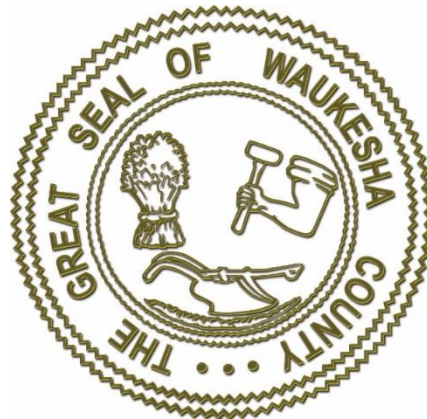

Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use Strategic Plan 2026 - 2028

The Department of Parks and Land Use Strategic Plan was prepared to proactively respond to the anticipated needs of the businesses and citizens of Waukesha County.



“The Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use, working through a combination of collaboration, education and regulation, is dedicated to fostering economic development, sound land use, and the protection, enhancement and enjoyment of the County’s natural resources and health of its citizens.”

Dale R. Shaver, Parks and Land Use Director

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Reader's Guide: How to read the Strategic Plan

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Thanks for reading Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use's 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](#) at any time!

What's an Objective?

In this Strategic Plan, an Objective is a unifying theme that guides the department's purpose. The theme may be achieved through multiple strategies.

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).

Strategy: What must be accomplished in order to achieve our Objective. It must be **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound** (aka **SMART**).

For example, a county environmental health program may set an **Objective** to "reduce residents' exposure to environmental health hazards." One **Strategy** is to decrease private well risks by boosting the number of well water test kits submitted by county residents by 20% by December 31, 2026, through targeted outreach in higher-risk areas.

Each strategy has an **Owner**, which is a division (or divisions) that guides efforts for its completion and success. Find this in the center column.

In the right-hand column, you will find the **Timeframe** for each Strategy. This represents each Strategy's deadline.

Feel free to contact Waukesha County to discuss any Objective or Strategy— just ask for one of the divisions listed.

Pillar: Customer Service

Objective #1: Initiate key changes to Department public service computer systems to ensure information is always on, always accessible

Learn More: Though our focus on service excellence, particularly ensuring timely access to information, these strategic objectives represent our on-going commitment to providing information frequently sought by businesses and residents in an "always on, always accessible" manner.

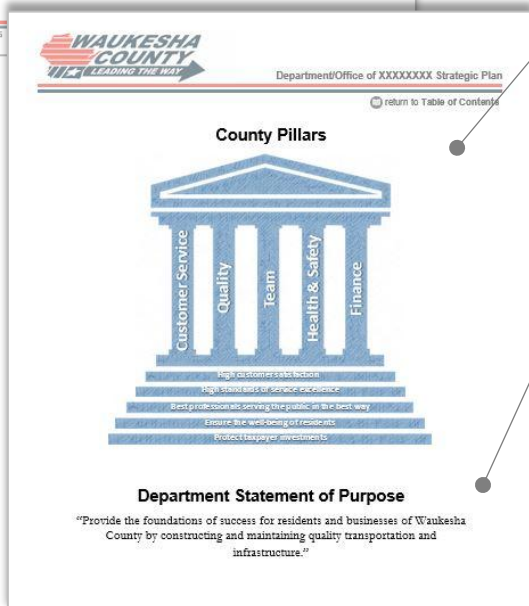
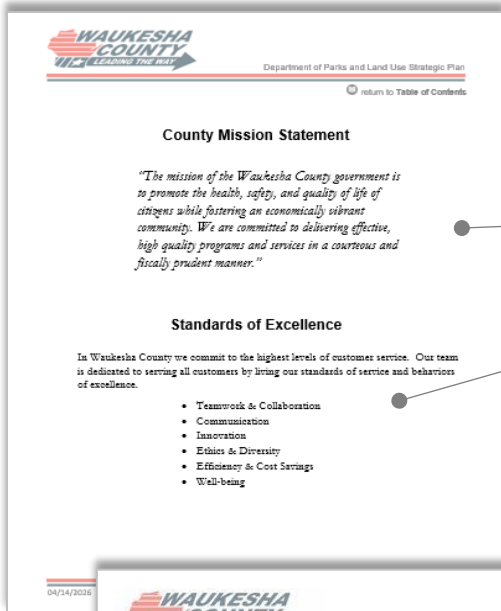
STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
1) To enhance communication with customers and stakeholders as well as leverage technology enhancements, advance the high-priority improvement recommendations identified in the PEU Permit Process and Systems Review Report into implementation phase by August 2026.	Planning and Zoning, Land Resources and Environmental Health Divisions	August, 2026
2) By December, 2026, conduct a comprehensive assessment of whether AI chatbot technology is an appropriate and sustainable tool to assist clients and patrons with common informational inquiries in order to reduce walk-in and phone traffic.	Public Information and Web Content Teams	December, 2026
3) Community Development will work with the Department of Administration – Information Technology to create a digital platform and central location for submittal of essential paperwork and formal documentation for Community Development Block Grant subgrantees and HOME program clients and lenders by December, 2027.	Community Development	December, 2027
4) To improve searchability of County Codes hosted online, conduct benchmark research and evaluate the functionality of online code hosting systems to prepare a recommendation report for the Department of Parks and Land Use and Office of Corporation Counsel by April, 2027.	Planning and Zoning Division	April, 2027

Learn More:

The description provides additional context and insight into our "why" we have strategically focused on the particular objective.

