

* Rockland building permit data was utilized to adjust this number to reflect actual homes constructed in 2020 or later.

**Percent totals may not equal 100.0% due to rounding.

Structures

The Town of Rockland has a significantly higher estimated percentage of 1-unit detached structures (single-family homes) at 99.1 percent than either Brown County or the State of Wisconsin at 63.7 and 66.5 percent, respectively. The Town has a proportionately much smaller percentage of duplexes and currently has no multifamily units.

Rockland should monitor the demands of a growing and diversifying population to ensure that the Town’s housing will continue to meet its needs. To support a more diversified housing stock, Rockland may want to consider the provision of public sewer and/or water as the population grows. Figure 5-2 identifies the total number of structures in Rockland and the number of units they contain.

Figure 5-2: Estimated Units in Structure for Rockland, Brown County, and Wisconsin

Units in Structure	Town of Rockland	%	Brown County	%	Wisconsin	%
1-unit, detached	655	99.1%	72,707	63.71%	1,828,241	66.46%
1-unit, attached	0	0.00%	7,524	6.59%	117,090	4.26%
2 units	4	0.60%	5,734	5.02%	167,524	6.09%
3 or 4 units	0	0.00%	3,598	3.15%	96,711	3.52%
5 to 9 units	0	0.00%	9,378	8.22%	133,112	4.84%
10 to 19 units	0	0.00%	5,694	4.99%	98,612	3.58%
20 or more units	0	0.00%	7,984	7.00%	223,966	8.14%
Mobile home	2	0.30%	1,475	1.29%	84,443	3.07%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.00%	29	0.03%	1,051	0.04%
Total	661	100.00%	114,123	100.00%	2,750,750	100.00%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate and Town data

Occupancy

The 2023 American Community Survey identified a total of 661 housing units within the Town of Rockland. This compares with an estimated 566 units in 2010, which is an increase of 95 units (16.8 percent) over the 15-year period. The breakdown of housing units into owner-occupied and renter-occupied shows that owner-occupied units accounted for 94.3 percent of the Town’s dwelling units in 2010, and this percentage actually increased to 94.0

Deleted: Figure 5-1: Estimated Age of Housing Units in the Town of Rockland

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percent owner-occupied housing by 2010. The Town has a much higher percentage of owner-occupied housing units than either Brown County or the State of Wisconsin at 72.0 and 67.7 percent, respectively. However, this could change over the course of the next 20 years as the Town considers the provision of public sewer and water service that would help to accommodate more dense development. In the short term, small multifamily and scattered duplex units could be developed on septic systems and wells provided that they are adequately maintained and monitored. Figure 5-3 summarizes the housing occupancy changes that occurred between ~~2010~~ and ~~2023~~.

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Figure 5-3: Town of Rockland Change in Housing Occupancy, 2010-2020

	2010	% of Total	2020	% of Total	Increase or Decrease
Total housing units	622	100.00%	645	100.00%	23
Occupied housing units	595	96.70%	639	99.07%	44
Owner-occupied	531	92.45%	616	95.50%	85
Renter-occupied	64	4.25%	23	3.57%	-41

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census

Value

According to the 2020 census, the largest segment of the Town's owner-occupied homes is valued between \$300,000 and \$499,999 (43.7 percent), while 39 percent of the homes are valued between \$500,000 and \$999,999. When reviewing the median owner-occupied home value for Rockland (\$396,700) compared to that of Brown County (\$245,900) and the State of Wisconsin (\$247,400), it is apparent that the homes in Rockland contain significantly more value. Much of this difference is likely due to the lot size limitations put in place by extraterritorial land division review. It could also be impacted by the locational amenities the Town has to offer, such as proximity to the Metropolitan Green Bay Area, Fox River frontage and Niagara escarpment views. Figure 5-4 reflects changes in value as shown in the 2023 American Community Survey. (See Figure 5-4.)

Figure 5-4: Estimated Town of Rockland Owner-Occupied Housing Values



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2023 American Community Survey 5 year estimate, and Town of Rockland Assessment records.

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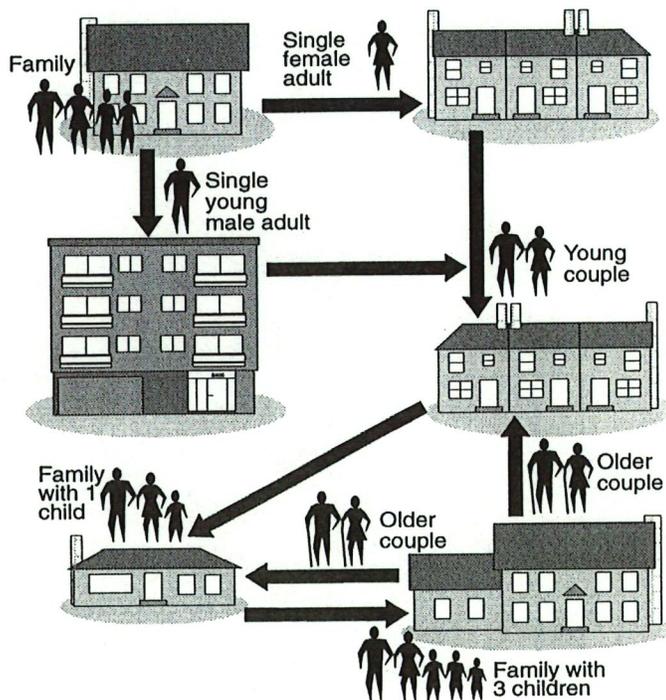
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Range of Housing Choices

