



Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2016



*Marathon County
Comprehensive Plan
2016*

*Adopted by the Marathon County Board of Supervisors
on the Recommendation of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force*

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ORDINANCE #O-4-16

2016 MARATHON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: ORDINANCE TO ADOPT

WHEREAS, on May 23, 2006, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marathon adopted Ordinance 0-16-06 to create Chapter 26 of the General Code of Ordinances entitled "Marathon County Comprehensive Plan"; and

WHEREAS, sec. 66.1001(4), Wis. Stats., establishes the required procedure for a local government to adopt a comprehensive plan, and Sec. 66.1001(2) identifies the required planning elements to be addressed; and

WHEREAS, on May 21, 2013, the Board adopted Ordinance 0-17-13 to create Sec. 2.05(15) of the General Code of Ordinances to create a task force for the purposes of drafting a proposed updated Comprehensive Plan for Marathon County; and

WHEREAS, on November 14, 2013, the Board adopted Ordinance 0-30-13 to revise Sec. 2.05(15) of the General Code to revise specific duties, responsibilities, and timelines for the task force; and

WHEREAS, sec. 66.1001(4)(a), Wis. Stats., requires that the local governing planning body (Land Conservation & Zoning Committee) shall adopt written procedures designed to foster public participation at every stage of the comprehensive plan preparation; and

WHEREAS, on March 24, 2015, the Board adopted Resolution R-10-15 to approve the written procedures included in the "Public Participation Plan for the Comprehensive Plan Update"; and

WHEREAS, on December 9, 2015, the Marathon County Executive Committee reviewed and accepted the findings and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan task force, formally concluding the work of the task force; and

WHEREAS, on December 10, 2015, the Land Conservation & Zoning Committee adopted Resolution 01-2015 recommending County Board adoption of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, pursuant to state requirements cited above, and authorizing a Class 1 public hearing; and

WHEREAS, on January 14, 2016, the Executive Committee held a public hearing on the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, with notice in compliance with the requirements of sec. 66.1001(4)(d) Wis. Stats.; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan may be used as the basis for, among other things, updating the zoning ordinance, recommending infrastructure improvements, establishing policy for County action regarding elements in the plan; and as a guide for approving or disapproving actions affecting growth and development under the jurisdiction of Marathon County; and

WHEREAS, this Comprehensive Plan may from time to time be amended, extended, or added to in greater detail; and

WHEREAS, on February 3, 2016, the Executive Committee voted to approve/amend the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, as set forth in the Attachment, repealing and recreating Chapter 26 of the General Code of Ordinances.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED AND RESOLVED, by the County Board of Supervisors of the County of Marathon that Chapter 26 of the General Code of Ordinances entitled "Marathon County Comprehensive Plan is hereby repealed and recreated pursuant to the Attachment; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND RESOLVED that said ordinance shall take effect upon passage and publication as required by law.

Adopted this 16th day of February, 2016.

LAND CONSERVATION & ZONING COMMITTEE

Jean Meszke
[Signature]

[Signature]

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

[Signature]
[Signature]

[Signature]
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Fiscal Impact: No direct budgetary impact. The plan is intended to inform and guide future budgetary decisions.

Table of Contents



Plan Chapters

1	<i>Introduction</i>	1
2	<i>Demographics</i>	7
<i>Healthiest</i>		
3	<i>Health and Human Services</i>	21
4	<i>Community Character</i>	43
5	<i>Natural Resources</i>	55
6	<i>Water Resources</i>	67
<i>Safest</i>		
7	<i>Public Safety</i>	83
8	<i>Infrastructure</i>	93
9	<i>Land Use</i>	107
<i>Most Prosperous</i>		
10	<i>Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development</i>	117
11	<i>Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources</i>	135
12	<i>Intergovernmental Cooperation</i>	151
13	<i>Implementation</i>	155

Plan Maps

- 2-1 Population Change 1990-2010**
- 2-2 Projected Population Change 2010-2030**
- 2-3 Six Regions**

Healthiest

- 4-1 Housing Unit Change 2000-2010**
- 5-1 Natural Resources**
- 5-2 Terrain**
- 5-3 Depth to Bedrock**
- 6-1 Water Resources**
- 6-2 Depth to Groundwater**
- 6-3 Designated Waters**
- 6-4 High Capacity Wells**
- 6-5 Shoreland Jurisdiction Areas**

Safest

- 7-1 Law Enforcement Service**
- 7-2 Fire Service Areas**
- 7-3 Emergency Medical Service Areas**
- 8-1 Transportation**
- 8-2 Metro Transportation**
- 8-3 Utilities**
- 9-1 Existing Land Use 2015**
- 9-2 Land Use Change 2000-2010**
- 9-3 Future Land Use**
- 9-4 Farmland Preservation Areas**
- 9-5 Zoning Status**

Most Prosperous

- 10-1 School Districts**
- 10-2 Education and Industrial Parks**
- 11-1 Recreation Areas**

Chapter One

Introduction



The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan will help guide County decision makers on a wide array of issues over the next twenty years. It will also provide guidance to the 41 towns, 15 villages and 6 cities within the County. All these communities, working together, make Marathon County a special place.

Currently, the 135,000 County residents enjoy economic opportunity, quality schools, and strong communities, along with access to a wide variety of recreational options. Although, the County compares well when compared to other counties there is still room for improvement. An overarching goal of Marathon County is to become the Healthiest, Safest and Most Prosperous County in the State. Therefore, the intent of this plan is to provide the foundation for that improvement.

Mission and Vision

Mission Statement

Marathon County government serves people by leading, coordinating and providing county, regional, and statewide initiatives. It directly, or in cooperation with other public and private partners, provides opportunities that make the Marathon County area a preferred place to live, work, visit and do business.

Vision Statement

Marathon County government leads by providing high quality infrastructure and integrated services and by developing trusting, collaborative relationships among diverse partners. It is proactive in enhancing health and safety, protecting the environment, and providing cultural, recreational, and economic opportunities which make the Marathon County and the surrounding area a preferred place to live, work, visit and do business.

Framework for the Comprehensive Plan

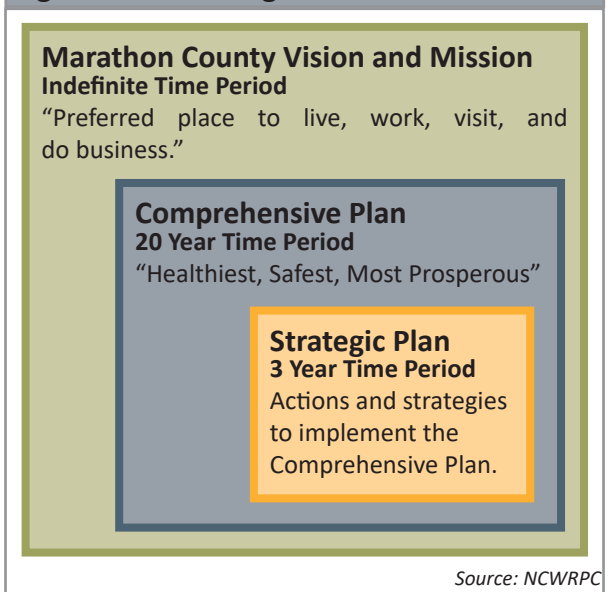
The Comprehensive Plan is one part of the overall planning process in Marathon County. **Figure 1-1** shows the relationship between the Vision and Mission, the Comprehensive Plan, and the Strategic Plan.

Background

Marathon County has a strong tradition of planning. Numerous planning efforts have taken place since the last comprehensive planning process a decade ago. The 2006 plan was the first comprehensive plan developed for the County and its focus was more on meeting the requirements of the State Planning Law rather than being developed as a tool to guide the County as a whole.

This plan moves in a new direction, while still addressing the requirements outlined in Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001, to the extent applicable. That law requires that at minimum these elements or issues be discussed: Issues & Opportunities, Natural, Agricultural & Cultural Resources, Housing, Transportation, Utilities & Community Facilities, Economic Development, Land Use, Intergovernmental Cooperation, and Implementation. New topics and chapters added to this plan cover Health and Human Services, Water Resources, and Community Character. This plan, when adopted, will replace the 2006 Comprehensive Plan.

Figure 1-1: Planning Framework



Task Force

A 9-member Comprehensive Plan Task Force was created at the beginning of the planning process and included members from the County Board. The Task Force members served as liaisons to their respective standing committees. County staff and North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (Planning Team) provided support to the Task Force. The Task Force held ten meetings over the course of the project. Their role was to represent the county’s best interests while attending meetings and helping staff and the consultant team make important decisions. The Task Force provided guidance for developing the overall Plan and helped guide many of the decisions regarding the goals, objectives and action steps necessary to carry out the Plan. The Task Force’s ultimate responsibility was to provide a final draft long-term Comprehensive Plan for Marathon County Board action by December 31, 2015.

Figure 1-2 identifies the members of the planning Task Force.

Planning Process

The update to the Comprehensive Plan took place from January 2014 to February 2016. Three groups were gathered throughout the process to lead the update and to provide expert insights: the Task Force, the Planning Team, and the County Department Heads. Public input was also sought at several stages of the plan update process, as outlined in the Public Participation Plan.

County staff held public meetings mid-way through the planning process to meet with the general public, town officials, and others about the Comprehensive Plan. As part of this process, staff reached out to all local governments throughout the County. A series of meetings were held to inform citizens about the planning process and request input. An opportunity to identify land use changes was also offered. Representatives from numerous towns attended these meetings.

The team working on the day-to-day work of the plan update consisted of staff from the Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department and staff from the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. County administration was also represented.

Standing Committees

The Marathon County Board of Supervisors has 8 standing committees: Finance and Property, Human Resources, Executive, Education and Economic Development, Environmental Resources, Health and Human Services, Infrastructure, and Public Safety. Early in the planning process in 2014, all standing committees participated in an exercise to help define “**What does a preferred place to live, work, visit, and do business look like?**” Standing committee discussions continued and identified trends and challenges that may impact Marathon County becoming a preferred place and the assets that could be leveraged and the opportunities that could be explored for Marathon County to become the preferred place. From the standing committee work, themes started to evolve which resulted in the development of the comprehensive plan’s guiding principles.

Figure 1-2: Task Force Members

Supervisor	Standing Committee
Kurt Gibbs, Chair	Executive
Charles Soukup	Education and Economic Development
Arnold Schlei	Human Resources and Infrastructure
John Robinson	Health and Human Services
Sandi Cihlar	Environmental Resources
John Durham	Finance and Property
Craig McEwen	Public Safety
Ken Day	Health and Human Services
Matt Hildebrandt	Technology

Guiding Principles

The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan is based on principles that call for actions and outcomes that meet the overarching goal to ensure that Marathon County is the healthiest, safest, and most prosperous county in Wisconsin. The guiding principles serve as the foundation for shaping and navigating the future, and will ensure that the Comprehensive Plan remains consistent with the vision of Marathon County as the healthiest, safest, and most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Crossroads of Wisconsin

Encourage decisions that support options to allow safe and efficient movement of people and goods in and through Marathon County by a variety of modal means.

Education and Economic Development

Epicenter

Encourage decisions that support lifelong education, workforce development, and diverse opportunities for economic growth.

Environmental Stewardship

Encourage decisions that enhance the ecology and natural resources of Marathon County, while preserving and protecting them from human impacts and development, for the benefit of current and future populations.

Health Focused

Encourage decisions that promote the physical, mental, and social health of the community through affordable access, health education, health care systems, and infrastructure to encourage healthy living at all stages of life.

Multi-Partners Cooperation

Encourage decisions that support cooperation and collaboration with local, county, state, and federal governments, public-private partnerships, nonprofits, and other organizations to improve communication and efficiency.

Recreation Hub

Encourage decisions that enhance the cultural, entertainment, and outdoor recreation amenities to ensure Marathon County's future as a year-round destination for residents and visitors.

Safe and Sound

Encourage decisions that support the promotion of public safety and a sense of personal security within the community.

Sense of Place

Encourage decisions that support and enhance local history, heritage, culture, values, social pride, and community character in Marathon County to foster growth and coordinated development and to establish a vibrant sense of place.

Sustainable Agriculture

Encourage decisions that support preservation of productive farmland, growth of agribusiness, and promote innovative farming practices to maintain a strong local agricultural economy which contributes to the local and global food system.

Embrace Innovation

Encourage decisions that support the utilization of new technologies and opportunities for innovation.



The Guiding Principles help protect the natural and agricultural resources of the County.

Department Head Retreats

A series of three retreats were held with the 23 department heads of Marathon County. The purpose of the retreats was to ensure that the comprehensive plan would be meaningful, useful, and relevant to the departments in the county government, by utilizing the expertise of the department heads to identify issues and goals and to think strategically about how county departments can work together in collaboration to achieve the goals.

At the first retreat, in September 2014, the department heads were introduced to the new comprehensive planning process and their role in it. The 10 guiding principles were discussed and departments identified programs and services they provide related to the principles. Eleven critical issues that the county is currently facing or is likely to face over the next 20 years were identified.

The second retreat, in October 2014, focused on what role Marathon County plays in influencing or impacting the critical issues identified at the previous retreat. Of the eleven critical issues, three were deemed to be the Primary Issues in which the County plays a direct role: Health of the Community, Environment and Ecosystem Resources, and Collaborative Governance.

A third retreat was held in November 2014, and built upon the previous work. The three primary issues were converted into goal statements and expanded. This retreat focused on the goal of Governance, breaking it into four Emerging Goals and detailing action steps that can be taken by the County to achieve the goals.

Two further meetings were held in February 2015 to develop the goals and action steps of the Environment and Ecosystem Management and Health of the Community sections. Those present at these meetings reflected all of the County departments which have a direct role in these areas. Goals, objectives, and action steps were identified for the three primary issues.

The recommended objectives and action steps for the Environment and Ecosystem Management and Health of the Community sections make up much of the Action Plan. Meanwhile, the work under Collaborative Governance does not easily fall into the realm of any of the chapters in this plan, as the recommendations are largely internal process changes to how Marathon County Government operates. These Collaborative Governance recommendations are seen below. They do provide valuable information for the overall planning effort.

Collaborative Governance

Goal 1: Improve community engagement and community education through communication, technology, and social media.

The first goal of Collaborative Governance is about helping community members get informed and involved with government and improving the community. The tools of communication, technology, and social media were key elements in how the Department Heads envision community engagement and education being strengthened. Three ideas were recommended on how to potentially reach this goal. First, consider hiring a County Public Information Official (PIO). This role would ensure that the public receives a consistent message with an organized, proactive response. Second, develop a stronger portal for the community to connect with government information. This portal could potentially be an enhanced version of the County website. Finally, hold public dialogues which invite the community into conversation with government about relevant subjects. The Ketterling public engagement method was suggested as a balanced way to inform as well as engage.

Goal 2: To improve customer service, Marathon County must keep pace with technology demands and the expectations of the public.

The expectations the public has of their government's responsiveness have increased dramatically with advances in technology. Marathon County government recognizes that keeping pace with technological advances is necessary to maintain a high level of customer service. The first recommendation is to enhance the capacity to receive electronic information from citizens. This includes the Emergency Services' Dispatch's ability to receive advanced 911 social media (text messages, twitter, VoIP) as well as the Highway department among others. Second, Marathon County government should consider utilizing blast messages to communicate with the public based on interest, such as road conditions, traffic, crime, meetings, and parks. Third, utilize current technology to communicate messages with the public. For example, rather than writing step-by-step directions for something, consider making a YouTube video to explain.

Goal 3: To improve efficiency of public resources and increase achievement of desired results.

Using public resources in an efficient and effective manner is vastly important. The first recommendation towards reaching this goal is to create a culture of continual learning within County government. Investing in training opportunities for staff at all levels will improve the efficiency of work. Second, there is a need to focus on departmental and inter-departmental planning for desired results by scheduling and allocating structured time and resources on specific issues and initiatives. Finally, drive down decision making and be willing to accept a greater degree of risk with decisions.

Goal 4: Encourage citizens to express their needs and to be part of the solution.

An active and vocal citizenry is necessary to reach the goals of the community and reach solutions to complex problems. The three top recommended action steps for this goal are to 1) offer forums for communities as needed to publicize issues, 2) train government officials to develop engagement skills, and 3) build relationships with media outlets.

Structure of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan includes thirteen chapters, see **Figure 1-3**, along with numerous tables, charts, and maps. The various chapters cover many issues impacting Marathon County today and in the future.

Chapter one provides an introduction and overview of the Comprehensive Planning process. The next eleven chapters focus on various topics, including: demographics; health and human services; community character; natural resources; water resources; public safety; infrastructure; land use; education, workforce development, and economic development; recreation, tourism, and cultural resources; and intergovernmental cooperation.

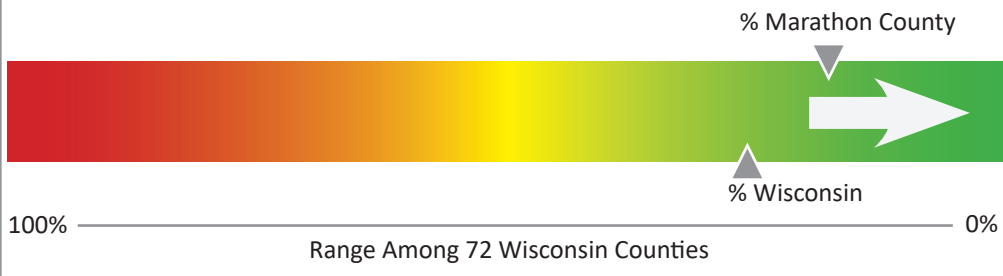
Each of these chapters is generally laid out covering these basic sections: introduction, previous plans and studies, inventory of current conditions, issues, goals and objectives. Additionally, as a way to indicate current conditions and to establish a base for various indicators we have included "Indicator bars" throughout the chapters, see Example below. These provide a ranking of Marathon County compared to other counties and the state. These also provide basic benchmarks for future planning efforts to monitor overall progress.

The final chapter, Implementation, includes an Action Plan, which identifies strategies or actions to move forward the various goals and objectives from each of the previous chapters. Future Strategic Planning efforts will focus and prioritize the Comprehensive Plan even more.

Figure 1-3: Chapters

1. Introduction
2. Demographics
3. Health and Human Services
4. Community Character
5. Natural Resources
6. Water Resources
7. Public Safety
8. Infrastructure
9. Land Use
10. Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development
11. Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources
12. Intergovernmental Cooperation
13. Implementation

Example of an Indicator Bar



Definition

Boxes like this will give definitions for some of the more technical terms used in the plan.

Chapter Two Demographics



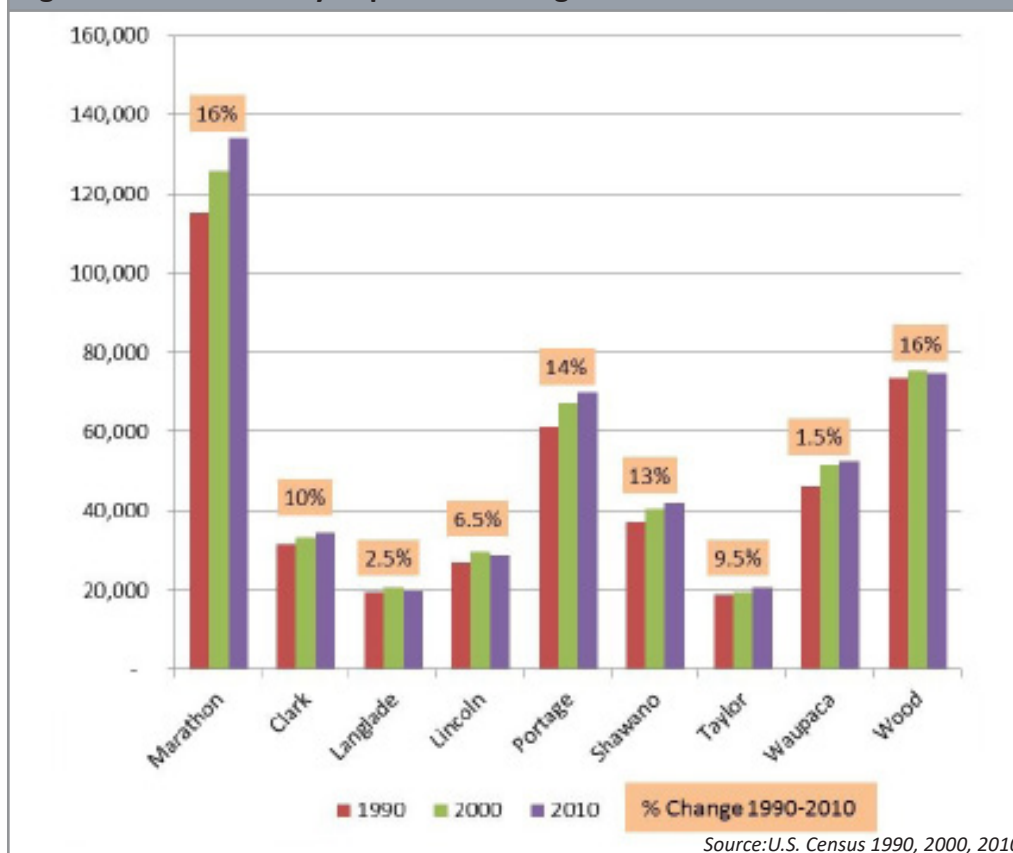
This chapter describes demographic information as background for the planning effort. It will be used to identify trends that may have an effect on Marathon County over the next two decades. Demographics are presented in two sections: “Marathon County and Beyond” and “Within Marathon County”. “Marathon County and Beyond” shows the demographics of Marathon County compared to the State of Wisconsin and other neighboring counties. “Within Marathon County” breaks down the demographics within the county to show the regional distinctions between county borders.

Marathon County and Beyond

Regional Population Change

Marathon County has the largest population in the region, and experienced the largest net increase in population, with 22,700 new residents. **Figure 2-1** illustrates population change in Marathon County and surrounding counties since 1990. The regional counties experienced a wide array of rates of population growth. None of the regional counties added as many people as Marathon County, due to their smaller size, but two regional counties, Portage and Waupaca, had slightly higher rates of population growth.

Figure 2-1: Area County Population Change



Population and Households

Since 1990, the population of Marathon County increased by 16 percent, from 115,400 to 134,000. As shown on **Figure 2-2**, the population in the State increased at about the same rate during this period.

Figure 2-3 shows that the number of households in Marathon County increased by 40 percent since 1990. The average Marathon County household declined from 2.75 persons in 1990 to 2.49 in 2010, as seen in **Figure 2-4**. This is consistent with the national trend toward more households, with fewer persons per household. More households are comprised of single adults, couples without children, and families with fewer children per household. Marathon County's household numbers and household size mirrored the percent change for the State of Wisconsin over the past two decades.

Racial Composition

The racial composition of Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin in 2010 is shown in **Figure 2-5**. Marathon County has experienced significant growth in racial diversity over the last two decades. Both Marathon County and Wisconsin are majority white but are becoming more diverse. Marathon County has the highest Asian population percentage of all counties in Wisconsin.

The Latino population in Marathon County grew by over 2,000 people between 2000 and 2010 according to the U.S. Census. Countywide, Latinos made up 2.2 percent of the population in 2010. However, several municipalities have larger Latino population percentages, including the Village of Athens (4.9%), Town of Brighton (6.5%), the Town of Franzen (9.5%), the City of Colby (14.9%), and the City of Abbotsford (39.9%).

Household

All of the people who occupy a housing unit, including family members and unrelated people.

Figure 2-2: Population

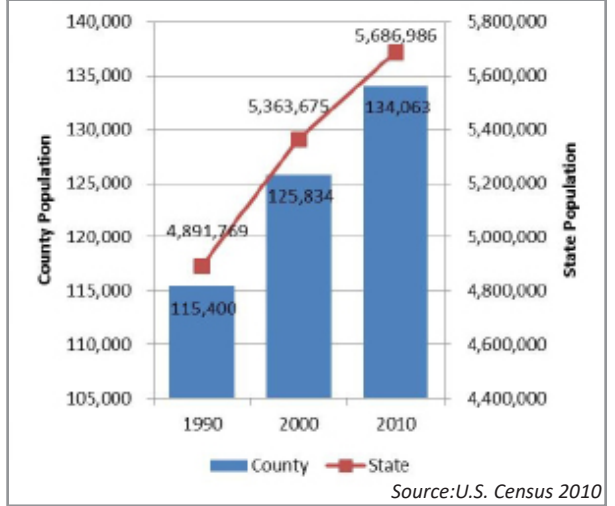


Figure 2-3: Households

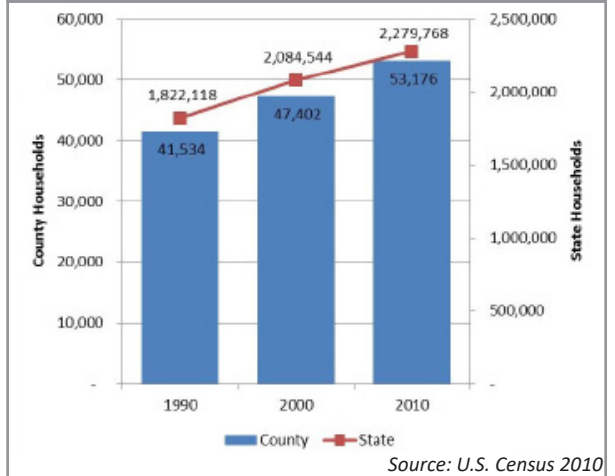


Figure 2-4: Average Household Size

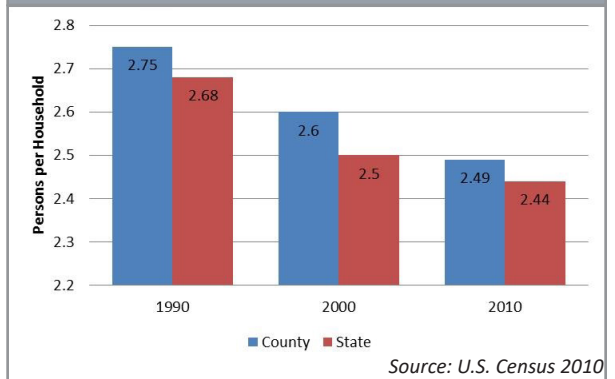
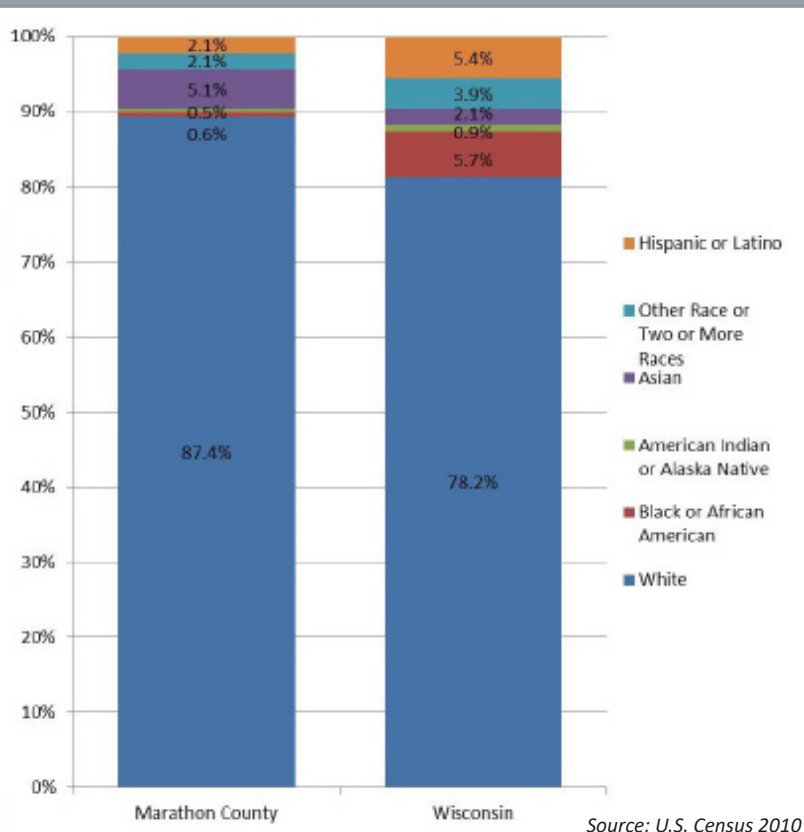


Figure 2-5: Racial Composition



Age

Figure 2-6 compares the distribution of population by age group from 1990 to 2010 for Marathon County and Wisconsin. Marathon County has lost population in the age groups under 25 years of age and gained population in the older age groups. Both Marathon County and Wisconsin have seen their median age increase over the past two decades. The population distribution at the County and state levels are roughly equivalent, with the biggest difference being at the 18 to 24 years age bracket. Marathon County has seen a 1.3 percent decrease in this bracket from 1990 to 2010; Wisconsin has seen a 2.1 percent increase.

Figure 2-6: Household Income in Marathon County, 2010

Age Group	Percent of Population					
	Marathon County			Wisconsin		
	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010
Under 5 Years	7.4	6.4	6.5	7.4	6.4	6.3
5 to 17 Years	20.6	20.4	18	22	19.1	17.3
18 to 24 Years	9.2	8.2	7.9	7.4	9.7	9.5
25 to 64 Years	50.1	52	53.5	49.9	51.7	53.1
65 Years or Over	12.6	13	14.1	13.3	13.1	13.8
Median Age	32.7	36.3	39.4	32.9	36	38.5

Source: WisDOA, U.S. Census, & NCWRPC

Population pyramids are a way to represent the age distribution within a population. **Figure 2-7** and **Figure 2-8** show the population pyramids for Marathon County and Wisconsin in 2010. Marathon County has a smaller percentage of its population in the young adult years, especially in the 20 to 24 years old age bracket.

Education

Figure 2-9 compares levels of education attainment of County residents to State levels. Marathon County has seen an increase in the percent of the population with a high school degree and with a bachelor's degree since 1990. The State has also seen an increase in these percentages, and continues to be higher than County levels. In the County, 89 percent of the population has at least a high school degree, only one percentage point behind the State figure. The County is farther behind State levels in population with a bachelor's

Figure 2-7: Population Pyramid Marathon County

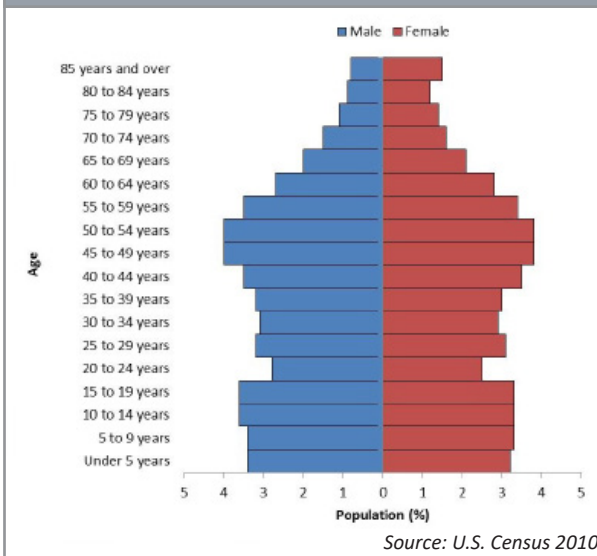


Figure 2-8: Population Pyramid Wisconsin

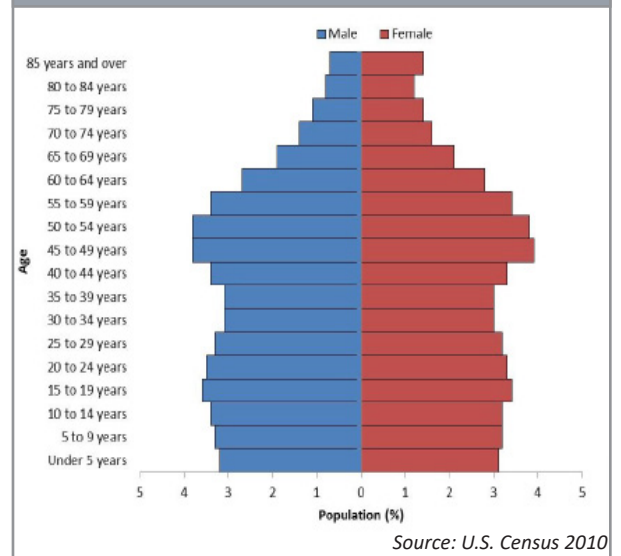


Figure 2-9: Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Marathon County			Wisconsin		
	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010
Less than 9th Grade	14.1	8.2	4.9	9.5	5.4	3.5
9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma	10	8	5.8	11.9	9.6	6.4
High School Graduate	40.8	38	38	37.1	34.6	33.1
Some College, No Degree	13.3	18.3	18.2	16.7	20.6	21.3
Associates Degree	8.4	9.2	11.2	7.1	7.5	9.4
Bachelor's Degree	9.4	12.6	14.7	12.1	15.3	17.5
Graduate or Professional Degree	4	5.7	7.2	5.6	7.2	8.9
Percent High School or Higher	75.9	83.8	89.2	78.6	85.1	90.2
Percent Bachelor's or Higher	13.5	18.3	21.9	17.7	22.4	26.4

Source: WisDOA & U.S. Census,

degree, with 21 percent to the State's 26 percent. More detailed information on the education in general and the education levels of the County's workforce can be found in Chapter 11.

Household Income

Both Marathon County and the State experienced increases in median household income since 1990, see **Figure 2-10**. While the median household income in Marathon County continues to be higher than the State average, the State is experiencing a faster rate of income growth than Marathon County. Income figures must be viewed with caution, since the absolute numbers will rise with inflation. However, the relative percentages of residents in each income level indicate that income distribution in Marathon County is proportionate to levels observed Statewide in both 1990 and 2010. Chapter 11 goes into more detailed information about the income levels of Marathon County's population.

Figure 2-10: Household Income Levels

Income Level (as percent of population)	Marathon County			Wisconsin		
	1990	2000	2010*	1990	2000	2010*
Less than \$10,000	12.4	5.9	4.3	14.0	7.1	5.9
\$10,000 - \$14,999	8.9	5.4	4.5	9.4	5.8	5.3
\$15,000 - \$24,999	19.3	12.3	10.8	18.7	12.7	10.8
\$25,000 - \$34,999	18.4	13.1	11.1	17.4	13.2	10.8
\$35,000 - \$49,999	21.5	19.4	15.8	20.2	18.1	14.8
\$50,000 - \$74,999	13.7	25.2	20.7	14.1	22.7	20.1
\$75,000 - \$99,999	3.2	10.5	15.3	3.6	10.9	13.6
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1.6	5.4	12	1.7	6.4	12.4
\$150,000 - \$199,999	1.0	1.3	3	1.0	1.5	3.5
\$200,000 or more	-	1.6	2.5	-	1.5	2.9
Median Household Income	\$31,143	\$45,165	\$53,762	\$29,442	\$43,791	\$52,627

* Adjusted for Inflation. Source: WisDOA & U.S. Census,

Employment Characteristics

Figure 2-11 illustrates the breakdown, by occupation, of the employed population of Marathon County in 2000 and 2010. The "employed population" is defined as people living in the County who are 16 years and older. In 2010, the County had an employed population of 69,248, a 4.6 percent increase from 2000. The three sectors with the highest employment in the County were Management, Business, Science and Arts; Sales and Office; and Production, Transportation, and Material Moving occupations. **Figure 2-11** only includes occupation data for 2000 and 2010, not including

Figure 2-11: Occupation by Sector

Sector Occupations	2000		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Management, Business, Science, and Arts	19,745	29.7	22,048	31.8
Service	8,127	12.2	9,731	14.1
Sales and Office	17,457	26.2	16,596	24.0
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	910	1.4	924	1.3
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance	5,806	8.7	5,573	8.0
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	14,505	21.8	14,376	20.8
Total Employed Population	66,550	100.0	69,248	100.0

Source: WisDOA, U.S. Census

1990, because the occupation sectors were redefined after 1990 and the sectors have changed making it difficult to compare across 1990 and 2000 data. Greater detail regarding employment characteristics can be found in Chapter 11's economic development section.

Within Marathon County

Marathon County is the largest county in the state of Wisconsin, based on area. As such, its boundaries contain a diversity of commerce and communities, landscapes and land uses.

Municipal Growth

The areas within the County experience change and growth at different rates. Fifteen municipal units within Marathon County grew by over 100 people between 2000 and 2010. Fourteen experienced negative population growth. The City of Wausau and its surrounding municipalities experienced the largest population changes. The City of Wausau and the Villages of Weston and Kronenwetter all had high positive net growth, while the Town of Rib Mountain had the greatest negative net growth.

Map 2-1 shows population change by municipality between 1990 and 2010. As the Map shows, most towns experienced modest percentage growth over the last two decades. Most of the communities with very high percentage growth also have relatively small populations. Five towns, as well as one city and one village, had negative population growth between 1990 and 2010.

Growth Projections

It is necessary, when planning for the future, to have an idea of future population growth. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) statistically estimates population and household projections for Wisconsin. WDOA population projections are recognized as Wisconsin's official population projections in accordance with Wisconsin Statute 16.96. Figure 2-12 indicates population projections for Marathon County and Wisconsin completed in 5-year increments by WDOA.

For Marathon County, these projections assume a moderate rate of growth, resulting in a

Cohort

A group of persons sharing a statistical or demographic characteristic.

population increase of 18,727 persons, or 14 percent between 2010 and 2040. Wisconsin is also projected to have 14 percent population growth by 2040. For comparison to Map 2-1, which shows population change looking backward 20 years, Map 2-2 shows projected population change looking forward 20 years. Fewer municipalities are projected to have very high positive population growth, but fewer municipalities are projected to have negative population growth as well.

To add detail to the population projections, Figure 2-13 shows the projected 2040 population broken down by age cohort. As the large baby boomer generation reaches retirement age by 2040, the pyramid shape of previous decades gives way to a more linear diagram. A significantly higher percentage of women survive into the older age cohorts than men. Marathon County is projected to continue to struggle to attract and retain both men and women in the 20 to 24 years of age cohort.

Figure 2-12: Population Projections, 2010-2040

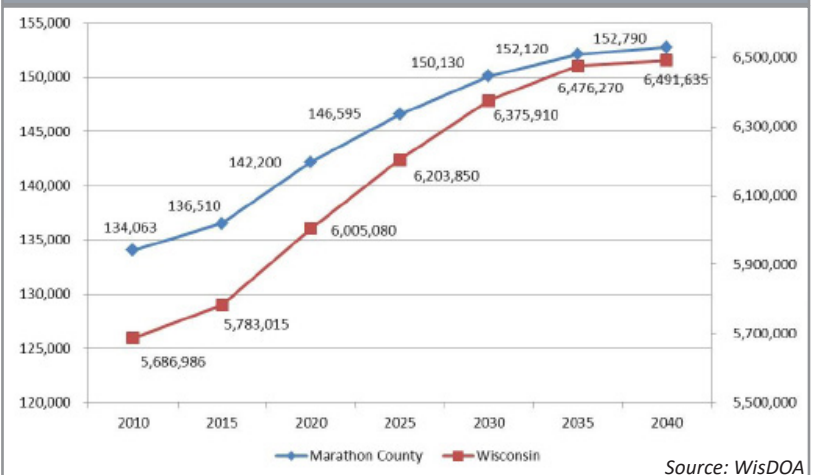


Figure 2-13: Population Projection Pyramid Marathon County, 2040

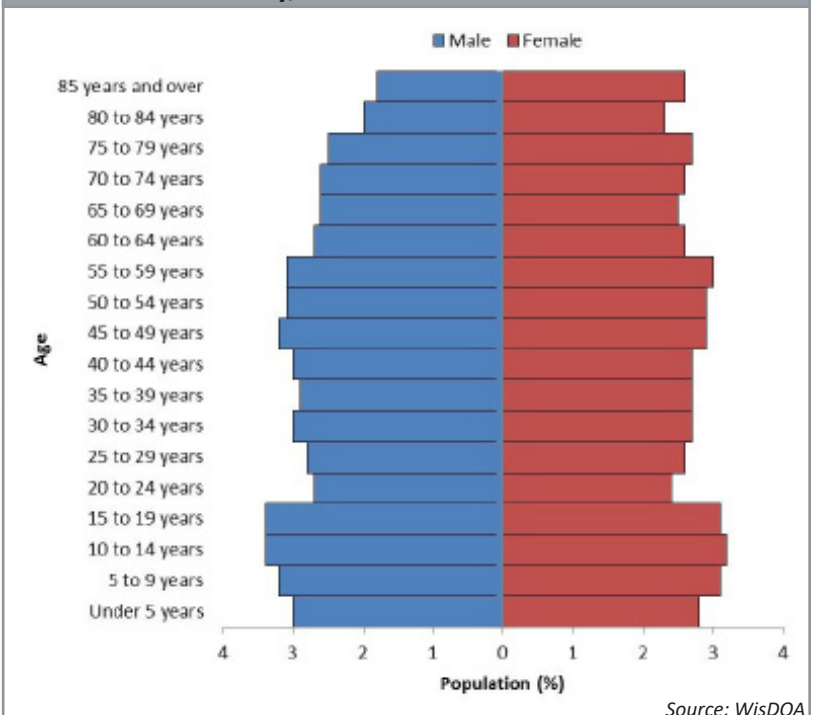
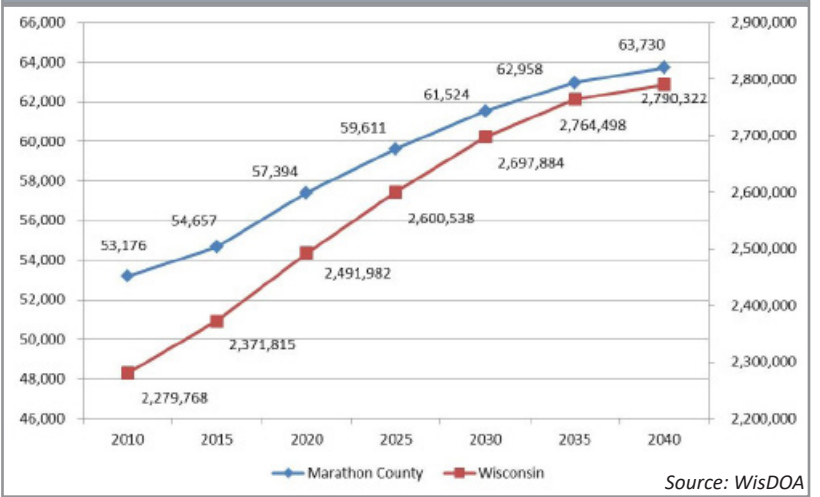


Figure 2-14 shows the household projections based on the WDOA population projections. Marathon County is projected to increase of over 7,500 households by the year 2040, a 20 percent growth. Wisconsin is projected to have 22 percent growth in households by 2040. The trend toward smaller adult households is reflected in the high rate of growth, and is primarily responsible for the fact that households are projected to increase faster than the population.

Figure 2-14: Household Projections 2010-2040



Marathon County's Six Regions

While developing the recent Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan and meeting with residents staff looked for norms and trends that would provide natural subdivisions to group the county around identified commonalities. While agriculture motivated the initial study, researchers found cultural and demographic similarities that further defined these regions. The work yielded the Six Regions of Marathon County—Antigo Flats, Eastern Lakes, Heart of America, Lumberjack, Wisconsin Central, and Wisconsin River Influence, see Map 2-3.

The six regions attempt to distinguish some of the unique features that set each area of the county apart. As Figure 2-15 shows, residents are not dispersed evenly though the regions. Over half of the population lives in Wisconsin Central, while less than one percent live in Antigo Flats. However, there are also several unifying characteristics which show the similarities within the County. Median Household Income, seen in Figure 2-16, is quite consistent across the regions, with Lumberjack and Wisconsin River Influence being slightly higher than the other regions. All regions have a higher median household income than Wisconsin (\$51,598) and the United States (\$51,914). Figure 2-17 shows median age among the regions between 38.4 years and 43.9 years, with a County median age of 39.4. Despite the variation among the regions, Marathon County has an older median age than Wisconsin (38.5 years) and the United States (37.2 years).

Figure 2-15: Total Households by Region

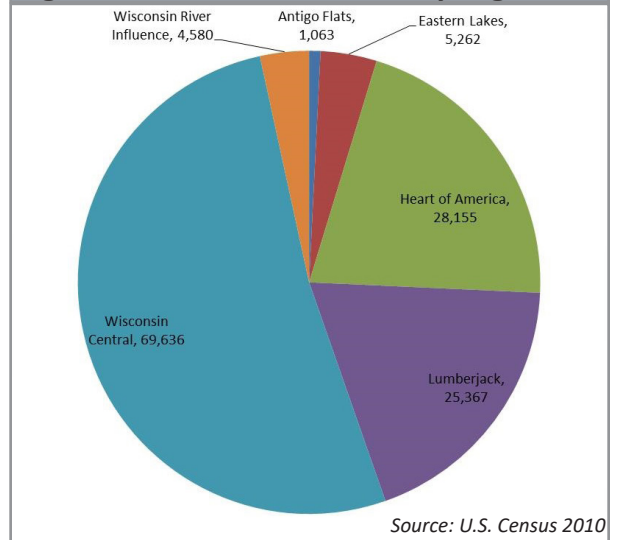


Figure 2-16: Median Household Income by Region

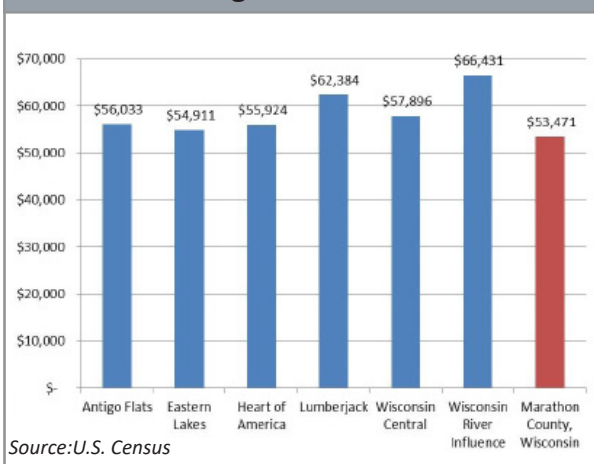
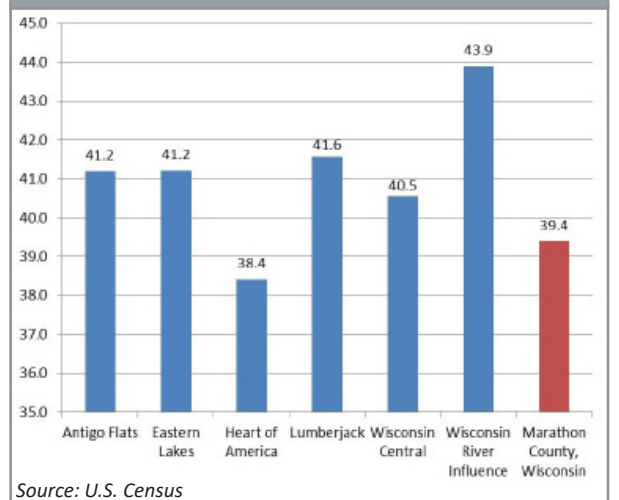


Figure 2-17: Median Age by Region



Antigo Flats

Encompassing the towns of Harrison and Plover, Antigo Flats earns its name for its regional connection to the City of

Antigo in Langlade County and its subsistence on family potato farms. Antigo Flats is the smallest of the six regions, in both size and population. In 2010, the region had 1,063 people in an area of 72.7 square miles. The median age in Antigo Flats is 41.2 years old.

In addition to the largely generational farms that make up Antigo Flats, this region is characterized by large tracts of publicly-owned land and outdoor recreation areas including the Bitzke Bird Walk, the Dells of the Eau Claire county park, the Ice Age Trail, and the Plover River State Fishery. Private lands are a mix agriculture and forest lands with scattered large lot residential development.

The agriculture industry in the Antigo Flats region is primarily seed potato and vegetable crops. Farms are generational and include several Century Farms. Residents in the area primarily go to the City of Antigo for school, work, socializing, and shopping. Residents do not feel connected with their county of residence. The area is challenged with a lack of connection with Marathon County government, which can lead to both perceived and actual lack of county services.

Antigo Flats is the smallest geographic region, with only two towns. It is also the least populated, with a population density of 14.6 people per square mile, much lower than the County average of 85.1 people per square mile. Antigo Flats has the lowest housing density in the county at an average of 5 homes per square mile, see **Figure 2-18**, and has large residential lots with an average 2.5 acres. The actual housing density is even lower given the large publicly owned land base. Antigo Flats has the second highest owner occupancy rate, at 91.5 percent, behind only Wisconsin River Influence at 92 percent, see **Figure 2-19**.

Density

The number of inhabitants, dwellings, or other similar measurements in a given area. Density is often expressed as dwelling units per acre or people per square mile.

Figure 2-18: Housing Density by Region

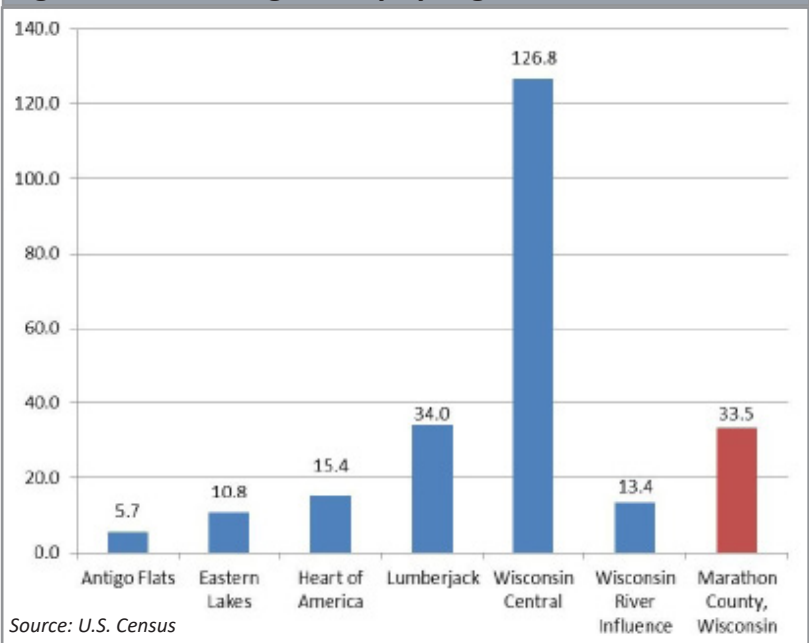
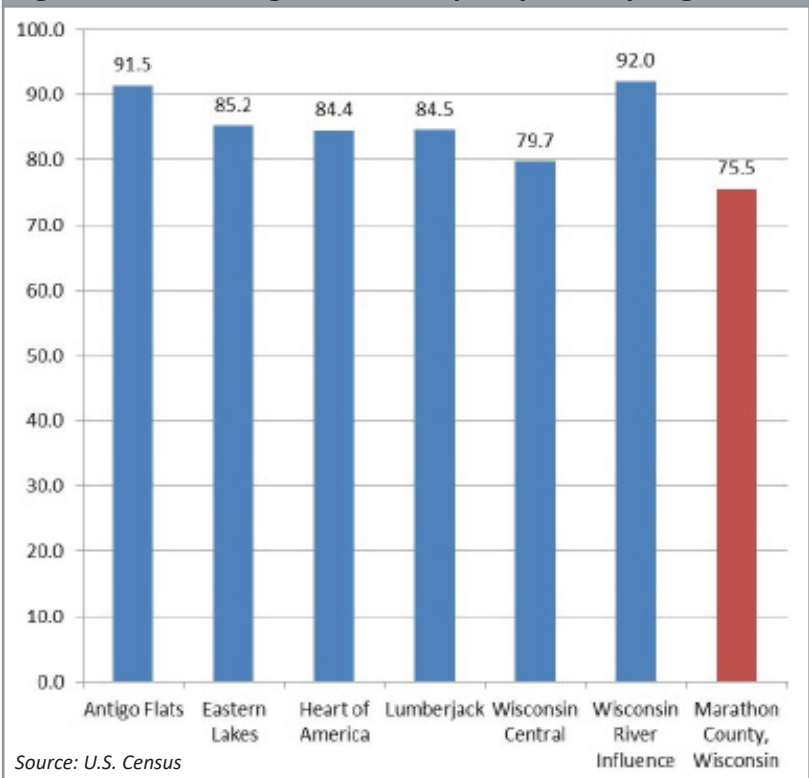


Figure 2-19: Housing Owner Occupancy Rate by Region



Eastern Lakes

The Eastern Lakes region includes the towns of Norrie, Elderon, Franzen, Reid, and Bevent, and the village of Hatley. With 5,262 people in an area of 193.8 square miles, this is the third smallest region, and has the second lowest population density at 27.2 persons per square mile. The Eastern Lakes region has a median age of 41.2, slightly higher than the County median age of 39.4.

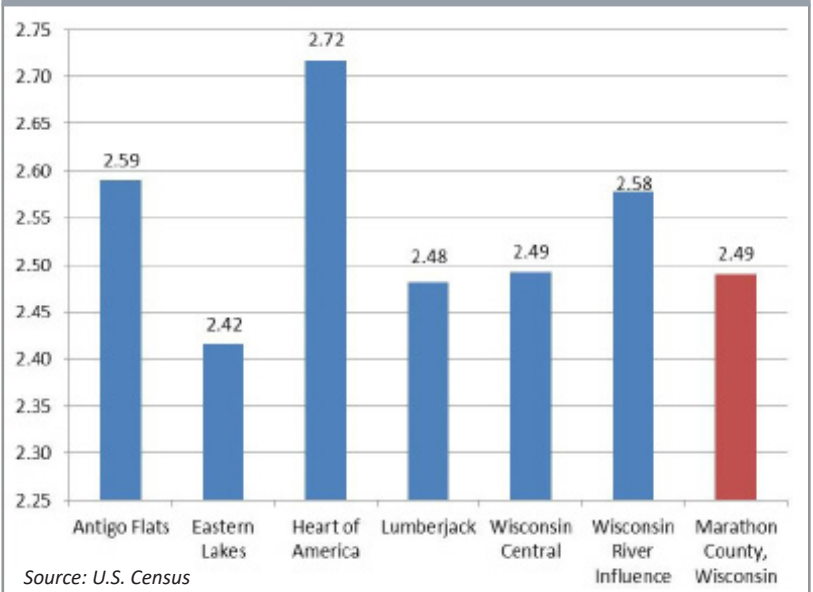
The area was glaciated, resulting in a forested landscape with many kettle lakes. The area is characterized by smaller tracts of forested and agricultural lands. Many residences are seasonal lake homes and hunting cabins. Residential development averages 1.8 acres, but lot size is highly variable due to the mix of larger residential lots in agricultural areas, smaller residential lots in the forested areas, and the smallest residential lots along lakeshores. The southeastern corner of Marathon County is spotted with lakes around which communities have developed. People from this region tend to value a more remote lifestyle, which gives this region the longest average commute and the farthest travel times to other services.

The Eastern Lakes region had a 5% population growth, second lowest only to Antigo Flats, which saw population decline. Housing growth is similar to the county wide housing growth at 14% (15% county-wide housing growth). Housing density is second lowest in the county (average of 11 homes/square mile) and on lots that are smaller than the county-wide average (1.8 acres in the region, 2.1 acres county-wide).

The region does not have a commercial center for goods and services, therefore residents in the region go to school, work, socialize, and purchase many of their goods and services from cities and villages outside the region such as Stevens Point and Rosholt in Portage County, Wausau in Marathon County, and Birnamwood and Wittenberg in Shawano County. Because of the scattered service centers, various school districts, and the prevalence of seasonal homes, the region does not have the strong a sense of community found in most of the other regions in the county. The area is challenged with a lower residency rate than other areas of the county due to seasonal lake homes and hunting cottages. This often results in less connection with community and a lower degree of community involvement than in areas with high residency rates.

The Eastern Lakes region has the lowest average household size of the six regions, with 2.42 persons per household, see **Figure 2-20**. This is perhaps related to the prominence of retirement and vacation homes in the region. The region has the lowest median household income of the regions at \$54,911 per household, but this figure is higher than the Marathon County median household income by almost \$500. Eastern Lakes also has the longest mean travel time to work, with people driving an average of 26.6 minutes to their place of employment.

Figure 2-20: Average Household Size



Heart of America

The Heart of America region is named after the Heart of America's Dairyland Agricultural Enterprise Area in eastern Clark County and western Marathon County. The region includes the towns of Berlin, Bern, Brighton, Cassel, Day, Eau Pleine, Emmet, Frankfort, Halsey, Hamburg, Holton, Hull, Johnson, Marathon, McMillan, Reitbrock, Rib Falls, Spencer, and Wien; the villages of Athens, Dorchester, Edgar, Fenwood, Marathon City, Spencer, Stratford, and Unity; and the cities of Abbotsford, Colby, and Marshfield. The Heart of America is the largest of the regions in geographic area, covering 668.8 square miles, and the second largest in terms of population, with 28,155 people in 2010. The large size and modest population give a population density of 42.1 persons per square mile. This region has the youngest median age of all the regions, at 38.4 years, and is the only region with a median age below the county median age of 39.4 years.

The region is characterized by a flat to gently rolling landscape, with large tracts of contiguous farmland, and forest in the wetter areas and along streams. The Heart of America is fueled by Marathon County's commercial dairy farms, giving western Marathon County an Americana appeal. A number of small towns—Athens, Edgar, Marathon City, Spencer, Stratford—are more than just service and commercial centers; they are foundational to community identities within this region.

The population and housing growth in the Heart of American is moderate, similar to that of the county-wide growth. Homes in the area are scattered, about 16 homes per square mile, and on large lots with an average of 2.7 acres. Residents in the area have a strong sense of community. Residents primarily live, work, attend school, socialize, and purchase many of their goods and services in the

small villages and cities in the region.

The area is challenged with balancing the protection of transportation infrastructure with the needs of the agriculture industry, conflicts in the urban and rural transitional areas around villages and cities, limited groundwater quantity, and agricultural runoff. The long-term State Highway 29 corridor conversion to limited access poses additional challenges to farmers with property on both sides of the highway.

The Heart of American region is the largest, geographically, of the six regions in Marathon County, covering nearly half of the land area. Heart of American has the largest average household size, at 2.72 persons per household. **Figure 2-21** shows that the region also has the lowest population percentage with an educational attainment of a high school degree or higher, at 84.3 percent.

Lumberjack

The Lumberjack region includes the towns of Easton, Hewitt, Maine, Ringle, Texas, Wausau, and Weston, and the villages of Brokaw and Weston. In 2010, this region had a population of 25,367 people in an area of 279.6 square miles, giving Lumberjack the second highest population density, with 90.7 persons per square mile. Lumberjack also has the second oldest median age at 41.6 years, with only Wisconsin River Influence being older.

The area is characterized by family operations of small agri-tourism and activity farming such as corn mazes, pumpkin patches, and hayrides. With the relocation of Wausau East High School, the Lumberjack region has seen an increase in residential development. Surrounding much of the metro area, especially to the north and east, farmland is converted into large residential lots for commuting professionals who want the commercial amenities of the urban area but the residential benefits of more rural parts of the county. The area is challenged to balance the demand for high level, cost effective public services with available resources.

The population and housing growth in Lumberjack region is the highest in the county (15% and 26% compared to 7% and 15% county-wide). This growth is at least partly due to the relocation of Wausau East high School and the newer elementary schools in the region. Housing density is the second highest (about 35 home per square mile) and on large lots (aver 2.8 acres, largest in the county). Residents in the area primarily work, socialize, and purchase many of their goods and services in the Wisconsin Central region.

The Lumberjack region has the highest labor force participation rate of the six regions at 76.6 percent, see **Figure 2-22**. For comparison, the labor force participation rate in Lumberjack is higher than in Marathon County (72.2%), in Wisconsin (69.0%), and the United States (65.0%).

Figure 2-21: Percent High School Graduate or Higher

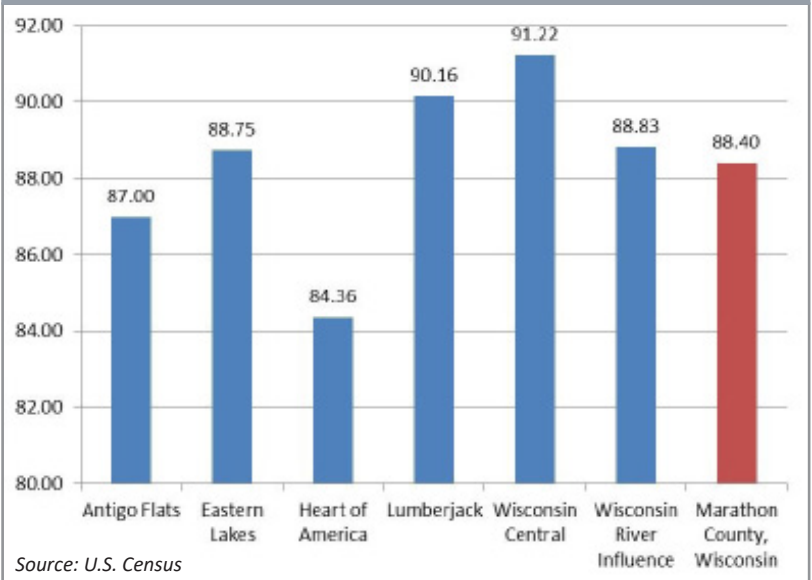
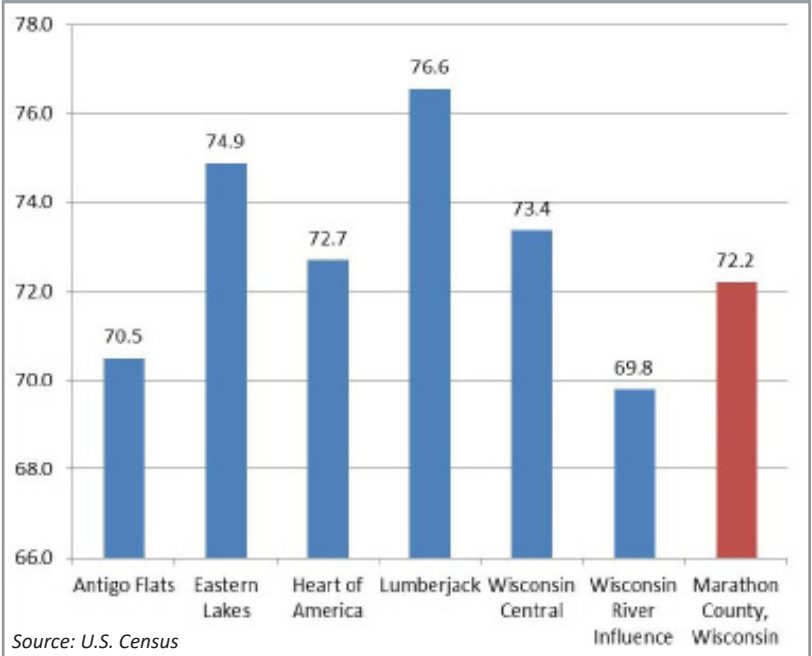


Figure 2-22: Labor Force Participation Rate



Wisconsin Central

Wisconsin Central region includes the cities of Mosinee, Schofield, and Wausau; the Villages of Kronenwetter and Rothschild; and the towns of Guenther, Mosinee, Rib Mountain, and Stettin. Wisconsin Central is the region with the largest population and the highest population density, with 69,636 people in 225.6 square miles. The median age in this region is 40.5 years.

Wisconsin Central is the urban center of the county and serves as the employment, higher education, goods and service provider, and social recreation center of the county. This area serves as a regional marketplace for producers to sell goods at farmers markets and local businesses. The area is challenged with loss of industry in a growing urban area that is served by public utilities.

The population and housing growth in Wisconsin Central is low (4% and 11% compared to 7% and 15% county-wide). Homes in the area are clustered (about 127 homes per square mile) and on small lots (average 1.2 acres), although the median lot size is much smaller because most of the housing is on small lots in the urbanized area. Residents in the area primarily live, work, attend school, socialize, and purchase many of their goods and services within the region.

Wisconsin Central combines the various communities that make up the Wausau Metro Area, offering higher density residential living and the amenities of a more urban lifestyle, including arts and culture, restaurants, and retail. Its central location with easy access to highways 51 and 29 make it a regional service provider for all of Marathon County and the greater Northwoods area.

Wisconsin Central is the most centrally located region in the County and is also the most urban of the regions. As the urban region, it has the highest population density at 308 persons per square mile, almost 3.5 times as dense as the second densest region, see [Figure 2-23](#). Wisconsin Central has the shortest mean travel time to work of the six regions at 17.9 minutes, which is almost three minutes shorter than any other region, see [Figure 2-24](#). Additionally, Wisconsin Central has the highest housing occupancy rate, at 94.3 percent, but the lowest housing owner occupancy rate, at 79.9 percent.

