

CHAPTER 1 - ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

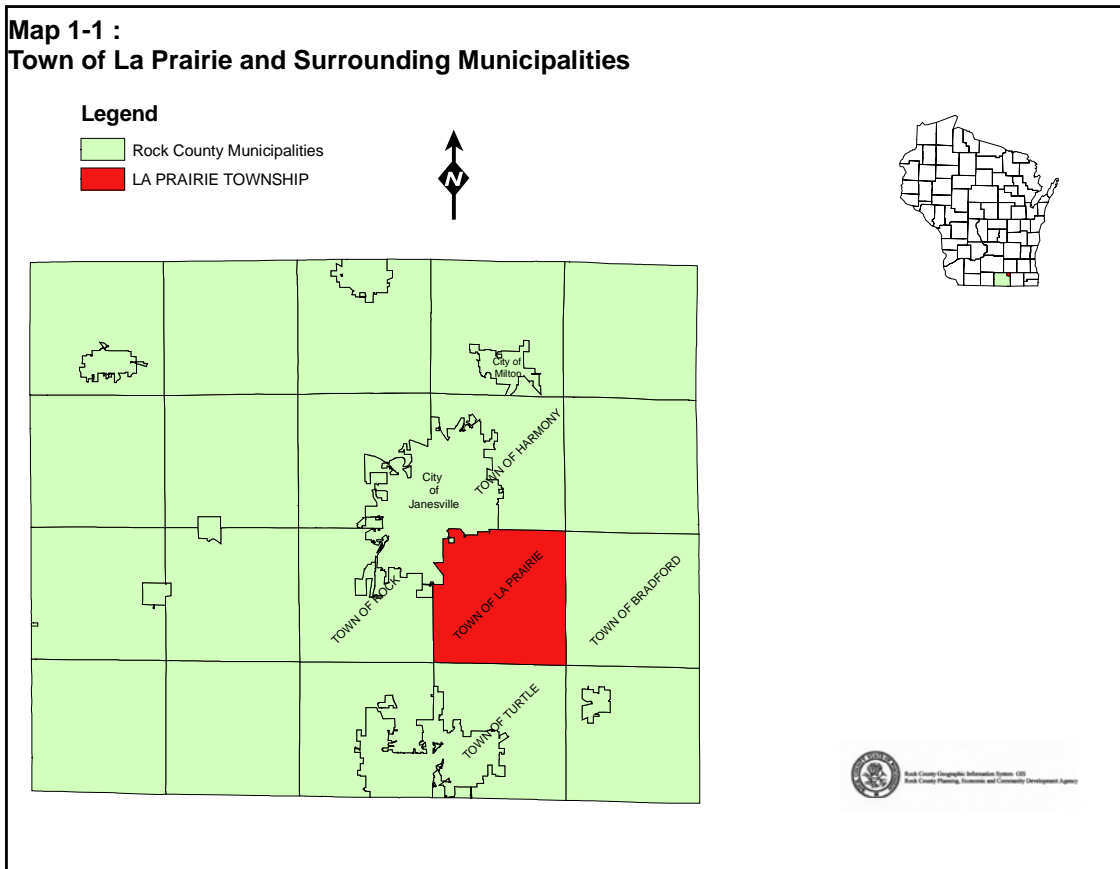
As defined in Wisconsin State Statutes 66.1001, the Issues and Opportunities element of a community’s comprehensive plan is designed to provide “background information” on the community, including “population, household and employment forecasts;” as well as “demographic trends, age distribution, educational levels, income levels and employment characteristics.” Also according to statute, the Issues and Opportunities element shall include a “statement of overall objectives, policies, goals and programs” of the community to guide its “future development and redevelopment... over a (minimum) 20-year planning period.” This document adheres to these guidelines while utilizing a 30-year planning horizon.

1.1 Introduction

The Town of La Prairie Comprehensive Plan is a component of a multi-jurisdictional planning effort with Rock County and twelve other local communities in the county. The intent of this multi-jurisdictional effort is to promote coordinated and consistent planning across governmental boundaries and through governmental layers.

Geographic Setting

The Town of La Prairie is located in the southeast quadrant of Rock County, Wisconsin (Map 1-1). It is bound to the west, south and east by the towns of Rock and, Turtle and Bradford respectively. The City of Janesville is located immediately adjacent to the town on the northwest.



Surprisingly, the Town of La Prairie is still predominantly rural in character despite sharing a border with the county seat, Janesville, a city with over 60,000 residents. Also nearby is the rapidly growing state capital city of Madison (forty miles northwest), Illinois' third largest city (Rockford, fifty miles southwest), and Wisconsin's largest city, Milwaukee (seventy miles east).

The defining natural characteristic of the Town is the outwash plain, remnants of the last advance of Wisconsin Glaciation roughly 10,000 years ago. The topography is relatively level with limited drainage patterns, the exception being the southeastern corner of the Town that contains a portion of Turtle Creek. This outwash plain is composed of some of the richest and most productive agricultural soils in the nation. Consideration of these geographic factors is vital to a responsible and thorough comprehensive planning process for the Town of La Prairie

Purpose and Intent

The primary purposes of this plan are to generate goals for attaining a desirable development pattern, devise strategies and recommendations the Town of La Prairie can follow to achieve its desired development pattern, and to create a Comprehensive Plan Document that conforms with Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Legislation, commonly referred to as "Smart Growth."

The Town of La Prairie Comprehensive Plan should be used by county and local officials when revising and administering their ordinances, as well as when setting priorities for major investments. The plan should be the basis for reviewing future developments, constructing transportation improvements, and extending public services. The plan is designed to be a guiding vision so that there is a consistent policy to follow and a clear goal for the future residents of the Town of La Prairie.

1.2 Comprehensive Planning Process

The Town of La Prairie has had a development plan that was compiled in 1977. In order to produce a plan that meets the requirements of the comprehensive planning law, Town leaders decided to work with Rock County. This decision allows the town to take advantage of the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration Comprehensive Planning Grant program to develop a new plan that would conform to the requirements of the Comprehensive Planning Law and better reflect Town residents' vision of how La Prairie should develop through 2035.

As administrator of the Comprehensive Planning Grant, the Rock County Planning, Economic, and Community Development Agency was contracted with to provide professional planning assistance. Staff from the agency will prepare the background information and the recommendations of this plan based upon the consensus opinions of the citizens advisory committees, Town visioning sessions, surveys, and the Comprehensive Planning Law. The resulting plan adheres to the requirements of Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Legislation.

Organization of the Town of La Prairie Comprehensive Plan Document

This document will be comprised of nine elements that reflect the requirements in the Comprehensive Planning Law: Issues and Opportunities; Housing; Transportation; Utilities and Community Facilities; Cultural, Natural, and Agricultural Resources; Economic Development; Intergovernmental Cooperation; Land Use; and Implementation. In addition to these nine elements, state statutes also provide that the County's existing Farmland Preservation Plans, Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans, Land Records Modernization Plans, and Park, Outdoor

Recreation, and Open Space Plans be consistent with and part of a community’s comprehensive plan.

