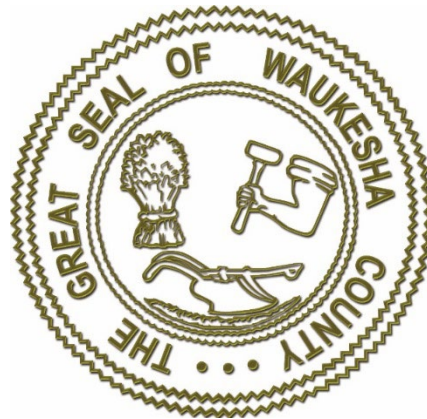


Waukesha County Department of Extension Strategic Plan 2026 - 2028



“The Waukesha County Department of Extension commits to this purpose...

We teach, learn, lead, and serve, connecting people with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities.”

–Jerry Braatz, Area Extension Director

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 [Jump to Strategic Objectives](#)

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Reader's Guide: How to Read the Strategic Plan

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Thank you for reading Waukesha County Department of Extension Waukesha County'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](#) 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.

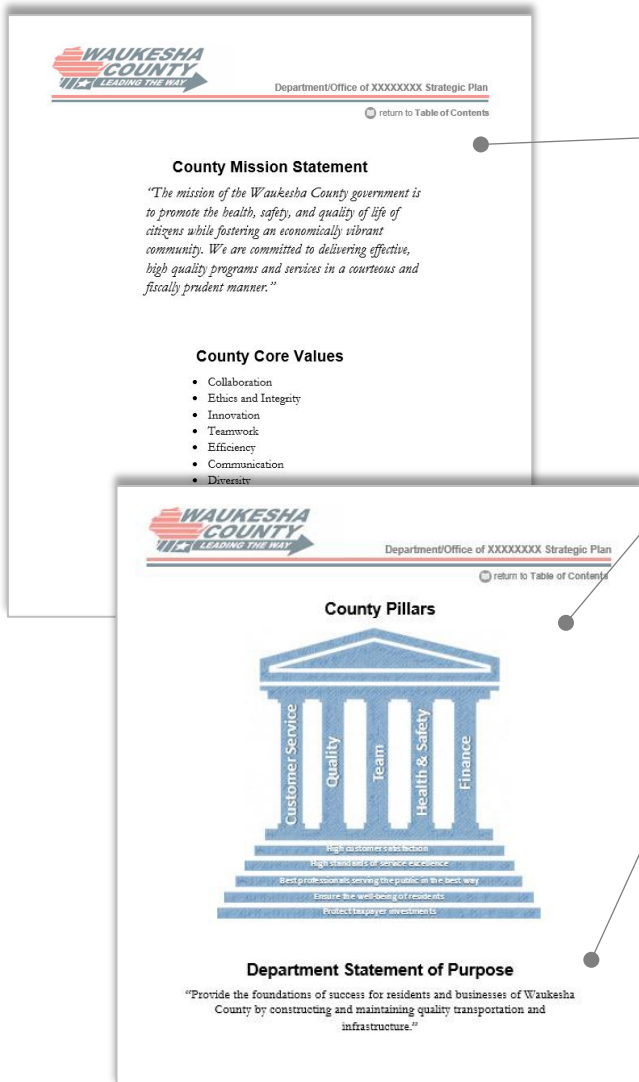
The screenshot shows a page header with the Waukesha County logo and the text 'Department/Office of XXXXXXXXX Strategic Plan'. Below the header is a red bar with the text 'Pillar: Choose an item.' and two links: 'return to Objectives list' and 'return to Table of Contents'. The main content area displays '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 links: 'Type here, update link', 'Type here, update link', and '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

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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.
- 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.”

