent years, Class I railroads, Canadian National and Union Pacific, have been selling lines that are less important to their long-haul operations. Progressive Rail is a short-haul operator that is currently operating some such lines in Chippewa and Barron counties, to continue service to local businesses.

Data on the type of freight originating and terminating in the region, as well as the breakdown of transport mode, by county, was compiled by WisDOT. The data is shown for west central Wisconsin counties in the following tables. The data shown is for 2001. 2007 data will be available within the next couple months.



- Railroads**
- BNSF Burlington Northern-Santa Fe
 - CN Canadian National
 - CPR Canadian Pacific Railway (Soo Line Railroad)
 - UP Union Pacific Railroad
 - PGR Progressive Rail, Inc.
- Symbols**
- Amtrak Station
 - Port Major Commercial Ports
 - Rail lines out of service
 - Local Rail Bank
 - Rails-to-Trails
 - In Rails-to-Trails Negotiation & Out of Service

2008 West Central Wisconsin Railroads

source: excerpt from WisDOT 2008 Wisconsin Railroads map, 2008

2001 WCWRPC Commodity Flow

Originating Tonnage by Mode

Originating County	Air	Inter-modal	Rail	Truck	Total Tonnage
Barron	53		43,145	3,576,316	3,619,514
Chippewa	40		68,251	2,364,162	2,432,453
Clark	207	488	153,367	1,928,559	2,082,620
Dunn	19		33,932	1,418,890	1,452,840
Eau Claire	78		61,105	3,789,783	3,850,966
Polk	21		40,313	1,281,983	1,322,316
St. Croix	42		43,831	2,347,866	2,391,738
TOTAL	460		443,943	16,707,559	17,152,449

Terminating Tonnage by Mode

Terminating County	Air	Inter-modal	Rail	Truck	Total Tonnage
Barron	41		70,677	2,405,425	2,476,143
Chippewa	49		145,990	3,379,706	3,525,746
Clark	16	289	270,968	2,980,628	3,251,901
Dunn	34		65,416	2,428,077	2,493,527
Eau Claire	109		384,136	4,628,793	5,013,038
Polk	25		33,615	1,626,913	1,660,553
St. Croix	61		48,335	2,405,186	2,453,581
TOTAL	336	289	1,019,138	19,854,727	20,874,490

Originating Tonnage by Commodity type

Commodity	Tons	% of Total
Field Crops	5,762,546	33.6%
Warehouse & Distribution	2,700,646	15.7%
Nonmetallic Minerals (Sand & Gravel)	1,751,551	10.2%
Concrete, Gypsum or Plaster	1,290,536	7.5%
Primary Forest Materials	921,106	5.4%
Grain Mill Products	637,909	3.7%
Industrial Chemicals	391,592	2.3%
Beverages or Flavor Extracts	364,667	2.1%
Misc. Wood Products	355,370	2.1%
Dairy Products	331,997	1.9%

Terminating Tonnage by Commodity type

Commodity	Tons	% of Total
Nonmetallic Minerals (Sand & Gravel)	9,804,984	47.0%
Warehouse & Distribution	2,508,945	12.0%
Concrete, Gypsum or Plaster	1,398,300	6.7%
Industrial Chemicals	711,820	3.4%
Primary Forest Materials	676,350	3.2%
Abrasives, Asbestos	558,891	2.7%
Paving or Roofing Materials	490,759	2.4%
Sawmill Products	467,646	2.2%
Misc. Food Preparation	287,762	1.4%

WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN
STATE OF THE REGION WORKING PAPER

**UTILITIES & COMMUNITY
FACILITIES**

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**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING
MARCH 2009**



Prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

1. INTRODUCTION

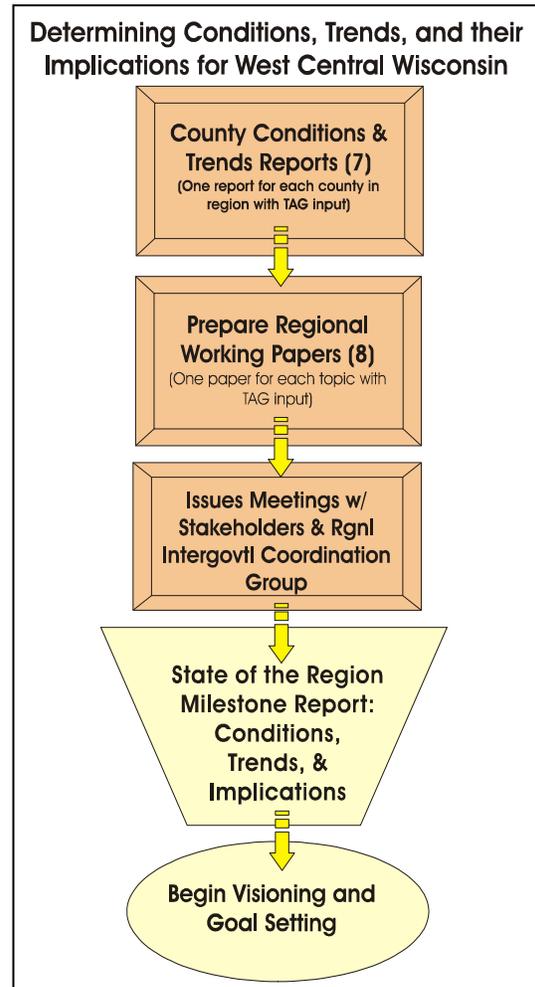
There are three primary ways for local governments to guide development¹: (1) planning policy (e.g., zoning, resource protections), (2) fiscal policy (e.g., tax programs, PDRs), and (3) public works (e.g., sewer, water, schools). This working paper focuses on the last of these—the non-transportation infrastructure and community facilities upon which we rely.

This document is one of eight working papers prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) as part of its comprehensive planning effort with input from the project’s Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

As shown in the diagram to the right, these working papers largely build upon the seven county conditions and trends reports prepared by WCWRPC with TAG input. The working papers place the county data in a regional context, highlighting conditions and trends of regional significance or opportunities for multi-jurisdictional cooperation.

As such, the information found within this document is discussed at a regional level. Each county’s conditions and trends report should be referred to for additional details and background information at the county and municipal level.

These working papers provide a foundation upon which regional issues can be identified and discussed. Only by building a consensus on our region’s key conditions and trends, can the issues, their implications, and the remainder of the regional comprehensive planning effort for west central Wisconsin proceed.



¹ Williams Jr., Norman. *The Three Systems of Land Use Control*. Rutgers Law Review. Vol. 25. 1970. pp 80-101.

2. UTILITIES

Utilities, together with transportation infrastructure, are the backbone of our communities and region. Utilities support the physical and economic development of our communities, while protecting our natural resources and improving our daily lives.



Not One Without Water (Water & Wastewater)

"Thousands have lived without love, not one without water."
– W.H. Auden, poet (1907-1973)

During 2008 comprehensive planning surveys in Barron and St. Croix counties, residents ranked groundwater as the top natural resource to be protected. Similar survey results can be found throughout the region.

All municipal water utilities and most private residents in west central Wisconsin currently obtain their water from groundwater sources. There are 63 municipal water systems and 78 municipal wastewater treatment systems or districts in our region. All of these public systems are closely regulated and monitored. While municipal water and wastewater utilities are provided for most incorporated areas, there are areas of significant residential and commercial development in our region without municipal sewer and/or water.

In the past, protecting our groundwater supply has typically focused on ensuring safe drinking water. Overall groundwater quality in the region is good, but there have been some localized concerns related to soil conditions or environmental contamination. In addition, municipal wells are often located on the periphery of a community which can also be an area experiencing growth pressure.

Groundwater protection efforts vary widely from protecting recharge areas to hydrologic modeling to animal waste management to mitigating contaminated soils. However, non-regulatory approaches (e.g., studies, Clean Sweeps, education) can often fall prey to tightening budgets.

Wisconsin wellhead protection laws require that all municipal wells proposed or constructed after May 1, 1992, have a wellhead protection program, but many older wells do not have such a plan. The table on the following page shows that most municipalities in the region have wellhead protections plans for at least one of their wells, but far fewer have adopted a wellhead protection ordinance. Wellhead protection areas may extend beyond municipal boundaries and water service areas.

The Wisconsin Wastewater Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) Permit Program regulates municipal and industrial "point source" discharges to surface and groundwaters, as well as the disposal practices of sludge and by-product solids. The table on the following page identifies the numbers of these wastewater treatment systems in the region; sanitary sewer districts are included in the municipal WPDES permit numbers.

Water and Wastewater Systems (May 2007)²

County	# of municipal water systems	# of wellhead prot. plans	# of wellhead prot. ordinances	# of municipal WPDES permits	# of industrial WPDES permits
Barron	9	7	2	13	5
Chippewa	9	6	3	9	6
Clark	10	8	5	11	7
Dunn	7	2	0	9	2
Eau Claire	5	2	0	6	9
Polk	12	7	3	13	5
St. Croix	11	7	5	17	4
Total	63	39 (61.9%)	18 (28.5%)	78	38

Sewer service area planning is required for communities with a population greater than 10,000 as part of area-wide water quality management planning. The purpose of these plans is to protect environmentally sensitive areas from development which could have an adverse impact upon surface or groundwater quality. WCWRPC often becomes involved in sewer service area planning due to the high level of intergovernmental cooperation required. Four areas of our region participate in sewer service area planning—Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls urban area, Menomonie, Hudson, and River Falls. The City of New Richmond is projected to exceed 10,000 residents by 2020 and the City of Rice Lake will be approaching 10,000 by 2030.

While the past emphasis in the region has largely been on water quality, there is increasing concern about the quantity of the supply. Lack of water can limit the growth and expansion of a community and its industries. If you walked into the new Abbotsford City Hall in March 2009, you were greeted by a video explaining that groundwater availability does not meet the city’s growing demand and a surface water source primarily supplied by stormwater and treated wastewater is proposed. Other communities in northern Clark County have similar water quantity challenges and may also need to consider more innovative alternatives. Water quantity concerns are not limited to Clark County, however, as water use throughout the region is increasing as shown in the table on the following page.

The table shows that water usage in our region nearly doubled between 1979 and 2005, and 59 percent of the high capacity irrigation wells are located in Dunn and Barron counties. Under NR 812.07, a high capacity well system has an approved pump capacity of 70 or more gallons per minute and requires Wisconsin DNR approval. Overall in our region, data on water quantity is limited. The Barron County Soil and Water Conservation Department has recognized the lack of water quantity baseline data in order to better model and monitor groundwater availability. For more discussion on groundwater in our region, please refer to the *WCWRPC Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources Working Paper*.

² Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and UW-Extension Center for Land Use Education & USGS Wisconsin Water Science Center. *Protecting Wisconsin’s Groundwater through Comprehensive Planning* website. <http://wi.water.usgs.gov/gwcomp/>.

Water Use by County (millions of gallons)³

County	1979 Water Use	2005 Water Use	Primary Increases Due To:	# High Capacity Wells	# High Cap. Irrigation Wells
Barron	9.6	19.4	irrigation & industrial	363	170
Chippewa	8.7	15.4	irrigation & industrial	194	86
Clark	5.4	6.1	livestock & public use; industry in some locations	102	2
Dunn	7.7	31.9	irrigation & some industry	329	262
Eau Claire	16.7	18.8	irrigation & domestic	174	56
Polk	5.4	10.9	domestic, aquaculture, & public use	102	25
St. Croix	6.2	15.8	domestic, industrial, & irrigation	231	132
Total	59.7	118.3		1,495	733 (49%)

It Flows Downhill (Stormwater Management)

*“Water generally flows downhill in this area”
- a Detroit news reporter describing a suburban flood*

Stormwater management is important to reduce or prevent soil erosion, mitigate flooding, and limit run-off of pollutants, nutrients, and sediment to water bodies. Like water quality preservation, there are a wide variety of tools to address stormwater management, such as storm sewers, site plan review, preservation of natural storage areas, and agricultural best practices. And like groundwater, stormwater does not recognize political boundaries.



Public stormwater facilities in most rural areas of our region are limited to ditches and culverts. Most systems for developed areas use a combination of engineered stormwater solutions and natural approaches which take advantage of existing swales, ponds, or other storage areas.

State and federal law requires municipalities in census-defined urban areas and municipalities with 10,000 or more population to develop a stormwater management program. Under these rules, the fifteen municipalities in the Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls urban area and the cities of Hudson and Menomonie must have a stormwater management program. Again, the cities of New Richmond and Rice Lake are projected to approach or exceed the 10,000 population threshold in the next 20 to 30 years

³ Ibid. Does not include mining and thermoelectric power generation. High capacity well information from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources *High Capacity Well Information* website. <http://dnr.wi.gov/water/dwg/hicap.html>

Most communities with subdivision and/or zoning ordinances have encompassed some level of stormwater management requirements. Further, State law requires landowners to develop an erosion control plan and acquire discharge permits for all construction sites where one or more acres are disturbed.

According to the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Public Works Association, only six cities in our region had adopted stormwater utilities as of August 2008: Barron, Chetek, Eau Claire, Menomonie, New Richmond, and River Falls; Chippewa Falls also has a utility, but was not included in the APWA list. Stormwater utilities have the ability to charge fees in order to develop and maintain the community's stormwater system. Though such utilities are not commonplace in west central Wisconsin, the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies estimated that 38 percent of stormwater management agencies in the United States in 1996 were funded through stormwater utilities.

Organized Lightning (Energy Transmission)

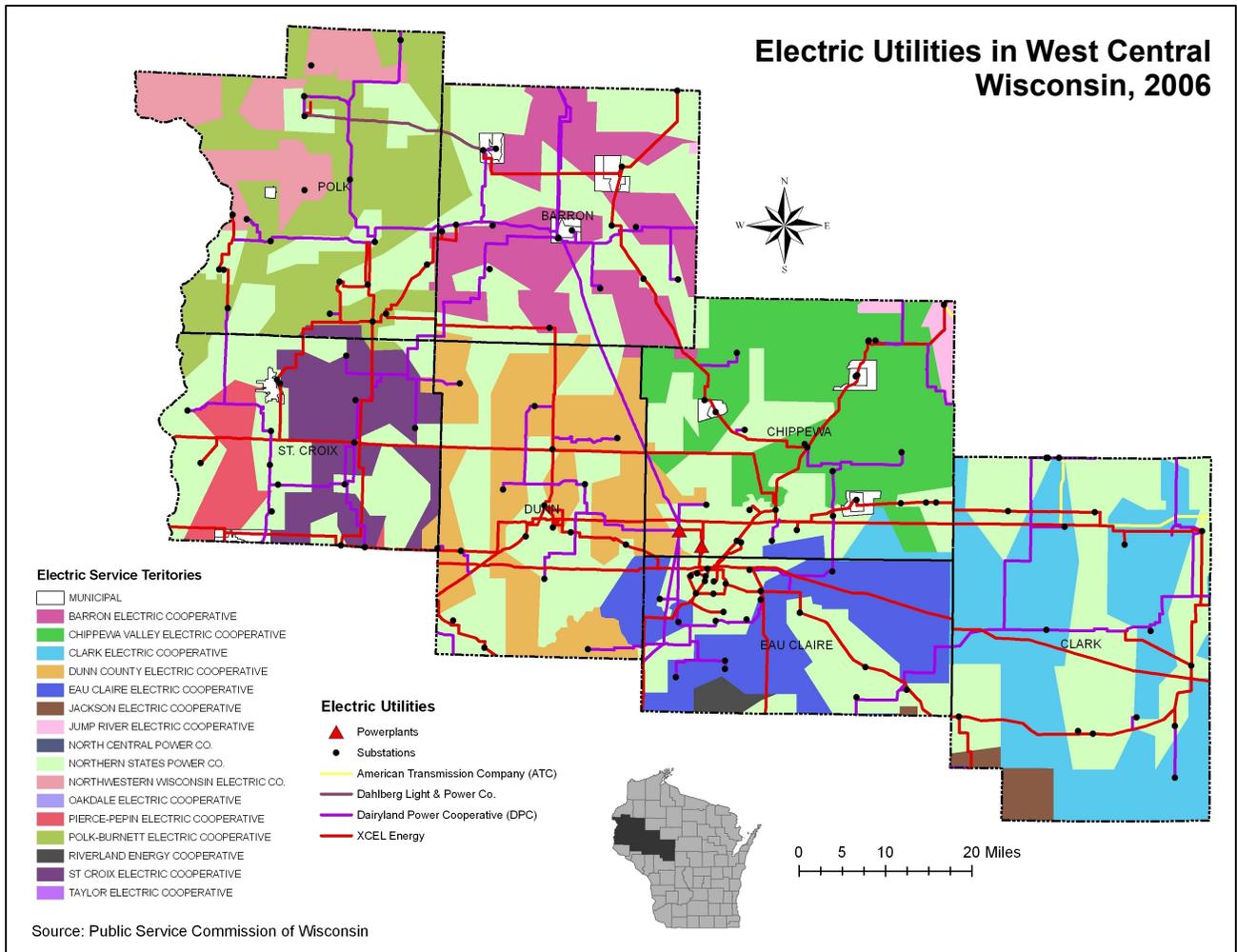


“Electricity is really just organized lightning.”
- George Carlin, comedian (1937-2008)

Planning and managing our energy infrastructure is a task largely left to the energy service providers and the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. This subsection is an overview of the existing transmission system; for a discussion of energy sources, please refer to the *WCWRPC Energy & Sustainability Working Paper*.

The electric transmission system is complex and highly interconnected. This is especially true for our region since we have a greater number of electric cooperatives than any other area of Wisconsin. As shown on the map on the following page, approximately 58 percent of our region is served by eleven electric cooperatives who are all members of the Dairyland Power Cooperatives. Two private companies, Xcel Energy and Northwestern Wisconsin Electric Cooperative, service 41 percent of our region, with the remaining one percent served by the nine municipal utilities.

The map also shows the medium and high voltage transmission lines in the region. Only parts of two high voltage (345kV) lines intersect portions of the region—the Xcel Energy line crossing Dunn, Eau Claire and Polk counties and the ATC Arrowhead-Weston line crossing Clark and a small portion of Chippewa counties. Improvements to the system to meet demands, replace aging equipment, and ensure contingency availability are ongoing. To increase reliability and help meet projected demand in our region, the Chisago project has received final go-ahead for construction. This project entails a 161 kV line across the St. Croix River at St. Croix Falls, then east to a substation near Amery.

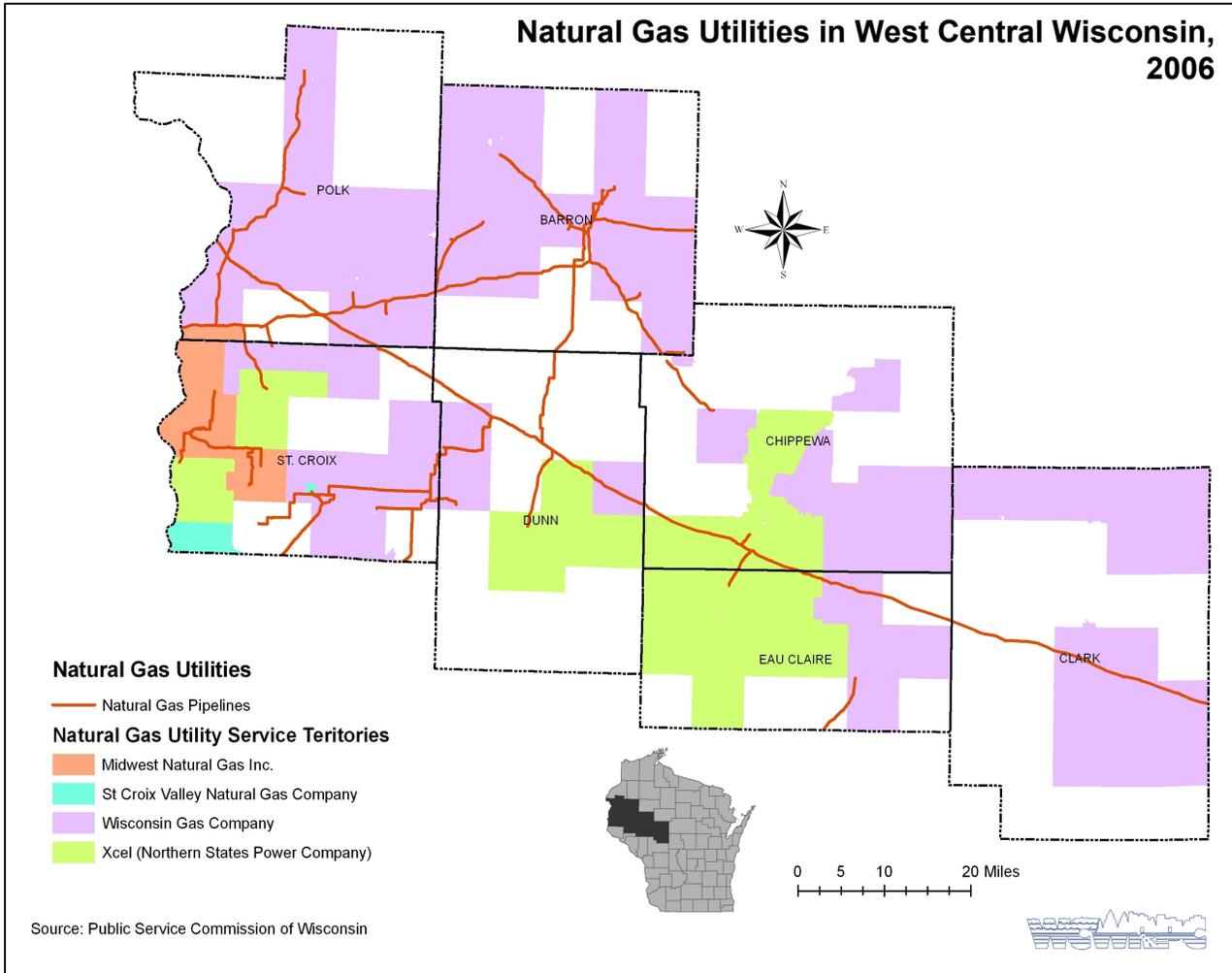


As shown on the map on the following page, natural gas availability in west central Wisconsin is largely limited to incorporated cities and villages, towns with significant development, and those areas in between. Service areas shown on the map are by municipality, though gas service may not be available to the entire municipality.

Siting of new gas and electric transmission systems can be difficult, especially for developing areas. The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin recommends that municipalities consider future transmission lines in their planning and development review processes.

Currently, only a limited number of municipalities practice official mapping to preserve future utility rights-of-way adjacent to roads or existing utility corridors. More commonly, land use regulations are used to reduce potential conflicts. Electric reliability also benefits from cooperation between electric providers and local governments for line maintenance, such as tree cutting, and emergency planning for power outages.

Natural Gas Utilities in West Central Wisconsin, 2006



The New Speed of Communications (Communication Utilities)

"The speed of communications is wondrous to behold."
-- Edward R. Murrow, journalist (1908-1965)

Economic and lifestyles changes are requiring communication to be faster, more convenient, more reliable, and more connected. For instance, AT&T Wisconsin has experienced a 53 percent decrease in its number of landlines since 2000.⁴

Improving communication systems is expensive and largely market driven. Cellular companies continue to improve coverage areas as demand warrants, though gaps in cellular coverage do exist in our region. Physical landforms, such as the hills in the Knapp area, can also pose barriers to various forms of wireless communication.



Whether part of the service, high-tech, or information/knowledge economy, more emphasis is being placed on high-speed communications as part of economic development strategies. While each county in the state has some fiber and companies continue to expand fiber service, only about 62 percent of the industrial parks in the region have fiber optic service.⁵

The map on the following page provides an overview of non-wireless broadband availability in Wisconsin, though wireless services can sometimes augment these offerings. Broadband service shown on the map denotes those areas with multi-directional data transmission at speeds of 200 Kbps or greater. But the data was collected at the telephone company exchange level or by zip code, so not all potential customers within given area will have broadband service. In Wisconsin, 47 percent of broadband is provided by cable television companies and 37 percent by telephone companies, with the remaining market served by wireless.⁶ The Public Service Commission is beginning a broadband inventory for the state, so more detailed information about broadband availability in our region will be available in the future.

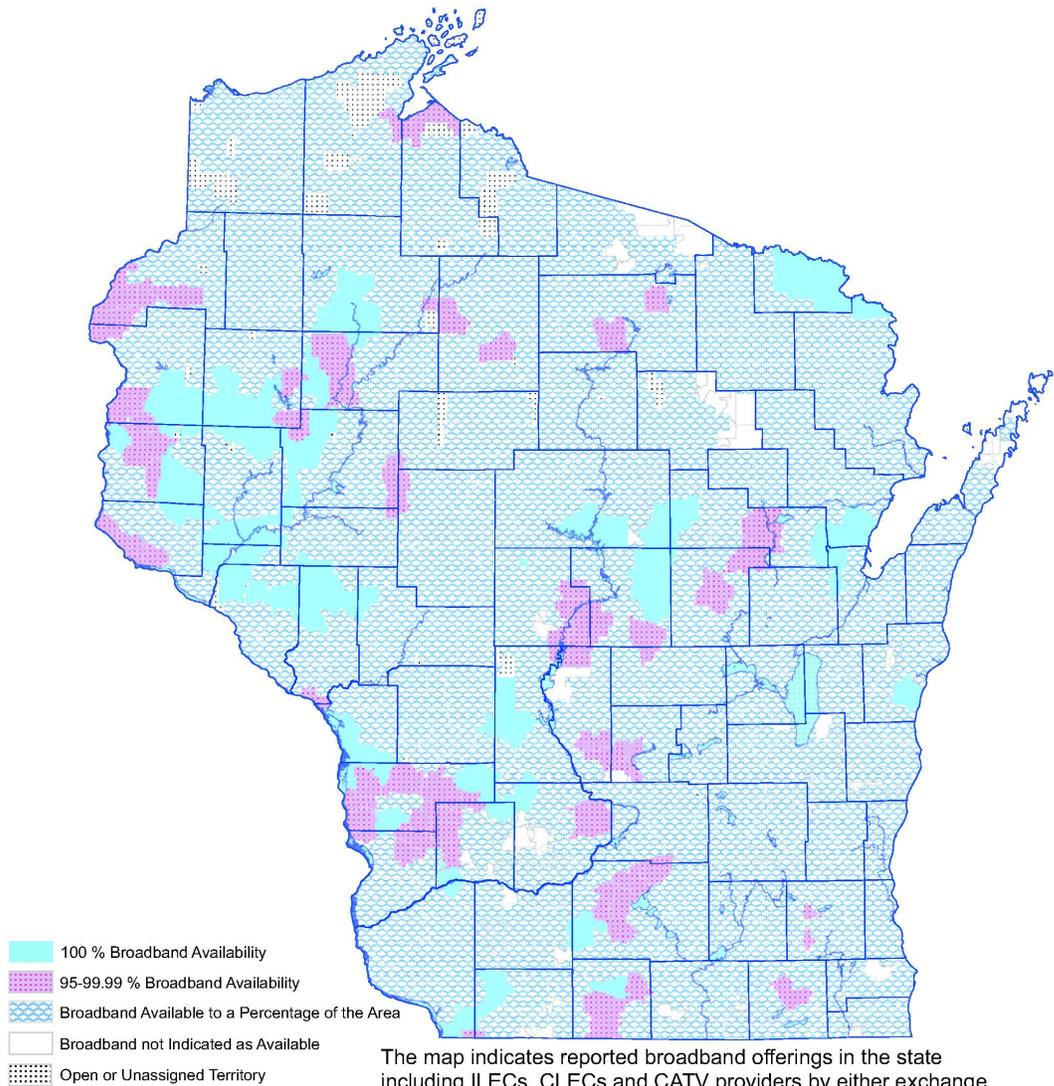
The State Internet Equipment Tax Credit and Exemption Program was recently launched to assist in broadband employment. Significant grant funding for broadband infrastructure improvements is also being made available through the 2009 federal stimulus package.

⁴ Ehr, Mike, Director of External Affairs-AT&T Wisconsin. *AT&T Public Policy Update*. March 24, 2009.

⁵ WCWRPC. *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*. October 2008.

