

## ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Development of Iron County’s Comprehensive Plan begins with an overview of the county based on known information from the past to present and projections of the future covering a 20-year planning horizon. This element gives an overview of demographic trends and background information necessary to develop subsequent components of the comprehensive plan. This information would include such things as past, present, and future population; household and employment forecasts; demographic trends; age distribution; education and income levels; and employment characteristics.

### 1.2 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Since the creation of Iron County from Ashland and Oneida Counties in 1893, the county’s population has been quite erratic. The population increased the most in the ten years from 1910 to 1920, gaining 1,955 people, and sustained its greatest loss from 1940 to 1950, losing 1,335 residents. In the last ten years, the county has gained 708 people. Table 1.1 shows in more detail the historical population of Iron County over the last 100 years.

**Table 1.1: Iron County: Population 1900-2000**

Year	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Pop.	6,616	8,306	10,261	9,933	10,049	8,714	7,830	6,533	6,730	6,153	6,861

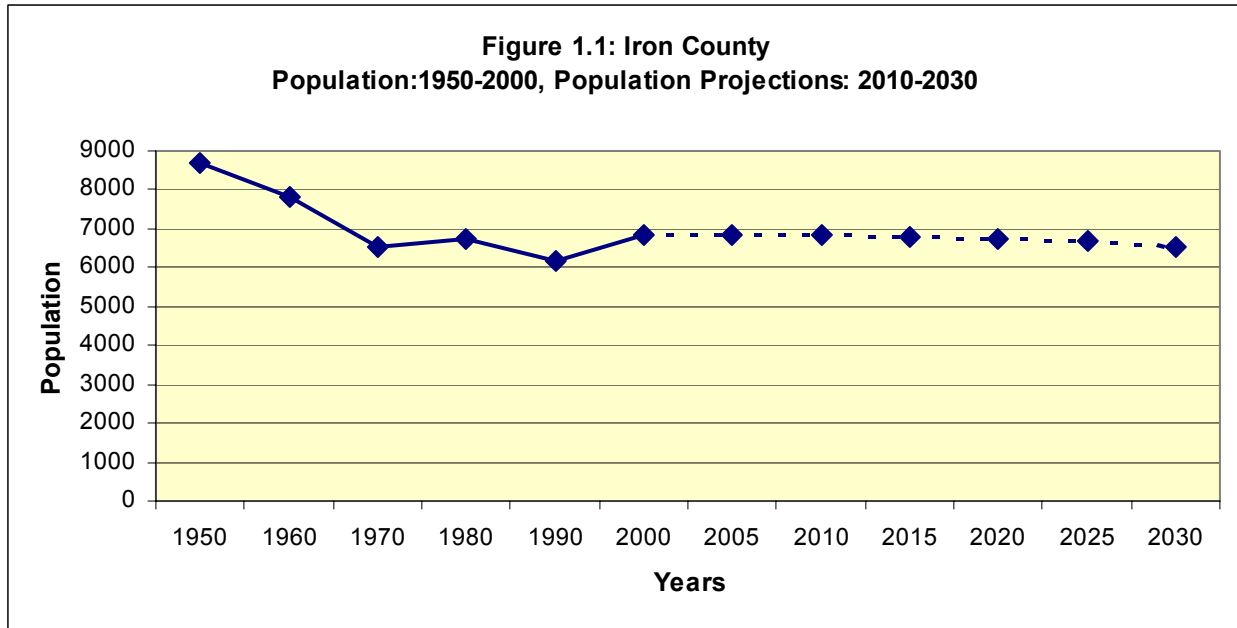
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

#### Population Projections

Table 1.2 shows population projections for Iron County from 2005 to 2030. These projections are based on past and current population trends and are intended to be a baseline guide for county decision makers. The projections indicate that Iron County will experience a slow decline in population over the next 25 years. Although Iron County is “projected” to decline in population over the next 25 years, many feel that the county will actually increase in population like it has over the last decade. Figure 1.1 charts both the historical population as well as the projected population change through 2030 for the county.

**Table 1.2: Iron County Population Projections 2005-2030**

Year	Iron County
2005	6,841
2010	6,830
2015	6,785
2020	6,719
2025	6,684
2030	6,554
<b>Absolute Change 2005-2030</b>	<b>-287</b>



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; WI Dept. of Administration, Demographic Services Center

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

### **Ethnicity & Ancestral Composition**

An ethnic group consists of those who conceive themselves as being alike. Most often times, these groups share a common ancestry, history, or culture. This may include geographic origins, family patterns, language, values, cultural norms, religion, music, and employment patterns. Table 1.3 details the ethnicity of Iron County residents. Ethnic backgrounds for Germans and Italians are strongest in Iron County.

