

2040 Washington
County **Comprehensive Plan**



Downtown Stillwater

Chapter 2 - County Context

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Washington County Vision

A great place to live, work, and play... today and tomorrow.

Washington County Mission

Providing quality services through responsible leadership, innovation, and the cooperation of dedicated people.

Washington County Goals

- To promote the health, safety, and quality of life of citizens.
- To provide accessible, high-quality services in a timely and respectful manner.
- To address today's needs while proactively planning for the future.
- To maintain public trust through responsible use of public resources, accountability, and openness of government.

Washington County Values

- Ethical: to ensure public trust through fairness, consistency, and transparency.
- Stewardship: to demonstrate tangible, cost-effective results and protect public resources.
- Quality: to ensure that services delivered to the public are up to the organization's highest standards.
- Responsive: to deliver services that are accessible, timely, respectful, and efficient.
- Respectful: to believe in and support the dignity and value of members of this community.
- Leadership: to actively advocate for and guide the County toward a higher quality of life.

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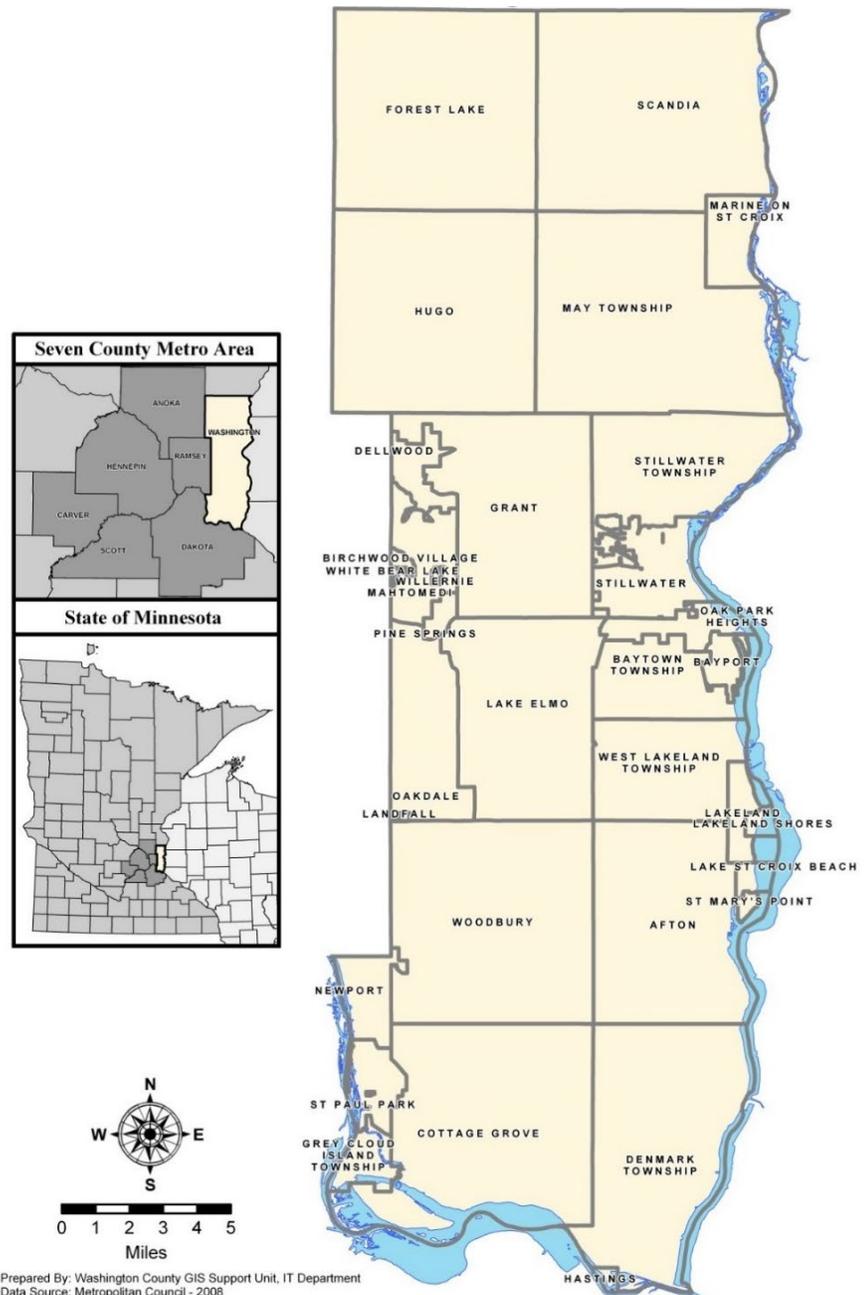
Executive Summary

Washington County is an area of abundant beauty, historical character, and agricultural heritage located on the eastern edge of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The county is home to 27 cities and six townships. Encompassing 423 square miles of land and water surface, Washington County is the fourth smallest county in the state based on land area. The county is 38 miles from north to south and 14 miles from east to west. The St. Croix River forms the entire eastern border and the Mississippi River forms the southern and southwestern border (see Figure 1). In 2015, an estimated 251,015 people resided in the county.

Demographic characteristics will be referred to using one of three terms throughout this chapter – county, estimates, and forecasts. These terms provide a reference to how the number was developed, and are defined as:

- **Count:** represents an official count of a dataset. This term is only used when representing totals from a decennial (10-year) U.S. Census.
- **Estimate:** represents data from a historic period that is outside of a Census data set. For example, the 2015 population estimate of 251,015 is calculated based on past conditions but is not as accurate as a county.
- **Forecast:** represents data for a period in the future. This data is calculated based on assumed growth rates, providing a general assumption for future populations.

Figure 1: Regional Context & Washington County Communities



Prepared By: Washington County GIS Support Unit, IT Department
 Data Source: Metropolitan Council - 2008

Historic Settlement Patterns and Influences

Washington County has historically played a diverse role in the region, serving the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area with its commercial, industrial, historical, natural, and agricultural resources.

