

Barron County Strategic Planning Work Group

Monday, December 15, 2025 – 3:00 p.m.

Government Center – Room 2151

335 East Monroe Avenue - Barron, Wisconsin

AGENDA

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Public Meeting Notification
3. Special Matters & Announcements
4. Public Comment
5. Approve Agenda
6. Approve Minutes of 11-19-25 Meeting
7. Approve \$5,000 Payment to UW Extension – Strategic Planning
8. Discuss / Review / Approve Process for Next Five (5) Year Plan
9. Staff Updates
 - a. Tourism – Suggestion from Supervisor Fowler
 - b. Future of Health Care
 - c. WCA Magazine – Community Connections to Prosperity
 - d. Barron County Economic Development 2026 Work Plan
 - e. Housing Information – BCEDC Director Armstrong
10. Future Agenda Items
11. Set Next Meeting Date
12. Adjourn

PLEASE CALL 537-6841 IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND

cc: Patti Anderson, Randy Cook, Louie Okey, Karolyn Bartlett, John Banks, Craig Turcott, Jodi Kummet, Karla Potts-Shufelt, John Muench, Rachael Richie, Jeff French, Administrator, Corp. Counsel, Co. Clerk, Webmaster & 3 Public Postings

Any person who has a qualifying disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act and requires the meeting or materials at the meeting to be in an accessible format must contact the County Clerk's office at 715/537-6200 at least 24 hours prior to the meeting so that arrangements may be made to accommodate your request.

DRAFT

Minutes

Barron County Strategic Planning Work Group

Wednesday, November 19th, 2025 1.30pm

Barron County Government Center, RM 2151

335 East Monroe Avenue, Barron, WI 54812

Minutes taken by CA French

Committee/County Board Members Present: Okey, P. Anderson, Bartlett arrive 1.36pm, Banks, Turcott

Staff Present: French, Karla Potts-Schufelt, Muench,

Virtual Attendance: None

Others Present: U.W. Extension Staff: Lori Baltrusis, Karl Green, Sarah Brown,

#1. Call to Order: 1.30pm Chair okey

#2. Public Meeting Notification:
French provided notification of meeting public posting

#3. Special Matters and Announcements:
None

#4. Public Comment:
None

#5. Approve Agenda
Motion to approve: Turcott/P. Anderson, Carried

#6. Approve Minutes 03-10-2025 Meeting:
Motion to approve: Banks/Turcott, Carried

#7. Presentation UW Extension - Organizational/Direction Process Next Five Years:
Karl and Sarah provided information and document outlining plan timeline
Discussion on Committee size and representation.
Five to Six meetings for this group, discussed possibility of having plan ready for County Board approval by the March 2026 C/B meeting.
1st meeting review of Strategic Plan documents goals and ideas

DRAFT

#8. Discuss/Review Process for Next Five Year Plan:

The following are comments from members as to thought/ideas to be included:
Futuristic and achievable, thinking off the wall, visionary on the use of AI
Outdoor rec plan, bike and ped plan, how they match with the next five year plan
Mission and Vision Statement(s) revisions or updates thereto.
AI and the use of GovAI as a resource to increase employee productivity

#9. Small Homes - City of Rice Lake

Discussed: no action taken potential future agenda item

#10. Discuss/Review Adams County Homestead Credit Policy:

Discussed: no action taken potential future agenda item

#11. Five Year Recreation Plan - Coordination with Strategic Plan:

Beta document included with packet, discussed how to incorporate Rec. Plan with Strategic Plan

#12. Discover Media Works Multi-Year Ad / Video / TV Campaign:

Chair Okey discussed the \$60,000 costs, no action taken.

#13. Discuss Review Current Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- A. Special CA Reports - Schools
- B. Continuation of CJCC
- C. Continuation of Family Drug Reunification Court: *(Opioid dollars)*
- D. Red Cedar Bridge Signs *(Installed spring 2025)*
- E. Changes to Current Mission Statement - *(Future Agenda item)*
- F. Brownfield Technical Assistance - Broten Property City of Rice Lake *(Work on-going)*

For each of these items CA French, or Chair Okey provided information, no action taken.

