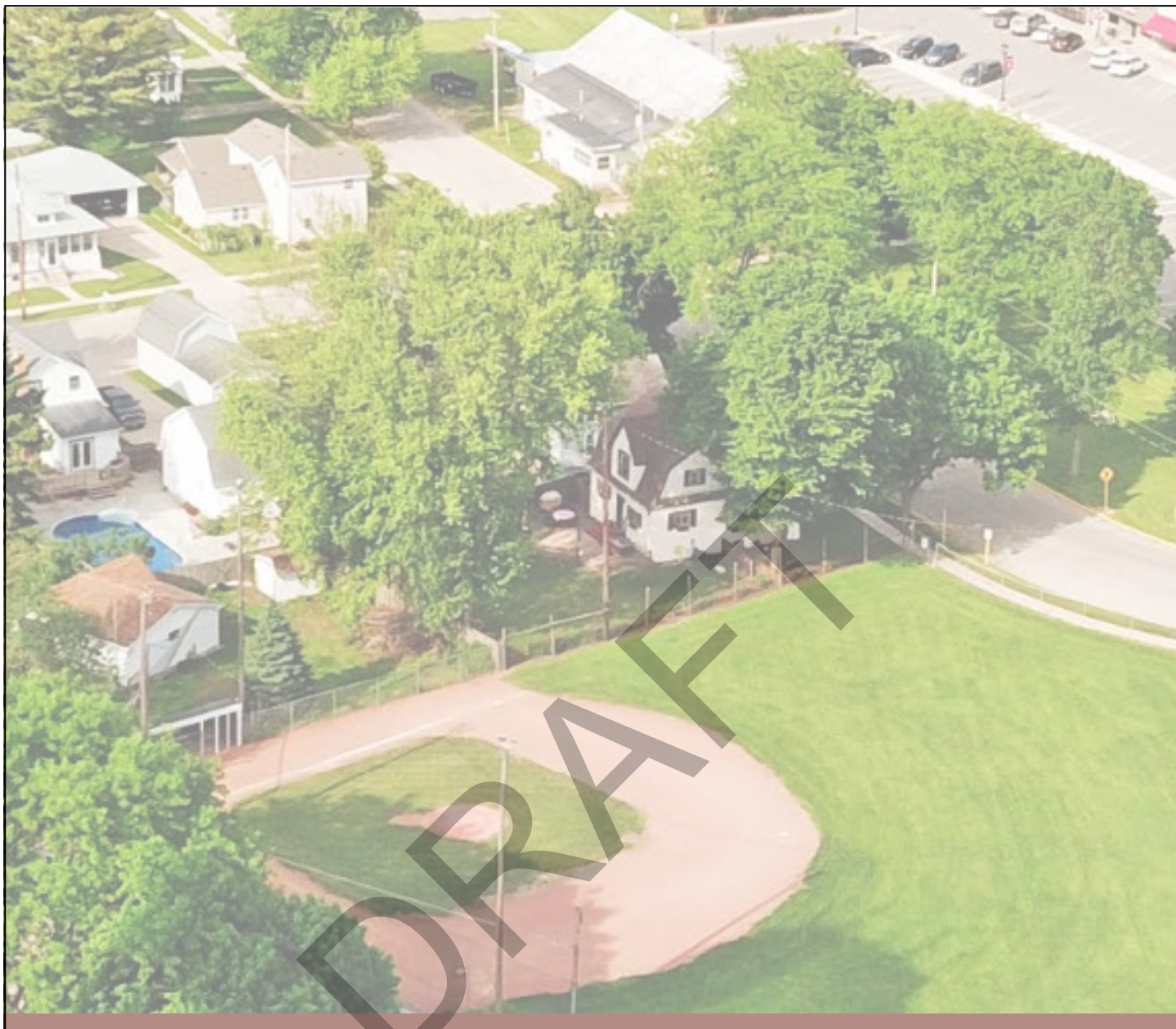




Milton Comprehensive Plan

Draft

Presented by: Redevelopment Resources & Studio GWA

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Chapter 1: Issues and Opportunities Element

This chapter provides an overview of important demographic trends and background information necessary to understand the changes occurring in the City of Milton. It also identifies key issues and opportunities for land development and/or redevelopment over the 20-year planning period. This chapter also contains goals, strategies, and recommendations to sustain the vitality of the City of Milton.

Demographic Trends and Projections

Demographic trends and projections enable communities to plan for future services and potential land uses to meet future needs for both residents and employers. Population trends and projections are key to planning services for residents as well as economic development indicators for potential employers. Household growth, employment, and income trends and projections are key for planning the quantity and types of housing needed.

Population

The City of Milton has experienced population growth from 2010 to 2020, according to Esri, growing from 5,512 to 5,726—an overall rise of 3.9% over the decade (Figure 1). During that same time, Rock County grew only 2.1%. However, by 2024, the population slightly decreased to 5,686, representing a decline of less than 1% while Rock County grew by the same percentage.

The population of Milton is subjectively representative of Rock County in terms of the distribution of the population across age cohorts, however, Milton tends to slightly skew to the younger population (Figure 2).

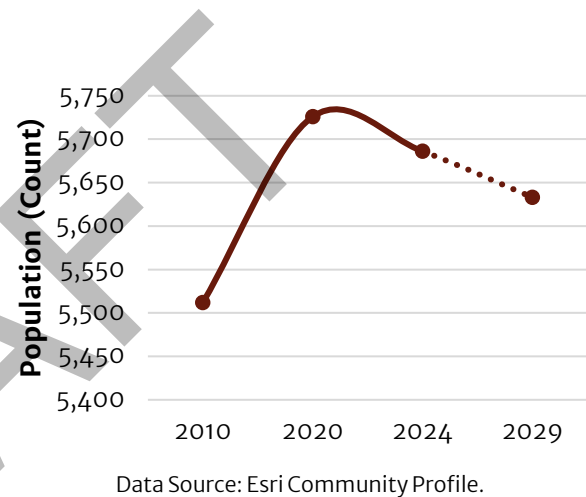


Figure 1. Milton Population Trends and Projections (2010–2029)

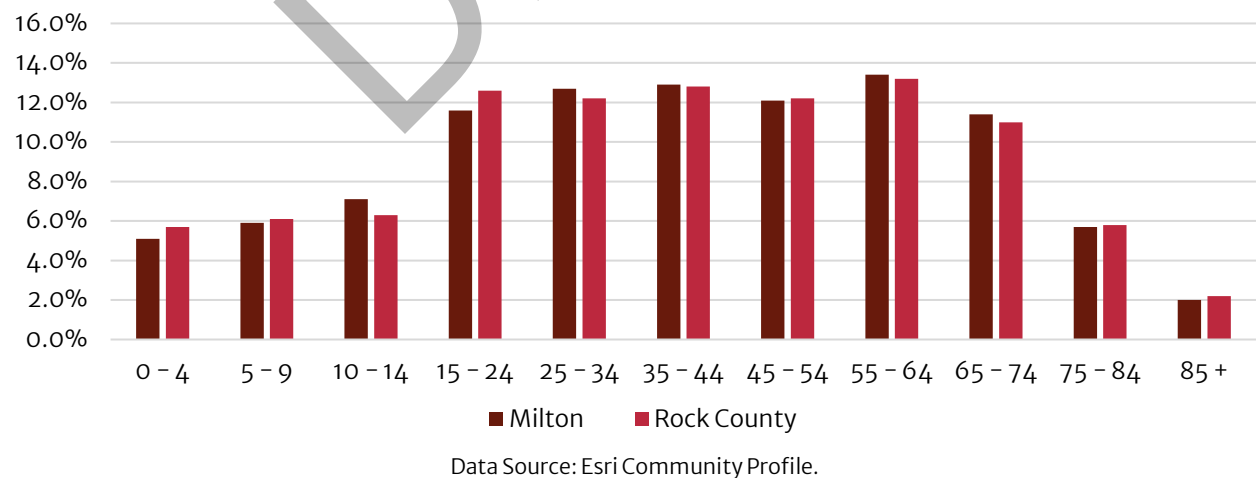
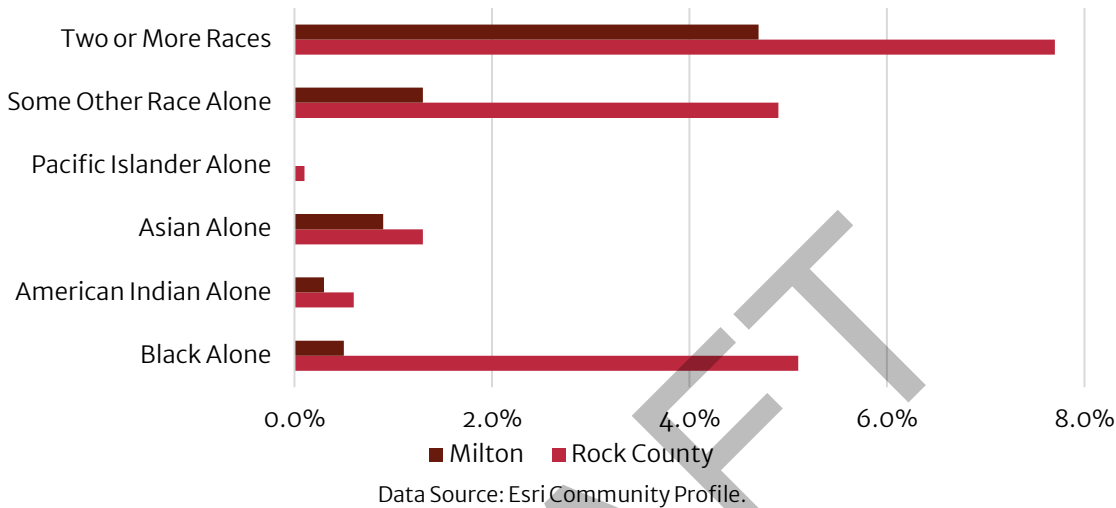


Figure 2. Population by Age Cohort

In 2024, 92.3% of City of Milton residents identified as White alone compared to Rock County at 80.3%. The second highest race representation is two or more races (4.7%). Rock County has 7.7% that identify as two or more races. Additionally, those who identified as having a Hispanic Origin in Milton was 4.3% of the population compared to 10.3% in Rock County. The county also has a larger representation of Black alone and Asian alone than the City of Milton (Figure 3). Therefore, Esri has calculated Milton's diversity index at 21.7, while the county's diversity index is at 46.5. (For more information about the diversity index, see Appendix A.)

Figure 3. Percentage of Non-White Population



Educational attainment is one indicator prospective employers consider when evaluating the skill level available within a local talent pool. There is a higher concentration of higher educational attainment among the City of Milton residents compared to the county overall. The largest share of Milton's population has attained some level of college education (35.8%), with an additional 29.7% having attained a bachelor's degree or higher (Figure 4). Rock County, by comparison, has smaller shares in each of these groups (33.2% and 25.4%, respectively).

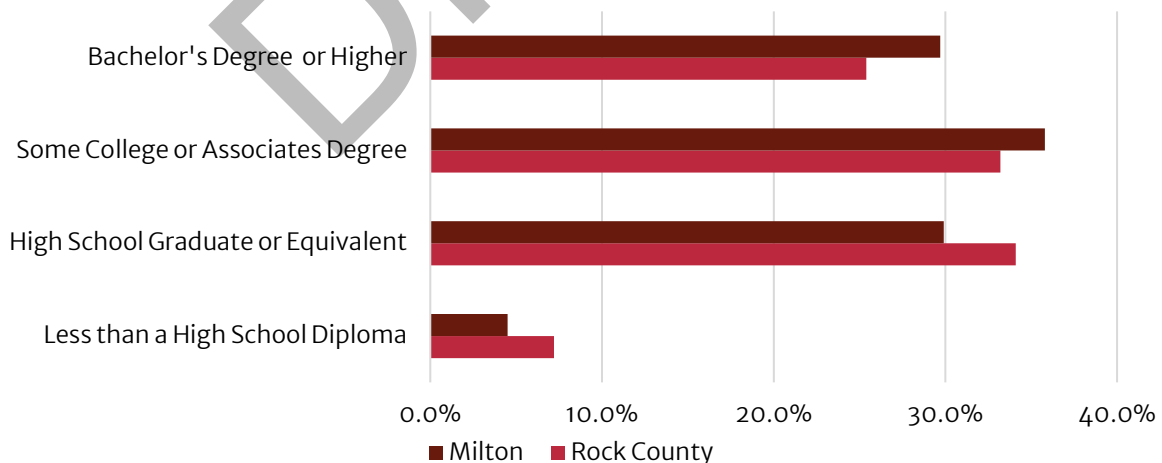
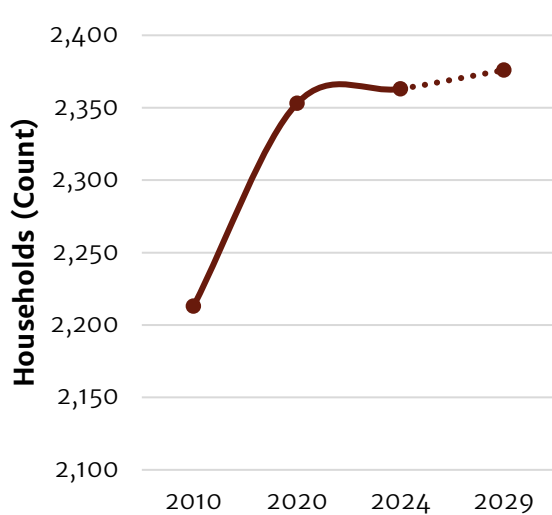


Figure 4. Population 25+ by Educational Attainment (2024)

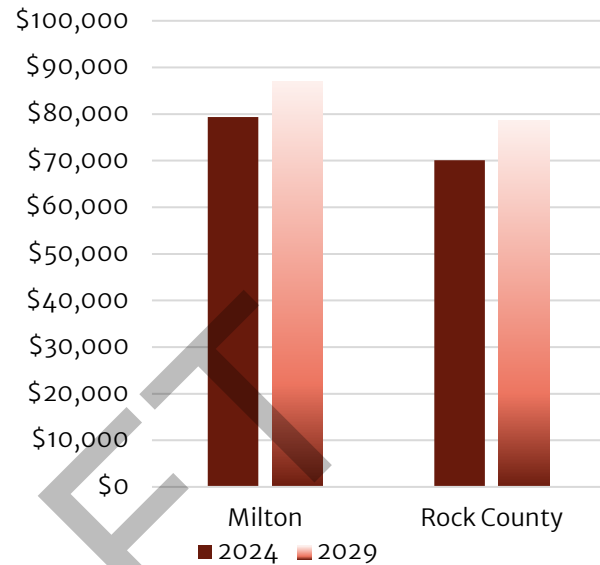
Households

While the estimated population in Milton decreased from 2020 to 2024, households continued to grow. Projections indicate that the number of households will increase from 2,363 in 2024 to 2,376 by 2029 (Figure 5).



Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

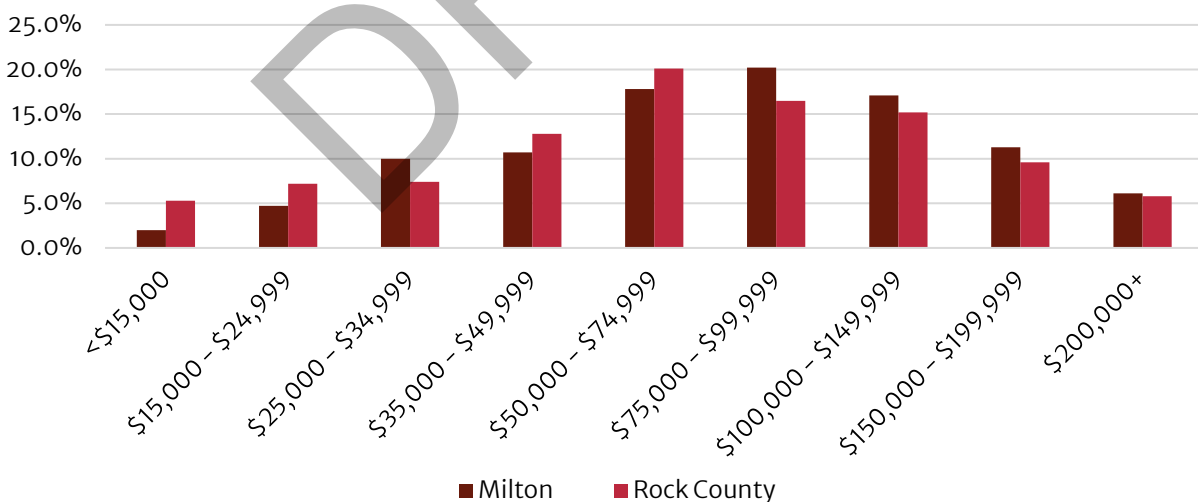
Figure 5. Milton Household Trends and Projections (2010–2029)



Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

Figure 6. Median Household Income (2024–2029)

The median household income in the City of Milton is higher than that of the county overall (\$79,337 and \$70,051, respectively). The highest percentage of people (20.2%) earn between \$75,000 and \$99,000. Median incomes are expected to increase from 2024 to 2029 for both the city and the county (Figure 6).

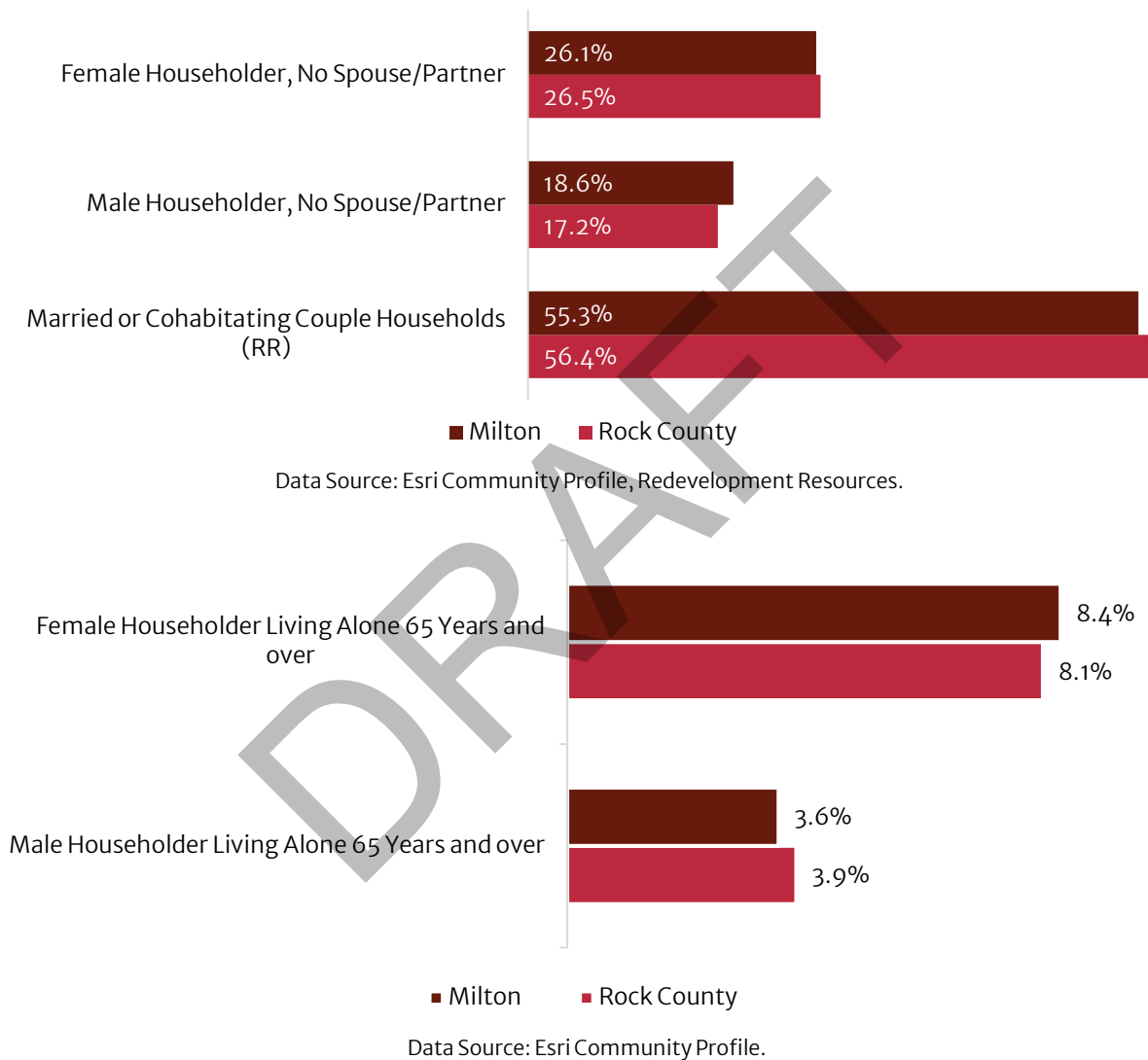


Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

Figure 7. Households by Income Level Cohort (2024)

More than 55% of households in both Milton and Rock County are married or cohabitating couples. Of those households, 28–30% do not have children under 18 years of age. About 26% of both Milton and Rock County households are female householders without a spouse or partner. Male household owners with no spouse or partner stand at 17.2% for Milton and 18.6% for the county. Of those households comprised of individuals living alone over the age of 65, 8.4% are female and 3.6% are male (Figure X). These are key data points for planning the type of housing needed.

Figure 8. Households by Type (2020)



Key Issues

1. Demographics and household change — modest growth but shifting needs

What's happening: Milton's population growth since 2010 has been modest; households continue to grow and are projected to increase in the near term. The city's population is younger than the county on average and has higher educational attainment than the county. These patterns affect school needs, housing type demand, and labor force availability.

Why it matters: Household formation (including single-person and senior households) increases demand for a broader range of housing types (smaller units, accessible units, "missing middle"). School enrollment trends should be monitored (enrollment appears stable/slightly rising regionally), which affects facility planning.

2. Housing supply, affordability, and market pressure

What's happening: Local housing prices have risen substantially in recent years (market sites show rising median prices), while household numbers and incomes suggest demand will continue. The city's revaluation shows large, assessed increases that may shift affordability pressures.

Why it matters: Without proactive measures Milton may see limited options for young families, essential workers, and downsizing seniors — leading to labor shortages for local employers and stresses on affordability.

3. Economic development balance — manufacturing growth vs. diversification

What's happening: Milton has active economic development programs (multiple open TIF districts) and recent private industrial investment, including a notable plastics manufacturer expansion aided by state support and a chocolate manufacturer which has added \$37M in assessed value in the last four years. Not only does that bring job growth, but also increases service and workforce needs.

Why it matters: Heavy reliance on a few large employers or sectors can create vulnerability to market cycles; growth also increases demand for housing, transit, and utilities. The city must balance tax base growth with preserving downtown character and community quality of life.

4. Downtown, historic resources, and placemaking

What's happening: Milton's historic downtown and Milton College historic district are local assets (tourism, identity). Continued downtown revitalization is an opportunity, but requires attention to parking, storefront vacancy, and public realm amenities.

Why it matters: A healthy downtown anchors community identity and captures local spending; poor downtown conditions can reduce tax base and community cohesion.

5. Fiscal capacity, TIF management, and property revaluation effects

What's happening: Milton uses multiple TIF districts to catalyze development; the city also recently completed a revaluation that raised assessed values significantly. TIFs are an asset but require careful management.

Why it matters: Large revaluation increases can change tax burden dynamics and community perceptions; TIF funds can provide capital but must be aligned with long-term maintenance obligations (utilities, roads).

Key Opportunities

1. Leverage active TIF program and recent business expansions

Use TIF and grant leverage to fund targeted infrastructure (roads, sewers) that unlock high-value industrial and housing sites. Prioritize projects with short payback and strong job/housing ratios.

2. Promote a “missing-middle” & infill housing strategy

Convert small infill parcels into duplexes, townhomes, smaller single-family lots, and accessory dwelling units to increase supply while maintaining neighborhood character. Use density bonuses, reduced parking, and fast-track permitting to incentivize development.

3. Downtown revitalization as economic and placemaking engine

Expand façade programs, convert upper-floor spaces to residential/office, expand wayfinding and parks, and program regular events to boost downtown foot traffic and sales.

4. Strengthen workforce housing & training linkages

Partner with local employers (including expanding manufacturers) and school/technical colleges to align housing, childcare, and training programs — reduce commute pressures and build local labor pipelines.

5. Pursue resilience grants & infrastructure funding

State and federal programs for water/wastewater, stormwater, and resilience are available. Prioritize projects that produce multiple public benefits (habitat, recreation, stormwater mitigation).

The City of Milton is positioned to grow thoughtfully over the next 20 years: household growth and a skilled resident base provide an attractive labor pool for local employers, while recent investments and active TIF districts create financing capacity for catalytic projects. At the same time, Milton must manage pressures from rising housing costs, aging local infrastructure, and the need for careful fiscal and intergovernmental coordination. To guide growth, Milton should prioritize a targeted housing strategy, a utility capacity and capital improvement program, downtown revitalization that preserves historic character, and proactive partnerships with county and state agencies to fund resilient infrastructure and workforce housing.

Goals, Strategies, and Recommendations

Goal 1: Promote sustainable demographic and household growth to meet evolving community needs

Strategy 1: Monitor and forecast demographic shifts to inform service planning.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct annual reviews of population, age cohort, and household data using sources like Esri and Census updates.
2. Partner with Rock County and local schools to track enrollment trends and adjust facility capacities.
3. Integrate diversity index monitoring (currently 21.7) to promote inclusive community programs.

Strategy 2: Adapt public services and infrastructure to support a younger, educated population.

Recommendations:

1. Expand recreational and educational amenities, such as youth programs or workforce training hubs, in collaboration with technical colleges.
2. Prioritize infrastructure upgrades (e.g., broadband, parks) in growth areas to attract and retain young families; develop metrics to evaluate labor force availability for employers.

Strategy 3: Foster intergovernmental coordination for regional growth management.

Recommendations:

1. Establish joint planning committees with Rock County to align population projections and service needs.
2. Apply for state grants to fund demographic studies.
3. Create a public dashboard for residents to access trend data and provide feedback.

Goal 2: Strengthen community identity, fiscal resilience, and placemaking through targeted investments

Strategy 1: Revitalize downtown and historic districts as community anchors.

Recommendations:

1. Expand façade improvement grants and upper-floor conversions for residential/office spaces in the Milton College historic district.
2. Enhance public amenities like parking, wayfinding, and parks with TIF funding; organize year-round events (e.g., markets, festivals) to increase foot traffic and local spending.

Strategy 2: Optimize TIF districts and fiscal tools for long-term sustainability.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a TIF management plan with short-payback criteria for infrastructure projects (e.g., roads, utilities) tied to job creation.
2. Conduct fiscal impact analyses post-revaluation to adjust tax burdens equitably.
3. Build reserve funds from TIF increments for maintenance obligations.

Strategy 3: *Pursue grants and partnerships for resilient infrastructure and placemaking.*

Recommendations:

1. Apply for state/federal funding (e.g., resilience grants for stormwater, water systems), prioritizing multi-benefit projects like habitat restoration with recreation.
2. Form alliances with county agencies for shared infrastructure planning; integrate placemaking into economic development by marketing Milton's historic assets to attract tourism and new businesses.

Strategy 4: *Build community cohesion through inclusive engagement and monitoring.*

Recommendations:

1. Create a citizen advisory group to oversee plan implementation, with representation from diverse demographics.
2. Track progress on placemaking metrics (e.g., vacancy rates, event attendance) annually
3. Leverage higher educational attainment by involving residents in volunteer-led initiatives for historic preservation.

