

CHAPTER 1 Issues and Opportunities for Comprehensive Planning **in the Town of Amherst**

Section 1.1 Description of Planning Area

The Town of Amherst is located on the eastern side of Portage County, and is bordered by the Towns of New Hope and Stockton on the north, Town of Stockton on the west, Towns of Lanark and Buena Vista on the south, and Waupaca County on the east (Figure 1). Amherst is the 10th largest of Portage County's 17 towns in terms of geographic size, encompassing an area of approximately 24,384 acres. The Town (political unit) includes all of congressional Township 23N-R10E and part of T23N-R9E.

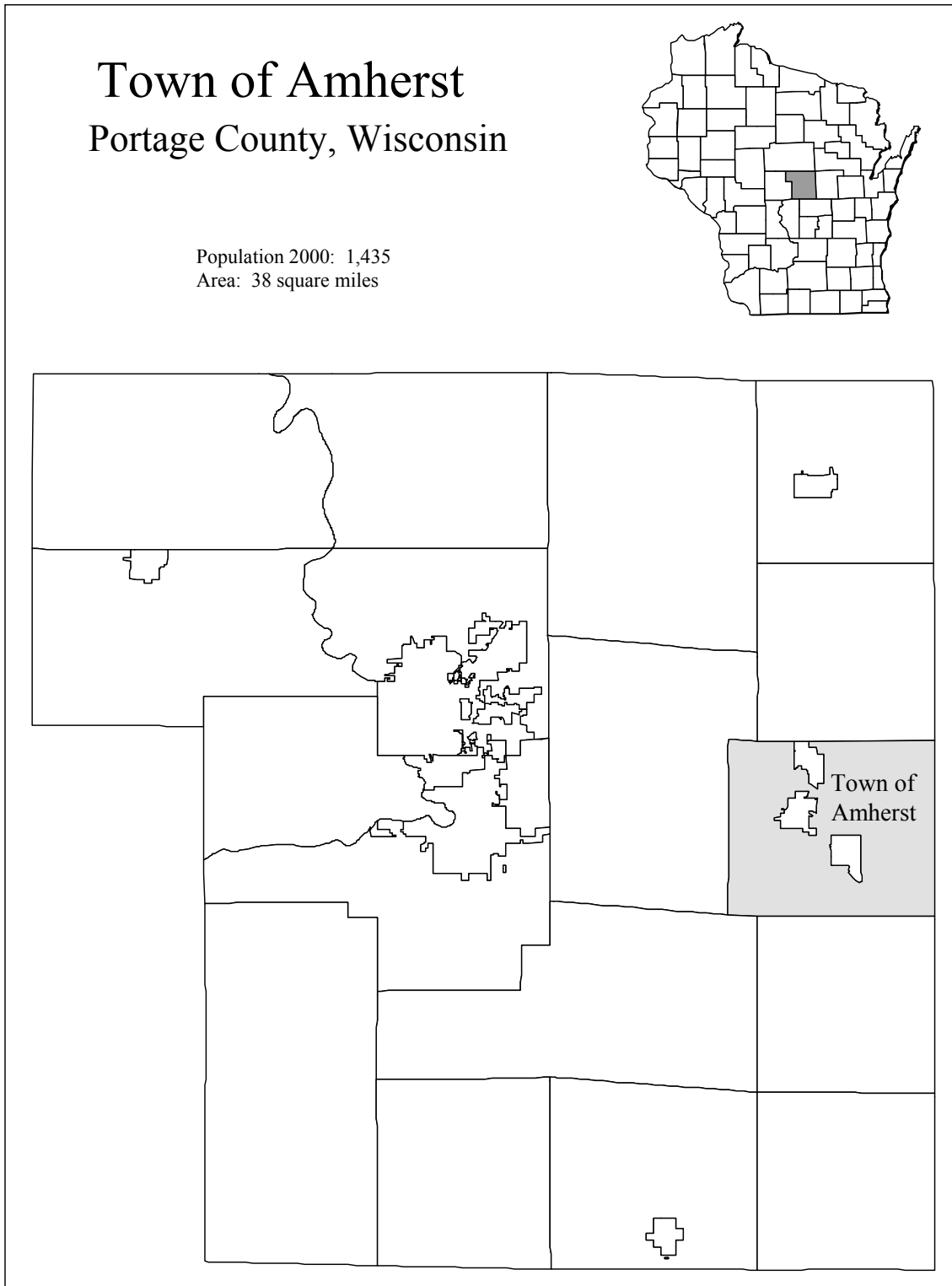
The following excerpt is taken from the Malcolm Rosholt Online Archives of the Portage County Historical Society:

It is not exactly recorded when the Town of Amherst was established, but that was probably in 1852, making it one of the earliest towns in the county. At the time it included the present Town of Lanark which in 1856 was annexed to the Town of Belmont and soon after became independent.

