

WOOD COUNTY
WISCONSIN
RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

March 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with sincere appreciation that the assistance of the following organizations and individuals are recognized for their contributions in developing Wood County's first Economic Development Plan. The completion of this plan could not come at a better time considering the extreme economic challenges everyone is facing due to the COVID-19 world pandemic. As important as the completion of this plan is, equally important is the collaborative process that was used to develop it. Through this process, Wood County has further developed its economic development capacity and has identified priorities and a coordinated approach to grow the economy and strengthen quality of place in Central Wisconsin.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development

Purdue University – Center for Regional Development & Extension Community Development

University of Wisconsin – Madison, Division of Extension

Wood County Board of Supervisors

Wood County Conservation, Education and Economic Development Committee

Wood County Core Team Members

Wood County Rural Economic Development Innovation Initiative Planning Team

Wood County is in the geographic center of the state of Wisconsin. The 793 square-mile County is comprised of four cities, eight villages, 22 townships, and 17 unincorporated communities. Wood County has two distinct and unique population centers at opposite corners of the County; the city of Marshfield in the northwest has a population of 18,400 and Wisconsin Rapids in the southeast has a population of 17,800. Historically, development in the County has generally occurred at higher rates around those two population centers, as well as in the other smaller cities of Pittsville and Nekoosa, and the eight villages. The County is located near major State Highways and Interstate 39.

The 2018 population of Wood County was 72,904 and is projected to decrease by 563 in the next five years. The projected population decline is concerning and relatively unique considering that many of the surrounding counties are projected to experience some level of population growth over this same period of time. The average age continues to rise due to out migration of youth, a decrease in birth rates, and increased life expectancy. With an aging and decreasing population, the County faces the challenge of having an adequate workforce available to meet future demand which will also affect quality of life.

In response, this plan was developed to enhance the economic vitality of Wood County by projecting future needs, identifying strengths, and addressing some of the existing barriers. The plan focuses on initiatives for bettering the quality of life and economic development. They include:

- Ensuring robust technology infrastructure exists throughout the county for residents and businesses;
- Developing a plan to address the housing needs throughout the County;
- Producing a branding strategy;
- Supporting Central Place initiatives to provide one site that promotes arts, cultural assets, and entertainment;
- Developing a combined countywide outdoor recreational trail/boat access/beach map to increase use and attract tourists and new residents;
- Establishing an entrepreneurial "ecosystem"; and,
- Transforming the economic development network to a collaboration economic development group.

These efforts are substantial and many of the initiatives are already underway. Key to their success will be the collaboration among local, regional, and state professionals and programs and their ability to build capacity with local residents and businesses.

The REDI team recognizes that enhancing the economic robustness within the County requires the presence of just and equitable conditions that must be interwoven throughout the implementation of this plan. These intentions should be embedded within all processes, including but not limited to, the selection of committee members to ensure many voices and perspectives are included, heard, and acted upon, the choices employed when developing informational networks and outreach strategies, and nurturing a welcoming and inclusive environment among diverse partners and throughout the County.

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WOOD COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATIVE

The Wood County Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) planning process was initiated by the Wood County economic development team and supported by the Wood County Board of Supervisor’s Conservation, Education, and Economic Development (CEED) committee. Funding to engage external expertise for this effort was provided through a USDA Rural Development REDI grant. The funds were allocated to faculty and staff at Purdue University (Center for Regional Development and Purdue Extension Community Development) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison to guide the process and provide the needed resources and analyses to develop this plan.

The Wood County REDI planning team expanded on an ad hoc “Round Table” team that previously met quarterly to provide updates and exchange ideas about economic development in the County. The Round Table team was expanded to involve more perspectives and greater diversity needed to better reflect the County’s demographics. The REDI planning team was comprised of 24 people and received support from an additional 13 people (Tables 1 and 2).

The planning process was initiated during a two-day workshop at the UW-Stevens Point@Marshfield campus in December 2019. During the workshop, the Purdue University and UW-Madison Extension support teams provided guidance on the process and presented data on demographics and the local economy. The Wood County REDI team organized itself into two sub-teams; one team focused its discussions on themes associated with quality of place while the other focused on economic development themes. The sub-teams met regularly for several months with some disruptions occurring during the early part of the pandemic. Despite this disruption in planning, the expanded Round Table team further coalesced as they met weekly or bi-weekly to discuss impacts to the local economy and strategize on how best to support local businesses throughout the pandemic. Additionally, in summer 2020, Verso Corporation, a primary employer in Wisconsin Rapids, announced the closure of its papermill. In response, a subset of the team began working collectively to provide resources and support for former employees Verso Corporation and potential site redevelopment or purchase. The REDI sub-teams resumed their planning in September 2020. As the planning process progressed and initiatives were prioritized, smaller working groups were formed to develop SMART goals and objectives. The teams also identified several initiatives that are critical to the success of economic development in Wood County, efforts that will be primarily led by the County and may not involve the REDI team during implementation (Figure 1).

This plan was adopted unanimously by the Wood County Board of Supervisors on April 21, 2021, **Table 1. Wood County REDI planning team members and affiliations.**

Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Josh Miller	City of Marshfield	Terry Whitmore	Nekoosa School District
Kyle Kearns	City of Wisconsin Rapids	Dennis Lawrence	North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC)
Zach Vruwink	City of Wisconsin Rapids	Patrick Gatterman	Northward Peddle and Paddle
Mary Ann Lippert	Wood County Resident	Mark Speirs	Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
Andy Kvernen	Cornerstone Marshfield	Arne Nystrom	Town of Grand Rapids Board Chairman
Kara McManus	Gold Key Realty	Jenny Resch	University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point (UWSP)
Angel Whitehead	Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce (HOW)	Meridith Kleker	Wisconsin Rapids Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)
Jim Webster	Ho-Chunk Nation	Doug Machon	Resident and former Wood County Board Chairman
Betsy Wood	Encourage Community Foundation	Ken Curry	Wood County Board Supervisor
Scott Larson	Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MACCI)	Dave LaFontaine	Wood County Board Supervisor
Matt McLean	Marshfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)	Sue Kunferman	Wood County Health Dept.
Bobbi Damrow	Mid-State Technical College (MSTC)	Jason Grueneberg	Wood County Planning & Zoning Dept. (P&Z)

Table 2. Wood County REDI support team members and affiliation.

Purdue Center for Regional Development/Purdue Extension	UW-Madison, Division of Extension
Lionel “Bo” Beaulieu	Tessa Conroy
Michael Wilcox	Brandon Hofstedt
Maria Wiltse	Gail Huycke
USDA Rural Development	Matt Lippert
Jessica Mancel	Jackson Parr
Kelley Oehler	Kristin Runge
Jenna Savage	Nancy Turyk
Carol Wetuski	

Figure 1: Summary of Wood County REDI plan initiatives.

Economic Development

Develop a diverse and sustainable economy in Wood County.

- Establish an entrepreneurial "ecosystem" in Wood County.
- Transform the economic development network to a collaboration economic development group.

Quality of Place

Establish Wood County as a vibrant and diverse community to live, grow, work, and play.

- Ensure robust technology infrastructure exists throughout the county for residents and businesses. Includes broadband, internet, and cell coverage
- Develop a plan to address the housing needs throughout Wood County.
- Develop a branding strategy to let others know that Wood County is a vibrant and diverse community to live, grow, work, and play.
- Support Central Place initiatives to provide one site that promotes arts, cultural assets, and entertainment in Wood County.
- Develop a combined countywide outdoor recreational trail/boat access/beach map to increase use and attract tourists and new residents.

Quality of Place - Complimentary Initiatives

Implementation of the following are critical to successful economic development in Wood County but will be led by the County independent of the REDI planning team.

- Update the Wood County Comprehensive Plan.
- Improve health outcomes by complimenting the Wood County Health Plan.
- Improve health, equity, and resilience and reduce expenses by implementing the Wood County Energy Plan.

This section of the plan was contributed by Jackson Parr, MPA, Brandon Hofstedt, PhD., and Kristin Runge, PhD., Community Development Institute in the Division of Extension at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Portions of this section were adapted from an economic analysis of Wood County completed by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The team finalized their report in July 2020; therefore, it reflects conditions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and closure of Verso Corporation's papermill in Wisconsin Rapids.

This report¹ examines the demographic and economic features of Wood County, offering some comparison to both the state and nation. The analysis includes location quotients and other economic methods to identify local strengths. This report also includes analysis of several community development measures such as the population's age, education, crime, unemployment, and income.

The purpose of analyzing Wood County's economy and identifying economic trends is to answer the following questions: Which industries in the County have lagged in terms of economic performance? What are the underlying causes of poor economic performance in certain industries? What measures can be taken to address the economic problems that exist? When answering these questions, it is useful to use a comparative analysis among the County, the State of Wisconsin, and the nation.

The analysis helps to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of each industry in the County, thereby identifying potential strategies for economic development strategies that can be tailored to local conditions. Much of the information presented in this analysis has been collected from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and the U.S. Census Bureau and focuses on the indicators of income, poverty, commuting patterns, employment, and unemployment. Data from Woods and Poole (2019) were used to look at growth indices over time within the county as a whole as well as specific employment sectors. Finally, this report includes data on other metrics of economic activity from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRED).

At the time this report was drafted, a Wisconsin Rapids paper mill operated by Verso was in the process of shutting down, resulting in the loss of more than 900 jobs. The data in this report does not include these employment impacts but may aid in strategies to mitigate the impact of the closure.

REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

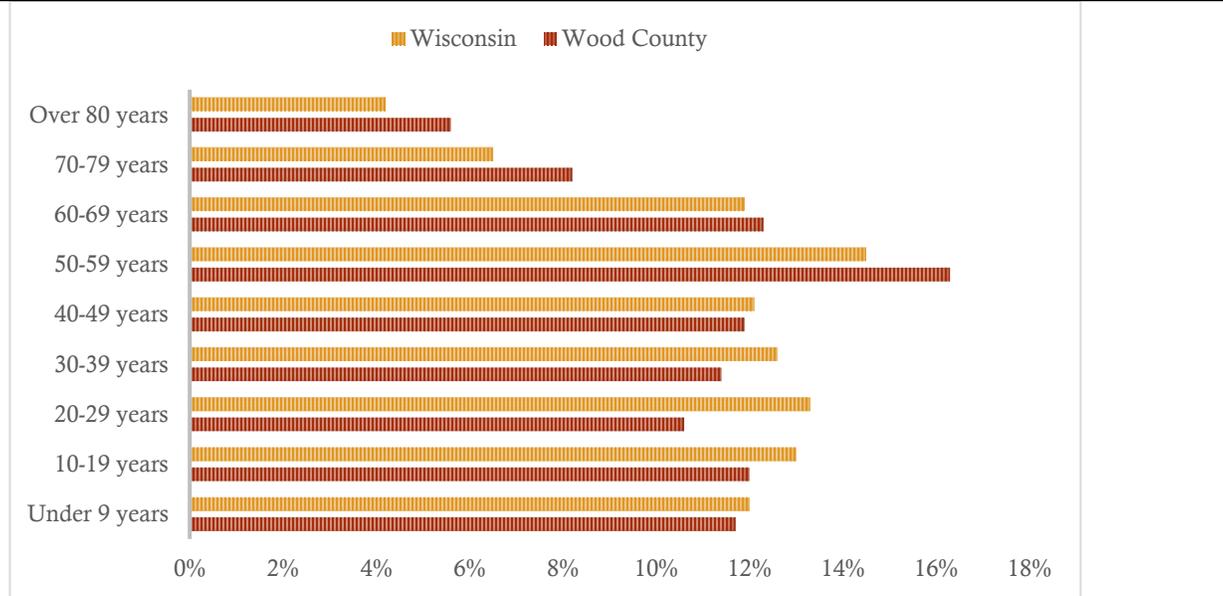
POPULATION

The population in Wood County in 2019 was 72,999, representing a 2.3% decline since 2010. Meanwhile, the population in the rest of the state increased 2.2% over the same period. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) expects the population in Wood County to decline 4.8% between 2010 and 2040, representing one of the largest population declines in the state.

