

Waukesha County Register of Deeds Strategic Plan 2026 - 2028



“The office of the Register of Deeds office was established in Wisconsin in 1836 as a repository for land and vital records. In the office of the Register of Deeds, our goal is to continue to use advanced technology to increase efficiency and continue to provide the highest level of customer service to the people of Waukesha County.”

**-James Behrend
Waukesha County Register of Deeds**

Table of Contents

 [Jump to Strategic Objectives](#)

Table of Contents

Readers Guide: How to Read the Strategic Plan	2
Executive Summary	4-7
Mission Statement & Standards of Service Excellence	5
County Pillars & Department Statement of Purpose	6
Overview & Strategic Objectives	7
Strategic Objectives	8
Objective 1	8
Objective 2	9
Objective 3	10
Objective 4	11
Objective 5	12
Appendices	13-26
Appendix A: Environmental Scan	14

Reader's Guide: How to Read the Strategic Plan

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Thank you for reading the Waukesha County Register of Deeds Strategic Plan.

This plan provides an overview of what Waukesha County leadership aims to achieve over the next three years and how this Department aims to meet those goals.

Note: Consider this Strategic Plan a high-level look at problem-solving initiatives. As such, a reader may not encounter data on all departmental activities (as found in an Operational Plan). We [welcome your questions and feedback](#) any time!

What's an Objective?

In this Strategic Plan, an Objective is a milestone to be reached. It must be **specific**, **measurable**, **attainable**, **realistic**, and **time-bound** (aka **SMART**).

Each objective appears in two places: In a list that shows all of our goals in one place, and on its own page (example below, right).

Owner: The member of our team that is accountable for this Objective.

Feel free to contact Waukesha County to discuss any objective – just ask for the person listed here. We do the very same!

Strategy: What must be accomplished in order to achieve our objective?

A company that sells fruit snacks may set an objective to “increase sales.” One of their strategies is to pioneer new points of sale beyond supermarkets and vending machines, like commercial air travel, pizza delivery, and pro sporting events.

Like each Objective, a Strategy has an **owner** who guides efforts for its completion and success. Find this in the center column.

In the right-hand column, please find the **timeframe** for each strategy. This represents each strategy's deadline.

Performance measures:

A graphic or image show the progress and status of each Objective's success.

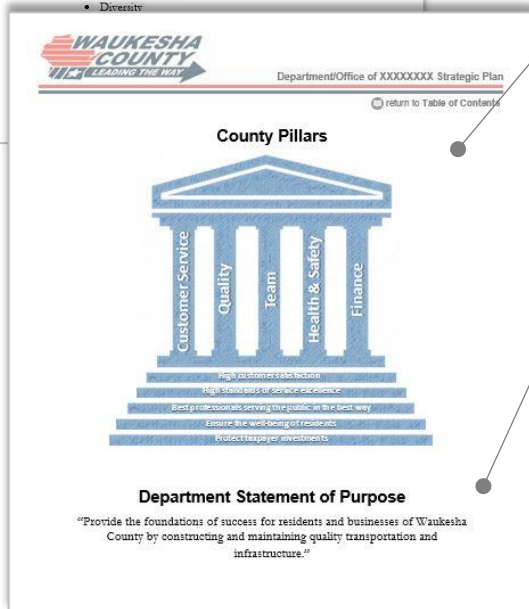
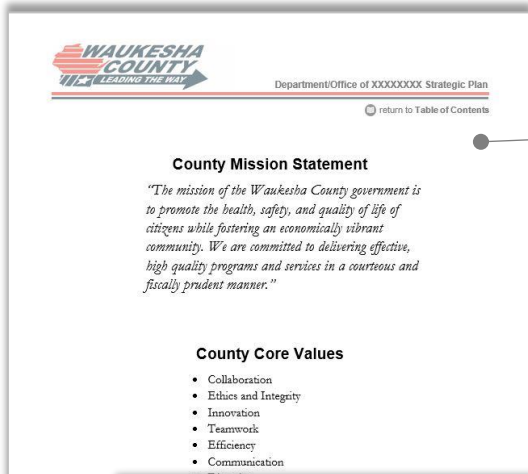
The screenshot shows a page header with the Waukesha County logo and 'Department/Office of XXXXXXXX Strategic Plan'. Below the header is a red bar with the text 'Pillar: Choose an item.' and two navigation links: 'return to Objectives list' and 'return to Table of Contents'. The main content area displays 'Objective 1: Click or tap here to enter text.' with 'Owner: Click or tap here to enter text.' and 'Performance Measure: Click or tap here to enter text.' Below this is a large box labeled 'Insert graphic/image here'. To the right of this box is a 'Learn More:' section with three bullet points, each containing a link: 'Type here, update link'. At the bottom of the screenshot is a table with three columns: 'STRATEGY', 'STRATEGY OWNER', and 'TIMEFRAME'. Each cell in the table contains the text 'Click or tap here to enter text.'

Learn More:

Jump to supporting resources found in this Strategic Plan's appendices, on WaukeshaCounty.gov, or elsewhere!

Reader's Guide Continued

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



The origin of each Objective

In each of Waukesha County's Departmental Strategic Plans, a pair of pages bears the principles and promises that guide our Objectives:

- Waukesha County's [Mission Statement](#). The big picture.
- County [Standards of Service Excellence](#), the principles we observe on our path to completing our mission.
- Waukesha County's [Five Pillars of Success](#), our framework for identifying core priorities and establishing program goals.
- Department's [Statement of Purpose](#). Each department completes a Strategic Plan. Each declares its own "mission" here.

How is the objective shaped by the "environmental scan"?

Environmental scan (n): Monitoring of an organization's internal and external environments for detecting early signs of opportunities and threats that may influence its current and future plans.

Find environmental scan data summarized in this document's [Appendix](#) sections.

Executive Summary: Mission Statement & Standards of Service Excellence

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County Mission Statement

“The mission of the Waukesha County government is to promote the health, safety, and quality of life of citizens while fostering an economically vibrant community. We are committed to delivering effective, high-quality programs and services in a courteous and fiscally prudent manner.”

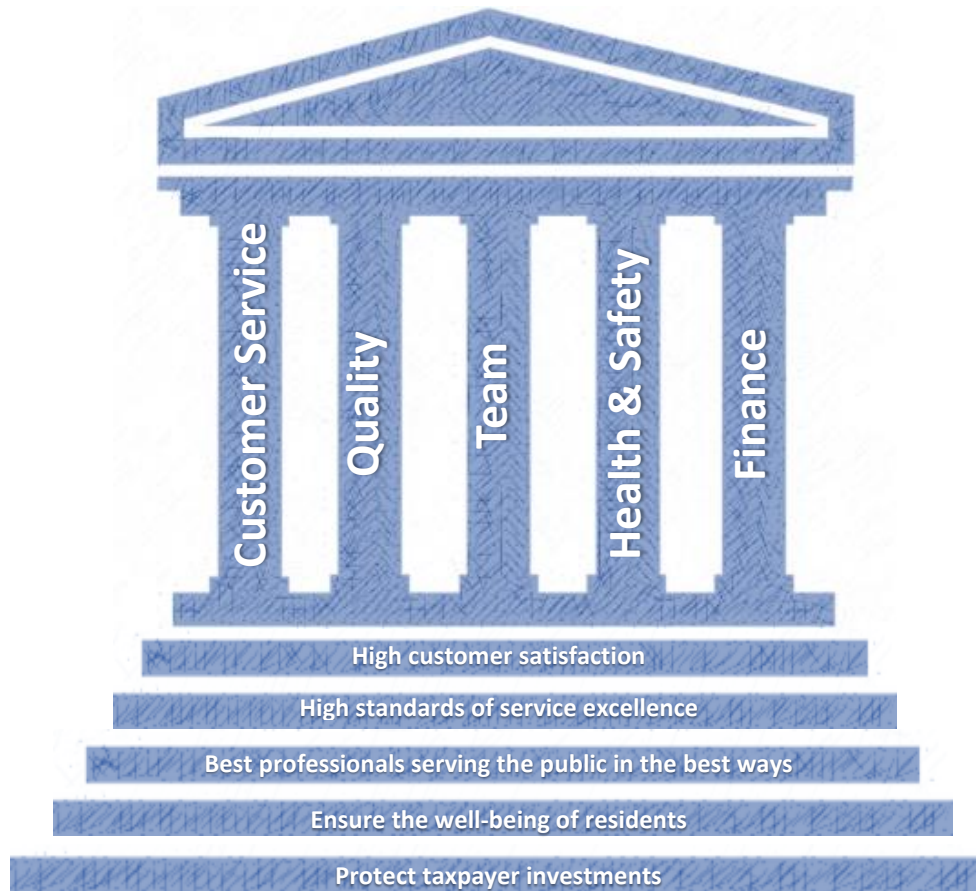
County Standards of Service Excellence

- Teamwork & Collaboration
- Innovation
- Efficiency & Cost Savings
- Communication
- Ethics & Diversity
- Well-being

Executive Summary: County Pillars & Statement of Purpose

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

County Pillars



Department Statement of Purpose

“The purpose of the Register of Deeds office is to provide the citizens of Waukesha County a depository for safekeeping and public inspection of recorded legal documents pertaining to Land Records and Vital Records.”

