



Village of Port Edwards

Reuse and Redevelopment Plan

Acknowledgements

Village Board

- Betsy Mancl, President
- Caleb McGregor, Vice President
- Tiara Grunden
- Jennifer Moore
- Lonn Radtke
- Erik Saylor
- Joe Zurfluh

City Staff

- Duane Gau, Interim Village Administrator
- Ben Martinson, Public Works Director
- Diane Tremmel, Clerk/Treasurer

Village Planning Commission

- Tiara Grunden
- Doug Kasten
- Bob Kroll
- Lisa Miller
- Scott Stewart

Department of Natural Resources

- Michael Prager
- Candice Quandt

Vandewalle & Associates

- Scott Harrington, AICP
- Scott Heacock
- Elona Bartnick
- Jeff Maloney
- Dean Proctor
- Dan Eckberg, AICP

This plan was made possible with funding provided by the Wisconsin DNR Remediation and Redevelopment Program.

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Introduction

The Village of Port Edwards was greatly affected by the closure of the Domtar Paper Mill in 2008. At the time it closed, the Mill provided over 500 direct jobs and an additional 800 indirect jobs, which was already down significantly from the more than 1,200 jobs it once directly supported on-site. Shortly after the closure, the Village assembled a detailed plan for redevelopment of the property in partnership with the new property owner, DMI Acquisitions.

In the years after the Mill's closure, redevelopment and reuse of the Mill and surrounding buildings has been slower than expected. Understandably, Village residents and elected officials are frustrated by the lack of redevelopment progress on the property. The delay began when the demolition contractor for the project filed for bankruptcy in 2015. This resulted in years of litigation between DMI and the demolition contractor. Now that their litigation is resolved, DMI plans to resume demolition on the Mill building in 2024. As of the writing of this plan, DMI was pursuing a demolition permit approval and a development agreement with the Village.

Given the many years of delay, the Village is eager to move this process along as quickly as possible. This plan seeks to lay the groundwork for a quick and realistic redevelopment that can resolve this persistent issue for the Village of Port Edwards. With progress once again occurring on the site, this plan revisited earlier planning efforts and explored the surrounding context for additional opportunities to generate tax base for the Village.

The largest unknown for the planning area is redevelopment of the former Administration Building. The building sits on two separate parcels, and the northern portion was transferred to Wood County due to delinquent property taxes in 2022, while the other half remains owned by DMI. This building presents a great challenge and opportunity for redevelopment in this area. This analysis culminated in four scenario alternatives that set a vision that reflects current economic trends and community priorities. This plan was made possible with funding provided by the Wisconsin DNR Remediation and Redevelopment Program.

2008 – Domtar closes the Mill.

2013 – DMI purchases the Mill property.

2014 – DMI begins demo.

2015 – Demo ends prematurely due to contractor going bankrupt.

2017 – DMI sells warehouse property. Begins operating as a warehouse for Milk Specialties Global.

2022 – Computer Data Center and Administration building are transferred to Wood County due to delinquent property taxes.

2023- DMI resolves litigation with demolition contractor. Begins process of reapplying for demolition permits and hiring new demolition contractor.

2023 – Investor purchases computer data center.



Existing Property Conditions and Ownership

The property has a long and complex history with a variety of issues that need to be considered during any redevelopment. Based on conversations with individuals familiar with the properties, this section documents the overarching property conditions and conditions of buildings within the study area.

Overarching Property Conditions:

VPLE: Prior to selling the property, Domtar obtained site closure and a Voluntary Liability Exemption (VPLE) for the entire Mill property. There was significant environmental testing and remediation of the property conducted as a result of that process. There are a few small areas of continuing obligations on the Study Site that are encapsulated and cannot be disturbed. There are no known environmental issues on the property for the former Administration Building.

Compatible Reuses: The proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning for the Mill properties allows a wide range of uses, including residential, commercial, and industrial. DMI plans to increase the number of rail spurs on their property and lease out spaces primarily for industrial uses. Based on the configuration of the property and location of those planned improvements, we have determined that residential and other non-industrial uses are feasible on the Administration Building site.

Parcel Lines: When the Mill had a single property owner, parcel lines had no bearing on the location of new buildings or utilities. This left unresolved issues of utilities on the property without proper easements and parcel lines that divide buildings in half. Most of these issues will be resolved as DMI completes the Village's PUD process and replats the property. There are remaining issues concerning covenants between property owners for maintenance of internal utility and private road infrastructure. The implementation phase will need to consider the responsibilities each property owner will have for developing and maintaining the shared infrastructure in the area.

Public Water Access: The Mill Pond is a great amenity for the Village with great views and calm waters. However, there is very limited public access available. The Administration Building site provides a great opportunity to create access to the Mill Pond. A planned bike trail along the waterfront will create a complementary recreational asset. The proximity to the historic John Alexander statue adds an additional element of community importance to

this location. These factors make this an ideal location for a brewpub or restaurant that can serve as a resting point along the trail for people to relax and take in the scenery. A brewpub or restaurant could support additional recreational facilities for the Mill Pond and surrounding open space without creating new maintenance costs for the Village.

Flooding: Basement flooding and leaking roofs have been an ongoing issue in the Study Site, particularly for the Administration Building and CDC. These buildings have water and mold damage that has been unaddressed while they have sat vacant for years. Based on the assessment of individuals that have recently walked through the buildings, rehabbing these buildings would, at a minimum, require completely gutting the inside down to the studs and starting from scratch.

Asbestos: Due to the age of the buildings in the Study Site, there is a significant amount of asbestos in nearly every building. The increased costs of asbestos remediation need to be considered in any rehabilitation or redevelopment of buildings on the property.

Economic Conditions: Wood County is designated as a “Distressed County” by WEDC, and the Study Site is located in an Opportunity Zone. Although attracting new business to an economically challenged region will be difficult, these designations open up new sources of funding that can be used to implement the plan. Additionally, initial stakeholder outreach revealed that existing property owners are unsure of the best industries to target for recruitment. Understanding and communicating the local economy’s strengths and developing a list of target industries for recruitment is an important factor in implementation.

Waterfront Trail: A long-discussed feature on the Study Site is a trail through the property along the waterfront of the Mill Pond, hydro spillway, and the Wisconsin River. Engineering concepts already have been completed for the trail, but funding that was previously allocated to the project was redirected due to ongoing property maintenance issues on the Mill Building. When complete, the trail would provide a riverfront path for Village residents to enjoy, complete with a public art installation honoring the history of the Mill.

Power: The site was originally powered by the Domtar-owned hydro dams. In 2014, the hydro dams were disconnected from the site and new distribution lines to Alliant Energy were installed. However, only the Warehouse was reconnected with new transformers. All of the buildings on the Mill property have transformers, but not all of them are connected to power yet. Getting all of the buildings up and running will likely require significant internal rewiring.

Downtown: Market Avenue serves as the Village of Port Edward’s historic downtown and is the only walkable business district in the Village. It features Village Hall, a Post Office, restaurant, hair salon, and a few other local businesses. Local businesses in the downtown were severely impacted by the closure of the Domtar Mill in 2008. Almost overnight, the community transitioned from a job center into a bedroom community. Since 2008, the Village has taken bold efforts to revitalize business in the community to reestablish its commercial core and bring jobs back into the downtown area. The Downtown is less than a 10-minute walk from the Mill property.



Surrounding Building Conditions and Plans

Many of the properties in this area are under private ownership and already have detailed plans in place for future development. The key exception is the former Administration Building. The split ownership of the property is a major impediment to redevelopment. Additionally, there is no clear vision for desired redevelopment. With that in mind, the scenario alternatives in this plan focus on the former Administration Building to create a clear vision that is compatible with adjacent properties. Map #1 details the existing ownership and usage of nearby properties.

Former Administration Building: This 153,000 square foot, three story building was expanded over time and is located on two separate parcels. The northern section was foreclosed on by Wood County due to delinquent property taxes, while the southern section is still owned by DMI. Potential investors have stated that the split ownership of the building is a major factor in their decision not to purchase and redevelop this building. Resolving the split ownership of this building is a critical component to putting this blighted property to productive use. DMI's previous demolition permit included a concept of property lines that put the administration building on a single parcel. The scenario alternatives in this plan used those proposed property lines as the basis for the designs.

Additionally, the building's configuration (which is actually four separate, interconnected structures) and prior uses for office, storage, laboratory, and pro-type manufacturing spaces creates difficulties in adapting to other uses. In 2020, the Village hired an engineering firm to investigate the building conditions throughout the Mill property. A review of that report, along with building blueprints, to determine the reuse potential for each building can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the west wing is the most intact and may be salvageable. However, the rest of the building is in poor condition and ill-suited for reuse. The salvageable portion of the building is much wider than a typical residential building footprint and would be most suitable for flex space use.

Mill Building: The Mill was vacated in 2008 and has been empty since that time. In 2014, demolition began on the Mill but was cut short when the demolition contractor filed for bankruptcy. After years of delays, DMI has resolved their litigation with the contractor and plans to resume demolition on the Mill building during 2024. DMI recently hired a new demolition contractor and is in the process of filling out the four required demolition permits for the property (state, local, FERC, and DNR). They have hired an engineering firm to complete the platting and redesign process for the building. Conceptual renderings of the rehabbed Mill Building are already complete. In short, the southern portion of the Mill Building will be demolished, the southern exterior wall will be replaced, and the remaining 410,000 square foot, two-story building will be subdivided and leased. The building tenants are expected to be industrial in nature, and DMI has begun targeted outreach to prospective tenants. The building is served by rail spurs and will have newly constructed loading docks for trucks at both levels. Truck traffic will be routed through Filtration Plant Road.

Chip Building: Currently located on the same lot as the Mill Building, this 24,500 square foot, single story building will be located on a separate lot after the PUD and replatting for the entire site are approved. The building features 23,000 square feet of open area with 40-foot ceilings in addition to a small office space and rest rooms. It has rail access and is suitable for manufacturing, processing, or assembly-type uses.



YMCA Building: Located across the street to the north of the Warehouse, this building has been largely abandoned after a new YMCA was built in nearby Wisconsin Rapids. The building offers limited access to a 24-hour fitness center, daycare, boxing gym, and basketball court. Large portions of the complex are in disrepair and have been closed to the public. The YMCA is starting an internal process with the board of directors and additional stakeholders to determine future reuse for the property.

Domtar Hydro Plant: Domtar has retained ownership of the Hydro Plant that currently is attached to the east end of the Mill Building, as well as much of the shoreline along the Mill Pond. The Hydro Plant provided power to the Study Site when Domtar owned the entire property, and still powers Domtar-owned properties outside of the Study Site. However, Wisconsin law prevents a non-utility from selling power to another user. As a result, the Hydro Plant was disconnected from the Study Site after the property was sold.

