

## Chapter 2 - Housing

According to Wisconsin State Statutes 66.1001, the Housing element of a town's comprehensive plan is to be "a compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps, and programs... to provide an adequate housing supply that meets existing and forecasted housing demand in the (town). Working very much in concert with the other elements, the housing element specifically addresses the assessment of "age, structural, value and occupancy characteristics" of the town's housing stock. Additionally, the housing element is to "identify specific policies and programs that promote the development of housing for residents" of the town... "provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels and of all age groups and persons with special needs, (and identify) policies and programs that promote the availability of land for the development or redevelopment of low-income and moderate-income housing, and policies and programs to maintain or rehabilitate" the town's existing housing stock.

### 2.1 Introduction

#### Overview

Housing a growing and ever-changing population presents both challenges and opportunities to the Town of La Prairie. As presented in the Issues and Opportunities element of this plan, the Town of La Prairie's population has stabilized and may in fact decline during the next 30 years. However, as "baby-boomers" approach retirement age, and the population becomes more diverse, more housing variety will be needed. Providing a range of housing choices for all citizens is very important in order to keep the town growing and vibrant.

A primary focus of the Housing element is to provide Town of La Prairie residents of all social and economic character with affordable and varied housing options. This chapter will investigate both the existing housing market and some options for the future development of housing in the town. The goals and objectives of the housing element reflect key concerns addressed by residents of the Town of La Prairie throughout the public participation process.

#### Goals and Objectives

##### **Housing Goal #1:**

To provide for planned and orderly development and redevelopment of residential areas in such a way that adverse environmental impacts are minimized, public services are efficiently provided and all means of transportation are accommodated.

##### **Objectives:**

- Direct new housing development (or subdivisions) to areas with substantial amounts of existing residential development.
- Consider strategies for new residential development to minimize fragmentation of farmland and reduce the potential for farm vs. non-farm conflict.
- Stabilize the physical condition of older neighborhoods by creating and enforcing property maintenance codes, developing funding programs, and applying for grants that are geared toward housing rehabilitation and maintenance, and buffering residential areas from incompatible land uses.
- Identify the most suitable areas for new dwelling units on the Future Land Use Plan and guide new residential development into those areas.
- Promote the development and implementation of residential design and building maintenance standards to ensure quality and energy-efficient housing.

**Housing Goal #2:**

To develop residential areas that provides a variety of quality housing opportunities for all segments of the Town of La Prairie’s population; including senior citizens, low-income, and disabled residents.

**Objectives:**

- Promote cooperation among agencies, both public and private, that provide affordable housing.
- Ensure that specialized residential facilities (e.g. elderly housing, CBRFs) are adequately served with transit service, pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, recreational facilities, and convenient, nearby shopping, service and entertainment areas.
- Ensure that local zoning regulations provide for a variety of housing options.

**2.2 Town of La Prairie’s Housing Framework**

As the housing element will reveal, the Town of La Prairie has limited residential subdivision development hence also has a limited range of housing options. Residential subdivisions that have been developed in Rock County since the 1950s tend to be uniform and consist almost exclusively of single-family homes, a trend that has been followed in La Prairie. Typically, these subdivisions are separated from other uses (commercial, institutional, recreational, etc.) and housing types. This results in clusters of single-use developments, thus creating an environment where nearly every trip out of one’s home must be by vehicle. In order to create an environment where walking and bicycling are viable transportation options, a mixing of land uses, including a variety of housing types, should be integrated into new developments and included in redevelopment efforts, as well.

Providing a wide range of housing choices is necessary for the community to maintain a stable housing stock and population base. Therefore, it is wise for the town of La Prairie to provide for as wide a selection of housing choices as utilities and other services can accommodate. It is vital to understand that a person’s housing preference changes over time. The housing element now turns towards an examination of the many characteristics of La Prairie’s existing housing stock.

**Housing Type and Occupancy Characteristics**

There were 362 housing units in the Town of La Prairie as of the 2000 Census. As shown in Table 2-1 on the next page, the town’s 2000 housing stock consisted of a considerable amount of single-family homes (over 91 percent). This proportion of single-family homes is a decrease over the 1990 figure for the town (95.4 percent) but is significantly higher than the year 2000 county (almost 76 percent) and statewide (about 69 percent) figures. Accordingly, the town has far fewer multi-family homes than either the county or state averages, but actually ranks near the middle amongst Rock County towns.

