

Chapter 2

Issues and Opportunities

Introduction

The Issues and Opportunities chapter is designed to provide a general overview of the Town of Wheaton’s residents related to age, income, employment, educational attainment, etc. as well as the population and household forecasts of the community. It also takes into account the Community Survey results to identify demographic trends and changes affecting the Town that may create **issues** that can be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan or provide **opportunities** that the Town can utilize to improve the community.

Historic Population

Analyzing historic and forecasted population will help the Town of Wheaton to anticipate land needs to accommodate future growth and to consider what other effects the growth may have on infrastructure, parks, and services that residents and businesses utilize.

Table 2-1 looks at the historic population in the Town of Wheaton and surrounding municipalities. All municipalities grew between 1970 and 2010 but many of the Towns experienced the most growth. The Town of Wheaton’s population grew by 51.6% during this time period. The Village of Lake Hallie has limited historic population because it wasn’t incorporated until 2003.

Much of the population growth can be attributed to the proximity to larger urban areas adjacent to the Town where many employment opportunities are available which retain and draw people to the area. The Towns provide space for residents who prefer rural living but who can easily commute to jobs in the urban areas.

Table 2-1: HISTORIC POPULATION - Town of Wheaton and Surrounding Municipalities

Local Unit of Government	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1970-2010
Town of Wheaton - Chippewa Co.	1,782	2,328	2,257	2,366	2,701	51.6%
Town of Howard - Chippewa Co.	643	660	625	648	798	24.1%
Town of Tilden - Chippewa Co.	963	1,088	1,079	1,185	1,485	54.2%
Village of Lake Hallie - Chippewa Co.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6,448	n/a
City of Chippewa Falls - Chippewa Co.	12,351	12,270	12,749	12,925	13,661	10.6%
Town of Elk Mound - Dunn Co.	455	668	749	1,121	1,792	293.8%
Town of Union - Eau Claire Co.	2,355	2,689	2,456	2,402	2,663	13.1%
City of Eau Claire - Chippewa and Eau Claire Cos.	44,619	51,509	56,806	61,704	65,931	47.8%

Source: *U.S. Census and 2014 Wisconsin Demographic Services Center *U.S. Census



Population Forecasts

Population forecasts have long been used to assess development prospects and community facility needs created by population growth. Population forecasts can be used to evaluate potential residential development needs, economic conditions and the level of demand for public facilities and services. Businesses, schools and units of government frequently use these forecasts to determine the future needs or design of public facilities or services.

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) population forecasts are, by state statute, the official population projections for Wisconsin. Between 2020 and 2040, the Town of Wheaton and all surrounding municipalities, except for the City of Chippewa Falls, are forecasted to have population growth and the percentage of growth is fairly consistent in comparison (see Table 2-2).

Table 2-2: POPULATION FORECASTS - Town of Wheaton and Surrounding Municipalities

Local Unit of Government	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2020-2040
T. of Wheaton - Chippewa Co.	2,701	2,795	2,935	3,060	3,165	3,245	3,295	12.3%
T. of Howard - Chippewa Co.	798	815	855	890	920	940	955	11.7%
T. of Tilden - Chippewa Co.	1,485	1,550	1,650	1,735	1,815	1,880	1,925	16.7%
V. of Lake Hallie - Chippewa Co.	6,448	6,900	7,395	7,845	8,245	8,580	8,835	19.5%
C. of Chippewa Falls - Chippewa Co.	13,661	13,720	13,940	14,070	14,110	14,050	13,880	-0.4%
T. of Elk Mound - Dunn Co.	1,792	1,930	2,035	2,155	2,245	2,320	2,395	17.7%
T. of Union - Eau Claire Co.	2,663	2,780	2,920	3,060	3,180	3,280	3,375	15.6%
C. of Eau Claire – Chippewa/Eau Claire Cos.	65,931	67,445	69,225	70,895	72,255	73,095	73,770	6.6%

Source: *U.S. Census and 2014 Wisconsin Demographic Services Center *U.S. Census

Household Forecasts

More households, the result of population growth, will require more housing, jobs, and services. Between 2020 and 2040, the Town is forecasted to have 2005 additional households. The number of persons per household is decreasing, which results in less people per dwelling.

Table 2-3 shows that all municipalities are forecasted to have more households by 2040. The impact these new households have on a municipality will vary based on preferences, ordinances, land costs and other factors.

