

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

Socioeconomic conditions and growth patterns have implications for the future health and vitality of communities. They help define existing problems and identify available socioeconomic resources. They also represent the current and future demands for services and resources. Changes in population and households combined with existing development patterns and policy choices will determine how well the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield will be able to meet the future needs of their residents and the 14 comprehensive planning goals.

Issues and Opportunities Vision for 2030

In 2030, the Town of Aurora is a vibrant rural community and the quality of life has never been greater. A countywide agricultural marketing effort has ensured that agriculture continues to play a strong role in the area's economy. Dairy farms, equestrian facilities, as well as larger family owned operations and other agricultural based amenities continue to exist in harmony with the residential segment of the town. While growth has occurred, the town has been successful in protecting the integrity of the area's highly valued environmental features.

Auroraville is thriving with a blend of residential development, open space and commercial establishments. Through a cooperative effort with the WDNR and the dedicated work of local service organizations and residents the Aurora Millpond has become a scenic focal point within the small community. Situated next to the millpond, the Otto Brey County Park is an enjoyable spot for local families to picnic.

A heightened sense of community has been achieved in the Town through an annual community "pride" day and potluck. The Town, along with Waushara County, has been successful in working with the City of Berlin, the Berlin Area School District and Green Lake County on a number of projects that have enhanced the lives of the residents of the town. These efforts have given residents an opportunity to meet and connect with neighbors and other members of the community; and ensured, through community involvement and partnership with others, that the needs of the elderly, disabled and youth of the town are being met.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

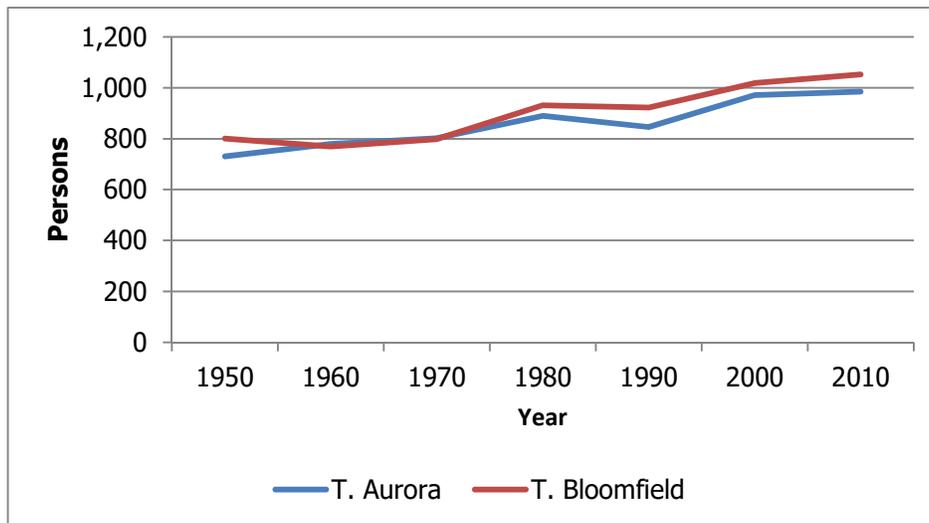
This section of the chapter provides a brief summary of historic population growth, followed by more detailed information regarding current population and household characteristics of the region. Population and socioeconomic trends are identified and potential future growth and development patterns are discussed. Characteristics examined include age, race, ethnicity, educational attainment, income and household types. Current and potential population and socioeconomic issues are noted. Their potential impacts and policy implications will be discussed in the remaining comprehensive plan element chapters. The remainder of this chapter will briefly describe the policy context, discuss the need for intergovernmental cooperation, assess current and future trends and identify issues that need to be addressed.

Demographic Trends

Historic Population¹

Over the past fifty years, the population of the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield has remained fairly stable. Their population increased in some decades and decreased in others. However, overall, both towns experienced an increase in residents between 1950 and 2010. Interesting, the Town of Aurora (254) and Town of Bloomfield (251) each gained about 250 residents during this time period (Figure 2-1 and Appendix B, Table B-1).

Figure 2-1. Historic Population Change



Source: U.S. Census: 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2010.

Between 1950 and 2010, population growth in the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield lagged behind Waushara County, the East Central Region, and Wisconsin. The Town of Aurora's population increased by 34.7 percent during this time period, while Bloomfield's population increased by 31.3 percent. Population increases at the county, region and state level exceeded 65 percent, with Region experiencing the largest increase, 77.7 percent. 2014 population estimates from the Wisconsin DOA indicate that recent growth trends are more in line with regional and state growth patterns. Since 2010, Aurora and Bloomfield's population has increased by 1.8 percent and 1.4 percent respectively, compared to 0.1 percent at the county level, 0.9 percent at the regional level and 0.8 percent at the state level.

Components of Population Change

The two components of population change are natural increase and net migration. Natural increase is calculated by subtracting deaths from births during a specific time period. Net migration is, in theory, the number of people leaving an area (out-migrants) subtracted from the number of people coming into an area (in-migrants). However, since no convenient way of determining the movement of people on a regular basis exists, net migration must be estimated. Net migration can be estimated based on survey data, information from census questions, IRS data or calculated by subtracting natural increase from total population change.

¹ U.S. Census: 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010; WI DOA 2011-2014.

Net migration estimates may vary depending on which methodology is used. Data from the University of Wisconsin-Extension Applied Population Laboratory (APL) and the Wisconsin DOA, for example, show similar trends, but their net migration estimates vary.

An examination of the data provided by the University of Wisconsin-Extension APL and the Wisconsin DOA indicate that since 1950, migration has played a greater role in population change in Waushara County than natural increase. With the exception of the 1950s, Waushara County has experienced a positive net migration rate (Tables 2-1 and 2-2). Furthermore, the rate of net migration in Waushara County has exceeded the overall Wisconsin net migration rates each decade since 1980, which indicates that Waushara County is attracting residents from other parts of Wisconsin.

Table 2-1. Net Migration Estimates, 1950 to 1990

	Waushara County		Wisconsin	
	Net Migration	Total Change	Net Migration	Total Change
1950 to 1960	-8.62%	-3.04%	-1.44%	15.06%
1960 to 1970	6.37%	9.62%	0.16%	11.79%
1970 to 1980	17.66%	25.22%	0.23%	6.51%
1980 to 1990	7.27%	4.64%	2.68%	3.96%

Source: UWEX Applied Population Laboratory, "Net Migration by Age for Wisconsin Counties, 1950-1990".