Although all of these chapters have their own goals, objectives, and recommendations, the elements are all interrelated, and therefore, the goals, objectives, and recommendations are also. This plan is developed with the interrelationships of the elements in mind. The future land use plan contained in the land use chapter of the comprehensive plan provides a vision of how the Town of La Prairie can look in the year 2035. There will be recommendations regarding the location, density, and design of future development, and these recommendations are the cornerstone of the overall plan. The future land use plan will be the composite of the goals, objectives, and recommendations contained in all of the chapters. The Rock County Planning, Economic & Community Development Agency has determined how the documents and maps are to be constructed, in keeping with Wisconsin’s Comprehensive Planning legislation.

The final part of the plan involves implementing the recommendations made by the plan. A comprehensive plan is only effective when it is actually used. This includes utilizing the plan on a routine basis when making policy and administrative decisions and when creating or revising Town ordinances, such as the zoning ordinance, to guide development that is consistent with the plan. This document is not the end of the planning process. In fact, the plan will be reviewed and updated within five years of completion, and thereafter at a minimum of once every ten years. This periodic review ensures that planning within the Town will continue to evolve to reflect new trends and concepts.

1.3 Goals and Objectives Development Process

A major element of the comprehensive planning process is the identification of community-wide goals and objectives. This identification is obviously difficult as specific values held by residents are highly elusive and complex. While individuals vary widely in their choice of values and their tolerance and acceptance of differing attitudes, a large part of the plan’s purpose is to satisfy the community’s best interests. It is intended that the recommendations in this plan reflect the 14 local comprehensive planning goals prescribed in state statute and listed below:

1. Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructures and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial areas.
2. Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
3. Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces, and groundwater resources.
4. Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.
5. Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and low costs.
6. Preservation of cultural, historic and archaeological sites.
7. Encouragement of cooperation and coordination among nearby units of government.
8. Building community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
9. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for all income levels within the community.
10. Providing infrastructure, services and developable land adequate to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
11. Promoting expansion or stabilization of the agricultural economic base and job creation.
12. Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
13. Planning and developing land uses that create or preserve unique urban and rural communities.

14. Providing an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system that meets the needs of all citizens.

Visioning Sessions

In order to identify the Town of La Prairie's priorities for community development, as well as key issues and concerns to be addressed, the Rock County Planning and Development Agency held public visioning sessions in November 2005 and January 2006 at the La Prairie Town Hall. Approximately 60 citizens attended these two sessions. The purpose of these sessions is for the agency to be provided with input into how the residents would like the Town to develop through the year 2035. This process is intended to establish a framework from which the township and its citizens will make future land use decisions.

The vision statement was compiled from comments, concerns, and issues that were presented to the agency during the visioning sessions. This process will prove critical to the establishment of a unified vision for the Town of La Prairie, providing a direction and focus for the planning effort.

Town of La Prairie Vision Statement

It is envisioned that in the year 2035, the Town of La Prairie will be an uncommonly unique community that will continue to consist of a viable agricultural economy while at the same time maintaining a high rural quality of life. Adamantly preserving prime farmland and limiting urban sprawl through zoning and cooperation with its neighboring governments will accomplish this. Including its rural heritage, these will be the most important facets of this special place.

Citizen Participation Plan

The Rock County Planning and Development Agency constructed a Citizen Participation Plan at the beginning of the planning process. The intent of the Citizen Participation Plan is to foster public participation throughout every step of the planning process. In addition to a visioning process, the County will hold open discussions, citizen surveys, element workshops, and annual "open house" meetings to engender public participation in the creation of the comprehensive plan.

Town of La Prairie Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives each have a distinct and different purpose within the planning process. Planning goals are functional ideas and values that help guide the planning process. Goals address major essential issues, which become apparent through the planning process. They are ideas and values, which are in the public interest and provide an end toward which the planning process is directed. Objectives describe specific purposes, which should be sought in order to advance toward the achievement of the overall goals. The town's response to these goals and objectives are recommendations (policies) - discussed in each chapter specific to that comprehensive plan element- and programs - the means by which a community can achieve and/or implement the recommendations- discussed in the Implementation Element of the Town of La Prairie Comprehensive Plan.

The comprehensive plan and future development of the Town is based on the following goals and objectives.

GOAL: To preserve farmland and the agricultural based economy.

Objective: Use available land use controls to allow successful farming to continue.

Objective: Concentrate non-agricultural development separate from agricultural areas.

GOAL: To maintain the rural quality of life.

Objective: Avoid strip type development.

Objective: Continue to maintain conservation practices to protect the groundwater.

GOAL: To manage growth by guiding development to areas of sufficient physical characteristics and supporting infrastructure.

Objective: Manage growth by clearly designating Rural Transition Areas where existing rural development, physical features and existing public services support future rural development.

Objective: Manage growth through rural infill development.

GOAL: To provide town residents with opportunities to live, work, and recreate in Rock County.

Objective: Promote the vitality and viability of existing agricultural operations.

Objective: Facilitate the continuing availability of high quality schools and educational opportunities for town residents in Rock County.

1.4 Demographic Characteristics

At the core of any effective effort to track a community's development is the study of that community's population growth. Not only does this effort illustrate past growth, it can also shed light on what the future holds. A thorough understanding of population trends for a community makes for more effective needs assessment regarding housing, education, utilities, and recreation, as well as its future land use and economic development. The Issues and Opportunities element of the Town of La Prairie Comprehensive Plan addresses background information and supplies projections in the form of tables and figures embedded within the text of the document. In addition, a series of maps is compiled at the end of this chapter to illustrate many of the issues concerning the Town.

