



# ENVISION 2050

La Crosse County, Wisconsin  
Comprehensive Plan  
2022 - 2050



LA CROSSE COUNTY

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# Land Recognition Statement

We recognize and acknowledge that the land we occupy is the ancestral home of the Ho-Chunk Nation, who have called this land Teejop since time immemorial.

We acknowledge the circumstances that led to the forced removal of the Ho-Chunk people through governmental treaties and forcible removal, and we honor their history of resistance and resilience. The Ho-Chunk Nation and the other eleven First Nations residing in the boundaries of present-day Wisconsin remain vibrant and strong.

We recognize and respect the inherent sovereignty of the twelve First Nations that reside in the boundaries of the state of Wisconsin. This history of colonization informs our work and vision for a collaborative future.

As we develop La Crosse County's Comprehensive and Sustainability Plan, let us all remember the Ho-Chunk people of the past who stewarded this land, those now who have shown the resilience and survived removal despite Federal and State policies, and the people and generations of the future who will stand on the shoulders of their resilient ancestors.

This land recognition was read at the start of each Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee meeting to promote the importance of creating a plan that recognizes the first inhabitants and stewards of La Crosse County. It encourages us to accept the role of stewardship as a duty while acknowledging the history of prior policies, decisions, their benefits as well as consequences so that we may move forward in a more equitable and inclusive manner.



# Letter from the County Board Chair

Envision 2050, the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan, is the culmination of a yearlong effort to update and re-imagine the policies that will guide our stewardship of county land use and resource management for the next decade and beyond. Creating this plan was a labor of love that brought together community experts from various fields, elected officials and policy makers, staff, and, most importantly, the voices of over 1000 residents of La Crosse County. I gratefully acknowledge the engagement and dedication to ‘getting it right’ that each of the participants displayed throughout this process. As we immersed ourselves in the myriad considerations that govern good county management, and as we endeavored to represent each of our constituencies while keeping the good of the entirety of the county in mind, it became apparent that our desire to leave a legacy document that would safeguard our children’s and grandchildren’s future in this beautiful corner of the globe, trumped all other considerations. We were mindful of the different needs and expectations that the various interest groups brought to the process and there were ample opportunities for discussion and consensus building.

The end-product is a living, breathing document that provides guidance without rigidity, recognizes the unlimited potential for growth and development, while acknowledging our duty to focus on sustainable, ecologically sound practices.

Sustainability and equity were among the core values chosen by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to guide the development of Envision 2050. Those two values echo throughout this document and inform the policy recommendations in the closing chapters.

The world will be a very different place in 2050, but this document pays homage to our need to be visionary and to take seriously our responsibility to be caretakers of the earth for future generations. The Native American proverb, “We don’t inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children,” has guided our work in crafting this document and will, hopefully, guide those entrusted with its implementation.



**MONICA KRUSE**  
La Crosse County Board Chair





# **ENVISION 2050**

## **Introduction**

# Envision 2050

will guide La Crosse County's development over the next 10 years and beyond. The goal is to create a framework for sustainable growth that can build a resilient and thriving La Crosse County for future generations.

The plan has been prepared under the State of Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law, adopted in 1999. The law requires that all land use decisions in the county be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, the plan must be updated at least once every 10 years. This review will serve as a checkpoint to ensure that the complete document is providing clear direction and decisions remain consistent with community goals, values, and needs.

A committee of community members worked with county staff to develop Envision 2050. The process began with the selection of core values by the group. Those values are sustainability, collaboration, equity, respect and forward-thinking. The essence of those values is carried through the entire document. The language agreed upon by the committee to define those values is shown here.

In the document's policy recommendations, symbols are used to denote when a recommendation aligns with one or more of the core values.

	<h2>Sustainability</h2> <p>Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs</p> <p>Focus on environmental, fiscal, and resilient plans for economic and social structure, prepare for the future and unexpected events and adapt to change while continuing to move forward</p>
	<h2>Collaboration</h2> <p>Through deep listening for understanding, work jointly with all county stakeholders to create common goals</p>
	<h2>Equity</h2> <p>Everyone is heard, everyone belongs, and everyone feels they belong</p> <p>We recognize that we all have our own perspectives and biases and will acknowledge them as we listen to others, especially those that we may initially disagree with</p>
	<h2>Forward-Thinking</h2> <p>Making use of new ideas and approaches to issues; resiliency, ability to adapt, change, move forward, cutting edge</p>
	<h2>Respect</h2> <p>A high, special regard towards all people</p> <p>The plan is culturally responsive, trauma informed, and everyone treats all community members in the manner they prefer to be treated</p>

Public participation is key to any comprehensive plan and was emphasized throughout the development of Envision 2050. Over 1,000 people participated in surveys to provide input that helped guide the development of specific chapters of the plan. Meetings with specific stakeholders, including town and village governments and landowners, also were used to gather input and feedback. Public input helped create the shared vision this plan represents.

La Crosse County combines rich agricultural land and natural resources with an urban core that supports rapidly growing towns and villages. Envision 2050 attempts to balance the need to preserve our farmland and natural resources with the demand for further growth and modern social and physical infrastructure. Envision 2050 is written and designed to promote readability and public engagement. This plan belongs to the people of La Crosse County and reflects the shared values of all who contributed to its creation.

Envision 2050 begins with the Existing Conditions Report, which details La Crosse County's physical and social characteristics. This includes information on demographic trends, the local and regional economy, infrastructure, cultural and natural resources, and housing statistics. The plan then moves into the final, forward-looking chapters. This is where policy recommendations are found, in addition to an implementation chapter. One of the most important elements of this plan is the Future Land Use map (Map 7), which you can find in the Land Use Plan chapter. To view the map online, please go to [https://arcgis.com/arcgis/proxy/arcgis/rest/services/Land\\_Use\\_Plan/MapServer/0](https://arcgis.com/arcgis/proxy/arcgis/rest/services/Land_Use_Plan/MapServer/0). At that link, individual future land use maps for each town in the county can also be viewed.



## Acknowledgements

**Monica Kruse**, County Board Chair

**Steve O'Malley**, County Administrator

## Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

**Peg Isola**, County Board Supervisor (Co-Chair)

**Monica Kruse**, County Board Supervisor (Co-Chair)

**Kathy Allen**, Citizen Member

**Kim Cable**, County Board Supervisor

**Maureen Freedland**, County Board Supervisor

**Dave Hansen**, Citizen Member

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**Patrick Scheller**, County Board Supervisor (Vice-chair)

**Rick Cornforth**, County Board Supervisor

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**Karl Green**, Community Development Educator, University of Wisconsin Extension La Crosse County

**Heather Quackenboss**, Human Development and Relationships Educator, University of Wisconsin Extension La Crosse County

## Special Thanks

To the many community members who took the time to provide invaluable input.

**01**

# Regional Context & Dynamics

**One of the opportunities associated with the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan is to look beyond municipal borders. Much of this report focuses on the relationship between individual communities and the county. It is also important, however, to look at the role of the county in the larger region.**

**A. The following list of regional characteristics and special features need to be considered as this plan is developed. These are the facets that can be utilized to ensure the future of La Crosse County as a desirable destination for tourists, businesses and community members.**

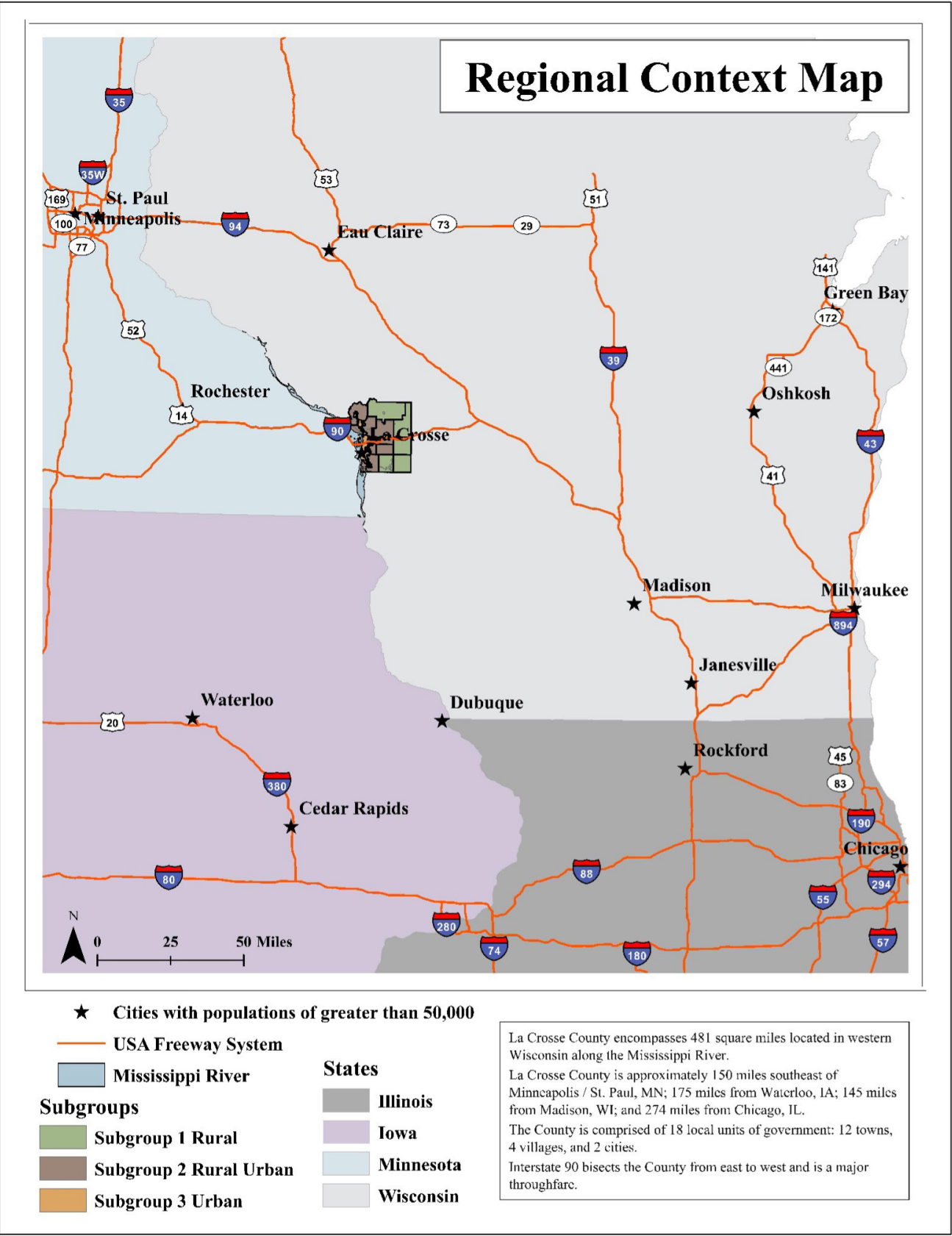
- Gateway to Wisconsin from the western states.
- Gateway to the Coulee Region / Mississippi River.
- Part of the Driftless Region, known for its defining and unique natural features, bluffs, trout streams, and coulees.
- Key destination along the “Great River Road.”
- Regional employment center including manufacturing, agricultural processing, healthcare, and higher education.
- Location of prime and productive agricultural lands.
- Convergence of outdoor multi-recreational trail networks including silent sports like hiking, bicycling, paddle sports and power sports like ATV, power boating and fishing.
- Tourist destination with cultural, art, and music events, outdoor recreation, regional convention center, historic downtowns and locations, sporting events, and restaurants. County parks include Goose Island, Veteran’s Memorial, Neshonoc Swarthout, Neshonoc South, and Mindoro, as well as Hoeth Forest and the Raymond C. Bice Forest.
- Regional transportation hub including regional airport, Amtrak, and Greyhound Bus stations.
- Educational center including three institutions of higher education (Western Technical College, Viterbo University, and University of Wisconsin – La Crosse).
- Educated population - residents of La Crosse County have a higher educational attainment level than average.
- Regional economic urban hub.
- Home to desirable smaller communities and towns.
- Strong local food philosophy and practice with increasing number of farm-to-table and restaurants and farmer’s markets.

**B. A broad overview of La County’s geographical location is shown in Map 1.**

**C. Greater details of the features are covered in Chapter 7 Cultural Resources.**

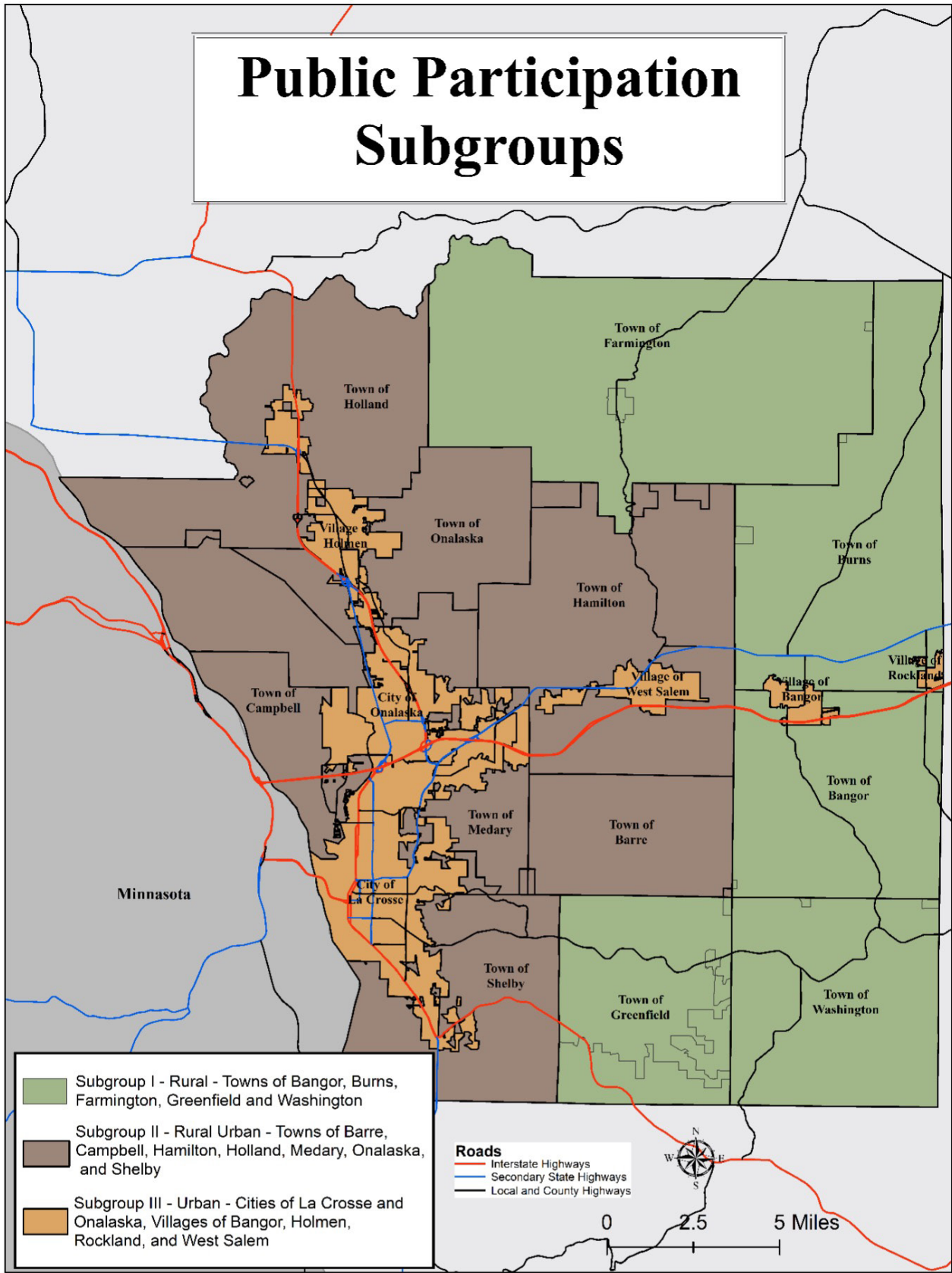
**D. The Sub Groups that are discussed in this document can be seen on Map 19.**

Map 1: Regional Context






Map 19: Subgroups



02

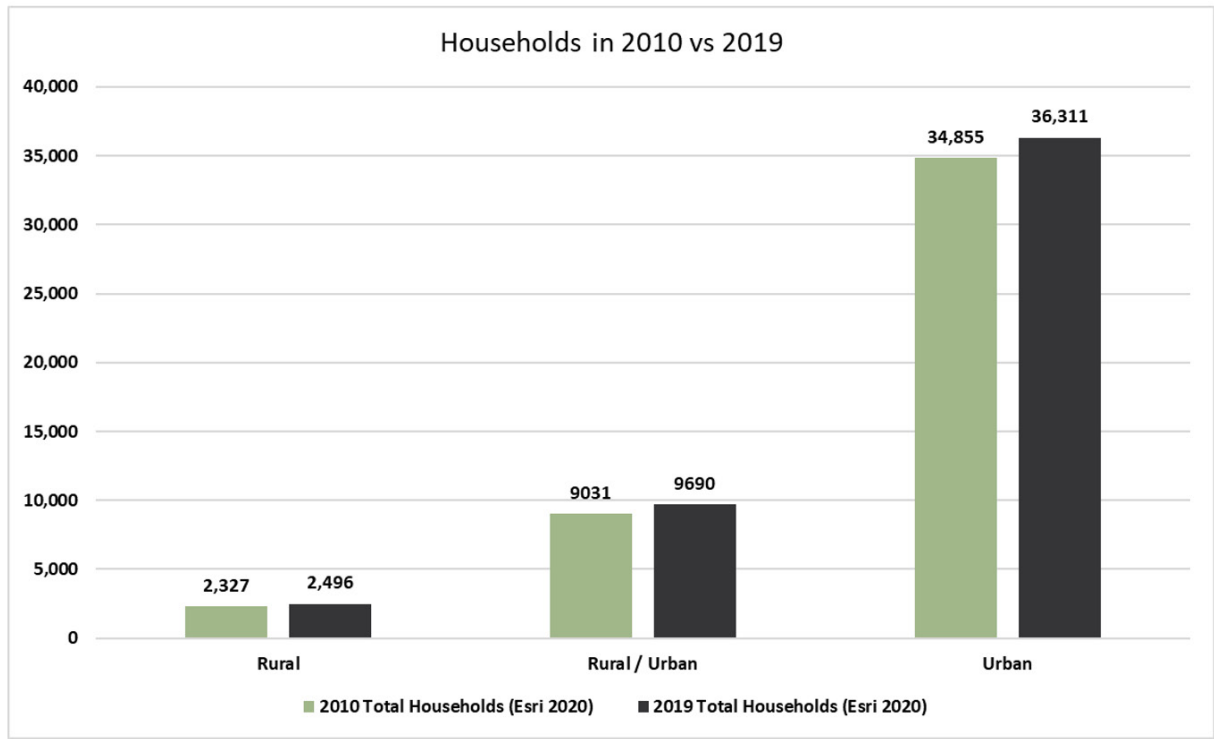
# Demographic Trends & Projections



This section of the existing conditions report provides information on current demographic trends at the state, county, municipal, and sub-area level. Population and income statistics in this chapter are drawn from the U. S. Census Bureau and ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute).

A. Population Trends and Forecasts

1. La Crosse County’s population has grown between 10% and 15% in each of the past several decades. Certain parts of the county have large amounts of growth, including the towns of Holland and Onalaska, the Village of Holmen, and the City of Onalaska. These areas of the county are projected to continue to grow throughout the next 30 years. Other places in La Crosse County, including the Town of Shelby and the Town of Medary, are projected to see their declining populations stabilize over the next 30 years.
- a) Graph 1, demonstrates how rapidly the county is growing based on projections created from census data supplied by both the federal census and the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is a division of the United States Census Bureau and is widely used by state and local governments to assist in planning decisions.



**b)** The tables below outline how and where the county has fluctuated during the past 10 years and estimated growth between 2020 and 2025. This data comes from ESRI and was collected per municipality and reported in the subgroups. Each table reports total population and then breaks these numbers into household and family populations plus population density and are reported by Subgroups. They show the annual growth rate between 2010 and 2020 and the estimated annual growth rate between 2020 and 2025.

Table 1

2020 Key Demographic Indicators (Esri)	RURAL				
Category	Town of Bangor	Town of Burns	Town of Farmington	Town of Greenfield	Town of Washington
2020 Total Population (Esri)	660	1,046	2,201	2,255	584
2020 Household Population (Esri)	657	1,044	2,200	2,208	550
2020 Family Population (Esri)	572	888	1,915	1,887	482
2020 Population Density (Pop per Square Mile) (Esri)		21.6	29.2	75.1	16.2
2010-2020 Population: Annual Growth Rate (Esri)	0.69%	0.97%	0.64%	0.89%	0.45%
2025 Key Demographic Indicators (Esri)					
2020-2025 Population: Annual Growth Rate (Esri)	0.60%	0.77%	0.59%	0.66%	0.41%

Table 2

2020 Key Demographic Indicators (Esri)	RURAL / URBAN						
Category	Town of Barre	Town of Campbell	Town of Hamilton	Town of Holland	Town of Medary	Town of Onalaska	Town of Shelby
2020 Total Population (Esri)	1,384	4,340	2,603	4,196	1,638	6,140	4,907
2020 Household Population (Esri)	1,378	4,326	2,566	4,196	1,636	6,132	4,820
2020 Family Population (Esri)	1,193	3,294	2,242	3,580	1,426	5,333	3,872
2020 Population Density (Pop per Square Mile) (Esri)	66.9	1,158.00	52.9	103.2	149.2	172.5	196.8
2010-2020 Population: Annual Growth Rate (Esri)	1.13%	0.06%	0.65%	1.23%	1.12%	0.86%	0.39%
2025 Key Demographic Indicators (Esri)							
2020-2025 Population: Annual Growth Rate (Esri)	0.84%	0.06%	0.56%	1.11%	0.84%	1.20%	0.32%

Table 3

2020 Key Demographic Indicators (Esri)	URBAN					
Category	City of La Crosse	City of Onalaska	Village of Bangor	Village of Holmen	Village of Rockland	Village of West Salem
2020 Total Population (Esri)	52,396	18,864	1,426	10,061	709	5,102
2020 Household Population (Esri)	47,457	18,728	1,426	10,043	709	4,869
2020 Family Population (Esri)	27,401	14,919	1,170	8,591	577	3,973
2020 Population Density (Pop per Square Mile) (Esri)	2,553.90	1,863.10	1,163.40	1,935.40	1,214.90	1,492.70
2010-2020 Population: Annual Growth Rate (Esri)	0.20%	0.60%	-0.22%	1.09%	1.74%	0.60%
2025 Key Demographic Indicators (Esri)						
2020-2025 Population: Annual Growth Rate (Esri)	0.14%	0.88%	-0.18%	0.82%	1.16%	0.42%

## 2. Total Population:

A comparison of total population over time can help identify areas of growth that, when considered alongside existing and planned infrastructure, may need to be flagged for future improvements. The type of improvements decided upon will depend on the make-up of the population and the goals and objectives of the community.

Table 4

Geography	Population			% Change 2010 to 20121	
	2010	2021			
<b>Wisconsin ^</b>	5,686,986	5,893,718	206,732	3.51%	
<b>La Crosse County</b>	114,638	120,784	6,146	5.09%	
<b>T Bangor</b>	615	633	18	2.93%	
<b>T Barre</b>	1,234	1,374	140	* 11.35%	
<b>T Burns</b>	947	974	27	2.85%	
<b>T Campbell</b>	4,314	4,319	5	0.12%	
<b>T Farmington</b>	2,061	2,144	83	4.03%	
<b>T Greenfield</b>	2,060	2,179	119	5.78%	
<b>T Hamilton</b>	2,436	2,522	86	3.53%	
<b>T Holland</b>	3,701	4,338	637	* 17.21%	
<b>T Medary</b>	1,461	1,545	84	5.75%	
<b>T Onalaska</b>	5,623	5,906	283	5.03%	
<b>T Shelby</b>	4,715	4,722	7	0.15%	
<b>T Washington</b>	558	539	- 19	- 3.41%	
<b>V Bangor</b>	1,459	1,580	121	8.29%	
<b>V Holmen</b>	9,005	11,167	2,162	* 24.01%	
<b>V Rockland</b>	594	754	160	* 26.94%	
<b>V West Salem</b>	4,799	5,116	317	6.61%	
<b>C La Crosse</b>	51,320	50,869	- 451	- 0.88%	
<b>C Onalaska</b>	17,736	19,650	1,914	* 10.79%	

\*Geographies experiencing a statistically significant difference between

**Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010/ 2020 Decennial Census Summary File 1 Total Population and Table B01003 Total Population,**

- a) Table 4 compares the total population count from the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census Areas with changes in population that are statistically significant are identified by an asterisk.
- b) La Crosse County continues to grow more than other areas within Wisconsin and is projected by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) to grow by about 15% by 2040. This is slightly more than is projected for Wisconsin as a whole (14. 1%).
- c) Five of our communities experienced significant change in population. As was noted in the Coulee Vision 2040 report by the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC), the Village of Holmen is again proving to be the growth community in the planning area.
- d) Despite a slowing of overall population growth from 2010 to 2020 compared to the growth experienced between 2000 and 2010, the significant localized growth in Holmen demands that planning for improved transportation options and services is necessary to maintain Holmen's access to jobs, retail, and recreation within the region.

**e)** Projections developed by the DOA show that the village of Holmen and the town of Holland will experience the greatest projected growth in population from 2010-2040. In 2009 Holmen created a tax incremental district (TID) encompassing 985 acres of developable land that included land annexed from Holland. In 2017, Holmen and Holland entered into a boundary agreement that explicitly identifies areas of development and annexation within the two communities.

**f)** Growth in the city of La Crosse is projected to be low—only 1% from 2010-2040—with the largest growth spurt (2.4%) projected to be occurring now.

**g)** The City of La Crosse is projected to lose population between 2020 and 2040. The towns of Campbell and Shelby are also projected to lose population.

### 3. Population by Age

**a)** Table 5 provides the 2010 population count, the 2040 population projection, and the percentage change of population by age for La Crosse County, as aggregated by groups of interest from which we can make assumptions about travel habits and needs.

**Table 5. Actual and Projected Population by Age**

Table 5: Actual and Projected Population by Age for La Crosse County Age Group <sup>1</sup>	Population				% Change	
	2010 Count	2020 Projected	2040 Projected	2010-2020	2020-2040	2010-2040
Pre-schoolers (under 5)	6,748	7,110	7,940	5.4%	11.7%	17.7%
Elementary/middle-schoolers (5-14)	13,378	14,640	15,810	9.4%	8.0%	18.2%
High schoolers (15-19)	9,547	9,300	9,840	-2.6%	5.8%	3.1%
Collegians (20-24)	12,626	12,240	13,060	-3.1%	6.7%	3.4%
Family-focused Workforce (25-44)	27,813	28,090	28,170	1.0%	0.3%	1.3%
Empty-nester Workforce (45-64)	29,325	28,550	25,690	-2.6%	-10.0%	-12.4%
Retirees (65 and older)	15,201	22,170	30,990	45.8%	39.8%	103.9%

<sup>1</sup>The names of the age groups are generalizations based on a population of interest that falls within the age range. The ranges presented are limited by the ranges provided by the data source.  
Source: Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration.

**b)** Table 5 shows that the number of children under 15 is projected to increase by 18% by 2040, while high school and college-age persons are projected to increase by only a little over 3%. The significance in the increase in elementary/middle schoolers lies with the prevalence of parents or the “family-focused workforce (24 – 44)” which is expected to increase by 1.3% by 2040.

**c)** Other significant changes include a drop of 12.4% as part of the “empty-nester workforce” (ages 45-64) enters the retirees age group (age 65 and older), a group that is projected to more than double by 2040.

The following charts show the breakdown by generation for the county and by subgroups. Millennials are defined as being born during the years 1981-1996. They were aged 14-29 in 2010 and will be aged 44-59 in 2040. Baby boomers are defined as being born during the years 1946 – 1964. They were aged 46-64 in 2010 and will be aged 76-94 in 2040. Generation X are defined as being born during the years 1965-1980. They were aged 30-45 in 2010 and will be aged 60-75 in 2040. The silent generation are defined as being born during the years 1928-1945.

Chart 1. County Population by Generation (2020)

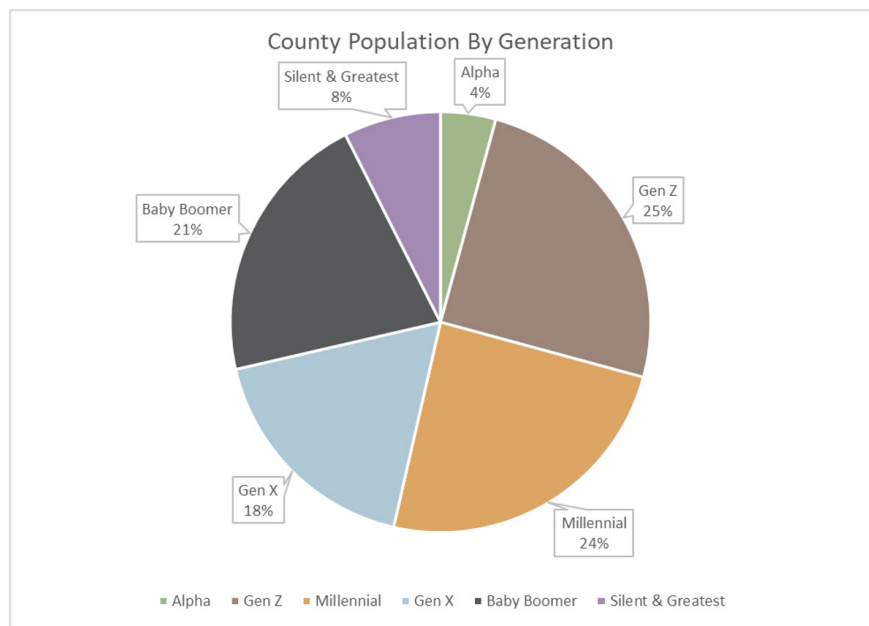


Chart 2. 2020 Population by Generation Subgroup I (- Rural - towns of Bangor, Burns, Farmington, Greenfield and Washington)

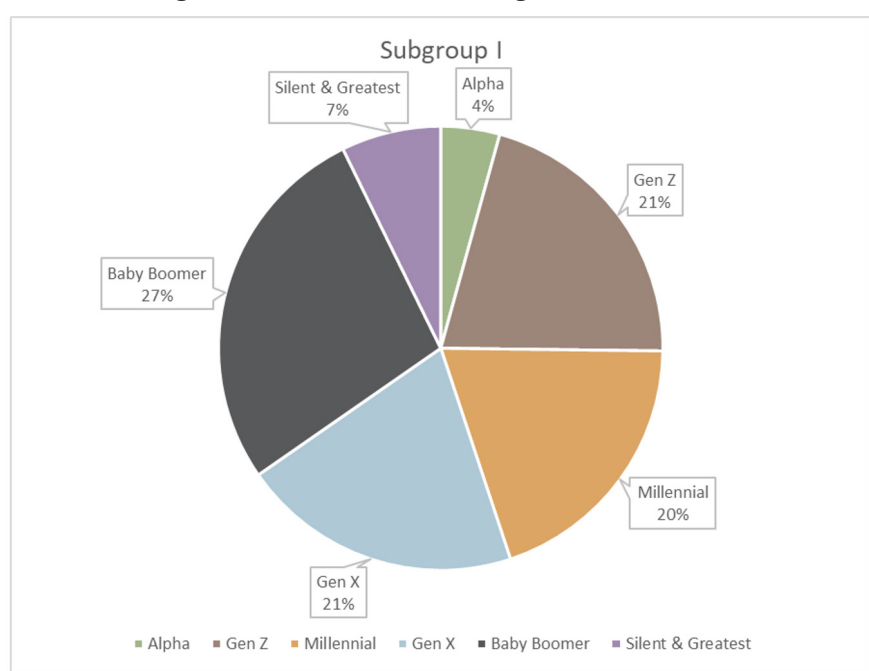




Chart 3. 2020 Population by Generation Subgroup II (Rural Urban - towns of Barre, Campbell, Hamilton, Holland, Medary, Onalaska, and Shelby)

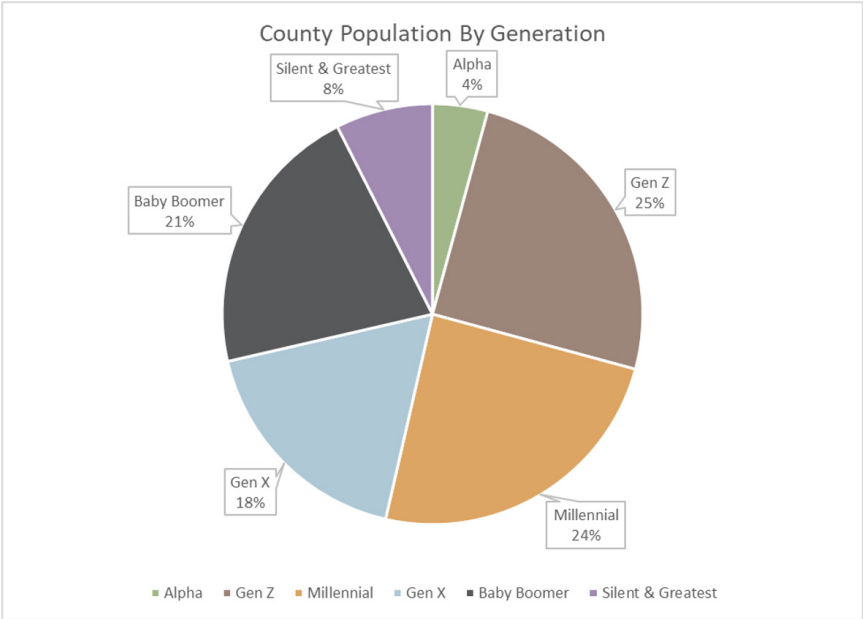
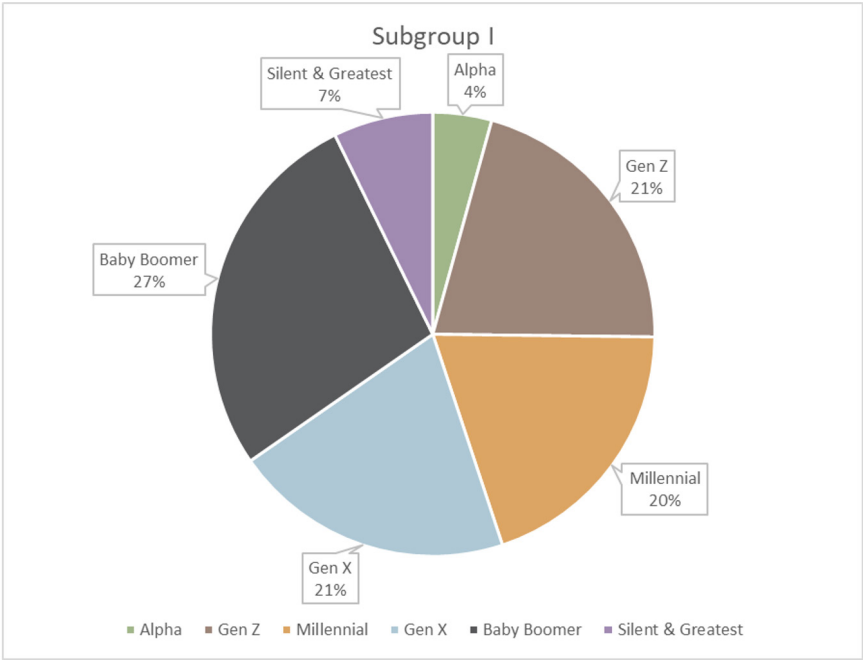


Chart 4. 2020 Population by Generation Subgroup III (Urban – cities of La Crosse and Onalaska, villages of Bangor, Holmen, Rockland, and West Salem)



#### 4. Age and Gender:

These two factors can have a significant impact on the services that are needed and wanted in a community. They can also drive what is seen as a priority when it comes to decision making and planning within a community.