Table 2-3: HOUSEHOLD FORECASTS - Town of Wheaton and Surrounding Municipalities

Local Unit of Government	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2020-2040
T. of Wheaton - Chippewa Co.	1,001	1,054	1,116	1,176	1,233	1,285	1,321	18.4%
T. of Howard - Chippewa Co.	292	303	321	338	354	367	378	17.8%
T. of Tilden - Chippewa Co.	546	580	622	662	701	738	765	23.0%
V. of Lake Hallie - Chippewa Co.	2,447	2,663	2,879	3,088	3,288	3,478	3,626	25.9%
C. of Chippewa Falls - Chippewa Co.	5,896	6,028	6,182	6,310	6,403	6,470	6,461	4.5%
T. of Elk Mound - Dunn Co.	589	652	700	755	798	838	876	25.1%
T. of Union - Eau Claire Co.	983	1,041	1,104	1,166	1,218	1,265	1,303	18.0%
C. of Eau Claire – Chippewa/Eau Claire Cos.	26,803	27,892	28,909	29,821	30,586	31,128	31,442	8.8%

Source: *U.S. Census and 2014 Wisconsin Demographic Services Center *U.S. Census

Age Distribution

The age of a community is also important in identifying the needs of the community. Table 2-4 and Figure 2-1 compares the Town of Wheaton’s age distributions in 2010 and 2018.

The Town of Wheaton’s population is getting older with the increase in residents ages 45 and older. This may be due to these people moving to Wheaton as they age. The number of the youngest age residents is declining, confirming that population growth is likely due to migration by adults with children moving to Wheaton. The median age of a resident has increased from 40.7 in 2010 to 43.7 in 2018.

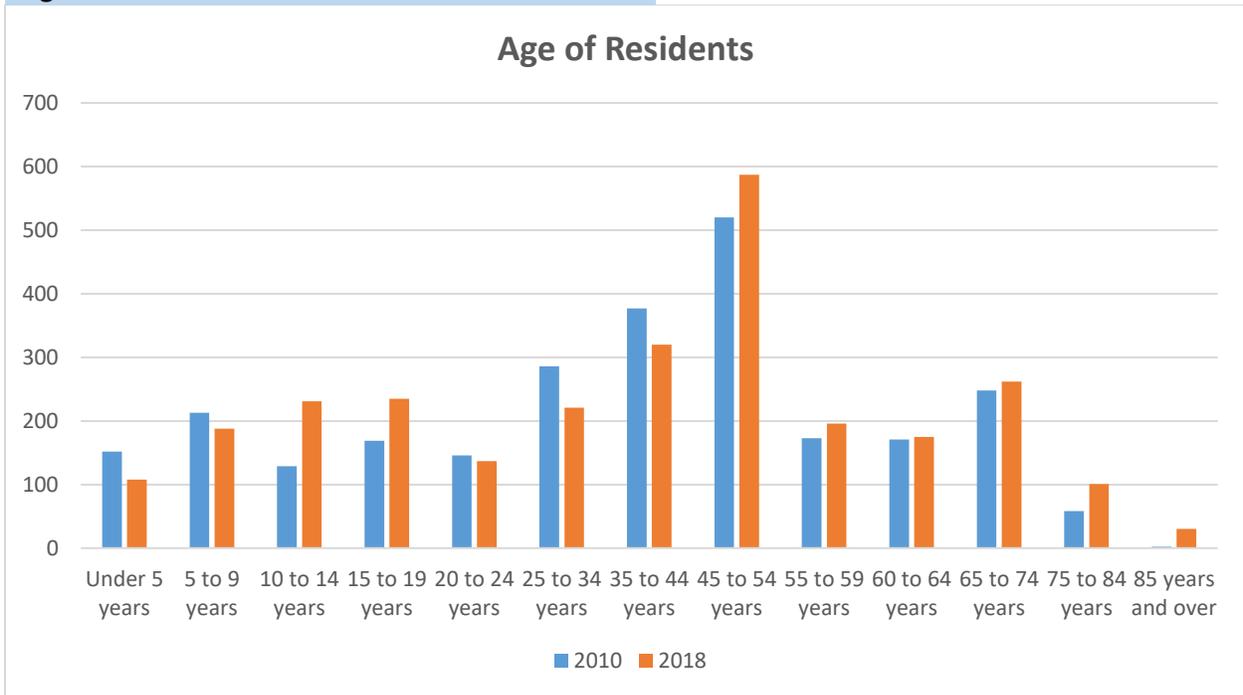
Table 2-4: SEX AND AGE – Town of Wheaton

