

1 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This element of the *Comprehensive Plan Existing Conditions Report* provides an overview of the important demographic trends and background information necessary to create a complete understanding of the City of Onalaska. Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law, which is contained in Section 66.1001 of Wisconsin Statutes, requires this element to include a statement of overall goals, objectives, policies and programs for the 20-year planning period, as well as household and employment forecasts that are used to guide the development of this plan, and demographic trends, age distribution, education levels, income levels and employment characteristics that exist within the governmental unit. Goals, objectives, and policies are included in the separate plan document that accompanies this report.

1.1 Community Vision Statement

The City of Onalaska is a growing, family-oriented community; amidst spectacular natural resources including the coulees, bluffs, Black River and Lake Onalaska; with a strong economy and good jobs; tremendous parks and recreation facilities; and an outstanding educational system. Our greatest assets are our residents – the people who live, work, play and contribute to aspects of our community. Over the next 20 years, we will continue to value our residents and protect our natural resources while fostering high quality development that fits our unique character, expanding our transportation system, and providing good housing choices.

1.2 Population Trends & Forecasts

The City of Onalaska is the second largest community in La Crosse County. The City has grown steadily over the past 40 years, averaging a growth rate of 31 percent per decade since 1960. Recent population increases have been attributed to the combination of a general migration of residents to the La Crosse area, migration from the City of La Crosse to Onalaska, and property annexations from surrounding areas.

Tables 1.1a and 1.1b document population trends and projections for the City of Onalaska and surrounds. Table 1.1a shows projections done by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) through 2010. Table 1.1b shows projections done by the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) through 2025. Both are based on historical population growth rates, although different methodologies were employed in each.

The projections compiled by the MRRPC show Onalaska’s population increasing more steeply than do the projections prepared by the Wisconsin DOA. Generally, the MRRPC projections are higher throughout the County, excepting their projections for the City of Onalaska. Both agencies foresee consistently high growth rates for Onalaska in coming decades. One factor supporting the continued growth of Onalaska is the availability of land suitable for development, a marked contrast to the situation in the City of La Crosse where much of the land is not physically suited to development.

Table 1.1a: Wisconsin DOA Population Trends & Projections

	Year	La Crosse County	Holmen Village	Bangor Village	Rockland Village	West Salem Village	La Crosse City	Onalaska City
Census	1980	91,056	2,411	1,012	383	3,276	48,347	9,249
	1990	97,904	3,236	1,076	509	3,611	51,140	11,414
	2000	107,120	6,200	1,400	625	4,738	51,818	14,839
Projections	2005	110,302	7,243	1,470	667	5,061	51,561	15,907
	2010	113,211	8,249	1,535	708	5,368	51,206	16,924

Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Administration, 2003

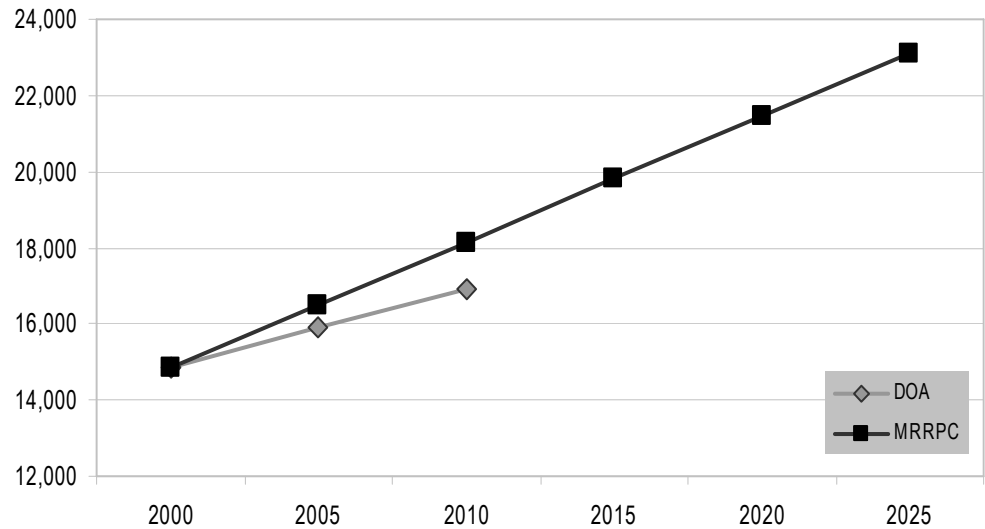
Table 1.1b: MRRPC Population Trends & Projections