How to read the Strategic Plan continued

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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.
- Waukesha County's **Standards of Excellence** -the values 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 [Executive Summary](#) and [Appendix](#) sections.

Appendices at a glance

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Appendix A – Department of Parks and Land Use Environmental Scan

[Countywide Environmental Scan Data](#)

[Community Analysis](#)

[Waukesha County Political & Legislative Issues](#)

[Economics](#)

[Technology](#)

[County Financial Analysis](#)

[Internal Analysis](#)

[Department of Parks and Land Use Environmental Scan Data](#)

[Housing Availability, Demand, and Use](#)

[Financial Strategies for Service Delivery](#)

[Workforce Development](#)

[Technology Enhancements](#)

[Recyclable Material Commodity Values](#)

 *Tip: Click title to jump to Appendix*

Transmittal Letter

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March 30, 2026

Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow
Waukesha County Board
Waukesha County residents and visitors


We are pleased to be able to present to you the updated Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use (PLU) 2026-2028 Strategic Plan. The plan was developed by Department staff selected through [Strengths Finder](#) assessment and is designed to be proactive in addressing your needs as business and residents who have chosen to work and live in Waukesha County.

This Strategic Plan is structured around countywide pillars of: 1) Customer Service, 2) Quality, 3) Team, 4) Health and Safety, and 5) Finance. The pillars provide the foundation for setting organizational goals and direction to achieve service and organizational excellence. Simply put, what gets measured, gets improved.

Our strategic plan will be used to shape our annual budget and set individual employee performance goals to ensure we are meeting our strategic targets, and thus your needs.

I would like to sincerely thank our customers, other departments, citizens, and staff for their insightful feedback that helped us create this plan.

If you have any questions regarding our Strategic Plan, please feel free to contact me at (262) 896-8300.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale R. Shaver".

Dale R. Shaver
Director
Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use

Executive Summary

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The 2026-2028 strategic plan leverages the successes of the 2023-2025 strategic plan to create a three-year blueprint for continuous improvement. For continuity and consistency across departments, the plan is closely aligned with Waukesha County's standards of service excellence and five pillars. The planning process was led by a 25-member workgroup, and it involved an extensive environmental scanning process, customer and employee feedback, ideation, critical analysis, and the creation of measurable performance metrics.

The Department of Parks and Land Use engaged in an environmental scanning process that gathered information on the forecasted demographics in the County, the needs of businesses for economic development, feedback and expectations of our customers, environmental analysis, and other forecasted influences on our ability to efficiently and effectively provide services over the next three years. This process of looking forward has helped us identify key priorities that shaped the objectives of this plan. The detailed environmental scan is presented in [Appendix A](#).

The 2026-2028 strategic plan includes 7 strategic objectives. Each objective is a theme that guides the department's purpose. In addition, each objective includes key strategies that the department will carry out over the next three years in alignment with the strategic objectives. These strategies follow the SMART model – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. The performance metric data will be used to monitor how the department is progressing toward the desired outcomes and will determine if the department needs to adjust processes and strategies to achieve the desired performance goals.

The department prides itself in operating in a business-like manner. Therefore, the more clearly we write and openly share with staff and customers about our performance goals, the better we can perform. What gets measured gets improved.

County Mission Statement

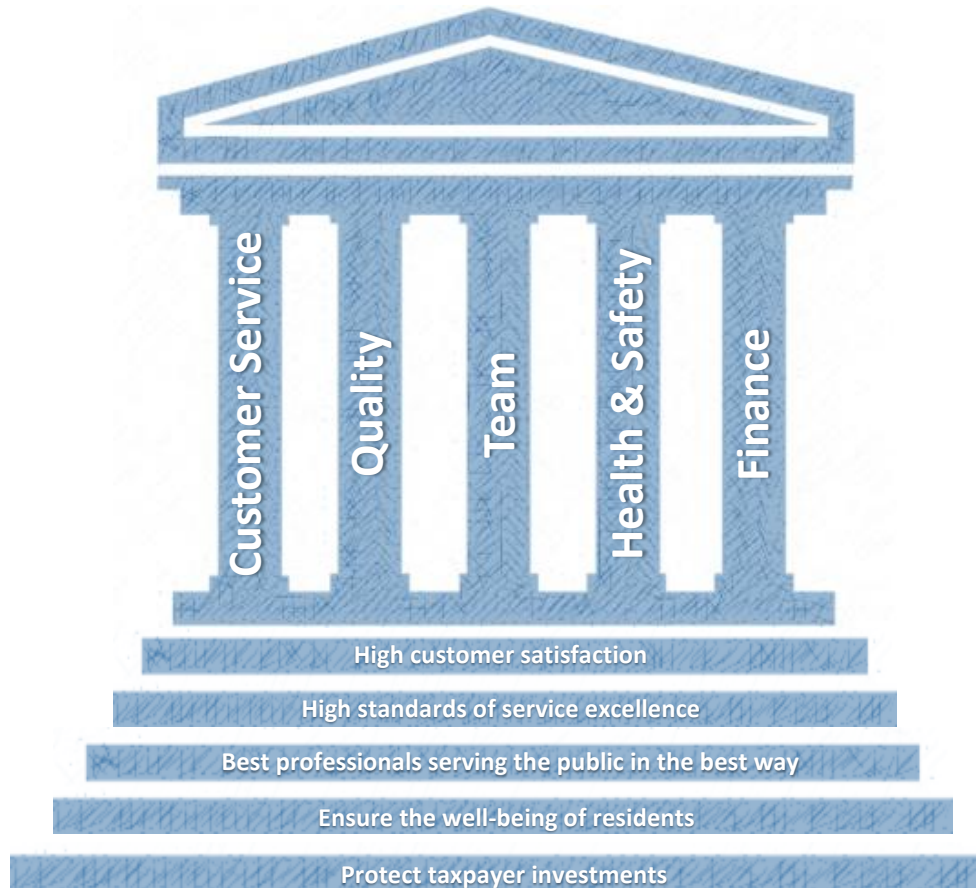
“The mission of the Waukesha County government is to promote the health, safety, and quality of life of citizens while fostering an economically vibrant community. We are committed to delivering effective, high quality programs and services in a courteous and fiscally prudent manner.”

