



Oneida County, Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan 2025



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Oneida County, Wisconsin – **Adopted MM/DD/YYYY**

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Background & Demographics

Background

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, and, instead, they provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a twenty-year horizon for future planning and community decisions. The County Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic – living document that can be amended at any time.

According to the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, a comprehensive plan must address at least nine of the following topics:

- Demographics
- Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Economic Development
- Land Use
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Implementation

This Plan is an update of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan adopted by the County, with much of the Plan being brought forward with updated data.

In 1933, Oneida County adopted the first rural zoning ordinance in the United States. In the period after the “cut-over” when the timber wealth of northern Wisconsin had been removed, many counties, including Oneida, were in financial difficulty. The cost of maintaining roads and transporting school children to remote areas was seen as a burden that the County couldn’t bear. The zoning Ordinance was adopted to prevent settlement in remote areas of the County. The Ordinance became a model for similar ordinances throughout the country.

Planning Process

The process to develop the 2013 Oneida County Comprehensive Plan was a very extensive effort. There were several meetings with the Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee, meetings with the local town planning groups, and public outreach efforts. The overall process took over two years to complete. This update process begins with the 2013 Plan. Census and other data have been updated and all chapters reviewed. All plan goals, objectives, and policies in the Plan have been reviewed. Some of the maps were updated, including existing land use and future land use.

Plan Setting

Oneida County is located in northeastern Wisconsin and is bounded on the north by Vilas County, on the east by Forest County, on the south by Lincoln and Langlade Counties, and on the west by Price County. The County is a predominantly rural area with a large proportion of its land in forests, wetlands, and agriculture. Residents and visitors from both near and far utilize its many lakes and expansive natural areas for recreational purposes. The City of Rhinelander is the County seat and largest community in the County with a population of about 8,400. There are twenty towns and one city within the County. See Map 1-1: Location.

Data Sources

Demographics are an important consideration for planning. The review of the socio-economic trends throughout the County are critical to understanding what has occurred and what is likely to occur in the future. Below we look at the total population, age distribution, households, educational levels, employment, and income levels. All of these will be examined in some detail.

Data from the U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS), in addition to other sources, such as the Wisconsin Department of Administration's population projections and the Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator, are used throughout this report.

The U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS), are both produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. However the Census is a count of the American population and housing units conducted every ten years, while the American Community Survey is an estimate of the population and housing released on a yearly basis. Data is included from the 2000, 2010, and 2020 decennial Censuses and the 2017-2021 ACS, and trends are generally analyzed for the time frame between 2000 and 2021 in this Report. The ACS evolved from the "long form" that a random subset of the population used to receive with the Census.

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau started releasing ACS data for all populations on a yearly basis. The availability of these surveys means that communities do not need to wait ten years for the Census to assess current trends. Smaller populations, however, such as many of the communities in Oneida County, are often difficult to survey. Therefore, the data presented is not always as accurate or consistent as the Decennial Census. Furthermore, Census and ACS data is self-reported, which can produce its own accuracy issues. However, there are numerous reviews completed to ensure the data is valid. There are few substitutes, if any, for most of the demographic data provided by these sources.

Demographics

Population

From 2000 to 2010, Oneida County experienced a 2.1% decline in total population, shrinking from 36,776 in 2000 down to 35,998 in 2010. However, Oneida County's population has since rebounded, as the County's population of 37,845 in 2020 represents a 5.1% increase from the 2010 population and a 2.9% increase from the 2000 population. Oneida County's 2.9% increase in population since 2000 is significantly slower than the 9.9% increase experienced throughout Wisconsin as a whole, mainly due to Oneida County's population decrease between 2000 and 2010.

However, while both Oneida County and Wisconsin grew in population between 2010 and 2020, they differ in the components of population change, natural population change, and net migration. From 2010 to 2020, Wisconsin continued to grow as the natural increase in births outpaced deaths and negative net migration from the State. In contrast, Oneida County's population experienced positive net migration, but experienced a negative natural increase in population because there were more deaths than births.

Table 1-1 displays the total population from the last three Decennial Censuses for each local unit (minor civil division) within the County, and for Oneida County and Wisconsin. Seven of the twenty towns in Oneida County lost population between 2000 and 2020. During this time, the Town of Monico experienced the largest net decrease in population, losing 104 residents. At the same time, the Town of Enterprise experienced the fastest increase in population, with population increasing by 28.8%, adding 79 residents. The City of Rhinelander and Town of Minocqua added the most residents total during this time, adding 550 and 203 residents respectively. By adding 550 residents, the population increased by over 7% in the City of Rhinelander. According to the Wisconsin DOA's most recent population estimates, Oneida County's population was 37,935 in 2022.

Not reflected in these population numbers is the seasonal population, particularly the summer visitor season. According to various calculations, the summer population can explode to over 100,000 people. The area is a major tourist destination and a popular vacation home area. There are numerous campgrounds, resorts, hotels, short-term rentals, and seasonal housing units in the County. This summertime population places a great demand on County and local government resources.

Table 1-1: Population

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2000-20 Net Change	2000-20 % Change
Cassian	962	985	1,069	107	11.1%
Crescent	2,071	2,033	1,984	-87	-4.2%
Enterprise	274	315	353	79	28.8%
Hazelhurst	1,267	1,273	1,299	32	2.5%
Lake Tomahawk	1,160	1,043	1,155	-5	-0.4%
Little Rice	314	306	388	74	23.6%
Lynne	210	141	139	-71	-33.8%
Minocqua	4,859	4,385	5,062	203	4.2%
Monico	364	309	260	-104	-28.6%
Newbold	2,710	2,719	2,831	121	4.5%
Nokomis	1,363	1,371	1,372	9	0.7%
Pelican	2,902	2,764	2,809	-93	-3.2%
Piehl	93	86	74	-19	-20.4%
Pine Lake	2,720	2,740	2,724	4	0.1%
Schoepke	352	387	388	36	10.2%
Stella	633	650	569	-64	-10.1%
Sugar Camp	1,781	1,694	1,819	38	2.1%
Three Lakes	2,339	2,131	2,413	74	3.2%
Woodboro	685	813	808	123	18.0%
Woodruff	1,982	2,055	2,044	62	3.1%
City of Rhinelander	7,735	7,798	8,285	550	7.1%
Oneida County	36,776	35,998	37,845	1,069	2.9%
Wisconsin	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	530,043	9.9%

Source: U.S. Census

Age Distribution

Population distribution is important to the planning process. In particular, the two population groups examined here are the 17 and younger group and the 65 and older group. These are often

referred to as dependent populations and have different needs. The younger population group requires schools and, often, childcare options, and the older group is retiring. By comparing these groups over time and to the State, demographic changes within Oneida County are identified.

Between 2000 and 2021, Oneida County's population of individuals 17 and younger decreased by 1,640, and went from accounting for 22.3% of the total population in 2000 to accounting for only 17.5% of the total population in 2021, as displayed in **Table 1-2**. Meanwhile, the State's population of residents 17 and younger decreased by 75,812 residents and went from accounting for 25.5% of the State's total population in 2000 to only accounting for 22% of the State's total population in 2021.

The City of Rhineland is the only local unit within Oneida County that experienced a net increase of individuals 17 and younger between 2000 and 2021, with a net increase of 60 residents. However, this age group slightly declined as a proportion of the population in Rhineland, going from accounting for 23.4% of the total population in 2000 to only accounting for 22.9% of the total population in 2021. All of the towns within Oneida County experienced both net decreases in individuals 17 and younger and the population 17 and younger as a proportion of the total population.

Table 1-2: Persons 17 Years of Age and Younger

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2021	2000 % of Total	2010 % of Total	2021 % of Total
Cassian	187	140	174	19.4%	14.2%	16.3%
Crescent	531	378	473	25.6%	18.6%	20.5%
Enterprise	48	36	38	17.5%	11.4%	10.1%
Hazelhurst	266	243	217	21.0%	19.1%	18.2%
Lake Tomahawk	192	109	155	16.6%	13.0%	15.0%
Little Rice	58	32	24	18.5%	10.5%	8.1%
Lynne	35	18	14	16.7%	12.8%	11.4%
Minocqua	954	713	840	19.6%	16.3%	16.9%
Monico	117	56	58	32.1%	18.1%	16.4%
Newbold	616	525	364	22.7%	19.3%	13.0%
Nokomis	310	253	241	22.7%	18.5%	14.9%
Pelican	732	533	495	25.2%	19.3%	17.7%
Piehl	19	14	11	20.4%	16.3%	13.1%
Pine Lake	616	550	562	22.6%	20.1%	20.7%
Schoepke	64	51	22	18.2%	13.4%	7.0%
Stella	162	136	87	25.6%	20.9%	14.3%
Sugar Camp	423	291	360	23.8%	19.7%	17.8%
Three Lakes	504	341	179	21.5%	16.0%	8.9%
Woodboro	126	145	112	18.4%	17.8%	13.1%
Woodruff	432	349	266	21.8%	17.0%	15.2%
City of Rhinelander	1,811	1,657	1,871	23.4%	21.2%	22.9%
Oneida County	8,203	6,640	6,563	22.3%	18.4%	17.5%
Wisconsin	1,368,756	1,339,492	1,292,944	25.5%	23.6%	22.0%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2017-2021)

During the same period, Oneida County’s population of individuals 65 and older increased by 2,865 residents and went from accounting for 18.7% of the total population in 2000 up to accounting for 26% of the total population in 2021, as displayed in [Table 1-3](#). Meanwhile, the State’s population of residents 65 and older decreased by 294,525 residents and went from accounting for 13.1% of the State’s total population in 2000 to accounting for 17% of the State’s total population in 2021.

Table 1-3: People 65 Years of Age and Older

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2021	2000 % of Total	2010 % of Total	2021 % of Total
Cassian	175	244	326	18.2%	24.8%	30.6%
Crescent	287	372	464	13.9%	18.3%	20.1%
Enterprise	56	100	152	20.4%	31.7%	40.4%
Hazelhurst	224	251	340	17.7%	19.7%	28.5%
Lake Tomahawk	232	271	301	20.0%	26.0%	29.1%
Little Rice	55	97	88	17.5%	31.7%	29.5%
Lynne	54	43	50	25.7%	30.5%	40.7%
Minocqua	1,189	1,159	1,576	24.5%	26.4%	31.7%
Monico	35	39	90	9.6%	12.6%	25.5%
Newbold	391	555	792	14.4%	20.4%	28.2%
Nokomis	234	306	494	17.2%	22.3%	30.5%
Pelican	392	508	675	13.5%	18.4%	24.2%
Piehl	10	19	19	10.8%	22.1%	22.6%
Pine Lake	330	492	678	12.1%	18.0%	25.0%
Schoepke	89	87	121	25.3%	22.5%	38.4%
Stella	79	112	129	12.5%	17.2%	21.3%
Sugar Camp	295	359	531	16.6%	21.2%	26.2%
Three Lakes	584	568	746	25.0%	26.7%	37.2%
Woodboro	111	143	239	16.2%	17.6%	28.0%
Woodruff	479	585	558	24.2%	28.5%	31.8%
City of Rhinelander	1,583	1,490	1,380	20.5%	19.1%	16.9%
Oneida County	6,884	7,800	9,749	18.7%	21.7%	26.0%
Wisconsin	702,553	777,314	997,078	13.1%	13.7%	17.0%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2017-2021)

The City of Rhinelander experienced a net decrease of individuals 65 and older between 2000 and 2021 with a net decrease of 203 residents. Additionally, this age group experienced a decline as a proportion of the population in Rhinelander, going from accounting for 20.5% of the total population in 2000 to only accounting for 16.9% of the total population in 2021. All of the towns within Oneida County experienced increases in the proportion of their population that was 65 and older, while the Town of Lynne was the only Town to experience a net decrease in their population 65 and older.

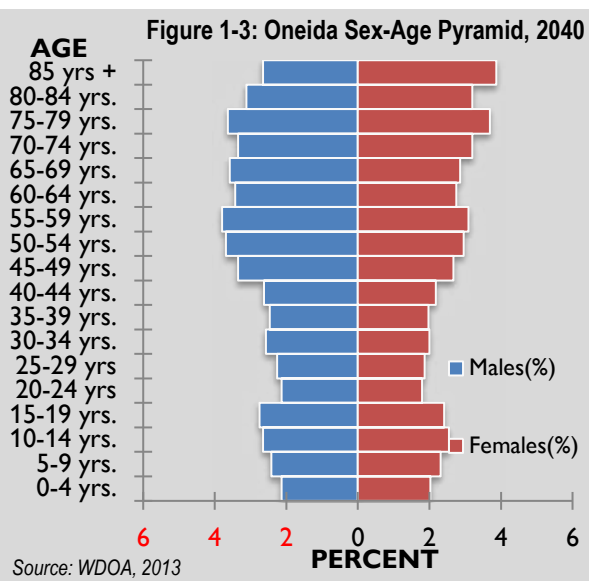
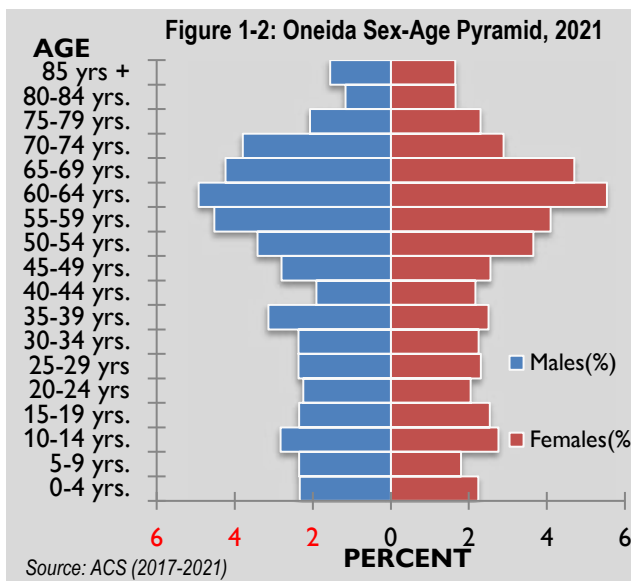
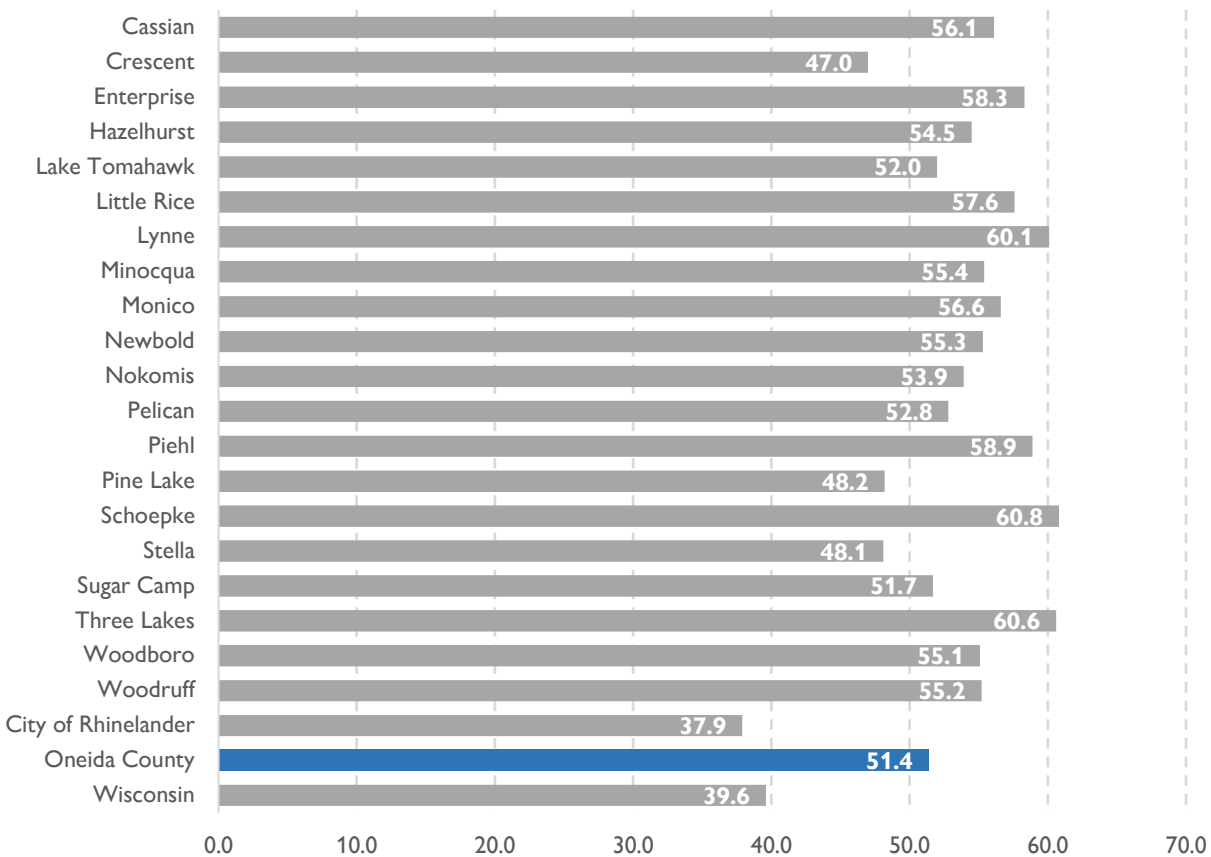
The trend towards having an older population is mainly due to the aging of the Baby Boomers, the largest generation in American history, and retirees moving into the County. The oldest Baby Boomer was 75 in 2020, while the youngest Baby Boomer was 57 years old. Based on increases

in life expectancy and advances in medicine, the 65 and older group can expect to grow in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total population.

Figure 1-1 displays the median age for each local unit within Oneida County, as well as for Oneida County and Wisconsin in 2021. Oneida County's median age of 51.4 in 2021 was significantly higher than Wisconsin's median age of 39.6. Similarly, each of the towns within Oneida County had a significantly higher median age in 2021 than the median age of Wisconsin as a whole, with the Towns of Schoepke, Three Lakes, and Lynne having the highest median ages within Oneida County. In contrast to both the County and all of the towns within the County, the City of Rhinelander actually had a lower median age of 37.9 in 2021 than Wisconsin. The high median age experienced throughout Oneida County reflects an aging population, with an increasing proportion of residents nearing retirement age and a decreasing proportion of younger residents.

Figure 1-2 and **Figure 1-3** below show the population pyramid for Oneida County in 2021 and the population projections for 2040. However, the term "pyramid" has already become a misnomer in Oneida County's case. Until recently, most communities' population "bases" were larger than the tops. Today, in the North Central Wisconsin Region, many communities' population age-sex distributions resemble columns, rather than pyramids, as in Oneida County.

Figure 1-1: Median Age (2021)



As mentioned earlier, the proportion of the population 17 and younger within the County has been decreasing over the past two decades, while the proportion of the population 65 and older has been increasing. These trends will have an impact on the labor force, school system, and health care industry across the County. As the growth in population slows, so will the workforce and, ultimately, job growth. It will also be challenging to fund public services if employment and tax revenues are not growing, as there is a lower percentage of the population working from which to collect state income taxes and more income from Social Security. At the same time, the economy is expected to shift as older adults drive the economy. Healthcare is expected to continue to grow as well as other service providers.

There are a number of actions a community can take to not only address these challenges, but to capitalize on the benefits of this age group. Not only do older adults have years of valuable experiences and wisdom, but many of the entrepreneurs, and therefore job creators, are at or near retirement age. As Oneida County imports older adults looking to retire in the area, this demographic brings a great amount of spending power in the local economy.

Households

In 2010, there were 16,003 households in Oneida County, as shown in [Table 1-4](#). Between 2000 and 2010, the number of households within Oneida County grew 4.4%, adding 670 households. However, the number of households within Oneida County has decreased since 2010, as the number of households within the County declined by 1.7% between 2010 and 2021, representing a loss of 279 households. In contrast, the State of Wisconsin experienced a 5.4% increase in the number of households between 2010 and 2021, adding 122,050 households during this time.

Table 1-4: Households

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2021	2000-21 Net Change	2000-21 % Change
Cassian	402	445	431	29	7.2%
Crescent	797	857	863	66	8.3%
Enterprise	124	146	208	84	67.7%
Hazelhurst	528	537	488	-40	-7.6%
Lake Tomahawk	475	443	398	-77	-16.2%
Little Rice	138	154	159	21	15.2%
Lynne	92	69	78	-14	-15.2%
Minocqua	2,189	2,079	2,224	35	1.6%
Monico	128	127	175	47	36.7%
Newbold	1,114	1,176	1,206	92	8.3%
Nokomis	556	590	660	104	18.7%
Pelican	1,167	1,183	1,190	23	2.0%
Piehl	39	41	39	0	0.0%
Pine Lake	1,063	1,136	1,117	54	5.1%
Schoepke	156	188	161	5	3.2%
Stella	236	263	223	-13	-5.5%
Sugar Camp	708	729	823	115	16.2%
Three Lakes	1,031	996	907	-124	-12.0%
Woodboro	310	351	332	22	7.1%
Woodruff	866	948	814	-52	-6.0%
City of Rhinelander	3,214	3,545	3,228	14	0.4%
Oneida County	15,333	16,003	15,724	391	2.6%
Wisconsin	2,084,544	2,279,768	2,401,818	317,274	15.2%

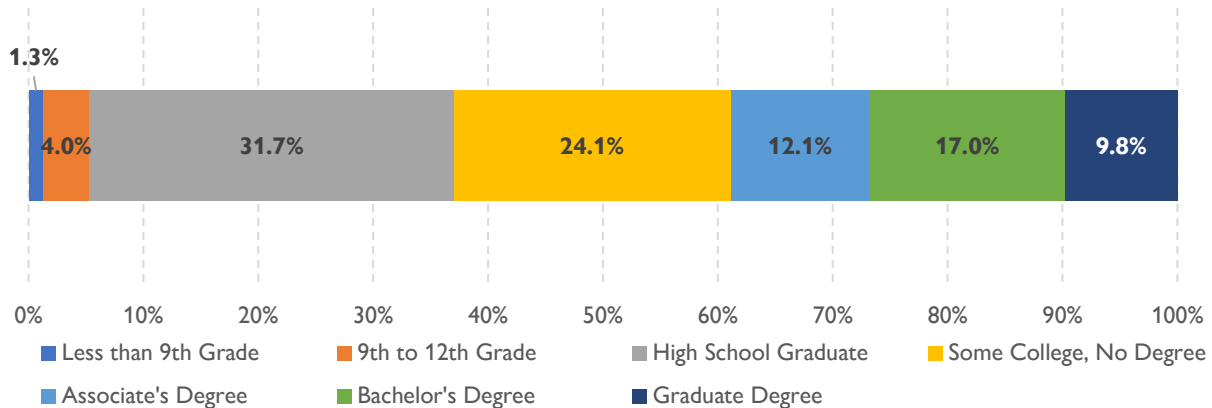
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2017-2021)

Generally, the number of households across the country has been increasing as more people decide to live alone. Additionally, couples today are having fewer children than ever before. These factors have led to the number of households increasing at a faster pace than the population as a whole. In Oneida County, the number of households grew at a slightly faster pace (2.6%) between 2000 and 2021 than the population (1.9%), compared to the State of Wisconsin as a whole, where household growth (15.2%) has significantly outpaced population growth (9.9%) since 2000. As a result of household growth outpacing population growth, average household size has decreased over the past two decades. In 2000, the average household size in Oneida County was 2.40 people and 2.57 people in Wisconsin. By 2021, the average household size had decreased to 2.38 people in Oneida County and to 2.44 people in Wisconsin.

Education Levels

Educational attainment has improved significantly over the past two decades. **Figure 1-4** displays the highest level of education achieved by residents 25 and older in Oneida County. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 27% of jobs in the United States require a college education of some sort. However, other experts believe the percentage of jobs requiring a college education to be much higher. In Oneida County, 38.9% of the population 25 and older had an associate's degree or higher, compared to 42.7% in the State. This could impact job growth if local employers cannot find skilled workers in the area.

Figure 1-4: Highest Educational Level Attained, Age 25 and Older (Oneida County, 2021)



Over the past two decades, the percentage of people 25 and older who have a high school diploma or higher has been increasing, as the percentage of people 25 and older in Oneida County who have a high school diploma or higher increased from 85.1% in 2000 to 94.7% in 2021. During this time, each local unit within Oneida County experienced an increase in the percentage of people 25 and older with a high school diploma or higher. Since 2000, Oneida County has had a higher percentage of people 25 and older who have a high school diploma or higher than the State, as shown in **Figure 1-5**.

The percentage of people 25 and older with four or more years of college is rapidly increasing throughout Oneida County and Wisconsin, as shown in **Figure 1-6**. In 2000, 20% of people 25 and older within Oneida County had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. By 2021, the percentage of people 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher within Oneida County increased to 34%. During this time, most local units within Oneida County experienced increases in the percentage of people 25 and older who have a bachelor's degree or higher, while only the

City of Rhinelander and the Towns of Lynne and Pelican experienced a decrease between 2000 and 2021.

Figure 1-5: Percentage of Residents 25 and Older with a High School Degree

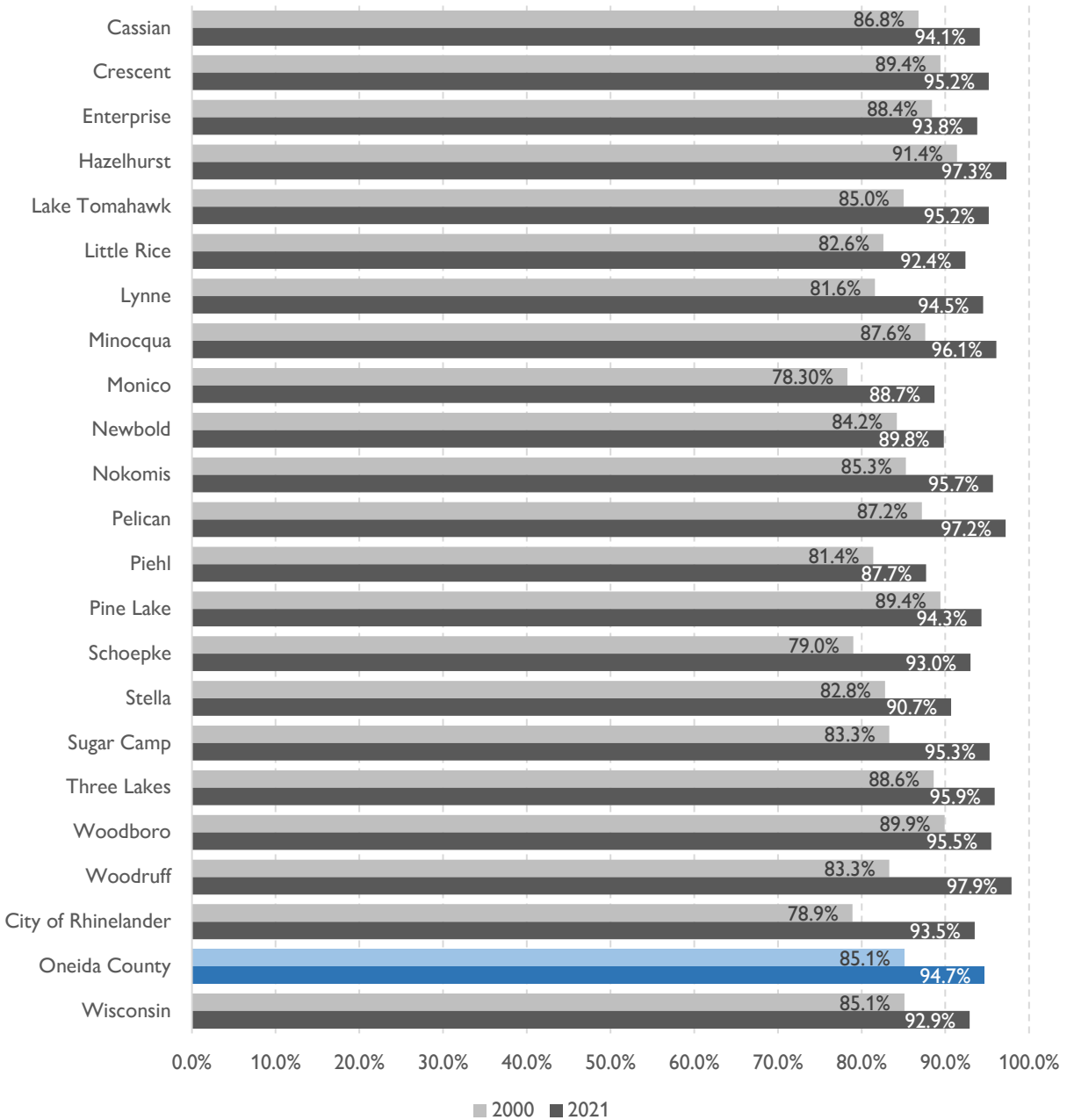
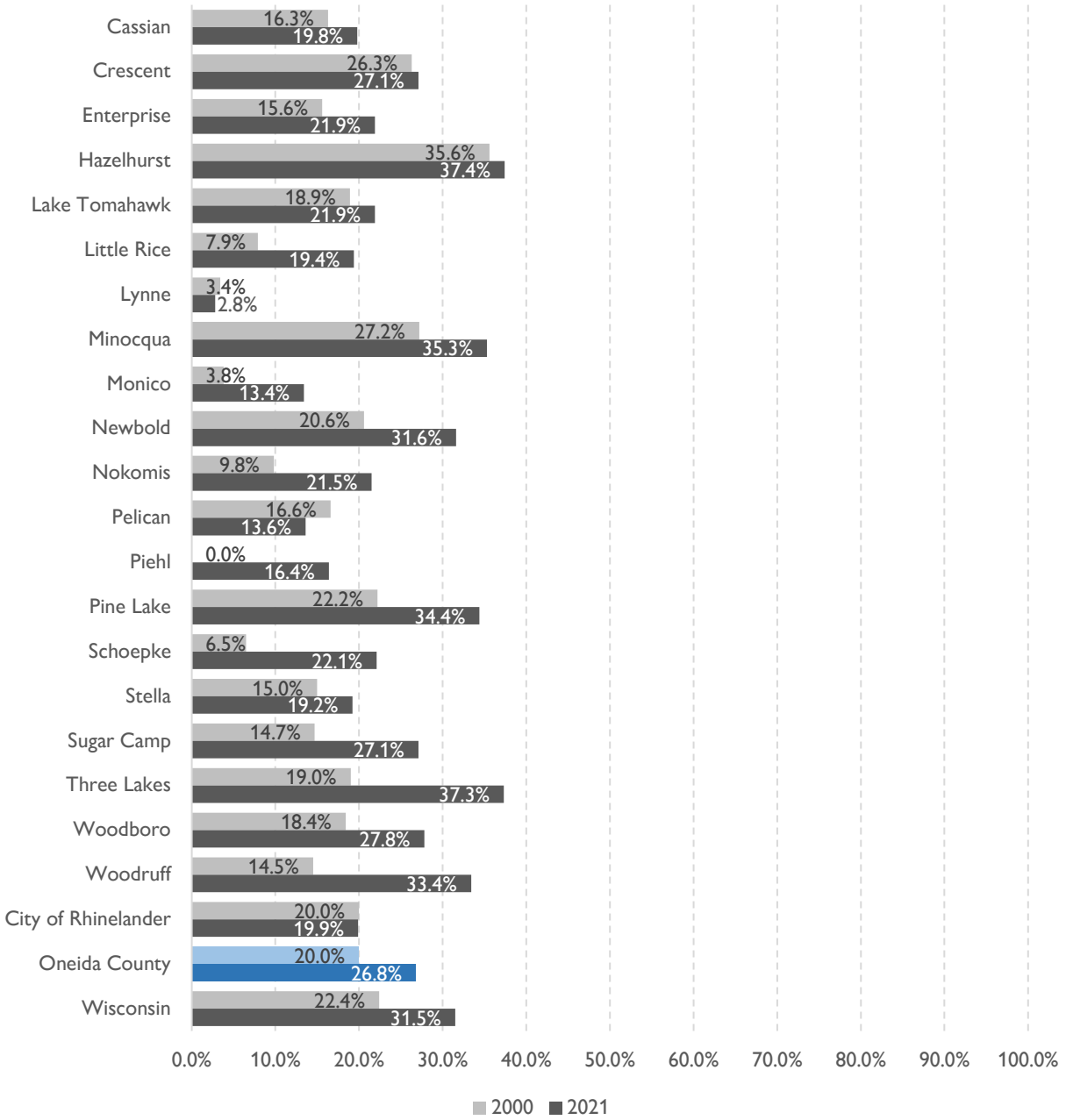


Figure 1-6: Percentage of Residents 25 and Older with a Bachelor's Degree



Employment

In 2021, there were 16,968 residents employed within Oneida County (note that there are residents who are employed that work outside of the County). This represented a 1.3% decline in employment since 2000, as there were 231 fewer employed residents within Oneida County in 2021 than there were in 2000, as shown in **Table 1-5**. This is in contrast to the increase in employment for Wisconsin residents, as the number of Wisconsin residents employed increased by 10.2% between 2000 and 2021. The decrease in the number of workers in Oneida County is likely tied to the aging population. The median age in 2021 for Oneida County was 51.4, which is a much higher median age than the State’s median age of 39.6. When an individual reaches the age group of 55 and older, their probability of participating in the labor force drops significantly.

