

Acknowledgments

Town of Washington Zoning and Planning Committee

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Town of Washington Board

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Town of Washington

Comprehensive Plan



Adopted *MONTH YEAR*

Funded by the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office for Coastal Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act, Grant # AD239125-024.12.



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Introduction

This chapter describes the purpose of the plan, the planning process, and the public engagement strategy. It also provides a brief overview of town history and current demographic makeup.



Purpose

The Town of Washington Comprehensive Plan is a long range policy document that serves as a guide for staff, officials, and decision makers in the management of growth and conservation in the town through 2044.

Per Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law (Wis. Stats. 66.1001), the town of Washington is legally obligated to have a locally approved comprehensive plan. The statutes require each governmental jurisdiction that regulates the use of land through a land division ordinance, shoreland zoning ordinance, general purpose zoning ordinance, or official map to have an adopted comprehensive plan. Comprehensive plans are required to be updated every 10 years at minimum.

The town of Washington did not have its own comprehensive plan prior to the establishment and adoption of this document. However, the town has been involved in planning efforts under Door County. The town also conducted a comprehensive planning survey in 2007, which the survey utilized in the development of this plan was modeled after.

In addition to compliance with state statutes, the town recognized that a comprehensive plan was necessary to help prioritize its resources to best provide public amenities and infrastructure while maintaining quality of life and environmental resources.

Planning Process

This plan was prepared by the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (BLRPC) with the guidance and assistance of the town of Washington staff and officials, the Washington Island Zoning and Planning (WIZAP) Committee, and the citizens and stakeholders in the town with partial funding from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program (WCMP). The process involved the following:

- Discussions with town staff and the WIZAP Committee.
- Technical analysis of demographic, housing, and other data from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the Wisconsin Department of Administration, and other publicly available data.
- Review of existing planning efforts led by the town or other regional entities.
- Stakeholder engagement, including public review and an open house.

Stakeholder Outreach and Public Engagement

While a comprehensive plan relies heavily on technical analysis of existing physical, systemic, and demographic conditions, it also has extensive roots in the community's local values and goals. To ensure that this document appropriately represents the town's values, the town of Washington and the BLRPC sought engagement and input from the public and community stakeholders through the following activities:

WIZAP Committee Meetings

Throughout the planning process, BLRPC staff met with the WIZAP Committee at four public meetings and an open house to present and discuss elements of the comprehensive plan. The purpose of these WIZAP Committee meetings was to discuss feedback and provide direction on the content of the plan as it was developed. The WIZAP Committee held additional meetings to generate feedback and refine elements of the plan.

Survey

The WIZAP Committee generated a community survey based on a previous survey that was conducted by the town in 2007. Copies of the survey were mailed to all landowners and registered voters in the town. Additional copies of the survey were available at the town office, and an online version was produced by BLRPC staff for additional accessibility.

The survey was available from October 30, 2023 through **November 20, 2023**. The town received ____ completed surveys. Feedback received through this survey was considered by the WIZAP Committee in the development of goals and objectives throughout this plan. A summary of survey responses is located in [Appendix ____](#).

Introduction

Open House

BLRPC staff and the WIZAP Committee facilitated one open house to communicate plan content and status to the public and gather valuable feedback from the public. The open house was intended to be educational for the general population, and it included a presentation on the plan purpose and _____. The open house was held on [month, day], 2024.

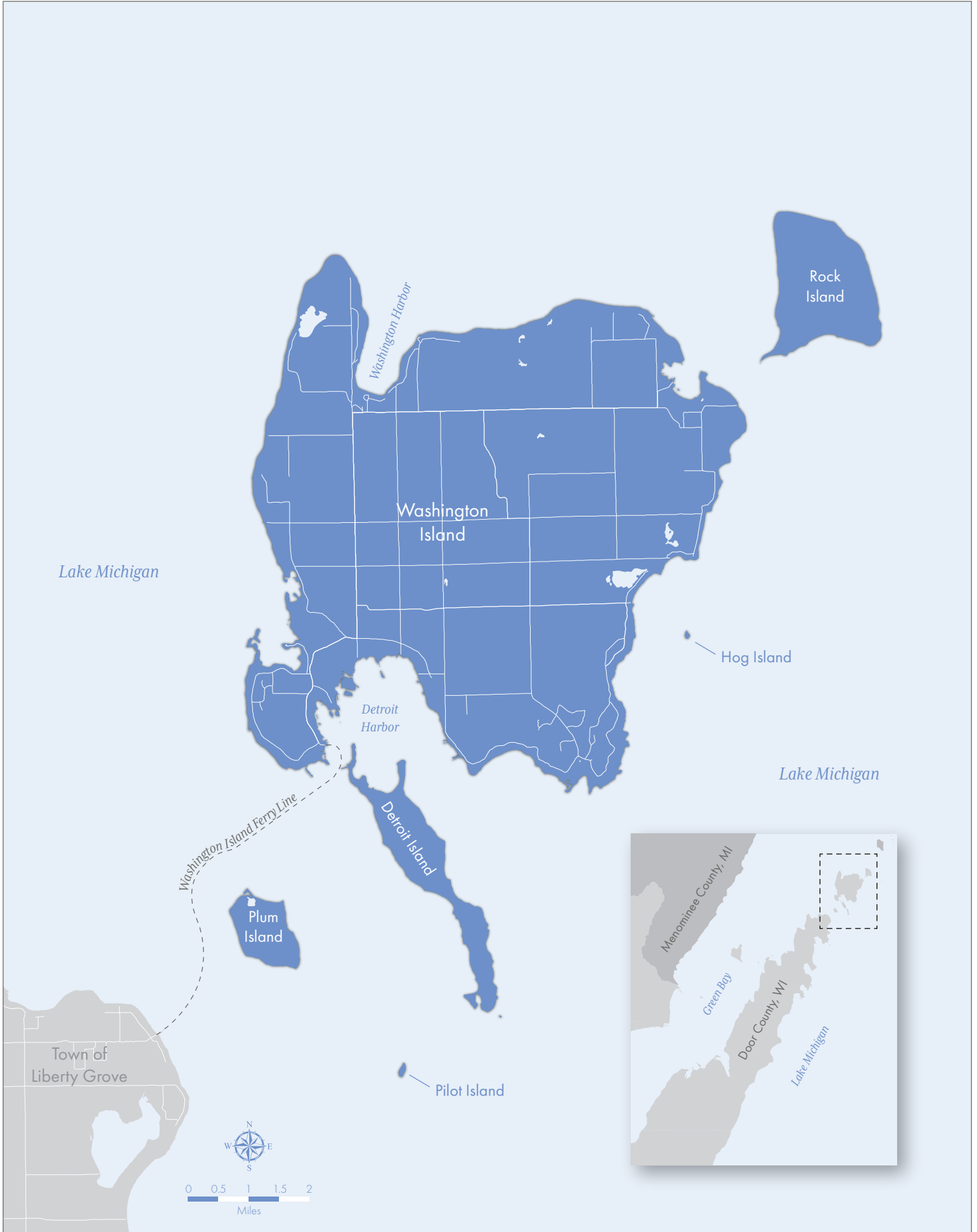
Public Hearing and Comment Period

A public hearing was held by the WIZAP Committee on [month, day], 2024, following a 30 day public comment period on the plan

Town History

Reserved for write-up of town's history from archives.







