

Chapter 1

Demographics

A comprehensive plan is a local government's guide to community physical, social, and economic development. Comprehensive plans are not meant to serve as land use regulations in themselves; instead, they provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a vision for future planning and community decisions. This chapter reviews the demographics of the Town of New Chester and identifies the major trends impacting the Town over the next few decades. Both Adams County and the State of Wisconsin are included for comparison.

Background

The Town of New Chester is a traditional six-mile by six-mile Town with 36 sections, located in the southeast part of Adams County, Wisconsin. The Town is bounded by the Town of Lincoln to the north, Marquette County to the east, the Town of Adams to the northwest, the Town of Easton to the west, Town of Springville to the southwest, and the Town of Jackson to the south. It is one of the seventeen towns in the county, see Map 1 for locational reference.

Over the years the town has been dominated by forestry and scattered agricultural uses. However, recently, more non-farming uses, mainly scattered residential development, have been locating in the town, see Map 2. Grand Marsh and Brooks are two Census-Designated Places in the Town that feature homes, businesses, and churches.

Planning Process

The Comprehensive Planning Process was overseen by the Town Board. They met several times with staff from North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to review the 2016 plan, analyze updated data, review the goals, objectives, and policies, and develop a new Future Land Use map. Prior to adoption, a public hearing was held. See the attachments at the end of the plan for a copy of the Public Participation Plan, Plan Commission Resolution, Public Hearing Notice, and Town Board Resolution.

Public Participation

An important part of any planning process is public involvement. Public involvement provides the citizens of the Town an opportunity to express their views, ideas, and opinions on issues that they would like addressed on the future development of their Town. Local officials use this input to guide policies and decisions with greater awareness of the public's desires and consensus.

A Public Participation Plan was adopted early in the planning process to ensure the public had opportunities to engage. This Plan ensures that all meetings are posted and open to the public, all materials related to the plan are available at the Town Hall and online for public review, and that a public hearing will be held to solicit public comment prior to adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

Population and Households

Historical Trends

The Town's population has decreased significantly in recent years according to the Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). The Census is a count of the entire country's population every 10 years, and the ACS provides population estimates for non-Census years. It is important to note that the U.S. Census and American Community Survey data do not include non-resident property owners. Table 1 shows that the Town's population peaked at 2,254 in 2010, followed by slight decline to 1,960 in 2020. The 2024 ACS estimate shows a dramatic decrease to 1,394, but it is important to understand that, because ACS only provides an estimate, and Towns with smaller populations have a large margin of error, it is unlikely that a population decrease is occurring as rapidly as Table 1 suggests.

Note that the Oxford Federal Correctional Institution population is included with Census totals. The Federal Bureau of Prisons estimates the FCI Oxford population to be about 1,156 inmates as of 2026.

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) also releases population estimates each year, and its 2025 estimate for New Chester was 2,144, which suggests that the population may actually be growing. Either way, Census and ACS data are considered "official" sources for purposes of grant writing and other activities the Town is involved with, so they are used in this plan.

Table 1: Demographic Change 2000-2024						
Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2024	2010-2024 Net Change	2010-2024% Change
Total Population						
T. New Chester	2,141	2,254	1,960	1,394	-860	-38.2%
Adams County	19,920	20,875	20,654	21,123	248	1.2%
State	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	5,914,872	227,886	4.0%
Total Households						
T. New Chester	371	428	446	406	-22	-5.1%
Adams County	7,924	9,341	9,111	9,517	176	1.9%
State	2,084,544	2,274,611	2,377,935	2,479,480	204,869	9.0%
Average Household Size						
T. New Chester	2.60	2.30	2.23	2.06	-0.24	-10.4%
Adams County	2.32	2.10	2.09	2.14	0.04	1.9%
State	2.50	2.41	2.38	2.33	-0.08	-3.3%

Source: U.S. Census 2000, 2010, & 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2020, & 2024

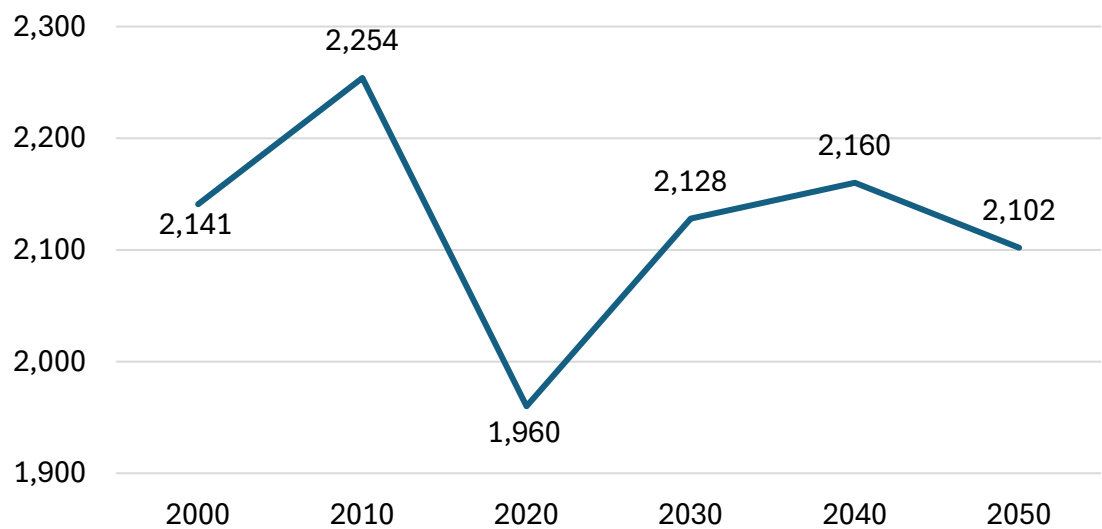
Table 1 suggests that Adams County is growing slowly, and the State of Wisconsin is growing faster than the County, with an estimated population increase between 2010 and 2024 of 1.2 percent and 4.0 percent, respectively. But these growth rates are not as fast as the decades before 2010. Due to decreasing household size, the rate at which households are decreasing according to Census and ACS is less pronounced than the rate that the population is estimated to be decreasing. For example, despite the ACS estimating a 38.2 percent population decrease between 2010 and 2024, it only estimates a 5.1 percent decrease in households.

The average household size has been decreasing steadily across the nation over the past few decades. This is due to a multitude of factors including longer life spans, fewer people having children, and people having fewer children or no children at all. Household size in the Town has followed this pattern, with an average household size of 2.6 people per household in 2000 dropping to 2.06 people in 2024, for a decrease of 0.54 people per household. This is a substantially greater decrease compared to the County, which had a decrease of 0.18 people per household between 2000 and 2024, and the state, which saw a decrease of 0.17 people per household during the same time.

Projections

Figure 1 shows population projections for the Town of New Chester and Table 2 compares projected population in the Town to Adams County, based on projections made by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA). The Wisconsin DOA population projections are recognized as Wisconsin’s official population projections. These projections are based on historical population and household growth in the community. The Town of New Chester is expected to experience a 7.2 percent increase in population through 2050. This growth rate is more than that of Adams County as a whole, which is expected to decline at a rate of 29.1 percent by 2050.

Figure 1: New Chester Population Projections



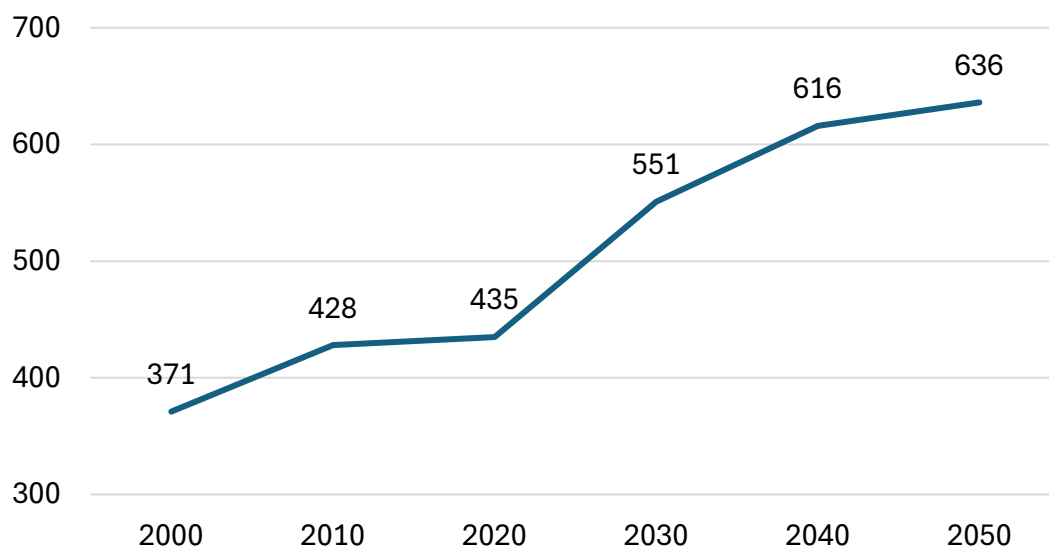
Source: U.S. Census 2000- 2020; WI DOA 2030-2050

Table 2: Population Projections 2010-2050						
Total Population by Year						
	2020	2030	2040	2050	Net Change 2020-2050	% Change 2010-2050
T. New Chester	1,960	2,128	2,160	2,102	142	7.2%
Adams County	20,654	19,035	16,875	14,650	-6,004	-29.1%

Source: WI DOA Population Projections 2024

Figure 2 and Table 3 include household projections completed by the WDOA. Similar to the overall population, the Town is projected to see a 46.2 percent increase in the number of households, but the County is projected to have a 23.1 percent decrease by 2050. Chapter 3 discusses how a large share of the Town's housing is seasonal, and those households do not count towards the year-round population or household totals. With the large cohort of baby boomers retiring, it is possible that some of this projected growth could be from seasonal property owners deciding to retire in the Town to live there year-round.

Figure 2: New Chester Household Projections



Source: U.S. Census 2000-2020, WI DOA 2030-2050

Table 3: Household Projections 2010-2050						
Total Households Per Year						
	2020	2030	2040	2050	Net Change 2020-2050	% change 2010-2050
T. New Chester	435	551	616	636	201	46.2%
Adams County	9,049	8,625	7,860	6,961	-2,088	-23.1%

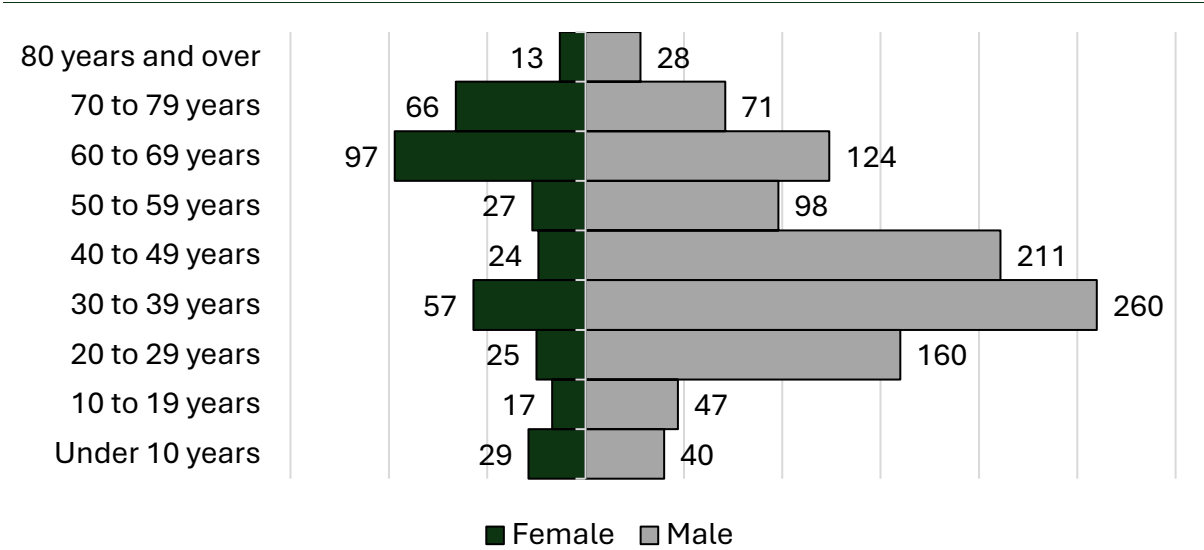
Source: WI DOA Household Projections 2026

Age

Figures 3 and 4 compare the distribution of age group for the Town of New Chester and Adams County. Adams County’s population pyramid is highly constrictive with far greater numbers in the higher age ranges compared to lower age ranges. For example, the largest age group in Adams County is the 60-to-69-year-old category. This is indicative of aging populations with slow population growth.