Table 1-5: Total Employed Persons (16 and Older)					
Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2021	2000-21 Net Change	2000-21 % Change
Cassian	468	468	462	-6	-1.3%
Crescent	1,110	1,004	1,138	28	2.5%
Enterprise	144	141	124	-20	-13.9%
Hazelhurst	625	660	563	-62	-9.9%
Lake Tomahawk	515	463	414	-101	-19.6%
Little Rice	152	180	149	-3	-2.0%
Lynne	69	77	39	-30	-43.5%
Minocqua	2,206	2,088	2,181	-25	-1.1%
Monico	169	218	181	12	7.1%
Newbold	1,344	1,401	1,327	-17	-1.3%
Nokomis	685	561	733	48	7.0%
Pelican	1,461	1,387	1,286	-175	-12.0%
Piehl	40	39	51	11	27.5%
Pine Lake	1,429	1,501	1,225	-204	-14.3%
Schoepke	135	222	119	-16	-11.9%
Stella	275	325	336	61	22.2%
Sugar Camp	832	911	990	158	19.0%
Three Lakes	889	970	855	-34	-3.8%
Woodboro	337	512	415	78	23.1%
Woodruff	898	876	794	-104	-11.6%
City of Rhinelander	3,416	3,798	3,586	170	5.0%
Oneida County	17,199	17,802	16,968	-231	-1.3%
Wisconsin	2,734,925	2,869,310	3,014,612	279,687	10.2%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2017-2021)

Income Levels

Median household income and per capita income are displayed in **Table 1-6** and **Table 1-7**. Oneida County's median household income rose about 66.6% between 2000 and 2021, compared to the State's increase of 53.2%. Meanwhile, Oneida County's per capita income also increased at a staggering pace, increasing by 85.8% between 2000 and 2021, compared to the State's increase of 72.8%. (Note that these changes have not been adjusted for inflation.)

Table 1-6: Median Household Income					
Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2021	2000-21 % Change	2010-21 % Change
Cassian	\$39,844	\$47,083	\$74,375	86.7%	58.0%
Crescent	\$48,875	\$66,964	\$82,292	68.4%	22.9%
Enterprise	\$34,479	\$44,327	\$43,929	27.4%	-0.9%
Hazelhurst	\$45,461	\$52,750	\$72,333	59.1%	37.1%
Lake Tomahawk	\$38,065	\$41,563	\$65,294	71.5%	57.1%
Little Rice	\$40,750	\$58,571	\$67,750	66.3%	15.7%
Lynne	\$27,344	\$33,750	\$32,500	18.9%	-3.7%
Minocqua	\$40,333	\$45,469	\$61,759	53.1%	35.8%
Monico	\$33,281	\$41,875	\$53,438	60.6%	27.6%
Newbold	\$40,722	\$58,542	\$70,882	74.1%	21.1%
Nokomis	\$43,000	\$47,750	\$77,650	80.6%	62.6%
Pelican	\$36,053	\$44,352	\$62,578	73.6%	41.1%
Piehl	\$31,500	\$42,917	\$45,987	46.0%	7.2%
Pine Lake	\$43,750	\$51,563	\$70,815	61.9%	37.3%
Schoepke	\$28,929	\$51,875	\$48,750	68.5%	-6.0%
Stella	\$40,909	\$54,091	\$85,288	108.5%	57.7%
Sugar Camp	\$37,118	\$42,500	\$63,990	72.4%	50.6%
Three Lakes	\$32,798	\$41,855	\$64,464	96.5%	54.0%
Woodboro	\$42,054	\$50,313	\$68,333	62.5%	35.8%
Woodruff	\$35,335	\$42,306	\$70,208	98.7%	66.0%
City of Rhinelander	\$29,622	\$34,401	\$42,381	43.1%	23.2%
Oneida County	\$37,619	\$45,857	\$62,660	66.6%	36.6%
Wisconsin	\$43,791	\$51,598	\$67,080	53.2%	30.0%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2017-2021)

Table 1-7: Per Capita Income

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2021	2000-21 % Change	2010-21 % Change
Cassian	\$22,794	\$28,534	\$34,500	51.4%	20.9%
Crescent	\$20,697	\$37,804	\$39,859	92.6%	5.4%
Enterprise	\$14,970	\$26,418	\$39,394	163.2%	49.1%
Hazelhurst	\$28,732	\$32,048	\$38,338	33.4%	19.6%
Lake Tomahawk	\$19,177	\$25,177	\$34,555	80.2%	37.2%
Little Rice	\$21,659	\$31,317	\$39,433	82.1%	25.9%
Lynne	\$16,429	\$22,148	\$28,452	73.2%	28.5%
Minocqua	\$24,461	\$30,856	\$46,254	89.1%	49.9%
Monico	\$12,973	\$21,085	\$34,284	164.3%	62.6%
Newbold	\$20,392	\$31,214	\$42,863	110.2%	37.3%
Nokomis	\$19,171	\$35,045	\$35,577	85.6%	1.5%
Pelican	\$18,566	\$29,221	\$38,883	109.4%	33.1%
Piehl	\$13,102	\$18,661	\$23,779	81.5%	27.4%
Pine Lake	\$21,515	\$33,826	\$39,716	84.6%	17.4%
Schoepke	\$20,134	\$25,925	\$37,430	85.9%	44.4%
Stella	\$16,712	\$22,195	\$38,916	132.9%	75.3%
Sugar Camp	\$18,135	\$27,052	\$32,576	79.6%	20.4%
Three Lakes	\$17,758	\$26,560	\$36,686	106.6%	38.1%
Woodboro	\$21,079	\$31,610	\$34,744	64.8%	9.9%
Woodruff	\$20,508	\$27,086	\$39,757	93.9%	46.8%
City of Rhinelander	\$16,047	\$21,009	\$27,155	69.2%	29.3%
Oneida County					
Oneida County	\$19,746	\$28,085	\$36,689	85.8%	30.6%
Wisconsin					
Wisconsin	\$21,271	\$26,624	\$36,754	72.8%	38.0%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2017-2021)

During the past two decades, both the County’s median household income and per capita incomes grew at a faster pace than the State’s rates. Overall, median household incomes within Oneida County are lower than in Wisconsin, while per capita incomes within Oneida County are nearly identical with the per capita income in Wisconsin as a whole.

Planning Issues, Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Planning Issues

A variety of issues were identified throughout the planning process. Many of these were brought up during the planning meetings, others were taken from existing documents, and some were taken from public meetings.

County-wide Planning Issues:

1. Oneida County recognizes the need to protect private property in all phases of comprehensive planning.
2. All land use planning processes, including on all federal and state land, and lands utilizing federal or state funding and including any and all guidance, executive, or other mandated actions, shall coordinate with the county and towns and work to resolve all planning conflicts to the satisfaction of the county and towns prior to finalizing plans or other actions. The coordination process will be driven at the local level and shall include proportional and equal representation by industry stakeholders and impacted private property owners in all planning phases. The coordination process shall be formalized as described in Chapter 8 of the comprehensive plan.
3. Housing concerns related to availability and affordability throughout the County.
4. Broadband needs throughout the County.
5. Capacity of existing infrastructure and increasing population, especially related to summer populations.
6. Funding for schools and County infrastructure.
7. Conversion of private lands to public lands, while using federal, state, and local tax dollars, which decreases overall tax base.
8. Access to ATV/UTV trails and logging roads in the American Legion State Forest.
9. Sustainable land management practices that provide considerations for multiple uses and conservation of natural resources.
10. Resiliency of the natural landscape, ground and surface water quality, and increased recreational pressures on lakes and rivers.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Each of the following Comprehensive Plan chapters will conclude with a set of goals, objectives, and policies, which will be used to guide the future development of the County. These can be changed if the County's future goals change.

For purposes of this planning process, goals, objectives, and policies are defined as follows:

Goals: Broad statements that express general public 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: Recommended actions 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.

Chapter Two:

Natural, Agricultural, & Cultural Resources

Background

This Chapter describes local land and water conditions in detail, as well as agricultural resources and cultural heritage. Considering the patterns and interrelations of natural resources on a broader scale is essential because they do not follow geo-political boundaries. In addition, many of the programs for protecting or mitigating impacts on natural resources are administered at the county, state, or federal level. Thus, an overview of recent county-wide natural resource planning efforts is described below. Natural resources covered in this Chapter include biology, geology, and geography, including terrain, soils, water, forests, wetlands, wildlife, and habitat.

Cultural resources include a community's heritage, archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to indigenous peoples or other cultural groups. Cultural resources also include arts and the way of life in a community. Cultural resources are those elements around us that signify our heritage and help evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinct.

[Previous Plans and Studies](#)

[Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests 2004 Land and Resource Management Plan](#)

The U.S. Forest Service created this plan to identify land management activities on national forest lands in Oneida County. It can be viewed on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website.

[Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin](#)

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Oneida County is in two ecological landscapes: the Northern Highland and the North Central Forest. These two landscapes each have a chapter in the Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin that can be viewed on WDNR's website. The publication describes the kinds of plants and wildlife that live in the County as well as how state lands are being managed.

Oneida County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2020-2029

This Plan was developed by the Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department with assistance from various local, regional, and state agencies and input from members of the community. It provides a framework for local, state, and federal conservation program implementation efforts. Implementation of this Plan will help protect and improve the valuable water and soil natural resources in Oneida County. Some of the Plan's recommendations include protecting shoreland areas, reducing nonpoint source pollution, replacing failing septic systems, and reducing wildlife conflicts. The Plan can be found at www.oclw.org.

Oneida County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2024-2028

Completed in November 2023, this plan involves the County's Forestry, Land, and Recreation Committee. The primary purpose of this Recreation Plan is to provide continued direction in meeting the County's current and future recreation needs. This direction takes the form of an inventory and analysis of outdoor recreational facilities, followed by establishing recommendations to meet identified needs. Adoption of this Plan and its subsequent acceptance by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) allows for continued eligibility for financial assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the Stewardship Fund, and many other federal and state funding programs. A copy is available in the Oneida County Forestry Department.

Oneida County Farmland Preservation Plan, 2015

The Oneida County Farmland Preservation Plan is required under Chapter 91 of Wisconsin Statutes. It was developed by the Oneida County Conservation and UW-Extension Education Committee. The Plan's purpose is to guide and manage farmland preservation and agricultural production capacity from 2015 to 2024. The Plan functions as the primary policy document setting forth directions for how the County intends to preserve agricultural production capacity, farmland, soil and water resources, and rural character.

Farmland Preservation Areas - Parcels that meet the Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP) mapping criteria. No non-agricultural development is planned in the next fifteen years for those areas identified.

Criteria for Farmland Preservation Areas:

- Lands depicted on the Soils Map as farmlands.
- Lands depicted on the Land Use Map as agriculture, cranberry bog, open lands, or woodlands.

- Lands depicted on the Future Land Use Map that allow agriculture or forestry to occur.

Lands are excluded if they can be identified as any of the following:

- Local, county, state, and federal lands
- “Planned Out” lands on Map 5 of the FPP
- Parcels less than five (5) acres
- Tax exempt land

Farmland preservation areas cover a significant portion of the County, with areas not designated as farmland preservation areas mainly located adjacent to water bodies. Existing agricultural areas within the County are scattered throughout the County.

Oneida County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021-2035

The mission of the County Forest is to manage, conserve, and protect the natural resources within the County Forest on a sustainable basis for present and future generations. This Plan is administered by the County’s Forestry, Land, and Recreation Committee and it contains information about forest resource planning, outdoor recreation planning, silvicultural practices, aesthetic management zones, trails and access control, biological communities, and wildlife species that exist within the County Forest. A copy is available in the Oneida County Forestry Department.

USGS Protecting Wisconsin’s Groundwater through Comprehensive Planning

In a joint effort by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), the University of Wisconsin System, and the United States Geological Survey, a website was made available with data and information on geology, general hydrology, and groundwater quantity and quality. The website was developed to aid government officials in their comprehensive plans, including this Plan. The most recent data available for Oneida County was published in 2007. The Oneida County report can be accessed here: <https://wi.water.usgs.gov/gwcomp/index.html>.

Natural Resources Inventory

The County's natural resource base encompasses the geography, topography, soils, surface water, watersheds, floodplains, wetlands, groundwater, woodlands, and environmentally sensitive areas.

Geography

Oneida County is located in northeastern Wisconsin and is bounded on the north by Vilas County, on the east by Forest County, on the south by Langlade and Lincoln Counties, and on the west by Price County.

The County's total area is about 1,217 square miles or 790,700 acres, with about 78,000 acres in surface water according to the County's Land Information Department, leaving about 722,300 acres of land area. The County contains numerous lakes, and about 830 miles of rivers and streams, of which 192 miles are classified as trout stream.

Forests cover about 80% of the County and provide raw materials, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. About 33.7% of the County is publicly owned land, including federal, state, county, local governments, schools, and others. Oneida County owns 82,890 acres of forestland as of 2023, which are managed locally and sustainably. Management balances local needs through integration of forestry, wildlife, fisheries, endangered resources, water quality, soil conservation, and recreational recommendations and practices. Many County trails are found in the County Forests for ATV/UTVs, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, biking, and hiking. Agriculture is present in some areas of the County, including the Towns of Crescent, Cassian, Stella, and Sugar Camp. Oneida County is also a producer of potatoes.

Topography

The topography of Oneida County is of glacial origin, primarily pitted outwash plain with other areas of glacial till and glacial drift. Glacial deposits in the southern, eastern, and western parts of the County are covered by silty deposits, making them the best suited agricultural soils. Few areas in the world have as many lakes as the northern part of the County.

Oneida County's landscape is the result of several glacial advances and retreats that took place over Northeastern and Central Wisconsin some 12,500 to 20,000 years ago. As a result of this activity, numerous unique geologic and topographic features emerged such as extensive ground moraine in the southeast and southwest parts of the County, a remnant end moraine near Rhinelander, and a number of parallel ridges adjacent to drumlin fields in Forest and Langlade

Counties. Oneida County's physical landscape is defined not only by forest, wetlands, streams, woodlots, hills, and other natural features, but perhaps most by the density of the lake area in the northern part of the County and Vilas County, one of the most extensive lake districts in the world. Elevations in Oneida County range from 1,460 feet above sea level near McCord, in the southwest, to about 1,735 feet above sea level at Squirrel Hill. Steep slopes are defined as slopes greater than 12%.

Soils

Soils exert a strong influence on the way land is used. Soils affect the cost and feasibility of building site development, the provision of public facilities, and agricultural production capabilities. Knowledge of the potentials and limitations of soil types is necessary to determine how they can best be used and managed. For example, development may be limited on soils characterized by poor filtration, slow percolation, flooding/ponding, wetness, steep slope, and subsidence.

A detailed study of the soils of Oneida County was prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which resulted in the Soil Survey of Oneida County, Wisconsin, 1988. The survey includes a detailed identification of the specific soils found throughout the County, and also provides a grouping of soils into generalized soil associations or predominant soil patterns. Further investigation is required for "site-specific" soil information, as with individual soil tests. Soil tests are completed for each new building site application to determine the site's capability to accommodate the septic loads.

Important to land use planning, the study identifies each soil type's limitations for certain development forms. A soil which exhibits a "severe" limitation is one in which one or more soil properties or site features are so unfavorable or difficult to overcome that a significant increase in construction effort, special design, or intensive maintenance is required. For some soils rated severe, proceeding with development may be challenging.

The soils of Oneida County are primarily sandy or loamy soils which are suited to, and do support, forested/woodland uses. Due to the sandy and droughty nature of the soils, most are of relatively low agricultural value. In addition, the growing season in the County is rather short.

The following provides a general discussion of the general soil associations found within Oneida County. It should be noted, however, that these general descriptions are only guidelines and should be referred to as such.

The majority of the County is dominated by three soil associates - the Padus-Pence (25%), Keweenaw-Vilas (24%), and Sayner-Vilas (24%) associations. These three soil associations each comprise nearly a quarter of the County's coverage and combine to account for nearly three-

quarters (73%) of the County. Most of the soils in these three associations are used as woodlands, as these soils are well suited for trees.

Other soil associations within the County include the Magnor-Cable association (3%), the Goodman-Monico-Cable association (5%), the Greenwood-Dawson-Carbondale association (3%), the Padus-Goodman association (7%), the Au Gres-Crosswell-Kinross association (7%), and the Goodman-Keweenaw association (2%).

Metallic and Nonmetallic Resources

Oneida County contains some significant nonmetallic deposits, and, several quarries are in operation. There are some known metallic deposits within the County, one in the Town of Lynne and two in the Town of Schoepke. Although there was an attempt to develop the Lynne site by Noranda Minerals in the 1990s, the project had been abandoned. More recently, Tamerlane Ventures explored the permitting process, too, but also abandoned those efforts. In 2020, Badger Mineral Exploration LLC did some exploratory drilling in the Town of Schoepke.

Chapter 9, Article 6, Section 9.61, Non-Metallic Mining and Metallic Mineral Exploration, Bulk Sampling and Mining of the Oneida County Zoning and Shoreland Protection Ordinance regulates these activities on all public and private lands, and is approved through conditional use permitting within District 1-A Forestry and District 10 General use. The unzoned Towns of Enterprise, Monico, and Sugar Camp do not require a conditional use permit. The County also has its Chapter 22, Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance to assure that lands opened to nonmetallic mining are reclaimed to near pre-mine conditions, or to some other pre-determined final use. The reclamation ordinance applies to all towns in the County. Any new nonmetallic mine (gravel pits) would be subject to the reclamation standards under this Ordinance. Currently, there are 44 approved nonmetallic mining quarries throughout the County that are greater than 1 acre in size. All lands within the County are under the Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance.

Surface Water

Oneida County has numerous lakes covering about 68,400 acres, and over 830 miles of streams, of which 192 miles are classified as trout streams, for a total of just over 78,000 acres of surface water. The acreage may fluctuate slightly based on precipitation patterns. Overall, the general water quality is good, however, eutrophication is an issue. During the summer, shallow water areas may contain algae and increased aquatic plant growth. The water is predominantly very soft

in the seepage, drained, and drainage lakes, but the water is hard in many of the spring lakes and streams.

The largest body of water is the Willow Flowage, an impoundment and a drainage lake, covering 6,306 acres. Most of the lakes are spring lakes or seepage lakes. Lake Tomahawk is the largest natural lake, which covers 3,627 acres. The deepest lake is Clear Lake, which is 100 feet deep.

Below is a summary of surface water totals from the Oneida County Land Information Office:

- There are 1,131 waterbodies identified in the Geographic Information System (GIS)
- 616 of these waterbodies are named lakes, rivers, or streams
 - 465 are named lakes
 - 9 are named rivers
 - 142 are named creeks
- 28 lakes are greater than 500 acres (see [Table 2-1](#))
- 39 lakes are between 250 and 500 acres
- 87 lakes are between 100 and 250 acres
- 74 lakes are between 50 and 100 acres
- 278 lakes are between 10 and 50 acres
- 625 small lakes are less than 10 acres

Table 2-1: Oneida County Lakes Over 500 Acres

Lake Name	Acreage	Township
Big Fork Lake	690	Three Lakes
Big Lake	865	Three Lakes
Big Stone Lake	548	Three Lakes
Buckskin Lake	634	Minocqua
Clear Lake	846	Woodruff
Columbus Lake	670	Sugar Camp
Crescent Lake	626	Crescent
Dam Lake	744	Sugar Camp
Hat Rapids Flowage	650	Crescent
Katherine Lake	590	Hazelhurst
Kawaguesaga Lake	670	Minocqua
Long Lake	620	Three Lakes
Minocqua Lake	1,360	Minocqua
Ninemile Lake, Lower	646	Three Lakes
Pelican Lake	3,585	Schoepke
Pickerel Lake	736	Newbold
Planting Ground Lake	1,012	Three Lakes
Rainbow Flowage	2,035	Newbold
Rhinelanders Flowage	1,326	Newbold
Sand Lake	540	Sugar Camp
Sevenmile Lake	503	Three Lakes
Shishebogama Lake	716	Minocqua
Squirrel Lake	1,317	Minocqua
Sugar Camp Lake	545	Sugar Camp
Thunder Lake	1,835	Three Lakes
Tomahawk Lake	3,392	Lake Tomahawk
Two Sisters Lake	719	Newbold
Willow Flowage	6,306	Little Rice

Source: WDNR, Wisconsin Lakes Book

The following lakes are also over 500 acres, but only a portion smaller than 500 acres is within Oneida County since they cross the County's boundaries:

- Amber Lake (785 acres total between Minocqua and Vilas County)
- Nokomis Lake (2,433 acres total between Nokomis and Lincoln County)
- Upper Post Lake (757 acres total between Schoepke and Langlade County)
- Rice River Flowage (920 acres total between Nokomis and Lincoln County)

The Wisconsin River flows through the center of the County through the Towns of Crescent, Newbold, Pine Lake, Lake Tomahawk and Woodruff, as well as the City of Rhinelander. The Wisconsin River, along with its tributaries, drain most of the County. The most prominent of these tributaries are the Pelican River in the eastern part of the County and the Tomahawk River in the west. The Wolf River flows through the far southeast corner of the County, and the Flambeau River drains the far northeast corner.

Surface water is an important resource to Oneida County, however, it is threatened by both point and nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution, often the result of stormwater runoff and erosion, is pollution that cannot be traced to a single source and can come from roadways, parking lots, farm fields, and construction sites. The more impervious surfaces, the greater the runoff carried into the waterways.

The Wisconsin State Legislature created Wisconsin's Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Abatement Program (NPS) in 1978 (§281.66, Wis. Stat.). The goal of Wisconsin's NPS Program is to improve and protect the water quality of streams, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater by reducing pollutants from agricultural and residential nonpoint sources of pollution. The WDNR and DATCP administer the program, which focuses on critical hydrologic units called priority watersheds. The program is implemented through priority watershed projects led by local units of government. Landowners, land renters, counties, cities, villages, towns, sewer districts, sanitary districts, lake districts, and regional planning commissions are eligible to participate.

Impaired Waters

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), per requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), maintains a list of water bodies that do not currently meet water quality standards under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act (CWA). This list is commonly known as the "CWA 303(d) list," corresponding to the applicable subsection of the CWA. The WDNR is required to update the list every two years.

Oneida County has 43 water bodies appearing on the 2022 CWA 303(d) list. While Slaughterhouse Creek is listed as having chronic aquatic toxicity because of unspecified metals in contaminated sediments, it is also listed as an Exceptional Resource Water (see below for more details). Waste load allocations will be implemented through the Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) program for point sources, and through Wisconsin's NPS Program. Most of the lakes are on the list because of mercury contamination from atmospheric deposition, while several are listed for excess algal growth. The WDNR issues fish consumption advisories based upon atmospheric mercury pollution.

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

The WDNR also maintains a list of Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs). An outstanding resource water is defined as a lake or stream which has excellent water quality, high recreational and aesthetic value, high-quality fishing, and is free from point source or nonpoint source pollution. An exceptional resource water is defined as a stream that exhibits the same high-quality resource values as outstanding waters, but may be impacted by point source pollution or have the potential for future discharge from a small sewer community. **Table 2-2** contains a listing of all Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters within Oneida County. (Note that, according to WDNR, there are an additional 15.74 miles of unnamed streams and an additional 2.3 miles of unnamed springs that are considered ERWs.)

For an interactive map showing the location of surface water bodies in Oneida County, anyone can view the WDNR Surface Water Data Viewer at:

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/SurfaceWater/swdv>

Table 2-2: Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

Name	Status	Counties	Miles	Acres
Bearskin Creek	ERW	Oneida	3.67	N/A
Bearskin Creek	ERW	Oneida	4.09	N/A
Bearskin Creek	ERW	Oneida	2.88	N/A
Big Carr Lake	ORW	Oneida	N/A	209
Clear Lake	ORW	Oneida	N/A	873
Gudegast Creek	ERW	Oneida	2.29	N/A
Howards Creek	ERW	Oneida	1.10	N/A
Jennie Creek	ERW	Oneida	3.43	N/A
Langley Creek	ERW	Oneida	3.54	N/A
Lela Creek	ERW	Oneida	2.15	N/A
Little Pine Creek	ERW	Oneida	2.90	N/A
Little Tomahawk Lake	ORW	Oneida	N/A	163
Little Willow Creek	ERW	Oneida	2.26	N/A
Noisy Creek	ORW	Oneida	3.67	N/A
Outlet Creek	ERW	Oneida	0.68	N/A
Palm Creek	ERW	Oneida	2.37	N/A
Palm Creek	ERW	Oneida	0.71	N/A
Planert Creek	ERW	Oneida	0.46	N/A
Radtke Creek	ERW	Oneida	0.43	N/A
Slaughterhouse Creek	ERW	Oneida	0.70	N/A
Squirrel River	ORW	Oneida	12.89	N/A
Starks Creek	ERW	Oneida	3.36	N/A
Stony Creek	ERW	Oneida	1.06	N/A
Tomahawk Lake	ORW	Oneida	N/A	3,462
Tomahawk River	ORW	Oneida	20.65	N/A
Two Sisters Lake	ORW	Oneida	N/A	719
Upper Post Lake	ORW	Langlade, Oneida	N/A	765
Walczak Creek	ERW	Oneida	3.48	N/A
White Springs Creek	ERW	Oneida	0.76	N/A
Willow Flowage	ORW	Oneida	N/A	4,229
Wisconsin River	ERW	Oneida, Vilas	5.38	N/A
Wisconsin River	ERW	Oneida	13.74	N/A
Wolf River	ORW	Forest, Oneida	18.03	N/A

Source: WDNR

Wetlands

Wetlands are essential for groundwater aquifer recharge, wildlife habitat, and social functions such as open space, recreation, and aesthetics. They also act as water storage “sponges” in high water by absorbing excess water and slowly releasing it back into the watershed, thereby preventing flooding and minimizing flood damage. Wetlands have valuable ground and surface water purification capabilities since potentially harmful compounds and bacteria in the water are absorbed into plant tissues, thus buffering the adjacent water body. Wetlands occur in areas where the water level is usually near or above the soil surface. Wetlands cover over 237,500 acres of land throughout the County. Wetlands are mapped in Map 2-1: Natural Resources.