The Town's residential development is very typical of many rural communities dealing with the initial impacts of increased development pressures and suburbanization where housing is typically single-family in nature and is being developed in stand-alone, large-lot subdivisions. As the Town continues to grow, it should encourage developers to consider more options for existing residents and new residents alike by encouraging the development of additional duplex units and possibly small group homes for the elderly.

While understanding that the lack of public services presently limits the range of housing choices that are and will be available within the Town, it is important to recognize that as people go through various stages in their life, their preferred housing type may change. Although the Town may currently depend on neighboring communities to provide the complete range of housing for its residents, this section contains a series of recommendations the Town can implement to maintain its current housing stock and development pattern while somewhat increasing its range of housing choices. Figure 5-5 provides a representation of how a person's housing preferences might change over time.

Figure 5-5: Change in Housing Preferences Over Time



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Rent¶
 The 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS) identifies the median gross rent in the Town of Rockland as approximately \$900 per month. The ACS further identifies a total of 18 rental units with rent ranges generally \$750 - \$999 per month. This range is for the estimated 31 rental units in the Town, which is a rather small number accounting for the narrow range of rental costs.¶
 The City of De Pere, located just to the north of the Town, contains over 3,200 rental units with a range of rental price points and currently helps to satisfy the majority of the demand for rental housing near Rockland. Should Rockland develop public sewer and water systems, the Town should encourage the development of additional multi-family housing to reduce the upward cost pressure on the existing rental units in the Town.¶
Mortgage¶
 According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, approximately 80 percent of the owner-occupied housing units in Rockland have a mortgage, with a median monthly mortgage cost of \$2,009. This is significantly higher than either the county or state, at \$1,417 and \$1,460 per month, respectively, and is likely indicative of the generally higher median value of homes in Rockland.¶
 One metric to determine whether or not a mortgage is affordable, is from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which recommends that housing costs (mortgage, insurance, taxes, etc.) should not exceed 30 percent of household income. Homeowners paying 30 percent or more are considered to be overextended and in danger of mortgage default if any interruptions to income or unforeseen expenses occur. The ACS identifies 35.7 percent of Rockland homeowners as paying 30 percent or more of their household income for housing, which is more than Brown County (29.9 percent) and the State of Wisconsin (33.2 percent), respectively. The relatively high mortgage costs in Rockland is an issue that the Town will need to monitor over the course of this comprehensive plan, and if public utilities become available, diversifying the housing stock types and lot sizes would provide more options for people desiring to live in Rockland.¶

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Source: Local Government Commission, 2003.

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Should the Town successfully develop the full range of public services (sewer, water, emergency services, parks, etc.), Rockland should ensure its range of housing expands as well. A well-diversified housing stock allows the Town to withstand future changes in the housing market, as well as future changes in the demographics of the community.

Conservation by Design Developments

In certain parts of Rockland there may be critical environmental, historical, or agricultural features that should be preserved, but the property owner wishes to develop his or her property. In situations such as these, "Conservation by Design" subdivisions could accomplish both goals. In terms of housing, the lots in conservation by design subdivisions are smaller and clustered together to prevent damage to the feature(s) to be preserved, while still allowing at least the same number of lots that could be developed with a conventional subdivision design.

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There are currently a number of "Conservation by Design" subdivisions in Brown County, primarily associated with waterways, wetlands, and the Niagara Escarpment. All of these natural features are present in Rockland and a conservation subdivision approach to residential development could be used to help maintain the Town's rural character. In addition to natural features, agricultural lands can be the feature protected by conservation subdivisions. As the protected agricultural lands in conservation subdivisions are generally smaller than those required for large-scale agriculture, smaller-scale agricultural activities such as truck farming, floriculture, viticulture, and similar agricultural uses are typical.



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Auxiliary Dwelling Units on a Residential Parcel

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As residents continue to age, there often comes a time when they might not wish to maintain a separate home but do not want or cannot afford to live in a retirement or elderly care home. Some communities allow small, attached or detached accessory dwelling units on one residential parcel. These "granny flats," or "backyard cottages" as they are sometimes called, allow the elderly to maintain their own independent living quarters for sleeping and washing while being able to easily interact with their extended



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family for meals and socializing in the principal residence. Rockland allows attached units, built as an addition to the home. Only family members are permitted to inhabit these auxiliary units.