	2010	Percent	2018	Percent
Under 5 years	152	5.7%	108	3.9%
5 to 9 years	213	8.1%	188	6.7%
10 to 14 years	129	4.9%	231	8.3%
15 to 19 years	169	6.4%	235	8.4%
20 to 24 years	146	5.5%	137	4.9%
25 to 34 years	286	10.8%	221	7.9%
35 to 44 years	377	14.3%	320	11.5%
45 to 54 years	520	19.7%	587	21.0%
55 to 59 years	173	6.5%	196	7.0%
60 to 64 years	171	6.5%	175	6.3%
65 to 74 years	248	9.4%	262	9.4%
75 to 84 years	58	2.2%	101	3.6%
85 years and over	2	0.1%	30	1.1%
Median age (years)	40.7	(X)	43.7	(X)
Total population	2,644	100.0%	2,791	100.0%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census and 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Figure 2-1: AGE – Town of Wheaton



Source: 2010 U.S. Census and 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

An aging population will have different needs for housing, recreation and transportation that other age groups may not have.

Labor Force

Table 2-5 shows that 73.2% of residents are in the labor force and 71.5% being employed. Residents not in the labor force may be retired, disabled or stay-at-home parents. As stated earlier, Wheaton has an aging population, which means declining numbers of residents in the workforce. Currently, most businesses will say they have difficulty finding employees.

Table 2-5: EMPLOYMENT STATUS – Town of Wheaton

Employment Status	Number	Percentage
Population 16 years and over	2,209	100.0%
In labor force	1,617	73.2%
Employed	1,579	71.5%
Unemployed	38	1.7%
Armed Forces	0	0.0%
Not in labor force	592	26.8%

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Place of Work

Table 2-6 shows workers residing in the Town of Wheaton and their place of work. About a third of workers have jobs in Chippewa County. Other nearby counties, such as St. Croix, Eau Claire and Dunn, also provide job opportunities and it is likely that many residents work in those counties as well. A small number of workers work outside of Wisconsin. Some may commute to jobs in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.

Table 2-6: PLACE OF WORK – Town of Wheaton

Workers 16 years and over	1,550	100.0%
Worked in state of residence	1,542	99.5%
Worked in county of residence	547	35.3%
Worked outside county of residence	995	64.2%
Worked outside state of residence	8	0.5%

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Commuting

Table 2-7 shows that 88.1% of workers drive alone to work. About 5% stated they carpooled or worked from home. The high percentage of workers driving alone may be influenced by the distance to their employment or the lack of transportation alternatives.

Table 2-7: COMMUTING TO WORK – Town of Wheaton

Mode	Number	Percentage
Workers 16 years and over	1,550	100.0%
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	1,365	88.1%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	74	4.8%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	0	0.0%
Walked	12	0.8%
Other means	27	1.7%
Worked at home	72	4.6%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	20.9	(X)

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 2-8 shows that about 82% of workers are commuting to jobs 29 minutes or less from their homes. This would indicate that there are good employment opportunities within a reasonable distance.

Table 2-8: TRAVEL TIME TO WORK – Town of Wheaton

Less than 10 minutes	219	14.1%
10 to 14 minutes	260	16.8%
15 to 19 minutes	324	20.9%
20 to 24 minutes	312	20.1%
25 to 29 minutes	157	10.2%
30 to 34 minutes	124	8.0%
35 to 44 minutes	37	2.4%
45 to 59 minutes	22	1.4%
60 or more minutes	95	6.2%

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Education Levels

Table 2-9 shows that 96.4% of Wheaton residents were high school graduates or higher, up from 93.0% in 2010. Twenty-five percent of residents achieved a bachelor’s degree or higher, up from xxx in 2010.

Higher educational attainment can provide for more work choices for residents. It also provides potential workers for businesses that need a varied and highly skilled workforce.

Table 2-9: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT – Town of Wheaton

	Number	Percent
Population 25 years and over	1,892	100.0%
Less than 9th grade	24	1.3%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	44	2.3%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	615	32.5%
Some college, no degree	370	19.6%
Associate's degree	366	19.3%
Bachelor's degree	333	17.6%
Graduate or professional degree	140	7.4%
High school graduate or higher	1,824	96.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	473	25.0%

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Household Income

Personal income is derived primarily from employment wages. An individual’s education level and occupation can determine the range of that wage scale and influences their personal standard of living. A comparison of the occupations of those employed in the labor force helps to determine the economic effect of the employment opportunities available to area residents and the ability to increase their standard of living.



