

## **CHAPTER 1      Issues and Opportunities for Comprehensive Planning in Portage County, Wisconsin**

66.1001(2)(a) Wis. Stat.:

**Issues and Opportunities element.** Background information on the local governmental unit and a statement of overall objectives, policies, goals and programs of the local governmental unit to guide the future development and redevelopment of the local governmental unit over a 20-year planning period. Background information shall include population, household and employment forecasts that the local governmental unit uses in developing its comprehensive plan, and demographic trends, age distribution, educational levels, income levels and employment characteristics that exist within the local governmental unit.

This “Portage County Comprehensive Plan” is built on the foundation of community planning previously done by the Towns and Villages that make up the County whole. The ideas and aspirations of these local plans will be taken into account as the Portage County Board attempts to set forth general policies to guide growth. The purpose of a comprehensive planning program is to promote orderly and beneficial development, helping to create a community that offers residents a more attractive, efficient, and “friendly” environment in which to live.

The comprehensive planning process must involve an understanding of Portage County’s various physical, economic, and social circumstances and issues. It should examine how the towns and villages have evolved over the years to reach today, what goals these communities hope to achieve, and what actions are necessary to reach these goals. A successful planning process can provide the direction needed to manage future growth by offering guidelines to government leaders, private enterprise, and individuals so the development-related decisions are sound, practical and consistent.

### **Section 1.1      Description and History of Planning Area**

The Portage County Comprehensive Plan includes background information and recommendations for development within all seventeen of the County’s Towns (Alban, Almond, Amherst, Belmont, Buena Vista, Carson, Dewey, Eau Pleine, Grant, Hull, Lanark, Linwood, New Hope, Pine Grove, Plover, Sharon, and Stockton). Four Town Boards (Alban, Dewey, Linwood, Sharon) officially voted to remove themselves from the grant funded planning project. Of those Towns, only Sharon has adopted a Comprehensive Plan, the others have not. Until such time as they do, this Portage County Comprehensive Plan will include pertinent information from their previously adopted Land Use Plan or Development Guide. For the Town of Alban, with no previous planning document, Portage County has included land use recommendations.

The adopted Comprehensive Plans for the six rural villages (Almond, Amherst, Amherst Junction, Junction City, Nelsonville, and Rosholt) are hereby incorporated as a part of this Plan by reference. Two Village Boards (Almond, Rosholt) officially voted to remove themselves from the grant funded planning project. The Village of Almond has adopted their individual Comprehensive Plan. Rosholt has not; until such time as they do, this Portage County Comprehensive Plan will include pertinent information from their previously adopted Development Guide. The remaining municipalities that make up the urban core of Portage County (Villages of Plover, Whiting, Park Ridge and the City of Stevens Point), along with portions of towns surrounding them were part of an “Urban Area” planning program. The recommendations from the adopted Urban Area and individual adopted Village/City Comprehensive Plans are incorporated as a part of this Plan by reference.

The following information has been provided from “Land and Lumber, A History of Portage County” Copyright © Portage County Historical Society and New Past Press, Inc.

### **The Land**

Portage County takes its name from the mile-wide strip of land separating the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers now occupied by the City of Portage in Columbia County. As county boundaries changed, the name Portage moved north, much to the confusion of newcomers for the last 150 years. This is not to say that present-day Portage County has no portages of its own. Canoeists, from ancient time to modern days, also portaged around the rocky stretches of the Wisconsin River between Plover and Stevens Point. This trail was called the “Plover Portage” and was one of the first local place names known to fur traders, loggers, and settlers.

Geologically, the County is a portage connecting the granite bedrock of northern Wisconsin to the sandy central plain and to glacial deposits pushed by the ice from the eastern part of the state. Here the glaciated region of northeastern Wisconsin meets the “driftless” zone of the southwest and where hills dotted with pothole lakes meet the dry flats and wet meadows of the great plain.

The County is also a portage between different communities of native plants. The County straddles the “tension zone” band of biodiversity that stretches across Wisconsin. White pines, birch and sugar maple meet bluestem grass, wetland sedge and sand prairie butterfly flowers. As such, pre-settlement Portage County possessed one of the largest and most diverse collections of native plant species in the state.



Wisconsin River, circa 1900. (PCHS)

Oak openings--seamless stretches of grass “opened” with groves of mature white, black, red, and burr oak--dominated the terrain of over one-quarter of the County. These openings included no more than one or two majestic, mature oaks per acre looming over a carpet of grass. Fire kept the oak openings--as well as the marshes and prairies that covered another fifteen percent of the County--free of brush, shrubs, and younger trees. The remaining sixty percent of the County was woodland, with about two-thirds in upland forest and one-third in “swamp” or wetland trees. The upland forest was concentrated east of the glacial divide, with oaks, basswoods, sugar maples, even a few beech trees. Large “sugar groves” were found in the towns of Eau Claire, Sharon, and Linwood.

While the upland forest was large, “swamp conifers”-- white cedar, black spruce, tamarack, hemlock--made up the second most common ground cover in the County. These trees were found in large swamp and marsh areas scattered throughout the County. By comparison, the

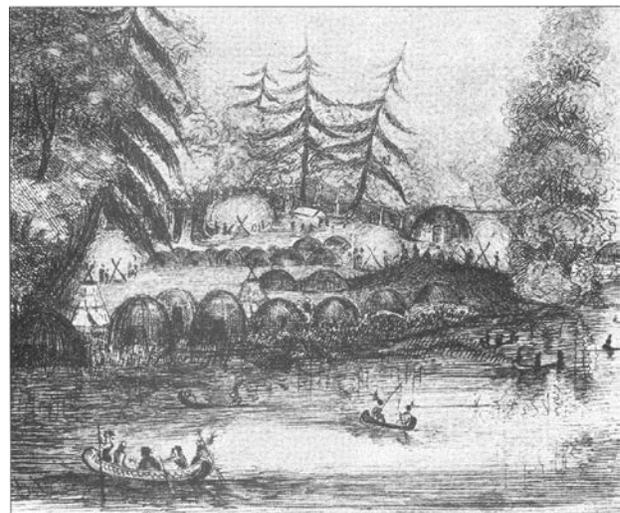
pineland so coveted by the pioneer loggers comprised only about fourteen percent of the ground cover, with just as much in jack pine as in white pine. Much of the pine forest was in “climax” condition when settlers first arrived to the area, with relatively few large trees shading our younger competition. Only one-half of the white pines in the region were thicker than fifteen inches at shoulder height, with many as thick as five feet.

Pioneer loggers favored the white pine because it was also the “cork” pine that would float when green. By comparison, a green oak log would sink like a stone. Floatable pine logs enabled settlers to take advantage of another feature of Portage County’s natural endowment – water power.

Water running downhill was a powerhouse for pioneer industry and the foundation of many cities and villages in early Portage County. The Wisconsin drops forty-two feet within the Plover-Stevens Point stretch of the River and was the most important powerhouse in the County. And while this stretch of river was the first to be worked, it was not the only one. Rivers such as the Plover, Tomorrow, Little Wolf and Mill Creek were all utilized for their natural power supply to operate saw and grist mills, float logs and lumber, and provide for transportation of goods and people. These rivers were essential to the development of industry, agriculture, villages and cities along their banks.

### **The People**

The Native American heritage of Portage County is thousands of years old. Archeological evidence supports the view that humans have inhabited the central part of the Wisconsin River Valley for over 10,000 years. The Ojibwe people of northern Wisconsin developed a semi-nomadic lifestyle that usually brought them to Portage County in the fall. They would move on to spend the winters in the upland forests between La Crosse and Eau Claire, and then begin a gradual migration to the north in the spring, in time to tap the maple trees and make the season’s harvest of sugar. These annual migrations through the area continued until the 1860s when settlement throughout the area forced the Ojibwe to remain closer to the reservation lands they had wrested back from the United States in the 1850s.



Menominee Indian village, circa 1800. (PCHS)

The Menominees and the Ho-Chunks also inhabited Portage County in the early 1800s. By then, the fur trade had destroyed much of their traditional culture, as it had that of the Ojibwe. In 1836, the Menominees signed the Treaty of the Cedars, which opened up the Wisconsin River north from Nekoosa to Wausau to loggers and sawmill operators. In 1848, yielding to pressure from settlers who had illegally settled on Indian land, the federal government persuaded the Menominees to sign off all their land in Wisconsin. Although the terms of this treaty were later altered so the Menominees could retain a reservation, they had relinquished control of central Wisconsin. Their departure opened the land away from the Wisconsin River to American settlement. The story of the Ho-Chunks is not as simple. They had an older claim than the Menominees to land in central Wisconsin and more of them were living here when American

settlement began. They too were coerced to signing a treaty that said they would leave Wisconsin but, unlike the Menominees, they did not have the opportunity to renegotiate it. Instead, many Ho-Chunks resisted federal attempts to forcibly remove them by laying low in the less settled parts of Adams, Juneau, Wood, Monroe and Portage counties. It was these people who appeared in many of the settlers tales of Indians in the county.