The DOA estimates consider the aging population, which is particularly prevalent in Wood County. Figure 2 shows the percentage of the population in each age group for Wood County and statewide. Wood County has fewer residents in all age groups younger than 49 years old when compared with the rest of the state. Meanwhile, Wood County's share of the population above the age of 50 is greater compared to the rest of the state. Wood County is positioned to be relatively more impacted by the aging population than the rest of Wisconsin.

¹ Significant portions of this report have been adapted and reformatted from a previous Wood County economic analysis. *Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Plan, Wood County, Wisconsin, April 2021*

Figure 2: Age of Population

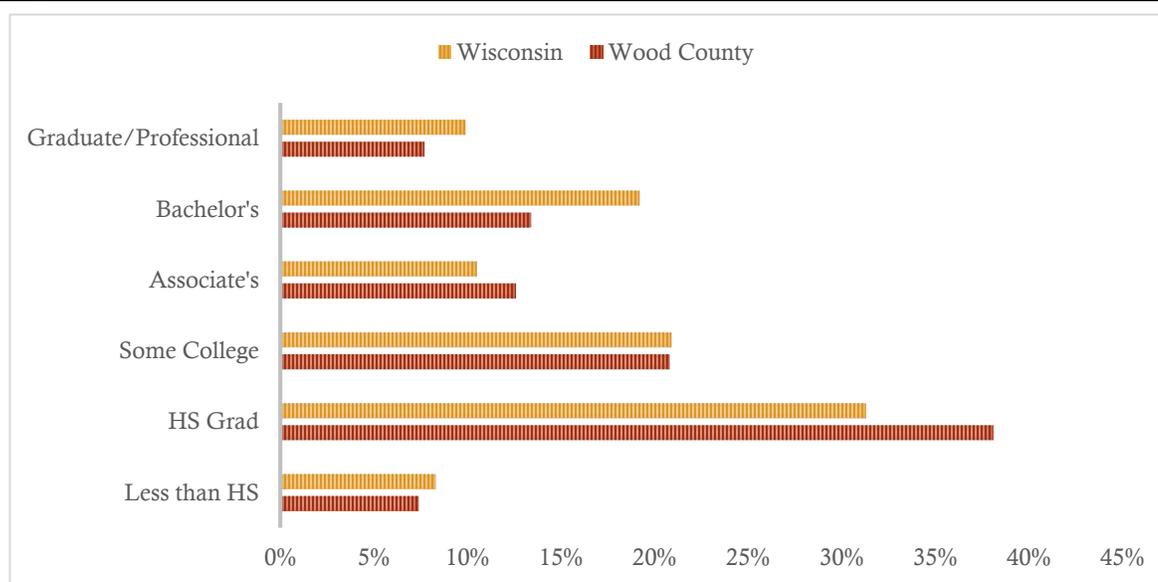


Source: American Community Survey 2018 five-year estimates

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Residents of Wood County have lower levels of educational attainment compared to the rest of the state (Figure 3). Although Wood County has a relatively high percentage of residents that graduated from high school or have an associate degree, the percentage of people statewide with bachelor's degrees outpaces residents of Wood County. Although Wood County residents have graduated high school at approximately the same rate as the state, 92.6% in Wood County compared to 91.7% statewide, there is a large gap in residents with at least a bachelor's degree (21.1% in Wood County compared to 29% statewide).

Figure 3: Educational Attainment

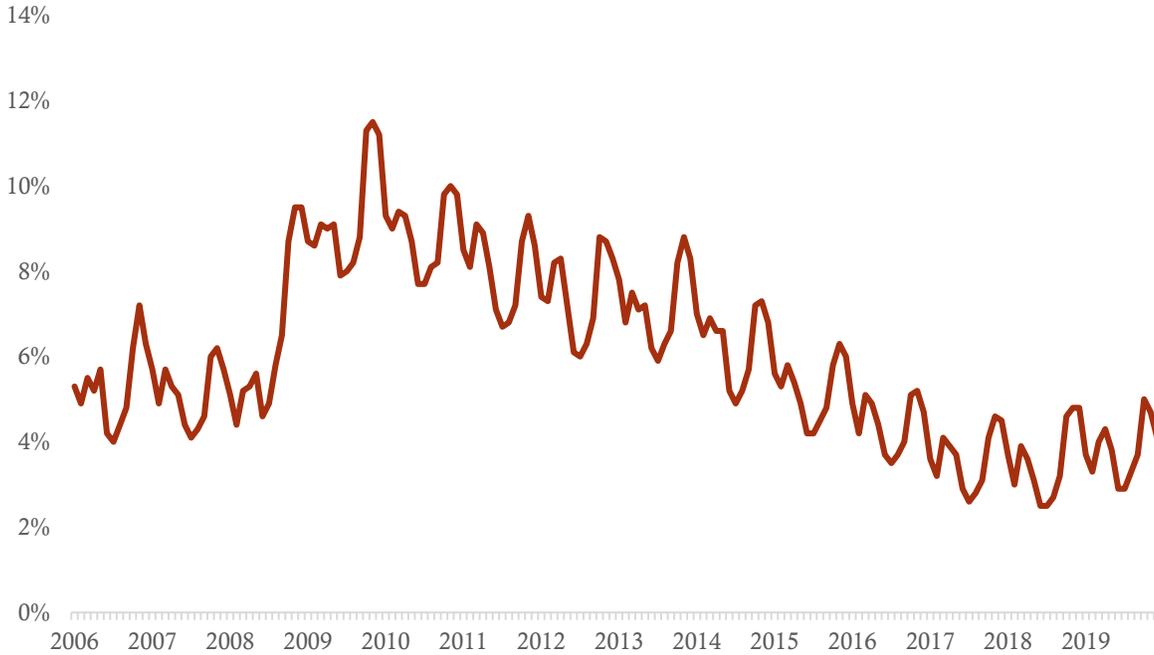


Source: American Community Survey 2018 five-year estimates

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Wood County's unemployment rate recovered from the Great Recession of 2008, going from peak unemployment of 11.5% in February 2010 to 4.1% in March 2020 (Figure 4). The unemployment rate in Wood County also shows the county's seasonality in employment. Each year, the unemployment rate rises approximately two percentage points between October and January before falling again throughout the year.

Figure 4: Unemployment Rate in Wood County, Wisconsin

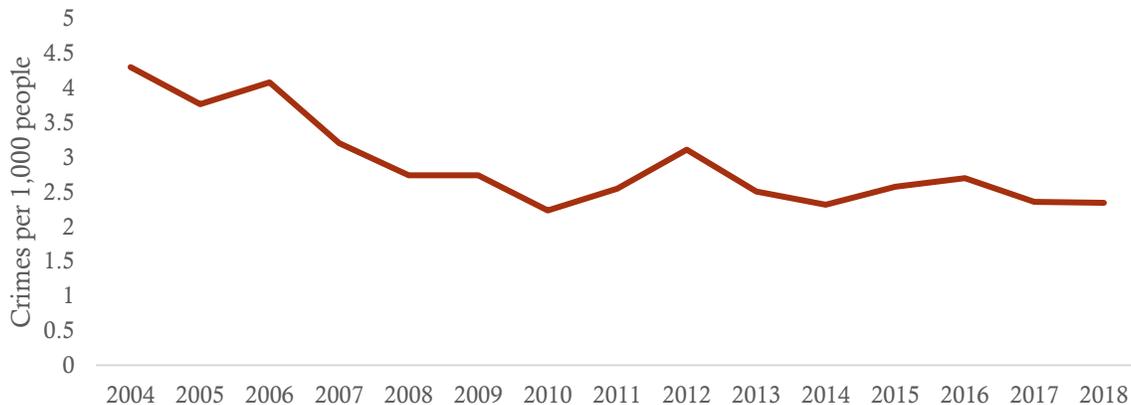


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

CRIME

Wood County has a low crime rate that has been steadily declining since 2004 (Figure 5). The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's County Health Rankings found 28 violent crimes per 100,000 people annually for the period between 2012-2014. That is one-tenth of the statewide rate of 283 per 100,000 people.

Figure 5: Violent and Property Crime in Wood County (Per 1,000 People)

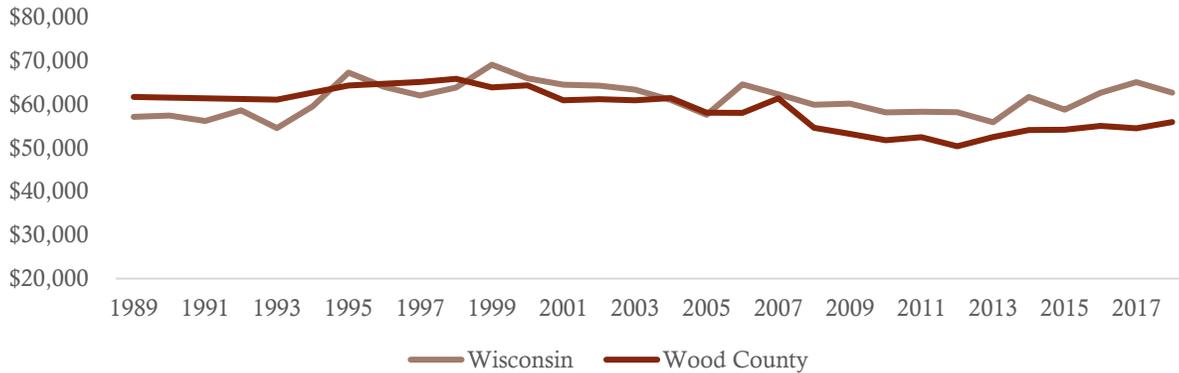


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
Includes violent and property crime incidents known to law enforcement.

MEDIAN INCOME

The median income of Wood County residents is lower than the rest of Wisconsin, a gap of \$6,750 in 2018. However, this gap is a recent development. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, income in Wood County tracked with growth statewide (Figure 6). Beginning in 2005, Wood County's growth in income began lagging behind the state and that gap has persisted.