The pace of housing development remained slow in the first five years of the 2000s. Between 2000 and June of 2006, 15 building permits were issued within La Prairie Township, introducing an average of 2 units per year to the town’s housing stock. This trend was a continuation of the 90’s, when 22 housing units (2 per year) were constructed. It should be noted that the Town instituted a moratorium on new housing construction during 2003-04.

**Table 2-1: Housing Types, 2000**

Units in Structure	La Prairie	Percentage	Rock County	Percentage	Wisconsin	Percentage
1-Unit Detached	330	91.2%	45,150	72.6%	1,531,612	66.0%
1-Unit Attached	2	0.6%	1,960	3.2%	77,795	3.4%
2 Units	6	1.7%	4,799	7.7%	190,889	8.2%
3 or 4 Units	14	3.9%	1,745	2.8%	91,047	3.9%
5 to 9 Units	3	0.8%	2,589	4.2%	106,680	4.6%
10 to 19 Units	0	0.0%	1,197	1.9%	75,456	3.3%
20 or More Units	0	0.0%	2,758	4.4%	143,497	6.2%
Mobile Home	7	1.9%	1,958	3.1%	101,465	4.4%
Boat, RV, van, etc	0	0.0%	31	< 0.1%	2,703	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>62,187</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,321,144</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (sample data), 2000.

Table 2-2 provides a comprehensive examination of trends in housing occupancy in the Town of La Prairie since 1980. These data are telling, as they illustrate the decline in housing units in the town during the 1980’s and a somewhat significant shift back to a positive increase in the Town’s housing stock. It is significant to note that the zero vacancy rate for the owner occupied housing units. A certain amount of vacancy is necessary for a healthy housing market. According to HUD, an overall vacancy rate of around 3% allows consumers adequate choice and mobility, with owner-occupied rates around 1.5% and renter-occupied rates around 5% considered acceptable. As table 2-2 indicates, the town’s total vacancy rate in 2000 was right at the HUD-prescribed rate. The overall vacancy rate is right on target with the HUD recommendations. Overall, these data show that the town is maintaining a healthy amount of available housing options for those who wish to rent but could use greater options for those who wish to own. Please note the difference in housing units between the two tables. Table 2-1 depicts sample coverage while Table 2-2 is 100% coverage.

**Table 2-2 : Occupancy Statistics, 1980 - 2000**

	1980	1990	2000	Change	
				Number	Percent
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	341	325	352	11	3.1%
<b>Vacancy Rate</b>	5.0%	2.1%	2.8%	-2.2%	
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	256	225	263	7	2.6%
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	85	92	79	-6	-7.7%
<b>Vacancy Rate (Homeowner)</b>	0%	0%	0%	0.0%	
<b>Vacancy Rate (Rental)</b>	5.0%	2.1%	2.8%	-2.2%	
<b>Seasonal Units</b>	0	0	0	0	

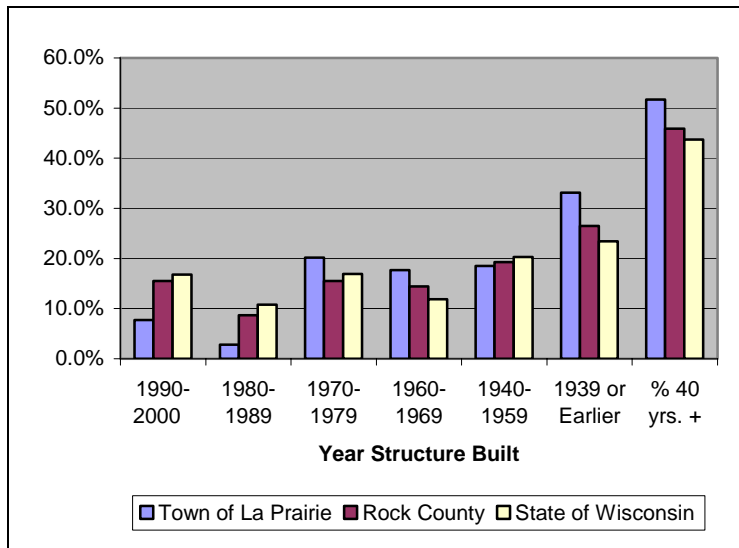
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 - 2000.

