



Our intention is to have in-person meetings going forward. For the time being, we will hold the City Committee Meetings, Plan Commission, Council and most others at the Community Room at 933 Michigan Avenue. This in-person location will meet the legal requirement for our open meetings.

We will have a virtual option available, but the technology for the hybrid style meeting may not be reliable all of the time.

Members

- Mayor Wiza
- Alderperson Kneebone
- Commissioner Arntsen
- Commissioner Beacom
- Commissioner Miskowiak
- Commissioner Rice
- Commissioner Schuler

AGENDA

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

Date and Time:	August 12, 2025 6:00 PM	Location:	Community Room 933 Michigan Avenue, Stevens Point, WI
			<u>OR</u> Zoom Teleconferencing
			Meeting ID: 838 0927 7583 Passcode: 204436 <u>By Computer:</u> https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83809277583?pwd=5VbpDrgWWKPkDhrJQ0iEqDn5DIVPlg.1 <u>By Phone:</u> +1-312-626-6799 (US Chicago)

Opening Section:

1. Roll Call.

Discussion and Possible Action on:

1. Report of the July 7, 2025 meeting of the City Plan Commission.
2. Review of Comprehensive Plan Chapter 1: Issues and Opportunities revisions and recommendation to Common Council.
3. Review of draft Comprehensive Plan Chapter 2: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources.
4. Review of draft Comprehensive Plan Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities.

Closing Section:

1. Adjournment.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that any person who has special needs while attending these meetings or needs agenda materials for these meetings should contact the City Clerk as soon as possible to ensure that a reasonable accommodation can be made. The City Clerk can be reached by telephone at (715) 346-1569 or by mail at 1515 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point, WI 54481.

Maps further defining the above area(s) may be obtained from the City of Stevens Point Department of Community Development, 1515 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point, WI 54481, or by calling (715) 346-1567, during normal business hours.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that a quorum of the Common Council may be in attendance at this meeting.



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Members

- Mayor Wiza
- Alderperson Kneebone
- Commissioner Arntsen
- Commissioner Beacom
- Commissioner Miskowiak
- Commissioner Rice
- Commissioner Schuler

MINUTES

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

Date	July 7, 2025	Location:	Community Room
and	6:00 PM		933 Michigan Avenue, Stevens Point, WI
Time:			
			<u>OR</u>
			<u>Zoom Teleconferencing</u>
			Meeting ID: 828 2249 0311
			Passcode: 317789
			<u>By Computer:</u>
			https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82822490311?pwd=6u8bmhXDImEpnUGRoh2
			<u>By Phone:</u> +1-312-626-6799 (US Chicago)

Opening Section:

1. Roll Call

- Meeting called to order at 6:00PM by Director Kivela
- Members Present: Kneebone, Arntsen, Beacom, Miskowiak, Rice, Schuler
- Members Excused: Wiza
- In absence of Mayor Wiza, Alder Kneebone is nominated by Beacom to chair the meeting. Arntsen seconds the nomination. No other nominations received; Kneebone unanimously approved to chair.

Discussion and Possible Action on:

2. Report of the June 2, 2025 meeting of the City Plan Commission.

- Background: Report of the June 2, 2025, meeting of the City Plan Commission included in the agenda packet.
- Motion: Arntsen moves approval
- Second: Schuler seconds the motion.

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- Discussion: None
 - Vote: Unanimous approval.
3. A request from the City of Stevens Point to approve a right-of-way plat and relocation order from Briggs Street to Franklin Street as part of the Business 51 Street Reconstruction Project.
 - Background: Director Beduhn provides background information regarding the right-of-way plat and relocation order, including utilities conflicts best resolved by extending the project to Briggs Street.
 - Motion: Schuler moves to approve the request as presented.
 - Second: Miskowiak seconds the motion.
 - Discussion: Schuler asks if tables and figures have been verified; Director Beduhn confirms.
 - Vote: Unanimous approval.
 4. A request from the City of Stevens Point to acquire the property located at 1909 Cypress Street (Parcel ID 281240832300402) and two unaddressed parcels off of Cypress Street (Parcel ID 281240832300303 & 281240832300403).
 - Background: Director Lemke provides background information regarding the request to acquire the properties identified in the agenda packet to accommodate the facilities needs of the Public Utilities department.
 - Motion: Arntsen moves to approve the request as presented.
 - Second: Schuler seconds the motion.
 - Discussion: No further discussion.
 - Vote: Unanimous approval.
 5. Staff Update: Zoning Code Rewrite.
 - Background: Associate Planner / Zoning Administrator Kuhn provides background information regarding progress made on the Zoning Code rewrite project.
 - Discussion:
 - Kneebone inquires about the responses to the Housing survey
 - Schuler asks about the content of the discussion
 6. Staff Update: Comprehensive Plan Issues & Opportunities Draft Chapter and Summary
 - Background: Klesmith provides update regarding the draft chapter and summary
 - Discussion:
 - Schuler provides comments on several sections of the second draft and requests a red-lined copy between reviews.
 - Arntsen, Beacom, Miskowiak, Kneebone approve of remarks made by Schuler; Kneebone shares approval of the summary document.
 - Specific comments regarding the chapter revisions are documented for revision by staff.
 - Vote: No action taken.
 7. Staff Update: UWSP Planning Capstone Project - Sisters of Saint Joseph Parish Adjacent Lands
 - Background: Klesmith introduces the capstone project report.
 - Discussion: Schuler and Kneebone give positive remarks on the report.
 8. Director's Report.

- Background: Director Kivela provides oral summary of the Director's Report.

Closing Section:

9. Adjourn
 - Meeting adjourned at 6:51PM.

SIGN IN SHEET

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY

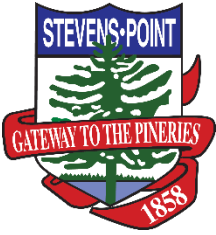
FAILURE TO PRINT LEGIBLY MAY RESULT IN MISS SPELLED NAMES ON OFFICAL RECORD OF MEETING MINUTES.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

Gingold Keymer	District #3
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PLEASE RETURN TO SECRETARY, THANK YOU.



Memo

Chris Klesmith
Neighborhood Planner / Economic
Development Specialist

City of Stevens Point
1515 Strongs Avenue
Stevens Point, WI 54481
[715] 341-4171 | cklesmith@stevenspoint.com

To: Plan Commission
From: Chris Klesmith
CC: Jarod Kivela, Adam Kuhn
Date: August 8, 2025
Subject: Comprehensive Plan Updates, Agenda Items 2-4

Commissioners,

At our Special Plan Commission meeting we will be reviewing chapters 1, 2, and 4 of the revised comprehensive plan. Included in this memo is a summary of changes that were made to the first chapter based on your input from the previous meeting. Moving forward, staff will provide red-lined copies to the Plan Commission to approve of changes prior to recommending acknowledgement or adoption of chapters to the Common Council. With your thorough reviews, staff are recommending that the Plan Commission recommend to the Common Council that the first chapter be accepted and placed in the existing Comprehensive Plan as an appendix until either the chapter or the entire plan is ready for public hearing and adoption. Once presented to Common Council, staff will release the survey to solicit public feedback on the first chapter. The survey will remain open for two weeks before being closed, reviewed, and changes made, if any.

In order to improve the efficiency of the review process at special plan commission meetings, staff ask that you keep comments for public discussion related to the ideas, references, data, and logic of the chapters and not to grammatical issues within the drafts. If you have suggestions, comments, questions, or identify grammatical issues, staff ask that you please submit those items in writing to both cklesmith@stevenspoint.com and Sam Wessel at swessel@ncwrpc.org so we may accurately compile your suggestions prior to reviewing the revised copies of chapters. These comments do not need to be submitted prior to the meeting, but we do ask that they be submitted within a week of the meeting to maintain progress.

If you have any immediate or urgent questions, I ask that you please call me at your discretion.

Cheers,

Christopher Klesmith
Neighborhood Planner & Economic Development Specialist
City of Stevens Point

Stevens Point Comprehensive Plan Chapter 1

Summary of Revisions, Draft 2 to Draft 3

- Page 5
 - Included the neighboring Town of Stockton in the background
- Page 7
 - Maintaining the Summary of Public Participation Activities and Summary of Public Input on Page 7, additional details will be documented in appendices as referenced.
 - Reintroduced paragraph describing the ACS information and trends that are analyzed and discussed in this comprehensive plan
- Page 8
 - Reintroduced content (within the first paragraph and the entirety of the second paragraph) regarding neighboring communities so that the population trends in the City are discussed in the context of the growing region.
- Page 9
 - Response to commissioner comments: Under population projections, the phrase “they don’t factor…” is actually in relation to a DOA statement, which is clarified.
- Page 12
 - Sentence explaining the difference between households and housing units is added.
- Page 13
 - Reintroduced references to surrounding communities, same logic as above
- Page 14 (Employment)
 - Clarification that table 6 only includes Census/ACS data; Lightcast data will be discussed in Chapter 6.
- Page 16
 - Added statements regarding the increase of median wages catching up with the County. UWSP was not able to provide any information regarding trends in student wages, so no additional information regarding the contribution of student employment was added. Please reference the next paragraph – tables were moved up so these paragraphs appear closer together.
- Additional Notes

- Staff would like to adhere to the decision to include “conclusion” style information in each subsection rather than condensing those conclusions into a new subsection so that those conclusions are available adjacent to the data. If additional data-based conclusions should be amended to the 2-page summary that the commission believes are important to note, please assist in identifying them to be referenced in the summary.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Demographics **Draft 3: 8/7/2025**

Background

The City of Stevens Point is a cultural, economic, and educational hub located near the center of Portage County in Central Wisconsin along the Wisconsin River. The City borders the Town of Hull to the northeast, the Town of Stockton to the east, the Village and Town of Plover to the south, the Town of Linwood to the southwest, and the Town of Carson to the northwest. Additionally, the Village of Park Ridge is entirely landlocked by the City of Stevens Point, and the Village of Whiting is landlocked between the Wisconsin River, City of Stevens Point, and Village of Plover. See Map 1.1: Planning Context.

An overview of the City's history is available on the Wisconsin Historical Society's website. In summary, the Wisconsin River has been inhabited for over 10,000 years. Members of Ho-Chunk, Menomonie, and Ojibwe tribes occupied present-day Portage County prior to an influx of European Settlement. Settlement in the early 19th century brought agriculture and industry that used the Wisconsin River's power, such as logging, woodworking, and paper mills. Railroads and what is now the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point arrived in the late 19th century. Today, the County's economy is driven by a mix of education, agriculture, manufacturing, and other industries.

Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law

A comprehensive plan is a local government's guide to community physical, social, and economic development. Comprehensive plans are not meant to serve as land use regulations in themselves; instead, they provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a twenty-year vision for future planning and community decisions. According to the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, a comprehensive plan must include at least nine elements, which include this Chapter's content (Issues and Opportunities) along with eight others:



2. Natural,
Agricultural, and
Cultural Resources



3. Housing



4. Utilities and
Community Facilities



5. Transportation



6. Economic
Development



7. Land Use



8. Intergovernmental
Cooperation



9. Implementation

State statutes prescribe a list of topics to address for each of the elements. This chapter reviews demographic data including the total population, age distribution, households, educational levels, employment, and income levels in detail. Reviewing these trends is critical to understanding what has occurred and what is likely to occur in the future.

Planning Process

This plan is an update of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan adopted by the City, which heavily influences the basis for this plan. Additionally, in 2022, the City of Stevens Point's City Council adopted **People Are the Point** as its strategic plan to enhance the City for as many different people and experiences as possible. This plan aimed “to develop a network of

creative nodes across the city that will serve and strengthen the neighborhoods that surround them and expand and diversify the lifestyles supported in Stevens Point.” The Plan identified four hubs that are ideal for incremental development: 1. Downtown and Riverfront, 2. North Division, 3. Stanley Street and Schmeeckle, and 4. Center and South Point. Core priorities of this strategic plan include:

Housing: Incremental development of the urban core, creating a new loft/warehouse living, promoting small footprint homes, creating agri-hoods and adventure-hoods, supporting community solar/green utilities, and strengthening cultural identity through unique housing projects.

Entrepreneurial and Innovation Capacity: Support the innovation center (CREATE Portage County) at The Grove, retain existing small businesses, grow local agriculture innovation and food businesses, expand financial programs for businesses, support Mid State Technical College (MSTC) efforts, work with local organizations to expand venture capital, and enhance outdoor recreation (mountain biking, bouldering, space activation, etc.).

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Visibility and storytelling of diverse groups through public art, speakers, music, etc., workforce attraction/retention, awareness building, and working with UWSP to recruit more diverse students, and work with the County.

Figure 1. City of Stevens Point Neighborhoods



Source: City of Stevens Point

As of 2025, consultant-led Downtown Stevens Point and Division Street Corridor Plans had been adopted, and draft reports for planning activities in the Goerke/Washington, Eastside, and Southeast/McDill had been produced by the City’s Community Development Department. Findings from these plans and activities are carried into this plan’s various chapters. In 2025, the City decided to shift to a citywide approach to comprehensive planning to have all neighborhood-level recommendations available in one document, which ultimately led to the creation of this plan.

Summary of Public Participation Activities

Below is a timeline of public participation activities based on the Public Participation Plan in Appendix A:

Meeting Date	Meeting Type	Activities
June 2, 2025	Plan Commission	Adopt Public Participation Plan
June 18, 2025	Plan Commission	Project Kickoff; Review draft Chapter 1
July 7, 2025	Plan Commission	Review 2 nd draft Chapter 1

Summary of Public Input

Insert summary of public comments and survey results here when complete.

Data Sources

The U.S. Census Bureau has two data sources that are widely used in this plan, which are described below:

U.S. Census	American Community Survey (ACS)
- Counts population, households, etc. - Based on former Census “short form” - Mailed to every household in the U.S. - Mailed every decade (2010, 2020, etc.) - Self-reported data that is published - Typically more accurate than ACS - No data for non-Census years	- Counts U.S. Census info plus additional topics - Based on former Census “long form” - Mailed to a limited number of households - Mailed every year (2024, 2025, etc.) - Self-reported data used to produce estimates - More topics covered than Census - Provides data for non-Census years

The ACS evolved from the “long form” that some households used to receive with the Census. In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau began releasing ACS data for all populations on a yearly basis. The availability of these surveys means that communities do not need to wait ten years for the census to assess current trends, but they are only estimates based on a limited sample size. Trends are generally analyzed for the thirteen-year time frame from 2010 to 2023 in this report.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, college students were to be counted where they attend college instead of at home in 2020. Despite early school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, Census retained this policy, indicating that the student population should be reflected in Census data. However, local staff who assisted with administering the 2020 Census noticed that many students were not counted in the City due to being sent home early. Therefore, it is important to evaluate various data sources throughout the plan, while understanding there are other factors that affect their accuracy.