	Year	La Crosse County	Holmen Village	Bangor Village	Rockland Village	West Salem Village	La Crosse City	Onalaska City
Census	1960	72,465	635	928	257	1,707	47,575	3,161
	1970	80,468	1,081	974	278	2,180	50,286	4,909
	1980	91,056	2,411	1,012	383	3,276	48,347	9,249
	1990	97,892	3,220	1,076	509	3,611	51,120	11,414
	2000	107,120	6,200	1,400	625	4,738	51,818	14,839
Projections	2005	111,562	7,053	1,471	683	5,164	52,073	16,494
	2010	116,004	7,906	1,542	741	5,591	52,329	18,149
	2015	120,446	8,760	1,613	799	6,017	52,584	19,804
	2020	124,888	9,613	1,684	856	6,443	52,839	21,459
	2025	129,330	10,466	1,755	914	6,870	53,095	23,114

Source: Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, 2000

Figure 1.1 illustrates the difference between the City of Onalaska population projections presented in table 1.1a and those presented in table 1.1b.

Figure 1.1: City of Onalaska Population Projections



1.3 Demographic Trends

Table 1.2: City of Onalaska Population by Age, 2000

	1990	Percent of Total	2000	Percent of Total	Proportional Change 1990-2000
Under 5 years	871	7.7%	1,015	6.8%	-0.9%
5 to 17 years	2,257	20.0%	2,868	19.3%	-0.7%
18 to 20 years	425	3.8%	545	3.7%	-0.1%
21 to 24 years	637	5.6%	462	3.1%	-2.5%
25 to 44 years	4,047	35.9%	4,432	29.9%	-6.0%
45 to 54 years	1,136	10.1%	2,305	15.5%	5.5%
55 to 59 years	443	3.9%	750	5.1%	1.1%
60 to 64 years	410	3.6%	491	3.3%	-0.3%
65 to 74 years	664	5.9%	923	6.2%	0.3%
75 to 84 years	275	2.4%	579	3.9%	1.5%
85 years and over	119	1.1%	168	1.1%	0.1%
Under 18 years	3,128	27.7%	3,883	26.2%	-1.6%
Over 65 years	1,058	9.4%	1,670	11.3%	1.9%
Total	11,284	100.0%	14,538	100.0%	--