Figure 2-23: Population Density

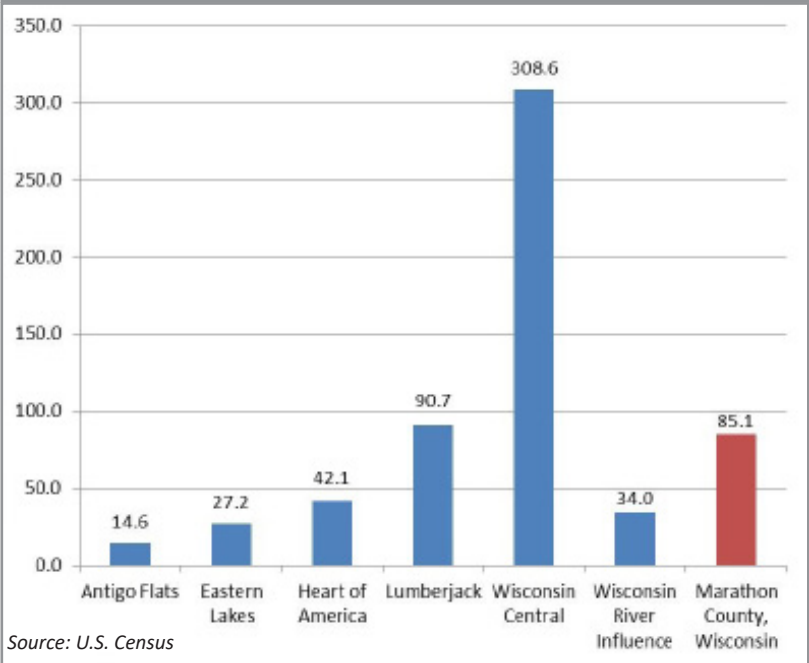
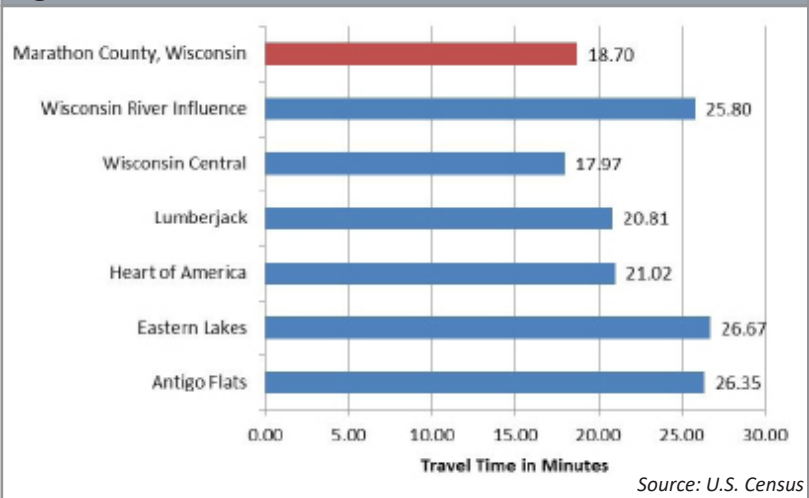


Figure 2-24: Mean Travel Time to Work



Wisconsin River Influence

The Wisconsin River Influence region includes the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, Lake DuBay, Wisconsin River, Mead Wildlife Area, and the surrounding towns of Bergen, Cleveland, Green Valley, and Knowlton. With only 4,580 people in an area of 134.8 square miles, Wisconsin River Influence is the second smallest region. The median age in this region is the highest of any region, at 43.9 years.

The region is characterized by its surface water features, forests, and farmland. The agriculture industry is varied and includes berries, ginseng, Christmas trees, apple orchards, grain, dairy, and other livestock. This south-central region provides its residents access not only to the benefits of Wausau, Stevens Point, and Marshfield but also to the flowages of the Wisconsin River, making this region an attractive place to live and giving it the highest per capita income in Marathon County.

Household income and equalized value per capita is higher in this region than any other region in the county. The population growth in the area is tied with the Lumberjack region at 15% for the highest growth in the county and housing growth is 24%, second to the Lumberjack region. While the housing density is relatively low overall (13 homes per square mile), homes are somewhat clustered. This discrepancy is due to the significant surface water acreage in the region. Residential lots are smaller than county-wide (average 1.6 acres), likely due to smaller water frontage lots decreasing the overall lot size in the region. Residents of this region primarily work and shop outside the Wisconsin River Influence region in the cities of Stevens Point and Wausau.

Wisconsin River Influence is the second smallest region, both in terms of geographic area and population. This region has the lowest housing occupancy rate of the regions, at 84.1 percent, see **Figure 2-25**. The region has the highest median housing value at \$184,100, see **Figure 2-26**. Wisconsin River Influence also has the highest median household income, at \$66,431 per household.

Figure 2-25: Housing Occupancy Rate

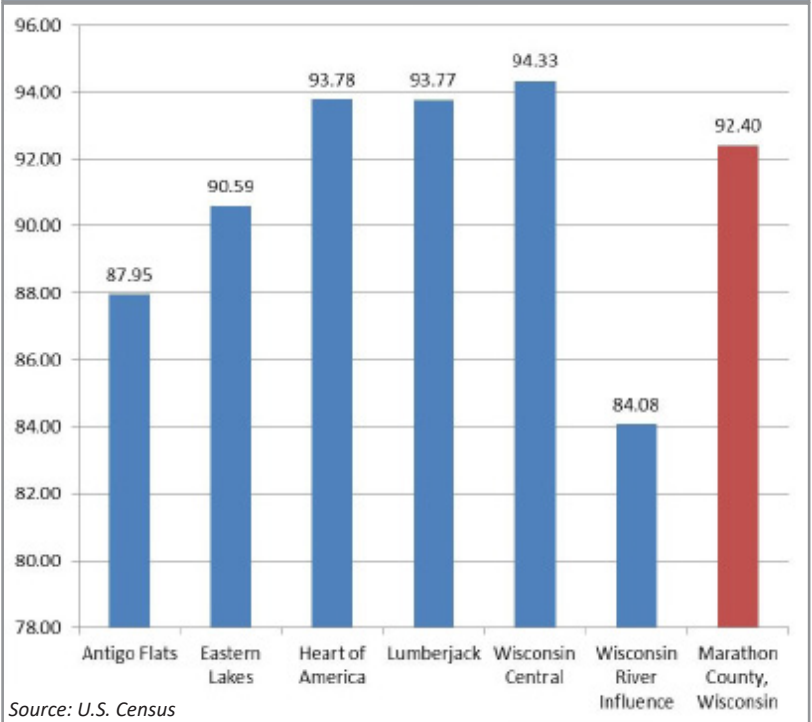
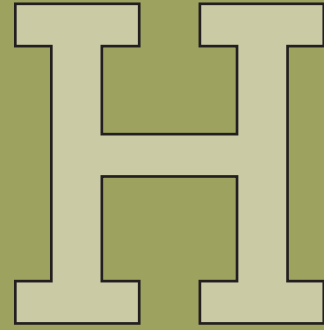


Figure 2-26: Median Housing Value



Section One Healthiest



- Chapter Three** **Health and Human Services**
- Chapter Four** **Community Character**
- Chapter Five** **Natural Resources**
- Chapter Six** **Water Resources**

Chapter Three

Health and Human Services



N.B. The Health and Human Services chapter is a new addition to the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan. By the nature of this new chapter's subject, the framework of this chapter is slightly different than the other chapters in the plan. For each topic, an overview of the topic is followed by a brief description of the related services currently taking place in Marathon County. The chapter also includes a list of the primary partners Marathon County works with to address Health and Human Services issues.

Marathon County Government plays a critical role in creating policies and providing services to enable people to enjoy lifelong health and wellbeing. Residents of Marathon County are fortunate to live in communities where there is a commitment on the part of public and private partners to provide quality health and human services that are of value to the residents served, resulting in residents whose overall health and wellbeing is better than the State of Wisconsin. Like many communities across the state and nation, Marathon County is faced with problems that threaten people's lifelong health and wellbeing.

The problems that face the health and social wellbeing of people and the communities they live in are socially and culturally complex, frequently termed as "wicked" problems. "Wicked" problems are complex, difficult to understand why they exist, inherently interconnected to other problems, and have no one linear solution. For example, poverty is linked with education, education with health, health with income. Another example is the link of poor mental health and misuse alcohol/substance use to childhood trauma, crime with mental health and substance use, and so on. These broad problems touch each and everyone one of us and afflict our communities, negatively impacting the vitality of communities and the individuals and families who live there.

Wicked Problems

A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve for as many as four reasons: incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden, and the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems.

Complex problems create breeding grounds for significant disparities that help to determine a person's overall health and social wellbeing. The social, economic, and physical environment in which a person lives shapes their individual characteristics and behaviors. Poor housing conditions, low education and income levels, unemployment, lack of access to affordable health services, and lack of social support networks are all consequences of complex problems that impact a person's lifelong health and wellbeing. The future health and social wellbeing of a community will be determined to a large extent by how effectively government, healthcare and human service providers, local non-profit organizations, and business can work together to eliminate disparities among those populations that experience a disproportionate burden of death, disability, and disease.

This chapter is framed by the *County Health Rankings* which utilizes a population health model that emphasizes the many factors that can help make communities healthier places to live, learn, work, and play (Appendix 1 - Figure 3-1). The *County Health Rankings* inform us that the health, social and economic wellbeing of a community is intrinsically linked. The following modified quote from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), illustrates how Marathon County government and partners view health and wellbeing – "*Our health and overall wellbeing is not something we get from the doctor's office, but instead it is something that starts in our families, in our schools and workplaces, in our playgrounds and parks and in the air we breathe and the water we drink.*"

Changing the culture of health and social wellbeing of a community takes time. It is not something that happens quickly. Problems that are considered "wicked" are decade-long issues. The *County Health Rankings* demonstrates that many complex, interwoven factors influence the health and wellbeing of communities and individuals.

Solving complex problems requires multiple strategies that can only be achieved through collaborative efforts among government, business, and nonprofit organizations. Long-term change does not happen in isolation. No single program or organization can address the large-scale community change that is needed, as solutions require unique, innovated perspectives from diverse people and organizations. Not only must community goals align, but organizations must work together, in a structured way, to achieve real, long-lasting change. Aligning community agendas, establishing shared measurements and fostering mutual reinforcing activities is a start, but without continuous communication among all community organizations, work and progress will remain silo.

The complex social and cultural problems that impact our health and wellbeing are worth solving. The economic and societal burden of problems like poverty, drugs, crime, alcohol and other substance abuse, domestic violence, child welfare, obesity, and mental health will continue to increase if nothing is done. Marathon County is known in the Wisconsin for having rich partnerships across diverse community sectors committed to creating necessary change to ensure the health and social wellbeing of our communities.

Previous Plans and Studies

LIFE Report – 2016

LIFE in Marathon County is a biennial report depicting the quality of life in Marathon County. The purpose of the LIFE in Marathon County Report is to acknowledge community strengths, identify community challenges, and serve as a catalyst for change by advancing community conversations and partnerships around the Calls to Action. www.co.marathon.wi.us

Marathon County Community Health Assessment – 2012

The LIFE Report is used as the basis for Marathon County’s Community Health Assessment. Marathon County Health Department is statutory responsible for conducting a community health assessment and developing an improvement plan. This responsibility is shared with the Marathon County Board of Health and Healthy Marathon County. Healthy Marathon County is a partnership of health care and community organizations working together to make a healthier community. Community health priorities for 2012-2016 include: access and affordability of health care, alcohol misuse, healthy aging, oral health care, overweight/obesity, suicide prevention, and tobacco. www.healthymarathoncounty.org

County Health Rankings – 2015

The County Healthy Rankings is an annual report of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. The report measures health outcomes like length of life and quality of life and health factors like health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment in nearly every county in America, see **Figure 3-1**.

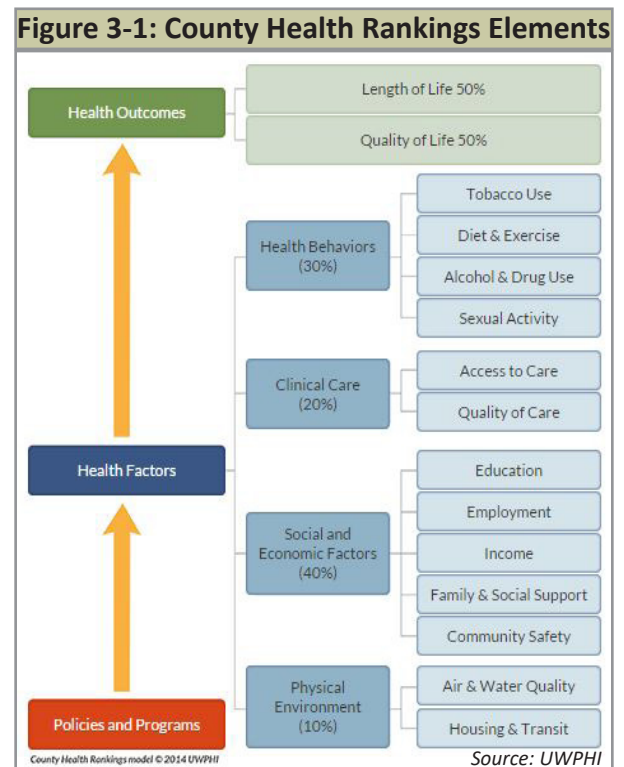
The annual rankings provide a revealing snapshot of how health is influenced by where we live, learn, work, and play. The County Health Rankings report has been published every year since 2003, which makes it a valuable tool for benchmarking progress over time. Between 2010 and 2014, Marathon County ranged from 29th to 12th place of 72 counties in Wisconsin according to the County Health Rankings. In 2015, Marathon County ranks 22nd in Health Outcomes and 18th in Health Factors. Marathon County’s best ranking in 2015 was 9th in Physical Environment which measures air pollution, drinking water violations, severe housing problems, and commute times. The worst ranking was 30th in Quality of Life which measures poor health, poor physical health days, poor mental health days, and low birthweight. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

Adverse Childhood Experiences in Wisconsin: Findings from the 2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey – 2010

In January 2012, the Children’s Trust Fund and the Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Fund of Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin issued the report: “Adverse Childhood Experiences in Wisconsin: Findings from the 2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey,1” detailing the prevalence of ACEs in Wisconsin and identifying correlations between ACEs and a number of adult health and well-being outcomes. Since then, two additional years of data have been collected and analyzed. <http://wichildrenstrustfund.org/files/WisconsinACEs.pdf>

Wisconsin ACE Brief – 2011 and 2012

The data presented in this report are from the combined 2011 and 2012 WI BRFSS samples. While the BRFSS has been conducted since 1984, 2011 was the first year that data collection included cell phone numbers, thus making it possible to capture a broader sample of Wisconsin residents. In total, 9,039 Wisconsin residents² were surveyed from varying geographical locations, income levels, races



and ethnicities, offering a diverse picture of Wisconsin residents. This report assesses socio-demographic differences in ACE prevalence rates by cumulative “score” and by type. [http://wischildrenstrustfund.org/files/WisconsinACEs\(2014Brief\).pdf](http://wischildrenstrustfund.org/files/WisconsinACEs(2014Brief).pdf)

Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Report – 2014

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) produces this annual report on Child Abuse and Neglect in Wisconsin. The Report tracks key statistics and performance measure to mark outcomes. The DCF values safety, permanence, stability, and well-being for children; strength-based family-centered approaches; respectful interactions for families; cultural competency; and partnership between the child welfare system and families and communities. Child welfare dashboards providing statewide and county performance in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being are available on demand. <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwreview/reports.htm>

The Epidemic of Chronic Disease in Wisconsin – 2011

Released in January 2011, The Epidemic of Chronic Disease in Wisconsin outlines the impact of chronic diseases on the health of Wisconsin residents, healthcare systems, and the economy. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00238.pdf>

The Burden of Excessive Alcohol Use in Wisconsin – 2013

Released in March 2013, The Burden of Excessive Alcohol Use in Wisconsin outlines costs associated with excessive alcohol consumption. Funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program, the report represents a community-academic partnership between the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and Health First Wisconsin, a health policy-focused community-based organization. <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/publications/other/burden-of-excessive-alcohol-use-in-wi.pdf>

Healthiest Wisconsin 2020 – 2010

Healthiest Wisconsin 2020: Everyone Living Better, Longer is the third statewide community health improvement plan. The goals of this plan, which covers 2010 to 2020, are to improve health across the life span and to eliminate health disparities and achieve health equity. The mission of the plan is to assure conditions in which people can be healthy, and members of healthy, safe, and resilient families and communities. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00187.pdf>

Healthy People 2020 – 2010

Healthy People 2020 is the fourth United States national health plan and covers 2010 to 2020. The vision of the plan is “a society in which all people live long, healthy lives.” The four overarching goals of the plan are to 1) attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death, 2) achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups, 3) create social and physical environments that promote good health for all, and 4) promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages. <http://www.healthypeople.gov/>

Current Conditions

There are number of conditions that shape our communities which impact people’s ability to enjoy lifelong health and wellbeing. The following section provides an overview of conditions that will impact the future of Marathon County. Key measure(s) are introduced for each condition that provide a status report on how Marathon County is doing in relationship to the State of Wisconsin and among the range of 72 Wisconsin counties. For Marathon County to become the healthiest county in the State of Wisconsin, continual progress to move the needle along the continuum will be necessary, having green on the continuum being the most desirable and red being the least desirable.

Disparities/Vulnerable Populations

Socially and culturally complex problems can create significant health disparities, especially for vulnerable populations. The future health of Marathon County will be determined by how well we can eliminate health disparities for vulnerable populations as defined by race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, geography, gender, age, disability status, risk status related to sex and gender, and among other populations identified as at-risk for health disparities.

Economic Wellbeing of Children

More than 16 million children in the United States are currently living in poverty and the number is increasing. Poverty is the single greatest threat to children's wellbeing and children living in poverty are at significantly higher risk for poor health and development.

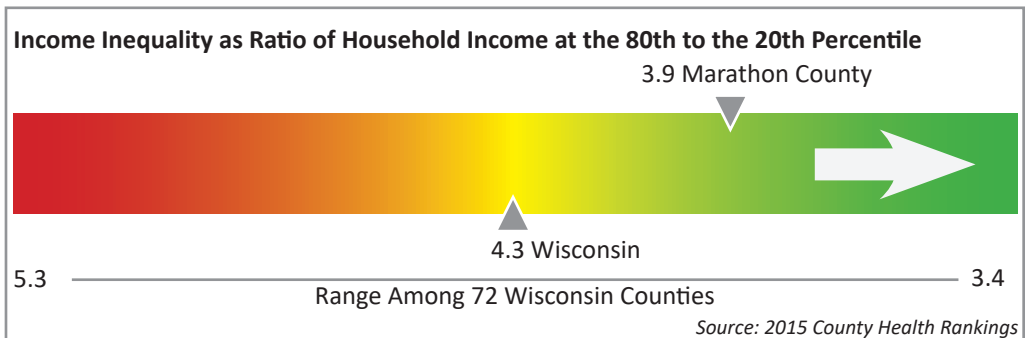
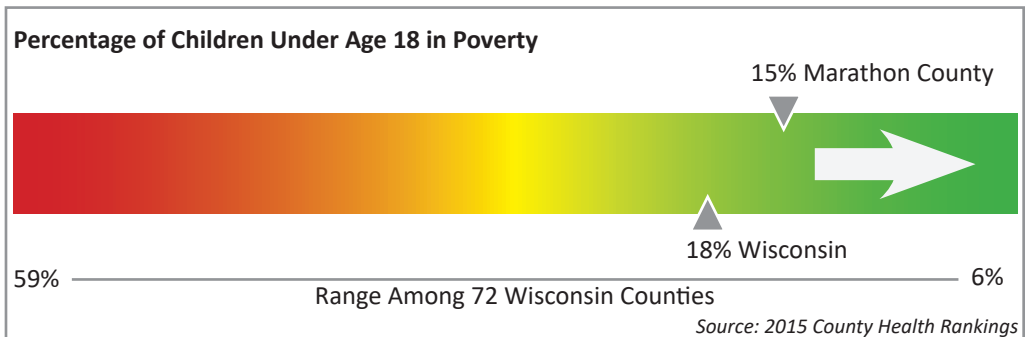
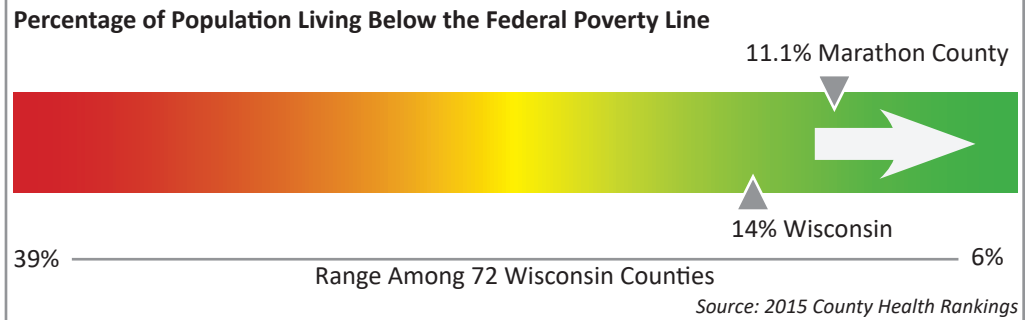
Current Programs/Services

The Marathon County Department of Social Services provides support to vulnerable children, adults, and families in Marathon County. The majority of programs are mandated by state law.

General Access is a program which provides information about Social Services and community services to customers and processes requests for agency services. The Wisconsin Shares Child Care program provides child care assistance for working low-income families; working foster parents, kinship care relatives providing care under a court order and receiving kinship care benefits; and for individuals who are preparing for employment through Wisconsin Works, Food Share Employment and Training Program, or are in high school and working on their high school diploma.

The Child Support Program is a cooperative county, state, and federal effort designed to ensure that all children are supported by their parents. Through the collection of support, the Child Support Program helps to ensure the economic well-being of children who reside in single parent households, helps to reduce welfare dependence and helps to reduce the costs associated to welfare.

The Social Services Department has an Economic Support unit that determines eligibility and maintains benefits for many federal and state programs. The unit currently assists customers with health coverage and medical assistance through the Health Insurance Marketplace, medical assistance through Medicaid, food assistance through the FoodShare program, kinship care, caretaker supplement benefits, and the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program. Affordable Care Act has led to larger caseloads due to greater eligibility among clients for programs such as FoodShare and economic assistance.



Health Disparities

Health disparities are preventable difference in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations.

Poverty

The poverty threshold is the measure used to reflect a family's or individual's needs, and varies based on the size of the family and the ages of the members. Any family or individual with an income lower than the threshold is considered to be in poverty.

Adult Economic Wellbeing

The social, economic, and physical environment in which a person lives shapes their individual characteristics and behaviors. Poor housing conditions, low education and income levels, unemployment, lack of access to affordable health services, and lack of social support networks are all consequences of complex problems that impact a person's health and social wellbeing.

One measure of economic wellbeing is the ability to earn a living wage. A living wage accounts for covering the basic costs of a safe and decent standard of living without the need for government support or poverty programs. See the Workforce Development section of Chapter 10 for a discussion of the living wage thresholds in Marathon County.

Homelessness is an issue that continues to grow in Marathon County. Each homeless shelter in Marathon County reported increases in individuals utilizing their services over the past few years. Many of these individuals have limited housing options and lack the financial resources to pay for housing. There is an increasing need in Marathon County for affordable and available housing needs for individuals and families, specifically low-income individuals and families.

Current Programs/Services

The Marathon County Veterans Service Office assists local veterans and their dependents or survivors in obtaining federal and state financial and educational benefits. Also, this program helps veterans who are homeless or at risk of being homeless by connecting them to the Veterans Assistance Program and many other services such as health care, mental health treatment, and transitional housing.

The Aging and Disability Resources Center of Central Wisconsin (ADRC-CW) provides information and assistance regarding all public and private benefit programs, such as Medicare, Medical Assistance, Social Security, as well as other legal, housing, and financial assistance programs that help maintain the financial, health, and social wellbeing of adults.

Many programs exist in Marathon County to help people find employment. See the Workforce Development section of Chapter 10 for details on these programs.

Children and Adults with Disabilities

Children and adults with disabilities need health care and health programs for the same reasons anyone else does—to stay well, active, and a part of the community.

Children and adults with any disability are significant. Having a disability does not mean a person is not healthy or that he or she cannot be healthy. Being healthy means the same thing for all of us—getting and staying well so we can lead full, active lives. That includes having the tools and information to make healthy choices and knowing how to prevent illness.

For example, developmental disabilities are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas. These conditions begin during the developmental period, may impact day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person's lifetime. Developmental disabilities begin anytime during the developmental period and usually last throughout a person's lifetime. Most developmental disabilities begin before a baby is born, but some can happen after birth because of injury, infection, or other factors.



Source: <http://pixabay.com/en/motorized-wheelchair-wheelchair-952190/>
People with wheelchairs need special accommodations in getting around town..

Current Programs/Services

Marathon County has a variety of programs and services to serve children and adults who have developmental disabilities to help them realized their full potential.

Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) is dedicated to meeting family needs through a statewide coordinated system of information, referral and follow up, family to family support, and strong partnerships with providers in 15 counties of northern Wisconsin. The Northern Regional Center provides free and confidential services for children less than 22 years of age who have a physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition that has lasted over a year and who require more health or educational services than other children their same age. The Wausau office serves all of Marathon County as well as other counties in northern Wisconsin.

The Marathon County Social Services Department Children's Long-Term Support Program provides services for families of children (age 0-18) with disabilities, with the goal of keeping children in their homes. Skilled professionals work with families to provide adaptive aids, day services, teach daily living skills and offer in-home treatment therapies that help each child reach their greatest potential.

North Central Health Care has a variety of programs for children and adults who have developmental disabilities to help them realize their full potential – helping them build daily living, learning, decision-making and vocational skills based on their personal choices and abilities.

North Central Health Care's Birth to Three program works in partnership with the families and friends of children with developmental delays or disabilities, providing parents and their child with the extra support they need within their natural environment and daily routines. Their goal is to help make each day a learning opportunity — a day filled with opportunities that help children reach his or her full potential — by providing parents with the knowledge, skills, support and resources they need.

The Adult Day Service is structured for individuals with developmental and physical disabilities, who are 18 and older; reach their greatest social, educational, cognitive, life and community potential by offering them a variety of activities that stimulate their interest and growth.

The Vocational Services program helps adults and transitional adolescents who have mental health disorders, cognitive disabilities, learning and physical disabilities, access employment opportunities suited to their abilities and preferences. NCHC teams with over 100 employers to provide creative employment opportunities that are mutually beneficial to the individual and the company.

Community Care Connections of Wisconsin (CCCW) is a State Certified Managed Long Term Care Organization, whose primary role is to deliver the Family Care Program benefit to eligible residents. Family Care is a voluntary program, offering cost-effective choices for health and long-term support services for elders and adults with physical and/or developmental disabilities.

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Wisconsin (ADRC-CW) is the first place to go for all adults with any type of disability, including developmental, physical, and mental health, to receive information and access to services in order to enhance and maintain health independence. All adults with any income level are served, including children with disabilities that will soon be transitioning to adulthood. The ADRC-CW is responsible for determining eligibility and enrolling individuals in publicly-funded services, such as the Family Care or IRIS programs.

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides monthly disability compensation payments and medical care to veterans who are injured or become ill while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The Marathon County Veterans Service Office assists local veterans in applying for VA disability compensation. The Veterans Service Office educates, advises, and assists veterans throughout the application process.

Healthy Homes

Housing concerns such as a lack of heat, water, mold, garbage, hoarding, pests, groundwater, or failing to maintain property at a reasonable level conducive to health and safety can be considered human health hazards.

Marathon County residents have an increased risk for exposure to lead paint and radon gas in their homes. Lead is toxic to everyone, particularly to children under the age of 6. Lead

exposure to young children can cause reduced IQ and attention span, learning disabilities, developmental delays, and a range of other health and behavioral effects. Pre-1950 buildings are commonly associated with exposures to lead. Although lead paint was banned in 1978, the health risk still persists today. Approximately 84% of houses in the City of Wausau and 71% in Marathon County were constructed prior to 1978. Most childhood lead poisoning occurs in the home where the child lives or regularly visits. Childhood lead poisoning can best be prevented by eliminating lead based paint hazards. Wisconsin's goal is to have all houses be lead-safe. Wisconsin recommends that children between the ages of 6 months through 5 years be screened for the risk of lead exposure. The effects of lead poisoning are irreversible, so early intervention is key to preventing increased negative impacts for a child and the community.

Radon, a naturally occurring, odorless, radioactive gas that causes lung cancer is found in 5-10% of the homes in Wisconsin above the US EPA guideline of 4 picocurie per liter (pCi/L). Between five and ten percent of the homes in Wisconsin have radon levels above the US EPA guideline of 4 pCi/L for the year average on the main floor, with Marathon County having a significant higher percentage. Radon exposure is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.

Current Programs/Services

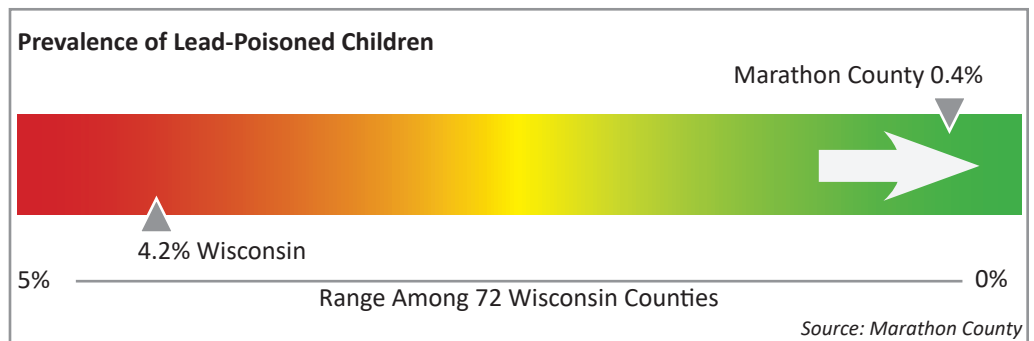
The Marathon County Health Department seeks to provide information as to the amount of risk associated with circumstances and how it may impact health. When conditions warrant, the Health Department working closely with municipal and county zoning, investigate and issue orders as needed to address the hazard.

The Housing and Hoarding Workgroup of Marathon County promotes safe and healthy living environments by coordinating resources and services to address housing and hoarding-related concerns on behalf of Marathon County residents. The group is comprised of representatives from municipal and county government departments.

The Marathon County Lead Prevention Team intervenes at blood lead levels of 5 microgram per deciliter (ug/dl) and above. When children are identified as having elevated blood lead level, parents receive public health intervention to identify the source and reduce further exposure.

Prior to intervening at blood levels of 5 ug/dl, it could take 1-3 years to reduce a child's blood lead level into a safe range. Early intervention has cut that time down to a few weeks or months in most cases. This early intervention approach is not only the first of its kind in the state, but has also produced a significant decrease of elevated blood lead levels (over 20 ug/dl) in Marathon County.

Marathon County Health Department serves as a Regional Radon Information Center (RIC) and provides technical consultation on testing for radon and how to mitigate or remove radon from the home.



Older homes are more likely to have issues of lead paint.

Infectious Disease

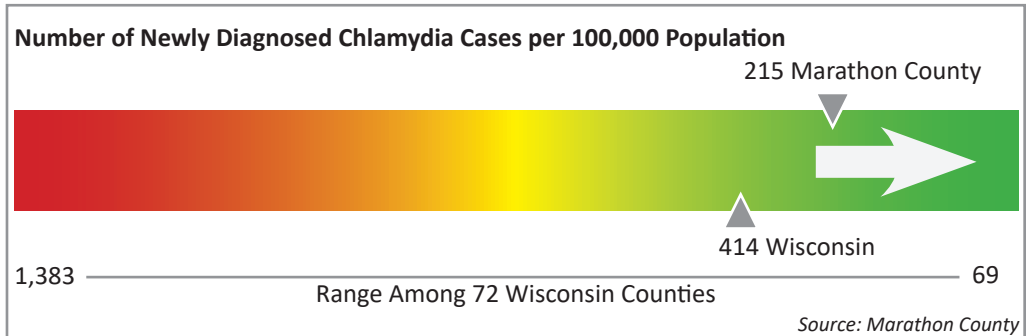
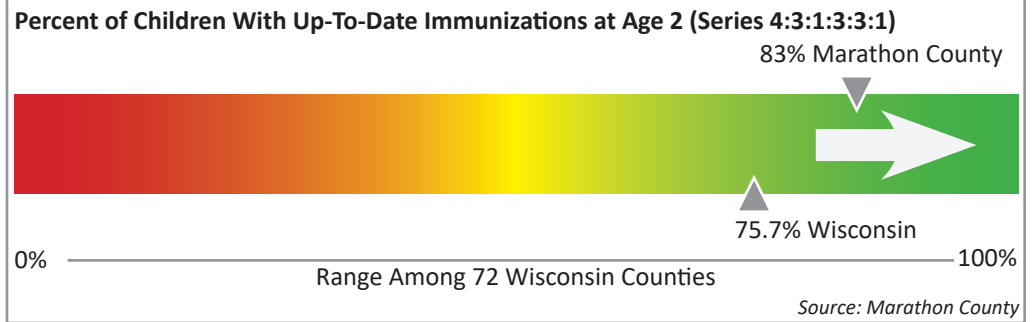
Communicable diseases, sometimes called infectious diseases, are illnesses caused by organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites. Infectious diseases remain one of the major causes of illness, disability and death. Communicable diseases are spread in numerous ways, including through contaminated food and water, insect vectors, animals and person-to-person spread. Sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS continue to be significant locally and nationally.

Immunizations are one of the 10 greatest public health advances of the 20th century and continue to be one of the most cost effective measures to prevent communicable diseases. Immunizations benefit both the individual who receives them as well as the community as a whole. If community immunization rates are high enough, the resulting “herd immunity” protects individuals who are unable to be vaccinated and those with compromised immune systems. The goal for herd immunity is a 90-95% vaccination rate, so it is vitally important that all immunizations and vaccinations are up-to-date for people of all ages. A national Healthy People 2020 goal is that 90% of the nation’s children be fully immunized by their 2nd birthday. In 2012, 85% of Marathon County children were fully immunized by age 2.

Cases of Hepatitis C continue to increase in Marathon County. One of the most significant risk factors for becoming infected with Hepatitis C is injection drug use. Numerous studies demonstrate that needle exchange programs play an important role in reducing hepatitis C infection and do not increase drug use. Sexually transmitted diseases (STD), particularly chlamydia is the most prevalent reportable communicable disease, accounting for 40 % of all reportable diseases in Marathon County.

Current Programs/Services

The Marathon County Health Department is responsible for preventing and controlling infectious disease threats to the public. The Health Department investigates reportable diseases to assure people receive appropriate treatment, education on the disease, and to control further spread of diseases in communities. Health care providers, schools, child care centers, nursing homes, and long-term care facilities are key partners in identifying infectious diseases quickly and assisting in control measures. Marathon County has a county-wide reminder and recall system for childhood immunizations that is managed by the Health Department. In addition, the Health Department assures access to vaccines by providing immunization clinics throughout the county.



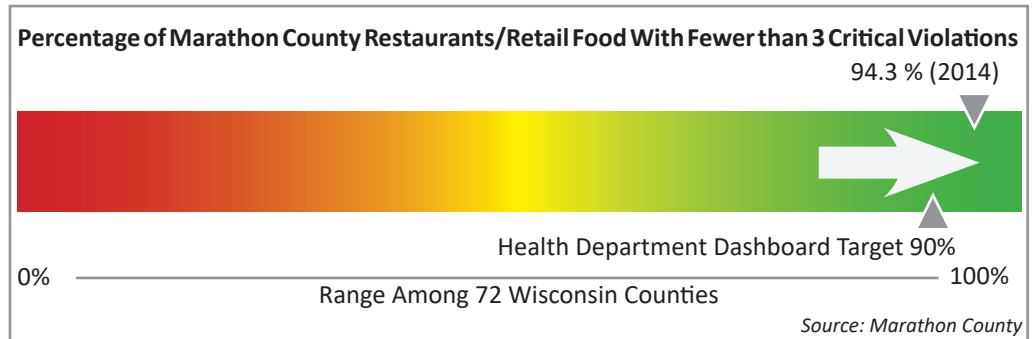
Communicable Disease

Communicable diseases spread from one person to another or from an animal to a person. The spread often happens via airborne viruses or bacteria, but also through blood or other bodily fluid. The terms infectious and contagious are also used to describe communicable disease.

Safe Food Sources

While safer food sources has been identified as one of the 10 greatest public health advances of the 20th century, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans get sick from food-related diseases, resulting in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. The cost of medical care, work loss and quality of life has been estimated to be approximately \$1,900 per illness

(Healthy Related Costs from Foodborne Illness in United States, 2010). The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has identified reducing foodborne diseases as a 1 of 10 winnable battles – having known effective strategies to reduce the impact of foodborne diseases.



Current Programs/Services

The Marathon County Health Department serves as an agent for the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, and the Department of Safety and Professional Services and as such is responsible for the county licensing and regulation of food operations, grocery and convenience stores, bakeries, lodging establishments, campgrounds, swimming pools, and body art businesses. The Department provides routine inspections, follow-up on complaints, and education and consultation to businesses on regulations and practices.

The Health Department investigates reports of illnesses related to food and water borne diseases. The goal of investigations is to identify the source of the illness and contain the spread of the disease. Some commonly reported food and water borne diseases are Salmonella, Cryptosporidium, Campylobacter, Norovirus, and Giardia.

Safe Drinking Water

Clean, safe drinking water is important for good health. Drinking water for Marathon County residents come from public water systems and private wells. The establishment of public water and waste-disposal systems and regulations, has substantially decreased the risk for illness and diseases. For residents who rely on private wells for their drinking water, annual testing of their water is recommended to ensure it is safe to drink.

Current Programs/Services

The Marathon County Health Department Water Testing Laboratory provides water testing services to the citizens of Marathon County and surrounding counties, with the goal of safer water supplies. The lab is involved in monitoring public drinking water supplies which include municipal community water systems and those involved in the Department of Natural Resources transient non-community water (TNC) systems program. The Health Department advises all private well owners to have their well water tested annually for coliform bacteria.



Source: Health Department
Water being tested at the Water Testing Laboratory.

Childhood Trauma

Early relationships between a child and their caregiver are critical to create emotional bonds. It is through these early relationships that a child's emotions, trust, and understanding develop to understand themselves and the world around them. Exposure to trauma during a child's early years is especially damaging to their development. Children experiencing trauma can feel hopeless or powerless, develop a basic mistrust of others, believe that the world is an unsafe place, and develop a negative self-worth.

Trauma refers to extreme stress (e.g. threat to life, bodily integrity or sanity) that overwhelms a person's ability to cope. Trauma is subjective to each individual, but often results in feelings of vulnerability, helplessness, and fear.

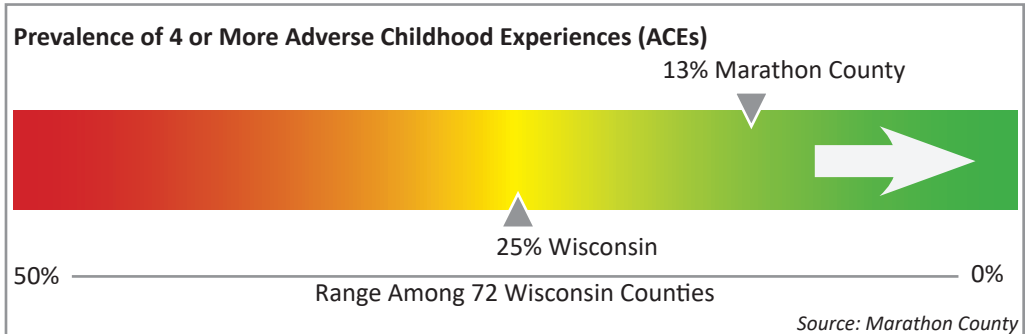
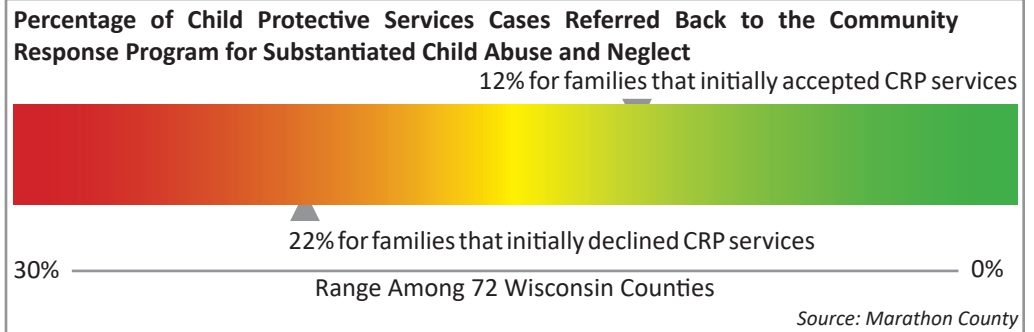
An individual's experience of trauma impacts every area of human functioning – physical, mental, behavioral, social, and spiritual. Traumatic experiences can include:

- Violence in the home, personal relationships, workplace, school, systems/institutions, or community,
- Maltreatment or abuse: emotional, verbal, physical, sexual, or spiritual,
- Exploitation: sexual, financial, or psychological, and
- Abrupt change in health, employment, living situation over which people have no control.

Trauma-informed care is an intervention and organizational approach that focuses on how trauma may affect an individual's life and his or her response to behavioral health services from prevention through treatment. It provides a new perspective where those providing the support shift from asking "What is wrong with you?" to "What has happened to you?" This change reduces the blame and shame that some people experience when being labeled. It also builds an understanding of how the past impacts the present, which effectively makes the connections that progress toward healing and recovery.

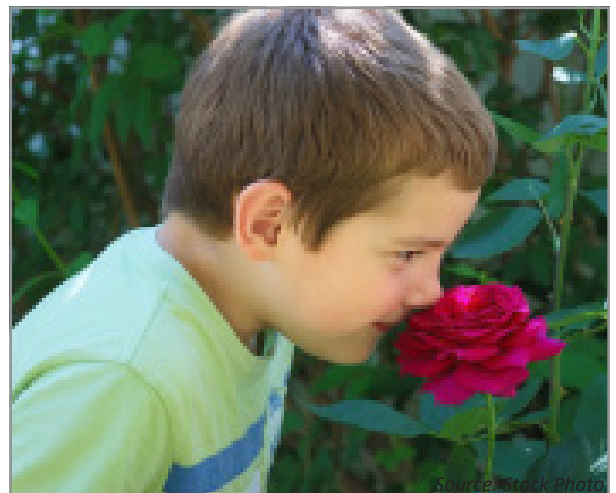
The impact associated between childhood trauma on long-term health and wellbeing was initially studied by Kaiser Permanente from 1995-1997 and is referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences. An Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) is traumatic experience prior to the age of 18. ACEs result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain. Positive experiences in childhood often lead to healthy and productive adulthood. An adverse childhood experience is a traumatic experience prior to the age of 18. ACEs can negatively impact a child's brain development and physical, mental, and social behaviors increasing risk for poorer mental health, teen pregnancy and juvenile delinquency.

Adults with higher ACEs have poorer outcomes, such as increased levels of toxic stress, higher risk for alcoholism, illegal drug use, depression, suicide, partner violence, smoking, obesity, and heart disease. ACEs tend to occur in clusters, such that people who experienced at least one ACE are likely to have experienced multiple ACEs in childhood.



Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse childhood experiences are potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being. These experiences range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to parental divorce or the incarceration of a parent or guardian.



Childhood trauma can affect a child's ability to be hopeful.

Building resiliency in parents and children is crucial in reducing the impact of childhood trauma. Resilience is the ability of a child to return to being healthy and hopeful after an adverse experience occurs. Research shows that if parents and significant others provide a safe environment for their children and teach them how to be resilient, the negative effects will be reduced. When children build up resilience, they learn to adapt positively to changing situations and maintain a hopeful outlook. Programs and services can assist parents and children in helping them be resilient by teaching parents how to be nurturing, connecting parents to resources to meet their basic needs, increasing their knowledge of parenting and child development, and assisting them in building their social networks.

Resilience

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. It means “bouncing back” from difficult experiences.

Current Programs/Services

Marathon County Start Right Program is a public-private partnership with the Marathon County Health Department, which provides an array of services to parents with young children, prenatal to age 5. The goal of the program is to help parents be the best parent they can be. Services include: promoting healthy behaviors on the part of parents so babies are born healthy and children are healthy; reducing safety hazards; connecting parents to health and community resources; and parenting education to ensure children grow up in a nurturing home.

Marathon County UW-Extension programs in 4-H Youth Development give young people opportunities to learn new skills, gain self-confidence and contribute to their communities. Backed by the knowledge and research base of the University of Wisconsin, 4-H Youth Development educators design educational, leadership and citizenship experiences for youth.

Marathon County Social Services Department is responsible for investigating reports of child abuse and neglect. Reports include concerns of physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional damage. Social workers assess the situation and take necessary next steps to ensure the child’s safety. During a recession, higher reports of child neglect and abuse are seen due to parental alcohol and drug use. This trend continues into 2015, with increase in child neglect and abuse cases. The On-going Child Protective Services unit works closely with families and other service providers in an attempt to reduce family stressors, which contribute to abuse/neglect. Social workers interact with families in their homes, in community service team meetings, and in court. Services include case management, direct parent education, substitute care placement, and court liaison.

The Family Foster Care program provides temporary care for children whose parents cannot provide care for them. Persons licensed by the Department of Social Services provide foster care. The usual license is for the care of up to four children; however this may increase to six if it is necessary to keep siblings together. Children are most often placed in care as a result of a court order but may occasionally be placed by agreement between the parents and Social Services for up to six months. Foster care is not adoption. Children are usually placed in foster care for short periods of time and do not typically become permanent members of the family. Whenever possible, they return to their birth parents.

The Community Response Program (CR) is an early intervention program intended to strengthen families and circumvent their future inclusion into the Child Protective Services area. The Community Response program is voluntary and is the only Child Protective Service not mandated by statute, but continues to be an important intervention program with good long-term outcomes.

Comprehensive Community Services of North Central Health Care (NCHC) provides a flexible array of community-based services to youth with diagnosed mental health or substance use disorders. A Service Facilitator, with support of a multi-disciplinary team, works with the youth and family to provide support and services aimed at helping the child reach their full potential and remain in their home, school and community. Services are individualized to meet each child’s unique needs and include assessment, service planning, service coordination, crisis planning, individual skill building and development, wellness education, medication management and other services identified as necessary.

The Coordinated Services Team initiative of North Central Health Care (NCHC) provides wraparound services to families with children who are involved in two or more systems of care (such as special education, child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health or substance use services) and have complex needs. A Care Coordinator works with the family and all identified supports to develop a plan of care that improves the functioning and quality of life for the youth and their family. Through the Coordinated Services Team model, the Care Coordinator works collaboratively with all involved to form a Child and Family Team that works together to meet the needs of the youth and family. Services are voluntary and driven by the family.

The Juvenile Justice Intake Unit handles referrals of delinquent behavior that would be considered a crime or status offense if the juvenile were an adult. Referrals from law enforcement go through an intake process and are reviewed by the District Attorney's office for charges. Lower risk cases have deferred prosecution and higher risk cases have dispositional court orders with the goal of protection of the youth and community and rehabilitation services for the youth.

In addition, community partnerships across public and private sectors are in place to prevent and reduce the impact of childhood trauma in Marathon County. Current partnerships include:

- Early Years Coalition – A partnership of 30 organizations who work together to ensure child and family wellbeing through a coordinated county-wide effort which maximizes resources, focuses on evidence-based practices, and advocates for early childhood success.
- Citizen Review Panel – Citizen members and professional partners oversee the Child Protective Services systems.
- Child Death Review Team – A multidisciplinary team that reviews child deaths in the County, analyzes trends, and makes prevention recommendations.
- Children's Advocacy Center – A partnership between Social Services, the District Attorney's Office, local law enforcement, and physicians that conducts forensic interviews in cases of serious abuse, to use in court in lieu of child testimony.
- Western Marathon County Healthy Communities – comprised of a diverse partners from local/county government, schools, and citizens from each of the seven municipalities in Western Marathon County—Abbotsford, Athens, Colby, Edgar, Marathon, Stratford, and Spencer. This coalition enables the rural Marathon County communities to share a "collective voice", uniting their efforts, so that they can work together to create a healthy Western Marathon County.

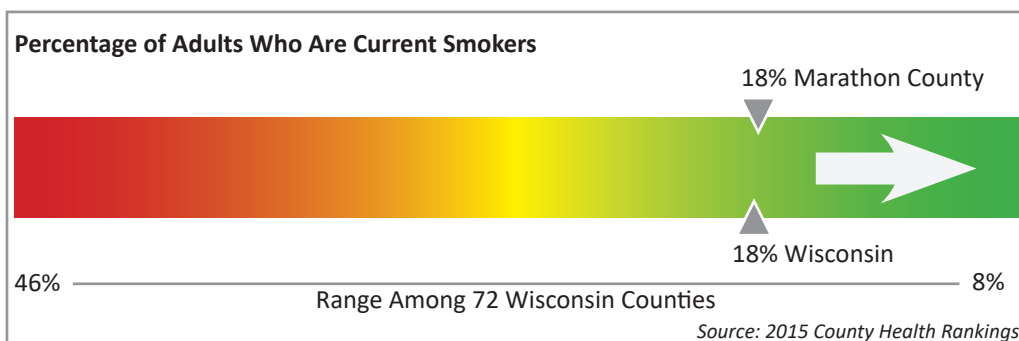
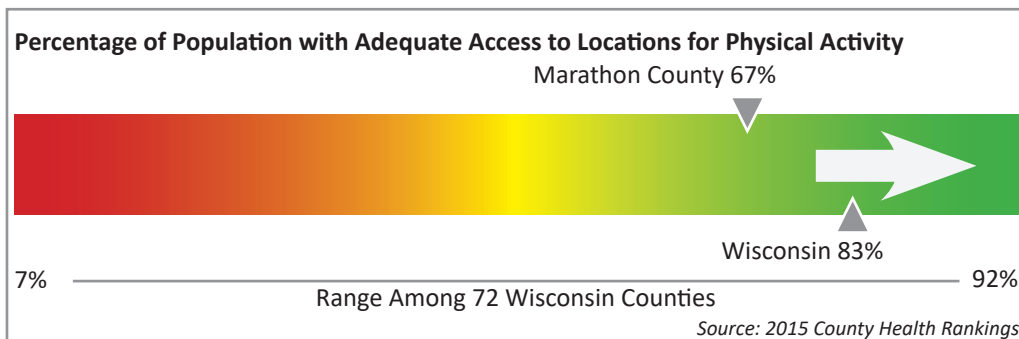
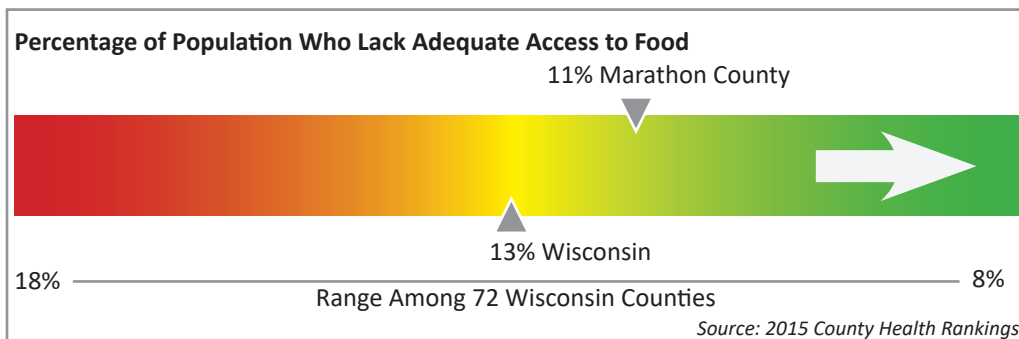
Burden of Chronic Disease

Chronic disease is the leading cause of death and disability in the U.S. More than half of all Americans suffer from one or more chronic diseases. Chronic diseases are illnesses that last a long time, are rarely cured, and can result in disability. Examples of common chronic diseases include heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, asthma, arthritis, obesity, and oral disease.

The rapid growth of chronic disease is costing lives, quality of life and prosperity. Chronic diseases are responsible for 7 out of 10 deaths each year, and treating chronic diseases accounts for 86% of our nation's health care cost. Most chronic diseases can be prevented by addressing a set of common risk factors responsible that include: unhealthy diet, insufficient physical activity, tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure, and excessive alcohol use.

Chronic Disease

Chronic disease is a long-lasting condition that can be controlled but not cured. While they are among the most common and costly health problems, they are also among the most preventable and most can be effectively controlled.



The past two decades have seen dramatic growth in the percentage of Americans diagnosed with cardiovascular disease and diabetes, a result of the increased rates of obesity. Rising obesity rates threaten to send healthcare costs for chronic disease soaring for the next few decades. In 2014, the adult obesity rate in Marathon County was 28%, ranking 14th among counties in Wisconsin.

Obesity is a complex health issue that is affected by a person’s genetics, lifestyle choices, and the environment in which they live in. In the simplest terms, obesity results from a lack of physical activity and poor nutrition. The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is about a living a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity.

Healthy Eating

Good nutrition is essential for good health throughout the lifespan. Healthy eating means choosing a balanced diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products and includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.

Supporting the expansion of locally-grown food is a key strategy to tackling the obesity epidemic and will stabilize community supported markets, thus creating permanent jobs. Marathon County has a proud heritage in the agriculture business, contributing not only to the economy but to our health. Public and private partnerships are underway to expand access to locally-grown food include farmers markets, community gardens, Farm to School and local food pantries.

Current Programs/Services

The Marathon County Health Department works with school district personal and local producers to increase access to fresh local food, and decrease the barriers to transportation, storage and preparation of those foods. Marathon County Health Department staff assists schools with the development of school gardens, classroom education/curriculum, buying local food, and “Lunch Line Redesign” analysis.

Marathon County Health Department provides staff support to the Health Eating Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, whose mission is to create a culture of healthy eating and active living in Marathon County. HEAL connects public and private organizations to coordinate plans, activities and policies in support of creating a culture of better health.

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) is a UW-Extension nutrition education program that helps limited resource families and individuals choose healthful diets, purchase and prepare healthful food and handle it safely, and become more food secure by spending their food dollars wisely.

The Marathon County Hunger Coalition’s mission, in which Marathon County government is a partner, is to mobilize the community to research, identify, implement, and promote long-term sustainable solutions to the problem of hunger and food insecurity in Marathon County.

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin (ARDC-CW) provides a comprehensive nutrition program to all adults aged 60 and over of any income level. The program includes delivering hot nutritious meals to the homes of homebound adults and a Café 60 program, whereby adults aged 60 and over can receive a nutritious meal at a local restaurant. In addition, the ARDC-CW provides other evidence-based healthy living programs that support a healthy lifestyle in order to maintain and improve health in individuals.



Fresh fruits and vegetables are part of a healthy school lunch. *Source: Stock Photo*



A woman purchases fresh tomatoes at the Wausau Farmers Market. *Source: Marathon County Central Time*

Active Living

Regular physical activity helps improve your overall health and fitness, and reduces the risk for many chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.

Physical activity is important throughout the lifespan and has physical, mental, and emotional benefits for people of all ages. Benefits include: aiding in the prevention of chronic diseases; maintaining mobility with age; improving mood and boosting energy; promoting better sleep; reducing the risk of depression; and keeping thinking, learning and judgement skills sharp as you age. According to the National Wildlife Foundation, children's stress levels fall within minutes of playing outside in green spaces. Spending regular time outdoors helps children grow lean and strong, enhances imaginations and attention spans, decreases aggression, boosts classroom performance, and makes kids better caretakers of the environment.

The physical places and spaces in which we live, learn, work and play shape how active we can be. An active community is a neighborhood, city, or county that explores opportunities to enable physical activity in the daily routine of its residents – sidewalks, neighborhood parks, bike paths. Designing the built environment to include safety and accessibility for all people, results in opportunities that will improve health outcomes, transportation options, and social capital within the community.

Marathon County has an abundance of recreation opportunities in all four seasons. From the plethora of city and county parks, to the numerous miles of hiking, biking, snowshoeing, and cross country ski trails there is always somewhere new to explore in Marathon County. Maintaining and enhancing the active community environments is paramount to ensure all residents and visitors can be physically active.

Current Programs/Services

The Wausau Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Bicycle & Pedestrian Sub-Committee is the leader for all bicycle and pedestrian planning, engineering, education, and events in the Wausau metro area. The MPO Bike/Ped Sub-Committee has linked transportation planners, city planners, public works directors, park and recreation directors, law enforcement officials, and public health educators with local bike clubs, bike shop owners, and area bicycle enthusiasts.

The Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department manages a county-wide park system that typically focus upon a high quality natural feature and provide limited areas of development that support low intensity recreation uses, such as picnicking, hiking, fishing, swimming, and camping. These parks serve large areas of the county. The county park system also provides specialized facilities that serve the entire county or major populations within the county, such as the fairgrounds, Nine Mile mountain bike and cross-country ski trail system, shooting range, softball complex, and indoor ice skating.

Tobacco

Smoking remains to be the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., even as smoking rates continue to decline. Declining smoking rates in Wisconsin can be attributed to a number of successful interventions, including price increases, smoking bans and restrictions, community efforts that educate tobacco retailers, and actively enforce retailer sales laws. In 2014, 86% of likely voters in Wisconsin supported smoke-free air policy.

While smoking rates have declined, alternative tobacco products are being sold, resulting in the need for ongoing education on the health risk associated with tobacco products. For example, e-cigarettes are devices that can be used to simulate smoking and that produce an aerosol of nicotine or other substances.

Current Programs/Services

The Marathon County Health Department provides staff support to the Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition which strives to reduce tobacco/nicotine related death and disability through education and advocacy, creating a community environment that encourages tobacco free living. Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition is made up public and private partners from Marathon, Portage and Wood counties.

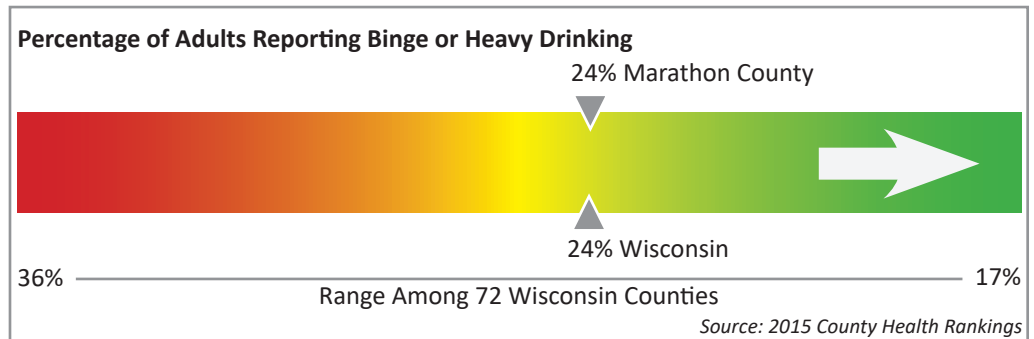


Two men bicycling for recreation on a trail near Wausau.

Source: Dennis Helke

Culture of Alcohol & Other Drugs

The burden of alcohol and other drug abuse continues to negatively impact county and municipal governments, law enforcement, local treatment providers and area non-profit organizations in Marathon County. Substance abuse is in large part shaped by community-level factors including availability, accessibility, acceptability, and affordability of substances.



Wisconsin's alcohol environment is a prime example of how communities play a role in shaping culture. In Wisconsin, municipal governments have the ability and authority to control the number and location of alcohol outlets in their community. In 2014, 369 alcohol licenses were issued in Marathon County, which is one alcohol outlet for every 368 citizens, compared to the national rate of one alcohol outlet per 1,400 people. The number of alcohol outlets has significant impacts on both the culture and economic future of a community. Communities experience more alcohol-related problems when a large number of alcohol outlets sell and serve in a dense geographic area.

Wisconsin's rates of alcohol use and misuse continue to be the highest in country. Wisconsin has the highest rate of adult binge drinking in the U.S., a heavy drinking rate higher than the national average, and the highest binge drinking rate of women of childbearing age in the nation. The 2013 University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute report, *The Burden of Excessive Alcohol Use in Wisconsin*, estimates that the annual cost of excessive alcohol use in Marathon County costs \$1,137.05 for every man, woman, and child, totaling \$152.4 million for Marathon County. Excessive alcohol consumption in Marathon County contributed to 31 alcohol-related deaths, 1,318 alcohol-related hospitalization, and 1,392 alcohol-related arrests in 2011.

Marathon County has made progress in reducing alcohol consumption among youth. The rate of reported drinking among Marathon County high school students based on the 2014-2015 Youth Risk Behavioral Survey is less than both Wisconsin and the U.S. The schools that reported the highest levels of underage drinking also had the lowest percentage of parent disapproval, meaning more underage drinking occurred when parents didn't think it was wrong. As a state, Wisconsin continues to show improvement in youth alcohol use with high school student drink rates that have continued to decline over the past 10 years.

Alcohol-related injuries kill more Wisconsin residents than alcohol-related diseases annually. Causes of alcohol related injury deaths include falls, alcohol poisoning, motor vehicle crashes, and self-harm.

Alcohol continues to be a contributing factor to traffic crashes with Saturday and Sunday mornings between 2:00am and 3:00am depicting the highest statistic for alcohol-related crashes. A majority of traffic deaths in Marathon County occur on state highways while a majority of injuries from traffic crashes occur on local streets or roads.

Excessive alcohol consumption is a contributor to intimate partner violence, which refers to any behavior in an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in that relationship.

Marathon County, as well as the rest of Wisconsin, has seen an increase in heroin use, trafficking, and crime-related to illicit drug sales during the past 3 years. In Wisconsin, the rate of heroin-related deaths quadrupled from 2007 to 2012. One of the most significant risks a heroin user faces is dependence on the drug. Users who inject heroin also risk contracting HIV, Hepatitis C, and other infectious diseases. Most new Hepatitis C infections in the United States each year are among injection drug users.

Non-medical use of prescription drugs continues to be a problem in Wisconsin. Increased prescribing of opioid pain relievers is a primary factor in the rise of misuse and diversion in the U.S. Prescription drugs are abused and misused more often than any other drug, except marijuana and alcohol. This growth is fueled by misperceptions about their safety, increasing availability, and varied motivations for their use from countering anxiety and helping sleep problems to getting high.

Current Programs/Services

Marathon County Health Department provides staff support to the Marathon County Alcohol & Other Drugs (AOD) Partnership, a substance abuse prevention coalition comprised of a diverse group of more than 250 individuals and organizations working together to reduce the burden of substance abuse in Marathon County. The coalition has representation from area schools, local law enforcement, city and county government, health care professionals, civic and community groups, parents and youth.

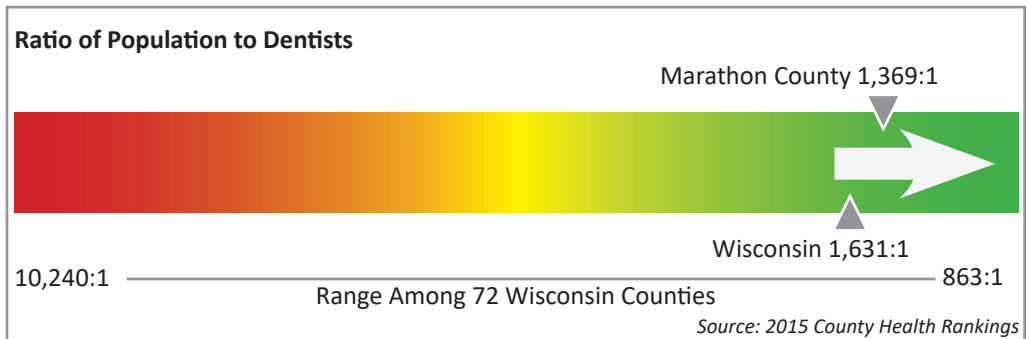
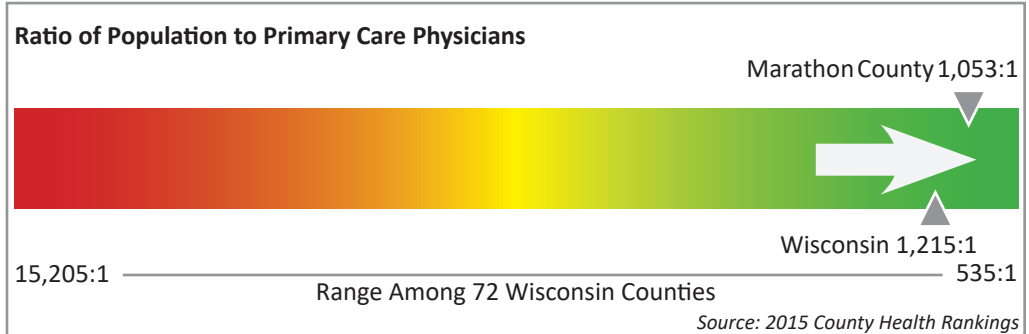
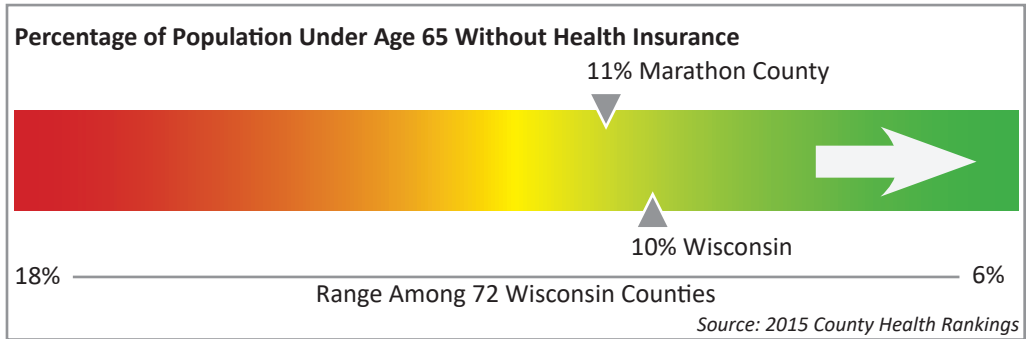
Marathon County has participated in several statewide campaigns on drunk driving enforcement with the current campaign revolving around buzzed driving is drunk driving.

Access to Care

Access to high quality health care is vitally important for individuals and families, protecting individuals and families from unexpected, high medical costs and providing free preventive care, like vaccines, screenings, and check-ups. In 2013, Marathon County ranked 19th of Wisconsin's 71 counties in clinical care.

Improving access and effectiveness of health care continues to be a national and state priority. Under the Affordable Care Act, health insurance companies can't refuse someone coverage because of "pre-existing condition" – that is, a health problem you had before the date that the new health care coverage starts.

Oral health is also integral to an individual's overall health. The most common oral diseases among children and adults are dental cavities and gum disease. Dental decay is the most common chronic disease among children; five times more common than asthma. Recent studies indicate that infections of the mouth may increase the risk for heart disease, premature delivery, low birthweight babies and complicate control of blood sugar for people with diabetes.



A shift from emergency dental care to prevention is important for good oral health. Proven prevention strategies such as effective use of fluoride, community water fluoridation, and dental sealant programs are crucial to prevent oral disease. Currently between 50-75% of Marathon County's population is served by fluoridated water. Community water fluoridation has been recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one of the 10 great public health achievements of the 20th Century. Fluoridation helps to lower the cost of dental care and helps residents retain their teeth throughout life.

