

**Comprehensive Plan:** The City of Wausau has completed its comprehensive plan. This document was prepared as a collaborative effort between the City, Marathon County, and the Minneapolis-based consulting firm, URS. The plan is intended to serve as a guide for the City Plan Commission, Common Council, and other City officials as they make decisions about the long term growth and improvement of the community. Most of the plan is focused on the physical development of Wausau, with land use, transportation facilities, and park and recreation improvements being major areas of focus. Other important elements of the plan include intergovernmental cooperation, housing, cultural facilities, and natural resources. The Common Council adopted the plan in February, 2006. This *Conditions and Issues* volume (Volume I of II) provides extensive background information on the community including an identification of problems, issues and concerns.

Anyone wishing to comment on this volume of the plan may send an email to: [planning@mail.ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:planning@mail.ci.wausau.wi.us). Please note that Volume II of the plan, *Goals, Objectives, Policies & Actions*, and the supporting figures are also available for review and comment on the City website.

# City of Wausau

## Comprehensive Plan:

# Conditions and Issues

(Volume I of II)

*February, 2006*

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## List of Acronyms

**AADT**—Annual Average Daily Traffic

**BMPs**—Best Management Practices

**CBD**—Central Business District

**CCR&R**—Child Care Resource and Referral Network

**CDBG**—Community Development Block Grant

**CES**—Cropland Evaluation System (Marathon County)

**CIP**—Capital Improvement Program

**CISM** – Capital Improvements and Street Maintenance Committee

**CTH**—County Trunk Highway

**CVB**—Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention and Visitors Bureau

**CWA**—Central Wisconsin Airport

**DCPZ**—Department of Conservation, Planning and Zoning (Marathon County)

**DWD**—Department of Workforce Development

**EMS**—Emergency Medical Services

**EPA**—U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

**ERW**—Exceptional Resource Waters, a designation by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

**ESL** – English as a Second Language

**FEMA**—Federal Emergency Management Agency

**FIRM**—Flood Insurance Rate Maps

**HOME**—Home Investment Partnerships Program

**HUD**—U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**LHOG**—Local Housing Organization Grant

**LMI** – Low- and Middle-Income

**LOS**—Level of Service (related to amount of traffic and congestion on a roadway, measure from Level A, no congestion and freely moving traffic, to Level F, traffic gridlock).

**LRTP**—Long Range Transportation Plan (Prepared by the Wausau Metro Planning Organization for the Metro area).

**LWRMP**—Land and Water Resource Management Plan (Marathon County)

**MPO**—Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

**MSA** – Metropolitan Statistical Area

**NCHC**—North Central Health Care

**NCWRPC**—North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning  
Commission

**NRHP**—National Register of Historic Places

**NTC**—Northcentral Technical College

**ORW**—Outstanding Resource Waters, a designation under the  
U.S. Clean Water Act.

**SHPO**—State Historic Preservation Office

**STF Data**—Summary Tape File, referring to data files of the  
2000 U.S. Census.

**STH**—State Trunk Highway

**TDP**—Transit Development Plan (Wausau Area Transit  
System)

**TIF**—Tax Incremental Financing

**TIP**—Transportation Improvement Program (Marathon  
County)

**USDA**—United States Department of Agriculture

**USH**—U.S. Highway

**UW-MC**—University of Wisconsin—Marathon County

**WATS**—Wausau Area Transit System

**WDA**—Wisconsin Department of Agriculture

**WDNR**—Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

**WDOA**—Wisconsin Department of Administration

**WDOT**—Wisconsin Department of Transportation

**WHEDA**—Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development  
Authority

**WPS**—Wisconsin Public Service Corporation

# 1. Introduction and Summary

Communities are like people. They are constantly growing and changing from day to day and, therefore, have changing needs. It is essential that communities anticipate the future if they are to take advantage of what the future has to offer. Communities plan in order to guide and encourage these changes in such a way that they bring maximum benefit to all of their citizens. More explicitly, we plan our communities in order to be prepared for things we expect to happen, to accomplish what we want to happen, and to avoid or prevent things we do not want to happen.

Frequently, in discussions of the planning process, the question is asked, “What is planning when considered as a government function?” One of several possible answers that might be given is that planning is a rational and systematic process in which a guide for future economic, social and physical growth of a community is developed and maintained. It is the process of formulating long-range objectives and developing orderly ways in which to achieve these objectives. Planning of whatever kind, in whatever field, carried on at whatever level of government, is ultimately involved with policy — either the formulation of policy or the implementation of objectives for government action.

A comprehensive plan is a long-range policy guide to decisions about the physical development and redevelopment of a community. A plan generally does not provide a detailed design for specific site development; rather, it sets out broad policy directions for community change. Most plans address at

least three basic elements: the private uses of land, community facilities, and circulation.

This comprehensive plan provides a foundation to help the City Plan Commission and Common Council make decisions about various public programs and activities, including: growth and annexation, zoning, land use, parks, economic development, public utilities, streets, downtown revitalization, neighborhood improvements, and other matters where local government may play a role in meeting the changing needs of the community. Private businesses can also use the plan and some of the background information contained herein to guide their decisions to invest, build, and develop in our community.

This comprehensive plan has a very strong citizen input base. Special planning committees, focus groups, a household survey, neighborhood meetings, and other public participation activities were undertaken to provide a high level of assurance that there is general public agreement on the direction that the City should take as it plans for the future. This plan also incorporates ideas and strategies from other recent planning efforts the City has undertaken, including the City’s Vision Statement, development goals and objectives, recommendations for community improvements and policy criteria.

## Mission Statement of the City of Wausau

Wausau has engaged in many planning activities to direct the growth and development of the community. The importance of planning to community leaders is also articulated in the formal *Mission Statement Of The City Of Wausau* which was adopted by the Common Council in 1990 and reaffirmed by another Common Council in the late 1990s. This mission statement, which is reproduced in its entirety below, indicates that Wausau City Government will “*Plan And Encourage Positive Growth*”.

### ***Mission Statement of the City of Wausau***

*In Response To Our Citizens,*

*We will Provide Services*

*In the Most Effective And Efficient Manner*

*In Order to Promote And Enhance*

*Our Living Environment.*

*Plan and Encourage Positive Growth.*

*Promote A Positive Community Image*

*By Encouraging Citizen Involvement*

*And Civic Pride.*

## Citizen Participation

Over the past several years, in keeping with the City’s Mission Statement, City officials have engaged in a variety of efforts to involve citizens in identifying community concerns and values. Citizen input was gathered through several community mail-out surveys and visioning sessions. Through these efforts, **community values** and a **vision** for the future were defined. These were included in a report entitled “*Wausau Tomorrow – A Vision for the Future of Our Community*” (March, 1999) and are reproduced below.

### Identified Community Values

- Diversified, clean and healthful natural environment.
- Position on the banks of the Wisconsin River, which both separates and joins our community.
- Scenic beauty.
- Quality parks and open space areas.
- Strong family ties.
- Low crime rate.
- Rich culturally and socially diverse heritage.
- Economic vitality and variety.
- Quality urban services.

### Community Vision Statement

*As we look to the future, we see Wausau as a pleasant and attractive City that is socially and politically progressive. Wausau will be a place that maintains its small-town character and intimacy as it continues to grow and diversify into a cosmopolitan area. We will continue to be a community of*

*cares people who have created a safe, healthy and secure place for people of all backgrounds and lifestyles. Individual rights are understood and respected in the context of social responsibility. We place a high value on family, the natural environment and public safety, and we will emphasize their importance in the future, as we have in the past.*

*The City will continue to grow and strengthen its position as the regional, social and cultural center of Northcentral Wisconsin. The City will also maintain its status as the hub of economic activity and opportunity in the Wausau Urban Area. Our rich history combined with the cultural and entertainment opportunities available will help investment and redevelopment in the central area. Our park system will be expanded to accommodate population growth and enhance the quality of life for Wausau residents and visitors. The high value we place on the natural environment will encourage us to continue to protect our surroundings and to make enhancements where damage has been done. Our Wisconsin River and its shore lands will be a mainstay of community activity, not for transporting logs or fueling industry as in the past, but for providing recreational opportunities and scenic beauty.*

*In the year 2020, the City of Wausau and the Urban Area will not only feel like one community but, through continuing collaborative efforts with our neighbors, the Urban Area communities will have taken more steps toward actually merging into one large community. We will make the City of Wausau and the Wausau Urban Area a better place to live through these cooperative efforts. We will manage growth and change in Wausau through citizen involvement and careful planning.*

*Downtown Wausau's unique character will have renewed vibrancy. People throughout the region will recognize Downtown's uniqueness and gather to work, shop and enjoy the many social, cultural and entertainment options available there. The heightened activity in the central area will stimulate interest in living downtown.*

*Public services and infrastructure improvements will be made to accommodate growth and enhance the quality of life for Wausau residents. Improvements to the street system, bus lines, pedestrian facilities and bicycle ways will elevate the level of mobility options for all travelers. Our residential neighborhoods will be clean, healthy and safe places where physical blight has been eliminated.*

*The various educational systems serving our community will provide learning environments that recognize and accommodate our rich diversity. They will provide programs that lead to lifelong learning and productivity.*

*Our vision for Wausau in the year 2020 combines the values that are prevalent in the community today with our aspirations for tomorrow. Our vision seeks to preserve and enhance the distinctive characteristics of our community and to recognize and address the challenges that lie before us.*

### **"Big Bold Ideas"**

One of the community visioning sessions encouraged participants to "think outside of the box". The result of this session was a list of "big bold ideas" for the future. Since these were identified in 1999, some aspects of these ideas have been

implemented. The original list of ideas is presented below and organized under general topic headings.

#### City Growth and Expansion:

- Annex the area northwest of the current City limits bounded by Decator Drive, CTH K and Burek Avenue. This area might be suitable for an industrial park.
- Secure residential “growing room” by annexing land to the east of the present City limits. Emphasis should be placed on the areas east of Thom Field and the Andrew Warren Historic District. Industrial development is not appropriate for this area; there are better areas for industrial use.

#### General Development/Redevelopment:

- Build a grocery store/supermarket on the northeast side, but do not allow commercial strip development. Keep commercial development in or near downtown.
- Clean up the Near East side, particularly the property in the area bounded by N 1<sup>st</sup> Street, N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Short Street and Bridge Street. Concentrate building and other code enforcement in this area.
- Provide clustered commercial development near the intersection of Franklin and 41<sup>st</sup>.
- Redevelop the Wausau Downtown Airport into a residential area with waterfront lots.
- Maintain commercial development along Grand Avenue.
- Maintain industrial land uses along the railroad corridor on the east side of Wausau.
- Redevelop 3-M Corporation property, formerly SNE (Crestline) Corporation, for residential use or as the site for expansion of the UW-Marathon County campus.

- Redevelop the far south end of the area located between S 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and S 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, along Lake Wausau, for river edge commercial uses such as a marina, shops, restaurants and other water-oriented commercial establishments.
- Target housing inspections and expenditures of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and spot redevelopment to the area generally bounded by Stewart Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Garfield Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue.
- Provide a public elementary school to serve the new residential district to the east.

#### Riverfront:

- Relocate heavy industry to a more appropriate industrial park area and redevelop the central river corridor.
- Continue development of the Festival Grounds along the Wisconsin River in downtown.
- Develop apartments along the river south of Bridge Street. The river is a great place for residential apartments/condominiums.

#### Downtown/City Center:

- Maintain the owner-occupied central city residential areas.
- Develop downtown residential land uses with ancillary services.
- Complete development of the Arts Block.

#### Transportation:

- Construct a new bridge across the Wisconsin River at Evergreen Road.
- Provide sidewalks along 13<sup>th</sup> Street in the vicinity of Horace Mann Middle School.

- Create an east side by-pass. Widen Evergreen, 41<sup>st</sup> Street and Wausau Avenue/STH 52 to four lanes.
- Reconstruct the McCleary Bridge to align with 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and widen 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue from the new bridge to Thomas Street. Improve Thomas Street by widening to four lanes from 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Grand Avenue, improving the S-curve near Cleveland Avenue, restricting commercial access, and installing ornamental street lighting.
- Reconstruct the intersections of 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Stewart Avenue, including the intersection of 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue and STH 52.
- Reconstruct the USH 51/STH 29 interchange to eliminate the traffic signals and make it a free-flowing facility. Also widen freeway to six lanes and widen overpass at Stewart Avenue to allow at least four lanes of traffic to pass under the freeway.
- Widen Stewart Avenue to four lanes from USH 51 to 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- Improve the River Edge Parkway from Stewart Avenue south to Riverside Park.
- Improve access to the City's public works facilities and wastewater treatment plant by widening and reconstructing McCleary Street.

#### Parks, Trails, and Recreation:

- Develop a bike trail along the northeast side of the Wisconsin River and along the west side of the City.
- Develop Stewart Park. This would be a good site for an amphitheater and outdoor arts programs.
- Create park space, river walk, and bikeway along the river.
- Develop a recreation/sports complex in the area around the new East High School.

- Create a major recreation/nature area on Franklin Street.
- Establish park/conservancy in wetland/stream corridors.
- Develop a trail between Town Line Road and Franklin Street through new residential development.
- Construct a pedestrian bridge from Riverside Park to Isle of Ferns Park.
- Enhance the appeal of Marathon Park by removing and repairing fencing along Stewart Avenue and along 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and landscaping along the fence to enhance its visual impact.
- Establish a water facility in Marathon Park.

#### Other:

- Develop the CTH K gateway to the City.
- Enlarge and preserve the Andrew Warren Historical District.
- Establish a uniform curb and gutter ordinance throughout the City.
- Maintain trees and neighborhood scale.
- Aggressively market the City through advertising.
- The City should purchase land when it becomes available. However, the City should not develop just to develop; think about the quality of development and what fits. The right development will come in time.
- Extend bus service through the City.

#### **Consensus Goals of the 2002-2004 Common Council**

More recently, support for the values and the community vision described above was restated during a goal setting session of the Wausau Common Council in August, 2002. At this

session, the Common Council established the following five consensus goals for 2002-2004:

1. Develop strategies to attract business and industry.
2. Develop strategies for replacing the loss of shared tax revenue.
3. Improve inter-governmental cooperation: Local, County, State, and Federal, schools, et. al.
4. Develop downtown entertainment district.
5. Housing.

These goals, and strategies to achieve them, will be discussed more specifically in the various sections of the comprehensive plan (e.g., Land Use, Economic Development, Transportation, etc.).

## Summary of Findings

The City of Wausau Conditions and Issues report documents existing conditions in the City and identifies primary issues or concerns the City may need to address in the future. This report provides a backdrop for development of the final plan, which will outline policies and actions the City can take to address identified issues and guide future growth in Wausau. Some key findings of this report include:

- The City of Wausau is the largest city in Marathon County and is the hub of regional government, employment, and cultural activities. However, growth in the metropolitan area has shifted to the south and east in recent years. As a result, the City of Wausau's standing as the regional hub,

particularly regarding retail trade, is becoming less clearly defined.

- Much of the City's growth in the last few decades has been directly related to annexations and an influx of Southeast Asians. The City's population currently represents about 31 percent of the total population in Marathon County. Compared to other communities in the County, the City has a higher concentration of populations with special needs, including seniors, persons with low incomes, and Southeast Asians.
- The City is graced with a large amount of waterfront providing natural, scenic and recreational amenities as well as opportunities for redevelopment. However, some of these areas are environmentally sensitive and should be protected from development impacts. Other areas, particularly along the downtown riverfront, contain industrial contamination, which must be cleaned up to enable redevelopment.
- In some parts of the City, natural features such as shallow bedrock, steep slopes, and wetlands limit development and result in inefficient land use patterns.
- The City is essentially fully developed, with little vacant, underdeveloped land remaining. Thus, new development will likely occur through redevelopment of obsolete or underutilized properties or on land annexed from adjoining towns.

- Since 1960, over 5,800 acres have been annexed to the City of Wausau from adjacent unincorporated towns. Based on annexation trends of the last four decades, it is anticipated that the City will annex approximately 1,400 acres during each of the next two decades.
- Downtown Wausau is considered the heart of the City and generally recognized as the hub of regional government and cultural activities. In 2000, the City adopted a master plan to revitalize downtown Wausau, including the downtown riverfront. In addition, a National Main Street program was established in 2002 to actively address downtown revitalization.
- Neighborhood deterioration and stabilization is a major concern and challenge. The older, smaller housing stock, concentrations of rental property, concerns about crime, and high taxes can become factors that “push” more mobile and affluent people out of the City.
- The City’s local street system is aging and funding ongoing maintenance and improvements is a continual challenge. Local street maintenance is mostly funded through property taxes; however the capital budget is not always sufficient to complete needed improvements in a timely manner. In addition, the City receives little financial support to improve or maintain the County roads located in the City. As a result, costs for maintenance of these County roads are borne entirely by City taxpayers rather than all Marathon County taxpayers, as is the case with almost all other County highways.
- The Wausau Area Transit System provides public transit, mostly within the City of Wausau. Expanding the service cost-effectively is difficult given the limited concentration of commercial/industrial development, low-density residential development pattern in newly annexed areas of the City, lack of connections between various modes of transportation, and limited support for transit service in adjacent communities.
- All property in the City is served by public sewer and water service. Public utility extensions are only allowed within the City’s boundaries and therefore only occur after annexation. Because the City cannot proactively initiate annexation, it is difficult to prepare a schedule for orderly utility extensions. Rather, the City responds to requests for annexation, often resulting from problems related to private septic systems or wells.
- The City provides a range of housing options, although a large portion of the existing housing stock is at least 40 years old. The City has several housing rehabilitation programs and new homebuyer programs and has improved building code enforcement efforts to address issues related to housing deterioration and encourage housing reinvestment.
- The City offers a number of housing and assistance programs for low-income families and individuals, which has contributed to the relatively high concentration of low- and middle-income residents in Wausau.

- Wausau is the only unit of government in Marathon County with a Historic Preservation Plan and Historic Landmarks Commission. The majority of properties in the County listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are located in Wausau. Wausau is also home to several cultural facilities that serve the City and regional community, in particular the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum and the Grand Theatre.
- Most of the City of Wausau is served by the Wausau School District, although a small portion of the southeast side is in the D.C. Everest School District. There are 13 private or parochial primary and secondary schools located in the City. There are also two post-secondary institutions located in the City, UW-Marathon County (UWMC) and Northcentral Technical College (NTC).
- The City park system is managed by the Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department. The City *Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2003 – 2008* was adopted by the Common Council in May, 2003.
- The City's economy includes a diverse mix of government, health care, insurance, service and manufacturing. The City also enjoys a successful downtown central business district and thriving industrial park. However, there are concerns about the impact of high tax rates and an increasing tax rate disparity on future economic development in the City.

## 2. Demographics

This analysis is intended to describe the existing demographics of the City of Wausau and identify the major demographic trends impacting Wausau over the next few decades. For comparison purposes, both Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin are also evaluated in several sections of this analysis.

Population and employment drive urban development; they have a direct effect on housing, transportation, local commercial activity, and service delivery. For example, as the population expands, the demand for housing, parks and open space, schools, sewer and water services, commercial development, and many other services and activities also increases. Population data not only provide a strong indicator of the community's economic vitality but also form the basis for measuring the adequacy of existing community services and facilities and for planning for future needs. An understanding of the patterns, amounts and causes of changes in population and employment provides a strong foundation for planning for the future.

### Population and Households

#### Historical Growth Trends

The City was chartered by the State of Wisconsin in 1872 and grew at an extremely rapid rate during the lumbering era of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Population growth trailed off quite rapidly during the 1950s and the following decade. By 1980,

the U.S. Bureau of the Census recorded the City's first population decrease — a decline of 380 people from 1970 to 1980.

From 1900 through 1950, the City's population grew at a much faster rate than Marathon County's. However, since the 1950 Census, the City's population increased at a much slower rate than Marathon County's except for the period from 1980 to 1990. During this decade, the City's population increased by over 14 percent, while Marathon County's population increased by less than 4 percent.

Much of the City's population growth during the 1980s can be attributed to two components. First, the City annexed literally thousands of residents who were living in the adjacent communities of Rib Mountain and Stettin. Thus, many of the "new" City residents were incorporated into Wausau through the annexation process. Second, the "Asian and Pacific Islander" population of the City increased from 64 in 1980 to 2,216 in 1990. Many of the people in this racial group were Southeast Asians who migrated to the City of Wausau to escape political persecution or worse in their homeland. Absent either or both of these demographic changes, the City's population growth during the 1980s would have been significantly lower than 14 percent.

This proposition is supported by the City's growth during the 1990s. As shown in Table 2-1, the City's April, 2000, population, as determined by the Bureau of the Census, stood at 38,426, an increase of 3.69 percent from the 1990 Census. However, Marathon County's population increased by 9 percent since 1990. The City's growth rate declined during the

1990s even though a substantial number of Southeast Asians in-migrated to the community. The 2000 Census found that 1,309 of the Asian population living in Wausau were foreign-born and entered the United States between 1990 and March, 2000. The number of people annexed to Wausau also declined during the 1990s. From 1990 to 1998, only 176 people were annexed to the City.

The data in Table 2-1 also show a dramatic increase in population experienced by Marathon County during the 1970s, when the City’s total population was declining. During the 1970s, there was a major economic boom in Marathon County, with a substantial number of people moving into the area to take advantage of new job opportunities. However, many of these new residents decided to locate in the “bedroom” communities adjacent to the City of Wausau, where home sites were plentiful and easy to reach with improvements to the highway system. During this decade, the Town of Weston’s population increased by almost 5,000, representing a change of nearly 78 percent. Even more dramatic was the 93 percent growth experienced by the Town of Kronenwetter, where the population grew by over 2,400 people. Suburban population growth adjacent to a large central city was also common in other urban areas in Wisconsin and the United States during the 1970s.

In Wausau, growth was limited by several factors, including:

- The City was “landlocked” in that most of the territory within its municipal boundaries was developed;
- Substantial improvements to the highway system, primarily

the construction of USH 51 and portions of STH 29, reduced travel time and thus made living in suburban communities more attractive;

- Many new home buyers wanted larger homes on larger lots in a rural or suburban-type setting;
- A general increase in the population’s affluence enabled more households to meet many of the expenses related to living in more remote locations, including the cost of owning several motor vehicles; and
- There were few local developers who were interested in building new homes in the City, in part due to limited available land.

**Table 2-1: Demographic Change, 1970-2000**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% change 1970 to 2000	% change 1990 to 2000
<b>Total Population</b>						
<b>Wausau</b>	32,806	32,426	37,060	38,426	+17%	+4%
<b>County</b>	97,457	111,270	115,400	125,834	+29%	+9%
<b>State</b>	4,417,821	4,705,767	4,891,769	5,363,675	+21%	+10%
<b>Total Households</b>						
<b>Wausau</b>	11,254	13,295	14,718	15,678	+39%	+6.5%
<b>County</b>	29,771	37,865	41,534	47,402	+59%	+14%
<b>State</b>	1,328,804	1,652,261	1,822,118	2,084,544	+57%	+14%
<b>Average Household Size</b>						
<b>Wausau</b>	2.92	2.48	2.45	2.37	-19%	-3%
<b>County</b>	3.27	2.90	2.75	2.60	-20%	-5%
<b>State</b>	3.22	2.35	2.68	2.50	-22%	-7%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

Due to a significant downturn in the local and national economies during the 1980s, population growth in the entire Wausau Urban Area declined substantially from the 1970s. The Urban Area grew by only 2,653 people from 1980 to 1990. As discussed earlier, most of the population growth during this period can be attributed to an in-migration of people from Southeast Asia. For Wausau, this in-migration and the 2,245 people who were annexed from the Town of Stettin represented nearly all of the City's growth from 1980 to 1990.

During the period from 1990 to 2000, with vastly improved economic conditions, most communities in the Wausau Urban Area experienced substantial growth. The entire population of the urban area grew by 6,566 from 1990 to 2000 and now represents over 63 percent of the County's total population. Much of the growth during this decade occurred in the southern and eastern portions of the urban area. The Village of Rothschild and Town/Village of Weston together experienced a population increase of 2,803, or 19 percent, while Rib Mountain recorded a 35 percent increase in population, adding 1,951 residents.

Although Wausau's population increase of 1,366 during the 1990s is significant, it represents a growth rate of only 4 percent, which is lower than in some other urban area communities and the County overall, which grew by 9 percent. Two important factors contributing to the City's growth during this decade were a greater availability of residential building sites and a relatively high birth rate for the resident Southeast Asian population. Unlike in the 1980s, population growth through annexation and in-migration of Southeast Asians contributed little to the City's growth during the 1990s.

## Population Forecasts

**Past Projections** - In June, 1993, the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) issued a report entitled, "Official Municipal Population Projections 1990-2015". This document provides population projections for all communities in the State of Wisconsin, in five-year increments from 1990 through the year 2015.

The WDOA forecasts, based on 1990 Census data, suggested that the City's population would increase by 4,931 during the 25 years from 1990 to 2015, with a year 2000 population for Wausau of 39,807. This projected population was not reached by April, 2000, when the U.S. Census was taken indicating that the City's population by that date had reached 38,426 or 1,381 less than the State's projection. Thus, the WDOA population projections for the City, based on 1990 Census data, appear to be quite high compared to the community's actual growth rate.

On the other hand, according to the 2000 Census, the County's actual year 2000 population exceeded the 1990 WDOA projection by 1,634 people and the actual total Wausau Urban Area population also exceeded the previous projection by about 1,000 people. Thus, a large proportion of the unanticipated growth in Marathon County took place in the Wausau Urban Area, outside of the City of Wausau.

These projections also indicate that while the City's population growth appears to be lagging behind the State's projection, the County is growing at a higher rate than expected.

**Current Projections** – For the County-wide comprehensive planning program, the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) prepared a series of population forecasts for each community in Marathon County. These forecasts were completed in 5-year increments between the years 2000 and 2030 and assumed three different rates of total population increase: a low (9 %), moderate (14%) and a high (19%) amount of total growth.

Assuming a moderate rate of growth, Wausau’s population is projected to increase by 5,380 (14 percent), between 2000 and 2030. The moderate projections for the City are shown in Table 2-2 where they are compare to the County-wide projections. These City population forecasts are used elsewhere in the comprehensive plan where population projection are needed to estimate future demand or consumption levels for various City services and facilities.

**Table 2-2: Moderate Population Projections, 2005-2030 (NCWRPC)**

	Total Population by Year						
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
<b>Wausau</b>	38,426	39,323	40,219	41,116	42,013	42,909	43,806
<b>County</b>	125,834	128,632	131,430	134,217	137,022	139,820	142,618

Source: Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 2003

Table 2-2b shows population projections completed by the WDOA Demographic Services Center through 2030. The WDOA population projections are recognized as Wisconsin’s official population projections in accordance with Wisconsin Statute 16.96. These projections are based on the same historical time period as those developed by the NCWRPC;

however, more recent years carry a greater weight in the WDOA’s projected populations. Additionally, the WDOA projections are based on the historical population trends of individual communities, whereas the NCWRPC projections are based on trends in the planning sub-areas established for the County comprehensive planning effort.

The NCWRPC projections provide a baseline to determine trends in the sub-area. They are useful in identifying future population beyond the borders of individual communities, whereas the WDOA projections may be more useful at the local municipality level.

**Table 2-2b Population Projections, 2005-2030 (WDOA)**

	Total Population by Year							
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030*	% change
<b>Wausau</b>	38,426	39,191	39,813	40,461	41,154	41,831	42,716	+11%
<b>County</b>	125,834	130,242	134,504	138,836	143,308	147,112	150,255	+19%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration.

\*2030 was projected from the 2025 DOA forecast using a countywide growth rate.

**Household Forecasts**

Like population, household projections were completed in 5-year increments between 2000 and 2030 and are shown on Tables 2-3 and 2-3b. In the first table, the number of households was calculated by dividing the average persons per household into the total population for each 5-year increment as shown on Table 2-2. The average persons-per-household in the City (2000) was estimated to be 2.37 and for the County it was calculated to be 2.60.

Assuming a moderate rate of population growth, as projected by North Central Regional Plan Commission, the number of households in the City is estimated to increase by 2,270, or 14 percent, between 2000 and 2030. This projection assumes a static average number of persons-per-household of 2.37 over the projection period.

**Table 2-3: Household Projections, 2005-2030 (NCWRPC)**

	Total Households by Year							
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	% change
<b>Wausau</b>	16,214	16,592	16,970	17,349	17,727	18,105	18,484	+14
<b>County</b>	48,585	49,665	50,745	51,821	52,904	53,985	55,065	+13

Source: Derived from data in Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 2003

The results of a second method of projecting the number of households in Wausau is shown in Table 2-3b. These projections were developed from historical population trends and used the WDOA household projection methodology. While the percentage change in the number of households is much higher under this method, the number of households in Wausau by the year 2030 is very close to the NCWRPC projection methodology.

**Table 2-3b: Household Projections, 2005-2030 (WDOA)**

	Total Households by Year							
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030*	% change
<b>Wausau</b>	15,678	16,224	16,842	17,429	17,984	18,439	18,975	+21%
<b>County</b>	47,702	50,109	52,902	55,589	58,181	60,283	62,035	+30%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

\* 2030 numbers projected from 2025 DOA estimates based on countywide growth rate rates

## Age Distribution

Based upon a comparison of 2000 Census data, the City’s population is slightly older than that of Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin. As shown in Table 2-4, Wausau has a much higher percentage of its population in the 65 years old and over age group than either the County or the State. Over 17 percent of the City’s population is over 65, compared to 13 percent for the remainder of Marathon County and 13.1 percent for the State. This is probably due in part to the variety of housing programs and opportunities for older residents that are available in the City. No other community in the County has this range of senior housing options and assistance available. As the elderly population of the County grows, the number of older adults residing in the City will probably increase, especially if other communities in the Wausau Urban Area make little or no effort to establish senior housing and other assistance programs. At the other end of the age profile, Wausau has only a slightly lower percentage (28.3%) of its population in the less than 20 years old age groups than Marathon County (29.6%) and the State (28.6%).

**Table 2-4: Population by Age Group, 2000**

Age Group	Percent of Population		
	Wausau	County	State
Under 5 years	6.2	6.4	6.4
5 to 9 years	7.1	7.5	7.1
10 to 14 years	7.5	8.0	7.5
15 to 19 years	7.5	7.7	7.6
20 to 24 years	6.6	5.4	6.7
25 to 34 years	13.0	13.0	13.2
35 to 44 years	14.5	16.5	16.3
45 to 54 years	12.5	13.9	13.7
55 to 59 years	4.4	4.8	4.7

60 to 64 years	3.5	3.8	3.8
65 to 74 years	7.3	6.4	6.6
75 to 84 years	6.8	4.8	4.7
85 years and over	3.0	1.7	1.8
<b>Median Age</b>	36.5	36.3	36.0

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2000

### Racial Composition

Over the past two decades the racial composition of Wausau and Marathon County has changed, becoming more racially diverse. In 1980, the City’s population was 98.8 percent White but declined to 85.9 percent White by 2000 as a result of a significant in-migration and natural growth of the Southeast Asian population. As discussed earlier, this substantial in-migration was a primary contributor to the City’s growth during the 1980s and, to a lesser extent, during the early years of the 1990s. Table 2-5 shows that most of the non-White population in Marathon County resides within the City of Wausau. In 2000, the non-White population of Marathon County totaled 7,755 people, with 69.8 percent (5,416 people) of this population living within the Wausau city limits.

**Table 2-5: Racial Composition, 1980, 1990 and 2000**

	White	Black	Amer. Indian, Eskimo, Aleut	Asian, Pacific Islander	Other races
<b>City of Wausau</b>					
<b>1980</b>	32,038	24	142	64	158
% City 1980	98.9%	0.07%	0.44%	0.20%	0.49%
<b>1990</b>	34,485	47	261	2,216	51
% City 1990	93.0%	0.13%	0.7%	5.98%	0.14%
<b>2000</b>	33,010	208	228	4,398	582
% City 2000	85.9%	0.54%	0.59%	11.45%	1.51%

% County 2000	28%	60%	52%	77%	47%
<b>% change 1980-2000</b>	-13%	+6.7%	+0.15%	+11.3%	+1.0%
<b>Marathon County</b>					
<b>1980</b>	110,488	38	327	184	233
% County 1980	99.3%	0.03%	0.29%	0.17%	0.21%
<b>1990</b>	112,189	89	490	2,499	133
% County 1990	97.2%	0.08%	0.42%	2.17%	0.12%
<b>2000</b>	118,079	347	435	5,741	1,232
% County 2000	93.8%	0.28%	0.35%	4.56%	0.98%
<b>% change 1980-2000</b>	-5.5%	+0.25%	+0.06%	+4.39%	+0.77%

Source: U.S. Census, compiled by Joe Pribanich, Wausau City Planner

The decade from 1990 to 2000 was a period of substantial growth in the City’s minority population, which increased from 2,575 in 1990 to 5,416 in 2000, an increase of 2,841, or 110 percent. The largest component of this increase was in the Asian and Pacific Islander group, which grew by 2,182. Similar to the 1980s, continued in-migration of foreign-born people was the largest growth component for this segment of the community. As indicated earlier, the 2000 Census found that 1,309 of the Asian population living in Wausau were foreign-born and entered the United States between 1990 and March, 2000. This represents 60 percent of the total growth in Wausau’s Asian population. Natural population increase appears to be the other factor contributing to the growth of this segment of the community.

### Education and Income Levels

As shown in Table 2-6, according to 2000 Census data, about 81 percent of City residents have a high school education or higher. This compares to 83.8 percent for the County, and 85.1

percent for the State. In the City, over 21 percent of residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is higher than the number of persons with a bachelor’s degree or higher in the County, with 18.3 percent, but lower than the State, with 22.4 percent.

**Table 2-6: Educational Attainment, 2000 (population age 25 and over)**

Educational Attainment	Wausau		County	State
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Less than 9th Grade	2,621	10.4	8.2	5.4
9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma	2,211	8.8	8.0	9.6
High School Graduate	8,122	32.3	38.0	34.6
Some College, No Degree	4,627	18.4	18.3	20.6
Associates Degree	2,138	8.5	9.2	7.5
Bachelor's Degree	3,570	14.2	12.6	15.3
Graduate or Professional Degree	1,839	7.3	5.7	7.2
Percent high school graduate or higher		80.8	83.8	85.1
Percent bachelor's degree or higher		21.5	18.3	22.4

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2000

As shown in Table 2-7, median household income for City residents was \$36,831 in 2000. This is significantly lower than both Marathon County, with a median income of \$45,165, and the State overall, at \$43,791. It is interesting to note that the percent of population in highest income groups (over \$100,000) in the City is nearly the same as for the County. However, the City has a much higher percentages of its population in lower income groups (under \$35,000).

**Table 2-7: Household Income Levels, 2000**

Income Level	Wausau		County	State
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Less than \$10,000	1,259	8.0	5.9	7.1
\$10,000 - \$14,999	1,198	7.6	5.4	5.8
\$15,000 - \$24,999	2,508	15.9	12.3	12.7
\$25,000 - \$34,999	2,418	15.4	13.1	13.2
\$35,000 - \$49,999	2,991	19.0	19.4	18.1
\$50,000 - \$74,999	3,008	19.1	25.2	22.7
\$75,000 - \$99,999	1,118	7.1	10.5	10.9
\$100,000 - \$149,000	786	5.0	5.4	6.4
\$150,000 - \$199,999	209	1.3	1.3	1.5
\$200,000 or More	248	1.6	1.6	1.5
Total Households	15,743	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$36,831	-	\$45,165	\$43,791

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2000

### Employment Characteristics and Forecasts

Table 2-8 illustrates the breakdown, by occupation, of the employed population of the City in 2000. The “employed population” is defined as people living in the City who are 16 years old and older and working. In 2000, the City had an employed population of 18,489. Most residents were employed in management, professional and related, sales and office, or production, transportation and material moving occupations.

**Table 2-8: Occupation by Sector, 2000**

Sector	Number	Percent
Management, professional, and related occupations	5,658	30.6
Service occupations	2,684	14.5
Sales and office occupations	5,303	28.7
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	97	0.5
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	1,175	6.4
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	3,572	19.3
<b>Total Employed*</b>	18,489	100

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

\* "Total Employed" represents employed civilian population 16 years old and older.

While the table above shows the type of occupations Wausau residents hold, Table 2-9 indicates the number of jobs located in the City, regardless of where the employee lives (27,342 jobs in 2000). Thus, Wausau has at least 8,853 non-residents commuting to the City to work. (This number is certainly higher, since many City residents work outside of Wausau.) Table 2-9 also shows employment forecasts completed by the NCWRPC. By the year 2030, it is estimated that the City will be the site of over 36,300 jobs. This represents an employment increase of 33 percent and assumes a moderate job growth rate based upon the rate of change in employment between 1990-2000 for non-farm employment.

**Table 2-9: Employment Projections, 2000-2030**

	Total Employment by Year						
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
<b>Wausau</b>	27,342	28,839	30,335	31,831	33,328	34,824	36,321
<b>County</b>	72,508	75,625	78,742	81,859	84,976	88,093	91,210

Source: Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 10/29/03

**Summary of Significant Demographic Trends**

- From 1990 to 2000, the City’s population grew by 1,366 and reached 38,426 in April 2000. This 4 percent increase is less than half the rate of population increase experienced by Marathon County, which grew by 9 percent during the same ten-year period.
- From 1990 to 2000, the City grew at a significantly slower rate than several other metro area communities such as the Villages of Weston and Rothschild, which together accounted for an increase of 19 percent, and the Town of Rib Mountain, which recorded a 35 percent increase in population. This illustrates the continuing shift of population in the urban area toward the south and east.
- Between 1970 and 2000, the City of Wausau’s population as a percent of the total County population decreased from about 34 percent to 30.5 percent. At the same time, the Wausau metro area population, relative to the total County population, decreased from 64 percent to 63.3 percent.
- The City has a higher percent of its population in older age groups (over 65) than either the County or the State. However, the median age of City residents, at 36.5 years, is

only slightly older than that of the County (36.3) or State (36.0).

- The City and the County are both becoming more racially diverse. In 1980, non-White populations represented 1.1 percent of the City and 0.7 percent of the County total populations. In 2000, the non-White populations of the City and County represented 14.1 percent and 6.2 percent of the total population, respectively. In 2000, about 70 percent of the County's non-white population lived in the City of Wausau.
- The City's Asian population grew from 64 people in 1980 to 2,216 in 1990 and 4,398 in 2000. This represents an increase of about 6,700 percent over the two decades!! In Marathon County, the Asian population increased from 0.2 percent of the total County population in 1980 to 4.6 percent in 2000.
- According to projections completed by the NCWRPC, based on 2000 Census data, Wausau's population is expected to grow by 5,380 people between 2000 and 2030 and employment in Wausau is expected to grow by 8,979 jobs between 2000 and 2030..
- The City population is almost equally split by the Wisconsin River, with 51 percent of the City's residents living on the east side.
- Wausau has a slightly lower percent (80.8%) of residents with high school diplomas or higher, compared to 83.8 percent for the County, and 85.1 percent for the State.

However, the percent of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher is higher in the City (21.5%) than the County overall (18.3%).

- The median household income in Wausau (2000) was \$36,831, which is significantly lower than median income in the County (\$45,165) or State (\$43,791).

## Demographic Issues

- **Populations with Special Needs** – Compared to other communities in Marathon County, the City of Wausau is home to a higher concentration of groups with special needs, including seniors, persons with low-incomes, and Southeast Asians. As a result, the City provides higher levels of services geared toward groups with specific needs than most other communities in the County. This in turn has an impact on a variety of City government resources.

### 3. Natural Resources

Because natural resource features do not follow community boundaries, it is important to consider their patterns and inter-relationships on a broader scale. Further, many of the programs for protecting or mitigating impacts to natural resources are administered at the County, State or Federal level. Thus, an overview of recent countywide natural resource planning efforts is described below, followed by a description of local natural resource conditions. Of particular interest are geographic areas of the landscape encompassing valued natural resources features grouped below by resource type, including water, soil and biological resources.

#### Recent County-Wide Planning Efforts Related to Natural Resources

In the last decade, several plans were prepared by the County specifically to address protection and management of natural resources. These plans may be used as resources to guide local policy and decision making regarding resource management and protection. In addition to the plans listed below, Marathon County and several local communities have adopted park and outdoor recreation plans that discuss natural resource-based recreational facilities and protection strategies.

- ***Marathon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP)*** - In 2001, Marathon County adopted a LWRMP in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes (Wisconsin Act 27, Chapter 92.10). The primary intent of this plan is to identify a vision for natural resource

management in Marathon County and outline strategies to protect the quality and quantity of soil and water resources. Marathon County encompasses portions of 22 watersheds. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has ranked these watersheds according to water pollution impacts and designated five as “priority” watersheds to receive special planning and funding through the voluntary, State-funded Priority Watershed Program. The County’s Land Conservation Department works with the WDNR to implement the program. Program funding is used to hire staff to assist in developing management plans for each watershed and to provide cost sharing to landowners for implementation of “best management practices” (BMPs) to achieve the program objectives.

- ***Marathon County 2001 Groundwater Protection Guide*** – This guide is an extension of the efforts established with adoption of the Marathon County Groundwater Plan in 1988. It is intended to guide local and County officials in setting policy. It also serves as a resource of information about groundwater and other natural resources and recommends strategies to address issues related to groundwater protection.
- ***Marathon County Forest Ten-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 1996-2005*** – This plan includes recommendations to guide management of forest land in Marathon County in accordance with the County Forestry Department’s mission to manage and protect the County forest on a sustainable basis for ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future generations. It provides substantial information on

existing forest resources as well as information regarding the roles of the various agencies and regulatory framework related to forest management.

## Water Resources

Marathon County contains abundant water resources. Many have remained in a fairly pristine state and others are in need of focused efforts to improve water quality. Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) designations are derived from an amendment to the U.S. Clean Water Act, which directed states to identify waters that were largely unaffected by pollution and should remain that way. States were required to develop “anti-degradation” policies to protect these waters from pollution. As a result, wastewater entering an ORW must be as clean as the water in the “outstanding” water body. The anti-degradation policies only apply to point sources of pollution, such as an industrial discharge pipe. However, Wisconsin has other programs in place to control non-point source pollution, such as animal waste and pesticides in farm runoff, urban runoff, and failing septic systems.

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board also wanted to extend higher levels of protection to top trout waters. As such, the WDNR established a second category of waterways to be protected under the anti-degradation policy; these are the ERW. Wastewater entering ERW must meet minimum clean water standards, although higher standards are encouraged where feasible.

There are no designated ORW or ERW in the City of Wausau.

Water resources that have been significantly degraded are identified as “impaired waters”. Four of the 22 watersheds in Marathon County have been identified as “impaired waters” on the “303 (d) list” of the U.S. Clean Water Act. The list identifies waters that do not meet current water quality standards and merit water quality improvement and protection. None of these impaired watersheds is located in the City of Wausau. However, it is noted that resource management plans for these watersheds, plus the Lower Big Rib River watershed, are currently being done as part of the Priority Watershed Program, a State-funded, voluntary program administered by the County. The County’s resource management planning efforts are described in more detail in the *Marathon County LWRMP* (2001).

**Streams/Rivers** – The Wisconsin River is the most significant natural resource in the City of Wausau. It bisects the City, resulting in a large amount of riverfront property in both public and private ownership. Between the confluence of the Wisconsin and Big Rib Rivers and the dam in Rothschild, the river widens to form Lake Wausau. The Big Rib River flows along the southern edge of the City’s western “panhandle” and enters the Wisconsin River at the north end of Lake Wausau, which forms the southern boundary of the City. The Little Rib River flows through the “panhandle” area before entering the Big Rib River. On the north end of the City, Moore Creek flows through the American Legion Golf Course before entering the Wisconsin River. Streams and rivers in the City are shown on Figure 3-1.

**Floodplain** – Floodplains consist of land likely to be covered by floodwater during the regional (100-year) flood. Floodplain areas are based on information compiled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). The floodplain includes the floodway and the flood fringe.

Areas within the 100-year floodplain are located immediately adjacent to the rivers and streams flowing through the City (see Figure 3-1). In the last ten to fifteen years, there have been mounting concerns by City officials over the effects of changing land use patterns on flood flows and flood hazards in the City. Managing the water that runs off during a rainstorm or when the snow melts is becoming a more difficult issue for the City, especially as growth extends farther upstream into relatively undeveloped areas. The Wisconsin River, Big Rib River, Little Rib River, Eau Claire River, and the tributaries that drain into these rivers are all impacted by urban development. It is important to note that a number of the smaller tributaries “disappear” as they enter the City limits. These streams actually enter the City’s storm sewer system and are conveyed to the receiving water in large storm sewer pipes.

General flooding has been a particular problem where many of the smaller tributary streams are enclosed in storm sewers yet development continues in the adjacent, natural areas. Development increases the amount of impervious surface, which then increases the probability of flooding downstream.

The City of Wausau initiated a stormwater management program to provide some assurance that additional development does not overload the existing storm sewer

system and cause downstream flooding. In 2002, the City’s stormwater management program incorporated some relatively new State regulations including a review of impacts of new development projects and requirements for the construction of retention basins and other infrastructure necessary to manage stormwater runoff. However, these stormwater management regulations only apply within the City and not the adjacent communities where runoff from development can flow into the City’s storm sewer system or the natural streams entering the City, thus increasing the overall amount of runoff.

**Wetlands** – Wetlands in Wisconsin were defined by the State Legislature in 1978 as: *“an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions.”*

Programs in three levels of government - local, State and Federal - regulate activities in wetlands. There are dozens of wetland types in Wisconsin, characterized by vegetation, soil type, and degree of saturation or water cover. Some of the more prominent wetland types are:

- ***Aquatic Bed*** wetlands contain plants growing entirely on or in a water body no deeper than 6 feet. Plants may include pond-weed, duckweed, lotus and water-lilies.
- ***Marshes*** are characterized by standing water and dominated by cattails, bulrushes, pickerel-weed, lake sedges and/or giant bur-reed

- **Sedge or "Wet" Meadows** wetlands may have saturated soils, rather than standing water, more often than not. Sedges, grasses and reeds are dominant, but look also for blue flag iris, marsh milkweed, sneeze-weed, mint and several species of goldenrod and aster.
- **Scrub/Shrub** wetlands include bogs and alder thickets and are characterized by woody shrubs and small trees such as tag alder, bog birch, willow and dogwood.
- **Forested** wetlands include bogs and forested floodplain complexes. They are characterized by trees 20 feet or more in height such as tamarack, white cedar, black spruce, elm, black ash, green ash and silver maple.

As shown on Figure 3-2, most remaining wetlands in the Wausau area are located near surface water drainage ways such as the Big Rib River or Little Rib River. Due to springs, seeps and unusual soil conditions, however, some wetlands are located on relatively steep slopes and even in depressions on hilltops. For example, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has located wetland environments on some of the highest terrain in Wausau (at the top of the hill at West Wausau Avenue and 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue).

Many wetland areas in Wausau, especially along the Wisconsin River, were drained and filled as the City developed. As recently as the mid-1970s a large wetland area along Northwestern Avenue was used as a regional solid waste landfill - the former Holtz-Krause Landfill. Today, however, State and Federal regulations prohibit the destruction of wetlands. There is also strong public interest in preserving

wetlands since these areas have important natural functions which make them particularly valuable natural resources.

Most known and suspected wetlands in the City have been mapped but a site specific study is often necessary to determine with a higher degree of certainty whether a "green fields" development project will have a negative impact on wetlands.

**Groundwater** – Depth to groundwater varies throughout the City. Sand and gravel aquifers adjacent to the Wisconsin River provide an abundant and easily accessible drinking water supply. The shallow depth to water and permeable soils also make the water supply susceptible to contamination and necessitate the responsible use of potential contaminates. The City adopted a Wellhead Protection Ordinance in 1997 to help protect its groundwater resources. The wellhead protection area is generally located between USH 51 and the Wisconsin River, north of Randolph Street. The exact boundaries, which consists of two different overlay zones, are shown on the City Zoning Map.

## Soil Resources

**Soil Types** – As shown in Figure 3-4, there are generally two types of soils in the Wausau area that were formed as a result of the last glacial period. These include upland soils that are dominantly stratified drift (**Mahtomedi-Fordum-Sturgeon** soil association) and upland soils over bedrock (**Fenwood-Rietbrock-Rozellville** soil association). The stratified drift is a result of layering of water-carried glaciated materials in outwash plains as the glacier melted. These outwash plains are the nearly level to level areas where the soils range from

moderately coarse, medium, and fine sandy loam to silt loam over sand and gravel. The upland soils over the bedrock are a result of glaciation before the Wisconsin glacier and erosion of igneous and metamorphic rocks. These soils are found in upland areas and range from medium and moderately fine subsurface loamy soils with loam to silty clay loam subsoil over granitic and gneissic bedrock.

Within these two general soil associations are several types of soils with differing physical characteristics in regards to depth to groundwater, flooding, depth to bedrock, slope and stoniness. These physical characteristics affect the suitability of the soil for certain types of urban development.

- **Soils with Shallow Depth to Groundwater** - Soils with a shallow depth to groundwater create several problems if they are developed. Oftentimes, depth to groundwater is directly related to landscape position, with low-lying areas having a shallow depth to groundwater. Generally, soils with a depth to water table of zero to one foot are found adjacent to rivers and streams and are in the floodplain. These areas are poorly suited to any type of urban development because of a seasonally high water table and the possibility of flooding.

Those soils with a depth to groundwater of one to three feet and three to six feet may also have problems with wetness and flooding if they are developed. The problems may be overcome by filling the area or draining the soil by utilizing some type of subsurface drainage system. Oftentimes, installation of these systems is cost prohibitive and problems may still occur in the future with settling and

cracking of foundations and seasonal flooding of basements.

Soils with a shallow depth to groundwater are also poorly suited for roads because of wetness and frost-heave action. Frost heave tends to break up the pavement and increase maintenance costs. Filling the road bed or constructing a subsurface drainage system may mitigate the frost heave problem. Both measures can increase the cost of roadway construction. Shallow depths to groundwater can also increase the cost of installing sewer and water and can lead to the infiltration of water into the sewer system.

Perched water tables can be found in some of the soils in the Wausau area. A perched water table occurs where a layer of clay or other tight material restricts the downward movement of water and creates a saturated area above the normal water table. Seasonally, this may create wetness problems if that particular soil is developed. In addition, in areas of steep slopes, a perched water table can be exposed to create a seepage (an area where water continually flows from the surface, similar to a spring).

- **Soils with Shallow Depths to Bedrock** - Soils will also vary according to depth to bedrock. A depth to bedrock of 60 inches or more has only slight limitations to urban development. Soils with a depth to bedrock of less than 60 inches do pose problems in terms of development, especially in areas of steep slopes. Shallow depths to bedrock are common in the upland soils in Wausau, particularly along the eastern City limits and north of the Wausau Insurance complex. Generally, the majority of

these soils average a depth to bedrock between 42 and 48 inches. The bedrock is typically fractured igneous and metamorphic rock. Figure 3-5 illustrates depth to bedrock. Cost is a major consideration when developing on soils with shallow depths to bedrock. Constructing dwellings with basements and installation of public services such as sewer and water usually require removal of the rock, which can increase development costs significantly. Of seven sanitary sewer projects constructed in 1981 where bedrock was encountered, removal of the rock represented, on the average, 45 percent of the total project cost (\$55 per cubic yard of rock). Some building sites may also require filling or constructing dwellings with partially exposed basements in areas with high bedrock.

Soils that are shallow to bedrock are unsuitable for septic systems because the soil depth is inadequate for absorption fields. Although Wausau is served by public sewer and water, there may be older residences built over shallow bedrock with failing septic systems in areas contiguous to the City. These pose a health hazard. It is important to identify such areas because they may require sewer extensions in the future. Roads constructed on soils that are shallow to bedrock are susceptible to frost heave during spring thaw. Frost heave increases maintenance costs and will decrease the life of the roadway.

Soils shallow to bedrock are commonly found on steep slopes in the Wausau area. Development on steep slopes poses many challenges and usually requires more extensive earth moving than in level areas. Removal of vegetation on steep slopes increases stormwater runoff and creates

erosion problems. The soil removed by erosion can cause property damage down slope, clog and overburden storm sewers, and adversely affect surface water quality. Dwellings constructed on steep slopes that are shallow to bedrock are subject to slippage. Utilizing a retaining wall may mitigate the slippage problem.

Several soils in the Wausau area are characterized by large stones and rock outcrops, which can present problems when developing the land. Large stones can be removed by bulldozing, but rock outcrops must be either designed around or removed by blasting which will increase development costs significantly.

**Prime Farm Soils** – Figure 3-6 illustrates soils that have been identified as prime farm soils according to the Marathon County Cropland Evaluation System (CES). This system establishes a basis from which one parcel of land can be compared to another. It rates soils on their ability to produce food, feed, forage, and fiber crops. It is based upon the knowledge that soil properties affect yields. The system is non-biased, defensible, and can be consistently applied. Additional information on Marathon County CES can be obtained from Marathon County Land Conservation Department.

There are ribbons of Class 1 and 2 prime farm soils that extend into the City on the east and northwest. There are also some prime farm soils along the Wisconsin River. These class designations refer to the quality of soils for growing crops and are based on United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classifications. Class 1 soils are the best soils in Marathon

County for growing all crops. Class 2 soils are also very good agricultural soils; however, they may be prone to wetness and are therefore less desirable than Class 1 soils. It should be noted that not all prime farm soils are used for farming; some have been developed with residential or other uses. The “prime farm soils” designation simply indicates that these soils are good productive farmland.

In the late 1970s, the preservation of prime agricultural land became an important statewide issue. Rapid, low-density residential development in many parts of Wisconsin contributed to urban sprawl, which consumed hundreds of thousands of acres of the most productive cropland in the State. In an effort to stem the consumption of prime agricultural lands, the Wisconsin Legislature adopted the Farmland Preservation Act, which provides tax credits to farmers who participate in the preservation program. For the most part, the preservation of prime agricultural land is an option available to private property owners who generate a given amount of income from farm operations. The State has not, however, mandated the preservation of prime agricultural land; it has merely provided financial incentives which are intended to discourage the development of the State’s agricultural resources.

According to County conservation officials, the actual preservation of the soil resources, however, is not as critical in Marathon County as in other parts of the State because the demand for agricultural land has been declining for decades and the amount of land consumed for urban development is relatively minor compared to other metropolitan areas. Impacts of farm preservation efforts on development and

growth of the City are discussed in greater detail in the Land Use section.

## Topography

The topography in the City of Wausau varies from nearly level to quite steep, with elevations ranging from 1,160 feet above sea level on the shores of Lake Wausau to approximately 1,500 feet above sea level near the intersection of West Wausau Avenue and 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

As mentioned earlier, much of the area immediately adjacent to the Wisconsin River is extremely flat. This flat topography has helped support high-density residential and commercial development on relatively small parcels of land. On the east side of the river, a hill and valley topography becomes evident several thousand feet east of the river. The valleys tend to be oriented in an east-west direction and are defined by small streams that originate only a few miles east of the City limits in the Town of Wausau. On either side of these intermittent streams are relatively steep-sloped hills that terminate in fairly flat, high plateau areas. Several of the arterial streets that carry traffic east of the City, including Town Line Road, McIntosh Street, Franklin Street and Wausau Avenue, are constructed on top of these plateau areas.

On the west side of the Wisconsin River, the general topographic conditions are quite different than on the east side. While the area adjacent to the Wisconsin River is quite flat for a considerable distance west of the river, the streams and steep hill and valley topography are not nearly as well developed here. The principal topographic feature on the west side of

Wausau is a large, steep hill located between Bridge Street and Stewart Avenue that rises in elevation west of Fourth Avenue. Much of the topography near the Big Rib and Little Rib Rivers is also relatively flat. Farther from these rivers, hilly topography is encountered and the prospect of finding bedrock near the surface increases.

**Steep Slopes** - As shown on Figure 3-7 there are several steep, hilly areas within and adjacent to the City that are likely to remain undeveloped for a considerable period of time due to the high costs of constructing public and private improvements in these areas. Most of the hills on the east side of Wausau, as well as the plateau areas, are defined by bedrock, which is located near the land surface. High construction costs can be encountered when developing in these steep slope areas. Development in such areas may also pose some environmental concerns.

- **Building Constraints** - Buildings constructed on steep slopes must be designed to conform to the terrain. Constructing a basement in rock or leveling a site for a large building can dramatically increase construction costs. In addition, the density of development must often be lower in steep areas because of the cost of making large areas level enough to support parking facilities and building sites. Retaining walls, which are also costly to build and maintain, are often needed to support high-density building development. Often, retaining walls are needed to literally prevent one parcel of land from falling onto the adjacent parcel. Development limitations resulting from steep slopes are particularly apparent on the east side of Wausau due to the physical constraints in this area. Very little City

growth has occurred on the far east side in the last 40 years as compared to the west side of Wausau. However, since 2000 this trend has changed dramatically and several large tracts of land have been annexed to the City and subdivided.

- **Stormwater Management** - Topography also influences the rate of stormwater runoff. Care must be taken to ensure that development in steep areas does not result in downstream flooding. This is especially true on the east side of Wausau where most of the downstream property close to the Wisconsin River has been completely developed. As construction activities have proceeded upstream and onto the adjacent hillsides, existing storm sewers in some portions of the City have reached their capacity and are no longer capable of accommodating additional runoff. Thus, the frequency of flooding in certain drainage basins has increased dramatically.

Where down slope storm water drainage is a concern, keeping development relatively low density and/or maintaining a natural conservancy area will maximize runoff infiltration and help protect other property in the watershed from flooding. Regardless of the existing conditions in the watershed, stormwater management practices need to be incorporated into all development in order to reduce runoff and help improve water quality. Stormwater management is further discussed in the Utilities element.

- **Road Construction Constraints** - Special consideration must be given to the design of streets so that the grade

follows the contours as closely as possible. Where the grade does not follow contours, streets must be shaped by cutting and filling, a costly construction method. Snow removal and salting must also be given a higher priority on roads with steeper grades, especially those with a north-facing exposure..

The relatively steep hill-and-valley topography in the Wausau area has limited the development of a north-south arterial street that would extend from Town Line Road (CTH N) north to Evergreen Road. In 1986, an extensive planning and engineering study completed for a Grand Avenue alternative route concluded that, due the topographic conditions, the 41<sup>st</sup> Street/Camp Phillips Road (CTH X) corridor is the nearest opportunity for an arterial street in this area which would connect Town Line Road to Evergreen Road.

- **Utility Constraints** - Installation of public services in areas of steep slopes is usually more costly than in flatter terrain. Depending upon the direction of slope and the elevation, sanitary sewer lift stations and water reservoirs or booster stations may be required. In addition, more manholes in the sanitary sewer system are generally required on steep slopes.

## Biological Resources

**Vegetation** – Wausau is mostly developed so the predominant vegetation consists of urban landscaping such as trees, shrubs and private gardens. More natural wooded areas and wetlands occur in parks, along the rivers, or in undeveloped areas.

The City’s extensive tree planting program, in parks and along streets, has been nationally recognized. For many years, Wausau has been identified as a “Tree City USA”.

**Wildlife Resources and Habitat** – Wildlife resources include a variety of game and non-game species of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians that typically live in Marathon County. Common types of wildlife include bear, wolf, badger, deer, wild turkeys, raccoon, squirrels, songbirds, waterfowl and raptors. Wildlife resources are abundant in the many undisturbed sanctuaries, refuges, reserves, and scattered habitats located throughout the County. Numerous other species of migrating birds use habitat in Marathon County for food, shelter, and resting stops during seasonal migration.

There is a significant amount of wildlife habitat in Marathon County. In addition to County parks and forest units, major wildlife habitat areas include the George W. Mead Wildlife Area, the McMillan Marsh State Wildlife Management Area, and Rib Mountain State Park.

**Threatened and Endangered Species** - Both aquatic and terrestrial endangered, threatened, or special concern species are present within the City. These include:

**Communities:** None identified.

### Flora:

- Snowy Campion (*Silene nivea*)
- Vasey’s Pondweed (*Potamogeton vaseyi*)

**Fauna:**

- Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)
- Black Redhorse (*Moxostoma duquesnei*)
- Skillet Clubtail (*Gomphurus ventricosus*)
- Cyrano Darner (*Nasiaeschna pentacantha*)
- Stygian Shadowfly (*Neurocordulia yamaskanensis*)
- Pygmy Snaketail (*Ophiogomphus howei*)
- Elktoe (*Alasmidonta marginata*)

**Natural Resource Issues**

- **Development Constraints** – In some parts of the City, natural features such as shallow bedrock, steep slopes, and wetlands pose constraints that limit urban-type development. The higher cost of construction on steep slopes or in areas with high bedrock often reduces the development feasibility of these areas. As a result, these areas are often left undisturbed while land with fewer constraints around it is developed, which can result in inefficient land use patterns. As land prices increase, developers become more willing to take on the added expense of developing these more challenging sites.
- **Wetlands** – Some relatively small, poor quality wetland areas in the City have limited or significantly delayed the type and scope of several proposed developments. The delays have been costly to both the developer and the City as significant time and other resources devoted to wetland issues have, nonetheless, resulted in the elimination of the wetland area.
- **Conservancy Areas** – There are three large, very significant environmentally sensitive areas in Wausau that have not received the type of public protection from development that may be warranted. The wetland/floodplain complex of the Big Rib River, Little Rib River, and the Eau Claire River provides relatively undisturbed habitat for many species of wildlife in a near-urban environment. However, there are not any local programs established to protect these environmental corridors, and high density, urban-type development is continuing to encroach into these areas.
- **Brownfields** – Cleaning up soil and groundwater contamination and other types of environmental hazards in the City of Wausau will foster redevelopment of certain properties and expand the City's tax base as well as increase the utilization of otherwise underdeveloped properties. Reuse of the former SNE property north of Thomas Street, which is a very large, highly contaminated, and very visible site, needs to be given an extremely high priority.
- **Wisconsin River** – Continuing to improve the natural resources qualities of the Wisconsin River and the public's access to this water way is a major community issue. Through the planning and implementation activities of the Wausau River Edge Commission much has been accomplished in the last 10 years. However, an update of the Commission's 1995 master plan is needed to evaluate past accomplishments and chart a course for the next several decades.

## 4. Land Use

The City of Wausau is the largest city in Marathon County and the metropolitan area. It is also the hub of regional government, employment, and cultural activities. Wausau is bordered by one incorporated municipality (City of Schofield) and several unincorporated towns. The overall Wausau metropolitan area contains four incorporated villages (Brokaw, Weston, Rothschild, and Kronenwetter) and one other city (Mosinee).

### Historic Development Patterns

The effects of the Glacial Period, coupled with the geological erosion that followed, have resulted in a rather complex arrangement of topographic, geologic, hydrologic and soil conditions in the City of Wausau. These conditions, in turn, have affected the suitability of land for high density, urban development.

From its founding in the 1840s through the 1950s, most development within the City of Wausau took place on the relatively flat, sandy terrain located near the banks of the Wisconsin River. The soils and topography allowed for easy, cost-effective construction of building foundations, municipal sewer and water services, storm drainage facilities, and streets. Early in the City's history, railroads were used much more heavily than today for shipping raw materials and finished products and for intercity passenger travel. Locally, streetcars provided the primary motorized means of moving people within the City. Both of these transportation modes require

extremely flat routes to function properly. Thus, industry, commercial activities, and residential land uses were concentrated in the flat, sandy areas near the Wisconsin River. While originally located entirely on the east side of the Wisconsin River, the City now straddles the river valley.

Today, the most suitable land in the City for higher-density urban land uses has been developed. The undeveloped sites within the older parts of the City and large sections of territory annexed by the City over the last 20 years have various development limitations. Many of these same limitations are prevalent in the areas adjacent to the present City limits where annexation and future City growth are likely to occur. It is important, therefore, to recognize and understand these limitations since they often impact the type and intensity of land uses that can be developed and the public and private cost of constructing buildings and utilities as well as maintaining municipal services and facilities in these areas. Most of these limitations are discussed in greater detail in the "Natural Resources" section of this report.

### Current Pattern of Land Use

The historic heart of downtown Wausau is located near the east bank of the Wisconsin River. Stewart Avenue and Grand Avenue (Business 51) are the primary commercial corridors leading in and out of downtown. Generally, residential neighborhoods developed adjacent to downtown and the major commercial corridors. Smaller, neighborhood-oriented commercial nodes are located throughout the City and typically developed at road intersections. Auto-oriented commercial land uses are concentrated at key access points into the City

such as the major intersection with USH 51/STH 29 (e.g., Stewart Avenue and CTH K) and the Business 51 corridor, which was historically the primary north-south route through the City. Industry originally located along the Wisconsin River and near rail lines. Since the late 1960s, most new industrial development has located on the western edge of the City, along STH 29 in Wausau West Business and Industrial Park and the importance of many of the riverfront and rail-oriented industrial sites has greatly diminished.

From its beginnings on the banks of the Wisconsin River, the City developed parallel to the river, generally extending north and south of downtown. Historically, development to the east has been constrained by a major rock ridge that effectively defined the eastern edge of the City. Most recent City expansion has occurred to the west, primarily through annexation of territory from the Town of Stettin. As a result of these annexations, a narrow finger of the City extends to the west several miles, along STH 29, north of the Big Rib River.

Expansion to the south is restricted by the presence of the City of Schofield and, to some extent, by the confluence of the Wisconsin and Big Rib Rivers that forms the border between the City and the Town of Rib Mountain. Given these restrictions, future expansion of Wausau will likely occur to the north, east, and/or west through annexation. Based on annexation trends of the last four decades and existing City policies, it is anticipated that the City will annex approximately 1,400 acres during each of the next two decades.

**Existing Land Use** - For purposes of this report, tax assessment land use categories were used to represent existing

land use in Wausau. Table 4-1 describes the various land use categories and Figure 4-1 illustrates the existing land use.

**Table 4-1: Land Use Classifications for City of Wausau (2000)**

Land Use	Description	Acres	% of Total Land Area
<b>Single Family Residential</b>	One family structures, farm residences, mobile homes	3,127	26.62
<b>Multi-Family Residential</b>	Multiple family structures with three or more households, condos, duplexes, apartments	153	1.30
<b>Commercial Services</b>	Retail stores, taverns, restaurants, truck stops, gas stations, farm coops, farm implement dealerships, automobile dealerships, business offices, motels/hotels, offices, telephone/gas company	966	8.23
<b>Industrial</b>	Saw/paper/lumber mills, dairies, industrial parks, trucking operations, distribution centers	456	3.88
<b>Quarries/Gravel Pits</b>	Mining operations	41	0.35
<b>Cropland</b>	Tilled agriculture, prime farmland	380	3.24
<b>Specialty Crops</b>	Ginseng, orchards, vineyards, nurseries, groves, cranberries, etc.	18	0.15
<b>Other Agriculture</b>	Fallow, pasture and undetermined agriculture, power lines and towers, water towers, municipal wells	137	1.17
<b>Public/Quasi-Public</b>	Schools, churches, cemeteries, town halls, fire departments, National Guard	554	4.72
<b>Recreation</b>	Ball fields, golf courses, playgrounds, parks, trails, camp grounds, shooting ranges	529	4.50
<b>Woodlands</b>	Forested land	1,271	10.82
<b>Water and Wetlands</b>	Open waters, such as lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, creeks, reservoirs, etc.	1,329	11.32
<b>Transportation</b>	Airports, highways, road right-of-ways, railroads, logging roads	2,299	19.57
<b>Vacant/Barren</b>	Unused open land in wooded areas,	485	4.13

Land	along streams, along roadsides		
Total Land Area		11,747	100%

Source: Marathon County Tax Assessment Code Database

## Recent Land Use Plans

**Land Use and Related Plans** – Several plans dealing with land use and development in the City have been completed over the years. These are summarized below:

- ***A Comprehensive Plan for the Wausau Area, Wisconsin*** – This report, done in 1965, is the City’s first comprehensive plan. It assessed existing conditions and provided recommendations regarding a number of community development and public facility issues for the Wausau Urban Area. The plan was regional in scope and contained recommendations that also covered the cities of Schofield and Wausau, the Village of Rothschild, and parts of the Towns of Stettin, Maine, Rib Mountain, Texas, Wausau and Weston. A number of the recommendations from the land use section of this plan that deal with Wausau’s general growth are of interest today and may still be relevant as the City continues its efforts to plan for orderly growth well into the next century. These recommendations are summarized in Appendix A.
- ***City of Wausau Land Use Plan*** - This plan, adopted by the Wausau Common Council in October, 1983, was the first large scale planning effort undertaken by the City of Wausau since the 1965 *Comprehensive Plan for the Wausau Area* was completed. While this plan addressed land use issues and goals on a citywide basis, it primarily focused on

land use trends, issues, and recommendations for each of nine neighborhoods in the City. The level of citizen participation for this planning effort included neighborhood meetings, open meetings held by the Citizen Advisory Committee, and a public hearing before the City Plan Commission. Most of the planning effort focused on the territory within the existing City limits, with only a cursory analysis of potential growth areas outside the City limits. However, the *Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan for the Year 2000*, completed two years earlier, identified a cost effective, environmentally sound, future growth area boundary for the City of Wausau and adjacent communities in the Urban Area.

The land use plan contains a number of community goals, objectives, and policies that are still pertinent today and will be incorporated into this comprehensive plan. It also described several land use planning principles, which have been updated and will be included in this comprehensive plan as well. A summary of the 1983 Plan recommendations is provided in Appendix A.

- ***Central Business District (CBD) Master Plan (2000)*** - As one of its first orders of business in the new millennium, the Wausau Common Council adopted a *CBD Master Plan* on January 11, 2000, as an element of the City’s Master Plan. The *CBD Master Plan* was prepared by the City’s Comprehensive Planning Committee with the assistance of a Madison, Wisconsin consulting firm, CityVision Associates. Work on the plan began in March, 1999, and focused on that part of the community generally bounded by Third Avenue, Sixth Street, Bridge Street, and

Thomas Street. The planning process, which involved considerable citizen input and meetings with elected and appointed officials, resulted in a 50-page document intended to guide the future development of the CBD. The plan contains a vision statement, general goals for the CBD, and many specific recommendations focused on land use, redevelopment activities, transportation, streetscape, and urban design. The document also details an implementation strategy for carrying out many of the plan's recommendations.

The community's vision for downtown as articulated in the plan is:

*Downtown Wausau is the heart of the City and surrounding region. It is the nerve center of retail trade, financial transactions and governmental activities in the region. Downtown Wausau gives our community and those who identify with Wausau a strong sense of place. More than any other part of the City, downtown defines Wausau as a community. City officials, business leaders and residents from throughout the Wausau Urban Area recognize the importance of downtown to our heritage and to our future. They are vitally interested in strengthening the social, cultural and economic position of downtown for the betterment of everyone.*

*For downtown Wausau, the next 20 years will not simply be a continuation of the past. There*

*will be dramatic changes in many of the elements that help define our downtown. Redevelopment of the riverfront for open space and public purpose and connecting this area to the commercial core will enhance the area's appeal to all visitors. Expansion of civic, cultural and entertainment spaces and programs will help create renewed business and visitor interest in downtown.*

*Downtown Wausau's unique architectural and physical character will have renewed vibrancy. People from throughout the region will recognize downtown's uniqueness and gather here to work, shop and enjoy the many available social, cultural and entertainment options. The physical improvements made to the downtown and the heightened activity in the central area will help generate new employment opportunities and stimulate interest in living downtown.*

Since its adoption, many of the recommendations contained in the Master Plan have been further tested, evaluated, rejected, modified, or implemented.

A number of other plans that influence growth and development have also been completed and are described more completely in other, respective chapters of this comprehensive plan. These include:

- ***Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Wausau Metropolitan Area (November 1996)*** – This plan focuses on the regional transportation system and will be updated concurrently with the development of this comprehensive plan.
- ***River Edge Master Plan (June 1995)*** - This plan focuses on improving public access to the Wisconsin River. The plan focuses on development of the River Edge Parkway, which is intended to physically link the parks located along the river; improve pedestrian and bicycle transportation facilities; and enhance recreational opportunities.
- ***The Wausau Plan: A View to the Future (February 1995)*** – This plan highlights general priorities and seven goals for the community to improve use of resources, measure effectiveness, and define a clear direction for the future. The overarching directive of the plan is “that goals are to be set and decisions are to be made only in the best interest of the residents and businesses of Wausau”.
- ***Major Amendment to the Wausau Sewer Service Area Boundary (December 1992)*** – As a result of City growth and escalating demand for extending sewer service, the 1981 plan was amended in December, 1992, when the Wausau Common Council adopted a document entitled, *Major Amendment to the Wausau Sewer Service Area Boundary*. This report represented a comprehensive update of the analyses and projections contained in the initial plan and extended the sewer service boundary for the City of Wausau farther into the adjacent hinterland to encompass a

new, expanded area that will likely be sewered by the year 2010. Thus, the City’s anticipated growth boundary was further extended into the adjacent rural communities.

The plan update was prepared in accordance with the planning guidelines established by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). These guidelines allowed the City to increase the land area within its sewer service boundary in proportion to its projected population increase. Thus, based upon the population projections developed for the plan update, the City was allowed to expand its earlier sewer service boundary by approximately 3,000 acres. In consultation with the Sewerage and Water Utility, the Capital Improvements and Street Maintenance Committee (CISM), Public Works Department, and other City staff, a preliminary growth boundary for the City was established. The results of the preliminary planning effort were then presented at public informational meetings and at a public hearing and were distributed widely via press releases and letters to the governing bodies of the other communities within the Wausau Urban Area. After a several month public review and revision process, the final plan was presented to the City Plan Commission and Common Council for adoption. Following Common Council action, the plan was transmitted to the WDNR for final approval, which was received in June 1993.

The WDNR also requires that all City of Wausau engineering plans for extending sanitary sewers be approved by that agency. Before the WDNR will review these engineering plans, however, the territory these sewers will serve must be located within the City’s sewer service or growth boundary. If the territory is not within this growth boundary, the WDNR

will not approve the engineering plans and, hence, the City will not be allowed to extend sanitary sewers into that territory. In addition, the WDNR does not allow sewer extensions into wetland areas, floodplain areas, or certain other environmentally sensitive areas unless there are no other cost effective alternatives for locating the sewers and the WDNR is assured that there will not be any development within the environmentally sensitive areas served by the sewer extensions. Thus, through the sewer service planning process, environmentally sensitive areas are protected and utilities are extended in a planned, cost effective manner.

- ***The City of Wausau Comprehensive Park and Recreation Area Plan (December 1990)*** – This plan identifies the general location, character, and extent of existing and needed parks, playgrounds, and special recreation areas to guide future park and recreation area land acquisition, development, and maintenance activities. The plan was updated in 2003 to extend the City’s eligibility for certain types of grants.
- ***Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan (December, 1986)*** - This document identified the most cost effective means of mitigating or preventing flooding in five developing watersheds that are in and adjacent to the City of Wausau. Three of these watersheds are located on the east side of the Wisconsin River and two are on the west side of the Wisconsin River. The study recommended that the City construct a series of stormwater detention facilities that would temporarily store stormwater runoff and gradually allow this water to enter the receiving stream over an extended period of time. These improvements were

recommended along with increasing the capacity of some storm sewers and developing certain administrative practices, all of which were intended to reduce or prevent flooding in the community. A number of the recommendations contained in the report have been implemented and the City will continue to use this document as it is required to implement the Phase II requirements regarding stormwater runoff developed by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

- ***Project Plans for Five Different Tax Increment Finance Districts (1981 - 1995)*** - Since 1981, the City has established five Tax Incremental Finance Districts (TIFs) and prepared a project plan for each of these districts. According to State law, the districts must be numbered sequentially, beginning with District Number 1. In Wausau, TIF No. 1 was established in 1981 and was created to finance the public improvements necessary to construct the Wausau Center Shopping Mall. The law that allows cities to use tax increment financing was created by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1975 as a financial tool for cities and villages to promote tax base expansion. The law is targeted toward eliminating blighted areas, rehabilitating areas with declining property values, and promoting industrial development. Before the tax incremental finance law was created, when a community like Wausau installed public improvements to promote private development, City property owners shouldered the cost of these improvements but all four of the property taxing jurisdictions - city, county, and the two school districts - shared in the revenue generated by the tax base increase. Under tax increment financing, however, all taxing entities become financial

partners in promoting the expansion of the tax base. When a tax incremental district is created, the property value within the tax increment district is established and a temporary taxing entity is created - the tax incremental district. This new taxing entity receives all of the property taxes generated by the increase in the value of the property within the tax incremental district. For example, if the property value within a tax incremental district increases by one million dollars as a result of the public and private improvements made within the district, all of the property tax revenue generated by that one million dollar increase, including that which would normally go to the school districts and county as well as the city, is instead allocated to the tax incremental district to pay for the public improvements and other project costs incurred by the district. City residents are no longer alone in funding certain tax base expansion projects.

Further details on the tax incremental finance law are contained in Section 66.46 of the Wisconsin Statutes, which identifies the procedures for creating, administering, and terminating tax incremental districts.

1. **TIF Number 2** in the City of Wausau was established in 1990 to finance improvements to an approximately 80-acre site within Wausau West Business and Industrial Park. The improvements here involved primarily sanitary sewers, water mains, street construction, and related costs.
2. **TIF Number 3**, established in 1994, is located in the CBD. It was established to finance some of the improvements planned for the Wausau Century Project,

which included a hotel, civic/convention center, expansion of the Wausau Center Mall, new parking structures, and related development and expenditures. Although much of the project is no longer viable, the district is still in existence.

3. **TIF Number 4 and Number 5** were created in 1996 and 1997, respectively. Both of these districts are located in Wausau West Business and Industrial Park and were established to help pay for much of the infrastructure improvements needed to develop fairly large expansion areas in the Industrial Park. The new Eastbay Corporation warehouse is in TIF Number 5.

All five of the project plans mentioned above are quite narrow in scope but quite detailed in terms of identifying the number, size, location, and type of improvements and other expenditures made within each district. Each plan also outlines a fairly detailed schedule of events that will occur to fully implement the project plan. All of the project plans for these districts were adopted by the Wausau Common Council following a public hearing and recommendation by the City Plan Commission. Although each of the plans has a limited geographic scope, a number of the goals and objectives listed in the documents are indicative of the City's economic development policies. For example, the objectives of the City's economic development efforts related to TIF Number Five include:

- A. Increase the employment opportunities available in the community.

- B. Increase the per capita income in the community.
- C. Increase the industrial property tax base for all taxing jurisdictions, including Marathon County, Northcentral Technical College (NTC), Wausau School District, and City of Wausau.
- D. Increase the availability of properly located, adequately serviced industrial sites.
- E. Accommodate new industries and the expansion of existing industries in the Industrial Park by extending and upgrading the needed infrastructure.
- F. Identify feasible and appropriate means of installing and financing the improvements necessary to market the industrial land within TIF Number 5.

## Land Use Regulations

The zoning ordinance is the primary means by which the City regulates the use of land. The zoning ordinance and other regulations are adopted for the broader purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of the community.

**Zoning** – For the purpose of regulating the use of land and buildings, the entire City of Wausau is divided into various zoning districts. Within each zoning district, certain land uses are allowed, and the lot size, lot width, height of buildings, building setbacks, and other land use and building development activities are regulated in order to protect the public health, safety and welfare. A brief summary of the types of permitted

land uses and some of the differences between each of the zoning districts is provided in Appendix B and a table summarizing lot sizes, yard requirements, frontage, and floor area ratio regulations for each zoning district is provided in Appendix C. Generally speaking, the table is arranged with the most restrictive zone (R-1, Single Family Residence District) at the top and on down to the least restrictive zone (M-2, General Industrial District).

It should be noted that most of the property in the City is located in either a residence (R), commercial (B), or industrial (M) zoning district. The permitted land uses within each of these general classifications are cumulative, from the more restrictive to less restrictive districts. For example, in the least restrictive residential district (R4-2), which allows apartment buildings, single family residences as well as duplex structures are also permitted uses. Similarly, in a General Commercial District (B-3), which is Wausau’s most liberal commercial district, the uses allowed in the more restrictive commercial districts (B-1 and B-2) are also permitted.

In addition to the districts identified above, there are a number of special zoning districts that cover a relatively small portion of the community. These districts include: UDD, Unified Development District; M-1-P, Limited Industrial Park District; M-2-P, General Industrial Park District; I-M, Interchange Manufacturing District; Shoreland-Wetland zoning district; Floodplain zoning district; Riveredge Overlay District; and Wellhead Protection Overlay District.

**Other Land Use Regulations** – In addition to zoning, the City employs several other means of regulating land uses,

including local subdivision regulations that also govern the division of land through certified surveys. The subdivision regulations and certified survey requirements apply within the City of Wausau as well as within its three-mile extraterritorial jurisdictional area. Wausau also maintains an official city map that regulates development on certain properties and along certain streets, both within Wausau and within its extra-territorial limits. Over the last 20 years, Wausau has also adopted several redevelopment plans that regulated land uses and building improvements within areas that were designated for redevelopment.

**Farmland Preservation** - While there is no Exclusive Agricultural zoning in the City, the Farmland Preservation Act has some significance for City growth because farmers who have enrolled their property in the program cannot be assessed for sewer and water extensions that abut or cross their land unless the services are used by the farmer. In 2001 there were two farms near the existing City limits that were enrolled in the State's Farmland Preservation tax credit program and could not be assessed for utility extension work. One farm along Town Line Road is contiguous to the existing City limits; the other farm is located about one-half mile east of the current City limits. Both of these farms are in the Town of Wausau.

It is important to note that a considerable amount of prime farmland abuts the City, especially to the east. In planning for the City's expansion, it is important to be aware of the potential conflicts that can develop between urban land uses and farms. Constructing homes near farm operations can yield complaints from new residents about odors, noise and dust and concerns about manure and pesticide spreading. In planning for new

residential development near the City limits, active farm operations in the abutting towns must be taken into consideration in order to ensure that new residential development is established in environmentally compatible locations.

## Land Supply

Most of the land area within the City of Wausau is developed. As a result, land for new development is usually obtained through annexation of adjacent unincorporated territory. In fact, annexation has been the primary factor contributing to Wausau's growth in the past several decades. Since 1960, Wausau has annexed about 1,450 acres of land per decade. The 1990 Census revealed that over 8,000 City residents live in the area that was annexed between 1960 and 1990.

Within the existing City borders, land for new development primarily consists of underutilized properties and/or brownfields with potential for redevelopment as well as individual vacant parcels that can support infill development or can be combined with adjacent parcels to create larger redevelopment sites.

Land potentially available for future development (residential and non-residential) between 2000 and 2030 was estimated by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) based on the land use categories shown in Table 4-1. Land categorized as barren, cropland, forestland, other agriculture, and specialty crop was considered "available" for future development. On the other hand, land categorized as already developed, such as industrial or areas that cannot easily

be developed, such as wetlands or waterways, were considered “unavailable” for future development. In the City of Wausau, 2,290 acres are identified as available for future development and 9,457 acres are considered unavailable.

It is noted that some of this “available” land may be in public ownership, as shown in Table 4-2, thus making it essentially “unavailable” for development.

**Table 4-2: Public Owned Land in Wausau (in acres), 1998-2002**

Year	County Owned	State Owned	Federal Owned
1998	310.3	63.5	8.8
2002	269.5	63.5	8.8
Change	-40.8	0	0
% Change	-13.1	0	0

Source: Data compiled by local assessors with Municipal Board of Review

## Annexation Trends

As noted above, much of the City’s population, housing, and economic growth since 1960 can be attributed to annexation of developed and undeveloped land. From 1960 through 2001, the City annexed over 5,808 acres from the adjacent unincorporated towns. This represents over nine square miles of land area. Table 4-3 summarizes the City’s annexation trends over the past 41 years:

**Table 4-3A: Annexations to Wausau: 1960-2001**

Period	Number of Acres Annexed
1960 - 1969	1,257 acres
1970 - 1979	1,894 acres
1980 - 1989	1,071 acres

1990 - thru-2001	1,586 acres
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Source: City of Wausau Engineering Department, 2002.

During the approximately four-decade period chronicled above, Wausau incorporated an average of 1,452 acres per decade. Most of the territory annexed since 1960 is located on the west side of the Wisconsin River which has seen a great deal of growth as annexation allowed the extension of sewer and water utilities needed for residential, commercial, and industrial development. The 41 years of annexation activity extended the City’s western boundary from about 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, westward to beyond 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Much of the new development in the USH 51 and STH 29 corridors was established on territory annexed to the City, including the Wausau Insurance Companies complex, Wausau Hospitals, Wausau Medical Center, and Wausau West Business and Industrial Park. These developments have contributed enormously to the City’s tax base and the overall economic health of Marathon County since many of the people who work in Wausau live in other communities.

In addition to the huge area devoted to commercial, industrial and institutional uses, literally thousands of existing homes and vacant home-sites have been annexed to the City since 1960. Based upon data from the 1990 Census, the area annexed to the City from 1960 to 1990 was the place of residence for 8,013 people in 1990. Thus, if the City’s boundaries had remained constant since 1960, Wausau would be a mere fragment of the city it is today; its population, tax base, commercial enterprises, and economic opportunities would be considerably reduced.

Based upon annexation trends of the last four decades and existing City policies, it is anticipated that the City will annex approximately 1,400 acres during the next decade and an identical amount from 2010 to 2020. Most people who annex to the City of Wausau do so to receive municipal water and sewerage disposal services. Municipal utility systems are highly desirable since they:

1. Allow for residential, commercial, and industrial development at a higher, more economical density;
2. Remedy existing sewer or water problems experienced by homes and businesses; and/or
3. Meet the requirements for utility services established by nationally franchised commercial operations.

Occasionally, people choose to annex to the City for zoning, street improvements, and other minor reasons. The predominant reason, however, remains the desire to receive municipal sewer and water services.

Annexation of town territory can result in disputes between the City and either town officials or certain property owners included within an annexation. Town officials sometimes feel that the City is “gobbling up” their community and significantly reducing the town’s land area and tax base. However, data collected for annexations from 1960 through 2002 indicates that the amount of area annexed from individual towns by the City has been relatively small. Table 4-4B shows the acreage and the percent of each of the town’s total area that has been annexed over this 42-year period. In most cases, only

a very small percentage of a town’s total area was annexed during the study period. For example, in 42 years, 4.92 percent of the land in the Town of Wausau was annexed and 2.46 percent of the Town of Maine was annexed. At the current rate of annexation, it would take 405 years for the City to annex half of the remaining area in the Town of Wausau and 840 years before the City would annex half of the remaining area in the Town of Maine.

While tax base loss has been a concern for some towns, the State recently adopted a law to mitigate this issue. The law requires that the City provide a payment to the town, for a five year period after annexation, equal to the tax base lost by the town. Further, since the City and the adjacent communities are within the same larger taxing jurisdictions---Marathon County, North Central Technical College and the Wausau or Everest School District---the transfer of property from a town to the City has no financial impact on these larger governmental units.

Other annexation disputes arise when some property owners are annexed to the City against their individual wishes. Oftentimes this is necessary to make an annexation either statutorily feasible or financially possible. The City attempts to address the concerns of these property owners but must often do what is in the best interest of the majority of the property owners within an area.

## **Residential, Industrial and Commercial Land Use Projections**

The NCWRPC estimated land demand for future residential and non-residential development for each community in Marathon County as part of the County-wide comprehensive planning process. The estimate of land needed for future residential development was based upon the number of projected new dwelling units between 2000 and 2030 and the current average density of 2.01 dwelling units per acre in the Highway 51 planning sub-area. In the City, it is estimated that 1,129 acres of land will be needed to accommodate new residential development from 2000 to 2030. As discussed in the *Demographics* element of the plan, this is based upon a “moderate” population increase of 14 percent (5,380 people) during the 30 year period and a household density of 2.37 persons per household. Thus,  $5,380 \text{ people} / 2.37 \text{ people per dwelling unit} / 2.01 \text{ dwelling units per acres} = 1,129 \text{ acres}$ .

To estimate 5-year growth increments for residential land uses, the total 1,129 acres was divided by six, the number of growth increments in the 30 year period. This exercise suggests that during each of the 5-year periods, 188 acres will be developed for new residential dwelling units.

Estimated land needed for non-residential development was based upon projected changes in local employment and an estimated current average density of 8.20 employees per acre in the Highway 51 planning sub-area. The NCWRPC estimated, under a “moderate” employment growth forecast that 1,094 acres will be needed to accommodate new non-residential (commercial and industrial) development through 2030. Based upon the 2002 ratio of commercial to industrial land in the City (4.5:1, as indicated in Table 4-4A), it is estimated that 199 acres of additional land will be used for industrial purposes by

2030 and 895 additional acres of land will be use for commercial purposes by 2030.

Similar to the residential land use forecast increments, these 30 year projections were divided by six to arrive at 5-year growth increments for industrial and commercial land uses. Thus, during each of the five years growth increments it is estimated that 33 acres ( $199 \text{ acres} / 6$ ) will be developed for industrial land use and 149 acres ( $895 \text{ acres} / 6$ ) will be developed for commercial use.

Table 4-3B provides a summary of the 5-year growth increments in future residential, industrial and commercial land uses in the City of Wausau, a grand total of 2,220 acres. These acreage totals are also used in the *Update of the Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan (2005-2006)*.

It should be pointed out that the acreage figures in Table 4-3B represent the land area that is anticipated to be the site of new building construction. There will be other land consumed during this period for streets, parks, churches and possibly schools. In addition, there will be platted areas that will contain vacant lots as well as industrial and commercial areas with vacant parcels. Thus, the amount of land area that the City will need to annex between 2000 and 2030 will probably be more in line with past trends and approach 4,356 acres ( $1,452 \text{ acres per decade} \times \text{three decades}$ ).

## Land Values

In 1998, the value of all property in Wausau, for property tax purposes, was over \$1.57 billion. This represents almost 31

percent of the total value of taxable property in Marathon County. Residential property comprises the highest proportion of the City’s total value at about 60 percent, while manufacturing represents the lowest proportion at 4.3 percent of the total value.

Table 4-4 indicates the change in assessed land values between 1998 and 2002 for various types of land use in the City of Wausau. It also indicates percent change in acreage and land value for the City compared to Marathon County. Between 1998 and 2002, the value of residential land decreased by about 34 percent, while the value of residential land in the County overall increase by 5.6 percent. However, the amount of acres of residential land increased by over 57 percent in the City, which is significantly higher than the average increase countywide, and likely reflects residential property annexed to the City during this period. During the same period, the value of commercial land increased slightly and the value of manufacturing land decreased slightly. Countywide, average commercial land values declined by 4 percent while manufacturing land values increased over 34 percent. Likewise, the value of agricultural land in the City and County decreased. In the City, the forest land category experienced the largest increase in overall acreage, increasing by over 94 percent. However, values for this type of land decreased slightly. In Marathon County, land classified as swamp and waste land had the highest percent increase in acreage (74.8%) and value per acre (137%) of all categories. Land classified as forest, countywide, also experienced an increase in value per acre of almost 92 percent.

**Table 4-3B: Projected Five-year Growth Increments In Future Residential, Industrial and Commercial Land In Wausau: 2000-2030.**

Period	Future Residential Land Used (Acres)	Future Industrial Land Used (Acres)	Future Commercial Land Used (Acres)
2000-2005	188	33	149
2005-2010	188	33	149
2010-2015	188	33	149
2015-2020	188	33	149
2020-2025	188	33	149
2025-2030	188	33	149
<b>TOTALS:</b>	1128	198	894
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>	2220		

*Source: City of Wausau Planning Office (2005).*

**Table 4-4A: Per Acre Assessed Land Values for Wausau (in dollars), 1998 – 2002**

Year	Residential		Commercial		Manufacturing		Agriculture		Swamp & Waste Land		Forest	
	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only	Acres	Land Only
1998	3,637	\$47,747	1,829	\$52,982	396	\$20,551	132	\$721	0	\$0	17	\$1,535
2002	5,723	\$31,645	1,908	\$54,085	422	\$20,506	109	\$190	0	\$0	33	\$1,488
Chg.	+2,086	\$-16,102	+79	\$1,103	+26	\$-45	-23	\$-531	0	\$0	+16	\$-47
Percent Change Comparison												
	Acres	Land (\$)	Acres	Land (\$)	Acres	Land (\$)	Acres	Land (\$)	Acres	Land (\$)	Acres	Land (\$)
Wausau	+57.4	-33.7	+4.3	+2.1	+6.6	-0.2	-17.4	-73.6	0	0	+94.1	-3.1
County	+21.2	+5.6	+38.4	-4.0	-0.5	+34.4	-11.2	-47.6	+74.8	+137.0	+1.0	+91.8

Source: Data compiled by local assessors with Municipal Board of Review

**Table 4-4B: Area Annexed to City of Wausau, By Town, From 1960-2002**

COMMUNITY (Town of)	Area (Acres) Annexed to Wausau from 1960-2002 (42 Years)	% of Town's Total Land Area Annexed to Wausau from 1960-2002
Maine	687	2.46
Rib Mountain	395	2.35
Stettin	3339	12.30
Town of Wausau	1094	4.92
Texas	427	1.47
Weston (Town & Village	725	3.58

Source: City of Wausau Planning Office (2005).

## Major Opportunities and Constraints

- Redevelopment** – There are several properties in the City with potential for redevelopment including many of the old industrial properties located along the Wisconsin River. The riverfront setting makes them desirable locations for new residential and commercial development; however, many of these properties are polluted and must be cleaned up prior to redevelopment. Costs of pollution clean-up and other complexities associated with redevelopment often mean these projects take more time to initiate and complete.
  - Downtown Revitalization** – In 2000, the City adopted The *Wausau CBD Master Plan*, which outlines strategies to revitalize downtown Wausau. Some of the key opportunities include improving pedestrian access, development on the riverfront and creation of the Arts Block. The Master Plan also recommended joining the Main Street program, which has been done. Main Street program staff will be directly involved in implementing the recommendations in the Master Plan.
  - Downtown Access** – While downtown revitalization efforts are underway, access in and out of downtown is perceived by some people to be a problem. Getting in and out of downtown can be difficult due in part to its distance from the freeway, congestion on the major corridors leading into downtown, and confusion about the one-way street system downtown. This discourages some people from shopping downtown as other, outlying shopping centers are perceived to be more accessible. Some of these
- perceived constraints, however, have been remedied with the reconstruction of the intersection of 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Washington Street, and River Drive (2004) and converting 1<sup>st</sup> Street to two-way operation and improving USH 51 access to the central business district.
- CTH X “Eastern Bypass”** – There are plans to reconstruct and upgrade CTH X (Camp Phillips Road) to create a major north-south “bypass” route along the eastern edge of the metropolitan area from STH 29 on the south (Village of Weston) to STH 52 on the north (Town of Wausau). This route is envisioned to eventually extend further north to Evergreen Road, connecting to a potential new river crossing and further south to connect with CTH XX near the Cedar Creek commercial area in Rothschild. Expanding the City border to the east toward CTH X would allow the City to capture some of the development that will occur along this corridor. It could also create another, alternative access into downtown. However, because the City does not have authority to initiate annexations, careful coordination of development with the Town of Wausau through cooperative extra-territorial zoning and through extra-territorial plat and certified survey review will be critical to ensure efficient and appropriate development in this area.
  - Cost of Community Services** – Taxes in the City of Wausau are higher than in other municipalities in the metropolitan area and the rest of Marathon County. This can serve as a “push factor” for some businesses and residents, creating an incentive to move out of the City. It can also diminish the City’s attractiveness to prospective

developers, business owners, and residents. On the other hand, Wausau is a full service community and provides the highest level of local governmental services in Marathon County, especially in the area of protective services - police, fire, and ambulance. It is also the only community in the County fully serviced by public transit. Although the cost of community services may “push” some people away from Wausau, others are attracted because they place a high value on the services provided by the City.

## Land Use Issues

- **Limited Land Supply/Annexation** – There is little vacant land left within the City limits to accommodate new development. As noted previously, City growth and expansion is dependent on annexation. Wisconsin State Law makes it difficult for cities to proactively annex property. Thus, the City only considers annexations in response to requests initiated by property owners. In some cases the property owner is a developer who wants to create an urban density subdivision or commercial venture that requires public sewer and water service. Individual residential or business property owners typically request annexation to receive municipal sewer and water services, often in response to septic system failures or problems with private wells. As a result, the City expands when and where opportunities arise.

While the City has defined an urban service area boundary within which sewers may be extended, its longstanding policy has been to not extend sewer and water services until land is annexed to the City. Since State court decisions

prohibit the City from proactively initiating annexation, land that may be suitable for development may remain undeveloped – or underdeveloped - until the property owner requests annexation and sewer and water are extended. Likewise, new urban density development often occurs when and where land is annexed, whether the City had intended to grow in that direction or not.

- **Annexation Laws** – As discussed above, the archaic State annexation laws prevent the City from effectively and efficiently implementing a growth management plan along the City’s periphery. These laws do not allow the City to unilaterally annex properties that stand in the way of the City’s growth and development efforts.
- **Extra-territorial Planning** – Before passage of the State Smart Growth Law, Wausau’s ability to plan within its extraterritorial plat and zoning jurisdictions was extremely limited and controversies frequently erupted as the City border changed. With the new comprehensive planning law, the City is better equipped to initiate a cooperative growth area planning effort. The absence of this type of planning program over the last several decades has resulted in a number of inefficiencies in the growth of the community and the extension of various City services and utilities. Conveying this growth and planning initiative to adjacent towns and Marathon County will allow those governmental units to adapt their planning and plan implementation efforts accordingly.
- **Redevelopment Challenges** – While redevelopment presents significant opportunities for growth and

revitalization in the City, it also poses complex financial and logistical challenges. Property assembly, demolition, and pollution clean-up are costly, which sometimes makes it difficult to find willing developers and financing.

Previously developed properties may be too small or oddly shaped and, therefore, must be combined with adjacent parcels to create a “good” redevelopment site. In addition, access to redevelopment sites may need to be enhanced or altered in order to accommodate a new land use. Public assistance (financial and/or technical) is usually needed to address these challenges in order to encourage private sector investment. Therefore, redevelopment priorities must be clear and balanced with City resources carefully dedicated to these needs and opportunities.

- **Brownfields** – Existing environmental contamination on former industrial and commercial sites has discouraged the redevelopment of many otherwise commercially viable properties in the City. The mere possibility of contamination existing on a property frightens potential developers as well as financial institutions from redeveloping these properties for residential or commercial uses. As mentioned earlier, these sites include the former SNE property on Thomas Street, many of the Central Business District Riverfront properties and many sites adjacent to the rail lines throughout the community.
- **Neighborhood Blight** – In several of the older neighborhoods of Wausau, pockets of blighted property still exist. Blighted properties diminish the value and desirability of these areas and often result in the spread of blight to other nearby properties. Blight characteristics may

be present on all types of property including residential, commercial and industrial. Generally, residential blight is most prevalent in areas with a high concentration of older, renter-occupied dwelling units, where reinvestment in property is minimal. Commercial and industrial blight is mainly concentrated in areas that are no longer attractive for their intended use due to poor site visibility, poor access, or proximity to arterial streets. Old age and/or poor condition of public infrastructure can also contribute to neighborhood decline.

- **Incompatible Land Uses** – Conflicts between land uses of different types and intensities typically occur in areas where land uses are in transition, traffic volumes or circulation changes, and buffering is inadequate or non-existent. When different land uses are located in close proximity, conflicts can arise relative to traffic, noise, and aesthetic compatibility. This is often the case where high intensity commercial uses are allowed to encroach into relatively stable residential areas. Similar conflicts can result where industrial activities generate truck traffic, dust, noise, and odor that impact nearby residents.
- **Old Industrial Sites** – Remnants of old industrial sites still occupy areas adjacent to residential neighborhoods and these sites frequently represent an impediment to improving the adjacent residential area. Apparently, owners of the residences are concerned that their financial investment in housing improvements will not be a wise expenditure if new industrial development on the adjacent industrial sites creates land use conflicts.

- **Odor Issues** – There are citywide concerns about existing and potential odors created in nearby communities, primarily the Town of Maine. Presently, odor from manure spreading on a large industrial dairy farm in the Town of Maine creates occasional odor problems for a relatively large segment of the City. In addition, a corn drying facility currently under construction and a proposed ethanol plant in the Village of Brokaw may also create odor issues for City residents on a regular basis. An ethanol plant in this area may also present a threat to the City’s ground water supplies, which have their origins in the area immediately south of Brokaw.
- **Shifts in Retail Activity** – Wausau has historically been the economic hub of North Central Wisconsin. In recent years, retail growth in the Wausau metropolitan area has shifted to the south and east. As a result, the City of Wausau’s standing as the regional retail trade center is becoming less clearly defined.
- **Strip Commercial Development** – Strip commercial development along some of the City’s arterial streets, such as Third Avenue and parts of Grand Avenue, has resulted in a number of land use conflicts with nearby residents as well as traffic congestion and safety problems. These areas also often have a cluttered appearance as a result of excessive signage, lack of landscape screening, and a wide variety of commercial architectural styles.
- **Sprawl-Type Development** – There are too many State laws and administrative rules that promote sprawl-type development that is contrary to the Smart Growth legislation. Examples are the State’s liberal rules governing on-site, private wastewater disposal systems and the State’s transportation policies that facilitate long distance commuting. Expenditures at the State and County levels as well as certain legislative actions make development in rural areas extremely attractive. Good transportation systems that are subsidized by urban development help keep property taxes low in the rural areas and make commuting relatively fast and efficient.
- **Extension of 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue** – In order to execute the City’s long term growth and development plan on the northwest side of the community, Westwood Drive has been extended from Bridge Street north to CTH U. This project has provided motor vehicle and pedestrian access to a large, undeveloped area of the City that has immediate access to municipal sewer and water services. While the road is favored by some property owners along the proposed corridor, others were opposed to the project. To mitigate the controversy, the City has attempted to design the road to avoid the property owned by opponents of the project and primarily serve the land owned by project proponents.
- **Cell Towers** – Locating cell towers in certain parts of the City has been a significant issue. The concerns about these towers range from aesthetics to the potential for ill health due to exposure to the cell tower radiation.

## Appendix A-Summary of Previous Comprehensive Plans

### Comprehensive Plan for the Wausau Area (1965) - Land Use Analysis

Following is a summary of the major findings and recommendations from the Land Use Analysis of the City's first comprehensive plan, which was adopted in 1965. This plan was regional in scope, encompassing the cities of Wausau and Schofield, the Village of Rothschild, and parts of the towns of Stettin, Texas, Maine, Rib Mountain, Weston and Wausau. It is interesting to note that some of the problems existing 40 years ago are prevalent today.

#### Existing Problems:

- **Central Area** – deteriorated building conditions and obsolescence, small parcel size and land assembly, pedestrian and traffic movement, parking, truck loading, and need for certain public facilities (e.g., library expansion, auditorium, new post office)
- **Changing Central Area Fringe** – building and land use conversions from residential to commercial and institutional uses.
- **Strip Commercial Development** – areas of traffic and land use conflicts, inefficient street and site design, and inadequate parking and property access.
- **Areas of Mixed-Use** – areas of incompatible activities (i.e., residential and industrial) and inefficient use of land.
- **Areas of Mixed Building Standards** – deteriorated buildings, sub-standard housing, poor construction or inadequate maintenance.
- **Urbanizing Areas Not Served by Municipal Utilities** – development occurring in areas not served by municipal sewer and water service.

#### Opportunities for Future Development:

- **Central Wausau Area Revitalization** – the central area (downtown Wausau) must be a strong, vigorous center if the Wausau Area is to continue to serve the regional business and shopping needs of North Central Wisconsin.
- **Expansion of the Wausau Technical Institute** – need to address space limitations at existing site to accommodate increasing enrollments and the role the Institute should play in the Wausau Area.
- **Expansion of the Marathon County Extension of the University of Wisconsin** – explore the potential to expand to a four-year college and ensure well-planned and coordinated campus development.
- **Industrial Development or Expansion** – anticipated most new industrial development would occur in the Schofield Industrial Park and the Town of Weston Research Park and expansion of existing industrial areas

would occur in existing industrial areas of Wausau along the river and railroad tracks.

- **Employers Mutual Development** – support planned development and consolidation of Employers Mutual of Wausau campus near the intersection of USH 51 and STH 29.
- **Interchange Development** – recommends positive action by local municipalities to provide orderly development at interchange locations in their communities, noting the particular importance of the intersection of USH 51 and STH 29.
- **Public Open Space, Recreation and Conservation Areas** – recommends promotion and better utilization of the potential of existing scenic areas such as Rib Mountain. Also identifies potential recreation areas such as Mosinee Hill, the high eastern bank overlooking the Wisconsin River in the Town of Texas, and areas along the Eau Claire and Rib Rivers. Suggests consideration of acquisition of scenic easement, particularly along the Wisconsin River.
- **Hiawatha-Pioneer Trail** – a segment of this 2,070-mile trail passes through the Wausau area and Rib Mountain State Park. Recommends capitalizing on the tourism and special publicity opportunities associated with the trail.

### City of Wausau Land Use Plan (1983)

Following is a summary of the recommendations of the general land use plan section from the 1983 report. Nearly all of these recommendations have been implemented or, in some cases, such as the development of Wausau West Business and Industrial Park, are currently being implemented.

1. Since the northwest and west sides of Wausau have the greatest supply of suitable vacant land, new residential development should be directed to those areas. This development should occur in a logical, orderly fashion, first by in-filling the scattered vacant parcels of land and then by staging growth contiguous to existing development.
2. All new development within the City should be directed away from areas that are unsuitable in terms of shallow depths to bedrock, shallow depths to groundwater, and steep slopes. If the City is petitioned to extend sewer and water service into these areas, the owner or developer should be assessed the additional cost of installing these utilities.
3. To encourage growth, the City should extend sewer and water service to the vacant parcels of land within the City that are contiguous to existing development and should provide recreational facilities.
4. Maintenance of the City's existing housing stock should be encouraged by implementing the recommendations included in the Wausau Housing Study prepared by the

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) in 1981.

5. The City should direct commercial development to concentrated areas to facilitate interactions and should discourage strip commercial development.
6. New industrial development in the City should be directed to the Wausau West Industrial Park and expansion of existing industrial zones should be allowed as long as it does not encroach into adjacent residential areas and if the expansion would be compatible with other adjacent uses.

In addition to the recommendations cited above, a number of issues were identified as part of the land use planning process that merit further study. It was recommended that additional, more detailed study be given to the items listed below as part of the City's ongoing planning process. A careful reading of these items reveals that many of these issues have been studied and resolved, while others are still under investigation; only a few of these issues have yet to be thoroughly addressed. For example, an interchange at 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and STH 29 to serve the Industrial Park has been constructed; the suitability of the Holtz-Krause Landfill site for park purposes is still being analyzed; and a study of the flow of truck traffic through residential neighborhoods has yet to be undertaken.

### **Issues for Further Study Identified In City of Wausau Land Use Plan (1983):**

- A. Analyze projected population growth and its effect on Wausau's elementary schools.
- B. Review assessment practices as they apply to vacant land to determine if they deter land development.
- C. Study the need for additional recreational facilities in areas of existing and future residential development in the City, particularly in the Longfellow, Riverview, Jefferson and Stettin neighborhoods.
- D. Investigate the Holtz-Krause Landfill site to determine its suitability for park purposes. (underway)
- E. Determine which structures in the Central Business District (CBD) are historically and culturally significant and worthy of preserving.
- F. Study possible improvements to Second Street in the CBD to help integrate it with the rest of the CBD.
- G. Study the availability and need for on- and off-street parking in the CBD.
- H. Investigate the feasibility of creating an historic district in the southern portion of the Franklin neighborhood.
- I. Study the problems of deteriorated rental units as they relate to student housing and absentee landlords in the

- Lincoln neighborhood and the other neighborhoods in the City.
- J. Study the residential zoning north of Schofield Avenue (Campus Drive) in the Thomas Jefferson neighborhood to determine if the density is suitable, especially considering the drainage problems, school capacity, and street capacities in the area.
  - K. Study the flow of truck traffic through residential neighborhoods.
  - L. Investigate the feasibility of constructing an interchange from STH 29 within the Industrial Park, possibly at 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. (completed)
  - M. Determine if the City-owned vacant land in the Industrial Park is suitable for development and if additional land is needed for the City's long-term industrial needs.
  - N. Study the vacant land north of Stewart Avenue and west of 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue extended, which is characterized by shallow bedrock, to determine if it is suitable for development.
  - O. Study areas with possible environmental limitations, particularly the Bos Creek area, to determine specific land areas that should be retained in their natural state.
  - P. Review the zoning code to determine if it contains barriers to the installation/construction of innovative designs that conserve energy or utilize alternative sources of energy.
  - Q. Study extraterritorial zoning to determine if its use by the City would be feasible.

## Appendix B-Zoning District Summary

ZONING DISTRICT	DISTRICT SUMMARY
<p><b>R-1</b></p>	<p><b>Single Family Residence District:</b> The R-1 District is the cornerstone for residential zoning in the community. The single family residence is the primary permitted use in this district; however, there are a multitude of other uses which are typically found in residential areas which are also permitted in this district, such as parks, schools, religious institutions, and others. In addition, there is a lengthy list of conditional uses which can be established only after a public hearing and specific Common Council approval.</p> <p>In an R-1 District, the minimum lot size for a single family residence is 10,000 square feet, with a minimum lot width of 80 feet. The attached Table summarizes lot size, frontage and setback requirements in all of the City's zoning districts.</p>
<p><b>I-R</b></p>	<p><b>Interchange Residence District:</b> This district is almost identical to the R-1 District, except the building setback restrictions from expressways and intersecting highways apply in these areas.</p>
<p><b>R-2</b></p>	<p><b>Single Family Residence District:</b> The R-1 and R-2 Districts are almost identical, except in an R-2 District, the minimum lot size for a single family residence is 7,000 square feet, and the minimum lot width is 60 feet. Setbacks and yard requirements are also lower in an R-2 District than in an R-1 District.</p>
<p><b>R-3</b></p>	<p><b>Two Family Residence District:</b> The permitted uses in this district are identical to an R-1 District but in addition, two family dwellings (duplexes) are allowed.</p> <p>The conditional uses in an R-3 District are the same as those in an R-1 District and also include bed &amp; breakfast establishments and country inns. The minimum lot size requirements in an R-3 District are 7,000 square feet of area and 60 feet of lot width.</p> <p>As indicated in the introduction above, in this Two Family Residence District, single family residences are permitted.</p>

ZONING DISTRICT	DISTRICT SUMMARY
<b>R-3-1</b>	<b>Two Family Residence District:</b> This district is identical to the R-3 District except the minimum lot size for single family and two family residences is 10,000 square feet and the minimum lot width is 80 feet.
<b>R-4</b>	<b>General Residence District:</b> In the General Residence District, the highest density residential uses are permitted. These include multi-family dwellings (apartments), boarding houses, lodging houses, and rooming houses. In addition, many of the same uses which are permitted in an R-1 and R-3 District are allowed here. The minimum lot size for multi-family structures is 1,500 square feet per dwelling unit for apartments with two bedrooms or more; 1,200 square feet of lot area per unit for one-bedroom apartments, and 900 square feet of lot area for boarding, lodging and rooming houses. The minimum lot size requirements are 7,000 square feet of lot area and 60 feet of frontage.
<b>R-4-1</b>	<b>Limited General Residence District:</b> This district is quite similar to the R-4 District except that multi-family dwellings may not exceed 8 units per structure. In an R-4 District, there is no limit on the number of units per structure.
<b>R-4-2</b>	<b>Medium Density Residence District:</b> The uses allowed in this district are identical to an R-4 District. The primary difference relates to the development density. In this district, apartment buildings with two or more bedrooms per unit must have 2,500 square feet of lot area per unit; one-bedroom apartments require at least 2,000 square feet of lot area per unit. These lot size requirements represent a decrease in the allowable development density from an R-4 District. The minimum lot width for an apartment in this district is 100 feet and the minimum lot area is 7,000 square feet.
<b>B-1</b>	<b>Neighborhood Shopping District:</b> The uses allowed in this district are intended to satisfy the basic shopping needs of persons living in adjacent residential areas. In addition to single family dwellings, there are only 18 types of commercial uses which are allowed in this district. For example, barber shops, beauty parlors, grocery stores, bakeries, and liquor stores are permitted uses. Similarly, the list of conditional uses in a B-1 District is quite limited and includes only three commercial activities.
<b>B-2</b>	<b>Community Service District:</b> In this district, residential uses are not allowed on the ground floor; they are permitted, however, on the second or higher floors above commercial establishments. In addition to all of the uses which are permitted in a B-1 District (except single family dwellings), there are almost 70 additional commercial uses which are allowed in a B-2 zone. The conditional uses in a B-2 zone include all of those in a B-1 zone as well as approximately 10 others commercial uses.

ZONING DISTRICT	DISTRICT SUMMARY
<b>B-3</b>	<p><b>General Commercial District:</b> This is the City's most liberal commercial zoning district. In addition to all of the uses allowed in a B-1 and B-2 District, there are 23 other commercial uses which are permitted in a B-3 zone. Many of these uses can generate a great deal of noise, odor, visual clutter, and other effects that may not be desirable near single family residential areas nor in high quality commercial areas. The types of uses which are permitted in a B-3 zone include such activities as animal kennels, feed and seed stores, greenhouses and nurseries, taverns with live entertainment and dancing, and motels. Similar to the permitted uses, the conditional uses allowed in a B-3 District may be objectionable to nearby residents and include such activities as amusement parks, auto body shops, construction contractors' shops and yards, and truck terminals.</p>
<b>B-4</b>	<p><b>Central Business District:</b> This type of zoning is only found within the downtown area of the City. The uses allowed in this district include any use permitted in a B-2 District as well as 11 additional permitted uses. The conditional uses allowed in a B-1 District are also allowed in a B-4 District, and 7 other commercial uses are also conditional.</p>
<b>I-B</b>	<p><b>Interchange Business District:</b> Generally, I-B Districts are only located near USH "51". This district differs considerably from the four districts outlined above, since the lot size requirements in an I-B District are much greater, as are building setback requirements. The intent of this district is to provide desirable development of high quality highway service facilities. Building setbacks are important to ensure visibility from motor vehicles at intersecting streets and highways. In the I-B District, there are only 13 permitted uses; however, one of the listed uses, "Retail sales stores", allows a whole variety of establishments.</p>

ZONING DISTRICT	DISTRICT SUMMARY
<p><b>I-P</b></p>	<p><b>Industrial Park District:</b> This zoning district is only applied in the City's Industrial Park which is located in the far western part of the City. There are 27 different manufacturing and related uses that are permitted in this district; however, many other types of commercial and manufacturing uses can be established as conditional uses. In this district, the building setback and yard requirements are quite substantial; thus, a great deal of open space, either for parking or green area, must be established.</p>
<p><b>M-1</b></p>	<p><b>Limited Industrial District:</b> There are about 40 manufacturing and commercial activities that are permitted in this district. In addition, there are over 20 conditional uses that are allowed. This type of district is intended for industries and commercial uses that do not create a great deal of nuisance or hazard.</p>
<p><b>M-2</b></p>	<p><b>General Industrial District:</b> Any use allowed in an M-1 District is also allowed in an M-2 District. In addition, approximately 35 uses which have a potential for generating nuisance or hazardous conditions are also permitted. These uses include such activities as foundries, mining operations, metal stamping plants, and meat packing activities. The conditional uses in an M-2 District include all of those which are allowed in an M-1 District and activities such as junk yards and sanitary landfills.</p>

## Appendix C –Zoning District Lot and Yard Requirements Summary

ZONE	USE	MINIMUM LOT SIZE	MINIMUM FRONTAGE	YARD REQUIREMENTS					MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA RATIO
				FRONT	REAR	INTERIOR SIDE	CORNER	TRANSITIONAL	
<b>R1</b>	Single Family	10,000 sq. ft.	80'	25'	35'	10'	20'	NA	NA
<b>R2</b>	Single Family	7,000 sq. ft.	60'	20'	30'	8'	15'	NA	NA
<b>R3</b>	Two Family	7,000 sq. ft.	60'	20'	30'	8'	15'	NA	NA
<b>R3-1</b>	Two Family	10,000 sq. ft.	80'	25'	35'	10'	20'	NA	NA
<b>R4</b>	Multiple Family	7,000 sq. ft.*	60'	15'*	30'	5'*	12'*	NA	2.20
<b>R4-1</b>	Multiple Family (8 unit maximum)	7,000 sq. ft.*	60'	15'*	30'	5'*	12'*	NA	2.20
<b>R4-2</b>	Multiple Family	7,000 sq. ft.*	100'	25'	35'	15'	20'	NA	2.20
<b>B1</b>	Neighborhood Shopping District	2,000 sq. ft.*	NA	15'*	NA*	NA*	NA*	YES	1.80
<b>B2</b>	Community Service District	2,000 sq. ft.*	NA	NA	NA*	NA*	NA*	YES	2.80
<b>B3</b>	General Commercial District	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	YES	2.80
<b>B4-1</b>	Central Business District	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	YES	4.0
<b>B4-2</b>	Central Business District	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	YES	8.0
<b>B4-3</b>	Central Business District	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	YES	8.0
<b>M1</b>	Limited Industrial District	NA	NA	30'	NA	NA	30'	YES	2.40
<b>M2</b>	General Industrial District	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	YES	3.60
<b>IP</b>	Industrial Park District	NA	NA	50'	25'	25'	30'	YES	NA
<b>M1-P</b>	Limited Industrial Park District	NA	NA	30'	NA	NA	30'	YES	1.0
<b>M2-P</b>	General Industrial Park District	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	YES	1.0

ZONE	USE	MINIMUM LOT SIZE	MINIMUM FRONTAGE	YARD REQUIREMENTS					MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA RATIO
				FRONT	REAR	INTERIOR SIDE	CORNER	TRANSITIONAL	
<b>IR</b>	Interchange Residence District	10,000 sq. ft.	80'	25'*	35'	10'	20'	NA	NA
<b>IB</b>	Interchange Business District	12,000 sq. ft.	100'	30'	30'	20'	30'	YES	.5
<b>IM</b>	Interchange Industrial District	40,000 sq. ft.	150'	50'	50'	25'	50'	YES	.75

NA = Not Applicable      \* = Contact Inspections Department

## 5. Transportation

A community's transportation system consists of a variety of roads; some are owned and maintained by local officials, others are part of the County or State road systems. In addition to roads, the transportation system includes facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, railroads, airports, public transit and freight. This section describes the transportation system in the City of Wausau and related improvements or issues affecting the system.

### Recent Transportation Plans

Following is a brief description of the major recent plans and studies that focused on aspects of the transportation system in Wausau.

- ***Business 51 Circulation Study***– Strand Associates, Inc. produced the Business 51 Circulation Study for the City of Wausau and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) in December, 2000. The purpose of the study was to evaluate some of the transportation recommendations proposed by the *Wausau Central Business District (CBD) Master Plan*.
- ***Central Business District (CBD) Master Plan***– The *CBD Master Plan* was completed in 2000 and proposed numerous recommendations to encourage redevelopment, enhance aesthetics in the CBD, and improve traffic flow.

Transportation recommendations included:

- The conversion of several one-way streets to two-way operations.
- Changing parking configurations on several streets.
- Changing the operations of several street intersections.

Prior to the 2000 *CBD Master Plan*, many plans relating to downtown transportation had been completed, including:

- *Downtown Wausau Retail Database* (1996).
- *Project Plan for Tax Increment District Number Three* (1994).
- *Downtown Parking Study Update* (1993).
- *Redevelopment Plan for the Wausau Century Project* (1993).
- *Initial Operating Plan, Wausau Central Business Improvement District* (1991).
- *Downtown Parking and Traffic Study* (1987).
- ***Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Wausau Metropolitan Area (1996)*** – The LRTP was produced by Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc. for the Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and adopted in November, 1996. This plan considers the various modes that make up the transportation system as well as the relationship between transportation and land use. The LRTP was reaffirmed in 2001 and an update should be completed during 2006.
- ***River Edge Master Plan*** – In June, 1995 the Wausau Common Council adopted the *River Edge Master Plan* as a component of the City master plan. The report identifies long- and short-term strategies for improving public access

to the City's most important natural resource – the Wisconsin River. The plan relates to transportation because of its focus on continuing development of the River Edge Parkway.

The parkway is intended to physically link the parks located along the river by improving pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the community. Most of the recommendations focus on the continued development of the River Edge Parkway along both banks of the Wisconsin River, which would be completed over the course of 20 to 30 years.

The corridor includes portions of the City bordering both banks of the Wisconsin River up to three city blocks deep in some cases. Central to the parkway's concept is a web of walkways, a network that reaches from City limit to City limit through the corridor and along the river wherever physically possible, including across bridges and islands. The walkway network is a transportation alternative allowing bicycle, pedestrian, and other non-motorized modes of travel access to and from residential and commercial segments throughout the corridor and connecting existing parks along the river edge.

## Other Transportation-Related City Plans

In addition to the plans described above, the City has undertaken many studies and planning efforts that directly or indirectly relate to City transportation issues. These include:

- ***The Wausau Plan: A View to the Future (1995)*** – This plan highlights some general priorities and goals for the community to improve the use of resources, help measure the effectiveness, and provide the City with a clear direction for the future. Several of these goals directly or indirectly relate to City transportation issues.
- ***Major Amendment to the Wausau Sewer Service Area Boundary (1995)*** – The primary purpose of the plan was to establish a sewer service boundary for the Wausau Urban Area. Even though the plan does not relate directly to transportation, establishing sewer service boundaries will impact land use and the transportation system through increased travel trips and the need to construct new roads to serve development. The location of the sewer service boundary will also affect transportation linkages in adjacent areas.
- ***City of Wausau Comprehensive Park and Recreation Area Plan (1990)*** – The primary recommendations related to transportation include developing the river edge parkway and reviewing needs and opportunities for recreational bicycling.
- ***Draft City of Wausau Comprehensive Plan*** – Between 2000 and 2002, the City of Wausau began a process to update the City of Wausau Land Use Plan, which was adopted in 1983. The draft plan's references to transportation generally relate to the reciprocal relationship between transportation and land use. Transportation is also addressed throughout the plan's discussion of land use planning principles.

## Regional Transportation Planning Efforts

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

County transportation planning efforts are presented in various plans and studies. Findings and recommendations presented in these plans should be integrated into local community planning efforts when relevant and appropriate. Recent transportation plans prepared by Marathon County include:

- ***Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*** – The TIP includes all programmed transportation projects receiving Federal and/or State funds. The TIP for 2003–2005 was adopted in October, 2002 and is updated every two years.
- ***State Trunk Highway 29 Corridor Land Use Review (1997)*** – This plan was prepared by a multi-departmental team working with communities along the STH 29 corridor in the western part of Marathon County. The primary goal was to identify recommendations to allow local communities to protect STH 29 from impacts related to unplanned growth.

- ***Marathon County Functional / Jurisdictional Highway Classification Study (1988)*** – This plan identifies and groups classes of roadways that provide similar levels of service. The plan recommended that the unit of government having the greatest basic interest in the roadway’s function would carry out the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the classified roadways.

The City of Wausau is part of the Wausau Area MPO, which in conjunction with the Marathon County Planning Department developed several transportation plans for the Wausau metropolitan area, including the 1996 LRTP described above. Other MPO plans include:

- ***Transit System Management Performance Audit Wausau Area Transit System (WATS) (2001)*** – The WDOT is required by statute to conduct a management performance review of all urban transit systems receiving State aid. Performance reviews are conducted at least once every five years. Abrams-Cherwony & Associates produced this report.
- ***WATS Transit Development Plan (TDP) (1999)*** – The TDP was prepared by Abrams-Cherwony & Associates with Urbitran Associates. It is updated every five years and provides a five-year capital improvement program and service recommendation plan.
- ***Marathon County Paratransit Study (2001)*** – The study, prepared by Urbitran Associates, Inc. with Abrams-Cherwony & Associates, reviewed paratransit services within the Wausau area provided primarily by WATS.

## Land Use and Transportation

Transportation systems and land use patterns have a well-documented reciprocal relationship. As land uses are intensified, they will generate or attract more trips, which in turn will increase demand for transportation facilities. By expanding those transportation facilities, access to the adjacent areas is increased, making them more desirable for intensified land use. While this land-use/transportation pattern is more apparent in growing communities, it also occurs in older communities where activities are shifted or transferred from one area to another. While changes in land use may stimulate the demand for improved transportation facilities, the opposite, that improved transportation facilities will increase the intensity of new land uses, may also be true.

Sometimes connections between transportation and land use are so intertwined as to fall into the chicken and the egg conundrum of which comes first. There are, however, several basic observations about the relationships that help us understand the Wausau Metro Area.

- **Land use/transportation linkages in the Metro Area are primarily based on the road system.** Air, rail, and transit systems have roles but are of lesser importance to trends in land use and transportation for passenger movement. This is typical of a smaller-sized mid-western urban area. Non-road modes of transportation are still important to the area and, in fact, long range transportation planning should stress diverse transportation options. At the present time, however, land use patterns are linked to streets and highways. For goods movement, roads are also

very important, but railroad and air-freight assume a more important role for certain commercial/industrial land uses.

- **Residential growth has a large impact on the need for transportation improvements** because it constitutes at least 50 percent of all developed acreage in the urban area. Home to work and home to shopping, recreation, and other trips are likewise significant. Not only does residential development result in the direct expansion of the local street grid to serve new properties, but it also increases the traffic demands on connecting collector and arterial routes.
- **Commercial development, particularly retail, responds to improvements in the transportation system.** This type of development is highly dependent on market access and visibility. Since most market access is via automobiles, any change to the street system that increases automobile traffic, accessibility, and/or visibility produces greater incentives for commercial development. Likewise, any change to the system that decreases traffic or access may initiate commercial stagnation or change in land use. A prime example in the Metro Area is the increase in commerce along the USH 51 bypass and the corresponding relative decline in commerce along Business 51 (Grand Avenue) after the west side freeway was built.
- **At the local level, industrial development sometimes initiates and/or responds to transportation improvements.** As some industries prosper, they generate a need for transportation improvements to serve their existing locations. Other industries will move to industrial parks, which are often

placed in locations of greatest accessibility. In general, however, industries seek lower land and production costs or advantages in other resources or markets and may accept relatively lower access to transportation systems in exchange, if such a trade-off is required. Communities offering space in industrial parks find that transportation is important, but secondary, to the cost of land offered in industrial parks and the cost of labor and other production needs in the area.

For each of these general principles, there are examples of the reverse case being true. For instance, highway improvements can lead to development of fringe or distant residential areas. Unique commercial developments may prosper and require road expansion. Certain industries may be wholly dependent on access to transportation facilities. In the Metro Area, however, the basic observations generally hold up and illustrate the implications of development choices.

**Access Management** – Wisconsin was one of the first states to recognize the relationship between highway operations and the use of abutting lands. Under Administrative Rule TRANS 233, the WDOT has established rules to review subdivision plats abutting or adjoining State trunk highways or connecting highways. These regulations require new subdivisions to: (1) have internal street systems; (2) limit direct vehicular access to the highways from individual lots; (3) establish building setbacks; and (4) establish access patterns for remaining unplatted land.

Many of the Grand Avenue/Business 51 traffic congestion issues are in part due to the large number of driveways and

unrestricted and/or uncontrolled left-turning movements. Access management strategies not only increase capacity but can also improve safety, enhance roadway predictability, and better accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit operations. When combined with a streetscape program, access management programs can also provide more attractive and inviting streets.

The Stewart Avenue reconstruction project from 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a good example of access management combined with a streetscape enhancement program that has improved safety and enhanced the traveling experience. To avoid the congestion and safety problems resulting from strip commercial development, over the last 20 years, Wausau has worked to discourage this type of development.

## Road Network

**Functional classification** (*Source: WDOT Facilities Development Manual*)

A functionally classified road system is one in which streets and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of service they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility to land access functions. At the upper limit of the system (principal arterials, for example), are those roads that emphasize traffic mobility (long, uninterrupted travel) such as USH 51, whereas at the lower limits are those local roads and streets that emphasize access such as most residential area roads. Roadway facilities, including classification and jurisdictions (i.e., U.S., State, and County highways) are shown in Figure 5-1.

The functional classifications are generally defined as follows:

**Principal Arterials** serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics of an interstate or interregional nature. These routes generally serve all urban areas with a population greater than 5,000 or connect major centers of activity. They carry the highest traffic volumes and are designed to accommodate longer trips.

**Minor Arterials**, like principal arterials, also serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators providing intra-community continuity and service for trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials. For example, 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue is classified as a minor arterial.

**Collectors** provide both land access service and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas. The collector system distributes trips from the arterials through the area to the local streets. The collectors also collect traffic from the local streets and channel it onto the arterial system. Elm Street is an example of a collector street on the west side of Wausau.

**Local Streets** 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 lowest level of mobility, and high volume through-traffic movement on these streets is usually discouraged.

**Road Jurisdiction** – Roads are commonly classified in one of two ways: by ownership or by purpose. Jurisdictional responsibility refers to ownership of a particular road, while functional classification, as describe above, identifies the road by the level of service (LOS) it provides.

Jurisdiction refers to governmental ownership, not necessarily responsibility. For example, some State-owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Additionally, the designation of a public road as a “Federal-aid highway” does not alter its ownership or jurisdiction as a State or local road, only that its service value and importance have made that road eligible for Federal-aid construction and rehabilitation funds.<sup>1</sup>

Ownership is divided among the Federal, State, and local governments. States own over 20 percent of the national road network. The Federal Government has responsibility for about five percent, primarily in national parks, forests, and Indian reservations. Over 75 percent of the road system is locally controlled.

In some cases, local municipalities are responsible for conducting routine maintenance and minor repairs on State and Federal highways within their jurisdictional boundaries. In return, the State generally provides financing to those jurisdictions. However, major repairs and reconstruction are generally still the responsibility of the State Department of Transportation.

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration Conditions and Performance Report.

USH 51 and STH 29 are the primary routes through the metro area and are owned and operated by the WDOT. Marathon County performs most maintenance on these facilities, under a contract with WDOT. Basically, the County performs the work and the State reimburses the County for 100 percent of its costs.

Most other State and U.S. signed roads in the urban area are owned and maintained by the community where the street is located. In Wausau, the City owns and maintains most of Business 51 and STH 52. These are classified by WDOT as connecting highways. As such, the City receives additional State Transportation Aid funds to maintain these types of streets and, when reconstruction is needed, the State pays for most of the cost, with the City making a relatively minor financial contribution.