Despite the limitations listed above for each data source (self-reporting, etc.), there are few substitutes, if any, for most of the demographic data provided by these sources. In general, they are the most widely used and exhaustive data sets used in plans, grants, decision-making tools, and other programs. Other data sources are used for topics not covered by Census are cited accordingly, such as population projections from the Wisconsin Department of Administration’s (DOA).

Demographics

Population

The strength of the City's workforce, institutions, and overall quality of life depends on a thriving population, which is measured in Table 1. The City's population was estimated to be 25,666 based on the 2020 U.S. Census, with a slight decrease to an estimated 25,497 in 2023. From 1990 to 2010, the City grew at a similar pace to local, countywide, and statewide trends. But since 2010, the City's growth has not kept up with surrounding communities. For example, the Village of Plover's growth rate has consistently been higher since 1990 and it continues to grow. From 1990 to 2010, the estimated population growth for the City of Stevens Point was 16.1 percent, compared to 14 percent for Portage County, 16.3 percent statewide, and 24.1 percent nationwide. But since 2010, the City's population is estimated to have decreased by 4.6 percent, compared to a 0.5 percent increase for Portage County, a 3.6 percent increase statewide, and a 7.7 percent increase nationwide.

The neighboring Village of Plover follows these trends, but at a much higher rate between 1990 and 2010 (48.3 percent) as well as between 2010 and 2023 (13.1 percent). The Village of Plover is less topographically constrained than the City of Stevens Point, but some of this growth is due to the existing population in neighboring towns being annexed to the Village over time. The Village of Park Ridge appears to have grown the fastest since 2010 (20 percent), but its small population could result in less accurate estimates and a more pronounced percentage change in population due to Census' margins of error.

The DOA estimates a higher City population of 26,619 in 2024, which is also slightly lower than the 2010 Census. But DOA's county estimate of 72,139 in 2024 is considerably higher than Census and ACS estimates, indicating that countywide growth could benefit the City. In general, more Americans are having fewer children, and fewer Americans are having children at all, leading to fewer births relative to deaths, a higher median age, smaller household sizes, and a slower overall population growth rate. But Stevens Point's relatively low cost of living, lack of natural disasters, and access to nature, healthcare, and education could reverse these trends as other areas of the Country continue to be more costly, congested, and hazard prone.

Table 1: Population

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2020	2023	1990-2010 % Change	1990-2010 Net Change	2010-2023 % Change	2010-2023 Net Change
C. Stevens Point	23,006	24,551	26,717	25,666	25,497	16.1%	3,711	-4.6%	-1,220
V. Park Ridge	546	499	491	530	589	-10.1%	-55	20.0%	98
V. Plover	8,176	10,647	12,123	13,519	13,713	48.3%	3,947	13.1%	1,590
V. Whiting	1,838	1,739	1,724	1,601	1,496	-6.2%	-114	-13.2%	-228
T. Carson	1,327	1,332	1,305	1,374	1,213	-1.7%	-22	-7.0%	-92
T. Hull	5,559	5,627	5,346	5,287	5,280	-3.8%	-213	-1.2%	-66
T. Linwood	1,035	1,129	1,121	1,070	1,188	8.3%	86	6.0%	67
T. Plover	2,223	2,194	1,701	1,565	1,479	-23.5%	-522	-13.1%	-222
T. Stockton	2,494	2,903	2,917	3,018	3,010	17.0%	423	3.2%	93
Portage Co.	61,405	67,182	70,019	70,377	70,375	14.0%	8,614	0.5%	356
Wisconsin	4,891,769	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	5,892,023	16.3%	795,217	3.6%	205,037
USA	248,709,873	281,421,906	308,745,538	331,449,281	332,387,540	24.1%	60,035,665	7.7%	23,642,002

Source: U.S. Census 1990-2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2023

Population Projections

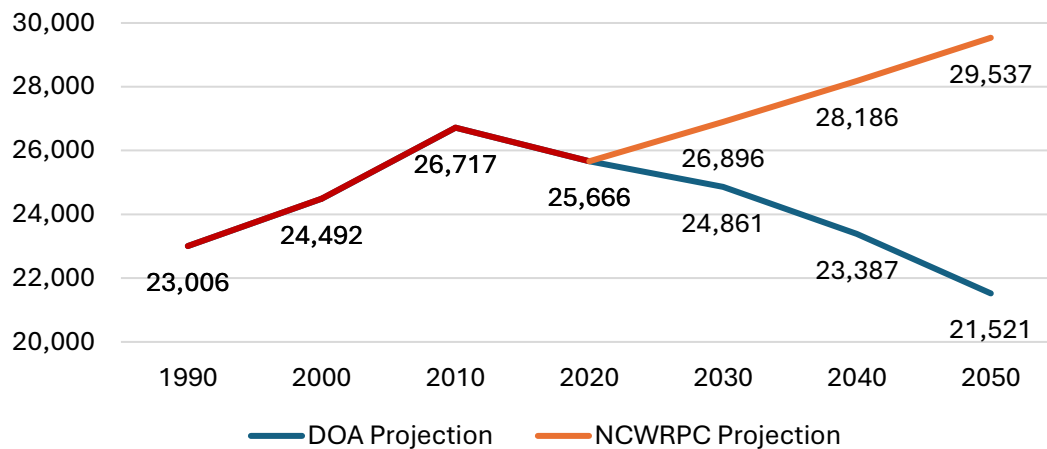
DOA projects population estimates for all counties and minor civil divisions. The most recent projections are based on the 2020 Census, and they are based on the existing population. According to DOA, they don't factor in a possible shift in inbound migration, for example, due to climate change or cost of living impacts that could drive the country's population to lower-risk, lower-cost areas like Wisconsin as those trends are much harder to predict. The City should focus on the next ten years' growth while monitoring future projections as they are updated every ten years. See Table 2.

Table 2: Official State of Wisconsin Population Projections

Minor Civil Division	2020 Census	2030 DOA	2040 DOA	2050 DOA	% Change 2020-2050	Net Change 2020-2050
C. Stevens Point	25,666	24,861	23,387	21,521	-16.1%	-4,145
V. Park Ridge	530	522	498	464	-12.5%	-66
V. Plover	13,519	14,259	14,425	14,136	4.6%	617
V. Whiting	1,601	1,418	1,218	1,022	-36.2%	-579
T. Carson	1,374	1,320	1,232	1,125	-18.1%	-249
T. Hull	5,287	4,837	4,303	3,749	-29.1%	-1,538
T. Linwood	1,070	1,008	923	828	-22.6%	-242
T. Plover	1,565	1,381	1,183	989	-36.8%	-576
T. Stockton	3,018	2,850	2,618	2,355	-22.0%	-663
Portage County	70,377	68,090	63,985	58,820	-16.4%	-11,557
Wisconsin	5,893,718	5,890,915	5,841,620	5,710,120	-3.1%	-183,598

Source: Wisconsin DOA 2024

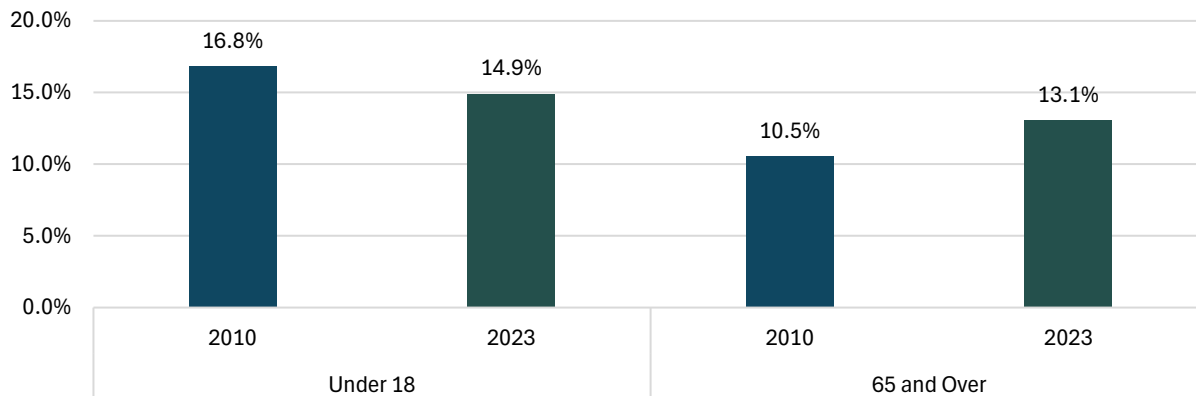
DOA projects that the City's population will decrease to 21,521 by 2050, for a decrease of 16.1 percent as shown in Figure 2. But given the recent uptick in countywide growth and relatively stable quality of life in Wisconsin, the decline may not become as pronounced, and it could even reverse itself. For example, it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain mortgages and insurance for homes in more hazard-prone areas of the country, and water resources are becoming scarce in other regions. This has led to more people showing interest in living in the great lakes states, where water is abundant and natural hazards aren't as severe. Therefore, Figure 2 includes a hypothetical projection based on the City's growth rate per decade between 2000 and 2020, which was 4.8 percent over 20 years. This provides a range of possibilities for future planning purposes.

Figure 2: Estimated Range of Possible Population Projections

Source: Wisconsin DOA 2024, NCWRPC 2025

Age Distribution

Age influences demand for various workforce, services, and institutional needs, especially for those aged 17 and younger and seniors 65 and older. These are often referred to as dependent populations and they have different needs: the younger group requires schools, and the older group is likely to be retired. The remainder of the population between the two age groups comprises most of the workforce, generating much of the tax base, jobs, and services needed to support these two groups. Figure 3 depicts the City's declining share of children and growing share of seniors.

Figure 3: Age Group Percent of Total City Population

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010 & 2023

Table 3 shows that a rising median age and growing senior population is not a concern specific to Stevens Point, as this trend is reflected throughout Portage County, Wisconsin and the nation. The City's large student population is reflected in a median age that is considerably lower by comparison. Future chapters discuss how to address challenges as school districts, hospitals, housing, businesses, and other institutions will be impacted in the coming decades. There is an opportunity to capitalize on Stevens Point's attributes to enable more children and workforce-aged adults to prosper and support a growing retired population.

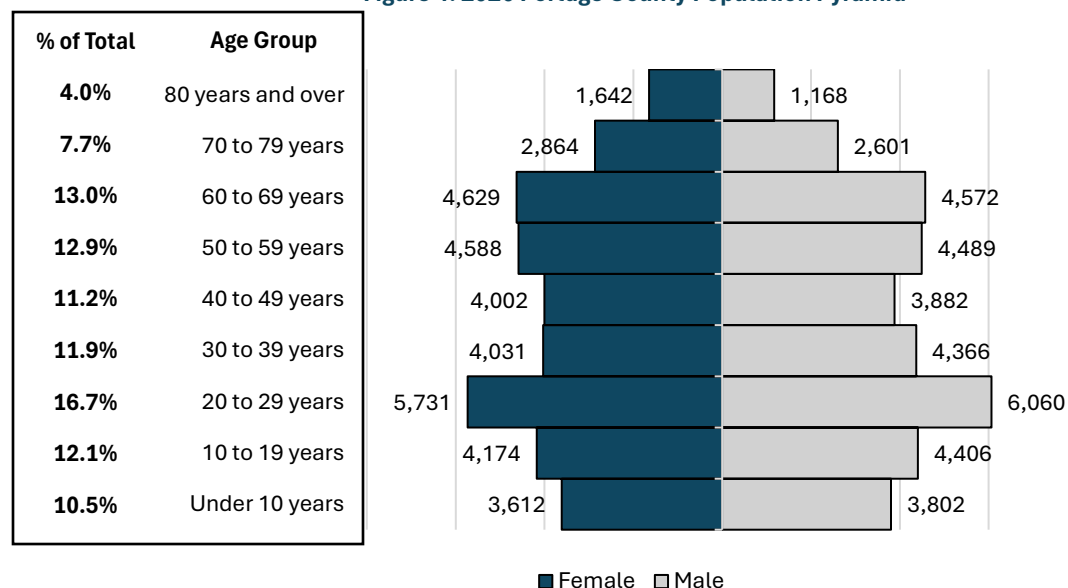
Table 3: Age Characteristics

Minor Civil Division	Population Under Age 18, 2010	Population Under Age 18, 2023	% Change 2010-2023	Population Age 65 and Over, 2010	Population Age 65 and Over, 2023	% Change 2010-2023	Median Age 2010	Median Age 2023
C. Stevens Point	4,493	3,795	-15.5%	2,818	3,329	18.1%	25.9	28.7
V. Park Ridge	118	143	21.2%	127	160	26.0%	44.4	45.8
V. Plover	2,857	3,259	14.1%	1,322	2,050	55.1%	36.0	36.4
V. Whiting	263	273	3.8%	513	449	-12.5%	52.2	45.2
Portage County	14,796	13,403	-9.4%	8,546	12,556	46.9%	35.6	38.1
Wisconsin	1,343,593	1,244,078	-7.4%	754,868	1,133,395	50.1%	38.1	40.5
United States	74,033,117	73,645,238	-0.5%	38,749,413	55,970,047	44.4%	36.9	38.7

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010 & 2023

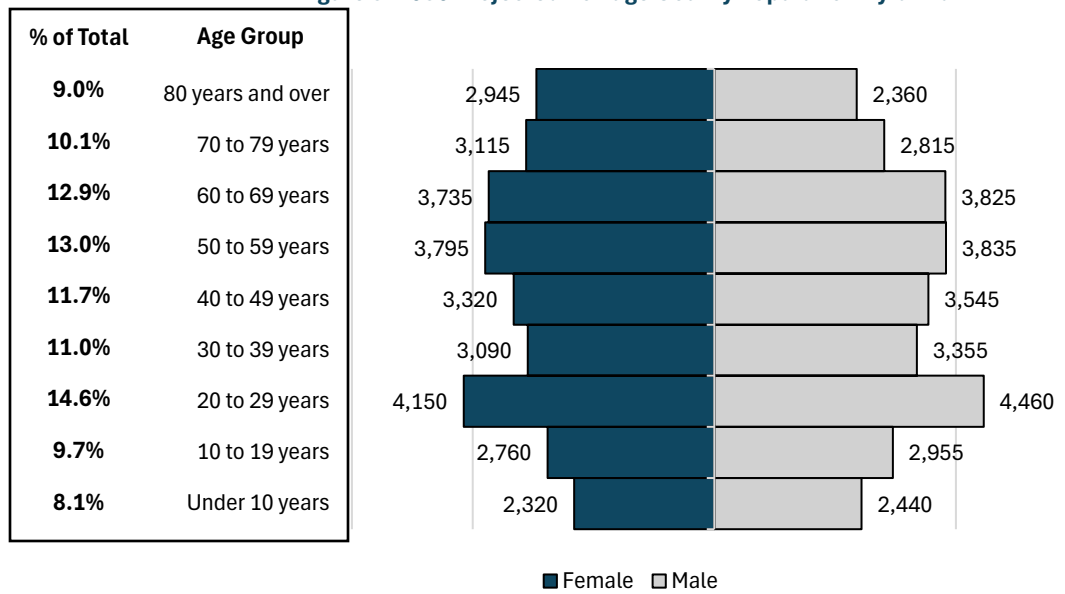
Figures 4 and 5 depict the number of residents by age and gender in Portage County counted in 2020 and projected for 2050. They are called population pyramids because they typically have a wide base and a narrow top. In recent decades, they resemble pillars instead due to the large baby boomer population aging and living longer, and this is even more noticeable in the 2050 projection as Millennials, who are currently members of the largest generation, will be between ages 54 and 69. The 20-to-29-year-old category is pronounced in both Figures due to the student population, and it currently is the largest age group. But the age groups 50 to 59 and 60 to 69 are the next two largest groups in 2020, resulting in an ongoing wave of workforce retirements. Future chapters in this Plan address the implications that these changing demographics will have on housing, public services, the workforce, the economy, and more.