Table 1-1: Population Data, 1970-2005

Governmental Unit Name	1970 Census	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2005 DOA Estimate
Town of Avon	614	555	570	586	589
Town of Beloit	9,182	8,382	6,778	7,038	7,319
Town of Bradford	1,071	1,100	1,030	1,007	1,027
Town of Center	942	908	861	1,005	1,040
Town of Clinton	1,090	925	899	893	909
Town of Fulton	2,126	2,866	2,867	3,158	3,230
Town of Harmony	1,364	2,090	2,138	2,351	2,448
Town of Janesville	2,700	3,068	3,121	3,048	3,343
Town of Johnstown	914	844	850	802	797
Town of La Prairie	1,086	1,099	943	929	905
Town of Lima	1,063	1,179	1,285	1,312	1,314
Town of Magnolia	736	746	717	854	855
Town of Milton	1,977	2,306	2,353	2,844	2,974
Town of Newark	1,456	1,574	1,514	1,571	1,593
Town of Plymouth	1,246	1,267	1,189	1,270	1,299
Town of Porter	884	940	953	925	969
Town of Rock	3,050	3,399	3,172	3,338	3,362
Town of Spring Valley	852	912	790	813	813
Town of Turtle	2,532	2,703	2,458	2,444	2,430
Town of Union	1,202	1,329	1,537	1,860	1,981
Village of Clinton	1,333	1,751	1,849	2,162	2,237
Village of Footville	698	794	764	788	769
Village of Orfordville	888	1,143	1,219	1,272	1,357
City of Beloit	35,729	35,207	35,571	35,775	36,106
City of Edgerton	4,118	4,335	4,254	4,891	5,096
City of Evansville	2,992	2,835	3,174	4,039	4,660
City of Janesville	46,426	51,071	52,210	60,200	62,130
City of Milton	3,699	4,092	4,444	5,132	5,437
Rock County Total	131,970	139,420	139,510	152,307	156,989
State of Wisconsin	4,417,731	4,705,642	4,891,769	5,363,715	5,580,000

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2005. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970, 1980, 1990, & 2000.

Table 1-2: Population Change, 1970-2005

Governmental Unit Name	1970 - 1980		1980 - 1990		1990 - 2000		2000 - 2005*	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Town of Avon	-59	-9.6%	15	2.7%	16	2.8%	3	0.5%
Town of Beloit	-800	-8.7%	-1,604	-19.1%	260	3.8%	281	4.0%
Town of Bradford	29	2.7%	-70	-6.4%	-23	-2.2%	20	2.0%
Town of Center	-34	-3.6%	-47	-5.2%	144	16.7%	35	3.4%
Town of Clinton	-165	-15.1%	-26	-2.8%	-6	-0.7%	16	1.8%
Town of Fulton	740	34.8%	1	0.03%	291	10.2%	72	2.3%
Town of Harmony	726	53.2%	48	2.3%	213	10.0%	97	4.1%
Town of Janesville	368	13.6%	53	1.7%	-73	-2.3%	295	9.7%
Town of Johnstown	-70	-7.7%	6	0.7%	-48	-5.7%	-5	-0.6%
Town of La Prairie	13	1.2%	-156	-14.2%	-14	-1.5%	-24	-2.6%
Town of Lima	116	10.9%	106	9.0%	27	2.1%	2	0.2%
Town of Magnolia	10	1.4%	-29	-3.9%	137	19.1%	1	0.1%
Town of Milton	329	16.6%	47	2.0%	491	20.9%	130	4.8%
Town of Newark	118	8.1%	-60	-3.8%	57	3.8%	22	1.4%
Town of Plymouth	21	1.7%	-78	-6.2%	81	6.8%	29	2.3%
Town of Porter	56	6.3%	13	1.4%	-28	2.9%	44	4.8%
Town of Rock	349	11.4%	-227	-6.7%	166	5.2%	24	0.7%
Town of Spring Valley	60	7.0%	-122	-13.4%	43	5.4%	-	0.0%
Town of Turtle	171	6.8%	-245	-9.1%	-14	-0.6%	-14	-0.6%
Town of Union	127	10.6%	208	15.7%	323	21.0%	121	6.5%
Village of Clinton	418	31.4%	98	5.6%	313	16.9%	75	3.5%
Village of Footville	96	13.8%	-30	-3.8%	24	3.1%	-19	-2.4%
Village of Orfordville	255	28.7%	76	6.7%	53	4.3%	85	6.7%
City of Beloit	-522	-1.5%	364	1.0%	204	0.6%	331	0.9%
City of Edgerton	217	5.3%	-81	-1.9%	637	15.0%	205	4.2%
City of Evansville	-157	-5.3%	339	12.0%	865	27.3%	621	15.4%
City of Janesville	4,645	10%	1,139	2.2%	7,990	15.3%	1,930	3.2%
City of Milton	393	10.6%	352	8.6%	688	15.5%	305	5.9%
Rock County Total	7,450	5.7%	90	0.06%	12,797	9.2%	4,682	3.1%
State of Wisconsin	287,911	6.5%	186,127	4.0%	471,946	9.7%	216,285	4.0%

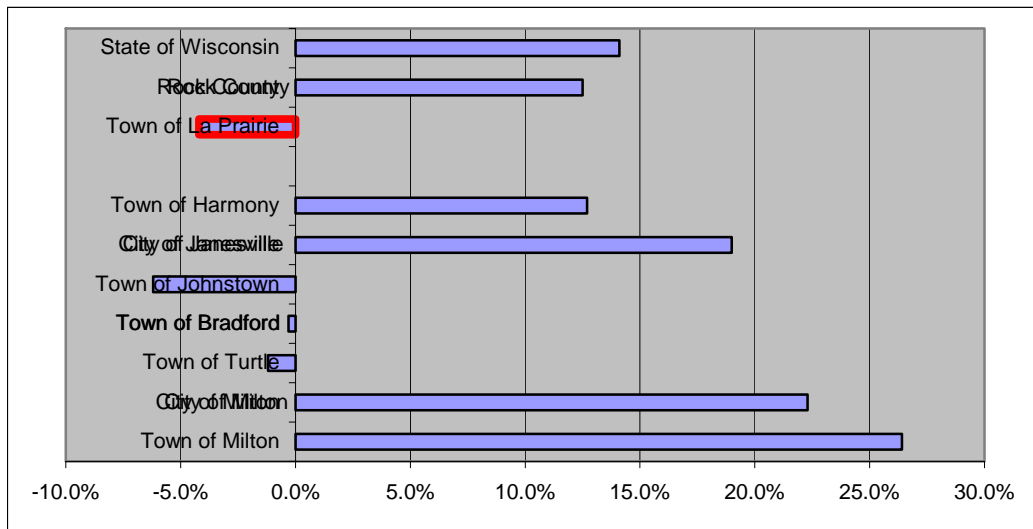
Source : Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2005. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970, 1980, 1990, & 2000. * Data from 2005 represent Wisconsin DOA estimates, not actual census figures.

Tables 1-1 and 1-2 outline the different rates of population change that have taken place in the Town of La Prairie and other municipalities within Rock County since the 1970 census. Interestingly, the Town of La Prairie has experienced slow or negative growth, compared to most of the other municipalities within the County, from 1970 to 1980 and from 1980 to 1990 - in fact La Prairie was the second slowest growing municipality in the county from 1970 to 2000. As evidenced by these tables, the Town has in recent history been well behind both the county's and the state's population growth rate. Figure 1-1 (next page) analyzes the Town of La Prairie's growth from a slightly more local perspective by illustrating the Town's population changes from 1990 to 2005 relative to its neighboring municipalities.