Figure 6: Real Median Household Income (2018 dollars)

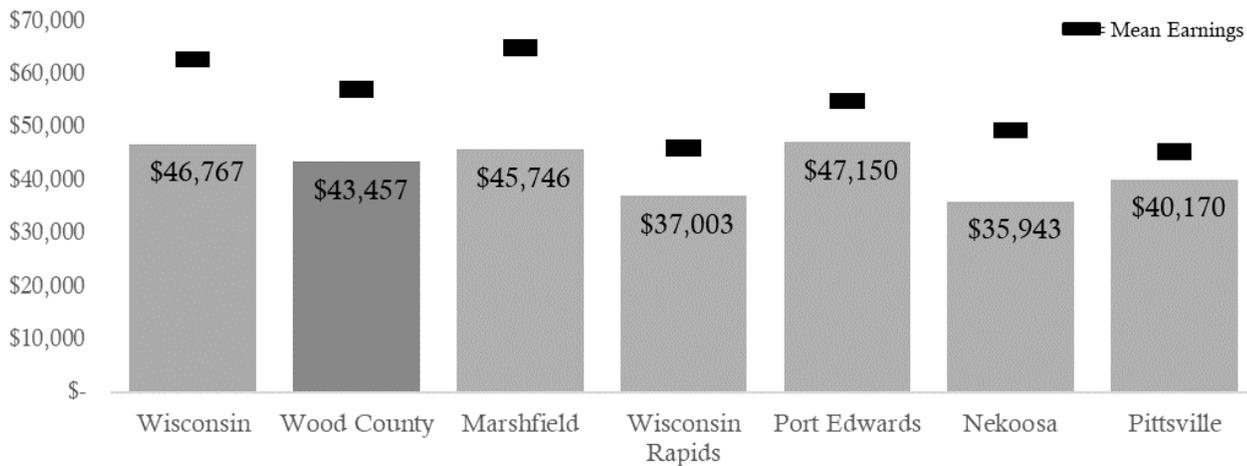


Source: U.S. Census

Note: Data was collected from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, sourced from the U.S. Census. Wood County values were converted to real 2018 dollars using the Bureau of Labor Statistic's CPI calculator.

While Wood County's median household income is less than the rest of the state, there is variation in earnings, or wages and salaries between communities in Wood County. Figure 7 shows the 5-year average median annual earnings for Wisconsin, Wood County, and five municipalities in Wood County. There is approximately an \$11,000 earnings gap between the lowest-earning municipality (Nekoosa) and the highest-earning municipality (Port Edwards). The black bars above each column represent the mean income. The larger the distance between the black bar and the earning bar, the greater the variation in earnings in that community. For example, there is a nearly \$16,000 gap between the median and mean in Marshfield, which may be due to several uniquely high salaries for medical professionals at the Marshfield Clinic.

Figure 7: Earnings in the Past 12 Months (2018 dollars)



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

Note: Values represent the 5-year average earnings between 2013-2018. Earnings are one component of income, typically wages and salaries. Therefore, earnings values represented here are less than those described in Figure 6, which shows total income.

INCOME & POVERTY

Poverty is a metric that can assess the socioeconomic well-being of the County. Table 3 shows the proportion of the population falling below the federal poverty levels of \$12,760 for individuals and \$26,200 for a family of four. Although the poverty rate for both groups has declined since 2013, the rate in 2018 still represents a larger proportion of residents than in 2008. In all years, child poverty is higher than the total countywide rate. As expected, real mean household income is inversely related to poverty rate. As the real median household income decreased in 2013, poverty rate increased. However, real median household income being higher in 2018 than 2008, the poverty rate in 2018 is still higher than 2008.

	2008	2013	2018
Total Population in Poverty (%)	8.0	11.7	10.1
Minors (Under 18) in Poverty (%)	10.3	16.3	13.2
Real Median Household Income (\$2018)	54,184	52,519	55,879

Source: Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), U.S. Census Bureau

WORKFORCE INFLOW & OUTFLOW

The inflow and outflow of residents within an area can be an indicator of the economic health of a community. Residents tend to spend money locally, but they also purchase goods near their place of work or during their commute. Therefore, analyzing the movement of residents and employees can indicate whether a community is generating economic activity from an inflow of employees or losing business as residents commute elsewhere for work.

Table 4 shows how many employees of companies in Wood County commute from elsewhere, as well as how many residents of Wood County commute elsewhere for work. Wood County's inflow and outflow are balanced with 18,145 Wood County residents commuting elsewhere for work and 19,201 people commuting to Wood County for work. Slightly more than half of Wood County residents (52.9%) work within the county.

	Count	Share
Employed in Wood County	39,593	100%
Employed in Wood County, Living Elsewhere	19,201	48.5%
Employed & Living in Wood County	20,392	51.5%
Living in Wood County	38,537	100%
Living in Wood County, Employed Elsewhere	18,145	47.1%
Living & Employed in Wood County	20,392	52.9%

Source: U.S. Census OnTheMap

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Between 2000 and 2018, Wood County's population decreased, in contrast to the State's increase in population during this period. According to 2013 population projections from the Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services Center, Wood County will add over 2,400 people to its population between the 2010 census and 2040. Most of that growth will likely be concentrated along the Wisconsin River in the unincorporated areas since much of Wood County's increases are due to the conversion of land from forestry and agriculture to other uses. This increased population will generate additional demand for services. The total number of persons employed in Wood County has steadily declined in the last eighteen years, with many residents commuting outside the County to work in cities like Stevens Point and Wausau.

Economic analysis indicates that the County's economy has shifted towards agriculture and the recreation and tourism industries. The County appears to be making a transition from slow-growth industries to rapid-growth industries, but this shift will necessitate workforce development and training before the economy and employment reach equilibrium. Wood County has managed to remain competitive in agriculture, accommodations, and transportation during the past fifteen years.

ECONOMIC SECTORS

Overall, in 2018, there were 38,609 persons employed in the basic economic “super-sectors”, or the aggregated NAICS sector groupings, in Wood County. This represented a decrease of 11% since 2000 (Table 5). These sectors include Natural Resources & Mining; Construction; Manufacturing; Trade, Transportation, & Utilities; Information; Financial Activities; Professional & Business Services; Education & Health Services; Leisure & Hospitality; Other Services; and Public Administration. Between 2000 and 2018, the three fastest growing sectors were Information, Professional & Business Services, and Financial Activities. In terms of total employment, Education & Health Services is the largest segment of the economy, followed by Trade, Transportation & Utilities.

It should be noted that the number of employees in certain sectors, particularly those workers engaged in agriculture, forestry & fishing, may be understated because this information utilizes Department of Workforce Development data and those who are self-employed or work in family businesses are not reflected in this dataset.

Sector	2000	2010	2018	2000-18 Net Change	2000-18 % Change
Natural Resources & Mining	513	548	505	-8	-1.6
Construction	1,755	1,382	1,577	-178	-10.1
Manufacturing	9,162	5,253	5,586	-3,576	-39.0
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	10,514	9,497	8,924	-1,590	-15.1
Information	581	1,087	1,396	815	140.3
Financial Activities	1,025	1,100	1,193	168	16.4
Professional & Business Services	1,560	1,652	1,876	316	20.3
Education & Health Services	12,289	15,243	11,612	-677	-5.5
Leisure & Hospitality	2,875	2,410	2,762	-113	-3.9
Public Administration	1,794	2,246	2,065	271	15.1
Other Services	1,308	1,324	1,113	-195	-14.9
Totals	43,376	41,742	38,609	-4,767	-11.0

Source: WI Department of Workforce Development; QCEW ES202 Results, 2000, 2010, 2018

Education & Health Services is the largest sector in the County, accounting for about 30 percent of total employment. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector declined by about 5 percent, compared with the State’s growth rate of 27 percent.

Trade, Transportation, and Utilities is the second-largest sector in the County, accounting for over 23 percent of total employment or 8,924 jobs. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector decreased by 15 percent, which was faster than the state, where the industry shrunk by about 3 percent.

Manufacturing is the third largest sector, accounting for over 14 percent of total employment or 5,586 jobs. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector decreased by 39 percent, significantly faster than the statewide decrease of 20 percent during this time period.

Leisure and Hospitality is the fourth largest sector, accounting for over 7 percent of total employment or 2,762 jobs. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector decreased by 4 percent, compared to the state’s growth rate of 19 percent.

Public Administration is the fifth-largest sector in the county, accounting for over 5 percent of total employment or 2,065 jobs at the local, state, and federal levels. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector grew by about 15 percent, compared to the state’s decline of 5 percent.

Professional and Business Services is the sixth-largest sector, accounting for about 5 percent of total employment or 1,876 jobs. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector grew by about 20 percent, slower than the state’s growth rate of about 33 percent.

Construction is the seventh-largest sector, accounting for about 4 percent of total employment or 1,577 jobs. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector decreased by 10 percent, compared to the 2 percent decrease experienced in the state during the same time period.

Information is the eighth-largest sector in the County, accounting for about 4 percent of total employment. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector more than doubled, with an increase of 140 percent, in contrast with the statewide decline of 11 percent during that same period.

Finance, insurance and Real Estate is the ninth-largest sector in the County, accounting for about 3 percent of total employment or 1,193 jobs. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector grew by over 16 percent, which exceeded the State’s growth rate of 2 percent.

Other Services. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector decreased by about 15 percent, compared to the state’s increase of 3 percent. Some 1,113 persons are employed in this sector, making it the 10th largest sector in the county, accounting for about 3 percent of total employment.

The **natural resource-based sector** is critical to the County and surrounding counties. It is these raw products that supply the demand for many major industries. Agricultural production of milk, potatoes, oats, barley and hay, snap beans, green peas, sweet corn, soybeans, and cranberries is critical for the dairy and food processing industries. The timber produced in the area supplies the lumber mills, the pulp and paper mills, the millwork and housing components industries and the factory-built housing industry. Approximately 505 persons are employed in this sector, accounting for about 1 percent of the County’s total employment. Between 2000 and 2018, this sector saw little change, with a reported decrease of eight jobs during this period. During the same period, the State’s growth rate in this sector was 67 percent.

Wood County’s largest employers are displayed in Table 6. The largest employers in the County are the Marshfield Clinic, De Boer Transportation, Roehl Transportation, and the Wisconsin Rapids School District.

Employer Name	Industry
Marshfield Clinic	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals
De Boer Transportation Inc.	General Freight Trucking, Long Distance, Truckload
Roehl Transport Inc.	General Freight Trucking, Long Distance, Truckload
Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools	Elementary and Secondary Schools
County of Wood	Executive and Legislative Offices
Ho-Chunk Gaming	American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal Governments
Wal-Mart	Supermarket & Other Grocery Stores
I-State Truck Center	General Freight Trucking, Long Distance, Truckload
Riverview Hospital Association	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals

Source: Wisconsin DWD & NCWRPC

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

LOCATION QUOTIENT

This analytical technique compares local, state and national employment levels by economic sector. The result of this analysis is a numeric value called a location quotient. The model is derived from the premise that the local economy may be divided into two sectors: 1) a “basic” or non-local sector and 2) a “non-basic” or local sector. Data for the following section is provided by Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI), a detailed synthesis of employment and labor data from federal, state, and private sources in order to provide a more detailed view of the Wood County economy.