Executive Summary: Overview & Strategic Objectives

 [Return to Table of Contents](#)

Strategic Planning Overview

Waukesha County has successfully used strategic planning tools for well over a decade. County Departments hold stakeholder focus groups, conduct environmental scans, and work with departmental strategic planning coordinators to perform major updates to their plans on a three-year basis and provide annual updates as needed.

Through strategic planning, the County has established links between our Standards of Service Excellence, business functions, and measurable program outcomes across all departments which results in an atmosphere of continuous improvement and better service delivery.

To help guide our strategic planning process and identify priorities, the County established a cross-departmental Strategic Planning Executive Committee which holds meetings and trainings with planning coordinators and has worked with outside consultants to provide expert guidance to ensure that each new generation of our strategic plan is better than the last.

Strategic Objectives at a Glance:

- [Objective 1](#) Operational Efficiency & Space Optimization
- [Objective 2](#) Public Education & Community Outreach
- [Objective 3](#) Website & Digital Experience Modernization
- [Objective 4](#) Data Modernization, Improved Customer Experience & Indexing Completion
- [Objective 5](#) Innovation & AI Enhanced Customer Tools

County Pillar: Customer Service

 [Return to Strategic Objectives](#)

Objective 1: Operational Efficiency & Space Optimization

Owner: Register of Deeds Management Team

Performance Measure: Customer and staff surveys have indicated a concern about the accessibility, security and efficiency of the Register of Deeds Office space. The current layout is not efficient for customers, which results in frustration and confusion, and staff have expressed concerns with members of the public having easy access to staff-only areas. Feedback from all stakeholders will be obtained throughout the process to determine project success.

Strategy: Evaluate and reconfigure Register of Deeds office layout to improve efficiency and enhance the customer experience, improve secured space for staff and provide a designated accessible area for disabled customers, provide customers with streamlined responses to common inquiries and assist funeral homes in making escrow account replenishment easier.

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Evaluate and reconfigure ROD office layout and improve security of staff space	Determine whether the ROD office will be relocated at any point in the next 5 years. If not, work with Facilities to determine most cost efficient way to reconfigure current office setup to optimize space, security and efficiency.	Beth Zimmermann, Robert Dunn	2028 and ongoing
Develop communication/email templates to reduce staff handling time	Prepare streamlined templates to respond to customer email inquiries, reducing the staff time spent handling these matters.	Brian Ore, Alex Neimon	2026/Q4
Provide funeral homes with online escrow payment options (credit card replenishment options)	Goal is to improve efficiency, reduce administrative workloads, and streamline overall process. The strategy would need to be discussed with IT and Aumentum to come up with an online app option for funeral home's to access and later test before going live ensuring access to their account and online payments are successful.	Robert Dunn, Tara Eckert	2026/Q4

Objective 2: Public Education & Community Outreach

Owner: Register of Deeds Management Team

Performance Measure: Increase public awareness and understanding of the Register of Deeds office functions and Recording Notification Service (RNS) through community engagement, outreach events, public education and expanded partnerships. Success will be measured by community participation levels, RNS sign-ups and feedback from customers and community partners.

Strategy: Actively promote and educate the public on the services and functions of the Register of Deeds office. Strengthen current partnerships and expand others, improve communication and

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Promote and educate the public on the functions of the ROD office and RNS	Attend community events, senior programs, and professional organization meetings to introduce and promote RNS. Provide a computer that customers can sign up on the spot.	Beth Zimmermann	Ongoing
Provide fraud risk data and victim guidance	Provide customers with up to date fraud data and guidance on steps to take if they feel they have been a victim of property fraud.	Brian Ore, Alex Neimon	Ongoing
Continue to build relationships with all area funeral homes to enhance service opportunities	Goal is to acquire more business with our local Funeral Homes by mailing out an informational letter and/or visiting locations on sight explaining our services in the hopes to generate more revenue	Tara Eckert	Ongoing

Learn More:

- www.waukeshacounty.gov/ROD
- www.waukeshacounty.gov/ROD/RNS

County Pillar: Quality

 [Return to Strategic Objectives](#)

Objective 3: Website & Digital Experience Modernization

Owner: Robert Dunn, Brian Ore, Christina Hartzell

Performance Measure: ROD staff and customers will continue to be regularly asked for feedback regarding the website and public access to determine effectiveness and make functional improvements when possible.

Strategy: The public access land records website will be getting a major upgrade in 2026 which should drastically improve functionality. ROD staff will continue to work with the land records software developer on upgrades and improvements to both public access and Recording Notification.

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Update and modernize website	Streamline the wording, continue to make the site more user friendly.	Brian Ore, Christina Hartzell	Ongoing
Improve public access land records website	Implement updates to Public Access site in a manner where anyone who visits can quickly search and obtain the information they need, update user guides and prepare online videos to give a step by step guide to use.	Robert Dunn, Brian Ore	Ongoing
Improve RNS functionality, accessibility	Work with develop to make the sign-up process easier with drop down selection lists and an opportunity to verify that the legal information provided is correct.	Robert Dunn	Ongoing

Learn More:

- www.waukeshacounty.gov/ROD
- www.waukeshacounty.gov/ROD/RNS

County Pillar: Customer Service/ Team

[Return to Strategic Objectives](#)

Objective 4: Data Modernization, Improved Customer Experience & Indexing Completion

Owner: Register of Deeds Management Team

Performance Measure: According to a survey by the Property Records Industry Association, 83% of counties in the United States have digital documents that need additional indexing to make them fully searchable. The Waukesha County Register of Deeds office is home to almost 5 million land records documents. Our goal is to have 100% of our land records documents fully indexed by 2035 with the help of assistive technology.

Strategy: As of 2022, all land records documents going back to 1846 are available to view online. However, these documents are not currently fully indexed, which makes the search process difficult for many customers. Register of Deeds staff are working to index these historical documents, but the process will take many years. We are looking to make this process more efficient by using AI technology.

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Complete Backfile Indexing Project	Complete all indexing data for our entire record to facilitate customer ease of use.	Beth Zimmermann, Robert Dunn, Tracy Carlsen	Ongoing
Implement AI Indexing to current and backfile records	Use Automated indexing to complete initial indexing pass in both current and backfile records to speed backfile indexing. Blind rekey would still be employed to ensure accuracy.	Robert Dunn, Tracy Carlsen	2026, Q3-Q4
Introduce new options for Vital Records document purchasing	Implement online document purchasing, QR Code for website purchases and advanced ordering for vital records documents.	Beth Zimmermann, Tara Eckert	2026, Q2
Introduce a tiered subscription option for lower volume users	Moving from a single subscription offering to a tiered model will offer more flexibility and choice for our customers and better align the cost to their usage. This may reduce foot traffic in the Land Records division and possibly boost revenues.	Beth Zimmermann, Robert Dunn	2027
Continue cross-training of staff between Recording and Land Records	Cross training Recording and Land Records staff ensures that all staff are familiar and able to assist customers with questions. This will also make coverage more flexible.	Beth Zimmermann, Robert Dunn	Ongoing

County Pillar: Quality/Customer Service

 [Return to Strategic Objectives](#)

Objective 5: Innovation & AI Enhanced Customer Tools

Owner: Beth Zimmermann, Robert Dunn, Brian Ore

Performance Measure: Develop and update tools to assist customers in various processes accomplished in the Register of Deeds office. Gather frequently asked questions and common issues and concerns and use those as a basis for developing tools that a customer can use to help themselves. Streamline the recording process to eliminate the need for staff to work at the counter, and work with Land Information Services to enhance search functions for land records.

Strategy: Following the upgrade to the public access website, new user guides will be developed and additional tools will be made available to customers to enhance the searching functions. In person recording options will be evaluated and streamlined in conjunction with Objective 1 – optimizing space in the ROD office.

