

**CITY OF WISCONSIN RAPIDS**

# **HOUSING STUDY AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

**July 2016**

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# Housing Study and Needs Analysis

*Prepared For:*

City of Wisconsin Rapids  
Planning and Economic Development  
444 W Grand Ave  
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495

*Prepared By:*

Vierbicher  
999 Fourier Drive, Suite 201  
Madison, WI 53717

Phone: (608) 821-3967

Fax: (608) 826-0530

*Prepared:*

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# Executive Summary





The City of Wisconsin Rapids Housing Study and Needs Assessment provides an analysis of the current and prospective housing stock within the City of Wisconsin Rapids and makes recommendations based on the anticipated future housing demands of the community.

## DATA FINDINGS

The study utilized data from various sources, including: American Community Survey (ACS), U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, ESRI Business Analyst, Multiple Listing Service (MLS), Urban Land Institute (ULI), Wood County, City of Wisconsin Rapids, field observations, and direct responses from residents and community stakeholders.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The median age for the City, according to ACS data, is 40.9 years, which is lower than most of Wood County. The City experienced a reduction in residents between 10 -25 years old during the period from 2010 to 2014. However, modest gains in the 25-35 year old cohort foreshadows a potential growth in the future, as this group is the most likely to expand their household through having children. The fastest gains in population were among cohorts older than 60 years old, as retirees gradually begin to downsize their homes and move closer to necessary services in the City.

## EMPLOYMENT

The largest share of the City's workforce is comprised of education and health-care workers, making up 24% of the labor market. While manufacturing jobs have reduced over the years, they still account for nearly 22% of the labor force.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

ACS 5-year estimates (2010-2014) show that residents of Wisconsin Rapids have lower incomes compared to the surrounding communities. Median household income in the City was \$36,300, approximately \$12,000 less than the Wood County average. ACS data also estimates 13-19% of residents are below the

federal poverty line, a finding that will have large implications on future housing choices and could make the City eligible for many other federal and state grants to study and address the housing affordability issues.

## HOUSING TYPE

Nearly 63% of total housing is made up of owner-occupied single-family detached units. Of the rental population, 43.2% live in single-family detached units, 20.8% live in buildings with 2-4 units, and 33.2% live in buildings with 5 or more units. Nearly a third of total housing units spend more than 30% of total income on housing expenses, which is the standard for determining whether housing is classified as "affordable." The most recent Median owner-occupied housing assessed values were \$85,900 per unit in Wisconsin Rapids; this figure is below \$120,000 median value for Wood County.

## HOME SALES (MLS)

Research into MLS data draws attention to the City's position relative to peer communities such as the Town of Grand Rapids, the Village of Plover, the City of Stevens Point, and the City of Marshfield.

Between 2009 and 2015, the percentage of all listed single-family homes sold in the City fell to a low of 47% in 2011 but rebounded to 77% in 2015. Similarly, the average single-family list price for homes fell to a low of \$74,000 in 2013 but rebounded to \$85,000 in 2015. The average price for the sale of single-family homes reached \$80,000 in 2015, up from a five-year low of \$69,500 in 2013. The City lags the four other neighboring communities in each statistic except for listing-to-sale ratio, in which only the City of Marshfield is lower.



## Community Survey

Vierbicher and the City conducted a regional housing survey to better understand the current housing supply, demand, and needs of the residents. The survey was available to anyone in the region and was promoted heavily in news stories, church bulletins, school take-home folders, and several other outlets. Finally, Vierbicher conducted stakeholder interview with people from a variety of organization each with a vested interest in the Wisconsin Rapids housing Market.

### SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

- Roughly half of the respondents listed Wisconsin Rapids as their declared location— a response rate of 3.8%.
- Over 80% of respondents were owners
- A third of respondents stated their household consisted of 2 members.
- Nearly 30% of their household members were under the age of 18.
- Nearly 64% of respondents stated that one or more members of their household were employed full-time.
- Over 24% of respondents indicated a gross annual household income between \$50,000 and \$74,999 and over 19% of respondents indicated a gross annual household income between \$25,000 and \$49,999.
- More than 42% of respondents indicated they spent more than 30% of household income on rent and other housing-related expenses.
- Almost 88% of respondents indicated they lived in single-family homes.
- Rental respondents reported the largest barriers to purchasing were the inability to afford a down payment and existing outstanding debt.

Open-ended responses showed ambivalence toward expanding the low-income housing stock, though many also called for the building of more affordable units. Some respondents felt low-income housing developments encourage the importation of unwanted urban elements from larger cities.

## Guiding Observations

After reviewing the data, conducting site visits, and engaging with the community, Vierbicher concluded some of the primary or guiding observations are:

- The need for increasing or adapting existing single/two-family and multi-family housing units, both for owners and renters, with a specific emphasis on providing housing options for young families and empty-nesters.
- The need for more quality and affordable housing options for both owners and renters.
- The need for a proactive and collaborative approach to property maintenance, compliance, and enforcement.
- The need to establish formal neighborhoods to ensure municipal revitalization efforts also have a “bottom-up grassroots” partner.
- The need for a proactive approach to counter often inaccurate perceptions and stereotypes regarding affordable housing for seniors and low-income residents.

## Categories of Recommendations

To address these issues, Vierbicher has included a list of recommendations for the City to adopt at the end of this report. A list of examples and detailed proposals on how to implement these recommendations are also included as part of the Action Plan to this study.

### PROMOTE AND PLAN FOR MORE SINGLE AND TWO-FAMILY HOMES

Examples: Create single and two-family revolving loan funds for façade and home improvements, establish an owner-occupied purchase and rehabilitation program, assess the ability to create housing historic districts resulting in additional tax credit and loans, continue to improve the frequency of property value assessments, and monitor lot availability and demand for entry-level homes.

### PROMOTE AND PLAN FOR MORE MULTI-FAMILY HOMES

Examples: Expand stock of townhomes, row-homes, and duplex units that are appealing to empty nesters and young professionals, set benchmarks for affordability, encourage downtown development and activation of second-floor units in historic buildings, create a revolving loan fund for maintenance and upkeep of rental units, and actively distribute educational materials regarding the influence of affordable housing on the housing market.



### ANTICIPATE SENIOR HOUSING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Examples: Create a separate working group that will proactively monitor the need for additional independent multi-family affordable units, assisted-living units, and special living care housing units.

### PROMOTE HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

Examples: Work with other agencies and the private sector businesses to spur revitalization efforts, create an inventory of vacant or underutilized parcels, target and demolish dilapidated structures, and create strategies to encourage infill development and adaptive reuse.

### OTHER HOUSING AND PROPERTY-RELATED INITIATIVES

Examples: Conduct regular community surveys to gauge the development and redevelopment process, focus new and existing economic development strategies to attract and retain living wage employment, and encourage employers to engage and help address issues in the City's housing market.



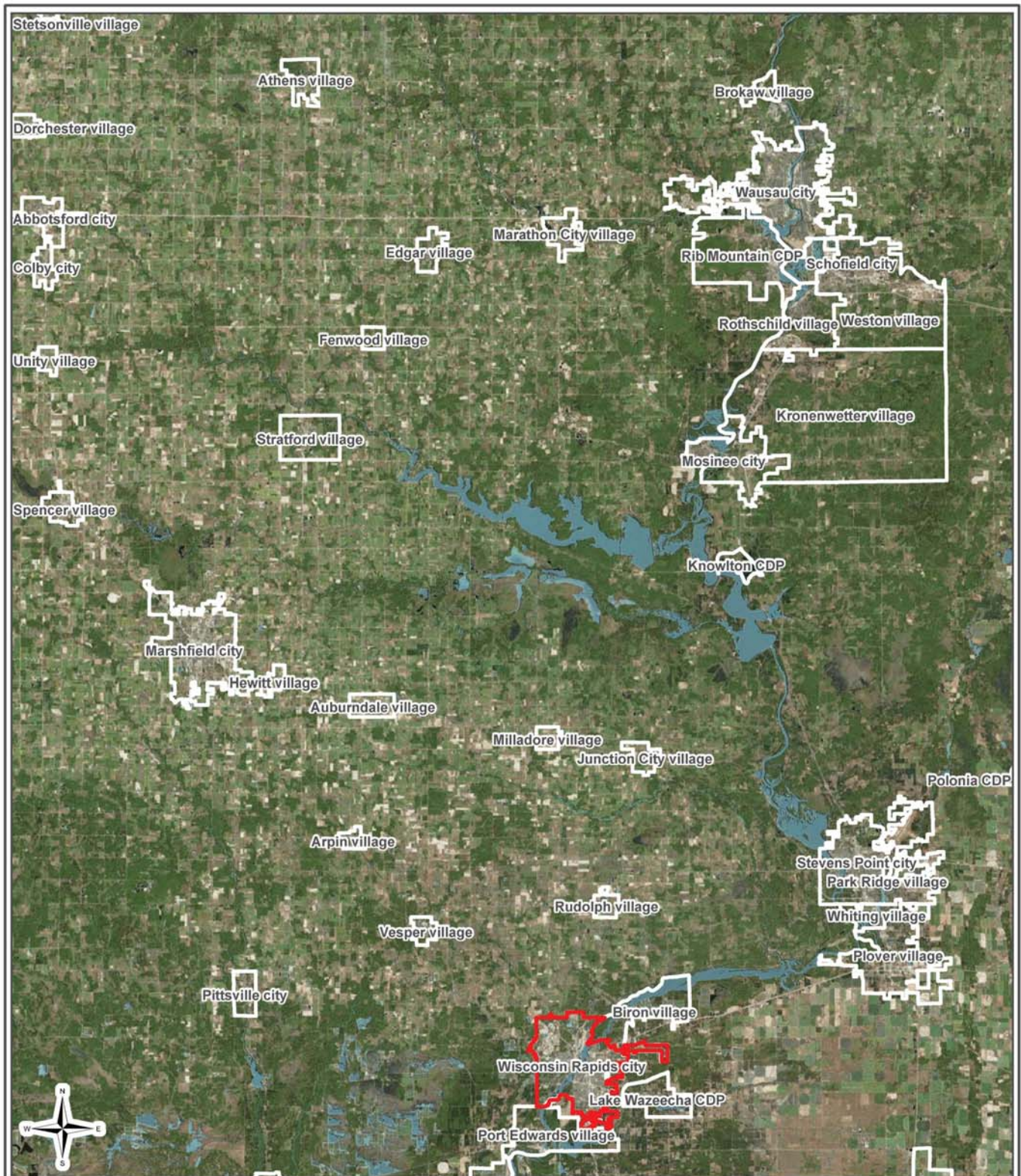
## Projected Housing Demands

Housing Type	Current Vacancy			Healthy Market Target	Units needed to Meet Current Demand	Units needs to Meet Future Demand (2020 includes unmet current demand) (In 5 Year increments — not cumulative)					
	Current Number of Units	Percent Vacant	Number Vacant			2020-Low	2020-High	2025-Low	2025-High	2030-Low	2030-High
Apartments	1886	3.9%	74	5.0%	21	62	82	43	54	27	34
Townhome/Duplex/Condo	924	3.5%	32	5.0%	14	30	39	24	29	17	20
Single Family	5974	3.1%	185	2-3%	0	101	152	53	78	15	29
	8784		291		35	193	273	120	161	59	83

# Introduction and Methodology







**Map 1: Regional Location Map**  
City of Wisconsin Rapids

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REEDSBURG - MADISON - PRAIRIE DU CHIEN  
999 Fourier Drive, Suite 201, Madison, WI 53717  
Phone: (608) 826-0532 Fax: (608) 826-0530

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Sources: US Census, Wood County, City of Wisconsin Rapids, ESRI





## INTRODUCTION:

In the fall of 2015, the City of Wisconsin Rapids ("City") contracted with Vierbicher to conduct a comprehensive housing study and needs analysis. The objectives of the study were to facilitate a discussion, research the existing housing data, anticipate the future of the housing needs of the community, and create a series of recommendations to achieve these initial objectives.

The study observed and analyzed the current and future housing issues and opportunities within the community. The resulting recommendations enabled the City to create an implementation strategy directed at maintaining and strengthening the City's housing position in the Southeast Wood County regional housing market.

The City and Vierbicher understand the City is uniquely positioned among three other similarly sized communities that each contains a large share of the regional housing market. Therefore, this study evaluated the housing supply and demand in the City of Wisconsin Rapids and several of the surrounding communities. The comparative analysis is integrated throughout this report.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted within the municipal boundaries of the City of Wisconsin Rapids and was not a complete regional housing study. Therefore, where data was readily available, the study compared Wisconsin Rapids to surrounding communities. The primary data sources used throughout this study are:

- City of Wisconsin Rapids;
- Wood County;
- Multiple Listing Service (MLS);
- State of Wisconsin;
- U.S. Census Bureau;
- ESRI;
- Bureau of Labor Statistics; and
- Direct responses from residents and community stakeholders.

## REPORT STRUCTURE

The remainder of this report is made up of the following sections:

- Demographic and socioeconomic profile. This section provides a summary of the regional population, population growth, households, income, and employment characteristics.
- Housing profile, supply, and demand. This section provides an informational summary on housing stock and affordability within the City.
- Housing needs/assessment questionnaire. This section contains the summary results from the extensive community survey conducted from December 2015 to January 2016.
- National housing trends and the local impact. This section reviews national housing trends and the local impact on housing development.
- Critical issues, opportunities, and recommendations. This section organizes the feedback from the stakeholder interviews, data observations, and the community survey to identify the issues and opportunities in the city. Then this section contains the recommendations and implementation plan for addressing the housing needs identified in the issues and opportunities section.

Throughout this report, Vierbicher examined the City of Wisconsin Rapids in a regional position among the other similar cities, (Cities of Wausau, Stevens Point, Marshfield) and the immediate surrounding housing markets (the City of Nekoosa, Villages of Port Edwards and Biron, and the Town of Grand Rapids).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project team thanks the following agencies, companies, and individuals that provided data and information during the completion of this study.

- American Community Survey (ACS)
- ESRI Business Analyst
- Multiple Listing Service (MLS)
- Urban Land Institute (ULI)
- Wood County
- City of Wisconsin Rapids
- Vierbicher field observations

## DATA DISCLAIMER

A significant amount of the regional analysis did not have direct municipal or local involvement and required the use of data from ESRI and the 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) five-year average. The US Census Bureau developed the ACS in response to declining participation in the Census Long Form. This transition enabled the U.S. Census Bureau to update and release timely annual data.

The US Census Bureau first implemented the ACS as a supplementary form of the 2000 Census and received full implementation in 2005. For communities less than 20,000 people, the ACS combines annual results to complete the annually updated 5-year estimate. The ACS reports that data collected at a national, regional, state, and metropolitan and county level maintain a low level of Coefficient of Variation (CV) and low Margin of Error (MOE). Thus, the regional data maintains a higher confidence level than local level data. Therefore, local data listed within the ACS with a greater than 15% MOE will be documented in each data table.

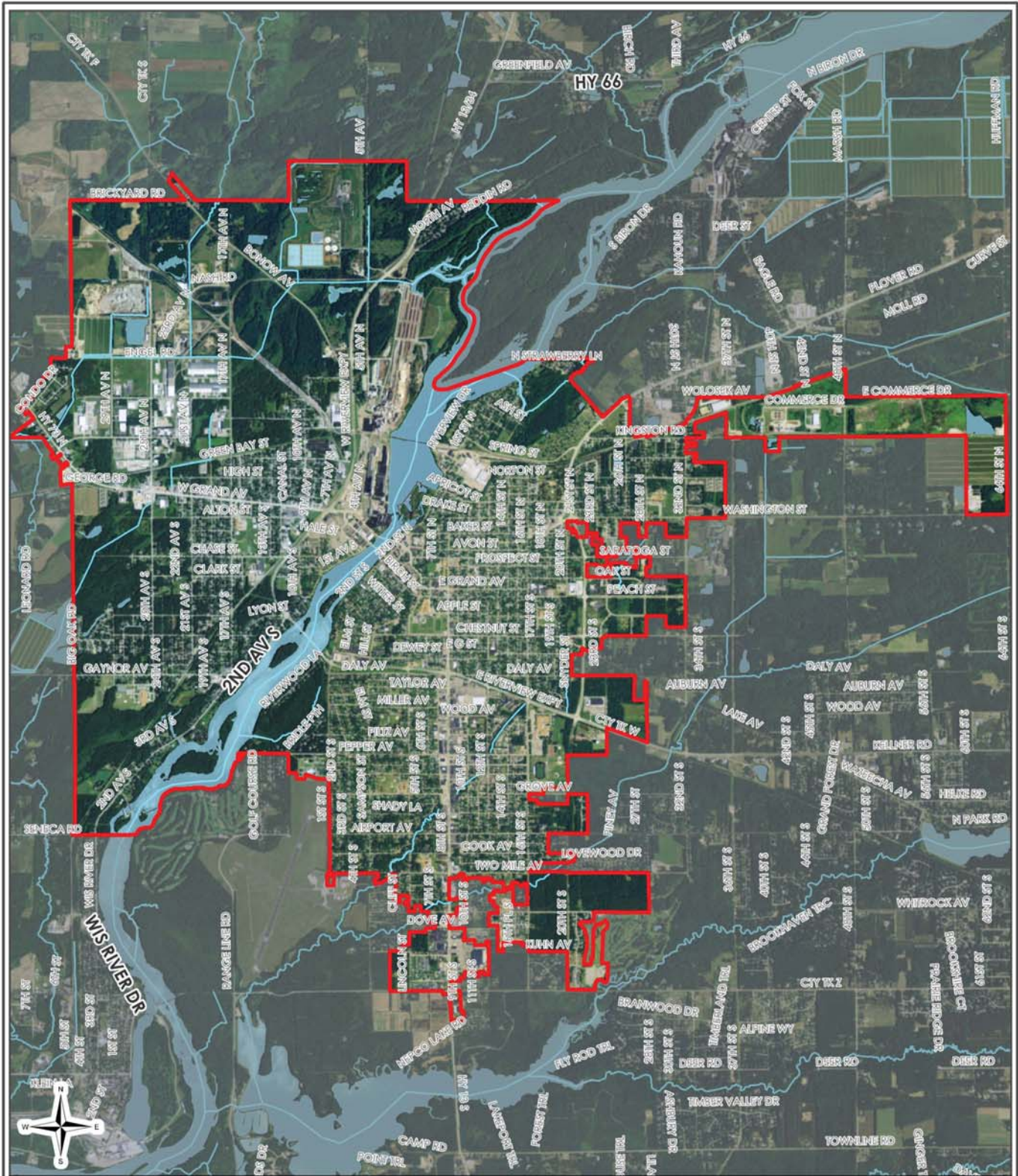
## LIMITATIONS

This housing study represents an analysis performed with the data available at the time of the report. The findings and recommendations are based on current solutions and the best available information on future trends and projections. Significant changes in the regional economy, employment growth, federal or State of Wisconsin tax policy or other related factors could alter the conclusions and recommendations contained in this housing study.



## Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile





**Map 2: City of Wisconsin Rapids Map**  
City of Wisconsin Rapids

0 0.425 0.85 1.7  
Miles

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Phone: (608) 826-0532 Fax: (608) 826-0530

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Sources: US Census, Wood County, City of Wisconsin Rapids, ESRI





The stakeholder interviews and community survey results abound with comments and concerns for maintaining quality local employment to help ensure the City maintains and grows its economic presence. Therefore, this chapter analyzes the socioeconomic conditions in the City of Wisconsin Rapids.

The City grew organically from the combination of two separate communities (Grand Rapids and Centralia) located along both sides of the Wisconsin River in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The community grew rapidly around industries located along the waterfront (Map 2). The manufacturing industry led to decades of stable employment for the City, but as manufacturing levels throughout the country began to decline, employment sectors within the region began to diversify rapidly to a service sector economy and nearly stagnating local household economies. According to the US Census Bureau, estimated median household income cumulatively rose less than \$1,500 or approximately 5% since the 2000 Census. Whereas the cumulative nationally inflation for goods and services rose approximately 37% over that same period.

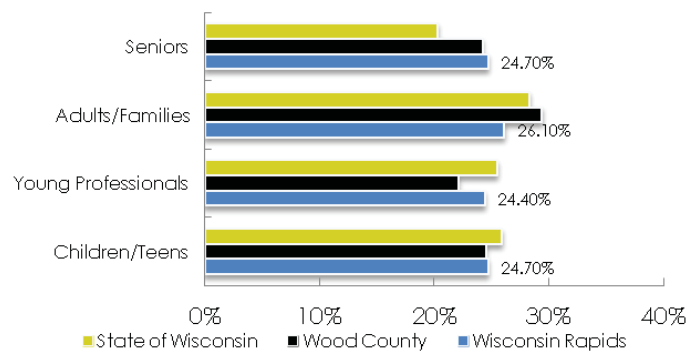
The remainder of this section provides a summary of the current population, projected population growth, current house-

hold income, household composition, and employment characteristics throughout the region.

## POPULATION

Over the past four decades, the City of Wisconsin Rapids maintained a stable population base only fluctuating from a population high of 18,587 in 1970 to a low population of 17,995 in 1980. Since 1980 the City steadily increased in population, and the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) population estimates the 2015 population at 18,577 – nearly identical to the 1970 Census observed population and is nearly 25% of the Total Wood County Population. Table 1 details the regional population shift since 1970. Furthermore, the City has a very even population distribution with children and teens, (under 20), young professionals (20-40), adults and families, and seniors (over 60) having an almost equal share of the current population. Figure 1 illustrates these findings.

**Figure 1: Local Population Comparison**



**Table 1: Regional Population History Comparison**

MCD Type	Municipality	County Name	1970 Census	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	Final Estimate 2015	Percent Change Since 1970
<b>City</b>	<b>Wisconsin Rapids</b>	<b>Wood</b>	<b>18,587</b>	<b>17,995</b>	<b>18,245</b>	<b>18,435</b>	<b>18,367</b>	<b>18,577</b>	<b>-0.05%</b>
Town	Grand Rapids	Wood	5,147	7,319	7,071	7,801	7,646	7,699	49.58%
Village	Biron	Wood	771	698	794	915	839	829	7.52%
Village	Port Edwards	Wood	2,126	2,077	1,848	1,944	1,818	1,789	-15.85%
Town	Port Edwards	Wood	1,076	1,387	1,351	1,446	1,427	1,420	31.97%
City	Nekoosa	Wood	2,409	2,519	2,557	2,590	2,580	2,568	6.60%
Village	Plover*	Portage	NA	5,310	8,176	10,520	12,123	12,515	135.69%
City	Stevens Point	Portage	23,479	22,970	23,002	24,551	26,717	27,037	15.15%
City	Marshfield	Multiple	15,560	18,053	18,861	18,383	18,218	19,186	23.30%
City	Mosinee	Marathon	2,395	3,015	3,820	4,063	3,988	4,021	67.89%
City	Schofield	Marathon	2,577	2,226	2,415	2,117	2,169	2,212	-14.16%
City	Wausau	Marathon	32,806	32,426	37,060	38,426	39,106	39,063	19.07%

Note: Village of Plover Change Since 1980

Data  
Source:  
Wisconsin  
DOA

## POPULATION CHANGE

According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) "Wisconsin Population & Housing Estimates," the City of Wisconsin Rapids has an estimated population of 18,577. This estimated 1.1% increase since 2010 Census is the largest estimated increase in the region when compared to immediately adjacent communities. The increase is also comparable to the 1.2% increase estimated in the City of Stevens Point. The City of Schofield (1.9%) and the Village of Plover (3.2%) in Marathon and Portage Counties experienced the greatest estimated population increase since the 2010 Census. Table 2 details the population estimates from the DOA.

The DOA partnership with the Applied Population Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin projected the City of Wisconsin Rapids to lose nearly 900 residents between 2010 and 2040. Table 3 and Figure 2 summarize the regional projections. Figures 4-6 detail the existing age breakdowns and projected population pyramids shifts from 2010-2040.

Listed below is an excerpt from DOA project team methodology:

These projections are based on the geographic boundaries of minor civil divisions as of October, 2013. The projection controls for population acquired or lost through reported annexations or boundary agreements dating back to 1990. In addition, the methodology controls for large group quarters' changes, such as new correctional institutions. However, no assumptions are made for future annexations, boundary changes or large group quarters' openings, expansions or closures.

## MEDIAN AGE

The US Census 2010-2014 ACS estimates the City of Wisconsin Rapids median age at 40.9 years. The median age is lower than most of the municipalities in Wood County and comparable to similar cities within the region, with exception to the City of Stevens Point which is influenced by the student population at the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point. Figure 3 illustrates the regional median age comparison.

**Table 2: 2015 Regional Population Comparison**

Municipality Type	Municipality Name	Final Estimate 2015	Census 2010	Numeric Change	Percent Change
City	Wisconsin Rapids	18,577	18,367	210	1.14%
Town	Grand Rapids	7,699	7,646	53	0.69%
Village	Biron	829	839	- 10	-1.19%
Village	Port Edwards	1,789	1,818	- 29	-1.60%
Town	Port Edwards	1,420	1,427	- 7	-0.49%
City	Nekoosa	2,568	2,580	- 12	-0.47%
Village	Plover	12,515	12,123	392	3.23%
City	Stevens Point	27,037	26,717	320	1.20%
City	Marshfield	19,186	19,118	68	0.36%
City	Mosinee	4,021	3,988	33	0.83%
City	Schofield	2,212	2,169	43	1.98%
City	Wausau	39,063	39,106	- 43	-0.11%

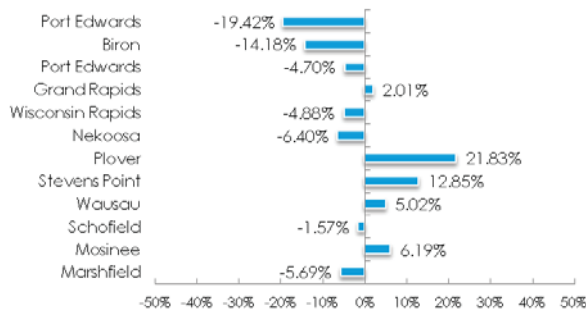
Data Source: Wisconsin DOA

**Table 3: 2015 Regional Population Estimates & Future Projections Comparison**

Municipality Type	Municipality Name	2010 Census	Final Estimate 2015	2020 Projection	2025 Projection	2030 Projection	2035 Projection	2040 Projection	% Change Since 2010
City	Wisconsin Rapids	18,367	18,577	18,300	18,280	18,160	17,990	17,470	-4.88%
Town	Grand Rapids	7,646	7,699	7,795	7,880	7,925	7,945	7,800	2.01%
Village	Biron	839	829	815	800	780	760	720	-14.18%
Village	Port Edwards	1,818	1,789	1,720	1,665	1,610	1,555	1,465	-19.42%
Town	Port Edwards	1,427	1,420	1,420	1,420	1,410	1,400	1,360	-4.70%
City	Nekoosa	2,580	2,568	2,555	2,550	2,530	2,500	2,415	-6.40%
Village	Plover	12,123	12,515	13,270	13,770	14,200	14,530	14,770	21.83%
City	Stevens Point	26,717	27,037	28,420	29,110	29,640	29,980	30,150	12.85%
City	Marshfield	19,118	19,186	18,975	18,930	18,785	18,585	18,030	-5.69%
City	Mosinee	3,988	4,021	4,160	4,225	4,270	4,270	4,235	6.19%
City	Schofield	2,169	2,212	2,205	2,210	2,205	2,180	2,135	-1.57%
City	Wausau	39,106	39,063	40,460	41,100	41,490	41,450	41,070	5.02%

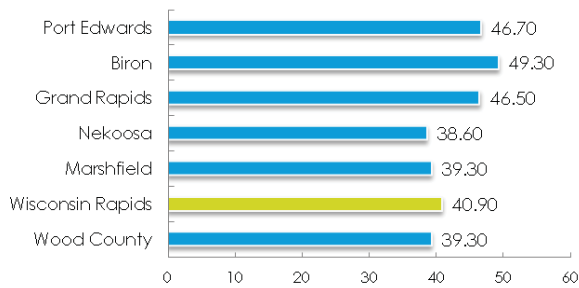
Data Source: Wisconsin DOA

**Figure 2: Regional Estimated Future Population Change (2010-2040)**



Data Source: Wisconsin DOA

**Figure 3: Regional Median Age Comparison**

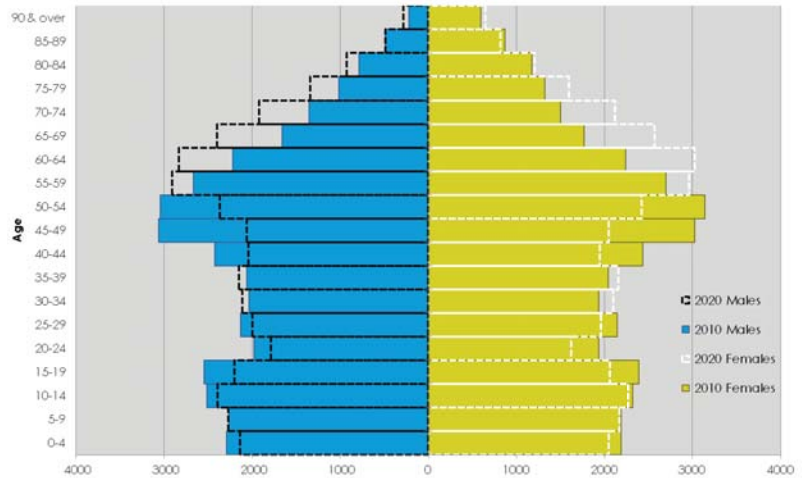


Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

As Figures 4-6 illustrate, Wood County has a significant portion of the population between 40 and 60 years of age. For many years, demographic analysts have been talking about the impact that is occurring as the large “baby boomer” generation moves through the aging cycle. This trend has been evident in the City and Wood County. This age cohort is the current driver maintaining a stable housing market and is the direct reason for the surging sales data that is reviewed later in this report.

