

NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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SERVING ADAMS, FOREST, JUNEAU, LANGLADE, LINCOLN, MARATHON, ONEIDA, PORTAGE, VILAS, AND WOOD COUNTIES

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING 3 AGENDA:

DATE: Monday, October 14, 2024

TIME: 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

PLACE: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Contact Sam Wessel at swessel@ncwrpc.org for a link.

1. Call to Order & Introductions
2. Recap of Meeting 2
3. Review Draft Chapters 5, 6, and 7
4. Next Steps and Meeting Date
5. Adjournment

The Public is Welcome at all NCWRPC Meetings.
Contact Sam Wessel at swessel@ncwrpc.org for a link.

Regional Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Meeting 2 Summary

Date: August 14, 2024

Time: 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Place: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Loretta Baughan, Ted Cushing, Jami Gebert, Doug Machon, Betty Manson, and Tim Reed

Staff Attendees

Christian Boulanger, Dennis Lawrence, and Sam Wessel

Meeting Overview:

- NCWRPC staff provided a brief recap of the first meeting, mentioning that the introduction and Chapter 1 sections of the Regional Comprehensive Plan had been reviewed at the last meeting. The project timeline was also covered.
- Staff reviewed Chapter 2 (Natural Resources). The Committee did not have any specific concerns with the chapter's content. The issues section will remain general, but the water quality issue will list common water quality concerns (nitrates, PFAS, etc.) relevant to the region.
- Staff reviewed Chapter 3 (Housing). The Committee did not state any specific concerns with the chapter's content. After discussing the chapter's issues, staff will add that housing availability and poor housing conditions (health and safety) are issues.
- Staff reviewed Chapter 4 (Utilities & Community Facilities). There were no concerns with the content. Under the issues section, staff will add that Emergency Services like Fire and Emergency Medical Services are moving away from a volunteer workforce to a paid workforce. The objective on broadband speed will be changed to reflect the FCC's definition of broadband (100 mpbs upload/20 mpbs download).
- Staff concluded the meeting by mentioning that the Committee would receive an email to identify dates/times for the next meeting.

Chapter 5: Transportation

Background

Previous Planning Efforts

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), 2021 is the current federal transportation program that authorizes up to \$108 billion to support federal public transportation programs, including \$91 billion in guaranteed funding. It also reauthorizes surface transportation programs for FY 2022-2026. Goals include safety, fleet and transit modernization, and equity.

Connect 2050: Let's Connect Wisconsin, 2022 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the state. Adopted in 2022, the plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon.

Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2018 assesses bicycling and walking conditions, identifies potential trails and route user groups, and describes policies and programs to assist local governments with bicycling and walking to promote connectivity throughout North Central Wisconsin. Goals include mobility, functionality, safety, and connectivity.

Regional Livability Plan, 2015 addresses three issues: modes of transportation to work, driver age, and maintenance costs. The Plan's goals are providing transportation access to all ages and abilities, funding transportation maintenance and expansion, and enhancing the economy with airports and freight rail.

State Trails Network Plan, 2003 identifies potential trail corridors that link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. Former rail corridors are especially useful for completing these trails.

County-Level Public Transit Plans are updated by NCRPC for each County in the Region every 5 years.

1. Issues

- A need for bicycle and pedestrian improvements
- Dispersed population in rural areas
- Weight limits on roads
- Rail and roadway conflicts
- Funding transportation maintenance and improvements
- An aging population's ability to continue depending on driving
- Transporting students as school enrollment declines and school facilities consolidate

2. Inventory and Trends

The Region's transportation system is comprised of a road network, rail lines and yards, airports, and private landing strips. See Map 5.

Road Network

Roads are classified in two ways: 1) by jurisdiction and 2) by function. The jurisdictional classification indicates who owns or is responsible for the roadway. The functional classification identifies the role or function the roadway plays in moving traffic.

Jurisdictional Classification

The Region's roads fall into four jurisdictional classifications: federal, state, county, and city, village, or town local roads. The Region's approximately 17,000-mile road network is comprised of 238 miles of Interstate and U.S. Highways, 1,651 miles of state highways, 2,858 miles of county highways, and 12,173 miles of local roads. There are also around 265 miles of other roads, such as forest roads, fire lanes, and other roads not used for general travel purposes. Where road jurisdictions overlap, the mileage is counted toward the higher class to avoid overstating the total miles of pavement within the system.

Interstate and Federal Highways include Interstates (ISH) 39 and 90/94 and several U.S. Highways (USH): 51, 45, 12, 10 and 8. These serve as principal arterial roads except for USH 12, a minor arterial.

State Trunk Highways (STHs) are primarily two-lane routes with some four-lane sections that are minor arterials. Two exceptions include STHs 29 and 54, which are completely or partially four-lane principal arterials. Remaining east-west highways include STH 70, 64, 21, and 82, and north-south highways include STH 13, 34, 55, and 80. They are particularly useful for transporting freight.

County trunk highways (CTH) are primarily collector roads that link communities to each other while distributing traffic to the arterial system. They also serve agricultural and forestry areas.

Local Roads are maintained by towns, villages and cities, and they provide access to local land uses including residential, commercial/industrial and recreational areas.

Functional Classification

At the regional level, the functional classification system is divided into four main categories as follows:

Principal Arterials (1,037 miles) serve interstate and interregional trips. The function of a principal arterial is to provide efficient mobility for through traffic trips, with no or limited land use access.

Minor Arterials (902 miles) serve moderate-sized communities and other major traffic generators, providing intra-regional and inter-area traffic movements. Minor arterials also provide mobility for through traffic, but typically have lower traffic volumes with fewer restrictions access to the system.

Collectors (3,713 miles) collect traffic from local roads and provide links to all remaining smaller communities, locally important traffic generators and higher function roads.

Local Roads (11,311 total miles) provide access to adjacent land and provide for travel over relatively short distances. All roads not classified as arterials or collectors are local function roads.

Roadway Conditions and Design Standards

NCWRPC utilizes the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating System (PASER) system, which ranks surfaces from "1" (very poor condition) to "10" (excellent condition). Roads and bridges are inspected every two years and submitted to the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR). WisDOT’s state highway plan projects traffic congestion levels, providing additional data for project planning.

Counties prepare six-year highway improvement plans to address conditions and design standards. Recommended design standards vary based on their functional classification, and proper access management improves safety and traffic flow. WisDOT manages access to all state trunk highways, while counties and municipalities can adopt standards using subdivision and driveway ordinances.

Traffic Characteristics

Daily Traffic: Table 13 summarizes vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which is the estimated total of all mileage driven by all cars in each county. VMT has increased by since 2003 (10.9 percent), but at much slower pace since 2012 (3.0 percent). This is partially due to an increase in median age as older drivers drive less.