Comparative Population Change

Studying the Town of La Prairie’s population change in this more specific context allows for more accurate planning. It is important to recognize that external markets, in this case the Town’s neighboring municipalities, can potentially impact the magnitude and scope of development in the Town of La Prairie in the short term as well as the long term. As figure 1-1 below indicates, the Town’s rate of population change since 1990 has been much slower than all of its neighbors, with the exception of Johnstown, a town that is also losing population. It is worth noting that the two rapidly growing communities are “right next door” to La Prairie in the City of Janesville and Town of Harmony. This fact compounds the magnitude of growth pressures on the Town of La Prairie. As more residents move to these areas, additional pressure may be applied to grow geographically into areas that are presently part of La Prairie.

Figure 1-1: Population Change, 1990 – 2005, Town of La Prairie and Neighboring Communities

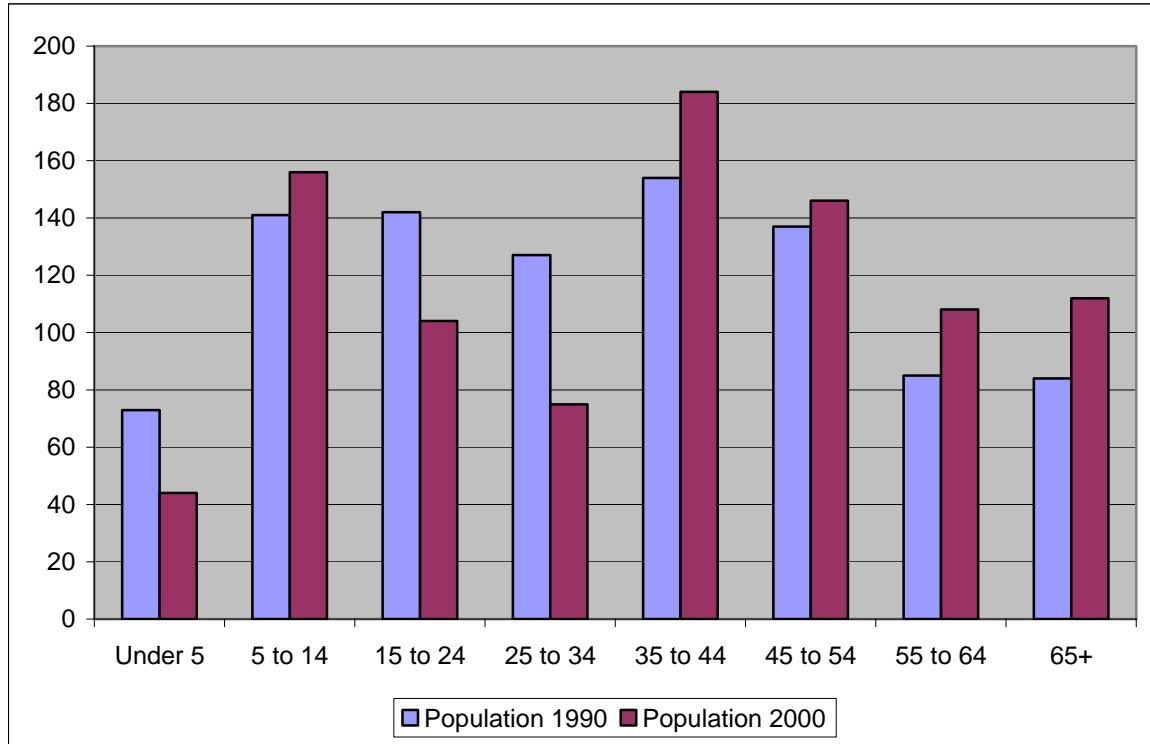


Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration Estimate, 2005. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990.

Age Distribution

Besides simply studying raw population trends, the issues and opportunities element is made more effective by a detailed study of the character of the Town of La Prairie’s population. Vitrally important for the planning of facilities and services, as well as development patterns, is a study of age characteristics. The Town’s median age in 2000 was 40.4, older than both the State (36.0) and County (35.9) figures by over four years. On the next page, figure 1-2 and table 1-3 detail the age distribution of the Town’s population for the census years of 1990 and 2000. Analysis of this data provides clues not only to how the Town changed in one decade, but also how it can be expected to change in the future.

Figure 1-2: Population by Age Group, Town of La Prairie, 1990 - 2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000.

As evidenced by figure 1-2, a significant portion of the Town of La Prairie’s population in the year 2000 was between the ages of 35 and 44, and 45 and 54, were by far the fastest growing. Like the rest of Rock County (and the country in general), this data reflects the result of the “baby boomer” generation continuing to age and approach retirement. Again, this data allows the Town to plan for the economic (job market, industry, tax base) and social (recreation, health care, school systems) implications of the dynamics of its population.

Table 1-3: Population by Age Group, Town of La Prairie, 1990 - 2000

Age Cohort	Population 1990	Pct. Of Total Population	Population 2000	Pct. Of Total	Number Change 1990 - 2000	PCT Chg. 1990 - 2000
Under 5	73	7.7%	44	4.7%	-29	-39.7%
5 to 14	141	15.0%	156	16.8%	15	10.6%
15 to 24	142	15.1%	104	11.4%	-38	-26.8%
25 to 34	127	13.5%	75	8.1%	-52	-40.9%
35 to 44	154	16.3%	184	19.8%	30	19.5%
45 to 54	137	14.5%	146	15.7%	9	6.6%
55 to 64	85	9.0%	108	11.6%	23	27.1%
65+	84	8.9%	112	13.1%	28	33.3%
Total	943	100.0%	929	100.0%	-14	-1.5%