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

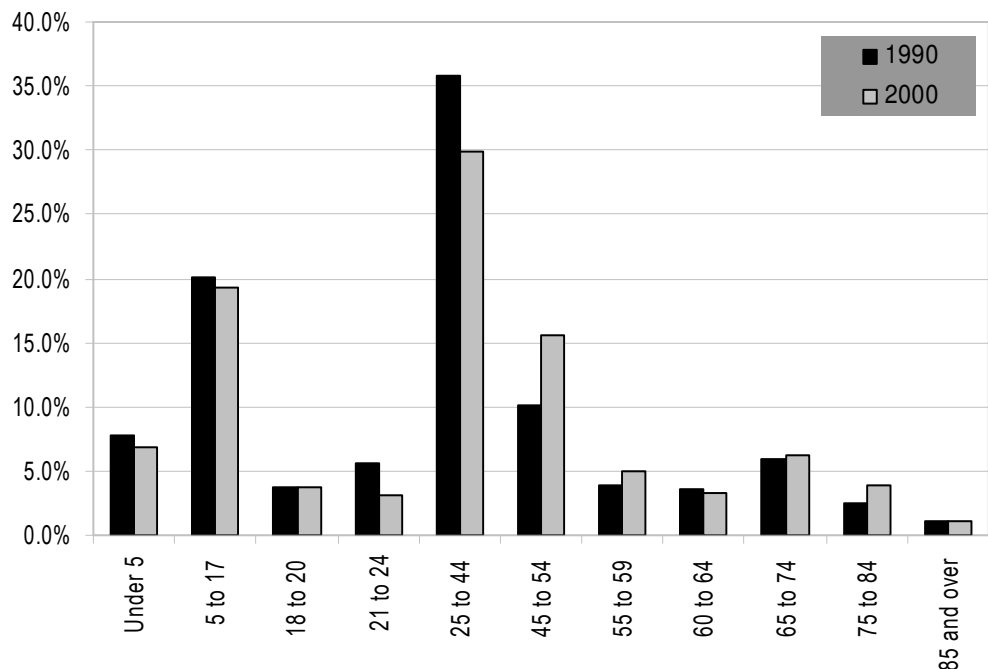
a. Age and Gender

Table 1.2 illustrates the age distribution of Onalaska residents by age group according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. A large percentage of the population falls into the 25 to 44 year age group. However, this group saw a notable decline from the 1990 Census and now represents just 29.9 percent of the total population, down from 35.9 percent in 1990. The male-female ratio in the City in 2000 was 48.4 to 51.6.

Another significant segment of the population is the group between the ages of 45 and 54 who make-up over 15 percent of the City’s population. This is also the group that saw the most significant increase in population during the 1990s, growing by 5.5 percent as a portion of the total population. There were also increases in the 55 to 59, and 75 to 84 year old age cohorts.

The population of individuals under 18 fell from 27.7 percent of the population in 1990 to 26.2 percent of the population in 2000, while the percentage of the population aged 65 and over grew by 1.9 percent. The City of Onalaska’s age distribution is not substantially altered from a decade ago, and as depicted in Figure 1.2 Onalaska is generally a very young city, however it does show signs of echoing the national trend toward an aging population.

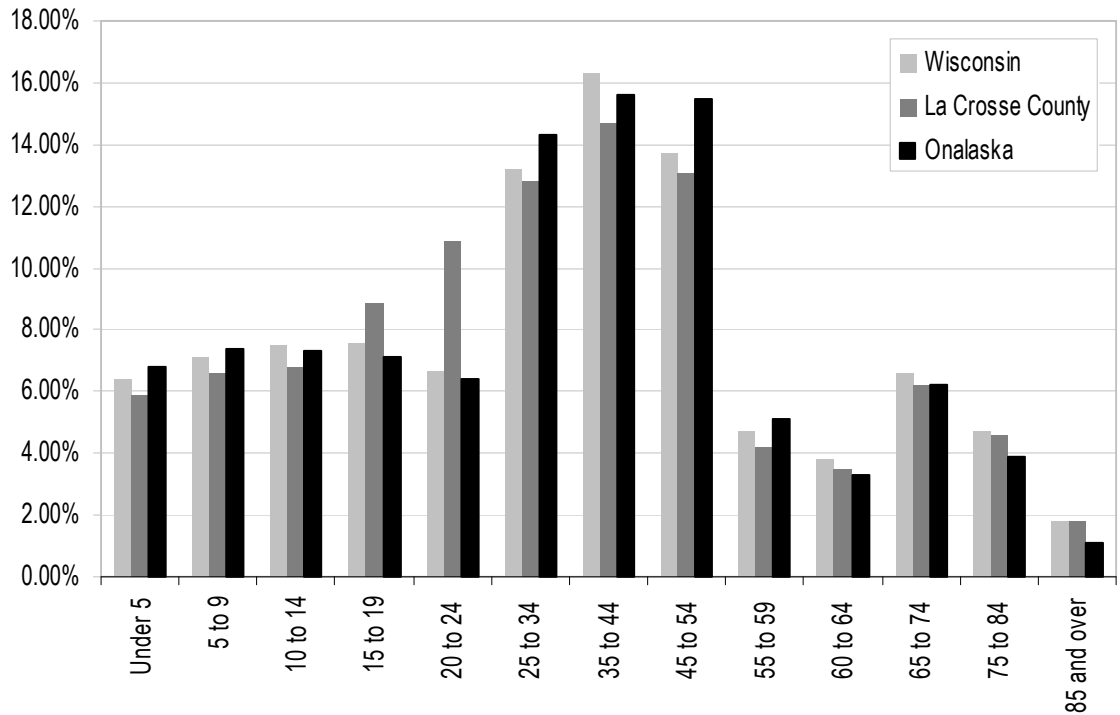
Figure 1.2: City of Onalaska Age Distribution, Change 1990-2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000

Figure 1.3 contrasts the age distribution of the City of Onalaska with that of La Crosse County and the State of Wisconsin. Onalaska’s population and the population of La Crosse County tend to be younger than that of the State as a whole. In general the population of Onalaska is even younger than that of La Crosse County, the exception being that there are more individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 at the County level, largely due to the presence of 3 institutions of higher education in La Crosse.

Figure 1.3: Age Groups as a Percentage of Total Population, 2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

b. Race

In 2000, 95.9 percent of the population in the City of Onalaska was white, compared with 99 percent in 1990. The racial profile of the City has changed somewhat in the last decade. While all minority groups saw slight increases, the most significant change occurred among individuals of Asian descent. This racial group now comprises 3.2 percent of the City's population, up from 1990 when Asian or Southeast Asian individuals comprised only .4 percent of the total population. The increase, which has occurred county-wide, is largely due to the influx of Hmong immigrants to the area.

The Hmong, a minority hill tribe from Laos, were staunch supporters of the U.S. Military during the Vietnam War. As a result they became targets for annihilation by the North Vietnamese government following the evacuation of American troops. The fortunate were able to migrate to the U.S. with the assistance of church sponsorship programs and the U.S. government.

1.4 Household Trends and Forecasts

Approximately a quarter of the homes in Onalaska were built between 1990 and March of 2000. The largest build-out in the City occurred between 1970 and 1990 when over 45 percent of Onalaska's existing housing units were constructed. Table 1.3 itemizes the housing stock in Onalaska according to the year the structure was built.

Table 1.3: Housing Stock, 2000

Year Structure Built	Number	Percent of Total
1999 to March 2000	148	2.4%
1995 to 1998	631	10.4%
1990 to 1994	859	14.1%
1980 to 1989	1,189	19.6%
1970 to 1979	1,634	26.9%
1960 to 1969	648	10.7%
1940 to 1959	655	10.8%
1939 or earlier	312	5.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

The majority of Onalaska residents, 53.4 percent, have moved into their homes since 1995. Table 1.4 shows the number of householders by the year they moved into their home.

Table 1.4: Year Householder Moved into Unit, 2000

Year	Number	Percent of Total
1999 to March 2000	1,252	21.1
1995 to 1998	1,916	32.3
1990 to 1994	994	16.8
1980 to 1989	801	13.5
1970 to 1979	536	9.0
1969 or earlier	430	7.3

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

Tables 1.5 through 1.7 estimate future housing growth for the City of Onalaska based in part on projections of persons per housing unit. By using MRRPC population growth projections, and assuming a consistent linear trend in population per housing unit, projections for housing growth were determined.

Table 1.5 shows housing demand if population per housing unit stays constant at 2000 levels. In this scenario, no discount factor was used.

Table 1.5: Housing Projections – Scenario A

	Year	Population	Percent Change	Population per H.U.	Housing Units	Percent Change
	1970	4,909	...	3.29	1,491	...
	1980	9,249	46.9%	2.88	3,213	115.5%
	1990	11,414	19.0%	2.58	4,419	37.5%
	2000	14,839	23.1%	2.44	6,076	37.4%
projections	2010	18,149	18.2%	2.44	7,438	18.3%
	2020	21,459	15.4%	2.44	8,795	15.4%
	2025	23,114	7.2%	2.44	9,473	7.2%

Table 1.6 uses a discount factor derived from the average change in population per housing unit seen in all Villages and Cities in La Crosse County over the past 30 years in 10-year increments. This discount factor was used to determine future estimates for population per housing unit and subsequently the projected housing growth for the City of Onalaska.