**Housing Age and Structural Characteristics**

The overall condition of housing in the Town of La Prairie can generally be assessed through census data, including general characteristics of structural age, presence of complete plumbing facilities, and overcrowding. In 2000, only 0.8 percent of the town’s housing units (3 total) lacked hot and cold water, a flush toilet, or a bathtub or shower – indicating that the lack of plumbing facilities is not an overriding concern in the Town of La Prairie. Also in 2000, only around 1.1 percent (4 units) of the town’s housing units were considered “overcrowded,” a term used when a housing unit has more than one person per room. This figure indicates that crowding is not a principal concern in regards to the condition of housing in La Prairie.

Figure 2-1 illustrates the age of the town’s housing stock, compared to the county and state totals, based on the 2000 census. As is evident from this figure, a much higher percentage of Town of La Prairie homes were built before 1970 than in Rock County and Wisconsin as a whole, with only 30.7 per cent of the units constructed since 1970. Although a good portion of homes in the town were constructed within forty years of the last census, it is worthy of note that homes of 1940s and 1950s vintage also account for a significant proportion of the town’s housing stock.

**Figure 2-1 : Age of Housing as a Percent of 2000 Housing Stock, Town of La Prairie Comparison**



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

All told, almost fifty-two percent of the homes in the town were over forty years old in 2000, and will likely show signs of wear over the planning period. This could potentially increase the necessity for and interest in housing rehabilitation resources, new home construction, or historic preservation and restoration. In general, the Town of La Prairie has a relatively old housing stock, and the first half-decade of the twenty-first century was marked with additional new housing development, almost entirely of the single-family detached, owner-occupied variety.

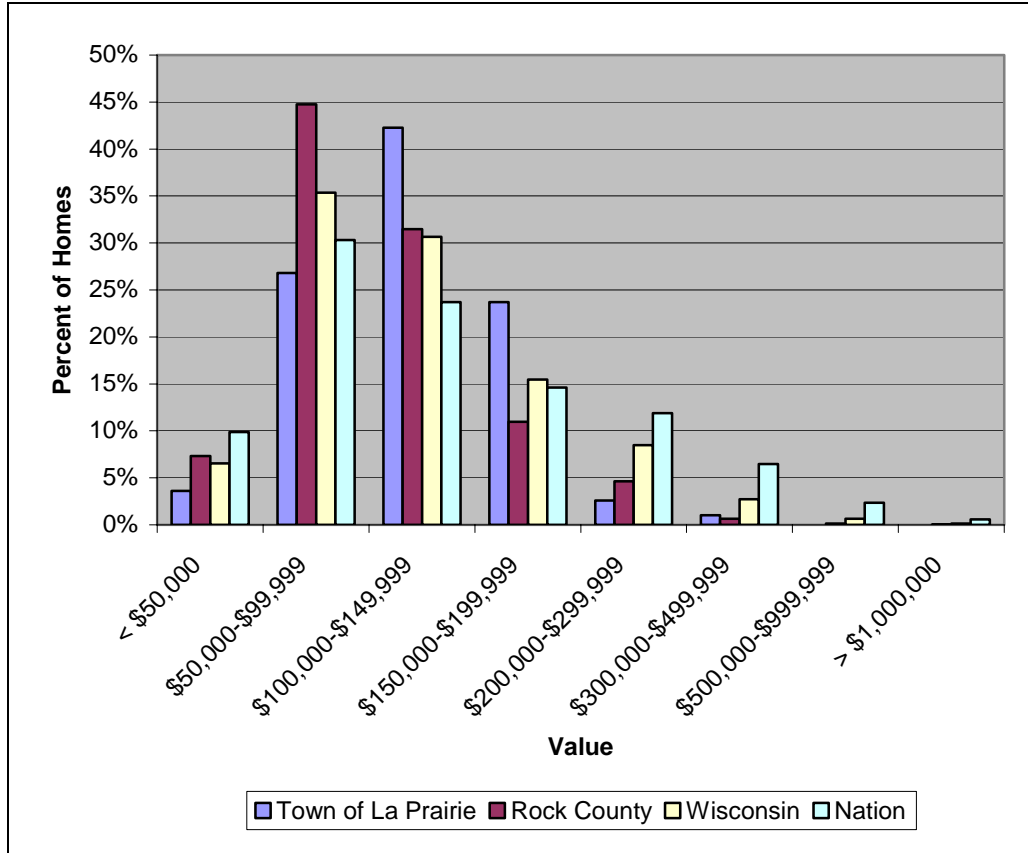
In essence, these trends polarize both homes and residents in the town, leading to homogeneous land use and development patterns. The objectives stated earlier in the Housing element are a strong starting point for the improvement and sustainability of the distinct character of the town’s housing stock. These objectives also serve as the basis for the recommendations and