The role of migration in the county's population growth became more important in the 1990s and early 2000s, when the rate of natural increase fell below zero. Since natural increase rates were negative, the entire increase in population in Waushara County since 1990 can be attributed to in-migration (Table 2-2).

Table 2-2. Components of Population Change, Waushara County

	Numeric Change			Percent Change		
	Natural Increase	Net Migration	Total Change	Natural Increase	Net Migration	Total Change
1970-1980	215	3,516	3,731	1.5%	23.8%	25.2%
1980-1990	448	411	859	2.4%	2.2%	4.6%
1990-2000	-23	3,792	3,769	-0.1%	19.6%	19.4%
2000-2010	-193	1,623	1,430	-0.8%	7.0%	6.2%

Source: Population Trends in Wisconsin: 1970-2000, 2001; WDOA, 2005 WDOA, Components of Population Change for Wisconsin Counties, April 2000 - April 2010, Vintage 2013

Waushara County migration patterns also varied by age² (Appendix B, Table B-2).³ Between 1990 and 2000, young families (age 30 to 44 yrs) and baby boomers (age 45 to 64) moved to Waushara County. During this time period, Waushara County lost population in two other age groups, as many individuals ages 20 to 29 and individuals age 75 and older migrated out of the

² WI DOA, 2005.

³ This information was not updated for 2010.

county. The net loss of young adults is likely attributable to two factors. First, many students leave the county to attend college. Others may have relocated in search of affordable housing and better employment opportunities. The out-migration of elderly individuals likely resulted from a need or desire for additional services. As the County's population ages, an increase in demands or desires may exist for a wider variety of housing, healthcare, support services and transportation options than are typically available in rural communities.

Population Density⁴

Population density reflects the degree of urbanization and impacts the demand and cost effectiveness of urban service provision. Over time, urban growth and suburbanization within Waushara County has expanded, and settlement patterns have increased in density. In 2010, population densities for Waushara County towns ranged from 11 to 61 persons per square mile. Population densities in the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield were less than the county average. The Town of Aurora averaged 29 persons per square mile, while the Town of Bloomfield averaged 30 persons per square mile (Appendix B, Table B-3). The average population density for Waushara County was 39 persons per square mile, which was considerably less than the state average of 105 persons per square mile.

Age Distribution

The age structure of a population impacts the service, housing and transportation needs of a community. Communities with growing school age populations may need to expand school facilities. Communities with growing elderly populations may need to expand healthcare, housing options and transportation services. Currently, the largest age cohort within the region and the state is the "baby-boom" generation, which includes those individuals born between 1945 and 1965. These individuals have had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on service and infrastructure needs within both towns.

The change in population by age cohort between 2000 and 2010 indicates that the area's population is aging⁵ (Appendix B, Tables B-4 and B-5). Both towns experienced an increase in persons in the 45 and greater age cohorts and a decline in the 19 and younger age cohorts. The Town of Bloomfield lost population in the preschool (age 0 to 5 yrs.), school age cohorts (age 5 to 19 yrs.) and childbearing age cohort (age 25 to 44 years) and gained population in the 20 to 24 age cohort, 45 to 64 age cohort and the elderly (age 65 and older) age cohort. While the Town of Aurora experienced a loss in population for the preschool (age 0 to 5), school age (age 5 to 19), age 20 to 24 and age 25 to 44 age cohorts. The largest increase by far for both towns occurred in the 45 to 64 year old age cohort. Between 2000 and 2010, the share of individuals age 45 to 64 increased by 7.7 percent in the Town of Aurora and 7.5 percent in the Town of Bloomfield.

The relative decline in population under age 5 can be attributed to the out migration of individuals age 20 to 29 and the high proportion of residents age 45 to 64, as most individuals age 45 and older have moved beyond child bearing. The increase in the number of working age individuals can be attributed to in-migration of individuals age 45 and older and the aging of the baby-boomers. The towns of Aurora and Bloomfield experienced an increase in the number of individuals age 65 and older, which indicates that some Aurora and Bloomfield

⁴ U.S. Census, 2000.

⁵ U.S. Census; 1990, 2000.

residents are choosing to age in place. As individuals age, they may need or desire more accessible housing and additional services such as transportation and healthcare.

Median age divides the age distribution of the population in half. One half of the population is younger than the median age, while the other half of the population is older than the median age. As a result, the median age of the population provides some insight to the overall population structure within a community. Median age can and does vary over space and time. Changes in population compositions resulted in most Waushara County communities experiencing an increase in median age between 2000 and 2010⁶ (Appendix B, Tables B-4 and B-5).

In 2000, the Town of Aurora had the fifth lowest median age in Waushara County, 37.6 years. Between 2000 and 2010, the median age increased by 6.7 years in the Town of Aurora and by 5.0 years in the Town of Bloomfield. By 2010, the Town of Aurora had the tenth lowest median age in Waushara County, 44.3 years. The median age for the Town of Bloomfield was 45.1 years (Appendix B, Tables B-4 and B-5) in 2010. Both towns had a lower median age than Waushara County and a higher median age than the state in 2000 and 2010. In Waushara County the median age rose from 42.1 years in 2000 to 46.2 years in 2010. In Wisconsin, the median age increased from 36.0 years in 2000 to 38.5 years in 2010.

Household Structure

Household Size

Household size and changes in household structure help define the demand for different types and sizes of housing units. The composition of a household coupled with the level of education, training, and age also impact the income potential for that household. It also helps define the need for services such as child care, transportation, and other personal services. Decreases in household size create a need for additional housing units and accompanying infrastructure, even if no increase in population occurs.

Household size for both towns, Waushara County and the state has been decreasing since 1970⁷ (Appendix B, Table B-27). Historically, the county has retained the lowest average household size. When compared to Aurora, the Town of Bloomfield had the largest average household size in 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2010. Changes in household composition resulted in the Town of Aurora having the largest average household size in 2000.

Between 2000 and 2010, the largest decline in average household size occurred in the Town of Aurora, which experienced an increase in the number and share of one and two person households and a decrease in the number and share of five or more person households'.⁸ In 2010, Town of Bloomfield had the largest household size, at 2.53 persons per household, while the Town of Aurora was slightly smaller at 2.50 persons per household. The average household size in Waushara County and Wisconsin was 2.34 and 2.43 persons per household, respectively (Appendix B, Tables B-6 and B-7).