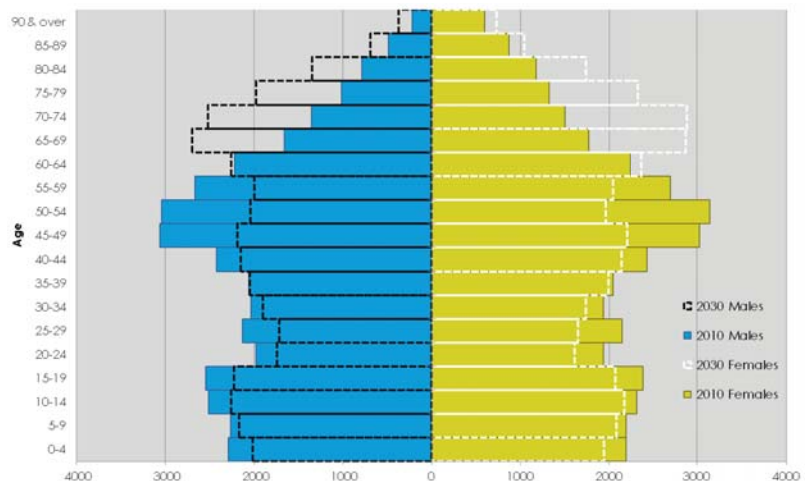
While most baby-boomers are still in their “forever” homes, there is a growing nationwide trend of retirees looking to downsize or relocate to a residential unit with less maintenance. The Nielsen Group illustrates this has significant implications as over 40% of households are headed by someone between the ages of 50 and 69. This age cohort holds approximately 54% of all household wealth and even though older households are less likely to purchase homes, this age cohort will account for a quarter of every dollar spent on new home purchases or rent over the next five to ten years.

**Figure 4: Wood County Age-Sex Pyramid, Population Projections (2010-2020)**



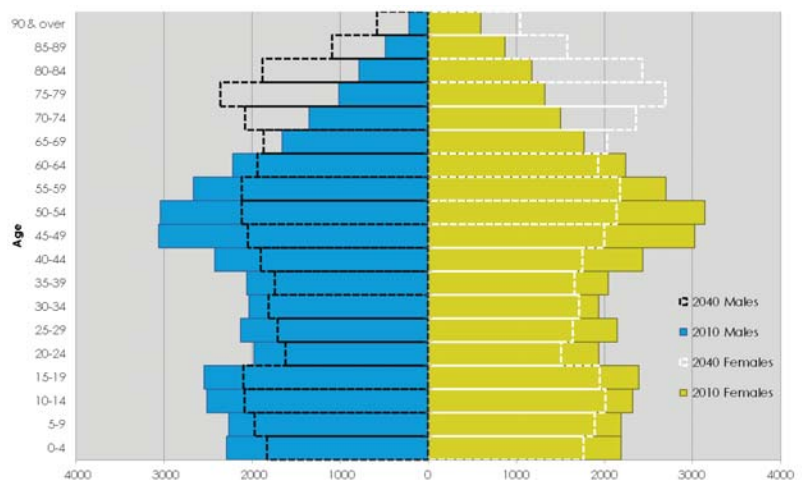
Data Source: Wisconsin DOA

**Figure 5: Wood County Age-Sex Pyramid, Population Projections (2010-2030)**



Data Source: Wisconsin DOA

**Figure 6: Wood County Age-Sex Pyramid, Population Projections (2010-2040)**



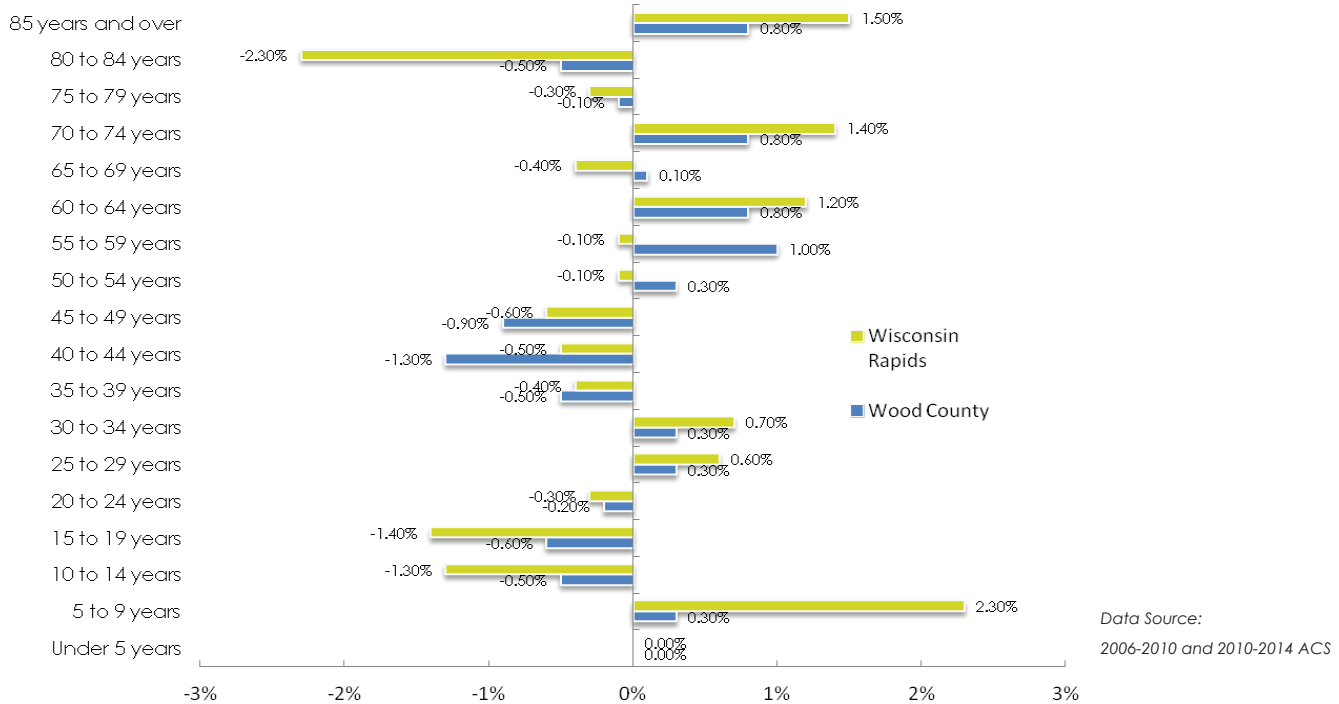
Data Source: Wisconsin DOA

As the trend to downsize gradually increases over the next 15-30 years, the impact this age cohort will have on the owner/renter composition will change. If Wood County is subject to this large age cohort entering retirement over the next 15-30 years and they are not replaced by an influx of a younger home buying generation, then the entire County housing market could see a gradual increase of homes on the real estate market. The change could reverse the recent trends in the housing market. The City has a lower median age than the surrounding villages and towns; therefore, it could experience this impact several years later.

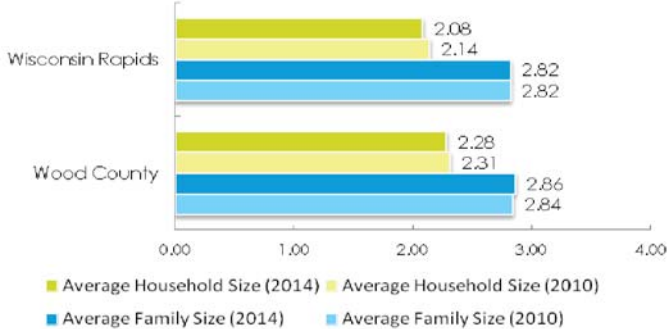
## HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Conversely, the City of Wisconsin Rapids and Wood County are losing residents between the ages of 10 and 25. The school enrollment losses listed on the next page illustrate these findings. Since the 2010 Census, with the exception of five to nine-year-olds, most of the population gains were in age cohorts older than 60. The City did see gains in the number of residents between 25-35 years old. Since this is the age cohort most likely to expand their families through birth, it should temporarily help reverse the trend of smaller average family and household sizes. Figure 7 illustrates the changes in the age demographic categories since the 2010 Census.

**Figure 7: Local Change in Age Demographic Categories (2010-2014)**



**Figure 8: Local Change in Average Family & Household Size**



**Figure 9: Regional Average Family and Household Size**

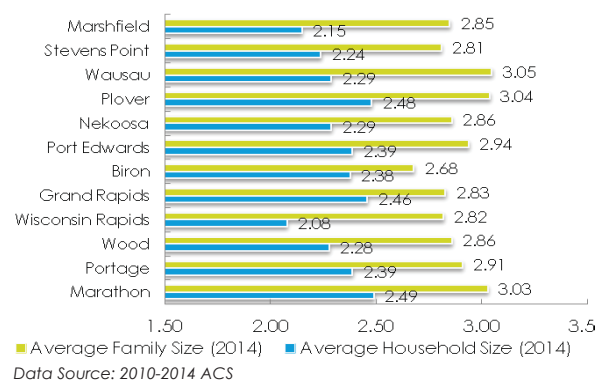






Figure 8 illustrates the changes in average family and household sizes for the City and Wood County. Figure 9 illustrates the regional comparison of average household and family sizes. Since the City lost a significant percentage of the population between the ages of 10 and 25, the reduction will show greater impact when this age cohort reaches an age to start families.

## INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

According to the 2010-2014 ACS, Wisconsin Rapids has relatively low incomes when compared to the surrounding communities and counties. Specifically, the City has an estimated median household income of approximately \$36,300. This figure is approximately \$12,000 less than the median household income for Wood County, nearly \$4,000 less than the Cities of Wausau and Stevens Point, and over \$6,000 less than the City of Marshfield. Of greater concern is household income level directly impacting future housing choices, and the 2010-2014 ACS reports that 13-19% of Wisconsin Rapids residents reside below the federal poverty level. Table 4 details the regional median income comparison.

According to the 2010-2014 ACS, of the estimated 8,004 employment positions in the City, the largest share is in education or health care services (~ 24.0%) followed by manufacturing (~ 21.8%) and retail

trade (12.6%). Table 5 details these findings. The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) anticipates the North Central Workforce Development Area (WA6: Adams, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, and Wood Counties) will see growth of approximately 5,000 new education and health services jobs, approximately 1,800 new professional and business services jobs, and approximately 1,400 new leisure and hospitality jobs. The DWD anticipates the manufacturing and goods production sectors to increase by nearly 1,275 jobs, but the total market share of manufacturing employment will fall approximately one percent (20.7% to 19.9%) due to the larger projected increases in the service sector.

## EDUCATION AND ENROLLMENT

According to the Department of Public Instruction, every school district in Wood County (Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards, Pittsville, Nekoosa, Marshfield, and Auburndale), the Wausau School District, and the Stevens Point School District experienced reduced enrollment from 2001 to 2015. These figures include reported enrollment totals for both public and private schools.

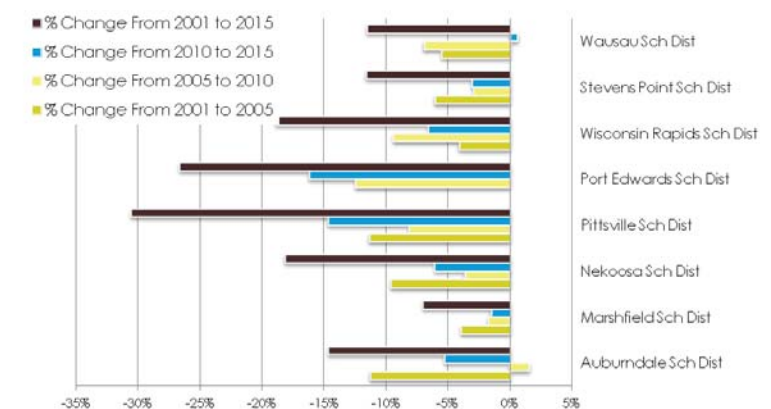
It is difficult to compare the total number of losses in each district because the surveyed school districts ranged from over 9,500 enrolled students (Wausau) to 378 enrolled students (Port Edwards) in 2015. Therefore, Vierbicher reviewed the per-

**Table 4: Regional Median Household Income Comparison**

Municipality Type	Municipality Name	Median household income (dollars)
County	Marathon	\$ 53,779
County	Portage	\$ 50,837
County	Wood	\$ 48,241
City	Wisconsin Rapids	\$ 36,299
Town	Grand Rapids	\$ 73,208
Village	Biron	\$ 56,094
Village	Port Edwards	\$ 54,125
City	Nekoosa	\$ 38,207
Village	Plover	\$ 58,409
City	Wausau	\$ 40,464
City	Stevens Point	\$ 40,081
City	Marshfield	\$ 42,619

Source: 2014 ACS

**Figure 10: Regional Changes in School Enrollment**



Data Source: Department of Public Instruction

cent changes and found the greatest percent reduction occurred in Pittsville (30.52%), Port Edwards (26.6%), Nekoosa (18.18%), and Wisconsin Rapids (18.13%). Figure 10 illustrates these find-

ings. This is of concern as the surrounding municipalities attempt to curb the recent trends in declining family and household sizes. The Wisconsin Rapids School District did slow the enrollment losses and only experienced a 6.5% decline in enrollment from 2010-2015.

**Table 5: County Employment Comparison**

Employment Type	Wood County		Wisconsin Rapids	
	Estimate	Percent of County	Estimate	Percent of City
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, & mining	1,186	3.28%	115	1.44%
Construction	2,098	5.80%	432	5.40%
Manufacturing * **	7,096	19.62%	1,663	20.78%
Wholesale trade* **	765	2.12%	133	1.66%
Retail trade	4,182	11.56%	1,011	12.63%
Transportation & warehousing, & utilities **	1,909	5.28%	363	4.54%
Information * **	479	1.32%	130	1.62%
Finance & insurance, & real estate & rental & leasing	1,445	4.00%	325	4.06%
Professional, scientific, & management, & administrative **	1,767	4.89%	496	6.20%
Educational services, & health care & social assistance	9,904	27.39%	1,916	23.94%
Arts, entertainment, & recreation, & accommodation & food services **	2,655	7.34%	723	9.03%
Other services, except public administration **	1,575	4.36%	438	5.47%
Public administration * **	1,103	3.05%	259	3.24%
Total:	36,164		8,004	
*Outside Margin of Error - Count		**Outside Margin of Error - City		

## TAX COMPARISON

Table 6 illustrates the tax rates in a regional comparative context. Typically, villages and towns will have proportionally lower tax rates than cities because cities offer more amenities such as parks, schools, commercial land uses, and industrial land uses. Many of the surrounding villages and towns use these regional amenities, the different land uses, and the employment generators to supplement their higher residential composition. Cities also have higher percentages of homes serviced by sewer and water utilities. The City of Wisconsin Rapids tax rate is slightly higher than

the comparable community of Marshfield and adjacent Village of Biron. The Town of Grand Rapids' tax rate is significantly lower than the City of Wisconsin Rapids and taxes on a home valued at \$100,000 would be approximately \$855 less in the Town. However, the assessed value of similar homes in the Town of Grand Rapids is significantly higher than the City of Wisconsin Rapids.

The taxes on a median home value in the City of Wisconsin Rapids (\$85,000) would be approximately \$2,250 whereas the taxes on a median home value in the Town of Grand Rapids (\$145,000) would be approximately \$2,600.

**Table 6: Regional Tax Comparison**

Municipality Type	Municipality Name	2014 Effective Tax Rate	Taxes on \$100,000	Difference v/s Wisconsin Rapids	School Tax Percent	Tech College Tax Percent	County Tax Percent	Local Tax Percent	Other Tax Percent
City	Wisconsin Rapids	0.02642	\$ 2,642		36.7%	2.9%	16.9%	41.2%	2.3%
Town	Grand Rapids	0.01787	\$ 1,787	\$ (855)	53.9%	4.3%	26.7%	14.3%	0.9%
Village	Biron	0.02585	\$ 2,585	\$ (57)	32.5%	2.6%	16.1%	33.2%	15.6%
Village	Port Edwards	0.01746	\$ 1,746	\$ (896)	58.6%	4.3%	26.8%	9.4%	0.9%
City	Nekoosa	0.03026	\$ 3,026	\$ 384	30.4%	2.3%	13.3%	41.4%	12.6%
Village	Plover	0.01905	\$ 1,905	\$ (737)	45.2%	6.0%	25.4%	22.6%	0.8%
City	Wausau	0.02517	\$ 2,517	\$ (125)	38.4%	4.2%	17.9%	31.4%	8.0%
City	Stevens Point	0.02179	\$ 2,179	\$ (463)	34.2%	3.5%	21.5%	37.1%	3.7%
City	Marshfield*	0.02315	\$ 2,315	\$ (327)	52.1%	4.5%	27.8%	14.7%	0.9%

Source: 2015 DOR TVC Report

\* Portion located in Wood County



## Housing Profile, Supply, and Demand







## HOUSEHOLD PROFILE

The quality of a housing unit directly relates to the user satisfaction; however, obtaining objective data on the housing stock can be a difficult task. This next section looks at relevant and obtainable municipal level data to understand the housing quality and characteristics.

## OCCUPANCY TENURE

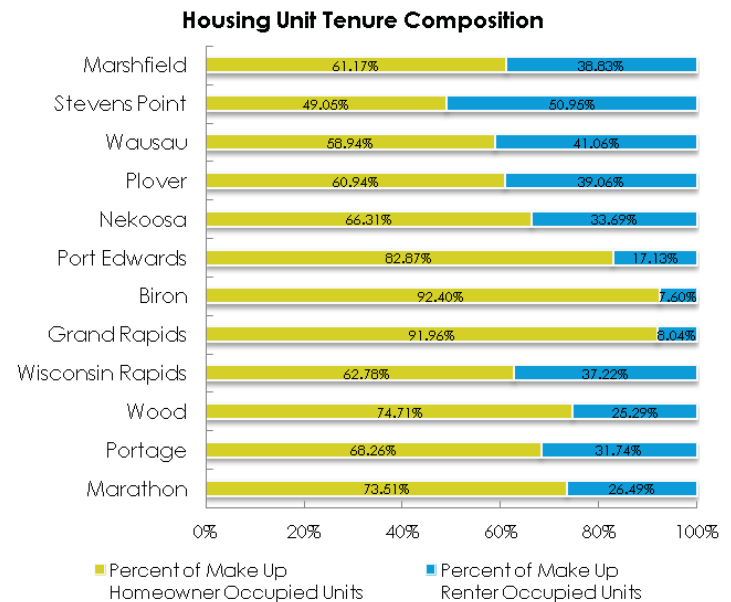
Vierbicher notes the 2010-2014 ACS estimates the City of Wisconsin Rapids to have 8,558 occupied housing units and 9,007 total housing units. According to the 2015 assessment records, the City of Wisconsin Rapids has 8,802 housing units, a difference of 24 units or 2.28%. We consider these totals to be relatively equal for use throughout the remainder of this report.

According to the 2010-2014 ACS, approximately 62.78% of the occupied 8,558 housing units within the City are owner-occupied, and 37.22% are renter occupied. As expected, the rental unit occupancy in Wisconsin Rapids was higher than the immediate surrounding towns and villages, but the number of owner-occupied units for Wisconsin Rapids is slightly higher than the City of Marshfield and over ten percent higher than the City of Stevens Point. Figure 11 illustrates the total population tenure or occupancy status for the City of Wisconsin Rapids and the surrounding and comparable communities. Figure 12 also illustrates the City's low vacancy rates compared to the surrounding communities.

Also, 59.70% of the total units within the City are owner-occupied single family detached units; this is the highest rate of single family detached ownership for comparable cities. As expected, the City has a lower rate of owner-occupied single family detached homes than the immediate surrounding villages and towns. Table 7 on the next page illustrates the complete list of housing types and ownership compositions for each of the communities surveyed.

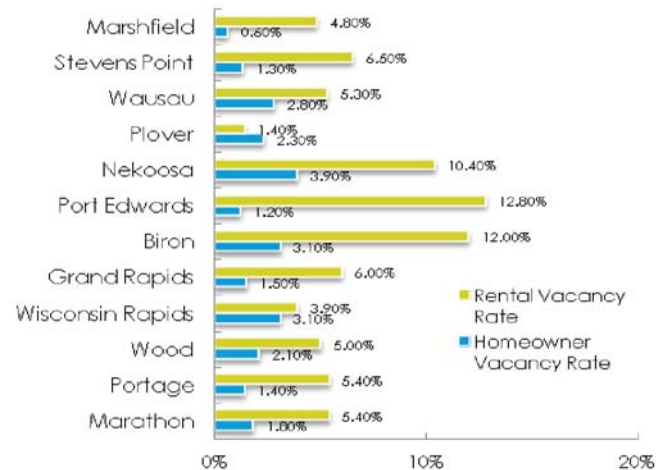
Furthermore, only 43.2% of the rental population resides in a single family home, 20.8% reside in a building containing two to four units, and 33.2% reside in a building containing five or more units.

**Figure 11: Regional Housing Unit Tenure/Occupancy Status**



Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

**Figure 12: Regional Unit Vacancy Rate by Tenure**

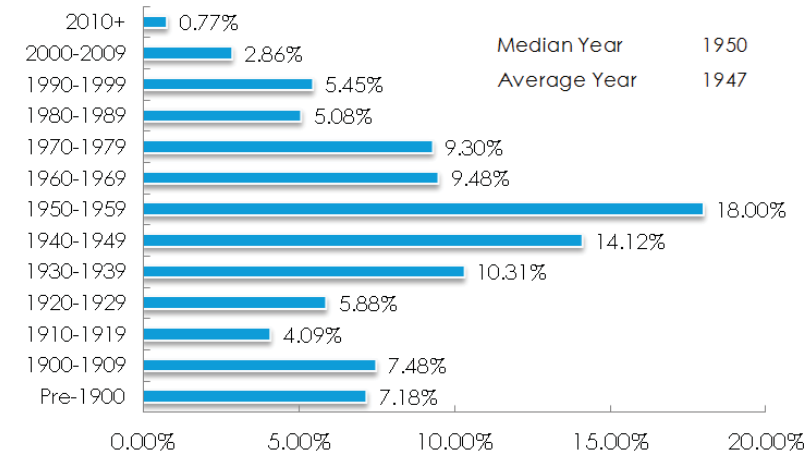


Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

## 2016 PARCEL STATUS/ASSESSMENT REVIEW

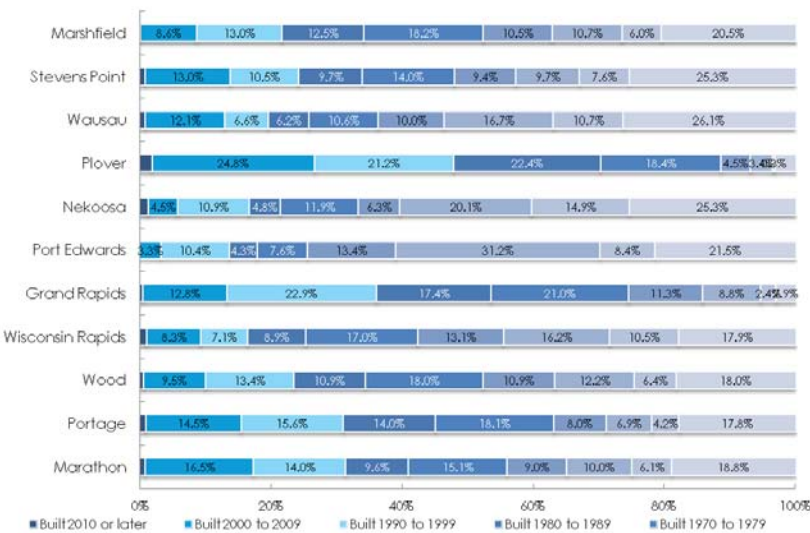
According to the assessment records, there are approximately 120 residentially classed parcels that are greater than 0.15 acres, have a land value greater than \$8,000, an improvement value less than \$5,000, and are in a residential future land use designation. These are the parcels that the study classifies as "developable." The majority of these lots are infill or those on the fringe of the existing neighborhoods. There are more parcels with enough acreage for development but were subdivided without having improvements or services (road, water, sewer, etc.) to the lots. Map 6 identifies these parcels.

**Figure 13: Local Single & Two-Family Residential Units – by Decade (portion of existing inventory)**



Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids Assessor

**Figure 14: Regional Residential Units Comparison – by Decade**



Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids Assessor, 2010-2014 ACS

## UNIT AGE

While the unit age does not directly correlate with the quality of the housing stock and the type of unit, it could help understand the typical features and amenities that might reside in the structure still today. According to the assessment record, almost 15% of the single and two-family homes were constructed before 1930, and 49% were constructed before 1950. Of significant note, a total of 18% of the units still in existence today were constructed during the post-WWII housing boom between 1950 and 1959 and of particular concern is only 14.16% of units have been constructed over the last 35 years. Figure 13 and Map 3 illustrate the single and two-family construction by the decade. According to the assessor and the 2010-2014 ACS, Figure 14 represents the regional residential unit comparison.

## BEDROOMS

According to the American Enterprise Institute, since the 1970's the national average home size increased by 1,000 square feet despite the decline in average and median family sizes. The average living space per individual has therefore doubled over the last forty years (<https://www.aei.org/publication>). The City of Wisconsin Rapids has a larger portion of the total units in two and three bedroom units than all of the other municipalities surveyed. Almost 90% of all housing units within the City have three units or fewer. These findings are typical of a community with an older median home age and a larger share of the regional rental market. More specifically, units in the City are split along the categories listed on the next page:

**Table 7: Regional Housing Tenure by Ownership and Structure Type**

Municipality Type	Municipality Name	1, detached		1, attached		2 Units		3 or 4 Units		5 to 9 Units		10 to 19 Units		20 to 49 Units		50+ Units		Mobile home		Boat, RV, van, etc	
		Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter
County	Marathon	69.20%	6.51%	0.84%	1.86%	0.63%	4.76%	0.20%	1.72%	0.16%	4.58%	0.03%	3.71%	0.05%	1.56%	0.08%	1.18%	2.31%	0.61%	0.01%	0.00%
County	Portage	62.86%	7.54%	1.63%	1.72%	0.58%	4.29%	0.06%	4.81%	0.06%	5.86%	0.00%	3.68%	0.00%	1.76%	0.00%	1.20%	3.05%	0.88%	0.01%	0.00%
County	Wood	69.70%	7.61%	0.84%	1.43%	0.64%	3.22%	0.10%	1.58%	0.00%	3.45%	0.07%	1.81%	0.01%	3.41%	0.02%	1.93%	3.31%	0.86%	0.01%	0.00%
City	Wisconsin Rapids	59.70%	10.19%	0.98%	2.84%	0.62%	4.27%	0.00%	3.58%	0.00%	6.02%	0.09%	1.92%	0.00%	5.43%	0.00%	1.92%	1.39%	1.06%	0.00%	0.00%
Town	Grand Rapids	86.50%	4.94%	0.00%	0.58%	0.55%	1.52%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.45%	4.91%	0.55%	0.00%	0.00%
Village	Port Edwards	82.03%	11.84%	0.42%	0.84%	0.42%	1.53%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.70%	0.00%	2.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
City	Nekoosa	65.92%	17.04%	0.39%	1.96%	0.00%	4.41%	0.00%	1.08%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.25%	0.00%	4.70%	0.00%	1.47%	0.00%	0.78%	0.00%	0.00%
Village	Plover	56.15%	3.53%	3.43%	3.02%	0.18%	2.23%	0.00%	7.23%	0.00%	13.92%	0.00%	5.78%	0.00%	2.20%	0.00%	0.45%	1.18%	0.69%	0.00%	0.00%
City	Stevens Point	43.99%	10.53%	2.04%	2.55%	1.03%	8.94%	0.09%	8.08%	0.08%	8.30%	0.00%	6.60%	0.00%	3.12%	0.00%	2.36%	1.82%	0.46%	0.00%	0.00%
City	Marshfield	54.62%	5.14%	1.80%	1.68%	1.15%	5.65%	0.19%	1.71%	0.00%	7.60%	0.19%	4.53%	0.00%	7.02%	0.09%	5.06%	3.13%	0.45%	0.00%	0.00%

*Italics Indicates outside 15% margin of error due to small sample size*

Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS



- One bedroom units - approximately 12%
- Two bedrooms units - approximately 32%
- Three bedroom units – approximately 43%
- Studio & Greater than four bedroom units - approximately 12%

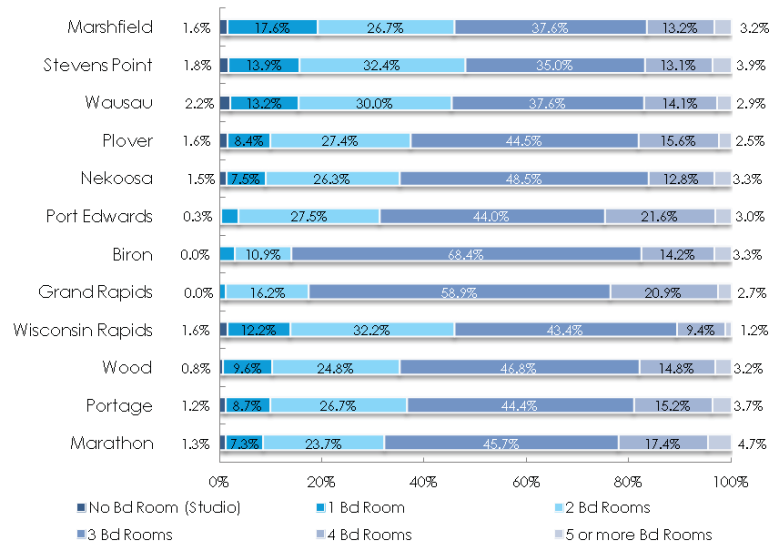
Whereas, only 73% of the households in the community survey stated their home was three units or less; this is a direct result of people from outside of Wisconsin Rapids with larger homes responding to the survey. Figure 15 represents the regional residential bedroom per unit comparison.