Access to affordable and high-quality integrated health care ensures not only the health of Marathon County's families, but also their economic security.

Current Programs/Services

Marathon County residents are served by three major healthcare systems: Aspirus, Marshfield Clinic, and Ministry Health Care. Hospitals include Aspirus in Wausau, Ministry-St. Clare's in Weston, and Ministry-Saint Joseph's in Marshfield. In addition to the hospitals, primary care clinics are located in communities throughout Marathon County with specialty services in the Wausau metro and Marshfield areas. Residents who are uninsured or underinsured have access to health, dental and behavioral health services through federally qualified health clinics; Bridge Community Health Clinic, Wausau and the Family Health Center of Marshfield, Inc.

Marathon County is fortunate to be served by Bridge Community Health Clinic and Marshfield Clinic's Family Health Center – federally qualified health centers. Both clinics provide dental care to all people, regardless of



Source: <https://pixabay.com/en/doctor-medical-medicine-health>
Regular visits with a doctor are part of preventative care.

their income or insurance coverage, with a sliding fee scale for individuals without insurance. With the recent expansion of both clinics, access issues in the area dental care are expected to decrease in the coming years.

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system provides comprehensive medical care and treatment to eligible veterans. The VA operates a Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Marathon County. The nearest VA Medical Center is located in Tomah, Wisconsin.

The Marathon County Veterans Service Office assists local veterans with establishing eligibility for VA healthcare by explaining the benefits and assisting with the application process.

Mental Health & Substance Use

Mental illness is defined as “collectively all diagnosable mental disorders” or “health conditions that are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.” Approximately 19% of Wisconsin adults have any mental illness and 4.6% have severe mental illness. Depression is the most common type of mental illness, affecting more than 26% of the U.S. adult population.

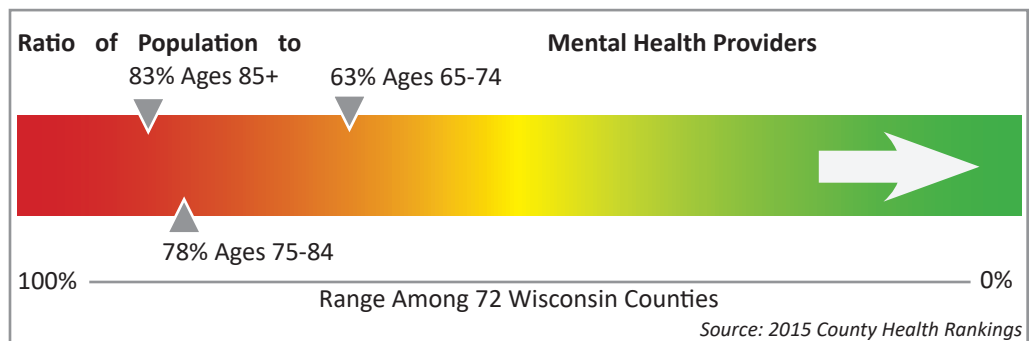
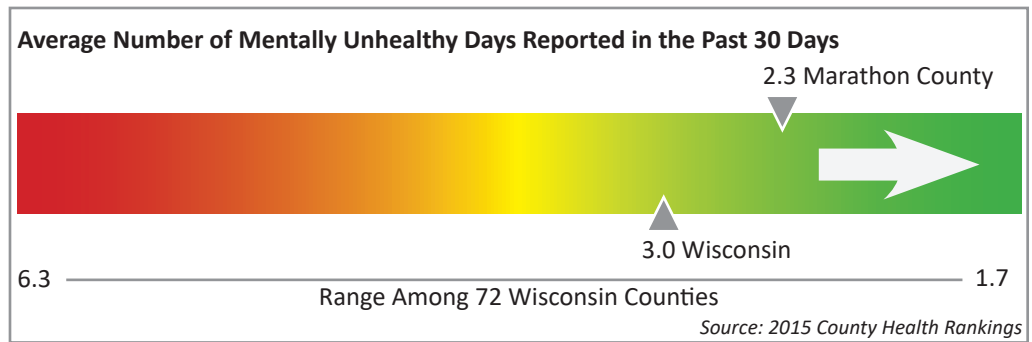
Evidence has shown that mental disorders, especially depressive disorders, are strongly related to the occurrence and successful treatment of many chronic diseases including diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and obesity. In addition, depressive disorders are associated with many risk behaviors for chronic disease; such as, physical inactivity, smoking, excessive drinking, and insufficient sleep.

The average Marathon County adult experiences 2.3 poor mental health days per month according to the *County Health Rankings*. This measure is based on survey responses to the question: “Thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?”

Mental health and substance abuse conditions often co-occur. Integrated treatment or treatment that addresses mental health and substance abuse at the same time is associated with lower costs and better outcomes, such as reduced substance use, improved symptoms and functioning, decreased hospitalization, increased housing stability, fewer arrests, and improved quality of life.

Access to mental health care is vitally important to the health of individuals and the safety of communities. In Marathon County, the ratio of mental health providers to population is 724:1, compared with the Wisconsin state average of 623:1. Mental health providers include psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, counselors, marriage and family therapists and advanced practice nurses specializing in mental health care. Marathon County like communities across the U.S. do not have adequate number of psychiatrists for our population.

There are populations that are at greater risk for poor mental health and that can include veterans, individuals with chronic disease, the aging population, and individuals in the criminal justice system. Childhood trauma plays a major role in increased levels of toxic stress, higher risk for alcoholism, illegal drug use, obesity, and chronic disease and crime.



Mental Health

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is a state of well being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Current Programs/Services

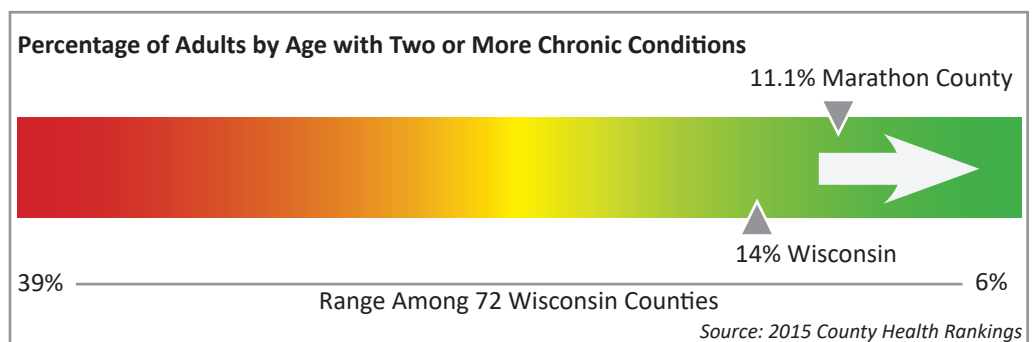
North Central Health Care's (NCHC) mental health services offers programs that provide mental health support in community, home and workplace settings. They provide individual, couples, family and group counseling options. NCHC manages supportive living environments that help individual's lead independent lives and provide crisis and inpatient services for those with more pressing mental health needs. In addition, NCHC provides and in-patient services for acute mental health and detoxification. Community Treatment of North Central Health Care, which includes Comprehensive Community Services and the Community Support Program, provide intensive case management along with a flexible array of services to youth and adults with mental health and substance use disorders with a goal of helping adults be as independent as possible and helping youth remain in their homes, schools and communities.

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system provided mental health care and treatment to eligible veterans. The VA provides mental health counseling at the local Wausau Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Marathon County. The VA also operates a Vet Center in Wausau which provides mental health and readjustment counseling services to combat veterans from all eras.

The Marathon County Veterans Service Office assists local veterans with establishing eligibility for VA healthcare, which includes mental health services. We explain the benefits and assist veterans with the application process.

Aging

During the past century, a major shift occurred in the leading causes of death for all age groups, including older adults, from infectious diseases and acute illnesses to chronic diseases and degenerative illnesses. More than a quarter of all Americans and two out of every three older Americans have multiple chronic conditions, and treatment for this population accounts for 66% of the country's health care budget.



“Living well” with chronic conditions will be key to ensuring quality of life for Marathon County residents as they age. In order to live well with chronic conditions as one ages, individuals will need to be able to access a full range of healthcare services that include mental health, along with social support for the individual and their caregivers.

Social connectedness is a key determinate of health and happiness at all ages of life. For an older adult, aged 65 years old and older, a lack of social connectedness or social isolation can be devastating. In fact, the National Council on Aging suggests that older people without adequate social interaction are twice as likely to die prematurely.

Sustainable, affordable housing options are a necessity for older adults. When considering housing options for seniors the only option that may come to mind is nursing home care. However, today Marathon County seniors have more housing options than ever. An individual can remain in their home; in 2012, 26.9% of persons 65+ in Marathon County lived alone, compared to 29.9% for Wisconsin. As their health dictates supportive in-home services can be obtained to enable a senior to remain in the home of their choice. Day Services are available to provide relief for caregivers as well as socialization opportunities for the elderly. Subsidized housing is an option for those struggling to maintain, afford or access housing. Assisted living facilities are a flexible option designed to allow individuals to age in place while remaining connected to their community.

In addition, nursing homes are a critical option for communities committed to serving aging adults. Nursing homes provide long term care for those that cannot live at home and require continual skilled nursing services. They can also be a supportive place to receive short-term rehabilitative services.

Marathon County and Wisconsin have seen their median age increase over the past two decades. Additionally, both have seen an increasing percentage of their population in the over 65 year age bracket. The demographics chapter includes a discussion of the age breakdown of Marathon County as well as a 2010 population pyramid and a 2040 projected population pyramid.

Current Programs/Services

The Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Central Wisconsin provides information and access to a full array of services and resources that promote health and independence. Services include information and assistance, information and help in applying for benefits, caregiver support, elderly nutrition, evidence-based healthy living programs, and eligibility determination and enrollment in publicly-funded programs, such as Family Care and Include, Respect, I Self direct (IRIS). All older adults and adults with disabilities and their families, no matter their income level, are welcome at the ADRC-CW. The Elderly and Disability Benefit Specialist works with people

60 and older to help them understand programs such as the many parts of Medicare, Medical Assistance, Social Security Retirement and Disability benefits, Medicare Supplement Insurance, Food Share, as well as other legal, housing and financial assistance programs.

Community Care Connections of Wisconsin (CCCW) is a State Certified Managed Long Term Care Organization, whose primary role is to deliver the Family Care Program benefit to eligible residents. Family Care is a voluntary program, offering cost-effective choices for health and long-term support services.

North Central Health Care operates Mount View Care Center, a facility that offers skilled nursing services, in Wausau. This facility serves persons requiring either short term or long term skilled nursing care because of complex physical needs, psychiatric and neurological diseases, dementia, or behavior problems.

Key Partners

Health and human services are fields where partnerships are vital. Marathon County has a rich history of collaboration between local government, business, nonprofit organizations, and schools through diverse partnerships and various community coalitions. These partnerships bring a broad array of stakeholders to the table to improve the health of the community. Complex problems cannot be solved without these community collaborations. Focused efforts through a highly structured collaboration have been proven to work. The following list key Marathon County Government departments whose mission is in support of leading solutions to address the issues outlined in this chapter.

Aging & Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin

Vision: Widely recognized as the preferred choice for initial contact and early access to information and resources that prevent, delay, and lessen the impacts of aging and disabilities in the lives of adults.

Mission: The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin promotes choice and independence through personalized education, advocacy, and access to services that prevent, delay, and lessen the impacts of aging and disabilities in the lives of adults.

The ADRC-CW provides consistent aging and disability resource center and Older Americans Act services throughout Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, and Wood counties.

Marathon County Health Department

Vision: To be the healthiest and safest county in which to live, learn, work, and play.

Mission: To advance a healthy Marathon County community by preventing disease, promoting health, and protecting the public from environmental hazards.”

The Marathon County Health Department has a variety of programs and services to address local health issues, specifically Environmental Health, Water Testing, Family Health, Communicable Disease Control, and Chronic Disease Prevention.

Marathon County UW-Extension

Vision: Marathon County’s educational network for engaging people and their communities in positive change.

Mission: To extend the knowledge and resources of the University of Wisconsin to Marathon County residents, where they live and work.”

Marathon County UW-Extension’s purpose to which they commit is “we teach, learn, lead and serve, connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities. Local faculty and campus-based specialists deliver educational programs in: agriculture; community, natural resource, & economic development; family living; and 4-H/youth development.

North Central Health Care

Vision: North Central Health Care will be the leading provider of a fully integrated continuum of care delivering quality, innovative services in a fiscally responsible manner.

Mission: North Central Health Care compassionately serves the community through accessible, specialized care.

NorthCentralHealthCare(NCHC)offersmentalhealth,addiction, skilled nursing, developmental disability, water therapy and adult protective services for North Central Wisconsin. NCHC serves Langlade, Lincoln and Marathon Counties with locations in Wausau, Merrill, Antigo and Tomahawk.

Social Services Department

Vision: Our dedicated, knowledgeable staff positively impact the community through provision of effective customer centered programs and services. We promote integrated services through leadership and collaboration to support individuals and families in achieving positive outcomes that build a strong and healthy community.

Mission: We strengthen individuals and families by coordinating and providing resources that promote safety and maximize independence to build a strong and healthy community.

The Marathon County Social Services department (SSD) provides support to vulnerable children, adults, and families in Marathon County. Most of the programs run by SSD are mandated by state law. Services are provided in an array of areas including child protection, juvenile justice, economic support, and child support, among others.

Veteran’s Service Office

Vision: We are Marathon County’s local resource for veterans and their dependents. To ensure that all Marathon County veterans will receive the benefits to which they’re entitled.

Mission: The mission of the Veterans Service Office is to advise and assist veterans, their dependents and survivors in securing federal and state veterans’ benefits. This office serves as a liaison between the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), and local veterans.

The Veterans Service Office serves as liaison between the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) and the local veteran. The mission of the Veterans Service Office is to assist all veterans and their dependents or survivors in applying for federal and state veterans benefits.

Goal and Objectives

Health and Human Services Goal: Marathon County promotes the physical, mental, and social health of the community and takes steps to support healthy living for residents at all stages of life.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that every child makes it to adulthood with health, stability, education, and growth opportunities.
2. Ensure that every person has local access to effective mental health treatment.
3. Prevent or decrease the effects of chronic disease.
4. Persons with disabilities and older adults will live safely and independently.
5. Promote access to quality, accessible, affordable recreation opportunities.
6. Promote access to safe, healthy, affordable food.
7. Ensure Marathon County is an open, inclusive, and diverse place to live and work.
8. Maximize innovative technology, systems, and infrastructure to meet current and emerging health and social needs.
9. Promote innovative models for injury prevention.

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Chapter Four

Community Character



This chapter addresses housing, community character, and livability. Housing is a fundamental component of any comprehensive planning effort. Housing is more than merely shelter, it is the quality, availability, and types of housing which shape and help define the rural and urban communities within Marathon County. Community character refers to the natural and built features that shape a community's identity. In Marathon County, that character is varied and diverse, reflecting the area's geography, history, architecture, and natural setting. That character is still evolving. Livability is about quality of life. It is that quality of life this is critical to the future of Marathon County.

Other chapters of this plan also impact community character, including land use.

Previous Plans and Studies

County Comprehensive Plan – 2006

The previous plan included a discussion of housing. A variety of data and other information was collected. In addition, a variety of goals, objectives, policies and actions were identified. Much of that material is incorporated within this chapter.

Marathon County LIFE Report – 2014

The LIFE report provides a wide array of information and data depicting the quality of life in Marathon County. It contains a variety of information that relates to housing in the Basic Needs Section. The report, which is published every two years, also serves to monitor change over time.

Regional Livability Plan – 2015

Regional Livability Plan (RLP) was prepared and adopted by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in 2015. The RLP identifies ways to capitalize on regional opportunities and address weaknesses to make the area more livable for all residents. The document covers a variety of topics including housing, economic development, transportation, and land use. The RLP also suggests goals, objectives, and recommendations that counties, cities, villages and towns can incorporate in their own plans.

In addition, the RLP highlights trends which need to be addressed at the local level to increase livability, including:

- an aging population,
- smaller household sizes,
- a lack of housing options,
- an increase in housing costs related to incomes,
- employment projections forecasting a major shortage of labor force by 2025,
- a reliance on the personal automobile for transportation,
- an increasing cost of transportation system infrastructure maintenance, and
- the conversion of agricultural land to other land uses.

Housing

Housing is an important component of the comprehensive plan. This section provides an inventory and analysis of housing conditions in Marathon County.

There are a variety of housing options available within the County. However, most housing for special populations, such as the elderly or lower-income, is concentrated in incorporated municipalities; particularly in the Wausau metropolitan area. These areas are generally more able to provide necessary support facilities (medical facilities, public transportation, etc.) and therefore will likely continue to be where specialized housing is located in the future. With the aging of the population, demand for senior housing is expected to increase.

While most of the housing stock is generally in good condition, there are areas where older structures are beginning to experience deterioration and need rehabilitation to remain safe and viable dwellings. While the County is not directly involved in housing rehabilitation, many local municipalities have established programs aimed at home improvements and rehabilitation.

Overall Marathon County has a quality housing stock. Single-family homes continue to be the predominant type of housing in both urban and rural areas. However, the number of duplexes and other multi-family homes is increasing, thus providing a wider variety of housing choices. Housing characteristics, however, vary greatly across the County. Different trends can be observed in rural, suburban, and urban areas. Rural towns that are more distant from the growth pressures of the Wausau and Marshfield urbanizing areas typically display higher rates of home ownership and occupancy, larger household sizes, and lower housing costs. Suburban areas, including towns and villages within the USH 51 corridor, typically show the highest housing values and costs. Growth rates in these communities are among the highest in the County. The City of Wausau and other more urban communities demonstrate a wider range of housing options in terms of price, age, and amenities.

Housing Inventory

According to the 2010 Census, Marathon County has a total of 57,734 housing units. Over 73 percent of the total housing stock is classified as owner-occupied.

Figure 4-1 illustrates that Marathon County has far more total housing units compared to neighboring counties. This is partially due to the size and number of communities in Marathon County. Despite the size, Marathon County has the highest percentage of owner-occupied units, along with Wood County, and the second lowest percentage of vacant units, behind Wood and Portage Counties.

Figure 4-2 displays total housing units for all Marathon County communities. Five villages have less than 100 housing units, but several of these communities have boundaries which extend into Clark County to the west. Eight communities have over 1,000 housing units, all located in the USH 51 corridor.

Data indicate that owner-occupied housing rates are highest in the rural areas of the county. Several of the unincorporated towns surrounding the Wausau metropolitan area have owner-occupancy rates in

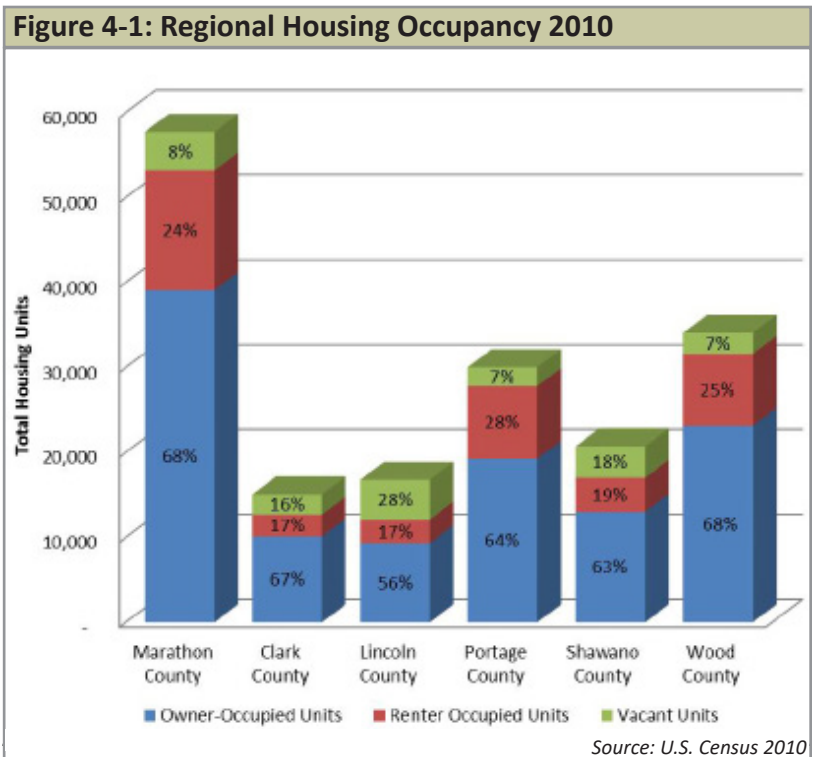


Figure 4-2: Housing by Municipality, 2010

Area	Total Housing Units	Total Occupied Housing Units	Total Vacant Housing Units	Average Household Size	Percent of Housing Built Before 1970
Abbotsford city	248	226	22	2.73	29%
Athens village	503	471	32	2.35	63%
Bergen town	291	250	41	2.54	31%
Berlin town	387	364	23	2.6	47%
Bern town	205	189	16	3.13	51%
Bevent town	537	454	83	2.46	35%
Brighton town	217	214	3	2.86	62%
Brokaw village	138	123	15	2.04	25%
Cassel town	341	322	19	2.83	39%

Cleveland town	578	530	48	2.81	35%
Colby city	215	199	16	2.46	44%
Day town	427	410	17	2.65	52%
Easton town	446	426	20	2.61	47%
Eau Pleine town	308	298	10	2.59	52%
Edgar village	635	597	38	2.48	40%
Elderon village	83	80	3	2.24	74%
Elderon town	301	245	56	2.47	40%
Emmet town	347	324	23	2.85	41%
Fenwood village	67	64	3	2.38	57%
Frankfort town	249	242	7	2.77	47%
Franzen town	256	219	37	2.64	48%
Green Valley town	315	218	97	2.48	28%
Guenther town	152	133	19	2.56	46%
Halsey town	228	208	20	3.13	50%
Hamburg town	341	322	19	2.85	54%
Harrison town	178	150	28	2.49	47%
Hatley village	233	223	10	2.57	30%
Hewitt town	265	239	26	2.54	37%
Holton town	326	308	18	2.83	63%
Hull town	266	262	4	2.85	68%
Johnson town	330	310	20	3.18	53%
Knowlton town	889	760	129	2.51	23%
Kronenwetter village	2,810	2,652	158	2.71	14%
McMillan town	737	709	28	2.78	33%
Maine town	934	890	44	2.63	50%
Marathon town	415	396	19	2.65	44%
Marathon City village	680	638	42	2.39	47%
Marshfield city	440	394	46	2.02	12%
Mosinee city	1,791	1,660	131	2.39	46%
Mosinee town	864	814	50	2.66	22%
Norrie town	431	368	63	2.65	47%
Plover town	287	250	37	2.76	36%
Reid town	541	489	52	2.47	37%
Rib Falls town	362	345	17	2.88	46%
Rib Mountain town	2,761	2,650	111	2.57	27%
Rietbrock town	345	332	13	2.93	56%
Ringle town	648	619	29	2.76	26%
Rothschild village	2,332	2,199	133	2.38	49%
Schofield city	1,099	994	105	2.18	68%
Spencer village	875	816	59	2.36	42%
Spencer town	574	550	24	2.86	27%
Stettin town	1,057	999	58	2.56	31%
Stratford village	713	666	47	2.37	52%
Texas town	683	645	38	2.5	37%
Unity village	89	84	5	2.43	66%
Wausau city	18,154	16,487	1,667	2.31	67%
Wausau town	901	860	41	2.57	46%
Weston village	6,364	5,772	592	2.54	21%
Weston town	241	228	13	2.77	31%
Wien town	296	283	13	2.91	56%
Marathon County	57,734	53,176	4,558	2.49	46%

Source: U.S. Census 2010

excess of 90 percent. With a few minor exceptions, the smaller villages in the County had owner-occupied housing percentages similar to that of the County average.

The larger municipalities along the USH 51 corridor, including the cities of Wausau and Schofield, and the Village of Weston, exhibit the highest percentage of renter-occupied housing. The Village of Brokaw, at 35 percent, has the lowest percentage of owner-occupied housing in this urban corridor.

Seasonal Housing

Seasonal housing units are defined by the Census Bureau as housing units for “seasonal, recreational, or occasional use”. Seasonal housing is found throughout the County, but the communities with the largest number of seasonal homes are generally located in the south central and eastern portion of the County. This may be due to the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir and Lake Du Bay in the south and the proximity to large tracts of open space and undeveloped land in the eastern portion of the County. In seven towns seasonal homes account for more than ten percent of total housing units, these are: Green Valley, Elderon, Bevent, Norrie, Franzen, Bergen, and Knowlton. Green Valley, which has extensive frontage on the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, has the highest percentage of seasonal housing, with 28 percent. The Town of Knowlton has the highest number of seasonal units, with 94. In all, seasonal housing makes up less than 2 percent of the county’s housing units.

Seasonal Housing Units

Seasonal housing units are those intended for occupancy only during certain seasons of the year and are found primarily in resort areas.

Changes in Housing Stock

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of housing units in the County increased by over 7,300 (15%), as shown in **Figure 4-3**. With that growth, it is important to note that the percentage of owner-occupied to renter-occupied housing has remained fairly constant. Single-family housing grew by 16 percent and remains the most common housing type throughout Marathon County. The largest percent growth among housing types was seen in multi-family housing, which experienced a 66 percent increase in buildings with 10 or more units, while smaller buildings with 3 to 9 units increased by 23 percent. In 2000, duplexes were the most common type of multi-family unit, but by 2010, they had been surpassed by larger multi-family developments. In fact, while multi-family units in buildings with 3-9 and 10+ units grew during the past decade, the number of duplexes dropped by almost 500 units.

Map 4-1 shows how quickly communities in Marathon County grew between 2000 and 2010 by analyzing construction of new housing units. Nearly all communities had at least a modest housing unit increase in the past decade..

Housing Age

The age of housing stock typically reflects several important factors including size, amenities, and overall condition or associated maintenance costs. Age of the home often reflects different regional and national trends in housing development. Housing predating the 1940s, for example, was typically smaller and built on smaller lots. In subsequent decades, both average lot and home sizes have increased.

Average homes constructed in the 1980s and 1990s are typically much larger than housing built in previous decades. This can be seen in both the rural and more urban environments of Marathon County. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

Census data shows that over 7,750 new housing units were built in Marathon County between 2000 and 2010. Housing building during the 2000s represents 13.6 percent of total housing units, slightly less than was built in the 1990s. At the other end of the spectrum, it should be noted that approximately 46 percent of Marathon County’s housing stock was built prior to 1970. This could indicate a need for additional housing rehabilitation programs to assist in the maintenance of these older homes. See Figure 4-2.

Physical Characteristics

The physical quality of housing stock is measured by several interrelated features including structural integrity, size, and available facilities. Physical quality needs vary, depending on the type or function of the dwelling. For example, recreational housing will typically

Figure 4-3: Change in Housing Stock, 2000 and 2010

	2000	2010	Net Change	% Change
Housing Units	50,360	57,734	7,374	15%
Occupied Housing Units	47,702	52,893	5,191	11%
Vacancy %	5%	8.3%	3.3%	66%
Owner Occupied Units	36,091	39,046	2,955	8%
Renter Occupied Units	11,611	13,847	2,236	19%
Owner Occupied Units as % of Total	76%	73.8%	-2.2%	-3%
Persons per Household	2.6	2.49	-0.11	-4%
# of Seasonal Homes	554	840	286	52%
# of Single Family Homes	38,299	44,296	5,997	16%
# of Duplexes	4,000	3,503	-497	16%
Multi Family 3-9 Units	3,289	4,030	741	23%
Multi Family 10+ Units	2,280	3,787	1,507	66%

Source: U.S. Census 2000, 2010

require different amenities than a primary residence. Although a great deal of variation exists throughout Marathon County, data obtained through statistics, interviews, and observations indicate that the County's housing stock is generally sound.

In 2010, the median number of rooms for a Marathon County dwelling is 5.9 rooms, which is slightly larger than the statewide average of 5.5 rooms. Generally speaking, there is an increasing market demand for larger housing units. A majority of the rural and suburban towns report having larger median room size than the County overall. On the other hand, urban municipalities, such as the cities of Wausau and Schofield, generally have median room sizes slightly below the County figures.

Housing Values

Figure 4-4 shows median housing values in 2010 for Marathon County, surrounding counties and the State of Wisconsin. The median value is based only on single-family houses located on lots less than 10 acres in size. Additionally, this statistic only considers housing units without a business or medical office on the property. In 2010, the median housing value in Marathon County was \$139,500, which is slightly higher than median values in neighboring counties with the exception of Portage County, but below the state median value.

Providing a range of housing values is important to meet the housing needs of people of different income levels and at different times in their lives. Figure 4-5 shows the range of housing values in Marathon County in 2010. The percentage of housing units below \$100,000 decreased from 54 percent in 2000 to 24 percent in 2010. Conversely, the percentage of housing valued above \$150,000 rose from 15 percent in 2000 to 46 percent in 2010.

Figure 4-4: Median Housing Value, 2010

County	Median Value
Clark County	\$119,900
Lincoln County	\$131,300
Marathon County	\$109,500
Portage County	\$140,100
Shawano County	\$125,100
Taylor County	\$120,100
Wisconsin	\$169,000

Source: U.S. Census, 2010

Figure 4-5: Range of Housing Values, 2000 and 2010

Range of Values	Number of Housing Units		Percent Change
	2000	2010	
< \$49,999	1,459	1,970	35.0%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	13,405	7,476	-44.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	8,220	11,699	42.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2,368	8,117	242.8%
\$200,000 or more	1,714	9,784	470.8%

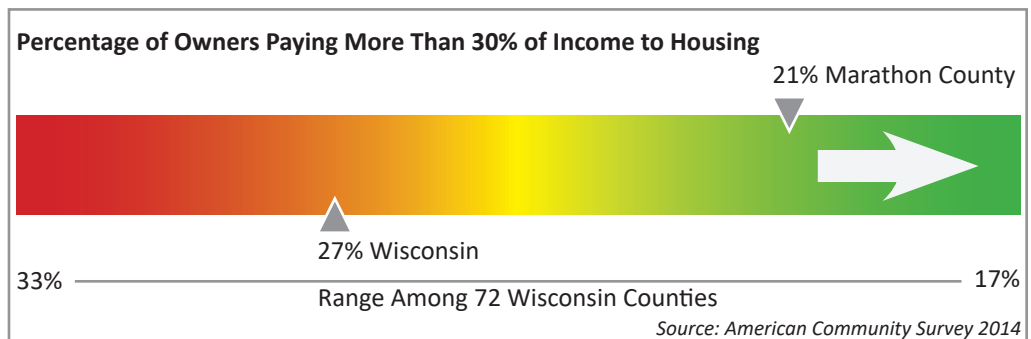
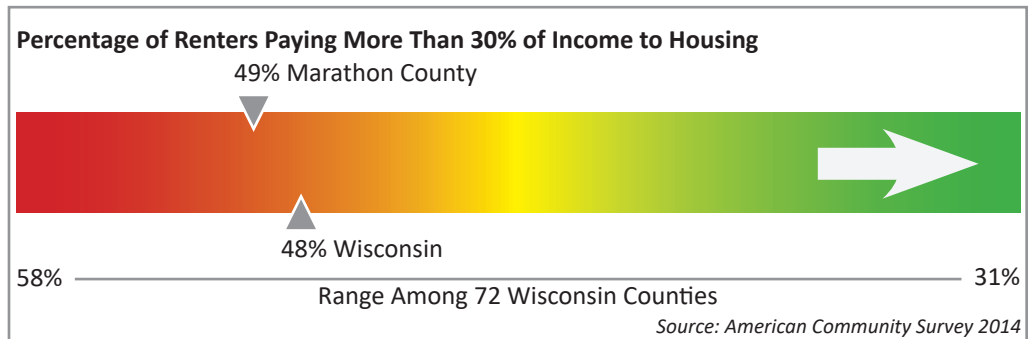
Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

The median value of housing varies significantly across the County, although housing has become more expensive in the past decade. Lower median values often reflect older and smaller housing stock, which is typically concentrated in the older urban areas and villages. Housing in the growing metro suburban areas is generally more expensive, in part because larger percentages of the housing stock in these communities is relatively new and quite large. Likewise, communities with housing located on property with lake frontage generally have higher median values.

Housing Affordability

Several factors impact housing affordability. These factors include rent and mortgage payments, maintenance expenses, lot size, and required or desired amenities. Household size and income are also key factors contributing to what housing options are available and accessible to residents.

Affordability is relative; therefore it is difficult to define a firm standard for affordability. Statistically speaking, those spending in excess of 35 percent of their total household income on housing costs may be facing affordability difficulties. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that rental-housing costs not exceed 30 percent



of monthly income. HUD also indicates that mortgage lenders are more willing to make loans if the scheduled mortgage payment is less than 29 percent of the monthly household income. For this analysis, the threshold of 35 percent of total household income was used to define affordability.

Overall select median owner-occupied costs in the County, both with and without a mortgage, are lower than figures for the State. This suggests that while general housing costs are lower in the County than the State on average, household incomes are also comparatively lower. Marathon County has a smaller percentage of residents paying greater than 35 percent of their income toward housing than the State of Wisconsin, four percent fewer among owners with a mortgage, three percent fewer owners without a mortgage, and seven percent fewer renters.

Figure 4-6 compares median monthly housing costs among local counties. Owner occupied housing is distinguished between with and without a mortgage. Marathon County has the lowest percentage of homeowners with a mortgage paying more than 35% of their income toward housing relative to nearby counties and the state. Only Wood County has a lower percentage for homeowners without a mortgage and only Portage County has a lower percentage for renters. Housing costs in Marathon County are slightly higher than nearby counties, but Marathon County is more affordable than most, particularly if you own your own home and are paying a mortgage.

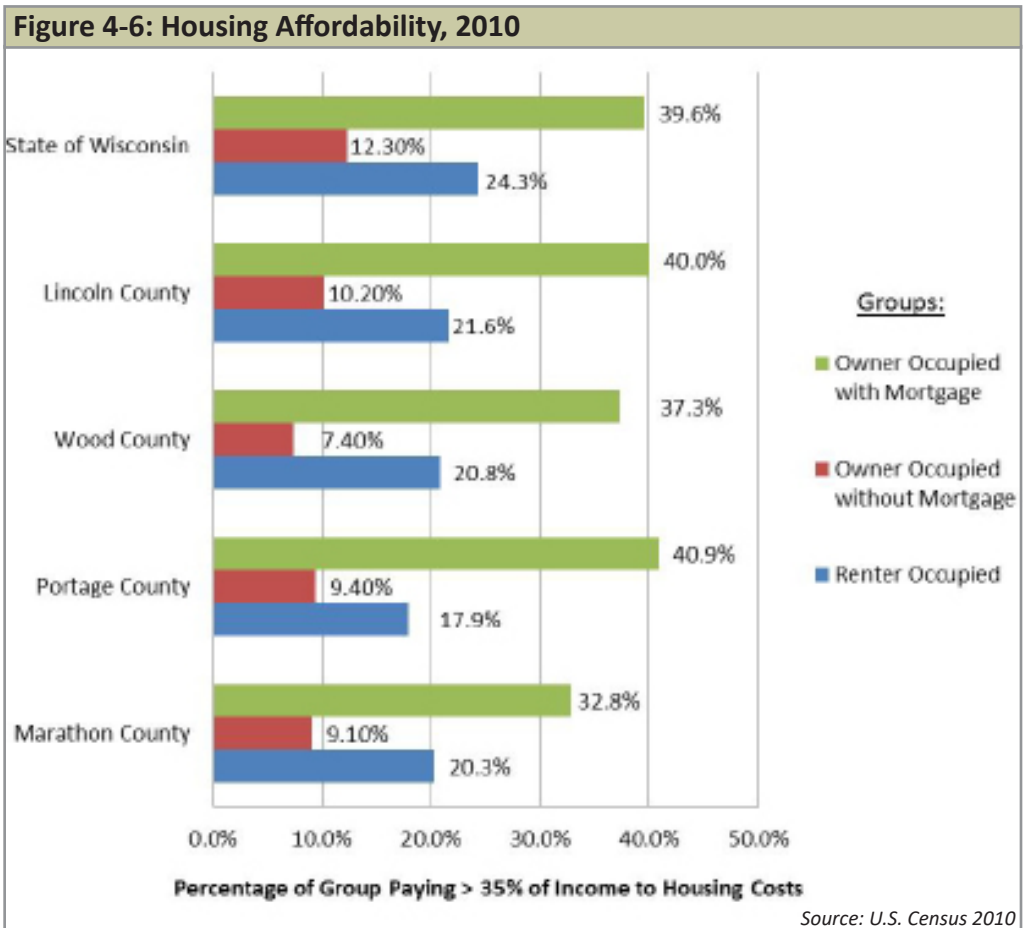
According to the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority, as of 2012, over 945 rental housing units received federal assistance in the County. These housing units are located in 23 different developments in various communities throughout the County, including the cities of Colby, Mosinee, Schofield, Stratford, Wausau, and Weston, and the villages of Athens, Edgar, Rothschild, Spencer, and Stratford. These housing units serve elderly, families, and persons with disabilities, as well as Section 8 voucher recipients. Other developments that have received affordable housing tax credits are found throughout Marathon County.

Special Housing Homeless Services

There are several services for homeless citizens of Marathon County. Most of these shelters are located in the Wausau metro area, with some services also located in Marshfield. Catholic Charities operates a shelter in Wausau that serves about 10 persons per night.

The Salvation Army and The Women’s Community provide emergency shelter as well.

The efforts of most organizations working on homeless issues in Marathon County are directed towards preventing people from becoming homeless. Preventing homelessness is the preferred means of intervention, as it is less costly to all involved, and it helps maintain household stability. It is also widely recognized that homelessness is often the result of other problems such as unemployment, mental illness, domestic abuse, and drug addictions. As such, providing an integrated network of support is essential to address this complex issue. To address these issues the Marathon County Housing and Homelessness Coalition was created in 2012. Their mission is to raise awareness, find solutions, and eradicate homelessness.



Senior and Subsidized Housing

In Marathon County, housing for seniors and populations with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Wausau. The Marathon County Aging and Disability Resource Center, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and the Marathon County United Way all maintain a list of these housing options throughout the County. As the number of elderly persons increases in the coming years, there will most likely be an increased need for these types of housing options. This trend will be seen throughout Marathon County, the State of Wisconsin, and the nation, as the baby-boom population ages. The Highway 51 area is the center of Marathon County for population, jobs, and housing opportunities. As such, most of Marathon County's senior housing opportunities are centered in and around this area as well.

Migrant Worker Housing

Some communities in Marathon County have identified concerns about providing adequate housing for migrant workers, particularly in the western half of the county. Currently, many of these migrant workers pass through Marathon County to work on large agricultural operations. Based on anecdotal evidence, these workers are often housed at their work site, sometimes in temporary housing. Many rural communities have expressed concerns about the quality of these on-site housing units for migrant workers.

Community Character

Community character is less quantifiable than other aspects of comprehensive planning, but it is equally important to the creation of livable communities. Marathon County's character is diverse, including rolling farmlands, woodlands, urban neighborhoods, modern suburban developments, historic downtown districts, and scenic natural areas.

Every community has its own unique sense of place felt by residents and visitors alike. A few major factors have a direct influence on this character including the mix of uses present, public and open spaces, the street/road network, level of density, focus on design, and diversity. The mix of uses present can include the primary destinations of daily life such as home, work, shopping, school, and recreation amenities and their proximity to one another. Public and open spaces include civic buildings, churches, libraries, parks, and other places for people to gather. The street/road network are part of the character by influencing how people navigate their environment, the means by which they travel, traffic levels, and safety concerns. Density plays a role in community size, walkability, and the variety of retail and commercial uses a community can support. Design can impact aesthetics with architectural features, scale, and the visual style which unites or divides a community into neighborhoods. Finally, diversity includes a range of retail and housing options that allow for people of different socioeconomic groups to live within a community.

Community Character

Community character is the sum of all the attributes and assets that make a community unique, and that establish a sense of place for its residents.

Maintaining "rural character" has been mentioned throughout this planning process and numerous other planning efforts in the County. However, rural character is not defined. Usually, it is an image of a farm or open space with very little development. A definition might be as follows: rural character is a landscape where the predominant feature is the natural environment, such as farmland, woodlands, open space, or water bodies, and the placement of development is minimal.

Marathon County's rural heritage of family farms and Main Streets has been maintained in some areas, but in others it has transitioned to scattered subdivisions and strip commercial development. In many places people can no longer walk or bike to neighboring residences or convenience stores because these uses have been separated or they are located too far away. Achieving the right balance between the quantity and quality of new development and redevelopment is important.

This Plan provides guidance for the creation and maintenance of specific identities for the different land use groups in the county. Unique and identifiable communities and neighborhoods contribute to a sense of place and help create pride where one lives and works. That pride then encourages higher levels of quality and maintenance. The county is a growing and evolving community where the community character is not static or easily definable within a single type. However, it is important to maintain local traditions and historic architectural styles.

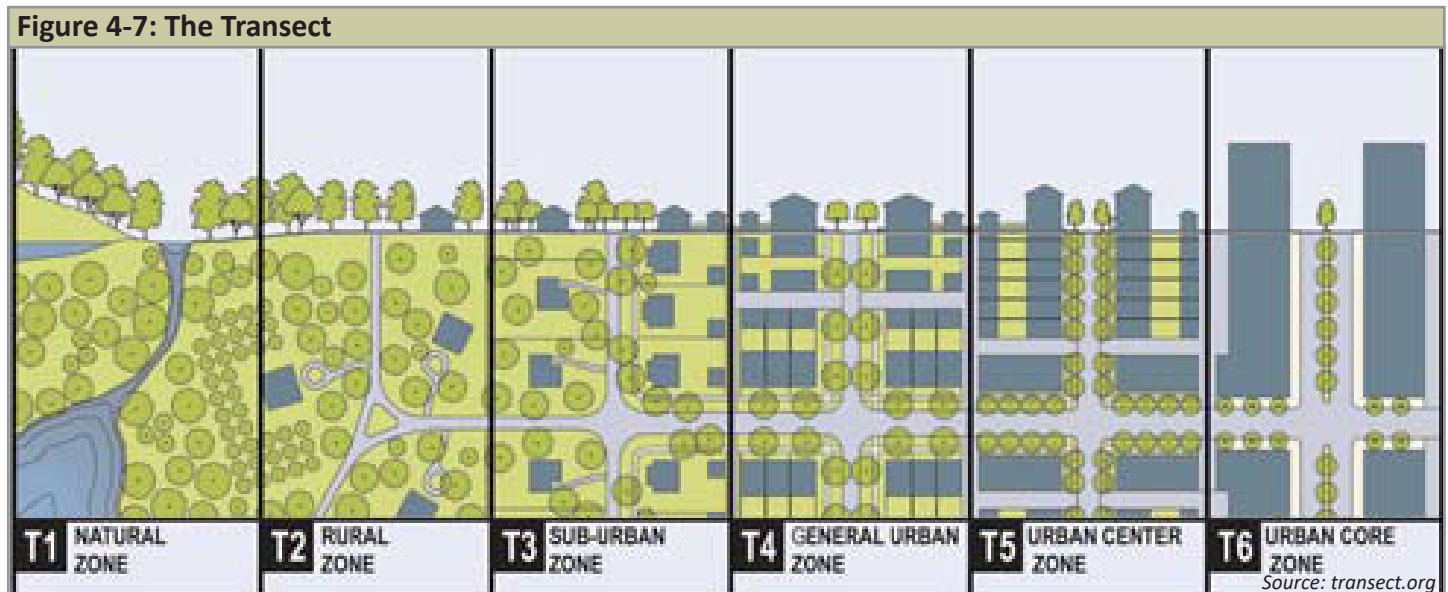
The physical components of community character generally include the following design elements:

- Architectural elements and style of buildings
- Street patterns & streetscape (landscaping, light fixtures, street furniture, etc.)
- Layout and design of development
- Open spaces and preserved resources

Local zoning and subdivision ordinances impact the overall character as well. It is important to consider these as well.

County Transect

The transect is a based approach to planning and design is based on a series of habitats or “ecozones” that are placed on a continuum from rural to suburban to urban. The zones are distinguished by varying density and character of the built and natural environment. See **Figure 4-7**. Development in each zone is regulated differently, related to building design standards, building setbacks, height, scale, as well as types of use.



Neighborhoods throughout a city:

- Illustrates the transition from rural to suburban to urban,
- Incorporates a variety of uses into one neighborhood,
- Combined uses reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by increasing options,
- Highest intensity in core then intensity decreases moving outward

The way these physical components of community character, as mentioned earlier, are used creates different communities ranging from rural to urban. The qualities of each of these elements are described for five community groupings. There are many broad types of development that exist throughout the county. They include rural crossroads and villages, traditional farms, suburbs, and small and large cities. Similar to the transect communities can be grouped on a continuum based on density.

- Rural (agricultural and wooded lands with scattered other development)
- Rural Place (crossroads, hamlet, unincorporated cluster)
- Rural Center (small cities & villages)
- Urban Fringe/Suburban (Lower density/mainly residential with some retail/business)
- Urban (Higher density/Mixed uses)

Different strategies need to be developed in local planning efforts for the communities to preserve their individual character.

Rural to Urban Continuum

Rural

These areas are characterized by agriculture, woodlands, and open spaces, with very low density scattered development – mainly to support agricultural uses. Most of the towns in the county would be considered rural where agriculture and woodlands dominate the landscape.

Rural Places

These are very small communities, sometimes unincorporated, with limited services.

Rural Centers

These are local trade centers that serve the rural areas surrounding them. These are often small cities and villages.

Urban Fringe/Suburban

Areas adjacent to urban centers, usually incorporated areas, sometimes unincorporated towns, that were, and continue to be, the major focus of growth within the Region. This includes the Villages of Weston and Kronenwetter and the Town of Rib Mountain.

Urban Center

Cities and villages within the region, densely built, which contain the majority of the employment, business establishments, and community facilities and services. The primary center is the Wausau Urban Area, which includes the cities of Wausau and Schofield and the Village of Rothschild.

Livability

Livability is often defined as the sum of the factors that add up to a community’s quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities.

Multiple federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and professional associations have developed different definitions of livability. Livability is most often used to describe the diverse aspects of society, surroundings, and shared experiences that shape a community. It includes an interrelated set of economic, spatial, and social components that together are challenging to understand and measure in the defined work of planning and development. In addition, livability embraces the human experience of place, and is specific to the place and time in question. According to former Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, “Livability is about tying the quality and location of transportation facilities to broader opportunities such as access to good jobs, affordable housing, quality schools, and safe streets.” A sample of definitions of livability adopted by federal or national organizations appears in **Figure 4-8**.

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) joined together to create the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The Partnership works to coordinate federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution.

The six livability principles established by the Partnership are a solid foundation for improving livability in Marathon County.

All communities can be made more livable. When residents are able to live near their place of employment, travel costs, transportation maintenance, pollution, and congestion are reduced. Efficient use of land and support for walking, biking, and access to transit reduces energy consumption saving money for individuals, communities, and the region. Typically, livable and sustainable developments are less expensive to build, require fewer municipal services, result in higher values for property owners, and generate a range of long-term social and environmental benefits.

Figure 4-8: Definitions of Livability

Agency/Organization	Definition
U.S. DOT	Livable communities are places where transportation, housing, and commercial development investments have been coordinated so that people have access to adequate, affordable, and environmentally sustainable travel options
AASHTO*	AASHTO’s ‘livability’ objective is to use transportation investments to improve the standard of living, the environment, and quality of life for all communities, rural, suburban, and urban.
Partners for Livable Communities	Livability is the sum of the factors that add up to a community’s quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment, and recreation possibilities

**AASHTO is the American Association of State Highway Officials*

Six Livability Principles

- 1. Provide more transportation choices.** Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation’s dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.
- 2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
- 3. Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.
- 4. Support existing communities.** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.
- 5. Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.
- 6. Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Issues

- **Scattered Rural Housing Development.** Demand for housing in rural areas is growing. This is due to a number of factors including road improvements that provide convenient access between rural areas and the Wausau and Marshfield urban areas and an increasing desire by some people to live in a rural setting. While not all rural residential development is bad, uncontrolled development can have negative impacts. New housing in rural areas can result in fragmentation of woodlands and prime agricultural lands. As more people choose to live near operating farms the potential for conflicts between farmers and non-farming residents increases. Likewise, people moving from urban to rural areas often demand higher levels of service, such as paved roads, which can place a financial burden on rural towns. At the same time there is a need to balance the amount of regulatory control of rural housing development with the need to protect private property rights. Cluster subdivisions may be an option.
- **Senior Housing.** It is anticipated that the need for senior housing and related services will increase in the future as the baby-boom population continues to age. Most existing senior housing is located in the Wausau and Marshfield metro areas or in rural villages. It makes sense that senior housing continue to be concentrated in these areas, which also provide convenient access to health care, shopping, and various social services. This may lead to loss of population in rural towns.
- **Senior Transportation Services.** With seniors staying in their homes longer, in part because of better health and longer life expectancy, this increase demand to support services, such as specialized transportation. When driving becomes less desirable it is difficult for seniors to connect with the community without some type of transportation.
- **Rising Housing Costs.** Housing costs are high in some communities; finding housing affordable to people in all stages of life can be a challenge in some locations. The cost of housing results from several factors, including costs related to land, building materials, code requirements, and labor. Taxes and municipal service costs (utilities, public protection, etc.) also factor into the overall affordability of housing in a community.
- **Homelessness.** There is a growing number of families that are homeless, or facing the threat of being homeless. At the same time, resources for social services and other programs that deal with some of the causes of homelessness are becoming scarcer. While improving the supply of affordable housing can help, homelessness often results from health and social factors independent of the physical housing supply. As such, addressing homelessness will require a multi-faceted approach to address issues relating to affordable housing supply as well as health and social service issues, such as drug and alcohol treatment.
- **Housing Rehabilitation.** Marathon County currently has a relatively high amount of older housing stock, which is mostly concentrated in the older cities (e.g., Wausau, Schofield) and rural villages (e.g., Stratford, Edgar). Since older housing generally is smaller and less expensive than newer housing, the older housing stock plays an important role in providing a wide variety of housing opportunities in the County. However, to remain viable, some of the older housing stock may need to be rehabilitated. In some cases, if the housing stock is too run-down, it may need to be removed to make way for new development.
- **Migrant Working Housing.** Housing for migrant workers is an issue facing many rural communities. Current regulations of temporary housing, mobile homes, etc. may need to be reexamined to determine if they adequately address concerns specific to migrant worker housing.
- **Preserve Rural Character.** Development must be well planned to follow land use patterns that are compatible with the distinct regions where it takes place and give adequate consideration to environmental constraints and local services. Development standards must address historical patterns, issues of transportation, housing, and economic well-being while fostering a sense of community, a pride of place, and an awareness of the natural environment.
- **Livability.** As market demands change there is a need to provide varied housing styles and walkable places to attract younger generations and retain older residents—aging in place. The investments made in communities will build upon one another, making the entire county more livable for everyone. The ability to live, work and recreate in one location connects citizens to their communities and helps ensure economic, equitable, and environmental sustainability for the region.
- **Planning Coordination.** It is essential for plan consistency and implementation that most of the communities in the county develop and update plans on a regular basis. Currently, only a scattered number of communities are updating their plans. Many issues are regional in nature, and as such, they cannot be dealt with effectively by any one unit of local government. Communities need to plan in order to make informed choices about the future—that is, to create and maintain places where people want to live, work, and recreate.

Community Character Goal and Objectives

Community Character Goal: The local history, culture, social pride, and community character are established and enhanced as defining elements which make Marathon County a vibrant and inviting place to be.

Objectives:

1. Promote a variety of safe and affordable housing options that meet the needs of all community members.
2. Preserve and protect the county's landscape, environmental resources and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.
3. Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods throughout the county.
4. Enhance community livability.

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Chapter Five

Natural Resources



Natural resources, the soil, water, and air, are critical to the future of Marathon County. Marathon County has identified Natural Resource protection as a priority because the economic strength and vitality of our community is dependent on the quality of these resources. These resources are highly valued for their natural beauty, wildlife habitat, the recreational opportunities they provide as well as their important contribution to the economy of Marathon County

Marathon County's natural resources are covered in this Comprehensive Plan in two different chapters. Land and biological resources are in this chapter. Water resources receive extra attention in a new chapter devoted specifically to them, Chapter 6.

Previous Plans and Studies

In the last decade, several plans were prepared and/or adopted by Marathon County specifically to address protection and management of natural resources. These plans may be used as resources to guide local policy and decision making regarding resource management and protection.

Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) – 2010

The Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of soil and water conservation in Marathon County from 2010 to 2020. The Land Conservation and Zoning Committee identified the following long-term program outcomes for the natural resource protection efforts in Marathon County:

1. Land Use activities are well planned to enhance community development, minimize conflicts, maximize infrastructure investments, and protect rural character.
2. Maintain the soil and water resources as productive assets through topsoil and organic matter conservation.
3. Marathon County agriculture and woodlot producers are economically strong.

The plan was written with the assistance of partner agencies, including the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; Farm Services Agency; Natural Resources Conservation Service; and the Wisconsin Cooperative Extension.

Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan – 2013

The Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan is required under Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The purpose of this plan is to guide and manage growth and development in a manner that will preserve the rural character; protect the agricultural base and natural resources; and contribute to the County's overall goal of promoting public safety, health and prosperity within the County. This plan is the primary policy document in directing preservation of agricultural production capacity, farmland preservation, soil and water protection, and future land development while respecting private property rights and individual units of government. That plan, in part, serves, as the agricultural chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Also see the Land Use Chapter.

Marathon agriculture is diverse and extends over a large geographical region of nearly 1 million acres. During the development of the farmland preservation plan and through many citizen meetings, Marathon County recognized that a one size fits all strategy of policy would not be effective nor would it best utilize the limited resources available to serve the residents.

Marathon County has identified six unique regions that vary in demographics, land use, soils, and patterns of agriculture to best understand unique challenges and opportunities. Programs will be tailored to best serve each region's needs. The six regions are described in Chapter 2 and shown on **Map 2-3**.

Marathon County has identified high priority Farmland Preservation Areas to be protected: The following purposes were used in establishing these areas:

- Preserve productive agricultural lands in the long-term
- Preserve the rural character and aesthetic quality of Marathon County
- Minimize nonagricultural development on prime farmland
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas

The farmland preservation plan proposes two primary strategies for protecting identified prime working farmland: Farmland Preservation Zoning and Agricultural Enterprise Areas. Marathon County has two Agricultural Enterprise Areas. Antigo Flats in the northeast part of the County grows primarily seed potatoes and the Heart of America's Dairyland in the western half of the County which is primarily a dairy producing area.

The Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative continues the opportunity for landowners within areas planned and zoned for agricultural preservation to claim farmland preservation income tax credits. Within Marathon County, eligible landowners may collect \$7.50 per acre if in an area planned and zoned for farmland preservation, and \$10.00 per acre if also within a designated Agricultural Enterprise Area where the landowner signs a 15 year farmland preservation agreement. The County continues to support the tax credit as a key incentive tool for farmland preservation.

Farmland Preservation Zoning

Marathon County has also implemented Farmland Preservation Zoning to restrict non-agricultural development in the Farmland Preservation Zoning district. The strategy requires a minimum of 35 acres to construct a residence or farm operation. Establishment of a minimum of 1 acre parcel is also allowed in the event of a farm consolidation (existing farm operator purchases land but not necessarily existing buildings or residences which are then separated from the farm land). Requests for development or land division that does not meet the standards in the zoning district may be granted or denied through a process that rezones the property into a different zoning district. Not allowing non-agricultural development in the farmland preservation zoning district meets DATCP requirements.

Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan – 2006

The Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a management guide for the Marathon County Forest and is updated every fifteen years. The mission of the plan is to manage and protect natural resources on a sustainable basis for the ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future generations. The report includes a number of recommendations for:

- Multi-Use Trail Management
- Timber Management
- Wildlife Habitat and Game Management
- Public Information and Education
- Land Acquisition and Forest Boundary Management
- Biodiversity Management
- Forest Administration, Budgets, Intergovernmental Relationships
- Watershed Management
- Tourism, and
- Staffing and Personnel Management.

Wisconsin Land Legacy Report – 2006

The Wisconsin Land Legacy Report is an inventory of places critical to meet Wisconsin's future conservation and recreation needs. The Report identifies 229 Legacy Places and 8 statewide needs and resources that the public and the DNR staff believe are the highest priorities for conservation going forward. This report has a 50 year time frame, asking what lands to preserve in Wisconsin for the year 2050.

Air Resources

Climate

Marathon County has a continental climate which experiences four distinct seasons with cold winters and warm summers. Winter temperatures average between 0 and 23 F and summer temperatures average between 54 and 80 F. Summers are fairly short which limits the crops which can be grown. Average annual rainfall is 32 inches and average annual snowfall is 60 inches.

The impacts of climate change may be increasing in future years, which will likely affect the temperatures in the region and the length of the seasons. Increases in storms could also affect precipitation levels.

Air Quality

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets National Ambient Air Quality Standards according to the Clean Air Act. These standards set parts per million maximums for six principal pollutants: Carbon Monoxide, Lead, Nitrogen Dioxide, Ozone, Particle Pollution, and Sulfur Dioxide. Hundreds of other air toxics are regulated through permits. Wisconsin DNR monitors air quality to inform the public when air pollution reaches unhealthy levels. Wisconsin DNR does ozone monitoring in Marathon County at a rural location near Lake Dubay in Bergen Township. Ozone levels at this location have decreased from about 79 parts per billion in 2000 to about 61 parts per billion in 2010, levels within the national standards.

The EPA also makes designations on counties dependent on whether or not they meet the national primary or secondary ambient air quality standards for pollutants. Those that do meet the standards are Attainment Areas, those that do not are Nonattainment Areas. Marathon County is designated as an Attainment Area and thus does not have additional regulations on new industries desiring to locate in the County.

The American Lung Association produces an annual report on air quality, State of the Air. According to the 2015 report, Marathon County received an A grade for having few high ozone days. The County has received a passing grade for high ozone days every year since 2000. Northern Wisconsin consistently has some of the nation's highest air quality scores.

In addition to these outdoor air quality issues, the Marathon County Health Department is concerned with indoor air quality, particularly regarding radon. Radon is a leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, second only to tobacco. Marathon County in partnership with the regional Northcentral Radon Information Center (RIC) performs tests to measure indoor radon levels. In Marathon County, tests between 2011 and 2013 had an average of 63% of results showing elevated radon levels. Other indoor air quality issues the Health Department responds to are smoke, carbon monoxide, and mold.

Land Resources

Terrain

Marathon County's terrain is primarily the result of glaciation. The far northern and western areas of the county are broad, nearly level to sloping ground moraines. The central area, except for the Wisconsin River Valley, is a mixed terrain of ground moraines and uplands underlain by bedrock at a depth of 2 to 20 feet. The Wisconsin River Valley is composed of nearly level to very steep outwash terraces and nearly level and gently sloping flood plains. The southeastern area of the county consists mainly of nearly level to steep outwash plains and stream terraces and undulating to very hilly moraines and drumlins. Map 5-1 identifies some of the natural resources in Marathon County. Map 5-2 shows the variation in elevation found within the County.

Depth to Bedrock

The depth of bedrock below the soil surface can affect the suitability of land for development and other uses. In areas with shallow depth to bedrock construction of homes and other buildings may be limited since the cost to excavate the bedrock can be cost-prohibitive. Likewise, high bedrock may preclude installation of conventional on-site septic systems. The quantity of available water from low producing bedrock aquifers is a serious concern which may limit the expansion of



The view from Rib Mountain shows some of the terrain in the County.

Six Regions Terrain

Antigo Flats

The Antigo Flats region includes the towns of Harrison and Plover. The area is characterized by large tracts of publicly owned land and outdoor recreation areas (Bitzke Bird Walk, Dells of the Eau Claire, Ice Age Trail, and Plover River state fishery). Private lands are mixed agriculture and forest lands with scattered large lot residential development.

The agriculture industry in the Antigo Flats region is primarily seed potato and vegetable crops.

Heart of America

The Heart of America region is named after the Heart of America's Dairyland Agricultural Enterprise Area in eastern Clark and western Marathon counties. The region includes the towns of Bern, Halsey, Hamburg, Berlin, Holton, Johnson, Rietbrock, Rib Falls, Hull, Frankfort, Wien, Cassel, Marathon, Brighton, Eau Pleine, Emmet, Spencer, McMillan, and Day; the villages of Dorchester, Unity, Spencer, Stratford, Fenwood, Edgar, Marathon City, and Athens; and the cities of Marshfield, Abbotsford, and Colby. Pre-settlement, the area was dominated by wetlands, which were drained to make way for agriculture. The region is characterized by a flat to gently rolling landscape, with large tracts of contiguous farmland, and forest in the wetter areas and along streams.

Wisconsin River Influence

The Wisconsin River influence region includes the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, Lake DuBay, Wisconsin River, Mead Wildlife Area, and the surrounding area in the towns of Cleveland, Green Valley, Bergen, and Knowlton. The region is characterized by a surface water features, forest, and farmland.

Wisconsin Central

Wisconsin Central region includes the cities of Wausau, Schofield, and Mosinee; the Villages of Rothschild and Kronenwetter; and the towns of Stettin, Rib Mountain, Mosinee, and Guenther. The area is the urban center of the county and serves as the employment, higher education, goods and services provider, and social recreation center of the county. Agricultural lands in the Wisconsin Central region are historically under the most non-agricultural development pressure in the county due to the availability of urban amenities. With the downturn in the economy and resulting decreased housing construction, this development pressure has lessened in recent years. However, it is anticipated to return to pre-recession levels in the future.

The agriculture industry in the Wisconsin Central region includes greenhouses, grain, ginseng, dairy, and agribusinesses that provide agricultural services and products. Wisconsin Central serves as a regional marketplace for producers to sell goods at farmers markets and local businesses.

Lumberjack

The Lumberjack region includes the towns of Maine, Texas, Hewitt, Easton, Wausau, Weston, Ringle, and the village of Weston. The area is characterized by large tracts of forested lands with scattered smaller agricultural tracts, mixed with large lot residential development.

The agriculture industry in the Lumberjack region is smaller scale grain, beef, and "lifestyle farms". Lifestyle farming is characterized by family operations of small agri-tourism and activity farming such as corn mazes, pumpkin patches, and hayrides, etc.

Eastern Lakes

The Eastern Lakes region includes the towns of Norrie, Elderon, Franzen, Reid, and Bevent; and the village of Hatley. The area was glaciated, resulting in a forested landscape with many kettle lakes. The area is characterized by smaller tracts of forested and agricultural lands. Many residences are seasonal lake homes and hunting cabins. Residential development averages 1.8 acres, but lot size is highly variable due to the mix of larger residential area in agricultural areas, smaller residential area in the forested areas, and smallest residential area along lakeshores.



The Six Regions of Marathon County include many types of places.

residential and business in the County and also increases the cost of drilling water wells. In most areas in Marathon County bedrock is over 60-inches below the surface, see Map 5-2. Some areas in the center of the County have shallower bedrock with depths from 40 to 60 inches below the surface. A few isolated areas, such as near the base of Rib Mountain, have bedrock 20-40 inches below the surface.

Soil Resources

Most of the soils found in the County are best used for cropland and woodlands. The soils of Marathon County are primarily derived from the weathering of glacial drift, outwash, and bedrock. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service conducted a Soil Survey which described the kinds of soils that exist in an area. Soils are described in terms of their location on the landscape, profile characteristics, relationship to one another, suitability for various uses, and needs for particular types of management. The Survey identified 13 primary soil associations in Marathon County. See the survey online for more detailed and up-to-date information.

Another method of describing soils is through hydrologic soil groups. Hydrologic soil groups are based on estimates of runoff potential. Soils are assigned to one of four groups according to the rate of water infiltration when the soils are not protected by vegetation, are thoroughly wet, and receive precipitation from long-duration storms. Surface runoff refers to the loss of water from an area by flow over the land surface. Surface runoff classes are based on slope, climate, and vegetative cover.

Soils play a significant role in determining the suitability for a site for development. Most soils in Marathon County are suitable for agriculture, except those with excessive slopes or areas that are poorly drained. Areas most suitable for agricultural production, with minimal limitations and requiring minimal inputs for successful production have been identified as “prime farm lands” by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Not all lands classified as prime farm soils are used for farming; some have been developed with residential or other uses. The western half of the County is home to most of the prime farmland. However, several areas of prime farmland are found east of the Wisconsin River, particularly northeast of the City of Wausau and along the Eau Claire and Plover rivers. The Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan includes more detailed information on prime farm soils.

Soil Erosion

The primary concerns with regard to soil erosion are the potential loss of productive farm soils and the impact of sediment and nutrient runoff on water quality. To maintain soil productivity, an average soil erosion rate of three to five tons per acre per year for cropland is considered allowable or tolerable (“T” level). The average soil loss rate for Marathon County is two tons per acre per year. To preserve water quality, the County’s goal is to keep soil erosion rates below “T” levels, particularly in water-quality management areas. Most soil erosion in Marathon County is associated with agricultural activities. Soil erosion can also be a problem related to mining, development of buildings and roads, and forest clearing.

Soil Erosion

Soil erosion is a naturally occurring process in which a field’s topsoil is worn away by the natural physical forces of water and wind or through forces associated with farming activities such as tillage.

A variety of efforts are currently used or encouraged to control and minimize soil erosion include conservation tillage, stormwater permitting requirements, management intensive grazing, crop rotations, development restrictions on steep slopes, and construction best management practices. See the Farmland Preservation Plan for more information on efforts to control and minimize soil erosion.

Soil erosion has many potential sources. With over 331,948 acres of cropland within the county, agricultural soil erosion has been a longtime concern for the Marathon County Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department. However, other land disturbances such as mining, residential and commercial construction, roads and forestry have the potential to deliver significant amounts of sediment to waterways. Soil erosion delivers soil sediment, organic material and nutrients to surface waters and is considered the primary nonpoint source of pollutant to our waterways.