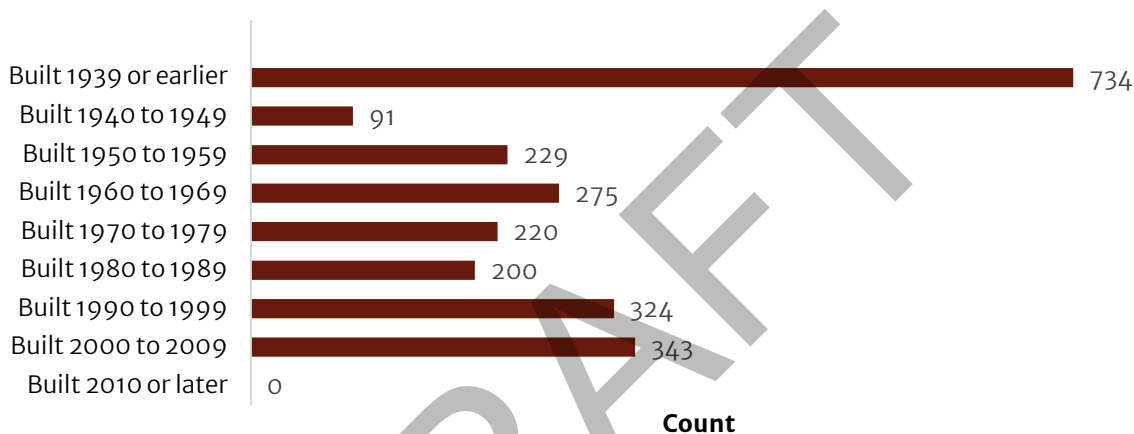
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Chapter 2: Housing Element

This chapter outlines the circumstances and attributes of the current housing market and leads into recommendations the City of Milton can implement to ensure a healthy housing market for its residents.

Age Characteristics

Of the approximately 2,261 housing units in the City of Milton in 2023, 21.6% of them were built in 1939 or earlier. From 1940 to 2009, the average number of units built per decade was 242. Outlier decades include the 1970s, 2000, and 2010s. Mortgage interest rates peaked in 1981 at 18.63% and remained in the double digits until the 1990s. At the national level, the Great Recession (and long recovery), restructuring of lending practices, and rising construction costs have impacted housing starts. Locally, the closure of the GM plant in Janesville in 2008 also contributed to declining housing starts. In 2024, there were 140 units approved for construction.



Data Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Housing Characteristics, 2023.

Figure 9. Housing Units by Year Built

Structural and Occupancy Characteristics

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates from 2018–2023, more than 68% of housing units in Milton were single-family detached units with an additional 7.5% that were one-unit attached structures (single-family units that share a wall such as a townhouse).

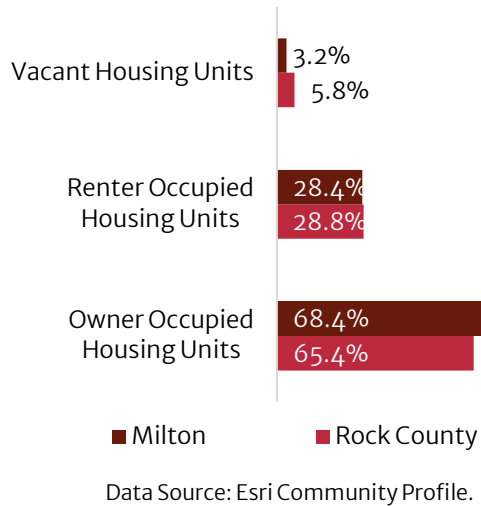


Data Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Housing Characteristics, 2023.

Figure 10. Housing Units by Type

In 2024, Esri estimates owner-occupancy at just over 68% and Milton's total vacancy rate in 2024 to have been approximately 3.2% (Figure 11). This vacancy rate is the lowest Esri has estimated it since the Great Recession. Based on experience, best practices and household growth projections, Redevelopment Resources recommends an owner-occupancy vacancy rate of 2-3% and a rental vacancy rate of 3-5% for a combined vacancy rate of 5-8%. A vacancy rate of 5-8% is a conservative recommendation.

Figure 11. Housing Unit Tenure Comparison (2024)



The difference between a structure with one-unit, attached and a structure with two or more units is in how it is legally separated by parcel number and address. For example, a structure with one parcel number and two units is a two-unit structure. However, a structure that has two units that share a wall and separate parcel numbers (such as a condo), is called a one-unit, attached.

“Some amount of vacant residential units is needed to facilitate the free movement of population and choice of reasonable alternatives.”

~ Arthur Nelson, [Planner's Estimating Guide: Projecting Land-Use and Facility Needs](#)

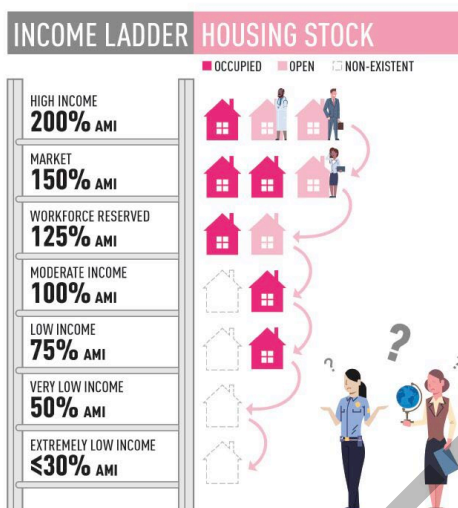
Housing Costs

THE HOUSING LADDER

**WHEN THERE
AREN'T ENOUGH
HOMES,**

**EVERYBODY
COMPETES FOR
WHAT'S
AVAILABLE.**

• SIGHTLINE INSTITUTE



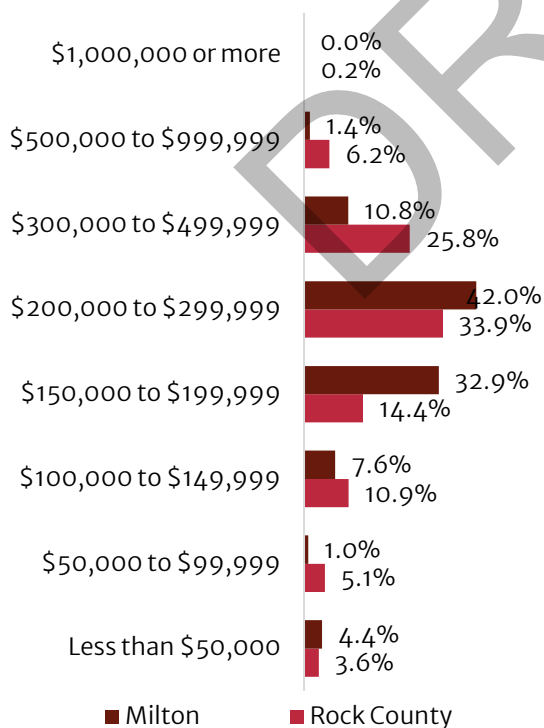
As the housing market tightens, demand drives up the cost of housing with increased rents and higher costs of home ownership. Households begin to feel the strain when wage increases do not keep up with increased housing costs. As of 2023, according to the American Community Survey, approximately 46% of homes in Milton are valued at less than \$200,000, 42% of units are valued between \$200,000 and \$299,999, and 12% are valued at greater than \$299,999 (Figure 12).

The median home value of

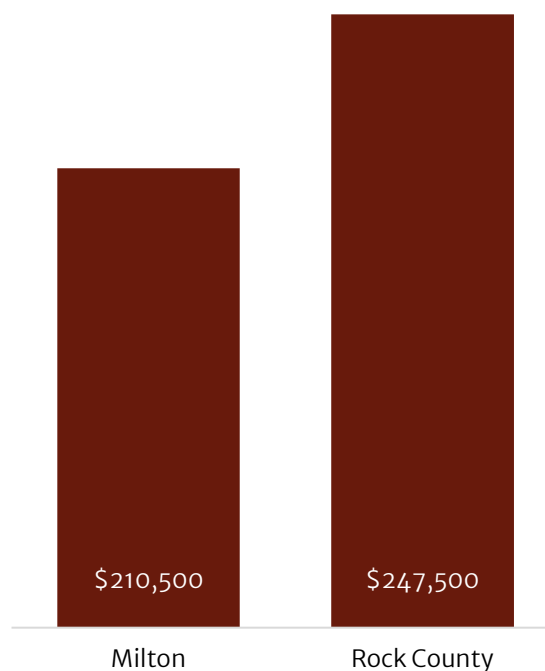
owner-occupied units in 2023 was \$210,500, which is less than the Rock County median home value of \$247,500.

Figure 12. Owner-Occupied Housing Units by Value (2023)

Figure 13. Median Value of Owner-occupied Units (2019-2023)



Data Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2019-2023), Housing Characteristics.



Data Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Housing Characteristics.

The median rent in the City of Milton is lower than that of Rock County as a whole (Figure 14). According to the American Community Survey five-year estimates, median rent decreased 4.3% from 2014 to 2018, but from 2018 to 2023, median rent increased 21.1%. Households whose income did not increase at the same rate as rent increases were more likely to be cost-burdened households.

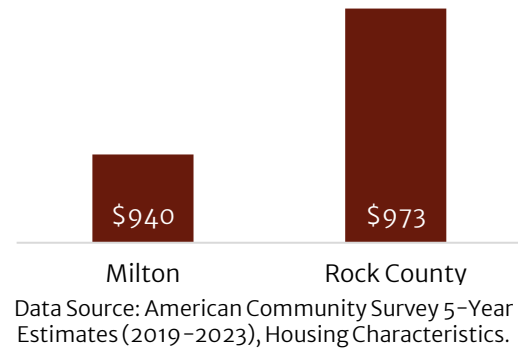
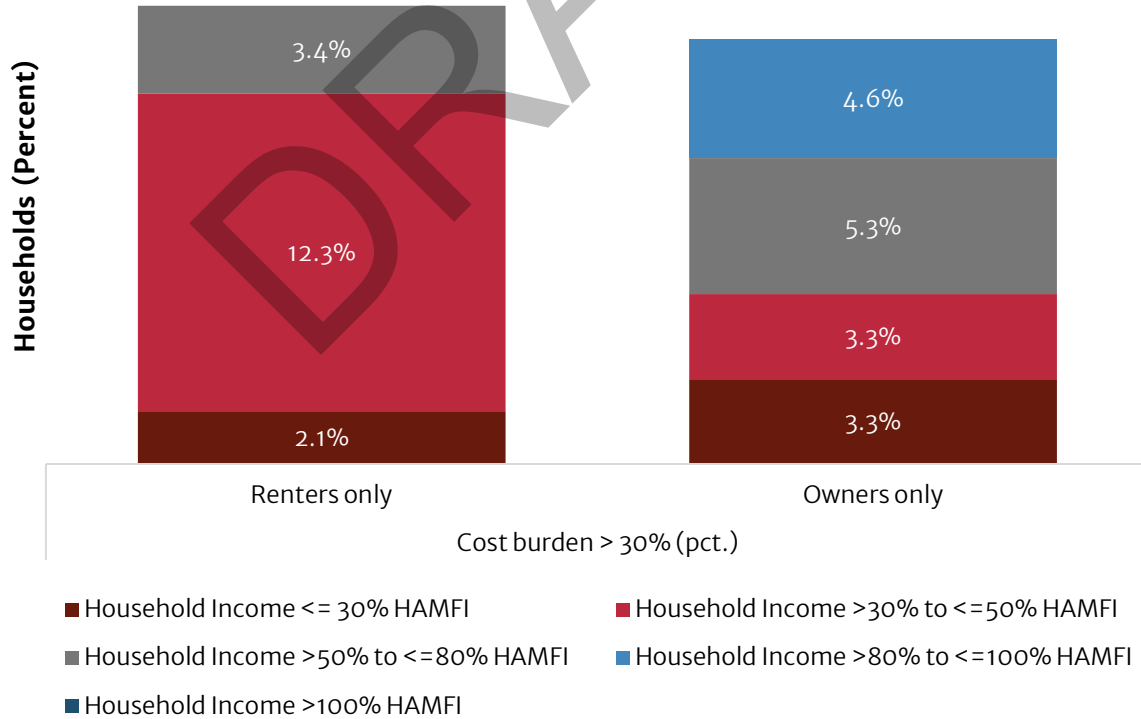


Figure 14. Median Rent Comparison (2019–2023)

Housing Cost Burden

Households that spend more than 30% of their household income on housing expenses are considered cost-burdened by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Milton residents are concerned about housing affordability and the availability of housing units. In Milton, 17.8% of households are cost-burdened renter households and 16.5% are cost-burdened owner households. In other words, more than 1 in 3 households in Milton are cost-burdened (Figure 15).

Figure 15. City of Milton Cost Burdened Households by Income and Tenure



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, CHAS (2017–2021 ACS), City of Milton.

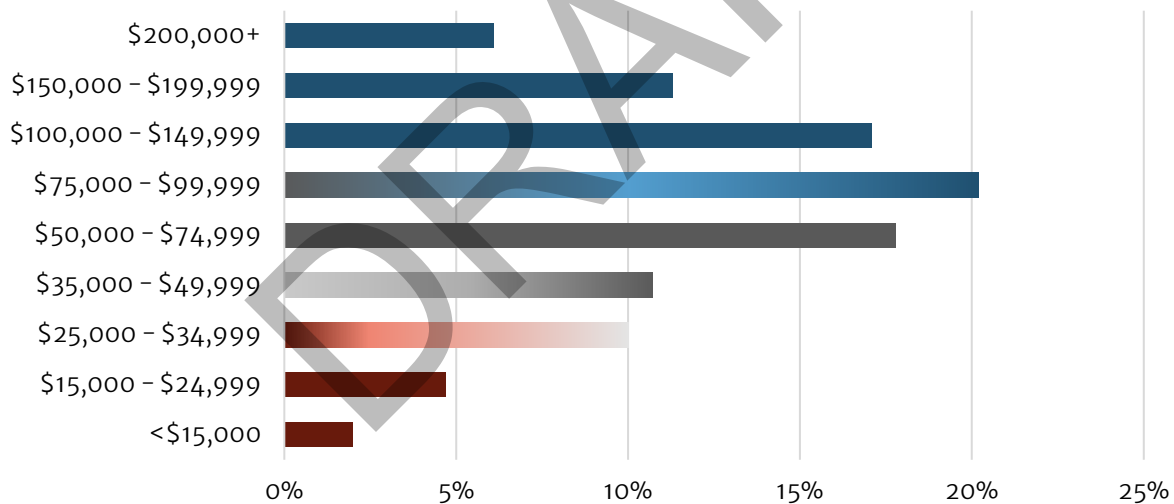
Income Levels

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) determines the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI) to determine income eligibility for housing programs. The 2024 HAMFI for Rock County is \$98,600. Table 1 provides the income limits based on the HAMFI, while Figure X illustrates the approximate percentage of households in Milton by the percentage of HAMFI. For context, approximately 27.4% of Milton households earn less than \$50,000 (Figure 16).

Table 1. HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI)

Household Income <= 30% HAMFI	Less than \$29,580
Household Income >30% to <=50% HAMFI	\$29,580 – \$49,300
Household Income >50% to <=80% HAMFI	\$49,300 – \$78,880
Household Income >80% to <=100% HAMFI	\$78,880 – \$98,600
Household Income >100% HAMFI	Greater than \$98,600

Data Source: Redevelopment Resources, HUD Income Limits for Rock County. Note: 2024 HAMFI is \$98,600.



Data Source: Esri Community Profile, Redevelopment Resources.

Figure 16. Milton Households by Income (2024)

Housing Demand

There are many factors that contribute to calculating the housing unit demand forecast for a community. It is important to consider census data, i.e. what the household projections indicate related to growth or decline in a community, as well as employment growth, the historical pace of development, and what the market needs for a healthy vacancy rate. A healthy vacancy rate allows households to have choices when it comes to appropriate housing for their income level, stage of life, and preferred lifestyle.

The following table models five main contributing factors to determining housing demand:

1. Natural household growth
2. The number of people who work in Milton, but live outside of the community
3. Market inability to keep up with demand over the past 15+ years due to recession and subsequent damage to the residential construction and home mortgage industries
4. Changing demographics; baby boomers aging, Generation X buying up existing stock, a very large Generation Y & Z, and senior citizens staying in their homes longer than ever before
5. Existing and new employer growth/hiring

Table 2. Housing Demand

	Low	High
Employed in Milton but Living Outside	1,642	1,642
New Jobs	200	400
New Households captured	276	613
Natural Household Growth 2024–2033	47	87
Pent up Demand since 2009	288	288
Recommended Vacancy	5%	8%
Additional Units needed by 2045	641	1,066

*Jobs were not taken into account in the total demand 1 for 1 but factored into New Households at the percentage shown.

Data Sources: Census On-the-Map, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Redevelopment Resources.

Note, the demand table is for the number of total units and is not a prescription for the type, style, or density of units. A discussion regarding residential density is in Chapter 8, Land Use. The final comprehensive plan will include recommendations for facilitating the desired housing type, price point, and density.

Goals, Strategies, Recommendations

Based on the Housing Element chapter's analysis—highlighting an aging housing stock with limited new construction (only 76 units since 2010), predominance of single-family homes (over 68%), low vacancy rates (3.2% vs. recommended 5–8%), rising costs (median rent up 21.1% from 2018–2023), significant cost burdens (over 1 in 3 households affected), income disparities (27.4% under \$50,000 amid HAMFI of \$98,600), and projected demand driven by growth factors like demographics and employment the following goals have been developed. These align with Wisconsin's comprehensive planning requirements (§66.1001) for housing, emphasizing affordability, diversity, and supply to support a healthy market over the next 20 years.

Goal 1: Increase housing supply and diversity to meet projected demand and accommodate changing demographics.

Strategy 1: Encourage development of diverse housing types to address gaps in the market.

Recommendations:

1. Offer density bonuses for projects including smaller units suitable for seniors or single-person households (e.g., 20% units at 80% median income).
2. Conduct a biennial housing inventory to track progress toward adding units based on demand factors (e.g., natural growth and demographics).
3. Conduct a housing needs assessment every 5 years to guide unit types based on income cohorts (e.g., high demand in \$75,000–\$99,000 range).

Strategy 2: Accelerate new construction to achieve recommended vacancy rates.

Recommendations:

1. Streamline permitting processes for developments meeting diversity criteria, targeting 5–8% overall vacancy (2–3% owner, 3–5% rental).
2. Partner with developers to identify sites for at least 100 new units over the next decade, prioritizing areas with infrastructure capacity.
3. Use TIF districts to fund site preparation for mixed-use projects that include residential components.

Strategy 3: Monitor and forecast housing needs based on demographic and economic trends.

Recommendations:

1. Update housing demand models annually using ACS, Esri, and local data on factors like commuter inflows and employer hiring.
2. Collaborate with expanding manufacturers and educational institutions to encourage support of workforce housing programs, including employer-assisted down payments or on-site childcare.
3. Monitor employment trends to ensure housing aligns with job growth.
4. Collaborate with Rock County for regional projections, incorporating HAMFI adjustments.
5. Create a public housing dashboard to share trends (e.g., units by year built) and solicit community input on preferred types.

Strategy 4: Preserve and rehabilitate existing housing stock for long-term viability.

Recommendations:

1. Launch a deferred loan program (potentially in partnership with a non-profit) for owners of pre-1939 homes (21.6% of housing stock) to fund accessibility upgrades, aging-in-place modifications, and energy efficiency.
2. Enforce building codes with incentives for conversions (e.g., single-family to multi-unit).

Goal 2: Improve housing affordability and reduce cost burdens for residents across income levels.

Strategy 1: Mitigate rising costs through financial assistance and policy tools.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a local housing trust fund using TIF revenues to provide down payment assistance for first-time buyers earning below \$50,000 (27.4% of households).

Strategy 2: Foster partnerships to align housing with income and tenure needs.

Recommendations:

1. Work with employers to create employer-assisted housing programs, such as rent subsidies for essential workers, or employer-sponsored downpayment assistance programs.
2. Integrate affordability metrics into comprehensive plan reviews, ensuring new units match income cohorts.

Strategy 3: Foster partnerships to align housing with income and tenure needs.

Recommendations:

1. Identify priority sites for mixed-income projects near employment centers.
2. Require economic impact studies for new developments to assess job-housing ratios.
3. Incentivize green building practices in housing projects to appeal to educated, younger residents.

Goal 3: Promote sustainable housing development that supports economic vitality and community needs.

Strategy 1: Link housing growth to employment and commuter patterns.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct studies on workers commuting into Milton and incentivize developments capturing 20–30% of this demand through job-housing balance requirements
2. Partner with local manufacturers and businesses to co-fund housing near job sites; integrate economic development goals by prioritizing TIF projects that yield high job-housing ratios.

Strategy 2: Enhance community engagement and equity in housing decisions.

Recommendations:

1. Host annual forums with diverse stakeholders (e.g., seniors, young families) to guide housing types and densities (detailed in Chapter 8)
2. Ensure balanced distribution of affordable units across neighborhoods to avoid concentration
3. Evaluate progress using metrics like owner-occupancy rates (target 68–70%) and adjust based on feedback.

Strategy 3: Leverage regional resources for housing innovation.

Recommendations:

1. Coordinate with Rock County and nearby cities (e.g., Janesville) for shared housing initiatives, such as joint grant applications for infill redevelopment
2. Explore innovative models like community land trusts to maintain affordability long-term
3. Track historical barriers (e.g., post-2008 recession impacts) to inform adaptive strategies for future economic shifts.

Chapter 3: Transportation Element

Introduction

This element establishes a vision for a multimodal transportation system that serves residents, businesses, and visitors alike. It inventories the city's roadway network, documents regional transit, rail, air, walking, and biking facilities, and summarizes transportation-related plans. This element also sets goals and strategies to preserve infrastructure, improve connectivity, and complement economic development efforts. By balancing the needs of local traffic, freight movement, bicyclists, pedestrians, and emerging technologies, the plan aims to preserve Milton's historic charm while supporting smart, sustainable growth.

Existing Transportation System

Roadways

Functional Classification

Table 3 summarizes the functional classification of roadways by lane miles and percentage within the City of Milton and its 1.5-mile planning area. Local Roads, which provide the highest degree of accessibility, comprise the largest amount of lane miles at 56 miles, or 48 percent of the total.

Table 3: Lane Miles by Functional Classification

Classification	Lane Miles in City of Milton	% of Total	Lane Miles in Planning Area	% of Total
Principal Arterial – Interstate	–	0%	6.95	6%
Principal Arterial – Other	4.35	9%	15.33	13%
Minor Arterial	7.37	16%	11.44	10%
Collector	9.50	20%	27.07	23%
Local Road	25.92	55%	55.6	48%
Total	47.14	100%	116.39	100%

Data Source: Rock County GIS

Functional classification is the process by which roadway segments are assigned a class based on the character of the travel service each roadway provides within the transportation network. Roadway segments are classified within a hierarchical structure, beginning with Arterials at the top, followed by Collectors, and Local Roads at the bottom. Arterials provide a high degree of regional mobility and a low degree of local access, as they are typically associated with long-distance, free-flow travel on high-capacity roadways. Collectors often balance mobility and access by linking local streets to the arterial roadways and serving adjacent land uses. Local Roads provide the highest degree of accessibility and the lowest degree of mobility, as they give multiple entrance and exit opportunities for users to reach their homes, workplaces, and other destinations.

While functional classification alone does not dictate roadway design, it establishes expectations for travel speed, capacity, and relationship to land use development, guiding how streets are planned and managed within Wisconsin's municipal comprehensive planning framework.

The following is a brief summary of the functional classification for each roadway within the planning area.

Principal Arterials: Provide the highest levels of mobility in the planning area. These roads are typically characterized by higher speed limits, wide shoulders, and dedicated turn lanes as right-of-way affords.

Principal arterials in the planning area consist of the following:

- **Interstate principal arterials:** A segment of Interstate 90/39 runs north-south through the Town of Milton, north of County Highway M.
- **Other principal arterials:** State Highway 26 runs predominantly north-south thorough the planning area.

Traffic control for these arterials consists of signalization and roundabouts. Accessibility is limited, typically consisting of at-grade access to other arterial or collector roadways or destinations with larger land uses.

Minor Arterials: Connect Principal Arterials to Collector roads to serve county-wide and/or intra-state travel demand. For example, Madison Avenue and John Paul Road are designated as Minor Arterials. Roadways existing outside the city are county-owned or state-owned. A typical urban cross-section within city boundaries consists of two travel lanes flanked by sidewalks with curb and gutter. Traffic control is limited, consisting of stop signs to Principal Arterials.



Image: Example of a minor arterial road.

Collectors: Connect Local Streets and Arterials to serve local or county-wide travel demand. Many Collector roads serve larger population clusters and therefore extend beyond city boundaries and into the planning area—Parkview Drive, for example—while some Collector roads serve small population clusters and provide access to residential subdivisions. Traffic control is limited, consisting of stop signs to Minor Arterials.

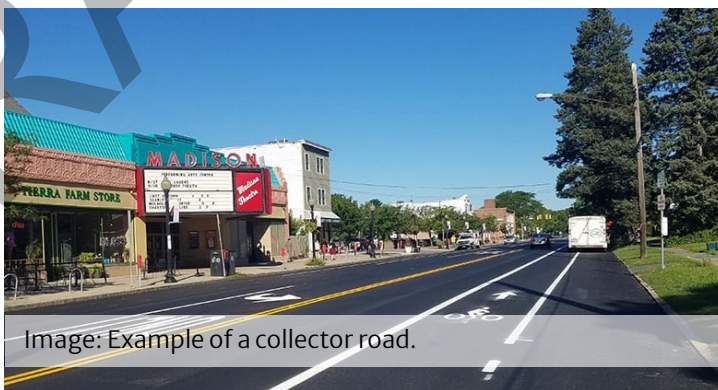
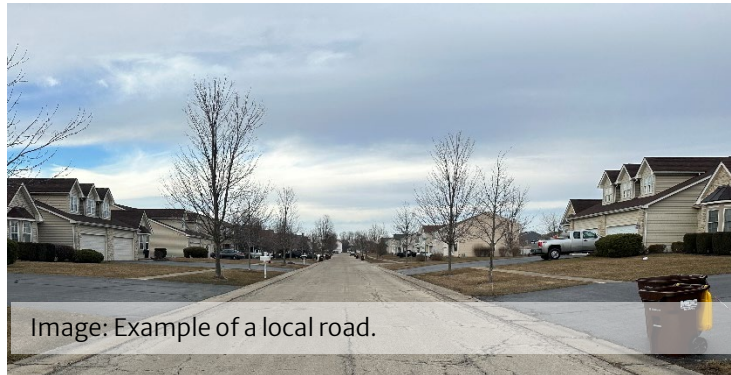


Image: Example of a collector road.

Local Roads: Provide direct access to homes, businesses, and other amenities. Within the city, these streets are typically characterized by low speed limits, on-street parking, sidewalks, amenities near the right-of-way (e.g. benches, street lighting), and narrow travel lanes compared to other classes. Through-traffic mobility is limited, and traffic volumes are typically the lowest among other classes.



Jurisdictional Authority

Map 1 illustrates the jurisdictional responsibility for each roadway within the City of Milton and its 1.5-mile planning area. City-owned roadways comprise 29 percent of roads within the planning area (34 miles), followed by roadways owned by the Town of Milton (29 percent, 33.5 miles). The State of Wisconsin has authority over 32 lane miles within the planning area; this includes state-owned roadways and Interstate highways within its borders.