Source U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000

School Enrollment and Educational Attainment

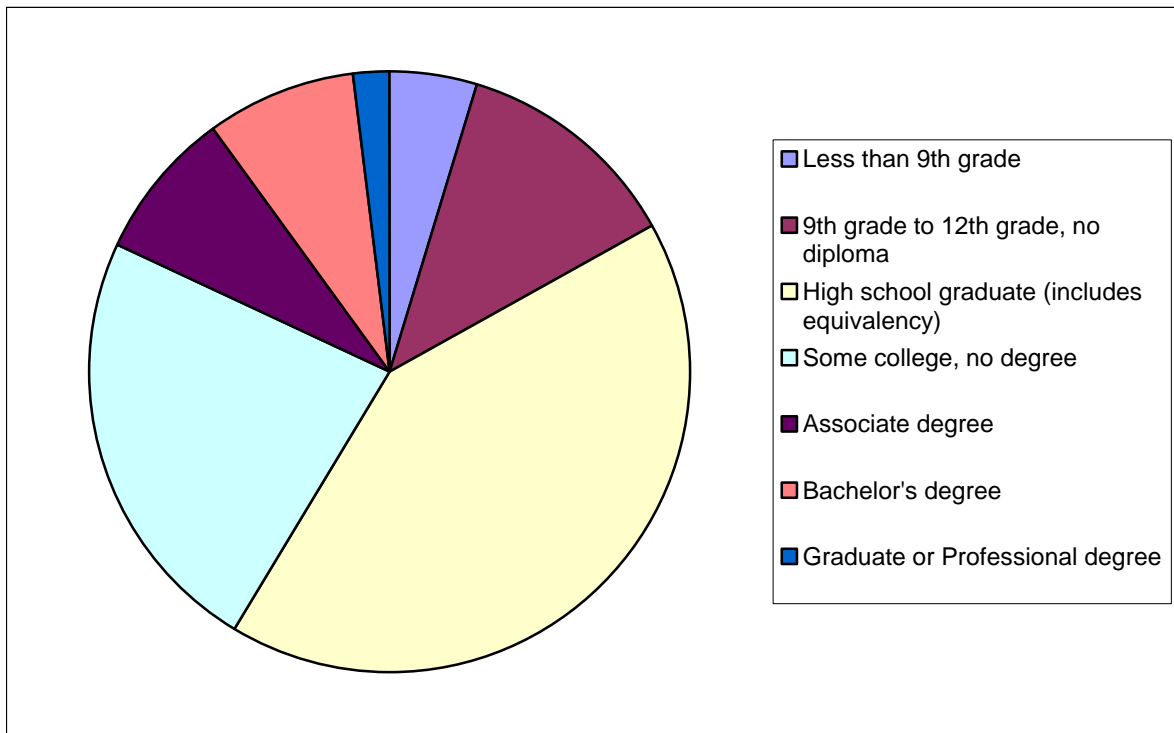
Table 1-4 expands upon the age group data by identifying enrollment in any type of educational venue for citizens age three and older for the year 2000. A study of school enrollment works in concert with the age group figures to assess educational resource needs, among other things. Figure 1-3 displays the year 2000 data for the highest level of education attained for citizens age twenty-five and over in the Town of La Prairie. Educational attainment is a useful tool in indicating the overall economic health of an area, a topic explored in more detail beginning in the next section of this chapter.

Table 1-4: School Enrollment of Persons Age 3 & Over, Town of La Prairie, 2000.

Type of Institution	Number Enrolled	Percent of Total Enrolled	Percent of Total Population
Nursery School	19	7.2%	43.2% (Age 3-5)
Kindergarten	23	8.7%	32.8% (Age 4-6)
Elementary School (Grades 1-8)	138	52.3%	83.5%(Age 5-15)
High School (Grades 9-12)	65	24.6%	85.5% (Age 14-19)
College or Graduate School	19	7.2%	17.9%(Age 16 & Over)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

Figure 1-3: Educational Attainment, Town of La Prairie, 2000*



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000. *Figures represent percentage of population age 25 & over only.

Population Forecasts

In January 2004, the Wisconsin Department of Administration released updated population projections for Wisconsin municipalities through the year 2025. Using the same population forecast methodology employed by the WDOA, the Rock County Planning, Economic, and Community Development Agency calculated the Town of La Prairie’s population to the year 2035. While this broad picture of the Town’s population is insightful, it is by dissection of these population figures that thorough planning is possible. Table 1-5 does just that, comparing the projected population of the Town with the other municipalities in Rock County. As this data indicates, La Prairie is projected to experience slow or negative, growth through 2035.

Table 1-5: Population Forecast, Rock County 2000 - 2035*

Name of Municipality	2000	2005	2015	2025	2035	Change 2000-2035	% Change 2000-2035
Town of Avon	586	590	597	605	612	26	4.4%
Town of Beloit	7,038	7,226	7,597	7,968	8,101	808	11.5%
Town of Bradford	1,007	1,004	996	989	980	-27	-2.7%
Town of Center	1,005	1,054	1,150	1,247	1,343	301	30.0%
Town of Clinton	893	897	905	913	921	28	3.1%
Town of Fulton	3,158	3,268	3,486	3,704	3,922	702	22.2%
Town of Harmony	2,351	2,453	2,672	2,891	3,105	754	32.1%
Town of Janesville	3,048	3,296	3,789	4,280	4,769	1,721	56.5%
Town of Johnstown	802	784	748	712	687	-115	-14.3%
Town of La Prairie	929	908	865	823	782	-147	-15.8%
Town of Lima	1,312	1,336	1,383	1,431	1,478	166	12.7%
Town of Magnolia	854	886	951	1,015	1,076	222	26.0%
Town of Milton	2,844	3,024	3,380	3,735	4,085	1,241	43.6%
Town of Newark	1,571	1,594	1,640	1,686	1,732	161	10.2%
Town of Plymouth	1,270	1,298	1,352	1,406	1,454	184	14.5%
Town of Porter	925	934	951	969	986	61	6.6%
Town of Rock	3,338	3,359	3,399	3,440	3,483	145	4.3%
Town of Spring Valley	813	818	828	838	850	37	4.6%
Town of Turtle	2,444	2,411	2,383	2,357	2,332	-112	-4.6%
Town of Union	1,860	2,006	2,295	2,584	2,874	1,014	54.5%
Village of Clinton	2,162	2,322	2,640	2,957	3,175	1,013	46.9%
Village of Footville	788	786	783	780	777	-11	-1.4%
Village of Orfordville	1,272	1,304	1,367	1,431	1,486	214	16.8%
City of Beloit	35,775	35,878	36,029	36,190	36,317	542	1.5%
City of Edgerton	4,891	5,070	5,423	5,776	6,103	1,212	24.8%
City of Evansville	4,039	4,368	5,021	5,672	6,214	2,175	53.8%
City of Janesville	60,200	62,405	66,756	71,096	75,680	15,480	25.7%
City of Milton	5,132	5,412	5,968	6,523	7,107	1,975	38.5%
Rock County	152,307	156,691	165,354	174,018	182,431	30,124	19.8%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2004 & U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000. *Population figures for 2005-2025 are WDOA projections. Unofficial 2035 data are projected using DOA projection methodology.

In order to plan adequately for future needs in the Town of La Prairie on a long-term basis, future demand must be determined. As the Town’s population grows and its characteristics change, so will the demand for housing, jobs, and many services. In short, these population forecasts, along with trends that have developed in Rock County, will foster a planning process that is a concentrated and well-directed effort. On the next page, the issues and opportunities element addresses some of the characteristics of the economic climate that exist in the Town of La Prairie,

which will be incorporated with these forecasts to make more detailed projections regarding the Town's future.