policies presented later in this chapter. First, though, the Housing element addresses the value characteristics of the Town of La Prairie’s existing housing stock.

**Value Characteristics**

According to the 2000 census, the largest percentage of homes in the town ranged in value from \$100,000 to \$149,999. Figure 2-2, below, displays the range of home values in the Town of La Prairie, Rock County, Wisconsin, and the nation as reported by the 2000 census.

**Figure 2-2 : Range of Home Values, 2000**



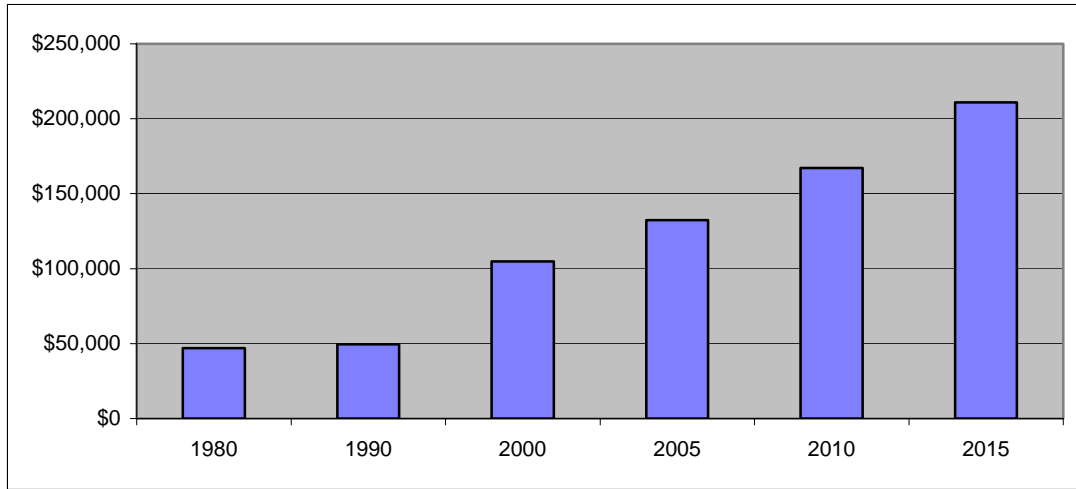
Source: United States Bureau of the Census, 2000.

As figure 2-2 indicates, over half of the Town of La Prairie’s homes were valued between \$100,000 and \$199,999. The town’s median home value in 2000 was \$124,400, measurably higher than the state (\$112,200) figure and considerably higher than the county (\$98,200) figure. Furthermore, only about 30% of the Town of La Prairie’s homes were valued below \$100,000 in 2000. As is clearly evident in figure 2-2, this lower value range is much more prominent in Rock County as a whole and the State. Consequently, for each value range of \$150,000-199,999 and lower, the town had a less percentage of homes than did the county, and the state. The discrepancies between the town and county are likely attributable to numerous factors, among them the general age of the town’s housing stock, local tastes and preferences, and factors of income and economics.