Swamps, bogs, marshes, potholes, wet meadows, and sloughs are all considered wetlands. The soils in these areas are usually saturated within a few inches of the surface during the growing season and need artificial drainage to be made arable. In addition to their ecological value, wetlands are an important recreational, educational, and aesthetic resource. Wetlands offer breeding and nesting grounds for waterfowl and many other animals dependent on aquatic habitats. Maintaining these breeding grounds ensures a variety and adequate amount of game for hunting and wildlife observation. Sometimes, a particular chain of wetlands can be home to a rare or endangered species, provoking interest from scientists and educators. Lastly, the visual appearance of the wetlands themselves can constitute a scenic resource.

Historically, the greatest threats to wetlands in the County have been agricultural drainage and urban development. Given their important role, the destruction of wetlands can negatively affect the public in many ways. Developing impermeable surfaces and adding fill materials can destroy the hydrological function of a wetland site while simultaneously increasing flood dangers downstream. The WDNR has promulgated minimum standards for managing wetlands to help reduce the negative impacts of developing in or near wetland areas.

The WDNR identifies the location of wetlands on their Wisconsin Wetland Inventory maps and associated database. According to this database, Oneida County has over 237,500 acres of wetlands, which also includes wooded wetlands. Significant concentrations of wetlands in Oneida County include the Munninghoff Marsh on the Rhinelander Flowage, Rainbow Wetlands State Natural Area, and the Thunder Lake Swamp in the Three Lakes area. Additional wetlands are associated with floodplains and smaller wetlands are scattered throughout the County.

In addition to lakes, rivers, streams, and creeks, which are regulated by the County Shoreland Protection Ordinance, for location of structures, impervious surface area, and other regulations, there are also wetlands and vegetated lakebeds. Wetlands located within 1,000 feet of the

ordinary high-water mark (OHWM) of lakes or within 300 feet of rivers, streams, and creeks are regulated under the County Shoreland Protection Ordinance due to their proximity to surface water. Vegetated lakebeds are mostly adjacent to bodies of water and are regulated by the County Shoreland Protection Ordinance, which specifies requirements for setbacks and other regulations for structures located in these areas.

Floodplains

Floodplains are a natural flood control system that provide an area where excess water can be accommodated. The extent to which a floodplain may become inundated depends upon the amount of water, the speed and distance that the water travels, and the area's topography. Oneida County contains approximately 54,750 acres of floodplain, some of which is also wetlands. Floodplains are mapped in Map 2-1 Natural Resources.

Floods are one of Wisconsin's most common types of natural disasters. Each year Wisconsin communities suffer millions of dollars in flood damages. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designates floodplain areas in the State. These areas are predicted to be inundated with floodwaters in the 100-year storm event (e.g., a storm with about a 1% chance of happening in any given year or a 26% chance of happening in 30 years). Given that these areas are prone to flooding, development in floodplains is usually discouraged. Even so, development does occur in these areas and affects this system's ability to function properly. Oneida County regulates floodplain development through its Chapter 20 Floodplain Ordinance

Chapter NR 116 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code requires all municipalities to adopt reasonable and effective floodplain zoning ordinances for the purpose of protecting individuals, private property, and public investments from flood damage. Floodplain zoning regulates development in the floodway and flood fringe areas, usually by requiring structures to be built above flood levels or be otherwise flood-protected. For regulatory purposes, a floodplain is generally defined as land with a one percent chance of flooding in any year (also known as the 100-year floodplain). Floodplain regulation can also keep communities eligible for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). FEMA offers emergency monetary assistance to flood stricken communities provided these areas are in compliance with NFIP requirements and have also completed a Flood Insurance Study. Currently, Oneida County and the City of Rhinelander participate in the NFIP program, have completed the Flood Insurance Study, and have created a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) that delineates those areas likely to be inundated by a 100-year flood (also known as "A" Zones).

It is important to note that Oneida County is interested in updating flood maps using Lidar technology as existing maps are out of date. This effort is dependent on FEMA's scheduling regarding when they release map updates.

[Watersheds](#)

Oneida County is divided into 12 watersheds and two drainage basins. The Subcontinental Divide separates the Mississippi River drainage basin from the Lake Michigan drainage basin. On the eastern side of the divide, water flows into the Wolf River, which leads to Lake Michigan. On the western side of the divide, the water flows into the Wisconsin River on its way to the Mississippi River.

The far southeast corner of the County is within the drainage basin of the Wolf River, the far northeast corner is in Flambeau River basin, which flows into the Chippewa River, and the rest of the County is within the drainage basin of the Wisconsin River. In Oneida County, the Wisconsin River flows generally south through the center of the County, from the Rainbow Flowage, through the City of Rhinelander and leaves the County in the Town of Crescent. Several principal tributaries of the Wisconsin River that are partly in the County include Noisy Creek, Pine Creek, Sugar Camp Creek, and the Pelican River, which joins the Wisconsin at Rhinelander and drains much of the eastern part of the County.

The Tomahawk River, which starts in the Minocqua Chain of Lakes and includes the Willow Flowage, drains much of the western part of the County before joining the Wisconsin at Tomahawk in Lincoln County. The far northwest corner of the County is drained by Amber Creek into the Upper South Fork of the Flambeau River, which flows into the Chippewa River. The far southeast corner of the County drains to Post Lake and the Wolf River and the Lake Michigan basin.

The WDNR issues grants for the implementation of watershed projects through a cost-share approach. The Priority Watershed Program provides financial assistance to local units of government in selected watersheds to address land management activities that contribute to urban and rural runoff. The grantees use the funds to reimburse costs to landowners for installing voluntary Best Management Practices (BMPs).

[Groundwater Resources](#)

Groundwater supplies nearly all of the water for residential, commercial, and industrial uses in Oneida County. In general, groundwater use has increased in the County as urban areas continue to grow and development increases around the County's lakes. The increase in rural housing

developments and agricultural irrigation, each with its private well, also places demands on groundwater.

Groundwater is comprised of the portion of rainfall that does not run off to streams or rivers and that does not evaporate or transpire from plants. This water percolates down through the soil until it reaches the saturated zone of an aquifer. The groundwater level generally rises in spring, declines in summer, rises slightly in fall, and declines in winter. Use of groundwater for irrigation has caused a measurable decline in the level only in the immediate vicinity of the withdrawal. The depth to groundwater ranges to over 100 feet beneath the hills on the moraines to as little as 25 feet in lowland areas. Groundwater yields from the glacial deposits vary. Generally, the outwash yields more than the glacial till. The underlying crystalline bedrock yields little or no water.

Natural groundwater generally discharges at streams, marshes, lakes, and springs or as underflow. The continued flow of perennial streams during long dry periods is caused by the natural discharge of the groundwater reservoir. Ensuring an adequate supply of usable groundwater is important for Oneida County.

The quality of the ground water is generally good. The impact of development and agriculture may cause deterioration of the ground water. Typically, the yield of wells varies based on the depth and nature of the underlying glacial deposits. Where the glacial drift is thin, such as near Monico, wells yield only a few gallons per minute. In other areas, such as the hilly moraine areas in the southeast and southwest sections of the County, wells will produce 5 to 50 gallons per minute, and in areas of glacial outwash or of thick deposits of saturated sand and gravel yields can range up to 2,000 gallons per minute. A well at Rhinelander yields more than 1,000 gallons per minute.

Groundwater quality can be impaired by a variety of pollutants including leaking underground storage tanks (LUSTs), landfills, septic tanks, over-application of pesticides and fertilizers, and spills of hazardous chemicals. The most common contaminants in Wisconsin's groundwater are pesticides, nitrates, nitrogen, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). These contaminants come from many sources, including nitrogen-based fertilizers, septic systems, animal waste storage, feedlots, municipal and industrial wastewater discharges, and sludge disposal. A recent concern related to groundwater is Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS). These substances are a group of chemicals often used to make fluoropolymer coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water.

Groundwater contaminants can affect the health of humans, livestock, and wildlife. Because groundwater seeps more slowly than surface runoff, pollution that occurs today may not become evident for several years. Once polluted, the groundwater is very difficult to purify and may take many years to clean itself by the dilution process.

Woodlands

Forest cover is a key environmental, economic, and aesthetic feature. Expansive forest lands provide recreational and aesthetic opportunities for residents and tourists, and also function as sources of commercial timber production. In addition, woodland cover plays a key role in the function and value of sensitive environmental areas like steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains. Regulations concerning removing woodland vegetation may be necessary to protect natural scenic beauty, control erosion, provide critical wildlife habitat, and reduce effluent and nutrient flows into surface water bodies/courses. Therefore, preserving and protecting forest resources is critical to sustain and enhance the economic and environmental health of Oneida County.

At one time, much of Wisconsin was covered with magnificent stands of pine, hemlock, hardwoods on the highlands and cedar, spruce, and balsam on its lowlands. From 1860 to 1910, these forests provided raw material for a thriving lumber industry. The need to supply lumber for a growing nation and the need for sound forest management resulted in the harvest of the forests and the degradation of the landscape. Immigrants rushed to these newly cleared lands, hungry for a place to farm and build their lives. But in a few years, the soils gave out, catastrophic fires occurred, and many people were forced to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The land was left exhausted and tax-delinquent. Oneida County Forests were created from tax delinquent land in Wisconsin under the County Forest Crop Law.

The pre-settlement composition of forest land in Oneida County primarily included two forest types. Approximately one-half of the County had pine forests composed of white pine and red pine mixtures with few hardwoods. A common belief of pre-settlement forests is that extensive pine forests covered most of Northern Wisconsin. This forest type was minimal even before settlement, with the most extensive block occurring in Oneida and Vilas Counties. The remaining half of the County was comprised of hemlock, sugar maple, and yellow birch with mixtures of white and red pine. This forest type was the largest, most characteristic forest composition type in Northern Wisconsin.

Between the mid-1800s and early 1900s, forests throughout Wisconsin were almost entirely cut. White pine, and to some extent red pine, was the concentration of early logging practices, virtually eliminating the white pine seed source in Northern Wisconsin. The remaining forests

were logged for commercial and industrial purposes or cleared for agriculture. Through the years, Oneida County has regained much of its forest cover, although the species composition is not different from pre-settlement times. Overall, forest cover comprises approximately 80% of the County's total area.

Areas of Critical Environmental Sensitivity

Areas of critical environmental sensitivity are those unique elements/areas of the natural resource base that should be preserved and, therefore, excluded from urban/intensive development. Typically, areas of critical environmental sensitivity include wetlands, floodplains/floodways, critical shorelands, steep slope areas (especially those adjacent to wetlands and shorelands), publicly-owned scientific and natural areas (i.e., fish and wildlife habitats), and identified archaeological sites. The protection of such areas is intended to

- 1) Protect the health, safety, and welfare of the general public.
- 2) Protect surface water and groundwater quality.
- 3) Reduce damage from flooding and stormwater runoff.
- 4) Maintain important wildlife habitats or recreational areas.

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 the use of other lands in the State. Natural areas are defined as tracts of land or water that 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. Currently, there are 18 State Natural Areas (SNA) located within Oneida County, and these are listed below:

1. ***Finnerud Pine Forest SNA (No. 31)*** is a UW-Madison Arboretum holding of old growth red pine. Contact the Arboretum at 608-263-7344 for access permission.
2. ***Rice Lake SNA (No. 40)*** is 1,030 acres and located in the Thunder Lake Wildlife Area.
3. ***Holmboe Conifer Forest SNA (No. 79)*** is 32 acres and located in the Town of Pelican.
4. ***Gobler Lake SNA (No. 115)*** is 1,085 acres and located in the Town of Little Rice.
5. ***Stone Lake Pines SNA (No. 185)*** is 65 acres and located within the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in the Town of Sugar Camp.

6. *Wind Pudding Lake SNA (No. 188)* is 340 acres and located within the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in the Town of Lake Tomahawk.
7. *Patterson Hemlocks SNA (No. 216)* is 304 acres and located in the Town of Minocqua.
8. *Atkins Lake & Hiles Swamp SNA (No. 238)* is 2,644 acres and partially located in the Town of Piehl.
9. *Upper Tomahawk River Pines SNA (No. 239)* is 1,040 acres and located in the Town of Minocqua.
10. *Squirrel River Pines SNA (No. 244)* is 643 acres and located in the Town of Minocqua.
11. *Germain Hemlocks SNA (No. 355)* is 88 acres and located in the Town of Cassian.
12. *Pat Shay Lake SNA (No. 446)* is 736 acres and partially located within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in the Town of Three Lakes.
13. *Tomahawk Lake Hemlocks SNA (No. 510)* is 244 acres and located within the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in the Town of Lake Tomahawk.
14. *Two Lakes Pine-Oak Forest SNA (No. 511)* is 112 acres and located within the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in the Town of Lake Tomahawk.
15. *Big Swamp SNA (No. 512)* is 2,914 acres and located within the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in the Town of Sugar Camp.
16. *Rainbow Wetlands SNA (No. 513)* is 2,357 acres and located within the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in the Town of Newbold.
17. *Shallow Lake SNA (No. 514)* is 103 acres and located within the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in the Town of Newbold.
18. *Spur Lake SNA (No. 537)* is 71 acres and located in the Town of Piehl.
19. *Sugar Camp Hemlocks SNA (No. 594)* is 96 acres and located in the Town of Sugar Camp.
20. *Enterprise Hemlocks SNA (No. 608)* is 601 acres and located in the Town of Enterprise.
21. *One Stone Lake Hemlocks SNA (No. 629)* is 342 acres and situated along the Northern boundary of Thunder Lake Wildlife Area and the Rice Lake State Natural Area.
22. *Upper Kaubashine Creek SNA (No. 650)* is 264 acres and located in the Town of Hazelhurst.

State Wildlife Areas

State Wildlife Areas were acquired to preserve habitat for wildlife. Currently, two State Wildlife Areas exist within Oneida County:

1. **Thunder Lake Wildlife Area** is located 1 mile north of Three Lakes and is a public hunting area that consists of 3,000 acres.
2. **Woodboro Lakes Wildlife Area** is located about 10 miles west of Rhinelander is a public hunting area that consists of 3,000 acres.

Most of the areas of critical environmental sensitivity within Oneida County are already managed/regulated at the federal, state, and/or county level, such as wetlands, floodplains, shoreland buffer zones, and publicly-owned scientific and natural areas. In addition, the WDNR maintains a listing of all rare, threatened, and endangered species and natural communities within the State.

Public Ownership

As of 2023, 33.70% of all land within Oneida County is publicly owned, and 33.56% of all land within Oneida County currently has reduced taxes due to agriculture, MFL, or other uses. This means that 67.26% of all land within Oneida County is either currently tax exempt or has reduced taxes, leaving only 32.74% of the County's land area as being fully taxable. [See Table 2-3.](#)

Table 2-3: Percentage of Total County Acreage by Ownership		
Name	Total Acres	Percent of County
Publicly Owned Land (Tax-Exempt)	226,197	33.70%
State	121,215	18.06%
County Forest	82,890	12.35%
Federal	11,744	1.75%
County – Other	940	0.14%
Non-profit and Local Government	9,408	1.40%
Land with Reduced Taxes	225,309	33.56%
Lands enrolled in MFL-FCL	189,855	28.28%
Agricultural Lands	26,007	3.87%
Undevelopable (Wetlands, Soils, etc.)	9,447	1.41%
Fully Taxable Lands	219,759	32.74%
Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) State Tax Records		

Federal Ownership

Lands in the County owned by the federal government total approximately 11,744 acres (1.75% of land in the County) and are primarily part of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest

Created out of the “cut-over” lands primarily during the 1920s and 1930s, the National Forests and the State and County forests, represent an economic and recreational resource. Today, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is made up of more than 1.5 million total acres. Operating under a 1986 plan and subsequent revisions, both the Chequamegon and Nicolet units of the National Forest are today dedicated to multiple uses. This principle sees the forest as a source of timber and a protector of water quality and wildlife habitat. It is also a recreational and visitor asset for the counties within its boundaries, including Oneida County.

State of Wisconsin Ownership

The majority of the publicly owned land within Oneida County is owned by the State of Wisconsin with approximately 121,215 acres (18.06% of land within the County) being owned by the State. The majority of State-owned lands within the County are included in the Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest (NHAL).

Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest

The Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest was established in 1925 to protect the headwaters of the Wisconsin, Flambeau, and Manitowish Rivers. Outdoor recreational opportunities are diverse and abundant in the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest. Visitors are drawn to the forest's water resources. The forest is blessed with one of the highest concentrations of lakes in the world, making sport fishing a significant recreational activity.

In addition to these recreational facilities, the NHAL provides "wild land" for those seeking a pristine and quiet backcountry experience in areas with few support facilities, motorized vehicles, or signs of management activities. The Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area is described as "almost Canada" because this flowage in Oneida County has a wild flavor. The area has over 17,000 acres, 73 miles of shoreline, 106 islands, and 7 boat landings. Rustic campsites around the shoreline and on the islands offer scenery and solitude. There are abundant walleye, panfish, northern pike, muskellunge, and bass, as well as hunting and hiking opportunities, and wildlife such as deer, bear, ruffed grouse, ducks, loons, and wolves.

The NHAL State Forest provides abundant recreational opportunities and a working forest that provides for timber management and production. The NHAL State Forest is managed using

sustainable forestry practices to offer recreational opportunities, timber production, aesthetics, watershed protection, and habitat for various plant and animal species. Ultimately, the management goal is to benefit the people of Wisconsin, both current and future generations. The acquisition of property for inclusion in the NHAL State Forest is based on “willing sellers.”

Oneida County Ownership

The Oneida County Forestry and Recreation Department manages 82,890 acres of County Forest. This land is managed for multiple uses and is independently certified as sustainably managed and harvested. Some of the County Forest is closed to motorized vehicles. Permitted recreational activities can include hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, camping, bough cutting (permit required), firewood collection (permit required), and wildlife observation.

Oneida County has about 1,600 acres of School Forests associated with four school districts. School Forests are open to the public for various recreational and educational uses. School Forests within Oneida County include:

Minocqua, Hazelhurst, Lake Tomahawk (MHLT) School District

- MHLT School Forest, 40 acres, S34 T38N R6E; and
- Minocqua School Forest, 193 acres, S22, 23, & 26 T39N R6E.

School District of Rhinelander

- Rhinelander Junior High School Forest, 39 acres, S4 T36N, R8E;
- Crescent District School Forest, 53 acres, S4 & 5 T36N R8E;
- Pelican School Forest, 79 acres, S3 T36N R9E;
- Clovernook School Forest, 80 acres, S34 T37N R8E;
- Bernstein School Forest, 120 acres, S1 T37N R9E;
- Burkhart School Forest, 120 acres, S7 T37N R9E;
- Cedric A Vig Outdoor Classroom (CAVOC), 160 acres, S10 T36N R9E;
- Lake Creek School Forest, 160 acres, S2 & 11 T37N R9E; and
- Rhinelander High School Forest, 400 acres, S5 & 8 T37N R9E.

Three Lakes School District

- Three Lakes School Forest, 34 acres, S32 T38N R11E;

- Gagen-Piehl School Forest, 40 acres, S29 T37N R11E; and
- Sugar Camp School Forest, 40 acres, S34 T38N R9E.
- Additional 40 acres in Sugar Camp at CTH A.

Woodruff School District

- Arbor Vitae-Woodruff School Forest, 22 acres, S20 T39N R7E.

Privately Owned Lands

It is important to identify how the remaining woodlands in the County are (or are not) managed and the value private landowners place on maintaining their wooded property.

According to state tax tables, in 2023, about 189,855 acres of woodlands were enrolled in the WDNR Managed Forest Law (MFL) program, totaling approximately 28.28% of the County's total acreage. These include lands enrolled in Forest Crop Law (FCL), a predecessor to the MFL program that still exists but is not allowing new or re-enrollments. These programs provide tax relief to landowners of enrolled property in return for the landowner entering into a contract to manage the land as forest land for a specified time. Property enrolled in these programs will likely remain under management through the planning period and beyond, as many contract agreements associated with these programs are 25 years or longer. Throughout the County there is substantial private forest not enrolled in the program, as well as additional lands with uses like agricultural and wetland that have a reduced tax rate. Altogether, 225,309 acres, or 33.56% of the County, is privately owned with reduced taxes.

Lands that do not have reduced taxes or tax-exempt status comprise about 32.74% of land in the County, meaning that 67.26% of the County's area tax-exempt or tax-reduced. This land typically includes existing intensive development (i.e., residential, commercial, industrial). These private uses may have the largest impact on the County's rural character and quality of natural resources if not properly planned. The remaining private lands, including MFL/FCL lands, are important to supply Oneida County with a sufficient future tax base. When landowners would like to protect wooded areas, MFL/FCL lands are preferred over tax-exempt public lands and/or easements because they have the flexibility to be developed for residential, commercial, and other uses once their existing contracts have been fulfilled in order to contribute to the County's tax base.

In recent years, the demand for private forest land has increased dramatically. The reason for this can be primarily attributed to the decreasing available supply of waterfront property. As the

amount of available waterfront property in the County declines, the demand for forest land has been increasing. Private woodland management will continue to have significant impacts in Oneida County.

Private landowners may participate in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program or engage in some other form of formalized forest management practices, such as the tree farm programs sponsored by the paper companies, to ensure the preservation and health of the County's woodland resources and wildlife habitat and not permanent easements acquired using federal, state, or local tax dollars that will take away tax base.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Oneida County contains a wide range of plant and wildlife habitats. These natural habitats have been greatly affected by rural development and agricultural practices. In most cases, these influences are directly responsible for the endangerment or threatening of certain species. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires all federal agencies to conserve endangered and threatened species. The State of Wisconsin has similar statutes.

Wisconsin law prohibits the "taking" of any plant or animal listed as endangered or threatened. Taking is defined as the act of killing, harming, collecting, capturing, or harassing a member of a protected species. The WDNR-Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation operates the Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI), which maintains data on the location and status of rare species, natural communities, and natural features in Wisconsin.

WDNR's Natural Heritage Inventory program maintains data on the general location and status of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species in the State. This data is obtained through field inventory. According to that inventory, Oneida County has 595 land sections with occurrences of aquatic and terrestrial plants, animals, and/or natural communities of endangered status as identified in the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory. Each section identified may have several different species or just one species.

Oneida County has 59 species that are listed in the Natural Heritage Inventory. Of these species, 12 are listed as threatened or endangered. The American Marten (*Martes americana*) and Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) are the only two endangered species listed in Oneida County. There are 10 other species that are considered threatened. **Table 2-4** lists the 12 species listed as threatened or endangered within Oneida County. It is worth noting that the Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*), Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), and the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) are bird species that are fully protected under the Migratory Bird Act. Also worth noting is that the bald eagle is no longer listed but is now protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Several other species of plants and animals are listed as rare, but no laws are in place to protect them.

Table 2-4: Threatened or Endangered Species in Oneida County				
Common Name	Scientific Name	WI Status	Federal Status	Group
Algae-leaved Pondweed	Potamogeton confervoides	THR		Plant~
American Marten	Martes americana	END		Mammal
Black Tern	Chlidonias niger	END	SOC	Bird~
Calypso Orchid	Calypso bulbosa	THR		Plant~
Large Water-starwort	Callitriche heterophylla	THR		Plant~
Little Brown Bat	Myotis lucifugus	THR		Mammal~
Red-shouldered Hawk	Buteo lineatus	THR		Bird~
Spruce Grouse	Canachites canadensis	THR		Bird~
Tufted Bulrush	Trichophorum cespitosum	THR		Plant~
Upland Sandpiper	Bartramia longicauda	THR		Bird
Wood Turtle	Glyptemys insculpta	THR	SOC	Turtle~
Yellow Rail	Coturnicops noveboracensis	THR		Bird~

Source: WDNR - Natural Heritage Inventory

Agricultural Resources

In 2015, the County adopted a Farmland Preservation Plan. Pursuant to Wis. Stat. §66.1001, the comprehensive planning law, that plan becomes a component of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. See the [Oneida County Farmland Preservation Plan](#) for more detailed information on agriculture.

Growing potatoes and cranberries are two of the main agricultural enterprises in Oneida County. Additional enterprises include beef production, Christmas tree farming, and maple syrup production. The soils of Oneida County are primarily sandy and loamy, suited to, and do support, forested/woodland uses. Due to the sandy and droughty nature of the soils, most are of relatively low agricultural value. In addition, the growing season in the County is relatively short. As such, agriculture in Oneida County is primarily limited to a few areas with expanses of sandy loam soil, primarily in the Towns of Crescent, Cassian, Stella, and Sugar Camp.

Current trends in Oneida County show that potato production will continue as it has for over 50 years, centered around the Town of Sugar Camp. Potato development is supported by the Rhinelander Agricultural Research Station, also known as the UW-Lelah Starks Potato Breeding Farm, located in the Town of Cassian, and two commercial seed potato research farms operated

by Frito-Lay, one in the Town of Stella and the other in the Town of Three Lakes. Sowinski Farms has a seed potato farm in the Town of Stella. The machinery, repair services, growing inputs, and crop storage necessary for potato production are available in the Rhinelander area and the Towns of Stella up through Three Lakes in Oneida County. Potato storage exists and is projected to continue in the Town of Sugar Camp into the foreseeable future. All potato processing is projected to continue outside of Oneida County.

Cranberries are grown in the Towns of Newbold, Three Lakes, Cassian, Stella, and Sugar Camp. Oneida County projects that cranberry production will increase wherever beds can be developed, so with much of the County having a shallow depth to groundwater, many places throughout the County are possible for new bogs.

Cultural Resources

Oneida County is located in the northern section of Wisconsin, where the last glacier deposited terminal moraines, eskers, erratic boulders, silt loam, lakes, rivers, and deep forests – a unique geology.

Native Americans inhabited Oneida County when the first European explorers, missionaries, and fur traders traveled into the County. The early inhabitants of the County were of the Lacotah (Sioux) people, gradually displaced by the Ojibway. White settlement began in earnest with the arrival of the Brown brothers in 1882.

Oneida County was established in 1885 and included all of Vilas County and parts of Forest, Langlade, and Iron counties. Its current boundaries were set in 1905. The County population more than doubled from 5,010 in 1890 to 11,234 in 1905. Agriculture grew from 1900 to 1920, and farms peaked in 1940 at 789.

Although forestry, manufacturing, and agriculture continue to play a prominent role in the County's economy, businesses that take advantage of the County's wealth of lakes and natural amenities represent potential for growth in the future.

The history of Oneida County as a visitor destination goes back to the earliest days. Such establishments as Keeler's Resort on Pelican Lake, the Northern Resort on Lake Minocqua, and Drave's Hotel at Lake Tomahawk, founded in the early 1900's, were precursors for today's tourism industry. Forestry, manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism historically have all played prominent roles in the County's economy.

[Historical Structures](#)

The practice of preserving historic sites and structures recognizes the architectural, engineering, archaeological, cultural, or historic importance of these assets to a community. In 1994, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted statutes requiring cities and villages with property listed in the National Register of Historic Places or the State Register of Historic Places to enact an ordinance to preserve these places.

The State and National Registers of Historic Places lists properties, historic districts, individual buildings, parks, bridges, locomotives, and archaeological sites. There are 25 buildings and sites listed on either or both registers in Oneida County.

Similar to the State Register of Historic Places, the Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) also provides historical and architectural information. This database contains information on approximately 120,000 properties in Wisconsin and is maintained by the Wisconsin Historical Society. The AHI contains data on structures that illustrate Wisconsin's unique history and cultural landscape. Inclusion in this inventory affords no special protection to structures nor does it convey special status, rights, or benefits to owners. The largest percentage of the structures in the inventory are located in the City of Rhinelander. In all, there are 713 buildings listed in this inventory.

The Archaeological Site Inventory (ASI) is the most comprehensive list of the archaeological sites, mounds, marked and unmarked cemeteries, and cultural sites in the State. However, it includes only those sites that have been reported to the Wisconsin Historical Society. It only includes some possible sites and cemeteries of archaeological significance in the State. This inventory has been developed over a period of 150 years. Therefore, each entry in the database varies, and the information has yet to be verified in all cases.

As noted earlier, there are 25 historic sites and structures in Oneida County, including the former Texaco Service Station (Minocqua Brewing Company), Boesal and Hagge Boathouses in Minocqua, First National Bank in Rhinelander, the Indianapolis Outing Club and Jollywood in Three Lakes, Mecikalski General Store in Schoepke, the Tomahawk Lake Camp Historic District, six native archeological sites, as well as the Oneida County Courthouse.

There are 713 sites and structures on the Architectural History Inventory (AHI). The City of Rhinelander has more structures listed on the AHI than other municipalities, likely due to its county seat status and growth as the largest community in the County. The City currently has 138 architecturally significant buildings on the state AHI, most of which are homes and commercial buildings.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal 1: The management of natural, agricultural, and cultural resources shall be accomplished in a way that both guarantees multiple uses of the county's most important natural resources—sensitive lakes, rivers, and streams; as well as stewardship of critical wetlands, open space, wildlife habitat, woodlands, and unique physical areas—and equally protects private property rights and ensures requisite space for economic development.

Objectives:

- Promote development consistent with a primary goal of local control and maintaining and assuring future economic viability, guided by the principles of multiple use and preservation of private property rights, while minimizing impacts on natural, agricultural and cultural resources.
- The county shall ensure wise stewardship of the environment by identifying and balancing industrial, agricultural, forestry, and tourism opportunities to best maximize economic benefits.
- Balance resource protection efforts with the requirements of human life and economics and identify and enhance the resources to provide economic returns to the County.
- The long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources must be considered in any land-use plan. To achieve this goal, the county shall pursue and guarantee appropriate multiple uses of land, including but not limited to recreation, timber harvesting and forest management, metallic and nonmetallic mining, fish and wildlife activities, and agricultural production, as well as conservation. Multiple uses of land must be employed in a way that equally satisfies the economic and stewardship needs of the people of Oneida County, while preserving flexibility for future adjustments to account for changing conditions and encourage state and federal governments to do the same.