## UNIT SIZE

The average housing unit increased nationwide each decade until the housing bubble burst in the late 2000's. The 2000's saw the highest average square footage per new single and two family residential units in Wisconsin Rapids. The 1,648 average square feet outpaced the 1990's average by over 120 square feet. However, since the housing market crash in the late 2000's the average new home size decreased by nearly 300 square feet. More specifically, the City experienced an increase in the ratio of duplex and triplex units to single family homes. Two and three family uses tend to have a smaller per unit square foot ratio than single family homes. Thus, the average square feet per unit significantly decreased from 1,648 square feet from 2000-2009 to 1,343 square feet since 2010. While the average square feet per structure is 1,336, the inclusion of two and three family uses lowers the average unit size to 1,251 per square feet per unit (Figures 16 and 17).

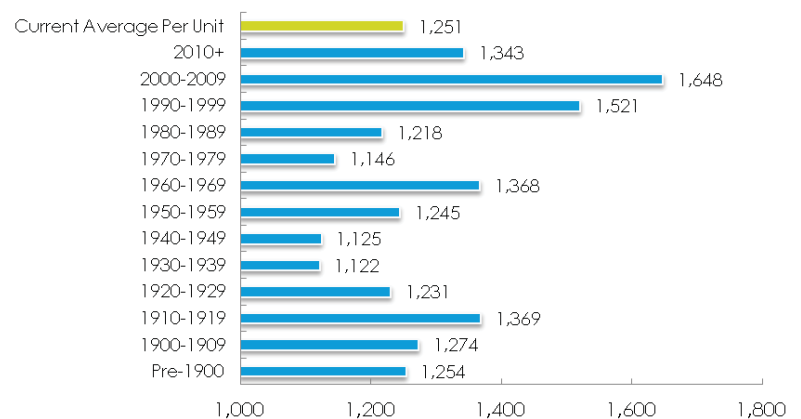
Since the City has an older median structure age than the surrounding communities it can be assumed the average unit size will also be smaller than the surrounding communities. Nearly 70% of the single and two family housing units within the City are below 1,500 square feet. Approximately 20% of the units are between 1,500 and 2,000 square feet, and only 10% are greater than 2,000 square feet.

**Figure 15: Regional Comparison Number of Bedrooms per Unit**



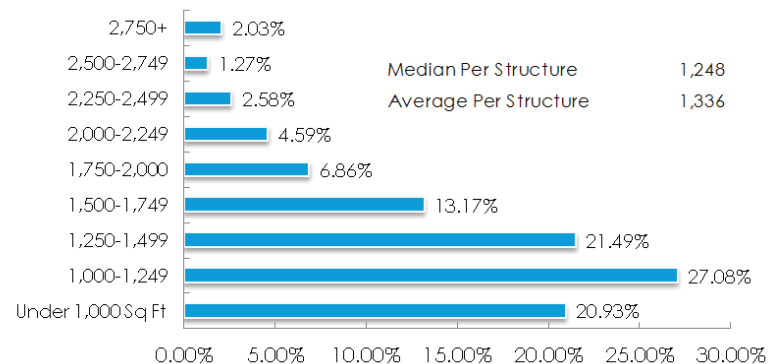
Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids Assessor, 2010-2014 ACS

**Figure 16: Local Average Unit Size – by Decade**



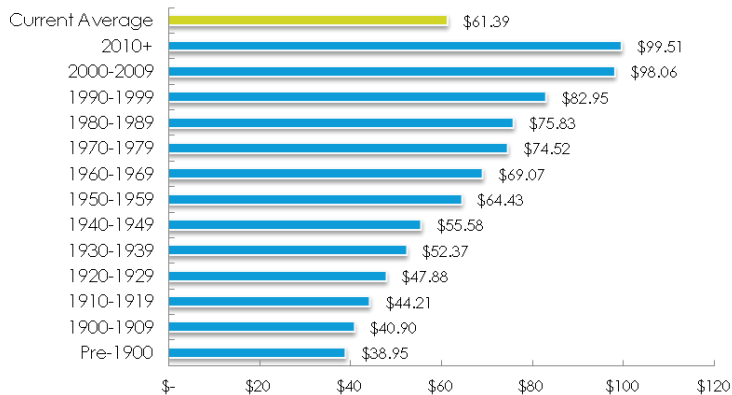
Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids Assessor, 2010-2014 ACS

**Figure 17: Local Unit Size Classification**



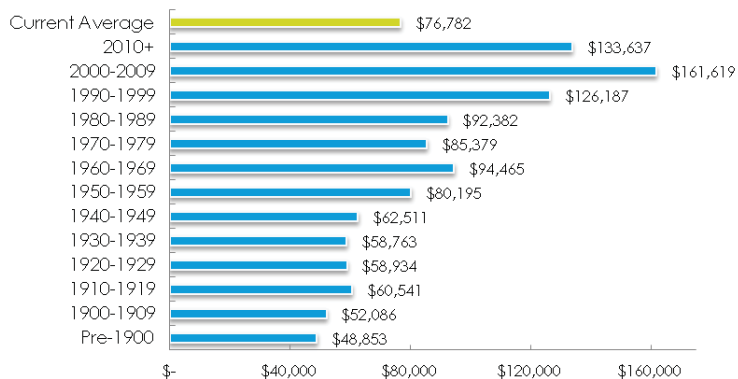
Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids Assessor, 2010-2014 ACS

## Local Single and Two Family Residential Assessed Value Per Square Foot - by Decade



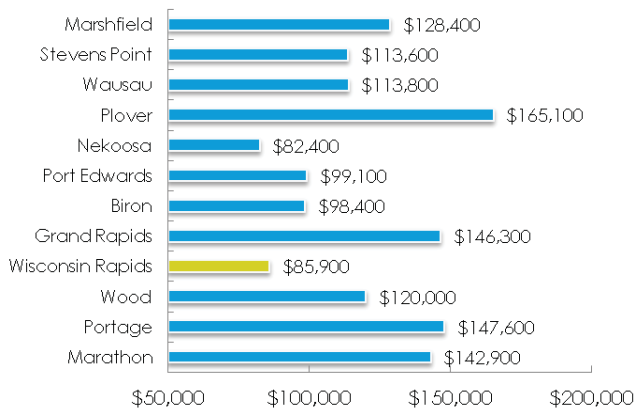
Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids Assessor, 2010-2014 ACS

## Local Average Single and Two Family Residential Unit Assessed Value - by Decade



Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids Assessor, 2010-2014 ACS

## Median Single Family Residential Unit Assessed Value



Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS



Image: Example single family owner occupied units

## HOUSING UNIT VALUE

The City experienced a gradual increase the average home value per square foot each decade since 1900. The remaining historic homes constructed before 1900 have a current per square foot value of \$38.95. Units constructed in the 1950's have a current value of \$64.43 per square foot and the most recent homes constructed after 2010 have a current value of \$99.51 per square foot. The average value for all single and two-family homes is \$61.39 per square foot, and the average assessed value for all single and two-family residentially classed parcels in the City is approximate \$77,000 and ranged as low as \$15,000 of final assessed value. Figures 18 and 19 illustrate these findings.

According to the 2010-2014 ACS, the median owner-occupied housing unit value is \$85,900. The difference in value results from the tendency of investors to purchase the lower priced homes to convert into rental units. The City of Wisconsin Rapids has the second lowest owner occupied median home value of the communities studied and is significantly lower than the Wood County median value of \$120,000 per owner-occupied unit. Figure 20 illustrates this finding.

As expected, there is a strong correlation between the year of construction and the assessed value and the value per square foot; this is an important finding because the median age of the residential structures is 65 years old, and only 14.16% of units have been constructed since 1980.





## HOMEOWNER HOUSING COSTS

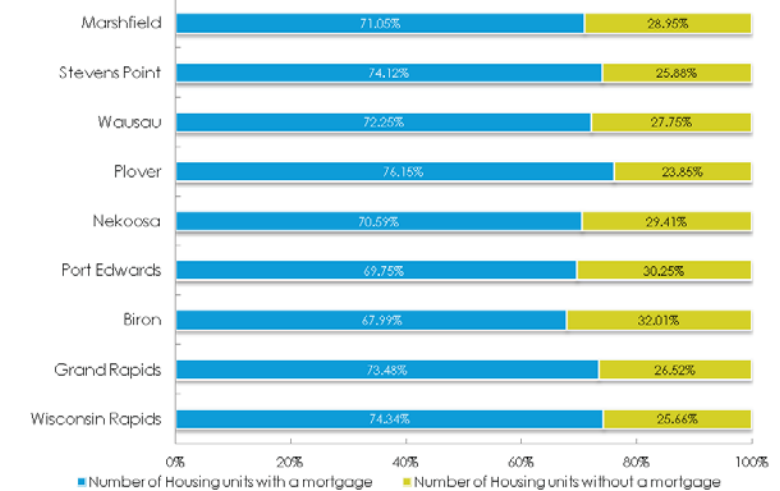
The financing of home ownership is a measure of stability within a community. The greater percentage of owner occupied units without a mortgage typically represents a community with longer tenured residents. According to the 2010-2014 ACS, the City has approximately 75% of owner-occupied units with a mortgage; this figure is slightly higher than the study area average of 72.5%. Figure 21 illustrates these findings. Additionally, Figure 22 illustrates the median monthly costs associated with homeownership. The City has roughly the same ownership costs for households without a mortgage throughout the study area, but significantly lower monthly housing costs for households with a mortgage. The lower mortgage ownership costs are a direct result of the lower home sale values (detailed later in this report). The median monthly homeowner housing costs for homes with a mortgage in the City is approximately \$960, whereas, the Wood County median monthly homeowner housing costs for homes with a mortgage is approximately \$1,100.

## HOUSING COSTS AS A PERCENT OF INCOME (HOMEOWNER)

Furthermore, the amount spent on housing costs as a percentage of gross income is a direct measure of the strength of the housing market. National experts state housing costs should be less than 30% of total household income. Nationwide as housing costs outpace household incomes, nearly 40 million households spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

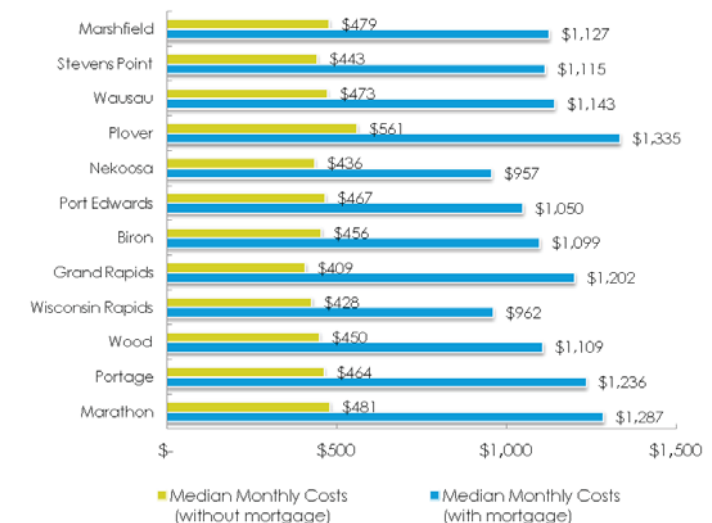
According to the 2010-2014 ACS, approximately 24-26% of owner occupied households within the City spend more than 30% of their household income on housing costs. This percentage similar to the comparable communities within the region but is slightly more than the Wood County average. Of concern, is nearly 17% of households without a mortgage still spend more than 30% of the household income on annual housing cost - the highest in the region and is a direct result of older homes requiring more maintenance and lower incomes in the City. Figures 23 and 24 detail the percentage of housing costs for owner-occupied housing units with and without a mortgage.

**Figure 21: Regional Owner Occupied Mortgage Status**



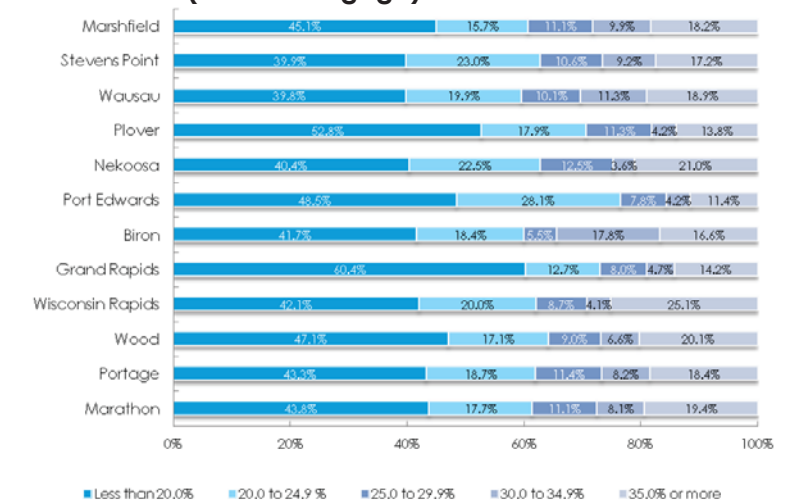
Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

**Figure 22: Regional Median Monthly Housing Costs**



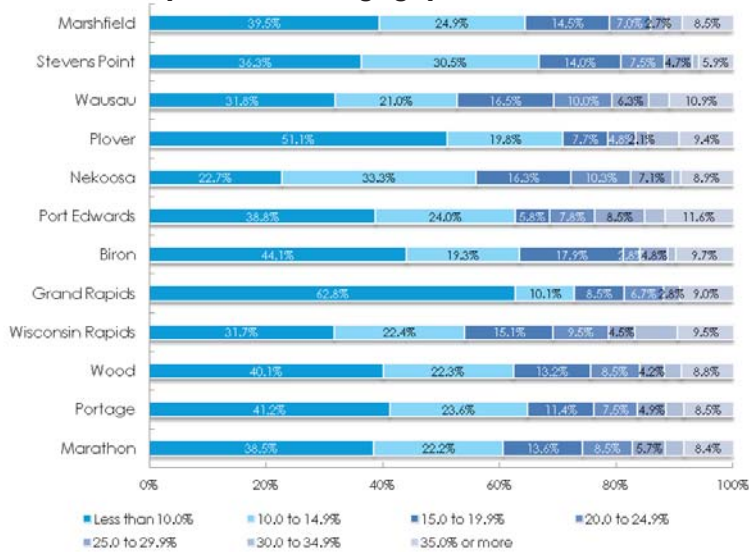
Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

**Figure 23: Regional Housing Cost as a Percentage of Household Income (with a mortgage)**



Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

**Figure 24: Regional Housing Cost as a Percentage of Household Income (without a mortgage)**



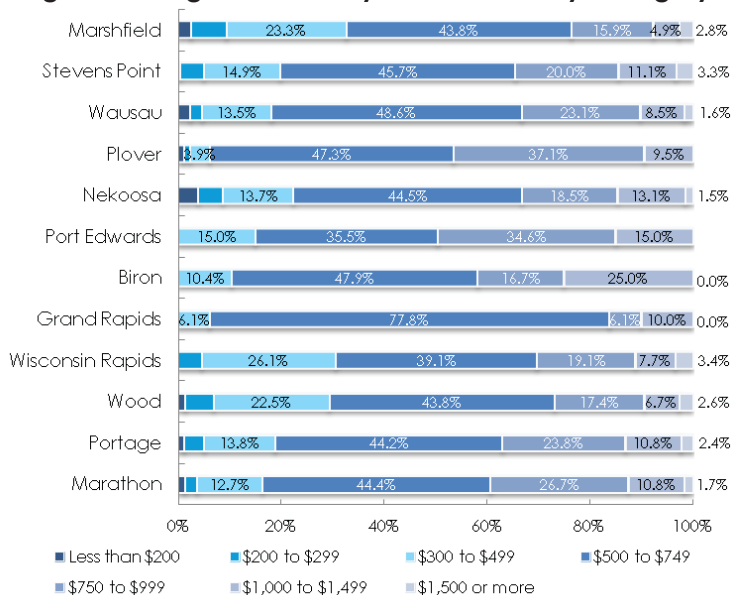
Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

**Figure 25: Regional Median Monthly Rental Rates**



Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

**Figure 26: Regional Monthly Rental Rates by Category**



Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

## MEDIAN RENTAL COSTS

As previously stated, approximately 37% of the units in the City are renter occupied. According to the 2010-2014 ACS, the City median rental costs of \$620 a month remains slightly above the Wood County average of \$613 a month. The estimated monthly rental cost is slightly lower than the City of Stevens Point (\$659 a month) but greater than the City of Marshfield (\$585 a month).

Overall, the median monthly rental value within Wisconsin Rapids is much lower than the immediate surrounding communities. Figure 25 illustrates these findings. The lower rental rates are a direct result of the majority of the units being older and smaller than newer units in most of the other surrounding communities. Figure 26 lists the percentage of monthly rents by category and by the municipality. It is noted the reported results for the Village of Port Edwards fall outside the 15% margin of error. The community survey results detailed later in the report supplement these findings.



Image: Example multi family structures





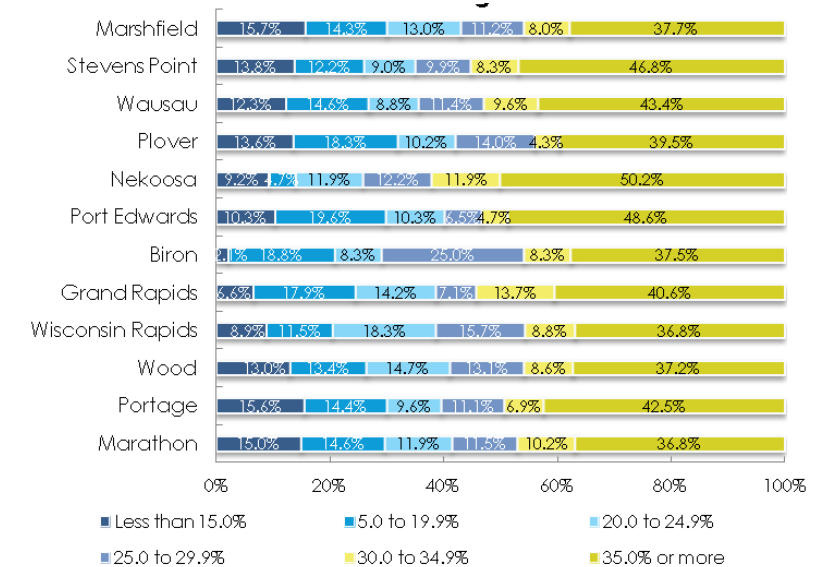
## HOUSING COSTS AS A PERCENT OF INCOME (RENTER)

Similar to the concerns for homeownership expenses exceeding 30% of gross annual income, the rental population of Wisconsin Rapids experiences an even greater percentage of the population exceeding 30% of their income on housing costs. Approximately 43-45% of the rental population within the City spends over 30% of the household income on housing related expenses. While this is a high percentage of the population, it is similar to all other communities surveyed. Therefore, this should be a concern for the entire region that rental rates continue to increase faster than median household incomes. This is a national trend, and as the Multi-Family Executive research group documented, 2015 was the sixth year in a row with higher than normal price level increases. As vacancy rates decrease the rental rates increase as a result of higher demand. Figure 27 illustrates the findings. The community survey results detailed later in the report supplement these findings.



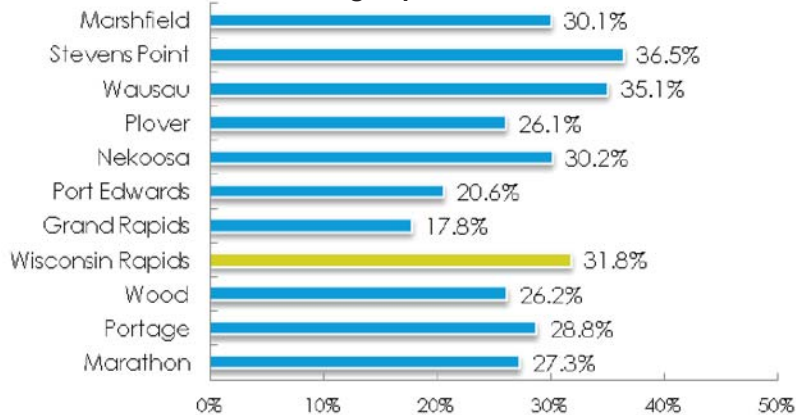
Image: Example multi family structures

**Figure 27: Regional Rental Housing Costs as a percentage of Gross Income**



Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

**Figure 28: Regional Percent of Population Spending 30% or More of Income on Housing Expenses**

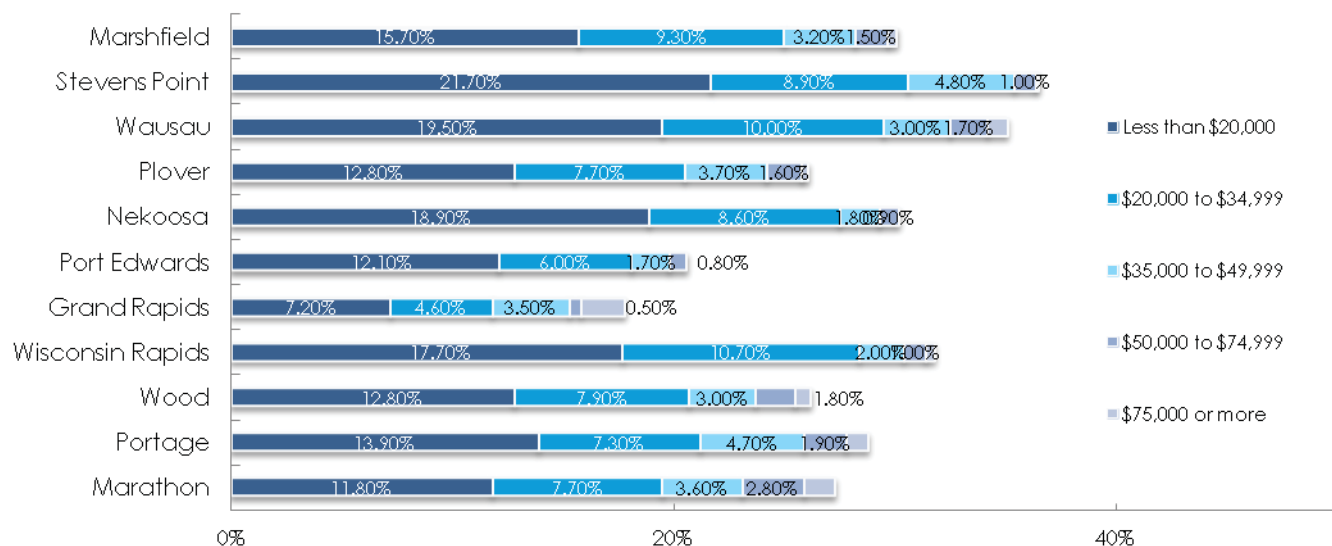


Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS

## AFFORDABILITY HOUSING: EXPENSES GREATER THAN 30% OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Affordable housing is defined as spending less than 30% of gross household income on housing expenses. Based on the 2010-2014 ACS, the City of Wisconsin Rapids has approximately 30-32% of total households spending more than 30% of their total income on housing related expenses. Moreover, nearly 27-29% of households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing-related expenses make less than \$35,000, thus burdening this population even further. Since the median home assessed value, average sale value, and median gross rent is much lower than the surrounding communities, those in the higher income categories will have proportionately less housing expenses. According to the 2010-2014 ACS, only 3-5% of households in Wisconsin Rapids making more than \$35,000 are spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Figure 28, Figure 29, and results of the community survey illustrate and support these findings.

**Figure 29: Regional Percent of Population Spending 30% or More of Income on Housing Expenses by Income Category**



Data Source: 2010-2014 ACS



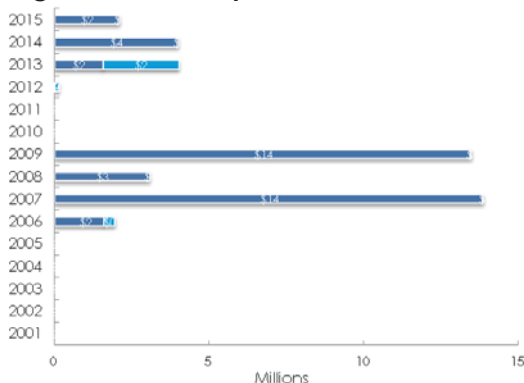
## HOUSING SUPPLY TREND

### NEW RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Based on the last 15 years of residential permit data from the City (as illustrated in Figure 30) single family and duplex construction peaked between 2002 and 2004 and slowly decreased until the recession in the late 2000's. The City averaged only ten single or two family residential permits from 2010 to 2015. To put that into perspective, the lowest number of units still in use today by decade before 2000 was between 1910-1919, where 276 units are still in existence today. Figure 13, Figure 30, and Table 8 illustrates these findings.

Almost conversely, the number of apartments (four or more units) built within in the City grew out of the decrease in single to three family unit construction. Since 2006, developers obtained permits for a total of 808 units and constructed the majority of the units between 2006 and 2010. Figure 31 and 32 detail this trend. The total permit values mirror the total unit permits for the single to three family units; whereas, the permit value for the apartments widely ranged depending on the type of unit. Senior and nursing facilities have a much higher value than compared to traditional apartments. The greatest years for senior and nursing facilities was 2007, 2009, and 2014.