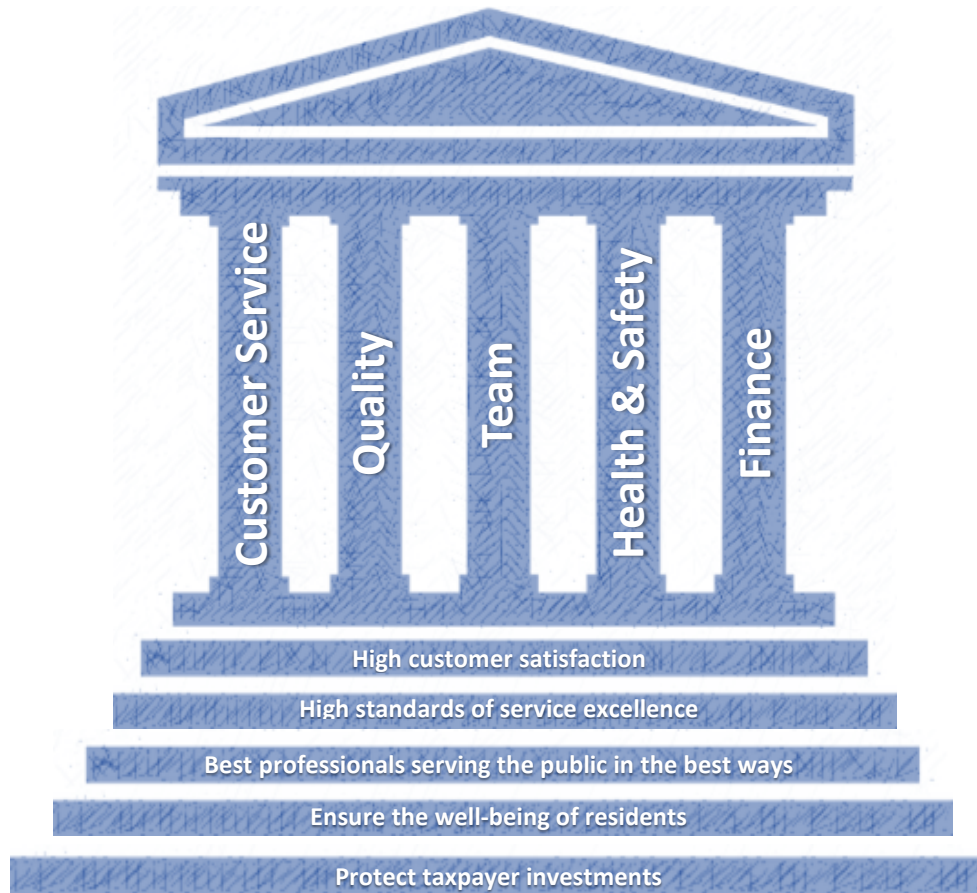
County Standards of Service Excellence

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

Executive Summary: County Pillars & Statement of Purpose

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County Pillars



Department Statement of Purpose

“The purpose to which Extension commits is to teach, learn, lead, and serve, connecting people with the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities. Our vision is to become a thriving, well known and sought-out educational resource that reflects the rich diversity of the County. The values we strive to live by are community, discovery, inclusiveness, relationships, and respect.”

Executive Summary: Overview & Strategic Objectives

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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](#)**: Increase the knowledge level of green industry workforce by identifying emerging industry needs and delivering educational workshops that address these needs.
- **[Objective 2](#)**: Increase the capacity of local governments and community-based organizations to lead effective organizational development efforts by providing education, facilitation, and technical assistance that strengthen governance, collaboration, and implementation of community priorities.
- **[Objective 3](#)**: Increase the knowledge, skills, and applied practices of Waukesha County community organizations and local government leaders by delivering trainings and workshops on key community development topics that support effective leadership, organizational effectiveness, and collaborative decision-making.
- **[Objective 4](#)**: Strengthen 4-H positive youth development programs by expanding access to high quality, research-based educational experiences that build leadership, youth voice, life skills, and civic responsibility through programming and intentional youth-adult partnerships.
- **[Objective 5](#)**: Improve the nutrition, food security, and physical activity practices of low-income participants in the Waukesha County Expanded Nutrition and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) provided by FoodWise.