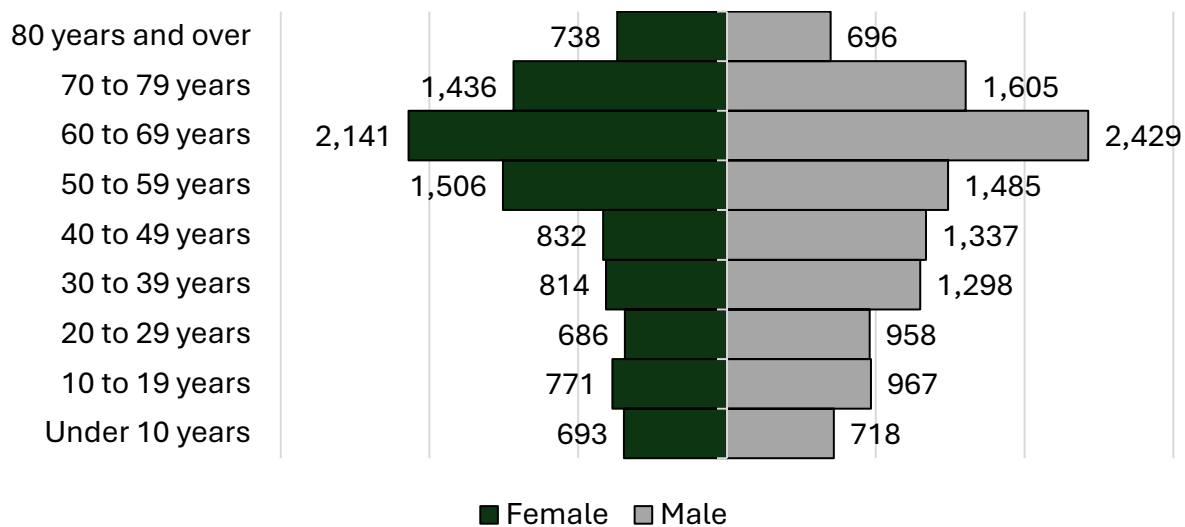
Alternatively, the Town of New Chester has a younger age distribution, with the 30-to-39-year-old category being the largest. This is the age when families tend to have children, so that could also explain the projected population increase through 2050. But for now, there are few children in both the Town and County relative to the population in older age categories. Note that the presence of FCI Oxford skews the age cohorts in Figure 3 to have a larger population of men, especially between ages 20 and 59.

Figure 3: Town of New Chester Age Cohorts



Source: American Community Survey- 5 Year Estimates

According to the American Community Survey’s 5-Year Estimates, the median age of the Town was 42.6 years in 2024, up from 38.3 in 2010. The county’s median age in 2010 was 47.7 years, and it rose to 55.7 years by 2024. The median age for both the Town and County were higher than the state, which had a median age of 40.2 in 2024.

Figure 4: Adams County Age Cohorts

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Population distribution is important to the planning process. Two age groups are of note, those 17 years of age and younger and those 65 years of age or older. These are often referred to as dependent populations, but each has different needs. For example, the younger group requires schools and childcare and the older group requires increased levels of medical care.

The U.S. Census calculates an old age dependency ratio, which is the population age 65 and older divided by the population ages 18 to 64 times 100. In 2024, the old age dependency ratio for the Town of New Chester was 27.5, up from 12.2 in 2010. The U.S. Census also calculates a youth dependency ratio, which is the population under 18 divided by the population ages 18 to 64 times 100. In 2024, the child dependency ratio for the Town of New Chester was 19.7, down from 22.9 in 2010. The needs of those in the 65 and older group have become much more prevalent in the past few years. In contrast, the needs of the younger population are important, but are not as widespread because the size of this group is shrinking.

Due to longer life expectancy and the size of the Baby Boomer generation, the 65 and older age group is expected to continue to increase in size. The trend is occurring at the state and national levels and to an even greater degree within rural Wisconsin counties. This population trend whereby older age categories increase significantly while younger age categories decline will impact the future labor supply, tax base, school system, and health care industry at the national, state, and local levels.

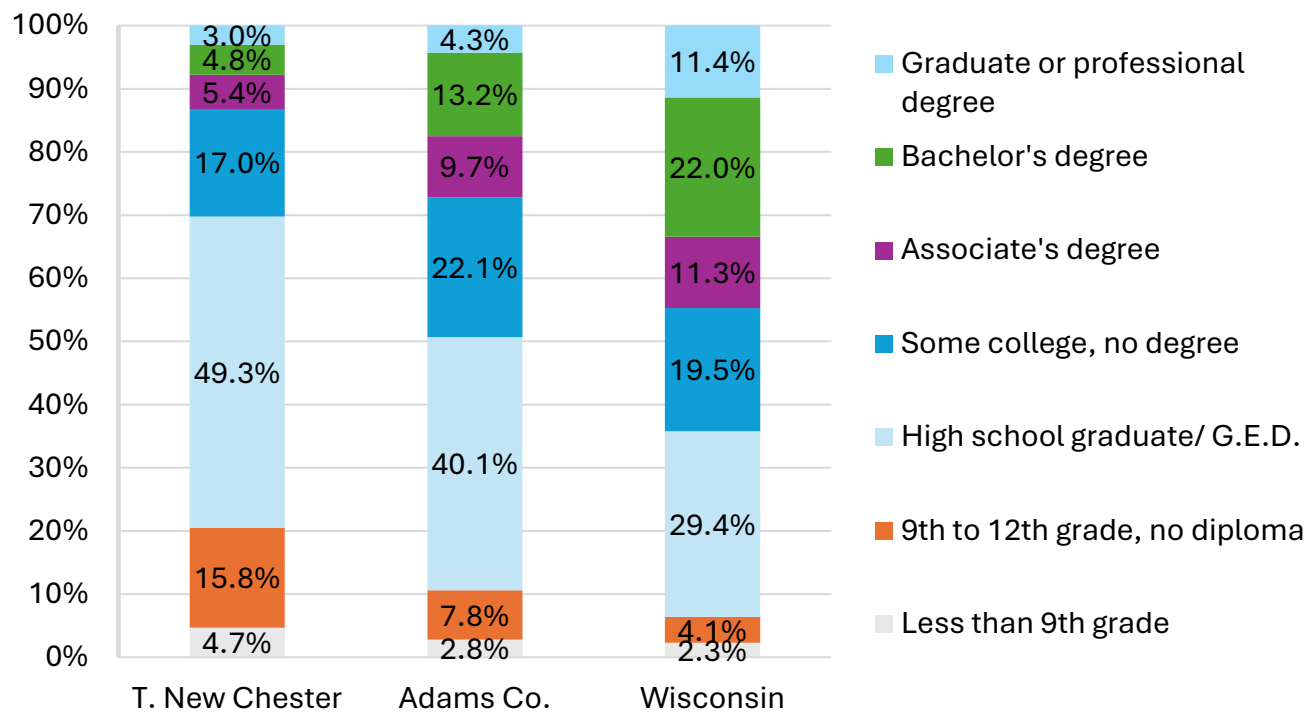
Education and Income Levels

Education

Figure 5 compares educational attainment of those in the Town of New Chester to the county and the state. In 2024, 79.5 percent of Town residents aged 25 and older had a high school diploma or higher. This was 9.9 percent lower than the county average and 14.1 percent lower than the state average.

According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, there has been little to no change in the percentage of Town residents aged 25 or older who had achieved a high school diploma or higher from 2010 to 2024, since the rate in 2010 was only estimated to be 0.7 percent higher than in 2024. However, the percentage of Town residents aged 25 or older who have a bachelor's degree or higher has increased from 5.9 percent in 2010 to 7.8 percent in 2024. This was still lower than both the county and the state, at 17.5 percent and 33.4 percent, respectively. Education and how it relates to economic development will be discussed in the economic development chapter.

Figure 5: Educational Attainment



Source: American Community Survey 2024

Income

Median household income and per capita income are two commonly used measures of income. Median household income is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, meaning half of all households have income above that amount, and half have income below that amount. Per capita income is the average income earned per person.

Median household income for Town of New Chester residents was \$49,028 in 2024, which rose considerably from \$38,939 in 2010. Note that \$38,939 in 2010 had the same purchasing power as \$60,006 in 2024 due to inflation, so wages have actually decreased. This could partially be due to the large number of retirees who no longer work full-time, but it reflects the impact inflation has had over that 16-year period.

Table 4 shows that the Town's median household income in 2024 was much lower than Adams County (\$59,442), and significantly lower than the State of Wisconsin (\$77,485). This is partially offset by a lower cost of living in Adams County compared to other regions of Wisconsin. But County and statewide incomes have increased at about double the rate that the Town's incomes did.

Similarly, Table 5 illustrates that per capita income for the Town was also much lower than County and statewide figures, but it increased at a faster rate, which is partially due to smaller household sizes in the Town compared to the County and state.

Table 4: Median Household Income				
Minor Civil Division	2010	2024	*Net Change	*% Change
T. New Chester	\$38,939	\$49,028	\$10,089	25.91%
Adams County	\$39,885	\$59,442	\$19,557	49.03%
Wisconsin	\$51,598	\$77,485	\$25,887	50.17%

Source: U.S. Census 2010; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Table 5: Per Capita Income				
Minor Civil Division	2010	2024	Net Change	% Change
T. New Chester	\$12,939	\$22,613	\$9,674	74.77%
Adams County	\$21,917	\$35,863	\$13,946	63.63%
Wisconsin	\$26,624	\$43,373	\$16,749	62.91%

Source: U.S. Census 2010; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Although 14.6 percent of households in the Town reported incomes above \$100,000, 24.9 percent reported incomes below \$25,000 in 2024. Table 6 compares the poverty rate for the Town, the County, and the state from 2010 to 2024. The percentage of the population living below the poverty level in the Town has increased by 10 percent from 2010 to 2024. In 2010, the Town had a similar poverty rate to both the County and state. Since then, poverty has decreased statewide, increased slightly in the County, and increased dramatically in the Town.

Table 6: Poverty Rate		
Minor Civil Division	2010 Poverty Rate	2024 Poverty Rate
T. New Chester	15.7%	25.7%
Adams County	12.6%	14.1%
Wisconsin	11.6%	10.3%

Source: U.S. Census 2010; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Employment Characteristics

Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the breakdown of the labor force in the Town of New Chester in 2010 and 2024. The labor force includes those that are 16 and older who are working or looking for work. It does not include those who are retired or staying home with children, for example. There was a decrease of 120 people in the labor force from 2010 to 2024 in the Town, which is a decrease of over 25 percent. This is likely due to the rise in median age, whereby more people are entering retirement. This decline was more significant than in the County, which saw a decrease of 2.6 percent of its labor force from 2010 to 2024. In contrast, the state experienced an increased labor force of 1.9 percent during the same time.

Labor force participation indicates the percent of everyone 16 years and over that are in the labor force. The labor force participation rate increased 5.6 percent in the Town of New Chester from 2010 to 2024. There was a decrease in the county and state during this period, indicating a tightening labor market throughout Wisconsin.

Table 7: Labor Force						
Minor Civil Division	Labor Force			Labor Participation Rate		
	2010	2024	2010-2024 % Change	2010	2024	2010-2024 % Change
T. New Chester	479	359	-25.1%	22.5%	28.1%	5.6%
Adams County	9,139	8,902	-2.6%	50.9%	47.6%	-3.3%
Wisconsin	3,078,465	3,136,600	1.9%	69.0%	65.3%	-3.7%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

In 2010, the Town of New Chester had an employed population of 410 people. This number decreased by 114 people to 306 by 2024, for a decline of 25.4 percent. In contrast, both the state and the county saw an increase in the employed population from 2010 to 2024, at rates of 1.7 percent and 5.6 percent, respectively. The U.S. Census classifies individuals as unemployed if they are not working, actively seeking work, and available to accept a job. The Town’s unemployment rate in 2024 was 14.8 percent, and the County and state saw lower unemployment rates of 4.5 percent and 3.2 percent, respectively.