**Table 1.3: Iron County Ethnicity**

Austrian	47	Irish	374
Croatian	24	Italian	1,082
Czech	57	Norwegian	195
Danish	29	Polish	538
Dutch	35	Russian	22
English	273	Scottish	36
Finnish	880	Slovak	34
French (except Basque)	189	Swedish	212
French Canadian	102	United States or American	119
German	1,213	<i>Other Ancestries</i>	<i>1,375</i>
Hungarian	25	<b><i>Total Ancestries Reported</i></b>	<b><i>6,861</i></b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Most county residents reported their race as white (98.3%) in the 2000 U.S. Census. Other racial categories only accounted for two percent of the total population and are shown in Table 1.4.

**Table 1.4: Race in Iron County, 2000**

Race	Iron County	
	Number	Percent
White	6,743	98.3%
Black	6	<1%
American Indian & Alaska Native	41	<1%
Asian & Pacific Islander	12	<1%
Other Races	4	<1%
Two or more races	55	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,861</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000 (SF 1)

**Demographic Change & Age Distribution**

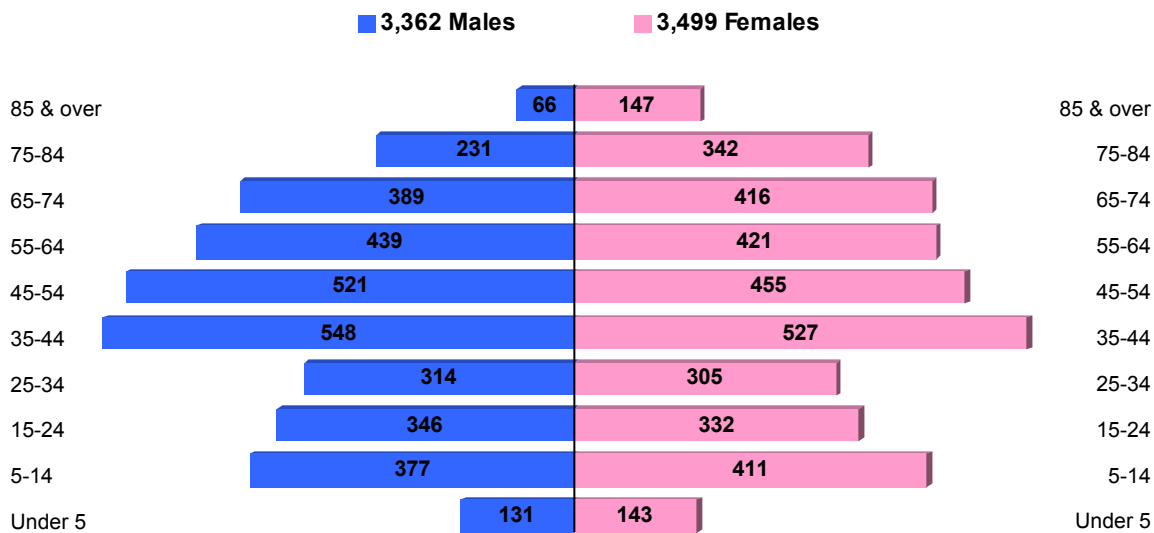
In the years between 1990 and 2000, Iron County saw a decrease in children 5 years old and younger (-11.6%), persons age 25 to 34 (-22.1%), and persons age 65 to 74 (-4.6%). Of the age groups showing an increase for this time period, the group that grew most rapidly was persons aged 45 to 54 (+52.5%). Table 1.5 illustrates the net gain/loss and percentage change by age group, while the population pyramid in Figure 1.2, presents a visual depiction of the age categories for 2000 in Iron County.

**Table 1.5: Iron County Demographic Change, 1990-2000**

Age category	Absolute Change: 1990-2000	Percent Change: 1990-2000
Under 5	-36	-11.6%
5 to 14	+8	+1.0%
15 to 24	+62	+10.1%
25 to 34	-176	-22.1%
35 to 44	+277	+34.7%
45 to 54	+336	+52.5%
55 to 64	+146	+20.4%
65 to 74	-39	-4.6%
75 to 84	+70	+13.9%
85 and over	+60	+39.2%
<b>Selected age categories</b>		
All inhabitants 14 and under	-28	-2.6%
All inhabitants 24 and under	+34	+2.0%
All inhabitants 65 and over	+91	+6.1%
All inhabitants 75 and over	+130	+19.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (SF 1)

**Figure 1.2: 2000 Iron County Age Distributions**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (SF 1)

In 2000, Iron County had 3,362 males and 3,499 females. The median age of Iron County residents is 45 years old, compared to the median age of 36 years for the State of Wisconsin.