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Create user guides for customer functions	Prepare user guides for the various customer functions in our office using AI that will allow customers to tailor their experience to their situation.	Brian Ore	Ongoing
Develop interdepartmental LIS search site	Create a new site with LIS where customers can enter any common criteria and get to their parcel info in LIS or documents in Public Access without navigating LIS map search or finding their legal first.	Robert Dunn	Ongoing
Eliminate in-person submission of recorded documents, expand internal e-recording options	Customers often come to the counter seeking forms or assistance with completion of documents – both things that we do not provide. Implementing a drop box or kiosk system for document submission will streamline this process.	Beth Zimmermann	Ongoing

Learn More:

- <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/parks-and-land-use/land-information-system/>
- <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/register-of-deeds/online-search-tools/>

Appendix A: Environmental Scan

 [Return to Table of Contents](#)

Environmental Scan Overview

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

Population, Census Data, Demographics

Understanding the trends in growth and change in the population of Waukesha County will allow County Departments to strategically plan by responding to the needs of the population. As of the 2020 Decennial Census, 406,978 people resided in Waukesha County and according to the US Census QuickFacts, the County is estimated to have 417,029 residents as of July 1, 2024. The County is made up of 36 municipalities, including 8 towns, 21 villages, and seven cities. When consideration is given to the number of municipalities that our customers work with, it is also important to deliver services in the most efficient and logical way possible. Economic development is vital for communities in Waukesha County to retain optimum paying jobs, maintain municipal infrastructure and essential services, and maintain and expand quality of life.

General population

- The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) projects the County's population to increase to 424,472 by the end of 2025, to 436,986 by 2030, and 450,620 for 2035. This equates to a 6.16% increase in population between 2025 and 2035 ([VISION 2050 - 2024 Update - Review of Year 2050 Plan Forecasts](#)).
- Projections show that through 2050, Waukesha County will continue to be the third largest county in population in Wisconsin, Milwaukee and Dane will continue to be the first and second largest counties in population.
- Net migration will continue to be the primary source of population increase. The number of births (natural increase) is expected to increase moderately, but the number of deaths is expected to increase substantially because of deaths from the aging population (baby boomers). Wisconsin DOA Projections show that the number of deaths will exceed the number of births between 2030 and 2040, resulting in a negative natural increase in the County ([DOA Population Projections, produced in 2024, based from 2020 Census](#)).
- Waukesha County's share of the regional population is projected to increase from 19.3% (measured in 2010) to 19.89% by 2050, whereas Milwaukee County's share of the regional population is projected to decrease from 45.90% to 35.19%. Racine County's share of population remains between 9-10% and the population projection shows a minor decrease of 0.01% (SEWRPC: <https://www.sewrpc.org/Files/Info-Data/Demographics/2020-Profiles/RacineCounty.pdf>).
- The median age in Waukesha County is approximately 43.5 years old according to the [2023 ACS 1-year estimates \(Census Bureau Tables\)](#), and 43.1 years old according to the 2020 ACS 5-Year estimates ([S0101: AGE AND SEX - Census Bureau Table](#)). The median age has been increasing since 1970 when it was 25.4 years old.

- People 65 yrs. and older made up approximately 14.3% of the population in 2010, 17% in 2015, and 19.6% in 2020. This population is projected to make up 25.4% of the population by 2040.
- The youngest members of the baby boomer generation will reach age 65 by 2030.

Race

- Estimates based on the 2020 Census, approximately 87% of Waukesha County residents are Non-Hispanic White and estimated to be 86.1% as of July 1, 2024.
- The Hispanic or Latino population has increased from 4.1% in 2010 (16,123) to 5.3% (21,664) in 2020 and is estimated to be 5.9% (24,604) as of July 1, 2024.
- The Black or African American population has increased from 1.3% (4,914) in 2010 to 2% (8,175) in 2020 and is estimated to be 2.1% (8,757) as of July 1, 2024.
- The Asian population has increased from 2.7% (10,271) in 2010 to 4.1% (16,759) in 2020 and is estimated to be 4.2% (17,515) as of July 1, 2024.
- The American Indian population has continued to remain steady over the past 20 years. Approximately 0.3% (1,251) of the overall population is American Indian as of July 1, 2024.

Community Analysis: Health and Public Safety

Waukesha County ranks among the healthiest counties in Wisconsin. According to the [County Health Rankings](#) (2025), the County performs better than average—both statewide and nationally—on overall health outcomes and community conditions. However, local data highlights gaps in key health outcomes. Mental health, substance use, and healthy aging stand out due to both the burden reflected in the data and the opportunity for meaningful impact at the community level.

In identifying local public health priorities, the focus was placed on areas where the County can have the most significant impact. Mental health, substance use, and healthy aging were selected as part of the [Public Health Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#), which leverages shared community action to address high-burden issues through local coordination, prevention, and systems-level change.

Data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services illustrates the interconnected drivers behind Waukesha County's health priorities:

- **Accidents (unintentional injuries)** accounted for 8.5% of all deaths (1,009 deaths). Of these, 57% were due to falls and 23% to accidental drug overdoses, highlighting risks related to both aging and substance use.
- **Alzheimer's disease** accounted for 4.5% of deaths (538 deaths), **Parkinson's disease** for 1.7% (197 deaths), and **nutritional deficiencies** for 1.3% (155 deaths)—all indicators of a growing need for age-friendly systems and supports.
- **Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis** made up 1.4% of deaths (172 deaths), with 75% of these tied to alcoholic liver disease, reinforcing the connection to substance use.
- **Intentional self-harm (suicide)** accounted for 1.3% of deaths (153 deaths), further underscoring the need for mental health and early intervention strategies.

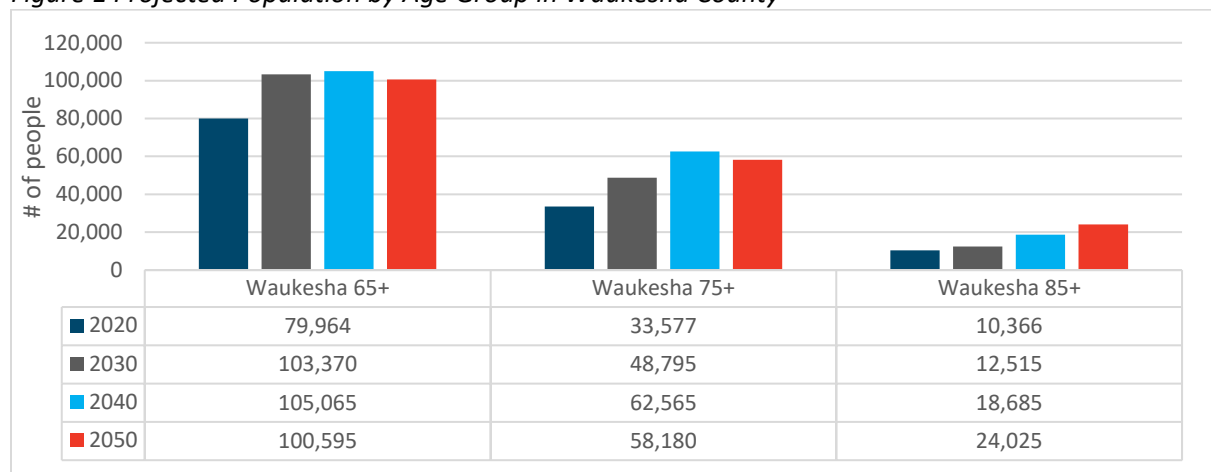
(Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics, 2025)

Healthy Aging: An Emerging Priority

Waukesha County is experiencing a rapid demographic shift. As of 2020, nearly 80,000 residents were 65 years old or older. This growth leads to an increased demand for systems that help older adults remain healthy, safe, and connected. It highlights the importance of age-friendly planning that promotes independence and quality of life. *(Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center, 2024)*

- The 65+ population is projected to exceed 100,000.
- The 75+ population will grow by 73% (from 33,577 to 58,180).
- The 85+ population will more than double (from 10,366 to 24,025).

Figure 1 Projected Population by Age Group in Waukesha County



(Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center, 2024)

As the population ages, the need for long-term services and support (LTSS) is growing, with national data pointing to the scale and impact of this shift:

- 56% of Americans turning 65 today will need long-term services and supports (LTSS).
- 22% will require LTSS for more than five years.
- Average LTSS costs: \$120,900, with 37% paid out-of-pocket.
- Family caregivers provide an estimated \$204,000 in unpaid care per person.

(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation [HHS/ASPE], 2022)

In Waukesha County, fall prevention and social connectedness have surfaced as two leading concerns affecting older adults’ ability to age well safely.