Map 1. Jurisdictional Responsibility of Roadways in City Boundary and Planning Area

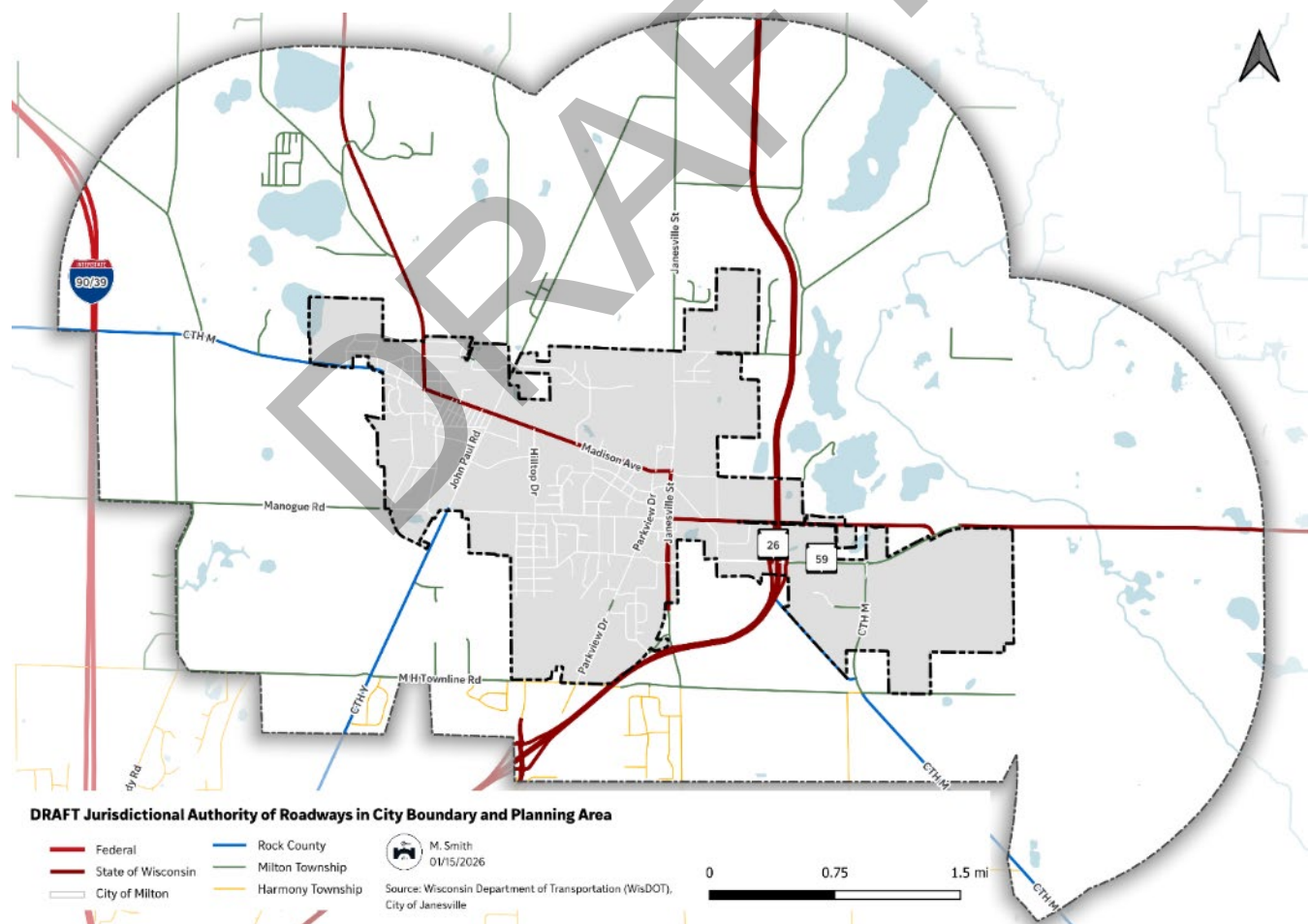


Table 4. Jurisdictional Responsibility of Roadways in City Boundary and Planning Area

Classification	Lane Miles in City of Milton	% of Total	Lane Miles in Planning Area	% of Total
City of Milton	34.02	72%	34.06	29%
Rock County	0.36	1%	7.42	6%
City of Edgerton	0	0%	0	0%
Town of Harmony	0	0%	8.99	8%
Town of Milton	3.91	8%	33.48	29%
State of Wisconsin	8.9	19%	32.02	28%
Total	47.2	100%	115.98	100%

Data Source: Rock County GIS

Truck Routes

The network of designated truck routes consists largely of principal arterials (e.g. State Trunk Highway 26) and minor arterials (e.g. John Paul Road, Madison Avenue), although some collector streets and local roads are also designated truck routes. According to Section 70-182 of the Milton Code of Ordinances, the following streets are designated for through-truck route use:

- Chicago Street between the intersection with East High Street and the south city limits
- Commerce Way
- Front Street
- Gateway Drive
- Greenman Street between the intersection with South Janesville Street and Parkview Drive
- Putman Parkway
- South John Paul Road between the intersection with West Madison Avenue and the south city limits.
- West Madison Avenue between the intersection with Clear Lake Avenue and the west city limits.
- Merchant Row.
- Parkview Drive between the intersection with East High Street and the intersection with East Madison Avenue.
- State Trunk Highway 26
- State Trunk Highway 59
- Sunnyside Drive
- Vernal Avenue
- Vickerman Road
- South on Vincent Street from approximately 300 feet south of the intersection with Crescent Drive to its intersection with South John Paul Road

These streets accommodate trucks, truck tractors, and tractor semitrailer combinations 30 feet or more in length and/or with a gross weight of 12,000 pounds or more.

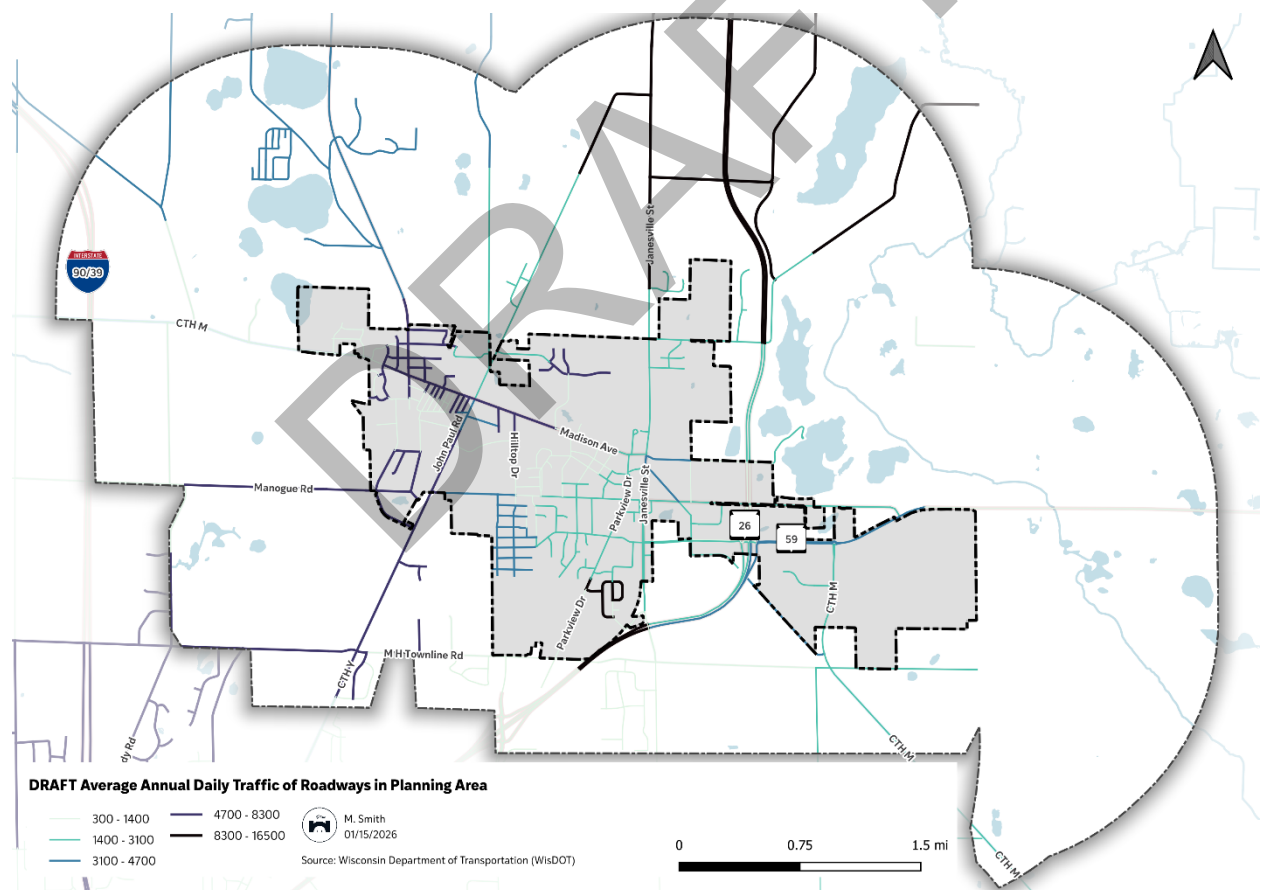
Traffic Volumes and Travel Demand

Map 2 illustrates the Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) of select roadways in the planning area. The primary travel corridors in the planning area consist of the following principal arterials and minor arterials:

- State Trunk Highway 26 is a principal arterial with peak segments between 13,000–16,000 AADT.
- John Paul Road and County Highway Y are minor arterials with segments between 3,800–8,300 AADT.
- Madison Avenue ranges from 3,000–5,800 AADT.
- Clear Lake Avenue has an AADT of 5,550.
- Janesville Road ranges from 2,800–3,700 AADT.
- High Street ranges from 2,100–4,700 AADT.

While AADT is an important factor in assigning functional classification, traffic volume alone does not dictate a roadway's classification. Two roads with identical volumes may serve different purposes and carry different classifications, while two roads of the same class may carry very different volumes. In general, higher-classified arterials tend to carry the highest volumes.

Map 2. Average Annual Daily Traffic of Roadways in Planning Area



The Streets and Highways element of the *Janesville Area 2020–2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)* outlines WisDOT's travel demand forecasting process and its implications for the planning area. Travel demand

forecasting utilizes information such as current socioeconomic data, land use data, and highway data to create a model of the road network and its use in 2050. This process identifies roadways that may experience future congestion and outlines potential solutions, ranging from operations improvements, transit improvements, and roadway improvements.

One of the measures used to assess roadway congestion is Level of Service (LOS). LOS is graded from A (free flow) to F (extreme congestion) based on traffic volume relative to roadway capacity. These grades help identify system deficiencies and guide infrastructure investments. While the LRTP indicates serious congestion issues along key arterial roadways—commercial areas along STH 26 and USH 14 in Janesville, for example—the City of Milton enjoys LOS A–C conditions and does not experience congestion typically found in LOS D–E. Exceptions to this may be found in areas of peak activity. For example, roadways near school facilities may experience congestion during peak pick-up and drop-off times.

Pavement Condition

MPO jurisdictions utilize the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) system of evaluating roadway conditions under their jurisdiction every two years (on the odd year) as required under State Statute. The change aligns with other Wisconsin municipalities utilizing the PASER system due to the simplicity of the evaluation of roadway conditions.

The PASER system rates roadway conditions between the ranges of “1” (needing total reconstruction) to “10” (reflective of newly completed construction). PASER data is recorded in the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR), a state-hosted database assisting local governments and WisDOT to manage local data to improve decision-making and meet legal requirements.

Map 3. PASER Rating Pavement Conditions, City-Owned Roadways

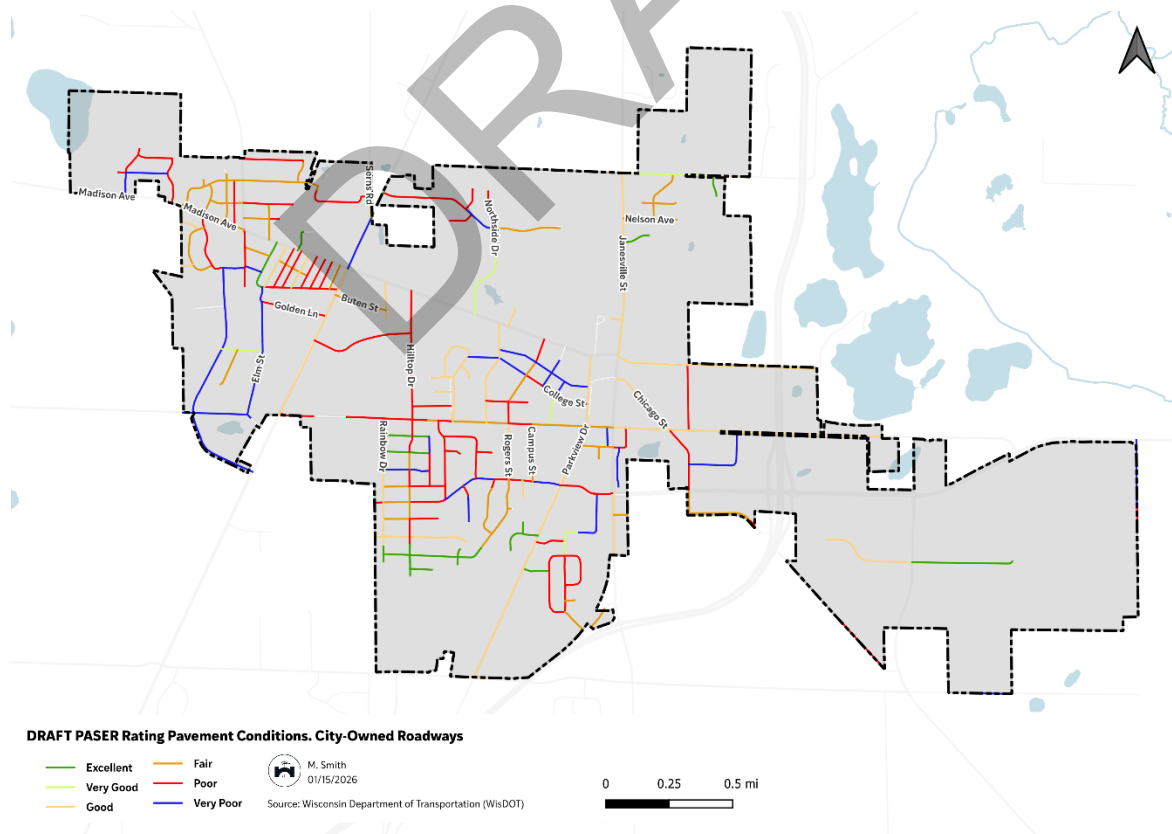
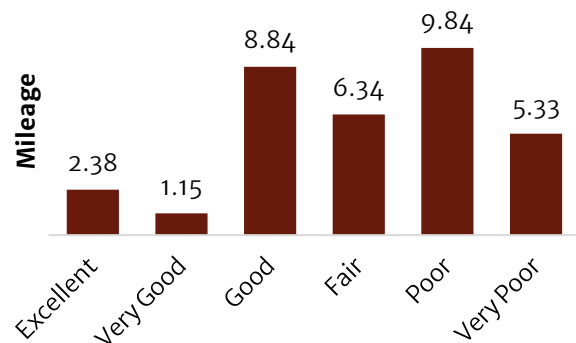


Figure 17 illustrates PASER values for roadways owned by the City of Milton, utilizing 2025 roadway data submitted to the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR). Nearly 10 miles of roadway are rated as ‘poor’ (29% of total), following by 8.8 miles of roadway rated as ‘good’ (26% of total).

Planned Projects

Local

The 2025–2031 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) lists several planned projects that include street improvement elements. A summary of each planned project is below. Each road segment listed includes pavement replacement along with spot repair of curb, gutter, and sidewalk. It is important to note that these are planned projects, and not all funding has been determined at the time of this plan. Readers are encouraged to consult the latest CIP for more information.



Data Source: WisDOT, 2025.

Figure 17: City of Milton PASER Ratings, 2025

- **Serns Road Regional Lift Station and Utilities (2026):** Roadway improvements associated with this project include segments of North John Paul Road, Sunset Drive, Northside Drive, Badger Lane, and Pheasant Ridge.
- **High Street BIL Construction (2027):** Roadway improvements associated with this project include full-depth pavement replacement on High Street between John Paul Road and Janesville Street, and a new traffic signal and dedicated left- and right-turn lanes will be installed at the High Street / John Paul Road intersection.
- **4-inch Water Main Replacement, East Side (2027):** Aging 4-inch mains will be replaced along Babcock, College, Columbus, Dunn and Greenman Streets and on Larch Lane, improving reliability across the east-side grid.
- **St. Mary Street and Utilities (2029):** St. Mary Street will be rebuilt with new utilities from Rainbow Drive to Janesville Street.
- **4-inch Water Main Replacement, West Side (2030):** West-side streets—Fourth Lane, West Lane, Lamar Drive, Division Street, Crandall Street and Ansley Avenue—will get new 4-inch water mains to replace the existing undersized lines.
- **Lift Station 5 and Utilities, S. John Paul Road (2031):** Lift Station 5 will be upgraded and S. John Paul Road will be reconstructed with new utilities from Madison Avenue south to the city limits at High Street.

The Streets and Highways element of the Janesville Area 2020–2050 LRTP details several planned and recommended projects related to the City of Milton, including extensions to Sunset Drive, traffic signal installation and at-grade rail crossing improvements on John Paul Road, and extending Hilltop Drive. Table 5 details additional information on each planned and recommended project. The LRTP states that these projects, among others, are subject to actual needs and funding availability.

County

Rock County’s Highway Division has scheduled two roadway improvements to County Highway M:

- The 2026 Recommended Budget for Rock County’s Highway Division has identified County Highway M from M–H Townline Road to State Highway 59 as a project in the planning area which would begin in 2026.

- 2025–2029 Rock County Capital Improvement Plan details pulverizing and overlay a four-mile segment of County Highway M from County Road A to MH Townline Road. The project is slated for 2028.

State

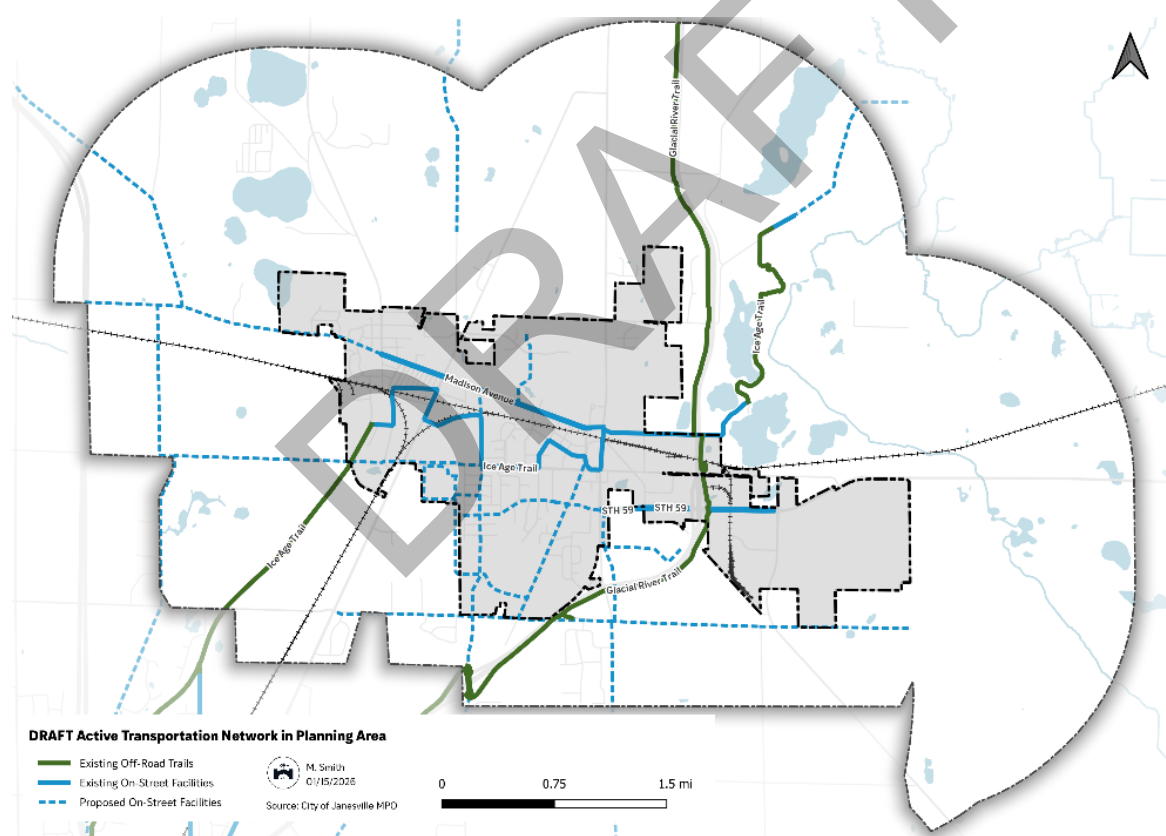
WisDOT is planning a compact single-lane roundabout at the intersection of John Paul Road and Madison Avenue. The project was recently submitted for Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding, as it has produced a high number of angle crashes from 2018–2022. The project would be constructed in 2031. As a temporary measure, all-way stop control has been constructed.

Active Transportation Network

Pedestrian and bicycle accommodations are essential to Milton's small city character. Key destinations such as schools and parks are located within a short walking or biking distance to many neighborhoods, and residents expect a safe, comfortable, and connected network for accessing these destinations.

A brief summary of walking and biking facilities are below, including regional multi-use paths. These facilities, along with planned facilities from the Janesville MPO, are also illustrated in Map 4.

Map 4. Existing and Planned Transportation Network in Planning Area



Pedestrian Facilities

Sidewalks are present throughout much of the planning area, particularly within city boundaries. The City has a number of programs and policies designed to facilitate a safe, connected network of sidewalks, including:

- Sidewalk construction, concurrent with street reconstruction projects as appropriate;
- Sidewalk trip hazard repair (e.g. saw-cutting, slab removal and replacement);

- Requiring new or redeveloped sites to include one bicycle/pedestrian access point from the site to the street system as well as mandating on-site walkways (minimum 5 feet wide, delineated from parking)

Bicycle Facilities

According to spatial data from the Janesville MPO, dedicated bicycle facilities in the planning area are limited to on-street bike lanes on the following road segments: Madison Avenue, from South Clear Lake Avenue to Janesville Street; State Trunk Highway 59 from Janesville Street to County Highway M.

Many of Milton's streets consist of two travel lanes with low-traffic volumes, attributes which some bicycle users may find suitable for on-street riding with no separation from motor vehicles.

Multi-Use Trails

Ice Age Trail: The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is a 1,000-mile trail system that winds through Wisconsin's most scenic glacial landscapes. Milton hosts a 3.2-mile segment of the Ice Age Trail, which consists of both on- and off-street trail segments. Yellow-blazed posts, kiosks, and roadway wayfinding signs guide users through the city. Trail workdays and programming are led by the Rock County Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

In addition to people hiking and biking, the Janesville to Milton Segment of the Ice Age Trail is open year-round for equestrian use. Other equestrian-oriented trails and parks are present in Rock County, yet outside of the planning area.

Glacial River Trail: The Glacial River Trail parallels STH 26 for 21 miles between Janesville and Fort Atkinson. The 3.7-mile Milton section—completed in 2014—connects the city's industrial park, high school, and residential neighborhoods to the regional trail network. Trailheads with parking are located at Milwaukee St and at the Commerce Dr roundabout; amenities include benches, waste receptacles, and winter snow-clearing to the property line.

Transit Service

Public Transportation Providers

Milton does not operate its own public transportation system. However, Rock County Transit (RCT) provides shared-ride, wheelchair-accessible, door-to-door transportation for residents aged 55 and older and individuals with disabilities. RCT buses operate Monday–Friday (excluding holidays) for medical, work, shopping, personal, and social trips. Fares are \$10 round-trip/\$5 one-way within a community and \$12 round-trip/\$6 one-way between communities, with 10-ride passes available; rides must be scheduled at least three days in advance by calling 608-757-5054 during office hours (8 a.m.–5 p.m.). A separate Paratransit service is available for those requiring additional support through Janesville and Beloit Transit Systems.

Private Transportation Providers

There are a variety of fixed-route and point-to-point private transportation providers in Rock County, including but not limited to the following entities:

- Van Galder Bus Company: Operates scheduled routes from Janesville to Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago among other locations, with terminal located at 3120 North Pontiac Drive, Janesville.
- Mega Bus: Offers daily bus serves between Milton (stop at Piggly Wiggly) and Janesville (stop at Van Galder Depot).
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Rock County: Provides door-to-door, non-wheelchair accessible transportation for residents aged 55 and over.
- Wisconsin Disabled American Veterans (DAV): Offers free rides to all veterans who need help getting to and from scheduled medical appointments at the Madison VA.

Rail Service

Freight Rail

Freight rail service in the planning is provided by the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad Company (WSOR). The lines run through the city's industrial areas and serve a growing array of industries. According to the Freight Element of the Janesville Area 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan, WSOR is a regional Class II Railroad which operates freight service on state-owned rail lines in southern Wisconsin, and through northeast Illinois with over more than 600 miles of former Milwaukee Railroad and CNW branch and mainline track, with Janesville serving as the southern hub. As of 2014, WSOR served 22 rail customers in Rock County, and provides local switching service for on-line industries. A variety of commodities are transported on the WSOR including corn and grain, coal, canned goods, lumber, paper, fertilizer, aggregate, ethanol, plastic, gasoline, sugar, pulp board, metal scrap, auto parts, military vehicles, lube oil, and steel.

The city is bifurcated by the east-west segment of this rail line which can create delay and congestion along major corridors at one of the twelve grade crossings (namely John Paul Road and Janesville Street). The Streets and Highways Element of the Janesville Area 2050 LRTP lists at-grade rail crossing improvements on John Paul Road as one of its Planned & Recommended projects. The only grade-separated crossing in city boundaries is at State Trunk Highway 26, where the highway exists above the rail line.

The city has large tracts of land available for development in the Crossroads Business Park with potential for rail service.

Passenger Rail

Milton is currently not directly served by passenger rail service. Residents can access Amtrak passenger service in nearby Milwaukee and Columbus. Looking ahead, the Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 outlines statewide passenger rail considerations that could influence future regional connectivity options.

Air Transportation

Airports

The closest local airport is the Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport (SWRA), which is located south of Janesville off US High 51 and therefore outside of the planning area. According to the Freight Element of the Janesville Area 2020–2050 Long Range Transportation Plan, SWRA is served by a number of chartered on-demand air cargo carriers. Freight forwarding is provided by independent contracts, organized by local businesses. Multiple local businesses utilize the airport to receive shipments.

For commercial air travel, residents rely on the following airports:

- Dane County Regional Airport (MSN)
- Chicago Rockford International Airport (RFD)
- Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport (MKE)

These airports provide domestic and international flight connections.

Other Transportation Options

Snowmobile Trails

Rock County is connected to a network of snowmobile trails that provide winter recreational opportunities. County-owned trails are present in the planning area, one of which runs north-south through the west side of the city. The county supports snowmobile trail users through a dedicated snowmobile hotline and maintains partnerships with local snowmobile alliances to ensure trail accessibility and safety throughout the season.

Rustic Roads

Rustic Roads are a unique component of Wisconsin's transportation network. Established in 1973, the program

is intended to maintain the state's scenic, lightly traveled country roads for the enjoyment of motorists as well as people walking and biking. Rustic Road 35 is a 2.7-mile paved segment of Serns Road between County N and North John Paul Road in the Town of Milton in the planning area.

According to the 2015 City of Milton Comprehensive Master Plan, Rock County has also designated Bowers Lake Road from Highway 26 to Highway KK as a possible future Rustic Road in the planning area.

Review of State, Regional, and Local Transportation Plans

Connect 2050 (2022)

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Connect 2050 long-range transportation plan provides a framework for coordinated multimodal investment decisions statewide through 2050. A thorough review of Connect 2050 has been conducted as part of the update of the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element update. This ensures that local projects advance the regional goals of safety, efficiency, and economic competitiveness.