⁶ U.S. Census; 2000, 2010.

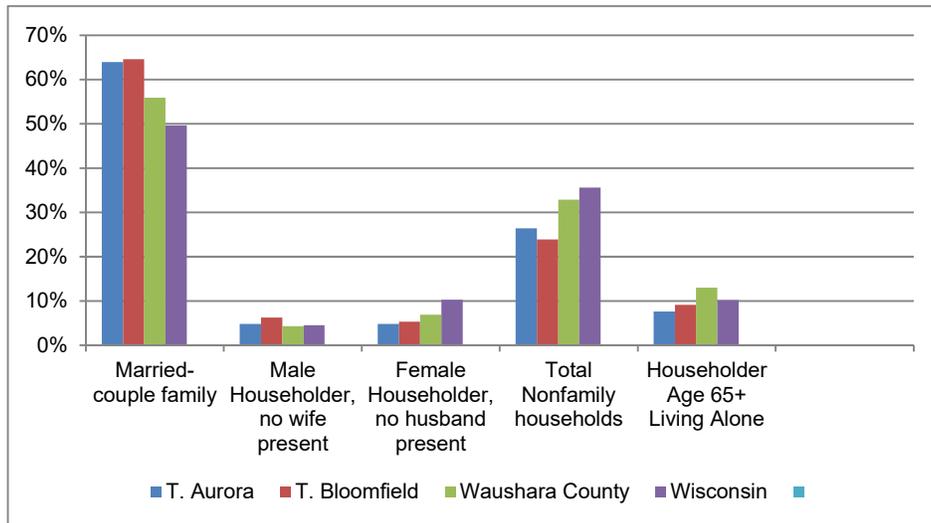
⁷ U.S. Census; 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010.

⁸ U.S. Census; 2000, 2010.

Household Composition⁹

In 2000 and 2010, the majority of households for all four jurisdictions were family households, and the majority of family households were married couple families (Appendix B, Tables B-8, B-9, B-10 and B-11, figure 2-2). Between 2000 and 2010, all four jurisdictions experienced a decrease in the share of family households and married couple families and an increase in the share of nonfamily households. The share of single parent family households increased in all jurisdictions, but still remained a relatively small share of total family households. In 2000, the share of family households ranged from 66.5 percent of all households in Wisconsin to 80.1 percent of all households in the Town of Aurora. By 2010, the share of family households ranged from 64.4 percent of all households in Wisconsin to 76.1 percent of all households in the Town of Bloomfield. The state had the largest share of single parent family households and nonfamily households in both years. The Town of Aurora had the largest share of family households, married couple family and single parent family households in 2000, while the Town of Bloomfield had the largest share of family households, married couple family and nonfamily households in 2010.

Figure 2-2. Percent of Households by Type, 2010



Source: U.S. Census; 2010, STF 1A.

In 2000, householders age 65 or older and living alone ranged from 11.9 percent in Waushara County to 6.5 percent in the Town of Aurora. Between 2000 and 2010, the share of elderly householders living alone increased in all jurisdictions. By 2010, elderly householders living alone ranged from 13.0 percent of all households in Waushara County to 7.6 percent in the Town of Aurora.

While householders age 65 or older and living alone comprises a small share of the total households, their numbers are increasing in all jurisdictions. Between 2000 and 2010, the combined number of householders age 65 or older and living alone in the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield rose from 54 to 68. While this may be a satisfactory living situation for some, for others it may be a challenge. As costs rise and health declines, elderly singles may have difficulty maintaining their housing unit, especially if they own a larger home. Homes may need special modifications or additional equipment if the elderly or disabled are to live independently.

⁹ U.S. Census; 2000, 2010.

Assistance may also be needed with housekeeping, transportation or meal preparation, etc. Social isolation may also become an issue if these individuals have limited mobility options. The towns of Aurora, Bloomfield and Waushara County may want to consider what options and services will help meet the needs of these individuals.

Race and Ethnic Origin

Population by race and ethnic origin provides information regarding the social and cultural characteristics of an area. It also provides information regarding population dynamics. Access to education and economic opportunities differ by race and ethnic origin. Differences also exist in age structure, language barriers and risks for various diseases and health conditions. Some ethnic groups are also more mobile than others.

Since new immigrants are more likely to settle in areas with existing populations from their countries of origin, race and ethnicity, existing populations may also influence migration patterns. National population trends indicate that persons of color (includes African Americans, Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, Pacific Islanders, Asians and persons declaring two or more races) and persons of Hispanic Origin are growing faster than non-Hispanic whites¹⁰. As the population of the cluster, Waushara County, and Wisconsin continue to grow, it is likely that the minority proportion of the population (persons of color and whites of Hispanic Origin) will also continue to grow. If this occurs, communities may need to compensate for the changing demographic composition. It is important that these individuals participate in the planning process so that these individuals not only understand local cultural norms, but also have a positive stake in local communities. Communities may also find it beneficial to promote opportunities for positive interaction between cultures. An increase in understanding of differences and similarities in expectations and cultural values may help reduce friction between groups.

Racial Distribution¹¹

Both towns experienced an increase in persons of color between 2000 and 2010 (Appendix B, Tables B-12 and B-13). However, the number of persons of color remained small. Only 58 individuals in the Town of Aurora and 19 in the Town of Bloomfield identified themselves as non-White. Whites continued to comprise an overwhelming majority of the population. Asian or Pacific Islanders comprised the largest nonwhite group in Aurora, while persons of two or more races was the largest nonwhite group in Bloomfield. Less than two percent of state county and town residents declared they were of two or more races.

The population in both towns is less diverse than that of the county and state. In 2010, whites comprised 94.1 percent of the Town of Aurora's population and 98.2 percent of the Town of Bloomfield's population, compared to 86.2 percent of the state's population and 93.2 percent of Waushara County's population.

¹⁰ U.S. Census.

¹¹ U.S. Census; 2000, 2010, STF IA.