Falls are a leading cause of injury and death among older adults in Waukesha County.

- Falls accounted for 57% of all accidental deaths from 2021-2023, making them a key driver of unintentional injury, the County’s 4th leading cause of death *(Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics, 2025)*.

- Older adults face the highest rates of fall-related emergency visits and deaths. In Waukesha County, about 1 in 8 adults aged 85+ went to the ER for a fall injury between 2021 and 2023, compared to 1 in 19 aged 75–84 and 1 in 42 aged 65–74 (*Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics, 2025*).

Social isolation significantly impacts the health and well-being of older adults, with risks comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, a greater threat than obesity or physical inactivity. (*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023*)

In Waukesha County:

- 28.1% of adults 65+ live alone (*U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2023*).
- 10% lack internet access; 9% are uncomfortable using technology (*ADRC of Waukesha County Survey, 2023*).
- Only 5 of 37 municipalities have Senior Centers (*Waukesha County Government*).
- Just 17% of residents believe older adults have adequate social support (*Waukesha County Public Health, 2022*).
- Waukesha County has fewer membership organizations per capita than the state average (*University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute & Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2025*).

Together, these trends call for coordinated strategies that enhance mobility, strengthen physical and social environments, mitigate fall-related risks, and foster meaningful connections. By investing in community programs, accessible spaces, and digital inclusion, Waukesha County can better support healthy aging for all residents.

Mental Health: A Growing Crisis

Mental health is a top public health concern in Waukesha County, with youth experiencing some of the most significant challenges. The County has one mental health provider per 320 residents, which is better than the Wisconsin average (1:370) but still below the national benchmark (1:300). Despite this, access to care remains limited (*University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, 2025*). Only 25.8% of residents reported being satisfied with mental health services (*Waukesha County Public Health, 2022*).

Youth mental health has emerged as a critical area of concern, with local data pointing to high levels of distress and significant unmet need (*Tortora, McCoy, & Frederick, 2021*):

- 56% of Waukesha County High School students report anxiety, depression, or self-harm.
- 52% of students said they rarely or never get the help they need.
- 15% of students seriously considered suicide, 12% made a plan, and 7% attempted suicide.

Despite rising need, many young people still face significant challenges accessing mental health support. Common barriers include cost, stigma, insurance limitations, a lack of youth-centered or culturally responsive services, and limited access to school-based supports.

Mental health is also shaped by the environments where youth live, learn, and connect. According to the 2021 Waukesha County Youth Risk Behavior Survey (*Tortora, McCoy, & Frederick, 2021*):

- 17.0% of students reported experiencing in-person bullying.
- 16.0% of students reported being bullied online.
- 38% of students said bullying is a problem at their school.
- 11% of students did not feel like they belong at school.
- 17% of students said they did not have a teacher or other adult to talk to about a problem.

These findings underscore the importance of school environments that foster connection, trust, and psychological safety. Improving youth mental health in Waukesha County will require earlier intervention, stronger support systems, and community-wide efforts to reduce stigma, especially within schools and youth-serving spaces.

Substance Use: A Complex and Evolving Landscape

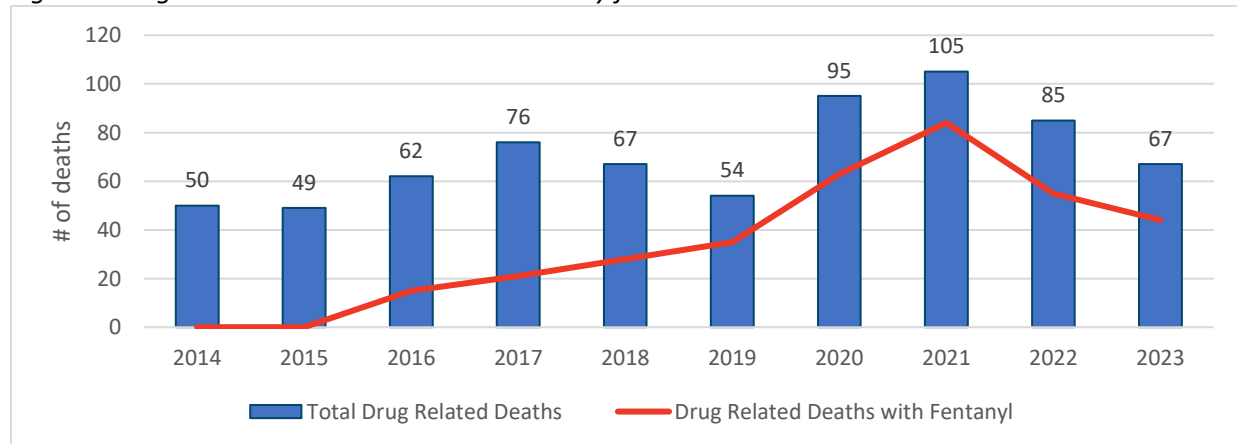
Substance use in Waukesha County is a complex and evolving public health issue. The Community Health Improvement Plan prioritizes opioids, particularly fentanyl, due to their immediate lethality and significant local impact.

On August 1, 2022, Waukesha County declared a [community health crisis](#) after opioid-related deaths nearly doubled from 2019 to 2021. This declaration led to the formation of the Fentanyl Crisis Response Team, focused on reducing overdose deaths. These efforts, combined with declining state and national drug-related death rates, suggest that harm reduction strategies are beginning to make an impact.

Yet the crisis continues to shift. Fentanyl remains the most acute threat, with overdose deaths increasingly driven by potent and unpredictable drug mixtures. In Wisconsin, cocaine deaths involving synthetic opioids increased by 134% from 2019 (182 deaths) to 2021 (426 deaths), and an estimated 40% of counterfeit pills contain a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl (*Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2024*).

Emerging substances like xylazine—a tranquilizer not reversible with naloxone—further complicate response efforts. These evolving threats underscore the ongoing need for a coordinated approach that spans education, prevention, harm reduction, and strong community partnerships.

Figure 2 Drug Related Deaths in Waukesha County from 2014 - 2023



(Waukesha County Medical Examiner's Office, 2025)

Beyond Opioids: Alcohol, Tobacco, Vaping, and Marijuana

While opioids remain the most urgent substance-related threat, broader patterns of substance use, particularly alcohol, tobacco, vaping, and marijuana, also present serious and often underestimated public health challenges. These substances are frequently socially accepted or perceived as less harmful, yet they contribute to long-term health risks, especially when use begins early.

Alcohol remains one of the most widely used and socially accepted substances in Waukesha County, yet it contributes to significant harm across the lifespan:

- In Waukesha County, 25% of adults reported binge or heavy drinking *(University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute & Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2025)*.
- 27% of motor vehicle crash deaths in the County involved alcohol *(University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, 2025)*.
- Binge drinking rates remained statistically unchanged from 2009 to 2020; however, high-use patterns persist, particularly among adults aged 35–44 and those in higher-income households *(ProHealth Care, 2022)*.
- Among high school students in Waukesha County *(Tortora, McCoy, & Frederick, 2021)*:
 - 23% reported having a drink within the last 30 days.
 - 9% reported binge drinking in the past 30 days.
 - Among students who drank:
 - 41% engaged in binge drinking.
 - 28% had their first drink before age 13—early use often linked to trauma, violence, or abuse.

Tobacco and vaping continue to pose significant public health concern in Waukesha County, despite overall progress in reducing cigarette smoking.

- 12.9% of Waukesha County residents were current smokers from 2017–2021 *(Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2025)*.
- In 2020, 11% of adults reported smoking cigarettes, while 4% reported using electronic vapor products. Among those who smoked or vaped, 55% attempted to quit for at least one day, and 69% of those who saw a healthcare provider were advised to quit *(ProHealth Care, 2022)*
- Vaping remains especially concerning among youth in Waukesha County:
 - 25% of students have tried vaping
 - 11% of students reported use in the past 30 days
 - Local use is likely underreported, complicating prevention and intervention efforts *(Tortora, McCoy, & Frederick, 2021)*:

As public support for marijuana continues to grow, with 63% of Wisconsin voters supporting recreational use and 86% supporting medical use, a new and largely unregulated threat has emerged: Delta-8 THC *(ACLU of Wisconsin, 2025)*. Derived from hemp and chemically altered to produce a high like traditional marijuana, Delta-8 is psychoactive, widely available, and currently unregulated at the state level in Wisconsin *(Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2024)*.

This regulatory gap means:

- There are no statewide age limits—Delta-8 can legally be purchased by youth.
- Products are sold at gas stations, vape shops, and convenience stores.
- No standard exists for packaging, labeling, or potency.
- Some local municipalities have implemented their own restrictions, but these vary.

