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# 3.0 COMMUNITY PROFILE

## Demographic Profile

The planning process for the Town of Empire begins with a profile of the people who live, work and own property in the community. Specifically, this chapter examines the size, composition and trends of the population. This information is critical to forecasting the need for development and community facilities and services, since it is people who will demand better schools, roads, parks, jobs and other public services.

### POPULATION TRENDS & PROJECTIONS

The Town of Empire has experienced population gains over the last two decades as demonstrated in Table 1. Empire’s growth has been significantly higher than some of the other towns adjacent to the City of Fond du Lac including the Towns of Eden and Fond du Lac (which have been affected by annexation), as well as the Town of Forest to the east of Empire. The Town of Empire’s growth has remained just behind that of Taycheedah. Overall, Empire’s 2000 population represents roughly 2.8% of the Fond du Lac County population. This background information provides the context and population growth environment in which Empire finds itself.

Some members of the community will view additional residential and economic growth in the community as necessary and beneficial, while others may see them as threats to the small town character of Empire. Finding a balance between the “preservationists” and “pro-growth” advocates is but one reason for development of this Comprehensive Plan.

**How Much Growth Is  
Too Much Growth?**

The population of the Town of Empire has grown by nearly 14 percent since the 1980 census. Its population is expected to grow to over 3,000 persons by 2025.

The primary purpose of this plan is to provide a vision for the future of Empire and a strategy to effectively prepare for residential and commercial development pressures the community will experience through 2025.

<b>TABLE 1 HISTORIC POPULATION TRENDS</b>						
Location	1980	1990	2000	2005 Estimate	Actual Chg 1980-2000	□ Change 1980-2000
<b>Town of Empire</b>	2,359	2,485	2,620	2,755	261	11.1%
<b>Town of Eden</b>	1,130	1,037	979	994	-151	-13.3%
<b>Town of Fond du Lac</b>	3,001	2,310	2,027	2,401	-974	-32.4%
<b>Town of Forest</b>	1,098	1,094	1,108	1,132	10	0.9%
<b>Town of Taycheedah</b>	3,227	3,383	3,666	3,886	439	13.6%
<b>Empire’s Share of County Population</b>	2.65%	2.75%	2.69%	2.75%	NA	NA
<b>City of Fond du Lac</b>	35,863	37,755	42,203	43,101	6,340	17.6%
<b>Fond du Lac County</b>	88,964	90,083	97,296	100,180	8,332	9.4%

SOURCE: WI Dept. Administration, Demographic Service Center for Estimate. 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census

Table 2 projects the population of Empire through 2025 based on projection data available from the East Central Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission and the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Comparisons to surrounding communities are provided for additional understanding of regional growth. Based on the information provided in Table 2, the Town population is expected to steadily increase over the next 20 years, but at a rate slower than the adjacent Town of Fond du Lac.

TABLE 2 POPULATION PROJECTIONS, 2005-2025*							
Location	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	# Change, 2005-2025	% Change, 2005-2025
Town of Empire	2,715	2,818	2,918	3,019	3,158	393	14.2%
Town of Eden	964	950	934	919	900	-64	-6.64%
Town of Fond du Lac	2,337	2,457	2,578	2,700	2,813	476	20.4%
Town of Forest	1,128	1,148	1,166	1,184	1,198	70	6.21%
Town of Taycheedah	3,850	3,988	4,122	4,257	4,375	525	13.6%
City of Fond du Lac	43,273	44,619	45,918	47,210	48,306	5,033	11.6%

SOURCE: East Central Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission, Fond du Lac Metropolitan Planning Organization Land Use and Transportation Plan, September 2005. Town of Eden and Town of Forest Figures from Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2005.

In the community survey, two questions (questions #4 and #5) were included about future growth. The results reveal that residents would like to see growth continue at the same rate in the future as it did between 1994 and 2005 (12% or 1.1% per year). Furthermore, the results reveal that in the next 10 years, resident would like to see the Town’s population become somewhat larger (55%) or remain about the same as it was estimated in 2005 (33.5%).