County Pillars: Quality, Health & Safety

 [Return to Strategic Objectives](#)

Objective 1:

Increase the knowledge level of green industry workforce by identifying emerging industry needs and delivering educational workshops that address these needs.

Owner:

Horticulture Educator

Performance Measures:

1. 1,050 attendees per year attend green industry educational workshops.
2. 85% of workshop attendees report increased knowledge of green industry topics.
3. 85% of workshop attendees report increased awareness of practices to protect the environment.

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Identify upcoming industry needs	Conduct key informant interviews with participants to further clarify program needs.	Horticulture Educator	2026-2028
Hold four to six educational workshops per year	Plan, develop, coordinate, and teach workshops. Collaborate with other state Extension educators to identify topics, locations, and speakers that address emerging industry needs.	Horticulture Educator	2026-2028

Learn More: <https://waukesha.extension.wisc.edu/horticulture>

County Pillars: Quality

 [Return to Strategic Objectives](#)

Objective 2: Increase the capacity of local governments and community-based organizations to lead effective organizational development efforts by providing education, facilitation, and technical assistance that strengthen governance, collaboration, and implementation of community priorities.

Owner: Community Development Educator

Performance Measures:

1. Conduct five (5) organizational development workshops, consultations, or facilitated processes per year delivered to local governments and community organizations
2. 80% of participating organizations adopt or improve at least one organizational practice (e.g., strategic planning, leadership structure, partnership coordination)

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Conduct community and economic data collection and analysis to inform community development education and support	Survey community-based organizations and residents and meet with local government staff and elected officials to gather data on community needs and priorities. Conduct targeted organization assessments to identify strengths, gaps, and priority areas.	Community Development Educator	2026-2028
Guide listening sessions and strategic planning efforts for local organizations	Provide organizations with the tools to move from community input to clear priorities, aligned strategies, and implementation-ready action plans.	Community Development Educator	2026-2028
Deliver Real Colors® personality and leadership trainings	Train employees to build self-awareness, strengthen communication, and improve teamwork across community organizations and local governments.	Community Development Educator	2026-2028

Learn More: <https://waukesha.extension.wisc.edu/community-development/>

County Pillars: Quality

 [Return to Strategic Objectives](#)

Objective 3: Increase the knowledge, skills, and applied practices of Waukesha County community organizations and local government leaders by delivering trainings and workshops on key community development topics that support effective leadership, organizational effectiveness, and collaborative decision-making.

Owner: Community Development Educator

Performance Measures:

1. 500 participants per year served through trainings and workshops
2. 70% of organizations report increased capacity
3. 70% of organizations report applying new practices

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Assess organizational and municipal needs	Needs assessments will be used identify priority topics for workshops, training, and technical assistance.	Community Development Educator	2026-2028
Develop local government workshops and programs	Develop workshops and programs for municipal plan commissioners, elected officials, staff, and residents focused on local government functions and organizational effectiveness.	Community Development Educator	2026-2028
Conduct workshops and educational	Conduct workshops and educational sessions in both in-person and virtual formats as appropriate.	Community Development Educator	2026-2028
Support strategic planning in organizations	Support organizations, municipalities, and NRSA neighborhoods by facilitating strategic planning and goal-setting processes.	Community Development Educator	2026-2028

Learn More: <https://waukesha.extension.wisc.edu/community-development/>

County Pillars: Quality

 [Return to Strategic Objectives](#)

Objective 4: Strengthen 4-H positive youth development programs by expanding access to high quality, research-based educational experiences that build leadership, youth voice, life skills, and civic responsibility through programming and intentional youth-adult partnerships.

Owner: Youth & Family Educator, Associate Educator

Performance Measures:

1. At least 730 youth participate annually in leadership, civic engagement, and skill building 4-H programs.
2. 75% of participating youth report an increase in leadership, confidence, or life skills as measured through program evaluations or surveys.
3. PYD/4-H programs have at least 160 trained volunteers to support program implementation and youth & adult partnership practices.
4. Collaborate with 25 community organizations and/or businesses on an annual basis.