Table 8: Employment				
Minor Civil Division	2010	2024	2010-2024 % Change	Unemployment Rate 2024
T. New Chester	410	306	-25.4%	14.8%
Adams County	8,354	8,493	1.7%	4.5%
Wisconsin	2,869,310	3,031,042	5.6%	3.2%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

As shown in Table 9, the two employment sectors with the most employed in 2024 were sales and office occupations along with production, transportation, and material movement occupations. Note that these are places where the Town's residents work, regardless of where the job is located, rather than measuring only jobs that exist in the Town.

Since 2010, there has been a dramatic shift in employment. Sales and office positions went from the smallest group of employers to the second largest, with an increase of 63 jobs. All remaining occupations saw a dramatic decrease in the number of Town residents employed in them.

Table 9: Resident Occupations 2010-2024			
Occupation Sector	2010	2024	2010-2024 Net Change
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	82	48	-34
Service occupations	95	50	-45
Sales and office occupations	31	94	63
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	71	19	-52
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	131	95	-36
Total employed*	410	306	-104

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Demographic Snapshot

- Overall, there has been a notable decline in both the Town's population and number of households since 2010. Household size has experienced a steady decrease since 2000.
- The Town of New Chester is expected to experience a slight increase in both population and household size through 2050, unlike the County and State.
- There are a large number of people in the middle age categories, but the median age of the Town is much lower than the County's, and slightly higher than the state median.
- The median age rose 4.3 years from 38.3 in 2010 to 42.6 in 2024.
- In 2024, 79.5 percent had a high school diploma or higher and 7.8 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher in the Town of New Chester. This was much lower than both the county and the state.
- The median household income of \$49,028 in 2024 was much lower than the County and the state. The 2024 per capita income of \$22,613 was also lower than the County and state.
- The labor participation rate is substantially lower than the County, which is also lower than the state, and the unemployment rate is much higher than the county and the state.
- Most people working in the Town of New Chester work in the areas of sales and office occupations or production, transportation, and material moving occupations.

Issues and Opportunities Summary

A variety of issues were identified throughout the planning process, and the following chapters of this plan will list the issues that relate to each chapter's topic. Opportunities that the Town has to address each issue are described in the Goals, Objectives, and Policies at the end of each chapter.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Each of the following Comprehensive Plan chapters' goals, objectives, and policies will be used to guide the future development of the Town. For purposes of this planning process, goals, objectives, and policies are defined as follows:

Goals

Broad statements that express general priorities about how the community should approach development issues during the next 20 years. These goals are based on key issues, opportunities and problems that affect the community.

Objectives

More specific than goals and are usually attainable through planning and implementation activities. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.

Policies

Rules or courses of action that are used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. Policies are intended to be used by decision-makers on a regular basis.

The Town's 2016 Comprehensive Plan's goals, objectives, and policies were presented to Plan Commission, and they were reviewed and updated during the development of this updated Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter 2

Natural, Cultural, and Agricultural Resources

This chapter describes local land and water conditions in detail as well as agricultural resources and cultural heritage. It is important to consider the patterns and interrelations of natural resources on a broader scale because they do not follow geo-political boundaries. In addition, many of the programs for protecting or mitigating impacts on natural resources are administrated at the county, state, or federal level. Thus, an overview of recent county-wide natural resource planning efforts is described below.

The protection of natural features in the physical landscape, including water resources, soils, and woodlands, is necessary for the preservation of the environment for future generations. Certain environmental features and assets have more than merely aesthetic and leisure-time activity values. They are essential to long-term human survival and the preservation of life, health, and general welfare. As such, the protection and/or management of these environmental features and assets clearly are in the public's best interest. Natural and cultural resources are also important to the Town's character and identity.

Previous Natural, Agricultural, & Cultural Resource Plans and Studies

In the last decade, several plans were prepared by the 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.

Adams County Comprehensive Plan 2018

The Adams County Comprehensive Plan addresses natural, agricultural, and cultural resources for Adams County. The goal of the Natural, Cultural, and Agricultural Resources element is to protect natural areas, economically productive areas, including forests and scenic landscapes upon which tourism depends, and the protection of open space and unique landscape resources.

Adams County Land & Water Resources Management Plan 2026-2035

The Adams County Land and Water Resources Management Plan is drafted as a ten-year plan (2026-2035) with included Work Plan goals and objectives in accordance with the requirements set forth in Chapter 92 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

- Create a culture where landowners take ownership of their impact on the environment.
- Protect and improve groundwater quality and quantity as well as surface water quality.
- Reduce wind erosion.
- Engage and support our local youth in conservation efforts.

- No net loss of existing wetlands.
- Promote working Forests.

Adams County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2024-2028

The primary purpose of this recreation plan is to provide continued direction in meeting the current and future recreational needs of the County. This is accomplished through an inventory and analysis of outdoor recreational facilities, asking the public what they are looking for, and the establishment of recommendations to meet identified needs.

Adams County Farmland Preservation Plan 2016

The Adams County Farmland Preservation Plan focuses on preserving the agricultural production capacity, farmland, soil and water resources, and rural character in Adams County. The plan identified issues and concerns in farming practices, sets goals and policies to preserve agriculture, and identifies actions to achieve the set goals. It also sets criteria for both farmland preservation and non-farmland preservation areas.

Much of the Town is designated a farmland preservation area, and Adams County administers the certified farmland preservation zoning ordinance, which allows property owners in those areas to receive tax credits on a per-acre basis.

Natural Resources

The Town of New Chester is located in southeast Adams County in Central Wisconsin. The Town lies in the mid-latitude continental climatic zone, which is characterized by long, snowy winters and short, warm summers. Spring and fall are often short with rapid changes from summer to winter and winter to summer. Annual precipitation, throughout the area, averages about 32 inches. About one-half to two-thirds of the annual precipitation falls between May and September. Snowfalls range between 45 and 80 inches annually, with a continuous snow cover from November to early April.

Land Resources

The Town covers about 20,067 acres of land. The topography includes both flatter areas as well as some hilly areas. Elevation ranges from around 940 feet above sea level along Neenah Creek to 1,120 feet above sea level in some of the hilly areas in the central part of the Town. This is because the Town straddles two ecological landscapes identified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR): The Central Sand Hills, and the Central Sand Plains. The town has some steep slopes which hinder development. See Map 3. Over the years, the Town has been largely dominated by agriculture and forestry, with approximately 29.3 percent of the total land being used for agriculture, and 55.1 percent being woodlands, some of which may be agricultural forests.

Topography and Geology

Adams County primarily lies at the bottom of the former Glacial Lake Wisconsin, giving it a flat, sandy terrain. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) places this portion of the County in the Central Sand Plains Ecological Landscape as a result. The Johnstown Terminal Moraine, which is a series of lakes and ridges that passes through the Town of New Chester, is a result of past glacial activity, which is why it is more rugged than other portions of the County. DNR considers this portion of the County to be in the Central Sand Hills Ecological Landscape. DNR has guides on their website describing each ecological landscape in detail, along with its physical characteristics, wildlife, and best land management practices.

The Dresbach Group is comprised of sedimentary sandstone of late (Upper) Cambrian Age that overlies crystalline basement rocks of Precambrian Age. Both the crystalline rock surface and the sandstones decline from less than 100 feet in the northern part to nearly 400 feet in the southern part of the county. In places, the sandstones project up through overlying materials to create the scenic sandstone mounds and castle rocks of Adams County. These sandstones range from fine to coarse in grain and are relatively permeable. The extensive outwash plains extend southward along the terminal moraine and covers nearly 400 square miles of the “driftless area”. The remainder of Adams County is covered by glacial lake deposits, consisting of sand, silt, and clay covered with a fine to coarse grain.

The Town of New Chester’s topography varies with some flatter areas and some hilly areas. Elevation ranges from around 860 feet above sea level on the eastern valleys to 1,110 feet above sea level in the hilly areas in the middle of the Town. The Town has some steep slopes which hinder development.

Soils

Soils are an important natural resource. To better guide development and land use within the Town, it is important to know and understand soil properties and their limitations. Soil properties affecting potential land use decisions include depth to bedrock, slope, drainage/permeability, shrink-swell potential, and flooding. Soil characteristics can vary widely across a given area, but generalizations can be made based on a soil series, which is a type of soil profile. The soil survey describes the characteristics of different types of soils including engineering properties, physical and chemical properties, and soil and water features.

As with most areas in Central Wisconsin, the Town has a variety of soil types within its boundaries. According to the USDA Web Soil Survey of Adams County, three dominant soil series were identified within the Town: Coloma sand, Plainfield sand, and Okee loamy sand. See the Soil Survey for more detailed information.

Forests

Woodlands are the predominant land cover within the Town, covering around 11,051 acres, or approximately 55.1 percent of the Town. Forest cover provides many vital functions, which are diverse in nature; recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, economic commodity (timber products), and wildlife habitat as well as protection of sensitive environmental areas. Tree cover is essential, especially for erosion control

and to reduce effluent and nutrient flows into surface water bodies and courses. Woodlands are shown on Map 6, Existing Land Use.

Some woodlands in the town are being maintained through the Managed Forest Law (MFL). This tax assessment program is available to landowners willing to manage their forest plot according to sound forestry practices as specified in a management plan.

Metallic and Non-Metallic Mineral Resources

There are no active metallic in the Town of New Chester. There are no known non-metallic mines in the Town shown on Map 4: Utilities & Community Facilities.

Environmentally Remediated Areas

Brownfields are commercial or industrial properties that contain or may contain hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. Expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of these properties can be especially difficult. The Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) is an online database that provides information about contaminated properties and other activities related to the investigation and clean-up of properties with contaminated soil and/or groundwater.

Contaminated sites are not uncommon as all communities with commercial and industrial development have the potential for air emissions, groundwater contamination, soil spills, and surface water contamination. There are no open listed sites in the Town of New Chester at this time, aside from one site at the Oxford Federal Correction Institution, which is closed but has continuing obligations.

Rare Species and Natural Communities

Wisconsin's National Heritage Inventory Program (NHI) is responsible for maintaining data on the locations and status of rare species, natural communities, and natural features throughout the State. The program's database, on the Wisconsin DNR website, identifies species and natural communities that are currently tracked by the NHI. As of July 2026, NHI tracked 16 species and habitats in the Town of New Chester. Cut-leaved Anemone is the only species listed as endangered. The Brittle Prickly-pear and Henslow's Sparrow are also listed as threatened.

Wisconsin's biodiversity goals are to identify, protect and manage native plants, animals, and natural communities from the very common to critically endangered for present and future generations. Knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship of Wisconsin's native species and ecosystems are critical to their survival and greater benefit to society.

Water Resources

The Town of New Chester, as well as the whole of Adams County, contains a range of natural surface water features, including rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands. Some have remained in a fairly pristine state and others are in need of focused efforts to improve water quality. This section discusses the characteristics of the major surface water features located within the Town.

Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land in which water drains to a common point. In Wisconsin, watersheds vary in scale from major river systems to small creek drainage areas and typically range in size from 100 to 300 square miles. River basins encompass several watersheds. There are 32 river basins in Wisconsin, which range in size from 500 to over 5,000 square miles.

Much of the Town of New Chester is in the Neenah Creek Watershed, with water flowing east as part of the Fox Wolf Basin, ultimately reaching Lake Winnebago and Lake Michigan. A small portion of the northeastern part of the Town also drains this direction through the Montello River watershed. The western portion of the town is in the Wisconsin River basin, ultimately flowing into the Mississippi River via the Duck and Plainfield Creeks.

Surface Water

Together the rivers, creeks, and ponds in the Town account for a total of about 165 acres, or 0.8 percent of the Town's area. The larger bodies of water are Patrick Lake, Rollers Lake, Fenner Lake, and McGinnis Lake. Fenners, McGinnis, and Patrick Lakes all have their own Lake Districts, which have the authority to levy taxes and enact ordinances that protect the quality of the lakes. Neenah Creek is the primary creek in the Town. The Natural Resources Map shows the locations and names of the major surface waters in the Town.