Table 13: Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), Crashes, and Fatalities by County

County	Average Crashes per Year	Average Fatalities per Year	VMT 2003	VMT 2012	VMT 2022	% Change 2003-2022	% Change 2012-2022
Adams	427	5	246,000,000	322,505,970	232,336,735	-5.6%	-28.0%
Forest	190	1	125,000,000	212,551,545	154,041,170	23.2%	-27.5%
Juneau	790	4	752,000,000	725,308,290	785,184,715	4.4%	8.3%
Langlade	464	3	228,000,000	271,739,215	224,475,365	-1.5%	-17.4%
Lincoln	755	6	462,000,000	443,427,550	592,282,945	28.2%	33.6%
Marathon	3,077	12	1,561,000,000	1,649,954,395	1,778,381,105	13.9%	7.8%
Oneida	940	5	475,000,000	585,785,945	533,436,550	12.3%	-8.9%
Portage	1,424	6	811,000,000	878,907,955	965,115,480	19.0%	9.8%
Vilas	526	2	342,000,000	388,497,970	337,203,425	-1.4%	-13.2%
Wood	1,268	9	683,000,000	638,756,935	700,893,805	2.6%	9.7%
Region	9,861	35	5,685,000,000	6,117,435,770	6,303,351,295	10.9%	3.0%

Source: WisDOT

Crashes & Safety: Table 13 also summarizes the average crashes per year (data from 2015-2020) and average fatalities per year (data from 2019-2023) using the most recent data available from WisDOT. There was a decrease in both crashes and fatalities for most counties and the region as a whole over these periods.

Commuting Patterns: Table 14 summarizes the direction people commute to work. Typical of a rural area, many residents commute outside of their county of residence for work, with more people leaving the

region each day than entering. Marathon and Wood Counties see more inbound commuters than outbound commuters.

Commuting Modes: The share of each mode of transportation is similar among the Region’s counties and similar to regional and statewide figures. In 2022, 78.6 percent of the Region’s residents drove alone, 7.6 percent carpooled, 0.2 percent used public transportation, 2.4 percent walked, 0.5 percent cycled, 9.8 percent worked from home, and 0.9 percent used other forms of transportation. The share of workers working from home more than doubled since 2012 (4.02 percent).

Table 14: Commute Characteristics

	Adams	Forest	Juneau	Langlade	Lincoln	Marathon	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Live and Work in County	2,040	1,959	4,484	4,233	5,376	43,395	8,063	17,135	4,225	18,164	149,101
Live in County, Work Outside	5,641	1,885	6,509	5,016	9,029	24,549	9,367	16,288	4,728	17,379	60,364
Work in County, Live Outside	2,393	999	4,205	2,856	4,621	27,109	6,400	15,535	3,352	19,385	46,828
Net Gain/Loss of Workers	-3,248	-886	-2,304	-2,160	-4,408	2,560	-2,967	-753	-1,376	2,006	-13,536
Workers per Car	1.05	1.06	1.05	1.03	1.04	1.06	1.06	1.05	1.04	1.05	1.05
Average commute (min.)	29.1	24.0	24.4	22.6	22.2	19.1	21.8	20.8	18.8	22.1	21.2
% of workers with no access to a car	1.5%	1.8%	1.3%	1.1%	1.6%	1.4%	1.1%	1.6%	1.8%	1.9%	1.5%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2022

Network Users

Trucking: WisDOT designates truck routes based on their ability to accommodate different truck lengths and keep trucks out of quiet residential areas. Regional maps are available on WisDOT’s website.

Long Distance Intercity Bus Service: Lamers Bus Lines connects Wausau and Stevens Point to the Fox Cities, and there are WisDOT-supported potential routes region to Madison, Eau Claire, and Green Bay.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities: The Wisconsin State Bicycle Map classifies state and county roads by how suitable their configuration and conditions are for cycling. Additionally, NCWRPC’s 2018 Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan recommends bicycle connections that improve connectivity between communities. WDNR manages the Hillsboro, Elroy-Sparta, 400, Green Circle, Tomorrow River, Mountain-Bay, Wolf River, Nicolet, and Bearskin State Trails, while local infrastructure is implemented by Counties and municipalities. Finally, the statewide Ice Age National Scenic Hiking Trail crosses the region.

Transit & Transportation Systems: Municipalities, Counties, and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) administer several transportation options such as fixed bus routes, taxis, senior transportation, and ADA-accessible transportation. Table 15 displays ridership by transit system, with 2018 having peak ridership in the Region. Recently, ridership has declined significantly except for in the Village of Plover and City of Mauston. This is due to more people retiring, working from home, and impacts from COVID-19.

Table 15: Transit Ridership

Transit System	1980	1990	2000	2012	2018	2022	% Change 2018-2022
Forest County Potawatomi	-	-	-	-	1,267	968	-23.6%
Lac du Flambeau	-	-	-	-	33,520	16,678	-50.2%
Marshfield	30,747	98,807	89,126	84,870	93,904	88,868	-5.4%
Mauston	-	14,081	26,708	19,385	21,542	22,199	3.0%
Merrill	80,692	67,923	69,818	73,209	61,158	45,121	-26.2%
Oneida-Vilas Transit	-	-	-	-	35,132	27,518	-21.7%
Plover	-	1,946	10,569	21,688	24,597	58,760	138.9%
Rhinelanders	38,907	47,012	29,768	71,338	83,028	23,051	-72.2%
Stevens Point	152,706	138,916	97,224	283,096	238,472	129,214	-45.8%
Wausau	1,093,053	731,955	749,025	633,638	507,200	341,157	-32.7%
Wisconsin Rapids	30,323	59,494	74,856	104,072	94,452	77,259	-18.2%
Region	1,426,428	1,160,134	1,147,094	1,291,296	1,194,272	830,793	-30.4%

Source: National Transit Database

Other Transportation Modes

The overall transportation network is made up of all modes of transportation, including railroads, airports and more. The following sections highlight these other modes.

Rail: Fox Valley & Lake Superior, Canadian National, Union Pacific, and Canadian Pacific Kansas City operate rail lines in the region. NCWRPC is a member of the Northwoods Rail Transit Commission, an organization dedicated to improving rail service for northern Wisconsin and upper Michigan.

Water Transportation: No commercial water transportation is available within the region. In 2023, the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway opened as a water-based recreational corridor on the Wisconsin, Eau Claire, and Big Rib Rivers in Oneida, Lincoln, Marathon, and Portage Counties.

Airports: General Aviation Airports in the region are in Marshfield, Wisconsin Rapids, Adams-Friendship, Wausau, Stevens Point, New Lisbon, Necedah, Merrill, Tomahawk, Three Lakes, Eagle River, Minocqua-Woodruff, Boulder Junction, and Manitowish Waters. Rhinelanders-Oneida County Airport (RHI) and Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) in Marathon County are the Region's two commercial airports. Data for these airports is found in Table 16. Note that COVID-19 significantly impacted figures for 2021.