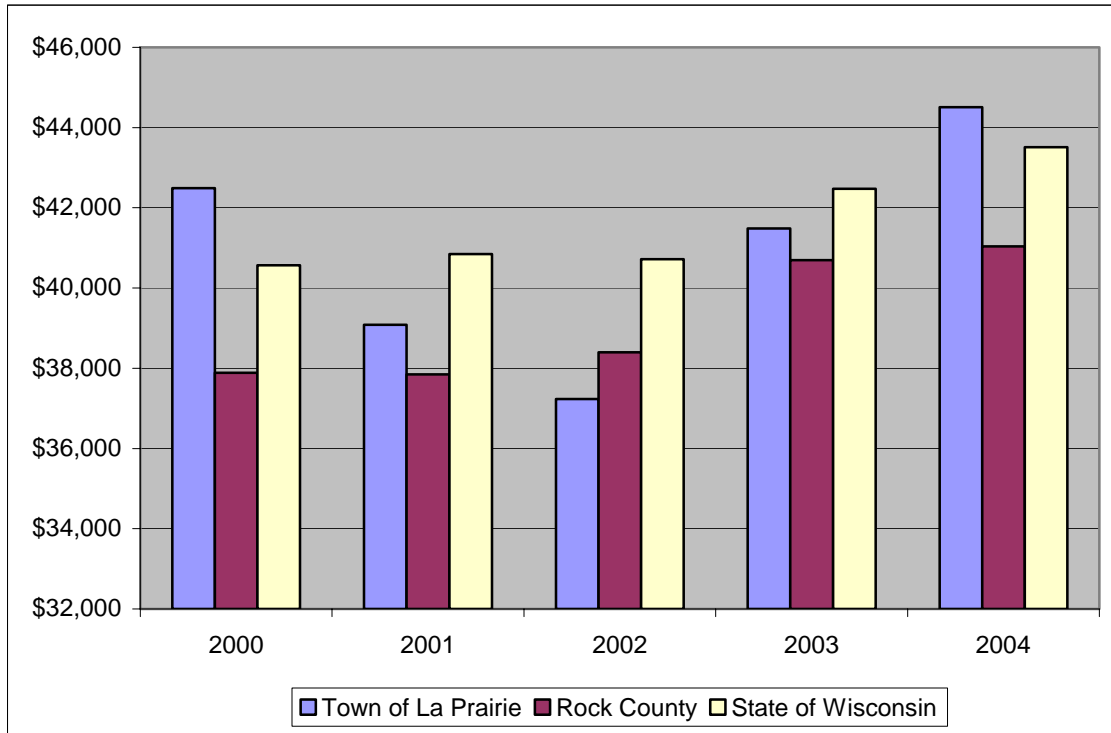
1.5 Economic Characteristics

Perhaps the most accurate and effective way to gauge the economic health of an area is to analyze the characteristics of the area's workforce and labor opportunities. Covered in more detail by the Economic Development Element of the Town of La Prairie Comprehensive Plan, economic growth is introduced here in the Issues and Opportunities element according to law because it provides vital background information to the planning process. Addressed in this element are basic employment data including industries of employment opportunity, occupation of employed persons, income, and commuting data. This background information engenders a thorough planning practice in the Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Income Data

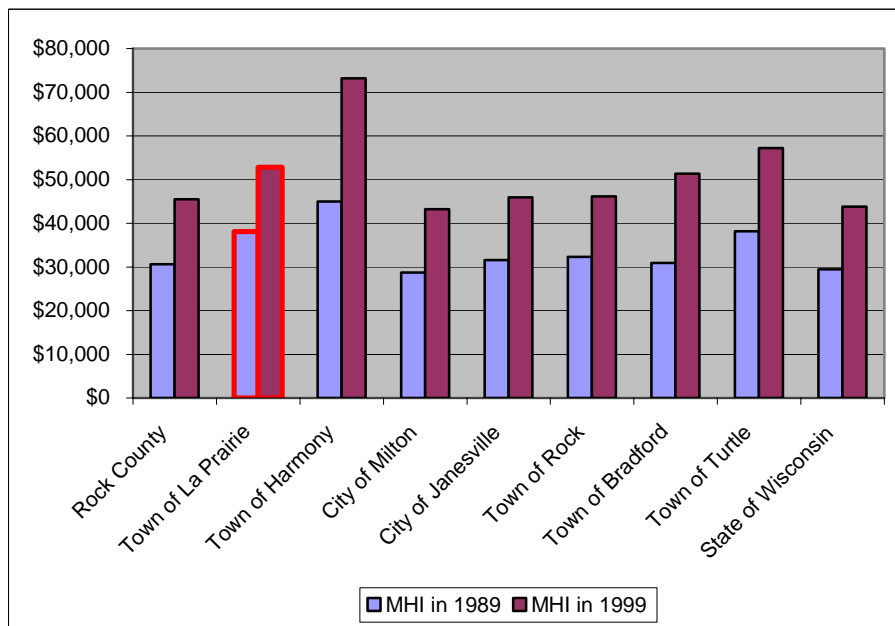
In addition to employment figures, the study of trends in personal income is also indicative of an area's economic health. According to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue-Division of Research and Analysis, the Town of La Prairie's adjusted gross income (AGI) per tax return has historically fluctuated above and below both Rock County and the State AGI. The most recent reported year lists the 2004 AGI for the Town at \$44,511, over \$3,000 higher than the 2003 AGI and \$7,000 higher than the 2002 return. The 2004 return is higher than both the state and the county while the 2003 return is higher than the county but not the state and the 2002 report is less than either the state or the county. Figure 1-4 displays the AGI trend from 2000-2004 for the Town, Rock County, and the State of Wisconsin. Also, the Town's median household income (figure 1-5, next page), while slightly higher than the county and state figures, has not increased as dramatically as the figures shown by some of its neighbors.

Figure 1-4: Municipal Per Return Income, 2000 - 2004



Source: State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue, *Municipal Per Return Income Report, 2000 - 2004*.

Figure 1-5: Median Household Income, Town of La Prairie and Neighbors, 1989 & 1999



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 & 2000.

Workforce Data

Crucial to the understanding of economic health is determining the personality and scope of the people who work in an area. As of 2000, 480 of the Town’s 689 working-age residents considered themselves to be in the labor force. Table 1-6 divides the Town’s labor force based upon occupation and industry for 1980, 1990, and 2000. Most notable in regard to this data is the dramatic decrease of citizens employed in farming, fishing and forestry jobs, and the remarkable decline in the number of unemployed. A significant reason for the decline in the “farming, fishing and forestry category lies in the fact that the definition of “Management, Professional & Technical” occupations was expanded to include farmers running their own business for the 2000 census.