On the next page, the discussion of the Town of La Prairie’s housing framework concludes with forecasted future housing values, through 2015, based upon the trends that have been observed and illustrated in the housing element. These data, depicted in figure 2-3, were compiled by the

Rock County Planning Agency and are based upon Wisconsin Department of Revenue’s annual statements of equalized values and assessments for Rock County municipalities since 1980. As with all projections, those provided here should be used carefully and updated as more current data become available.

**Figure 2-3 : Average Residential Value, Town of La Prairie, 1980 - 2015**



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Bureau of Equalization – *Statement of Assessments and Equalized Values, 1980 - 2005*. Rock County Planning Agency Projections, 2006.

Figure 2-3 indicates the significant rise in residential property values expected through 2015. When analyzing these data, it must be noted that “residential property values” refers to **all** residential property in the town, including multi-family units, vacant residential land, and homes without mortgages. Furthermore, these projections were prepared under the assumption that the most recent trends in value change would continue through 2015. As evidenced by this table, residential property values will continue to climb in the town, making homeownership a progressively more financially daunting goal. The inflation rate was taken into consideration when calculating Table 2-3.

### 2.3 Housing Needs Analysis

The Housing element now shifts from an analysis of the housing supply towards an analysis of housing demand in the Town of La Prairie. A cornerstone of this analysis is an investigation of the affordability of housing in the town. In addition to that, the Housing element uses projections of total units and housing variety to determine future housing demand. The existing housing framework provides an overall picture of the housing market in the Town of La Prairie. By observing conditions and trends in the town, efforts of the planning team can more effectively assess the housing needs of current and future La Prairie Town citizens.

#### Overall Housing Need

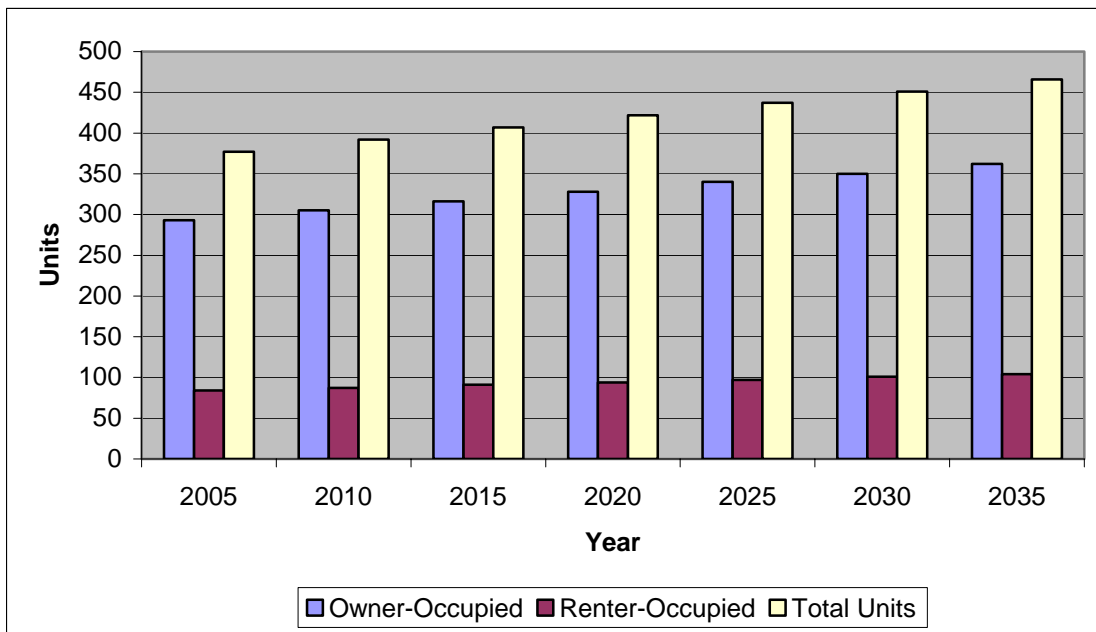
In 2000, there was an adequate supply of vacant housing overall (table 2-2, page 21). In the first half of the decade since then, an economic slowdown and dramatic drop in interest rates have actually caused the demand for rental units to decline, bringing the rental vacancy rate (throughout all of Rock County) to about 8 percent, according to a 2004 study by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The demand for owner-

occupied housing, according to the study, has shown very little change over the same time period.