Demographics and Housing

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the town's population makeup and housing characteristics. It summarizes trends and current conditions, as well as future projections.



This section summarizes key trends and projections in population demographics and housing in the town of Washington. The analysis compares the town to the county and state. This information is important in anticipating future needs in the town, including infrastructure, transportation, community facilities, and other amenities.

Population Characteristics

This section details the historic trends and current population dynamics in the town of Washington.

According to the 2020 Decennial Census, the population of the town of Washington was 777 people. This represents a nearly 9% increase over the 2010 population of 708 people. The change in population between 2010 and 2020 (8.8%) was 2 percent higher than the change over the previous decade (6.8%).

**American Community Survey (ACS)
vs. the Decennial Census**

The Decennial Census is conducted every ten years and counts every person living in the US. The ACS surveys a sample of the US population monthly to provide estimates and cover topics not asked on the Decennial Census.

Population Trends, 2000-2020

	2000	2010	2020
Population	660	708	777
Change		48	69
% Change		6.8	8.9

Source: Decennial Census 2000, 2010, and 2020

Distribution by Age

Median Age

The median age in the town of Washington is 63 years. This remained approximately the same with just over a 1% increase from 2010 (62 years). The median age in the town is significantly higher than Door County and Wisconsin (54.5 years and 40.1 years, respectively).

**Median Age
Town of Washington**

63.0

Door County: 53.3
Wisconsin: 30.1

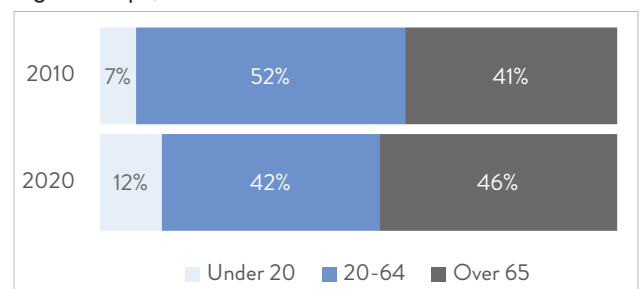
Source: US Census, 2020

Age Groups

The percentage of youth and older adults in the town of Washington increased from 2010 to 2021. The population under 18 years saw an increase by 24 percent from 7.4 percent of the total population to 9.8 percent. Over the same time period, the percentage of the population aged 65 and older increased by over 11 percent from 40.8 to 46.1 percent.

The age dependency ratio is calculated as the combined under-18 and 65-plus populations divided by the 18 to 64 population and multiplying by 100. The age dependency ratio from 2010 to 2021 increased from 92.8 to 126.5, meaning that the town's population shifted from having more working age individuals than "dependents" to a lower percentage of working age individuals.

Age Groups, 2010 and 2020



Source: Decennial Census, 2010; ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

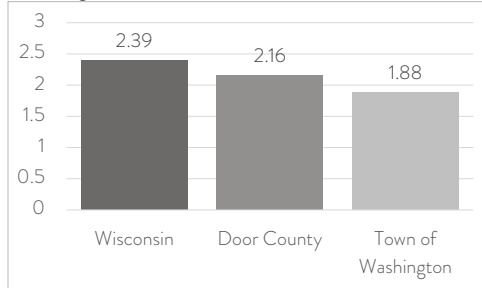
Demographics and Housing

Households

The town of Washington is estimated to have 451 households according to 2021 ACS data. In the town, a larger portion of the population lives in smaller households than the county and state. The average household size in the town is 1.88 people, compared with 3.16 and 2.39 in Door County and Wisconsin, respectively. The average family size is also smaller.

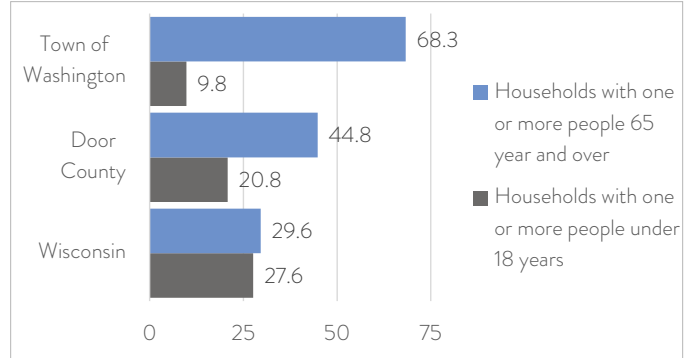
When considering the age of individuals in each household, the percentage of households with one or more people under 18 is more than 10% lower than both the county and state, while the percentage with one or more people 65 and older is higher.

Average Household Size



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Households by Type



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Population Forecasts

Reserved

Population Trends and Projections

Reserved. Trend line of historic Census population trends and WDOA forecasts

Source: WDOA



Housing Characteristics

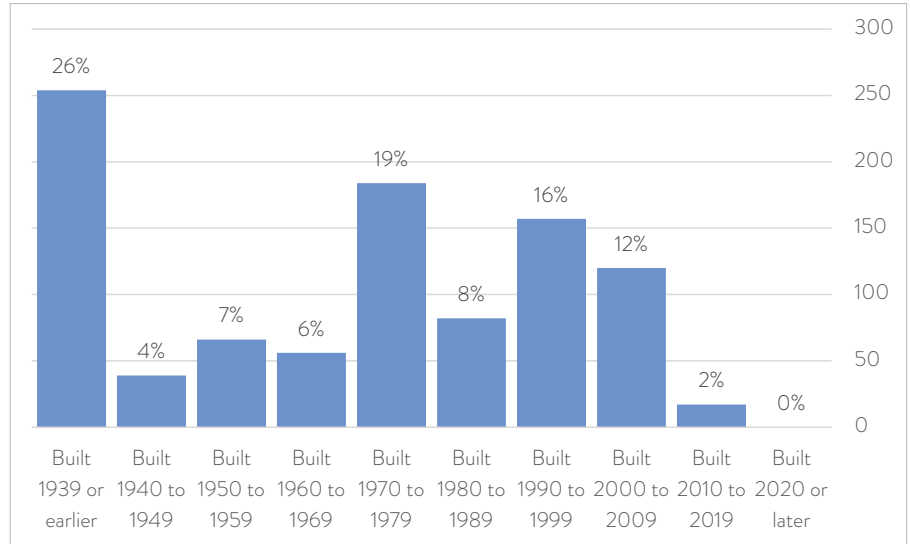
This section details the historic trends and current housing characteristics and market in the town of Washington. According to the ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates, there are 975 total housing units in the town of Washington.

Structures

Age

Construction of new housing units has slowed over the past several decades. Compared with 16 percent of existing structures built in the 1990s and 12 percent in the 2000s, only 2 percent of the current housing stock was constructed in roughly the past ten years. 17 new housing structures make up the 2 percent that were constructed between 2010 and 2020.

Age of Housing Structures

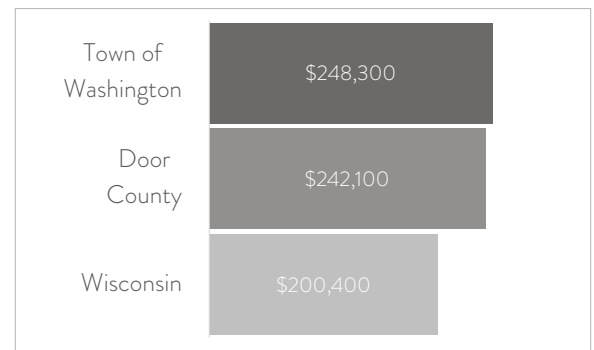


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Value

The median housing structure value in the town of Washington is \$248,300, similar to the median in Door county but about \$40,000 higher than the state. The largest portion (39 percent) of housing structures in the town are valued between \$200,000 and \$299,999, whereas only 25 percent of housing structures in the state are valued in the same category. The state has nearly 15 percent of structures valued under \$100,000 while the town has only 3 percent.

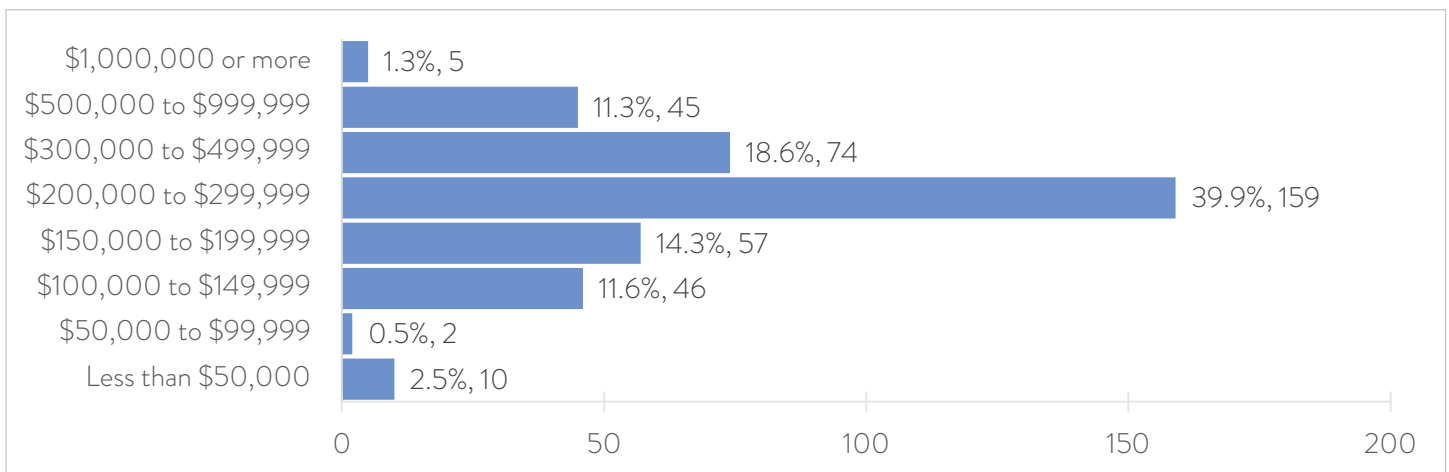
Housing Structure Value (Owner-Occupied Units)



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Housing Mix

Median Housing Structure Value

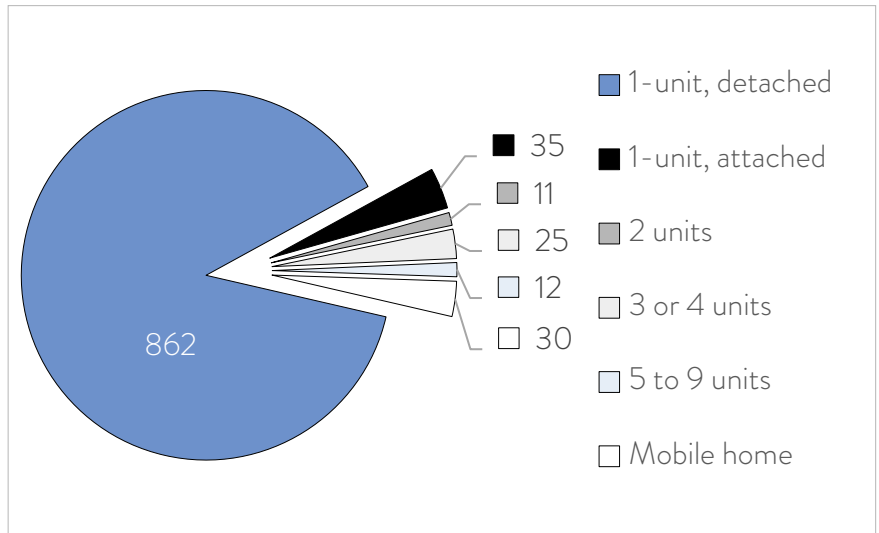


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Demographics and Housing

The vast majority of housing structures in the town (862 structures or 88.4 percent) are 1-unit detached homes. 1-unit attached structures, which are also considered single family homes, make up the next largest category at 35 units (3.6 percent). Buildings with two to nine units, as well as mobile homes, make up the remaining 8 percent of housing structures.

Units in Structure



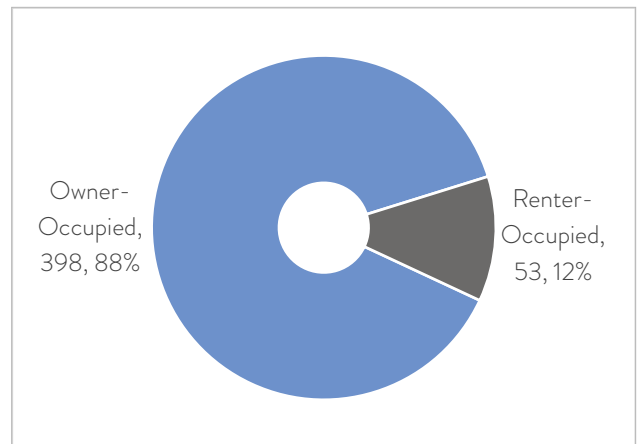
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Tenure and Occupancy

Tenure

88 percent of housing units in the town of Washington are owner-occupied, leaving the remaining 12 percent (52 units) that are renter occupied.

Tenure

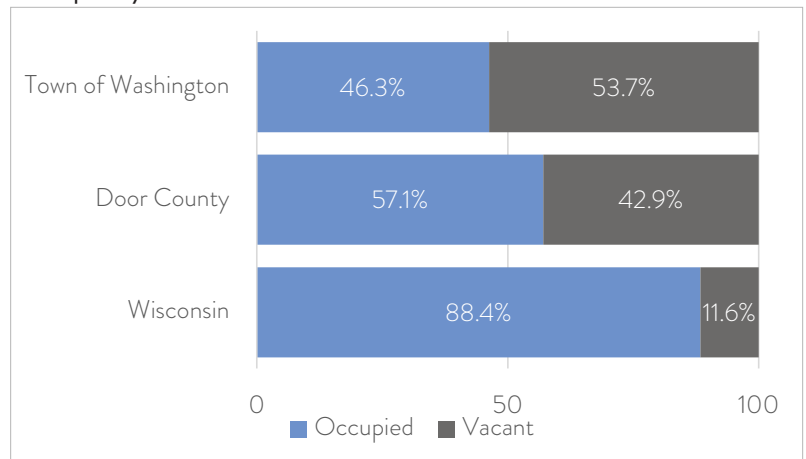


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Occupancy

Less than half of the housing units in the town of Washington are permanently occupied, according to the 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Lower occupancy rates in the town and in Door County are a result of the strong tourism industry and prevalence of second homes.

Occupancy Rates

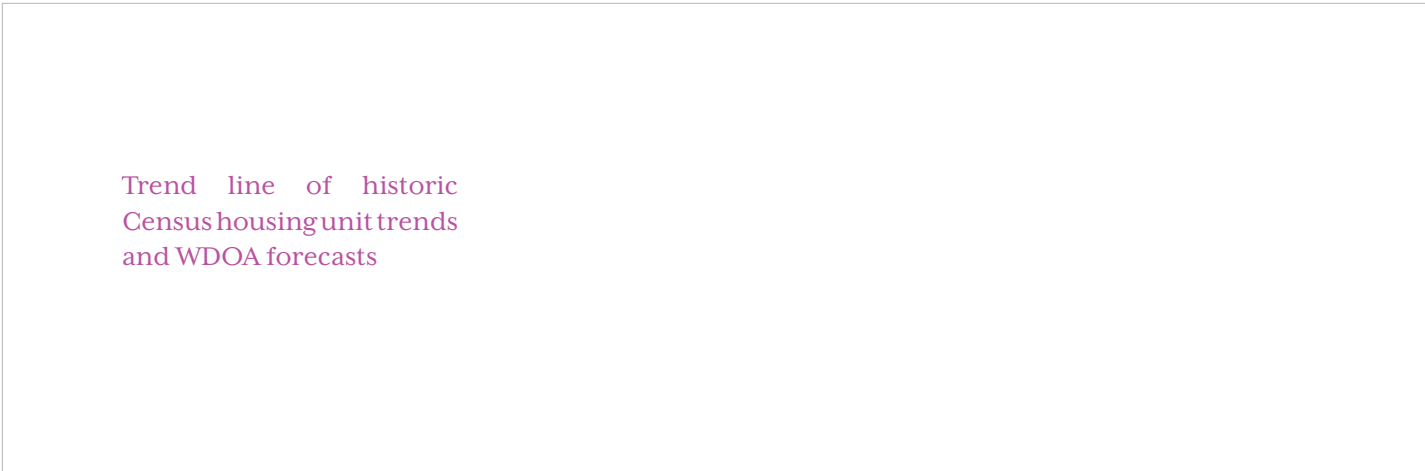


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Housing Forecast

Reserved

Housing Trends and Projections

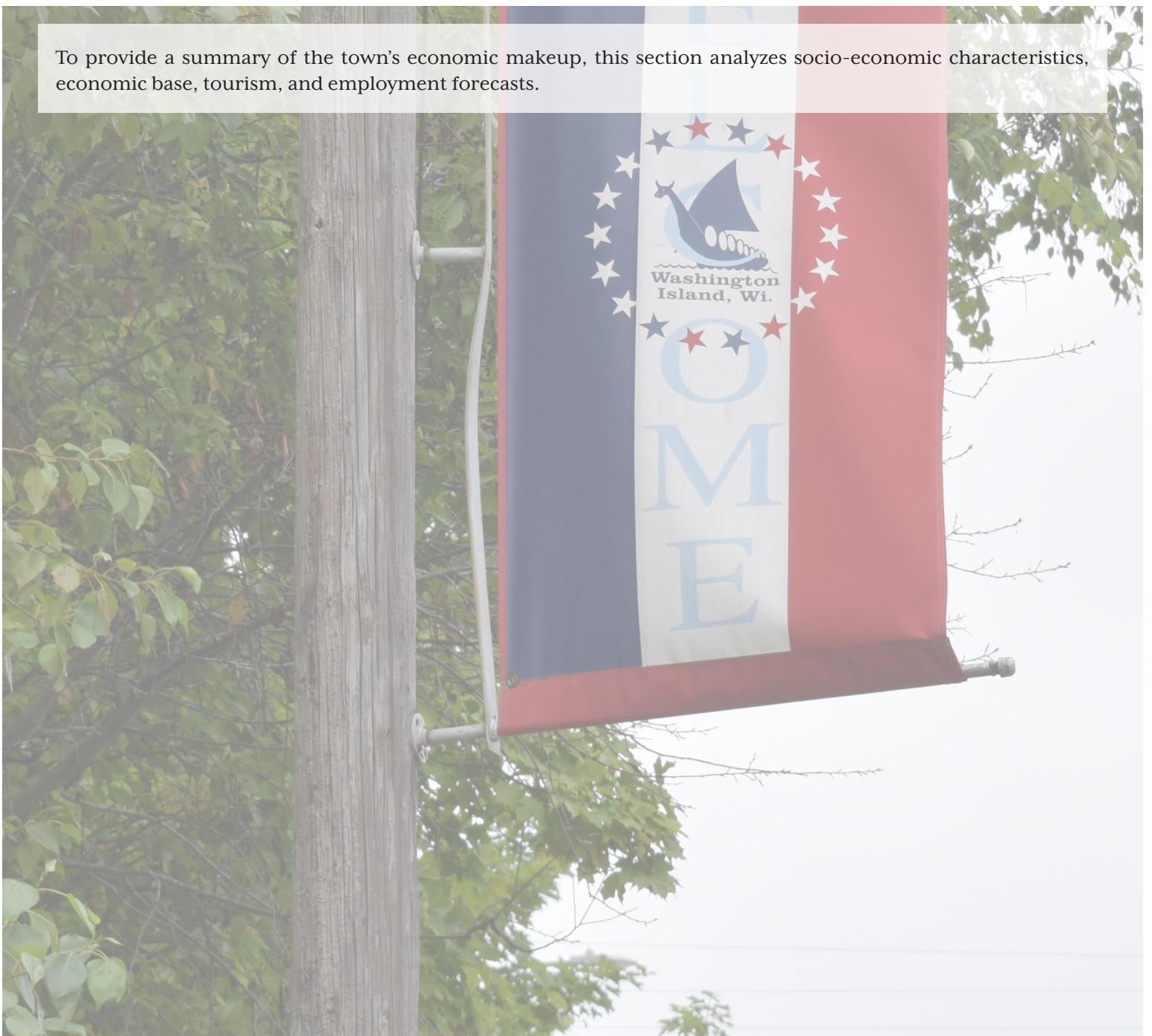


Source: WDOA



Economic Development

To provide a summary of the town's economic makeup, this section analyzes socio-economic characteristics, economic base, tourism, and employment forecasts.



The town of Washington is a small, rural community whose economy is characterized by strong tourism throughout the summer months and a tight-knit local economy. Information on the town's socioeconomic characteristics, economic base, employment forecast, and tourism is detailed through this section.

Socio-Economic Characteristics

Labor Force

Labor force represents the percentage of population age 16 and older. In the town of Washington, the labor force is 695 people, or 89.4 percent of the total population (Decennial Census, 2020). This is three percent higher than Door County (86.2 percent) and nine percent higher than Wisconsin (80.8 percent).

Seasonal Employees

The exchange visitor (J) visa program is available for approved individuals to participate in exchange visitor programs in the United States. There are numerous visitor categories: summer work visas provide opportunities for college and university students to engage in cultural exchange through seasonal work in the United States.

According to the U.S. Department of State, 5 Summer Work Visas (J-1) were issued for participants within the town's zip code area (54246) in 2022.

In addition to seasonal workers from other counties, internships and local businesses draw seasonal workers for the summer tourist season.

Education

Of the town's population age 25 and older, nearly 48 percent of individuals hold a Bachelor's degree or higher, according to the 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates. The town's education rate is significantly higher than county and state education levels. In Door County, roughly 34 percent of individuals age 25 or older hold a Bachelor's degree or higher, while the percentage for Wisconsin is two percent lower at approximately 32 percent.

Commuting

In the town of Washington, just under 73 percent of workers age 16 or older commuted by car, truck, or van (driving alone), which is over 5 percent lower than both the county and state (78.5 percent) (ACS, 2021). The town has higher percentages of workers who walk to work or work from home compared to both the county and state, making up the five percent difference in driving alone. The percentage of workers who walk to work in the town (7.4 percent) is more than double that of the county (3.5 percent) and the state (2.8 percent). Over 13 percent of workers work from home in the town of Washington.

The mean travel time to work in the town is under ten minutes as a result of the limited travel distances imposed by the town's island geography.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate of the civilian labor force is 1.2 percent, less than half of the rates of Door County and Wisconsin (2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates).

Economic Base

Earnings

Median earnings in the town of Washington, in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars, is \$29,500 (ACS, 2021).

Income

Median household income, which includes earnings plus additional income streams, is \$61,250 (ACS, 2021). Median household income in the town is about \$2,000 lower than that of Door County (\$63,856) and \$6,000 lower than Wisconsin (\$67,080).

Industry

The main industry that town residents work in includes educational services, healthcare, and social assistance make up the largest category of workers (14.2 percent). The figure below details the breakdown of industries that residents are employed in.

Significant employers in the town of Washington include [WIZAP committee input on prevalent employers, if known]

Industry



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Earnings vs. Income

According to the U.S. Census Bureau

Earnings are one type of income which are primarily from wages or salaries. In addition to earnings, **income** can also include Social Security payments, pensions, child support, public assistance, annuities, money derived from rental properties, interest and dividends.

Tourism

Tourism drives a significant portion of the economy in the town of Washington.

Reserved



Employment Forecast

Reserved for Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Bay-Area Region employment projections

Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources

This chapter describes the natural and cultural resources that give the town character and create unique management conditions.



The character of the town is highly dependent on physical characteristics of Washington Island and the five additional islands that comprise the town. The shoreline, water resources, topography, and other environmental resources define the cultural and recreational resources of the town. A profile of the town through its natural, agricultural, and cultural resources is outlined in this chapter.

Geology and Soils

Detached from the northern tip of Door County, the town of Washington is a collection of six islands located in Lake Michigan. The WDNR has identified landscapes in Wisconsin with different ecological attributes and management opportunities, and the town is located within the Northern Lake Michigan Coastal Landscape, which includes diverse habitats that provide year-round recreational opportunities, including the Niagara escarpment, wetlands, bogs, forests, and sand dunes.

Geology

According to the UW-Extension Geological and Natural History Survey, the town bedrock consists of Silurian dolomite, a type common throughout the Lake Michigan lakeshore. This bedrock is a significant feature of the town and can be seen exposed in some areas known as the Niagara Escarpment.

Topography

The topography in the town is dictated by the underlying bedrock layer, which creates cliffs and other rock features at the surface level. The elevation above sea level in the town ranges by over 200 feet from under 600 to nearly 800 feet, according to the WDNR. The highest points are located on Rock Island and central Washington Island where Mountain Tower is located.

Soil Characteristics and Limitations

The town is located within the WDNR defined Er soil region, which includes forested, red, sandy, loamy soils.

Reserved for limitations per town feedback. May include shallow depth to bedrock and rocky soil impact on construction and agriculture, etc.

Hydrology

Watershed

All islands that compose the town are within the Lake Michigan basin and drain to the lake. The town is part of the Upper Door County Watershed (WDNR).

Groundwater

The geological layer that underlies the town allows for increased infiltration of surface water and runoff, which can impact groundwater quality. Common sources of groundwater contamination include pesticides and fertilizers, animal waste, and private septic systems.

Shoreline

The town is surrounded by the waters of Lake Michigan and has ___ miles of shoreline. The Niagara Escarpment makes up sections of shoreline, and there are many residences located near the water. In Rock Island State Park, the shoreline is undeveloped and includes bluffs and beaches. Washington's extensive shoreline provides recreational opportunities and draws in tourists.



Environmental Corridors

Environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs), or environmental corridors, represent naturally significant areas that should be protected. The four features of environmental corridors are detailed below, and their location and extent are shown on Map 2.

Wetlands

The WDNR defines wetlands as “where water is at, near or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions.” Wetlands are located on several of the islands in the town of Washington. On Washington Island, extensive wetlands are located in the southwest near Detroit Harbor, the southeast along the Lake Michigan shoreline, and in the central portion of the north half of the island. These are typically located in floodplains, lowland areas, and other places where water pools. Wetlands provide many ecosystem services such as stormwater retention, groundwater recharge, pollution filtration, habitat for plants and animals, scenic open space, and recreational, cultural, educational, and scientific uses.