Standards of Excellence

In Waukesha County we commit to the highest levels of customer service. Our team is dedicated to serving all customers by living our standards of service and behaviors of excellence.

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

County Pillars



Department of Parks and Land Use Statement of Purpose

The Waukesha County Department of Parks & Land Use, working through a combination of collaboration, education and regulation is dedicated to fostering economic development, sound land use, and the protection, enhancement and enjoyment of the County's natural resources and health of its citizens.

Strategic Objectives at a glance

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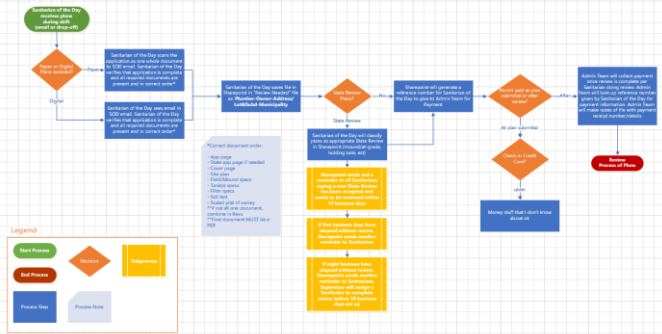
- Objective #1:** Initiate key changes to Department public service computer systems to ensure information is always on, always accessible
- Objective #2:** Integrate and strengthen interagency and municipal relationships to ensure the department is coordinating, connecting and improving
- Objective #3:** Leverage smarter systems for better service by utilizing emerging technologies and trend analysis to improve operational efficiency, expand service delivery, and remain responsive to evolving community needs
- Objective #4:** Leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze and plan the integration of ai into business processes.
- Objective #5:** Position the department team to build and strengthen internal talent to position the organization for future readiness
- Objective #6:** Invest in the quality, safety and functionality of park system facilities and amenities through a long-term modernization strategy to ensure park facilities remain clean, safe, open and relevant
- Objective #7:** Advance the Department’s long-term financial sustainability and service excellence.

Tip: Click title to jump to objective detail

Pillar: Customer Service

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Objective #1: Initiate key changes to Department public service computer systems to ensure information is always on, always accessible



Learn More:

Through our focus on service excellence, particularly ensuring timely access to information, these strategic objectives represent our on-going commitment to providing information frequently sought by businesses and residents in an “always on, always accessible” manner.

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
1) To enhance communication with customers and stakeholders as well as leverage technology enhancements, advance the high-priority improvement recommendations identified in the PLU Permit Process and Systems Review Report into implementation phase by August 2026.	Planning and Zoning, Land Resources and Environmental Health Divisions	August, 2026
2) By December, 2026, in coordination with Department of Administration – Information Technology, conduct a comprehensive assessment of whether AI chatbot technology is an appropriate and sustainable tool to assist clients and patrons with common informational inquiries in order to reduce walk-in and phone traffic.	Public Information and Web Content Teams	December, 2026
3) Community Development will work with the Department of Administration – Information Technology to create a digital platform and central location for submittal of essential paperwork and formal documentation for Community Development Block Grant subgrantees and HOME program clients and lenders by December, 2027.	Community Development	December, 2027
4) To improve searchability of County Codes hosted online, conduct benchmark research and evaluate the functionality of online code hosting systems to prepare a recommendation report for the Department of Parks and Land Use and Office of Corporation Counsel by April, 2027.	PLU and DPW	Ongoing
5) By April, 2027 improve efficient access to comprehensive zoning files and data by identifying gaps or duplications and enabling streamlined property research in Map Atlas for internal and external users.	Planning and Zoning Division	April, 2027

Pillar: Customer Service

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Objective #2: Integrate and strengthen interagency and municipal relationships to ensure the department is coordinating, connecting and improving



Learn More:

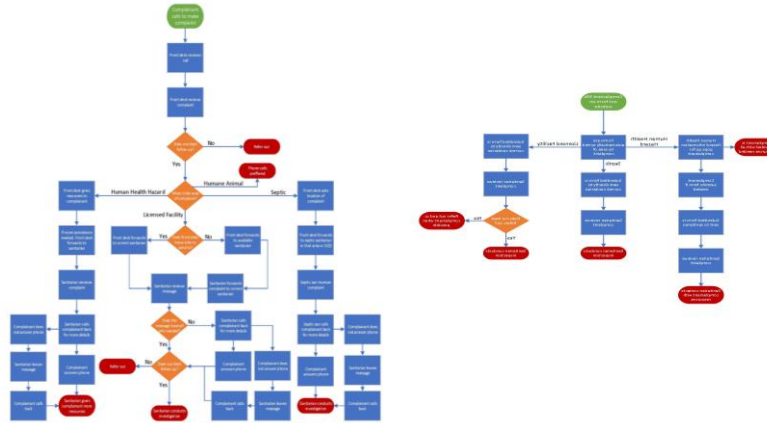
Service excellence often involves clear communication and collaboration between the County and local governments. Examples of communication and collaborations to meet customer service needs include land use, stormwater and on-site sewage permitting processes as well as public education for an efficient recycling program. This strategic objective is designed to purposefully establish a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure we are communicating key information and key times.