Those employers providing goods and services that are purchased or consumed by customers outside the study (Wood County in this case) are considered to be basic employers. Conversely, goods and services consumed by the local community are considered non-basic. Thus, economic success of the community is measured by its ability to bring in money from outside of the community; the community offers goods and services that are sought out by other regions that do not have them. This type of economy is also known as an export economy and is usually the overall goal of many economic development programs.

The location quotient model uses employment information for both the County and the nation by industry and compares their ratios of sectoral employment to total employment. Each industry sector is assigned a location quotient value which in turn is

used to identify those employees considered export, or “basic” within a given industry sector. “Non-basic” employees are those workers whose wages are derived from money circulating within the existing local economy. In any community, certain goods and services simply cannot be obtained locally and consumers must look elsewhere. This is known as an industry sector “leakage”. Too many leakages can result in a declining economy as consumers continue to spend their money in communities other than their own. Fortunately, Wood County has more basic employees than non-basic. However, if existing industries are not retained and new opportunities are not created, this status could change in the future.

The location quotient can be described by the following equation:

$$LQ_i = (e_i^t / e_T^t) / (E_i^t / E_T^t), \text{ where:}$$

e_i^t = regional (county) employment in industry i in year t

e_T^t = total regional (county) employment in year t

E_i^t = national employment in industry i in year t

E_T^t = total national employment in year t

If results are greater than 1.00, it is determined to be an exporting sector and values below 1.00, indicate an importing sector. Exports bring money from outside the county into the local economy and imports represent local dollars flowing outside the county. Table 7 summarizes the results of the location quotient analysis.

Table 7. Wood County Location Quotient, 2019

NAICS	Industry	LQ 2010	LQ 2019	LQ % Change	Total Employment	Average Earnings
11	Crop and Animal Production	2.23	2.25	0.9	1,111	\$44,466
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.09	0.04	-55.6	10	N/A
22	Utilities	0.38	0.41	7.9	59	\$132,976
23	Construction	0.74	0.82	10.8	1,983	\$61,793
31	Manufacturing	1.43	1.70	18.9	5,712	\$72,460
42	Wholesale Trade	0.60	0.78	30.0	1,210	\$62,416
44	Retail Trade	1.01	0.95	-5.9	4,005	\$31,527
48	Transportation and Warehousing	2.57	2.35	-8.6	3,715	\$59,324
51	Information	1.18	1.80	52.5	1,387	\$74,198
52	Finance and Insurance	0.46	0.61	32.6	1,031	\$58,194
53	Real Estate and Rental Leasing	0.39	0.37	-5.1	265	\$46,870
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0.25	0.28	12.0	774	\$61,657
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.38	0.22	-42.1	137	\$149,102
56	Administrative & Support, Waste Management & Remediation Services	0.36	0.46	27.8	1,213	\$35,682
61	Educational Services	0.22	0.23	4.5	246	\$18,705
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	2.41	1.82	-24.5	9,749	\$65,128
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.33	0.67	103.0	493	\$22,227
72	Accommodation and Food Services	0.63	0.65	3.2	2,357	\$16,654
81	Other Services	0.93	0.96	3.2	1,926	\$25,511
90	Government	0.69	0.78	13.0	4,948	\$60,243

Source: EMSI, 2020

The non-government sectors are highlighted below:

Crop & Animal Production has a Location Quotient of 2.25, reflecting that Wood County is a significant exporter of agricultural goods. Additional information regarding agriculture in Wood County may be found in the Natural, Cultural & Agricultural Resources and Land Use chapters of this plan.

Transportation and Warehousing Wood County has a developed transportation and warehousing industry. The local supply of these services is mostly adequate to meet overall demand. This category has a Location Quotient of 2.35. Many industries rely upon transportation and warehousing as a major component of their business practice. Wood County's rural setting creates a situation where the local industries must have effective transportation and warehousing services to compete in regional, national, or global markets.

Manufacturing is an important component of any economy given its tendency to provide more and higher-paying jobs than most other sectors. This category has a Location Quotient of 1.70. Two significant export industries are prefabricated wood building manufacturing and fiber box manufacturing, both of which are closely related to the forestry industry.

Other Services category collects all of the private sector service jobs that do not fit into other categories. This category has a Location Quotient of 0.96.

Retail Trade is commonly in demand in rural areas. Wood County provides basic retail services to residents, but most specialized retail requires imports from surrounding areas. This category has a Location Quotient of 0.95.

Construction Wood County does not have major construction contractors, but it does have many small, independent construction businesses that focus on building residences and small business buildings. This category has a Location Quotient of 0.82. These firms are generally capable of handling most of the demand for construction in Wood County. Substantial projects or specialized contractors can only be found elsewhere outside the County.

Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation Although Wood County does not offer the arts and entertainment opportunities of larger cities, it compensates in this sector through its relatively extensive recreation economy. The sector has experienced significant growth in its Location Quotient in the past decade, growing 103%. If that rate of growth continues, the sector may become a driver for the county. This category has a Location Quotient of 0.67 in 2019.

Accommodation and Food Services has a Location Quotient of 0.65. This economic sector is considered to be a major export economy for Wood County and is likely to see dramatic increases in the years to come.

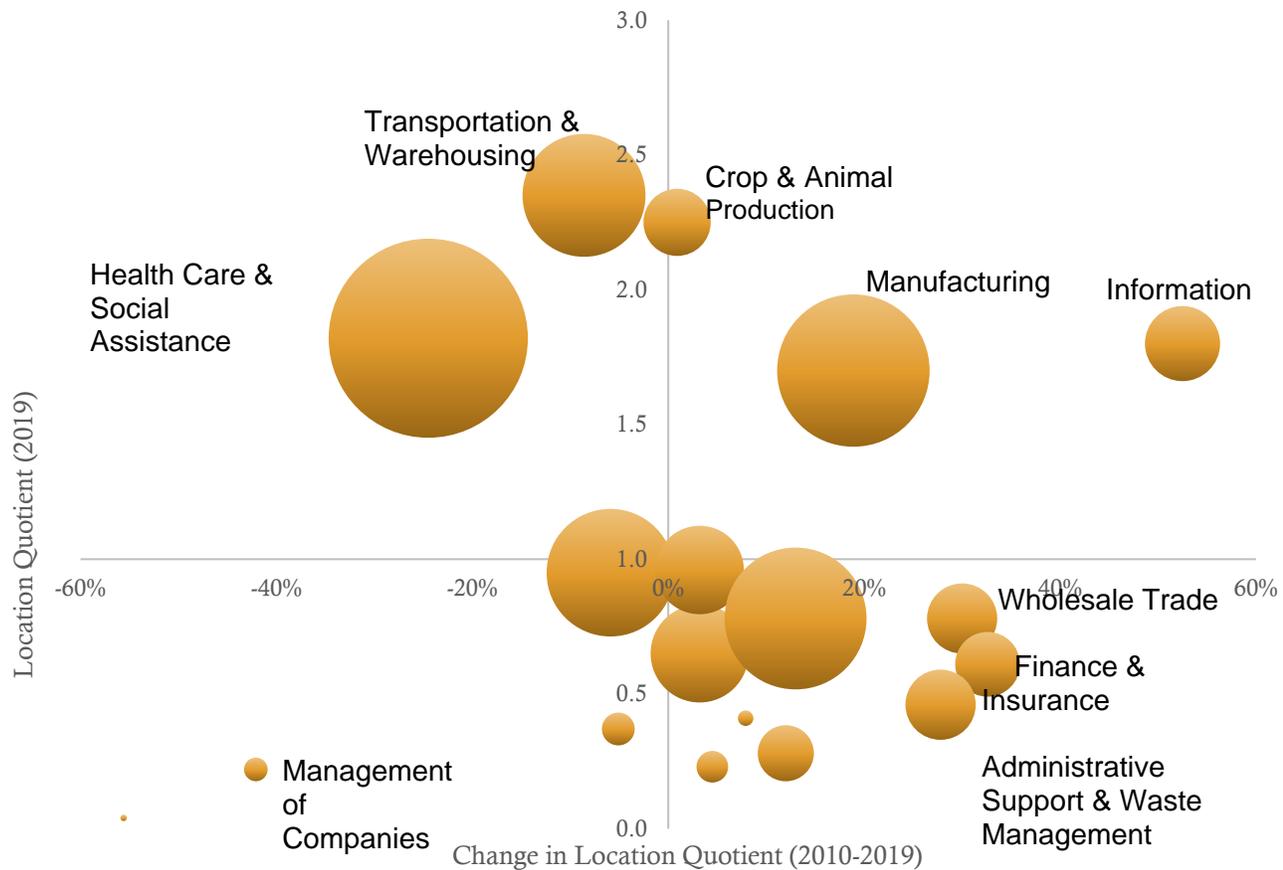
Utilities has a Location Quotient of almost 0.41. Additional information regarding these entities may be found in Utilities and Community Facilities chapter of this plan.

INDUSTRY SIGNIFICANCE TO COUNTY ECONOMY

Figure 8 sorts each industry into one of the following categories: Driver, Emerging, Maturing, and Troubled. Driver Industries are located in the upper right quadrant of Figure 8. They are more concentrated within the County than the national average and are also increasing in employment over time. Emerging Industries, located in the lower right quadrant of Figure 8, are those industries that are not yet quite as concentrated within the County as they are at the national level but are increasing their employment over time. Maturing Industries, located in the upper left quadrant of Figure 8, are more concentrated within the County than the national average but are decreasing in employment over time. Troubled Industries, located in the lower left quadrant of Figure 8, have low employment, are less concentrated than the national average, and are decreasing in employment over time.

Driver Industries are "standouts" or drivers that distinguish the County economy and are doing so more every year - and they are especially important if they employ a high number of people. Driver industries play a key role in the economic vitality of a region by supply quality, often high paying jobs, while also supporting job growth in other industries. These industries function as the primary engines for economic growth and stability because they export products and services and import vital dollars. Those dollars then circulate in the economy and support other local industries and jobs. The driver industries in Wood County are: Crop and Animal Production, Information, and Manufacturing.

Figure 8: Driver, Emerging, Maturing and Troubled Industries in Wood County



Source: EMSI 2020

Note: This only includes sectors with publicly available data. Arts, Entertainment & Recreation is not included in this figure to display the data at a more readable scale.

Emerging Industries are precursors to drive industries. If emerging industries continue to increase in employment over time, they eventually become driver industries. Wood County has 11 emerging industries including: Accommodation & Food Services, Utilities, Educational Services, Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services, Government, Construction, Administrative Support, Wholesale Trade, Finance & Insurance, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, and Other Services.

Maturing Industries If a mid-size or large industry is in this quadrant, it is an important warning that the County is losing a major part of its export base and should form planning and investment priorities accordingly. Wood County has two maturing economies; Health Care & Social Assistance, and Transportation & Warehousing.

Troubled industries could be warning signs that the County needs to attract more businesses in these industries to maintain an economy that is sufficiently diversified and resilient in comparison to the national economy. Wood County has three troubled industries; Management of Companies & Enterprises, Retail Trade, and Real Estate & Rental Leasing.