Connect 2050 also includes the following sub-plans:

- **Statewide Active Transportation Plan (ATP):** The ATP will combine and update the state's previous Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020 and Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020. The plan is currently in the pre-draft stage, with the process including public surveys to gather input and identify needs. The public will have future opportunities to provide feedback through online and in-person events before a final draft is published.
- **Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050:** The Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 inventories the state's rail network and sets short- and long-term priorities for both freight and passenger service. It incorporates earlier studies on extending Metra into Wisconsin and advances several corridor concepts; among the recommended alignments, the City of Milton would serve as an intercity connection point.

Janesville Area 2020–2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan (2021)

The Janesville Area 2020 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) serves as a long-range guide to the Janesville Urbanized Area (UZA), which includes the Cities of Janesville and Milton, in addition to numerous surrounding townships. The plan focuses on developing efficient highway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities, while also promoting effective transit services throughout the Janesville Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)

Key takeaways include its role as an action-oriented framework for enhancing multimodal transportation options, ensuring the region can accommodate future growth while improving mobility, safety, and accessibility for all users. The plan emphasizes long-term sustainability and coordination among local, regional, and state transportation efforts.

Projects of note are detailed in the Planned Projects section above.

2025–2030 Janesville Area MPO Transportation Improvement Program (2025)

The Janesville Metropolitan Area (MPA) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a staged, multi-year program of transportation improvement projects. The Cities of Janesville and Milton, along with a portion of townships including Harmony, Janesville, La Prairie, Milton, and Rock are included in the Janesville MPA. The TIP is federally required to be updated annually for federal funding and must be approved by WisDOT prior to federal acceptance.

The 2025–2030 TIP includes two projects within city boundaries: The West Madison Ave./John Paul Rd. intersection design (TIP ID 371–25–003) and the Vickerman Rd. project (TIP ID 371–25–005).

City of Milton Downtown Parking Study (2017)

Conducted during summer 2017, the parking study found that downtown parking supply exceeds demand, with an overall occupancy rate of 31%. The study surveyed Junction Square and Goodrich Square, noting that while Junction Square has more restaurants and Goodrich Square more offices, even peak evening demand in Merchant Row reached only 48% occupancy, indicating adequate parking availability. The report details both off-street and on-street parking, including all-day, accessible, reserved, and 20-minute spaces, concluding that current infrastructure meets demand.

City of Milton 2020–2024 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2020)

The City of Milton 2020–2024 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) is a strategic guide for enhancing the city's park system through development, improvement, and acquisition, with the goal of improving residents' quality of life and supporting community growth. It outlines recreation goals, policies, and a park classification system, while detailing existing facilities, future needs, and capital improvement recommendations. The plan incorporates public input from surveys and meetings and aligns with regional and statewide recreation strategies to ensure the system meets evolving community demands.

Janesville Area MPO Trail User Report (2022)

The Janesville MPO surveyed users for preferences and patterns to document annual use of the regional recreational trail system. The survey found that bicycling is the dominant trail activity (59%), with adults aged 18–64 making up the largest user group (53%) and men comprising 58% of all users. Milton emerged as a key area of interest, with users requesting the following:

- Trail expansion north to Milton, with 'Milton/Ft. Atkinson' being a top destination among 20 surveyed users
- Trail connections to Milton along John Paul Rd. and Wright Rd.

Trail users reported exceptionally high satisfaction (99% rated trails as "Good" or "Very Good") and felt safe (93% rated trails as "Safe" or "Very Safe"), while identifying key improvement needs including better trail connectivity, enhanced safety at road crossings, and increased inclusivity for diverse user groups.

Goals, Strategies, and Recommendations

This section identifies specific goals, strategies, and recommendations to guide the maintenance of public infrastructure, improve safety, and expand mobility choices for residents and visitors. By coordinating these transportation objectives with land use planning and economic development initiatives, the city seeks to support sustainable growth while preserving the community's distinct identity and quality of life.

Goal 1: Provide a safe, accessible, and efficient multimodal transportation system that serves all users and supports sustainable growth.

Strategy 1: Prioritize the maintenance and reconstruction of existing infrastructure.

Recommendations:

1. Prioritize the reconstruction of roadways rated as ‘poor’ and ‘very poor’ on the PASER pavement condition scale to extend the life of the road network.
2. Update the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) annually to reflect changing pavement conditions and funding opportunities.
3. Establish a policy for the replacement of curb, gutter, and sidewalk as part of every city-led roadway reconstruction project.

Strategy 2: Enhance safety at high-risk intersections and crossings.

Recommendations:

1. Implement safety improvements at intersections and crossings identified as high-risk for pedestrians and motorists.
 - a. Deploy speed counter measures (e.g. speed tables, chicanes, curb bump-outs) on approaches to schools and parks as well as downtown.
 - b. Identify locations for mid-block crossing improvements (e.g. high-visibility crosswalks, pedestrian refuge islands, rectangular rapid flashing beacons) to increase safety and connectivity.
2. Evaluate the feasibility of roundabouts or other modern traffic control devices at appropriate intersections to improve traffic flow and safety.
3. Collaborate with freight rail operators to mitigate delays at at-grade crossings and improve safety for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Goal 2: Expand and connect pedestrian, bicycle, and trail facilities to create a seamless active transportation network.

Strategy 1: Expand and connect pedestrian, bicycle, and trail facilities.

Recommendations:

1. Develop and maintain a GIS layer to inventory sidewalk conditions and analyze connectivity gaps to aid in future planning decisions.
2. Fill identified gaps in the sidewalk and bicycle network to facilitate connections between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and commercial areas.
 - a. Improve segments of the Ice Age Trail, particularly where it transitions from off-street to on-street, city-owned segments. Consider designating such segments as Bicycle Boulevards and/or installing buffered or separated facilities.
3. Enhance and expand the city’s bicycle network to reduce stress and increase comfort for all ages and abilities.
 - a. Consider designating key local streets as Bicycle Boulevards or installing buffered facilities to increase connectivity.
4. Adopt a Complete Streets policy that evaluates bike-ped accommodation in every roadway project.

Strategy 2: Enhance the usability and quality of active transportation infrastructure.

Recommendations:

1. Provide wayfinding signage and amenities, such as benches and bike racks, along trails and key pedestrian routes to encourage usage.
2. Continue to enforce snow removal responsibilities to property owners within 24 hours of a snow event.
3. Continue to inventory and repair ADA non-compliant curb ramps during capital improvement projects.

Goal 3: Increase local and regional mobility choices through expanded transit and emerging technologies.

Strategy 1: Strengthen public transit services and regional connectivity.

Recommendations:

1. Explore opportunities with the Janesville Transit System (JTS) and Rock County Transit (RCT) to provide additional transit services for residents, particularly seniors and those with disabilities.
2. Explore opportunities with Janesville MPO and Rock County to expand transit routes or stops to better serve major employment centers, educational institutions, and areas of higher residential density.
3. Support intercity bus connectivity by identifying and maintaining convenient locations for private provider stops within the city.
4. Collaborate with major local employers to implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs, such as flex-scheduling or carpool incentives, to reduce peak-hour congestion.

Strategy 2: Integrate emerging mobility technologies and sustainable practices.

Recommendations:

1. Update infrastructure standards and zoning ordinances to require the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in public and private developments.
2. Monitor advancements in autonomous vehicle (AV) technology and prepare infrastructure specifications to allow for future integration.

Goal 4: Align transportation improvements with land use, economic development, and environmental goals.

Strategy 1: Align transportation investments with land use and economic development.

Recommendations:

1. Plan for the orderly extension of the city's roadway network concurrent with the future land use map.
2. Continue to require a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) as part of a development agreement with new developments that may generate a significant increase in traffic volume.
3. Coordinate with the local school district to ensure safe and accessible walking and biking routes exist between schools and surrounding neighborhoods.
4. Require developments to construct sidewalks to adjacent parcels prior to final plat approval.

Strategy 2: *Preserve the unique character and defining features of the community.*

Recommendations:

1. Identify and protect scenic corridors and historic gateways within the transportation network to maintain the community's identity.

Strategy 3: *Manage parking supply and demand to support economic vitality.*

Recommendations:

1. Work with Janesville MPO to update the 2017 Downtown Parking Study with the latest information on parking supply, utilization, peak demand, and future needs.
2. Consider Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to reduce congestion in areas with peak activity (e.g. school pick-up and drop-off hours, downtown events). Examples include coordinating a 'Bike Bus' program, walk- or bike-to-school campaigns, and more.

DRAFT

Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities

Element

Introduction

This element provides the framework for coordinating Milton's municipal services, utility systems, and public facilities with the community's land use, transportation, and economic development initiatives. By guiding the orderly extension and efficient use of water, sewer, stormwater, energy, and other essential services, this element protects the City's quality of life and maximizes the value of existing public investments.

Municipal Services

City Administration

The City of Milton's municipal administration is led by a City Administrator. The City Administrator is a council-appointed position with a wide range of duties including budget preparation, economic development, and intergovernmental relations. The City Clerk and the Treasurer Departments are under the direction of the City Administrator. Additional City departments include Human Resources, Public Library, Municipal Court, Police, Public Works, and Utilities (Stormwater, Wastewater, Water). These departments consist of approximately 39 full-time and 15 part-time or seasonal staff members.

Other public services are rendered through both public- and private sector entities, including:

- Assessor: Catalis
- Fire and Rescue: Lakeside Fire-Rescue
- City Engineer: Baxter & Woodman

Milton's elected government officials include a Mayor, six council members, and a municipal judge. The City operates under a mayor-council form of government. Both the mayor and council members are elected at-large for two-year terms. The City is also guided by 12 boards, committees, and commissions, including the Plan Commission, Board of Review, Library Board, Parks and Recreation Commission, Police Commission, and Joint Fire Commission, the latter of which is an independent entity that includes Milton as a member municipality among others. These commissions provide resident oversight and guidance on specialized policy matters.

Milton City Hall is located at 710 South Janesville Street. This location is home to the City's municipal offices, council chambers, and municipal court.

Police

The Milton Police Department is responsible for providing 24-hour police services and protection in the City of Milton. The Department provides a range of services including traditional law enforcement duties, crime prevention programs, neighborhood watch initiatives, school resource officer support, and public education on safety topics. The department is staffed by 17 employees including 13 full-time sworn officers, part-time sworn officers, and civilian support staff.

The department is located at 690 South Janesville Street. This facility was constructed in 2014 and includes a climate-controlled evidence room, covered parking for police vehicles, and other improvements.

The Milton Police Department is a Wisconsin Law Enforcement Accredited Agency (WILEAG), a distinction held by fewer than eight percent of law enforcement agencies statewide. This accreditation signifies the department's adherence to rigorous professional standards in areas such as policy development, training, evidence handling, and community engagement.

Fire and Rescue

The City of Milton is served by Lakeside Fire-Rescue, a combination department staffed by full-time, part-time, paid-on-call, paid-on-premises, and intern personnel. In 2023 the City joined the Edgerton Fire District, legally named Edgerton Fire but now doing business as Lakeside Fire-Rescue, bringing the total to eleven member municipalities. The former Milton Fire-EMS Department was integrated into the District at that time, prompting the rebranding.

Lakeside Fire-Rescue provides firefighting, emergency medical services (EMS), and fire inspections across a 220-square-mile service area from its headquarters in Edgerton and two stations, including Station 2 in Milton at 614 West Madison Avenue. The earlier intergovernmental agreement between the City and Town of Milton has been superseded; the Town has since joined the District as well.

Utilities

Water Supply

Milton's municipal water system provides a safe and dependable source of water for the community. The system includes four deep sandstone wells, two elevated storage tanks (with a combined capacity of 700,000 gallons), one booster station that pumps into a high-pressure zone, and a distribution system with nearly 42 miles of active water pipes. Water treatment includes chlorine to protect against bacterial growth, fluoride for dental health, and polyphosphate to sequester iron and manganese in the system.

The City's Water System Master Plan (2023) evaluates the water system and proposes a series of improvements. The current system meets current and projected average day demands through 2050, but fire flow and storage shortfalls must be addressed. Four areas, notably the Crossroads Business Park, fall below required fire flows, and an additional 300,000 gallons of elevated storage is needed to satisfy Wisconsin DNR recommendations of having "one average day" of pumpage. The City has begun design of the water tower in the business park to address these deficiencies, with construction planned to occur in 2027. Other proposed improvements include:

- Replacing undersized cast-iron water mains with large-diameter segments along key roadways, ensuring redundancy and fire flow capacity as development extends west to I-39/90 and north along Janesville Street;
- Upgrading well sites to meet pending chemical compatibility rules and maintain firm capacity if grid power is lost; and
- Continuing to replace 2 percent of the water main system annually.

Distribution system reinforcements will replace roughly 9,000 feet of undersized (primarily 4-inch) cast-iron water mains with 8- to 12-inch loops along Nelson Avenue, Storrs Lake Road, High Street, and Northside Drive, ensuring redundancy and fire flow capacity as development extends west to I-39/90 and these improvements, among others, will keep the water supply dependable and compliant through the plan horizon.

Storm Water Management

Milton's storm sewer system consists of roughly 24.4 miles of storm sewer pipe throughout the City. This system primarily drains into 13 detention basins and seeps into the groundwater system. These underground systems are interconnected with larger local bodies of water, such as Storrs Lake and the Rock River. Additionally, there are 71 stormwater outfalls within that City that are connected to waterways within the Rock River/Milton watershed.

Sanitary Sewer and Wastewater Treatment

The City of Milton's sanitary sewer system provides year-round collection and treatment services for residential, commercial, and industrial users. The system is comprised of approximately 46.2 miles of sanitary main with 13 lift stations. A Sanitary Sewer System Ordinance governs the city's system; this ordinance was first adopted in 1968 and most recently updated in 2010 to revise rates, charges, and billing procedures.

The City of Milton wastewater treatment plant is located at 41 North Street on a former landfill in the north-central part of the city. Built in 1937 as a Works Progress Administration project, the original system discharged effluent to groundwater through infiltration basins. Subsequent upgrades added a mechanical plant and additional treatment processes, with effluent now pumped to the Rock River at the same outfall used by the Consolidated Koshkonong Sanitary District. The facility is an advanced secondary activated sludge plant that meets current Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System limits and is sized for projected sewage flows over the next 20 years.

The city is evaluating its long-term wastewater treatment strategy through a comprehensive facilities planning process. The assessment considers whether small-scale improvements remain the most cost-effective approach or if alternatives such as larger plant modifications, regionalization with neighboring communities (Janesville or Consolidated Koshkonong Sanitary District), or plant relocation would better serve future needs. Future improvements include replacing aging electrical gear and blowers, enhancing air control systems, upgrading mixing equipment, and addressing waste-activated sludge storage deficiencies.

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling

Milton's solid waste disposal and recycling services are managed through a contract with Johns Disposal, providing weekly refuse collection every Wednesday and bi-weekly recycling collection on alternating Wednesdays.

Specialized disposal programs enhance Milton's environmental stewardship through partnerships with regional organizations. Hazardous waste disposal is coordinated through the Rock County Clean Sweep Program, ensuring safe handling of dangerous materials. Additionally, the City operates an electronics recycling program at the Department of Public Works in partnership with COM2 Recycling Solutions.

Communication Services and Power Distribution

There are a variety of public and private utility providers supplying electricity, natural gas, and communications services to homes and business in the City of Milton.

- **Electric:** Alliant Energy provides electrical service to most properties in the City of Milton and the extraterritorial boundary. Rock Energy Cooperative is a local provider of electrical service to properties in Milton Business Districts.
- **Natural Gas:** Alliant Energy provides natural service to most properties in the City of Milton and the extraterritorial boundary. The eastern portion of the extraterritorial boundary is served by WE Energies. Northern Natural Gas has a distribution pipeline that runs through the City, but does not serve the city directly.
- **Internet and Telephone Service:** Milton residents have access to several cellular phone options as well as many high-speed internet providers. This includes Spectrum, TDS Fiber, Brightspeed, and T-Mobile, among others. Some of these services are facilitated by approximately 17 telecommunication towers within City boundaries.

The American Transmission Company (ATC) owns and operates the electric transmission lines in the planning area. ATC produces a 10-Year Transmission System Assessment which identifies and priorities future projects needed to improve the adequacy and reliability of the transmission system. The report is segmented into zones

of service; Zone 3, in which Milton is located, forecasts an electric load growth of 0.9% annually through 2035. While a number of projects are planned in Zone 3, none are located in the planning area.

A key component of Milton's electrical infrastructure is the 24.9 kV transmission line that serves the Crossroads Business Park, which is equipped with two transformers rated at 50 MVA and 25 MVA to support industrial operations. Alliant Energy serves as the primary provider for both electric and natural gas services in Milton. For detailed mapping of electric service territories and transmission line routing, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin offers interactive mapping tools.

Parks and Recreation

Milton's network of parks and open spaces provides a mix of active and passive recreation opportunities. Together with the School District of Milton, the City has a total of 17 parks which comprise approximately 197 acres of land. In order to ascertain level of service and forecast demand, each park is classified into one of the following park types, below. Some parks are assigned more than one park type.

Neighborhood Parks

- Crossridge Park: Located at 1122 Parkview Drive, this 43-acre park includes a walking trail, prairie, and two playgrounds with a variety of equipment, among other amenities. A grassy area to the northeast is used by Milton Youth Football. This park is also classified as a Natural/Conservation Area.
- Lamar Park: Located adjacent to Milton West Elementary School, this 5.5-acre park is commonly used for classes. The park features a variety of amenities including two baseball diamonds, sand volleyball court, playground equipment, and picnic shelter. The park is a popular park to rent for events.
- Liberty Park: This 2.5 acre park is located at 230 South Clear Lake Avenue and includes playground equipment, bathrooms, concession stand, and a baseball field, which is used for 9-12 year old Little League.
- North Goodrich Park: Located in the Village Square Historic District, this 2-acre park is home to Milton Community House, a former trail depot that is rented out for various events throughout the year. In addition to the depot, the park includes a variety of playground equipment.
- South Goodrich Park: Also located in the Village Square Historic District, this 6-acre park is located next to the Milton West Elementary School and includes the Goodrich Square Splash Pad, two softball diamonds, a pavilion, and picnic tables.
- Tails n Trails Dog Park: This 14.5-acre facility is located at 466 Elm Street and includes fenced-in dog areas. Additional amenities include a playground structure and walking trail. This Park is also classified as both a Special-Use Park and a Natural/Conservation Area.
- Veterans Park: Located at 430 Hilltop Drive, Veterans Park includes an array of flags, a eagle statue on a pedestal, and memorial stones. Additional amenities include a pavilion with restrooms, playground equipment, and open space, which is commonly used for youth sports. The park is also classified as a Special Use Park.

Nature/Conservation Areas

- Mud Lake: Located on West Madison Avenue, this is a 12-acre park and that includes a walking trail and picnic tables. Park activities are limited to hiking and canoeing or non-motorized boating on the lake.

Special Use Parks

- King Park: This 8-acre park is located at 214 Hilltop Drive and includes a 9-basket disc golf course, shed, and gravel parking lot. The park serves as the community sledding hill in the winter, while the flat, open area below the hill is used for Milton Youth Soccer.

Mini Parks

- Northridge Park: Located at 420 Rivendell Drive, this 1.5-acre park includes playground equipment that primarily serves neighborhood community members.
- Tower Hill Park: This is a small, 3-acre park located in a residential neighborhood. Amenities are limited to playground equipment with a bench and picnic table.
- Water Tower Park: This 2.5-acre park is located at 932 Rogers Street and primarily serves adjacent residential neighborhoods. The park includes playground equipment and a picnic table.

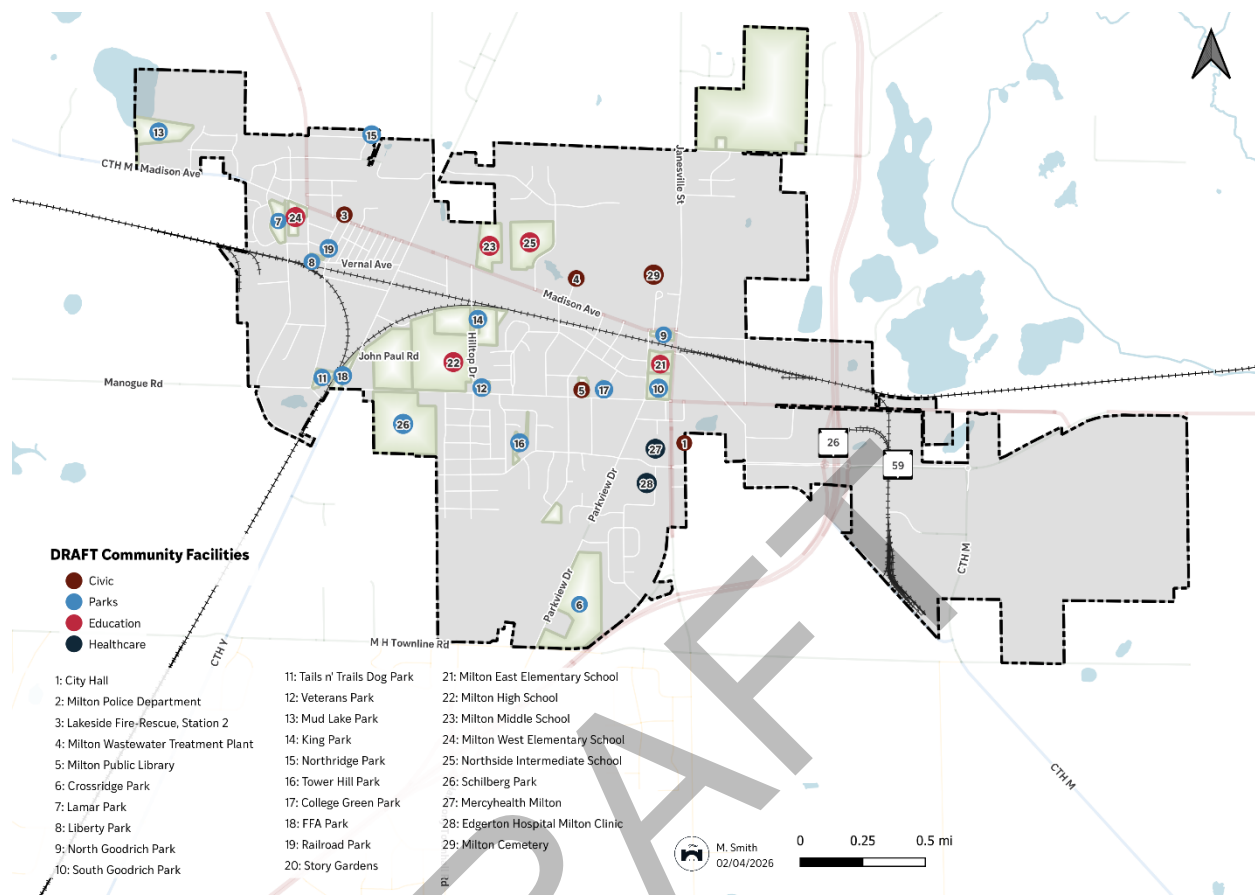
Underdeveloped Parks

- College Green Park: This 1-acre park is located on Columbus Street. The park provides a quiet, passive recreation area with picnic tables. Topography and site constraints limit the ability to add active recreation amenities to the site.
- FFA Park: Located on South John Paul Road, this 1.5-acre park includes a prairie area, picnic tables, and a hitching post. It is used primarily by the public for youth football practice. This park is also classified as a Natural/Conservation Area.
- Railroad Park: This is a 1-acre park located in the center of the Junction Square downtown district on the west side of the City. The park features mature trees but lacks dedicated equipment or structures.
- Story Gardens: Located on the grounds of the Milton Public Library, Story Gardens features gardens along with an outdoor programming space, stage, and seating area. A segment of the Ice Age Trail was recently rerouted to go through the gardens.

School District Parks

- Milton East Elementary School: Located at 725 Greenman Street, this 2-acre park includes a variety of playground equipment as well as basketball hoops, benches, and picnic tables.
- Milton High School: Located at 114 W. High Street, the high school campus includes a baseball diamond with bleachers, football field and track, tennis courts, an undesignated grassy area used for soccer, a warming house with bathrooms, and a children's play area.
- Milton Middle School: Located at 20 E. Madison Avenue, the middle school includes six acres of area used for soccer and basketball.
- Milton West Elementary School: Located at 825 W. Madison Avenue, this 2-acre park includes a variety of playground equipment, benches, and picnic tables.
- Northside Intermediate School: Located at 159 Northside Drive, the intermediate school includes basketball courts, soccer field, running trails, and playground equipment.
- Schilberg Park: Located at 301 W. High Street, this 40-acre park offers ballfields, volleyball courts, a playground, pavilion, walking paths, and hosts the annual Independence Day celebration.

Map 5: Community Facilities



Community Facilities

Libraries

Located at 430 East High Street, the Milton Public Library provides free access to residents and offers a comprehensive collection of physical and digital materials. A \$3.1 million renovation in 2016 included a new entrance, elevator, technology infrastructure, and flexible program rooms. The City's 2025–2028 Capital Improvement Plan and the library's strategic plan identify future needs for expanded youth and collaborative spaces, additional parking, and enhanced broadband/Wi-Fi capacity.

In addition to traditional lending services, the library offers a variety of programs and services tailored to all age groups, including children's reading challenges, job search resources, and more. Milton Public Library is one of 22 member libraries in the Prairie Lakes Library System, which serves communities in Racine, Rock, and Walworth counties.

Schools

Residents of the City of Milton are served by the School District of Milton. The District covers approximately 121 square miles, encompassing the City of Milton, a portion of the City of Janesville, and portions of the Towns of Fulton, Harmony, Janesville, Johnstown, Koshkonong, Lima, and Milton. According to the 2023 Janesville Comprehensive Plan, approximately 20 percent of students enrolled in the district are Janesville residents.

The School District of Milton operates eight facilities: a high school serving grades 9–12, a middle school for grades 7 and 8, an intermediate school for grades 4 through 6, four elementary schools for kindergarten

through third grade, and a cooperative alternative high school program. Enrollment data shared with the state Department of Public Instruction indicate a total of 3,461 students in the district. Other than a 1 percent decline during the 2021–2022 school year, total enrollment has increased and returned to 2020–2021 levels.

Table 5: Enrollment Data for School District of Milton, 2020–2025

School Name	Grades	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025	5-Year Avg	% Difference 2020–2025
Milton East Elementary School	K–3	419	417	427	425	409	419	–2%
Consolidated Elementary School	K–3	90	86	86	88	82	86	–9%
Milton West Elementary School	PreK–3	358	340	320	324	322	333	–10%
Harmony Elementary School	K–3	315	296	308	294	288	300	–9%
Northside Intermediate School	4–6	695	722	715	762	794	738	14%
Milton Middle School	7–8	499	480	511	504	509	501	2%
Milton High School	9–12	1092	1074	1053	1054	1057	1066	–3%
Total		3,468	3,415	3,420	3,451	3,461	3443	0%

There are a range of higher education institutions within the region. This includes the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, UW–Whitewater at Rock County, and Blackhawk Technical College.

Health and Child Care Facilities

Milton is served by two facilities within City boundaries: Mercyhealth Milton (725 S. Janesville Street), and Edgerton Hospital Milton Clinic (831 Arthur Drive). Both facilities provide primary care and family medicine to patients in Milton and surrounding communities. Outside of Milton, residents can access full-service hospitals within a 15-mile radius, including Edgerton Hospital in Edgerton, Mercyhealth Hospital and Trauma Center in Janesville, and SSM Health St. Mary’s Hospital in Janesville.

Milton is also served by a variety of commercial and home-based childcare and preschool education facilities. The School District of Milton offers 4K preschool programming at three elementary school locations: Harmony Elementary, Milton East Elementary, and Milton West Elementary.

Cemeteries

There are three cemeteries within City boundaries. Milton Cemetery is owned by the city and is located on North Janesville Street. It was founded in 1839 and includes nearly 13 acres. Two other privately owned cemeteries, Milton Junction and St. Mary, also operate within city boundaries. Milton Junction Cemetery is operated by the Milton Junction Cemetery Association and is located on John Paul Road. Saint Mary Cemetery is operated by St. Mary Church and is located on West High Street.