Policies:

- Require cost benefit analysis for all major conservation projects on public/easement lands, including for forest management plans. Oneida County will evaluate and determine the cost benefit analysis of any and all guidance, executive action, or mandated action offered by any agency, state and federal, governor or president, before initiating any action pursuant to the action requested, to be approved by the county and paid for by the requesting party.
- Slow the spread of invasive species.

- Examine the impacts of metallic or nonmetallic mining on the County’s natural resources.
- Conserve and enhance shoreland areas by minimizing impact from land disturbing activities.

Goal 2: Minimize the conversion of forestland and woodlands into other uses and prioritize forest management and timber production on all such public lands.

Objective:

- Conserve and enhance Managed Forest Law (MFL) Lands and encourage the state of Wisconsin to review the state Managed Forest Law (MFL) program
- Prioritize sustainable forest management on public land to not only provide forest products, but also other multiple uses and considerations such as wildlife habitat, watershed protection, aesthetics, cultural, recreational, and other ecological values.

Policies:

- Discourage the conversion of existing privately owned lands to public lands using federal, state, and local tax dollars to purchase existing MFL lands or purchase easements over them. Reducing the tax base in perpetuity is antithetical to the interests of county residents and gives up local control.
- Require the management for multiple uses of woodlands and forestlands on public land to emphasize timber production and forest management as the top priority—producing products and services from working forests, including timber and other forest commodities—with secondary priorities including aesthetics, cultural, recreational, and other ecological values.
- Forest management practices should use multiple-use forest principles. In crafting land use plans for wildlife habitats, include specific goals for balance between game versus non-game species.
- Refer to Oneida County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan (and other applicable plans).

Goal 3: Reduce contamination of surface and groundwater resources in the County.

Objectives:

- Promote development that minimizes surface and groundwater impacts from onsite septic systems and other sources.
- Conserve and enhance surface water, groundwater, and shoreline buffer zone quality.

Policies:

- Promote groundwater protection efforts to maintain and lower nitrate, pesticide, and volatile compound pollution.
- Identify and assess the current drainage system in the County.
- Support dam/drainage way repair to minimize flooding in the County.
- Address erosion through sound erosion control methods and mechanisms.
- Promote prevention of PFAS in groundwater including efforts to facilitate remediation of both water and soil.
- Reference and consider policies in the Oneida County Land & Water Resource Management Plan.

Goal 4: Encourage and support the conservation of natural areas that minimize flooding, such as grasslands, wetlands, and woodlands.

Objective:

- Increase and improve wildlife habitat.

Policies:

- Work with FEMA to update floodplain maps with new technology.
- Increase awareness of corridors and landscape connectivity and encourage retention of a natural area network connecting open areas, wetlands, and woodlands.
- The County shall coordinate with FEMA to update floodplain maps with new technology.

Goal 5: Allow for needed nonmetallic mining while balancing the interests of adjacent landowners and the County.

Objective:

- Minimize and consider impacts to the County's natural resources from nonmetallic mining.

Policy:

- Promote proper reclamation techniques in the County.

Goal 6: Allow metallic mining through the County’s metallic mining exploration, bulk sampling, and mining ordinance while balancing natural resources, and the interest and safety of residents and landowners to comply with state laws.

Objective:

- Minimize impacts to the County’s natural resources from metallic mining.

Policies:

- Promote proper reclamation techniques in the County
- Protect groundwater, surface water, and wetlands from the negative effects of mining.
- Maintain county mining ordinances (s).

Goal 7: Conserve and enhance economically productive farmlands.

Objective:

- Work to preserve farming as a viable occupation within the County.

Policy:

- Maintain an updated Farmland Preservation Plan.

Goal 9: Preserve and enhance cultural, historic, and archaeological resources.

Objectives:

- Continue identification and protection of key cultural, historic, and archaeological sites.
- Encourage nomination of sites to the State Historical Society.

Policy:

- Development proposals should be reviewed by the County relative to the potential impacts to the cultural resources of the County.

Chapter Three:

Housing

Background

This is the third of nine chapters that comprise the Oneida County Comprehensive Plan. The housing characteristics of Oneida County are essential elements of the land use planning process. The physical location of housing determines the demand and cost of many public services and facilities. In addition, housing characteristics are related to the community's social, aesthetic, and economic conditions.

Housing is a basic need for everyone, and the availability of suitable housing is a central concern of any comprehensive planning effort. Planning for the future of the County requires a comprehensive approach to ensure that the housing needs of all segments of the population are addressed. For low-income households, the disabled and homeless individuals, and victims of domestic abuse, this can involve programs that make housing available at below market rates. There is more to affordable housing than meeting the needs of particular segments of society. Moderately priced housing available to middle-income, working families is as important to the County as meeting the needs of low-income households, elderly, and disabled individuals. Housing availability for workers can be an important factor in economic development.

This section will provide the County with information about the current housing stock and identify significant changes that have occurred over time. Information is presented about the occupancy/vacancy characteristics, housing values, trends in seasonal/recreational housing, and the equalized valuation of Oneida County.

[About the Data](#)

Unfortunately, it is difficult to track exactly what housing prices are and what rents are being charged due to ever-changing economic conditions. The U.S. Census Bureau provides the most detailed series of data estimates that capture the age, condition, value, and type of housing, but this is based on self-reported data and projections, since not everyone responds to the Census or reports their property accurately. Therefore, the data in this chapter should be used to

identify broad trends and guide this chapter’s goals, objectives, and policies, rather than being treated as a precise measure of exact housing characteristics.

In some cases, tax records may also be used to determine housing unit totals, but this has limitations as well. For example, a building listed as “commercial” might be along a main street and include residential units above. In that case, residential units could be missed when counting the number of residential properties on tax records. Therefore, this method was not used, because it is more time consuming and doesn’t include as many details, like how much of a household’s income is spent on housing, like the Census data does.

Previous Plans and Studies

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 Persons 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.”

Grow North Region Housing Study, 2021

The Grow North Region Housing Study analyzes the Grow North Region’s housing stock, which includes Oneida County housing stock and trends, and workforce housing within the Grow North Region. This analysis identifies needs, such as additional housing throughout the Grow North Region, what housing types are needed, and which steps are needed to solve housing gaps within the Region. This housing study also developed a set of goals and strategies to address the housing issues identified. The identified goals in the Grow North Region Housing Study are as follows:

- Provide an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals and households of all income levels throughout the Region.
- Increase the number of rental units within the Region.
- Encourage a diverse mix of housing within the Grow North Region.

- Encourage housing that accommodates seniors, individuals with disabilities, and individuals and families that are extremely low income.

Regional Livability Plan, 2015

The 2015 Regional Livability Plan (RLP), written by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), addresses livability issues in housing, transportation, economic development, and land use. The RLP identifies several issues affecting community livability related to housing, including the following:

- Aging population.
- Smaller household sizes.
- Lack of housing options.
- Increase in housing costs related to income.

Oneida County Comprehensive Plan, 2013

The Oneida County Comprehensive Plan closely examines the state of housing throughout Oneida County, examining housing issues and qualities, such as the age of housing units, housing value, housing types, seasonal housing, and general housing characteristics. The identified goals in the Oneida County Comprehensive Plan relating to housing are as follows:

- Encourage adequate supply of affordable housing for all individuals of all income levels consistent with the County's rural character.
- Encourage residential development in suitable areas.
- Encourage using, maintaining, and renovating existing housing as a source of affordable housing.

Inventory

Oneida County has a high level of owner-occupancy, over 15 percentage points higher than the State. Homeownership levels are lowest in the City of Rhinelander. Nearly 42% of all housing units within Oneida County are seasonal.

General Housing Characteristics

In 2022, there were 30,858 total housing units within Oneida County, up from 26,627 in 2000. Housing growth over the past two decades within Oneida County has been slightly slower than in Wisconsin as the total number of housing units in Oneida County rose by 15.9% between 2000 and 2022 compared to a 17.8% increase statewide, as shown in **Table 3-1**. However, most of this growth occurred between 2000 and 2010, as Oneida County added 3,498 housing units. Since 2010, the number of housing units within Oneida County has only increased by 733 housing units, which represents a 2.4% increase, indicating that housing growth has drastically slowed over the past decade.

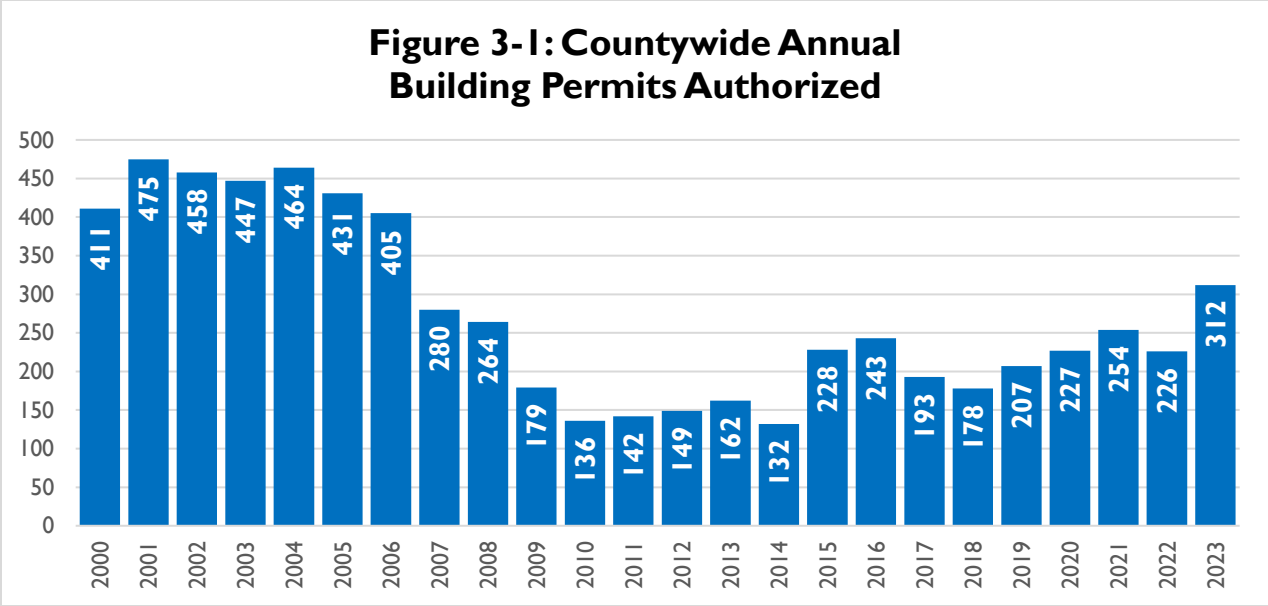
Factors that have caused housing growth within Oneida County to slow during the past decade. The Great Recession in 2008 led to a crash in the housing market and a drastic decrease in housing construction. Another factor that led to the decline in housing growth within Oneida County is that much of the prime lakefront property in Oneida County has already been developed.

Table 3-1: Total Housing Units

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2022	2000-22 Net Change	2000-22 % Change
Cassian	1,011	1,204	1,053	42	4.2%
Crescent	1,034	1,252	1,341	307	29.7%
Enterprise	386	460	479	93	24.1%
Hazelhurst	1,113	1,246	1,261	148	13.3%
Lake Tomahawk	1,052	1,139	1,092	40	3.8%
Little Rice	435	459	518	83	19.1%
Lynne	298	299	358	60	20.1%
Minocqua	4,284	4,835	4,887	603	14.1%
Monico	216	231	271	55	25.5%
Newbold	2,074	2,327	2,466	392	18.9%
Nokomis	1,013	1,145	1,218	205	20.2%
Pelican	1,532	1,715	1,693	161	10.5%
Piehl	85	102	123	38	44.7%
Pine Lake	1,381	1,617	1,660	279	20.2%
Schoepke	626	647	635	9	1.4%
Stella	316	385	402	86	27.2%
Sugar Camp	1,326	1,579	1,663	337	25.4%
Three Lakes	2,908	3,151	2,951	43	1.5%
Woodboro	592	748	744	152	25.7%
Woodruff	1,515	1,603	1,652	137	9.0%
City of Rhinelander	3,430	3,981	4,391	961	28.0%
Oneida County	26,627	30,125	30,858	4,231	15.9%
Wisconsin	2,321,144	2,624,358	2,734,511	413,367	17.8%

Source: American Community Survey (2018-2022)

Another way to examine the slow growth in housing units experienced over the past decade is to analyze the trends in residential building permits throughout Oneida County. The number of residential building permits authorized per year is significantly lower than it was before the Great Recession in 2008, as shown in [Figure 3-1](#). Oneida County averaged 404 housing permit authorizations between 2000 and 2008. Since 2009, Oneida County has averaged only 198 residential building permit authorizations per year, an average that is less than half of the pre-recession average. While the number of residential building permits authorized has been increasing since 2011, the number of permits authorized per year is still below pre-recession levels.

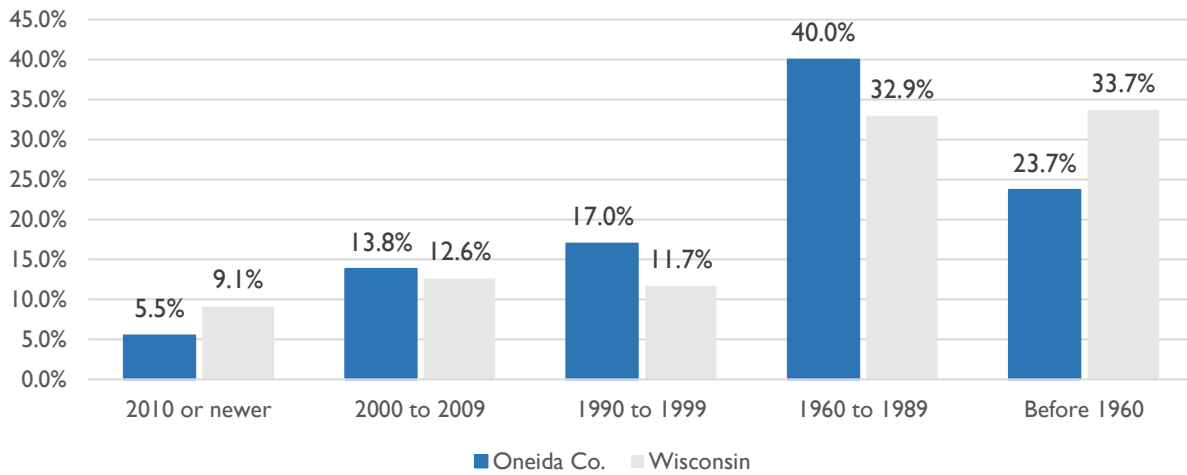


Source: HUD

Building Age

Figure 3-2 presents the age of the housing stock in Oneida County. The data is presented in terms of the year that the housing structures were originally built. Generally speaking, Oneida County has a newer housing stock than the State, as only about one-quarter of homes were built before 1960, whereas one-third of homes statewide were built before 1960. This trend reverses after 2010, where the ratio of homes in Oneida County built since then (5.5%) is lower than the statewide average (9.1%). For both Oneida County and the State of Wisconsin, more homes were built in the 1990s and 2000s than since 2010. This further illustrates the slowing housing growth experienced within both Oneida County and Wisconsin over the past decade.

Figure 3-2: Year Built

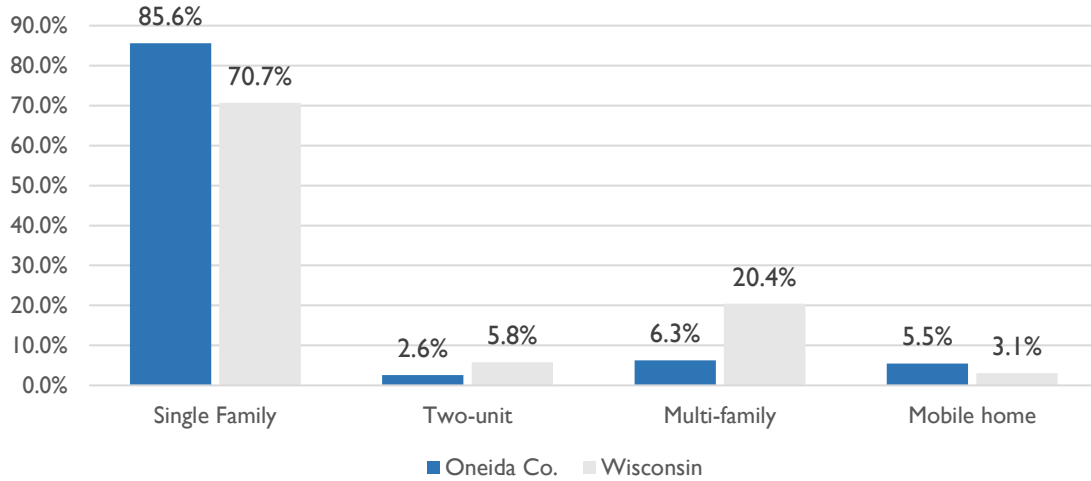


Housing Type

Single-family housing is the dominant housing type in Oneida County. Single-family housing comprises almost 86% of Oneida County’s housing stock, a significantly higher percentage compared to Wisconsin, where single-family housing accounts for about 71% of the housing stock. Multi-family housing (structures with three or more dwelling units) comprises just over 6% of Oneida County’s housing stock, significantly lower than in Wisconsin, where multi-family housing comprises over 20% of the State’s housing stock. **Figure 3-3** compares the structural type of housing units within Oneida County and Wisconsin.

When comparing the mix of housing types in Oneida County to that of the State, it is clear that there needs to be more housing diversity within Oneida County. A lack of housing diversity poses challenges for the County in providing housing options that meet the needs of residents. Additionally, the lack of multi-family units significantly affects housing affordability within the County for low-income and workforce households. Multi-family housing is necessary for affordable units, as most subsidized affordable housing is provided in multi-family housing complexes. Multi-family developments are also important for adding new units to the housing supply, which helps to meet the demand for housing, helping to keep housing costs in check.

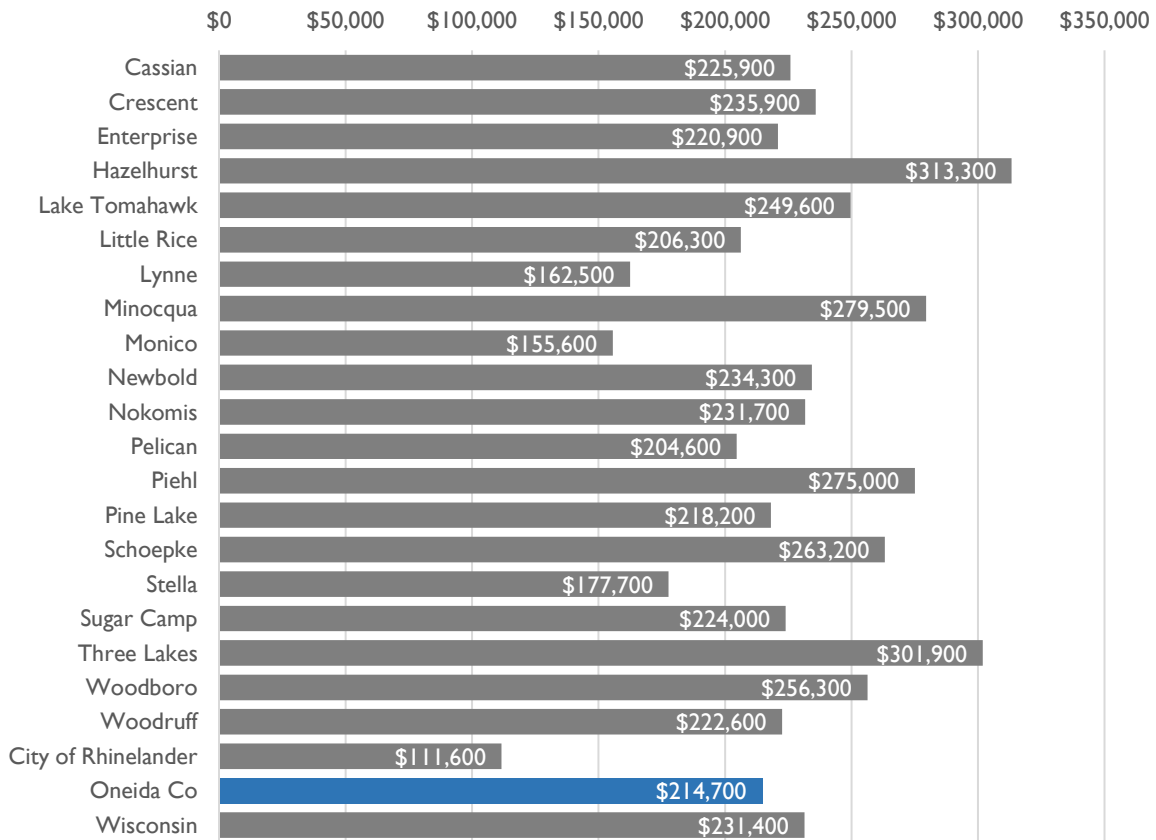
Figure 3-3: Housing Unit Type



Median Home Value

Figure 3-4 compares the median home value for owner-occupied housing units throughout Oneida County. In 2022, Oneida County had a lower median home value (\$214,700) than Wisconsin (\$231,400). While the median home value in Oneida County was lower than that of Wisconsin, ten towns within Oneida County had higher median home values than both Oneida County and Wisconsin. Among the municipalities in Oneida County, median home values within Oneida County ranged from \$111,600 in the City of Rhineland to \$313,300 in the Town of Hazelhurst. It is important to note that homes on larger pieces of land or along lakefronts can have higher values because of the land's value, rather than value being based just on the home's square footage. This explains why incorporated communities with small lot sizes, such as the City of Rhineland, can have lower home values.

Figure 3-4: Median Value of Owner Occupied Homes



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2018-2022

Housing Costs

Table 3-2 compares the median monthly housing costs throughout Oneida County. There are three housing types to measure when considering housing costs, which are:

1. Households living in owner-occupied homes with a mortgage,
2. Households living in owner-occupied homes without a mortgage, and
3. Renter households. Median monthly housing costs are typically highest for homes with a mortgage and lowest for homes without a mortgage.

Oneida County had a median monthly cost for households in owner-occupied homes with a mortgage of \$1,379 in 2022. Median monthly housing costs for households in owner-occupied homes with a mortgage among Oneida County municipalities ranged from \$954 per month in the Town of Monico to \$1,750 in the Town of Schoepke. Most of the towns within Oneida County had lower median monthly housing costs for households with a mortgage than the State’s

median cost of \$1,602 per month. Households in owner-occupied homes without a mortgage within Oneida County had a median monthly cost of \$481 in 2022. Among Oneida County municipalities, median monthly housing costs ranged from \$344 per month in the Town of Monico to \$624 in the Town of Piehl. Like households with a mortgage, most of the towns within Oneida County had lower median monthly housing costs for households without a mortgage than the State’s median cost of \$624 per month. Median gross rents are generally lower in Oneida County (\$876) than in the State (\$992). Within Oneida County, the median gross rent ranged from \$386 per month in the Town of Lynne to \$1,563 in the Town of Cassian, while the median gross rent for the State was \$992.

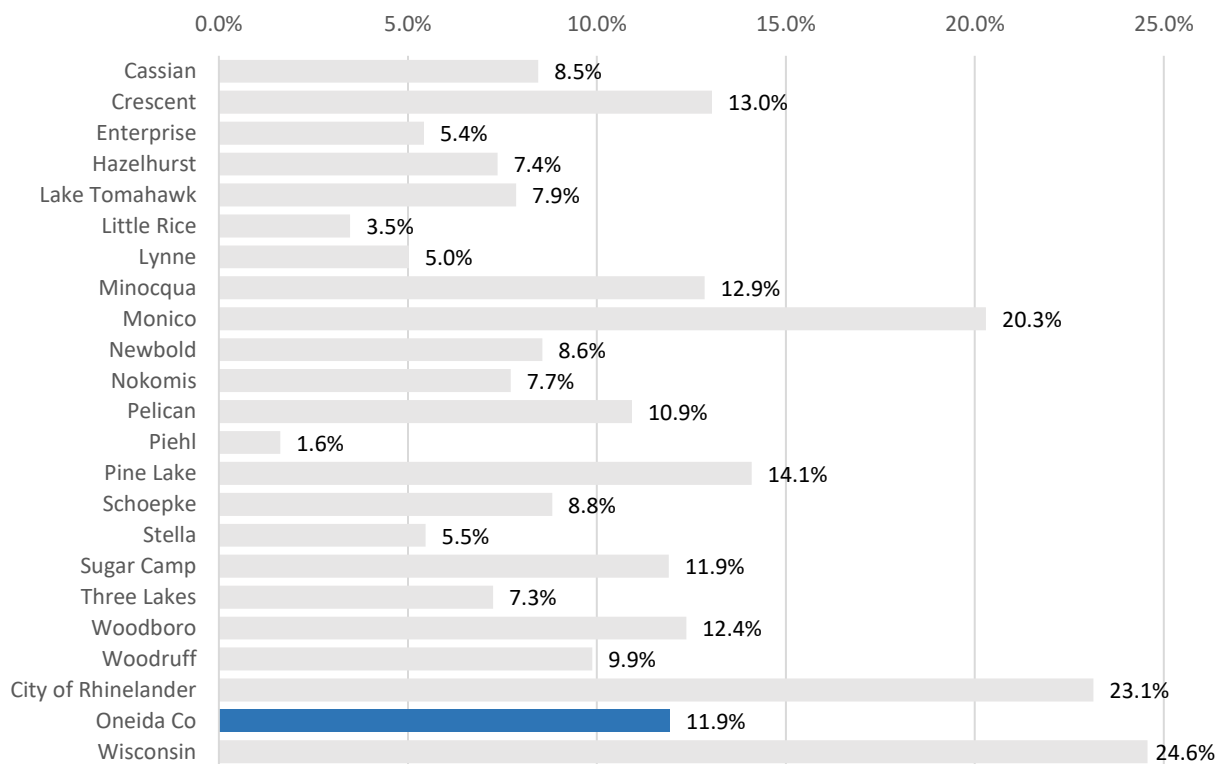
Minor Civil Division	With Mortgage	Without Mortgage	Rent
Cassian	\$1,591	\$499	\$1,563
Crescent	\$1,397	\$483	\$660
Enterprise	\$1,567	\$469	\$813
Hazelhurst	\$1,614	\$489	\$971
Lake Tomahawk	\$1,426	\$469	\$791
Little Rice	\$1,542	\$407	N/A
Lynne	\$1,453	\$437	\$386
Minocqua	\$1,592	\$521	\$939
Monico	\$954	\$344	\$875
Newbold	\$1,355	\$482	\$740
Nokomis	\$1,407	\$594	\$833
Pelican	\$1,205	\$409	\$768
Piehl	\$1,281	\$624	N/A
Pine Lake	\$1,502	\$486	\$796
Schoepke	\$1,750	\$467	\$643
Stella	\$1,134	\$500	N/A
Sugar Camp	\$1,498	\$445	\$840
Three Lakes	\$1,631	\$506	\$847
Woodboro	\$1,520	\$506	\$625
Woodruff	\$1,458	\$444	\$800
City of Rhinelander	\$1,054	\$495	\$867
Oneida County	\$1,379	\$481	\$876
Wisconsin	\$1,602	\$624	\$992

Source: American Community Survey (2018-2022)

Housing Affordability

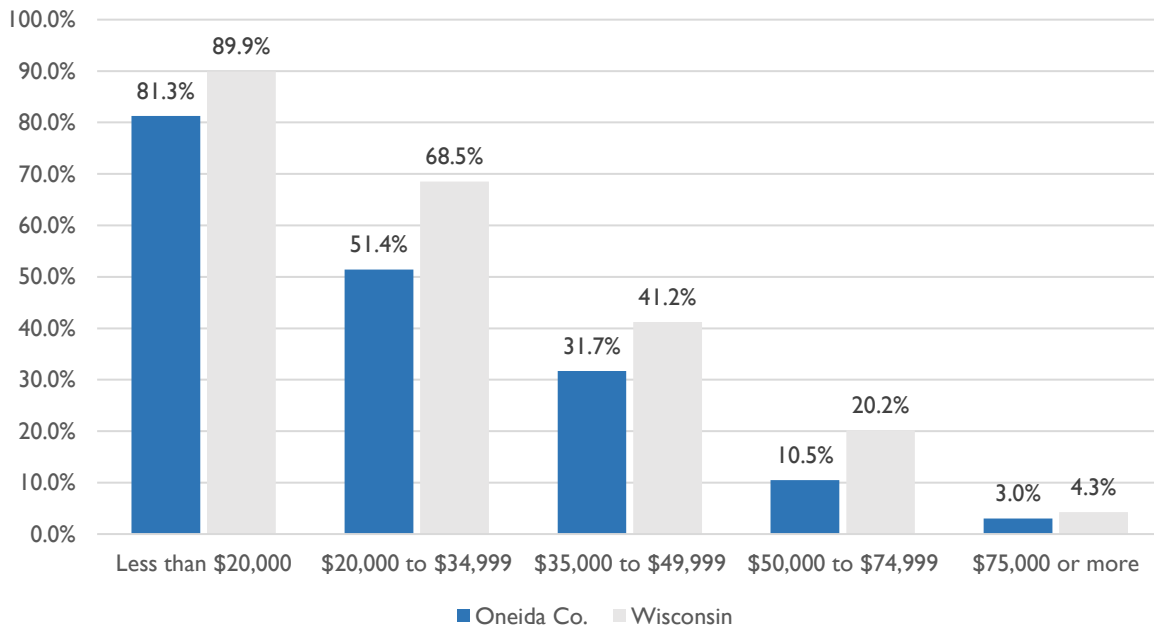
Costs associated with housing are one of the leading expenses in household budgets, with housing costs being the top expense in many household budgets across the nation. There is a consensus that a household is considered cost-burdened if it spends 30% or more of its household income on housing costs each month. This is the accepted definition of housing affordability by HUD. In 2022, over 11% of all households within Oneida County were considered cost-burdened based on this definition. **Figure 3-5** shows the percentage of households considered cost-burdened.