It lies entirely in the glaciated area and is divided by the Tomorrow River, which has its source in the Town of Sharon, then passes through Amherst, the corner of Lanark, to flow into Waupaca County. The name of Tomorrow is the translation of an Indian name transcribed as Waupaca, a name that it takes after passing the village of Amherst. The town is hilly with traces of recessional moraines and some flats representing outwash plains formed when the glacier receded. There are a few lakes, the largest being Lake Emily on which is a public park. It is a favorite lake for boating, fishing and swimming, and on its shores are a number of cottages.

The first settlers were Yankees and English speaking Canadians one of whom suggested the name of the town after his native town of Amherst, Nova Scotia. After 1860 Norwegians arrived in large numbers expanding the colonies in Waupaca County and became the largest foreign ethnic group. As the area was largely wooded, sawmills were built along the Tomorrow River and the Village of Amherst started by 1860 near one of the mills, with shops, taverns and a hotel. It further developed when in 1871 the Wisconsin Central Railroad was built and had a depot close to the town. The following year the Green Bay and Lake Pepin line was established. It passed north of town and westwards crossed the Wisconsin Central Railway at a place which became a Village named Amherst Junction. North of it on the Tomorrow a dam was built by an Englishman named Nelson, probably at the site of a beaver dam. The waterpower was used for a sawmill; later a gristmill was also built there and the Village of Nelsonville started in the vicinity. All three places were incorporated as villages. Amherst remained the largest with its mills, stores, hotel, bank, telephone exchange, which attracted people other than Yankees and Norwegians, so that it has now five different churches: Lutheran (one American Lutheran, the other of the Missouri Synod, originally started by the Germans), one Methodist, one Episcopal and one Catholic. Nelsonville can be called the Florida of Portage County as Norwegian farmers retire there. As they wanted a peaceful town, a Lutheran church was built. Later, when the village was incorporated, one of the first ordinances banned anyone from bringing any device for gambling and up to the present the village is dry; no tavern and no liquor in the stores.

Figure 1.1 Town of Amherst Location



Section 1.2 Past Planning in the Town of Amherst

A. 1995 Land Use Plan

In 1993, the Town of Amherst Planning Committee began working with the Portage County Planning Department to draft the first land use plan for the Town of Amherst. This planning effort was requested by the Town due mostly to the increased development pressure the community had experienced over the previous 20 years, and to update the County's Farmland Preservation Plan.

The intent of the plan was to serve as a formal statement of Town/County policies regarding land use. The document was formally adopted by the Town Board in September 1995. In addition, the Plan was intended to serve as a guide in updating the Town's zoning map.

Section 1.3 Current Comprehensive Planning Process

As mentioned in the introduction to this document, this Town of Amherst Comprehensive Plan had its beginning as a part of the County-wide planning project started in June 2001. The work during the first 18 months of the County-wide project, performed primarily by the Portage County Comprehensive Planning Joint Steering Committee, centered on public participation, visioning, and the generation of preliminary goal suggestions for the 9 required Plan elements. This information was then forwarded to all local units of government in the fall of 2002. Utilizing the information provided by the Joint Steering Committee, the Town of Amherst Plan Commission began the Town Comprehensive Planning process in earnest in January 2003. The Plan Commission met regularly, often many times a month, through April 2005 to put together the first complete preliminary draft of the plan. The comprehensive planning process involved several basic steps:

The first step involved research. Activities included acquiring a thorough knowledge of the existing community setting, identifying problems that require solutions, analyzing critical factors that need to be changed before progress can be made toward community goals, and establishing goals and objectives for growth and development. The second step involved the formation of planning policy. Planning policies recommend a course of action that will accommodate expected change, produce desired change, and prevent undesirable change.

The next step involved the selection of a preferred plan alternative for guiding future growth. The Land Use Element relates how the Town is expected to grow, and generally identifies how development should proceed in the future to achieve community goals. It proposes the most efficient use of land within the financial capabilities of the community by identifying where residential, and other anticipated land uses should occur.

The final step will involve implementation of the plan and programs that influence the day-to-day decisions made by government officials, private enterprise, and individuals. Plan implementation provides the means by which community goals can be achieved. Three major tools of implementation are the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and capital improvements program.

The Comprehensive Plan is the primary link between the past, the present, and the future, making it perhaps the best resource for achieving continuity over a period of time. It is to be used as a guide by those making decisions with regard to the development of the community. The Comprehensive Plan must also remain flexible so that it can be modified to reflect the processes

of actual development and the changing attitudes and priorities of the community. To maintain an updated Comprehensive Plan, new information must be continually gathered and studied to determine trends and reevaluate projections, forecasts, and plans. Even policy recommendations, which are relatively permanent statements, may require periodic review to determine their appropriateness and suitability in relation to the direction and character of community development at that time. A well thought-out and updated Comprehensive Plan, with a solid base of public involvement, is one of the most fruitful investments a local government can make. As a collection of policies and plans designed to guide future growth and development, it will help ensure continuity over time as changes occur within the Town of Amherst.