Soil Erosion Transect Survey

In June 1999, Marathon County conducted its first transect survey. The survey has been repeated every other year from 2000 to 2014. The average annual “tolerable” soil loss rate (“T”) per acre for Marathon County is 4.4 tons per acre per year. It is important to understand that soil loss calculations and acceptable “T” are performance values based on maintaining soil productivity not protecting water quality. The current average countywide soil erosion rate is 2.3 tons/acre/year with an upward trend.

From 1999-2006, the erosion rates within the Fenwood Creek watershed had averaged approximately 2.4 tons per acre per year. Ninety five (95) percent of the sediment delivery to the streams and reservoir is sourced from this upland soil erosion. Since 2010, the soil erosion rates have steadily increased to a rate of 3.0 tons/acre/year. Note that the transect data does not include ephemeral or snowmelt erosion contributions which are significant in the watershed. See **Figure 5-1**.

Figure 5-1: Annual Soil Erosion Rates (tons/acre/year)

Year	Marathon County Average Soil Erosion Rates	Fenwood Creek Average Soil Erosion Rate
2000	2.0	1.9
2002	2.3	3.2
2004	2.3	2.8
2006	2.1	2.4
2008	1.7	2.1
2010	1.8	2.3
2012	2.3	2.6
2014	2.2	3.0

Source: Marathon County Soil Erosion Transect Survey

Steep Slopes

Steep slopes are defined as slopes with gradients over 12 percent. Most steep slopes in Marathon County are located along the Wisconsin River valley and its tributaries, along the glacial moraine east of CTH Q where ridges of steep slopes occur in a northeast to southwest direction, roughly parallel to the Plover River, and near Rib Mountain. Steep slopes are marked on Map 5-1.

Steep slopes pose challenges for development and are often vulnerable to erosion. Land disturbances, such as construction and vegetation removal, are often restricted on steep slopes through regulations. Slopes can be cost-prohibitive to development due to the high level of technical engineering required to build upon them. The County does not regulate development on steep slopes, but WDNR restricts most land disturbance activities on slopes 30 percent and over. Municipalities with local zoning ordinances may also regulate development on steep slopes.

Non-Metallic Mining

Marathon County adopted a Nonmetallic Mining Ordinance in 1989. The ordinance was adopted in response to the approximately 400 operating or abandoned excavations of sand, gravel, decomposed granite and stone. The ordinance requires restoration of the site to a purposeful and acceptable landscape appearance and use. Mining activities at active mining sites are administered through the collaboration of DNR and county regulations to prevent sediment delivery to surface waters and to protect groundwater.

Marathon County has 120 operating non-metallic mines as of 2015. These mines are important sources of locally used construction aggregate and also produce value added stone products (such as shingle aggregate, decorative stone, architectural stone, and railroad ballast) that are marketed regionally and nationally. Local non-metallic mines help to keep construction and infrastructure development costs low by minimizing the high transportation costs of these necessary materials.

The County has several hundred additional abandoned or closed non-metallic mining sites. A non-metallic mining ordinance requires reclamation of mining sites to a purposeful and acceptable landscape appearance and use. The program is administered by the County CPZ. Non-metallic mines in Marathon County are marked on Map 5-1.

Metallic Mining

Gold was discovered in Marathon County in the 1970s in what is called the Reef deposit, located in the Town of Easton. A Canadian company owns the mining rights and has done exploratory drilling as recently as 2012. According to the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, the Reef deposit contains between 120,000 and 140,000 ounces of gold. High gold prices could lead to mining in the future, although the company has no current plans to mine the site.

Non-Metallic Minerals

Non-metallic minerals are minerals that have no metallic luster and break easily. They are typically some form of sediment and are often used in the creation of industrial products. Examples of non-metallic minerals include sand, limestone, marble, clay, and salt.



The entrance to a non-metallic mine in Marathon County.

Farmland Resources

Agriculture has played a dominant role in the culture and economy of Marathon County for the last century. A significant number of people in the County are employed in agriculture-related industries and the economic health of many rural communities is directly tied to agriculture.

Agriculture in Wisconsin has experienced several changes in the past few decades. Significant

amounts of cropland have been converted to non-farm uses, such as residential, woodland, or idle land. Marathon County had over 20,000 acres of farmland converted to other uses since 2000. The number of farms has decreased while the average farm size has increased. This reflects a decrease in the number of farm owners. The number of dairy herds and total number of cows has decreased. More conflicts are occurring between farm and non-farm uses. This is primarily a result of the increased demand for rural residential development and the subsequent increase of non-farm residents living in close proximity to active farm operations.

A fundamental purpose of the Farmland Preservation Plan is to guide and manage growth and development in a manner that will preserve the rural character; protect the agricultural base and natural resources; and contribute to the safety, health, and prosperity of the communities. The Plan also recognizes the importance of fairness toward individual property owners and individual units of government.

General goals:

- Users of the land will be good stewards of the land
- Programs must fairly and equitably support a diverse and profitable agriculture
- Protect a sufficient and sustainable ground water quantity
- Protect and improve good ground and surface water quality
- Support small farms and/or family farms
- Respect a balanced mixed land use
- Preserve the rural character and aesthetic quality of Marathon County
- Participation of all of county communities to achieve the goals of county's strategic plan
- Provide educational outreach on topics such as farmland preservation zoning and AEAs

Agricultural preservation:

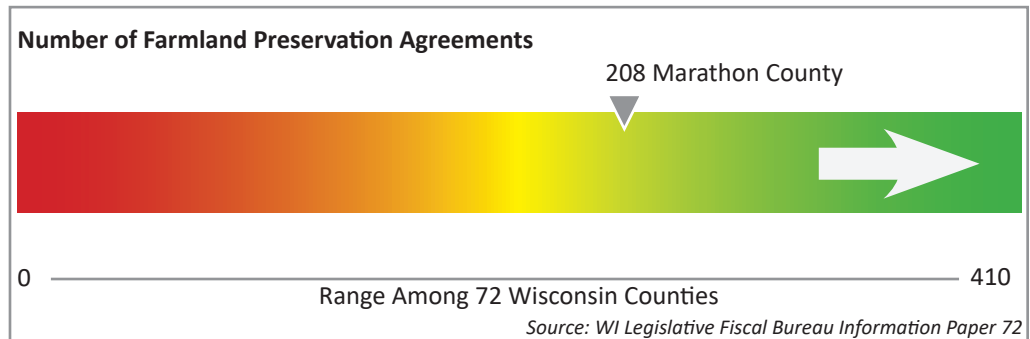
- Minimize nonagricultural development on prime agricultural soils
- Maintain the integrity of agricultural economic clusters

Housing and Development:

- Design and locate rural housing to minimize adverse impacts on agriculture
- Encourage higher-density residential development in non-farmland preservation areas
- Encourage nonagricultural industries to locate in areas where public utilities will be available

Regional Food Distribution and Networks:

- Support food distribution systems to access the local food initiatives of community
- Provide education and technical support to small scale producers and direct marketers



A combine is used to harvest corn.



A harvest waits on a field after being baled.

Farmland Preservation

The preservation of farmland is very important in Marathon County, because of the importance of agriculture to the local economy and identity. The Farmland Preservation Plan details policies and strategies the County is committed to in the effort to support and sustain active farms. The Farmland Preservation Plan identifies and distinguishes farm preservation areas from non-farm preservation areas and future development areas.

Property owners in farm preservation areas may participate in the Farmland Preservation Program, an income tax credit program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection. The goals of the program are twofold: to preserve Wisconsin farmland by means of local land use planning and soil conservation practices and to provide property tax relief to farmland owners. Landowners keeping land in agricultural use can claim a credit on their state income tax through the program if they meet requirements of acreage and farm sales. Landowners must also comply with County soil and water conservation standards.

The tax credits are intended as an incentive to keep land in active farming and meet soil conservation standards. The program is also intended to help off-set increases in farm land values and associated higher taxes. The Marathon County CPZ is responsible for administering the soil conservation plan and monitoring compliance with soil conservation standards. The County conducts compliance “spot checks” on about a quarter of the program participants annually.

Farmland Preservation Zoning

Farmland Preservation Zoning is a voluntary zoning classification is intended to minimize fragmentation of farmland by imposing a minimum lot size of 35 acres. In order to adopt farmland preservation zoning, a municipality must be enrolled in the Farmland Preservation Program. Since Marathon County adopted its first Farmland Preservation Plan in 1982, eight towns have adopted Farmland Preservation Zoning. These include: Brighton, Day, Eau Pleine, Hull, Marathon, McMillan, and Mosinee. Map 9-4 in the Land Use chapter shows towns with farmland preservation zoning.

Biological Resources

Biological resources include the living elements of natural resources, the flora and fauna present in Marathon County. A variety of plants and animals are found in the County, including several endangered and threatened species and several sensitive animal habitats.

Forest Transition Zone

The Wisconsin Land Legacy Report is a document produced by the WDNR in 2006 to be an inventory of places to meet Wisconsin’s conservation and recreation needs for the next 50 years. The Report divides Wisconsin into 16 Ecological Landscapes and 229 Legacy Places, which are distinct places of conservation and recreation significance. Marathon County is wholly within the Forest Transition ecological landscape and contains five Legacy Places.

Other areas of interest in Marathon County include the Brokaw Hemlock Hardwood forest. It is the largest hemlock-hardwood forest in the Forest Transition ecological landscape and is indicative of the forests that occurred in this part of Wisconsin in pre-settlement times. The ground layer harbors a diverse plant community and many forest interior birds are present.

Vegetation

Marathon County’s original vegetation of consisted primarily of deciduous and evergreen forests. Forests played a significant role in the early development and economy of the County. As of 2010, approximately 38 percent of the land area in Marathon County is forested. Forest lands continue to provide resources for lumber, pulp, and associated industries. They also provide opportunities for recreation and are increasingly sought for rural residential development.

Marathon County has nine county forest units covering 29,937 acres. The county forests include a mix of uplands, marshes, water impoundments, and wildlife. County forests are open to the public for hiking and camping. The County also has significant private forest land. The State Managed Forest Law provides tax credits to private forest owners who are part of the program. Marathon County has approximately 110,400 acres of private woodland enrolled in the Managed Forest Law programs. See the Land Use chapter for more information on the Managed Forest Law in Marathon County. County forest units are marked on Map 5-1.



Marathon County has many types of farming.

Biological Resources

Biological resources refer to the living landscape—the plants, animals, and other aspects of nature—and are important to society for the various services they provide, as well as the problems they may create.

Five Legacy Places in Marathon County

- **Big Eau Pleine River Woods** – This diverse, high quality hemlock/hardwood forest exists around the Big Eau Pleine River. The corridor of forest along the river provides important pathways for animal species movements. Aquatic resources in the river include several rare invertebrates. The land adjacent to the forest is dominated by farms and open grasslands. The area could support a range of low-impact recreation uses.
- **Central Wisconsin Grasslands** – This area stretches from Taylor County south to Adams County and is attractive to a diverse community of grassland birds, including large populations of prairie chicken and Henslow’s sparrow. Other declining or rare grassland birds, including grasshopper sparrow, upland sandpiper, eastern meadowlark, northern harrier, and short-eared owls are locally abundant. Several large state wildlife properties, including the McMillan and Mead Wildlife Areas, are managed primarily to provide a mosaic of grassland habitats.
- **Middle Wisconsin River** – The middle portion of the Wisconsin River is an important biological and recreation corridor linking northern and southern Wisconsin. Due to the proximity of several large population centers, including Wausau and Mosinee, this portion of the river receives substantial public use with recreation boating, fishing, and waterfowl hunting. Large numbers of anglers take advantage of the river’s robust warmwater fishery, which includes muskies, walleye, smallmouth bass, and several other species. The black redhorse is found below the dam in Wausau, the only place in the state that it is known to occur. Upland forests in the area typically contain a mix of oaks, aspen, and conifers, while the floodplain forests are dominated by silver maple, green ash, and hackberry. These forests provide important habitat for a variety of resident and migratory wildlife.
- **Norrie-Hatley Wetlands** – This is a large open to forested wetland that harbors many species typically found much further north. Two softwater seepage lakes occur within the wetland. Vegetation present includes open bog, muskeg, black spruce swamp, and calcareous white cedar/tamarack swamp with several rare plant species. Potential habitat for rare birds and plants exists among the conifer swamps. Recreation opportunities may be limited to low-impact uses due to the wetness of the area, but protection would conserve scenic views from the Mountain Bay State Trail.
- **Rib River** – The Rib River offers some of the finest trout fishing in the area. The river has a medium gradient with gravel, rock, and cobble substrate, offering excellent in-stream habitat. Natural vegetation, predominantly northern hardwood forest, covers most of the stream corridor. The shoreline corridor, with its wooded, wild, and steep banks, give the angler a feeling of seclusion. Some agriculture occurs within the middle and lower reaches.



The images above show, from top to bottom, a shelter along the Big Eau Pleine River; the Mead Wildlife Area; the Wisconsin River; the Norrie-Hatley Wetlands; and the Rib River in winter.

Wildlife

Wildlife resources are abundant in the many undisturbed sanctuaries, refuges, reserves, and forests located throughout the County, including large tracts under private ownership. Wildlife resources in Marathon County include a variety of game and non-game species. Numerous species of songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and mammals are found in county forests. See the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan for more information about the wildlife species present in the County.

Endangered Species

Information on endangered resources in Wisconsin is provided in general terms only since Wisconsin State Law prohibits identification of specific locations of these resources. State Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) maps are appropriate for general planning and assessment purposes only. Endangered species include those species recognized by state and federal governments as having severely declining populations that are in jeopardy of extinction. Species identified (listed) as “Threatened and Endangered” are protected under Federal law.

In Marathon County, the WDNR has documented many species of endangered, threatened or special concern status. The locations of endangered resources that are not considered vulnerable to collection are identified at the town level in Marathon County. Locations of more vulnerable species are generalized to minimize the potential for collection or disruption.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Endangered Species list for Wisconsin as of April 2015, the following species are federally-listed species present in Marathon County:

- Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) – Endangered
- Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) – Threatened
- Whooping crane (*Grus americanus*) – Non-essential experimental population

Biological Resource Regulation

Some existing regulatory and management programs related to biological resources are listed below:

- Game Animals - Game animals are regulated through hunting restrictions. The WDNR is responsible for permitting and enforcement of these restrictions.
- Migratory Birds - Migratory birds are regulated by the Migratory Bird Act, which is administered by the WDNR.
- Forestland - The State’s Managed Forest Law (MFL) offers substantial tax reduction to property owners who agree to manage their forestland in accordance with a WDNR approved plan. The MFL program provides incentives to protect privately owned woodlands from destructive timber cutting practices and over harvesting and prevents land from becoming developed and/or converted to agricultural land use. Marathon County also has a plan for management of County forestland.
- Shoreland Habitat – The County enforces zoning regulations to limit development in identified shoreland and floodplain areas. These restrictions also protect and minimize disturbance to wildlife habitat located in shoreland areas.

Issues

- **Preserve Land with Prime Soils for Agriculture and Forests.** Agricultural land and forests are very important to Marathon County. Increasing development pressure has led to more of this land being converted to other uses. The Farmland Preservation Plan identifies the need to protect prime soils for agriculture and forests. See the Land Use chapter for more information about preserving land for agriculture and forests.
- **Woodland Conservation.** Development pressures and clearcutting for agriculture have led to increasing fragmentation of Marathon County's woodlands. The timber industry was instrumental in the settling of Marathon County and remains an important piece of the local economy. Some tools are in place to continue sustainable forestry methods and encourage woodland conservation. One of these methods is participation in the Managed Forest Law program.
- **Multi-use Access to Resources.** Convenient access to natural resources (lakes, rivers, trout streams, woodlands, etc) is highly valued by County residents. While current levels of access appear good, the demand for access to natural areas will likely increase as Marathon County and the Wausau metro area grow. Balancing the provision of access with resource protection can create conflicts between different user groups. For example, excessive mountain biking or ATV use can damage vegetation and create erosion in sensitive areas such as floodplains or on steep slopes. Determining the appropriate level of access to these areas will likely need to be addressed on a case specific basis as impacts vary depending on the type and character of the natural resource and the intensity of the activity.
- **Healthy Soil for Healthy Plants, Animals and People.** Soil health is critical for the capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. The importance of managing soils so they are sustainable for this and future generations cannot be overlooked. To do this, we need to consider soil as living organisms that when provided the basic necessities for life perform functions required to produce food and fiber. Only "living" things can have health, so we must consider soil as a living ecosystem. It is teeming with billions of bacteria, fungi, and other microbes that are the foundation of a symbiotic ecosystem. A healthy soil ecosystem provides nutrients for plant growth, absorbs and holds rainwater for use during dryer periods, filters and buffers potential pollutants from leaving our fields, which is the foundation for all agricultural and forest activities. If we were to measure only one criterion for healthy soils it would be the organic matter. If organic matter levels are decreasing our soils are becoming losing health, if they are increasing soil health increases. What is truly essential for soil health is covering our soils year round to improve infiltration, reduce erosion and nutrient loss. The practices most common for this are managed grazing, cover crops, conservation tillage and hay rotations. We can no longer leave our soils exposed to the elements from early October through mid-June if we want to have healthy soils.

Natural Resources Goal and Objectives

Natural Resources Goal: The natural resources of Marathon County are managed in a balanced way (so they are protected and preserved) for current and future generations' health, enjoyment, and economic benefit.

Objectives:

1. Protect vulnerable natural resources.
2. Promotesoundlandusedecisionthatconserveandpreservenaturalresourcesinbalancewitheconomicdevelopmentandgrowth.
3. Mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts.
4. Protect and improve air quality.
5. Protect and improve soil health.
6. Promote balanced use of non-metallic mineral resources and ensure mine reclamation.
7. Protect and preserve prime agricultural areas.
8. Protect and sustainably manage public and private county forest resources.

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Chapter Six

Water Resources



Marathon County depends on its water resources. They are economically and ecologically important to the health and welfare of its citizens. These water resources provide drinking water from both surface and groundwater sources. They provide very important recreational benefits as well as contribute to a diverse ecosystem which provides important functional and economic benefits. However, changes in land use and population shifts have increased demands for these water resources and this, in turn, threatens many of them.

Nonpoint runoff problems are both water quality and quantity based. Nonpoint pollution is a result of activities that take place on the land surface, and how water runs off the land surface or seeps into the ground. Most land use activities have the potential to contribute to nonpoint pollution problems.

Generally, because of the complexity of the problems and multiple jurisdictions involved, no one protective measure will wholly solve the problem caused by nonpoint sources of pollution in a given watershed or area of the county. More likely, a combination of mechanisms will be necessary, and in many cases may be preferred, to give locally based and supported initiatives maximum flexibility in achieving their protection goals and needs. Improved linkages among different levels of government and existing protective mechanisms are needed to ensure that actions taken do actually provide desired protection of Marathon County's water resources.

Water Resources are prominent in Marathon County, which contains many streams and rivers. Most are tributaries to the Wisconsin River, which bisects the County as it flows to the south. In addition to 202 lakes, the County also has significant amounts of wetlands and floodplains. Maintaining excellent water quality is fundamental to the high quality of life in Marathon County.

Previous Plans and Studies

Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan – 2010

The Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan responds to soil and water quality concerns through local, state, and federal programs. The plan represents a 10 year (2010-2020) implementation plan that emphasizes cooperation with State and Federal conservation partners, as well as a renewed emphasis on education. The LWRM Plan brings the human and natural resources together in a strategic plan to protect and improve our soil and water resources.

The four long term program outcomes the LWRM Plan aims to achieve with a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of soil and water conservation are:

1. Land use activities are well planned to enhance community development, minimize conflicts, maximize infrastructure investments, and protect rural character.
2. Improve and protect the surface and ground water assets to enhance public health and safety, recreational opportunities, and economic development.
3. Maintain the soil and water resources as productive assets through topsoil and organic matter conservation.
4. Marathon County agricultural and woodlot producers are economically strong.

Total Maximum Daily Load Program – 2015

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act established the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program. The TMDL program identifies and restores polluted rivers, lakes, streams, and other surface waterbodies by detailing in a quantitative assessment the water quality problems and contributing sources of pollution, see **Figure 6-1**. The TMDL determines how much a pollutant needs to be reduced to meet water quality standards, and provides the foundation for taking actions locally to restore a waterbody to fishable and swimmable standards.

TMDLs must be developed for waterbodies impaired by point sources and/or nonpoint sources. The TMDL is one important tool required by the Clean Water Act and employed by Wisconsin DNR to quantitatively assess a stream's water quality and allocate allowable pollutant loads among sources along the stream and/or river. The Upper Wisconsin River TMDL is scheduled for completion in 2017. This plan specific pollutant allocation limits for all dischargers in the watershed to achieve statewide water quality goals.

Groundwater Protection Guide – 2001

The Groundwater Protection Guide was first developed in 1988. In April 2001, the plan was updated to reflect the changing programs and policies within the county as well as to acknowledge the increased level of regulation by state agencies to protect the groundwater resources of Marathon County. The guide identifies sources of groundwater in the county as well as consumption trends for the various community users. Environmental protection programs and responsibilities for implementation are identified for all the various State and local departments and agencies. Along with conservation programming, the enforcement of performance standards, zoning, wellhead protection activities, and groundwater monitoring will be necessary to help protect the groundwater.

Special considerations are evaluated that recognize that groundwater is a primary source of all water consumption by the residents and businesses of the county. As residential sprawl continues into the rural areas of the county and the scale of agricultural activities increasingly threaten the groundwater, the conservation efforts to protect the resource will need to increase. The Groundwater Plan and Central Wisconsin Basin Plan together identify risk concerns relative to type of pollutant sources present in specific watersheds as well as the relative risk of groundwater sources to potential problems.

USGS Protecting Wisconsin's Groundwater Through Comprehensive Planning – 2007

In a joint effort, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the University of Wisconsin System, and the U.S. Geological Survey Cooperative Water Program worked together to build a website of data and information on geology, general hydrology, and groundwater quantity and quality. The website was developed to aid government officials and planners in Wisconsin for addressing groundwater in their comprehensive plans. The most recent data available for Marathon County was published in 2007. The full Marathon County report can be found at their website: wi.water.usgs.gov/gwcomp/find/marathon/.

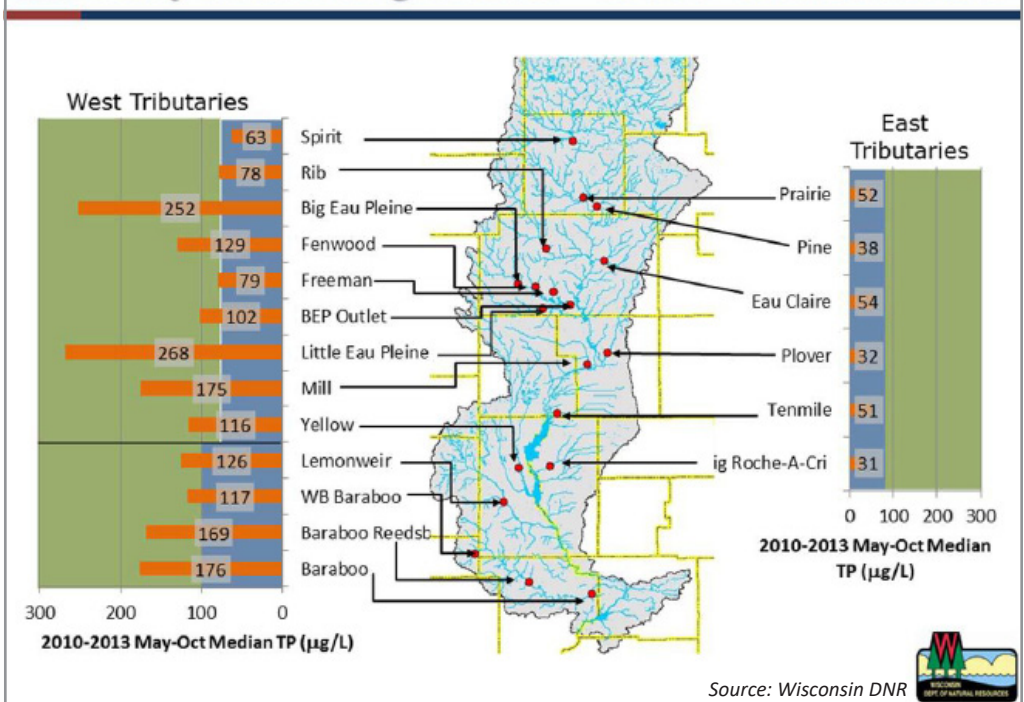
Central Wisconsin River Basin Plan – 2010

The Central Wisconsin River Basin Plan was updated in 2010. Findings from the Basin Plan were used to assure that the LWRM Plan addresses those impacted waters and targeted activities of the county with the greatest need. The Basin Plan identifies:

1. Impacted Watersheds,
2. Exceptional waters and outstanding waters,
3. 303(d) waters,
4. Significant sources of pollutants or activities impacting the waters.

Figure 6-1: Wisconsin River TMDL

Tributary Monitoring Results – Total P Concentration



Strategic Plan for the Big Eau Pleine River Watershed and Reservoir – 2009

In 2009, Marathon County convened a meeting between Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, livestock producers, Big Eau Pleine Organization, and Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company in response to reoccurring fish kills in the Bid Eau Pleine Reservoir. In 2009, the Big Eau Pleine Task Force completed the short-term strategic plan which included the following:

1. Historic Case Study of the Big Eau Pleine Watershed and Reservoir
2. Action plan to upgrade the 1981 Aerator system
3. Long range “plan of work” to address the water quality and quantity of the Big Eau Pleine River System

The strategic plan identifies the roles and commitments of governmental agencies, sportsman and citizen groups, educational institutions, agricultural groups, and the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company to address the water quality concerns of the reservoir. The log range plan includes the development of the Fenwood Creek pilot watershed project as a means to begin educational and landowner outreach efforts prior to completion of the TMDL plan. The pilot project will create landowner awareness of agricultural contributions to water quality degradation.

Big Eau Pleine – 2014

The Big Eau Pleine Citizens Organization (BEPCO) has embarked on an effort to review many years of scientific data. This effort began in April, 2014 with stakeholders (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Valley Improvement Corporation, Marathon County, and local residents) meeting to better understand the hydrodynamics of the reservoir and how they relate to inflow, outflow, reservoir water levels and dissolved oxygen. A better understanding of this complex system will allow for more efficient and effective management decisions. The second phase of this effort involved continuing to develop organizational capacity and stakeholder involvement with the BEP issues as well as developing a lake management plan for the reservoir. Additional information on the BEP project can be found on the BEPCO website at <http://www.bigeaupleine.org/>

Surface Water Resources

Marathon County has 202 lakes with a total surface area of 28,322 acres. Big Eau Pleine Reservoir is the largest body of water with a potential area of 6,830 acres when full. Many lakes lie in kettle holes left by the retreat of the glaciers. Seepage lakes are the most common type of lake in the County. These lakes do not have any surface outflow but depend on underground movement of water through highly permeable glacial soils for drainage. Most lakes are quite shallow, with depths ranging from less than one foot to a maximum of 34 feet. The largest “lakes” in the County have been formed behind river dams, including the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, Lake Wausau, Half Moon Lake, and Lake Du Bay. Like other water resources, lakes provide flood retention, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and scenic amenities. Many of these lakes are identified on Map 6-1: Water Resources.

The county has 356 rivers and streams with a surface area of 3,748 acres. The interconnected network of rivers and streams that cross Marathon County is characteristic of a landscape influenced by glacial impacts. The Wisconsin River flows south through the county. The river is regulated by several dams on the mainstream and tributaries, which are controlled by the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Corporation (WVIC). Major tributaries flowing from the east to west include the Trappe, Eau Claire, Little Eau Claire, and Plover Rivers. The major tributaries flowing from west to east are the Little Rib, Big Rib, Big Eau Pleine, and the Little Eau Pleine Rivers.

Surface Water

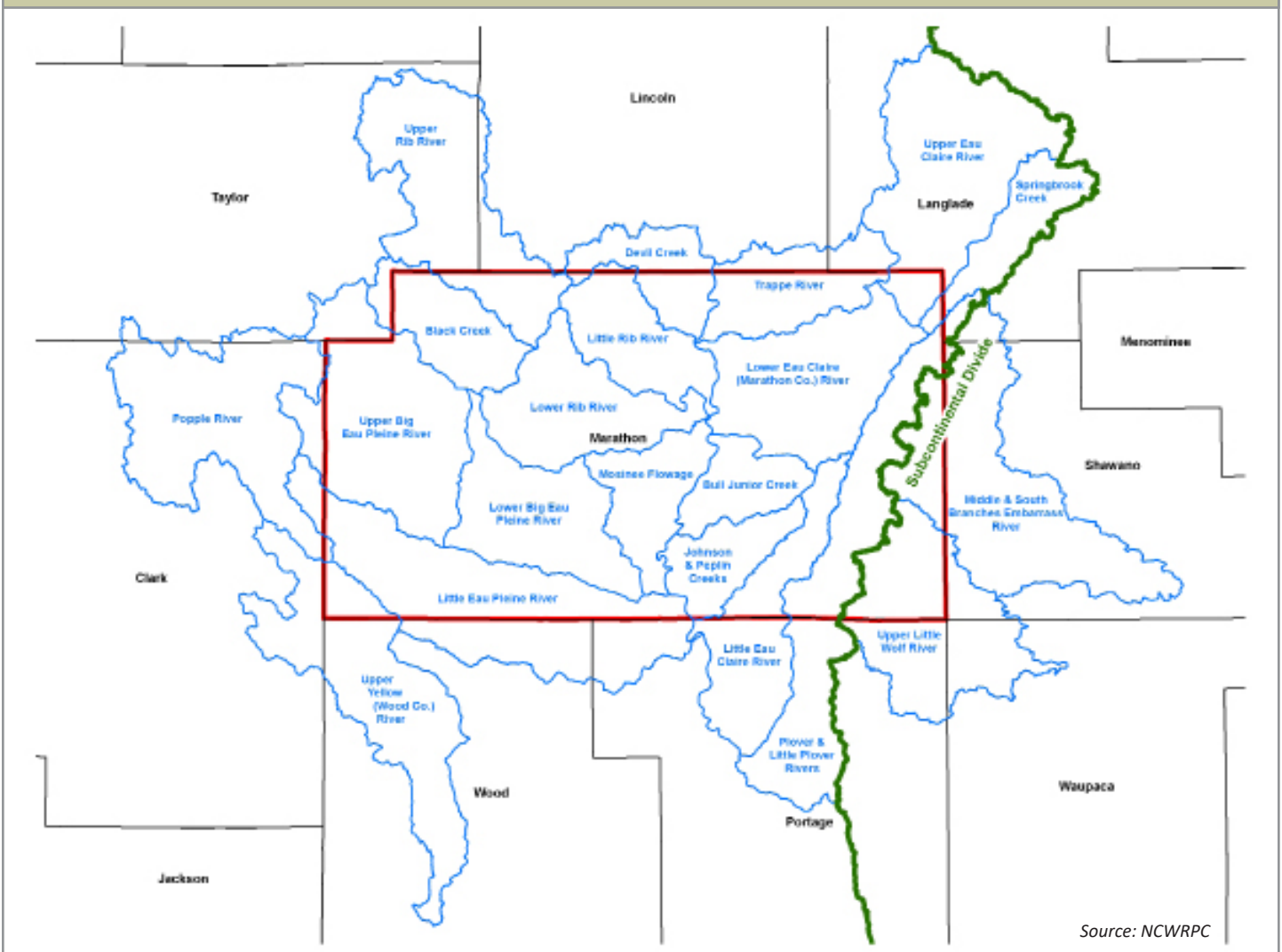
Surface water is the water on the surface of the planet, such as in a stream, river, or lake.



A pier on a lake along the Wisconsin River.

Source: Marathon County

Figure 6-2: Watersheds in Marathon County



Source: NCWRPC

Watersheds

Marathon County is geographically located in what the Wisconsin DNR has named the Central Wisconsin Basin, which is a subset of the entire Wisconsin River corridor located in Central Wisconsin. The Central Wisconsin Basin extends south from the Merrill dam located on the Wisconsin River in Lincoln County to the Castle Rock Flowage Dam in Juneau and Adams Counties. The Central Wisconsin River Basin is comprised of 29 watersheds, 17 of which are all or part in Marathon County, see **Figure 6-2**. A watershed is an area of land that is drained by a waterway that flows to a lake, reservoir, or river. The watershed boundary line is defined as a topographic dividing line from which surface streams flow in two different directions.

The watersheds in Marathon County contain numerous scenic vistas including rock outcroppings and flowages. They are also characterized by diverse agricultural activities throughout the basin. The last glaciers created a network of warm and cold water streams fed by surface and groundwater sources that all connect to the Wisconsin River, except for the two sub-watersheds in the southeastern part of the County, which flow into the Fox-Wolf Basin.

Watershed

A watershed is an area of land where all of the water that drains off of it or is under it goes into the same place. The watershed consists of surface water and all the underlying groundwater.

Wetlands

Wetlands consist of transitional areas between uplands and open water. Wetlands perform important ecological functions such as flood retention and water quality improvements. They provide valuable wildlife habitat as well as recreational opportunities. In Marathon County, wetlands were severely impacted or destroyed by agricultural activities from the late 1940s through the 1970s. Many were drained for cropland through the creation of “w” ditches, which consist of a narrow, raised field with a ditch on either side. Many of these ditches still exist.

Programs in three levels of government - local, state and federal - regulate activities in wetlands. Permits are required for activities that impact wetlands, such as land and road development. In some cases wetland replacement or mitigation is required. While the State policy does not mandate wetland mitigation on non-federal wetlands, it does encourage efforts to minimize loss through the use

of “best management practices” (BMPs), which include a variety of techniques and approaches aimed at minimizing the impacts of construction and development on the natural environment.

Wetlands that remain in the County are generally located adjacent to rivers, creeks, and floodplains as shown on the Natural Resources Map. Most are wooded, although several types of WDNR classified wetlands can be found throughout the County.

From the last 1940s through the 1970s, many natural wetland areas on the west side of the county were drained for cropland through constructed “w”-shaped surface ditches. These long, narrow drainage channels improved crop production, but also increased runoff rates and the flashy nature of the streams. The majority of these drainage ditches still function in agricultural areas. The drainage system, although an effective crop production enhancement, contributes the rapid transport of nutrients and sediment from the landscape into surface waters. The TMDL plan will prescribe best management practices at the edge of cropland fields to reduce the runoff potential of these drainage ditches, as well as to enhance the wetland capacity of the watershed.

Floodplains

As defined in the County Zoning code, the floodplain consists of the “floodway” and “flood fringe”. The “floodway” is defined as the channel of a river or stream and those portions of the floodplain adjoining the channel required to carry the regional flood discharge. “Flood fringe” is defined as that portion of the floodplain outside of the floodway covered by floodwaters during the regional flood and generally associated with standing water rather than rapidly flowing water.

Floodplain

A floodplain is an area of land that is prone to flooding, usually located adjacent to a stream or river.

In Marathon County, areas within the 100-year floodplain are typically located immediately adjacent to rivers, streams and creeks. In some flatter areas, such as around the Big Eau Pleine River, the floodplain extends some distance from the water’s edge. Likewise, floodplains usually do not exist along river segments with steep or high banks, although these areas experience greater flood depths due to constricted flow.

Floodplains are subject to potential flooding and/or intermittent wetness and therefore they are not generally appropriate for development. Like wetlands, floodplains provide areas where water from swollen rivers and streams can over-flow. They also provide valuable wildlife habitat.

Lakes of Marathon County

Marathon County has a number of lakes which provide wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and aesthetic enjoyment. Several lakes have citizen organizations or sports clubs that work to protect and preserve the water resources such as the Big Eau Pleine Citizens Organization (BEPCO), DuBay Property Owners Association, Lake Wausau Association and Pike Lake Sportsmen Club. Marathon County also has two lake districts: Big Bass Lake Rehabilitation District, and Mayflower Lake Improvement District. A lake district is a special purpose unit of government established to maintain, protect, and improve the quality of a lake and its watershed.

Over the years, little data has been collected related to water quality conditions, health of fisheries and the aquatic plant community. This lack of good science based information made it difficult to develop strategies and to focus resources on the improvement or protection of these lake ecosystems.



A view of Lake Wausau in autumn.

Source: Wisconsin DNR

In 2010, Marathon County embarked on a project to collect scientific and social information and develop lake management plans on eleven lakes in Eastern Marathon County. This Eastern Lakes Project is a partnership of citizens, eastern Marathon County communities, Marathon County government, and the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point. Scientific data collected included: watershed and land use assessment, water quality, shoreland health, fishery, zooplankton, aquatic plants and sediment core analysis. Based on this scientific data, lake management plans were developed outlining goals and objectives for protection and improvement efforts. Additional information on the Eastern Lakes Project can be found on the Marathon County website at <http://www.co.marathon.wi.us/Departments/ConservationPlanningZoning/ConservationServices/Lake Programs.aspx>.

In 2011, the Lake Wausau Association (LWA) reorganized to address citizen concerns about the lake’s water quality. Over the past decade there has been substantial weed and algae growth raising concern over water quality and bacteria. The LWA took action by launching a lake evaluation project in the spring of 2012, after months of planning and prioritizing objectives of the evaluation. The project focused on evaluating the condition and health of the lake including water quality, water flows, fisheries habitat, aquatic plant management, shoreland habitat, community values, and recreational uses. Boundaries of the evaluation area are from the Wausau dam, Schofield dam, Domtar dam, and HWY 51 Rib River Bridge.

LWA contracted services with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP), and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (ACE) in conducting the comprehensive lake evaluation project. These researchers and specialists are performing various tasks including hydrodynamic modeling, aquatic macrophyte surveying, bathymetry and in-lake habitat surveying, shoreland habitat surveying, community capacity analysis, and social and economic values surveying. The bathymetry and in-lake habitat surveying included production of a digital map of the lake for use in the project, as well as for long-term monitoring of the lake.

Development of a lake management plan is the final task of the project. The plan will provide direction for implementation needed to achieve goals related to water quality and water flows, recreation, shoreland management, fishery management, communication, and water governance. The plan will identify the steps required to achieve these goals and the parties that are responsible for the action steps. Additional information on the Lake Wausau Association and their resource protection efforts can be found on their website at: <http://lakewausau.org/>.

Groundwater Resources

Groundwater Characteristics

Groundwater is the major source of all water consumption in Marathon County. The 17 municipal water systems in Marathon County are owned and operated by specific communities. All public and private water supplies and most domestic, industrial, and agricultural water supplies rely on groundwater. According to the department of Natural Resources Inventory of Watersheds, in 2006, 15 of the 20 inventoried watersheds rank “high” relative to groundwater impacts and threat to the resource. As residential development continues to expand into the rural areas of the county and agricultural production methods intensify, the concern for groundwater protection grows. Increased nitrate and bacteria levels in residential wells pose serious health concerns. For more information about municipal water utilities and private wells, see Chapter 8 on Infrastructure.

Groundwater

Groundwater is water present beneath the earth’s surface in soil pore spaces or fractures of rock formations.

Access to groundwater varies across the County, as does the amount of water available. The depth to reach groundwater is shown in Map 6-2. Some areas, particularly those with high bedrock, require wells with depths of 50-feet or more. Water supplies are generally good in the Wisconsin River Valley.

Over the past 3 years, the concern for groundwater quantity has increased. From 1979 to 2005, total water use in Marathon County increased from 40.7 million gallons per day to 68.2 million gallons per day. The increase of water use is due to a growing industrial consumption. Recently, the communities of Dorchester and Abbotsford have documented concerns about limited municipal water supplies and its impact to future growth. The concern has also extended to other small rural communities, as well as Towns where large scale livestock operations draw heavily on the regional water supplies.

High Capacity Wells

High capacity wells are one or more wells, drill holes, or mine shafts on a property that have a combined approved pump capacity of 70 or more gallons per minute.

Groundwater Use Limitations

Available groundwater in much of central Wisconsin is limited to discharge through wells of low yield. Aquifers that yield small amounts of water to wells are associated with fractured crystalline rock formations at or near ground surface in the central and eastern parts of the County, sandstone overlying crystalline rock in the southern and western parts, and glacial till that covers the area north and west of the Marshfield moraine. Many wells in crystalline rock yield less than 2 gallons per minute (gpm). About 90 percent of the wells in sandstone and most wells in glacial till yield 5-20 gpm.

Water for public and industrial supplies is limited in a large part of central Wisconsin. Yields of ground water and natural stream flows during dry seasons are too low to sustain large supplies. In some towns and villages, public water supplies are inadequate; in others, they are barely adequate and cannot sustain the increase in future needs.

The number of high capacity wells for municipal, agricultural, and industrial use continues to increase in Marathon County. High capacity wells are wells which have the capacity to draw 70 gallons per minute or more. As a result of increased demand and/or persistent drought conditions, some areas of Marathon County are experiencing the impacts of limited groundwater resources. Proposed legislation to manage groundwater quality in designated management areas did not advance out of legislative committee in 2009. Therefore education about groundwater conservation is the primary tool available to help manage groundwater quality issues. Protection of groundwater quality continues to be an important management issue in Marathon County. Overall progress has been made on groundwater quality; however the communities should continue to be diligent on well head protection. Runoff contamination can be an issue and this past year two private wells were impacted by manure runoff in Marathon County.

In recent years, the State of Wisconsin has introduced legislative initiatives to better regulate groundwater competition and over-draw in areas where supplies are limited. Furthermore, Marathon County will need to track evolving legislation to target program services

where groundwater quality and quantities are a challenged.

In the western half of Marathon County, limited groundwater storage potential and rapid surface runoff deprive the area of much water that otherwise would be available. Only a small part of the total water yield, excluding surface-water reservoir potential, is available for large public supplies. Soils of low permeability impede downward seepage and promote rapid surface runoff. Crystalline rock at or near the surface, generally covered by thin deposits of low permeability, limit the groundwater storage potential. The result is a water-poor area in a water-rich State.

Surface Water Quality

Water quality concerns take on many forms. Contributions to degradation can either be by point source (industrial discharge pipe or direct discharge from an animal lot) or by the less obvious nonpoint sources. The Central Wisconsin River Basin Plan recognizes cropland runoff and animal waste runoff as the most significant sources of pollutants to the watersheds of Marathon County.

The nonpoint sources associated with the agricultural livestock industry are increasing relative to both scale of runoff event and frequency. Since 2003, the Conservation, Planning, and Zoning staff has documented several significant discharges in the County associated with agricultural livestock waste, most in the late winter-early spring season. These runoff events are oftentimes characterized as “point sources” and many cases caused either fish kills or well contamination.

Nonpoint sources, including soil erosion, animal waste runoff, pesticide runoff, and urban runoff have been identified as significant sources of pollution that need to be controlled in order to meet State water quality goals. The impact of these pollutants include eutrophication, well contamination, fish kills, algae blooms, beach closings, high bacteria counts, turbidity, and loss of aquatic habitat. Most surface waters designated as 303d impacted waters are impacted by phosphorus. To a large degree, the Upper Wisconsin TMDL will focus upon the reduction of phosphorus delivery to surface water.

Public awareness of wetlands as a valuable resource continues to increase. However as with other counties, Marathon County has seen a net loss in wetland acreage. Minimizing the loss of wetland with their buffering capacity is a high priority for the enhancement of water resources in Marathon County. Building wetland function adjacent to cropland is an important element in the reduction of nonpoint runoff and promotion of groundwater recharge, two important resource concerns in Marathon County. Wetland restoration and sediment control are important water quality tools that will be promoted over the next 10 years.

Designated Waters

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

The U.S. Clean Water Act states that waters identified as largely unaffected by should be kept that way, establishing the designations of Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters to classify protected waters. An Outstanding Resource Water (ORW) is a lake, stream, or flowage having excellent water quality, high recreational and aesthetic value, and high quality fishing. ORWs are free from point source or nonpoint source pollution. An Exceptional Resource Water (ERW) is a lake, stream, or flowage exhibiting the same high quality resource values as outstanding waters, but may be affected by point source pollution. Several streams in the County are classified as ORW or ERW and are noted on Map 6-3. A complete listing of these high quality surface waters can be found on the WI DNR web site.

Impaired Waters

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) identifies “impaired waters” that belong on the “303(d) list” of the U.S. Clean Water Act. This list, maintained by the EPA, identifies waters that do not meet current water quality standards and merit water quality improvement and protection. Some of the pollutants and impairments measured include phosphorus, sediment (total suspended solids), bacteria (E.coli), and mercury. A complete list of impaired waters is on the WI DNR web site. Water impaired due to low dissolved oxygen and phosphorus associated with agricultural nonpoint runoff includes the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir and the Big Eau Pleine River Watershed. The 303(d) waters, and proposed 303(d) waters, in Marathon County are shown on Map 6-3.

303(d) Waters

A list of impaired or threatened waters, referencing Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. These waters do not meet water quality standards due to excessive pollution.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) include geographic areas of the landscape encompassing high quality or environmentally important resource features such as lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, undeveloped shoreland, floodplains, and areas of steep slopes. These areas are particularly vulnerable to degradation or destruction from development and other impacts and therefore should be protected from intensive disturbances.

Water Quality Management Area (WQMA)

One shoreline protection designation is the Water Quality Management Area (WQMA). WQMAs are defined as a) an area located within 1,000 feet from the ordinary high-water mark of navigable waters; b) an area located within 300 feet from the ordinary high-water mark of navigable waters. Marathon County has delineated the WQMA’s areas greater than five acres in size on Map 6-3. Due to the highly developed drainage systems in the County, the WQMAs are extensive and widespread.

Marathon County has a shoreland zoning ordinance which protects all the water quality management areas within the County. The ordinance protects 1,000 feet from the ordinary high-water mark of a lake, pond, or flowage and 300 feet from the ordinary high water mark of a river or stream.

Stormwater Management

Surface water management (also referred to as “storm water management”) is one of the key components in efforts to improve water quality. It primarily involves controlling the volume, quality, and storage of runoff. Storm water management facilities in urban areas generally consist of a network of curbs, gutters, catch basins and pipes to collect water and holding or detention ponds to hold the water until it can seep into the soil or evaporate. Storm water management also typically involves some degree of control over development and/or construction practices to minimize runoff and erosion. These are often referred to as “best management practices” (BMPs) and may include restrictions on the amount of impervious area allowed on a parcel, limits on removal of vegetative cover which protects against erosion, and restrictions on building on steep, highly erodible slopes.

Requirements for surface water management planning stem from the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 objectives to improve water quality. All levels of government, from federal to local get involved in the management and regulation of surface water, depending on the size of the area, its incorporation status, and the specific activities or use of the land that could affect surface water quantity or quality.

Storm water management at the local level typically occurs through site development standards and erosion control regulations. In Marathon County these standards are found in the Zoning Code (Chapter 17) and Land Division Regulations (Chapter 18). Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) permits are required for large, and certain smaller municipalities or urbanized areas. In addition WPDES permits are required for paper mills, treatment plants and several of the large dairies and animal operations in Marathon County. These permits regulate discharges to groundwater and surface waters.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) deals with flood control and requires municipalities to perform floodplain mapping and develop management plans in order to receive federal flood insurance. Areas within the designated 100-year floodplain are discussed in the Natural Resources section. The County administers land use and development control in areas identified as shoreland, floodplains and wetlands in accordance with the Zoning Code (Chapter #22). Generally, new development is not allowed in these areas, although there are structures that were built prior to current development restrictions that remain in the floodplain.

The County is particularly concerned about non-point sources of pollution, including failing septic systems, urban runoff, and issues often identified with rural areas such as soil erosion, animal waste and pesticides. Non-point pollution is best addressed at the watershed level. Marathon County encompasses portions of 22 watersheds as shown in **Figure 6-2**.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Prevention through education continues to be an important activity for invasive species control. Clean Boat volunteers are having a positive effect on public awareness. Permits for work in public waterways or in areas of land disturbance near waterways should include provisions to clean equipment prior to moving to the next site to prevent the unintentional transport of invasive species. In 2010, Marathon County has entered into a working relationship with the Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development agency to conduct an inventory of lakes and flowages unassociated with the Wisconsin River for aquatic species. The inventory efforts will also involve educational outreach efforts to Park Department employees and students.

Currently, 21 water bodies are infested with aquatic invasive species.



A surface drainage ditch filled with water along a rural road.

Source: CPZ

Pollutant

A pollutant is a substance or energy introduced into the environment that produces undesirable effects or adversely affects the usefulness of a resource.

Groundwater Quality

Groundwater is the primary source of drinking water in Marathon County. Nearly 85% of 762 private well samples collected in Marathon County from 1990-2006 met the health-based drinking water limit for nitrate-nitrogen. Over half of the samples contained 2-10 mg/L of nitrates serve as indicators that land use is affecting groundwater quality. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and DNR reports that 80% of nitrate inputs to wells originate from the agricultural land spreading of nutrients and legume cropping systems.

Pollution and Contamination

Since groundwater gets into the ground at the land surface, it makes sense that what happens on the land surface can have impact on groundwater. A great many land use activities have the potential to impact the natural quality of groundwater. For examples, a landfill may leach contaminants into the ground that end up contaminating groundwater. Gasoline may leak from an underground storage tank into groundwater. Fertilizers and pesticides can seep into the ground from too much application on farm fields, golf courses, or lawns. Intentional dumping or accidental spills of paint, used motor oil, or other chemicals on the ground can result in contaminated ground or surface water.

In areas with many private wells, groundwater contamination is a concern, especially where the soil types are highly permeable. Sources of groundwater contamination, such as landfills, chemical spills, and high nitrates in runoff, are often linked to human activities. The Water Testing Lab at the Marathon County Health Department and the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point monitor public and private drinking water systems and recreational waters and tests for several microbiological and chemical parameters.

One way to measure past contamination is through the WDNR's Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS), which records information about contaminated properties and other activities related to the investigation and cleanup of contaminated soil or groundwater in Wisconsin. As of August 2014, Marathon County had 89 open or conditionally closed sites which fall into a few different categories. The five types of sites tracked include Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites, Environmental Repair (ERP) sites, Spills, Liability Exemption (VPLE) sites, and Abandoned Container site.

Susceptibility of Groundwater to Contaminants

Susceptibility of groundwater to pollutants is the ease with which a contaminant can be transported from the land surface to the top of the groundwater called the "water table". Many materials that overlie the groundwater offer good protection from contaminants that might be transported by infiltrating waters. The amount of protection offered by the overlying material varies depending on the materials. In some areas, the overlying soil and bedrock materials allow contaminants to reach the groundwater more easily than in other areas.

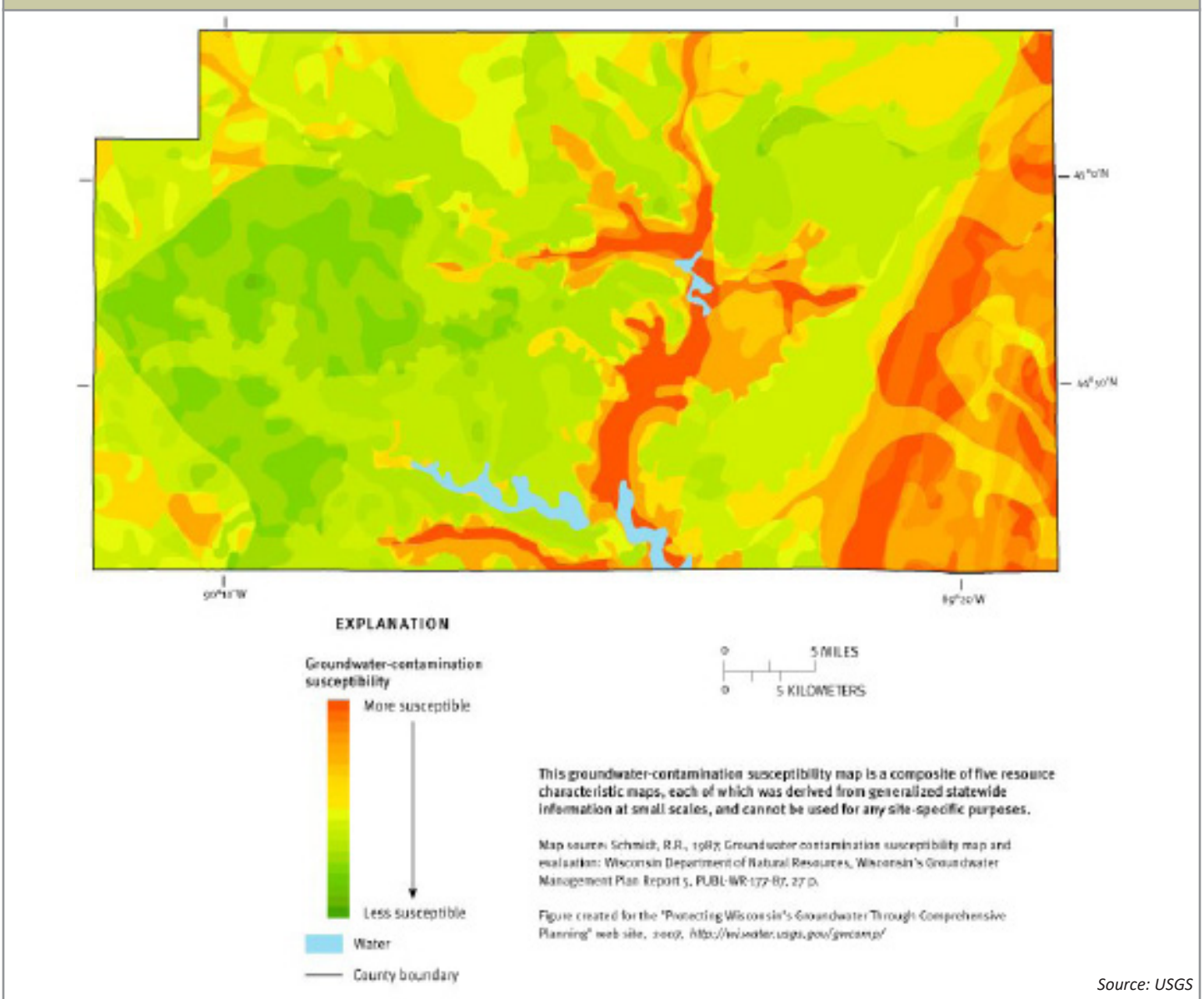
Five physical resource characteristics are used to determine how easily a contaminant can be carried through overlying materials to the groundwater. These characteristics are depth to bedrock, type of bedrock, soil characteristics, depth to water table, and characteristics of surficial deposits. **Figure 6-3** shows a composite map compiling all five of these characteristics into one map which shows the combined score for each area – low scores represent areas that are more susceptible to contamination and high scores represent areas that are less susceptible to contamination.

Water Use

According to a 2007 report by the USGS Wisconsin Water Science Center, the primary uses of water in Marathon County are domestic, livestock, aquaculture, irrigation, industrial, commercial, and public use and losses, see **Figure 6-4**. From 1979 to 2005, total water use in Marathon County has increased from about 40.7 million gallons per day to 68.2 million gallons per day. Industrial water use is the greatest component of use in the county and is responsible for the increase in total water use over this period. The proportion of county water use supplied by groundwater decreased from 46% in 2000 to 34% in 2005.

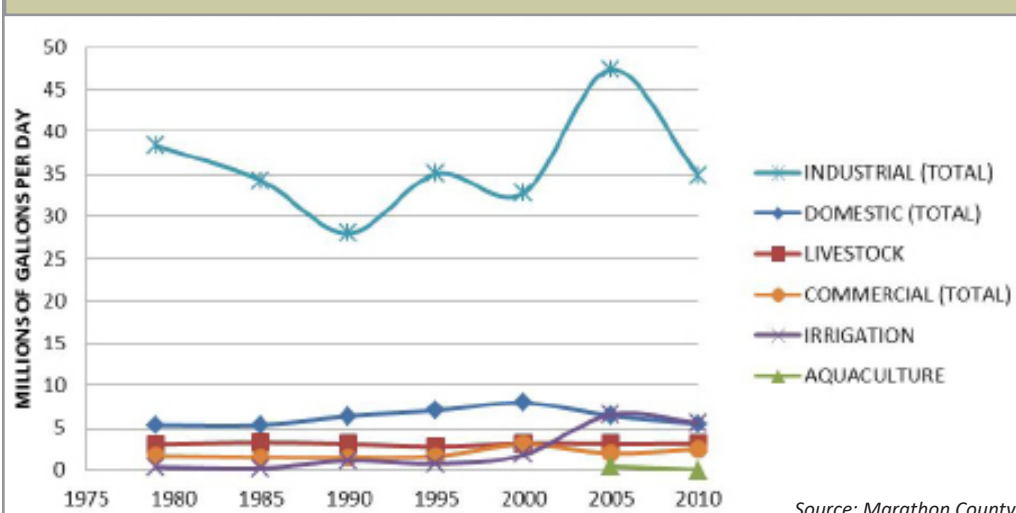
Most water used in Marathon County is drawn up from groundwater via high capacity wells. A high capacity well system is a water supply system that has the potential to draw over 100,000 gallons per day or 70 gallons/minute. (424 high capacity wells in Marathon County: Source DNR, July, 2015). Map 6-4 shows reported high capacity wells by number of wells per square mile. The largest numbers of wells are found in the Wausau metro area and in the agricultural area in the south eastern portion of the County. The four largest wells reported quantities of water higher than most wells by several million gallons. These highest use wells are the Weston Power Plant, the Domtar Mill, the Mosinee Paper Mill, and the City of Wausau.

Figure 6-3: Groundwater Contamination Susceptibility



Source: USGS

Figure 6-4: Water Use by Category



Source: Marathon County

Water and Industry

Marathon County is home to several industries which are heavy water users. Using the water for transportation in industry was a driving factor to settlement in the area. Today, water is used in manufacturing of several types of industries.

Paper Mills

Two paper mills continue to operate in Marathon County, both along the Wisconsin River. The mill in Rothschild originally opened in 1909 and is now operated by Domtar. This facility has one paper machine and one pulp line and has the capacity to produce 136,000 short tons of paper and 65,000 tonnes of pulp annually. The mill in Mosinee, originally founded in 1910, is currently operated by Expera Specialty Solutions. Two of the four high-capacity wells in Marathon County which draw the most water are these two mills.

Paper mills use vast quantities of water every day in their operations. According to a 2009 report sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency, the average water use within pulp and paper mills is approximately 17,000 gallons/ton of paper. Water is necessary in most stages of the pulp and paper making process including raw materials preparation, pulping, chemical recovery, bleaching, and papermaking. Mills also discharge wastewater and often have their own wastewater treatment plants to minimize impacts on local water sources.

Power Plant

The power plant in Weston is operated by Wisconsin Public Service. At this site, three fossil-fueled electric generating units make electricity. Weston 4, the newest unit, began operating in 2008 and is one of the cleanest power plants of its kind in the United States, uses clean coal technologies. Electricity generated at this site is split between Wisconsin Public Service customers (70%) and Dairyland Power Cooperative of La Crosse (30%). The Weston power plant is one of the largest water users in Marathon County.



The Weston 4 power plant.

Thermoelectric power plants, like the facility in Weston, use large amounts of water. As of 2010, more water was required to run power plants than any other industry in the United States, accounting for 49 percent of total industrial water use. Thermoelectric power plants boil water to create steam, which spins turbines to generate electricity. The steam must then be condensed back into water before it can be reused to produce more electricity.

Food Production and Processing

Marathon County has a strong industry in dairy production and is one of Wisconsin's leading milk producers. Animal products require a large quantity of water to produce, in both the raising and feeding of the animals and in the production of consumer products such as milk, cheese, and meat.

Water is used in milk and cheese processing to clean equipment and to cool products during production. Dairy processing also produces wastewater which must be treated. It requires approximately 4.5 gallons of water to produce one gallon of milk, including both raising the cow and processing the product.

The meat processing industry is a high water user. Meat processing plants primarily use water for sanitizing animal holding areas, meat washing, chilling, waste fluming, and cleaning and disinfecting equipment. Typical water use in the processing of pork and cattle varies from around 1,000 to 10,000 gallons per ton of product. Meat processing also generates wastewater which must be treated before leaving the facility.

Water and Agriculture

Farms are major users of water, accounting for 70 percent of freshwater use worldwide. Crop farming in the eastern half of Marathon County requires irrigation and accounts for most of the high capacity wells found in that area on [Map 6-4](#).

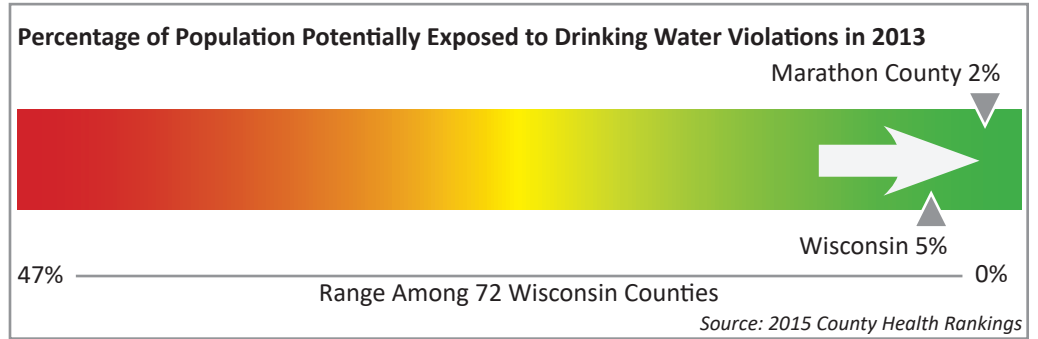
On dairy farms, water is used for animal consumption, milk cooling, cleaning and sanitizing equipment, cow cooling, irrigating crops, producing value added products, moving manure, and cleaning barns through flush systems. The average dairy cow drinks 43.6 gallons of water per day and requires 6.3 gallons per day for cleaning, a total of almost 50 gallons per cow.

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) Marathon County is home to nine permitted CAFOs as of 2014 according to the WDNR. CAFOs congregate animals, feed, manure and urine, dead animals, and production operations on a small land area. These operations require large quantities of water for animal consumption, cleaning, and other uses. Runoff from CAFOs can have negative impacts to water quality due to the amount of animal waste on site.

Residential Use

Water is also used directly by people for drinking, bathing, washing, and other regular activities. Most incorporated municipalities in Marathon County have a water utility which provides water to residents; see the Infrastructure chapter for more information on water utilities. High capacity wells in the City of Wausau account for one of the top four largest drawing well areas.

Residents in rural areas rely on private wells for their water.



Water-based Recreation and Tourism

Marathon County is the home of many popular water-based outdoor recreation activities including boating, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, and fishing. The County is a destination for these activities, with people traveling from around the region to participate in them. Water-based recreational activities depend on safe, clean County lakes and streams for their continued success.

Map 6-5 identifies the shoreland jurisdiction areas throughout the County, where protections are in place to protect waters.

The surface waters of Marathon County are used recreationally by fishermen. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) notes fishery areas, and the locations waters for popular fish such as musky and trout. Marathon County has five identified fishery areas and one rearing station. The fishery areas are located on Big Rib River, Four Mile Creek, Freeman Creek, Plover River, and Spranger Creek. These areas are noted for their fish populations including brook trout, brown trout, smallmouth bass, and forage species. Marathon County has hundreds of miles of classified fishing rivers and streams and thousands of acres of designated fishing lakes.



Fishing on a lake in Marathon County.

Issues

- **Protect Water Quality.** There are numerous regulations and/or incentive programs at the County, State and Federal level aimed at protecting water resources from contamination from non-point sources such as farm runoff and soil erosion. One of the continuing challenges is ensuring coordinated and effective enforcement of the various regulations. In addition, some areas in or immediately adjacent to the Wausau metro area are experiencing strong development demand. Unrestricted or insensitive development can negatively impact water quality. Development in areas without sufficient infrastructure, in well recharge areas, or shoreland areas should be carefully controlled to minimize impacts to water resources.
- **Water Contamination.** While the quality of the groundwater in Marathon County is generally very good, contamination has occurred in some areas, usually as a result of human activities. The County is particularly concerned about non-point sources of pollution, including failing septic systems, urban runoff, soil erosion, manure runoff, nitrates and other chemicals in runoff. The County is currently addressing some of these through development of the TMDL plan. While the County Health Department laboratory analyzes samples from wells collected through voluntary means, the lab does not test for herbicides and pesticides. Where samples have been taken, evidence of these chemicals has been found at levels that could pose health concerns. This suggests that a more proactive approach to water quality monitoring may be needed to identify the location and extent of potential water contamination problems.
- **Large scale livestock operations and Impact on Water Quality.** Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) are large scale (over 1000 animal units) agricultural operations where animals are kept and raised in confined situations. Medium Animal Feeding Operations are livestock operations with over 500 animal units. These types of operations congregate animals, feed, manure and urine, dead animals, and production operations on a small land area. Runoff from CAFOs can have very negative impacts on water quality because of the sheer concentration of pollutant sources in one area.
- **Upcoming TMDLs.** Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) are standards which describe the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards. WDNR is currently implementing a plan to improve water quality in the Wisconsin River Basin, which includes all but the south eastern corner of Marathon County. Implementation of the TMDLs will improve water quality in the Wisconsin River basin, but it will require significant changes to address runoff from agricultural, municipal, and industrial sources.

Water Quality and Quantity Goal and Objectives

Water Quality and Quantity Goal: The water resources in Marathon County are of the highest quality, for the safety of residents and the health of aquatic ecosystems, and are protected from damaging behaviors like overuse and pollution.

Objectives:

1. Protect and enhance surface water resources and natural habitat areas.
2. Manage lake and reservoir resources to balance concerns of shoreland residents, users, and local businesses.
3. Protect and enhance the quantity and quality of potable groundwater and potable surface water supplies.
4. Reduce agricultural nonpoint runoff to surface water (soil sediment, organics, and nutrients).

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Section Two Safest



- Chapter Seven** **Public Safety**
- Chapter Eight** **Infrastructure**
- Chapter Nine** **Land Use**

Chapter Seven

Public Safety



The welfare and protection of the general public is the mission of public safety. Organizations that provide public safety services to Marathon County are covered in this chapter including law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, and emergency management departments. Due to its size and central location, Marathon County is seen as a leader and strong partner in many public safety initiatives throughout northern Wisconsin.

