

Chapter 2:

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays the foundation of the Washburn Comprehensive Plan. It offers background on the residents of Washburn, describes overarching issues and opportunities facing the City, and portrays Washburn's vision.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WASHBURN

POPULATION CHANGE

Historically, Washburn has served as the resource hub for the population of the Bayfield Peninsula. Washburn has experienced significant increases and decreases in population since its incorporation in 1904. Washburn's population peaked in 1918, when more than 9,000 people resided in the City. At that time, the DuPont plant in nearby Barksdale manufactured explosives for World War I. Following the war, employment at the DuPont plant leveled off, and logging, agricultural, and quarrying operations in the area declined sharply. World War II brought a slight upswing in employment and population in Washburn, but population levels remained well below the levels that existed during World War I. Following World War II, Washburn's population again declined. In 1960, only 1,896 people resided in Washburn. Washburn's population increased from 1960 to 1990 when 2,285 people resided in Washburn. However, from 1990 to 2000, Washburn once again saw a slight decrease in population. In 2000, 2,280 people lived in Washburn (see Table 2-A: Population Change 1970-2000). The Wisconsin Demographic Service estimated that population of Washburn in 2005 was 2,281.

TABLE 2-A: POPULATION CHANGE 1970-2000

Place	1970 Pop.	Change 1960-70	1980 Pop.	Change 1970-80	1990 Pop.	Change 1980-90	2000 Pop.	Change 1990-00
City of Washburn	1,957	3.2%	2,080	6.3%	2,285	9.9%	2,280	-0.35%
Town of Barksdale	574	-1.8%	762	32.8%	756	-0.8%	801	6.0%
Town of Bayview	297	0.3%	343	15.4%	402	17.2%	491	22.1%
Town of Washburn	282	-11.3%	386	36.8%	490	26.9%	541	10.4%
Bayfield County	11,683	-1.9%	13,822	18.3%	14,008	1.3%	15,013	7.2%
State of Wisconsin	4,413,300	11.7%	4,705,642	6.6%	4,891,769	4.0%	5,363,690	9.6%

Wisconsin Demographic Service Center, U.S. Census Bureau

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population projections are effective planning tools when used correctly. However, their accuracy is subject to several factors including assumptions for birth rates, death rates, migration, and economic conditions. Assumptions are based on past trends and the best information available at the time. However, assumptions do not always remain true, and unexpected changes can occur. For instance, existing industries may close or choose to expand. In a small community like Washburn, these changes can have a significant impact on the population. Therefore, Washburn should use the population projections presented in this Comprehensive Plan as a general guide and not as an absolute certainty. Moreover, the City should periodically review and update the population projections based on new conditions.

Wisconsin Demographic Service Center Population Projections

The Wisconsin Demographic Service Center projects that Washburn’s population will gradually decrease through the year 2025. In contrast, the Demographic Service Center projects that the population in the surrounding towns of Barksdale, Bayview, and Washburn will gradually increase through the year 2025. The projected growth in the surrounding towns likely relates to a desire of some people to live in a rural setting (as opposed to an urban setting) and to a perception of some people that it costs less to live in the surrounding towns than it costs to live in the City of Washburn. The Demographic Service Center also projects that the population of Bayfield County will gradually increase through the year 2025, but the projected rate of growth for Bayfield County is roughly half of the projected rate of growth for the State of Wisconsin (see Table 2-B: Population Estimates and Projections).