As late as 1888, a group of Indians camped on the future grounds of the Normal School to witness the July Fourth celebration at Stevens Point. Two years later, federal census takers reported no Indians living in Portage County; nor did they report any in 1900. Despite lack of records, the county did have a small Indian population at the turn-of-the-century. Many of them chose to live in hard-to-reach places and had good reason to avoid census takers and anyone else working for the United States government.

### **The Settlers**

Tucked in the interior of a state with no railroads, where wagon roads were few and primitive, and separated from the navigable part of the Wisconsin River by several hundred feet of falling water and one-hundred miles of sand bars, Portage County was not easy to reach in the opening years of white settlement. Not until the railroads reached the county in the early 1870's could immigration be called a less-than-tedious endeavor. As a result, the county's population rose at its fastest pace in the first two decades after the arrival of the railroad, growing from 10,674 in 1870 to 17,731 in 1880 and 24,798 in 1890. It would take another thirty years for the county to add as many people as it did in either the 1870s or the 1880s and another forty years to do it again. By 1900, the frontier era was over in Portage County and by 1910 the population of the county would actually decline slightly.



Oldest building in Lanark, 1858. (PCHS)

In the 1850s, the wave of European settlement to the Wisconsin Frontier flowed heaviest from Germany, Norway and Ireland. But for the next fifty years, many countries would be represented by substantial numbers of immigrants. "Yankees," French, Canadian, and Swedish would all settle in Portage County, but none would have as much of an impact as the Polish settlers. Due to new

immigration and growth of families already in the country, by the end of the century, Portage County was home to one of the largest rural populations of Poles in Wisconsin. In time, Stevens Point would become home to the largest per capita population of Polish-Americans in the United States.

Numbering 2,750 in 1890, Poles constituted the largest number of foreign-born people in the county. Since many children of Polish parents were born in this country, the actual number of people of Polish heritage here was close to 10,000, or about one-third of the county total. Germans were the second largest group of foreign-born, totaling 2,146, which multiplies to one-quarter to one-third of the county's people claiming a German heritage. Third were the Norwegians, with 900 foreign born, followed by the Canadians, 367; then the Irish, 206.

**Table 1.1: Portage County Population -- 1900**

Total:	29,483	Born in USA:	22,174
African American:	7		
Indians:	0	Foreign Born:	7,309
<b>Country of Origin:</b>			
Asia	6	Luxembourg	0
Austria	58	Mexico	1
Belgium	12	Norway	90
Bohemia	68	Poland (Austria)	39
Canada (English)	296	Poland (Germany)	2,602
Canada (French)	71	Poland (Russia)	98
China	3	Poland (Unknown)	11
Denmark	171	Russia	47
England	170	Scotland	49
Finland	1	Sweden	163
France	22	Switzerland	17
Germany	2,146	Turkey	0
Holland	21	Wales	13
Hungary	91		
Ireland	206	Other Countries	8
Italy	0	Born At Sea	12

While settlers came to Portage County for family, friends, jobs or trade, the availability of land to farm was the most common motivator. For Europeans used to working land they had no hope of owning, or whose small tracts could not support a family, the prospect of acquiring acres of ground on the American frontier was exciting.

### **A Pioneer Economy**

The availability of water power was the driving force behind the early development of the local economy in Portage County. The pioneers started sweating to improve the Portage County stretch of the Wisconsin River when in the late 1830s, Conant and Campbell built their first dam at “Conant’s Rapids,” (about one mile south of the County Road HH bridge) followed by a saw mill on the west side of the river. For the next seventy years, the rivers and streams in Portage County would power saw and planing mills, grist mills and eventually paper and pulp mills. By the mid-1880s, when the pioneer lumber industry was at its peak in the Wisconsin River Valley, Stevens Point had at least seven woodworking plants employing about 1,000 men aged twelve and older plus a few dozen women. Hundreds more people were employed in mills scattered throughout Portage and neighboring counties, while hundreds more wintered in logging camps, then used their pay for the mortgage on the home farm.



River drivers at Dancy, circa. 1880.

While the pioneer logging industry may have turned the key, it was the railroad that shifted the “Car of Progress” into high gear in Portage County. Settlement, industry, farming, the quality of life in general, accelerated with the arrival of the iron rails. Portage County was born in the

1840s and reborn when the trains started running in the 1870s. As an established lumber mill city, Stevens Point was a logical destination for either a north-south or east-west line across the state. Other villages with hopes of seeing tracks laid in its downtown soon withered when bypassed by the iron road.

Amherst, and other county villages with water-powered grist mills, were farm service communities. Those services expanded when the railroad made Amherst a shipping center for seed, grain, livestock, agricultural implements and potatoes. Portage County recorded its first million-bushel potato crop in 1895, but county farmers had been raising more potatoes than the local market could absorb for many years. The railroad enabled farmers to reach distant markets, making Amherst and every stop on the line a local and long distance farm market center.



Potato harvest, circa. 1900. (PCHS)

The romance of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century logging era obscures the fact that the majority of the people of Portage County lived on farms or in farm service villages. Even many who lived in Stevens Point either tilled the soil themselves or owed their livelihood to those who did. The lumber industry did, however, supply jobs with paychecks that families used to pay for their farms.

By 1890, after thirty years of hard work, county farmers had “improved” a total of 140,000 acres and established 2,626 farms. Oats, primarily used to feed horses, had replaced wheat as the top yielding crop, but potatoes were already the most valuable, worth \$426,126 in 1895. It was in this decade that the “general farming” period began to close and county farmers started to concentrate on the dairying and potato growing that would dominate county agriculture into the future.

## **Section 1.2 Past Planning in Portage County**

### **A. Preliminary Planning Studies**

During the 1970's, a series of "Area Planning Reports" were prepared by the Portage County Planning Department:

No. 1 Natural Environment (11/73)	No. 7 Transportation Study (12/77)
No. 2 Land Capability (12/73)	No. 8 Housing Study Phase 1 (12/77)
No. 3 Land Use Study (3/75)	No. 9 County Housing Plan (7/78)
No. 4 Land Use Study (5/75)	No. 10 County Rural Transit Study (3/79)
No. 5 Population and Economy (6/75)	No. 11 Development Guide, Discussion Draft (4/79)
No. 6 Overall Economic Development Plan (8/76)	

These reports were used as the foundation for the County's first full Development Guide.

### **B. 1981 Portage County Development Guide**

The Development Guide was produced by the County's elected officials and the Portage County Planning Department. The basic purpose of the Portage County Development Guide was to determine goals, policies, and recommendations for guiding the land development in the public interest. The Guide was intended to be a policy document of the Portage County Board and the Planning and Zoning Committee.

## **Section 1.3 Current Comprehensive Planning Process**

As mentioned in the introduction to this document, this Comprehensive Plan had its beginning as a part of the County-wide planning project started in June 2001. The work during the first 18 months of the County-wide project, performed primarily by the Portage County Comprehensive Planning Joint Steering Committee, centered on public participation, visioning, and the generation of preliminary goal suggestions for the nine (9) required Plan elements. In the fall of 2002 all information from the Joint Steering Committee was forwarded to Portage County Towns and Villages to use in drafting their individual Comprehensive Plans. As the local governmental units began completing their plans through the summer of 2005, the Portage County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee re-convened to continue work on the County-wide Plan. The comprehensive planning process for both the County and local levels involves several distinct steps:

The first step involves research. Activities include acquiring a thorough knowledge of the existing community setting, identifying problems that require solutions, and analyzing critical factors that need to be changed before progress can be made toward community goals, and establishing goals and policies for growth and development. For the Portage County Plan, information from the local Town and rural Village comprehensive plans was used as a base for the background information sections of Chapters 1 through 8 of this document.

The second step involves the formation of planning policy. Planning policies recommend a course of action that will accommodate expected change, produce desired change, and prevent undesirable change. The initial 2005 draft of the Portage County Comprehensive Plan utilized a list of preliminary goals established by the Rural Steering Committee in 2002. Subsequent discussion included the various goals, objectives, and policies adopted within the individual rural Town/Village Plans.

The next step involved the description of a preferred direction for guiding future growth. The Land Use Element of this plan relates how the Portage County Rural Area is anticipated to grow, and generally identifies how development should proceed in the future to achieve community goals.

The final step will involve implementation of the plan and programs that influence the day-to-day decisions made by government officials, private enterprise, and individuals. Plan implementation provides the means by which community goals can be achieved. Three major tools of implementation are the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and capital improvements program. Zoning regulations act to control growth and development so that it is harmonious with the proposals and recommendations set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. They promote sound, orderly development directed toward the preservation of property values and the improvement of the overall appearance of the community. Subdivision regulations assure that new land divisions are designed in an orderly and efficient manner and are in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. The capital improvements program is a long-range financial plan for major public improvements. It proposes the best means for utilizing available financial resources to provide residents with necessary facilities and services. The Comprehensive Plan is also used as a basis for such purposes as: 1. subdivision plan review; 2. zoning application review; 3. Board of Appeal cases; 4. annexation cases; 5. Farmland Preservation Program; 6 locating and planning future streets via official maps powers of s. 62.23(6); 7. Public Works planning and programming.