Section 1.4 Demographic Trends

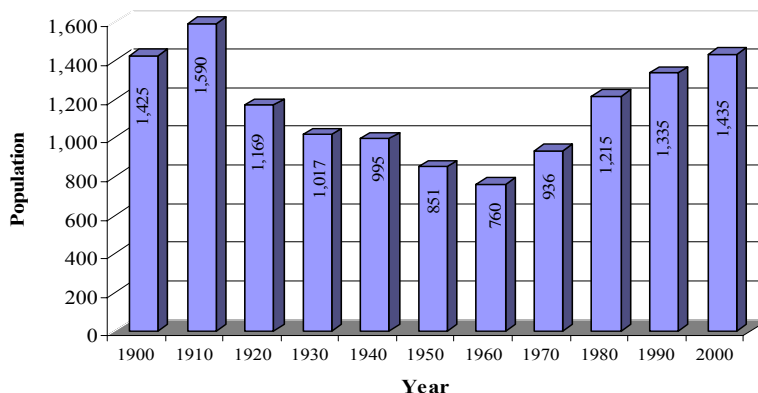
A. Population Growth

Every 10 years the Federal government performs the national census, and these Census results are the main source of information used to understand how communities change over time. The Town of Amherst has seen a considerable variation in its growth rate over the last 100 years.

Census data reveal two major, historical population trends for the Town of Amherst (see Figure 1). The first major trend was a steady decline in the Town’s population over a fifty-year period from 1910 to 1960. This was characteristic of a rural-to-urban population movement which occurred during that period on a county, state, and nationwide basis. The particularly large decline in population during the 1910-1920 period was due, in part, to the incorporation of the Village of Amherst Junction in 1911 and the Village of Nelsonville in 1913 (both Villages incorporated out of the Town of Amherst).

This declining trend was reversed during the 1960’s, with the Town experiencing a significant upturn in population, as urban residents began moving back to rural areas. Once again, this change was characteristic of a broader urban-to-rural movement at the County, State, and national levels. In Portage County, the impact of this migration back to the rural areas was greatest in three towns adjacent to the larger population centers. Accordingly, Towns such as Hull and Plover experienced the largest growth spurts due to their proximity to the Stevens Point Urban Area. Nevertheless, population growth in outlying towns, such as Amherst, was still very significant. Thus, the decade of the 1960’s marked the end of the Town of Amherst’s declining population and the beginning of a growth period. This new growth was highlighted by a 29.8% increase during the 1970’s.

Figure 1.2: Town of Amherst Population Change, 1900 to 2000



Source: US Bureau of Census

More recently, the Town experienced a more modest growth rate of 9.9% during the 1980-1990 period and a growth of 7.5% during the 1990-2000 period. In population, the Town of Amherst currently ranks 7th out of 17 towns in Portage County.

Table 1.1: Amherst Comparison Population Change, 1970 to 2003

	U.S. Census				State of Wisconsin Estimate	1970 to 2000 Change	2000 to 2004 Change
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004		
Town of Amherst	936	1,215	1,335	1,435	1,464	53.3%	2.0%
Town of Buena Vista	827	1,023	1,170	1,187	1,235	43.5%	4.0%
Town of Lanark	578	1,043	1,554	1,449	1,527	150.7%	5.4%
Town of New Hope	492	625	694	736	750	49.6%	1.9%
Town of Stockton	1,537	2,208	2,494	2,896	2,974	88.4%	2.7%
Portage County	47,541	57,420	61,405	67,182	68,664	41.3%	2.2%

Source: US Census Bureau; State of Wisconsin Dept. of Administration; Portage County Planning and Zoning Dept.

Population growth is a combination of many factors including birth, death, in and out migration. By examining migration patterns for the residents of the Town of Amherst, we can better understand how growth in the community is occurring (Table 1.2). The U.S. Census provides data on where residents were living five years prior to the census. The “Same House” column identifies the Amherst residents that lived in the same dwelling in both 1995 and 2000 (or 1985 and 1990); this can be an indicator of long-term residency. The “Different House, Portage County” column identifies the Amherst residents that lived in a home outside the Town, but within Portage County, in 1995. The “Different House, Different County” column identifies the Amherst residents that lived in a home outside of the Town and Portage County, but within the State of Wisconsin, in 1995. The “Different State” column identifies the Amherst residents that lived in a home outside the State of Wisconsin in 1995. Altogether, this information provides insight into the nature and pace of new residents moving into the Town.

Based on 2000 census information, seventy-seven percent (77%) of the Town's residents lived in the same house as they did in 1995, up nine percent (9%) from the 1990 census. This indicates that long term residents are becoming a larger fraction of the total population.