Table 16: Commercial Airport Statistics

Airport	Air Carrier Enplanements			Aircraft Operations			Emplaned Freight (lbs.)		
	2012	2019	2021	2012	2019	2021	2012	2019	2021
CWA	120,637	141,123	57,163	15,236	13,574	13,592	521,788	619,262	1,763,711
RHI	11,353	27,203	13,654	736	793	925	871,615	1,420,686	861,321

Source: WisDOT

Other Modes of Travel: Other modes within the Region include snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), horses, cross-country skis, and others. Though they are not addressed in this plan, trail locations and crossings must be considered when planning other transportation facilities.

3. Goals, Objectives, and Policies (2015 numbers in red; Suggested revisions reduce text)

Goals

1. Provide and improve transportation access to people of all ages and abilities to ensure lifelong mobility and accessibility. (6)
2. Fund the maintenance and expansion of the transportation system. (7)
3. Enhance the regional economy by supporting airports and freight rail. (8)

Objectives

1. Increase the number of workers who travel to work via carpool, public transit, bicycle, and walking. (6.1)
2. Improve walkability, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian safety. (6.2)
3. Implement a complete streets policy to ensure that the right-of-way will provide safe access for all users. (6.4)

Suggested revision for Objectives 1-3:

1. **Assess and improve the infrastructure, feasibility, and safety of all modes of transportation that serve as an alternative to driving such as carpooling, public transit, walking, cycling, and ride sharing (Uber, Lyft, etc.)**

4. Continue maintaining, upgrading, and modernizing existing streets and bridges to ensure a high level of reliability and safety for all users. (6.3)
5. Explore alternative ways to fund transportation infrastructure. (7.1)
6. Strengthen air and rail options to move people and goods. (8.1)

Suggested revision for Objectives 4-6:

- 2. Continue maintaining, upgrading, and modernizing existing streets, bridges, rail, and air infrastructure to ensure safety and reliability while exploring alternative funding sources for transportation.**

Policies

1. Create more bicycling and walking options that connect residential areas to community centers and business districts. (6.1.1)
2. Provide safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian routes. (6.2.1)
3. Provide opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian education. (6.2.2)
4. Create a bike share program. (6.2.3)
5. Encourage employers to provide bicycle parking. (6.1.3)
6. Expand the availability and visibility of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. (6.2.4)
7. Provide opportunities for low-income individuals to access and learn about bicycles. (6.2.5)
8. Facilitate active transportation by establishing safe, marked walking and biking routes between key destinations such as schools, recreation centers, waterfronts, neighborhood centers, parks, and employment and shopping centers. (6.2.6)
9. Develop a safety education campaign that explains the rules of the road and emphasizes courtesy for all road users combined with improved enforcement of traffic and parking laws that affect pedestrians and bicyclists. (6.2.7)

Suggested revision for Policies 1-9:

- 1. Create more bicycle and pedestrian routes and connections between destinations.**
- 2. Enhance the safety and user-friendliness of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.**
- 3. Support bike share programs, bicycle parking, and programs that improve bicycle access for low-income households.**
- 4. Encourage opportunities for educating all transportation users regarding the rules of the road and support improved enforcement of traffic and parking laws that affect motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.**

10. Increase the number of electrical and compressed natural gas (CNG) fuel stations. (6.3.4)
11. Plan for transportation innovations such as driverless cars and ridesharing applications, such as Uber and Lyft. (6.3.7)
12. Maximize mobility for seniors, children, and other transit-dependent and vulnerable populations by mixing residential and commercial uses around multimodal areas. (6.1.7)
13. Conduct a transit needs assessment for the region to identify where new or expanded services are needed and to evaluate the effectiveness of existing services. (6.1.4)
14. Increase the number of park-and-ride lots to encourage rideshare programs. (6.1.2)

Suggested revision for Policies 10-14:

5. **Assess existing demand and plan for alternative forms of transportation that serve seniors, children, and other populations who cannot drive.**
6. **Support innovations in transportation such as ride sharing (Uber, Lyft, etc.), park-and-ride lots, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fuel stations, and electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.**

15. Reconsider width standards for new streets to ensure that pedestrians, bikes, parking, buses, and cars have adequate space. (6.3.8)
16. Support state policies identifying additional funding mechanisms, such as gas tax, registration fees, etc. (7.1.1)
17. Target investments toward projects that include more than one mode of transportation. (6.1.5)
18. Increase employment opportunities in close proximity to housing developments. (6.1.6)
19. Expand the use of traffic calming devices to slow traffic and increase safety for all roadway users; e.g. ADA curb ramps, curb extensions, safety signage, median islands, traffic circles, and bicycle boulevards. (6.2.8)
20. Incorporate green infrastructure, including curb extensions and storm water planters, into street and highway improvements where practical. (6.3.2)
21. Exceed minimum signage requirements. (6.3.3)
22. As streets are planned for reconstruction, redesign and rebuild them as complete streets with integrated transit and pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular measures. (6.4.2)
23. Support “road diet” design to reduce the width of streets where applicable. (7.1.3)
24. Research alternative road materials, e.g. gravel, concrete, pavers, and bricks. (7.1.4)
25. Prepare and implement a long-term infrastructure plan for the road system. (6.3.1)
26. Improve the major regional transportation corridors that connect to employment centers. (6.3.5)
27. Target repairs and maintenance. (6.3.5)

Suggested revision for Policies 15-27:

7. **Promote multimodal streets that safely accommodate buses, bicycles, parking, pedestrians, transit, and vehicles.**
8. **Incorporate streetscaping, traffic calming, and safety features such as green infrastructure, ADA-accessibility, landscaping, signage, and lane reconfigurations where appropriate.**
9. **Explore alternative funding sources (gas tax, registration fees, etc.) and road surface materials (concrete, gravel, pavers, etc.) to ensure the long-term sustainability of maintaining, repairing, and funding the Region’s roads.**

28. Enhance the capacity of CWA and RHI by adding more connection and destinations. (8.1.1)
29. Encourage the use of regional airports for business and personal trips. (8.1.2)
30. Promote air freight in the region to local businesses. (8.1.3)
31. Explore alternative modes of transportation such as passenger and freight. (7.1.2)
32. Develop business and industrial parks with airports and rail access. (8.1.4)
33. Study the feasibility of passenger rail in the region. (6.3.6)
34. Expand freight rail system in the region. (8.1.5)
35. Study and identify ideal locations for multimodal and transloading facilities. (8.1.6)

Suggested revision for policies 28-35:

- 10. Support the use and expansion of CWA and RHI airports for passengers and freight by encouraging additional connections and destinations.**
- 11. Support the expansion of rail for freight in the Region while assessing the feasibility of passenger rail use.**
- 12. Locate industrial parks near airports and rail lines and identify locations for multimodal/transloading facilities.**

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Chapter 6: Economic Development

Background

This chapter examines the Region’s economy and compares it to statewide and national trends, followed by a series of economic development recommendations and local, regional, state, and federal programs.