⁶ Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. *Status of Investments in Advanced Telecommunications Infrastructure in Wisconsin*. Spring 2008. p28.

Wisconsin 2006 Combined ILEC, CLEC and CATV Broadband Offerings



The map indicates reported broadband offerings in the state including ILECs, CLECs and CATV providers by either exchange or zip code. In most cases, CLEC offerings overlay the ILEC broadband service areas. There are distance limitations on all the broadband offerings, so although an area is reported as having broadband service, not all customers in the area may be able to obtain broadband service.

*ILECs and CLECs are local telephone exchange carriers.
CATVs are cable television providers.*

Infra Map 8
March 2008
Public Service Commission of WI

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

While infrastructure is the foundation upon which our communities are built, other facilities and services are vital to make our region a safe, healthy, and desirable place in which to live, work, and play. This section touches upon a few of the more regionally significant facilities and services, though communities maintain many additional facilities not discussed here (e.g., fire stations, municipal buildings, flood control structures, cemeteries). Many of these other facilities are in need of improvement or expansion as technologies change and demand increases, and their exclusion here does not make them any less important to the health and safety of the region.

Healthy Minds & Bodies (Education & Health)



*“A healthy mind in a healthy body.”
- Juvenal, Roman satirist (circa 120 AD)*

When asked what should men pray for, Juvenal famously answered “mens sana in corpore sano (a healthy mind in a healthy body).” West central Wisconsin is blessed with many educational and health facilities to help realize such prayers.

The table below summarizes the educational facilities and libraries headquartered in our region. These facilities receive additional support from the Community Educational Service Agencies (CESA #10 & #11) and from two library systems (Indianhead Federated & Wisconsin Valley). Keep in mind that numerous school districts headquartered in counties outside our region also serve our region’s communities but are not included in these numbers. Further, the list only includes those private schools as reported to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Educational Facilities⁷

County	Public School Districts Headquartered in Region		# of Private Schools (note text)	# of Libraries
	# of Districts	2008 Enrollment		
Barron	7	7,658	10	6
Chippewa	7	9,291	16	5
Clark	8	5,209	12	11
Dunn	4	5,780	4	4
Eau Claire	4	13,787	25	5
Polk	8	7,967	3	10
St. Croix	6	13,422	7	9
Total	44	63,114	77	50

In 2008, approximately 2,779 school age youth were home schooled in CESAs 10 and 11 which includes areas outside our region, representing 3.3% of the total public and home schooled

⁷ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008.

students in these CESA districts. Homes schooling enrollments across Wisconsin have been decreasing over the last decade, with the following five-year decreases for our CESAs:

- CESA 10: -65 children (-5.5%) and -74 families (-11.6%)
- CESA 11: -62 children (-3.6%) and -36 families (-3.9%)

West central Wisconsin has a strong post-secondary educational infrastructure. The majority of our region is served by the Wisconsin Indianhead and Chippewa Valley technical colleges which work closely with businesses and the public sector to provide practical workforce training. As shown in the table below, our region is also served by three comprehensive universities and UW-Barron County in Rice Lake, which offers associate-degree programming. UW-Stevens Point is also in close proximity for many Clark County residents and UW-Colleges Online also offers Internet-based coursework. Lakeland College’s Chippewa Valley Center in Chippewa Falls is the only accredited private college facility in the region which is a member of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Enrollment of UW Campuses in West Central Wisconsin

Campus	1998-99 Enrollment	2007-08 Enrollment	% change
UW-Eau Claire	10852	10854	0.02%
UW-River Falls	5617	6452	14.87%
UW-Stout	7731	8477	9.65%
UW-Barron County	491	606	23.42%

source: University of Wisconsin system

As an active expression of the “Wisconsin Idea,” University of Wisconsin-Extension partners closely with county governments to provide supportive services to all residents, businesses, and governments. Cooperative efforts also exist between educational institutions, local governments, and the health care industry in areas such as workforce development and emergency planning.

The table below provides the number of general hospitals and rural health clinics in our region which are in the Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services-Division of Quality Assurance’s facilities directories.

Health Facilities and Medically Underserved Communities⁸

County	# of General Hospitals and Clinics	Health Professional Shortage Areas (# of FTEs needed)			Medically Underserved Areas (MUA) Score	MUA area
		Primary Care	Dental	Mental Care		
Barron	13	0	0	1	62.00	C. of Chetek
Chippewa	9	4	0	1	60.80	Chippewa Co.
Clark	10	2	0	0	61.40	Clark Co.
Dunn	1	6	2	1	56.60	V. of Colfax area
Eau Claire	9	5	0	0	60.80	Eau Claire Co.
Polk	8	1	0	1	58.70	V. of Centuria
St. Croix	9	1	0	0	60.30	C. of Glenwood City

The table also shows the distribution of our region’s medically underserved communities as designated by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. Please note that the shortages of health care professionals are not always in a medically underserved area (MUA). MUAs are indexed with a score of 0 to 100, with the lower scores having the highest need.

There has been significant expansion of health facilities in some areas in recent years, such as the newly opened Marshfield Clinic in Rice Lake. While most planning and operations of health facilities is undertaken by private entities, all counties have health departments and some have health care facilities.

Building our Youth (Child Care)

“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President (1882-1945)



Wisconsin state law requires a license for anyone caring for four or more children under the age of seven years who are unrelated to the providers. The table below provides the number of licensed facilities by county and the total number of children for which the facilities are licensed.

Licensed Child Care Facilities and Growing Demand⁹

County	# of facilities (2008)	Licensed for total # of children (2008)	# of children less than age 6 (2000)	# of children less than age 6 (2030)	% increase in children less than age 6 (2000-2030)
Barron	35	875	3,051	3,174	4.0%
Chippewa	55	1,370	4,109	4,832	17.6%
Clark	31	537	3,013	3,438	14.1%
Dunn	33	702	2,770	3,636	31.3%
Eau Claire	98	3,579	6,644	8,357	25.8%
Polk	35	542	2,924	3,719	27.2%
St. Croix	94	2402	5,344	10,312	93.0%
Total	381	10,007	27,855	37,468	34.5%

The table shows that the existing licensed capacity of child care centers in west central Wisconsin is approximately 36% of the total number of all children less than age six in 2000. Without extensive surveys and interviews, there is no region-wide data available to definitively say whether existing licensed facilities are meeting the demand. However, approximately 73% of children under the age of six in our region were in households where the female head of household was in the labor force. These children are potentially needing market care.

It is clear that the demand for child care services will continue to grow, but at different rates for different areas of the region. It is important to note that the above table does not reflect the location of the child care facilities and employment. For example, 77 of the 98 of the licensed facilities in Eau Claire County are located in the City of Eau Claire. This reflects, in part, that

parents will often enroll their children close to their employer and may travel outside the county or community in which they reside. Additional considerations for child care include the stability and seasonality of their employment and different racial or ethnic needs.

Our Growing Moral Test (Senior and Special Care)



“It was once said that the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life-the children; those who are in the twilight of life- the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life-the sick, the needy, and the handicapped.”

- Hubert H. Humphrey, 38th Vice President & Minnesota Senator (1911-1978)

Almost 50 percent of all persons age 65 and over will spend some time in a nursing home.¹⁰ As discussed in the WCWRPC population working paper, the number of residents age 65 and over in our region is projected to increase by 124 percent between 2005 and 2030. There will be a corresponding increase in demand for senior services, in-home care, and assisted living.

The table below identifies the number of licensed assisted living facilities and beds in the region. Using the 2005 occupancy rate and number of beds, it can be estimated that the number of facility residents in the region as a proportion of the population aged 65 or more was 9.9 percent. If this ratio is applied to the projected 2030 population, the demand for assisted living beds will more than double between 2005 and 2030.

Assisted Living Facilities and Growing Demand¹¹

County	# of facilities (2008)	# of beds (2008)	nursing home occupancy rate (2005)	est. # of residents (2005)	# of residents as % of popul. 65+ yrs (2005)	est. # of residents (2030)
Barron	34	797	89.6	714	9.3%	1,440
Chippewa	69	978	76.1	744	8.7%	1,552
Clark	27	597	90.7	541	10.6%	764
Dunn	31	522	83.9	438	9.4%	1,076
Eau Claire	79	1,533	90.8	1,392	11.8%	2,920
Polk	22	616	89.6	552	8.0%	1,269
St. Croix	43	893	86.7	774	10.4%	2,498
Total	305	5,936	86.8 avg	5,156	9.9%	11,531

The assisted living facilities in the above table include licensed nursing homes, community based residential facilities, residential care apartment complexes, and adult family homes providing all types of assistance and care (e.g., general senior, Alzheimer’s, developmentally disabled,

rehabilitation). Though the far majority of these facilities provide senior or dementia/Alzheimer’s care, the 2030 projected demand for assisted living facilities is actually higher once non-seniors requiring such care are considered. The above table also does not provide insight into the distribution of these facilities within individual counties, nor does it reflect the level of care. For instance, in 2006, 40 percent of Wisconsin nursing home residents had a moderate or severe cognitive impairment.¹²

Walking with Nature (Outdoor Recreation)

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”

- John Muir, naturalist (1838-1914)



West central Wisconsin has an abundance of natural resources which provide residents and visitors a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Recreational facilities are often developed and maintained through cooperative efforts involving local governments, schools, non-profit groups, or even multiple communities. Trails, in particular, can require a high level of intergovernmental coordination and efforts to extend or connect trails are underway in our region. Recreational activities can also conflict with other activities or uses, such as multi-use trails, water sports, and ATV use on roads.

Trail Miles & Recreational Lands

County	Trail Miles (1998)	County Rank by Trail Miles (1998)	Acres of Non-MFL Rec. Lands (2005)
Barron	304	28	23,230
Chippewa	393	14	44,330
Clark	345	19	134,460
Dunn	294	30	16,412
Eau Claire	184	54	58,511
Polk	334	21	43,008
St. Croix	262	32	19,165
Total	2,116		339,116

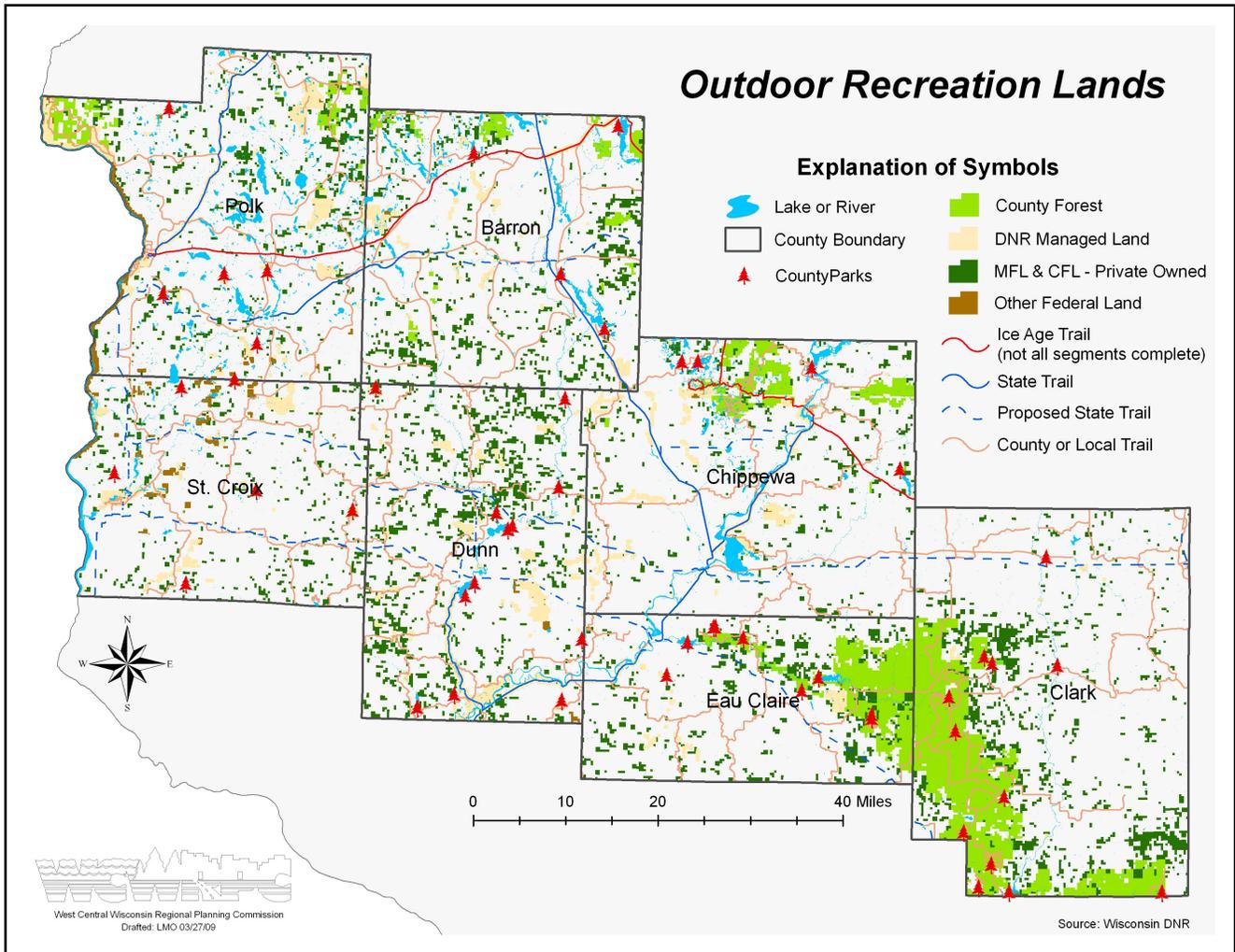
source: Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources

The table to the left shows the trail miles and acres of non-Managed Forest Law public recreational lands in the region. The map on the following page identifies our region’s surface waters, state trails, and primary federal, state, and county recreational lands. Privately owned forest crop and managed forest lands are also shown, though not all of these properties are open to the public. Many communities, schools, churches, and private groups across the region also own and maintain parks and recreational facilities not shown on the map.

Counties and local municipalities must have an outdoor recreation plan (ORP) adopted within the past five years in order to be eligible for outdoor recreation grant dollars administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Most counties and many communities have met this prerequisite.

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The *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2005-2010* (SCORP) provides some insight into recreational supply shortages for different sub-regions of the state, though this analysis should be considered carefully since local needs may vary. In general, the SCORP identifies parks, campgrounds, and boat launches needed in many parts of our region, while soccer fields, tennis courts, nature centers, and picnic areas are in short supply in many of our developed areas.



In Case of Emergency... (Emergency Services & Management)

*"I have left orders to be awakened at any time in case of national emergency, even if I'm in a cabinet meeting."
- Ronald Reagan (1911-2004)*

Natural and man-made hazards do not recognize political boundaries and events can all impact multiple communities. Our region is not immune to such large-scale threats.



The 1899 New Richmond Tornado remains the eighth deadliest in U.S. history with 117 known deaths. Past droughts have dried up shallow wells and caused millions of dollars in crop losses. The 1996 Weyauwega train derailment which resulted in a 16-day evacuation involved the same tracks which cross our region. And we are at a latitude comparable to the Montreal area which was struck by an ice storm in January 1998 which left over four million residents without power, some for over three weeks. While these are perhaps

extreme examples, our emergency services providers are protecting our communities every day as they respond to more commonplace incidents.

Emergency response involves a high degree of inter-agency coordination. All law enforcement agencies fall under a Statewide mutual aid agreement. Mutual aid for fire departments, ambulance, and first responders varies, though a number of counties have adopted county-wide agreements. Public works and highway departments in many communities also have mutual aid agreements, though formal agreements are less common. While many communities and agencies have provided support without formal agreements in the past, such agreements are becoming more necessary due to specialized equipment, differing billing rates, varying training requirements, and insurance concerns.

Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties all have a county-level Level B hazardous materials response team. Clark County contracts with another county for Level B service, while Polk and St. Croix counties rely on each local fire department to address this. For additional support, with a higher level of protective gear, the entire region is served by the Level A West Central Wisconsin Regional Response Team based in the Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire Fire Departments. For bomb threats, the bomb response team is activated from Madison.

Communications are vital to effective emergency response. The interoperability of emergency communications systems between different agencies has received significant recent attention. Twelve counties in the area are participating in an interoperability communications planning grant project to address compatibility. Not all counties in our region are participating in this effort, nor are all of our counties pursuing P25 compliance with the national interoperability standard for digital two-way wireless communications. Policies regarding use of emergency radios, siren activation, and weather warnings also vary by county. Many existing weather sirens in the region are aging and do not have battery back-up, while adequate siren coverage is not available for all developed areas.



Due to recent events and escalating costs, emergency planning and preparedness requirements have been increasing, placing greater demands on emergency management personnel. Planning for emergencies and hazardous materials facilities is primarily coordinated through each county emergency management office and Wisconsin Emergency Management. With the assistance of WCWRPC, each county in our region has also adopted a hazard mitigation plan to ensure eligibility for related FEMA grant dollars. And other public, private, and non-profit entities are involved in planning and response depending on the disaster type (e.g., pandemic flu, forest fire, drought, electric outage, nuclear release).

Private businesses and community members are becoming more involved in disaster planning as reflected by the formation of Disaster Ready Chippewa Valley and the Chippewa School's READY program. While some communities do integrate Safe Growth concepts into their comprehensive planning and development projects, this is uncommon.

4. COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

“The cost of living has gone up another dollar a quart.”
 - W.C. Fields, comedian (1880-1946)

Whether parks or police, roads or recycling, or water or wastewater, the costs to develop and maintain community services are significant and growing. Meanwhile, levy limits and the downturn in the economy are forcing many local governments to make very difficult decisions regarding community services.



Formal capital improvements planning is still relatively rare for most governments in the region, often limited to the larger cities or road projects. There has also been anecdotal evidence that expectation levels for services (e.g., trails, paved roads, curbside garbage collection) are sometimes higher among for new residents moving from other states or from urban areas to rural communities.

The cost of community services (COCS) has a strong correlation to land use. Different land uses will generate more (or less) revenue than they consume in public services. The Wisconsin Land Use Research Program at the UW-Madison performed a series of COCS studies in the 1990s across the state. A COCS ratio of greater than 1 indicates that the land use costs more in services than it provides in revenues; less than 1 indicates that the land use generates more revenues than it consumes in costs.

The table below presents the range of results from the COCS studies for eight towns which included the Town of Richmond in St. Croix County.

Cost of Community Services Ratios (taxpayers perspective)¹³

Land Use	range of COCS ratios
Residential	1.01 to 1.30
Agricultural Residential	1.09 to 1.35
Commercial/Manufacturing	.15 to 1.11
Agricultural Land	.04 to .29
Swamp/Forest	.03 to .43
Ag. Land and Ag. Residences	.69 to .96

In short, the cost of town and school services provided to all types of residences exceeds the tax revenue generated by the residences. The table also shows that the costs can vary widely by community depending on the services offered, differing costs, and type of development. Generally, development in rural areas is more costly to serve due to the distances and lower densities involved.

WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN
STATE OF THE REGION WORKING PAPER

AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

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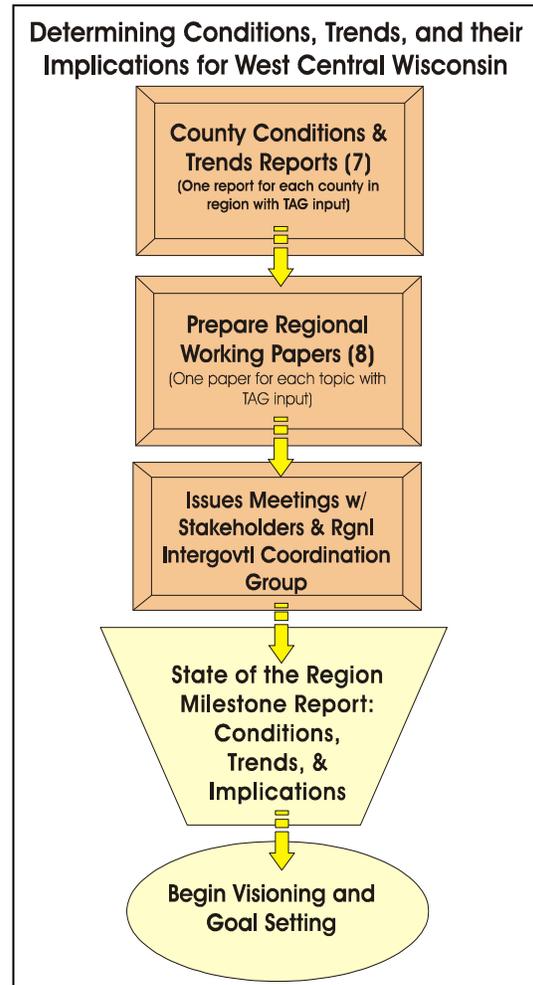
1. INTRODUCTION

This document is one of eight working papers prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) as part of its comprehensive planning effort with input from the project’s Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

As shown in the diagram to the right, these working papers largely build upon the seven county conditions and trends reports prepared by WCWRPC with TAG input. The working papers place the county data in a regional context, highlighting conditions and trends of regional significance.

As such, the information found within this document is discussed at a regional level. Each county’s conditions and trends report should be referred to for additional details and background information at the county and municipal level.

These working papers provide a foundation upon which regional issues can be identified and discussed. Only by building a consensus on our region’s key conditions and trends, can the issues, their implications, and the remainder of the regional comprehensive planning effort for west central Wisconsin proceed.



“Once you have lived on the land, been a partner with its moods, secrets, and seasons, you cannot leave. The living land remembers, touching you in unguarded moments, saying, ‘I am here. You are part of me.’”

– Ben Logan. From the book *The Land Remembers*

2. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

“When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilization.” – Daniel Webster (1782-1852)

Acreage Down and Value Up

The distribution of agricultural land in west central Wisconsin varies significantly. In 2007, west central Wisconsin had an estimated 1,837,877 acres of assessed agricultural land. This represents 45.2 percent of the land. As a region, there was a loss of approximately 500,000 acres (780 square miles) of assessed agricultural

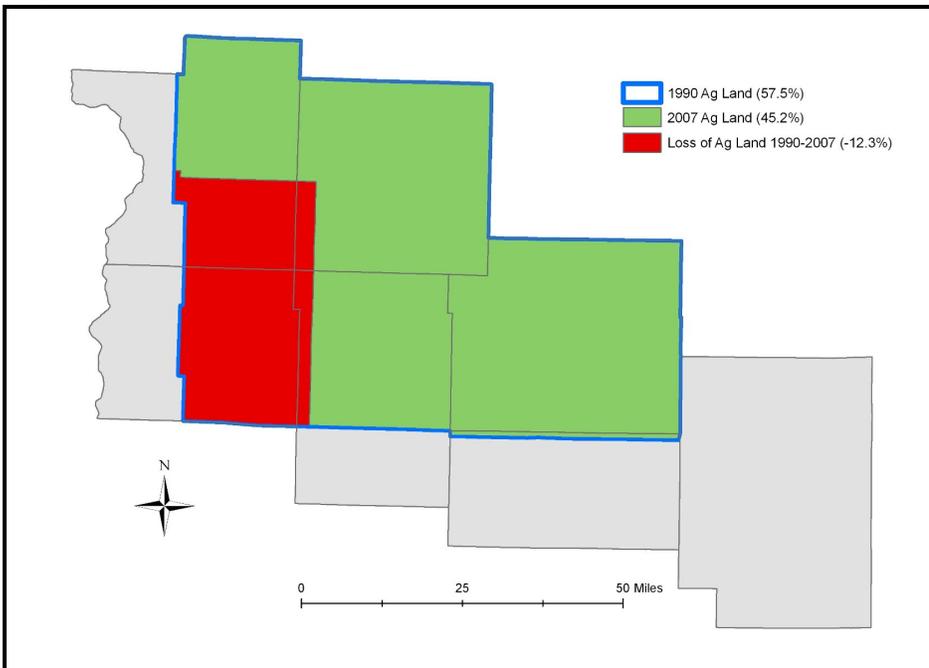
land between 1990 and 2007 (Figure 1). This equates to 1/8 of the size of the whole region or just over the size of St. Croix County. In 1990, 57.5 percent of the region consisted of assessed agricultural land. This equates to 12.3 percent less of the region in 17 years. Figure 2 visually demonstrates how much of the region was comprised of assessed agricultural land in 1990 and 2007. The red area shows the agricultural land that was lost in those 17 years.

Figure 1: Assessed Agricultural Acres

	1990 Agricultural Acres	2007 Agricultural Acres	2007 Percentage of County	1990 – 2007 Change in Acres
Barron County	350,269	262,867	46.1	-87,402
Chippewa County	361,823	291,547	43.8	-70,276
Clark County	403,232	363,127	46.5	-40,105
Dunn County	350,000	293,620	53.1	-56,380
Eau Claire County	192,542	158,187	38.3	-34,355
Polk County	328,689	210,874	34.5	-117,815
St. Croix County	350,706	257,655	54.7	-93,051
West Central Wisconsin	2,337,261	1,837,877	45.2	-499,384

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 2: Agricultural Land Trends



The counties with the highest percentages of assessed agricultural land are St. Croix (54.7 percent) and Dunn (53.1 percent). Polk (34.5 percent) and Eau Claire (38.3 percent) counties have the smallest percentages. In the past 17 years, the two counties that lost the highest percentage of their respective farmland were Polk County (36 percent) and St. Croix County (27 percent). Figure 3 shows the changes of assessed agricultural land in the region between 1990 and 2007.

The region experienced a significant increase in the market value of agricultural products sold between 2002 and 2007. The total market value increased from \$754,579,000 to \$1.154 billion. This is an increase of \$400 million (\$287 million – 2007 constant dollars).