TABLE 2-B: POPULATION ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS

Place	2005 Pop.	Change 00-05	2010 Pop.	Change 05-10	2015 Pop.	Change 10-15	2020 Pop.	Change 15-20	2025 Pop.	Change 20-25
City of Washburn	2,281	0%	2,275	-0.3%	2,259	-0.7%	2,229	-1.3%	2,178	-2.3%
Town of Barksdale	824	2.9%	845	2.5%	861	1.9%	871	1.2%	872	0.1%
Town of Bayview	525	6.9%	557	6.1%	586	5.2%	610	4.1%	627	2.8%
Town of Washburn	567	4.8%	592	4.4%	614	3.7%	631	2.8%	640	1.4%
Bayfield County	15,432	2.8%	15,830	2.6%	16,129	1.9%	16,315	1.2%	16,327	0.1%
Wisconsin	5,563,896	3.7%	5,751,470	3.4%	5,931,386	3.1%	6,110,878	3.0%	6,274,867	2.7%

Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration, January 2004

Washburn’s Population Goal

The City can choose to respond to the projections from the Wisconsin Demographic Service Center in one of two ways. It can accept that a future decline in the City’s population is inevitable and it could plan accordingly. Or, it can develop goals, objectives, policies, and plans to help stabilize or grow the population. This Comprehensive Plan reflects the City’s desire to set realistic goals to grow the population of Washburn. Washburn believes that the high quality of life that it has to offer will help retain existing residents and businesses and it will attract new residents and businesses from elsewhere.

Between 2005 and 2025, the Demographic Service Center has projected that the population of the State of Wisconsin will increase by 12.8%, Bayfield County will increase by 5.8%, the Town of Barksdale will increase by 5.8%, the Town of Bayview will increase by 19.4%, and the Town of Washburn will increase by 12.9%. The Demographic Service Center has also projected that the average city in Wisconsin will increase in population by 12.9% between 2005 and 2025. If Washburn were to grow at the projected rate of Bayfield County (5.8%), then Washburn in 2025 would have a population of 2,311 - 133 more people than what existed in 2005. If Washburn were to grow at the projected rate of the average city in Wisconsin (12.9%), then Washburn in 2025 would have a population of 2,575 – 294 more people than what existed in 2005.

This Comprehensive Plan sets a goal for the City of Washburn to grow to a population of 2,500 in 2025 – this equates to roughly 10% growth from 2005 to 2025. There is an adequate amount of land within the existing urban service area of the City to accommodate this growth through a logical and phased plan. Consequently, if Washburn does not meet its growth goal, it would not adversely affect the other goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan.

AGE COMPOSITION

It is not only important to know how many people live in Washburn, but it is also important to know key characteristics of the people, such as their age, education, and employment status. The following provides an overview of the existing age composition of Washburn residents and the anticipated changes in age composition that will occur through the year 2025. Also, refer to Table 2-C: Age Composition – 2000.

Broad Age Groups

All residents fit into one of three very broad age groups: 1) those under the age of 18; 2) those between the ages of 18 and 65; and 3) those over the age of 65. In 2000, 26.6% of the population of Washburn was under the age of 18; 58.1% was between the ages of 18 and 65; and 15.3% was over the age of 65. In comparison, in 2000, 25.5% of the population of the State of Wisconsin was under the age of 18; 61.4% was between the ages of 18 and 65; and 13.1% was over the age of 65. Notably, Washburn, in comparison to the State of Wisconsin, has a smaller percentage of its population between the ages of 18 and 65, and a larger percentage of its population over the age 65. Over time, as the baby boom generation ages and as women have fewer children, the percentage of people over 65 will increase significantly in Washburn and throughout Wisconsin. Unless Washburn can attract younger families and retain or bring back young Washburn adults who have graduated from high school or college, the rate at which Washburn ages will accelerate. An aging population can significantly affect future jobs, services, and education in Washburn. The following provides a more detailed description of the issues and opportunities associated with various age groups in Washburn.

People under the Age of 18

The number of people under the age of 18 will vary by year, but the number of people in this age group will generally decrease over time, even if the overall population increases. There are several reasons for this. The number of people of childbearing age in Washburn is decreasing. Consequently, the number of babies born in Washburn will continue to decrease. In addition, people today are generally having fewer children than people of previous generations. Accordingly, unless Washburn attracts a significant number of younger families from other areas and retains its current population, the number of children in Washburn will decrease. Since 1997, enrollment in the Washburn School District has slowly been decreasing, and the School District is planning for continued decreasing enrollment at least through the year 2010.