Ethnic Origin¹²

In 2010, the most common ancestry identified by town and county residents was German (Appendix B, Table B-14 and B-15). Forty-five percent (44.8%) of Town of Aurora and 64.1 percent of Town of Bloomfield residents claimed German ancestry, compared to 41.2 percent of Waushara County residents. Several residents (17.5% of Aurora and 9.9% of Bloomfield residents) could not identify or chose not to report their ancestry. The second most common ancestry identified by Town of Aurora residents was Polish (10.0%), while Town of Bloomfield residents identified American (3.9%) and Waushara County residents identified Other Groups (11.1%).

Although Hispanics are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, they currently comprise less than six percent of the county's and state's population (Appendix B, Table B-16). However, like the nation, this segment of the population is one of the fastest growing in the area. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population within Waushara County and Wisconsin increased significantly. At the county level, the Hispanic population increased from 3.7 percent of the county's population to 5.4 percent. At the state level, the Hispanic population increased from 3.6 percent of the state's population in 2000 to 5.9 percent of the state's population in 2010.

Although the number and share of Hispanics increased in the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield between 2000 and 2010, they remain a very small part of the population. In 2010, Hispanics comprised 1.4 percent of the Town of Bloomfield's population and 2.7 percent of the Town of Aurora's population (These figures do not include the UMOS shelter, as it is not open on April 1st). If these towns are going to continue to grow through migration, it is likely that the number and percentage of Hispanics in the area will also increase as Hispanics are becoming a larger share of the national, state and county population.

Income Levels

Income includes both earned and unearned income. Earned income includes money earned through wages, salaries and net self-employment income (including farm income). Unearned income includes money from interest, dividends, rent, social security, retirement income, disability income and welfare payments.¹³ Traditionally, earned income is geographically dependent, as the quality of local jobs determines the earning potential and quality of life for local residents dependent on earned income. Unearned income is not geographically dependent. Retirement pensions, for example, may come from a company which is located several states away. As a result, a retiree's quality of life is not as dependent on the health of the local economy and quality of jobs in the area as someone who derives the majority of their income from earnings. As telecommuting increases and becomes more mainstream, earned income may become more geographically independent. However, at this point in time, little telecommuting occurs in Waushara County.

¹² U.S. Census, 2000 STF 1A and 2010 DP-1.

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau.

Impact of Earnings on Household Income¹⁴

An examination of 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates income data indicates that the majority of household income within the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield, Waushara County and the state is derived from earnings. As a result, access to earning opportunities is a strong determinant in meeting the income needs of residents in all four jurisdictions (Appendix B, Table B-17). This is especially true for the Town of Aurora¹⁵, which had the second highest percentage of households with earnings in Waushara County. Eighty-one percent (81.4%) of income in Aurora was derived from earnings, compared to 78.9 percent of income in Wisconsin and 74.8 percent of income in the Town of Bloomfield. At the county level, only 69.2 percent of income was derived from earnings, which indicates that the county as a whole is less dependent on employment and job creation than the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield.

Income Comparisons¹⁶

Three commonly used income measures are median household income, median family income and per capita income. Median income is derived by examining the entire income distribution and calculating the point where one-half of incomes fall below that point, the median, and one-half above that point. Per capita income measures income per person, and is calculated by dividing the total income of a particular group by the total population of that particular group, including all men, women and children, regardless of age and earning potential.

A comparison of median family, median household and per capita income values between 1999 and 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates indicate that the Town of Bloomfield, Waushara County, and Wisconsin experienced an increase in all income measures during this time period (Appendix B, Table B-18). The Town of Aurora experienced an increase in median family and per capita and a decrease in median household income during this time period.

According to the 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the State of Wisconsin maintained higher median household, median family and per capita income, while Waushara County maintained the lowest in all three income values.

Household Income By Range¹⁷

Median and per capita income figures are often used to compare incomes across communities. Household income by range, however, provides a clearer picture of the distribution of income within a community. This allows communities to target policies, programs, housing and economic development opportunities to better meet the needs of their residents. Table B-19 in Appendix B identifies the number of households in income categories ranging from those with incomes of less than \$10,000 through those with incomes of \$200,000 or more. Figure 2-3¹⁸ shows the distribution of those households. 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates information indicates that the Town of Bloomfield had a larger number of households with incomes below \$10,000 (19), than the Town of Aurora (9). The Town of Aurora had a larger number of

¹⁴ U.S. Census, 2000, STF 3A.

¹⁵ Does not include the Waushara County portion of the City of Berlin.

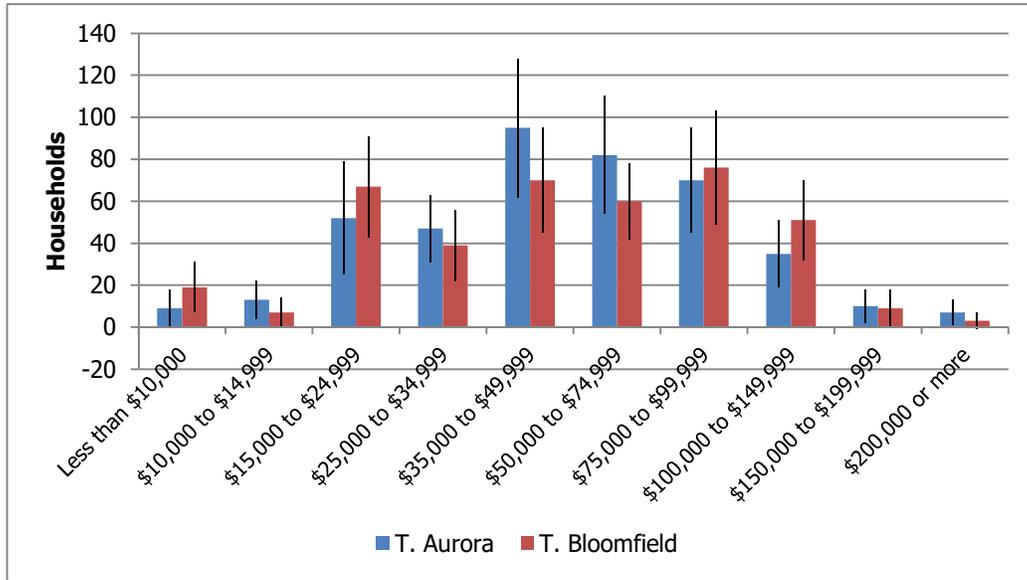
¹⁶ U.S. Census, 2000, STF3A; 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates, DP03

¹⁷ U.S. Census, 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates, DP03

¹⁸ Figure 2-3 illustrates the margin of error (MOE) as error bars. Larger MOE may render this data less reliable.

households with incomes of \$150,000 or more (17), than the Town of Bloomfield (12). In the Town of Aurora, the income range with the largest number of households was the \$35,000 to \$49,999, while in the Town of Bloomfield; the income range with the largest number of households was \$75,000 to \$99,999. Income categories with the smallest number of households include those with incomes of less than \$15,000 and those with incomes of \$150,000 or more.

