

Town of Ridgeway Comprehensive Plan



March 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this section is to provide basic background information for the comprehensive planning process and general population and demographic characteristics for the Town of Ridgeway. More specifically this section includes information from the community survey and visioning sessions, demographic trends including population trends, age distribution, housing trends, education levels, income levels, employment characteristics, population projections, housing projections, and labor force projections.

**Wisconsin State Statute 66.1001(2)(a)**

(a) Issues and opportunities element. Background information on the local governmental unit and a statement of overall objectives, policies, goals and programs of the local governmental unit to guide the future development and redevelopment of the local governmental unit over a 20-year planning period. Background information shall include population, household and employment forecasts that the local governmental unit uses in developing its comprehensive plan, and demographic trends, age distribution, educational levels, income levels and employment characteristics that exist within the local governmental unit.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES POLICIES

The following are the issues and opportunities policies for the Town of Ridgeway. The essence of these recommendations is carried out throughout the entire document.

- **Protect and improve the health, safety, and welfare of residents in the Town of Ridgeway.**
- **Preserve and enhance the quality of life for the residents of the Town of Ridgeway.**
- **Protect and preserve the rural character of the Town of Ridgeway.**

Note: The above policy recommendations are further explained in other elements of this comprehensive plan. This section provides background information and overall direction. For example, the above recommendations may be carried out by implementing recommendations in other sections such as housing, economic development, and transportation.

BACKGROUND

Iowa County, together with twenty-two jurisdictions, including the Town of Ridgeway, applied for a Comprehensive Planning Grant through the Wisconsin Department of Administration in the fall of 2001. In the spring of 2002, the Comprehensive Planning Grant was awarded. Iowa County and the jurisdictions within it contracted with the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWWRPC) to complete individual comprehensive plans for each of the twenty-three participating jurisdictions (Iowa County, cities, towns, and villages) in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001.

Because of the large number of involved jurisdictions and in an effort to streamline planning meetings, individual jurisdictions were grouped into “clusters”, based on their physical proximity to one another, resulting in six cluster groups. Iowa County was a separate cluster.

- “Northwest Cluster” (Towns of Highland and Pulaski, Villages of Avoca and Highland)
- “Northeast Cluster” (Towns of Arena, Clyde, and Wyoming, and the Village of Arena)
- “Central Cluster” (Towns of Dodgeville and Ridgeway, Village of Ridgeway, and City of Dodgeville)
- “Southwest Cluster” (Towns of Eden, Linden and Mifflin, and Village of Linden)
- “South Central Cluster” (Towns of Mineral Point and Waldwick, and City of Mineral Point)
- “Southeast Cluster” (Town of Moscow, and Villages of Blanchardville and Hollandale)
- Iowa County

In 2017 and 2018, the Ridgeway Township Land Use Commission revised this Comprehensive Plan and updates are incorporated.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

COMMUNITY SURVEY

In September and October of 2002, the staff from SWWRPC and University of Wisconsin Extension Service-Iowa County (UWEX-Iowa County) developed a countywide survey that was distributed to all property owners in Iowa County. A total of 10,752 surveys were sent out, 281 to Town of Ridgeway property owners. Ninety-three surveys were sent back, giving the Town a 33 percent return rate. (See Appendix A-1 for complete survey results.)

A new survey was conducted for the Town of Ridgeway in 2016. Updates are based on the results from that survey and the open meetings held. Our Vision Statement has not changed. Three hundred and forty-two (342) surveys were sent out to Town of Ridgeway residents and property owners. One hundred and fourteen (114) surveys were returned. (See Appendix A-1 for complete survey results.)

COMMUNITY VISION

A vision statement identifies where the Town of Ridgeway intends to be in the future and how to best meet the future needs of its stakeholders: citizens. The vision statement incorporates a shared understanding of the nature and purpose of the organization and uses this understanding to move towards a greater purpose together. SWWRPC, in conjunction with UWEX-Iowa County, sponsored visioning sessions for each cluster in the autumn and winter of 2002-2003. The Town of Ridgeway's planning commission utilized the visioning information from these sessions to create a formal vision statement. The vision statement by the Town of Ridgeway is:

Preserve the family farm/rural heritage flavor by protecting productive agricultural land and scenic vistas, and yet provide for growth of the community by recognizing the needs and potential of all age and diverse groups within the community.