People between the Ages of 18 and 24

Most people between the ages of 18 and 24 choose to pursue higher education or enter the workforce. Washburn is fortunate to have easy access to two quality schools of higher education in nearby Ashland: Northland College and the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical Institute. However, Washburn, like most Wisconsin cities, must strive to retain its 18 to 24 year old residents, or find a way to bring them back into the community once they have received a college degree. Generally, people in this age group are not married and they do not have children. Consequently, they may not feel significant ties to Washburn, and they may be more willing to leave Washburn in search of other opportunities. So, in addition to jobs, Washburn will need to be able to provide amenities to retain and attract 18 to 24 year olds.

People between the Ages of 25 and 54

If Washburn is to meet its goal of growing its population, and if Washburn is to sustain its population, then it will be especially important for Washburn to retain and attract people between the ages of 25 and 54. This is critical because people between the ages of 25 and 54 are at their prime working age. In addition, people in this age range tend to have children, so they are less apt to make impulsive moves elsewhere. Perhaps more than any other age group, those between the ages of 25 and 54 tend to have a strong commitment to the future of the community. Washburn will need to have ample economic opportunities and affordable housing, to retain and attract people between the ages of 25 and 54. Furthermore, Washburn will need to provide quality parks, services, and cultural activities to ensure a high quality of life that will retain and attract people.

People over the Age of 65

As life expectancy continues to increase and as the baby boom generation nears retirement age, the number and percentage of people over the age of 65 will increase dramatically. This has several implications for the future of Washburn. For example, Washburn will need to make sure that it has adequate housing for those over the age of 65. Washburn will need to attract people to take over the jobs of those who retire from their jobs in Washburn. It will need to create new jobs to help care for seniors in need. Also, some people over the age of 65 will choose to live elsewhere for part of the calendar year, which can have an impact on local businesses.

TABLE 2-C: AGE COMPOSITION – 2000

Age	City of Washburn		Bayfield County		Wisconsin	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 5	94	4.1	794	5.3	342,340	6.4
5 to 9	168	7.4	979	6.5	379,484	7.1
10 to 14	215	9.4	1,196	8.0	403,074	7.5
15 to 19	183	8.0	1,037	6.9	407,195	7.6
20 to 24	88	3.9	490	3.3	357,292	6.7
25 to 34	190	8.3	1,401	9.3	706,168	13.2
35 to 44	399	17.5	2,379	15.8	875,522	16.3
45 to 54	383	16.8	2,452	16.3	732,306	13.7
55 to 59	106	4.6	994	6.6	252,742	4.7
60 to 64	86	3.8	827	5.5	204,999	3.8
65 to 74	134	5.9	1,341	8.9	355,307	6.6
75 to 84	139	6.1	836	5.6	251,621	4.7
85 and Over	95	4.2	287	1.9	95,625	1.8
Median Age	40.5	--	42.1	--	36.0	--

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

RACE AND ORIGIN

Approximately 68% of Washburn residents were born in Wisconsin. Ninety-three percent of Washburn’s residents are white and almost 7% are American Indian (see Table 2-D: Race and Origin in 2000). While these statistics will remain relatively stable in the near future, if Washburn is to realize its goal of growing its population, it will need to attract people from outside Washburn, from outside Wisconsin, and perhaps from outside the United States. Consequently, Washburn will gradually become a more diverse community in the future.