As has been stressed throughout this local planning process, the Comprehensive Plan is the primary link between the past, the present, and the future, making it perhaps the best resource for achieving continuity over a period of time. It is to be used as a guide by those making decisions with regard to the development of the community. The Comprehensive Plan must also remain flexible so that it can be modified to reflect the processes of actual development and the changing attitudes and priorities of the community. To maintain an updated Comprehensive Plan, new information must be continually gathered and studied to determine trends and reevaluate projections, forecasts, and plans. Even policy recommendations, which are relatively permanent statements, may require periodic review to determine their appropriateness and suitability in relation to the direction and character of community development at that time.

The goals and policy statements of any individual community plan can be expected to be value-based and subject to varying interpretations and definitions, which may even be expected to differ from case-to-case because of different circumstances. The goals and policy statements included within this document are intended to provide a general, over-arching framework for encouraging long-term intergovernmental consideration of development decisions within the individual Portage County communities.

A well thought-out and updated Comprehensive Plan, with a solid base of public involvement, is one of the most fruitful investments a community can make. As a collection of policies and plans designed to guide future growth and development, it will help ensure continuity over time as changes occur within Portage County.

## Section 1.4 Demographic Trends

### A. Population Growth

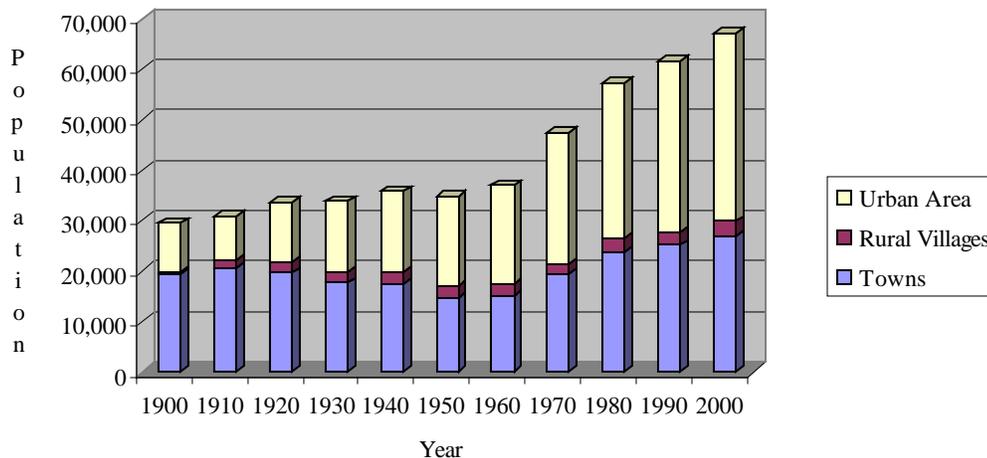
Every 10 years the Federal government performs the national census, and these census results are the main source of information used to understand how communities change over time. Table 1.2 and Figure 1.1 show how Portage County’s population changed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both in total number and how it was distributed.

**Table 1.2: Portage County Population Change, 1900 to 2000**

		U.S. Bureau Of Census										
		1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
In Towns		19,401	20,754	19,668	17,654	17,543	14,872	15,264	19,283	23,792	25,142	26,986
In Rural Villages		558	1,499	2,194	2,224	2,268	2,254	2,166	2,180	2,645	2,701	2,877
<b>Rural Area</b>		<b>19,959</b>	<b>22,253</b>	<b>21,862</b>	<b>19,878</b>	<b>19,811</b>	<b>17,126</b>	<b>17,430</b>	<b>21,463</b>	<b>26,437</b>	<b>27,843</b>	<b>29,863</b>
Urban Area		9,524	8,692	11,687	13,949	15,987	17,732	19,534	26,078	30,973	33,562	37,319
Portage County		29,483	30,945	33,549	33,827	35,798	34,858	36,964	47,541	57,410	61,405	67,182

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Urban Area = Stevens Point, Villages of Plover, Whiting, Park Ridge

**Figure 1.1: Portage County Population Distribution, 1900-2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Portage County saw its population increase by 5,777 people between 1990 and 2000, a growth rate of 9.41 percent. The State of Wisconsin grew by 471,906 people, or 9.6%, over the same period. Table 1.3 below compares the growth of Portage County to four of its neighboring counties.

**Table 1.3: Selected Growth in Central Wisconsin, 1980 to 2000**

	Marathon County	Percent Change	Waupaca County	Percent Change	Waushara County	Percent Change	Wood County	Percent Change	Portage County	Percent Change
1980	111,270	~	42,831	~	18,526	~	72,799	~	57,410	~
1990	115,400	3.7%	46,104	7.6%	19,385	4.6%	73,605	1.1%	61,405	7.0%
2000	125,834	9.0%	51,731	12.2%	23,154	19.4%	75,555	2.6%	67,182	9.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

During the 1980's, Portage County showed the second fastest population growth within this 5-County central Wisconsin area, slightly behind Waupaca County. The 1990's found Waushara County increasing its population by nearly 20%, followed by Waupaca County (12%+) and then Portage County. Marathon County also quickened its pace of development in the '90's (from 3.7% in the '80's to 9%). All five Counties showed expanding populations as the century closed.

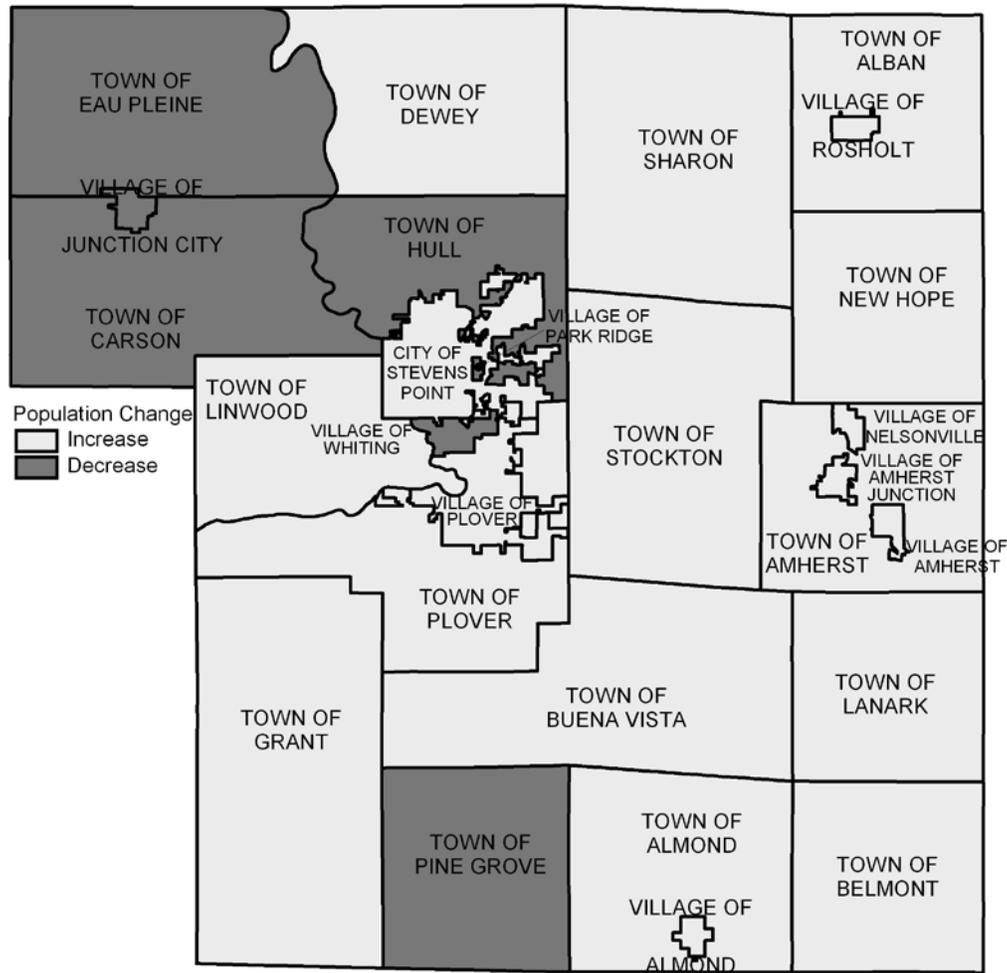
Between 1980 and 2000, the distribution of Portage County population across its 17 Towns, 9 Villages and City has shifted a bit. The percent of residents living in Towns decreased slightly from 41% to 40% of the overall County population over the 20-year period. The central Urban Area saw its share increase slightly from 54% to over 55%, even as the City of Stevens Point saw its share of the County total decrease from 40% to 37%.