**Population of Municipal Divisions**

**Historical Population**

Table 1.6 indicates the populations of each civil division and their change in population from 1950 to 2000. Of the county’s 12 civil divisions, 10 units sustained a loss of population. The only municipalities to gain inhabitants were the Towns of Sherman, which gained 172 people (104.9%), and Mercer, which gained 758 persons (77.8%). The greatest decreases came from the Town of Anderson at 50 percent and the Towns of Knight, Saxon, and Pence, which all declined by about 46 percent. The incorporated Cities of Hurley and Montreal both decreased by roughly 40 percent over the same period.

Table 1.6: Historical Population, 1950-2000								
MUNICIPALITY	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	Absolute Change 1950-2000	Percent Change 1950-2000
<b>Towns</b>								
Town of Anderson	122	110	92	91	69	61	-61	-50.0%
Town of Carey	273	221	194	179	175	191	-82	-30.0%
Town of Gurney	161	129	135	153	143	158	-3	-1.9%
Town of Kimball	607	514	468	499	513	540	-67	-11.0%
Town of Knight	518	417	324	294	265	284	-234	-45.2%
Town of Mercer	974	1,048	1,003	1,425	1,325	1,732	+758	+77.8%
Town of Oma	396	317	265	298	260	355	-41	-10.4%
Town of Pence	371	314	234	191	181	198	-173	-46.6%

**Table 1.6: Historical Population, 1950-2000**

MUNICIPALITY	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	Absolute Change 1950-2000	Percent Change 1950-2000
Town of Saxon	655	483	371	362	335	350	-305	-46.6%
Town of Sherman	164	153	152	336	267	336	+172	+104.9%
<b>Cities</b>								
City of Hurley	3,034	2,763	2,418	2,015	1,782	1,818	-1216	-40.1%
City of Montreal	1,439	1,361	877	887	838	838	-601	-41.8%
<b>Iron County</b>	<b>8,714</b>	<b>7,830</b>	<b>6,533</b>	<b>6,730</b>	<b>6,153</b>	<b>6,861</b>	<b>-1853</b>	<b>-21.3%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### **Projected Changes Through 2025**

Table 1.7 indicates population projections for the civil divisions through the year 2025. Iron County is projected to see a declining population through 2025 with a total net decrease of roughly 2.3 percent.

**Table 1.7: Population Projections, 2005-2025**

Municipality	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	Absolute Change 2005-2025	Change 2005-2025
<b>Towns</b>							
Town of Anderson	56	52	48	43	40	-16	-28.6%
Town of Carey	192	193	193	193	193	1	0.5%
Town of Gurney	158	159	158	157	157	-1	-0.6%
Town of Kimball	527	515	501	487	475	-52	-9.9%
Town of Knight	279	274	269	263	258	-21	-7.5%
Town of Mercer	1,816	1,896	1,962	2,018	2,077	261	14.4%
Town of Oma	380	404	425	442	461	81	21.3%
Town of Pence	193	189	184	179	175	-18	-9.3%
Town of Saxon	340	331	321	310	301	-39	-11.5%
Town of Sherman	345	354	361	366	372	27	7.8%
<b>Cities</b>							
City of Hurley	1,750	1,687	1,619	1,550	1,492	-258	-14.7%
City of Montreal	805	776	744	711	683	-122	-15.2%
<b>Iron County</b>	<b>6,841</b>	<b>6,830</b>	<b>6,785</b>	<b>6,719</b>	<b>6,684</b>	<b>-157</b>	<b>-2.3%</b>

Source: Department of Administration - Demographic Services Center

## **1.3 HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS**

A *household* includes all of the people who occupy a housing unit. An analysis of the households of a community helps establish an understanding of the community’s character and provides insight into community life.

The 2000 Census identified 3,083 households in Iron County. Of this total, 1,960 are family households (includes a householder and one or more other people living in the same household

who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption), and 1,123 are non-family households (a householder living alone or with non-relatives only).

In reviewing the household characteristics and present composition of households, one noticeable characteristic comes forth: married-couple families with own children under 18 comprise only 16.8 percent of the households in the county. Table 1.8 reveals in more detail the composition and characteristics of households in Iron County.