#10. Staff Updates:

None

#9. Future Agenda Items:

Open Meetings enhancements for AI, Agenda, Minutes, etc.
Tourism - developing a targeted strategy
Costs for this plan
Mother in-law suites and control by BOA
Small Homes
Homestead credit policy
Coordination Rec. Plan with Strategic Plan
Mission Statement

DRAFT

#10. Set Next Meeting Date:

12-15-2025 1.30pm

#11. Adjourn:

Chair Okey declared adjourned at 2.50pm by unanimous consent

G:\google\googledocs\2025-11-19 Strategic Planning WG Minutes.docx

- December meeting
 - 30 Min - Discussion/Review of Historical Strategic Planning documents (including Goal/Directional Statements) (Karl Green)
 - 30 Min. - Discussion/Review of existing County Plans re: connections to Strategic Plan (Jeff French, Karl Green)
 - Review and refine/change Mission & Vision (Karl Green)
- January meeting
 - 60 Min. Data presentation on Barron County on County services
 - Economic (Dave Armstrong/Karl Green)
 - Demographic (Karl Green)
 - Financial (Jeff French)
 - 30 Min. Changes to Local/County landscape since last planning document
 - SP Committee & County Board (Jeff French)
 - County service delivery (Jeff French/Karl Green)
 - Department Heads
 - (Survey option-?)
- February meeting SWOT Analysis (Karl Green/Sarah Brown)
 - SP Committee & County Board
 - Department Heads
- March meeting
 - Refine & develop Strategic Plan directional statements (Karl Green/Sarah Brown)
- Late March/Early April meeting
 - Development and presentation of SP action Plan (Karl Green/Sarah Brown)



Jeff French <jeff.french@co.barron.wi.us>

Article

1 message

Bartlett, Karolyn K. <Bartlett.Karolyn@mayo.edu>

Mon, Nov 24, 2025 at 11:09 AM

To: "Jeff French (jeff.french@co.barron.wi.us)" <jeff.french@co.barron.wi.us>

Just wanting to share a recent article that I just found in my reading. This is healthcare but as we talk County Strategic planning, I think some of this will be our situation as well.

By 2030, about two-thirds of healthcare tasks are expected to be automated or augmented by technology, according to the World Economic Forum.

Here are seven things to know from the 2025 Future of Jobs Report, which surveyed leaders in late 2024 from 1,043 companies, collectively representing more than 14.1 million employees across the globe:

1. In 2025, an estimated half of healthcare duties are performed predominantly by humans.
2. In 2030, only 34% of healthcare activities will be done mostly by humans.
3. In healthcare, 54% of that shift will be attributable to automation, with the rest driven by augmentation.
4. 73% of healthcare employers plan to complement and augment their workforces with new technologies, while 64% want to accelerate the automation of tasks and processes.
5. 92% of healthcare organizations say AI and big data will be increasingly important skills for their workforces by 2030.
6. 98% of healthcare businesses say AI and information processing technologies (such as big data, virtual reality and augmented reality) will drive transformation at their organizations in the next five years.
7. 51% say robots and autonomous systems will.

Barron County's Community Connections to Prosperity Steering Committee members (from left) Jenny Jorgenson, Cody Kargus, and Lori Zarhbock lend a hand at the hygiene product booth during a Centerpoint community event.



Community Connections to Prosperity

Building a Stronger Barron County, One Project at a Time

By Sarah Turner, Public Health Specialist, Barron County; Alisa Lammers, Caregiver Specialist and Health Promotions Coordinator, Aging and Disability Resource Center of Barron and Rusk Counties; and Jenny Jorgenson, Community Engagement Specialist, Mayo Clinic Health System

In Barron County, local leaders, service providers, and community members have come together with a simple yet powerful purpose: to make life a little easier for people living with the daily challenges of poverty. Rather than working alone, Community Connections to Prosperity members join forces to create short-term projects that solve real problems for families while building long-term community strength.