**Table 1.4: Portage County Population Change, 1970 to 2005**

	U.S. Census				State	1970 to	2000 to 2005	
	1970	1980	1990	2000	DOA Estimate 2005	2000 Change %	#	%
City of Stevens Point	23,479	22,970	23,002	24,551	25,125	4.6%	574	2.3%
Village of Plover	2,618	5,310	8,176	10,520	11,351	301.8%	831	7.9%
Village of Whiting	1,782	2,050	1,838	1,760	1,689	-1.2%	-71	-4.0%
Village of Park Ridge	817	643	546	488	464	-40.3%	-24	-4.9%
<b>Urban Area</b>	<b>26,078</b>	<b>30,973</b>	<b>33,562</b>	<b>37,319</b>	<b>38,629</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>1,310</b>	<b>3.5%</b>
Village of Almond	440	477	455	459	447	4.3%	-12	-2.6%
Village of Amherst	585	701	792	964	1,037	64.8%	73	7.6%
Village of Amherst Jct.	141	225	269	305	334	116.3%	29	9.5%
Village of Junction City	396	523	502	440	433	11.1%	-7	-1.6%
Village of Nelsonville	152	199	171	191	183	25.7%	-8	-4.2%
Village of Rosholt	466	520	512	518	504	11.2%	-14	-2.7%
Town of Alban	606	768	860	897	911	48.0%	14	1.6%
Town of Almond	529	624	590	679	698	28.4%	19	2.8%
Town of Amherst	936	1,215	1,335	1,435	1,464	53.3%	29	2.0%
Town of Belmont	387	496	540	623	658	61.0%	35	5.6%
Town of Buena Vista	827	1,023	1,170	1,187	1,231	43.5%	44	3.7%
Town of Carson	1,295	1,441	1,327	1,299	1,356	0.3%	57	4.4%
Town of Dewey	575	803	849	975	1,026	69.6%	51	5.2%
Town of Eau Pleine	784	963	944	931	955	18.8%	24	2.6%
Town of Grant	1,195	1,593	1,673	2,020	2,087	69.0%	67	3.3%
Town of Hull	3,124	5,122	5,563	5,493	5,545	75.8%	52	0.9%
Town of Lanark	578	1,043	1,554	1,449	1,552	150.7%	103	7.1%
Town of Linwood	773	1,082	1,035	1,111	1,129	43.7%	18	1.6%
Town of New Hope	492	625	694	736	752	49.6%	16	2.2%
Town of Pine Grove	649	762	949	904	931	39.3%	27	3.0%
Town of Plover	1,074	2,330	2,223	2,415	2,444	124.9%	29	1.2%
Town of Sharon	1,304	1,694	1,742	1,936	2,030	48.5%	94	4.9%
Town of Stockton	1,537	2,208	2,494	2,896	3,016	88.4%	120	4.1%
<b>Rural Area</b>	<b>18,845</b>	<b>26,437</b>	<b>28,243</b>	<b>29,863</b>	<b>30,723</b>	<b>58.5%</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
<b>Portage County</b>	<b>47,541</b>	<b>57,420</b>	<b>61,405</b>	<b>67,182</b>	<b>68,664</b>	<b>41.3%</b>	<b>1,482</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
<b>State of Wisconsin</b>	<b>4,417,821</b>	<b>4,705,624</b>	<b>4,891,769</b>	<b>5,363,675</b>	<b>5,532,955</b>	<b>21.4%</b>	<b>169,280</b>	<b>3.2%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau; State of Wisconsin Dept. of Administration; Portage County Planning and Zoning Dept.

**Figure 1.2: Portage County Municipal Population Increase / Decline, 1990 – 2000**



The urbanized core of Portage County (Stevens Point, Villages of Plover, Whiting, Park Ridge), for the purposes of this Comprehensive Plan is called the Urban Area. Within the Urban Area, the Village of Plover has had the largest numeric and percentage growth over the last 20 years, nearly doubling in size (Table 1.4 above). It was the percentage leader from 1990 to 2000 (+28.67%), and also had the largest 1990 to 2000 numeric increase (2,344), followed by the City of Stevens Point (1,549). The growth in Stevens Point during this period is a distinct rebound after a twenty-year period of losing population (1970 to 1990, see Table 1.4). According to figures provided by the State of Wisconsin, Stevens Point gained a little over 500 residents through annexation between 1990 and 2000 (432 from Town of Hull, 76 from Town of Plover), leaving roughly 1,000 residents as natural increase in population or new arrivals. The Village of Plover annexed-in 65 residents over the same period. The Villages of Park Ridge and Whiting continued their trends of losing population. Both Park Ridge and Whiting have limited area for new housing construction, and have aging populations with less and less children in the home.

The “Rural Area” of Portage County is made up of the 17 Towns plus the six rural Villages: Almond, Amherst, Amherst Junction, Junction City, Nelsonville and Rosholt. Among Portage County Towns, Lanark had the largest percentage of growth over the last decade (25.56%), followed by Grant and Stockton. Lanark also had the third largest numeric increase (295), behind Stockton (402) and Grant (347). Lanark’s neighbors in the southeastern portion of the County, the Towns of Amherst and Belmont, showed significant population increases over the

last two decades. The Villages of Amherst, Amherst Junction, and Nelsonville within the Town of Amherst all recorded double-digit percentage increases in their populations. The Town of Stockton, west of Amherst, saw a strong increase in population as well. The recent activity can be explained in part by intensifying development pressure along the U.S. Hwy 10 corridor as it is improved to a freeway facility between Appleton and Stevens Point. To the west and north of Stevens Point, the Towns of Carson and Eau Pleine continued their trends of slightly losing population, while neighboring Linwood and Dewey continued to gain. The Towns of Hull and Pine Grove each lost population from 1990 to 2000 (-1.3 and -4.8%, respectively) after gaining population between 1980 and 1990. As mentioned above, Hull lost 432 residents to Stevens Point through annexation between 1990 and 2000. The Towns of Sharon and Alban, east of Hull, each grew. Alban is growing slowly, but at a pace ahead of its Village, Rosholt, which itself recorded a gain in the 1990 to 2000 period after seeing its population fall between 1980 and 1990. The Town of Almond, next to Pine Grove, gained 15% in population during the 1990's after losing residents the previous decade. The Village of Almond recorded a gain in the 1990 to 2000 period after seeing its population fall between 1980 and 1990. The Town of Plover, adjacent to the fast-growing Village, still recorded almost 9% growth itself.

### B. Age Distribution

The “Baby Boom” generation, the name given to those persons born from January 1, 1946 through the end of 1964, plays a large part in describing the changes within the different age groups, or “cohorts” that make up the Portage County population structure.

**Table 1.5: Distribution of Population, by Ten-Year Age Groups**

Age	Towns			Rural Village Total			Portage County		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Under 5 years	2,230 9.4%	1,994 7.9%	1,612 6.0%	239 9.1%	217 8.0%	216 7.5%	4,343 7.6%	4,266 6.9%	3,964 5.9%
5 to 9 years	2,200 9.2%	2,347 9.3%	2,035 7.5%	188 7.1%	231 8.6%	234 8.1%	4,105 7.1%	4,667 7.6%	4,331 6.4%
10 to 14 years	2,403 10.1%	2,242 8.9%	2,261 8.4%	200 7.6%	234 8.7%	241 8.4%	4,566 8.0%	4,413 7.2%	4,787 7.1%
15 to 19 years	2,452 10.3%	1,947 7.7%	2,185 8.1%	207 7.9%	183 6.8%	234 8.1%	7,153 12.5%	5,643 9.2%	6,394 9.5%
20 to 24 years	<b>1,897</b> 8.0%	1,438 5.7%	1,188 4.4%	<b>207</b> 7.9%	159 5.9%	177 6.2%	<b>8,117</b> 14.1%	7,438 12.1%	7,589 11.3%
25 to 34 years	<b>4,233</b> 17.8%	<b>4,067</b> 16.2%	3,098 11.5%	<b>404</b> 15.3%	<b>405</b> 15.0%	409 14.2%	<b>9,180</b> 16.0%	<b>9,897</b> 16.1%	8,322 12.4%
35 to 44 years	2,784 11.7%	<b>4,201</b> 16.7%	<b>4,917</b> 18.2%	257 9.8%	<b>393</b> 14.6%	<b>443</b> 15.4%	5,593 9.7%	<b>8,690</b> 14.2%	<b>10,261</b> 15.3%
45 to 54 years	1,973 8.3%	2,691 10.7%	<b>4,407</b> 16.3%	153 5.8%	247 9.1%	<b>343</b> 11.9%	4,447 7.7%	5,489 8.9%	<b>8,945</b> 13.3%
55 to 59 years	906 3.8%	1,018 4.0%	1,420 5.3%	127 4.8%	91 3.4%	105 3.6%	2,158 3.8%	2,157 3.5%	2,894 4.3%
60 to 64 years	826 3.5%	921 3.7%	1,121 4.2%	165 6.3%	81 3.0%	115 4.0%	2,027 3.5%	2,142 3.5%	2,341 3.5%
65 to 74 years	1,262 5.3%	1,457 5.8%	1,616 6.0%	271 10.3%	238 8.8%	142 4.9%	3,391 5.9%	3,610 5.9%	3,791 5.6%
75 to 84 years	498 2.1%	664 2.6%	874 3.2%	175 6.6%	176 6.5%	151 5.2%	1,806 3.1%	2,273 3.7%	2,565 3.8%
85 years and over	128 0.5%	151 0.6%	252 0.9%	42 1.6%	46 1.7%	67 2.3%	534 0.9%	720 1.2%	998 1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,792</b>	<b>25,138</b>	<b>26,986</b>	<b>2,635</b>	<b>2,701</b>	<b>2,877</b>	<b>57,420</b>	<b>61,405</b>	<b>67,182</b>
<b>Median Age</b>	27.3	32.2	37.8	32.0	34.7	36.2	25.4	29.3	33.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Rural Villages = Almond, Amherst, Amherst Jct, Junction City, Nelsonville, Rosholt