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Facilitate hands-on learning opportunities for youth	Facilitate at least 12 hands-on learning opportunities that promote youth leadership, decision making, and personal growth.	Youth & Family Educator, Associate Educator	2026-2028
Develop leadership opportunities/pathways for youth	Annual programming will include leadership opportunities or pathways for youth through clubs, countywide programs, events, and committees.	Youth & Family Educator, Associate Educator	2026-2028
Support volunteers with training and resources	Provide adult volunteers with the training and resources that they need to deliver consistent, research-based positive youth development programming.	Youth & Family Educator, Associate Educator	2026-2028
Expand outreach efforts	Increase outreach efforts to engage new and underserved youth.	Youth & Family Educator, Associate Educator	2026-2028
Evaluate youth development outcomes	Evaluate outcomes using participation data, surveys, and youth reflections. Inform continuous program improvement.	Youth & Family Educator, Associate Educator	2026-2028

Learn More: <https://waukesha.extension.wisc.edu/4-h/>

County Pillars: Quality

 [Return to Strategic Objectives](#)

Objective 5: Improve the nutrition, food security, and physical activity practices of low-income participants in the Waukesha County Expanded Nutrition and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) provided by FoodWise.

Owner:

FoodWise Program Administrator

Performance Measures:

1. FoodWise program contacts - 4,200 in 2026, increasing by 100 contacts each following year
2. 750 participants will be served by FoodWise programs in 2026, increasing by 25 participants each following year
3. 50% of older youth & adults report an increase in daily fruit and vegetable consumption in 2026, increasing by 2% each following year
4. 85% percent of low-income participants show improvement in one or more nutrition practices.
5. 80% percent of low-income participants show improvement in food resource management practices.
6. 70% of participants report an increase in physical activity in 2026, increasing to 72% by 2028.

Strategy	Strategy Details	Owner	Timeframe
Provide educational outreach to low-income adults and youth	Increase the number of Adult Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Older Youth (middle school and high school age) participants by teaching Eating Smart & Being Active, Around the Table, Teen Cuisine, Small Bites, and other relevant curricula. Maintain number of elementary-age youth EFNEP participants.	FoodWise Program Administrator	2026-2028
Collect program evaluation data	Collect evaluation data from participants in EFNEP programs. This data will measure nutritional behavior change using research and evidence-based EFNEP national program evaluations comparing pre- and post-tests.	FoodWise Program Administrator	2026-2028
Reach out to potential program partners	Enhance outreach to additional partners reaching individuals and families eligible for FoodShare.	FoodWise Program Administrator	2026-2028

Learn More: <https://waukesha.extension.wisc.edu/nutrition-education/>

Appendix A: Environmental Scan – Waukesha County

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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.

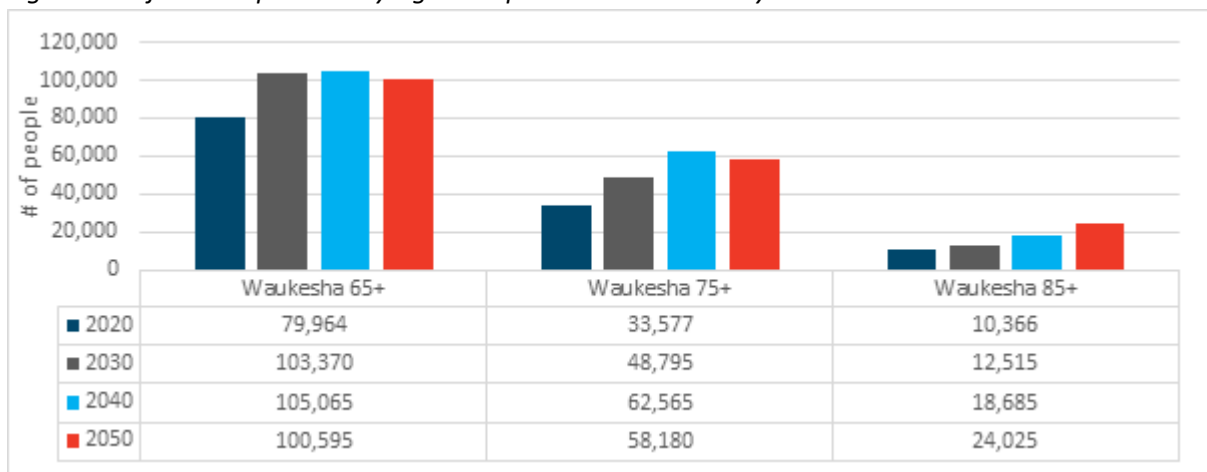
(Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics, 2025)