Figure 3-5: Percentage of Households Cost-Burdened



All municipalities within Oneida County had a lower percentage of households considered cost-burdened than the statewide percentage. Housing affordability issues are more common in households with lower incomes. For example, about 81% of households within Oneida County earning less than \$20,000 annually are cost-burdened. In comparison, about 51% of Oneida County households earning between \$20,000 and \$34,999 annually are also cost-burdened. The percentage of cost-burdened households decreases as household income increases, as shown in **Figure 3-6**.

Figure 3-6 Cost Burden by Household Income



Housing tenure also can help identify housing affordability issues for households. Generally, renter-occupied homes are more likely to be cost-burdened by their monthly housing costs than owner-occupied homes. About 46% of renter households within Oneida County are cost-burdened by their monthly housing costs, compared to only about 19% of owner-occupied homes.

One reason for renter households being more likely to be cost-burdened by their monthly housing costs is that renter household incomes tend to be lower than homeowner household incomes, which places renter households at more significant risk of being cost-burdened.

Occupancy Characteristics

Generally, the number of households nationwide is increasing as more people decide to live alone. Additionally, couples today are having fewer children than ever before. These factors have led to the number of households increasing at a faster pace than the population as a whole. As a result of household growth outpacing population growth, average household size has decreased over the past two decades. In 2000, Oneida County’s average household size was 2.4 people, and Wisconsin’s average household size was 2.57 people. In 2022, the average household size had decreased to 2.26 people in Oneida County and to 2.37 people in Wisconsin.

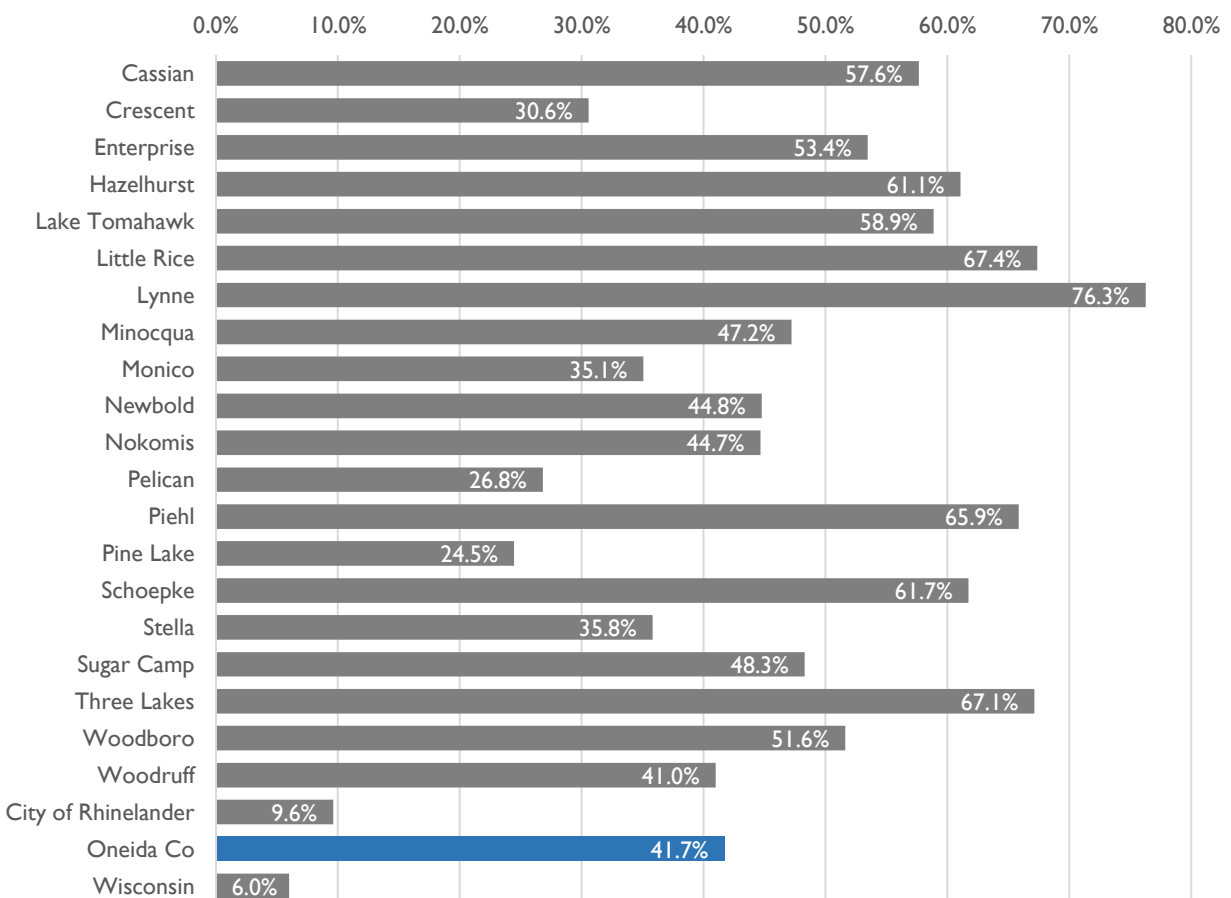
There was a total of 16,417 households within Oneida County in 2022. Homeowners accounted for about 83% of the occupied units (13,558), while renter households accounted for the remaining 17% (2,859). Homeownership rates within Oneida County are significantly higher than in the State, likely due to the County’s rural nature, where rental units are less common than in more urbanized areas. **Table 3-3** displays household types throughout Oneida County.

Table 3-3: Household Types, 2022		
Minor Civil Division	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied
Cassian	96.8%	3.2%
Crescent	93.6%	6.4%
Enterprise	60.3%	39.7%
Hazelhurst	95.3%	4.7%
Lake Tomahawk	91.8%	8.2%
Little Rice	95.7%	4.3%
Lynne	76.3%	23.8%
Minocqua	74.3%	25.7%
Monico	94.2%	5.8%
Newbold	95.7%	4.3%
Nokomis	95.3%	4.7%
Pelican	88.4%	11.6%
Piehl	100.0%	0.0%
Pine Lake	87.3%	12.7%
Schoepke	85.5%	14.5%
Stella	97.9%	2.1%
Sugar Camp	93.7%	6.7%
Three Lakes	88.5%	11.5%
Woodboro	87.3%	12.7%
Woodruff	77.7%	22.3%
City of Rhinelander	64.5%	35.5%
Oneida County		
	82.8%	17.2%
Wisconsin		
	67.1%	32.9%
<i>Source: American Community Survey (2018-2022)</i>		

Seasonal Housing

Oneida County offers residents and visitors year-round recreational opportunities with its abundant natural resources, due to its "Northwoods character." The attractiveness of this asset is demonstrated by the dominance of seasonal/recreational housing units in Oneida County, as 41.7% of all housing units within Oneida County are considered seasonal. **Figure 3-7** displays the percentage of seasonal housing units throughout Oneida County. In addition, the 2017 Wisconsin Act 59, which prohibits local governments from restricting the rental of single-family homes for seven days or more, has changed the reasons lakefront dwellings are being purchased and developed. Some families no longer utilize them on occasional weekends, but operate them as lodging facilities instead.

Figure 3-7: Percentage of Housing Units that are Seasonal



Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022

Housing Programs

The following is a compilation of state and federal funding opportunities that may be relevant to housing projects within Oneida County. This is a partial list of the available grants and loans, and some private funding options exist.

Wisconsin Department of Administration

Community Development Block Grant-Small Cities Housing Program:

The Wisconsin Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Housing (DOH), provides grants to general-purpose units of local government for housing programs that principally benefit low- and moderate-income (LMI) households. These funds are primarily used for rehabilitating housing units, homebuyer assistance, and small neighborhood public facility projects. CDBG dollars are flexible and responsive to local needs.

In addition to addressing LMI housing needs, CDBG can be used to leverage other programs or serve as a local match. The grant also can be used as an incentive to involve the private sector in local community development efforts or to respond to area needs. The CDBG program often catalyzes other community development projects.

Community Development Block Grant-Housing Revolving Loan Fund Program:

Since 1982, over 270 communities in the State of Wisconsin have received Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for housing rehabilitation and homebuyer assistance through the State CDBG Small Cities Housing Program. CDBG housing funds are loaned to low and moderate-income (LMI) households and local landlords in exchange for an agreement to rent to LMI tenants at an affordable rate. Once CDBG housing loans are repaid to the community, they are identified as CDBG Housing Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs).

Under the CDBG housing RLF, homeowners in owner-occupied dwellings and homebuyers receive 0% interest loans, either deferred or low monthly payments. Rental rehabilitation loans are 0% to 3% monthly installment loans. Loans are due in full when the title changes, when the home ceases to be the homeowner's primary residence, or when the property is sold. CDBG housing funds can only be used for CDBG-eligible activities.

Neighborhood Stabilization Program:

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program assists in acquiring and redeveloping foreclosed properties that might otherwise become sources of abandonment and blight within their communities. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires these funds to be targeted to communities with the most severe neighborhood problems associated with the foreclosure crisis.

HOME Homebuyer and Rehabilitation Program:

The Division of Housing (DOH) has identified homeownership and the conservation of quality owner-occupied and rental housing as top priorities for allocating federal and state housing resources. A program was established to provide essential home purchase assistance, necessary home rehabilitation, and other vital improvements for dwelling units occupied by low- and moderate-income households. The source of funds is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOH) awards these funds to local units of government and local housing organizations through a biennial funding cycle.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC):

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), like HOME, aims to encourage the production and rehabilitation of affordable housing. It provides an incentive for private entities to develop affordable housing. The credit reduces the federal taxes an individual or corporation owes for an investment in low-income rental housing. The amount of the tax deduction is tied to the proportion of low-income residents in the housing produced. The credit is paid out over 15 years to investors in the housing project. LIHTC provides funding for the construction of new buildings or the rehabilitation or conversion of existing structures. To qualify, a property must set aside a particular share of its units for low-income households.

Home Improvement Advantage Loan

With this loan, a homeowner can borrow up to \$15,000 to improve the quality and value of their home. The borrower must have no late mortgage payments in the past six months, a credit score of 620 or better, total mortgage debt cannot exceed 110% of value, and the household must meet WHEDA Home Improvement Advantage income limits.

[U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)

Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers are administered by several housing authorities within Oneida County. Eligible families are issued vouchers that they can use to secure housing in the private market. Having found a suitable housing unit that meets minimum health and safety standards, where the owner has agreed to rent under the program, the eligible family uses its voucher to cover the part of the rent beyond the portion it pays, usually 30% of its income. The landlord receives a subsidy directly for the amount of the Fair Market Rent not paid by the tenant. The voucher-holder signs a lease for at least one year, and the landlord signs a contract with their local housing authority, running concurrently with the lease. Eligibility for the program is generally limited to families with incomes below 50% of the median for the County in which they reside. The program is open to any housing unit where the owner agrees to participate and where the unit satisfies the standards. Congress is considering replacing the current voucher program with a block grant to states. If enacted, eligibility criteria for the program may change.

[U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development \(USDA-RD\)](#)

Section 502 Homeownership Direct Loan. This program of the Rural Health Service (RHS) provides loans to help low-income households purchase and prepare sites or purchase, build, repair, renovate, or relocate homes.

Section 502 Mutual Self-Help Housing Loans. These loans are designed to help very low-income households construct their own homes. Targeted families include those who cannot buy affordable housing through conventional means. Participating families perform approximately 65% of the construction under qualified supervision.

Section 504 Very-Low-Income Housing Repair Program. This program provides loans and grants to low-income homeowners to repair, improve, or modernize their homes. Improvements must make the homes safer and more sanitary or remove health or safety hazards.

Section 515 Multi-Family Housing Loan. This program supports the construction of multi-family housing for low-income residents. The program, which has been in Wisconsin since 1969, involves the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) underwriting fifty-year mortgages at a 1% interest rate in exchange for an agreement to provide housing for low and very low-income residents.

Section 521 Rural Rental Assistance (RA). This program provides an additional subsidy for households with incomes too low to pay Rural Housing Service (RHS)-subsidized rents.

Section 523 Rural Housing Site Loans. These loans are designed to aid public non-profit and private organizations to acquire sites for affordable housing.

Section 533 Rural Housing Preservation Grants. These grants are designed to assist sponsoring organizations in repairing or rehabilitating low-income or very low-income housing. Assistance is available for landlords or members of a cooperative.

Single Family Home Loan Guarantees. These loans are designed to assist and encourage lenders to extend 100% loans to moderate- and low-income rural homebuyers by providing a 90% loan note guarantee to lenders to reduce the potential risk of extending full loans to these potential homebuyers.

Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1: Encourage adequate supply of affordable housing for all individuals of all income levels consistent with the County's rural character.

Objectives:

- Encourage local land use controls and permitting procedures that allow affordable housing opportunities.
- Encourage appropriate public and private sector development of housing within the county.

Policies:

- Consider using manufactured housing as an affordable, well-regulated source of housing.
- Encourage that adequate opportunities for multi-family housing to meet the needs of moderate-income families are available, especially in areas where service jobs are prevalent.
- Continue County support of a County-wide housing authority.
- Make changes to zoning ordinances that reduce the cost of housing.

Goal 2: Encourage residential development in suitable areas.

Objectives:

- Encourage residential development in areas that avoid conflict.
- Encourage multi-family dwellings and subdivision facilities.

Policies:

- Discourage the location of new development in areas that are shown to be unsuitable for specific uses due to flood hazards, groundwater pollution, highway access problems, etc.

Utilities & Community Facilities

Background

This chapter reviews utilities and community facilities in the County, which include solid waste disposal, onsite wastewater recycling facilities, parks, telecommunications facilities, transmission lines, cemeteries, health care facilities, childcare facilities, and other public facilities, such as police, fire and rescue facilities, libraries, schools, and other government facilities. This chapter includes a discussion of utility and community facility issues, background, inventory, and trends, followed by this chapter’s goals, objectives, and policies.

[Previous Plans and Studies](#)

[Groundwater Coordinating Council 2023 Report](#)

The residents of Oneida County rely on groundwater for drinking water and agricultural uses. This demand makes it especially important to implement policies to ensure the quality and quantity of water resources. Statewide, minimal changes to Wisconsin’s groundwater laws have been allowed despite emerging pollutants like nitrates, pesticides, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), metals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and bacteria. This report recommends adjusting groundwater rules in response to changes to state standards, evaluating and monitoring geology and soils to develop management practices that prevent water from being contaminated, and educating the public about health and contamination concerns.

[Regional Livability Plan \(2015\)](#)

The Regional Livability Plan (RLP) is the most updated version of NCWRPC’s comprehensive plan. The RLP discusses utility and community facility issues throughout the ten-county North Central Region. The RLP focuses on a range of trends in public facilities and makes general recommendations on how local governments throughout the ten-county region can manage them.

[Oneida County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan \(2023\)](#)

This document is required for local governments to be eligible for certain disaster mitigation programs. The report looks at general conditions in Oneida County, including population, transportation, land use, and economics. An inventory of utilities, community facilities and emergency services form the background for understanding how the County might respond to a disaster. Risk assessment is at the heart of the All-Hazards Mitigation program. To mitigate the risks, it's necessary to assess their relative importance. Examples of hazards include floods, tornadoes, winter storms, drought, fire, and hazardous materials accidents. The likelihood of any given hazard occurring is estimated based on historical data, and the impact of these hazards is evaluated. The plan seeks to recommend how County government should respond to such occurrences and suggests mitigation measures to reduce the risk caused by identified hazards.

[Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\), 2019-2023](#)

This plan classifies, measures, and provides for the preferences and needs of a statewide recreating public. An estimated 95 percent of Wisconsin residents participate in outdoor recreation, and as a result, it is an important part of the State's economy. Demand in the Northwoods portion of the state where Oneida County is located includes ATV/UTV riding, road bicycling, mountain biking, developed and primitive camping, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking, hunting, off-highway motorcycle riding, participating in nature-based education programs, and snowmobiling.

[State Trails Network Plan](#)

This 2003 document clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in providing all types of trails. The Plan identifies potential trail corridors linking 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 creating recreational and alternative transportation corridors.

[Segment 15—Ashland to Rhinelander](#)

This potential trail would connect Ashland with Woodruff, Minocqua, Rhinelander, and finally to Crandon.

Segment 19—Langlade Co to Michigan

This corridor links the State of Michigan with the Mountain Bay Trail near Eland in Marathon County. This corridor also links to the proposed Three Lakes to Rhinelander and Crandon to Tomahawk corridors in Oneida County.

Segment 68—Rhinelander to Three Lakes

This corridor would link these two communities by an off-road connection. At Rhinelander, links to the Washburn to Fond du Lac corridor, and at Three Lakes, links to the Langlade County to Michigan corridor are possible.

Segment 69—Tomahawk to Crandon

This corridor would link these two communities by an offroad connector. This corridor intersects the Langlade County to Michigan corridor at Pelican Lake. It links the Argonne to Shawano corridor in the east with the Tomahawk to Wausau corridor in the west.

[North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan, 2018](#)

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan analyzes bicycle and pedestrian transportation throughout the North Central Region. The purpose of this Plan is to “recommend policies, programs, and facilities to improve the safety, viability, convenience, and attractiveness of bicycling and walking for transportation.” This Plan also creates a regional network of safe walking and bicycling.

The Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan contains the following four region-wide goals:

- **Mobility** – The Trail System must enhance bicyclists’ ability to get around the Region including access to key destinations such as schools, parks, retail areas, and other public facilities.
- **Functionality** – New off-road routes, improved existing street routes, signage and marking, and route promotion must be combined to function as a system that is easy and desirable.
- **Safety** – Every bicyclist and pedestrian in the North Central Region deserves a system that is safe for travel.
- **Connectivity** – The Trail System must provide a seamless transportation system on multiple levels, including internal to all areas of a community, external to outlying

neighbors around the Region, and becoming a part of the bigger picture of a statewide trails network.

Oneida County Countywide Biking & Walking Routes & Trails Plan, 2002

In 2002, the Oneida County Biking and Walking Trails Council developed this bike route plan with assistance from NCWRPC. This Plan proposed a system of non-motorized transportation routes and trails throughout the County with connections to Rhinelander. The Plan was updated in 2010, but the County did not adopt the update. However, the main elements of the Plan have been integrated into the County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

City of Rhinelander Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2019

The Plan builds upon the 2003 Rhinelander Area Pathways Project to develop strategies for improving bicycle and pedestrian transportation throughout Rhinelander. Potential policies and infrastructure changes are identified, along with a potential improvement time frame and who will initiate the change for each project. This Plan includes engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation recommendations to provide a well-rounded and complete bicycle and pedestrian network.

Oneida County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2024-2028

The primary purpose of this Recreation Plan is to provide continued direction in meeting the County's current and future recreation needs. This direction takes the form of an inventory and analysis of outdoor recreational facilities followed by establishing recommendations to meet identified needs. Adopting this Plan and its subsequent acceptance by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) allows for continued eligibility for financial assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), the Stewardship Fund, and many other federal and state funding programs.

For individuals with disabilities, the focus remains on the development of assistive technologies that enable the more effective use of telecommunications infrastructure by improving access to computers, web pages, and internet connections.

American Transmission Company: 10-Year Transmission System Assessment, 2022-2031

The American Transmission Company manages transmission infrastructure in the state. New projects are planned in surrounding counties to improve flexibility, reliability, economic factors, connectivity, and performance.

Inventory and Trends

Below is a summary of existing utilities and community facilities in Oneida County, along with related facts and descriptions.

County Government

Below is a list of County and County-related departments and their locations, all of which have a Rhinelander address:

- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), 100 Keenan St.
- Emergency Management, 2000 E. Winnebago St.
- Highway Department, 730 W. Kemp St.
- Oneida County Jail, 2000 E. Winnebago St.
- Public Health, 100 W. Keenan St.
- Sheriff's Office, 2000 E. Winnebago St.
- Solid Waste, 7450 CTH K
- U.W. Extension, Northwoods Center, Room 121 at Nicolet College (5364 College Dr.)

All other departments are located at the Oneida County Courthouse, 1 S. Oneida Ave. in Rhinelander:

- Buildings and Grounds
- Circuit Court Branches I and II
- Clerk of Courts
- Corporation Counsel Office
- County Clerk
- District Attorney
- Finance
- Forestry and Outdoor Recreation
- Information Technology Services
- Labor Relations and Employee Services
- Land and Water Conservation
- Land Information
- Medical Examiner
- Planning and Zoning
- Probate/Juvenile

- Register of Deeds
- Social Services
- Treasurer
- Veteran's Services

Water-related Facilities

Drinking Water

The City of Rhinelander, Lake Tomahawk, the Lakeland Sanitary District encompassing the parts of the Towns of Minocqua, Woodruff, and Arbor Vitae (Vilas County), and the Three Lakes Sanitary District #1 all provide water supplies for domestic and commercial use to the town centers. These systems depend on high-capacity wells drawing groundwater, water towers, and underground reservoirs for storage. The City of Rhinelander has a Wellhead Protection Ordinance which protects groundwater quality from runoff.

Wastewater

A municipal wastewater treatment facility serving the City of Rhinelander is located on the south side of the City along the Wisconsin River. Wastewater treatment facilities serve the Lakeland Sanitary District #1, the Lake Tomahawk Sanitary District, and the Three Lakes Sanitary Districts #1 and #2.

In Oneida County, a combination of County and state regulations control the installation and maintenance of privately owned wastewater disposal systems (POWTS). Traditionally, onsite disposal systems have relied on drain fields or mounds that spread effluent over a large area, allowing waste to be dispersed without adversely affecting groundwater quality. The success of these systems is dependent on the depth and permeability of the soils in which they are installed.

Stormwater

The majority of Rhinelander is currently served by the City's concrete pipe storm sewer system. Portions of Lake Tomahawk and Three Lakes have storm sewers, the built-up "island" area of Minocqua-Woodruff, and along major highways (51,47 & 70).

Dams

According to the 2023 Oneida County All Hazards Mitigation Plan, 44 dams are used for agriculture, recreation, erosion control, flood control, and electric power generation. There are 20 large dams, defined as being over 20 feet in height. The Hat Rapids and Rhinelander Paper Mill Dams have the ability to produce electricity.

High-Capacity Wells

High-capacity wells are defined as wells with a capacity of at least 100,000 gallons per day. Most of these wells in the County are owned and operated privately, but municipalities also operate some to provide drinking water for municipal water systems. See the WDNR's Water Use Viewer map or high-capacity well search on the agency's website for up-to-date information about the number, location, and ownership of these wells and other details. As of November 2023, WDNR's website listed permits for high-capacity well withdrawal locations in Oneida County, including 188 groundwater and 33 surface water locations.

Solid Waste and Recycling Facilities

The Oneida County Solid Waste Department is located at 7450 CTH K, and the County Public Works Committee oversees the solid waste and recycling programs. Municipalities contract with private haulers throughout the County to provide solid waste and recycling pick-up, and several transfer sites are also located in Minocqua and Three Lakes. Waste and recycling are transported to the defunct Oneida County Landfill site and collected and transported via a contracted private hauler to a landfill site outside the County with the location determined by the County's current contract, which is subject to change.

Public Works

Town Halls and Garages

Each Town and the City of Rhinelander have a primary public building to house government functions and other public meetings. Several communities also have other buildings that are garages for the storage of road maintenance equipment as well as firefighting equipment. Many of the Town Halls are also where solid waste transfer sites are located.

Drainage Districts

There are currently no public drainage districts in Oneida County.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries serve as unique and tangible links to our past. There are 38 cemeteries located throughout the County depicted on Maps 4-1 and 4-2: Utilities & Community Facilities.

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The Oneida County Sheriff's Office, the Minocqua Police Department, the Rhinelander Police Department, the Three Lakes Police Department, and the Woodruff Police Department are the six law enforcement agencies within Oneida County. The State Patrol has statewide jurisdiction on all public roads but operates mainly on State and U.S.-numbered highways. The County Sheriff provides general law enforcement services throughout the County, and it operates the County Jail, along with the County's 911 Dispatch Center, Emergency Services, HAZMAT, and the Oneida County Ambulance Service. Other services that the Sheriff's Office provides are Dive Team, North Central Drug Enforcement Group (NORDEG), Drone Team, Project Lifesaver. The Minocqua, Rhinelander, Three Lakes Police, Woodruff Departments patrol their respective communities.

Fire

There are seventeen fire departments that serve the local units of government in Oneida County. The Rhinelander Fire Department is a paid full-time department, while the remainder of the departments: Cassian, Crescent, Hazelhurst, Lake Tomahawk, Little Rice, Minocqua, Monico, Newbold, Nokomis, Pine Lake, Pelican, Pelican Lake Fire District, Alpha, Sugar Camp, Stella, Three Lakes, and Woodruff rely on volunteers.

Prisons and Jails

Oneida County has two facilities: The McNaughton Correctional Center in Lake Tomahawk, a state prison, and the Oneida County Jail in Rhinelander.

Emergency Medical Service (EMS)

Oneida County contracts with Aspirus to provide a County Wide Ambulance service. Oneida County Ambulance Service provides emergency medical response to all unincorporated municipalities within Oneida County along with some outside areas of Vilas, Lincoln, Langlade, and Forest Counties.

Healthcare

The County is home to several medical facilities, and some residents near the edge of the county may have additional options in surrounding counties. Within Oneida County's boundaries, there is Aspirus Clinic, Howard Young Medical Center, and Marshfield Clinic Woodruff Center in the

Town of Woodruff; Marshfield Medical Center in the Town of Minocqua; and Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital, Aspirus Rhinelander Clinic, Marshfield Clinic Rhinelander Center, and Rhinelander VA Clinic in the City of Rhinelander.

Education, Recreation, and Culture

Libraries

There are three libraries in Oneida County:

- Minocqua Public Library, 415 Menominee St
- Rhinelander District Library, 106 Stevens St
- Demmer Memorial Library (Three Lakes Public Library), 6961 W School St
- Nicolet College Library, 5364 College Dr

Schools throughout the County may also have small libraries within them.

Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas

In addition to managing the County Forest, Oneida County manages Almon Park, Perch Lake Park, and Enterprise Campground. Remote camping is allowed in the County Forest. Information is available on the Oneida County Forestry and Outdoor Recreation website and Map 4-3 of this Plan. The proposed 2024-2028 Oneida County Outdoor Recreation Plan, available on NCWRPC's website, contains a list of proposed improvements to County-managed properties.

Public lands not managed by Oneida County are described in detail in Chapter 2: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources. Trails are described in Chapter 5: Transportation. In summary, there are 18 state natural areas, two state wildlife areas, one state forest, one national forest, and 16 school district forests. There are also parks, playgrounds, and trails managed by school districts and municipalities throughout the County. See WDNR and USDA for more information.

Great Pinery Heritage Waterway

On August 26, 2023, the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway officially opened to the public, featuring the Wisconsin River and its tributaries. This 108-mile-long trail begins at the Hat Rapids Dam in Oneida County and ends at the Lake DuBay Dam in Portage County, connecting to the Lower Big Rib River Trail and the Lower Eau Claire Waterway in Marathon County. New maps and signage help with navigation, and this State Trail is expected to receive National Trail status in 2024. Information is available on the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway website.

Schools

The following school districts are fully or partially located in Oneida County:

Unified School Districts:

- Northland Pines (one high school, one charter high school, one middle school, one charter middle school, four elementary schools, and one alternative school)
- Prentice (one high school, one middle school, one elementary school, and one virtual school)
- Tomahawk (one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school)
- Rhinelander (one high school, one middle school, and four elementary schools)
- Elcho (PK-12 in one building)
- Three Lakes (one junior/senior high school and two elementary schools)

Other Schools:

- Minocqua Joint School District: (MHLT Elementary School and Lakeland STAR School)
- Woodruff Joint School District: Arbor Vitae – Woodruff Elementary School
- Lakeland Union High School (one high school that serves students from Minocqua and Arbor Vitae – Woodruff Joint School Districts)

Private schools include Zion Lutheran Grade School in Rhinelander, Trinity Lutheran School in Minocqua, Nativity of our Lord Catholic School in Rhinelander, and St. Mary's Grade School in Tomahawk.

Colleges

Nicolet College's main campus is in the City of Rhinelander, with an additional location in the Town of Minocqua and several other locations in Forest, Lincoln, and Vilas Counties. It is part of the Wisconsin Technical College System and offers associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates. Although no four-year colleges or universities are in Oneida County, Nicolet College has transfer programs where students can complete a four-year degree at another school when they finish their two-year program locally.

Museums

Museums in Oneida County include:

- Pioneer Park Historical Complex

- Rhinelander Historical Society
- Northwoods Petroleum Museum
- Dr. Kate Museum
- PPHC – Railroad Museum
- Three Lakes Historical Museum
- Minocqua Museum
- ArtStart Rhinelander
- Lake Tomahawk Museum, 7247 Kelly Dr

Cultural resources are explained in more detail in Chapter 2 of this Plan.

Childcare

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families maintains an up-to-date list of licensed daycare providers and a search tool. According to the search tool, there are approximately 16 licensed facilities in the County, with most clustered in or near the City of Rhinelander.

Energy and Telecommunications

Electric

The Wisconsin Public Service Corporation supplies most of the County’s electricity, with smaller areas on the western side of the County being served by Price Electric Cooperative and Northern States Power Company. The American Transmission Company (ATC) operates several high-voltage lines that traverse the County, all of which are 115 kV lines. Most of them are single-circuit lines, with one multiple-circuit line extending from the City of Rhinelander towards Lincoln County.