This generation contained a large number of births, considerably more than the generation before or after, and therefore poses unique problems and opportunities as it ages. The leading edge of the “Baby Boomers” would have been 34 years old in 1980, and 54 years old in 2000. The gray boxes within Table 1.5 highlight the movement of the Boomers through their lifecycle. Note the increasing percent of overall population contained within the “20 to 24” and “25 to 34” age groups in 1980, the “25 to 34” and “35 to 44” age groups in 1990, and the “35 to 44” and “45 to 54” age groups in 2000. Note also that, due to a combination of advances in medical care and lifestyle changes, people in the age cohorts ahead of the Boomers (65 years plus) are living to a greater age. The combination of the advancing Boomer wave and general increase in longevity means that greater attention must be paid to the housing, transportation, and general service needs of an aging population within each community in Portage County. See individual municipal Comprehensive Plans for details on their resident populations.

The “median age” for a population is the age at midpoint where half of the residents are older and half are younger. Table 1.5 (previous page) lists the average median ages for Towns, Rural Villages and Portage County overall.

As expected, the overall population of Portage County has continued to grow older. Numbers for each individual unit of government are included in their Comprehensive Plans. Portage County has a younger population than the State of Wisconsin overall (median age of 33.0 years vs. 36.0), but is aging at a slightly faster rate over the last 20 years (State of Wisconsin: median age increase of 6.6 years from 1980 to 2000; Portage Co.: +7.6 years).

The Towns, on average, are aging at a faster rate than the County overall. The seventeen Towns had an average median age of 27.3 years in 1980, growing to 37.8 years in 2000. The County over the same period went from 25.4 years to 33.0 years. The Town of New Hope has the oldest median age among the Towns at 41.0 years, followed by Amherst and Eau Pleine at 39.3 years. The Town of Amherst has the fastest aging population in the County, with an increase in the median of 12.9 years since 1980. This could be the result of younger people moving from the rural town into the Villages of Amherst, Amherst Junction, Nelsonville, or elsewhere. The other “aging” towns are Hull (median age +12.1 since 1980), Grant (+11.9), Eau Pleine (+11.3), Sharon (+11.0), and Dewey (+10.9).

The Towns, on average, are also aging faster than the Rural Villages (Almond, Amherst, Amherst Junction, Junction City, Nelsonville, Rosholt). The seventeen Towns averaged a 10.5 year increase in median age between 1980 and 2000, while the Rural Villages increased 4.2 years over the same period. The Villages of Amherst Junction and Rosholt have actually seen their median age decrease between 1980 and 2000. Amherst Junction dropped from a median age of 34.8 years in 1980 to 28.3 years in 1990, then nudged upward to 30.2 years in 2000. The Rosholt median age grew from 34.0 in 1980 to 34.9 in 1990, then decreased to 31.3 in 2000. The Village of Nelsonville also displayed this rise/fall pattern, going from a median age of 30.4 in 1980 up to 34.8 in 1990, then down to 33.5 in 2000.

With regard to the Villages referenced above, an examination of their age structure provides insight into their “growing younger” (see individual municipal Comprehensive Plans). The Village of Rosholt has reduced its median age by 3.6 years in the last decade. The “15-to-19” and “20-to-24” year age cohorts contained 62 persons in 1990. The “25-to-34” age cohort (where they would “age” into in the following census) contained 81 persons in 2000, a 30% increase. The “under 5 years” cohort from 1990 also showed growth, increasing from 34 persons to a year 2000 total in the “10-to-14” cohort of 46, a 35% increase. There were also substantial reductions in all 2000 age groups above the age of 45.

The Village of Amherst Junction reduced its median age by 6.5 years from 1980 to 1990, but added almost 2 years back to it (28.3 years to 30.2) by 2000. The main reason for the initial drop seems to be a sizeable in-flow of 25-to-35 year-olds and 35-to-45 year-olds in the 1980's (+43% and +60%, respectively). A good portion of these folks subsequently moved back out in the 1990's (-26% and -18%, respectively). There was a substantial drop in the number of 15-to-19 year-olds (-35%), as well. The 1990's did see an in-flow of 25-to-35 year-olds (from twenty-four 15-to-19 year-olds in 1990 to fifty-seven 25-to-35 year-olds in 2000, +137%).

The Village of Nelsonville reduced its median age by 1.3 years between 1990 and 2000. The main age groups that showed increase were the 25-to-35 year-olds (+15 or 68%) and 35-to-44 year-olds (+4 or 17%).

The Town of Amherst, which is the fastest aging community in all Portage County, has added 12.9 years to its median age since 1980. The most rapid rise in age came in the 1990's (from median age of 30.9 to 39.3). The year 2000 found a reduction of in the number of 10-to-14 year-olds, 15-to-24 year-olds, and 25-to-34 year olds. There was an increase in the number of 35-to-45 year-olds, 45 to 54 year olds, and 85 years plus. This last category (85+) went from 7 persons in 1990 to 54 persons in 2000. The 75-to-84 year-old cohort also increased from 40 to 50 people.

As one would expect with the rise in median age, the percentage of the population for the Towns within Portage County over the age of 65 has been trending upward since 1980 as well.

**Table 1.6: Portage County Population 65 years +**

	Towns			Rural Villages			Portage County		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
65 to 74 years	1,262 5.3%	1,457 5.8%	1,616 6.0%	271 10.3%	238 8.8%	142 4.9%	3,391 5.9%	3,610 5.9%	3,791 5.6%
75 to 84 years	498 2.1%	664 2.6%	874 3.2%	175 6.6%	176 6.5%	151 5.2%	1,806 3.1%	2,273 3.7%	2,565 3.8%
85 years and over	128 0.5%	151 0.6%	252 0.9%	42 1.6%	46 1.7%	67 2.3%	534 0.9%	720 1.2%	998 1.5%
<b>Population 65+</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>2,272</b>	<b>2,742</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>5,731</b>	<b>6,603</b>	<b>7,354</b>
<i>% of Total Population</i>	<i>7.9%</i>	<i>9.0%</i>	<i>10.2%</i>	<i>18.5%</i>	<i>17.0%</i>	<i>12.5%</i>	<i>10.0%</i>	<i>10.8%</i>	<i>10.9%</i>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>23,792</b>	<b>25,138</b>	<b>26,986</b>	<b>2,635</b>	<b>2,701</b>	<b>2,877</b>	<b>57,420</b>	<b>61,405</b>	<b>67,182</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The Portage County Towns saw the 65+ population segment increase from 7.9% of their total population in 1980 to 10.2% in 2000, and the County as a whole increased from 10% to 10.9%. In the Rural Villages, however, the number and percentage of seniors aged 65 and over has decreased over the same period. With seniors increasingly aging in place in the Towns, and Rural Villages not attracting more seniors over time, Portage County and Town officials must remain mindful of special concerns or issues that may arise, such as emergency services, etc.

### C. Education Levels

Education attainment is an assessment of the highest level of schooling achieved by those Portage County residents 25 years of age and older.

**Table 1.7: Comparison of Educational Attainment for Residents 25 Years and Older**

Ed. Attainment (Persons 25 yrs+)	Towns		Rural Villages		Portage County	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Less Than 9th Grade	2,006 13.6%	1,109 6.2%	255 15.2%	96 5.4%	4,065 11.6%	2,420 6.0%
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	1,388 9.4%	1,444 8.1%	185 11.1%	155 8.7%	3,029 8.7%	3,019 7.5%
High School Graduate	6,578 44.6%	7,486 42.2%	767 45.8%	756 42.3%	14,082 40.2%	14,952 37.2%
Some College (No Degree)	1,923 13.0%	3,124 17.6%	230 13.7%	343 19.2%	5,205 14.9%	7,572 18.9%
Associate Degree	725 4.9%	1,236 7.0%	60 3.6%	140 7.8%	1,922 5.5%	2,802 7.0%
Bachelor's Degree	1,513 10.3%	2,387 13.4%	142 8.5%	226 12.6%	4,594 13.1%	6,468 16.1%
Graduate / Professional Degree	616 4.2%	968 5.5%	35 2.1%	73 4.1%	2,107 6.0%	2,910 7.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,749</b>	<b>17,754</b>	<b>1,674</b>	<b>1,789</b>	<b>35,004</b>	<b>40,143</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000 Census. Rural Villages = Almond, Amherst, Amherst Junction, Junction City, Nelsonville, Rosholt

In general, the rural areas of Portage County are under-represented in the Bachelor and Graduate Degree categories, and have higher percentages of high school graduate than the County overall. See municipal Comprehensive Plans for more specific details on educational attainment.