Figure 4: 2020 Portage County Population Pyramid



Source: U.S. Census 2020

Figure 5: 2050 Projected Portage County Population Pyramid



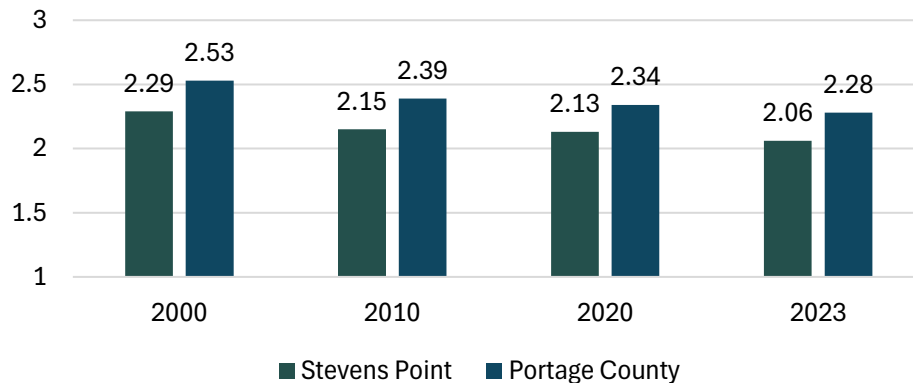
Source: Wisconsin DOA 2024

Fertility rates also explain why there are fewer children compared to the overall population. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Country's fertility rate was 3.7 births per woman in 1957. In 2014, it was 1.93 which is below the 2.1 replacement rate that maintains a population. An emerging national trend is that the most populous counties in America have the fastest decreasing share of children aged 5 and under, and Stevens Point's family-oriented setting can be promoted to attract more children and young families moving from these areas.

Households

Households are groups of people living together, whereas housing units mentioned later reflect the number of residential units they can live in. Despite a lack of population growth, Table 4 and Figure 6 depict continued household growth in the City because household sizes are getting smaller. The average household size decreased by 0.23 in the City and 0.25 countywide between 2000 and 2023. Although the City's household growth between 2010 and 2023 was slower than countywide, statewide, and national trends, it still fuels demand for housing even if the overall population isn't growing.

Figure 6: Average Household Size



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2000, 2010, 2020, & 2023

Table 4: Total Households

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2023	1990-2010 % Change	1990-2010 Net Change	2010-2023 % Change	2010-2023 Net Change
C. Stevens Point	9,305	10,598	10,771	11,063	28.5%	2,353	4.4%	465
V. Park Ridge	211	217	235	249	1.4%	3	14.7%	32
V. Plover	3,985	4,948	5,717	5,555	73.2%	2,091	12.3%	607
V. Whiting	690	750	720	633	17.7%	113	-15.6%	-117
T. Carson	475	514	542	531	16.6%	73	3.3%	17
T. Hull	1,988	2,069	2,141	2,189	11.8%	218	5.8%	120
T. Linwood	388	430	453	517	25.7%	88	20.2%	87
T. Plover	861	639	597	654	-13.4%	-99	2.3%	15
T. Stockton	984	1,087	1,182	1,208	34.7%	280	11.1%	121
Portage Co.	25,040	27,814	29,138	29,636	30.5%	6,508	6.6%	1,822
Wisconsin	2,086,304	2,279,768	2,428,361	2,446,028	25.1%	457,650	7.3%	166,260
USA	105,539,122	116,716,292	126,817,580	127,482,865	26.9%	24,768,882	9.2%	10,766,573

Source: U.S. Census 1990-2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2023

Education

Table 5 indicates that educational attainment rates are strong in Stevens Point for both high school and college graduates as they are higher than county, state, and national trends. The percentage of residents over 25 with a high school diploma increased in all municipalities, the County, the state, and the nation between 2000 and 2023. The City of Stevens Point (95.9 percent), Portage County (94.8 percent) and its municipalities generally have higher rates of high school graduates than statewide figures (93.7 percent), and the State of Wisconsin has higher rates than national figures (89.4 percent). Portage County (33.7 percent) and the State of Wisconsin (33.8 percent) have similar rates of those with a bachelor's degree or higher, which is only slightly under the national rate (35 percent). The City of Stevens Point (39.4 percent), Village of Park Ridge (60.9 percent), and Village of Plover (40.3 percent) have higher rates of those with a bachelor's degree or higher than County, state, and national rates, with all other municipalities listed below having a lower share of college graduates than County, state, and national rates.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, urban areas often have higher rates of educational attainment due to higher wages and amenities that attract workers. Although Stevens Point isn't typically considered to be a large City, it is a cultural and economic hub for the surrounding area, which could partially explain these trends. Additionally, being home to MSTC and UWSP means there are many academic jobs that require higher levels of educational attainment. It is much less common for individuals born before WWII to have completed high school or college education, so this helps explain the increase in educational attainment over time as this older age group decreases in size. In general, high school, technical college, and college completion ensures a varied and skilled workforce for the City, and the City has a well-known legacy of supporting these educational institutions.

Table 5: Educational Attainment

Minor Civil Division	% Completed High School			% with Bachelor's Degree or Higher			% Change (High School)	% Change (Bachelor's)
	2000	2010	2023	2000	2010	2023		
C. Stevens Point	85.1%	92.6%	95.9%	26.1%	33.2%	39.4%	10.8%	13.3%
V. Park Ridge	93.6%	96.5%	98.6%	52.9%	46.8%	60.9%	5.0%	8.0%
V. Plover	91.5%	91.5%	92.6%	30.6%	31.6%	40.3%	1.1%	9.7%
V. Whiting	84.0%	85.7%	95.9%	22.8%	20.9%	32.2%	11.9%	9.4%
T. Carson	80.9%	84.0%	96.4%	13.8%	21.0%	22.6%	15.5%	8.8%
T. Hull	90.4%	91.6%	97.7%	31.1%	34.3%	30.7%	7.3%	-0.4%
T. Linwood	88.5%	90.7%	94.7%	19.6%	16.0%	25.2%	6.2%	5.6%
T. Plover	85.5%	88.1%	95.5%	22.4%	17.1%	28.7%	10.0%	6.3%
T. Stockton	88.3%	89.4%	93.2%	16.0%	18.6%	27.4%	4.9%	11.4%
Portage County	86.5%	90.4%	94.8%	23.4%	27.1%	33.7%	8.3%	10.3%
Wisconsin	85.1%	90.4%	93.7%	23.4%	27.1%	33.8%	8.6%	10.4%
United States	80.4%	85.0%	89.4%	24.4%	27.9%	35.0%	9.0%	10.6%

Source: U.S. Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010 & 2023

Employment

There are two ways to measure employment: the number of City residents who are employed, and the number of jobs located within the City's limits. Table 6 lists the number of citizens of a given geography that are employed, rather than where the job is located. For all municipalities listed, the City of Stevens Point saw the largest percent increase (20.5 percent) and net change (2,576) in residents with a job between 2000 and 2023, followed by the Village of Plover (10.7 percent, 654 net change). By comparison, the County's employment grew by 5.7 percent, the state's employment grew by 10.4 percent, and the nation's employment grew by 15.1 percent. All other municipalities listed saw a decrease in employment during the same time. However, some of them have a higher number of employed residents in 2023 compared to 2010, which is likely due to the recovery that followed the Great Recession of the 2000s. In general, an aging population will result in fewer employees filling jobs and a need to attract workers to the area. Although the impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the workforce are unknown at this time, it is an emerging trend that the City should continue to monitor.

In contrast to viewing workers by where they live in Table 6, Lightcast (formerly EMSI) is a private company that specializes in workforce analytics. While data is only available by ZIP code rather than by municipality, data from 2023 shows that there were 23,917 jobs located in ZIP codes 54481, 54482, and 54492 compared to 37,644 jobs in Portage County. This means that over 63 percent of the County's jobs are in Stevens Point ZIP codes, despite City residents only comprising 40 percent of the County's workforce. This is supported by the commuter flow analysis in Chapter 5 that shows double the number of inbound commuters compared to outbound commuters. This indicates that Stevens Point is the employment hub of the County, though income being earned there isn't necessarily being spent there due to the number of commuters. Adding housing in the City may reduce commute times, provide more lifestyle options, and keep more of the wages earned in the City within the local economic ecosystem. See Chapter 6: Economic Development for more Lightcast-based data analysis.

Table 6: Total Residents who are Employed

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2023	2000-2023 % Change	2000-2023 Net Change	2010-2023 % Change	2010-2023 Net Change
C. Stevens Point	12,547	13,795	14,557	15,123	20.5%	2,576	9.6%	1,328
V. Park Ridge	260	207	254	252	-3.1%	-8	21.7%	45
V. Plover	6,094	6,447	6,616	6,748	10.7%	654	4.7%	301
V. Whiting	864	696	650	670	-22.5%	-194	-3.7%	-26
T. Carson	752	600	724	682	-9.3%	-70	13.7%	82
T. Hull	2,977	2,534	3,036	2,671	-10.3%	-306	5.4%	137
T. Linwood	649	748	617	544	-16.2%	-105	-27.3%	-204
T. Plover	1,182	1,020	798	696	-41.1%	-486	-31.8%	-324
T. Stockton	1,669	1,674	1,623	1,652	-1.0%	-17	-1.3%	-22
Portage County	35,677	36,395	37,703	37,693	5.7%	2,016	3.6%	1,298
Wisconsin	2,734,925	2,869,310	2,983,277	3,018,918	10.4%	283,993	5.2%	149,608
United States	138,820,935	141,833,331	155,888,980	159,808,535	15.1%	20,987,600	12.7%	17,975,204

Source: U.S. Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2020, & 2023

Income

Income is a local indicator of prosperity, and it is typically measured in two ways: median household income and per capita income. Household income indicates the purchasing power of a typical family or household unit, while per capita income measures purchasing power per person. Like employment, there are two ways to measure income geographically: incomes for Stevens Point residents regardless of where they work, or incomes being earned in Stevens Point, regardless of where workers live.

Tables 7 and 8 summarize that, in general, per capita income has risen faster than median household income, which is partially due to smaller household sizes. Of the municipalities listed below, Stevens Point residents had the smallest net median household income increase between 2000 and 2023 and the lowest overall income in 2023. This could be due to its position as an older, more urban community, as surrounding municipalities with newer, more expensive housing tend to attract higher income households. Stevens Point's urban fabric also results in a greater variety of housing unit styles, so those with limited incomes or disabilities may find more housing options within the City's limits than in neighboring communities without necessarily needing to own a car. Finally, a large student population means many do not work full time while in school, or are at the beginning of their careers, resulting in lower wages and a need to support cost-effective lifestyles and housing options as college enrollments are projected to remain stable through **YEAR**. Per capita incomes for City residents are also lower than all other municipalities listed, and they were considerably lower than county, state, and national incomes.

Table 7: Median Household Income

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2023	2000-2023 % Change	2000-2023 Net Change	2010-2023 % Change	2010-2023 Net Change
C. Stevens Point	\$33,178	\$40,115	\$46,663	\$56,218	69.4%	\$23,040	40.1%	\$16,103
V. Park Ridge	\$57,031	\$62,708	\$73,611	\$82,083	43.9%	\$25,052	30.9%	\$19,375
V. Plover	\$51,238	\$59,714	\$63,988	\$83,139	62.3%	\$31,901	39.2%	\$23,425
V. Whiting	\$42,381	\$43,239	\$58,304	\$72,257	70.5%	\$29,876	67.1%	\$29,018
T. Carson	\$51,583	\$60,260	\$87,721	\$96,875	87.8%	\$45,292	60.8%	\$36,615
T. Hull	\$53,915	\$64,621	\$86,357	\$101,306	87.9%	\$47,391	56.8%	\$36,685
T. Linwood	\$55,972	\$65,333	\$77,772	\$79,531	42.1%	\$23,559	21.7%	\$14,198
T. Plover	\$49,313	\$75,000	\$75,150	\$81,009	64.3%	\$31,696	8.0%	\$6,009
T. Stockton	\$50,957	\$63,646	\$72,381	\$82,279	61.5%	\$31,322	29.3%	\$18,633
Portage County	\$43,487	\$51,456	\$60,316	\$73,284	68.5%	\$29,797	42.4%	\$21,828
Wisconsin	\$43,791	\$51,598	\$63,293	\$75,670	72.8%	\$31,879	46.7%	\$24,072
United States	\$41,994	\$51,914	\$64,994	\$78,538	87.0%	\$36,544	51.3%	\$26,624

Source: U.S. Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2020, & 2023

Table 8: Per Capita Income

Minor Civil Division	2000	2010	2020	2023	2000-2023 % Change	2000-2023 Net Change	2010-2023 % Change	2010-2023 Net Change
C. Stevens Point	\$17,510	\$21,653	\$26,127	\$32,670	86.6%	\$15,160	50.9%	\$11,017
V. Park Ridge	\$28,074	\$30,807	\$32,854	\$43,717	55.7%	\$15,643	41.9%	\$12,910
V. Plover	\$23,085	\$27,672	\$33,929	\$40,730	76.4%	\$17,645	47.2%	\$13,058
V. Whiting	\$19,492	\$24,681	\$30,616	\$44,458	128.1%	\$24,966	80.1%	\$19,777
T. Carson	\$21,576	\$33,500	\$39,023	\$52,342	142.6%	\$30,766	56.2%	\$18,842
T. Hull	\$22,433	\$30,718	\$47,480	\$52,397	133.6%	\$29,964	70.6%	\$21,679
T. Linwood	\$21,073	\$24,482	\$37,762	\$44,090	109.2%	\$23,017	80.1%	\$19,608
T. Plover	\$21,186	\$26,977	\$34,078	\$45,985	117.1%	\$24,799	70.5%	\$19,008
T. Stockton	\$19,886	\$26,497	\$32,522	\$38,118	91.7%	\$18,232	43.9%	\$11,621
Portage County	\$19,854	\$24,873	\$32,268	\$39,476	98.8%	\$19,622	58.7%	\$14,603
Wisconsin	\$21,271	\$26,624	\$34,450	\$42,019	97.5%	\$20,748	57.8%	\$15,395
United States	\$21,587	\$27,334	\$35,384	\$43,289	100.5%	\$21,702	58.4%	\$15,955

Source: U.S. Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2020, & 2023

The percentage increase in the City's median household income between 2000 and 2023 was higher than many surrounding communities, which could be due to its younger population, increase in job opportunities, and lower share of retirees compared to neighboring communities. But since incomes increased countywide, it does not mean that the City's incomes have fully caught up with those of other nearby Portage County communities. Median household and per capita incomes across Portage County were slightly behind statewide and national incomes, but the cost of living is also 0.4 percent lower than the national average according to Lightcast, indicating that wages go farther in Central Wisconsin than in many other locations in the USA. This could increase the appeal of living in the area as the cost of living continues to rise nationwide and supports the need for the City to continue maintaining and growing a variety of job opportunities.

