



Oconto County 20-Year Comprehensive Plan

Mid-point Summary

Authorization of the Comprehensive Plan

Preparation of a comprehensive plan for Oconto County is authorized under Wisconsin State Statutes 59.69 and 66.1001 (Smart Growth). Oconto County entered into an agreement with the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (Bay-Lake RPC) to prepare the county's Comprehensive Plan. The planning process began in July 2006.

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to identify and assure sensible growth and development, and conservation over the next 20 years. Comprehensive plans allow citizens to make specific recommendations regarding such things as environmental protection, infrastructure development, transportation, housing densities, land use patterns, and design. The adopted plan provides the policy and guidance under which the county will develop and base land use decisions in the future.

Oconto County Comprehensive Plan Process

The county is using a bottom-up approach to develop the Oconto County plan, meaning the local plans are developed followed by merging the local plans to form a general countywide comprehensive plan. The Oconto County Planning Advisory Committee (OCPAC) is the responsible entity for advising development of the 11 elements which will comprise the *Oconto County 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*. The process also divides the county into three regional clusters (southern, central, and northern) with each region comprised of 6 to 11 communities. The purpose of creating these clusters is to ensure region specific issues are recognized when developing the county plan.

On July 19, 2006 a nominal group workshop was conducted with members of the OCPAC and other interested individuals to identify current and future development and preservation issues. Major topics mentioned by the group at this meeting included:

- Protect natural resources such as lakes, rivers, forests
- Preservation of farmland
- Maintain local control and preserve property rights
- Industry is being lost in Oconto County and needs to be replaced
- Alternative and efficient energy sources including fuels, wind, and hydro
- Development of all types of recreational trails

Oconto County Planning Clusters



Oconto County Statistics

- Land area (2000) – 997.97 square miles
- Population (2000) – 35,652
- Population estimate (2006) – 37,958
- Persons per square mile (2000) – 35.7
- Housing units (2000) – 19,815
- Average household size (2000) – 2.52
- Homeownership rate (2000) – 80.3%
- Median value owner occupied units (2000) - \$89,900
- Median household income (2004) - \$45,592
- Percent persons below poverty (2004) – 8.6%

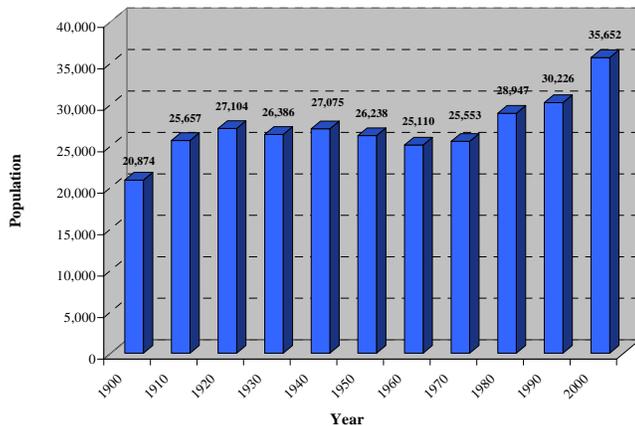
Utilizing the adopted local plans and the results of the county nominal group workshop, visioning workshop, and other public input sessions; the county, in conjunction with the OCPAC, will develop the Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs to guide implementation of the Oconto County comprehensive plan.

The county background text has been written and reviewed by the OCPAC and each committee from the regional planning clusters for the following elements: Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources; Population and Housing; Economic Development; and Transportation. These elements, in conjunction with the Utilities and Community Facilities and Land Use Controls and Inventory elements, will serve as a basis for development of the county's Future Land Use element and General Plan Design (GPD), which outlines how the county envisions its growth over the next 20 years.

In the coming months, the Bay-Lake RPC, in conjunction with Oconto County Planning and UW-Extension, will be working with the towns of Abrams, Bagley, Brazeau, Breed, Chase, Doty, Lakewood, Lena, Little Suamico, Morgan, Spruce, Stiles, and Townsend; the villages of Lena and Suring; and the city of Oconto Falls to develop their Land Use and General Plan Design Elements. Open houses on these plans are anticipated to be held in early spring of 2008 and will be followed by the plan adoption process. Development of the *Draft Oconto County 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* is expected to be completed in the winter of 2008. Upon completion of the draft, the plan will be presented to the public for comment and a second open house will be held. Adoption of the final plan is anticipated to take place in the summer of 2009.