<b>Table 1.8: Household Characteristics</b>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent of all households</b>
<b>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>3,083</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Family Households (families)	1,960	63.6%
Married couple families	1,634	53.0%
Married couple families with own children under 18	519	16.8%
Married couple families with <u>no</u> children under 18	1,115	36.2%
Non-family Households	1,123	36.4%
Householder age 65 or older	1,051	34.1%
1 person in household	986	32.0%
2 persons in household	1,233	40.0%
3 persons in household	389	12.6%
4 persons in household	312	10.1%
5 persons in household	108	3.5%
6 persons in household	45	1.5%
7 or more persons in household	10	0.3%
Average household size	2.19	(x)
Average family size	2.74	(x)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, (SF 1)

### **Household Projections**

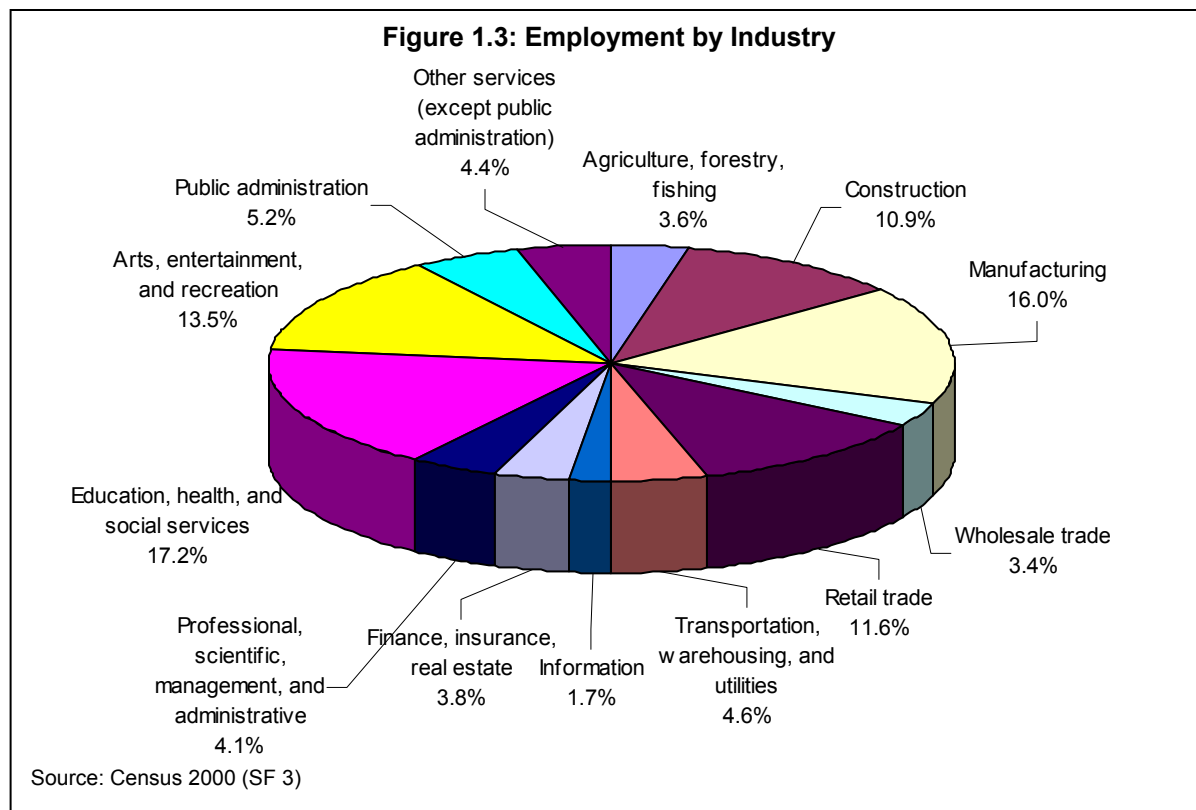
Household projections for Iron County to the year 2025 are displayed in Table 1.9. From 2000 to 2025, the county is projected to gain 273 households (approximately 11 per year), an increase of nearly 8.9 percent.

<b>Table 1.9: Households 1980-2000, Projected Households 2005-2025</b>								
<b>Iron County</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
U.S. Census	2,664	2,602	3,083	--	--	--	--	--
Projections	--	--	--	3,159	3,255	3,322	3,342	3,356

Sources: US Census Bureau; Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center

## 1.4 EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

According to Census 2000 figures, approximately 2,871 Iron County residents were employed at that time in either the county or elsewhere. See Transportation Element for commuting patterns. The Educational, Health, and Social Services industry sector employed the most town residents at 494. Manufacturing employed the second largest number of residents at 460. Figure 1.3 displays employment of Iron County residents by percentage of industry sector.



### Iron County Labor Force

A community's labor force is that portion of the population that is employed or actively seeking employment. Table 1.10 lists Iron County labor force statistics for the last ten years on an average annual basis. It should be noted that Iron County employment fluctuates and changes on a seasonal basis. According to Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development data, Iron County's labor force numbers have fluctuated up and down over the last ten years. Also, unemployment rates in 2002 and 2003 climbed to the highest level since 1993

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Labor Force	3,165	3,123	3,268	3,295	3,216	3,201	3,304	3,383	3,342	3,406
Employed	2,905	2,898	3,004	3,035	2,963	3,015	3,085	3,148	3,057	3,117
Unemployed	261	225	264	260	253	186	219	235	285	289
Unemp. Rate	8.2%	7.2%	8.1%	7.9%	7.9%	5.8%	6.6%	7.0%	8.5%	8.5%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, LAUS

**Average Annual Wages**

As shown in Table 1.11, annual average wages earned by workers in Iron County in 2003 fell short of the statewide average for all but one industry sector. Workers employed in the industry sectors of Manufacturing, Financial Activities, and Professional & Business Services received less than 60 percent of the State of Wisconsin average for workers in those same fields. Workers in the Natural Resources & Mining industry sector earned the highest average annual wage followed closely by the Construction industry. Iron County’s average annual wage for all industries is ranked 69 out of 72 counties in the State.

**Table 1.11: 2003 Annual Average Wage by Industry Division**

	<i>*Iron County Average Annual Wage</i>	<i>State Average Annual Wage</i>	<i>Percent of State Average</i>
All Industries	\$22,428	\$33,423	67.10%
Construction	\$33,312	\$40,228	82.81%
Education & Health Services	\$26,398	\$35,045	75.33%
Financial Activities	\$24,287	\$42,946	56.55%
Information	ND	\$39,175	NA
Leisure & Hospitality	\$8,724	\$12,002	72.69%
Manufacturing	\$24,442	\$42,013	58.18%
Natural Resources & Mining	\$31,096	\$25,723	120.89%
Other Services	\$19,419	\$19,710	98.52%
Professional & Business Services	\$19,801	\$38,076	52.00%
Public Administration	\$28,975	\$35,689	81.19%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	\$18,833	\$28,896	65.17%

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Covered Employment and Wages (ES-202), Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development  
 ND = Non Disclosable--data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards

**Top Iron County Employers**

The Education and Health Care; Manufacturing; and Trade, Transportation, and Utilities industry sectors are the top three employment sectors in the county. See Element 6 for details on number of businesses and jobs for all industries for 2003. According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, the ten largest employers in Iron County as of June 2003 are listed in Table 1.12.

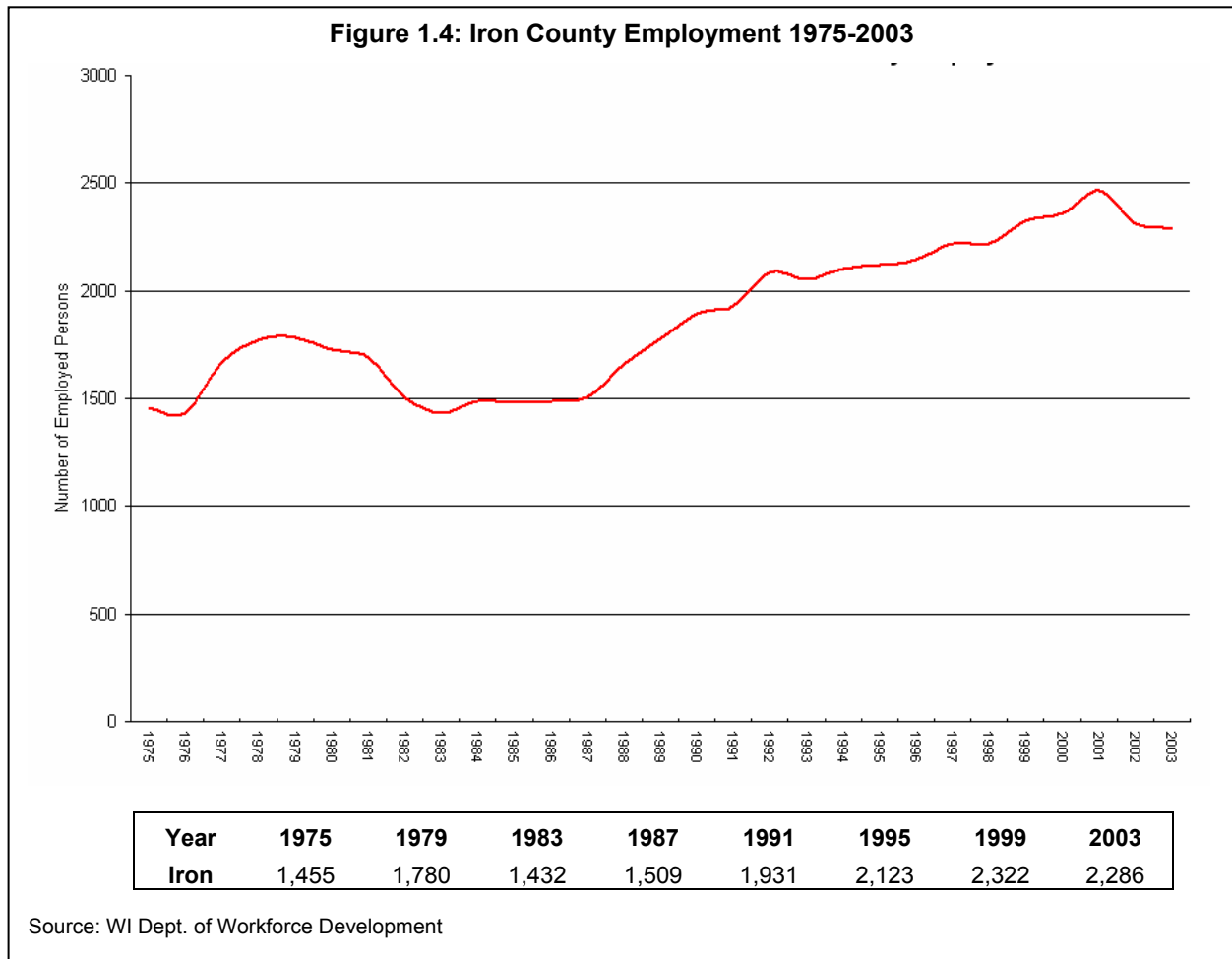
**Table 1.12: Top 10 Iron County Employers**

<b>Employer Name</b>	<b>Product or Service</b>	<b>Employment Size Range</b>
Hurley School District	Elementary and Secondary School	100-249
Action Floor Systems LLC	Hardwood Dimension and Flooring Mills Mfg.	100-249
Villa Maria Healthcare Center	Skilled Nursing Care Facility	100-249
Art Unlimited Sportswear LLC	Men's and Boys' Clothing, NEC Mfg.	50-99
Iron County	Executive & Legislative Govt. Office	50-99
Wayne Nasi Construction Inc.	General Contractors-Nonresidential Buildings	50-99
The Copsps Corp	Grocery Store	50-99
Giovanoni True Value Hardware Inc.	Hardware Store	50-99
Midwest Forest Products, Inc.	Logging	20-49
Liberty Bell Chalet Inc.	Limited Service-Restaurant	20-49