Goals, Strategies, and Recommendations

The following goals, strategies, and recommendations translate Milton’s long-range vision for utilities and community facilities into specific, measurable actions. Together they balance system reliability, fiscal responsibility, and quality of life expectations, positioning the City to absorb future growth without compromising service delivery or environmental health.

Goal 1: Ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of utility systems to meet community needs.

Strategy 1: *Ensure that the production, treatment, and distribution of water is safe and reliable for all users.*

Recommendations:

1. Plan for the orderly extension of the city's water main system concurrent with the future land use map.
2. Continue annual water main replacement programs targeting undersized and aging infrastructure.
3. Monitor groundwater quality and potential contamination issues to ensure long-term compliance with drinking water standards.

Strategy 2: *Assure wastewater and stormwater systems keep pace with land use and economic development forecasts.*

Recommendations:

1. Evaluate long-term strategies identified in the forthcoming Wastewater Treatment Plant Facilities Report, including potential plant modifications, regionalization, or relocation to meet future discharge limits.
2. Plan sewer extensions and treatment facility improvements incrementally, as growth occurs, to ensure cost-effective service delivery.
3. Require developer-funded sewer extensions sized for full build-out densities and dedicate easements for future wastewater interceptors.
4. Consider the use of sewer assessment policies and impact/development fees that will encourage compact development and discourage scattered development.
5. Ensure that new stormwater infrastructure is sized for more frequent extreme weather events (e.g. 100-year storms)

Goal 2: Coordinate utility and facility planning with future land use, transportation, and economic development plans.

Strategy 1: *Coordinate capital projects across departments and synchronize utility work with street reconstructions.*

Recommendations:

1. Prepare an annual city-wide asset management report that scores pavement, water, sewer, and sidewalk conditions to set multi-year schedules and coordinate improvements.
2. Consider burying utility lines where feasible during road improvement projects to enhance community aesthetics and reliability.

Strategy 2: *Foster intergovernmental and provider coordination.*

Recommendations:

1. Prioritize the use of existing utility systems and plan for the orderly, sequential extension of utilities to support development patterns outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

2. Pursue shared-service agreements and utility coordination with neighboring jurisdictions, agencies, and service providers to improve efficiency and serve regional growth.
3. Maintain ongoing communication with utility and community facility providers to raise awareness of upcoming development and infrastructure needs.
4. Coordinate planning efforts with the School District of Milton and emergency service providers to allow them to anticipate future growth and resource needs.

Goal 3: Enhance the quality of life for all residents through reliable municipal services and high-quality community facilities.

Strategy 1: Develop and maintain a comprehensive parks and recreation system.

Recommendations:

1. Follow the recommendations of the City's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) when making park acquisition and development decisions. Update the CORP as needed to reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Secure parkland before, or concurrent with, development, using developer dedications where appropriate to control costs and increase parkland access. Areas could include those identified in the CORP as lacking proper park coverage, places lacking trail or path access, and/or places of environmental importance.
3. Consider adding passive, family-oriented recreation facilities and amenities (e.g. trails, shelters, splash pads) in underutilized spaces, particularly close to residential districts.
4. Establish a dedicated annual maintenance and operations fund for the City's parks, recreation facilities, and amenities to meet diverse community needs.
5. Retrofit and design all parks to meet or exceed current ADA accessibility standards.
6. Explore public and private partnerships to leverage additional expertise and resources towards implementing park recommendations.

Strategy 2: Provide high quality and cost-effective community services and facilities that meet existing and projected future needs and align with adopted plans, policies, and ordinances.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to monitor the condition of municipal buildings and public safety facilities to identify necessary upgrades, replacements, and long-term maintenance projects.
2. Encourage improved access to healthcare facilities and childcare services by supporting properly located and operated facilities.
3. Ensure each department regularly assesses their staffing, equipment, and facility requirements for effective service delivery, not only to meet existing service quality but also to meet anticipated growth.
4. Evaluate building, mechanical, housing, and sanitary codes to align with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter 5: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element

Introduction

This chapter serves as a vital guide for stewardship of the assets that define the character and quality of life in the City of Milton. It documents agricultural character and land use, summarizes a variety of natural resources including water, woodlands, and minerals, and details the historic resources that define our community's heritage.

The chapter concludes with a series of goals, strategies, and recommendations designed to guide the city in maintaining a balance between growth and resource preservation. These directives provide the foundation for decision-making regarding land use, open space protection, agricultural viability, and the safeguarding of cultural resources for current and future generations.

Agricultural Resources

Agricultural Character and Land Use

Farming has played an integral role in the formation of Milton's history, character, and economy. Agricultural land comprises 11 percent of the city's existing land use, which is largely present on the city's periphery. In the planning area, agricultural land comprises nearly 52 percent of the land use. Much of this land is considered prime farmland due to its soil quality, moisture supply, and growing season.

Milton has a vibrant agricultural industry that is anchored by large-scale processing companies and supported by local farming operations. United Ethanol operates a major production facility in the area, manufacturing fuel ethanol, distillers' grains for animal feed, and corn oil, all while creating a market for local corn growers. The presence of Cargill's animal nutrition plant complements this by serving the local livestock market with feed products. This combination of industrial processors and local farms, including dairies and grain operations, makes agriculture a key economic driver in the region.

Agricultural Land Use Inside City Boundaries

- Existing land use: 339 acres (11% of city's land area)
- Existing land zoned for Rural Holding (RH-35) use, a district which acts as a holding zone to preserve productive agricultural lands in the long-term: 435 acres (16% of city's land area)
- In addition to the RH-35 zoning classification, other agricultural land in city boundaries may be zoned Light Industrial (IL), General Industrial (IG), Institutional (I), or Single-Family (SR-7).

Agricultural Land Use Within Planning Area

- Existing land use: 10,552 acres (52% of land within planning area – Refer to Map 11, 'Planning Area Existing Land Use Map', in the Land Use Element)
- The majority of agricultural land in Rock County is being used for cropland (According to USDA and NLCD data)

Land Capability Classification

The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Land Capability Classification System categorizes soils into eight classes (I–VIII) based on their suitability for agricultural use and the limitations they present for sustained crop production. This system serves as a guide for land use planning by evaluating soil characteristics, climate factors, and potential risks of damage. The classification helps determine the most

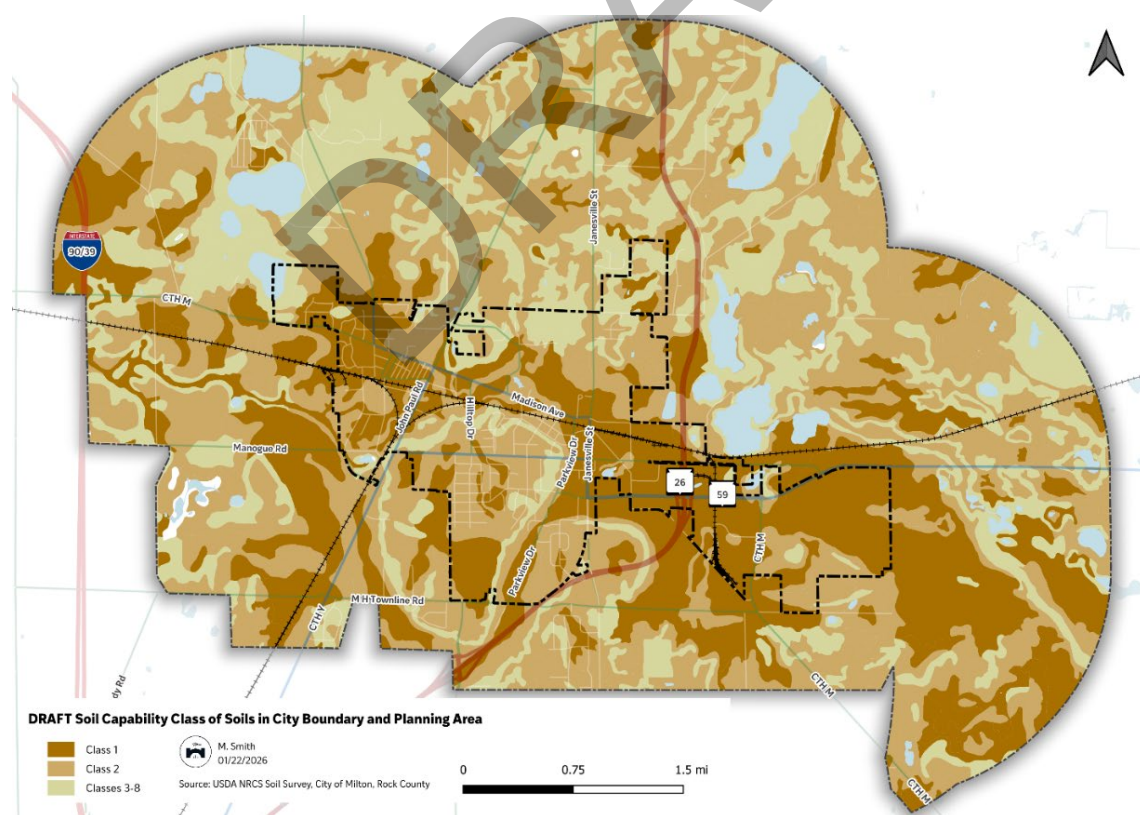
appropriate uses for land, ranging from intensive crop cultivation to land conservation.

- **Class I:** Class I soils may be safely used for intensive production of a wide range of plants (e.g. continuous row crops, pasture plants, woodland). These soils are deep, workable, generally well-drained, and are nearly level with minimal erosion hazard. Class 1 soils have slight limitations that restrict their use.
- **Class II:** Class II soils have moderate limitations and may require soil conservation practices (e.g. special tillage methods) that are generally easy to apply. They may be used for crops, pasture, woodland or wildlife habitat and have one or more limitations, such as moderate soil depth or gentle slopes.
- **Class III:** Class III soils require specific practices and conservation measures. They have severe limitations and conservation practices are usually more difficult to apply and maintain. These soils may be used for cultivated crops, pasture, range, woodland or wildlife habitat and have one or more limitations, such as moderately shallow rooting depth or moderate slopes.

Generally, lands with Class I and II soils are considered “National Prime Farmlands”. The soils in Classes III–VIII have progressively greater natural limitations for cropland, but may be used for pasture, grazing, woodland, wildlife, recreation, and aesthetic purposes.

Map 6 illustrates the soil capability classes within and around the City of Milton. There are approximately 1,484 acres within the city, 49 percent of which consists of Class 1 soils. These are present in both the southeast and northwest sections of the city. Class II soils are located throughout the central and northern sections of the city and account for 38 percent of the city’s land area.

Map 6: Soil Capability Class of Soils in City Boundary and Planning Area



County Agricultural Profile

Agriculture Classes

The National Land Cover Database (NLCD) uses Landsat data to provide timely, long-term, and detailed information on land surface change. NLCD agriculture classes include land used for production of annual crops as well as areas intensively managed for livestock production. The 2024 NLCD Land Cover data shows that most of the agricultural land cover in the planning area consists of cultivated crops. This includes most of the existing agricultural land use in city boundaries as well as in the planning area. Pastureland is largely located to the north of the planning area.

USDA data also indicate most of the agricultural land being used for cropland. Between 2017–2022, cropland has comprised between 86–87% of all agricultural land in Rock County.

Agriculture Change

Table 6 summarizes data on the number and size of farms in Rock County from 2012–2022. During this 10-year period, the number of farms has decreased 10.5 percent. Furthermore, farmland acreage has decreased 16 percent to 296,396 acres.



Figure 18: Map of Land Cover in Rock County. Cultivated Crops (Shown in brown, throughout the planning area) comprises 87% of the land cover.

Table 6. Number of Farms, Rock County (2012–2022)

	2012	2022	% Difference, 2012–2022
Number of Farms	1,509	1,350	–10.5%
Land in Farms (Acres)	353,793	296,396	–16.2%
Average Size of Farm (Acres)	234	220	–6.0%

Data Source: Rock County GIS

Table 7 segments the number of farms by size from 2017–2022. During this five-year period, the number of farms under 10 acres decreased nearly 39 percent, while farms between 500–999 acres decreased 38 percent.

Table 7. Farms by Size, Rock County (2017–2022)

Number of Farms by Size	2022	% of Total	2017	% of Total	% Difference, 2017–2022
1–9 acres	161	12%	262	17%	–38.5%
10–49 acres	535	40%	591	37%	–9.5%
50–179 acres	319	24%	320	20%	–0.3%
180–499 acres	209	15%	239	15%	–12.6%
500–999 acres	63	5%	101	6%	–37.6%
1000+ acres	63	5%	74	5%	–14.9%
Total	1350		1587		

Data Source: USDA, Census of Agriculture

Agricultural Plans, Programs, and Policies

City of Milton

In April 2025 the City of Milton adopted a new Zoning Ordinance. The ordinance includes a new Section (78.02.70) which establishes the Rural Holding (RH-35) Zoning District. This district is intended to permit very low-density single family detached residential development at a density of no more than one dwelling unit for every 35 gross acres. This district acts as a “holding zone” to preserve agricultural lands in the long-term, protect existing farm operations from encroachment by incompatible uses, promote further investments in farming, and may maintain eligibility for farming incentive programs.

Rock County

In 2013, Rock County published a Farmland Preservation Plan. The plan aims to preserve and enhance the agricultural industry within the county. It focuses on several key areas, including farmland preservation through zoning and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), supporting agricultural businesses and diversification, addressing environmental concerns related to farming, and promoting agricultural education and awareness. The plan also emphasized the importance of collaboration between farmers, local governments, and other stakeholders to achieve its goals.

In 2025, Rock County began updating the Farmland Preservation Plan. The plan, which will be titled ‘Preserve Rock’, has a 10-year horizon in order to be certified by the State of Wisconsin. The planning process for Preserve Rock is underway at the time of this report. Upon adoption, the plan will allow Rock County towns to adopt farmland preservation zoning, which makes eligible landowners and farmers qualified to participate in the State’s Farmland Preservation Program.

State Programs

The Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Tax Credit is available to eligible landowners who meet specific requirements, including owning the farmland for the entire year of the claim, being Wisconsin residents, and ensuring the farm meets state soil and water conservation standards. Landowners must also meet certain gross farm revenue thresholds and cannot have claimed homestead or veterans property taxes. The amount of the tax credit varies based on participation methods, such as being in a certified farmland preservation zoning district or enrolled in an effective farmland preservation agreement.

Recent legislative updates through Wisconsin Act 42, effective December 8, 2023, have increased tax credits for participants and modified minimum term lengths for agreements. These changes affect claims beginning with tax year 2023, providing enhanced benefits for landowners who participate in the program.

It should be noted that farmland within city boundaries (including land within the RH-35 Rural Holding district) is not eligible for the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Tax Credit. Only the Town of Milton is listed as having farmland preservation zoning.

Federal Programs

The 2018 Farm Bill includes a number of programs designed to facilitate long-term farmland preservation and conservation. The Bill was reauthorized through 2025 and extends the following programs:

- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):** Offers annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to farmers who remove environmentally sensitive land from production and install resource-conserving covers for 10- to 15-year contracts.
- **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP):** Provides financial and technical help to secure perpetual easements on farm and ranch land or to restore and protect wetlands; it replaced the former Wetland Reserve, Grassland Reserve, and Farm and Ranchland Protection Programs. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program designed to encourage producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by improving, maintaining, and managing

existing conservation activities and by undertaking additional conservation activities.

- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** Rewards producers who already meet a stewardship threshold and agree to adopt additional conservation activities that improve soil health, water quality, and biodiversity across the entire operation.
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** Shares the cost of installing structural practices (e.g., terraces, manure storage) or management practices (e.g., nutrient, pest, or grazing plans) that address identified natural-resource concerns.
- **Grassroots Source Water Protection Program (SWPP):** A joint USDA FSA–National Rural Water Association effort that funds local teams to develop voluntary, producer-focused plans and practices that safeguard rural drinking-water supplies.

Natural Resources

Ecological Landscape

An ecological landscape is an area identified for managing natural communities, key habitats, aquatic features, native plants, and native animals from an ecological perspective, which serves as a framework for sustainable planning.

The City of Milton is situated within the Southeast Glacial Plains ecological landscape, which is characterized by glacial landforms (e.g. till plains, morainal ridges). Elevations across the city range from about 805 feet along the central east–west band of relatively flat farmland to roughly 950 feet on the bordering northern and southern ridge crests. East and west of city boundaries, scattered glacial lakes occupy the lowest basins. These glacial landforms create the framework for both the city’s drainage patterns and its biological communities.

Today, the landscape consists primarily of agricultural cropland with fragmented forests and altered hydrology due to development, which presents challenges for biodiversity conservation. The region faces issues like habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and altered water flow, while offering management opportunities for conservation and restoration efforts to protect its remaining natural communities and ecological functions.

Metallic & Non-Metallic Mineral Resources:

The planning area contains significant glacial sand and gravel deposits, particularly south of the city. Two active gravel pits currently operate within the planning area: one east of Milton on Highway 59 and another south of the city on Milton Harmony Townline Road.

Under Wisconsin State Statute 295.20, landowners may register marketable nonmetallic mineral deposits through a process that requires certification by a professional geologist or engineer, notification to all local zoning authorities, and recording with the County Register of Deeds. Registration is effective for 10 years and may be renewed for an additional 10 years, with ongoing operations eligible for continuous renewal. Once registered, local governments are restricted from enacting zoning changes that would permanently interfere with mineral extraction. Zoning modifications may only occur if mining has not commenced and are part of a pre-adopted master plan, though these changes cannot affect registered land during its registration period. Local units retain the right to contest registrations in court on grounds of no marketable deposit or failure to meet zoning requirements.

Water Resources

Groundwater:

Groundwater is the portion of precipitation that infiltrates the soil rather than running off to surface water bodies or evaporating. Within the planning area, groundwater resources are generally abundant and of good quality. The absence of surface stream drainage and the presence of permeable substrata allow a significant portion of precipitation to infiltrate directly into the groundwater system. Once it reaches the saturated zone

of an aquifer, it becomes a long-term storage reservoir that can be tapped by wells.

The City of Milton has four wells, ranging from 722 to 1,036 feet deep, which draw from sandstone aquifers beneath the planning area. Given that groundwater is the city's sole source of potable, commercial, and industrial water, safeguarding water quality and long-term aquifer yield is essential for public health and economic sustainability. To that end, the city has established a Wellhead Protection Overlay District as part of its zoning ordinance. This district imposes uniform restrictions on all properties within the protection radius around municipal wells, in addition to the requirements of the underlying zoning districts.

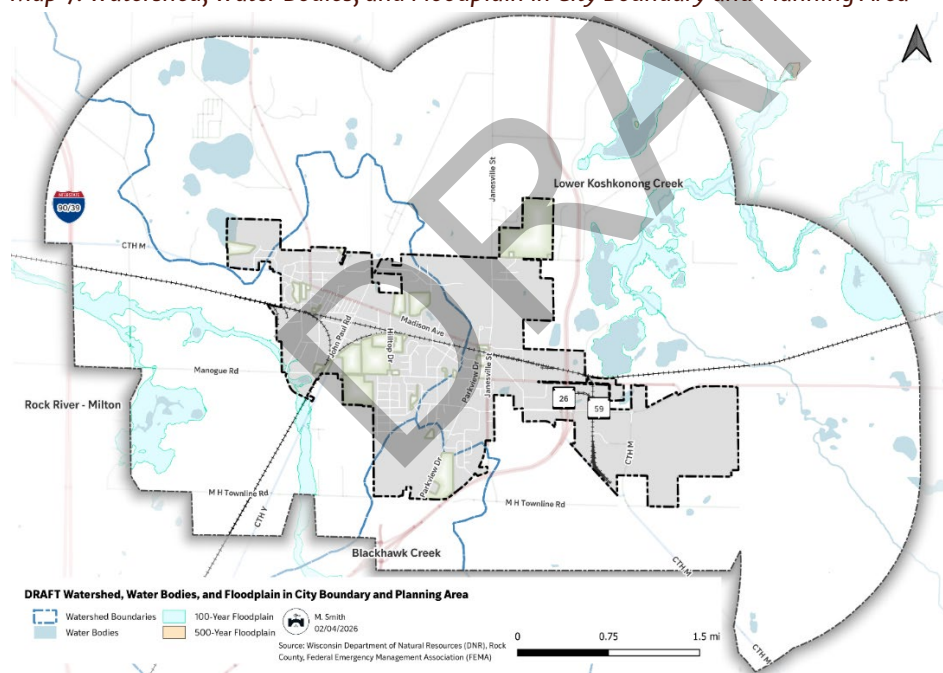
Watershed System

A watershed is an area of land that channels water to a common waterway, such as a creek or a river. Milton is located within the following watershed(s):

- **Lower Koshkonong Creek:** This 266 square mile watershed occupies the northern and eastern portions of the planning area (approximately 19 square miles).
- **Rock River – Milton:** This 49 square mile watershed occupies the western portion of the planning area (approximately 7 square miles).
- **Blackhawk Creek:** This 108 square mile watershed occupies a small southern portion of the planning area (less than 1 square mile).

Map 7 illustrates the watersheds as well as the surface waters and floodplain within the planning area.

Map 7: Watershed, Water Bodies, and Floodplain in City Boundary and Planning Area



Surface Waters

The planning area contains several surface water features, primarily consisting of five shallow freshwater lakes situated in two clusters. To the east of the planning area, Storrs Lake and Bowers Lake are situated within the Storrs Lake Wildlife Area, a state-managed property spanning over 2,800 acres. Storrs Lake supports a variety of fish species and includes a publicly accessible boat landing. To the northwest of the city are Mud Lake, Clear Lake, and Grass Lake. Mud Lake spans 51 acres and is surrounded by a wetland habitat that contributes to its natural character. Unnamed ponds and marshes are also present.

There are no rivers or streams in both the city's boundaries and the planning area. A segment of Otter Creek is located to the northeast of the planning area and is part of the Lower Koshkonong Creek watershed.

Wetlands

Wetlands perform essential ecological functions including filtering pollutants to protect groundwater and surface quality, mitigating flood impacts, and providing critical habitat for fish, migratory birds, and other wildlife species.

Wetland ecosystems within city boundaries are limited in extent, accounting for less than 2 percent of the city's total land area according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wetland Inventory, with smaller wetland tracts under five acres potentially underrepresented in this figure. To the northeast, the Storrs Lake Wildlife Area is home to a sizeable amount of wetland habitat.

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) produces Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). FIRMs are official floodplain maps that illustrate the 1 percent annual chance floodplain (also known as the 100-year floodplain, Special Flood Hazard Areas, or 'SFHA') and the 0.2-percent annual chance floodplain (also known as the 500-year floodplain). These floodplain maps are used by the city to ensure that floodplain management standards are applied to land development.

Map 6 illustrates the floodplain in the planning area, which is located south and east of city as well as around Storrs Lake and Bowers Lake. A small portion of the floodplain exists within city boundaries near East Vincent Street. There are no regulatory floodways in the planning area.

Shoreland Zoning and Setbacks

Rock County enforces shoreland zoning regulations under Chapter 4.2 of its Code of Ordinances, applying to all navigable waters within the planning area including the lakes and associated wetlands describe above. A minimum setback of 75 feet from the Ordinary High Water Mark is required for development, as defined by Rock County's shoreland zoning maps and consistent with state-mandated standards. These regulations, aligned with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) model ordinance, aim to protect water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational access.

Since shoreland zoning jurisdiction rests with Rock County in unincorporated areas, local planning efforts must coordinate with county regulations to ensure compliance. For the comprehensive plan, this underscores the need to direct future development away from sensitive shoreland areas, preserve natural buffers, and support long-term ecological and water resource protection goals.

Soils

Soil characteristics play a critical role in guiding sustainable land use and development decisions in Milton. Across the planning area, the following primary soil associations are present:

- **Plano-Warsaw-Dresden Association**
- **Kidder-St. Charles Association**
- **Dresden-St. Charles-Warsaw Association**

While instances of soils with severe engineering limitations are relatively rare within the city limits, specific locations where they do occur warrant attention. A notable area with such constraints exists on the northern edge of the city west of Business 26, a feature that extends to lands directly north of the city limits. Additionally, a smaller linear area south of St. Mary Street and west of Parkview Drive presents severe limitations.

On a broader scale, the planning area contains extensive zones with significant engineering constraints. Large areas surrounding Storrs Lake, Bowers Lake, and the marshes to the north exhibit these limitations.

Furthermore, a cluster of soils with severe constraints is associated with the major depressional areas located to the west and southwest of the city.

Woodlands

Woodlands within the planning area play a vital role in supporting environmental health and community well-being by improving air and water quality, managing stormwater runoff, and providing habitat for diverse plant and animal species. The planning area features scattered deciduous forests, with notable concentrations near Storrs Lake, Clear Lake, and to the north central section of the city. Within the city, mature street trees and extant wooded areas are key natural assets that help define Milton's landscape.

In recognition of its commitment to urban forestry, Milton was designated a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation in 2016. This national program encourages communities to establish and maintain sustainable tree management practices, reflecting Milton's ongoing efforts to preserve and expand its tree canopy for future generations.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) generally refer to distinct landscape features that play a critical role in maintaining water quality and supporting ecological health, such as wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, riparian corridors, and areas with unique habitat. These areas are identified to ensure that development is directed away from locations where it would have an adverse impact on the environment.

While no specific contaminated or designated sensitive sites have been identified in the WISDNR BRRTS system for Milton, the city and Rock County planning frameworks recognize the importance of identifying and preserving such areas to guide sustainable land use. ESAs are formally recognized in regional planning under Wisconsin's Sewer Service Area regulations, which prohibit sewer extensions into these zones to prevent adverse environmental impacts.

Threatened or Endangered Species

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) program maintains data on the general location and status of threatened or endangered species. At the township level in which Milton is located (Township 04N, Range 13E), the NHI lists a number of threatened and endangered species, including:

- **Threatened Species:** Prairie Parsley; Redfin Shiner; Acadian Flycatcher
- **Endangered Species:** Black Tern; Purple Milkweed; Eastern Prairie White Fringed Orchid

This list is not exhaustive, and readers are encouraged to consult WDNR's NHI portal for the latest information.

Additionally, WDNR assigns species a 'special concern' status indicating some problem of abundance or distribution is suspected but not proved. The purpose of this status is to focus attention on certain species before they become threatened or endangered. At the township level in which Milton is located, species of special concern include, but are not limited to, the King Rail, Blanding's Turtle, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. It should be noted that some species of special concern may also be protected under other federal and state laws, including the Migratory Bird Act.

Cultural Resources

Early History, Settlement, and Formation

Before the arrival of European settlers, the area now known as Milton was inhabited by the Pottawatomi, who were the dominant Native American group in the region. Following military actions associated with the Black Hawk War of 1832, the Pottawatomi ceded their land claims in 1833. Soldiers returning from the conflict had described the territory as having beautiful prairies, burr oak openings, and abundant water sources, which attracted interest from potential settlers in the East. Consequently, the land was opened for white settlement in 1836, paving the way for the establishment of a permanent community.

The first known settler in the area was Peter McEwen, who arrived in 1838, the same year that Joseph Goodrich and Henry Beebe Crandall also staked their claims. Goodrich, widely recognized as the founder of Milton, came from Alfred, New York, and selected the site specifically for its strategic potential at the intersection of trade routes between Chicago, Madison, Janesville, and Fort Atkinson. Originally named Prairie du Lac, the settlement was required to change its name to secure a federal post office. Goodrich played a pivotal role in the town's early infrastructure, building the Milton House in 1844 to serve as an inn and store, and establishing the Seventh Day Baptist Church in 1840 to fulfill his vision of a community based on religious and educational principles.