### POPULATION DENSITY

The Town of Empire covers approximately 36 square miles. The population per square mile is 76.5 persons. As people continue to move into the Town, additional areas will be developed for residential and commercial uses. It is anticipated that new residential development will include primarily single-family homes.

### POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Population figures and growth rates do not provide any insight about the characteristics of the population. To learn more about the people of the Empire, information about the race, sex, and age of the population must be examined.

In 2000, there were **1,326 males and 1,294 females living in the Town of Empire**. This is nearly a 50-50 split. Most all (98.1%) of the residents reported their race as white in the 2000 U.S. Census. This information is consistent with the data from the 1990 census.

The **median age of a Town of Empire resident in 2000 was 40.1**. This is slightly higher than the median ages reported for Fond du Lac County (36.9), the State of Wisconsin (36.0), City of Fond du Lac (35.7), and residents in the surrounding Towns of Eden (37.8) and Forest (37.3). Only the neighboring Town of Fond du Lac (41.6) had a higher median age. The Town of Taycheedah median age was equal to that of Empire (40.1).

TABLE 3 TOWN OF EMPIRE AGE DISTRIBUTION			
Age	Year 1990	Year 2000	Percent Change
Under 5	187	122	-34.8%
5-9	208	225	8.2%
10-14	206	243	18.0%
15-19	185	227	22.7%
20-24	101	81	-19.8%
25-34	326	200	-38.7%
35-44	423	502	18.7%
45-54	328	467	42.4%
55-64	241	289	19.9%
65-74	134	169	26.1%
75-84	94	81	-13.8%
85 and over	52	14	-73.1%

SOURCE: 1990 & 2000 U.S. Census

Table 3 looks more closely at the age distribution of Town residents between 1990 and 2000. The greatest increase in the Town was residents between the ages of 45 and 54. Over the next 20 years this age group will reach retirement. Accordingly, consideration of the needs of this population is an important aspect of this plan.

The most significant losses by age group were in children under the age of five, young adults of childbearing age (20-34) and those over age 75. The reduction in the number of adults of childbearing age is particularly concerning as it may have a long-term impact on school enrollment levels. However, it is important to point out that there was an increase in residents between the ages of 10-19, which over the next 20-years may help to offset the population losses of adults between the ages of 20-34 experienced since 1990.

With respect to the significant reduction of adults over the age of 75 living in the Town, the vast decrease suggests something more than normal mortality rates for this age group. Rather, this drop-off indicates residents are moving out of the Town as they age.

### GENERAL HOUSEHOLD TRENDS

A “household” can be basically described as a group of people living together in a single dwelling unit. This could include a family, a single person, or a group of unrelated individuals sharing a house or an apartment, but excluding those persons living in group quarters.

National and state trends have all moved towards an increase in the number of households, along with a decrease in the average number of persons per household. The main reasons for this decrease in household size include:

- A decrease in birth rate;
- People waiting longer to get married;
- An increased divorce rate; and
- An increase in the average life span thereby resulting in more elderly people living either alone or with another family member.

The Town of Empire has not escaped from this trend. The number of persons per household in Empire is decreasing (see Table 4). This is significant since a decreased household size means that more housing units will be needed to support the population – even if the overall population remains the same. Specifically, the Town has experienced an increase of 160 households since 1990. However, during this same period the number of persons per housing unit has decreased. In 1990, there were 3.29 persons per household in the Town of Empire, compared to 2.88 persons per household in 2000. Fond du Lac County also experienced an increase in the number of households between 1990 and 2000 and a decrease in the

number of persons per household. Projections done by the Wisconsin Department of Administration show this trend continuing through 2025.