The group has become known for its 90-day projects. Small by design, these projects are focused, goal-driven, and ready to show results. The projects don't require years of planning or complicated funding. Instead, they use the energy and creativity of local people and partners who care about their neighbors.

► Small projects with a big impact

Community Connections to Prosperity first began with a tiny home project. After identifying a need for housing without strict restrictions, the group, inspired by another community's model, began the project of building small, affordable homes with the help of community volunteers. The response was immediate. People stepped forward, ready to lend their time and skills. Two tiny homes were quickly built. However, while the willingness to construct the homes was strong, finding suitable sites for them soon became the primary obstacle. Finally, in 2025, the two tiny homes were donated to the Salvation Army of Barron County, where they help to meet the immediate needs of unhoused guests.

Community Connections to Prosperity continues to imagine new 90-day projects, always asking, “What is the next small thing we can do that will make a big difference?”

Partners see what is possible when they combine their time, skills and creativity.

Another project, Loads of Love, started when partners noticed a pattern at local clothing giveaways. Some of the same recipients were attending giveaways frequently for more clothes. Follow-up questions revealed a simple but significant barrier: doing laundry can be out of reach for families living in poverty. A single load of laundry at a laundromat can cost \$5 or more, plus the cost of detergent. When every penny is needed for rent, food, and gas, clean clothes often get pushed aside.

Recognizing this, the group adapted a model from a neighboring county and launched free biweekly laundry events led by a local church. The project not only covers the cost of laundry, but also provides positive support and connection to additional resources through the volunteers running the events, giving neighbors in need a little breathing room in their budgets and restoring dignity in daily life.

Most recently, the Feed the Future fundraising project brought the community together to help fight hunger among school-aged children. Over \$20,000 was raised to support the local school district’s weekend food programs, ensuring that children don’t go without food outside of school hours. The project was spearheaded by local business owners, Brian and Kim Claudnic of Wolf’s Den Campground and Wolfpack charities in Cameron, who plan to make it an annual event.

► Centerpoint: Bringing help under one roof

While the smaller projects have been powerful, the signature effort of Community Connections to Prosperity is something bigger: the Centerpoint events, which bring dozens of service providers together in one place.

Transportation is a significant barrier in rural areas. Community Connections to Prosperity asked: What if people did not have to travel across the county for support? What if food, housing assistance, health care, and employment services were all available in one place for one day?

Centerpoint events answer both questions. Attendees walk into a welcoming space filled with local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and volunteers, all ready to provide assistance.

Every service is free and aimed at removing barriers.

One mother came seeking housing help but left with child care connections, a job lead and groceries for her family. Across all events, more than 6,000 pounds of food and \$15,000 in hygiene products have been distributed, reaching hundreds of people. Attendance averages over 150 people per event, with dozens of organizations participating.

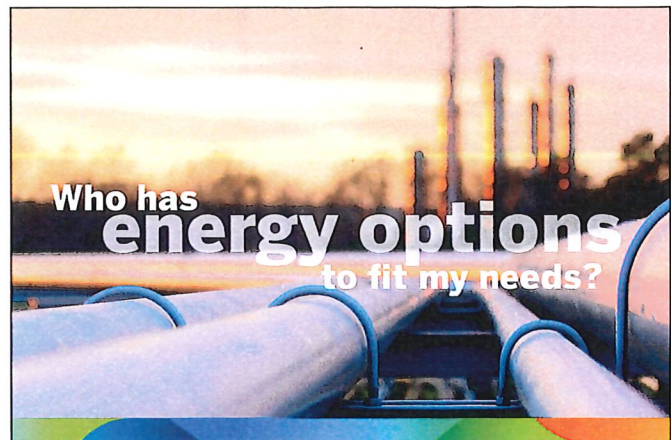
A remarkable achievement for a small, rural community.