These surface water resources replenish the groundwater as part of the hydrologic cycle. Under natural conditions, the aquifers generally receive clean water from rainfall percolating through the overlying soils. However, contamination of groundwater reserves can result from such sources as percolation of water through improperly placed or maintained landfill sites, private waste disposal located near the water table, leaks from sewer pipes, and seepage from some types of mining operations into the aquifer. Runoff from livestock yards and urban areas and improper application of agricultural pesticide or fertilizers can also add organic and chemical contaminants in locations where the water table is near the surface.

Protection of these groundwater reserves is necessary to ensure adequate water to domestic, agricultural and commercial uses. If groundwater is not protected, contamination could result; thus, endangering the quality and supply of the water in the town.

Wetlands

Wetlands are defined as areas between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is at, near, or above the land surface for a significant part of most years. Wetlands include marshes, wooded swamps, and wet meadows. Soils in these areas are usually saturated during the growing season within a few inches of the surface. The presence of wetlands in an area can limit the type of development that can occur in that location. The Town has few wetland areas, see the Natural Resources Map. Wetlands are primarily located near the lakes and ponds in the Town, as well as along Neenah Creek.

Wetlands perform many indispensable roles in the proper function of the hydrologic cycle, and local ecological systems. In a natural condition, they control floodwater by moderating peak flows, and some may

act as groundwater recharge sites. All wetlands have valuable water purification capabilities and make significant contributions to surface and groundwater quality. They act as settling areas for inflowing streams as well as functioning in the reduction of water nutrients through uptake of these compounds into plant tissues. They also have a buffering effect on water acidity or alkalinity and are helpful in the elimination of harmful bacteria, which may be found in surface or groundwater. They also serve as breeding and nesting grounds for waterfowl and many other animals that depend on aquatic habitats; they are important recreational, education, and aesthetic resources. In many instances, wetlands serve as the combined roles of flood moderation, water purification and aquatic habitat, wetlands are important to the maintenance of downstream habitat as well.

Floodplains

A floodplain is an area of land that is prone to flooding, usually located adjacent to a stream or river. Floodplains in the Town are found along Neenah Creek. See the Natural Resources Map. Floodplains are a natural feature not conducive to development. Inappropriate location of roadways in floodplains can result in serious flood damage. Periodic roadbed saturation and embankment washing eventually lead to an increase in road maintenance costs. In addition to roads, floodwaters can create a number of problems by damaging foundations of homes, electrical equipment, heating units, etc. Basements constructed on permeable sands and silts of floodplains are especially susceptible to damage resulting from seepage through walls. Thus, it is advisable to restrict development in such areas.

Groundwater

Groundwater is water found underground in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand, and rock. Under natural conditions, the aquifers generally receive clean water from rainfall percolating through the overlying soils. However, contamination of groundwater reserves can result from such sources as percolation of water through improperly placed or maintained landfill sites, private waste disposal located near the water table, leaks from sewer pipes, and seepage from some types of mining operations into the aquifer. Runoff from livestock yards and urban areas and improper application of agricultural pesticide or fertilizers can also add organic and chemical contaminants in locations where the water table is near the surface. Protection of these groundwater reserves is necessary to ensure adequate water to domestic, agricultural, and commercial uses. If groundwater is not protected, contamination could result; thus, endangering the quality and supply of the water in the town.

The Wisconsin DNR in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin Extension, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey and USGS, analyzed the ease whereby contaminants can be carried through overlying materials to groundwater. Variables relevant to this are depth to bedrock, type of bedrock, soil characteristics, depth to water table, and characteristics of surficial deposits.

Groundwater in Adams County is generally of good quality although some areas have non-threatening problems with iron, dissolved solids, and hardness. Local differences in quality are the result of the composition, solubility, and surface of the soil and rock through which the water moves, and the length of

time that the water is in contact with these materials. Contamination of groundwater typically is the result of land uses associated with modern development. Many land use activities have the potential to impact the quality of groundwater. 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 application on farm fields, golf courses, or lawns. Leaking fluids from cars in junkyards, intentional dumping or accidental spills of paint, used motor oil, or other chemicals on the ground can result in contaminated groundwater.

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

The Wisconsin DNR classifies major surface water resources. These classifications allow water bodies of particular importance to be identified because of their unique resource values and water quality. The DNR has two categories which include Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW), which have the highest quality water and fisheries in the state and are therefore deserving of special protection, and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) which have excellent water quality and valued fisheries but receive or may receive water discharges.

Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs) share many of the same environmental and ecological characteristics. The primary difference between the two is that ORWs typically do not have any direct point sources discharging pollutants directly to the water. In addition, any pollutant load discharged to an ORW must meet background water quality at all times. Exceptions are made for certain types of discharge situations to ERWs to allow pollutant loads that are greater than background water quality when human health would otherwise be compromised. Neenah Creek is currently the only ERW located within the Town of New Chester. There are not any ORWs located in the Town at this time.

Impaired Waters

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to develop a list of impaired waters, commonly referred to as the “303(d) list.” A water body is considered impaired if a) the current water quality does not meet the numeric or narrative criteria in a water quality standard or b) the designated use that is described in Wisconsin Administrative Code is not being achieved. A documented methodology is used to articulate the approach used to list waters in Wisconsin. Every two years, states are required to submit a list of impaired waters to EPA for approval. There are currently no impaired waters in the Town of New Chester.

Invasive Aquatic Species

Surface water resources in Adams County are threatened by the introduction of invasive aquatic species. Invasive species can alter the natural ecological relationships among native species and affect ecosystem function, economic value of ecosystems, and human health. It is recommended that the Town continue to work with the County Land and Water Conservation Department to develop public outreach education strategies. It is also beneficial that lake districts and associations continue to work with the DNR and

property owners to manage invasive aquatic species within lakes and waterbodies throughout the Town of New Chester.

Agricultural Resources

Farming in Adams County has been influenced by a combination of technology and environmental awareness. Employment in farming in Adams County has declined rapidly as farms have become more reliant on machinery and chemicals and less reliant on human labor. Larger farms can now be more easily maintained by fewer people leading to a reduction in the total number of farms in the county and an increase in the average size and value per farm. Farm size, conservation practices, and effective irrigation techniques have increased productivity to make rural Adams County into profitable farmland.

Farmland

Today, the primary agricultural crop in Adams County is irrigated vegetable farming (e.g. potatoes, corn, snap beans, soybeans, and peas). Cranberry production is increasingly important too. Two cattle Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) have been built since 2010 in the county. Approximately 5,888 acres of land in the Town of New Chester are used for agriculture, which is 29.3 percent of the total land.

The Adams County Farmland Preservation Plan indicates that pockets of prime farmland exist within the Town primarily in the southern and eastern sections. The USDA defines prime farmland as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Most of the Town is mapped as a farmland preservation area.

Farm Products

New Chester Dairy is permitted by WDNR as a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO), which are regulated by the state due to their high density of livestock.

Historical and Cultural Resources

A cultural resource is a broad term that can encompass many aspects of heritage. Cultural resources may include archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to Native Americans or other cultural groups. Cultural resources are those elements that signify heritage and help to evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinctive. Cultural resources include buildings; sites and landscape that help communities retain their sense of identity in an increasingly homogenized society.

Lands immediately adjacent to surface waters, but not man-made drainage ditches, may have an abundance of cultural and archeological significance because they were often the location of Native American and early European settlements. Additionally, the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) lists the L. Schreiber Farm (499 County Highway E) and St. Anne's Catholic Oratory (2929 St Anns Ave) as two historically significant sites, though they are not listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

Community History

The community of Grand Marsh, located at the crossing of County Road E and the Union Pacific tracks, can trace its roots to the earliest days of settlement in the county, and beyond. There are remnants of a Native-American settlement at this site, and the McElwain and Atkins homesteads date from before the Civil War. A hotel known as the Marsh House provided accommodation to teamsters hauling lumber along the old Pinery Road. But it was the construction of the railroad that led to the period of greatest development in Grand Marsh. After 1911, when the railroad reached the town, a number of businesses grew up, including dry goods and grocery stores, post office, furniture, hardware, and drug stores, blacksmith, bank, and a community hall.

A disastrous fire in 1915 destroyed several commercial buildings, including a dry goods, butcher, hardware and other stores, along with a hotel and the community hall. Many buildings from this period survive: the Grand Marsh Bank, the Wooden Nickel which had been Rathbun's dry goods and grocery store, Morgie's Auto Supply formerly Kurth's Mercantile. Changes in lifestyle, transportation and buying habits have caused many changes over the years but much of the historic fabric of the community still exists.

There are five structures in the town that are on the State History Inventory. The St. Anne's Catholic Church is a neoclassical style and was built in 1916. The L. Schieber Farm has a house, barn, windmill, and outbuilding on the registry. The House is a Gabled Ell style and the barn, windmill and outbuilding are Astylistic Utilitarian Building style and all built in the 1880's.

There are also several original farm homes and farm buildings in the town, which have not been examined for inclusion on the History Inventory. Among the notable buildings in the town are the Patrick Farm, which housed the first Post Office, the New Chester Congregational Church, and Morgie's Auto Parts. Lands immediately adjacent to surface waters, but not man-made drainage ditches, may have an abundance of cultural and archeological significance because they were often the location of Native American and early European settlements.

Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources Programs

Natural, agricultural, and cultural resource programs available to the town are identified below. The following list is not all-inclusive. For specific program information, the agency or group that offers the program should be contacted.

Aquatic Habitat Protection Program

The WDNR provides basic aquatic habitat protection services. Staff members include Water Management (Regulation) Specialists, Zoning Specialists, Rivers (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission-FERC) Specialists, Lakes Specialists, Water Management Engineers, and their assistants (LTEs). The program assists with water regulation permits, zoning assistance, coordination of rivers, lake management, and engineering.

County Conservation Aids

Funds are available to carry out programs for fish or wildlife management projects as per §23.09 (12), Wis. Stats. and NR 50, Wis. Adm. Code. Projects related to providing improved fish or wildlife habitat or projects related to hunter/angler facilities are eligible. Projects that enhance fish and wildlife habitat or fishing and hunting facilities have priority. Contact the WDNR for further information.

Discovery Farms Program

Discovery Farms is a program administered by UW-Extension that works with over 40 farmers across the state in the following categories: Nitrogen Use Efficiency, Tile Monitoring, Leachate Collection Systems, Watershed water quality, and Edge-of-Field Runoff Monitoring. The program's mission is to "develop on-farm and related research to determine the economic and environmental effects of agricultural practices on a diverse group of Wisconsin farms, and educates and improves communications among the agricultural community, consumers, researchers and policymakers to better identify and implement effective environmental management practices that are compatible with profitable agriculture."

Drinking Water and Groundwater Program

This WDNR program is responsible for assuring safe, high-quality drinking water and for protecting groundwater. This is achieved by enforcing minimum well construction and pump installation requirements, conducting surveys and inspections of water systems, the investigation and sampling of drinking water quality problems, and requiring drinking water quality monitoring and reporting. A team of specialists, engineers, hydrogeologists, and a program expert and program assistants staff the program. WDNR staff assist public and private well owners to help solve water quality complaints and water system problems. They also provide interested citizens with informational or educational materials about drinking water supplies and groundwater.

Wisconsin Fund

This is a program by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Safety and Buildings Division. Grants are provided to homeowners and small commercial businesses to help offset a portion of the cost for the repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of existing failing Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS). Eligibility is based upon several criteria, including household income and age of the structure.

Endangered Resources Program

The WDNR's Endangered Resources staff provides expertise and advice on endangered resources. They manage the Natural Heritage Inventory Program (NHI), which is used to determine the existence and location of native plant and animal communities and Endangered or Threatened Species of Special Concern. The NHI helps identify and prioritize areas suitable for State Natural Area (SNA) designation, provides information needed for feasibility studies and master plans, and maintains the list of endangered and threatened species. All management activities conducted by Wildlife Management and Forestry staff must be reviewed to determine the impact on NHI-designated species. A permit for the incidental take of an

Endangered or Threatened species is required under the State Endangered Species Law. The Endangered Resources Program oversees the permit process, reviews applications and makes permit decisions. Funding for the Endangered Species Program comes from several sources, including tax checkoff revenue, license plates, general program revenues (GPR), gaming revenue, Natural Heritage Inventory chargebacks, wild rice permits, general gifts and Pittman Robertson grants.