Table 1.6: Housing Projections – Scenario B

	Year	Population	Percent Change	Population per H.U.	Housing Units	Percent Change
	1970	4,909	...	3.29	1,491	...
	1980	9,249	46.9%	2.88	3,213	115.5%
	1990	11,414	19.0%	2.58	4,419	37.5%
	2000	14,839	23.1%	2.44	6,076	37.4%
projections	2010	18,149	18.2%	2.38	7,613	20.2%
	2020	21,459	15.4%	2.33	9,214	17.4%
	2025	23,114	7.2%	2.30	10,158	9.3%

Table 1.7 uses a discount factor derived from the average change in population per housing unit seen throughout La Crosse County over the past 30 years in 10-year increments. This was used to determine future population per housing unit and subsequently the projected household growth for the City of Onalaska.

Scenario C seems least realistic in that it predicts that population per housing unit will fall below 2 persons. Similar results were found in a model that applied the rate of change in population per housing unit seen just within the City of Onalaska over the past 3 decades.

Table 1.7: Housing Projections – Scenario C

	Year	Population	Percent Change	Population per H.U.	Housing Units	Percent Change
	1970	4,909	...	3.29	1,491	...
	1980	9,249	46.9%	2.88	3,213	115.5%
	1990	11,414	19.0%	2.58	4,419	37.5%
	2000	14,839	23.1%	2.44	6,076	37.4%
projections	2010	18,149	18.2%	2.22	8,176	25.7%
	2020	21,459	15.4%	2.02	10,625	23.1%
	2025	23,114	7.2%	1.93	12,579	15.5%

Regardless of which scenario is applied, the City of Onalaska is likely to see continued growth and will require considerable new housing to keep pace with demand.

It should be noted that the population growth projections used in the above analysis were provided by the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, and were based on the rate of population growth or decline experienced from 1970 to 2000. According to the MRRPC, this technique may have generated unrealistic figures in some of the cases where it was applied.

Housing tenure refers to whether a particular housing unit is owned or rented by the occupant. Table 1.8 indicates that nearly 70 percent of Onalaska's housing units are owner-occupied. Owner occupancy has increased since 1990 but not notably.

Table 1.8: Onalaska Housing Tenure Characteristics, 2000

	2000	Percent	1990	Percent
Occupied Housing Units	5,893	100.0%	4,241	100.0%
Owner Occupied Housing Units	4,015	68.1%	2,875	67.8%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	1,878	31.9%	1,366	32.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

Table 1.9 lists the housing units in Onalaska by type. Of the 6,076 housing units in the City, 56.9 percent are single family detached homes, and another 10.3 percent are 2-unit or duplex homes. Approximately 27 percent of the housing in Onalaska is in multi-family structures, defined as 3 or more units per structure.

Table 1.9: Housing Units by Type, City of Onalaska, 2000

Units per Structure	Structures	Percent
Total:	6,076	100.0%
1-unit, detached	3,458	56.9%
1-unit, attached	341	5.6%
2-units	626	10.3%
3 or 4 units	167	2.7%
5 to 9 units	439	7.2%
10 or more units	584	9.6%
Mobile home	461	7.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

1.5 Employment Characteristics and Forecasts

The Comprehensive Planning Law requires this element to address employment forecasts in the governmental unit over the 20-year planning period.

Onalaska residents primarily work outside Onalaska, but within La Crosse County. The State of Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development's "Occupations with Largest Growth 2000-2010" provides insight into the regional employment forecast for the Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon County area.

The following forecasts and statistics are divided into two broad categories: occupation and industries. It is common that several occupation groups are related closely to certain industries. For example, the U.S. Bureau of the Census uses the following description to describe the differences: Operators of transportation equipment, farm operators and workers, and healthcare providers account for major portions of their respective industries of transportation, agriculture, and health care. Industry categories, however, include people in other occupations. For example, people employed in agriculture include truck drivers and bookkeepers; people employed in the transportation industry include mechanics, freight handlers, and payroll clerks; and people employed in the health care industry include occupations such as security guard and secretary.

The pie chart below illustrates the occupational structure of Onalaska residents at the time of the 2000 census. A significant majority, 66.4 percent, are employed in “management, professional and related occupations,” or “sales and office occupations.”

Figure 1.3: Occupational Structure of Onalaska Residents, 2000

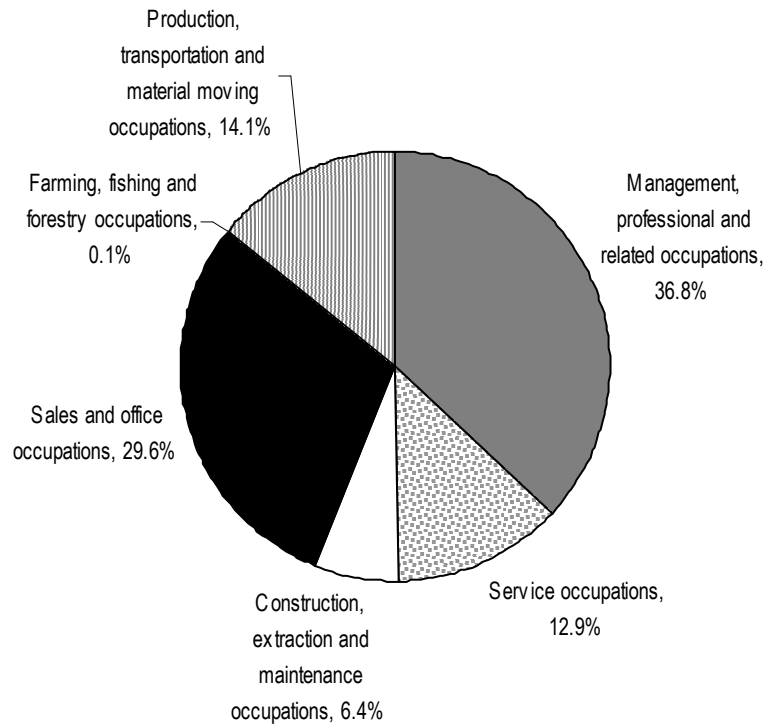


Table 1.10 lists the top 5 occupations experiencing the largest growth rates in the region, not surprisingly many of the occupations relate to the healthcare industry. The top two professions listed fall within the major areas of employment for Onalaska residents. For a more complete listing of Occupational growth projections see Chapter 6.

Table 1.10: Occupations with the Largest Projected Growth in Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon Counties 2000-2010

Occupational Title	2000-2010	
	Number	Percent Change
Computer Support Specialists	220	75.9%
Network/Computer Systems Admin	80	57.1%
Medical Records/Health Info Techs	110	55.0%
Medical Assts	190	52.8%
Personal and Home Care Aides	250	52.1%

Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development

Other employment projections were prepared at the state level. Table 1.11 lists the projected growth statewide for all occupations.