Table 1.2: Place of Residence for Town Residents

	Same House				Different House, Portage County				Different House Different County				Different State			
	1985		1995		1985		1995		1985		1995		1985		1995	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Town of Amherst	823	68%	1,014	77%	235	19%	189	14%	77	6%	110	8%	79	7%	83	6%
Town of Buena Vista	730	69%	820	72%	228	21%	205	18%	82	8%	113	10%	23	2%	9	1%
Town of Lanark	687	66%	756	56%	184	18%	251	19%	132	13%	332	25%	44	4%	80	6%
Town of New Hope	489	73%	538	77%	101	15%	110	16%	45	7%	49	7%	38	6%	20	3%
Town of Stockton	1,589	71%	1,996	73%	466	21%	500	18%	158	7%	239	9%	37	2%	66	2%
Portage County		51%		56%		21%		22%		21%		16%		7%		5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Census

Another informative statistic found in Table 1.2 is the number of residents who lived in a different house in a different county in 1995. Eight percent (8%) of residents in 2000 lived in a different county in 1995, as compared to six percent in 1985. Likewise, 6% of the population

lived in another state in 1995. This indicates that a growing portion of the population is moving to the Town from outside the County. These numbers provide further examples of how residential expansion is occurring within the Town of Amherst.

B. Age Distribution

Table 1.3 below details the number of Town residents that occupied specific age groups in each of the last three census years, along with similar information for an average of all Portage County Towns and the County as a whole.

Table 1.3: Distribution of Population, by Ten-Year Age Groups

Age	Town of Amherst			Town Average			Portage County		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Under 5 years	135 11.1%	121 9.1%	74 5.2%	131 9.2%	117 7.9%	96 6.0%	4,343 7.6%	4,266 6.9%	3,964 5.9%
5 to 14 years	243 20.0%	256 19.2%	217 15.1%	273 18.9%	271 18.0%	255 18.9%	8,671 15.1%	9,080 14.8%	9,118 13.6%
15 to 24 years	191 15.7%	181 13.6%	174 12.1%	260 17.8%	200 12.9%	200 13.3%	15,270 26.6%	13,081 21.3%	13,983 20.8%
25 to 34 years	235 19.3%	195 14.6%	169 11.8%	250 17.2%	242 15.7%	183 11.6%	9,180 16.0%	9,897 16.1%	8,322 12.4%
35 to 44 years	131 10.8%	244 18.3%	212 14.8%	166 11.1%	247 16.1%	294 18.2%	5,593 9.7%	8,690 14.2%	10,261 15.3%
45 to 54 years	89 7.3%	122 9.1%	293 20.4%	118 8.4%	161 10.3%	257 15.9%	4,447 7.7%	5,489 8.9%	8,945 13.3%
55 to 64 years	87 7.2%	82 6.1%	116 8.1%	103 8.0%	150 8.8%	152 9.4%	4,185 7.3%	4,299 7.0%	5,235 7.8%
65 to 74 years	64 5.3%	87 6.5%	76 5.3%	75 6.2%	86 6.6%	96 6.5%	3,391 5.9%	3,610 5.9%	3,791 5.6%
75 to 84 years	33 2.7%	40 3.0%	50 3.5%	29 2.5%	39 3.1%	52 3.7%	1,806 3.1%	2,273 3.7%	2,565 3.8%
85 years and over	7 0.6%	7 0.5%	54 3.8%	8 0.6%	9 0.8%	12 0.8%	534 0.9%	720 1.2%	998 1.5%
Total	1,215	1,335	1,435	1,411	1,522	1,597	57,420	61,405	67,182
Median Age	26.4	30.9	39.3	27	32	38	25.4	29.3	33.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000 Census

Insight into the nature of the Town's population change over time can be gained through examining how the different age groups change as they move through their life cycles. Age groups for the Towns and County (or "cohorts" as they are called when tracking a group of same-aged people) have been displayed in the table in ten-year increments to more easily see how their numbers increase or decline over different census years. The diagonal series of gray and white boxes within Table 1.3 indicate the path of each age cohort through the three census periods.

The 5-to-14 year old cohort for the Town of Amherst numbered 256 in 1990. Their number declined by 82 persons (-32%) by the year 2000 (as the 5-to-14 year olds became 15-to-24 year olds). Some of this decline may be explained by children leaving home for college or jobs. For the most part, the age cohorts between under 5 to 34 years old have experienced decreases in numbers, while age groups 35 to 54 experienced an increase in numbers between 1990 and 2000. In comparing similar cohorts to the Town Average and County overall, a similar pattern can be seen.

The “median age” is the point where ½ of the population lies above and ½ lies below; the older this age is, the older the overall population for a place is becoming. The median age for the Town of Amherst was 39.3 years old in 2000, increasing by 13 years since 1980. The other Towns across Portage County have seen their median age increase at a slower pace (10.5 years). The County as a whole has seen its median age increase at an even slower rate, less than eight years over the twenty-year period. This is an indication that the Towns overall are aging more rapidly than the County’s Villages or City of Stevens Point.