Fisheries Management Program

The WDNR funds this program primarily through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. The program assists with fishery surveys, fish habitat improvement/protection, and fish community manipulation. This program may also be used to fund public relations events and a variety of permitting and administrative activities involving fisheries.

Forest Management Program

Support for the Forest Management Program is received from the federal & state government, from recreation fees, from sale of forest products, from sale of state produced nursery stock, forest tax law payments, and other miscellaneous sources. All activities of the Forestry Program help support efforts to promote and ensure the protection and sustainable management of Wisconsin's forests.

Private Forestry

The WDNR's goal is to motivate private forest landowners to practice sustainable forestry by providing technical forestry assistance, state and federal cost-sharing on management practices, sale of state produced nursery stock for reforestation, enrollment in Wisconsin's Forest Tax Law Programs, advice for the protection of endangered and threatened species, and assistance with forest disease and insect problems. Each county has at least one Department forester assigned to respond to requests for private forestland assistance. These foresters also provide educational programs for landowners, schools, and the general public. Both private and industrial forest landowners have enrolled their lands under the Managed Forest Law.

Managed Forest Law (MFL)

The purpose of the MFL is to promote good forest management through property tax incentives. Management practices are required by way of an approved forest management plan. Landowners with a minimum of 10 contiguous acres (80% must be capable of producing merchantable timber) are eligible and may contract for 25 or 50 years. Open lands must allow hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and sightseeing, however, up to 80 acres may be closed to public access by the landowner. There is a 5% yield tax applied to any wood products harvested. Contact the WDNR for further information.

Nonpoint Source Program (NSP)

Wisconsin's NPS Program, through a comprehensive network of federal, state, and local agencies working in partnership with other organizations and citizens, addresses the significant nonpoint sources in the state.

This program combines voluntary and regulatory approaches with financial and technical assistance. Abatement activities include agriculture, urban, forestry, wetlands, and hydrologic modifications. The core activities of the program, which are research, monitoring, data assessment and management, regulation and enforcement, financial and technical assistance, education and outreach and public involvement, work to address current water quality impairments and prevent future threats caused by NPS pollution. Contact the WDNR for more information.

NRCS Conservation Programs

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters. Programs include:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) by USDA's Farm Service Agency
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
- Working Lands for Wildlife

Parks and Recreation Program

The WDNR gets its authority for administering the Parks and Recreation Program from Chapter 27 Wisconsin Statutes. This program provides assistance in the development of public parks and recreation facilities. Funding sources include: the general fund, the Stewardship Program, Land and Water Conservation fund (LAWCON), and the recycling fund, and program revenue funds.

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants

The Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) provides funding to producer led groups that focus on nonpoint source pollution abatement activities through the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program (PLWPG). The goal is to improve Wisconsin's soil and water quality by supporting and advancing producer-led conservation solutions by increasing on the ground practices and farmer participation in these efforts.

Stewardship Grants for Nonprofit Conservation Organizations

Nonprofit conservation organizations are eligible to obtain funding for the acquisition of land or easements for conservation purposes and restoration of wildlife habitat. Priorities include acquisition of wildlife habitat, acquisition of lands with special scientific or ecological value, protection of rare and endangered habitats and species, acquisition of stream corridors, acquisition of land for state trails including the Ice Age Trail and North Country Trail, and restoration of wetlands and grasslands. Eligible types of projects include fee

simple and easement acquisitions and habitat restoration projects. All projects must be in a WDNR approved outdoor recreation plan. Contact the WDNR or NCWRPC for further information.

Wastewater Program

The Department of Natural Resources provides this program to address point and non-point source pollution control. Operating funds for this program come from the federal government's Clean Water Act funding as well as state general program revenues. The core work of this program involves the issuance of wastewater discharge permits that discharge directly to surface or groundwater and enforcing the requirements of these permits. The program closely monitors the impacts of industry, septic tanks, sludge, and stormwater on the environment. Pretreatment plants for wastewater are offered economic assistance and provided with plan review services before the facility is established.

Watershed Program

The WDNR seeks to protect wild and domestic animals, recreational activities, natural flora and fauna, agriculture, business, and other land uses through watershed management. Funds to run this program are provided by the federal government through Clean Water Act and through state general program revenues. The program assists with watershed planning, water quality monitoring and modeling, and development of water quality standards and policy.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The purpose of the WRP is to restore wetlands previously altered for agricultural use. The goal of the WRP is to restore wetland and wildlife habitats. Lands that have been owned for at least one year and can be restored to wetland conditions are eligible. Landowners may restore wetlands with permanent or 30-year easements or 10-year contracts. Permanent easements pay 100% of the agricultural value of the land and 100% cost-sharing; 30-year easements pay 75% of the agricultural value and 75% cost sharing; 10-year contract pays 75% cost share only. Permanent or 30-year easements are recorded with a property deed, however 10-year contracts are not. Public access is not required. Contact the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for further information.

Wildlife Management Program

The WDNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management oversees a complex web of programs that incorporate state, federal and local initiatives primarily directed toward wildlife habitat management and enhancement. Programs include land acquisition, development and maintenance of State Wildlife Areas, and other wild land programs such as State Natural Areas. Wildlife Staff work closely with staff of state and county forests to maintain, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. Wildlife Management staff conduct wildlife population and habitat surveys, prepare property needs analysis's, develop basin wildlife management plans and collaborate with other WDNR planning efforts such as Park, Forestry or Fishery Area Property Master Plans to assure sound habitat management. Funding comes from the federal government in the form of Endangered Species grants and Pittman-Robertson grants and from state government in the form of hunting

and trapping license revenues, voluntary income tax contributions, general program revenue and Stewardship funds.

Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Wisconsin Historical Society

This office is part of the Wisconsin Historical Society and serves as the principal historic preservation agency in the state. In partnership with communities, organizations, and individuals, the SHPO works to identify, interpret, and preserve historic places for the benefit of present and future generations.

Natural Resources Trends

Problems and Causes

Wind erosion continues to be a big problem in Adams County. As companies/producers are getting bigger with more fields to harvest, harvesting takes longer and they are not able to get a cover crop planted in September. Moldboard plowing is more prevalent due to requirements by canneries for clean tillage to reduce crop contamination. Additionally, trees are being taken down right to the property line – windbreaks are not being left, or they are being mowed down or cut back.

Lake Sherwood, Lake Arrowhead, Lake Petenwell, Castle Rock Lake, Big Roche-a-Cri Creek, and Easton Lake are all listed as impaired 303(d) waters in Adams County, with Arrowhead and Sherwood being added in 2014. They became listed mainly due to increased levels of nutrients caused by cumulative actions by adjacent riparian owners, upstream inputs, and internal loading. This indicates that surface water across Adams County is generally decreasing in recent decades.

Changes in Land Use

- Deforestation occurring for large row crops, more irrigation, more CAFOs, and more subdivisions, especially along the streams.
- Changes in water quantity due to high-capacity wells increasing in number of wells and amount pumped per well, which may lead to more intermittent streams.
- Changes in water quality: more polluted runoff, manure storage issues, nutrient runoff, and more blue-green algae problems.
- Loss of smaller farms and more big farms likely.
- Frac sand mining and related pollutant issues.
- Need to find balance between protecting waters and agricultural uses.

Changes in Climate

- More intermittent streams.
- More wind erosion: there is a need for wind breaks, cover crops, and conservation tillage.
- More water erosion due to big storm events and flashier storm events.
- The water table is not being replenished as fast as being depleted, and lakes may be affected.

Tourism and Economy

- Tourism will change depending on water quality and quantity.
- Old septic systems need to be inspected and repaired/replaced.
- Changes in land and water quality or quantity could negatively affect property values and county income base.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal

The Town of New Chester manages natural and cultural resources in a balanced way for current and future generations' health, enjoyment, and benefit.

Objectives

1. Protect natural areas, including lakes, streams, wetlands, wildlife habitats, woodlands, and groundwater resources.
2. Protect natural resources that are economically productive, such as farmlands and commercial forests.
3. Preserve cultural, historic, and architecturally significant sites and buildings.

Policies

1. New development in the Town is encouraged in areas that will not impact local natural resources and discouraged in areas that have significant natural resources.
2. Consider the use of regulatory tools, such as transfer of development rights or purchase of development rights, to protect sensitive areas.
3. Protect and maintain high water quality standards within the Town.
4. Ensure that public access to the Town's surface water resources continues in the future.
5. Existing agricultural uses and buildings should be taken into consideration when locating new development to minimize conflicts.
6. Support the diversification of farming types and practices to maintain agriculture as a viable economic activity.
7. Encourage more windbreaks for erosion control
8. Encourage local farmers to participate in the Farmland Preservation Program to preserve farmland for long-term agricultural use.
9. Encourage and support owners of woodlands to develop forest management plans.
10. Work with the Adams County Historical Society, tribes, and others to provide guidance in the identification and protection of historic and cultural resources.
11. Review development proposals to minimize potential impacts to the historical and cultural resources of the Town.
12. Respect Century Farmsteads within the Town by allowing farming to continue.

Chapter 3

Housing

Housing characteristics and trends are important components of comprehensive planning. The physical location of housing can determine the need for many public facilities and services. Furthermore, understanding dynamics in the market likely to affect housing development in the future provides a basis for the formulation of policy to coordinate transportation facilities with a sustainable pattern of residential development. Understanding the factors affecting people's ability to meet their own housing needs provides a basis for reinforcing community ties, fostering economic development and environmental sustainability and improving the quality of life.

Previous Housing Plans and Studies

Adams County Housing Study 2025

In 2024, Adams County Economic Development (ACED), in partnership with the Adams County Housing Committee and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Partners Network (RPN) worked with the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) to produce this study in response to growing concerns over housing affordability. The Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC) and Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) soon partnered with ACED and Adams County to further enhance this project.

This project consisted of robust data collection, public surveys, public open houses, and stakeholder interviews to understand which housing types are highest in demand, and what barriers prevent an adequate supply of desired housing. This study recommends a variety of strategies and programs that each individual community may explore depending on their own needs to encourage the construction and rehabilitation of needed housing.

Wisconsin State Consolidated Housing Plan

The Consolidated Housing Plan is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the application process required of the states in accessing formula program funds of Small Cities Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships, Emergency Shelter Grants and Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA).

The Consolidated Plan provides the Framework for a planning process used by states and localities to identify housing, homeless, community, and economic development needs and resources and to tailor a strategic plan for meeting those needs.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan evaluates opportunities for improved and expanded housing throughout the North Central Wisconsin Region. The Regional Comprehensive Plan’s housing chapter includes a listing of programs and strategies for enhancing the housing market and identifies the following issues facing housing in the Region:

- Affordability
- Availability
- Housing Condition
- Senior, Disability-friendly, and Low-income Housing
- Seasonal Housing

Housing Assessment

Housing Type and Tenure

In 2024, the Town of New Chester had approximately 406 occupied housing units, 93.6% percent of which were owner-occupied, see Table 10. The Town of New Chester had a significantly higher percentage of owner-occupied homes than the State of Wisconsin, and slightly more than the whole of Adams County. There were 7.4 percent more owner-occupied homes than in Adams County and 25.8 percent more than in Wisconsin. The average household size of 2.06 was slightly lower than the county and the state, which were 2.14 and 2.33, respectively. Over 42 percent householders lived alone, and 23.9 percent of households had an individual age 60 or older. The percentage of households that included someone age 60 or older was lower than the county at 62.7 percent and similar to the state at 41.7 percent.

According to the Adams County Housing Study conducted by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) in 2025, the County is projected to need 1,333 new housing units by 2040.

Table 10: Housing Units by Type and Tenure 2024			
	T. New Chester	Adams County	Wisconsin
Total occupied housing units	406	9,517	2,479,480
Owner occupied units	380	8,207	1,682,214
Renter occupied units	26	1,310	797,266
Average household size	2.06	2.14	2.33
% owner occupied	93.6%	86.2%	67.8%
% householder living alone	42.6%	31.4%	31.5%
% with individuals 60 or over	23.9%	62.7%	41.7%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Seasonal Housing

In the Town of New Chester, a significant amount of the housing stock is used seasonally. As shown in Table 11, in 2024, 179 of the 677 total housing units were seasonal housing units, for a total of 26.4 percent. This was lower than the County percentage of 38.3 percent, but much higher than the state percentage of 6.2 percent. This reflects the New Chester's position as a seasonal destination in a County that is heavily built on tourism.