**Figure 32 Local Apartment Permit Value**



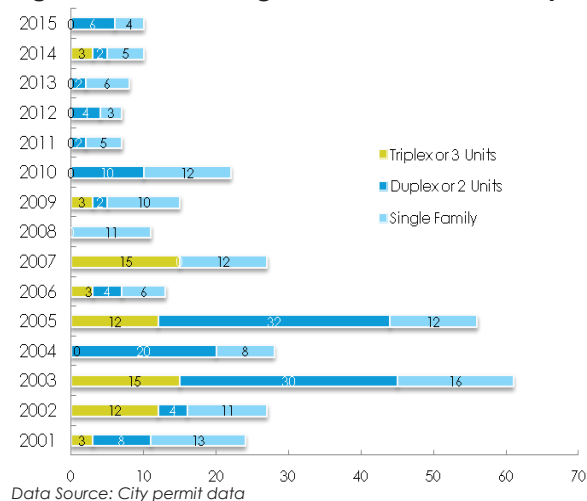
Data Source: City permit data

**Table 8: Local One to Three Family Structure Construction by Decade**

Year	Number of units	Percentage of Total Units
Pre-1900	485	7.18%
1900-1909	505	7.48%
1910-1919	276	4.09%
1920-1929	397	5.88%
1930-1939	696	10.31%
1940-1949	953	14.12%
1950-1959	1215	18.00%
1960-1969	640	9.48%
1970-1979	628	9.30%
1980-1989	343	5.08%
1990-1999	368	5.45%
2000-2009	193	2.86%
2010+	52	0.77%
Total	6751	-

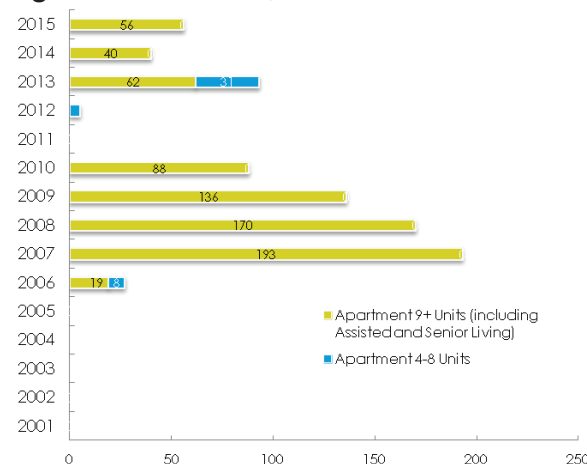
Data Source: City Assessment Data

**Figure 30: Local Single, Two, & Three Family Unit Permits**



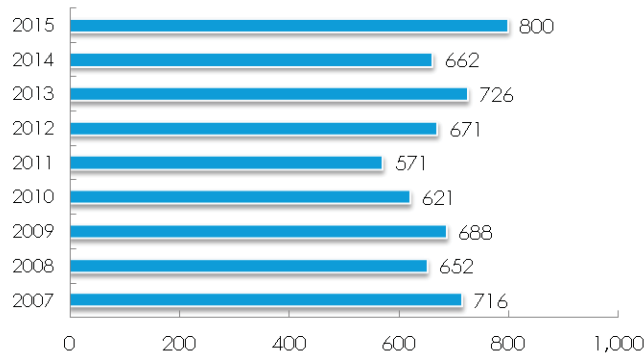
Data Source: City permit data

**Figure 31: Local 4-8, and 9+ Unit Permits**



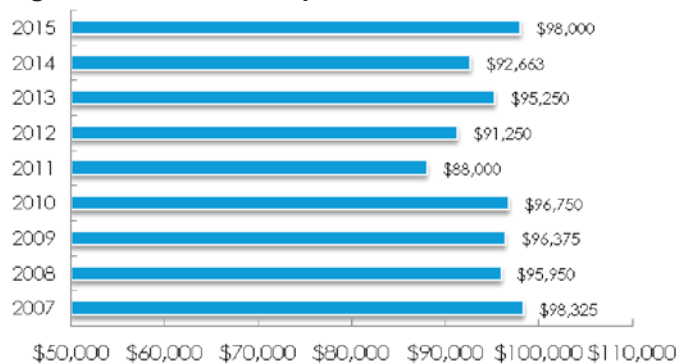
Data Source: City permit data

**Figure 33: Wood County Annual Total Unit Sale**



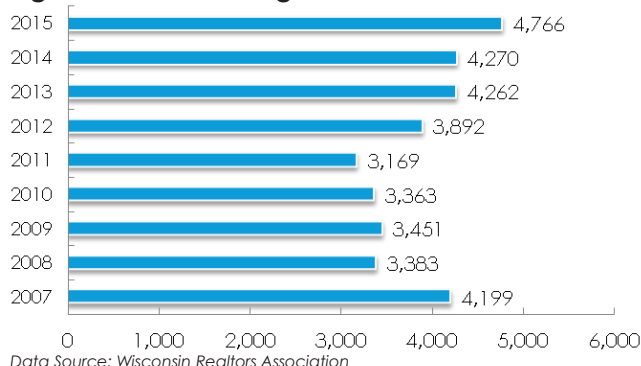
Data Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association

**Figure 34: Wood County Median Sale Price**



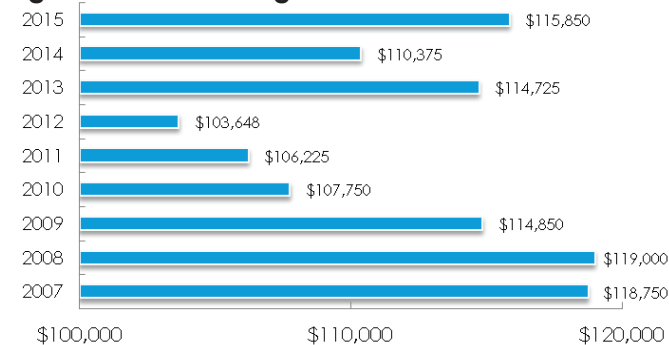
Data Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association

**Figure 35: Central Region Annual Total Unit Sale**



Data Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association

**Figure 36: Central Region Median Sale Price**



Data Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association

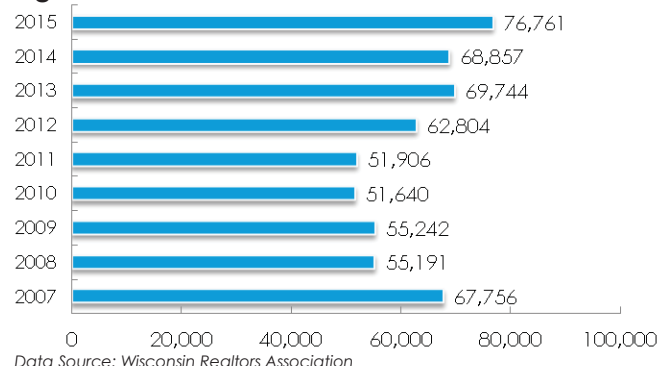
## MLS REVIEW

During the December stakeholder interviews, several of the realtors expressed concern that the City of Wisconsin Rapids average home sales over the past few years became stagnant, but have since started to return to pre-recession sales levels. They also stated the City routinely experiences a lower rate of new construction because the median assessed value and median sale values are significantly lower than the actual cost of new construction.

## REAL ESTATE SALES AND LISTINGS

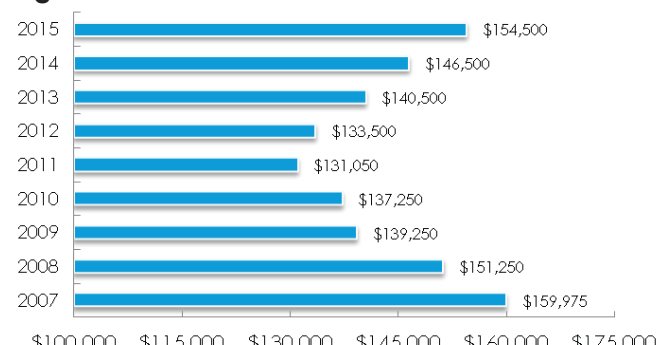
To fully evaluate the recent real estate sales data, Vierbicher reviewed recent Multiple Listing Services (MLS) sales data over the previous five years for the cities of Wisconsin Rapids, Stevens Point, Marshfield, the Village of Plover, Town of Grand Rapids, Wood County, the central region, and the State of Wisconsin. This review enabled the market analysis to evaluate the surrounding communities, comparable cities, the region, and the state. Figures 33-38 detail the unit sales and median sales trend for Wood County, the Central Region, and the State of Wisconsin.

**Figure 37: State of Wisconsin Annual Unit Sale**



Data Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association

**Figure 38: State of Wisconsin Median Sale Price**



Data Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association



## LOCAL SINGLE FAMILY REAL ESTATE SALES

The following section reviews the regional sales of single and two family homes from 2009 to 2015.

### *Percent of Listed Single Family Homes Sold*

The City of Wisconsin Rapids sales has since rebounded to a current high of 77% sale of total listings. Percent of homes sold is up from the low of 47% sale of the total listings in 2011. The current listing to sale ratio is equal to the Town of Grand Rapids, is higher than the City of Marshfield, and is lower than the City of Stevens Point. Figure 39 illustrates these findings.

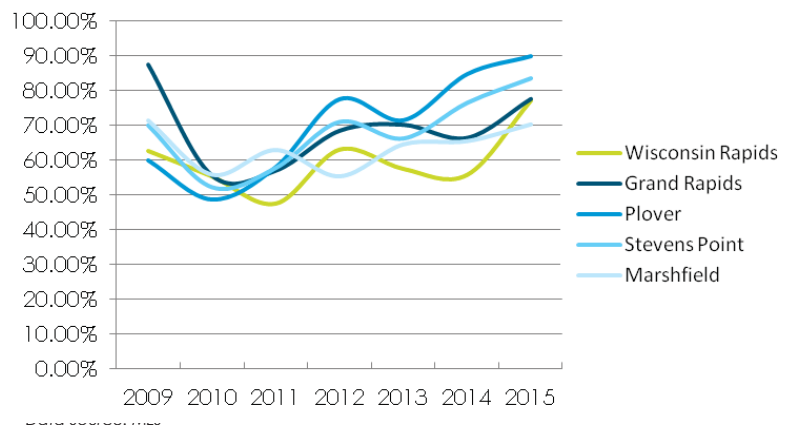
### *Average Single Family List Price*

According to the MLS listing data, the City of Wisconsin Rapids average annual listing price fluctuated from an approximate low of \$74,000 in 2013 to the current high of nearly \$85,000. The average list price is significantly lower than the City of Marshfield, the next closest surveyed community. Figure 40 illustrates these findings.

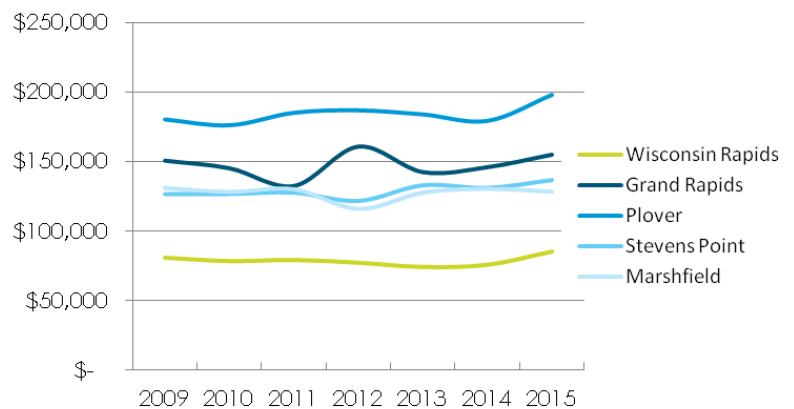
### *Average Single Family Sale Price*

According to the MLS listing data, the City of Wisconsin Rapids average annual sale price only fluctuated proportionally with the lowest average list price of approximately \$69,500 in 2013 to the current high of approximately \$80,000. The average sale price is significantly lower than the City of Marshfield, the next closest surveyed community. Figure 41 illustrates these findings.

**Figure 39: Regional Percent of Listed Single Family Homes Sold**

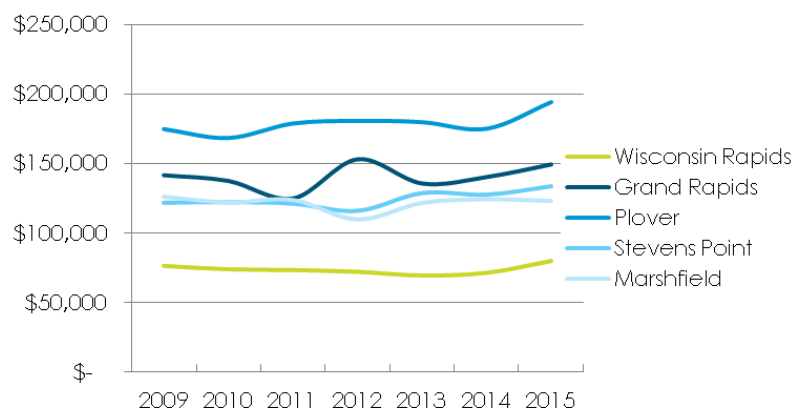


**Figure 40: Regional Average List Price of Single Family Homes**



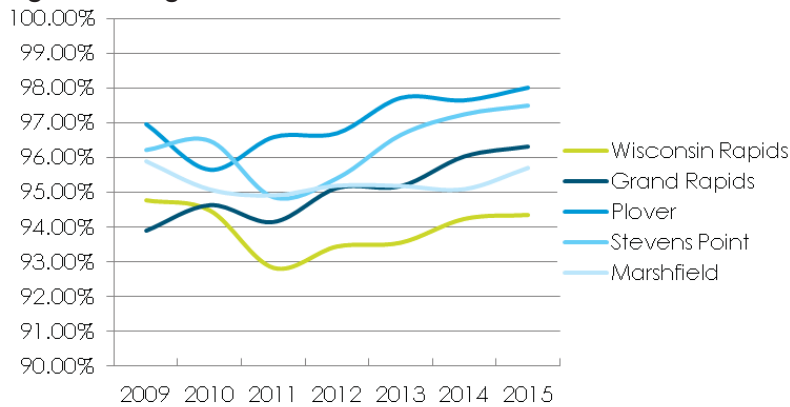
Data Source: MLS

**Figure 41: Regional Average Single Family Homes Sale Price**



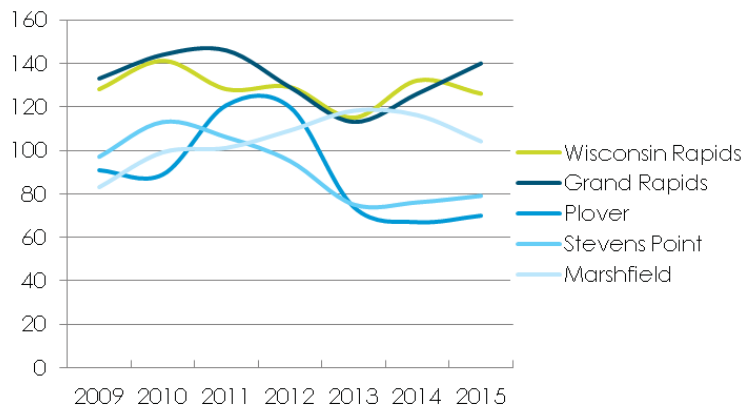
Data Source: MLS

**Figure 42: Regional Sale and List Price Ratio**



Data Source: MLS

**Figure 43: Regional Average Days on the Market before Sale**



Data Source: MLS

**Table 9: Local Wisconsin Rapids MLS Sales Data**

Year	Wisconsin Rapids, City								
	Total Listed	Total Sold	Number Sold	Pct Sold	Avg List Price Sold	Avg Sale Price Sold	Sale Price / List Price Ratio	Avg Days on Market Sold	Avg List Price Unsold
2009	Single Family	318	199	62.58%	\$ 80,729	\$ 76,494	94.75%	128	92,725
	Condo	7	0	0.00%	\$ -	\$ -	0.00%	-	45,000
	Multi Family	28	4	14.29%	\$ 119,655	\$ 110,750	92.56%	300	113,082
2010	Single Family	324	179	55.25%	\$ 78,319	\$ 73,983	94.46%	141	98,160
	Condo	1	3	300.00%	\$ 154,933	\$ 147,333	95.09%	226	173,000
	Multi Family	24	11	45.83%	\$ 80,027	\$ 70,363	87.92%	173	268,625
2011	Single Family	352	167	47.44%	\$ 79,089	\$ 73,408	92.82%	128	98,852
	Condo	3	1	33.33%	\$ 54,900	\$ 47,500	86.52%	266	39,900
	Multi Family	12	2	16.67%	\$ 137,400	\$ 123,950	90.21%	264	113,668
2012	Single Family	324	204	62.96%	\$ 77,185	\$ 72,112	93.43%	129	100,902
	Condo	0	1	0.00%	\$ 39,900	\$ 34,500	86.47%	224	-
	Multi Family	27	3	11.11%	\$ 196,140	\$ 181,506	92.54%	26	107,800
2013	Single Family	371	213	57.41%	\$ 74,201	\$ 69,406	93.54%	115	86,752
	Condo	3	1	33.33%	\$ 84,900	\$ 81,000	95.41%	129	-
	Multi Family	50	13	26.00%	\$ 110,123	\$ 92,077	83.61%	185	153,068
2014	Single Family	386	215	55.70%	\$ 75,755	\$ 71,373	94.22%	132	98,533
	Condo	3	1	33.33%	\$ 68,000	\$ 68,000	100.00%	80	39,900
	Multi Family	13	17	130.77%	\$ 102,682	\$ 88,611	86.30%	538	105,644
2015	Single Family	345	266	77.10%	\$ 84,938	\$ 80,124	94.33%	126	97,155
	Condo	3	2	66.67%	\$ 35,450	\$ 30,750	86.74%	116	99,900
	Multi Family	21	23	109.52%	\$ 101,743	\$ 88,886	87.36%	413	261,788

Data Source: MLS

## Sale and List Price Ratio

According to the MLS listing data, the City of Wisconsin Rapids annual sale to list price ratio increased closer to the 2009 ratio (94.33%). The ratio is still a percentage point lower than the City of Marshfield, the next closest surveyed community. Figure 42 illustrates these findings.

## Average Days on the Market Prior to Sale

According to the MLS listing data, the City of Wisconsin Rapids average annual days on the market prior from listing to closing was 126 days. The average days on the market is higher than most of the other surrounding communities except for the Town of Grand Rapids at 140 days. Figure 43 illustrates these findings.

Table 9 details the complete summary data for the City of Wisconsin Rapids based on the 2009 to 2015 MLS data. Currently, in Wisconsin Rapids, there are 157 single family homes listed on the MLS with an average list price of \$80,288.

The MLS listings also identified 13 undeveloped but serviced lots under a half acre available for purchase with an average list price of \$20,515. Similarly, within a 20-mile radius, the MLS listing show 166 undeveloped but serviced lots available with an average list price of \$29,441. There are many more serviced lots in the City that are undeveloped, but not listed on the MLS. Map 6 identifies the undeveloped lots.



## DOWNTOWN HOUSING PROFILE

As previously noted, the City of Wisconsin Rapids estimated 8,582 residential units within the City. For this analysis, Vierbicher aligned the Downtown study with the original study area used in the 2009 Waterfront Plan. Figure 45 illustrates the approximately 215 acre study area boundary.

According to the assessment records, there are 171 residential units located in the Downtown. These account for approximately 1.99% of the total units in the City of Wisconsin Rapids.

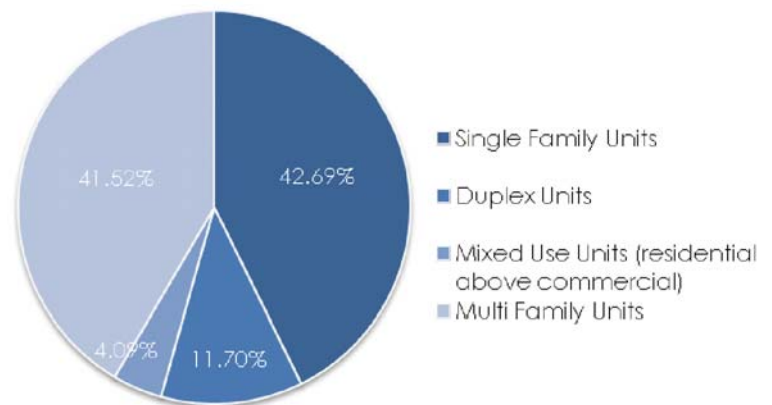
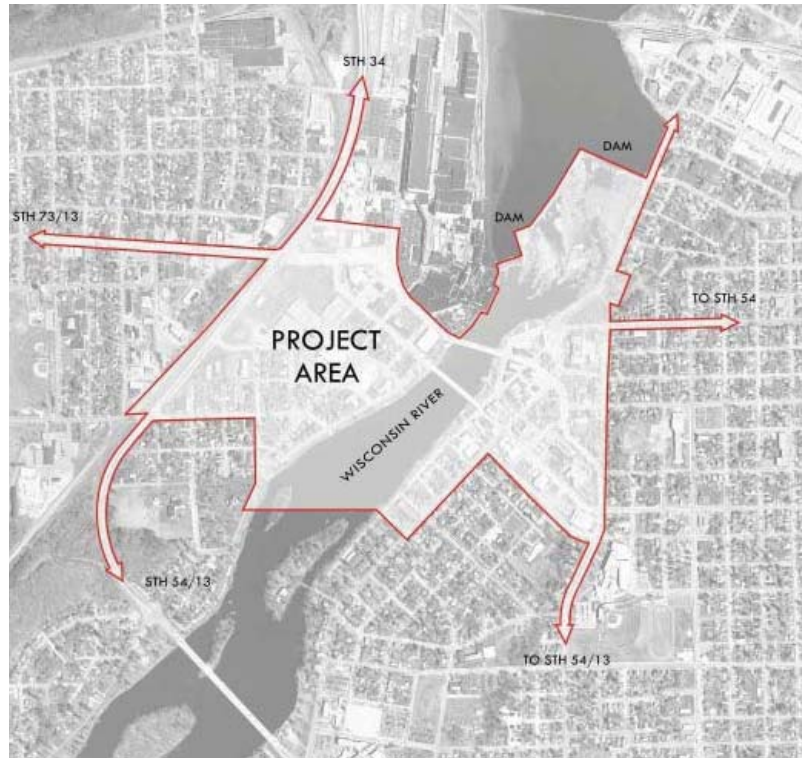
The unit breakdown is as follows:

- 73 units are single family units.  
(42.69% of the Downtown and 0.85% of total housing units within the City)
- 20 units are duplex or two-family units  
(11.70% of the Downtown and 0.23% of total housing units within the City)
- 7 units are residential units located within a mixed use building  
(4.09% of the Downtown and 0.08% of total housing units within the City)
- 71 units are multi-family units.  
(41.52% of the Downtown and 0.83% of total housing units within the City)

Figure 45.1 illustrates the housing unit breakdown.

On the east side of the Wisconsin River, nearly all of the units are located south of Maple Street and east of 4th Street. On the west side of the Wisconsin River, the majority of the units are located south of Hale St. Map 8 illustrates the housing unit locations within the Downtown and Map 9 illustrates the currently developable land within the Downtown.

Figure 45: Downtown Study Area and Housing Units



Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids 2009 Waterfront Plan and Assessment records

## DOWNTOWN HOUSING POTENTIAL

The 2009 Downtown Waterfront Plan suggests several areas for redevelopment opportunity that totals 23.7 acres. The west side of the Wisconsin River contains the majority of redevelopment opportunity with 21.9 acres. The east side has only 1.8 acres suggested for redevelopment opportunities.

The Downtown Study Area has a potential to develop 23 - 118 Units/acre using 1-5 units per acre density in the 23.7 acres redevelopment opportunity area. If the City requires higher density, then using 6-10 units per acre density in the 23.7 acres redevelopment opportunity area a total of 142-237 units/acre.

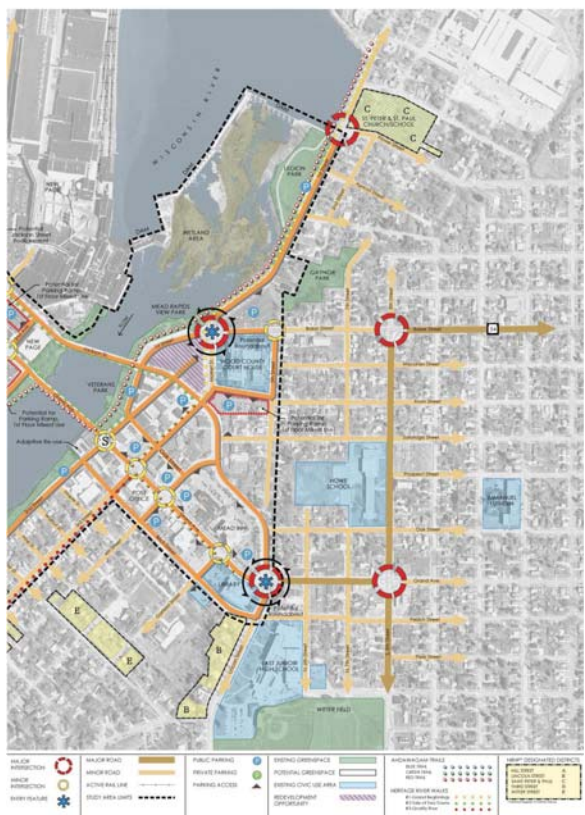
However, the redevelopment area should have a good mix of housing units to accommodate the various housing needs for residents. The Downtown Waterfront Plan suggests adding 280,000 square feet of multi-family residential units, but do not give a total number of units to develop. Each site will need to be reviewed and developed according to final decisions made by the City.

Redevelopment must take into account parking suggestions, and requirements from the Downtown Waterfront Plan. The 23.7 acres does not take into account the seven parcels noted as Developable City Property, which currently are parking lots. The total acreage of Developable City Property is 2.7 acres



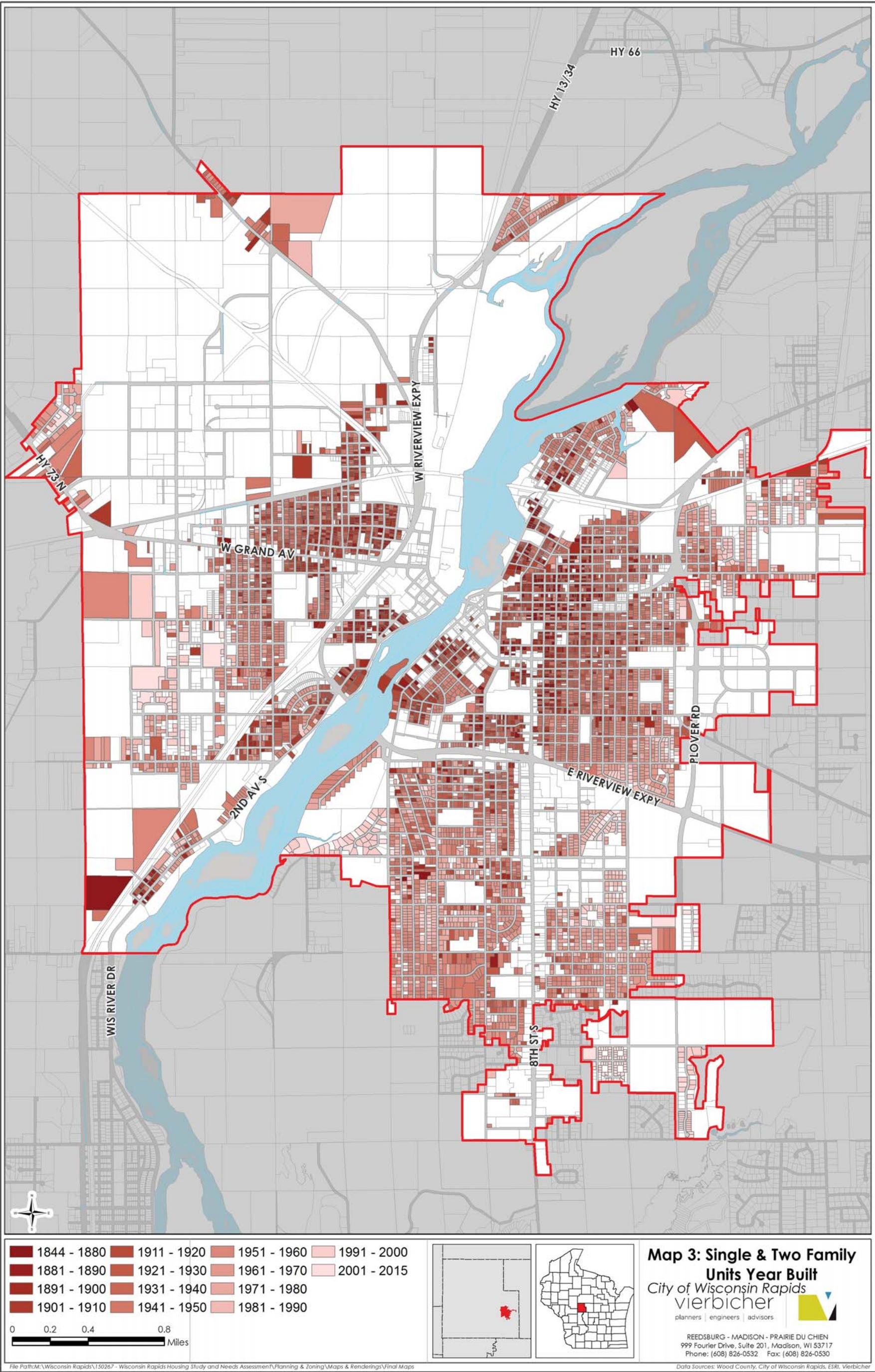
Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids 2009 Waterfront Plan

**Figure 45.3: Opportunity Analysis — East**

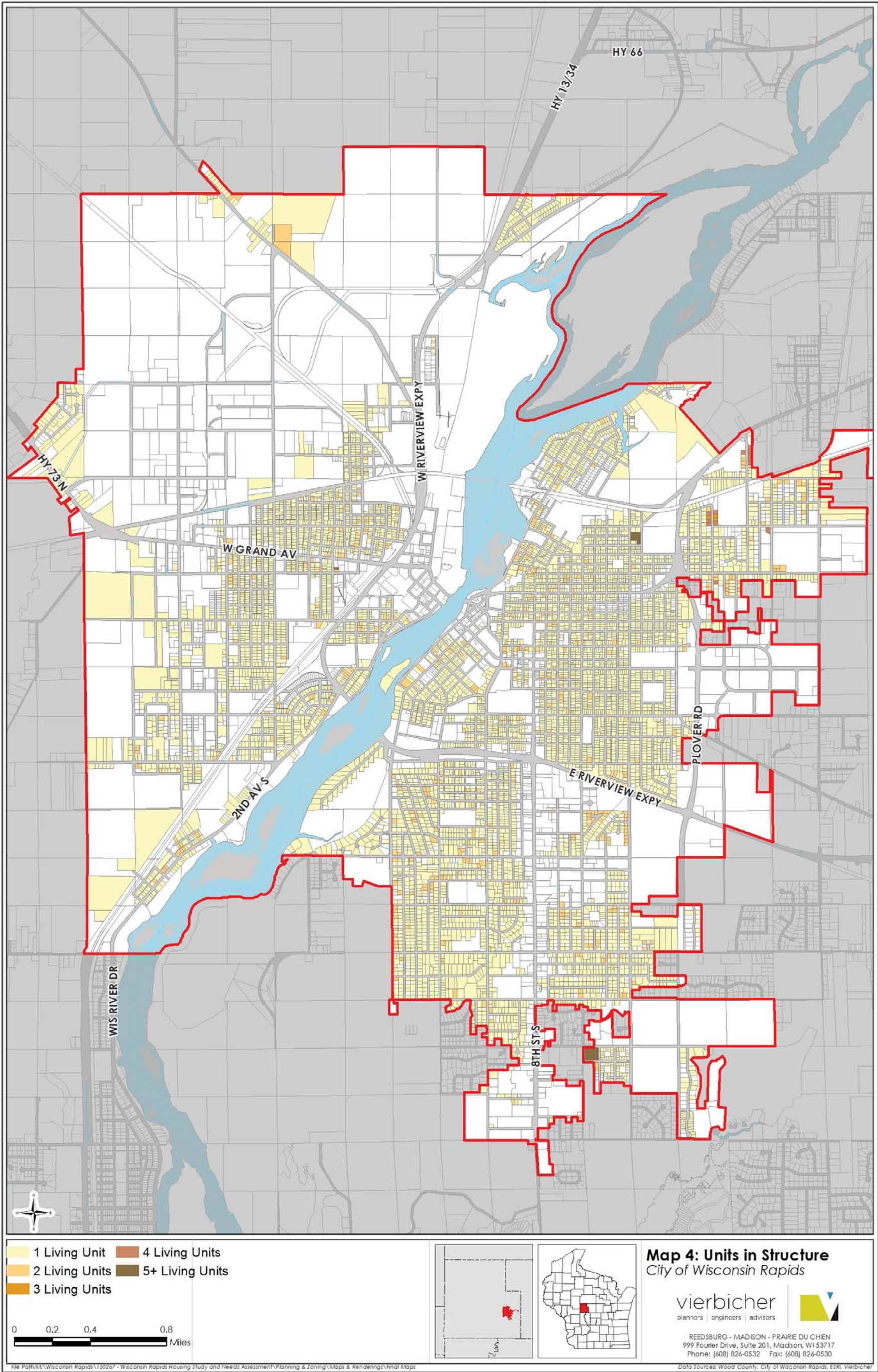


Data Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids 2009 Waterfront Plan