Originally part of St. Croix County of the Wisconsin Territory, Washington County was established on October 27, 1849 after the formation of the Minnesota Territory. Many of the first permanent settlements after the 1837 treaties with native populations were located along the rivers in the area of what later became Washington County. The earliest townsite developments were in Stillwater, Lakeland, and Marine on St. Croix along the St. Croix River. Settlements in the 1840s and 1850s along the St. Croix River included Copas, Arcola, Baytown, Afton, and Oak Park. Early townsites on the Mississippi River included Grey Cloud, Point Douglas, and Newport.

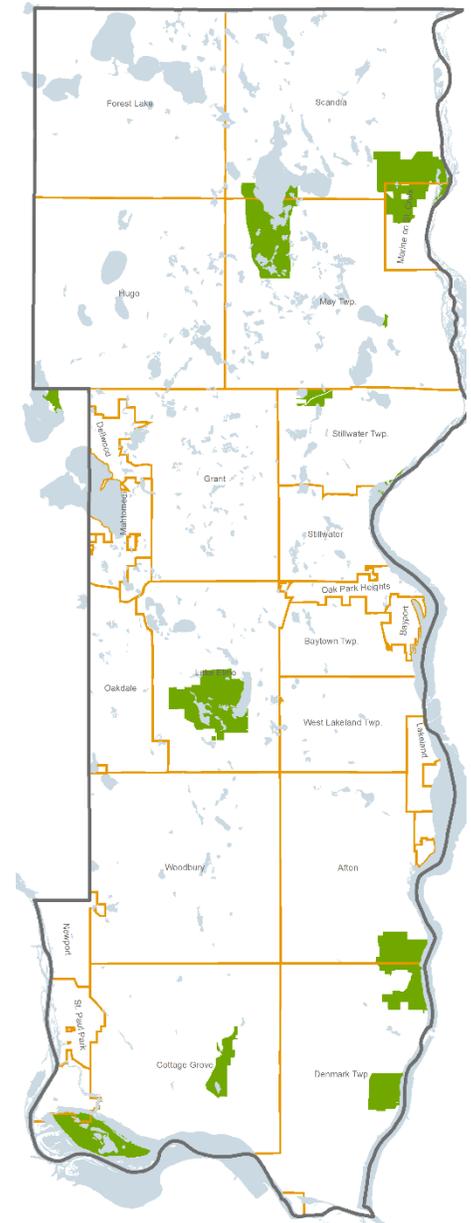
The county was one of the first areas of the state settled by people from the eastern United States and Europe, particularly Scandinavians. The earliest Swedish settlement in Minnesota occurred in Scandia in 1850, an area that was formally organized as a township in 1893.

The first commercial sawmill was established in Marine in 1839. By the 1850s, a sawmill site located in present day Stillwater became a booming lumber town. Cut timber was shipped via the Mississippi River to St. Louis and other southern markets. After the turn of the 19th century, much of the northern forests were felled and sawmilling declined, as did the area’s economy. The populations of Stillwater and Washington County plummeted.

Agriculture gained importance and became the economic mainstay of the county through the 1950s. Townships of Afton, Denmark, Lakeland, Oakdale, Cottage Grove, Baytown, Grant, Oakdale, and Red Rock (now known as Woodbury) were important agricultural areas.

The railroad played an important role in the early development of Washington County. In the 1960s, construction of interstates 694 and 94 and improvements to the state highways, such as Highway 61, facilitated suburban growth in the outer rings of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Cottage Grove and Oakdale were the first suburbs. Growth in suburban areas continues today.

Figure 2: Wetlands and Regional Parks



Washington County as a Place



Scenic beauty, historic significance, recreational amenities, and proximity to the growing Twin Cities Metropolitan Area have made Washington County a popular recreation and tourism destination. These qualities also explain the county’s continued popularity for residential and commercial development.

Washington County’s physical environment is very diverse, with varying surface and underground features throughout the county. The county is fortunate to have high-quality lakes, woodlands, agricultural areas, watersheds, wetlands, and two nationally significant river valleys. These natural resources and features are remarkably intact compared with those in other metropolitan counties; this is rapidly changing due to development. Parks and preserved open space provide an opportunity to preserve portions of the county’s many natural systems, including groundwater, wildlife habitats, and vegetative and landscape types (see Figure 2).

Surface waters cover about 9 percent or about 38 square miles of the county’s 423 square miles. The majority of the county’s surface waters consist of lakes and wetlands, most of which are located in the northern half of the county. The largest lakes are Forest Lake, Big Marine Lake, Lake Elmo, White Bear Lake, and Lake St. Croix. Many of the larger lakes, once resort and vacation spots during the first part of the 20th century, are now ringed with residential development.

Before settlement, as much as 80 percent of the county was forested. The rest of the county was covered by lakes, wetlands, and prairie. After the timber was harvested and the land was cleared, agriculture prevailed. Nearly all the land suitable for agriculture was being farmed by the early 1900s. Today, woodlands cover about 9 percent of the county according to the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System, and about 54 percent of the land area is classified agriculture or undeveloped land according to the Metropolitan Council.

While much of Washington County has retained its rural atmosphere, today it is considered a “suburban” county. However, the county continues to maintain its diverse image, from the corn fields of Denmark Township to the residential neighborhoods of Woodbury, and from the office and retail complexes along I-94 to the cooling waters of the St. Croix River. Each area of Washington County possesses a distinct set of landscapes and resources.

Washington County is a place where a prosperous economy grows with vital industries. The continual expansion of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, with its resultant population growth, has caused a spread of highly developed suburban areas in Washington County in the cities of Woodbury, Cottage Grove, and Oakdale. The communities of Stillwater, Hugo, Bayport, St. Paul Park, Newport, and Forest Lake have developed economic bases that support a local labor force.

Scenic beauty, historic significance, recreational amenities, and proximity to the growing Twin Cities Metropolitan Area have made Washington County a popular recreation and tourism destination.

Data Sources

This chapter takes a closer look at Washington County’s people, economy, and important themes that face the community into 2040. The data from this section comes from the 2010 U.S. Census, the annual American Community Surveys (ACS), the Washington County Community Health Assessment, the Minnesota Department of

Employment and Economic Development, the Minnesota Department of Education, and the Metropolitan Council. Appendix B Washington County At-A-Glance, contains a summary of current data for Washington County.