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
1) By December, 2026, develop a municipal and interagency stakeholder assessment, using municipal and stakeholder feedback, to identify coordinated communication opportunities.	Parks and Land Use Divisions	December, 2026

Pillar: Quality

[return to Objectives list](#) [return to Table of Contents](#)

Objective #3: Leverage smarter systems for better service by utilizing emerging technologies and trend analysis to improve operational efficiency, expand service delivery, and remain responsive to evolving community needs



Learn More:

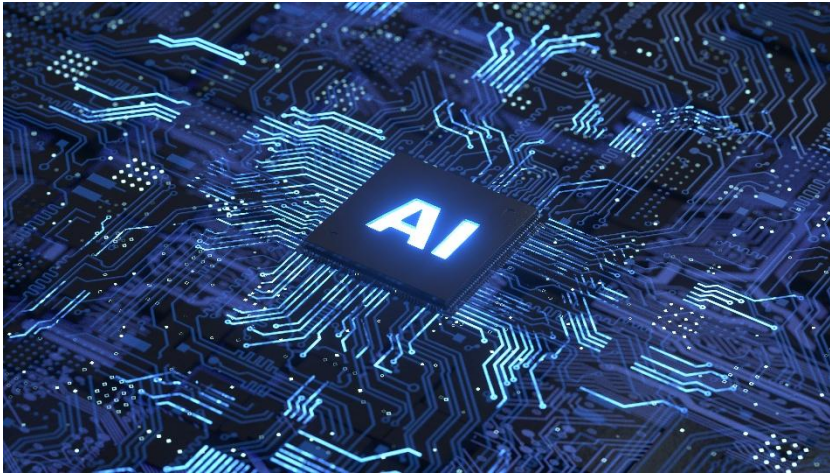
The Department is highly vested in a continuous improvement mindset. This strategic objective is an intentional evaluation of existing workflow processes to map out our future state workflows to more effectively leverage technology.

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
1) By December, 2027, transition all PLU contract processing and grant management workflows from OnBase to Workday by collaborating with IT and Finance to configure workflows, migrate 100% of active records, and train all identified staff, resulting in 100% of new contracts and grants processed through Workday to improve operational efficiency and life cycle management of contracts and grants. .	Park System Division	December, 2027

Pillar: Quality

[return to Objectives list](#) [return to Table of Contents](#)

Objective #4: Leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze and plan the integration of AI into business processes.



Learn More:
 An artificial intelligence (AI) strategy isn't just for big tech companies—county governments can benefit in very practical, everyday ways. The key reason is simple: counties manage a huge number of services, and AI can help deliver them faster, cheaper, and more accurately. This strategic objective is to coordinate on a County government wide strategy to further leverage AI.

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
1) Coordinate with the Department of Administration – Information Technology Division to participate in the AI Subcommittee under the Waukesha County Technology Alignment Committee (WCTAC). The AI Governance, Adoption and Training Subcommittee will work to ensure that AI adoption aligns with Waukesha County strategic goals and supports ethical, efficient, reliable, and secure deployment of AI technologies in County operations, and oversee AI-related initiatives including governance protocols, training programs, and adoption strategies, and review, evaluate, and recommend frameworks and policies to facilitate responsible AI use across County departments, and ensure a comprehensive understanding of potential applications, benefits and considerations.	Department of Parks and Land Use Divisions	Alignment with Department of Administration – Information Technology

Pillar: Team

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Objective #5: Position the department team to build and strengthen internal talent to position the organization for future readiness



Learn More:

Waukesha County is fortunate and challenged with extremely low unemployment and extremely high labor participation rates which causes businesses to increase focus on workforce readiness to meet current and future service levels. These strategic objectives for a workforce readiness strategy is about making sure your people have the right skills, mindset, and support to meet current demands and adapt to future changes. Without one, companies tend to fall behind—either in productivity, innovation, or talent retention.

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
1) By December, 2027, create a department wide report of 100% of PLU positions to establish an AI competency matrix defining core and role specific capabilities and recommend a training approach.	Administrative Division	December, 2027
2) By March, 2027, develop a written report for PLU managers and supervisors that includes an analysis of all department positions to identify roles suitable for Registered Apprenticeship, internships, or structured work experience – with focused consideration of difficult-to-fill or high-turnover roles – and outline viable models including any partners or implementation considerations.	Department of Parks and Land Use Divisions	March, 2027
3) By December, 2028 develop and pilot a structured department professional development program that incorporates a department coach and a project that allows an individual to grow technical, leadership, strategic thinking, business acumen, or change management skills in alignment with their personal professional development goals and supplements but does not duplicate existing County opportunities.	Department of Parks and Land Use Divisions	December, 2028
4) By December, 2027 fully configure the Workday Learning Module to include department onboarding classes, job classification-specific training, and PLU provided specific employee training or conferences.	Department of Parks and Land Use Divisions	December, 2027

Pillar: Health & Safety

[📄 return to Objectives list](#)
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Objective #6: Invest in the quality, safety and functionality of park system facilities and amenities through a long-term modernization strategy to ensure park facilities remain clean, safe, open and relevant

Park Projects

Stay up to date on the latest major Park Projects.