VISIONING

In 2016, the Town of Ridgeway planning representatives were to identify issues, opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses specific to the Town of Ridgeway. The following lists are based on the township survey, public hearings, citizen input and local Plan Commission meetings.

Issues:

- Land use in the Ridgeway/Hwy 18/151 interchange area
- High taxes
- Preserving and protecting wildlife habitat and natural resources
- Lack of Wi-Fi, high speed internet and cable access
- Preserving farmland, scenic views and rural character
- Employment opportunities

Opportunities:

- Planning and development around highway interchange(s)
- Continue to formulate, plan, and educate public
- Continue awareness of employment needs in land use plan
- Promote tourism and recreational activities
- Promote expanded access to high speed internet
- Promote a sense of community

Strengths:

- Having a working and functioning Land Use Commission
- Town rural atmosphere
- Good outdoor recreation possibilities
- Commitment to preserve the rural character
- Stable population
- Good road service

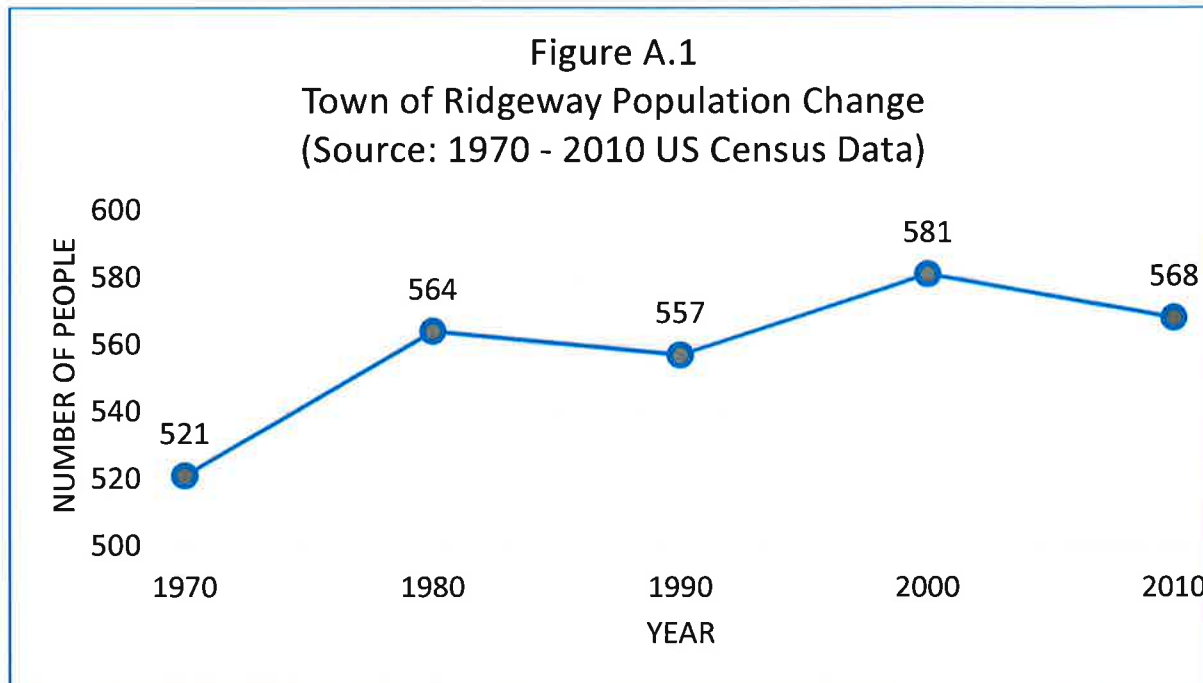
Weaknesses:

- Discontent over taxes
- Lack of local employment opportunities
- Potential loss of school
- Lack of affordable housing

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

POPULATION CHANGES

The Town of Ridgeway’s population has increased by forty-seven people over the past 40 years. Between 1970 and 1980, the Town grew by 8 percent. Between 1980 and 1990, it lost 1 percent. Between 1990 and 2000, the Town grew by 4 percent. Between 2000 and 2010, it lost 2 percent.