Two agencies provide population and household projections for Washington County, the Minnesota State Demographer and the Metropolitan Council. Their projections are generated by differing methodologies. The Minnesota State Demographer’s projections are based on the U. S. Census data. The projections are tied to a series of overall statewide control numbers against which cities and townships, in the aggregate, must match. The State Demographer’s projections are used to establish broad statewide policies and to understand trends that influence statewide planning and legislation.

The Metropolitan Council’s projections are generated with a greater understanding of land availability, site suitability, and historic growth patterns in the quadrants, rings, and communities of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The Metropolitan Council uses the projections to set its policies related to the location of the Metropolitan Urban Services Area and the services it provides. These projections will be used to inform elements throughout the comprehensive plan.

Population and Households

Historic Growth

Washington County experienced modest population growth in the early part of the 20th century, increasing by only 24 percent between 1900 and 1950. The county experienced dramatic population growth during the second half of the 20th century. Population grew by 58 percent between 1960 and 1970 and was followed by a sustained high growth rate until 2000. With its population surging to 201,130, Washington County was the third fastest growing county in Minnesota in the 1990s. Since 2000, growth has slowed to a rate not seen since the early 1900s.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 2000 and 2010 population growth was increasingly concentrated in the cities of Forest Lake, Hugo, and Woodbury. The communities of Woodbury, Cottage Grove, and Oakdale housed 52 percent of the total population in 2010 and 50 percent in 2015 (see Appendix C). The communities of Lake Elmo, Hugo, St. Paul Park, May Township, and Woodbury are all projected to experience population growth of over 40 percent by 2040.

Table 1: Washington County Growth in Population and Households, 1970 to 2040

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2030	2040
Population	83,003	113,571	145,896	201,130	238,136	251,015	268,410	299,130	330,200
Percent Increase*	58%	37%	28%	38%	18%	5%	7%	11%	10%
Households	21,314	35,001	49,246	71,462	87,859	92,669	102,280	116,210	130,090
Percent Increase*	55%	64%	41%	45%	23%	5%	10%	14%	12%

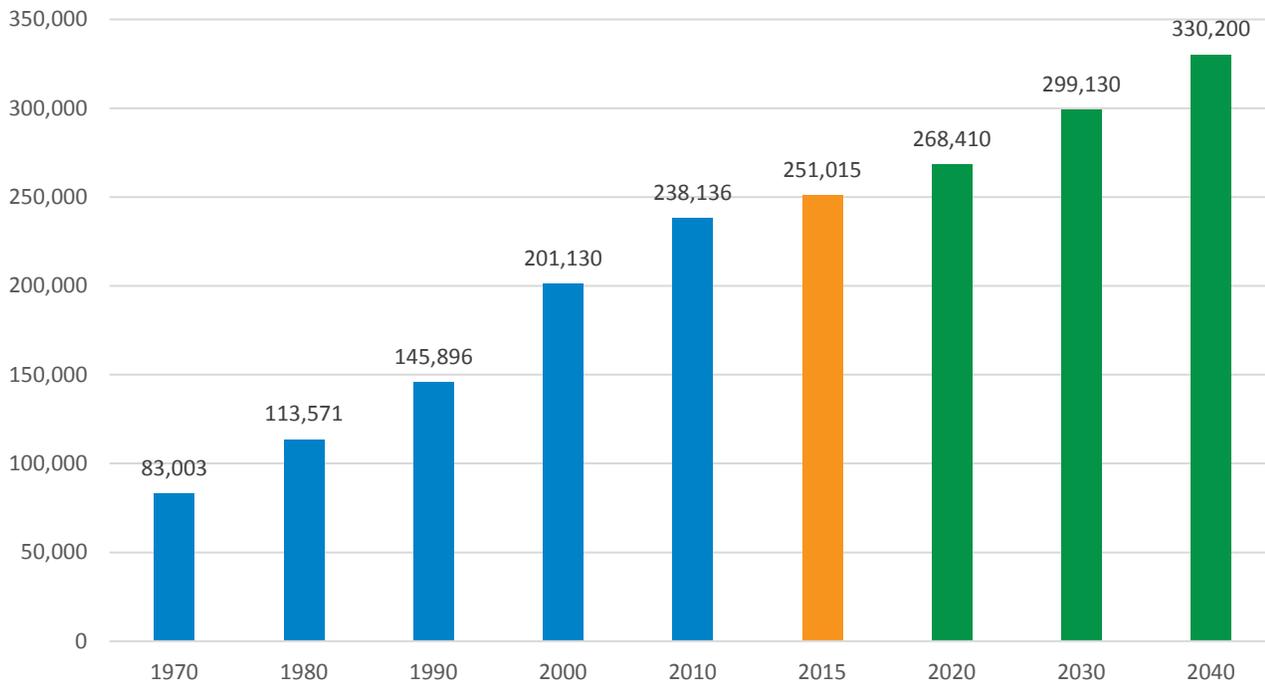
*Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: U.S. Census Data for 1970-2010, Metropolitan Council estimates for 2010, 2015, 2020, 2030 and 2040.

Projected Growth

Today, Washington County is the fifth most populous county in Minnesota and is projected to continue this role through 2040. The American Community Survey estimates the county’s population in 2015 to be 251,015, representing a 5.4 percent growth from the 2010 official count. The county’s population is expected to grow at a modest rate with the population expected to reach 330,200 people by the year 2040 (see Figure 3). This growth will result in an increase of 32 percent and 79,185 people between 2015 and 2040.

Figure 3: Washington County Population 1970 to 2040



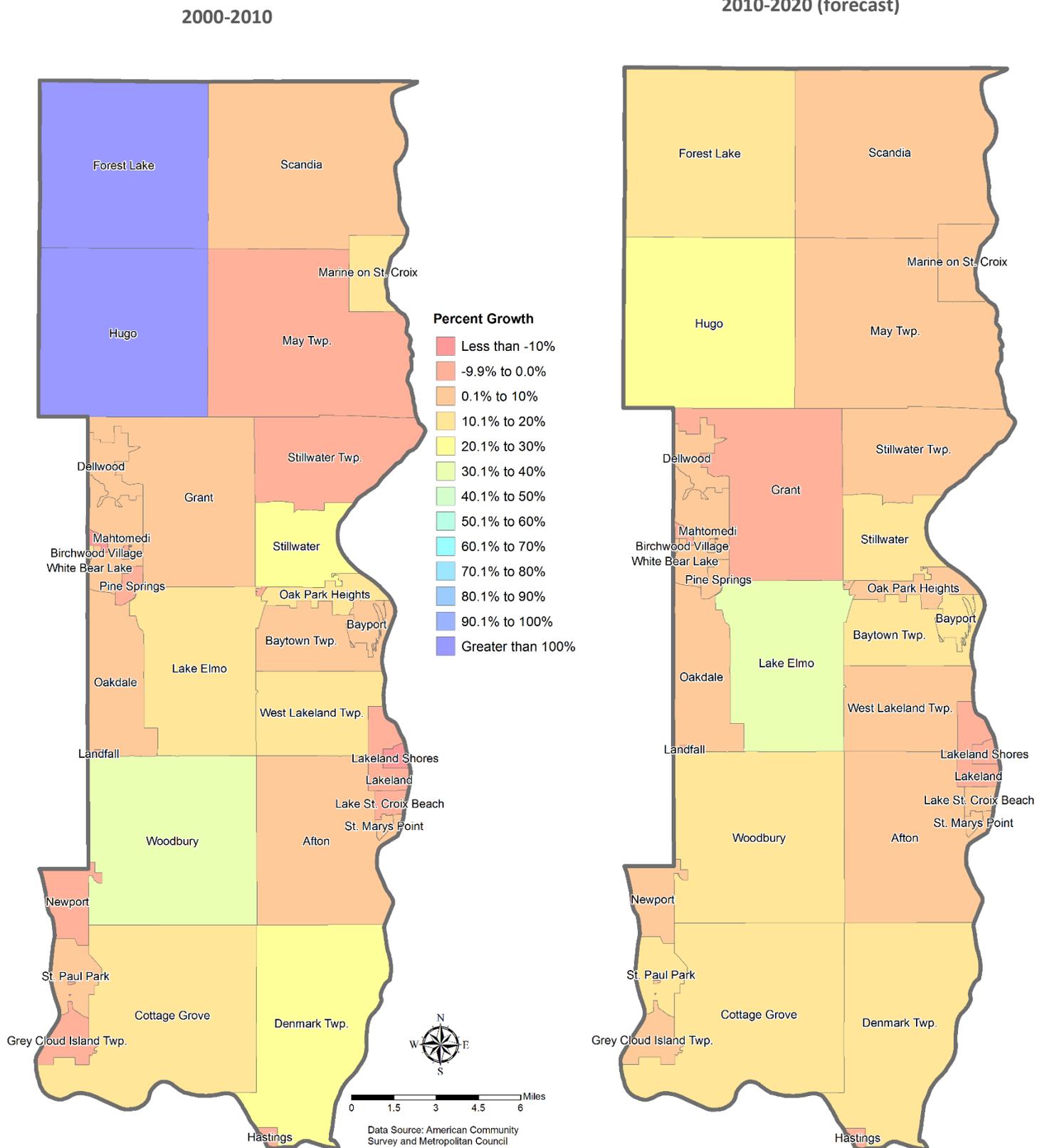
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, Metropolitan Council

Washington County as a whole has experienced population growth since 1970 and is projected to continue to grow into 2040. Not all communities within the county have experienced positive population growth between the last two decennial Censuses. For example, May Township experienced a declining population from 2000 to 2010, but is expected to experience positive growth for the next 30 years (see Figure 4). The concentrations of the County’s population are also expected to change into 2040, particularly on the eastern side of the county (see Figure 5). Appendices B and C contain the Metropolitan Council’s population and household growth by community.



To accommodate the Metropolitan Council’s projected population growth into 2040, considerations must be made for additional housing and employment throughout Washington County. Washington County households are expected to grow by 41.3 percent from 87,859 in 2010 to 130,090 by 2040 (see Figure 6). Additionally, employment is expected to increase by 37.7 percent from 71,897 in 2010 to 105,410 by 2040.

Figure 4: Population Growth by Community, 2000 to 2040



2020-2030 (forecast)

2030-2040 (forecast)