As one would expect with the rise in median age, the percentage of the population for the towns within Portage County over the age of 65 has been trending upward since 1980 as well. The Town of Amherst 65+ population segment increased from 8.6% of total population in 1980 to 12.6% in 2000. The average Portage County Town saw this segment increase from 9.3% to 11%, and the County as a whole increased from 9.9% to 10.9%. The number of seniors aged 75 and over has more than doubled since 1990, with the number of residents aged 85+ increasing from 7 in 1990 to 54 in 2000.

C. Education Levels

Levels of educational attainment have followed a similar trend of improvement across the different municipal divisions within Portage County (Table 1.5). The Town of Amherst increased its overall educational attainment during the 1990’s. The number and percentage of Town of Amherst residents age 25 and over who had less than a 9th grade education decreased significantly between 1990 and 2000. The percentage of 25+ year old residents who completed some college, or completed a college degree program rose from thirty-six percent (36%) to forty-seven percent (47%) over the same period. This 11-year increase in attainment for Amherst was slightly behind of the gain for the Town Average (24% to 43%), but ahead of the gain of the County as a whole (40% to 49%). The Town of Amherst also outperformed the Town and County averages for the number and percentage of residents who completed 9th to 12th grade but did not receive a diploma. The Amherst numbers for this category decreased by 10.4%, while the Town Average experienced a 3.8% decrease and Portage County experienced a 5.6% decrease in this category.

Table 1.4: Comparison of Educational Attainment for Residents 25 Years and Older

Ed. Attainment (Persons 25 yrs+)	Town of Amherst		Town Average		Portage County	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Less Than 9th Grade	114 <i>14.7%</i>	42 <i>4.3%</i>	118 <i>10.2%</i>	67 <i>6.4%</i>	4,065 <i>11.6%</i>	2,420 <i>6.0%</i>
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	83 <i>10.7%</i>	95 <i>9.7%</i>	82 <i>7.1%</i>	84 <i>8.0%</i>	3,029 <i>8.7%</i>	3,019 <i>7.5%</i>
High School Graduate	300 <i>38.6%</i>	386 <i>39.4%</i>	392 <i>34.0%</i>	444 <i>42.3%</i>	14,082 <i>40.2%</i>	14,952 <i>37.2%</i>
Some College (No Degree)	122 <i>15.7%</i>	229 <i>23.4%</i>	113 <i>9.8%</i>	181 <i>17.3%</i>	5,205 <i>14.9%</i>	7,572 <i>18.9%</i>
Associate Degree	52 <i>6.7%</i>	68 <i>6.9%</i>	42 <i>3.6%</i>	73 <i>7.0%</i>	1,922 <i>5.5%</i>	2,802 <i>7.0%</i>
Bachelor's Degree	84 <i>10.8%</i>	122 <i>12.4%</i>	89 <i>7.7%</i>	142 <i>13.5%</i>	4,594 <i>13.1%</i>	6,468 <i>16.1%</i>
Graduate / Professional Degree	22 <i>2.8%</i>	38 <i>3.9%</i>	37 <i>3.2%</i>	58 <i>5.5%</i>	2,107 <i>6.0%</i>	2,910 <i>7.2%</i>
Total	777	980	1154	1048	35,004	40,143

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000 Census

D. Households and Income

The Town of Amherst residential community is made up of different types of households. The U.S. Census defines a household simply as “including all of the people who occupy a housing unit”. People not living in households are classified as living in group quarters. Table 1.5 below details the changes in the make-up of Town of Amherst households over the last 20 years, and compares them to the Portage County data and the average of the County Towns. Married-couple households, traditionally the largest group within Amherst, have seen their percentage of total households decrease over the last 20 years even as their numbers increase, mirroring a County-wide declining trend. Single-parent headed households within Amherst have increased over the 20 year period from 27 to 42 households, with their percentage increasing slightly to 11%. This percentage is comparable to the Town Average (11%), and lower than the County overall (16%). Amherst’s non-family households have increased from approximately 15% of total households in 1980 to 21% in 2000.

The Persons Per Household (PPH) calculation for the Town of Amherst, along with the average of Towns and the County overall have continued a declining trend over the last 20 years. Amherst closely matches the size and rate of decline of the Town Average, while the overall County PPH rate of decline has been a bit smaller. This translates into Amherst and other Town households being a bit larger than the County average.