Numbers tell part of the story, but the real impact is on individual lives. A man who had just lost his job found both food assistance and a path to training for new employment. A grandmother raising her grandchildren connected with health care and school resources in a single afternoon. A couple who had just moved to town had secured employment, but did

Continued on page 30



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
to Prosperity



Constellation, the endorsed energy supplier for WCA, offers comprehensive energy solutions and a variety of pricing options for electric, natural gas, and renewable energy products for organizations of any size, in every competitive energy market across the U.S.

To learn more about participating in the Constellation Energy Program, please contact Rich Cialabrini at richard.cialabrini@constellation.com or 847.738.2510.



associations.constellation.com/wca

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not have permanent housing. On what was their last night at a hotel, they came to the event and connected with a local shelter for temporary housing until they got paid and could secure permanent housing. Each person leaves with more than information — they leave with hope and a plan.

Centerpoint works because it's a shared effort. No single agency runs it. Local groups provide space, businesses donate meals and supplies, volunteers set up, and service providers connect people with the resources they need.

One volunteer remembered meeting a young man who did not know where to turn. By the end of the day, he left with several clear next steps and a sense of hope. This spirit of teamwork is what makes Community Connections to Prosperity unique. It is not just about giving things away. It is about creating a support network to navigate complicated systems and building a stronger community, where no one has to struggle alone.

► Looking ahead

Community Connections to Prosperity continues to

imagine new 90-day projects, always asking, "What is the next small thing we can do that will make a big difference?" Partners see what is possible when they combine their time, skills and creativity.

The group's leaders believe that these efforts send a powerful message. Poverty is not just an individual problem, but a community challenge, and when the community responds together, change is possible.

From paying for laundry and building tiny homes to raising money for hungry children and connecting neighbors to resources, Community Connections to Prosperity shows what local support can look like. It offers simple, practical solutions and brings people together. Most importantly, it shows that in Barron County, neighbors are willing to help each other create bridges to a better future, one project at a time. ■

Sarah Turner is a public health specialist with the Barron County Department of Health and Human Services and is co-chair of Community Connections to Prosperity. Alisa Lammers is a caregiver specialist and health promotions coordinator with the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Barron and Rusk Counties and a member of the Community Connections to Prosperity Steering Committee. Jenny Jorgenson is a community engagement specialist with Mayo Clinic Health System and a member of the Community Connections to Prosperity Steering Committee.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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	Total No. Copies (Net press run)	4,158	4,150
	Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions	3,447	3,445
	Paid/Requested In-County Mail Subscriptions	102	102
	Paid Distribution Outside USPS	0	0
	Other Classes Mailed Through USPS	0	0
	Total Paid	3,549	3,547
	Free/Nominal Rate Outside-County	320	322
	Free/Nominal Rate In-County	14	14
	Free/Nominal Rate Distribution by Mail-Other Classes Mailed Through USPS	54	30
	Free/Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail	134	134
	Total Free/Nominal Rate Distribution	522	500
	Total Distribution	4,071	4,047
	Copies not Distributed	87	103
	Total	4,158	4,150
	Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	87.18%	87.65%

**Barron County Economic Development Corporation
2026 Work Plan**

The following will review the proposed 2026 work plan for Barron County Economic Development Corporation. The areas of focus will be similar to 2025 but will be applied more broadly in an effort to bring in outside expertise to assist in each focus area.

1. Business Services
 - a. Start ups
 - i. Increased use of other businesses and programs to assist us in our start up program. This will help additional businesses start.
 - ii. On-going assistance in follow up with businesses started in the previous 24 months.
 - b. Scaling existing business especially this just out of startup.
 - i. Economic Gardening initiatives.
 - c. Business retention
 - i. Sales and/or expansion of existing businesses
 - ii. Other initiatives as defined by BRE interviews with existing employers
2. Community Economic Development
 - a. Housing initiatives
 - b. Childcare initiatives
 - c. Explore a growing trend in community economic development where investing in people, places, and quality of life is just as important as traditional business and job-focused strategies.
3. Tourism
 - a. Increase partnerships with municipalities that have tourism commissions to leverage efforts for marketing Barron County.
 - i. Rice Lake
 - ii. Barron
 - iii. Turtle Lake
 - b. Increase partnerships with other tourism promotion entities
 - i. Chambers of Commerce
 1. Chetek
 2. Rice Lake
 3. Barron
 4. Cumberland
 - ii. St Croix Tribe
 - iii. Identify others
4. Gain additional monetary support from business, Industry and other organizations including grants.