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*):

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- 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 support.

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 to 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

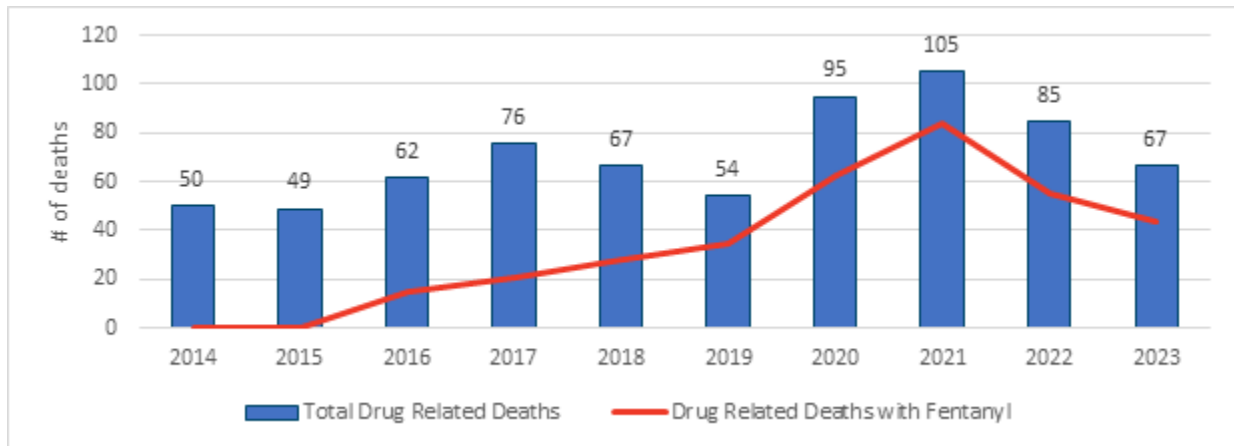
Substance use in Waukesha County is a complex and evolving public health issue. The Community Health Improvement Plan prioritizes opioids, particularly fentanyl, due to their immediate lethality and significant local impact.

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.
- 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 regulations 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%	<u>Includes</u> 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 Sheriff, Clerk of Courts, and Register of Deeds are elected to four-year terms with these positions up for election in November of 2026. The County Executive will be up for election in a nonpartisan 4-year term race held in April of 2027.

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 Associate's 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.

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.

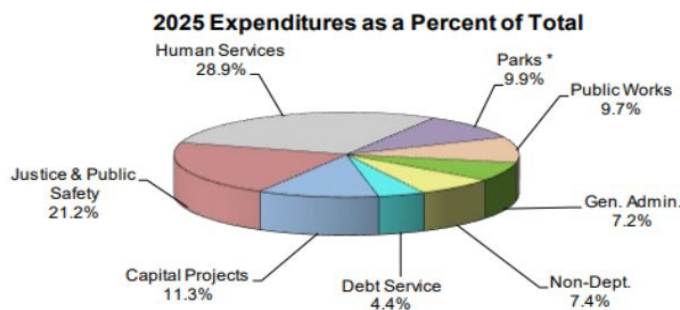
Household/Family

- 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.