Table 1.5: Household Type Comparison

Households By Type	Town of Amherst			Town Average			Portage County		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Family Households	307	362	391	361	406	454	13,257	14,883	16,496
<i>percent of Total households</i>	85%	84%	79%	84%	82%	79%	72%	70%	66%
Married-couple families	280	325	349	326	359	404	11,592	12,645	13,808
<i>percent of Fam households</i>	91%	90%	89%	90%	88%	89%	87%	85%	84%
Other family, male householder	11	16	23	13	18	21	437	602	861
<i>percent of Fam households</i>	4%	4%	6%	4%	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%
Other family, female householder	16	21	19	22	29	29	1,228	1,636	1,827
<i>percent of Fam households</i>	5%	6%	5%	6%	7%	6%	9%	11%	11%
Non-family Households	53	67	103	68	87	122	5,056	6,423	8,544
<i>percent of Total households</i>	15%	16%	21%	16%	18%	21%	28%	30%	34%
Householder living alone	42	54	84	56	70	95	3,730	4,679	6,130
<i>percent of Non-fam households</i>	79%	81%	82%	82%	81%	78%	74%	73%	72%
Householder 65 years and over	~	21	34	~	29	34	~	1,933	2,196
<i>percent of Non-fam households</i>		31%	33%	0%	33%	28%		30%	26%
Total Households	360	429	494	429	493	576	18,313	21,306	25,040
Persons Per House Hold	3.38	3.11	2.80	3.28	3.00	2.71	2.93	2.71	2.54

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000 Census

Another instructive piece of information on the state of households within the Town is the level of income that each household achieves. Again the census provides insight into the range of incomes present within Amherst. Table 1.6 below describes how household incomes have changed in the last 20 years. It is a testimony to both the inflation of wages and the increased earning power of the residents of Town of Amherst that the percentage of households making greater than \$50,000 per year has increased from 0% in 1979 to 50.7% 1999.

Table 1.6: Household Income Comparison

Household Income Per Year	Town of Amherst			Town Average			Portage County		
	1979	1989	1999	1979	1989	1999	1979	1989	1999
Less Than \$10,000	83 23.4%	24 5.7%	41 8.2%	105 24.3%	50 10.1%	25 4.2%	5300 28.9%	3210 15.0%	1767 7.0%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	70 19.8%	27 6.4%	17 3.4%	66 15.3%	37 7.5%	24 4.2%	2919 15.9%	1978 9.3%	1608 6.4%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	120 33.9%	96 22.9%	38 7.6%	140 32.6%	84 16.9%	56 9.6%	5423 29.6%	4072 19.1%	3174 12.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	52 14.7%	76 18.1%	54 10.8%	77 18.0%	85 17.1%	76 13.0%	2907 15.8%	3654 17.1%	3425 13.6%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	21 0.1%	107 0.3%	95 19.1%	29 0.2%	124 0.4%	112 0.2%	1223 6.7%	4370 20.5%	4484 17.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	8 2.3%	79 18.8%	160 32.1%	9 2.1%	82 16.5%	153 26.3%	380 2.1%	2983 14.0%	5771 23.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	0 0.0%	6 1.4%	52 10.4%	5 1.1%	22 4.4%	82 14.1%	193 1.1%	661 3.1%	2820 11.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	0 0.0%	1 0.2%	34 6.8%	0 0.0%	8 1.7%	36 6.1%	0 0.0%	274 1.3%	1346 5.4%
\$150,000 or more	0 0.0%	4 1.0%	7 1.4%	0 0.0%	5 0.9%	19 3.2%	0 0.0%	134 0.6%	717 2.9%
Total Households	354	420	498	431	496	583	18,345	21,336	25,112
Median H-Hold Income	\$17,069	\$32,679	\$50,435	\$16,715	\$31,439	\$47,887	\$16,659	\$28,686	\$43,487

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000 Census

With the examination of income information, the Town of Amherst should also assess the poverty status of its residents. “Poverty” is generally defined as a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor. If a family’s total income is less than that family’s threshold, then that family, and every individual in it, is considered poor. The poverty thresholds do not vary geographically. That is, they are the same throughout the United States. However, the poverty thresholds are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition counts money income before taxes and does not include capital gains and non-cash benefits (such as public housing, food stamps, and Medicaid). Poverty is not defined for people in military barracks, institutional group quarters, or for unrelated children under age 15 (such as foster children). Table 1.7 below outlines poverty thresholds for 1980, 1990, and 2000. Table 1.8 lists the census information on poverty for the total number of residents, persons age 65 and above, and families within the Town of Amherst, the Town average, and Portage County as a whole.

Table 1.7: Poverty Thresholds - 1980, 1990, and 2000

Size of Family Unit	Poverty Threshold		
	1980	1990	2000
One Person	\$4,190	\$6,652	\$8,794
Two Persons	\$5,363	\$8,509	\$11,239
Three Persons	\$6,565	\$10,419	\$13,738
Four Persons	\$8,414	\$13,481	\$17,603
Five Persons	\$9,966	\$15,792	\$20,819
Six Persons	\$11,269	\$17,839	\$23,528
Seven Persons	\$12,761	\$20,241	\$26,754
Eight Persons	\$14,199	\$22,582	\$29,701
Nine Persons or More	\$16,896	\$26,848	\$35,060

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

According to census figures, the Town of Amherst has experienced a decrease in the number of residents earning below the poverty level as compared to the County as a whole.