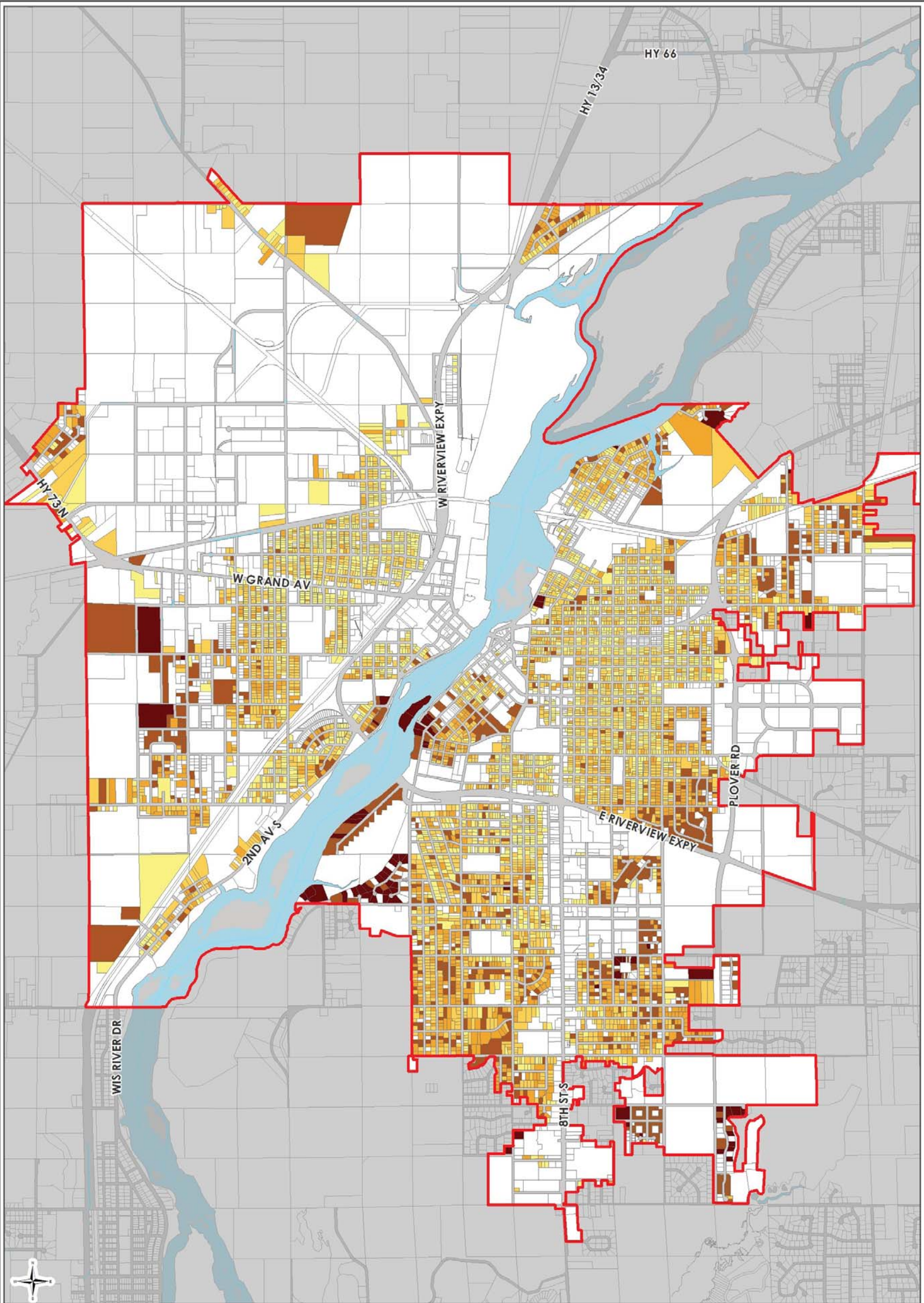








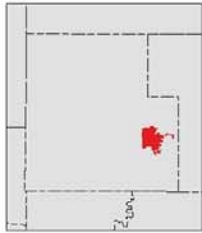




**Structural Improvement Value**

0-\$49,999	\$75,000-\$99,999
\$50,000-\$74,999	\$100,000-\$199,999
	\$200,000+

0 0.2 0.4 0.8  
Miles



**Map 5: Single & Two Family  
Unit Value**

City of Wisconsin Rapids

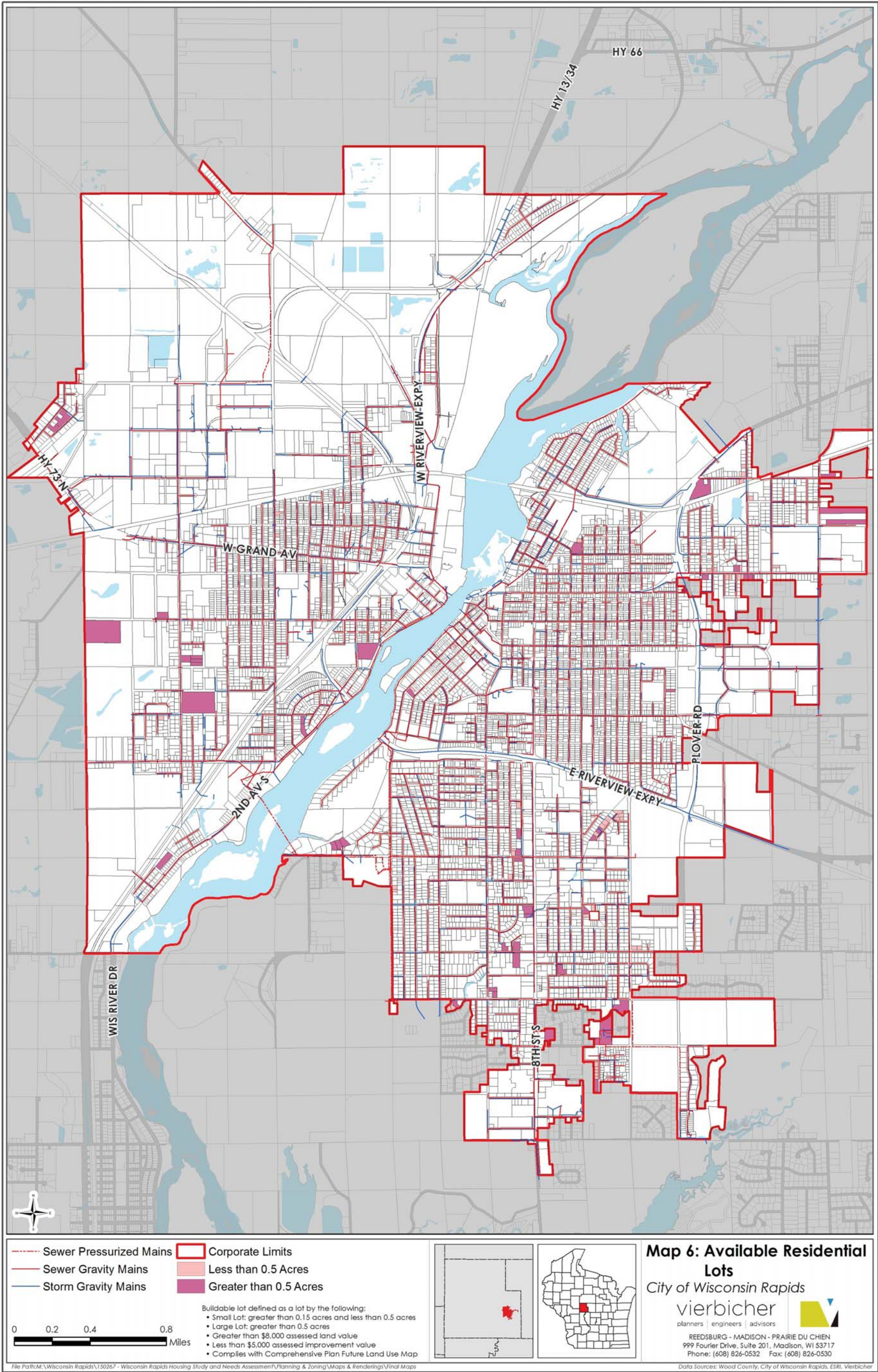
**vierbicher**  
planners | engineers | advisors



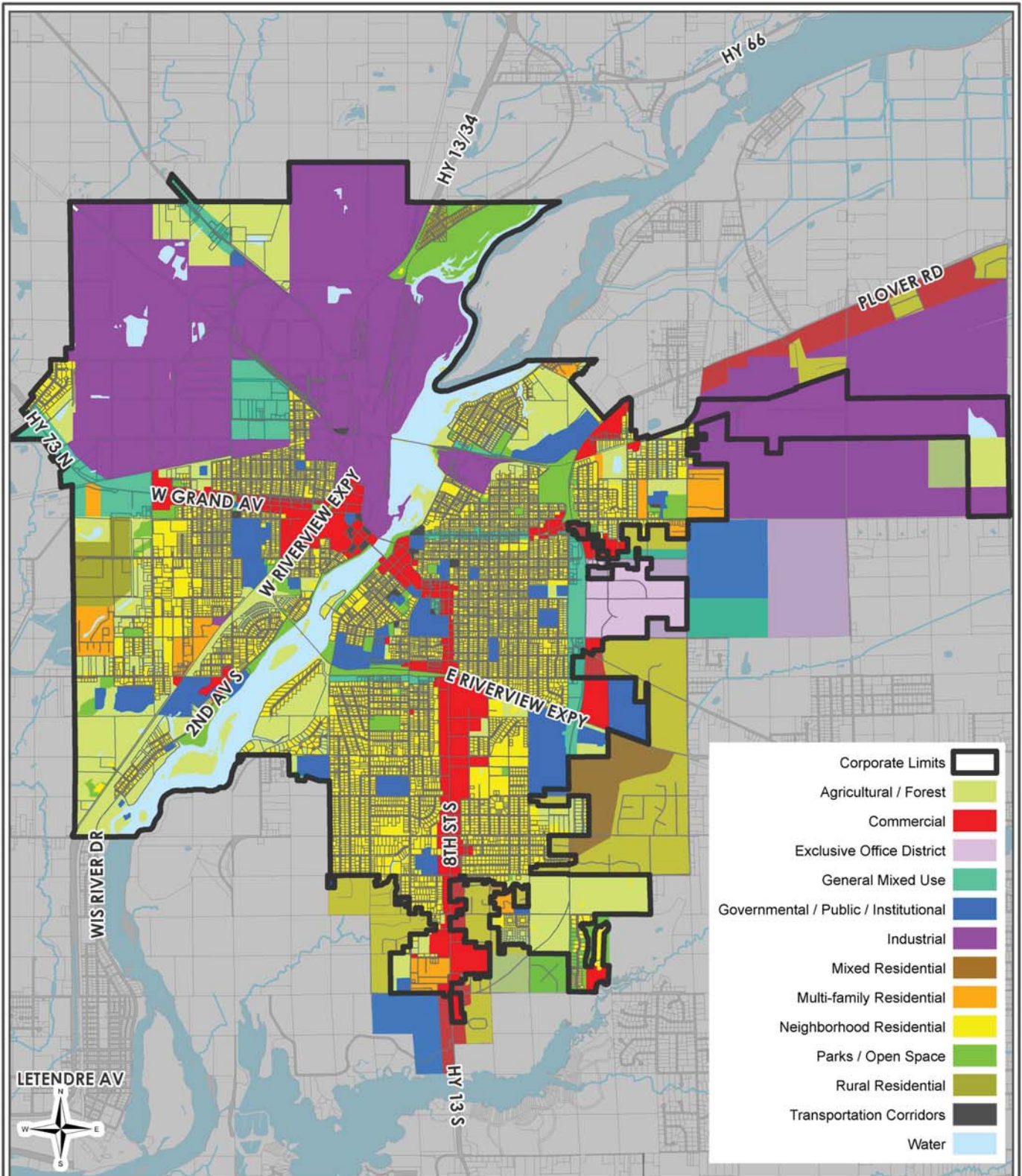
KEESBURG • MADISON • PRAIRIE DU CHIEN  
999 Fourier Drive, Suite 201, Madison, WI 53717  
Phone: (608) 826-0532 Fax: (608) 826-0530

Data Sources: Wood County; City of Wisconsin Rapids; ESRI; Vierbicher







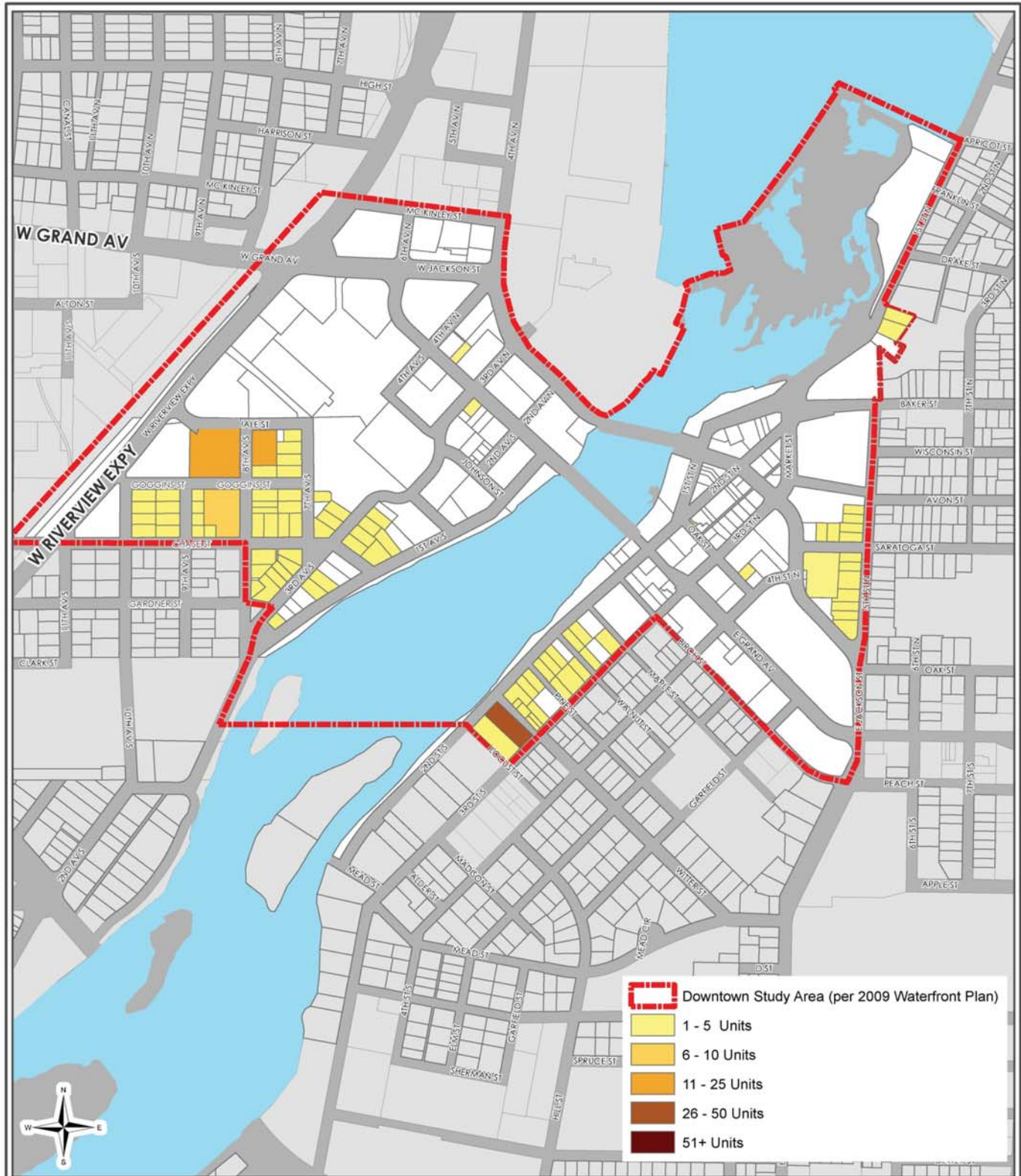


**Map 7: Future Land Use**  
City of Wisconsin Rapids

0 0.425 0.85 1.7  
Miles







**Map 8: Downtown Study Map**  
City of Wisconsin Rapids

0 0.05 0.1 0.2  
Miles

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planners | engineers | advisors

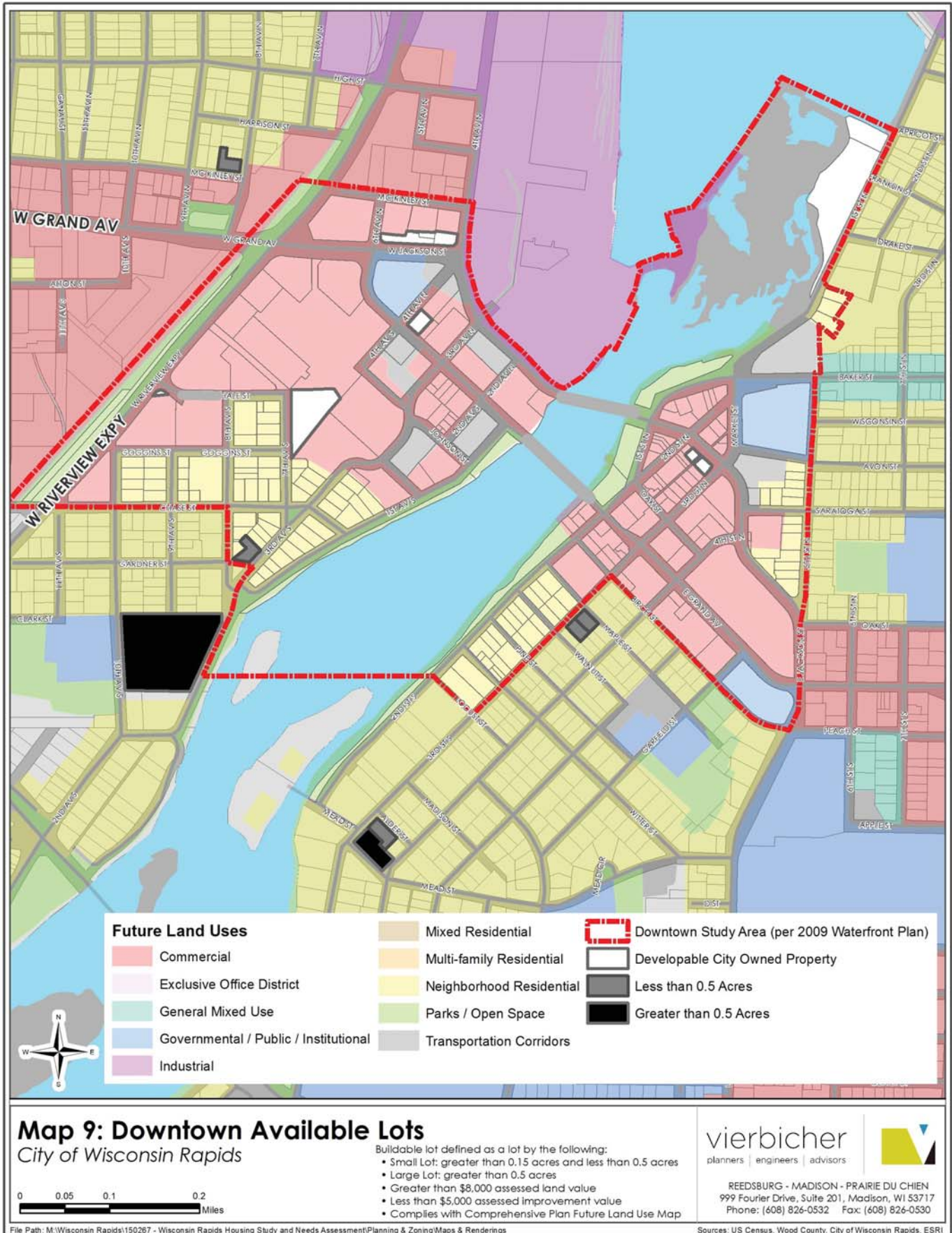


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999 Fourler Drive, Suite 201, Madison, WI 53717  
Phone: (608) 826-0532 Fax: (608) 826-0530

File Path: M:\Wisconsin Rapids\150267 - Wisconsin Rapids Housing Study and Needs Assessment\Planning & Zoning\Maps & Renderings

Sources: US Census, Wood County, City of Wisconsin Rapids, ESRI









Municipality	Parcel ID	Acres	Structure Sq Ft	Year Built	Land Value	Improv Value	Total Value	Estimated Fair Market Value %	Estimated Fair Market Value \$	Net assessed Value Rate	Local Tax Share
Wisconsin Rapids	3414612	0.33	1144	1969	\$ 17,100	\$ 80,900	\$ 98,000	98.83%	\$ 99,200	0.02654	\$ 1,161
Grand Rapids	703408	0.55	1345	1979	\$ 10,500	\$104,600	\$115,100	99.63%	\$ 115,500	0.01779	\$ 331

Notes (according to the assessment records)

- The WR parcel has less area and has a higher assessed value. This could be attributed to being located adjacent to public utilities.
- The WR parcel is located on a public street with sanitary and storm sewer; whereas, the GR parcel is on a private aging asphalt cul-de-sac and must pay for additional services separate
- The WR parcel has concrete driveway; whereas, the GR parcel has an aging asphalt driveway
- The WR parcel has an additional attached deck and additional landscaping
- The structures have similar square feet but were constructed 10 years apart
- The GR parcel is assessed \$17,100 more; therefore, resulting in a much higher estimated fair market value

Wisconsin Rapids	3414613	0.64	2016	1969	\$ 22,400	\$ 94,600	\$117,000	98.83%	\$ 118,400		\$ 1,386
Grand Rapids	703410	0.52	2136	1979	\$ 22,500	\$155,000	\$177,500	99.63%	\$ 178,200		\$ 511

Notes (according to the assessment records)

- The WR parcel has more area but has a lower assessed value.
- The WR parcel is located on a public street with sanitary and storm sewer; whereas, the GR parcel is on a private aging asphalt cul-de-sac and must pay for additional services separate
- The WR parcel has concrete driveway; whereas, the GR parcel has a new asphalt driveway
- The WR parcel has an additional patio/additional landscaping, and the GR parcel has an additional deck
- The WR parcel is a 1-1/2 story structure home, and the GR parcel is a single story ranch home.
- The structures have similar square feet but were constructed 10 years apart
- The GR parcel is assessed \$60,500 more; therefore, resulting in a much higher estimated fair market value.

## Map 10: Housing Assessment Case Study

City of Wisconsin Rapids

0 125 250 500 Feet

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Phone: (608) 826-0532 Fax: (608) 826-0530

File Path: M:\Wisconsin Rapids\150267 - Wisconsin Rapids Housing Study and Needs Assessment\Planning & Zoning\Maps & Renderings

Sources: US Census, Wood County, City of Wisconsin Rapids, ESRI

# Housing Needs/Assessment Questionnaire Survey Report









## OVERVIEW

As part of the City of Wisconsin Rapids Housing Study and Needs Assessment, Vierbicher conducted a regional community survey to understand the current housing makeup and needs of residents in and around the City of Wisconsin Rapids. This part of the housing study focused on a 39 question survey available to anyone within the region. Vierbicher conducted direct stakeholder interviews with representatives from financial institutions, real estate brokerage firms, rental property owners, builders, and subject matter staff from the City and Wood County.

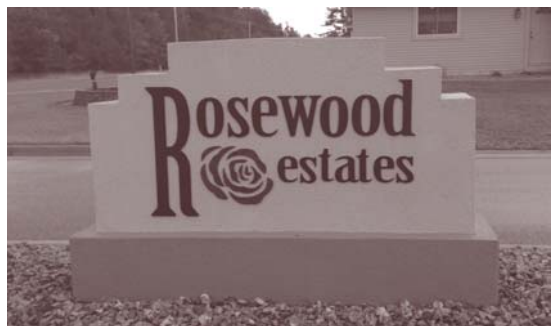
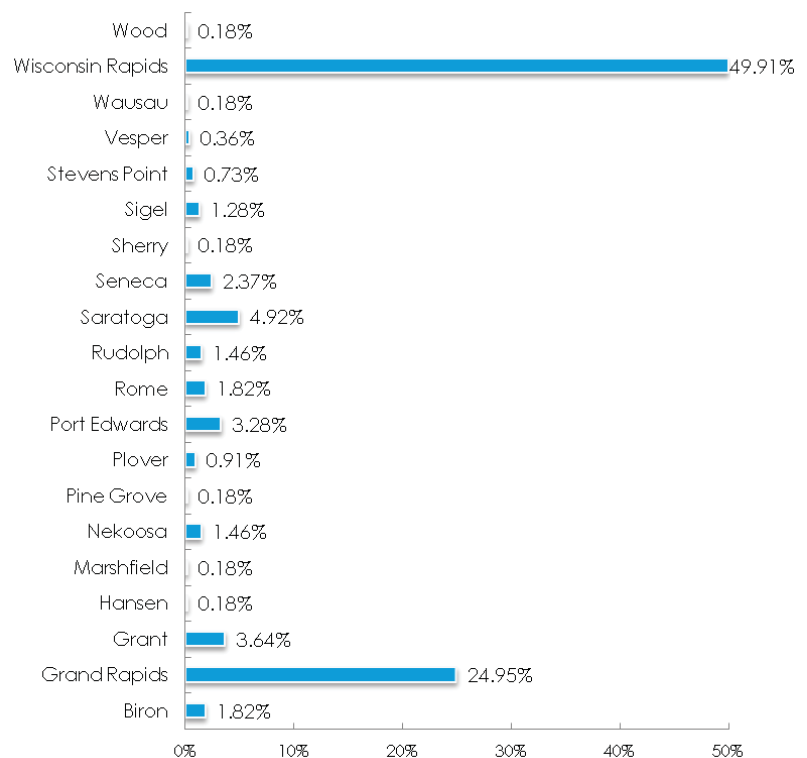
The City promoted the survey in news stories, social media, social groups, church bulletins, school take home folders, and several other outlets. The City collected responses between mid-December and January and the average response completion time was 12 minutes. The survey focused on assessing the current housing stock, evaluating the community needs and desires, and understanding household compositions throughout the region. This report summarizes the responses from 692 participants that completed the survey from 19 disclosed municipalities.

## SURVEY HOUSEHOLD REVIEW

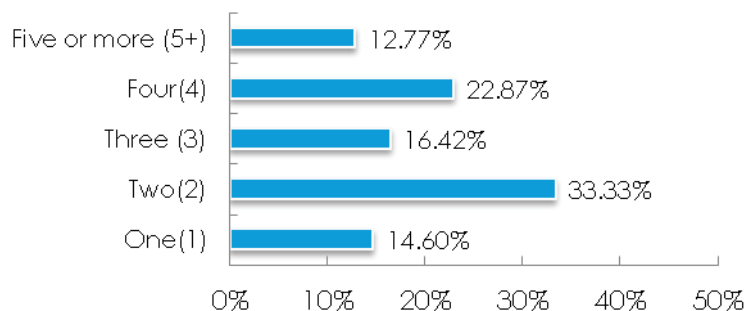
The first series of questions in the survey asked respondents to list their current location and the length of time they have resided there.

Nearly half of the declared locations were in the City of Wisconsin Rapids (49.91%). This is a response rate of 3.8% of the municipal households (assuming one response per household). The Town of Grand Rapids had the second highest response rate at 24.95%.

**Figure 44: Respondent Current Location**



**Figure 46: Number of Household members**



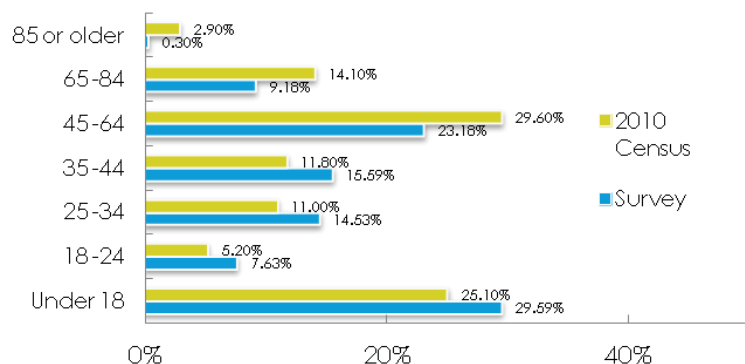
This section analyzes the responses related to the number of household members, household member age, annual household income, employment status, and employer location.

#### NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBER(S)

According to the survey, the largest percentage of respondents stated there were two members of their household (33.33%) and the second largest percentage of respondents reported there were four members of their household (22.87%). Figure 46 illustrates these findings.



**Figure 47: Percentage of Household Members by Age**

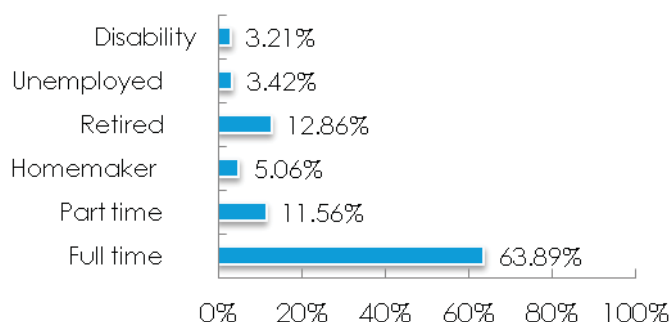


#### HOUSEHOLD MEMBER(S) AGE

According to the survey, the largest percentage of individuals residing in the respondent's homes were younger than 18 years old. This group represented 29.59% of the declared household members. The second largest group was 45-64 representing 23.18% of the reported household members. Figure 47 illustrates these findings.



**Figure 48: Household Member(s) Employment Status**



#### HOUSEHOLD MEMBER EMPLOYMENT

According to the survey, there were 1,034 responses to the two-part question asking the employment status of one or two members of the household. As expected, full-time employment was the most common answer at 63.89% followed by retired at 12.86%. Figure 48 illustrates these findings.



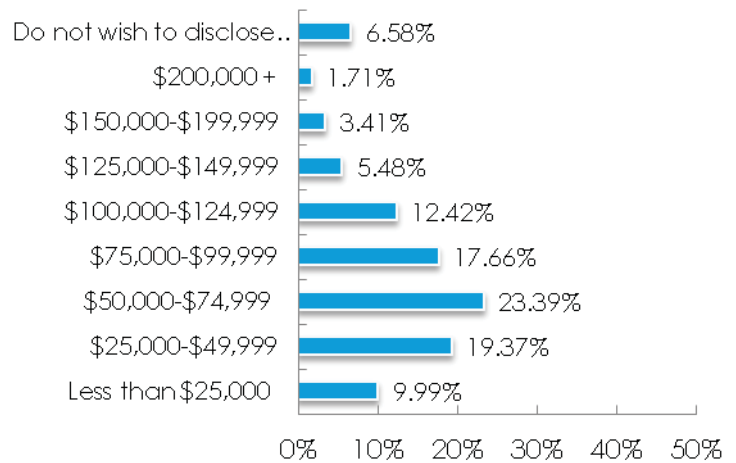


## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

According to the regional survey, 23.39% of respondents stated their estimated annual gross household income was between \$50,000 and \$74,999. This was the largest represented group. Second was 19.37% who stated their estimated annual gross household income was between \$25,000 and \$49,999. These results are higher than the general population in Wood and Portage Counties. According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, the largest percentage of earners in Wisconsin Rapids were in the \$25,000-\$49,999 income bracket. Figure 49 illustrates these survey findings.

Vierbicher notes this is attributed to and reflective of the percentage of respondents that are owner occupied single family home owners in and outside of Wisconsin Rapids. Typically, a higher percentage of owner-occupied units in the responses would or could skew data in the upward direction as it takes a larger income to own and maintain a home.

**Figure 49: Estimated Annual Gross Household Income**



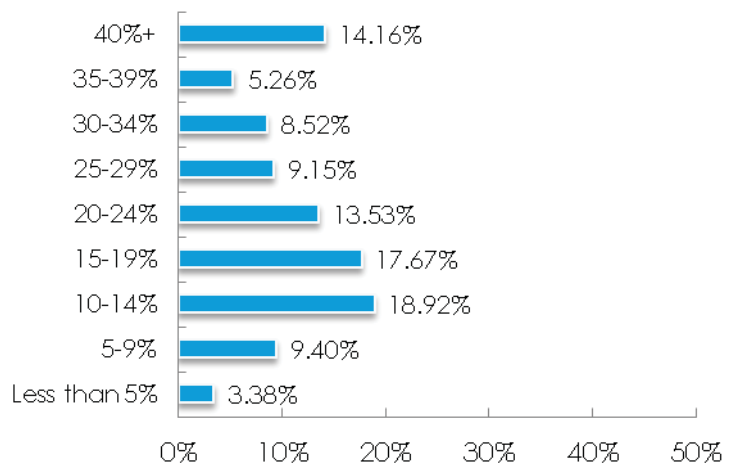
## HOUSEHOLD INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING COSTS

(MORTGAGE, TAXES, INSURANCE, UTILITIES, ETC)

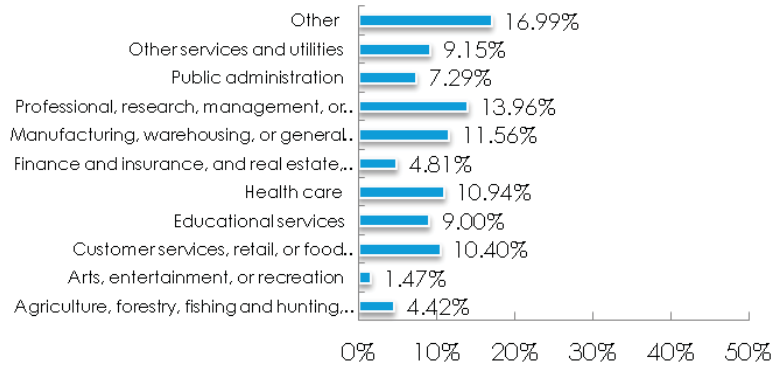
According to the survey responses, 18.92% of the households stated they spent 10-14% of their income on housing-related expenses and 17.67% of households stated they spent 15-19% of their income on housing-related expense.

There is concern that 27.94% of households stated they spend 30% or more of their income on housing-related expenses and 14.16% of households spend 40% or more of their income on housing-related expenses. These results are in contrast to expert advice from financial planners throughout the country that state households should not spend more than 30% on related housing expenses. Figure 50 illustrates these findings.

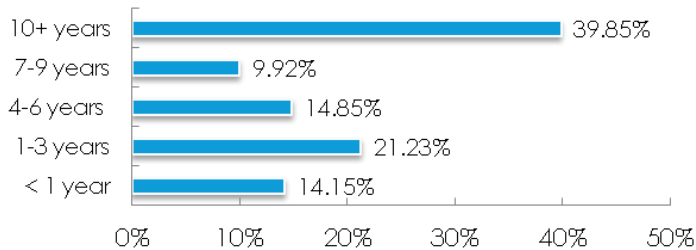
**Figure 50: Estimated Annual Gross Housing Income Spent of Housing Costs**



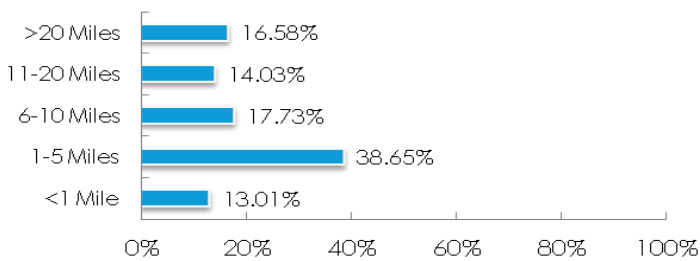
**Figure 51: Household Employment Industries**



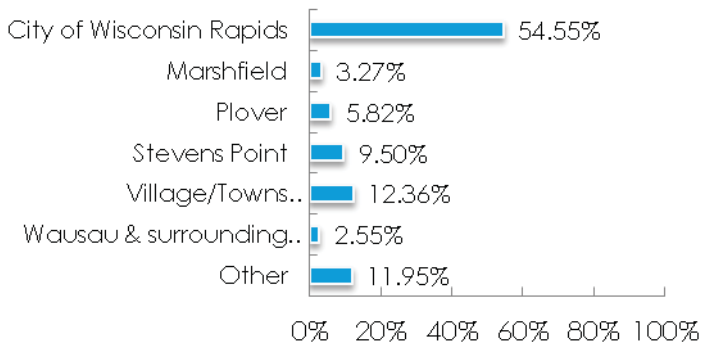
**Figure 52: Years with Current Employer**



**Figure 53: Distance to Employer**



**Figure 54: Location of Employer**



## HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYERS

According to the survey, a narrow majority of respondents listed "Other", and the disclosed employments ranged from pipefitting to lawyer to nonprofit staff. Most the disclosed "other" declared responses can fit into one of the multiple choice options. Figure 51 illustrates these findings.



## YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT

A plurality of respondents have been with their current employers for more than ten years (39.85%). However, given that the lower amount of respondents at their current employers from 7-9 years (9.92%) and 4-6 years (14.85%) potentially shows the majority of the of the ten-year cohort have been with their employers well beyond ten years. The second largest response was 1-3 years (21.23%). Figure 52 illustrates these findings.



## DISTANCE TO EMPLOYER

More than half of respondents live within five miles of their employer (51.66%), with the remaining respondents almost equally dispersed between 6-10 miles, 11-20 miles, and greater than 20 miles. This information directly correlates to the disclosed locations of the respondents current employers. The most frequent employer location was the City of Wisconsin Rapids (54.55%) and the second most were surrounding villages and towns at 12.36%. Figures 53 and 54 illustrates these findings.





## HOUSING REVIEW

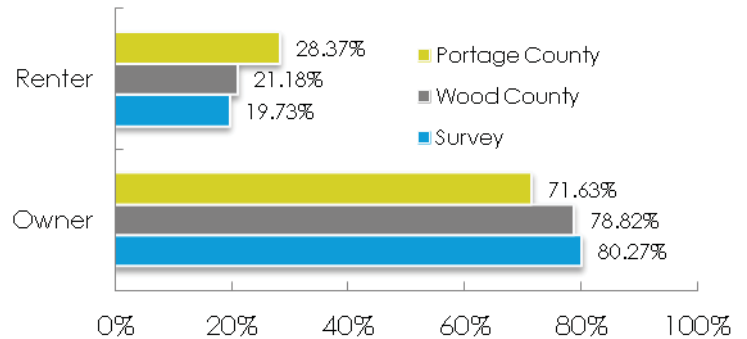
This section analyzes the responses related to the housing type, occupancy, value, expenses, and other property-related factors.



### OCCUPANCY STATUS AND TENURE

The overwhelming majority of respondents were homeowners (80.27%), and only 19.73% were renters. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, these figures align with the averages for Wood County (78.82%/21.18%) but are below the averages for Portage County (71.63%/28.37%). Portage County could experience a higher rental occupied rate as a result of UW-Stevens Point, located in Stevens Point. Figure 55 illustrates these findings.

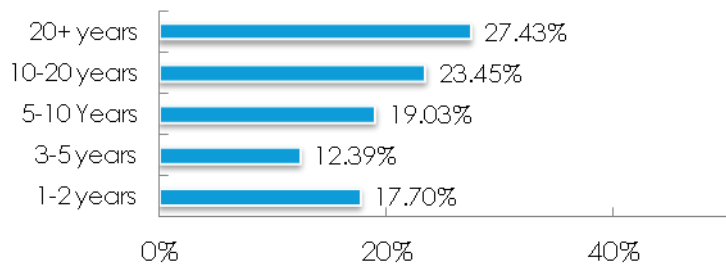
Figure 55: Occupancy Status/Tenure



### OWNER OCCUPIED UNITS:

Approximately 27.4% of owner-occupied housing units have been under the same ownership for over 20 years. The second longest ownership group (10-20 years) accounts for an additional 23.45% of the housing units surveyed. Therefore, over half of the homes surveyed have been under the same ownership for over ten years. Figure 56 illustrates these findings.

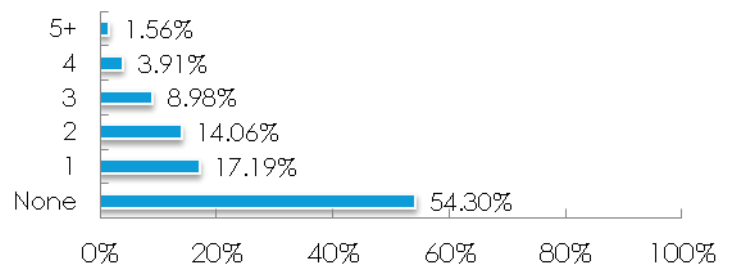
Figure 56: Years at Current Residence



### RENTER OCCUPIED UNITS:

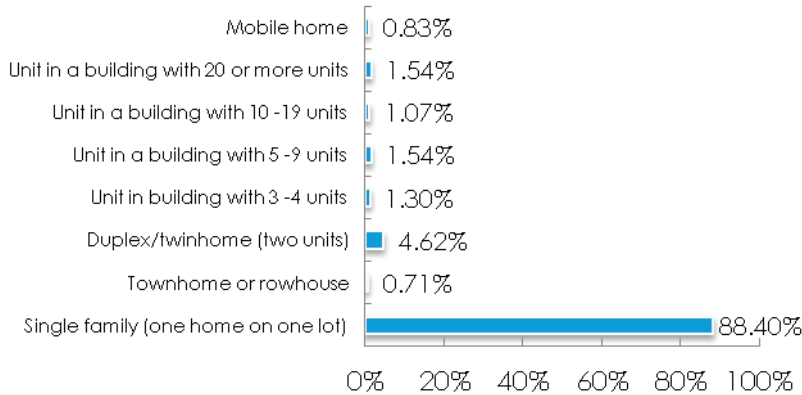
The renter-occupied units are stable within the region as 54.30% of respondents stated they have not relocated within the last five years, and 17.19% stated they have only relocated once in that same period. Therefore, people are simply not transitioning into home ownership at a typical rate. Figure 57 illustrates these findings.

Figure 57: Number of Relocations in the Last 5 Years (renter)

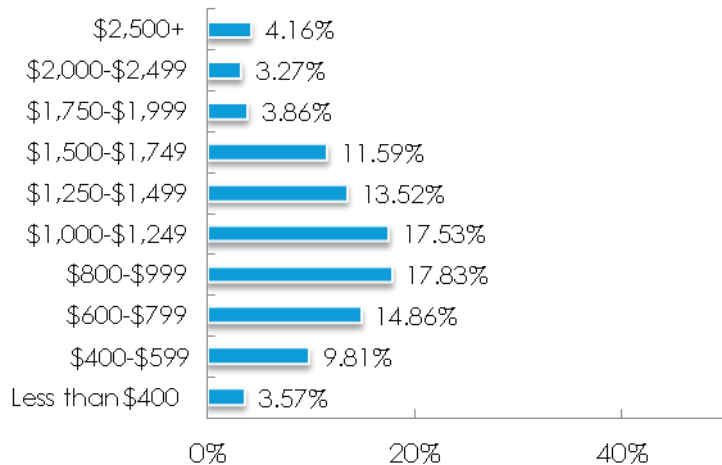




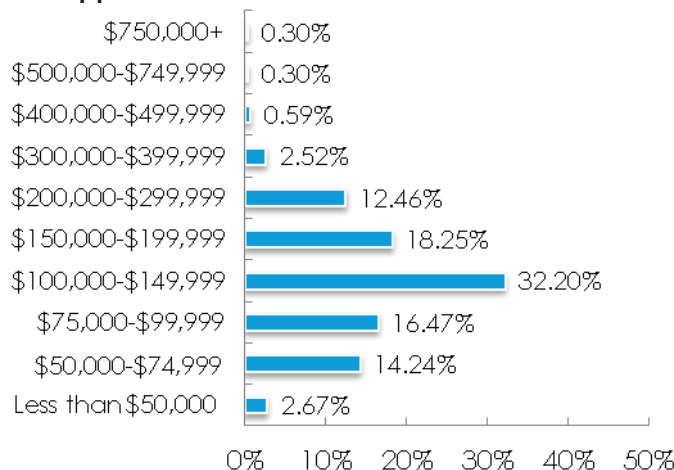
**Figure 58: Current Housing Type**



**Figure 59: Monthly Owner Expenses**



**Figure 60: Approximate Assessed Home Value**



## HOUSING TYPE

The majority of respondents resided in single family homes (88.40%) with duplex homes accounting for 4.62% of the declared residential units. Figure 58 illustrates these findings.



## OWNER MONTHLY HOUSING EXPENSES AND ASSESSED VALUE

Over 35% of homeowners stated their monthly housing expenses were between \$800 and \$1,250 (\$9,600 to \$15,000 annually). In total, 77.12% of the homeowners stated their monthly housing expenses were less than \$1,500 (\$18,000 annually). This directly relates to the approximate assessed value of the home, as 83.83% of respondents stated their value was below \$200,000. Figures 59-60 illustrate these findings.

Also, just over 50% of respondents stated they did pay or are currently paying mortgage insurance when they purchased their home.

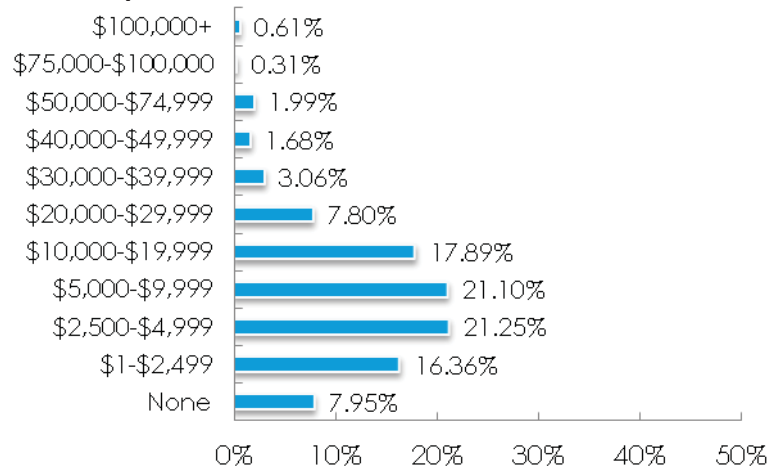


## INCOME SPENT ON MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT (NOT INCLUDING STORM DAMAGE)

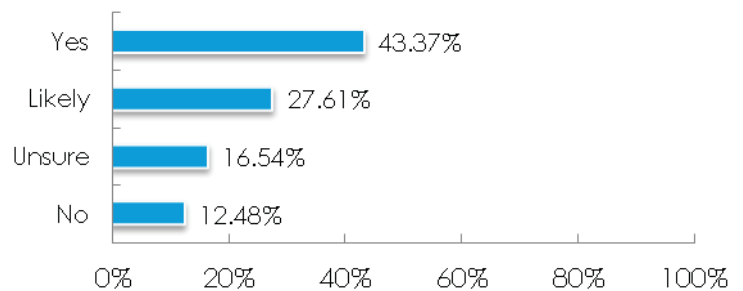
The majority of all respondents (66.66%) spent less than \$10,000 on their home over the past five years, and 17.89% spent between \$10,000 and \$20,000. These figures could be skewed as most homes in the region installed a new roof as a result of storm damage over that same period; therefore, homeowners did not have to put net income towards that improvement. Figure 61 illustrates these findings.

Almost 71% of respondents stated they would or are likely to spend additional resources on improvements over the next five years. These improvements would probably be a partial remodel/renovation or appliance upgrades. Figures 62-63 illustrate these findings.

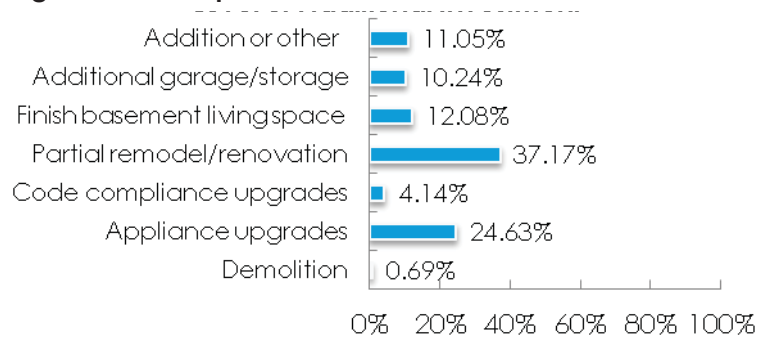
**Figure 61: Money Spent on Maintenance and Improvement over Last 5 years**



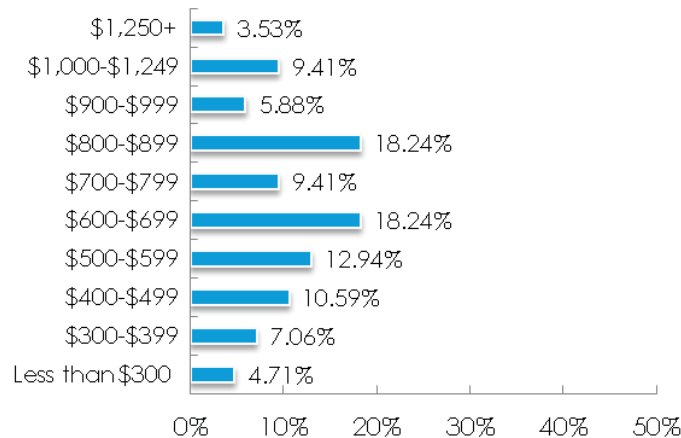
**Figure 62: Willingness to Invest Additional Funds Over the Next 5 Years**



**Figure 63: Anticipated Level of Investment**



**Figure 64: Monthly Renter Expenses**



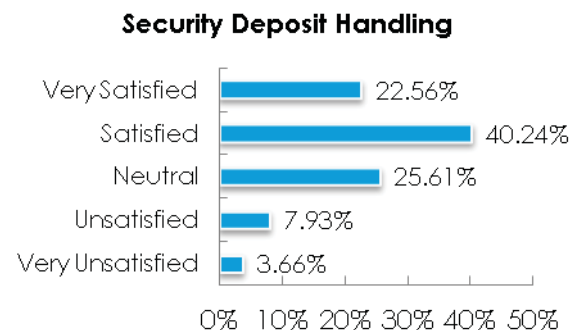
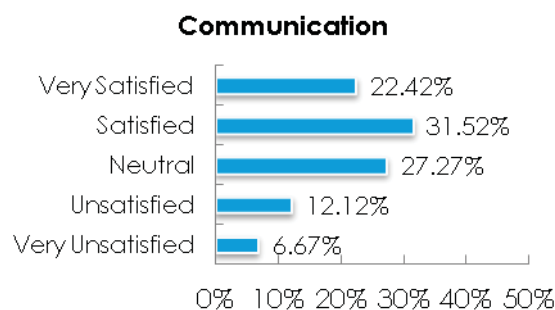
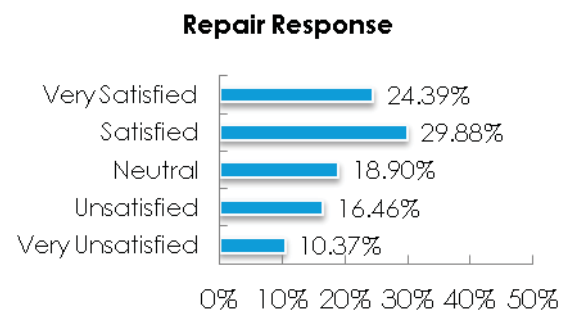
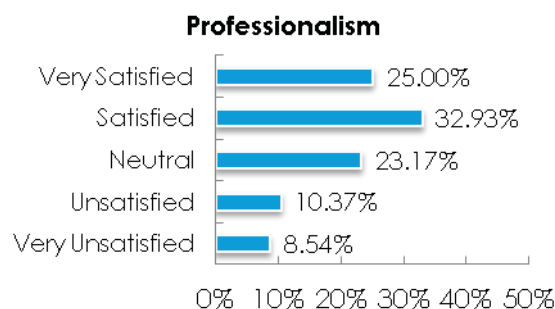
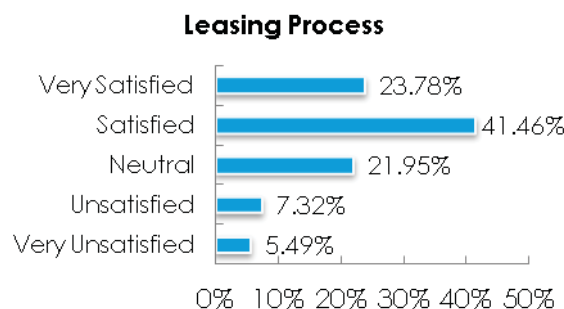
## OWNER MONTHLY HOUSING EXPENSES (RENTER)



According to the results, a plurality of renters (45.89%) spend between \$600 and \$900 on their monthly rental housing expenses. The results are higher than previously noted according to the ACS and could be attributed to the recent rent increases documented by respondents. This should also be reflected in the 2011-2015 ACS when it is released and from responses from individuals in the surrounding communities with higher incomes. The survey also asked if renters were interested in purchasing within the next two years and 38.26% responded "Yes," 34.78% responded with "Maybe," and 26.96% responded with "No."

The survey then asked about the greatest barriers to purchasing. The largest barrier to buying a home was the lack of a down payment and existing outstanding debt. The chart to the left illustrates the reasons and responses. Finally, the survey asked respondents to rank their rental experience in the leasing process, professionalism, repair response, communication, and security deposit handling. Each question primarily garnered a "satisfactory" response. Figure 65 details the full results below.

**Figure 65: Renting Experience**





## SELF-REPORTED HOUSING CONDITION

This section details the responses related to current housing condition and personal housing preferences related to type and amenities and the future preferred housing type within the City of Wisconsin Rapids.

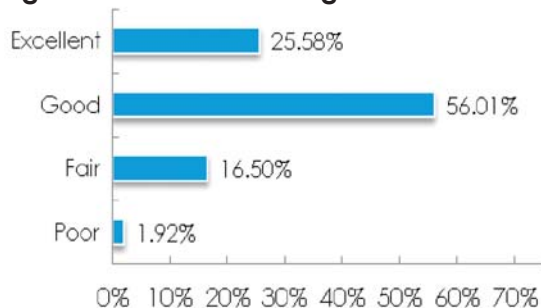
### CURRENT HOUSING RATING

In general, most of the respondent rated their existing home or apartment as of good or excellent quality. Figures 66 and 67 summarize the measured responses to condition, location, size, quality, and amenities.

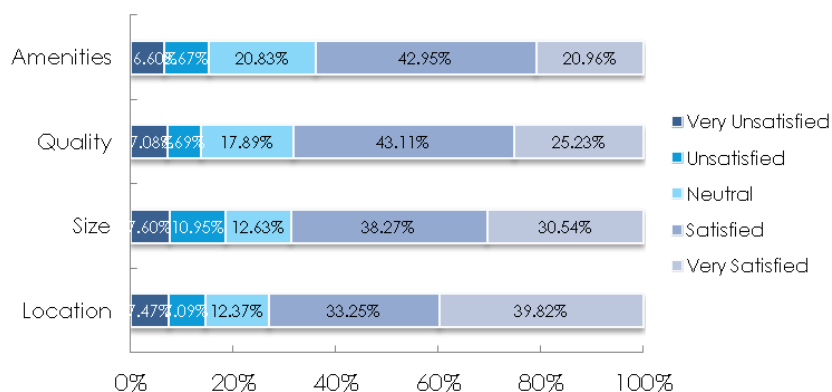
### LOCATING WITHIN WISCONSIN RAPIDS

Respondents primarily stated they do not live in the City of Wisconsin Rapids because they preferred larger lots and the rural life (34.10%). The second most influential reason for not locating inside the City was the higher tax rates compared to the surrounding towns and villages (10.03%). The questionnaire then asked if the respondents were to move to the City of Wisconsin Rapids, what type of housing they would prefer. The overwhelming majority stated they would prefer a single-family home (78.18%). Figures 68 and Figures 69 illustrates these findings.