**a)** The median age for the county is 35.2 years, which is slightly lower than the state median age. The majority of residents in La Crosse County are between 25 and 44 years old. However, the county has a large population of school age children, ages 5 to 19 years. Chart 1 demonstrates the balance of the population throughout the county (30% of the population is under age 20 and approximately 20% of the population is above 55 years old). The table (Table 5) shows there are 22,884 school age children making up 22.3% of the population. An exception can be found in the towns of Holland, Onalaska, and the Village of Holmen, where a third of the population is less than 20 years old, and only 14% of the population is over 55 years of age. These numbers are important to note as more research is conducted concerning school demand and other family needs.

**b)** The city of La Crosse has a significantly larger population of 20- 24-year-olds; this segment of the population makes up almost 15% of the total population of the city. This can be explained by the city's large college student population.

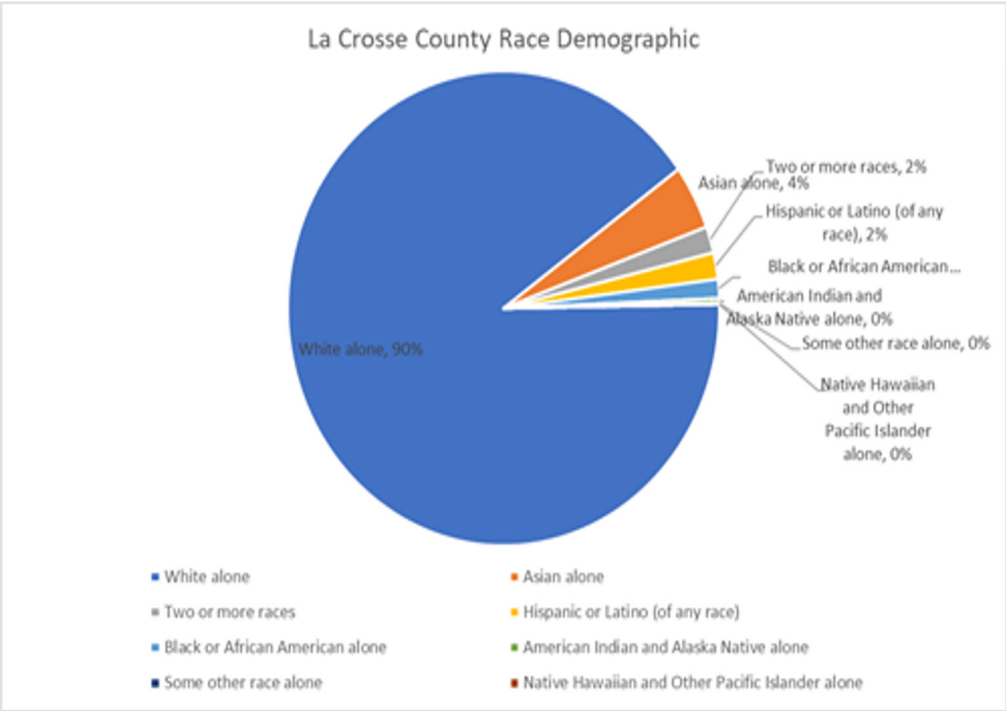
#### 5.

Race is an important component of social identity and must be considered as a central part of conversations pertaining to the growth of a community, especially as it relates to identity and equity. In 2021, the La Crosse County Board passed a [resolution declaring racism a public health crisis](#). The resolution called on the board to work to make the county an equity and justice-oriented organization and to advocate for policies to improve health in communities of color.

Chart 5 shows the diversity of La Crosse County. While the majority (90%) of residents are White, we can see that residents of Asian descent comprise 4% of the county's population, the second most represented race in the county. Another 2% of residents within La Crosse County are Latino, with the remaining 4% of residents identifying as Black or African American or as two or more races.



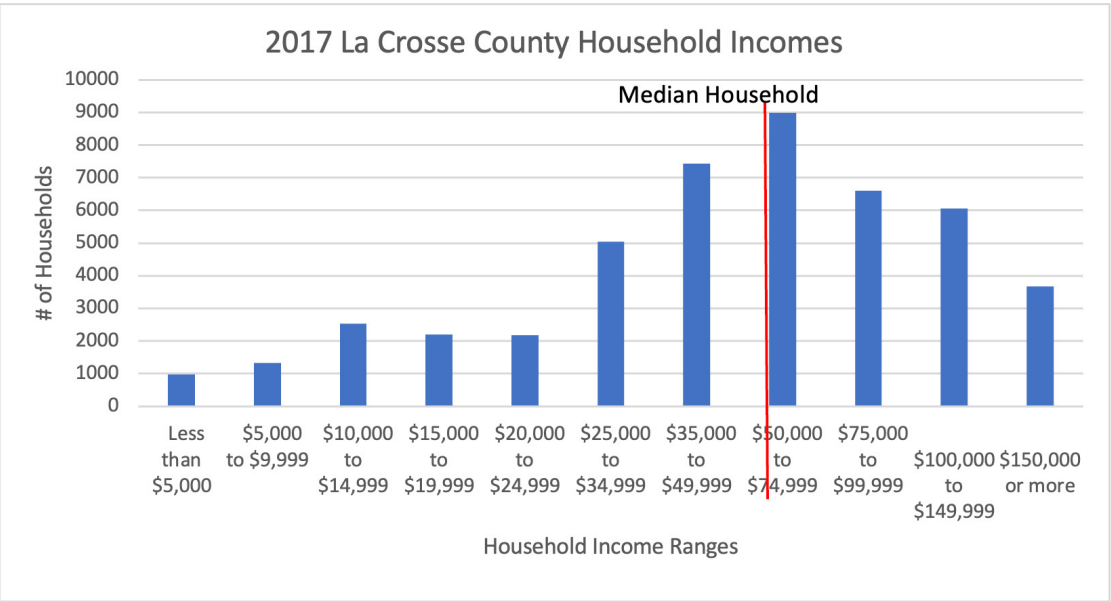
Chart 5. La Crosse County Racial Demographics



6. Income Levels:

a) Graph 2 demonstrates the median household income ranges generated by individual people, families, and households in La Crosse County. The median income at the county level is slightly lower than the state median income in all categories.

Graph 2

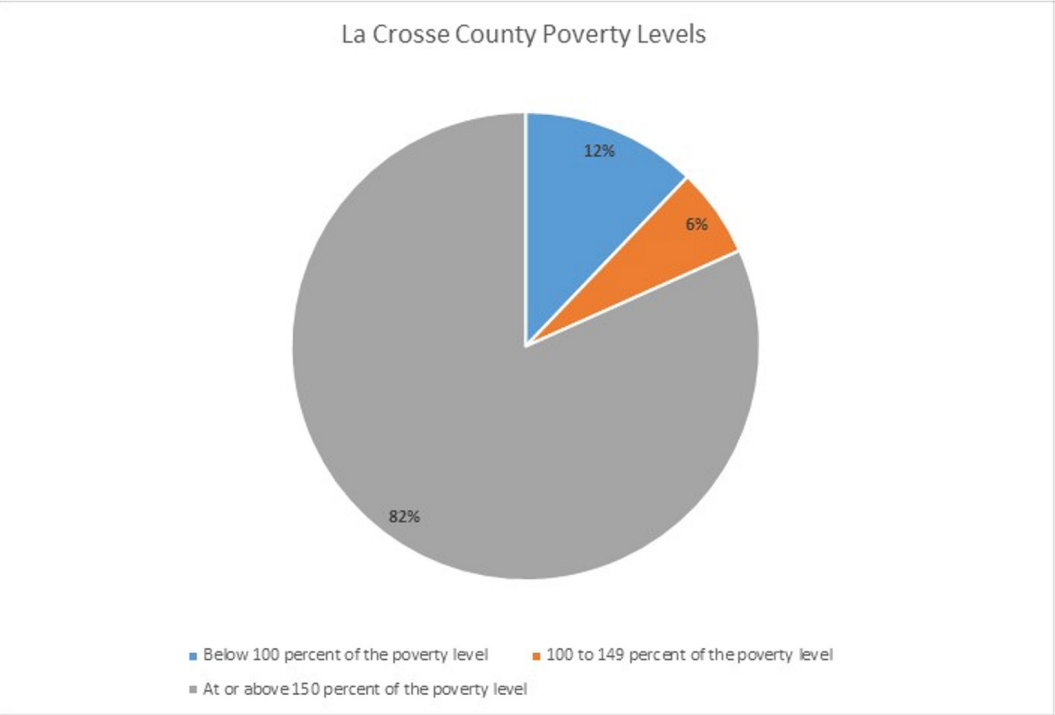


7.

Poverty in La Crosse County directly relates to the economic base of the county. High rates of poverty can be a signal of a depressed economy.

a) As outlined in Chart 6 below, 12% of individuals in the county live below the poverty line. 6% live below 150% of the poverty line, and the remaining 82% live above 150% of the poverty line. These poverty numbers have increased by over 25% over the past decade, which follows a national trend of increasing poverty.

Chart 6. Poverty Levels



03

# Land Use

**Land use is among the most important planning considerations. The following chapter explores the relationship between existing uses, land use regulations, and projections for future use.**

#### **A. La Crosse County Make-up**

- 1.** La Crosse County encompasses over 300,000 acres. While nearly 70% of the county remains in agriculture or natural cover, the county is home to a regional center and metropolitan area. It is therefore not surprising that the county includes some of the fastest growing communities in the state. A benefit of the county planning effort is to provide context to consider local growth decisions in conjunction with neighboring communities.
- 2.** Over 40,000 housing units are found throughout the county's communities. Overall, La Crosse County has a density of nearly 100 homes per square mile. The county's urban communities have a density of nearly 700 homes per square mile. Some of the county's more rural towns, including Washington, Burns, and Bangor have less than 10 homes per square mile.
- 3.** Land Use in the county is regulated by several ordinances, including the county's zoning ordinance. The ordinance sets both the densities and non-residential intensities and is administered by county planning and zoning staff. The comprehensive plan will provide guidance regarding changes to zoning and other regulating ordinances.

#### **B. Existing Land Use Patterns**

- 1. Current Patterns:** There are over 300,000 acres of land in La Crosse County.

County-wide, agriculture and forest make-up over 70% of the county's land area. Residential lands make up approximately 6% of the county's acreage. A detailed set of existing land use acreages is shown in Table 7.



Table 7

<b>Existing Land Use by Subgroup</b>						
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Area (acres)</b>			<b>Existing Land Use</b>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Land</b>	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Vacant</b>	<b>Occupied</b>
T. Bangor	22,400	0	22,400	324.1	12.0	312.1
T. Burns	30,976	27	30,912	487.5	12.0	475.5
T. Farmington	48,320	128	48,192	852.3	172.0	680.3
T. Greenfield	19,264	0	19,264	638.5	171.7	466.8
T. Washington	23,104	0	23,104	361.7	56.0	305.7
<b>Subgroup I total</b>	<b>134,208</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>134,016</b>	<b>3,650.4</b>	<b>526.7</b>	<b>3,123.7</b>
T. Barre	13,248	0	13,248	459.7	103.0	356.7
T. Campbell	8,044	5,587	2,457	489.7	95.9	393.8
T. Hamilton	32,704	640	32,064	983.6	338.2	645.5
T. Holland	29,184	1,984	27,200	1,158.6	325.5	833.1
T. Medary	7,488	0	7,488	477.2	194.4	282.7
T. Onalaska	28,736	5,056	23,680	1,619.4	206.0	1,413.4
T. Shelby	18,624	2,240	16,384	1,093.0	364.0	729.0
<b>Subgroup II total</b>	<b>124,780</b>	<b>15,507</b>	<b>109,273</b>	<b>7,345.3</b>	<b>1,523.9</b>	<b>5,821.4</b>
V. Bangor	787	0	787	123.9	41.4	82.5
V. Holmen	3,328	0	3,328	673.0	134.4	538.6
V. Rockland	371	0	371	69.8	13.3	56.5
V. West Salem	2,201	12	2,188	391.0	29.8	361.2
C. La Crosse	14,425	1,292	13,132	2,639.8	255.6	2,384.2
C. Onalaska	6,867	384	6,483	1,498.2	295.1	1,203.1
<b>Subgroup III total</b>	<b>27,979</b>	<b>1,688</b>	<b>26,289</b>	<b>6,165.4</b>	<b>769.7</b>	<b>4,626.1</b>
<b>La Crosse County Totals</b>	<b>286,967</b>	<b>17,350</b>	<b>269,578</b>	<b>17,161.1</b>	<b>2,820.3</b>	<b>13,571.2</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2020 and 2025, \*density individual/housing unit per acre of land area

## 2. Existing/Potential Land Use Conflicts:

There are no known existing land use conflicts where La Crosse County has purview over the mitigation of conflict. Potentially, annexation by incorporated communities will have an impact on town land use in some areas. La Crosse County is currently working with several communities to develop boundary agreements to forecast annexations and prevent conflicts. The county continues to provide assistance on land use issues where appropriate.

## 3. Existing Densities:

La Crosse County has an overall density of 236 people and 107 homes per square mile. The county's municipalities (La Crosse, Onalaska, Holmen, West Salem, Bangor, and Rockland) have an average density of 1,600 people and 664 homes per square mile. The density of La Crosse County's towns varies greatly due to their varied rural and suburban characters. The towns of Washington, Burns, and Bangor exhibit the overall lowest density.

## 4. Non-Residential Intensities:

La Crosse County's zoning ordinance regulates the intensity of non-residential development outside of the municipalities with their own zoning.

- a) Commercial: This is the non-agriculture/non-residential zoning district in the county. A wide range of uses are allowed by right including retail, feed mills, hotels, and animal hospitals. A maximum height limit of three stories or 45 feet is allowed.



**b)** Industrial: The industrial district allows a wide variety of industrial, warehousing, commercial and related uses. However, residential, educational, and institutional uses are generally prohibited. The maximum height for this district is 60 feet or 5 stories.

## C. Land Use Supply and Demand

### 1. Land Use Supply

**a)** The supply of land to support development is based on several factors including physical suitability, local and county regulations, and community goals. Intergovernmental agreements and annexations also become considerations when looking at the available land supply at the community level.

**b)** Land physically suited for development exists throughout the county. A conservative estimate, based on a 2006 study performed by the geography department at the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse, indicates there are nearly 190,000 acres that could be physically suited for development. The policies developed in this plan and subsequent community plans will help guide how growth is managed in these areas.

### 2. Land Use Demand

**a)** As development pressures increase, the demand for developable land also rises. An analysis of building trends in the 1990s indicates that approximately 3% of the county's farmland was converted out of an agricultural use between 1990 and 1997. Not surprisingly, this conversion factor was higher for towns on the western side of the county. Towns surrounding Holmen, Onalaska, and La Crosse had close to 8% of their agricultural acreage converted to other uses.

**b)** Based on growth and housing projections provided by the state's Demographic Service Center, the county may need to accommodate nearly 5,000 acres of new residential, commercial, and industrial land along with additional acreage needed for infrastructure, parks, community facilities and similar uses over the next 20 years. Local and county policies could guide the future rate, form, and location of new growth.

04

# Agricultural Resources



Agriculture has long been an important part of La Crosse County’s economy. Because of its location along the Mississippi River, the region ships agricultural products throughout the country and the world. Major commodities include corn, soybeans, and dairy products. La Crosse County is dedicated to the preservation of agriculture, and to promoting and encouraging best agricultural management practices, as outlined in the county’s Land and Water Resource Management Plan. As of 2020, there were 259 farms in the county with active Farmland Preservation Program Conservation Plan certificates. Those farms comprise approximately 54,554 acres of land.

A. Agricultural Resources Inventory

1. Agriculture is stable and diverse in La Crosse County. The last five years have been economically challenging but despite some farm closures, La Crosse County farmers continue to adapt and grow according to industry need. La Crosse County’s top commodities include corn, cattle (dairy and beef), forages, soybeans, and poultry. County-wide, land converted out of agriculture sold for a higher value than land that remained in agriculture. However, in some towns, land continuing in agriculture sold for a higher value than land converted out of agriculture. Only 3% of agricultural land in the county sold between 2012 and 2017 was converted out of agriculture.

Soil suitability can indicate land that is best suited for agriculture. Soil suitability classes for agriculture range from Class I to Class VIII. Class I has no significant limitations for raising crops. Classes II and III are suited for cultivated crops but have limitations such as poor drainage, limited root zones, climatic restrictions, or erosion potential. Class IV is suitable for crops but only under selected cropping practices. Classes V, VI, and VII are best suited for pasture while Class VIII is suited only for wildlife habitat, recreation, and other non-agricultural uses. La Crosse County soil classes are depicted on Map 12 - Soil Classifications by Capability in the appendix of this document.

According to the 2017 census of agriculture, there were 667 farms in La Crosse County, down 11% from 2012. The average acres operated per farm was 216. This indicates a total of over 144,334 acres of land being farmed, down about 9% since 2012. In reviewing our land information data, this would indicate that the agriculture census included some forest as being considered farmland. Only 26 of these operations were irrigated. Animal based agriculture included 189 operations with an inventory of beef cattle, 76 operations with an inventory of dairy cattle, 261 with calves, 27 with hogs, 34 with lambs and or sheep, and 72 with chickens. Crop agriculture in La Crosse County included 296 operations with corn grain, 79 with corn silage, four with wheat, 19 with oats, 10 with barley, one with sorghum, 186 operations with soybeans, 375 with hay and haylage, 22 with vegetables, eight with potatoes, two with sweet potatoes, and 14 orchards.

Percent of Farms that:	
Have internet access	77
Farm organically	4
Sell directly to consumers	7
Hire farm labor	29
Are family farms	98

**05**

# Natural Resources

**The natural environment of La Crosse County contributes greatly to residents' quality of life. A variety of unique natural resources are present throughout the county as discussed in this chapter.**

### **A. Groundwater**

Groundwater resources are plentiful in La Crosse County and provide the sole source of residential water supply for county residents. A sandstone and dolomite aquifer coupled with the soil geology of the area allow for rapid groundwater recharge, which provides a constant supply of water. Groundwater in the area is generally considered to be of good quality; however, the area's porous soil geology, while allowing for rapid groundwater recharge, can also make the groundwater more susceptible to contamination. The PFAS crisis in the Town of Campbell, and issues with nitrates in well water in the towns of Holland and Onalaska demonstrate the risks this poses for drinking water in the county.

**1.** The information and recommendations generated from the county's groundwater study, development of municipal wellhead protection ordinances, and encouragement of concentrated developments that use municipal sanitary sewer systems will greatly assist in maintaining and protecting this buried treasure. These topics are discussed in detail in the Utilities and Community Facilities section of this report.

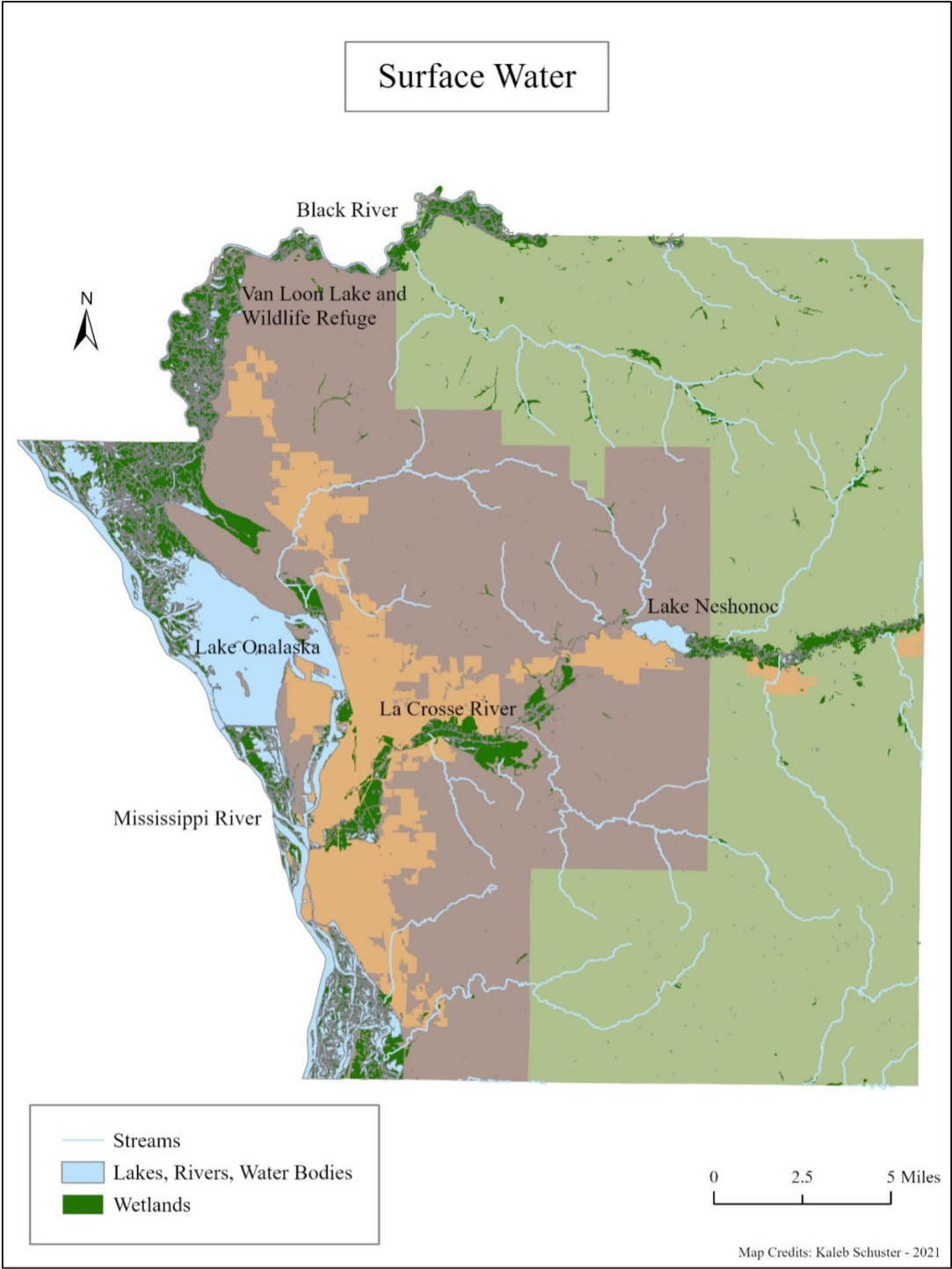
### **B. Surface Water**

**1.** La Crosse County's surface waters are one of its most popular environmental resources from a recreational and aesthetic perspective. There are few natural inland lakes in La Crosse County. The adjoining surface waters of the Mississippi River, Black River, Lake Onalaska, and Lake Neshonoc are the biggest contributors to surface water recreation. Collectively these waterways cover over 16,460 acres of surface area in the county.

**2.** One of the most significant water resources available to residents and visitors is Lake Onalaska. The 7,000-acre lake has depths to 40 feet, but the average depth is just eight feet. The lake was formed in 1937 when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finished the Dresbach, Minn., Lock and Dam 7. The 687-acre Lake Neshonoc was created in 1852 from the damming of the La Crosse River. The accumulation of sediment is the fate of all impounded waterways and in the 1980's sedimentation, siltation, and turbidity in the lake became such a major concern that the Lake Neshonoc Protection and Rehabilitation District was formed. Veterans Memorial Park Pond, another drainage impounded lake, is located between Medary and West Salem and covers 3.8 acres. Van Loon Lake, located in the northwest portion of the county, covers approximately 17 acres. This lake is in the 4,281-acre Van Loon Wildlife Refuge and is categorized as a seeping lake with a depth of just three feet.

3. The La Crosse River, Black River, and 35 other creeks account for the remaining surface waters in the county, of which 28 are classified as trout streams. In total, the county has 273 miles of stream, or 983 surface acres, excluding any portion of the Mississippi River.

Map 2. Surface Water



### C. Nitrates

**1.** Nitrates can occur naturally in surface and groundwater at a level that does not generally cause health problems. High levels of nitrates in well water often result from improper well construction, well location, overuse of chemical fertilizers, or improper disposal of human and animal waste. Nitrate is one of the most common groundwater contaminants in rural areas. It is regulated in drinking water primarily because excess levels can cause methemoglobinemia, or “blue baby” disease. Although nitrate levels that affect infants do not pose a direct threat to older children and adults, they do indicate the possible presence of other more serious residential or agricultural contaminants, such as bacteria or pesticides.

**2.** Nitrate contamination was discovered in areas of La Crosse County in the mid-2010s from well testing. It was investigated further by the consultant-led Nitrate Task Force (NTF) in 2017. The Task Force utilized both Data Gap Analysis and Root Cause analysis.

**3.** Factors Increasing Vulnerability to Contamination

- Permeable soils.
- Thin soils and shallow bedrock.
- Fractured bedrock.
- Karst and solution features.
- Shallow depth to the water table.
- Rapid infiltration and recharge.
- Improperly abandoned wells.
- Faulty or poorly designed wells.

### D. Wetlands

**1.** According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) there are 37,667 acres of wetlands of five acres or more in La Crosse County, which accounts for approximately 13% of the county’s total area. Most of these wetlands lie within the Mississippi, Black, and La Crosse River watersheds.

**2.** Wetlands are defined in Wisconsin Statutes 23.32 as areas where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions. Wetlands are environmentally sensitive due to the many values and functions they provide, including:

- Filtering and replenishing groundwater.



- Flood protection – wetlands act like sponges by storing and slowly releasing rainfall and runoff, which reduces flood peaks and flood recovery costs.
- Filters for certain kinds of wastes and soluble contaminants generated from runoff, which protects water quality.
- Food and habitat for many plants and animals, which benefits hunting, fishing, sightseeing and other recreational or tourism interests.
- Shoreline protection – wetlands protect shorelines from erosive wave action and enhance the quality of life by providing spacious and scenic open spaces.

**3.** Conversion of wetlands to development destroys the productive capacity of the ecosystem. Additionally, development costs are much higher in wetlands or areas with wet soils.

## E. Woodlands

**1.** La Crosse County is in a region of the country known as the Prairie-Forest Border, which forms the transition zone between the plains to the south and west and the forests to the north and east. Wisconsin forest statistics published in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported 136,500 acres of forest in the county. Before European settlement and the resulting fire suppression, the vegetation in this region consisted of oak savanna and southern oak forest. The remaining forest cover is generally broad-leaved deciduous forest. Oak is the predominant hardwood with maple replacing some of the oak stands following logging. Extensive stands of bottomland hardwoods such as elm and cottonwood are found in the vicinity of the Black and Mississippi rivers.

**2.** Woodlands perform important aesthetic, environmental, and ecological functions. La Crosse County's scenic wooded hills and coulees are one of the most attractive features of the landscape and have a major impact on residents and tourists alike. Woodlands also provide important settings, backdrops, and screens for homes, businesses, farms, roads, and shorelines, which creates an attractive landscape that benefits the economy and aesthetics of the county. In addition, woodlands generate or contribute to energy, oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon cycles. They also provide essential habitats for numerous varieties of plants and animals and can mitigate the destructive effects of erosion, pollution, and severe weather.

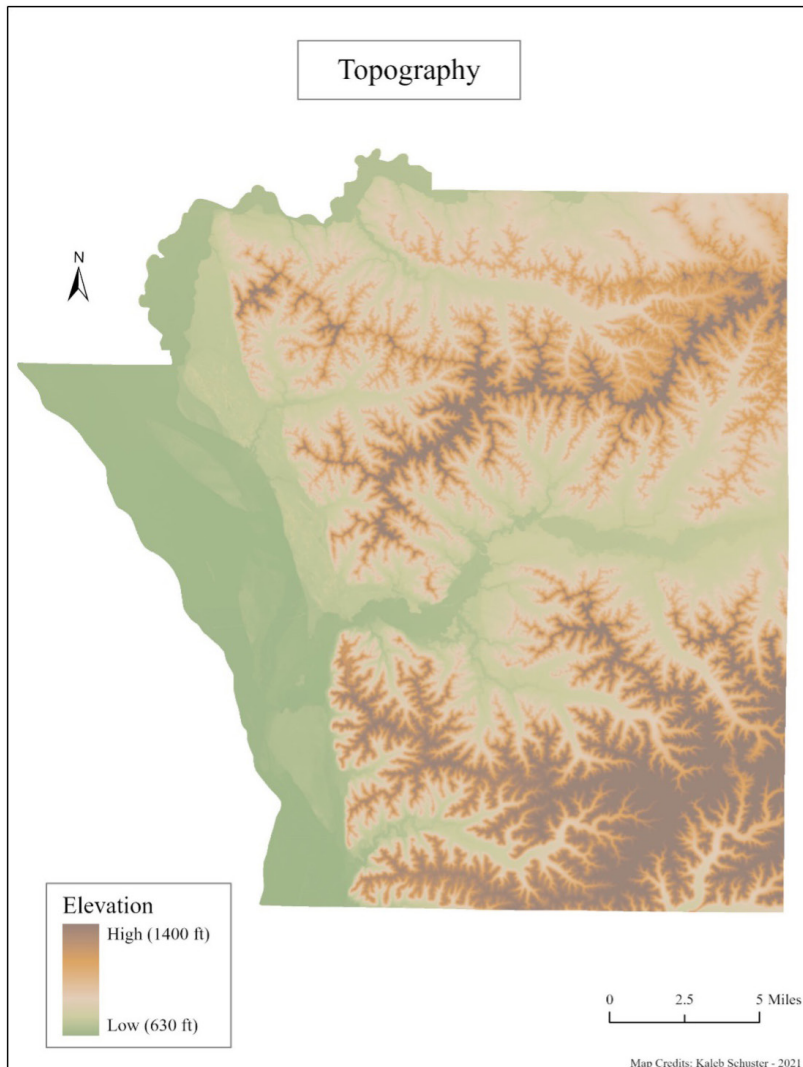
**3.** The State's Managed Forest Law (MFL) program is available to landowners with 10 or more contiguous acres of forested land. Participating landowners must agree to a forest management plan that includes harvesting at least 80% of their forest area. In exchange, their land is taxed at a rate below the state average. As of 2022, about 35,700 acres in La Crosse County were enrolled in MFL.

## F. Landforms and Topography

1. La Crosse County is in the heart of the driftless area, which covers southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, and northeast Iowa. This area was missed by the most recent glacial advance but was highly dissected by the glacial melt water created 11,000 years ago by the retreating glaciers. The scenic ridges and valleys created by this melt water were named coulees by early French settlers resulting in this area becoming known as the “Coulee Region.” Many of the ridges have bluffs of exposed limestone outcroppings. These bluffs are especially prominent on the western edge of the county along the Mississippi River and provide for majestic scenery that defines La Crosse County. Protecting these bluffs and ridgetops from poor development practices is increasing in importance as development activity continues to expand into rural areas.