Table 1.8: Percent in Poverty Comparison

	Town of Amherst		Town Average		Portage County	
	1989	1999	1989	1999	1989	1999
Persons	1,333	1,435	1,332	1,417	57,805	67,182
Below Poverty Level	111	94	115	78	7,454	6,074
	8.3%	6.6%	8.6%	5.5%	12.9%	9.0%
Persons 65 Years and Over	13	180	115	148	5,327	7,354
Below Poverty Level	10	54	13	14	740	561
	76.9%	30.0%	11.3%	9.3%	13.9%	7.6%
Families	352	388	358	404	14,927	16,643
Below Poverty Level	22	13	23	14	1,051	725
	6.3%	3.4%	6.3%	3.5%	7.0%	4.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000 Census.

E. Employment Characteristics

A summary of employment by industry data for the last three Census years is provided in Table 1.9. This information represents what type of industry that the working residents of Amherst were employed by, and is not a listing of the employment currently located within the Town. The discussion of the Amherst economy will take place within the Economic Development Element of this Comprehensive Plan. It should be noted that the method used for classifying industries was changed between the 1990 and 2000 Census, and therefore the information included in the industry categories of Table 1.9 is not entirely consistent for comparison between those years.

Table 1.9: Summary of Employment by Industry

Industry	Town of Amherst			Town Average			Portage County		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Mining	138 27.3%	114 17.3%	66 8.8%	90 15.7%	80 10.8%	58 6.8%	1,816 7.3%	1,755 5.8%	1,241 3.5%
Construction	29 5.7%	22 3.3%	44 5.9%	32 5.5%	44 6.0%	52 6.1%	1,004 4.0%	1,297 4.3%	1,707 4.8%
Manufacturing	72 14.2%	105 15.9%	139 18.5%	125 21.6%	156 21.1%	185 21.7%	4,637 18.6%	5,373 17.8%	6,314 17.7%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	34 6.7%	70 10.6%	73 9.7%	30 5.2%	46 6.3%	53 6.2%	1,214 4.9%	1,511 5.0%	1,948 5.5%
Information	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	18 2.4%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	10 1.2%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	835 2.3%
Communications/ Other Public Facilities	3 0.6%	3 0.5%	~ 0.0%	6 1.0%	7 0.9%	0 0.0%	325 1.3%	367 1.2%	0 0.0%
Wholesale Trade	19 3.8%	23 3.5%	17 2.3%	23 4.0%	24 3.2%	31 3.6%	885 3.5%	1,026 3.4%	1,235 3.5%
Retail Trade	47 9.3%	98 14.8%	54 7.2%	80 13.8%	118 16.0%	105 12.3%	4,317 17.3%	5,667 18.8%	4,813 13.5%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	46 9.1%	50 7.6%	77 10.2%	63 11.0%	83 11.2%	89 10.4%	2,971 11.9%	3,359 11.1%	3,682 10.3%
Professional, Management, Administrative	~ 0.0%	~ 0.0%	17 2.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	31 3.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1,627 4.6%
Business and Repair Services	9 1.8%	38 5.8%	0 0.0%	11 1.8%	17 2.3%	0 0.0%	518 2.1%	941 3.1%	0 0.0%
Personal Services	~ 0.0%	22 3.3%	~ 0.0%	0 0.0%	15 2.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	777 2.6%	0 0.0%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation Services	10 2.0%	6 0.9%	40 5.3%	17 3.0%	6 0.7%	48 5.6%	734 2.9%	388 1.3%	3005 8.4%
Educational, Health, Social Services	74 14.6%	72 10.9%	142 18.9%	78 13.6%	102 13.9%	141 16.5%	5,331 21.4%	5,617 18.6%	7,192 20.2%
Other	7 1.4%	14 2.1%	42 5.6%	14 2.3%	23 3.1%	32 3.8%	624 2.5%	1,362 4.5%	1,236 3.5%
Public Administration	18 3.6%	23 3.5%	23 3.1%	8 1.4%	18 2.5%	20 2.3%	571 2.3%	710 2.4%	842 2.4%
Total Employed Persons	506	660	752	576	739	853	24,947	30,150	35,677
Unemployed Persons	37	32	60	58	37	38	2,013	1,590	2,255
Total Labor Force	543	692	812	634	777	893	26,960	31,740	37,944
Percent Unemployed	7.3%	4.8%	8.0%	10%	5%	4%	8.1%	5.3%	6.3%
Persons 16 Years +	0	936	1,113	0	1,066	1,220	0	47,202	53,135

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000 Census.