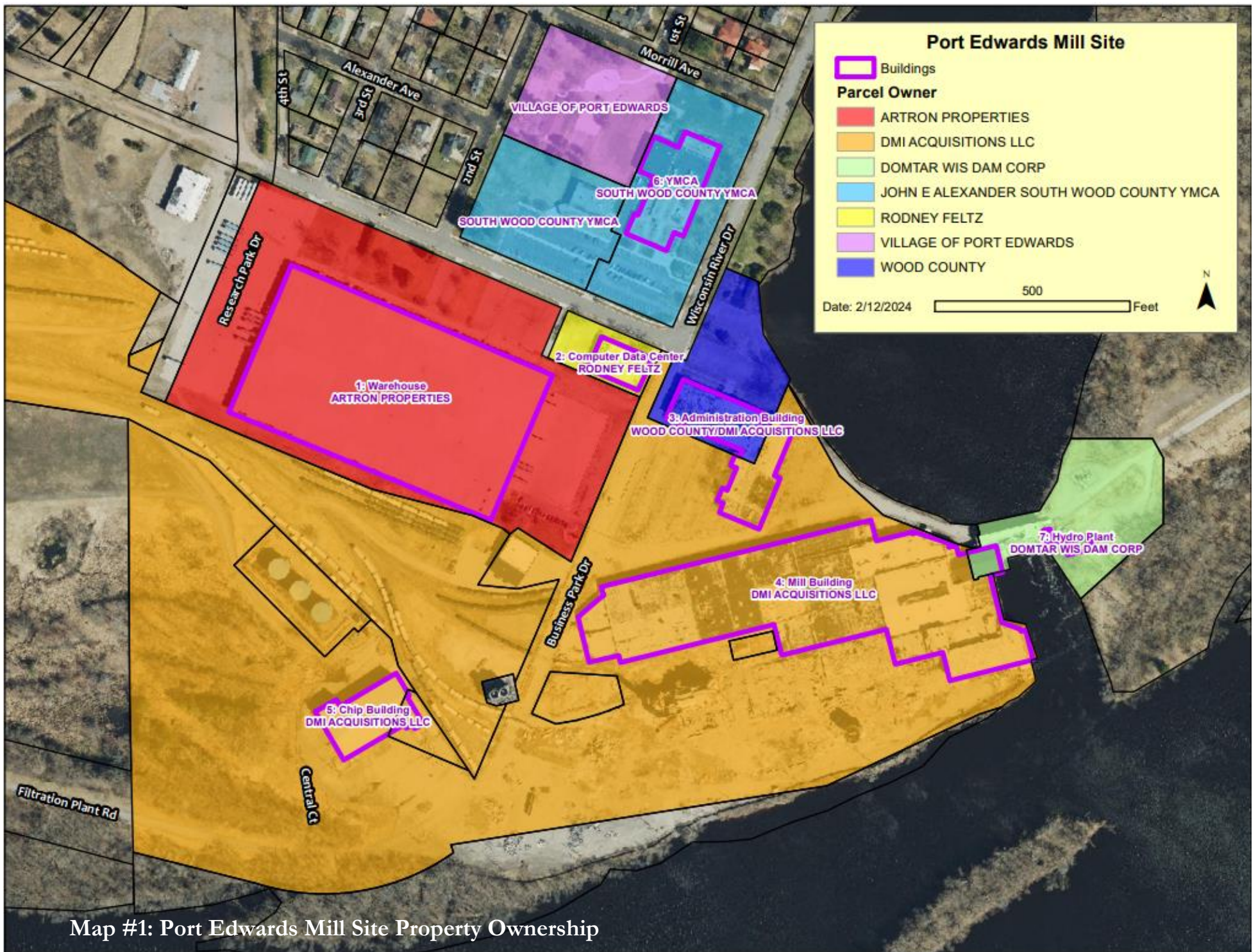
Former Computer Data Center (CDC): Formerly owned by DMI, this 12,500 square foot building was recently foreclosed on by Wood County due to delinquent property taxes. This single-purpose structure has not been occupied in more than a decade and has water damage throughout the building, which creates challenges for reuse. In addition, the basement of the building, where the utility systems are located, is subject to frequent flooding. There is also asbestos located throughout the building.

The original reuse plan for this building was to continue using it as a computer data center. It received some initial interest, but ultimately all potential tenants passed on the building due to its deteriorated structural condition.

In late 2023, an investor purchased the property from Wood County. He intends to rehab the building for industrial/manufacturing use.

Warehouse: This 290,000 square foot building is owned by Artron Properties and occupied by a single long-term tenant (Milk Specialties Global). The tenant also leases the former truck repair building located to the immediate west. Artron Properties recently invested in a new fire suppression system for the warehouse connected to the Village's water system due to their concerns about maintenance of a shared system with DMI. However, the Village's water system may need to be upgraded or moved to serve the warehouse's new system and accommodate anticipated future expansions.





Map #1: Port Edwards Mill Site Property Ownership



Regional Economic and Housing Trends

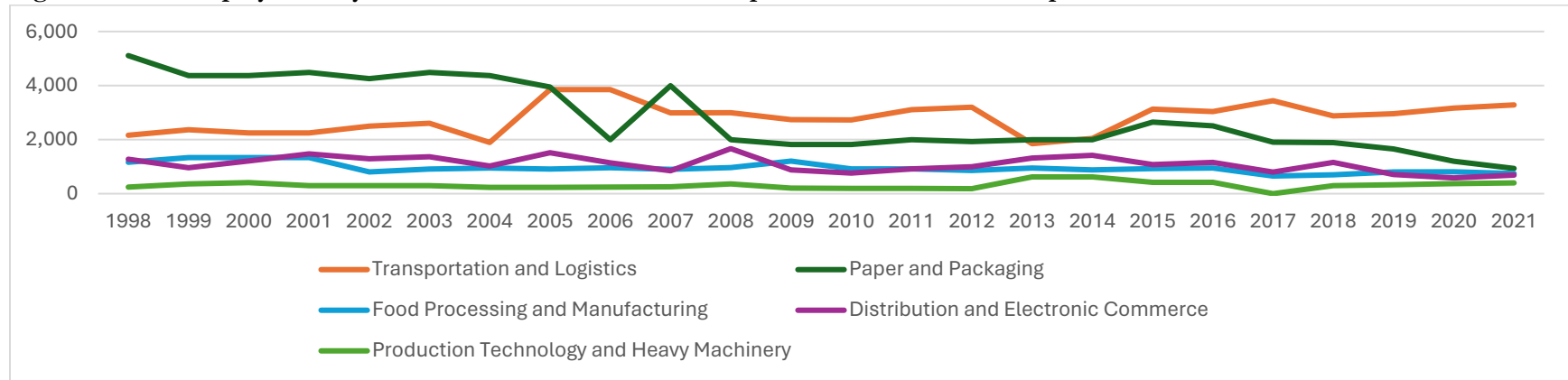
Understanding regional economic and housing trends is an important aspect of determining future reuses for the property. Key trends are highlighted in this section, and additional economic and demographic information can be found in Appendix C.

Economic Trends

Historically, Wood County was known for the strength of the paper industry. In recent years, the County has been hit with large job losses from closures of large established paper mills. In Port Edwards, the Mill closed in 2008 and has yet to see redevelopment or reuse of the main mill property and many of the surrounding buildings. Wood County is designated as a “Distressed County” by WEDC, and the Village of Port Edwards is located in an Opportunity Zone. Attracting new business will be difficult, but the Distressed County and Opportunity Zone designations can potentially attract investment to the area.

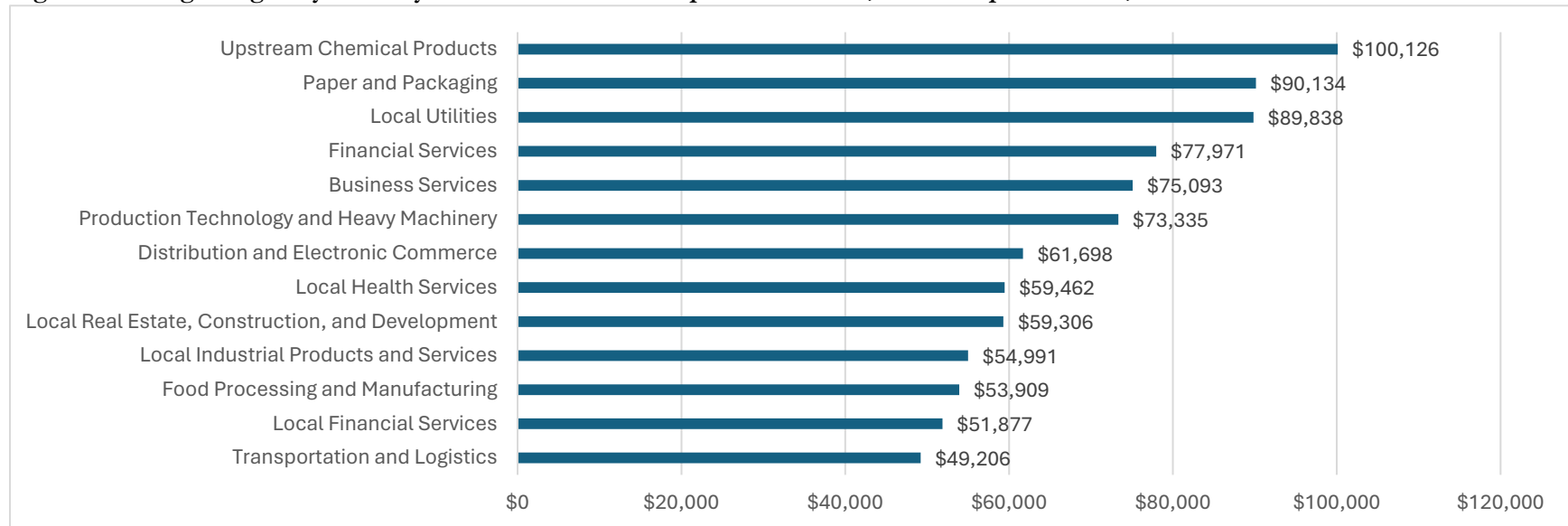
The Village of Port Edwards is located within the Wisconsin Rapids-Marshfield, WI Micropolitan Area. As shown in the graph below, the total employment in the Paper and Packaging industry has declined significantly. At the same time, the Transportation and Logistics industry has grown. Despite the large losses of jobs from paper mill closures, the unemployment rate in the region is 3.1%. A metric commonly used by economists for “full employment” is approximately 3-5%. This means the region has reached “full employment” and has a shortage of workers for available jobs. However, it is important to note that although the decrease in Paper and Packaging jobs has largely been offset by an increase in Transportation and Logistics jobs, the average salary for Transportation and Logistics jobs (\$49,206) is significantly lower than the average salary for Paper and Packaging jobs (\$90,134). These factors all indicate that future job recruitment efforts in the Village should focus on higher wage industries to replace the high-wage jobs that were lost when the paper mills closed. This can be accomplished through targeted outreach efforts to individual businesses and by creating community amenities that attract and retain a high-wage workforce.

Figure 1: Total Employment By Economic Cluster - Wisconsin Rapids-Marshfield, WI Micropolitan Area, 1998-2021



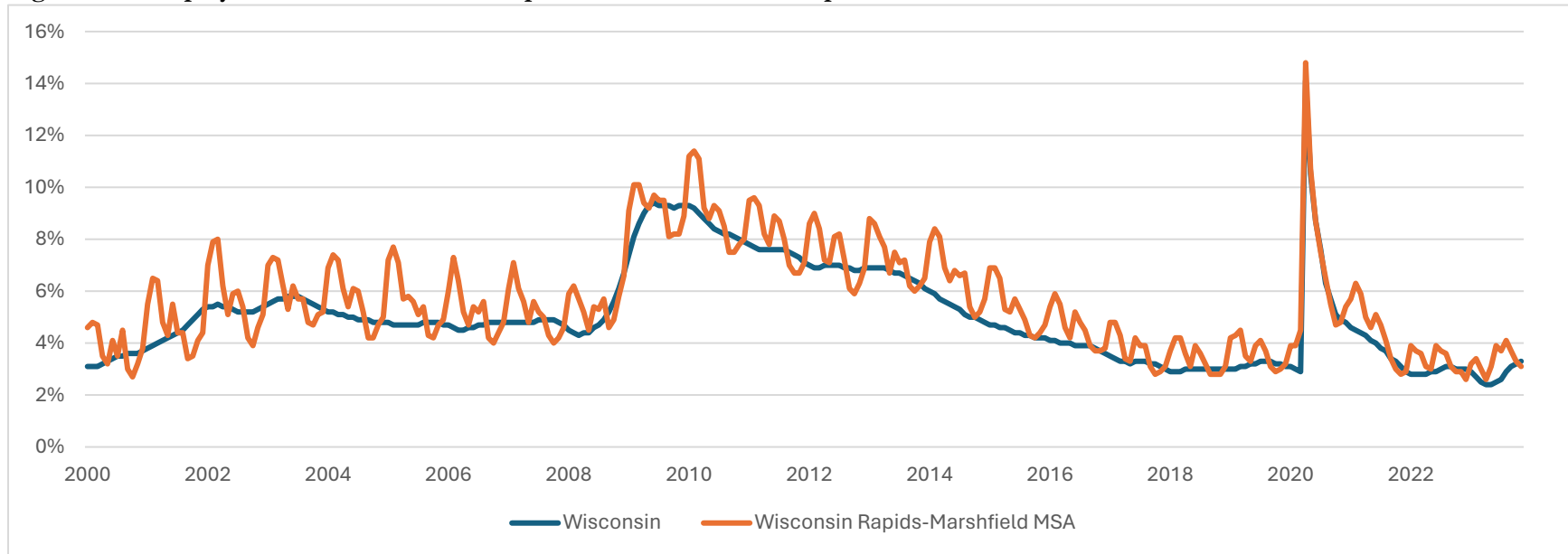
Source: U.S. Cluster Mapping Project

Figure 2: Average Wages By Industry Cluster - Wisconsin Rapids-Marshfield, WI Micropolitan Area, 2021



Source: U.S. Cluster Mapping Project

Figure 3: Unemployment Rate - Wisconsin Rapids-Marshfield, WI Micropolitan Area, 2000-2021



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Housing Trends

Interviews with stakeholders and a review of U.S. Census Bureau data revealed a lack of workforce housing in the Village. Some stakeholders stated that a lack of housing affordable to middle-class families is a barrier to filling existing jobs.

A key metric for determining supply and demand in the housing market is the vacancy rate. If too many units are vacant, it indicates a lack of demand for housing. If not enough units are vacant, it indicates a lack of supply for housing that makes it difficult for new residents to move into the community. For owner-occupied housing, a 2% vacancy rate is considered “healthy.” For renter-occupied housing, a 5% vacancy rate is considered “healthy.” These are both general rules of thumb, but are a good starting point for communities to understand the housing needs in their community.

Port Edwards is a small community, and therefore has a fairly significant margin of error in U.S. Census Bureau estimates. To account for this, trends in Wisconsin and Wood County as a whole were included for comparison. Port Edwards and Wood County both show a lower vacancy rate than the state as a whole for owner-occupied housing and are well below the “healthy” rate of 2%. Rental occupancy rates are closer to a “healthy” vacancy rate of 5%.

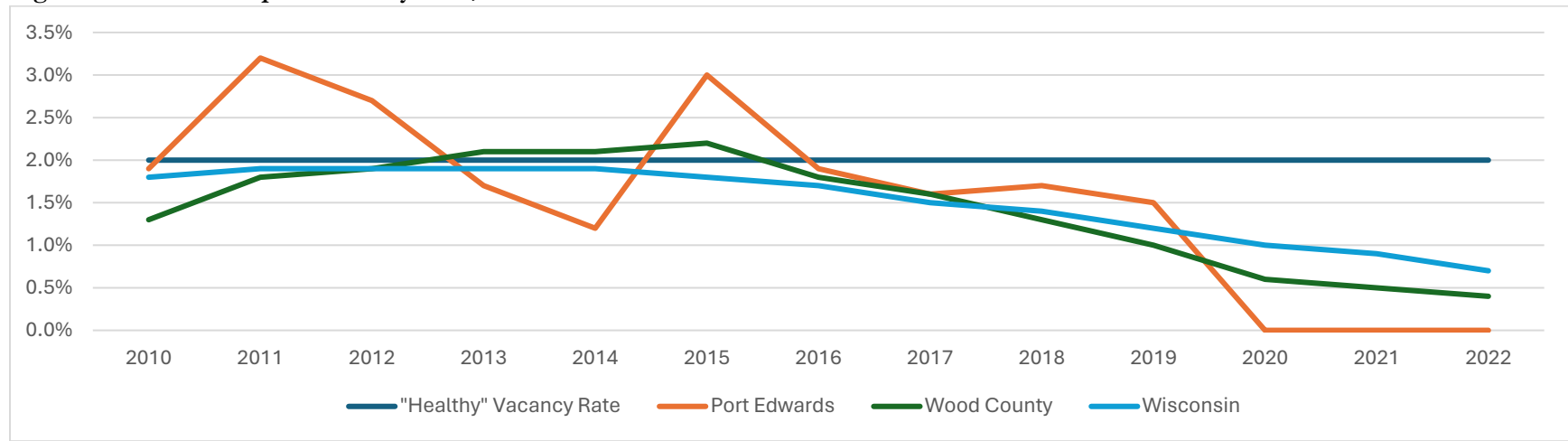
These trends are exacerbated by the lack of new housing built within the community in recent years. More than 85% of the existing housing units in Port Edwards were built prior to 1980, and 21% were built prior to 1939. Units built prior to 1980 are more likely to have environmental hazards such as asbestos, lead paint, and lead pipes. These are all factors that may push prospective residents to choose to live in a neighboring community instead of choosing Port Edwards.

Most developable land within the Village’s municipal boundary is already developed. Future residential development will require either growing outwards (annexing land from neighboring towns) or growing upwards (infill redevelopment for multi-family units in larger buildings).

Like other communities in the region, Port Edwards has struggled with a declining population. This is attributable to a number of factors, such as the loss of jobs from the Mill site, lack of new housing construction, and an increasing number of knowledge workers moving to larger metros for increased economic opportunity. A declining population poses challenges for recruiting new businesses or residential development to the Village, particularly if there is not sufficient workforce or new households to meet demand for new development. Reversing this trend will require action from the community to attract new residents. In addition to attracting new jobs, local communities can attract new residents by investing in amenities that increase the overall quality of life in the Village. Existing initiatives in the Village to rejuvenate the downtown, create a bike path through the Village, and maintain local park space are all important tools for attracting new residents to the area.

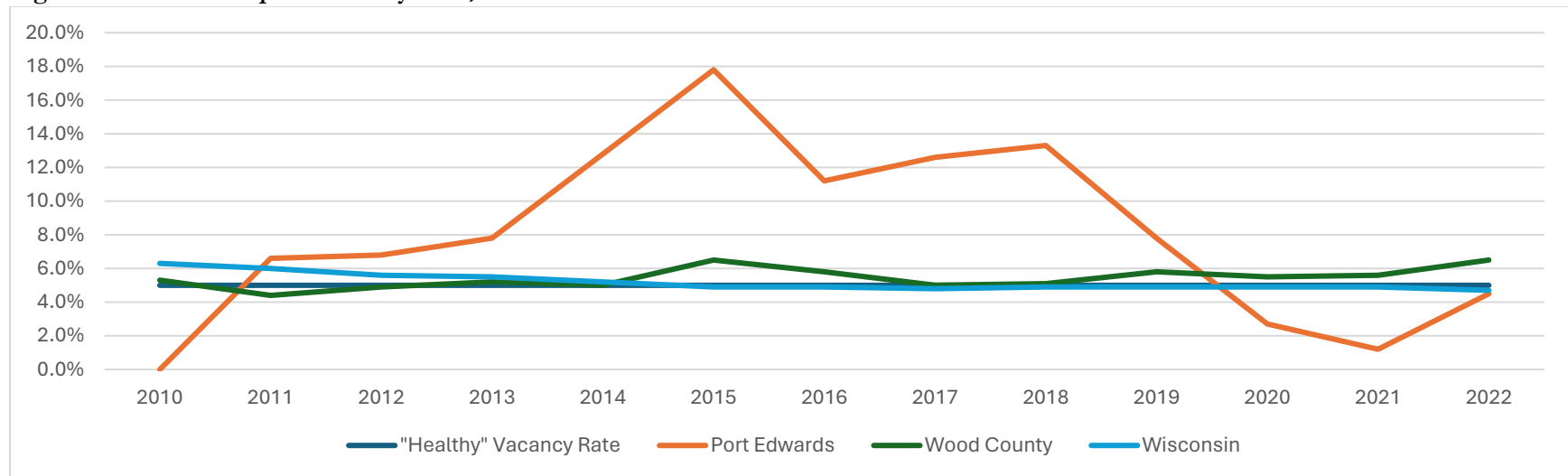


Figure 4: Owner-Occupied Vacancy Rate, 2010-2022



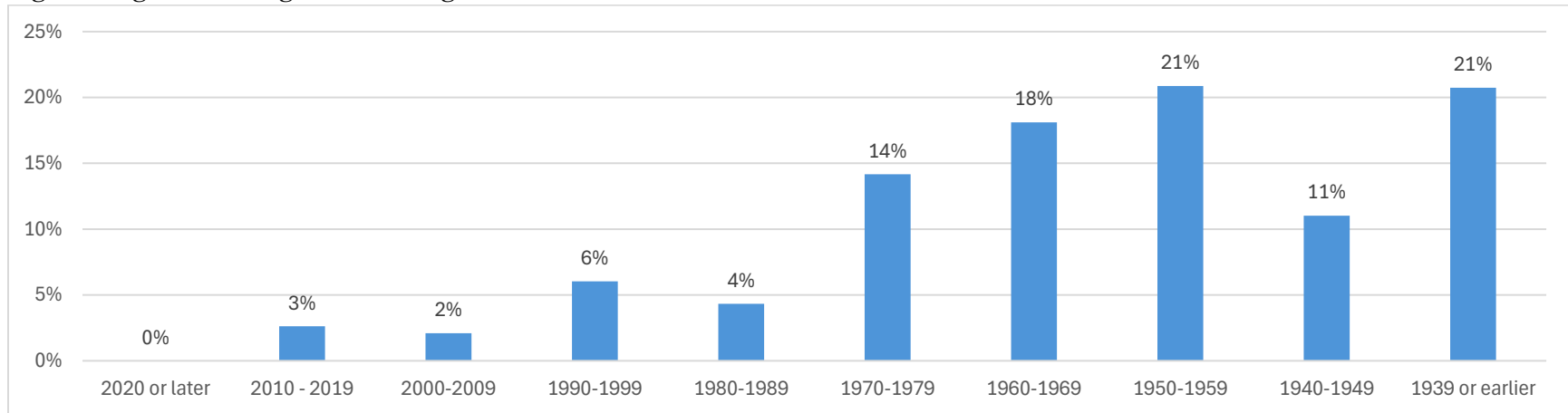
Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5 year estimates

Figure 5: Rental-Occupied Vacancy Rate, 2010-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-year estimates

Figure 6: Age of Housing Stock – Village of Port Edwards, 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Figure 7: Population 2000-2023

	2000	2010	2020	2023*
Port Edwards	1,944	1,818	1,762	1,736
Wood County	75,555	74,749	74,207	73,706
Wisconsin	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	5,951,400

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2020 Census.

*Source: WisDOA 2023 Population Estimates by Municipality



Public Input Summary

The Village held a public meeting on February 13, 2024 to get feedback from Village residents and elected officials. The meeting focused on determining overarching priorities for the Mill property along with identifying preferred reuses for the Administration Building and Computer Data Center, both of which were owned by Wood County at the outset of the planning process.

The top priorities for the community are quickly redeveloping the site, increasing the tax base, and creating new opportunities for business. Attendees were less concerned about the specific reuses that could occur for each building. Based on the public feedback, the concept alternatives for the plan focus on the Administration Building property to identify opportunities that could be quickly and effectively executed.

When asked about new public amenities on the property, attendees did not want the Village to be responsible for maintaining new park space. There was still support for a new trail along the pond that is planned to be constructed as part of the DMI redevelopment of the Mill building.

Lastly, attendees were blunt about the challenges for redeveloping this area. They noted that the Mill was supposed to be demolished over 10 years ago, and they are incredibly frustrated by the lack of action to complete the project. During the meeting, attendees identified solving the split ownership of the Administration Building as the key challenge for redevelopment of that property. They also noted that there will be challenges recruiting new businesses to the area.

Detailed Public Meeting and Survey Results

When asked to rank potential reuses for the building on a scale from 1-5, the top priorities were increasing the property tax base, creating new jobs/business opportunities, and redeveloping the properties quickly.

Overarching Priorities	Average Score
Increase property tax base	4.56
Create new jobs/ business opportunities	4.44
Redevelop/rehab properties quickly	4.11
Create new housing	3.44
Create new public/ recreational amenities	3.11
Reuse existing facilities to the maximum extent possible	3.00
Create new shopping choices	2.89
Create new health care/ institutional facilities	2.89
Create public lake access on Nepco pond.	2.89
Create new hotel space	1.89

When asked to rank potential reuses for the Computer Data Center on a scale of 1-5, respondents were relatively neutral given the desire to redevelop these properties as quickly as possible, attendees were encouraged by the recent purchase of the property and noted support for the new investor's plan for Industrial/Manufacturing uses. Due to the likelihood of this building getting rehabbed within its existing footprint, it was removed from consideration for the scenario alternatives.

Priority Reuses: Computer Data Center	Average Score
Industrial/Manufacturing	3.78
Office	3.44
Retail	2.89

“I’ve been here my entire life, and my family has been part of the Mill for generations. It needs to be cleaned up and movement needs to happen.”

“The Mill closed the year before I moved to Port Edwards. I have seen the economic changes play out in the community and school. The most important piece is to revitalize the area.”

When asked to rank potential reuses for the Administration Building on a scale of 1-5, respondents were relatively neutral and prioritized industrial/manufacturing, office, workforce housing, and public lake access. In addition to the written comments, a few attendees noted skepticism about the usefulness of public lake access in this location given other nearby areas where public access is possible. Similarly, some attendees noted concerns with new housing in this location due to truck traffic from the warehouse and neighboring industrial uses.

Priority Reuses: Administration Building	Average Score
Industrial/Manufacturing	3.67
Office	3.56
Workforce Housing	3.22
Public Lake Access	3.22
Retail	3.11
Senior Housing	3.11
Park Space	3.11
Restaurant/Brewpub	2.89
Health Care/Institutional	2.89
Hotel	2.78

“Being a newer resident, but lifelong to the area, it is important to rebuild and clean up the area to create tax base and utilize a beautiful area.”

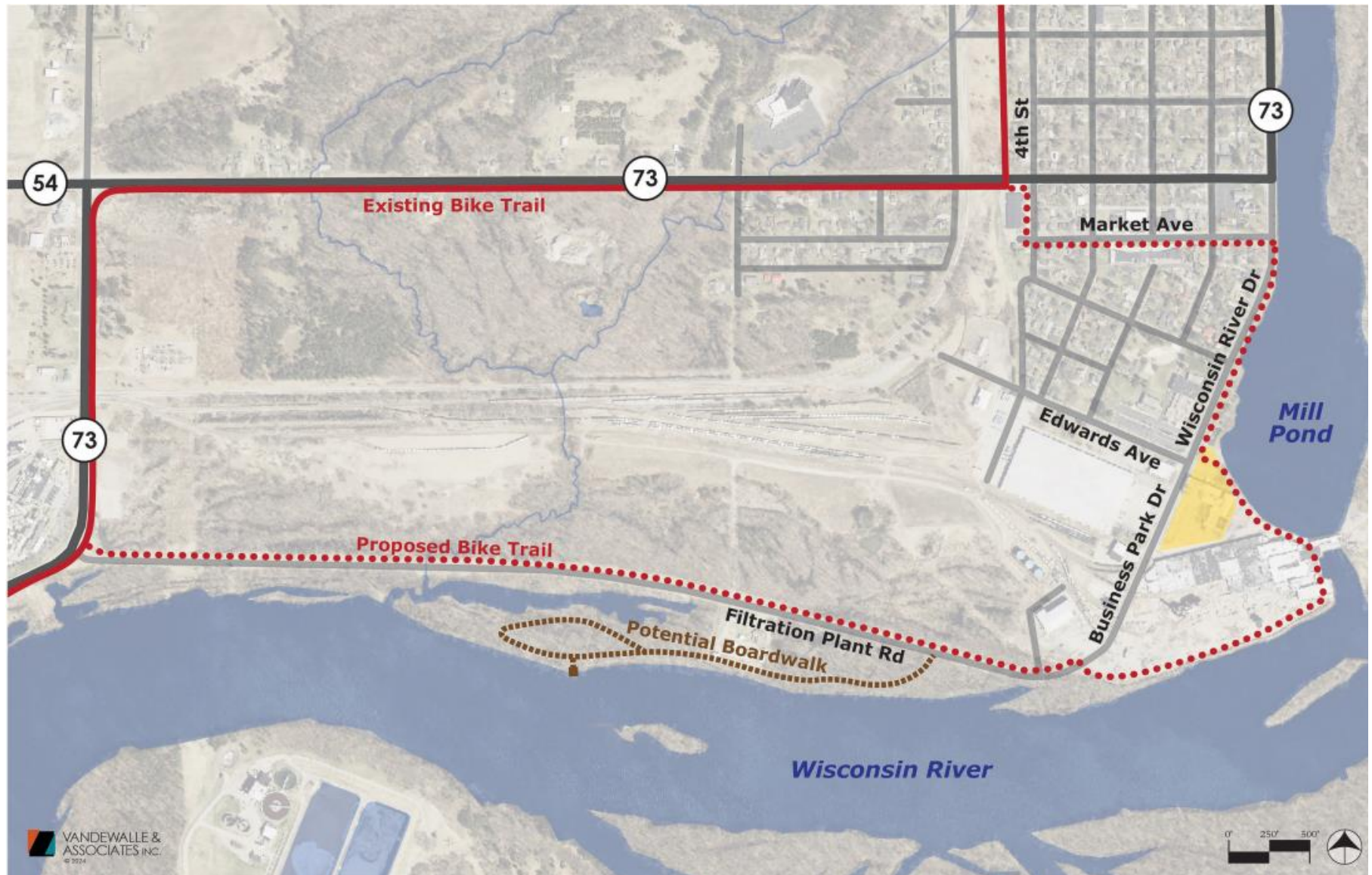
Opportunity Analysis and Scenario Alternatives

Four scenario alternatives were prepared for the Former Administration Building based on the review of existing property conditions, regional economic trends, conversations with surrounding property owners, and public input. These concepts reflect the overarching goals of the community and could be quickly and effectively executed. They provide an inspiring vision to guide the Village and potential developers during the implementation phase of the project.



Bike Trail

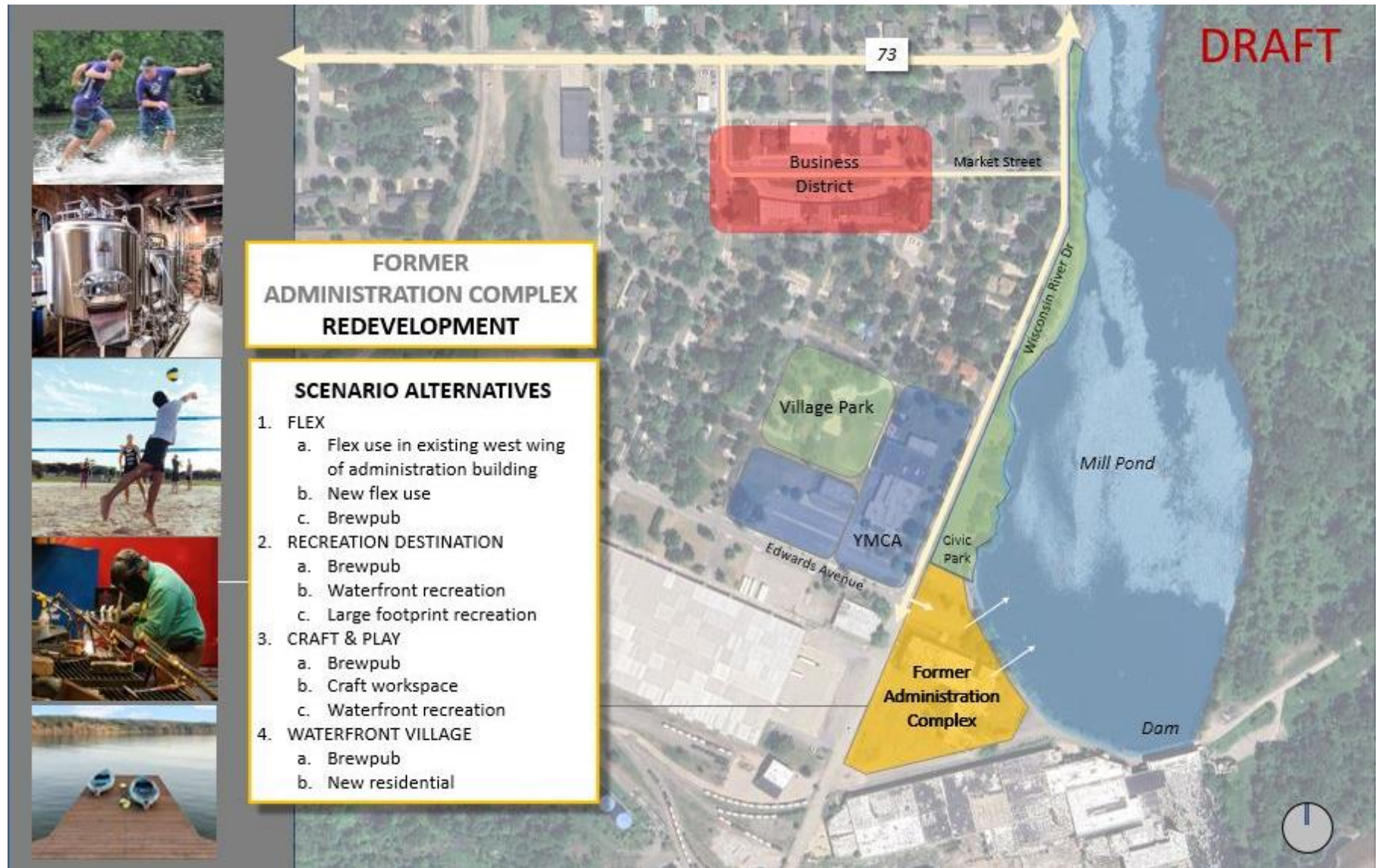
There is an existing bike trail that connects Port Edwards to Nekoosa and Wisconsin Rapids. A long-envisioned addition to the main trail is a loop that connects through downtown Market Avenue, through the Mill property, and off on to Filtration Plant Road. This addition would draw trail users through the Village's main business district and create extra foot traffic to make downtown businesses more vibrant. The Administration Building's prime location next to the Mill Pond and along a recreational trail is a key asset for a business that can draw trail users and customers from throughout the region.



Scenario Alternatives

In recognition of the community's desire to see redevelopment happen quickly, four scenario alternatives were prepared that provide a variety of complementary uses that are designed to fully embrace the surrounding assets and buffer from nearby industrial uses.

Key elements included in the concepts include a brewpub, craft spaces, play areas, an event venue, residential, and historical features. Each of these elements are described in more detail at the end of this section.



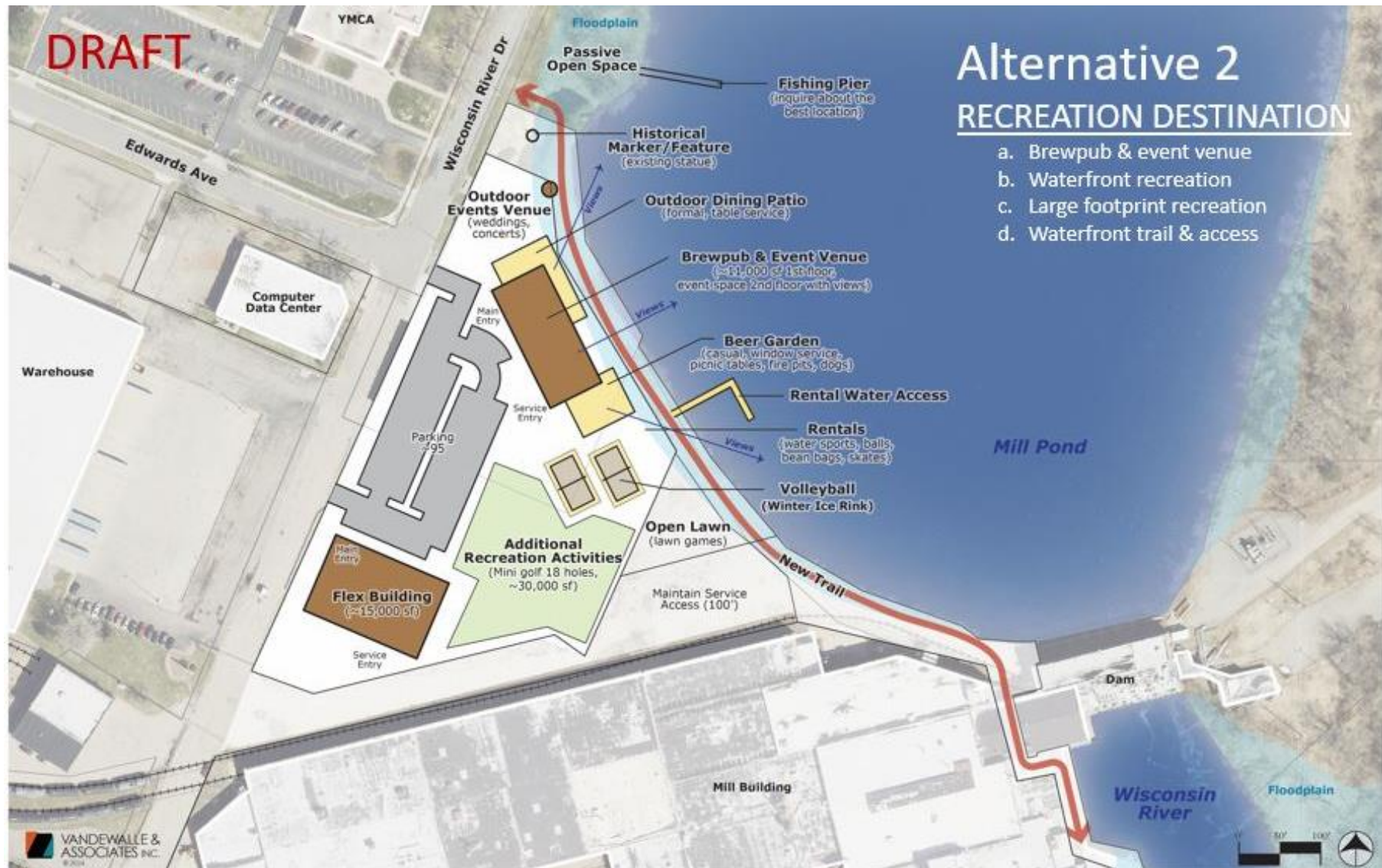
Alternative 1: Flex

The Flex concept proposes retaining the existing west wing of the Administration Building. Due to the wide footprint of the building, residential uses are an unlikely reuse for the building. Instead, the building and a newly constructed flex space on the southern portion of the property could complement the brewpub and recreational uses. Preferred uses for these buildings include light industrial, surplus space for brewing, bike and boat repair shop, tackle shop, makerspace, or similar types of businesses.



Alternative 2: Recreation Destination

The Recreation Destination concept proposes demolishing the Administration Building and replacing it with a large brewpub and event venue, complete with outdoor dining, an outdoor event venue, and waterfront recreation. This design also includes open space that could accommodate an 18 hole mini-golf course and two volleyball courts. The newly constructed flex space on the southern portion of the property would complement the brewpub and recreational uses. Under this concept, industrial activities would be strongly discouraged from the flex space buildings to minimize conflicts with the increased number of outdoor users on the property. Preferred uses for the flex space building include surplus space for brewing, bike and boat repair shop, tackle shop, makerspace, or similar types of businesses.



Alternative 3: Craft & Play

The Craft & Play concept proposes demolishing the Administration Building and replacing it with a small brewpub, complete with outdoor dining, waterfront recreation, and open spaces for additional recreational activities. The newly constructed buildings on the southern portion of the property would complement the brewpub and recreational uses. Preferred uses for the flex space building include surplus space for the brewing, bike and boat repair shop, tackle shop, makerspace, artisan studios and galleries, crafts people, local food and beverage processing and sales, or similar types of businesses.



Alternative 4: Waterfront Village

The Waterfront Village concept proposes demolishing the Administration Building and replacing it with a small brewpub, complete with outdoor dining, waterfront recreation, and open spaces for additional recreational activities. This concept includes newly constructed residential units. Approximately 28-36 units could be constructed within this footprint. Garages and additional parking are used as a buffer from the nearby warehouse and industrial uses. This concept also includes increases in passive open space for residents of these buildings.



Design Element 1: Brewpub

A Brewpub is envisioned as the key anchor tenant for each of the alternatives. Despite the long stretches of riverfront throughout the region, there is nothing like this in and around Port Edwards that gives people the ability to be directly on the waterfront in a restaurant or commercial setting. This location can take full advantage of the scenic views and will create a memorable outdoor dining experience that will be a treasured destination for locals and visitors alike. Wisconsin has a strong tradition of waterfront breweries and restaurants. Examples to draw inspiration from include Vintage Brewing Company in Sauk Prairie, and Ishnala in the Wisconsin Dells.



BREW PUB



Design Element 2: Craft

The Mill property has historically been a key employment site for the Village. The decline of the paper industry means that the Village needs to look for new opportunities to diversify the local economy. The flex spaces shown in the site alternatives will provide a space for new businesses to flourish. Due to the close proximity to recreational and commercial uses, this plan proposes that the flex spaces target businesses that will be compatible to the nearby recreational, commercial, and residential uses. These businesses will increase the tax base of the Village and provide high-wage jobs and business ownership opportunities to residents in the community.



CRAFT



Design Element 3: Play

The incredible natural amenities of the property are a key asset for the community and nearby businesses. This serene setting will be a destination for people to rest along the trail, take in the scenery, or cast a line from a fishing pier. The calm surface of the Mill Pond is great for kayaking, paddleboarding, or log-rolling. Additionally, the property has sufficient space to accommodate volleyball courts, outdoor mini-golf, and yard games. The opportunities are endless!



PLAY



Design Element 4: Event Venue

Located along the scenic Mill Pond, this property provides an excellent backdrop for an outdoor event venue that can be privately run as a separate business or an extension of the brewpub. Events will draw new customers in the door, accommodate larger weddings in the summer months, and provide a space to create lasting memories.

The north side of the property is buffered from industrial uses and near the John Alexander statue. Events held in this space will maximize the scenic beauty of the area and draw more visitors to this important monument that memorializes the Mill property and the Alexander family's contributions to the community.



EVENT VENUE



Design Element 5: Residential

Over 85% of the Village's housing stock was built before 1980, and low vacancy rates indicate a demand for new housing units within the community. Most developable land within the Village's municipal boundary has already been developed, and this location provides an excellent opportunity for quality infill development.

The Waterfront Village concept proposes 28-36 residential units. Units are buffered from surrounding properties by garages and parking spaces. Nearby passive open space would be ideal for dogs to run and families to play. Construction styles similar to the pictures below are anticipated as the most market-feasible opportunity, but the Village should remain open to other proposals that maximize density and therefore add the most value to the Village's tax base. Detailed information on median rents, incomes, and demographics in the community can be found in Appendix C.



RESIDENTIAL



Design Element 6: Historical Features

The Administration Building is past its useful life and will likely be demolished unless it's repurposed as outlined in Alternative 1. It is filled with asbestos and other contaminants, and the configuration of the building makes it difficult to repurpose.

The building played an important role in the Village's history that deserves to be remembered. There are six relief panels on the north façade of the building that depict stages of papermaking. They are a distinctive feature of the building that can be removed and preserved prior to demolition. These panels can be repurposed into a monument surrounding the John Alexander statue to tell the story of the Village's history and preserve the memory of what once stood here.



Administration Building
North facade



HISTORICAL FEATURES



MONUMENT
(Example)



Implementation

Implementation will require collaboration between the property owners in the area, the Village, the County, and the State. The following recommendations provide a roadmap for making these projects a reality. It also details the next steps the Village should take to play a leadership role in facilitating collaboration between the various entities that are involved.

Recommendation #1: Resolve the Split Ownership of the Administration Building

The Administration Building is on two separate parcels with split ownership. The northern parcel is owned by Wood County and the southern parcel is owned by DMI. Both parties would like to see the building demolished or rehabilitated into a more productive use. Potential investors have indicated that the split ownership is a deal breaker for investing in the property. Additionally, consolidating the ownership under County jurisdiction will make it easier to apply for grant funding that can pay for demolition and implementation of the site concepts presented in this plan. The Village will need to play a lead role in facilitating this process.

Recommendation #2: Apply For Grants

The Village's budget is stretched thin with existing obligations and cannot fund demolition for the property. It also has limited staffing and funds to support grant writing. Wood County, as a property owner of the Administration Building, can take the lead on applying for state and federal grants to assist with demolition. In particular, the DNR Ready for Reuse grant, WEDC Brownfield and Idle Sites grants, and the WEDC CDI grant are the most applicable to this project and have the highest chance of success.

Priority Funding Sources for Demolition:

DNR Ready for Reuse Grant: The maximum grant amount is \$200,000 and it does not require a local match. Grant applicants must own the property. Requires the applicant to have a reuse lined up with financing in place to complete the cleanup and redevelopment.

WEDC Brownfield and Idle Sites Grants: These two grants from WEDC can be used to fund demolition or rehabilitation activities on properties that have been long vacant. A community can apply for both grants for the same project.

WEDC CDI Grant: This program supports community redevelopment efforts for catalytic shovel-ready projects. Funds can be used for demolition and new construction of significant destination attractions.

TIF District: If grant applications are unsuccessful, the Village could fund demolition with money generated by a TID. The Village's existing TID is at the end of its spending period, so funding demolition would require a new TID.

These grants require a plan to be in place prior to grant funding being awarded and will likely require a developer/business to be lined up and ready to go if the grants are approved. This plan will serve as the basis of this for these grants, along with commitments from a future buyer.

In addition to these grants, the Village should pursue other grant opportunities that arise. This plan focuses on a core employment destination within walking distance to the Village's historic downtown, and the Village foresees development on this property as a catalytic project for supporting downtown businesses. This makes the project well suited for grant programs focused on supporting downtown businesses and redevelopment. The Village should provide information and letters of support for any grants that Wood County applies for.

Recommendation #3: Explore Creating a New TIF District

Tax Increment Finance (TIF) is one of the most important economic development tools available to local governments in Wisconsin. TIF is a financing mechanism to spur development and grow the tax base in an area that would not otherwise see the type, magnitude or timing of development desired by the community. TIF works by designating a small geographic area for redevelopment, and using future additional tax revenue from new development and appreciation to fund improvements that build the tax base.

TIF funds can be used for demolition and other site preparation costs. This makes it a good option to supplement any grant funding. The existing Tax Increment District (TID) is near the end of its spending period and has allocated all available funding. A new TID would need to be established to fund the demolition.

A successful TID requires new development in the district that provides a basis for funding projects within the TID. The Mill property, YMCA, Administration Building, Computer Data Center, and Warehouse properties are all anticipating development. The Village should not create a new TID until it becomes clear that one or more of these projects will move forward and will provide enough increment to warrant the creation of a TID. The new TID could generally follow the lines of the existing TID, with strategic additions of the aforementioned properties to generate additional increment.

To be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, the Village needs to carefully review each funding request to understand the project's financing and ensure each project only receives the funding needed to make the project financially viable.

Recommendation #4: Participate in YMCA Redevelopment Vision

YMCA access is a community priority for Port Edwards. The 4k program saves the school district money and is a critical service amid a statewide shortage of childcare options. Additionally, the 24-hour gym and recreational facilities are an important component of promoting community health. Usage of the facility in Port Edwards has declined in part due to a new YMCA that was recently built in Wisconsin Rapids. The YMCA plans to continue providing services in Port Edwards, but no longer needs as large of a building footprint to provide those services.

The YMCA is at the beginning stages of deciding the next steps for the property. The existing building is outdated and in need of extensive repairs. Sections of the building are closed off due to extensive mold, and the age of the building leads to high energy and maintenance costs for the portions that are still in use. Additionally, the odd configuration of rooms does not lend itself to any obvious reuse.

An optimal outcome for the Village would be a site design that creates new YMCA programming space, but also includes for-profit entities that will add to the Village's tax base. This will require a partnership between the YMCA and an investor/developer. The Village should collaborate with the YMCA to create a mutually beneficial vision for that property. Potential areas for collaboration include applying for WEDC Idle Sites grant, including the

property within a new TIF district to assist with funding demolition and site preparation costs, reviewing a comprehensive plan amendment and rezoning application for the property to encourage residential and commercial uses, and assisting with developer recruitment.

Recommendation #5: Flexibility For Future Reuses

The existing zoning for the Administration Building allows manufacturing and laboratory uses, with conditional uses of animal hospitals/kennels, hotels/motels, offices, and restaurants. Implementing the site concepts from this plan will require PUD zoning to accommodate the variety of uses on the lot. A PUD zoning for the Mill property was recommended by the Plan Commission in 2018 but never adopted by the Village Board as DMI never completed the process. The proposed PUD would have allowed a wide range of uses, including residential, commercial, and industrial. The 2018 PUD can serve as a template for future rezoning that allows maximum flexibility to accommodate the unique nature of this property.

The Village's ordinances require that a PUD zoning district have an accompanying development agreement. The purpose of the agreement is to memorialize the obligations of the Village and the developer, ensure that the proper infrastructure and easements are in place to allow legal access to each building on the property, and to set timelines for the development. The Village should move forward with PUD rezoning for the Mill properties along with accompanying development agreements in accordance with Village ordinances.

Recommendation #6: Facilitate Orderly Demolition.

The Village already is engaged with DMI on facilitating the local demolition permit for the Mill property. That demolition permit application will set standards to minimize impact on surrounding property owners and protect the general public from asbestos and other environmental contaminants within the existing building.

In addition to the larger Mill property demolition, there is much work left to do to facilitate the demolition of the Administration Building. With the building on separate parcels with separate ownership, the demolition will require a collaboration between DMI, Wood County, and the Village. Demolition will likely require a mix of funding from DMI, grant sources, and a new TIF district. The Village can play a leading role in facilitating this collaboration.



Appendix A: Statement of Determination

This analysis of the adaptability of the Administration/Research Building is based on review of the Property Condition Assessment for Village of Port Edwards (2020) and review of architectural documentation and building photographs.

Analysis and conclusions are framed in the need to determine whether the Administration/Research Building should be razed or if reuse (particularly for residential use) is possible and viable. Different phases of construction and portions of the building, each presenting different challenges and possibilities, are discussed.

Summary: Property Condition Assessment (General Engineering Company, April 2020)

- “In our opinion, the building should be razed.”
- “...extensive deficiencies” due to lack of repair and maintenance
- “... dangerous, unsafe, unsanitary and otherwise unfit for human habitation”
- Long periods without heating or electricity
- Long periods of active leaking resulting in extensive water damage
- Large quantities of mold on all levels
- All interior finishes and millwork would require replacement
- Main electrical equipment exposed to water and unusable
- All plumbing in poor condition
- Mechanical equipment all exposed to water and moisture and past serviceable life
- Roof systems generally in poor condition with much of it not structurally sound

Architectural Analysis

West Wing (Administration Offices)

- 3 stories (including basement)
- Approximately 77,000 square feet (total)
- Concrete, steel, and glass construction
- In fair to poor condition due to neglect, lack of heating/cooling, water damage, and vandalism.
- The footprint is approximately 100 feet in width. Even though the central hallway works with the structure and current circulation, the approximate depth of 45 feet from center circulation to outside walls is not conducive to residential units.
- Open floor plate allows flexibility of layout and uses.
- Well-lit with natural light.
- Existing egress stairs and elevator could be reused. These may need to be enclosed to qualify as means of egress.
- Accessibility to the building is an issue with no floors at grade. An interior or exterior ramp or a second elevator to the First Floor would make this building accessible.
- Original curtain wall (glazed exterior skin) has high energy costs and would be expensive to replace.
- Fully glazed outside walls and the structural spacing would make unit separation difficult and balconies impractical.

East Wing (Research Building)

- 3 stories (including basement), numerous levels
- Built in 3 phases
- Approximately 60,000 square feet (total)
- Concrete and brick construction
- In poor condition due to neglect, lack of heating/cooling, water damage, and vandalism.
- Built in two, less than ideally integrated, phases. Multiple ramps and stairs are necessary to match different floor elevations of the two building phases.
- Specialized floor layout with rooms for specific past uses may be difficult to reuse. Very partitioned, inefficient.
- Many of these interior walls are masonry (some may be load-bearing).

Conclusions

- Damage, contamination and health issues, inability to reuse systems, lack of integrity in the building's components, and interior design/renovation character all present significant challenges to renovation and reuse of the Administration/Research Building.
- Any reuse of the building for any purpose would require the gutting of everything but some of the structure and possibly some doors and windows. This removal would include most or all of the interior non-load-bearing walls and finishes, gutting of all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and fixtures.
- If structural components are salvageable and costs are not prohibitive, further analysis of the integrity of the following would still be required to determine viability for reuse:
 - All structural components (steel and metal components are likely not sound) ;
 - Most of the roof structures, decks, and moisture barriers;
 - Exterior walls and skin and windows; and
 - Removal and remediation of all health threatening elements (i.e., interior mold and contamination).
- Flooding in the basement may still be an issue. Further investigation and remediation of this condition would have to be completed before renovation.
- The specialized interior layout of the east wing of the structure poses a challenge for reuse for any other uses than the existing.
- Although some continuity exists between the building areas (because the additions considered this need), the three-phases of construction have created a somewhat segmented building. Unless uses align well with the different existing spaces, this makes reuse more difficult.
- Residential reuse is especially problematic:
 - The size and configuration of the floor plates are not well suited for typical residential unit sizes and layouts;
 - Differences between floor elevations make circulation difficult; and
 - Contamination and mold may be impractical or impossible to mitigate.
- Other uses such as office, research, or light manufacturing may be possible but only if structures are sound, health issues can be eliminated, and if the rehabilitation costs are not prohibitive.
- Reuse of the west wing (previously the administrative offices) seems possible because of the flexible open floors and possible fewer issues with health issues, but only for uses well-suited for such spaces (i.e., office), not for residential.
- Reuse of the east wing (previously the research building) presents many barriers to reuse. Just the right office or research use that aligns with the specialized layout (not residential) would be required.

Appendix B: Renovation and Demolition Estimates

Preliminary cost estimates were prepared to give a greater understanding of the costs associated with renovating or demolishing the Administration Building. These estimates are based on general trends and assumptions about the building. Final costs will vary depending on contractor availability, costs for environmental (i.e., asbestos) removal/clean-up, site remediation, disposal, permitting, regulatory requirements, selective dismantling, and local equipment and labor.

These estimates are applied on three levels of square foot costs (high, medium, and low). High finish might include interior walls, quality finishes, equipment/furniture. Low finish might include fewer partitions, finish materials, and storage. Cost estimates were separated into the West and East wings of the building to account for a partial demolition.

Asbestos is a known contaminant throughout most of the flooring in the building. However, the extent of asbestos is unknown at this time. Cost estimates for asbestos removal were developed based on different percentages of asbestos throughout the building footprint.

The most likely scenario for the building is demolition with associated asbestos remediation. In that scenario, the total costs to prepare the site for new development will potentially range between \$2.3 million and \$4.4 million. A majority of the costs are associated with asbestos removal. A detailed assessment of asbestos within the building will help further refine these estimates.

	High	Medium	Low
Demolition	\$991,500	\$754,500	\$582,000
Asbestos Removal	\$3,412,500	\$2,559,375	\$1,706,250
Total	\$4,404,000	\$3,313,875	\$2,288,250

Renovation Cost Estimates

HIGH COST			
West	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
High finish	51,300	\$300	\$15,390,000
Low finish	25,700	\$150	\$3,855,000
Total	77,000		\$19,245,000
East	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
High finish	49,200	\$300	\$14,760,000
Low finish	10,300	\$150	\$1,545,000
Total	59,500		\$16,305,000
MEDIUM COST			
West	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
High finish	51,300	\$200	\$10,260,000
Low finish	25,700	\$100	\$2,570,000
Total	77,000		\$12,830,000
East	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
High finish	49,200	\$200	\$9,840,000
Low finish	10,300	\$100	\$1,030,000
Total	59,500		\$10,870,000
LOW COST			
West	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
High finish	51,300	\$100	\$5,130,000
Low finish	25,700	\$50	\$1,285,000
Total	77,000		\$6,415,000
East	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
High finish	49,200	\$100	\$4,920,000
Low finish	10,300	\$50	\$515,000
Total	59,500		\$5,435,000

Demolition Cost Estimates

HIGH COST			
West	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
Upper floors	51,300	\$7	\$359,100
Basement	25,700	\$8	\$205,600
Total	77,000		\$564,700
East	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
Upper floors	49,200	\$7	\$344,400
Basement	10,300	\$8	\$82,400
Total	59,500		\$426,800
MEDIUM COST			
West	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
Upper floors	51,300	\$5	\$256,500
Basement	25,700	\$7	\$179,900
Total	77,000		\$436,400
East	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
Upper floors	49,200	\$5	\$246,000
Basement	10,300	\$7	\$72,100
Total	59,500		\$318,100
LOW COST			
West	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
Upper floors	51,300	\$4	\$205,200
Basement	25,700	\$5	\$128,500
Total	77,000		\$333,700
East	Area (sf)	PSF Cost	Total Cost
Upper floors	49,200	\$4	\$196,800
Basement	10,300	\$5	\$51,500
Total	59,500		\$248,300

Asbestos Removal Cost Estimates

HIGH COST					
West	Area (sf)	% Asbestos	Asbestos Area	PSF Cost	Total Cost
Upper Levels	51,300	100%	51,300	\$25	\$1,282,500
Basement	25,700	100%	25,700	\$25	\$642,500
Total	77,000	100%	77,000		\$1,925,000
East	Area (sf)	% Asbestos	Asbestos Area	PSF Cost	Total Cost
High finish	49,200	100%	49,200	\$25	\$1,230,000
Low finish	10,300	100%	10,300	\$25	\$257,500
Total	59,500	100%	59,500		\$1,487,500
MEDIUM COST					
West	Area (sf)	% Asbestos	Asbestos Area	PSF Cost	Total Cost
Upper Levels	51,300	75%	38,475	\$25	\$961,875
Basement	25,700	75%	19,275	\$25	\$481,875
Total	77,000	75%	57,750		\$1,443,750
East	Area (sf)	% Asbestos	Asbestos Area	PSF Cost	Total Cost
High finish	49,200	75%	36,900	\$25	\$922,500
Low finish	10,300	75%	7,725	\$25	\$193,125
Total	59,500	75%	44,625		\$1,115,625
LOW COST					
West	Area (sf)	% Asbestos	Asbestos Area	PSF Cost	Total Cost
Upper Levels	51,300	50%	25,650	\$25	\$641,250
Basement	25,700	50%	12,850	\$25	\$321,250
Total	77,000	50%	38,500		\$962,500
East	Area (sf)	% Asbestos	Asbestos Area	PSF Cost	Total Cost
High finish	49,200	50%	24,600	\$25	\$615,000
Low finish	10,300	50%	5,150	\$25	\$128,750
Total	59,500	50%	29,750		\$743,750

Appendix C: Economic and Demographic Data

Figure 1: Population 2000-2023

	2000	2010	2020	2023*
Port Edwards	1,944	1,818	1,762	1,736
Wood County	75,555	74,749	74,207	73,706
Wisconsin	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	5,951,400

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2020 Census.

**Source: WisDOA 2023 Population Estimates by Municipality*

Figure 2: Age

	Median Age				Percent Under 18				Percent Over 65			
	2000	2010	2020	2022*	2000	2010	2020	2022*	2000	2010	2020	2022*
Port Edwards	41	44	46	41	26%	24%	24%	27%	22%	22%	25%	23%
Wood County	38	43	44	44	26%	23%	21%	21%	15%	17%	22%	21%
Wisconsin	36	39	40	40	26%	24%	22%	22%	13%	14%	18%	18%

**Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2020 Census.

Figure 3: Race and Ethnicity - Village of Port Edwards

Race	2000	2010	2020	2022*
White	93%	95%	91%	89%
Black or African American	1%	1%	1%	0%
American Indian	1%	1%	1%	0%
Asian	4%	1%	2%	0%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	0%	1%	1%	0%
Two or More	1%	1%	4%	10%
Ethnicity				
Hispanic or Latino	0%	2%	2%	1%

**Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2020 Census.

Figure 4: Age Distribution - Village of Port Edwards

Age Range	2000		2010		2022*	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Under 5 years	88	5%	111	6%	90	5%
5 to 9 years	143	7%	109	6%	114	6%
10 to 14 years	183	9%	123	7%	192	11%
15 to 19 years	157	8%	135	7%	122	7%
20 to 24 years	59	3%	81	4%	118	6%
25 to 34 years	180	9%	174	10%	152	8%
35 to 44 years	269	14%	220	12%	214	12%
45 to 54 years	245	13%	249	14%	171	9%
55 to 59 years	104	5%	114	6%	125	7%
60 to 64 years	86	4%	102	6%	94	5%
65 to 74 years	192	10%	176	10%	230	13%
75 to 84 years	131	7%	145	8%	119	7%
85 years and over	104	5%	79	4%	77	4%
Total Population	1,941	100%	1,818	100%	1,818	100%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010 Census.

Figure 5: Poverty Rate

	Families in Poverty				Individuals in Poverty			
	2000*	2010	2020	2022	2000*	2010	2020	2022
Port Edwards	6%	7%	6%	10%	8%	10%	10%	14%
Wood County	4%	6%	7%	7%	7%	8%	10%	11%
Wisconsin	6%	8%	7%	7%	9%	12%	11%	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

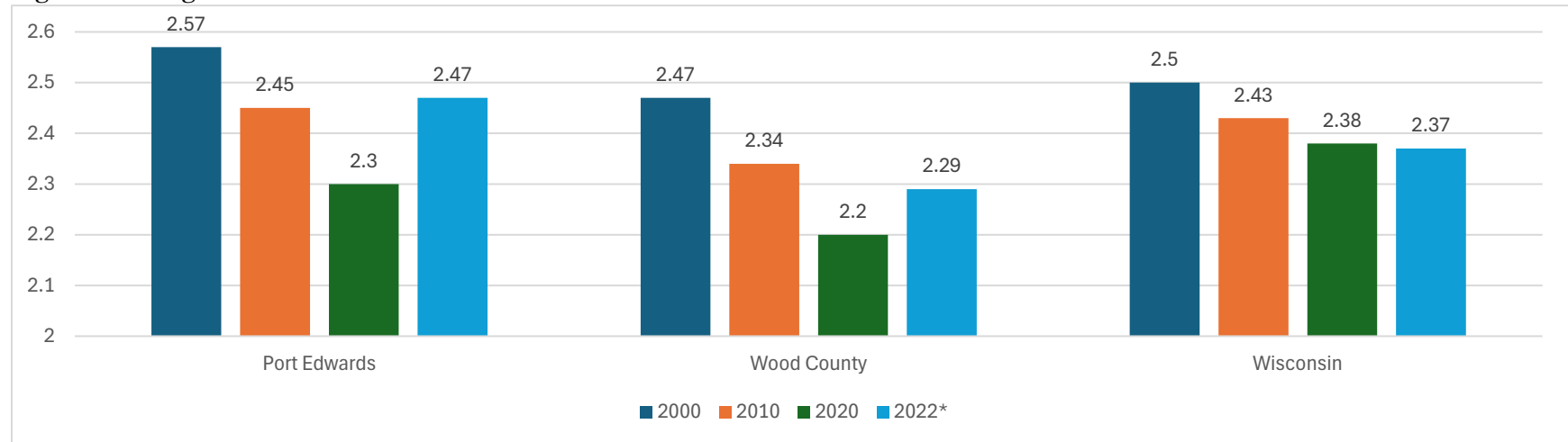
Figure 6: Area Incomes

	Median Household Income				Per Capita Income			
	2000	2010	2020	2022*	2000	2010	2020	2022*
Port Edwards	\$48,850	\$53,000	\$55,045	\$70,347	\$20,750	\$24,315	\$27,841	\$30,963
Wood County	\$41,595	\$47,204	\$55,684	\$63,273	\$20,203	\$24,893	\$32,037	\$36,712
Wisconsin	\$43,791	\$51,598	\$63,293	\$72,458	\$21,271	\$26,624	\$34,450	\$40,130

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2020 Census.

Figure 7: Average Household Size



*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2020 Census.

Figure 8: Monthly Housing Costs and Values

	Median Gross Rent			Median Monthly Owner-Occupied Costs (with a mortgage)			Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units		
	2000	2010	2022*	2000	2010	2022*	2000	2010	2022*
Port Edwards	\$512	\$655	\$840	\$921	\$1,079	\$1,112	\$83,500	\$96,700	\$125,600
Wood County	\$442	\$559	\$830	\$800	\$1,102	\$1,215	\$81,400	\$116,500	\$156,600
Wisconsin	\$540	\$713	\$992	\$1,024	\$1,433	\$1,602	\$112,200	\$169,000	\$231,400

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

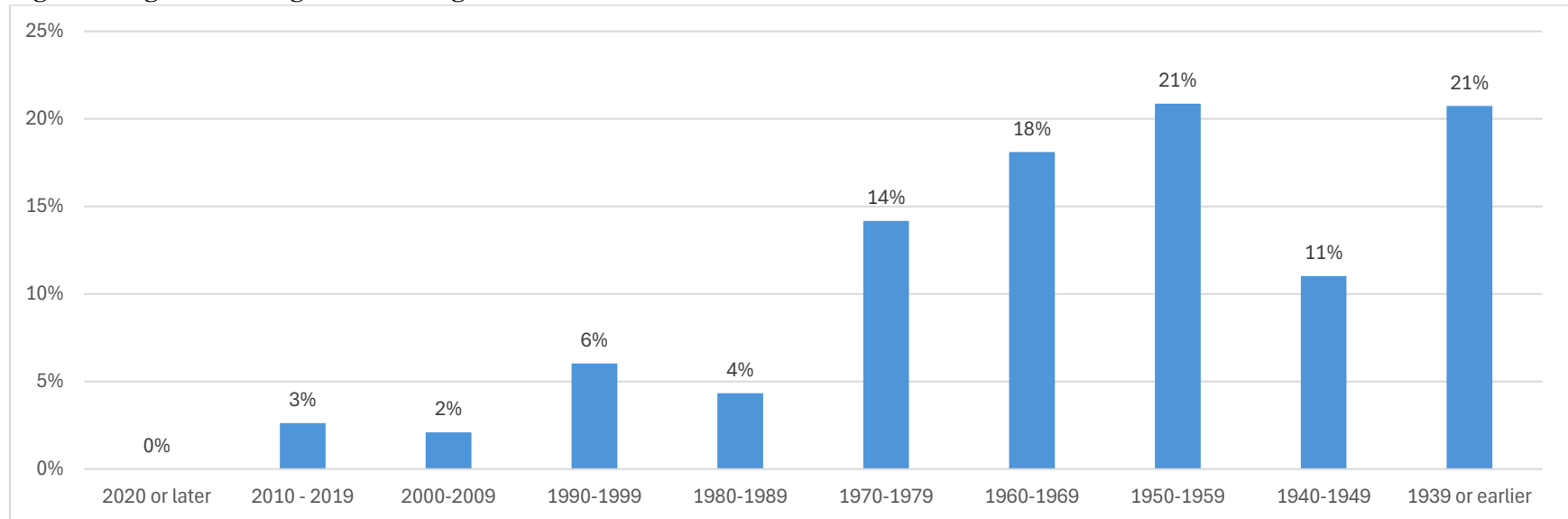
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2020 Census.

Figure 9: Housing Units by Cost and Value - Village of Port Edwards, 2022

Cost of Monthly Rent	Number of Units	Percent of Units	Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units	Number of Units	Percent of Units
Less than \$500	-	0%	Less than \$50,000	14	2%
\$500 to \$999	98	67%	\$50,000 to \$99,999	178	32%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	41	28%	\$100,000 to \$149,999	173	31%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	7	5%	\$150,000 to \$199,999	96	17%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	-	0%	\$200,000 to \$299,999	63	11%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	-	0%	\$300,000 to \$499,999	36	6%
\$3,000 or more	-	0%	\$500,000 to \$999,999	2	0%
Total	146		\$1,000,000 or more	-	0%
			Total	562	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Figure 10: Age of Housing Stock – Village of Port Edwards, 2022



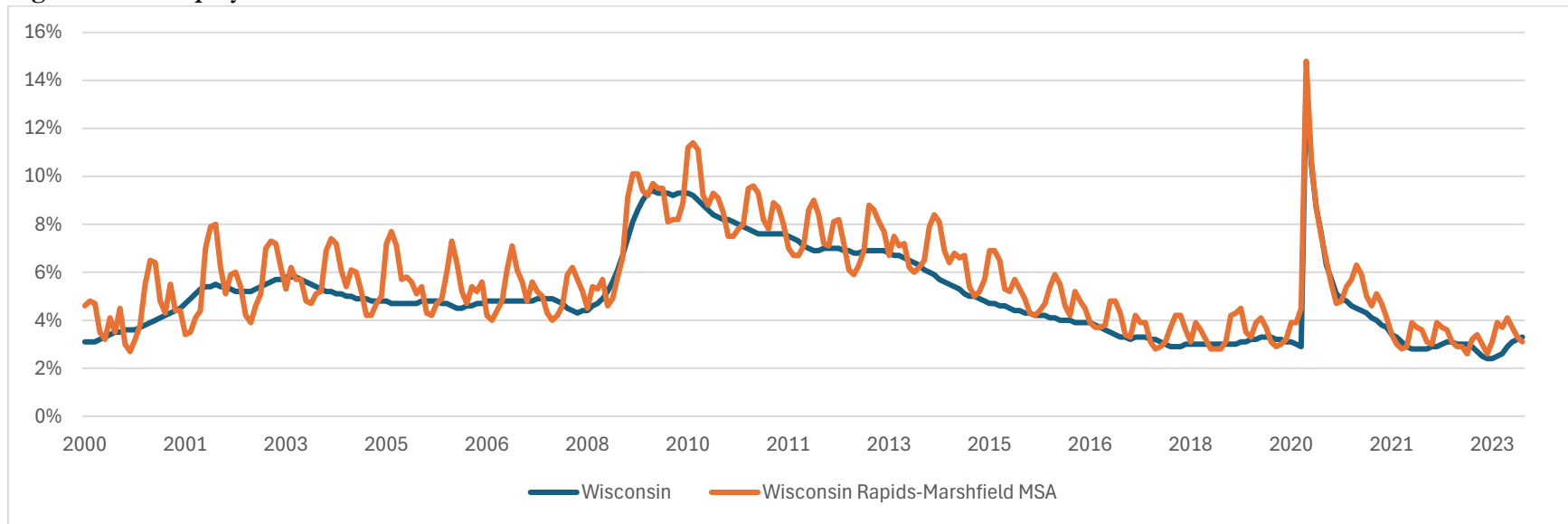
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Figure 11: Commuting Method, 2022

	Car, Truck, or Van - Drove Alone	Car, Truck, or Van - Carpooled	Public Transportation	Walked	Other Means	Worked From Home
Port Edwards	83%	4%	0%	0%	4%	9%
Wood County	80%	8%	0%	2%	2%	8%
Wisconsin	77%	7%	1%	3%	2%	10%

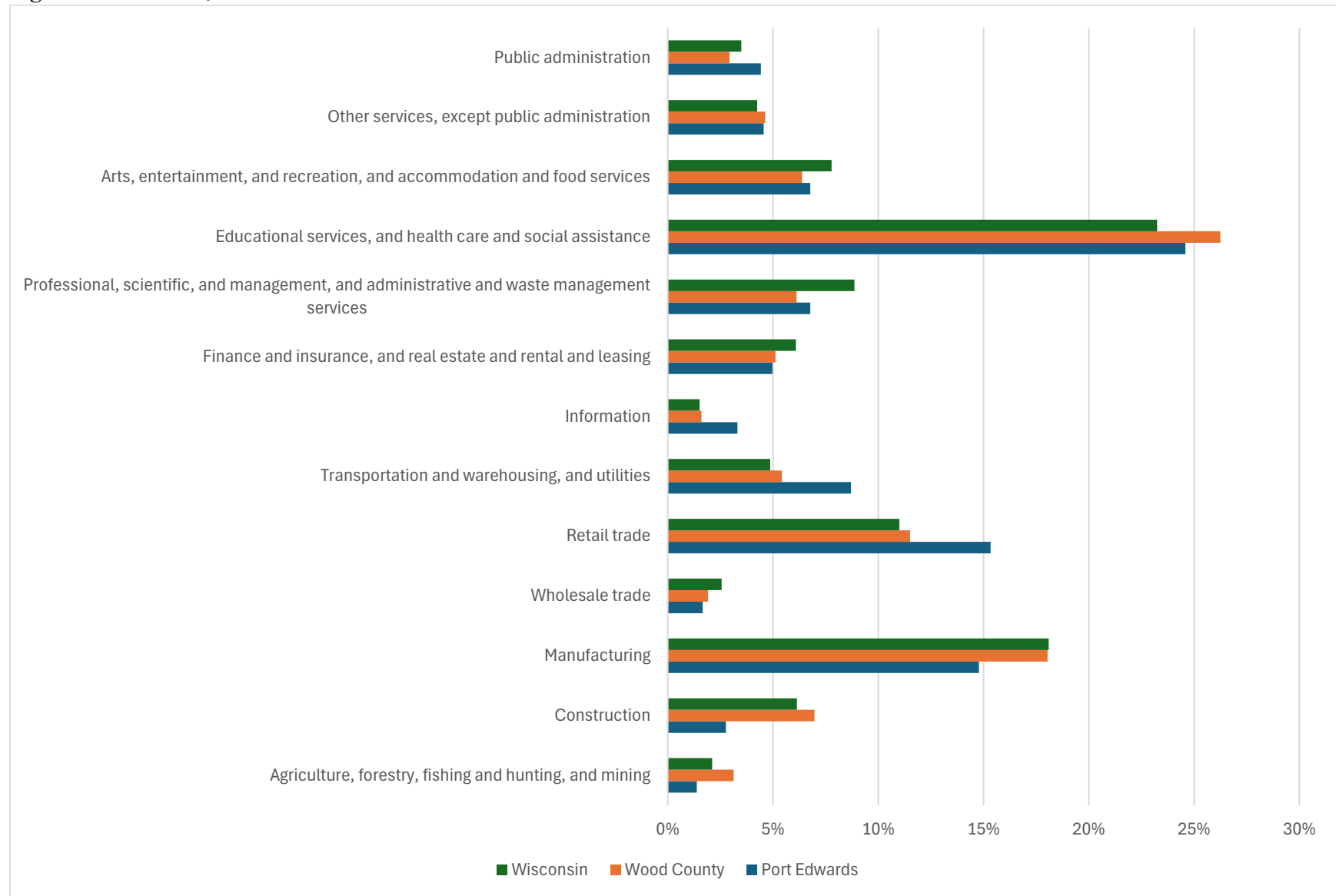
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Figure 12: Unemployment Rate 2000-2023



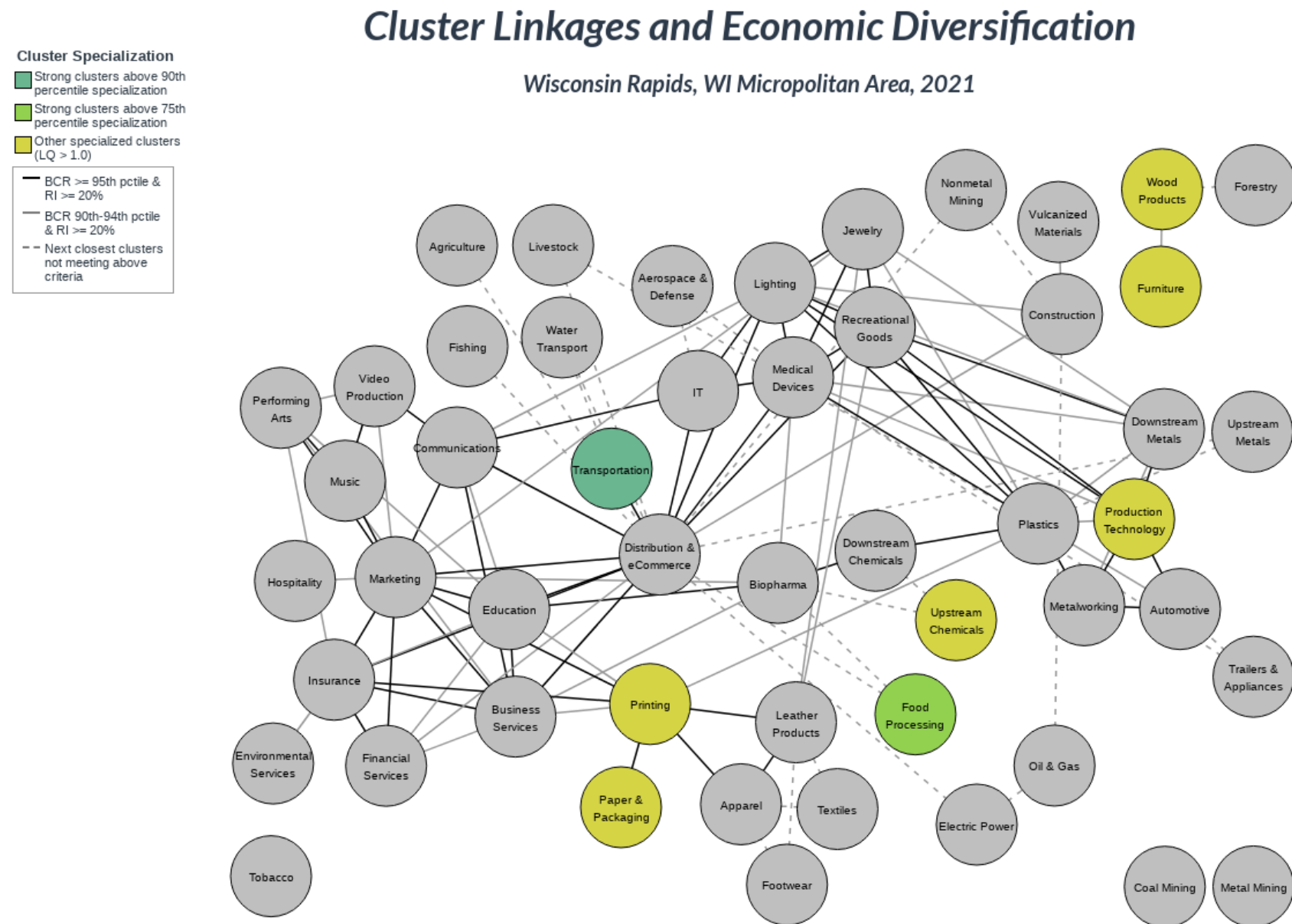
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 13: Industries, 2022



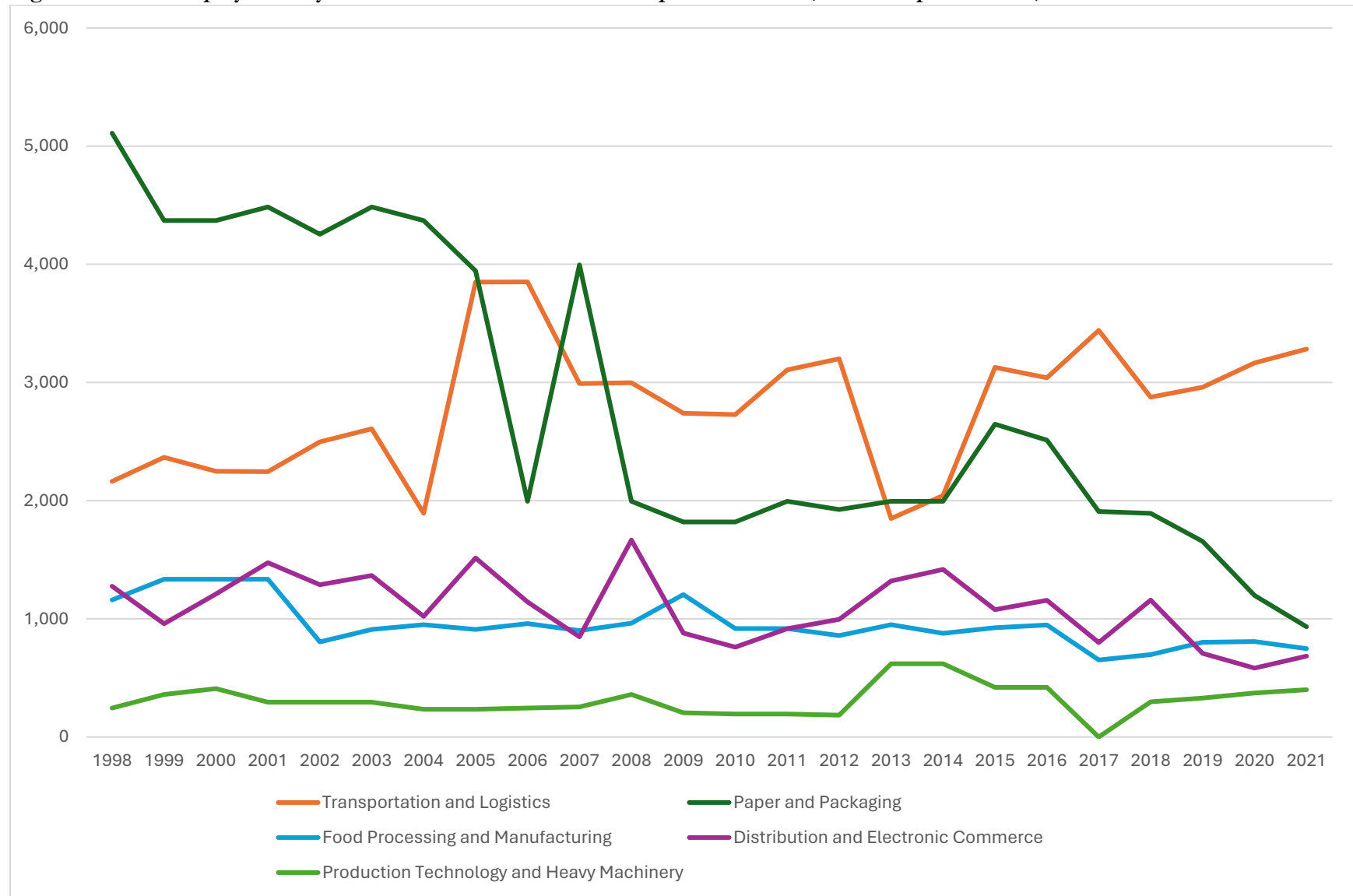
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Figure 14: Cluster Analysis



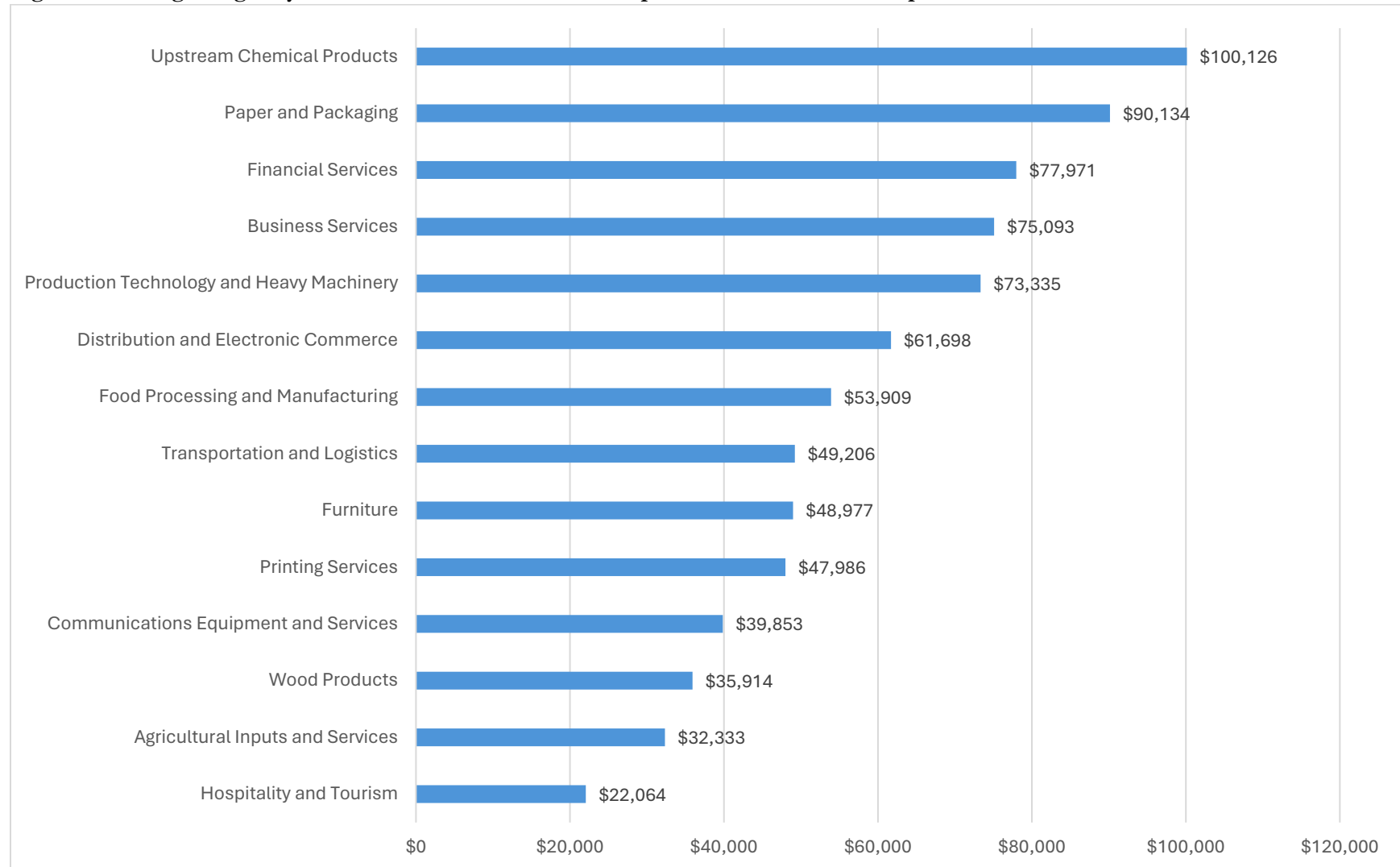
Source: U.S. Cluster Mapping Project

Figure 15: Total Employment By Economic Cluster - Wisconsin Rapids-Marshfield, WI Micropolitan Area, 1998-2021



Source: U.S. Cluster Mapping Project

Figure 16: Average Wages by Economic Cluster - Wisconsin Rapids-Marshfield, WI Micropolitan Area, 2021



Source: U.S. Cluster Mapping Project