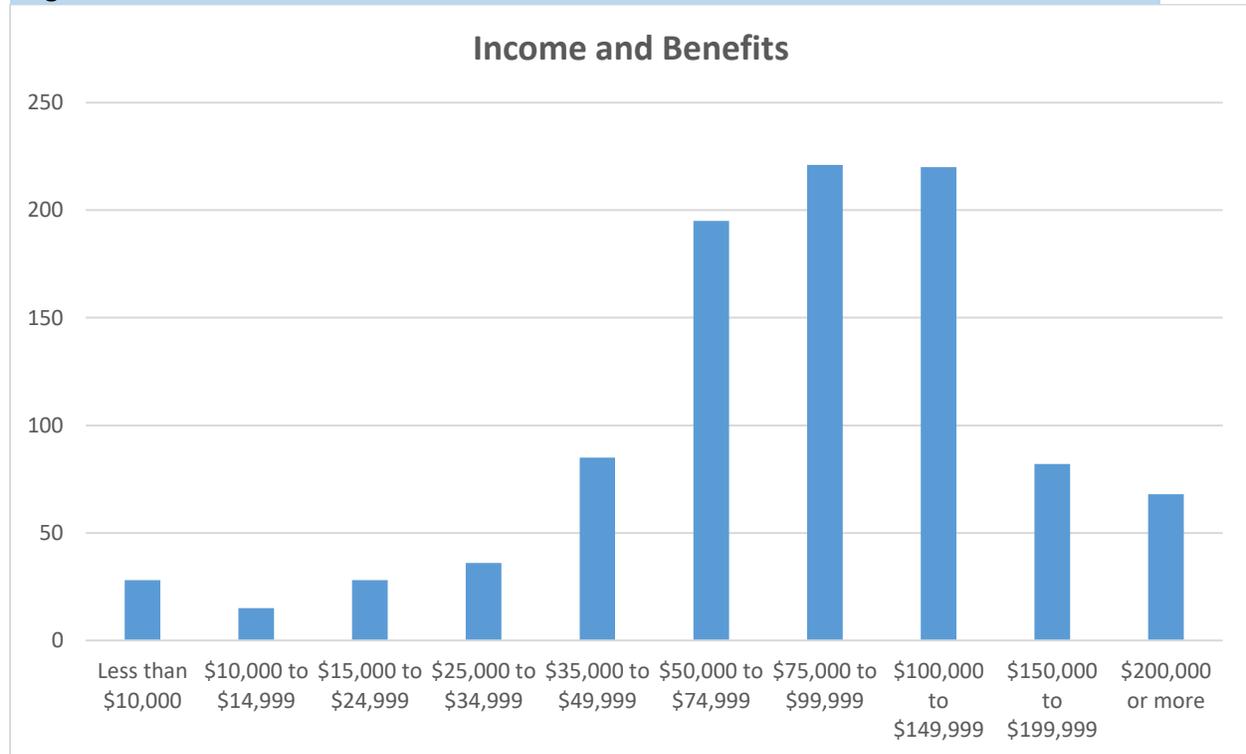
Sixty-five percent of Town of Wheaton households earn between \$50,000 and \$149,999 annually (see Table 2-10 and Figure 2-2). The median household income is \$83,636 compared with \$66,705 in 2010. Median family income is \$86,800 compared with \$80,400 in 2010.

Table 2-10: INCOME AND BENEFITS– Town of Wheaton

Total households	978	100.00%
Less than \$10,000	28	2.90%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	15	1.50%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	28	2.90%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	36	3.70%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	85	8.70%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	195	19.90%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	221	22.60%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	220	22.50%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	82	8.40%
\$200,000 or more	68	7.00%
Median household income (dollars)	83,636	(X)
Median family income (dollars)	86,800	(X)

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 2-2: INCOME AND BENEFITS– Town of Wheaton



Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year



Employment by Occupation

Table 2-11 shows that almost a third of civilians, 16 years and over, are working in management, business, science, and arts occupations. Twenty-four percent are working in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. Seventeen percent are working in sales and office occupations. Most of these occupations are located outside of the Town of Wheaton.

Table 2-11: OCCUPATION – Town of Wheaton

Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,579	100.0%
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	532	33.7%
Service occupations	226	14.3%
Sales and office occupations	275	17.4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	163	10.3%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	383	24.3%

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Employment by Industry

Industry refers to the type of business where the occupations are located. Table 12-2 shows that the top three industries where residents work are educational services, health care, and social assistance (27% of residents), manufacturing (18%) followed by retail trade (14%). Similar to occupations, many of these industries are located outside of the Town of Wheaton.

Table 2-12: INDUSTRY – Town of Wheaton

Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,579	100.0%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	85	5.4%
Construction	81	5.1%
Manufacturing	288	18.2%
Wholesale trade	22	1.4%
Retail trade	223	14.1%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	95	6.0%
Information	31	2.0%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	51	3.2%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	84	5.3%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	421	26.7%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	85	5.4%
Other services, except public administration	57	3.6%
Public administration	56	3.5%

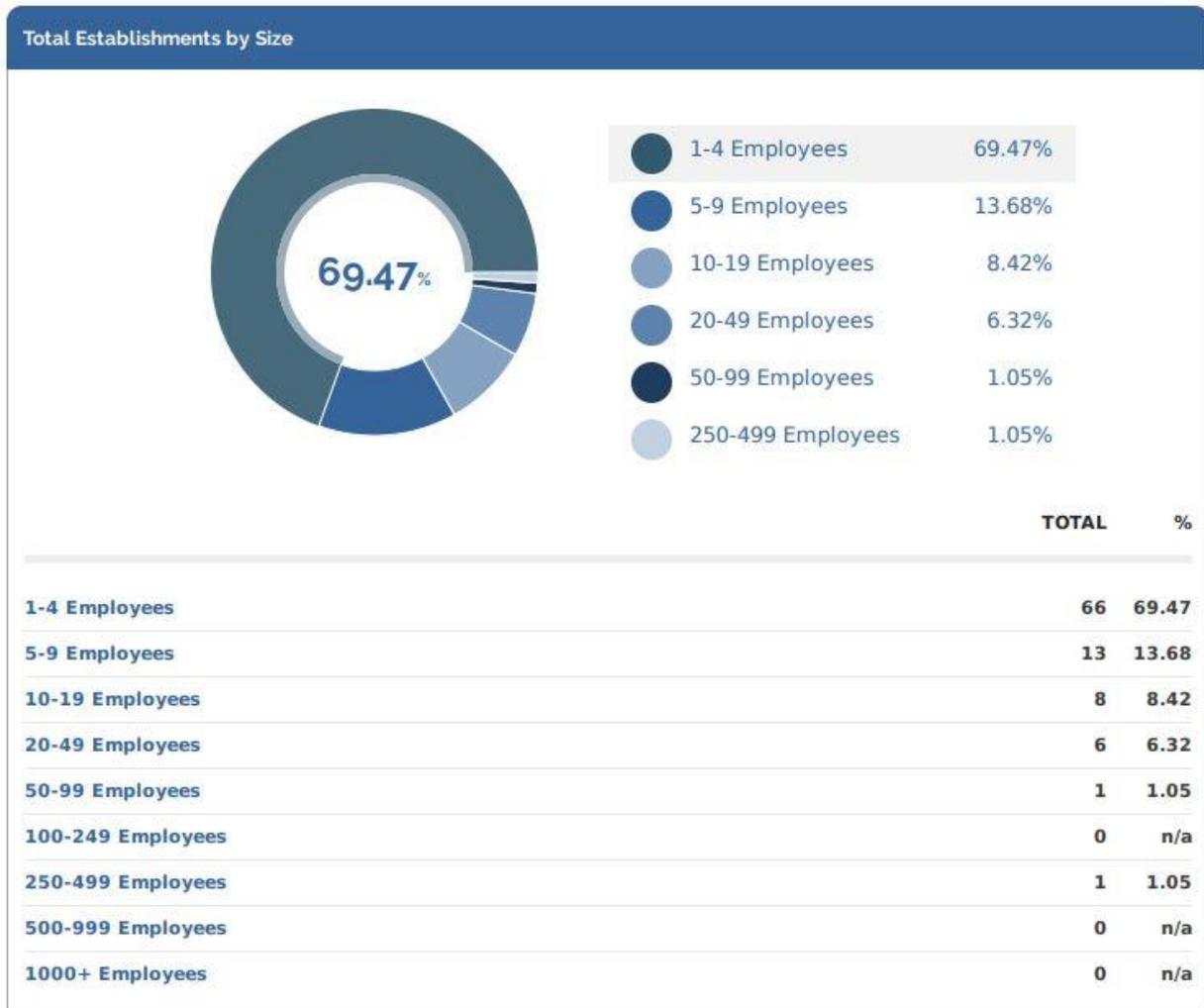
Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Employment Opportunities in the Town of Wheaton

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation estimates that there are ninety-five businesses in the Town of Wheaton that provide employment opportunities for residents. About 70 percent of these businesses have 1 to 4 employees (see Table 2-13) and about 17% have 5-9 employees (see Table 2-13).