Figure 2-3. Distribution of Households by Income Range, 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates



Source: U.S. Census, 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates, DP03

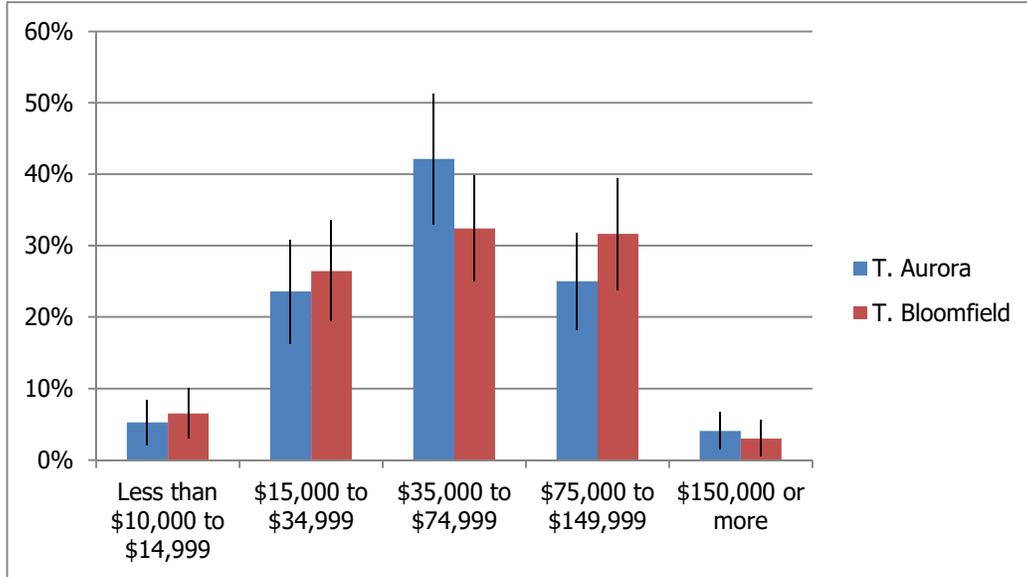
For additional comparison and analysis, the eleven income categories in Appendix B, Table B-19 have been consolidated into five broader income categories and presented in Figure 2-4¹⁹ as a share of total households with income. As indicated in Figure 2-3 and 2-4, both towns had a slightly different distribution of households by income range in 2009-2013. Over eighty percent of households in both towns reported incomes below \$100,000. Both towns had a greater share of households with income between \$35,000 and \$74,999. Approximately 42.1 percent of Town of Aurora and 32.7 percent of Town of Bloomfield households reported income in this category. Slightly more than half of households in both towns reported incomes of less than \$50,000. Since a significant share of households are at or below the county median income (\$43,070), this means that many households in the area are likely eligible for programs such as housing rehabilitation grants and loans, guaranteed loans for first time home buyers and job training programs designed to help increase skills which should result in increased earnings potential. Some families may also be eligible for school lunch programs.

The percentage of households with incomes below \$15,000 ranged from 5.2 percent of all households in the Town of Aurora to 6.4 percent of all households in the Town of Bloomfield. In comparison, 10.8 percent of county households and 11.3 percent of Wisconsin households had incomes less than \$15,000. At the other end of the spectrum, 11.2 percent of county households and 19.0 percent of Wisconsin households had incomes of \$100,000 or more.

¹⁹ Figure 2-4 illustrates the margin of error (MOE) as error bars. Larger MOE may render this data less reliable.

While the percentage of households with incomes of \$100,000 or more ranged from 12.4 percent in the Town of Aurora to 15.6 percent in the Town of Bloomfield.

Figure 2-4. Household Income by Range, 2009-2013 ASC 5-Year Estimates



Source: U.S. Census, 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates, DP03

Poverty Status

The poverty level is determined by the U.S. Census Bureau and based on current cost of living estimates, as adjusted for household size. In 2000, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two children was a household income of \$17,463. By 2010, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two children had risen to \$22,113.²⁰

Between 1999 and 2009-2013, both the number and percentage of persons living below the poverty threshold increased in all four jurisdictions (Appendix B, Tables B-20 and B-22). The share of persons living below poverty increased from 4.4 percent of Town of Aurora residents in 1999 to 5.0 percent in 2009-2013. Within in the Town of Bloomfield the share of persons below the poverty line increased from 8.1 percent in 1999 to 10.0 percent in 2009-2013. About 12 percent (11.6%) of Waushara County residents and 13 percent of state residents lived below the poverty line in 2009-2013, this was up from 9.1 percent and 8.7 percent, respectively in 1999. This indicates that poverty is less common in both towns than at the county or state level.

Poverty by age trends varied (Appendix B, Table B-21, B-23, B-24 and B-25). Children were more likely to live below poverty than elderly residents during both time periods in Waushara County and Wisconsin. While in the Group F communities, elderly residents were more likely to live in poverty in 1999, and children were more likely to live in poverty in 2009-2013. In 1999, 6.5 percent of children and 8.8 percent of elderly lived below the poverty line. By 2009-2013, 12.5 percent of children and 3.5 percent of elderly lived in poverty.

²⁰ U.S. Census, 2000 and 2010 Poverty Thresholds

In 2009-2013, 46 children in the Group F communities lived in poverty, compared to 11 elderly residents. At the community level, 8.3 percent of children in the Town of Aurora and 17.7 percent of children in the Town of Bloomfield lived under the poverty line. In comparison, 3.5 percent of elderly residents in the Town of Aurora and 3.4 percent of elderly residents in the Town of Bloomfield lived in poverty.

At the county level, 779 children lived in poverty compared to 421 persons 65 or older. The ratio of children to elderly below poverty was even greater at the state level, where 235,375 children lived below poverty compared to 60,349 persons age 65 and older. Generally, poverty rates for children were lower in the Group F communities, than either Waushara County (16.7%) or Wisconsin (18.1%).