PLACE PROSPERITY

MOVING BEYOND ECONOMIC GROWTH TO ASSESS PROSPERITY

JOBS

LOW UNEMPLOYMENT

INCOME

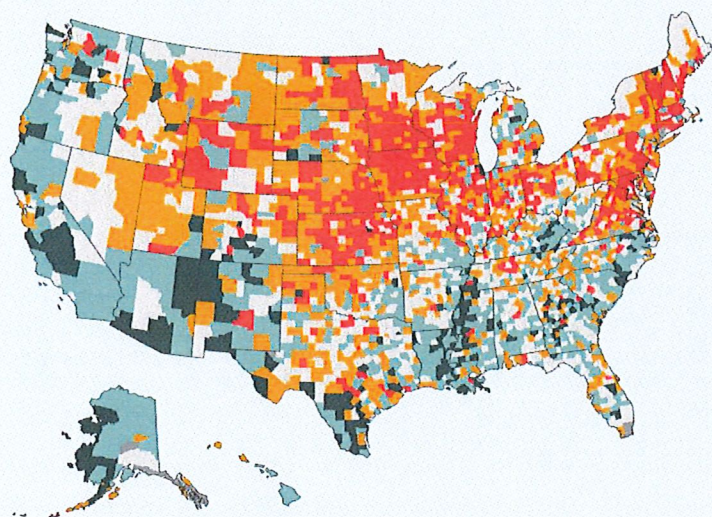
LOW POVERTY

EDUCATION

LOW DROP-OUT RATE

HOUSING

LOW HOUSING STRESS

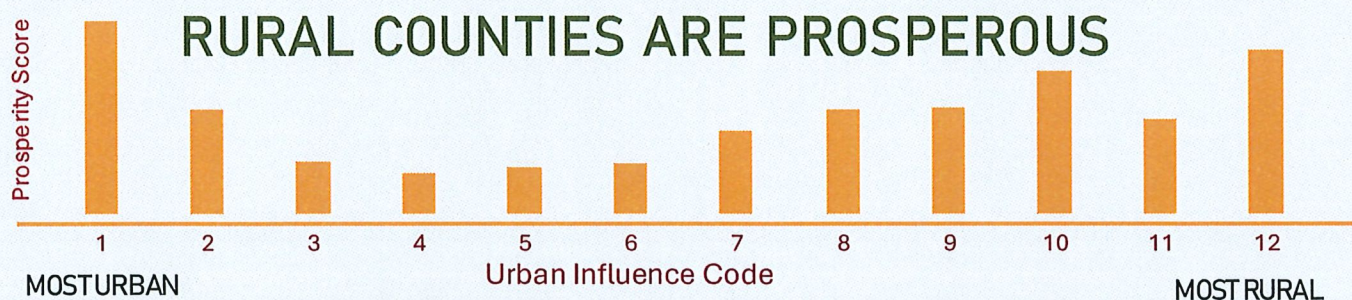


Lacking Measurable Prosperity Extremely Prosperous
Unit: County | Time Period: 1990-2022 | Data: US Census, ACS

We replicate and extend a well-received index of place prosperity using sequence analysis.

The result is a 5-category typology where every county is scored from “lacking measurable prosperity” to “extremely prosperous.”

Extremely Prosperous counties routinely score better than the national average across all four indicators: jobs, income, education, and housing.



18 % of rural counties
EXTREMELY
PROSPEROUS

WHEN PLACES ARE ASSESSED USING METRICS THAT GO BEYOND GROWTH,
RURAL COUNTIES ARE VERY COMPETITIVE WITH THEIR
URBAN COUNTERPARTS.