Figure 3: Change in Assessed Agricultural Land

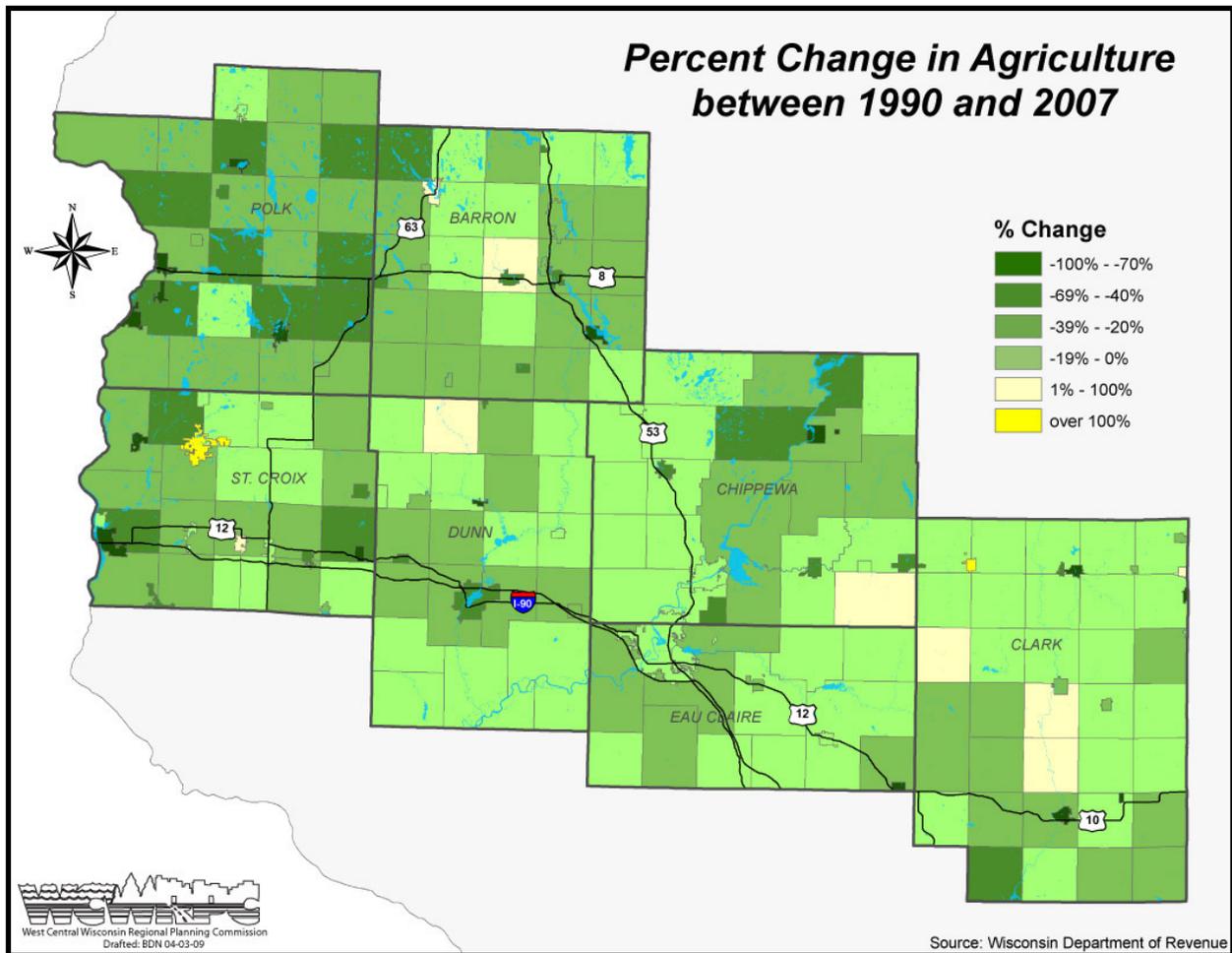


Figure 4: Dairy Farms

Dairy Declines

The region has experienced a significant reduction in the number of dairy farms. Between 1987 and 2007, the region experienced a decrease of 3,736 dairy farms, which equates to a 58 percent reduction (Figure 4). Figure 5 shows how dairy farms have decreased as a percentage of total farms. The region experienced a decrease of 31,777 (14.2 percent) milk cows between 1997 and 2007 (Figure 5). According to the 2007 Census, there were 192,244 milk cows and 2,688 dairy farms in the region

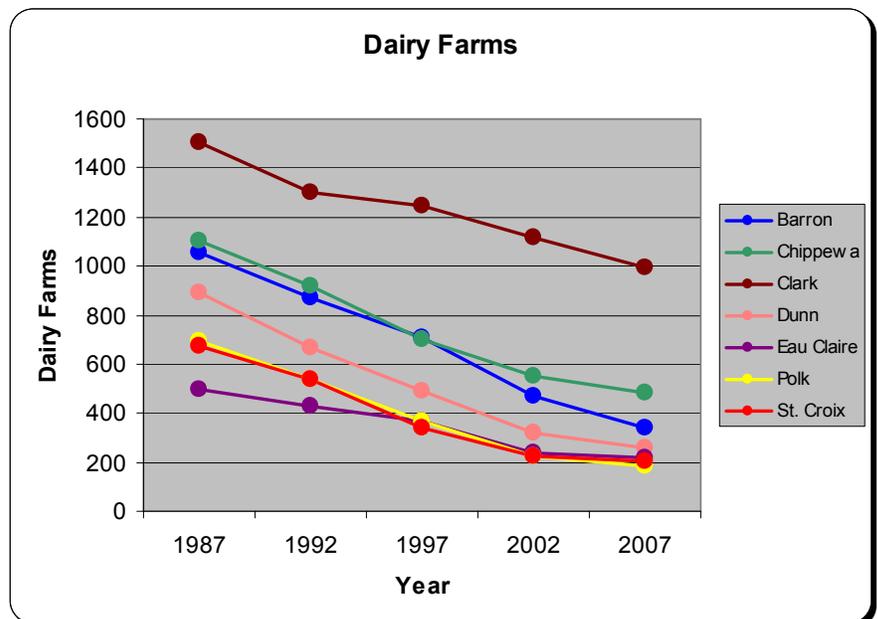
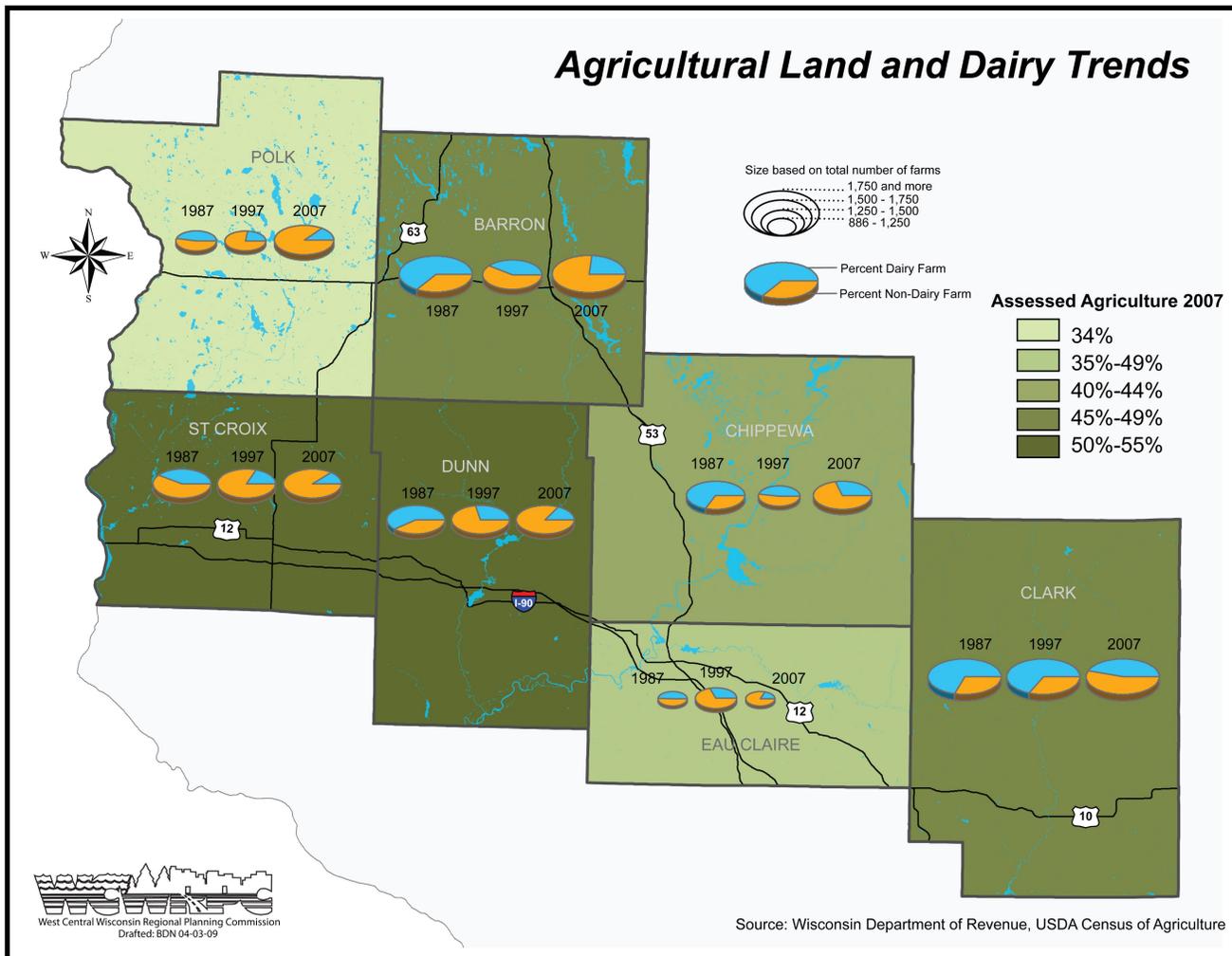


Figure 5: Dairy Farm Trends



(71.5 cows/farm). In 1997, there were 224,021 milk cows and 4,227 dairy farms respectively (52.9 cows/farm).

Increases in Renewable Energy Production

The region is experiencing an increase in the number of farms that are taking part and/or pursuing onsite renewable resource operations. This includes several anaerobic digesters, production of bio-fuel, utilizing wood, and other ventures. This phenomenon is being experienced throughout the region. Most notably, public and private investment in the ethanol industry has altered the agricultural landscape of the region in the past several years. Partly due to this, the amount of land in corn production between 2002 and 2007 increased from 21 percent of agricultural land in the region to 24.8 percent, as defined by the USDA. In comparing corn acres to only assessed agricultural land, this number is 31.1 percent, in 2007. At this time, with an uncertain future of ethanol, the region has experienced a steady and in most instances a decrease of private investment for ethanol. Currently, there are two ethanol plants located in the region. They are located in Stanley and Boyceville. Several farms in the region are producing bio-fuel and energy through manure, canola seeds, and other renewable resources. There is a growing interest in the production of energy from a variety of waste agricultural products in the region.

Figure 6: Milk Cows

	1997 Milk Cows	2002 Milk Cows	2007 Milk Cows	97-07 Number Change	97-07 Percent Change
Barron County	33,883	26,790	23,512	-10,371	-30.6
Chippewa County	41,660	33,629	32,255	-9,405	-22.6
Clark County	63,333	63,326	64,438	1,105	1.7
Dunn County	26,959	22,189	23,143	-3,816	-14.2
Eau Claire County	15,450	10,627	11,326	-4,124	-26.7
Polk County	20,196	17,785	16,540	-3,656	-18.1
St. Croix County	22,540	21,837	21,030	-1,510	-6.7
West Central Wisconsin	224,021	196,183	192,244	-31,777	-14.2

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Organic and Direct Market Farm Sales Increase

There has been an increase in organic farms and direct market food production in the region. In 2007, there were 206 certified organic farms and \$11,099,000 in sales of organically produced commodities. Due to different questions on the USDA census form, data from 2002 are not perfectly compatible with the 2007 data. However, according to the 2002 Census, the region had 63 organic farms and \$2,131,000 (\$2,450,650 - 2007 constant dollars) of sales.

Figure 7 shows that the value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for consumption significantly increased 111 percent in the region between 2002 and 2007. This consists of farmers markets, community supported agriculture, local purchasing programs, etc. The value sold increased from \$2,525,000 in 2002 to \$5,319,000 in 2007. This is an increase of \$2,794,000 (\$2,415,000 - 2007 constant dollars). In addition, there are now no less than 20 farmers markets in the region, many of which operate more than one day a week.

These trends show that the definition of what constitutes farming and farming practices are changing in the region. This change can certainly create issues between the newer and growing organic and/or direct market farmers and their supporters and larger farm operations that do not cater to organic and local markets. This can include spraying, genetics, diet of animals, impact on local and global environment, etc.

Figure 7: Agricultural Products Sold To Individuals For Consumption

	2002 Farms	2007 Farms	Percent Change	2002 Value (in \$1,000)	2007 Value (in \$1,000)	Value Percent Change
Barron County	87	102	17%	423	858	103%
Chippewa County	85	112	32%	703	654	-7%
Clark County	150	194	29%	233	369	58%
Dunn County	99	136	37%	440	883	101%
Eau Claire County	57	108	90%	219	1046	378%
Polk County	120	194	62%	215	712	231%
St. Croix County	112	136	21%	292	797	173%
West Central Wisconsin	710	982	38%	2,525	5,319	111%
State of Wisconsin	4,918	6,243	27%	29,072	43,491	50%
U.S.A.	116,733	136,817	17%	812,204	1,211,270	49%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Who's Working In Agriculture?

Ownership: Aging Families

The type of farm ownership in the region has stayed relatively the same between 1987 and 2007 (Figure 8). Between 1987 and 2007, the percentage of non-individual/family/partnership farms has increased about 50 percent. However, the 2007 percentage is still extremely low at only 3.8 percent. The average age of the principal operators in the region increased from 52.2 to 54.2 years old, between 2002 and 2007.

Figure 8: Farm Ownership

	1987 Percentage of Farms	2002 Percentage of Farms	2007 Percentage of Farms
Individual/Family Farms	89.8	92.3	89.9
Partnership	7.8	4.9	6.3
Other (Corporation, Co-op, Trust, etc.)	2.4	2.8	3.8

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Workers: Increase in Minorities

It has been documented numerous times that during the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of Hispanic workers in Wisconsin agriculture, most notably the dairy and meat processing sectors. This holds true for the region. Several rural communities in the region are

experiencing an influx of Hispanics. Many of these Hispanics work in agriculture related jobs. Specifically, this increase is most prevalent in the area in and around Abbotsford and Curtiss, Clark County and Barron and Cumberland, Barron County. In addition, there is a large Somali community in the City of Barron Many work in the meat processing sector. This issue is discussed in more detail in the Population Working Paper.

Larger Farms Reshaping Total Value Percentages

Much of the total value increase in the region can be attributed to the increase in farms that sold \$500,000 or more in total value. The region experienced an increase from 173 such farms in 2002 to 340 farms in 2007. The value of products sold from these farms increased from \$249,876,000 to \$561,345,000, which totaled an increase of \$311 million (\$274 million – 2007 constant dollars). Figure 9 shows how these farms have increased their percentage of the total value sold market in the region.

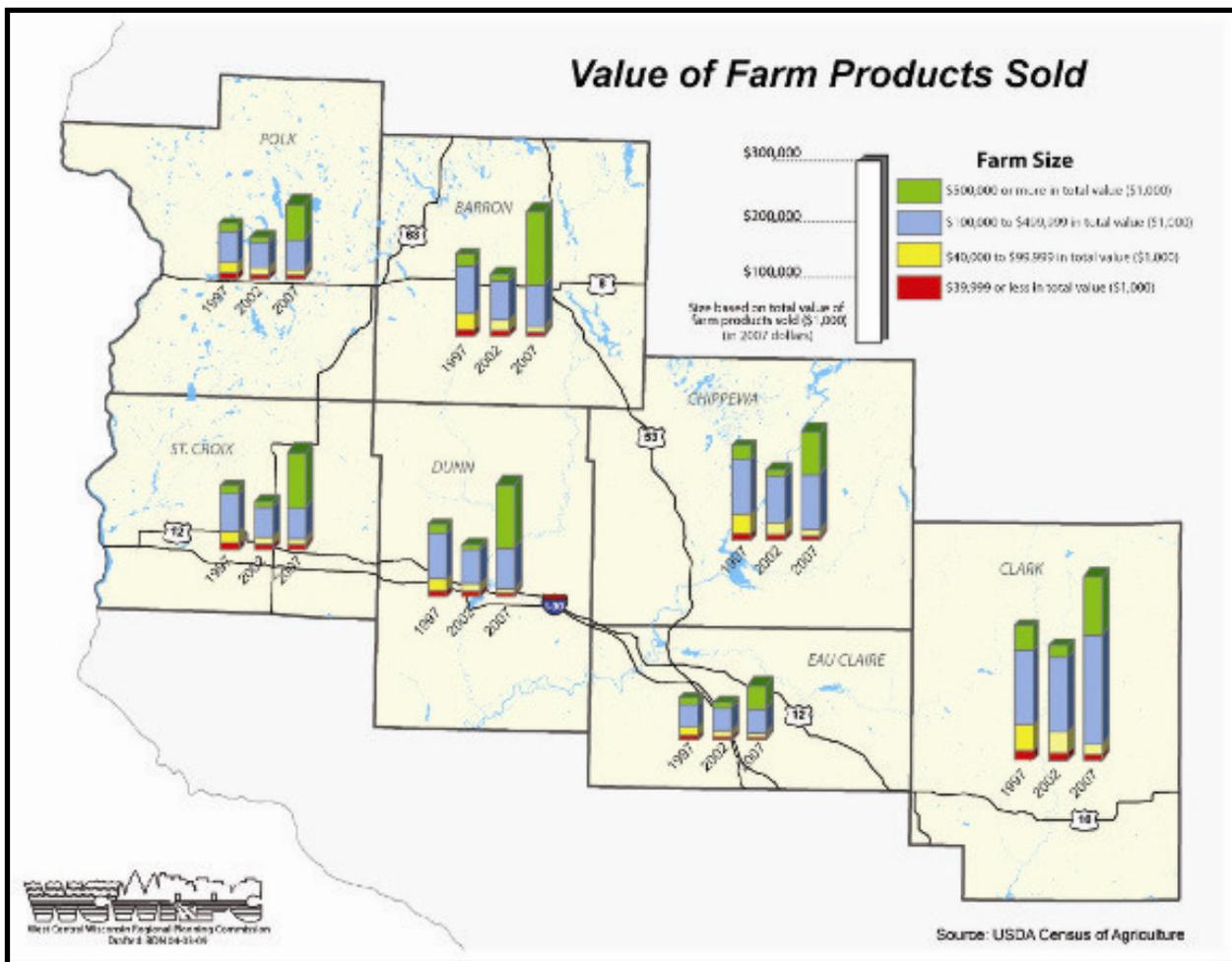
Agriculture Preservation/Working Lands

As more farmland is being taken out of production by urban development, the discussion of ways to preserve agriculture land is becoming more popular. Through the State's Working Lands Initiative, it is a goal to a) expand and modernize the State's existing farmland preservation program, b) establish agricultural enterprise areas, c) develop a purchase of agricultural conservation easement matching grant program, and d) funding the Working Lands Initiative. This will be done by farmland preservation plans, farmland preservation zoning, agricultural enterprise area, farmland preservation agreements, and purchase of agricultural conservation easement grant program.

Trends Conclusion

Overall, the region is experiencing a variety of trends. Most notably, there has been a significant decrease in dairy farms in the region and a smaller, yet also significant, decrease in milk cows. Compared to the past, the region has significantly fewer assessed agricultural acres. There are fewer farms, but these farms are larger. While at the same time, there has been an explosion in the number and value of products sold from small direct market farms in the region. This has created a dichotomy in the region with one trend consisting of an increase in farm size and another trend consisting of more direct market farms, which often times tend to be smaller in size. The regional agriculture industry has entered the growing renewable energy market. Farm owners are getting older and minority workers are more prevalent in the regional agricultural industry.

Figure 9: Value of Farm Products Sold



3. NATURAL RESOURCES

“*Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.*” - Aldo Leopold (1887 – 1948)

The types and amounts of natural resources in west central Wisconsin are bountiful. These resources vary depending on location within the region. Detailed information, such as management and encroachment type information, for specific natural resource issues can be found in the respective county Condition and Trends Reports.

Forest Fragmentation Becoming Familiar

In 2008, west central Wisconsin had an estimated 781,207 acres of assessed forest land (Figure 10). This represents 19.2 percent of the land. The counties with the most assessed forest land in 2008 were Chippewa (154,104 acres) and Polk (152,127 acres). The counties with the highest percentages were again Polk (24.9 percent) and Chippewa (23.1 percent) counties. The counties with the smallest percentages were St. Croix (10.6 percent) and Clark (16.2 percent). Due to the new assessed AG Forest category, it is difficult to compare the amount of assessed forested acres in the region with previous years.

One trend that is evident in the region is the fragmentation of forested areas and the subsequent impact on wildlife habitat and resources generated from forested areas. The fragmentation of forested areas is both an environmental and economic issue.

There are also over 234,000 acres of Forest Crop Law Acreage and Managed Forest Law Acreage in the region. Figure 11 shows the distribution of this acreage in the region. The *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin* goes into greater detail regarding these programs.

Figure 11: Forest Land Tax Program Participation by County (2008)

	Forest Crop Law Acreage	Managed Forest Law Acreage
Barron	1,703	33,796
Chippewa	1,498	21,984
Clark	3,766	53,151
Dunn	3,524	47,989
Eau Claire	1,034	29,571
Polk	1,431	34,021
St. Croix	984	13,640
Total	13,940	234,152

Figure 10: Assessed Forest Land

	2008 Forested Acres	2008 Percentage of County
Barron County	115,469	20.3
Chippewa County	154,104	23.1
Clark County	126,364	16.2
Dunn County	106,356	19.2
Eau Claire County	76,644	18.6
Polk County	152,127	24.9
St. Croix County	50,143	10.6
West Central Wisconsin	781,207	19.2

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Soils and Mineral Resources

The vast majority of the region has soils that are not conducive to conventional private septic systems. In many cases, this limits the amount of residential development that can occur outside of public sewer systems. Due to the amount of river valleys in the region and the way the terrain was formed during the last glacial period, many areas in the region have sloped areas that are not advantageous to development or traditional row crop endeavors.

The region has historically experienced extraction of soil and mineral resources, as certain areas of the region are rich in desired soils and mineral resources. At this time, the region has approximately 335 non-metallic mining sites. This number does not include all of the small private sites that often are not documented.

Currently, there is growing demand for soil and mineral resources inside and outside the region. As this demand increases, there is greater probability that suitable extraction areas are going to be closer to inhabited areas. At the same time, as communities expand their growth areas and more land is used for low-density rural residential development, conflicts between extraction operations and incompatible development will increase.

Water Issues On The Rise

Surface

In general, the water quality in the region's river basins is a concern. The major issue is pollution from added nutrients and sediment from run-off, primarily from agricultural land and urban areas. The region has 68 different water bodies that are impaired, as defined by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR has 73 water bodies in the region listed as either outstanding or excellent.

Floodplains are a serious issue in the region. Nearly all surface waters of significant size have associated 100-year floodplains identified in National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Flood Insurance Rate Maps and are regulated by counties or local municipalities. Floodplains provide important wildlife habitat, recharge the aquifer, and naturally purify runoff, while providing flood storage. Based on past disaster declarations, serious flooding events can be expected in our region every four to six years. In recent decades, stormwater or overland flooding has been increasing in frequency and damage, though riverine or overbank flooding remains a concern for many areas.

Following the widespread 1993 floods, the 1995 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers *Floodplain Management Assessment* found that decreasing upland runoff in our region can have measurable benefits during large flood events and recommended a system-wide analysis of flood potential. The report further recommended better adherence to existing land-use policies (e.g., floodplain zoning) as an effective first step in flood mitigation and recommended that critical facilities be sited out of harm's way. The report also warned against the trend that flood protection projects (e.g., dams and levees) have tended to induce floodplain development in many areas.

Figure 12 shows that there is a significant amount of development within or adjacent to the 100-year floodplains of our region. This information can also serve as a proxy for identifying areas of shoreline encroachment. In most counties, the majority of these potentially floodprone structures can be found in unincorporated towns, though the largest concentration of such structures (304) can be found in the City of Eau Claire. This is an estimate of potentially_floodprone properties based on best available data taken from the County hazard mitigation plans prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. Such assessments will be improved as the new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps and additional G.I.S. parcel data become available.

Figure 12: Estimate of Potential 100-Year Floodplain Development in West Central Wisconsin

	Potential 100-Year Floodplain Structures	Percent of structures in cities & villages	Est. Assessed Value of Potential Floodplain Improvements	Number of NFIP Claims
Barron	277	8%	\$22.8 mil.	5
Chippewa	419	29%	\$37.1 mil.	58
Clark*	502	n.a.	\$29.3 mil.	24
Dunn	642	36%	\$37.8 mil.	12
Eau Claire	620	50%	\$50.2 mil.	8
Polk	413	2%	\$37.5 mil.	13
St. Croix	395	61%	\$63.8 mil.	37
Total	3,168	n.a.	\$278.5 mil.	157

* Data for Towns only; city and village data not available for Clark County
 source: County Hazard Mitigation Plans

It is important to note that flood events are not limited to the 100-year floodplain, especially as stormwater flooding risks increase, and many structures outside of regulated floodplain areas in our region do not have flood insurance.

Ground

In isolated areas, groundwater quality is a concern. This is specifically the case in St. Croix County. Closed depressions in the County significantly increase groundwater contamination risks as contaminants at the surface may not be given the opportunity to be adequately filtered by soils, but, instead, are passed more directly from the surface to the aquifer. The USGS is also currently completing a groundwater modeling effort which includes St. Croix County.

The region is also experiencing isolated incidents of groundwater shortages. One of the more severe areas is in northeastern Clark County along STH 29, specifically in Abbotsford and Curtiss. Both communities are working on strategies to solve their water shortage problem. As a whole, many areas in the region lack groundwater quantity baseline data for future comparison.

Figure 13 shows the amount of water that is being used in the region, the number of municipal water systems, wellhead protection plans and ordinances and the number of contaminated groundwater and soil sites in the region. It should be noted that the huge increase in Dunn

Figure 13: Groundwater data

	1979 Water Use (million gallons/day)	2005 Water Use (million gallons/day)	Municipal Water Systems	Wellhead Protection Plan	Wellhead Protection Ordinance	Contaminated groundwater and/or soil sites
Barron County	9.6	19.4	9	7	2	40
Chippewa County	8.7	15.4	9	6	3	50
Clark County	5.4	6.5	10	8	5	57
Dunn County	7.7	31.9	7	2	0	38
Eau Claire County	16.7	18.8	5	2	0	60
Polk County	5.4	10.9	12	7	3	57
St. Croix County	6.2	15.8	11	7	5	57
West Central Wisconsin	59.7	109.7	63	39	18	359

Source: United States Geographical Survey and Wisconsin Center for Land Use Education

County is attributed solely to irrigation and primarily from an ethanol plant that was built after 2000. All other water use stayed constant over this period of time.

Sensitive Areas Abound

The region has extensive geographic diversity. Therefore, the region has a long list of different types of sensitive areas. This consists of shorelands, floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, forests and woodlands, and grasslands and prairie. Many of these areas have unique species and ecosystems that are easily impacted negatively by human activity. Making this situation more challenging is the mixture of standards, approaches, and applications in the region that limit development in sensitive areas. This stems from the variety of regulations used by the different units of government in the region and State and Federal regulations.

Open Space and Recreational Resources Galore

The seven county west central region of Wisconsin has an abundance of open space and recreational resources. The types of open space are as diverse as the landscape in the region and consist of water bodies, forested areas, trails, and parks. One of the most prominent open spaces in the region is the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway, which borders Minnesota along the northwest portion of the region. Scattered throughout the region are various federal, state, and local wildlife, fishery, natural, and scientific areas, including private conservancy areas. These areas are managed as open space to provide important feeding, breeding, nesting, cover, and other habitat values to a wide variety of plant and animal species.

4. CULTURAL RESOURCES

“We are not makers of history. We are made by history.” - Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

The seven county region has a long and storied history, with many significant cultural sites. These sites include Native American encampments, fur trading outposts, lumbering camps, and historic buildings. Historic structures, sites, and districts are often targeted for hazard mitigation strategies due to their unique, often irreplaceable, social value. Such historic resources can also be responsible for defining much of a community’s identity. The region also has a variety of cultural resources that pertain to the arts. These are widespread throughout the region.

Registered Historical Sites

The region currently has 127 locations on the National Register of Historic Places. A total of 5,262 places and objects in the region have been identified as having historic value and are on the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory. Most of the structures that are registered as historical places are houses. Many older structures are beginning to get to the state where they cannot be repaired and/or saved, especially in rural areas.

Existing Resources

There are a variety of resources available in the region to help preserve local cultural resources. There are 13 existing historic/architectural preservation ordinances and five ordinances being developed. The region has 53 historical societies and museums. Some communities are consciously attempting to redevelop their downtowns to promote development and new private investment.

The state requirement that communities adopt a comprehensive plan is allowing communities to analyze and develop goals, objectives, and strategies, which can be created to help them identify and preserve their respective cultural resources. Due to the diversity of the region, there are several different types of historical resources in the region. Among other things, this is a result of different local economies, different geography and natural resources, different indigenous cultures, and different European settlement groups and patterns.

The Arts

The region has numerous cultural resources that are associated to the arts. In addition, the region has an abundance of activities and events. These are spread throughout the region and consist of community festivals, Oktoberfests, a variety of Dairy Days, concerts, university functions, and numerous other cultural events. Their concentrations often resemble the population densities of the region, and the majority of the time are located in the larger cities of the region. Due to its size, Eau Claire has numerous arts related cultural resources. In addition, due to the quantity and size of different cultural resources in the Twin Cities, it is common for residents in the region to travel to the Twin Cities for arts and culture.