**Table 1-6: Occupation & Industry of the Employed*, Town of La Prairie
1980 - 2000**

Occupation	1980		1990		2000		Change 1980 - 2000	
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	Number	Percent
Management, Professional, & Technical	71	14.3%	90	17.6%	104	21.7%	33	31.7%
Service	66	13.3%	50	9.8%	48	10.0%	-18	-37.5%
Sales and Office	97	19.6%	94	18.4%	115	24.0%	18	15.7%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	106	21.4%	76	14.8%	2	.4%	-104	-98.1%
"Blue Collar"	155	31.3%	175	34.2%	205	42.7%	50	24.4%
Unemployed & Unemployment Rate	65	13.1%	27	5.3%	6	1.3%	-59	-90.8%
Total Civilian Workforce	549	-	512	-	480	-	-15	-19.0%
Industry of Employed								
Construction, Mining, & Natural Resources	134	30.8%	106	21.9%	84	17.9%	-50	-37.3%
Manufacturing	135	31.0%	140	28.9%	135	28.8%	0	0.0%
Transportation & Utilities	18	4.1%	30	6.2%	21	4.5%	3	14.4%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	94	7.8%	82	16.9%	79	15.6%	-15	-19.0%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	11	2.5%	5	1.0%	11	2.4%	0	0.0%
Services	103	23.7%	122	25.2%	138	29.5%	35	95.0%
Total Employed	435	87.9%	485	94.7%	468	97.5%	33	29.4%

Source U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980, 1990, & 2000. * Employed persons 16 years of age and older.

Additionally, the average commute time for Town of La Prairie residents in 2000 was 20.8 minutes, an increase of two minutes over the 1990 figure and just one-half minute greater than the county average of 20.3. While the workforce in the Town of La Prairie is diversifying, the citizens are traveling slightly greater distances to earn their living. Current employment characteristics and trends are discussed in greater detail in the Economic Development Element of this plan. However, the historical data provided in this chapter, along with the forecast section that follows, set the stage for later discussion regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the employment opportunities in the Town of La Prairie.

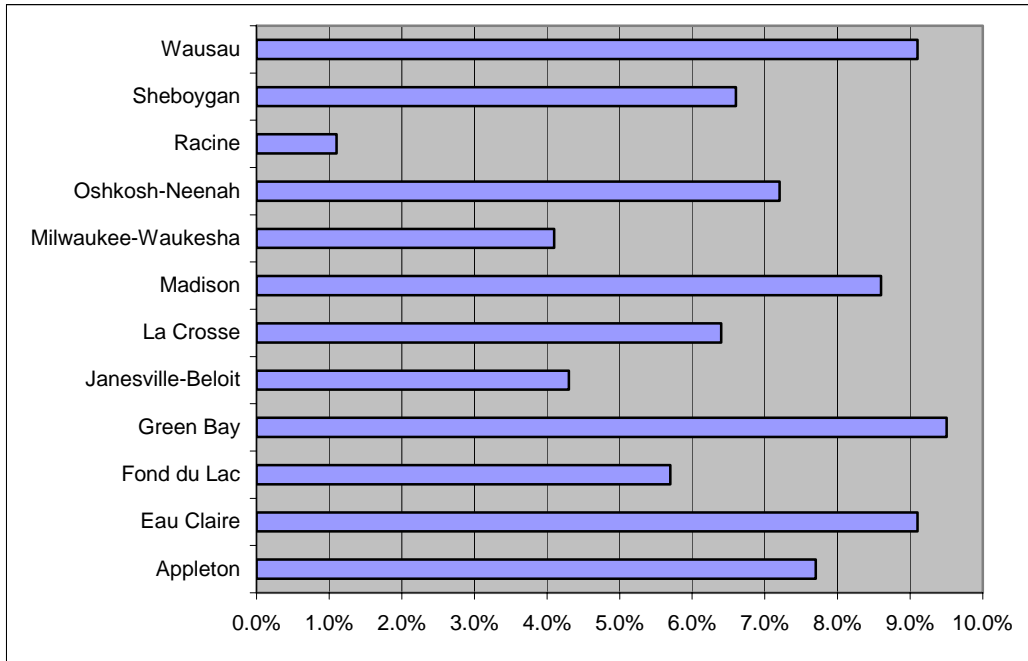
Employment Forecasts

Following tremendous job growth in the 1990s, the Janesville-Beloit Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes the Town of La Prairie, is projected to continue employment growth through 2008. According to the State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue-Division of Research and Policy, the most recent Metropolitan Area Outlook states that employment in the Janesville-Beloit MSA experienced significant job loss for the first four years of the decade. Much of this is due to the decline in manufacturing jobs, a trend which finally stabilized and reversed in 2004, and coupled with the increase in service sector employment, indicates moderate growth for the rest of the decade.

On the following page, a labor force projection is provided for the Town (table 1-7) based upon the application of year 2000 labor force data to population forecasts. These projections should be used with caution due to the complex and very much reactive nature of characteristics like the

labor force. It is impossible to account for the myriad of factors that may influence employment habits of the working-age population. These forecasts are based on present conditions and cannot predict how those conditions may change through the year 2035, but they can foretell what the Town’s labor force very well could look like barring any monumental economic (i.e. major change in unemployment, depression) or social (i.e. withdrawal of certain group from workforce) events.

Figure 1-6: Janesville-Beloit Metropolitan Area Employment Forecast, 2004 - 2008



Source: *Metropolitan Area Outlook Report*, Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, 2004.

Table 1-7: Town of La Prairie Employment Forecast, 2000 - 2035

Year	Labor Force	Percent Change Since 2000
2000	480	-
2005	463	-3.5%
2015	441	-8.1%
2025	419	-12.7%
2035	398	-17.1%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2004, Rock County Planning & Development Agency, 2005.

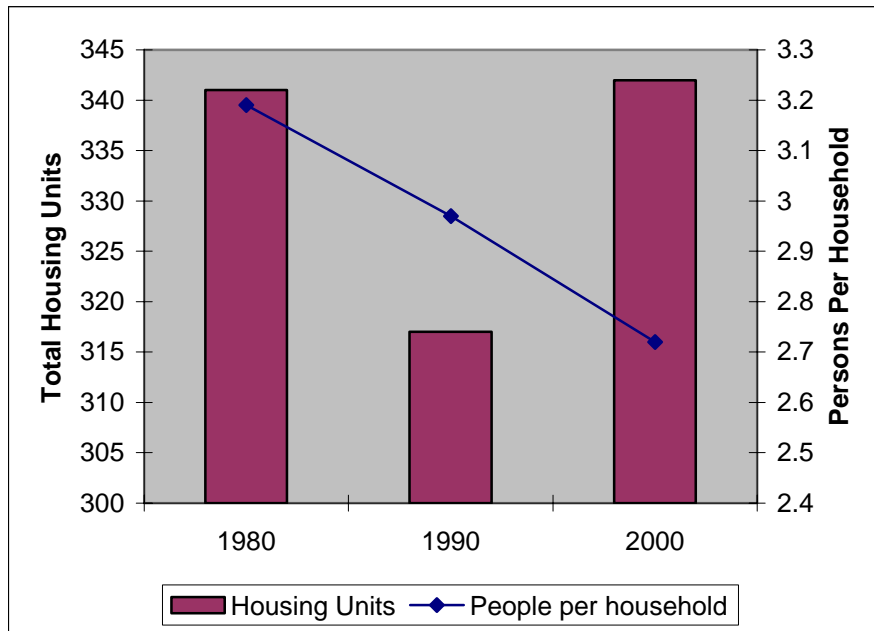
Clearly, an issue to be investigated more thoroughly in the Economic Development Element of this document is how to plan for an increasingly diversifying Town workforce through 2035. As Rock County’s economic landscape continues to transform, the data presented in this section of the Issues and Opportunities element will enable the county to plan accordingly.