Previous Plans and Studies

North Central Wisconsin Regional Entrepreneurship Assessment & Strategy, 2023 This project includes a Regional business survey, an analysis of existing conditions for entrepreneurs, and a series of recommendations that led to the creation of [NCWRPC’s online Entrepreneurship Portal](#).

North Central Wisconsin Regional Recovery Plan, 2022 This plan guides economic stabilization, recovery, and resiliency efforts in the Region following the COVID-19 Pandemic and future economic shocks that could occur. It identifies best-practice strategies that help economic stabilization and recovery, improving the region’s economic resilience.

North Central Region Industrial Park Inventory, Absorption, and Needs Study, 2022 This study tracks the rate of industrial park space development in the Region and provides projections for industrial land demand over the next decades. Included are maps of each industrial park.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), 2021 The Region is designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) as an Economic Development District (EDD). As part of the designation, NCWRPC prepares a CEDS that summarizes past efforts and provides goals and a list of potential EDA-funded projects by County and for the Region.

Regional Livability Plan (RLP), 2015 The Region’s former comprehensive plan addresses three economic development issues: labor force availability, wages, and broadband.

ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2023 “ALICE” Households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) are above the poverty level, but struggle financially. United Way reports that 34 percent of the region’s households are either below the poverty level or are ALICE households.

1. Issues

- An aging workforce, retirements, and the need for a skilled and flexible workforce
- Unpredictable weather impacts to agriculture, outdoor recreation, and financial resiliency
- The need for broadband expansion
- Childcare availability and affordability
- Unknown future of the forest products industry
- Limited access to active rail lines
- Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation, and their unknown future impact on the economy
- The increase in flexible, hybrid, and remote work and its impact on commercial real estate, local businesses, community facilities, and job recruitment strategies

- Inflation’s impact on businesses, County and municipal budgets, household finances, and growing wealth gaps between households of different income levels

2. Inventory and Trends

Chapter 1 discussed how the Region is growing, but at a much slower rate than the State of Wisconsin and the nation, and WDOA anticipates that its population will peak in 2035. However, many of the nation’s fastest growing areas are facing water shortages, natural hazards, high living costs, and other factors that reduce quality of life. North Central Wisconsin’s abundance of good schools, proximity to hospitals, natural resources, and relatively affordable living could result in future population growth.

Economic Analysis

This section uses Location Quotient (LQ), estimated and projected number of jobs, and average earnings to provide detailed information on the Region’s economy.

Location Quotient identifies which industries exist at a higher or lower concentration compared to state and national averages. LQ divides the economy into two sectors: The “basic” (or non-local) sector and the “non-basic” (or local) sector. The stronger the basic sector is, the more the Region is exporting, and the less it is experiencing “leakage”, or dependency on importing goods and services. When the basic sector of the economy is strong, revenue is generated and circulated within the local economy. Therefore, attracting and retaining businesses and employees is essential to the Region’s economic well-being.

Economic sectors with an LQ greater than 1.00 indicates, it is an exporting sector, indicating that it is contributing to the basic sector of the economy. If LQ is below one, it is an importing sector. Exports bring money from outside the Region into the local economy and imports represent local dollars flowing outside the county. See Table 17 for a list of the Region’s LQ by industry; those with bold font have an LQ greater than 1.00. Data in this table are from Lightcast (formerly EMSI), a private company that specializes in global labor market analytics. It measures all jobs within the region, whereas the U.S. Census and American Community Survey measure the jobs that the region’s residents have, regardless of if they work in the Region or not.

Income contributes to the region’s competitiveness for workers and allows residents’ consumer habits to contribute to the Regional economy. According to Lightcast, the Region has a Cost-of-Living Index of 99.3, meaning that salaries in Table 17 have 7 percent greater purchasing power relative to the cost-of-living compared to the nation as a whole. The Region’s highest paying industries are Utilities (\$142,651), Finance and Insurance (\$102,292), and Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$85,639). See Chapter 1: Demographics for more information about household and per capita income in the Region.

Job growth is only expected to increase by 1.7 percent between 2022 and 2032, with manufacturing (973), construction (862), and professional, scientific, and technical services (823) adding the most jobs. Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (56.9 percent), Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (23.0 percent), and Management of Companies and Enterprises (21.8 percent) are expected to grow the fastest as a percent. See Table 17.

Table 17: Industry Characteristics

Industry	LQ	Average Earnings Per Job (2024)	Estimated 2022 Jobs	Projected 2032 Jobs	Net Change	% Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3.21	\$50,871	8,508	7,873	-635	-7.5%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.24	\$83,735	130	204	74	56.9%
Utilities	0.9	\$142,651	663	667	4	0.6%
Construction	0.88	\$70,498	10,943	11,805	862	7.9%
Manufacturing	2.18	\$77,499	37,335	38,308	973	2.6%
Wholesale Trade	0.91	\$79,590	7,250	7,512	262	3.6%
Retail Trade	1.19	\$39,555	24,661	24,569	-92	-0.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	1.14	\$67,995	11,589	11,232	-357	-3.1%
Information	0.56	\$77,802	2,380	2,315	-65	-2.7%
Finance and Insurance	1.28	\$102,292	13,039	11,735	-1,304	-10.0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.5	\$61,708	1,939	2,243	304	15.7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0.37	\$85,496	5,496	6,319	823	15.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.98	\$85,639	3,049	3,713	664	21.8%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	0.49	\$45,600	6,690	7,053	363	5.4%
Educational Services	0.24	\$26,668	1,311	1,431	120	9.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	0.99	\$79,297	29,368	29,668	300	1.0%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.85	\$25,837	3,147	3,871	724	23.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	0.97	\$24,044	17,269	18,009	740	4.3%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	0.87	\$36,865	9,538	9,564	26	0.3%
Government	0.92	\$72,853	29,321	29,241	-80	-0.3%
All Industries	N/A	\$64,759	223,626	227,332	3,706	1.7%

Source: Lightcast (Formerly EMSI), 2022 & 2024

Labor Force Analysis

Labor Force is the number of those who are aged sixteen and over that are employed or looking to be employed. Persons over sixteen who are students, stay-at-home parents, retired, institutionalized, or unable or unwilling to seek employment are not considered part of the labor force. Between 2000 and 2022, the size of the region’s labor force increased by only 0.9 percent, compared to 9.0 percent statewide. Note this is the number of people who live in the County, not the number of jobs in the County, and some workers work in other counties. See Table 18.