Table 1.11: Statewide Employment Projections by Occupation 2000-2010

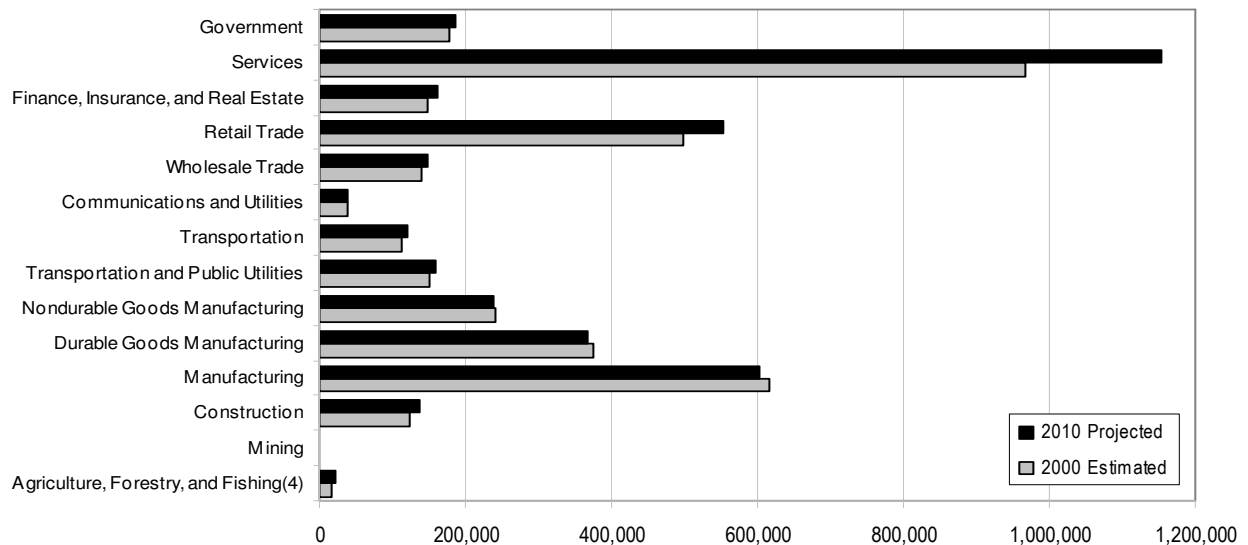
Occupational	2000	2010	Change	Percent Change
Total, All Occupations	3,011,380	3,301,160	289,780	9.6%
Management Occupations	153,240	169,800	16,560	10.8%
Business/Financial Operations	87,950	98,200	10,250	11.7%
Computer & Mathematical Occupations	46,710	66,850	20,140	43.1%
Architecture/Engineering Occupations	50,520	51,880	1,360	2.7%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	28,970	32,370	3,400	11.7%
Community/Social Services	42,090	52,410	10,320	24.5%
Legal Occupations	15,790	17,990	2,200	13.9%
Ed, Training, & Library	177,460	203,850	26,390	14.9%
Arts/Design/Entertainment/Sports/Media	47,490	54,340	6,850	14.4%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	135,900	165,500	29,600	21.8%
Healthcare Support Occupations	78,890	98,940	20,050	25.4%
Protective Service Occupations	49,660	58,020	8,360	16.8%
Food Preparation & Serving Occupations	218,820	244,850	26,030	11.9%
Build & Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance	102,350	117,780	15,430	15.1%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	76,700	95,190	18,490	24.1%
Sales and Related Occupations	304,430	329,880	25,450	8.4%
Office/Administrative Support Occupation	476,230	495,230	19,000	4.0%
Farming/Fishing/Forestry	5,990	6,460	470	7.8%
Construction/Extraction Occupations	146,680	159,960	13,280	9.1%
Installation/Maint/Repair Occupations	117,130	124,780	7,650	6.5%
Production Occupations	415,890	407,430	(8,460)	-2.0%
Transportation/Material Moving Occupations	232,480	249,470	16,990	7.3%

Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development

As shown in the pie chart on the previous page, well over half the population of Onalaska is employed in “management, professional and related occupations,” or “sales and office occupations.” Both of these occupational categories are well positioned to absorb much of the job growth projected above in table 1.11.