TABLE 4 HOUSEHOLD PROJECTIONS, 2005-2025						
Location	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
<b>Total Number of Households</b>						
Town of Empire	910	953 *	998	1,036	1,071	1,100
Town of Eden	337	339	341	340	338	333
Town of Fond du Lac	789	820	861	896	928	956
Town of Forest	397	413	429	442	452	461
Town of Taycheedah	1,319	1,428	1,543	1,644	1,744	1,834
<b>Persons Per Household</b>						
Town of Empire	2.88	2.82 **	2.76	2.73	2.70	2.68
Town of Eden	2.90	2.84	2.79	2.75	2.72	2.70
Town of Fond du Lac	2.57	2.52	2.47	2.43	2.41	2.39
Town of Forest	2.79	2.73	2.68	2.63	2.62	2.60
Town of Taycheedah	2.78	2.72	2.67	2.63	2.61	2.58

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. Census and Demographic Service Center, Wisconsin Dept. of Administration

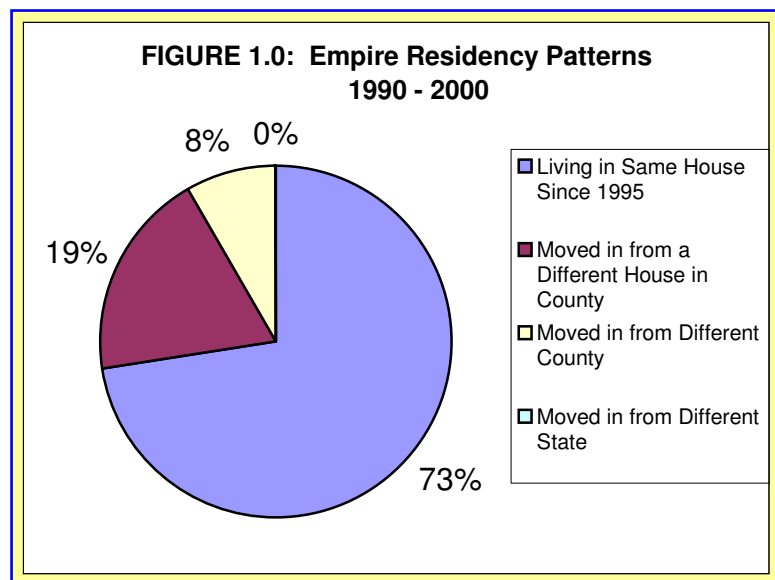
\* The official 2005 Town of Empire Household Mailing List includes 1,050 addresses. This figure represents 100+ households more than is suggested by the state's data presented in Table 4. The difference is due to faster than anticipated housing development in Empire over the last five years. For more information refer to Table 1, Table 2 and the Future Housing Section of Chapter 4.

\*\* Based on the official 2005 population estimate of 2,755 and the Town of Empire's official count of 1,050 households, the actual 2005 persons per household estimate has decreased to 2.62.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 910 households (861 owner occupied; 49 renter occupied) in the Town of Empire. The vast majority of households (86.4%) are family households (families). Of these family households, the most common type was married-couple family households (72.2%). Most of the married couple households did not have children (i.e. empty nesters). There are also a significant number of non-family households (13.6%) in the Town that include mostly people living alone.

### WHERE ARE RESIDENTS COMING FROM?

Figure 1.0 provides a breakdown of residency patterns between 1995 and 2000. Of the people currently residing in the Town, seventy-three percent live in the same residence they occupied in 1995. Nineteen percent either changed residences in Empire or moved from another community in Fond du Lac County. The remainder of the population moved into Empire from a different county. Less than one percent moved from a different state.



## Economic Profile

Economic conditions have a direct impact on the supply, demand and costs for housing, infrastructure, and services within a community. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the economic situation in the Town to predict additional housing, infrastructure, and service needs. This section profiles the local economic environment by examining factors, including per capita income, poverty rate, and unemployment rate.

To understand and appreciate the local economic picture in Empire, it is necessary to look beyond the Town and examine characteristics of Fond du Lac County. These comparisons provide much more information about the local economic situation than would a simple look at conditions only in the Town. Furthermore, these comparisons put economic characteristics into perspective. Given that economy of the Town depends heavily on the regional economy (i.e. Fox Cities), an understanding of the regional economy is very important. Strong fluctuations in the regional economy will impact the Town of Empire.

The remaining portion of this chapter is primarily specific to Fond du Lac County. The information presented is based on 1990 U.S. Census, 1992 U.S. Economic Census, 1997 U.S. Economic Census, 2000 U.S. Census and other reliable sources. Specific information available for the Town of Empire is incorporated where available and appropriate.

### LABOR FORCE

The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons who are 16 years of age and older. Table 5 tracks the rate of employment and unemployment in Fond du Lac County over the last several years. The employment picture for the area reflects the national economic downturn since 2000.

#### Are You In The Labor Force?

The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons who are 16 years of age and older, who are willing and actively seeking work. Institutionalized populations are not included in the labor force.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>Labor Force</b>	54,824	53,122	54,993	56,605	56,519	57,219
<b>Employed</b>	53,130	51,653	53,230	54,214	53,591	54,109
<b>Unemployed</b>	1,694	1,469	1,763	2,391	2,928	3,110
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	3.1%	2.8%	3.2%	4.2%	5.2%	5.4%

SOURCE: WIDWD, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, 2005

The term used to describe the relationship between the labor force and population is “participation rate.” Fond du Lac County’s labor force participation rate is 70.7%. The United States’ participation rate is about the same (around 70%), while the overall State of Wisconsin participation rate is approximately 75%.

Empire’s participation rate was reported at 77.6% in the 2000 U.S. Census.

Participation rates are the result of both economic and demographic conditions of an area. The participation rate in Fond du Lac County indicates that the county has a diverse mix of employment opportunities and a population willing to work at those industries that are located in the county.

## MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Fond du Lac County workers are very mobile. In fact, Fond du Lac County is a net exporter of workers. It loses more workers to surrounding counties than it gains from them. Based on the 2000 U.S. Census Data, over 14,000 workers leave the county for work, while only 9,700 come into the county for employment, a net loss of 4,400 workers. Some of these workers may actually only be commuting a few miles over the county line to nearby employers, but others may be traveling many miles. Most workers who travel beyond the county travel to Dodge County, followed by workers traveling to Winnebago County and Washington County.



USH 151 (Shown Looking North from 4<sup>th</sup> Street Road) is an important means of travel for Empire residents.

The Town of Empire has a minimal amount of commercial and industrial development (Refer to *Current Land Use Map* in Chapter 9). There is limited non-residential development due to:

- Limited available infrastructure services (i.e. water and sewer)
- A small population base; and,
- The Town's close proximity to the City of Fond du Lac.

However, the potential for additional Town development exists. The Town would like to maintain its rural, largely undeveloped character. Accordingly, the Town does not want to see a great deal of development along these corridors. The Town encourages business development in the City of Fond du Lac and nearby cities.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 1,958 workers in the Town. Town residents were employed in the following types of occupations:

- Management, professional and related (41.8%)
- Sales and office (17.6%)
- Production, transportation and material moving (16.7%)
- Construction, extraction and maintenance (10.6%)
- Service (10.8%)
- Farming, fishing and forestry (2.5%)

By industry, most of the Town's workers were employed in education, health and social service industries in 2000. Of the major remaining industry types reported by residents:

- 371 residents were working in education, health and social service industries (25.2%);
- 306 residents were employed in manufacturing (20.7% of workforce);
- 133 were employed in the retail trade (9%);
- 119 were employed in construction related industries (8.1%);
- 84 were employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining industries (5.7%); and,
- 80 residents were working in finance, insurance and real estate industries (5.4%).

Tables 6 and 7 highlight the top 10 industry groups and employers in Fond du Lac County. There were a total of 4,451 employers in the county. The top ten employers employed 15 percent of all non-farm workers in Fond du Lac County. Four of the ten largest employers are in manufacturing. However, only three of the ten largest industry groups are in manufacturing.



TABLE 6 TOP 10 INDUSTRY GROUPS IN FOND DU LAC COUNTY		
Industry Group	Employers	Employment
Machinery Manufacturing	22	4,894
Educational Services	23	3,868
Food Services & Drinking Places	166	3,651
Food Manufacturing	20	1,924
Executive, Legislative & General Government	32	1,770
Hospitals	N/A	N/A
Specialty Trade Contractors	167	1,515
Ambulatory Health Care Services	102	1,434
Nursing & Residential Care Facilities	24	1,304
General Merchandise Stores	N/A	N/A

SOURCE: Fond du Lac County Workforce Profile, Figures from 2001

NOTE: Table exclude farm workers. NA data is suppressed to retain confidentiality in census reporting.