15 % of rural counties
IMPROVING
PROSPERITY

WHEN CONSIDERING THE CHANGES IN PROSPERITY OVER TIME,
RURAL COUNTIES ARE MORE LIKELY THAN URBAN
COUNTIES TO HAVE IMPROVED IN PROSPERITY SINCE
1990.

READ
MORE



Moving Beyond Growth to
Evaluate Change in
Community Well-Being



Understanding WI
Prosperity in the
National Context

Suggested Citation: Schmidt, Danielle, Tessa Conroy, and Steven Deller. "Place Prosperity: Moving Beyond Economic Growth to Assess Prosperity." 27 June 2025. www.RuralLivability.org

HOUSING AND HEALTH

LINKING COMMUNITY HEALTH AND HOUSING STRESS IN WISCONSIN

HOUSING FINANCIAL STRESS:

SPENDING **30% OR MORE** OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME ON RENT OR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS AND OTHER HOUSING COSTS

23 *Percent of Homeowners* IN WISCONSIN ARE HOUSING STRESSED

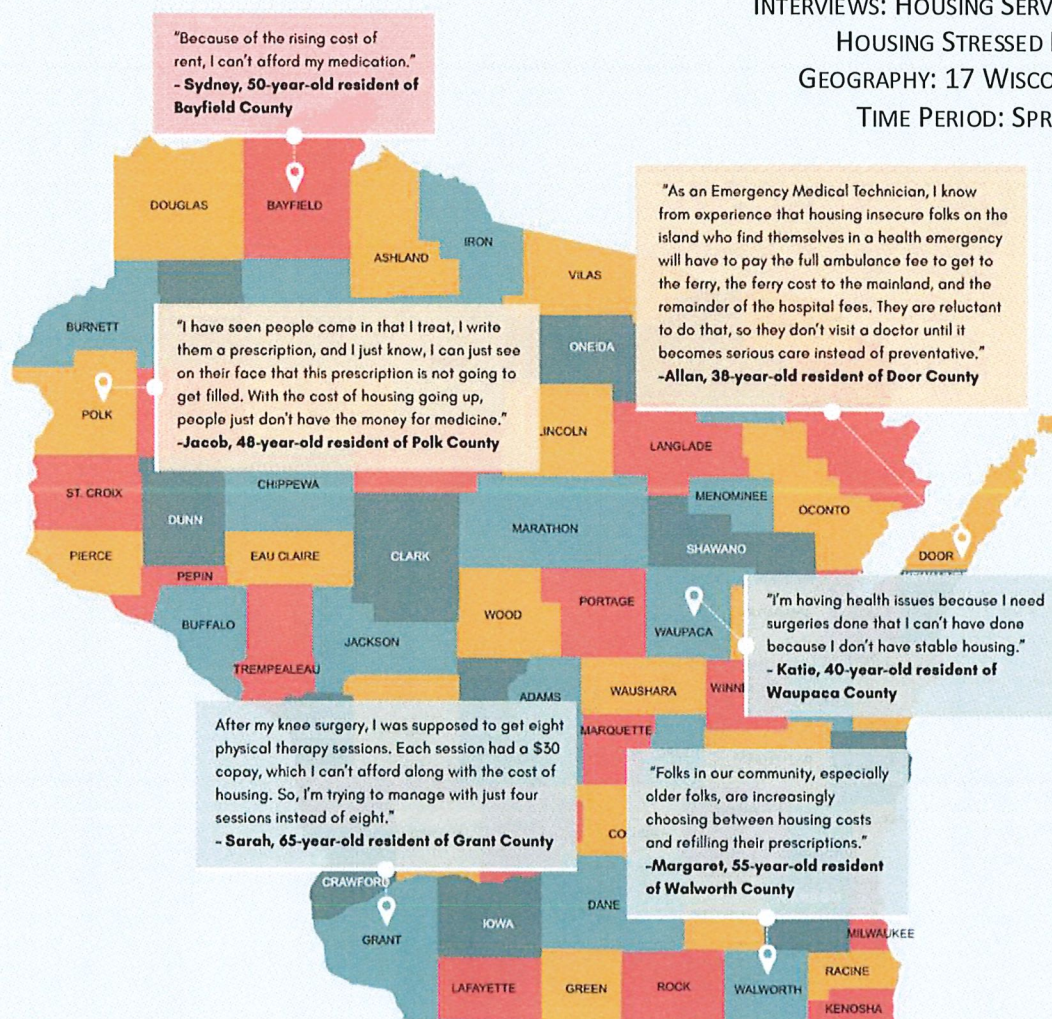
44 *Percent of Renters* IN WISCONSIN ARE HOUSING STRESSED