Natural Gas

Natural Gas Service is provided by the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation, but not all areas in the County have gas service. Residents with no nearby gas connection often rely on liquid propane (LP) for heating, cooking, and other uses. There are no natural gas pipelines in Oneida County.

Telecommunications

Internet service continues to expand as an economic development necessity, and access to internet service varies greatly throughout the County. Landline and cellular phone service are

also essential for communications. Topographic features limit where lines can be buried or where cellular signals can reach. Broadband is currently being expanded throughout the County.

Onieda County is currently improving and developing Broadband options with various companies as part of a Countywide effort to expand service. Landline phone service providers in Oneida County include CenturyLink and Frontier. Cable TV lines provide digital signals known as wireline access, and other providers use satellite or wireless technology. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Oneida County are AirRunner Networks, Astrea, Brightspeed, Bug Tussel, Charter – Spectrum, ChoiceTEL, Frontier, HughesNet, King Street Wireless, SonicNet, and Viasat, Inc. Mobile internet and Cellular coverage is available from AT&T, Cellcom, Sprint, and Verizon. Other providers may get a signal in the County where roaming agreements exist.

Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1: Strive to provide the best quality public services to all the citizens of the County, including water related facilities, solid waste and recycling facilities, public works, public safety, health care, education, recreation, culture, energy, and telecommunication.

Objectives:

- Monitor the effects of Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS) by inspecting them every three years (five years for housing with seasonal occupancy).
- Provide law enforcement, ambulance, volunteer fire, and first responder services to residents, whether by the County or by local units of government.
- Support high-quality educational opportunities for all residents.
- Monitor and respond to PFAS as issues, information, and programs continue to emerge.

Policies:

- Ensure that schools, public safety, health care, and other community facilities are of the highest quality without placing undue financial burden on County taxpayers.
- Make more extensive use of the Wisconsin Fund to upgrade failing onsite disposal systems on qualifying properties.
- Assure public health and groundwater quality when permitting and monitoring private onsite wastewater and wells.
- Encourage the development of a comprehensive County-wide trail plan that includes facilities for hikers, bikers, ATVs, and disabled and elderly individuals and a system that ties together attractions and natural and cultural resources throughout the County.
- Encourage land acquisition and development strategies for parks, as outlined in the County Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- Promote improved broadband internet service throughout the County.

Chapter Five:

Transportation

Background

Oneida County’s transportation system includes roads, airports, lakes and rivers, various types of trails, as well as utility corridors. The transportation system supports the movement of people and products within a community and connects to areas beyond. Transportation plays a major role in the efficiency, safety, and overall desirability of the community as a place to live and work.

Previous Plans and Studies

Federal Transportation Plans

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), most known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) is the current federal level transportation policy and spending program for fiscal years 2022-2026. 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.

State Transportation Plans

Connect 2050. Connect 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.

Regional Comprehensive Plan

Regional Livability Plan (2015). Transportation is one of four elements included in the Regional Livability Plan (RLP), adopted by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in 2015. The Transportation Assessment Report identifies trends and issues facing transportation. Three issues were identified: the modes of transportation to work, the age of drivers in the region, and high transportation maintenance costs. The RLP's transportation goals are:

- Provide and improve transportation access to people of all ages and abilities to ensure lifelong mobility and accessibility.
- Fund the maintenance and expansion of the transportation system.
- Enhance the regional economy by supporting airports and freight rail.

Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2018

The plan assesses existing conditions related to bicycling and walking, identifies other potential trail and route user groups, identifies routes, and describes policies and programs to assist local governments in improving bicycling and walking in North Central Wisconsin. The plan contains the following four region-wide goals: mobility, functionality, safety, and connectivity. This means that destinations should be connected to each other with trails that are safe and easy to use.

County Transportation Plans

Oneida - Vilas County Locally Developed, Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan 2019-2023 Oneida County developed this five-year plan, which analyzes service gaps and needs in public transit and human services transportation and proposes strategies and funding sources to address the gaps and needs.

Local Transportation Plans

City of Rhinelander Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2019 The focus of this plan is to improve bicycling and walking throughout the City of Rhinelander. This plan focuses on guidelines for planning bicycle and pedestrian facilities, with general design and funding information included. This plan also examines existing conditions for biking and walking and suggests routes and improvements.

Inventory and Trends

Oneida County has a road network, rail lines and yards, a public airport, and private landing strips. This section describes the road network, traffic volumes, commuting patterns, network users, and other modes of transportation. See Map 5-1: Transportation.

Road Network

The County's Highway Department is responsible for the network of County Highways throughout the county. The county also has a joint Oneida and Vilas County Transit Committee and a Traffic Safety Committee. Analysis of the road system's traffic patterns, review of traffic counts, study of accident reports, discussion with individuals at the local, county, and state levels, and finally, a field survey of the roads can assist in providing possible recommendations relevant to the system.

Roadway Classifications

Oneida County's roadway network has about 1,685.7 miles of public highways and streets. Roads are classified in two ways: 1) by jurisdiction and 2) by function. The jurisdictional classification indicates who owns or is responsible for the roadway. The functional classification identifies the role or function the roadway plays in moving traffic.

Jurisdictional Classification

Within a jurisdictional framework, the County's roads fall into three major classifications: federal (USH) and state (STH) highways, county highways (CTH) and City, Village, or Town streets and roads, which are called local roads. There are no interstate highways (ISH) in Oneida County.

Cities, Towns, and Villages maintain jurisdiction over the greatest mileage of the County's road system (1,351.4 miles) with about 80% of the total mileage. County trunk highways make up the next largest category with 171.2 miles, or just over 10% of the system, followed by federal highways (94 miles, or 5.6% of the system). Finally, State Highways comprise 69.3 miles, or 4.1% of the system. Table 5-1 lists the mileage breakdown for the County's road network by jurisdictional classification. There are additional non-public roads in the County not listed here.

Table 5-1: Road Milage by Jurisdictional and Functional Class

	Arterial	Collector	Local	Total
Federal	94.0	0.0	0.0	94.0
State	59.9	9.3	0.0	69.3
County	5.9	163.8	1.4	171.2
Local	13.6	250.6	1,087.2	1,351.4
Total	173.4	423.8	1,088.6	1,685.7

Source: WisDOT

Functional Classification

A functional classification system groups streets and highways into classes according to the character of service they provide. The current functional classification system used in Wisconsin consists of five classifications that are divided into urban and rural categories. Functional classifications are used to determine eligibility for federal aid. For purposes of functional classification, federal regulations define urban as places of 5,000 or more population, so the rural classifications apply in municipalities with populations below this threshold. Descriptions of each functional class are as follows:

- Principal Arterials serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics of an interstate of interregional nature. These routes generally serve all urban areas greater than 5,000 population or connect major centers of activity and the highest traffic volumes and the longest trip desires.
- Minor Arterials, in conjunction with principal arterials, serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators, providing intracommunity continuity and service to trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials.
- Major Collectors provide service to moderate-sized communities and other inter-area traffic generators and link those generators to nearby larger population centers or higher function routes.
- Minor Collectors collect traffic from local roads and provide links to all remaining smaller communities, local important traffic generators, and higher function roads. All developed areas should be within a reasonable distance of a collector road.
- Local Roads comprise all facilities not on one of the higher systems. They serve primarily to provide direct access to abutting land and access to the higher order of systems. Local streets offer the highest level of access, but the lowest level of mobility for automobiles.

Oneida County’s principal arterials include USH-8, USH-45, USH-51, most of STH-32, and STH-70, with most of STH-47 acting as a minor arterial. Major collectors include STH-47 northwest of Woodruff and STH-32 east of Three Lakes, and all remaining CTHs, and over 250 miles of local roads are either major or minor collectors. Almost all local roads are owned by local units of government. See Map 5-1: Transportation and Table 5-1 for details.

The distribution of roads within the functional categories falls within current state guidelines. The guidelines suggest that principal and minor arterials combined should be between 6 and 12%, collectors between 10 to 28%, and local roads between 65 to 75% of the total system. The functional classifications in Table 5-1 fit within these guidelines, except local roads, which are only slightly under (64.6%).

Surface Conditions

To assess the condition of the county’s roadways, the Oneida County Highway Department uses the WISLR (Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads) system developed by the University of Wisconsin Transportation Information Center for measuring the condition of their roadways. The rating system is called PASER, which stands for Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating. Although there are different scales for concrete, asphalt, sealcoat, gravel, and unimproved roads, they are generally based on a scale ranging between "1" (very poor condition) to "10" (excellent condition). Every other year the road network is rated, and that rating is used for the determination of improvements. See Table 5-2.

Table 5-2: Pavement Surface Rating		
Rating	Miles	Percent of Total
Very Poor	0.0	0.0%
Poor	17.0	10.0%
Fair	48.8	28.6%
Good	32.9	19.3%
Very Good	52.8	31.0%
Excellent	19.0	11.1%
Total	170.5	100.0%
Source: WisDOT; NCWRPC		

The riding surface of the County Highway system is currently in good condition with the majority (61.4%) being rated as having good, very good, or excellent surface condition. About 28.6% of roads are in fair condition, and 10% are either not rated or in poor or very poor condition. Note

that this is only referring to surface conditions, and not the road base, which can be affected by wetness, frost action, and expansive or weak soils that affect a road's lifespan.

Proposed Highway Improvements

WisDOT's current State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) identifies improvements to state and federal highways between 2023 and 2028. The County Highway Department prepares its own roadway management plan identifying needed improvements on County highways. These improvements are subject to change based funding and needs. Proposed improvements to the County's highway system are shown in Table 5-3.

Table 5-3: Oneida County Highway Improvement Program					
Year	Highway	From	To	Milage	Type of Improvement
2023	STH-17	USH-8	Stevens St	3.19	Pavement Replacement
2023	USH-8	Tracy Rd	N McCord Rd	2.93	Resurface
2023	USH-8	USH 8 and 45 Intersection		0.40	Pavement Replacement
2023	USH-8	N Rifle Rd	STH 47	3.20	Pavement Replacement
2023	USH-51	Lake Katherine Bridge		0.05	Bridge Maintenance
2024	STH-17	Stevens St	Pollyanna Rd	1.07	Pavement Replacement
2024	USH-8	CTH-G	CTH-P	4.46	Pavement Replacement
2024	USH-51	Manitou Park	Minocqua Lake Bridge	0.43	Pavement Replacement
2025	USH-51	USH-8	Bearskin Bridge	7.15	Resurface
2025	USH-51	Front St	3rd Ave	1.74	Resurface
2026	USH-8	STH-47	CTH-G	1.44	Pavement Replacement
2026	USH-51	Minocqua Bridge	Front St	0.39	Resurface
2027-2028	STH-32	Whitefish Lake Inlet		0.01	Culvert Replacement
2027-2028	USH-8	Gatewood Heights Rd	N Rifle Rd	10.81	Resurface
2027-2028	USH-45	USH-8	STH-32	16.45	Resurface
2027-2028	STH-32	Old 32 Rd	Oneida Co. Line	3.57	Resurface

Source: WisDOT

Trucking

There are two types of WisDOT designated truck routes within Oneida County: Designated Long Truck Routes and 65-foot Restricted Truck Routes. The Designated Long Truck Routes are USHs 8, 45 and 51 and STHs 17, 47, and 70. STH 32 east of US 45 and STH 47 west of USH 51 are 65-foot Restricted Truck Routes. Local issues such as safety, weight restriction, and noise impacts play significant roles in the designation of local truck routes.

County highways connect the County's rural areas with the designated state truck routes and serve an important role in linking the County's agricultural and forestry resources to the Region's major highways and economic centers. All county highways are generally open to truck traffic. The County uses seasonal weight limits to minimize damage.

Traffic

Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts for selected locations in Oneida County are shown on the Transportation Map. The counts come from WisDOT's regular traffic counting program selected to give a general feeling for the traffic levels throughout the County. The selected counts do not necessarily reflect the peak traffic location of a given road. Average Annual Daily Traffic counts are calculated by multiplying raw hourly traffic counts by seasonal, day-of-week, and axle adjustment factors. The daily hourly values are then averaged by hour of the day and the values are summed to create the AADT count. Traffic in Oneida County ranges from a few cars a day on remote town roads to more than 20,000 on USH 51 in Minocqua during the tourist season.

Traffic Counts

Traffic volume is an indicator of roadway use and WisDOT maintains a traffic count program. There are several sites where counts are conducted in the county. Table 5-4 below displays the annual average daily traffic counts (AADTs) for 2012 and 2022 for 18 selected locations in Oneida County. Note that the most recent traffic counts for these locations are mapped out on the Transportation Map in addition to many other traffic count locations.

Between 2012 and 2022, daily traffic levels increased throughout Oneida County, with only 4 of the 18 traffic count locations listed in Table 5-4 experiencing a decrease in traffic volume. According to the County's previous Comprehensive Plan, traffic levels have been increasing since 2010. The largest percentage increase in traffic volumes between 2012 and 2022 occurred at the USH 45 between Javen Rd and STH 32 East location, where daily traffic volume increased by over 69 percent. However, this location's 2012 count was abnormally low compared to other

years of traffic counts in the same location. It is worth noting that three of four decreases in traffic counts in Table 5-4 occurred in the City of Rhinelander.

Table 5-4: Traffic Counts				
Traffic Count Location	Community	2012	2022	% Change
STH 17 North of Lincoln Co. Line	Crescent	2,000	2,300	15%
USH 51 South of CTH Y	Hazelhurst	6,100	7,100	16%
STH 47 North of CTH D East	Lake Tomahawk	4,500	5,400	20%
USH 51 South of STH 70	Minocqua	18,800	21,000	12%
USH 8/USH 45 Btwn USH 45 N & S	Monico	4,700	4,000	-15%
USH 45 North of CTH C West	Piehl	1,500	2,000	33%
STH 17 NE of CTH W	Pine Lake	6,600	8,800	33%
STH 47 Btwn CTH K & Meadow Dr Rhinelander	Rhinelander	6,900	6,800	-1%
USH 8 Btwn STH 47 & S River Rd	Rhinelander	10,900	9,500	-13%
STH 17 Btwn Stevens St & Shepard Lake Rd	Rhinelander	8,800	11,900	35%
Stevens St Btwn Phillip St & Timber Dr	Rhinelander	10,000	5,800	-42%
USH 45 Btwn CTH B East & CTH B West	Schoepke	3,200	3,300	3%
STH 17 South of CTH D West	Sugar Camp	5,000	6,800	36%
USH 45 Btwn Javen Rd & STH 32 East	Three Lakes	1,300	2,200	69%
USH 51 South of CTH N	Woodboro	4,900	7,100	45%
USH 8 NE of CTH N & E Of Shady Rest Rd	Woodboro	5,800	6,100	5%
STH 70 Btwn Mercer Lake Rd & Duvall Ct	Woodruff	4,600	6,000	30%
USH 51 Btwn Lemma Creek Rd & STH 47	Woodruff	14,300	15,800	10%

Source: WisDOT

Commuting Patterns

County-to-county worker flow data compiled by the U.S. Census is a convenient way to analyze commuting patterns, see Table 5-5 and Figure 5-1. Oneida County is a net exporter of workers. An estimated 9,367 workers leave the County for work on a regular basis, while 6,400 enter the County for work. This creates a net loss of about 2,967 workers. An estimated 8,063 workers live and work in Oneida County. Counties that attract the most Oneida County workers are Vilas (1,550), Marathon (997), and Lincoln (761), and they are coincidentally the same top three Counties whose residents commute to work in Oneida County with 1,487, 447, and 839 workers, respectively.

Table 5-5: Oneida County Commuting Patterns, 2021			
County	Working in Oneida County, Living in Listed County	Living in Oneida County, Working in Listed County	Net Gain/Loss of Workers
Oneida County	8,063		N/A
Vilas County	1,487	1,550	-63
Lincoln County	839	761	78
Marathon County	447	997	-550
Langlade County	247	170	77
Forest County	243	197	46
Portage County	221	331	-110
Wood County	205	429	-224
All Other Counties	2,711	5,112	-2,401

Source: U.S. Census-on-the-Map

Figure 5-1: Commuter Inflow and Outflow, 2021



Source: U.S. Census-on-the-Map, 2021

Scenic Byways

In 2017, WisDOT designated the Nicolet-Wolf River Scenic Byway as the state's fifth scenic byway, which consists of a 145-mile route that utilizes state highways 32, 52, 55, and 70 across Forest, Langlade, Oneida, and Vilas Counties. Scenic byways are tourism-oriented, rather than commuter- or trucker-oriented, but they contribute to the local economy by promoting tourism and are important to consider when evaluating transportation facilities.

Rustic Roads

The Rustic Road program is a state program administered by WisDOT. Roads accepted into the program remain under local jurisdiction. To qualify, roadways must have outstanding natural features such as rugged terrain, native vegetation, and wildlife or other cultural or historic qualities that set the road apart. Oneida County has two rustic roads:

- Route 58: 9.6 miles of Blue Lake Road and Mercer Lake Road between STH-70 and USH-51.
- Route 59: 4.5 miles of Sutton and Camp Pinemere Roads between Blue Lake Road and STH-70.

Rustic Road designation allows local governments to maintain the road in a rustic state if safety and drivability are maintained. Rustic Roads may be narrower or have more vegetation in the right-of-way than other roads. Maintenance is at local discretion with no oversight from the state. There are no direct financial incentives or penalties from the state in this program, however, WisDOT provides and maintains the Rustic Road signs.

Park and Ride

Park and Ride locations allow commuters to carpool and save on transportation costs. While there are no official locations in Oneida County, the nearest designated park and ride facility is located at USH 51 and CTH S south of Tomahawk in Lincoln County.

Alternative Forms of Transportation

Transit & Transportation Systems for Persons with Disabilities

The Oneida County Department on Aging in Rhinelander provides information on volunteer transportation services for those that are elderly and for those with disabilities. According to their website, the addition of more transportation services is being investigated. Rides are provided for shopping, medical appointments, or to other locations as needed. Existing options are listed below:

- Northwoods Transit Connections provides public transportation countywide.
- Rapid Cab provides taxi service in Rhineland.
- Various hospitals and employers provide transportation by request.
- School buses transport students (note there are no intercity bus routes that serve Oneida County).

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The Oneida County Biking and Walking Trails Council, Inc. (OCBWTC) is a private non-profit organization that plans and develops trails, bike lanes, and sidewalks. Their website has an up-to-date map of the County's trails. Map 4-3 of this Plan also depicts the County's trail system. Trails are planned in a way where Rhineland acts as a hub with trails and routes reaching out like spokes to other destinations such as Minocqua, Woodruff, Three Lakes, the Bearskin Trail, and others, extending beyond the County's borders.

Oneida County and its local units have slowly expanded designated bike routes on highways and offroad trails over time. Sidewalks exist in Rhineland and other town centers such as Minocqua-Woodruff and Three Lakes, which can also benefit those using scooters and wheelchairs. Basic types of pedestrian and bicycle facilities include shared roadways, improved shoulders, bike lanes, and off-road shared use paths. WisDOT design manuals should be consulted for appropriate specifics.

Rail

Watco Holdings, Inc. operates the Fox Valley & Lake Superior Rail System (FOXY) on tracks running east to west through the southern and middle portion of the County. Recently, the track between Rhineland and Crandon to the east was taken out of service, but Watco is retaining it for possible future use. Freight can be loaded or unloaded at the rail yard in downtown Rhineland, and service is also provided to industrial sites west of the City. There is no passenger rail service available in Oneida County.

Airports

The Rhineland-Oneida County Airport (RHI) is the only commercial airport in Oneida County, and it is also categorized as a non-hub primary commercial service airport. It offers daily scheduled flights to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) using Delta Connection, which is operated by Skywest Airlines. There is also the Lakeland Airport/Noble F. Lee Memorial Field, which is cooperatively owned and operated by the Towns of Woodruff and Minocqua in Oneida County along with the Towns of Arbor Vitae and Lac du Flambeau in Vilas County. The

facility is located within the Town of Arbor Vitae in Vilas County. Finally, there is The Three Lakes Municipal Airport, which has a lighted grass runway but is closed in the winter. This facility is classified as a basic utility airport for smaller aircraft. There are also several private landing strips and heliports located throughout the County.

Water Transportation

There are no harbors or ports within Oneida County, so there is no significant water transport of passengers or freight. Today, tubing, boating, and sailing are popular forms of recreational transportation in and around Oneida County. Chapter 2 has a detailed breakdown of surface water bodies in the County that may be used for recreation.

Other Modes of Travel

There is significant use of a variety of miscellaneous other vehicles within Oneida County including snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), horses, cross-country skis, and others. However, these forms of travel are usually not recognized as modes of transportation, but rather as forms of recreation. As such, these alternative forms of travel will not be addressed extensively in this chapter. However, it is important to be aware of interactions between recreational forms of travel and more traditional transportation systems. For example, snowmobiles have an extensive network of their own trail routes that often parallel or cross public highways. They may also utilize right-of-way from other modes of transportation or utility corridors for routes.

Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1: To provide an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens, while maintaining the rural character of the County. Investigate implementation of policies which can help enhance, encourage, and maintain the viability of the airport for passenger, freight, and private use.

Objectives:

- Maintain the efficiency, safety, and functionality of the County's existing transportation system, which links the urban center with outlying towns, adjacent communities and the region.
- Encourage a balanced transportation network that provides a choice in the type of mode (i.e., car, bus, bike, walking, etc.) easy transfer between modes and transportation opportunities for those without use of an automobile.
- Achieve close coordination between development of transportation facilities and land use planning, land development and rural character preservation.
- Preserve the scenic value along select roadways to enhance and protect the County's rural character.
- Minimize the negative impacts of proposed transportation facility expansions.

Policies:

- Coordination must occur with the Department of Transportation (WisDOT), the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRCP) or private Engineering Firms to ensure that the County's transportation system is coordinated with surrounding regional systems and that the County's interests are well served when major transportation facilities or programs are proposed.
- Work with WisDOT on corridor preservation for all federal and state highways.
- Plan for extension of County highways and other major arterials as necessary to complete connections, provide for appropriate routes for trucks and emergency vehicles and serve planned development areas.
- Preserve scenic views by limiting off-premise advertising along selected highways.
- Consider future road locations, extensions, or connections when reviewing development plans and proposals.

- Work with local governmental units to plan for a network of interconnected roads in planned development areas to control highway access, preserve rural character, and improve access to these areas.
- Consider upgrading where land uses generate heavy traffic on roads that have not been constructed or upgraded for such use, including seasonal uses.
- Support coordination and consolidation of specialized transit by a variety of agencies that serve the County's elderly and handicapped residents.
- Support the Northwoods Transit Commission which serves Oneida and Vilas Counties.
- Continue support of the Rhinelander / Oneida County Airport.
- Support the Oneida County Biking and Walking Trails Council bike route and trail plan and subsequent updates that use grant funding.
- Support expanded bike accommodations on County Highways with resurfacing/reconstruction projects and additional off-road bike trails that use grant funding.
- Continue to encourage Canadian National (CN) Railroad to maintain quality rail service to Oneida County and the City of Rhinelander.

Chapter Six:

Economic Development

Background

This element is based on the statutory requirement for a “compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps, and programs to promote the stabilization, retention, or expansion of the economic base and quality employment opportunities.” An analysis of the economic base and labor force of Oneida County is included, as well as a list of various economic development programs.

[Previous Plans and Studies](#)

[Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\), 2021](#)

Oneida County is one of ten counties included in the North Central Wisconsin Economic Development District as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) is responsible for maintaining that designation. As part of the designation, NCWRPC annually prepares a CEDS. This report summarizes and assesses economic development activities over the past year and presents new and modified strategies to promote growth.

[North Central Wisconsin Regional Entrepreneurship Assessment & Strategy, 2023](#)

In 2023, NCWRPC surveyed businesses across its ten-county region to assess how business-friendly the region is for entrepreneurs. Included in this report are survey findings, recommendations, and an inventory of all programs and facilities that support entrepreneurship. An Entrepreneurship Portal containing these resources is found on NCWRPC's website.

[North Central Wisconsin Regional Recovery Plan, 2022](#)

The purpose of this plan is to guide economic stabilization, recovery, and resiliency efforts within the North Central Wisconsin Region in the face of events that cause economic shocks, such as natural disasters.

[North Central Wisconsin Industrial Park Inventory, Absorption, and Needs Study, 2022](#)

NCWRPC conducted a 10-county study of available industrial park acreage, the rate at which it is being developed, and how much acreage is needed in the future. The study includes industrial park planning recommendations along with up-to-date maps of Oneida County's five industrial parks. As of 2020, there were only 2 acres remaining in Oneida County in the City of Rhinelander.

[Regional Livability Plan, 2015](#)

Economic Development is one of four elements included in the RLP, adopted by the NCWRPC in 2015. The Economic Development Assessment Report within the RLP observes in detail the economic health of the ten-county region and identifies trends and issues facing the local economy. The RLP addresses three economic development issues:

- [Available Labor Force and Employment](#) Businesses need a workforce with the proper education to meet the demands of an ever-changing job market.
- [Living Wage](#) over the past ten years, the region's cost of living (i.e. home prices and rent) have increased faster than per capita and household incomes.
- [Broadband](#) High-speed broadband connections are crucial for government services, healthcare, education, library systems, private businesses, and residents.

[ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2023](#)

This report, developed by the United Way, describes households in Oneida County that are above the federal poverty level, but still struggle to afford basic household necessities, or "ALICE" households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). The ALICE report shows that 36% of Oneida County households are either below the federal poverty level or are considered ALICE households, indicating that the average household in Oneida County is slightly more financially strained than the average State of Wisconsin household (34%). Additional information is available on United Way Wisconsin's website.

Inventory

This analysis provides insight regarding how industries in Oneida County are performing by comparing the County with state and national statistics. Using the American Community Survey

and Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) data, Oneida County's economic strengths and weaknesses are identified, along with a series of strategies.

Economic Overview

Chapter I discussed how Oneida County is growing, but at a much slower rate than the State of Wisconsin and the nation. While growth brings development pressure to the County, there are concerns about if there will be a big enough working population to support the growing retired population. Retirees from other locations may find the County attractive due to its relative affordability and proximity to good healthcare, outdoor recreation, and services.

Oneida County's top three industries in terms of having the highest percent of all jobs in the County are educational, health, and social services (22.3%), manufacturing (14.4%), and retail trade (13.7%). This is due to the presence of Nicolet Technical College, various school districts, various Marshfield Clinic and Aspirus Health locations, and several industrial parks and businesses. See **Table 6-1**.

Table 6-1: Employment by Industry					
Industry	2000	2010	2021	2000-21 Net Change	2000-21 % Change
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	526	383	377	-149	-28.3%
Construction	1,455	1,843	1,138	-317	-21.8%
Manufacturing	2,080	2,028	2,450	370	17.8%
Wholesale trade	425	428	483	58	13.6%
Retail trade	2,815	2,613	2,328	-487	-17.3%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	689	780	503	-186	-27.0%
Information	434	435	229	-205	-47.2%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	636	802	1,002	366	57.5%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	898	1,228	1,391	493	54.9%
Educational, health, and social assistance	3,953	4,080	3,777	-176	-4.5%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	1,694	1,851	1,747	53	3.1%
Other services, except public administration	733	652	880	147	20.1%
Public administration	861	679	663	-198	-23.0%
Total	17,199	17,802	16,968	-231	-1.3%
<i>Source: U.S. Census 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2010 & 2021</i>					

Economic Sectors

In 2021, there were an estimated 16,968 Oneida County residents who were employed. Because of how the Census records this information, this figure represents the number of jobs held by Oneida County residents, and not the total number of jobs in Oneida County. Overall, the number of employed residents decreased by 1.3% between 2000 and 2021, which is slower than the state (9.4%) and nation (21.4%) during the same time.

Industries that grew the most from 2000-2021 in terms of total employment include:

- Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing (57.5%)
- Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services (54.9%)
- Other services, except public administration (20.1%)

Industries that decreased the most from 2000-2021 in terms of total employment include:

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining (-28.3%)
- Transportation and warehousing (-27.0%)
- Public administration (-23.0%)

Finally, industries that employ the largest total number of people are:

- Educational, health, and social assistance (3,777 employees)
- Manufacturing (2,450 employees)
- Retail Trade (2,328 employees)

These sectors were the largest in 2000 and 2010 as well, but retail trade has declined significantly since 2000 (-17.3%) because of online shopping, and manufacturing has increased (17.8%) since then. Educational, health, and social assistance declined only slightly (-4.5%) during this time. Training, education, and recruitment will ensure that Oneida County will continue to fulfill employers' needs as conditions continue to change.

Major Employers

According to the Job Center of Wisconsin, in 2020, Oneida County's largest employers are Ahlstrom-Munksjo Paper Mill, Akelas World, Ascension at Home – Rhinelander, Aspirus Health, Camp Timberlane for Boys, Honey Rock Camp, Jehovah's Witnesses, Kohl's, Lakeland Union School District, Menards, Musson Brothers, Inc., Nicolet Area Technical College, Rennes Health & Rehab Center, Rhinelander School District, St. Matthias Thrift Shop, Trig's, Walmart, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Economic Analysis

This section uses Location Quotient to provide detailed information on Oneida County's economy. Location Quotient identifies which economic sectors are currently at a higher or lower concentration compared to state and national averages. Additionally, future job projections are also included. Most data in this section are from Lightcast (formerly EMSI), a private company that specializes in global labor market analytics.

Location Quotient

Location quotient (LQ) compares local, state, and national employment data by economic sector. It measures the ratio of jobs that a locality has in an economic sector compared to state and national ratios. The higher the LQ, the higher the concentration of that type of job is for Oneida County, see Table 6-2. LQ divides the economy into two sectors:

- The Basic (Exporting) Sector are goods and services that are purchased or consumed by customers outside Oneida County, which are also called exports. These are industries with an LQ above 1.00.
- The Non-Basic (Importing) Sector are goods and services consumed in Oneida County. These are industries with an LQ less than 1.00.