Previous Plans and Studies

Marathon County Hazard Mitigation Plan – 2011

The Marathon County Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted in June of 2011 and will be updated in 2016. The plan is undergoing revision with input from the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) and a local planning agency to provide an overview of the planning area including land use, transportation system, and critical community facilities. The plan then conducts a risk assessment for the hazards which could affect Marathon County and provides mitigation strategies to reduce the impact hazards could have. The hazards which pose the greatest risk to Marathon County include winter storms, tornadoes, floods, fires, transportation accidents, and hazardous materials incidents.

Public Safety Services

Law Enforcement Services

Sheriff's Office

The Sheriff's Office consists of 205 employees working in five different Divisions: Administration; Communications; Corrections; Investigations; and Patrol. In addition to the five divisions, the Sheriff's Department also has several special teams with special duties that are not specifically assigned to any division. These specialized units are the S.W.A.T. Team, the Dive/Rescue Team, the Bomb Squad, and the Crisis Negotiation Team. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office has several special assignments including the K-9 Program, the Honor Guard, The Crash Reconstruction team, Animal Control, and Crime Stoppers, among others.

The department takes charge and custody of the jail and persons therein, and keeps records of all prisoners committed, charged, and/or convicted of any arrests. The department must enforce all federal and state laws and county ordinance pertaining to traffic and crimes.

Administration Division

The Administration Division is the Sheriff's Department headquarters, and is the office of the Sheriff and Chief Deputy. The division provides the direction, coordination, and control necessary to ensure successful accomplishment of the department's mission and vision. This division oversees the department wide budget and assists in the strategic planning of resources and services across the department. All department records are stored in Sheriff's Administration. The Administrative Division also oversees Courthouse Security.

Investigations Division

The Investigations Division is comprised of sworn law enforcement officers and is responsible for conducting criminal investigations within the jurisdiction of the Marathon County Sheriff's Department. Encompassed within the realm of the Investigations Division are six entities with specific roles.

- General Investigations Unit
The General Investigations unit's function primarily focuses on Crimes against Persons and Property Crimes involving adult offenders.

- **Juvenile/Sensitive Crimes Unit**
The Juvenile/Sensitive Crimes unit's function primarily focuses on crimes in which juveniles are identified as a victim or an offender, as well as any sensitive crimes. Most of the sensitive crimes (child abuse/neglect cases, sex crimes, and elder abuse) are investigated via a joint effort and team approach with investigative social workers from the Marathon County Department of Social Services. The investigations focus on the protection and welfare of the victims, as well as the identification and prosecution of the offenders.
- **Special Investigations Unit**
The Special Investigations Unit is a multi-agency team comprised of investigators from the Marathon County Sheriff's Department, Wausau Police Department, and the Everest Metropolitan Police Department. The primary function of the unit is the investigation of controlled substance crimes within Marathon County.
- **Evidence Technician**
The Evidence Technician's duties include control of the intake, processing, and disposal of property/evidence in possession of the Marathon County Sheriff's Department, processing crime scenes for evidence, and coordinating the processing of evidence with other law enforcement agencies.
- **Warrant/Identification Unit**
The Warrant/Identification unit's primary function is the management of the Marathon County Sheriff's Department warrant files and records, and the transportation of inmates.
- **Civil Process Unit**
The Civil Process unit's primary function is the service of civil process. Civil Process is the writ or mandate that serves as the means used for bringing a defendant to court to answer in an action or proceeding, civil or criminal.
- **Forensic Detective**
The Forensic Detective is responsible for the investigation of crimes involving electronic devices including computers, cellular phones, tablets and other electronic devices and media storage.

Patrol Division

The Patrol Division is responsible for the protection of life and property, and the enforcement of federal, state, and county laws and ordinances. The patrol function involves the prevention and intervention of adult and juvenile crime, rendering assistance to citizens in need of service, apprehension of law violators, and traffic enforcement. Patrol responds to calls for services as dispatched, and prepares reports on action taken or other documentation, for use in recording keeping and prosecution purposes.

Additional functions of the Patrol Division include K-9; ATV, Boat, and Snowmobile Patrol; and safety programs for youth and adults in ATV, Boat, Hunter, and Snowmobile safety. The Patrol Division also has a Reserve Deputy Program which assists the regular force during peak activity on weekends and holidays.

Local Police Jurisdictions

The incorporated communities in Marathon County are mostly patrolled by their own police departments. Most of the unincorporated towns utilize the services of the County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement. Local jurisdictions are shown on **Map 7-1**.



A patrol officer providing traffic assistance at an event. Source: Sheriff Dept.

Emergency Services

Emergency services in Marathon County consist of a very large framework of Police Departments, Fire Departments, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), shown on **Maps 7-1, 7-2, and 7-3**. Most of the cities and villages in Marathon County maintain their own police and fire departments. Towns and small municipalities rely on the Marathon County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services.

The local hospitals also provide advanced life support via ambulance and helicopter. Training and coordination with local fire departments aids in the fast response to critical incidents with the latest technology and life-saving equipment.

Fire Services

The cities, villages, and towns of Marathon County each have their own fire department or are part of a multi-jurisdictional fire department. **Map 7-2** shows the boundaries of the fire services in Marathon County as well as the location of fire stations. Most fire departments also provide emergency response service, hazardous materials response, and public education, among other public services. Most of the fire departments in Marathon County are made up of volunteers, with the exception of the City of Wausau and a few other municipalities in the metro area. Many volunteer fire departments, especially in the rural areas of the county, are struggling to have full staffing during the day, due to the number of volunteers with full time jobs who work in other communities.

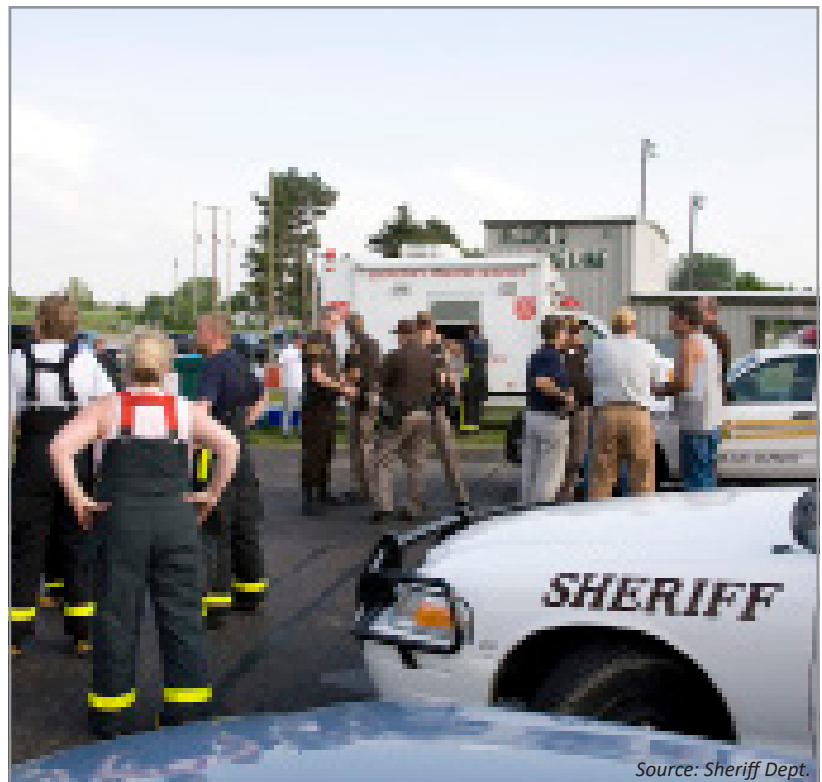
Emergency Medical Services

Emergency medical service is provided by most municipalities in conjunction with fire services. **Map 7-3** shows the emergency response providers in Marathon County. In addition to professional emergency medical responders, many municipalities have volunteer First Responders who are trained to provide immediate lifesaving actions in their community or neighborhood while waiting for an ambulance or emergency response team can get there.

Air transport teams can pick up patients from health care facilities and accident sites and get them to appropriate care as quickly as possible. The two major hospitals in Marathon County, Aspirus and Ministry, each have air transport capabilities for emergency medical needs. Aspirus's MedEvac Transport helicopter is located in Wausau. Ministry's Spirit transport helicopter is based out of Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield.

Rescue and Other Services

The Sheriff's Office's Dive/Rescue Team is the only dive team in Marathon County. The Team provides dive support to all fire and law enforcement agencies in Marathon County. The Dive team is capable of diving in all weather conditions to perform search and recovery, surface rescue, and underwater investigations. The Marathon County Emergency Response Team and the Wausau Fire Department's Regional Response Hazardous Materials Team both provide hazardous materials response along with technical rescue capability to supplement local fire department responses to structure collapse, trench collapse, ropes, and confined space incidents.



The Sheriff Department, fire services, and others at an emergency response training event. *Source: Sheriff Dept.*

Communications

Communications systems are vital to public safety, especially regarding 911 communications. The primary issues regarding public safety communications include the use of mobile data, next generation 911 technology, and uniform addressing.

Communication Center

The Marathon County Sheriff's Department Communication Center is the primary communications Center for all police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) agencies in Marathon County. All 911 calls for Marathon County are handled by this center. The Communications Division services 84 user agencies, 38 EMS agencies, 33 fire departments, and 12 law enforcement agencies, and also provides alert paging support for the Emergency Management Office, District Attorney, and Medical Examiner's Office. The dispatch center is a 24/7 operation and has a minimum of 5 personnel on duty at all times. In 2013, the Communications Center received over 152,000 calls for service and 12,386 emergency 911 calls.

Marathon County Communication Center operates 8 positions of which 5 to 7 are normally manned. The communication system consists of 20 towers, 19 towers are linked by microwave and one tower is linked with fiber optic cable. The towers not only provide radio service but also provide high speed connectivity to the county's computer and phone network. Additionally, five P25 digital radio channels also have encryption to provide service for 12 law enforcement agencies. While Wausau Fire has a dedicated dispatch and operations channel, a radio channel for paging and another channel for fire and EMS are simulcast countywide to emergency services agencies outside the City of Wausau.

The Communications Center is responsible for activating public warning systems. The choice to install a warning siren is strictly a local decision made by a city, village, or town.

Dispatch has the ability to communicate over 26 radio channels. Some additional radio channels not listed above are for County Highway, City-County Park Department, North Central Health Care, Wausau DPW, County Jail, Children Secure Detention, and the Central Wisconsin Airport.

Emergency Response

Emergency response is the organizing, coordinating, and directing of available resources in order to respond to the event and bring the emergency under control

Many additional radio channels are maintained and operated for interagency use and others for agencies outside the County's dispatch reach. Marathon County also maintains a 3-site, low speed mobile data radio system to provide mobile computer operation for most of the County should the cellular network fail or become congested. This back-up data system currently operates the GPS vehicle locality map for all law enforcement. All law enforcement radios have an Emergency button that gives officers information when activated. This, coupled with the GPS location system, provides an extra layer of protection.

Marathon County's radio system consists of subscriber equipment manufactured by Tait, Harris, and Motorola. The microwave equipment is supplied by Alcatel, Exalt, Motorola, and GE MDS. The Sheriff's Department has a radio technician on staff to maintain the equipment.

The Future of Emergency Communications

Public safety officers, especially police officers, need high speed mobile data to do their job well. Using the general data network can be problematic if it goes down or if it is overloaded due to high use in emergency situations. Other technology advances use mobile data. The future solution is to have a dedicated mobile network for public safety use. FirstNet is the First Responder Network Authority, authorized by Congress to "build, operate, and maintain the first high-speed, nationwide broadband network dedicated to public safety." Planning is underway for FirstNet to fulfill its mission across the United States.

Traditional 911 dispatches rely exclusively on spoken descriptions provided by callers. Next generation 911 dispatches will be equipped to receive other types of media from callers including text messages, images, and videos. Some counties are preparing their communications centers to receive Next Gen 911 messages. This new technology has the potential to dramatically alter the way dispatchers and public safety officers do their jobs. Dispatchers will have much more information to distill rapidly to provide to police, fire, and EMS officers.

Citizens expect the County and its emergency response partners to get the right response to the right person at the right time in order to protect people, property, and our environmental resources. Marathon County has over 58,000 address points, including households and businesses. These address are often difficult to locate for dispatchers and public safety personnel in an emergency due to the county-wide multi address grid system. Efforts have been made by the Marathon County Public Safety Committee to educate citizens, business owners, and public officials about the outdated addressing system. Marathon County will be replacing its Land Records System and Tiburon System (law enforcement software). The County recognizes that the installation of these software systems should complement each other with a reliable and uniform addressing system. A Uniform County Address System will be considered for action in 2016 by the County Board.

Next Generation 911

Next Generation 911 (NG911) is an Internet Protocol (IP)-based system that allows digital information, such as voice, photos, videos, and text messages, to flow seamlessly from the public, through the 911 network, and on to emergency responders.

Partnerships

Individual government resources alone cannot meet all the needs of those impacted by crime, disasters, and other events. There are times when the assistance of partners are needed. Partnerships around public safety cross county departments, local municipalities and organizations, nearby counties, and state and federal organizations. In some emergency situations, non-governmental agencies such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army also play a role. Many public safety partnerships are found in the Marathon County Sheriff's Office, including:

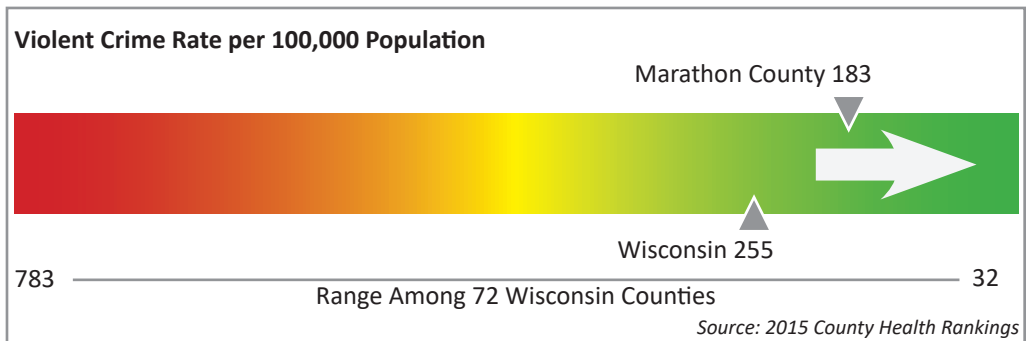
- SWAT – includes members from the Sheriff's Office, other metro area police departments, Fire/EMS
- Bomb Team – Marathon and Oneida Sheriff's Office staff; responds to all of Northern WI
- Crisis Negotiation Team – 911, Detective Bureau, Jail, Patrol
- Dive Team
- Crash Reconstruction Team – includes Sheriff's Office, Wausau and Everest Metro PD
- Drug Unit – Sheriff's Office, National Guard, Wausau PD, Everest Metro PD
- North Central Emergency Response Team (NCERT) – preplanned response team
- Drug Cases – FBI, HIDTA, DEA, DCI, US Attorney's Office

Marathon County is part of the North East Wisconsin Public Safety Communications group (NEWCOM). NEWCOM identifies the communication needs of north east Wisconsin to allow the 500+ law enforcement and public safety organizations in the region to communicate effectively with one another. Marathon County is one of 16 counties involved in NEWCOM and has been a member since 2006.

Crime and Corrections

Crime and Drugs Crime-Related Factors

Prevention and intervention of crime is a responsibility of the Patrol Division of the Sheriff's Office and the Investigations Division conducts criminal investigations of major crimes and other cases referred by the Patrol Division. The most common crime incidents that lead to arrest include theft, assault, and disorderly conduct.



Technological advances in recent years have altered the way evidence is gathered in crime investigations. In 2013, the Sheriff's Office added a new Detective Forensic Examiner to the Investigations Division. Since 2012, nearly all cases dealt with some type of technological component. Cell phones are the focus of many forensic technology examinations. Whenever a case was investigated, if a cell phone was used, it usually held some type of evidence relative to the case which had to be extracted, reviewed, and preserved.

Drug-Related Factors

The investigation of controlled substance crimes within Marathon County is the primary function of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) of the Sheriff's Office. The SIU investigates cases related to heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, cocaine, pharmaceuticals, and other controlled substances. In 2013, SIU worked 234 incidents and had 252 arrests, referring 444 charges to the District Attorney's Office.

Marathon County detectives investigated 16 drug related deaths in 2013, not including cases involving THC or alcohol. Forty-five percent of all the accidental deaths are attributed to drugs and/or acute alcohol intoxication. Thirty-five percent of all motor vehicle fatalities were attributed to drugs and/or acute alcohol intoxication. Twenty-five percent of all deaths investigated in 2013 were attributed to acute alcohol intoxication.

Thirteen drug overdose deaths were investigated in 2013, more than the six in 2012 and eight in 2011. In 2013, a wider array of drugs were involved in overdose deaths than in previous years, including heroin, polypharmaceuticals, methamphetamine, cocaine, morphine, fentanyl, huffing, and alcohol.

Wausau Crime Laboratory

The State of Wisconsin Department of Justice has three crime labs located around the State. Wausau is home to the Wausau Crime Laboratory and serves all of northern Wisconsin. The lab provides quality forensic analyses in the interest of criminal justice. Areas of analysis include blood alcohol analysis, controlled substances, crime scene response, fingerprint identification, and forensic imaging. The Wausau Crime Lab opened in 1991 and is located at 7100 West Stewart Ave in the City of Wausau.

Courthouse

The Marathon County Courthouse is located in downtown Wausau and is the home of Marathon County's six courtrooms, Clerk of Courts, County Clerk, District Attorney, Medical Examiner, Sheriff's Office, Jail, and Emergency Management Office.

District Attorney

The District Attorney is the prosecutor in all cases of crime or county traffic ordinance violations committed in Marathon County. The District Attorney staff works with the Sheriff's Office to ensure the effective, efficient, and uniform enforcement of the criminal laws and the administration of criminal justice throughout Marathon County.

Corrections and Jail

The Sheriff's Department handles the corrections and jail duties for Marathon County. See Sheriff section above. The Corrections Division is responsible for the Marathon County Jail (Adult Detention), Juvenile Detention (Secure), and the Juvenile Shelter Home (Non-Secure).



The Marathon County Courthouse.

Jail Facility and Adult Detention

The Marathon County Jail serves all law enforcement jurisdictions within Marathon County and also secures inmates who are apprehended for other law enforcement agencies throughout Wisconsin and the U.S. The jail facility opened in 1988, was renovated in 2000, and currently has 279 beds. The maximum capacity of the jail is 279 inmates, but the Wisconsin Department of Corrections recommends that the average daily population stay within 80 of total capacity, which would be 223 inmates. In recent years, the jail has been at capacity and the Sheriff's Office has had to house inmates in facilities in Lincoln County and Shawano County.

The demographics of the jail population consisted of 77% male and 23% female inmates in 2013. The racial breakdown of inmates in 2013 consisted of 81% Caucasian, 10% Black, 5% Asian, and 4% Native American.

The Marathon County Sheriff's Office 2013 Annual Report attributes the high jail population to a changing criminal element and the impact of illegal drugs. For example, 2013 had an 11 percent increase in felony arrests over 2012. Additionally, the average length of stay in the jail increased 17 percent in 2013 over 2012.

Adult detention also includes other programs active beyond the jail. For example, the Huber Program allows sentenced inmates to leave the facility for work-release, education, and job search. Marathon County inmates in the Huber Program may be outside the facility for up to 12 hours per day, six days per week.

Juvenile Detention

The Secure Detention center is located within the Marathon County Juvenile Facility and is considered a secure placement for juveniles, similar to the adult jail. Reasons for being admitted to a secure facility generally include criminal activity. The facility can house up to 20 children ages 10-17 years old, which includes boys and girls.

The Shelter Home is also located within the Marathon County Juvenile Facility and is considered a non-secure placement for juveniles. This means that children are not locked in and do have some freedom even though there are rules to follow in the structured setting. Children at the Shelter Home, typically ages 10-17, are admitted for reasons like abuse and neglect, runaway, and awaiting placement in a foster home, group home, or residential treatment center. The Shelter Home can house up to 8 children, which includes boys and girls.

Jail Diversion Programs

The Electronic Monitoring Program is a jail diversion program which removes minimum risk inmates from the jail and electronically monitors their location while under in-home detention.

In addition to prosecuting cases in court, the District Attorney's office runs several court diversion programs. These programs afford low-risk, first time offenders the opportunity to avoid criminal charges and/or convictions if they agree to successfully complete a customized agreement that the District Attorney believes will be beneficial to them in hopes that they will not repeat criminal behavior in the future. The two types of agreements are Deferred Prosecution Agreements and Deferred Entry of Judgment Agreements. The conditions of the deferred agreements are often counseling, programming, education, and community service. Another type of court diversion is the Community Conference Program which uses restorative justice as part of the agreement.

Recidivism

Recidivism is a relapse into criminal behavior, measured by criminal acts that result in rearrest, reconviction, or a return to jail within a three-year period following initial release. New system was recently implemented to track recidivism in the local context. At the time of this plan's adoption, not enough data has been collected to provide detailed numbers.

Recidivism

A person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime, resulting in re-arrest, reconviction, or a return to prison.

Vehicle and Road Safety

A strong transportation system must be safe for all users including cars, trucks, and pedestrians. This section addresses a few highway safety issues dealing with interchanges, access points, speeds, railroad crossings, and vehicle crashes.

Freeway Interchanges

The major freeway interchanges in Marathon County are found where USH 51 and STH 29 intersect in the Wausau metro area. In the past, these interchanges have been the location of several high profile crashes. Both interchanges were recently redesigned and reconstructed to make several safety improvements.

Highway Access

Access points are locations where major roads are intersected by minor roads or driveways. The main safety concern with access points regards entering and exiting traffic and higher speeds on major roads. Some issues that should be addressed include the higher accident rate at at-grade intersections such as are found along rural segments of STH 29, the multitude of driveways and cross-streets along busy commercial roads such as CTH JJ in Weston, and high speeds on narrow roads often with obscured sight lines such as CTH C between CTH O and STH 34.

Vehicle Speeds

The primary safety concern regarding vehicle speeds comes when drivers are moving at a speed very different, either faster or slower, than most traffic. These dramatic variations create an unpredictable driving environment. Very high speeds are a regular concern in both urban and rural environments. The farm equipment or horse and buggies found in the rural areas of Marathon County travel at very low speeds. Where high speed traffic and slow farm traffic meet, safety is a concern.

Railroad Crossings

Safety is a major concern where vehicles cross railroad tracks. Marathon County has 99 public, open, at-grade road-rail crossings. Trains require long stopping distances, and are often unable to stop before hitting a vehicle which stops over the tracks. A few problem rail crossings are found in the Village of Kronenwetter and the City of Mosinee. In both instances railroad tracks run parallel to a major road and traffic sometimes waits on the track crossing to merge onto another road. Numerous safety concerns occur in the Town of Knowlton where trains block roads which provide access of emergency services to residents. Residents, town officials and law enforcement continue to try to work with the railroad to solve this safety problem.

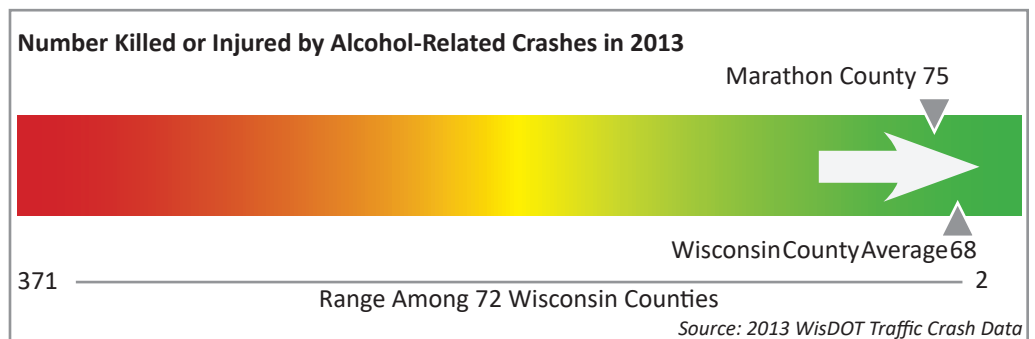
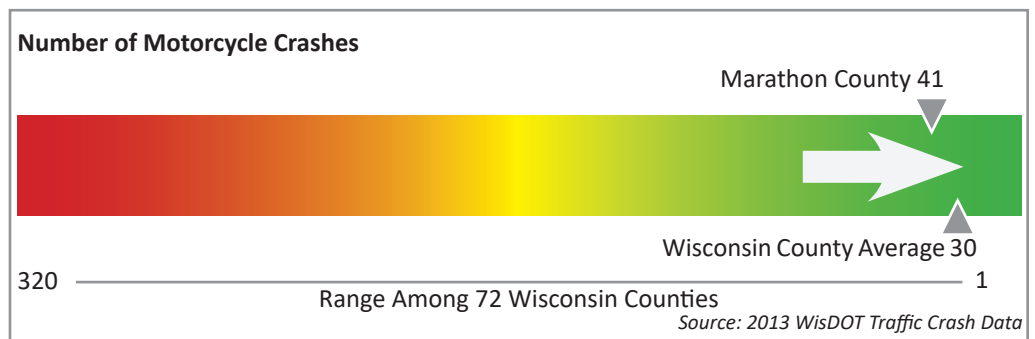
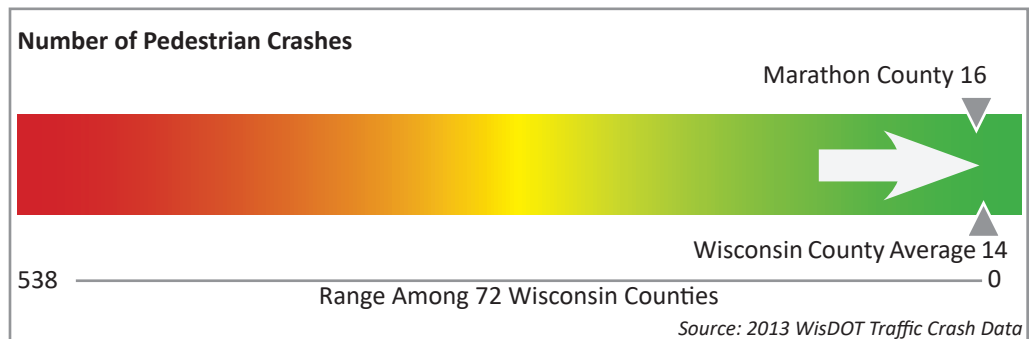
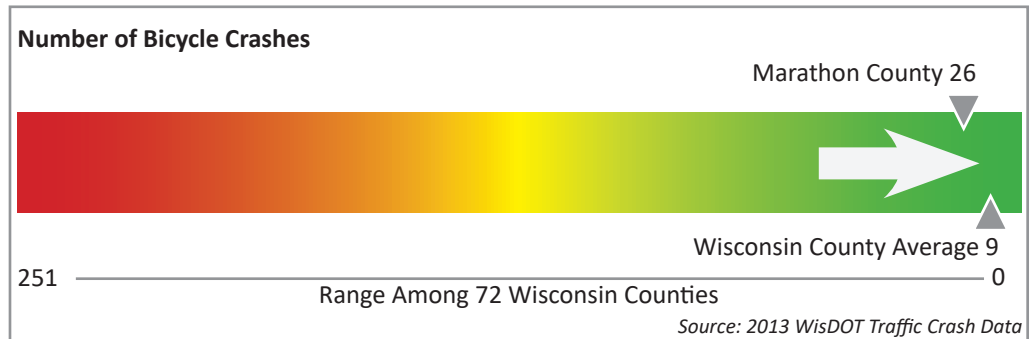
Vehicle Crashes

According to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, a crash is “an occurrence that originates or terminates on a traffic way, which involves at least one motor vehicle in transport, and results in injury or death to any person or damage to any property.” Crashes can involve automobiles, motorcycles, trains, bicycles, and pedestrians.

According to the 2013 LIFE Report for Marathon County, 3,060 traffic crashes took place in 2011. Alcohol was a factor in 19.4 percent of crashes and deer were involved in 18.7 percent. Motorcycles were involved in 44 crashes, bicycles in 23, pedestrians in 18, and school buses in 12.

The Marathon County Sheriff’s Office investigated 1,516 traffic crashes in 2013. This is up almost 200 from the 1,318 crashes in 2012. Of the 2013 crashes, 756 had property damage only, 244 involved personal injuries, 449 were involved deer, and 12 accidents were fatalities. Crashes involving property damage took place almost twice as often in the winter months.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services publishes Public Health Profiles for all counties. The 2011 Marathon County report shows that 961 persons were injured in motor vehicle crashes in 2011, including 43 motorcyclists, 19 bicyclists, and 19 pedestrians. In addition to the persons injured, 16 persons were killed, including 6 people in alcohol-related crashes, one bicyclist, and one pedestrian.



Hazard Mitigation

The Marathon County Emergency Management department is responsible for the implementation of the Emergency Response Plans for the County. These plans deal with preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation of natural and man-made hazards.

According to the National Climatic Data Center, between 1950 and 2010 Marathon County experienced 290 weather-related hazards. The most common hazards were hail, snow or ice, tornados, extreme temperature, flood, and lightning. Tornado, lightning, and hail hazards caused over \$12 million in property damage each. Flood caused over \$56 million in crop damage and snow or ice caused over \$15 million in crop damage.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is responsible for forest and wild fires in most areas of Marathon County through five wildfire districts. On average, Marathon County has 27 forest fires every year, with an average of 52 acres burned per year.

Marathon County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2011-2016

Hazard mitigation is defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as “any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from natural hazards”. Hazard mitigation is the preventative component of the responsibilities of the Marathon County Emergency Management department. Mitigation activities are actions that will prevent or eliminate losses, even if an incident does occur. Mitigation can reduce or eliminate the need for an emergency response and greatly reduce the recovery period.

Marathon County has adopted Hazard Mitigation Plans in 2006 and 2011. Federal regulations require that local hazard mitigation plans must be reviewed, updated to reflect changes in development, progress in local mitigation efforts, and changes in priorities, and reapproved every five years for local jurisdictions to be able to receive hazard mitigation funding. A hazard mitigation plan update is currently underway.

Although Marathon County has the potential to experience a myriad of different risks from both natural and manmade hazards, the Hazard Mitigation Plan concentrates on those hazards that have the greatest potential to impact people in Marathon County and also focuses on impacts to vulnerable structures/facilities and vulnerable populations. The hazards of little or no risk to Marathon County include earthquake, land subsidence, and landslide. Potential hazards addressed by the plan include winter storms, tornadoes, flooding, dam failure, fire, transportation incidents, severe thunderstorms, agricultural/hydrologic drought, hazardous materials incidents, and groundwater contamination.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan includes a comprehensive table of goals and possible mitigation actions to achieve those goals for each of the jurisdictions involved in the Plan, which is most of Marathon County. The mitigation actions are intended to be carried out by Marathon County and its cities, villages, and towns. The plan summarizes each mitigation action, parties responsible for its implementation, and approximates the cost and timeframe for each action. Actions were prioritized as high, medium, or low based on level of need, available staff and funding, cost, and other factors.

Hazard Mitigation

Hazard mitigation is any action taken to reduce or eliminate long term risk to people and property from natural hazards.



Storm damage to a house from a downed tree.

Source: Sheriff Dept.

Issues

- **Jail Population.** The jail has a capacity of 279, but state mandates require jails be kept at no more than 80% capacity. As of April 2015, Marathon County had 71 people housed in jails in other counties including Taylor, Lincoln, and Shawano. The Department spends approximately \$700,000 annually to house inmates outside the county. In addition to being beyond capacity, the current jail is an aging facility with issues of its own. Efforts to address jail overpopulation include electronic monitoring and sentence reduction programs, which saved over \$450,000 in 2014. These programs could be expanded; however, not all of the jailed population is eligible, due to the nature of their crimes, some of which have mandatory sentences or restrictions.
- **Drugs.** The drug unit is never caught up, due to the high number of cases. The volume of work is taxing resources. Drug cases are closely linked with property crimes. Marathon County is a state hub for methamphetamine and also sees many marijuana, heroin, and cocaine cases.
- **Next Generation 911.** Dispatches are moving to Next Generation 911, which has the ability to receive text messages, photos and videos. Marathon County is currently not fully prepared to receive these messages. The County currently has E-911 capabilities and will be moving to NG911 after an update to the Records Management System in 2016. Additionally, Marathon County does not currently have a backup dispatch location. Plans are in place to construct a mobile dispatch center.
- **Forensic Technology Experts.** The Department currently has only one person trained to gather forensic evidence from technology. Due to the prevalence of technology, this is likely to be a growing sector in the future.
- **Volunteer Emergency Services.** Many of the fire and EMS services in Marathon County are staffed by volunteers. These agencies are struggling to respond to emergency calls due to fewer new volunteers, aging existing volunteers, and a larger percentage of volunteers who work full time jobs outside the community and thus are unable to respond to calls during the day.
- **Recidivism.** The Sheriff's Office and County Administration are working together to curb recidivism in Marathon County. Marathon County has known for years that a significant factor in recidivism rates in Marathon County is the result of serious untreated Mental Health issues that affect our community and the Jail population. The Sheriff's Office, County Board and County Administration have taken steps to provide higher levels of service in the Marathon County Jail in an effort to curb recidivism rates. The addition of a Social Worker, Mental Health professionals, and a psychologist have already proven beneficial and the long-term benefits of these services are yet to be evaluated due to their recent implementation.

Public Safety Goal and Objectives

Public Safety Goal: Marathon County is a safe and secure community for all residents and visitors.

Objectives:

1. Provide cost-effective and high quality public safety services.
2. Mitigate the impacts of the alcohol abuse, heroin, and methamphetamine epidemics in Marathon County through evidence-based practices.
3. Reduce recidivism.
4. Improve road safety and reduce crashes.
5. Plan for appropriate disaster mitigation preparedness, response, and recovery.

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Chapter Eight Infrastructure



Infrastructure includes the essential physical structures and facilities required for a community to operate and thrive. These structures and facilities include the transportation network or roads, rail, and other means of moving people and goods, as well as the public and private utility systems for water and sewer, power, and telecommunications, among others.

Recent Plans and Studies

Wausau Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan – 2015

This plan incorporates the 5 E's concept of planning for non-motorized transportation in the Wausau metro area, they are: Education, Encouragement, Engineering, Enforcement, and Evaluation. The plan also uses a perceived cyclist stress factor for the roads to help determine which roads are more desirable for people to ride on. These then are used to create a list of infrastructure improvements for the metro communities to develop and enhance their non-motorized transportation network.

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan – 2014

This plan analyzes service gaps and needs in public transit and human services transportation then proposes strategies to address the gaps and needs. A five-year work plan was written to cover 2014 through 2018.

Wausau MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan – 2009

This 20-year comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan proposes recommendations and infrastructure improvements for non-motorized transportation. The plan also identifies various funding opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

2025 Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan – 2007

The sewer service area plan helps communities look at wastewater collection systems to adequately accommodate growth, to protect the communities' water supply through sound planning, and to assure that growth occurs in a cost-effective manner. The plan was written in 2007 and is due for an update shortly.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Wausau Metropolitan Area – 2011

One of the requirements of the MPO by the federal legislation is the development of a LRTP for the urbanized area. The LRTP is prepared every five years by the MPO, the County, and WisDOT. The Plan identifies the current conditions in the area and identifies and recommends solutions to the issues regarding the deficiencies of the roadways in the metro area. The LRTP recommendations are based on the relationship between land use policy and transportation facilities and services, including roadways, transit, bikeways, pedestrian ways, air, inter-city bus, and the movement of goods by air, rail, and truck. The current LRTP was adopted in 2011 with a planning horizon of 2035.

Transportation Improvement Program – 2013

The current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was created in 2013 by the Wausau MPO and is be updated annually. The TIP is developed by the MPO in cooperation with the State, affected transit operators, and local communities within the MPO planning boundary. The plan identifies transit and highway projects to be funded over the next four year period.

Metro Ride Transit Development Plan (TDP) – 2012

This plan was prepared for the County of Marathon Metro Ride by the AECOM Technical Services, Inc. and AJM Consulting. The purpose of the TDP process is to evaluate transit service and how it is performing within the residential, employment, and fiscal area enables one to better improve the service to meet the changing mobility needs within the greater Wausau Area. The TDP created a service plan

and a set of operating recommendations to be phased in over the five year period and is supported by a financial plan and ancillary recommendations. The Final Report addressed the socioeconomics and land use characteristics to better understand developing trends which will impact the overall efficiency, level of service, and financial viability of the transit system.

Connections 2030 – 2009

This is Wisconsin's latest long-range, statewide multi-modal transportation plan, written by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). Connections 2030 identifies a series of system-level priority corridors that are critical to Wisconsin's travel patterns and the state's economy. The following priority corridors have been identified with routes through Marathon County:

- The Marshfield/Rapids Connection from Stevens Point to Abbotsford utilizes STH 13 on the west side of the County.
- The Northwoods Connection from Oshkosh to Rhinelander includes USH 45 just outside Marathon County's boundary in Shawano County.
- The POW/MIA Remembrance corridor from Abbotsford to Ashland uses STH 13 on the west side of the County.
- The Wausau Metropolitan Planning Area is overseen by the Wausau Metropolitan Planning Organization and includes all or portions of 17 contiguous villages, cities, or towns in the Wausau Metro area.
- The Wisconsin Heartland corridor from Eau Claire to Green Bay traverses Marathon County from east to west along STH 29.
- The Wisconsin River corridor from Madison to Ironwood, Michigan runs through Marathon County from north to south on I-39/US 51.

Wisconsin Trails Network Plan – 2003

This Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) plan identifies a statewide network of trails and provides guidance to the DNR for land acquisition and development. Many existing trails are developed and operated in partnership with counties. By agreement, the DNR acquires the corridor and the county government develops, operates, and maintains the trail. Two trails are planned which will run through Marathon County: Segment 18 – Tomahawk to Wisconsin Dells, following a power line corridor near Wausau, as an extension of the Hiawatha/Bearskin Trail and Segment 52 – Wausau to Marshfield, along an abandoned rail corridor with significant trail potential.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Non-Urbanized Area of Marathon County – 1996

This plan was developed to identify options for non-motorized transportation in the rural portions of Marathon County. The concept of providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities was discussed by primarily paving a wide shoulder on the County Highways that extended approximately 2 miles from all the cities and villages not in the Wausau metro area. This wide paved shoulder concept has ultimately become a policy of the County Highway Department and the County's Infrastructure Committee.

Transportation

Transportation Organizations

Marathon County Highway Department

The Marathon County Highway Department is responsible for operation, maintenance, and improvements to the County road system. This system currently includes over 600 miles of roadways. Additional major activities of the Highway Department are administration, planning, design, construction, and traffic operations. The Department's function is critical to the provision of the County's transportation facilities.

Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission

Transportation planning in Marathon County is coordinated between the Marathon County Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning (CPZ) staff and the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission, which is the Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); the body designated by the Federal Department of Transportation to be responsible for transportation planning in the metropolitan area. CPZ provides staff for the MPO and also does transportation planning for areas outside the metropolitan area.

In urbanized areas with populations over 50,000 Federal highway and transit statutes require, as a condition for spending federal highway or transit funds, the



Source: Marathon County Central Time
An aerial image of the intersection of Highways 29 and 51 in Wausau.

designation of MPOs which have responsibility for planning, programming and coordination of federal highway and transit investments. The Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission is composed of the chief elected official of the communities that make up the Wausau urbanized area, which include the cities of Mosinee, Schofield and Wausau; the villages of Brokaw, Kronenwetter, Rothschild, and Weston; and the towns of Maine, Mosinee, Rib Mountain, Stettin, Wausau and Weston. Also represented are the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) and the Marathon County Highway Committee.

Road Network

Marathon County is bisected by two major highways: north-south by I-39/USH 51 and east-west by STH 29. The Wausau metropolitan area is located at the crossing of these two major roadways, which provide excellent access to the County. The road network includes over 600 miles of County Roads, 300 miles of State Highways, nearly 100 miles of US Highway, and over 2,500 miles of local and other roads. See **Figure 8-1. Map 8-1** illustrates the road system in Marathon County and identifies the MPO boundary.

The Wausau metro area is the location of the major traffic generators in the County. Much of the remainder of the County consists of rural agricultural lands and small villages generally served by two-lane state and county highways and local roadways. Local roads in villages are mostly paved, while local roads in rural towns may consist of both paved and gravel roads. Map 8-2 looks at the transportation in the metro Wausau area in more detail.

Functional Classification

A functional classification system groups streets and highways into classes according to the character of service they provide. The five classifications are principal arterial, minor arterial, major collector, minor collector, and local road.

The transportation system map, Map 8-1, illustrates the state highways, county highways, and local roads in Marathon County. By the rural system, principal arterials and minor arterials in Marathon County are all state and federal highways, while major collectors are a mix of state and county highways. In the urban areas, arterials also include a few county highways and even several high traffic local roads. Major collectors consist mostly of County roads outside of the City of Wausau. The classification of minor collector is only used in rural areas. Minor collectors make up a relatively small percentage of roadways and generally consist of county roads and some town roads.

Roadway Level of Service (LOS)

Level of Service refers to the amount of traffic and congestion on a roadway. There are six levels of service, from A to F.

A road operating at LOS A has virtually no congestion and traffic moves freely. At LOS F, the worst classification, traffic congestion results in stop-and-go conditions. The amount and type of traffic on a road at any point in time relates to the land uses the roadway serves.

The 2011 Long Range Transportation Plan's 2035 Capacity Deficiency Analysis uses LOS, among other methods, to forecast traffic and vehicle miles traveled. Most of the roadway network in place has adequate capacity to accommodate anticipated growth through 2035.

Roadway Improvements

The State, County, and MPO keep records of planned roadway improvements which have been identified for implementation and for which funding commitments are likely. WisDOT prepares a statewide Six Year Highway Improvement Program; the current plan covers 2015-2020. The MPO prepares a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) every year, identifying projects within the urban area for the next four years. It is important to remember that continually changing needs, funding availability, and political climate affect the ultimate implementation of improvement plans on a year-to-year basis. See those plans for more information.

A major effort underway, which will impact the County for many years, is the upgrade of State Highway (STH) 29 to a freeway. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is currently designing and conducting environmental studies to preserve right-of-way and functionality. As those plans are finalized and constructed there will be changes along the corridor, including future interchanges, overpasses and local road modifications. All of this is being done to maintain a safe and efficient STH 29 as part of the State Highway network. Beyond impacts on the transportation system

Figure 8-1: Road Network

Road Type	Miles
County	633
Forest	6
Local	2,544
Park	3
Private	16
State	309
Federal	97
Total Miles	3,607

Source: NCWRPC GIS

Level of Service

Level of service (LOS) is a qualitative measure for the flow of traffic service on a highway, using the scores of A through F. It measures speed and density of traffic.



Road construction and repair.

Source: Marathon County Central Time

within the County, these changes will impact land use along the corridor. Community planning efforts near STH 29 should incorporate and address these transportation changes.

River Crossings Improvements

The Wisconsin River runs through the County north-south and through the Wausau metro area. Several existing bridges span the river and connect both sides; however additional bridges would ease traffic at crossings, particularly in Wausau and Mosinee.

Transit Service and Facilities

In Marathon County, the only fixed route transit service is found in the Wausau metro area. As of 2015, Metro Ride operates 7 regular bus routes in the City of Wausau. A transfer center is located in downtown Wausau. All Metro Ride buses are accessible to person with limited mobility through wheelchair lifts or ramps. The front of each bus is also equipped with a bike rack which can hold two bikes. During the school year express routes enhance regular routes to accommodate increased passenger loads. Metro Ride buses run Monday through Friday from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm and do not run on weekends or major holidays.

Metro Ride also provides paratransit service to persons who, due to a disability, are unable to use the fixed route bus service. Paratransit users must be certified by Metro Ride. Paratransit service is limited to any area within ¼ mile of a regular bus route and must be requested a day in advance. Marathon County does not have Amtrak service (the only inter-city rail passenger service in the country). The closest Amtrak station is in Portage, WI, 107 miles south of Wausau.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle facilities serve a dual purpose of being used for both recreation and utilitarian transportation. In the denser, urban communities in the County bicycling is used often as a mode of transportation that is safe and with bike routes that are marked.

The current Wausau MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan recommended bicycle routes in the metro area which were implemented in 2013, as shown on **Map 8-2**. The MPO recently adopted a new bicycle and pedestrian plan.

In the Wausau metro area, the plan identifies strategies to assist the local communities on how to enhance the infrastructure by building bicycle and pedestrian facilities in areas that have a scientific rationale in the communities, build education and encouragement in the area on the benefits to bicycling and walking and then how to better enforce the rules of the road with stronger law enforcement practices.

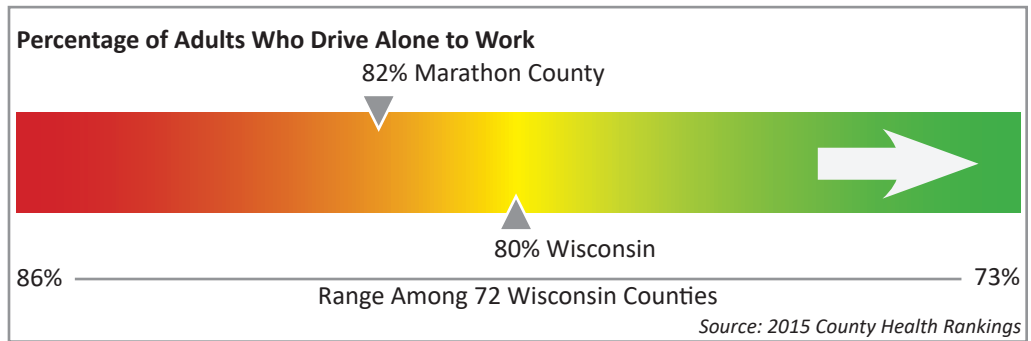
Along with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Metro area, the Metropolitan area has been recognized with a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. This is a very prestigious award that signifies the level of involvement the communities have in making the area a better place to be active with walking and biking along with the transportation facilities needed to give people the options to travel in the community without just using an automobile.

Outside of the Wausau area, several bicycle and pedestrian trails can be found, with more in the planning stages. The Mountain Bay State Trail is an off-road trail on a former railway which runs east from the Village of Weston through Shawano County to connect with Green Bay. The Ice Age Trail is a National Scenic Trail which traverses Wisconsin with a segment running north-south along the eastern edge of Marathon County. The Wisconsin DNR Trails Network Plan is in the process of being updated with more potential trail location to be identified in Marathon County.

The Wausau MPO LRTP also addresses bicycling and pedestrian modes of transportation. This plan stresses that a walkable or pedestrian-friendly community is one that provides a comfortable and safe environment for

Bicycle Facility

A bicycle transportation facility is a new or improved lane, path, or shoulder for use by bicyclists and a traffic control device, shelter, or parking facility for bicycles.



A bicyclist utilizes the wide bike shoulder for safe riding.

pedestrians, covering the need for sidewalks and other amenities such as street trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, and street furniture, in addition to walkable destinations. The plan also covers both on-street bicycle facilities and multi-use trails, saying that bicycling as a mode of transportation is likely to be most viable within more densely developed urban areas where safe routes are available to desired destinations. Planning for bicycle routes is an on-going effort and the long-term goal is to provide bicycle route connections throughout the County.

Some of the schools in the County have also promoted biking and walking for children. One program utilized has been the Safe Routes to School program. This program provides funding for planning and construction projects to promote and enhance biking and walking facilities.

Pedestrian issues are often a low priority due to vehicles being the primary mode of transportation for much of the public. However, in many areas pedestrian commuters number higher than transit or bicycle commuters. Many vulnerable population groups, such as children and the elderly, are often pedestrian commuters, and thus pedestrian safety is a critical issue.

Little countywide data is available on pedestrian travel. However, Wausau metropolitan area data suggests that pedestrian commuting in some areas of the City of Wausau is significant. The percentage of people who walk to work is generally a function of land use. Walking is a much more common mode of transportation in older traditional neighborhoods, where residential and employment locations may be close to each other, densities are higher, and sidewalks and streets are typically laid out in a grid pattern.

Airports

Marathon County is home to two major airports, the Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) in Mosinee and the Wausau Municipal Airport located in Wausau. A few small landing strips in the County are used by private pilots. Airports are marked on Map 8-1.

Central Wisconsin Airport

The Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is classified as an Air Carrier/Air Cargo airport, which means it is designed to accommodate virtually all aircraft up to, and in some cases including, wide body jets and large military transports. CWA is one of nine airports in Wisconsin that provide scheduled commercial air passenger service on a year-round basis. The CWA is conveniently accessible to the Wausau metropolitan area via I-39. It also draws customers from the larger Central Wisconsin region.

The airport has two concrete runways, five instrumental landing procedures for all weather operations, an air traffic control tower, and all the other amenities of a modern airport.

CWA is the only airport within Marathon County or neighboring counties that provides scheduled air passenger services. As of 2015, three airlines (Delta, United, and American Airlines) provided 14 flights per day with connections through Minneapolis, Chicago, and Detroit. There are also nine air freight and express flights daily.

The terminal has been undergoing renovation since 2012 to include modern amenities, new security checkpoints, and larger ticket counters. In 2010, over 160,000 passengers traveled through CWA. March is the peak month for the CWA. Business travelers make up about 60 percent of passengers through the CWA. Recreational traffic is lower than most airports and discretionary travel is primarily outbound.

Wausau Municipal Airport

The Wausau Municipal Airport is a local, private airport which provides general aviation services and is fully equipped to receive large corporate jets, charters, and privately owned aircraft. The airport is located in the City of Wausau, along the southern boundary shared with the City of Schofield. US Business 51/Grand Avenue is the primary access route to the airport. The airport is located along the Wisconsin River and occupies a substantial amount of riverfront property. The airport's location to the river provides the Wausau Seaplane Base, which adjoins the Wausau Municipal Airport.

The Wausau Municipal Airport provides general aviation services and is fully equipped to receive large corporate jets, charters, and privately owned aircraft. The Wausau Municipal Airport's two paved runways and instrument approaches make it a viable facility even when weather conditions are marginal. Air charter, flight instruction, aircraft rental, scenic rides, as well as aviation line services such as refueling, transportation, lodging and catering are some of the services available. The airport provides convenient access in and out of the City of Wausau for many area businesses.



Central Wisconsin Airport.

Source: sustaineng.com

Freight Facilities and Services

Rail Facilities and Service

Shipping freight long distance, especially for bulk commodities such as coal and grain, is most efficient and cost effective by rail. Railroads are also efficient for moving finished goods due to multi-modal shipping and the containerization of freight. Shipping via rail helps to reduce traffic and wear on highways by diverting truck traffic.

Marathon County has 65 miles of active rail lines. The primary rail operators in Marathon County are Canadian National (CN) railroad and Union Pacific railroad. The only active rail line through the Wausau Metropolitan Area runs along the Wisconsin River and I-39/USH 51 corridor through Marathon County. The tracks are owned and operated by the CN railroad. This line also connects to Mosinee, where a rail yard serves the Mosinee Paper Mill.

CN indicates they have lines running along a north-south corridor to Spencer where it diverts north through Unity, Colby, Abbotsford, and terminates in Medford. Marathon County does not have an active rail line running east and west.

Trucking Service and Facilities

Truck freight services are essential to the local and regional movement of goods. Most finished consumer goods arrive by truck and trucking is very cost effective for shorter distance shipping. Good truck access to commercial activity centers is necessary for the distribution of goods.

Recommended truck routes are marked in some areas throughout the County, such as the City of Wausau. While trucks cannot be prohibited from state funded roads, truck routes direct truckers to their destinations on the most appropriate roads in order to minimize truck noise, safety concerns in residential areas, and reduce wear on roads that are not designed for heavy vehicle traffic. State and County highways provide a high LOS throughout most of the County. Still, there may be some instances due to weight limits, particularly on bridges, or at times of spring thaw, where trucks are prohibited. Large trucks on local roads are a concern in some communities because of the road damage created and the resulting need for maintenance.

The Marathon County Highway Department has a policy which defines overweight and oversized vehicles, requiring permits for these vehicles. This policy is in place to ensure the safety of the traveling public and minimize potential damage to County Highways and other infrastructure. The maximum axle weight permitted may not exceed 20,000 pounds.

The County and local communities specifically in the metro area, needs to continuously monitor how and where freight by trucks is being moved. Nationally, the focus of freight hauling is on the concept of the “last mile”. This refers to the proximity of the trucking facilities and their final destinations of the freight being hauled to the freeway system. The costs associated with trucking and the on demand response from consumers for their goods are making freight haulers evaluate where facilities are located. In the metro area most industrial parks and trucking transfer stations are located within that “last mile” from the freeways to give them easier and quicker access to their destinations. This gives them an advantage over others that may be located farther from the freeways and have to be concerned with traffic congestion and problems with transferability of their goods in a denser urban area.

Utilities

Public utilities in Marathon County are mostly limited to areas within incorporated municipalities. Residents and businesses in rural, unincorporated townships rely on private utilities, including individual on-site septic treatment systems and private wells. Extension of public utilities into rural, unincorporated townships is generally only done in conjunction with annexation of the served area into an adjacent incorporated municipality.

Marathon County does not get directly involved in municipal sewer and water services, although the County does coordinate planning for the Wausau Urban Sewer Service Area. The Conservation, Planning & Zoning Department also reviews and issues permits for private sewage systems. The WDNR administers the State code regarding private wells. While the County does not provide or regulate the development of storm water management facilities, water quality and soil erosion are managed at the county level through implementation of the Marathon County Land and Water Resources Management Plan, which was updated most recently in 2010.

Sanitary Sewer Utilities

Public sanitary sewer services in most incorporated areas of Marathon County handle sanitary waste disposal. A system of pipes transports sewage from residences and businesses to treatment facilities. In rural areas, most sewage is dealt with on site through private septic systems.

Municipal Sanitary Sewer Service

Sewer service areas define boundaries where public sewer service may be available, see Map 8-3 which shows municipal utilities. In order to accommodate future growth, sewer service area boundaries often incorporate areas not currently served by public sewer. Areas currently served by municipal sewer systems are typically incorporated and may require annexation into an incorporated municipality prior to extension of utilities.

Sewer service area planning helps communities anticipate future needs for wastewater treatment and keep water safe for drinking,

recreation, and diverse aquatic life. The Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service area includes most of the cities of Mosinee, Schofield, and Wausau, the villages of Kronenwetter, Rothschild, and Weston, and the Towns of Maine, Rib Mountain, Ringle, Stettin, Texas, Wausau, and Weston. Most other villages in Marathon County have their own municipal sewer service. In 2015, Wausau Water Works provided water and sewerage service to approximately 16,000 homes and businesses and maintained over 250 miles of water and sewer mains in the Wausau and Schofield areas. The Rib Mountain Metropolitan Sewerage District, located in the Town of Rib Mountain, treats waste water from the Villages of Kronenwetter, Rothschild, Weston, and the Rib Mountain Sanitary District.

WisDNR designated the Marathon County Planning Department as the Sewer Service Area (SSA) Planning Agency for the Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Area in 1978. This designation requires an update to the Sewer Service Plan every five (5) years as per Administrative Code NR 121 based on Federal EPA regulation.

Most of the incorporated areas of Marathon County provide public sanitary sewer service and include the following units of government:

- Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Area (includes the cities of Wausau, Mosinee and Schofield, the villages of Rothschild, portions of Weston and Kronenwetter, and portions of the towns of Rib Mountain, Stettin, and Weston.)
- Village of Athens
- Village of Birnamwood
- Village of Brokaw
- Village of Edgar
- Village of Fenwood
- Village of Hatley
- Village of Marathon City
- Village of Spencer
- Village of Stratford
- Unincorporated Town of Milan (located in the Town of Johnson), and
- Unincorporated Town of Rozellville (located in the Town of Day).

Wastewater Management Facilities Planning

Water quality planning requirements are specified in Sections 205(j), 208, and 303 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Municipal waste treatment is among the nine elements to be included or referenced as part of the CWA elements - 40CFR130.6(c)(3).

From a historical perspective, one of the objectives of Section 208 of the CWA was to establish integrated and coordinated facility planning for wastewater management. In order to accomplish this objective in urban areas where competition for service areas was expected to be a concern, the CWA called for the designation of area wide planning agencies to assist in the resolution of such conflicts as they may arise. This is important as two major wastewater treatment facilities are located within the Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Area. The DMA designation process prevents two separate treatment facilities and/or management agencies from planning for the same area. This is important because cost/benefit and feasibility analysis is based on the projected service demand and the sizing of sewer lines and wastewater treatment plants have to reflect existing and projected populations. If POTWs compete for the same customers, the duplication of service would be cost prohibitive, could result in plant operation problems; system design, planning, and jurisdictional authority conflicts.

The owners/operators of Publicly-Owned Wastewater Treatment Works (POTWs) were designated to have the authority for sewer related planning in clearly demarcated boundaries. These boundaries were commonly referred to as 201 boundaries (after Section 201 of the CWA) and are now known as FPAs.

Wastewater management facilities planning areas identifies local units of government to be designated as management agencies (DMA) under Section 208 of the Federal CWA for wastewater management planning. It identifies wastewater management options and prescriptions within each facilities planning area that were developed by the DMA. These options represent current judgements about where sewers will be extended and where areas will remain unsewered over the course of the next twenty years. However, planning for future wastewater treatment needs is an inexact science. Assumptions are made relative to the size and extent of population growth.

In the Wausau metro area and other population centers around Marathon County, wastewater treatment facilities appear to be in good repair, with adequate capacity to serve expected development within their respective areas. Local wastewater collection systems (pipe network and lift stations) are also generally in good condition. Sewer pipes and mains are typically replaced and upgraded in conjunction with road reconstruction or in response to known problems. Most local communities, as a matter of policy, do not extend sewer service without annexation.

Publicly-owned wastewater treatment facilities are required to treat waste in accordance with their respective NPDES permit limits. In addition, as the DNR completes the TMDL reports throughout the state, publicly-owned wastewater treatment facilities may be required to upgrade their treatment works based on the results of the TMDL. The TMDL sets the amount of pollutant loading that can be assimilated by a water body without a violation of water quality standards, and includes wasteload allocations for point sources for nonpoint sources, and a margin of safety.

Private On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems

Private On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS) for sewage disposal are found primarily in the unincorporated areas of Marathon County. These systems include a septic tank or aerobic treatment tank and some type of absorption field alone or in combination with passive or active treatment components or holding tanks. Areas determined unsuitable for septic systems, for reasons such as high bedrock or high water tables, are not conducive to installation of conventional, in ground absorption fields and must use other methods.

Regulation of POWTS

Regulations for POWTS in Marathon County are found in Chapter 15 of the County General Code of Ordinances. All premises intended for human occupancy and not served by public sewer are required to have a private sewage system. The WDNR reviews septic treatment and dispersal systems that handle over 12,000 gallons per day.

Permit Requirements

Permits for private sewage systems are issued CPZ. Soil and site evaluations are required to determine if the proposed septic system is suitable for the specific property and location before a permit will be issued. Periodic inspection of septic systems is required by the State.

Water Utilities

Most residents and businesses in incorporated or urban areas of Marathon County get water service through public water systems while those in rural areas obtain water through private wells. Groundwater is the primary source of water in Marathon County. The availability of water varies across the County depending on the local geology. Generally, the area surrounding the Wisconsin River Valley has access to an ample water supply from alluvial aquifers along the Wisconsin and Rib Rivers. Groundwater supply is most limited or difficult to access in parts of the County where dense bedrock is close to the surface.

Municipal Water Service

Most incorporated areas of Marathon County provide public water service to property within their jurisdictional boundaries. Most of the communities that provide public water service treat their water supply. Iron and manganese are the most commonly treated elements in water in the Wisconsin River Valley. Communities further west, including the villages of Athens and Stratford, add chlorine and fluoride, and sometimes a caustic soda to raise the water pH level.

The EPA and WDNR set standards and test drinking water for municipal water systems. Annual Consumer Confidence Reports are published by municipal water utilities informing the public of the results of water tests. If any contaminants exceed the standards, the public is immediately notified.

Water Service Areas

Incorporated communities provide public water service within their boundaries and occasionally slightly beyond. Multiple wells are needed to meet the demand for water in most communities, and existing wells sufficiently meet current needs. Groundwater is plentiful beneath most of Marathon County, although in some areas it is deeper than others; see the Depth of Groundwater map in Chapter 6, **Map 6-2**. Some communities with low water flows, such as the Village of Athens, discourage land uses that require high water use from developing there.

Wellhead Protection

Wellhead protection is a preventative program designed to protect public water supply wells. The goal of a wellhead protection plan is for communities to delineate and protect the land area which contributes water to their wells in order to prevent contamination of their water supply wells. A wellhead protection ordinance is an adopted zoning ordinance which institutes land use regulations and restrictions around wellheads. In 2015, of the 17 municipal water systems in Marathon County, 13 had a wellhead protection plan and 9 had a wellhead protection ordinance.

Storage and Distribution Facilities

Water storage facilities include water towers, ground storage reservoirs, and clear wells. Local municipalities report storage facilities in good condition and of adequate quantity to meet present and expected future needs.

Water distribution facilities include networks of mains and pipes to transport water. Municipalities report networks to be in good working condition. When roads are reconstructed, the network of water distribution pipes is replaced, updated, or repaired as needed.

Private Water Wells

Private wells are the primary water source for most residents and businesses located in the towns of Marathon County. Approximately 18,000 private wells provide water for human consumption and agricultural activities such as crop irrigation and livestock watering. Well water is generally of very good quality. More information about groundwater can be found in Chapter 6, Water Quality and Quantity.



Source: www.kronenwetter.org
Water towers are an element of a public water utility's infrastructure.

Energy Utilities

Access to energy is essential to support the needs of residents as well as those of commerce and industry. Demand for electricity and natural gas service continue to rise as population and job growth occurs. Having a reliable and relatively inexpensive supply of energy is critical to the state and regional economy.

Electrical Power

Most electricity in Wisconsin is produced by coal-fired and nuclear powered generating plants, although several newer power plants are fueled by natural gas. Other technologies such as wind power, bio-fuels, fuel cells, etc. are becoming more competitive and are also considered part of the State's long-term strategy to ensure sufficient power generation.

The two key components of electrical power supply are generating capacity and distribution capacity. Power can be generated locally or purchased from generating plants around Wisconsin and in other nearby states. The ability to import power is important to protect against power interruptions, particularly during peak demand periods.



Wind turbines are a source of renewable energy.

Source: Marathon County Central Time

Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPS) is the primary supplier of electric power in Marathon County. WPS is based in Green Bay, WI and serves nearly the entire County. WPS currently operates four power plants (Weston 1, 2, 3, and 4) all located in the villages of Kronenwetter and Rothschild. These plants provide up to 896 megawatts of coal-fired capacity. Weston 4, which began operating in 2008 uses clean coal technology, and is one of the cleanest power plants of its kind in the country. Some areas in the County are served by other providers. In 2015, the other providers included Xcel Energy (northwest portion of the County), Taylor Electric, Clark Electric and Alliant (far eastern portion of the County).

The American Transmission Company (ATC) maintains a 220-mile electric transmission line, the Arrowhead-Weston Transmission Line, which connects the Village of Weston and Duluth, Minnesota. The line, which was energized in February 2008 and is now moving up to 800MW of power, improves reliability to the electric transmission system in the region. The AWT is marked on **Map 8-3**.

Natural Gas

Wisconsin Public Service is the County's largest supplier of natural gas, serving over 30,000 customers. In areas without access to municipal gas lines, liquid propane and heating oil are the primary means of natural gas. The ANR Pipeline Company, marked on **Map 8-3**, provides interstate pipeline service.

Telecommunication Facilities and Services

Private companies; such as T-Mobile, Verizon, AT&T, Cellcom, TDS, and Charter; provide telecommunication services in Marathon County. Charter Communication is the largest provider of cable television in the County. The strongest service is provided in the Wausau metro area and other population centers, and along STH 51 and STH 29. The County zoning ordinance includes regulations for siting mobile towers. Rural areas generally rely on satellite dishes for television and cable services.

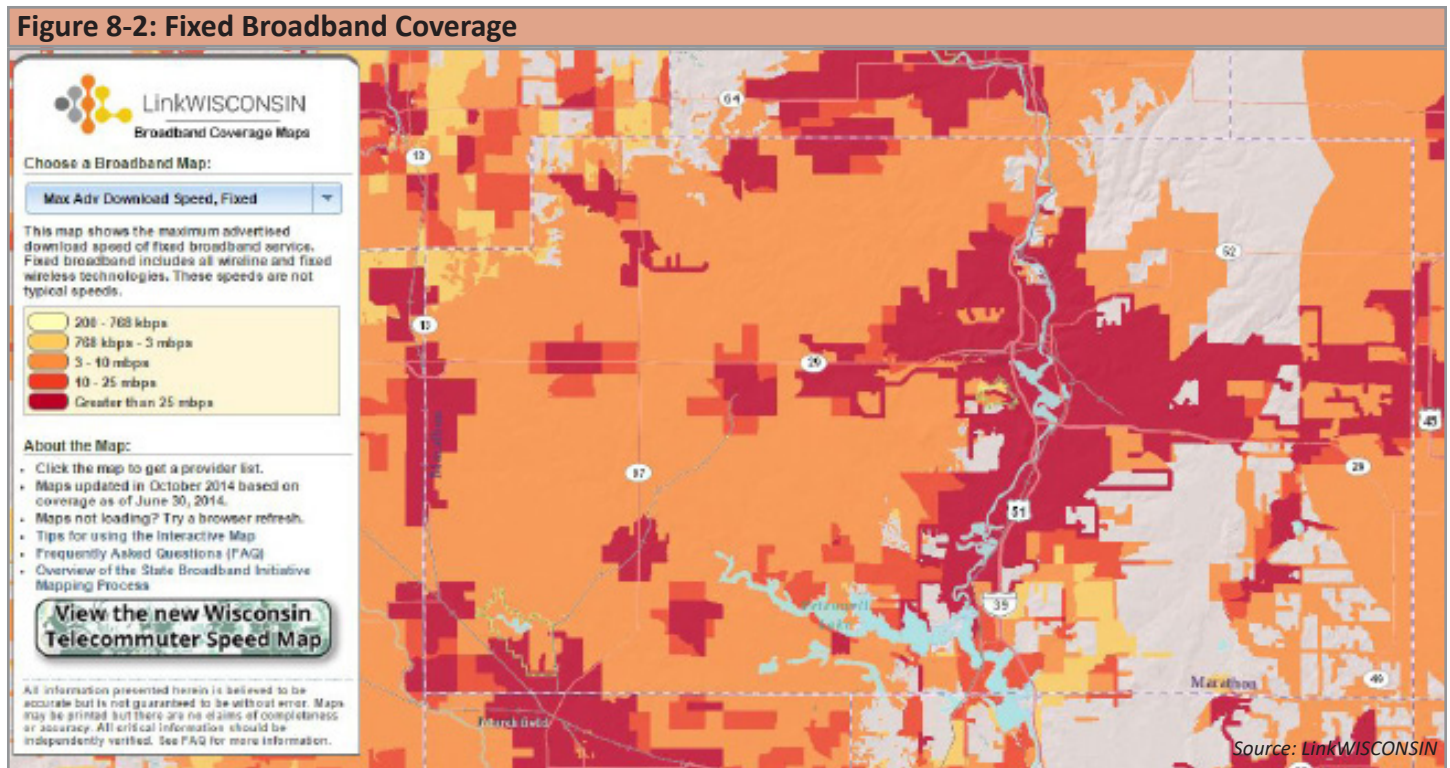
The need for faster internet speeds is understood in Marathon County. Several studies have been conducted in recent years on the topic, including an extensive Broadband Gap Analysis in 2009. UW Extension (UWEX) has been heavily involved in the broadband discussion with the Broadband and E-Commerce Education Center and the Building Community Capacity through Broadband program. UWEX, with the help of two grants from the Federal Government, is working to expand infrastructure for broadband internet connections to public safety agencies, health care providers, schools, and community organizations in Wausau and three other Wisconsin communities.