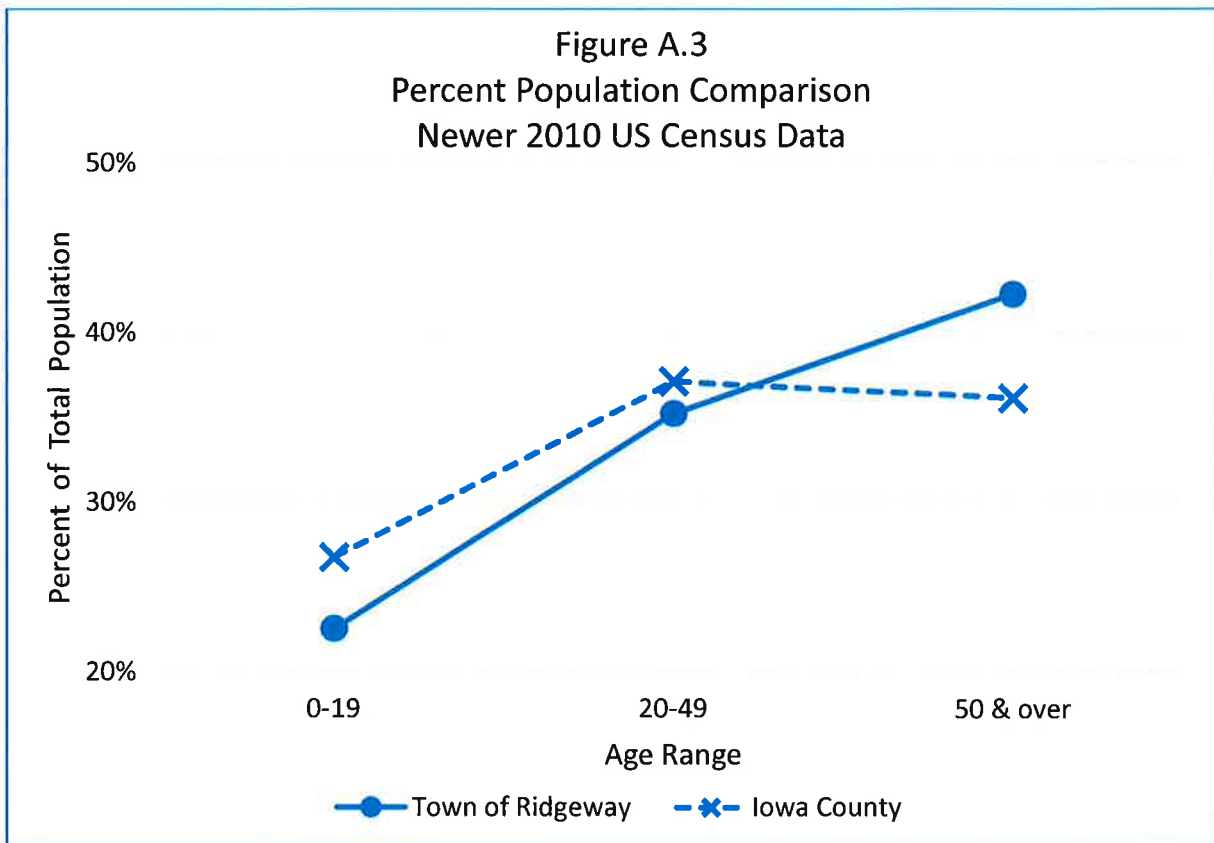
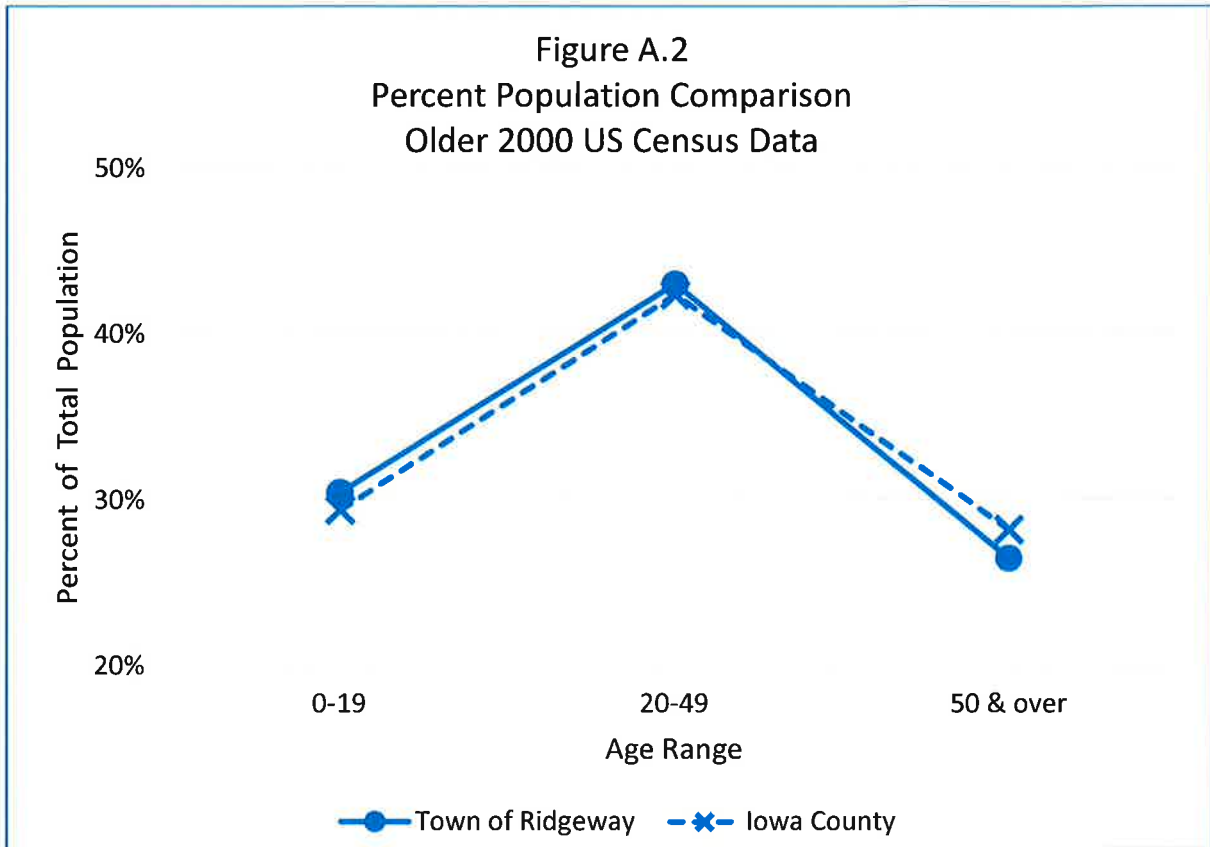


AGE DISTRIBUTION

Figures A.2 and A.3 show the age distribution of Town of Ridgeway and Iowa County residents, using 2000 and 2010 US Census data.

According to the most recent US Census Bureau data, the Town of Ridgeway population has *increased significantly* in age between 2000 and 2010. The portion of Township residents age 50 or older *increased* from 27% to 42% of the total population. Over the same 10-year period, the portion of residents under the age of 20 *decreased* from 30% to 23%.

In 2000, the Township population closely resembled the Iowa County population profile, but changes in the County age profile have occurred at a much slower rate. Between 2000 and 2010, the portion of County residents age 50 or older *increased* from 28% to 36% of the total population. Over the same 10-year period, the portion of residents under the age of 20 *decreased* from 29% to 27%.



DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS**POPULATION**

Preparing population projections is necessary to provide planners, developers, and others with expected increases or decreases in given base years. Reliable projections of population are needed for all kinds of planning or policy decisions whether involving the need for extending utilities, building a new highway, or starting a business. All these require some notion of probable demand for such facilities.