As the community developed in what is now referred to as Old Milton, it saw an influx of settlers from New England who founded schools and churches to support the growing population. A significant shift in the town's trajectory occurred with the arrival of the railroad in 1852, which catalyzed economic growth and expanded the business district, particularly in agricultural trade and wheat shipping. This transportation development also led to the formation of a separate commercial hub known as Milton Junction, which sprang up around a railroad spur line and eventually developed its own distinct "Merchant Row" along Vernal Avenue.

Although the two villages existed as neighboring entities for over a century, Old Milton and Milton Junction remained separate for much of their history due to the formation of separate village governments and occasional legal challenges. Cooperation grew steadily throughout the twentieth century, driven by key catalysts such as the growth of nearby Janesville, increasing residential development, and the need for modern services like home mail delivery. Economic considerations also played a significant role, as residents sought to attract state and federal aid and enhance opportunities for business development. The push for unification culminated in a formal merger proposal in 1966, followed by a successful referendum in November of that year. The communities officially merged in 1967, and the newly consolidated City of Milton received its official city charter in 1969.

Historic Resources

Locally Designated Historic Landmarks and Districts

The City of Milton is home to a variety of resources that have been designated as local historic landmarks by the Milton Historic Preservation Commission. This includes:

- 18 buildings; and
- One district (Village Square Historic District)

Of these landmarks, 12 are either individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or considered contributing buildings to the Milton College Historic District.

Milton's Historic Preservation Commission may recommend or rescind designation of historic structures, sites, or districts within city limits. The city has considered conferring local landmark status to properties in Junction Square that are not within the Merchant Square Historic District, described below.

Map 8: Locally Designated Historic Landmarks and Districts in the City of Milton



National Register of Historic Places, Buildings and Districts

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic sites worthy of preservation. Administered by the National Park Service, this program coordinates efforts to identify and protect America's historic resources, involving State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) like the Wisconsin Historical Society to connect federal initiatives with local communities. Both the National and State registers include buildings, sites, and cultural resources significant to national, state, or local history.

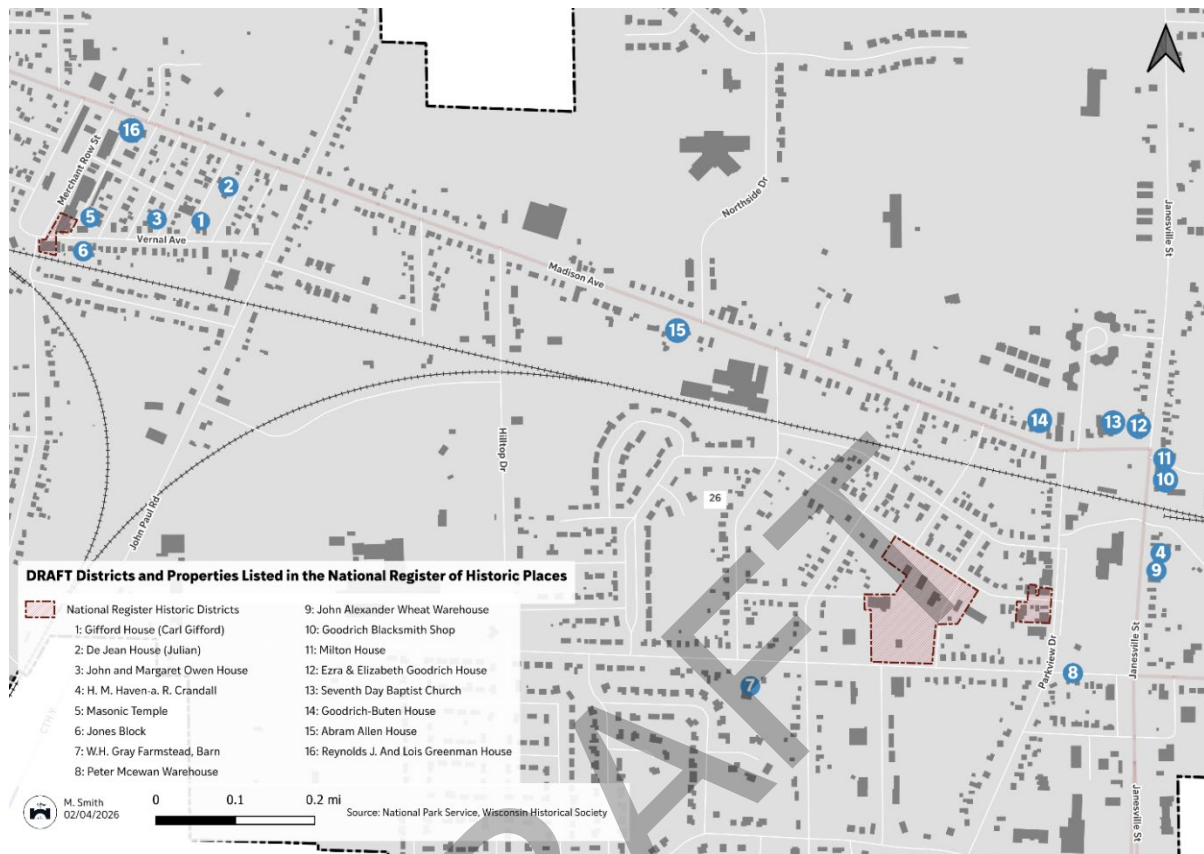
Listing serves as an honorary designation that offers significant benefits, such as eligibility for historic rehabilitation tax credits and preservation grants, while providing protection from adverse effects of federally funded projects. It does not impose restrictions on private property owners, who retain full control over their property within the bounds of local laws and ordinances.

Existing Buildings and Districts

In addition to the locally-designated landmarks described above, the City of Milton is home to the following national landmarks:

- 16 extant properties that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places;
- 3 National Register Historic Districts; and
- 18 total properties that are contributing buildings within one of the three historic districts, described below.

Map 9: Districts and Properties in the City of Milton Listed on the National Register of Historic Places



Milton College Historic District: Listed in 1980, this historic district encompasses the historic core of the former Milton College campus. The district comprises six historically contributing buildings constructed between 1854 and 1911, primarily in Italianate and Eclectic Revival styles, which were associated with Milton College. This private liberal arts institution, founded in the 1840s by Joseph Goodrich with ties to the Seventh Day Baptists, played a significant role in teacher education before closing in 1982. The district's architectural cohesion and educational legacy underscore its historical importance.

The Milton College Historic district holds significance for both its architecture and its educational role. Milton College, previously known as Milton Academy, was the oldest college in Wisconsin and played a notable role in teacher education before it closed in 1982. Today, the former campus buildings have been adaptively reused, housing commercial, office, and residential spaces, with the Main Hall Museum preserving the institution's history.

Milton College: A Mainstay of Milton's Educational Heritage

Milton College's roots trace back to the 1844 Milton Academy, which was chartered as a college in 1867 and later expanded to offer Bachelor of Arts and Science degrees. The historic campus features notable structures such as Main Hall, Goodrich Hall, and the Whitford-Borden House. Although growth slowed during the Great Depression and World War II, the institution persevered due to the dedication of its faculty and students.

In the mid-20th century, the college became a cultural hub in the community, enriching local life through music, drama, and a diverse student body. Today, the site remains a significant historical landmark representing the town's educational heritage.

Merchant Row Historic District:

Listed in 2015, this historic district consists of a small group of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings in Junction Square, a downtown district that was originally the town for Milton Junction. The district is located at the south end of Merchant Row and the west end of Vernal Avenue and encompasses the most intact group of historic buildings in the district.

The National Register Nomination lists 7 properties, all of which are contributing buildings to the district. The Merchant Row Historic District was nominated to the National Register under Criteria A (local commercial significance) and C (local architectural significance), with the period of significance starting in 1880 and ending in 1964 for Criteria A and 1926 for Criteria C, respectively.

Parkview Historic District:

Listed in 2015, this historic district consists of a small group of early twentieth century commercial buildings that make up the south part of old Milton's downtown, clustered around College Street and Parkview Drive. The form, massing, and use of similar building materials, methods, and styles result in a small but cohesive assemblage of buildings that are integral to the district's character.

The National Register Nomination lists 7 properties of which 6 are contributing buildings and 1 is a non-contributing building. The Parkview Historic District was nominated to the National Register under Criteria A (local commercial significance) and C (local architectural significance), with the period of significance starting in 1890 and ending in 1964 for Criteria A and 1941 for Criteria C, respectively.

Eligible Buildings and Districts

According to 2023 data from the state Architecture Historic Inventory, three extant properties have been determined by the Wisconsin Historical Society to be potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, however, none of these buildings are designated as local historic landmarks:

- S.C. Chambers House (5 South John Paul Road);
- Grant Davis House (350 East Madison Avenue); and
- Fred Hutson House (743–745 West Madison Avenue).

National Landmarks

Located at 18 South Janesville Street, the Milton House is a National Historic Landmark and the only certified Underground Railroad site in Wisconsin open for public tours. Built in 1844 by Joseph Goodrich, the Milton House is the first building in the United States to be made of grout and features a 45-foot tunnel connecting a one-room cabin to the main inn, which was used to shelter individuals escaping slavery. The site is officially recognized by the National Park Service's Network to Freedom program for its documented role in aiding enslaved people seeking freedom.

Today, the Milton House Museum offers guided tours that highlight its significance in both local history and the broader narrative of the Underground Railroad. The Milton Historical Society operates the site with a mission to preserve Milton's heritage and promote civil rights education, positioning the museum as a leading experiential historic site in Wisconsin.

Cultural Activities and Community Events

The City of Milton cultivates a vibrant cultural landscape through a collaborative network of organizations that work together to enrich community life. The City of Milton, Milton Area Chamber of Commerce, School District of Milton, and Milton Public Library coordinate to provide a diverse array of programs and gatherings throughout the year. By leveraging these relationships, the city ensures a broad spectrum of cultural and recreational opportunities are accessible to the public, fostering a strong sense of belonging and community identity.

Milton Community Days stands as a cornerstone of the city's cultural scene, operating as a massive open-air evening market that highlights the region's local talent and economy. The event provides a venue for residents to connect with dozens of local crafters, makers, bakers, and growers. Complementing this seasonal market is a robust schedule of annual festivals that celebrate history and tradition. These include the Civil War Living History Festival held in May, the Independence Day Celebration, and the MACC's Makers Market and Pork Roast in August, which collectively draw residents together for shared experiences. Additionally, cultural engagement is sustained through monthly Summer Concerts on the Gathering Green at The Gathering Place, offering regular entertainment opportunities for the community.

Goals, Strategies, and Recommendations

Milton's identity and quality of life are rooted in its agricultural lands, natural areas, and cultural heritage. As the community evolves, it is essential to balance future growth with the stewardship of these finite resources to ensure a sustainable and vibrant future. This element provides a comprehensive framework for preserving productive agricultural land, protecting natural areas, and celebrating the historic assets and cultural traditions that define the unique character of the City of Milton.

Goal 1: Preserve and support agricultural lands and rural character.

Strategy 1: Protect prime agricultural soils and active farmland.

Recommendations:

1. Reference the strategies and recommendations for Goal 1 in the Land Use Element—Encourage infill development of existing land within the city—to conserve agricultural land uses.
2. Collaborate with Rock County to implement the County Farmland Preservation Plan and ensure local zoning aligns with regional preservation efforts.
3. Explore the use of conservation tools, such as Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), and cluster subdivisions, in areas of prime agricultural soils before major public infrastructure is extended.
4. Update the Rural Holding (RH-35) district map in conjunction with soil survey and land evaluation/site assessment scores as they become available.

Strategy 2: Foster a viable agricultural economy.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage agribusinesses to locate on previously developed or infill sites within the city limits rather than on greenfield parcels outside the city boundaries.
2. Explore opportunities for direct marketing of local agricultural products, such as supporting farmers markets or facilitating farm-to-table partnerships with local restaurants.
3. Support the diversification of local agricultural operations (e.g. agritourism, value-added products) to enhance economic resilience and farm profitability.

Goal 2: Protect and enhance natural resources and environmental systems.

Strategy 1: Conserve and manage water resources.

Recommendations:

1. Coordinate with Rock County and the Upper Rock River Basin stakeholder groups (e.g. Rock River Coalition, Rock River Stormwater Group) to align local land use decisions with regional groundwater sustainability objectives, recognizing that aquifers cross political boundaries.

2. Promote year-round water conservation practices among residents and businesses, emphasizing voluntary measures that maintain efficient and sustainable usage regardless of seasonal conditions.

Strategy 2: Safeguard and connect natural areas, habitats, and tree canopies.

Recommendations:

1. Connect fragmented natural areas through the establishment of greenways or conservation easements to improve habitat connectivity and support biodiversity.
2. Continue updating the Tree Inventory Dashboard which catalogues the quantity and diversity of trees along the city's right-of-way. Use the findings to plant trees, prioritizing areas near schools, parks, and other gathering places.

Goal 3: Celebrate and steward Milton's historic and cultural assets.

Strategy 1: Develop a robust historic preservation program, with updated tools, guidelines, and resources to help protect and preserve historic resources.

Recommendations:

1. Provide educational resources and technical assistance to property owners regarding historic preservation standards, maintenance practices, and available tax incentive programs.
2. Pursue a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant to update the city's Architectural and Historic Survey (2013), ensuring that newly eligible properties are identified and that local preservation efforts are based on current data.
3. Consider pursuing local landmark designation for potentially eligible buildings in Junction Square that are not currently located in the Merchant Row Historic District.
4. Consider pursuing local landmark designation and/or individual listing to the National Register of Historic Places for properties categorized as 'potentially eligible' in the Wisconsin Architecture Historic Inventory.
5. Encourage the Historic Preservation Commission to pursue an organizational membership with the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions and participate in ongoing training sessions.

Strategy 2: Promote cultural resources and heritage tourism.

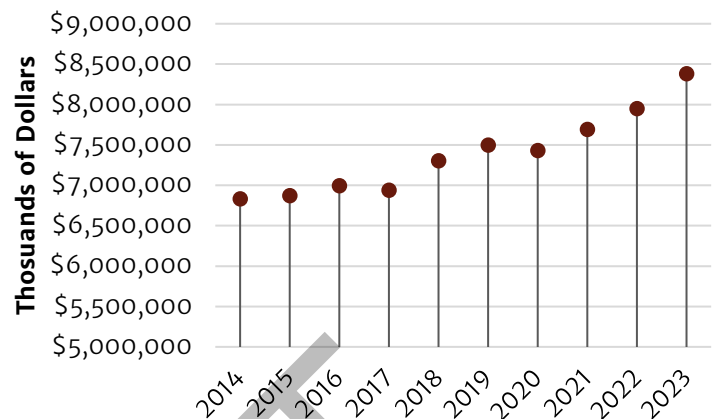
Recommendations:

1. Develop and promote heritage tourism programs that highlight Milton's historic sites, cultural facilities, and community history to attract visitors.
2. Encourage the integration of public art and cultural displays into new public and private development projects to enhance the visual character of the community.
3. Consider developing a rotating art program using a phased approach, one that begins near select public spaces and has a reasonable rotation timeframe (e.g. 2 years).
4. Foster partnerships with cultural groups and arts organizations to host events, educational programs, and festivals that celebrate local heritage.

Chapter 6: Economic Development Element

Economic Base

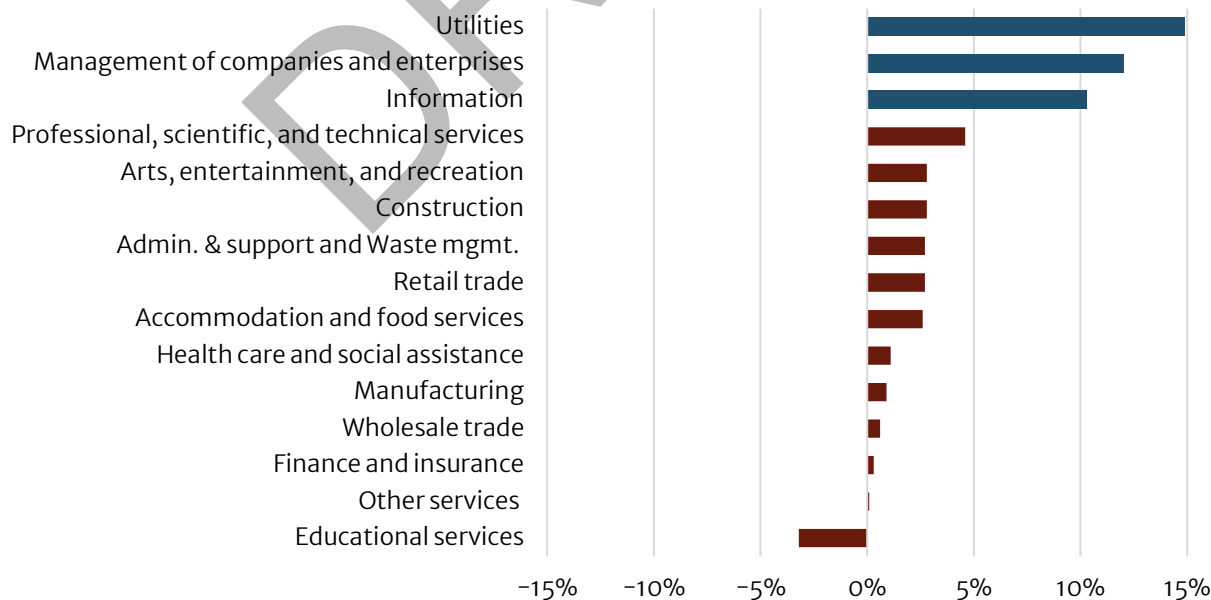
One indicator of the health of a local economy is the measurement of the gross domestic product over time (GDP). Components of GDP include the consumption (or spending) by households; business investment in capital, inventory and equipment; government spending; and net exports. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis provides inflation-adjusted (Real GDP), county-level data. The latest data release is up to 2023. Figure 18 illustrates real GDP growth in Rock County. From 2014 to 2017, growth was positive, but at a much slower rate than after 2018. Real GDP growth accelerated in 2023.



Data Note: Real GDP is in thousands of chained 2017 dollars.
Data Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Figure 18. Real Gross Domestic Product Trends for Rock County

Figure 19 further illustrates the rate of change year-over-year from 2014 to 2023 by industry. The fastest growing industries during that period (and for which there is data available), were Utilities; Management of companies and enterprises; and Information. The Management of companies and enterprises industry includes businesses that are corporate headquarters, holding companies, etc. The information industry includes businesses that are communication companies such as telecommunications, publishers, broadcasting companies, carriers and service providers.



Data Note: Industry detail is based on the 2017 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Not all industries are shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information. Data Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Figure 19. Compound Annual Growth Rate by Industry in Rock County (2014-2023)

Major Rock County employers in the private sector include the headquarters of Hendricks Holding, Blain Supply Inc., Woodman's Food Market, Inc., Prent Corporation & GOEX. Other large employers in different industry segments include Kerry Group, SSI Technologies, Grainger, Data Dimensions, Charter Next Generation (CNG), and many more.

Milton's largest employers are as follows in Table 8. With the exception of the Milton School District and the City of Milton, all are private sector employers.

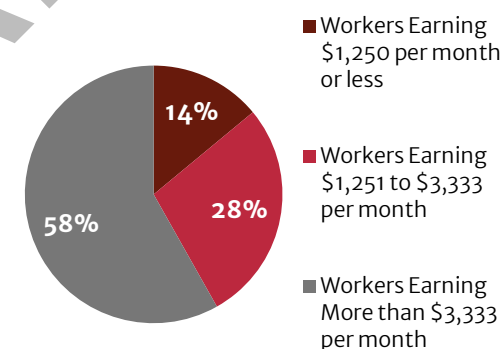
Table 8. Largest Milton Employers

Company Name	Product or Service	Approximate Employees
School District of Milton	Education	618
Freedom Graphic Systems	Printed material and direct mail	275
Charter Next Generation	Plastics manufacturer	193
Clasen Quality Chocolate (CQC)	Chocolate Manufacturer	104
Diamond Assets	Tech manufacturer	84
Frank Beverage Group	Beer wholesale	80
Piggly Wiggly	Grocers – retail	62
City of Milton	Municipal government	50
Riteway Bus Service	School buses and motor coaches	47
Handy Art	Paint manufacturer	37

Employment Trends and Income by Industry

According to the Census On the Map Inflow-Outflow data, 13% of the 1,891 employees working in Milton in 2022 lived in the city while 87% commuted. Conversely, of those of working age living in the city (2,336), 2,087 commuted out of the city for work, creating a net negative outflow of 445 laborers. Of those external jobs filled by residents, more than 58% of them are for jobs paying more than \$3,333 per month (Figure 20).

By 2024, Esri estimated that Milton had 2,184 workers. Data Axle, a partner with Esri that provides the Business Summary report, estimates that there are 2,211 employees working in Milton in 2025. The largest local employers are Milton School District, Charter Next Generation (CNG), and the City of Milton.



Data Source: Census On the Map Inflow/Outflow Analysis of Private Primary Jobs.

Figure 20. Share of Residents Commuting Out of Milton by Earnings

Figure 21 on the next page, illustrates the estimated employees in each industry in Milton. The largest industry in terms of the number of employees in Milton is in educational services (more than 400 employees). The average annual pay in this industry is approximately \$44,500 in 2024 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Figure 22, on the next page). The Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry employs more than 275 employees and has an estimated average annual pay of \$75,400. Manufacturing and Health Care and Social Assistance industries each have approximately 230 employees in Milton. The average annual pay of a manufacturing employee is just under \$70,000 and the average annual pay of a health care and social assistance employee is \$66,900.

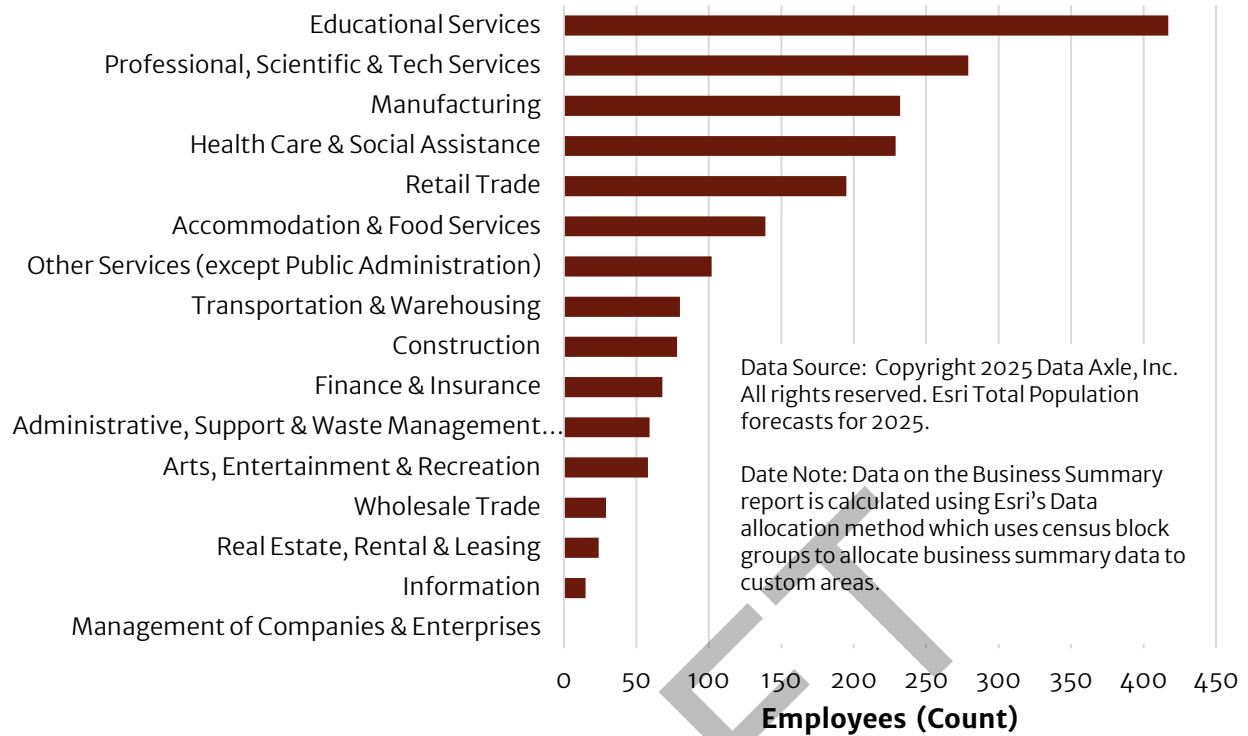
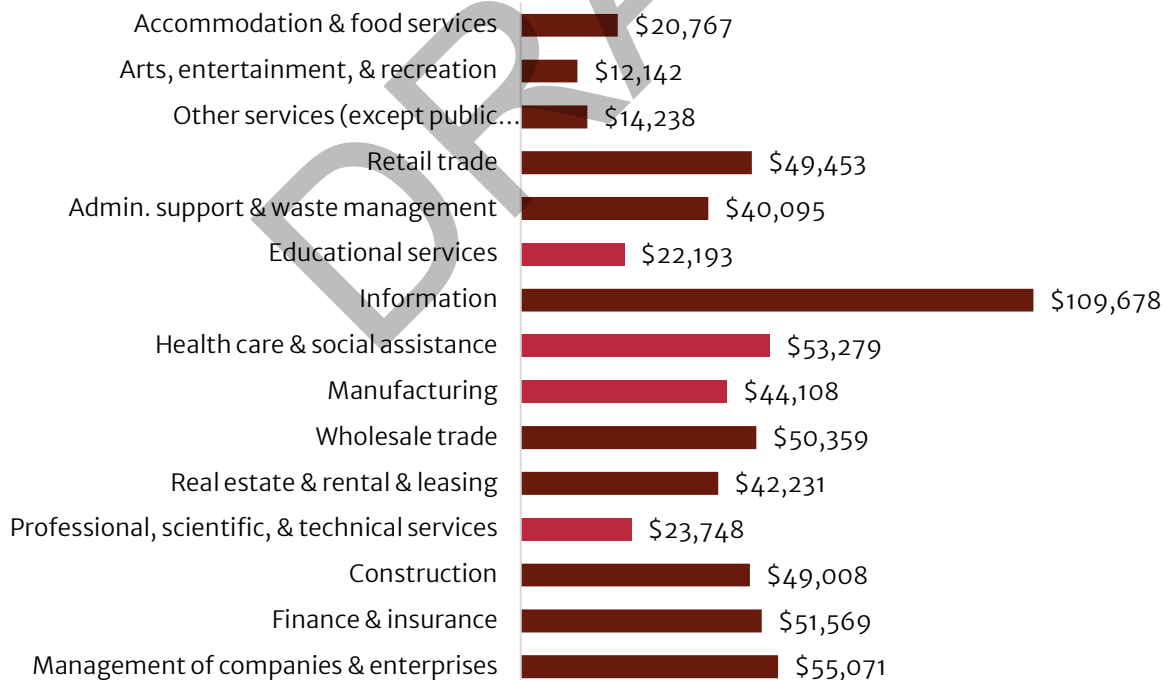


Figure 21. Milton Employees by Industry



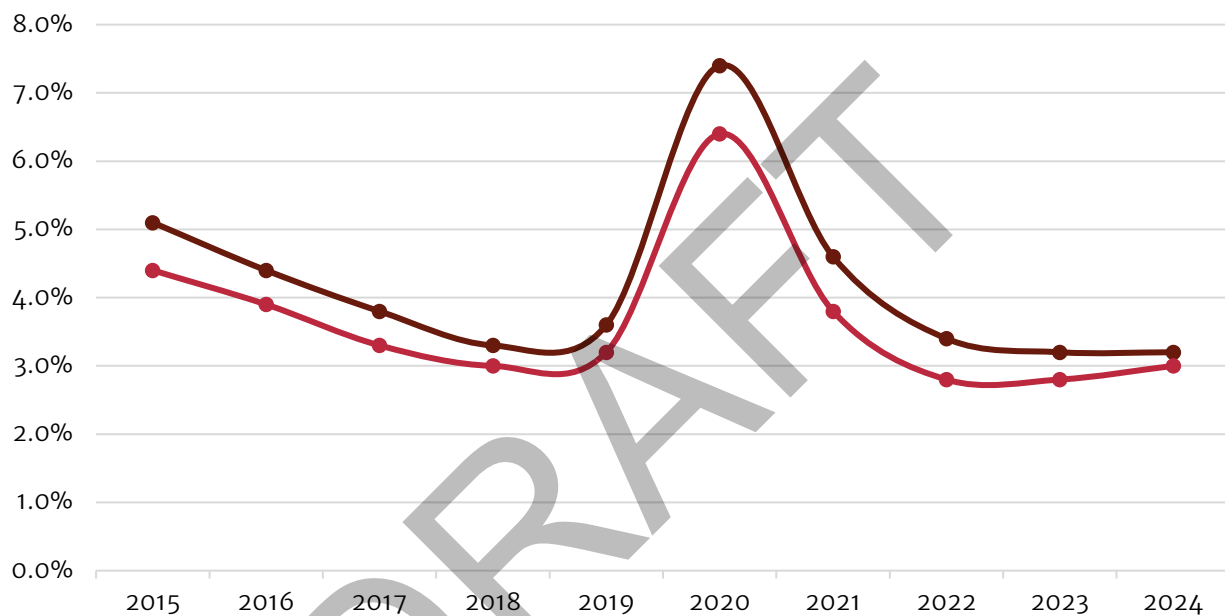
Data Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages in private sector for all establishment sizes. Numbers are preliminary for 2024.