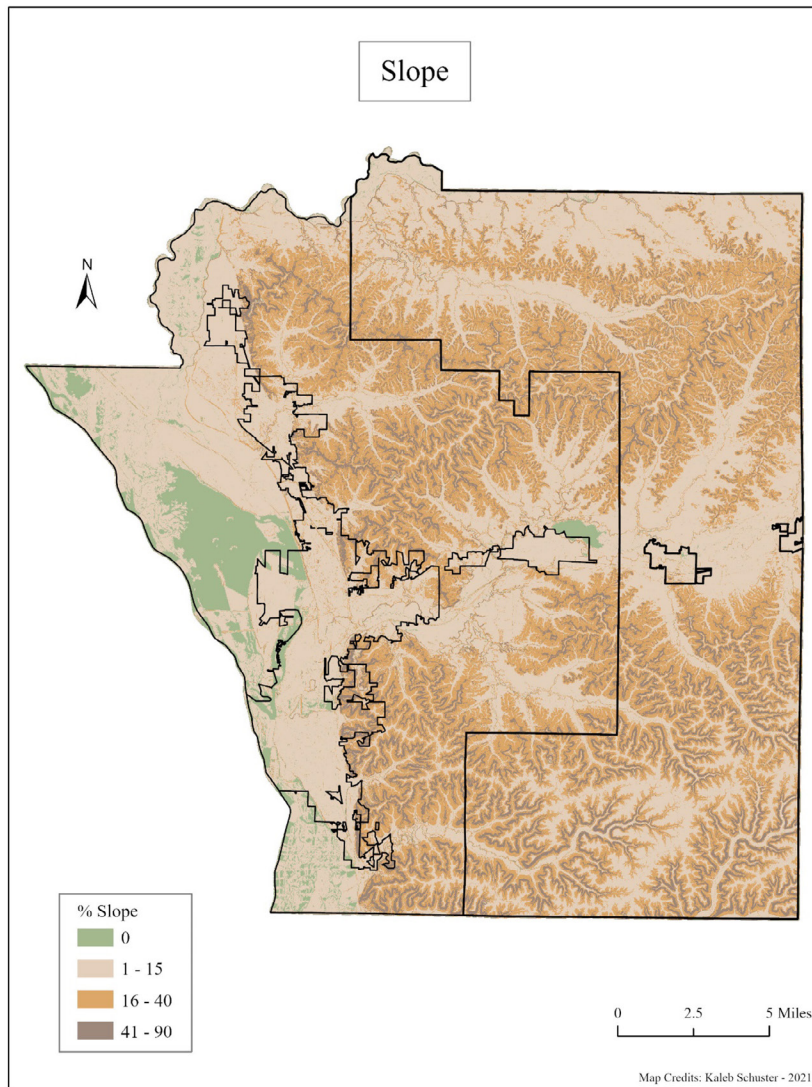
2. Geographic elevations in the county range from about 630 feet to 1,400 feet above sea level.

Map 3. Topography



### G. Steep Slopes

#### Slope



**1.** Steep slopes are found throughout La Crosse County and are the result of the driftless area topography in which the county is located. Steep slopes are environmentally sensitive from a water quality perspective because increased erosion and stormwater runoff occurs when these slopes are developed. The detrimental effect of stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as rooftops and driveways increase greatly when such surfaces are constructed on steep slopes. La Crosse County has many creeks, some of which support trout fisheries. All creeks, as well as the larger rivers and lakes, are or could be recipients of runoff from development on steep slopes. The creeks classified as trout streams make handling of runoff from development on steep slopes especially critical if these sensitive aquatic environments are to be maintained or enhanced.

**2.** To protect the area's rivers, lakes, and streams from excessive stormwater runoff, the county Land Conservation Department enforces a construction site erosion control ordinance that calls for approval of an erosion control plan prior to construction activity taking place. This ordinance also prohibits construction activity from occurring on slopes with an incline of 30% or greater. Increased erosion control measures are called for in this ordinance when slopes of 20% or greater are to be disturbed. In addition, the Village of Holmen has stricter standards than the county and prohibits construction on slopes of 12% or greater.

**3.** In addition to erosion, sedimentation, and water quality problems, development on steep slopes can impair the natural beauty in the area. When development occurs on steep slopes, or on top of these steep slopes at higher elevations, it greatly impacts the visual character of the area as the development can dominate the viewshed.

## H. Soils

**1.** Soil suitability is a key factor in determining the best and most cost-effective locations for new development. Soil types and capability also help determine the viability of land for agricultural purposes. The soils of the county vary by their location and proximity to the area's rivers, and can be grouped into the following categories:

- Silty soil on dolomite (lime rock) uplands.
- Silty soils on sandstone uplands.
- Rolling sandy soils on uplands.
- Sandy soils of the Mississippi River valley.
- Silty soils of valleys and benches.
- Wet bottom lands.

**2.** These soils are discussed in detail in the La Crosse County Farmland Preservation Plan. Typically, the southern half of the county is dominated by the "silty soils on dolomite (lime rock) upland" category; the central part of the county along the La Crosse River contain soils associated with the "silty soils of valleys and benches" category; the northern part of the county contains soils of the "silty soils on sandstone uplands" category; and the area along the Mississippi River contains soils associated with "wet bottom lands" and "sandy soils of Mississippi River Valley."

## I. Wildlife, Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

**1.** River backwaters, wooded coulees, and remnant prairies provide excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife. Whitetail deer, squirrels, rabbits, ducks, geese, pheasants, grouse, and wild turkeys are abundant in La Crosse County. In addition, the area boasts outstanding fishery resources, including trout, walleye, northern pike, and panfish.

- 2.** Over the last few decades La Crosse County, like many parts of the country, has experienced changes in the composition of its animal and plant life. Historically most changes occurred through human encroachment and consequent disturbance to the wildlife and its habitat. Land uses that have drastically altered the natural environment such as the cutting of forests, wetland drainage, agriculture, and increased urbanization have resulted in the reduction of the quantity and quality of habitat for many species. This reduction in habitat has also resulted in the near extirpation of some species.
- 3.** The U. S. government, to protect biological resources, enacted the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973. The Act essentially prohibits the taking of a threatened or endangered species or its habitat. Wisconsin, in accordance with the ESA, has developed the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Working Lists. The Wisconsin Natural Heritage Working Lists contains species known or suspected to be rare in the state.

#### **J. Open Spaces, Environmental Corridors and Environmentally Significant Areas**

- 1.** There are many open spaces, environmental corridors, and environmentally significant areas in La Crosse County. Environmental corridors are continuous systems of open space that include environmentally sensitive lands, floodplains, wetlands, and natural resources requiring protection from disturbance and development. Important environmental corridors that are suitable for preservation include the river and stream corridors, the bluffs, the coulees, and the important wildlife habitats located throughout the county.
- 2.** In addition to the areas described above, there are other designated environmentally significant areas that should continue to be protected. Four State Natural Areas exist in La Crosse County. These are formally designated sites devoted to scientific research, the teaching of conservation biology, and the preservation of natural values and genetic diversity for future generations. The natural areas in La Crosse County include Midway Railroad Prairie in the Town of Onalaska, La Crosse River Trail Prairies located along the trail in La Crosse and Monroe counties, and Great River Trail Prairies located along the trail in La Crosse and Trempealeau counties. And finally, the Holland Sand Prairie, north and west of the Village of Holmen.
- 3.** Two DNR Public Wildlife Recreation Land resources are found in La Crosse County. Van Loon Wildlife Area is approximately 4,000 acres and is located northwest of Holmen, this area includes the McGilvray Bridges, which are historic and receive significant visits every year from both residents and visitors. Coulee Experimental Forest is located near Bangor and contains 3,000 acres.
- 4.** Another significant open space and environmental corridor in the region is the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The refuge was established in 1924 and is one of the country's largest and most visited refuges with 3.5 million visitors annually. Lake Onalaska is part of this refuge, which hosts more than 265 species of birds, 57 species of mammals, 35 species of reptiles and amphibians and more than 100 species of fish. The entire refuge from Wabasha, Minn, to Rock Island, IL, encompasses nearly 240,000 acres and is over 260 miles long. From La Crosse County the refuge can easily be accessed by paddlers and birdwatchers from the Brice Prairie Landing or Lytle's Landing; by hikers and bikers from the Great River Trail; and by wildlife viewers from Midway.



### K. Mining and Non-Metallic Mineral Resources

**1.** A non-metallic mine is an area of one acre or greater where mineral aggregates or non-metallic minerals are extracted. As of June 2021, there are 29 registered non-metallic mining permits in La Crosse County for clay and rock, sand pits, or topsoil mining. These permits are registered for sites in La Crosse, Onalaska, Holland, and West Salem. Non-metallic mining activities are expected to continue in La Crosse County because of the sand and gravel deposits found along the rivers. However, all mines must have a reclamation plan to ensure that they will be properly closed and reclaimed when mining activities are completed.

### L. Air Quality

**1.** The DNR classifies the La Crosse Metropolitan Area as an air quality attainment area. This designation means the area is not in violation of any air quality regulations. Because land use densities and configurations can both positively and negatively affect air quality, these must be carefully considered in the future to maintain the region's good air quality. As the county's population grows and more people and goods use the highways, attention will need to be focused on the impact of automobile and truck emissions on air quality. Additionally, agricultural, and industrial land uses can significantly impact air quality and should be carefully monitored as well.



**06**

# Utilities and Community Facilities



**Utilities and community facilities provide the foundation upon which La Crosse County is built and maintained and provide the basis for how the county functions. Utilities include sanitary sewer, storm sewer, water systems, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, and solid waste disposal systems, including recycling. Community facilities include schools, libraries, parks, police, fire, health care, and other similar facilities. Utilities and community facilities contribute significantly to the quality of life in La Crosse County. It is important to assess the existing services and understand how or if they need to be changed, and where there is room for improvement.**

### **A. Water Supply**

**1.** Approximately 75% of La Crosse County's residents are served through the nine municipal water supply systems and 41 active municipal wells that exist in the county. The county's water supply comes entirely from groundwater – either through municipal wells or private wells. The vast majority of Southwestern Wisconsin's groundwater comes from a sandstone and dolomite aquifer that was deposited 425-600 million years ago. The area's mid-continent climate ensures an abundant supply of groundwater by providing over 30 inches a year of precipitation.

**2.** While the county's precipitation and soil geology allow for rapid groundwater recharge, they also allow for groundwater contamination from surface activities. There are many contaminated groundwater sites within the county and with continued growth in population and economic activity, the demand on groundwater supplies will continue to increase. To assist in preventing further groundwater contamination, a groundwater modeling study of La Crosse County was completed in 2003. This study assessed the effects of recent and potential future groundwater withdrawals and provides a suitable tool to evaluate the effects of proposed water management programs. The plan identifies the extent of contamination on existing sites and the direction in which these contaminated sites are flowing. An example of why this is important took place in 2016 when excess nitrates in the groundwater were discovered throughout some areas of the county following an audit by the DNR. This discovery led to the testing of 540 wells in 2017. About 30% of the wells were found to have nitrate levels over the federal standard. To combat this issue, the county organized a nitrate task force which met from December 2017 to June 2018. This task force developed and implemented policies to reduce human exposure to these high nitrate levels.

In 2019, PFAS contamination was detected on French Island in the Town of Campbell in municipal wells, private drinking water and groundwater. PFAS (Polyfluoroalkyl Substances) are a large group of human-made chemicals that have been used in industry, firefighting foams, and consumer products since the 1950s. The chemicals have been linked to various adverse health effects. PFAS detected on French Island are believed to have resulted from the utilization of firefighting foam (also known as Aqueous Film Forming Foam or AFFF) at the La Crosse Regional Airport. At the time this plan was being produced, state and local units of government were working together to find a solution to the PFAS issues around the airport.

3. Because of these issues, it is important to designate groundwater protection zones, often called groundwater recharge areas or wellhead protection areas, to protect this invaluable resource. Wellhead protection plans and ordinances are already in place in the City of Onalaska, and the villages of Holmen, Rockland, and West Salem. Any new municipal wells that are drilled in La Crosse County are also required to have wellhead protection plans and ordinances.

### B. Sanitary Sewer Service/Wastewater Treatment Facilities

1. There is probably no other facility that plays such an influential role in determining the location and density of development than sewer service supported by a centralized wastewater treatment plant. Wastewater treatment plants are cost beneficial because of an economy of scale factor involving a large population contributing to and maintaining one single facility as opposed to each user maintaining their own treatment facility or holding tank. The economic benefits of wastewater treatment systems carry over into land subdivision developments, as this makes undeveloped land within a community or on its periphery attractive for development because of the increased number of smaller size lots that can be served in an environmentally sound manner. The higher costs associated with a centralized wastewater treatment collection system requires a high number and a certain density of users; therefore, these systems are most often found in urbanized areas.

2. There are 11 wastewater treatment plants located throughout the county, these locations can be noted on map 4 in the appendix, and their storage capacities are listed as follows in Table 8.

Table 8

Wastewater Treatment Facility	City	Storage Capacity (Gallons)
Bangor Waterworks	Bangor	176,000*
Holmen Waterworks	Holmen	1,300,000
La Crosse Waterworks	La Crosse	5,150,000
Mindoro Sanitary District 1	Mindoro	50,000
Onalaska Waterworks	Onalaska	3,425,000
Rockland Waterworks	Rockland	50,000*
Shelby TN of SD 2 Arbor HL	La Crosse	65,000*
Shelby TN of SD 2 Skyline	La Crosse	45,000*
Shelby TN of Wedgewood VLY	La Crosse	152,000*
St Joseph Sanitary District 1	La Crosse	150,000
West Salem Waterworks	West Salem	1,500,000

\*These data points may be out of date as they were drawn from the most recent Comprehensive Plan, as current statistics were not available at the time of drafting.

**3.** The City of La Crosse owns and operates the La Crosse municipal wastewater treatment system that provides wastewater service to almost 16,000 customers within the City, including several high-strength industrial customers, treatment of hauled waste, and four wholesale municipal customers: the City of Onalaska, the Town of Campbell, the City of La Crescent, MN, and the Town of Shelby Sanitary District No. 2. The City of Onalaska, Town of Shelby, and Town of Campbell through local ordinances and intermunicipal agreements with the City of La Crosse discharge to this treatment system. The facility is located on Isle La Plume La Crosse and was originally constructed in 1936 but has since been modified and upgraded many times. Each of the villages in the county has their own wastewater treatment facility.

**4.** A general rule of thumb often used when estimating present or future wastewater treatment demand is 100 gallons per capita per day. A community with no major industrial or institutional users operate with a flow that is much lower, while the City of La Crosse treatment plant, which has major industrial and institutional users, handles flow amounts that exceed the 100 gallons per capita per day by three to four times. Wastewater treatment plants are also intentionally built with excess capacity to handle future residential and business growth.

**5.** Section 208 of the Clean Water Act plays an important role in the La Crosse sewer service area. The act's main point was to make it unlawful to discharge any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters. This section of law led to the development of the La Crosse Sewer Service Area Plan in 1985. In 2013, the La Crosse Sewer Service Area Water Quality Management Plan 2013 – 2035 was adopted. Approvals for wastewater treatment facilities, permits for all point source discharges and sewer extensions, and any projects funded with state resources must conform to the plan.

**6.** In May of 2021 an update project began for the La Crosse Wastewater Treatment Facility. This \$68 million project is intended to allow the city to meet state regulation requiring increased capacity for biosolids and new phosphorous removal requirements. The last major overall facility upgrade was in 1972, so a portion of the project is also for the replacement of equipment and facilities components at the end of their useful life. Additionally, there is a sustainability component intended to make the city waste removal operation more efficient. The project is on schedule to be completed in 2023. To determine what future growth capacity to include in the upgrades, the city worked with municipal wholesale customers and large users in the region. This information was incorporated into a 20-year facility plan developed for the utility by Donohue and Associates Engineering consultants. Concurrently, the city worked with Trilogy Consulting to conduct a formal sanitary sewer rate study to determine financial impacts to the utility of the upgrades proposed in the facility plan. The facility plan and rate study were ultimately approved by the City Council and together detail the path forward that ensures the City of La Crosse will be able to provide efficient and cost-effective sewer treatment to the region for years to come.

Reports available at:

<https://www.cityoflacrosse.org/your-government/departments/utilities/sewer-utility/sanitary-sewer-utility-projects-planning-activities/facility-planning-sanitary-sewer>

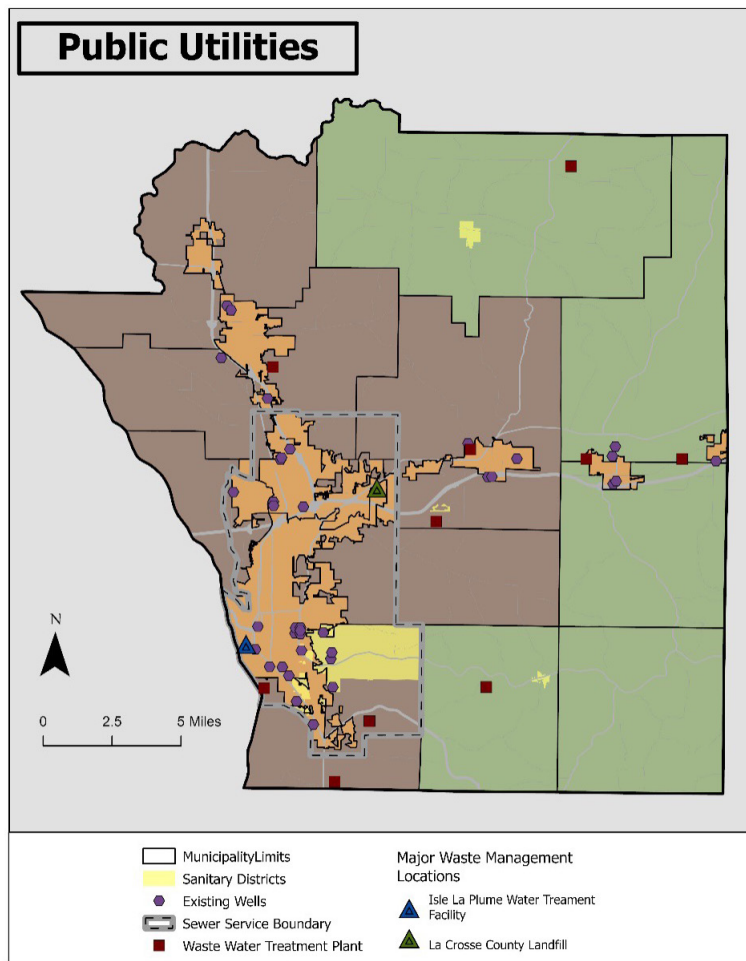
### C. On-Site Wastewater Treatment Technology

1. The disposal of wastewater in the areas of La Crosse County that are not served by sanitary sewer is handled using individual on-site wastewater treatment systems, often referred to as septic systems. On-site wastewater treatment systems are used by fewer than 20% of residents in the county. These systems include on-site ground absorption septic systems, holding tanks, and private package system plants that serve larger commercial industrial uses or higher density residential developments such as condominiums and mobile home courts.
2. The Wisconsin Department of Commerce (COMM) regulates the siting, design, installation, and inspection of most private on-site sewage systems. The State's Plumbing Code (COMM 83) allows both conventional and advanced pre-treatment systems for residential development, which presents local communities with land use challenges. Changes to COMM 83 allow properties that have soil depths or soil types that were once unsuitable for conventional septic systems to be developed and serviced by advanced pre-treatment sewage systems. This could result in widespread areas of scattered non-farm related residential development in the county unless sound land use planning principles and policies are followed. Scattered non-farm residential development is both costly and inefficient to serve and significantly degrades the county's unique rural character. Further, such scattered non-farm development often leads to increased conflicts between agricultural operations and non-agricultural uses.

### D. Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling Facilities

1. Solid waste in La Crosse County is disposed at the La Crosse County Landfill, which is located east of I-90 and south of Highway 16 as shown on the Utilities Map (Map 4). Glass, aluminum, and tin are collected for recycling at this facility. In addition to landfilling solid waste, the county is under contract with Xcel Energy to provide solid waste to economically run Xcel's refuse to energy facility located on French Island in La Crosse. In 1988, La Crosse County and Xcel Energy entered a contract calling for the burning of solid waste to produce energy and extending the life and use of the county's regional landfill. The contract calls for a minimum delivery of 73,000 tons of acceptable solid waste a year. All unacceptable solid waste and the ash left over from the burning is disposed of at the county landfill. The need to provide this minimum quantity of solid waste and the closing of many smaller landfills in Western Wisconsin resulted in La Crosse County negotiating solid waste disposal contracts with other surrounding communities and counties. At the time of this writing, solid waste is received for burning at the Xcel facility and landfilled in La Crosse County from as far as 100 miles away and comes from communities in both Minnesota and Wisconsin.
2. In 2017, Xcel agreed to continue taking solid waste until the year 2030. As of 2017 the plant generated approximately 58,000 megawatt-hours of electricity from the burning of about 42,700 tons of trash. This facility along with other diversion programs kept 55,000 tons of garbage out of the landfill, roughly a third of the total volume brought in.
3. In 2018, construction began on the final landfill cell available under La Crosse County's current permit. This cell is expected to extend the life of the landfill until 2036. Approaching that point, the county will need to decide on whether to pursue a new permit for expansion.

Map 4. Public Utilities



## E. Stormwater Management

**1.** Stormwater management has gained attention in recent years as an environmental concern because of its impacts on flooding, property damage, and surface water quality issues. Similar to water supply and wastewater treatment, stormwater management is an important part of municipal infrastructure. In La Crosse County, individual municipalities are responsible for collecting, storing, and conveying rainfall and snowmelt runoff in a manner that is safe for the public and does not harm the environment.

**2.** In addition, the DNR requires an erosion control plan and permit for all projects that disturb one or more acres of land. The landowner is required to ensure that a site-specific erosion control plan and stormwater management plan are developed and implemented at the construction site. Also, the La Crosse County Subdivision and Platting Ordinance requires subdividers to provide a soil erosion plan subject to Chapter 21 of the La Crosse County Code of Ordinances and a stormwater management plan that meets the appropriate post-construction water quality requirements of NR151 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code and the water quantity requirements set forth in the La Crosse County Code of Ordinances.

### F. Telecommunication Facilities

1. CenturyLink provides the county with local telephone service; long distance service is available through several providers. Charter Communications provides cable television service. CenturyLink, Charter Communications, and Mediacom offer high-speed cable or fiber internet access. There are also an ever-growing number of satellite internet providers that provide internet availability for rural and urban citizens. With the expansion of internet access, residents living throughout specific areas of the county may also be able to receive service from providers that don't primarily serve La Crosse County.

2. The La Crosse area has a strong base of broadband technology. High speed internet access and fiber optic connections are available throughout the La Crosse metro area. The region is connected to the midwestern fiber optic network via CenturyLink. Fiber optics allow for the high-quality transmission of large volumes of information at an affordable rate. However, this technology is not available throughout the entire county and residents in rural areas and outside of the La Crosse metro area have limited capabilities for high-speed internet services. It is anticipated that with the growing distribution and quality of satellite internet access, rural users will have increased internet speeds available to them within upcoming years.

### G. Power Plants, Electricity, and Transmission Lines

1. La Crosse County is served by several electric power utility providers. Xcel Energy and Riverland Energy Cooperative are the two main providers, while others such as Bangor Municipal and Jackson Electric Cooperative serve select areas of the county. The largest power plants are located on French Island in La Crosse and in Genoa. Xcel Energy and We Energies provide natural gas to county residents.

2. The French Island facility is a combination generating plant and resource recovery facility. The plant burns wood waste and processed municipal solid waste, called refuse-derived fuel (RDF) - a burnable fuel produced on-site at a resource recovery facility built specifically for that purpose. The conversion of the French Island facility in the 1980s from burning coal and oil, to burning wood waste and RDF helped extend the life of the plant and maintained reasonable electric rates for customers, while resolving a solid waste disposal problem for La Crosse County. The facility has the capacity to burn 104,000 tons of waste per year. While waste redirect from the county landfill makes up most of the fuel used in this facility, the increasing desire for "green" companies has led to multiple private-sector sources providing waste as well.

3. One of the drawbacks to burning garbage is the impact on air emissions. The refuse to energy facility must meet federal emissions guidelines, and meeting these standards is of critical importance due to the facility location in the city of La Crosse. In November 2002, French Island completed \$10.9 million in improvements to reduce emissions and has operated at 85-90% below previous emissions levels since the improvements were made.

4. Overall, according to Wisconsin's Citizen Utility Board, the electrical system in western Wisconsin is congested and not as robust as in other parts of the state. As the area considers energy needs over this planning horizon, it will be important to coordinate transmission planning with Minnesota and to consider opportunities for utilizing alternative energy sources, such as wind and solar.

5. In 2015 the Badger Coulee Transmission Line Project received approval and underwent construction in 2016. As of December 2018, this project reached “in-service” status. This project is a collaboration between American Transmission Co. (ATC) and Xcel Energy and involved the construction of a 180-mile, 345-kilovolt transmission line from northern La Crosse to northern Dane County. Dairyland Power Cooperative, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency – Wisconsin, and WPPI Energy are also part owners of this portion of the transmission line. The intention of this project was to address and improve the electrical system reliability issues seen locally and throughout the Midwest. The cost of this project was approximately \$580 million to complete construction. ATC and Xcel state that there are significant economic benefits that come from this endeavor which include the offset of the need for lower voltage line upgrades, improved grid access and efficiency, and improved connection to high-quality renewables that exist throughout the grid in the nation’s western wind valley. For more information on this project, please visit <https://www.atc-projects.com/projects/badger-coulee/>.

## H. Libraries

La Crosse County operates five library locations in Bangor, Campbell, Holmen, Onalaska, and West Salem. The City of La Crosse has its own library system, with a main branch in downtown La Crosse and satellite branches in the north and south of the city. In total, there are 12 libraries available for public use within the county as seen in Table 9.

Table 9

Library Name	Address
La Crosse Public Library	800 Main St, La Crosse
Murphy Library (UWL)	1631 Pine St, La Crosse
South Community Library	1307 16 <sup>th</sup> St S, La Crosse
North Community Library	1552 Kane St, La Crosse
Western Technical College Library	304 6 <sup>th</sup> St N, La Crosse
Onalaska Public Library	741 Oak Ave S, Onalaska
F.J Robers Library	2548 Lakeshore Dr, La Crosse
Hazel Brown Leicht Library	201 Neshonoc Rd, West Salem
John Bosshard Memorial Library	1720 Henry Johns Blvd, Bangor
La Crosse County Library	121 Legion St W, Holmen
Todd Wehr Memorial Library (Viterbo)	900 Viterbo Dr, La Crosse



### I. Schools

- 1.** La Crosse County is served by eight school districts: Bangor, Cashton, Holmen, La Crosse, Melrose-Mindoro, Onalaska, West Salem, and Westby.
- 2.** The educational future of La Crosse County is ensured through 10 public high schools (including charter/alternative schools and the Western Wisconsin Technical College), nine public middle schools (including charter/alternative schools) and 27 elementary schools. In addition, the county has 16 private schools that provide additional educational choices for residents.
- 3.** The county also has several post-secondary education schools, including the following:
  - University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL) was founded in 1909 and is now one of the 13 four-year campuses in the University of Wisconsin system.
  - Western Technical College is a public two-year college with a focus on technical education.
  - Viterbo University is a Catholic University founded in the Franciscan tradition that offers a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees.

### J. Police, Fire, and Rescue

- 1.** The La Crosse County Sheriff's Department is located in the La Crosse County Courthouse and Law Enforcement Center and serves the entire county.
- 2.** There are nine Fire Districts in La Crosse County: Bangor, Campbell, Coon Valley, Farmington, Holmen, La Crosse, Onalaska, Shelby, and West Salem.
- 3.** In addition, there are 10 EMS Districts: Bangor, Brice Prairie, Campbell, Coon Valley, Farmington, Holmen, La Crosse, Onalaska, Shelby, and West Salem.
- 4.** The La Crosse County 911 Emergency Dispatch Center is located in the La Crosse County Courthouse and Law Enforcement Center in La Crosse. Over 30 employees provide 24-hour emergency telephone service to everyone in La Crosse County. Using a modern 911 system (E-911), the 911 telecommunicators can send emergency and non-emergency assistance quickly and accurately.
- 5.** In addition to providing emergency telephone answering service, the La Crosse County 911 Emergency Dispatch Center telecommunicators are also radio and multiple computer system operators. This fully integrated system allows the department to provide full emergency and non-emergency service to each of the eight law enforcement departments, the eight Fire Departments, the nine First Responder organizations, and search and rescue teams throughout the entire county.

### K. Health Care

Gundersen and Mayo Clinic health systems offer world-class health care facilities to La Crosse County residents that cover a full range of services.

### L. Child Care Facilities

La Crosse County has many regulated full-day group child-care centers and regulated full-day family child-care homes. A portion of these childcare facilities offer infant care and care during second and third shift. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on childcare throughout the county, making it difficult to put together an accurate picture of the number of establishments in this county during the creation of this plan.

### M. Religious Institutions and Cemeteries

Religious institutions of a variety of denominations are located throughout La Crosse County. The county also has numerous public and private cemeteries, including seven in the West Salem area, six in the Mindoro area, six in the Bangor area, seven in the Holmen area, two in the Onalaska area, and three in the La Crosse area. The locations of these cemeteries are generally available in county plat books, as well as from the county's Historical Society, and through online searches.

### N. Outdoor Recreation

La Crosse County is one of the premier areas in the state for a variety of outdoor recreation activities. The county draws in people from a wide area to utilize the extensive areas and facilities provided for hiking, biking, parks recreation and camping, water sports, fishing, and many other activities. Within the county there are over 100 maintained recreation trails and over 160 maintained public parks.

### O. Timetable for the Expansion of Utilities and Community Facilities

An important part of this planning process is to determine what upgrades or expansions to the county's utilities and community facilities are needed, and when. This analysis will be completed throughout this planning process and upgrades and expansions will be identified as needed.

**07**

# Cultural Resources

**Preservation of historic and cultural resources is important to the vitality of any community. It fosters a sense of pride and provides an important context for social and cultural continuity between the past, present, and future. La Crosse County has a rich cultural history that should be preserved and enhanced whenever possible.**

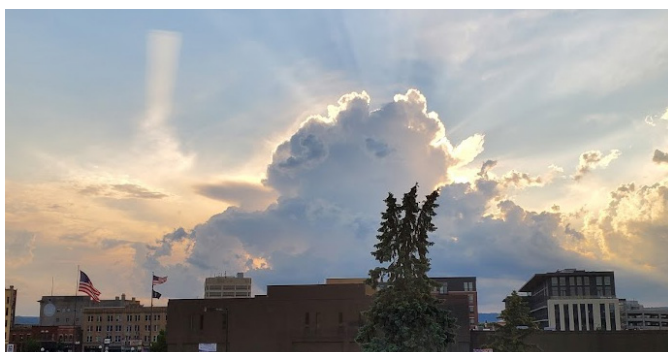
### **A. Historic Properties and Districts**

1. There are numerous historic properties and sites in La Crosse County that are an important part of the county's historical past. Fifty-one of these sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places in La Crosse County and 29 have been designated as local historic sites by the La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission under the Certified Local Government Program. There are many properties in the county that are listed as local historic resources in the Wisconsin Historical Society's Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) database. This database contains information about a wide range of historic properties located throughout the county and the state that create Wisconsin's distinct cultural landscape.
2. The La Crosse County Historical Society operates three facilities in the city of La Crosse that are open to the public: Hixon House, Swarthout Museum, and Riverside Museum. These facilities provide residents and visitors an opportunity to further explore the county's historic past.
3. La Crosse County is home to one National Historic Landmark, the Hamlin Garland House, located in West Salem. The house was owned by Hamlin Garland who was born in West Salem in 1860. An historical plaque commemorates the site, which was designated in 1973.

### **B. Archaeological Resources**

1. Native Americans have inhabited La Crosse County for millennia. Archaeological surveys and excavations have recorded over 900 sites that span the last 13,000 years, and many more sites remain to be found. The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) keeps official records on all reported archaeological sites, and the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center (MVAC) at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse (UWL) also has information on many regional sites. Recorded sites include Paleoindian and Archaic camps, Woodland villages, and burial mounds, and extensive Oneota village complexes with burial and cemetery areas. Portions of some sites are still present even in previously developed areas. Currently 21 archaeological sites in the county are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and many others are no doubt eligible but have not undergone a formal NRHP review and nomination process.

2. All burial sites, regardless of age or cultural affiliation, are protected under Wisconsin's Burial Sites Preservation Law (Wis. Stats. 157. 70). Currently the WHS statewide database lists 112 burial sites in La Crosse County, including both active cemeteries and archaeological burial locations. WHS oversees implementation of the law and is the primary source of information for landowners, units of government, agencies, or anyone who wishes to work within the boundaries of a burial site. Further information is available on the WHS website (<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS15239>).
3. MVAC has displays on local archaeology available at the Archaeology Laboratory on the UWL campus and offers information online and through contacts with staff (<https://www.uwlax.edu/mvac>).



08

# Housing



- 1. There are 49,723 housing units in La Crosse County, housing just over 114,000 people, according to the 2017 American Community Survey.
- 2. Physical characteristics of the housing stock help to define La Crosse County and how it is growing. The housing units within the county are primarily single-family detached homes. However, two unit and 10 or more-unit buildings each make up about 10% of the housing units found in the county. The county’s housing stock has consistently grown over the past 60 years, with between 10 and 20% of the housing stock being built each decade from 1940 to the present.
- 3. The weighted average sale price of an owner-occupied housing unit across municipalities in La Crosse County was about \$230,000 in 2020, according to an analysis by the University of Wisconsin Extension, with substantial increases in home values continuing through the development of this plan. Median household income for La Crosse County was \$57,882 in 2019, which suggests the average housing expense (mortgage and insurance payments and other typical costs) would consume more than 30% of the household income. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines as “affordable” housing that costs no more than 30% of a household’s total monthly gross income. For homeowners, the 30% amount would include the mortgage payment, property taxes, homeowners’ insurance, and any homeowners’ association fees.
- 4. Housing Projections. Overall, La Crosse County is expected to generate demand for over 8,000 new households over the next 20 years. The table (10) below outlines the number of housing units in the county as of 2017, and projected growth to 2025. These projections have been provided by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA). The forecasts have been reached by closely monitoring past growth trends within the county and surrounding areas. The 8,000 estimate comes by multiplying out the expected demand based on the most recent forecasts over the coming two decades.

Table 10.