County Financial Analysis

Waukesha County Budget: Expenditures



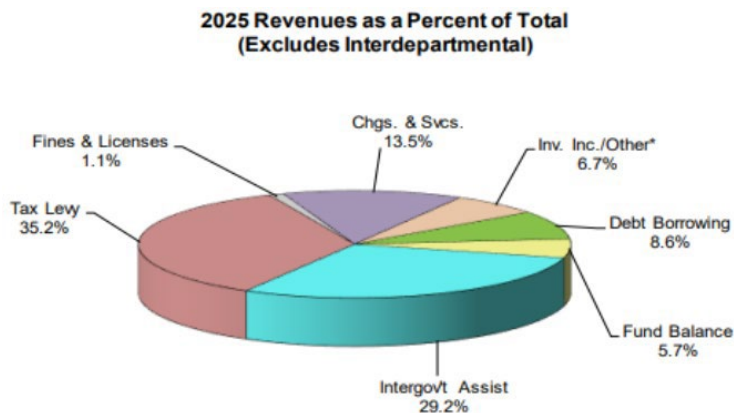
* Includes Parks, Environment, Education and Land Use

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.

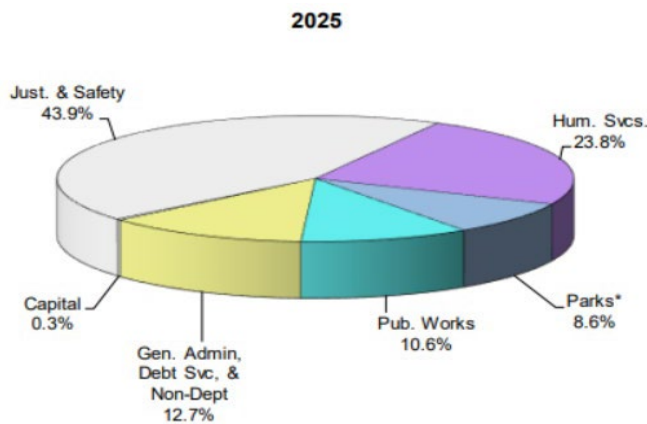
The county carries out several programs on behalf of the state and federal government (mostly in Justice & Public Safety and Health & Human Services), so about a quarter of the total revenue budget is typically from state and federal revenue sources, though growth in these revenue sources is often minimal 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).

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 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.

2012						County Total
<5	5-9	10-14	15-20	>20		
Administration	11	17	20	11	30	89
Circuit Court Services	16	19	19	7	31	92
Corporation Counsel	3	9	9	3	15	39
Emergency Preparedness	16	29	5	2	6	58
Public Works	15	14	27	26	48	130
District Attorney	2	4	10	6	10	32
Health and Human Service	96	76	65	52	111	400
Parks and Land Use	7	16	27	14	43	107
Sheriffs Department	65	86	60	47	83	341
Multi Departments	20	19	18	14	15	86
County Total	251	289	260	182	392	1374

2012						County Total
<5	5-9	10-14	15-20	>20		
Administration	12%	19%	22%	12%	34%	100%
Circuit Court Services	17%	21%	21%	8%	34%	100%
Corporation Counsel	8%	23%	23%	8%	38%	100%
Emergency Preparedness	28%	50%	9%	3%	10%	100%
Public Works	12%	11%	21%	20%	37%	100%
District Attorney	6%	13%	31%	19%	31%	100%
Health and Human Service	24%	19%	16%	13%	28%	100%
Parks and Land Use	7%	15%	25%	13%	40%	100%
Sheriffs Department	19%	25%	18%	14%	24%	100%
Multi Departments	23%	22%	21%	16%	17%	100%
County Total	18%	21%	19%	13%	29%	100%

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%

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

Waukesha County Budget Taskforce

The County Executive created the Task Force, in partnership with the national consulting firm Raftelis, in the spring of 2024 to gather public input and provide direction for future county budgets. Waukesha County’s data-driven decision making and conservative approach to budgeting have made it stand out as one of the nation’s top performing counties. The County has always been committed to gathering public input as a part of the budget process and its approach to fiscal management. The creation of the 2024 Budget Task Force, and the holding of four, open and public task force sessions is a testament to that commitment.