In addition to the Census data above, Lightcast provides additional income insight. Average earnings were \$70,373 in 2023 per job located in Stevens Point ZIP codes 54481, 54482, and 54492, compared to \$67,234 for all jobs in Portage

County. This information further supports the City's role as the county's economic engine, as incomes earned within the City limits are higher than countywide incomes. When combining commuter, employment, and income data, it appears that higher incomes are being earned in the City by residents who often commute from outside the City, while City residents earn lower incomes, which is skewed by the presence of college students and recent graduates. This reflects an opportunity to add high quality, owner-occupied housing in the City to reduce commute times and strengthen the tax base. It also indicates a need to support jobs that pay a living wage and provide strong wage growth over time to strengthen the City's tax base and provide more opportunities for City residents.

The rise of educational attainment also indicates that City residents may be capable of obtaining jobs with higher wages, and the popularity of remote work influences where these workers will choose to live. Implications of these trends are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: Housing and Chapter 6: Economic Development. In general, increasing housing supply and choices allows more workers of various skills and income levels to live in the City, which prevents blight and generates more tax revenue to sustain and improve the City's services and high quality of life.

Summary

A two-page infographic is provided at the end of each chapter to summarize its contents in an easy-to-understand format. Despite a lack of population growth since 2010, the City's households, jobs, incomes, and educational attainment have increased in recent years. While the City has a relatively young population, an increasing retired population and decreasing child population follow local, state, and national trends. These trends indicate that the City is both positioned for future growth and prosperity but is also prone to challenges that can result from a lack of planning. Changing conditions will impact jobs, housing, healthcare, education, and more, which are addressed in detail in this plan's chapters. In summary, the City must work to attract people from elsewhere in order maintain economic growth, and the community's quality of life, affordability, and economy places it in an ideal position to attract future growth.

Issues

A variety of issues were identified throughout the planning process during planning meetings, and others were taken from existing documents. The following chapters of this plan will list the issues that relate to each chapter's topic. Responses from recent County and City public surveys were also used to confirm existing knowledge about concerns regarding land use, environmental protection, quality of life, and other issues that are discussed throughout this plan.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Each of the following Comprehensive Plan chapters will conclude with a set of goals, objectives, and policies, which will be used to guide the future development of the county. For purposes of this planning process, goals, objectives, and policies are defined as follows:

Goals

Broad statements that express general priorities about how the community should approach development issues during the next 20 years. These goals are based on key issues, opportunities and problems that affect the community. The City listed the following 10 overall goals in its Issues & Opportunities Chapter of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan:

- Managed Growth
- Quality of Life
- Good Living Environments
- Good Land Use Planning
- Annual Planning and Development Strategy
- Good Development Ordinances
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Tax Base Growth
- Cost-Effective Public Services
- Local Control
- Citizen Input
- Interrelated Goals and Plans

Objectives

More specific than goals and are usually attainable through planning and implementation activities. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.

Policies

Rules or courses of action that are used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. Policies are intended to be used by decision-makers on a regular basis.

The former plan's extensive number of goals, objectives, and policies have been condensed into fewer and more concise ones that serve the same purpose as the original 2005 Plan while being easier to navigate. These updates provide solutions to the latest issues facing the City of Stevens Point and they are found at the end of each chapter. In summary, changing demographics, especially regarding household size and age characteristics, have implications on how neighborhoods, housing, public spaces, parks, jobs, and public services are structured. This plan's goals, objectives, and policies allow for compact development, enable a variety of housing unit configurations, support a robust economy, utilize efficient planning of public services and infrastructure, and encourage proximity of housing to retail, employment, healthcare, and other destinations to accommodate these population trends.

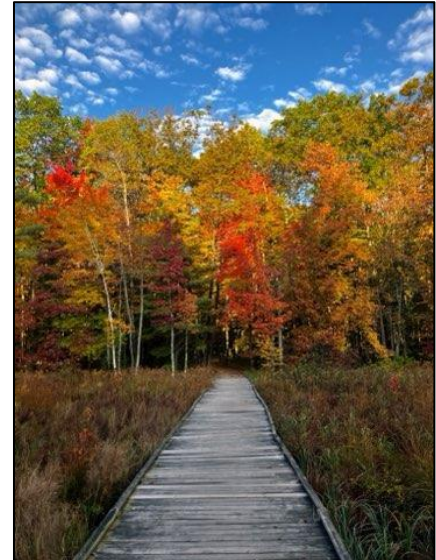
Chapter 2: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources DRAFT 1 8/7/2025

Introduction

Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources provide a variety of public health, tourism, quality-of-life, and economic benefits in Stevens Point. Analyzing the City's natural resources identifies areas suitable for development while protecting sensitive landscapes that enhance aesthetics, wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, and outdoor recreation opportunities. Agricultural resources support a thriving food production and distribution network, and cultural resources capture the City's history and settlement patterns that contribute to the City's identity. The chapter is comprised of several sections including background on each topic (previous plans and studies), inventory and trends, issues, and goals, objectives, and policies.

Natural Resources

The City of Stevens Point is 18.43 square miles of land straddling the Wisconsin and Plover Rivers, surrounded by neighboring developed villages and rural towns with woodlands and agricultural lands. Much of the area's landscape was formed during the latest ice age 12,000 years ago. Highlands to the north diverted continental glaciers around much of Portage County and most of southwestern Wisconsin. The ice mass only covered the hilly eastern portion of Portage County, whereas the flat, sandy plains around Stevens Point result from the former lakebed of Glacial Lake Wisconsin. The City's water resources drain entirely to the Mississippi River. Sandy soils and a high water table provide the City with abundant groundwater resources and flood resilience. These soils are prone to contamination and vary in suitability for development. Below is a list of natural resource-related studies that are relevant to the City and its immediate surroundings.



Previous Natural Resources Planning Efforts

A Path to a Sustainable Stevens Point 2008. This report was created by the Stevens Point Eco-Municipality Task Force to provide a sustainable framework addressing eight topics: Civic Involvement and Education, Development and Land Use, Food, Green Building and Energy, Parks and Tourism, Transportation, Waste and Recycling, and Water and Wastewater. The Task Force's role at that time was to develop an eco-municipality resolution for the City, create policy recommendations for municipal government, and identify community projects and education programs. A 2017 update to this plan found on the City's website lists the Task Force's accomplishments since its inception.

Land Legacy Report 2006. This report was prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to delineate lands that have significant value to the public. It recommends that these lands should be protected using the State's Stewardship Fund or other means. The report does not specify how these lands should be acquired or managed. Nearby Land Legacy sites are the Central Wisconsin Grasslands, Dewey Marsh and Woods, Hartman and Emmons Creeks, Little Plover River, Middle Wisconsin River, Plover River, Sand Country Trout Streams.

McDill Pond Management Plan 2023. The McDill Inland Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District (MILPRD) the City adopted this plan which has goals to restore fish populations, prevent invasive species, meet water quality standards, protect shoreland areas, enhance recreation, and communicate management practices to the public.

NCWRPC Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025. This regional plan for the 10-county North Central Wisconsin region identifies natural resources as both enhancing the local quality of life but also as an economic development tool as outdoor recreation attracts workers to the region. (plan currently under review)

Portage County Comprehensive Plans 2006 and 2024. The 2006 Portage County Comprehensive Plan focused heavily on agriculture. The 2024 plan provides updated data and identified fragmented land, climate change, changing agricultural economic conditions, and groundwater and surface quality and quantity as issues, along with new opportunities for agritourism and renewable energy. The goals, objectives, and policies reflect a desire to use natural, agricultural, and cultural resources for economic development while minimizing impacts on these resources.

Portage County Farmland Preservation Plan 2016. Goals of this plan include preserving agriculture throughout the county, maintaining the agricultural economy, improving relationships between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses, encouraging compact and sustainable urban growth, and maintaining surface and groundwater supplies.

Portage County Groundwater Management Plan 2017. This plan assesses groundwater quality and quantity, identifies the uses and users that depend on groundwater, discusses vulnerabilities to contamination and depletion, categorizes the impacts and conflicts related to these uses, considers potential impacts of changes in uses, and provides options and recommendations for mediating conflicts based on groundwater sustainability.

Portage County Lake Study and Lake Management Plans 2005. Between 2003 and 2005, 32 lakes were studied for water quality, fish, aquatic organisms, wildlife, and land use. Using information from the three-year lake study project and information collected from surveys of watershed citizens, management plans were developed for all the lakes.

Portage County Land & Water Resource Management Plan 2019. The plan inventories the County's natural resources, with goals and objectives to improve and protect these resources. This plan identifies issues regarding water quality concerns from urban and rural uses, impacts of unplanned development, erosion and pollution concerns, and addressing impaired waters.

Portage County Soil Survey. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency that produces the County's Soil Survey. The survey contains predictions of soil characteristics for selected land uses and highlights the limitations and hazards inherent in the County's soils. Included are maps identifying the location of soil types.

State of the Central Wisconsin River Basin 2002. This DNR-led plan studies geology, demographics, and land use patterns and provides an assessment of the Wisconsin River's water quality. This effort provided 1) an assessment of existing conditions, 2) identification of major issues, priorities, and objectives, and 3) recommendations for action. The plan includes management priorities and recommendations regarding fish, wildlife, and watersheds within the basin.

Stevens Point Urban Area Sewer Service Area Plan Update 2023. The purpose of this water quality management plan is to maintain a twenty-year sanitary sewer service boundary for the Stevens Point Urban Area and managing the extension of sanitary sewage services within this urban area in a cost effective, environmentally acceptable manner.

Stevens Point Public Tree Inventory Report and Management Plan 2024. This plan highlights the City's efforts to increase boulevard tree planting, broaden the diversity of tree species, expand training and pruning efforts, assess and remove hazardous trees, and support the City's full time forestry staff.

Water Quality Assessment of the Plover River Watershed 2001. The UWSP Environmental Task Force Program created this report to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). Water samples in this report showed that the Plover River has good water quality, but bacteria, nitrates, triazine, and pesticides were listed as concerns.

The City, County, and State all have **Outdoor Recreation Plans** that guide the development of parks and open space in Stevens Point. These are discussed in Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities.

Natural Resources Inventory and Trends

Geography

Stevens Point is the County Seat of Portage County in Central Wisconsin, which is bordered by Marathon County to the north, Waupaca County to the east, Waushara and Adams Counties to the south, and Wood County to the west. The Wisconsin River runs through the heart of the County and City, influencing the City's historic development along the waterfront. The Villages of Plover and Whiting border the City to the south, and the Village of Park Ridge is entirely surrounded by the City. The Towns of Hull, Plover, and Stockton border the City on the east side of the Wisconsin River, and the Towns of Carson and Linwood border the City west of the river.

The City's historic downtown, surrounding neighborhoods, and UWSP are centrally located in the City and based on a traditional street grid network. Post World War II development extends away from this area in a more suburban development pattern, especially towards Interstate 39. The Plover River, a Wisconsin River Tributary, flows through the eastern portion of the City, where the Westfahl Dam forms the McDill Pond near the Village of Whiting. The Jordan Dam and Jordan Pond are another impoundment on this river just upstream of the City's limits. Interstate Highway 39, U.S. Highways 51 and 10, and several state highways intersect in or near the City, linking it to other areas in the state.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Portage County is divided into three ecological landscapes: the Central Sand Plains cover much of the western half of the county, the Central Sand Hills cover most of the eastern half of the county, and the Forest Transition covers the northeast and northwest corners of the county. The Central Sand Plains are a remnant of the extinct Glacial Lake Wisconsin, which left behind sandy outwash. The Central Sand Hills and Forest Transition feature glacial features like moraines and till plains.

Regarding its vegetation, Portage County is in the Tension Zone where tallgrass prairies and oak savanna to the south meet forests to the north, so there are a variety of plant species both from northern and southern Wisconsin. This is a result of a cooler climate to the north transitioning to a warmer climate to the south. According to the University of Wisconsin – Madison, the Tension Zone is expected to keep moving north because of climate change, and the impacts are currently being studied. See Map 2: Natural Resources for an overview of the County's natural features.

Geology and Topology

The area around Stevens Point is underlain by crystalline rocks of the Precambrian age and sandstone of the Cambrian age. The crystalline rock is exposed and weathered in the northwest part of the City in the area between Business Highway 51 and the Wisconsin River. Development is limited here because of shallow bedrock, poor drainage, and expansive clay soils that affect building foundations. However, in the remainder of the City, sand and sandstone overlies this crystalline rock, where soils are sandy, well-drained, and flat. The City's elevation is 1,089 feet above sea level.

Soil

Soils in Stevens Point vary from loamy and silty material west of the Wisconsin River, to sand and gravel east of the River. Alluvial and organic soils are also found throughout the City. There are 27 identified soil series in Portage County grouped into 13 soil associations, which are described and mapped in the County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan. The most prevalent soil type in the City is Plainfield loamy sand that occurs throughout that part of the City generally south of the State Highway 66 corridor. Soils in other areas of the City are denser soils over shallow bedrock that are subject to heaving and swelling due to frost action, presenting potential problems for development. See the Soil Survey of Portage County, Wisconsin (1978, U.S. Department of Agriculture) for a complete description of these soil associations.

Mineral Resources

Nonmetallic mines have a presence throughout Portage County, but there are no known active mines within the City's limits. There are no known local metallic mineral deposits.

Climate

Stevens Point has a warm-summer humid continental climate (Dfb) according to the Köppen climate classification system. The annual average temperature ranges from 44 to 45.5 degrees Fahrenheit. The warmest month is July, with an average high temperature of 80°F; the coldest is January with an average high of 22.7°F. The average annual precipitation is 32 inches, of which six inches (rainfall equivalent) is from snowmelt. The average annual snowfall is about 44.5 inches. The average dates for the first and last frost are May 11th to October 1st, respectively, with an average growing season of 142 days. The growing season tends to be slightly longer east of the Wisconsin River than it is west of the river, and summer frost is not uncommon. While this limits agricultural opportunities, cranberries thrive west of the City, while sandy soils east of the City are irrigated by center pivot systems to produce cool season crops like potatoes, vegetables, and corn.