Mixing of Residential Types

One of the components of traditional neighborhoods that should be considered in new residential developments in the Town is the inclusion and mixing of different housing types. Historically, housing types were mixed. However, more recently, housing types other than single-family detached homes have been grouped together, thereby concentrating these uses. Mixing the housing types avoids the concentration of large tracts of rental properties and their perceived negative impacts. Residents and landlords of rental units are more apt to better maintain their properties if they are mixed with owner-occupied housing. Restrictive and Home Owners Association covenants must be adhered to.

In order for uses other than single-family detached homes to be palatable to surrounding property owners, the other uses need to be of a scale and design that blend in with the residential character of the neighborhood. Strict developmental design standards will likely need to be employed to achieve the desired seamless integration of these uses into the neighborhoods. Design standards let the developer know ahead of time what standards the neighbors expect for the building and the neighbors know that the development will meet their expectations as well.

Educate Residents and Homebuilders Regarding "Visitability" Concepts

As people age, their ability to move around their own home can become increasingly difficult. For a number of elderly and mobility-impaired residents, the simple presence of a single stair to enter a home could cause a great deal of difficulty. According to Green Bay-based Options for Independent Living, "visitability" applies to the construction of new single-family homes to make them "visit-able" by people with physical or mobility disabilities. Typically, visitable homes have:

- One entrance with no steps.
- A minimum 36-inch clear passage through all the main floor doors and hallways.
- A useable bathroom on the main floor.

Although these improvements do not allow full accessibility, such as is promoted in universal design, they do allow (at a minimum) elderly and people with a mobility limitation the ability to visit a home or remain living in their home for a longer period of time.

Summary of Recommendations

It is very important for the Town to continue to monitor its progress in meeting the goals and objectives of this plan's Housing chapter. To attain the goal and objectives, the following recommendations were developed based on the input received from the 2024

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The majority of residential subdivisions developed over the past 50 years consist almost exclusively of single-family detached homes separated from any commercial, institutional, or even recreational uses. This results in residents of these subdivisions having to utilize a vehicle to travel to a store, school, or park instead of having the opportunity to walk or bike a relatively short distance to these land uses. The separation of uses and reliance on a vehicle is especially difficult for the elderly, mobility-impaired, children, and others who may not want to or cannot drive.¶

In order to encourage people to walk and bike, uses other than only single-family residential uses should be encouraged within new neighborhoods. For example, corner lots are very good locations for small neighborhood commercial uses and higher density residential developments, while recreational and institutional uses should be located in places that provide a focus point, gathering place, and identity for the neighborhood and its residents. In Rockland, neighborhood commercial uses may particularly pertain to small home-based businesses, which may act as a business incubator until the business is ready to move out into its own building or site.¶

In order for uses other than single-family detached homes to be palatable to surrounding property owners, the other uses need to be of a scale and design that blend in with the residential character of the neighborhood. In order to achieve the desired seamless integration of these uses into the neighborhoods, strict commercial design standards should be employed. The design standards would let the developer know ahead of time what standards the neighbors would expect for the building, and the neighbors would know that the development would meet their expectations, as well.¶

Deleted: Senior Housing Development¶

Considering the general aging of the population in the Town of Rockland and Brown County, there is a potential demand for senior housing in the Town. A master-planned senior housing development with a variety of housing types and amenities that takes into account the natural features of the Town would provide an alternative to Rockland citizens who are aging and don't wish to maintain their existing home, but still wish to live in Rockland and enjoy the rural character of the Town. ¶

In order to develop such a concept, at present it would have to be developed on a large private on-site wastewater treatment system or other small, "package" type wastewater treatment system. In order for such a concept to succeed, the ownership, maintenance, and liability for the system would need to be identified prior to approval by the Town, County, and State. Furthermore, any senior housing development would need to include a means of transportation to surrounding communities for groceries, health care, and other necessities that could not be provided on site for (... [8])

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Comprehensive Plan Community Survey, open meetings, State of Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law, and sound planning principles:

- Keep informed of housing affordability issues and the possible need for more varied housing types in Rockland as the population continues to grow, age, and diversify and public utilities become available.
- Continue to ensure that the Town's housing stock remains in good condition through code enforcement and informing Town residents of housing rehabilitation programs.
- New residential developments should serve the Town and be harmonious with the Town's rural character and scale.
- Carefully consider the placement of accessory dwelling units on lots with an existing home.
- Promote universal design in new residential development and visitable design in existing residential remodeling projects. This meets the requirements of senior citizens, individuals with special needs, disabled veterans, and others with accessibility needs.
- Encourage conservation subdivisions to protect natural areas and/or agricultural lands.
- Encourage potentially eligible Rockland residents to take advantage of different housing rehabilitation and purchase programs offered through Brown County and the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA).

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