The Issues and Opportunities element of the plan contains household forecasts, which were used to project housing demand in the town through 2035. In addition, these projections are developed assuming that vacancy rates will remain consistent through the projected planning period. Figure 2-4, below, provides housing unit projections for the town through 2035. The Housing element builds upon these forecasts by identifying existing and projected trends and characteristics of the housing stock, providing recommendations on how to foster a stable housing market, and illustrating how to provide for the development of new and innovative housing practices.

It is difficult to predict with certainty how occupancy trends will progress in the future. It would appear, however, that owner-occupancy in the Town of La Prairie (and most of unincorporated Rock County, for that matter) has reached a near maximum, while a more constant and diverse distribution of occupancy choices still exist in the cities and villages. Figure 2-4, below, illustrates the distribution of both renter- and owner-occupied housing in the town, as projected under the assumption that the occupancy trends existing at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will continue through the planning period.

**Figure 2-4: Projected Housing Units, 2005 - 2035**



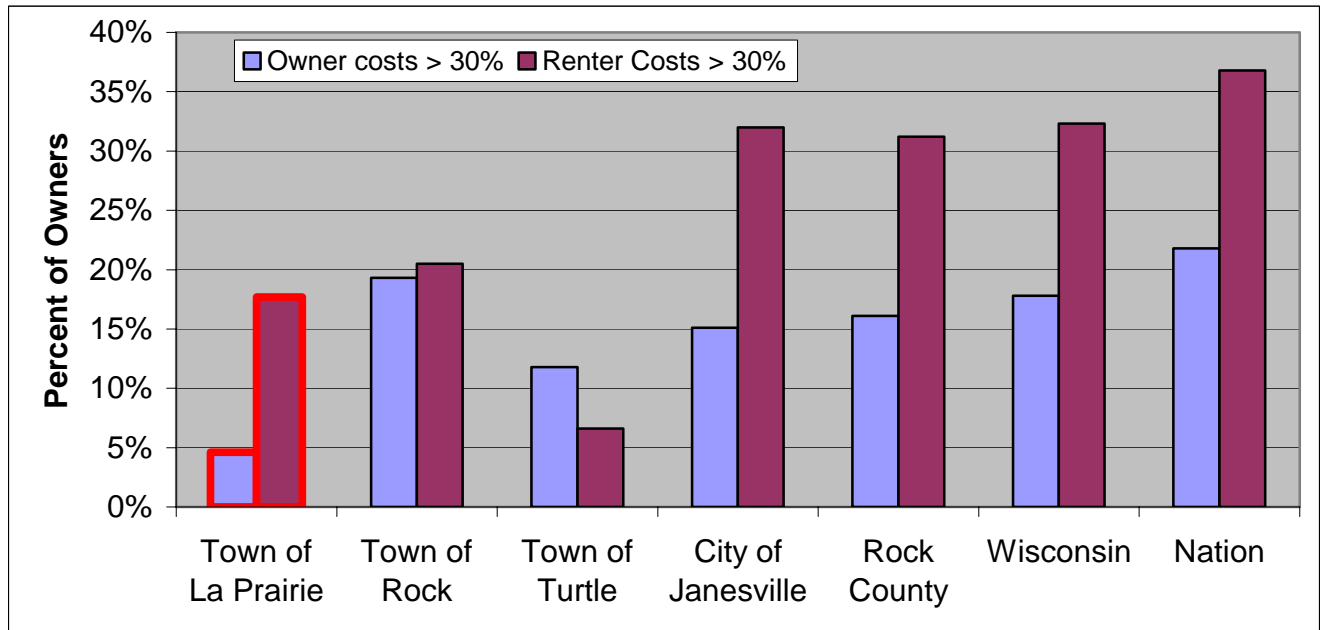
Source: Rock County Planning and Development Agency Projections, 2006.

While this methodology allows the town to look forward several years into the future, it is imperative that these trends are investigated frequently. Periodic update and revision will allow the town to recognize whether there exists a need for additional housing of varying occupancy types. There are a number of factors that will no doubt shape the occupancy patterns of future residents, but this simple analysis provides one example of a characteristic to be accounted for and planned for by these, and future, planning efforts.