TABLE 7 TOP 10 EMPLOYERS IN FOND DU LAC COUNTY		
Industry Group	Product or Service	Size
Brunswick Corp. (Mercury Marine)	Outboard engine equipment manufacturing	Over 999 employees
Agnesian Healthcare, Inc.	General medical and surgical hospitals	Over 999 employees
Fond du Lac School District	Elementary and Secondary Schools	Over 999 employees
County of Fond du Lac	Executive and legislative offices, combined	Over 999 employees
Alliance Laundry Systems LLC	Household laundry equipment manufacturing	500-999 employees
Moraine Park Technical College	Junior Colleges	500-999 employees
J F Ahern Co.	Fire Alarm systems	500-999 employees
Charter Comm Holding Company LLC	Cable and other program distribution	500-999 employees
Ultra Mart Foods Inc.	Retail bakeries	250-499 employees
Intl Paper Co. (FDL Container)*	Corrugated and solid fiber box manufacturing	147 employees

SOURCE: Fond du Lac County Workforce Profile, January 2004

\* Employee figure provided by Empire Town Resident. 2004 Workforce Profile indicated Over 999 employees.

NOTE: Table excludes farm workers.

## INCOME & WAGES

Income is another factor that provides an indication of economic health. Average family and household incomes for Fond du Lac County and the Town of Empire have been consistently and substantially higher than state averages as illustrated in Table 8, which suggests a level of prosperity. However, per capita county income levels have been consistently lower than the state averages. The Town's income has also been significantly higher than comparable county and state figures in all categories.

### MEDIAN INCOME vs. AVERAGE INCOME

The U.S. Census Bureau data related to income is reported as a "median" figure. This represents the middle point of all incomes reported. It is not the same as an "average" income. For example, if 4 people reported their income at \$30,000 and 1 person reported their income at \$100,000, the median income for these 5 people would be \$30,000. In the same scenario, the average income would be \$44,000, which does not accurately depict where the majority (i.e. 4 people vs. only 1) reported their income.

The U.S. Census does not provide an average income figure. Moreover, it is not possible to calculate an average without access to every individual census form from Empire where an income was reported. The U.S. Census Bureau privacy policies prohibit this level of access. It is anticipated that Empire's average income figures would be higher than the median income.



TABLE 8 INCOME TRENDS					
		Town of Empire	Fond du Lac County	Wisconsin	Difference Between Town & County
1980	Median Household	\$25,194	\$18,159	\$17,680	\$7,035
	Median Family	\$26,594	\$20,385	\$20,915	\$6,209
1990	Per Capita	\$8,104	\$6,803	\$7,243	\$1,301
	Median Household	\$42,143	\$29,441	\$29,442	\$12,702
	Median Family	\$44,730	\$34,257	\$35,082	\$10,473
2000	Per Capita	\$16,754	\$12,574	\$13,276	\$4,180
	Median Household	\$67,330	\$45,578	\$43,791	\$21,752
	Median Family	\$70,511	\$53,325	\$52,911	\$17,186
	Per Capita	\$27,174	\$20,022	\$21,271	\$7,152

SOURCE: U.S. Census 1980 - 2000

**WORDS TO KNOW**

**Household income** includes the income of all person 16 years old and older in the household, whether related or not.

**Family income** is the summation of the income of the householder and all members of the family that are 16 years old or older.

Wages paid by employers in Fond du Lac County are, on average, generally lower than the state by industry. Average annual wages by industry are shown in Table 9. Only construction and manufacturing industries had higher local wage rates than the state averages.