County roads that enter Wausau include CTH U, CTH W, CTH Z, and CTH N. Only CTH N is signed through the City. The other County trunks end inside the City limits. Ownership of most of these signed County roads within Wausau is currently the responsibility of the City. As such, Wausau taxpayers are financially responsible for maintenance and improvement of these streets that serve City residents and many residents from the rural areas. However, in the rural areas, maintenance and improvement of these County trunks is the financial responsibility of all County taxpayers, including the City. Thus, Wausau property owners pay the full cost of maintaining their major streets and also pay about one-third of the cost of maintaining the major streets (County highways) in the rural parts of the County. This continues to be a major concern of City officials, and in early 2003 the City formally requested

that Marathon County accept ownership of 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue. As of July 2003 the County Board had not acted on this request.

## Major Road Facilities

A brief description of the major road facilities located in the City is provided below. Functional classification, jurisdiction, and Annual Average Daily Traffic<sup>2</sup> (AADT), when available, are summarized for all major roads.

- USH 51/STH 29** The City has convenient access to USH 51/STH 29 which provides interstate access to the south (I-39) and northern access to Merrill via USH 51 expressway. STH 29 provides convenient expressway access to the east to Green Bay and west to Eau Claire and the Twin Cities. All of these roads that make up the freeway system through the Wausau area are classified as principal arterials. USH 51/I-39 is designed as a freeway through Marathon County. STH 29 is designed as a freeway through the metro area and an expressway with at-grade intersections in the rural areas of Marathon County. The combined USH 51/STH 29 freeway section is the most heavily traveled section of highway in the County. The highest 2001 AADT volume on USH 51/STH 29 was between the CTH N and the USH 51/STH 29 east interchanges, which had about 58,000 vehicles per day (vpd). In 1999, the highest AADT volume was a little over 53,000 north of the CTH NN interchange.
- Business 51** is also a principal arterial providing north and south access through Wausau. Before the construction of

<sup>2</sup> 1998 and 2001 Wisconsin Highway Traffic Data, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, May 1999 and 2002.

the new USH 51, Business 51 was the main highway through the metropolitan area. Business 51 still serves as a major north-south route. In the southern part of Wausau, Business 51 (Grand Avenue) is a four-lane undivided arterial that also provides property access to many homes, apartments, and businesses south of the downtown. The large number of business driveway/access points and the limited number of dedicated left-turn lanes create safety hazards as well as traffic congestion and related delays. Because right-of-way is limited and the corridor is lined with homes and viable businesses, acquiring the right-of-way along the corridor to widen the street with turn lanes would likely be difficult and costly.

Heading north, Business 51 transitions into a one-way loop around downtown Wausau via 6<sup>th</sup> Street, McIndoe Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, and across the Wisconsin River over the Scott Street Bridge which transition to become Stewart Avenue. Business 51 on the west side of the Wisconsin River follows 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue (a one-way pair with 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue), W. Union Avenue, then along Merrill Avenue, and connects to an interchange with USH 51. Southbound Business 51 also uses Merrill Avenue, then 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (a one-way street), Stewart Avenue, and a series of one-way streets - W. Washington Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, and Forest Street. These three one-way streets serve as the southern loop skirting downtown Wausau.

Most of the downtown and northern portions of Business 51 were reconstructed in the 1990s. The pavement on Grand Avenue, from Forest Street to Kent Street, however, will likely need to be replaced between 2011 and 2013,

after the USH 51/STH 29 project is completed. This will be a significant reconstruction project.

- **STH 52** is also a principal arterial. From west to east, STH 52 starts at the USH 51/STH 29 interchange, follows Stewart Avenue across the river via the one-way pair of Washington Street (eastbound) or Scott Street (westbound). Eastbound traffic is routed south on 1<sup>st</sup> Street to Forest Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Street, which serves as the southern loop skirting downtown Wausau. STH 52 follows the 6<sup>th</sup> Street one-way pair with 5<sup>th</sup> Street. STH 52 is classified as a minor arterial along Wausau Avenue to the east city limits. Westbound STH 52 travelers use the northern portion of the downtown loop from 5<sup>th</sup> Street, which includes McIndoe Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, and the Scott Street Bridge connecting to Stewart Avenue heading west.
- **CTH N** is a principal arterial from west to east via S. 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Thomas Street to Grand Avenue to Town Line Road, and eastward out of Wausau. As previously discussed, although the road is signed as a County trunk, it is a City street and the City receives no financial assistance from the County to maintain or improve this facility.

## Planned Road Improvements

**USH 51/STH 29 Expansion** – The most significant current transportation issue is the USH 51/STH 29 expansion and rehabilitation project, which is slated to begin in 2004 and be completed in 2010-2012.

**USH 51 and STH 29 West Interchange** – As part of the USH 51/STH 29 expansion project, a major new interchange will be constructed at the junction of USH 51 and STH 29 West. The proposed improvements will require a significant disruption to adjacent land uses. Furthermore, the Fire Department has noted that the proposed interchange will cut off access to Stewart Avenue, a major route for emergency vehicles. The Fire Department submitted a letter detailing the Stewart Avenue concern and other interchange-related issues.

**CTH K and CTH U Interchanges** – As part of the USH 51 improvements, the interchanges at CTH U and CTH K will be reconfigured. WDOT initially proposed the interchange improvement at CTH K that included the elimination of the interchange at CTH U. However, this was neither supported by the City nor by many business owners and residents who commented on the plan. An alternative was developed that would create a full diamond interchange at CTH K and a half diamond interchange at CTH U. The City and many businesses and residents support this design.

**“Eastern Arterial”** – The “Eastern Arterial” is the term given to proposed improvements and expansion of CTH X (Camp Phillips Road) north of its intersection with STH 29 in the Village of Weston. The project is included in the *Wausau Metropolitan Area’s Long-Range Transportation Plan* (1996) and would comprise the eastern segment of a proposed arterial loop around the Wausau metro area. It would also provide another major north-south route through the area that could help relieve congestion on Business 51. The route would provide better mobility for those traveling to and from the Ministry Health Care complex in the Village of Weston and

related development along the STH 29 corridor and downtown Wausau. Currently, the entire CTH X corridor is outside the City of Wausau; however, segments of the road are likely to be annexed in the future.

Improved access provided by this corridor will likely foster interest from private developers considering new development opportunities along this corridor. The impacts of increased traffic along this corridor and on east-west connecting roads may be an issue for the City in the future. The primary east-west roads include Town Line Road (CTH N), McIntosh Street, Franklin Street (CTH Z), and STH 52. Increases in traffic volumes and the potential need for subsequent improvements of these roads will need to be given careful consideration since they route traffic through residential neighborhoods and also have segments with very steep gradients.

**“Western Arterial”** – The western arterial segment of the proposed metro area arterial loop is located on the west side of USH 51 and is intended to function like a frontage road to keep local traffic off of USH 51. The City is opposed to the Western Arterial due to its high cost (over \$25 million), limited utility, and contribution to sprawl development in parts of Rib Mountain and areas southwest of there. WDOT traffic forecasts indicate this road will carry only 8,000 vehicles per day in 2030, less than 10 percent of the traffic projected to be using USH 51 in the year 2030. Furthermore, this County trunk highway will discharge all of the traffic it generates onto City streets - S. 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Sherman Street.

**New Northern River Crossing** – The 1996 LRTP recommends that a study be undertaken by the Wausau Area MPO to consider construction of a new Wisconsin River crossing somewhere between Bridge Street in Wausau and Evergreen Road in the Town of Texas. As of 2003, the MPO staff has made no progress on this study.

## Potential Road Improvement Needs

**Thomas Street** – Major improvements to Thomas Street may be needed as a result of the heavy traffic volumes it carries. Such improvements include the bridge over the Wisconsin River and the railroad viaduct over the Wisconsin Central Limited tracks. The State is responsible for maintenance of these bridges and has scheduled improvements in 2005-2006.

2001 AADT counts indicate Thomas Street traffic volumes range between about 15,000 vehicles per day (vpd) west of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to about 17,500 vpd east of the Thomas Street Bridge. The 1998 AADT counts were generally higher than in 2001. The 1998 AADT west of the Thomas Street Bridge was 19,000 vpd. These traffic counts seem to indicate that expanding the roadway to four lanes could be justified. With completion of the new McCleary Bridge, traffic within this corridor may increase. However, Thomas Street has limited right-of-way space to accommodate widening.

SEH, Inc., an engineering consulting firm, is conducting a study for WDOT and the City on the Thomas Street corridor. The study includes the area between 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Grand Avenue/Business 51. One solution being considered to accommodate traffic volumes and flow is to create a one-way

pair using Thomas Street and Sherman Street. Another potential solution, depending on the available right-of-way, is a three-lane configuration (i.e., two through-lanes, one in each direction, with a continuous center left-turn lane or dedicated left-turning lanes) which can have almost the same capacity as an undivided four-lane road.

**CTH Z (Franklin Street)** is a major connecting road to CTH X (Camp Phillips Road). However, this road has an exceptionally steep grade near the east City border. As a result, speeding traffic coming down the hill into the City is a common complaint of residents in the area. Also, trucks using this route sometimes use engine or “Jake” breaks coming down the hill, which has generated many noise complaints. Traffic calming strategies may be helpful for addressing these issues.

**Sturgeon Eddy Road** also receives many neighborhood traffic speed complaints. High speeds may be a product of road width and design characteristics. Studies suggest that drivers will drive the speed that feels comfortable given the road environment and conditions, regardless of the posted speed limit. A wide road pavement with no sight line disruptions tends to result in higher driving speeds than a narrow road width and narrowed sight line due to large trees, parked cars, or buildings set close to the street.

**28<sup>th</sup> Avenue** is another road with an exceptionally steep gradient (approximately 22-24 percent grade). If the proposed West Arterial is realized, which would connect to the 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue alignment, a plan for reducing the slope of 28<sup>th</sup> Street may be warranted. Reducing the slope could require more right-of-way in which case it would be advantageous to address

the grade issue before adjacent lands are developed. In 2003, Marathon County began to study 28<sup>th</sup> Street for possible upgrade improvements.

**20<sup>th</sup> Avenue** is planned to be extended from Bridge Street north to CTH U to provide access to private property in this area and to provide another collector/arterial street on the west side of USH 51 to avoid the steep terrain on 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue. With the realignment of the intersection of Bridge Street and Westwood Drive, 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue will provide a relatively direct route from CTH U to Stewart Avenue.

## Road Design Standards

Currently, the City's arterial streets are designed to WDOT standards. Local street designs vary although, generally, they range in widths between 32 and 36 feet.

**One-way Streets** – The use of one-way streets and one-way street pairs is common in the City. One-way pairs are used on North 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets between E. Wausau Avenue and McIndoe Street (STH 52) and 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues between Thomas Street and W. Union Avenue. A series of one-way streets route traffic in a counter clockwise direction around the perimeter of the downtown central business district forming an arterial “loop.” West Washington Street and Scott Street form a short one-way pair across the Wisconsin River just west of downtown. As described previously, creation of a new one-way pair is being considered as one of the options for expanding capacity along Thomas Street.

One-way streets and one-way street pairs have been shown to reduce trip travel times; however, they also increase trip lengths as a result of decreasing access to adjacent land uses (i.e., more driving around to get to a destination). One-way streets can increase capacity and greatly enhance traffic flow. However, one-way streets also tend to create environments conducive to speeding.

Generally, one-way streets with two or more lanes are not desirable in residential areas because they tend to encourage speeding, increase noise, and create pedestrian safety concerns, which diminish neighborhood livability. Another characteristic of one-way streets, particularly on commuter routes, is that they create greater directional traffic impacts to adjacent land uses concentrated in either the AM or PM peak-hour.

One-way streets, particularly in downtown areas, can create confusion, decrease accessibility to businesses, and result in more driving around as people search for parking. To drivers unfamiliar with the area, the downtown Wausau one-way street system can be confusing. In 2000, Strand Associates, Inc. produced the *Business 51 Circulation Study* for WDOT. The study focused on downtown Wausau and addressed one-way street issues. The study recommended that 1<sup>st</sup> Street be converted from a one-way street to a two-way street.

## Road Maintenance

In a community survey conducted by the City in June 2002, citizens expressed strong support for spending public funds to repair and improve City streets. Road maintenance is generally

done in a systematic manner through the City's capital improvement program described below.

**Capital Improvement Program (CIP)** – The City utilizes a five-year CIP which consists of an infrastructure plan component and another significant capital projects component. The infrastructure plan is developed by the City's Public Works/Engineering Department and presented to the Capital Improvements and Street Maintenance Committee (CISM) for review and recommendation.

The City's Finance Committee evaluates the Capital Budget and Plan and recommendations are presented to the Common Council for consideration and approval. Annually, the Common Council also reviews and approves department requests to carry forward project budgets to the next year. The CIP emphasizes the preservation and maintenance of existing assets. Preservation activity represents about 97 percent of the plan.

## Pedestrian Facilities

The results of the City's 2002 community survey indicate fairly strong support for improving and expanding the City's sidewalk program. The City currently has several plans in place pertaining to the City's pedestrian facilities.

- **Existing Sidewalks** – Most older sections of the City have sidewalks, generally on both sides of the street. However, many of the newer areas that have been annexed to Wausau since 1960 do not have sidewalks. Currently, 50

percent of the cost of constructing new sidewalks or replacing sidewalks is assessed to property owners.

- **City Sidewalk Plan** – The City's Sidewalk Plan includes a sidewalk inventory and establishes criteria for adding sidewalks. Currently, sidewalks are required on two sides of arterial streets and on one side of collector streets. New sidewalks are also added according to requests of property owners or when properties are annexed. The City is planning to construct more sidewalks in the Riverview neighborhood, especially near the three schools in this neighborhood. It should be noted that the construction of sidewalks is often a contentious issue since many property owners do not want to pay the 50 percent assessment cost, experience the inconvenience that accompanies construction, or maintain them in winter.
- **River Edge Parkway** – The planned parkway identified in the *River Edge Master Plan* generally focuses on recreational uses and economic development opportunities. However, it is also intended to serve as a transportation corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists. Given the proximity to downtown and residential areas along the corridor, the potential for use of the parkway for utilitarian trips, as well as recreational trips, is significant.

## Bicycle Facilities

There are several trails in the urban area for both bicyclists and pedestrians such as the Mountain-Bay trail. The City has also taken steps to establish a system of bicycle routes and trails as described below.

**Bike Routes and Lanes** – The City has some designated and signed bike routes and the LRTP includes additional proposed bicycle routes, some of which have been implemented since 1996. For example, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues and 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets were rebuilt with wide curb lanes to more safely accommodate bicyclists. However, the City would benefit from a more comprehensive approach to providing and improving bike facilities in the City and to help coordinate bicycle planning activities and facilities with other communities in the County.

**Trails** – The City’s *River Edge Master Plan* calls for the creation of a parkway that would provide for a multi-use trail system. The City would like to see a future trail network that connects the parkway with trails in other communities (e.g., Villages of Weston and Rothschild). Even though these trails are generally designed as recreational facilities, they have the potential to also serve utilitarian bicycle trips if appropriate connections are made to major trip destinations. Extending the parkway north to Merrill could also help attract tourists and greatly expand the availability of bicycle facilities for City residents.

## Transit

The Wausau Area Transit System (WATS) provides fixed route transit service to the City. A map of current WATS routes is provided in Figure 5-3. WATS is owned by the City of Wausau and operates primarily within the City limits. The results of a community survey conducted by the City in May 1997 indicate very strong support for the bus system. Of the 400 respondents, 92 percent either agreed or strongly agreed

with the statement, “Wausau should continue to maintain a high quality bus system”.

The most recent plan for improving WATS was prepared in November 1999 by Abram-Cherwony & Associates with Urbitran Associates, Inc. The *WATS TDP* presents the findings and recommendations of the consultant team regarding both fixed route bus service and ADA paratransit service provided by WATS+.

**Transit and Land Use** – Land use decisions are critical if transit is to play a viable role in providing transportation choices in the community. Past and current development patterns are generally oriented toward the automobile. Often, transit access is not a concern until after the development is completed. Providing an effective and efficient transit service is much more difficult when transit is considered after the development is built.

Downtown Wausau provides a pedestrian-friendly, and thus transit-friendly, environment that greatly enhances transit’s ability to attract choice riders (i.e. non-transit dependents). However, downtown Wausau, like most urban central business districts, continues to account for a smaller and smaller proportion of the total retail and commercial activity in the region. Wausau, like many other downtown areas, also contains a large supply of relatively inexpensive parking. This can make driving downtown for employees and visitors more attractive and thus reduce incentives to use transit services.

**Fixed Route Bus Service** – WATS operates nine bus routes in the City of Wausau, which run at 30-minute intervals.

WATS also operates one bus route to Rothschild and Schofield, which operates at 60-minute intervals. Free transfers between routes are made at the main transfer facility located in the downtown area, one block from the Wausau Center Mall.

**Express Service** – WATS provides express route service during the school year to alleviate crowding on regular routes. Most of these routes are designed to get passengers to their destinations by eliminating the need to transfer downtown. All express routes are open to the general public.

In 2000 WATS averaged a little over 3,100-passenger trips per day, or a total of about 828,000-passenger trips, on their fixed route service. Ridership between 1996 and 2000 has remained relatively stable with the exception of a ten-percent ridership decrease between 1998 and 1999.

In 2000, fares covered about 16 percent of the WATS' approximately \$2,367,000 in total operating expenses. Local, State, and Federal funds accounted for 24 percent, 39 percent, and 20 percent of operating funds, respectively.

**Paratransit Service (WATS+)** – WATS contracts with Medi-Vans for the provision of a door-to-door van service for persons who, because of a disability, are unable to use WATS' bus service. WATS+ paratransit users must be certified by WATS and reservations are required at least one day prior to the trip. The paratransit service area includes all of the City of Wausau and any area that is within 3/4 of a mile from a regular bus route in Rothschild and Schofield.

WATS+ averaged about 90-passenger trips per day, for a total of about 24,000 trips in 2000. The demand response, curb to curb service provided by WATS+ is significantly more expensive to provide than fixed route transit service. In 2000, paratransit services average operating expense was \$10.41 per passenger trip; whereas fixed route service's average cost per passenger trip was \$2.56.

## Airports

Two airports provide service to the City:

- **Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA)** – Scheduled passenger air service is provided at the CWA in Mosinee, which is only about a 10 to 15 minute drive from Wausau. In 2002, four airlines - Mesaba/Northwest, United/United Feeder Service, and Skyway/Midwest Express - provided 24 flights per day, which connect through Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee.
- **Wausau Downtown Airport** – The Wausau Downtown Airport is located within the City of Wausau along the southern boundary shared with the City of Schofield. Business 51/Grand Avenue is the primary access route to the airport. Capital improvements at the airport are generally made in conformance with the *Airport Layout Plan* (1991).

The Wausau Downtown Airport provides general aviation services to Wausau and the surrounding area and is fully equipped to receive large corporate jets, charters, and privately owned aircraft. The airport is entirely owned and

managed by the City. The Wausau Downtown Airport's two paved runways and instrument approaches make it a viable facility even when weather conditions are marginal. Air charter, flight instruction, aircraft rental, scenic rides, as well as aviation line services such as refueling, transportation, lodging, and catering, are some of the services available.

In many communities, airport issues generally relate to noise and safety conflicts with neighboring land uses. This does not appear to be an immediate problem for the Wausau Downtown Airport. Neighborhood meetings held at the airport have not generated any concerns about land use conflicts between the airport and nearby residents.

In the past there have been plans to move the Wausau airport or consolidate general aviation services at the CWA in order to utilize the valuable riverfront property that is the current home of the airport. However, because of reversion clauses on the land and Federal and State dollars that have been provided to the airport, some airport land would be required to be returned to the County and State and Federal authorities would have to be refunded money contributed to airport improvements. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the CWA would agree to provide general aviation services.

## Freight

**Truck Routes** – The City-designated truck routes are identified in the *Wausau Area Long-Range Transportation Plan*.

**Rail** – Wausau has good access to rail service provided by the Wisconsin Central Limited. The mainline of the railroad is located on the east side of the Wisconsin River and extends from near Gilbert Park on the north to the abandoned Holtz-Krause Landfill on the south. The mainline cuts through several residential neighborhoods creating motor vehicle and pedestrian access issues and noise concerns in the immediate area.

Rail spurs provide rail access to the Wausau West Industrial Park and several other industrial areas around the City. Noise and traffic are a lesser concern on these spurs since rail traffic moves more slowly and is less frequent than on the mainline.

## Transportation Issues

- **Funding Street System Improvements** – Much of the City's cost for maintenance and improvement of the local street system is paid for with property taxes and not funded with user fees, such as the gas tax and vehicle registration payments. Furthermore, within the City's limits, there are very few miles of County trunk highway that are the financial responsibility of all residents in Marathon County. The City receives almost no financial support from Marathon County to improve or maintain its street system. On the other hand, all of the towns and many of the villages in Marathon County have their entire arterial street system and many collector streets owned and maintained by Marathon County. Thus, all County residents, including residents of Wausau, help pay for maintenance and improvements to the streets in these towns and villages while only a very limited amount of County tax dollars are

spent in Wausau to upgrade and maintain County roads here. The net result is higher property taxes in Wausau and lower property taxes in the rural areas where the County subsidizes maintenance and improvement of their road system.

In addition to the obvious tax issues, residents from outside the City who commute to Wausau place an added burden on the operation of City streets as well as on street maintenance yet do not contribute financially to these costs.

- **Aging Local Streets** – The City of Wausau has over 200 miles of streets within its municipal boundaries. The cost of construction, repair, and ongoing maintenance is extremely high and the City’s capital budget has not always provided sufficient funds to complete needed improvements and maintenance in a timely manner.
- **State/County Highway Expansions** – Major expenditures by the State and County on highway capacity increases and on upgrading existing roads in the rural areas and in communities adjacent to Wausau have literally paved the way for suburban and rural sprawl-type development in these communities. This has resulted in a dispersal of economic activity while straining much of the transportation infrastructure in the older street corridors of Wausau.
- **Street Extensions/Reserving Street Corridors** – Identifying the location of streets and the need for widening existing street corridors is a sensitive issue in the community since it often involves purchasing private

property for these purposes and possibly changing the land use and traffic circulation in the immediate area. For example, extending North 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue between West Wausau Avenue and CTH U has created a number of concerns on the part of several abutting property owners. This extension, however, is needed to continue with the City’s plans for growth and development into this area of the community and to function as a frontage road, adjacent to USH 51.

- **Congestion and Access Management along Commercial Corridors** – Strip commercial development along some of the City’s arterial streets continues to be a traffic congestion and safety problem. This is especially true along those streets where the traffic volume continues to increase and the prospects for developing alternative traffic routes or increasing the street’s capacity is limited. The most pressing need for access management in commercial corridors is along Grand Avenue/Business 51 and along Thomas Street where additional street capacity will be extremely difficult and costly to provide given limited existing public right-of-way.
- **Serving Edge Development** – The long-term costs associated with constructing and maintaining new roads and related infrastructure for development on the urban fringe will be more costly than if older sites, with existing transportation infrastructure, are redeveloped. In addition, new developments often require high cost (sewer, water) investments in other infrastructure that can outpace tax revenues. At a time when funding is tight, it will become increasingly important, and difficult, to balance funding of

new infrastructure with funds to ensure adequate maintenance of the existing infrastructure system.

- **High Traffic Speeds** – Speeding traffic on many of the City’s arterial and residential collector streets is a major concern of residents in these areas. Residents frequently complain about speeding traffic and reckless drivers and express concerns about the hazards these motorists represent to bicyclists, pedestrians, and small children in the residential neighborhoods.
- **Truck Traffic in Residential Neighborhoods** – Semi-truck traffic in residential areas has been a concern expressed at many of the neighborhood meetings held by City officials over the last ten years. While the City has been responsive to these concerns and has taken steps to reduce the conflicts between large trucks and residential land uses, changes in land use in the City’s commercial and industrial areas create new places where conflicts occur between residences and semi-truck traffic.
- **Railroad Traffic** – Railroad traffic through the community and trains at railroad spurs present several concerns. First, due to freight car switching, Town Line Road and Thomas Street are often blocked for extended periods of time, causing extensive traffic delays. Second, noise from train whistles and freight trains traveling through certain residential neighborhoods are a concern of nearby residents. Residents are also concerned about the potential for a train derailment and possible toxic emissions, which might result from various types of spills.
- **Street System Continuity** – There is very little continuity in the street and highway system on the east and west sides of the Wisconsin River, including Thomas Street, Town Line Road, Stewart Avenue, Franklin Street, Bridge Street, and East Wausau Avenue. The lack of continuity causes misdirection for cross-town traffic as well as additional congestion on the north-south street system and inefficient system operation.
- **Eastern Arterial/Northern Bridge** – Development of a plan and construction program to extend the proposed eastern arterial (CTH X) north to Evergreen Road with construction of a new bridge crossing the Wisconsin River needs to remain a high priority for the Wausau MPO’s planning efforts. This segment will complete an outer, arterial street system loop around the urban area to improve the efficiency of longer local trips and reduce existing and long-term congestion on other arterial streets such as Grand Avenue, Bridge Street, and Thomas Street.
- **Pedestrian Facilities and Safety** – Balancing the need to provide sidewalks for pedestrians with the wishes of some property owners to not have sidewalks constructed adjacent to their property has been a sensitive issue for local officials. While the wishes and individual desires of property owners need to be considered in a decision-making process, the overall safety of the community must also be a factor in decisions to construct sidewalks in Wausau. Pedestrian safety is particularly a concern in areas around schools when students are arriving and leaving.

- **Street Lights** – Street lighting has been a concern of residents in certain parts of the City. In some places the issue is an insufficient amount of light provided in the area while in other areas residents express concerns about too much light in the neighborhood. A street lighting plan for dealing with these issues that provides information on the type of light fixtures available, costs to operate, and alternatives for entire night lighting has not been prepared. The issue of extraneous light from the streets as well as from commercial, industrial, and institutional areas often is a localized issue. To address this issue in new subdivisions, private lighting systems may be an acceptable cost-effective compromise.
- **Bicycle Facilities Plan** – The City does not have a comprehensive bicycle facility plan other than the recommendations contained in the LRTP. Marathon County prepared a countywide bicycle plan in the late 1990s, which included all communities except Wausau. Wausau needs to be part of a countywide bicycle system planning effort to ensure that the activities and improvements occurring in adjacent communities are coordinated with efforts made in the City.
- **Transit and Sidewalks** – Pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks are of significant importance to transit users, who must traverse between their origin or destination and a bus stop location. The lack of sidewalks presents a significant safety hazard for transit patrons who are forced to navigate and wait in the street in order to access the transit service. This is a particularly critical safety issue for school-aged children and the disabled who use mobility devices such as wheelchairs. The situation is exacerbated in the winter months when accumulated snow may force transit patrons to walk in the street.
- **Transit-Oriented Design** – The design of most of the City’s older neighborhoods is transit-friendly with traditional grid design through streets and sidewalks. Newer neighborhoods tend to be less conducive to public transit, with low-density development, a lack of sidewalks, circuitous street design, and few through streets. Providing transit service in these areas is possible but tends to be less efficient and cost-effective, because transit must travel greater distances for fewer passengers. The City’s industrial park presents similar design problems with buildings on large lots set back a considerable distance from the streets and with no sidewalks on streets or on the industrial building sites.
- **Limited Transit Service** – The limited transit service hours provided by WATS create a mobility impediment for some transit system customers and discourage others from using transit service. WATS service is not provided in the evenings, on Saturdays during the summer months, or on Sundays and holidays. Service frequencies are 30 to 60 minutes, depending upon the time of day, which also represent an inconvenience for customers and a limiting factor for new riders.
- **Intra-City/Inter-City Bus Service** – From a system-wide perspective, Wausau does not have good connections between various modes of transportation such as inter- and intra-city bus service. The current intra-city bus terminal is

located several miles south of the City, at Cedar Creek Mall, and is not accessible by the City's WATS bus system. In addition, the public transit system operations are very limited or nonexistent in many of the adjacent suburban communities.

## 6. Utilities

Sewer and water services in the City of Wausau are provided by City-owned utilities. The utilities operate as a financially self-supporting enterprise fund with user charges paying for operation and maintenance costs as well as much of the capital improvement costs. As an enterprise operation, the utilities do not rely upon property taxes to support any of their activities. The utilities are governed by a five-member commission that includes three citizens, a Wausau Common Council member, and the Mayor. For various reasons, the water utility and the sewerage utility are maintained as two separate entities, although the same five individuals serve on each of the two utility commissions.

In 1998, the sewer and water utilities changed their name to Wausau Water Works and established two divisions — a drinking water division and a wastewater division. Each of these divisions has its own mission:

- *The drinking water division shall provide clean, safe drinking water for the residents of Wausau.*
- *The wastewater division shall return clean water to the environment in compliance with all discharge requirements.*
- *These essential services to our community will be achieved in the most efficient manner possible.*

In early 1999, the staff of Wausau Water Works was in the process of updating its strategic plan.

This plan contains recommendations in four specific areas: general administration, water supply and treatment, water distribution, and wastewater collection and treatment. The recommendations of this plan are summarized in the Utilities plan element.

### Utility System Improvement Plans

Over the last 20 years several long-range, comprehensive, and detailed studies of the utility systems have been completed to guide the growth and improvement of the physical infrastructure. These planning and facility improvement reports include:

- ***Wausau Area Facilities Plan*** prepared by Becher-Hoppe Associates, Inc., Schofield, Wisconsin — February, 1982. Published in two volumes.
- ***An amendment of Wausau Area Facilities Plan***, prepared by Becher-Hoppe Associates, Inc., Wausau, Wisconsin — November, 1987.
- ***Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan for the Year 2000***, prepared by the Marathon County Planning Commission for the Wausau Area Wastewater Facilities Policy Advisory Committee — October, 1981.
- ***Major Amendment to the Wausau Sewer Service Area Boundary***, prepared by City of Wausau — December, 1992.

In addition to the strategic planning elements and the long-range plans listed above, there are a number of system improvements and extensions that will likely be made in the next 15 to 20 years in order to accommodate City growth and/or upgrade system deficiencies. These have been identified by utility and other City staff and will be incorporated into the Utilities section of the final comprehensive plan. Most of these improvements will be made near the edge of the City limits where utilities are presently lacking or will be completed in response to existing system limitations.

## Sanitary Sewer Service

Wastewater generated by the City of Wausau, the City of Schofield, and a small portion of the Town of Stettin is conveyed to the Wausau wastewater treatment plant via approximately 200 miles of sanitary sewers. Although Wausau treats the wastewater generated in Schofield, it is not responsible for the wastewater collection system. The City of Schofield operates its own sewerage utility for this purpose. The Schofield utility also operates an independent water utility, which supplies water throughout the community. All wastewater from the Schofield system enters Wausau in a pipe near the Downtown Wausau Airport. Schofield's wastewater is monitored and a single bill is sent to the Schofield utility according to the amount of wastewater it generates.

Wausau has operated the entire Stettin wastewater system since 1986, when most of the Stettin Sanitary District was annexed to the City. Each of the remaining Stettin sewer customers have their own private wells, which prevents the City from monitoring the amount of water used by these customers. As a

result, Stettin customers are billed for sewer service on a flat fee basis, while bills for City of Wausau customers are based upon the amount of wastewater produced. Currently, Stettin customers consist of about 25 homes and businesses; however those will decrease as some property owners are relocated to make way for the planned new USH 51/STH 29 interchange.

## Sewer Service Area

In the early 1980s, the City of Wausau and six other communities in the Wausau Urban Area cooperated in the preparation of a sewer service area plan. The plan, entitled *Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan for the Year 2000*, was prepared by the Marathon County Planning Department and completed in October, 1981. Preparation of this plan was mandated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) as one component of the *Upper Wisconsin River Water Quality Plan* and as a requirement for receiving wastewater treatment facilities grants and administrative approval of sewer extensions. The WDNR's involvement in this planning effort is promulgated in State Administrative Rules and in the Federal Clean Water Act.

The primary purpose of the plan was to establish a sewer service boundary for the Wausau Urban Area. The area encompassed by the City's sewer service boundary in 2004 is shown on Figure 6-1. The boundary sets the 20-year maximum limit for the extension of sanitary sewer services in a cost effective, environmentally sound manner. Quite simply, property located within the sewer service boundary line is eligible to receive sanitary sewer service during the 20-year planning period; any property lying outside this sewer service

area boundary would not be eligible to receive this utility service unless the boundary were amended. Thus, the sewer service boundary also functions as a community growth boundary for Wausau since all development in the City must have sanitary sewer service.