Table 11: Percentage of Seasonal Housing 2024			
	Total Housing Units	Seasonal Housing Units	% Seasonal Housing Units
T. New Chester	677	179	26.4%
Adams County	17,008	6,519	38.3%
Wisconsin	2,778,572	172,842	6.2%

Source: 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Tourist Rooming Houses

Tourist Rooming Houses (TRHs) have emerged in popularity in Wisconsin over the past decade, and they are often known as Airbnbs or VRBOs. They are housing units that are rented short-term, primarily for those on vacation, rather than long-term rentals that house year-round residents. According to Adams County, there were only 15 TRHs countywide. As of 2026, the County has a total of 280 licensed TRHs, not including the Town of Rome, which administers its own zoning and permitting for TRHs. In 2026, there were 9 licensed TRHs in the Town of New Chester.

Structural Characteristics

Tables 12 and 13 detail the number and percentage of housing units by type in the Town of New Chester. Nearly 73 percent of the housing units are single-family detached homes, and over 25 percent are mobile homes. The share of mobile homes is slightly higher than the county proportion of 18.1 percent, and significantly higher than the state proportion of 3.1 percent. ACS estimates that there are on 11 multifamily units in the Town, being entirely in structures with 3 or 4 units.

Table 12: Housing Units by Structural Type 2024								
	1- Detached	1- Attached	2	3 or 4	5 or more	Mobile Home	Other	Total
T. New Chester	492	0	0	11	0	171	3	677
Adams County	12,667	222	106	163	733	3,079	29	16,970
Wisconsin	1,839,569	120,679	162,913	97,215	472,263	84,807	1,126	2,777,446

Source: 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 13: Housing Units by Structural Type (Percentage) 2024

	1- Detached	1- Attached	2	3 or 4	5 or more	Mobile Home	Other	Total
T. New Chester	72.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	25.3%	0.4%	100.0%
Adams County	74.6%	1.3%	0.6%	1.0%	4.3%	18.1%	0.2%	100.0%
Wisconsin	66.2%	4.3%	5.9%	3.5%	17.0%	3.1%	0.0%	100.0%

Source: 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Adams County is also comprised mainly of single-family housing but does have a variety of housing types. Apartment style homes with five or more units make up 4.3 percent of the total housing units in Adams County. Mobile homes make up a significant amount of Adams County housing stock at 3,079 units, or 18.1 percent. According to NCWRPC's 2025 Adams County Housing Study, mobile homes can provide some of the most affordable owner-occupied housing, but they tend to depreciate over time, which makes building equity more challenging.

There is a very small percentage of multi-family housing across different structural types, which limits the variety of options homeowners and renters have to choose from. Though expanding multifamily housing options helps seniors looking to downsize as well as younger adults looking to move to the area, it is difficult to construct multifamily housing in areas that use well and septic instead of public water and sewer. A variety of housing types would better accommodate those at various income levels and life stages.

Age Characteristics

The age of a community's housing stock typically reflects several important factors including size, offered amenities, and overall maintenance costs. Age of the home often also reflects different regional and national trends in housing development. Housing predating the 1960s for example, was typically smaller and built on smaller lots. In subsequent decades, both average lot and home sizes have increased. For example, average homes constructed in the later part of the previous century and the first decade of the millennium are typically much larger than housing built in previous decades. This can be seen in both the rural and more urban environments of Adams County. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

Tables 14 and 15 outline build dates of housing units throughout the Town, county, and state based on 2024 American Community Survey data. Most of the housing in the Town was built in 1970 or later, for a total of nearly 70 percent. In Adams County, 74.9 percent of the total homes have been constructed since 1970. In the Town of New Chester, the greatest percentage increase resulted between 2000 and 2009, when a total of 175 or 25.8 percent of homes were constructed. Only 25.1 percent of homes in the Town were built prior to 1970. This is higher than the county at 22.2 percent, but lower than the state at 42.8 percent. This shows that the housing stock in the Town is comparatively older than the county, but newer than the state.

Assessing the number of bedrooms in the Town's housing stock provides insight regarding the size and configuration of the Town's housing stock. Overall, 78.9 percent of the housing units in the Town have two or

three bedrooms, slightly more than half of those are three bedrooms. 7.2 percent have one bedroom and 8.7 percent have four or more bedrooms.

According to the Adams County Housing Study conducted by NCWRPC in 2025, most of a home's most expensive components are typically replaced every 20-30 years. This includes but is not limited to roofs, windows, and appliances. With nearly 95% of the Town's housing being constructed before 2009, this could pose an issue for homeowners and homebuyers, as a strong demand for repairs can increase housing costs.

Table 14: Year Structure Built 2024

	1939 or earlier	1940 to 1949	1950 to 1959	1960 to 1969	1970 to 1979	1980 to 1989	1990 to 1999	2000 to 2009	2010 or later
T. New Chester	55	18	23	74	88	103	115	175	26
Adams County	1,059	369	882	1,455	3,756	2,589	2,622	3,097	1,179
Wisconsin	495,155	146,155	285,081	262,558	394,494	262,669	347,567	347,953	236,940

Source: 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 15: Year Structure Built (Percentage) 2024

	1939 or earlier	1940 to 1949	1950 to 1959	1960 to 1969	1970 to 1979	1980 to 1989	1990 to 1999	2000 to 2009	2010 or later
T. New Chester	8.1%	2.7%	3.4%	10.9%	13.0%	15.2%	17.0%	25.8%	3.8%
Adams County	6.2%	2.2%	5.2%	8.6%	22.1%	15.2%	15.4%	18.2%	6.9%
Wisconsin	17.8%	5.3%	10.3%	9.4%	14.2%	9.5%	12.5%	12.5%	8.5%

Source: 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Value Characteristics

Table 16 details housing values in owner-occupied homes throughout the Town, county and state. In 2024, the median housing value was \$151,900 in the Town of New Chester. This was lower than Adams County, at \$200,800 and significantly lower than the State of Wisconsin at \$266,500.

A significant proportion (45.4%) of the Town's homes are valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999. This is less than the County and state, with 13.7 percent and 5.1 percent, respectively. While this indicates that affordable housing could be abundant, it does not reflect what condition the housing is in or if there are enough jobs with a livable wage in the New Chester area. According to the NCWRPC Adams County Housing Study, having too few units available for higher and lower incomes can strain the available housing supply for middle income households and increase prices for everyone. The study found that there is a countywide shortage of housing units at multiple income levels.

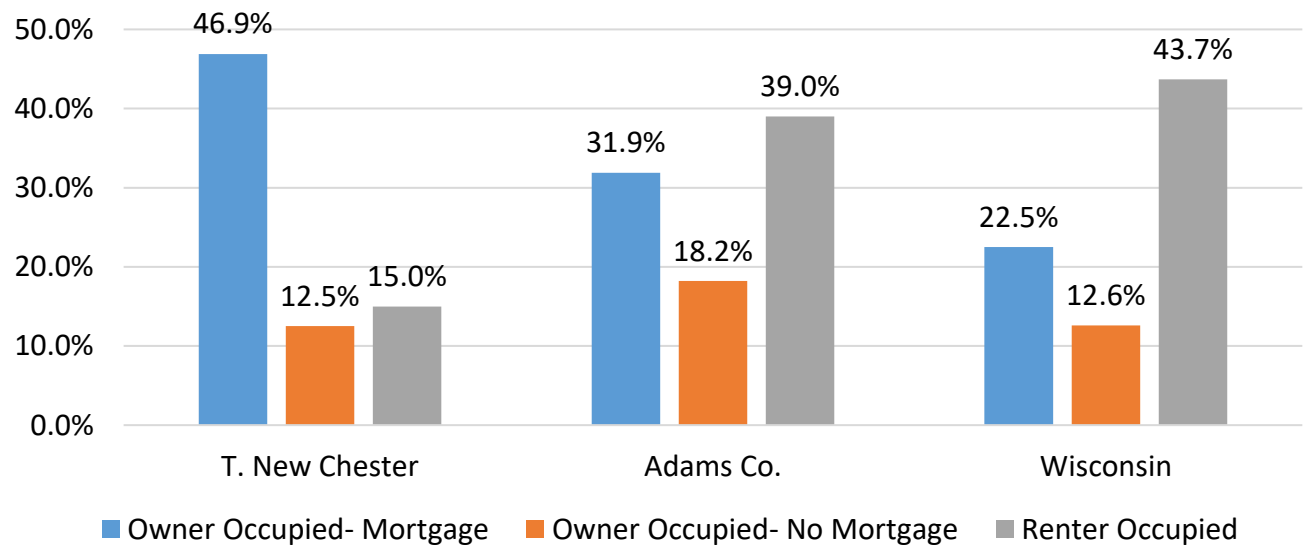
Table 16: Housing Value Owner Occupied 2024							
	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 to \$299,999	\$300,000 or more	Median Value
T. New Chester	13.7%	23.7%	11.8%	13.7%	15.8%	21.3%	\$151,900
Adams County	8.9%	13.7%	12.3%	14.8%	23.7%	26.6%	\$200,800
Wisconsin	4.0%	5.1%	8.9%	14.1%	25.5%	42.4%	\$266,500

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

About 43 percent of owner-occupied units have a mortgage and about 57 percent do not have a mortgage. Housing is considered affordable when a household pays less than 30 percent of their income towards housing costs, and above 30 percent is known as a cost burden. Figure 6 shows the proportion of cost burdened households in New Chester compared to the county and the state, according to 2024 American Community Survey data. The Town’s proportion of cost-burdened owner-occupied homes that had a mortgage (46.9 percent) was much higher than the County (12.5 percent) and state (15.0 percent).

For owner-occupied homes that did not have a mortgage, the Town’s proportion of cost burdened homes was lower than both the County and the state. Similarly, the proportion of cost-burdened renters in the Town was also lower than both the County and the state. The median gross rent in the Town was \$682. This was higher than both the County and the state, which saw median rents of \$828 and \$1,087, respectively.

Figure 6: Percent of Households that are Cost Burdened



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Summary of Housing Characteristics and Issues

The Town of New Chester appears to attract a substantial number of seasonal residents along with year-round residents. Over one out of every four units are seasonal housing units. Most year-round homes are owner-occupied. Much of the Town's housing was built since 2000, but there are also many homes from the 1960s through the 1990s. Households who rent or who own and don't have a mortgage are less cost burdened than County and statewide households, but those who have a mortgage are much more likely to be cost burdened. Most housing consists of single-family detached housing and mobile homes.

WDOA's population projections from 2024 suggest that housing demand will continue in the coming decades. The Adams County Housing Study notes that although seasonal units, if offered for sale, could become a year-round residence for a homebuyer, they are not necessarily the style of housing that year-round workers and families need. The prices of these units can also be too high for a local resident to afford as they tend to be owned by people who primarily reside in a different location with higher incomes.

There is a high percentage of housing units that have an individual(s) aged 60 or older in the Town. Seniors typically desire housing that is smaller, accessible, and near needed healthcare services and amenities. This need will continue throughout the upcoming decade. According to the NCWRPC Adams County Housing Study, new multifamily housing that is consistent with the overall rural character of the county can help address future housing needs that will accommodate senior residents and attract young workers. However, it will primarily be located in places like the City of Adams or Village of Friendship, which have access to the infrastructure needed to support multifamily development.

It is important to note that there is a shortage of housing units for multiple income levels, which can cause different income levels to compete for limited housing, which increases prices. New construction and rehabilitation are needed to increase the variety of housing options for all income levels. It is difficult to construct new housing that is affordable for local incomes without a variety of strategies and programs, which are listed in the 2025 Adams County Housing Study. For example, manufactured housing has increased in quality, and it can be constructed more quickly and cost effectively compared to a similar stick-built home. There are an estimated 232 subsidized housing units in Adams County as of 2025, but an estimated 4,430 low income households, indicating that, while housing appears to be affordable, incomes in Adams County are often too low to comfortably afford housing. In summary, supplying affordable housing that is high quality and serves year-round residents, older adults, those with disabilities, and those with low incomes is the Town's greatest challenge.