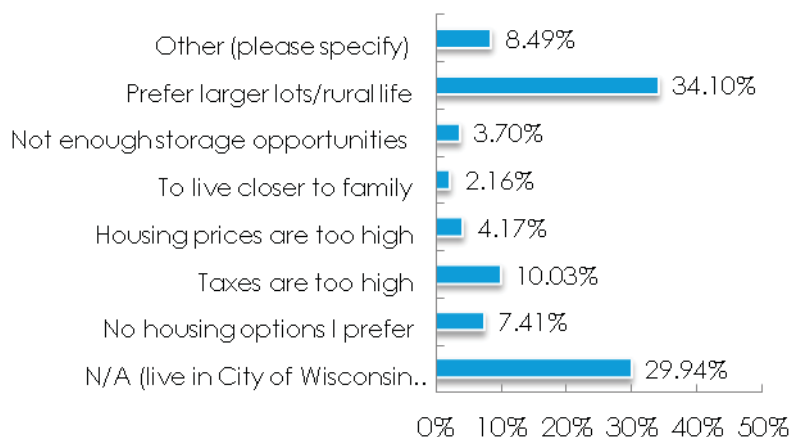
**Figure 66: Current Housing Condition**



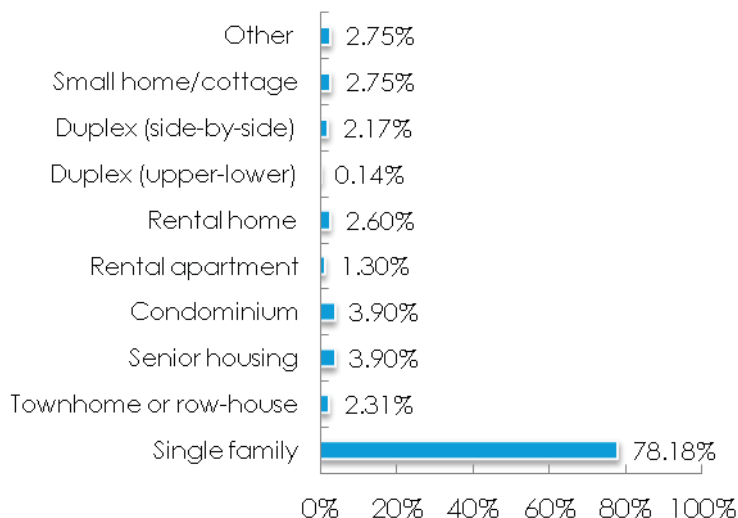
**Figure 67: Current Housing Satisfaction**



**Figure 68: Reasons for Not Locating in the City of Wisconsin Rapids**



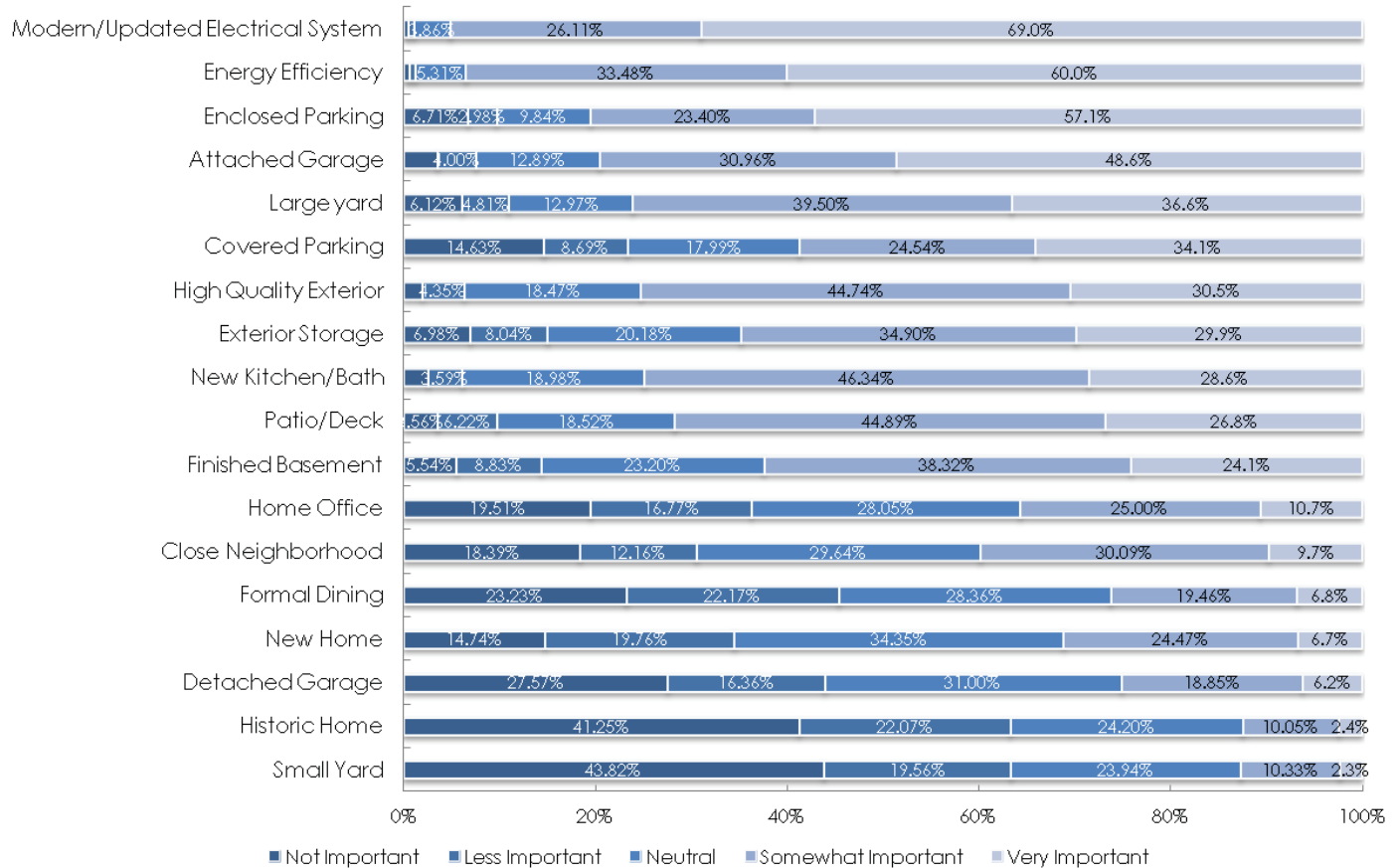
**Figure 69: Preferred Housing Type if Locating in Wisconsin Rapids**



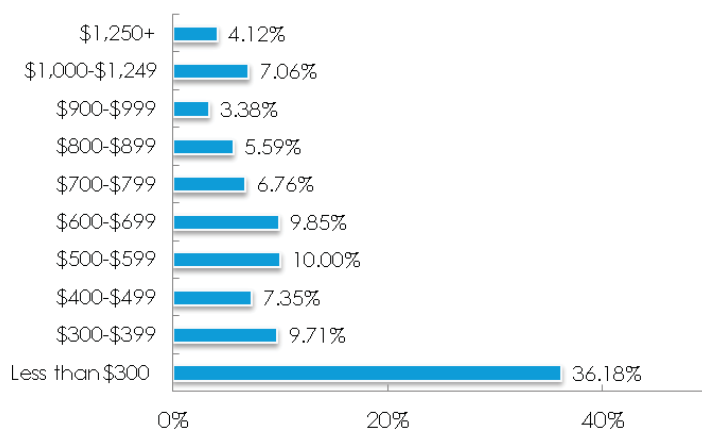
## HOME AMENITIES AND PREFERENCE

Figure 70 illustrates the preferences for all respondents when searching for a home. The highest rated responses were for modern electrical systems, energy efficiency, and enclosed parking.

**Figure 70: Home Amenities Preference**



**Figure 71: Willingness to Pay for Amenities**



## WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR DESIRED AMENITIES

According to the survey results, 36.18% of respondents indicated they are not willing to pay \$300 or more per month for their desired housing amenities. This high percentage directly relates to the lower regional household income levels when compared to the State of Wisconsin average. It is also significant to note that nearly 27% of the respondents are willing to pay an additional \$700 or more per month to get their desired housing unit. Figure 71 illustrates these results.



## DESIRED HOUSING NEEDS FOR WISCONSIN RAPIDS

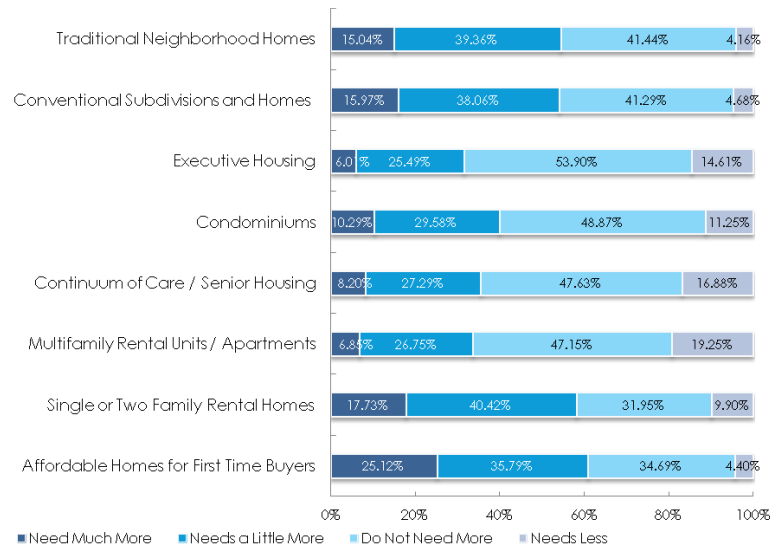
Except for affordable homes for first-time homebuyers and single or two family rental homes, the majority of respondents stated that they do not need additional multifamily rental units/ apartments, a continuum of care / senior housing, condominiums, executive housing, traditional neighborhoods, or conventional subdivisions.

These collective responses counter a large number of the open-ended remarks stated throughout the survey where individuals expressed the need for additional subdivisions with slightly larger lots and also affordable senior housing to enable residents to stay in Wisconsin Rapids. It is also of great concern that 64% of respondents stated the City does not need more or even needs less continuum of care or senior living facilities. These results could counter the reality that Wisconsin Rapids could face over the next 15-30 years if the City experiences population projections listed earlier in this report and as shown again in Figure 6.

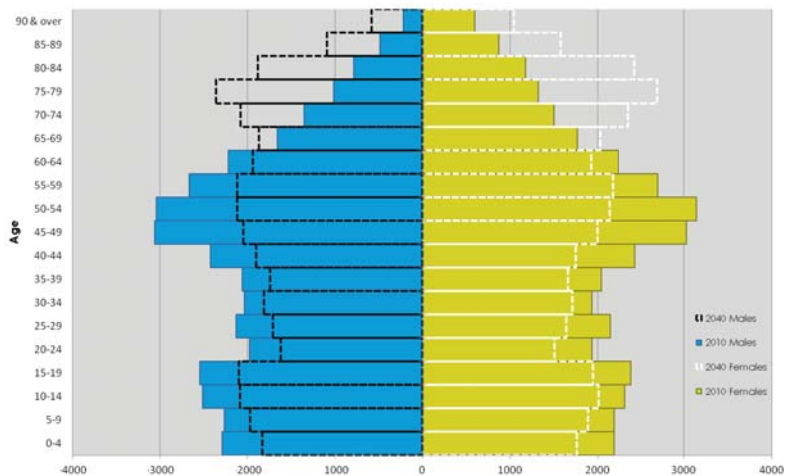
Vierbicher then asked the following questions to help shape the future housing recommendations. The appendix of this report contains the open-ended responses to the following questions:

- Based on your experiences, where should new housing be constructed in the City of Wisconsin Rapids?
- Based on your experiences, what areas of the City of Wisconsin Rapids are most in need of housing stock improvement?
- Based on your experiences, where should housing not be rehabilitated or developed in the City of Wisconsin Rapids?
- Based on your experiences, what other items should the City of Wisconsin Rapids be concerned with regarding future housing demands?

**Figure 72: Housing Needs in Wisconsin Rapids**



**Figure 6: Wood County Age-Sex Pyramid, Population Projections (2010-2040)**



Data Source: Wisconsin DOA

## IMPACT OF HOUSING COSTS AND HOMELESSNESS

Finally, Vierbicher asked if the respondents personally know someone who is struggling with housing costs and may be in danger of becoming or is currently homeless. It is critical to note that 32% of the respondents stated they know someone who is struggling with housing costs; furthermore, 28 respondents stated they have someone living with them that does not have a permanent place to live.



## National Housing Trends and the Local Impacts









## OVERVIEW

As part of this housing study, Vierbicher conducted stakeholder interviews with key individuals from organizations representing a variety of interest groups involved in the Wisconsin Rapids housing market. The interviews focused on identifying housing issues, needs, barriers, trends, and preferred locations for housing development and redevelopment within the City.

The remainder of this section presents conclusions and recommendations from the field survey, observations in national housing trends, interview responses, and the qualitative responses from the community survey.

## DEFINITION OF GENERATIONS

For this review, Vierbicher segmented the population into general generation categories. Vierbicher understands that generation labels are simply a lens in which people observe a loosely defined segment of the population; however, research over the past few decades indicates there are statistically significant commonalities in housing preferences for individuals within defined generations. The remainder of this report observes and anticipates the housing market impact of the four different generation segments defined below.

- War-Baby/Silent Generation  
(combined in this report)
- Baby-Boomer
- Generation X
- Generation Y (commonly referred to as Millennials)

### WAR-BABIES/SILENT GENERATION

War Babies represent the segment of the population between the ages 69 to 84 and the Silent Generation represent the 85 and older population. This age cohort is more apt to live in rural areas, small towns, or existing homes in well-developed urban neighborhoods. If members of this generation are to move, they will most likely move to a convenient and accessible neighborhood or building.

### BABY-BOOMERS

Baby-Boomers represent the segment of the population between ages 50 to 68. This generation maintains the largest share and purchasing power in the housing market and, as reported earlier, account for over 50 percent of household wealth in the country. This population segment most likely still live in the homes they raised families. The homes are most likely in located in suburbs, within smaller cities and towns, or within well developed urban neighborhoods. In previous generations, empty nesters began downsizing by buying smaller homes or renting apartments shortly after their children moved out. Baby-Boomers, however, are

not downsizing as fast as previous generations, which continues to contribute to the shortage of available homes in the local housing market. Limits in the local supply contribute to the delay in Generation Xers and Millennials moving up in the housing market. Many housing market experts predict this trend will eventually shift and free up larger homes in the housing market. The shift could also adversely impact the availability in apartment rentals, senior housing communities, and assisted living facilities.

### GENERATION X(ERS)

Generation Xers represent the segment of the population between ages 35 to 49 and are predominantly owners of single family homes in smaller cities and town, urban fringe neighborhoods, or in suburban communities. Generation Xers represent the segment of the population most likely raising a family in the traditional "American Dream" neighborhood. If they are to move over the next five to ten years, it will most likely be to a home with larger living space and more of the desired neighborhood amenities.

### MILLENNIALS

As noted earlier in this report, attracting and retaining young families is vital to the future of the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Therefore, Vierbicher spent proportionally more time studying their future market impact. Millennials represent the segment of the population between ages of 19 to 35 and account for approximately 78.6 million Americans and 26.3 million households.

The media often portrays Millennials as expensive coffee drinking downtown urbanites wanting to live in high rise urban centers; however, studies by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) in 2013 and 2015 illustrate a much different picture. Several of the results are detailed below.

- 50 percent are renters - well above the 37 percent renters for the similar age demographic in 2004. Of the renters:

- ☐ Approximately 62 percent rent apartments or mobile homes.
- ☐ 38 percent rent single-family homes or townhomes.
- ☐ Only 13 percent reside in apartment buildings four stories or taller.
- ☐ One-third of renters would prefer to own.
- Approximately 30 percent are owners, nearly 10 percent lower than the same age demographic in 2004. Of the owners:
  - ☐ Nearly 81 percent purchased a single-family detached home.
  - ☐ Just over 18 percent bought a townhome, rowhouse, duplex, or condominium.
  - ☐ Only 22 percent considered new construction as "very important," conversely, 42 percent said brand new is "unimportant."
  - ☐ Approximately one-third of all buyers required private mortgage insurance.
- Approximately one-fifth (21 percent) live with family or relatives. Consequently 16.5 million people could be moving into the housing market over the next five to ten years.
- 28 percent live with children under the age of 18.
- Of the segment that does not live with relatives - only 18 percent live alone, 38 percent live with one other person, 18 percent live with two other people, and 26 percent live with three or more people.
- Two-thirds of renters reside in cities (21 percent in or near downtowns and 43 percent in city neighborhoods).
- Only 13 percent of Millennials live in true large city downtown high rise buildings.
- Only 38 percent of the Millennials did not have student loan debt, and another 10 percent repaid their debt. In total 52 percent are still in school or have outstanding debt. For those that had student debt - the average student debt ranged from \$25,000-\$30,000 after graduation.
- Finally, only 85 percent own a car - far below previous generations.



## NATIONAL HOUSING TRENDS AND THE LOCAL IMPACTS

### LOCATION:

According to a 2015 study, conducted by the Urban Land Institute, 48 percent of all Americans and 73 percent of Millennials report, they are very or somewhat likely to move in the next five years. This is vital as 53 percent of Americans (63 percent of Millennials, 49 percent of Baby Boomers, and 64 percent of general renters) would prefer to live in a place where they do not need to use a car as often. This finding does not preclude people from residing in well positioned rural regions or small and mid sized cities, but simply states that the personal vehicles (and large garages) will have less impact on housing choices over the next several decades.

### HOMEOWNERSHIP:

Two-thirds of Millennials see themselves transitioning into single-family homeownership over the next five years; however, they remain less likely to move into single family ownership than Generation Xers and Baby Boomers. National trends also illustrate the War-Baby/Silent Generation members are most likely to move into rental housing over the next five years (from 77 percent owner occupied in 2015 to 59 percent owner occupied in 2020).

### SIZE:

Among likely movers, Millennials and Generation Xers most likely expect to relocate to a larger home, while 73 percent of Baby-Boomer and 83 percent of the War-Baby/Silent Generation will look for the same size or smaller home.

### TYPE:

Single-family homes remain the top housing preference for buyers (61 percent rented or owned), however, over the past several years townhomes, and duplexes started to take a larger share of

the housing market. The proportion of townhomes and duplexes increased to 19 percent – a six percent increase over several years ago.

### SALES:

According to the National Association of Realtors 2016 Generation Sales Trends Report

- At 35 percent, buyers 35 years and younger are the largest cohort of home buyers.
- First-time buyers made up 32 percent of all home buyers, down from 33 percent in previous years.
- The most common type of home purchased continues to be the detached single-family home, which made up 83 percent of all homes purchased.
- Home prices increased slightly over previous years due to the constricting supply of available homes.
- As expected, the most expensive homes were purchased by buyers 36 to 50 years.

1 "America in 2015: A Community Survey by ULI."

2 <http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/America-in-2015.pdf>

3 <http://www.realtor.org/reports/home-buyer-and-seller-generational-trends>

## LOCAL TRENDS AND ISSUES

### AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT FOCUS:

Many of the opened responses illustrated dire concerns for several areas of the City. Over 70 percent of the respondents stated some or all of the west side needs housing rehabilitation. Many went on to say the City should focus the efforts on removing the dilapidated and blighted housing and rehabilitate structures that could add to the character of the community. As one respondent stated, this would help "represent the west side as a beautiful place to live. It has the potential and space to grow..."

Respondents also stated that pockets of the east side need rehabilitation attention. Many respondents stated the City should target rehabilitation around parks, schools, the northeast side neighborhoods, near downtown neighborhoods, and the older historic homes and neighborhoods.

### HOUSING REMOVAL FOCUS:

Many respondents stated the City should focus housing relocation or removal efforts on properties immediately adjacent to the industrial areas or the railroads. These areas should be reserved for targeted business recruitment and expansion or open space preservation to help reduce land use conflicts and buffer existing neighborhoods from the industrial land uses.

### HOME SIZE (PRE & POST-RECESSION):

According to the interviewed homebuilders, before the recent recession homebuyers were primarily concerned with the general size of a home. The most desired homes often included oversized attached garages that consumed a significant portion of the front façade of the home that made a home look larger and of greater value. Since the recession, several homebuilders stated the homebuyers are looking for slightly smaller homes, but with higher quality amenities and features. The building permit activity supports this observation.

### LOTS:

As previously stated, there is a limited supply of existing single family lots within the City of Wisconsin Rapids that are not encumbered by wetlands. Maps 6 and 9 illustrate the available serviced parcels greater than 0.15 acres, with a

minimum assessed value of \$8,000, and an assessed improvement value of less than \$5,000.

Vierbicher notes, the available parcels in the City are not the same type currently being developed in adjacent communities. Most of the lots in other communities tend to be slightly larger conventional cul-de-sac subdivision lots located closer to the fringe of development; whereas, the parcels available in the City are on traditional grid streets. The reported MLS data supports the finding as the average listing price for available serviced lot within the City of Wisconsin Rapids is \$20,000; whereas, the average list price for all serviced lots available within the a 20-mile radius of the City is \$29,000. The Rosewood Estates subdivision is the only location in the City of Wisconsin Rapids with stable single and two-family construction growth.

### TYPE OF WORK:

As illustrated earlier in this report, renovation projects vastly outnumbered new construction projects in the City. The homebuilders and realtors interviewed stated the average cost of constructing a new house could range from \$180,000 to \$240,000. This is very challenging in a market where the listed sale price closely reflects the estimated fair market value. Custom homebuyers risk having the home assessed much lower than the actual cost of construction and would have to "ride-out" the housing market for many years until the sale price more closely reflects the cost of construction. Therefore, it is more economical to purchase a home at a lower price and complete desired renovations or additions. The builders interviewed stated a significant portion of past renovations (not including the recent storm damage repairs) were for older individuals or couples looking to renovate existing homes to enable them to reside in the home longer. Typical renovations include zero entry doorways, bathroom safety features, and the removal of dense carpet. This trend will likely continue as the community starts to age and people wish to remain independent longer.





## LOCAL DEMOGRAPHICS AND EMPLOYMENT

Without quality and stable employment anchoring a community, the means to afford quality housing is severely limited. Therefore, employment opportunities represent the largest housing demand generator. Many of the community survey respondents stated retaining quality employment and encouraging new living wage jobs should be the City's highest priority. The aging community in Wisconsin Rapids compounds the regional employment shift as the manufacturing labor force shrinks and the need for professional health services increases.

As stated earlier in this report, the DOA partnership with the Applied Population Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin projected the City of Wisconsin Rapids to lose nearly 900 residents between 2010 and 2040. The study also found a significant shift of the population to older age cohorts. For the second time in their generation, baby-boomers will drastically change the nationwide employment market. According to reports by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, healthcare fields will lead all fields in growth until 2022. Regions and municipalities with a significant portion of the population entering retirement age will need an influx of health care professionals to serve the community.

According to representatives for Aspirus Riverview Hospital, the hospital currently employs approximately 600 people. To meet the anticipate market demand for services the hospital anticipates employment to double to 1,200-1,500 people over the next decade. Upon further review of the 586 reported employees, 67.5

percent live in a Wisconsin Rapids zip code. Vierbicher estimates approximately two-thirds or 260 of these employees reside in the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Extrapolating these figures to the future growth equates to a projected impact of an additional 275 to 410 additional workers and households in the City. The hospital anticipates most of these positions will be created at the main Riverview Campus and staffed with educated young professionals. Vierbicher also calculated small ancillary employment growth from other employment sectors and business throughout the city.

## PROJECTIONS

To project the housing growth needs and impacts, Vierbicher applied the anticipated household gains listed above, adjusted for changes in housing preference within the different generations, to the anticipated demographic patterns established by the Wisconsin DOA.

The results indicate the City of Wisconsin Rapids should anticipate an increase in young professionals and families in the community as a result of the Aspirus Riverview Hospital expansion. The City will also experience a greater pressure on affordable senior housing units as the community continues to age and seniors from the surrounding communities migrate closer to the necessary goods and services. The additional influx of employment would be of great benefit to the city, but could drastically impact the current housing availability within the region.

Table 10 details the projected household growth in the community.

**Table 10: Projected Housing Demands**

Housing Type	Current Vacancy			Healthy Market Target	Units needed to Meet Current Demand	Units needs to Meet Future Demand (2020 includes unmet current demand)					
	Current Number of Units	Percent Vacant	Number Vacant			2020-Low	2020-High	2025-Low	2025-High	2030-Low	2030-High
Apartments	1886	3.9%	74	5.0%	21	62	82	43	54	27	34
Townhome/Duplex/Condo	924	3.5%	32	5.0%	14	30	39	24	29	17	20
Single Family	5974	3.1%	185	2-3%	0	101	152	53	78	15	29
	8784		291		35	193	273	120	161	59	83

Given the totals for the City as a whole, the City needs to ensure that the Downtown Redevelopment area absorbs a greater percentage of these new housing units. The City should focus on building apartments and townhomes/duplexes/condo in the Downtown redevelopment area. The City should focus nearly 80% of the future apartment, and townhomes/duplexes/condo development in the downtown study area for each five-year increment shown in Tables 11—13. This is due to the limited available space for these uses near the urban fringe of the community and the future changes in housing demand preferences.

It should be noted that the large apartment and townhomes, developments will most likely require redevelopment of an existing parcel or parcels.

The potential number of units are based on Table 10 units to meet Future Demand.

**Table 11: Suggested Number of Units to Build by 2020**

Housing Type	Units to Meet Future Demand		Downtown Study Area		Outside of Downtown Study Area	
	2020-Low	2020-High	2020-Low	2020-High	2020-Low	2020-High
Apartments	62	82	50	66	12	16
Townhome/Duplex/Condo	30	39	24	31	6	8
Single Family	101	152	0	0	101	152
			74	97	119	176

**Table 12: Suggested Number of Units to Build by 2025**

Housing Type	Units to Meet Future Demand		Downtown Study Area		Outside of Downtown Study Area	
	2025-Low	2025-High	2025-Low	2025-High	2025-Low	2025-High
Apartments	43	54	34	43	9	11
Townhome/Duplex/Condo	24	29	19	23	5	6
Single Family	53	78	0	0	53	78
			54	66	66	95

**Table 13: Suggested Number of Units to Build by 2030**

Housing Type	Units to Meet Future Demand		Downtown Study Area		Outside of Downtown Study Area	
	2030-Low	2030-High	2030-Low	2030-High	2030-Low	2030-High
Apartments	27	34	22	27	5	7
Townhome/Duplex/Condo	17	20	14	16	3	4
Single Family	15	29	0	0	15	29
			35	43	24	40







## Issues, Opportunities, and Recommendations







## SINGLE AND TWO-FAMILY PROJECTIONS

As stated earlier in this report, the single-family housing demand is based on the anticipated employment growth and the resulting household growth. Based on the combination of these demand factors the City should:

Recommendation SF 1:  
Promote and plan for 101-152 additional single-family and two-family owner and renter units over the next five years.

Recommendation SF 2:  
Promote and plan for 154-230 additional single-family and two-family owner and renter units over the next ten years (cumulative total).

Recommendation SF 3:  
Promote and plan for 169-259 additional single-family and two-family owner and renter units over the next 15 years (cumulative total).

## DESIRABILITY

The smaller and older housing stock in the City is not as highly desirable as new housing stock in comparable communities. This directly relates to length of time homes stay on the market and sale price ratio. According to recent MLS data, listed properties in the City of Wisconsin Rapids have the second longest time on the market (second to the Town of Grand Rapids) and the lowest sale price to list price ratio (Figures 42 and 43).

## MATERIALS AND STRUCTURAL AGE

One of the greatest concerns for individuals looking to purchase a home in the City is the amount of time, effort, and money to bring an older home up to their desired living standards. According to Wood County health officials, many of the older owner-occupied homes and rental properties must routinely address lead paint, lead pipes, and/or asbestos when making minor or major renovations

to a home. Homeowners must often address inadequate ventilation and poorly sealed windows and doors that cause moisture and mold damage in older homes. This abatement can significantly impact the cost of renovation ownership; however, the Wood County Health Department stresses the importance of the abatement for the health of the occupants

## QUALITY OF SINGLE AND TWO FAMILY RENTAL HOUSING UNITS

Vierbicher observed throughout the study the need to increase the quality of single-family rental housing. This concern routinely came up in the community survey, and there is the general perception that many of the single-family rental housing units in the City of Wisconsin Rapids lack quality. Poor property maintenance and exteriors were cited as a growing concern. The lack of property maintenance and building upkeep in an area can contribute to a continuing downward spiral of divestment. Homeowners who had maintained their properties could begin to defer their maintenance as they see the properties around them deteriorate. Leaving maintenance issues and blighting influences unaddressed leads to increased vandalism and crime, and can spread to surrounding areas. A comparatively low sale value only compounds the problem as opportunistic landlords purchase low-priced properties to rent with limited maintenance. Numerous responses stated the city needs to ensure there are quality and affordable rental units. One respondent clearly illustrated this concern.

"I pay much more for rent for an old, improvement-needing house than I would for a mortgage. And the only affordable houses to rent are old, run-down, or falling apart."

It is important to note that not all rental properties are blighted or in disrepair. Quality rental units blend into the neighborhood; whereas, neglected properties tend to be the focal point of

neighborhood concerns. To address these concerns the City should:

**Recommendation SF 4:**  
Establish a home improvement revolving loan fund or similar program specifically for owner-occupied housing improvements.

To establish the fund, the City could redistribute money from the general fund, redistribute fees charged for violations, apply for state appropriated CDBG funds, or extend Tax Increment Districts for an additional year to fund housing redevelopment programs as allowed by Wisconsin State Statutes. Recommendations SF 2-4 and MF11 could be part of this fund.

The City should also encourage people to purchase, rehabilitate, and maintain older properties. Therefore, the City should:

**Recommendation SF 5:**  
Establish an Owner-Occupied Purchase/ Rehabilitation Program.

A purchase and rehabilitation program could be a part of the revolving loan fund, or the City could simply direct potential homeowners to the best available resources such as the WHEDA Mortgage Certification Credit (MCC) program or Wisconsin Historic Tax credits. To enable residents to apply for historic tax credits the City should:

**Recommendation SF 6:**  
Create Historic District(s) to leverage rehabilitation funds.

With the vast history in Wisconsin Rapids, the City should investigate the possibility of recognizing a historic district. The inclusion of properties in a historic district could help property owners leverage state and national renovation grants, funds, or tax credits to preserve historic structures. To help preserve the residential character, in the older neighborhoods, the City should also:

**Recommendation SF 7:**  
Create a two-family to a single-family conversion program.

A single family conversion program would help single-family property owners that can prove the structure was initially designed as a single-family house and wish to return the structure to the previous state.