We examined county-level links between housing financial stress and health using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantitative data from the American Community Survey and County Health Rankings were spatially analyzed to reveal geographic patterns and correlations.

Qualitative data from interviews with 32 Wisconsin residents (ages 19-65) revealed a key theme: forgoing healthcare to afford housing.

INTERVIEWS: HOUSING SERVICE PROVIDERS AND
HOUSING STRESSED INDIVIDUALS
GEOGRAPHY: 17 WISCONSIN COUNTIES
TIME PERIOD: SPRING 2025



BY COUNTY, THE SHARE IN FAIR OR POOR HEALTH INCREASES WITH THE SHARE OF HOUSING STRESSED HOMEOWNERS



HOMEOWNERS ARE OLDER THAN RENTERS, ON AVERAGE, AND MORE LIKELY TO HAVE HEALTH ISSUES



HOUSING FINANCIAL STRESS MAY FORCE PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY OLDER RESIDENTS, TO FOREGO ESSENTIAL MEDICAL CARE

READ MORE



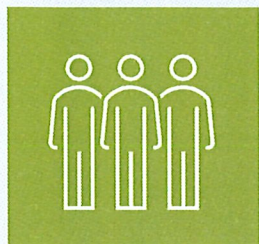
For more information please see:

Gaede, Erin, Conroy, Tessa and Deller, Steven. (2025). The Impact of Housing Financial Stress on Community Well-Being. *Indicator 7(3)*. University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension.



THE RURAL LIVABILITY PROJECT

LIVING WELL. LIVING RURAL.



1 IN 3
WISCONSINITES
LIVE IN A RURAL
COMMUNITY.

Growth is often equated with thriving, but we need a more nuanced understanding of rural well-being. **The Rural Livability Project at UW-Madison** aims to highlight and better understand thriving rural communities based on factors that go beyond economic growth.



NEW METHODS
AND MEASURES
OF LIVABILITY



RURAL-
CENTERED
ANALYSIS



RIGOROUS
ASSESSMENT OF
WHAT MATTERS



TARGETED FOR
REAL-WORLD
APPLICATION

RESEARCH

The Rural Livability Project is primarily a research effort to lay the foundation for our community development practices. Guided by theory and practice, we emphasize rigorous methods and measurement to define and understand what drives livability.



PRACTICE

Our research findings inform the work of Extension with communities through our placemaking, community economic analysis, strategic planning, downtown development, and entrepreneurship programs. Input from communities directs our research on livability.

THE 4TH WAVE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Focusing on **livability** is part of a new wave of economic development that emphasizes people: what they find appealing and what improves their quality of life. This new wave of economic development is supported by data. Increasingly, jobs follow people as opposed to the traditional idea that people follow jobs.

RURAL LIVABILITY INCLUDES:



CRITICAL
INSTITUTIONS



HOUSING
ACCESS & QUALITY



CIVIC
PARTICIPATION



DIGITAL
CONNECTION



NATURAL
AMENITIES



ARTS AND
CULTURE



PHYSICAL AND
MENTAL HEALTH



SOCIAL
CAPITAL

Tessa Conroy, Project Lead
Vilas Associate Professor
Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics
Community Economic Development Specialist
Division of Extension



Rural Partnerships Institute
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON