

2

Existing Conditions



Wadena

Comprehensive Plan & Transportation Plan

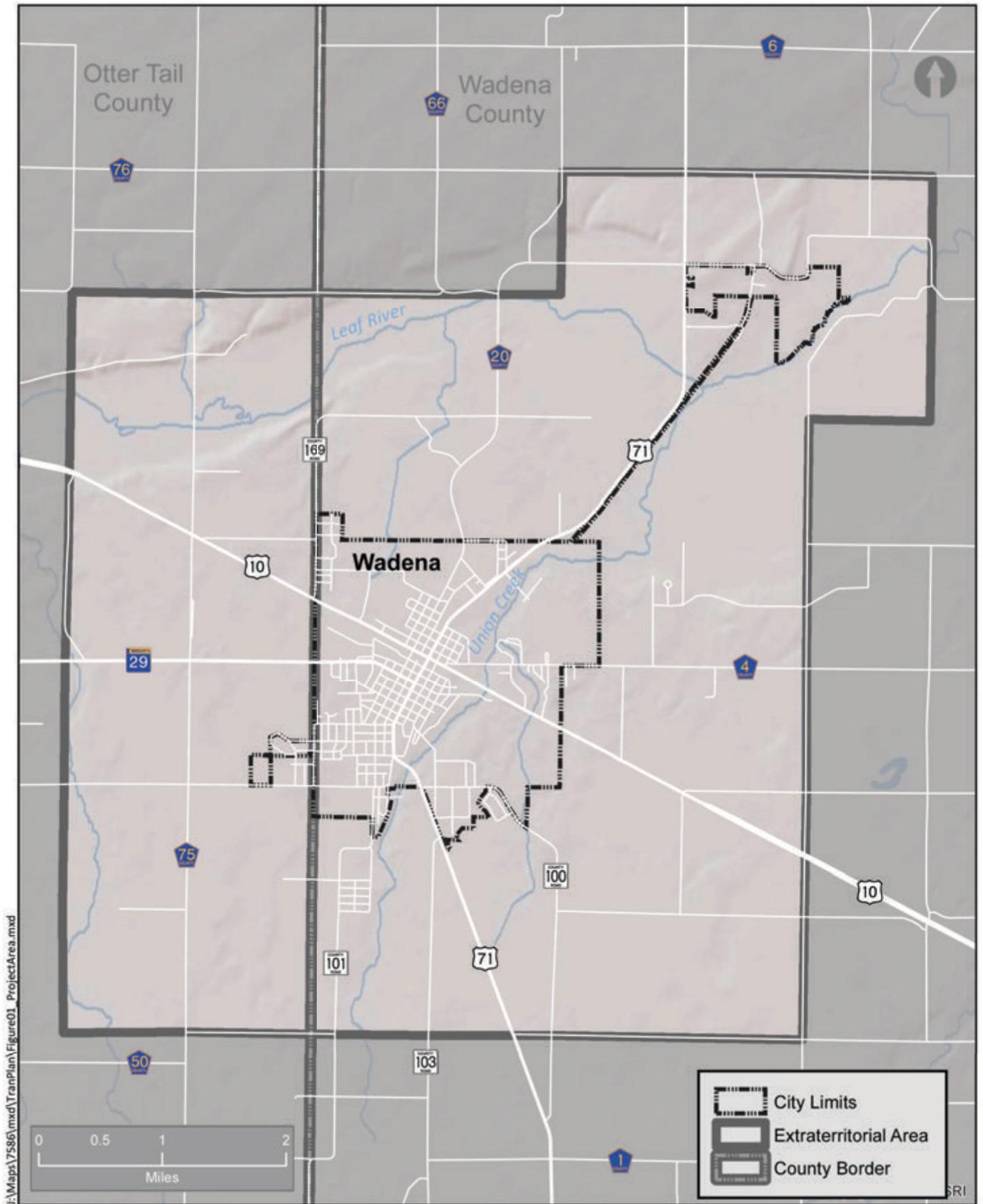
2.1 OVERVIEW

The City of Wadena is predominantly located in central Minnesota, on the western edge of Wadena County. The community is situated in an area that transitions from the eastern deciduous forest to the northern coniferous forest. The natural features of the area consist of rolling hills, lakes and wetlands, and large wooded areas. Much of the land surrounding Wadena is farmed and the economy of the region is supported mainly by agriculture. However, tourism has become an important aspect of the region due to the presence of large lakes and natural areas. Many visitors come to the region during the summer and fall months. Although the majority of the City of Wadena is located in Wadena County (See **Figure 2-1**), portions of Wadena, west of 11th Street SW, are within Otter Tail County.

This chapter reviews existing conditions within the City of Wadena including existing land use and zoning, demographics, economics, and physical characteristics. The compilation of the existing elements provides a snapshot of the community, the issues within, and an understanding of how the community has changed over the years.

This section of the plan addresses the following elements:

- Historical Assessment
- Demographics
- Economic
- Physical Characteristics
- Natural Resources
- Cultural/Recreational Resources
- Existing Zoning
- Existing Land Use
- Educational Institutions
- Emergency Services
- City Facilities
- Parks and Open Space
- Utilities



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Figure 2-1

2.2 HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT

The name Wadena is an Ojibwa word meaning “Little Round Hill”, probably referring to the bluffs along the Crow Wing River where the original town site was located. Along the Otter Tail Trail, Wadena was founded as a trading post that thrived between 1855 and 1872. During this time more than 100 people lived inside the post. The railroad was built through the unsettled area in 1872, and Wadena was moved 15 miles to the west to its current location.

The City of Wadena was established in 1874 and became the Wadena County seat. Shortly following the incorporation of the City, a school and courthouse were built. The strategic location of the community made it a regional economic farm hub. Wadena served as a trade center for Wadena County and neighboring counties of Todd, Cass, and Otter Tail.

Historically, a number of major traffic routes in central Minnesota have passed through, or adjacent to, Wadena. For example, of the three main canoe routes connecting the Twin Cities to Pembina, North Dakota, one passes near Wadena. This route would become a common conduit for other modes of transportation as time progressed. For example, the canoe path would later be used to establish a route for the Red River ox carts, only to be followed by the Northern Pacific Railroad Company as it expanded westward. As transportation advanced and the highway era began, U.S. Highway 71 (connecting the Gulf of Mexico to Canada) and U.S. Highway 10 (connecting the east and west coasts) were built, and came to intersect Wadena. Why Wadena was named the county seat is apparent, and it remains a trade center for the county region.

2.3 DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

Review of the historic population trends, gender, and age groups of a community provides an insight into the changes that have occurred throughout the area.

Historic

According to the 2010 census, Wadena's population was 4,088, which is a decrease of more than 200 people from the 2000 census. The largest decline during the past 50 years of Wadena's history was between 1980 and 1990, when the population declined by nearly 600 people, a population decline of more than 12 percent. It appears that some of this decline can be attributed to a population shift from the city to the surrounding rural area, although data has not been collected to determine exactly when that shift occurred. As shown in

Figure 2-2 and Table 2-1, the city experienced population growth from 1910 to 1980, before falling in 1990.

Figure 2-2: Wadena Population Trend

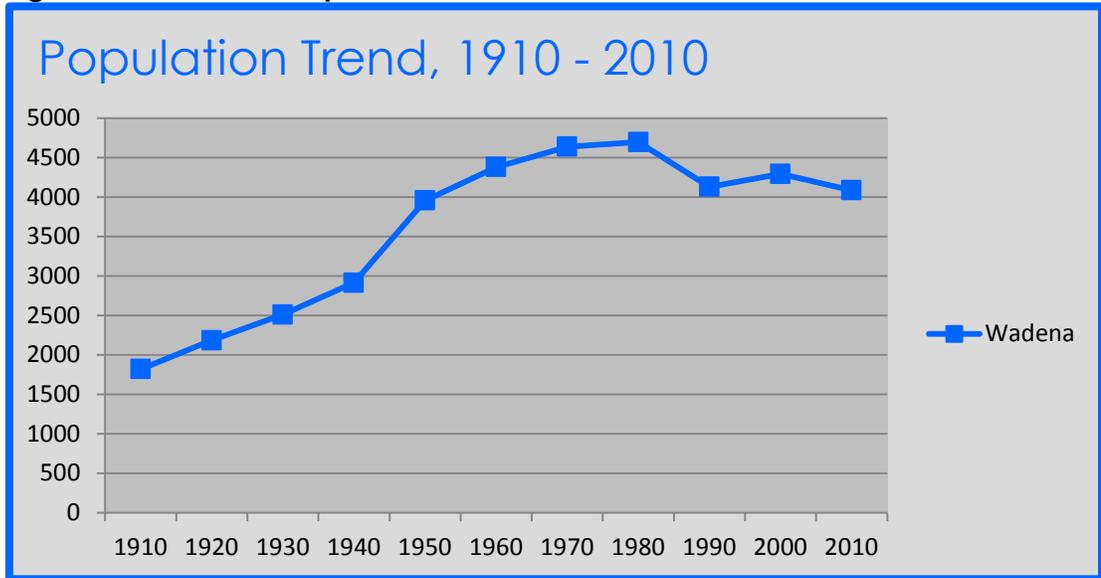
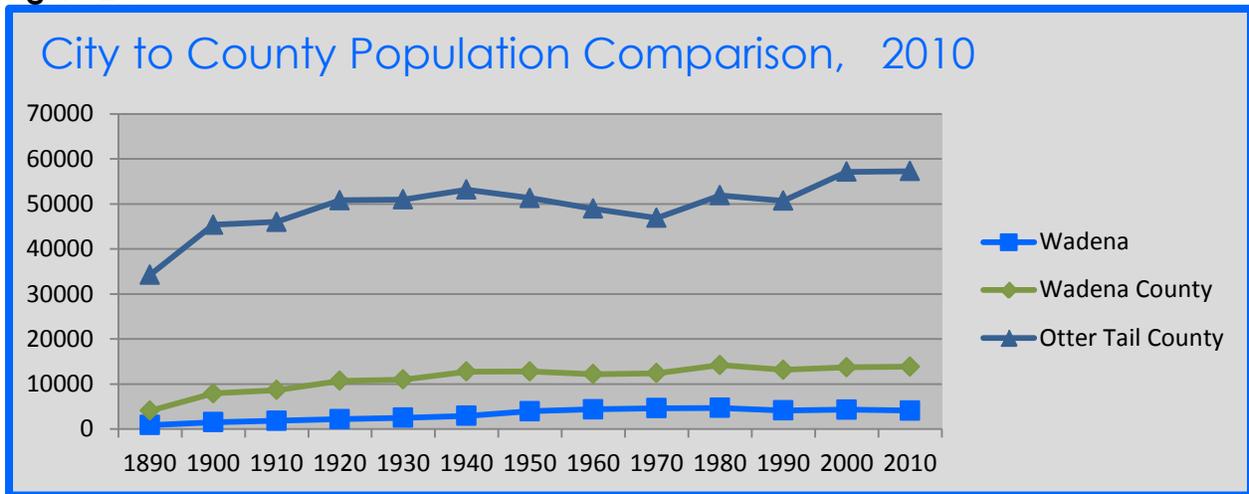


Table 2-1: Population Comparison, 2010

Year	Minnesota		Otter Tail County		Wadena County		City of Wadena	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1910	2,075,708	-	46,036	-	8,652	-	1,820	-
1920	2,387,125	15.00%	50,818	10.39%	10,699	23.66%	2,186	20.11%
1930	2,563,953	7.41%	51,006	0.37%	10,990	2.72%	2,512	14.91%
1940	2,792,300	8.91%	53,192	4.29%	12,772	16.21%	2,916	16.08%
1950	2,982,483	6.81%	51,320	-3.52%	12,806	0.27%	3,958	35.73%
1960	3,413,864	14.46%	48,960	-4.60%	12,199	-4.74%	4,381	10.69%
1970	3,804,971	11.46%	46,907	-4.19%	12,412	1.75%	4,640	5.91%
1980	4,075,970	7.12%	51,937	10.72%	14,192	14.34%	4,699	1.27%
1990	4,375,099	7.34%	50,714	-2.35%	13,154	-7.31%	4,131	-12.09%
2000	4,919,479	12.44%	57,159	12.71%	13,713	4.25%	4,294	3.95%
2010	5,303,925	7.81%	57,303	0.25%	13,843	0.95%	4,088	-4.80%

The City of Wadena experienced rapid growth rates for many decades, slowing in the 1960s and 1970s followed by a slight decline in the past 30 years. The population of Wadena County has followed a similar trend. **Figure 2-3** is a graphical representation of the rise and fall of the populations of the City of Wadena, Wadena County, and neighboring Ottertail County (a portion of the city of Wadena is located in Ottertail County) beginning in 1890 and leading up to the present day. The City of Wadena comprises approximately 30 percent of the population of Wadena County. As the population of the City of Wadena slowly declines, the population of Wadena County slowly increases or stays constant, indicating that some people are migrating outside of city limits to alternative rural housing opportunities. This trend is similar in Otter Tail County for the same time period, as shown in **Table 2-1**. During the historic growth period of the City of Wadena from 1930 to 1970, both counties experienced little growth or declining populations. This trend may be the result of people moving into urban areas from rural areas in the County.

Figure 2-3



Current

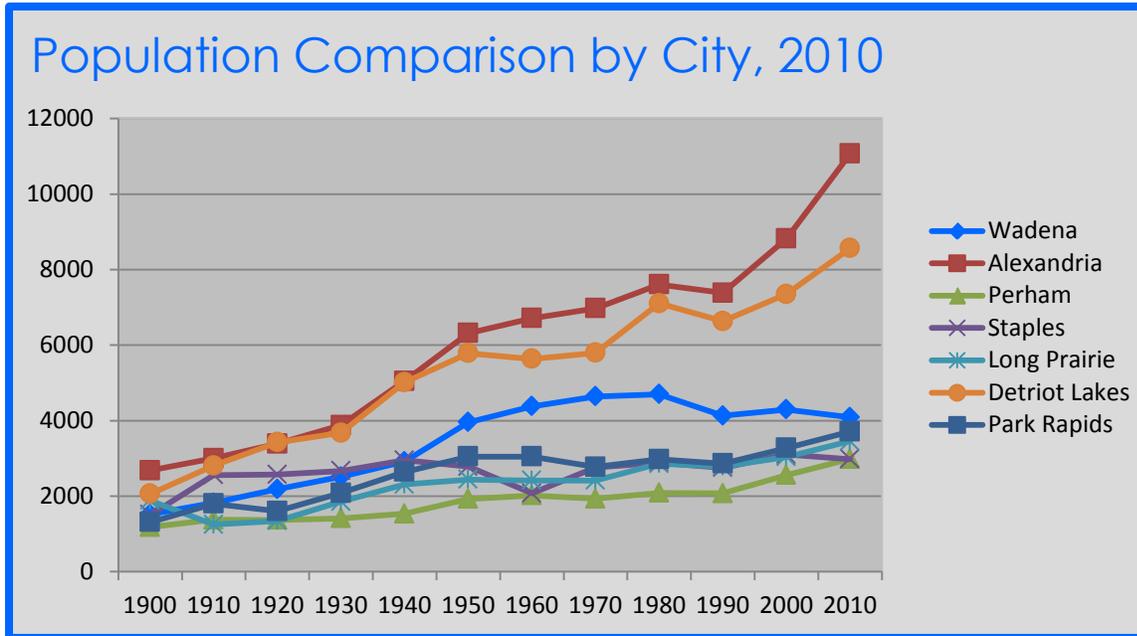
The most recent census data shows that more than 1,100 people live in the two-mile extraterritorial area (ETA) surrounding Wadena, and nearly another 1,500 people live in the two miles surrounding the ETA. This additional population of 2,605 in the four-mile area surrounding Wadena adds a population representing nearly 64 percent of the city's population of 4,088 to the immediate service area surrounding Wadena. Table 2-2 shows this information.

Table 2-2: Population of Wadena and ETA, 2010

Area	Total Population by Area	Difference
City of Wadena	4,088	-
City + ETA	5,199	1,111
City + ETA + 2 miles	6,693	2,605

When compared with other communities of similar size in the region, Wadena's population trend is very similar to the recent population trend of Staples, Minnesota, which is located approximately 17 miles to the southeast along TH 10 (see **Figure 2-4**). Although Staples has a smaller population than Wadena, it experienced a similar population decline between the 2000 and 2010 census. Of the seven communities compared, only Wadena and Staples experienced a decline during this time period.

Figure 2-4: Population Comparison by City



To estimate what the population of Wadena will be in 20-25 years, 5 percent, 10 percent, and 25 percent growth scenarios were projected, as shown in **Table 2-3**. Population increase is shown in five-year increments. These growth scenarios are compared against population projections from the Minnesota Demographer and a decreased population trend based upon historical regression. The growth projections of 5 and 10 percent during the next 20-25 years represent a very conservative population increase which is in line with past trends.

Table 2-3: Wadena Population Trends

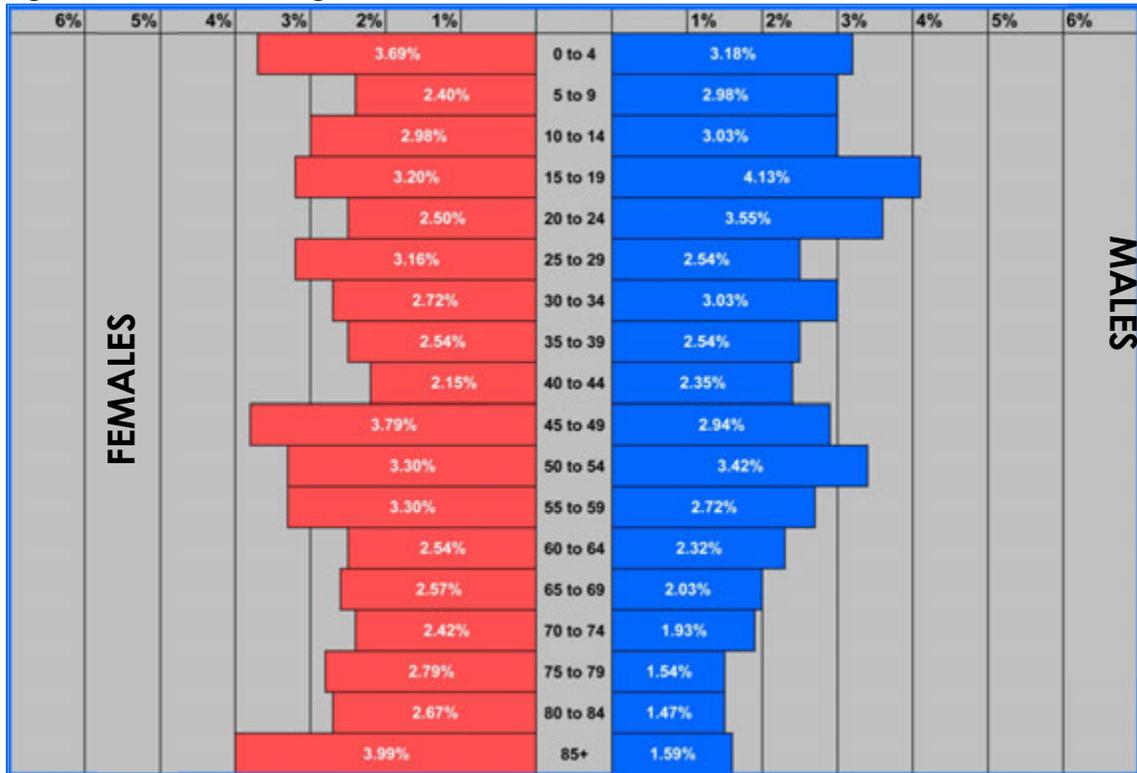
Trend	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
Minnesota Demography	4,088	4,115	4,140	4,170	4,140	4,135
5%	4,088	4,130	4,170	4,210	4,250	4,290
10%	4,088	4,170	4,250	4,335	4,415	4,495
25%	4,088	4,290	4,495	4,700	4,905	5,110
Historical Regression	4,088	4,075	4,065	4,020	3,975	3,935

AGE DISTRIBUTION

The population pyramid below in **Figure 2-5** shows City of Wadena residents as a percentage of the population that falls into each age cohort. Characteristics demonstrated by the population pyramid include:

- The life expectancy of females far exceeds that of males, which has generally been a trend in the United States over the course of the last 50 years.

Figure 2-5: Wadena Age Cohorts, 2010



- The influence of the Baby Boom and Echo Boom generations are represented as the spikes in populations between 45-59 years old and 15-29 years old, respectively.
- One interesting characteristic is the higher number of males in the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups. This could be due to the type of courses offered by the Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Wadena or the types of jobs available in the community.

Based on the population pyramid, the population of Wadena generally appears stable. Population pyramids that are top heavy show a growing population, as the highest percentage of population is in the younger age groups. A declining population is represented by a bottom heavy pyramid, in which the oldest age cohorts hold the largest percentage of the population. **Figure 2-5** displays neither a top or bottom heavy pyramid.

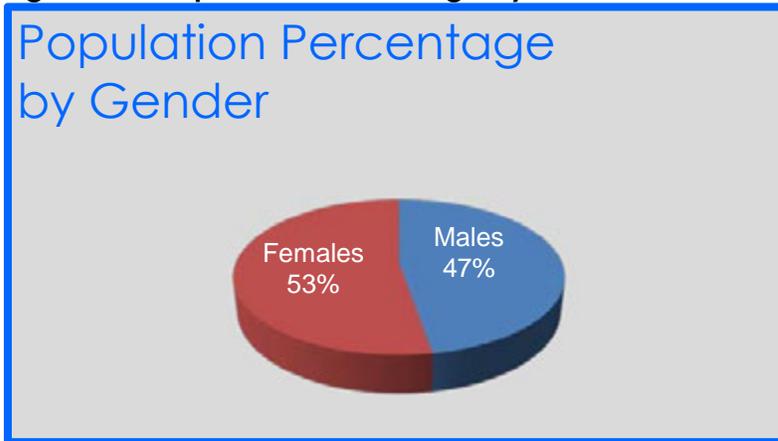
The average age for a male living within the city is 39.85 while the average female age is 45.55, the difference of which can be explained by the higher survival rates of

older female age cohorts. The pyramid is fairly balanced with 51.83 percent of the population being over 40 years of age.

GENDER

As shown in **Figure 2-6**, the 2010 census indicated that Wadena's total population is comprised of 53 percent females and 47 percent males. This breakdown is typical of many Minnesota communities, although Wadena's gender disparity appears somewhat greater than Minnesota as a whole, which consists of 50.4 percent female and 49.6 percent male.

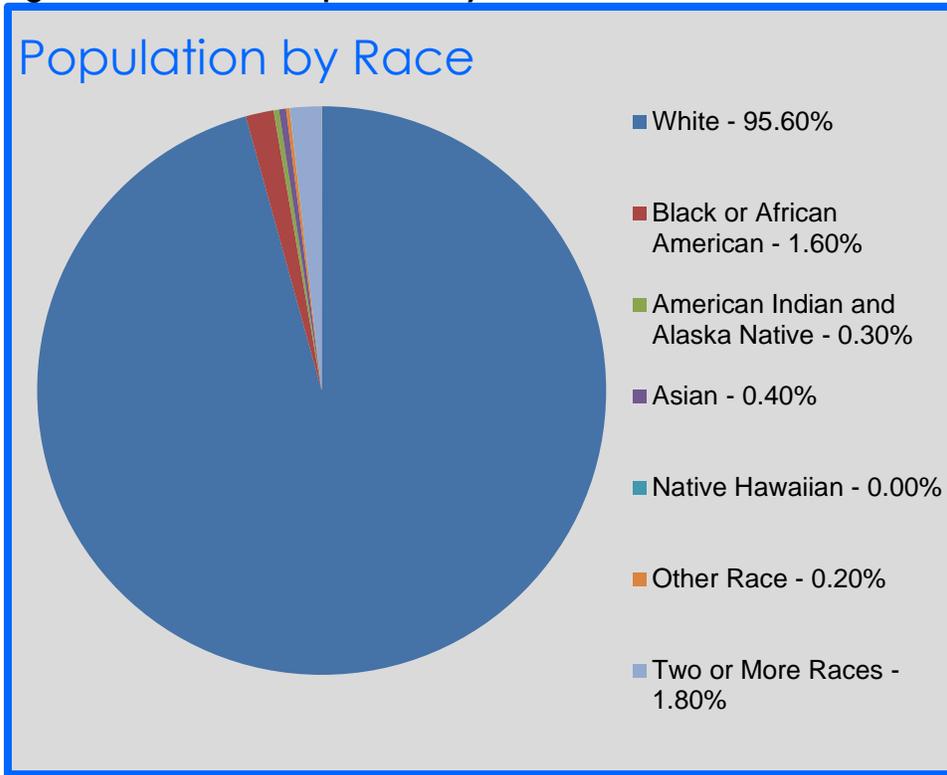
Figure 2-6: Population Percentage by Gender



RACIAL COMPOSITION

Not unlike most of the rural areas in northern Midwestern states, Wadena has a population primarily composed of Caucasians, which are mainly descendent from Germanic and Scandinavian origins. These were some of the first settlers to migrate to central and northern Minnesota in the mid-19th century. **Figure 2-7** shows the breakdown of the population of Wadena by race, according to the 2010 census. A slight change in the racial composition of the community occurred between 2000 and 2010. Over the last decade, the white population decreased by 2.2 percent, while the Black or African American and Asian populations increased.

Figure 2-7: Wadena Population by Race



HOUSEHOLDS

As shown in **Figure 2-8**, the 2010 census indicated a total of 2,010 dwelling units in Wadena. At that time, 1,840 dwelling units were occupied, leaving a total of approximately 170 vacant dwelling units. Occupied housing units in the surrounding two-mile and four-mile area are shown in **Table 2-4**. The two-mile ETA adds another 23.6 percent to the city's occupied dwelling units with 435 occupied dwellings. In the two-mile area surrounding the ETA, there are another 517 dwelling units. The four-mile area surrounding Wadena increases the occupied dwellings by 52 percent, with another 952 units. This brings the total number of occupied dwelling units in Wadena and the surrounding four-mile area to 2,792 in the year 2010.

Table 2-4: Occupied Dwelling Units, Wadena and Surrounding Area, 2010 Census

Area	Total Units	Total Occupied Dwelling Units	Difference
City of Wadena	2,010	1,840	-
City + ETA	2,527	2,271	431
City + ETA + 2 miles	4,357	2,792	521

More than 12 percent of Wadena's housing units were vacant based on the results of the 2010 Census (See Figure 2-8). Some of the vacant dwelling units in Wadena could be related to college students and the time of year during which census data

was collected, when certain housing units have been only temporarily vacant. More than 22 percent of the 170 vacant units were for sale during the 2010 census (38 units). Other vacancies were documented for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, sold but not occupied, or rented but not occupied. Nearly a fourth of the vacant dwelling units (42) simply identified a vacant unit for no particular reason.

Figure 2-8: Wadena Vacant Housing Units

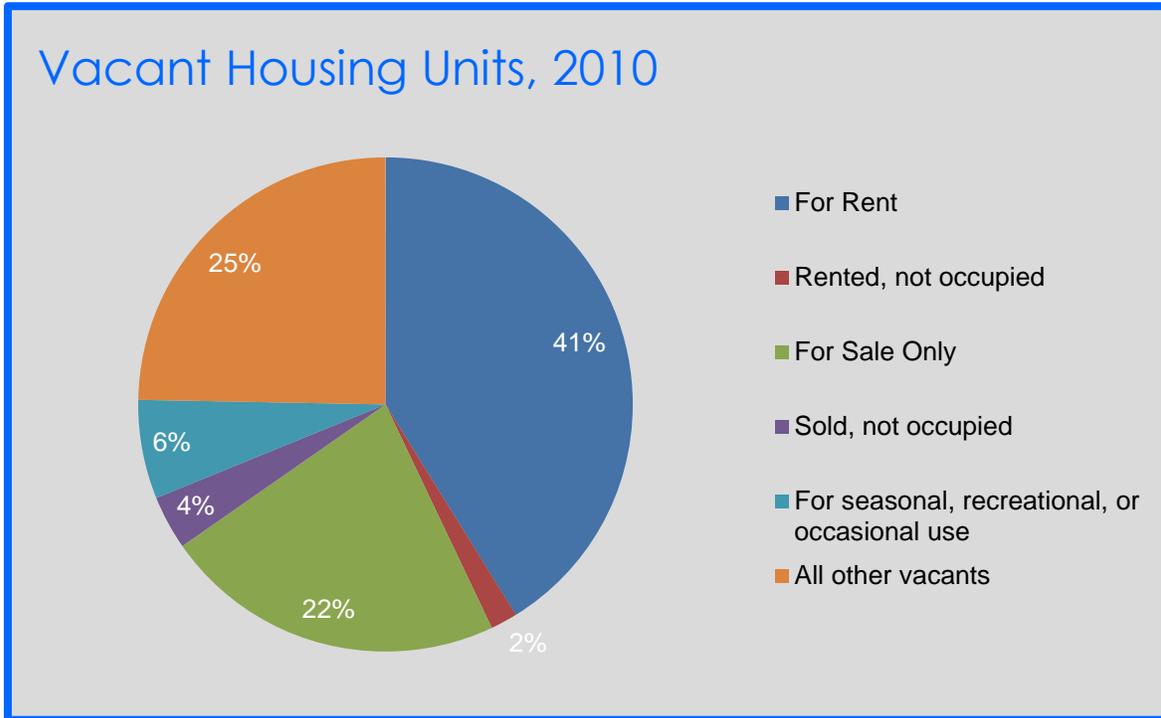
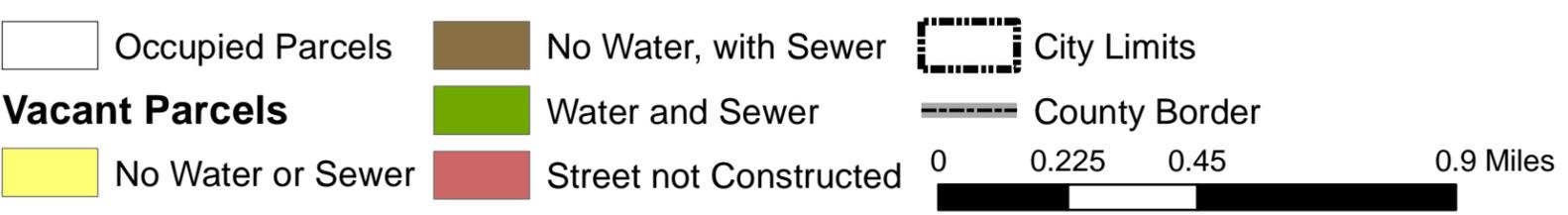
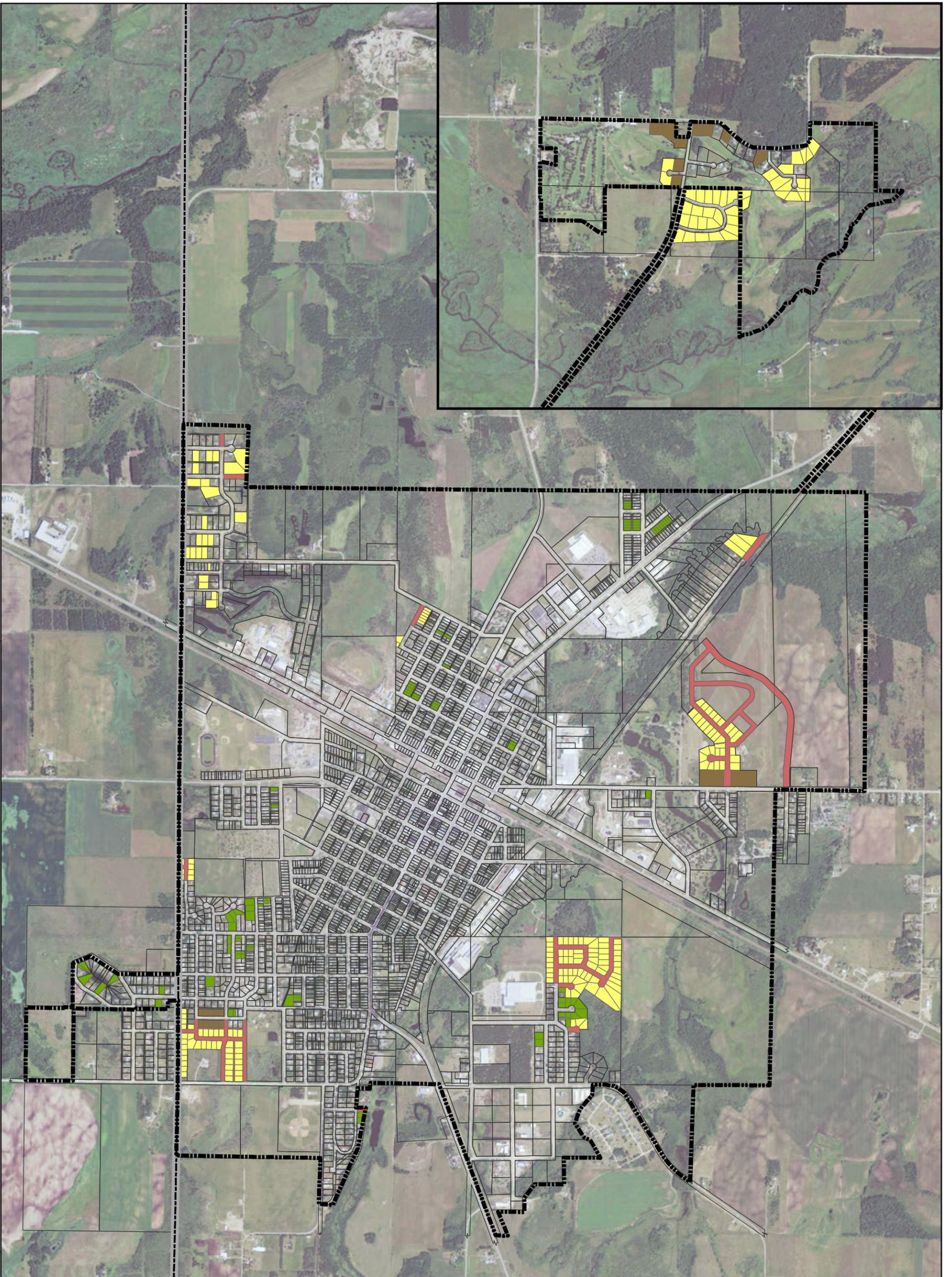


Figure 2-9 displays vacant parcels platted within city limits according to data received from the City of Wadena in the summer of 2012. Vacant parcels for this data set are defined as parcels with no built structure or an uninhabitable structure. According to this data, 310 parcels are vacant. Of these vacant parcels, 214 do not have municipal water or sewer connections, 21 have municipal sewer connections but are not connected to water, and 75 are connected to municipal sewer and water. Some of the vacant parcels are located in the path of the 2010 tornado. Of these parcels, a few are situated between two parcels with structures that were repaired or rebuilt following the tornado. These parcels are more challenging to develop due to the existing context, which consists of mainly smaller lots in older neighborhoods.

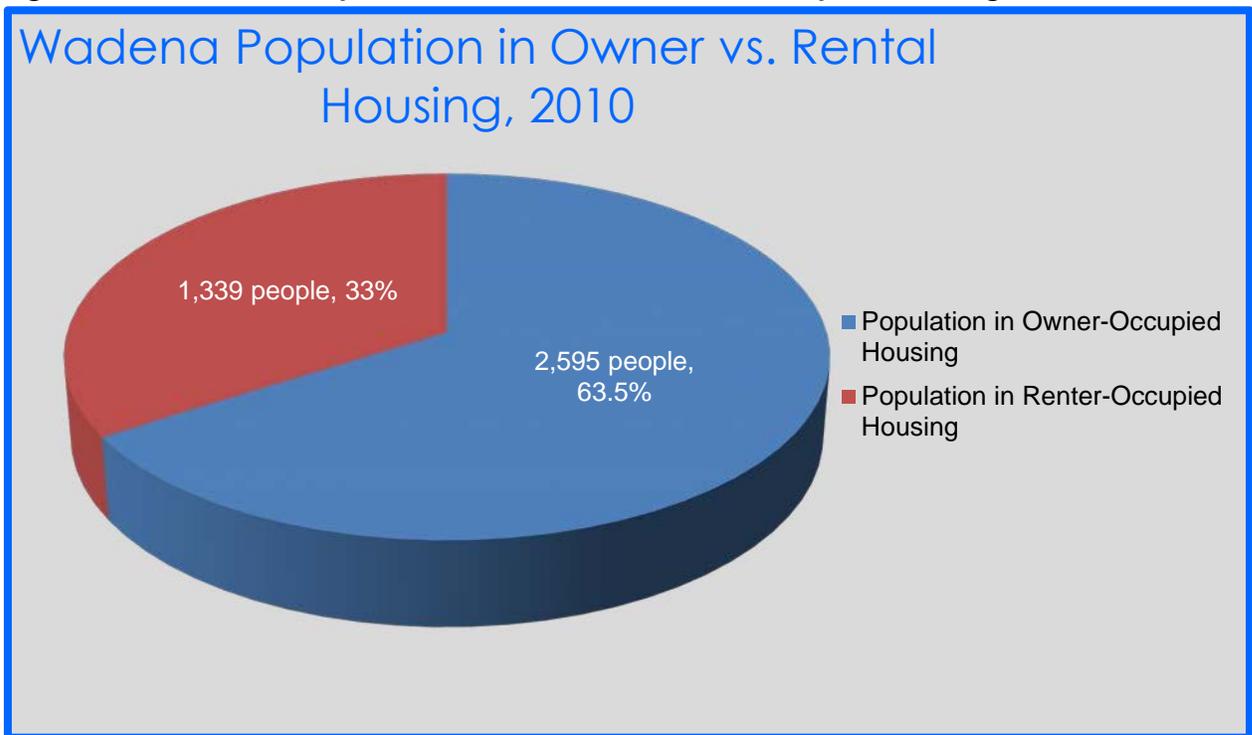


HP\Projects\17586\Design\GIS\mxd\Figure X_ Existing Vacant Parcels

Figure 2-9

Figure 2-10 shows the breakdown of population living in owner occupied housing versus rental housing according to the 2010 census. Approximately 0.5 percent of the population was unaccounted for in this data (154 people). The percentage of the population living in owner occupied housing (63.5 percent) versus renter occupied housing (33 percent) is very typical of many cities throughout the United States. As the City of Wadena grows, land designated for rental housing (typically medium/high density) and owner-occupied housing (typically low density residential) should be proportionally developed to provide housing opportunities for all income and lifestyle categories of new residents.

Figure 2-10: Wadena Population in Owner vs. Rental Occupied Housing



In 2000, the average household size in the City of Wadena was 2.2 people, which decreased to 2.14 people in 2010. A similar trend was observed regarding the average family size, which fell from 2.92 people in 2000 to 2.86 people in 2010.

2.4 ECONOMIC

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

According to the 2010 Census, the average monthly earnings in Wadena County was \$2,778 whereas the State of Minnesota averaged \$4,343. This equates to an

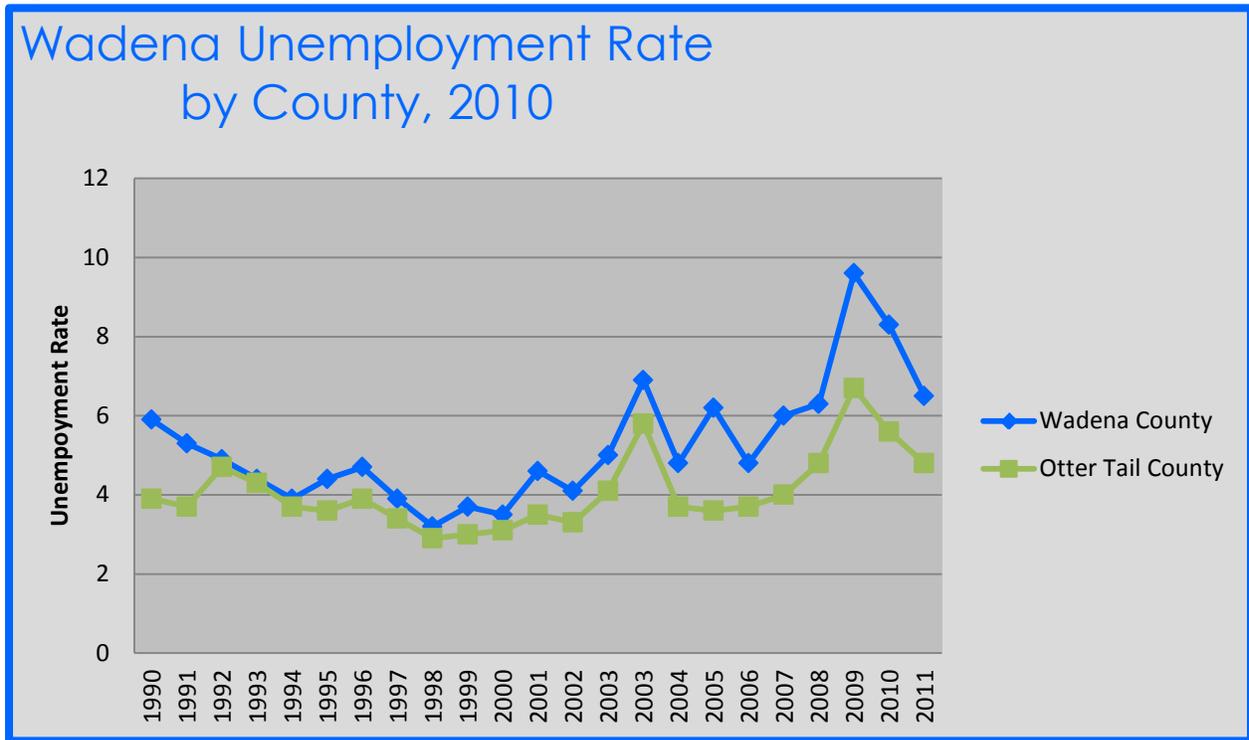
average yearly income of \$33,336 and \$52,116, respectively. The average new hire in Wadena County earns \$1,988 per month, or \$23,856 yearly. These incomes in Wadena County are indicative of a substantial blue collar workforce which would also include small family farmers. Depending upon size and employment status, some individuals and families are below the national average yearly income, which is \$34,575 a year for a four-person family. Most, however, are likely considered middle class, which is often true of families with two income earners.

According to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the September unemployment rate for Wadena County was 6.8 percent (See **Figure 2-11**). This rate is the fourth highest in the State of Minnesota, which has an unemployment rate of 5.8 percent. Otter Tail County's unemployment rate (4.6percent) is lower than the State of Minnesota and the Nation (7.8 percent).

Job Trends

Figure 2-11 was compiled using data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. It shows the unemployment rate from October of each year from 1990 to 2011. Overall, Wadena County has experienced a higher unemployment rate with greater fluctuation than that of Otter Tail County. The unemployment rate for Wadena County in October of 2011 was 6.5 percent, while the rate for Otter Tail County was 4.8 percent. Even though the unemployment rate for Wadena County is relatively high, it is still lower than the national average.

Figure 2-11: Unemployment Rate by County



MAJOR EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

The data shown in **Table 2-5** was collected from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development for the first quarter of 2012. It compares the employment and wages by industry for the City of Wadena, Otter Tail County and Wadena County. Within the City of Wadena, the greatest number of people are employed in the Trade, Transportation, and Utilities Industry, while this category employs the second greatest number of people in both counties. Employees within the Utilities Industry earn the greatest hourly wage within the City of Wadena, which aligns with the employees within Wadena County. The Finance and Insurance Industry earns the highest hourly wage in Otter Tail County. The City of Wadena has the highest average annual salary of the three jurisdictions across the industries studied.

Table 2-5: Employment and Wages Earned by Industry, First Quarter of 2012

Industry	City of Wadena			Otter Tail County			Wadena County		
	Employment	Hourly Wage	Annual Salary	Employment	Hourly Wage	Annual Salary	Employment	Hourly Wage	Annual Salary
Manufacturing	229	\$13.30	\$27,664	3,654	\$17.38	\$36,140	495	\$14.35	\$29,848
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	1,027	\$17.45	\$36,296	4,343	\$16.00	\$33,280	1,328	\$16.10	\$33,488
Utilities	40	\$35.60	\$74,048	-	-	-	20	\$35.60	\$74,048
Wholesale Trade	397	\$22.15	\$46,072	571	\$19.08	\$39,676	429	\$22.03	\$45,812
Transportation and Warehousing	109	\$18.60	\$38,688	-	-	-	228	\$14.98	\$31,148
Financial Activities	105	\$18.55	\$38,584	626	\$19.70	\$40,976	161	\$18.08	\$37,596
Finance and Insurance	98	\$19.35	\$40,248	539	\$21.43	\$44,564	141	\$18.75	\$39,000
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	7	\$7.45	\$15,496	87	\$9.03	\$18,772	19	\$14.00	\$29,120
Professional and Business Services	69	\$18.88	\$39,260	1,037	\$17.55	\$36,504	-	-	-
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	23	\$11.10	\$23,088	450	\$17.78	\$36,972	28	\$11.45	\$23,816
Education and Health Services	989	\$18.23	\$37,908	6,198	\$15.58	\$32,396	2,463	\$17.95	\$37,336
Leisure and Hospitality	264	\$4.43	\$9,204	1,652	\$5.43	\$11,284	352	\$4.63	\$9,620
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	-	-	-	179	\$5.58	\$11,596	26	\$6.08	\$12,636
Accommodation and Food Services	257	\$4.50	\$9,360	1,472	\$5.43	\$11,284	326	\$4.50	\$9,360
Other Services	96	\$7.48	\$15,548	678	\$9.53	\$19,812	154	\$12.93	\$26,884
Public Administration	215	\$21.00	\$43,680	1,099	\$20.63	\$42,900	263	\$19.33	\$40,196
Total Employment/ Average Wage or Salary	3,925	\$15.87	\$33,010	22,585	\$14.29	\$29,725	6,433	\$15.38	\$31,994

Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development