As a result of City growth and an escalating demand for extending sewer service, the 1981 plan was amended in December, 1992, when the Wausau Common Council adopted a document entitled, *Major Amendment to the Wausau Sewer Service Area Boundary*. This report represented a comprehensive update of the analyses and projections contained in the initial plan and extended the sewer service boundary for the City of Wausau farther into the adjacent hinterland to encompass a new, expanded area that was likely to be sewered by the year 2010. Thus, the City's anticipated growth boundary was further extended into the adjacent rural communities.

The plan update was prepared in accordance with the planning guidelines established by the WDNR. These guidelines allowed the City to increase the land area within its sewer service boundary in proportion to its projected population increase. Thus, based upon the population projections developed for the plan update, the City was allowed to expand its earlier sewer service boundary by approximately 3,000 acres. In consultation with the Sewerage and Water Utility, the Capital Improvements and Street Maintenance Committee (CISM), Public Works Department, and other City staff, a preliminary growth boundary for the City was established. After several months of public review, revisions were made

and the final plan was adopted and transmitted to the WDNR for final approval, which was received in June, 1993.

It should also be noted that the WDNR must approve all engineering plans for extending City sanitary sewers. Furthermore, the area these sewers will serve must be located within the City's sewer service or growth boundary, or the WDNR will not approve the engineering plans and, hence, the City will not be allowed to extend sanitary sewers into that area. In addition, the WDNR does not allow sewer extensions into wetlands, floodplains, or certain other environmentally sensitive areas unless there are no other cost effective alternatives and the WDNR is assured that there will not be any development within environmentally sensitive areas served by the sewer extensions. Thus, through the sewer service planning process, environmentally sensitive areas are protected and utilities are extended in a planned, cost effective manner.

## **Sewage Treatment and Collection Facilities**

The Wausau Wastewater Treatment Plant is located on Adrian Street, on the west bank of the Wisconsin River. Prior to 1940, wastewater was discharged, untreated, into the Wisconsin River. A primary treatment plant was built in 1940, which removed about 50 percent of the waste from the system; a secondary treatment system was constructed in the late 1960s, which removed about 85 to 90 percent of the organic load. Then, in 1991 the treatment system was substantially reconstructed and expanded in order to further improve the quality of water discharged to the Wisconsin River.

The existing treatment plant is designed to accommodate an average annual daily flow of 8.2 million gallons. It operates at approximately 60 percent capacity, which is adequate to serve anticipated future development within the service area.

In 2002, the plant, which is an advanced, activated sludge wastewater facility, met all of its WDNR parameters for wastewater discharge. Wausau Water Works is currently looking at providing a higher level of treatment (Class A) to enhance their ability to recycle waste products. This will also allow more flexibility for storage, thus enhancing overall storage capacity.

The wastewater collection system (pipe network and lift stations) is generally in good condition. Sewer pipes and mains are replaced and upgraded in conjunction with road reconstruction or in response to known problems. One major improvement currently planned is the construction of a new interceptor sewer constructed parallel to an existing interceptor sewer. This new interceptor will serve the southeast side of the City and is intended to reduce/eliminate threats of system back-ups.

The utility currently has 21 lift stations. Additional lift stations will be necessary to serve new annexations or developments that do not naturally drain to the waste water treatment facility.

Similar to the water system, planning for expansion and improvements to the wastewater system is a collaborative effort on the part of the Utility Director, other City staff, and private consulting firms. Generally, when the City extends its water distribution lines, sewer mains are also installed at the

same time. The wastewater treatment plant and sewer collection system are maintained by 12 employees.

## Public Water Service

The Wausau Water Works has been providing safe, clean drinking water to City residents since 1885. The Utilities Director, working with City staff and private consulting firms, carries out most of the water system facilities planning. This entire water supply and distribution system is operated and maintained by a staff of 21 people.

**Service Areas and Supply** - The utility serves only City of Wausau customers; water is not currently sold to any of the communities adjacent to Wausau. The City is working with the Town of Rib Mountain to provide them with an emergency back-up water supply. The City has also considered selling water wholesale to the Town of Weston. Nearly every year the utility extends service into new territory that was recently annexed to the City from the adjacent towns.

The water supply system consists of six wells and a central water treatment plant. All of the wells are located near the Wisconsin River. These wells range in depth from 95 feet to 160 feet and pump anywhere from 900 to 3,000 gallons per minute. The treatment plant helps ensure uniform water quality. The treatment plant was constructed in 1963 and is used to remove iron and manganese from the water. The plant also provides corrosion control, disinfection, and fluoridation. Air stripping towers remove any volatile organic compounds that might be present in the groundwater. A \$4.5 million remodeling program was recently completed to provide

redundancy, increase capacity, and automate the plant with the latest technology for process monitoring and control. This automation has reduced operating expenses while maintaining water quality.

Currently, the water system is capable of delivering up to 10 million gallons of drinking water daily with peak hourly loading to 12 million gallons. In 2004, there were almost 15,000 metered water customers in the City and the utility pumped, on an average day, 5 million gallons of treated water through over 200 miles of water mains.

However, if the City decides to sell water to the Town of Weston, one additional well may be needed.

Groundwater and well contamination has been a major concern in the City. In the late 1970s, volatile organic compounds in the drinking water were traced to spills from a chemical plant near several of the municipal wells and a former landfill site also near several municipal wells. To remove the remaining VOCs in the municipal water supply, Wausau Water Works has installed air strippers. To provide some assurance that future land uses do not contribute to groundwater pollution within the municipal well recharge area, the City adopted a municipal well recharge area overlay zoning district, which strictly controls the type and operation of land uses that might contribute to groundwater contamination in the area of the municipal wells. In addition, Wausau Water Works has initiated various public awareness and public education efforts to reduce the overall probability that the activities of individual citizens or businesses will pollute the municipal groundwater supplies.

In the long run, Wausau Water Works hopes to extend the municipal well recharge area zoning district into portions of the adjoining Town of Maine, which is presently not regulated by this City zoning ordinance.

## Water Storage Facilities

Water storage facilities consist of one elevated water tower, three ground reservoirs, and one clear well. There is one water reservoir on the east side of the Wisconsin River on Brown Street and three on the west side: at 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Elm Street, at 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West Wausau Avenue, and in the 6400 block of Highland Drive in the Industrial Park. A second elevated water tower with the capacity of 250,000 gallons will be constructed in 2004 at the 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West Wausau Avenue site to meet the water service needs of this area of the City.

## Water Distribution Systems

Water distribution is accomplished through a network of mains and water storage units that continuously supply water to all users. This distribution system consists of 199.5 miles of various-sized water mains as well as valves, fire hydrants, reservoirs, and related appurtenances. The distribution system is in good working condition. Old mains are replaced in conjunction with road reconstruction where the service history of the main indicates replacement is warranted. The City has a capital improvement program to schedule funding for replacement of older water mains and other worn out system components.

Adequate water pressure is maintained throughout the distribution system by the water storage facilities and booster stations. Booster pumps are needed as the City expands to the east to provide water pressure in areas where the surface elevation approaches or exceeds 1400 feet above sea level. The new 18<sup>th</sup> Street booster station serving Wausau East High School is an example.

## Surface Water Management

In December, 1986, the City adopted a *Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan*. The report is an in-depth study of five separate watersheds, which contribute runoff to existing storm sewers within the City of Wausau. It addresses concerns regarding the capacity of the existing storm sewers within the City and the effect that new development will have on this capacity. The study reviewed the general design of drainage facilities in five separate watersheds, cost minimization for drainage system improvements, storm sewer needs, stormwater runoff control options for the City, and an implementation program. Design criteria and data and methods for reducing flooding and accommodating future City growth were detailed in the report.

The establishment of detention basins throughout several of the watersheds was recommended as a principal means of reducing flood potential and accommodating the additional runoff generated by further City growth. These detention basins were identified as the most cost-effective means of conveying the runoff generated by the design storm, the 100-year rainfall event. Soil conditions and land use projections within each of

the five watersheds were studied to help estimate potential runoff volumes. For each of the five watersheds, a detailed plan was prepared which included cost estimates for the most cost-effective means of accommodating the 100-year stormwater flow.

As a result of this study, the City has acquired the necessary land to establish stormwater detention basins in two of the watersheds studied by the consultant. In one of the watersheds, located along Evergreen Road, all of the improvements needed to accommodate a smaller, 50-year storm event were completed in 1995 when Evergreen Road was reconstructed. In the Bos Creek watershed, which is located northwest of Northcentral Technical College (NTC), some stormwater drainage improvements were implemented when Campus Drive was reconstructed in 2000. Other recommendations from the report may be implemented as land acquisition funds become available.

On the City's east side, in the watershed tributary to East Bridge Street, minor improvements were made in 1998. However, either one large or two smaller stormwater detention basins must be constructed in this watershed to provide the desired flood protection level planned to accommodate more development in this area.

In November, 2000, the Wausau Common Council created Chapter 15.56 of the *Wausau Municipal Code* governing stormwater management. This ordinance focuses on controlling the volume or flow of stormwater from development sites and also includes provisions for improving the quality of water flowing from development sites. Adoption of this ordinance

should help the City meet its surface water quality obligations under the State and Federal requirements for implementing various activities to reduce stormwater pollution nationwide. During 2003, the City was in the early stages of complying with these National and State regulations. However, it appears that in the long run costs associated with improving surface water quality could exceed \$1.5 million per year. As a result of these anticipated high costs, the City is investigating the possibility of creating a stormwater utility which could help generate the revenue needed to administer and manage the facilities and programs developed to improve local stormwater quality.

## Natural Gas and Electric Utilities

Natural gas and electric service in the City of Wausau is provided by Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPS), an investor-owned utility based in Green Bay, Wisconsin, with approximately one-half million customers. The Wausau area has significant electrical generation capacity, with 456 megawatts of coal-fired capacity in the Weston I, II, and III units in the Village of Kronenwetter, as well as 5.4 megawatts of hydroelectric capacity at a dam located in the City of Wausau south of Stewart Avenue. WPS expects to apply for licensing of an additional 500 megawatts of coal-fired capacity in the form of a Weston IV power plant, which the company hopes to have operational by the fall of 2008. WPS currently imports up to 20 percent of the electricity needed in its distribution system on peak days. The Weston IV plant would be the first significant addition to the utility's base load generation capacity since Weston III came on line in 1981.

## Telecommunication Facilities and Services

- Television/Cable providers – Charter Communications
- Telephone/Fiber Optics - Verizon
- Cell towers – There are three cell towers located in the City of Wausau and several cell phone antennae located on other towers, buildings, steeples, etc. around the City.

## Solid Waste Management

The City of Wausau contracts with a private company (currently Onyx) for all residential solid waste collection and disposal. Commercial and industrial properties contract for their own private waste management. Municipal, commercial and industrial waste is accepted at the Marathon County Landfill in Ringle. User fees collected at the landfill defray the cost of landfill operations.

The Marathon County Solid Waste Management Department is in charge of waste management for non-hazardous solid waste. It consists of the 575-acre landfill, recycling programs, composting, and waste-to-energy. The Department opened a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility in May 1997, where most County residents can drop off hazardous waste free of charge. Since 2005, Wausau residents must pay \$75 per visit to this facility because the City no longer has its domestic solid waste taken to the County Landfill.

The City operates a yard waste drop-off site on Cleveland Avenue and Thomas Street. As part of its solid waste contract with the City, Onyx operates the yard waste site and hauls away the waste, including branches, to a licensed compost site,

currently located in the Town of Wausau. The City periodically renews its contract with the compost site owner which, therefore, may change in the future.

## Recycling

Recycling pick-up for residential property is provided by a private contractor (also Onyx) on a bi-weekly basis. Commercial and industrial property owners contract for their own private recycling services.

## Utility Issues

- **Utility Service Extensions** – Because current City policy only allows provision of public utility services **after** annexation, a schedule for utility extensions can only be developed on a short-term basis after a majority of residents and property owners in an area commit to annexing their land to the City. The locations of most of the anticipated 15- to 20-year utility extensions have been identified based upon the staff's knowledge of the area adjacent to the City and long-term growth trends. In most cases, however, the improvements will not be constructed unless those areas are annexed to the City. As discussed in the *Land Use* section, the City has very little control over the timing of annexations since the process relies entirely upon the desires of a majority of the residents and property owners in a particular area. The City cannot, by State law, initiate an annexation.

Some of the utility service extensions identified will be implemented in the short-term since the service areas for

the utilities have recently been annexed or there has been a strong interest expressed by property owners in the area to annex. It should be noted, however, that there may be a number of other areas not yet identified that will be considered for utility extension as a result of unanticipated interest in annexation. It is the City's intention to also consider utility extensions into these unanticipated growth areas even though these utility extensions are not shown on the maps. This flexibility is needed to accommodate unanticipated requests for utilities that may arise from economic pressures to develop or from problems that residents might be experiencing with private wells, ground water supplies, or on-site waste disposal systems.

- **Water Pressure** – There are water pressure problems in isolated areas around the City where the ground elevation is over 1,400 feet above sea level. These areas are beyond the utility's current ability to provide normal water service. Without significant additional capital investment in water booster systems and possibly elevated storage, these areas cannot be served from the public water system and the existing water supply system simply cannot provide the volume of water needed to fight a fire.
- **Sewer Lift Stations** – The primary sewer system limitation is the unusual terrain in the City that requires the use of wastewater lift stations to serve areas of low elevation. In some areas of potential City expansion, particularly pockets of lower elevation, sewer lift systems will be needed. These areas will require considerable capital expenditures to serve and create higher long-term maintenance costs for the utility.

- **Stormwater Management Plan/Financing** – Implementing the Federal and State regulations governing stormwater management will be a financial and administrative challenge for the City. Various financial, technical, and administrative methods need to be reviewed to develop a stormwater management plan that meets the regulatory agencies’ requirements and local financing and governmental operational goals. This issue will consume a considerable amount of staff time as various options are developed and assessed for meeting these regulatory constraints. Allocating financial resources to managing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)’s Phase II surface water quality requirements may result in funding reductions for other City capital improvement and utility management programs.
- **Groundwater Quality Protection** - Potential contamination of the City’s municipal water supply at its source remains a concern of Wausau Water Works. Through broadening its public education and awareness programs, as well as expanding the City’s regulatory land use controls beyond the current municipal limits, the probability of groundwater contamination should be mitigated.
- **Aging Infrastructure Replacement** – Many of the sewer collection and water distribution facilities in the City are quite old and replacing these facilities is a constant, costly endeavor for Wausau Water Works. In addition, water main breaks require unscheduled improvements to the water main as well as unanticipated street repairs.
- **Sewer Service Area Plan Update** – As part of the comprehensive planning process, the City’s WDNR-approved sewer service area plan should be updated to incorporate elements of the comprehensive plan and to also provide guidance for the City’s development into the adjacent rural communities. The most recent update of the plan was approved by the WDNR in June, 1993, and many changes in the City’s growth pattern, transportation facilities, industrial park development, and high school and middle school construction have contributed to the need to update this important growth area plan. In the update, there will be a projection or forecast of the additional territory that is likely to be annexed and sewered during the 20-year planning period, to 2025. Due to the overall uncertainty as to which parts of the adjacent towns are likely to be taken into the City, an expanded area within the sewer service boundary should be considered for adoption by the City and approval by the WDNR.
- **Area Utility Consolidation** – State and Federal regulations, the need to improve efficiency and economy, and increased demands on natural resources will favor the consolidation of area water and sewerage utilities as the Wausau area continues to grow. Open communication and a great deal of work will be needed to make consolidation politically acceptable.

## 7. Housing

Our homes are one of the most important elements in our day-to-day lives. They provide shelter as a basic need, socially link us to neighborhoods, are a significant asset in our local economy and, for the most part, are the single largest investment many of us will make. Our homes also are a source of comfort, satisfaction and pride which, together with the neighborhoods in which we live, we will rigorously defend against what we believe to be adverse developments. For these reasons, housing conditions, residential development and neighborhoods are important considerations for local government.

Wausau's residential areas utilize the majority of the City's land area. They are the principal source of revenue generated from local property taxes and, in return, receive the greatest amount of services and expenditures from the City. Single family housing accounts for approximately 60 percent of the value of all property, both real and personal, in the City of Wausau. The importance of housing is clear, and the City's concern for this basic need is high.

### Housing Characteristics

This section provides an inventory and analysis of housing conditions in the City of Wausau. The City's housing stock is predominantly single family, with about 62 percent owner-occupied. Most housing units were constructed before 1980, and housing values are lower than median values for Marathon County and the State as a whole.

Data contained in this section reflect two methodologies of data collection employed by the U.S. Census. The source of data collected for the first table is from 2000 Census, Summary Tape File (STF)-1 Data, which was collected through a household-by-household census and represents responses from every household within the country. To get more detailed information, the U.S. Census also randomly distributes a long-form questionnaire to 1 in 6 households throughout the nation. Tables utilizing this sample data are identified in the footnote below each table and are labeled "STF-3 Data". It should be noted that STF-1 and STF-3 data may differ for similar statistics, due to survey limitations, non-response, or other attributes unique to each form of data collection.

### Housing Type and Tenure

As shown in Table 7-1, the City of Wausau has 15,678 occupied housing units. About 62 percent (9,676) of these units are owner-occupied, as compared with almost 76 percent on a county-wide basis. According to 2000 Census data, the average household size in the City is 2.37 persons-per-household, which is slightly smaller than the average size in the County or State. About one third (34%) of all households are classified as being "1 person households", suggesting a fairly high number of single adults and/or widowed elderly persons. About 27 percent of City households have a householder 65 years or older.

**Table 7-1: Number of Housing Units by Type and Tenure: 2000**

Area	City of Wausau	Marathon County	Wisconsin
Total Occupied Housing Units	15,678	47,702	2,084,544
Owner Occupied Units	9,676	36,091	1,426,361
Renter Occupied Units	6,002	11,611	658,183
Average Household Size	2.37	2.6	2.50
% Owner Occupied	61.7	75.7	68.4
% 1 Person Households	33.6	23.6	26.8
% With Householder 65 years or older	26.7	21.7	21.5

Source: 2000 U.S. Census: STF-1 Data

## Changes in Housing Stock

**Historic Trends** - From 1970 to 1980, the number of housing units in the City of Wausau increased by 2,041, even though the population in the City declined by 380 people. This phenomenon was occurring on a nationwide basis as the average number of people living in a household declined. Some of the factors contributing to this phenomenon were an increasing divorce rate, which created additional, smaller households; the older segment of our population was living longer and doing so in their own homes; children were leaving their parents at an earlier age and setting up their own households; and many younger adults were waiting a longer period of time before getting married.

During the 1980s, the number of additional housing units in Wausau increased by 2,023, while the population increased by 4,634. During this same period, 93 percent of the total increase in housing in the Urban Area occurred in the City of Wausau.

During the 1990s, the trend in smaller households continued in Wausau as the number of new housing units was only 16 fewer than the population increase (1,366) during this decade. Thus, while Wausau's population grew at a relatively modest rate, its housing stock increased significantly. On an Urban Area basis, the City accounted for 32 percent of the increase in housing units during the 1990s.

Census data for 2000 indicate that 38 percent of the occupied housing units in the City were renter-occupied, while the remaining 62 percent were owner-occupied. When compared to most communities in the urban area, the City of Wausau has a much higher rate of renter-occupied housing units. Only 12 percent of the occupied housing units in Rib Mountain and 10 percent of the units in Kronenwetter are renter-occupied. On a countywide basis, 24 percent of the housing units are renter-occupied.

A major factor contributing to the increase in housing units in the City has been annexation of existing homes from adjacent communities. However, the annexation phenomenon merely involves the transfer of housing units from one community to another and does not result in the creation of new housing units.

Table 7-2 notes changes in the housing stock between 1990 and 2000 according to U.S. Census Data. By 2000, the number of housing units in Wausau reached 16,668, an increase of 1,369 (9%) since 1990. At the same time, the number of occupied housing units rose by 986 (7%). The number of owner-occupied housing units increased by 424 (5%) while the

number of renter-occupied units increased by 562 (10%). Vacancy rose from 4 to 6 percent. The census reports increases in the number of single-family and multi-family units; however duplex units decreased in number.

**Table 7-2: Changes in Housing Stock in Wausau**

	1990	2000	# Change	% Change
Total Housing Units	15,318	16,687	1,369	9%
Occupied Housing Units (Households)	14,718	15,704	986	7%
Vacancy %	4%	6%	--	--
Owner Occupied Housing Units	9,272	9,696	424	5%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	5,446	6,008	562	10%
Owner Occupied Housing Units as percent of Total	63%	62%	--	--
Number of Homes for Seasonal/Recreation Use	56	71	15	27%
Number of Single Family Homes	10106	10795	689	7%
*Detached	9863	10411	548	6%
**Attached	243	384	141	58%
Number of Duplexes	2687	2591	-96	-4%
Multi Family Units 3-9 units	1160	1474	314	27%
Multi Family Units 10+	1149	1570	421	37%

Source: U.S. Census: 1990, 2000 STF-3 Data

\* This is a 1-unit structure detached from any other house

\*\*In row houses (sometimes called townhouses), double houses, or houses attached to nonresidential structures, each house is a separate, attached structure if the dividing or common wall goes from ground to roof.

**NOTE: Due to differences in data sources, above information may not correspond with data in Table 7-1.**

Detailed information on construction of new single-family and multi-family dwelling units in the City between 1979 and 1997 indicates that 59 percent of new dwellings were built on the west side of the Wisconsin River and 41 percent were

constructed on the east side. However, the number of new single-family dwelling units is almost equally distributed between the east and west sides, with an average of 21 units constructed each year on the east side and 25 per year constructed on the west side.

However, the difference is much greater for duplex and multi-family dwellings, with 41 units constructed per year on the west side and only 24 units per year constructed on the east side. Unless there are radical changes in the demand for new single-family dwelling units in the City, the existing rate of construction is likely to remain as it is into the foreseeable future.

Table 7-3 summarizes the more detailed information and shows that since 1979 there have been an average of 115 new residential dwelling units constructed each year in Wausau, with slightly less than half (49) of these units being single-family residences. This relatively slow development rate is reflected in the number and size of residential subdivisions platted in the City from 1980 through 2001. During this 22-year period, a total of 43 subdivisions, containing 995 lots, were created — an average of 45 new lots per year. Thus, the number of residential lots created per year barely keeps pace with the number of residential units constructed. The limited availability of residential lots may be one factor hindering the rate of residential development in Wausau.

**Table 7-3: New Housing Units Constructed in Wausau: 1979 through 2001**

Year	New Single-Family Units	New Two And Multi-Family Units	Total New Units	Beds For Community Based Residential Facilities*
1979	26	26	52	
1980	23	30	53	
1981	28	86	114	
1982	22	36	58	
1983	46	12	58	
1984	45	20	65	
1985	60	30	90	
1986	57	30	87	
1987	48	161	209	
1988	60	34	94	
1989	72	32	104	
1990	48	132	180	
1991	74	91	165	(35)
1992	44	161	205	(20)
1993	46	79	125	(15)
1994	54	71	125	(15)
1995	36	106	142	(50)
1996	48	8	56	(0)
1997	45	97	142	(37)
1998	56	66	122	(20)
1999	78	24	102	0
2000	62	97	159	(16)
2001	56	85	141	(41)
<b>Totals</b>	1134	1514	2648	249
<b>Average New Units Per Year</b>	49	66	115	

Source: Residential building permit data, City Inspection Department.

Prepared by: Joe Pribanich, City Planner. Revised: June 2003.

\*Included with the two and multi-family units

## Housing Age

The age of a community’s housing stock typically reflects several important factors including size, offered amenities, and overall maintenance costs. Age of the home often also reflects different regional and national trends in housing development. Housing predating the 1940s, for example, was typically smaller and built on smaller lots. In subsequent decades, both average lot and home sizes have increased. For example, average homes constructed in the 1980s and 1990s are typically much larger than housing built in previous decades. This can be seen in both the rural and more urban environments of Marathon County. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

**Table 7-4: Age of Housing Stock, City of Wausau**

Total Units	Year Built								
	1999 to March 2000	1995 to 1998	1990 to 1994	1980 to 1989	1970 to 1979	1960 to 1969	1950 to 1959	1940 to 1949	1939 or earlier
16,687	188	618	708	1,232	1,958	1,715	2,840	2,217	5,211
100%	1%	4%	4%	7%	12%	10%	17%	13%	31%

Source: U.S. Census: 1990, 2000 STF-3 Data

Table 7-4 shows the range of housing age in the City. Compared to Marathon County, housing in Wausau is considerably older on average. The 2000 Census indicates that 31 percent of all housing units in Wausau were built before 1940 and 61 percent were built before 1960. In Marathon

County, only 22.8 percent of the housing stock was built before 1940 and 42 percent was built before 1960.

Housing built during the 1990s makes up approximately 9 percent of the City’s total housing stock. That is slightly lower than overall percentages for the County where homes built in the 1990s make up 13 percent of the overall housing stock.

To address the aging housing stock and other issues, the City has taken several steps, including development of a housing rehabilitation program for both owner-occupied and rental units, initiating a concentrated building code enforcement program, and offering down payment assistance to new home buyers.

### Physical Housing Stock

Table 7-5 looks at several select measures of physical condition and compares them to figures for Marathon County and Wisconsin. The median home size in the City of Wausau is similar in size compared to the overall figures for the County and State, as measured by number of rooms. Nearly 65 percent of the City’s housing stock is classified as being a “single family” home, which is slightly lower than overall figures for the County or State. At the time of the 2000 census, over 9 percent of the City’s housing units were in structures with more than 10 units. Census data indicate that a small percentage of homes in the City lacked complete plumbing and kitchen facilities in 2000.

**Table 7-5: Physical Housing Stock**

Community	Median Rooms	Characteristic (%)			
		1 unit, detached or attached	In buildings with 10 or more Units	Lacking complete plumbing facilities	Lacking complete kitchen facilities
Wausau	5.4	64.69%	9.41%	0.67%	0.92%
Marathon County	5.8	76.10%	4.50%	0.90%	0.90%
Wisconsin	5.4	69.30%	9.40%	1.40%	1.50%

Source: U.S. Census: 1990, 2000 STF-3 Data

### Housing Values

#### Median Value

Housing valuation has increased steadily over each of the past ten years, averaging a 4.14 percent increase per year. While much of this added value is due to inflation, 25 percent is the result of home improvements. The average sale price of a single-family home in 1986 was \$49,100. By 1993, that figure had risen to \$69,300.

The median value of owner-occupied housing in Wausau stood at \$85,500 in the 2000 Census, while the median value was \$131,100 in Rib Mountain; \$114,600 in Kronenwetter; \$111,200 in the Village of Weston; and \$95,800 for all of Marathon County. The median value of housing is a reflection of the age of the units and their general condition. More importantly, this value is a significant indicator of the amount of tax revenue generated by this class of property and the level of governmental services that it can support.

Table 7-6 shows home value statistics for the City, the County and State. Specifically, the column to the right shows the

median (or middle value) of select owner-occupied homes for each specified area. This value includes only single-family houses that are located on less than 10 acres. Additionally, this statistic only considers homes without a business or medical office on the property. Census data indicate that the City of Wausau has a median home value below that of the County.

**Table 7-6: Median Housing Values, 2000**

	Median Value (dollars)
<b>City of Wausau</b>	\$85,500
<b>Marathon County</b>	\$95,800
<b>Wisconsin</b>	\$112,200

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, STF-3 Data

### Range of Values

Table 7-7 shows the range of housing values that exist in the City. Compared to overall percentages for Marathon County, the City of Wausau has a higher percentage of homes valued below \$100,000. The percentage of homes between \$150,000 and \$200,000 is similar between the City and Marathon County.

**Table 7-7: Range of Housing Values, 2000**

Number of Houses per Housing Value Category	City of Wausau	Marathon County
< \$49,999	521	1,459
%	6%	5%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	5,397	13,405
%	62%	49%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,925	8,220
%	22%	30%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	457	2,368
%	5%	9%
\$200,000 or more	458	1,714
%	5%	6%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, STF-3 Data

### Housing Affordability

Several factors impact the varied levels of housing affordability in Marathon County. These factors include rent and mortgage payments, maintenance expenses, lot size, and required or desired amenities for the home. Household size and income are also key factors contributing to what housing options are available and accessible to residents.

Statistically speaking, those spending in excess of 35 percent of their total household income on housing costs may be facing affordability difficulties. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that rental-housing costs not exceed 30 percent of the monthly income. HUD also indicates that mortgage lenders are more willing to make loans if the scheduled mortgage payment is less than 29 percent of the monthly household income.

As shown in Table 7-8, the percentage of households in the City of Wausau that pay more than 35 percent of their household income on housing costs is slightly greater than the County and State among owner-occupied households and greater than the County but less than the State for renter-occupied housing.

Table 7-8 also shows that select median owner-occupied costs for City households are similar to the County and slightly less than the State. This includes households with and without a mortgage. Median renter costs also appear to be consistent between the City and County. Technical documentation from the Census states that contract rent is the monthly rent agreed to or contracted for, regardless of any furnishings, utilities, fees, meals, or services that may be included. For vacant units, it is the monthly rent asked for the rental unit at the time of enumeration. Gross rent is the contract rent plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water and sewer) and fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc.) if these are paid by or for the renter. (*U.S. Census STF 3 Technical Documentation Guide*)

**Table 7-8: Housing Affordability, 2000**

	Owner Occupied			Renter Occupied		
	Median selected monthly owner costs <sup>1</sup>			Median Selected monthly renter costs <sup>1</sup>		
	With mortgage	No mortgage	% <sup>2</sup>	Median Contract rent	Median gross rent	% <sup>2</sup>
<b>Wausau</b>	\$856	\$298	11%	\$419	\$473	24%
<b>Marathon County</b>	\$916	\$295	10%	\$423	\$484	20%
<b>Wisconsin</b>	\$1,024	\$333	9%	\$473	\$540	25%

<sup>1</sup>In dollars

<sup>2</sup>Percent paying over 35% of household income on housing

Source: U.S. Census: 2000 STF-3 Data

In 1993, the Wausau Community Development Authority constructed 40 units of public housing for low-income families. Directly assisted public housing units in Wausau now account for 4 percent of the 16,668 total units in the City identified in the 2000 Census. Because of the increasing demand, many low-income households now pay in excess of 50 percent of their incomes toward monthly rent.

## Special Housing

### Senior Housing

In Marathon County, housing for seniors and populations with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Wausau. The Marathon County Aging and Disability Resource Center, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and the Marathon County United Way all maintain a list of these housing options throughout the

County. As the number of elderly persons increases in the coming years, there will most likely be an increased need for these types of housing options. This trend will be seen throughout Marathon County, the State of Wisconsin, and the Nation.

The Highway 51 area has the highest concentration of population, jobs, and housing opportunities in Marathon County. As such, most of Marathon County's senior housing opportunities are centered in and around this area as well. There are approximately 110 different senior and special needs housing programs and facilities in and around the Wausau metropolitan area. The Wausau Community Development Authority operates 254 elderly housing units at Riverview Towers and Kannenberg Plaza.

## Housing Assistance Programs

Direct governmental involvement in housing began with the Federal Housing Act of 1934, when home construction was a method of eliminating blighted slums while creating jobs during the Depression. Today, Federal, State, and local governments operate numerous housing programs focused on providing quality affordable housing for those persons who have the greatest need.

The overwhelming majority of housing in Wausau is provided by the private sector, through the construction, banking, and real estate industries. The degree of direct governmental involvement in local housing varies with the changing needs of the community. In Wausau, government functions primarily in a supporting role — namely, planning, zoning administration,

building code enforcement and the provision of public works infrastructure and essential services. The City has developed housing rehabilitation programs and offers down payment assistance to new home buyers. The City has also provided support for emergency shelters and the development of handicapped housing units. Most of these services are provided through the City's Community Development Authority and Community Development Department

There are a variety of State and Federal housing programs geared to addressing a variety of housing issues. Grants and low interest loans are available for counties, communities, or individual homeowners. The following housing resources are available to participants as specified by program.

- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - Entitlement Program** – The City of Wausau annually receives Federal CDBG funds to assist with the housing and job needs of low- and moderate-income people and to help eliminate blight in the community. In 2002, the City received about \$800,000 in CDBG funds. With substantial community input, the Common Council annually approves a very specific program for the expenditure of these funds.
- **Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)**
  - Rental Rehabilitation Program
  - Home Owner and Accessibility Rehabilitation Program
  - Home Ownership Program
  - Wisconsin Fresh Start Initiative provides at-risk young people with education, skills, and career direction leading to economic self-sufficiency.

- **Homeless Programs (Wisconsin Department of Administration [WDOA] and Private)**
  - HUD Emergency Shelter Grants
  - State Shelter Subsidy Grants
  - Transitional Housing
  - Salvation Army
  - Local Churches
- **Local Housing Organization Grant (LHOG)**  
State grants are available to enable community-based organizations, tribes, and housing authorities to increase their capacity to provide affordable housing opportunities and services.
- **HOME Loans and Home Improvement Loans (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority [WHEDA])**
- **Housing-Related Consumer Protection Services (Wisconsin Department of Agriculture [WDA])**  
The Trade and Consumer Protection Division is responsible for the investigation of unfair and deceptive business practices and handles individual consumer complaints involving landlord/tenant complaints, and home improvement transactions.