Total housing units - 2017	49,723
Occupied housing units	46,966
Vacant housing units	2,757
2020 Projected Total housing units	51,291
2025 Projected Total Housing Units	52,710

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Esri forecasts for 2020 and 2025



**09**

# Transportation

**This chapter provides an inventory of the highway, freight, passenger, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian systems and facilities in the planning area. It also addresses existing operating conditions, anticipated future operating conditions, and system forecasts if available.**

### **National Highway System**

**1.** The National Highway System (NHS) is a system of federal-aid highways deemed important to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility. The NHS is composed of interstates, other principal arterials, the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET), major STRAHNET connectors, and intermodal connectors. In the planning area, roads designated as part of the NHS include:

- Interstates: I-90.
- Other Principal Arterials: USH 53 (includes Copeland Ave / Rose St.; 3rd St / 4th St.), USH 14/61 (includes parts of Cass St. and Cameron Ave.; and all South Ave. and Mormon Coulee Rd.), STH 16 (includes La Crosse St.), STH 157 (including Main St. between STH 35 and USH 53), STH 35 between STH 157 in Onalaska and I-90, STH 33 between 3rd St. and 32nd St., all of Gillette St., and all Losey Blvd.
- Intermodal Connectors: Clinton St. between Rose St. and Bainbridge St., Bainbridge St. between Clinton St. and the F. J. Robers intermodal facility, King St. between Front St. and 4th St., Front St. between King St. and Cass St., Cass St. between Front St. and 2nd St., and 2nd St. between Cass St. and King St.

### **Other Highways**

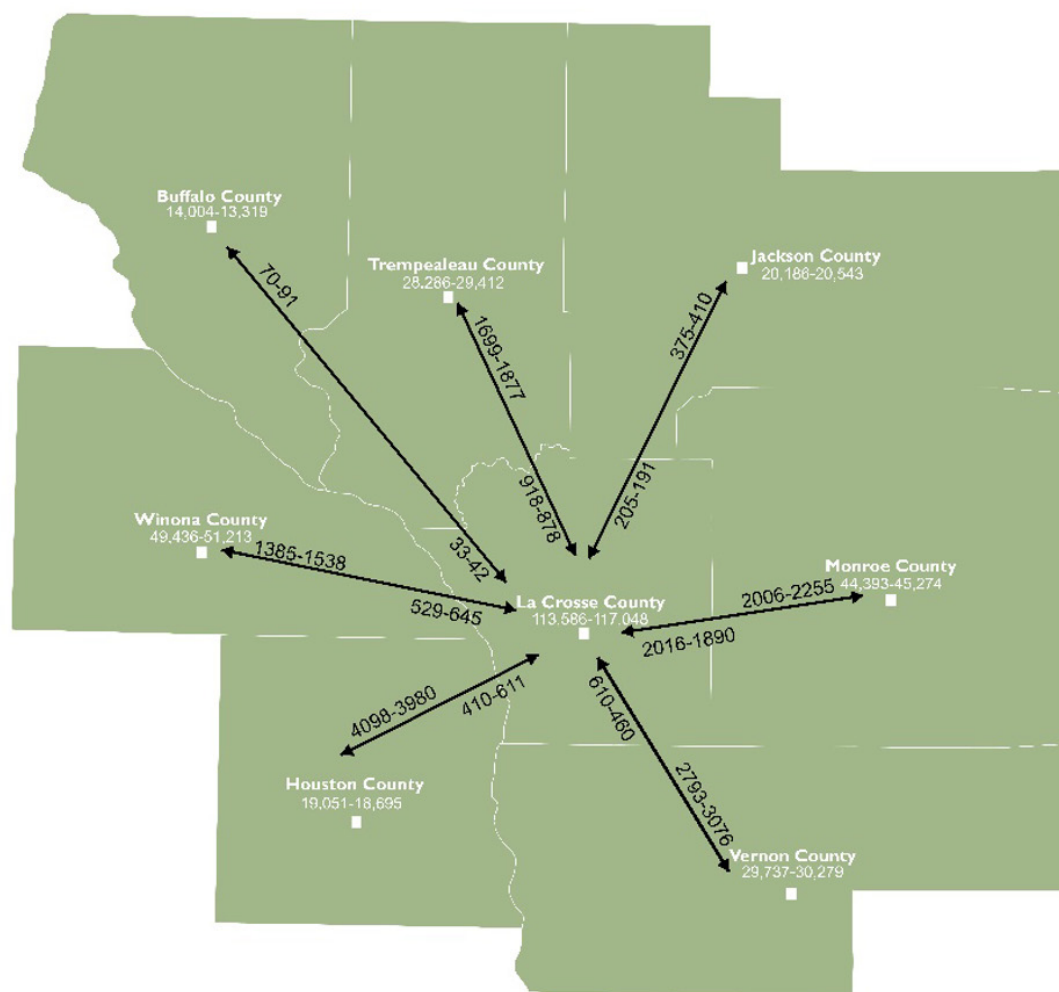
Local and rural minor collector roads make up the balance of the 1,128 centerline miles in the planning area, totaling nearly 723 miles or 64%. Improvements on these roads are funded through the capital improvement budgets of the responsible local unit of government.

### **Commuting Patterns**

County-to-county worker flows are compiled from responses to decennial Census and American Community Survey (ACS) questions regarding where people lived and worked. Figure 1 represents the most recent data available and illustrates the range in the number of workers 16 and older that live and work in the same county and that commute into and out of La Crosse County. The numbers are expressed as a range in the number of commuters so that the margin of error is considered.

Figure 1: County-to-county worker flows for workers 16 years of age and older, 2009-2013.

NOTE: Data are represented as a range to consider the margins of error.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, the change between the 2009-2013 and the 2011-2015, 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey.

### Freight Systems

Freight movement within and through the planning area occurs via truck, rail, water, and air. Barge freight is moved through the planning area on the Mississippi and Black rivers as well as to and from intermodal facilities and two municipal docks (Isle La Plume and South Copeland); rail freight is carried by the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad; truck freight is moved by many over-the-road freight carriers primarily on U. S. and state highways; and air freight is carried into and out of the La Crosse Regional Airport on commercial passenger air carriers. Service costs per pound of freight carried vary widely by mode of transport. Water transport is the cheapest per pound and has the most capacity, followed by rail, then truck, and finally with air transport being the most expensive. In general, low-value, high-weight commodities are transported by water and high-value, low-weight commodities are transported by air. This chapter provides an inventory of the highway, rail, waterway, and air networks and facilities that facilitate freight movement through the planning area.

### Truck Freight Networks

1. The truck freight networks discussed in this section include the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN) and the National Multimodal Freight Network (NMFN) — both established by the FAST Act — state-designated truck routes, and local truck routes.
2. Federal and state truck routes are designed to facilitate the movement of freight on our highway systems. Criteria such as freight flows, critical commerce corridors, impedances to travel, and access, continuity, and connections to important freight transportation facilities inform the decision to include a highway in a freight network. At the local level, truck routes may more often be identified to restrict truck traffic to certain roads and away from residential streets.

### Rail Networks and Services

Rail service in the area is provided by two Class I20 railroads: Burlington Northern & Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway and Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway. Both railroads connect the Twin Cities and Chicago through La Crosse.

### Waterway Facilities

The Mississippi Valley Division (MVD)—one of nine divisions that make up the United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE)—manages the entire length of the Mississippi River from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. The MVD consists of six interdependent districts—St. Paul, Rock Island, St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg, and New Orleans—responsible for maintaining navigation channels for the transport of goods. The St. Paul District has jurisdiction over 284 miles of the Upper Mississippi River. The district is responsible for maintaining a 9-foot-deep navigation channel—243.6 miles on the Mississippi River and 40.6 miles on the Minnesota, St. Croix, and Black Rivers—and the 12 uppermost navigation pools, and locks and dams from Guttenberg, Iowa north to Upper St. Anthony's Falls in Minneapolis, Minn. The planning area includes the southern half of navigation pool 7, which extends from Lock & Dam 7 (LD 7) located north of La Crescent near Dresbach upstream to LD 6 near Trempealeau; LD 7 located on Mississippi River mile 702.5 in the town of Dresbach; and the northern half of navigation pool 8, which extends from LD 8 near Genoa, upstream to LD 7. LD 7 was constructed with a lock 110 feet wide by 600 feet long and a concrete dam 940 feet long. It was placed into operation in April of 1937.

#### 1. Port of La Crosse

The Port of La Crosse stretches for about four miles from Black River mile 1.2 south to Mississippi River mile 698 just beyond the Harold E. Craig Fleeting site. It handles nearly 1 million tons of commodities each year, including liquid, cement, grain, and general bulk products. It also supports recreational boating and fishing and an active excursion boat trade, with tours provided on the La Crosse Queen, Julia Belle Swain, and Mississippi Explorer. Freight is transported on the Mississippi and Black rivers on barges that are towed up and down river by a tug. The average tow on the Upper Mississippi River is 15 barges consisting of 5 barges tied together and moving three abreast. Barges are typically pushed because it provides more control and allows more barges to be moved at once. A typical barge carries 1,500 tons of cargo, which is 15 times greater than a rail car and 60 times greater than a trailer truck.

The transfer of commodities between barge and truck occurs at several locations along the Mississippi and Black rivers. The F. J. Roberts Co. transload facility also provides transfers between barge and Canadian Pacific rail. The rivers are also home to several fleeting sites, which allow barges to be set aside while they wait to be loaded and unloaded.

## Passenger Services

Passenger services in the planning area include passenger rail service provided by Amtrak, intercity bus service provided by Jefferson Lines, and air passenger service provided by air carriers serving the La Crosse Regional Airport.

### 1. Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago (TCMC) Intercity Passenger Rail Service

In 2012, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the La Crosse Area Planning Committee requested Amtrak to complete a study to determine the feasibility of adding a second daily train between St. Paul/Minneapolis Minn., Milwaukee, and Chicago, IL with stops in La Crosse.

The feasibility report (2015) recommended an initial start-up service between Chicago and St. Paul Union Depot, now commonly referred to as the TCMC (Amtrak second train). Since 2015, additional studies have been completed addressing purpose and need, alternatives analysis, environmental analysis and a service development plan. In the Summer of 2021, with legislative and funding approvals received from the respective states the TCMC is scheduled to begin service in 2024 (or sooner). The \$53 million TCMC Project will add an additional round trip train on the existing Amtrak Empire Builder route improving mobility and increase reliable travel options between the economic hubs of St. Paul, Minnesota; La Crosse and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Chicago, Illinois.

### 2. Commercial Air Passenger Service

The La Crosse Regional Airport (LSE) is categorized by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a non-hub primary commercial service facility. This means that the airport is publicly owned, receives scheduled passenger service, and has more than 10,000 passenger boardings but less than 0.05% of all U. S. boardings each year. LSE is a self-sufficient entity of the City of La Crosse. It sits on 1,380 acres on French Island and boasts the third longest runway in Wisconsin. Currently, LSE provides non-stop service to Chicago, IL, on American Airlines and to Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn., and Detroit, Mich., on Delta Air Lines. Other air carriers include Allegiant Air, Ameristar Air, Envoy Air, Miami Air International, SkyWest Airlines, Sun Country Airlines, Swift Air, and USA Jet Airlines.

### 3. For-Hire Transportation Services

Taxi companies and transportation network companies (TNCs) are the two types of for-hire (and for-profit) transportation services that operate in the La Crosse area. (Subsidized, specialized transportation services will be discussed in the next section, Local Transit Networks & Services.)

The four major cab companies that operate in the La Crosse area—CTS Taxi, Coulee Region Taxi, Bullet Cab, and Bee Cab—are pre-booked services and assign rides to drivers as the requests are made. Requests are made by phone and rides are not shared.

Uber and Lyft are TNCs that have been operating in the La Crosse area since 2017. TNCs are different from traditional taxi service in that they utilize technology (app-based assignments) to gain efficiencies, they offer shared rides, and the drivers own their own vehicle. The original prediction was that TNCs would reduce the

need for personal car ownership and ultimately remove cars from the road, but a study commissioned by Uber and Lyft of six major metropolitan areas showed that their vehicles were responsible for significant portions of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) within the cores of those regions and that on average only 54 to 62% of the VMT had a rider. The rest of the miles traveled were spent driving between assignments.

The impact that Uber and Lyft have had on transit ridership, vehicle miles traveled, and traffic congestion has not been studied, but they appear to have had no significant impact and serve more to fill a gap in services.

#### **4. Airport Shuttle Service**

GO Airport Shuttle is a shared-ride airport shuttle service between Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport (MSE) and various La Crosse area locations.

#### **5. Local Transit Networks & Services**

Transit services in the planning area include fixed-route city bus, intercity rural regional bus, shared-ride taxi, and specialized transportation for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

#### **6. La Crosse City Bus**

The La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) is the fixed-route transit provider for the city of La Crosse. The MTU operates five core routes, two circulator routes, and other routes that provide connections to neighboring communities and safe transportation between the campuses and downtown La Crosse.

#### **7. Safe Ride**

Safe Ride is a state-funded service designed to reduce drinking and driving by college students. During the Fall and Spring semesters, Safe Ride operates between downtown La Crosse and the college campuses every 15 minutes from 10 p. m. to 3 a. m. on Thursdays and Fridays and from 9 p. m. to 3 a. m. on Saturdays.

#### **8. Intercity Rural Regional Bus Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit**

Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit, or “the SMRT bus” as it’s locally called, is an intercity rural regional bus service operating in Crawford, Vernon, Monroe, and La Crosse counties. Currently SMRT offers deviated, fixed-route service Monday through Friday on its four routes: Red (Prairie du Chien-La Crosse), Yellow (Viroqua-La Crosse), Blue (Viroqua-La Crosse), and Green (Tomah-La Crosse). All buses include bike carriers and are wheelchair accessible. All trips regardless of origin or destination are \$3. Punch cards are available for a discounted rate.

**9. Shared-Ride Taxi**

Onalaska-Holmen-West Salem Public Transit (OHWSPT) provides door-to-door, shared-ride van transportation for trips within and between the city of Onalaska, the village of Holmen, and the village of West Salem. Rides are not accepted for origins or destinations outside of these communities.

**10. Specialized Transportation**

Specialized transportation for the elderly and persons with disabilities is available through four main avenues: 1) La Crosse County Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC); 2) La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility; 3) managed care organizations; and 4) private pay or personal vehicle.

**11. Aging and Disability Resource Center of La Crosse County**

The Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of La Crosse County manages the La Crosse County Minibus program, which provides reservation-based, curb-to-curb bus transportation to La Crosse County residents aged 60 and older and/or have a disability. All vehicles are wheelchair accessible.

**12. Trails**

The planning area currently has over 87 miles of trails - of which about 12 miles are for walking only. The nearly 76 miles of shared trails include about 22 miles of the unpaved Great River State Trail and La Crosse River State Trail. These trails are managed by the DNR and require a state trail pass for bicyclists 16 and older. Walkers, cross-country skiers, and snowshoers do not need to purchase a trail pass. Funds from snowmobile registration fees allow snowmobilers to use the trails without purchasing a trail pass. The remaining 54 miles of shared trails only allow bicyclists and pedestrians. Trail miles increased about 13% since 2015 (Coulee Vision 2040), with 57% of the trail development occurring in the cities of Onalaska and La Crosse.

**13. Rustic Roads**

While the county's transportation system supports all economic activity, some roadways in La Crosse County have been designated to promote tourism and related economic activity. These Rustic Roads are scenic, lightly traveled country roads that have outstanding natural features along their borders such as rugged terrain, native vegetation, native wildlife, or include open areas with rich agricultural vistas. La Crosse County has three designated Rustic Roads:

- Rustic Road 26: County MM, beginning at the intersection of USH 14/61 to its intersection with USH 14 and USH 61 (5.3 miles). La Crosse County MM combines beautiful scenery and history. It offers the traveler views of the Mississippi River Valley and the Mormon Coulee Creek Valley. Brinkman's Ridge provides a wide panorama of the Mississippi River, including the Goose Island wildlife refuge. This route also passes by the Oehler Mill site, first built in 1854, which features a 111-year-old root cellar.

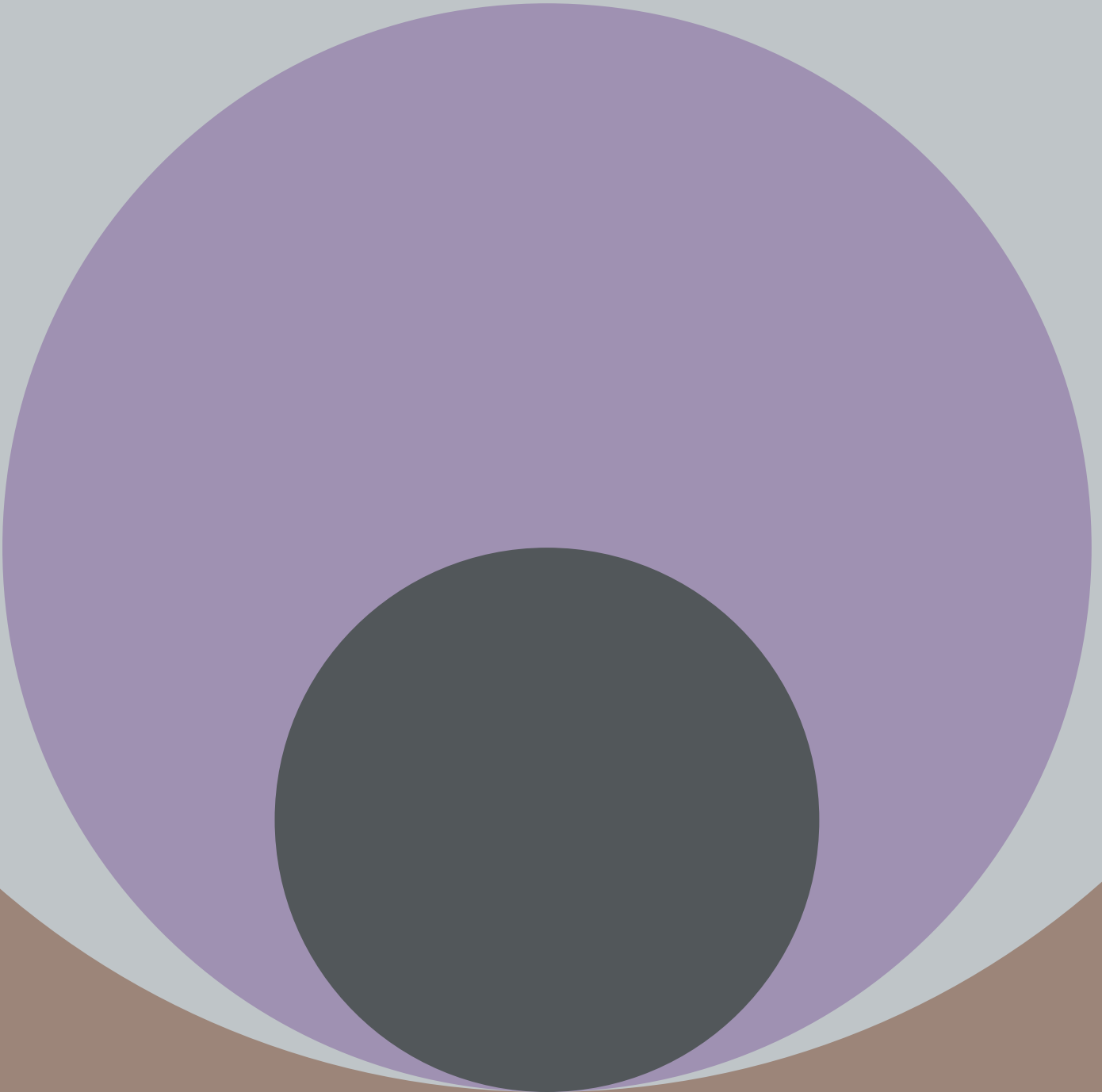


- Rustic Road 31: R31 travels on several streets in the Village of West Salem to County Highway C, north to WIS 16, then loops around Swarthout Lakeside Park, back to WIS 16 (2.6 miles). Rustic Road travelers can view such historic spots as the Gullickson Octagon House, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Hamlin Garland Homestead, where the late Pulitzer prize-winning author, who was born near West Salem, did much of his writing.
- Rustic Road 64: Northwest of Holmen, R64 makes a loop off US 53/STH 93, following Amsterdam Prairie Road and Old 93 (2.7 miles). Located near the Van Loon Wildlife Area, this route offers a rather unique combination of historic transportation architecture and scenic views. From Amsterdam Prairie Road, it is possible to enter historic McGilvray Road, also known as 7-Bridges Road, by foot. McGilvray Road is on the National Register of Historic Places because of its rare bowstring arch bridge construction.



**10**

# Sustainability



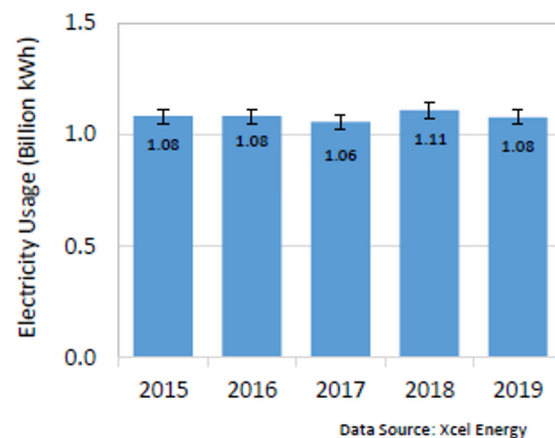
The La Crosse County Board adopted a Strategic Plan for Sustainability in 2009 that included a program to measure a series of sustainability indicators on an ongoing basis. As part of the plan, an annual report is presented to the county board. The report tracks progress or setbacks on the indicators, which include community-wide and county government operations only indicators. On each of the county government operations indicators, the county has made steady progress since 2007 (the base year for most indicators). A detailed analysis is available in the Sustainability Indicators 2020 Report, which can be viewed here: <https://data-hub-lacrossecounty.hub.arcgis.com/>. The report is prepared for the county by Sustainability Analytics, a La Crosse-based environmental consulting firm. Below are summaries of the data on the most significant county-wide indicators.

#### Community-Wide Indicators

##### Electricity Usage

Community-wide, La Crosse County used 1.08 billion kWh of electricity during 2019 - down from 1.11 billion kWh in 2018 (-2.9%, see Figure 2). 2020 information was not available in time for this report, and 2015 is the first year for which information is available. Note that year-to-year differences may fall within the margin of error (+/-3%) specified by Xcel Energy. Of the county's total 2019 electricity usage, 70% was used by businesses and 30% by residences.

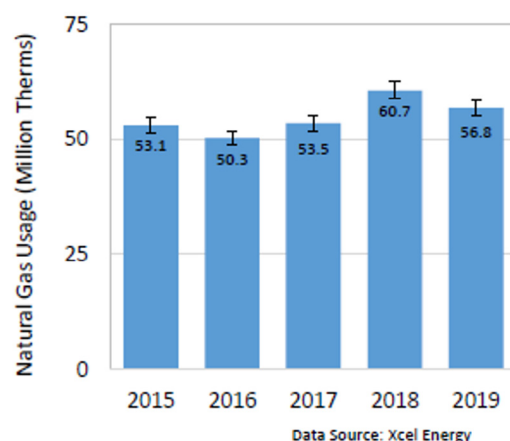
Figure 2: La Crosse County Community-Wide Annual Electricity Usage



##### Natural Gas Usage

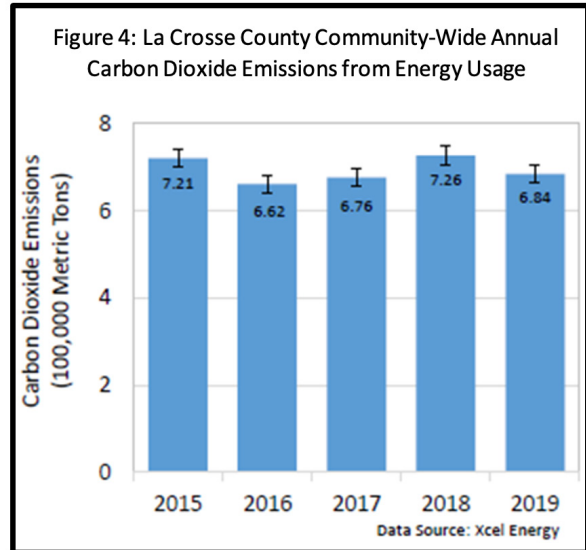
Community-wide, La Crosse County used 56.8 million therms of natural gas during 2019 - down from 60.7 million therms in 2018 (-6.3%, see Figure 3). 2020 information was not available in time for this report, and 2015 is the first year for which information is available. Of the county's total natural gas usage in 2019, 63% was used by businesses and 37% by residences.

Figure 3: La Crosse County Community-Wide Annual Natural Gas Usage



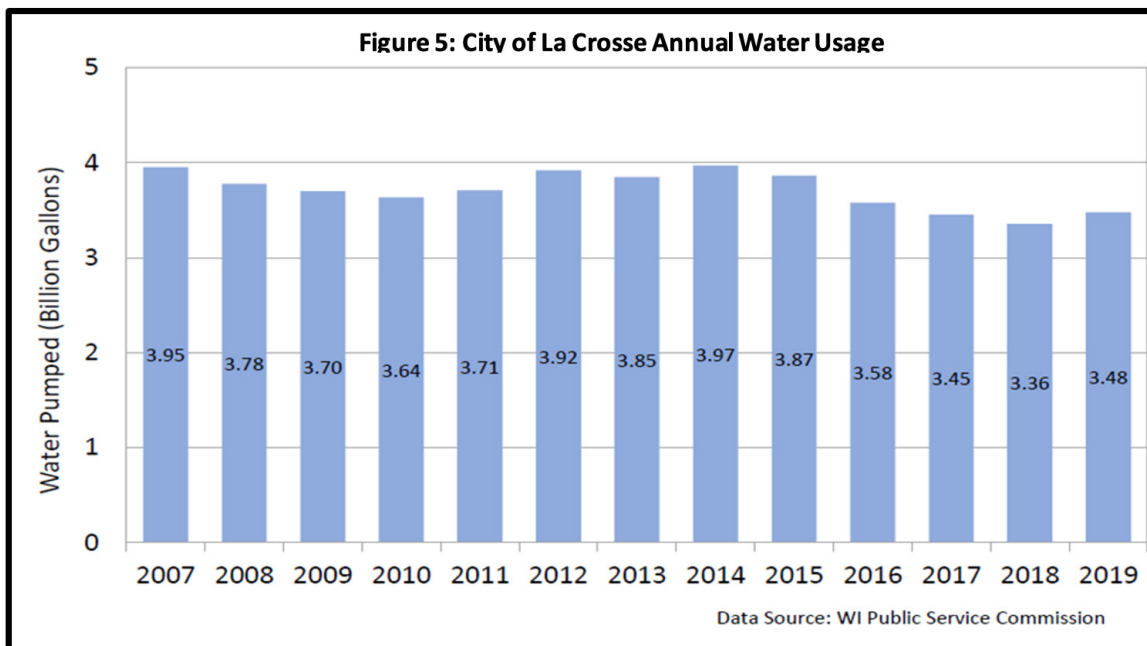
### Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Energy Usage

Community-wide, electricity and natural gas usage in La Crosse County during 2019 was responsible for 683,899 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions – down from 725,918 metric tons in 2018 (-5.8%, see Figure 4). 2020 information was not available in time for this report, and 2015 is the first year for which information is available. Note that year-to-year differences may fall within the margin of error (+/- 3%) specified by Xcel Energy. Of the county's total carbon dioxide emissions from electricity and natural gas usage in 2019, businesses were responsible for 67% and residences for 33%.



### Water Usage

This indicator tracks the total amount of water pumped annually by the City Water Utility's wells. It includes both metered usage and unmetered usage/losses such as main breaks, service leaks, system flushing, and fire suppression. The City Water Utility's wells provided 3.48 billion gallons of water in 2019 – down from 3.95 billion gallons in 2007 (-12.0%), but up from 3.36 billion gallons in 2018 (+3.6%; see Figure 5). Total water usage is influenced by rainfall amounts during the growing season, as more pumped water is used for landscape irrigation during periods of low rainfall.



### Solid Waste Generation & Diversion

Solid waste managed by La Crosse County enters one of three waste streams: deposition in the La Crosse County Landfill, incineration at Xcel Energy's Waste-to-Energy facility on French Island, or recycling. Recycled quantities include materials diverted for recycling at the landfill - shingles, concrete, tires, scrap metal, yard waste and wood waste.

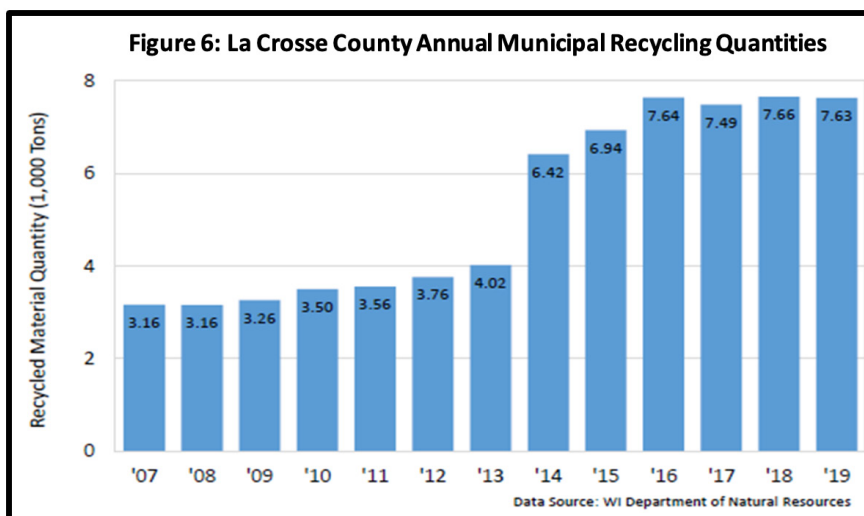
In total, La Crosse County handled 138,133 tons of solid waste in 2020 – up from 123,274 tons in 2007 (+12.1%), and up from 129,673 tons in 2019 (+6.5%). The COVID-19 pandemic caused substantially higher citizen usage of the county solid waste system, which explains the increased amount of solid waste generated in 2020. Economic recession may explain the relatively low quantity of solid waste generated in 2009 and the subsequent increasing trend.

Of the total solid waste handled in 2020, 63% was deposited into the landfill, 20.8% was incinerated to produce electricity, and 16.2% was recycled. Roof damage caused by storms resulted in large quantities of shingles being received by the county solid waste system in 2020, which explains the increased quantity of recycled material. The 2020 total diversion rate (i. e. the sum of the % incinerated, and the % recycled) was 37%, down from 41.4% in 2007, but up from 33.5% in 2019. Waste from La Crosse County incinerated at French Island was used to produce an estimated 19.6 million kWh of electricity in 2020, enough to supply approximately 2,153 households

### Municipal Recycling Collection

This indicator tracks quantities of recyclable materials collected through curbside and drop off collection methods by all municipalities within La Crosse County. Materials include paper products (newspaper, corrugated, magazines), containers (aluminum, steel, bi-metal, plastic, glass) and polystyrene foam packaging.

Recycling collection quantities have increased significantly since 2007. Together, the county's municipalities collected 7,632 tons of materials for recycling in 2019 –up from 3,160 tons in 2007 (+141.5%), but down slightly from 7,657 tons in 2018 (-0.3%; see Figure 6). Information for 2020 was unavailable in time for this report. The increase in recycled quantities between 2013 and 2014 coincide with the initiation of “single stream” collection processes and distribution of larger storage containers to residents in the Cities of La Crosse and Onalaska.



**11**

# Floodplains



**Floodplains are land areas that have been or may be covered by floodwater during the “regional flood”. The regional flood is a flood determined to be representative of large floods known to have occurred in Wisconsin or which may be expected to occur on a particular lake, river or stream. Floodplains are identified and mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The nation’s annual flood recovery costs are high and the human hardship beyond this is immeasurable. It is for this reason that the federal, state, and local governments encourage hazard mitigation planning that discourages floodplain development. Counties, cities, and villages are responsible for administering floodplain zoning in accordance with regulatory standards of Chapter NR116 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code and the standards of the National Flood Insurance Program.**

- 1.** Floodplains in La Crosse County are located adjacent to river corridors, Lake Onalaska, and along the east side of Brice Prairie in the Town of Onalaska.
- 2.** More frequent heavy downpours have led to increased demand for stormwater infrastructure repairs, flood improvement strategies and conservation practice installation in La Crosse County.
- 3.** Extreme weather events in La Crosse County have become a common occurrence over the last several decades. These large storms often leave municipalities and private landowners with damage to dams, roads, bridges, crop fields, waterways or other infrastructure. In the wake of these storms, community members regularly seek help in the form of technical and financial assistance. However, when widespread flooding and erosion occur, municipal budgets often fall short, and staff struggle to keep up with requests for assistance.
- 4.** The Land Conservation Department has observed the following changes because of more frequent extreme weather events:
  - Failure of dams.
  - Increased questions and concerns about drainage along roads, driveways, buildings, and farm fields.
  - Revised rainfall and erodibility factors for models used to predict runoff.
  - Greater demand for permits and technical assistance related to flooded sites or sites where new springs have emerged.
  - Additional technical requests for strategies on how to infiltrate more water.
  - Accelerated recession rates on streambanks.
  - More inquiries about wetlands and tile drainage.
  - A general increase in demand for cover crops, waterways, grade stabilization structures, buffers and other conservation practices.



**5.** Funding appropriated to improve stormwater infrastructure, accumulate soil organic matter, and install more conservation practices will aid in curbing this problem. Specific solutions include:

- Construct more dams and waterways.
- Stabilize streambanks and create more watershed storage.
- Promote rotational grazing and other innovative animal waste recycling technologies.
- Install more cover crops.
- Restore wetlands.
- Research crop genetics and new cropping systems that better cycle nutrients.
- Improve stormwater infrastructures and capacities.
- Promote more infiltration.
- Encourage more recycling and reclamation.
- Provide incentives to build soil organic matter.

**6.** Funding stormwater infrastructure upgrades, flood improvement projects and conservation practices will promote water storage, reduce erosion, and build organic matter. These are some of the most effective ways we can prepare for future extreme weather events.



**12**

# Economic Development

Economic development is measured by a sustained increase in prosperity and quality of life through innovation, lowered transaction costs, and the utilization of capabilities towards the responsible production and diffusion of goods and services.