Figure 22. Rock County Average Annual Pay by Industry (2024)

Unemployment

The unemployment rate of Wisconsin and Rock County has been trending similarly with a tightening between the two over time, with the exception of 2020 when the greatest difference in the rates is observed (Figure X). By 2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the county's unemployment rate has reached its lowest point since the economic recovery from the Great Recession.

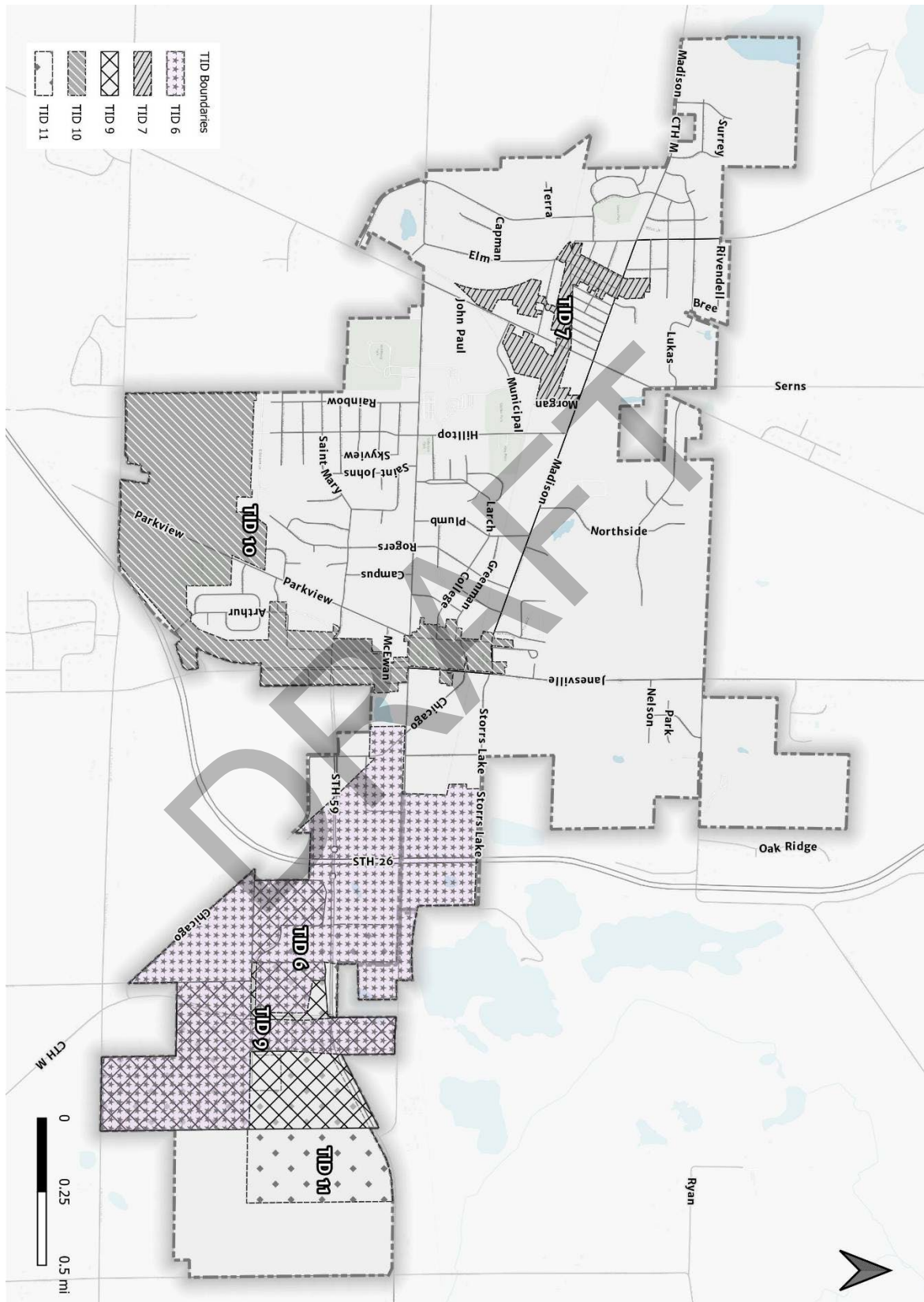
A tight labor market such as this forces businesses to become creative in how they attract and retain talent. From an economic development standpoint, communities can facilitate talent attraction and retention efforts by learning from businesses what their employees' needs are, providing technical assistance for employee training, and marketing the community collaboratively with the employer. This can be accomplished through business retention and expansion visits either by city staff, local chamber of commerce, Rock County, or combination of the organizations.



Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, seasonally adjusted.

Figure 23. Unemployment Rate Trend Comparison of Rock County and Wisconsin (2015–2024)

Existing Economic Development Tools and Resources



Tax Increment Districts (TIDs)

Tax increment financing is one of the few tools municipalities have to facilitate economic development. The City of Milton has several districts in which they desire to attract investment and it is working.

- [TID #6](#) is the Crossroads Business Park. It was adopted January 21, 2003, and is set to close no later than January 21, 2026. More than \$40M in increment has been created since its creation.
- [TID #7](#) encompasses the Junction Square Business District and other properties in the surrounding area. It has generated more than \$19M in increment since its adoption in 2004. The end of its expenditure period begins in June 2026 and it is set to close no later than June 7, 2031.
- More than \$20M in incremental value has been created in [TID #9](#) which encompasses the eastern portion of Crossroads Business Park (TID #6) since its creation in 2016.
- [TID #10](#) encompasses the Goodrich Square Business District (formerly TID #8) and other properties in the surrounding area. It was adopted August 7, 2018, and has generated nearly \$10M in increment.
- [TID #11](#) encompasses the industrial portion of Crossroads Business Park (TID #9) east of STH 26. The purpose of this TID is to incentivize and promote industrial development along STH 26, STH 59, and the existing WSOR rail line which bisects the TID. This TID was created in 2020 and has generated more than \$40.5M in increment.

The city does have a policy in place (available on the city website) for the types of projects it is open to incentivizing, eligible costs, incentive structure, and evaluation criteria.

Small Business Development

The city partnered with two local banks, Bank of Milton and First Community Bank, to develop the Small Business Development Loan Program. The fund is capitalized at \$25,000, but loan activity is slow.

Eligible Activities Include (but not limited to):

1. Land and/or building acquisition
2. Professional design/architectural services
3. Interior and/or exterior renovations
4. Structural repairs
5. Building expansions
6. Construction of a new facility
7. Improvements necessary to bring the property into code compliance
8. Other activities deemed appropriate designated by the Common Council of the City of Milton

Additional information and program application are available on the city website.

Facade Grant Program

Milton also offers a matching [Façade Grant Program](#) for traditional downtown buildings in TIDs #7 and #10. The matching grant is up to \$10,000 for eligible costs. The program guidelines, application, and a gallery of before and after photos are available on the City's [website](#) or at City Hall, 710 S. Janesville Street.

Other Resources

- [Milton Area Chamber of Commerce \(MACC\)](#)
- [Rock County Development Alliance](#)
- [Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation \(WEDC\)](#)

Goals, Strategies, Recommendations

Based on the chapter's analysis—highlighting positive GDP growth in Rock County (accelerating in 2023, with Wisconsin GDP reaching new highs in 2024 per recent state profiles), a tight labor market with low unemployment (2.9% in Rock County as of September 2025), major local employers (e.g., Milton School District, Charter Next Generation with its \$270 million expansion creating 340 jobs), commuting outflows, and existing tools like active TIDs, Small Business Development Loan Program, and Façade Grants—along with updates from Milton's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan emphasizing business success and thoughtful growth, the following goals have been developed. These align with Wisconsin's comprehensive planning requirements (§66.1001) for economic development, focusing on job creation, diversification, and resilience over the next 20 years.

Goal 1: Promote business attraction, expansion, and diversification to capitalize on regional growth and reduce economic vulnerabilities.

Strategy 1: Target high-growth industries and support existing employers for expansion.

Recommendations:

1. Prioritize incentives for Utilities, Information, and Management sectors through TIDs, building on successes like Charter Next Generation's \$270M project.
2. Conduct targeted outreach to Rock County headquarters (e.g., Hendricks Holding, Prent Corporation) for satellite operations in Milton.

Strategy 2: Diversify the economic base beyond manufacturing and education.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a sector diversification plan focusing on emerging areas like professional services (275+ employees, \$75,400 avg. pay) and health care.
2. Partner with Rock County for joint marketing campaigns highlighting Milton's rail access (WSOR line) and proximity to I-39/90.
3. Aim to add 200 new jobs in non-manufacturing sectors over five years through site-ready programs in Crossroads Business Park.

Strategy 3: Foster small business growth and entrepreneurship.

Recommendations:

1. Expand the Small Business Development Loan Program by increasing capitalization to \$50,000 and promoting eligible activities (e.g., renovations, expansions).
2. Collaborate with local banks and chambers for mentorship programs.
3. Host quarterly networking events to connect startups with major employers like SSI Technologies or Grainger.

Goal 2: Strengthen workforce development and talent retention to address labor shortages and commuter patterns.

Strategy 1: Implement business retention and expansion (BRE) programs to understand and meet workforce needs.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct annual BRE visits with top employers (e.g., Milton School District, City of Milton) in collaboration with Rock County and the Chamber of Commerce.
2. Use insights to address employee needs like housing or childcare.

3. Develop a talent attraction toolkit marketing Milton's quality of life to reduce the 87% commuter inflow.

Strategy 2: *Partner with educational institutions and employers for training and skill alignment.*

Recommendations:

1. Collaborate with technical colleges and the School District of Milton to offer customized training in high-pay industries (e.g., manufacturing at \$70,000 avg. pay).
2. Work with the school district(s) to launch apprenticeship programs targeting the 2,087 out-commuters, aiming to retain 20% locally.

Strategy 3: *Promote housing and amenities to attract and retain young talent.*

Recommendations:

1. Integrate workforce housing incentives into TIDs, linking to demographic shifts and commuter data.
2. Market Milton collaboratively with employers via digital campaigns emphasizing low unemployment and proximity to Janesville.
3. Establish metrics to reduce net labor outflow by 100 workers over five years.

Goal 3: Enhance and expand economic development tools and resources for sustainable investment and community vitality

Strategy 1: *Optimize TID management for high-impact projects.*

Recommendations:

1. Update the TID policy to include 2025 budget priorities, such as land acquisitions in TID #9 for industrial development
2. Conduct annual audits to ensure short payback periods (e.g., Crossroads TID #6 closing by 2026)
3. Aim to generate an additional \$50M in increments across districts by 2030 through targeted incentives.

Strategy 2: *Revitalize downtown and historic areas through loan and grant programs.*

Recommendations:

1. Expand the Façade Grant Program beyond TIDs #7 and #10 with increased matching up to \$15,000, incorporating before/after galleries for promotion.
2. Tie grants to small business retention, aligning with the 2025 zoning code rewrite.
3. Partner with community organizations for events boosting local spending.

Strategy 3: *Increase utilization of financial assistance programs.*

Recommendations:

1. Promote the Small Business Development Loan via the city website and targeted outreach to underserved sectors
2. Explore adding eligibility for tech startups in Information industries
3. Track loan activity annually and adjust based on slow uptake, aiming for full capitalization utilization within three years.

Strategy 4: *Pursue grants and collaborations for infrastructure and resilience.*

Recommendations:

1. Apply for federal/state funding (e.g., WEDC grants) to support business park expansions and utilities upgrades.
2. Partner with Rock County for joint applications.

DRAFT

Chapter 7: Intergovernmental Cooperation

Element

Goal of This Element:

This chapter is focused on "intergovernmental cooperation," defined as any formal or informal arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions communicate visions and coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve land use, transportation, natural resource, utility, facility, services, or other issues of mutual interest.

This chapter contains a compilation of background information, goals, objectives, policies and recommended programs for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions. It incorporates by reference all plans and agreements to which Milton is a party under §66.0301, §66.0307, and §66.0309, Wisconsin Statutes. It is intended to promote consistency between this Plan and plans for neighboring jurisdictions.

Existing Regional Framework

City of Janesville

The City of Janesville is the largest city in Rock County with an estimated 2024 population of 66,428. Janesville's growth—both commercial and residential—has been focused on its northeast side, and much of it is in the School District of Milton. Janesville serves as Rock County's primary regional commercial and job center. The Janesville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, important for transportation planning and funding, also covers Milton. Therefore, Janesville's growth has significant impacts on the City of Milton and this Plan. The City of Milton has an intergovernmental boundary agreement with the City of Janesville, signed in 1982, which determines the limit of each city's extraterritorial jurisdiction. Recent intergovernmental efforts include shared fire services agreements, with a 2022 memorandum of understanding for fire department shared services between Janesville, Milton, and others.

Other Cities

Edgerton, located nine miles north of Milton, is probably Milton's closest peer city in the County. Edgerton had a 2024 population of 6,138. Whitewater, located 14 miles to the northeast along Highway 59, also has relationships with Milton. Whitewater had a 2024 population of 16,076.

Towns

The unincorporated jurisdictions abutting and close to the City of Milton include the towns of Milton (2023 population 3,085), Harmony (2024 population estimate 2,561), and Fulton (2024 population estimate 3,667). These towns are generally rural and agricultural in character and use.

The City of Milton signed an intergovernmental agreement with the Town of Milton in 2009. This agreement determines the area where the City will grow within the Town of Milton. Outside of this determined area, the City waives its powers of extraterritorial land division review and will not provide public sewer service. (The City of Milton retains all of its extraterritorial powers in other adjacent towns.) Additional intergovernmental agreements include a 2021 agreement for shared costs related to a new west fire station and a 2022 intergovernmental agreement signed by multiple municipalities, including Milton entities, for fire services. As of 2023, the Milton Fire Department merged into the Lakeside Fire Rescue as part of ongoing shared services efforts.

Rock County

Rock County encompasses 720 square miles (20 towns). The County is characterized both by some of the richest agricultural land in the country and a strong industrial base. The Rock River runs generally north to

south through the County.

Rock County is part of the nearly continuous development along the I-39/90 corridor from southern Wisconsin to Belvidere, IL. Rock County's 2024 population was 165,461, which reflects an increase of 3.2 percent between 2013 and 2024. The County grew by 5.3 percent between 2000 and 2013. Several smaller cities and villages, including Milton, have participated in this growth.

Rock County has planning, land division review, and limited zoning authority within the unincorporated areas of Rock County. The County works with towns to prepare and update town land use plans, which are included in the County Farmland Preservation Plan. By and large, these plans support agricultural preservation. Many towns, including those in Milton's Planning Area, have exclusive agricultural zoning to achieve farmland preservation objectives. The towns operate under town (as opposed to County) zoning. Rock County is currently updating its Comprehensive Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan in 2025, with public input sought to guide decisions for the next 10–20 years.

School District of Milton and School District of Janesville

The School District of Milton covers approximately 100 square miles and serves most children residing within the City of Milton. The District also covers portions of the Towns of Lima, Johnstown, Milton, Harmony, Fulton, and Janesville. The district had 3,461 students in the 2024–2025 school year. The School District of Milton is an important partner, as it runs many of the City's recreational programs, and the perceived quality of the school district directly affects the City's economic health.

Portions of the City of Milton, particularly areas annexed or near the boundary with Janesville, are served by the School District of Janesville. The School District of Janesville covers approximately 107 square miles and includes the City of Janesville and parts of surrounding jurisdictions, including Milton. In the 2024–2025 school year, the School District of Janesville had approximately 10,116 students. The presence of two school districts within Milton's boundaries necessitates coordination on issues such as school facility planning, transportation, and recreational programming to ensure seamless services for residents. Both school districts are critical to the City's economic vitality and community development, as their performance and offerings influence residential growth and property values.

The City of Milton will continue to engage with both the School District of Milton and the School District of Janesville to address shared challenges, such as school retention, long-term facility needs, and the management of open space and recreational lands. This includes collaborating on transportation planning to accommodate students attending schools in either district and ensuring that growth within Milton aligns with the capacity and plans of both districts.

Important State Agency Jurisdictions

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) Southwest Region office, located in Madison, serves a 16-county region including Rock County. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) provides service to all Rock County residents out of six South Central Wisconsin offices including Madison, Fitchburg, Janesville, Poynette, Dodgeville, and Horicon. There are no known conflicts between the City's plans and the plans and actions of these State agencies.

Intergovernmental coordination and regional connectivity

Milton's growth and transportation projects (state highway work, local streets) make coordination with Wisconsin DOT, Rock County, adjacent towns, and the school district essential. The city is updating its comprehensive plan now to set 20-year guidance.

Regional collaboration improves grant competitiveness, resolves land-use conflicts at the edge (annexation, extraterritorial plat review), and enables efficient service delivery.

Goals, Strategies and Recommendations

Based on the chapter's focus on fostering formal and informal arrangements for coordination among jurisdictions—such as boundary agreements with Janesville and the Town of Milton, shared fire services, transportation planning with WisDOT and the Janesville MPO, collaboration with Rock County on land use and farmland preservation, and partnerships with school districts for facilities and programs—along with the need for regional connectivity, grant competitiveness, and conflict resolution, the following two goals are presented.

Goal 1: Strengthen partnerships with adjacent municipalities, towns, and Rock County to promote coordinated land use, growth management, and shared services.

Strategy 1: *Foster intergovernmental coordination for regional growth management.*

Recommendations:

1. Establish joint planning committees with Rock County and adjacent towns (e.g. Milton, Harmony, Fulton) to align on population projections and service needs.
2. Apply for state grants to fund demographic studies.
3. Create a public dashboard for residents to access trend data and provide feedback.

Strategy 2: *Review and update boundary and service agreements to minimize conflicts and support mutual growth.*

Recommendations:

1. Conduct biennial reviews of existing agreements (e.g., 1982 Janesville boundary, 2009 Town of Milton growth area) with input from all parties; negotiate amendments to address extraterritorial jurisdiction overlaps and sewer service extensions
2. Develop a conflict resolution protocol for annexation or land division disputes, incorporating mediation through Rock County.

Strategy 3: *Expand shared services initiatives for cost efficiency and regional resilience.*

Recommendations:

1. Build on recent fire service mergers (e.g., 2022 MOU and Lakeside Fire Rescue) by exploring joint emergency management or public works agreements with Janesville, Edgerton, and towns
2. Pursue state funding (e.g., via Wisconsin's Shared Revenue program) for collaborative projects like road maintenance; track service delivery metrics annually to evaluate cost savings and adjust partnerships.

Strategy 1.4: *Promote joint advocacy for regional funding and policy alignment.*

Recommendations:

1. Continue to coordinate with Rock County on its 2025 Comprehensive Plan update to ensure Milton's goals align with county farmland preservation.
2. Form a regional coalition with nearby cities (e.g., Whitewater) to lobby for federal grants in transportation or infrastructure.
3. Host annual intergovernmental summits to discuss mutual interests like I-39/90 corridor development.

Goal 2: Enhance collaboration with school districts, state agencies, and regional entities to support infrastructure, education, and community resilience.

Strategy 1: Integrate school district planning with city growth and recreational programming.

Recommendations:

1. Establish regular coordination meetings with the School Districts of Milton and Janesville to align enrollment projections (e.g., 3,461 and 10,116 students in 2024–2025), facility expansions, and transportation needs.
2. Co-develop recreational programs using school facilities to serve residents across district boundaries; incorporate school input into Milton's land use maps to ensure new developments support educational capacity.

Strategy 2: Coordinate with state agencies for infrastructure and natural resource management.

Recommendations:

1. Partner with WisDOT's Southwest Region on transportation projects, including updates to state highways and integration with the Janesville MPO for funding priorities.
2. Collaborate with WDNR offices (e.g., Janesville, Madison) on Rock River watershed initiatives, such as stormwater management or habitat preservation.
3. Conduct joint environmental impact assessments for city projects to avoid conflicts and leverage state expertise.

Strategy 3: Leverage regional entities for grant opportunities and community development.

Recommendations:

1. Work with the Janesville MPO to prioritize Milton's transportation needs in regional plans, enhancing connectivity along corridors like Highway 59.
2. Apply collaboratively for federal or state resilience grants (e.g., for utilities or flood mitigation) with Rock County and school districts.
3. Develop a shared database for tracking intergovernmental projects, including performance metrics for economic impacts on property values and community vitality.

Strategy 4: Build inclusive engagement mechanisms to address cross-jurisdictional challenges.

Recommendations:

1. Create citizen advisory groups with representatives from schools, counties, and towns to launch public education campaigns on intergovernmental benefits, such as improved services from shared agreements.
2. Monitor and report annually on collaboration outcomes, adjusting strategies based on resident surveys and partner evaluations.

Chapter 8: Land Use Element

This chapter is intended to guide land use decision-making in the city and planning area. Long-range land use planning allows municipalities to guide development and redevelopment in a manner that maintains community character and protects sensitive environmental features. This chapter contains goals, strategies, recommendations, and maps to guide future land development in and around the City of Milton.

Land Use Planning Context:

Understanding the history of the city and its development patterns is integral to preserving its character and planning its future. Until 1967, the City of Milton was comprised of two separate communities: Milton and Milton Junction. This is why there are two separate downtown areas: Parkview Drive on the east side and Merchants Row on the west side. (See Chapter 5 for more information regarding the historical and cultural resources.) Transportation patterns dictated by rail and automobiles further influenced land development. Land used for commercial and industrial purposes varies based on preferences for bulk material movement, visibility, and walkability.

Zoning

Zoning is the primary method municipalities use for encouraging and regulating land development by permitting, by right or conditionally, various uses in desired locations. Table 9 provides the zoning description, code and intent of each district. Table 10 breaks down the acreage of each zoning district, percent of total land by zoning district, and undeveloped acres per zoning district based on Map 9.

Table 9. Zoning Code Descriptions and Intents

Zoning Description	Zoning Code	Intent
Central Mixed-Use	CMU	Generally on established commercial corridors that are, or are planning to become, mixed-use in character and establish standards that are compatible with the existing mix of land uses and redevelopment objectives. This district is intended to provide for a variety of employment, retail, and community service opportunities, while allowing some residential uses at an approximate density of up to 36 dwelling units per acre. Uses shall be compatible not only with other uses within the district, but land uses in adjoining zoning districts as well.
Institutional	I	To permit both large- and small-scale institutional development including those on single sites within larger areas of both residential and nonresidential zoning districts. Residential uses are intended to occur at an approximate density of one dwelling unit per acre. This district avoids the creation of commercial spot zone intrusions in primarily residential or industrial areas where spots of commercial zoning may be incompatible.
General Industrial	IG	To permit mid-scale to large-scale industrial and office development at an intensity that is consistent with economic development objectives and compatible with adjacent residential and commercial development. The primary distinguishing feature of this district is that it is geared toward indoor industrial activities with some raw materials or finished products stored outside. This district tends to be heavy, but not typically a nuisance for adjoining properties.

Heavy Industrial	IH	To provide space for self-contained and isolated manufacturing and industrial operations which are incompatible with residential and commercial uses because of potential nuisance or hazard generation.
Light Industrial	IL	This district is intended to permit both small- and mid-scale industrial and office development at an intensity which is consistent with economic development objectives and compatible with adjacent residential and commercial development. The primary distinguishing feature of this district is that it is geared toward indoor industrial activities with some loading and unloading exposed which are not typically associated with high levels of noise, soot, odors and other potential nuisances for adjoining properties.
Multi-Family Residential-10	MR-10	To create, preserve, and enhance areas for multi-family uses in small buildings such as multiplexes or apartments at low densities, up to ten dwelling units per acre.
Multi-Family Residential-20	MR-20	To create, preserve, and enhance areas for multi-family uses in small and mid-sized buildings such as townhomes, multiplexes or apartments at medium densities, up to 20 dwelling units per acre.
Neighborhood Mixed Use	NMU	This district is intended to permit residential development and small-scale commercial uses that are compatible with adjacent residential uses and established neighborhood-level commercial corridors. Residential uses are intended to occur at an approximate density of ten dwelling units per acre.
Rural Holding	RH-35	This district acts as a "holding zone" to preserve productive agricultural lands in the long-term, protect existing farm operations from encroachment by incompatible uses, promote further investments in farming, and may maintain eligibility for farming incentive programs. Very low-density single family detached residential development is permitted at a density of no more than one dwelling unit for every 35 gross acres.
Suburban Mixed-Use	SMU	This district is intended to permit a wide range of freestanding large and mid-scale office, retail, service, lodging, and entertainment uses that are compatible with the desired community character along major commercial corridors. Residential uses are permitted at an approximate density of up to 36 dwelling units per acre.
Single Family Residential—10	SR-10	To create, preserve, and enhance areas for moderate density single family detached dwellings at an approximate density of ten dwelling units per acre.
Single Family Residential-7	SR-7	To create, preserve, and enhance areas for moderate density single family detached dwellings at an approximate density of seven dwelling units per acre.
Two Family Residential-10	TF-10	To create, preserve, and enhance areas for single family detached and two-flat dwellings at an approximate density of ten dwelling units per acre.
Two Family Residential-8	TF-8	To create, preserve, and enhance areas for single family detached and two family attached dwellings at an approximate density of eight dwelling units per acre.