Table 2-13: EMPLOYEES – Town of Wheaton



Survey Results

To gather input from residents to help update the Town's Comprehensive Plan, the Town contracted with the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls to create and mail surveys to all 1,145 Town of Wheaton households and non-resident property owners for which mailing addresses were available. The initial mailing contained a cover letter describing the purpose of the survey, a questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope.

The target response for accuracy of estimates to within +/-5% with 95 percent confidence for the Town of Wheaton population was 288 surveys or a 25% response rate. **Out of 1,145 surveys distributed, the SRC received 590 completed surveys.** Sixteen survey packets being returned as non-deliverable. The response rate was 52%.

With 590 completed surveys, the results provided in the full report found in the Appendix are expected to be accurate to within plus/minus 2.8 percent with 95 percent confidence.

The questionnaire contained nine topical sections related to the update of the Town's comprehensive plan: quality of life, community facilities and services, recreation, natural and cultural resources, housing, transportation, agriculture and land use, economic development, and communication.

The following are key observations from the survey results:

Quality of Life

- The top four reasons Town of Wheaton respondents give for choosing to live in the Town are rural character, home lot size, natural beauty, and to be near family/friends.

Community Facilities and Services

- All community services and facilities listed on the survey are rated highly (good or excellent) by a majority of respondents (fire protection, recycling programs, law enforcement services, signage, ambulance service, cemetery services, and storm water management).

Recreation

- Substantial percentages of survey respondents have no opinion about the recreational facilities and trails asked about in the survey. Of those with an opinion, snowmobile trails received the highest rating. A strong majority would not be willing to pay more taxes to fund park and recreational opportunities and facilities.

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Most Wheaton respondents place a very high level of importance on the protection and preservation of the natural and cultural resource base of the Town. Groundwater, rivers and streams, air quality, and forested lands are supported particularly strongly (99% rated these resources as essential, very important, or important).



Housing

- When asked what types of housing are needed in the Town, a strong majority say there is a need for more single family housing. Respondents support the use of cluster design for the layout of rural housing lots. At the same time, written comments revealed a pattern of concern that the rural atmosphere of the Town will be lost due to residential development.

Transportation

- Wheaton respondents are largely satisfied with the condition of its roads. Although more than one-half strongly agree or agree that walking and biking are important modes of transportation, they are less enthusiastic about the need for more walking/biking trails along public roadways in the Town. Respondents are generally satisfied with overall road conditions and snow removal in the Town, and they are less willing to pay more taxes for snow removal or road maintenance in the Town.

Agriculture and Land Use

- Wheaton respondents almost unanimously agree that agricultural land should be used for agricultural purposes. However, they disagree that large-scale farms (500+ animals) should be allowed to expand. Nearly all respondents agree or strongly agree that driveways should be required to meet emergency service standards. Most respondents also feel that it is important to consider visual impacts when evaluating development proposals. A majority (91%) of Wheaton respondents feel there should be a minimum lot size for rural residential development. Sixty-eight percent (68%) believe that it should be the current 5-acre minimum and 23% believe it should be less than five acres.

Economic Development

- Agricultural related businesses received the highest level of support as an appropriate type of business in the Town, although smaller majorities find numerous other types of businesses to be appropriate as well. A majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that the Town should work to coordinate efforts to actively recruit new business and industry. Respondents indicate that they are in favor of wind and solar energy as forms of economic development. They are not as supportive of using ethanol for this purpose.

Communication

- The most effective methods of receiving information from the Town regarding comprehensive planning for this group of respondents are direct mailings and newsletters.



Summary

The Town of Wheaton's population is forecasted to continue to grow and this growth will influence how land is used, the need for expanded services and the need for more public infrastructure to serve residents.

Wheaton's proximity to larger urban areas makes it an attractive place to live. Residents enjoy the rural character and can commute a short distance to a variety of employment opportunities, many which pay good salaries.

The median age of residents is rising. This can present challenges to provide housing, recreational opportunities and transportation options that allow older residents to stay in Wheaton if they choose.

The rural character of the Town is a draw for many residents who also feel strongly about the protection of its natural resources such as streams, air quality and forested lands. Residents also feel strongly about the preservation of agricultural land for agricultural purposes.

More detailed information can be found in the individual chapters that will explore ways to meet the goals of the Comprehensive Plan as they are identified.

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