INDUSTRY SPECIFIC ANALYSIS

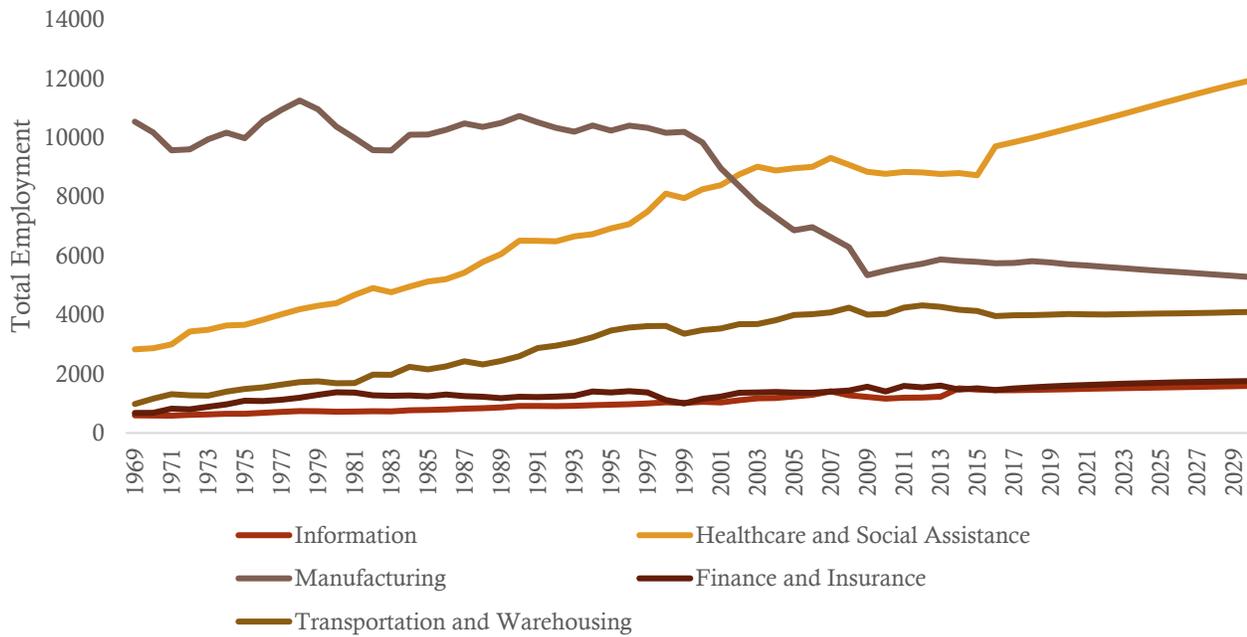
This section provides greater detail on the employment and earnings growth over time for some of the most important sectors in Wood County's economy as identified by the Location Quotient and Shift-share analyses. The change in employment from 1969 projected to 2030 for the Information, Healthcare & Social Assistance, Manufacturing, Finance & Insurance, and Transportation & Warehousing industries are displayed in Figure 9.

In terms of absolute employment, Manufacturing and Healthcare & Social Assistance have consistently been the largest industries in Wood County for the period analyzed and are predicted to continue this trend beyond 2030. However, in 2002,

Healthcare & Social Assistance overtook Manufacturing as the largest employment sector, following decades of consistent growth. This occurred during a period where manufacturing in most rural Wisconsin counties saw a significant decline (Conroy, Kures, and Chen 2018).

The other three sectors depicted here, Transportation & Warehousing, Information, and Finance & Insurance, have lower absolute employment but have maintained relatively steady growth. Since the Great Recession, Transportation & Warehousing has declined slightly, but these data project continued recovery through 2030. Meanwhile, the large growth in the Information sector couple with a location quotient of 1.8 represents a potential place for Wood County to capitalize. The Bureau of Labor Statistics lists the Information sector as including the production and distribution of information and cultural products, providing the means to transmit or distribute these products, data, or communications, and processing data.

Figure 9: Wood County Change in Total Employment (1969-2030)



Source: Woods & Poole 2020

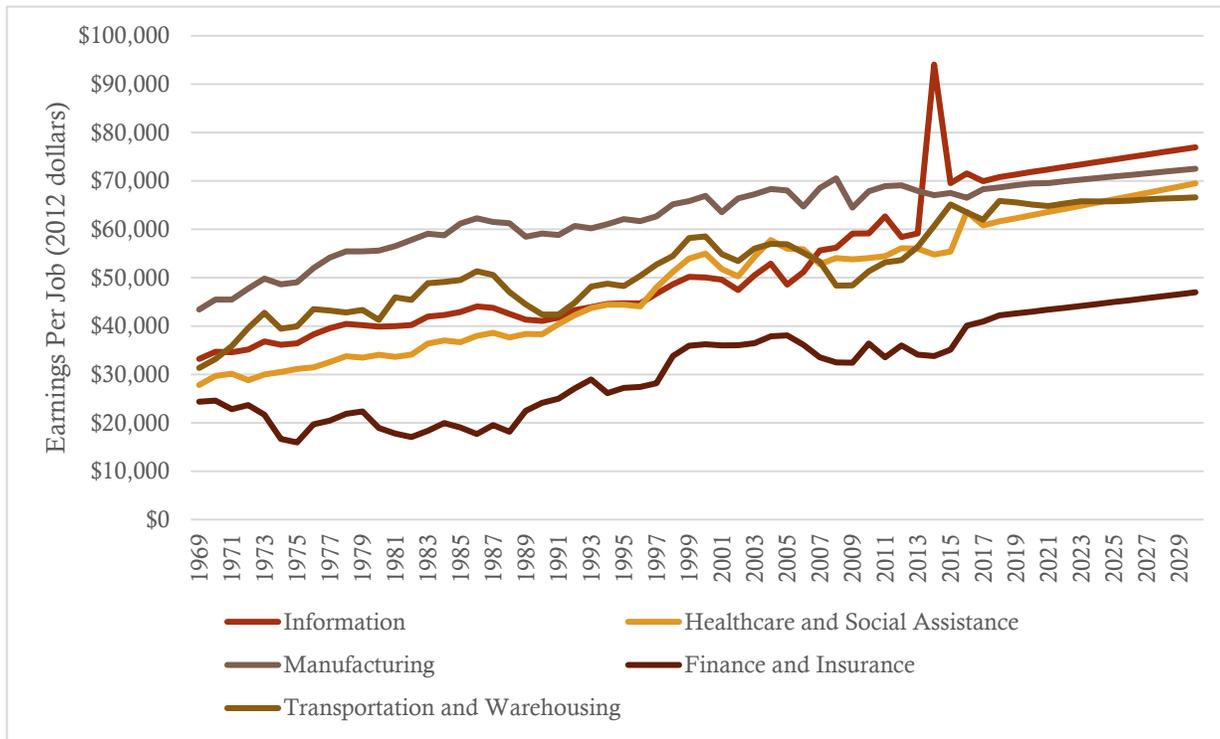
Earnings per job is another valuable metric for determining how “good” a job is in a sector. The earnings per job over time for the five sectors are displayed in Figure 9 and Table 10. In general, from 1969 to 2020, earnings per job has increased steadily across all sectors. Manufacturing has historically been the highest paying sector in the county, but Information overtook the highest-paid sector around 2015. Again, this is encouraging for the Information sector as it has one of the highest location quotients for the county and has high-paying jobs. Therefore, growing the Information sector may simultaneously increase the number of high-paying jobs in the county.

Earnings per job in the Manufacturing sector is the second-highest of the sectors shown here, followed by Transportation & Warehousing, Healthcare & Social Assistance, and Finance & Insurance. Transportation & Warehousing earnings have been somewhat volatile. Wages in Finance & Insurance have grown at a slower rate than the other industries except Manufacturing, but the size of the workforce in Finance & Insurance is among the smallest of these sectors.

Table 9. Earnings Per Job

	2020 Earnings Per Job	Growth in Earnings Per Job (% , 1969-2020)	Total Employment
Information	\$ 71,879.97	116	1,387
Healthcare & Social Assistance	\$ 62,939.57	126	9,749
Manufacturing	\$ 69,482.05	60	5,712
Finance & Insurance	\$ 42,985.03	76	1,031
Transportation & Warehousing	\$ 65,098.06	108	3,715

Figure 10: Earnings Per Job (1969-2030)



Source: Woods & Poole 2019

PURPOSE OF THE WOOD COUNTY REDI PLAN

The Wood County REDI planning process was initiated by the Wood County economic development team and the CEED committee to garner insight on the role of the County in economic development and help guide economic development investments by the County. The overarching purpose was to bring together many of those involved in supporting and promoting economic development in Wood County to collectively and proactively identify key initiatives that would lead to improved quality of place and economic opportunities. This process involved developing a data-driven understanding of current and projected conditions within the County while anticipating future needs and opportunities. This process led to rich conversations and development of partnerships and capacity that will enable the implementation of this plan and the ability to respond to unforeseen disruptions such as the pandemic and large losses to the community through closures of facilities such as Verso Corporation.

The initiatives selected for this plan are intended to attract new residents and visitors, provide economic opportunities for new and existing businesses, and highlight the appealing qualities of the county. They focus on enhancing the capacity of the economic development partners to exchange ideas and collectively carry-out economic development projects, broadening support for entrepreneurs, expanding broadband throughout the County, identifying housing needs and developing a plan for implementation, developing guidance for branding the County, and making information about arts, cultural assets, and entertainment, and recreational opportunities more accessible. Additional initiatives being led by the County were identified as critical components of economic development include implementation of the County’s Health Improvement Plan, Energy Plan, and updating the County Comprehensive Plan. The next sections of the plan identify the series of steps needed to guide the implementation of the Wood County REDI plan initiatives.

Table 10. Acronyms used in the REDI Plan tables.

Organization Name or Phrase	Acronym
Conservation, Extension, Economic Development Committee of the Wood County Board of Supervisors	CEED
Convention and Visitor Bureau	CVB
Digital Equity Solutions Team	DEST
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Steering Committee	EESC
Geographic Information System (mapping)	GIS
Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce	HOW
Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry	MACCI
Mid-State Technical College	MSTC
North Central Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission	NCWRPC
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin	PSC
SCORE Association	SCORE
Small Business Development Center at University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point	SBDC
To Be Determined	TBD
University of Wisconsin – Madison, Division of Extension	UW-Extension
University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point	UWSP
United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development	USDA-RD
United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Economic Development Initiative	REDI
United States Economic Development Administration	EDA
Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation	WEDC
Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority	WHEDA
Wisconsin Realtors Association	WRA
Wood County Health Improvement Plan	CHIP
Wood County Planning and Zoning Dept.	P&Z

WOOD COUNTY REDI PLAN GOALS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL: DEVELOP A DIVERSE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY IN WOOD COUNTY

GOAL: TRANSFORM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NETWORK TO A COLLABORATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Many municipalities and organizations contribute in various ways to the economic vitality of Wood County. Some work directly with developers or businesses, while others provide training or education or offer funding or programming support. To ensure a robust approach to economic development, communication is essential. Over the past three years, this has been achieved by convening a group referred to as the “Round Table” on a quarterly basis. The pandemic necessitated increasing the frequency of meetings to weekly or bi-weekly. The Wood County REDI team seeks to enhance these partnerships by expanding beyond communication and into collectively implementing projects. Many of the projects and partners are identified in this plan. The coordination of this collaboration will be facilitated by Wood County’s Director of Planning and Zoning.