Section 1.5 Forecasts

A. Population Projections

Population projections developed by the Portage County Planning and Zoning Department suggest that the Town will experience moderate growth through the year 2025, with a projected increase of 245 residents from 2000 to 2025, or a growth rate of 17.1%. This compares with a projected increase of 17.5% for the entire County, for the same period. It should be noted that all population projections are "best guesses" and should be used with caution. The methodology for this projection is included in Appendix D of this Comprehensive Plan.

The Town of Amherst Plan Commission has adopted the following projected population totals for the planning period:

Yr 2010: **1,536** Yr 2015: **1,572** Yr 2020: **1,621** Yr 2025: **1,680**

However, the Town believes that these projections are low due to the potential for increased residential demand from the improvements to the U.S. Hwy 10 corridor. The Town has no method of projecting future population, but wanted to develop a plan that would recognize a more aggressive rate of growth.

B. Household Projections

Household projections for the Town of Amherst will be based on the population projections from Section 1.5A above, divided by an anticipated number of persons per household through 2025.

The number of persons per household has been steadily declining in the Town of Amherst, from 3.38 persons in 1980 to 2.80 persons in 2000. Using a method of linear regression and data beginning in 1980, the number of persons per household (PPH) in 2010 will be 2.52. Projecting numbers far into the future using linear regression produces increased uncertainty, therefore, the persons per household will be held at 2.52 for 2025. Keep in mind that these numbers represent projections and should not be used as absolute.

Utilizing a PPH of 2.52 for this plan horizon (2025) results in the following household projections for Town of Amherst:

2010: **610** households 2015: **624** households 2020: **644** households 2025: **667** households

C. Employment Projections

The Town has experienced a sharp decline in agriculture related employment since 1980. Town officials anticipate the downward trend in this sector will continue over the next twenty years, however, agricultural uses will still occupy a significant portion of the Town's land base. The majority of future job opportunities outside of the agriculture sector are expected to be located in the Stevens Point urban area, Waupaca, and the Fox Valley area. Jobs will most likely be found in the service, health care, government, manufacturing, and finance sectors.

Section 1.6 Vision Statement

The Town of Amherst recognizes that it is in a time of transition, and change will occur over the next twenty years that may alter the character of the community. Due to this anticipated change, the Town offers the following statement of how it envisions a future based on community values over this time period:

Residents work to maintain the rural character of the community, preserving, protecting and enhancing the Town's natural resources and open spaces.

Growth is managed in a financially sound manner that does not negatively impact the Town's ability to provide services. While agriculture continues to be the predominant land use and the cornerstone of our Town's economy, thoughtfully planned residential areas and small commercial development are encouraged to maintain the tax base in the face of devalued farmland and future annexations to nearby villages. Higher intensity uses are carefully planned to contribute to our rural lifestyle.

The Town of Amherst continues to work with area municipalities to solve common problems and enhance the quality of life for present and future generations.

To achieve this desired future, residents and community leaders recognize the necessity and importance of individual rights and community interests, encouraging citizen involvement and open communication.

Section 1.7 Community Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Town residents wish to manage growth in a manner that does not impede existing agricultural operations and still promotes a more rural lifestyle. Town residents also recognize the importance that natural resources, such as the Tomorrow River, Lake Emily, Lime Lake and Bear Creek contribute toward the Town's character. Recognition of these assets should be taken into consideration as growth and development occur over time.

Goals, objectives and policies provide the framework for guiding future community development activities in the Town of Amherst. One means of deriving goals and policies is through issue identification. Many of the issue statements in the various plan elements are framed as questions. This was purposefully done so that answering the questions would help Plan Commissioners more easily form goal or policy statements.

Goals are stated as desirable conditions to strive toward in the future. They are common ideals of the community that can be achieved through the actions of government leaders, private enterprise and individuals.

Objectives are general targets to be achieved along the path of satisfying community goals.

Policies are more specific recommendations or methods of action to accomplish these stated objectives. Together these three pieces express the uniqueness of the community while providing guidance for desirable patterns of growth and development. The following statements are reflective of the overall desires of the community:

A. Goals

1. Maintain the Town's rural character.
2. Manage and protect the Town's natural resources to ensure long term quality.
3. Promote a sound, stable, and sustainable economy.
4. Manage growth in a financially sound manner that does not negatively impact the Town's ability to provide services.

B. Objectives

1. Direct non-farm housing away from productive agricultural areas.
2. Protect important natural areas throughout the Town.
3. Ensure that newly developed or redeveloped areas are compatible with existing uses of land.
4. Recognize the importance of individual property rights.

C. Policies

1. Effective implementation tools, such as the Portage County Zoning Ordinance, official maps, and Town ordinances should be used and enforced.
2. Limit development densities throughout the Town to preserve productive farmland, protect natural resources and open spaces, as a means of preserving rural character.
3. Develop new ordinances and regulatory tools as the need arises.