The currently available means of connecting to the internet are via cable modem, digital subscriber line (DSL), fixed wireless service, mobile or cellular wireless, and satellite-based internet service. These options provide a range of speeds and costs to residents and businesses, but are not all available in every part of the county. The 2009 study identified several means of increasing internet access and speed in the future including fourth generation (4G) technologies like Long Term Evolution (LTE) and Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMax), broadband over power line (BPL), and fiber to the home or premise. The cost of these options is often a limiting factor in implementation.

Broadband coverage is available in both fixed and mobile types. Fixed broadband includes all wireline and fixed wireless technologies. In Marathon County, fixed broadband at speeds greater than 25 mbps can be found in and near most incorporated municipalities, see

Figure 8-2. Mobile broadband service is typically used via smartphones. Mobile broadband coverage in Marathon County has slower download speeds than fixed, with most of the County at speeds of 768 kbps to 10 mbps.

Affordable, accessible, high speed internet service is vital to residents and businesses in Marathon County. Residents utilize high speed internet for communication, education, telemedicine, entertainment, and home businesses, among other uses. Businesses require high speed internet to be competitive in a global economy. Some of the slower categories in the map below are not adequate for the needs in the County.



Solid Waste Management

The Marathon County Solid Waste Department oversees the collection of solid waste and recycling services in the County. These services include coordinating collection with private haulers and municipalities, waste reduction programming, and running the County landfill in the Town of Ringle. Residents and businesses can bring waste materials to the landfill directly for a small fee. Marathon County has agreements with Portage and Shawano Counties allowing them to dispose of solid waste in the Ringle landfill.

Waste collection in Marathon County is primarily contracted through private waste management service providers. Most cities and villages, as well as some towns, contract with a private waste hauler for curbside pick-up. This service is paid for by residents through a fee included with their tax or water bill.

The Solid Waste Department also has several programs tailored to K-12 schools. Waste reduction audits and reviews help schools reduce costs and get efficient services. Educational tours of the landfill and recycling process teach students how waste and recyclable materials are handled. Educational presentations teach students about waste reduction, landfills, recycling, composting, and the life cycle of garbage. Finally, the landfill property has many trails open to the public for research and hiking.

The Marathon County Landfill is on 575 acres of county land in the Town of Ringle. The landfill receives approximately 90 vehicles every day, delivering about 550 tons of waste. The landfill is separated into several different areas. Area A opened in 1980 and was closed in 1993 upon reaching capacity with 1.5 million tons of waste. The current active landfill is Area B, 31.5 acres with a capacity of 2.4 million tons, has an expected remaining life of 8 to 10 years.

The waste haulers currently working with the Solid Waste Department include Advanced Disposal; B&B Containers, LLC; Eagle Waste and Recycling, Inc.; Evergreen Disposal; Express Disposal, Inc.; Harters Fox Valley Disposal; IDEAL Dumpster Service, LLC; IROW –

Shredding, Recycling, and Waste Services; Tito, Inc.; and Waste Management, Inc. In many communities around Marathon County, haulers use dual collection trucks to pick up trash and recycling at the same time.

Dealing with food and yard waste in a more sustainable manner is a waste issue which needs more attention. Food and yard materials make up approximately 25 to 30 percent of solid waste across the United States. Reducing food waste will require a mix of education, composting, and other tools. Residents and businesses need to be aware of the problem and alternatives to throwing away food, for example excess food can be donated to food banks and shelters. Food scraps and yard waste can be composted to break down food into fertilizer. Digester operations turn food and yard waste into energy and can be an option for businesses and other large organizations.

Recycling

Recycling throughout the County is contracted by residents or municipalities with private companies. Town Halls act as recycling pick up locations in some rural areas without curbside pickup. Information on recycling for specific types of materials can be found at the Marathon County Solid Waste Department website. The Solid Waste Department recycling accepts co-mingle recycling, cardboard, electronics, appliances, hazardous waste, tires, metal, used motor oil, car batteries, shingles, and other miscellaneous materials. The issue of how to deal with agricultural plastics and if they can be recycled is being looked at currently. A recent pilot program to recycle agricultural plastics was not successful and new alternatives are being developed.



Electronics are banned from Wisconsin landfills, but can be recycled.

Issues

- **Sustainable Transportation System.** Maintaining the transportation system in a fiscally sustainable manner is an ongoing issue for the County. The costs associated with building new facilities, in addition to the ongoing maintenance costs, need to be. Finding and maintaining a consistent and adequate source of funding for various transportation projects is a continual challenge. It is important to note that the County is only responsible for maintenance on roads under its jurisdiction. Reductions in funding at the state and federal levels and a tight County budget add to the challenge of keeping road maintenance at acceptable levels.
- **Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA).** The vitality of the CWA is essential to the continued economic competitiveness of Marathon County. Airports nationwide of a similar size are struggling to remain strong in the current economy. The airport provides connectivity to larger markets to businesses and residents in Marathon County. In order for businesses to develop or for business retention to occur, the CWA needs to remain a viable provider of air transportation in the area. The CWA is a key link to businesses worldwide and without that connection, Marathon County and central Wisconsin businesses will be forced to reevaluate being in this area without their service.
- **Farm Impacts and Conflicts.** Heavy farm equipment puts a significant amount of stress on roads, which can result in the need for more frequent maintenance which can substantially increase costs, putting strains on local and County budgets. The primary road safety concerns expressed in rural areas of the County relate to conflicts between farm and non-farm vehicles, speeding, and increased congestion as more non-farmers choose to live in rural areas. In addition, there are some areas where horse and buggies traveling rural roads in mixed traffic is a safety concern.

The largest issue pertaining to farm impacts on the road infrastructure is that of manure hauling activities. Marathon County has endorsed a policy pertaining to the permitting authority for manure hauling activities. The policy identifies times of year that hauling can be done and what criteria are used to allow or restrict certain aspects of the hauling. The policy creates parameters that manure haulers can work under to haul loads of manure on the County Highway system in a safe manner that will not adversely impact the roadways or the motoring public.

- **Transit.** Some communities outside the metro-area have expressed an interest in transit and/or paratransit services. The cost-effectiveness of providing such services is a challenge. To be cost-effective, transit must serve enough people to sufficiently reduce the costs per passenger. That is usually difficult in non-urban areas, given the lower densities and limited potential for attracting transit riders. Opportunities may exist to provide semi-regular and/or demand-response transit services between towns and villages in the county to the Wausau area. Such a service may be particularly valuable to seniors wishing to get to retail centers and medical services.
- **Non-Motorized Transportation Facilities.** With the increases in bicycling for both recreation and transportation with the continual need for pedestrian facilities, the area has seen an increase in the demand for additional facilities and services related to bicycles and pedestrians. The local communities are being asked to provide opportunities to walk and bike that fit all ability levels and all age groups. These come in the forms of sidewalks and crosswalks, but also bike lanes and bike paths that connect destinations. People are looking for ways to stay more active in their older years and for its health benefits as well as younger people are looking for options to move about the community without having to rely on an automobile. The challenges of non-motorized transportation are numerous in developing a system that will benefit all and be accepted by all.
- **Service Consolidation.** Consolidating sewer and water utility service throughout the Wausau metropolitan area has been discussed for several years. Service consolidation could improve the efficiency and reduce the costs of utility services. However, implementing a consolidated utility system will require substantial intergovernmental cooperation to overcome political and parochial barriers.
- **Adequate Internet Coverage.** As technology increasingly pervades every aspect of life in today's society, the need for adequate internet accessibility across the County grows. Access is strong in the more urbanized areas of the County, but lagging in the rural areas. This disparity will need to be addressed as reliance on internet technology continues to increase.
- **State Highway 29.** As the highway is upgraded to a freeway numerous access points will be eliminated and new interchanges will be constructed. These changes will impact both the County and local road networks and land uses.

Infrastructure Goals and Objectives

Transportation Goal: The transportation infrastructure in Marathon County is maintained to the highest standards to allow safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services in and through the County.

Objectives:

1. Provide a safe, efficient, fiscally sustainable multimodal transportation system.
2. Improve access management on major roadways.

Utilities Goal: The utilities infrastructure in Marathon County is maintained to the highest standards to support the residents and businesses of the County.

Objectives:

1. Promote efficient and coordinated sewer and water expansion.
2. Ensure compliance with state codes for new and replacement private on-site wastewater treatment systems.
3. Ensure adequate energy and telecommunications services.
4. Strive to provide affordable, accessible, high-speed internet access throughout the County.
5. Provide cost-efficient solid waste management.

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Chapter Nine

Land Use



Marathon County is located in north central Wisconsin, and is surrounded by the Counties of Clark, Lincoln, Langlade, Shawano, Portage, Taylor, and Wood. In all, the county encompasses over one million acres, which makes it the largest county in Wisconsin based on land mass.

The area was settled in the mid-nineteenth century to take advantage of its abundant pine forests. The Wisconsin River, which bisects the County, provided the waterpower necessary to haul and process the lumber. As the forests declined, Marathon County became a center for agriculture, specifically dairy production, and remains the number one ranking dairy producing county in Wisconsin. Today, land use patterns in the County still reflect the original economic base, with farmland, woodland, and water-related resources covering much of the area. While most urban type development continues to concentrate in the Wisconsin River valley, changes in the agricultural economy and growing pressure for widespread residential development is slowly altering the land use pattern in rural areas across the County.

Previous Studies

Comprehensive Plans – 2006

The previous County Plan was completed as part of a county-wide effort where nearly every local unit of government prepared a comprehensive plan. Those local town plans then became the foundation for the county plan, especially as it relates to land use. The County land use plan essentially consisted of a “patchwork quilt” of local comprehensive plans. Since none of the towns have updated or amended their own plans, this plan will continue to utilize the 2006 future land use information.

Each local jurisdiction must make local land use decisions that are consistent with their own comprehensive plan. It is important to note that cities and villages may include areas in adjacent towns in their plans under extra-territorial jurisdiction. Therefore, planning for land uses along jurisdictional borders will require coordination and intergovernmental cooperation.

Other Plans

In addition, the County has adopted numerous plans that have a bearing on land use and development. These are described in more detail under other sections of this comprehensive plan, but the major plans include:

- Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) – 2010
- Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan – 2013
- Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan – 2006
- Marathon County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – 2007
- 2025 Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan – 2007)

Pattern of Development

Although it is a large county, some general characteristics differentiate various areas of Marathon County. Most of the county has rolling hills and valleys with numerous rivers and streams. Characteristics such as soils, depth of bedrock, marshland and woodland reflect the impact of glaciers on landforms. These natural factors have had a direct impact on the type and pattern of development throughout the County.

Marathon County is crossed by two major road corridors, including I-39/USH 51, a major north-south route, and STH 29, a major east-west route. USH 51 has long been a major transportation corridor following the Wisconsin River, connecting communities in the south with the northwoods. The presence of this road corridor also fostered the growth of the various urban centers along its route. The City of Wausau began at Big Bull Falls on the Wisconsin River in 1848 and was one of several saw mill settlements. The City of Mosinee grew in the 1850s at Little Bull Falls farther south, while Schofield was the site of another mill in 1851 at the point where the Eau Claire River entered the Wisconsin River south of Wausau. The villages of Brokaw (1899) and Rothschild (1909) both developed as paper mill towns and, along with the other communities that lined the Wisconsin River, formed the commercial and industrial heart of Marathon County. Several outlying communities in the County began as saw milling sites, or as station stops as the railroads were built through the area. Most communities became more focused on agriculture by the beginning of the twentieth century as lumbering declined.

A description of the major types of land cover that dominate the overall County landscape follows:

Metropolitan Development

The communities along USH 51 have grown toward each other, and today function as a contiguous metropolitan area. Wausau has expanded, mostly to the west into Stettin, along STH 29, and the Village of Weston has grown to the east along STH 29. Formerly rural communities on the edge of Wausau, such as Rib Mountain and the Village of Weston, have rapidly urbanized during the last decade. Both communities have followed standard suburban development patterns, with major commercial and/or industrial growth. Land conversion to residential use has increased at a faster rate than population growth, spurring greater metropolitan expansion.

Rural Development

STH 29 has had a major impact on outlying communities as well. Road improvements have made it easier for residents to live in rural areas by providing an easy commute to job centers in the Wausau metro area. Thus, convenient access to the urban area has increased demand in many historically rural towns for scattered low-density residential development. Smaller villages in the County continue to function primarily as agricultural service centers, and many have retained viable commercial “Main Street” districts. A few, including Stratford, Spencer, and Athens have developed industrial parks, and others retain traditional industries such as cheese factories or creameries often integrated into the village commercial center. However, most major industrial and commercial activities remain concentrated in communities along the USH 51 and STH 29 corridors around the Wausau metro area.

Agriculture/Cropland

Marathon County’s farmers utilize almost 440,000 total acres of land, or about 43% of the land base. The majority of cropland area is located in the western half of the County and generally coincides with the soils most suitable for sustaining agriculture. To encourage preservation of prime farmland to maintain farming, the County prepared a Farmland Preservation Plan. The purpose of this plan is to guide and manage growth and development in a manner that will preserve the rural character; protect the agricultural base and natural resources; and contribute to the County’s overall goal of promoting public safety, health and prosperity within the County. This plan is the primary policy document in directing preservation of agricultural production capacity, farmland preservation, soil and water protection, and future land development while respecting private property rights and individual units of government. A major component of this plan is the designation of an Agricultural Enterprise Areas or AEA. Two such areas are identified, one in the western portion of the County and another in the northeast corner of the County.

Open Space

Marathon County is rich in land set aside in both county and state-owned park and wildlife land. Marathon County has 18 County parks that encompass 3,100 acres, of which Big Eau Pleine Park is the largest at 1,450 acres. County forestlands also provide a significant amount of public open space. The State of Wisconsin manages two large wildlife areas in the County. The 33,000-acre George W. Mead Wildlife Area, south of the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir along the County’s southern border, is a major public open space in the towns of Green Valley and Bergen. The McMillan Marsh Wildlife Area, in the towns of Spencer and McMillan, carves out 4,172 acres along the Little Eau Pleine River. State-owned wildlife properties, as well as Rib Mountain State Park (1,182 acres) contribute large amounts of public open space in the County.

Woodland

Marathon County was once covered in woodlands. Today, there is about 390,000 acres of wooded lands with the larger segments concentrated in the eastern half and along the northern border of the County. An estimated one-third of County land area is forested; some is in public ownership and some is owned by private land owners and/or companies such as paper mills. Marathon County owns about 30,000 acres of forestland, the majority of which is located in several forest units on the eastern side of the County. Other woodland areas tend to be along rivers and creeks. Much of the woodland throughout the County is in 30-40 acre tracts adjacent to individual farms. Approximately 100,000 acres of private woodlands have been set aside under the Managed Forest Law or Forest Crop Law programs administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Marshland

Another significant land cover characteristic in the County is the amount of marshland (sometimes identified as wetlands and vacant/barren land). These areas generally flank the numerous rivers and streams and broaden out in flat, low areas. Because these areas pose development constraints, they sometimes function as large natural areas essentially protected from development. Major marshland areas runs along the Little Eau Pleine River (George W. Mead Wildlife Area), the McMillan Marsh, Nine-mile Creek and along the glacial moraine that separates the southeast from the rest of Marathon County in the vicinity of the Eau Claire and Plover Rivers.

Existing Land Use

Identifying how land is used is a critical component of a Comprehensive Plan. All land is used in some manner, be it developed for residential or industrial uses, or used for passive activities such as woodlands or open lands. As such, a detailed land use analysis was completed as part of this planning effort using existing County data, airphotos, and other information. Generalized existing land use categories include: Agriculture, Commercial, Industrial, Residential, Governmental, Open lands, Outdoor Recreation, Transportation, and Woodlands. This information was then mapped, see **Map 9-1**, and various calculations were made, see **Table 9-1**, to arrive at the 2015 generalized land use.

Agriculture is the dominant land use type in Marathon County, accounting for over 43 percent of the total land area. This is followed by woodlands with 38 percent.

Overall, the amount of land developed with residential, commercial, or industrial land uses is relatively small, combined about six percent of the land area. Of the developed land use types, residential land uses account for the vast majority of acreage, but still only represent about 4.7 percent of the land area in the entire County. While the Wausau metropolitan area continues to expand, Marathon County remains predominantly rural in character.

Table 9-1: Existing Land Use

	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	439,346	43.51%
Commercial	5,486	0.54%
Governmental/ Institutional	2,438	0.24%
Industrial	5,185	0.61%
Open Lands	57,312	5.68%
Outdoor Recreation	2,313	0.23%
Quarry	13	0.00%
Residential	47,604	4.71%
Transportation	33,016	3.27%
Woodlands	387,718	38.40%
Water	28,331	2.81%
Total Acres	1,009,763	100.00%

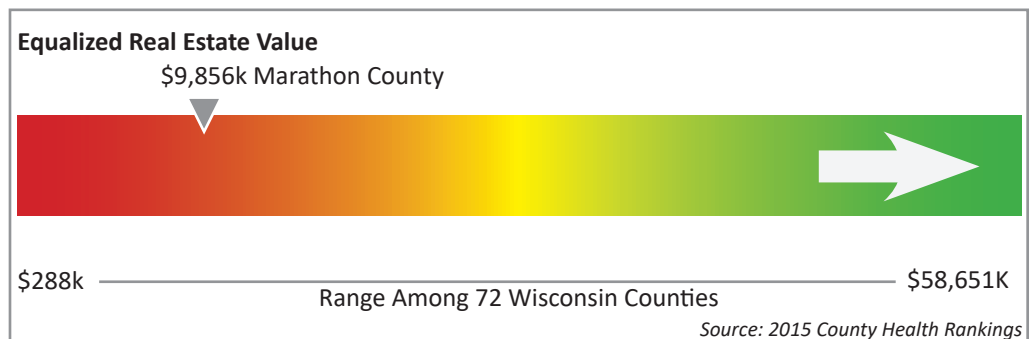
Source: Marathon County Land Cover, NCWRPC Modified 2015

Land Use Changes

The majority of land use changes occur along the Wisconsin River/Highway 51 Corridor and State Highway 29 Corridor. As part of the planning effort there was a comparison between the land use over time. The previous plan used the year 2000 as the base, so to examine a ten year change we used the 2010 County Land Use Cover. In addition, the county was split into a one mile grids and the amount of change between the years was calculated. That change information was then and grouped into the following: Very Low - 0 to 2%, Low - 2 to 7%, Medium - 7 to 14%, High - 14 to 26% and Very High 26% or more. That information was then mapped to identify where land use change is occurring throughout the County. Much of this change is development related for the construction of residential, commercial, or industrial uses, but some involves non-construction changes such as converting land uses from woodlands to agriculture. See the Land Use Change Map, **Map 9-2**.

Land Values

Between 2000 and 2015 equalized real estate property values across Marathon County have increased over 66 percent. The State of Wisconsin increased by 72 percent over that same period. The majority of this growth was between 2000 and 2010. Overall, the villages of Marathon County grew the fastest as a percentage of value, followed by towns and cities. The towns were responsible for the most value growth overall. See **Figure 9-2**.



Property values are grouped into several categories by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. Residential land represents the largest proportion of value in villages, cities, and towns, totaling over 6.3 billion dollars in the County. Commercial land has the second highest proportion of value, and the growth rate was faster than that of residential land. Among cities, commercial land was valued nearly as

high as residential land, while in villages commercial land was less than one-third of residential land, and in towns commercial land value was less than 10 percent of residential land. Undeveloped land had the fastest rate of growth in equalized value over the 15 year period, followed by commercial and residential, see **Figure 9-3**.

Due to some changes in the way land is classified for tax purposes between 2000 and 2010, changes in valuation by land category, particularly agricultural, agricultural forest, and forest, are not comparable. In 2009 short rotation woody crops began to be counted as an agricultural use. However, the 2014 *Wisconsin Agricultural Land Prices* report provides some insight to the trends in agricultural land prices across the state. Value per acre of agricultural land has been increasing since 2009, growing from \$3,236 to \$3,935.

About half of the jurisdictions in Marathon County declined in value between 2010 and 2015, while half increased. Among the villages, the highest percentage increase was the Village of Dorchester, with the Marathon County portion growing almost 650 percent over the 15 year period. The highest numerical growth was the Village of Weston, with an increase of \$531,720,800. The greatest numerical change overall and among the cities was the City of Wausau, with a growth of \$858,401,600. The Marathon County portion of the City of Marshfield had the greatest percent change, at 173 percent. The greatest percentage change among the towns was the Town of Cleveland, while the Town of Rib Mountain had the greatest numeric growth.

Table 9-2: Equalized Real Estate Values by Government Type

	2000	2010	2015	Change 2000-2015	Change 2010-2015
County	\$5,723,600,300	\$9,550,655,600	\$9,548,048,100	66.80%	0.00%
Cities	\$2,068,921,400	\$3,191,479,700	\$3,119,297,600	50.80%	-2.30%
Villages	\$1,057,650,600	\$2,341,624,600	\$2,382,675,500	125.30%	1.80%
Towns	\$2,597,028,300	\$4,017,551,300	\$4,046,074,000	50.80%	0.70%
State Total	\$277,213,706,800	\$483,966,688,200	\$478,301,463,950	72.50%	-0.01%

Source: WI Department of Revenue & NCWRPC

Table 9-3: Equalized Real Estate Values by Category

	2000	2010	2015	Change 2000-2015	Change 2010-2015
Residential	\$3,767,714,700	\$6,221,435,400	\$6,336,788,900	68.20%	1.90%
Commercial	\$1,046,253,500	\$1,950,493,000	\$1,949,046,000	86.30%	-0.10%
Manufacturing	\$269,733,900	\$398,810,600	\$395,199,800	46.50%	-0.90%
Agricultural	\$131,124,300	\$70,038,400	\$63,633,900	-51.50%	-9.10%
Undeveloped	\$26,660,400	\$70,494,900	\$63,236,000	137.20%	-10.30%
Ag Forest	\$0	\$150,001,300	\$144,018,500	NA	-4.00%
Forest	\$236,000,600	\$311,826,400	\$253,150,200	7.30%	-18.80%
Other	\$243,112,900	\$377,555,600	\$342,973,800	41.10%	-9.20%
County Total	\$5,723,600,300	\$9,550,655,600	\$9,548,048,100	66.80%	0.00%

Source: WI Department of Revenue & NCWRPC

Land Demand

Over the next twenty years there will be changes across the County as the population, households, and employment opportunities increase. According to the projections over 15,000 new persons will live in Marathon County, over 8,000 new households will reside in the County, and over 12,000 new jobs will be located within the County. See **Figure 9-4**.

Every new housing unit and every new business location will use land. Much of the land is currently in use for agriculture or forestry. Land demand is based on the population, household and employment projections above. Using the information and updated formula from the previous plan growth in the County were initially prepared in the 2006 Plan and modified here.

- Residential includes land designated for Single Family and Multiple Family Residential land uses,
- Commercial includes land designated for Commercial land uses,
- Industrial includes land designated for Industrial and Quarry land uses, and
- Agricultural includes land designated a Cropland, Specialty Crops, Other Agriculture, Barren, or Woodlands.

Acreage projections were based on assumptions about density of housing units per acre and employees per acre. It is estimated over the next 20 years, 9,000 acres will be needed to accommodate future residential development and 2,000 acres are needed for future non-residential development, see **Figure 9-5**.

Based on the existing local comprehensive plans, it appears there is more than sufficient acreage throughout the County to meet estimated demand for new residential, commercial, and industrial development. See individual local comprehensive plans for more detailed information and locations identified for development.

Table 9-4: Population, Households, and Employment Projections

	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
Population	136,510	142,200	146,595	150,130	152,120
Households	54,657	57,394	59,611	61,524	62,958
Employment	76,511	78,638	83,473	86,004	88,613

Source: NCWRPC & Marathon County

Table 9-5: Projected Land Demand in Acres

	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
Residential	48,822	51,161	53,500	55,839	57,845
Commercial	5,108	5,374	5,640	5,906	6,137
Industrial	6,276	6,541	6,806	7,071	7,295
Agricultural	883,697	880,826	877,955	875,084	872,951

Source: NCWRPC & Marathon County

Future Land Use

Each town, village and city prepares a local comprehensive plan. Part of those local efforts is the creation of a future land use map. These maps, when joined together, create the County Future Land Use Plan. As part of the previous planning effort these plans and maps were prepared. Over the summer of 2015, towns were provided the opportunity to review and update their future land use maps and make changes. Only a few communities have updated their plans, mostly cities and villages in the Wausau urban area. Therefore, the future land use map appears similar to the previous County Comprehensive Future Land Use Map, **Map 9-3**. A major planning effort impacting land use is County Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP). When the FPP was adopted in 2013 that plan became part of the County Comprehensive Plan. The FPP identified farmland preservation areas in each town and also established agricultural enterprise areas. Both of these have impacts on future development. See **Map 9-4** and the FPP for more information.

Urbanization

Urbanization is a population shift from rural to urban areas and the ways in which society adapts to that change.

Current Land Use Regulations

Zoning

The current County zoning code identifies 16 zoning classifications and four overlay zoning districts. For each zoning classification the code identifies permitted uses, special exceptions, and height, yard, and area requirements. The zoning code can be found in Chapter 17 of the Marathon County Code. Local communities in Marathon County may adopt their own zoning code, adopt the County zoning code, or choose to have no zoning. Incorporated municipalities adopt and enforce their own zoning regulations. There are 19 towns that have adopted County Zoning. See **Map 9-5**.

Map 9-5: Zoning Status by Municipality

The County Board has authority to review and approve or deny zoning requests in those unincorporated towns that adopt County zoning. The County Board takes the local town's recommendations into account when they take final action. While the County Board generally follows the recommendations of the local Town Board, they are not required to concur with the town's recommendations. However, towns have veto authority if the County Board approves a zoning amendment over the town's recommendation to deny. On the other hand, the County Board can deny a request that a town recommends for approval, in which case, the town has no recourse and the County Board decision is final.

In towns with local zoning, the local officials adopt, administer, oversee, and ultimately enforce the town zoning code. As in towns with County zoning, the County Board has review authority over zoning ordinance amendments (map and text), however the County Board cannot approve an amendment if the town recommended denial. But, the County Board can deny an amendment that the town recommended for approval. In towns with County zoning, decisions regarding variances, conditional use permits, and the like are made by the County Board of Adjustments. In towns with local zoning, a local board of adjustment has authority over such requests.

In unincorporated towns without any zoning, the County does not have any zoning review authority but is involved in land development through its role in land division/plat review, issuance of permits (e.g., septic systems) and shoreland regulations. While the County has jurisdiction over land division and shoreland regulations in all unincorporated areas, incorporated municipalities are responsible for adopting and enforcing subdivision and shoreland regulations within their jurisdiction.

Shoreland Zoning

Shoreland, wetlands, and floodplain regulations are applicable in all geographic areas of the County. Wisconsin law mandates that counties adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates land use in shoreland/wetland and floodplain areas for the entire area of the county outside of villages and cities. This ordinance supersedes any town ordinance, unless a town ordinance is more restrictive. The shoreland/wetland and floodplain area covered under this zoning is the area that lies within 1,000 feet of a lake and within 300 feet of a navigable stream or to the land ward side of a floodplain, whichever distance is greater. Most of the development regulations are aimed at establishing buffers and minimizing runoff to protect water quality. While the County enforces shoreland regulations within Marathon County, the WDNR maintains oversight responsibilities to ensure compliance with State Statutes.

Incorporated villages and cities are required to adopt and enforce their own shoreland zoning covering the same defined shoreland/wetland and floodplain areas described above.

Land Division Regulations

The County regulates the division of land in accordance with Chapter 18 of the Marathon County Code. The County's land division regulations apply in all unincorporated areas of the County. However, where a town has land division regulations that are more restrictive than the County's, the local regulations apply. Chapter 18 includes regulations for minimum lot sizes, street design and access requirements, land dedication, surface drainage and erosion control. The County also has permitting authority over private septic systems, which are addressed in Chapter 15 of the County Code. As with shoreland zoning, incorporated villages and cities adopt and enforce their own land division regulations.

In addition to the development related regulations described above, Marathon County administers several programs aimed at preserving certain types of land uses and resources. These include:

Farmland Preservation Program

The State of Wisconsin has a Farmland Preservation Program. The goals of the program are twofold: to preserve Wisconsin farmland by means of local land use planning and soil conservation practices and to provide property tax relief to farmland owners. Landowners keeping land in agricultural use can claim a credit on their state income tax by obtaining a zoning certificate (if the land is zoned "exclusive agriculture") or by signing a contract with the State. The program has several requirements. See the Marathon County Farmland Preservation Plan for more information.

Forest Crop Law (FCL) and Managed Forest Law (MFL)

In Wisconsin, over 2.5 million acres are enrolled under the FCL and the MFL programs. Land set aside under the FCL required at least 40 acres in one quarter-quarter section and the MFL requires at least 10 acres of contiguous forest land. Landowners may close to the public up to 160 acres of their forest lands set aside under the MFL. The remaining program acres must be open to public access for hunting, fishing, hiking, sight-seeing and cross-country skiing. Landowners choose a 25- or 50-year contract and pay an Acreage Share Amount as part of their tax bill in lieu of taxes.

Consistency between Plan and Zoning

Under the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning law, land use and zoning designations are related, but not necessarily identical. Land use categories tend to be fairly general whereas zoning districts regulate specific land uses and development requirements. Because the land use categories are general it is common for more than one zoning district to correspond to each land use category. It is also possible that some zoning districts might be consistent with more than one land use designation.

Achieving consistency between land use and zoning is required by State Statutes. This generally occurs when a community is considering a proposed zoning change. The decision to approve a zoning change must be based on the adopted comprehensive plan, and specifically, the future land use map. Generally, if the requested zoning is consistent with the land use designation on the property it should be approved, unless unique circumstances indicate the rezoning would negatively impact surrounding properties or the community. If a rezoning request is not consistent with the land use designation, the community should consider denying the rezoning request.

In situations where a rezoning request is not consistent with the land use designation - but the community believes the requested zoning is appropriate in the specific location and would benefit the community - the zoning change can be approved, however, the land use map should be amended accordingly to establish land use and zoning consistency. The process for amending the land use map is discussed in greater detail in the Implementation Chapter.

Issues

- **Land Use Coordination.** The County is interested in retaining its rural character as well as a viable agricultural and natural resource economic base. While at the same time the County population is expected to increase by 14% over the next two decades. It will be important to manage growth to minimize the impacts development on agricultural and natural resources. Currently 19 towns are covered under county zoning, 15 have their own, and 7 have no general zoning regulations. While there may be many similarities between the various local regulations, coordination of land uses and development activities can be a challenge if adjacent municipalities have different regulations. Coordinating a county-wide land use plan can be challenging as a result. About a third of the municipalities in the County adopted County zoning. As such, the regulations contained in the County zoning ordinance have a fairly broad impact on development throughout the County. While this provides for some consistency in development standards throughout the County, coordination with the zoning regulations in municipalities with their own zoning can be a challenge.
- **Scattered Rural Development.** County residents place a high value on the rural character of the County. However, increasing residential development in rural areas and around the fringe of the Wausau urban area is altering the character of the County. In addition, as the number of residences in rural areas increases, the potential for conflicts with farm operations increases. Likewise, demand for services increases, which can strain limited local government budgets. To begin to address some of the impacts of rural development, the County may want to explore approaches such as conservation or cluster subdivision standards. Likewise some of the existing development standards may need to be reexamined to determine if they are effective at controlling scattered rural development.
- **Preserve Active Farming.** Changes in the agricultural economy are creating challenges for rural areas seeking to adapt to the changing economic environment and preserve their rural agricultural character and livelihood. The County's agricultural economy is in a depressed state due to a downturn in prices for goods such as milk and ginseng. At the same time that prices for farm commodities are low, cash rents for farmland have increased, and the percentage of farm equity associated with real estate values have increased significantly. A goal of the county is to spur value-added agricultural businesses within the Agricultural Enterprise Area identified in the Farmland Preservation Plan.

Land Use Goal and Objectives

Land Use Goal: Marathon County makes sound land use decisions which balance the needs of agriculture, recreation, economic development, and growth so as to wisely maximize the land's potential.

Objectives:

1. Minimize scattered rural development and preserve rural character.
2. Preserve active farming
3. Encourage redevelopment of under-utilized areas.
4. Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth.

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Section Three Most Prosperous



- Chapter Ten** **Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development**
- Chapter Eleven** **Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources**
- Chapter Twelve** **Intergovernmental Cooperation**



Chapter Ten

Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development

One of the goals of Marathon County is to be the most prosperous County in the State. This chapter addresses three key elements necessary to achieve that goal: education, workforce development, and economic development. Education spans the lifespan from K-12 schooling to higher education and technical training. Workforce development looks at labor force and programs to assist job seekers, workers, and employers to be successful. Economic development encompasses job creation, economic growth, and quality of life.

Previous Plans and Studies:

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) – 2014

Marathon County is one of ten counties included in the North Central Wisconsin Economic Development District as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is the agency that is responsible for maintaining that federal designation. As part of maintaining that designation, the NCWRPC annually prepares a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report. The report serves to summarize and assess economic development activities of the past year and present new and modified program strategies for the upcoming year.

Key components from this regional level plan include an inventory of the physical geography of the Region and its resident population. Labor, income, and employment data are reviewed as well as an in-depth analysis of the economic status of the Region.

Regional Livability Plan (RLP) – 2015

The Regional Livability Plan is a comprehensive plan for the 10 county Region by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The RLP identifies ways to address the region's opportunities and weaknesses to increase the region's ability to become more livable for all residents. The Plan addresses four specific areas: housing, economic development, transportation, and land use. The economic development goals of the plan are:

1. Foster efficient business expansion and retention to increase employment opportunities and employment in the region.
2. Create an innovative atmosphere to foster an entrepreneurially supportive environment.
3. Promote and attract new business from outside the region.
4. Encourage the reuse of existing commercial and industrial properties and sites for more sustainable economic development.
5. Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce prepared to meet the needs of both existing and emerging industries and technologies.
6. Meet the full range of business' infrastructure needs with emphasis on transportation, utilities, and communications.
7. Promote and increase communication between regional and county economic development, workforce development, and planning organizations.

LIFE Report – 2014

The LIFE Report is a joint effort of Marathon County and the United Way. Its purpose is to provide a reference for the community to evaluate strengths and weaknesses and identify priority issues. The report, which is published every two years, serves as a tracking vehicle to show how the community has changed over time. Two of the sections of the report focus on Education and on the Economic Environment.

The Education report tracks Childcare, Kindergarten Readiness, Enrollment by Racial and Economic differences, School District Expenditures, Reading Comprehension, Mathematics Proficiency, High School Graduation Rates, and Higher Education. Challenges facing education according to the 2013 report include limited access to child care in rural areas, school district revenue cuts, an

increase in economically disadvantaged students, and fewer residents attaining post-secondary education relative to state averages.

The Economic Environment report tracks many economic indicators including Employment, Job Satisfaction, Income, Unemployment, Poverty, Economic Impacts of Transportation, and Tourism. Challenges facing the economic environment according to the 2013 report include high unemployment despite employer needs in select industries, resident concerns about jobs providing living wages and career advancement, and a strain on county services to unemployed residents.

Marathon County: A Next Generation Talent Magnet – 2010

This report, developed by Next Generation Consulting, addresses the question, “What will it take for Marathon County to be a destination for top talent?” As part of the research process, a “Handprint” for Marathon County was developed to contrast the County’s assets with other communities. According to the study, Marathon County meets or exceeds the standards of its peer regions in five of the seven measured indexes – Vitality, Earning, Cost of Lifestyle, After Hours, and Around Town. The County falls short in two categories – Social Capital and Learning. The report also identifies Nine Priority Areas of Focus to address moving forward. The top four priority areas were: 1) Engage emerging leaders, 2) Create green economy, e.g. industries, 3) Create “next generation” businesses, and 4) Develop a long-term funded plan.

Education

Early Childhood Development

Early childhood education has far reaching affects in the lives of students. According to the 2013-2015 LIFE Report, the experiences children have during their first five years of life have dramatic effects on their abilities to learn, to interact social, and to attain life-long success. Gaps in achievement are often ascribed to deficits in learning acquired during pre-school years that then follow students and grow throughout their education.

The LIFE Report states that Marathon County, on average, had a 92 percent rate of kindergarten readiness on the 2012 Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergartners (PALS-K). Every district in Marathon County exceeded the state average of 89 percent.

The Marathon County Early Years Coalition was formed in 2012 to serve young children and their parents in hopes of improving early childhood development in Marathon County. The coalition seeks to recognize and strengthen the role the community plays in helping children grow and learn by supporting the development of pre-birth through school age children.

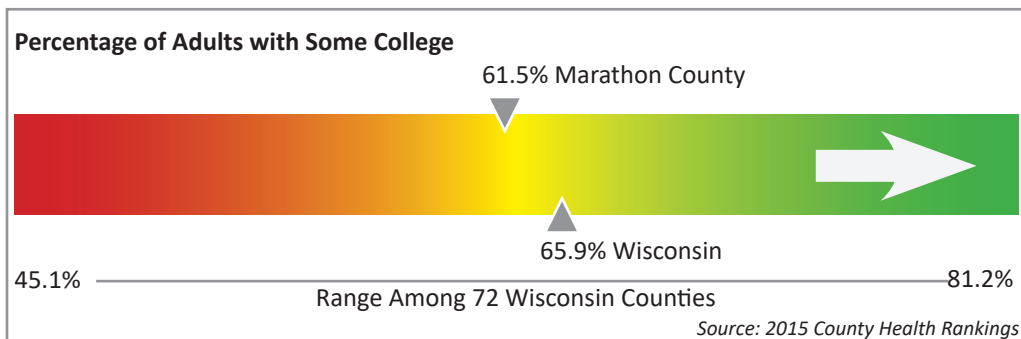
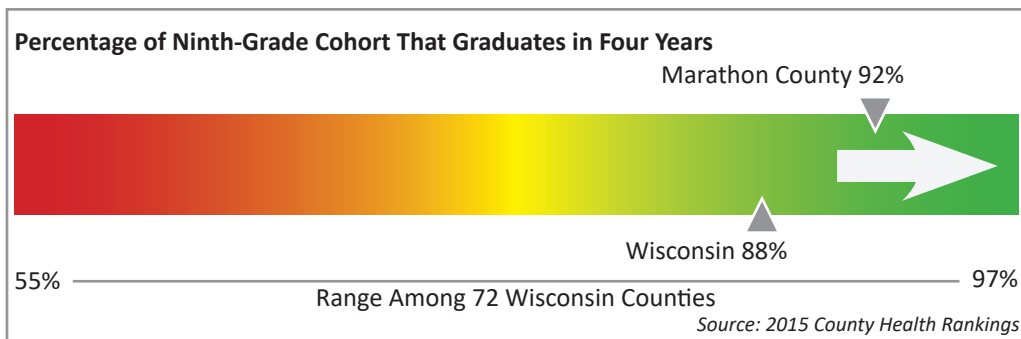
K-12 Education

Marathon County is served by 48 schools, a mix of public, private, and parochial schools.

Marathon County has 17 public school districts, as shown on [Map 10-1](#). Enrollment statistics for each county school district for 2000 and 2010 are shown in [Figure 10-1](#). Five schools have seen increases in enrollment during the past decade, while the other twelve have seen enrollment decrease. Small and large districts alike experienced significant changes in enrollment.

Of the five school districts that increased, the D.C. Everest Area School District had the greatest increase in enrollment, both net and percent, with 614 more students, or 12.2 percent. This district serves Schofield, Rothschild, Weston, Ringle, Easton, and Hatley which are some of the developing areas in the county. Mosinee and Abbotsford each had an increase of eight percent. Stratford and Edgar had increases of less than five percent.

Over half of the school districts in the County experienced decreases in the double digits between 2000 and 2010. Wausau had the greatest net decrease, losing 662 students and Rosholt had the greatest percent decrease, losing 18.8 percent of students enrolled.



The number and type of schools in each district is presented in Figure 10-2. Together, all public school facilities in the County currently include 18 high schools, 13 middle/junior high schools, and 52 elementary schools.

Twenty two private and parochial schools offer County residents an alternative to public schools for elementary and secondary education. Over half of these schools are affiliated with the Catholic Church, while another 10 percent are affiliated with the Lutheran Church. In terms of location within the County, 13 private and parochial schools are located in Wausau, another 7 in Marshfield, and three each in Athens, Merrill and Mosinee. The rest of the schools are scattered in communities around the County.

Schools of Higher Education

Opportunities for post-secondary education in Marathon County are provided by two state schools, the University of Wisconsin-Marathon County and Northcentral Technical College, and two private schools, Globe University and Rasmussen College. The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is the closest university, located about 40 minutes from Wausau, offering a full range of undergraduate and graduate degree programs. [Map 11-2](#) shows the location of the colleges and technical schools in Marathon County.

The University of Wisconsin—Marathon County (UW-MC) is located in the City of Wausau and offers lower level (freshman and sophomore) college classes, leading to a baccalaureate degree. Associate Degrees are offered in Arts & Sciences, and Bachelor’s Degrees (through collaborative degree programs with UW Oshkosh and UW Stevens Point) offered in Business Administration, General Studies, and Nursing. Enrollment in 2010-2011 was approximately 1,300 students.

Northcentral Technical College (NTC), also located in Wausau, has over 170 program offerings including

Figure 10-1: School Enrollment History

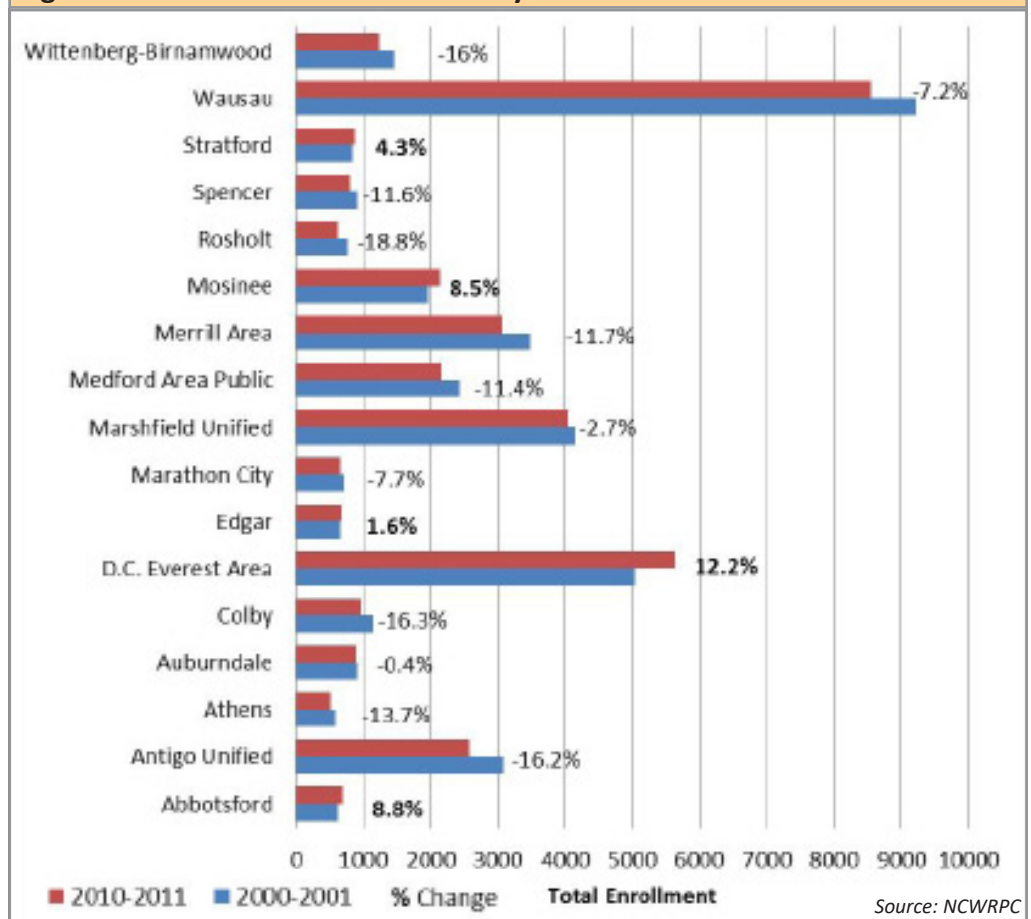


Figure 10-2: School District Facilities

School District	Elementary Schools	Middle/Junior High Schools	High Schools
Abbotsford	1	0	1 (6-12)
Antigo Unified	7	1	1
Athens	1	1	1
Auburndale	1	0	1 (6-12)
Colby	1	1	1
D.C. Everest Area	7	2	1
Edgar	1	1	1
Marathon City	1	0	1 (6-12)
Marshfield Unified	5	1	1
Medford Area	3	1	1
Merrill Area	5	1	1
Mosinee	1	1	1
Rosholt	1	1	1
Spencer	1	0	1 (6-12)
Stratford	1	0	1 (6-12)
Wausau	13	2	2
Wittenburg-Birnamwood	2 (K-8)	0	1
Total	52	17	18

Source: NCWRPC

two-year associate degrees that combine technical skills with general education, one and two-year technical diplomas that provide hands-on-learning, and short-term certificates to improve job skills. Programs focus on business, technical, health, and industrial fields. Approximately 2,300 full- and part-time students attend classes, although more than 16,000 people take at least one class annually.

Globe University is a for-profit college associated with the Minnesota School of Business. The Wausau campus of Globe University, located in Rothschild, offers programs in areas with a strong demand for skilled employees. They offer degree, diploma, and certificate programs in fields such as accounting, business administration, medical assisting, veterinary technology, massage therapy, paralegal, and information technology.

Rasmussen College, a for-profit post-secondary education institution, develops students by providing them the practical, relevant, and in-demand skills they need to confidently start or advance a successful career. The Wausau campus of Rasmussen College offers bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees, and certificates and diplomas in programs in business, design, education, health sciences, justice sciences, nursing, and technology.

Libraries

Libraries promote lifelong learning, supporting populations not reached by traditional education including very young children and older adults. Libraries also increase access to computers and technology.

The Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) system offers service to residents at its headquarters library in Wausau and at branches throughout the County. Other library branches are located at Athens, Edgar, Hatley, Marathon City, Mosinee, Rothschild, Spencer and Stratford. Several library facilities are relatively new or recently expanded. A bookmobile provides weekly service to other outlying areas. The MCPL is a member of the Wisconsin Valley Library Service. Locations of libraries are shown on Map 10-2.



Source: Athens Library
The Athens Branch of the Marathon County Public Library.

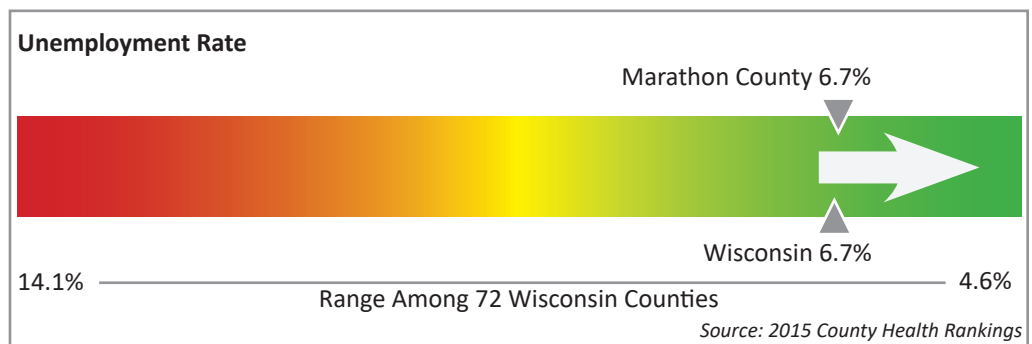
Residents near the boundaries of Marathon County may be closer to libraries in other communities. Several such libraries include Abbotsford, Antigo, Birnamwood, Colby, and Marshfield.

Workforce Development

Workforce development, according to the Urban Institute, provides a broad range of employment and training services to job seekers, as well as targeted assistance to employers. Strategies for workforce development can be found in formal education systems, such as technical schools and colleges, within businesses to assist their employees, and through public organizations such as a local chamber of commerce. Workforce development covers the breadth of a career, from training for individuals preparing to enter the workforce, to on the job training to improve workplace performance, and to career transitions later in life.

Working Population

The first step in any workforce development strategy is an understanding of the local workforce. Knowledge of the local population informs workforce development by elaborating on the number of people of working age, the labor force participation rate, and the education levels of workers, among other important factors. See the Demographics chapter of this Plan for more detail on the population of Marathon County.



The population of Marathon County grew from 125,834 in 2000 to 134,063 in 2010, an increase of 6.5 percent compared to a 6 percent increase in the State. Population growth has been concentrated in the urban areas of Marathon County, particularly in the cities and villages extending along the corridors of Highway 51 and Highway 29.

Working Age Population

The primary working ages are between 25 and 64 years old. In 2010, 53.6 percent of the Marathon County population and 53.0 percent of the Wisconsin population were in prime working age. Generally, this bodes well for worker availability in years to come but because

younger workers are quite mobile, the supply of workers is not guaranteed. Impending retirements of baby boomers will reduce the supply of available workers more quickly than in the past. The Regional Livability Plan has identified a need for more people of primary working age to meet job demand over the next decade.

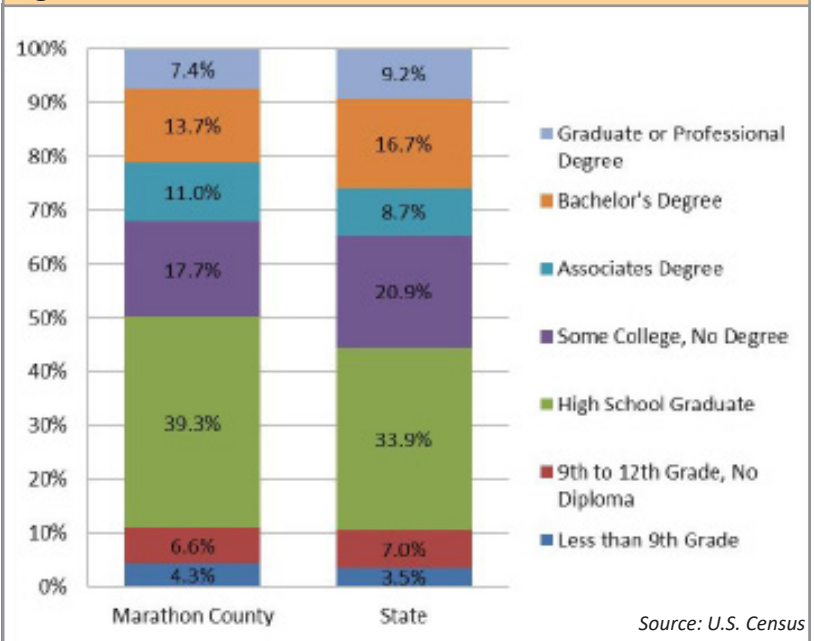
Labor Force Participation

The labor force consists of civilians who are at least 16 years old and who are not incarcerated or institutionalized, who are working and people who are looking for work. Most people of working age that are not in the labor force are students, at-home parents, or retirees. The labor force participation rate in Marathon County in 2010 was 72.2 percent compared with 69.0 percent statewide. The Marathon County labor force in 2010 was 74,962 persons according to the U.S. Census' American Community Survey and was 73,520 persons according to the DWD Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

Educational Attainment

Compared to Wisconsin, Marathon County has a higher percentage of people who have a high school diploma or greater; and a lower percentage of people with a bachelor's degree or greater, as shown on **Figure 10-3**. Education attainment in Marathon County is lower than the State as a whole, particularly in post-high school education; although it is higher than most northern Wisconsin counties.

Figure 10-3: Educational Attainment, 2010



Income

Marathon County has a varied income distribution. The median household income in 2010 was \$53,471 and the per capita income was \$25,893. Per capita income in the metro Wausau area exceeds the per capita income in the Nation and compares favorably to most areas of the State. Rural areas of Marathon County are typical of rural areas throughout the State where per capita income is lower than the national average. Per capita income grew 25 percent at both the state and county level between 2000 and 2010, but county per capita income remains slightly lower than state levels. See **Figure 10-4**.

Figure 10-4: Household Income, 2010

Income	Number of Households	Percent
Less than \$10,000	2,235	4.2%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	2,382	4.5%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	5,646	10.7%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	5,998	11.4%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	8,348	15.8%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	11,592	22.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8,033	15.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	5,992	11.4%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,401	2.7%
\$200,000 or more	1,801	2.1%

Source: U.S. Census

Commuting Patterns

More people leave Marathon County for work than commute from other counties into Marathon County for work, resulting in a net loss of 1,464 workers, according to 2010 Bureau of Labor Statistics data. Over half of all workers who live in Marathon County and commute outside the County to a job, travel to Wood County; see **Figure 10-5**.

Figure 10-5: Commuting Patterns, 2000 and 2010

County	2000			2010		
	Commute		Net Commute	Commute		Net Commute
	Into	From		Into	From	
Wood	3,944	1,449	(2,495)	5,406	1,852	(3,554)
Portage	968	1,408	440	1,823	2,005	182
Lincoln	964	2,826	1,862	1,113	2,682	1,569
Clark	710	1,407	697	1,129	921	(208)
Shawano	391	1,066	675	603	1,150	547
TOTAL	6,977	8,156	1,179	10,074	8,610	(1,464)
Work within Marathon County	57,000			61,483		

Source: U.S. Census On The Map

Employment by Occupation

Occupation is about the tasks that an employee does, while industry is about the final product or service a business produces. The Bureau of Labor Statistics explains that employees who perform essentially the same tasks are in the same occupation, whether or not they work in the same industry. For example, businesses as varied as hospitals, retail stores, manufacturing firms, and transportation companies may all have employees in the occupation of accountant. **Figure 10-6** shows occupations by sector in Marathon County. In 2010 the County had an employed population of 69,248. The largest occupation sectors are management, professional and related occupations (31.8%) and sales and office occupations (24.0%).

Figure 10-6: Occupation by Sector, 2000 and 2010

Sector	2000		2010		2000 to 2010 % Change
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Management, Professional, and Related Occupations	19,745	29.7%	22,048	31.8%	11.66%
Service Occupations	8,127	12.2%	9,731	14.1%	19.74%
Sales and Office Occupations	17,457	26.2%	16,596	24.0%	-4.93%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance Occupations	6,716	10.1%	6,497	9.4%	-3.26
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	14,505	21.8%	14,376	20.8%	-.89%
Total Employed	66,550	100%	69,248	100%	4.05%

Source: U.S. Census, NCWRPC

Living Wage

While income is a measure of how much money people working in Marathon County earn, the living wage takes a different view and asks how much do people working in Marathon County need to earn to maintain a normal standard of living. The state minimum wage is the same for all individuals, regardless of how many dependents they may have and the poverty rate is typically quoted as gross annual income. The living wage, however, takes into account the expenses a family of different sizes will have including food, child care, medical, housing, transportation, and taxes.

Living Wage

A living wage is the hourly rate an individual must earn to support their family, if they are the sole provider and are working full-time (2080 hours per year).

For single adult families, the adult is assumed to be employed full-time. For two adult families where both adults are in the labor force, both adults are assumed to be employed full-time. For two adult families where one adult is not in the labor force, one of the adults is assumed to be employed full-time while the other non-wage-earning adult provides full-time child care for the family's children. Full-time work is assumed to be year-round, 40 hours per week for 52 weeks, per adult (2080 hours per year). Families with one child are assumed to have a 'young child' (4 years old). Families with two children are assumed to have a 'young child' and a 'child' (9 years old). Families with three children are assumed to have a 'young child', a 'child', and a 'teenager' (15 years old).

The living wage in Marathon County ranges from \$8.03 per hour for a two adult two income household to \$36.64 per hour for a one adult household with three children, see **Figure 10-7**. In general, households with two working adults require lower per hour salaries to meet the living wage threshold. The state minimum wage of \$7.25 meets the poverty wage threshold for all households with no children, a one adult household with one child, and two adult households (two income earners) with up to three children. The current minimum wage does not meet the poverty threshold for 2 adult households with one earner who have one or more children.

Figure 10-7: Living Wage

Hourly Wage	Living Wage	Minimum Wage	Poverty Wage
1 Adult	\$9.99	\$7.25	\$5.00
1 Adult, 1 Child	\$21.88	\$7.25	\$7.00
1 Adult, 2 Children	\$28.27	\$7.25	\$9.00
1 Adult, 3 Children	\$36.64	\$7.25	\$11.00
2 Adults (1 Working)	\$16.18	\$7.25	\$7.00
2 Adults (1 Working), 1 Child	\$19.44	\$7.25	\$9.00
2 Adults (1 Working), 2 Children	\$21.56	\$7.25	\$11.00
2 Adults (1 Working), 3 Children	\$24.68	\$7.25	\$13.00
2 Adults	\$8.03	\$7.25	\$3.00
2 Adults, 1 Child	\$12.02	\$7.25	\$4.00
2 Adults, 2 Children	\$15.25	\$7.25	\$5.00
2 Adults, 3 Children	\$18.98	\$7.25	\$6.00

Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator

The biggest increase in required salary to meet the living wage threshold is between a one adult household and a household with one adult and one child. The addition of one child increases the necessary annual income after taxes from \$17,661 per year to \$38,672 per year, a difference of \$21,011. Two adult households (both working) with three children require the highest annual salary to meet the living wage threshold, requiring a salary after taxes of \$67,101 per year. A one adult household with three children requires an annual salary of \$64,758 per year to meet the minimum living wage threshold. Childcare is the highest typical expense ranging from \$8,130 per year for a single child to \$23,468 per year for 3 children. Two adult households with only one working adult have a significant advantage in meeting the living wage threshold due to the elimination of childcare costs.

Typical annual salaries in Marathon County range from \$18,590 for people in food preparation and serving related occupations to \$86,820 for people in management. Food preparation and service occupations (\$8.94 per hour) are the only occupations that do not meet the lowest living wage threshold of \$9.99 per hour for a single adult household. Management occupations (\$41.74 per hour) are the only occupations that meet the living wage threshold for all categories. Only 23 percent of the occupations pay an hourly wage above the minimum living wage threshold for a one adult household with two or fewer children. Only 41 percent of the occupations pay an hourly wage above the minimum living wage threshold for two adults (one working) households with two or fewer children and 68 percent of occupations pay an hourly wage above the minimum living wage threshold for two adult households with two children.

Overall, the addition of children puts an additional burden on households significantly increasing the minimum hourly wage necessary to meet the minimum living wage threshold. This additional burden may help explain the national trend of smaller household sizes and smaller average household sizes.

Workforce Programs

Workforce development is a vital part of any local economy and especially so in Marathon County, with its large manufacturing sector. Many state, regional, and local organizations and educational institutions work together to promote workforce development in Marathon County.

State of Wisconsin Programs

Department of Workforce Development

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is a state agency whose mission is “advancing Wisconsin’s economy and business climate by empowering and supporting the workforce”. They provide job services, training, and employment assistance to people looking for work, at the same time as working with employers on finding the necessary workers to fill current job openings.

Wisconsin Fast Forward Program

Wisconsin Fast Forward helps address the state’s need for skilled workers through a program created by Governor Scott Walker in 2013. The program created worker training grants and makes other investments to prepare workers for jobs available today and in the years to come. Up to \$15 million in grants will be available to support employer-led worker training, administered by the DWD’s Office of Skills Development (OSD). Wisconsin Fast Forward also includes resources to develop a labor market information system in the future to provide real-time labor intelligence and connect job seekers with employers with available jobs.

Workforce Development Board

Marathon County is one of nine counties served by the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (NCWWDB) in Stevens Point. The mission is to cultivate a skilled and competitive workforce which meets the demands of employers in the region. NCWWDB guides workforce development by engaging and connecting local employers, educators, and community organizations to more effectively align workforce resources; identifying, obtaining, and directing resources toward skilling, re-skilling, and building a future pipeline of workers to meet regional demands; identifying and disseminating regional labor market data and trends which impact short-term and long-term development of a skilled labor pool; and overseeing publically-funded Workforce Investment Act programs and the One-Stop Job Centers in the region.

County Programs

Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce

Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce and the Marathon County Development Corporation (MCDEVCO) both play a role in workforce development. They work together to nurture collaborative partnerships between educational institutions, businesses, community organizations, and the community itself. One such partnership is with the Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center (NWMOC) which delivers resources designed to help small and mid-sized manufacturers compete in a global economy. Another partnership is with NTC’s Business and Industry Solutions (BIS) division, which assists manufacturers in the training and professional development of their employees through customized, on-site training in areas like leadership, machine tool, robotics, and blueprint reading.

Young Professionals Program

E3 Young Professionals (E3YP) is a workforce development initiative of the Wausau Regional Chamber of Commerce designed to help attract, retain, and meet the unique needs of young professionals (ages 21-45) throughout the Wausau region. The purpose of E3YP is to engage young professionals with each other, the community, and businesses; to empower young professionals with leadership opportunities and development tools to grow; and to excite young professionals to work, play, and stay in the Wausau region. E3YP offers monthly events for its members, ranging from professional development and training on topics of interest to young professionals to social networking opportunities.

Marathon County Job Center

The Marathon County Job Center, in Wausau, is a comprehensive job center through the Job Center of Wisconsin, a program of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. The purpose of the Wisconsin Job Center system, a Wisconsin-centered employment exchange, is to link employers in all parts of the state with anyone looking for a job. The Marathon County center provides many services including job seeker assistance, career planning, resources, skills and education, workshops, recruitment assistance, and youth services. Located in Wausau, this Job Center serves all of Marathon County as well as several counties to the north, as the primary comprehensive job center in north central Wisconsin.

Workforce Education Technical Schools

Marathon County is home to several schools of higher education, including UW—Marathon County, Northcentral Technical College, Rasmussen College and Globe University. Additionally, Mid-State Technical College has a campus in Marshfield, which is just outside of Marathon County's boundaries. All of these institutions are involved in workforce development to some degree. They offer technical and skills based training, certificates, and degrees for in-demand careers in manufacturing, technology, and health sciences, among others. These training services are available for young adults new to the workforce as well as vocational adults interested in furthering their education in their current career or beginning a new career track.

High School Programs

- Wausau Engineering and Global Leadership Academy – The Wausau Engineering and Global Leadership Academy (EGL), housed at Wausau East High School, is a one-of-a-kind educational opportunity for young men and women interested in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This charter high school is built on the foundation of problem-based and project-based inquiry and learning, to prepare students for personal and academic success in high school, college, and beyond. In 2014, Newsweek ranked EGL the 34th best high school in the United States.
- D.C. Everest Career and Tech Ed – The D.C. Everest Career and Technical Education Department, within the Senior High School, provides opportunities for all students to acquire and apply academic, technological, employment, and life skills in order to ensure success in an ever-changing global society. The Department offers classes in agri-science, business and technology, engineering technology, construction, energy and transportation, manufacturing, and marketing. A wide variety of career pathways are available to help students plan ahead to succeed beyond high school.

High Demand Manufacturing Training

The need for new workers in the manufacturing sector is great, due to general growth and the prospect of many current employees retiring in the next decade. This need is the impetus for local programs designed to get high school students interested in careers in manufacturing. The Heavy Metal Bus Tour is one of these programs. The tour was designed to show middle and high school students already interested in the manufacturing industry possible career choices and give the students an idea of the skills they need to develop. In 2014, the third year of the tour, over 3,000 students from 30 schools toured 46 different area manufacturers to create a greater awareness of the career paths available in advanced manufacturing.

The Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce, McDEVCO, local school districts, and Northcentral Technical College have come together to develop career paths for the growing number of advanced manufacturing job openings created by growth and baby boomer retirements. Technical colleges and universities have built or are developing programs to train workers in the latest developments in welding, robotics, and computer-operated machinery, but local businesses want to see students begin preparing for careers in manufacturing before they get into college.

One of the primary goals of organizations like Manufacturing Works, who runs the Gold Collar Careers program, a partner on the Heavy Metal Bus Tour, is to bridge the gap between students and manufacturing. By providing awareness and outreach, they are working to dispel the myths that manufacturing is a dangerous, dirty, unrewarding career. They provide opportunities such as job shadowing, job co-ops, and internships; matching students with manufacturers to learn about careers in electromechanical technology, mechanical design, nano and biotechnology, robotics and automation, and welding and fabrication, among others. Northcentral Technical College is part of the Manufacturing Works organization, and the primary connection point in Marathon County for students interested in learning more about manufacturing careers.



Source: *Marathon County Central Time*
An employee works a piece of equipment in a manufacturing plant.