Unemployment Rate reflects the number of people in the labor force who are not employed but would like to be. Between 2000 and 2022, the Region’s unemployment rate decreased by 1.6 percent compared to a 0.2 percent increase statewide. While a falling unemployment rate means people can find jobs more easily, it also indicates that employers may have a harder time finding employees. See Table 18.

Participation Rate measures the percentage of all people over age 16 who are in the labor force. Between 2000 and 2022, the Region’s participation rate decreased by 5.4 percent, compared to a statewide decrease of 3.4 percent. The decrease is mostly a result of the Region’s rising median age and the large baby boomer population retiring and living longer than past generations. See Table 18.

Table 18: Labor Force Indicators

Indicator	2000	2010	2022	2000-2022 % Change Region	2000-2022 % Change State
Labor Force	225,369	236,873	227,418	0.9%	9.0%
Employed	213,508	220,364	218,915	2.5%	10.5%
Unemployed	11,728	16,050	8,280	-29.4%	-21.8%
Unemployment Rate	5.2%	6.8%	3.6%	-1.6%	0.2%
Participation Rate	67.0%	66.4%	61.6%	-5.4%	-3.4%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2010 & 2021

Worker Education and Training contributes to Wisconsin’s economic competitiveness and productivity. Chapter 1 discusses educational attainment and Chapter 4 lists educational facilities in the Region. In general, Wisconsin has historically had high quality schools, technical colleges, and universities. Training is another labor force indicator, which involves partnerships between businesses, governments, and educational institutions to develop the Region’s economy. Included in this Chapter is a list of programs.

Economic Development Infrastructure

Redevelopment Areas are those that are underutilized or vacant and there is existing infrastructure and public services in place. These can be called blighted, deteriorated, or even condemned. Redeveloping these sites improves the tax base without requiring more infrastructure.

Brownfields are sites contaminated by former uses. WDNR identifies these sites through the Wisconsin Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) and assists with the reuse and cleanup of brownfield lands.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) involves creating a Tax Increment District (TID) where the property’s baseline taxes continue to fund all taxing jurisdictions at its current rate. As improvements are built and the property’s taxable value increases, the “increment,” or additional property tax revenue generated, goes directly towards projects within the TID. This can be used to finance infrastructure serving the site, environmental cleanup, and/or other projects needed to make a project happen. When TID-related costs are paid by the increment, the TID closes and the TID’s entire property taxes go towards all taxing jurisdictions, adding to the tax base. The state regulates TID creation and administration, requiring a “but-for” test that demonstrates the project would not be feasible without the creation of a TID.

Industrial and Business Parks enable communities to attract new businesses or to relocate existing businesses for expansion. An industrial park is designed to ensure compatibility between industrial operations and its surrounding uses through its zoning, utilities, and other characteristics that are needed to support these uses. They are further enhanced by being located near rail, airport, and highway facilities.

Economic Development Programs

State

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)

- Brownfield Program
- Capacity Building Grants (CB)
- Certified Sites
- Historic Preservation Tax Credit
- Business Opportunity Loan Fund
- Workforce Training Grants
- Idle Sites Redevelopment Program
- Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant Program
- Fast Forward Program (see below)
- Wisconsin Investment Fund
- The Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program
- Technology Development Loan Program

Additional Statewide Programs and Agencies

- Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce
- Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)
- The Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC)
- Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Wisconsin Fast Forward
- Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)
- Wisconsin Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP)
- Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Wisconsin Small Cities Program
- Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC)

Regional

- Centergy, Inc.
- Grow North
- North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (See NCWRPC’s [online Entrepreneurship Portal](#) for a list of programs and resources).
- Central Wisconsin Economic Development (CWED) Fund

Federal

- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA – RD)

3. Goal, Objectives, and Policies (2015 numbers in red)

Goals

1. Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce (2)
2. Support and develop a diverse economic base ensuring economic growth and resiliency (3)
3. Support infrastructure needed for economic development (4)
4. Develop tourism and the knowledge-based economy into leading economic sectors (5)

Objectives

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Enhance education and workforce readiness, ensuring residents have the education and skills needed to reach their full potential (2.1)2. Continue to grow the regional labor force to satisfy future market demand (2.2) |
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Suggested revision to Objectives 1-2:

- 1. Ensure an educated and skilled workforce for the region**

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Support entrepreneurs and small business development to expand support services for new and growing businesses (3.1)4. Encourage the retention and expansion of both existing and emerging industries (3.2)5. Promote and attract new businesses (3.3) |
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Suggested revision to Objectives 3-5:

- 2. Promote, attract, expand, and retain emerging and existing businesses while supporting local entrepreneurs.**

- 6. Ensure an adequate supply and distribution of industrially zoned land (4.2)
- 7. Redevelop and position former industrial sites for new users (4.3)
- 8. Support and promote the main street/ downtown areas as the primary economic centers of communities (4.4)

Suggested revision to Objectives 6-8:

- 3. Support development in both downtowns and industrial parks by providing an adequate supply of developable land and redeveloping existing underutilized sites.**

- 9. Strengthen the region’s tourism market (5.1)
- 10. Provide resources to enrich the region’s quality of life (5.2)

Suggested revision to Objectives 9-10:

- 4. Strengthen the Region’s tourism and natural resources to enhance the economy and quality of life.**

Suggested New Objective:

- 5. Implement and maintain a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to support new economic development projects in the Region (New)**

Policies

- 1. Connect regional businesses to educators better identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed in the future (2.1.1)
- 2. Educate high school students about manufacturing careers through efforts like the "Heavy Metal Tour" program (2.1.2)
- 3. Work with business leaders to increase opportunities for practical experience. (2.1.3)
- 4. Assist communities and businesses with seeking workforce training grants. (2.1.6)

Suggested revision to Policies 1-4:

- 1. Work with businesses, schools, and communities to ensure the future workforce is equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities and assist with workforce development grants.**

- 5. Develop site tours for college seniors in surrounding states to meet with region’s top employers, learn about potential employment opportunities, and experience the region. (2.2.1)
- 6. Develop a marketing program to educate and attract labor force to the region. (2.2.2)
- 7. Continue developing communities that are attractive to current and future professionals that offer a variety of amenities, activities, and opportunities. (2.2.3)
- 8. Establish an occupational average hourly wage that is competitive with surrounding regions. (2.2.4)

Suggested revision to Policies 5-8:

- 2. Develop and market the Region’s amenities, activities, opportunities, and wages while actively recruiting workers to fill jobs and grow the workforce population.**