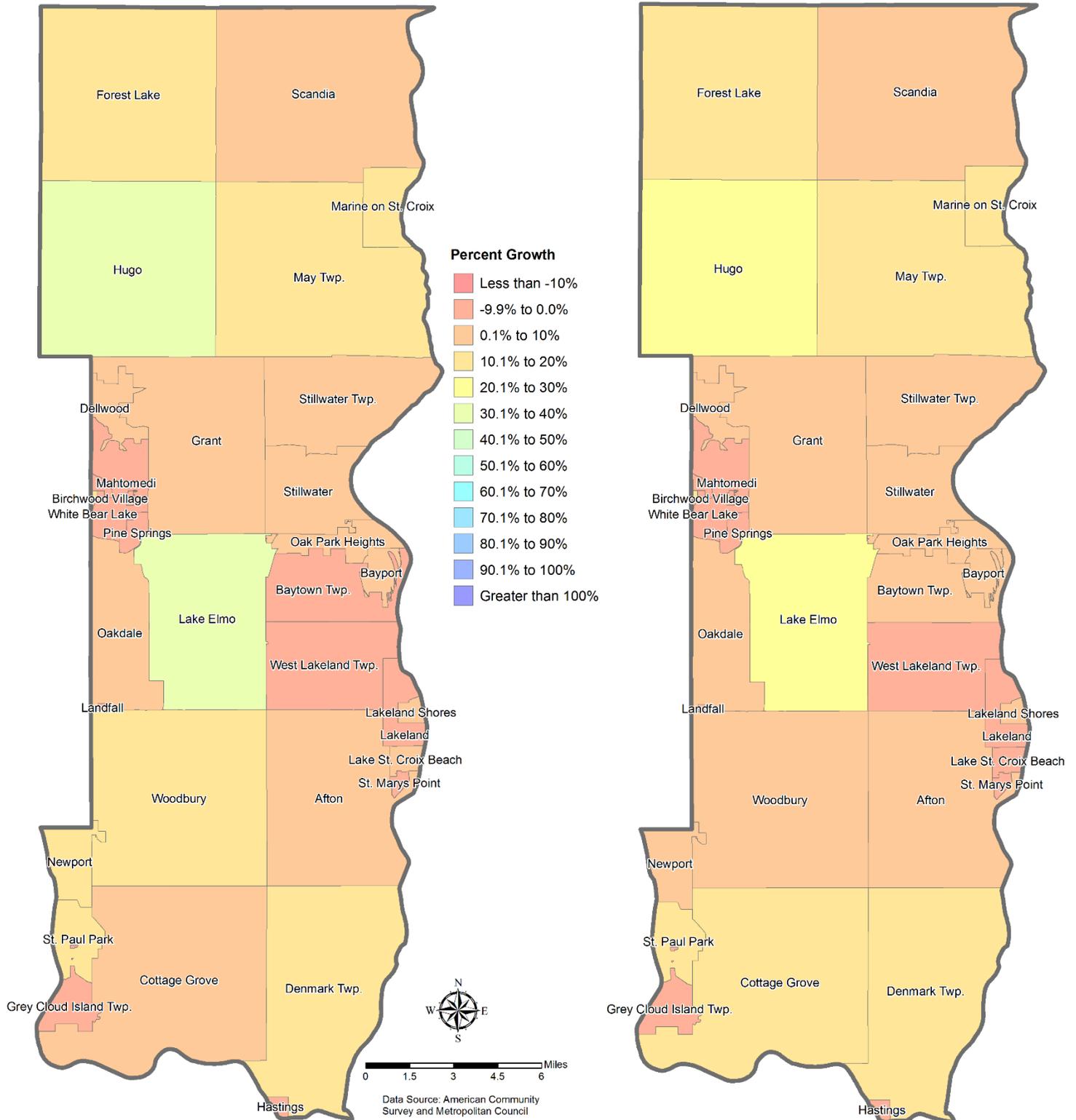
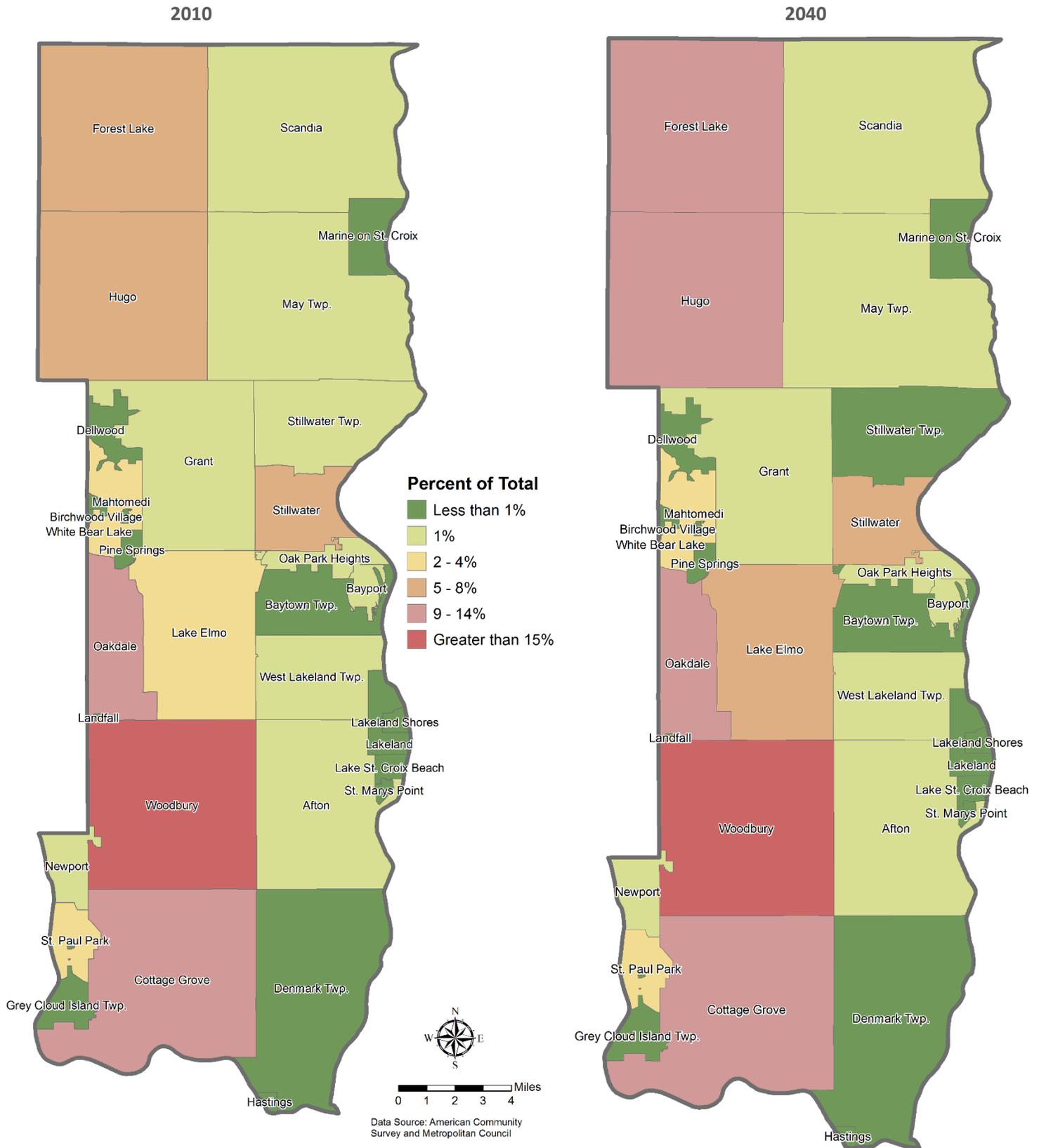


Figure 5: Percent of Total County Population, 2010 and 2040



Population Characteristics

This section highlights current and historic characteristics of Washington County’s population which is used to inform the population, housing, and employment projections throughout the Comprehensive Plan Elements.