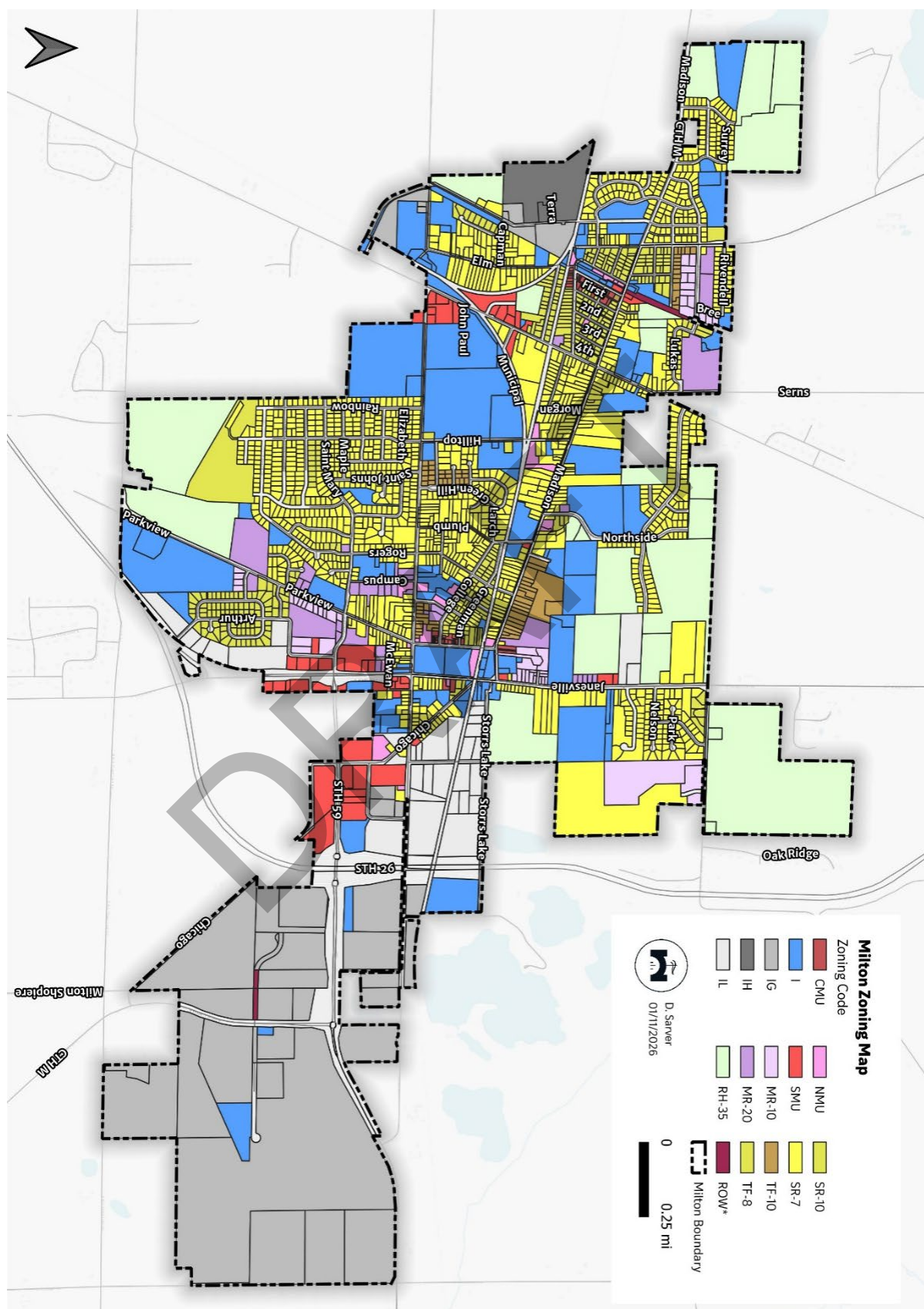
Table 10. Parcels per Zoning District

Description	Zoning Code	Acres	Percent	Undeveloped
Central Mixed-Use	CMU	7.6	0.2%	
Institutional	I	450.4	14.8%	25.8
General Industrial	IG	618.5	20.3%	390.6
Heavy Industrial	IH	34.1	1.1%	
Light Industrial	IL	116.0	3.8%	6.2
Multi-Family Residential-10	MR-10	52.7	1.7%	25.3
Multi-Family Residential-20	MR-20	68.2	2.2%	2.4
Neighborhood Mixed Use	NMU	16.7	0.5%	
Rural Holding	RH-35	434.6	14.3%	7.6
Suburban Mixed-Use	SMU	76.0	2.5%	26.5
Single Family Residential-10	SR-10	59.6	2.0%	0.5
Single Family Residential-7	SR-7	605.7	19.9%	81.9
Two Family Residential-10	TF-10	37.0	1.2%	0.2
Two Family Residential-8	TF-8	77.7	2.6%	4.5
Right-of-Way	ROW*	4.0	12.8%	
	ROW [†]	386.3		
		3,045.1	100.0%	571.2

* Parcels which did not have a zoning code but are used as ROW.

[†] Land used as ROW but does not have a separate parcel.

Map 10. Zoning Map



Existing Land Use

Using aerial imagery and zoning code classification, the following uses were identified for each parcel within the city boundaries:

Agriculture/Agricultural

Cultivated crop land zoned for agricultural uses.

Commercial/Enterprise

Property on which the sale of goods (e.g., clothing, food, beverages, household goods, salons) or services (medical, legal, or other professional) takes place.

Educational Facilities

Buildings or facilities used for educational purposes that are publicly owned.

Industrial

Manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and support services.

Institutional

Tax-exempt buildings that offer community gathering spaces, education, art, or religious instruction.

Incorporated

Land within an incorporated municipality. (Applicable to only the planning area maps.)

Multi-Family Residential

Structures with four or more residential dwelling units.

Municipal Facilities

Property that is publicly owned and used as a center of public service such as public safety, public utilities, transportation services, and city hall.

Parks/Open Space/Recreation

Publicly owned property for the use and enjoyment of the community for walking, biking, or other recreational activities.

Private Parkland

Land adjoining residential parcels under the same ownership that is undeveloped. The parcels may be landlocked with limited ingress or egress options or other topological constraints.

ROW

Parcels that are publicly owned but used for transportation purposes.

Single Family Attached

Structures with two or more residential units attached, but each unit is separately owned.

Single Family Detached

Structures with only one residential dwelling unit.

Specialized Residential

Residential units that are income or age restricted.

Undeveloped

Land zoned for commercial, residential, or industrial uses, but is currently being used for crop production.

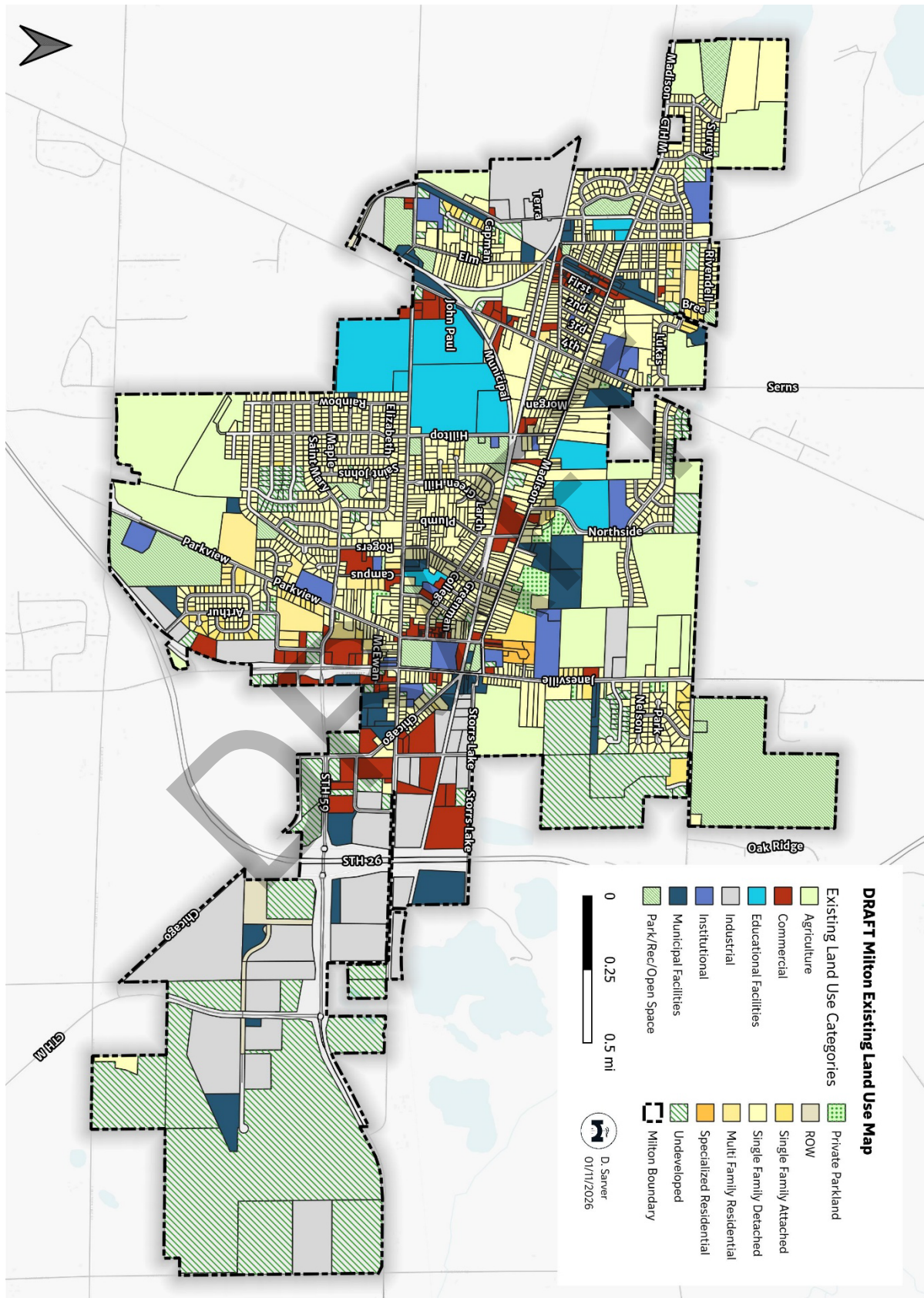
Existing Land Use Analysis

Table 11 breaks down the number of acres per type of use within the boundaries of the city. Single Family Detached housing is the largest land use type (21.6%). The next largest category is undeveloped land. The development potential for that category is discussed later in the Land Supply section of this chapter. Land used as right-of-way requires ongoing maintenance and improvements provided by the relevant jurisdictions (city, county, state, federal).

Table 11. Existing Land Use in City of Milton

Existing Land Use	Acres	Percent
Single Family Detached	658.0	21.6%
Undeveloped	571.2	18.8%
ROW	404.9	13.3%
Agriculture	339.0	11.1%
Industrial	315.5	10.4%
Park/Rec/Open Space	201.4	6.6%
Educational Facilities	145.3	4.8%
Commercial	116.0	3.8%
Municipal Facilities	113.7	3.7%
Institutional	66.4	2.2%
Multi-Family Residential	54.6	1.8%
Single Family Attached	34.2	1.1%
Private Parkland	19.2	0.6%
Specialized Residential	5.7	0.2%
Total	3,045.2	100.0%

Map 11. Existing Land Use



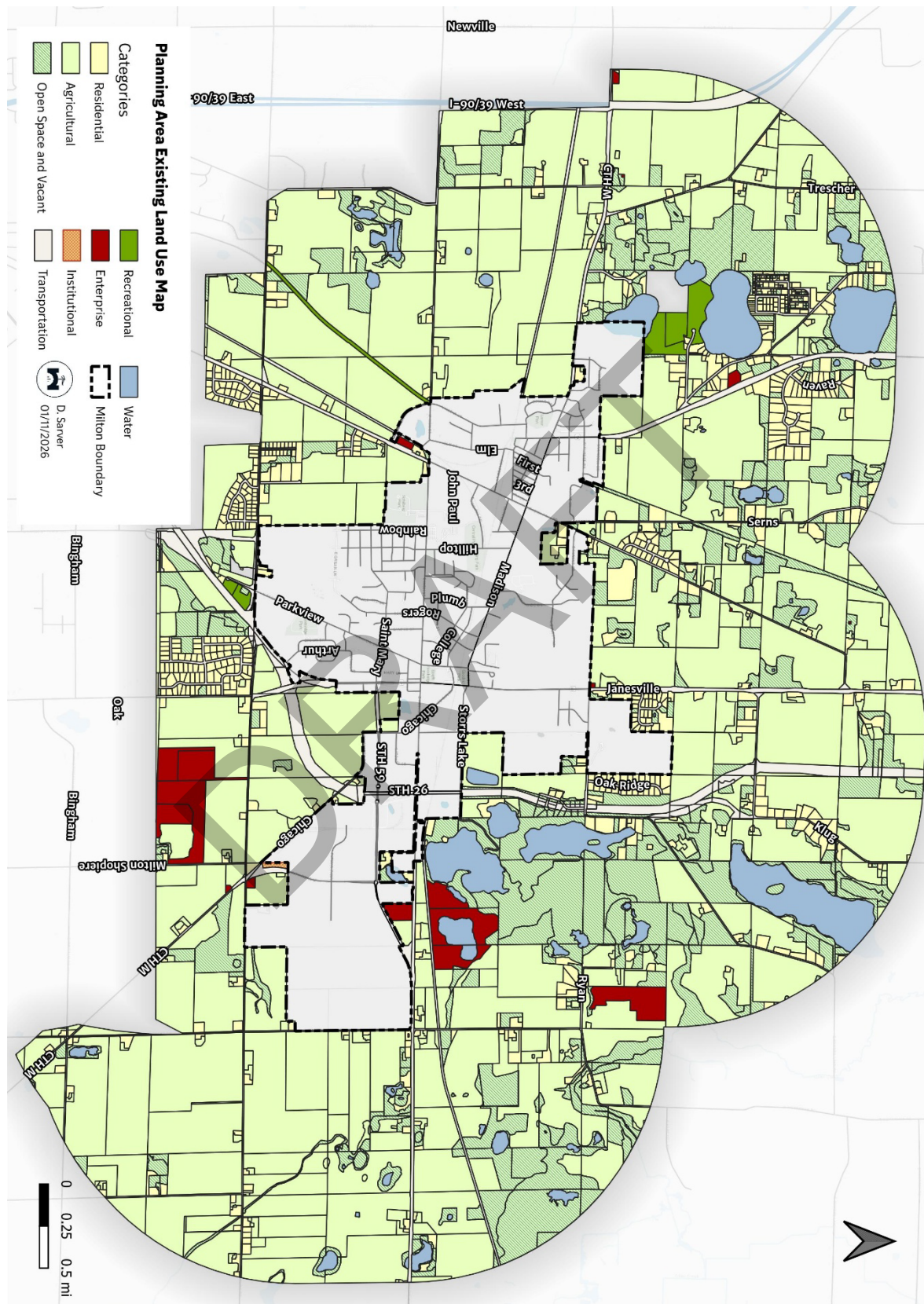
The State of Wisconsin allows small communities like the City of Milton to plan up to 1.5 miles beyond the municipal border into unincorporated areas. This area is called the extraterritorial zone or planning area. There are 20,409.5 acres of land within the planning area. Table 12 breaks down the existing land uses within the planning area.

More than 80% of the land within the planning area is identified as agricultural, within an incorporated municipality or for open space.

Table 12. Existing Land Use Within Planning Area

Existing Land Use	Acres	Percent
Agricultural	10,552.8	52%
Enterprise	242.9	1.2%
Incorporated	3,040.8	14.9%
Institutional	3.0	0.0%
Open Space and Vacant	3,080.3	15.1%
Recreational	83.9	0.4%
Residential	1,099.8	5.4%
Transportation	1,634.4	8.0%
Surface Water	671.6	3.3%
Total	20,409.5	100%

Map 12. Planning Area Existing Land Use Map



Land Supply

Developable land is defined as:

1. Areas of the city that have been planned or approved for development, but not yet built-out (undeveloped)
2. Vacant land that has not been planned for development
3. Developed land that has become obsolete and is appropriate for redevelopment
4. Land in the planning area that may be annexed in the future. This method of increasing the city's land supply is dependent on the decisions of private property owners and cannot be predicted. Annexed land that does not have ready access to city utilities can also be overly expensive to service.

There is a total of 571.1 acres of undeveloped land within the city boundaries. Table 12 breaks down the undeveloped land by zoning code and the number of residential units permitted, if applicable. Map 12 illustrates undeveloped, developable land.

Of the 25.8 acres of land that are undeveloped and zoned Institutional, 23.2 acres are controlled by the city. The remaining properties are owned by tax-exempt entities. The parcels that the city controls are planned for municipal purposes such as future parks, snow storage, storm water retention basins, etc.

Table 13. Undeveloped Land in City of Milton by Zoning Code

Zoning Description	Zoning Code	Min. Lot Size (SF)	Max. Num. Dwelling Units/Acre	Undeveloped Acres	Max Number of Infill Dwelling Units Possible
Institutional	I	7,200	1	25.8	26
General Industrial	IG	20,000	0	390.6	
Light Industrial	IL	15,000	0	6.2	
Multi-Family Residential-10	MR-10	10,000	10	25.3	253
Multi-Family Residential-20	MR-20	15,000	20	2.4	48
Rural Holding	RH-35	43,560	0.03	7.6	0
Suburban Mixed-Use	SMU	15,000	36	26.5	953
Single Family Residential-10	SR-10	3,000	10	0.5	5
Single Family Residential-7	SR-7	6,000	7.00	81.9	573
Two Family Residential-10	TF-10	6,000	10	0.2	2
Two Family Residential-8	TF-8	10,000	8	4.5	36
				571.2	1,895

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Land Development Limitations

Undevelopable land includes areas characterized as wetlands, limited by floodplains, public ownership, conservation easements or other characteristics. Soil conditions, topography, water table levels, etc., also impact how and whether land may be developed. The city has two historic districts and a number of properties listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places which may influence these properties redevelopment opportunities. (Please refer to the [Historic Walking Tour Booklet](#) for a recent inventory of historic properties.) Specific building and site limitations will need to be assessed by the developer and city when a specific development proposal is being considered.

Land Demand

Housing

The estimated number of units demanded over the next 10 years is approximately 1,066 (see Table 2 in Chapter 2). There are 27.7 acres of undeveloped land zoned for multi-family residential, 82.6 acres of undeveloped land zoned for Single-Family Residential or Two-family Residential, and 26.5 acres of undeveloped land zoned Suburban Mixed Use. If the maximum number of units allowed were built on these parcels, an additional 1,895 units could be built. If the city were to encourage infill development for residential housing, there is more than enough land available to meet demand over the next 10 years, but the city may need to annex additional land for residential development to accommodate growth over the next 20 years.

Industrial

The city currently has 396.8 acres of industrially zoned land available for development. Most of that land is in Crossroads Business Park (368.9 acres). This land could serve a variety of users. The largest contiguous parcel is 204.2 acres. Three parcels are approximately five acres or less, two are approximately 13 acres, and four acres are 27 to 37 acres. North of Crossroads Business Park is a 15.5-acre property zoned for general industrial use which is currently undeveloped. All this land is either in or within a half-mile of a tax increment district (see Chapter 6).

There are parcels ranging between one and three acres each which are zoned for industrial but have not been developed. These properties are located in older industrial areas throughout the city.

As land in Crossroads Business Park approaches full occupancy, the city should consider developing additional industrial land southwest along WI Hwy 26 for access to the I-39/90 interchange.

Parks & Open Space

There is a total of 201.4 acres of parks, recreational and open space within the city boundaries accessible to the public. Of those, the city controls 93.4 acres. The remaining are privately held acres (e.g., Oak Ridge Golf Course), which the public is encouraged to enjoy. (Note: School facilities were not included in these calculations.) Esri estimates that the population of Milton was 5,686 in 2024. Therefore, there are 35.4 acres per 1,000 people. Or 16.4 acres per 1,000 people if only considering the acres the city controls.

The [National Recreation and Park Association](#) (NRPA) provides guidelines and benchmarks that are often referenced by communities in their park and recreation planning. The NRPA suggests a minimum of 6.25 to 10.50 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population. However, it's important to remember that this is a guideline. Municipalities in Wisconsin may adopt different standards based on their specific needs and priorities. Other communities of similar size typically have 8–12 acres per 1,000 in population.

Additional information on existing parks and open space is within Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities.

Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts:

There are no known land use conflicts within the city. The city underwent a zoning code rewrite in 2023 which has been helpful. The greatest potential for land use conflicts in any city is at the interface of residential uses with commercial and industrial uses, and occasionally with large-scale institutional uses. Continued upgrading of a city's Land Use Plan and its zoning standards can serve to avoid land use conflicts as the city continues to grow. These techniques can enable city landowners, businesses, and institutions to see more predictability in the city's desired development patterns and can adjust individual plans accordingly, thus serving to avoid land use conflicts and the interpersonal conflicts, financial loss, and legal problems that can often accompany such conflicts.

Future Land Use Plan

In addition to the existing land use descriptions, the future land use map includes an additional category for Planned Neighborhood.

Planned Neighborhood: A mix of commercial, higher-density residential, and/or Government and Institutional land uses. Typically located along transportation corridors and offer transitions from higher-density urban cores to lower-density residential subdivisions.

[Insert Planned Neighborhood images and site plan examples.]

Table 13 demonstrates the future land use plan for the City of Milton. The greatest difference between the existing land use within the city and the future land use is the result of infill development. The decrease in commercial use is due to those properties becoming part of a planned neighborhood development, which may include commercial uses as noted in the definition above.

Table 13. City of Milton Future Land Use Table

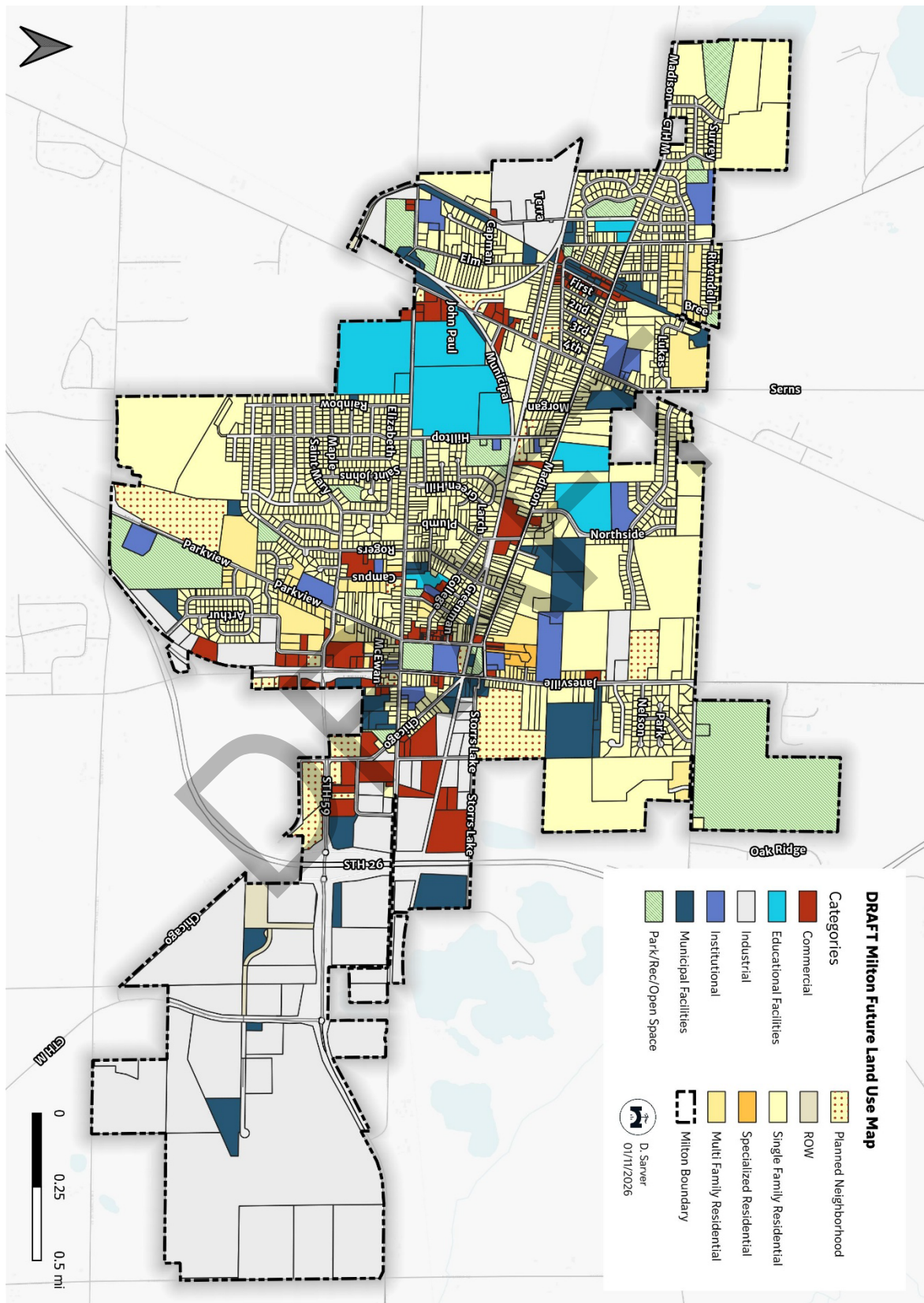
Future Land Use	Acres	Total Percent	Change from Existing Land Use (%)
Single Family Residential	1052.8	34.6%	11.8%
Industrial	717.9	23.6%	13.2%
ROW	403.8	13.3%	0.0%
Park/Rec/Open Space	207.0	6.8%	0.2%
Educational Facilities	145.3	4.8%	0.0%
Municipal Facilities	131.4	4.3%	0.6%
Planned Neighborhood	109.7	3.6%	3.6%
Commercial	109.6	3.6%	-0.2%
Multi Family Residential	94.4	3.1%	1.3%
Institutional	67.6	2.2%	0.0%
Specialized Residential	5.7	0.2%	0.0%
Grand Total	3,045.2	100.0%	

Table 14 demonstrates the planned future uses within the planning area and notes changes in existing uses. Map 13 illustrates the future land use plan within the planning area. Notable changes include some agricultural land on the north side of the city converting to residential uses to accommodate growth in the next twenty years. There is also some agricultural land on the south side of the city near Crossroads Business Park that could be used for storm water retention facilities.

Table 14. Planning Area Future Land Use Table

Future Land Use	Acres	Percent	Change from Existing Land Use (%)
Agricultural	10,248.6	50.2%	-1.5%
Municipal Facilities	14.3	0.1%	0.1%
Enterprise	242.9	1.2%	0.0%
Incorporated	3,040.8	14.9%	0.0%
Industrial	63.0	0.3%	0.3%
Institutional	3.0	0.0%	0.0%
Open Space and Vacant	3,070.3	15.0%	0.0%
Recreational	83.9	0.4%	0.0%
Residential	1,336.8	6.5%	1.2%
Transportation	1,634.4	8.0%	0.0%
Water	671.6	3.3%	0.0%
Total	20,409.5	100.0%	

Map 14. Future Land Use Map



Goals, Strategies, and Recommendations:

Goal 1: Encourage infill development of existing land within the city.

Undeveloped land within the city has the lowest estimated fair market value per acre, therefore, also the lowest assessed value per acre. However, utilities and city services already exist within the corporate boundaries. Infill development would provide economies of scale for city services and financial cash flow for those services.

Strategies:

1. Market available commercial and industrial properties on the city's economic development webpage.
2. Consider allocating funds from future TID closures for residential infill development.

Recommendations:

1. Add a link to the zoning map to the economic development webpage.
2. Add a layer to the zoning map that identifies available properties.
3. Post available industrial properties on the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's website: <https://wedc.org/doing-business-in-wisconsin/available-sites/>

Goal 2: Encourage the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of existing structures to invigorate corridors and conserve resources.

Strategies:

1. Encourage redevelopment of underutilized and vacant properties.
2. Promote adaptive reuse to preserve community character and conserve resources.

Recommendations:

1. Leverage existing funding tools to encourage property owners to remedy code violations or make improvements.
2. Provide technical assistance and design support for property owners seeking to repurpose historic or aging buildings. Resources may be available through the Wisconsin Connect Communities program.

Goal 3: Monitor city growth and its impact on City services in terms of land, labor, and equipment.

Strategies:

1. Forecast service demand based on projected growth.
2. Prepare City staff and departments for growth.

Recommendations:

1. Use scenario planning to anticipate infrastructure needs under different growth patterns (infill vs. greenfield development).
2. Integrate population growth projections into the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to guide timely infrastructure investments.
3. Evaluate staffing levels and training needs across departments most affected by growth, such as recreation, library, planning, public works, and public safety.

Goal 4: As land in Crossroads Business Park approaches full occupancy, the city should consider developing additional industrial land southwest along WI Hwy 26 for access to the I-39/90 interchange.

Strategies:

1. Identify the target property and owner's willingness to transition the land to the city.
2. Negotiate acquisition of the land.
3. Pursue annexation and amend boundary agreements with Town of Milton if applicable.