Without consistent regulation or enforcement, Delta-8 THC remains a growing concern for youth health and safety in Waukesha County. Figure 3 Delta-8 THC Legality: A State-by-State Guide



(Ty, 2024)

Often sold in forms that mimic candy or vape cartridges, Delta-8 is especially appealing to young people. Among high school students in Waukesha County:

- 17% of students have used marijuana.
- 13% of students who have used marijuana started before age 13.

(Tortora, McCoy, & Frederick, 2021)

Health officials warn that Delta-8 use can result in impaired memory, judgment, and coordination; hallucinations, anxiety, psychosis, and loss of consciousness; as well as dependency, addiction, and withdrawal symptoms (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2024).

Tackling substance misuse in Waukesha County requires a coordinated, community-wide response. The lasting impact will depend on strong partnerships among public health, behavioral health, law enforcement, schools, and community organizations working together to deliver prevention, harm reduction, and recovery support.

Waukesha County Deaths

Between 2021 and 2023, there were 11,908 deaths among Waukesha County residents. Heart disease and cancer were the leading causes, accounting for just over 40% of all deaths (*Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics, 2025*). While these chronic conditions remain important, they represent long-term health challenges that are typically addressed through broader clinical and healthcare system strategies.

Table 1 Top 15 Causes of Death by Broad Groups in Waukesha County from 2021 - 2023

Rank	Broad Cause	Count	% of Total	Notes
	All Causes	11,908	100%	
1	Diseases of heart	2471	20.8%	
2	Malignant neoplasms	2386	20.0%	Includes several cancers
3	Other causes*	1969	16.5%	
4	Accidents (unintentional injuries)	1009	8.5%	Includes Falls (57%) and Accidental Drug Overdoses (23%)
5	Covid-19	661	5.6%	
6	Cerebrovascular diseases	648	5.4%	
7	Alzheimer's disease	538	4.5%	
8	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	374	3.1%	
9	Diabetes mellitus	249	2.1%	
10	Parkinson's disease	197	1.7%	
11	Chronic liver disease & cirrhosis	172	1.4%	Includes Alcoholic Liver Disease (75%)
12	Nutritional deficiencies	155	1.3%	
13	Intentional self-harm (suicide)	153	1.3%	
14	Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome and nephrosis	141	1.2%	
15	Influenza and pneumonia	128	1.1%	
NA	All Other Broad Causes (Grouped)**	657	5.5%	

NOTES: *Other causes is a defined category in WISH that includes a wide range of less common, residual, and ill-defined causes. It accounted for 16.5% of deaths in Waukesha County from 2021 to 2023.

**All Other Broad Causes (Grouped) is a custom category combining lower-frequency causes not shown individually. Together, these causes accounted for 5.5% of deaths in Waukesha County from 2021 to 2023.

SOURCE: *Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics, 2025*

Waukesha County Political and Legislative Issues

County Board

All 25 County Board Supervisors will be up for election in nonpartisan 2-year term races held in April of 2026 and 2028. The County Executive will be up for election in a nonpartisan 4-year term race held in April of 2027. The Sheriff, Clerk of Courts, and Register of Deeds are elected to four-year terms with these positions up for election in November of 2028.

Any significant changes resulting from these elections could impact spending priorities, tax policies, and how services are delivered to residents.

Wisconsin Political Landscape

Wisconsin's political landscape for the next three years (2026-2028) is characterized by partisan division and a series of high-stakes elections. With the announcement that Governor Tony Evers will not be running for re-election next fall, the race for governor in 2026 is wide open for both parties, marking the first open-seat gubernatorial election in the state since 2010. Whoever wins the executive seat will significantly influence the state budget and legislative agenda going forward.

Additionally, the 2026 state legislative races are expected to be more competitive. New legislative district maps, which were redrawn after the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled the old ones unconstitutional, have made several districts more competitive, giving Democrats a stronger chance to challenge the long-standing Republican majorities in both houses of the legislature.

Supreme Court elections scheduled for 2026, 2027, and 2028 will make the court's ideological balance a central political battleground, with potential ramifications for highly contested issues.

Wisconsin State Budget

In July of 2025, Governor Evers signed the state's \$111.1 billion State Budget. Key provisions of the 2025-2027 state budget that support Waukesha County include:

- Increase in funding for Circuit Courts
- 6 additional assistant district attorney positions in Waukesha County
- Increase to General Transportation Aids (GTA) of 3% in the first year of the biennium and an additional 3% in the second year of the biennium
- No significant change in Shared Revenue or state mandate relief

Federal Political Landscape

Increased pressure from President Trump to cut federal spending should result in county departments preparing for potential reductions in federal aid, increased competition for remaining federal funds, and a need to diversify revenue streams. Changes to social safety net programs, that

counties administer on behalf of the federal government, could lead to more administrative work, new eligibility requirements, and a reduction in federal dollars.

The political landscape from 2026 to 2028 will be defined by two major elections, midterms in November 2026 setting the stage for the presidential race in 2028.

ECONOMICS: Unemployment/Jobs/Business

Unemployment

- The County's 2024 unemployment rate (2.6%) is lower than the national average (4.1%) and lower than the state's average (3%).

There continues to be a tight labor market that is making recruitment of county employees difficult and is increasing salary demands across many job classifications.

Jobs:

- Job growth is projected to increase from 242,001 in 2017 to 338,000 in 2050. (SEWRPC 2020)
- 32.1% of Waukesha County residents have a Bachelor's Degree (10.6% above the national average) and 10.1% hold an Associates Degree (1.2% above the national average)
- Waukesha County has more individuals 55 years and older than the national average for an area of similar size, with 147,092 compared to 124,551 nationally. Individuals in this age range may consider retiring soon.
- Waukesha County has fewer Millennials than the national average for an area of similar size, with 69,611 individuals compared to 83,832 nationally. Individuals in this age group are typically considered mid-career.
- 93.2% of businesses in Waukesha County have 49 or fewer employees. 6.5% of businesses have between 50 – 499 employees and 0.2% of Waukesha County businesses employ over 500 individuals.
- By 2050 Waukesha County is projected to have 24.4% of the total jobs in the metropolitan statistical area (Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties).

Business Survey

The Waukesha County Business Survey was conducted in cooperation with Waukesha County, the Waukesha County Business Alliance, the Waukesha County Center for Growth, Carroll University and the Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington (WOW) Workforce Development Board in the winter of 2025. A total of 163 businesses responded to the survey. Respondents included representatives from 35 of Waukesha County's 37 municipalities, a wide range of business sectors, and companies sized from the self-employed to operations with more than 1,000 employees.

Highlights from the survey include:

- 71% of businesses plan to expand their workforce in the next three years, down from 80% on the 2023 survey.
- 73% of manufacturing businesses and over half of all types of businesses report a skilled-labor shortage as the top challenge to workforce growth.
- Of those hiring
 - 53% are looking for industry-specific skilled labor
 - 32% are looking for marketing/sales
 - 30% are looking for administrative
 - 26% are looking for engineering
 - 13% are looking for business services (Finance/Legal/HR)
- Top skills organizations are looking to develop in employees include project management, strategic management, and data analytics.
- Companies are preparing for advancements in emerging technologies by
 - Upgrading technology infrastructure (55%)
 - Implementing or upgrading AI-driven tools and technologies (51%)
 - Developing or enhancing cybersecurity or AI strategy (48%)
 - Recruiting or upskilling employees with skills in AI/cyber (48%)
 - Piloting or adopting automation (37%)
- 83% of businesses in Waukesha County are ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the local business climate. Economic uncertainty, workforce availability, tax and regulatory policies factor into broader state and national perceptions.
- 44% of respondents have reached 100% capacity at their existing location which is down from 60% in 2017

Technology

The technology use within County government and among its customers continues to grow. Trends toward cloud, e-commerce, remote work, and end user driven systems enable more functionality and services available to internal and external customers. This “always on – always accessible” expectation requires increased dependence on information technology and the support services to implement/manage systems and mitigate risk.

Continued strategic investment in technology and a focus on system and process effectiveness/efficiency results in productivity and subsequent return on investment. Enhancements to information management, IT security, business continuity and data access will continue to develop. The increased use and access of data means that IT security is an ever-increasing responsibility, and the need to protect data and follow sound information governance policy is critical.

Investment in IT security, business continuity, and disaster recovery will assist in reducing cyber-attack vectors and help ensure confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information/data. An evolving, multi-tiered approach will provide protection from internal/external threats and keep public trust and brand reputation intact.