Household Types

The 2015 American Community Survey reports 90,932 households in Washington County, an increase of 3 percent from 2010. In 2015, 73 percent of households are family households, of which 37.2 percent have their own children less than 18 years. Non-family households make up about 27 percent of Washington County. Residents 65 years of age and over make up 8.4 percent of the non-family households within the county. The average household size is 2.67 persons and the average family size is 3.13 persons.

A majority of the housing stock in Washington County continues to be single family dwellings, comprising 68 percent in 2016. The number of townhomes and multifamily dwellings continues to rise throughout the county, with increases of 51 and 67 percent, respectively, between 2000 and 2010. In 2016, townhomes and multifamily dwellings accounted for 28 percent of the county’s housing stock.

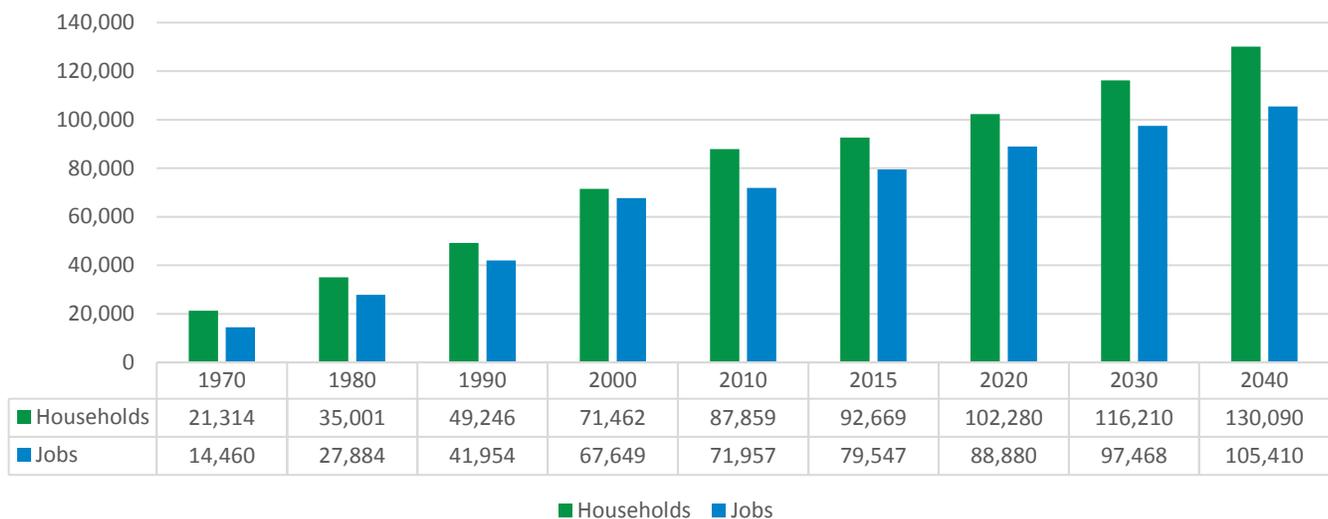
In 2015, 73 percent of the county’s households were families, compared with 64 percent for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The difference is primarily the result of a high number of new families moving into the county, compared to younger singles. “Other Family” includes single parents and unmarried couples with no children.

Table 2: Washington County Household Types, 2015

Location	Non-Family		Family		
	Living Alone	Other (roommates)	Married with Children	Married without Children	Other Family
Washington County	21.8%	5.2%	27.5%	35.7%	9.8%
7-County Metro Area	28.8%	7.7%	22.3%	31.7%	9.6%

Source: 2015 American Community Survey

Figure 6: Washington County Households and Employment, 1970 to 2040



Age and Gender

The male to female ratio in Washington County is fairly even. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 49.5 of Washington County was male and 50.5 percent was female. The 2015 American Community Survey reported 47.4 percent was male and 52.6 percent was female, representing a slight increase in the gender gap. However, the Metropolitan Council projections do not show a continued increase in the gender gap, with a greater male population in 2040.

The county’s population is aging, mirroring state trends. In 2000, the median age in Washington County was 35.1 years; by 2010 it had increased by 9 percent to 38.2 years. In 2015 the median age was 39.6 years, an increase of 4.5 years since 2000. In 2010 the median age for males was 37.2 and for females it was 39.2.



In 2008, 8.9 percent of the county population was over 65, growing to 13.6 percent in 2015. During the coming decade, between 2020 and 2030, the elderly population in Washington County will grow by nearly 60 percent. According to the Minnesota State Demographer population forecasts, between 2015 and 2040 the population of older Minnesotans will increase by 106 percent. In 2015, residents between the ages of 40 and 64 represented the largest age group, accounting for over 36 percent of the total population. The 2040 population projections align with the national trends of aging population, with residents 65 and over comprising 21 percent of the population (see Figure 7 and Table 3).