Task Force Membership

The Task force was comprised of 34 Waukesha County residents including several County Board Supervisors, municipal elected officials, business leaders and the public. Other County Board Supervisors and members of the public attended meetings but were not considered members of the Task Force.

What was the goal of the Task Force?

The Task Force examined the county's future capital and operating needs, reviewed all revenue options available to the county under state law, and made recommendations to the County Executive and the County Board as to how it believed the county should approach its budgets over the next 5-10 years.

Task Force Results

According to the task force's final report, given the complexity and competing interests of individual Task Force members, reaching a consensus about addressing future budgetary challenges was unrealistic. Instead, the group reached a shared agreement regarding the values, priorities, and areas of focus over the next few years to provide sound guidance for elected officials as they navigate difficult policy decisions. The key themes that emerged from the work of the Budget Task Force are reflected below. The report provides more details regarding each of these themes.

- Importance of fiscal responsibility
- Targeted budgetary service level reductions and enhancements
- Desire to explore revenue options
- Support for infrastructure and economic development
- Evaluate shared services and shared revenue

To view the complete final report you may visit:

<https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/media/huadxbam/waukesha-budget-taskforce-board-final-presentation-aug-2024.pdf>

The Budget Task Force provided critical public input into the county's short and long-term financial planning and will continue to be referenced as the county grapples with the fiscal reality of budgeting under decades of state property tax levy limits and unfunded state mandates.

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Appendix B: Environmental Scan – Extension Department

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Overview

Extension Waukesha County collected data using a Qualtrics survey that 233 people completed with 156 participants being between the ages of 18 and 65 (labor force age) and an additional 77 participants over the age of 65. Waukesha County also collected data through key informant interviews with 13 local governments in Waukesha County and SEWRPC. The interviews with local government officials specifically focused on local government education needs.

Qualtrics survey participants rated Extension educator performance with an average score of 4.54 on a scale of 1 to 5. Participants rated program quality at 4.43 on a scale of 1 to 5. Extension program participant survey results and participation data show that Waukesha County residents deeply value Extension’s practical, research-based education across youth development, agriculture and horticulture, community leadership, and health and wellness. Respondents encouraged Extension to both continue proven programs and explore new topics reflecting evolving local needs such as mental health, aging, digital access to programs, and environmental stewardship.

When considered alongside Waukesha County’s demographic and economic trends—an aging but educated and economically strong population, moderate population growth through in-migration, and high expectations for quality and innovation—survey findings confirm that Extension continues to position itself and innovate to meet both current and emerging community priorities.

Community Development

Valued programs:

Real Colors Training, Strategic Planning, Data Analysis Reports, Plan Commission Workshop, Engaging People Around Neighborhood Issues

Support from community feedback:

Comments emphasize the importance of capacity building and inclusion, positioning Extension as a trusted partner for strengthening local government, collaboration, and communication.

Trend relevance:

- Higher educational attainment and civic expectations suggest residents value thoughtful engagement and evidence-based decision-making. In-migration as a driver of population growth highlights the need to engage new residents in communities throughout Waukesha County.

Emerging opportunities

Expand local government education offerings such as comprehensive planning, policy creation, and communication tools for residents. Focus programming on challenges that local government officials communicated below.

- Redevelopment as a Driver of Growth - Most communities are built out, shifting focus to redevelopment and infill. New projects often include multifamily components, which face public resistance and require updated ordinances and plans.
- Housing Pressures and Community Character - Communities face tension between maintaining small-town or lakefront character and addressing housing affordability and density. Shoreland zoning and preservation of historic or rural features are ongoing concerns.
- Outdated Ordinances and Tools - Many zoning, subdivision, and sign codes are outdated, ambiguous, or difficult to enforce. Communities seek model ordinances and peer examples to guide updates.
- Continuing Training for Plan Commissions - New and existing members often lack structured orientation and rely on meetings to learn. Communities want consistent training on roles, authority, legal standards, and best practices for fact-based decision-making.
- Comprehensive Planning Training and Refresher Programs - Strong demand for ongoing education on plan commission roles, comprehensive planning, zoning administration, and case law. Scenario-based and interactive learning is preferred.
- Regional Collaboration and Networking - Broad support for joint learning among similar-sized municipalities to share best practices, address common issues, and coordinate on regional priorities such as housing and infrastructure.
- Emerging Planning Issues - Local officials are increasingly dealing with solar and EV infrastructure, stormwater and runoff control, outdoor lighting, and impervious surface management.