Learn More:
 Through our involvement in working to attract and retain businesses in Waukesha County, we are regularly reminded that evolving economic development requires a continued focus on transportation and utility infrastructure, tax rates, labor availability and quality of life (parks, schools and healthcare). More importantly, businesses looking to locate or expand in Waukesha County look to available skilled labor. Through this strategic objective, we will be taking another multi-year look at our park system amenities regarding their maintenance needs, and public desires to keep our park system “clean, safe, open and relevant”.

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
1) By December, 2027, develop and begin implementation of a Park System facility modernization strategy that ensures facilities remain Clean, Safe, Open, and Relevant by utilizing the facility master plans, facility use data and customer surveys that align investments with community demand and fiscal impact. Initiate at least three priority capital or improvement projects aligned with the plan; and establish a donation-funded partnership program that secures a minimum of two external partnerships to pilot innovative amenities at parks and trailheads, resulting in improved facility functionality, user satisfaction, and long-term financial sustainability.	Parks System Divisions	December, 2027

Pillar: Finance

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Objective #7: Advance the Department’s long-term financial sustainability and service excellence.



Learn More:

As a “AAA” bond rated county government, these strategic objectives continue our high level focus on fiscal responsibility for taxpayer funding and increasing efficiency in key business processes.

STRATEGY	STRATEGY OWNER	TIMEFRAME
1) By July, 2028, develop a plan to increase non-property tax levy revenue to 65% of total General Fund annual revenues (from the 2026 baseline of 55%) through expanded user fees, program revenue, grants, partnerships, and other market-aligned revenue streams; document opportunities for operational efficiencies as a result of technological improvements that manage controllable operating costs and improve service delivery sustainability; and complete a comprehensive fee and cost-recovery analysis resulting in proposed rate adjustments achieving a minimum 90% cost-recovery ratio across all major service categories, as confirmed through annual financial reporting and customer impact analysis.	Administrative Division	July, 2028
2) By December, 2027, in coordination with the Department of Administration, research the potential of a secure Automated Clearing House (ACH) framework that enables the electronic payment of invoices and receipt of grants and other revenues; establishes eligibility criteria and internal controls for vendors and funding partners to ensure safe and efficient ACH transactions; and transition at least 60% of eligible vendor payments and grant receipts from paper-based processing to ACH, as measured through annual financial reporting.	Administrative Division	December, 2027
3) By December, 2026, in coordination with Department of Administration - Purchasing, complete a comprehensive review of current blanket contract processes and workflows to identify opportunities for standardization; implement process enhancements that streamline procurement timelines, strengthen compliance, and improve administrative efficiency; and work with PLU-Communication staff to develop and execute a vendor and staff communication strategy that reinforces the strategic value of establishing and utilizing blanket contracts.	Administrative Division	December, 2026

Appendix A –

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Department of Parks and Land Use Environmental Scan

Countywide Environmental Scan Data

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.

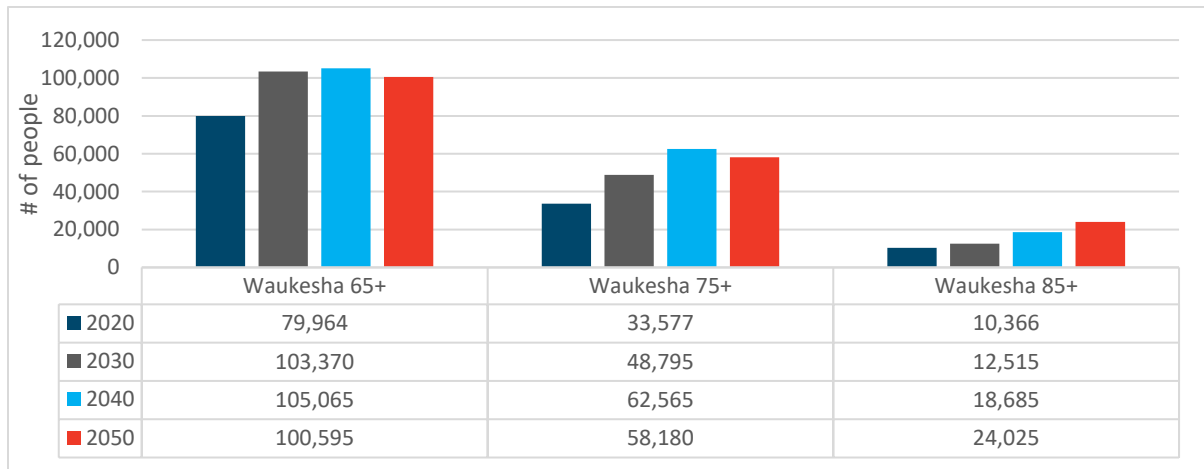
(Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics, 2025)