Economic development incorporates who is working in the county, what industries they are employed in, the companies or agencies that are employing them, where those companies are located, and the money they are making and contributing to the La Crosse County economy. The chapter provides an overview of the statistical performance of those functions in the county.

La Crosse County Industries

Chart 7 illustrates a first glance of La Crosse County's jobs market, showing the breakout of jobs by sector as percentage of total jobs.

Chart 7.

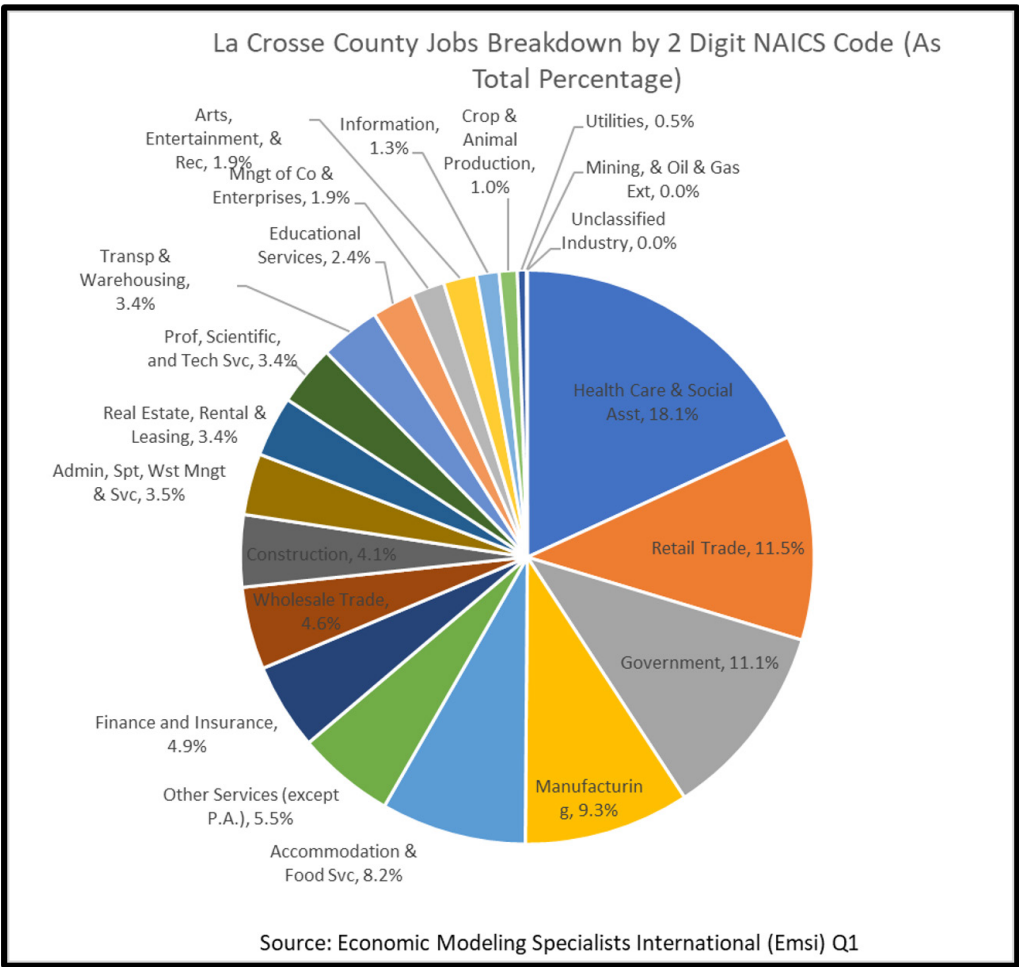
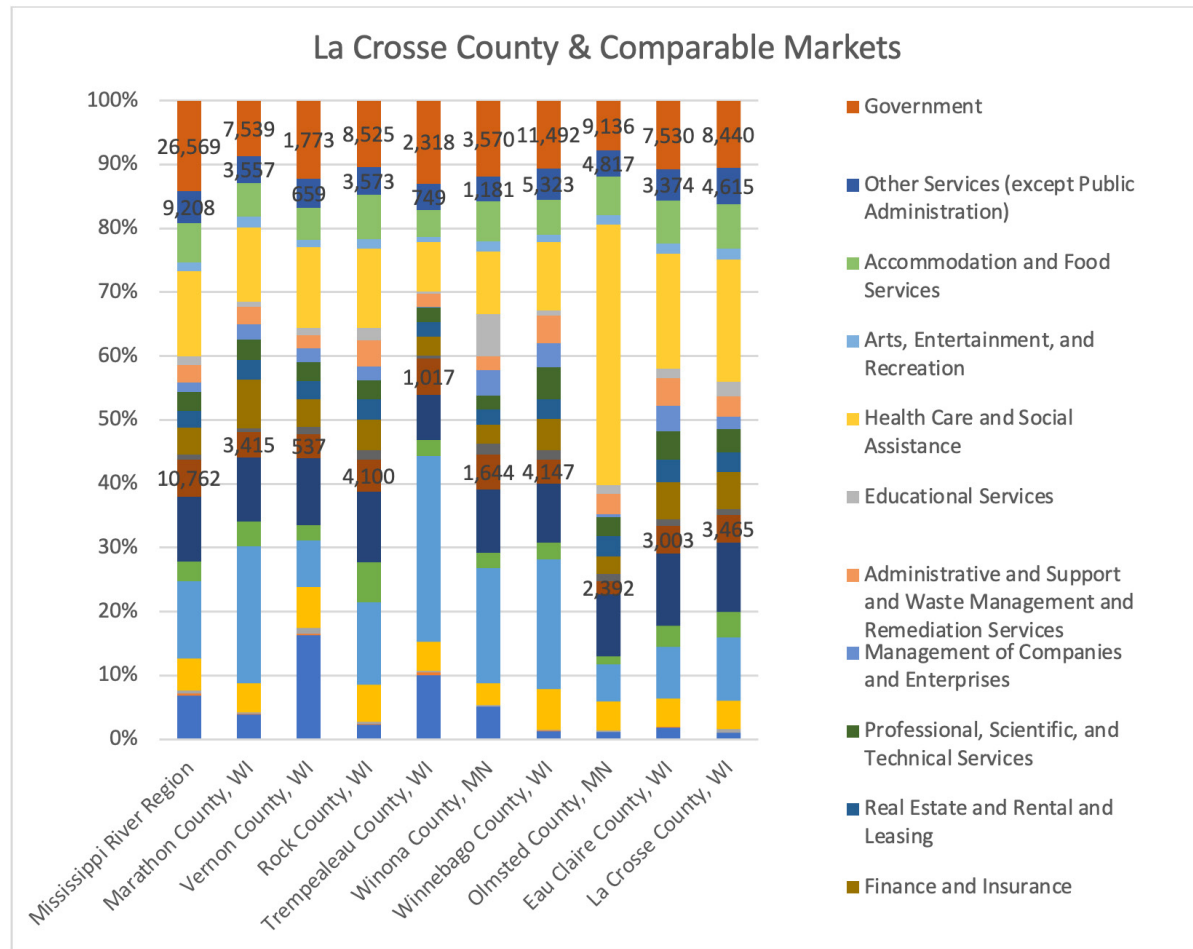


Chart 7.



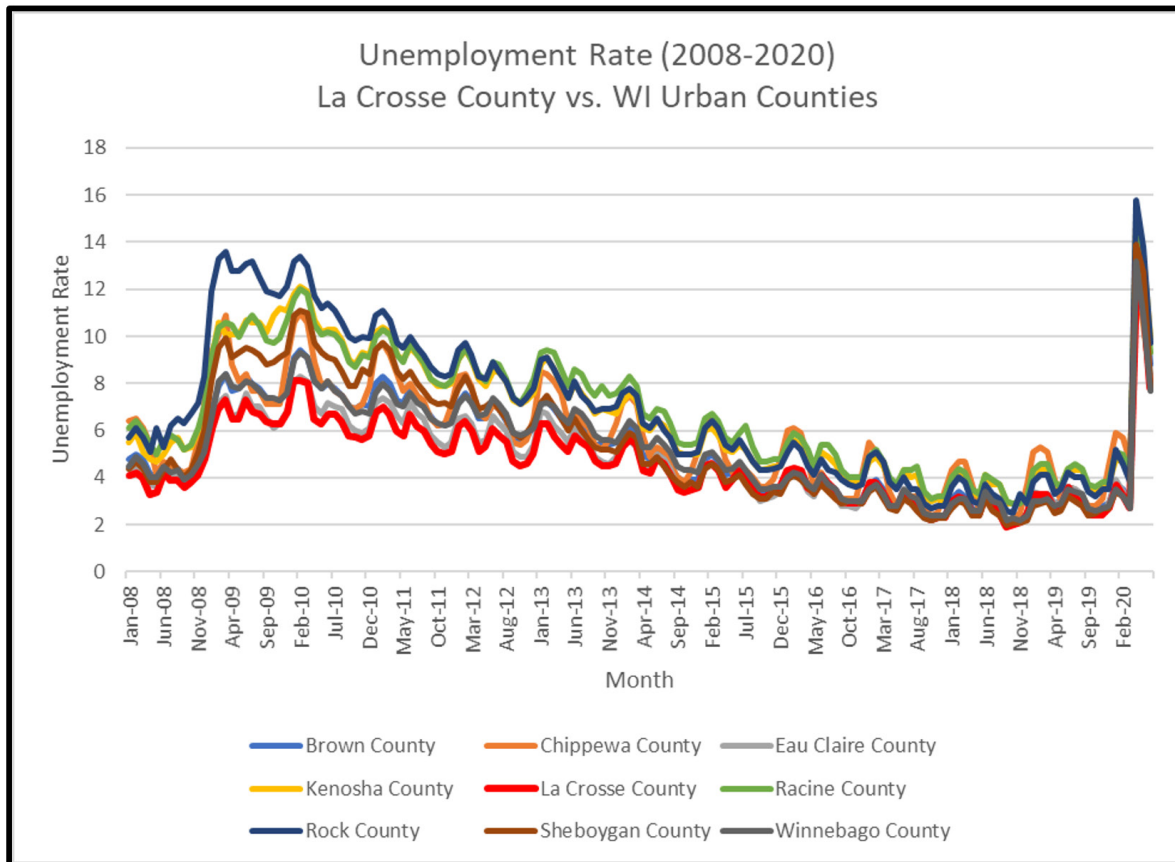
Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International (Emsi) Q1 2018 Data Set.

Figure 7 compares La Crosse County with similar sized Counties in Wisconsin, Minnesota; as well as neighboring counties and the Mississippi River Regional Planning County membership area.

As illustrated, La Crosse County has large numbers of jobs in health care, retail trade, government, and manufacturing; with these four categories making up approximately 50% of the jobs in La Crosse County. This mix impacts La Crosse County's unemployment rates as different industries see varying impacts to unemployment based on local, regional, and national issues.

One snapshot illustrating the current condition of a local economy is to consider conditions such as unemployment and labor market participation.

Graph 3.



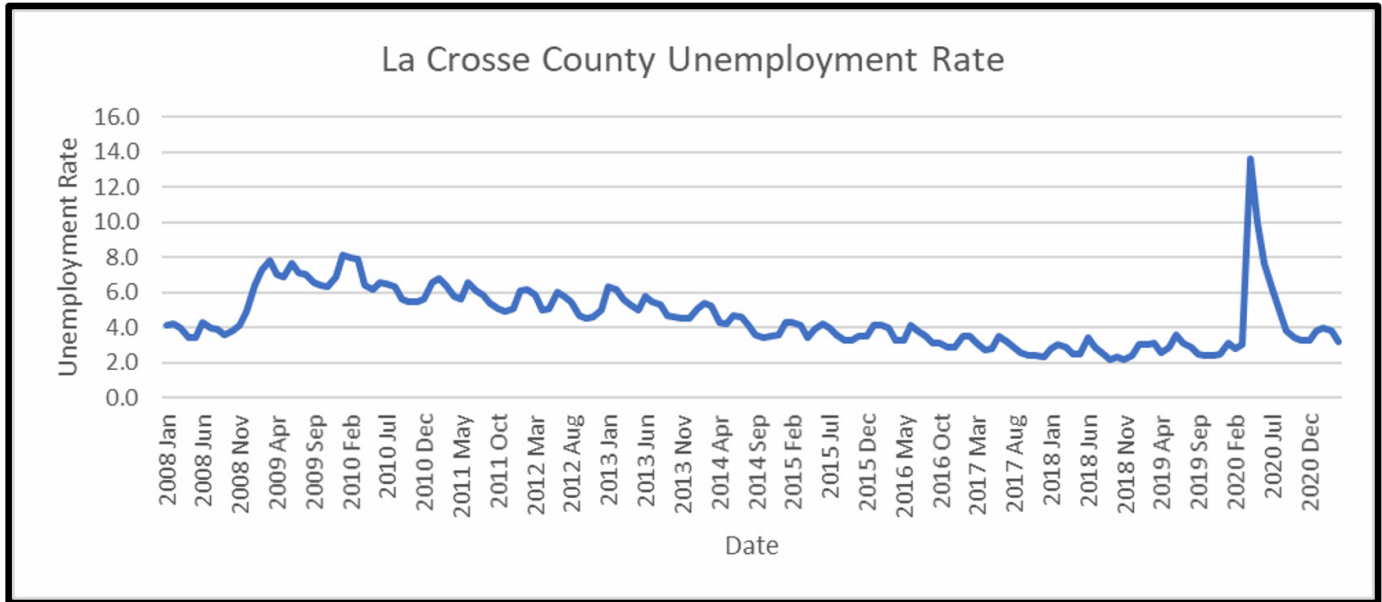
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics – Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Graph 3 compares La Crosse County's unemployment rate between 2008 and 2020, with other urban counties in Wisconsin. The heavy red line indicates La Crosse County's unemployment rate. Seasonal fluctuations as well as national economic periods affect the various counties in relatively synchronous waves, largely resulting from how their individual industry makeups fared during economic up swings and downturns.

The "Great Recession" typically defined around the 2008-2010 timeframe impacted Wisconsin's urban counties by increased unemployment. However, counties such as Marathon and Rock and Winnebago saw greater increases in unemployment during these periods likely due to their heavier reliance on manufacturing jobs than counties such as La Crosse and Eau Claire, which predominantly rank lowest of the counties listed.

However, the global pandemic of 2020 severely spiked unemployment, as also illustrated in Graph 3. Luckily, the pandemic-related unemployment spike was not long lasting and, as illustrated in Graph 4, begins to trend below 4% by Fall of 2020.

Graph 4.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics – Local Area Unemployment Statistics

### Workforce

Workforce is, and will continue to be, a substantial challenge to our local economy, just as it is across the country. In 2017, the 7 Rivers Alliance led the effort to develop the Workforce Innovation for a Strong Economy (WISE) Plan. This plan predicted that the net worker need over the 10-year period will be 15,321. Therefore, the region will need to retain (slowing the projected out-migration and retirements) or attract 1,500-2,000 more workers each year for the next decade just to keep up.

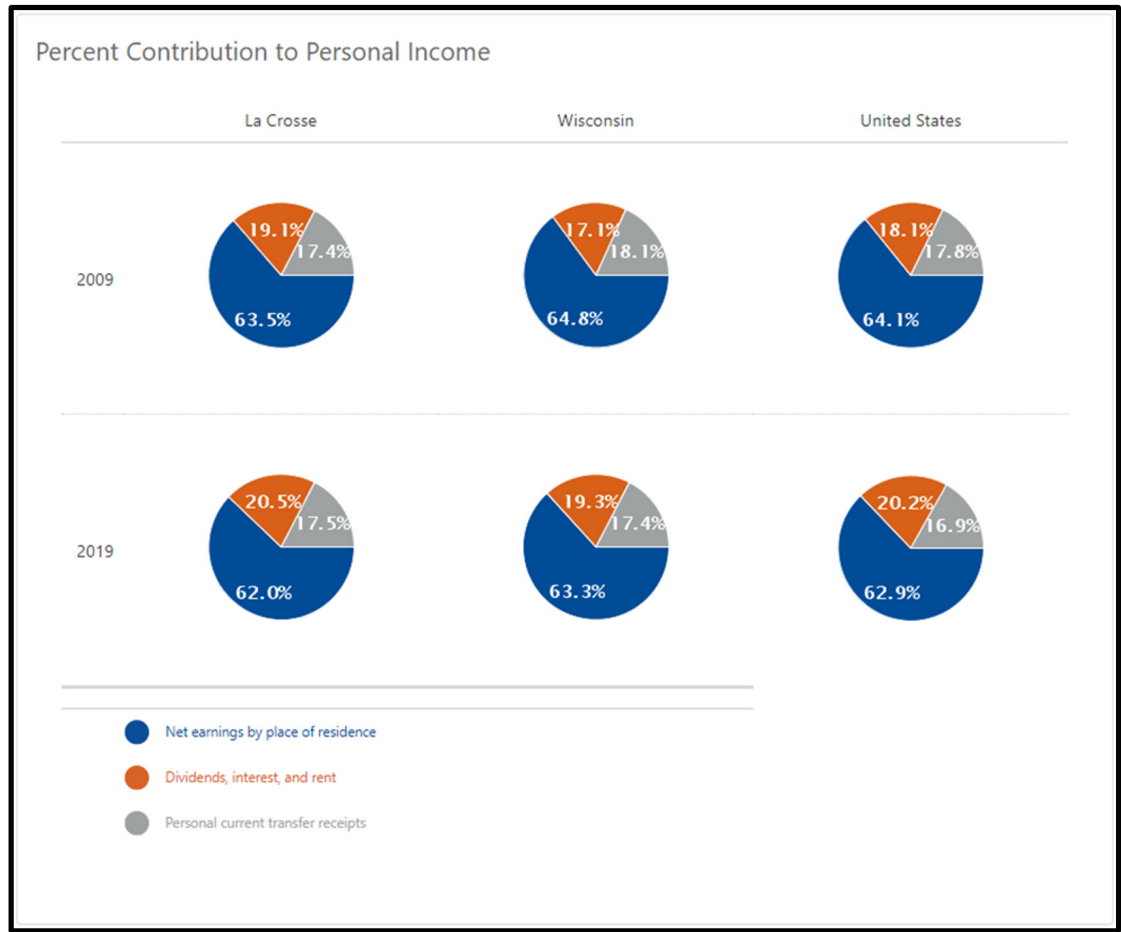
As baby boomers continue to retire, workforce participation rates continue to decline, and birthrates continue to be low, there will not be enough people to fill all open jobs in our county if current trends persist. There are already plenty of examples of businesses needing to turn down work or slow expansion plans due to the inability to find enough workers. This trend is sure to cause issues with access to goods and services, and therefore quality of life, for everyone. For this reason, many economic development organizations across the country are starting to prioritize workforce attraction and quality of life initiatives.

### Employee Wages

One issue that impacts La Crosse County residents is the per capita income of residents in the county. The following data acquired from the Bureau of Economic Analysis illustrates La Crosse County's personal income comparing 2009 with 2019. The greatest gains in personal income have been experienced through dividends, interest earnings and rent. Unfortunately, between 2009 and 2019 net earnings have not increased in La Crosse relative to personal income, an issue we also see overall in Wisconsin and collectively in the United States. This seems counter-intuitive to the issue of labor shortages and low unemployment, as it seems these conditions would spur greater net earnings for employees.



Figure 8.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.



The United Way ALICE report determines a cost-of-living expense for many counties in Wisconsin. For 2018, the ALICE cost of living for a single person, and a family of four is as detailed below in Table 11:

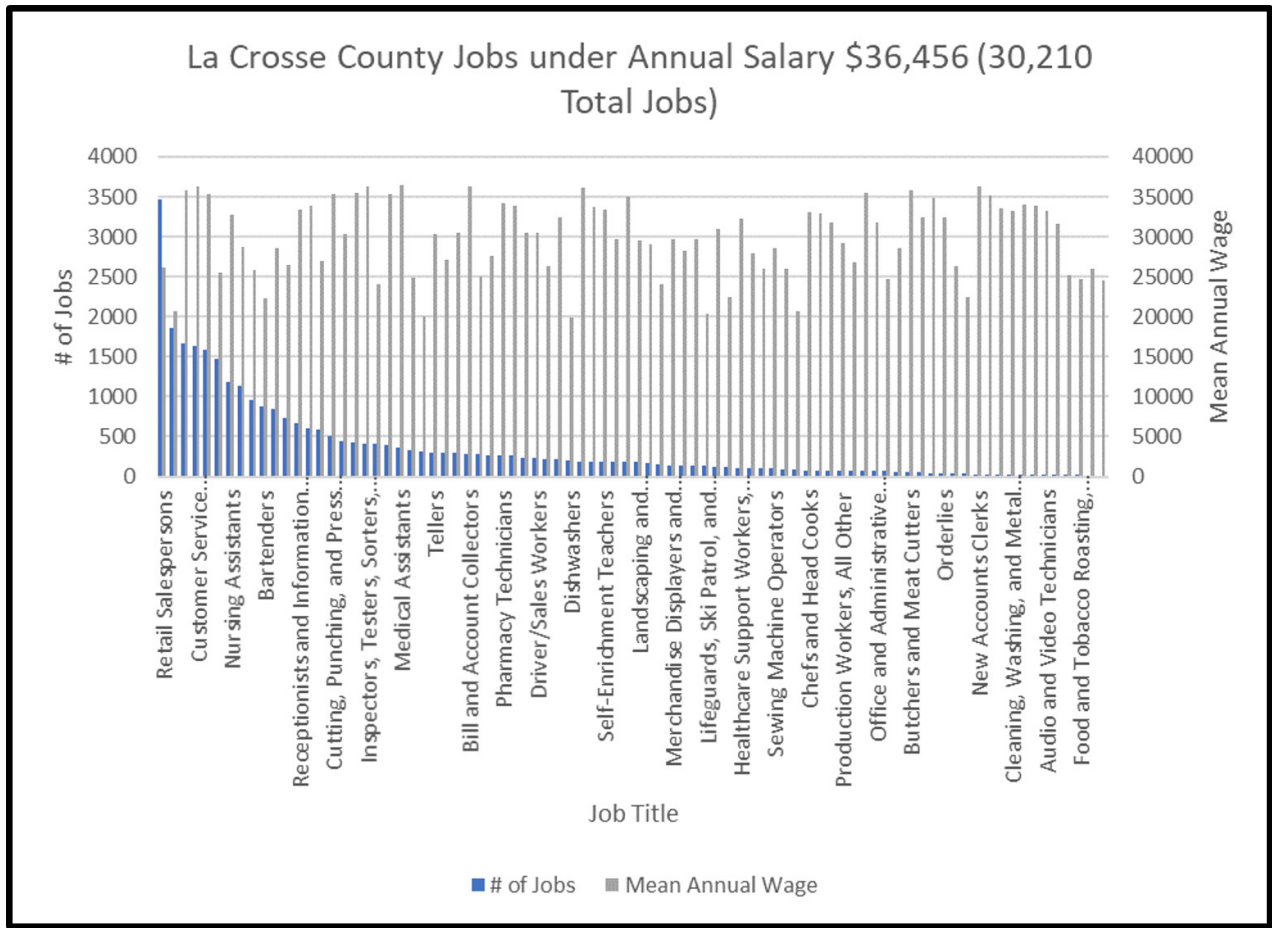
Table 11.

Household Survival Budget, La Crosse County, 2018		
	SINGLE ADULT	2 ADULTS, 1 INFANT, 1 PRESCHOOLER
Monthly Costs		
Housing	\$587	\$919
Child Care	\$–	\$1,368
Food	\$272	\$824
Transportation	\$326	\$795
Health Care	\$214	\$699
Technology	55	\$75
Miscellaneous	\$173	\$552
Taxes	\$276	\$844
Monthly Total	\$1,903	\$6,076
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$22,836	\$72,912
Hourly Wage*	\$11.42	\$36.46
<p>* Wage working full-time required to support this budget</p> <p>For ALICE Survival Budget Sources, see the 2020 Methodology Overview available at <a href="https://www.unitedforalice.org/methodology">UnitedForALICE.org/Methodology</a></p>		

It should be noted that the Household Survival Budget does not include a savings category. In La Crosse County many jobs pay less than a wage capable of supporting a family of four. While not every worker is supporting a family of four, determining this standard cost of living helps give perspective to the number of good paying jobs available in La Crosse County.



Graph 5.

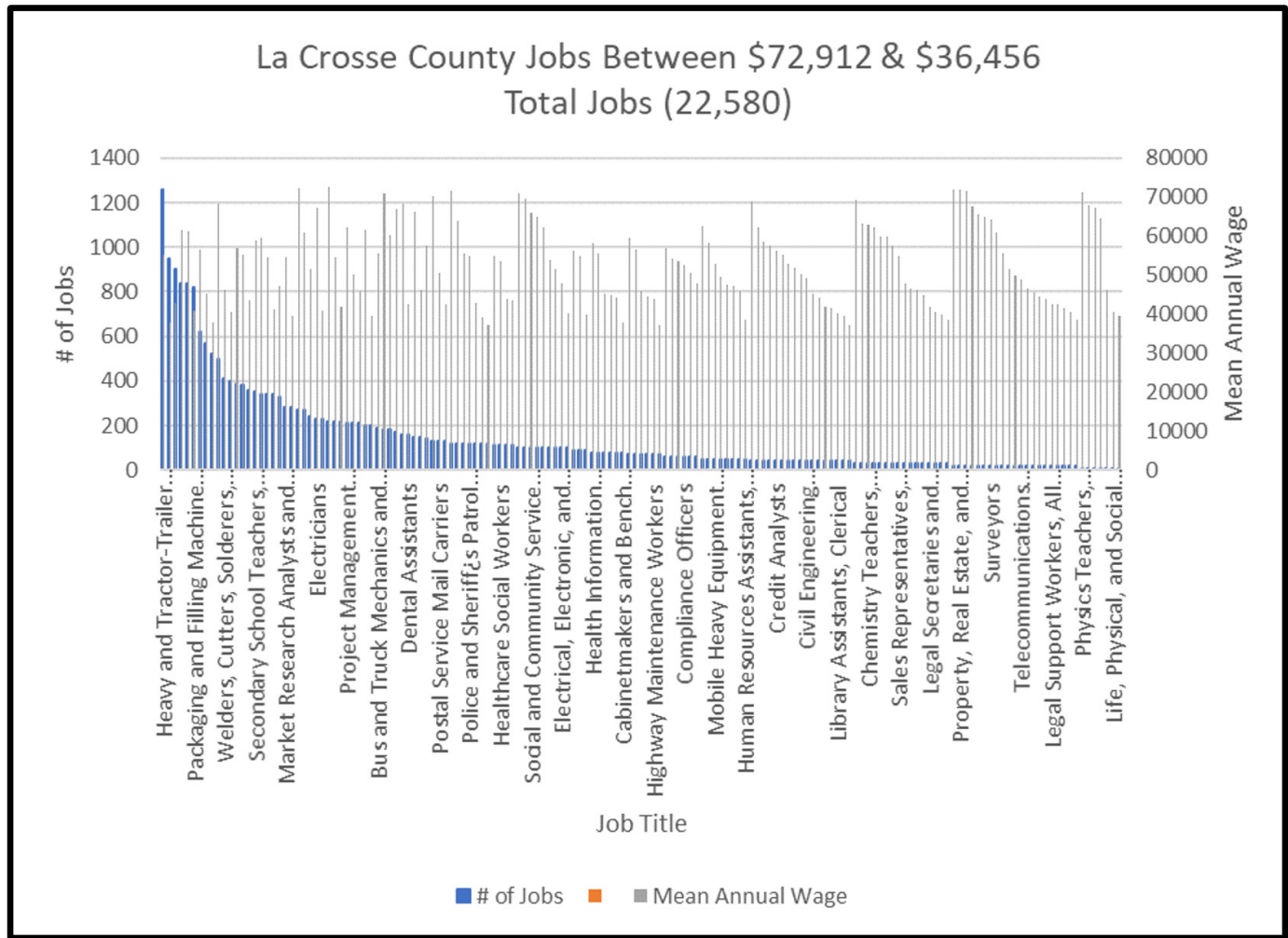


Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, UW Extension

Graph 5, above, illustrates the 30,210 jobs in La Crosse County that pay below a family of four-survival budget for one of two adults in a family of four (1/2 of the \$72,912 amount). These 30,210 jobs represent approximately 52% of the total jobs (for which we have unemployment insurance data) in La Crosse County.

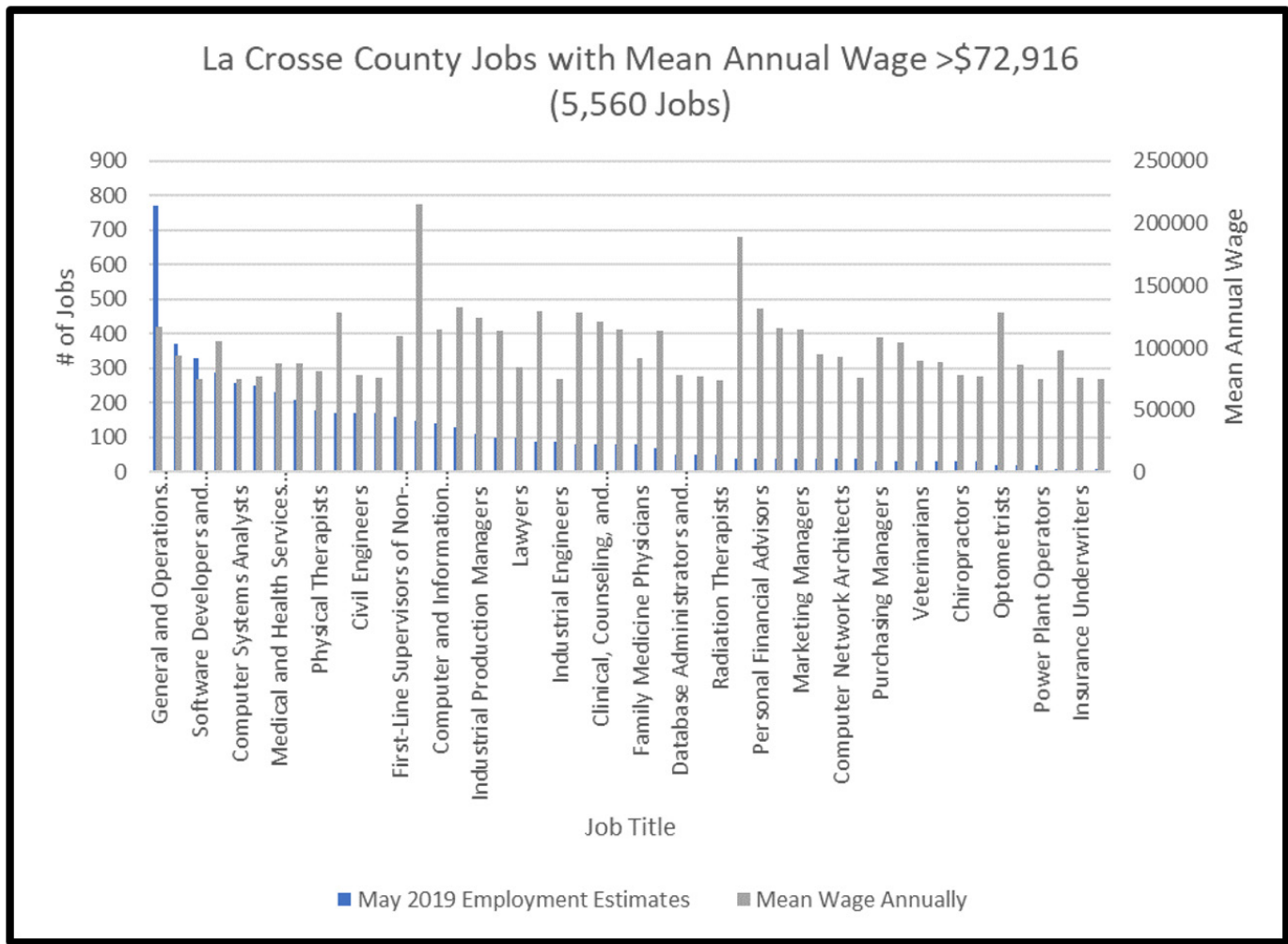
Graph 6, below, illustrates the 22,580 jobs in La Crosse County that pay above \$36,456 but below the La Crosse County cost of living standard amount of \$72,912. In other words, these jobs could support a family of four’s survival budget if both adults were employed in these job categories. These 22,580 represent approximately 39% of the total jobs (for which we have unemployment insurance data) in La Crosse County.

Graph 6.



Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, UW Extension

Graph 7.



Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, UW Extension

COVID-19 Impacts on Economy

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an economic recession. Many businesses were forced to close their doors and people were forced to completely change their consumption patterns. This has brought some immediate impacts such as business closures and increased unemployment rates, but it has also brought significant uncertainty, and we will need to wait to see what shifts in consumption patterns will be more long-term. For example, many employees were forced to make a transition to working from home. Some have found that it works for them, and some have found that it does not – but over the next year or two we will see how demand for commercial office space will be different based on that shift. This may also then have ripple effects on other industries that capitalized on the concentration of workers in central business districts. There are also predictions that mid-sized communities like La Crosse County, could have increased attractiveness for many who are not as comfortable living in large metropolitan areas anymore – especially as they may have more freedom to work remotely. So, this could present economic development opportunities for our region.



Locally, resources to help support local businesses were available, and many were able to tap into the unprecedented stimulus spending by the federal government. This helped to keep the economy afloat, but there have also been some business closures and long-term impacts on markets that we will need to continue to deal with in recovery. It will be important, at least for the next few years, to focus economic development programming on assisting with economic recovery from the pandemic and helping to build resiliency in our economy.

### Economic Development Tools

Likely the most powerful tool for local government economic development is Tax Incremental Financing (TIF). This tool is available to cities and villages, and townships in a limited form, but not directly to counties in Wisconsin. Counties do however participate in the Joint Review Board for the creation or amendment of any TIF district. The following table (12) shows TIF districts within La Crosse County as of 2020.