TABLE 2-D: RACE AND ORIGIN IN 2000

Race	City of Washburn		Bayfield County		Wisconsin	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	2,129	93.4	13,500	89.9	4,827,514	90.0
Black or African American	8	0.4	30	0.2	326,506	6.1
Am. Indian or Alaska Native	157	6.9	1,586	10.6	69,386	1.3
Asian	11	0.5	60	0.4	102,768	1.9
Native Hawaiian/Pacific	-	-	4	-	4,310	0.1
Other	11	0.5	64	0.4	104,662	2.0

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The 2000 US Census reports that approximately 87% of Washburn residents over the age of 25 have a high school diploma or equivalency, and roughly 24% of Washburn residents over the age of 25 have a bachelor’s degree or higher (see Table 2-E: Educational Attainment - 2000). The percentage of people in Washburn that have a graduate or professional degree is higher than that in Bayfield County or the State of Wisconsin. In recent years, there has been a rise in high school graduates that pursue a college degree. However, the general trend across Wisconsin is that young people with a college degree are leaving the area for employment opportunities elsewhere. A key goal of Wisconsin communities is to find opportunities for college graduates to stay in Wisconsin.

TABLE 2-E: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT – 2000

Characteristic	City of Washburn	Bayfield County	Wisconsin
Less than 9 th Grade		2.6%	3.9%
9 th to 12 th Grade – No Diploma		10.8%	9.2%
High School Graduate – Includes Equivalency		27.0%	34.2%
Some College – No Degree		22.9%	21.5%
Associate Degree		12.5%	9.6%
Bachelor’s Degree		14.9%	14.7%
Graduate or Professional Degree		9.4%	6.9%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS AND FORECASTS

In 2000, the US Census reported 938 households in Washburn and 589 families. A household refers to all persons who occupy a housing unit. So a household could involve a family living in a house or it could involve unrelated people sharing an apartment. A family refers to a parent or grandparent living with at least one child. In Washburn, most families are comprised of married couples with children. Yet, in the future, it is likely that the percentage of married couples without children living with them will increase. The percentage of single parent households will also increase. Female households

with no husband present accounted for approximately 13% of the family households in Washburn in 2000.

The median household in Washburn in 2000 was 2.33 persons per household, which was down from 2.46 in 1990 (see Table 2-F: Average Household Size). Given the trend for single person households and smaller family sizes, it follows that household size will also decrease. The Comprehensive Plan projects the average household size in Washburn will be approximately 2.2 in 2025.

TABLE 2-F: AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Location	1990	2000	2025 (Projection)
City of Washburn	2.46	2.33	2.2
Bayfield County	2.52	2.40	--
State of Wisconsin	2.61	2.50	--

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 and Sanders Wacker Bergly, Inc.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

In 2000, Washburn’s unemployment rate (4.0%) was somewhat lower than Bayfield County’s (5.3%), but slightly higher than Wisconsin’s unemployment rate (3.2%). The City’s median household income is comparable to the County’s but significantly lower than the State’s (see Table 2-G: General Employment and Income Characteristics - 2000). Refer to the Economic Development Chapter for more detailed information.

TABLE 2-G: GENERAL EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME CHARACTERISTICS – 2000

Characteristic	City of Washburn	Bayfield County	Wisconsin
Employed in Labor Force	56.0%	57.1%	65.8%
Unemployed in Labor Force	4.0%	5.3%	3.2%
Not in Labor Force	40.0%	37.5%	30.9%
Median Household Income	\$33,257	\$33,390	\$43,791
Per Capita Income	\$15,331	\$16,407	\$21,271
Median Earnings, Male, Full-Time, Year-Round	\$31,875	\$31,699	\$37,062
Median Earning, Female, Full-Time, Year-Round	\$23,235	\$21,731	\$25,865
Individuals Below Poverty Level	10.3%	12.5%	8.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

Employment Forecast

In a small community like Washburn, it is difficult to project future employment with certainty. However, Washburn’s unemployment rate will likely fall to 3.5% or so by the year 2025 when Washburn’s baby boom generation will be retired. Conceivably, Washburn may experience a labor shortage before 2025 and, therefore, will need to attract people from outside Washburn to fill the jobs that the baby boom generation held. New jobs to care for the aging population of Washburn will also need to be created and will need to be filled. If Washburn is to reach its goal of growing to a population of 2,500 by the year 2025, then Washburn will need to create roughly 100 new jobs by the year 2025. The City should use this forecast as a general guide and update this forecast as conditions warrant.