Health and Well-Being

Valued programs:

StrongBodies, WeCOPE Mental Health Program

Support from community feedback:

“The need for mental health support will only be increasing, especially among our youth” and “Programs that address loneliness for those who lose a life partner” reinforce demand for mental health, emotional wellbeing, and social connection initiatives.

Trend relevance:

- The aging population and longer life expectancy strengthen the case for wellness and aging-in-place programs that address physical activity, loneliness, and digital access. The population of age 65 and over in Waukesha County will increase from 19.6 % of the population in 2020 to 25.4% in 2040.
- In Waukesha County, the rate of fall-related hospitalizations and mortality for people over the age of 65 continues to be higher than the State of Wisconsin.
- Higher income and education levels support interest in evidence-based, proactive health education. This is critical as over 34% of adults in the county have a BMI that places them in the obese category.
- The Waukesha County Community Health Assessment indicated that 19% of adults within the County reported having a mental health condition.

Emerging opportunities:

Expand StrongBodies and WeCOPE offerings to address intergenerational wellness, grief, and resilience. Develop partnerships with health coalitions and Waukesha County Health and Human Services to reach older adults and families managing stress or transitions.

Commercial Horticulture**Valued programs:**

Landscape & Grounds Maintenance Short Course, Urban Forestry Workshop, Horticulture Yard & Garden Helpline, Farm Technical Assistance and Consultation, Farmers Market Workshop, Produce Safety Education

Support from community feedback:

Interest in “beekeeping,” “trees,” “low-maintenance gardens,” and “plant health” reflects strong community enthusiasm for sustainable landscapes and nature-based learning.

Trend relevance:

- Higher income, educated residents often invest in property improvement and environmental stewardship. Waukesha County continues to rank near the top across Wisconsin counties in green industry sales.
- Urban and suburban land redevelopment trends create opportunities for sustainable landscaping and green infrastructure education as suburban development in the county is associated with larger lot sizes.
- The number of local fresh market vegetable, fruit growers, and flower growers continues to increase because of this segment of agriculture's low cost of entry it is helping to fuel the local economy, food security and create jobs.

Emerging opportunities:

Expand sustainability programs, growing season extension strategies, vegetable irrigation techniques, concerns about climate trends, develop new urban forestry partnerships, and create new workshops on pollinators, greenhouse management, and sustainable design.

Positive Youth Development**Valued programs:**

4-H Clubs and Projects, In/After School Clubs, 4-H Summer Camp, Kids Zone (Waukesha County Fair), Farm to School, Youth Garden Education

Support from community feedback:

“Guidance on career choices and pay scales” and “College and career workshop, financial literacy, community resources day” validate the need for workforce readiness and life skills. “Any and all ways to continue and expand 4-H” underscores enduring support for youth engagement.

Trend relevance:

- Economic growth and business expansion create opportunities for youth career readiness, internships, and mentorships.
- Modest population growth and continuing smaller family sizes emphasize the importance of investment in programs that help retain youth as they grow into adulthood.
- Youth leadership programming prepares youth to be the county adult leaders of the future.

Emerging opportunities:

Broaden 4-H pathways into career, workforce and technical education, financial literacy, and local entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

Extension Waukesha County's future lies in bridging its strong program foundation with county departments and community partners with forward-looking initiatives that address changing demographics, economic growth, and evolving community needs—continuing to connect university research with community action to engage people in learning throughout the lifespan thus improving the lives of Waukesha County residents.