**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN
STATE OF THE REGION WORKING PAPER**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING
APRIL 2009**



Prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

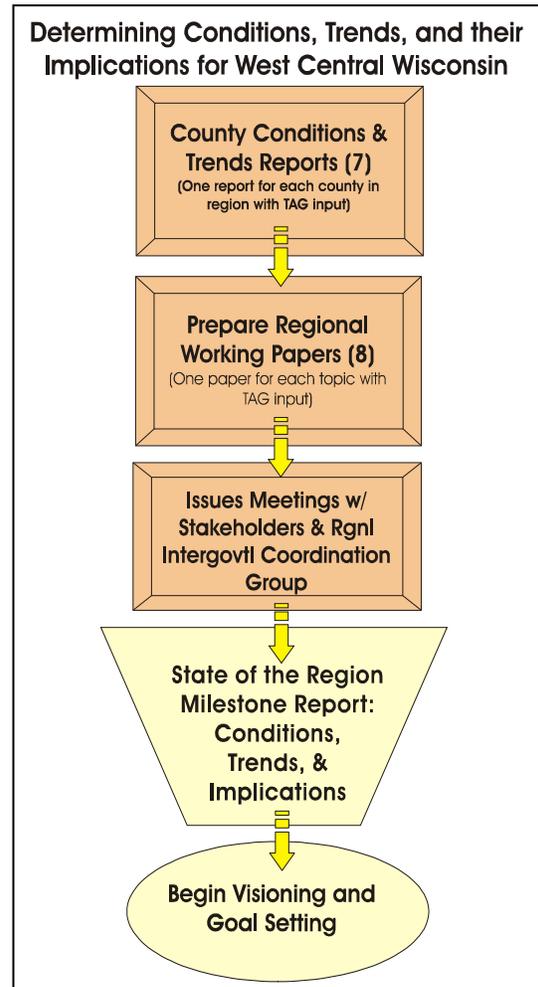
1. INTRODUCTION

This document is one of eight working papers prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) as part of its comprehensive planning effort with input from the project's Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

As shown in the diagram to the right, these working papers largely build upon the seven county conditions and trends reports prepared by WCWRPC with TAG input. The working papers place the county data in a regional context, highlighting conditions and trends of regional significance or opportunities for multi-jurisdictional cooperation.

As such, the information found within this document is discussed at a regional level. Each county's conditions and trends report should be referred to for additional details and background information at the county and municipal level.

These working papers provide a foundation upon which regional issues can be identified and discussed. Only by building a consensus on our region's key conditions and trends, can the issues, their implications, and the remainder of the regional comprehensive planning effort for west central Wisconsin proceed.



WCWRPC gives special recognition to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development-Office of Economic Advisors and the U.S. Department of Commerce-Bureau of Economic Analysis as the primary sources of the data used to produce the graphs and maps in this working paper.

2. RECURRING IN CYCLES (ECONOMIC CYCLES)

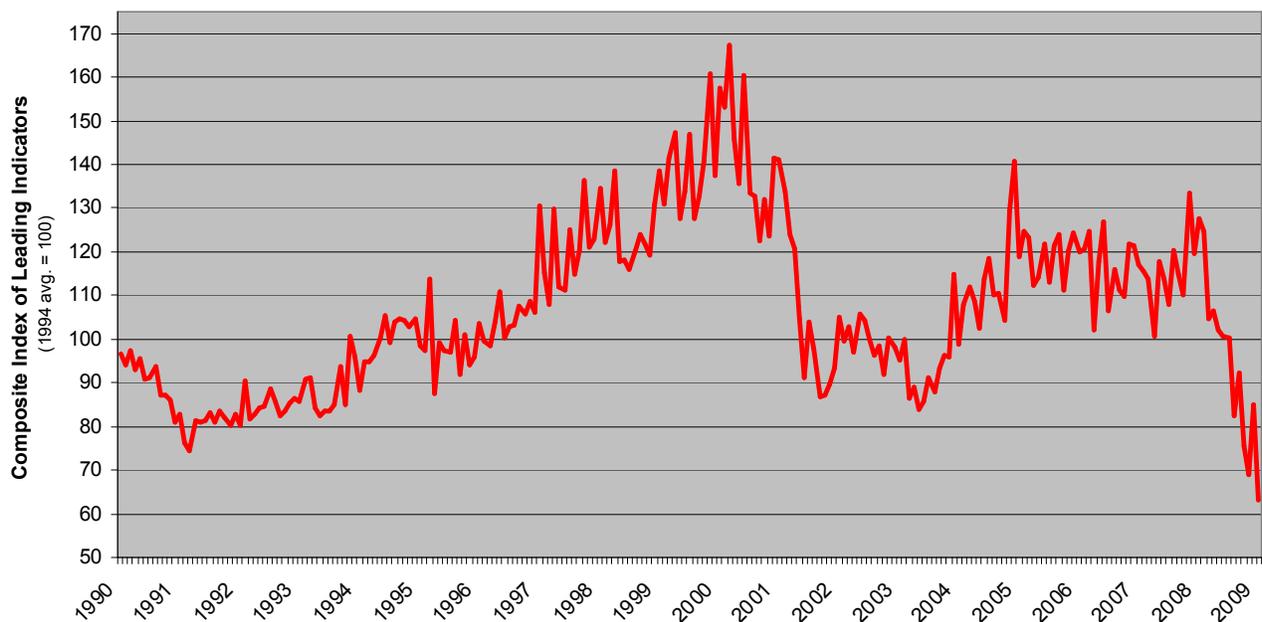
“Events tend to recur in cycles.”

– *W. Clement Stone, philanthropist & author (1902-2002)*

Perhaps more than other comprehensive plan elements, the local economy and economic development are influenced by regional, state, national, and global factors. The economy is always in flux, often occurring in cycles or periods of growth, prosperity, and expansion followed by periods of decline, contraction, or recession. There is no reliable methodology to predicting such cycles, and some economists argue that these fluctuations are the result of “shocks” to the economy in terms of productivity or demand changes, and the use of the term “cycle” is a misnomer.

The graph below shows leading indicators of certain economic activities (average work week, job openings, business starts, unemployment claims) which are often used to foreshadow economic change. The graph reflects the economic recession of the early 1990s (S&L crisis & “Black Monday”), the growth and bursting of the “dot-com bubble” in the 1990s, and the manufacturing recession of the first part of the last decade.

Composite Index of Leading Indicators for Wisconsin (1990-Jan 2009)



source: Wisconsin Office of Economic Advisors

While job growth and the economy in Wisconsin were relatively strong between 2004 and 2007, the severity of the current economic crisis is quite apparent in the above chart. There is no clear consensus on the extent and length of the current slowdown or the likely impacts of state and federal stimulus efforts. Some of the more positive projections anticipate recovery to begin in the last half of 2009, but the current crisis is much more serious than most historical recessions. The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis expects that District 9’s economy will continue to struggle with non-farm employment contracting and unemployment rates rising in 2009.

However, personal income and authorized housing units are expected to grow.¹ The recovery timeline can be further impacted by changing global economic conditions and federal policy for the financial, auto industry, and housing sectors in particular.



Based on past trends, we do know that Wisconsin often lags behind other areas in such economic indicators. For instance, as of May 2008, Wisconsin's housing sector had not yet felt the brunt of the mortgage/price dilemma to the extent of other states such as Arizona, California, Florida, Nevada, and Ohio. This fact is important since housing sales in many of these other states have begun to increase and there are some indications that the housing market may begin to recover in spring or summer 2009.

The above is the broader context in which our businesses, educational institutions, local governments, and other partners implement their economic strategies. These trends may impact communities differently within the region, and local strategies may need to change to accommodate such fluctuations. During a financial crisis, demand for alternative business financing may increase. As development slows, traditional tax incremental financing, with the community burdening all the risk, may not be the best approach. But while the economy adjusts, opportunities do arise. For instance, after the escalating fuel prices of 2007-2008, research and development funding for alternative energy and energy-reducing technology is on the increase.

3. REACHING FOR CONCLUSIONS (CONDITIONS & TRENDS)

*"If all economists were laid end to end, they would not reach a conclusion."
– George Bernard Shaw, Irish Playwright (1856-1950)*

A wealth of economic information is available at the state, regional, county, and local levels, along with a range of specialized business studies and a variety of economic modeling techniques. Yet, there is no clear consensus between the various players on the economic stage regarding a single particular data source or metrics on which to make comparisons and benchmark and measure economic progress. As one option, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development has identified regional metric benchmarks to assist economic planning and development efforts.

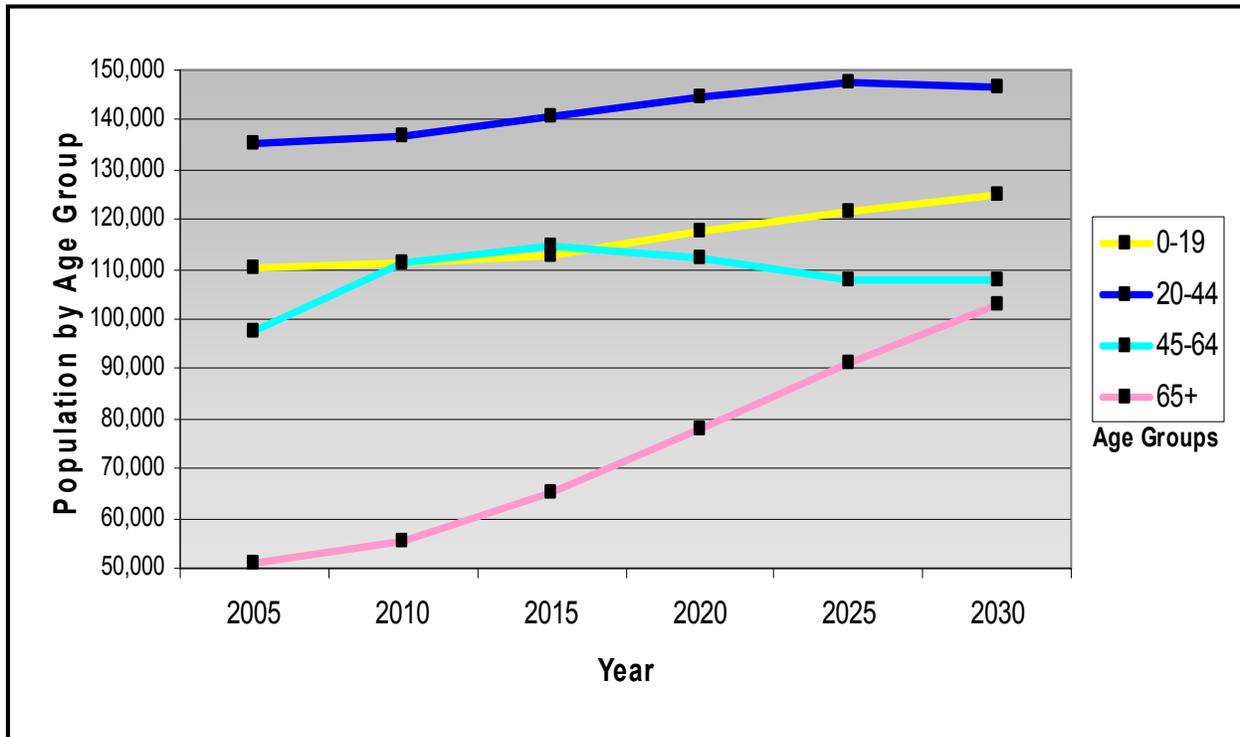
This section is not intended to identify, nor provide all of the needed economic metrics. Instead, it summarizes the economic conditions, trends, and forecasts most pertinent for regional economic planning from a variety of state and other sources. Additional county-specific data and analysis can be found in the WCWRPC existing conditions and trends report for each county.

¹ Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. *Minneapolis Fed Forecasts Economic Downturn Will Continue through 2009 in the Ninth District.* http://www.minneapolisfed.org/news_events/rel/2009/forecast.cfm. February 11, 2009.

Potential Labor Force Changes

The WCWRPC population working paper documents the historical and projected population in the region, as well as related demographic changes. Our region is projected to grow by 31.1 percent between 2008 and 2030, while median age continues to increase. The chart below shows that our labor force will likely tighten over the next 25 years as the baby boomer generation ages. However, this projected trend varies significantly by county, as shown in the individual county charts in the population working paper.

Population Projections for West Central Wisconsin (2005-2030)



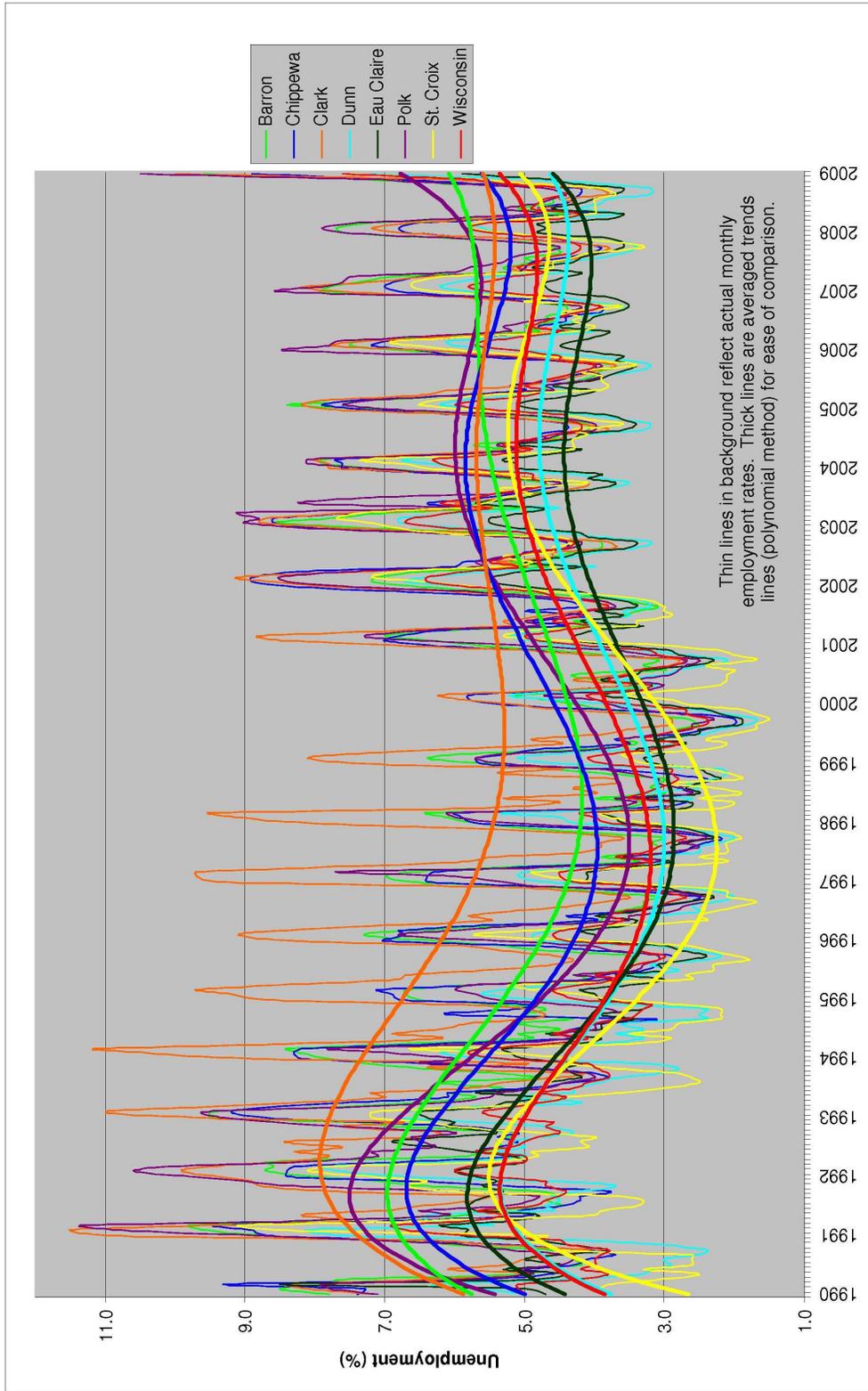
Educational levels continue to increase across the region, reflecting the strong presence of post-secondary institutions. In 2000, 86 percent of west central Wisconsin residents ages 16 and over had a high school diploma or higher, ranging from 75.4 percent in Clark County to 91.6 percent in St. Croix County. Twenty percent of our region's residents had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2000, ranging from 10.3 percent in Clark County to 26.3 percent in St. Croix while 28.6 percent had an associate's degree or higher. The population working paper also notes the changing ethnic/racial demographic which is linked to the food processing industries in Clark and Barron counties. Even so, 96.9 percent of our population in 2000 was non-Hispanic white.

Employment & Occupations

Overall, Wisconsin and our region have strong labor force participation rates. The labor force participation rate is the percent of non-institutionalized civilians of age 16 or more in the labor force. Only Barron County's 2007 rate of 67 percent was below the state average of 71 percent. Higher participation rates in low income areas may reflect a higher portion of families with dual incomes.

The graph below shows the monthly unemployment rates and generalized unemployment trends for the region and Wisconsin for the last 19 years.

Monthly & Trend Unemployment Rates (Jan 1990 to Jan 2009)



source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development-Office of Economic Advisors

The chart on the previous page shows that unemployment trends do shift considerably over time with annual rates in the region fairly similar to the state average for most of this decade. The chart also shows that most counties in our region have high employment seasonality, with significantly higher unemployment during the winter months. Eau Claire County is the consistent exception to this trend. The recent jump in unemployment rates is dramatic, though not yet clearly visible on the chart. The January 2009 Wisconsin unemployment rate of 7.6 percent was the highest of any Wisconsin monthly rate on the chart.

Unemployment continued to increase in February 2009 as shown in the table to the right. Unemployment for our region's counties in January 2009 was approaching, but had not exceeded some of the seasonal highs of the early 1990s, with the exception of Polk County. Polk County's twelve percent unemployment was higher than any rate shown on the chart on the previous page.

**Estimated
Unemployment Rate
(February 2009)**

County	Unemp. Rate
Barron	10.7%
Chippewa	9.8%
Clark	10.7%
Dunn	8.2%
Eau Claire	6.9%
Polk	12.0%
St. Croix	8.8%
Wisconsin	8.8%

Health care-related occupations are expected to grow at the quickest pace over the next ten years as shown in the table below. While production and manufacturing workers (non-administrative) currently constitute our region's second largest occupation group, it is projected to be our second slowest in growth. The table below does not include self-employed persons, unpaid family workers, and farmers. For comparison, there were about 9,000 full-time farm employees in 2007 in our seven-county region.

Occupations in WDA 8 Region (2006 & 2016)

(includes Barron, Chippewa, Clark, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, & St. Croix Counties)

Occupational Category	Estimated # of Non-Farm Jobs				Average Annual Openings			Estimated Salary and Wages		
	2006	2016	Change	% Change	New Jobs	Replacements	Total	Avg. Ann. Salary	Entry Level Wage	Experienced Wage
Office and Administrative Support	27,340	28,450	1,110	4.1%	110	590	700	\$27,672	\$8.91	\$15.50
Production	21,920	22,330	410	1.9%	40	450	490	\$29,587	\$9.71	\$16.48
Sales and Related	18,310	18,910	600	3.3%	60	600	660	\$28,466	\$7.11	\$16.98
Food Preparation and Serving Related	17,360	19,270	1,910	11.0%	190	590	780	\$17,154	\$6.44	\$9.15
Transportation and Material Moving	15,350	15,990	640	4.2%	60	340	400	\$27,171	\$8.55	\$15.32
Education, Training, and Library	11,150	11,870	720	6.5%	70	230	300	\$40,542	\$10.89	\$23.79
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	9,140	11,050	1,910	20.9%	190	170	360	\$53,903	\$12.33	\$32.71
Construction and Extraction	7,210	7,890	680	9.4%	70	130	200	\$40,695	\$12.91	\$22.89
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	6,540	7,020	480	7.3%	50	110	160	\$35,821	\$11.28	\$20.19
Healthcare Support	6,310	7,660	1,350	21.4%	140	70	210	\$23,966	\$9.12	\$12.72
Management	6,290	6,440	150	2.4%	20	150	170	\$75,048	\$17.80	\$45.22
Business and Financial Operations	6,180	6,910	730	11.8%	70	110	180	\$49,764	\$14.66	\$28.56
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	5,500	6,110	610	11.1%	60	100	160	\$22,666	\$7.49	\$12.60
Personal Care and Service	4,730	5,530	800	16.9%	80	110	190	\$19,846	\$7.01	\$10.81
Architecture and Engineering	3,450	3,470	20	0.6%	<5	80	80	\$56,612	\$16.97	\$32.34
Protective Service	3,340	3,560	220	6.6%	20	100	120	\$34,478	\$9.64	\$20.04
Community and Social Services	2,190	2,520	330	15.1%	30	40	70	\$39,857	\$13.02	\$22.24
Computer and Mathematical	2,170	2,520	350	16.1%	40	50	90	\$56,244	\$17.18	\$31.97
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	1,780	1,890	110	6.2%	10	50	60	\$32,966	\$8.70	\$19.43
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1,410	1,570	160	11.3%	20	30	50	\$51,170	\$15.39	\$29.21
Legal	660	730	70	10.6%	10	10	20	\$66,469	\$15.28	\$40.30
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	340	360	20	5.9%	<5	10	10	\$24,535	\$8.78	\$13.30
Total, All Occupations	178,630	192,050	13,420	7.5%	1,340	4,100	5,440	\$32,996	\$8.23	\$19.68

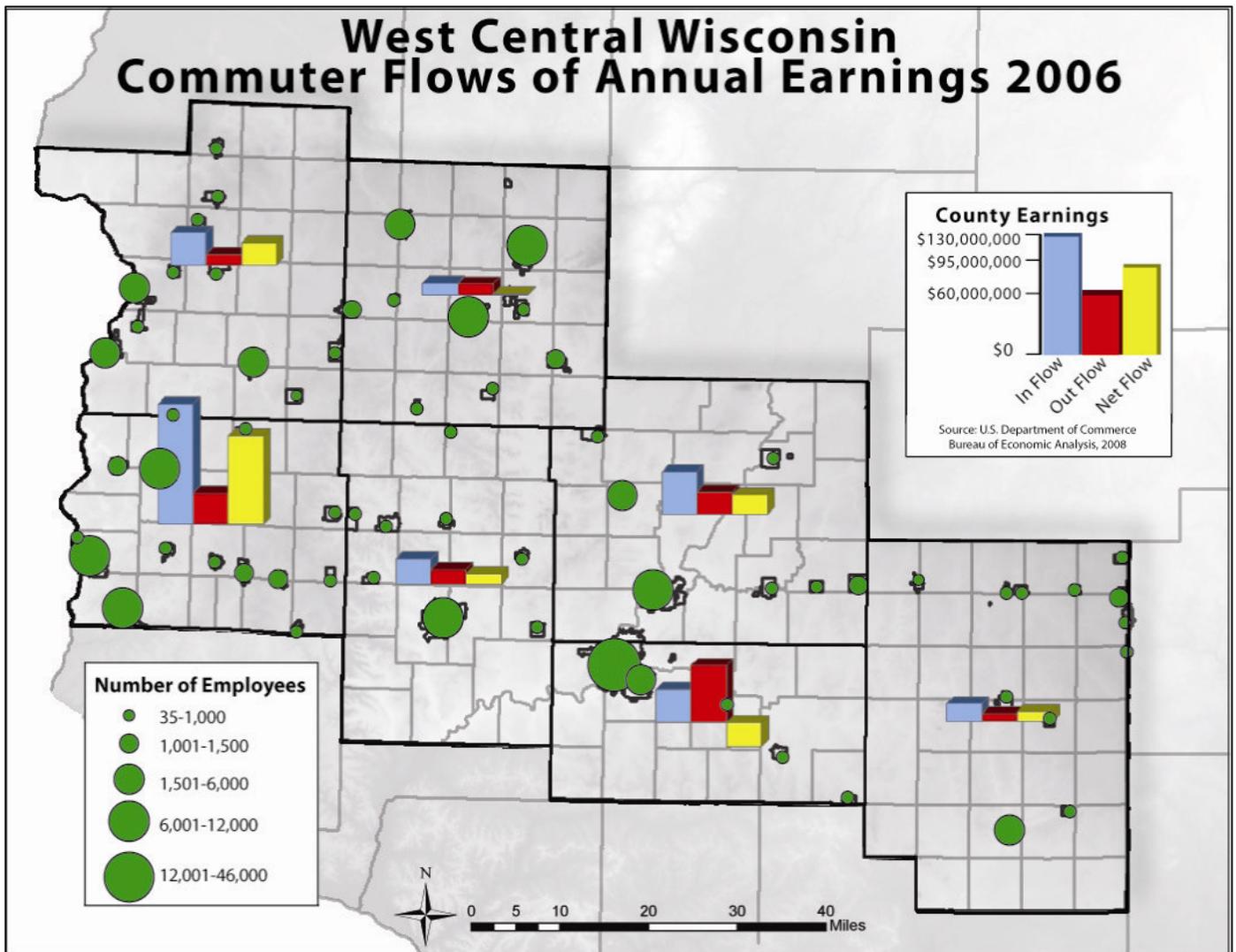
source: Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development-Office of Economic Advisors, Nov. 2008

Commuting times increased dramatically for the region's residents between 1990 and 2000, and more residents are working outside their place and county of residence. As shown in the table to the right, these trends are most dramatic in Polk and St. Croix counties, with large numbers of commuters travelling to the Twin Cities.

Commuters by County (2000 U.S. Census)

County	Place of Employment (%)		
	County of Residence	Outside County of Resid., in Wisconsin	Outside County of Resid., Other State
Barron	85.9%	11.6%	2.4%
Chippewa	65.9%	33.0%	1.1%
Clark	66.6%	32.8%	0.6%
Dunn	65.3%	29.5%	5.2%
Eau Claire	82.2%	16.5%	1.3%
Polk	61.7%	15.0%	23.3%
St. Croix	48.7%	7.6%	43.8%
Region	68.9%	19.3%	11.9%

The map below shows the relative number of employees who work in each of the incorporated areas of our region, as well as the movement of earnings. Inflows and outflows reflect the annual earning of commuters and whether they reside within the same county as their place of unemployment.

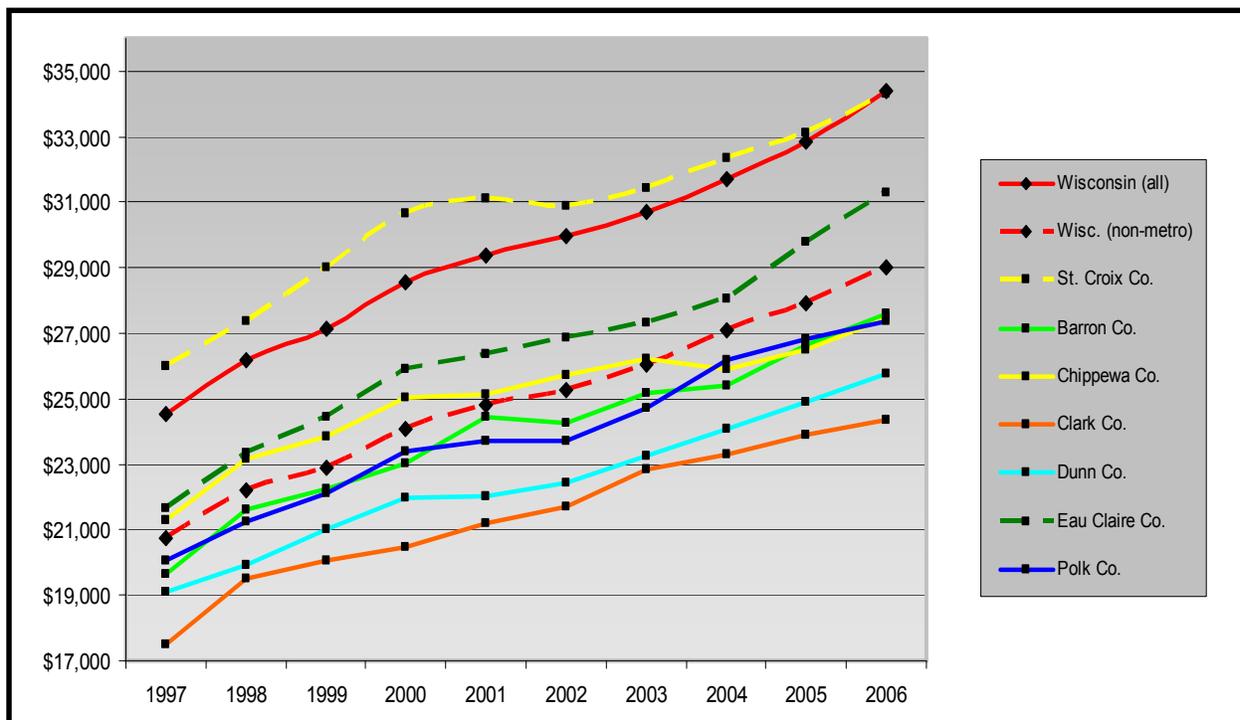


Counties with a high net inflow (e.g., St. Croix County) have large numbers of workers who commute outside the county for their place of unemployment. Eau Claire County has a negative net inflow, due to the large number of workers who commute to the Eau Claire area from adjacent counties. This map does not necessarily reflect spending trends, however, since many workers shop in their place of employment, rather than their place of residence.