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

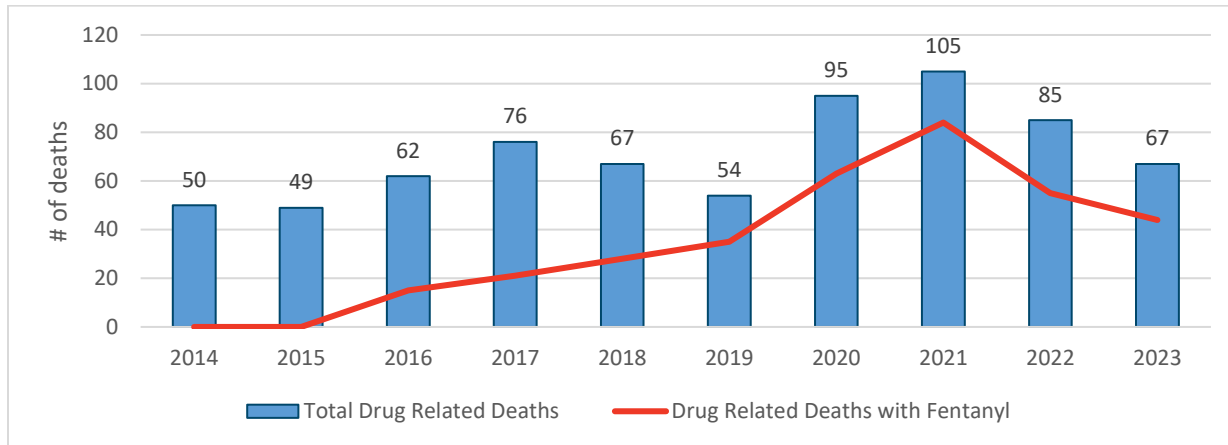
Substance use in Waukesha County is a complex and evolving public health issue. The Community Health Improvement Plan prioritizes opioids, particularly fentanyl, due to their immediate lethality and significant local impact.

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.

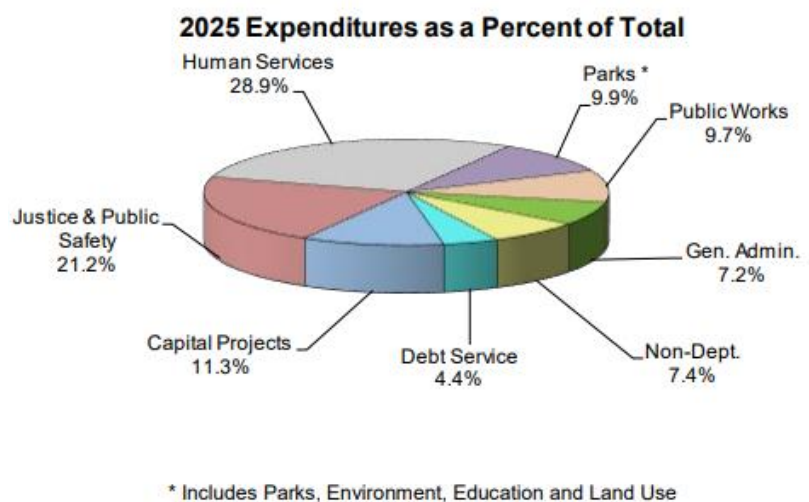
Household/Family

- 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.



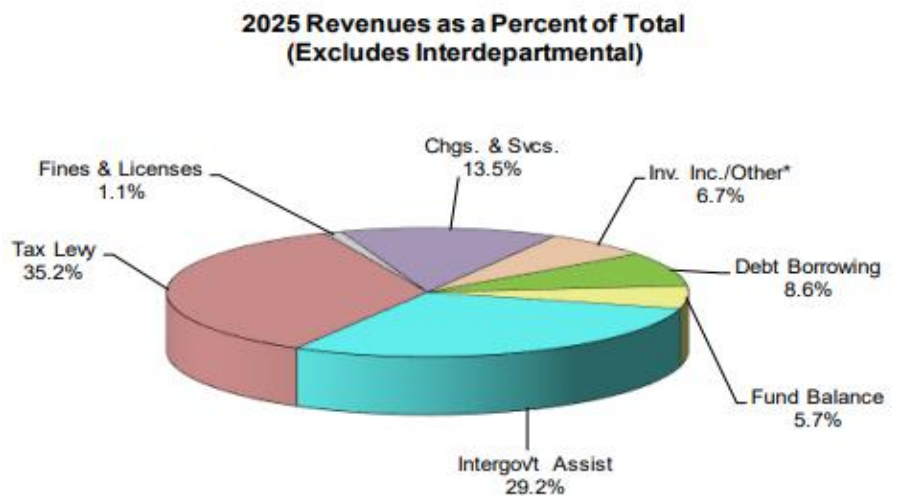
External factors will continue to play a key role in significantly impacting future trends and projections including how federal and state funding priorities may likely affect local funding policies and services carried out by local governments provided in different ways. Also, volatility of fuel, energy, 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.