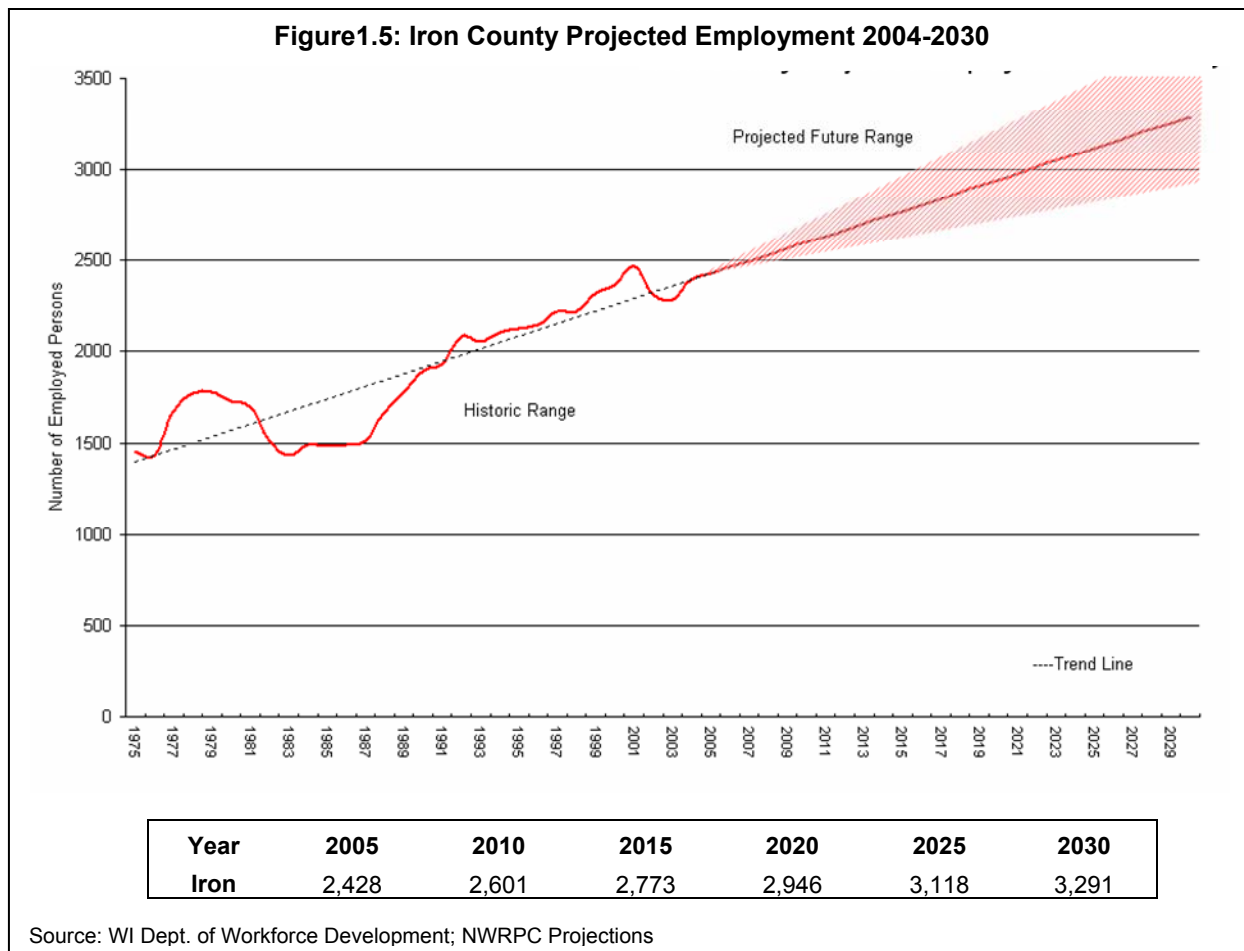
Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development June 2003

### Iron County Employment Forecast

Based on data from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) highlighting the number of jobs with employers located in Iron County from 1975 to 2003, employment projections were developed by NWRPC to 2030. Figure 1.4 shows the employed persons for 1975 to 2003 and Figure 1.5 shows not only the past employment data but also the employment projections for future years to 2030.



Analyzing the local employment data from 1975-2003 derived employment projections for Iron County. The “trend line” in Figure 1.5 depicts a “best fit” of the known data values and a projection of the future data values. The shaded area in Figure 1.5 represents a range of probability, meaning that it is more likely that the future value will fall somewhere within this range rather than directly along the trend line. This is a very simplistic model to be used for general planning purposes. The Wisconsin DWD will develop more detailed county projections.



## 1.5 INCOME LEVELS AND POVERTY RATES

### Median Household Income

The 2000 U.S. Census reports a median household income of \$29,580 for Iron County. This figure is lower than the median household income of \$43,791 for the state. Of the county’s households in 1999, 60.1 percent report an annual income of over \$25,000. Table 1.14 shows in more detail the average annual income for households in Iron County.

Table 1.14: Iron County Household Income		
Annual Income	Number of Households	Percent of Households
Less than \$10,000	366	11.8%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	306	9.9%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	562	18.2%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	1,185	38.3%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	549	17.7%
\$100,000 and over	126	4.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 (SF 3)

**Per Capita Income, Per Capita Personal Income, & Poverty Rate**

Per capita *money* income (PCI) is defined as all resident income divided by population and is reported by census data. It is composed of generally traceable money from wages, interest, dividends, welfare program payments, etc. It does not take into account money received from sale of property, money borrowed, exchange of money between relatives in same households, tax refunds, gifts, and insurance payments, which per capita *personal* income (PCPI) figures do take into consideration. Thus, PCPI figures are always higher than PCI. The U.S. Census Bureau reports PCI and the Bureau of Economic Analysis, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, calculates PCPI at the county level on a yearly basis.