Surface Water

Surface water covers 958 acres, or 8.1 percent of the City. The Wisconsin and Plover Rivers comprise most of the City's surface water features, along with the McDill Pond, which is a reservoir on the Plover River. Stevens Point Dam, located on the Wisconsin River just south of Clark Street Bridge, is the only Wisconsin River Dam within the City's limits. Together with other dams downstream, these structures submerge the natural rapids that existed prior to European settlement. Though much smaller than the Wisconsin and Plover Rivers, Moses Creek travels through the northern portion of the City before entering a culvert at the UWSP Intermural Fields, which empties into the Wisconsin River south of downtown. This underground connection has the potential to be daylighted in the future. Scattered lakes and ponds are also present, for example, in the Schmeckle Reserve, with Lake Joanis being the most well-known. These lakes have emergency connections to Moses Creek to prevent flooding.

These water features are popular for fishing, paddling, wildlife viewing, and other recreational uses, and some dams along them produce hydroelectric power (see Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities for more information). The waterways are generally not used for transportation or freight purposes. According to the DNR, there are 5 surface water withdrawal locations in the City along the Wisconsin River.

WDNR ranks the state's lakes and streams that meet the highest water quality standards as either Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs) or Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs). There are currently no ORWs or ERWs in the City, but there are several in Portage County. The Wisconsin and Plover Rivers experience some contamination from both urban and rural runoff, but water quality has improved considerably since the 1970s. Bacteria is still a concern in the Plover River and McDill Pond.



Watersheds

The City lies within the following watersheds: Mill Creek, Little Eau Claire River, and Plover/Little Plover Rivers, all of which drain to the Wisconsin River, which drains to the Mississippi River. The Johnstown Terminal Moraine, which consists of

hilly terrain roughly parallel to County Highway J east of the City, forms a divide between water draining towards the Wisconsin River and water draining to the Fox River and eventually the Great Lakes.

Groundwater Resources

Groundwater is water that occupies void spaces between soil particles or cracks in the rock below the land surface. It originates as precipitation that infiltrates the ground. The type of soil and bedrock that a well is drilled into often determines the pH, saturation index, and the amount of hardness or alkalinity in water. The City uses groundwater for its drinking water supply, and it supplies agricultural and industrial processes in the area as well.

Groundwater is a limited resource, and both its quality and quantity are important factors. These factors are influenced by local geology and local land use. Portage County's groundwater originates in two aquifers: the sand and gravel aquifer, and the crystalline bedrock aquifer. The sand and gravel aquifer results from glacial drift, and it is the closest to the surface. Most wells use this aquifer as it is easier to drill into and produces faster flow rates compared to the crystalline bedrock aquifer, which is deeper. Because the gravel-sand aquifer is closer to the surface, and local soils are sandy, it is vulnerable to contamination.

Groundwater quality can be impaired by a variety of pollutants including leaking underground storage tanks (LUSTs), landfills, septic tanks, over-application of pesticides and fertilizers, and spills of hazardous chemicals. The most common contaminants found in Wisconsin's groundwater are pesticides, nitrates, nitrogen, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). These contaminants come from a multitude of sources including nitrogen-based fertilizers, septic systems, animal waste storage, feedlots, municipal and industrial wastewater discharges, and sludge disposal.

Groundwater contaminants can affect the health of humans, livestock, and wildlife. Because groundwater seeps more slowly than surface runoff, pollution that occurs today may not become evident for several years. Once polluted, the groundwater is very difficult to purify and may take many years to clean itself by the dilution process. The DNR has developed a groundwater contamination susceptibility model. This model identifies groundwater contamination susceptibility by measuring the ease with which water (and any contaminant carried in the water) travels from the land surface to the top of the groundwater layer. Five characteristics are used to obtain the composite measurement: bedrock depth, bedrock type, soil characteristics, surficial deposits, water table depth, and contaminated source waters.

The Portage County Groundwater Citizens Advisory Committee is responsible for implementing Portage County's 2017 Groundwater Management Plan. According to the 2017 Countywide Water Quality Report, groundwater generally has a slightly basic level of acidity and is moderate to hard with moderate alkalinity. The eastern portion of the county tends to have harder water with higher acidity and alkalinity, and the western portion of the County, where the City is located, tends to be less hard, less acidic, and less alkaline. Nitrate and chloride in groundwater are a concern, and they are a result of agriculture, septic systems, road salt, and soil drainage properties. Historically, an agricultural herbicide called atrazine was widely used but has been banned since 2006 due to contamination. Finally, development north and east of the City limits presented concerns of groundwater quality in the City's previous Comprehensive Plan. In the 2006 plan, septic systems and lawn chemicals impacted groundwater quality in locations where groundwater flows towards the City, particularly for those utilizing well water. Future development is recommended to be connected to public water and sewer utilities, with other strategies used to mitigate contamination from surface inputs.

Numerous high-capacity wells are located throughout the City. According to the DNR there are 1,132 active high-capacity wells located in the County, with nearly 50 located in the City. A high capacity well is a well that has the capacity to withdraw more than 100,000 gallons per day, or a well that, together with all other wells on the same property, has a capacity of more than 100,000 gallons per day. Residential wells and fire protection wells are excluded from the definition of a high capacity well, and their pumping capacities are not included in the calculation of a property's well capacity. These wells extract water from considerable depths and may impact water quantity in aquifers.

Shorelands

Shorelands, as defined in Wisconsin Administrative Rule Chapter NR 115, are “lands within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high watermark of a lake (including ponds and flowages) or 300 feet of a navigable stream or river or to the landward extent of the floodplain (whichever distance is greater)”. Many homeowners and visitors seek out lakes and rivers as places to enjoy natural beauty in a quiet setting, yet the number of users and riparian landowners can create user conflicts due to demand for limited resources. Furthermore, due to the way it can alter the natural landscape, shoreland development changes the aesthetic and recreational value of lakes, rivers, and streams.

Shoreline development is an important consideration in lake development, particularly if the lake has a high degree of irregularity in its shoreline. More irregularity means more land area with access to the lake and therefore greater development pressure on the lakefront itself. Reservoirs and other impoundments tend to have more irregular shorelines since they reflect the flooding of existing landforms. Development impacts on these lakes are generally more severe than on natural lakes. The City has shoreland zoning provisions in its General Zoning Standards that require a 30-foot setback from surface water along with vegetation regulations for structures within shoreland areas.

Floodplains

Floodplains are a natural flood control system that provides an area where excess water can be accommodated. The extent to which a floodplain may become inundated depends upon the amount of water, the speed and distance that the water travels, and the topography of the area. The City has approximately 2,265 acres of floodplain, or about 19.2 percent of the total land area. Given that these areas are prone to flooding, development in floodplains is usually discouraged. Even so, development may exist in these areas which affects the ability of floodplains to function properly. The encroachment of development on the floodplain system is often mitigated by the construction of dikes, levies, or other man-made flood control devices. Unfortunately, these mitigation measures are expensive and not always adequate to control a flood or may cause other areas to flood even if they were formerly not part of the floodplain. The expense of maintaining these floodplain control measures, and replacement of structures damaged by flooding is eclipsed by the potential for loss of human life due to the danger inherent from flooding.

Chapter NR 115 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code requires all municipalities to adopt floodplain zoning ordinances for the purpose of protecting individuals, private property, and public investments from flood damage. Floodplain zoning regulates development in the floodway and flood fringe areas usually by requiring structures to be built above flood levels or be otherwise flood-protected. For regulatory purposes, a floodplain is generally defined as land where there is a one percent chance of flooding in any year (also known as the 100-year floodplain). Floodplain regulation can also keep communities eligible for the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). FEMA offers emergency monetary assistance to flood stricken communities provided these areas follow NFIP requirements and have also completed a Flood Insurance Study. Currently, the City of Stevens Point, and Portage County all participate in the NFIP program, have completed the Flood Insurance Study, and have created a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) that delineates those areas likely to be inundated by a 100-year flood (also known as “A” Zones).

Overall, a relatively small portion of the City is considered a floodplain, being mostly located along the Wisconsin River and Plover Rivers in lands dedicated to parks or open space. Dams and other structures help prevent frequent flooding. A portion of downtown that would otherwise be in the floodplain is currently protected by a levee system. Iverson Park and basements near McDill Pond are known to experience occasional flooding, and ponding is common in the northwestern portion of the City where development is sparse and soil is poorly drained. Floods generally occur during periods of heavy rainfall and/or snowmelt. As Wisconsin’s climate continues to warm, heavy rainfall events could increase in frequency.

Wetlands

Wetlands perform many roles in the hydrologic cycle and ecological systems. They also absorb excess water and release it back into the watershed slowly, minimizing flooding. Wetlands have valuable ground and surface water purification capabilities since potentially harmful compounds and bacteria in the water are absorbed into plant tissues, cleaning nearby water bodies. Wetlands occur in areas where the water level is usually near or above the soil surface.

The DNR identifies the location of wetlands on their Wisconsin Wetland Inventory maps and associated database. According to this database, the City has 1,665 acres, or 14.1% percent of its total area that is considered wetlands. Most of these wetlands are in areas with flat and/or low-lying terrain, and some were created from dams and other structures after European settlement where they didn't exist historically. Overall, it is estimated that at least 50 percent of the City's wetlands no longer exist due to development, especially on the north side of the City.

Wetland vegetation in Portage County primarily includes emergent wet meadows (such as water lilies and rushes) and broad-leaved deciduous forests. Swamps, bogs, marshes, potholes, wet meadows, and sloughs are all considered wetlands. Besides their ecological value, wetlands are also an important recreational, educational, and aesthetic resource. Wetlands are a breeding and nesting ground for waterfowl and for many other animals depending upon aquatic habitats. Maintaining these breeding grounds ensures a variety and adequate amount of game for hunting and wildlife observation activities. Sometimes a particular chain of wetlands can be home to rare or endangered species. Lastly, the visual appearance of the wetlands themselves can constitute a scenic resource.



Given their important role, destruction of wetlands can negatively affect the public. Developing impermeable surfaces and adding fill materials can destroy the hydrological function of a wetland site while simultaneously increasing flood dangers downstream. WDNR enforces minimum standards for managing wetlands to reduce the negative impacts of developing in or near wetland areas, and the City's Conservancy Zoning District helps protect them.

Air Quality

WDNR and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) define and monitor air contaminants known as criteria air pollutants. Portage County meets all primary and secondary standards, which are two sets of regulations used to evaluate the severity of these pollutants. Therefore, the City is in an attainment zone, meaning there are no local regulations needed to remedy air pollution issues at this time.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Surface water, floodways, wetlands, and steep slopes create environmentally sensitive areas that are less suitable for development than others. In most cases, these areas where development is most harmful are the same areas where development is most difficult or expensive. For example, building a house on the edge of a steep hillside requires expensive footings and erosion control measures to prevent the structure from falling. Removing trees and dirt for construction can compromise the integrity of the cliff and cause more stormwater erosion or landslides, thus harming the entire hill itself. Therefore, these areas should be protected.

Forests

Forests in Portage County are dominated by different trees depending on their location, including oaks, maple, aspen, red pine, and white pine. Planted trees improve soil conservation, water conservation, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and aesthetics, and the City's Forestry & Landscape Operations staff plants and maintains them on extensive public lands, right-of-way, and parks that the City manages. There are no federal, state, or county forests within the City limits, nor are there any known Managed Forest Law (MFL) privately owned lands, but there is an extensive system of municipal and county parks that protect woodlands within and around the City.

Steep Slopes

While the City is relatively flat, some steep slopes occur near the Wisconsin and Plover Rivers. Steep slopes are often unsuitable for development since they are constantly in a state of erosion due to wind and rain. Development on these surfaces would be subject to unstable foundations and exacerbate the erosion process. See Map 2-1: Natural Resources.

Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife habitat in the City historically included grasslands, marshes, waterways, and woodlands. Present species include deer, turkey, rabbits, grouse, geese, ducks, beavers, squirrels, red foxes, woodchucks, pheasants, muskrats, gray wolves, badgers, coyotes, opossums, otters, minks, raccoons, skunks, sandhill cranes, weasels, porcupine, various birds, raptors, and migratory waterfowl. Fish include walleye, northern pike, perch, bass, and assorted panfish. The City's location within the Tension Zone discussed earlier means there are species from both northern and southern Wisconsin, though their presence and distribution may be affected by climate change as the Tension Zone is pushed north, possibly affecting vegetation and wildlife habitat.

While there are no federal or state public lands within the City's limits, areas that preserve natural features and wildlife habitat are scattered throughout the City. Schmeeckle Reserve, which is operated by UWSP, is a 280-acre site that features trails, boardwalks, wildlife, and a 24-acre lake. Additionally, the Green Circle Trail, which functions as a nonmotorized transportation corridor along the Wisconsin and Plover Rivers, connects many of the City's parks and natural features in a continuous green corridor. The Jordan Marsh and Moses Creek corridors also provide important wildlife habitat. The City and UW-Stevens Point have also purchased parcels of land over time for habitat protection.

Careful management of these areas ensures wildlife habitat protection as development pressures continue. Examples include the City's partnerships with North Central Conservancy Trust and the Stevens Point Area School District to manage lands for conservation purposes, as well as the City's desire to utilize natural drainageways as environmental corridors in new development. Finally, the City has also launched the Lawn Gone Native program to replace turfgrass with native wildflowers to benefit pollinators, soil quality, and stormwater management.



Threatened and Endangered Species

Portage County contains a wide range of plant and wildlife resources. Human influence can have a dramatic effect on vegetative communities. Natural habitats have been greatly affected by development and agricultural practices. In most cases, these influences are directly responsible for the endangerment or threatening of certain species. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires all federal agencies to conserve endangered and threatened species. The State of Wisconsin

has similar statutes. Past land use changes have led to the destruction of sharptail grouse and bison habitat. Habitat change and hunting resulted in the extinction of the passenger pigeon as well. Wisconsin law prohibits the “taking” of any plant or animal listed as endangered or threatened, which is defined as killing, harming, collecting, capturing, or harassing a member of a protected species. WDNR’s Bureau of Endangered species operates the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI), which maintains data on the location and status of rare species, natural communities, and natural features in Wisconsin. For an up-to-date list of species, their status, and laws protecting them, view the NHI at dnr.wisconsin.gov. As of 2025, the NHI lists the following endangered species in Portage County:

Threatened Species

- Dwarf Milkweed
- Marsh Valerian
- Pale Green Orchid
- Woolly Milkweed
- Big Brown Bat
- Greater Prairie Chicken
- Henslow’s Sparrow
- Little Brown Bat
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Redfin Shiner
- Upland Sandpiper
- Wood Turtle

Endangered Species

- Fassett’s Locoweed
- Black Tern
- Blanchard’s Cricket Frog
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Regal Fritillary

The Portage County Seed Bank allows landowners to plant threatened and endangered plant species to help address these concerns. Additional conservation activities, whether led by an agency, nonprofit, volunteers, or individual landowners helps preserve the habitat that supports these species as well.