GOAL: ESTABLISH AN ENTREPRENEURIAL “ECOSYSTEM” IN WOOD COUNTY THROUGH INCREASED SUPPORT, COMMUNICATION, AND COLLABORATION.

Data suggests that Wood County has not yet reached its potential for the encouragement and support of existing and emerging local entrepreneurs. Select initiatives have been undertaken over the years, with many programs being offered to youth and adults. However, for the most part, efforts have not been coordinated and while support has been offered to individual entrepreneurs, support for the group of entrepreneurs in the County has been inconsistent. Therefore, identifying existing entrepreneurs and mentors, creating clear connections between all of the supporting programs, and providing long-term networks of support is required to enhance entrepreneurship in the County.

Objective 1: Increase contacts with entrepreneurs by 100%.

Objective 2: Increase the number of aspiring entrepreneurs annually by 5%.

Objective 3: Increase new business formations annually by 5%.

Strategy 1: Create an oversight committee	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time Start/End	Measurements
Strategy 1.1: Develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem steering committee (EESC) to guide and assist in the development of the entrepreneurial network.	Round Table initiates committee	Include representation from entrepreneurial businesses, financial institutes and accountants, SBDC, HOW and MACCI Chambers, MSTC, UWSP, K-12 schools, SCORE	By April 2021	EESC is formed.
Strategy 1.2: Establish administration of listservs, minutes, scheduling meetings.	Wood County P&Z		By March 2021	Administration is established.

Strategy 2: Inventory of assets.	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Strategy 2.1: Identify and establish a database of entrepreneurs in Wood County.	Tessa Conroy and others and some work locally HOW and Marshfield Chambers	UW Extension Homegrown Module 1 and 2 could help with understanding that data	By July 2021	A listing of Wood County entrepreneurs is established.
Strategy 2.2: Identify various business support programs offered by chambers, SBDC, and others in the county.	SBDC	EESC	By March 2021	Business support programs will be documented, shared with EESC, and made publicly available.
Strategy 2.3: Examine programs in other communities.	NCWRPC	EESC	By December 2021 and Ongoing	EE programs in other communities will be documented and shared with EESC.
Strategy 2.4: Prepare and administer a survey among entrepreneurs and business service professionals.	EESC	UW Extension, UWSP, HOW and Marshfield Chambers	By July 2021	Survey results will be summarized, discussed by EESC, and incorporated into strategies.
Strategy 2.5: Develop web resources for area entrepreneurs and launch county-wide.	EESC	UW Institute for Business & Entrepreneurship/Start In Wisconsin	By December 31, 2021	Website will be populated and shared publicly.
Strategy 2.6: Connect with the County's existing and proposed business incubators and maker's spaces at McMillan Library, the Tribune Building, and UWSP@Marshfield to align with fundraising efforts and when operational, incorporate into the EE efforts.	EESC	USDA-RD, WEDC, City of Wisconsin Rapids, EDA	Ongoing	Proposed maker's spaces will be operational, and the public will be informed about the opportunities at these spaces.

Strategy 3: Identify programming gaps.	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Strategy 3.1: Review and analyze asset information to determine gaps.	EESC	UW Extension (Steve Deller and Matt Kures) may help by doing a Community Economic Analysis (CEA)	2021 following completion of database and assets summary.	Programmatic gaps have been identified.
Strategy 3.2: Develop an awareness campaign using social media and other outlets to make people aware of entrepreneur programs.	EESC	UWSP business students	By end 2021	An awareness campaign is designed.

Strategy 4: Fill Gaps by developing responsive programming.	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Strategy 4.1: Establish and document point of contact(s) and network for program delivery to respond to the needs/requests of budding and existing entrepreneurs.	EESC	Homegrown 3 and 4 could help accomplish this.	By July 2021 and Ongoing	EE resources will be documented and publicly available.
Strategy 4.2: Enhance network to provide awareness of others in the network to connect entrepreneurs with those that can assist them at any point in their development.	EESC	Homegrown 3 and 4 could help accomplish this.	By July 2021 and Ongoing	A resource is created for entrepreneurs that identifies the support network that is available to them.
Strategy 4.3: Creation of a Wood County Entrepreneur's Club with at least monthly meetings with inclusive schedule led by entrepreneurs. Establish administrator for the Club.	EESC	Resource - UW Extension in Juneau County	By December 31, 2021	An entrepreneur club is initiated, and an administrator has been identified.
Strategy 4.4: Develop and incorporate a multi-level, inclusive entrepreneurial development system that includes the following:			Ongoing	
4.4.1: Work with K-12 school systems to develop and incorporate/enhance entrepreneurial curriculum.	HOW and Marshfield Chambers	UWSP, Mid-State Technical College, Wood County School Districts, state and national Chambers		80% Positive post-training survey responses
4.4.2: Work with post-secondary systems to develop and incorporate/enhance entrepreneurial curriculum.	HOW and Marshfield Chambers	UWSP, Mid-State Technical College		80% Positive post-training survey responses
4.4.3: Engage with adults interested in entrepreneurship.	SBDC	UW, Mid-State Technical College		Reach 50 people annually plus 80% Positive post-training survey responses
Strategy 4.5: Increase awareness of the entrepreneurial system with local business services professionals, such as banking, accounting, and insurance.	Steering Committee	Homegrown 3 and 4 could help accomplish this.	Ongoing	Professionals offering services to entrepreneurs will be aware of services and contacts within the network.
Strategy 4.6: Dedicate training sessions to minority entrepreneurs and retired entrepreneurs. Incorporate inclusion in all strategies.	SBDC, UW Extension Wood County	Resources - UW Extension Entrepreneurs of Color Support Team	Ongoing	Underserved entrepreneurs will be considered in all strategies. Dedicated training sessions will be offered.

Strategy 4.7: Host an annual “Entrepreneurship Conference/Event” or contest bringing together various resources, speakers and networking opportunities.	EESC	Other regional economic development organizations, UWSP, Mid-State Technical College, Round Table, businesses, foundations	2022	An annual event will be held for local entrepreneurs and evaluated.
Strategy 4.8: Enhance available assistance and establish stronger relationships with resources, such as UWSP, MSTC, SBDC, SCORE & WEDC	EESC	Regional, state, and national economic development organizations	Ongoing	Resources will communicate at least quarterly.
Strategy 4.9: Establish an “Entrepreneur of the Year” award with the chambers/others.	HOW and Marshfield Chambers	EESC, WEDA Conference	2022	Entrepreneur of the Year will be awarded annually.
Strategy 4.10: Monthly email and social media contact with entrepreneur list informing of meetings, resources, and success stories.	EESC		Ongoing	An email and social media post will occur monthly.

Strategy 5: Assess and Modify Network and Program	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Strategy 5.1: Prepare an annual report to present to community related to entrepreneurship, including number helped, start-ups, issues, and challenges, as well as successes.	EESC		Annually at year's end. Initiated in 2020	Annual report is prepared and made accessible.
Strategy 5.2: Conduct interviews with entrepreneurs leaving/closing/selling their businesses to understand reasons and modify programs.	HOW and Marshfield Chambers	As needed or appropriate	Ongoing, as needed	Reasons for entrepreneurs leaving/closing/selling their businesses are understood.
Strategy 5.3: Encourage providing updates for city councils, village boards, and county board committees to discuss entrepreneurial issues.	EESC	UWSP @ Marshfield, Incourage, Round Table	Annually beginning in 2021	Interested municipal boards will have updates related to entrepreneurial issues.
Strategy 5.4: Evaluate program against objectives and implement changes in 2022.	EESC	UW Extension	Early 2022 and 2023	Program will be evaluated and modified by 2023.
Strategy 5.5: Pursue grant funding including WEDC's Entrepreneurship Support Program.	EESC	USDA-RD, Wood County Planning and Zoning Director	As needed	Grant funding will be pursued, as needed.

QUALITY OF PLACE GOAL: ESTABLISH WOOD COUNTY AS A VIBRANT AND DIVERSE COMMUNITY TO LIVE, GROW, WORK, AND PLAY.

GOAL: ENSURE ROBUST TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE EXISTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY FOR RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES INCLUDING BROADBAND, INTERNET, AND CELL COVERAGE.

Wood County’s goals and objectives for broadband are intended to achieve digital equity and safety throughout the county. We are defining digital equity as the ability to access e-technology for participation in society. This includes cellular service and internet access at broadband speeds for all.

The expansion and provision of internet and cellular services has been prioritized in Wood County’s 2020 Strategic Plan. The Emergency Management Communication and Public Health sections prioritize the need for a more robust communication system. In addition, enhanced communication with county residents and businesses will benefit many other initiatives identified in the plan such as those related to health, safety, education, and economic development.

Broadband Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 1: Establish and convene a Digital Equity Solutions Team (DEST).	Wood County P&Z, UW Extension Wood County	Broadband Exploratory Group	February 28,2021 or after notification of grant request status for grants submitted to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) in Dec 2020.	Representation reflects county demographics (age, gender, race).
Strategy 1.1: Building on the experience of the current Broadband Exploratory Group, identify and recruit representatives from other key sectors to serve as partners.	Wood County P&Z, UW Extension Wood County	Broadband Exploratory Group. K-12 education; post-secondary education; emergency services; elected local officials (county, city, town, village); employers from population centers and rural areas; health care; recreation & tourism.	February 28,2021 or after notification of grant request status for grants submitted to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) in Dec 2020.	Additional partners have been recruited to serve on DEST.
Strategy 1.2: Conduct inaugural meeting of DEST. Develop subcommittees, as needed, to work on various elements of the plan.	Wood County		By end of February 2021 or following notification of PSC grant award status	DEST will have met and identified sub-committees.
Strategy 1.3: Meet monthly through 2021 to share updates and monitor progress.	DEST committee		Monthly though 2021. DEST will identify frequency in future years.	Monthly meetings are occurring.
Strategy 1.4: Engage and inform elected local officials (city, village, and town) on the purpose and goals of the DEST.	DEST committee		Began in fall 2020.Ongoing	Local elected officials are aware of the goals and activities being pursued by DEST.