If a County's basic sector of the economy is weak, residents depend more on buying goods and services from other locations, which is known as industry sector leakage. Attracting and retaining businesses and employees is essential to the County's economic well-being. Exports bring money from outside the county into the local economy and imports represent local dollars flowing outside the county. Table 6-2 provides a summary of the location quotient analysis results.

Table 6-2: Location Quotient (LQ) by Industry	
Industry	LQ
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1.32
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.00
Utilities	0.63
Construction	1.01
Manufacturing	1.21
Wholesale Trade	0.78
Retail Trade	1.73
Transportation and Warehousing	0.66
Information	0.68
Finance and Insurance	0.46
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.69
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0.30
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.36
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	0.46
Educational Services	0.10
Health Care and Social Assistance	1.36
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.93
Accommodation and Food Services	1.39
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1.16
Government	0.96
Unclassified Industry	0.04
<i>Source: Lightcast 2021-2022</i>	

As depicted in Table 6-2, Oneida County has a greater concentration of jobs in the following industries than statewide and nationwide averages:

Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting

Although this industry only employs 2.2% of County residents, it has the second highest location quotient, demonstrating its importance to Oneida County’s economy.

Construction

This industry has an LQ that is only slightly higher than average, and it employs about 6.7% of Oneida County residents. Historically, home construction, especially for seasonal or retiree populations, has fueled demand for new construction.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing is a significant export as it has an LQ that is higher than average and employs over 14% of County residents. The number of manufacturing jobs has also increased by almost 18% since 2000. Manufacturing is often considered an important industry since tends to employ many people with higher-than-average wages.

Retail Trade

This industry has the highest LQ of all of Oneida County's sectors, and it employs almost 14% of County residents. The number of jobs has declined, however, with competition from online commerce having increased since 2000.

Health Care and Social Assistance

This industry's high LQ is a result of Oneida County being home to several Marshfield Clinic and Aspirus Health locations. This industry could continue to grow based on the County's aging population.

Accommodation and Food Service

This industry's high LQ is likely a result of the County's tourism, which results in numerous hotels and restaurants.

Other Services (except Public Administration)

Jobs that do not fit neatly in the other categories fall under this category, which has a higher-than-average concentration in the County.

The following industries are considered import industries in Oneida County:

- Mining, quarrying, oil, and gas extraction
- Utilities
- Wholesale trade
- Transportation and warehousing
- Information
- Finance and insurance
- Real estate rental/leasing
- Professional/scientific/technical services

- Management of companies and enterprises
- Administration and support
- Waste management
- Educational services
- Arts/entertainment/recreation
- Government

This means that there is a lower concentration of these industries in these industries than there on average nationwide. Note that changing conditions can impact the concentration of jobs in each industry. For example, although finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing employment is found at a lower concentration than statewide or national concentrations, employment in these jobs in Oneida County has grown by over 57% since 2000.

Employment Projections

Based on analyses of historical and national data, Lightcast projects predicted employment for industries and occupations for the next decade. Table 6-3 summarizes the projected number of jobs between 2021 and 2031. The numbers are adjusted to complement projections from other sources, such as the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. See **Table 6-3**.

Countywide, there is a projected increase of 1,373 jobs between 2021 and 2031. Industries expected to grow the most are educational services (32%), manufacturing (25%), and wholesale trade (24%). Jobs projected to decrease the most are in utilities (-50%), management of companies and enterprises (-48%), and finance and insurance (-11%). Overall, there is predicted to be variability between the number of jobs created or lost in different industries, but the overall ranking of each industry's total employment is not expected to shift considerably over the next decade.

Note that, because Lightcast's data is different from U.S. Census data, the total number of jobs in each industry varies between the two sources despite using 2021 data for both. This is because the U.S. Census records the number of Oneida County residents who have a job (within or outside Oneida County), while Lightcast records the number of jobs that exist within Oneida County (even if workers reside in another county).

Table 6-3 Employment Projections

Industry	2021 Jobs	2031 Jobs	2021 - 2031 Change	2021 - 2031 % Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	170	204	34	20.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0	0	0.0%
Utilities	58	29	-29	-50.0%
Construction	819	811	-8	-1.0%
Manufacturing	1,670	2,088	418	25.0%
Wholesale Trade	486	603	116	24.0%
Retail Trade	2,838	2,598	-241	-8.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	435	511	75	17.0%
Information	229	276	47	20.0%
Finance and Insurance	321	287	-35	-11.0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	187	190	3	2.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	331	345	14	4.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	98	51	-47	-48.0%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	514	528	15	3.0%
Educational Services	35	46	11	32.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,780	3,344	564	20.0%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	211	238	28	13.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,904	2,158	253	13.0%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	578	598	20	3.0%
Government	2,144	2,276	132	6.0%
Unclassified Industry	0	<10	Insf. Data	Insf. Data
Total	15,808	17,182	1,373	9.0%

Source: Lightcast, 2023

Labor Force Analysis

This section examines four factors related to the County’s labor force. These factors are labor force, unemployment, workforce participation, and education & training. **Table 6-4** displays a variety of information related to the County’s labor force.

Table 6-4: Labor Force Indicators					
Indicator	2000	2010	2021	2000-2021 % County Change	2000-2021 % State Change
Labor Force	18,311	18,836	17,393	-5.0%	8.9%
Employed	17,199	17,802	16,968	-1.3%	10.2%
Unemployed	1,112	1,032	425	-61.8%	-18.8%
Unemployment Rate	6.1%	5.5%	2.4%	-60.7%	-25.2%
Participation Rate	63.4%	61.7%	54.9%	-13.4%	-4.3%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2010 & 2021

Labor Force

The labor force is defined as the number of County residents sixteen and over, employed or looking to be employed. Persons over sixteen who are students, stay-at-home parents, retired, institutionalized, or unable or unwilling to seek employment are not considered part of the labor force. Overall, the size of the labor force decreased by 5.0% between 2000 and 2021 in Oneida County, for a decrease of 918 individuals. Note this is the number of people who live in the County and have jobs, not the number of jobs in the County, and some workers work in other counties. While the labor force declined during the past few decades, the State of Wisconsin’s labor force grew slightly.

Unemployment

In 2000, the County had 6.1% unemployment compared to the state rate of 4.7%. This rose to 5.5% in 2010 due to the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis, but has since dropped to 2.4%, slightly under the statewide unemployment rate of 3.5%. Unemployment is defined as the difference between the total civilian labor force and total persons employed. Stay-at-home parents, retirees, or persons not searching for employment are not considered unemployed because they are not considered to be part of the labor force.

Workforce Participation

In 2000, over 63% of Oneida County residents over the age of 16 were in the labor force, but this decreased to 54.9% by 2021. This is slightly higher than the statewide participation rate of

66%. The decrease is partially due to the large number of baby boomers who are retiring but can also be due to other factors including a lack of childcare.

Workforce participation is a measure expressed in terms of a percentage of persons not actively seeking employment divided by the total working age population. These persons may not seek employment due to retirement, disability, choose to be a home care provider, or simply are not looking for work.

Education and Training

The level of educational attainment is an important indicator of the skills of the labor force. Formal education and job training reflect a community's ability to provide a labor force for certain types of industry. As identified earlier in the plan, educational attainment in the county is similar to the statewide average in terms of those with a high school diploma or better, and bachelor's degrees or higher. The County has higher educational attainment rates than the nationwide average.

Training is another labor force indicator. Partnerships between local businesses, governments, and educational institutions are very useful in developing the County's economy. Institutions such as Nicolet Technical College often direct their programs to the training needs of local workers and businesses. Training services for dislocated workers is provided at the Job Center of Wisconsin, which has its nearest locations in Marathon and Shawano Counties. The center is intended to be a one-stop resource for employers to meet their workforce needs and job seekers to get the career planning, job placement, and training services they need to obtain jobs. Organizations such as the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board are important to this process as well.

Income and Wages

There are two basic measures of income: median household income and per capita income. Median household income provides an indication of the economic ability of the typical family or household unit while per capita income provides a measure of relative earning power on a per person level. As identified earlier in this plan, the Median Household income in 2000 was \$37,619 and the Per Capita income was \$19,746. By 2021, both median and per capita incomes rose by 67 and 86%, respectively. Both median household income and per capita income grew faster in Oneida County than in the state as a whole.

Table 6-5 provides average annual wage data by industry as reported by the 2021 American Community Survey. While average wages in Oneida County are overall similar to neighboring counties, they are lower than statewide figures. This is offset by a cost of living that is lower than the statewide average.

Table 6-5: Median Annual Income by Industry

Industry	Oneida	Vilas	Lincoln	Wisconsin
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	\$50,966	\$32,315	\$29,250	\$33,140
Construction	\$43,000	\$47,200	\$45,446	\$51,433
Manufacturing	\$52,412	\$52,059	\$49,520	\$50,316
Wholesale trade	\$61,250	\$44,375	\$45,313	\$52,719
Retail trade	\$26,279	\$24,294	\$22,609	\$26,593
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	\$45,938	\$46,900	\$46,156	\$49,491
Information	\$37,292	\$41,058	\$31,205	\$49,575
Finance and insurance, and real estate, and rental and leasing	\$56,094	\$41,328	\$53,456	\$54,982
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative, and waste management services	\$49,688	\$32,184	\$35,507	\$48,187
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	\$38,585	\$41,960	\$31,412	\$40,810
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	\$18,464	\$21,800	\$13,074	\$15,356
Other services, except public administration	\$30,794	\$30,000	\$23,693	\$31,109
Public administration	\$52,520	\$42,083	\$51,513	\$56,259

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Redevelopment

Generally, redevelopment areas are those that are underutilized or vacant and there is some existing infrastructure and public services in place. Often these might be called blighted or deteriorated, or even condemned. They can be redeveloped to improve the tax base without having to add new roads, sewers, and other infrastructure.

In addition, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) lists information on contaminated properties and documents activities relating to eventual reuse and cleanup of “brownfield” lands through the Wisconsin Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS). The five types of sites tracked by BRRTS include Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites, Environmental Repair (ERP) sites, Spills, Liability Exemption (VPLE) sites, and Abandoned Container sites. The DNR’s website has a BRRTS map that has the latest information on each site.

Economic Development Infrastructure

Oneida County's economic development infrastructure is concentrated along main highways, especially USH-8, USH-45, USH-51, STH 17, STH-32, STH 47, and STH-70. A Fox Valley & Lake Superior Rail Line also traverses the County in an east-west direction.

This infrastructure investment provides a wider range of opportunities for prospective entrepreneurs and greatly increases the county's chances of developing and maintaining a stable employment base for its workforce in the future. There are five industrial parks totaling approximately 294 acres, four of which are in the City of Rhineland and another in the Town of Three Lakes. Two of Rhineland's industrial parks are served by rail, and the whole County has access to Rhineland-Oneida County Airport. Although each park is served by infrastructure, only 2 acres remain undeveloped, and future development will need infrastructure to be extended to meet demand. See Chapter 5 for a complete list of truck routes, railroads, highways, airports, and other forms of transportation that facilitate economic development.

Industrial parks are important for creating and retaining jobs. An industrial park is a planned subdivision of land that provides sites for potential industrial firms with necessary infrastructure. The park is designed in such a way that it ensures compatibility between industrial operations and the existing activities of the area in which the park is located.

Economic Development Programs

There are several economic development programs available to businesses and local governments in Oneida County. The following is a partial list of those programs.

Local

Downtown Rhineland, Inc.

Downtown Rhineland, Inc. (DRI) is a collaboration of business and community members that is responsible for promoting businesses and events, as well as maintaining Downtown Rhineland's appearance.

Impact Seven Business Lending Loans

This program provides flexible, affordable loans to a wide variety of business types, specializing in commercial and mixed-use real estate and affordable housing. From large catalytic development projects to Main Street businesses, Impact Seven invests in the people and places that build community.

Local Chambers of Commerce

The following organizations offer information on local business, tourism, and industry by promoting events and programs for the business community:

- Arbor Vitae-Woodruff Chamber of Commerce
- Hazelhurst Information Center
- Let's Minocqua Visitors Bureau and Chamber of Commerce
- Oneida County Tourism Council
- Pelican Lake Chamber of Commerce
- Rhinelander Area Chamber of Commerce
- Three Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Welcome Center, Inc.
- Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce

Each organization has its own website for more information.

Oneida County Economic Development Corporation

Founded in 1989, the Oneida County EDC was created as a partnership between business and industry with the responsibility of growing new and existing businesses Countywide.

Regional

Central Wisconsin SCORE

Central Wisconsin SCORE consists of a team of experienced entrepreneurs who volunteer their experience and knowledge to help small business professionals start, develop, and grow businesses. SCORE offers free business advice, business training, and numerous templates and tools. SCORE also offers the opportunity to be connected with mentors and provides business education tools such as events, online courses, recorded webinars, and a startup roadmap.

Central Wisconsin Economic Development (CWED) Fund

Revolving loan funds are available to entrepreneurs and their lenders to structure financing packages for start-up and expanding businesses to encourage economic growth in the area. CWED manages a revolving loan fund designed to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed rate, low down payment, low-interest financing.

Grow North

Grow North is a non-profit organization whose mission is to assist area counties and communities in their efforts to recruit and retain businesses, stimulate new job creation, and to foster an environment conducive to entrepreneurial growth. It was created to foster cooperation

among economic development partners and foster economic growth efforts in Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, and Vilas Counties.

The GRID (Guiding Rural Innovation and Development)

The GRID acts as a one-stop connection to a wide-ranging list of business resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses in Northern Wisconsin.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The County is a member of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, as are all local governments based on county membership. Membership brings with it a variety of planning benefits and services. Benefits include participation in the Economic Development District, including eligibility for a variety of grants administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration.

Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center (NWMOC)

The Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center provides operations assessments, technology training, and on-site assistance to help firms in Northern Wisconsin modernize and streamline manufacturing processes.

State

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation is the state's primary department for the delivery of integrated services to businesses. Their purpose is to 1) foster retention of and creation of new jobs and investment opportunities in Wisconsin; 2) foster and promote economic business, export, and community development; and 3) promote the public health, safety, and welfare through effective and efficient regulations, education, and enforcement. WEDC manages a variety of programs intended to assist businesses and communities, including:

- Brownfield Program
- Capacity Building Grants (CB)
- Certified Sites
- Historic Preservation Tax Credit
- Business Opportunity Loan Fund
- Workforce Training Grants
- Idle Industrial Sites Redevelopment Program
- The Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program
- Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant Program
- Fast Forward Program (see below)
- Wisconsin Investment Fund
- Technology Development Loan Program

Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)

This program, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, provides immediate assistance and funding for the cost of transportation improvements necessary for major economic development projects.

The Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC)

This non-profit organization is located at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater and specializes in new product and invention assessments and market expansion opportunities for innovative manufacturers, technology businesses, and independent inventors.

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF)

DCF has partnered with the nonprofit First Children's Finance to finance small business loans to childcare entrepreneurs. They work with other lenders, community partners, economic developers, and directly with childcare businesses to provide financing.

Wisconsin Fast Forward

This program, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, is a nationally recognized, innovative talent development solution driven by Wisconsin businesses to train and retain highly skilled workers. Grant funds support employer-led worker training projects that:

- Encourage increased collaboration between Wisconsin businesses and workforce training partners.
- Fill current and ongoing skill requirements of Wisconsin employers.
- Place workers in long-term positions with opportunities for professional growth and economic advancement.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

WHEDA administers a variety of programs to support small businesses, with several programs designed specifically for agribusiness.

Wisconsin Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP)

As part of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the Office of Rural Prosperity seeks to foster vibrant, prosperous, and resilient rural communities across Wisconsin. ORP functions as a one-stop shop to help rural stakeholders navigate programs and resources serving rural communities and businesses. ORP's website contains a list of available grant programs, grant writing consultants, and grant writing training opportunities.

Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

The UW-Stevens Point SBDC is partially funded by the Small Business Administration and provides a variety of programs and training seminars to assist in the creation of small businesses in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Small Cities Program

The Wisconsin Department of Administration provides federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to eligible municipalities for approved housing and/or public facility improvements and for economic development projects. Economic Development grants provide loans to businesses for such things as the acquisition of real estate, buildings, or equipment; construction, expansion, or remodeling; and working capital for inventory and direct labor.

Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC)

WWBIC makes loans to small and micro businesses up to \$350,000. They work with both women and men in analyzing their business' financial needs and guiding them through the loan process.

Federal

America's Seed Fund: SBIR & STTR

Through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, America's Seed Fund provides technology-focused entrepreneurs, startups, and small businesses with funding to develop their ideas and a pathway to commercialization. Powered by a network of federal agencies, entrepreneur support organizations, and the Small Business Administration, America's Seed Fund advances federal missions and fosters a culture of innovation in the United States

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)

This Planning Grant from the Federal Communications Commission, administered by Wisconsin Public Service, enables eligible entities to opt-in to receive formula funding to participate in broadband planning activities that will inform the state Five-Year Action Plan which will guide broadband deployment and implementation of the BEAD program.

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

EDA offers a guaranteed loan program as well as public works grant program. These are administered through local units of government for the benefit of the local economy and, indirectly, private enterprise.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

SBA provides business and industrial loan programs that will make or guarantee up to 90% of the principal and interest on loans to companies, individuals, or government entities for financing in rural areas. Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corporation acts as an agent for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) programs that provide financing for fixed asset loans and for working capital.

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

The USDA Rural Development program is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in rural America. Financial programs include support for such essential public facilities and services as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and electric and telephone service. USDA-RD promotes economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks and community-managed lending pools. The program also offers technical assistance and information to help agricultural and other cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their member services.

Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1: Maintain, diversify, and expand the economy, while maintaining the rural character and environmental integrity of the County.

Objectives:

- Promote the retention and expansion of the current economic base.
- Promote the relocation of compatible businesses to the County.
- Pursue increased funding from both public and private sources.
- Encourage infill development throughout the county, where existing facilities exist.
- Encourage sustainable yield forestry by promoting the harvesting of wood products as raw materials for the energy industry.
- Encourage development of high-speed Internet infrastructure capabilities to meet the growing needs and challenges of an information-based economy.

Policies:

- Working with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation conduct a business retention survey from time to time to understand the needs of area businesses.
- Working with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation and U.W. Extension continue to support and expand the Inventors & Entrepreneurs Club to assist local inventors to create new firms, work with area entrepreneur networks.
- Pursue U.S. Economic Development Administration, USDA – Rural Development, and Wisconsin Department of Commerce funds, among other sources for projects.
- Research private community and national foundations as a source of project funding.
- Examine the economic impacts of metallic mining on groundwater, health, and quality of life in the county by employing commonly accepted business practices of due diligence, cost benefit analysis and risk assessment.
- Encourage “best management practices” for the development of county and private commercial forestland that both benefit the economy of the county and maintain its rural character.
- Encourage the location of communication towers in areas that provide the widest coverage throughout the county while minimizing the impact on the landscape and wildlife migration patterns.

Goal 2: Conserve and enhance the quality of life in the county by promoting the infrastructure and human resources that will foster economic development compatible with Oneida County's rural Northwoods character.

Objectives:

- Maintain and enhance public facilities and services.
- Work with area schools and the technical college to develop and maintain a well-educated and trained workforce.

Policies:

- Continue to support the Rhinelander/Oneida County Airport as an economic development asset.
- Continue to support an active rail system as an economic development and tourism asset.
- Plan for an adequate supply of land for commercial and industrial needs.
- Evaluate, maintain, and enhance infrastructure as necessary to facilitate economic growth, such as an industrial park.
- Promote telecommunications infrastructure, especially broadband Internet, and other technology related to development and expansion.
- Encourage industrial development to areas with the infrastructure and services to support the development.
- Encourage educational institutions to develop training programs needed by the area's businesses to meet identified needs.
- Support and work with local school officials on expanding the school to work program.
- Working with Workforce Development, determine current employment characteristics and identify existing and future employment needs.

Goal 3: Encourage the coordination of economic development efforts with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, City and Towns, Chambers of Commerce, as well as other local and regional organizations.

Objectives:

- Establish strong local and regional partners in the area of economic development.

Policies:

- Incorporate the economic development strategies developed in the Town plans into the County plan.
- Continue and strengthen relations with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, local chambers, and other local organizations.
- Participate in regional economic development efforts with surrounding counties, Grow North, the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and other regional efforts.

Chapter Seven:

Land Use

Background

This element is based on the statutory requirement for a compilation of goals, objectives, maps, and policies to guide the future development of the County. The land use element also provides a brief explanation of planning resources, implementation tools, an inventory and analysis of land uses, a future land use analysis, and concludes with county goals, objectives, and policies. The Land Use Element is based on locally adopted land use plans. Each local plan provides additional information specific to that town or city Plan and should be referenced for land use decisions.

[Previous Plans and Studies](#)

[Oneida County Comprehensive Plan, 2013](#)

The County's former Comprehensive Plan was created by the County's Planning and Zoning Committee with assistance from NCWRPC. The 2013 Plan's Land Use chapter recommended providing enough infrastructure and developable land to meet demand and maintaining the comprehensive plan to ensure an adequate supply of developable land would be available while balancing property rights.

[Regional Livability Plan, 2015](#)

Land use is one of the four elements included in the Regional Livability Plan (RLP), adopted by NCWRPC in 2015. The Land Use Assessment Report, a component of the plan, looks in detail at the land uses throughout the ten-county region and identifies issues and trends related to land use: housing density and farmland preservation. The two land use goals of the plan are as follows:

- Preserve and protect the Region's landscape, environmental resources and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.
- Manage and reduce vacant land and structures.

This plan is expected to be replaced with the 2025 Regional Comprehensive Plan by Summer 2025. It is advisory in nature and does not impose regulations on Oneida County.

Other County Plans

The County has a variety of other specialized plans which influence the comprehensive plan. These are:

- Oneida County Land & Water Resource Management Plan, 2019: The primary intent of this plan is to identify strategies to protect the quality and quantity of the County's soil and water resources.
- Oneida County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2023: This plan's primary purpose is to identify how to prevent injury and property damage from natural and manmade hazards. It was created by the County Public Safety Committee with assistance from NCWRPC.
- Oneida County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2024-2028: This plan's primary purpose is to identify existing recreational facilities and identify needed facilities for a five-year period. This Plan was created by the County's Forestry, Land, & Recreation Committee with assistance from NCWRPC.
- 15-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2021-2035): Although this plan sounds similar to this comprehensive plan, it is only used for management of County-owned forest and recreation lands and programs.

Surrounding County Efforts

Oneida County borders five other counties: Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Price, and Vilas Counties. These counties have prepared comprehensive plans, except for Price County. These plans are important to review, especially the land use maps. Additional planning efforts bordering Oneida County impact the County's land and water as well. For example, the Wisconsin River Watershed crosses into Oneida County from Vilas County.

No major land use conflicts have been identified; however, discussions with adjoining communities are important to be aware of development or other issues before they arise. The Intergovernmental Cooperation Chapter discusses issues related to surrounding and overlapping jurisdictions in detail.

Local Planning Efforts

Local Comprehensive Plans of each municipality in Oneida County were used to "build" the County Comprehensive Plan, especially this Chapter's Future Land Use Map. Table 7-1 is an inventory of each municipality's Comprehensive Plan status. Since these plans must be updated

every 10 years, and not every Town has an updated plan adopted, the most recent version of each plan was used when available.

Table 7-1 Local Comprehensive Plan Status			
Municipality	Original Adoption Date	Date of Latest Update	Plan Status
T. Cassian	11/18/2019	6/13/2022	Complete
T. Crescent	1/9/2007	2/14/2024	Complete
T. Enterprise*	1/7/2010		See footnote
T. Hazelhurst	8/1/1999	1/18/2018	Complete
T. Lake Tomahawk	9/1/2009		Overdue
T. Little Rice*	12/29/2009	3/8/2016	Complete
T. Lynne*	12/8/2009		See footnote
T. Minocqua	7/20/2010		Overdue
T. Monico	1/1/2010	4/4/2022	Complete
T. Newbold	9/1/2008	1/13/2022	Complete
T. Nokomis*	12/30/2009		See footnote
T. Pelican	12/1/2009	11/11/2019	Complete
T. Piehl	12/10/2009		Overdue
T. Pine Lake	10/1/2003	11/15/2017	Complete
C. Rhinelander	1/9/2008	12/12/2016	Complete
T. Schoepke*	4/13/2010		See footnote
T. Stella	?	12/13/2022	Complete
T. Sugar Camp*	12/22/2009		See footnote
T. Three Lakes	12/15/2009	9/2/2014	Complete
T. Woodboro	4/14/2009	10/15/2019	Complete
T. Woodruff	9/16/2009		Overdue
*Adopted as a "Coordination Plan."			
<i>Source: Wisconsin DOA, Oneida County Planning and Zoning</i>			

State Planning Efforts

The state is involved in a variety of planning efforts that impact Oneida County. Examples include two chapters of “the Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin,” which are the Northern Highland and North Central Forest. These ecological landscapes have plans that are drafted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and adopted by the Natural Resources Board to manage state-owned properties in these regions in an ecologically appropriate manner. They can be viewed on WDNR’s website. Other state plans include those from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) that describe how roads, trails, and other forms of transportation are managed, which can influence land development patterns.

Issues

According to the County's 2013, plan there were three predicted land use trends:

- Conversion of seasonal to permanent residences will increase as the baby boomer generation moves to the County as a retirement destination.
- Waterfront development pressure and cost of shoreline property will continue to increase, as fewer lakefront properties are available.
- Large, privately owned parcels adjacent to lakes will likely face development pressure for subdivisions.

Additionally, solar energy is becoming more common in Wisconsin, which impacts land use.

Inventory and Trends

The inventory and trends section identifies the County's land uses. It also looks at the change over the last twenty years and makes projections into the future. The element relies on many things discussed in earlier elements, such as population and natural resources.

Overview of Natural Landscape

Chapter 2 contains an extensive description of Oneida County's natural landscape. Overall, the County is known for its scattered forests and lakes which draw tourists and seasonal residents. Large tracts of forest are a result of county, state, and federal forests. Chapter 2 also describes the amount of land in public ownership.

Overview of the Built Environment

Oneida County features extensive low-density, rural development throughout the County, with extensive undeveloped land. Development is primarily clustered along main highways, especially in the City of Rhinelander and Towns of Lake Tomahawk, Three Lakes, and Minocqua.

Existing Land use

Woodlands dominate the County's landscape, comprising 80 percent of total acreage. Out of the developed land use categories, residential occupies the most acreage, for a total of 3.7% of the County's area. Open lands and water make up another 12.1% of the County's land area, and all other uses are 2.4% or less of the County's total acreage. See Table 7-2.

Table 7-2 Countywide Existing Land Use	
Land Use	Percent of Total
Agriculture	2.0%
Commercial	0.3%
Cranberry Bog	0.2%
Governmental / Institutional	0.2%
Industrial	0.2%
Open Lands	2.3%
Outdoor Recreation	0.4%
Residential	3.7%
Transportation	0.9%
Utility	0.0%
Water	9.8%
Woodlands	80.0%
Total	100.0%
<i>Source: NCWRPC</i>	

Land Breakdown

The County’s total area is approximately 790,700 acres. See Table 7-3 for a list of all municipalities and their size relative to the County. The Town of Minocqua is the largest municipality by area, and the City of Rhinelander is the smallest.

Table 7-3: Land Area by Municipality	
Municipality	Percent of Total
Town of Cassian	5.5%
Town of Crescent	2.6%
Town of Enterprise	4.8%
Town of Hazelhurst	2.8%
Town of Lake Tomahawk	3.2%
Town of Little Rice	6.0%
Town of Lynne	5.9%
Town of Minocqua	13.6%
Town of Monico	4.4%
Town of Newbold	7.5%
Town of Nokomis	3.0%
Town of Pelican	4.4%
Town of Piehl	3.1%
Town of Pine Lake	3.6%
Town of Schoepke	4.1%
Town of Stella	3.0%
Town of Sugar Camp	7.9%
Town of Three Lakes	8.1%
Town of Woodboro	3.0%
Town of Woodruff	2.9%
City of Rhinelander	0.7%
Oneida County	100.0%
<i>Source: NCWRPC</i>	

[Real Estate Values](#)

[Equalized Values](#)

Over the past 23 years, there has been a substantial increase in real estate value in every municipality in the County. Countywide, this growth was 196.4% between 2000 and 2023 according to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (WDOR). Table 7-4 summarizes this data and breaks it down by municipality, though it is not adjusted for inflation. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), inflation increased 77% between January 2000 and January 2023. Therefore, most of the County saw an increase in equalized real estate value that greatly surpassed the rate of inflation. See Table 2-3 in Chapter 2 for a summary of land acreage and percentage for tax exempt lands, reduced tax lands, and fully taxable lands in Oneida County.