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">9. Identify and grow angel and venture capital investments and connect business to investors. (3.1.1)10. Foster innovation and new business start-ups. (3.1.2)11. Promote and encourage development of new business incubators, seed accelerators, maker spaces, and co-working spaces throughout the region. (3.1.3)12. Support start-up and small businesses with training, market research, financial assistance, strategic planning, and other assistance. (3.1.4)13. Identify and support emerging business and industry clusters. (3.1.5) |
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Suggested revision to Policies 9-13:

- 3. Work with angel investors, venture capital investors, businesses, and industry data to foster innovation and new business startups.**
- 4. Develop business incubators, seed accelerators, maker spaces, coworking spaces.**
- 5. Support start-up and small businesses with training, market research, financial assistance, strategic planning, and other assistance.**

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">14. Create and/or expand business retention and expansion programs identifying local issues and opportunities. (3.2.1)15. Adopt a customer service management (CSM) system to document business meetings and retention/expansion efforts. (3.2.2)16. Work with local governments, regional partners, and the state to assist with the attraction of new businesses in the area. (3.3.1)17. Recruit new businesses and industries that complement existing clusters and place special emphasis on higher wage clusters. (3.3.2)18. Educate businesses on different grant and funding opportunities and programs. (3.2.3)19. Develop a succession planning program to assist businesses facing a retiring workforce or ownership. (3.2.4)20. Develop a program to connect local restaurants and stores to local farms to improve access to local produce. (3.2.5)21. Provide assistance to businesses helping identify additional markets and exporting opportunities. (3.2.6)22. Diversify the region’s economy fostering the development of emerging clusters. (3.3.3) |
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Suggested revision to Policies 14-21:

- 6. Assist with Counties, municipalities, and businesses navigating expansion, retention, and successional planning programs as well as grant and funding opportunities.**
- 7. Improve connections between restaurants, stores, and farms to enhance access to local produce.**

8. Assist the Region and its businesses by identifying emerging clusters, trends, markets, and export opportunities.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">23. Ensure business parks and industrial parks are “shovel” ready. (3.3.4)24. Perform a retail analysis and market analysis showing key demographics and potential retail stores for communities. (3.3.5)25. Attend regional and national business development tradeshow representing the region, such as the International Conference on Shopping Centers. (3.3.6)26. List vacant land and properties on the Locate in Wisconsin website. (3.3.7) |
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Suggested revision to Policies 20-26:

9. Assist communities with preparing “shovel-ready” industrial sites, retail/market analyses, and marketing materials for available sites.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">27. Align industrial zoning to areas with active industrial users and good highway, rail, and labor access. (4.2.1)28. Improve transportation options (rail, air) and utilities (broadband) to support businesses in the region. (4.2.2)29. Maintain a region-wide inventory of industrial and business parks. (4.2.3)30. Collaborate regionally to identify the best location for industrial/ business park space. (4.2.4) |
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Suggested revision to Policies 27-30:

10. Maintain the NCWRPC Industrial Park Inventory and Entrepreneurial Portal to ensure an adequate supply of industrially zoned land with access to transportation, utilities, workers, and programs.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">31. Develop transition plans for obsolete, “idle” industrial sites. (4.3.1)32. Rezone obsolete industrial sites for neighborhood compatible redevelopment. (4.3.2)33. Encourage a mixed use of obsolete industrial sites, promoting live-work activity where appropriate. (4.3.3)34. Identify resources and provide environmental remediation support for brownfields and other industrial sites. (4.3.4) |
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Suggested revision to Policies 31-34:

11. Promote redevelopment of idle and/or vacant sites by planning and zoning for a mix of employment, residential, and recreational activities while utilizing remediation programs.

35. Review business and property tax policies and development processes to create a more development friendly environment. (4.4.1)
36. Provide incentives for the attraction and retention of jobs in the main street/ downtown areas. (4.4.2)
37. Restore and redevelop downtown/ main street properties. (4.4.3)
38. Prepare and implement downtown redevelopment plans. (4.4.4)
39. Collaborate regionally to perform market and retail studies. (4.4.5)
40. Continue to seek and host tourism events and festivals. (5.1.1)
41. Improve hospitality and visitor facilities and services, e.g. public restrooms, way finding, and signage. (5.1.2)
42. Raise awareness, engage people, and create opportunities to celebrate the arts, cultural events, and historic resources. (5.1.3)
43. Establish a regional tourism marketing organization and develop a regional marketing plan. (5.1.4)
44. Identify appropriate sites for future expansion and development of cultural facilities. (5.2.1)
45. Provide adequate funding to area organizations to maintain their facilities and programming. (5.2.2)
46. Provide incubators and “maker spaces” for entrepreneurial businesses and artists showcasing the region’s creative ability. (5.2.3)
47. Build relationships with organizations that fall outside of those defined as “arts and culture” including organizations fostering outdoor recreation, tourism, and economic development. (5.2.4)
48. Create trail systems that connect community centers to outdoor destinations. (5.2.5)
49. Expand arts instruction and utilize existing community arts and culture resources within school systems. (5.2.6)

Suggested revision to Policies 35-43:

- 12. Review business and property tax policies and development processes to create a more development friendly environment.**
- 13. Incentivize job attraction and retention as well as planning and redevelopment in downtown areas.**
- 14. Conduct planning efforts, studies, and collaborative activities related to promoting outdoor recreation, tourism, festivals, hospitality, placemaking, cultural events, arts, and historic preservation throughout the Region.**

Suggested New Policy:

- 15. Work with Counties to implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) action plan and update the CEDS as required by the EDA.**

Chapter 7: Land Use

Background

Land use analysis determines which areas are most suitable for development and where growth is desired based on infrastructure, topography, and other characteristics. Included are land value estimates as well as projections for demand by land use type.

Previous Plans and Studies

The NCWRPC Regional Livability Plan, adopted in 2015, has a Land Use Assessment Report, which looks in detail at the land uses throughout the ten-county region. Trends identified in this plan include the loss of the number of farms and total farmland, and the increase in residential and vacant land over the last several decades. The two land use goals of the former plan are to 1. Manage and reduce vacant land and structures; and 2. To preserve and protect the Region's landscape, environmental resources and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.

Comprehensive Planning Efforts generally include County and municipal Comprehensive Planning. All ten Counties have adopted plans, as well as many towns, cities, and villages. However, many of them are older than the 10-year update requirement per state statute. See Map 7 for more information.

Other County Plans typically include Land & Water Resource Management Plans, All-Hazard Mitigation Plans, Outdoor Recreation Plans, Farmland Preservation Plans, and more. These plans address the quality of the natural environment, agricultural environment, outdoor recreation, and hazard management.

1. Issues

Dispersed Land Use Patterns. As the region continues to age, a dispersed population will impact the ability of residents to access services. There are also concerns about continuing to fund infrastructure as a result.