Elderly poverty rates in 2009-2013 were also less in the Group F communities than either the county or the state. In Waushara County, 8.6 percent of elderly residents in Waushara County and 7.8% of Wisconsin residents were below the poverty line.

Between 1999 and 2009-2013, the share of families in poverty decreased in the Group F communities and increased in the county and the state. In 1999, the share of families living in poverty ranged from 5.7 percent in the Town of Bloomfield to 3.9 percent in the Town of Aurora. In 2009-2013, the share of families living in poverty was less in the Group F communities than the county and state. The share ranged from 8.8 percent in Wisconsin to 1.7 percent in the Town of Aurora (Appendix B, Table B-20 and Table B-22). In all four jurisdictions, the share of families living below poverty was less than the share of total persons living below poverty for both years.

Most discussions regarding poverty tend to focus on children and elderly, as they are considered dependent populations which have little to no ability to change their circumstances. As a result, they are the populations most in need of assistance. However, as the U.S. economy moves from a manufacturing based economy to a service based economy, many individuals find themselves falling into a category called the working poor. These are individuals who are working, but their wages are too low to move them out of poverty. Economic development policies which encourage skill development, training and living wage jobs could help Town of Aurora and Town of Bloomfield communities continue to reduce the number of persons living in poverty. The living wage is defined as the hourly wage which will cover the cost of a two bedroom apartment and other basic expenses in a community within a 40 hour work week.

Population Forecasts²¹

Population projections can provide extremely valuable information for community planning; but by nature, projections have limitations which must be recognized. First, population projections are not predictions. Population projections are typically based on historical growth patterns and the composition of the current population base. Their reliability depends to a large extent on the continuation of those past growth trends. Second, population projections for small communities are especially difficult and subject to more error, as even minor changes in birth, death or migration rates can significantly impact community growth rates. Third, population growth is also difficult to predict in areas which are heavily dependent on migration, as

²¹ Source: U.S. Census, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010; WI DOA, Vintage 2013 population projections

migration rates may vary considerably based on various “push” and “pull” factors both within and outside of the area.

Since migration has played such an important role in Waushara County population growth, migration rates are expected to significantly impact future population growth. An examination of past growth trends in the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield indicate that decades of growth occurred during periods of high net in-migration and periods of population decline occurred during periods of low net in-migration. These historic population fluctuations are carried forward in the population forecasts for both towns.

Population growth in both communities will result in an increase in demand for services and land consumption. The density of settlement, coupled with the amount and location of land consumed for housing, commercial and industrial uses will impact service costs. Additional development will decrease the amount of open space. Development choices will also impact the economic vitality of the agricultural and forestry sectors.

Table B-26, Appendix B presents population estimates for Waushara County through 2040. These population projections are based on anticipated growth patterns developed by DOA. It is assumed that the largest population gains will occur during the second decade and will taper off during the last five years. However, as noted earlier, growth rates can shift quickly in smaller communities and migration can vary substantially based on factors within and outside of communities. As a result, it is recommended that the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield review their population growth every five years to determine if their population change is following anticipated trends or if growth trends are shifting.

Both towns are expected to grow through 2035, though population growth is expected to taper off after 2030. After 2035, the population of both towns is expected to decline to 2040. The Town of Aurora is expected to grow faster than Waushara County and the Town of Bloomfield between 2010 and 2035. Both towns are expected to go faster than Waushara County.

Population Projections by Age Cohort

Reliable age cohort projections at the community level are not available for the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield. Past trends and anticipated national, state and county trends indicate that population growth has not occurred uniformly in all age groups due to fluctuations in fertility rates and differences in migration patterns by age. These variations in growth rates, coupled with the aging of the baby boom population, will impact the population and age distribution within the Towns of Aurora and Bloomfield.

Wisconsin migration patterns by age indicate that as individuals approach retirement age, many relocate to rural communities. As elderly persons in rural areas age and their health begins to deteriorate, many relocate to urban communities for access to better services and healthcare. However, increases in technology and healthcare have contributed to longer life spans and allowed the elderly to remain more independent. It is unclear at this point how these changes will impact future migration patterns by age. In the future, the Towns of Aurora and Bloomfield may find themselves balancing the needs of school age children with the needs of their elderly residents.

Household Forecasts

In previous household forecasts, East Central relied on county and minor civil division (MCD) persons per household (pphh) projections from DOA to adjust future household growth to reflect modifications to population forecasts. During this update, staff has not formally released pphh information. As a result, DOA projections will be used for this update.

The actual growth rate and amount of future growth communities experience will be determined by local policies which can affect the rate of growth within the context of county, state and national population growth trends. Since migration plays such a large role in Waushara County growth patterns, growth rates and trends outside of the county will influence the pool of potential residents the county can attract. If communities prefer a slower growth option which puts less pressure on their natural resources and lessens the impact on their community character, communities are welcome to use the lower estimates. Regardless of whether communities prefer a no growth, low growth or high growth option, it is recommended they adequately prepare for future growth/changes to provide the most cost-effective services possible. Furthermore, individual communities can maximize the net benefits of public infrastructure and services by encouraging denser, efficient growth patterns which maximize the use of land resources while minimizing the impact on the natural resource base.

The number of households in Waushara County is expected to increase by 23 percent between 2010 and 2040. Households in the Town of Aurora may increase by 31.0 percent, while households in the Town of Bloomfield may increase by 28.0 percent during this time period (Appendix B, Table B-28).

The increase in the number of households is expected to result from in-migration of new households and a continued decrease in household size. Since new households are formed within an existing population when households split into two or more households, the number of households can increase even if the population does not. One major factor contributing to an increase in households nationwide will be the aging of the echo-boom generation. As these children of the baby-boomers move out of their parent's home and form their own household, the increase in the number of new households is expected to be large compared to actual population growth.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

Economic Development

An aging population creates opportunities and challenges. If current migration trends hold true, the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield will likely continue to attract baby-boomers. Many of these individuals may have personal wealth and/or good retirement incomes. At the same time, both towns have and will likely continue to have persons age 65 and older living in poverty.

A larger population will likely drive the need for additional goods and services. Local companies and communities may need to find creative ways to attract younger working individuals (25 to 45 years old) to live and work in the planning area to meet workforce needs. At the same time, recruiters should allow elderly who seek employment to continue to remain in the work force.