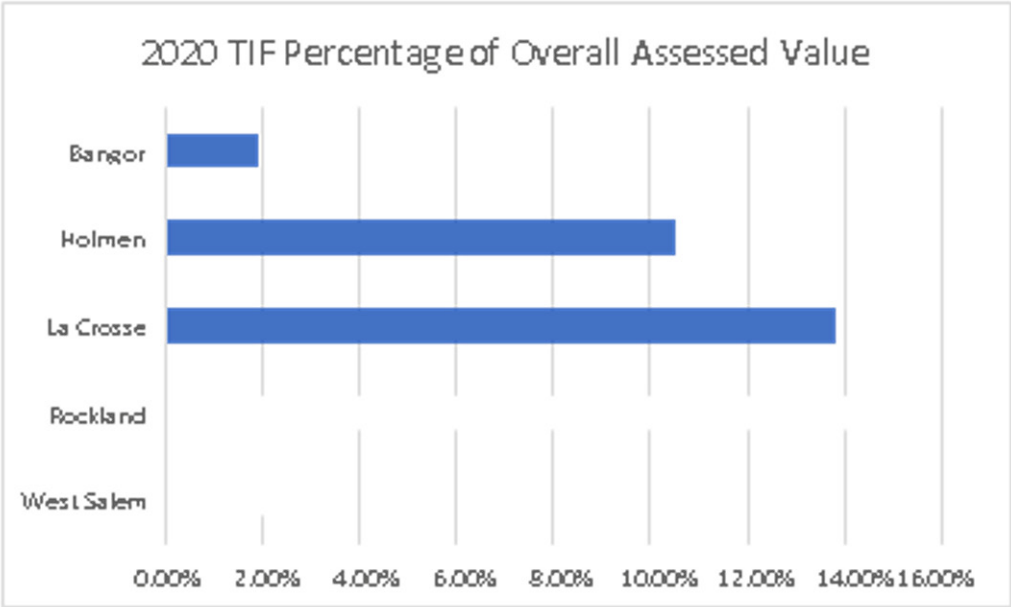
Table 12.

2020 Tax Incremental District (TID) Certification							
Municipality	TID #	Base Year	Expiration Year	Current Value	Base Value	Increment	TID Type
BANGOR	001	2008	9/10/2035	388,300	484,800	-96,500	Rehab/Cons.
BANGOR	002	2015	9/22/2035	2,408,300	620,500	1,787,800	Mixed Use
HOLMEN	002	2009	12/11/2028	36,103,100	2,647,000	33,456,100	Mixed Use
HOLMEN	003	2015	11/13/2034	91,972,100	37,362,300	54,609,800	Mixed Use
LA CROSSE	006	1994	4/14/2021	106,118,200	33,709,800	72,408,400	Regular (pre95)
LA CROSSE	007	1997	8/14/2024	28,670,500	15,000,800	13,669,700	Blight
LA CROSSE	010	2003	6/12/2030	12,949,400	2,540,100	10,409,300	Blight (post95)
LA CROSSE	011	2005	10/12/2031	302,991,100	132,955,800	170,035,300	Blight (post95)
LA CROSSE	012	2005	7/14/2032	42,064,000	19,363,800	22,700,200	Blight (post95)
LA CROSSE	013	2006	5/11/2026	178,228,800	53,698,400	124,530,400	Mixed Use
LA CROSSE	014	2006	8/24/2026	121,076,100	60,747,300	60,328,800	Mixed Use
LA CROSSE	015	2013	8/8/2033	99,860,600	62,802,000	37,058,600	Mixed Use
LA CROSSE	016	2014	6/12/2034	29,062,800	18,087,300	10,975,500	Mixed Use
LA CROSSE	017	2015	9/29/2035	88,537,400	11,744,600	76,792,800	Mixed Use
ONALASKA	005	2019	2/12/2047	3,115,300	0	3,115,300	Blight
ROCKLAND	001	2010	4/27/2030	6,469,300	1,176,300	5,293,000	Mixed Use
WEST SALEM	001	2007	11/21/2026	21,188,000	4,910,800	16,277,200	Mixed Use

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

To control the use of this tool, per state statute, municipalities are not able to create any new districts or add area to an existing district if more than 12% of their assessed value is located within existing districts. The following graph (8) shows the percentage of overall assessed value in TIF districts within each municipality that had districts in 2020.

Table 12.



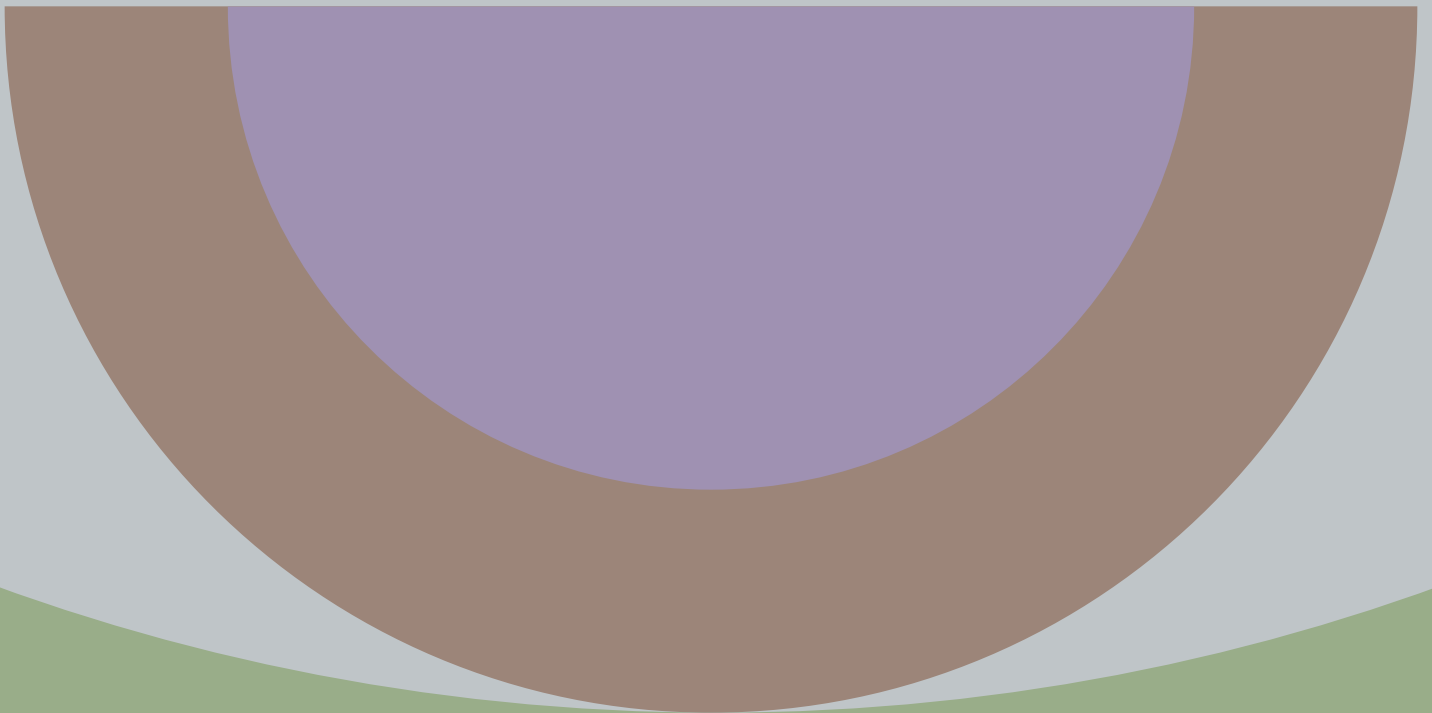
Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

This shows that the City of La Crosse and Village of Rockland are currently over 12%, which means that they will not be able to create new districts or add area to existing districts until they retire or remove area from existing districts.

Another tool for local government economic development, which is relatively new, is Opportunity Zones. Created under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, these zones are designed to spur investment in distressed communities by offering capital gains tax incentives. Local governments were able to request designation of census tracts as opportunity zones. Then, each state was able to designate a limited number of zones. The only opportunity zones within La Crosse County are two census tracts within the city of La Crosse – Census Tracts 2 (lower north side, including the River Point District) and 4 (east of downtown, between 7th Street and West Avenue and Jackson Street to the La Crosse River). The City of La Crosse is actively working to attract investment into these areas.

**13**

# Intergovernmental Cooperation





**This chapter was prepared within the context of many existing local, regional, and state plans, which were reviewed throughout this planning effort. The planning process considered the larger regional context and involved all local and neighboring governmental jurisdictions, planning organizations, agencies, stakeholders, and allowed for strong public participation.**

**Intergovernmental cooperation is a critical component of this planning effort and the future wellbeing of La Crosse County. Local services and planning strategies can be strengthened by cooperative relationships throughout the county. This chapter contains an overview of the county's intergovernmental relationships and identifies known existing or potential conflicts between this Comprehensive Plan and the plans of local cities, villages, towns, school districts, the State of Wisconsin, and federal agencies that maintain a presence in the county.**

### **A. La Crosse County Plans**

**1.** This Comprehensive Plan is an update to the county existing plan. In addition, the county has adopted numerous other plans, studies, and ordinances, including:

- La Crosse County Farmland Preservation Plan
- La Crosse County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- La Crosse County Land & Water Resource Management Plan
- Zoning Ordinance
- Land Division Ordinance

**2.** La Crosse County is also party to general cooperative agreements for fire, police, rescue, road maintenance, solid waste, recycling, and other services with several municipalities.

### B. Cities

1. City of La Crosse. The city of La Crosse is located on the west side of La Crosse County along the Mississippi River. La Crosse is the largest incorporated area in the county and serves as the county seat. The city has an adopted comprehensive plan, a park and recreation plan, a zoning ordinance, a land division ordinance, and many other plans and studies that guide community policies and actions.
2. City of Onalaska. The city of Onalaska is located north of La Crosse and is the second largest municipality in the county. Onalaska has adopted a comprehensive plan and has a zoning and land division ordinance, as well as many other ordinances and plans that inform community decisions.

### C. Villages

1. Bangor, Holmen, Rockland, and West Salem. The villages of Bangor, Rockland, and West Salem are located along I-90 in the central part of the county. The Village of Holmen is located along Highway 53 in the northern part of the county.
2. All villages, except Bangor, gained population in recent years. Holmen was the most rapidly growing community during this period in part because of its location near Onalaska on Highway 53, which provides transportation access to both Onalaska and La Crosse.
3. All of these communities have adopted a comprehensive plan and are following state statutes as far as planning and land use decision making.

### D. Towns

La Crosse County has 12 towns.

- Subgroup I - Rural - Towns of Bangor, Burns, Farmington, Greenfield and Washington
- Subgroup II - Rural Urban - Towns of Barre, Campbell, Hamilton, Holland, Medary, Onalaska, and Shelby
- Subgroup III - Urban - There are no towns in the subgroup
- Ten of the twelve 12 towns are under county zoning; (Campbell and Burns opted out in 2012.).
- All 12 towns are under county-wide shoreland, and floodplain ordinances.

- Each town has a development plan that was drafted as part of the La Crosse County Development Plan 2020 (1995) and again in 2008. However, many towns have developed or are currently developing a comprehensive plan update in conjunction with the La Crosse County comprehensive planning process that will update or replace these development plans per State of Wisconsin comprehensive planning

#### **E. Surrounding Counties**

- La Crosse County is bordered by four counties.
- To the north are Trempealeau and Jackson counties; to the east is Monroe County, to the south is Vernon County, and to the west by the Mississippi River and Minnesota, including Houston and Winona counties in Minnesota. Each of these counties has a much smaller population than La Crosse County.
- These neighboring counties are primarily agricultural with outstanding natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities. Existing or potential conflicts between La Crosse County and surrounding counties are minimal but will be explored through this planning process.

#### **F. Intermunicipal Boundary Agreements**

One of the action steps in recent planning efforts is to “facilitate/support adoption of boundary agreements among jurisdictions.” The overarching goal for developing the agreements was to define where annexations and their associated development activities would occur. This would not only help communities plan for municipal services but would also help support other planning efforts like identifying the appropriate transportation demand management (TDM) strategies to employ locally.

Boundary Agreements in Figures 9 and 10

- The project involved facilitating boundary discussions for La Crosse, (city)/La Crescent, (Minn., town), La Crosse, (city)/Shelby, (town), and Onalaska, (city)/Medary (town).
- The facilitation of discussions between Onalaska and Medary was eventually led by Onalaska, but no agreement has been completed.
- The Town of Campbell and the City of La Crosse entered into a boundary agreement in 2004 after Campbell tried to incorporate. This agreement will terminate on January 1, 2025.
- Several meetings were held between the city and township of La Crescent, but they were unable to reach an agreement that was satisfactory to both.
- Discussions between La Crosse and Shelby began in 2016 and are still ongoing.

Figure 9 – La Crosse / Onalaska / Shelby / Campbell / La Crescent, Minn., Boundaries

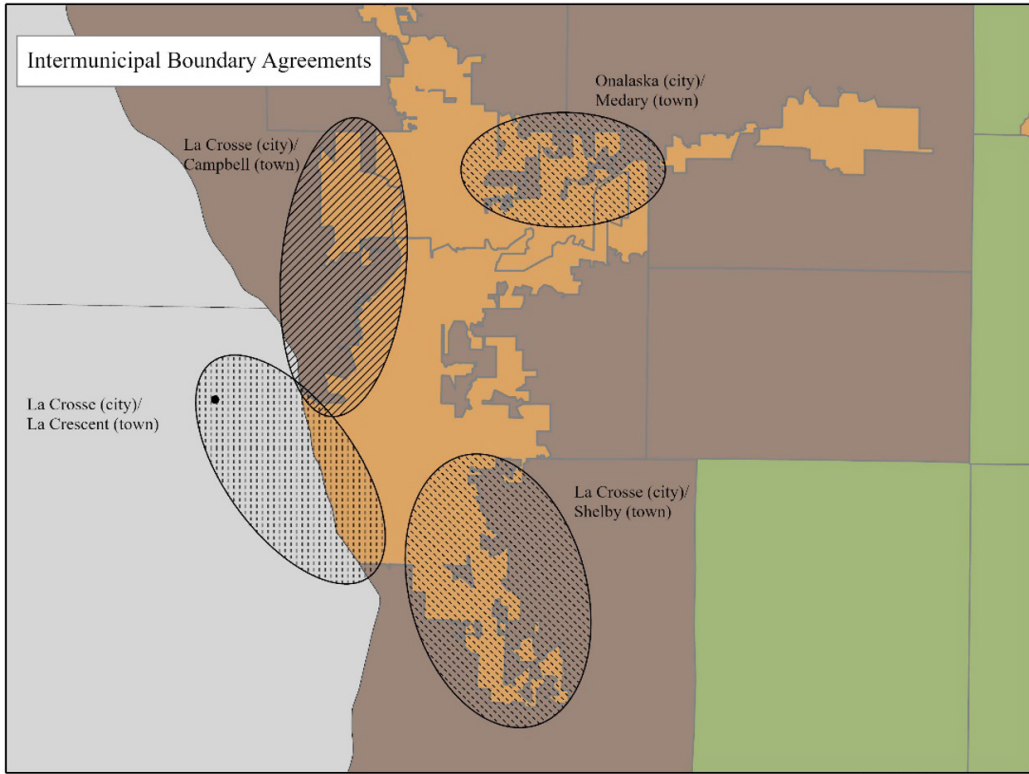
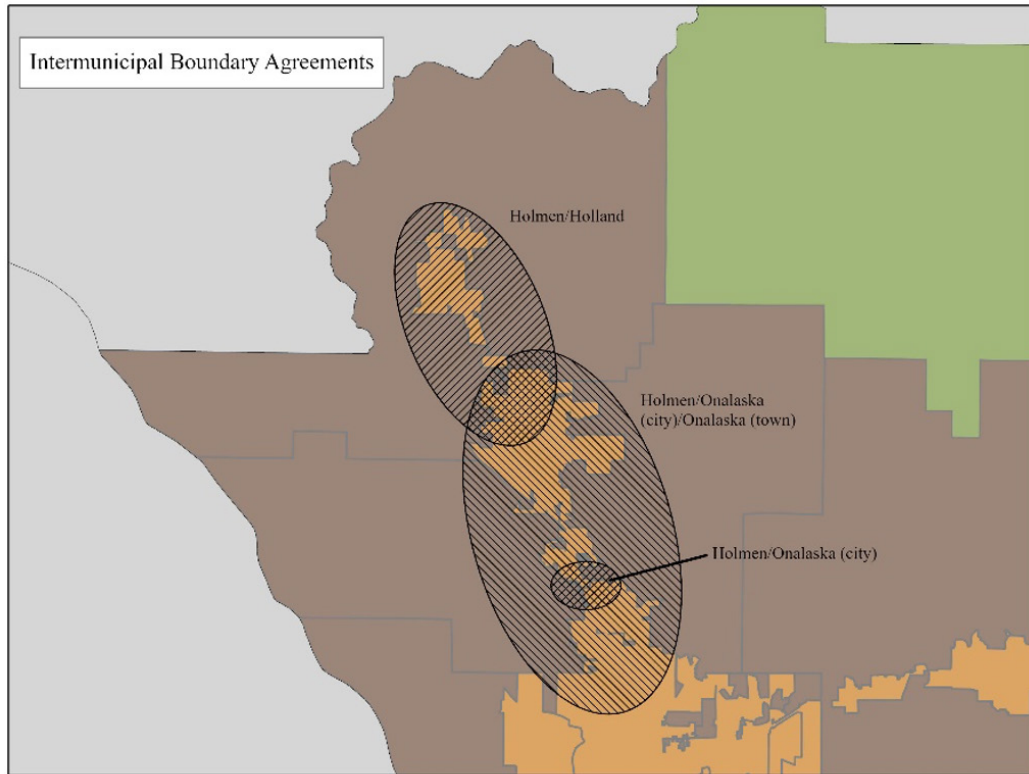


Figure 10 Holmen / Holland / Onalaska Boundaries



### G. Boundary Agreements in Figures 9 and 10

- To date the only agreements that have been finalized are for Holmen/Onalaska (city) (2015), Holmen/Onalaska (city)/Onalaska(town) (2016), and Holmen/Holland (2017).
- Agreements for Holmen (village)/Holland (town), Holmen/Onalaska (city), and Holmen/Onalaska (city)/Onalaska(town) occurred independently.

### H. Other Committees and Agencies

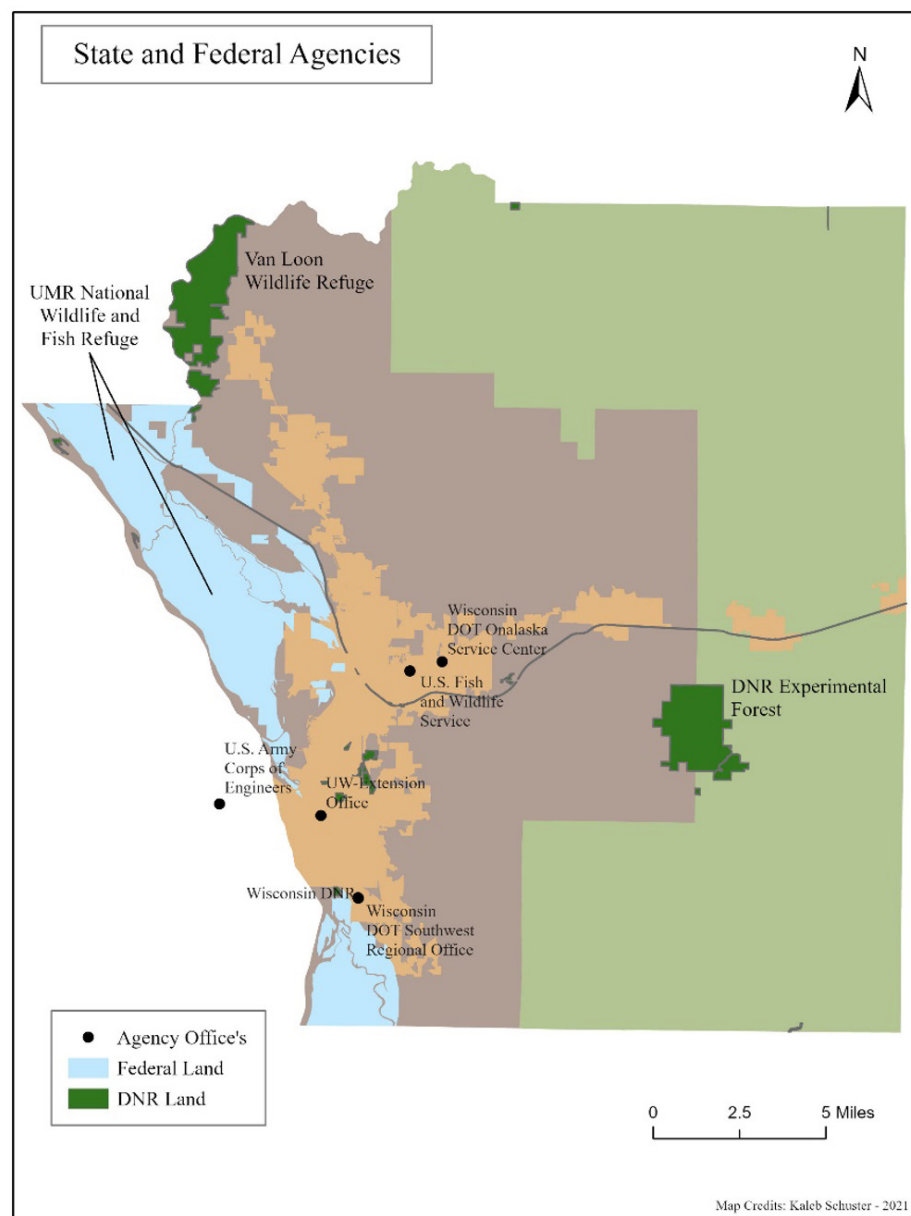
#### 1. Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission

La Crosse County is located within the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission's (MRRPC) jurisdiction. The MRRPC prepares and adopts regional or county-wide plans and represents Pierce, Pepin, Buffalo, Trempealeau, La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford, Jackson, and Monroe counties.

#### 2. La Crosse Area Planning Commission

The La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the La Crosse, Wisc., La Crescent, Minn., Urbanized Area. MPOs are designated for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process as established in 23 CFR 450 (part of the Code of Federal Regulations) and to provide a forum for local decision-making on transportation issues of a regional nature. The designation must be agreed upon by the governor (in our case, governors of Wisconsin and Minnesota) and the local units of government that together represent at least 75% of the affected population (including the largest incorporated city, based on population, as named by the U.S. Census Bureau). The LAPC is governed by a Policy Board that provides direction to and general oversight of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and its staff. The Policy Board is made up of representatives from local governments within our planning area that have opted to join the MPO. Member communities tend to be urbanized and urbanizing and benefit from the LAPC's urban programs. The more rural communities in the planning area are currently not members, however, they are eligible to join. These communities include the towns of Barre, Greenfield, and Hamilton in La Crosse County, and the townships of Dresbach and La Crescent in Winona County, Minn., and Houston County, Minn., respectively. To assist in carrying out the continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive performance-based multimodal transportation planning process required of MPOs, the LAPC has agreements with its member communities, the Wisconsin and Minnesota DOTs, and public transportation operators.

Map 5 State and Federal Agencies



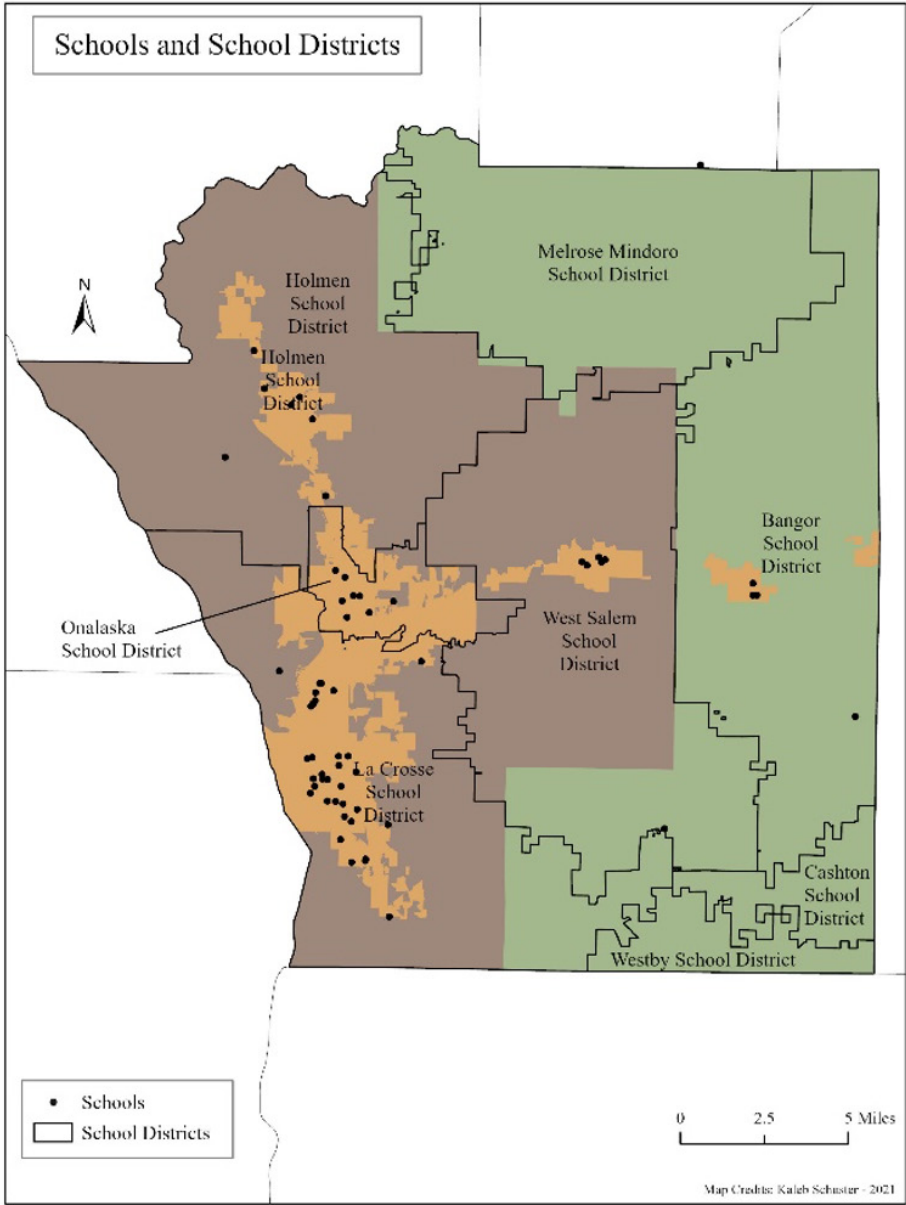
3. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) District 5 plays a critical role in many aspects of the county's transportation system, from highway design and development to bicycle and pedestrian facilities and networks.
4. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also has a prominent role in the county because of the many DNR-owned lands and facilities that are located here.
5. The University of Wisconsin Extension office is in the city of La Crosse and serves as an educational resource for county residents.
6. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains a presence in the county because of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

7. The U. S Army Corps of Engineers also maintains a presence in the county because of their ownership and management of locks and dams along the Mississippi River, which borders the western edge of the county.

The county and its local units of government recognize the importance of working with these state and federal agencies and are committed to continuing an ongoing dialogue with these agencies, both during and after the development of this Comprehensive Plan.

I. School Districts

Map 6 School Locations and Districts in La Crosse County Wisconsin





La Crosse County is served by eight school districts, as depicted on the Schools and School District Map 6

1. La Crosse public schools spend \$13,018 per student (2021-22). The average school expenditure in the U. S. is \$12,624. There are about 9.6 students per teacher in La Crosse.
2. There are no apparent existing or potential conflicts between the county and the school districts. However, this will be explored throughout the planning process and updated if necessary.

### J. Existing or Potential Conflicts and Process to Resolve Conflicts

1. Existing or potential conflicts related to land use decision-making have been reduced due to the multi- jurisdictional process used to develop county and local comprehensive plans.
2. The intergovernmental effort required to develop local plans that concertedly and uniformly support a regional plan has been an ongoing effort. Ostensibly, these efforts have reduced the potential for land use conflicts in the future especially since all plans were developed over approximately the same amount of time and because the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan unites existing plans into a cohesive document.
3. The process to resolve conflicts is tied to open communication and willingness of elected officials to maintain clear and responsive channels of communication in matters of conflict. The La Crosse County Zoning, Planning and Land Information Department is proactively working with local jurisdictions to develop boundary agreements to mitigate future disagreements within extraterritorial jurisdictions before intergovernmental conflict becomes an issue. Similar efforts are ongoing throughout La Crosse County to ensure effective cooperation between all local governments is maintained
4. Conflicts may arise when local plans and efforts of individual municipalities promote areas of development that do not utilize data analysis which shows development demand. This typically will provide significantly more area “supply” for development than the demand. This increase in “supply” of land for development negatively affects the real estate market in two ways. An increase in supply reduces the value of the land and creates tension between municipalities which can produce negative relationships and second, can promote improper investment by the public in unnecessary infrastructure to keep up with the artificial creation of a perception of need for said infrastructure. To reduce this potential conflict, municipalities need to carefully analyze the data and ensure that their comprehensive plans provide a conservative number of acres available for development.

# Introduction to the Final Chapters

The following chapters contain the forward-looking part of Envision 2050. This is where you will find policy recommendations and goals. The plan's core values (sustainability, collaboration, equity, forward-thinking, and respect), combined with the extensive public input received by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, guided the process of developing the recommendations. The icons listed below are used in these chapters to show when a recommendation aligns with a specific core value.



**Sustainability**



**Collaboration**



**Equity**



**Forward-Thinking**



**Respect**

# Sustainability

## Quadruple Bottom Line:

**\*Social \*Cultural \*Economic \*Environmental**

As both consumers and stewards of our valuable natural resources, La Crosse County has a particular responsibility to reduce consumption of fossil fuels, lessen impacts to our natural environment, and ensure that the needs of our citizens are met equitably, efficiently, and cost effectively. The environmental and social impacts of county operations are tremendous, including the need for electricity and natural gas to run facilities, the amount of diesel fuel and gasoline consumed to provide emergency services, plow snow, and haul solid waste, and the demands that go with providing vital social services, to name a few. Sustainable community development is a solution for lessening these environmental impacts, ensuring that La Crosse County continues to prosper economically, and for attaining social equity. This chapter will help direct La Crosse County's efforts towards sustainability and resilience for the next 20 years.

## Considering Sustainability Principles when Making Decisions

The development of a Sustainability Plan will help guide our community towards a more sustainable and balanced future. To get there, we must consider the decisions that are made today, and ensure that we integrate a Quadruple Bottom Line approach which ensures a balance of economic, governance, environmental, social, and cultural principles. Doing this will ensure that La Crosse County leadership is considering the community's needs when making decisions. To ensure that the Quadruple Bottom Line is implemented and integrated, the county board is required to properly consider all four principles in decision making and management.

## Policy Decision Framework

- Will the proposal meet the needs of people in La Crosse County?
- Is there adequate demand for the proposed use of resources?
- Is there adequate infrastructure to support the proposal?
- Will the proposal enhance overall prosperity within La Crosse County?
- Is the proposed use efficient for local government to serve?
- Will the proposed use enhance financial opportunities for community members?
- Will the proposed use conflict with established community economic development goals?



- Will the proposal support a resilient and sustainable natural environment?
- Will the proposal impact natural resources?
- Will the proposal impact the climate?
- Will the proposal account for greenhouse gas emissions?

### Intergovernmental Cooperation

- Encourage cooperative efforts between the City of La Crosse; Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit; the La Crosse Area Planning Committee and surrounding communities to seek ways to expand public transit.
- Encourage cooperation and coordination on provision of emergency services with local and regional units of government.
- Initiate efforts to consolidate services between governments and quasi-public entities. Discuss the importance of cost-effective and efficient delivery of services throughout La Crosse County communities.

### Disaster Planning/Resilience

The La Crosse County All Hazards Mitigation Plan 2020-2024 included all local units of government and organizations that desired to participate. The update of the plan was prepared under the guidance of the La Crosse County Emergency Management Committee (LEPC) due to their familiarity with flooding issues and floodplain management.

**It is projected that over the next 25 years, La Crosse County's climate will experience:**

- Increases in temperatures of 6.5°F, with the greatest increases in the winter
- Sixteen less nights a year with temperatures below 0°F
- Twenty-four more days a year with temperatures above 90°F
- More precipitation with more severe precipitation events
- Less snow cover, deeper frost depth, and more freeze-thaw cycles

*Sources: La Crosse County All Hazards Mitigation Plan 2020-2024 and Weathering Climate Change: A Vulnerability Assessment of Road, Bridge and Rail Infrastructure (La Crosse Area Planning Committee, 2018).*

### Solutions/Adaptations

Although the impacts of climate change are already being seen in Wisconsin, there are things La Crosse County policymakers, business leaders, and residents can do to help reduce potential impacts from climate change. The



development of climate change mitigation programs can help decrease the impacts from climate change while advancing other community priorities. Examples include implementing cost-effective clean energy policies and programs and reducing carbon emissions. Climate change and clean energy policies and programs can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lower energy costs, improve air quality and public health, and help achieve economic development goals. Other examples include flood mitigation strategies, flood hazard warning systems and improved land use patterns and designs to infiltrate surface water and minimize impervious surfaces in high hazard areas.

**Recommendations:****a) Pursue sustainability initiatives for county facilities and operations.**

1. Make recommendations on funding related to sustainability initiatives during the annual budget process.
2. Search for ways to partner with other area organizations in shared/group purchasing ventures.
3. Support the effort to bring a car sharing program to La Crosse both politically and financially.
4. Work with Human Resources to create an on-line (La Crosse County Intranet) sustainability training for new employees.
5. Continue to increase tree planting activity on County owned properties through the Land Conservation Department.
6. Develop an energy protocol and educate employees on how to reduce their energy consumption within their departments and be able to take this information home to make a difference in their own energy use.