## Housing Issues

- **Lack of Available Land** – The general lack of available vacant land for new residential development will continue to limit growth of the housing stock and population in Wausau. The City should consider initiating a program

wherein the City would purchase large, vacant tracts of property that are “for sale” within the extra-territorial areas and either develop the property or partner with private sector interests to develop this property for residential use.

- **Concentration of Low- and Middle-Income (LMI) Families/Individuals** – Most of the other communities in Marathon County have failed to provide housing and other assistance programs for low-income families and individuals which has resulted in a high concentration of the LMI population in Wausau. Programs and other incentives are needed to encourage the construction of more low- and middle-income residences in the newly developed areas of the community, near the City’s periphery and, more importantly, in the communities adjacent to Wausau.
- **Neighborhood Deterioration** – A number of neighborhoods within the City continue to deteriorate due to inadequate maintenance and other factors. Many rental properties, as well as owner-occupied properties, are in need of repair and improvement. Too many older homes are becoming deteriorated and, when concentrated in a particular neighborhood, create a slum-like appearance. These deteriorating neighborhoods need to be improved by both the private and public sectors through a variety of investment, incentive, and enforcement programs.
- **Deteriorating Rental Housing Stock** – The increasing percentage of rental property relative to owner-occupied property in the inner city area appears to be contributing to pockets of neighborhood blight. The older age of the City’s

rental housing stock contributes to the deterioration. The high number of absentee landlords in some neighborhoods exacerbates the problem, as many do not adequately address property maintenance issues or neighbor concerns about “problem” tenants. Expansion of the City’s code enforcement activities should be considered to improve housing and neighborhood conditions throughout the community.

- **Downtown Housing** – Redeveloping certain areas of the downtown for higher density residential use will remain an important component in the redevelopment of the downtown Central Business District (CBD).
- **Public Infrastructure** – There are a number of scattered pockets of blighted housing in the community. In some of these same areas, the public infrastructure (streets and drainage facilities) is also in need of improvement. Deteriorated public infrastructure may be a factor contributing to the blighted housing conditions.
- **Home Improvement Disincentives** – For low-income families, high property taxes in the City have been identified as an impediment to remodeling homes. Improving the rental housing stock significantly can increase the property value and taxes, thus prompting landlords to increase rents, which could result in the displacement of low-income tenants.
- **Building Reuse** – Reuse of certain large structures in the City for housing should be given careful consideration. Candidate structures might include the former Wausau East

High School building on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, the former Wausau Ironworks on West Street, and other large industrial and institutional buildings that are no longer suitable for their intended use. (NOTE: Private sector plans for converting the former Wausau East High School building to a 53-unit apartment complex have been approved by the Wausau School Board and the Wausau Common Council. Also, the conversion of some large, old single family houses to apartments is a major localized concern to the owners of single family residences near these converted properties.

- **Homeless Accommodation** – There is not enough accurate information on the number of homeless people or on the programs available to provide temporary shelter for homeless families and individuals. The extent of the problems of homelessness in the Wausau area has not been well documented nor are the public and private assistance programs widely publicized. Likewise access to information on assistance programs can be difficult to provide and/or distribute to the homeless. Better coordination and communication is needed between the various agencies and organizations involved in providing shelter and services for the homeless.

## 8. Cultural Resources

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

### Historic Preservation in Wausau

The City of Wausau is the only unit of government in Marathon County that has previously prepared a Historic Preservation Plan to guide City policies and the work of Wausau’s Historic Landmarks Commission. This document is based on the draft plan completed by the City and incorporates additional information developed within the framework of the Cultural Resources Plan for Marathon County.

The Historic Landmarks Commission has articulated its philosophy by stating that historic preservation encourages the conservation of a city’s historic fabric, preventing the tragic and irreplaceable loss of buildings that are a visible reminder of a city’s historic identity. Historic preservation establishes contexts by which to evaluate properties in order to determine which are indeed valuable and worthy of retaining.

Historic preservation benefits are far-reaching and include economic, aesthetic, civic and cultural rewards. Well-preserved structures are a sign of economic stability and reflect a community’s long term concern for its resources. In commercial areas, the rehabilitation and maintenance of significant structures can result in busy, enticing districts that are alluring to shoppers, prospective merchants, and other businesses. A city with a well-preserved historic fabric also attracts tourists. Moreover, an active and comprehensive preservation program encourages a community to be aware of its architectural and historical legacy; this fosters civic pride, appreciation, cultural development, and environmental concern. The cultivation of respect for the built environment is a value to an entire community and reinforces the distinctiveness that has is Wausau’s heritage.

### Background

Wausau’s history is important to its sense of community and provides the framework for identifying historic properties and why they are significant. Many grand buildings in the City — homes, businesses, and government structures — were lost to a wrecking ball in the 1950s and 1960s. These losses resulted in the beginning of efforts to preserve Wausau’s built environment. The first properties were nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1974 and the City of Wausau adopted an ordinance establishing the Historic Landmarks Commission in 1975.

Since then most historic preservation activity has centered around the regulatory process set up through Wausau’s Historic Landmarks Commission and most of the officially recognized

properties in the County are within Wausau. The City completed the *Final Report Intensive Historic Survey, City of Wausau, Wisconsin* in 1984 to provide a framework for property designation activities. The Intensive Survey describes Wausau's growth and development by thematic contexts such as education, government, industry, immigration and settlement and other topics. Extant properties (as of 1984) that exemplified these properties were identified and recommendations made on historic districts and individual properties that met criteria for local nomination.

Although a few individual properties were recognized through the NRHP, many other significant buildings were lost and the Commission lacked the authority to protect historic and architecturally significant buildings from destruction or to regulate changes to the exterior appearance of these buildings. In 1993, following public hearings, public debate, and numerous revisions to the initial proposal, a new Historic Landmarks Commission Ordinance was adopted by the Wausau Common Council. This new ordinance maintained the authority of the Landmarks Commission to recommend the designation of certain properties as landmarks and groups of properties as historic districts. But it also provided a new and powerful historic preservation tool--the authority to formally review and act accordingly on requests by property owners to alter or demolish designated landmarks and buildings within historic districts.

The Common Council expanded the authority and responsibility of the Landmarks Commission in an attempt to reduce the loss of significant structures in the community and

to enhance efforts to improve the remaining stock of historic and architecturally significant buildings.

## Landmarks Commission Ordinance

The purpose and intent of the Landmarks Commission Ordinance states that it is "a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of buildings of special architectural character or special historical interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people." By ordinance (2.82.010), the Historic Landmarks Commission is charged with the following responsibilities:

- (a) Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such buildings and of districts which represent or reflect elements of the City's cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history;
- (b) Safeguard the City's historic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such landmarks and historic districts;
- (c) Stabilize and improve property values;
- (d) Foster civic pride in the notable accomplishments of the past;
- (e) Protect and enhance the City's attractions to residents, tourists and visitors, and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry;
- (f) Strengthen the economy of the City;
- (g) Promote the use of historic districts and landmarks for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the City; and

- (h) Aid and assist individuals, public entities and other property owners in the nomination of their properties to the NRHP.

By the end of 2001, the Landmarks Commission had designated 12 individual properties and the Downtown Historic District. The Downtown Historic District (a Class II district) was established in July, 1997, and expanded in April, 1999. The Downtown Historic District encompasses 61 contributing structures and 24 non-contributing structures in an area bounded by Washington Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Grant Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The following list identifies locally designated properties.

**Table 8-1: Locally Designated Properties – Wausau Historic Landmarks Commission**

No.	Resource Name	Address	Comments
1	Wausau Club	309 McClellan St.	Also NRHP
2	Yawkey, Cyrus House	403 McIndoe St.	Also NRHP
3	Old Engine No. 4 Fire House	215 West Thomas St.	
4	Stone Hearth Bakery	529 N. Third St.	
5	Elmergreen Building	114 Grand Ave.	
6	U.S. Federal Building	317 First St.	
7	Lyman Thayer House	812 Grant St.	
8	St. James Catholic Church	621 N. Second St.	
9	St. Mary’s Catholic Church	408 Seymour St.	
10	Athletic Park Granite Wall/ Front Entrance	324 E. Wausau Ave.	
11	Wausau East High School (1936 portion)	708 Fulton St.	
12	Former Chicago Northwestern RR Depot	209 Washington St.	
13	Former Milwaukee Road Depot	720 Grant Street	
14	St. Stephen Lutheran Church	502 McClellan Street	
15	Downtown Historic District	Washington to Grant, 1 <sup>st</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup> Sts.	

*Source: Wausau Historic Landmarks Commission*

## The National Register of Historic Places

The NRHP is a list of sites, buildings, objects, districts and structures significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture. Significance may be determined at the local, state, or national level. Owners of an NRHP property may qualify for Federal tax credits if they renovate a property for income-producing purposes, such as an office, retail business, or bed and breakfast. Changes to NRHP properties are only reviewed when Federal funding is involved in a project; otherwise, NRHP properties can be altered or demolished without regulatory review. The NRHP process is administered through the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

The NRHP includes 24 listings in Marathon County. The majority of the NRHP properties are located within Wausau, with only seven properties outside the City. The properties in Wausau include the Andrew Warren Historic District, a district of approximately 10 blocks with many of the City's oldest and most historic homes of city leaders, built between 1868 and 1934. Five NRHP properties are dwellings within the Andrew Warren Historic District, listed individually prior to creation of the Andrew Warren Historic District. Another nine properties (some in the Warren Historic District) were listed in 1980 as part of the Eschweiler Thematic Resources nomination (a group of properties designed by architect Alexander C. Eschweiler). Except for the First Universalist Church, the Wausau Club, and the Marathon County Fairgrounds, the NRHP listings in Wausau are residences of city leaders. Table 8-2 identifies NRHP properties in Wausau.

**Table 8-2: National Register of Historic Places - Wausau**

No.	Resource Name	Address	City	Comments
1	Andrew Warren Historic District	Roughly bounded by Fulton, Grant, 4 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> Sts.	Wausau	
2	Bird, C. B., House	522 McIndoe St.	Wausau	Eschweiler Thematic Resources (ETR); also in Warren HD
3	Dunbar, C. F., House	929 McIndoe St.	Wausau	ETR
4	Everest, D. C., House	1206 Highland Park Blvd.	Wausau	ETR
5	First Universalist Church	504 Grant St.	Wausau	ETR; also Warren HD
6	Jones, Granville D., House	915 Grant St.	Wausau	
7	Marathon County Fairgrounds	Stewart Ave.	Wausau	ETR
8	Marchetti, Louis, House	111 Grant St.	Wausau	
9	Mathie, Karl, House	202 Water St.	Wausau	ETR
10	Miller, Henry, House	1314 Grand Ave.	Wausau	

**Table 8-2: NRHP - Marathon County (continued)**

No.	Resource Name	Address	City	Comments
11	Schuetz, E. K., House	930 Franklin St.	Wausau	ETR
13	Stewart, Hiram C., House	521 Grant St.	Wausau	Also Warren HD
14	Wausau Club	309 McClellan St.	Wausau	
15	Wegner, C. H., House	906 Grant St.	Wausau	ETR
16	Wright, Duey and Julia, House	904 Grand Ave.	Wausau	
17	Wright, Ely, House	901 6 <sup>th</sup> St.	Wausau	Also Warren HD
18	Yawkey, Cyrus C., House	403 McIndoe St.	Wausau	Also Warren HD

Source: National Park Service, National Register Information System

### Community Cultural Facilities

The City of Wausau is home to several cultural facilities that serve the local and regional community. Three of the major ones are described below:

- **Grand Theatre/Arts Block** – The Grand Theatre, located at 415 Fourth Street, opened in 1927 as an opera house. In 1987 a community sponsored restoration project was undertaken resulting in major upgrades to the lighting and sound systems. The Theatre hosts Broadway shows, national touring acts, and local productions and concerts. It is currently part of the \$13 million Arts Block expansion project to build a performing and visual arts center.

- **Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum** – Located at 700 North Twelfth Street, this facility was established in 1976 through the transformation of the John and Alice Woodson Forester mansion into a museum. The permanent collections of paintings, sculpture and other art works are known for their focus on birds. The museum hosts year-round changing exhibitions and also displays a collection of porcelains. The yard has been developed into a sculpture garden. The museum offers educational opportunities that include tours, lectures, demonstrations, story telling, and hand-on activities.
- **Marathon County Historical Museum** – The former home of Cyrus Yawkey, at 403 McIndoe Street, was dedicated to the Historical Society in 1954 by Leigh Yawkey Woodson. The building was placed on the NRHP in 1974 and is currently being renovated. The grounds include formal gardens and a carriage house. Across the street, at 410 McIndoe Street, is the AP Woodson/Leigh Yawkey Woodson home that was purchased by the Historical Society in 1995. The home was built in 1914 by Prairie School architect George W. Maher. The house contains the Historical Society library, archives, administrative offices, artifact storage, and educational exhibit area.

### Cultural Resources Issues

- **Lack of Current Information** – Although the 1984 *Intensive Survey of Wausau* provided much information and has been the basis of most designation since that time, a new Wausau survey is needed. Many properties identified

at that time may be gone, while other properties not previously surveyed should now be evaluated in a new context. It is necessary for the City to have updated information about cultural resources in order to improve its ability to plan for the preservation and protection of important cultural resources.

- **Design Review** – The Landmarks Commission is operating without design review guidelines in evaluating changes to existing landmarks. Guidelines have been established for the Downtown Historic District. Without guidelines, it is difficult for the Commission, residents, developers and others to arrive at any consensus on preservation of historic properties.
- **Need for Public Education** – City residents, the business community, and some public officials are not always informed about the value or benefits of local designation and have been suspicious of the regulatory aspects. As a result, there have been a limited number of designations in the last several years. Without support, neighborhoods and the City as a whole have not been able to fully include historic resources in planning neighborhood and downtown revitalization. In addition, Wausau’s historic character could contribute to greater efforts at cultural tourism, marketing the City’s historic character to visitors, with additional designation and City support.
- **Protection of Archaeological Sites and Cemeteries** – Cultural resources planning includes identification and protection of archaeological sites and historic cemeteries. The Wisconsin Historical Society maintains a list of

reported sites and cemeteries, representing a fraction of sites that are actually present. This information is often overlooked and should be incorporated into the planning process for local communities.

- **Resource Allocation** – In older neighborhoods, the City is not putting forth a sufficient effort to improve or prevent additional deterioration. Activities that need to be enhanced for this effort are building code enforcement, public education, housing grant/loan improvement programs, upgrading public infrastructure, and other means.

## 9. Community Facilities

Community facilities include an array of services and their associated facilities, associated with schools, libraries, public protection, and health care. This section describes the existing community facilities and services located in or used by the City of Wausau.

### Schools

#### Primary and Secondary Schools

About 98 percent of the City of Wausau is served by the Wausau School District. The remainder (a small portion of the southeast side of the City) is within the D.C. Everest School District. District-wide enrollments are provided in Tables 9-1 and 9-2.

The Wausau School District has a pre-school center, 13 elementary schools (grades K-5), 2 middle schools (grades 6-8), and 2 high schools (grades 9-12). The district reports that most students attend the middle and high school on the side of the Wisconsin River where they reside. Residents who live on the west side of the river attend John Muir Middle School at 1400 Stewart Avenue and Wausau West High School at 1200 West Wausau Avenue, while residents who live on the east side of the river attend Horace Mann Middle School at 3101 North 13th Street, and Wausau East High School at 2607 N.18<sup>th</sup> Street.

Wausau East High School opened in September, 2004. The new school is a state of the art facility, representing an

investment of over \$42 million. It replaces an inadequate and obsolete facility on 7<sup>th</sup> Street that will be rehabilitated for apartments. The Wausau School District undertook a number of major projects in the 1990s to upgrade, expand, and build schools as ratified by citizens through public referenda in 1991, 1995, and 1999. An addition to Wausau West High School was one of the projects funded and completed.

**Table 9-1: Wausau School District Enrollment**

Year	Enrollment PreK-12
1996-1997	9,300
1997-1998	9,386
1998-1999	9,267
1999-2000	9,208
2000-2001	9,015
2001-2002	8,944

Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction

**Table 9-2: D.C. Everest School District Enrollment**

Year	Enrollment PreK-12
1996-1997	4,882
1997-1998	4,892
1998-1999	4,950
1999-2000	5,032
2000-2001	5,084
2001-2002	5,104

Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction

There are several private schools located in the City of Wausau. These are listed in Table 9-3.

**Table 9-3: Private Schools – City of Wausau**

Name	Address	Level
A C Kiefer Educational Ctr	700 W Strowbridge St	Spec. Ed.
Faith Christian Academy	2121 N 25th St	Other
Holy Name Catholic School	1122 S 9th Ave	Elem.
Life Skill Center	120 S 14th Ave	Other
Montessori Educational Center	214 Sherman St	Other
Newman High School	1130 W Bridge St	High
Our Saviors School	703 Flieth St	Elem.
St Anne Catholic School	604 N 6th Ave	Other
St Matthew Middle School	225 S 28th Ave	Middle
St Michael's Catholic School	614 Steuben St	Elem.
Trinity Lutheran School-LCMS	501 Stewart Ave	Other
Wausau Community Christian	2109 N 25th St	Other
Zion Lutheran School-ELCA	616 Grant St	

**Post-Secondary Educational Facilities**

**University of Wisconsin – Marathon County (UW-MC) -**

Located in Wausau, UW-MC offers lower level (freshman/sophomore) college classes, leading to a baccalaureate degree. Associate Degrees are offered in Arts & Sciences, and Bachelor’s Degrees (through collaborative degree programs with UW Oshkosh and UW Stevens Point) offered in Business Administration, General Studies, and Nursing. Enrollment in 2002-2003 was approximately 1,300 students.

**Northcentral Technical College (NTC) -** NTC, located in

Wausau, offers 40 one- and two-year programs and certificates in business, technical, health and industrial fields. Approximately 2,300 full- and part-time students attend classes, although more than 16,000 people take at least one class annually.

**Libraries**

The City of Wausau is served by the Marathon County Public Library system. The Wausau Headquarters Library, located on First Street in downtown Wausau, completed an expansion to 82,000 square feet in 1995. This new main Wausau Library is open seven days a week and offers over 555,800 volumes, including books, magazines and other materials, as well as internet access.

**Public Protection**

**Police -** The Wausau Police Department consists of three major components: operations, investigations, and support services, with a total of 67 sworn officers. The City is divided into six patrol sectors, which are covered 24 hours a day. Priority response time is within three minutes.

To improve communications between police and residents, the City has initiated a “Community Policing” philosophy. Under community policing, one officer is assigned a specific neighborhood as his or her regular beat. By working in one neighborhood, the officer gets to know the homeowners, families, and shopkeepers, and vice versa. Engaging the community and networking with citizens can help build mutual trust and cooperation.

The Wausau Police Department is located adjacent to and immediately north of the Central Fire Station at 515 Grand Avenue.

**Fire and Emergency Response** - The City has a full-time Fire Department that responds to both fire and emergency medical calls. The department has three pumping engines, four ambulances, two aerial ladder trucks, and is one of eight hazardous materials regional response teams within the State of Wisconsin. Fire Department personnel also provide fire prevention awareness through education and inspection services in addition to fire suppression, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and emergency response.

The department has a staff of 60, including 54 uniformed emergency medical technicians/firefighters, three uniformed inspectors, two uniformed senior administrators, and one civilian secretary. In addition, 52 persons within the department are trained and ready to respond to hazardous materials/chemical accidents 24 hours a day. Fire engines and ambulances are located at three strategic stations throughout the City, resulting in an average response time of less than 5 minutes from receipt of an emergency call to on-scene arrival.

**E-911 Dispatch Service** - The Marathon County Sheriff's Department Communications Division provides E-911 Dispatch for all Police, Fire, and EMS agencies in Marathon County. The Communications Division services 85 user agencies and also provides alert paging support for the Emergency Management Office, District Attorney, and Medical Examiners Office.

The users are served by a microwave linked voted repeater radio system, consisting of a control center at the Sheriff's Department and nine remote radio tower sites spread throughout the County. The system is also utilized by the

Marathon County Highway Department and the Wausau Fire Department to support their radio communications. The 37 base radio transmitters and 479 mobile radios that make up the integrated system are maintained and serviced by the Sheriff's Department radio technician.

## Hospitals

In 2002, the only major hospital in Marathon County was Wausau Hospital, at 425 Pine Ridge Boulevard in Wausau. Wausau Hospital was created in the 1970s from a merger of St. Mary's Hospital and Memorial Hospital. A new building was completed in 1979 and expansions followed in 1982 and 1992. The 321-bed facility is a multi-specialty regional health center serving a 12-county region in north central Wisconsin. Annual admissions in 2001 totaled 13,631.

There are several specialized facilities affiliated with Wausau Hospital, including:

- **Comfort Care and Hospice Service**, which provides hospice care for the terminally ill and comfort care for those with life-limiting illnesses. This facility/service was established in 1979 and is designed to assist patients in maintaining as much independence as possible in a home-like environment. The facility is Medicare and Medicaid certified and is a licensed hospice care facility. In 1998, Hospice House – an 8-bedroom home - was established just west of Wausau Hospital.
- **UW Cancer Center Wausau Hospital** was established in January, 1999. It involves specialists from medical and

radiation oncology, pathology, radiology, surgery and family practice clinics. Affiliated with the UW Comprehensive Cancer Center in Madison, which is one of 41 comprehensive cancer centers in the United States, it provides Central Wisconsin area patients with access to the same doctors, technology and research available in Madison.

- **Wausau Heart Institute**, created in 1999, performs over 600 open-heart surgeries annually and is one of the top five cardiac programs in Wisconsin. The Institute provides cardiac care to 450,000 residents of a 14-county region through clinics at 10 outreach sites.
- **Spine and Neurosciences Services** at Wausau Hospital provides diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of neurological, muscular and skeletal disorders and injuries.
- **Gastrointestinal Center** provides elective and emergency gastroenterology procedures.

Wausau Hospital and its parent corporation, Community Health Care, and other nearby hospitals are part of the Wisconsin Valley Health Network. Hospitals nearby that are part of the network and may serve Marathon County residents include:

- Good Samaritan Health Center                      Merrill, WI
- Langlade Memorial Hospital                      Antigo, WI
- Memorial Health Center                              Medford, WI

Ministry Health Care announced plans in July, 2002, to construct a 104-bed, \$100 million hospital and medical office complex in Weston near the intersection of STH 29 and CTH X. The hospital is planned to open in spring 2005.

**North Central Health Care (NCHC)** – In addition to the hospitals and clinics described above, Marathon County is served by NCHC, a public agency that also serves Langlade and Lincoln counties. The NCHC main campus is located at 1100 Lake View Drive in Wausau. Additional offices are located in Antigo (Langlade Health Care Center) and Merrill and Tomahawk (Lincoln Health Care Center). According to their web site, NCHC offers outpatient, day hospital, community support and inpatient services for mental/emotional problems; vocational, life skill training, early intervention, housing and care management services for the developmentally disabled; and assessment, individual and outpatient group counseling, intensive programming, day hospital, referral for residential and inpatient treatment, and education for alcohol and other drug problems. Services for detoxification and for persons suffering from problems with gambling addiction are also offered.

NCHC operates a nursing home (Mount View Care Center) that offers skilled nursing services at the main campus in Wausau. This facility has a licensed capacity of 320 and serves persons requiring either short term or long term skilled nursing care because of complex physical needs, psychiatric and neurological diseases, dementia, or behavior problems.

## Child Care

The Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R) is a membership organization made up of 17 community-based CCR&R agencies serving the State of Wisconsin.

CCR&R agencies assist parents in selecting quality childcare, help to increase the supply of childcare in areas that may be lacking sufficient care, offer information and technical support to potential child care providers, and give technical assistance and support to existing childcare programs.

Each agency manages a database of existing childcare providers and programs, collects data about childcare rates, provider and teacher salaries, the number of parents and children using their services, the type of care requested and the children's ages.

The community-based CCR&R agencies that provide services to Marathon and adjacent counties are listed in Table 9-4.

**Table 9-4: Area Child Care Providers**

Counties	Agency	Contact Information
Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Taylor	Child Care Connection	<a href="http://www.childcareconnectionrr.org/">http://www.childcareconnectionrr.org/</a> (800) 848-5229
Shawano	Community Child Care Connection	800-738-8899
Portage	Mid Wisconsin Child Care Resource & Referral	715-342-0788
Wood	Child Care Resource & Referral of Central WI	800-628-8534

## Community Facilities Issues

- Multiple School Districts** - The City is located in two different school districts – the Wausau School District and the D.C. Everest School District. In addition, the school district boundaries between the two districts create access and transportation inefficiencies.
- Limited English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs** - The Wausau School District and DC Everest School District both provide ESL programs. Given the increase in residents (and students) whose first language is not English, other districts in the County should provide ESL in their curriculum.

## 10. Parks

The City of Wausau has an extensive park system with mature parks as well as new park projects under development. The City park system is managed by the Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department. Under the terms of this partnership between the City and County, the City of Wausau owns and pays for the costs of maintaining parks in Wausau, while the parks staff is organized as a Marathon County department. In addition, the City of Wausau has developed a policy of partnership with the Wausau School District on the use and maintenance of school recreational facilities.

### Background

The City's first park plan - the *Comprehensive Plan for the Wausau Park System* - was prepared in July, 1976. This plan was replaced by *The City of Wausau Comprehensive Park and Recreation Area Plan* that was adopted by the Wausau Common Council in December, 1990. The City is currently updating the 1990 plan and the Park and Recreation Committee is currently reviewing a draft *Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2003-2008* that will replace the existing plan.

The 1990 park plan focused on physical planning and development issues. These physical planning issues are explored in two broad categories — those with a primary impact on a neighborhood basis and those that are citywide in scope. Neighborhood planning was considered appropriate since most of the City's park facilities have been developed to focus on small neighborhood service areas. In addition,

previous City planning efforts for parks and land use planning focused on neighborhoods and the primary need for more park land is at the neighborhood level. City-wide issues such as riverfront development, community parks, sports complexes, utilization of the former Holtz-Krause Landfill, and natural resources management were given special attention in the report. Most of the priority improvements identified in the 1990 plan have been implemented.

**Community Survey** - A survey of residents conducted in April, 2002, found that 81 percent of responders agreed or strongly agreed that Wausau parks and recreation facilities met their needs. Many participants in the park planning process expressed opinions about current projects such as the 400 Block in downtown, the River Walk project, and fees for special parks (such as pools). The cost of acquisition of more park land and the cost of maintenance were a common concern.

**Park and Recreation Vision** – In 1995, the Common Council adopted the *Wausau Plan – A View to the Future*. This plan outlined a set of goals that defined an overall vision for parks and recreation in Wausau, as follows:

- Diversify the park system to meet present needs and future demand.
- Develop quality facilities for Wausau residents.
- Participate in the provision of recreational opportunities and programs for all portions of the community.
- Preserve and enhance important natural, historic, scenic, and archaeological features in the City.
- Maximize efficiency of parks and recreation areas to reduce or contain costs.

**Existing Parks, Trails and Open Space**

**Local Parks, Trails and Open Space**

Specific details on park facilities and goals for the Wausau parks can be found in the *City of Wausau Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2003-2008*, which was adopted by the Common Council in May, 2003. The plan identifies specific action items to address needs in each neighborhood. A list of outdoor recreation facilities listed in the current plan is given below for nine neighborhood service areas.

**Franklin Neighborhood**

Franklin School	Playground	3.2 acres
Kaiser Pool	Special park	1.0 acres
St. Michael's School	Playground	2.7 acres
Stewart Park	Special park	1.6 acres
Thom Field	Special park and playground	14.9 acres

**Grant Neighborhood**

Grant School	Playground	4.6 acres
John Muir Middle School	Special facility	15.0 acres
River Edge Trail		

**Thomas Jefferson Neighborhood**

Brisbane Park	Special use area	0.5 acres
Jefferson School	Playground	5.5 acres
North Central Technical School		95 acres
Schofield Park	Neighborhood park	5.2 acres
Schulenburg Park	Special park	3.6 acres
St. Anne's School		10.2 acres

**Lincoln Neighborhood**

3-M Park	Neighborhood park	16.0 acres
D.C. Everest County Park	Special park	3.0
Holy Name School		2.5 acres
Jones School	Playground	6.9 acres
Lincoln Neighborhood Tot Lot		0.8 acres
Lincoln School	Playground	4.7 acres
Marathon County Park	Community park	78 acres
Rib River Park	Special park, Undeveloped	40 acres
Riverside Park and Picnic Island	Neighborhood/Special park	14.6 acres

**Hawthorn Hills Neighborhood**

10th Street Park	Neighborhood park	1.0 acres
400 Block of Third Ave.		1.5 acres
Barker-Stewart Island	Special park	15 acres
Big Bull Falls	Special park	2.5 acres
City Hall Park	Special park	1.3 acres
Courthouse Park	Special park	0.5 acres
Hammond Park	Special park	1.4 acres
Hawthorn Hills School	Playground	13.8 acres
Kelly Park	Tot Lot	0.8 acres
Library Park	Special park	1.0 acres
Longfellow School	Playground	3.0 acres
Oak Island Park/ Isle of Ferns	Community park	27.2 acres
Paff Woods	Special park	20.5 acres
Pleasant View Park	Neighborhood park	6.7 acres
River Edge Trail		
White Water Park	Special park	0.5 acres
Woodson Park	Special park	0.3 acres
Yawkey Park	Special park	0.7 acres
WPS	Farmer's market	12.2 acres

**John Marshall Neighborhood**

Airport Park	Neighborhood park	6.3 acres
Alexander Park	Neighborhood park	2.5 acres
Eau Claire River	Property	50 acres
Holtz Krause	Property	57 acres
John Marshall School	Playground	6.8 acres
Memorial Park	Community park	23.4 acres

**Riverview Neighborhood**

Athletic Park	Special park	3.8 acres
Boileau Field	Special park	1.6 acres
Forest Park	Neighborhood park	4.3 acres
Gilbert Park	Special park	6.4 acres
Horace Mann School	Special facility	38.5 acres
River Highlands Park	Neighborhood park	4.8 acres
Sylvan Hill Park	Special park	70.6 acres

**Stettin Neighborhood**

Brockmeyer	Community park	25.5 acres
Horgen Park	Neighborhood park	4.4 acres
St. Matthew Middle School		12 acres
Stettin School	Playground	21.7 acres
Sunny Vale County Park	Community park	277 acres
Sunny Vale Softball Complex	Special park	67 acres
Swiderski Park	Neighborhood park	1.4 acres

**Wausau West Neighborhood**

Newman High School	Sports Field	19.1 acres
Wausau West High School	Special facility	71.2 acres
Westview	Neighborhood park	4.1 acres

In addition, the Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department is planning to develop several new parks, including:

- **400 Block** - Possible development of a downtown park on the 400 Block, which is currently an undeveloped open space.
- **River Walk** - Continued development of the River Walk trail and park space along the Wisconsin River, which is overseen by the River Edge Parkway Commission.
- **West Side Parks** - Park planning and development in neighborhoods near Wausau West High School.

**County or State Parks, Forests and Trails**

There are several County parks, one State park and one State trail located in or near the City of Wausau. These are briefly described below:

**Marathon Park** – Located in the City of Wausau, this is a 78-acre County park that provides a large number of facilities and programs. Marathon Park is the home of the Wisconsin Valley Fair, which utilizes a number of historic exposition buildings. The park's mature stand of white pines is highly visible along Stewart Avenue. The park also contains a wide variety of recreation facilities, including basketball and tennis courts, skating rinks, and a new grandstand area.

**D.C. Everest Park** – This is a 5.5-acre County park on the west bank of Lake Wausau in the City of Wausau located on the tip of a small peninsula at the south end of Third Avenue. The park is one of two county access points onto Lake Wausau and receives heavy use at its two boat landings. Other facilities include restrooms, benches, picnic tables, and portable

bleachers. The park is also home to the Wausau Water Ski Club.

**Sunny Vale Park** - Marathon County owns and maintains Sunny Vale Park in a narrow strip of the Town of Stettin and the City of Wausau south of STH 29 at 72nd Avenue. Also known as "Manmade" Park, Sunny Vale is a popular 299-acre park with facilities for swimming in Manmade Lake, picnicking, fishing, and model airplane flying. Sunny Vale Softball Complex is a 71-acre facility managed by the Wausau Area Softball Association through a contract with Marathon County. The complex has six lighted softball diamonds, each with a dugout, bleachers, and scoreboards.