As people are living longer, many are choosing to work into their traditional retirement years. These individuals often desire more flexibility or part-time employment. Other older individuals may need to earn extra income to afford the basic necessities and/or cover healthcare costs. Some retirees may not be interested in continuing in the workforce, but have the skills, knowledge and desire to serve as mentors and teachers. These individuals may, upon request, desire to volunteer to help communities address housing, literacy, financial education or other local needs. Some may wish to provide expertise to emerging businesses through a SCORE chapter. Since growing local businesses can be as important as attracting outside firms to locate in the area, new entrepreneurs should be encouraged to develop new industries so that job opportunities are available to all residents. Data indicates that earnings are an important component of household income in both towns. As a result, communities in the area should work together to build and attract living wage employment opportunities.

Housing

Additional housing will be needed to meet the anticipated increase in the number of households, the needs of seasonal residents and changing demographic trends within communities. The type, tenure and quantity of housing needed will vary based on the age structure, physical needs, income levels and preferred housing choices of the overall population. In all likelihood, communities will need a mixture of housing types, styles and price ranges. If current income structures remain in place, quality housing for low income workers and elderly will be important. New single family as well as multi-family homes will be needed. Some conversion of seasonal to year round residences is anticipated. Existing homes may need to be remodeled or rehabilitated to meet changing needs. Communities will likely need housing for singles, young families and their workforce. A variety of housing will be needed for the elderly and disabled as well. Remodeling or rehabilitation may help elderly or disabled individuals who wish to stay in their existing home to remain in their homes for a longer period. Other individuals may desire other alternatives or need assisted living or skilled nursing facilities. Condominiums, efficiency apartments or community based residential facilities may be best suited for this segment of the population. Both towns need to determine if they wish to provide these alternatives or if these individuals should be served elsewhere. Furthermore, housing costs appear to be rising faster than incomes in the Town of Bloomfield. As a result, more attention must be paid to meeting affordable housing needs. Housing can be made more affordable by increasing incomes, subsidizing the cost of existing housing or building housing which is more in line with local incomes.

Transportation

As communities grow, roads and other infrastructure may be needed to access additional housing, commercial, public and industrial buildings that may be constructed to accommodate the increasing population base. Transportation systems should be monitored for adequacy in meeting increased demands for local and through traffic. Potential changes could include additional lanes or other upgrades to existing roads. Local governments should also consider alternative transportation needs and desires. Increased access to bicycle and pedestrian facilities could provide viable, cost-effective transportation options for residents and increase recreational opportunities. As the elderly population's ability to drive decreases, the need for specialized transportation will increase. If these individuals are to remain in the area, increased access to affordable bus, shared ride taxi service or other transportation alternatives will be

necessary to ensure that the elderly can visit healthcare professionals, shop for groceries, and meet other basic needs.

Utilities and Community Facilities

As population demographics change, the overall needs of the community also change. A growing elderly population, for example, may increase the need for additional healthcare or adult daycare facilities. School facilities may need to be upgraded or modified to meet changing educational expectations or to help increase the earnings potential of local residents. An increase in residences may increase the need for police or fire protection. In the future, both towns will likely need to increase the number and availability of services targeted towards the elderly while maintaining a balance with services for working age persons and school age children. Communities will also need to balance the demands and needs of year-round and seasonal populations with the costs of those facilities and services. Ideally, improvements and expansions of utilities and community facilities and services should be coordinated with fluctuations in population. While some national recommendations are provided to help communities determine appropriate levels of service for fire, libraries, schools, open space, recreation and other public services, local governments should tailor services to local conditions to ensure that the basic needs of their citizens are met.

Agricultural Resources

Traditionally many of the farms in the planning area are small family owned operations. Throughout Wisconsin the numbers of agricultural operations, especially dairy farms, are declining significantly as existing farmers reach retirement age. Currently, few younger individuals are entering the farming profession due to increased operational costs and more stringent regulations. As the population in Waushara County increases, more pressure will be placed on landowners to convert land from farmland to residential, commercial and industrial development, which will further exacerbate these trends. Since agriculture is important to the economy of the towns of Aurora and Bloomfield, they should consider ways to reverse the decline in agriculture. Increased reliance on locally produced agricultural products would support the local agriculture and food products sectors and help ensure their continued operation, affordability and access. Alternative farming methods, programs and land use regulations could help meet anticipated increase in food demands.

Natural Resources

The critical question with respect to natural resources is how will an expanding population base affect the protection and preservation of natural resources. The increased demand for housing, commercial and industrial development will consume additional land throughout Waushara County. The abundance of natural resources, including wetlands, lakes, streams and forests sustains a portion of local economy. As development occurs, issues regarding open and natural space preservation/enhancement, water quality protection, wildlife habitat management, floodplain management and others will need to be addressed. Increased road construction will also require gravel, sand, and other non-metallic minerals. Deposits throughout the planning area will need to be identified so that transportation and construction costs can be minimized.

Cultural Resources

Waushara County is rich in historical, archeological, and cultural sites. These sites provide information about early Native Americans, European settlement and the development of the area. Many buildings and areas have significant religious or cultural meaning. While some Town of Aurora and Bloomfield sites are listed on the historical register, others are not. Efforts should be made to inventory and map historical, archeological, and cultural sites so that their significance is not destroyed or altered. These sites provide a link with the county's cultural and ethnic heritage. Preserving them would help document the changing demographics and socio-economic characteristics of the area. Historical sites, heritage corridors and museums may also provide economic development opportunities. Moreover, a concerted effort should be made to incorporate historical architectural styles into modern construction to enhance local cultural features and preserve community character.

The latest Census data indicates that the population of Waushara County and Wisconsin is becoming more diverse. As the area's population changes, language barriers and a lack of awareness and understanding between races, cultures, classes and generations can lead to conflict. Positive opportunities for cross-cultural, cross-class and multi-generational interaction can help resolve any issues that may arise as the area's population changes.