**Housing Affordability**

One of the most effective methods of gauging housing affordability is by measuring the proportion of household income spent for rent or homeownership costs. The national standard, established by HUD, for determining whether rent or home ownership costs comprise a disproportionate share of income is set at thirty percent of gross household income. Households spending more than thirty percent of their income for housing are at a higher risk of losing their housing should they be confronted with unemployment, unexpected bills, or other unexpected events. In 1999 (as measured by the 2000 census), the percentage of homeowners paying thirty percent or more of their income for housing was 5%. This figure compares very favorably among the town’s neighbors, the county, the state, and the nation (figure 2-5, below), exhibiting the lowest proportion of homeowners exceeding this thirty percent threshold. The situation for renters in the Town of La Prairie is also favorable, although a slightly higher percentage of renters (about 20%) pay over 30% of their income for housing than do homeowners.

**Figure 2-5 : Housing Affordability, 1999**



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

**Housing Affordability in the Near Future**

The census data provided above reveal that a relatively low percentage of town residents, at the time of the 2000 census, were overly “burdened” by housing costs, when using the HUD prescribed 30 percent rule as a measuring stick. In the short time since that census, a number of trends have emerged, which, along with the projections provided through various sources, indicate that housing affordability may become a more serious issue soon. Table 2-3 is a deeper analysis of housing affordability for **all Rock County** residents through the year 2015. This analysis uses detailed employment forecasts to determine future housing demand and affordability. Recalling Figure 2-3 (page 24), the data provided in Table 2-3 clearly indicate that the rising costs of homeownership might very well outpace and out-price many of the people working in and looking for homes in Rock County. Table 2-3 forecasts the maximum amount



that persons in certain occupations could afford to pay for rent (using the HUD 30% rule) or mortgage (also using HUD’s rule, but with a slightly more complex calculation accounting for other homeowner costs.) The assumptions made in the affordable mortgage forecast are listed at the foot of the table.

**Table 2-3 : Affordable Housing Costs, 2002 – 2012**

Occupation	Average Annual Job Openings: 2002-2012	Average Annual Wage	Max Monthly Mortgage Payment (HUD)	Max. Monthly Rent Payment (HUD)
Cashiers	190	\$16,642	\$254.17	\$416.05
Retail Salespersons	180	\$22,097	\$337.48	\$552.43
Waiters/Waitresses	140	\$14,336	\$218.95	\$358.40
Comb. Food Prep/Serv Wk/Ind Fast	120	\$14,518	\$221.73	\$362.95
Registered Nurses	100	\$49,535	\$756.53	\$1,238.38
Truck Drivers/Light or Delivery Svcs	90	\$34,619	\$528.73	\$865.48
Laborers/Freight/Stock/Material Movers/Handlers	90	\$23,199	\$354.31	\$579.98
Sales Reps/Wkls/Mfg/Exc. Tech/Sci Products	80	\$38,656	\$590.38	\$966.40
Team Assemblers	70	\$26,397	\$403.15	\$659.93
Janitors/Cleaners Exc. Maids/Hskpng	70	\$20,749	\$316.89	\$518.73
Nursing Aides/Orderlies/Attendants	60	\$20,054	\$306.28	\$501.35
Office Clerks/General	60	\$22,045	\$336.69	\$551.13
Customer Service Reps	60	\$29,556	\$451.40	\$738.90
Packagers/Packers/Handlers	60	\$21,520	\$328.67	\$538.00
Stock Clerks/Order Filers	60	\$20,579	\$314.30	\$514.48
Receptionists/Info Clerks	50	\$20,322	\$310.37	\$508.05
Bartenders	50	\$15,702	\$239.81	\$392.55
Bookkeepers/Account/Auditing Clerks	40	\$25,616	\$391.23	\$640.40
Elementary School Teachers Exc. Special/Voc. Ed	40	\$35,959	\$549.19	\$898.98
General and Operations Mgrs.	40	\$71,795	\$1,096.50	\$1,794.88
Maint/Repair Wkrs/General	40	\$30,948	\$472.66	\$773.70
Teacher Assts	40	\$19,265	\$294.23	\$481.63
Secondary Schl Tchrs Exc. Special/Voc. Ed	40	\$38,378	\$586.14	\$959.45
Personal and Home Care Aides	40	\$17,849	\$272.60	\$446.23
Home Health Aides	40	\$18,876	\$288.29	\$471.90
Tellers	40	\$19,778	\$302.06	\$494.45
<b>Total Jobs (Annual) in Top 25</b>	<b>1,890</b>	<b>\$26,500</b>	<b>\$404.72</b>	<b>\$662.49</b>
↓ Average Maximum Mortgaged Value of House :			↓ \$62,903 (10% down & 7.0% interest, 30 yr. Loan)	