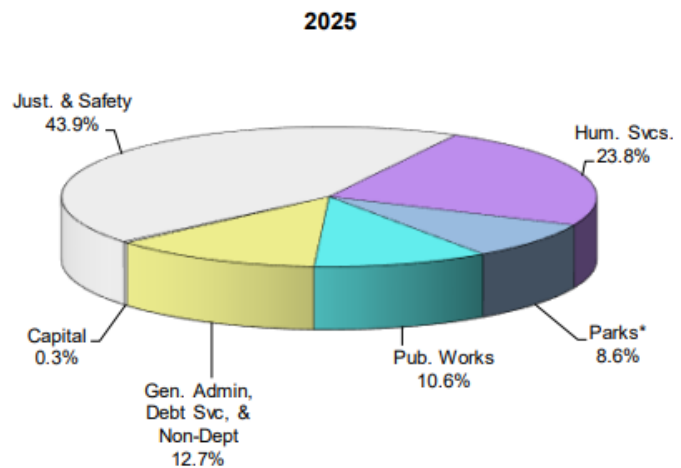
Other external factors that may affect estimated future revenue trends include a change in state funding, a change in the interest rate trend affecting county investments, or a change in moderate inflation trends. Also, other impacts which could affect future revenue include federal

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).

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 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.

	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

	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%	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%

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	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

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Department of Parks and Land Use Environmental Scan Data

HOUSING AVAILABILITY, DEMAND AND USE

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.

Regional and municipal level housing analysis continues to identify gaps in housing stock to meet projected employment levels and meet general market demand. 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 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, K-12 education, and park amenities. 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.

Several strategic opportunities exist within Department programs to work on the housing gap in Waukesha County.

Leverage Existing Federal HOME Program Funds

The median housing price almost doubled in Waukesha County between 2014 and 2024, increasing from \$236,673 to \$453,501 (Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association). Home sales have declined 27% since their height in 2020 in the County (6,486 sales in 2020 vs 4,739 sales in 2024). Interest rates, housing availability, construction costs, land costs and high market demand all impact housing affordability. A strategic opportunity exists to adjust current HOME Program procedures to increase down payment assistance amounts for program qualifying individuals. In addition, HOME Funds allocated for housing development could be increased, and the amount granted per unit could also be increased.

Short Term Rentals aka Tourist Rooming Houses

Tourist rooming house means all lodging places and tourist cabins and cottages, other than hotels and motels, in which sleeping accommodations are offered for pay to tourists or transients. These facilities are required to be licensed by DATCP or authorized agents as the agency responsible for lodging regulation. This is to ensure safety of guests relating to the building structure, drinking water, and general sanitation. Tourist Rooming Houses are also often required to obtain municipal permits and register with the DOR for a license in order to collect and remit state & county sales taxes and local room tax. The Environmental Health Division issued 57 licenses in 2024 and 87 in 2025. There are an estimated 100+ additional unlicensed Tourist Rooming Houses in Waukesha County. A strategic opportunity exists to work collaboratively with local municipalities to ensure licensure while taking into consideration the disruption to suburban neighborhoods.

Comprehensive Planning for Housing

A strategic opportunity exists to coordinate with Waukesha County municipalities to adjust comprehensive plans to identify more opportunities for housing density and provide for variety in housing types. While plans have long identified geographic areas for housing, many plans have not fully analyzed changing community demographics, housing demand and housing cost factors in the design of land use plan maps and strategies. Comparing best practices and case studies may help communities in modernizing their own plans. Other small communities may lack the resources to prepare plans of their own.

Accessory Dwelling Units

The Wisconsin Legislature has introduced draft bills relating to enabling the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on properties with existing residential structures. A strategic opportunity exists to research peer communities and best practices to consider zoning code amendments relating to ADUs. ADUs provide options for housing an aging population and may offer opportunities to diversify the housing stock to accommodate smaller households and to provide variety in dwelling unit sizes. In rural communities where senior communities are scarce, ADUs fill a void left by traditional senior developments. They allow people to better age in place and help to combat social isolation.

FINANCIAL STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

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. 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.

Park System Cost Recovery and Alternative Revenue Approach

A strategic opportunity exists to enhance financial sustainability through a comprehensive cost recovery and alternative revenue approach. This initiative focuses on diversifying revenue streams, optimizing operational efficiency, and aligning fee structures with market conditions and community priorities. By implementing data-driven approaches to revenue management, the department aims to bolster financial resilience, improve access to services, and reinvest in critical infrastructure. This strategy will support sustainable growth and ensure reinvestment in vital programs, ultimately increasing the department's ability to deliver long-term community value.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure Enhancement

The modernization of public facilities and infrastructure in the Park System presents a strategic opportunity to enhance safety, accessibility, and overall community value. This plan aims to address demographic shifts and maintain the County's role as a driver of engagement and revenue. By employing a long-term modernization strategy based on facilities usage data and community priorities, investments will align with industry standards. Utilizing the Asset Management system will enable comprehensive planning and resource prioritization, ensuring that infrastructure investments support sustainable revenue generation and effective asset management. This approach will enhance operational efficiency and extend asset life cycles, fostering a consistent, countywide standard for stewardship and community support.

Evaluation of Grant Disbursement Procedures

Due to stagnate federal funding of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, there is a declining service impact due to rising costs. A strategic opportunity exists to analyze the impact of targeting the funding priorities for the CDBG Program to direct the allocation toward higher impact categories, such as Housing, and toward fewer agencies to improve service impact.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Increase On-ramps to Employment Through Apprenticeships

Wisconsin's tightening labor market makes apprenticeships one of the fastest, lowest-risk on-ramps to quality jobs for workers and to a highly skilled workforce for employers. In 2024, the state hit a record 17,509 registered apprentices—evidence that demand and capacity continue to increase. Youth Apprenticeship is also surging: in 2024–25, 11,344 high school students participated with 7,447 employer sponsors. With options across roughly 200 occupations, apprenticeships can meet needs from construction and manufacturing to health care, education, and public service.