Income & Cost of Living

The chart below shows that while per capita personal income continues to rise, the per capita income levels of all counties in the region remain significantly below the Wisconsin average, except for St. Croix County. However, the difference is not quite so dramatic if the average per capita income for Wisconsin non-metropolitan area (red dashed line) is used for comparison.

Per Capita Personal Income (1997-2006)



source: U.S. Department of Commerce-Bureau of Economic Analysis

The average annual wage rates in the table on the following page provide another way of looking at income in the region. Average annual wages are below the state average for all counties in our region. Further, the rate of increase in annual wages between 2001 and 2007 was below the state average for all west central Wisconsin counties except Dunn County.

Poverty rates in our region in 2007 varied from lows of 5.3 and 8.7 percent in St. Croix and Polk counties, respectively, to highs of 13 and 14 percent in Eau Claire and Dunn counties. The remaining three counties had rates within 1.1 percent of the State average of 10.8 percent.

College student populations impact the above poverty rates and income averages for many communities. For example, the nearly 14,000 students in Chippewa and Eau Claire counties in 2007 had a per capita income over 2.6 times less than the average of the remaining population.

The cost-of-living (COL) can be significantly different depending on the degree of rurality and growth. One such commonly used COL measure, the Consumer Price Index, is only available for larger regions and cities, and not available at the county level.

The Wisconsin Women's Network of Wisconsin has produced a Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS) for each of Wisconsin's counties to show how much income working adults need to meet their basic needs with child care tax credits included.

**Average Annual Wages, 2001 and 2007
(covered employees only)**

County	2001	2007	Percent Change
Barron	\$25,514	\$27,608	+ 8.2%
Chippewa	\$27,315	\$29,901	+ 9.5%
Clark	\$23,690	\$27,533	+16.2%
Dunn	\$26,310	\$31,161	+18.4%
Eau Claire	\$27,842	\$32,484	+16.7%
Polk	\$24,564	\$28,320	+15.3%
St. Croix	\$26,763	\$31,184	+16.5%
Wisconsin	\$31,546	\$36,830	+16.8%

source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development-Office of Economic Advisors

**Annual Wage Required to Meet Monthly Costs
Self Sufficiency Standards, 2004²**

County	1 Adult only	2 Adults + 1 Age 3-5 + 1 Age 6-12	2004 Median Household Income
Barron	\$11,818	\$29,562	\$39,789
Chippewa	\$12,330	\$36,719	\$43,591
Clark	\$11,768	\$34,494	\$38,581
Dunn	\$11,774	\$34,936	\$41,615
Eau Claire	\$12,842	\$39,567	\$41,509
Polk	\$11,818	\$34,665	\$46,535
St. Croix	\$19,631	\$50,102	\$64,084
Dane	\$15,633	\$49,434	\$53,945
Milwaukee	\$15,035	\$47,667	\$41,509

The table to the left shows the self-sufficiency standard for each of our region's counties, as well as Dane and Milwaukee counties for comparison.

Those living in St. Croix County had the highest monthly costs in Wisconsin, largely due to housing expenses. On average, a single adult in St. Croix County will spend 47 percent of their income on housing costs compared to 35 percent in Clark County.

Employers & Industries

As discussed in the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources working paper, the number of farms in our region has been decreasing. Though agriculture remains our region's predominant land use, the table to the right shows that farm employment (as a primary occupation) is relatively small compared to many other industries.

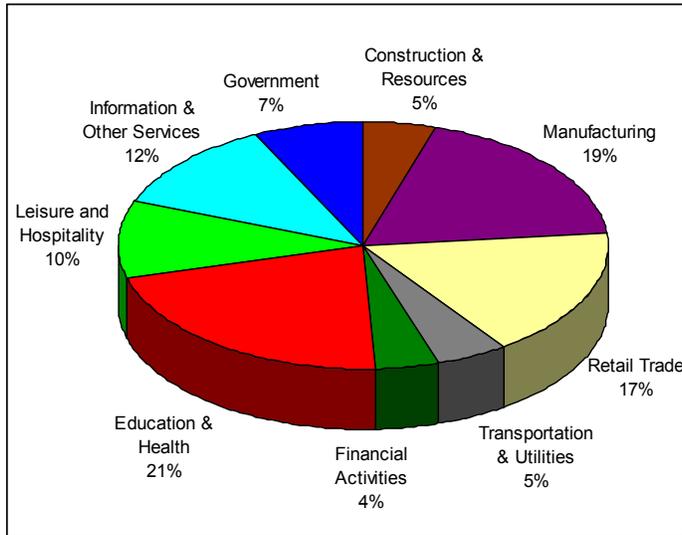
The chart and table on the following page shows the 2006 non-farm employment and 2016 projected employment for the WDA 8 Region (includes Pepin & Pierce counties) by industry.

**Estimated Farm Jobs & Operators,
2007
(primary occupation)**

County	Farm Jobs (includes seasonal)	Farm Operators
Barron	1,353	714
Chippewa	1,351	844
Clark	1,878	1,422
Dunn	1,210	674
Eau Claire	810	505
Polk	1,022	679
St. Croix	1,310	747
Totals	8,934	5,585

² Pearce, Diana and Jennifer Brooks. *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wisconsin 2004*. Wisconsin Women's Network. April 2004.

2006 Employment in WDA 8 Region



source: Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development, Nov. 2008

Within the past decade, employment in education and health services have surpassed manufacturing as our primary source of non-farm employment.

Further, based on current trends, education and health jobs are projected to grow fastest over the next decade, while the manufacturing sector experiences a loss in employment.

While projected manufacturing job losses are expected to be relatively small overall, these will be more than offset by job increases in all of the service sectors.

Employment by Industry in WDA 8 Region (2006 & 2016)

(includes Barron, Chippewa, Clark, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, & St. Croix Counties)

NAICS	Industry Title	Estimated Employment (Non-Farm Jobs)			
		2006	2016	Change	% Change
	Total, All Nonfarm Industries	178,630	192,050	13,420	7.5%
1133, 21, 23	Construction/Mining/Natural Resources	8,270	9,060	790	9.6%
31-33	Manufacturing	33,590	33,010	-580	-1.7%
311	Food Manufacturing	5,410	5,310	-100	-1.8%
333	Machinery Manufacturing	4,000	3,770	-230	-5.8%
334	Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	3,800	3,070	-730	-19.2%
42, 44-45	Trade	29,910	30,400	490	1.6%
445	Food and Beverage Stores	4,810	4,730	-80	-1.7%
48-49, 22	Transportation and Utilities (includes US Postal)	8,570	9,670	1,100	12.8%
52-53	Financial Activities	7,430	8,180	750	10.1%
61-62	Education and Health Services (includes State & Local)	38,900	44,520	5,620	14.4%
611	Educational Services (includes State & Local)	16,240	16,930	690	4.2%
622	Hospitals (includes State & Local)	7,710	9,140	1,430	18.5%
71-72	Leisure and Hospitality	17,840	19,850	2,010	11.3%
51, 54-56, 81	Information/Prof. Services/Other Services	21,210	24,080	2,870	13.5%
	Government (excludes US Postal, State & Local Education & Hospitals)	12,910	13,270	360	2.8%

source: Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development-Office of Economic Advisors, Nov. 2008

Cluster-based approaches to economic development is receiving increasing attention, though “economic cluster” is defined differently depending on the source. A true economic cluster is a concentration of similar, related, or complimentary businesses with active channels for communication, business transactions, and mutual support.

The table below summarizes 2007 employment and average wages in the region for 17 potential economic clusters identified by Indiana and Purdue Universities. The use of the term “cluster” in the table below is solely based on employment and a general geographic concentration. For reasons of confidentiality, some employment data is not included. The largest employment concentrations were in food processing, business and financial services, education, energy, and fabricated metal manufacturing.

Employment and Avg. Wage by Economic Cluster (2007)

Economic Cluster	Barron	Chippewa	Clark	Dunn	Eau Claire	Polk	St. Croix	Total	Avg. Wage
Total All Industries	21,040	21,529	10,169	16,234	56,678	15,288	28,742	169,680	\$31,542
Advanced Materials	73	1,142	38	348	82	235	1,573	3,491	\$41,118
Agribusiness, Food Processing & Technlgy	2,876	343	1,529	838	982	563	757	7,888	\$34,284
Apparel & Textiles			76		12		38	126	\$26,789
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation & Visitor Industries	431	385	122	98	1,535	370	593	3,534	\$14,887
Biomedical/Biotechnical (Life Sciences)	556	457		365	1,017	531	811	3,737	\$41,392
Business & Financial Services Cluster	322	411	47	340	4,212	265	1,197	6,794	\$42,847
Chemicals & Chemical Based Products	685	745		403	678	618	1,589	4,718	\$38,463
Defense & Security	86	244	32	290	615	177	346	1,790	\$35,291
Education & Knowledge Creation	<i>data from this source is not included for most schools and colleges</i>								\$31,709
Energy & Fuel-Related (Fossil & Renewable)	724	967	323	421	2,214	470	1,141	6,260	\$37,121
Forest & Wood Products	455	751	658	373	571	701	911	4,420	\$36,266
Glass & Ceramics		71				171	374	616	\$36,715
Information Technology & Telecommunications	70	169	6		1,296	219	269	2,029	\$45,651
Transportation & Logistics	234	600	327	179	754	162	785	3,041	\$35,662
MANUFACTURING SUPERCLUSTER	1,704	3,066	946	350	1,573	921	3,360	11,920	\$41,628
- Primary Metal Mfg		107						107	\$31,918
- Fabricated Metal Product Mfg		698	536	160	294	1,194	700	1,454	\$37,835
- Machinery Mfg		620	852	786	56	191	221	1,238	\$43,096
- Computer & Electronic Product Mfg			1,678				79	1,757	\$51,569
- Electric Equip, Appliance & Component					189		437	626	\$35,115
- Transportation Equipment Mfg		278					152	430	\$43,791
Printing & Publishing	111	326	66		594	246	442	1,785	\$27,906

source: Indiana Business Research Center & Purdue Center for Regional Development, www.ibrc.indiana.edu/innovation

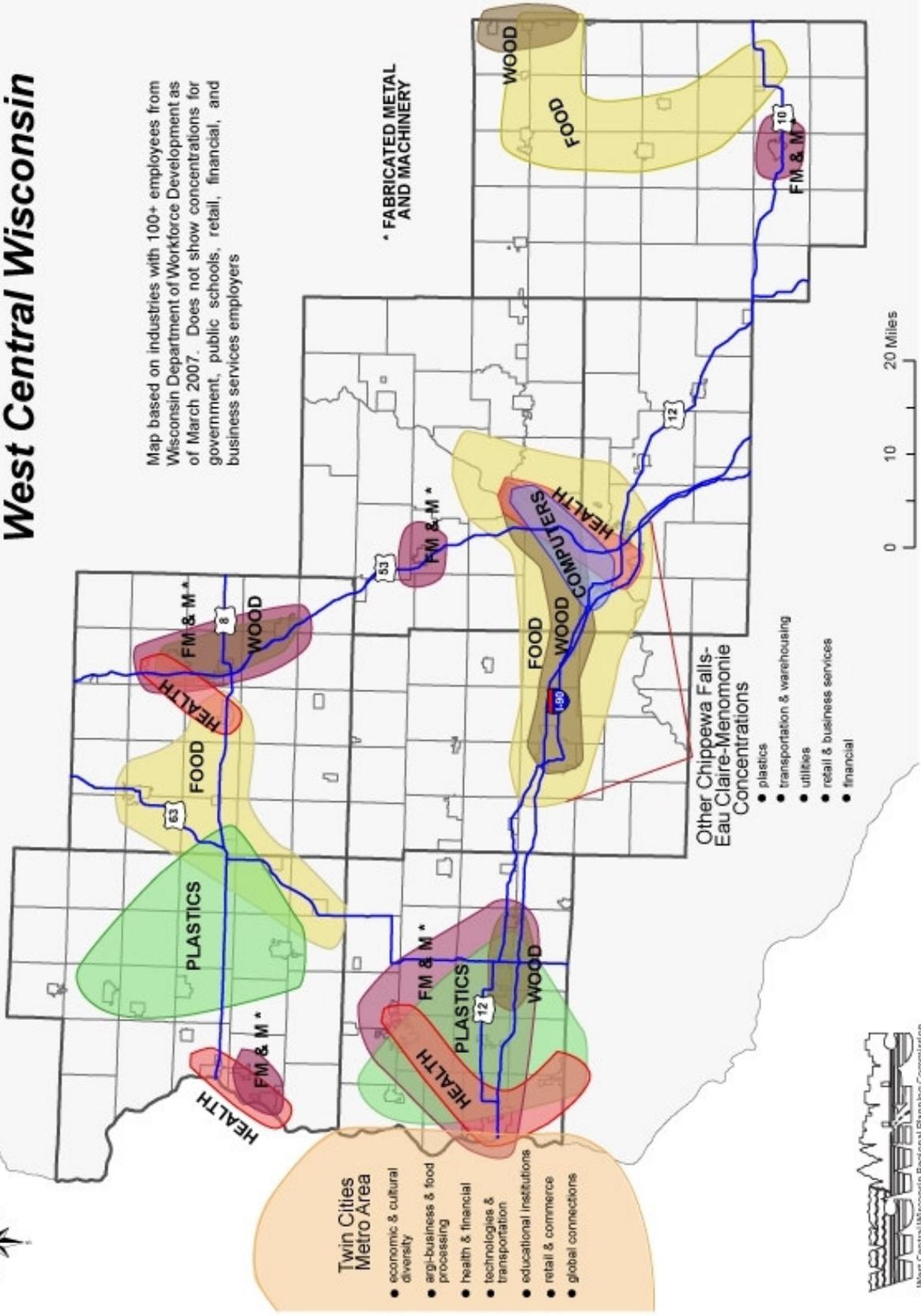
Looking at our region’s largest employers is another means of identifying potential concentrations and clusters. Of our 259 largest employers with 100 more employees (as of March 2007):

- 55 (21%) were manufacturing and food processing industries
- 43 (17%) were schools and colleges
- 39 (15%) were retail, of which 31% were in Eau Claire & St. Croix counties each
- 38 (15%) were health and social services related (non-manufacturing)

The map on the following page shows the primary industry concentrations of employers with 100+ employees in our region, excluding government, schools, tourism, business services, and retail. These concentrations were largely listed or identified in previous reports and studies by county, such as the Office of Economic Advisors county workforce profiles. The spatial approach on the map shows that concentrations often exist within certain areas of a county and can cross county boundaries, which may not be apparent otherwise. Overall, forty-three percent of these largest employers were located in the Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, and Menomonie area.

Industry Concentrations in West Central Wisconsin

Map based on industries with 100+ employees from Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development as of March 2007. Does not show concentrations for government, public schools, retail, financial, and business services employers



Twin Cities Metro Area

- economic & cultural diversity
- agri-business & food processing
- health & financial
- technologies & transportation
- educational institutions
- retail & commerce
- global connections

Other Chippewa Falls-Eau Claire-Menomonie Concentrations

- plastics
- transportation & warehousing
- utilities
- retail & business services
- financial



In 2007, Momentum Chippewa Valley (now Momentum West) hired GSP Consulting Corporation to prepare a *Technology, Talent, and Target Industry Assessment for West Central Wisconsin*. This analysis identified the following key points as part of its assessment:

- Due to our region’s proximity, diverse economy, steady economic growth, and quality educational institutions, we are in a position of strength.
- Changes to our economic “engine” are needed.
- Many of our largest companies are “lifestyle” firms, rather than growth-oriented entrepreneurial ventures.
- We experience a *brain drain* as our local colleges and universities produce more skilled graduates than annual job openings provide for.
- Though our business failure rate is relatively low, our start-up rates are also below the national benchmark overall.

The assessment identified the following target and supporting industry clusters for our region:

- Existing Sectors: Computers & Electronics
- Emerging Sectors: Bio-Agriculture, Bio-Energy, and Sensors/Remote Sensing
- Supporting Sectors: Medical Devices, Plastics & Packaging, Health Care, and Education

Chemicals and nanotechnology were identified as enabling sectors since the region currently lacks the industry base or a competitive advantage, though there is interest in these industries and they can support the previously identified target sectors.

Technology Industry Assessment (2007)

Existing Sectors

Computers & Electronics

Emerging Sectors

Bio-Agriculture

Bio-Energy

Sensors/Remote Sensing

Supporting Sectors

Medical Devices

Plastics & Packaging

Health Care

Education

Quality of Community

Quality of life, community, or place factors can influence a business's or potential employee's decision to locate (*and stay*) in a community. Such factors are commonly included in materials and websites used to promote or market a location, community, or county to prospective investors.



Models do exist for measuring quality of life or place. The West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board engaged in a “handprint” study measuring quality of place indicators in 2006 using volunteer assistance, though a more empirically based study is not available for our region. The “creative class” model developed by Dr. Richard Florida of the University of Toronto has received increasing attention. Dr. Florida’s model is based on the theory that knowledge professionals are a highly mobile workforce and are attracted to locations which accommodate their technological, cultural, and creative needs.

West central Wisconsin offers many quality-of-community amenities which could be attractive to potential businesses and professionals, such as our natural resources, workforce, education and health systems. But without additional study, the relative strengths, weaknesses, and competitiveness regarding our region’s quality of life compared to that of other areas is not fully known.

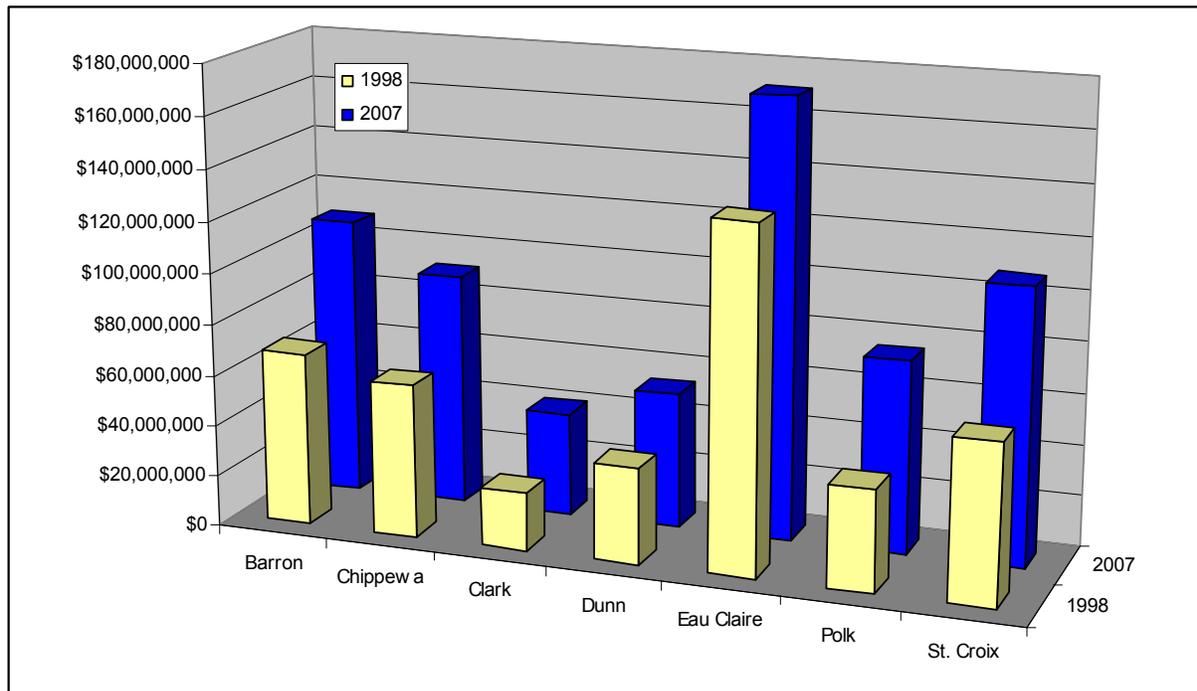
4. GETTING THERE IS HALF THE FUN (TOURISM)

“Why aren’t we flying? Because getting there is half the fun!”
– Clark Griswald (Chevy Chase) in *National Lampoon’s Vacation*

Tourism in our region is rooted in our natural resources, agricultural lands, and our regional transportation network. The many lakes of Barron and Polk counties attract visitors for water sports while the forests of Clark and eastern Eau Claire are a destination for hunters and ATV owners. The Chippewa Falls-Eau Claire-Menomonie area is a cultural, shopping, and event destination, supported, in part, by the universities and health services. Visitors are also attracted to our many historical sites, orchards, markets, festivals, and cultural activities to enjoy.

The proximity to the Twin Cities makes our region a potential destination for a day trip to the country, a weekend get-away, or a seasonal home. Interstate 94 and other highways also move large amounts of traffic through our region, allowing for the potential capture of traveler dollars. As shown in the chart below, traveler expenditures in our region grew by nearly 53 percent between 1998 and 2007 (compared to an inflation rate of about 27 percent). While Barron and Eau Claire counties had the highest 2007 expenditures, Polk, Clark, and St. Croix counties experienced the largest percent increases.

Traveler Expenditures (1998 to 2007)



source: Davidson-Peterson & Associates. *Economic Impact of Expenditures by Travelers on Wisconsin*. 2007

Tourism strategies and the importance of tourism varies by community, county, or area. Tourism for the region is primarily promoted through the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, county economic development corporations, and local chambers of commerce, though some communities or areas have other unique entities (e.g., Polk County Information Center).

5. WHERE BUSINESS GETS DONE (TIES TO THE TWIN CITIES)

“Twin Cities is where business gets done.”
– *MarketWatch, September 21, 2007.*

For a better understanding of the economic trends and opportunities for our region, we need to look west to the Twin Cities, rather than to State of Wisconsin trends in general. The proximity of west central Wisconsin to the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area has had a dramatic effect on our region, especially in St. Croix and Polk counties. Consider the following facts:

- As shown by the previous map with commuter trends, 11.9 percent of our region’s commuters in 2000 worked outside the State of Wisconsin.
- 23.3 percent of Polk County working residents work outside of Wisconsin.
- 43.8 percent of St. Croix County working residents work outside of Wisconsin.
- St. Croix County has been the fastest-growing county in Wisconsin since 1990 and the 95th fastest-growing in the U.S. from 2000 to 2007, with in-migration far outpacing natural increase.
- Upwards of 70,000 vehicles in an average day travel Interstate 94 in St. Croix County.
- Our economic ties to the metro area will only strengthen through various transportation improvements which are under study or being considered (e.g., Stillwater Bridge, US Highway 8, passenger rail service).

In 2007 and 2008, MarketWatch ranked the nation’s 50 most populous markets for business³. The Twin Cities scored highest by a wide margin due to its number of large, diverse firms and concentration of small businesses. Nineteen of the Fortune 500 “Largest U.S. Corporations” and 30 Fortune 1000 companies are headquartered in the metro area. These businesses were spread among various sectors such as:

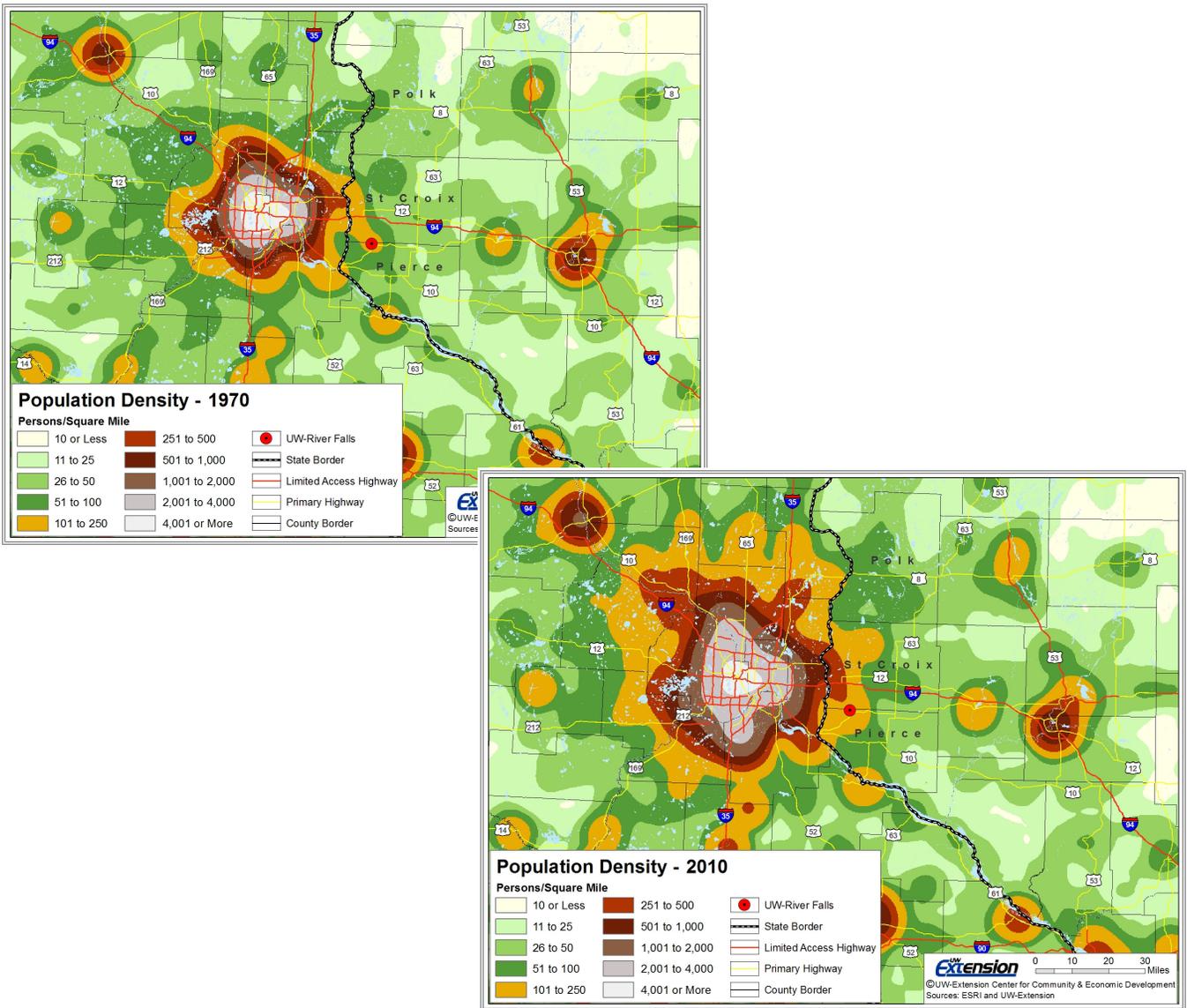
- agri-business, food processing, and food distribution (General Mills, Hormel, Land O’Lakes, Supervalu, Nash Finch, CHS, Mosaic, Cargill, Dairy Queen, Michael Foods)
- insurance, financial services, and health care (UnitedHealth Group, St. Paul Travelers, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, US Bancorp)
- retail and consumer goods (Target, Best Buy, Petters Group)
- technologies and transportation (3M, Northwest Airlines, Medtronic, CH Robinson)



³ Britt, Russ. *Minnesota Nice*. MarketWatch weekend edition. www.marketwatch.com. September 21, 2007. and Britt, Russ. *Players shift, but Twin Cities still best for business*. Marketwatch. www.marketwatch.com. December 2, 2008.

According to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area's top-employing industries were manufacturing, health care and social assistance, retail trade, and accommodations and food services in the second quarter of 2006.⁴ Like our region, the Twin Cities' health service sector is expected to expand rapidly for the near future and the labor supply is expected to tighten as baby boomers retire.