Economic Development

According to the International Economic Development Council, economic development encompasses the creation of jobs and wealth, the improvement of quality of life, and the policies and programs which enhance the economic wellbeing of a community. The economy in Marathon County has a division which falls along the urban and rural divide, with urban communities having a wide array of industries including manufacturing, retail, and health care while rural communities are more based on agriculture and forest products.

Key Economic Sectors

To gain an understanding of the economy in Marathon County, the key economic sectors in the County are examined. Employment numbers and growth give context to the size of an industry within Marathon County and location quotient analysis illustrates industries with a local concentration.

Employment

In 2010, just fewer than 70,000 people were employed in Marathon County. This is a 5.2 percent increase in employment since 2000. The two largest industries by employment are Manufacturing with 24.1 percent of all employment and Educational Services and Health Care with 21.3 percent. Together, these two industries represent half of all employment in Marathon County. Four industries had growth of more than 500 employees between 2000 and 2010: Educational Services and Health Care; Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative Services; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services; and Manufacturing. Two industries lost more than 500 employees: Retail Trade and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Mining. **Figure 10-8** shows employment by industry in 2000 and 2010.

In 2010, according to the U.S. Census' American Community Survey, Marathon County had an unemployment rate of 4.7%. The unemployment rate in Wisconsin was 4.6% and in the United States was 5.1%. In Marathon County, the unemployment rate means that approximately 4,856 were unemployed. According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, in 2010 Marathon County had 6,829 unemployed persons in a labor force of 73,520 persons for an unemployment rate of 9.3%.

Figure 10-8: Employment by Industry, 2000 and 2010

Sector	2000		2010		2000-2010	
	Employees	Percentage	Employees	Percentage	Net Change	% Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Mining	2,871	4.3%	2,231	3.2%	-640	-22.3%
Construction	3,925	5.9%	3,891	5.6%	-34	-0.9%
Manufacturing	16,302	24.5%	16,870	24.1%	568	3.5%
Wholesale Trade	2,303	3.5%	2,369	3.4%	66	2.9%
Retail Trade	8,511	12.8%	7,697	11.0%	-814	-9.6%
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	3,194	4.8%	3,116	4.5%	-78	-2.4%
Information	983	1.5%	1,026	1.5%	43	4.4%
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	5,501	8.3%	5,471	7.8%	-30	-0.5%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative Services	2,896	4.4%	3,865	5.5%	969	33.5%
Educational Services, and Health Care	12,446	18.7%	14,895	21.3%	2,449	19.7%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	3,918	5.9%	4,702	6.7%	784	20.0%
Other Services, except Public Administration	2,497	3.8%	2,454	3.5%	-43	-1.7%
Public Administration	1,203	1.8%	1,393	2.0%	190	15.8%
Civilian Employed Population Age 16 Years and Over	66,550	100%	69,980	100%	3,430	5.2%

Source: U.S. Census, NCWRPC

According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's 2013 Marathon County Workforce Profile, the two largest employers in Marathon County, Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Inc. and Greenheck Fan Corporation each have over 1,000 employees. The next eight largest employers have between 500 and 999 employees. **Figure 10-9** is a list of the top ten large employers in Marathon County in 2013.

Location Quotient Analysis

Location quotients are useful for finding areas that have high concentrations of jobs in certain occupations. If an LQ is equal to 1, then the industry has the same share of its area employment as it does in the reference area. An LQ greater than 1 indicates an industry with a greater share of the local area employment than is the case in the reference area. For example, Manufacturing in Marathon County in 2014 had an LQ of 2.58, which indicates that for every 2.58 people employed in Manufacturing in Marathon County, 1 person is employed in Manufacturing in the United States.

Industries that have a high location quotient (LQ) and employ a large number of people reflect both significant size and importance as businesses that export a product or service and bring new wealth to the region. Industries with high location quotients and a large number of employees in Marathon County are shown on **Figure 10-10**.

Location Quotient Projections

Location quotient projections come from analysis provided by Economic Modeling Specialists Intl., a leading organization for labor market analysis. Location quotient analyses can be visualized in a "bubble graph". In the Marathon County projections, the vertical axis has the 2014 LQ measurement, while the horizontal axis shows the projected percent change in LQ between 2014 and 2024. Industries are plotted as circles, with the circle size corresponding to their relative size as number of jobs. See **Figure 10-11** for an explanation of what the location by quadrant says about the industries.

The Marathon County Industry report compares 2014 industry jobs with projected 2024 jobs, identifying which industries will gain and lose jobs and projected change in location quotients, see **Figure 10-12**. Marathon County is projected to add 5,555 new jobs between 2014 and 2024 due to job growth, an 8 percent increase in jobs. The industries projected to grow the most between 2014 and 2024 are Health Care and Social Assistance (with almost half of total job growth), Accommodation and Food Services, Manufacturing, Construction, and Retail Trade.

Industries with high location quotients are those in which the county is strong; these driver industries should be supported and helped to grow. The five industries with the highest location quotients are Manufacturing (2.58), Crop and Animal (2.34), Finance and Insurance (1.60), Wholesale Trade (1.48), Retail Trade (1.24).

Figure 10-9: Large Employers, 2013

Establishment	Service or Products	# of Employees
Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Inc.	General medical and surgical hospitals	1,000+
Greenheck Fan Corp.	Industrial and commercial fan and blower manufacturing	1,000+
Kolbe & Kolbe Millwork Co. Inc.	Wood window and door manufacturing	500 to 999
Eastbay	Mail-order athletic footwear and apparel	500 to 999
Marathon Cheese	Dairy product merchant wholesalers	500 to 999
D.C. Everest Area School District	Elementary and secondary schools	500 to 999
North Central Health Care Facilities	Psychiatric and substance abuse hospitals	500 to 999
Northcentral Technical College	Junior colleges	500 to 999
Liberty Mutual Group Inc.	Direct property and casualty insurers	500 to 999
Wausau Metals/Milco/Linetec	Metal window and door manufacturing	500 to 999

Source: Dept. of Administration

Figure 10-10: Top 10 Economic Sectors by Location Quotient

Industry	Location Quotient	Total Employment
NAICS 321 Wood Product Manufacturing	13.49	2,471
NAICS 322 Paper Manufacturing	9.58	2,030
NAICS 112 Animal Production and Aquaculture	5.16	626
NAICS 327 Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	4.57	908
NAICS 333 Machinery Manufacturing	4.27	2,282
NAICS 332 Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	3.76	2,586
NAICS 524 Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	3.21	3,540
NAICS 424 Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	2.23	2,330
NAICS 337 Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	2.13	409
NAICS 311 Food Manufacturing	2.03	1,578

Source: BLS

Figure 10-11: Location Quotient Explanation

Mature Economies:

The upper left quadrant contains industries that are more concentrated in the County than average, but whose concentration is declining. If a mid-size or large industry is in this quadrant, it is an important warning that the County is losing a major part of its export base and should form planning and investment priorities accordingly. If the County does not bolster these industries or replace them with other export industries, it will likely enter a general recession.

Driver Economies:

An industry in the upper right quadrant is more concentrated in the County than average, and also is becoming more concentrated over time. These industries are “standouts” that distinguish the County economy and are doing so more every year—and they are especially important if they are also large in terms of jobs. Large industries in this quadrant are both important and high-performing, which means they will have increasing workforce demand. Small industries in this quadrant are emerging, high-potential regional export industries that should be developed further.

Troubled Economies:

The lower left quadrant contains industries which are less important regionally than nationally and are also declining in employment. Industries here could be warning signs that the County needs to attract more businesses in those industries in order to maintain an economy that is sufficiently balanced and diversified in comparison to the national economy.

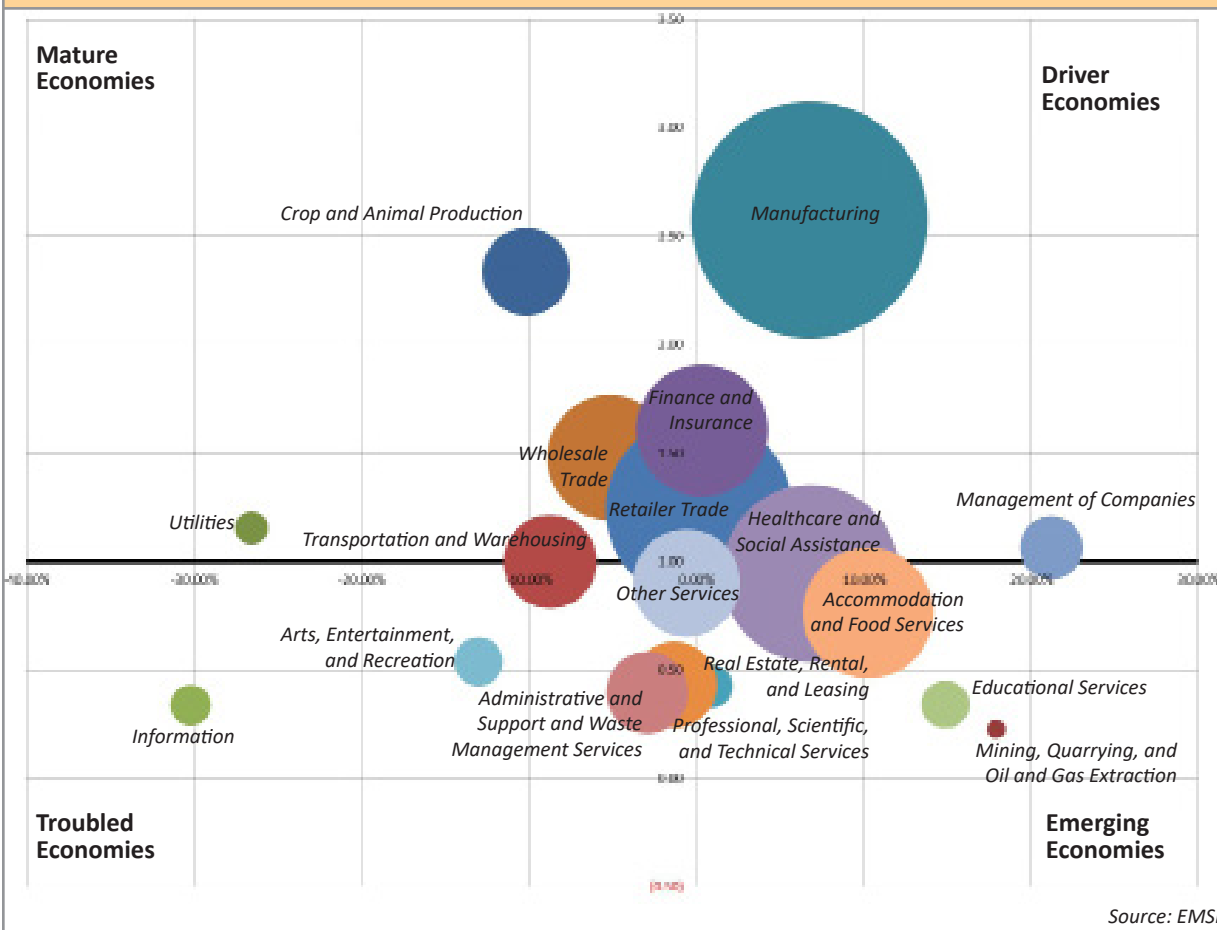
Emerging Economies:

The lower right quadrant contains industries which are not yet as concentrated in the region as they are at the national level, but are becoming more concentrated over time. If they continue this trend, they will eventually move across the horizontal axis into the upper right-hand quadrant. We might call them “pre-emergent” industries, having the potential to contribute more to the region’s economic base.

Location Quotient

The Bureau of Labor Statistics defines location quotients (LQs) as ratios that allow an area’s share or concentration of employment by industry to be compared to a reference or base area’s share. The reference area used here for comparison to Marathon County is the United States.

Figure 10-12: Location Quotient Analysis by Industry



Manufacturing Industries Location Quotient Analysis

As the Marathon County Location Quotient Analysis chart shows, Manufacturing is the largest industry, and is both strong and advancing. To gain a better understanding, the three manufacturing sub-industries which are strongest are further broken down.

Food and textiles industries, under NAICS 31, are expanded in **Figure 10-13**. Dairy Product Manufacturing is the largest segment and has the highest LQ. However, it is also projected to decline slightly over the next decade. Animal Slaughtering and Processing is also a large segment. It has a slight concentration and is expected to grow dramatically by 2024. Other Textile Product Mills, Other Food Manufacturing, and Bakeries and Tortilla Manufacturing are all smaller segments, but projected to grow in concentration. As small emerging industries, they should be supported because they have the potential to grow into strong clusters for the County.

Wood and paper products industries, under NAICS 32, are shown in **Figure 10-14**. This segment is historically very strong in the County. Other Wood Product Manufacturing and Pulp, Paper, and Paperboard Mills are both large segments that fall into the Mature Industries quadrant; they have high LQs but are projected to decline. Cement and Concrete Product Manufacturing is a growing segment with a strong concentration. Printing and Related Support Activities is a smaller segment sitting right on the X-axis, but has a very high projected growth. This is an emerging industry that could benefit from additional support.

Metal, machinery, and equipment industries, under NAICS 33, are broken down in **Figure 10-15**. Many of the industry segments within Metal, Machinery, and Equipment fall into the strong and advancing quadrant because they have positive LQs and projected growth. Ventilation, Heating, Air-Conditioning, and Commercial Refrigeration Equipment Manufacturing is the largest of these segments and has the highest concentration. Several segments fall into the Mature Industries segment because they have positive LQs but are projected to decline, including Architectural and Structural Metals Manufacturing and Electrical Equipment Manufacturing.

Figure 10-13: LQ Analysis of NAICS 31

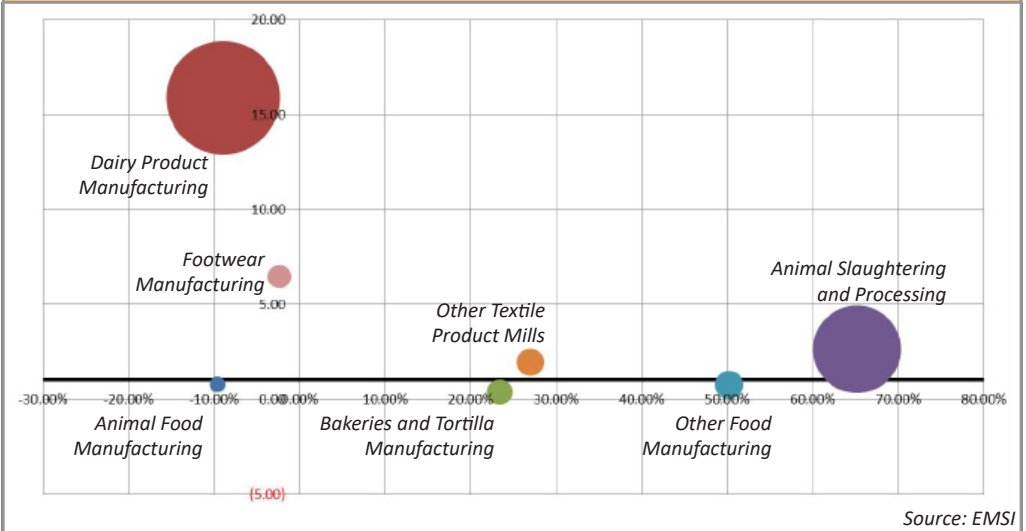


Figure 10-14: LQ Analysis of NAICS 32

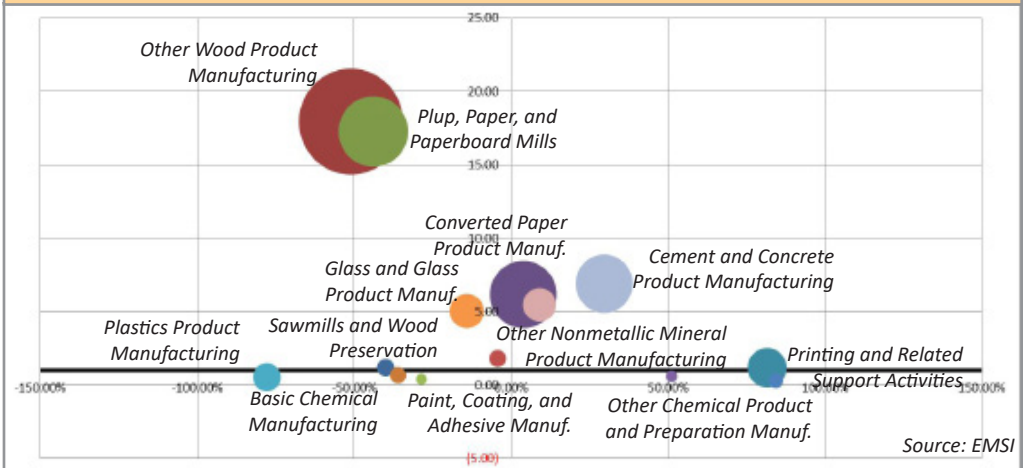
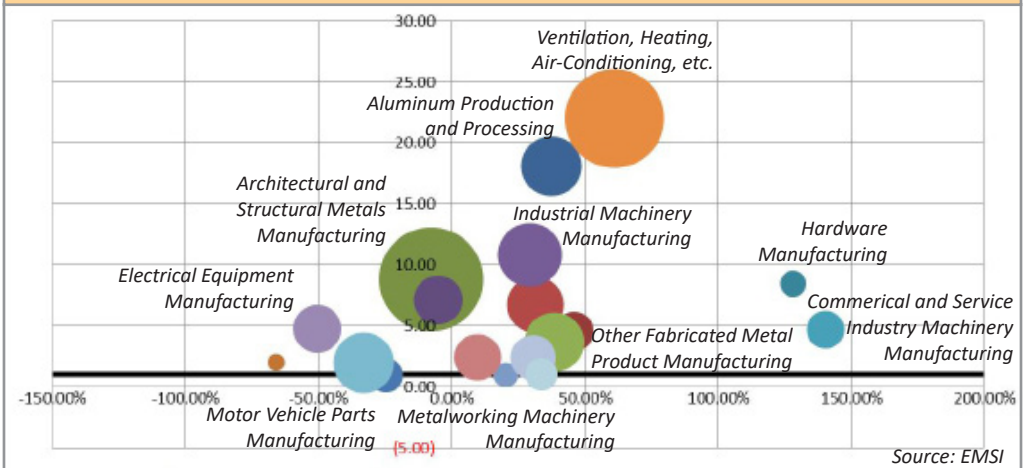


Figure 10-15: LQ Analysis of NAICS 33



Occupations Projections Analysis

The Regional Livability Plan has identified workforce as an issue that must be address in the near future; as the region will have many more job openings than available workers due to job growth, retirements, and a lack of young workers choosing to live in the region.

An occupations projections report from EMSI compares 2014 jobs with projected 2024 jobs, see **Figure 10-16**. Marathon County has projected annual openings of 2,545 jobs. Of these, about 500 are due to growth and about 2,000 are due to turnover due to retirements. How to attract more people to the region to fill these new positions must be addressed. All but three occupations are projected to increase in number of jobs between 2014 and 2024. The three projected to lose jobs are Management, Protective Service Occupations, and Military Occupations.

The occupations projected to increase the most in number of jobs are Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (896 annually), Healthcare Practitioners (813 annually); Office and Administrative Support (728 annually); Healthcare Support Occupations (531 annually); Sales and Related Occupations (421 annually); and Production Occupations (370).

Figure 10-16: Occupation Projections

SOC	Occupations Description	2014 Jobs	2024 Jobs	Projected Openings	2014-2020 Net Change	2014-2024 % Change
11-0000	Management	3,843	3,703	1,086	-140	-4%
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations	3,383	3,689	1,155	306	9%
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical	1,673	1,790	407	117	7%
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering	1,209	1,257	376	48	4%
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	314	355	151	41	13%
21-0000	Community and Social Services	852	1,009	380	157	18%
23-0000	Legal	344	364	92	20	6%
25-0000	Education, Training, and Library	3,234	3,443	926	209	6%
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	855	862	277	7	1%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	3,645	4,458	1,678	813	22%
31-0000	Healthcare Support	2,322	2,853	1,053	531	23%
33-0000	Protective Service	969	945	305	-24	-2%
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	4,590	5,486	2,806	896	20%
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	1,977	2,108	613	131	7%
39-0000	Personal Care and Service	2,291	2,540	804	249	11%
41-0000	Sales and Related	7,068	7,489	2,705	421	6%
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support	11,146	11,874	3,647	728	7%
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	817	873	327	56	7%
47-0000	Construction and Extraction	3,224	3,412	1,019	188	6%
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	2,829	3,055	975	226	8%
51-0000	Production	9,760	10,130	2,897	370	4%
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving	5,714	9,948	1,681	234	4%
55-0000	Military	376	350	85	-26	-7%
	Total	72,436	77,991	25,445	5,555	8%

Source: EMSI

Key Industries

A description of the key industry sectors and employers in Marathon County follows, organized by industries that are resources based, manufacturing based, and service based.

Resource Based Industries

Agricultural Production and Processing

According to the UW-Extension Economic Impact of Agriculture report for 2014, Marathon County agriculture generates \$2.7 billion in economic activity, about 19 percent of the county's total economic activity. Every dollar of sales from agriculture products generates an additional \$0.60 of economic activity in other parts of the county's economy. Agriculture provides 11,745 jobs, or 14.7 percent of the county's jobs, and \$821 million in income to workers, or 12.1 percent of total county income. Marathon County's top agriculture commodities in 2012 by dollar value were milk with \$249.8 million, grain with \$78.8 million, and cattle and calves at \$40.1 million.

According to the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture, Marathon County has 2,266 farms, encompassing over 490,000 acres of farmland. The average farm is 211 acres in size. Marathon County ranks first in Wisconsin in milk production, with nearly 61,000 dairy cows producing over 1.2 billion pounds of milk annually. The County also leads the United States in ginseng production, accounting for over 90 percent of the U.S. crop. Ginseng production brings approximately \$20 million in revenue per year to farmers in Marathon County.

The agriculture industry contributes \$2.54 billion in revenues and nearly 13,650 jobs to Marathon County's economy. The County's farmers own and manage the resources of over 465,000 acres of land, ranking it among Wisconsin's top counties in the production of forages, nursery stock, soybeans and agricultural crops in general. Dairy remains the largest part of agriculture in the County, explained mostly by the sale of milk.

Marathon County has eighteen plants that process dairy products for local, domestic, and international markets. On-farm employment accounts for nearly 3,155 jobs with processing jobs representing 6,190 jobs. Over the past decade the presence of immigrant workers, typically Hispanic, has increased, serving as a reliable source of labor to larger scale farms.

Forest Products and Forest Products Processing

Marathon County has approximately 29,937 acres of county-owned forest, which represents approximately 2.8 percent of all land in the County. County forests are established primarily for timber production and secondarily for recreation. In addition to publically owned forests, Marathon County has approximately 110,400 acres of private woodland enrolled in the WDNR Managed Forest Law programs. See the Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan for more detail on forests in Marathon County.

Many of the strongest industries in Marathon County rely on forest products as a primary or secondary material. WDNR and UW-Extension maintain an online database of the wood using industries in Wisconsin, including firms that manufacture logs and pulpwood into value added products, such as sawmills and pulp mills, as well as firms that manufacture dimensional and reconstituted wood products into value added products, such as furniture manufacturers. According to this database, in 2013 Marathon County had 36 wood using industries, including both primary and secondary users. Examples of a few companies included in the database are Award Hardwood Flooring, Central Wisconsin Lumber, Kolbe & Kolbe, Wausau Paper, and Wisconsin Box Co.

Manufacturing Based Industries

Nationally, in 2010, manufacturing employment represented 11 percent of all employment and in Wisconsin it represented 18.7 percent. In Marathon County, manufacturing represented 24.1 percent of all employment, the largest industry by employment in the County. Manufacturing is also a high wage sector in Marathon County with a median annual wage of \$45,552 in 2012 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, which is higher than the County's median annual wage for all industries of \$38,619.

Marathon County has a strong and diversified manufacturing base with a concentration in metal working industries, including:

- aluminum extruded products;
- cutlery;
- fabricated structural metal;
- metal doors; sash and trim;
- metal stamping; plating and polishing;
- powder coating;
- automotive;
- transportation and construction machinery;
- blowers and fans;
- industrial machinery;
- fabricated wire products; and
- fabricated pipe and fittings.



An industrial worker in a metal shop.

A number of the manufacturing operations in the County are related to the construction industry, including wood and metal products with commercial and residential applications such as venetian blinds; glass for windows; wood or metal windows, doors, and millwork; and prefabricated homes.

Key Service Based Industries **Health Care**

Over 4,600 people in Marathon County are employed in the health care industry, primarily in nursing homes, clinics and hospitals. Major employers in health care include Aspirus, Ministry Health Care, North Central Health Care, and Marshfield Clinic. See the Health and Human Services chapter for more detail about health care infrastructure in Marathon County.

Finance and Insurance

In 2010, over 5,400 people were employed in Marathon County in the Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate industries, many of them employed by direct property and casualty insurance carriers in Marathon County. Major employers include the Liberty Mutual Group and Wausau Benefits. In addition to the insurance industry, Wausau Financial develops and markets a wide variety of software applications and hardware equipment for the financial industry and other commercial businesses. As a regional center for northcentral Wisconsin, the Wausau metro area includes a concentration of banks and other financial institutions, many of which are located in downtown Wausau.

Retail

The retail sector is not considered critical to economic development because retail sales are dependent upon those businesses such as manufacturing and insurance carriers that export a product or service and import dollars to the region. The retail sector accounts for 11 percent of total employment in the U.S., in Wisconsin, and in Marathon County. The Wausau metro area serves as a regional center for retail activity. Major retail centers in the metro area are located in downtown Wausau, Rib Mountain, Cedar Creek in Rothschild, and the commercial corridors extending along most highways, particularly Business 51. The retail sector is recognized as a low wage sector offering limited benefits.

Visitor Industry

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism published a report on the economic impact of expenditures by travelers on Wisconsin in 2015. Visitor spending includes food, shopping, entertainment, lodging, and recreational expenditures by travelers and second-home owners. Marathon County had just over \$232 million in expenditures in 2014. The direct impact of tourism in Marathon County accounted for 4,131 jobs in 2014, providing over \$96 million in resident incomes and over \$28 million in state and local taxes.

A strong tourist industry highlights the unique assets of a community, making the area more attractive to residents and people being recruited by area employers. Marathon County has a broad range of recreational amenities like Rib Mountain State Park and Granite Peak Ski Area, the Mountain-Bay State Trail and the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, the Wausau Whitewater Kayak Park, the Eastbay Field Sports Complex, the Nine Mile County Forest ski and mountain bike trail systems, the Sunny Vale Softball Complex, and water resources such as Lake Wausau, Lake DuBay, and the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, as well as arts and culture amenities like the Grand Theater and the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, both in Wausau.



The Historic Stone Chalet at Granite Peak is a popular tourist location.

Development and Redevelopment Areas

Companies have different needs and preferences for business sites depending upon transportation, utility, and labor force considerations, so it is desirable to have land available for new development or redevelopment throughout the County, rather than concentrated in a few locations. It is also important to recognize that opportunities for new commercial and/or industrial development will likely occur in existing or planned business or industrial parks and through redevelopment of underutilized land. Map 10-2 illustrates the location of existing business and industrial parks in Marathon County.

An adequate supply of well-located business and industrial parks with good transportation access is critical to the economic health of the region. The business and industrial parks must be served with good sewer and water services, as well as energy and telecommunications infrastructure. In order to maintain diverse options to meet site location criteria of different companies such as location, lot size, and

transportation access, metropolitan regions typically maintain an inventory of 5 - 8 years of developable land.

Due to the costs of developing land and holding it, developers and communities may choose to invest in infrastructure on a phased basis. Communities identify land with critical highway access and other features well in advance of development in order to create competitive business and industrial park options in their region. Land for business or industrial park purposes can be controlled through planning and zoning, purchasing land or holding options. Local units of government generally control this, although the County may have some influence with regard to County roads and in communities with County zoning.

Two important factors that can influence the amount and location of new commercial and industrial development are the allowable development density and safe, convenient transportation access.

- **Development Density** - The amount of land required for individual building sites is regulated by zoning and varies by community. Optimizing the density of development in business and industrial parks helps a community secure the greatest return on its investment in infrastructure, and in the case of municipally owned industrial parks, it also impacts the community's return on investment in land. Industrial site location professionals and private business park developers typically look for an initial building coverage of 20-25 percent because this will generally allow a company to double in size on-site.
- **Access** - Industrial parks are typically located along major transportation corridors often separated from residential areas. One reason for the separation is to avoid land use and transportation conflicts as residential streets are not designed for heavy truck traffic and businesses do not like residential traffic or children playing in areas where they are moving heavy trucks and materials. It is also cost effective to concentrate roads with heavy load limits in industrial parks close to major highways. In addition to accommodating truck traffic, access for employees should be safe and convenient.

Wausau Metro Area Business and Industrial Parks

Half of Marathon County's twelve industrial and/or business parks are located in the Highway 51 Corridor, in Mosinee, Kronenwetter, Brokaw, Wausau, Rothschild, and Weston. No industrial park sites or land available in the Wausau metro area has rail access. Lack of rail access can increase transportation costs for a company; increase truck traffic in the community; or cause the company to locate in another area. Currently, the only industrial park in the County with rail access is located in the Village of Spencer.

Industrial Park

An industrial park is an area of land developed as a site for manufacturing and other industrial businesses.

Rural Community Industrial Parks

Several rural villages in Marathon County have created industrial parks, including Athens, Brokaw, Colby, Edgar, Spencer, and Stratford. The average building density is lower in these rural communities compared to development in business and industrial parks in the Wausau metro area. Lower density is common in more rural communities because land costs are lower, and rural communities often have plenty of available land with good highway access. However, such low building densities can create higher infrastructure costs (sewer, water, roads) for each lot.



The sign for the Stratford Business and Industrial Park.

Redevelopment Areas

Buildings that house manufacturing operations have evolved over the years to meet changing space needs. Manufacturers today typically prefer clear span buildings (no posts) and higher ceilings. Changes in technology, process flow, and warehousing systems make some older industrial buildings obsolete or limit their use to activities such as long-term storage. A decline in productive use of these buildings may lead to building deterioration, creating blight and a decline in tax values. Likewise, these older industrial areas no longer provide significant employment opportunities. In some cases, older industrial properties may have soil or water contamination. Given the high costs associated with property clean up and reuse, market conditions will have a significant impact on a community's ability to redevelop an area. For example, older buildings located along a commercial corridor experiencing development demand may require less public investment to foster redevelopment than areas that have contaminated soils or limited existing transportation access.

Most opportunities for redevelopment in Marathon County will occur in incorporated cities and villages. Old or obsolete commercial and industrial properties along the Wisconsin River and older highway corridors are the most likely candidates for redevelopment and several municipalities in the Wausau metropolitan area are beginning to redevelop these properties. In areas with water frontage, redevelopment often involves conversion of obsolete industrial uses into mixed commercial, residential, and recreational uses.

Downtown Revitalization

The primary central business district in Marathon County is downtown Wausau, but numerous other downtowns are found within the county. A healthy downtown is characterized by a diverse economic base, good access and parking, a clean, safe and attractive environment, and activity day and night.

Historically downtown Wausau has served as the center for government, finance, lodging, dining, entertainment, legal, retail and most commercial activities. As the region has grown and formats for retail, lodging and other businesses have changed, downtown Wausau, like many older downtown areas has evolved and adapted. In recent years retail shopping centers have developed in other metro area communities, following the shift of population to the south and east along major road corridors.

The City of Wausau has begun to implement a plan to redevelop a section of the downtown east of the river. Several years of planning and working with the consulting firm Stantec have led to initial construction, including remediating contaminated areas, daylighting a stream, and connecting 1st Street through the site. The plans include public access to the river and mixed use development for housing, restaurants, and other businesses.

Economic Development Organizational Framework

There are a number of entities in Marathon County that participate in economic development related efforts. Some of the primary organizations include:

Marathon County Development Corporation (MCDEVCO)

MCDEVCO is an economic development organization focused on growing business, building communities, and improving the quality of life in Marathon County communities. It is funded by administrative fees from municipal, county and private revolving loan funds, and memberships. It also receives financial support from the Wausau Chamber of Commerce and Marathon County. MCDEVCO serves all businesses and communities in Marathon County and has identified the following priorities:

- Sustain economic prosperity by helping existing businesses prosper and by attracting target industries.
- Building powerful regional partnerships.
- Foster a strong entrepreneurial climate that creates a competitive advantage.
- Providing infrastructure systems that stimulate quality economic growth.

Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)

The CVB promotes the area to business and leisure travelers and provides information on the area to visitors and residents. Six communities, including the Cities of Mosinee, Schofield, and Wausau, and the Villages of Rib Mountain, Rothschild, and Weston, work together to promote the area by contributing room tax revenues to the CVB.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC)

The ten counties served by the NCWRPC have been formally designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. Under this designation, the NCWRPC maintains a continuous process of planning assistance that supports the formulation and implementation of economic development programs designed to create or retain full-time permanent jobs and income. The NCWRPC provides technical assistance and compiles economic development data for its members and administers a regional revolving loan fund on behalf of the North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation.

North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board

As stated in the Workforce Development section of this chapter, NCWWDB has many programs to effectively align workforce resources, meet employment demands, and develop a skilled labor pool. NCWWDB also works directly with employers to develop customized trainings to help improve productivity, efficiency, and performance. These programs help companies find and maximize workforce talent to grow their business and ultimately grow the local economy.

Local Activities

Many municipalities have local economic development staff and programs to address these issues at a community scale. An example of what local economic development activities can include is found in the Wausau Entrepreneurial and Education Center. This center, located in the Wausau industrial park, helps businesses with business development by offering resources for entrepreneurs to establish and accelerate their growth. The center provides a one stop service center for start up and existing businesses throughout the region to access trusted advisors, educators, and capital in order to establish critical business practices that should lead to the successes of business owners.

Issues

- **Education.** The higher education system in Marathon County, particularly the University of Wisconsin—Marathon County, is strong and a vital part of the community. As funding for public higher education is reduced at the state level, higher education will need more local support.
- **Attracting and Retaining Young Wealth Builders and Professionals.** Employment and population projections forecast a disparity between available jobs and the labor force. High employment projections, combined with an older workforce preparing for retirement, will result in a labor force shortage and inability to meet the workforce needs of the business community. The future availability of a quality labor force is a major concern for the business community. See the Regional Livability Plan for more information on this issue.
- **Global Competition.** Marathon County's economy and local business need to be competitive in the increasingly global economy to be successful as technology makes the world smaller.
- **Technology.** Daily life is becoming increasingly more entrenched in ever evolving technology. High speed internet is necessary to do business, for education, for medical appointments, and more.

Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development Goals and Objectives

Education Goal: Every child and adult in Marathon County has the opportunity to get a world-class education.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that every person has the opportunity for education and employment to be self-supporting.
2. Support a high-quality and cost effective public school system.
3. Continue support for the University of Wisconsin—Marathon County.
4. Continue support for the Northcentral Technical College and other higher education institutions.
5. Provide high-quality library service.

Workforce Development Goal: Marathon County is a community where every person to find a family supporting job and every business to have a strong workforce.

Objectives:

1. Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce prepared to meet the needs of both existing and emerging industries and technologies.
2. Promote and increase communication between economic development, workforce development, and other organizations.

Economic Development Goal: Marathon County's a diverse economy a place of opportunities where people and businesses can grow and be successful.

Objectives:

Encourage development and redevelopment of key employment centers in areas that possess strong market potential, provide good transportation access for workers, and promote the efficient movement of goods.

1. Organize effectively and develop programs and tools to support key industries and a healthy economy.
2. Create an innovative atmosphere to foster an entrepreneurially supportive environment.
3. Encourage a globally competitive economy.
4. Maintain infrastructure to support economic growth.
5. Support the Central Wisconsin Airport.

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Chapter Eleven

Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources



This chapter describes the recreation amenities, tourism and visitor facilities, and cultural resources in Marathon County. The recreation amenities consist primarily of a strong county park and forest unit system, as well as several prominent state and private facilities. Tourism is an economic driver in Marathon County, so attention is paid to current tourist attractors and opportunities for expansion. The cultural resources section includes a history of Marathon County and catalogues the historic properties and sites within the county as well as arts and performing arts spaces.

Previous Plans and Studies

Marathon County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) – 2007

The Marathon County Board, Wausau/Marathon County Park Commission, Forestry, Recreation, and Zoning Committee developed the plan. It was effective through the years of 2007-2012. The overall goal of the plan is “to provide a park and forest recreation system that will meet the needs of our current and future generations, preserve and protect the County’s open space, water, historical, cultural, and natural resources; and provide recreation opportunities that are designed to enhance the County’s quality of life”.

LIFE Report – 2014

The LIFE Report is a joint effort of Marathon County and the United Way and is produced every two years. The purpose of the report is to acknowledge community strengths, identify community challenges, and serve as a catalyst for change by advancing community conversations and partnerships around the Calls for Action. This report covers a wide range of topics and specifically addresses the impact tourism has had in Marathon County.

Wisconsin Land Legacy Report – 2006

The Wisconsin Land Legacy Report was created by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This plan was adopted in 2006 and will be active for 50 years. The report specifically identifies 229 natural areas that meet the needs Wisconsin’s conservation and recreational needs. In the report identifies a number of areas in Marathon County with recreational opportunities.

Ice Age National Scenic Trail Corridor Plan and Environmental Assessment – 2013

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail Corridor Plan was prepared in 2013 by the Ice Age Trail Alliance, North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service. The purpose of the document was to create and establish a 40-45 mile corridor running through Marathon County for the Ice Age National Trail.

County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan – 2006

The Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a management guide for the Marathon County forest through the year 2020. The mission of the plan is to manage and protect natural resources on a sustainable basis for ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future generations.

Historic Preservation Plan for Wausau City, WI – 1999

In 1999, the Historic Landmark Commission of the City of Wausau adopted the Historic Preservation Plan. The intention of the plan was to preserve historical sites and building in Wausau. The goals proposed in the plans focus on preservation, education, and awareness.

Recreation

Marathon County has a substantial system of County parks, with a history dating back to the early decades of the twentieth century of providing well designed and maintained parks for the enjoyment of County residents. The system consists of eighteen County parks with a total of over 3,400 acres administered and maintained by the Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department. Marathon County also owns and maintains nine County forest units, all of which are open to the public for recreational purposes. The County forest covers a total of 29,937 acres of land. Marathon County also collaborates with the WDNR by operating and maintaining the 18 miles of the Mountain-Bay State Park Trail that lie within the county, performing maintenance on trails within the McMillan State Wildlife Refuge, and Administering the State's Snowmobile, ATV, and UTV grant programs.

Recreation

Recreation is any activity done for enjoyment when one is not working. It provides refreshment through a pasttime, exercise, or diversion.

The Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department is organized in partnership with the City of Wausau to plan and maintain the City's system of 37 parks. The County system also works in partnership with private recreational leagues and organizations to coordinate the use of County facilities for active recreation, but the County does not provide active recreational programming itself. During the 1990s, the County has transferred ownership and responsibility to local units of government for some parks that served specific community needs in Weston, Athens, Elderon, Easton, and the Town of Eau Pleine.

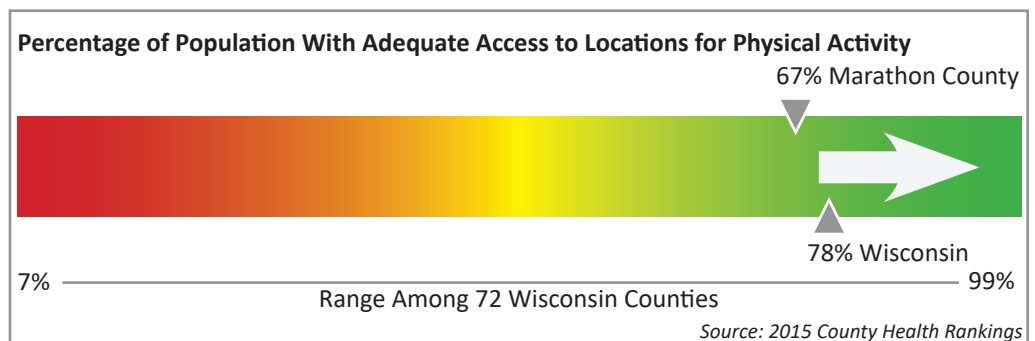
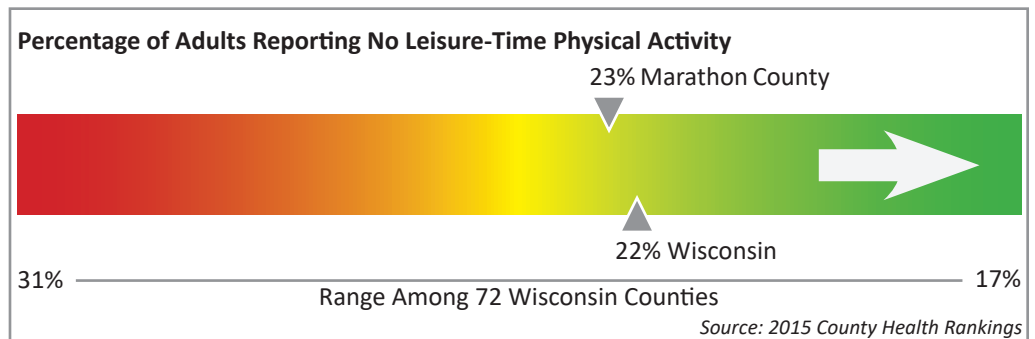
The County plans to concentrate its efforts and resources on fewer, larger parks, having either exceptional natural features or special use facilities. The primary mission of the Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department is to serve the recreational needs of Marathon County residents and conserve the County's unique natural resources.

Parks, Trails and Open Space

The primary components of the parks and recreation lands in Marathon County include County parks and forest units, State Parks, Trails and Wildlife Areas, and municipal parks. Combined these add to the outdoor recreation opportunities available to area residents and visitors, see [Map 11-1](#).

County Parks

Marathon County parks have a unique style that reflects the geology and geography of the County, and the history of the park system. Many of the County parks are built along rivers or river impoundments, which form reservoirs that provide opportunities for swimming and fishing. The first director of Marathon County parks department worked for the United States Forest Service and brought the Federal stylistic identity to Marathon County parks, characterized by use of materials common to the area (e.g., timber and granite) and rustic designs. Many of the system's parks still have vintage CCC-era shelters, which the department works to maintain. In fact, some buildings at the County fairgrounds in Marathon Park are listed on the National Architectural Register. Parking lots are often surrounded by small granite boulders.



[Figure 11-1](#) provides details about all of the parks and forest units in the County system, including their locations, size, and key features. Parks and forest units are also displayed on the Recreation Areas map.

County Forest Units

Marathon County owns and maintains nine County forest units; all are open to the public for recreational purposes. The forest units are popular for timber management, hunting, fishing, cross country skiing, mountain biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, hiking, bird watching, and camping. The County seeks to balance the recreational uses of its forests with timber production. See the Recreation Areas Map, [Map 11-1](#).

Figure 11-1: Marathon County Parks and Forest Units

County Parks	Location	Acreage	Key Features
Amco Parks	379 CTH F., Athens	39	Fishing, Picnic, Play Equipment, Shelter
Ashley Park	1600 Sandy Credd Road, Mosinee	160	Undeveloped
Big Eau Pleine Park	3301 Eau Pleine Park Rd, Mosinee	1,453	Beach, Boat Landings, Camping, Trails, Disc Golf, Fishing, Hiking, Biking, Snowbiking, Horse Trails
Big Rapids Park	EP1806 Big Rapids St, Stratford	33	Fishing, Picnic, Play Equipment, Shelter
Bluegill Bay Park	3800 Bluegill Ave, Wausau	98	Boat Landing, Fishing, Picnic, Shelters, Trails, Volleyball Court
Cherokee Park	H2700 CTH N., Colby	69	Fishing, Picnic, Play Equipment, Shelter, Trails
Courthouse Square	500 Forest St, Wausau	0.42	Open Area, Plants/Wildlife
D.C. Everest Park	1800 S 3rd Ave, Wausau	12.1	Boat Landing, Handicapped Accessible Fishing Pier, Waterski Show Site
Dells of the Eau Claire Park	P2150 CTH Y, Aniwa	278	Beach, Camping, Picnic, Swimming, Trails, Shelter, Ice Age National Recreation Trail
Duane L. Corbin Shooting Range Park	2173 Rifle Rd, Mosinee	100	Shelter; Rifle, Pistol, Skeet, and Archery Ranges; Classroom
Eastbay Sports Complex	602 E Kent St, Wausau	54	Field Sports Facility Concessions, Play Equipment
Library Park	106 Washington St, Wausau	1	Open Area, Picnic, Plants/Wildlife
Marathon Park	1201 Stewart Ave, Wausau	78	Fairgrounds, Amphitheater, Ice Areana, Large Shelters, Playgrounds, Concession, Minature Train Ride, Baseball, Basketball, Camping, Pickleball, Trails, Volleyball, Splash Pad
Mission Lake Park	400 County Park Rd, Hatley	93	Beach, Boat Landing, Swimming, Trails, Shelters
Mountain-Bay State Park Trail	Trailhead - Municipal St, Weston	--	Picnic; Bicycle, Hiking, and Snowmobile Trail
Reitbrock Geographical Marker	5651 Meridian Rd, Athens	0.1	Geographical Marker
Rib Falls Park	1725 CTH S, Edgar	315	Fishing, Picnic, Play Equipment, Trails
Sunny Vale Park	1000 S 72nd Ave, Wausau	300	Picnic, Swimming, Handicapped Accessible Fishing Pier, Snowbike Trail, Trails, Volleyball
Sunny Vale Softball Complex	1000 S 66th Ave, Wausau	72	Softball, Concessions, Volleyball, Picnic, Shelter
Forest Units	Location	Acreage	Key Features
Bern Wetland Forest	Town of Bern	269	Hunting, Open Area, Trails
Burma Road Forest	Town of Mosinee	1,480	Hunting, Trails, ATV Trail
Elderon Forest Unit	Town of Elderon	280	Hunting, Open Area, Trails
Harrison-Hewitt Forest	Town of Harrison	9,195	Hunting, Open Area, Trails, Wildlife Refuge
Kronenwetter Forest	Town of Kronenwetter	5,176	Hunting, Open Area, Trails
Leather Camp Forest Unit	Town of Guenther	5,248	Hunting, Open Area, Trails
Nine Mile County Forest Recreation Area	Town of Rib Mountain	4,897	Hunting; Cross Country Ski, Snowshoe, Snowmobile, Horse, and Mountain Bike Trails, Chalet
Ringle Marsh Forest	Town of Ringle	3,108	Hunting, Open Area, Trails
Wisconsin River Forest	Town of Maine	283	Hunting, Boating, Fishing, Trails

Source: Marathon County Parks Department

Marathon County has a Comprehensive Land Use Plan to guide management of the County's forests through the year 2020. The mission of the plan is to manage and protect natural resources on a sustainable basis for ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future generations. See the Natural Resources chapter for more information on County forest management.

State and Federal Park, Trail and Wildlife Areas

In addition to the parks and forest units owned and maintained by the County, there are several State owned recreation facilities and natural areas in Marathon County. Rib Mountain State Park, located in the Town of Rib Mountain, features picnic areas, hiking trails, cross country ski trails, hunting, and two observation decks. The Mountain-Bay State Park Trail begins in Weston and extends east following the former Chicago-Northwestern railroad line all the way to Green Bay. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail travels through the eastern side of the County, with about 35 miles of completed trails and connecting to the Dells of the Eau Claire County Park. The McMillan Marsh Wildlife Area covers 4,172 acres and contains bicycle and hiking trails. The George W. Mead Wildlife Area is a conservation and recreation area of over 33,000 acres by the Little Eau Pleine River and is open for public hiking, hunting, and fishing. The Plover River State Fishery Area consists of 1,405 acres of land along the Plover River, providing public access for fishing.



The amphitheater at Rib Mountain State Park.

Special Regional Recreation Facilities

There are several unique recreational facilities, mostly located in the Wausau metro area, that serve the larger region and County. These include:

Wausau Whitewater Kayak Park

Located along the downtown riverfront, utilizes the east channel of the Wisconsin River that includes natural rapids and dam-controlled water flow as a whitewater kayak race course. The course has developed into one of the best slalom and freestyle courses in the nation and Wausau's whitewater program has been named a Center of Excellence by the United States Canoe and Kayak Team, making it a top U.S. Training site. Spectator seating and trails have been developed along the course, which is within easy walking distance from downtown Wausau.



A race taking place at the Wausau Whitewater Kayak Park

Historic Athletic Park

Located in a residential neighborhood in the City of Wausau, the original CCC built granite perimeter stadium wall dates to 1936. The stadium was renovated with a new grandstand, retail store, and luxury suites in 2014. Additional changes set for 2016 include new third base line seating, restrooms, concessions, a party deck, and upgraded field lighting. The park is the home of the Wisconsin Woodchucks, a summer collegiate baseball team in the Northwood's League.

Granite Peak

This private downhill skiing area, located within the Rib Mountain State Park, includes numerous runs, six lifts, a renovated chalet dating from 1938, a contemporary chalet, and a ski school.

Nine Mile County Forest Recreation Area

This is the most popular unit in the county forest system with just under 5,000 acres. Nine Mile accommodates multiple uses including sustainable timber harvests, hunting, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, hiking, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing. It also contains the Duane L. Corbin Shooting Range Park for target and trap shooting as well as archery. Nine Mile also hosts recreational competitions each year including summer mountain bike races, cross-country ski races, and local school cross country races.

Rivers Edge Parkway

A master plan to establish a bicycle/pedestrian trail along the banks of the Wisconsin River through the City of Wausau was adopted in June 1995. The Rivers Edge Master Plan outlines a long-range (20-30 year) framework for improving access to the riverfront and enhancing the riverfront environment. While the master plan technically only includes the City of Wausau, interest is growing in communities throughout the Wausau metro area to work cooperatively to establish a connected trail system that will eventually extend the length of the Wisconsin River valley through the metro area and beyond. To date, slightly over 3 miles of trail have been constructed, mostly along the downtown riverfront. There is also broad community support for connecting the riverfront trail system with the Mountain-Bay state trail and other local municipal trail systems.

Forest Tax Law Land

An estimated one-third of Marathon County land area is forested. Approximately 100,000 acres of private woodlands are set aside under the Managed Forest Law or Forest Crop Law programs administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR). Under the Law, some of this private land must be open to the public. Open lands under the Managed Forest Law program allow for hunting, fishing, hiking, sight-seeing, and cross-country skiing. Open lands under the Forest Crop law allow for public hunting and fishing. Not all land under these laws are open to the public. The WisDNR website has a mapping application which displays open lands.

Park System Needs

The Marathon County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2007-2012 is intended to provide guidance to County staff and officials in the acquisition, development and programming of County parks, forests, and special recreation areas. The plan provides recreational needs analysis, recreation issue identification, and an action plan for development to meet the needs of the residents of Marathon County. The Plan makes the County eligible for various state and federal grant and aid funding programs.

The current plan identified several needs related to parks and recreation and outlines several actions to address those needs. The identified needs are summarized below.

Acresage Needs – According to the plan, 531 additional acres of active use recreation area are needed to meet current user needs and an additional 655 acres will be needed to meet user needs through 2020.

Service Area Needs – Most of Marathon County is well served by existing parks and forest recreation units. However, the plan identifies two areas in the County that are not adequately served by County parks and forests. One is the area between Spencer and Marshfield, which lacks a County park. The second area with a service deficiency is the Knowlton/Lake DuBay area. The main public shoreland and boat launch to Lake DuBay is at DuBay County Park in Portage County. The County would like to acquire land on the main body of Lake DuBay to address the needs for swimming access which the existing undeveloped Ashley County Park cannot effectively provide.

Recreational Study and Resource Protection Needs – There is a need at the state, regional and county level to consider provision of additional facilities to accommodate trail use activities and access to water resources. The plan also identifies the need to develop land management plans, lake management plans, and river management plans for certain areas.

Facility Needs – Master plans are needed for all major park properties and “base” recreation facilities (access roads, parking, restrooms, drinking water, etc.) should be provided in all County parks.

Areas of High Demand

High demand for certain recreation facilities or opportunities underscores the need to balance the desire to meet growing demands given limited budgets, while minimizing use conflicts and resource impacts.

Water Based Recreation

As the number of people participating in water based recreation grows, providing more or improving existing access to water resources has become a priority. Concerns have also been expressed regarding overuse of facilities, uncontrolled use, or inappropriate use and conflicting uses of lakes and rivers. In particular conflicts between motorized and non-motorized water-craft are becoming more common.

Trail Development

There is strong public support for development of more trails for year-round recreational activities. The Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2007-2012 recommends that trail development be given high priority. As with water based recreation, balancing the needs of a wide variety of trail users can be a challenge. Issues can arise regarding trail damage by higher intensity users such as mountain bikers and ATVs, safety concerns, particularly where motorized and non-motorized users share trails, and conflicts with hunting in joint use areas. In addition, trail maintenance and enforcement of trail use rules are common concerns of the various trail user groups, requiring coordination.

ATV/UTV Facilities

Demand for all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and utility-terrain vehicle (UTV) facilities has grown in Marathon County. Due to the nature of ATV and UTV use, there are few other recreational uses that ATVs and UTVs are compatible with besides other motorized uses. Marathon County offers more winter ATV opportunities than any other County in the state by making the majority of its 863 miles of snowmobile trails available to ATVs with some restrictions based on temperature. However, UTVs are not allowed on snowmobile trails due to their

weight and trail funding limitations. Summer ATV opportunities are limited to the Burma County Forest Unit and the Edgar-Stratford Trail. In general, private landowners have not been willing to open their lands to public ATV/UTV use. There are presently no other public lands in Marathon County that can physically accommodate ATV/UTV use due to environmental limitations or other existing recreation uses that are incompatible with ATV/UTV use. To accommodate additional ATV/UTV summer use, either private sector providers must emerge or public sector lands would need to be acquired and ATV/UTV specific facilities developed.

Recreational Activities

Competitive Activities

Team sports are a major element of recreation. Many county parks and other recreation facilities include spaces for team sports. Baseball, softball, and soccer fields, volleyball, tennis and pickleball courts, and other team sports facilities are popular recreation amenities. In addition to many public facilities in parks and at schools, some team sports have private facilities. Examples of private facilities the curling center, gymnastics facilities, golf courses, tennis clubs, and others. Wausau is home to a whitewater kayak course.

Silent Sports

Silent sports are outdoor activities that are human powered and aerobic, where movement does not require motors or fossil fuels. Silent sports include activities like hiking, cycling, running, paddling, cross country skiing, backpacking, snowshoeing, and multisport races like triathlons. Silent sports embrace the peacefulness of being in the middle of nature while being active. These aerobic outdoor activities take place on the rivers, roads, and trails across the County. Marathon County has approximately 22 miles of groomed cross-country ski trails, 120 miles of hiking trails, 30 miles of mountain bike trails, and 8 miles of snowshoe trails. Numerous competitive events occur on these facilities.

Motorized Activities

Motorized recreation activities involve the use of a vehicle such as a snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle (ATV), utility-terrain vehicle (UTV), off-road motorcycle, or watercraft. These vehicles not only provide a form of recreation for many users, but are often used as a local and regional mode of transportation. Marathon County has approximately 863 miles of snowmobile trails, 696 miles of these are also open to winter ATV use. Of the 863 miles of snowmobile trails, only 54 are on public land. The remaining miles are on private property, belonging to over 1,800 landowners. Marathon County also has 21 miles of joint summer ATV and UTV trails, all of which are on County land. There are no public off-road motorcycle facilities in Marathon County. Watercraft have access to approximately 32,055 acres of water in Marathon County, including acreage on 18 lakes, 6 major flowages, and many of the 643 miles of rivers or streams. Marathon County has approximately 3,365 miles of roadway that are frequently driven simply for pleasure and sight-seeing. Pleasure drives are a popular recreation activity enjoyed by motorists of all ages.

Other Recreational Activities

Not all recreational activities fall neatly into one of the above categories. Other outdoor recreational activities include those that interact more directly with nature. Nature-based outdoor activities include camping, birdwatching, viewing or photographing nature, and hunting and trapping. Fishing and ice fishing are popular recreation activities on the rivers and lakes in Marathon County. Many public and private spaces across the county are open to hunting during the various hunting seasons. Other winter recreation activities present in Marathon County include downhill skiing, snow tubing, sledding, and ice skating.



A couple snowshoeing at Nine Mile Forest Recreation Area.

Tourism

According to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Marathon County ranked ninth out of the 72 counties in the state, for revenues from tourism. This is shown through the wide of array of attractions located in Marathon County. Each year people come from all over the state and country for the local attractions and shopping districts. In 2014, Marathon County had over \$200 million in visitor expenditures. See the Economic Development section of Chapter 10 for more information on the economic impact of the Tourism industry in Marathon County.

Marathon County has several organizations which promote and support tourism. The Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention and Visitors Bureau provides information to people visiting Wausau and Central Wisconsin about accommodations, activities, shopping, food, and events. The Visitors Bureau is also highlighted on the state's tourism website, travelwisconsin.com. The

Tourism

Tourism is the industry of providing information, accommodations, transportation, attractions, and other services to tourists.

Wausau River District is a non-profit which enhances and markets downtown Wausau. Wausau Events is another local non-profit organization which markets and runs events in and around Wausau to create community.

Key Attractions

Currently there are a number of attractions in Marathon County, WI. There are an array of museums, breweries, pools and waterparks, cafes and restaurants, and shopping centers. The Grand Theater in downtown Wausau is a major event center hosting a variety of local and national productions and concerts.

Marathon County is also home to several regular events. The Wisconsin Valley Fair takes place in Marathon Park in Wausau during the summer every year. The Fair is a six-day event with approximately 150,000 visitors each year. Nightly concerts draw people from beyond Marathon County. Wausau is also the location of events such as the Chalkfest, Balloon and Rib Fest, Bull Falls Blues Fest and the Wausau Festival of the Arts Arttrageous Weekend.

Marathon County is also home to the annual Badger State Games. The Badger State Games are an Olympic-style competition which began in 1985. The Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention and Visitors Bureau took over the Games in 2011, after the Wisconsin Sports Development Corporation decided to discontinue them. The summer games take place primarily in June and the winter games take place primarily in January. Over 15,000 athletes participate each year.

Agri-tourism

Another area to develop in the tourist industry is Agri-tourism. Agri-tourism is based on utilizing existing farms and agricultural areas as a form of tourism. Currently in Marathon County there is minimal agri-tourism occurring. However there are a number agri-tourism opportunities in the county such as Pizza on the Farm, Farmers Markets, rent a cabin on a farm, tours, orchards, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, and berry picking. These events take place on farms around the Wausau area as well as in the smaller communities of Marathon County such as Edgar, Ringle, and Athens.

Sport Tourism – Up and Coming

Much of the growth experienced in the tourism industry was due to investment opportunities in sport tourism. The sport tourist industry has contributed significantly to the Marathon County tourism revenues. It has accounted for a 14.5 million dollar increase in tourism. The trend should continue for years to come due to the Athletic Park Renovations, Wausau Curling Center, Eastbay Sports Complex, and Granite Peak Improvements.

The Wausau Whitewater Kayak Course is a third of a mile park located in downtown Wausau. The park has a white water ride for anyone from beginners to expert paddlers. The lower section of the course is beginner friendly with a terrain of holes and waves. The Class II+ is the portion for more advanced paddlers. The main attraction of the park is Big Drop, shortly after is Little Drop. Regional, national, and international competitions are held at Whitewater Park.

The International Mountain Bike Association established the Ride Center Program in 2007. A Ride Center consists of a variety of trails from backcountry trails to gravity trails to urban mountain bike trails. The Central Wisconsin Offroad Cycling Coalition has developed a master plan to develop the Wausau area as an IMBA Ride Center, which would contribute substantially to tourism related to mountain biking. There are currently 20 miles of 12' wide trails and over 12 miles of single track mountain biking trails in the Nine Mile County Forest Recreation Area. There is a trail for everyone from advanced to beginners. In winter a 7 mile snowbike trail is offered at Sunny Vale County Park. At Sylvan Hill Park in Wausau, a bike park including gravity trails, a pump track and a skills area in the design phase with construction projected for 2017. In addition, Marathon County has purchased land in Brokaw for future mountain bike facility development.



The Outbound Trail at Nine Mile is a popular mountain biking trail.

Sustainable Tourism for the Future

Sustainable tourism takes into account the wants and needs of the tourists and the host area while protecting, and developing opportunities for years to come. Marathon County has the potential to develop sustainable tourism in the forested region of the county. In the county, there are approximately 388,147 acres of forested land. The forested lands can be utilized to develop hiking, camping, and biking areas. By developing these areas in sustainable manner would promote a healthy environment, preserve natural areas, and increase the tourism. However, care should be taken to measure the carrying capacity of the region.

A Brief History of Marathon County

Marathon County is located in the north central portion of the state of Wisconsin, on the edge of the Northern Highland physiographic region. The Northern Highland is a pre-glacial remnant that was worn down by the Wisconsin glaciation about 23,000 years ago. A terminal moraine cut through eastern Marathon County, and created the more glaciated southeastern corner of the county. Glacial deposits modified the drainage of the Northern Highland, creating lakes and swamps, waterfalls and rapids, as well as sandy and stone-filled soils. Rib Mountain, rising 1,941 feet above sea level, is also a remnant of the pre-glacial era. The western half of the county was a product of older glacial drift covered with river deposits, glacial lake deposits and other glacial drift. Located on the southern edge of the Highland, Marathon County was covered with conifer and hardwood forest at the beginning of large-scale Euro-American settlement in the mid-nineteenth century.

Marathon County had been home to the Ojibwa tribes since they had moved south from Madeline Island by the mid-eighteenth century. Much of Marathon County was taken over by the U.S. government in a treaty with the Western Ojibwa, signed in 1837. The following year, St. Louis lumberman George Stevens traveled north to investigate the newly-opened pine and hardwood forests along the Wisconsin River. By 1839, Stevens had built a lumber mill and dams at Big Bull Falls, destined to become the city of Wausau. Development was rapid along the river and by 1847, there were 45 sawmills on the upper river and all suitable mill sites were taken.

The Economics of Settlement

The lumbering industry dominated the development of Marathon County through the next half century. Community development was led by men in the lumber business: Walter McIndoe, who purchased the Stevens Mill at Big Bull Falls in 1848; Dr. William Scholfield, who arrived in 1851 and whose family operated the Martin mill on the Eau Claire River until the 1880s; Joseph Dessert, who purchased the mill at Little Bull Falls (Mosinee) by the 1850s and operated it for half a century; and Frederick Rietbrock, who developed the mill at Black Creek Falls (Athens) in 1879.

The lumber business provided the foundation for the lumbermen's attempts to construct railroads and create other businesses. McIndoe, elected to Congress in 1860, led the effort to secure a land grant for the Wisconsin Central Railroad. The railroad, however, ran not to Wausau, but along the western edge of the County, serving Spencer, Unity, Colby and Abbotsford. The Wisconsin Valley Railroad (later part of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific system) arrived in Wausau in 1874. The Milwaukee, Lake Shore & Western (later the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad) went through Wausau on the way to Marshfield by 1880. The arrival of railroads and growth of the lumber business led to population growth and Wausau, the largest community, grew from 1,349 in 1870 to 12,354 thirty years later.

While the earliest attraction in Marathon County had been the forests, the soils throughout the western two-thirds of the County were particularly suitable for agriculture. Farming

expanded rapidly. In 1860, 156 farms covering 20,366 acres were in operation. By 1900, 4,276 farms on 442,878 acres (43.9% of land area) showed the strength of agriculture. The early settlers grew a variety of crops including hay, potatoes, peas, oats, rye, barley and wheat. Corn became established later. Wheat never predominated in Marathon County, since by the time of widespread agriculture there, the primary wheat industry had already moved to the west. By the 1880s, however, the rise of dairying soon dominated agriculture in the County and in the state.

As early as 1885, over 230,000 pounds of butter and over 4,300 pounds of cheese were produced in Marathon County. Over the next decade, creameries developed to take over the home butter-making activities and the County had 17 such facilities by 1905. Cheese making also became important and by the end of the nineteenth century, Marathon County had the only sizeable activity in northern Wisconsin. By the Teens and 1920s, dairying had a strong foothold as a primary economic activity in Marathon County, displacing the lumber industry that had been in decline since the turn of the century.

Development of the Towns and Villages

Marathon County towns and villages generally started either as a lumber and saw milling site, or as a station site when the railroads built into the County in the 1870s and 1880s. Most settlements prospered with the lumber industry, but beginning in the 1880s as farming and the dairy industry began to expand, villages gradually began to serve as agricultural centers with processing facilities such as creameries, cheese-making factories, or grain elevators.

The transition from lumbering to agriculture was prominent in the area surrounding Frederick Rietbrock's saw milling settlement of Black Creek Falls (later re-named Athens). In the 1870s, Milwaukee attorney Rietbrock purchased the forests covering much of three surrounding towns, including Halsey, Johnson and Rietbrock. About one-third of the residents of Black Creek Falls were employed in Rietbrock's lumber business. Yet as the lumber business declined, Rietbrock led the way toward diversified farming with his own operation where he experimented with fertilizer use on crops, raised special breeds of dairy cattle, and encouraged agricultural education. Rietbrock's personal transition from lumber to agriculture typified the changes that occurred throughout Marathon County in the early twentieth century.

Other communities followed the same pattern, but were located on the various railroads that criss-crossed Marathon County. The Wisconsin Central, built on the western edge of the County, facilitated the development of the villages of Unity and Spencer in the white pine lumbering belt, and the cities of Colby and Abbotsford in the hardwood and hemlock forest belt. In the 1880s, the Milwaukee, Lake Shore & Western Railroad built through the County, running through the eastern towns to Wausau and southwest to Marshfield. This line (later Chicago and Northwestern) ran through Norrie, the Village of Hatley and Ringle on its way toward Wausau, and then west and southwest where the railroad served Marathon City, Edgar, Fenwood,

Stratford, and McMillan on its way to Marshfield. Wausau and towns to the south had previously received service in 1874 from the Wisconsin Valley Railroad (later the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific) when it was built north from Wisconsin Rapids.