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, *Wisconsin Projections 2002 – 2012: Employment in Industries and Occupations*, 2004, Rock County Planning & Development Agency, 2006.

## 2.4 Housing Programs

The housing element has shown that as the Town of La Prairie’s population continues to grow, age, and diversify, the need for a wide range of affordable and equitable housing options will persist, if not increase. A number of programs exist to provide the Town of La Prairie and its residents with housing opportunities that many not have otherwise been possible. Although the

list of programs presented in this section of the Housing element is not necessarily exhaustive, it is important for the town to review and implement, when appropriate, these programs when exploring a variety of housing options. There are several state and federal housing programs in place to assist private and non-profit developers in providing (and rehabilitating) affordable, elderly, and assisted housing in the town. These programs are summarized below, and a detailed list of housing programs can be found in the Housing element of the Rock County Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan.

The Town of La Prairie, through the Housing & Community Development arm of the Rock County Planning and Development Agency, may utilize a number of the programs detailed in the county plan. Among these, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program allows the town to receive CDBG funds on an annual basis for housing, economic development, and community service initiatives that benefit low to moderate income residents. Over \$500,000 annually in CDBG funds is available for eligible projects in participating communities. Eligible projects related to housing include rehabilitation, minor home repair, handicapped accessibility modifications, down-payment assistance for first-time homebuyers; and housing education, training, and counseling.

Other housing programs available to Town of La Prairie residents include home mortgage and improvement loans from WHEDA and grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development. The Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds down-payment assistance for homebuyers, rental rehabilitation, weatherization-related repairs, accessibility improvements, and rental housing development. The Housing Cost Reduction Initiative (HCRI) funds activities such as emergency rental aid, homeless prevention efforts, and related housing initiatives. Further information on these programs can be obtained by contacting WHEDA.

## 2.5 Housing Policies

The town's policies should be used as rules or courses of action to be followed in order to assure town citizens that the plan is implemented. The policies outlined in the housing element of the Town of La Prairie Comprehensive Plan, like the policies of the other elements, are meant to accomplish the goals and objectives of the plan. These policies should be used by town decision-makers on a day-to-day basis. As examples, the town should apply these policies when:

- Considering proposals to rezone property, review site plans, or issue conditional use permits.
- Revising and/or creating housing-related ordinances and documents such as the zoning or subdivision ordinances.
- Communicating with the private sector so that the town's expectations are known in terms of the location, timing, and quality of residential development.

The Town of La Prairie's housing element proposed to guide future housing development according to the following policies:

- The town will plan for a sufficient supply of developable land for housing in areas consistent with town wishes at a logical, controlled pace consistent with recent development trends, and of densities and types consistent with the town's predominantly rural setting.
- The Town of La Prairie should coordinate with Rock County in seeking Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to provide, maintain, and rehabilitate housing for all income and age levels.

- The town should promote principles of conservation neighborhood design in laying out new development, where allowed by the adopted Town Plan and Zoning Ordinance.
- When possible, easements for walking and biking trails should be secured to link new housing to open space or park developments.
- The Town of La Prairie shall encourage housing opportunities provided through infill development.
- The Town of La Prairie will strive to maintain the rural character of the town by continuing to enforce the Town Plan and Ordinances and continuing to cooperate with its neighboring governments.
- The Town of La Prairie will continue to cooperate with local individuals/corporations concerning speciality agriculture.