The post-pandemic world has accentuated the need to focus on improving the delivery of digital government services through the development of the external website. Enabling anytime, anywhere, and any-device alternatives to in-person, paper-based services will provide operational efficiencies and increase constituent satisfaction.

The reality of continuous technological change requires increased employee training. Technology is not a centralized IT responsibility alone. Portions of traditional information technology responsibilities continue to shift to end-users and business-specific subject matter experts act as application administrators. This creates efficiencies and it also requires increased focus on effective end-user solutions and the development of end-user expertise, documentation, and business continuity. The focus on end-user applications and lean IT staffing results in IT expertise in some areas being “one-person deep,” requiring the need for supplemental outside resources and prioritization of core functionality.

The County will continue to invest in people, processes, and application efficiencies to enable IT services and deliver business objectives and goals.

COUNTY FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Housing

Economic development is vital for communities in Waukesha County to retain optimum paying jobs, maintain municipal infrastructure and essential services, and maintain and expand quality of life.

The population in Waukesha County continues to age. As the baby boomer population enters retirement, the county must consider a variety of housing types to accommodate the changing needs of this age group as it relates to household type, income, and location. With the baby boomers leaving the workforce and requiring services, there is also a need to attract a new workforce. The available workforce population, which is younger and more racially diverse than before, requires the same housing considerations as the baby boomers. Locating a variety of housing near job centers helps attract skilled workers to the county and provides a customer base for nearby goods and services, parks, and available public transit. Nationally and locally, there has been an increasing demand for living units located near entertainment venues and workplaces, as millennials and empty nesters look for more dynamic living arrangements within walkable settings.

Household/Family

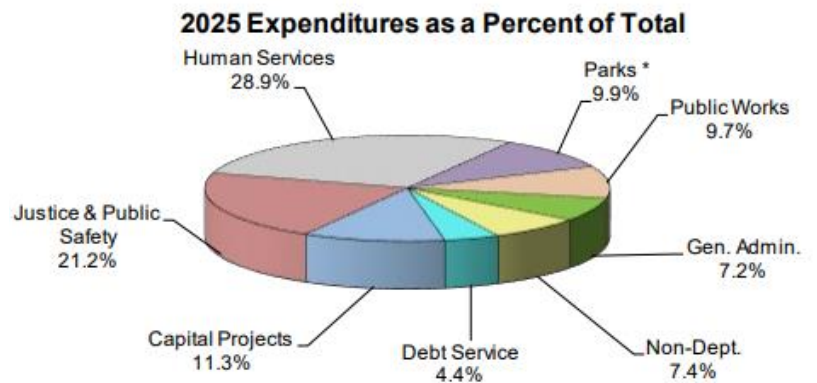
- In 2024 there were 167,392 households in Waukesha County. The number is expected to increase about 3% every 5 years. The average persons per household is approximately 2.4.
- The county is relatively affluent with a median household income of \$99,168, which is above both the state (\$74,671) and national (\$77,719) median, and the second highest among all counties in Wisconsin, behind St. Croix County just outside of the Twin Cities (\$103,731). Similarly, per capita income in Waukesha County is estimated at \$91,766, which is higher than the state (\$64,976) and the nation (\$69,418), and the second highest among all counties in Wisconsin (behind Ozaukee County at \$104,780). The latest data available is from 2023.
- The county has experienced healthy property value growth in recent years. Following several years of declining property value during the Great Recession, property values began

increasing for 2014. From 2014 to 2021, property value growth increased about 4.4% on average annually, with a gradual trend of larger percentage increases over that period. Since then, property values have increased more rapidly, at about 13% for 2022 and 2023, and 8.5% in 2025, driven largely by residential property inflation. (The increase for 2024 was just under 4.0%, but was artificially lower due to the state exempting personal property from taxes.) A realistic assumption for future growth would be about 4%-5% but could be higher if residential property inflation continues or could lower or negative if there's an economic downturn.

- According to the Wisconsin Realtors Association, the median home sale price in 2024 (the last complete year of data) was \$455,650. Statewide home prices rose 4.5% in the past year.
- The county is subject to state-mandated property tax levy limits, with growth in the levy primarily tied to “net new construction.” Net new construction consists of the value of new construction (i.e., development) minus demolition and is divided into the previous year’s total tax levy base (including tax increment districts) to get the growth factor.
- The county has experienced healthy growth recently; however, the county’s tax base is comparatively large so that this growth results in a relatively small net new construction growth factor. Assuming continued property value growth levels like recent years, the net new construction factor is expected to continue to decrease even if high levels of development are maintained.

Waukesha County Budget: Expenditures

The total operating budget (excluding capital projects and debt service) typically increases about 2%-3% and can fluctuate from year-to-year due to state and federal funding awards. The county provides many labor-intensive services, and personnel costs consistently make up about half of total operating budget. The two largest functional areas, Justice & Public Safety and Health & Human Services, consistently comprise about 55%-60% of the operating budget (excluding capital and debt). Debt service costs are expected to increase in future years due to additional borrowing needed for the courthouse project and the increasing cost of maintaining infrastructure. The graph above displays expenditures by functional area, including capital and debt.



* Includes Parks, Environment, Education and Land Use

External factors will continue to play a key role in significantly impacting future trends and projections including how federal and state funding priorities may likely affect local funding policies and services carried out by local governments provided in different ways. Also, volatility of fuel, energy, and commodity prices, and increasing medical and health insurance costs are likely to have future budget impacts. In addition, internal factors include high costs of jail inmates, Emergency

Preparedness 9-1-1 dispatch communications, and future debt service payments as a result of infrastructure projects, including the project to expand and modernize the courthouse and funding of major highway projects.

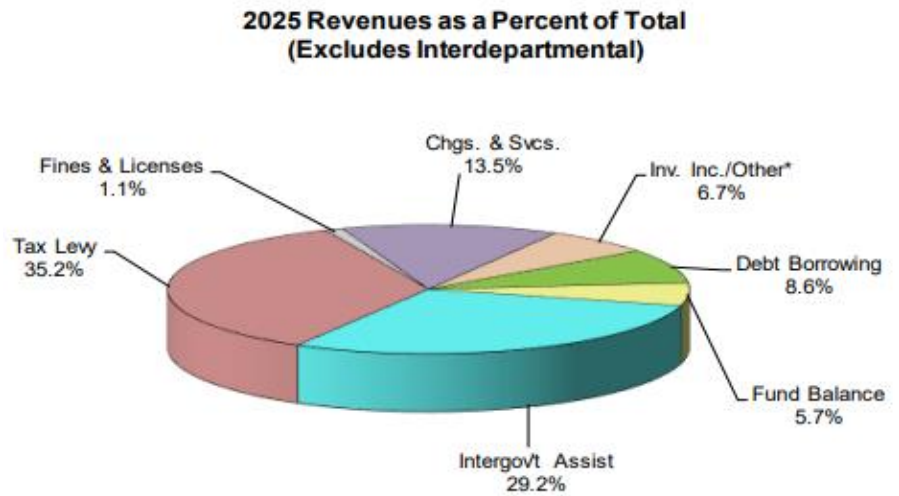
The county typically assumes slower growth in revenues, due to state-mandated levy limits and minimal increases in ongoing state/federal aid to help cover mandated services, resulting in forecasted gaps between revenues and expenditures. Typically, the gap has been between \$3 million and \$5 million but is forecast at about \$6 million for 2026.

Waukesha County Budget: Revenues

Intergovernmental assistance and tax levy comprise the majority of county revenues. The share of total budgeted revenues coming from the property tax has declined from 42% in the 2018 budget to 35.2% in the 2025 budget, mostly due to state-mandated levy limits.

The county carries out several programs on behalf of the state and federal government (mostly in Justice & Public Safety and Health & Human Services), so about a quarter of the total revenue budget is typically from state and federal revenue sources, though growth in these revenue sources is often minimal and insufficient to keep up with the increasing cost of mandated services. Also, the county attempts to maintain a diversified and stable revenue stream, which includes a reliance on user fees where costs can be directly related to the level of service provided and recovered through charges to individuals and organizations that directly benefit from those services. The county’s budget philosophy is to review and adjust user fees where allowable to cover increasing program costs, reducing reliance on tax levy. User fees/charges for service, for example, made up about 13.5% in the 2025 budget.