Ethnicity and Settlement

The lumber industry and the agricultural development that followed it provided the jobs and land that attracted settlers. While many of the lumbermen were of Yankee heritage, many other settlers were immigrants. Some were recruited from their first homes in Milwaukee and other cities; other residents were new arrivals directly from Europe. In terms of ethnic heritage, Germans have dominated Marathon County over the last century.

Germans from Hesse-Darmstadt arrived as early as the mid-1850s and settled in the towns of Maine and Berlin by 1855. In succeeding decades other Germans followed, from Pomerania, West Prussia and Brandenburg. Germans especially concentrated in the northern and central towns, from Marathon, Cassel and Wien north to the county line. By the late nineteenth century, approximately 75 percent of the Marathon County population was German-born or of German parentage.

Marathon County also attracted immigrants from Poland by the 1870s. Many of the earliest came from Milwaukee, responding to ads about available land. A group settled in Cassel in 1875, and another group relocated in Frederick Rietbrock's lands to establish Poniatowski. After the turn of the century, colonization efforts in the southeast portion of the County attracted additional Polish settlers in Reid, Bevent, Franzen, Guenther, Knowlton, Kronenwetter and Mosinee.

Smaller colonies of other European settlers were scattered throughout the County as well. Norwegians were prominent in Elderon and in the southeast section. There was an Irish emigration to Emmet, Mosinee and nearby Cleveland. Bohemians were present in the Rocky Ridge area near Mosinee and others located in Johnson and Holton. A Dutch colony formed in Plover, Easton and Ringle in the early 1900s, with residents who moved from Milwaukee and Sheboygan.

Economic Diversification

While new residents came for land and to settle the outlying portions of Marathon County, the lumbermen who had first come to exploit the pine forests wrestled with change. The depletion of pine forests by 1900 forced lumbermen to accept hemlock and other hardwood as raw materials. While these forests kept the business going until about 1915, lumbermen increasingly sought to diversify with new ventures. A group of these leaders began meeting informally as early as 1901 and became known as the Wausau Group. Led by Cyrus Yawkey, owner of the Yawkey Lumber Company, the group invested in new sources of lumber supply or new business ventures. The Wausau Group created a new role for Wausau, and helped it transition from a lumber milling center into a managerial center for various lumber-related businesses. Although Wausau continued as a production center, under Wausau Group leadership the city became the home office location for widespread lumber holdings and funneled the profits back into the city.

Men in the Wausau Group were responsible for shifting from lumber production into the creation of paper mills and built the Wausau Paper Mills Company in 1899 at Brokaw. The Group supported the founding of the Wausau Sulphate Fibre Company, a wood pulp and paper operation, located at Mosinee. A third mill was planned in 1909 at Rothschild, with construction of a 450-foot dam across the river that would create Lake Wausau. The Rothschild plant was called Marathon Paper Mills Company and was led for 40 years by David Clark Everest, who ultimately took over leadership of the Wausau Group after Cyrus Yawkey.

Concern about safety hazards in the paper mills led to the Wausau Group's entry into the insurance business. In 1911, on the day that the Wisconsin Workmen's Compensation law was passed, the Wausau Group formed the Employers Mutual Liability Insurance Company. By 1931, Employers Mutual had become the leading writer of workmen's compensation policies in Wisconsin. Later, as Wausau Insurance, this company created a lasting institution that brought a national image to the city through its advertising that featured the old Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad depot (located at 720 Grant Street). With leadership and interlocking directorates in the local banking industry and the street railway company, as well as leadership of local civic and social groups and arts and culture, the Wausau Group was responsible for carrying the city of Wausau and Marathon County into the mid-twentieth century.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Wausau continued to build on the diversified economic foundation created by the Wausau Group. The local control provided by the Wausau Group was clearly important in maintaining the economy of the area, although some have noted that this control prevented the influx of "new blood" or innovative ideas in business and civic leadership. In any event, there has been a strong sense of continuity in leadership in the County over time.

By 2000, the economic foundation retained the same base, but with some diversification. Wood and paper products are still leading industries, but with many manufacturing firms also supporting the economic base. Marathon County is the number one ranking dairy producing county in the state, although agriculture continues to suffer from a difficult market economy. Major employers, however, are led by the health care industry and insurance. Tourism has become more important, with efforts to enhance the County's natural features such as Rib Mountain, the development of biking trails and the parks along the numerous rivers that run through the County.

The population has become somewhat more diverse, although it is still predominantly white. Since the 1980s, large numbers of Asians, particularly Hmong, have settled in the Wausau area and now make up over ten percent of the population. The rural culture embraced by Mennonite and Amish residents in northwest Marathon County also adds a unique quality that distinguishes the County as it begins the twenty-first century.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources is a broad term that can encompass many aspects of heritage, including archaeological sites, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to American Indians or other cultural groups.

Cultural resources are those elements around us that signify our heritage and help to evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinctive. Cultural Resources include buildings, sites and landscapes that help communities retain their sense of identity in an increasingly homogenized society. The recognition of historic buildings, historic roads, or archaeological sites can provide a basis for towns and villages to preserve some aspect of their rural character. This plan recognizes that not all historic buildings or historic farms can be preserved. However, the recognition of their importance in the collective memory of Marathon County, and the desire to preserve that character as expressed in numerous community meetings, is an important reason to integrate cultural resources into the county planning process.

In Marathon County, residents have expressed a strong desire to preserve the rural character of the County. Increasing urbanization on the fringe of Wausau, and scattered residential settlement in towns farther out threaten the rural density and require greater service provision than the rural towns have traditionally provided. Given the changing agricultural economy, however, many towns are unsure how to respond to development and concerned about over-regulation.

Existing Cultural Resources

There are two primary methods for official recognition of historic properties—the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and designation by a local Historic Landmarks Commission. The following discussion identifies how these tools have been used in Marathon County.

Organized efforts to preserve historic resources in Marathon County date to the mid-1970s, when several actions were undertaken to preserve the County's heritage. The first properties were nominated to the NRHP in 1974 and the City of Wausau adopted an ordinance establishing the local Historic Landmarks Commission in 1975. The Marathon County Extension Homemakers compiled a booklet, "Historic Landmarks of Marathon County," that identified a wide variety of rural buildings, structures and archaeological sites throughout the entire County.

Since that time, historic properties throughout the County have been recognized through both the NRHP, and by the local Wausau Historic Landmarks Commission for properties within Wausau. Some properties are recognized at both levels. In Marathon County, only Wausau has established local recognition through its Historic Landmarks Commission. As of 2014, the Landmarks Commission had designated 24 individual properties and the Downtown Historic District. The Downtown Historic District encompasses 61 contributing structures and 24 non-contributing structures in an area bounded by Washington Street, 1st Street, Grant Street and 5th Street.

The City of Wausau has received several external designations in regards to historic preservation. In 2002, the City became a Certified Local Government in Wisconsin for historic preservation. In 2009, the City was named a Preserve America Community by the Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. These titles and partnerships encourage further preservation efforts in the City, as well as provide funding opportunities for preservation efforts.

The Marathon County Historical Society, formed in 1952, spearheads many historic preservation efforts in the County. The organization was given the Cyrus C. Yawkey house at 403 McIndoe Street for its headquarters. The Yawkey house, built in 1900 and fully restored, is home to the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum. The Woodson House is the society headquarters with the research library and archives, administrative offices, storage and exhibit space.

Historic Places

A historic place or heritage site is an official location where pieces of political, military, cultural, or social history have been preserved due to their cultural historic value. Historic sites are usually protected by law, and many have been recognized with an official national historic site designation.



Source: landmarkhunter.com

The Edgar Village Hall is on the National Register of Historic Places

Figure 11-2: Properties on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)

Resource Name	Address	City	Year Built	Comments
Andrew Warren Historic District	Roughly bounded by Fulton, Grant, 4th, and 7th Streets	Wausau	1868 to 1934	
Birc, C. B., House	522 McIndoe St.	Wausau	1910	ETR*, Warren HD
Dessert, Joseph, Library	123 Main St.	Mosinee	1898	ETR
Dunbar, C. F., House	292 McIndoe St.	Wausau	1929	ETR
East Hill Residential Historic District	Roughly bounded by 7th, Adams, 10th, Scott, and Bellis St.s	Wausau	1833 to 1945	
Edgar Village Hall	107 W. Beech St.	Edgar	1917	
Everest, D. C., House	1206 Highland Park Blvd	Wausau	1925 to 1928	ETR
First Universalist Church	504 Grant St.	Wausau	1914	ETR, Warren HD
Fricke–Menzer House	105 Main St.	Marathon	1875	
Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm	436 Co. Hwy. F	Hamburg	1904	
Fromm, Walter and Mabel, House	Off Wis. 107	Hamburg	1928	
Jones, Granville D., House	915 Grant St.	Wausau	1904	
Maine Site (47MR22)	Address Restricted	Brokaw	--	
Marathon County Fairgrounds	Stewart Ave.	Wausau	1921	ETR
Marchetti, Louis, House	111 Grant St.	Wausau	1878	
Mathie, Karl, House	202 Water St.	Wausau	1898	ETR
Miller, Henry, House	1314 Grand Ave.	Wausau	1894	
Rothschild Pavilion	1104 Park St.	Rothschild	1911	
Schuetz, E. K., House	930 Franklin St.	Wausau	1922	ETR
Single, Benjamin, House	4708 Stettin Dr.	Wausau	1849	
Stewart Hiram C., House	521 Grant St.	Wausau	1906	Warren HD
United States Post Office and Court House	317 1st St.	Wausau	1937	
Wausau Club	309 McClellan St.	Wausau	1901	
Wegner, C. H., House	906 Grant St.	Wausau	1922 to 1924	ETR
Wright, Duey and Julia, House	904 Grand Ave.	Wausau	1958	
Wright, Ely, House	901 6th St.	Wausau	1881	Warren HD
Yawkey Cyrus C., House	403 McIndoe St.	Wausau	1901, 1908	Warren HD

* ETR is the Eschweiller Thematic Resources. Source: National Register of Historic Places

The County Historical Society and its staff have nominated properties to the NRHP. Much of their work focuses on education, including programs such as the Little Red Schoolhouse Living History program at Marathon Park, various educational slide presentations, workshops, exhibits and guest speakers. The Society has also worked with local communities in the County to preserve their history and has published a self-guided tour of agricultural and rural landmarks, “Discover Marathon County’s Agricultural Heritage” (2000). There is currently no county-wide group similar to the Wausau Historic Landmarks Commission to recognize and/or designate historic properties outside of Wausau.

Marathon County has 27 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, as shown on **Figure 11-2**. The majority of the NRHP properties are located in Wausau, with only seven properties outside the city. Except for the First Universalist Church, the Wausau Club, and the Marathon County Fairgrounds, all NRHP listings in Wausau are residences of city leaders. Many of these historic residences are in the Andrew Warren Historic District, a district of approximately 10 blocks of homes built primarily between 1868 and 1934. Nine of the NRHP properties were nominated together as part of the Eschweiller Thematic Resources, all designed by Milwaukee architect Alexander C. Eschweiller. One archaeological site in the vicinity of the village of Brokaw is also listed on the NRHP (location restricted). Property details can be accessed via the Marathon County Historical Society and the NRHP websites. The Dells of the Eau Claire County Park has been nominated as a NRHP and is currently under review by the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation office.

Archaeological Sites and Cemeteries

Types of archaeological sites include places where people lived, worked, and worshipped. The following types of sites have been identified in Marathon County:

- Cemeteries (including burial mounds and unmarked graves)
- Cabins and homesteads
- Native American community sites
- Fish/weir/fish trap
- Sugarbush/maple sugaring sites
- Farmsteads
- Logging camps
- Military sites
- Corn hill/ farm fields

Cemeteries, Burial Mounds, Other Burials

Wisconsin Statute 157.70 provides for the protection of all human burial sites, including all marked and unmarked burials and cemeteries. According to the Marathon County records of the Genealogy Trails History Group, there are currently 158 cemeteries and burial areas identified in Marathon County, and it is likely that other cemeteries and burials may be present.

Suspected burial mounds or unmarked burials must be reported to the state Burial Sites Preservation Office. If human remains are uncovered during excavation, all work must cease pending review of the Burial Sites Preservation Office. All cemeteries and burials in Marathon County should be catalogued under Wisconsin Statutes 157.70 to provide maximum protection of these sites.

Additional Surveyed Properties

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has conducted architectural surveys in Marathon County to identify historic properties that are believed to be significant. The most recent survey was from the 1970s and thus is somewhat dated. Although the SHPO maintains inventory files, they have not been field checked in recent years. As a result, some properties may no longer be extant, while others may have deteriorated to a point where they have lost their integrity and significance. In general, properties that were identified as significant in that survey included cheese factories, farmsteads and barns and rural one-room schools. The SHPO property surveys are too long for inclusion in this plan, but should provide a basis for any additional survey work that the county may undertake in the future.

Opportunities and Challenges

Limited Perception of Landmark Properties

There is a need to survey and recognize a wide variety of buildings and sites and their contributions to Marathon County's heritage. The current NRHP listings are almost exclusively devoted to grand residential dwellings, and do not reflect the county's agricultural, industrial or recreational heritage. For example, some of the parks (Rib Mountain State Park, Eldeeron Park, Athens Park, Cherokee County Park, and Dells of the Eau Claire County Park) have Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)-era stonework, landscaping or park buildings that should be surveyed. Bridges and industrial properties should also be evaluated for their historic significance. Roadside religious art and grottos are distinctive regional structures that are related to the ethnic and religious heritage of the county and worthy of note. Distinctive churches throughout the towns, villages and cities are important architectural properties that are true landmarks in their communities and should be inventoried.

Symbolic and Financial Value of Historic Properties

All too often, Marathon County's historic buildings have been viewed as expendable, or as a frill. Renovation or re-use is summarily dismissed as too expensive without even considering such options, even though renovation costs are often significantly lower than demolition and new construction. Buildings that could provide an immediate sense of place in a community are torn down and replaced with nondescript modern concrete, without exploring options for renovation. The Mortenson Stone sawmill's planning mill, the last remaining original sawmill building in Wausau, has been dismantled and stored awaiting reconstruction by the Marathon County Historical Society.

Rural Character and Historic Resources

In Marathon County, residents have expressed a strong desire to preserve the rural character of the county and raised concerns about increasing ex-urban development and the decline of working farms. An important part of maintaining rural character is maintaining the rural landscape and the rural buildings that convey that sense of place. While it is important to address the location and type of new development, there is also a need to preserve some visible reminders of rural character, including working farms. Without preserving some of the existing resources, including farmsteads and farmlands, the very characteristics that attracted new residents will increasingly be gone.

Protection of Archaeological Sites and Cemeteries

Cultural resources planning includes identification and protection of archaeological sites and historic cemeteries. The Wisconsin Historical Society maintains a list of reported sites and cemeteries, representing a fraction of sites that are actually present. This information is often overlooked and should be incorporated into the planning process for local communities.

Arts and Performing Arts

There are numerous opportunities in Marathon County breathtaking works of art. The Grand Theater, located in downtown Wausau, opened in 2002 and has awed over 150,000 people each year with their amazing performances. Other performing arts organizations in the County include Wausau Community Theater, the Central Wisconsin Children's Theater, the Wausau Conservatory of Music, several local dance companies, and several bands and choirs.

Among other local museums and galleries, Marathon County is home to the Woodson Art Museum. This museum has a stunning collection of paintings, graphics, and sculptures consisting primarily of birds. The beautiful gardens are home to a collection of sculptures. Wausau is also the location of the Central for the Visual Arts, a visual arts organization that offers art exhibits, art classes, and an art shop.



The Grand Theater in Wausau is a primary performance venue.

Issues

- **Intergovernmental Coordination.** Currently, recreation facilities and opportunities are offered by a variety of public agencies and private organizations within Marathon County. Since funding for facility operation and development has become more limited due to tighter budgets, it is very important for the different agencies to coordinate their efforts to provide recreational services and opportunities to Marathon County residents. Central county municipalities should explore the possibility of establishing a metropolitan park and recreation system in the Wausau metropolitan area to reduce administration, operation, and maintenance costs while increasing the quality of recreation facilities and programs.
- **Jurisdictional Roles.** Parks under different jurisdictional control traditionally offer different types of facilities to serve different types of recreational needs of the residents of the county. Generally, local or municipal parks are small, highly developed parks that provide active recreation opportunities, while county parks and recreation areas are larger, less developed parks that provide passive recreation opportunities. State parks have unique features that set them apart and attract users from throughout the state. It is important that parks be owned and operated by the appropriate specialized jurisdiction. Another role for County parks is to provide highly developed facilities that serve large parts of the County such as fairgrounds, shooting range, softball complex, ice arenas, and Eastbay Sports Complex. This role is expanding with increased emphasis on attracting sports tourism.
- **Trail Development.** Hiking/walking/running trails and canoe/kayak trails were identified as a high priority needs. Marathon County should place a high priority on developing a county-wide trail system that provides year-round use for a variety of users, including barrier free trails, trails for the elderly, and trails of differing length and difficulty. Trails should be contained within a park or forest unit or they should connect parks and forests through easements. Marathon County should play a leadership role in coordinating and providing technical assistance throughout the metropolitan area for a community-wide trail system. Of particular note was the need for more bicycle trails and routes, mountain bike trails, and lighted cross-country ski trails.
- **Water Based Recreation.** Public access to water remains a major issue in Marathon County. Most of these concerns center around the overuse, uncontrolled use, or inappropriate use and conflicting uses on Marathon County's major lakes and rivers, especially Lake Wausau, Lake DuBay, Half Moon Lake, and the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir. To address the complex issues of public access to these water resources, Marathon County should provide coordination and technical assistance to municipalities, utilities, and other agencies in their efforts to prepare and adopt lake and river management plans that control public access, use, and safety on county waterways. Another major issue is declining water quality that reduces the quality and safety of many forms of water based recreation.
- **County Forest Land Acquisition.** Lands within the County forest boundaries or areas of special or unique values shall be recommended to the County Board for acquisition as they become available. A target of 200 acres per year has been established in the Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
- **Conservancy.** The Marathon County Park Department currently does not have a conservancy park classification, which would allow the county to designate, acquire, preserve, and appropriately develop lands with unique natural, environmental, geological, cultural, or historic features. The Marathon County Park Department should create a conservancy park classification, actively designate and acquire conservancy park land and easements, and adopt a county-wide conservancy plan.
- **Historic Park Facilities.** Several park shelters and other structures in Marathon County parks were constructed by the Civilian Conservancy Corps (CCC) in the 1930's. These facilities are very well maintained and are historically significant. Marathon County should make an effort to preserve the character of these existing CCC vintage shelters, explore nominating them for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, and develop new park structures in a compatible manner using similar methods and materials for construction.
- **Enhance Awareness and Access to Visitor Amenities.** Marathon County has an abundance of scenic and natural resources, as well as cultural and outdoor recreation opportunities. Such amenities can be enjoyed by area residents and visitors alike, and can be an important consideration when companies attempt to recruit technical, professional and management employees to the area from other parts of the State or country. However, information about and access to some of these amenities could be improved through relatively minor investments, like better maps, program information and signage. Likewise, access to visitor amenities could be improved through better cooperation and coordination between the various agencies involved, including the County and local municipal parks and forestry departments, arts and cultural organizations, and promotional groups like the CVB.

Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources Goal and Objectives

Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources Goal: Marathon County takes advantage of its many natural and cultural amenities to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to be active and engaged in a wide array of activities and events.

Objectives:

1. Ensure access to quality, accessible, affordable recreation opportunities.
2. Promote tourism throughout the County.
3. Encourage the protection of historically significant buildings and sites from development impacts.
4. Increase and expand awareness of cultural resources.

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Chapter Twelve

Intergovernmental Cooperation



This chapter describes existing activities that Marathon County uses to coordinate with other various units of government including municipalities, school districts, the State of Wisconsin and the federal government. This chapter will also summarize the major challenges and issues regarding intergovernmental cooperation and identify mechanisms for cooperation and coordination, including intergovernmental agreements, contracts, and regulatory authority. These mechanisms can occur between Marathon County and other local, regional, state or federal entities.

Intergovernmental Tools and Regulations

This section lists the various tools used related to intergovernmental cooperation.

Annexation

Wisconsin law generally places annexation power in the hands of individual property owners, making it difficult for local municipalities (villages, cities, and towns) to control where or when annexation will occur. Wisconsin Statutes (s. 66.021) outlines three procedures for petitioning annexation. The most common involves a petition signed unanimously by all the electors residing in the territory or all owners of property to be annexed. A petition can also be circulated to initiate annexation. This requires signatures of a majority of electors in the territory and owners of one-half of the property either in value or land area. A petition for annexation can also be requested through a referendum election, but this requires signatures of at least 20 percent of the electors in the territory and is not a process that is often used.

Annexation

Annexation is the incorporation of new territory into the domain of a city or village from another municipality.

Extraterritorial Zoning (ETZ)

Wisconsin Statutes allow cities and villages authority to assert zoning control over an area extending 1 ½ to 3 miles around their border, depending on their size. In Marathon County, the City of Wausau is the only community large enough to merit the 3-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction, all other cities and villages are limited to 1 ½ miles. To exercise ETZ, a committee must be formed with members of the affected city/village and town. This committee is charged with determining land uses and zoning in the extraterritorial area and must approve zoning changes. The committee is given two years to complete its work, although a one-year extension is allowed.

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

Extraterritorial jurisdiction is the legal ability of a government to exercise authority beyond its normal boundaries.

Extraterritorial Subdivision Review

Cities and villages have the option of exercising extraterritorial plat review authority, which affects the same area defined by ETZ. If they use this authority, they have the right to review and approve land divisions within this area. The purpose of extraterritorial plat review is to give cities and villages some control over development patterns along their borders. Unlike ETZ, extraterritorial subdivision review does not have a time limit.

Subdivision or Plat Review

Subdivision or plat reviews regulate the creation of parcels on subdivision plats and the correction of faulty parcels of record on assessor plats.

Intergovernmental Agreements

Wisconsin Statutes authorize local communities to establish cooperative intergovernmental agreements. These are most commonly used in the context of shared public services such as police, fire, and EMS. Cooperative agreements can also be established regarding revenue sharing and to deal with boundary changes in a coordinated, planned manner.

Shared Services and Facilities

The following section provides a brief description of the various functional areas and services that require intergovernmental coordination at various levels.

County/City Services

The County and the City of Wausau share several departments and services, including:

Health Department

The City of Wausau Health Department was absorbed into the Marathon County Health Department in the late 1970s.

Information Technology

Marathon County and the City of Wausau cooperate to jointly operate the City-County I.T. Commission, which provides the implementation and operation of cooperative data processing and management information systems. The I.T. Commission provides information services to all City and County departments including installing and maintaining computer hardware and software.

Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Services

Marathon County and the City of Wausau jointly operate the Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department that oversees most of the planning, management, and maintenance of both the Marathon County park system and the local City of Wausau park system, plus recreation programs, urban forestry, horticulture, and boulevard maintenance services. The Wausau park system includes 37 parks while the County system consists of seventeen County parks and nine County forest units. The department receives funding from the Marathon County budget as well as from the City of Wausau budget.

Emergency Response

A number of cities, villages, and towns provide Emergency Response in conjunction with their fire department services. Many communities also have First Responders, volunteers who are trained to provide immediate lifesaving actions in their neighborhood or community before an ambulance or Emergency Response team can get there.

E-911 Dispatch Service

The Marathon County Sheriff's Department Communications Division provides E-911 Dispatch for all Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services agencies in Marathon County. The Communications Division services 85 user agencies and also provides alert paging support for the Emergency Management Office, among others.

The users are served by a microwave linked voted repeater radio system, consisting of a control center at the Sheriff's Department, and nine remote radio tower sites spread throughout the County. The system is also utilized by the Marathon County Highway Department and the Wausau Fire Department to support their radio communications.

Fire Service

Fire department service in Marathon County is offered through a patchwork of systems operated by cities, villages, and towns. Many of the community fire service providers also provide Emergency Response. Marathon County has 31 fire service providers, many of which encompass more than one municipality and service is provided through mutual aid agreements between adjacent communities. The bulk of the fire service providers are made up of volunteers unless noted below. EMS service is also typically provided through the fire service provider.

Law Enforcement

The Marathon County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement and police protection to the unincorporated areas of the County. Local police departments generally serve the area within the incorporated boundaries of cities or villages, although some departments provide service to adjacent unincorporated towns through service agreements. In addition, some local police departments provide back-up service to the Marathon County Sheriff's Department on an as-needed basis. There are 12 police districts serving cities and villages located in or partially in Marathon County.

Library System

The Marathon County Library system consists of an eight branch facilities located at Athens, Edgar, Hatley, Marathon City, Mosinee, Rothschild, Spencer and Stratford and the headquarters facility located in downtown Wausau.



Emergency responders and ambulances are often a shared service.

Relationships with Other Governmental Entities

This section identifies the many various types of government that Marathon County maintains relationships with.

Economic Development

The Marathon County Development Corporation (MCDEVCO) is the county funded economic development corporation. They provide direct assistance to businesses and general support for economic development efforts. Another organization is Centergy, the Central Wisconsin Alliance for Economic Development, is an economic development group representing five central Wisconsin counties, including Marathon. Together they work to improve and promote the region's general business climate.

Housing

The North Central Community Action Program (NCCAP) is an advocate, provider, and facilitator of programs and services for low-income individuals in Lincoln, Marathon, and Wood Counties. NCCAP seeks to create opportunities for people and communities to obtain skills, identify and utilize resources, and explore innovative options necessary to reduce poverty and increase self-sufficiency. Marathon County is also part of the multi-county Central Wisconsin Region for CDBG housing assistance.

Local Municipalities

The County provides a variety of services to local municipalities. There are 62 government units in the County (41 Towns, 6 Cities and 15 Villages). Some specific services include: 911 dispatch service; access permits, maintenance and improvement of County Highways; planning and zoning; permitting oversight regarding private septic systems, shoreland, wetland and floodplain regulation; sewer service area planning; and animal waste and manure management. The County also provides oversight on compliance with soil and water conservation policies for the Farmland Preservation Program.

Metropolitan Planning

The Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the body designated by the Federal Department of Transportation to be responsible for regional transportation planning in the Wausau metropolitan area. The Marathon County CPZ staff works with the MPO on transportation related studies and planning efforts. The MPO's jurisdiction only covers the Wausau metro area, therefore the County is responsible for regional transportation planning in areas of the County outside the Wausau area.

Regional Planning

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) was created in 1973 and is a voluntary association of governments. Its service area encompasses ten counties, including Marathon County. The primary purpose of the NCWRPC is to provide planning services for the region and its member communities and to provide data and research and other technical services. It provides assistance in the five major areas of economic development, geographic information system (GIS), land use planning, intergovernmental cooperation and transportation planning. In addition, NCWRPC provides administrative services to the North Central Stormwater Coalition.

School Districts

Marathon County is served by seventeen school districts, some of which also extend into adjacent counties. Within these districts there are 52 elementary, 17 middle/junior high, and 18 senior high schools. There are also numerous private and parochial schools located in Marathon County. School facilities can significantly impact surrounding development, traffic patterns and volumes, and utility needs; therefore it is essential to coordinate planning for school facilities with affected municipalities and the County overall.

Towns & Villages Association

There are two Towns & Villages Association districts in Marathon County, generally split along the Wisconsin River to form the East and West associations. Both hold regular district meetings, participate in an annual statewide convention, and participate in cooperative training programs. Marathon County staff participate in meetings, often providing information on technical matters.

State and Federal Agencies

The County works with State and/or Federal agencies in conjunction with administration of several state and federal regulatory programs. While the State maintains oversight on many of their mandated regulations, the County administers permit reviews regarding shoreland, floodplain, and wetland zoning, compliance with water quality standards, farmland preservation tax credits and managed forest tax credit programs. The County also coordinates with State and Federal agencies on transportation planning, roadway construction and maintenance. The County operates and maintains the Mountain-Bay State Park Trail and administers the State's snowmobile, ATV, and UTV trail maintenance grant programs.

Surrounding Counties

Marathon County is surrounded by seven counties: Lincoln, Taylor, Clark, Wood, Portage, Shawano, and Langlade. Marathon County currently has cooperative agreements with some adjacent counties regarding regional facilities and services. Most notably, the Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is operated through a joint powers agreement between Marathon and Portage Counties. Marathon County has entered into a solid-waste handling agreement with Portage and Shawano Counties to coordinate public landfill operations. The agreement designates the Marathon County Landfill in Ringle as the primary public landfill serving these counties. Some County departments (e.g., Highway Department) occasionally contract with other counties for specific services and/or sharing of machinery.

Issues

- **Regionalization.** Communities in the Wausau Urban area and fringe are beginning to “rub shoulders” and need to start looking at themselves as a region and not simply a collection of separate municipalities. Efforts should focus on working together to attract development and jobs to locations that best benefit the region; with less attention to individual community gains. It must be recognized that simply shifting development around the region, for example, from Wausau to Weston, does not necessarily result in a net gain for the area. Rather, municipalities must work together to promote and enhance the region’s assets because increasingly, economic competition occurs between regions more so than between local communities. Working together to strengthening the region is the most effective way to remain competitive amongst the various other regions in the State.
- **Regulatory Structure.** There seems to be some frustration over the various levels of government involved in regulation of natural resources and the potential for the rules to change, which creates confusion and complicates enforcement. Given the various levels of government involved in resource protection this situation will likely continue. While the County has virtually no control over changes in State or Federal regulations or procedures, as the primary local administrating body the County can play an important role in communicating changes and making people aware of current regulations and permitting procedures.
- **Service Consolidation.** Marathon County has multiple jurisdictions for provision of community needs. There are 17 school districts, 12 police departments (including Marshfield), 31 fire departments, and 16 emergency service providers (most affiliated with fire departments). In some areas of the County, individual community and town service providers are an appropriate service delivery mechanism. In other areas, particularly in the Wausau metro area, where population and density are greater, the patchwork of service providers may be confusing and, in some cases, overlapping. Opportunities for service consolidation in the metro area have been discussed for several years, particularly regarding fire and EMS. Consolidation could reduce overall regional costs through more efficient use of staff and volunteers, sharing of equipment (purchase and maintenance) and facilities while increasing service efficiency.
- **Tax Base Competition.** There is fairly strong competition between local communities in the Wausau metro area and beyond to attract new development and employment. Protecting local tax base is driving much of the competition. As a result, financial incentives, particularly TIF, are used to lure development to a community. This can result in unnecessary public subsidization of development that may have occurred anyway. On the other hand, efforts to improve the quality of life may not be given adequate emphasis, even though quality of life factors tend to play a significant role in business location decisions.
- **Transportation Coordination.** The County maintains a highway network throughout the entire County and needs to maintain communication with each local unit to provide the best service. In addition, coordination needs to be maintained related to bicycle routes and trails.
- **Zoning Coordination.** All incorporated cities and villages in Marathon County have their own zoning. Of all unincorporated towns, 18 have adopted County zoning, 16 have their own zoning, while 7 have no zoning. In addition, the County administers shoreland throughout the entire county. Because of the various levels and types of zoning regulations, the potential for inconsistent and possibly conflicting regulation exists.
- **Zoning Revisions.** Over the last few years there have been issues and concerns with the County general zoning ordinance. Many issues related to communication, education, permitting and the code itself have been identified. As a result the County has initiated a major effort has to improve the zoning process and ordinance.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal and Objectives

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal: Marathon County is a cooperative and collaborative partner with other municipalities and organizations to most effectively and efficiently provide services to residents.

Objectives:

1. Promote technology and resource sharing
2. Encourage proactive conflict resolution
3. Promote cost-effective public services
4. Provide coordination of regional development and planning activities
5. Encourage participation in all levels of government

The Action Plan, found in Chapter 13, builds on the goals and objectives found in the chapters by adding recommended action steps to take to reach the goal of becoming the healthiest, safest, most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

Chapter Thirteen

Implementation



The primary function of this comprehensive plan is to establish a framework to influence future policy decisions with the overarching goal of making Marathon County the Healthiest, Safest, Most Prosperous County in the State. The plan also provides a blueprint for growth and development to maintain rural and community character. In addition, the plan set priorities for public expenditures. To be effective, this plan should be actively used as a tool to guide decisions concerning:

- The development and implementation of programs and support systems that further the goals and objectives set forth in this plan.
- The implementation of specific actions as identified in this plan.
- The implementation and enforcement of regulatory ordinances based on the goals and objectives identified in this plan.
- The establishment of a continued planning process providing for periodic review and updates to this plan.

Implementation Tools

Having the appropriate tools to implement the actions in this comprehensive plan is critical. There are two primary types of implementation tools: Non-regulatory and Regulatory. Non-regulatory approaches generally involve decisions related to policy and about how the county will spend its financial resources. Regulatory approaches involve implementing various rules and regulations, mainly related to land use regulations. In particular, the zoning ordinance and subdivision (or land division) regulations comprise the principal regulatory devices used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development.

Non-regulatory Tools

Marathon County annually prepares both an operational budget and a capital improvement plan. In addition, each county department, as well as agencies funded by the county, set objectives and prepare work plans. Another major policy effort undertaken by the County is the Strategic Plan.

Annual Operating Budget

Marathon County prepares a budget each year and it is one of the most important policy documents prepared. It is a statement of the prioritization and allocation of financial resources to achieve certain objectives over a specific time period. The budget is based on the needs of county residents, priorities set by the county board, and the related work plans identified by each County department.

The budget and the services provided by that budget are instrumental in achieving the goals and objectives of the plan. In 2015 the county operating budget was about \$166 million, which includes funding for over twenty different departments. The largest components of the budget are general government (36%), social services (24%), public safety (19%), and health (7%). Combined, these four functions comprise over 85% of the budget.

The budget is prepared by the county administrator in conjunction with department heads. The Finance and Property Committee provides oversight and the budget is adopted by the county board.

Capital Improvement Plan

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a blueprint for planning the County's major capital expenditures. A CIP is simply a method of planning for and scheduling expenditures for public improvements over a period of several years in order to maximize the use of limited public funds.

Marathon County set up the Capital Improvement Program with the following goals:

- Protect the County's investment in its buildings, equipment, improvements and infrastructure.
- Recognize the need to preserve and maintain existing assets over acquiring new assets.
- Develop the most cost effective way to manage the County's assets through a comprehensive process that cuts across departments, boards and committees.

The Capital Improvement Program is composed of two parts-- a capital budget and a capital program. The capital budget is the upcoming years spending plan for capital items. The capital program is a plan for capital expenditures that extends five years beyond the capital budget. Public improvements or expenditures typically considered in a CIP include:

1. An expenditure that is for a County department, operation or in the best interest of the County
2. Generally non-recurring
3. Has a cost of over \$25,000
4. Has a service life of 7 years or more
5. Rolling stock and equipment replacement that is of critical importance to the functioning of the department involved.

Each year the CIP is reviewed and extended one year to compensate for the previous year that was completed. This keeps the improvement program current and allows for modifications to meet changing needs. It coordinates community planning, financial capacity, and physical development. The preparation of a CIP is a joint responsibility between County administration and departments. The County Board approves the CIP.

Strategic Plan

The County regularly prepares a strategic plan to focus county work efforts and financial resources for a 3 to 5 year period. The comprehensive plan provides the foundation for the strategic plan process. The strategic planning puts things in action by prioritizing and focuses County efforts, as well as identifying benchmarks and other measurable items to monitor success over time.

Regulatory Tools

The most common regulatory implementation tools are the County's official controls or regulatory codes.

Zoning Ordinance

Zoning is used to manage and control how land is used and developed. The zoning ordinance establishes detailed regulations concerning how land may be developed, including setbacks, the density or intensity of development, and the height and bulk of building and other structures. The general purpose of zoning is to minimize undesirable side effects resulting from development by segregating and/or buffering incompatible uses and by maintaining standards that ensure development will not negatively impact the community's character or environment.

The zoning map indicates where specific types of development can and should be located. Zoning districts shown on the zoning map should be coordinated with the land use plan and map. While the zoning map and land use map do not need to directly match at the time the land use map is adopted, the intent is that the land use map will serve as a guide indicating how the property should eventually be zoned. Changes to the zoning districts should only be made if they are consistent with the adopted future land use map. However, there may be situations where changing the zoning district boundary makes sense and is in the best interest of the community. If changing the zoning would result in a conflict with the future land use map, the land use map should also be changed.

The future land use map should only be changed if it does not accurately reflect the community's desired land use pattern. Achieving consistency between zoning and land use designation is also discussed in the Land Use chapter.

The comprehensive plan, including the future land use map should be periodically reviewed and updated to adjust for unforeseen changes or events that were not considered at the time the initial plan and land use map were developed.

Land Division Ordinance:

Land Division regulations serve an important function by ensuring the orderly development of unplatted and/or undeveloped land. These regulations provide the procedures and standards for dividing a large parcel of land into smaller parcels. Land Division ordinances set forth reasonable regulations for lot sizes, road access and design, public utilities, parks and open space, and other improvements necessary to ensure that new development does not conflict with surrounding land uses and/or cause unreasonable burdens on provision of services. The way lands are divided plays a key role in the orderly development of a community.

Plan Adoption, Monitoring, and Amendments

While this comprehensive plan is intended to provide a long-term framework to guide both public spending decisions and development, it must also respond to continuous changes that occur that may not have been foreseen when the plan was adopted. It is appropriate that some chapters of the plan are rarely amended while others are subject to updating on a more regular basis. Plan maps should also be updated periodically. In general, key maps, such as the future land use map, should be reviewed annually to make sure they are still current.

Plan Adoption

The first step in implementing this plan involves adoption of the plan by County officials. First, the Comprehensive Plan Task Force sends the completed plan to the Executive Committee. The formal review and adoption process involves plan review by the Land Conservation and Zoning Committee (LCZC) who must adopt the plan by resolution of majority vote. The LCZC recommendation is forwarded to the County Board who must adopt the plan by ordinance (of majority vote). A public hearing is required to allow public comment on the ordinance prior to final action to adopt the plan. Adoption formalizes the plan document as the framework to guide local development decisions over the next 20 years. The adopted plan should also be recognized as a tool for communicating the community's land use policy and goals and objectives regarding coordination of growth and development.

Plan Amendments

The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan may be amended at any time. There should be very few instances that the plan will need to be amended. However, if circumstances do arise that require policies to change in order to accommodate a proposal that is in the best interest of Marathon County the amendment will need to be reviewed by the Standing Committees prior to review and adoption by the County Board. Amendments may be appropriate throughout the lifecycle of the plan, particularly if new issues emerge or trends change. These amendments will typically consist of minor changes to the plan text or maps. Large-scale changes or frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals should be avoided or the plan loses integrity.

The public should be notified of proposed Plan amendments to allow an opportunity for review and comment. For major amendments, the County might consider soliciting public opinion through surveys and/or community meetings with County partners prior to the official public hearing.

Plan Evaluation

This plan should be evaluated at least every 5 years, and updated at least every 10 years. Members of the County Board, standing committees, County staff, and any other local decision-making bodies should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated. The evaluation should involve first reviewing the goals and objectives to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires. Then the strategies and actions should be reviewed and refined to eliminate completed tasks and identify new approaches if appropriate. The evaluation should also include an updated timetable of actions to clarify priorities.

Plan Updates

According to the State comprehensive planning law, comprehensive plans must be updated at least once every ten years. As opposed to the more routine amendments described above, plan updates often involve re-writing of whole sections of the plan document and significant changes to supporting maps. A plan update should include a thorough examination of the County's goals and objectives based on an analysis of current growth trends and major changes that have occurred since the plan was initially adopted or last amended. Plan updates must be formally adopted following the same procedure described above for initial plan adoption.

Consistency Among Plan Chapters

The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the Implementation Chapter describe how each of the required chapters will be integrated and made consistent with the other chapters of the plan. Since Marathon County completed all planning chapters simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. It is noted that some overlap naturally exists between the plan chapters.

This Comprehensive Plan also references previous and concurrent related planning efforts to ensure they are considered in planning decisions in conjunction with the recommendations of this Plan. Recommendations from other plans have been summarized and incorporated in this plan as deemed appropriate, to foster coordination and consistency between plans. Some related plans, are incorporated by reference in this plan and are essentially considered appendices of this plan even though they are separate documents.

Action Plan

The overarching goal of this plan is that “**Marathon County is the healthiest, safest, and most prosperous county in Wisconsin**”. This goal was used to structure the Comprehensive Plan into three sections breaking healthiest, safest, and most prosperous into separate chapters. Achieving this big, overarching goal will require many different small steps taken concurrently in a coordinated effort across Marathon County. This Action Plan was designed to help Marathon County improve in the many interrelated areas necessary to become the healthiest, safest, and most prosperous county in Wisconsin.

The Action Plan is structured into goals, objectives, and actions. The example below explains the differences between the three and illustrates how the Action Plan is structured.

Goal: Goals are statements about Marathon County’s aspirations in the topic area.

Objectives are vision statements which provide direction to the subtopics within the areas of each goal.

Actions are key steps which should be taken on the road to meeting the objective and reaching the goal.

Each chapter concluded with goals and objectives which address the issues identified in the chapter. The Action Plan compiles the goals and objectives from each chapter and includes a list of action steps which can be taken to reach the goals. The objectives are drawn from the content of the chapters, focusing on the major topics within the chapter that need to be addressed moving forward. Not every topic mentioned in the plan has a corresponding objective in this Action Plan.

The action steps proposed in this plan are recommended steps that will help Marathon County move forward toward becoming the healthiest, safest, and most prosperous county in Wisconsin. Some action steps are recommended continuations of things the County currently does. Others are new plans or updates to plans that the County should develop. Many are taken from various other planning efforts and discussions. Others are new comprehensive approaches the County should develop that will bring multiple departments together to address complex problems. Note that these actions do not identify measurable benchmarks or timelines. That is the function of more detailed work to be completed by county administration and the strategic planning process.

Chapter 3: Health and Human Services

Health and Human Services Goal: Marathon County promotes the physical, mental, and social health of the community and takes steps to support healthy living for residents at all stages of life.

- 1. Persons with disabilities and older adults will live safely and independently.**
 - a. Develop a plan to address how to support people as they age.
 - b. Develop a plan to address how to support persons of all ages with disabilities and the changing demographics of persons with disabilities.
 - c. Identify and develop necessary training of staff to address victimization (financial) of older persons.
- 2. Promote access to safe, healthy, affordable food.**
 - a. Develop a plan to decrease food insecurity.
 - b. Ensure that food is safe and that food production is safe.
 - c. Develop a local food system plan.
 - d. Develop policies and programs that support food production practices with reduced negative human health impacts.
- 3. Ensure that every child makes it to adulthood with health, stability, education, and growth opportunities.**
 - a. Develop a plan to reduce childhood trauma.
 - b. Create a trauma-informed care system.
 - c. Develop a comprehensive approach (risk-based assessment) to address juvenile offenders to reduce the likelihood of recidivism.
 - d. Develop a framework for building resilient children.
- 4. Prevent and decrease the effects of chronic disease.**
 - a. Promote innovative models of providing oral and preventative health care.
 - b. Identify and adopt public policy that supports positive health behaviors.
- 5. Maximize innovative technology, systems, and infrastructure to meet current and emerging health and social needs.**
 - a. Ensure that emergency response services are prepared for and responsive to new emergency and public health threats, including communicable diseases and bioterrorism.
 - b. Enable rural citizens to have reliable, affordable, high-speed internet access to provide access to long-distance medical care and services via technology.
 - c. Ensure all citizens have reliable and affordable transportation for health care.
- 6. Promote innovative modes for injury prevention.**

- a. Enforce safety rules and regulations at workplaces and on roads.
 - b. Develop a strategy to change the culture around drinking and driving.
 - c. Develop a plan to address intentional injuries (such as suicide and domestic violence).
- 7. Ensure that every person has local access to effective mental health treatment.**
- a. Develop a continuum of services within a therapeutic community.
 - b. Attract and retain qualified treatment providers and behavioral evaluators.
 - c. Develop mechanisms to ensure access to treatment across the County.
 - d. Develop a more comprehensive approach to crisis prevention and serving people (children and adults) in crisis.
 - e. Develop comprehensive forensic mental health treatment options.
- 8. Ensure Marathon County is an open, inclusive, and diverse place to live and work.**
- a. Promote health equity.
 - b. Develop a plan to reduce and eliminate health and social disparities.
 - c. Promote cultural competence.
 - d. Cultivate an environment where cultural diversity can flourish.

Chapter 4: Community Character

Community Character Goal: The local history, culture, social pride, and community character are established and enhanced as defining elements which make Marathon County a vibrant and inviting place to be.

- 1. Promote a variety of safe and affordable housing options that meet the needs of all community members.**
- a. Support efforts by local municipalities to locate housing for special needs populations within easy and safe access to medical care, shopping, transportation facilities, and other necessary services.
 - b. Develop an action plan to reduce homelessness and increase homeless prevention services.
 - c. Post and routinely update information on housing agencies and programs on the County website.
 - d. Consider waiving some permit review fees, streamlining the permit review process, and providing flexible development standards to reduce regulatory barriers to the development of affordable housing.
 - e. Consider developing an affordable housing trust fund to assist in the development of safe and affordable rental housing options.
 - f. Continue to work cooperatively with local municipalities to foster neighborhood and housing rehabilitation through provision of cost-effective public services and infrastructure.
 - g. Continue to work with local municipalities to adopt cafeteria-style lot size requirements to accommodate a range of housing developments and density.
 - h. Assist local governments in evaluating codes related to temporary, manufactured, and/or mobile housing to better serve migrant workers and the agricultural economy.
- 2. Preserve and protect the county's landscape, environmental resources and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.**
- a. Encourage communities within Marathon County to update their comprehensive plans.
 - b. Develop model ordinances for conservation subdivision, traditional neighborhood development, and land division that can apply to each section of the Transect.
- 3. Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy safe and walkable neighborhoods throughout the county.**
- a. Develop a rehabilitation program for older housing in the County.
 - b. Develop a Complete Streets Policy.
- 4. Enhance community livability.**
- a. Develop an open space plan.
 - b. Allow for access to green spaces/open spaces.
 - c. Utilize (Natural Step process) to develop a Community Livability Plan.

Chapter 5: Natural Resources

- 1. Natural Resources Goal:** The natural resources of Marathon County are managed in a balanced way (so they are protected and preserved) for current and future generations' health, enjoyment, and benefit.
- a. Protect vulnerable natural resources.
 - b. Develop a comprehensive approach to protecting environmentally sensitive areas.
 - c. Identify and prioritize land with significant resources the County should consider for acquisition. Priority should be given to lands adjacent to existing County or government owned property.
 - d. Work cooperatively with the North Central Conservancy Trust to inform private property owners about establishing conservation easements.
 - e. Continue to provide and update information regarding access and access restrictions to natural areas.
 - f. Continue to seek opportunities to partner with wildlife (e.g. hunting, fishing) and conservation organizations on maintenance

- and enhancement of County-owned natural areas.
- g. Continue to seek grants and other funding to enhance and protect areas with significant natural resources or features.
2. **Promotesoundlandusedecisionthatconserveandpreservenaturalresourcesindecisionswitheconomicdevelopmentandgrowth.**
 - a. Update existing land use policies to address sprawl and natural resource protection.
 - b. Promote infrastructure development that protects natural resources.
 - c. Identify and preserve unique regional areas for natural resource protection and environmental remediation.
 - d. Develop a Land Capability Index.
 - e. Develop a comprehensive approach to redevelopment and revitalization of older housing stock and older buildings.
 3. **Mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts.**
 - a. Develop a plan to address climate change impacts.
 4. **Protect and improve air quality.**
 - a. Develop a comprehensive approach to address indoor and outdoor air quality issues.
 5. **Protect and improve soil health.**
 - a. Continue to monitor compliance with the soil conservation standards of the Farmland Preservation Program.
 - b. Develop strategies to encourage best management practices to reduce agricultural soil runoff to protect water and soil quality.
 6. **Promote balanced use of non-metallic mineral resources and ensure mine reclamation.**
 - a. Continue to actively enforce the non-metallic mining ordinance.
 - b. Consider amending the non-metallic mining ordinance to strengthen and clarify reclamation requirements.
 - c. Identify and maintain a map of active mining operations and significant non-metallic mineral resources. Consider zoning areas around mines and non-metallic mineral resources to restrict residential development or other land uses that might conflict with mining operations.
 7. **Protect and preserve prime agricultural areas.**
 - a. Identify areas in Marathon County with prime farm soils that are most vulnerable to conversion to non-farm land uses.
 - b. Work to expand the Agricultural Enterprise Areas within the County.
 - c. Expand Farmland Preservation Zoning to reduce fragmentation and protect prime agricultural soils.
 - d. Encourage the protection of agriculture by continuing to encourage towns to participate in County zoning.
 - e. Improve funding mechanisms to provide technical assistance to agricultural landowners and operators to develop nutrient management plans and implement best management practices.
 - f. Work with UW-Extension to meet with local agricultural operators to identify their individual needs and opportunities to best assist them in retaining and improving their farming operations.
 8. **Protect and sustainably manage public and private county forest resources.**
 - a. Implement the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Strategic Direction for forest.
 - b. Encourage private forest owners to adopt best management practices and sustainable forest management practices.
 - c. Work with UW-Extension, the WDNR, and local branches of the U.S. Forest Service to research and distribute information to encourage (and increase) sound forest management practices by owners of private forestlands.
 - d. Continue to provide information to property owners regarding participation in the Managed Forest Law program.
 9. **Manage solid waste and contaminants to reduce negative impacts on the environment and on health.**
 - a. Develop a comprehensive approach to managing solid waste.
 - b. Develop a comprehensive approach to managing contaminants.

Chapter 6: Water Resources

Water Resources Goal: The water resources in Marathon County are of the highest quality, for the safety of residents and the health of aquatic ecosystems, and are protected from damaging behaviors like overuse and pollution.

1. **Protect and enhance surface water resources and natural habitat areas.**
 - a. Continue to update and implement the recommendations of the Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan.
 - b. Promote conservation easements along riparian corridors.
 - c. Adopt and implement the Wisconsin River Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL).
 - d. Develop a coalition to address the upcoming TMDL for the Wisconsin River and develop an action plan to reduce phosphorus loading. The TDML water quality goal for Marathon County is 75 micrograms per liter for the Wisconsin River.
 - e. Support Urban MS 4 compliance with WPDES permit standards for TSS and phosphorus.
2. **Manage lake and reservoir resources to balance concerns of shoreland residents, users, and local businesses.**
 - a. Update floodplain maps.
 - b. Continue to support the efforts of the WDNR and lake district organizations to protect and improve the water quality and habitat of lakes.
 - c. Develop a comprehensive approach to manage aquatic invasive species.

- d. Work with UW-Extension to provide information and education regarding Best Management Practices and other measures local municipalities and property owners can implement to improve water quality.
3. **Protect and enhance the quantity and quality of potable groundwater and potable surface water supplies.**
 - a. Update the 2001 Groundwater Protection Plan.
 - b. Continue to develop and implement priority watershed management plans and Targeted Management Plans (TRM) plans to minimize impacts on water quality.
 - c. Continue to conduct tests and analysis of contaminants in private wells. Consider making such tests mandatory rather than voluntary.
 4. **Reduce agricultural nonpoint runoff to surface water (soil sediment, organics, and nutrients).**
 - a. Develop policies and programs to promote sustainable soil practices.
 - b. Develop a comprehensive approach to restore riparian wetland areas to enhance buffering of agricultural runoff.
 - c. Initiate and support a Farmer Council to engage the community in watershed programming.
 - d. Continue to enforce animal waste and manure management regulations to guard against water contamination resulting from livestock facilities.
 - e. Continue to enforce animal waste and manure management regulations to guard against water contamination resulting from large livestock facilities.

Chapter 7: Public Safety

Public Safety Goal: Marathon County is a safe and secure community for all residents and visitors.

1. **Provide cost-effective and high quality public safety services.**
 - a. Consider the potential to consolidate emergency service agencies.
2. **Mitigate the impacts of the heroin and methamphetamine epidemics in Marathon County through evidence-based practices.**
 - a. Develop a comprehensive approach to address use of heroin and methamphetamine.
3. **Reduce recidivism.**
 - a. Develop a comprehensive (risk-based assessment) approach to address juvenile offenders to reduce the likelihood of recidivism.
 - b. Develop comprehensive forensic mental health treatment options.
 - c. Develop a comprehensive approach to classification and programming for persons in jail.
 - d. Improve the court system to effectively and efficiently more people through the process.
4. **Improve road safety and reduce crashes**
 - a. Improve the infrastructure in areas with high numbers of traffic crashes, especially those involving vulnerable users, including bicyclists and pedestrians.
 - b. Improve signage and speed limits on county roads that see higher volumes of farm vehicles, horse and buggies, and/or bicycle traffic.
 - c. Review system wide crash data every two years to identify safety issues and problems that need to be addressed.
 - d. Formalize a process for citizen and municipal traffic calming requests and other complaints related to transportation safety.
5. **Plan for appropriate disaster mitigation preparedness, response, and recovery.**
 - a. Update the Marathon County All Hazards Mitigation Plan every five years.
 - b. Utilize green infrastructure in County projects and encourage the use in state and local projects to mitigate the potential effects of more severe storms due to climate change.

Chapter 8: Infrastructure

Transportation Goal: The transportation infrastructure in Marathon County is maintained to the highest standards to allow safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services in and through the County.

1. **Provide a safe, efficient, fiscally sustainable, multimodal transportation system.**
 - a. Ensure all County road projects accommodate bicycles, pedestrians, and transit where applicable, based on a County Complete Streets Policy.
 - b. Encourage and support transportation services and facilities that meet the needs of the transportation disadvantaged, including the elderly, children, people with disabilities, and low-income people and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
 - c. Update the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the non-urbanized areas of Marathon County that integrates all municipal and state pedestrian and bicycle-related trails and facilities in order to create a comprehensive and connected pedestrian and bicycle system.
 - d. Continue to work toward the coordination and expansion of public transit services to most effectively and efficiently utilize limited transit resources.
 - e. Promote the expansion and maintenance of rail access throughout the County.
 - f. Work with local municipalities to identify where farm/non-farm road use conflicts exist and implement measures to

minimize conflict.

g. Develop a financing plan to adequately fund transportation system maintenance, improvement, and operations.

2. Improve access management on major roadways.

a. Continue to work with federal, state, and regional transportation organizations to maintain a safe and efficient countywide roadway system.

b. Work with local municipalities to identify safe and efficient truck routes.

c. Continue to work with WisDOT and the local communities on right-of-way, access control, and local road crossing issues along State Highway 29.

d. Preserve and protect existing and potential rights-of-way for transportation facilities.

Utilities Goal: The utilities infrastructure in Marathon County is maintained to the highest standards to support the residents and businesses of the County.

1. Promote efficient and coordinated sewer and water expansion.

a. Continue to coordinate with affected municipalities and WDNR to update the Wausau Area Sewer Service Plan and associated boundaries of the urban service area.

2. Ensure compliance with state codes for new and replacement private on-site waste treatment systems.

a. Evaluate codes related to on-site treatment systems to ensure they protect environmentally sensitive areas and water quality.

b. Evaluate ordinance and procedures relating to private on-site waste treatment systems to ensure water quality and public health and safety are adequately protected.

c. Continue to strictly enforce regulations regarding on-site waste treatment systems in conjunction with permit review.

d. Continue to provide up-to-date information to property owners and/or system installers regarding regulations and permitting requirements for on-site waste treatment systems.

3. Promote energy conservation and the increased use of renewable energy.

a. Adopt innovative policies and practices for energy efficiency and sustainable building design.

b. Develop policies and programs that address land use and energy.

4. Ensure adequate energy and telecommunications services.

a. Continue to support regional, municipal, and individual efforts to improve energy conservation.

b. Continue to evaluate and actively participate in the review of large-scale energy infrastructure projects to ensure environmental impacts are adequately addressed.

c. Support local governments in adopting zoning regulations that conform to the provisions of federal telecommunications legislation and regulations to control the location of wireless antennas.

d. Support the expansion of broadband access across the County.

5. Strive to provide affordable, accessible, high-speed internet access throughout the County.

a. Develop a comprehensive approach to countywide high-speed internet access, including broadband and other technologies.

6. Provide cost-efficient solid waste management.

a. Continue to operate the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility drop off site.

b. Use the County website and newsletter to increase awareness and provide information to County residents regarding recycling and hazardous waste disposal.

c. Encourage waste reduction and recycling programs for municipalities and businesses.

Chapter 9: Land Use

Land Use Goal: Marathon County makes sound land use decisions which balance the needs of agriculture, recreation, economic development, and growth to wisely maximize the land's potential.

1. Minimize scattered rural development and preserve rural character.

a. Consider providing incentives, such as density bonuses, to encourage cluster or conservation subdivisions, particularly in areas with natural development constraints.

b. Consider adjusting minimum lot sizes or establishing a sliding-scale zoning district to provide for limited residential development in areas where agricultural uses and/or rural or natural character should be preserved.

2. Preserve active farming.

a. Continue to work to implement the Farmland Preservation Plan

b. Identify and map additional areas in the County that should be preserved for active farming and work cooperatively with local municipalities to coordinate zoning to restrict non-farm development

c. Consider requiring larger parcel sizes or restricting non-farm land uses in areas under County zoning with significant amounts of prime farmland and/or existing active farms.

3. Encourage redevelopment of under-utilized areas.

a. Identify underutilized areas for redevelopment.

- b. Continue to work cooperatively with local municipalities to coordinate infrastructure improvements to facilitate redevelopment.
 - c. Continue to work with local municipalities as appropriate to facilitate the required permit process related to environmental remediation.
- 4. Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth.**
- a. Encourage land use patterns that support alternative modes of transportation, including clustering of business and retail establishments (destination density).
 - b. Identify areas that should be permanently protected from development, including environmentally significant areas and natural buffers between communities.
 - c. Continue to encourage planning throughout the County to ensure efficient land use patterns, to protect natural resources, and to avoid the fragmentation of natural and agricultural land.
 - d. Develop model community and neighborhood design principles to enhance and protect community character while accommodating growth.
 - e. Continue to routinely update the zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure they support the goals and objectives outlined in the County and local comprehensive plans.
 - f. Continue to work cooperatively with municipalities to eliminate conflicts between county and local zoning and development regulations.
 - g. Promote community land use planning in the State Highway 29 Corridor that incorporates the changes to the transportation system and other impact on land use and other issues.

Chapter 10: Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development

Education Goal: Every child and adult in Marathon County has the opportunity to get a quality education.

- 1. Ensure that every person has the opportunity for education and employment to be self-supporting.**
 - a. Develop policies that support affordable, high-quality child care.
 - b. Develop policies and programs to provide a variety of means for people to access continuous education to be competitive in tomorrow's economy.
 - c. Develop policies and programs to increase independent living skills for all children, especially those coming from an alternative living situation.
 - d. Prepare a Connect Communities Plan to improve transportation to education and work.
 - e. Increase self-sufficiency among those currently relying on safety net programs.
- 2. Support a high-quality and cost effective public school system.**
 - a. Work cooperatively with the school districts to advocate and support actions by the State to provide adequate funding of public education capital and operational expenses.
 - b. Support efforts by school districts to share resources (staff, facilities) and program services to help control costs.
- 3. Continue support for University of Wisconsin—Marathon County.**
 - a. Maintain and expand support offered to the University.
- 4. Continue support for Northcentral Technical College (NTC) and other higher education institutions.**
 - a. Maintain and expand support offered to NTC and other higher education institutions.
- 5. Provide high-quality library service.**
 - a. Periodically evaluate demand for library services, including resource needs. Use this evaluation to budget for new resources and facility improvements.
 - b. Continue to explore opportunities to use new technologies to increase access to library resource.

Workforce Development Goal: Marathon County is a community where every person can find a family supporting job and every business to have a strong workforce.

- 1. Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce prepared to meet the needs of both existing and emerging industries and technologies.**
 - a. Work with the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, (NCWWDB) to ensure a well-trained workforce.
- 2. Promote and increase communication between economic development, workforce development, and other organizations.**
 - a. Continue to improve the quality of life in the County to attract new people to the local labor force.
 - b. Encourage and support partnerships between NTC, UW-MC, and others to provide a diverse range of high quality educational services for local and regional businesses.
 - c. Encourage communication and cooperation between employers, school districts, and higher education institutions to ensure a well-trained, competitive workforce with skills to meet the needs of a changing marketplace.

Economic Development Goal: Marathon County's a diverse economy a place of opportunities where people and businesses can grow and be successful.

- 1. Encourage development and redevelopment of key employment centers in areas that possess strong market potential, provide good transportation access for workers, and promote the efficient movement of goods.**
 - a. Support efforts to engage the public and private sectors to provide leadership for county economic development efforts.
- 2. Organize effectively and develop programs and tools to support key industries and a healthy economy.**
 - a. Establish a revolving loan fund to assist new farmers in entering the industry and assist existing farmers with adoption of new technologies or practices that improve the viability of agriculture.
 - b. Work with UW-Extension and others to provide education on best management practices to enable area loggers and farmers to be competitive, profitable, and employ environmentally safe practices.
 - c. Support activities that strengthen Central Wisconsin and the Wausau metro area's position as a regional health care center.
- 3. Create an innovative atmosphere to foster an entrepreneurially supportive environment.**
 - a. Respond to changing economic conditions and opportunities through periodic review and updating of economic development strategies, policies, investments, and programs.
 - b. Work with the Marathon County Development Corporation (MCDEVCO) to support a revolving loan fund to provide low interest financing to enable new entrants to get into farming and to enable existing farmers to adopt new technology or new products.
 - c. Enhance awareness of MCDEVCO as the primary point of contact for business expansion and start-up information.
- 4. Encourage a globally competitive economy.**
 - a. Promote regional cooperation to reduce competition between municipalities within the County.
 - b. Encourage MCDEVCO to work with regional and state agencies.
- 5. Maintain infrastructure to support economic growth.**
 - a. Maintain a safe highway network to provide access to all communities in the County.
 - b. Support technology in the workplace, particularly through access to broadband.
 - c. Work with municipalities to maintain a competitive inventory of serviced industrial land and office sites.
 - d. Provide appropriate access for trucks and employees for all business and industrial park sites.
 - e. Pursue federal and state funding to develop a county-wide revolving loan fund to assist communities with clean-up of contaminated sites.
- 6. Support the Central Wisconsin Airport.**
 - a. Continue to maintain a partnership between Portage and Marathon Counties to support Central Wisconsin as a regional airport.

Chapter 11: Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources

Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources Goal: Marathon County takes advantage of its many natural and cultural amenities to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to be active and engaged in a wide array of activities and events.

- 1. Ensure access to quality, accessible, affordable recreation opportunities.**
 - a. Ensure that new parks and park renovations are constructed with universal design.
 - b. Maintain and improve the Marathon County park system in a cost-effective manner.
 - c. Establish a consistent source of funding for parks, recreation, and forestry.
 - d. Minimizes use conflicts and resource impacts of recreational activities.
 - e. Develop a regional multi-use trail system.
 - f. Balance timber production and recreation uses of County forestlands.
 - g. Differentiate the separate roles and responsibilities between Marathon County and its' local municipalities in providing park, recreation, and forest lands, facilities and programs.
 - h. Support the efforts of volunteer and nonprofit groups to build and maintain trails, parks, and facilities that are consistent with the goals of this plan.
 - i. Work cooperatively with local municipalities to develop extensions and connections to the Mountain-Bay State Trail and the River's Edge Parkway trail system along the Wisconsin River.
- 2. Promote tourism throughout the County.**
 - a. Continue to work with area tourism organizations.
- 3. Encourage protection of historically significant buildings and sites from development impacts.**
 - a. Support the preservation of historically or culturally significant agricultural operations that contribute to rural character.
 - b. Consider identifying especially scenic roads as candidates for preservation in a state rustic road program.
 - c. Support the efforts of the County Historical Society to conduct a countywide survey of significant cultural resources.
 - d. Support the County Historical Society to the extent possible in seeking funding to conduct an inventory and evaluation of cultural resources.

- e. Consider the impacts to known cultural resources when reviewing development plans and/or permits involving land disturbance.
- 4. Increase and expand awareness of cultural resources.**
- a. Conduct a county wide cultural resources study, to update the previous one conducted in 1977.
 - b. Work with the County Historical Society, Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT), and local municipalities to establish and install signage identifying historically significant buildings and sites.

Chapter 12: Intergovernmental Cooperation

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal: Marathon County is a cooperative and collaborative partner with other municipalities and organizations to most effectively and efficiently provide services to residents.

- 1. Promote technology and resource sharing.**
- a. Continue to work cooperatively with the City of Wausau on sharing data services and park and recreation services.
 - b. Continue to provide mapping assistance to local municipalities.
- 2. Encourage proactive conflict resolution.**
- a. Work with municipalities to identify and resolve potential conflicts between jurisdictions.
 - b. Work with UW-Extension to provide information and forums to foster intergovernmental communication and encourage local officials to share information related to land use, growth management, and other governmental activities.
 - c. Continue to work with UW-Extension to conduct workshops and/or provide information on conflict resolution techniques.
- 3. Promote cost-effective public services.**
- a. Support efforts by local municipalities to establish cooperative service and joint facility arrangements.
 - b. Continue to provide E-911 Dispatch services for all police, fire, and EMS agencies in Marathon County.
 - c. Work with local municipalities and other government agencies to explore opportunities to share costs and/or consolidate public services.
 - d. Continue to cooperate with other counties on solid waste management.
- 4. Provide coordination of regional development and planning activities.**
- a. Create model ordinance to assist communities in planning, zoning, and subdivision review.
 - b. Assist efforts by municipalities to implement and update their comprehensive plans.
 - c. Encourage local municipalities to share their plans with adjacent communities.
 - d. Continue to cooperate with other units of government on issues involving natural resources, transportation facilities, and other systems that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- 5. Encourage participation in all levels of government.**
- a. Continue to actively work with the State of Wisconsin and the federal government.
 - b. Continue to actively participate in the Wisconsin Towns Association, League of Municipalities and other similar organizations.
 - c. Continue to staff and actively participate in the Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
 - d. Continue to explore opportunities to enhance awareness of and access to media tools that allow County citizens to become informed about on-going and current County activities.
 - e. Maintain strong relationships with all units of government within the county.



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2016**