Figure 7: Washington County Projected Population by Age Group, 2015 to 2040

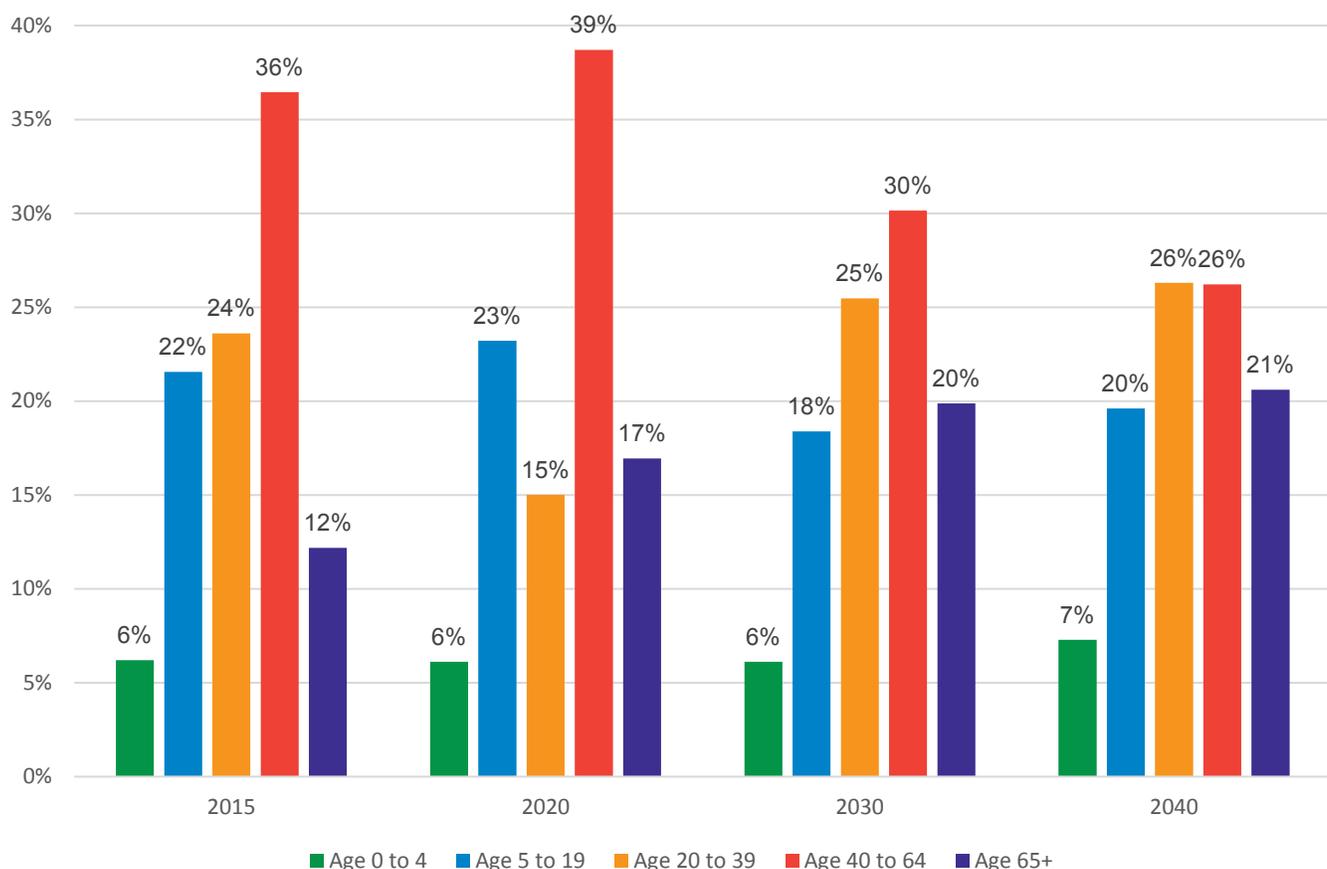


Table 3: Washington County Projected Population by Age, 2015 to 2040

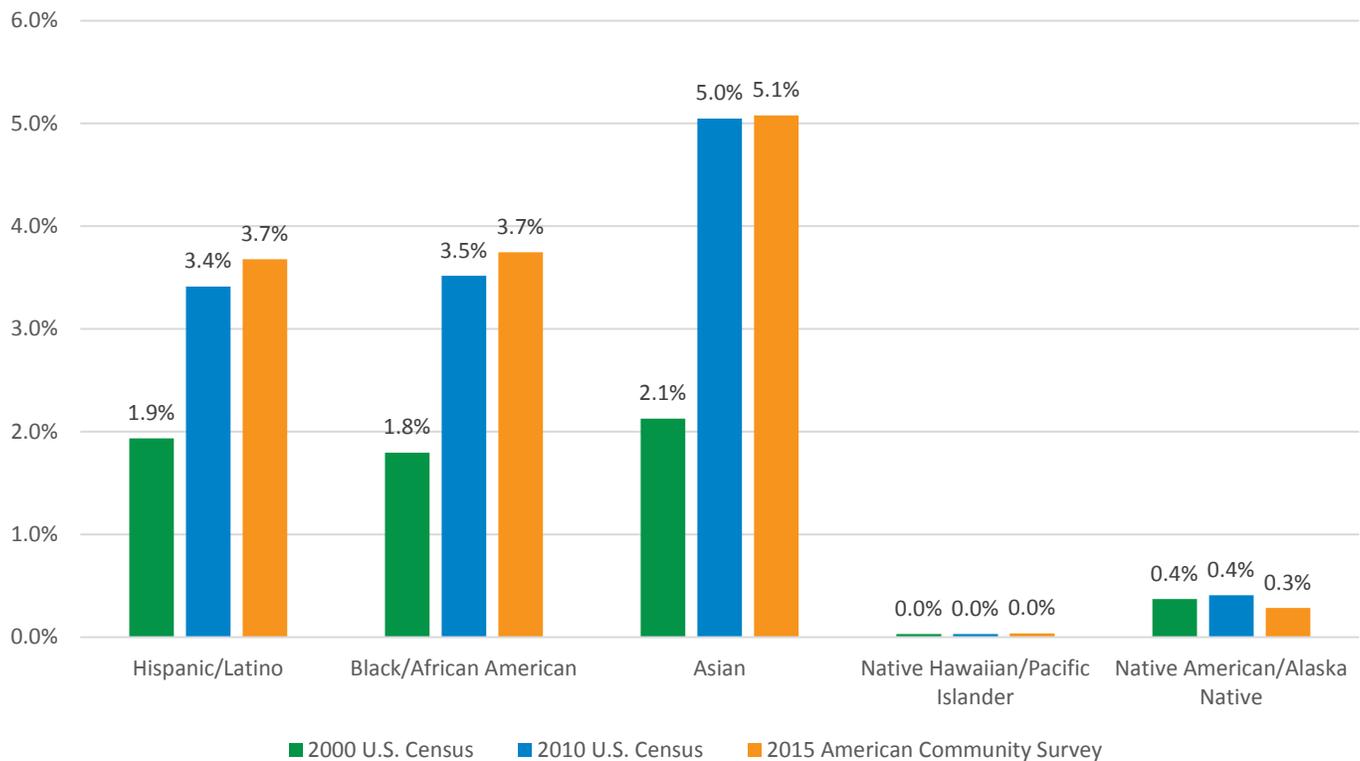
	Estimated Population		Projected Population						2015 to 2040 % Change
	2015		2020		2030		2040		
	Population	% of Total	Population	% of Total	Population	% of Total	Population	% of Total	
Age 0 to 4	15,413	6%	14,951	6%	17,484	6%	22,006	7%	42.8%
Age 5 to 19	53,508	22%	56,756	23%	52,489	18%	59,245	20%	10.7%
Age 20 to 39	58,600	24%	36,732	15%	72,696	25%	79,497	26%	35.6%
Age 40 to 64	90,473	36%	94,640	39%	86,079	30%	79,239	26%	-12.42%
Age 65+	30,246	12%	41,438	17%	56,742	20%	62,309	21%	106.0%
Total	248,240	100%	244,517	100%	285,490	100%	302,296	100%	21.8%