The map series below produced by UW-Extension provides a picture of the growing influence of the metro area using population density. While large percentages of commuters travel from west central Wisconsin to the Twin Cities for employment, not all of the development in Polk and St. Croix counties is bedroom community growth for the benefit of commuters. New businesses and industries are also occurring in our region, and our proximity to the Minneapolis/St. Paul area offers opportunities for additional business start-ups and expansions.



⁴ Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. Regional Perspectives webpage. <http://www.deed.state.mn.us/facts/perspectives.htm>

6. SUCCESS BASED ON PARTNERSHIPS (STRATEGIES)

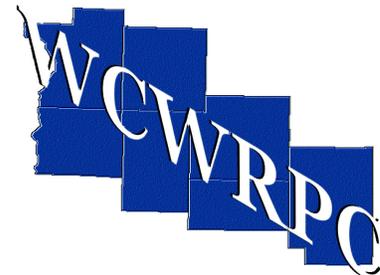
“Our success has really been based on partnerships from the very beginning.”

– Bill Gates, businessman and philanthropist (1955 -)

The following information is summarized from the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin* prepared by WCWRPC in October 2008. The *Inventory* contains more detailed descriptions of the following programs, along with the inventory of local and county economic development programs and strategies.

WCWRPC Programs

Since this planning effort will help guide West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, the following is a summary of WCWRPC’s primary economic development activities:



- Provides economic and population data.
- Prepares and maintains the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy which is a pre-requisite for Economic Development Administration (EDA) financial assistance
- Serves as a liaison and champion with the EDA, state agencies, and federal and state elected officials on behalf of the region, local communities, and their businesses in regards to funding assistance (e.g., grants, tax credits), economic policy, etc.
- Actively participates and provides support to a variety of regional or multi-jurisdictional economic development efforts, such as Momentum Chippewa Valley, the Synergy Conference, and West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board.
- Provides low-interest financing to area businesses through the administration of the Regional Business Fund, Inc. and related regional business loan programs which together includes the RBF revolving loan fund, Downtown Façade Loan Fund, Technology Enterprise Fund, Micro Loan Fund, and EDA loan fund.
- Administers a variety of additional loan funds, such as the Clark County EDA Fund, Hudson St. Croix County Business Park Fund, and Chippewa Falls TID #4 fund.
- Provides a variety of related support to local governments, such as preparation of tax increment financing project plans, grant applications (e.g., USDA Rural Development, WisDOT TEA, HUD CDBG), helping to pull together and leverage different funding sources, industrial site analysis, and comprehensive planning efforts.

Federal and State Programs

The following is a summary of additional federal and state economic development programs available for use by our region, though many of the regional efforts discussed in the next subsection also receive state and federal support:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for Public Facilities for Economic Development (PFED), Economic Development (ED) projects, and Blight Eliminations and Brownfield Redevelopment (BEBR).

- U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development Program provides loans and grants for eligible communities based on population size.
- U.S. Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration funding for public works, planning, and technical assistance is typically coordinated through WCWRPC.
- Recent legislation has consolidated the Wisconsin Airport Development Zone, Agricultural Development Zone, Community Development Zone, Enterprise Development and Technology Zone programs into a single tax credit program. Administrative rules for the new program are being developed.
- Wisconsin Transportation Facilities Economic Assistance (TEA) grant program for transportation projects which will result in job creation.
- Various federal and state agencies, as well as educational institutions and energy providers, offer a range of assistance, such as data gathering, economic analysis, workforce development, business planning, and technological support.

Federal and state initiatives and programs can frequently change, especially as economic forces change. For instance, there are increasing state and federal programs focusing on sustainability efforts, such as green technologies, energy efficiency, and Wisconsin’s Green Tier program. WCWRPC plays an important role in tracking these policy changes and disseminating this information to local communities.

Regional Partnerships

Our region has a plethora of multi-jurisdictional economic development programs as seen in the table below.

Multi-Jurisdictional Programs	Barron	Chippewa	Clark	Dunn	Eau Claire	Polk	St. Croix
W. Central WI Workforce Development Area	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
W. Central WI Regional Education Consortium/Synergy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
UW-Stout Technology Transfer Institute	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Momentum West	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Chippewa Valley Convention and Tourism Bureau		X		X	X		
Impact Seven, Inc.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Indianhead CAP			X				
Western Dairyland CAP					X		
West CAP	X	X		X		X	X
West Central Wisconsin RPC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Other regional economic development partners serving multiple communities include utility providers, Realtor’s Association of Northern Wisconsin, technical colleges, University of Wisconsin System, and various trade groups.

Nationwide, there is a growing trend to encourage a more regional and collaborative approach to economic development. In April 2007, Governor Jim Doyle created the Governor's Business Council with a mandate to promote the formation of multi-county regional economic development associations which has provided Growing Regional Opportunities in Wisconsin (GROW) grant funding to a number of such initiatives around the state. This trend towards a regional approach is well summarized in the Wisconsin Town's Association June 2008 Mailbox newsletter:

“This shift is being encouraged in large part by the competitive impacts of globalization. In effect, the focus has shifted from bricks and mortar to entrepreneurship and collaboration. This shift also embraced a regional (typically multi-county) strategy that sustains job growth by pooling educational, financial, technical and other resources on a competitive scale.”⁵

County and Local Programs

County and local programs can be quite diverse in strategy, vision, focus, and funding. Most county-level programs serve the entire county, while some programs may be limited to a certain area or just to a single municipality. Not all of these programs are public entities, since most economic development corporations, chambers, and business clubs are private, non-profits.

The following is an overview of some of the more common local and county tools in use in our region as identified in the *Inventory of Plans, Programs, and Land Use Policies in West Central Wisconsin*:

- All seven counties have an economic development corporation.
- At least 15 economic development corporations, 9 industrial development corporations, and 23 chambers of commerce at the community or local area level exist in the region.
- Seven communities have community development authorities or a municipal economic development entity.
- There are 102 active tax increment financing districts in 54 communities.
- There are 58 industrial or business parks in 47 communities.
- 16 communities have a Main Street or comparable downtown program, with numerous communities considering starting a similar program.
- 5 communities have Business Improvement Districts (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Menomonie, Rice Lake, and Rive Falls).
- Many communities improve or extend infrastructure in support of economic development efforts. Tax increment financing or grant funding is often used to assist with such improvements. Other WCWRPC working papers review the region's transportation, utilities, and community facilities in more detail.

A wide variety of other tools exist, though they many not be in wide use or may only be pertinent to specific circumstances.

⁵ Wisconsin Towns Association. *Mailbox*. Vol. 16, Number 6. p22. June 2008.

**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN
STATE OF THE REGION WORKING PAPER**

LAND USE

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**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
APRIL 2009**



Prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

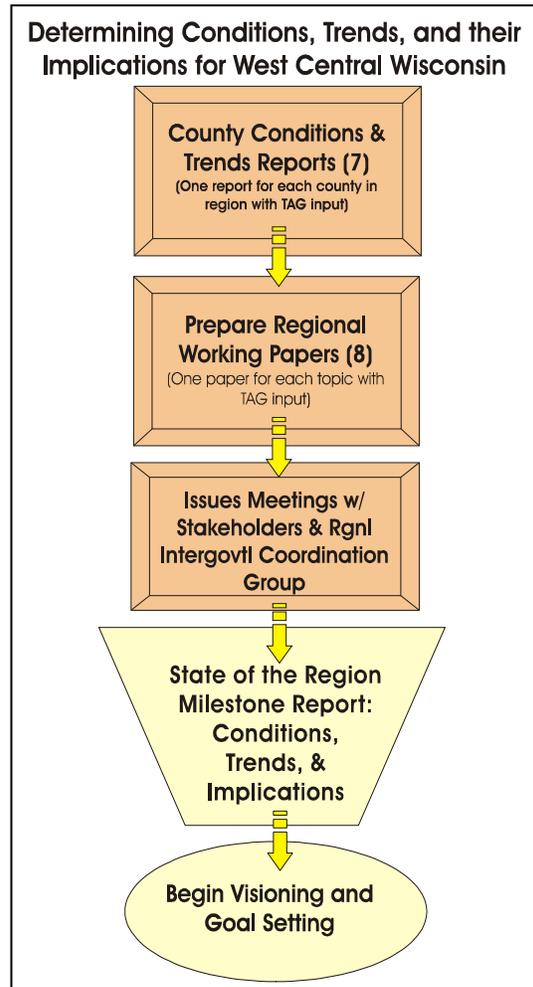
1. INTRODUCTION

This document is one of eight working papers prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) as part of its comprehensive planning effort with input from the project’s Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

As shown in the diagram to the right, these working papers largely build upon the seven county conditions and trends reports prepared by WCWRPC with TAG input. The working papers place the county data in a regional context, highlighting conditions and trends of regional significance.

As such, the information found within this document is discussed at a regional level. Each county’s conditions and trends report should be referred to for additional details and background information at the county and municipal level.

These working papers provide a foundation upon which regional issues can be identified and discussed. Only by building a consensus on our region’s key conditions and trends, can the issues, their implications, and the remainder of the regional comprehensive planning effort for west central Wisconsin proceed.



“Once you have lived on the land, been a partner with its moods, secrets, and seasons, you cannot leave. The living land remembers, touching you in unguarded moments, saying, ‘I am here. You are part of me.’”

– **Ben Logan** From the book *The Land Remembers*

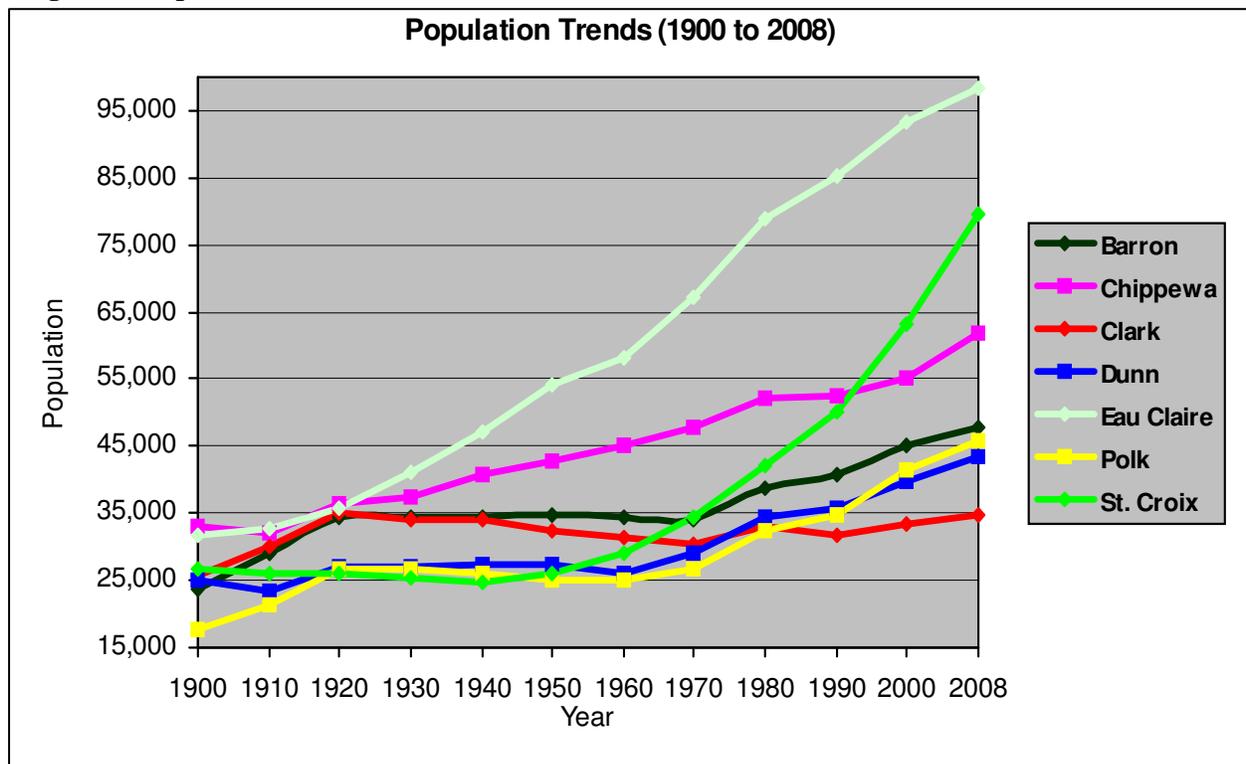
2. LAND USE CHANGE

“Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better. Obviously, then, one’s character and frame of mind determine how readily he brings about change and how he reacts to change that is imposed on him.” – King Whitney Jr.

Population Engine Drives Residential Land Use

At the turn of the 20th Century, the populations of west central Wisconsin’s seven counties were relatively comparable, all being less than 35,000 in population as shown in Figure 1. About 1920, Chippewa and Eau Claire counties began to experience significant increases in population

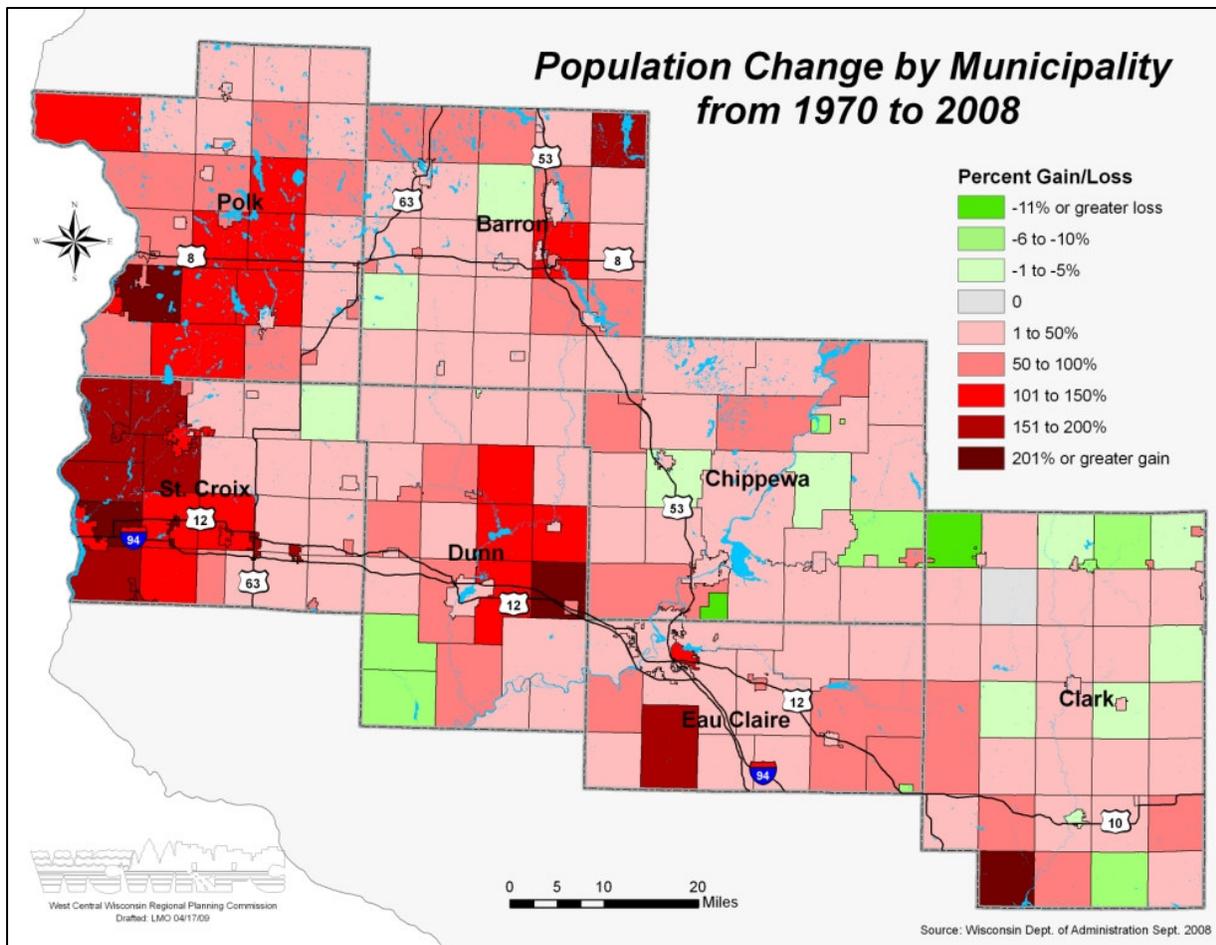
Figure 1: Population Trends



source: U.S. Census & Wisconsin Dept. of Administration

and have been growing at a relatively steady rate ever since. St. Croix County has generally been growing at an increasing rate since the 1950’s, and exploding in growth during recent decades. And since about 1970, Barron and Dunn counties have been growing at a fairly slow, but constant rate. Clark County’s population has fluctuated more than the other six counties, growing since 1990, but still just below its 1920 population.

Figure 2: Population Change: 1970 - 2008

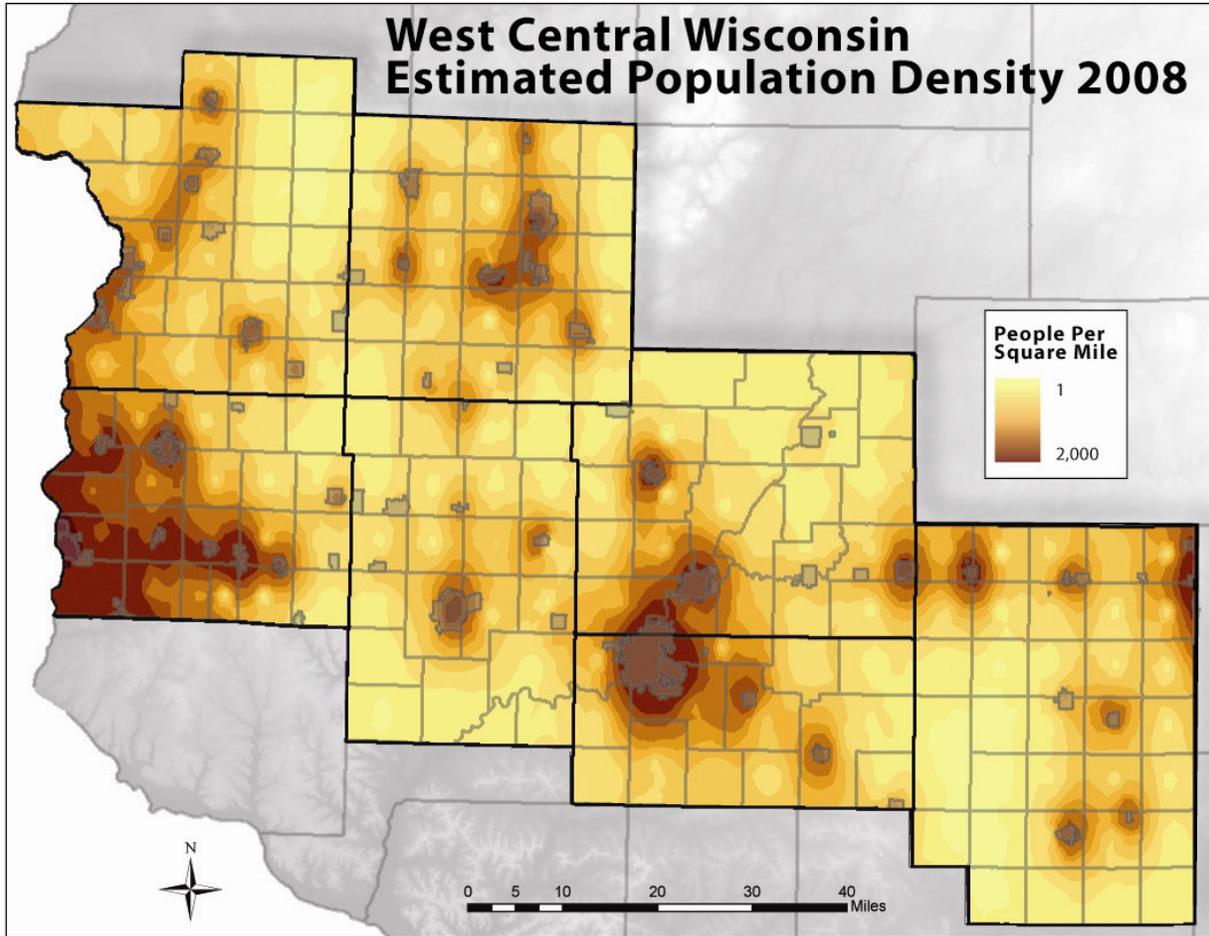


It is not surprising that areas with the greatest population growth are those that are also experiencing rapid land use change. Figure 2 shows the population change in our region by municipality from 1970 to 2008. While population growth in the cities and villages may have outpaced towns as a whole, some of the highest growth rates in the region have occurred in the unincorporated towns. Of the 37 communities which grew by over 100 percent since 1970, 17 were located in St. Croix County and nine in Polk County. Of these 37 communities, 26 were towns, eight were villages, and three were cities.

The map clearly shows the high rates of growth in the western communities of our region. Higher rates of growth also tended to be experienced in towns with considerable surface water features, such as the towns of Cedar Lake in Barron County, Tainter in Dunn County, Dewhurst in Clark County, and central Polk County. It should be noted that the growth of some towns have been moderated by annexation to an adjacent city or village.

The clusters of population growth depicted in the map demonstrate the influences of mobility, economic opportunities, and natural amenities on population change. It is clear that proximity and/or access to employment opportunities are a major factor in the population growth of the region.

Figure 3: Estimated Population Density



Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

Figure 3 provides a general visualization of the population density of west central Wisconsin using 2008 population estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Administration¹. As seen in the maps above and on the following page, the distribution of the population in the region makes it apparent that urban centers and transportation routes greatly influence development patterns. Concentrations of population in and around cities and villages are apparent. However, dispersing populations in rural areas are less apparent but no less noteworthy. The rural areas of rapid change in the region are also becoming the newest areas of population concentrations. This presents new challenges and opportunities to those communities experiencing the changes and few are equipped to respond to these in a timely manner.

¹ Use of this map is for regional planning purposes only. The map was created by a technique called kriging, which interpolates population density for a given location based on data from nearby locations. While the map shows the general population density pattern using density estimates for areas smaller than the municipal level, local variations do exist (e.g., does not account for certain landforms or surface waters).

Figure 4: Estimated Population: 2008

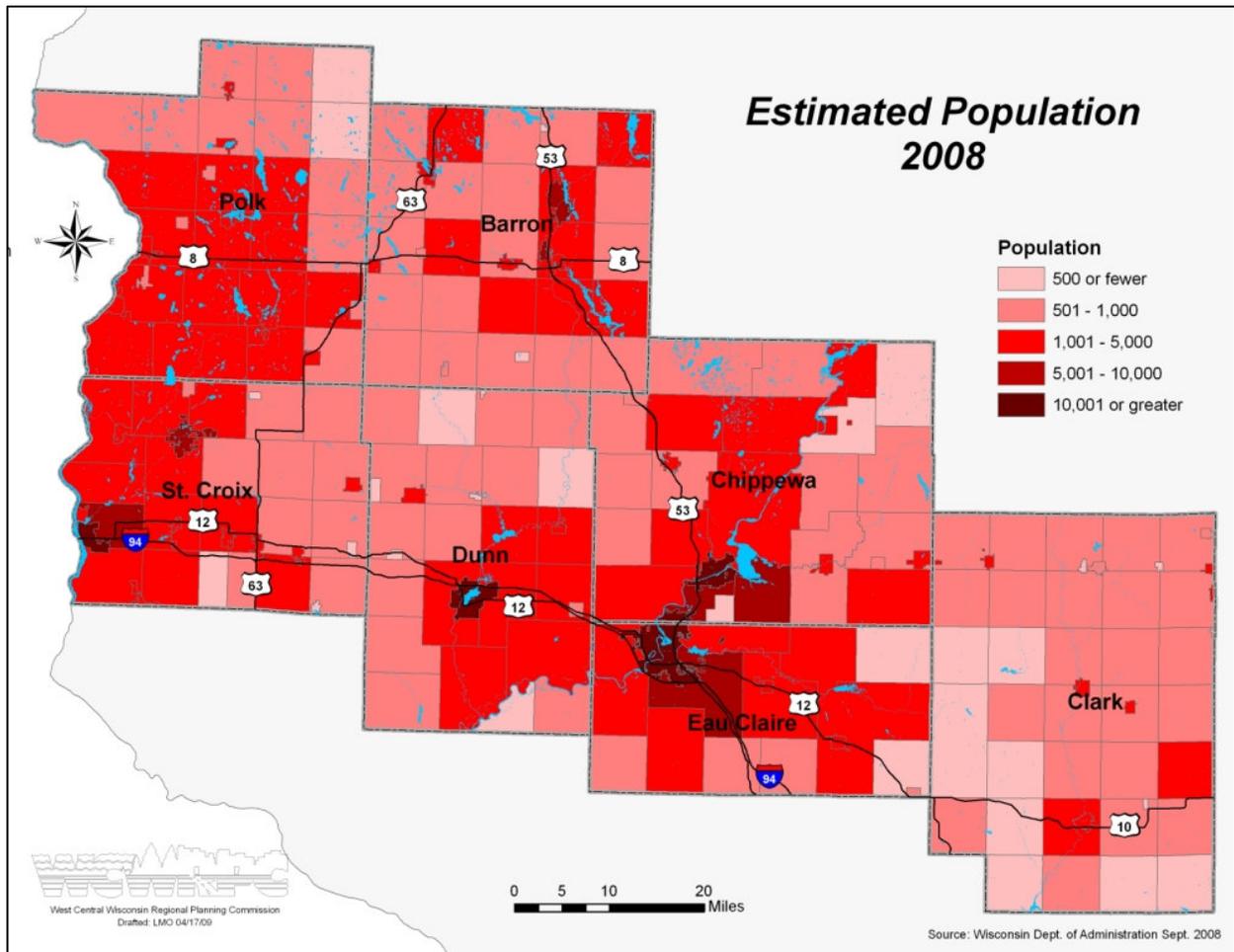


Figure 4 shows our region’s population distribution by municipality. While Eau Claire County has the highest population in the region, 79 percent of its population is clustered within the City of Eau Claire and adjacent City of Altoona and Town of Washington.

The region has experienced a significant increase in the rate of land consumption due to residential development (Figure 5). Between 1987 and 2007, the region experienced a 98.3 percent increase in residential land, while only experiencing a 24.5 percent increase in population. While decreasing household size has played a role, it cannot be ignored that more

Figure 5: Change In Land Consumption

County	1987 - 2007 % Change in Residential Land Use	1987 - 2007 % Change in Population	New Residential Acres/New Population
Barron County	54.4	16.8	3.2
Chippewa County	87.6	13.8	6.3
Clark County	71.3	6.4	11.1
Dunn County	n/a	21.5	n/a
Eau Claire County	61.0	17.4	3.5
Polk County	139.9	31.4	4.5
St. Croix County	138.1	64.9	2.1
West Central Wisconsin	98.3	24.5	4.0

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue and Department of Administration

land is being consumed due to increasing average residential parcel size. The above table depicts the percent change in residential land use and population for each of the seven counties in the

region. As can be seen, the percent increase in residential land use is roughly four times larger than the percent change in population over the same period of time.

Two Decades of Land Use Change

There are many indicators of land use change. Figure 6 shows the percent change in land assessed in five categories: residential, commercial, manufacturing, agricultural, and forest. The predominance of residential land use change and its impact on agricultural land are apparent. Three counties in the region more than doubled the amount of

residential land in the past twenty years contributing to region-wide doubling of assessed residential land during that period. Commercial development is supported and promoted in many communities, thus many counties saw corresponding increases in commercial land. Manufacturing is considered a significant economic activity that benefits local communities. Two counties, Barron and Clark, saw declines in manufacturing land while all the others have experienced growth in manufacturing land.

Residential Change

Figures 7 and 8 show twenty years of residential land use change. This change is not only affected by population, but its impact is affected by the density at which a community allows residential development to occur. Hence, two areas with equal population growth could see very different changes in the amount of residential land used to accommodate that

population. An urban area that develops small lots and multi-family housing will use less land per household than a rural area that develops large lots and no multi-family units. This is indicated in Figure 5 when comparing the population growth of communities with residential land change.