**D. Households and Income**

The Portage County residential community is made up of different types of households. The U.S. Census defines a household simply as “including all of the people who occupy a housing unit”. People not living in households are classified as living in group quarters. Table 1.8 below details the changes in the make-up of Portage County households over the last 20 years, and compares them to State of Wisconsin data.

**Table 1.8: Comparison of Household Types, Portage County and State**

Household Type	Portage County			State of Wisconsin		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
<b>Family Households</b>	<b>13,257</b>	<b>14,883</b>	<b>16,496</b>	<b>1,215,023</b>	<b>1,275,172</b>	<b>1,386,815</b>
<i>% of Total Households</i>	<i>72.4%</i>	<i>69.9%</i>	<i>65.9%</i>	<i>73.4%</i>	<i>70.0%</i>	<i>66.5%</i>
Married-Couple Families	11,592	12,645	13,808	1,044,204	1,048,010	1,108,597
<i>% of Family Households</i>	<i>87.4%</i>	<i>85.0%</i>	<i>83.7%</i>	<i>85.9%</i>	<i>82.2%</i>	<i>79.9%</i>
Other Family, Male Householder	437	602	861	37,506	104,745	77,918
<i>% of Family Households</i>	<i>3.3%</i>	<i>4.0%</i>	<i>5.2%</i>	<i>3.1%</i>	<i>8.2%</i>	<i>5.6%</i>
Other Family, Female Householder	1,228	1,636	1,827	133,313	122,416	200,300
<i>% of Family Households</i>	<i>9.3%</i>	<i>11.0%</i>	<i>11.1%</i>	<i>11.0%</i>	<i>9.6%</i>	<i>14.4%</i>
<b>Non-Family Households</b>	<b>5,056</b>	<b>6,423</b>	<b>8,544</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>546,946</b>	<b>697,729</b>
<i>% of Total Households</i>	<i>27.6%</i>	<i>30.1%</i>	<i>34.1%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>30.0%</i>	<i>33.5%</i>
Householder Living Alone	3,730	4,679	6,130	0	443,673	557,875
<i>% of Non-Fam Households</i>	<i>73.8%</i>	<i>72.8%</i>	<i>71.7%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>81.1%</i>	<i>80.0%</i>
Householder 65 Years and Over	~	1,933	2,196	163,961	192,072	207,206
<i>% of Non-Fam Households</i>	<i>~</i>	<i>30.1%</i>	<i>25.7%</i>	<i>13.5%</i>	<i>35.1%</i>	<i>29.7%</i>
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>18,313</b>	<b>21,306</b>	<b>25,040</b>	<b>1,654,777</b>	<b>1,822,118</b>	<b>2,084,544</b>
<b>Persons Per Household</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>2.54</b>			

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000 Census

Family households, traditionally the largest group within the County, have seen their percentage of total households decrease over the last 3 Census years (72% to 66%) even as their numbers increase. Within the Family category, the number and percentage of single-parent headed households continued to increase, from 12% to over 16% of Family households, between 1980 and 2000.

Non-Family households continue to increase in number and percentage. Within the Non-Family category, the percentage of “householders living alone” decreased slightly, even as their numbers increased. This could mean that more singles are taking on room-mates.

Table 1.9 details the household-type information for the different Portage County sub-areas.

**Table 1.9: Comparison of Household Types, Portage County Sub-areas**

Household Type	Towns			Rural Villages			Urban Area		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
<b>Family Households</b>	<b>6,081</b>	<b>6,857</b>	<b>7,657</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>6,458</b>	<b>7,309</b>	<b>8,091</b>
<i>% of Total Households</i>	84.2%	82.5%	78.8%	70.9%	69.1%	66.1%	64.2%	61.1%	57.0%
Married-Couple Families	5,500	6,071	6,810	617	599	574	5,474	5,975	6,424
<i>% of Family Households</i>	90.4%	88.5%	88.9%	86.1%	83.5%	76.7%	84.8%	81.7%	79.4%
Other Family, Male Householder	214	301	357	22	30	55	201	271	473
<i>% of Family Households</i>	3.5%	4.4%	4.7%	3.1%	4.2%	7.4%	3.1%	3.7%	5.8%
Other Family, Female Householder	367	485	490	78	88	119	783	1,063	1,194
<i>% of Family Households</i>	6.0%	7.1%	6.4%	10.9%	12.3%	15.9%	12.1%	14.5%	14.8%
<b>Non-Family Households</b>	<b>1,144</b>	<b>1,459</b>	<b>2,060</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>3,608</b>	<b>4,644</b>	<b>6,100</b>
<i>% of Total Households</i>	15.8%	17.5%	21.2%	29.1%	30.9%	33.9%	35.8%	38.9%	43.0%
Householder Living Alone	932	1,181	1,601	263	284	329	2,527	3,213	4,200
<i>% of Non-Fam Households</i>	81.5%	80.9%	77.7%	89.5%	88.8%	85.7%	70.0%	69.2%	68.9%
Householder 65 Years and Over	~	486	584	~	162	166	~	1,279	1,446
<i>% of Non-Fam Households</i>		33.3%	28.3%		50.6%	43.2%		27.5%	23.7%
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>7,225</b>	<b>8,316</b>	<b>9,717</b>	<b>1,011</b>	<b>1,037</b>	<b>1,132</b>	<b>10,066</b>	<b>11,953</b>	<b>14,191</b>
<b>Persons Per Household</b>	3.28	3.01	2.72	2.61	2.63	2.59	2.93	2.58	2.39

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000 Census. Urban Area = Stevens Point, Villages of Plover, Whiting, Park Ridge. Rural Villages = Almond, Amherst, Amherst Junction, Junction City, Nelsonville, Rosholt

Towns and Rural Villages have mirrored the County trend of a declining percentage of Family households. There are differences between Town and Village regarding the make-up of Family households, however. The Towns maintained their percentage of married-couple families (~89%) over the 3 Census years (1980, 1990, 2000), and there was minimal growth in the number and percentage of single-householder families. Villages, on the other hand, saw a 3%+ increase in the percent of each of the male- and female-householder family categories, and married-couple families declined by nearly 10% over the same period.

The number and percentage of Non-family households increased over the 20 year period. The Rural Villages had higher percentages of Non-family households in both the Householder 65 years + and Householder Living Alone categories than the Towns.

The Persons Per Household (PPH) calculation for the Towns, Rural Villages and the County overall have continued a declining trend over the last 20 years. The Rural Villages closely matches the PPH of the overall County, while the household size for the Towns is slightly larger.

Another instructive piece of information on the state of households within Portage County is the level of income that each household achieves. Again the Census provides insight into the range of incomes present within the County. Table 1.10 below describes how household incomes changed between 1980 and 2000.

**Table 1.10: Household Income Comparison**

Household Income Per Year	Portage County			State of Wisconsin		
	1979	1989	1999	1979	1989	1999
Less Than \$10,000	5,300 28.9%	3,210 15.0%	1,767 7.0%	440,963 26.6%	255,413 14.0%	148,964 7.1%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	2,919 15.9%	1,978 9.3%	1,608 6.4%	248,555 15.0%	170,828 9.4%	121,366 5.8%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	5,423 29.6%	4,072 19.1%	3,174 12.6%	480,030 29.0%	341,433 18.7%	264,897 12.7%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	2,907 15.8%	3,654 17.1%	3,425 13.6%	284,956 17.2%	317,699 17.4%	276,033 13.2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	1,223 6.7%	4,370 20.5%	4,484 17.9%	136,771 8.3%	368,148 20.2%	377,749 18.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	380 2.1%	2,983 14.0%	5,771 23.0%	63,502 3.8%	257,090 14.1%	474,299 22.7%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	193 1.1%	661 3.1%	2,820 11.2%	N/A	65,362 3.6%	226,374 10.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	0	274 1.3%	1,346 5.4%	N/A	30,544 1.7%	133,719 6.4%
\$150,000 or more	0	134 0.6%	717 2.9%	N/A	17,735 1.0%	62,903 3.0%
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>18,345</b>	<b>21,336</b>	<b>25,112</b>	<b>1,654,777</b>	<b>1,826,241</b>	<b>2,086,304</b>
<b>Median H-Hold Income</b>	<b>\$16,659</b>	<b>\$28,686</b>	<b>\$43,487</b>	<b>\$17,687</b>	<b>\$29,442</b>	<b>\$43,791</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000 Census

In 1980, about 75% of households in Portage County had incomes of \$25,000 per year or less, and only 3% of households had incomes in excess of \$50,000. By 2000, the percentage of households with incomes under \$25,000 per year had dropped to 26%, while those households with incomes over \$50,000 grew to over 42%. Median household income in Portage County increased by over 160% between 1980 and 2000, and remained similar to the State median.