Housing Programs

Wisconsin Department of Administration

- Community Development Block Grant-Housing Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program
- Community Development Block Grant-Small Cities Housing Program
- Homeless Programs (EHH Program)

- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)
- Housing Assistance Program (HAP)
- Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP).
- HOME Rental Housing Development (RHD)
- HOME Homebuyer and Rehabilitation Program
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program
- Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA)
- Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program (TBRA)
- Housing Cost Reduction Initiative Program (HCRI)

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

- Housing-Related Consumer Protection Services

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

- Advantage Home Improvement Loan Program (HILP)
- Housing Tax Credit (HTC)
- Wisconsin Bipartisan Housing Legislation Package 2023
 - Infrastructure Access Loan
 - Restore Main Street Loan
 - Vacancy-to-Vitality Loan
 - Home Repair and Rehab Loan
- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers
- Foreclosure Prevention
- Advantage Conventional Loan
- FHA Advantage Loan
- First-Time Home Buyer Advantage
- Foundation Grant Program
- Mortgage Credit Certificate (MCC) Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA-RD)

- Section 502 Homeownership Direct Loan Program
- Section 502 Mutual Self-Help Housing Loans
- Section 504 Very-Low-Income Housing Repair Program
- Section 515 Multi-Family Housing Loan Program
- Section 521 Rural Rental Assistance Program
- Section 523/524 Rural Housing Site Loans
- Section 533 Rural Housing Preservation Grants
- Single Family Home Loan Guarantees

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- Hazard Mitigation Assistance Programs

Other Programs

- Central Wisconsin Community Action Council
- The Historic Preservation Tax Credit
- Historic Homes Tax Credit

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal

Town of New Chester has decent, safe, affordable housing options that meet the needs of all community members.

Objectives

1. Preserve and protect environmentally sensitive natural resource areas through housing location decisions.
2. Encourage a variety of housing types as well as land for new residential development.

Policies

1. Encourage small lot residential in areas contiguous with existing housing and discourage small lot residential in rural areas.
2. Encourage residential development away from prime farmland areas.
3. Encourage residential development away from areas shown to flood hazard, potential groundwater contamination, wetlands, and other sensitive areas.
4. Support adequate affordable housing for all individuals consistent with the character of the community.
5. Ensure that local land use controls and permitting procedures do not discourage or prevent the provision of affordable housing options.
6. Support the development of senior and special needs housing within the Town.
7. Require new manufactured and mobile home installations to comply with Town ordinances.

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Chapter 4

Utilities and Community Facilities

Utilities and community facilities, provided by either public or private entities, are critical for community development. Utilities include things such as electrical service, natural gas, telephone, cable, and internet. Community facilities include local government buildings, libraries, educational facilities, and maintenance and storage facilities, as well as services like police, fire protection, and emergency medical services. Utilities and community facilities play an important role in the economy and livability of a community.

Previous Plans and Studies

Adams County All Hazards Mitigation Plan 2025

This plan examines general conditions, including an inventory of utilities, community facilities, and emergency services throughout Adams County. Risk assessment is at the heart of the all-hazards mitigation program. To mitigate the risks, it is necessary to assess their relative importance. The report looks at a series of mostly weather-related disasters; how they have affected the county in the past and how future instances are likely to affect the county and how local government should respond to such occurrences.

The report concludes with suggested mitigation measures that might be taken by local governments to reduce the risk from identified hazards. Counties and incorporated municipalities are required to adopt such plans with updates every five years.

Adams County Broadband Plan 2023

The objective of the Broadband Plan is to offer insights into the current state of broadband deployment in Adams County. The information presented in this plan aims to help the county understand broadband, thus assisting local officials in making well-informed decisions in supporting the right broadband deployments. The plan is to help facilitate the optimal broadband connections to residents, taking into consideration the cost associated with these deployments. Access to quality and affordable high-speed internet opens new opportunities for economic development, education, public safety, entertainment, and healthcare for Adams County.

Adams County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2024-2028

The primary purpose of this recreation plan is to meet the current and future recreational needs of the County. This is accomplished through an inventory and analysis of outdoor recreational facilities, asking the public what they are looking for, and the establishment of recommendations to meet identified needs.

Utilities

Water Service

The Town of New Chester does not have a public water supply system. Instead, private wells supply the water for public and private facilities within the Town. The Town is not aware of any water problems in the New Chester area that might affect the drinking water supply. The University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point Center for Watershed Science and Education assists property owners in monitoring well water quality by processing water test kits in a laboratory and providing educational resources.

Wastewater

There is no public sewer system in the Town of New Chester. Therefore, all development in the Town uses on-site septic systems that discharge to underground drainage fields and may include conventional (underground), mound, pressure distribution, at-grade, holding tank, or sand filter systems. Wisconsin Administrative Code regulates these on-site wastewater treatment systems.

Solid Waste and Recycling

The Town does provide curbside refuse collection through the County's contracts with private haulers, which is billed on residents' tax bills. Garbage and recycling pick-up operate on a weekly basis. A transfer site is located at 547 CTH A, and the County Landfill and Recycling at 1420 STH 21 in the Town of Strongs Prairie is open to the public for item drop-off during business hours.

Energy and Telecommunications

Electric and Natural Gas

Electric service in the Town is mostly provided by Adams-Columbia Electric Cooperative, with some areas served by Pioneer Power & Light Company. Natural gas is supplied to the Town of New Chester by Wisconsin Gas. The Enbridge Pipeline (Line 61) crosses the Town, transporting oil from the City of Superior to the Janesville and Beloit areas.

Cable/Internet

Telephone services are provided to the Town of New Chester mainly by Marquette-Adams Telephone Cooperative and Verizon. The Town contains 3 cell towers which are depicted on Map 4. The Town is wired with fiber optic cable, enabling fast internet speeds. Internet service providers in the Town include Marquette-Adams Telephone Cooperative, Bug Tussel, Verizon, Starlink, Viasat, and HughesNet.

According to the Adams County Broadband Plan conducted by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in 2023, the Town of New Chester had 937 Broadband Serviceable Locations, with 29.9 locations per square mile. The average download speed for households with internet was 37.3 megabits per second (mbps). This was much lower than both the county and state averages, which were 89.7 and 68.7 mbps, respectively. The average upload speed was 9.3 mbps, which was slightly lower than the county and

state at 39.1 mbps and 16.8 mbps, respectively. 78 percent of households had an internet subscription, higher than the county at 77.3 percent, but lower than the state at 86.9 percent.

Community Facilities

Town Hall

The New Chester Town Hall and Community Center are located at 629 Mason St, Grand Marsh, WI 53936, and they are connected to each other. The Town maintains the Town Hall, and the Grand Marsh Area Development Corporation maintains the Community Center. The Town Board consists of a chair, two supervisors, and a Clerk/Treasurer.

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The Adams County Sheriff's Office provides primary law enforcement services to all areas not included within municipal police department boundaries, including the Town of New Chester.

Fire

The New Chester Fire Department's Fire Hall is operated by an all-volunteer staff, and it is located at the same site as the Town Hall and Community Center. The Town contracts with neighboring municipalities for volunteer fire and first responders, and it provides service to the Towns of Lincoln and Easton.

Maintaining rural fire service is a challenge. The Town must continue to invest in and maintain fire protection equipment to ensure the protection of the public health and safety as population and housing growth increases service demands. Fire equipment must be continually updated and replaced, and training requirements must be met. Volunteer fire departments across the state struggle with maintaining sufficient membership to meet the needs of the community.

Emergency Medical Services and Medical Facilities

The Town of New Chester has an agreement with Marquette County Emergency Services to provide emergency medical (EMS) / ambulance service. The Town does not have any medical facilities within the Town. The nearest hospitals are Emplify Moundview Hospital and Clinics in Friendship and Aspirus Divine Savior Hospital in Portage. These health systems provide primary and specialty care.

Cemeteries

Wisconsin Statute 157.70 provides for the protection of all human burial sites, including all marked and unmarked burials and cemeteries. There are three Cemeteries in the Town: Gould Rock Cemetery, New Chester Cemetery, and a Cemetery associated with St. Ann's Catholic Oratory.

Child Care Facilities

There are no licensed childcare facilities located within the Town of New Chester.

Education

Primary and Secondary Schools

The Town of New Chester is split into two different school districts. Most of the Town is in the Adams-Friendship School District. A very small part of the eastern side of the town is part of the Westfield School District.

In December 2025, the Board of Education for the Adams-Friendship Area School District decided to begin consolidating their operations to reduce costs. The school district's three campuses will be merged into two. The current plan is for one campus to serve 4K through 5th grade, and for the other to serve 6th through 12th grade. Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, students in grades 4K through 5th grade will be located at the Adams-Friendship Elementary School, and students in grades 6th through 12th grade will be located on the High School Campus. In the 2024-2025 school year there were 486 students enrolled at the Adams-Friendship Elementary School, 446 students enrolled at the High School, and 338 students enrolled at the Middle School. The district-wide total student enrollment was 1,270 students. This is down from 1,618 students counted in 2015, for a decrease in enrollment of 21.5 percent over a decade.

Post-Graduate Education

Mid-State Technical College is a public two-year technical college with four regional campuses, one in Adams. They offer degrees, technical diplomas and certificates in a variety of high-demand career fields designed to meet local workforce needs.

The closest 4-year colleges are the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point in Portage County, and the University of Wisconsin -Madison in Dane County. The Town of New Chester is located approximately halfway between these two institutions.

Libraries

The Adams County Library and the Lester Public Library of Rome are the two libraries located in Adams County. Other nearby libraries, in Marquette County, can be found in Westfield and Oxford. Libraries in both counties are affiliated with the South Central Library System and provide library services for the town.

Post Office

A post office is located at 644 County Hwy E, Grand Marsh, WI 53936.

Recreation

Parks

There are no parks in the Town of New Chester.

Geologic Sites

Adams County is generally characterized by its flat to slightly undulating topography. Although there are several unique rock formations found throughout the County, there are no known notable land features located in the Town of New Chester.

State Natural Areas

State Natural Areas were acquired to protect the state's natural diversity, provide sites for research and environmental education, and serve as benchmarks for assessing and guiding use of other lands in the state. Natural areas are defined as tracts of land or water, which have native biotic communities, unique natural features, or significant geological or archeological sites. These sites do not have much facility development, though there may be a designated trail on the site. The Department of Natural Resources lists six areas within Adams County. There are no State Natural Areas located in the Town of New Chester.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal

1. Town of New Chester provides adequate utility infrastructure and community facilities to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

Objectives

1. Provide support for utilities necessary in a rural town.
2. Ensure public services provided are safe and sufficient to meet the needs of the community.
3. Provide facilities and services to support a strong, healthy community.

Policies

1. Consider sharing equipment and services across town boundaries to increase coverage and reduce costs.
2. Consider the feasibility of wastewater collection and treatment systems in new developments and the impacts they will have on water quality.
3. Encourage concentrated residential and other developments to consider the feasibility and water quality impacts of wastewater collection and treatment systems.
4. Develop and maintain a Capital Improvement Plan for major equipment purchases.
5. Continue to provide ambulance, volunteer fire, and first responder services to residents.
6. Consider sharing equipment and services across town boundaries to increase coverage and reduce costs.
7. Continue to open the Community Center as a multi-purpose building for community functions.
8. Explore opportunities to develop integrated, multi-use trail systems and recreational facilities.

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Chapter 5

Transportation

The transportation system in the town includes all the state, county and local roads. The local transportation network is an important factor for the safe movement of people and goods, as well as for the physical development of the town. There is no transit, rail, air or water transportation service within the Town's jurisdiction.

Previous Plans and Studies

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act)

This current federal transportation program authorizes up to \$108 billion to support federal public transportation programs, including \$91 billion in guaranteed funding. It also reauthorizes surface transportation programs for FY 2022-2026 and provides advance appropriations for certain programs. Major goals include improving safety, modernizing aging transit infrastructure and fleets, investing in cleaner transportation, and improving equity in communities with limited transportation access. Other federal legislation that frames transportation planning includes the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA); the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and the Clean Air Act. Environmental Justice is an applicable executive order that attempts to ensure that transportation planning and programming includes underrepresented groups such as minority and low-income populations.