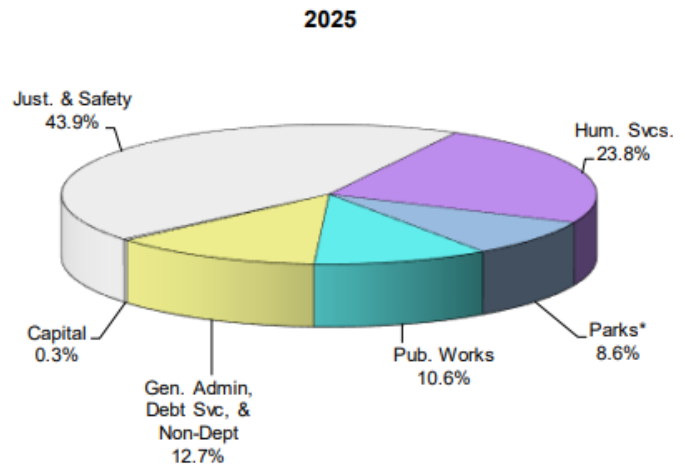
American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding will officially end on December 31, 2026, eliminating the county’s allocation from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds program. Other external factors that may affect estimated future revenue trends include a change in state funding, a change in the interest rate trend affecting county investments, or a change in moderate inflation trends. Also, other impacts which could affect future revenue include federal and state budget deficits which will likely result in revenue reductions and the potential for higher interest rates. Internal factors mainly include user fee increases, which help cover the rising costs of services and the ability to collect on client accounts, and the uncertainty of the County Executive and County Board supporting a revenue source, like a 0.5% county sales tax, which, if enacted, would significantly increase county revenues.



County Tax Levy

Section 66.0602 of the Wisconsin State Statutes, imposes a limit on property tax levies by cities, villages, towns, and counties. These entities cannot increase their tax levy by a percentage that exceeds their prior year change in equalized value due to net new construction plus an increment for terminated Tax Incremental Districts. The limit also includes exemptions for debt service obligations, consolidated services, and unused tax levy from the prior year. In a typical year Waukesha County is allowed to increase its property tax levy somewhere between 1% and 2% under these limits. That new tax revenue is then distributed to various county departments to support ongoing operations.

The area of Justice and Public Safety receives the most new tax levy support in a typical year. The share of tax levy going to Justice and Public Safety has increased from 41% in the 2014 budget to 43.9% in the 2025 budget, due in part to it being a priority area for the county and the limited ability for these operations to generate other revenues. That trend will continue into the near and medium-term future. Together with Health & Human Services, over 2/3 of tax levy goes to these two functional areas. State-imposed tax levy limits as described above continue to put pressure on our county budget. The pace of inflation and the increasing market demand for higher wages that have accompanied the tight labor market is making living within levy limits increasingly difficult. The county continues to resist imposing the statutorily allowable county sales tax to offset the restrictions of the tax levy cap. The county will continue to monitor actions of the State Legislature that could ease levy limits or support alternative funding sources for counties.



INTERNAL ANALYSIS

County Facilities and Operations

In 2026 the existing Waukesha County Courthouse Building will continue to undergo an extensive renovation to upgrade the facility and prepare the county to serve its citizens for at least the next 50 years. This project, which will be completed in 2027, will have an impact on county employees working in both the existing 1959 Courthouse Building and the Administration Center, as well as the visiting public. Business operations in both buildings will be affected at various times during the project. Departments should consider how their employees will be impacted by temporary office movements and consider potential changes or modifications to service delivery to customers who visit the two buildings.

In addition to the Courthouse Building itself, the county is examining changes to the county’s jail as well as the county’s Administration Building. Two separate studies will determine what renovations or expansions are warranted for those facilities.

The county is also in the process of divesting itself from two long-held properties, the campus at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee at Waukesha and the Northview building and land. The university campus has already been marketed via an RFP process and it is anticipated the Northview property will follow suit sometime in 2026.

Customer Service

Waukesha County is committed to the highest levels of customer service. Our team is dedicated to serving all customers by living our core values, standards of service, and behaviors of excellence. Waukesha County continues to focus its efforts on high levels of customer service, we can measure this using the Waukesha County Customer Service Survey. Waukesha County sets a goal to meet a 4.65 out of 5 for our overall customer service interactions. The table below shows the county’s scores across all departments for 2023-2025.

Performance Measure:	2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025 Target
Countywide Customer Satisfaction Rating	4.58	4.70	4.65

Employee Survey

Waukesha County received 737 complete responses to its 2024 Employee Engagement Survey.

As in past years, respondents were asked a range of questions about communication, sharing information, professional development, and continuous improvement. This includes four key questions that we have been measuring over time with a goal of meeting an 80% agreement threshold (Calculated by adding the % of ratings of Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree).

Countywide results of those questions as of 2024 can be found [here](#).

- 96%** I understand that I can be recognized for extra effort while demonstrating the County’s Standards of Service Excellence
- 97%** Information and knowledge is shared openly within my department
- 96%** During my annual performance evaluation with my direct supervisor, I discussed training needs and opportunities for professional development
- 98%** I understand how my work and assigned goals directly contribute to the overall success of the County in meeting its key strategic priorities

Historical Perspective:

2014 2024 Difference

I understand how my work and assigned goals directly contribute to the overall success of the County in meeting its key strategic priorities
 87% 98% +11%

Information and knowledge is shared openly within my department
 64% 97% +33%

During my annual performance evaluation with my direct supervisor, I discussed training needs and opportunities for professional development
 73% 96% +23%

I understand that I can be recognized for extra effort while demonstrating the County's Standards of Service Excellence
 61% 96% +35%

Comparing the 2014 results with the 2024 shows dramatic improvement in responses. The results are a testament to what a culture of continuous improvement should produce. We should all be proud of our progress and keep working to reach our 80% goal across all categories.

Countywide and Departmental Results using Power BI Dashboarding

To help understand the survey data and facilitate communication with county teams, Department Heads are provided a link to dashboards visually depicting the survey data in each department. Data may then be shared across Departments and utilized to determine individual or departmentwide performance goals or measure success of key initiatives.

County HR Scan Overview

County Employment Demographics - Years of Service

The charts below outline the distribution of employees by years of county service. During the period between 2022 and 2025 the percentage of employees with five or fewer years of county experience

	2022						2025						Δ 2025 vs. 2022				
	<5	5-9	10-14	15-20	>20	County Total	<5	5-9	10-14	15-20	>20	County Total	<5	5-9	10-14	15-20	>20
Administration	37	15	12	19	16	99	46	15	10	11	19	101	9	0	-2	-8	3
Circuit Court Services	40	10	5	10	12	77	39	20	4	4	14	81	-1	10	-1	-6	2
Corporation Counsel	18	7	5	5	5	40	17	9	5	6	6	43	-1	2	0	1	1
Emergency Preparedness	20	11	7	10	3	51	29	12	3	6	8	58	9	1	-4	-4	5
Public Works	62	17	10	10	28	127	58	28	14	7	18	125	-4	11	4	-3	-10
District Attorney	19	3	5	6	11	44	13	3	4	2	11	33	-6	0	-1	-4	0
Health and Human Service:	186	73	44	41	44	388	226	78	48	26	45	423	40	5	4	-15	1
Parks and Land Use	38	18	9	8	25	98	41	18	14	6	22	101	3	0	5	-2	-3
Sheriffs Department	145	49	36	50	40	320	161	46	37	32	52	328	16	-3	1	-18	12
Multi Departments	18	14	6	6	10	54	37	15	15	8	10	85	19	1	9	2	0
County Total	583	217	139	165	194	1298	667	244	154	108	205	1378	84	27	15	-57	11
	<5	5-9	10-14	15-20	>20	County Total	<5	5-9	10-14	15-20	>20	County Total	<5	5-9	10-14	15-20	>20
Administration	37%	15%	12%	19%	16%	100%	46%	15%	10%	11%	19%	100%	8%	0%	-2%	-8%	3%
Circuit Court Services	52%	13%	6%	13%	16%	100%	48%	25%	5%	5%	17%	100%	-4%	12%	-2%	-8%	2%
Corporation Counsel	45%	18%	13%	13%	13%	100%	40%	21%	12%	14%	14%	100%	-5%	3%	-1%	1%	1%
Emergency Preparedness	39%	22%	14%	20%	6%	100%	50%	21%	5%	10%	14%	100%	11%	-1%	-9%	-9%	8%
Public Works	49%	13%	8%	8%	22%	100%	46%	22%	11%	6%	14%	100%	-2%	9%	3%	-2%	-8%
District Attorney	43%	7%	11%	14%	25%	100%	39%	9%	12%	6%	33%	100%	-4%	2%	1%	-8%	8%
Health and Human Service:	48%	19%	11%	11%	11%	100%	53%	18%	11%	6%	11%	100%	5%	0%	0%	-4%	-1%
Parks and Land Use	39%	18%	9%	8%	26%	100%	41%	18%	14%	6%	22%	100%	2%	-1%	5%	-2%	-4%
Sheriffs Department	45%	15%	11%	16%	13%	100%	49%	14%	11%	10%	16%	100%	4%	-1%	0%	-6%	3%
Multi Departments	33%	26%	11%	11%	19%	100%	44%	18%	18%	9%	12%	100%	10%	-8%	7%	-2%	-7%
County Total	45%	17%	11%	13%	15%	100%	48%	18%	11%	8%	15%	100%	3%	1%	0%	-5%	0%

grew 45% to 48%. This trend is even more pronounced in comparison to 2012 when county work experience was more evenly distributed and the largest percentage of the workforce having twenty or

more years of experience at Waukesha County. The trend affirms the impact of the Baby Boom generation’s retirement and reflects the higher levels of turnover experienced coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The County continues to emphasize succession planning. Training programs such as Standards of Service Excellence (SOSE), Management University, Effective Supervision and Mentoring have been instrumental in employee transitions and in the mitigation of institutional knowledge loss as experienced employees, senior professionals, and managerial staff, have retired.