As indicated in Table 1.15, Iron County’s PCI and PCPI are significantly lower than the state’s averages. Per capita personal income for Iron County is only 75 percent of the state PCPI.

Poverty rates are determined on the basis of money income and, therefore, do not reflect the fact that many low-income people receive non-cash benefits. The percent of Iron County inhabitants below the poverty level is higher than the State of Wisconsin.

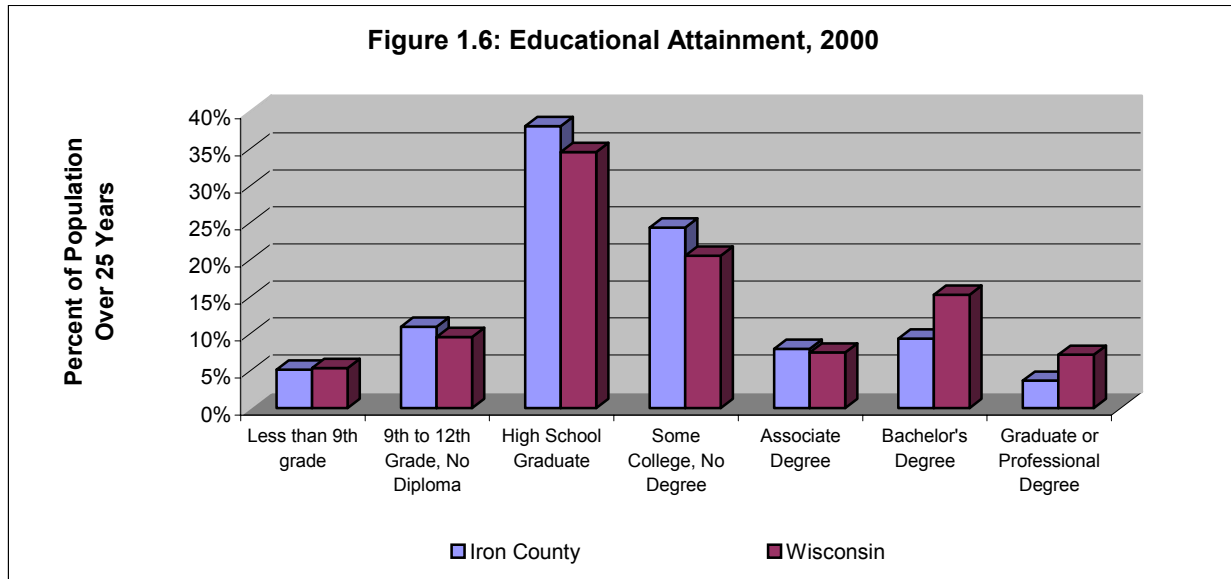
<b>Table 1.15: Iron County and the State of Wisconsin: Income and Poverty Levels</b>		
	<b>Iron County</b>	<b>State of Wisconsin</b>
Per Capita Personal Income (2001)	\$21,936	\$29,196
Per Capita Income (1999)	\$17,371	\$21,271
Percent of inhabitants below poverty level	11.1%	8.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000; U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis

**1.6 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

A good indicator of economic potential for an area is the educational attainment of its residents. Figure 1.6 details educational attainment of Iron County residents compared to the State of Wisconsin residents.

According to the 2000 Census, 5,124 Iron County residents were aged 25 and over. Of this age group, 45 percent have some education beyond high school, but only 13 percent hold a college degree. Statewide, 22.5 percent of the same population group holds a college degree.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 (SF 3)

## 1.7 OVERALL PLANNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Iron County Comprehensive Planning Ad Hoc Steering Committee has prepared a number of goals, objectives and actions in addressing land use and other activities in the county. The goals and objectives are intended to assist the county board and local property owners in implementing the actions. It is imperative the set of goals, objectives, and actions described in this plan are implemented to fully achieve the desired outcome. A full set of the goals, objectives, and actions with a timeframe for achievement are included in the Implementation Element of this plan.

The overall goal is to maintain the quality of life in Iron County. To do this, the overall objective is to guide future development and redevelopment of the county in a manner consistent with all town plans and with the goals, objectives, actions, and identified programs contained in this document. The overall action is to adopt and implement this comprehensive plan and continue to work with towns on decisions regarding land use in the future. The overall programs and actions outlined throughout this comprehensive plan represent the methods to achieve the overall plan goal.