Population

Oconto County Historic Population Trend



- From 1980 to 2000, Oconto County's population has experienced several shifts in its age distribution, generally showing a trend towards older age groups. The most significant indicator of this is the decrease in the number of individuals between the ages of 20 and 34. In 1980, this group accounted for 21 percent of the county's population. By 2000, this group's representation in the county dropped to 16 percent.
- The median age of Oconto County residents has risen from 30.8 years in 1970 to 38.8 years in 2000.

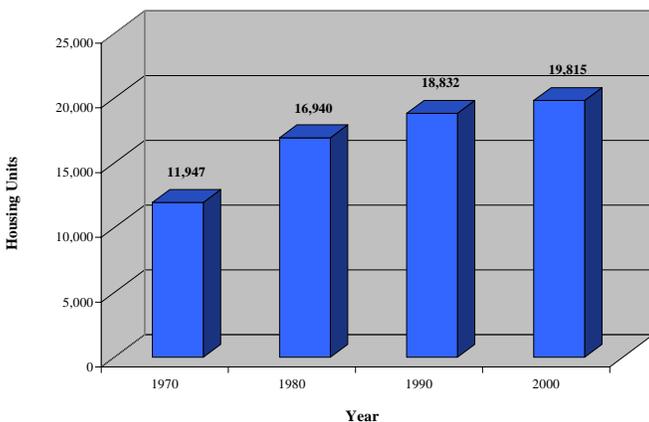
Oconto County Population Projections

- 2003 Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) population projections:

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|----------------------|----------------------|
| 2005 – 37,720 | 2020 – 43,018 |
| 2010 – 39,670 | 2025 – 44,351 |
| 2015 – 41,285 | |

Housing

Oconto County Historic Housing Trend



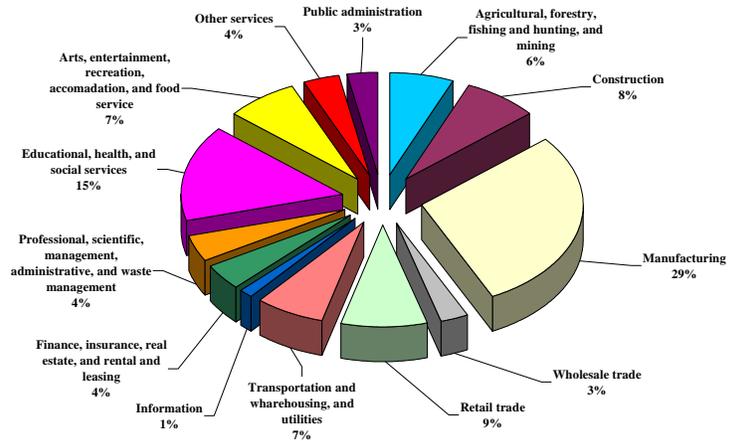
- According to the 2000 Census, one unit detached structures made up nearly 78 percent of the total housing types in Oconto County.

Oconto County Housing Unit Projections

- According to WDOA projections, the total number of occupied housing units in the county is projected to increase from 13,979 in 2000 to 19,367 in 2025.

Economic Development

- The 1999 Median Household Income in Oconto County was \$41,201. This is an 80 percent increase from the 1989 figure of \$22,927.
- The following figure indicates the percent of county residents working in each of the major industry groups as of 2000.



- According to UW-Extension, agriculture in Oconto County accounts for nearly \$317.9 million, or 25 percent, of the county's total economic activity.

Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources

- One hundred percent of the water used by municipalities and in homes in Oconto County comes from groundwater. Five municipalities in the county have 15 municipal wells that supply water to 26 percent of the county's residents. All other residents receive their water from private wells.
- According to the USDA, there were a total of 1,132 farms in Oconto County in 2002. Dairy farms were the primary livestock operations in addition to cattle and poultry farming.
- Between 2001 and 2005, 2,212 acres of land in the county was converted from agricultural to non-agricultural uses. The value of each acre diverted from agriculture to non-agriculture use has risen from \$2,607 per acre in 2001 to \$3,340 per acre in 2005.
- Oconto County has 20 locations listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

For More Information on the Oconto County Plan

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