TABLE 9 AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE BY INDUSTRY				
		Fond du Lac County	Wisconsin	Percent of State Average
	All Industries*	\$30,974	\$33,423	92.7%
	Natural Resources	\$22,665	\$25,723	88.1%
	Construction	\$40,596	\$40,228	101.0%
	Manufacturing	\$43,205	\$42,013	103.8%
	Trade, Transportation, Utilities	\$24,050	\$28,896	83.2%
	Information	NA	\$39,175	NA
	Financial Activities	\$36,778	\$42,946	85.6%
	Professional & Business Services	\$27,961	\$38,076	73.4%
	Education & Health	\$31,838	\$35,045	90.8%
	Leisure & Hospitality	\$9,174	\$12,002	76.4%
	Other services	\$16,847	\$19,710	85.5%
	Public Administration	\$32,451	\$35,689	90.9%

\* Mining excluded from table since wages were suppressed to maintain confidentiality

NOTE: Data does not include farm workers.

SOURCE: Wis. Dept. of Workforce Development, 2003

## POVERTY STATUS

According to the 2000 U.S. Census:

- 38 individuals living in Empire were living below the poverty line in 2000.
- Seven of these individuals were age 65 or over and 14 were under the age of 18.
- There were 4 families living below the poverty line in the Town of Empire in 2000.

In total, 1.5% of the Town's population was living in poverty in 2000. This figure is significantly lower than the statistic for Fond du Lac County - 5.8% of all county residents were living below the poverty line in 2000.

Poverty guidelines are a base-level figure. They do not take into account, at the local level, the costs of housing, transportation, goods and services. Although the poverty level for a family of four in Chicago is the same as that of a family of four in Empire, the cost-of-living differences between the two communities would indicate a greater ability to "make ends meet" in the rural community.

## EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>Percent Who Have Completed High School or Higher Education</b>	<b>Percent Who Have Completed a Bachelor's Degree or Higher</b>
Town of Empire	92.6%	30.9%
Town of Eden	83.9%	9.7%
Town of Fond du Lac	89.6%	18.3%
Town of Forest	83.9%	11.4%
Town of Taycheedah	86.3%	23.6%
Fond du Lac County	84.2%	16.9%
City of Fond du Lac	83.9%	19.0%
Wisconsin	85.1%	22.4%
United States	80.4%	24.4%

A good indicator of the quality of life in a community is the educational attainment of its residents. Generally, a high level of educational attainment reflects a skilled population with higher earnings potential. Table 10 reveals that the Town has an extremely high level of education attainment.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

## GENERAL ECONOMIC FORECASTS<sup>1</sup>

Historically, Fond du Lac County has had a competitive local economy with employment rates that were comparable to state and national figures. The economy supports a variety of manufacturing and service industries. Low-interest mortgage loan rates have also spurred housing construction and commercial development.

Demographic factors are a key driving force in any long-term projection. The growth rate of the population and changes in its composition has considerable impacts on the labor force, the unemployment rate, housing demand, and other spending categories. The population projections used in the U.S. economic forecast are based on the U.S. Census Bureau's "middle" projection for the U.S. population.

<sup>1</sup> Much of the information used to develop this section was from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue Long-Term Economic Forecast, 2001.

This projection is based on specific assumptions about immigration, fertility, and mortality rates. The national fertility rate (the average number of births per woman upon completion of childbearing) is expected to rise from its current level of 2.0 to about 2.2 in 2025. Life expectancy for men and women will rise steadily from 74.1 and 79.8 years in 1999 to 77.6 and 83.6 years in 2025, respectively. Net immigration (including undocumented immigration) is estimated to fall from 960,000 persons in 1999 to 918,000 in 2025.

The age distribution of the population is also an important part of the long-term outlook. As baby boomers begin to retire, the share of the U.S. population aged 65 and over will jump from 13% in 2010 to nearly 19% by 2025, pushing outlays for Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid higher. In addition, the growth rate of the working-age population will slow by more than that of the overall population.

Wisconsin total population growth is expected to average 0.4% annually from 2001 to 2025, a rate slightly below the 0.6% average from 1975-2000. Compared to the U.S. projected growth of 0.8% over the same period, Wisconsin is expected to continue the long-term trend of slower population growth than the nation as a whole. The adult population (those over the age of 17) in Wisconsin grew at an average annual rate of 1% over the past 25 years, but is expected to grow by 0.5% per year from 2001 to 2025. Also similar to U.S. demographic trends, the aging population in Wisconsin (those 65 and over) is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 2% for the next 25 years, including 3% per year after 2010. The aging population in Wisconsin grew at an annual rate of 1.3% per year from 1975 to 2000.