This growth underscores a timely opportunity for Waukesha County to align its efforts and ensure local employers and job seekers fully benefit. Waukesha County has several Youth Apprenticeship Consortia, a variety of training institutions, and several different state staff working to develop different Registered Apprenticeships in the region. However, these efforts are not always coordinated and do not take full advantage of other programs that can support apprentices with supportive services. Internally, Waukesha County does not have any apprenticeships in the Parks and Land Use Department.

Department Workforce Cross Training and Succession Planning

The Department of Parks and Land Use is positioned at a pivotal workforce juncture, characterized by both deep institutional experience and a growing influx of new talent. According to the most recent employee engagement survey, over 19% of staff have served the department for more than 20 years, while 35% have been with the

organization for less than five years. This generational blend reflects both the strength of long-term institutional knowledge and the need to intentionally manage workforce transitions as retirements and role changes occur.

Survey data also indicates a strong and participatory organizational culture. Nearly all employees report feeling that training needs are addressed (94%), that they are empowered to make process improvements (96%), and that their input is sought in shaping better ways of working (98%). These indicators suggest a high degree of engagement and readiness for continued growth and innovation.

At the same time, this evolving workforce composition introduces natural challenges related to knowledge transfer, succession, and skill alignment—particularly as technology, service delivery models, and public expectations continue to change. The department’s mix of veteran expertise and newer employees presents both a vulnerability and an opportunity: maintaining operational continuity while evolving roles and skills to meet emerging needs. Ongoing attention to workforce capacity, development, and adaptability will remain critical to sustaining the department’s long-term effectiveness.

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS

Always On, Always Accessible Public Service Systems

Waukesha County values a high level of customer service particularly in providing information accurately and in a timely manner. Many customer service inquiries seek general information regarding “how do I” or relating to the status of a particular permitting and licensing application or approval. A strategic opportunity exists to evaluate existing permitting and licensing workflow systems to enable review status check-ins and communication tracking. In addition, opportunities exist to leverage online document systems to allow customers to independently retrieve appropriate public records. Finally, an opportunity exists to evaluate the use of technology, such as chat bots and AI call centers to answer public inquiries accommodating their timeline.

Anytime, Anywhere and Any Device Access to Information for Staff

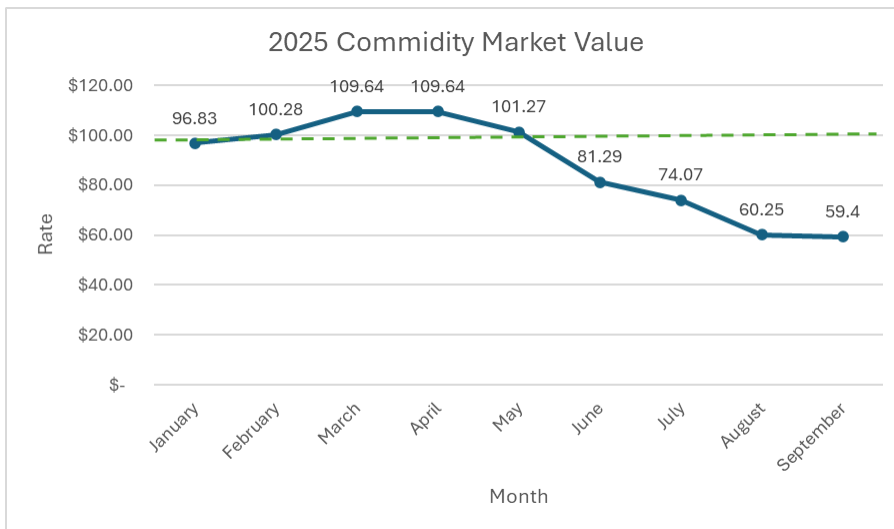
As the Department advances in the development of digital workflows and electronic records management, a strategic opportunity exists to integrate into permitting and licensing workflow systems, asset management, and general records retention systems, the ability to access and update records at anytime, anywhere and through multiple devices.

RECYCLABLE MATERIAL COMMODITY VALUES

In May 2023, a fire at the Joint City of Milwaukee/Waukesha County Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) forced Waukesha County to seek alternative processing for recyclables, resulting in a 10-year contract with Waste Management of Wisconsin, Inc. at its Germantown facility. Waste Management's \$38 million investment in advanced automation technologies, such as AI, optical sorters, and ballistic separators, has increased efficiency, enabling the capture of new commodities like #4 plastics and ensuring high-quality sales. This technological

advancement expands material market reach, and the marketing of recyclables remains a crucial revenue source for the program.

Economic markets play a critical role in determining the demand and price for recycled materials, directly impacting revenue assumptions in the recycling operations proforma. Market fluctuations, driven by international trade policies and global economic conditions, can lead to significant volatility. When demand falls, prices drop, creating revenue shortfalls; conversely, robust markets can boost demand and commodity value, enhancing financial outcomes. Recent downturns in 2025 illustrate these challenges, complicating financial forecasts despite expert optimism for recovery. Annual analysis of Waukesha County's recycling stream shows that cardboard and mixed paper, now over 50% of the stream, will likely grow. Maintaining fiber quality through education and supporting local paper mills ensures sustainable revenue sources. Proactive strategies, including market diversification and stable end-market relationships, are essential for mitigating economic impacts.



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[SOCIOECONOMICS | Regional Performance Monitoring](#)

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