Table 1.11 below details household income data for the Towns, Rural Villages and Urban Area of Portage County. Median household income growth between 1980 and 2000 was strong in the County's Towns, increasing from \$16,736 to \$48,037 (+187%). The Rural Villages reported an even greater percentage increase, \$13,464 to \$40,143 (+198%).

A special report published by the Central Wisconsin Economic Research Bureau in November of 2001 indicated that median income of Central Wisconsin's households was 5% higher than the median income for households in the State of Wisconsin as a whole, and 13% higher than the median income for households in the nation. In comparison, incomes in Central Wisconsin ten years ago were slightly lower than that for the State as a whole.

**Table 1.11: Household Income Comparison**

Household Income Per Year	Towns			Rural Villages			Urban Area		
	1979	1989	1999	1979	1989	1999	1979	1989	1999
Less Than \$10,000	103 24.2%	48 9.9%	25 3.0%	64 37.9%	33 19.3%	15 8.0%	3,129 31.2%	2,153 18.0%	1,243 8.8%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	66 15.5%	36 7.4%	24 2.8%	31 18.3%	20 11.4%	16 8.4%	1,600 15.9%	1,253 10.5%	1,104 7.8%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	139 32.7%	85 17.2%	55 6.5%	45 26.4%	35 20.3%	25 13.0%	2,789 27.8%	2,393 20.0%	2,092 14.8%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	76 17.8%	84 17.1%	75 8.8%	17 10.3%	32 18.4%	23 12.2%	1,513 15.1%	2,016 16.9%	2,019 14.3%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	28 0.2%	123 0.4%	111 0.2%	8 4.8%	34 19.6%	37 19.2%	690 6.9%	2,100 17.6%	2,378 16.8%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	9 2.2%	82 16.7%	154 18.2%	2 1.1%	14 8.1%	47 24.9%	213 2.1%	1,511 12.6%	2,875 20.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	5 1.1%	21 4.2%	80 9.6%	2 1.3%	2 1.4%	19 10.2%	103 1.0%	328 2.7%	1,336 9.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	0	8 1.6%	36 4.2%	0	2 1.0%	5 2.5%	0	140 1.2%	710 5.0%
\$150,000 or more	0	5 0.9%	18 2.1%	0	1 0.5%	3 1.6%	0	55 0.5%	392 2.8%
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>10,037</b>	<b>11,949</b>	<b>14,149</b>
<b>Median H-Hold Income</b>	<b>\$16,736</b>	<b>\$31,512</b>	<b>\$48,037</b>	<b>\$13,464</b>	<b>\$25,170</b>	<b>\$40,143</b>	<b>\$20,825</b>	<b>\$32,639</b>	<b>\$45,957</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000 Census. Urban Area = Stevens Point, Villages of Plover, Whiting, Park Ridge.

With the examination of income information, Portage County should also assess the poverty status of its residents. “Poverty” is generally defined as a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor. If a family’s total income is less than that family’s threshold, then that family, and every individual in it, is considered poor. The poverty thresholds do not vary geographically. That is, they are the same throughout the United States. However, the poverty thresholds are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition counts money income before taxes and does not include capital gains and non-cash benefits (such as public housing, food stamps, and Medicaid). Poverty is not defined for people in military barracks, institutional group quarters, or for unrelated children under age 15 (such as foster children). Table 1.12 below outlines poverty thresholds for 1980, 1990, and 2000.

**Table 1.12: Poverty Thresholds - 1980, 1990, and 2000**

Size of Family Unit	Poverty Threshold		
	1980	1990	2000
One Person	\$4,190	\$6,652	\$8,794
Two Persons	\$5,363	\$8,509	\$11,239
Three Persons	\$6,565	\$10,419	\$13,738
Four Persons	\$8,414	\$13,481	\$17,603
Five Persons	\$9,966	\$15,792	\$20,819
Six Persons	\$11,269	\$17,839	\$23,528
Seven Persons	\$12,761	\$20,241	\$26,754
Eight Persons	\$14,199	\$22,582	\$29,701
Nine Persons or More	\$16,896	\$26,848	\$35,060

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 1.13 details poverty information from the 2000 Census, which indicates a trend toward reduced poverty.

**Table 1.13: Percent in Poverty Comparison, Portage County and Sub-Areas**

	Towns		Rural Villages		Urban Area		Portage County	
	1989	1999	1989	1999	1989	1999	1989	1999
<b>Persons</b>	<b>25,122</b>	<b>26,986</b>	<b>2,643</b>	<b>2,877</b>	<b>30,040</b>	<b>37,319</b>	<b>57,805</b>	<b>67,182</b>
Below Poverty Level	2,213	1,400	324	259	4,917	4,415	7,454	6,074
	8.8%	5.2%	12.3%	9.0%	16.4%	11.8%	12.9%	9.0%
<b>Persons 65 Years and Over</b>	<b>2,152</b>	<b>2,742</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>3,550</b>	<b>4,252</b>	<b>5,327</b>	<b>7,354</b>
Below Poverty Level	242	244	71	39	427	278	740	561
	11.2%	8.9%	15.4%	10.8%	12.0%	6.5%	13.9%	7.6%
<b>Families</b>	<b>6,734</b>	<b>7,673</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>7,277</b>	<b>8,193</b>	<b>14,927</b>	<b>16,643</b>
Below Poverty Level	443	249	57	54	551	422	1,051	725
	6.6%	3.2%	8.0%	6.9%	7.6%	5.2%	7.0%	4.4%

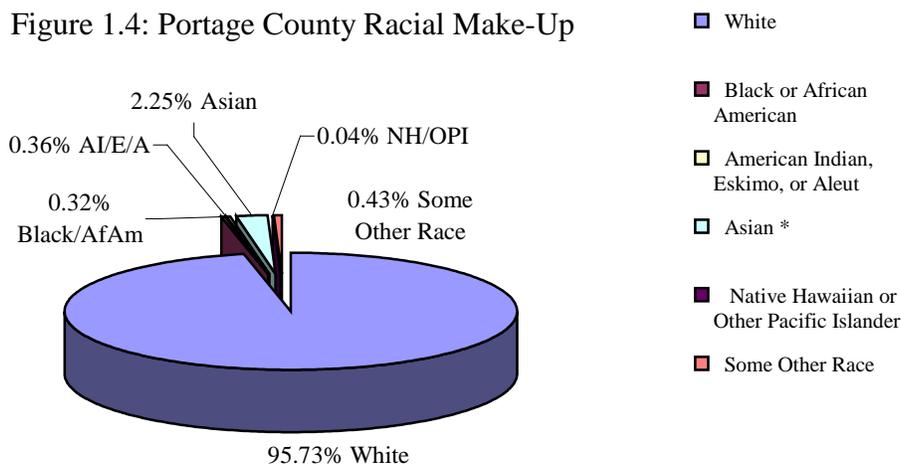
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000 Census. Urban Area = Stevens Point, Villages of Plover, Whiting, Park Ridge.

Portage County as a whole has seen substantial reduction in the percent of all residents, residents aged 65+, and families living below the poverty level. This trend is reflected in the Towns, and Rural Villages. The Urban Area has historically been home to a majority of the County residents in poverty. The 2000 Census shows the same circumstance. Towns have the lowest percentage of all residents and families living in poverty, while the Urban Area contains the lowest number of seniors living below poverty. Rural Villages showed a dramatic decrease in the number of seniors living in poverty, but still were home to a higher percentage in this category than Towns or the Urban area.

E. Race

Portage County has historically been populated predominantly by whites. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 11 of the County’s 26 Towns and Villages reported having a 100% white population in 1980. With the 2000 census, only one community remained at 100%. The County overall was listed as 98.6% white in 1980, and 95.7% in 2000. The second largest racial group within the County was Asian, which made up 2.2% of the 2000 population. Third listed was “Some Other Race” at 0.4%, followed by American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut (0.4%), Black or African American (0.3%), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (<0.1%). Hispanic Origin (of any race) was claimed by 1.4% of the County population; 0.9% classified themselves as “Two or More Races”.

Figure 1.4: Portage County Racial Make-Up



The Hispanic population of Portage County increased by nearly 70% from 1990 to 2000 (572 to 967). The Asian population nearly doubled between 1990 and 2000, from approximately 780 to over 1500 people. The Black or African American population increased by nearly 34%, from 161 to 215 people. The American Indian and Alaska Native population decreased slightly, from 255 to 242.

The City of Stevens Point is the County's most diverse community, being home to 40% of the Hispanic population, 75% of the Asian population, 50% of the Black/African American population, 50% the American Indian/Alaska native population, and 80% of the Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander population. See individual community Comprehensive Plans for more details.

#### F. Employment Characteristics

A summary of employment by industry data for the last three Census years is provided in Table 1.14. This information represents what type of industry that the working Portage County residents were employed by, and is not a listing of the employment currently located within the Town. The discussion of the Portage County economy will take place within the Economic Development Element of this Comprehensive Plan. It should be noted that the method used for classifying industries was changed between the 1990 and 2000 Census, and therefore the information included in the industry categories of Table 1.14 is not entirely consistent for comparison between those years.