A key feature of the population projection that is very problematic for growth of the Wisconsin economy and the local economy in Fond du Lac County is the prospect for a decline in the working age population after 2011. Statewide, the population aged 16 to 64 is projected to grow at an annual rate of 0.6% from 2000 to 2011, but will then decline at an annual rate of 0.4% from 2012 to 2025. The working age population grew at an annual rate of 0.9% from 1974 to 1999. The growth of the working age population has a profound effect on the growth of the labor force and employment.

Because of demographic shifts that will play out as baby boomers age and reach retirement, labor-force growth is expected to slow sharply over the next 20 years. First, increases in female participation will taper off, if only because the participation rates for many female age groups are approaching those of males. Also, over time, a growing share of the population will reach retirement age, when the participation rate falls to about 12%. As a result, the Wisconsin labor force is expected to expand by 1.3% per year between 2000 and 2005, 0.8% per year from 2005 to 2014, and by only 0.4% per year from 2015 to 2025. Overall labor-force participation is expected to fall as the population progressively moves into age groups with lower participation rates.

The overall dependency ratio (the ratio of those not in the labor force to those who are) will continue to decline for most of the next quarter-century, falling from 1.00 in 1989 to 0.91 by 2010, before rising to 1.01 by 2025. This ratio peaked at 1.65 in 1962, just after the crest of the baby boom. Clearly, the working population will *not* have to support proportionately more non-workers in the next 25 years than it has in the past. However, this assessment does not account for workers who support elderly parents and other retired workers.

There will be a change in the mix of non-workers, however, especially towards 2025. While the share of the population aged 65 and over has risen dramatically over the last two decades, the ratio of the number of elderly to the number of workers has so far remained stable. There were 24.4 persons aged 65 and over for every 100 persons in the labor force in 1971, versus 24.8 in 2000. This ratio should decline to 24.3 by 2006, but then jump to 27.9 in 2014 and to 37.6 by 2025, by which time most baby boomers will be of retirement age.

In summary, the United States, Wisconsin and Fond du Lac County are expected to post markedly slower economic growth over the next 25 years than during the past quarter-century. The prime causal factors for this slowdown are already in place: labor force growth constrained by demographic forces that cannot be quickly reversed and relatively moderate growth of the capital stock.

**For the Town of Empire**, these indicators are important because they may impact the quality of life for residents living in the area. Furthermore, these key economic indicators provide a gauge for the Town's ability to support additional commercial and industrial development over the next 20 years.

## **REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS**

To further consider employment forecasts for Empire residents, an effort was made to review the economic development planning efforts of the East Central Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission (ECWRPC).

In preparing its regional Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan, the ECWRPC relies on the State of Wisconsin's projections of employment for Wisconsin Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA's). ECWRPC reports indicate that all MSAs in Wisconsin are expected to see an increase in employment over the next ten years. Employment forecasts between 2001 and 2006, however, are lower in most MSAs when compared to growth between 1995 and 2000. The impacts of the 2001 economic downturn and the weaker labor market have lowered future employment growth accordingly. Metropolitan areas that depend heavily on manufacturing have been more affected by the current economic employment slowdown. The strongest growth is expected in the finance, insurance, and real estate sector and in the services sector.

## **LOCAL EMPLOYMENT FORECAST**

Based on available data described in this section, the assessment of community strengths and weaknesses for attracting economic development (refer to the Economic Development Chapter), and the anticipated impact associated with the successful implementation of the smart growth plan, employment forecasts for Empire residents are for slow but consistent job growth. Historically the percentage of unemployed Town residents, as compared to Fond du Lac County as a whole, has been high. This trend is expected to continue. It must be noted, though, that the share of Empire residents out of the labor force (i.e. retired) will also increase steadily through 2025.