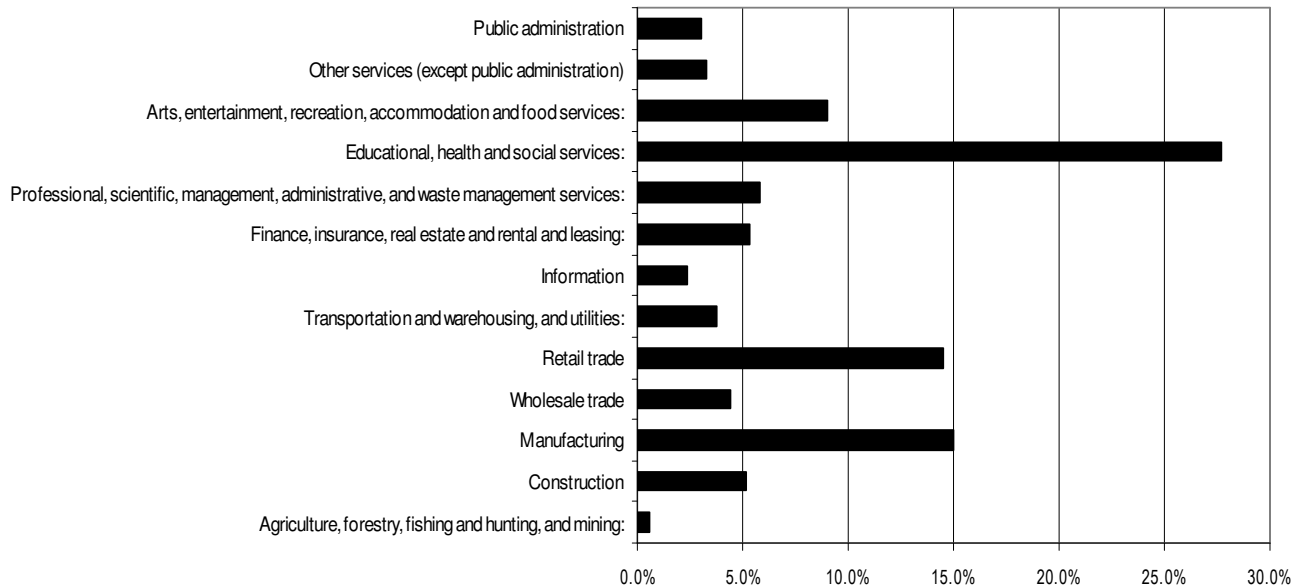
Figure 1.4 depicts projected statewide trends in employment by industry. Figure 1.5 shows local occupation by industry in the year 2000. While the categories are not strictly comparable, it is possible to see that the industries with the highest anticipated growth over the next ten years, such as the service industry and retail trade, already account for a significant portion of total employment in the Onalaska area. What is also obvious from the comparison is that the shrinking manufacturing sector will have a considerable impact on Onalaska’s labor force.

Figure 1.4: Statewide Employment Projections by Industry 2000-2010



Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development

Figure 1.5: Local Occupation by Industry, 2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 in Wisconsin DOA Community Profiles

1.5 Education Levels

Table 1.12 shows education levels in Onalaska compared to those of La Crosse County. Levels of educational attainment in the City are similar to those in the County. However, Onalaska residents are more likely to hold a high school diploma or its equivalent, and more likely overall to hold a bachelor's degree or higher than are residents across the County.

Table 1.12: Educational Attainment

	Onalaska	Percent of Total	La Crosse County	Percent of Total
Less than 9th Grade	281	2.9%	1,402	4.8%
9th to 12th Grade, no diploma	296	3.1%	2,197	7.5%
High school graduate (incl. equivalency)	2,934	30.5%	9,290	31.6%
Some college, no degree	1,934	20.1%	6,661	22.7%
Associate degree	1,167	12.1%	2,760	9.4%
Bachelor's degree	1,936	20.1%	4,543	15.5%
Graduate or Professional degree	1,071	11.1%	2,538	8.6%
Percent high school graduate or higher	-	94.0%	-	89.7%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	-	31.3%	-	25.4%
Total	9,619	100.0%	29,391	100.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

1.6 Income Levels

As shown in Table 1.13 income levels for Onalaska residents are higher in all categories than are income levels for the City of La Crosse, La Crosse County, and the State.

Table 1.13: Median Family Income, Median Household Income, and Per Capita Income, 1989 – 1999

	1989			1999		
	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income
City of Onalaska	\$32,624	\$37,788	\$13,605	\$47,800	\$57,264	\$24,066
City of La Crosse	\$21,947	\$30,067	\$10,898	\$31,103	\$43,047	\$17,650
La Crosse County	\$26,857	\$33,830	\$12,141	\$39,472	\$50,380	\$19,800
State of Wisconsin	\$29,442	\$35,082	\$13,276	\$43,791	\$52,911	\$21,271

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000