1.6 Household Characteristics

In order to establish accurate household projections, an analysis of existing conditions must first be completed. This section simply addresses historical patterns in household composition, which will be reflected in the forecast section of this element. This allows for more appropriate

accommodation for housing needs throughout the planning process. The total number of housing units in the Town of La Prairie has increased by one since 1980. In 2000, there were 342 housing units in the Town, a 7.3% increase over the 1990 figure of 317. As figure 1-8 displays, the ten-year period between 1990 and 2000 saw a moderate increase in new housing units introduced into the Town, in contrast to the previous decade. Note the dramatic decrease in the household size over the period. Combined with a decreasing population, the trend towards smaller household size will affect the housing market in the Town.

Figure 1-7: Number of Housing Units & Household Density, Town of La Prairie, 1980 - 2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980-2000.

As figure 1-7 illustrates, the average household size in the Town of La Prairie in 2000 was 2.72, down from 2.97 in 1990. In the same time, more than 25 additional housing units have been built while the population declined by 14. These findings are in keeping with the nationwide trend of smaller households and an increasing number of people living alone. It is important to keep this trend, as well as other potential changes in demographics and housing preferences, in mind when projecting future housing needs.

Households and Householders

Of the 342 housing units in the Town of La Prairie in 2000, 263 (76.9%) were owner-occupied. Table 8 below illustrates the changes in household characteristics and occupancy between 1980 and 2000, and will serve to put into context the projections provided in the next section. Note the steady vacancy rate, hovering between two and three percent since 1980. Also, while renter-occupied units remained relatively steady between 1980 and 1990, the reduction in the number of such units was more dramatic between 1990 and 2000. In all, the number of new households in the Town is due entirely to the increase in owner-occupied units over the twenty-year period. As

the demographic and economic landscape of the town continue to develop, these household characteristics will certainly evolve according to those developments.

Table 1-8: Town of La Prairie Household Type and Vacancy Rate, 1980 - 2000

	1980	1990	2000	Change 1980-2000	
				Number	Percent
Households	341	317	342	1	.3%
Owner-Occupied	256	225	263	7	2.7%
Renter-Occupied	85	92	79	-6	-7.6%
Seasonal*	3	0	1	-	-
Vacancy Rate	2.1%	2.1%	2.8%	25%	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 - 2000. * Seasonal housing units are considered vacant for purposes of calculating tenure and occupancy.

Household Forecasts

Utilizing the Wisconsin DOA method for projecting household and population growth, it is estimated that no additional housing units will be needed in the Town of La Prairie by 2035. This required number of housing units reflects a declining average household size during the period. Currently in the Town, ninety-one percent of the units in structure are one-unit detached homes (standard, single-family house). The majority of the remaining units in the Town are one- to four-unit attached structures. As an increasing percentage of the Town population approaches retirement age and families continue to have fewer children, there may be an increasing demand for a wider variety of housing options. The Housing Element of the Rock County comprehensive plan provides information relating to the different housing types that the county might wish to encourage, as well as the tools that the county and local communities can utilize to encourage a range of housing options for an increasingly diverse population.

1.7 Summary

The goals and objectives to be identified in the Town of La Prairie Comprehensive Plan will reflect the concepts contained in the fourteen State of Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning goals, as well as the thoughts and comments obtained from residents, elected officials, and other interested parties throughout the planning process. Accordingly, the goals and objectives will create a framework around which the comprehensive plan is developed.

The Town of La Prairie is expected to experience relatively slow or declining population growth as indicated by the 2035 population projections. Also of interest, the City of Janesville (38.5% growth) and the Town of Harmony (over 30% growth) are forecast to benefit (or suffer, depending on opinion) from its proximity to its ever-expanding neighbor to the west, Janesville, and experience considerable growth. In short, these developments in and around the Town’s borders will inevitably influence each of the elements of this comprehensive plan. It is important

to think of the Town not only in local terms, but also as it is affected (and as it affects) its neighboring communities.

While agri-businesses remain an important land use in the Town of La Prairie and Rock County, continued diversity in agri-businesses and labor force is a positive sign for the Town. Not only does such diversity stimulate the economy, it also spurs growth in skilled population and housing diversity. One hurdle to climb in the future, though, is the decreasing proportion of a working-age population. As current data and forecasts show, this age group is one of the most slowly-growing in the Town of La Prairie and Rock County.

The projected decline in population and the aging of the population still requires a diverse and healthy variety of options in the housing market. In addition, there is a need for facilities to service a diversifying population.

The projected slow growth in population, employment, and housing in the Town of La Prairie will still need to provide an opportunity to implement many of the stated objectives in the comprehensive plan. While development pressure will continue, it is the duty of the citizens and governments of the Town to use this document responsibly, maintaining those features of our community that make it a desirable place to live and do business.

1.8 Overall Policies and Recommendations

Policies and recommendations build on goals and objectives by providing more focused responses and actions to the goals and objectives. Policies and recommendations become the tools that the community should use to aid in making land use decisions. Policies that direct action using the words “will” or “shall” are considered to be mandatory and regulatory aspects of the implementation of the comprehensive plan. In contrast, those directives using the word “should” are more advisory and intended to serve as a recommendation and guide.

1. The comprehensive plan shall be utilized as a tool to guide town decision-making in accordance with state statutes.
2. The town should identify and prioritize a list of ordinances it wants created or modified.
3. Public participation shall be required as part of the development or amendment to any plans, ordinances, or programs.
4. Property owners should be notified at least once a year of all pre-scheduled Town Board and comprehensive plan meetings by various methods of public notice.

1.9 Overall Programs

The following programs are currently utilized by the community or are available for use by the town to implement the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations identified.

- *AB608, Wisconsin Act 233 - Clarification of Smart Growth Law* - This bill was signed into law in April 2004. This law reduces the number of programs or actions with which a comprehensive plan must be consistent. Under the new legislation, the only actions that must be consistent with a comprehensive plan are official mapping, local subdivision regulation, and zoning ordinances, including zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands.

- *Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center* – The primary responsibility of the Demographic Services Center is to develop annual total population estimates for all Wisconsin towns, villages, and cities. It also makes annual estimates of the voting age population for all municipalities and total population estimates for Zip code Areas. In addition, the Demographic Services Center develops population projections by age and sex for the counties, population projections of total population for all municipalities, and estimates of housing units and household characteristics for all counties. For further information on the Service Center contact the WDOA or visit its website at www.doa.state.wi.us.