Contamination and Blight. Older neighborhoods in the region may have sites contaminated by former industry and structures that have fallen into disrepair. There is an opportunity to rehabilitate these properties to save infrastructure costs compared to new construction.

Environmental Features. Development pressures can fragment woodlands and other wildlife habitat, increase runoff into waterways, impact aesthetics, and contribute to erosion if not designed properly.

2. Inventory and Trends

Natural Features

Table 19 summarizes land use totals, with 92.2 percent of the Region's land area consisting of agriculture or woodlands. These areas are developable when steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains are not present. Surface water, wetlands, and floodplains cover 36.4 percent of the Region. Note that floodplains and wetlands are not considered land uses, and they overlap the land uses in Table 19. Map 4 at the end of this plan provides a visual overview of these features.

Table 19: Acreage Totals by County

County	Total Acres	Land	Water	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Agriculture	Woodland
Adams	440,234	412,303	27,931	19,683	1,840	429	98,035	255,427
Forest	669,507	646,771	22,736	10,434	603	436	12,208	612,298
Juneau	514,280	486,758	27,522	10,907	1,743	533	106,822	282,267
Langlade	567,824	556,703	11,121	12,403	1,393	336	82,234	435,312
Lincoln	580,173	562,803	17,370	12,808	1,050	1,258	52,833	469,494
Marathon	1,008,158	979,570	28,588	49,164	6,080	6,003	409,585	400,236
Oneida	790,834	716,144	74,690	29,310	2,663	1,697	15,895	640,933
Portage	526,473	513,571	12,902	38,131	2,883	3,229	201,103	234,478
Vilas	650,886	554,173	96,713	37,518	3,974	215	4,626	495,393
Wood	517,394	502,314	15,080	21,595	2,617	2,185	132,742	246,243
Region	Percent of Total			Percent of Land Area*				
Acres	6,265,763	5,931,110	334,653	241,953	24,847	16,322	1,116,082	4,072,081
Percent	100.0%	94.7%	5.3%	3.9%	0.4%	0.3%	17.8%	65.0%

Source: NCWRPC. *These five categories account for 87.3 percent of the Region’s land area. Other land use types not depicted in Table 19 include uses such as government, utilities, and transportation, etc.

Developed Land

Only 4.5 percent of the region’s land area is developed as residential, commercial, or industrial land, but other land uses not in Table 19 are also present, such as government facilities, transportation, and outdoor recreation. Overall, the Region’s varied landscape features provide abundant developable land along with wildlife habitat, economic value, recreational opportunities, and aesthetic benefits.

Population and Housing Unit Density

Acreage totals in Table 19 are used to calculate population density and housing density in Table 20. Between 2000 and 2022, most Counties increased in housing unit density but decreased in population density, which peaked in 2010. This is due to smaller households and more seasonal housing.

Although countywide density estimates provide a snapshot of how dispersed each county’s population is, population and housing unit densities vary widely within Counties, with urban areas having much higher densities than rural areas. Generally, the denser a community’s population and housing units are, the less its residents must travel long distance to access employment, education, healthcare, and services. As aging and dispersed populations continue to grow, demand will likely increase for alternative transportation options and services for those who can no longer drive, impacting County and municipal budgets.

Table 20: Population Per Square Mile

County	Population Per Square Mile					Housing Units Per Square Mile				
	2000	2010	2022	% Change 2000-2022	Net Change 2000-2022	2000	2010	2022	% Change 2000-2022	Net Change 2000-2022
Adams	30.7	32.3	30.1	-1.8%	-0.6	21.8	27.0	24.4	12.0%	2.6
Forest	9.9	9.2	8.8	-10.8%	-1.1	8.2	8.8	8.3	1.0%	0.1
Juneau	31.7	34.8	33.2	4.8%	1.5	16.1	19.1	18.1	12.4%	2.0
Langlade	23.8	22.9	22.0	-7.6%	-1.8	12.8	14.2	13.7	7.3%	0.9
Lincoln	33.6	32.7	31.3	-6.8%	-2.3	16.6	19.1	17.8	7.3%	1.2
Marathon	81.4	86.8	87.5	7.5%	6.1	32.6	37.4	38.1	16.8%	5.5
Oneida	32.7	32.3	30.6	-6.5%	-2.1	23.7	27.1	24.8	4.5%	1.1
Portage	83.3	87.4	85.4	2.6%	2.1	33.0	37.5	38.0	15.2%	5.0
Vilas	24.1	25.0	22.8	-5.6%	-1.3	25.6	29.3	24.2	-5.3%	-1.4
Wood	95.3	94.2	91.7	-3.8%	-3.6	40.0	43.0	42.7	6.9%	2.7
Region	46.1	47.6	45.7	-0.8%	-0.4	23.4	26.6	25.5	8.9%	2.1

Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates, NCWRPC

Equalized Real Estate Values and Fiscal Capacity

To assess the financial capacity each County has, Table 21 tracks the change in equalized real estate valuations over time and measures the values on a per-capita basis based on data from the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA). All counties saw a considerable increase in equalized real estate values between 2000 and 2024, with a Regional increase of 214.8 percent, which was well above the inflation rate of 82.8 percent during this time.

Fiscal Capacity describes a County's equalized real estate value divided by its population. Counties with extensive lakefront properties, such as Adams, Oneida, and Vilas, have the highest equalized real estate valuations per capita. This is due to lakefront properties being valued more highly along with the abundance of seasonal homes relative to the number of year-round residents. Juneau County, which also has considerable lakefront real estate, had the highest increase in equalized real estate valuations since 2000, followed by Adams, Oneida, and Vilas Counties. Overall, the Region's fiscal capacity is about \$15,000 per capita higher than the statewide average, compared to a difference of \$13,000 in 2010. This suggests that the Region's fiscal capacity is growing at a rate that is slightly faster than statewide growth, despite a slightly lower overall rate of equalized real estate valuation growth between 2000 and 2024.