Figure 6: Land Use Change 1987-2007, Assessed Acreage

	Residential	Commercial	Manufacturing	Agricultural	Forest +
Barron	65.8%	49.6%	-12.0%	-25.2%	7.2%
Chippewa	87.6%	97.6%	12.2%	-20.0%	-10.1%
Clark	71.3%	53.3%	-19.6%	-13.2%	-47.1%
Dunn	186.9%	181.7%	64.7%	-18.2%	-3.7%
Eau Claire	61.0%	86.2%	53.7%	-19.2%	-17.3%
Polk	139.9%	20.7%	43.4%	-38.2%	10.9%
St. Croix	138.1%	122.5%	63.2%	-27.6%	35.2%
WCWRPC Region	106.9%	77.7%	17.4%	-23.0%	-9.3%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

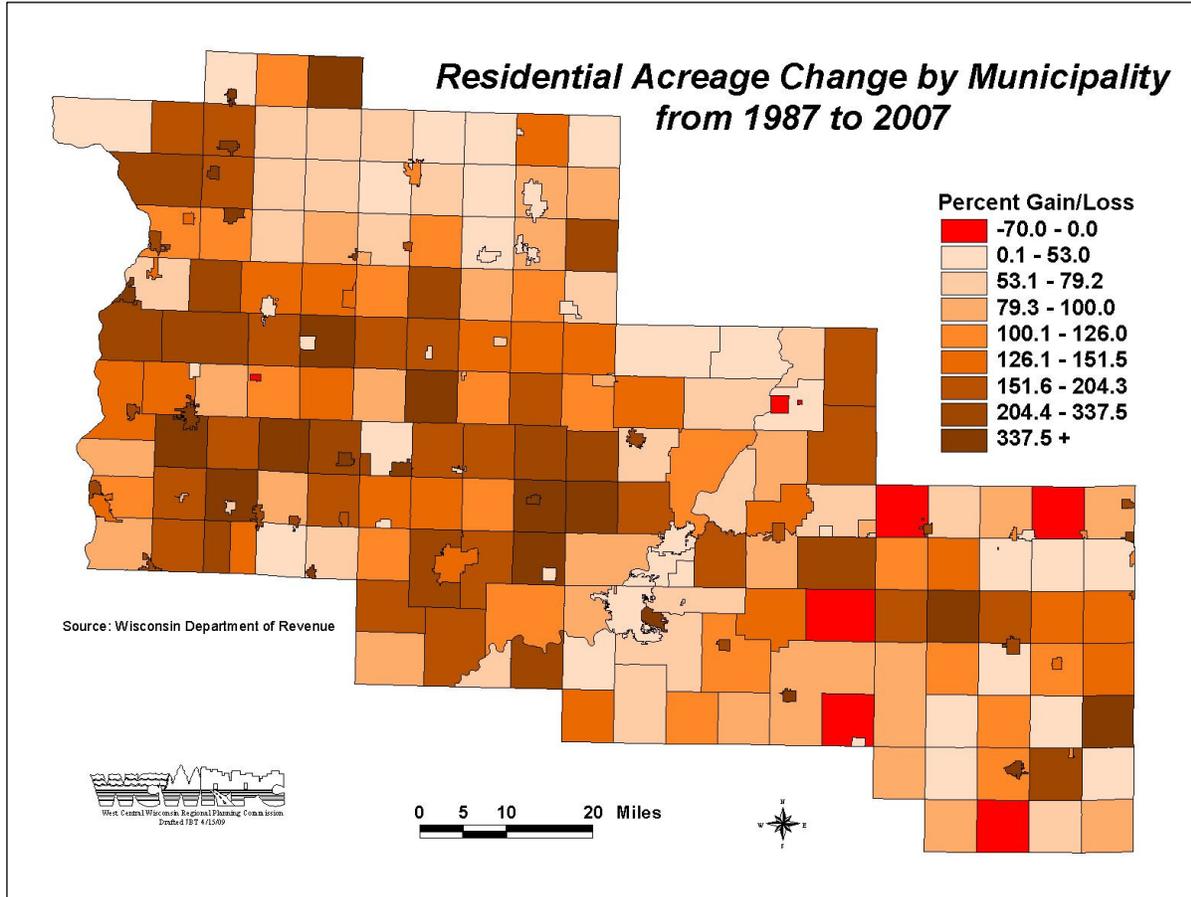
+ 2007 Forest and Ag Forest combined

Figure 7: Residential Land Change

County	Residential Land Change			Percent Change		
	1987	1997	2007	87-97	97-07	87-07
Barron	16,227	21,708	26,911	33.8%	24.0%	65.8%
Chippewa	14,247	20,660	26,723	45.0%	29.3%	87.6%
Clark	8,788	10,475	15,053	19.2%	43.7%	71.3%
Dunn	7,286	14,455	20,907	98.4%	44.6%	186.9%
Eau Claire	14,327	17,643	23,069	23.1%	30.8%	61.0%
Polk	19,419	32,836	46,589	69.1%	41.9%	139.9%
St. Croix	22,112	35,300	52,646	59.6%	49.1%	138.1%
WCWRPC	102,406	153,077	211,898	49.5%	38.4%	106.9%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 8: Residential Acreage Change



Commercial and Manufacturing Change

West central Wisconsin has experienced significant increases in assessed commercial and manufacturing land during recent decades (Figure 9). While the absolute change in these two categories is small for communities across the region, the impact of this change can be important to them. Realities and perceptions of community vitality are often associated with non-residential development. However, a real concern is prolonged disinvestment

Figure 9: Commercial Land Change

Commercial Land Change						
County	Acres			Percent Change		
	1987	1997	2007	87-97	97-07	87-07
Barron	2,714	3,512	4,061	29.4%	15.6%	49.6%
Chippewa	2,617	3,381	5,170	29.2%	52.9%	97.6%
Clark	1,025	1,249	1,571	21.9%	25.8%	53.3%
Dunn	864	1,700	2,434	96.8%	43.2%	181.7%
Eau Claire	1,455	2,002	2,709	37.6%	35.3%	86.2%
Polk	2,707	2,703	3,267	-0.1%	20.9%	20.7%
St.Croix	2,273	3,529	5,059	55.3%	43.4%	122.6%
WCWRPC	13,655	18,076	24,271	32.4%	34.3%	77.7%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

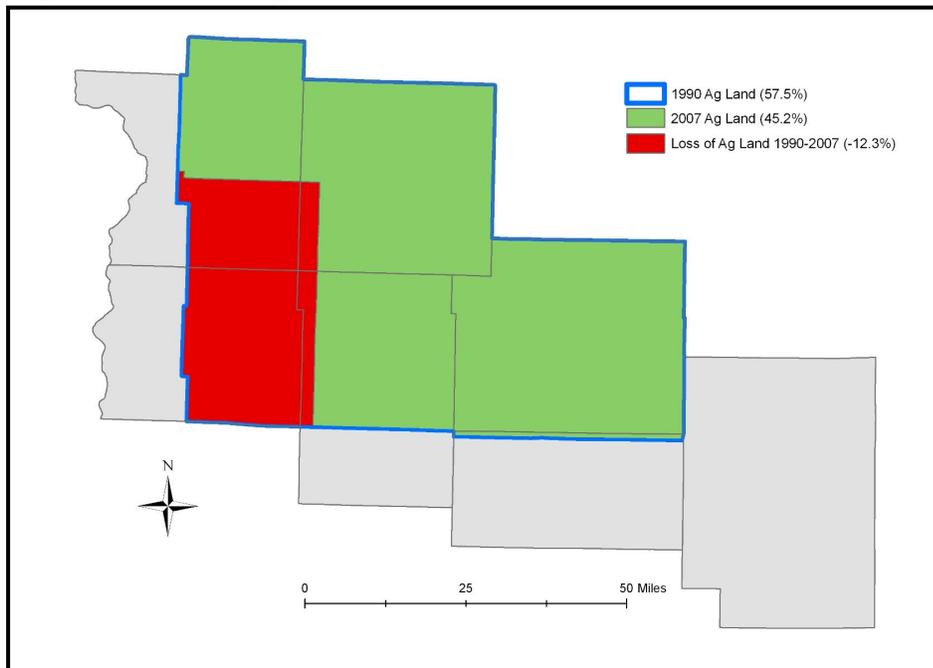
in urban cores and old industrial areas, while new investment occurs in “greenfields” and the urban fringe. While many communities welcome commercial and industrial development, they also may be concerned about the character of that development fitting their vision and goals.

Agricultural Change

The distribution of agricultural land in west central Wisconsin varies significantly. This is demonstrated by different geography, crop use, and concentrations differing throughout the region. In 2007, west central Wisconsin had an estimated 1,837,877 acres of assessed agricultural land. This represents 45.2 percent of the land. In 1990, 57.5 percent of the region consisted of assessed agricultural land. As a region, there was a loss of approximately 500,000 acres (780 square miles) of assessed agricultural land between 1990 and 2007. Figure 10 visually demonstrates how much of the region was comprised of assessed agricultural land in 1990 and 2007. The red area shows the equivalent amount of agricultural land that was lost in those 17 years. This equates to 1/8 of the size of the whole region or just over the size of St. Croix County. This equates to 12.3 percent less of the region in 17 years.

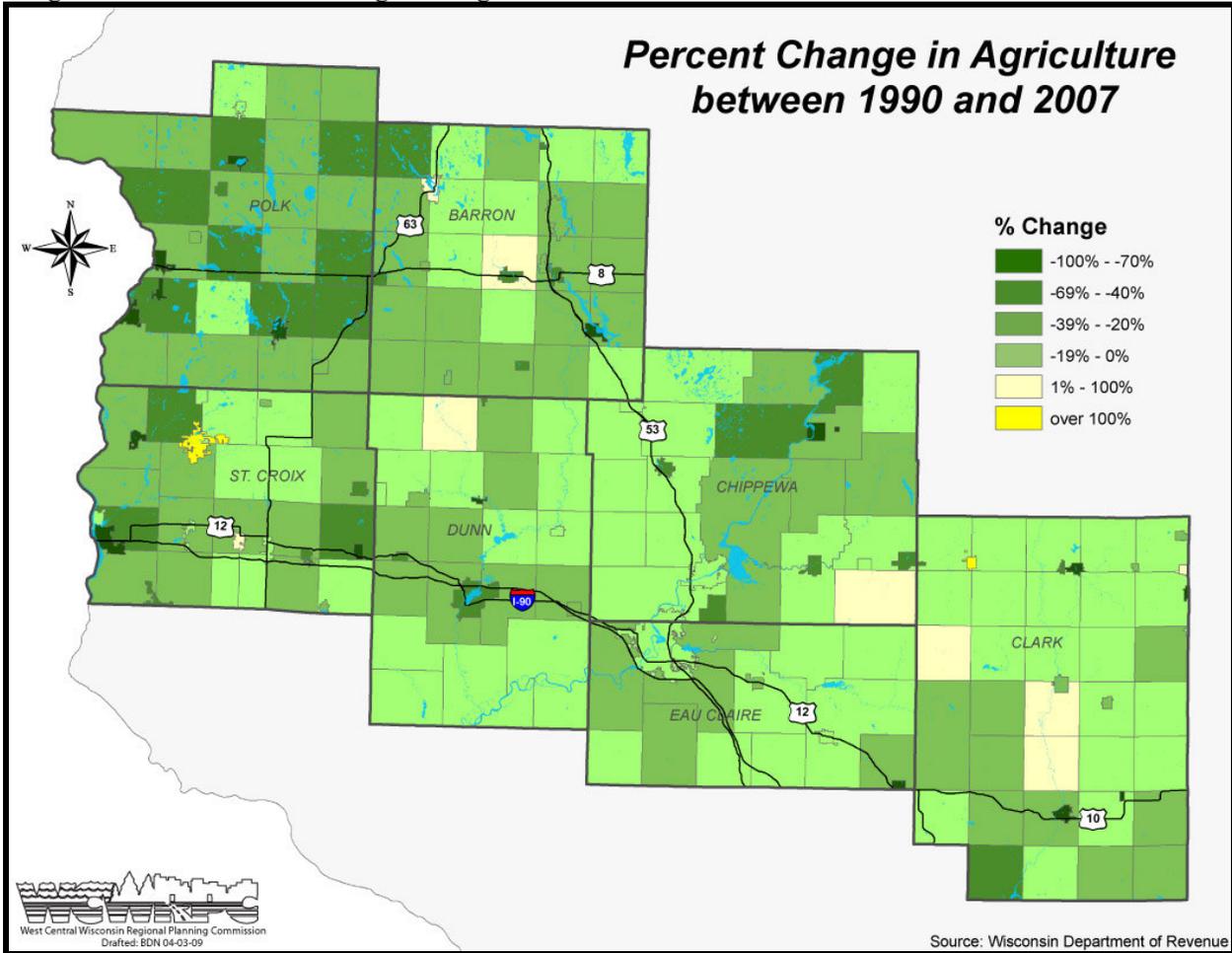
The counties with the highest percentages of assessed agricultural land are St. Croix (54.7 percent) and Dunn (53.1 percent). Polk (34.5 percent) and Eau Claire (38.3 percent) counties have the smallest percentages. In the past 17 years, the two counties that lost the highest percentage of their respective farmland were Polk County (36 percent) and St. Croix County (27 percent).

Figure 10: Loss Of Agricultural Land



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 11: Residential Acreage Change



Figures 11 and 12 show the changes of assessed agricultural land in the region between 1990 and 2007 and the distribution of that change by municipality. It can be seen that there is some correspondence between the areas previously indicating high population growth and residential land growth and those areas with the highest rate of farmland loss. The pervasive loss of agricultural land in the region is striking. This should be disturbing to us as the contributions to the economy and community character by agriculture are significant. Continual encroachment of residential

Figure 12: Agricultural Land Change

Agricultural Land Change						
County	Acres			Percent Change		
	1987	1997	2007	87-97	97-07	87-07
Barron	351,420	323,057	262,869	-8.1%	-18.6%	-25.2%
Chippewa	365,753	340,977	292,388	-6.8%	-14.2%	-20.1%
Clark	418,226	392,569	363,127	-6.1%	-7.5%	-13.2%
Dunn	358,866	326,134	293,620	-9.1%	-10.0%	-18.2%
Eau Claire	195,799	186,458	158,187	-4.8%	-15.2%	-19.2%
Polk	340,995	285,545	210,874	-16.3%	-26.2%	-38.2%
St. Croix	355,654	320,494	257,677	-9.9%	-19.6%	-27.5%
WCWRPC	2,386,713	2,175,234	1,838,742	-8.9%	-15.5%	-23.0%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

development into agricultural areas makes it more difficult for remaining farmers to farm and creates conflicts due to the differing expectations of new and existing residents.

Agricultural Preservation/Working Lands

As more farmland is being taken out of production by development, the discussion of ways to preserve agriculture land is becoming more critical. Through the State's Working Lands Initiative, it is a goal to a) expand and modernize the State's existing farmland preservation program, b) establish agricultural enterprise areas, c) develop a purchase of agricultural conservation easement matching grant program, and d) fund the Working Lands Initiative. This goal would be achieved by farmland preservation planning and zoning, agricultural enterprise areas, farmland preservation agreements, various levels of property tax relief, and a purchase of agricultural conservation easement grant program.

Changes in Forested Land

In 2008, west central Wisconsin had an estimated 781,207 acres of assessed forest land (Figure 13). This represented 19.2 percent of the land. The counties with the most assessed forest land in 2008 were Chippewa (154,104 acres) and Polk (152,127 acres). The counties with the highest percentages were again Polk (24.9 percent) and Chippewa (23.1 percent) counties. The counties with the smallest percentages were St. Croix (10.6 percent) and Clark (16.2 percent).

It is important to keep in mind that Figure 13 shows assessed forest acreage only and does not include State, County, and other public forest land. Due to the new assessed AG Forest category, it is difficult to compare the amount of assessed forested acres in the region with previous years. One trend that is evident in the region is the fragmentation of forested areas and the subsequent impact on wildlife habitat and resources generated from forested areas. The fragmentation of forested areas is both an environmental and economic issue.

Figure 13: Forested Land 2008

County	2008 Forested Acres	2008 Percentage of County
Barron County	115,469	20.3
Chippewa County	154,104	23.1
Clark County	126,364	16.2
Dunn County	106,356	19.2
Eau Claire County	76,644	18.6
Polk County	152,127	24.9
St. Croix County	50,143	10.6
West Central Wisconsin	781,207	19.2

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 14: Forested Land Change

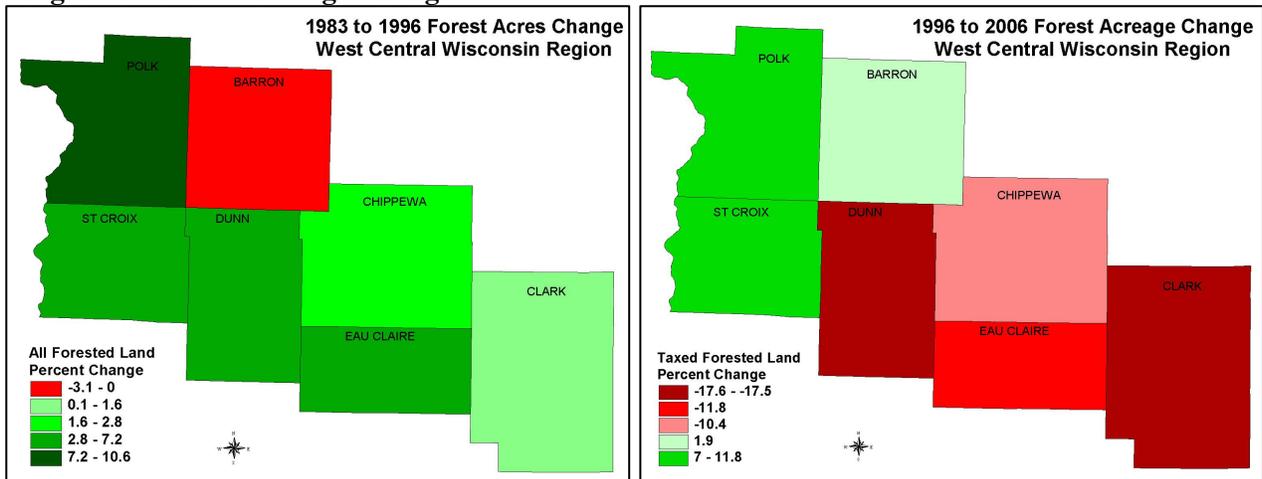
Forested Land Change						
County	Acres			Percent Change		
	1987	1997	2007	87-97	97-07	87-07
Barron	107,760	116,765	115,469	8.4%	-1.1%	7.2%
Chippewa	170,947	176,830	153,654	3.4%	-13.1%	-10.1%
Clark	157,862	160,833	83,499	1.9%	-48.1%	-47.1%
Dunn	110,478	131,273	106,356	18.8%	-19.0%	-3.7%
Eau Claire	92,647	106,978	76,644	15.5%	-28.4%	-17.3%
Polk	137,138	145,642	152,127	6.2%	4.5%	10.9%
St. Croix	37,086	48,252	50,143	30.1%	3.9%	35.2%
WCWRPC	813,918	886,573	737,892	8.9%	-16.8%	-9.3%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 15 shows the change in assessed forest land in the region by county between 1983 and 1996, and 1996 and 2006. It can be seen that between 1983 and 1996, six of seven counties added forested land, mostly due to the Crop Reserve Program which provided incentives for tree planting. However, from 1996 to 2006, four of seven counties lost significant amounts of assessed

forest land as that program eroded, residential encroachment into forested areas increased and use value assessment provided incentives to convert forested land to farmland.

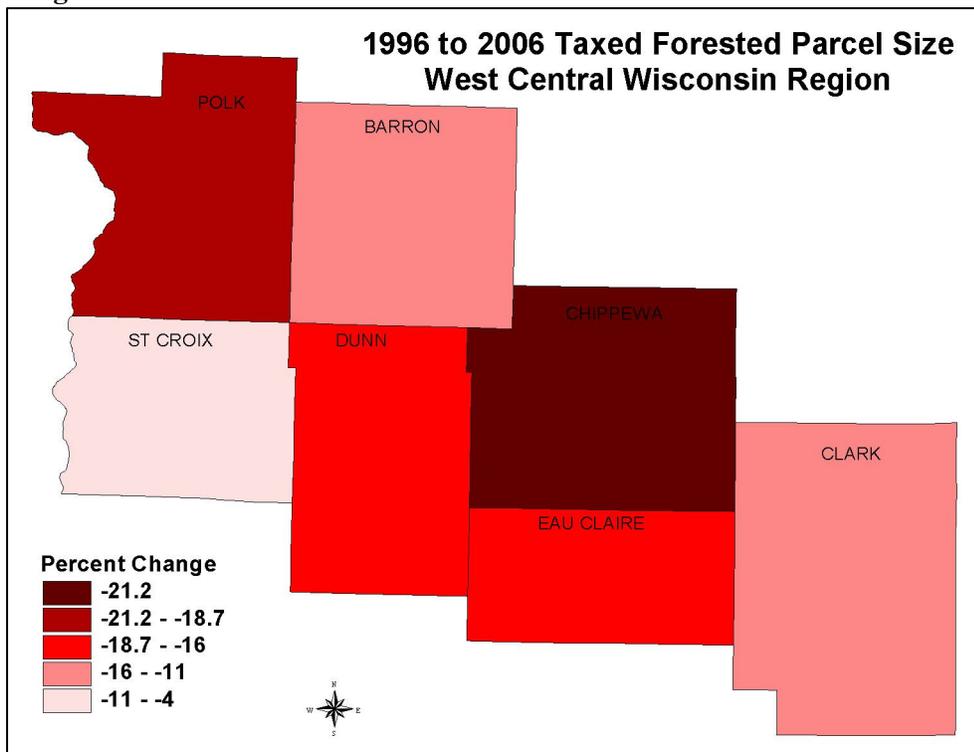
Figure 15: Forest Acreage Changes



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 16 shows the change in forested land parcel size in the region for a ten-year period between 1996 and 2006. The map shows that forest parcel size is declining throughout the region. Foresters consider a minimum forest parcel size of about 20 acres for proper management for forest production and natural habitat. Many of our counties already have average forest parcel sizes below this threshold. The continuing proper management of private forested properties is essential to a healthy forest industry in Wisconsin.

Figure 16: Forest Parcel Size



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

3. LAND USE IMPACTS

“We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” – Aldo Leopold

Land Use Change Impacts

Conflict Between Land Uses

The compatibility of adjacent land uses is an ongoing concern. Certainly agriculture is one of the most prominent uses facing impacts from encroaching incompatible uses. It is well documented that increasing non-farm land uses in farming areas not only consume productive agricultural land but can also negatively impact remaining farm operations. However, as communities grow, the potential for other land use conflicts increase. Traditionally, development regulations have sought to separate incompatible uses. Zoning districts have been established which separate and concentrate residential, commercial and industrial uses.

Recently, there have been newsworthy land use conflicts involving extracting non-metallic resources and supporting industries. Sand mining and processing has emerged as a contentious issue in several communities. The region has historically experienced extraction of mineral resources, as certain areas of the region are rich in desired mineral resources. At this time, the region has approximately 335 non-metallic mining sites. This number does not include all of the small private sites that often are not documented. With these resources becoming scarce in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area, there will be increasing demand to extract these resources in western Wisconsin where they are abundant.

The Transportation Connection

Recent sources suggest that transportation and land use planning are not as coordinated as they could or should be in land use and comprehensive plans. The absence of this coordination in land use plans and transportation studies limits the ability of planners to anticipate consequential development from transportation investments. This lack of integration also suggests that land development impacts of transportation projects usually cannot depend only on local land use plans.

Land use plans can be used as a starting point. However, subsequent reliance on such plans requires that they incorporate potential transportation project development impacts in a more systematic manner. Because of this challenge, there should be technical assistance programs for improving transportation impact analysis in local land use plans; best-practice reports which emphasize the use of land use and transportation indicators at different levels of aggregation and considering various development conditions; and strengthening regional and State agencies in their ability to reach out to local officials and land use planners to increase collaboration among parties and improve planning outcomes.

There are several transportation issues within the region that are and will have a significant impact on land use in the immediate and surrounding areas.

St. Croix River Crossing:

The proposed bridge improvements between Stillwater, MN and Houlton, WI, will make crossing the St. Croix River significantly easier. This will undoubtedly increase growth pressures in St. Croix and Polk counties and possibly surrounding counties as well.

Interstate Highway 94:

The stretch of Interstate Highway 94 that travels through the region is one of the busiest roads in the State. Interchanges are catalysts for development.

U.S. Highways 8 and 53 and State Highways 29, 35, 63 and 65:

These highways are main thoroughfares for numerous counties in the region. They provide high quality transportation alternatives for commerce, commuting, and recreational opportunities. With all of these alternatives, growth pressure for residential, commercial, and industrial land has occurred and will continue to occur along these corridors.

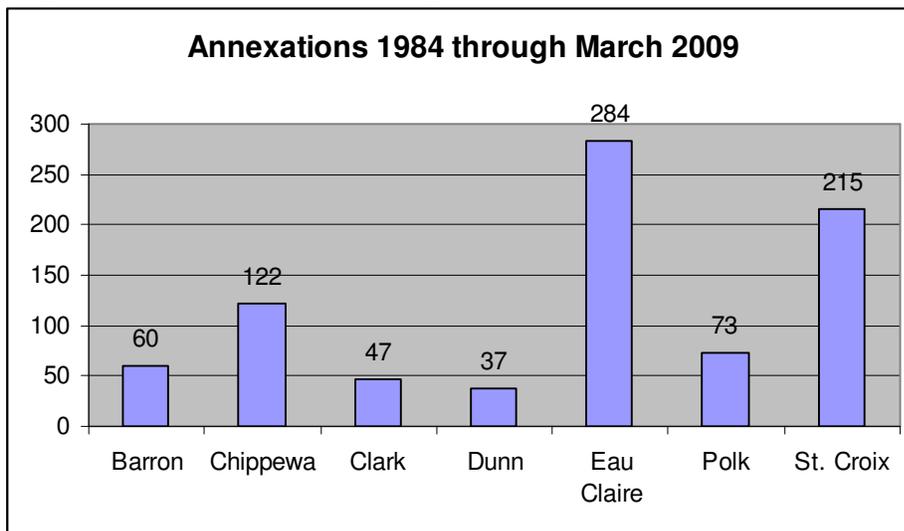
High Speed Rail:

If high speed rail is constructed in the region, there could be major impacts for communities that receive stations and for communities that do not receive stations. Communities that receive stations could experience a significant increase in residents who wish to take the high speed rail for commuting purposes.

Boundary and Extraterritorial Conditions

Cities and villages have opportunities to work with neighboring towns to influence how surrounding unincorporated areas develop through extraterritorial powers. In addition, cities and villages can annex unincorporated areas. In most cases, annexation leads to the development of a natural area or land that is being used for agricultural purposes. Figure 17 shows the number of annexations in each county between 1984 and 2009.

Figure 17: Annexations in the Region’s Counties



Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

Impacts on Natural Resources

When communities expand, often they do so in a way that impacts natural areas. Analyzing the land use and vegetative cover of the region from before White settlers, most of the region would not be recognizable now, as the vast majority of indigenous land cover has been destroyed and altered. This includes plains, prairies, forested areas, savannahs, wetlands, and a host of other ecosystems. However, currently, most think of agricultural and natural lands as being synonymous with areas where development has not destroyed or altered places that have not yet been developed. Regardless of one's view of what is a natural area, modern-day development is impacting our natural areas.

Perhaps the most obvious natural resource that is impacted by land use change is our surface and ground waters. Developed areas limit the amount of rainwater that can be naturally soaked into the ground and naturally replenish groundwater reserves. In addition, agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial uses all use water. In some locations throughout the region, existing water use has reduced the amount of groundwater so much that there is limited groundwater left for residential consumption. Other water resources that are impacted are wetlands and floodplains. The alteration and destruction of these areas further complicate natural ecosystems where natural locations allow water to seep into the ground and help limit or prevent flooding. This can occur in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Forestland and wildlife habitat is also greatly impacted when development occurs. This habitat can either be an area where animals live and/or be part of a corridor that animals use when they hunt or migrate. When development occurs, forestland is often fragmented or habitat is disrupted. Research has shown that many animals are already being impacted by the reduction of forested land and surface water. At a micro-level, these instances may seem insignificant. However, there are various locations throughout the region where natural habitats are tourism and economic catalysts for communities. Impacting these natural areas affect both the natural ecosystems and local economies.