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designates floodplains and defines the 100-year floodplain as any area that has a 1 percent chance of flooding each year. The town of Washington has very few designated floodplains within its boundaries except for narrow segments adjacent to the waters of Lake Michigan.

Steep Slope

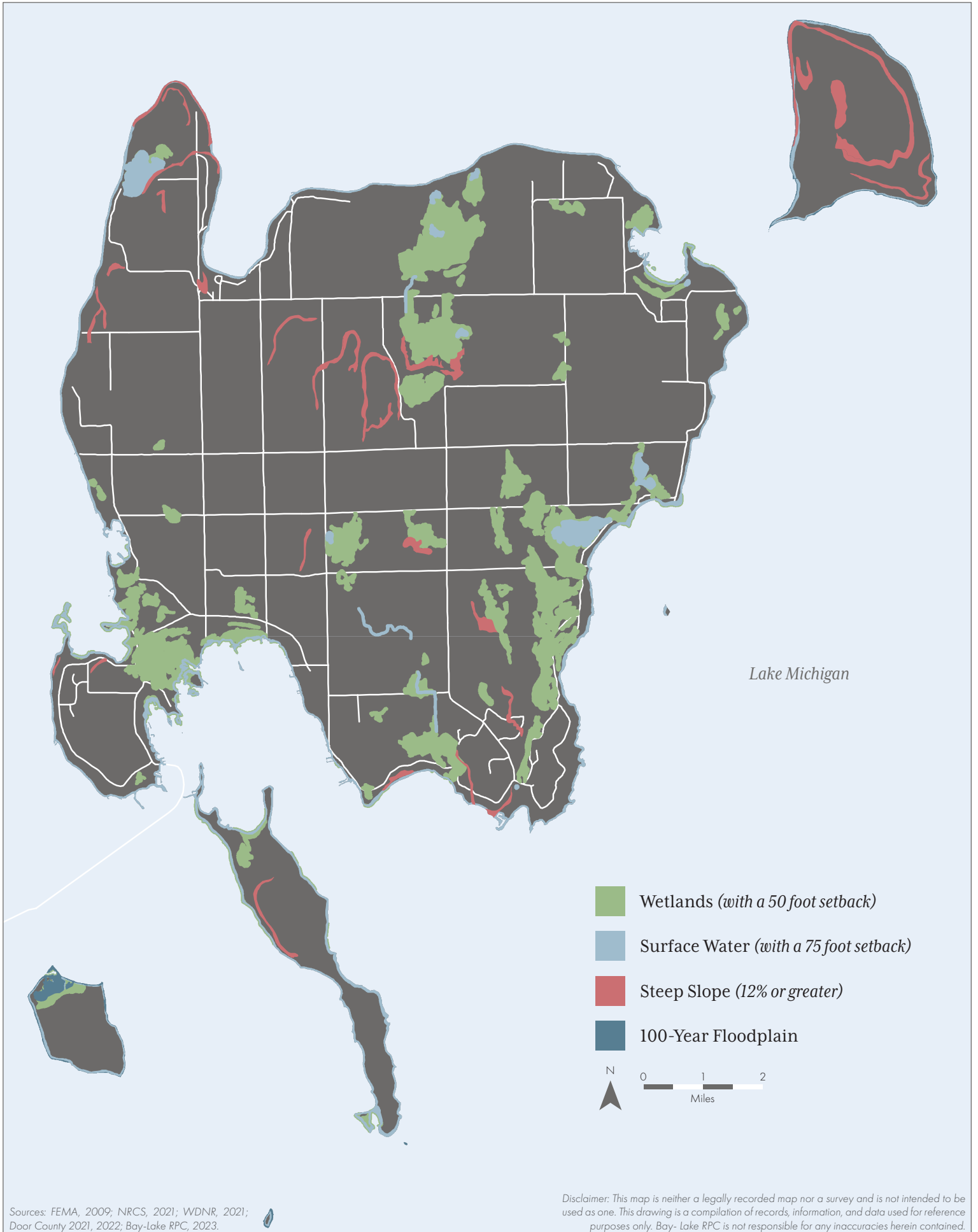
Steep slopes are considered to be those slopes greater than or equal to 12%. Steep slopes are located throughout the town, specifically on Rock Island, in Washington Island’s northwest bluffs, and centrally on Washington Island. These steep slopes provide recreation opportunities and scenery, as well as plant and animal habitat. Special consideration must be made in these areas as development is difficult or impossible due to hazards and cost imposed by the slope conditions.

Surface Waters

Named surface waters in the town of Washington include Little Lake, Big Marsh, Little Marsh, and Coffee Swamp, as well as multiple small, unnamed water features.

Environmental Concerns

Reserved - to be based on WIZAP committee feedback (options: invasive species, threatened and endangered species, climate, shoreline, etc.)



Significant and Scientific Natural Areas

Land Legacy Locations

The WDNR has identified 229 places in the state as being significant for their combination of conservation and recreation potential. Two Land Legacy sites are located within the town of Washington:

Niagara Escarpment

This dolomite ridge runs the full length of Door County and through the town. Its bluffs are visible on Rock Island and on the northeastern shore of Washington Island.

Grand Traverse Islands

The Grand Traverse Islands include Plum, Detroit, and Rock Islands, as well as several small outcroppings.



Niagara Escarpment as seen in lakeshore bluffs on the northwestern tip of Washington Island

State Natural Areas

There are six WDNR state natural areas (SNA) in the town of Washington, listed below. The WDNR website provides an overview of each site, along with recreation details, directions, maps, ownership, and additional resources. These SNAs in the town provide numerous benefits, including wildlife habitat, biodiversity, natural beauty, and recreation.

- Big and Little Marsh
- Coffee Swamp
- Detroit Harbor
- Jackson Harbor Ridges
- Little Lake
- Rock Island Woods

Agricultural Resources

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Door County contains 626 farming operations covering approximately 114,500 acres of land. The town of Washington contains **__ acres of farmland**, or **__ percent of its total area**. Rocky soils and shallow bedrock are limiting conditions in agriculture throughout the county and town.

Reserved - discussion with WIZAP on what town is known for in terms of agriculture



Washington Island Farm Museum

Historic and Cultural Resources

Historic Resources

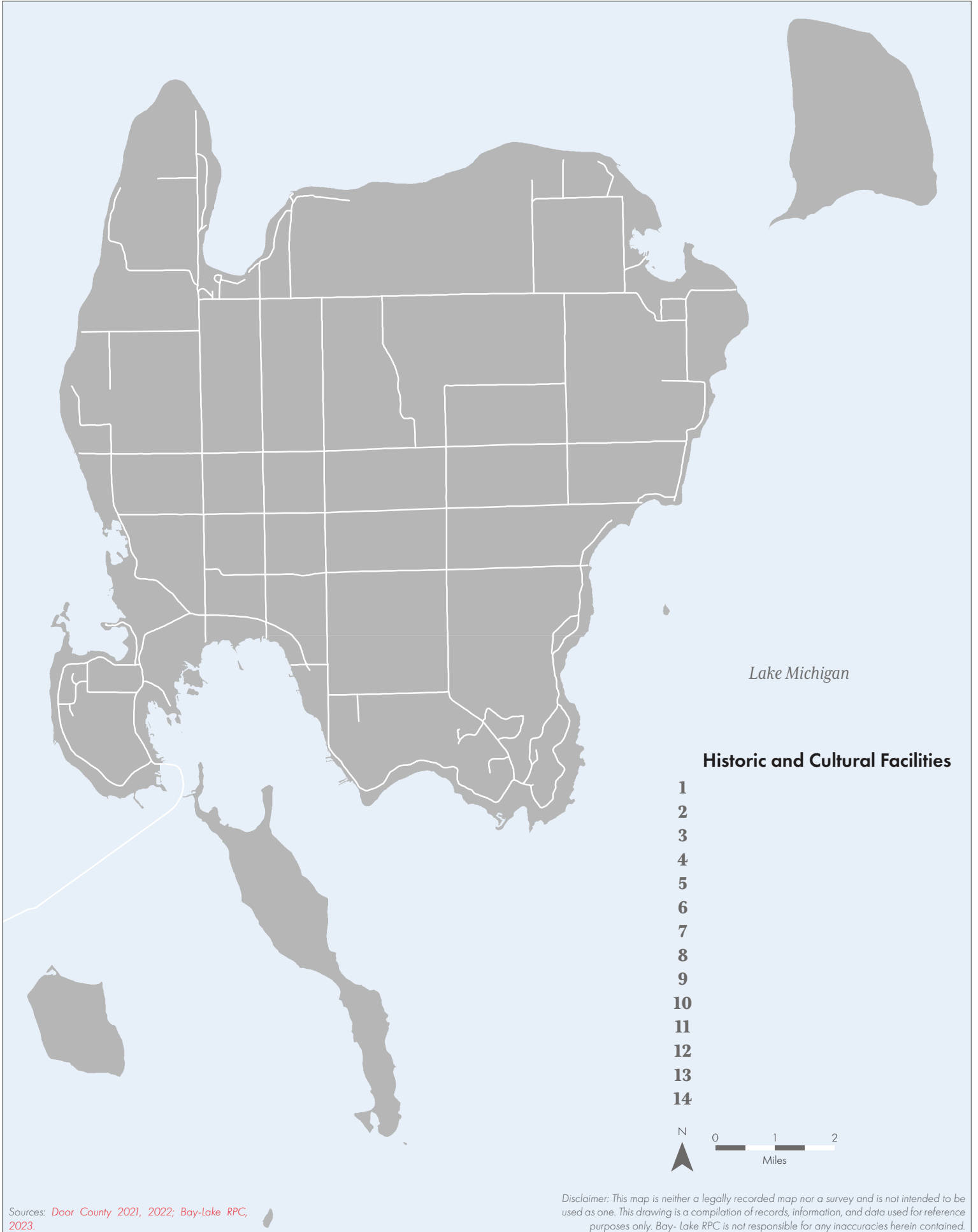
The town of Washington has 69 historically significant sites listed by the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) under their Architecture and History Inventory. 15 of these sites were constructed before 1900. Many of the listed historic sites are homes, but the list also includes churches, schools, stores, and water navigation related structures.

The WHS lists 11 sites on national or state registers of historic places, which include the following:

- Rock Island Historic District
- Little Lake Archaeological District
- Water Tower (Rock Island State Park)
- Pottawatomie Lighthouse
- Plum Island Range Rear Light
- LOUISIANA (Shipwreck)
- Thordarson Estate Historic District
- Plum Island Life-Saving and Light Station
- Iris Shipwreck
- Grape Shot Shipwreck (Schooner)
- Pilot Island Light



Pottawatomie Lighthouse on Rock Island State Park



Cultural Resources

Stavkirke

The Jacobsen Museum

The Jackson Harbor Maritime Museum

Trueblood Performing Arts Center (TPAC)

Washington Island Observer

Sievers School of Fiber Arts

Gathering Ground

[per discussion with town]





Utilities and Community Facilities

This chapter inventories the basic services, facilities, and infrastructure in the town of Washington with assessments of adequacy of provisions over the planning period.



As an island community, the town of Washington has unique challenges that must be considered in provision of community utilities and facilities.

Utilities

Sewer and Wastewater

How are sewage and wastewater in the town managed?

Water Supply

The town does not have a public water system, and residents primarily utilize groundwater through private wells for domestic, industrial, commercial, and agricultural purposes (please confirm).

Power/Electricity

How is electricity in the town supplied?

Solid Waste and Recycling

Washington Island Exchange / Town Dump

Garbage and recycling may be dropped off at the landfill in town bags at 1076 Gunnaugsson Road during hours of operation. Bags can be purchased at the landfill and town office.

Going Garbage and Recycling, Inc.

Many residents receive residential service from Going Garbage & Recycling, Inc. for roadside garbage and recycling pickup. The town does not have a contract for this service (please confirm).

Telecommunications and Internet

Broadband and cellular service in the town is available from several providers.

Community Facilities and Services

Community Center

The Community Center is located at 910 Main Road and contains several town facilities and services. It houses the medical clinic, optometrist and dentist offices, the library, the town office, town archives, and a large assembly hall.

Town Office

The Town Office is located inside the Community Center and offers multiple services, including filing town permits, purchasing town garbage bags and cemetery plots, and providing general information.

Library

The Washington Island Library is a branch of the Door County Library system. Patrons may request materials from other system libraries if this branch does not have what they need.

Archives

What services does the archives provide?

Town Shop

The Department of Public Works is based in the Town Shop located at 1291 Airport Road. The department manages much of the public infrastructure in the town and is responsible for trees, streets, parks, and other public spaces.

Emergency Services

Police

The Washington Island Police Department is located at 1045 Main Road. It consists of two full time officers ([please confirm and provide any additional information](#)).

Fire and Search and Rescue

The Washington Island Volunteer Fire Department is located at 1291 Airport Road. It consists of a Fire Chief and volunteer firefighters who provide firefighting and other emergency responses in the town.

Cemeteries

The Washington Township Cemetery is located at 1860 Cemetery Road. Burial sites may be obtained from the town office by both residents and nonresidents.

Care Facilities

Healthcare

Medical clinic, dental, and optometry services are all available in the Community Center. The only hospital in Door County is Door County Medical Center located in Sturgeon Bay. It provides a wide range of specialties, including Primary Care, the Women's and Children's Center, the Door Orthopedic Center, Behavioral Health, General Surgery, the Door County Cancer Center, a skilled nursing facility, and rehabilitation services facilities. A satellite clinic is also located in the village of Sister Bay.

Childcare

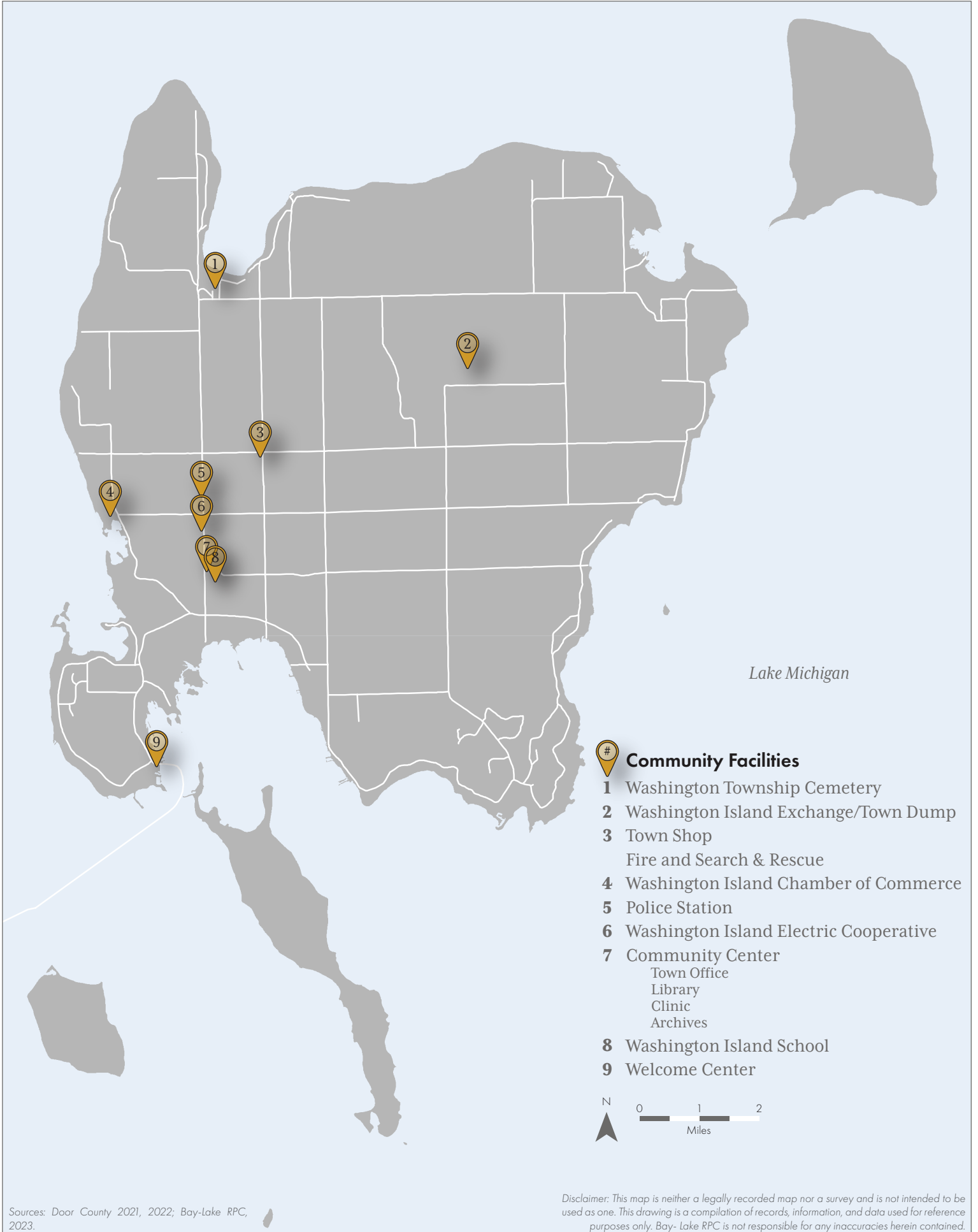
[Are there any childcare facilities or businesses in the town?](#)

Educational Facilities

Washington Island School District

The Washington Island School District serves students in grades 4K through 12. The district has one facility located at 888 Main Road.





Park and Recreation Facilities

Mosling Recreation Center

The Mosling Recreation Center is located near the school and Community Center at 1877 Lakeview Road. The “Rec” promotes wellness and community and provides many facilities, amenities, and classes for members to use.

Parks

Little Lake

Little Lake is the only inland lake on Washington Island. It is located on the northwestern edge of the island and the pier can be accessed from the end of Little Lake Road.

Schoolhouse Beach

Schoolhouse Beach is one of the few smooth stone limestone beaches in the world. There is a swimming area marked by buoys and a raft during the summer. This park also includes picnic areas with grills, a pavilion, changing rooms, and bathrooms. Please do not take rocks from the beach.

People’s Park

People’s Park is a small park located on the western shore of Washington Island on Little Lake Road. It is located on a bluff and does not have water access. It is a great location for watching the sunset over Green Bay, and it has a few picnic tables, a fire pit, and a grill

Percy Johnson County Park

Percy Johnson County Park is located on the eastern side of the island at the end of Lakeview Road. It has a beach and the water is shallow, and there are several amenities including restrooms.

Gislason Beach

Gislason Beach is located on Detroit Harbor on the southern end of Washington Island. The beach is ungroomed and on the shore are several wooden swings.

Jackson Harbor Ridges

Jackson Harbor Ridges are located on the northeastern side of Washington Island. Habitat within the ridges varies and harbors several coastal plant communities and attracts birds and waterfowl. Jackson Harbor Ridges is a WDNR designated State Natural Area.

Washington Island Ballpark

The Washington Island Ballpark is home to Little League baseball, the Islanders adult baseball team, fourth of July fireworks displays, and an ice rink during the winter.

Sand Dunes Park

Sand Dunes Park is a white sand beach dune located on the southern end of Washington Island.

Heritage Trail

Heritage Trail runs along Lobdell Point Road and can be accessed via Henning Road. It is a primarily wood chip lined path that goes through woods and long grasses.

Mountain Park and Lookout Tower

Mountain Park and Lookout Tower are centrally located on Washington Island. Visitors can enjoy picnic areas at the street level or climb 186 steps up the hill and tower.

Jill J.J. Jorgenson Memorial Park

Jill J.J. Jorgenson Memorial Park overlooks Washington Harbor on the northwestern corner of Washington Island. Visitors can see Rock Island to the east and St. Martin’s Island to the north on clear days.

Red Barn Park

Red Barn Park is across the street from Gislason Beach along Detroit Harbor on the southern end of Washington Island. This park has picnic tables, a playground, water bottle filling station, restrooms, and events in the summer.