SUMMARY OF THE PEOPLE OF WASHBURN AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS THAT WILL AFFECT THE FUTURE OF WASHBURN

The Wisconsin Demographic Service Center is projecting a slight decrease in population change through the year 2025. However, this Comprehensive Plan sets a goal for the City to grow its population from 2,281 in 2005 to 2,500 in 2025. This equates to growing by roughly 15 people per year from 2005 to 2025. To reach this goal, the City will need to place a special emphasis on attracting younger families to Washburn. This means Washburn will need to have ample economic opportunities, affordable housing, and a high quality of life that will retain and attract people. Washburn's school-aged population will likely decrease before 2010; however, if Washburn begins to provide more economic opportunities and attract younger families, the school-aged population may begin to gradually increase. Washburn's senior population will continue to grow noticeably, especially after 2010. Unless Washburn can draw new people and retain its youth, the City will likely experience a labor shortage as Washburn's population continues to age.

KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES AS REPORTED BY THE PEOPLE OF WASHBURN

On May 2, 2005, the City of Washburn mailed all registered voters in Washburn a survey to gather their opinions about planning issues facing the City. 602 residents completed and returned the survey for a response rate of 37%, producing results that should be accurate to within plus or minus 3.2%. Survey respondents had a demographic profile similar to the overall population of Washburn in relation to age, years of being a resident of Washburn, home ownership, and employment status. The following provides a summary of the key survey results relating to planning issues and opportunities facing Washburn.

- 82% of respondents rated Washburn as a good (63%) or excellent (19%) place to live compared to 13% who said it is a fair (12%) or poor (1%) place to live.
- Respondents were asked their opinion about encouraging or discouraging a range of development and preservation options for the City. The following summarizes the results. If a respondent said a given action should be strongly encouraged, it was given a weight of 2, encouraged received a weight of 1, take no action a weight of 0, discourage a weight of -1, and strongly discourage a weight of -2. Consequently, the larger the number associated with the action, the more strongly the respondents felt about encouraging the action.
 - Public access to lakeshore (1.32)
 - Commercial development (1.31)
 - Lakeshore preservation (1.22)
 - Public recreation facilities (1.13)
 - Residential development (1.13)
 - Green space preservation (0.99)
 - Industrial development (0.78)
 - Waterfront development (0.37)
- Respondents were asked to identify from a list of issues, which two issues are the most important issues facing Washburn. The following lists the percentage of respondents that identified the issue as being one of the two most important issues facing Washburn:
 - Increase businesses/jobs (45%)
 - Preserve views/access to Superior (27%)

- Lakefront development (24%)
 - Preserve healthy environment (19%)
 - Increase tax base (19%)
 - Improve business district (19%)
 - Preserve natural areas (12%)
 - Increase population (10%)
 - Use of public lands (10%)
 - Infrastructure needs (7%)
 - Cultural activities (3%)
- Survey results show that respondents that are younger and newer to Washburn appear to have a stronger focus on the environmental issues facing the City, while respondents who are older and have lived in Washburn for a longer period are more focused on economic challenges facing Washburn. Respondents expressed strong support for the City to encourage preservation and provide public amenities.

Refer to other chapters of this Comprehensive Plan for additional survey results. Refer to Appendix A: City of Washburn Community Planning Survey - Spring 2005 for complete survey results.

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

AN ECO-MUNICIPALITY

The City of Washburn became the nation's first eco-municipality on July 11, 2005. On that date, the Common Council of the City of Washburn adopted a Sustainable Community Development Policy (see Appendix B: City of Washburn Eco-municipality Resolution). By adopting this resolution, the City of Washburn endorsed the principles of sustainable community development, as proposed in the "Natural Step" framework. Furthermore, the City agreed to apply the principles of the Natural Step framework in planning, policymaking, and providing City services. Washburn also committed to use a democratic process that involves residents and City Staff to plan for the City's future and to implement proposed changes that will strengthen the City's role as a sustainable community.