**Bluegill Bay Park** - Marathon County owns and maintains Bluegill Bay Park and the Nine-Mile Forest Unit in the Town of Rib Mountain. Bluegill Bay Park is a 68-acre County park located on the west shore of Lake Wausau between Cloverland Lane and Parrot Lane. The park provides access to Lake Wausau at its boat landing with piers and a boat trailer parking lot, and is subject to overcrowding at times. The park's picnic area has 20 tables, 4 grills, 3 shelters, flush toilets and 104 parking spaces. A fishing area, including a handicapped pier, is also available. Forty-eight acres of the park are undeveloped, and the County's tree nursery is also in the park. Nine-Mile Forest Unit is known as a recreation area with many miles of hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country ski trails. Skiing is promoted with a ski chalet and over 25 kilometers of one-way loops. The forest is open to hunting and snowmobiling. Nine-Mile has 4755 acres of mixed uplands, marshes, and water impoundments.

**Rib Mountain State Park** is located within the Town of Rib Mountain. The park's main feature is Rib Mountain which, at 1924 feet above sea level, is one of the highest elevations in the State of Wisconsin. The park surrounds the mountain and has the following facilities: a picnic area with 65 tables, a camping area with 31 developed sites, 3 hiking trails, a nature trail, and a private downhill skiing area (Granite Peak).

**Mountain Bay State Trail** – This trail is built on a former railroad right of way stretching 83 miles from the Village of Weston to Green Bay. The current westernmost trailhead is adjacent to the Village of Weston Municipal Center, where parking and trail passes are available. The trail has a crushed granite surface and passes through the rural countryside and several villages as it makes its way from the Rib Mountain area to Green Bay on Lake Michigan.

## Park System Needs

**Recreation Trends** - Recreation trends mirror broader demographic trends. Likewise, local trends often reflect national trends. Some key demographic trends that can influence the use and delivery of park and recreation facilities and services include the increasing senior population, a secondary baby boom, dual income families, and single parent families. In addition, Wausau and Central Wisconsin are experiencing a significant immigration of Southeast Asian families.

Overall, these trends show a growing need for recreation facilities and programs geared toward the elderly and children.

**Needs Assessment** - The provision of park and recreation facilities and services must respond to changing needs and trends as the population of Wausau and the metro area continues to grow in size and make-up. A needs assessment conducted during the recent park planning process showed that park facilities in Wausau meet or exceed National Park and Recreation Association standards. Specifically, the City has 8.43 acres of basic parkland for every 1000 people, which is in the middle of the recommended standard range. The City's recreation facilities also exceed these standards in all categories, with the exception of volleyball courts. The City has three outdoor pools, which exceeds the standard, and may consider closing one pool to conserve funds. The City far exceeds the standards for baseball diamonds, tennis courts, and soccer fields.

Issues identified in the needs assessment include:

#### **Facility Needs**

- Growing demand for baseball and soccer fields.
- City lacks adequate commuter bicycle routes.
- Demand for picnic facilities exceeds availability.
- Water access sites are overcrowded.

#### **Planning and Programming Needs**

- Neighborhood park concept is challenged by the higher cost of delivering services at many locations, versus providing the same services at larger community and specialized sports fields.
- Five undeveloped parks need master plans.
- Increased traffic cuts people off from parks.
- Community-wide approach to open space acquisition and management is needed.

- Several undeveloped or underutilized properties are not functioning as intended.
- Potential park sites in growth areas have not been identified.
- Growing elderly population will require more passive recreation programs.
- Participation of Asian and Pacific Island youth populations is low.

#### **Funding Needs**

- User fees are below statewide averages.

#### **Cooperation Needs**

- Need policies and partnerships with other agencies.

#### **Parks Issues**

- **Holtz-Krause Landfill Site Reuse** – With landfill remediation/abandonment activities completed, the former Holtz-Krause landfill site has the potential to meet some of the open space and outdoor recreation needs of the community. Opportunities to provide for public use of this large open space area near the center of the community should not be lost.
- **Non-Resident Park Users** – Many residents of communities surrounding Wausau use the City's recreation and sports facilities without paying for this opportunity through property taxes. Because the abutting communities have fairly poorly developed recreational facilities, the residents rely on the City's facilities but do not make a significant financial contribution to the cost of acquisition,

maintenance, and operation of these areas. This has created an unnecessary and unfair financial burden on the City of Wausau that needs to be reconciled through some type of State legislation, revenue-sharing between the communities or payments made by users or the adjacent communities.

- **Stormwater Detention Basins** – As the City’s stormwater management program and facilities continue to grow, it may be possible to use some detention basins and associated open space areas to meet some of the City’s open space and park and recreation needs. Opportunities for multiple use of stormwater facilities should be given further consideration as the community grows.
- **River Edge Parkway** – Completion of the River Edge Parkway through the City of Wausau continues to be a major community objective and will be pursued through an update to the City’s *River Edge Master Plan*. That plan will also be incorporated into the comprehensive plan.
- **Conservancy Districts** – Protection of the floodplain/shoreland/wetland complexes adjacent to the Big Rib River and the Eau Claire Reservoir is an important environmental and recreational issue that should be addressed before development encroaches into these areas and diminishes their ecological value.
- **Reforestation and Management of Marathon Park** – Marathon Park is owned jointly by Marathon County and the Agricultural Society and many management and development decisions regarding this facility are made without significant review and input from the City. Since this is such an important community asset, some means for

allowing the City Park Committee and Common Council greater input into the use and redevelopment of Marathon Park should be established.

- **Wausau Hydro-Dam Property** – Expanding the City’s ability to hold large-scale festivals and other events in the vicinity of Whitewater Park and Fern Island/Oak Island Park is an important objective as the area continues to grow. Pursuing acquisition/dedication of excess property in the vicinity of the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation’s dam facility downtown will continue to be an important issue for Wausau until the land is owned by the City.

## 11. Economic Development

The condition of the local economy is an extremely important element in the planning process since the economy generates the wages that support the citizens and pays for the services and facilities that help define an area's quality of life. New jobs generated during strong economic periods provide opportunities for people living in the area to remain there and can also attract people from outside the area to relocate in a prosperous community. Both elements can contribute to population growth. On the other hand, without sufficient job opportunities many high school graduates will leave an area and many college graduates will not return after receiving a degree. Thus, the strength of an area's economy has a tremendous influence on its growth and stability.

This section provides some basic information about Wausau's economy and the most current projections for its future. However, most economic information and forecasts are provided for Marathon County as a unit, since a county is often the smallest area for which economic information is available. Furthermore, Wausau is not an island and thus it is important to understand the broader, countywide economic context that directly impacts the City's economy.

### County Economic Environment

Since settlement, the Marathon County economy was historically based on forest resources and diversified agriculture. Increased population and infrastructure – railroads, roads and dams for power - enabled the area to evolve beyond simple agricultural and logging operations.

Resources that once left the area unprocessed were now transformed into finished products, providing employment opportunities and adding value in forest products and agricultural processing. A number of related manufacturing operations grew in the area, some based on forest products and agricultural products, others supplying the existing industries with fabricated metal products. As these industries progressed, so did industries such as transportation, communications, public utilities, government, trade, finance, insurance and real estate. The County now enjoys a well-diversified economy.

The 2000 Census showed that manufacturing continues to be the largest employment industry in the County, with over 25 percent of non-farm workers employed in manufacturing industries. This is significantly higher than the national average of 10-12 percent. The second leading employment sector is the education, health and social services industry, with about 19 percent of the labor force working in these service jobs; closely behind is the retail trade industry, with about 13 percent of the total jobs.

### Key Economic Sectors

Key sectors of a regional economy can be identified by size, by growth or decline in employment, and by a concentration of the industry in the local area exceeding the national concentration. An industry that shows a higher concentration of employment than the national average is considered a "basic industry" and is identified by a technique called "Location Quotient" analysis. Basic industries are those sectors that export a product or service from the local community into the national or international economy. They are a critical part of the

“economic engine” for a region, affecting the growth and health of many dependent sectors of the economy such as retail trade, transportation, construction, and local services.

**Table 11-1: Marathon County Top 10 Industry Groups Based on Number of Employees (March 2001)**

Industry Group	Employers	Employees	Numeric change	
			1-year	5-year
Health Services	139	4,646	251	-276
Lumber & Wood Products	41	4,438	-30	253
Educational Services	22	3,792	108	243
Eating and Drinking Places	192	3,554	219	335
Fabricated Metal Products	32	3,458	-184	168
Insurance Carriers	24	3,339	-171	*
Miscellaneous Retail	120	3,142	206	1,206
Paper and Allied Products	11	2,649	4	*
Industrial Machinery & Equipment	37	2,642	41	697
Wholesale Trade – Durable	164	2,521	-89	63

\*data suppressed to maintain confidentiality

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, ES-202, December 2001

## Wausau Economic Environment

Since the 1960s, the City of Wausau economy has gradually evolved into a stable and diversified system. This diversity reduces the probability that the area will experience large swings in economic conditions that can occur as a result of changes at one company or in one particular industry. For example, some communities rely upon a local mine or military base for most local jobs and income. When work at the mine or

base declines or ceases, the effect on the local economy can be devastating.

In 1998, the largest employer in the City of Wausau and Marathon County was Wausau Insurance Companies, which provided work for approximately 2,400 people. These 2,400 jobs represent only about four percent of the total wage and salary employment in Marathon County. The next two largest employers, Wausau Hospital and Kolbe and Kolbe Millwork Company, each employed approximately 1,300 people. Although employment at Wausau Insurance Companies has declined significantly from 1998, the general condition of the economy in Wausau and Marathon County remains quite strong; a tribute to the diversity of the local economy.

While the Wausau metropolitan area (and Marathon County in general) experienced the impacts of the 2001 recession, the effects here were not as dramatic as they were elsewhere in Wisconsin. Statewide, employment declined by 0.2 percent from 2000 to 2001, while in Marathon County, employment increased by 0.2 percent. This increase is significant, since most other metropolitan statistical areas (MSA’s) in Wisconsin experienced significant drops in employment. For example, employment in the Kenosha MSA declined by 1.8 percent, while Racine and Janesville had drops of 1.4 percent.

The Wausau MSA’s employment increase can be partially attributed to the area’s diversified economy.

## Labor Force

The population of Marathon County grew from 115,400 in 1990 to 125,834 in 2000, an increase of 10.3 percent compared to an 8.5 percent increase in the State and 8.7 percent in the U.S. The most recent estimates show an annual growth rate of 0.7 percent in all three jurisdictions (Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services, 2002). Population growth has been concentrated in the urbanized area surrounding Wausau.

Unemployment data for April, 2003, show that the state of the economy in Marathon County is better than that of Wisconsin or the United States in general. The unemployment rate for Marathon County stood at 4.6 percent, compared to a statewide rate of 5.4 percent. Nationally, the unemployment rate stood at 6 percent in 2003.

The City of Wausau can be considered the “employment capital” of Marathon County since over 47 percent of Marathon County’s employed residents worked within the Wausau city limits in 1990. Employment in the City of Wausau is especially high for several of the smaller communities in close proximity to Wausau. Over 60 percent of the workers living in the Towns of Rib Mountain, Stettin and Wausau work in the City of Wausau. In 1990, the U.S. Bureau of the Census found that there were 27,057 people who worked at jobs located within the Wausau city limits. Only 48 percent of these people, however, were City residents; the remaining 52 percent of people working in Wausau reside in other parts of Marathon County. Thus, the City of Wausau is the place of employment for a very large commuter population.

Table 11-2 illustrates population and employment information for the City of Wausau. In 2000 there were 27,342 jobs at businesses located in the City of Wausau. A breakdown by employment sector indicates a high number of jobs in the Service sector, followed by the Commercial and Manufacturing sectors. The high service employment reflects the importance of the health care and insurance industries to the local economy.

**Table 11-2: Population and Employment by Sector, 2000**

<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>38,426</b>
<b>EMPLOYMENT:</b>	
Commercial	7,010
Manufacturing	5,042
Service	10,219
Other	3,264
Self-Employed/Farm	1,807
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27,342</b>

*Source: Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 6/10/03*

According to a Wisconsin Department of Revenue report published in August, 2002, the economic outlook for the Wausau MSA is forecast to be quite good from 2002 through 2006. Of the eleven MSAs in the State, Wausau is anticipated to have the third highest growth in employment, at 7.2 percent, from 2001 to 2006. This is significantly higher than the overall Statewide employment growth forecast of 4.2 percent. The Department of Revenue summarizes existing and forecast conditions in Wausau as follows:

*“Employment in the area has been quite stable despite the economic slowdown. In 2001, non-farm employment grew by*

*0.2 percent and is expected to decline slightly by 0.4 percent in 2002. From 2001 to 2006, employment is expected to increase by 7.2 percent, with the major contribution coming from the service and trade sectors.”*

Overall, the economic outlook for the Wausau MSA is very good in absolute terms as well as when compared to the State as a whole and certain other metropolitan statistical areas in Wisconsin. More importantly for the City of Wausau is the fact that Wausau is such a large part of the economic base of Marathon County. Positive forecasts for Marathon County in general have a greater impact on the City since such a huge percentage of the total economic activity of Marathon County occurs within the Wausau municipal boundaries.

## Major Employers

As noted above, Wausau Insurance Companies is one of the largest employers in the City and the County overall, providing over 2,500 jobs locally. Some other major employers in the City include:

- Wausau Hospital/Aspirus
- Wausau School District
- Eastbay
- Wausau Benefits
- North Central Health Care (NCHC) Facility
- Marathon County Government
- Northcentral Technical College (NTC)
- Wausau City Government
- Kolbe & Kolbe Millwork
- Fiskars

In addition to individual employers, the downtown area and industrial parks contain clusters of businesses, both large and small, that contributed to overall employment in the City.

**Central Business District (CBD)** – Downtown Wausau is one of the most successful central business districts in Wisconsin. It is a major employment center, with a diversity of retail stores, professional services, entertainment and recreation venues, and a growing residential environment. City leaders continue to champion downtown revitalization efforts, reflecting support expressed by community residents and businesses that place a high value on a thriving downtown environment.

The importance of the Wausau CBD is emphasized in the *Wausau CBD Master Plan*, which was adopted by the Common Council in January, 2000. The vision statement in this document emphasizes the economic, cultural, and social importance of a healthy downtown:

*“Downtown Wausau is the heart of the City and surrounding region. It is the nerve center of retail trade, financial transactions and governmental activities in the region. Downtown Wausau gives our community and those who identify with Wausau a strong sense of place. More than any other part of the City, downtown defines Wausau as a community. City officials, business leaders and residents from throughout the Wausau Urban Area recognize the importance of downtown to our heritage and to our future. They are vitally interested in strengthening the social, cultural and economic position of downtown for the betterment of everyone.*

*For downtown Wausau, the next 20 years will not simply be a continuation of the past. There will be dramatic changes in many of the elements that help define our downtown. Redevelopment of the riverfront for open space and public purpose and connecting this area to the commercial core will enhance the area's appeal to all visitors. Expansion of civic, cultural and entertainment spaces and programs will help create renewed business and visitor interest in downtown.*

*Downtown Wausau's unique architectural and physical character will have renewed vibrancy. People from throughout the region will recognize downtown's uniqueness and gather here to work, shop and enjoy the many available social, cultural and entertainment options. The physical improvements made to the downtown and the heightened activity in the central area will help generate new employment opportunities and stimulate interest in living downtown."*

**Industrial Parks** – The Wausau West Business and Industrial Park has been a vital component of the City's economic development strategy. The existing 450-acre park is located adjacent to the STH 29 corridor and has highway access from 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The first phase of the industrial park was developed in the late 1960s and comprised about 80 acres of industrial sites. Subsequent expansions of the industrial park occurred in 1978, 1993, and 1999. In 2001 there were over 50 businesses located within the industrial park, employing approximately 3,500 people.

Since it was created, the City, County, and surrounding communities have experienced the benefits of the industrial

park. In addition to the large amount of employment it provides, in 2001 industries had a combined equalized value of over \$100 million and paid over \$3 million in total property taxes in 2002 to the Wausau School District, Marathon County, NTC, and the City of Wausau.

Three tax incremental finance (TIF) districts have been created in the industrial park to help pay for the infrastructure needed to accommodate new enterprises. The objectives of these economic development efforts, as stated in the TIF district plans, are to:

1. Increase the employment opportunities available in the community;
2. Increase the per-capita income in the community;
3. Increase the industrial property tax base for all taxing jurisdictions, including Marathon County, NTC, Wausau School District, and the City of Wausau;
4. Increase the availability of properly-located, adequately-served industrial sites;
5. Accommodate new industries and the expansion of existing industries in the industrial park by extending and upgrading the needed infrastructure; and
6. Identify feasible and appropriate means of installing and financing the improvements necessary to market the industrial parkland.

Table 11-3 describes the business/industrial parks located in the Wausau urban area. The Wausau West Industrial Park encompasses 551 acres, making it the second largest in the urban area. It is also the oldest industrial park in the area. With about 200 acres remaining to accommodate new industrial development and assuming future development occurs at about the same rate as in the past, there appears to be enough land to meet development demand for another 18 years. The Wausau West Industrial Park has more building area and a higher building-to-land ratio than all other industrial parks in the area. With building coverage averaging about 24 percent, density is slightly below what industry site location professionals and private business park developers typically look for, which is an initial building coverage of 25-30 percent, which will typically allow a company to double in size on site.

**Table 11-3: Urban Area Business Park Summary**

Industrial Park	Year opened	Total acres	Acres sold	Average Annual Absorption	Acres Remaining	Est. Years Remaining	Building sq. ft.	Building to Land Ratio
<b>Wausau West</b>	1970	551	351	11.0	200	18.2	3,681,500	24%
<b>Central WI Bus Park - Mosinee</b>	1990	186	136	11.3	50	4.4	1,262,800	21%
<b>Schofield Industrial Parks</b>	1972	833	827.6	27.6	5.5	0.2	2,627,800	7%
<b>Weston Business Park</b>	1998	160	80	20.0	80	4.0	378,500	11%
<b>Rothschild Business Park</b>	1992	196	51	5.1	145	28.4	N/A	N/A
<b>All urban business parks</b>	1970	1,915	1,435	44.8	480	10.7	11,641,100*	19%*

*Source: Prepared by Economic Development Services based on information provided by the Wausau/Marathon County Chamber and contacted communities (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2003)*

*\* Totals do not include Rothschild due to lack of available data*

## Income

Income in Marathon County has historically lagged behind the nation, but has recently taken an upswing. Information from the U.S. Department of Commerce indicates that in 1996 the County per capita income was \$21,865. This income level ranked the area as 165<sup>th</sup> in the United States and was 89 percent of the national average per capita income of \$24,436. However, ten years earlier, in 1986, the area’s per capita income was considerably lower when Marathon County ranked 212<sup>th</sup> in the United States. The average annual growth rate in

per capita income for Marathon County from 1986 through 1996 was 5.4 percent, while the average annual growth rate in per capita income for the nation was only 4.9 percent. Thus, while the County still ranks behind the national average in per capita personal income, in the last ten years it has been experiencing a growth rate which exceeds that of the nation.

On a Statewide basis, an analysis prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue indicates that during the 1986 to 1996 period Marathon County was the sixth fastest growing county in the State in terms of personal income growth. During this time, inflation-adjusted per capita income increased by approximately 15 percent in Wisconsin, while in Marathon County, it increased by 19.5 percent. This high rate of growth in per capita income is another very good indicator of Marathon County's economic well-being.

Earnings of persons employed in Marathon County increased from approximately \$1 billion in 1986 to approximately \$1.9 billion in 1996, an average annual growth rate of 6.7 percent. The industry sector experiencing the slowest growth in earnings during this 10-year period was transportation and public utilities, which increased at an average annual rate of 4.3 percent. The fastest growing sector was finance, insurance, and real estate, which increased at an average annual rate of 9.8 percent. In addition, personal income in the Wausau MSA is projected to grow by 25.7 percent from 2001 to 2006 compared to a statewide increase of 23.7 percent.

## Economic Development Trends

As discussed earlier, the five-year economic forecasts for Marathon County, prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue in August, 2002, are extremely positive. Between 2001 and 2006, both job opportunities and personal incomes are expected to grow substantially in Marathon County, and are expected to exceed Statewide growth. Because the City of Wausau is such an important part of the County's overall economy, much of the employment and income growth projected for the County should occur within the City.

## Employment Projections

Information on employment in Marathon County is gathered separately for non-farm and farm employment. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) collects data on non-farm employment. The DWD estimated non-farm employment in Marathon County to be 49,407 in 1990 and 65,630 in 2000. This represents about a 33 percent increase over ten years. Data on farm employment is collected by the Census of Agriculture and consists of hired farm labor and operators. In 1987, farm employment in Marathon County was estimated to be 11,643 and in 1997 it was estimated to be 8,298. This represents a decrease of almost 29 percent.

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) computed employment projections based on the assumption that the historical growth rates described above would continue through 2030. These projections, for the City and County, are shown in Table 11-4.

**Table 11-4: Employment Projections, 2000-2030**

Total Employment by Year							
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
<b>Wausau</b>	27,342	28,839	30,335	31,831	33,328	34,824	36,321
<b>County</b>	72,508	75,625	78,742	81,859	84,976	88,093	91,210

Source: Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 10/29/03

The projections above are based on an assumed moderate growth rate of 33 percent. The NCWRPC also calculated projections based on a lower growth rate of 28 percent and a higher growth rate of 38 percent. The resulting employment growth is shown in Table 11-5. It is noted that the average growth rates for Marathon County as a whole are slightly different than those in the Highway 51 planning sub-area. Average growth rates for the County were assumed to be 21 percent (low), 26 percent (moderate) and 35 percent (high).

**Table 11-5: Percent Change in Employment, 2000-2030**

	Change in Employment by Growth Rate		
	Low Growth	Moderate Growth	High Growth
<b>Wausau</b>	7,615	8,979	10,346
<b>County</b>	87,999	91,210	96,805

Source: Marathon County 2030 Population and Employment Projections Methodology Report, NCWRPC, 10/29/03

### Economic Development Opportunities

Future opportunities for economic development will likely involve both redevelopment of existing obsolete properties as well as new “green field” development on the City’s edge or in areas that may be annexed in the future. Some areas the City has and will likely continue to investigate for potential development opportunities include:

- **Riverfront** – There are several old industrial uses along the riverfront that may provide opportunities for redevelopment with other uses. The City continually watches for these opportunities. However, redevelopment of the riverfront will be a long-term endeavor given potential property contamination, the need to relocate existing businesses, and consolidation of adequately sized parcels.
- **Wausau Iron Works** – The area around Wausau Iron Works may present opportunities for new development and/or provide for expansion of Marathon Park.
- **CTH X/Camp Phillips Road** – With the proposed improvements to CTH X/Camp Phillips Road to create an “east bypass” arterial, demand for development in this corridor will likely increase, particularly after the Ministry Health Care complex opens in the Village of Weston. While CTH X is currently outside the City limits, future City boundaries will likely extend further east and the City should proactively explore opportunities to tie into and coordinate with future development in this corridor.

### Economic Development Issues

- **East Side Industry** - The lack of an industrial park on the east side of the City has hindered the growth of manufacturing and other industrial employment in this area. As part of the City’s long-range growth and development plan, an area in the vicinity of the proposed “east arterial” (CTH X) intersection with 41<sup>st</sup> Street could be considered for creation of an east side industrial park.

- **High Tax Rates** - The property tax rate in the City of Wausau is considerably higher than in other communities in the Wausau urban area. This can discourage some commercial and industrial development activity, new home construction and, in some cases, annexation.
- **Reduced Shared Revenue** - Proposed cuts in State shared revenue for 2003-2005 could severely reduce the level of public services and facilities the City can provide, which could reduce the economic attractiveness of the community and the City's financial capacity to engage in tax base and job creation activities.
- **Health Care Costs** - Rising health care costs are consuming a higher percentage of the City's budget, which reduces the amount of money available for needed infrastructure and other economic development activities.
- **Construction Constraints** – Steep slopes and high bedrock conditions in certain parts of the City can greatly increase development cost, in turn making portions of Wausau less attractive for economic development ventures.
- **Regional Competition** - Competition between communities in the urban area for jobs and other economic development activities may not result in benefits to any of the urban area communities. Such economic competition can lead to political disagreements and significant financial costs for the “winning” community.
- **Limited Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) Capacity** - The City does not have adequate tax increment financing capacity to create new Tax Increment Finance Districts (TIF) to encourage development and redevelopment activities. As a result, some projects have been abandoned or delayed.
- **Tax Rate Disparity** - An increasing property tax rate disparity between the City and surrounding communities can negatively affect the desirability of the City to newcomers – both residents and businesses – looking to locate in the metro area.
- **County Leadership** - Marathon County has not taken a leadership role in ongoing economic development activities in the City nor in other parts of the County. This has resulted in significant local competition for the available economic development opportunities and minimal County investment into job and tax base creation activities.

## 12. Intergovernmental Cooperation

This section describes existing activities that the City of Wausau coordinates with other units of government, including: Marathon County, adjacent towns, the school district, the State of Wisconsin, and the Federal government. The purpose of this section is to identify the existing cooperative activities and summarize the major challenges and issues regarding intergovernmental cooperation and regional planning, including:

- Opportunities to reduce or eliminate duplication of services;
- Incompatible goals, policies and development;
- Mechanisms for conflict resolution; and
- Opportunities for joint planning and decision-making.

Mechanisms for cooperation and coordination primarily take the form of intergovernmental agreements, leases and contracts, and regulatory authority. These can occur between the City of Wausau and other local, regional, State or Federal entities. Following is a brief description of the various functional areas and services that require intergovernmental coordination at various levels.

### Local and Regional Level Cooperation

Intergovernmental cooperation can lead to greater efficiency and cost savings in delivery of public services. In the Wausau metropolitan area the potential exists to work cooperatively to

consolidate the delivery of certain services, such as ambulance and fire protection that has been discussed and studied for several years. The City of Wausau has been, and will continue to be, an active participant in these and other discussions. However, it is important that opportunities for cooperation are evaluated in light of what is in the best interest of the citizens of Wausau. The City has identified two conditions that must be met when considering cooperative endeavors. These include:

- Services currently provided to the citizens of Wausau must remain the same or improve; and
- Services provided to the citizens of Wausau must be at the same cost or less cost.

### Existing Shared Services

**Fire and Emergency Response** – The City provides mutual aid fire protection for other communities in the Wausau metropolitan area and does not charge for this backup service. Thus, other communities have the backup support and can rely upon Wausau’s full-time fire department to provide assistance to their communities for fire protection services. The City has considered charging for this assistance in the past but has not yet done so. Thus, nearly every community near Wausau benefits from the availability and service provided by Wausau’s full-time fire department, yet these neighbors do not pay for any of the costs related to this standby service or when the fire department actually responds to fires in these communities.

**Sewer Utility** – The City of Wausau provides wastewater treatment service for all of the municipal waste generated by

the City of Schofield, a small portion of the Village of Weston, and for a small number of Town of Stettin residents who are connected to the public wastewater collection system.

**Wausau Area Transit System (WATS)** – The WATS provides transit service to the City of Schofield and the Village of Rothschild in addition to the entire City of Wausau.

**City/County Data Center** – The City of Wausau and Marathon County cooperate to jointly operate the City/County Data services office which, in 2003, consisted of 23 individuals providing various technical and administrative support to almost all City and County staff who use personal and mainframe computers.

**911 Emergency Dispatch** – In the mid-1990s, Wausau eliminated its emergency dispatch service and began receiving dispatch service from Marathon County as a cost-saving measure that has produced a satisfactory level of service.

**Drug Task Force** – Wausau Police Department and the Marathon County Sheriff's Department cooperate on the investigation and elimination of illegal drug activity throughout the County. This program is supported by both agencies and is also funded with State and Federal dollars.

**City/County Park Department** – Marathon County and the City of Wausau jointly operate the Wausau & Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department that oversees most of the planning, management, and maintenance of both the Marathon County Park System and the local City of Wausau park system. This department receives funds from the

Marathon County budget as well as from the City of Wausau budget to perform its mission.

**Wausau Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)** – The City of Wausau participates with other communities in the urban area to provide funding and executive direction to the operations of the Marathon County Convention and Visitors Bureau, which is the local agency working to attract visitors and tourists to the urban area. Most of the communities surrounding the City of Wausau participate in this operation by dedicating a portion of their motel/hotel room tax dollars to support the operations of the CVB.

## Cooperative Practices

**Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)** – The City of Wausau is one of the ten members of the Wausau Urban Area MPO that engages in transportation planning for the entire Wausau urban area. Although the MPO has been in existence from the mid-1980s, the City and the surrounding communities have participated in metropolitan transportation planning since the late 1970s.

**Sewer Service Area Planning** – The City of Wausau participated in a cooperative manner with other communities in the Wausau urban area to plan for the long-term growth and urbanization of these communities through the extension of sanitary sewer service. This planning activity began in 1980 and continues under the direction of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the cooperative efforts of the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Commission. The resulting plan – the *Wausau Urban Area Sewer Service Plan*

*for the Year 2000* and subsequent amendments – define the areas where public sewer service may be extended.

**Water Service Planning** – Wausau Water Works is continuing its efforts to consolidate water service providers in the urban area. The intent of this activity is to consolidate all wells and water supply treatment facilities under one management agency. This will allow for a reduction in the amount of administrative staff needed to operate all of the individual water systems in the area. It will also allow for a more comprehensive response to catastrophic water supply or service problems affecting a large group of customers. This initiative would ultimately allow for the physical connection of several of the independent water supplies in the urban area. To help move in this direction, a water main connecting Rib Mountain and Wausau will be constructed when the McCleary Bridge is relocated to 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**County Health Department** – At one time, the City had its own Health Department but that agency was absorbed into the County Health Department in the late 1970s.

**County Library** – The City provided about one-half the funds to construct the new Marathon County headquarters library in the early 1990s and continues to provide parking and other services for this County-wide facility.

**League of Wisconsin Municipalities and Wisconsin Alliance of Cities** – The City is a dues-paying member and an active participant in both of these organizations. The primary mission of these statewide groups is to foster cooperation and

communications among the membership for the benefit of Wisconsin's citizens.

**Regional Agencies-** The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) provides planning and mapping assistance.

### **State and Federal Level Cooperation**

**State Agencies-** Wausau works closely with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) (roads, bus, airport) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) on a variety of programs, activities and facilities related to the City's growth and development.

**Federal Agencies** – The City has limited contact with Federal agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Mass Transit Administration, and Federal Aviation Administration.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation Issues**

- **Recruiting Business and Industry** – An enhanced level of cooperation among the urban area communities when recruiting new businesses and industries to the urban area needs to be developed and implemented. This approach would ideally mitigate the competition that exists between individual communities vying for the same economic activity, such as expansion of an existing industry or the attraction of a new retail store.

- **Consolidation of Governmental Services and Governmental Units** – Consolidation of certain governmental services and units within the Wausau urban area will continue to be an issue of discussion for many years. Merging the City of Schofield with the City of Wausau is a possibility since there are many commonalities between these two communities. Merging fire services, police, water utilities and others have some possibilities.
- **Declining State Funding** – The State of Wisconsin needs to continue to support the City of Wausau financially and in other ways to ensure that the City is able to provide the services and facilities needed by residents in the community. The principal issues here are: State cuts in financial aid to the City of Wausau and State legislation that continues to erode the City’s tax base by granting property tax exemptions to a growing number of special interest groups.
- **Marathon County Government** – Oftentimes, representatives of Marathon County government, including County Board supervisors and administrative staff, imply that the City of Wausau is not part of Marathon County. In the process, the City is treated differently than other communities in Marathon County and, as a result, does not receive the same level of services or facilities from County government.
- **Anti-Wausau Attitude** – There is an anti-Wausau attitude among the leaders of some of the communities adjacent to the City of Wausau. While this is not a situation unique to the Wausau urban area, these attitudes often hinder intergovernmental cooperative activities and place a major strain on efforts to consolidate services and to consolidate entire communities.
- **Annexation** - In Wisconsin, neither incorporated municipalities nor towns can initiate annexation. The process is driven by individual property owners (or developers) who petition for annexation into a city to receive sewer and water service. While towns often view annexation as a means to take their territory, cities and villages view annexations as a means to provide a more logical pattern of development and efficient provision of services.
- **Transit Service Area Expansion** –The lack of transit service to a large portion of the Wausau urban area reduces the mobility of all transit-dependent individuals in the area. It also reduces the accessibility of job opportunities and many community facilities such as healthcare, the headquarters library, and certain shopping and recreation areas. Other communities in the urban area need to provide a level of transit service comparable to that provided in Wausau, Schofield, and Rothschild.
- **Marathon Park and UWMC Campus Planning** –The UWMC campus is placing pressures on Marathon Park for the creation of additional parking spaces. These pressures are causing concerns that many of the large, old white pine trees might be sacrificed for parking. There is also a concern that there is not a reforestation plan in place to replant trees that are lost to disease, wind, and other natural or man-induced causes.