Land Use

Additional land will be converted to residential, commercial/industrial and public/institutional uses to accommodate anticipated population and household changes. These changes could alter the pattern of existing development and community character and place additional pressure on natural, cultural and agricultural resources. By recognizing the relationship between the density of settlement and amount and location of land consumed, local governments could minimize conflicts and protect natural and agricultural resources, amenities and community character. Two basic options for locating new development are within areas of existing infrastructure and development or converting farm, forest or open space lands to other uses. Either option will impact local communities. The towns of Aurora and Bloomfield will need to make choices that help achieve the envisioned future.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Although larger populations will result in an increased tax base, the offsetting costs for infrastructure, maintenance and services will require local governments and organizations to identify ways to provide cost-effective services to their residents. Where feasible, local governments must cooperate not only to provide adequate infrastructure to meet increased demands, but also to encourage economic development and employ sufficient staff to handle the anticipated service usage increases. Furthermore, a well-informed staff is necessary for local governments to meet the growing needs of the general public. Through effective communication, training and education, local governments will avoid unnecessary duplication of services and provide more streamlined access to information and services.

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Growth and development patterns do not occur in a vacuum. Over time, federal, state and local policies have directed the amount and location of development. Federal immigration policies determine the flow of immigrants into the United States, both in terms of numbers and countries of origin. Concepts such as Manifest Destiny combined with expansive federal housing, land and transportation legislation, policies and subsidies such as the Homestead and Railroad Acts, the interstate highway system and IRS codes, etc. have heavily influenced settlement patterns. Additional federal legislation such as the Civil Rights Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Affirmative Action legislation have increased access and opportunities for persons of color and persons with disabilities. Wisconsin has broadened federal Civil Rights and Affirmative Action laws to include additional protected classes. State transportation policies and state land use legislation such as NR121, farmland preservation, natural resource protection and real estate tax codes have influenced growth and settlement. Local attitudes towards growth and accompanying zoning legislation, transportation and utility investments and tax and land subsidies also influence the type and amount of growth and development which occurs in each community.

Policies which impact growth and development have been developed over time by different agencies and different levels of government with varying missions and objectives. The resulting policies and programs are sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory. It is the interaction of these various policies and market influences that determine actual growth patterns. Although many current federal and state policies and subsidies still encourage expansion, other policies such as the 14 land use goals recently developed by the state also encourage communities to accommodate growth in perhaps a more efficient manner than they have in the past. The recently adopted comprehensive plan legislation encourages communities to develop comprehensive plans, but provides communities with the opportunity to determine their own growth patterns. As a result, the type of development which will occur in the future is still open to debate.

Regional, County and Local Policies

East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is currently developing a regional smart growth plan. As part of this planning process, East Central has identified several key issues:

- How do we plan for continued population growth, which will result in an increase in demand for services and land consumption in the region?
- How do we promote the recognition of the relationship between the density of settlement and amount and location of land consumed for housing, commercial, and industrial uses and the costs of services?
- How do we ensure the economic vitality of the agricultural and forestry sectors in the context of a decrease in the amount of open space?
- How do we address the conflicts that will arise given that the majority of future growth is expected to occur in the urban counties, which is where most of the region's more

productive farmland is located? More specifically, how will we address the impact on the farm economy?

- How do we ensure that an increase in urbanization has a positive impact on rural communities?
- Urban counties in the region currently have greater social and economic capital, more government support due to a larger tax base, and greater access to nonprofit services than rural counties. Current trends show the educational and income gap between urban counties and rural counties widening. How do we plan to decrease this gap and promote a healthy, vibrant economy and quality of life for all residents throughout the region?

The core goal for the Issues and Opportunities Section is:

- To promote communities that are better places in which to live. That is, communities that are economically prosperous, have homes at an affordable price, respect the countryside, enjoy well designed and accessible living and working environments, and maintain a distinct sense of place and community.

The intent of this goal is to minimize the negative effects of sprawl development and provide a cost-effective variety of services and infrastructure that will meet the changing demographics of the overall population.

Federal, State and Regional Programs

This section includes information on federal, state and regional programs which were used to develop this chapter. Other programs which influence growth and may impact future socio-economic conditions will be described in pertinent chapters within this plan.

Federal Agencies

United States Department of Commerce

Economics and Statistics Administration (ESA). The Economics and Statistics Administration collects, disseminates and analyzes broad and targeted socio-economic data. It also develops domestic and international economic policy. One of the primary bureaus within the ESA is the U.S. Census Bureau. The majority of information analyzed in this chapter was collected and disseminated by the Census Bureau, which is the foremost data source for economic statistics and demographic information on the population of the United States. The Census Bureau conducts periodic surveys and Decennial Censuses that are used by federal, state, and local officials and by private stakeholders to make important policy decisions. The Bureau produces a variety of publications and special reports regarding the current and changing socio-economic conditions within the United States. It develops national, state and county level projections and also provides official measures of electronic commerce (e-commerce) and evaluates how this technology will affect future economic activity.

State Agencies

Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA)

Demographic Services Center. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) Demographic Services Center is responsible for developing annual population estimates for all counties and all minor civil divisions (MCD) in the state. They develop annual estimates of the voting age population by MCD and population estimates by zip code. The Demographic Services Center also produces annual county level housing unit and household estimates. The Demographic Services Center also develops population projections by age and sex for all Wisconsin counties, and produces population projections of total population for all municipalities.

Wisconsin State Data Center (WSDC). The Wisconsin State Data Center is a cooperative venture between the U.S. Bureau of the Census, DOA, the Applied Population Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and 39 data center affiliates throughout the state. The U.S. Bureau of the Census provides Census publications, tapes, maps and other materials to the WSDC. In exchange, organizations within WSDC function as information and training resources. DOA is the lead data center and the Applied Population Laboratory functions as the coordinating agency throughout the state. Local data center affiliates, such as East Central, work more closely with communities and individuals within their region.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Applied Population Laboratory (APL). The Applied Population Laboratory is located with the Department of Rural Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. They conduct socio-economic research, give presentations and publish reports and chartbooks. They will contract to do specific studies or school district projections. APL also functions as the coordinating agency for the WSDC and the lead agency for the Wisconsin Business/Industry Data Center (BIDC).

Regional Programs

East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Agency. As the state data center affiliate for the region, East Central receives Census materials and Demographic Service Center publications from DOA, plus additional information and reports from other state agencies. This information is maintained within its library, used for planning purposes and published within East Central reports. Information and technical assistance regarding this data is also provided to local governments, agencies, businesses and the public upon request.

While DOA provides base level population projections for the state, local conditions, such as zoning regulations, land-locked communities, and local decisions regarding land use development can influence the accuracy of these base line projections. As a result, East Central has the authority to produce official population projections for the region. East Central also estimates future household growth.