**Table 1.14: Summary of Employment by Industry**

Industry	Towns			Rural Villages			Portage County		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Mining	1,493 15.8%	1,332 10.9%	926 6.6%	54 5.4%	107 9.0%	70 4.8%	1,816 7.3%	1,755 5.8%	1,241 3.5%
Construction	518 5.5%	710 5.8%	868 6.2%	59 5.9%	75 6.3%	90 6.2%	1,004 4.0%	1,297 4.3%	1,707 4.8%
Manufacturing	2,041 21.5%	2,560 21.0%	3,027 21.5%	209 21.1%	259 21.7%	273 18.9%	4,637 18.6%	5,373 17.8%	6,314 17.7%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	497 5.2%	776 6.4%	892 6.3%	107 10.8%	61 5.1%	131 9.1%	1,214 4.9%	1,511 5.0%	1,948 5.5%
Information	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	250 1.8%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	57 3.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	835 2.3%
Communications/ Other Public Facilities	92 1.0%	101 0.8%	0 0.0%	21 2.1%	31 2.6%	0 0.0%	325 1.3%	367 1.2%	0 0.0%
Wholesale Trade	374 3.9%	401 3.3%	493 3.5%	50 5.0%	29 2.4%	48 3.3%	885 3.5%	1,026 3.4%	1,235 3.5%
Retail Trade	1,294 13.7%	1,943 15.9%	1,689 12.0%	168 16.9%	229 19.2%	155 10.7%	4,317 17.3%	5,667 18.8%	4,813 13.5%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	1,044 11.0%	1,351 11.1%	1,475 10.5%	73 7.4%	99 8.3%	107 7.4%	2,971 11.9%	3,359 11.1%	3,682 10.3%
Professional, Management, Administrative	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	479 3.4%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	50 3.5%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1,627 4.6%
Business and Repair Services	178 1.9%	307 2.5%	0 0.0%	9 0.9%	43 3.6%	0 0.0%	518 2.1%	941 3.1%	0 0.0%
Personal Services	0 0.0%	265 2.2%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	24 2.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	777 2.6%	0 0.0%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation Services	279 2.9%	92 0.8%	772 5.5%	20 2.0%	16 1.3%	103 7.1%	734 2.9%	388 1.3%	3,005 8.4%
Educational, Health, Social Services	1,305 13.8%	1,677 13.7%	2,341 16.6%	168 16.9%	157 13.1%	288 19.9%	5,331 21.4%	5,617 18.6%	7,192 20.2%
Other	220 2.3%	370 3.0%	541 3.8%	32 3.2%	45 3.8%	47 3.3%	624 2.5%	1,362 4.5%	1,236 3.5%
Public Administration	139 1.5%	315 2.6%	329 2.3%	22 2.2%	20 1.7%	27 1.9%	571 2.3%	710 2.4%	842 2.4%
<b>Total Employed Persons</b>	<b>9,474</b>	<b>12,200</b>	<b>14,082</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>1,195</b>	<b>1,446</b>	<b>24,947</b>	<b>30,150</b>	<b>35,677</b>
<b>Unemployed Persons</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>2,013</b>	<b>1,590</b>	<b>2,255</b>
<b>Total Labor Force</b>	<b>10,407</b>	<b>12,835</b>	<b>14,690</b>	<b>1,099</b>	<b>1,251</b>	<b>1,526</b>	<b>26,960</b>	<b>31,740</b>	<b>37,944</b>
<b>Percent Unemployed</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>
<b>Persons 16 Years +</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17,550</b>	<b>20,054</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,950</b>	<b>2,123</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>47,202</b>	<b>53,135</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000 Census.

## **Section 1.5 Forecasts**

### **A. Population Projections**

Population projections developed by the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) suggest that Portage County will experience moderate growth through the year 2025, with a projected increase of 11,770 residents from 2000 to 2025, or a growth rate of 17.5%. It should be noted that all population projections are "best guesses" and should be used with caution.

The Portage County Board is hereby adopting the following projected population totals for the planning period:

Yr 2010: 72,272      Yr 2015: 73,924      Yr 2020: 76,183      Yr 2025: 78,952

### **B. Household Projections**

Household projections for Portage County will be based on the population projections from Section 1.5A above, divided by an anticipated number of persons per household through 2025.

The number of persons per Portage County household has been steadily declining, from 2.93 persons in 1980 to 2.54 persons in 2000. Using a method of linear regression and data beginning in 1980, the number of persons per household (PPH) in 2010 will be 2.34. Projecting numbers far into the future using linear regression produces increased uncertainty, therefore, the persons per household will be held at 2.34 through 2025. Keep in mind that these numbers represent projections and should not be used as absolute.

When PPH is combined with the anticipated future population of 78,952 persons, and taking into consideration an average vacancy rate of 6% across Portage County, we can project the need for a total of 35,765 housing units in 2025. If the number of housing units existing in 2000 (26,589) is subtracted from the projected number of housing units in 2025 (35,765) we can anticipate that there will be a need across the Portage County for approximately 9,176 new housing units over the next twenty years.

As previously stated, the County projected 2025 population was generated by Wisconsin DOA. If the more accelerated projections from the Urban Area communities comes to pass (2025 Urban Area population of 48,308 instead of 44,072), the total amount of anticipated new 2025 housing units for Portage County would increase to 11,060. These future units can be contained in either single-unit or multiple-unit structures.

### **C. Employment Projections**

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development estimated that in 2004 there were 33,406 jobs in Portage County, with approximately 26,000 being located within the incorporated Urban Area (Stevens Point, Villages of Plover, Whiting, Park Ridge). A 2004 study prepared by University of Wisconsin-Extension analyzing the Portage County economy utilized employment projections of approximately 51,000 for the year 2020. If the current Urban Area percentage of County employment was carried forward, and this County-wide projection was achieved, nearly 14,000 new jobs could be anticipated in the Urban Area and another 3,500 in the Rural Area, within the next 15-20 years.

## **Section 1.6 Vision Statement**

In 2025, residents of Portage County have much to celebrate. Their quality of life has never been better; the urban and rural areas are thriving; the economy is healthy; and the sense of community is solid and strong. Family life is supported in a number of ways from accessible health care to lifelong educational opportunities and recreation. People care about each other. They work together to sustain and enhance community values, such as strong families, safe communities, responsible citizenship, participatory government, and cultural diversity. Volunteerism is supported and encouraged by individuals, businesses, and community leaders. The County's communities benefit from a strong sense of identity and a profound pride in their past, present and future.

Key Vision Ideas for Quality of Life:

- A high quality of life is found in rural Portage County. Maintaining the rural character of Portage County supports our quality of life.
- Quality of life is specifically measured by benchmarks that are regularly updated by citizens, including such factors as: volunteerism, availability of health care, accessible natural resources and open space, quality of schools, affordable cost of living, and a supportive community.
- Cultural and historic resources are identified and protected.
- Rural character is preserved through planned development in agricultural regions.
- Quality of life is enhanced through the coordinated provision of municipal services.
- A high quality countywide system of parks and trails provide for hiking, biking and other recreational opportunities.
- An excellent education system provides comprehensive learning opportunities for residents of all ages.

## **Section 1.7 Community Goals and Policies**

Goals and policies provide the framework for guiding future community development activities within Portage County. One means of deriving goals and policies is through issue identification. Many of the issue statements in the various plan elements are framed as questions. This was purposefully done so that answering the questions would help the County Board more easily form goal or policy statements.

Goals are stated as desirable conditions to strive toward in the future. They are common ideals of the community that can be achieved through the actions of government leaders, private enterprise and individuals.

Policies are more specific recommendations or methods of action to accomplish these stated goals. Together they express the uniqueness of the community while providing guidance for desirable patterns of growth and development.

### **A. Goals**

1. Promote a pattern of community growth and development that will provide a quality living environment for all Portage County residents, including those aging residents that

choose to age in place, or whose household incomes have not kept pace with the prevailing County upward trends.

2. Ensure that newly developed areas are compatible with existing uses of land.

## B. Policies

1. Portage County should implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure the County remains a desirable place to live and work, to encourage the development of balanced agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial and recreational land use patterns and to provide areas adequate for future growth.
2. Effective implementation tools, such as the zoning ordinance, official street map, subdivision regulations, shoreland and wetland ordinances and a capital improvement program should be used and enforced.
3. Community development should occur contiguous to and extend outward from areas of existing development, encouraging urban-style development in areas with urban services or in areas where services can be most efficiently and economically provided
4. Portage County should establish cooperative land use control procedures in conjunction with incorporated community governments to ensure harmonious development beyond the corporate limits of the communities.
5. Portage County should encourage development which protects and enhances the County's tax base.
6. The Portage County Planning and Zoning Committee should maintain an active role in assessing County needs, evaluating development, and utilizing the planning process as a means of accomplishing recommendations contained in the Comprehensive Plan.