Table 21: Equalized Real Estate Valuations

County	2000	2010	2024	% Change 2000-2024	Net Change 2000-2024	2024 Per Capita
Adams	\$1,235,812,700	\$2,589,942,600	\$4,904,516,000	296.9%	\$3,668,703,300	\$236,590
Forest	\$656,528,100	\$1,142,327,800	\$1,858,225,800	183.0%	\$1,201,697,700	\$201,128
Juneau	\$967,745,200	\$2,031,748,400	\$3,953,151,600	308.5%	\$2,985,406,400	\$148,086
Langlade	\$1,038,495,300	\$1,703,583,600	\$2,644,803,900	154.7%	\$1,606,308,600	\$135,548
Lincoln	\$1,457,462,700	\$2,358,251,600	\$3,965,249,400	172.1%	\$2,507,786,700	\$139,612
Marathon	\$5,545,444,100	\$9,321,354,200	\$17,264,936,400	211.3%	\$11,719,492,300	\$125,272
Oneida	\$3,604,966,400	\$7,322,297,600	\$12,049,967,300	234.3%	\$8,445,000,900	\$318,791
Portage	\$2,926,368,900	\$4,847,237,700	\$9,323,941,500	218.6%	\$6,397,572,600	\$132,667
Vilas	\$3,663,040,100	\$7,454,097,100	\$11,930,475,800	225.7%	\$8,267,435,700	\$515,444
Wood	\$3,000,148,100	\$4,596,721,050	\$7,955,395,200	165.2%	\$4,955,247,100	\$107,305
Region	\$24,096,011,600	\$43,367,561,650	\$75,850,662,900	214.8%	\$51,754,651,300	\$169,400
State	\$286,321,491,800	\$495,904,192,300	\$907,414,717,000	216.9%	\$621,093,225,200	\$154,266

Source: WDOA, NCWRPC

Redevelopment and Growth Opportunities

Ideally, growth should utilize existing infrastructure and public services to minimize both up-front infrastructure costs and long-term maintenance and service costs, keeping taxes low. Communities with public water and sewer service can support a greater variety of land uses compared to areas that rely on wells and septic systems. City, Town, Village, and County Plans should consider proximity to infrastructure when updating local comprehensive plans, particularly when creating future land use maps. Areas with natural features like steep slopes, floodplains, and wetlands should be avoided since developing them increases construction costs while causing issues with water quality, erosion, and wildlife habitat.

Revitalizing existing structures and/or redeveloping contaminated sites known as brownfields is an opportunity to increase a community's tax base while minimizing the need to expand infrastructure. This also results in new construction in walkable neighborhoods near existing amenities like waterfronts and downtowns. According to WDNR's Remediation and Redevelopment Map, there are 92 open sites in the Region. Refer to WDNR and other state agencies for an updated list of sites, regulations, and funding programs that assist in the revitalization of these sites, such as WEDC's Idle Sites and Brownfields Programs. These programs may also be available for non-contaminated sites that reuse an existing structure, such as schools converted into housing. Programs are listed in Chapters 2 and 6 of this Plan.

Land Use Demand

Population Projections (See Chapter 1) and Projected Job Growth (See Chapter 6) can be used to estimate demand for land for residential, commercial, and industrial development. These calculations are included in local comprehensive plans. Regionally, there is abundant developable land to meet future demand through at least 2040, with no foreseeable long-term shortage of land.

Future Land Use

Counties and municipalities adopt Future Land Use maps which guide development in locations where it is most suitable. They contain a map with text describing what the long-term intent is regarding how an area should develop. While they resemble a zoning map, they have no zoning authority and are only used as an advisory tool. Therefore, areas identified for development on these maps should not be assumed to automatically be ready for rezoning and development. Other factors like municipal boundaries and proximity to utilities determine which properties are most likely to develop in the short-term. Future land use maps should also consider maps for surrounding and overlapping jurisdictions to minimize conflicts.

Additionally, the goal of the future land use map is to provide a long-term vision, even though development occurs slowly over time as proposals are brought forward. Therefore, in some cases, an immediate rezoning may be appropriate to prepare for a land use change even if it is several years away. Finally, there are likely many instances where zoning and future land use categories align appropriately, but additional barriers exist. In some cases, amendments to zoning ordinance text may be appropriate to enable the type of development that is desired for a particular site.

Land Use Tools

The principal land use program in Wisconsin is the comprehensive planning program. The primary land use tools are zoning ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and official mapping.

Zoning Ordinances use a map to identify zones such as agriculture, residential, commercial, or industrial. Zoning text includes permitted land uses, buildings, yard, or lot dimensions, and other requirements. The goal of zoning is to keep similar and related uses together and separate dissimilar, unrelated, incompatible uses, particularly in relationship to transportation facilities, utilities and public services and facilities.

Land Division or subdivision regulation relates to the way in which land is divided and accessed. A community can control the subdivision of land by requiring a developer to meet certain conditions when recording a plat. This ensures growth patterns that can accommodate necessary lot sizes, utilities, and access. Cities and Villages have authority to review subdivisions proposed within a certain radius of its boundaries, known as the extraterritorial jurisdiction, as described in detail in Chapter 9: Implementation.

Shoreland Zoning is required for all counties, and they are optional for cities and villages. They regulate development in shoreland and floodplain areas to maintain aesthetic and environmental benefits.

Farmland Preservation Zoning is a voluntary zoning classification that is intended to minimize fragmentation of farmland by imposing development limitations consistent with or more restrictive than the provisions listed in Chapter 91 of WI Statutes. To adopt farmland preservation zoning, a municipality must be enrolled in the Farmland Preservation Program.

Wellhead Protection Ordinances restrict the land use activities that take place within a certain radius of public wells to protect what is known as the “recharge” area. This ensures that contaminants like chemicals will not easily travel into groundwater and contaminate sources of drinking water.

Official Maps are a map adopted by a county or municipality that specifies locations of future roads and other utilities or public facilities, along with right-of-way widths and other specifications. When a land division is approved, it must accommodate dimensions for future facilities according to the Official Map.

Other Tools include land acquisition, easements, deed restrictions, land dedication, and ordinances or programs regulating activities such as impact fees, land division, building permits, and erosion control.

3. Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goals

1. Manage and reduce vacant land and structures. (10)
2. Implement this Plan’s natural resource protection Goals, Objectives, and Policies in Chapter 2. (New)

Objectives

1. Focus development in existing downtowns and infill sites, and reuse historic buildings (5.3)
2. Manage and reduce vacant land and structures. (10.1)
Suggestion: Delete Objective 2 as it is the same as Goal 1.
3. Reuse vacant land and structures in innovative ways. (10.2)

Policies

1. Work with regional, state, and federal agencies to rehabilitate parcels to “shovel ready” status. (10.1.1)
2. Consolidate parcels where applicable for redevelopment. (10.1.2)
3. Collaborate with regional economic development organizations to establish a single point of contact for developers. (10.1.3)
4. Create incentives and policies that encourage mixed-use developments to expand potential uses of sites. (10.1.4.)
5. Promote the reuse of vacant buildings for creative, mixed-use development. (10.2.1)
6. Give priority to property proposals that incorporate high-performance building practices. (10.2.2)
7. Support the use of land to extend parks and recreation opportunities. (10.2.3)
8. Identify vacant lots and structures for public arts projects, community gardens, incubators and maker spaces, and neighborhood gateways. (10.2.4)
Suggestion: Delete Policy 8 since these are covered in other chapters.
9. Utilize employment, housing, and population projections to identify future land uses. (10.2.5)