**b) Promote sustainability programs, policies, actions throughout La Crosse County**

1. Develop a county-wide energy plan.
2. Join the Wisconsin Local Government climate coalition ([wlgcc.org](http://wlgcc.org)).
3. Request action plans from local utilities for attaining the 2050 goal of carbon neutrality and 100% clean energy.
4. Upgrade County certification Solsmart from Bronze to Silver.
5. Publicize Couleecap Weatherization programs.
6. Support individual and institutional solar energy projects.
7. Reduce solid waste generation and improve reuse/diversion programs.
8. Pursue electric vehicle infrastructure certification.
9. Wetland mitigation and development.



# Agriculture, Natural, and Cultural Resources

The purpose of this Natural, and Cultural Resources Element is to offer policies and recommendations to guide the future conservation, promotion, and effective management of natural, and cultural resources in La Crosse County. Content for this element was determined through the public participation process, review of current goals, review of multiple documents and plans, and input from organizations including the Mississippi Valley Archeology Center and the La Crosse County Historical Society.

**General Natural, and Cultural Policy.** La Crosse County will require municipalities to utilize county resource protection ordinances and encourage municipalities to develop stricter policies where warranted. Local preparation of special studies, maps, or monitoring strategies to protect agricultural, natural, and cultural resources will be encouraged and enabled to the ability of county government. When possible, the county will assist in directing local governments to appropriate opportunities, personnel, or special interest groups to further resource preservation goals as stated in their local comprehensive land use plans.

**Recommendations (numerical listing for reference purposes only, ordering does not suggest order of importance):**

**a) Preserve agricultural land, open space, and environmentally sensitive areas in the county**

1. Identify and map environmentally and culturally sensitive areas.
2. Develop a conservancy district as part of the La Crosse County Zoning Ordinance.
3. Encourage the development of Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies to determine the fiscal impact of existing local land uses. These studies evaluate working and open lands on equal ground with residential, commercial, and industrial land uses.
4. Direct new non-farm development to sites that would not adversely affect the operation of working lands. Similarly, new non-farm residential development should be tied to stringent deed restrictions or other recorded mutual agreement.
5. Discourage the development of major subdivisions (defined as five or more lots) unless served by public water and sanitary sewer service.



## b) Protect cultural and historic sites throughout the county

1. Encourage local historic societies and other organizations to preserve and promote historic places throughout La Crosse County.
2. Work with local communities to identify culturally significant and/or archaeological sites requiring deed restrictions and disturbance limitations to protect the locations, while balancing the privacy and security issues that come with cultural and archeological resources.

## c) Sustain and enhance ground and surface water resources in La Crosse County

1. Encourage all municipalities in the county to develop and enforce stormwater management plans that are similar to or more restrictive than the county's ordinance to reduce runoff to surface waters, and to identify treatment options.
2. Implement existing plans (Land and Water Resource Management Plans, etc.) to make the surface waters of the county safe for swimming and fishing.
3. Continue to promote and enforce construction setbacks from all waterways to prevent erosion into and siltation of surface waters.
4. Adopt policies and standards that are up to date with more recent precipitation patterns and amend design standards to reflect this significant increase in frequency and intensity of rainfall in our climate.
5. Explore policies to protect groundwater resources in La Crosse County from non-resident users, or business entities that exist to harvest groundwater resources without returning water back to the local aquifer.
6. Implement short, mid, and long-term nitrate policy recommendations established for the county to improve water quality.





# Economic Development

The purpose of this Economic Development Element is to establish priorities and recommendations for how La Crosse County assists in the development of a healthy economy. Much of this work will be done in collaboration with and support of partner organizations to help stabilize, retain, and expand the economic base and build quality, accessible employment opportunities in La Crosse County.

Content for this element was determined through staff research, stakeholder input, and review of current economic development goals and priorities, as set by the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Board, and also included review of the following documents and plans:

- Municipal Comprehensive Plans
- Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Report
- 7 Rivers Alliance Workforce Innovation for a Strong Economy (WISE) Plan
- 7 Rivers Region Executive Business Surveys

Additional economic development plans exist that promote specific business sector growth. These plans were also kept in mind when policies and recommendations were developed.

## General Economic Development Policy.

Bi-annually, the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Board sets goals and objectives, and they have most recently identified their “Big Picture” goals as follows:

- Encourage high-skill, living-wage job growth & support workforce attraction, retention, and development
- Support tax base creation and assist in the elimination of blight
- Contribute to better housing opportunities, neighborhoods, and quality of life
- Work toward greater efficiency of public services through collaboration
- Welcome an ethnically diverse population to improve our business environment



**Priorities:**

The Economic Development Fund Board also sets priorities for La Crosse County's work in community and economic development. Most recently the following priorities have been identified:

- Develop, manage, and promote appropriate business and development assistance/incentive programs
- Perform meaningful, effective business outreach
- Provide support for area non-profit organizations that assist in meeting our big picture goals
- Promote land use and transportation policy links
- Develop county-owned properties to highest and best use while working to fill gaps in the market
- Assist in the development of other (municipal and private) properties
- Promote and support entrepreneurship
- Continue to cultivate a local environment of sustainability, building on the existing reputation
- Work with regional partners to study and provide public and board education on new trends and demographics, and maintain meaningful economic indicators
- Market the benefits and opportunities of La Crosse County, for both residents and tourists
- Work with partners to develop incentives and economic solutions to improve the availability of quality childcare and early childhood education options

**Recommendations (numerical listing for reference purposes only, ordering does not suggest order of importance):**

**a) Enhance economic development infrastructure in the county, strengthening regional competitiveness.**

1. Work with partners to encourage/incentivize more quality, affordable childcare options.
2. Work with providers to deliver quality broadband coverage to all areas of the county.
3. Strive to increase the amount of revolving loan funds and grant funding available through federal, state, and other outside sources and encourage funds be used to enhance equity and diversity and to improve the quality of life for residents of the county.
4. Encourage municipalities to adopt zoning that permits higher-density, mixed uses in downtowns and around transportation hubs that once served the entire county but now compete with highway commerce and e-commerce.
5. Encourage municipalities to provide sufficient land supply for both industrial development and continued agricultural operation and to provide adequate buffers between these and other uses.



6. Encourage new business development and expansion that provides “family wage” jobs and a strong tax base.
7. Work with economic development partner organizations to develop a strategic approach to meeting our community and economic development needs.
8. Lead and/or support collaborative efforts to secure local, state, and federal resources that will assist in dealing with Covid-19 pandemic impacts.

**b) Encourage economic expansion and employment opportunities that build upon the diversity of the county’s economy.**

1. Enhance opportunities to further build the county’s industrial base through integration with technology-based industry clusters.
2. Strengthen the entrepreneurial infrastructure of the community, ensuring that entrepreneurs have the resources they need to grow strong, resilient business ventures.
3. Direct job-creating economic investments to distressed places. These investments would be intended to relieve concentrations of long-term unemployed persons including minorities, developmentally disabled, and the aging, and to encourage the redevelopment of land and buildings within these distressed areas.
4. Continue to explore agricultural programming to enable an active farm economy within La Crosse County (a purchase of development rights (PDR) program, etc.).
5. Promote secondary agriculture- related industries to process and support agricultural production.
6. Strengthen the county’s position as a regional distribution, manufacturing, health, technology, tourism, and service center.

**c) Support education and training opportunities so that every adult in the county can become an employable worker**

1. Continue to support educational programming to prepare La Crosse County’s labor force for success in an ever-changing economic landscape.
2. Encourage programming for apprenticeships to grow skilled trades, and technical training to prepare workers for knowledge-based industries.

**d) Incorporate sustainable actions/programs in economic development initiatives**

1. Promote and utilize sustainable energy resources as an economic opportunity and encourage increased development of alternative energy markets and businesses.
2. Promote sustainable development, energy conservation, and green building techniques, as well as the use of Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing.



# Housing

The Housing Element of a comprehensive plan provides direction to ensure an adequate supply of housing is available for existing and forecasted housing demand. For the purposes of the La Crosse County plan, the element includes policies that local governmental units should explore to promote the development of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels, all age groups, and all persons with special needs. Additionally, this element provides policies to promote the availability and proper use of land for the development or redevelopment of housing within its jurisdiction.

Recommendations were developed through the public participation process, review of current housing-related goals, and through review from La Crosse County's housing and economic development partners.

## General Housing Policy

La Crosse County will encourage local communities to provide an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels, age groups, and levels of ability. Housing redevelopment is encouraged where existing infrastructure is available, and redevelopment complements the existing neighborhood aesthetic. Public-private partnerships, cost-sharing, integration of low-cost housing, and other policies to promote housing development that is low-impact and democratically approved will be encouraged.

**Recommendations (numerical listing for reference purposes only, ordering does not suggest order of importance):**

**a) Provide a balance of affordable housing opportunities (including rental units) throughout the county**

1. Consider programming that allows residents in affordable neighborhoods to stay in their neighborhoods.
2. Encourage the replacement of aging housing stock, adaptive reuse of existing non-residential buildings, and the use of small-scale, infill sites within existing neighborhoods to minimize environmental impacts of sprawling development.
3. Support the La Crosse County Housing Authority in working with municipalities and other organizations in achieving short- and long-term goals related to the creation of affordable housing.
4. Promote, support and provide assistance to homeownership opportunities in multi-family style developments (condo units), improving financial equity opportunities for individuals with moderate and low incomes.



5. Consider tax delinquent lands as potential sites for affordable housing development, and potentially offer them at below market rate prices to not-for-profit housing providers to meet that need and return the property to the tax roll.
6. Continue to pursue housing assistance funding through state and federal programs, such as Community Development Block Grants.
7. Encourage integrated mixed-income and mixed-use neighborhood developments that provide an array of home sizes and prices.

**b) Promote innovative housing techniques (Planned Unit Developments, clustering, accessory apartments, straw bale homes, rammed earth, cord wood, 3D- Printed, tiny homes, etc.) at appropriate locations in the county**

1. Update ordinances to address varied housing techniques to ensuring safety of residents.
2. Consider program assistance to builders promoting alternative construction types that lower building costs and/or on-going energy usage.
3. Explore and facilitate new La Crosse County Housing Authority developments with particular focus on alternative building techniques.

**c) Facilitate a regional approach to preventing homelessness**

1. Strive to provide housing opportunities within all communities for transitioning homeless populations.



# Intergovernmental Cooperation

This Intergovernmental Cooperation Element is an essential component of any comprehensive plan. Within this element the relationships between public, quasi-public, and private entities are discussed to increase the efficiencies and capabilities of each entity to provide service and support throughout La Crosse County. The following policies and recommendations have been developed to guide the future development of various cooperative practices and agreements.

## General Intergovernmental Cooperation Policy

It is the county's policy to participate in intergovernmental coordination efforts with federal, state, and local governments. La Crosse County will support intergovernmental and private sector coordination to ensure:

- Economic development in conformance with comprehensive planning policy.
- Reduction of dependence on county resources for needed services.
- Increased accountability and responsiveness to regional and county-wide needs.
- Increased efficiencies in the delivery of services.
- The integrity of the land-use policies of any county comprehensive plan element is preserved.
- The responsibility and support for land use planning will be coordinated with adjacent jurisdictions through the adoption of local comprehensive plans and other planning agreements which will recognize:
  - That the county will maintain planning oversight through the comprehensive plan in unincorporated areas until and during any jurisdictional transition
  - The county will support the planning process for unincorporated areas and establish and participate in a cooperative process to address the future of urban service provision issues.
- La Crosse County will continue to encourage the development of cooperative boundary agreements between municipalities.

- County resources are used to leverage other resources for the encouragement of economically viable agricultural and forest areas, for habitat conservation and stabilizing rural areas. These initiatives could include:
  - Joint development of marketing facilities for agricultural products, such as wholesale and farmers' markets
  - Support for programs which conserve wildlife habitat, particularly wetlands, through private/public cooperation.
  - The encouragement of incentive programs or other compensatory mechanisms for the preservation of working lands, especially the purchase of conservation easements.

**Recommendations (numerical listing for reference purposes only, ordering does not suggest order of importance):**

**a) Foster communication with/between local municipalities increasing opportunities for collaboration on projects, plans, and service delivery.**

1. Prior to actions on rezoning of lands, the county zoning committee will take under advisement the recommendations provided in the town plans as well as any plans prepared by cities or villages for the purpose of seeking coordinated and compatible growth.
2. Encourage cooperation and coordination on provision of emergency services with local and regional units of government.
3. Encourage all municipalities in the county to develop and enforce erosion control, stormwater management, and groundwater recharge plans that are similar or more restrictive than county ordinances.
4. La Crosse County should take the lead in encouraging municipal boundary agreements.



# Transportation

## Chapter

The purpose of this Transportation Chapter is to offer goals, policies, and recommendations/actions to maintain, improve and enhance all modes of transportation facilities and services in La Crosse County. Content for this chapter was gathered through public input, review of current transportation plans and documents, as well as review and input by the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) and transportation stakeholders.

### General Transportation Policy

Future transportation plans developed and maintained by local jurisdictions, La Crosse County, the La Crosse Area Planning Committee, and the State of Wisconsin should address all modes of transportation, including highway, rail, water, air, public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel. Special attention should be paid to the public transit needs of people who are elderly and persons living with disabilities. Opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation on planning and funding of transportation facilities and services shall be encouraged.

### Recommendations

#### a) Maintain and improve the transportation system based on regional priorities that will benefit all users.

1. Ensure transportation system planning is coordinated between La Crosse County, La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC), local municipalities and local/state transportation agencies.
2. Work in conjunction with Wisconsin Department of Transportation, local municipalities on the planning and implementation of the U.S. Highway 53 La Crosse Corridor Major Project.
3. Support efforts to enable the development of Regional Transit Authorities (RTA).

#### b) Build upon La Crosse County's strong bike and pedestrian trail system to enhance recreational and utilitarian travel opportunities.

1. Work with the local units of government, the LAPC and various other agencies to help communities access sources of funding for multi-use trails.



2. Encourage cooperative efforts to further develop a county-wide trail system that provides safe and efficient routes to interconnect La Crosse County communities.
3. Support the Bluffland Coalition's "Blufflands Plan" and efforts to implement a multi-jurisdictional bluff land trail network.

**c) Lead efforts to plan and develop infrastructure for alternative energy vehicles, automated vehicles (AV's), connected vehicles (CAV's) and other emerging transportation technology.**

1. Facilitate a collaborative approach to electric vehicle infrastructure plan development.
2. Identify sources and secure funding for electric, automated, and connected vehicle infrastructure.

**d) Continue to improve public transportation services and alternative transportation methods to meet the needs of all residents with heightened attention to the unique needs of residents who live with disabilities, low income, and are aging.**

1. Facilitate local unit of government implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) practices (car/ridesharing, commuting incentives, parking costs, transit options, etc.) providing alternative reliable travel choices.
2. Facilitate cooperative efforts between local units of government and public transit providers to seek equitable ways to expand public transit (service area, hours, populations served, etc.).
3. Promote "Transit Ready" development where applicable and encourage population densities that support public transit service.

**e) Maintain and enhance a safe, reliable, and resilient public road system throughout the county.**

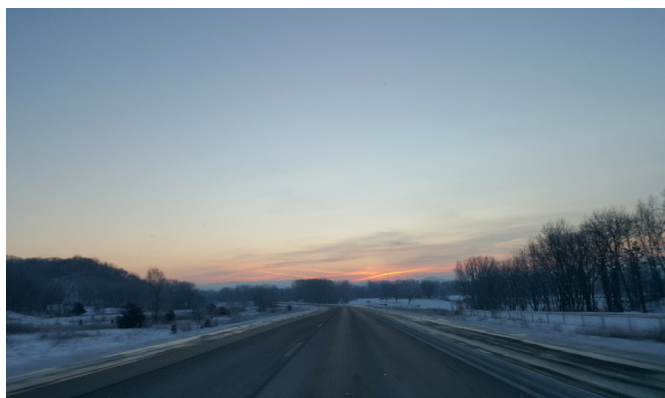
1. Continue consistent monitoring and recording of the county highway system (through WISLR and others) to identify, reduce, and minimize deficiencies in the system.
2. Implement the recommendations in the Capital Improvement Plan and Comprehensive County Road Maintenance and Replacement Study.
3. New roads or improvements to existing public roads shall meet the jurisdictional authority's design and construction standards (pavement/shoulder width, driveway access/spacing, signage, etc.)
4. Strengthen and/or develop policies minimizing traffic pressure on collectors (require developments to provide external connections to adjacent development) and limit road/driveway development on active agricultural land.



5. Require traffic impact analysis on all new developments with more than five lots and consider traffic calming techniques when applicable.

**f) Support and promote rail, air, and water transportation improvements that will benefit passenger and freight transportation in La Crosse County and the region.**

1. Assist in the implementation and continue support of the TCMC (Amtrak 2nd daily train) rail project.
2. Enhance rail safety by improving rail crossings and consider grade separated crossings where practical.
3. Ensure the La Crosse Municipal Airport continues to serve the general aviation and air commuting needs of the community as well as regional air passenger and freight services.
4. Support implementation of recommendations in the Port of La Crosse Harbor Plan.



# Utilities and Community Facilities

The purpose of this Utilities and Community Facilities Element is to offer policies and recommendations to guide the future development of utilities and community facilities in La Crosse County. This element of the county-wide plan is much more general than local municipal plans and will not include an in-depth analysis of local utilities or community facilities. Instead, it will discuss issues of regional importance such as ground water, transmission line corridors, equitable distribution of public services, and other issues within the purview of county government. Content for this element was determined through the public participation process, review of current goals, and includes review of related documents and plans

## General Utilities and Community Facilities Policy

To provide for the sustainability of future county-wide development by ensuring capacity for urban and rural uses and densities, La Crosse County will:

- Encourage utility and facility resource sharing that fairly distributes and compensates all cities, villages, and towns for past, present, and future investments in public services.
- Promote the sustainable development of utilities and community facilities to protect environmental resources.
- Work to develop and implement the recommendations of adopted plans related to sewer, water, power, and recreational facility development.
- Identify programs, funding, and partnering to develop renewable energy resources and distribution capabilities.
- Direct public investments in new or expanded community facilities toward meeting the long-range needs of the county overall.



**Recommendations (numerical listing for reference purposes only, ordering does not suggest order of importance)**

**a) Encourage La Crosse County municipalities to provide for the public recreation needs of all segments of the population.**

1. Facilitate continued utilization of the La Crosse County Outdoor Recreation Plan (2019).
2. Ensure recreation and park space is made available as a required part of urban density development.
3. Incorporate scenic areas and viewsheds in La Crosse County into a system of protected open spaces, scenic trails and parks.

**b) Protect groundwater resources, distribution systems, recharge areas, and wellheads from contamination, degradation, and overdevelopment.**

1. Identify ways to prevent further groundwater contamination, identify appropriate locations for new wells, and make more efficient and economical use of existing wells.
2. Encourage wellhead protection ordinances for municipal wells within the county.

**c) Manage solid waste and wastewater treatment facilities in an environmentally sensitive manner.**

1. Work with La Crosse County's Solid Waste Policy Board to implement the recommendations of the Solid Waste Management Plan.
2. Strengthen service relationships and properly manage solid waste disposal within the region.
3. Ensure that landfill areas are zoned properly and ensure appropriate buffer areas of either industrial uses or green spaces.
4. Ensure that there will be a sufficient growth plan for landfill areas or determine an alternative solution if the current area is not desired for growth.
5. Continue to maintain the nonproliferation of additional water treatment facilities but recognize that connection to an existing treatment facility is not always cost-effective or environmentally sound and that there may be instances where a small sewage treatment facility is the most effective solution.
6. Require site plans and density guidelines (dwelling units per acre) before approval of municipal sewer extensions to residential subdivisions.



7. In new developments promote incorporation of adequate open space with pervious surface areas to help control stormwater in an environmentally sound and natural manner.

**d) Ensure adequate utility and communication infrastructure throughout La Crosse County.**

1. Work with utility/communication providers to monitor existing supplies and forecast future demand to provide sufficient delivery for a variety of consumers.
2. Protect residents from major line development through the county that does not benefit La Crosse County users.
3. Support Next Generation 911 in the conversion from previously used tabular data obtained from telephone companies for addressing to the use of spatial data.

**e) Promote sustainable environmentally sensitive energy resources.**

1. Encourage participation of agricultural operations in energy-conserving programs.
2. Encourage all public buildings to meet or exceed the Energy Efficiency and Renewables standards (LEED – Like).
3. Support electrical grid resilience and stabilization throughout the region.
4. Encourage the continued use of Xcel's refuse-derived fuel power plant and ensure that enough waste is being provided to meet minimum contract demands.
5. Pursue other technologies which will bring even higher standards of environmentally sensitive power generation.

**f) Site and manage new and existing public facilities in an equitable manner.**

1. Identify equitable and acceptable ways to distribute the costs and benefits of public services and facilities between the private and public sectors.
2. Implement a public engagement process to include early and continuous public involvement when siting new public facilities.
3. New facilities shall conform to local siting requirements and if they are projected to generate substantial travel demand, attempt to locate facilities along transportation/public transit corridors.



# Land Use Plan

There is a direct relationship between the local and county plans. To accommodate minor differences in classification among local jurisdictional plans within La Crosse County, broad categories were developed to consolidate similar uses. The intent is that the broad county plan will generally depict the planned growth pattern, while local plans will dictate more specifically the type, amount, and intensity of allowable development.

Implementation typically is completed for future land use classes by amending the county-wide zoning district. This process is a direct relationship between county and town recommendations as laid out in state statute.

## Growth Projections

Future land use projections represent generalized growth scenarios based on state projections and current development densities. The projections indicate the county should generally plan to accommodate 5,000 additional combined acres of residential, commercial, and industrial land over the next 20 years. A generalized look at land supply shows that there are nearly 190,000 acres that are physically suited for development. Below is a table (Table 13) of residential future land use projections. The below projections were established using population projections from the American Community Survey, historical building permit trends, and the core values of the comprehensive plan. The Committee utilized a vision for the future of La Crosse County where the growth should occur if the development was utilizing the core values in deciding the location of the majority of future residential development.

When preparing a broad growth plan at this scale, it is often necessary to identify growth areas that exceed the generalized projection. This technique, often referred to as a “market adjustment” is done to account for minor changes in market conditions and the immediate availability of land designated for development purposes. For this future land use map (Map 7), the Committee has adopted a market adjustment of 200%.



Table 13. Future Land Use Projections

Future Land Use Projections					
Municipality	Residents/Acre	2030 Population Projected Change	Proposed Projections (based on core values)	Projected acres of residential land use in 10 years	200% market Adjustment for 20 year projected residential acres
Bangor	0.670	10	10	14	57
Burns	2.148	-5	-10	0	0
Farmington	2.583	175	200	285	1138
Greenfield	3.529	245	245	349	1394
Washington	1.613	-25	-25	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>		400	420	647.3	2589
Barre	3.009	110	50	43	172
Campbell	8.857	5	5	4	17
Hamilton	2.645	240	50	43	172
Holland	3.620	630	500	429	1715
Medary	3.434	60	60	51	206
Onalaska	3.792	315	315	270	1080
Shelby	4.489	-5	375	322	1286
<b>TOTALS</b>		1355	1355	1162	4648
<b>Towns Subtotal</b>		1755	1755	1809	7237
Bangor	11.500	90	50	11	44
Holmen	14.949	1560	800	175	702
Rockland	10.129	35	35	8	31
West Salem	13.049	340	300	66	263
La Crosse	19.847	150	2080	456	1825
Onalaska	12.593	2090	1000	219	877
<b>TOTALS</b>		4265	4265	935	3742
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>			6040	2745	10979

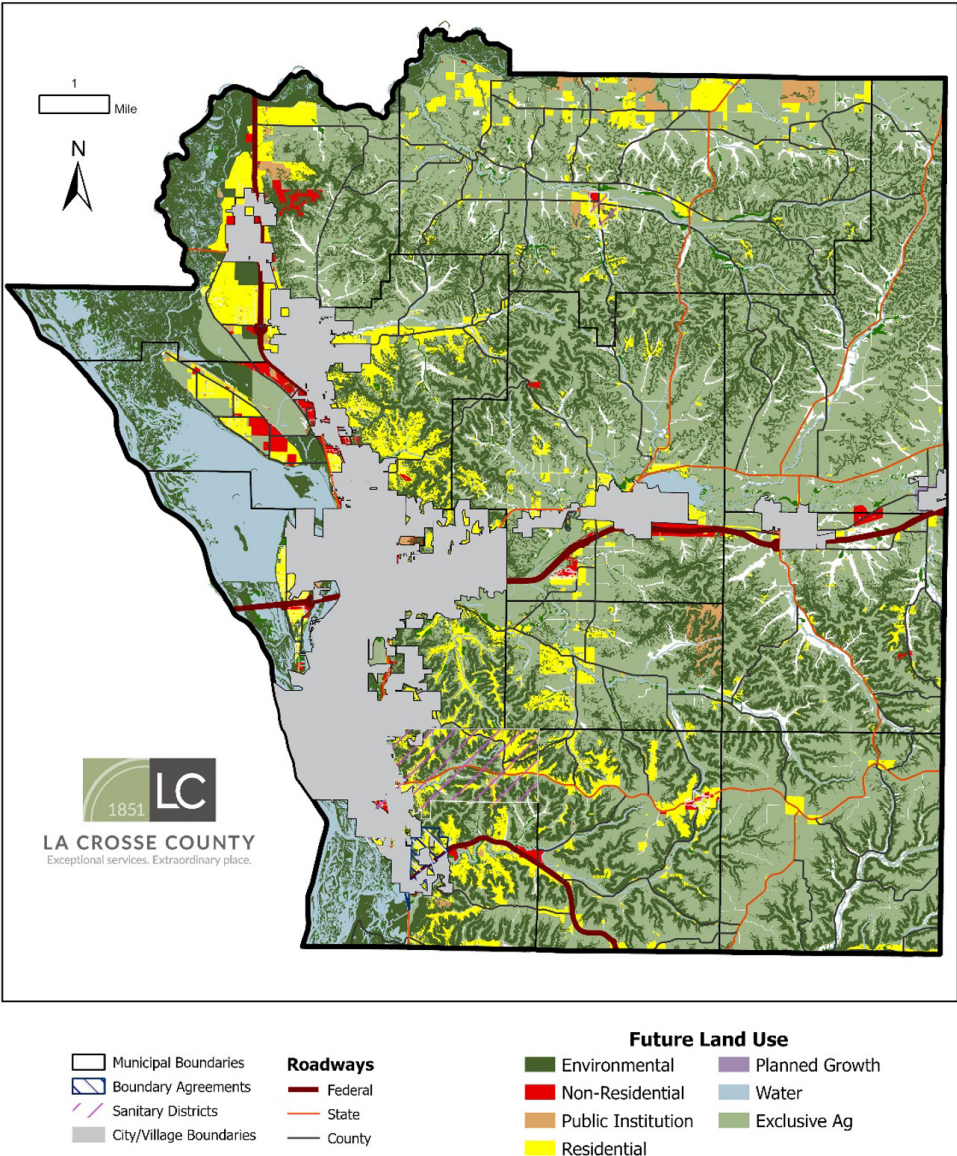
## Map 7 - Future Land Use

The Future Land Use map has been created based on the following:

- Five broad categories have been established to guide the county planning process as discussed at previous meetings. A description of the uses allowed within these categories is found on the following pages.
- The land use plan indicates “design and planning corridors.” These represent areas of future study and detailed recommendations. The county plan is intended to provide broad guidance on both the form and use of development in these corridors.
- To view the Future Land Use map online, go to <https://arcg.is/1rv4H9>. Individual future land use maps for each town in the county can be viewed through that link.



Map 7. Future Land Use: La Crosse County



**Future Land Use Districts**

This section outlines the planned future land use districts for La Crosse County depicted on the Draft Future Land Use Map. County districts (indicated as numbered headings, below) represent a consolidation of the more specific local land use districts. This relationship is depicted below.

Each category of land use contains an overall purpose statement that describes the intent of each district and its allowable uses. Categories may be implemented through multiple zoning districts.

- **Residential.** A residential district includes land uses where the predominant use is housing. In areas that are zoned residential, buildings may include single family housing, multiple family housing (apartments, duplexes, townhomes, and condominiums) or mobile homes. Zoning for residential use may permit some services or work opportunities or may totally exclude business and industry.
- **Non-Residential.** A non-residential district includes uses that are business related, including commercial, retail, or industrial. Zoning for these areas is established to provide separation from incompatible uses, which may include residential neighborhoods.
- **Public/Institutional.** This district encompasses a range of public, social, and institutional uses. These uses are public or semi-public, and generally tax exempt. Specific uses include schools, libraries, parks, municipal buildings, emergency response and public safety buildings, health care facilities, travel-related facilities, places of worship, or other governmental lands. As a broad policy plan, the County Land Use Plan will not depict the exact location of these facilities. Siting guidelines for new facilities are proposed in the recommendations section of this chapter.
- **Agricultural and Rural.** The Agricultural and Rural District is established for areas in which agricultural and certain compatible low intensity uses are encouraged as the principal uses of land. This district is to preserve agricultural land for food and fiber production; protect productive farming by preventing conflicts between incompatible uses; and especially to implement the provisions of the County Farmland Preservation Plan, when adopted and periodically revised; and comply with the provisions of the Farmland Preservation Law to permit eligible landowners to receive tax credits under ss. 71.09(11), Wis. Stats.
- **Environmental.** The Environmental District includes areas where special protection is encouraged because of unique landscape, topographical features, wildlife, or historical value. They contain Floodplains; Steep Slopes - 30% or greater; Wetlands; Preserved Lands in permanent conservation easements; and viewsheds, historic, archeological, or culturally significant sites. Since we do not currently have a zoning district for this environmental land use class, and while development is to be discouraged in these areas, they may be zoned consistent with adjoining zoning districts.

#### Land Use Policies, Recommendations, and Programs: Development Review and Ordinance Updates

##### a) Support innovative approaches to land development to increase flexibility, sustainability, and resilience.

1. Identify a sufficient supply of developable land for a range of different uses, in areas, types, and densities consistent with the local municipality's wishes and service requirements.



**b) Maintain plans and ordinances to manage future development throughout the county.**

1. Work with the towns, villages, cities, and surrounding counties to resolve remaining incompatibilities between local land use plans over the 20-year planning period.
2. Comprehensive Plan updates or amendments shall be required for county and local plans as communities reach their projected growth guidelines outlined in this chapter.
3. Update codes, ordinances, and other county programs, to implement recommendations in the County Plan.
4. Consider the development of new zoning districts as well as policies that allow for density- based zoning programs.
5. Require developers to prepare an independent fiscal or economic impact study per the municipality's requirements.

**c) Establish land development principles that preserve La Crosse County's natural resources and viewsheds.**

1. Develop Conservation Design Principles incorporating the use of cluster/conservation subdivision design and other similar existing models.
2. Establish design corridors along major transportation thoroughfares (Great River Road, Interstate 90, Highway 16, etc.).
3. Require new development in designated areas to meet local standards and guidelines such as:
  - "Hide" development from main roads through natural vegetation.
  - Provide vegetative buffers between building sites and sensitive to the site's historical or natural character.
  - Preserve mature trees, vegetation, and other attributes that relate to environmental areas. Prohibit or limit the placement of homes and buildings on exposed bluffs or ridge lines.
  - Integrate natural resources into the subdivision design as aesthetic and conservation landscape elements.
  - Restore degraded environmental areas within the subdivisions, such as streams and wetlands.
  - Maximize preservation of common open space in the neighborhood through public dedication and/or private management of open space.





4. Consider the implementation of Bluff Design Guidelines addressing the following:

- Preserve the hillsides, scenic vistas, woodlands, wildlife habitat, and associated rare features found in the Coulee Region.
- Prohibit ridge top “sky lining” that alters the natural land profiles with built structures. Limit the visual impact of any new development that can legally be constructed.
- Cluster development in a manner to maximize visually significant, unfragmented woodlands and open spaces.
- Design buildings on hillsides to follow the natural terrain in a manner that minimizes earth disturbance.
- Construct fences that are wildlife-friendly using fence designs that provide exits and corridors for wildlife.
- Place all utilities underground.
- Restrict or shield lighting preserving the dark night sky.



# Implementation

The La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan establishes a framework for a wide variety of public decisions affecting growth, development, community character, and public expenditures. This element of the plan consolidates opportunities and direction for La Crosse County over the next twenty years. It includes a synopsis of previously completed planning components (citizen participation process, plan goals, etc.) and a strategic action plan that prioritizes recommendations to achieve planning goals. The element also includes information about evaluating, amending, and updating this plan to ensure consistency with other planning documents, and to keep the plan current and relevant over time.

**NOTE:** there are also action plans within the sustainability chapter and the farmland preservation chapter, this action plan is in addition to those.

## Citizen Participation Process

The main purpose of the public participation process was to make all citizens of La Crosse County aware of the progress of the county-wide comprehensive plan and to offer the public opportunities to make suggestions or comments during the process. Public meetings, workshops, and open houses provided opportunities for the public to openly discuss comprehensive planning issues with local decision makers, county staff, and the hired planning consultant. Formal public hearings were also conducted as part of the plan adoption process to allow public testimony to be made regarding the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan. During plan development, every effort was made to ensure that public meetings were held at one or more public locations central and convenient to all citizens of La Crosse County. A series of public surveys were conducted on key elements of the plan, with opportunities for online and written participation.

Two of the major undertakings during this process included a series of sub-area meetings throughout the county, and a county-wide survey. In June and July 2021, landowner meetings were held to discuss preferred implementation tools. Examples were divided into incentive-based approaches (“carrots”) or regulatory tools (“sticks”). Overall, incentives were thought to increase voluntary compliance, but meeting participants realized some regulatory tools were also necessary. Many of those tools are represented in the next section of this Implementation Element. Results from all sub-area meetings were carried forward throughout plan development.