Impacts on Community Character

Each city/village begins with unique characteristics. These characteristics can include architecture, how the community develops with surrounding nature or a body of water, street patterns, public spaces, or how different land uses are intertwined with each other. In rural areas, community character often is a result of the natural landscape, agricultural operations, architecture of farm buildings and churches, and the terrain of the land.

Much of our new development is done in a way that does not compliment existing community character. New development is often architecturally sterile, provides no resemblance to existing architecture, and lacks a sense-of-place. In addition, in urban and suburban areas, new developments often have different street patterns that reduce connectivity.

**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN
STATE OF THE REGION WORKING PAPER**

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

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**WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING
APRIL 2009**



Prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

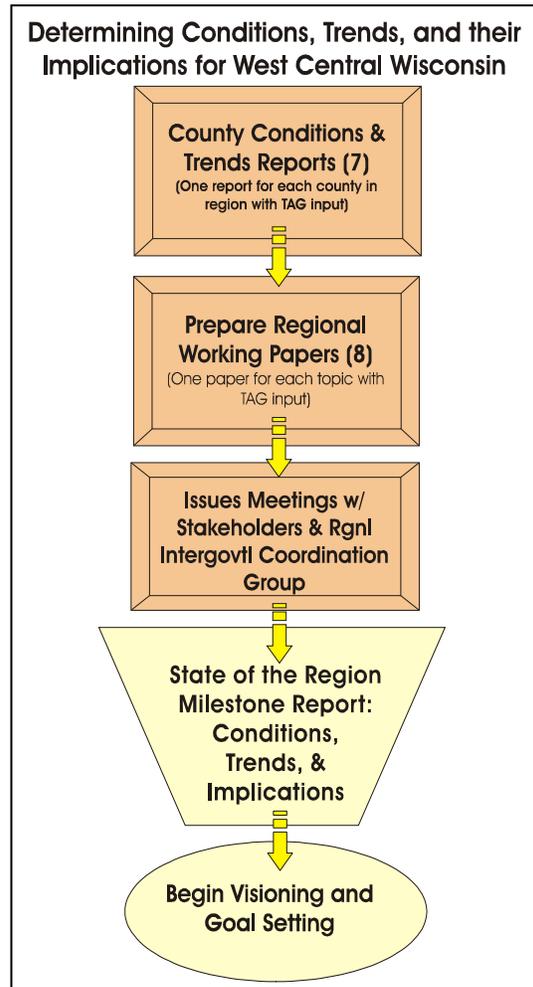
1. INTRODUCTION

This document is one of eight working papers prepared by West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) as part of its comprehensive planning effort with input from the project’s Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Even though energy and sustainability is not a required element under State Comprehensive Planning Law, the regional plan will have an Energy and Sustainability Element. Due to the dynamics of energy and sustainability in our society, there will be some overlap between this working paper and the other working papers.

As shown in the diagram to the right, these working papers largely build upon the seven county conditions and trends reports prepared by WCWRPC with TAG input. The working papers place the county data in a regional context, highlighting conditions and trends of regional significance.

As such, the information found within this document is discussed at a regional level. Each county’s conditions and trends report should be referred to for additional details and background information at the county and municipal level.

These working papers provide a foundation upon which regional issues can be identified and discussed. Only by building a consensus on our region’s key conditions and trends, can the issues, their implications, and the remainder of the regional comprehensive planning effort for west central Wisconsin proceed.



Lagom.

Legend says the word *lagom* comes from the Vikings. The word has no exact meaning in the English language, but can be translated roughly to “enough” or “in balance.” There is an adage that translates to, “Enough is as good as a feast.”

2. ENERGY PRODUCTION & USE - LIMITED RESOURCES

“The frog does not drink up the pond in which it lives.” – Native American proverb

CURRENT ENERGY SOURCES

Like the majority of the State of Wisconsin, the west central region of the state is mostly dependent on fossil fuels. With no accurate data that show energy use by type of fuel at the county level, statewide data need to be used. In 2005, coal (29.9 percent) and petroleum (29.2 percent) were they most used fuel types. This was followed by natural gas (23.1 percent). There is a significant drop in percentage after these three, which include electric imports (7.1 percent), nuclear (6.0 percent), and renewable energy (4.5 percent)¹. Among renewable energy, wood led the fuel types with 2.7 percent. Figure 1 shows the 2005 percentages for all of the renewable energy fuels. With all things being equal, one can assume that the amount of wind energy in the region is under the state average while wood is above the state average.

Figure 1: 2005 WI Biomass

Fuel Type	Percent
Wood	2.7
Ethanol	0.6
Hydro	0.4
Biogas	0.3
Solar	0.2
Waste	0.2
Wind	0.1

Source: UW-Extension – Center for Land Use Education

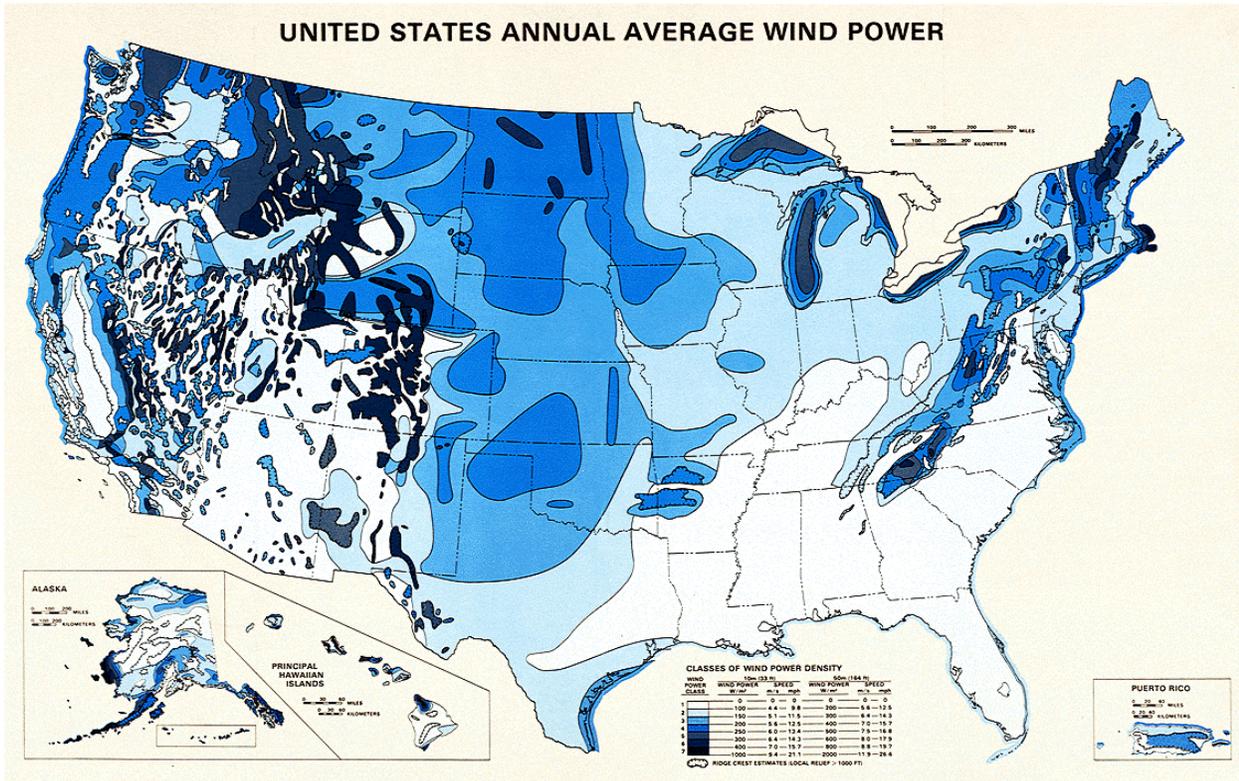
Energy consumption has steadily increased over the past 35 years. In fact, consumption has increased 55 percent, which is over double the state’s population growth. Roughly two-thirds of the money that is spent on energy in Wisconsin leaves the state’s economy. This equates to almost \$15 billion annually, or on average \$6,600 per household². The reduction of consumption is a vital component of any goal to increase the percentage of renewable fuels used in the state and region. Without significant reduction, much of the state’s agricultural and natural resources would be needed for energy and would not be available for other industries (agricultural, paper, etc.)

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

The State of Wisconsin Office of Energy Independence created a goal of having 25 percent of the state’s electrical energy and transportation fuels from renewable sources by 2025. The west central region can be a significant stakeholder in this goal. The variety of land cover allows for diversity in availability for renewable energy resources. According to the Center for Land Use Education’s *Wisconsin Land Use Megatrends: Energy*, the region has potential to provide renewable energy from wood, ethanol, switchgrass, and waste. In addition, there are specific areas in the region that would be moderately conducive to wind energy and on-site solar operations. There are also many opportunities in the dairy industry to create and profit from renewable energy.

The diversity of the region’s elevations, land cover, and land use play a significant and determining role in potential renewable energy that can be created in the region. There are currently several wind power exploration projects occurring in the region. As a whole, the region is rated as moderate for wind energy potential (Figure 2). According to Focus on Energy, the mean annual power density at 40 meters in the region is diverse, ranging from less than 100 W/m² to 200-300 W/m². The mean annual wind speed at 30 meters ranges from under 10.1 mph to 13.4 mph. This range is in the lower third of potential statewide speeds. At 100 meters, the speeds range between 12.3 mph and 17.9 mph. The majority of the region has mean annual wind speeds that are in the lower third of the potential statewide speeds. At the same time, parts of the

Figure 2: Wind Power Potential

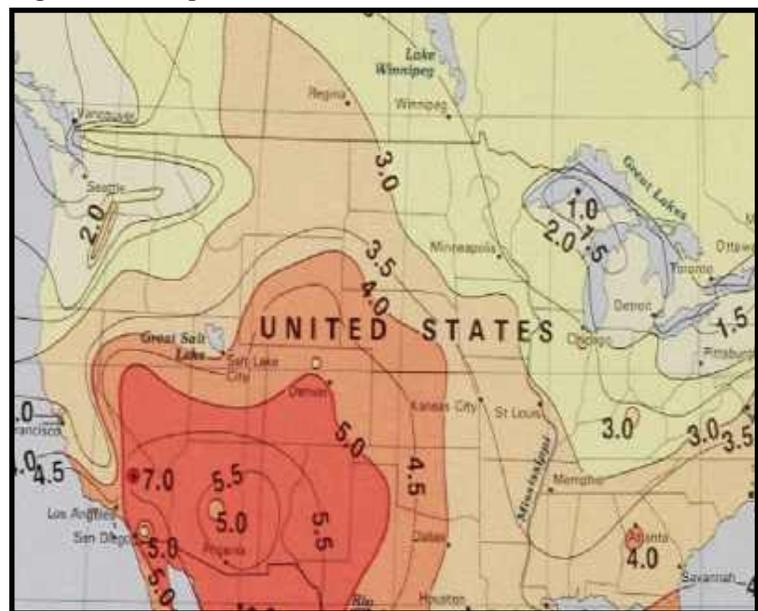


Source: National Renewable Energy Laboratory

region are ranked in the middle half of potential statewide speeds. Much of this is due to the diversity of elevations and land cover in the region. There are numerous areas in the region that are not conducive to wind energy. The ongoing wind exploration projects will go a long way in determining the amount of energy that can be produced in the region from wind. In addition, the State of Wisconsin is currently in the process of looking into wind farm siting guidelines.

Solar energy potential is fairly constant throughout the region and is not as strong as other parts of the nation (Figure 3 and 4). Due to the terrain in most areas of the region and the economic importance and vitality of agricultural land in the region, a large scale solar energy farm seems to be difficult to imagine in the region. It is commonly thought that most solar potential in the region would be site specific. Solar panels in the region would create most of their energy during the summer months, which are the months that experience the highest energy demands. There are numerous options to locate smaller solar farms in

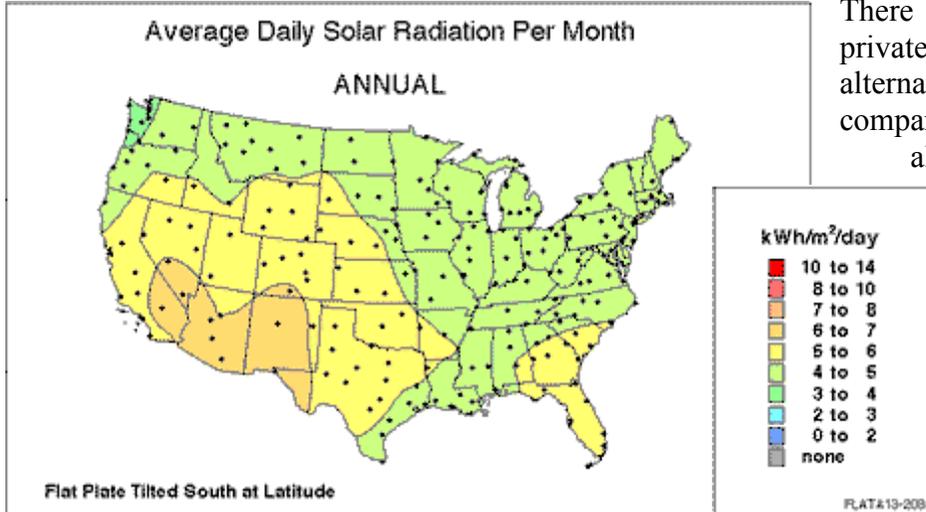
Figure 3: Solar potential



Source: www.solar4power.com

brownfield and industrial areas of the region. Even though the region ranks relatively weak in solar potential when compared to other areas in the U.S., the region has higher solar potential than all areas in Germany, the majority of France, and is only slightly behind Spain. Germany is largest solar thermal market in Europe and is second in the world, only behind Japan.

Figure 4: Solar Potential



There has been an increase in the private sector's investment in alternative energy. Numerous companies that are working in the alternative energy industry are being created and many businesses are expanding. These businesses are spread throughout the region. The diverse geography, land cover, and types of agricultural and natural resource industries create an environment where there are numerous

Source: www.bergey.com courtesy of US-DOE and NREL

alternative energy opportunities. Some examples of this include, the recent opening of High Quality Shavings, which is a new pellet company located in Polk County; anaerobic digesters on dairy farms; bio-energy opportunities from the by-products of processing plants and the making of cheese; and algae from lakes.

3. AGRICULTURE AND THE IMPACTS

“In every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decision on the next seven generations.” – Great Law of the Hau de no sau nee (Iroquois Nation).

The seven county region has a storied agricultural and natural resource history. Agricultural and natural resources have played an important role throughout the history of Wisconsin. The region is diverse in opportunities for profiting from bio-energy. In fact, the land cover diversity is seldom equaled among other regions in the state. The region consists of areas that are conducive for large acres of row crops, forest land, lakes, and areas that are conducive to smaller farms and/or dairy farms. Recently, many of these resources are beginning to be used as bio-energy. This can be witnessed by the increasing number of bio-energy stakeholders that are operating in the region. These facilities consist of private companies, individual farmers, and individuals.

Growing Participation in Sustainable Farming Practices

There has been an increase in organic farms and direct market food production in the region. These farms have a reduced impact on global climate change due to limited, if any, use of pesticides and fertilizers and reduced transportation costs to transport their products. In 2007, there were 206 certified organic farms and \$11,099,000 in sales of organically produced commodities. Due to different questions on the USDA census form, data from 2002 are not perfectly compatible with the 2007 data. However, according to the 2002 Census, the region had 63 organic farms and \$2,131,000 (\$2,450,650 - 2007 dollars) of sales.

Figure 5: Agricultural Products Sold To Individuals For Consumption

	2002 Farms	2007 Farms	Percent Change	2002 Value (in \$1,000)	2007 Value (in \$1,000)	Value Percent Change
Barron County	87	102	17%	423	858	103%
Chippewa County	85	112	32%	703	654	-7%
Clark County	150	194	29%	233	369	58%
Dunn County	99	136	37%	440	883	101%
Eau Claire County	57	108	90%	219	1046	378%
Polk County	120	194	62%	215	712	231%
St. Croix County	112	136	21%	292	797	173%
West Central Wisconsin	710	982	38%	2,525	5,319	111%
State of Wisconsin	4,918	6,243	27%	29,072	43,491	50%
U.S.A.	116,733	136,817	17%	812,204	1,211,270	49%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Figure 5 shows that the value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for consumption significantly increased 111 percent in the region between 2002 and 2007. This consists of farmers markets, community supported agriculture, local purchasing programs, etc. The value sold increased from \$2,525,000 in 2002 to \$5,319,000 in 2007. This is an increase of \$2,794,000 (\$2,415,000 - 2007 dollars). In addition, there are now no less than 20 farmers markets in the region, many of which operate more than one day a week.

In regards to the direct market farm industry, the region has no fewer than nine Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) farms. Many of these farms serve communities in the seven county region and/or the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The population of the Twin Cities metropolitan area significantly adds to the large supply of consumers of direct market farm products in the region.

Pesticides and Fertilizers On the Rise

As the region has a large percentage of agricultural land, the region consequently has fertilizers and pesticides that are used. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) reported in 2006 that nitrate-nitrogen is the most widespread groundwater contaminant in Wisconsin and that the problem is increasing in extent and severity. Specifically in Wisconsin’s groundwater, 80 percent of nitrate inputs come from agricultural fertilizers, manure spreading, and legume cropping systems. An analysis of 35,000 Wisconsin drinking water samples found that private wells in agricultural areas were three times more likely to be unsafe than in forested areas. Fertilizer and pesticides have the chance to travel downstream into surface water, and at the same time they have the chance to seep into groundwater. Nitrous oxide is a major contributor of green house gases produced from modern agriculture, which produces over 80 percent of global nitrous oxide emissions. The impact that nitrous oxide has on global warming is roughly 300 times more than carbon dioxide. In addition, a significant amount of energy is used to make and transport fertilizer and pesticides.

Regionally, between 1997 and 2007, the amount of commercial fertilizer, lime, and soil conditioners used increased from 961,419 acres to 1,004,211 acres. In relation to total assessed agricultural land, the percent of acres that had commercial fertilizer, lime, and soil conditioners increased from 39.1 percent to 43.6 percent (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Commercial fertilizer, Lime and Soil Conditioners

	Total Acres 1997	Total Acres 2002	Total Acres 2007	Percent of AG Land 1997	Percent of AG Land 2002	Percent of AG Land 2007
Barron County	146,425	140,384	150,959	40.7	39.9	46.6
Chippewa County	146,233	140,562	149,249	39.2	37.6	42.2
Clark County	184,448	169,803	202,466	40.2	36.8	46.0
Dunn County	160,955	137,126	170,003	39.5	34.4	44.4
Eau Claire County	71,900	68,795	81,175	33.6	33.7	39.5
Polk County	109,184	106,633	111,064	36.2	36.4	38.4
St. Croix County	142,274	119,927	139,295	41.5	38.7	45.2
West Central Wisconsin	961,419	883,230	1,004,211	39.1	36.9	43.6

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

The amount of chemicals for insects and weeds also increased between 1997 and 2007. Figure 7 shows that chemicals for insects increased from 111,663 acres to 242,775 acres. Chemicals for weeds increased from 565,986 acres to 721,342 acres. Acres of both chemicals categories increased in comparison to total assessed agricultural land in the region. Chemicals for insects increased from 4.8 percent to 10.5 percent and chemicals for weeds increased from 23 percent to 31.3 percent.

According to 2001 data, Barron, Chippewa, and Polk counties are located in a region of Wisconsin where 25 percent of the private wells had a detectable amount of herbicides or herbicide metabolites. Dunn, Eau Claire, and St. Croix counties were located in a region of Wisconsin where 52 percent of the private wells had a detectable amount. Clark County was in a region where 12 percent of the private wells had a detectable amount.

Figure 7: Chemicals For Insects

	1997 Acres	2002 Acres	2007 Acres	1997 Percent	2002 Percent	2007 Percent
Barron County	79,176	91,406	108,425	22.0	26.0	33.4
Chippewa County	74,172	83,616	106,936	19.9	22.4	30.3
Clark County	94,609	93,463	128,881	20.6	20.3	29.3
Dunn County	99,793	92,744	123,655	24.5	23.3	32.3
Eau Claire County	49,033	49,865	57,074	22.9	24.4	27.8
Polk County	67,996	58,903	78,749	22.5	20.1	27.2
St. Croix County	101,207	84,607	117,622	29.6	27.3	38.2
West Central Wisconsin	565,986	554,604	721,342	23.0	23.2	31.3

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

4. TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

“If you are seeking creative ideas, go out walking. Angels whisper to a man when he goes for a walk.” – Raymond Inmon.

The spatial pattern in the region is extremely rural. The region has a variety of Federal, State, County, and Local highways and roads that transport goods, services, and people. The region’s road system is a strength of the region, however, mass transit options lack in the region due to lack of community size, distance from destinations, and cost. As a whole, in 2000, 78.4 percent of workers in the region drove alone to work. There is more detailed discussion regarding the existing transportation situation in the Transportation Working Paper.

Healthy Options: Walking and Biking

There is a scattering of small cities and villages which in most instances are not conducive to intra-city mass transit. However, these communities are conducive to walking, if safe and accessible walking facilities exist, which in many cases is the situation. Several communities in the region have incorporated Safe Routes To School programs, which promote walking and biking to school and home. Many communities in the region have taken strides to promote and build accessible non-motorized transportation facilities.

Limited Bus Service

The size of the City of Eau Claire allows for the opportunity to operate a transit bus system, which it does. In addition, the communities of Chippewa Falls, Menomonie, Rice Lake and River Falls have the ability to have some form of small transit program that could include a shared-ride taxi system and/or a fixed route for buses or passenger vans. Rice Lake and Chippewa Falls have shared-ride taxi service.

Greyhound and Jefferson Lines offer limited inter-city bus service in the region and from within the region to outside the region. The location of the region allows for opportunities to have inter-city bus service, as Interstate Highway 94, U.S. Highways 8 and 53, and State Highways 29 and 64 travel through the region. These corridors are major transportation routes on which many communities in the region are located along. Even though these services exist, their operation schedules are extremely limited.

Passenger Rail Opportunity

There is ongoing discussion regarding passenger rail in west central Wisconsin. This service, if operated through the region, would have a station in Eau Claire and in other communities between Eau Claire and the Twin Cities. Current discussion involves the likelihood that people would use the passenger rail and how much money the system would cost. If a passenger rail system is created along the I-94 corridor there would be many significant changes to the region. One of these changes would be the demand for residential and commercial space in proximity to the stops along the route. Data show that passenger rail stops increase density, which then would create a condition where walking and bus transit is more feasible.

5. PLANNING, LAND USE, & COMMUNITY DESIGN

“Planning of the automobile city focuses on saving time. Planning for the accessible city, on the other hand, focuses on time well spent.” – Robert Cervero

The way a community grows and how it is designed plays a significant role on how much negative impact that community has on the environment. Reduced density creates an environment where a private automobile is required. Walking for purpose, as opposed for recreation, is not an option in many new developments throughout the region.

Residential Land Use = Population x 4

The region has experienced a significant increase in the rate of developed land per inhabitant. This has been most evident in Clark County. As a whole, the region experience a 98.3 percent increase in residential land, while only experiencing a 24.5 percent increase in population between 1987 and 2007. Much of this new development is single use where different land uses are separated. This separation often makes it challenging for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel from one use to another. Figure 8 depicts the percent change in residential land use and population for each of the seven counties in the region. As can be seen, the percent of increase in residential land use is roughly four times larger than the percent change in population over the same period of time.

Figure 8: Residential Land Use and Population Growth

	1987 - 2007 % Change in Residential Land Use	1987 - 2007 % Change in Population	New Residential Acres/New Population
Barron County	54.4	16.8	3.2
Chippewa County	87.6	13.8	6.3
Clark County	71.3	6.4	11.1
Dunn County	n/a	21.5	n/a
Eau Claire County	61.0	17.4	3.5
Polk County	139.9	31.4	4.5
St. Croix County	138.1	64.9	2.1
West Central Wisconsin	98.3	24.5	4.0

Source: WI Department of Revenue and WI Department of Administration

Transit Oriented Development

As was discussed earlier, most of the communities in the region are small and in rural locations.

Therefore, very few communities have the ability to operate a mass transit bus service. In most instances, a mass transit bus service that operates every 30 minutes needs a consistent density of at least 7-8 housing units per acre. In instances where this does not exist, this reduces the ability for conventional Transit Oriented Development (TOD). However, many TOD strategies are beneficial and desirable design, even if there is not a transit system operating in the community. These strategies could be implemented in neighborhoods and areas in small rural communities in the region. These include mixed-use development, pedestrian friendly design, reinvesting in established downtown areas, and only allowing development in areas that have public water and sewer. Another approach includes making sure that needed resources are within a 20 minute walk from most residences. For the City of Eau Claire, there are endless opportunities to implement more sustainable land use patterns through TOD.

Leading The Way With LEED and WI Green Tier

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program is a voluntary certification system that sets standards for individual structures and neighborhood design operated by the U.S. Green Building Council. There has been a significant increase in the interest

and construction of LEED certified buildings in the region. Currently, there are two LEED certified structures in the region: Flynn Elementary School in Eau Claire, Eau Claire County and Luck K-12 School in Luck, Polk County. There are eight registered structures in the region that are waiting to be certified. These are located in Chippewa (one), Dunn (three), and St. Croix (four) counties.

The Wisconsin Green Tier Program is based on a collaborative system of contracts and charters crafted jointly by participating businesses and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. These contracts and charters streamline environmental requirements in many cases and encourage new environmental technologies. The region has five companies that have successfully gone through the Green Tier Program.

6. SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS – RECENT CHANGES

“We must become the change we want to see.” – Mahatma Gandhi

There are many definitions of sustainability. Most agree that there are three attributes of sustainability. These three attributes are: the economy, the environment, and society. For the purpose of this working paper, environmental sustainability will be discussed.

Wisconsin Communities Leading Change Charge

There has been increased local and multi-jurisdictional interest within the region to create plans and projects to reduce impact on climate change. Several communities in the region are in the process of analyzing or implementing a process to become an eco-community. The most common process in this endeavor is *The Natural Step*. These communities adopt resolutions that state that they will adhere to specific guidelines that will reduce their impact on global climate change. As a whole, Wisconsin is a global leader in eco-communities with 24 such communities. The following municipalities in the region have adopted resolutions supporting the State’s 25 x 25 energy independence goal: Polk County, Village of Osceola, City of Amery, City of New Richmond, City of River Falls, and City of Thorp.

Units of government in the region are creating committees of elected and ad-hoc officials to address activity within their respective unit of government that can lessen their impact on climate change. Through these committees, the communities are also analyzing how they can reduce their costs and increase their energy independence through renewable and/or local energy sources. Examples include Barron County’s Energy Policy Work Group, Chippewa County’s Committee on Energy Consumption, Cost, and Conservation, and Polk County’s Ad Hoc Renewable Energy Committee.

Universities

Efforts also include work in the university sector. This includes the Earth, Wind, and Fire project team, which consists of several county based UW-Extension agents primarily in western and northwestern Wisconsin. The project team is working with local bio-energy stakeholders to raise the dialogue on bio-energy development in the region. Another program in the region is the UW – River Falls St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development (SCISCD). The SCISCD has a mission to support and facilitate the UW – River Falls in becoming one of the premier venues for deliberation and demonstration of sustainable community development principles. The SCISCD has also incorporated a graduate level program which focuses on sustainability.

1. UW – Extension. Center for Land Use Education. Wisconsin Land Use Megatrends: Energy. 2008.
2. Wisconsin Office of Energy Independence. Wisconsin Energy Statistics 2007. www.power.wisconsin.gov.

For more information on this planning effort and other WCWRPC activities, please contact us or visit our webpage.

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