Agricultural Resources

Agriculture is common in Portage County, especially dairy, vegetables, and cranberries. But agriculture is limited within the City’s limits, except for in areas that are planned for future development. Despite the lack of large-scale commercial farming within the City, several food processing facilities contribute to the City’s economy, and there is an opportunity to promote locally grown crops at farmers markets and other venues. Additionally, the City allows residents to have chickens (hens only), ducks, and/or rabbits, indicating that City residents have an interest in raising farm products on a small scale. When combined with UWSP’s reputation for its natural resources programs, there is a culture that is supportive of local agriculture, despite most of it not necessarily being within the City’s limits. Additionally, agrotourism is an economic development opportunity that could be expanded to benefit the area.

Previous Agricultural Resources Planning Efforts

NRCS Soil Survey for Portage County Maps and data in this report may be useful in determining which areas of the county are most suitable for agriculture.

Portage County Land and Water Resource Management Plan 2019 This plan identifies issues related to agriculture and lists priorities and strategies to mitigate the effects agriculture has on water quality, erosion, and other natural resources.

Agricultural Resources Inventory and Trends

While farmland is extremely limited in the City limits, County-level data provides a snapshot of the local agricultural economy. According to the 2024 Portage County Comprehensive Plan, there is an increase in farmland consolidation, with more large farms compared to smaller, family-owned farms. Below is a snapshot of local agricultural trends:

Crops

Countywide, 73% of farm sales revenue comes from crops, and the remaining 27% comes from livestock, poultry, and their associated products. The County ranks first in Wisconsin's 72 counties for total crop sales and 39th in sales for livestock, poultry, and their associated products. The County was also one of the top-producing counties in Wisconsin for these categories: 1. Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes, and 2. Fruits, tree nuts, and berries.

Livestock, Poultry, and Animal Products

Portage County produces the second highest total sales in Wisconsin for aquaculture. Other animal and animal product categories vary in state and national rankings based on the product, and dairy farming has decreased over the years. Portage County ranks 39th out of 72 counties in Wisconsin for total livestock, poultry, and their associated products.

Productive Agricultural Areas

Much of the City and its surroundings are relatively flat, supporting large-scale farming. Areas with high water tables and steep slopes typically have soil erosion and lower rates of productivity. Prime farmland describes areas with highly productive soils, but the City has not identified these areas, nor has it adopted a farmland preservation plan or zoning.



Agricultural Infrastructure

Agriculture relies on roads to transport farm products to markets and processing plants as well as irrigation systems due to the well-drained sandy soils. The Stevens Point Farmers Market has a strong presence in the City's downtown during the growing season, attracting visitors and supporting the local economy.

Cultural Resources

Stevens Point is the cultural center of Portage County, serves as the County Seat, and is home to a variety of institutions such as the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point (UWSP) and Mid-State Technical College (MSTC). The Wisconsin River played an instrumental role in the City's history, and indigenous and post-settlement historical sites are scattered throughout the area, both within and outside the City's limits.

Previous Cultural Resources Planning Efforts

The Wisconsin Historic Preservation Plan 2016-2025. This Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) administers this plan that prioritizes tasks and efforts on five critical issues: 1. Develop and implement targeted educational opportunities, 2. Increase awareness and support of historic preservation, 3. Increase funding sources for historic preservation, 4. Cultivate partnerships to advance historic preservation goals, and 5. Support and expand digital data and access.

Stevens Point Historic Preservation Plan 2024. identifies the City's existing and potential historic districts and sites, along with goals, objectives, and policies that address these topics: Surveying Efforts & Priorities, Local and National

District Nominations, Ordinance Amendments, Zoning & Development, Financial Assistance, Tourism, Sense of Place, and Education & Advocacy. The Plan has a strong focus on preserving and enhancing historic downtown buildings as well as City surveys and ordinances that more effectively identify and protect historic sites and structures. The plan also prioritizes education and outreach activities to communicate the procedures and benefits of historic preservation.

Cultural Resources Background

Preserving historic sites and structures recognizes the architectural, engineering, archaeological, cultural, or historic importance of these assets to a community. The City has a historic preservation and design review ordinance that meets state statutes for Cities with properties listed in the National and/or State Register of Historic Places, and Portage County has a historical society. To help identify historic sites, WHS has an online database called the Architecture and History Inventory (AHI), which provides historical and architectural information for around 120,000 properties that are relevant to the State's unique and varied history. Sites in the database are not protected and do not have any special status, rights, or benefits to owners unless listed in the State or National Registers.

Similar to the AHI, the Archaeological Site Inventory (ASI) is the most comprehensive list of the archaeological sites, mounds, marked and unmarked cemeteries, and cultural sites in the state. However, it includes only those sites that have been reported to the Wisconsin Historical Society and therefore does not include all possible sites and cemeteries of archeological significance in the state. This inventory has been developed over a period of 150 years, and each entry in the database varies widely and the information has not been verified in all cases. But overall, using both AHI and ASI tools helps the City determine which sites are worth preserving.

Cultural Resources Inventory and Trends

Historical Structures and Sites

The WHS AHI returns a total of 958 potentially significant property records in Stevens Point. This source is the most complete, up-to-date list of properties, though some recorded in the database may no longer exist due to demolition. The most significant sites in the City are the 14 that are listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places:

- August G. and Theresa Green House (1501 Main St.)
- Christina Kuhl House (1416 Main St.)
- David McMillan House (1924 Pine St.)
- Folding Furniture Works Building (1020 First St.)
- Fox Theater (1116-1128 Main St.)
- Hardware Mutual Insurance Companies Building (1421 Strong's Ave.)
- Hotel Whiting (1408 Strong's Ave.)
- J.L. Jensen House (1100 Brawley St.)
- Main Street Historical District (Bound by Prentice, Clark, Fremont, and Main Streets)
- Mathias Mitchell Public Square (Main St. from Strong's Ave. to Second St.)
- Nelson Hall (1209 Fremont St.)
- Sisters of St. Joseph Convent (1300 Maria Dr.)
- Stevens Point State Normal School (2100 Main St.)
- Temple Beth Israel (1475 Water St.)

There are additional locally recognized landmarks that, when combined with the list above, result in 26 sites total as described in the City's Historic Preservation Plan. The plan also lists 27 potential sites that are eligible to be on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Portage County Historical Society has a photo collection at the UWSP Library, and the Society also runs the Synagogue Museum in Stevens Point, Heritage Park in Plover, and Rising Star Mill in Nelsonville. Archeology sites like burial mounds are scattered throughout Portage County, but locations are not disclosed due to their vulnerability.

Cultural Offerings

Stevens Point is known for its food scene, extensive recreational opportunities, and variety of cultural events and activities. Culturally oriented institutions and events include Central Wisconsin Children’s Museum, Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra, CREATE Portage County, Cultural Commons, Downtown Historic Murals, Gallery Artists Cooperative, Levitt AMP Concert Series, Main Street Historic District, Monteverde Chorale, Portage County Historical Society, Riverfront Arts Center, Riverfront Rendezvous, Smith Scarabocchio Art Museum, Stevens Point Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, Stevens Point Festival of Arts, Stevens Point Sculpture Garden, Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame, UWSP Olson Museum of Natural History, UWSP Edna Carlsten Art Gallery, and more. Additionally, UWSP has several programs related to the Fine Arts, such as music and art majors and their associated events, as well as a recognized culture built around athletics and outdoor recreation.

Community Character

The form and appearance of a community often changes over time. Styles of building and development react to changing economic conditions and technologies, and to changing tastes. For example, a historic main street often features dense, mixed-use buildings built up against the sidewalk. This contrasts with a newer rural housing development where homes are set back from roads and buffered by wooded areas. Old and new buildings must meet the City’s present needs, and careful planning can successfully improve the quality and appearance of revitalized structures and new construction. Land use planning and zoning also ensure that higher density development is located where infrastructure can support it and where it is visually compatible with its surroundings. Planning and zoning can also be used to maintain tracts of open land until they are ready for development to ensure orderly growth. Finally, the City has a Downtown Design Review District with stricter architectural standards buildings must follow to maintain their historic feel. Overall, carefully implementing development policies allows the City to maintain its identity while accommodating development needs.

Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Issues

Availability of Land. Over time, development of open and wooded lands has resulted in the fragmentation of existing large, contiguous parcels. This has limited the supply of land available for agriculture, woodlands, and future growth areas. Infill and redevelopment preserve larger tracts of open land while maximizing existing infrastructure, and there is an opportunity to expand small-scale and urban farming techniques within the community.

Climate Change. The increase of natural hazards like flooding and severe weather, as well as the unpredictability of weather patterns are expected to impact the City’s resilience, insurance rates, and potential population growth.

Renewable Energy. While there is interest in renewable energy in the City, a lack of local control over large-scale wind and solar projects can limit the amount of land available for agriculture, development, or other purposes.

Water Quality and Quantity. Groundwater faces several threats that impact its quality and available quantity. Historically, Nitrate and Atrazine have been a concern in Portage County. Nitrate generally comes from both rural and urban sources, especially from fertilizers and septic systems. Atrazine is an agricultural herbicide, which is now banned in portions of Portage County. Finally, high-capacity wells and Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) raise concerns over the availability and quality of groundwater in the County as they withdraw large amounts of water. Additionally, urban and rural land use patterns affect the quality of surface water, impacting the environment and outdoor recreation in the City. Ground and surface water issues impact local agriculture, drinking water, and outdoor recreation.



Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Programs

Aquatic Habitat Protection Program. WDNR provides aquatic habitat protection services through their Water Management (Regulation) Specialists, Zoning Specialists, Rivers Specialists, Lakes Specialists, Water Management Engineers, and their assistants (LTEs). Programs assist with water regulations, zoning assistance, coordination of rivers, lake management, and engineering.

The Center for Watershed Science and Education (CWSE) allows area residents to determine the safety of their well water by providing the opportunity to have their well water tested at any state-certified testing laboratory, including the Water and Environmental Analysis Lab at UWSP, which houses CWSE.

Discovery Farms Program, UW-Extension program, leads agricultural research regarding economic and environmental impacts. It also facilitates communication to help implement effective and profitable management practices.

Drinking Water and Groundwater Program. This WDNR program ensures safe, high quality drinking water and groundwater by enforcing minimum well construction and pump installation requirements, conducting surveys and inspections of water systems, investigating and sampling drinking water quality problems, and requiring drinking water quality monitoring and reporting. WDNR staff assists with water quality issues and provides educational materials.

Endangered Resources Program. The DNR's Endangered Resources staff provides endangered resources expertise. They manage the Natural Heritage Inventory Program (NHI), which is used to determine the existence and location of native plant and animal communities and Endangered or Threatened Species of Special Concern. The NHI helps identify and prioritize areas suitable for State Natural Area (SNA) designation, provides information needed for feasibility studies and master plans, and maintains the list of endangered and threatened species. All management activities conducted by Wildlife Management and Forestry staff must be reviewed to determine the impact on NHI-designated species. A permit for the incidental take of an Endangered or Threatened species is required under the State Endangered Species Law. The Endangered Resources Program oversees permitting, applications, and approvals.

Farmland Preservation Program. To preserve farmland, the state enacted the Farmland Preservation Program, which is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Each county must develop a Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP), which becomes part of the county comprehensive plan as well.

Fisheries Management Program. This program assists with fishery surveys, fish habitat improvement/protection, and fish community manipulation. This program may also be used to fund public relations events and a variety of permitting and administrative activities involving fisheries.

Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development. Founded in 1972 and based in Stevens Point, Golden Sands is a nonprofit organization that serves 13 counties in Central Wisconsin. They assist volunteers, citizen groups, and government agencies with water, farming, and forestry projects.

Managed Forest Law (MFL). WDNR's MFL promotes good forest management through property tax incentives. Management practices are required under an approved forest management plan. Landowners with a minimum of 10 contiguous acres (80% must be capable of producing merchantable timber) are eligible and may contract for 25 or 50 years. Open lands must allow hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and sight-seeing; however, up to 80 acres may be closed to public access by the landowner. There is a 5% yield tax applied to any wood products harvested.

Nonpoint Source Program (NSP). Wisconsin's NSP Program, through a network of federal, state, and local agencies partnering with other organizations and citizens, addresses nonpoint pollution in the state. This program combines voluntary and regulatory approaches with financial and technical assistance. Abatement activities include agriculture, urban, forestry, wetlands, and hydrologic modifications. The core activities of the program — research, monitoring, data

assessment and management, regulation and enforcement, financial and technical assistance, education and outreach and public involvement — address current and future water quality issues caused by NPS pollution.

North Central Conservancy Trust. NCCT works with landowners to develop and maintain conservation easements to enhance wildlife habitat, water quality, aesthetics, and more. They also assist the City with managing some land in Bukolt Park and are instrumental in forming partnerships to protect various natural areas in and around the City.

NRCS Conservation Programs. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters. NRCS provides funding opportunities for agricultural producers and other landowners through these programs:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) by USDA's Farm Service Agency
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Small, Limited, and Beginning Farmer Assistance
- Working Lands for Wildlife

Parks and Recreation Program. This WDNR program helps develop public parks and recreation facilities under Wis. Stat. Chapter 27. Funding sources include the general fund, the Stewardship Program, Land and Water Conservation fund (LAWCON), and program revenue funds.

Private Forestry. The WDNR's goal is to motivate private forest landowners to practice sustainable forestry by providing technical forestry assistance, state and federal cost-sharing on management practices, sale of state produced nursery stock for reforestation, enrollment in Wisconsin's Forest Tax Law Programs, advice for the protection of endangered and threatened species, and assistance with forest disease and insect problems. Each county has at least one Department forester that provides assistance as well as educational programs for landowners, schools, and the public.

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants (PLWPG). DATCP provides funding to producer-led groups that focus on nonpoint source water pollution abatement through this program by increasing management practices and farmer participation in these efforts.

Stewardship Grants for Nonprofit Conservation Organizations. Nonprofit conservation organizations may obtain funding from WDNR for conservation land or easement acquisition and wildlife habitat restoration. Priorities include wildlife habitat, acquisition of lands with special scientific or ecological value, protection of rare and endangered habitats and species, acquisition of stream corridors, acquisition of land for state trails including the Ice Age Trail and the restoration of wetlands and grasslands. Eligible types of projects include fee simple and easement acquisitions and habitat restoration projects.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). This voluntary program restores wetlands which were altered for agricultural use. The program is administered by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in consultation with the Farm Service Agency and other federal agencies.

Wildlife Management Program. WDNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management oversees a variety of programs that incorporate state, federal and local initiatives for wildlife habitat management and enhancement. They include land acquisition, development and maintenance of State Wildlife Areas, and other wild land programs such as State Natural Areas. Wildlife Staff work closely with state and county forest staff to maintain, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. WDNR staff conduct wildlife population and habitat surveys, prepare property needs analysis, develop wildlife management plans, and collaborate with other Park, Forestry or Fishery Area Property Master Plans to ensure proper implementation.

Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS). This office serves as the principal historic preservation agency in the state. SHPO partners with communities, organizations, and individuals works to identify, interpret, and preserve historic places.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goals

1. Protect and enhance the City's natural, agricultural, and cultural resources that provide enjoyment, economic opportunity, and enrichment for the City's residents.
2. Preserve and protect the City's landscape, environmental resources, and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.
3. Monitor and mitigate health impacts from environmental contamination.
4. Expand and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in alignment with the City's Urban Forestry Management Plan and Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.
5. Encourage planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique communities.
6. Monitor climate change trends, irregular and/or extreme weather events, and local impacts.
7. Plan for and respond to natural disasters to preserve the health, safety, and economic resilience of the City.

Objectives

1. Protect and enhance sensitive lands such as wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, wildlife habitat, shorelands, productive soils, and other features from the impacts of development.
2. Protect and enhance surface water and groundwater quality.
3. Protect economically valuable natural resources like agriculture and woodlands while encouraging neighborhood-scale agricultural practices.
4. Support renewable energy opportunities that do not negatively impact the City's future growth areas.
5. Support the City's cultural resources and organizations.
6. Maintain an up-to-date Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Policies

1. Enforce agricultural preservation, shoreland zoning, wetland zoning, floodplain zoning, wellhead protection, stormwater management, and other ordinances that protect sensitive lands from the impacts of development.
2. Participate in local and regional initiatives that support watershed planning to improve water quality.
3. Manage, protect, and restore high priority watersheds, including the Wisconsin River, Plover River, Moses Creek, and McDill Pond using financially and environmentally sustainable practices.
4. Ensure that parks and open space are accessible and appealing to people of all ages and abilities with a variety of amenities, restrooms, and other facilities.
5. Encourage trees, native landscaping, and neighborhood-scale agriculture.
6. Capitalize on underutilized parkland for programming and events, especially at Goerke Park, McDill Pond, and Downtown Riverfront areas.
7. Encourage land donation or acquisition for conservation easements.
8. Restore and/or repurpose historic properties and districts in a way that maintains their historic integrity and while allowing flexibility for a variety of uses.
9. Integrate existing community character into the design of community improvements.

10. The Historic Preservation/Design Review Commission will work with owners of historic sites to meet the City's ordinances and guidelines while promoting historic preservation programs that may be available.
11. Work with the Wisconsin Historical Society to inventory cultural assets, historical sites, and related assets and identify priority sites for preservation.
12. Encourage property owners to consider placing historic properties on the State and National Register of Historic Places, including the Jordan Hydroelectric Facility.
13. Expand signage and programming to educate the public on the City's historic sites and buildings.
14. When development is proposed within 200 meters (656 feet) of a body of water or within the recorded boundaries of a previously recorded site, require a site investigation. Further action must be completed as outlined under the Federal Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and as outlined in the Wisconsin Archaeological Survey's Guide For Public Archaeology in Wisconsin 2012 and as revised.
15. Update the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan every five years to meet Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements.

Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities Draft 1 8/7/2025

Background

This chapter reviews utilities and community facilities in the City, which include solid waste disposal, on-site wastewater recycling facilities, parks, telecommunications facilities, transmission lines, cemeteries, health care facilities, childcare facilities, and other public facilities, such as police, fire and rescue facilities, libraries, schools, and other government facilities. These facilities support a community's overall well-being and prosperity, as well as contribution towards economic development efforts.

Previous Planning Efforts

American Transmission Company (ATC) 10 Year Transmission System Assessment 2024. ATC manages transmission projects that improve flexibility, reliability, economic factors, connectivity, and performance, including the Rocky Run Transformer Replacement near the City of Stevens Point scheduled for 2027.

Portage County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan 2020. This document is required for local governments to be eligible for certain disaster mitigation programs. The report looks at general conditions in Portage County, including population, transportation, land use and economics. An inventory of utilities, community facilities and emergency services form the background for understanding how the County might respond to a disaster. Hazards that are assessed in the plan include floods, tornadoes, winter storms, drought, fire, and hazardous materials accidents. The plan is being updated in 2025.

Portage County Broadband Plan 2024. This assessment involved surveying Portage County residents and their current internet speeds followed by strategies to improve speeds and coverage countywide. Generally, there is support to expand broadband throughout the County and use it as an economic development tool.

Portage County Health Department Plans. The Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) identify critical health needs through data collection and analysis, and a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is created to address concerns reflected in the two assessments.

Portage County Comprehensive Plan 2024. Issues identified in this plan are countywide access to broadband, an aging population, childcare availability and affordability, emergency services staffing difficulties, a need for a new county jail, groundwater protection, renewable energy, and the opportunity to expand natural, agricultural, and cultural tourism.

Portage County LIFE Report 2023. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Portage County LIFE Report identifies several areas for improvement regarding behavioral health, early childhood care, education, housing, shelter, and more.

Portage County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2029. Goals of this plan are 1. Protect, restore, and enhance Portage County's natural resources for outdoor recreation, 2. Continue developing Portage County as a bicycle friendly community and destination, and 3. Continue improving outdoor recreation facilities throughout Portage County. This plan is updated every five years to allow the County to receive grant funding.

Stevens Point Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023-2028. This robust plan includes the following goals: efficiency, accessibility, sustainable maintenance, community partnership and cooperation, and capital improvements. It includes detailed park-specific upgrades and their associated costs, as well as a series of existing site plans and renderings, particularly for a bicycle-pedestrian bridge crossing over the Plover River near I-39, an upgraded waterfront plaza at Bukolt Park, upgraded equipment at Emerson/Seramur Park, and a master plan for John S Groholski Park.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2025-2030. This WDNR plan assists with local planning efforts and is updated every 5 years. It analyzes trends in outdoor recreation and identifies barriers that prevent more Wisconsinites from enjoying outdoor recreation. Issues include changing demands on recreational resources, how new

recreational activities compete for the same resources as traditional ones, the effect of surrounding land uses on recreational areas, the socioeconomic characteristics that influence access to outdoor recreation, and climate change impacts to temperature and precipitation. According to a statewide survey, almost seventy percent of respondents indicated that walking, hiking, or running was their most common recreational activity. Swimming and wildlife viewing/photographing were the next two popular activities. These results emphasize the importance of public lands.

Stevens Point Area Sewer Service Plan 2040 Update 2023. This Plan is currently being updated, and it includes the City of Stevens Point, Villages of Park Ridge, Plover, and Whiting, and surrounding Towns of Linwood, Hull, Plover, and Stockton. Sewer currently serves the City and Villages, and the plan accommodates potential growth into the Towns, which are currently not served. This Plan identifies the sewer service area's boundary between now and 2040, and it manages the extension of sewer services over time as growth occurs. It considers environmental impact and cost effectiveness, minimizing long-term conflicts.

Inventory and Trends

City Government

The City of Stevens Point government offices are located primarily in City Hall at 1515 Strongs Avenue, where several County departments are also held. Departments include the Administration, Central Transportation, City Clerk, Community Development, Comptroller/Treasurer, Information Technology, Legal, Personnel (Human Resources), Public Utilities, the Stevens Point Municipal Airport, and Public Works. The Streets Division of Public Works has a facility at 100 Sixth Avenue described later in this chapter. The City's Community Media and Police Departments are based at 933 Michigan Ave, and the facility includes space where many public meetings are held. This building is attached to 2442 Sims Avenue where the City's Parks, Recreation, & Forestry department is based. Finally, the Fire and EMS Department Headquarters are based at 1701 Franklin Street, the City's Transit Station is based at 2700 Week Street, and the Public Utilities campus is located in the 300 block of Bliss Avenue.

Water-related Facilities

The sewer and water systems of the City of Stevens Point are governed under the direction of the Board of Water and Sewerage Commissioners, with the Common Council having final authority. The Board is composed of five commissioners who advise the Common Council on the management and operation of the City's Water Department and sewage treatment department. Appointments are made for staggered terms and are made by the Mayor and confirmed by the Common Council. Below are detailed descriptions of each type of facility.

Drinking water

The City of Stevens Point has its own municipal water system with distribution networks, which rely solely on groundwater. Some properties in the Village of Park Ridge have access to the City of Stevens Point's water system. Some properties within the City's limits are not yet served by public water where utilities have not yet been extended. Others are served by public water but also have a separate well for irrigation. The City has a wellhead protection ordinance, which restricts uses that could contaminate groundwater from being located within a certain distance of public wells.

In 2024, average daily water usage was 6.7 million gallons. There are seven wells (6 through 12) with former wells 1 through 4 being decommissioned. The distribution system contains 805,585 feet or 152.6 miles of mains. Of this, 91% are metallic and 97.5% are 6 inches or larger. Static pressures in the system range from 55 to 68 psi, and two water towers hold up to 1.75 million gallons of water to provide pressure and fire protection capacity even during power outages. The City also has two bulk water filling stations large tanks. The water utility has no known lead services and removed all known lead fittings prior to the end of 2023. See WDNR for more info on public and private water systems.

Wastewater

The City of Stevens Point is served by a public wastewater collection system and a wastewater treatment plant located at 301 Bliss Avenue. This system also serves the Village of Park Ridge. Altogether, there are 141 miles of 8” to 48” sewer pipe and has 14 lift stations. Public sewer system planning and service areas are regulated by the Wisconsin DNR to “assess the condition of a sewerage system, establish a need for improvement, evaluate options to address system needs and to identify the cost-effective alternative.” The current Stevens Point-Plover Sewer Service Area Plan was completed in 2023, and it establishes a 20-year growth boundary for these systems. See WDNR’s website for more statistics regarding public wastewater facilities.

Where utilities do not yet extend, private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS) serve a property’s wastewater needs. County and state regulations control the installation and maintenance of privately owned wastewater disposal systems (POWTS). Traditionally, onsite disposal systems have relied on drain-fields or mounds that spread effluent over a large area allowing waste to be dispersed without adversely affecting groundwater quality. The success of these systems is dependent on the depth and permeability of the soils in which they are installed.

Stormwater

Stormwater management systems convey and mitigate heavy rainfall and prevent flooding and erosion, especially in urban areas with extensive impervious surfaces like roofs and pavement. According to WDNR, the Village of Plover, City of Stevens Point, and UWSP are all MS-4 permitted communities, which means they have separate storm and wastewater sewers. Private and public property throughout the City may also have ponds and other structures to control runoff. The county maintains the ditches along county roads, and local municipalities maintain the ditches along municipal roads that control runoff. Municipal and County ordinances require stormwater plans with new development. Some property owners are eligible for stormwater credits on their utility bill if they reduce runoff beyond what ordinances require. Additional local, state, and federal regulations may apply for erosion control and discharging runoff into waterways. See the WDNR’s website for more information.

Dams

According to the 2020-2024 Portage County Hazard Mitigation Plan, there are 13 large dams in the County with an average age of 140 years. The Stevens Point Dam in the City and the Dubay Dam upstream of the City are owned by Consolidated Water Power Company, generating power, and they are considered high hazard dams. The Westfahl Dam, located in the Village of Whiting, is privately owned and forms McDill Pond on the Plover River within the City. This dam is considered to have significant hazard potential. Upstream of McDill Pond and outside the City limits is the Jordan Dam, which is County-owned and has low hazard potential. Altogether, there are 80 dams in Portage County according to the WDNR. Dams provide flood control, outdoor recreation, and hydroelectric power for County residents. See Map 4-1: Utilities and Community Facilities for locations.

High-Capacity Wells

High-capacity wells are discussed in detail in Chapter 2: Natural Resources, and they are defined as wells with a capacity of at least 100,000 gallons per day. Most of these wells are owned and operated privately, but some are also operated by municipalities to provide drinking water for municipal water systems. See the WDNR’s Water Use Viewer map or high capacity well search on the agency’s website for up-to-date information about the number, location, and ownership of these wells, as well as other details.

Energy and Telecommunications

Natural Gas

Natural Gas Service is provided by Wisconsin Public Service Corporation, and high-capacity gas lines are available on the east and north sides of the City for potential industrial users. The Koch Refining Company operates an LP gas pipeline and an “other petroleum products” pipeline, which meet at a terminal in the City of Stevens Point (Flint Hills Resources).

Electric

The Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) Corporation, Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative, and Wisconsin Power & Light provide service within and near the City. The American Transmission Company (ATC) operates several high-voltage lines that traverse Portage County, with many of them intersecting along the Wisconsin River near Stevens Point. All transmission lines are single-circuit, and they range from 69 kV to 345 kV. As of 2024, WPS’s energy sources are derived from a mix of coal (38.9 percent), natural gas (44.5 percent), hydroelectric (8.1 percent), wind (4.4 percent), solar (3.6 percent), and biofuels (0.5 percent). Currently, the City’s Public Utilities do not have any long-term plans for expanding renewable energy sources, but there is an opportunity to explore small-scale renewable energy that benefits home and business owners without consuming large tracts of land.

Telecommunications

Internet service continues to expand as an economic development necessity, and access to internet service varies greatly throughout the County. Landline and cellular phone service are also essential for communications. Topographic features limit where lines can be buried or where cellular signals can reach. Future expansion of broadband is expected following the completion of the County’s Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Plan. This involves a separate fiber network that connects municipal facilities in the City of Stevens Point and the Village of Plover but is not intended for individual consumer use. This system may be considered an asset for institutions that have multiple facility locations within the City and neighboring villages.

Landline phone service providers in Stevens Point include AT&T, Spectrum, and TDS. Cable TV lines provide digital signals known as wireline access, and other providers use satellite or wireless technology. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the City are HughesNet, Spectrum, T-Mobile, TDS, Verizon, and Viasat, Inc. DirectTV and Dish are also available for satellite TV. Mobile internet and Cellular coverage is available from AT&T, T-Mobile, U.S. Cellular, and Verizon, and other providers may get signal in the County where roaming agreements exist.

Solid Waste and Recycling Facilities

The City’s Public Works department is responsible for curbside garbage collection. Most Portage County municipalities are part of a consortium contracting through the Portage County Solid Waste Department for solid waste collection and disposal by private waste haulers. In addition to household and commercial trash and recycling, the department offers a variety of other programs for residents including electronic, appliance, and tire recycling, waste oil and anti-freeze recycling, and household hazardous waste disposal services. Solid waste and recycling services are located at 600 Moore Road in the Village of Plover, where solid waste is transferred out of the County since the Portage County Landfill’s closure in 2009.

Public Works

The Public Works Department’s main office and engineering division are located at City Hall at 1515 Strongs Avenue, while its Streets Division is located at 100 Sixth Avenue in Stevens Point, where there are garages for the storage of equipment for road maintenance and shops for maintaining the City’s fleet of vehicles and equipment. The Sixth Avenue site includes yard waste drop off and salt storage as well as free mulch for City residents. This facility may need expansion

or replacement in the coming years. The Common Council has indicated a preference to relocate the facility, which will require a large site (approximately 30 acres) that is more centrally located to the City's future growth areas to best serve the community.



Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The Stevens Point Police Department is located at 933 Michigan Avenue. The Wisconsin State Patrol, the Portage County Sheriff's Office, and UWSP University Police and Security Services also operate within the City's limit, and the Village of Plover also has its own police department. The State Patrol has statewide jurisdiction on all public roads but operates mainly on State and U.S. numbered highways. The County Sheriff provides general law enforcement services throughout the County, and it operates both the County Jail and Juvenile Detention Facility, along with the County's 911 Dispatch Center, Emergency Management, and the County's Emergency Medical Services program. The City of Stevens Point and Village of Plover Police Department patrol their respective communities.

Fire

The Stevens Point Fire Department is headquartered at 1701 Franklin Street, with a second station at 4401 Industrial Park Road. The Department also has a training facility at 3100 Whiting Avenue. There is potential to add a third fire station on the City's east side. All Portage County Fire Departments participate in a countywide mutual aid agreement ensuring compatibility between responding agencies. The City uses an automatic aid agreement the Plover, Hull, and Rudolph Fire Departments. The Insurance Services Office issues ISO ratings for fire departments. ISO ratings are determined on a scale of one to ten, with one being the highest rating. The ratings are based on aspects like staffing, apparatus, equipment, and the fire hydrant water supply systems to reflect how easily a fire department can respond to fires. This impacts property insurance rates as communities with better ISO ratings tend to have lower insurance premiums. The Stevens Point Fire Department currently holds an ISO rating of 2.

Jails

The County Sheriff's Office operates a County Jail and Juvenile Detention Center in Downtown Stevens Point. In 2023, the Portage County Board voted on the location of a proposed new County Justice Center which will consist of a \$180-million first phase that would relocate County jail facilities out of downtown Stevens Point to a site on the eastern edge of the City, but funding and a timeline for this project have not yet been approved. Additionally, the County will renovate and expand the existing Courthouse, utilizing space vacated by the City of Stevens Point. This includes upgrading safety and security systems, adding a secure entrance with sally ports, creating a single point of entry, and adding a fourth courtroom to accommodate future needs.

Emergency Medical Service (EMS)

The Stevens Point Fire Department provides contracted paramedic ambulance service to the City as well as several surrounding Towns. Station 1 covers the western and central portions of the City as well as Towns to the west and north of the City in partnership with Rudolph, Dewey, and Hull Emergency Medical Responders, and Station 2 covers the

eastern portion of the City along with Towns to the east, northeast, and southeast in partnership with Stockton, Hull, Sharon, and Rosholt Emergency Medical Responders.

Emergency Management

The City has an integrated emergency management program housed within its Fire Department. The Emergency Management Coordinator works with local, county, state, and federal partners to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the impacts of natural and human-caused disasters. Utilizing the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and guided by the Wisconsin Emergency Management framework, the City maintains an all-hazards approach to planning and response. This includes ongoing hazard identification, community education and outreach, and development of incident action plans for public events. Investments in infrastructure resilience, warning systems, and interagency training further enhance the City's ability to protect life, property, and the environment during times of crisis.

Healthcare

Aspirus operates a clinic in the City of Stevens Point and the neighboring Village of Plover. Additionally, in 2025, Noble Community Clinic opened a location at 2501 Main Street. There are also two hospitals in the City: Aspirus Stevens Point Hospital and Marshfield Medical Center - Stevens Point Campus. Several nursing homes with varying degrees of care can be found throughout the City, and it is expected that there will be an ongoing need for additional nursing home, memory care, and/or assisted living facilities as the County's population ages. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) maintains up-to-date directories of both institutional and residential-based facilities.

Libraries

The Portage County Public Library is located at 1001 Main Street in Stevens Point. UWSP and MSTC also house libraries on their respective campuses. Libraries in Portage County are part of the South-Central Library System along with Adams, Wood, Sauk, Columbia, Dane, and Green Counties, allowing the libraries to access resources across the system.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries serve as unique and tangible links to our past. There are 13 cemeteries located throughout the City. Many of the existing cemeteries have existing capacity and there are many undeveloped areas on the edges of the City suitable for new cemeteries. See Map 4-1: Utilities & Community Facilities.

Parks, Trails, & Natural Areas

The City of Stevens Point operates the following parks: Bukolt, Conifer Park and Trails, East Oak, Goerke Park, Iverson, KASH (Kids Are Special Here), Kozickowski, Mead, Morton, Parkdale, Parkwood, Pfiffner Pioneer, Plover River, Stevens Point Dog Park, Stevens Point Sculpture Park, Sorenson, Texas, and Zenoff Parks. The City also operates the K.B. Willett Ice Arena and the Donald Copps Municipal Pool with a waterslide in Goerke Park.

Schmeeckle Reserve and Green Circle State Trail are two significant recreational amenities that are not operated by the City, but are located within the City, with the 27-mile-long Green Circle forming a "greenbelt" through the City. The Green Circle features a connection along Hoover Avenue to the 29-mile-long Tomorrow River State Trail (WDNR). The Wisconsin and Plover Rivers, along with McDill Pond, provide public access to surface water recreation. There are additional county parks and state natural areas outside the City's limits, as well as the nearby Ice Age National Trail. Overall, these facilities contribute to the County's overall health and quality of life while serving as a draw for tourists.



Museums

Museums and other cultural destinations include the following:

- Beth Israel Synagogue Museum
- Historic Firehouse # 2 Museum
- Riverfront Arts Center/Cultural Commons
- Schmeeckle Reserve Visitor Center
- Smith Scarabocchio Art Museum
- Stevens Point Sculpture Park
- UWSP Carlsten Art Gallery
- UWSP Museum of Natural History

Cultural resources are explained in more detail in Chapter 2 of this Plan.

Childcare

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) maintains an up-to-date list of licensed daycare providers along with a search tool. According to the search tool, there are approximately 29 licensed facilities within a five-mile radius of the center of Stevens Point. There are also likely unlicensed options as well, such as informal in-home childcare. More resources are listed in the Economic Development chapter of this plan.

Schools

The City is served by the **Stevens Point Area School District** which includes Bannach, Jefferson, Kennedy, Madison, McDill, McKinley, Plover-Whiting, Roosevelt, and Washington Elementary Schools, Ben Franklin and P.J. Jacobs Junior High Schools, Stevens Point Area Senior High (SPASH), Charles F. Hernandez Alternative High School, and Point of Discovery Charter Middle/High School). **Private schools** in the City include Pacelli and Sacred Heart Catholic Schools, St. Paul Lutheran School, and Stevens Point Christian Academy. Pacelli and Stevens Point Christian include high school grades. Finally, Central Sands Community High School is a tuition-free, Waldorf-style education option located between Stevens Point and Amherst.

Colleges and Universities

The **University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point** campus, located in the City of Stevens Point, was established in 1894. When combined with its satellite campuses in Marshfield and Wausau, total enrollment is 8,125. The campus offers 80 baccalaureate degrees, 17 graduate programs, and 90 minors, and is known for its robust fine arts and natural resources programs. Recent expansions have drastically enhanced UWSP's Sentry School of Business and the college's Health Science and Wellness Program.

Mid-State Technical College also has a Stevens Point Campus that offers associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates. The college offers over 85 programs across its four campuses. In 2024, MSTC opened the Advanced

Manufacturing, Engineering Technology, and Apprenticeship (AMETA) Center, which accommodates training in newer industries like precision machining and inspection, robotic machine tending, lights-out manufacturing, automated manufacturing, and process control automation.



Resources for Seniors and People with Disabilities

The Portage County Aging and Disabilities Resource Center (ADRC) provides resources for seniors and those with disabilities. The ADRC manages the Lincoln Center, which is a senior center that offers a diverse selection of educational, health, fitness, creative arts and recreational classes and activities. Various nonprofits, such as Midstate Independent Living Choices, Opportunity Development Centers, and Door2Dreams provide resources for seniors and those with disabilities.

Summary

Providing an array of utilities and community facilities that meet the community's needs ensures that the City can continue strategically growing jobs that pay a living wage along with resources and amenities that make the City a desirable place to live. Educational and workforce development opportunities strengthen the local workforce while supporting individual prosperity. Chapter 6: Economic Development expands on this chapter by discussing the importance of understanding the capacity of existing utilities and facilities when marketing various redevelopment or business park sites to companies interested in relocating or expanding their operations. Monitoring community-wide capacities ensures that upgrades can be planned ahead of expected growth.

Issues

Access to Broadband

Though Stevens Point generally has better access to broadband than rural areas, financial or other barriers may exist. Continued expansion of broadband access is necessary as businesses and schools depend on it.

Aging Population

Portage County's increasing aging population impacts local infrastructure, especially healthcare facilities, nursing homes, and emergency services. There are services and aging-in-place retrofits that can keep seniors in their homes longer while avoiding expensive institutional care. Accessible public spaces, sidewalks, and transportation is essential for seniors and those with disabilities to navigate the community. Social support networks and nutrition programs also benefits these populations.

Childcare

There is concern over a lack of childcare as working parents may be unable to fill open jobs when they can't find available childcare or can't afford it. In 2024, only 6.2 percent of survey respondents living in the City indicated they were satisfied with childcare availability in Portage County (see Appendix E).

County Jail

Currently, the Portage County Jail is at capacity and needs new or upgraded facilities. However, as of this Plan's adoption, funding has not been approved to address this issue. Additionally, the planned expansion will require City Government at 1515 Strongs Avenue to relocate as this building is shared with several county departments.

Emergency Services

The survey administered during the 2024 County Comprehensive Plan project asked respondents to rank their satisfaction with existing services. Fire protection (80 percent), ambulance service (76 percent), and police protection (73 percent) were rated as the most satisfactory services out of all the services listed, but retirements and a shrinking workforce mean new strategies may be needed to recruit employees and maintain these services.

Groundwater Protection

Groundwater is discussed extensively in Chapter 2 of this plan. Ultimately, the groundwater quality and quantity impacts the type of public facilities needed, such as wells, treatment plants, and stormwater ponds. Privately-operated wells and septic facilities also impact groundwater, especially as existing systems age and new systems are constructed. According to the survey administered during the 2024 Portage County Comprehensive Plan's creation, 45 percent of respondents living in the City indicated that groundwater quality was "good" or "excellent," but about 47 percent agreed that it had decreased in quality over the past decade. Countywide, over 90 percent of survey respondents indicated a desire to protect groundwater resources, and this will continue to be a concern affected by both developed and undeveloped land uses.

Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Tourism

Trail systems can also enhance the tourism economy, as evidenced by the Green Circle and Tomorrow River Trails. The Green Circle Trail forms urban trail connections in the City of Stevens Point and Villages of Park Ridge, Plover, and Whiting, while the Tomorrow River State Trail connects this urban core to rural areas and small villages to the east. While both facilities serve residents, they are also destinations for those traveling to the area. Additionally, Stevens Point is known for its variety of cultural assets, emerging food scene, and close ties to the agricultural community and food production. There is an opportunity to further connect, enhance, and market these attractions to support local tourism.

Renewable Energy

Large-scale solar arrays have an increasing presence in Central Wisconsin due to their location near transmission lines and good air quality. The survey administered during the 2023-2024 Comprehensive Plan process revealed that almost 74 percent of City residents agree or strongly agree that renewable energy production is important to the future of Portage County (see Attachment E). Additionally, Electric Vehicles (EVs) could increase demand for electricity and charging stations. There are concerns over the location of these facilities, and the potential to embracing smaller-scale renewable energy opportunities that directly benefit energy customers.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goals

1. Provide cost-effective utilities, community facilities, and services that serve the needs of new development and redevelopment.
2. Support the infrastructure, public services, and facilities needed for economic development.
3. Support infrastructure that ensures the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce.
4. Explore the expansion of renewable energy in the City in a way that does not interfere with future growth areas.

Objectives

1. Identify areas of future growth and only extend infrastructure, utilities, and services when the density and tax base can support it.
2. Ensure that planned utilities are sized appropriately and have capacity for the type and intensity of new development.
3. Ensure that the City's parks are sized and located evenly throughout the City with a variety of playgrounds and recreational facilities that are high quality and accessible for all.
4. Plan for future park and conservancy land demand and acquire acreage as development occurs.
5. Utilize sensitive landscapes as conservancy areas that protect wildlife habitat, absorb rainfall and runoff, and provide passive recreational opportunities with minimal development.
6. Work with neighboring parcels on annexation and sewer service requests as well as septic systems age and the City's utilities approach these areas.
7. Respect property owners who do not currently wish to connect to City utilities as infrastructure is being extended.
8. Support the City's healthcare providers to expand healthcare options for an aging population with varying needs.
9. Support public health initiatives in the City, like those found in the Portage County Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plans.
10. Work with and support the City's educational and job training institutions.
11. Enhance education and workforce readiness, ensuring residents have the education and skills needed to reach their full potential.
12. Support small-scale renewable energy projects that benefit businesses and residents.
13. Support cost-effective water management strategies that minimize demand on stormwater systems.
14. Support energy efficiency upgrades that reduce energy costs.

Policies

1. Review development fees to ensure new development pays for the infrastructure, utilities, and services it receives.
2. Utilize the existing capacity of services and facilities to be used before new services and facilities are provided.
3. Maintain an up-to-date sewer service area (SSA) plan that identifies how utilities will expand as development occurs.
4. Development at densities that require water and sewer service (3 or more units per acre for residential, for example) is promoted over sprawling, large lot development.
5. Maintain an up-to-date Parks and Outdoor Recreation Plan to ensure high quality parks and recreational opportunities while qualifying the City for possible programs to help pay for park infrastructure.
6. Reserve natural drainageways and stream corridors for nonmotorized transportation and stormwater infrastructure.

7. Continue to support the rehabilitation and management of McDill Pond using financially and environmentally sustainable practices.
8. Along with enforcing land use and zoning patterns that minimize impacts to surface water and groundwater, explore rehabilitation of water resources, educational opportunities, and water treatment techniques that protect and enhance drinking water quality and safety.
9. Monitor emerging water contaminants and programs that help address them.
10. Provide adequate police, fire, emergency services, and government services as efficiently as possible to maximize the City's financial resources.
11. Provide quality Broadband options while improving download/upload speeds.
12. Connect workers with institutions that provide education, training, mentorship, and apprenticeship opportunities.
13. Support local school districts, universities, medical colleges, and technical schools to ensure a skilled workforce as younger generations comprise a smaller share of the overall population.
14. Maintain the City's Solsmart designation to enable the expansion of small-scale solar energy facilities.
15. Partner with the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) and Focus on Energy to distribute energy efficiency information and resources.
16. Utilize landscaping in the public right-of-way that minimizes maintenance and assists with water management.
17. Promote programs that make utilities more affordable, such as PACE financing and stormwater credits.
18. Use cost-effective processes for burying utility lines with road construction projects.
19. Explore reviving discontinued brush pickup and local composting programs.
20. Plan for new parks in future development areas, especially on the City's east and northeast sides.
21. Investigate opportunities for more indoor and community spaces that support year-round recreational and social programming.
22. Investigate opportunities for small-scale, onsite renewable energy production and local energy production management.
23. Continue to implement stormwater management with new development and redevelopment.
24. Plan for increasing energy demand from new development and electric vehicles by ensuring enough capacity regarding substations and other infrastructure.