Broadband Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 2: Assess the current status and explore viable options. Collect, assemble, and evaluate data on existing technology infrastructure. Identify infrastructure gaps, and learn about successful experiences of other communities.	DEST committee		Complete by June 30, 2021	Known data are compiled and up to date.
Strategy 2.1: Research and use the latest available Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) data to map unserved and underserved areas. Track other data resources that can help delineate the key broadband infrastructure needs of the County.	Wood County P&Z /GIS	DEST committee	Began in fall 2020. Ongoing.	Mapping is up to date.
Strategy 2.2: Collaborate with appropriate entities to identify and measure the actual internet speeds available to households, businesses and key institutions.	DEST committee	school districts, youth-serving organizations (i.e., 4-H), small businesses, and home-based employees		Actual internet speeds are known for key households and facilities.
Strategy 2.3: Map existing public Wi-Fi locations in the county and educate/promote establishment of free public Wi-Fi in strategic locations.	Wood County P&Z /GIS	DEST committee		Mapping is up to date and easily accessible to the public.
Strategy 2.4: Collect qualitative and quantitative data from residents, businesses, emergency services, government, and organizations to determine: their current use and application of broadband services, their future demand for broadband services, and their ability to pay for the services.	DEST committee		TBD by DEST committee	Survey data is collected and analyzed for use in decisions by DEST.
Strategy 2.5: Assess municipal zoning ordinances to streamline the permitting process associated with the building out of broadband services.	Wood County P&Z	Wood County Towns, Villages, Cities	By May 30, 2021	Zoning ordinances are evaluated for barriers to broadband.
Strategy 2.6: Reach out to contiguous counties and communities to assess shared needs and opportunities for collaboration beyond county boundaries.	Wood County P&Z	DEST committee	Began in fall 2020	The broadband interests of contiguous counties are known.
Strategy 2.7: Learn about different models for success from representatives from Wisconsin communities that have been effective in obtaining funding.	DEST committee		Began in fall 2020	Three models are known to DEST committee.

Broadband Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 3: Explore funding opportunities. Research state and federal public sector funding opportunities.	DEST committee		By May 30, 2021	Funding opportunities and respective deadlines are known by DEST committee.
Strategy 3.1: Identify best practices and model programs to support affordability of services for lower-income populations.	DEST committee	UW Extension Broadband Specialist, County Board		Three current models are known to DEST committee.
Strategy 3.2: Identify funding sources by reaching out to the USDA-RD, PSC, Congressional offices, etc.	Wood County P&Z	DEST committee	Began in fall 2020 and Ongoing	A minimum of three funding sources are known.

Broadband Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 4: Build and communicate plan. Using the information captured in Objectives 2 and 3, develop and disseminate the Wood County Digital Equity Action Plan.	DEST committee		TBD by DEST committee	Wood County Digital Equity Action Plan is disseminated.
Strategy 4.1: Develop a Digital Equity plan and prepare an easy-to-understand report with action items for this key goal throughout the county.	DEST committee			Plan is approved by CEED committee and Wood County Board
Strategy 4.2: Disseminate the plan through local print and broadcast media, social media and in-person meetings with stakeholder groups.	DEST committee			Plan is available to the public.
Strategy 4.3: Fine-tune plan based on input from key stakeholder groups.	DEST committee			Plan reflects input from stakeholders.

Broadband Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 5: Reach out to providers. Engage local and regional service providers to assess potential partnership relationships to meet the goal of digital equity.	Wood County P&Z	DEST committee	Began fall 2020 and ongoing, as needed.	Four providers are contacted annually.
Strategy 5.1: During the data collection process, continue to reach out to cellular and internet providers to gauge interest in expanding service in Wood County.	Wood County P&Z		Begin following notification of PSC grant award status and ongoing	Interest of cellular and internet providers is known.

Strategy 5.2: Issue a Request for Proposals to local and regional service providers to identify those who are ready to partner on funding applications.	Wood County P&Z	CEED committee	By October 2021	RFP has been issued.
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Broadband Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 6: Prepare and submit applications. Collaborate with provider(s) and other key entities in preparing and submitting a minimum of two funding applications to accelerate the deployment of broadband in the County.	Wood County P&Z	Providers, DEST committee	By December 2021	A minimum of two application are submitted.
Strategy 6.1: Identify available grants that are a good fit and partner with willing service provider(s).	DEST committee	Funding organizations	Ongoing	Grants are identified.
Strategy 6.2: Work with the local government, economic development organizations, businesses, and others to identify and secure sources of local match funds.	Wood County P&Z	DEST committee	By October 2021 and ongoing	Matching funds are identified for the applications submitted.
Strategy 6.3: Prepare funding applications in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders.	Wood County P&Z	DEST committee	Ongoing	Funding applications are submitted.

Broadband Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 7: Sustain local planning efforts by having DEST meet on a regular basis (at least quarterly) to continue implementing and monitoring progress on the Digital Equity Action Plan.	DEST committee		Ongoing	DEST committee is meeting or exceeding this plan's objectives for broadband and internet.
Strategy 7.1: Continue to identify new partners and stakeholders.	DEST committee		Ongoing	Representation from at least five sectors is maintained.
Strategy 7.2: Continue to revise data and present an annual update of the Wood County Digital Equity Action Plan and report of success by June 1 of each year.	Wood County P&Z	DEST committee	Annually, June 1	Report is prepared and presented to DEST committee and County Board annually.
Strategy 7.3: Stay focused on the pursuit of new funding opportunities to build on success.	DEST committee		Ongoing, as needed	Funding is no longer needed.
Strategy 7.4: Develop succession plans to ensure new members are on-boarded with the departure of current DEST representatives.	DEST committee		As needed	DEST is no longer needed.

Broadband Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 8: Coordinate training opportunities for residents and businesses to learn about internet, websites, and social media use to increase adaptation.	Round Table	DEST, MSTC, UWSP@Marshfield, SBDC, UW Extension	Ongoing	Residents and local businesses use broadband and home and work.

GOAL: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO ENSURE HOUSING NEEDS ARE MET THROUGHOUT WOOD COUNTY.

Sufficient housing stock that meets the needs of current and potential residents at all income levels is essential for creating healthy economic development conditions in the County. Addressing housing needs in the County has been identified as a priority in Wood County’s Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and in the economic vitality section of Wood County’s 2020 Strategic Plan. Several communities, including Marshfield, Nekoosa, and Wisconsin Rapids, have conducted housing studies and developed strategies to address needs. However, much of the rural portions of the County lack information about housing conditions and the types and locations of housing needs.

In the Wood County CHIP, housing is identified as one of the determinants of health. Even today, housing and financing policies continue to propagate racial inequities. These housing-related inequities housing have been shown to lead to reduced life expectancy, food insecurity, reduced or ineffective schooling, increased social programs, and workforce migration. The goal and objectives for housing in the CHIP follow. It should be noted the Health Department is the lead on many of these objective and the dates were established prior to their involvement in the pandemic.

Goal: Improve and increase affordable, safe, quality housing for those living in Wood County.

Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 1: Create a Housing Task Force to focus on issues related to maintenance of existing housing stock as well as construction of new housing and housing development.	Wood County Economic Development Roundtable	Wood County P&Z	June 2021	Housing Task Force created
Strategy 1.1: Assemble the Housing Task Force consisting of broad representation including municipalities, realtors, developers, bankers, major employers, economic development professionals, planners, health professionals, etc.	Wood County Economic Development Roundtable	Wood County P&Z	June 2021	Housing Task Force created with diverse membership
Strategy 1.2: Housing Task Force will meet as needed on a regular basis and contribute to implementation of the County Strategic Housing Plan as well as the County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).	Wood County Economic Development Roundtable	Wood County P&Z	June 2021	Housing Task Force meets annually on an as needed basis

Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 2: Inventory housing repair programs and strategies that can be utilized by homeowners in the County to repair/maintain properties and identify barriers to programs or programming gaps.	Wood County P&Z	Municipalities, NCWRPC, Housing Task Force	Dec. 2021	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 2.1: Provide educational materials for residents regarding housing assistance and programs through a regional online portal, as well as United Way's 211.	Wood County P&Z	Municipalities, NCWRPC, Housing Task Force	Dec. 2021	Portal created, and information shared with United Way's 211.
Strategy 2.2: Provide available housing information and resources to all municipalities in the County.	Wood County P&Z	Wood County P&Z	Dec. 2021	Contact with municipalities made at least 1 time a year
Strategy 2.3: Review case studies and best practices for housing repair/maintenance programs, as well as programs, incentives and strategies that promote development of new housing.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Housing Task Force	Dec. 2021	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 2.4: Engage the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA), the Wisconsin Realtors Association (WRA), United States Department of Agricultural (USDA) Rural Housing Service, and other organizations that impact housing.	Wood County P&Z, Housing Task Force, NCWRPC	Housing Task Force	Dec. 2021	Results included in Housing Plan

Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 3: Complete a countywide assessment of existing housing in Wood County.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Housing Task Force,	Dec. 2021	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 3.1: Define and inventory vacant and blighted properties.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Housing Task Force	Dec. 2021	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 3.2: Inventory housing units by type, age, and value, by municipality.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Housing Task Force	Dec. 2021	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 3.3: Complete a meta-analysis of housing data that is included in existing municipal housing studies in the County.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Municipalities, Housing Task Force	Dec. 2021	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 3.4: Compare the housing assessment to other central Wisconsin Counties to better understand how the County compares.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Housing Task Force, Central WI Counties	June 2022	Results included in Housing Plan

Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 4: Identify areas of the County where there is potential for future residential development.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Municipalities, Housing Task Force	June 2022	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 4.1: Review local zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans to identify areas that municipalities currently or in the future will allow housing.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Municipalities, Housing Task Force	June 2022	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 4.2: Review land cover and other land records mapping layers to determine where future housing may be possible. Some data layers to consider include soil, hydrography, wetlands, floodplain, shoreland zoning/regulations, steep slopes, environmentally sensitive areas.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Housing Task Force	June 2022	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 4.3: Identify areas of the County where infill development may take place. Consider vacant platted lots, availability of sewer and water utilities, zoning and adjacent land use.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Municipalities, Housing Task Force	June 2022	Results included in Housing Plan
Strategy 4.4: Include areas identified for future residential development in the County Comprehensive Plan when it is updated.	Wood County P&Z, NCWRPC	Housing Task Force	June 2022	Results included in Housing Plan

GOAL: DEVELOP A BRANDING STRATEGY TO LET OTHERS KNOW THAT WOOD COUNTY IS A VIBRANT AND DIVERSE COMMUNITY TO LIVE, GROW, PLAY, AND WORK.

Wood County offers many opportunities for a good quality of life for residents, visitors, and businesses. Articulating similar messages about the County through branding is a way to let others know what the County offers and values.

Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Objective 1a: Develop a diverse oversight committee for branding initiatives.	Wood County P&Z, UW Extension Wood County	CVBs, HOW, MACCI		Representation throughout the county reflective of county demographics (age, gender, and race).
Objective 1b: Increase tourism by 5% by 2024 based on 2020 direct visitor spending data.	CVBs will acquire 2020 data.		1/1/2020-12/30/24	

Branding Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Strategy 1.1. Identify oversight committee members by informing and inviting participation from all municipalities.	UW Extension Wood County	Municipalities, County Board Supervisors - Chair or appointed, Ho-Chunk Nation, CVB, HOW and Marshfield Chambers, Anchor businesses, community foundations, community leaders, Marshfield Clinic, Aspirus, schools, major employers	March/April 2021	Oversight Committee is formed.
1.1.1. Contact Villages and Cities.	TBD		March/April 2021	Villages and cities have been contacted.
1.1.2. Conduct a presentation at the Wood County Town's Assn. meeting.	TBD		March/April 2021	Presentation to Wood County Town's Assn. has been given.
Strategy 1.2. Convene the oversight committee and identify meeting frequency and schedule.	UW-Extension Wood County	Kristin Runge, UW-Madison Extension and oversight committee	May 2021	Oversight Committee has met and identified meeting frequency and schedule.
Strategy 1.3. Refine the purpose and use of branding and identify measurable outcomes.	Oversight Committee	Kristin Runge, UW Extension and oversight committee		The purpose and use of branding is defined.
Strategy 1.4. Assess perspectives and compile existing messaging.				
1.4.1. Conduct "convenience" samples survey. Distribute by email, libraries, etc.	Oversight Committee	Kristin Runge, UW Extension	Early summer 2021	Survey data are assessed.
1.4.2. Conduct trade area analysis or utilize existing information.	UW Extension Community Development Inst.			Trade area analysis has been conducted.
Strategy 1.5. Analyze all information and choose messages.	Oversight Committee	Kristin Runge, UW Extension		Messages have been chosen.
1.5.1. Design logo.	Oversight Committee			Logo is designed and agreed upon by Oversight Committee
1.5.2. Hire someone to design the brand book.	TBD	Oversight Committee		Brand book designer is hired.
1.5.3. Develop brand book.	TBD	Oversight Committee		Brand book is designed and agreed upon by Oversight Committee.