Beyond citizen involvement, other stakeholder groups such as county boards and commissions, county staff, and other public or private entities were included in the development of recommendations to ensure implementation steps are realistic and practical.

The primary oversight committee involved in the development of the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan was the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. This group met monthly to review plan progress, deliverables, and outcomes.

**Purpose**

Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law (Wisconsin Statute Section 66. 1001) requires the preparation of an Implementation Element as part of a nine-element comprehensive plan. The implementation plan needs to include:

**Implementation Tools**

- Implementation Tools include the rules, policies, and ordinances used to facilitate or control for a desired outcome. Examples include zoning, subdivision, and official mapping, or the availability of certain incentives. This section includes both regulatory and non-regulatory measures.

**Regulatory Measures**

- For the purposes of this document, "regulatory measures" are those that must be adhered to by everyone if adopted. Regulatory measures can be used to guide development and implement the recommendations of a comprehensive plan. These measures are officially adopted as ordinances (or as revisions to the existing ordinances). Some of the implementation tools are meant solely for use by municipalities within La Crosse County who may or may not choose to utilize these measures at their discretion with or without county assistance.

**Non-Regulatory Measures**

- For the purposes of this document, "non-regulatory measures" are meant to encourage a particular practice, but not legislate it. Non-regulatory measures can be used to guide development and implement the recommendations of a comprehensive plan. These measures often exist as policies or as special incentives available to willing participants. Some of the implementation tools are meant solely for use by municipalities within La Crosse County who may or may not choose to utilize these measures at their discretion with or without county assistance.

**Consistency Among Plan Elements**

- The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the implementation element describe how each of the nine-elements will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the plan. Since La Crosse County completed all planning elements simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist.
- This comprehensive plan references previous planning efforts, and details future planning needs. Whenever possible, existing municipal plans were incorporated in part or in whole, to ensure consistency with local decision making. To keep consistency with the comprehensive plan, the county should incorporate existing plans as components to the comprehensive plan and adopt all future plans as detailed elements of this plan.



## **Plan Adoption, Monitoring, Amendments and Update**

### **Plan Adoption**

- To implement this plan, it must be adopted by the La Crosse County Planning, Resources and Development Committee. After the Committee adopts the Plan by resolution, the county board must adopt the plan by ordinance. This action formalizes the plan document as a frame of reference for general development decisions over the next 20 years. Once formally adopted, the plan becomes a tool for communicating the community's land use policy and for coordinating legislative decisions.

## **Plan Use, Evaluation, and Amendments**

- 1.** La Crosse County will base all its land use decisions against this plan's goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations, including decisions on private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other actions.
- 2.** La Crosse County can expect gradual change in the years to come. Although this plan has described policies and actions for future implementation, it is impossible to predict the exact future condition of the county. As such, the goals, objectives, and actions should be monitored on a regular basis to maintain concurrence with changing conditions.
- 3.** The La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan may be amended at any time by the county board following the same statutory process to amend the plan as it originally followed when it was initially adopted (regardless of how minor the amendment or change is).
- 4.** To keep current with municipal actions, La Crosse County will update the La Crosse County Future Land Use Map at least annually. Municipalities amending or updating their local comprehensive plan should inform the county about these decisions and submit appropriate documentation to ensure consistency between the local and county plans.
- 5.** The plan should be evaluated at least every 5 years and updated at least every 10 years. Members of the county board, planning committees, and any other decision-making body should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated.
- 6.** The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee should reconvene five years after the initial adoption of the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan, and every five years thereafter, to review the comprehensive plan and suggest any amendments to the La Crosse County Board. The review should consist of the following steps:
  - Solicit recommendations for amendments from the general public, using procedures described in the Public Participation Plan.
  - Review annual reports on the comprehensive plan, generated when updates to the Future Land Use Map are made.
  - Review goals and objectives to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires.
  - Review policies, programs, and implementation strategies to eliminate completed tasks and identify new approaches if appropriate. Update Action Plan, as needed.

**Plan Update**

According to the State Comprehensive Planning Law, this Plan must be updated at least once every ten years. As opposed to an amendment or evaluation, the plan update is a major rewrite of the plan document and supporting maps. If the evaluation and amendment process outlined above takes place, it is likely these periodic amendments will keep the plan current and focus should instead be made on updating aging components of the plan, such as existing conditions (which could be updated with new Census information) and maps.



## 5-Year Action Plan

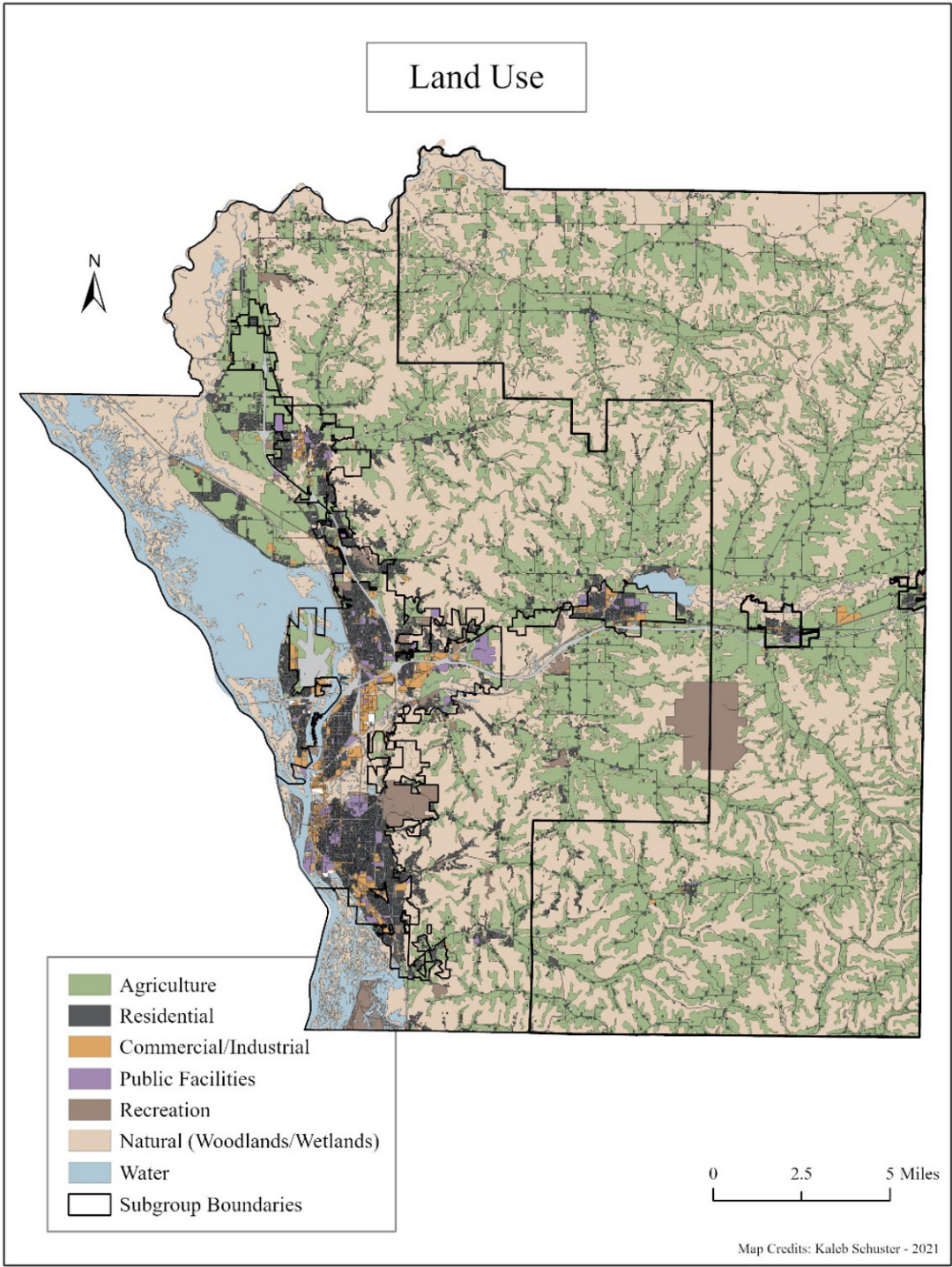
Table 14. Action Plan and Responsibilities

Table 14: Action Plan		
Action	Who is responsible?	Schedule
<b>Equity</b>		
Support recommendations for change as a result of the La Crosse County Board passing a resolution in April 2020 declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis.	La Crosse County Board, Committees, and Staff	Ongoing
<b>Housing</b>		
Make tax delinquent lands available at below market rate prices to not-for-profit housing providers.	La Crosse County PW&I Committee	Ongoing
Work with local advocacy agencies to enhance special needs housing.	La Crosse County Housing Commission	Ongoing
<b>Transportation</b>		
Require developments to provide appropriate areas for future transit and transportation facilities.	Planning, Resources & Development Committee	Immediate
Annually review and upgrade county highways.	Public Works & Infrastructure Committee	Annually
Increase connections between segments of the La Crosse County trail system.	Public Works & Infrastructure Committee	Ongoing
Approve ordinance amendments which require Access Control and Transportation Impact Analysis with new developments	Public Works & Infrastructure Committee	2022
<b>Community Facilities and Utilities</b>		
Implement recommendations of the Solid Waste Management Plan.	Solid Waste Policy Board; Public Works & Infrastructure Committee	Immediate
Explore improvements to La Crosse County buildings to meet nationally recognized energy efficiency standards	Sustainability staff; Public Works & Infrastructure Committee	2022
Develop Public Works Capital Improvement Plan	Public Works & Infrastructure Committee	2022
<b>Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources</b>		
Develop a Purchase of Development Rights road show for countywide education and issues collection.	County Land Conservation Staff; County Planning Staff	2025
<b>Economic Development</b>		
Develop countywide Economic Development Plan.	Economic Development Fund, Inc. Board; County Planning Staff	2022
Leverage additional state and local funding for economic development.	Economic Development Fund, Inc. Board	Ongoing
<b>Intergovernmental Cooperation</b>		
Assist in the development of Cooperative Boundary Agreements.	Planning, Resources & Development Committee; County Planning Staff with assistance from: 3	2022
<b>Land Use</b>		
Comprehensive rewrite of La Crosse County Zoning Code	Planning, Resources & Development Committee	2023
Update La Crosse County Subdivision Code.	Planning, Resources & Development Committee	2024
Draft Site Plan Review Ordinance	County Planning, Zoning, and Land Information Staff	2023
Develop Standards to review plan implementation progress.	County Planning, Zoning, and Land Information Staff	2022
Develop Standards to judge consistency of land use decisions with adopted comp plan.	Planning, Resources & Development Committee	2022
Update Sign Regulations (Ch. 33)	Planning, Resources & Development Committee	2023

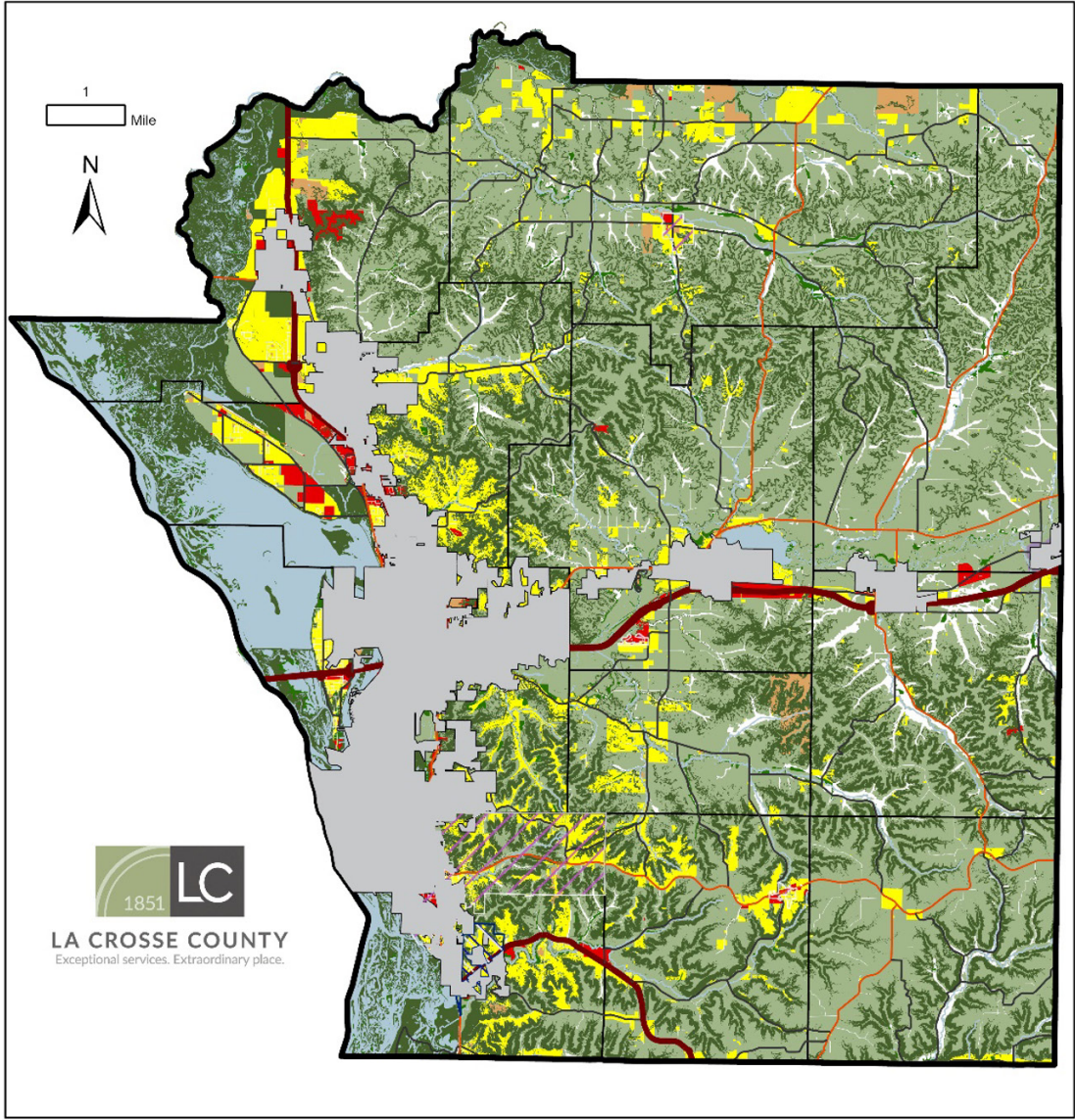
Table 14 provides a detailed list and work schedule of major actions that the county should complete as part of the implementation of the comprehensive plan. Many of the actions will collaborate with other groups.



Map 8. Existing Land Use



Map 7. Future Land Use



- Municipal Boundaries
- Boundary Agreements
- Sanitary Districts
- City/Village Boundaries

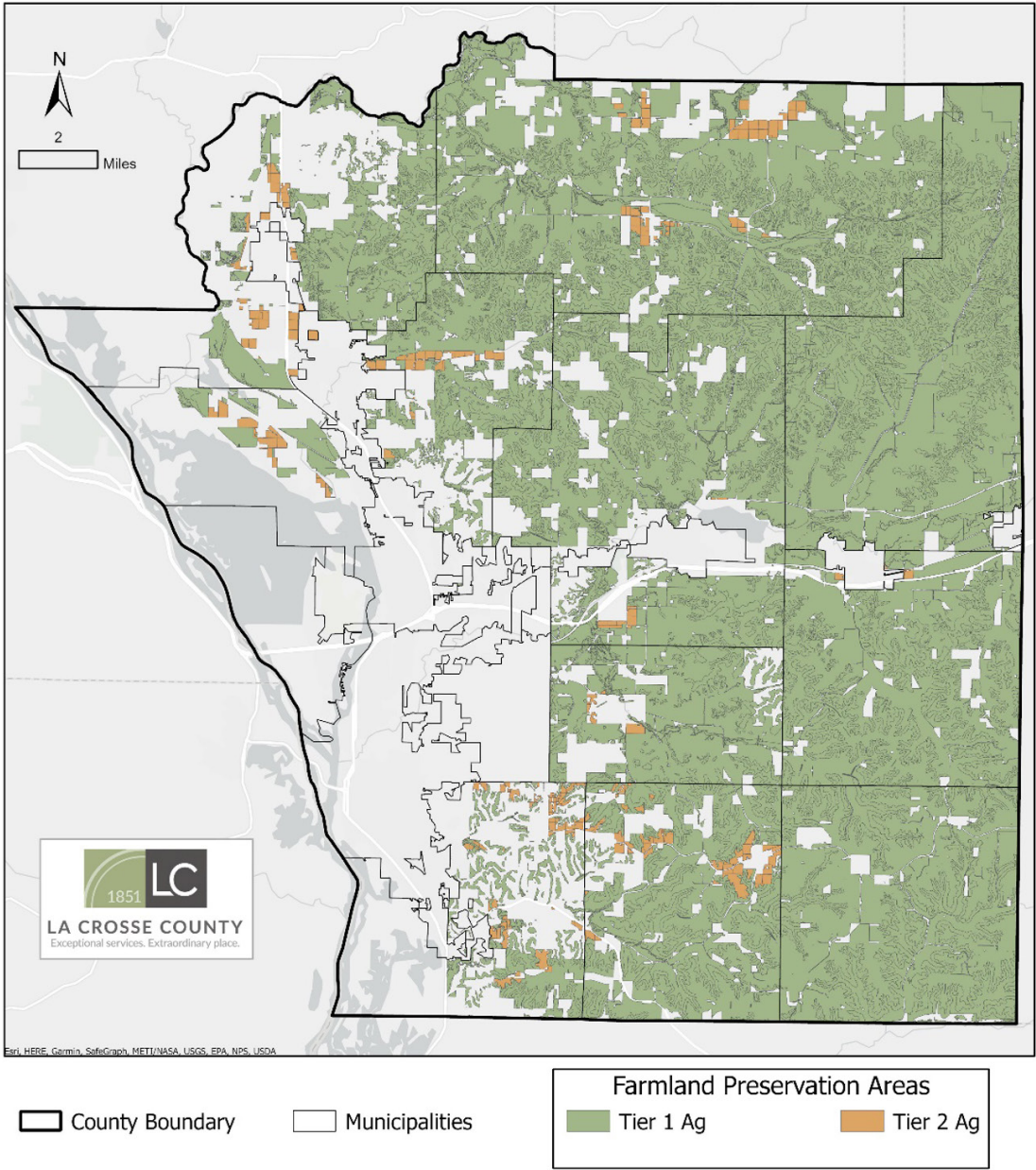
- Roadways**
- Federal
  - State
  - County

**Future Land Use**

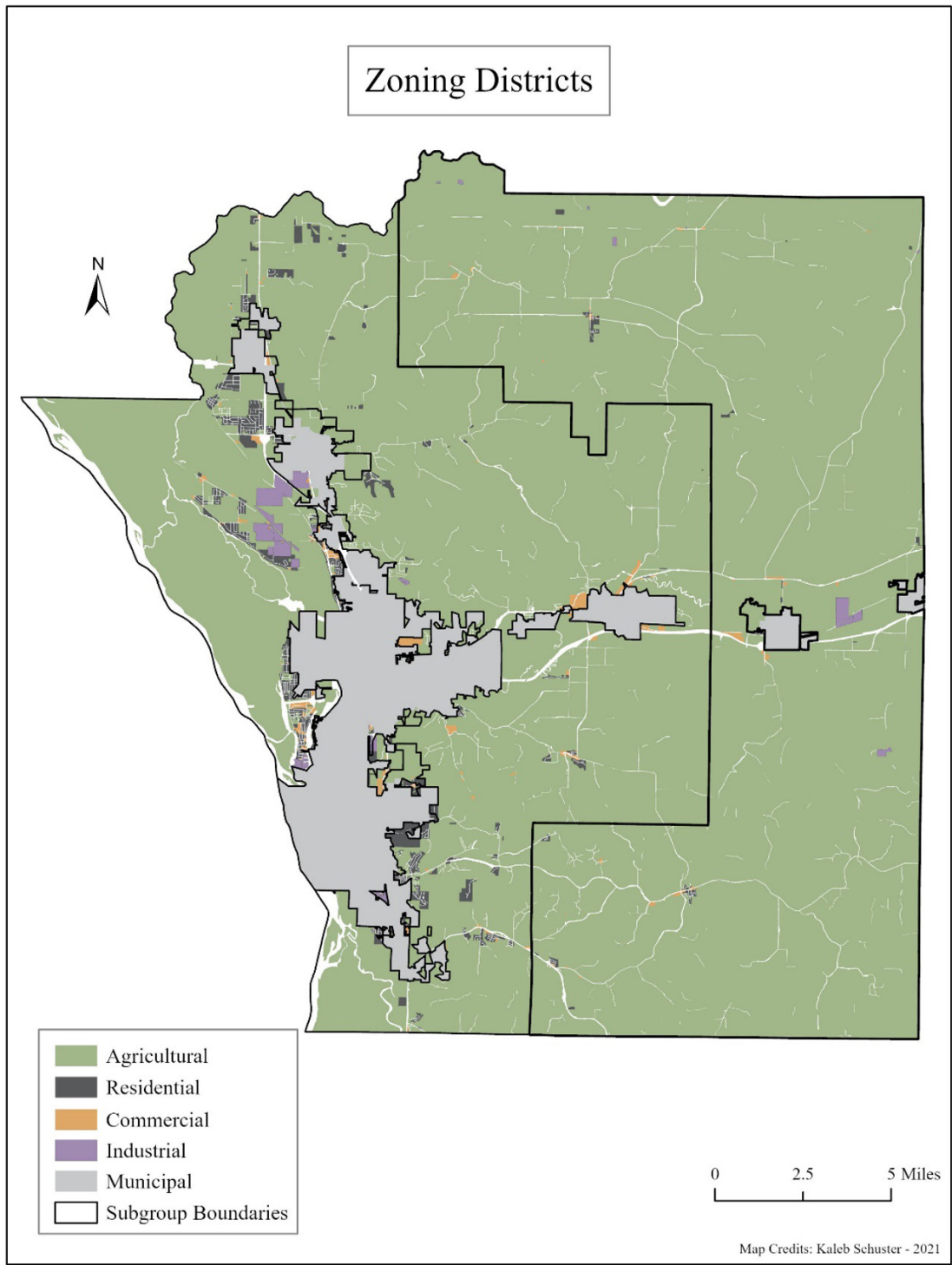
- Environmental
- Non-Residential
- Public Institution
- Residential
- Planned Growth
- Water
- Exclusive Ag



Map 9. Farmland Preservation - Agriculture Tiers

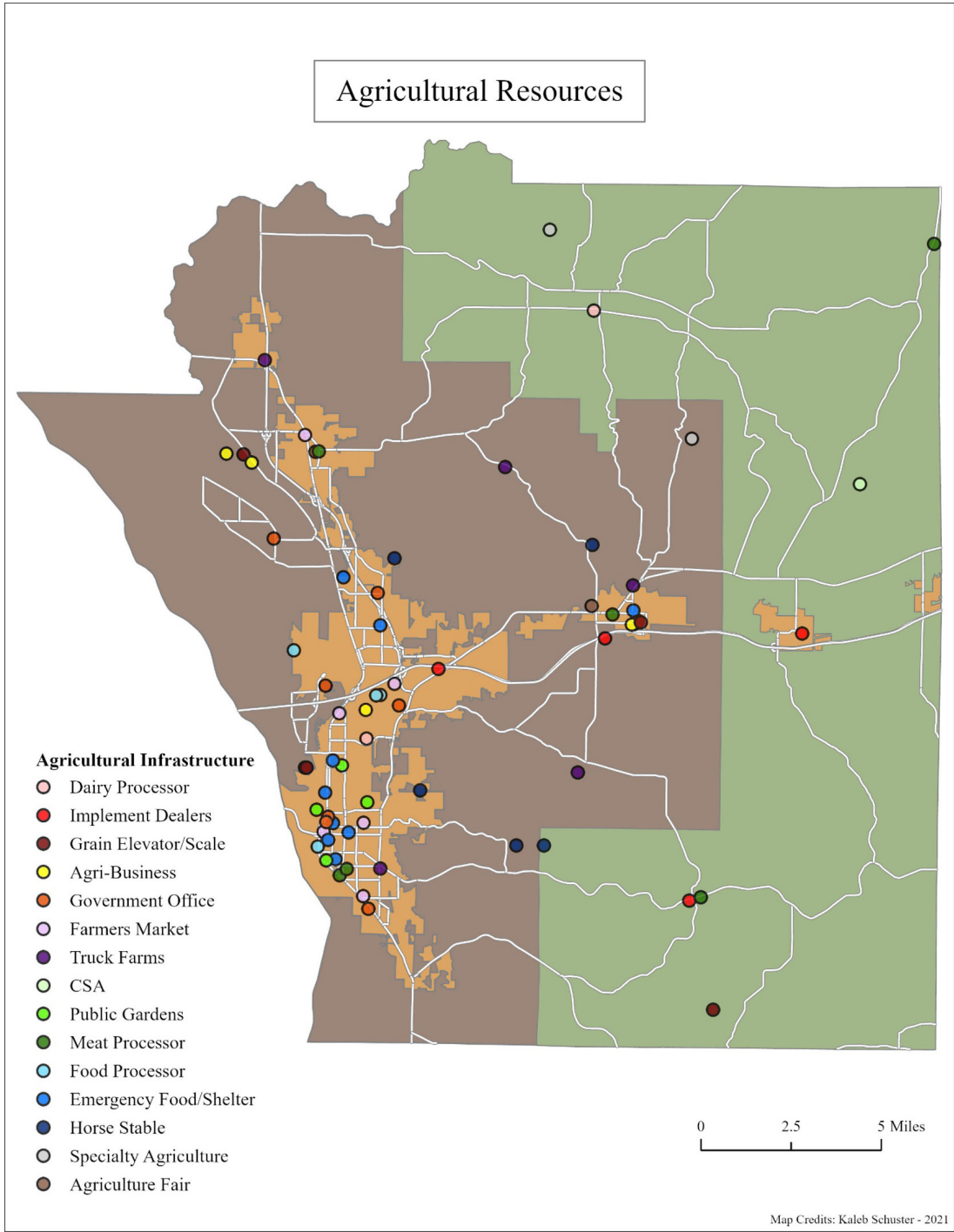


Map 10. Zoning Districts

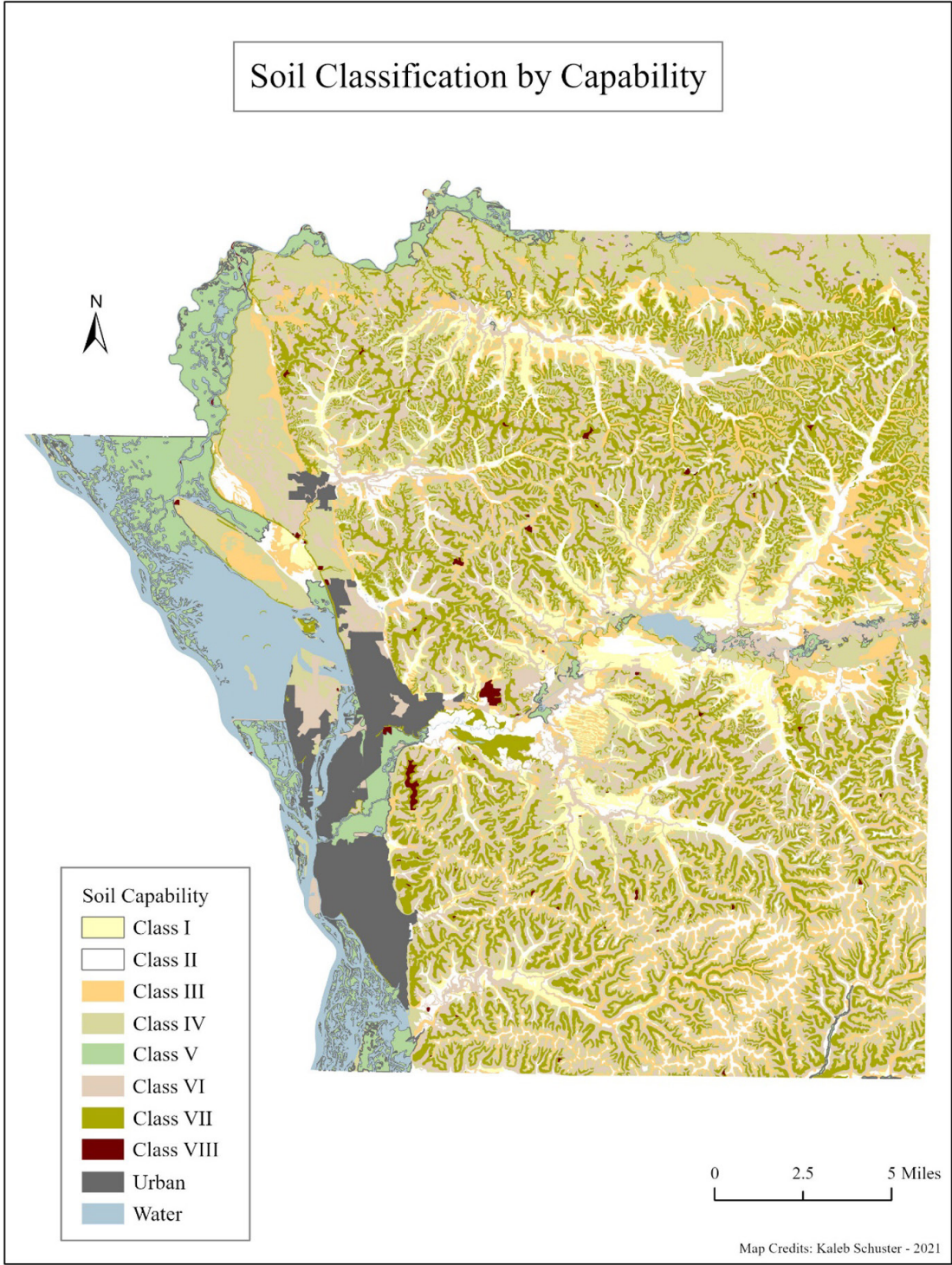




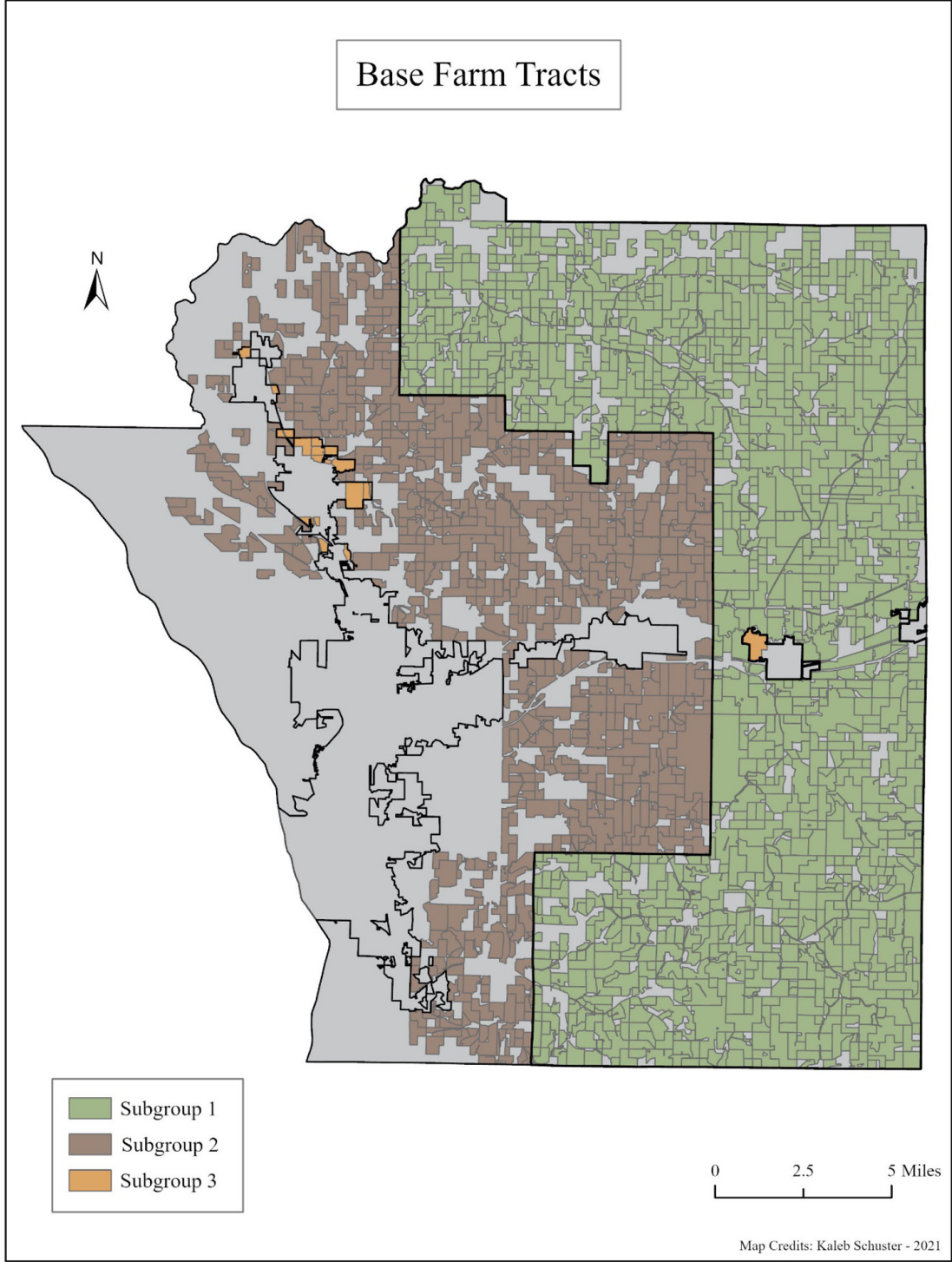
Map 11. Agricultural Resources



Map 12. Soil Classification by Capability



Map 13. Base Farm Tracts





Map 14. Slope