Washburn, as an eco-municipality that uses the Natural Step framework, developed policies and practices (reflected in this Comprehensive Plan) that strive to accomplish the following:

1. Eliminate Washburn's contribution to fossil fuel dependence and to wasteful use of scarce metals and minerals;
2. Eliminate Washburn's contribution to dependence on persistent chemicals and wasteful use of synthetic substances;
3. Eliminate Washburn's contribution to encroachment on nature; and
4. Meet human needs fairly and efficiently.

These principles provide a practical set of planning criteria to guide natural, social, and economic actions in Washburn. While the City may not fully realize these principles by the year 2027, the City is committed to making incremental progress in applying these principles in its planning, policymaking, and City services. The City will strive to improve the local economy, limit waste, promote energy conservation, protect its natural resources, promote efficiency, encourage intergovernmental cooperation, provide affordable housing, and encourage alternative modes of transportation. In summary, the City will seek to deliver a high quality of life for all residents in a manner that respects its social, economic, and natural capital.

A SMART GROWTH COMMUNITY

In addition to being an eco-municipality, Washburn is also committed to being a smart growth community. The principles and goals of smart growth communities and eco-municipalities are related, but they are expressed somewhat differently. This Comprehensive Plan incorporates the following overarching goals that Wisconsin Smart Growth Legislation requires Washburn to consider:

1. Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures (see Chapter 3: Land Use).
2. Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices (see Chapter 3: Land Use).
3. Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces, and groundwater resources (see Chapter 7: Agriculture, Natural, Coastal, and Cultural Resources).
4. Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests (see Chapter 3: Land Use).
5. Encouragement of land uses, densities, and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental, and utility costs (see Chapter 3: Land Use).
6. Preservation of cultural, historic, and archaeological sites (see Chapter 7: Natural, Cultural, and Agricultural Resources).
7. Encouragement and coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government (see Chapter 10: Intergovernmental Cooperation).
8. Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards (see Chapter 3: Land Use).
9. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community (see Chapter 8: Housing).
10. Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial uses (see Chapter 6: Utilities and Community Facilities).
11. Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of range of employment opportunities at the state, regional, and local levels (see Chapter 9: Economic Development).
12. Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals (see Chapter 3: Land Use).
13. Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied or unique urban and rural communities (see Chapter 3: Land Use).
14. Providing an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety, and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit dependent and disabled citizens (see Chapter 5: Transportation).

Refer to the chapters that follow for corresponding objectives and policies.

A SHARED VISION OF WASHBURN IN 2027

While no community can predict its future with complete accuracy, communities that have a clear vision for what they want to be in the future are more likely to achieve their goals than those communities that merely address issues as they arise. The following reflects Washburn's vision for what it wants to be in the year 2027. This vision will help guide the City in all of its planning and policymaking actions.

WASHBURN 2027

Washburn in 2027 is a sustainable community, full of life, proud heritage, natural beauty, and economic viability.

The City of Washburn is a community that:

- *Supports sustainable practices that help protect our valuable natural systems and resources;*
- *Builds economic and environmental viability;*
- *Appreciates, creates, and maintains an attractive design in architecture and landscape;*
- *Is proud of its heritage and strives to promote and protect the history of the past;*
- *Welcomes beneficial growth and change;*
- *Values the residential foundation of the community and the quality of neighborhoods;*
- *Supports and fosters superior schools;*
- *Provides a safe, respectful, and caring environment for all residents and visitors;*
- *Governs openly with integrity and builds community through communication and participation;*
and
- *Fosters life-long cultural, artistic, educational, and recreational enrichment for all of its citizens*

The following chapters of this Comprehensive Plan provide goals, objectives, policies, and plans to help Washburn achieve its vision.