Strategy 1.6. Develop an implementation process.	Oversight Committee			An implementation process is designed.
1.6.1. Identify formats, digital, print, zoomable app, etc.	Oversight Committee			Formats are agreed upon by Oversight Committee.
1.6.2. Identify host and ongoing maintenance strategies.	Oversight Committee			Host and maintenance strategies are identified.
1.6.3. Identify and secure funding sources.	Oversight Committee			Funding sources are identified and secured.
Strategy 1.7. Implement and evaluate.	Oversight Committee		Fall 2022	Implemented strategies are evaluated.

GOAL: SUPPORT CENTRAL PLACE INITIATIVES TO PROVIDE ONE SITE THAT PROMOTES ARTS, CULTURAL ASSETS, AND ENTERTAINMENT IN WOOD COUNTY.

Wood County is home to many amenities that are desirable to residents and visitors. However, advertising events and opportunities in separate locations can make it difficult to know about and participate in these activities. A central place to post this information will provide efficiencies for interested people.

Central Place Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Strategy 2.1: Support Central Place initiatives to provide one site that promotes arts, cultural assets, and entertainment in Wood County using centralwisconsin.com.	CVBs	municipalities, HOW and Marshfield Chambers, Ho-Chunk casino, community foundations, UWSP, MSTC, libraries	centralwisconsin.com initiated in summer 2020	Number of landing page visits and Google searches
2.1.1. Identify existing community/activity calendars and invite to be collaborators.	CVBs	municipalities, HOW and Marshfield Chambers, Ho-Chunk casino, community foundations, UWSP, MSTC, libraries	Ongoing	Collaborators are invited to contribute information.
2.1.2. Develop guidelines for what can be included/posted on the central site and distribute to collaborators.	CVBs	municipalities, HOW and Marshfield Chambers, Ho-Chunk casino, community foundations, UWSP, MSTC, libraries	By winter 2021	Guidelines for allowable posts have been developed and distributed.
2.1.3. Identify resources needed to meet future objectives.	CVBs	municipalities, HOW and Marshfield Chambers, Ho-Chunk casino, community foundations, UWSP, MSTC, libraries	Ongoing	Future needs are identified.

GOAL: DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE COUNTYWIDE OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL TRAIL/BOAT ACCESS/BEACH MAP TO INCREASE USE AND ATTRACT TOURISTS AND NEW RESIDENTS.

Outdoor recreational opportunities are abundant throughout Wood County. Participation in recreation can lead to a better quality of life, retaining and attracting residents and visitors. Additionally, physical and mental health can be improved by recreating outdoors. The County’s 2020 Strategic Plan ties economic vitality to its outdoor attributes and amenities by directing departments to maintain, develop, and manage parks, forestry, and recreation areas to meet the needs of the County, and to attract visitors and events to Wood County.

The goal for this initiative entails developing a comprehensive countywide recreation map that can be made available to users via physical paper copies and scalable electronic maps.

Centralized Recreation Mapping Objectives/Strategies	Responsible Parties	Partners	Time: Start/End	Measurements
Strategy 3.1. Develop a combined countywide outdoor recreational trail/boat access/beach map to increase use and attract tourists and new residents.	Wood County P&Z	County Parks and Forestry Dept., Municipal Parks Dept., Wisc. Dept. Natural Resources, CVBs	Began Dec 2020	Combined countywide outdoor recreation map is available for use.
3.1.1 Compile existing coverages into a map.	Wood County P&Z/GIS and NCWRPC	County Parks and Forestry Dept., Municipal Parks Dept., Wisc. Dept. Natural Resources	Began Dec 2020	Coverages are compiled into a GIS format.
3.1.2. Select map formats. (e.g. hard copy, web-based, app)	CVBs	CVBs, Ho-Chunk Nation, County Parks and Forestry Dept., Municipal Parks Dept., local businesses, local recreational clubs	Dec 2021	Map access will be available to a diverse set of users.
3.1.3. Secure funding for printing.	Wood County P&Z		Dec 2021	Funding for printing is secured.
3.1.4 Identify and secure funding for wayfinding.			Dec 2021	Funding for wayfinding is secured.
3.1.4. Implement wayfinding on the landscape.	Municipalities	Recreational clubs, Planning and Zoning, County Parks and Forestry, Sheriff Dept.		Wayfinding is in place.
3.1.5. Publicize the combined countywide map.	CVBs and County	Ho-Chunk Nation, County Parks and Forestry Dept., Health Dept. Municipal Parks Dept., YMCA, local businesses, recreational clubs		Measurable increase in the use of trails and outdoor amenities.

The REDI planning team identified several initiatives that are critical to economic vitality in Wood County. These initiatives will be led by the County independent of the REDI team. Their implementation is described in the Wood County's 2020 Strategic Plan.

UPDATE THE WOOD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan for the County provides numerous benefits that are required for economic vitality, including the provision of a level of certainty related to land use and development. A patchwork of ordinances and regulations can complicate the initiation and creation of new housing and business projects. As a result, many developers and entrepreneurs pursue communities that can offer consistency across municipal boundaries.

The current comprehensive plan for Wood County was adopted in 2009. Many changes have taken place since then, so an update is warranted. Wood County's planning staff are assisting local municipalities with updates to their comprehensive plans. Once complete, they will be compiled into the County's new comprehensive plan.

IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES BY COMPLEMENTING THE WOOD COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CHIP)

Successful economic development conditions are dependent on a healthy community. Housing and mapping of outdoor recreational provisions have also been recognized as priorities in Wood County's CHIP and the Wood County Strategic Plan.

The Wood County CHIP is a unified community plan created in collaboration of Wood County Health Department, Marshfield Clinic Health System, and Aspirus Riverview Hospital and Clinics. It provides recommended direction and plans to address the identified health priorities found in the Community Health Assessment (CHA), including substance use, behavioral health, active communities, and community food systems.

Through the development of the CHIP, efforts focused on prevention, systemic drivers, and root causes, which are included in the recommendations because health is determined by more than behaviors and access to care. Access to social and economic opportunities; the resources and supports available in homes, neighborhoods, and communities; the quality of schools; the safety of workplaces; and the cleanliness of water, foods, and air -- all contribute to health. Even more upstream, poor health and institutional and social inequities go together and systemically affect health outcomes. For this reason, recommended direction and strategies include efforts far more reaching than the health priority areas listed in the CHA.

The Healthy People Wood County (HPWC) core team guides the work of the identified health priorities. Using the guiding principles of health equity; policy, systems, environment change (PSE); community engagement; and sustainability, the HPWC core team convenes community organizations and creates partnerships to make positive, lasting change in Wood County.

The follow are priority goals identified in CHIP Plan. Objectives and timelines can be found at [http://www.woodcountyhealth.org/Reports/Documents/2019-2021%20Community%20Health%20Improvement%20Plan%20\(Final\).pdf](http://www.woodcountyhealth.org/Reports/Documents/2019-2021%20Community%20Health%20Improvement%20Plan%20(Final).pdf)

1. Improve and increase affordable, safe, quality housing for those living in Wood County.
2. Encourage community design and development that supports physical activity in Wood County communities.
3. Improve the health and well-being of justice-involved populations in Wood County.
4. Improve health outcomes for youths aged 11-18.
5. Build capacity and leadership development among specified marginalized populations within Wood County.
6. Address factors in Wood County that increase youth substance use and promote factors that decrease youth substance use to decrease unhealthy adult substance use over time.
7. Decrease mental health stigma.
8. Enhance access and reduce barriers to utilize mental health services by residents, with a focus on at-risk populations.
9. Improve collaboration of local providers and resources across all sectors to improve access to care, crisis responsiveness, and referral pathways.

10. Increase accessibility of healthy foods for Wood County residents and organizations through enhancing food systems and retail.

IMPROVE HEALTH, EQUITY, AND RESILIENCE AND DECREASE OPERATING COSTS BY IMPLEMENTING WOOD COUNTY'S ENERGY PLAN.

Wood County seeks to achieve a feasible level of energy independence as a way of enhancing energy security, reducing costs, attracting new residents, and positively impacting health, the environment, and local natural resources for future generations. Many of these attributes are tied to the success of economic development in the County. Declining costs associated with renewable energy systems are making the local generation of energy more attainable and economically beneficial. Furthermore, leading credit rating agencies look favorably on an energy plan and goals when determining municipal credit ratings.

Setting targets, developing strategies, engaging employees, and planning for initial capital investments will pave the way for reductions in energy use and expand the amount of energy generation by Wood County, resulting in saved tax dollars, greater energy security, and positive health and environmental outcomes. Energy is undergoing swift transitions worldwide. As a result, this plan should be reviewed and updated at least annually by the Wood County Renewable and Sustainable Committee.

Goal: Promote energy efficiency/conservation and renewable energy for Wood County operations. Initial target: By 2025, reduce non-renewable energy usage by 15%.

The Wood County Energy Plan identifies steps to achieve its initial target through the examination of electricity and fuel use in the county, reduction of energy consumption through implementation of efficiencies, and incorporating renewable energy into the County's energy portfolio. In addition, the plan encourages the adoption of renewable energy policies and practices as part of a strategy to meet future energy needs by utilizing sustainability and local renewable energy independence as tools to enhance economic stability and quality of life in the County, identifying and taking steps to remove barriers to development of renewable energy, and taking advantage of other opportunities as they arise.

The Energy Plan was adopted by Wood County Board on November 10, 2019 and its implementation was identified as one of the County's priorities for infrastructure resilience and efficiency in the County Strategic plan.

- Priority initiatives during the next two years:
- Energy assessment of top five energy consuming facilities.
- Microgrid feasibility analysis to enhance residence at two-healthcare centers.
- Choose energy efficient options when maintaining and building new facilities.
- Install solar at the Highway Dept. facility, and others as economically feasible.
- Education and input about energy efficiencies from County staff.

EVALUATION PLAN

The Wood County Planning and Zoning Department will be the primary keeper of the REDI plan. The Director of Planning and Zoning will initiate progress reporting with the REDI team at least quarterly and discuss any necessary adjustments to strategies. The quarterly reports will be shared with the County Board's CEED Committee. Each goal in the plan identifies one or more metrics for measuring success.

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