County Employment – Turnover

As the workforce transitions, it points toward the need for continued emphasis on county-wide efforts to recruit, develop and retain employees. This is especially clear when reviewing countywide turnover data, which in recent years has been affected by the low unemployment rate and changes in workforce participation. The chart below presents twelve years of data, and shows an uptick in overall turnover, regrettable turnover, and total resignations during starting in 2021.

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Regrettable Turnover Benchmark	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	FTE--Budgeted Positions	1366	1368	1363	1354	1354		1373	1381	1390	1390	1404	1426
FTE--Total Turnover	102	123	157	163	133		175	159	156	238	284	237	198
% Turnover	7.47%	8.99%	11.52%	12.04%	9.82%		12.75%	11.51%	11.22%	17.09%	20.23%	16.62%	13.88%
Regrettable Turnover*							68	66	68	106	169	105	94
% Regrettable Turnover							4.95%	4.78%	4.89%	7.59%	12.04%	7.37%	6.59%
Death	3	2	1	2	0		0	0	2	2	0	1	1
Disability Retirement	0	1	3	4	1		1	1	2	0	0	0	1
Discharge	8	8	21	7	8		8	8	12	15	13	14	23
Position Eliminated	0	0	0	0	0		0	1	1	7	0	0	2
Resignation	42	45	74	92	86		101	108	87	146	228	176	140
Retirement	49	67	58	58	38		65	41	52	68	43	46	31
Total	102	123	157	163	133		175	159	156	238	284	237	198

*Regrettable Turnover: Employees who left County employment that we planned to retain, or voluntary separation by individuals who are top performers, or high-potential employees, or where the separation is from a key position for which a possible successor has not been previously identified

*This turnover analysis does not include employees that transferred to other departments or had job assignment changes within the county

REGISTER OF DEEDS ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN INFORMATION

Part I: Background and Executive Summary

A. Background

The purpose of the Waukesha County Register of Deeds is to provide to the citizens of Waukesha County a depository for safekeeping and public inspection of recorded legal documents pertaining

to land records and vital records. The Register of Deeds is an elected official with a four-year term. In addition to the Register of Deeds, the office has 15 staff including the Deputy Register of Deeds, Senior Financial Analyst, Office Services Coordinator, three (3) Senior Administrative Specialists and nine (9) Administrative Specialists (2 part-time).

The Register of Deeds Office is comprised of three divisions: Recording, Land Records and Vital Records. The Recording division examines all legal documents submitted to ensure conformity to the Wisconsin Statutes, collects and deposits fees for recording documents and prepares the documents for indexing. The Land Records division is responsible for indexing all recorded and filed documents, preparing and delivering copies of documents, and assisting customers who are trying to search for documents. The Vital Records division is responsible for the filing of marriage and death certificates as well as issuing certified copies of birth, marriage, death and divorce certificates. In addition to the customers from the general public that each division serves daily, the Register of Deeds office has several business partners that we provide services to on a regular basis including title companies, attorneys, financial institutions, data aggregators and funeral homes.

B. Executive Summary

Environmental scanning is the process of collecting data relative to the organization. In September and October, 2025, the Register of Deeds office conducted focus groups of internal stakeholders (employees) as well as surveys of both internal and external stakeholders (employees, business partners, customers). Data from these focus groups and surveys was gathered and analyzed as shown in this Report.

Focus Group Highlights

- The general layout of the Register of Deeds office continues to be difficult for customers to navigate, not laid out well and lacking in security for staff. The location of the office is as far from the front door as possible, making it difficult for elderly and disabled customers.
- Several ideas for software improvements were suggested, including drop down list options, keyword searching and using AI to improve efficiency. Ideas for improving our Recording Notification Service (RNS) sign-up process were also suggested.
- Staff have noticed an increase in customer concerns regarding title theft. Promoting our RNS service and working with legislators to update the statutes to make it more difficult to record fraudulent documents will be part of this strategic plan.
- Staff often have customers that do not understand the function of our office, the fact that we do not complete documents and that we cannot give legal advice. On many occasions, customers are told by outside sources to come to our office for a service that we do not provide. Our staff provide the customers with information and resources, but the department will make an effort to reach out to our community business partners in an effort to provide more information and understanding of the functions of the Register of Deeds office.

Survey Highlights

- Customer survey responses were generally positive with 99% of customers stating that they received “Very Good” service and 99% of customers reporting that the communication by the Register of Deeds office is “Very Good”.
- When asked how the Register of Deeds could improve, as stated above, a common concern for walk-in customers was the distance of the office from the front door. Many walk-in customers are elderly or disabled and the Register of Deeds office is located in the farthest corner of the Administration Center. Current construction at the courthouse, limiting close parking options, was also cited as concern, albeit temporary.

- Funeral Home customer responses were overall very positive with all responses rating the Vital Records division a 5 out of 5. Funeral home customers indicated they receive fast, professional service from our office and that the staff regularly go above and beyond.
- Title Company and Subscriber customer responses were overall positive with customers indicating that their requests were fulfilled timely and accurately, and that 24/7/365 access to our land records is a great benefit. Customers said that our subscription service for land records is a good value and that the system is both easy to use and a clean format. They further indicated that additional indexing of the backfile documents would be helpful for both title companies and regular customers.
- Staff responded in their surveys that they appreciate the ability to give feedback and to know that their feedback was heard and considered. Staff expressed uncertainty about AI (artificial intelligence) and its use in our office and throughout our county, and requested further information and training on how it will impact their jobs. Suggestions were made to improve customer communication and resources (brochures, signage) that will be considered as part of this strategic plan.

Part II: Summary

Vital Records

Customers would like to see an option for online or app purchases of vital records. Funeral homes would like the ability to replenish their escrow accounts with a credit card, preferably online.

Recording & Land Records

Title company and subscription customers indicate that the Land Records software is generally easy to use and set up in a way that allows them to efficiently complete their searches. Some title companies have requested that the Department offer additional options for subscriptions for lower volume users. The Department should continue to prioritize backfile indexing which will make searching easier for both power users and regular customers, particularly as title companies have been receiving more requests for 100-year searches. Staff have suggested some automation and short-cuts for future upgrades of the Land Records system as well as enhanced searching options for the public access system.

Administration

The Department's website has significantly improved in the past year. Customers find the site easy to navigate and find the information they are looking for.

The majority of staff have indicated that they would like to see remote work options continue to be offered. Overall, the in-office/remote rotation was credited with saving staff time, money and stress. In addition, time use and production reports indicate that remote staff are more efficient, as they are able to complete work without interruption. This allows the in-office staff to spend the time necessary with in person and phone customers, ensuring customers receive the information they need in a timely manner.

The Department should continue to look at ways to improve the space usage in the office, including efforts to move the Department closer to the main entrance. Staff space is not sufficiently separated from public space and the customer service counters are not situated in a way that maximizes customer interaction. Further, the office is not set up to easily accommodate disabled customers. Signage should be reviewed and updated to make the office easier to navigate.

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[SOCIOECONOMICS | Regional Performance Monitoring](#)

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<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/waukeshacountywisconsin>

Wisconsin Department of Administration
[DOA Population Projections, produced in 2024, based from 2020 Census](#)

Wisconsin Public Radio, January 7, 2025
[Wisconsin's population expected to decline by nearly 200K residents come 2050 - WPR](#)

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