Adams County Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan 2013

This plan is intended to be utilized in developing a safe bicycle and pedestrian friendly transportation network throughout Adams County. There are three goals that were identified to achieve this end, to make all roads safe to walk or bike, to provide parking for schools. To achieve a safe bicycle and pedestrian friendly transportation network, the following three goals were identified:

- Make all roads safe to walk or bike
- Provide bicycle parking
- Provide Safe Routes to School

Adams County Locally Developed, Coordinated Public Transit – Human Service Transportation Plan 2024-2028

The purpose of this coordinated planning process is to have stakeholder involvement in the assessment of elderly and disabled transportation. This assessment identified that evening and weekend services are limited, a lack of volunteer drivers, transportation options, funding, and service to remote areas and for basic

needs. The plan also identified a need for a mobility manager to serve as a hub to coordinate and guide the program. The plan identifies a five-year work program to prioritize and address the gaps identified.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025

The 2025 Regional Comprehensive Plan (RPC) is the most recent update of a plan adopted by the NCWRPC in 1981. The RPC looks at transportation in all ten counties that make up the North Central Region, including Adams. It looks at general trends within the Region and recommends how county and local government can address transportation issues. Transportation goals in this plan include:

1. Provide and improve transportation access to people of all ages and abilities to ensure lifelong mobility and accessibility.
2. Fund the maintenance and expansion of the transportation system.
3. Enhance the Regional economy by supporting airports, freight rail, and intermodal freight opportunities.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2018

This plan is a regional effort to improve bicycling and walking across communities throughout the north central Wisconsin region. The Plan assesses existing conditions related to bicycling and walking, identifying other potential trail and route user groups, identifying routes and describing policies and programs to assist local governments in improving bicycling and walking to promote connectivity between communities and destinations throughout North Central Wisconsin.

Connections 2050

Connections 2050 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the state. Adopted in 2022, the plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit. It replaces Connections 2030.

State Trails Network Plan 2003

This 2001 document (revised in 2003) clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in the provision of all types of trails. The plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in the creation of recreational and alternative transportation corridors.

Road Network

The road system in the Town of New Chester plays a key role in development by providing both access to land and serving to move people and goods through the area. The Town utilizes the WisDOT PASER computer program to maintain an inventory of its local roads and monitor conditions and improvements of its roads. Types and intensities of land uses have a direct relationship to the traffic on roadways that serve those land

uses. Intensely developed land often generates high volumes of traffic. If this traffic is not planned for, safety can be seriously impaired for both local and through traffic flows. See Map 5.

The Town of New Chester road network consists of roughly 6.0 miles of state highway, 19.7 miles of county highway and 62.5 miles of local roads. The Town utilizes the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) to maintain an inventory of local roads and monitor conditions and improvements of its roads. This system enables the town to budget and keep track of roads that need repair.

Jurisdictional and Functional Classification

Functional Classification

A functionally classified road system is one in which streets and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of service they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility to land access functions. At the upper limit of the system (principal arterials, for example), are those facilities that emphasize traffic mobility (long, uninterrupted travel), whereas at the lower limits are those local roads and streets that emphasize access.

The functional classifications are defined by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation as follows:

- **Principal Arterials** – The principal function is to serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics indicative of substantial statewide or interstate travel. They connect urban areas with populations greater than 25,000 and provide an integrated network of continuous routes.
- **Minor Arterials** – The principal function is to link cities and larger towns (and other major destinations such as resorts capable of attracting travel over long distances), and form and provide intrastate and inter-county service. They are spaced at intervals, consistent with population density, so that all developed areas within Wisconsin are within a reasonable distance of an Arterial roadway. They provide service to corridors with trip lengths and travel density greater than those served by Collectors and Local Roads.
- **Major Collectors** – The principal function is to provide service to any county seat not on an Arterial route, to the larger communities not directly served by an Arterial and to other traffic generators of equivalent intra-county importance such as consolidated schools, shipping points, county parks and other important rural industry locations. They serve the most important intra-county travel corridors (arterials or other major collectors).
- **Minor Collectors** – The principal function is to provide service to smaller communities not served by an Arterial or Major Collector, and to link locally important traffic generators with surrounding rural areas. They are spaced at intervals, consistent with population density, to collect traffic from Local Roads and bring all developed areas within reasonable distance of a Collector.
- **Local Roads** – provide access to homes and businesses. They have low speed limits and offer limited mobility for through traffic.

Using roadway classifications, the Town of New Chester has the service of four collectors: CTH G, CTH A, GTH B, and CTH E. All other roads in Town are local roads.

Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction refers to governmental ownership, not necessarily responsibility. For example, some state-owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Additionally, the designation of a “Federal aid highway” does not alter its ownership or jurisdiction as a state or local road, only that its service value and importance have made the road eligible for Federal-aid construction and rehabilitation funds.

Ownership is divided among the federal, state, and local governments. States own over 20 percent of the national road network. The Federal Government has responsibility for about five percent, primarily in national parks, forests and Native American reservations. Over 75 percent of the road system is locally controlled. As of September 2026, there were 76.03 total miles of roadways in the Town under both the jurisdiction of the Town of New Chester and Adams County.

In some cases, local municipalities are responsible for conducting routine maintenance and minor repairs on state and Federal highways within their jurisdictional boundaries. In return, the state generally provides financing to those jurisdictions. However, major repairs and reconstruction are generally still the responsibility of Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Road mileage by jurisdiction for the Town of New Chester is indicated in Table 17.

Table 17: Road Mileage by Jurisdictional and Functional Class 2026				
Jurisdiction	Arterial	Collector	Local	Totals
State	0	0	0	0
County	0	18.86	0.48	19.34
Town	0	0	56.69	56.69
Totals	0	18.86	57.17	76.03

Source: WisDOT 2026

In addition to these main classifications, a road or segment of road may hold other designations, such as forest road, rustic road, emergency or evacuation route, truck route, bike route, etc. For example, Ember Drive, which begins at the border of the Town of New Chester and extends west into the Town of Easton, is designated by WisDOT as a rustic road.

Pavement Conditions

WisDOT requires all local units of government to submit road condition rating data every two years as part of the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR). The Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) program and WISLR are tools that local governments can use to manage pavements for improved decision making in budgeting and maintenance. Towns can use this information to develop better road budgets and keep track of roads that need repair. A summary of pavement conditions in the Town of New Chester can be found in Table 18. Roads exhibiting a surface condition rating at or below “fair” must be examined to determine what type of reconstruction or strengthening is necessary.

The roads that display a surface rating of “good” or better will only require minimal preventative maintenance to promote safe travel conditions. Most Town roads are in relatively good condition, as about 1.2% of roads rate as “Poor” or “Very Poor” and about 98.8% of roads rate as “Fair” or better. However, there is room for improvement as 64.9 percent of roads are considered “fair,” meaning there could be significant road projects in the coming decade.

Table 18: Surface Condition		
Surface Condition Rating	Miles	Percent
Very Poor	0.1	0.1%
Poor	0.6	1.1%
Fair	36.7	64.9%
Good	16.0	28.2%
Very Good	0.0	0.0%
Excellent	3.2	5.7%
Total	56.6	100.0%

Source: WisDOT

Traffic and Safety

Traffic Volumes

Annual average daily traffic (AADT) counts are measured and calculated on selected high traffic roads and highways every three, six, or ten years (depending upon functional classification) by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). Monitoring these counts provides a way to gauge how traffic volume is changing in the Town of New Chester.

Table 19: Average Daily Traffic Counts			
Location:	2011	2021	Change
CTH E East of CTH B	910	770	-15.4%
CTH G North of CTH E	380	450	18.4%
CTH G South of CTH E	530	520	-1.9%
CTH B Between CTH A & Ember Dr	930	930	0.0%
CTH B Between CTH A & Evergreen Ct	930	810	-12.9%
CTH A East of CTH B	320	670	109.4%
CTH A Between CTH G North and South	530	730	37.7%
CTH A East of CTH G	400	660	65.0%
CTH G Between CTH A and Fawn Ct	320	410	28.1%

Source: WisDOT

There are nine 2011 and 2021 state traffic count sites located in the Town, see Map 5. Annual average daily traffic (AADT) increased substantially at the site located on CTH A east of CTH B in New Chester from 2011

to 2021, at a rate of nearly over 109 percent. The site at CTH A east of CTH G also saw a 65 percent increase. Three sites saw a slight decrease in traffic, and the rest of the sites saw slight increases in traffic.

It remains important to balance land use with existing roadway infrastructure. Land use type and intensity has a direct relationship with traffic volumes, with higher density and intensity of land use generally leading to higher traffic volumes. To maximize safety, proposed land use should be considered in conjunction with the existing road network.

Increased traffic volume, congestion concentrated in certain areas, and even the types of vehicles travelling to and from a site can be impacted depending on land use. Mitigation is possible through measures such as creation of new access points, changes in circulation patterns, and general roadway modifications. Uncontrolled division of land tends to affect highways because of the increased intensity, which impairs safety and impedes traffic movements.

Evacuation Routes

The Town should meet with the Adams County Sherriff's Office to discuss a plan for evacuation of residents and visitors in the town. Areas of high population concentration like campgrounds and other high-density developments should have plans for efficient evacuations in times of emergencies.

Alternative Transportation Modes

Airports

There are no airports in the Town, but the Adams County Airport – Legion Field is a medium general service airport in the Village of Friendship. Regular commercial air and freight service is available at the Dane County Regional Airport in Madison, the Central Wisconsin Airport in Mosinee, and the La Crosse Municipal Airport in La Crosse.

Bus/Transit

No local or intercity bus services are provided within the Town of New Chester. The nearest stops to access inter-community bus services are at Mauston, Plover or Portage with connections to Appleton/Green Bay, Chicago, Madison, Milwaukee, Minneapolis and other communities along those lines. The bus services that serve some of these cities include Coach USA Van Galder, Greyhound, Jefferson Lines, and Flix.

Rail

Union Pacific Railroad freight trains pass through the Town of New Chester enroute between Minneapolis and Milwaukee/Chicago, but there are not depots or railyard in the Town, with the City of Adams and Village of Oxford being the nearest stops. Canadian National has freight connections in Necedah and New Lisbon with their main line between the Twin Ports of Duluth/Superior and Milwaukee/Chicago. Passenger rail service is provided by Amtrak, which runs along the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway line with stops in Tomah and Wisconsin Dells.

ATV/UTV

ATV/UTV All-terrain and utility terrain vehicles are becoming increasingly popular. More communities are allowing these vehicles on local roadways. A Town Board has the authority to open roads to these types of vehicles and can designate some or all the Town's roads. The Town of New Chester has adopted an ATV ordinance allowing them on all Town roads.

Pedestrian/Bicycle

All roads within the Town are available for bicycle and pedestrian travel. The 2013 Adams County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan identified opportunities that include the Town of New Chester. A proposed bike route, Segment 12, would connect the Brooks area to the lakes in the Town of Jackson where it would continue into Oxford. It would also extend west to neighboring communities, providing an alternative to State Highway 82. Altogether, proposed routes in this plan would connect Adams-Friendship to Castle Rock, Quincy Rock to Grand Marsh, and Castle Rock to Oxford.

Proposed improvements for the Grand Marsh area include new crosswalks, 6-foot paved shoulders, and a sidewalk connecting the former Grand Marsh Elementary School with existing sidewalks on CTH E.

Specialized

The Aging and Disability Resource Center serving Adams, Green Lake, and Waushara Counties provides transportation services for the elderly and those with disabilities.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal

Town of New Chester maintains local infrastructure to the highest standards to allow safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services.

Objectives

1. Provide a multi-modal transportation system to meet the needs of all citizens, including transit dependent and disabled citizens.
2. Support and maintain a safe and efficient transportation network.

Policies

1. Support a county-wide transit system.
2. Promote the development of multi-use trails, trail linkages, or wide shoulders as part of new development proposals, where appropriate.
3. Prepare and regularly update a 5-year Road Improvement Plan.
4. Work with the County on all county road projects in the Town.
5. Limit heavy traffic volumes and vehicles of very high weight to roads that have been constructed or upgraded for such use.
6. Consider future road locations, extensions, or connection when reviewing development plans and proposals.
7. Consider roadway access on new development proposals with a view to increase safety and preserve capacity.
8. Utilize WISLR to inventory and rate local roads.
9. Maintain local rail spurs and support industrial development along the rail line.