However, if a home becomes dilapidated to the point where it is detrimental to health, safety, and welfare of the community, the City of Wisconsin Rapids should continue to utilize raze or repair orders as necessary. However, the City should be proactive and:

**Recommendation SF 8:**  
Create a raze or repair plan/ procedures document for the Inspection Department to follow and distribute to landowners early in the raze or repair process.

Many single and two-family properties throughout the City are inundated with rubbish and debris. This was well documented by site visits and stated throughout the community survey comments; therefore, the City should:

**Recommendation SF 9:**  
Actively coordinate enforcement of the City's Property Maintenance Code between the appropriate City of Wisconsin Rapids and Wood County agencies.

## HOMEOWNERSHIP

As illustrated by the community survey results and the realtor and lender interviews, there appears to be a disconnect between the rates of home ownership and those who are willing but are reluctant to purchase after the recent recession. Vierbicher identified earlier in this report nearly 73 percent of the surveyed rental respondents were or might be interested in purchasing a home within the next two years, but were often encumbered by existing outstanding debt. Therefore, the City of Wisconsin Rapids should work to incentivize home ownership of these affordably priced homes. The American Community Survey stated the average monthly rental rates for a Wisconsin Rapids renter was approxi-



mately \$620. Using standard mortgage calculators (assuming a ten percent down payment, a 30-year fixed rate mortgage at current interest rates, and assuming a “Good” credit rating) the average monthly rental payment of \$620 could afford a \$94,000 home. Furthermore, using standard home affordability calculators and assuming a household at the median income level (\$36,299), with no down payment and \$400/month in existing outstanding or obligated debt, could afford up to an \$80,000 home purchase. These examples simply illustrate the upper limits of home affordability. To increase homeownership the City should:

**Recommendation SF 10:**  
Create and annually update educational material combining federal, state, local, nonprofit and private programs that promote homeownership.

## ASSESSED VALUE VS. SALE PRICE

A review of recent sales within the City of Wisconsin Rapids revealed that nearly every recent market sale (excluding foreclosures) was between \$50,000 and \$150,000. The sale price outpaced the assessed value. The differences ranged between 2 to 35 percent and the majority of the differences ranged between 5 to 15 percent. The trend is harder to predict for the large number of homes assessed less than \$50,000. Simple updates to a home will influence the sale presence and could significantly increase the sale value. This is crucially important to the City because fair market value is a factor or a percentage of the assessed value.

## ASSESSED VALUES VS. SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

Vierbicher also found significant differences in the assessed values by simply crossing municipal boundary lines. The difference could be attributed to a combination of newer structures, larger lots, and several other factors. However, the difference in assessed values for very simi-

lar properties is concerning. Vierbicher illustrates this example by using a case study of properties that are immediately adjacent to the municipal boundary between the City of Wisconsin Rapids and the Town of Grand Rapids. Map 10 illustrates these findings. This could be an isolated case, but over a thousand single family units have an assessed value less than \$50,000 which could drastically impact the annual tax revenue and budget. Therefore, the City should:

**Recommendation SF11:**  
Continue the plan to update assessed values frequently to more closely reflect market realities.

Increasing assessed values could enable the City to reduce the overall tax rate to align with similar communities. The City should strive during each reassessment process to ensure these values are currently reflective of the surrounding market.

## NEW CONSTRUCTION

The City has enough available lots to manage the expansion of new residential units for a few years; however the City should start to plan for new expansion areas. Growth areas should be identified by reviewing the current sewer service growth areas, the Comprehensive Plan future land use map, and the Waterfront Plan. The planning areas should also be reflective of the desired generational housing preferences. Therefore, the City should:

**Recommendation SF 12:**  
Monitor residential lot availability and promote additional land divisions as necessary to meet the demand of the community.

Finally, with the potential influx of young professional into the area the City should:

**Recommendation SF 13:**  
Monitor demand for entry-level homes and the potential to use infill lots for affordable housing and homeownership development.



## MULTIFAMILY

### RECENT DEVELOPMENT TREND

According to the assessment records, there are approximately 90 commercially assessed structures that contain residential uses. While the majority of these uses are exclusively residential apartments there are also several properties that contain 1-4 residential units above or adjacent to commercial uses. In total these structures account for greater than 1,800 units and approximately \$76 million in assessed value.

The multifamily units include market rate units, senior housing units, Community Based Residential Facilities (CBRF), and assisted living housing units. Over 40 percent of multifamily units were constructed between 2000 and 2009. Figure 31 details these findings.

### PROJECTIONS

As stated earlier in this report, the rental housing demand is based on the anticipated employment growth, the resulting household growth, and existing pent-up demand. Most of the rental housing in Wisconsin Rapids is classified as "market rate" or "conventional" housing. These units are free of any rental rate constraints, other than those imposed by a competitive marketplace. Some market rate units may impose age restrictions, and serve renters age 55 and older, but this age preference is the only limitation that exists in the market rate segment. Based on the combination of these demand factors, the City should:

**Recommendation MF 1:**  
Promote and plan for an additional 62-82 multifamily apartment units over the next five years.

**Recommendation MF2:**  
Promote and plan for 105-136 additional multifamily apartment units over the next ten years (cumulative total).

**Recommendation MF3:**  
Promote and plan for an additional

132-170 multifamily apartment units over the next 15 years (cumulative total).

### AFFORDABILITY

The additional units should help increase the housing unit total and raise the vacancy rate to the healthy limit of five percent and help reduce monthly the rental rates. A lower than average vacancy rate leads to un-proportional rent rate increases, thus reducing housing affordability within the community. To track the portion of the City impacted by rising rental rates, the City should also:

**Recommendation MF 4:**  
Maintain an annual inventory of the number of Low-Income tax credit housing units (LIHTC), WHEDA Section 42 housing units, Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program recipients, and other public assistance programs; and

**Recommendation MF 5:**  
Establish future benchmarks for market rate and housing assistance units within the City.

Furthermore, as young professionals stay in the rental market longer and start families later in their lifecycle the City should encourage the development of townhouse and twin home development closer to desirable amenities (restaurants, shops, etc.) that require less annual maintenance. Based on this combination of demand factors, the City should:

**Recommendation MF 6:**  
Promote and plan for an additional 30-39 townhomes, row homes, condos, duplex units over the next five years.

**Recommendation MF 7:**  
Promote and plan for an additional 54-68 townhomes, row homes, condos, duplex units over the next ten years (cumulative total).



**Recommendation MF 8:**  
Promote and plan for an additional 72-88 townhomes, row homes, condos, duplex units over the next 15 years (cumulative total).

A significant portion of the density should be in near downtown redevelopment areas identified in the Waterfront Plan. Providing young professionals their desired housing options earlier in their life cycle will help place them in the community and encourage them to invest and stay within the community. Furthermore, the downtown redevelopment could offer new housing choices to empty-nesters that desire less maintenance as they age. Based on these demand factors, the City should:

**Recommendation MF 9:**  
Promote the development of housing choices that are appropriate for empty-nesters and young seniors.

These housing choices should include similar or smaller sized attached single family homes or apartments with the appropriate amenities that appeal to the mature households as they age (zero entry, wider hallways, etc). This is similar to the new River City Senior Apartments on the west side and could be best-suited for infill development. Embracing this housing transition would help facilitate younger buyers (Millennials and Gen Xers) to move up in the housing market.

## PROPERTY AND TENANT MAINTENANCE

Property and tenant maintenance were recurring themes throughout the interviews and the public survey. Many landlords do a good job of maintaining their properties; however, some landlords do not reinvest in or maintain their properties and created a need for a monitoring program. Because the City has many affordably priced homes, the landlords tend to purchase additional homes to supplement their income or add to their property portfolio. In our experience, quality rental housing is maintained by an ever vigilant presence on the prop-

erty by the owner or property manager to proactively identify issues and maintain a quality dialog with the tenants. Therefore, the City should:

**Recommendation MF 10:**  
Create a Rental Registration and Inspection Program consistent with State of Wisconsin Regulations.

The creation and Implementation of a Rental Registration and Inspection Program would ensure each housing unit is in compliance with federal, state, and local laws and codes.

However, a potential rental registration program is not without limitations. As of March 1, 2016, the State of Wisconsin published changes to rental property laws. Specifically, the State limited a local municipality's abilities to proactively regulate rental properties. Local municipalities can still require landlord and rental property registration, but the registration may only require that a rental unit owner provides to the local government with his or her name, a contact person, and an address and telephone number at which the contact person may be contacted.

Furthermore, Wisconsin Act 176 (2015) also limited a municipality's authority to inspect rental properties as part of a rental registration program, except upon a complaint by any person, as part of a program of regularly scheduled inspections conducted in compliance with municipal inspection warrant requirements, or as required by state or federal law.

Vierbicher recommends implementing the program that is in compliance with State restrictions and laws. Elements of this program could include:

- Landlord Responsibilities/requirements
  - ☐ Property address
  - ☐ Owner name
  - ☐ Contact (property manager), including address and telephone number,
  - ☐ optional disclosure items include email, the number of units, etc.

- City of Wisconsin Rapids Responsibility
  - Create policy and rental property database to be maintained by staff.
  - Create multi-year regularly rental inspection scheduled, including owner-occupied rental property. The City is prohibited from charging a fee for conducting an inspection of a residential rental property unless the amount of the fee is uniform for residential rental inspections and the fee is charged at the time that the inspection is performed. The Act also specifies that a fee for a subsequent reinspection of a residential rental property may not be more than twice the fee charged for an initial reinspection.
  - Documentation of the number of units (market, affordable, subsidized, senior, etc.) in each inspection.
  - Identify training opportunities/resources for landlords in Wisconsin Rapids (working with non-profit groups).

This program could lead to landlords wishing to invest in their properties, but landlords owning one or two properties might not have the resources for significant upgrades, therefore, the city should:

**Recommendation MF 11:**  
**Create a revolving loan fund or similar program for rental housing rehabilitation.**

A revolving loan fund would help private landlords fund improvements to their buildings and ensure compliance with fire and building codes. The fund could also be used as equity to help fund the purchase and sale of a nuisance property to a quality landlord. To establish the fund the City could redistribute funds from the general fund, redistribute fees charged for violations, and extending Tax Incremental Districts for an additional year to fund housing redeveloped programs as allowed by Wisconsin State Statutes.

## NEGATIVE PERCEPTION OF "LOW-INCOME" OR SUBSIDIZED RENTERS

One of the most frequent comments that arose during the community survey was the negative perception of "Low-Income" renters. Most of the apartments in the immediate region were built in the City of Wisconsin Rapids. This is consistent with most development trends when comparing neighboring cities, villages, and towns. While this means cities are more diverse in their socioeconomic base, it also has negative, and often unwarranted, perceptions of the rental population.

According to the comments from the general public, there is a perception of people moving from outside of the City of Wisconsin Rapids for low-income apartments and housing (particular references to Chicago and Milwaukee), thus, causing crime related issues. However, Vierbicher reviewed the 184 units of Public Housing administered by the Wisconsin Rapids Housing Authority and analyzed the previous ZIP codes and found that 143 units are occupied by people previously located with Wisconsin Rapids zip codes (54494 and 54495). Twelve households relocated from the Village of Nekeosa and seven households relocated from the Village of Rudolph. Moreover, only two households relocated from Milwaukee and the adjacent suburbs and no households relocated from Chicago or the adjacent suburb. Therefore, the local data does not support the claims that the current residents in defined "Low-Income" housing are relocating to Wisconsin Rapids.

It is a challenge to overcome the negative perceptions when you try to attract new families to a region. Several of the comments from the community survey illustrate this perception.

"I think that building more low-income housing may lead to more citizens that may not contribute to society like they should."



"End the low-income rentals or perform better background checks on city-owned low-income housing."

"If you expand low-income housing, you will attract criminals from other cities. It is a known fact that low-income areas go hand in hand with crime and drugs. We are already seeing an increase in thugs from Milwaukee bringing drugs and violence into our community, and they are all in the low-income housing on the west side."

National studies illustrate that this simply is not factual. As an example, in 2013 the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy and the Moelis Institute for Affordable Housing Policy at New York University School of Law and Wagner School of Public Service found that after studying neighborhoods through ten different American cities, community resistance to households with housing choice vouchers based on fear of increased rates of crime is often unwarranted. The study acknowledges that crime rates are higher in communities with a greater percentage of housing choice vouchers; however, the researchers utilized a multiple regression analysis and found a statistically significant correlation between the number of vouchers households from year to year and concluded, after controlling for differentiating factors between cities, that "voucher holders tend to settle in neighborhoods where crime is already higher."

Similarly, a 2016 study conducted by the Stanford Graduate School of Business non-parametrically estimated spillover impacts to neighborhoods where Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Housing (LIHTC) developments were built. The study concluded that LIHTC developments have

"Heterogeneous effects on local housing prices based on neighborhood characteristics. In lower income areas, housing prices appreciated substantial over the long-run in response to the in-

roduction of affordable housing projects."

The study did conclude that areas with higher median income and low minority shares tend to depreciate slightly over the long-run. Extrapolating these findings to the City of Wisconsin Rapids reveals that future LIHTC developments would not negatively impact housing prices and values and could help raise the values of surrounding properties.

Furthermore, in 2015 the City of Madison and the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission conducted a review of general market-rate multifamily impacts and found the majority of the scholarly research is on the impact of affordable housing, but was able to find:

"The preponderance of evidence from across the country indicates that affordable rental housing has no measurable effect or a very small effect, sometimes in the positive direction, on the property values of nearby residents. Using a repeat-sales method to track the same properties over time, Green, Malpezzi, and Seah find that in Madison, proximity to Section 42 housing was correlated positively with increases in property values; Waukesha and Ozaukee Counties showed no significant difference; Milwaukee showed slightly negative correlation, with the relative drop disappearing quickly (2002). Ellen (2007), meanwhile, shows that Section 202 and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit programs lead to increases in property values in the surrounding community while Section 8 and public housing lead to reductions that diminish or disappear over time. Since Section 202 and LIHTC developments often include a mix of incomes, their boost to property values is more in line with what one would expect from 100 percent market rate multifamily development."



They concluded that

"...most modern studies of the adverse impacts of affordable housing on neighborhoods and property values find that effects are likely to be small and may even have positive impacts. Affordable multifamily housing is likely to have the least negative impact when dispersed in smaller developments in neighborhoods that have higher incomes and lower unemployment while struggling neighborhoods might see either positive or negative impacts depending on the size of a development and what it replaces."

Finally, regarding local perception, many of the open-ended responses commented on the people "living off the system."

Again, Vierbicher reviewed the anonymous records of 180 head of households (HoH) under the Wisconsin Rapids Section 8 program and found the following results:

- Average family size – 2 people.
- Approximately 43 percent (of the 180 HoH) are older than 55 years old, and 57 percent are younger than 55 years old.
- Approximately 59 percent (of the 180 HoH) are disabled/handicapped.
- Approximately 44 percent of the income earned by the HoH is social security. An additional 20.4 percent of the income is supplemental security income for those greater than 65, disabled, or blind.
- Approximately 76.8 percent of households earn less than \$15,000 a year. This is a direct result of the disproportionate segment of the population that is living on a fixed retirement income or are handicapped/disabled.
- Public Assistance is the sole source of income for 1 percent of households.
- 42 percent are working households.
- No working households also received TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).
- 22.8 percent of HoH have been in the Section 8 program longer than ten years.

- Nearly 25 percent of HoH have been in the Section 8 program less than two years.

As illustrated earlier in this report, the lower property values within the City of Wisconsin Rapids could eventually see an increase in property values in areas with quality built and managed LIHTC developments. One of the greatest challenge facing the City of Wisconsin Rapids is educating residents on the real and perceived impacts of low-income and affordable housing. Therefore, the City should:

**Recommendation MF12:**  
Create, distribute, and annually update educational material regarding the impacts of market rate, senior, affordable, low-income, and subsidized housing.

Numerous respondents stated there is a dire need for safe and affordable handicapped accessible housing. Determining the need for affordable housing options for those with limited mobility and disabilities is a challenge; unfortunately, there is no formula or mathematical equation to determine need. It is apparent from the data provided above and the community survey that there is an unmet demand, and the City should strive to encourage developers to incorporate accessible units into future developments.

If the City is going to provide incentives to multifamily developers, it should require that the developers include accessible or affordable units into structures, and the priority should be for the development of sites in proximity to services and other amenities.



## SENIOR HOUSING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### SENIOR HOUSING BOOM

Over the past decade, the City experienced an influx of senior housing developments within the region. The growth in the senior housing market is expected with an aging population. As stated previously, 64 percent of the survey respondents stated the City needs no more senior housing.

"Too many senior housing developments! All these new places are being built and the seniors are selling their home which is flooding the market."

"We are over-run with senior housing. If we want Rapids to thrive and grow we need business, jobs and young people interested in staying."

These responses oppose the reality that Wisconsin Rapids could face over the next 15-30 years as shown again in Figures 4-6. The large number of respondents objecting to senior housing could also be the result of only 17 percent of the reported respondents were older than 65. Vierbicher believes the boom in senior housing is mostly driven by existing Wisconsin Rapids residents moving into the senior housing units and not by perceived outsiders moving into the City.

The nationwide trend toward senior housing will only continue over the next decade as the baby-boomer begin to move out of their homes. The "flood" of the market could be unavoidable as baby-boomers represent an abnormally large portion of the local population.

### CONFIDENCE OF AFFORDABILITY

According to the Urban Land Institute 2015 Report, members of the war-baby/silent generations are most likely to lack confidence in their ability to afford the home they want in the future, and many expect to downsize or remain in place as long as possible to save costs. This was

stressed throughout the housing survey. Many respondents stated that while senior housing has been built over the past few years it has filled up quickly, and there are not many affordable housing options. Therefore, the City will need to balance redevelopment for senior housing, attracting families to the area, and ensuring quality subsidized and market rate rental housing.

**Recommendation SH 1:**  
Monitor the need for additional market rate and affordable independent senior living as part of a larger multifamily inventory.

**Recommendation SH 2:**  
Monitor the need for additional assisted living units for aging seniors as part of a larger multifamily inventory.

**Recommendation SH 3:**  
Monitor the need for additional specialized memory care housing as part of a larger multifamily inventory.

The City should work with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to maintain a list of senior and assisted units and properties as part of the rental unit database. This would enable the City to proactively market to senior housing developers as the community begins to age. Again, there is no precise formula or mathematical model available to determine senior housing needs, due to the variety of housing options and the difference in aging and longevity between individuals, but by providing readily available data, the City can proactively recruit developers to the Wisconsin Rapids area.

## HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD REHABILITATION

Many respondents stated there are several neighborhoods or blocks that are on the tipping point where homes need to be rehabilitated or demolished due to concerns for public health and safety; therefore, the City should:

**Recommendation HNR 1:**  
Work with local housing agencies, non-profits, State of Wisconsin agencies, and the private housing sector to spur rehabilitation efforts and select a neighborhood for a pilot revitalization program.

The program should be monitored, reviewed, and critiqued to implement in other areas of the City. Program could include many of the items listed in the previous sections, but also could include:

- Creating a formal neighborhood association based on models throughout the State of Wisconsin.
- Creating a block level plan for individual parcels in the neighborhood.
- Identifying owner-occupied rehabilitation resources.
- Identifying rental rehabilitation resources.
- Identifying infill lots for new construction (including single family homes and attached housing).
- Identifying parcels for land assemblage for larger townhome and attached housing redevelopment.
- Identifying properties to raze or repair .
- Identifying necessary infrastructure improvements (utilities, parks, streets, etc.).
- Identifying and revising City ordinances to encourage energy conservation systems (Mid State Technical College program guides).

A formal Neighborhood Revitalization Program should include clear and defined goals, objectives, strategies, responsible parties, timelines, and potential funding sources. A plan should also monitor any changes in the housing composition within the City to ensure market rate, affordable, and senior housing needs are met. As part of this program the city should:

**Recommendation HNR 2:**  
Create and maintain a citywide inventory of vacant and underutilized parcels.

To ensure consistency over time, the inventory should include a guiding document that dictates the definition of "vacant and underutilized." Using this parcel inventory list, the City should:

**Recommendation HNR 3**  
Acquire and demolish targeted dilapidated structures.

The City should then target rehabilitation around parks, schools, gateways into the City, and in the 100-year floodplain.

Furthermore, using the parcel inventory list, the City should:

**Recommendation HNR 4:**  
Create a strategy for targeted residential and mixed used infill redevelopment.

The strategy should strive to

- Reduce land use conflicts between residential uses and adjoining commercial and industrial properties.
- Identify land assemblage opportunities and opportunities to return smaller unusable portions of properties to adjoining land owners.
- Identify commercial storefront with underutilized second stories for potential housing renovations.

Moreover, the City should also:

**Recommendation HNR 5:**  
Target, incentivize, and implement redevelopment efforts consistent with the targeted infill strategy and the Waterfront Master Plan.

The Waterfront Master Plan illustrates areas for mixed-use and residential developments that will help attract new young professional residents to the area and provide new housing choices for the aging population.



The City could also use non-momentary tools to help incentivize development such as;

**Recommendation HNR 6:**  
Streamline the development approval and rezoning process for developments that incorporate affordable housing or are infill developments that utilize existing buildings or infrastructure.

## OTHER HOUSING AND PROPERTY RELATED INITIATIVES:

Finally, there are several loosely categorized recommendations that will enable the City to achieve the desired housing objectives. These include:

**Recommendation O1:**  
Conduct annual or biannual community survey assessments to gauge the development and redevelopment process.

**Recommendation O2:**  
Craft or revise any existing economic development strategies to attract or retain living wage employment.

**Recommendation O3:**  
Encourage employers to be involved in addressing the housing needs of Wisconsin Rapids.

Employer involvement could include;

- Grants
- Loans
- Forgivable loans
- Deferred loans
- Down payment assistance
- Loan guarantees

Employers that do not wish to grant assistance directly to individual employees could be a partner in establishing revolving loans funds or sponsoring neighborhood revitalization efforts to help impact change throughout the community.

**Recommendation O4:**  
Create a housing resource guidebook for current and potential property owners.

The guidebook could include;

- A list of available public and private bank financing assistance programs.
- A list of available public and privately funding homebuyer and homeowner education resources.
- An illustrated guide to the City permit and zoning procedures.
- A illustrated guide of common interior renovation ideas by house type (ranch, cap cod, tutor, bungalow, etc.) .
- An illustrated guide for external renovation projects that update and add value to a property or structure.

**Recommendation O5:**  
Identify and work with a local non-profit to champion “low hanging fruit” renovation and property maintenance assistance.

A significant portion of the respondents stated concern for the general maintenance of owner-occupied and rental properties. In addition to coordinated enforcement stated earlier in the recommendations, the local community could help influence change through grassroots community clean up efforts. For example, local non-profits or a newly created neighborhood associations could assist with property and home renovations through;

- The creation of an online landscape planting swap program.
- The creation of a tool exchange program.
- Organizing, neighborhood, block and property cleanup efforts.



The following Action Plan matrix identifies the description, time frame, and responsible parties for each recommendation. The timeframes are immediate ( 1-2 years), short-term (1-5 years), medium-term (1-10 years), and long-

City of Wisconsin Rapids Housing Study and Needs Assessment			
Rec ID	Description	Time frame	Responsible Parties
<b>Single and Two Family Recommendations</b>			
SF1	Promote and plan for 101-152 additional single-family and two-family owner and renter units over the next five years.	Short-Term	City (RDA, Plan Commission)
SF2	Promote and plan for 154-230 additional single-family and two-family owner and renter units over the next ten years (cumulative total).	Medium-Term	City (RDA, Plan Commission)
SF3	Promote and plan for 169-259 additional single-family and two-family owner and renter units over the next 15 years (cumulative total).	Long-Term	City (RDA, Plan Commission)
SF4	Establish a home improvement revolving loan fund or similar program specifically for owner-occupied housing improvements.	Immediate	City & Redeployment Authority
SF5	Establish an Owner-Occupied Purchase/ Rehabilitation Program.	Immediate	City (RDA, Plan Commission)
SF6	Create Historic District(s) to leverage rehabilitation funds.	Immediate	City
SF7	Create a two-family to a single-family conversion program.	Immediate	City (RDA, Plan Commission)
SF8	Create a raze or repair plan/procedures document for the Inspection Department to follow and distribute to landowners early in the raze or repair process.	Immediate	City (Inspection, Plan Commission, Fire, etc), Wood County
SF9	Actively coordinate enforcement of the City's Property Maintenance Code between the appropriate City of Wisconsin Rapids and Wood County agencies.	Immediate & Ongoing	City (Inspection, Plan Commission, Fire, etc), Wood County
SF10	Create and annually update educational material combining federal, state, local, nonprofit and private programs that promote homeownership.	Immediate & Ongoing	City (Inspection, Plan Commission, Fire, etc), Wood County
SF11	Continue the plan to update assessed values frequently to more closely reflect market realities.	Short-Term	City Assessor
SF12	Monitor residential lot availability and promote additional land divisions as necessary to meet the demand of the community.	Immediate & Ongoing	City Plan Commission
SF13	Monitor demand for entry-Level homes and the potential to use infill lots for affordable housing and homeownership development.	Immediate & Ongoing	City



City of Wisconsin Rapids Housing Study and Needs Assessment			
Multi-Family, Townhome, and Condominium Recommendations			
MF 1	Promote and plan 62-82 additional multi-family apartment units over the next five years.	Short-Term	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
MF 2	Promote and plan for 105-136 additional multi-family apartment units over the next ten years (cumulative total).	Medium-Term	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
MF 3	Promote and plan for an additional 132-170 multi-family apartment units over the next 15 years (cumulative total).	Long-Term	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
MF 4	Maintain an annual inventory of the number of Low-Income tax credit housing units (LIHTC), WHEDA Section 42 housing units, Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program	Immediate & Ongoing	City, Housing Authority, & County
MF 5	Establish future benchmarks for market rate and housing assistance units within the City.	Short-Term	City & Housing Authority
MF 6	Promote and plan for 30-39 townhomes, row-homes, condos, duplex units over the next five years.	Short-Term	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
MF 7	Promote and plan for 54-68 townhomes, row-homes, condos, duplex units over the next ten years (cumulative total).	Medium-Term	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
MF 8	Promote and plan for 72-88 townhomes, row-homes, condos, duplex units over the next 15 years (cumulative total).	Long-Term	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
MF 9	Promote the development of housing choices that are appropriate for empty-nesters and young seniors, young professional, and young families.	Short-Term	City & Chamber of Commerce
MF 10	Create a Rental Registration and Inspection Program consistent with State of Wisconsin regulations.	Immediate & Ongoing	City (Inspection, Plan Commission, Fire, etc), Wood County
MF 11	Create a revolving loan fund or similar program for rental housing rehabilitation.	Short-Term	City (Finance, RDA, Plan Commission)
MF 12	Create, distribute, and annually update educational material regarding the impacts of market rate, senior, affordable, low-income, and subsidized housing.	Immediate & Ongoing	City (Plan Commission, Housing Authority) & WISCAP

City of Wisconsin Rapids Housing Study and Needs Assessment			
Rec ID	Description	Time frame	Responsible Parties
<b>Senior Housing Recommendations</b>			
SH 1	Monitor the need for additional independent senior living as part of a larger multifamily inventory.	Immediate & Ongoing	City, Housing Authority, Lowell Senior Center & Central Wisconsin ADRC
SH 2	Monitor the need for additional assisted living units for aging seniors as part of a larger multifamily inventory.	Immediate & Ongoing	City, Housing Authority, Lowell Senior Center & Central Wisconsin ADRC
SH 3	Monitor the need for additional specialized memory care housing as part of a larger multifamily inventory.	Immediate & Ongoing	City, Housing Authority, Lowell Senior Center & Central Wisconsin ADRC
<b>Housing and Neighborhood Rehabilitation</b>			
HNR 1	Working with local housing agencies, non-profits, State of Wisconsin agencies, and the private housing sector to spur rehabilitation efforts and select a pilot Neighborhood	Immediate	City, Housing Authority & WISCAP
HNR 2	Create and maintain a citywide inventory of vacant and underutilized parcels.	Immediate & Ongoing	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
HNR 3	Acquire and demolish targeted dilapidated structures.	Medium-Term	City and RDA
HNR 4	Create a strategy for targeted residential and mixed used infill redevelopment.	Immediate	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
HNR 5	Target, incentivize, and implement redevelopment efforts consistent with the targeted infill strategy and the Waterfront Master Plan.	Long-Term	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
HNR 6	Streamline the development approval and rezoning process for developments that incorporate affordable housing or are infill developments that utilize existing	Immediate & Ongoing	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
<b>Other Housing and Property Related Initiatives</b>			
0 1	Conduct annual or biannual community survey assessments to gauge the development and redevelopment process.	Long-Term	City (RDA & Plan Commission)
0 2	Craft or revise any existing economic development strategies to attract or retain living wage employment.	Short-Term	City (RDA, Industrial Development Commission), Chamber of Commerce
0 3	Encourage employers to be involved in addressing the housing needs of Wisconsin Rapids.	Immediate & Ongoing	City (RDA, Industrial Development Commission), Chamber of Commerce
0 4	Create a housing resource guidebook for current and potential property owners.	Immediate	City and local developer/architects
0 5	Identify and work with a local non-profit to champion "low hanging fruit" renovation assistance.	Immediate	City, Wood County and non-profits

## Appendix