Table 7-4: Equalized Real Estate Values

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2023	2000-2023 % Change
T. Cassian	\$121,698,800	\$280,263,700	\$375,264,900	208.4%
T. Crescent	\$151,220,100	\$289,353,500	\$357,853,000	136.6%
T. Enterprise	\$51,314,800	\$101,492,900	\$135,633,600	164.3%
T. Hazelhurst	\$177,543,700	\$384,274,900	\$574,911,500	223.8%
T. Lake Tomahawk	\$118,970,200	\$230,920,100	\$386,081,300	224.5%
T. Little Rice	\$26,414,000	\$68,197,900	\$119,136,100	351.0%
T. Lynne	\$15,302,100	\$34,120,600	\$51,146,400	234.2%
T. Minocqua	\$826,088,000	\$1,754,154,600	\$2,925,762,100	254.2%
T. Monico	\$14,270,000	\$27,404,500	\$41,341,200	189.7%
T. Newbold	\$283,983,200	\$543,204,900	\$691,208,600	143.4%
T. Nokomis	\$130,348,700	\$271,122,700	\$426,308,500	227.1%
T. Pelican	\$187,115,600	\$316,417,500	\$431,953,600	130.8%
T. Piehl	\$5,637,500	\$16,255,300	\$22,522,800	299.5%
T. Pine Lake	\$167,246,700	\$295,149,800	\$427,661,700	155.7%
C. Rhinelander	\$412,493,700	\$591,178,400	\$793,165,800	92.3%
T. Schoepke	\$63,010,400	\$123,508,100	\$181,709,100	188.4%
T. Stella	\$47,458,000	\$87,617,700	\$117,034,400	146.6%
T. Sugar Camp	\$181,765,300	\$391,922,200	\$659,793,100	263.0%
T. Three Lakes	\$469,174,200	\$1,001,411,800	\$1,432,460,400	205.3%
T. Woodboro	\$86,852,300	\$183,799,100	\$262,455,400	202.2%
T. Woodruff	\$176,106,100	\$338,394,300	\$594,258,600	237.4%
Oneida County	\$3,714,013,400	\$7,330,164,500	\$11,007,662,100	196.4%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Opportunities for Redevelopment and Growth

The most efficient development utilizes existing public services and infrastructure, which are typically only found in incorporated communities. However, agreements to extend utilities can exist between incorporated and unincorporated communities, especially for water and sewer, which are required for some of development. Currently, most existing services are located in the City of Rhinelander, Town of Minocqua, Town of Three Lakes, Town of Lake Tomahawk, and Town of Woodruff.

The use of existing infrastructure and services is more cost-effective, and new commercial, industrial, and higher density residential development should be in these areas. Local plans identify areas already served and those areas that are most efficiently served by existing infrastructure

and services. Areas where sewer, water, and other infrastructure and services are not available should have minimal industrial and commercial development and only scattered residential development where appropriate.

Demographics Affecting Land Use

Population, housing, and employment are critical demographic factors that influence land use patterns. To examine future land use needs, projections were completed for population, housing units, and employment. The result provides projections for the future number of additional persons, housing units, and jobs that will be added to the County.

The population of Oneida County has continued to grow over the last several decades. In 2020, there were over 36,700 people living in the County. Between 2000 and 2020, the population grew by about 2.9%. Between 2000 and 2021, jobs decreased by 1.3% and housing increased by 14.5%. The larger increase in housing units relative to the job decrease is due to a decrease in household size and presence of retired empty nesters. Population, employment, and housing all impact land use.

Population

Population density is an indicator that compares the number of people occupying a specific geographic area. A rural area would have fewer people per square mile, while an urban area would have more people per square mile. Table 7-5 shows the number of people per square mile. The countywide total of 30.6 people per square mile is much lower than the statewide average of 89.6.

Housing

Similar to population, the number of housing units per square mile is also displayed in Table 7-5. The Countywide housing density of 21.6 is considerably lower than the statewide average of 41.5. This is typical in rural areas when compared to the state as a whole.

Employment

As discussed in Chapter 6, employment in Oneida County is expected increase by 9% over the next decade, for an estimated total of 1,373 new jobs added between 2021 and 2031. Jobs in educational services are expected to grow the most (32%), followed by manufacturing (25%), and wholesale trade (24%). These jobs will benefit from partnerships with local educational institutions as well as proximity to natural resources and transportation infrastructure.

Table 7-5: Density		
Municipality	People per Square Mile	Housing Units per Square Mile
Town of Cassian	15.7	15.5
Town of Crescent	61.4	41.5
Town of Enterprise	6.0	8.1
Town of Hazelhurst	37.0	35.9
Town of Lake Tomahawk	29.3	27.7
Town of Little Rice	5.3	7.0
Town of Lynne	1.9	4.9
Town of Minocqua	30.1	29.1
Town of Monico	4.8	5.0
Town of Newbold	30.4	26.5
Town of Nokomis	37.2	33.0
Town of Pelican	52.2	31.5
Town of Piehl	1.9	3.2
Town of Pine Lake	60.8	37.0
Town of Schoepke	7.7	12.6
Town of Stella	15.4	10.8
Town of Sugar Camp	18.6	17.0
Town of Three Lakes	24.1	29.5
Town of Woodboro	21.8	20.1
Town of Woodruff	57.6	46.6
City of Rhinelander	970.3	514.3
Oneida County	30.6	21.6
<i>Source: NCWRPC</i>		

Land Demand

Land demand is projected in Table 7-6. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) has population projections for 2025, 2030, 2035, and 2040. Based on the existing density of 0.77 residential acres per person, 0.07 commercial acres per person, and 0.04 industrial acres per person, land demand and total population are expected to peak in 2030. This means that the County could expect another 2,140 residents between 2020 and 2030, requiring 816 acres for residential development, 74 acres for commercial development, and 42 acres for industrial development between 2020 and 2030. Due to smaller families and an aging American population, population is then expected to decrease slightly after 2030. Although much of the land in Oneida County is publicly owned, there is sufficient undeveloped land to meet the need for the potential 1,883 acres of development by 2030.

Table 7-6 Land Demand in Acres				
Future Demand	2025	2030	2035	2040
WDOA Population Projections	38,905	39,985	39,745	38,500
Additional Residents	1,060	2,140	1,900	655
Residential Acres (0.77 acres/person)	816	1,648	1,463	504
Commercial Acres (0.07 acres/person)	74	150	133	46
Industrial Acres (0.04 acres/person)	42	86	76	26
Total Acres Needed by Year	933	1,883	1,672	576
<i>Source: WDOA, NCWRPC</i>				

The 2020 Census estimated the County’s population at 37,845, compared to the WDOA’s projection for 2020, which was 37,265. Since 580 more residents were counted in Oneida County than initially projected, demand in the future could be slightly higher than what is predicted by WDOA’s projections. But they are included since the State of Wisconsin recognizes them as the official projections.

Future Land Use

The future land use map is a collection of each municipality’s individual future land use maps. This plan does not change the zoning or land use classification of any parcel in the County but brings them together into one map for reference. The future land use map is different than zoning maps, and it assists staff and elected or appointed officials in reviewing requests for zoning changes. The map is advisory and does not have the authority of zoning, but it provides a vision of which parts of the county are suitable for different kinds of development so that infrastructure and services can be coordinated as the County develops. If land use changes at the local level are made, this County map should be updated to reflect them, since the County future land use map needs to match what each municipality has envisioned. The County map does not override the local maps if an error or inconsistency is found. See Map 7: Future Land Use.

Future Land Use Categories

Agriculture

Although there is little agricultural area in Oneida County, this identifies areas used for farming as well as cranberry bogs.

Commercial (Business)

Identifies businesses and commercial areas that are not considered industrial.

Industrial

Includes industrial uses as well as active and abandoned mining operations.

Open Lands

Open lands are areas that have no development and are clear of large concentrations of trees, such as open wetlands or fallow farm fields.

Outdoor Recreation

These areas identify active, developed recreational areas like ball fields and playgrounds, rather than undeveloped areas used for recreational purposes (such as forests and lakes).

Residential

Identifies areas of housing of various densities such as small lakefront properties or large rural residential parcels. It does not include farmhouses, which fall under agricultural land use.

Transportation

This includes roads, rail corridors, airports, and other areas dedicated to transportation.

Woodlands

Identifies land where forest is the dominant land cover.

Water

Identifies areas with surface water present.

Land Use Tools

The principal land use program in Wisconsin is the comprehensive planning program. The primary land use tools are zoning ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and official mapping.

Zoning

Under Wisconsin Statutes, counties and local units of government are authorized to adopt zoning ordinances. Zoning is a method for implementing or carrying out the land use plan by predetermining a logical pattern of land use development. Oneida County administers zoning for all Towns except for the Towns of Enterprise, Monico, and Sugar Camp.

A zoning ordinance consists of a map and written text. The zoning map identifies districts or zones, such as agriculture, residential, commercial, or industrial. Within each of these districts, the text of zoning ordinance specifies the permitted land uses, the size of buildings, yard or lot dimensions, and other prerequisites in obtaining permission to develop. The goal of the zoning

ordinance is to set a reasonable development pattern by keeping similar and related uses together and separating dissimilar, unrelated, incompatible uses, particularly in relationship to transportation facilities, utilities and public services and facilities.

Shoreland Zoning

Shoreland Zoning is in effect Countywide:

- Zoned towns follow the County’s shoreland zoning ordinance in addition to a General Zoning Ordinance
- Unzoned towns have state-required shoreland zoning that the County administers with no General Zoning
- The City of Rhinelander has its own shoreland zoning ordinance.

Farmland Preservation Zoning

Farmland preservation zoning is a voluntary zoning classification that is intended to minimize fragmentation of farmland by imposing development limitations consistent with or more restrictive than the provisions listed in Chapter 91 of WI Statutes. To adopt farmland preservation zoning, a municipality must be enrolled in the Farmland Preservation Program. Farmland Preservation Zoning is not currently utilized in Oneida County.

Wellhead Protection

Wellhead Protection ordinances restrict the land use activities that take place within a certain radius of public wells to protect what is known as the “recharge” area. This ensures that contaminants like chemicals will not easily travel into groundwater and contaminate sources of drinking water. Oneida County does not currently have a wellhead protection ordinance. Municipalities may also adopt wellhead protection ordinances, such as the City of Rhinelander’s ordinance.

Land Division

Oneida County administers land division (or subdivision) ordinances in all unincorporated Towns. Subdivision regulation relates to the way in which land is divided and accessed. A community can control the subdivision of land by requiring a developer to meet certain conditions when recording a plat. While imposing conditions restricts the use of private property, the cumulative effect of land subdivision on the health, safety, and welfare of a community is so great as to justify public control of the process. There is some overlap between zoning and subdivision codes in terms of standards. Both ordinances, for example, can set minimum lot sizes.

Official Mapping

An Official Map is a map adopted by a County that specifies locations of future roads and other utilities or public facilities, along with right-of-way widths and other specifications. When a land division is approved, it must accommodate dimensions for future facilities according to the Official Map. Currently, Oneida County does not have an official map.

Other Tools

Additional tools and approaches can be utilized by the County to achieve the goals of the plan. These include but are certainly not limited to the following: fee simple land acquisition, easements (purchased or volunteered), deed restrictions, land dedication, and ordinances or programs regulating activities such as impact fees, land division, building permits, and erosion control.

Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1: Provide for a well-balanced mix of residential, business, industrial, recreational, forestry, and other uses to serve the future needs of Oneida County and to maintain the area as a desirable place to live and work.

Objectives:

- Work with the Towns to guide the use, location, and density of development within both public and private lands consistent with the Oneida County Comprehensive Plan.
- Designate, maintain, and regulate an adequate quantity of suitable lands for future residential, commercial, forestry, industrial, recreational, and other uses in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and public input.
- Encourage the clustering of new business, residential, commercial, and industrial development into planned development areas to promote defined development districts, conserve resources, and maintain the character of the area.
- Encourage early identification of potential negative impacts from development proposals and promote strategies to minimize those impacts on neighbors, the community, and the natural resources.

Policies:

- Consider the use, location, and density of development and how it affects the natural resources, community character, anticipated growth, and need for utilities and services.
- Development should be discouraged in environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands and flood plains.
- Guide the location, mix, and quality of private development to meet both private and public land use demands.
- Land uses should be planned and approved for development in an orderly manner and avoid land use conflicts.
- Encourage infill development and redevelopment throughout the county, especially where facilities and services are available, such as Brownfields.

Goal 2: Provide adequate infrastructure & public services, and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future demand for residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses.

Objective:

- Encourage new areas of growth within or near existing areas of development where adequate public facilities and services exist or are planned for expansion and where there is adjacent existing compatible development.

Policies:

- Consider that the pace of development does not exceed the capacity of utilities, roads, and community facilities and services.
- New development should be responsible for paying for the cost of any new infrastructure costs required for that development.
- All locally adopted plans should strive to be complimentary with and seek to minimize conflicts with other levels of government and implementation tools.
- Work with Towns to develop and update individual comprehensive or coordination plans and create or modify implementation tools to reflect the future needs of their communities.

Goal 3: Maintain and update the County Comprehensive Plan.

Objectives:

- All comprehensive plans should strive to maximize public input in their planning efforts.
- Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.
- Promote flexibility in the plan.
- Establish on-going communication with each Town.

Policies:

- Work cooperatively with the Towns to coordinate land use and compatible development patterns that respect private property rights.
- Establish a policy on the relationship between the county and town plans as it relates to plan implementation.
- Establish a policy to ensure Towns are providing all plan amendments and updates to the county for incorporation into the County Comprehensive Plan.
- The County will maintain the County Comprehensive Plan, which will serve as a guide for future land use and zoning decisions.
- New development and redevelopment will be permitted based on consideration of this Plan.

Goal 4: Coordinate all state and federal agencies with a presence in Oneida County regarding all state and federally owned land planning activities.

Objective:

- All state and federal agencies and lands utilizing federal money shall coordinate with Oneida County's comprehensive plan for all land planning and management activities on state and federal lands within the jurisdiction of the county, to ensure consistent and harmonized policies across the three levels of government.
- Notification, consultation, and coordination with the county is required at the earliest time possible for any land planning and/or proposed action by state and/or federal agencies, or nonprofit organizations, or for any change in existing activities, newly permitted activities, or changes in regulations that may affect the economic basis of the county. Consultation and coordination with the county is necessary to determine the full scope of potential social and economic effects of proposed activities. The county considers that consultation and coordination must include all impacted towns on all forest management issues.

Policy:

- Oneida County requires that all federal and state agencies and lands utilizing federal, or state funding coordinate any land use activities with the county and impacted towns, in compliance with applicable federal and state laws and purposes of those laws with the County.

Chapter Eight:

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Background

This chapter is based on the statutory requirement for a “compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions, including school districts and adjacent communities, for siting and building public facilities and sharing public services.” The chapter also examines the relationship of the County with area school districts and adjacent local units of government, the state and other governmental agencies. In addition, this element shall identify existing or potential conflicts between the County and other governmental units that are specified in this paragraph and describe processes to resolve such conflicts.

This Comprehensive Plan provides overall recommendations for relationships with adjacent, local, and overlapping jurisdictions to achieve visions for future growth, avoid inefficient or conflicting development patterns, and promote intergovernmental agreements.

Previous Plans and Studies

Oneida County Comprehensive Plan, 2013

The County’s former Comprehensive Plan contained an exhaustive list of existing and potential intergovernmental efforts. Many of them have been brought forward into this Chapter, reviewed, and updated.

Regional Livability Plan, 2015

This plan was prepared by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission as the regional comprehensive plan. The Regional Livability Plan (RLP) is only advisory and briefly describes intergovernmental cooperation, cooperative agreements, and other methods that local governments can use to address common issues. Not all conflicts between local governments can be settled using these methods, but by looking at problems that transcend local boundaries in a regional context, solutions are more likely to be discovered.

Intergovernmental Issues

Consistency of Plans

Since 2010, state law requires zoning actions be consistent with an adopted plan. Policies between adjoining jurisdictions should be consistent with one another as much as possible, especially between Town and County plans. If the Town and the County plans have conflicting future land use maps, it will be hard for decision makers to be consistent with each other. Therefore, the City, Towns, and County should review and update their Comprehensive Plans at a minimum of ten years to ensure these maps remain consistent with each other.

Shared Services

Examples of shared services include one town contracting with another for fire or Emergency Medical Services (EMS), or the County agreeing to work with an adjacent county to solve a common problem. In both examples, the goal is to reduce costs and improve the quality of services received. Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities describes existing shared services in detail.

Overlapping Jurisdiction

Corporate boundaries of towns and counties often do not coincide with the boundaries of other functional service providing agencies, especially school districts. None of the school districts that operate in Oneida County are entirely within the County, and they cross into neighboring Counties. School district boundaries are set based on the location of school buildings, where the students live, and the efficiency of transporting children to a given school. While there are no known issues at this time, these overlapping jurisdictions must be taken into consideration when considering how best to execute intergovernmental agreements and how best to deliver services to citizens.

Overview of Efforts

This portion of the chapter examines the various existing governmental cooperation agreements, identifies some potential efforts, and provides a summary of the surrounding county planning efforts.

Existing Efforts

Local Efforts

The following departments and agencies work across municipal boundaries countywide:

- The Planning and Zoning department assists municipalities with zoning, planning, land division, and code administration. These tools are described in Chapter 7: Land Use.
- The Land & Water Conservation Department conserves local land and water resources.
- The Highway Department maintains and plows State and County roads in Towns, contracts with Towns to provide plowing and maintenance on Town roads and disperses state funding for local road projects.
- The Sheriff's Department provides protective services to all municipalities in the County, except the City of Rhinelander, which has its own police department. All law enforcement agencies in the County have a mutual aid agreement that allows them to assist each other. Oneida County's Animal Control Ordinance delegates animal complaints and investigations to the Oneida County Humane Society.
- The Clerk's Office manages the County's website, dog licensing, resolution and ordinance adoption, property tax information, DNR licensing, and more. This office also works with the State Elections Board to manage elections.
- The Oneida County Sanitary Landfill is owned by Oneida County and managed by the Oneida County Public Works Committee. The Committee approves contracts for Towns to collect waste using private haulers.
- The Oneida County Housing Authority in Woodruff administers rental subsidies for low-income households in both authority-owned and participating privately-owned housing units.
- The Oneida County Economic Development Corporation (OCEDC) was founded in 1989 as a partnership between business and industry. OCEDC is the countywide coordinator for economic development.
- The Human Service Center based in Rhinelander provides alcohol and drug abuse counseling, outpatient mental health services, programs for those with developmental disabilities, and other community support programs.

Additional services include fire, ambulance, and EMS services, which are also provided countywide, crossing municipal boundaries as described in Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities.

Regional Efforts

Grow North Regional Economic Development Corporation was created in 2004 to foster cooperation among economic development partners and foster economic growth efforts in

Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, and Vilas counties recognizing the value of collaborative efforts to grow and diversify the Northwoods economy.

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), who assisted in the creation of this Plan, provides planning and economic development assistance to 10 counties in Central Wisconsin (Adams, Forest, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, and Wood). As a member of this organization, Oneida County is eligible for Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding (see Chapter 6: Economic Development) as well as cost-effective planning projects led by NCWRPC staff.

State Efforts

The County primarily will coordinate with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Department of Transportation (WisDOT), and Department of Administration (DOA) to implement goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan. The level of involvement of these agencies is described in detail through the various chapters of this Plan, especially Chapter 2 (WDNR) and Chapter 5 (WisDOT). Additionally, DOA provides demographic data to the County each year and is the agency responsible for monitoring Comprehensive Plans among all of Wisconsin's Cities, Counties, Towns, and Villages.

Existing Intergovernmental Agreements

Existing intergovernmental agreements meet the County's needs as well as the needs of its municipalities at this time. These agreements are periodically reviewed and updated as conditions change. There is potential for exploring agreements as conflicts arise.

Potential Areas of Cooperation

The 2013 Oneida County Comprehensive Plan noted that opportunities existed for road maintenance and snowplowing to reduce costs and increase efficiency. It specifically mentioned agreements for shared equipment or contracts to outsource the work. Additionally, the 2013 Plan noted that several Towns in the County adopted Coordination Plans and described their intent.

Planning Efforts in Surrounding Counties

Forest (2023), Langlade (2019), Lincoln (2022), and Vilas (2023) Counties all have adopted County Comprehensive Plans while Price County has not created or adopted one. These plans were reviewed, including their future land use plans, and no conflicts with Oneida County were identified.

Goals, Objectives, & Policies

Goal 1: Encourage coordination and cooperation among all units of government.

Objectives:

- Promote communication with other units of government, including adjoining towns, the County, the region, the State, and federal government.
- Identify alternative solutions to existing or potential land use, administration or policy conflicts that may hinder inter-governmental cooperation.
- Encourage regularly scheduled meetings and on-going communications between County departments, local governments, State agencies, and surrounding governments.
- Encourage the sharing of information between departments, local governments, and citizens.

Policy:

- Pursue dialogue with and between the Towns and City in the county to seek areas of coordination, cooperation, and collaboration.

Goal 2: Coordinate activities across jurisdictional boundaries to improve the quality and efficiency of services.

Objective:

- Work together with other units of government, and others, to provide services in a more cost-effective manner.

Policies:

- Periodically review existing shared service agreements and explore additional agreements.
- Encourage cooperative agreements regarding annexation, expansion of public sewer and water services, growth management and boundary agreements between the Towns and the City.
- Encourage Towns to explore joint service agreements with neighboring Towns and the City where consolidating and coordinating services will result in better services and/or cost savings.

Goal 3: Encourage countywide and regional planning efforts to address issues that will affect the future of Oneida County.

Objectives:

- Coordinate the planning effort between the City of Rhinelander and its surrounding towns, as well as possible discussions with WI-DOA, DOT, and DNR, and any other governmental unit that can influence the planning process.
- Engage in and support processes to resolve conflicts between the plans of governments with overlapping jurisdictions.

Policies:

- At least annually, meet with adjoining units of government to discuss issues of mutual concern.
- Involve all school districts that serve the county in the planning process, to assist them with facility planning and site selection.
- Encourage coordination with surrounding counties and the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission or other resources to address issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries or involve the larger region.

Chapter Nine:

Implementation

Background

This Chapter describes implementation tools available to the County and explains how each of the Chapters of this Comprehensive Plan functions with one another. Also included is an overview of the process to adopt, amend, update, and evaluate the Comprehensive Plan. The Oneida County Comprehensive Plan, along with locally adopted comprehensive plans, is intended to help guide growth and development in the County. The Plans are a resource to decide what tools or programs can be used to meet goals, objectives, and policies.

Existing Implementation Tools

There are two primary types of implementation tools: non-regulatory and regulatory. Nonregulatory approaches generally involve decisions related to policy and about how the County will spend its financial resources. Regulatory approaches involve implementing various rules and regulations, mainly related to land use regulations. In particular, the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations comprise the principal regulatory devices used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development.

Non-regulatory Tools

Oneida County annually prepares both an operational budget as well as a capital improvement plan. In addition, each County department prepares work plans. Counties may also initiate strategic plans.

Annual Operating Budget

Oneida County prepares a budget each year to allocate funding for projects and operations. The budget is based on the needs of County residents, priorities set by the County Board, and the related work plans identified by each County department. The existing 2023 and proposed 2024 budgets can be viewed on the County's website. The Administration Committee oversees budget development, and the budget is adopted by the County Board.

Capital Improvement Plan

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) of Capital Fund is a blueprint for planning the County's major capital expenditures. A Capital Fund is a method of planning for and scheduling expenditures for public improvements over a period of several years to maximize the use of limited public funds. CIPs must consider short- and long-term expenses of maintaining existing infrastructure while upgrading it as needed. Each year the CIP is reviewed to keep the improvement program current and allows for modifications to meet changing needs. The preparation of a CIP is a joint responsibility between County administration and various departments. The County Board approves the CIP as part of the Annual Budget.

Strategic Plan

Strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes, and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. There is currently no active Oneida County strategic plan.

Regulatory Tools

There are three basic implementation tools that the County can use to implement this comprehensive plan. These are 1) General & Shoreland Zoning, 2) Land Division Ordinance, and 3) Official Mapping. General zoning applies only to towns that have adopted County zoning, while Shoreland zoning applies to the entire County's unincorporated areas. Meanwhile, the land division ordinance applies to the entire County's unincorporated areas unless a town has adopted a more restrictive ordinance. Official mapping applies throughout the entire County, but it is a very limited tool which Oneida County currently doesn't utilize. See Chapter 7: Land Use for a detailed description of these tools.

Other Planning and Zoning Tools

The County is usually not directly involved in either annexation or extraterritorial zoning. Annexation is the statutory process for transferring lands from unincorporated areas (towns) to incorporated areas (cities and villages). Annexations are usually initiated by landowners to transfer their land into a city or village. A city can only accept or reject the petition. Sometimes this causes tensions and legal battles between municipalities, and there are tools available to prevent this. The methods of intergovernmental cooperation available to address annexation-related issues include general intergovernmental agreements, municipal boundaries fixed by court judgment, boundary change by cooperative plan agreement, and revenue sharing agreements.

Like annexation, extraterritorial zoning (ETZ) and land division ordinances (ETJ) are useful but contentious tools to assist with a municipality's growth. For Cities and Villages, state law allows for extraterritorial zoning and land division regulations which can extend 1½ (Villages) to 3 miles (Cities) beyond the municipal boundary. This applies automatically if the city or village adopts a subdivision ordinance or an official map, and it allows the city or village to influence the pattern of development outside their corporate limits through zoning and land division. Currently, land divisions in unincorporated towns are sent to the City of Rhinelander if they are proposed within the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

To exercise extraterritorial zoning (ETZ), it is necessary for a city or village to form a committee with the adjacent town, in which both parties have three representatives. A majority of committee members must agree, and the governing body of both jurisdictions must adopt whatever agreement is reached for extraterritorial zoning to go into effect. As of right now, no communities in Oneida County exercise ETZ. The goal of extraterritorial zoning and land division is to reserve space for future roads and land use patterns so an incorporated community doesn't become landlocked by unincorporated development as it grows.

Consistency Review

The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the Comprehensive Plan describe how each of the required chapters will be integrated and made consistent with the other chapters of the plan. Since Oneida County completed all Comprehensive Plan chapters simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. This plan also references towns and municipalities in the County who have adopted their own plans.

Recommendations from the previous comprehensive plan and other County-adopted plans have been incorporated in this plan to foster coordination and consistency between plans. In the future, as plan amendments occur, it is important that reviews for consistency be conducted to ensure that this Plan is up to date. It is also critical that as towns make comprehensive plan amendments, those amendments are forwarded to the County for inclusion in the Oneida County Comprehensive Plan. This should ensure that the Planning & Zoning Committee is using the most current information available.

Plan Adoption, Amendments, Updates, and Evaluation

While this comprehensive plan is intended to provide a long-term framework to guide general development, it must also respond to continuous changes that occur that may not have been foreseen when the plan was adopted. It is appropriate that some chapters of the Plan are rarely amended while others are subject to updating on a more regular basis. Plan maps should also be updated periodically. For example, the Future Land Use Map may change regularly as zoning amendment requests are approved.

Plan Adoption

The first step in implementing this plan involves the Planning and Development Committee passing a resolution recommending adoption of the Oneida County Comprehensive Plan by the County Board. Next a public hearing is held to allow public comment on the document. Following that the County Board must adopt the plan by ordinance. Adoption formalizes the plan document as the framework to guide local development decisions over the next 10 to 20 years.

Upon plan adoption, Oneida County may review the Oneida County Zoning Ordinance, including both map and text, to be consistent with local comprehensive plans. This Plan should also be made available to the public, department heads, and elected or appointed officials responsible for decision making.

Plan Amendments

Occasionally this Plan may need to be amended. If circumstances do arise that require text or maps to change, the Planning and Zoning Committee should review and recommend adoption by the County Board. Amendments may be appropriate throughout the lifecycle of the plan, particularly if new issues emerge or trends change. These amendments will typically consist of minor changes to the plan text or maps. Large-scale changes or frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals should be avoided or the plan loses integrity. The public should be notified of proposed plan amendments to allow an opportunity for review and comment.

In towns where an officially adopted comprehensive plan exists, future amendments and updates to any town plan should be promptly forwarded to the Oneida County Planning & Zoning Department. Receipt of the town plan will allow staff and the planning & zoning committee to make recommendations that are based on the amended town plan. These local future land use maps will also become the basis for future amendments to the County's Future Land Use Map.

Plan Updates

According to the State comprehensive planning law, State Statute 66.1001, comprehensive plans must be updated thoroughly at least once every ten years. This includes updating each chapter, rather than minor amendments, so all the information is as current as possible. This gives the County an opportunity to modify goals, objectives, and policies as economic trends change. Plan updates must be formally adopted following the same procedure described above for initial plan adoption.

Plan Evaluation

This plan should be evaluated at least every 5 years. Members of the County Board, standing committees, County staff, and any other local decision-making bodies should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated. The evaluation should involve first reviewing the goals and objectives to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires. Then the strategies and actions should be reviewed and refined to eliminate completed tasks and identify new approaches if appropriate. Many of the policies identified in the plan are continuous or ongoing and should also be monitored to measure the plan's overall success. Thus, many of the objectives and their related actions can be accomplished in the short term, say 1 to 5 years. However, some will take longer to accomplish, say 6 to 10 or more years.

As part of the comprehensive planning process, several goals, objectives, and policies were developed. When implemented, these are intended to provide direction to County staff and its committees, as well as the board of supervisors. To measure progress towards meeting these goals, objectives, and policies, a variety of actions need to take place. Therefore, the task of measuring plan progress, is as simple as determining if any action was taken or not. That information will provide guidance to the County Board on when specific actions are to be initiated. Based on the targets, measures of progress in achieving implementation of the comprehensive plan can be examined.

A periodic "Plan Status" report may be prepared to summarize the progress toward implementation. This report might be jointly developed by various County departments, as related to their involvement in the implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies developed within this plan.

Conclusion

The Oneida County Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a "living" document. Periodic amendment and update of the plan is critical to ensure that it is accurate and consistent with the

needs and desires of the County. The specific policy statements are meant to serve as the mechanisms for achieving the goals and objectives, which were defined throughout the planning process. Ultimately, the success of the planning process will be measured by the future quality of life experienced by both residents and visitors to Oneida County.

To move the plan forward, a strategic planning process is an optional project that could occur as the next step in the planning process. As part of that effort, goals will be prioritized, benchmarks will be established, and responsible parties will be identified. The result will be a framework for the County in the coming years to help implement the Comprehensive Plan.