Source: Estimated Population – 2015 American Community Survey Estimate, Projected Population – Minnesota State Demographic Center, March 2017

Ethnic and Racial Diversity

Washington County is becoming more racially diverse. The non-white population doubled from 7.5 percent of the total population in 2000 to 14.3 percent of the total population in 2010. This percentage continues to grow with an estimated non-white population of 17.1 percent in 2015. The non-white population in 2010 was slightly smaller in Washington County (14.3 percent) than in Minnesota (14.7 percent). Figure 8 shows the change in each ethnic group between 2000 and 2015.

Figure 8: Washington County Ethnic and Racial Diversity, 2000, 2010, and 2015



According to the 2010 U.S. Census and the 2015 American Community Survey, the following changes occurred within the county between the year 2010 and 2015:

- Hispanic or Latino (of any race) population increased from 3.4 percent to 3.7 percent of the population.
- Black or African American population increased from 3.5 percent to 3.7 percent of the population.
- Asian population increased from 5.0 percent to 5.1 percent of the population.
- Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander remained below 1 percent of the population.
- American Indian and Alaska Native decreased from 0.4 percent to 0.3 percent of the population.

The 2015 American Community Survey reports that 90.8 percent of Washington County residents are English-only speakers in their homes. The remaining 9.2 percent speak a language other than English, including Spanish, other Indo-European languages, Asian, Pacific Islander, or some other language as their primary language at home. The Minnesota Department of Education reports that nearly 50 different languages are spoken in Washington County schools, including Hmong, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian.

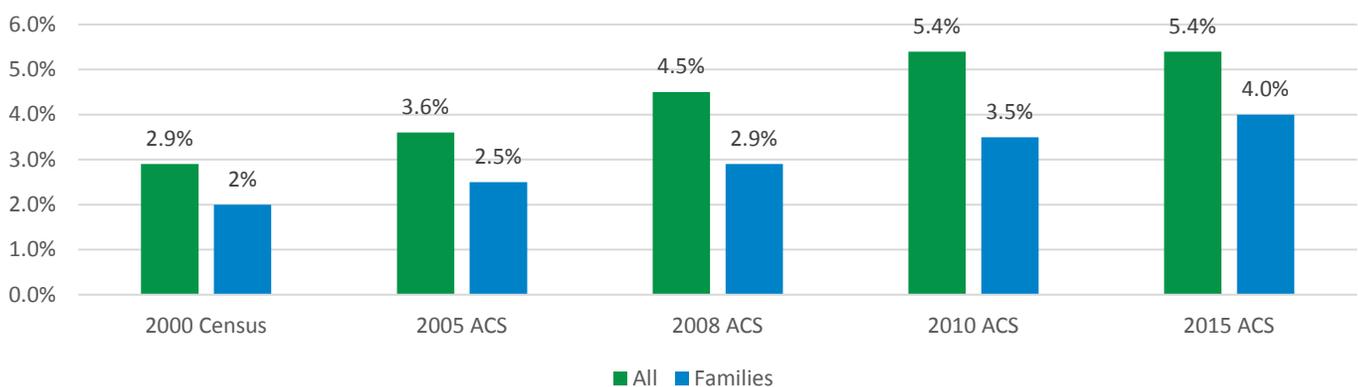
Income and Poverty

Washington County is the third most affluent county in Minnesota based on 2015 household income, after Scott and Carver Counties. Median household income for the county increased 5.8 percent from \$79,109 in 2010 to an estimated \$83,706 in 2015. Minnesota’s median household income increased 7.4 percent from \$57,243 in 2010 to \$61,492 in 2015.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census and 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates, Washington County had the third highest per capita income in the state in 2015 at \$38,461, behind Carver (\$40,322) and Hennepin (\$38,724) Counties. In 2015, Washington County’s per capita income was above the state average of \$32,157 and the U.S. average of \$28,930. Per capita income includes earnings, assets (interest, dividends, rent), and transfer payments.

Although poverty has increased nationally in the last five years, Washington County continues to have a low poverty rate. The percent of Washington County population below the poverty level remained at 5.4 percent from 2010 to 2015. Washington County continues to maintain a poverty rate lower than the State of Minnesota’s 2015 rate of 11.3 percent. The percent of families below the poverty level experienced a greater increase from 3.5 percent in 2010 to 4.0 percent in 2015, compared to non-families (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Washington County Poverty Level, 2010 to 2015



Economy

Labor Force and Employment

In 2010, 71,957 Washington County residents were employed according to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (MN DEED). MN DEED projects that number to increase by about 46 percent or 33,453 by 2040. The number of residents employed in 2040 is projected to be 105,410, 32 percent of the County’s population.

Between 2000 and 2016, employment increased by an average of 939 people annually. Growth in employment has stabilized in recent years and is projected to sustain at a rate that will add an average of 947 employees per year between 2016 and 2040.

According to MN DEED, the annual average wage for workers working within Washington County in 2016 was \$43,461, an increase of 35 percent from 2010. The annual average wage for workers in the Twin Cities region was \$58,111 in 2016.

The 2017 unemployment rate in Washington County was 3.7 percent, a decrease of 3 percent from 2010. The Washington County unemployment rate has historically remained lower than in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, and is currently 0.5 percent lower (see Table 4).

Table 4: Washington County Resident Employment, 1990 to 2017

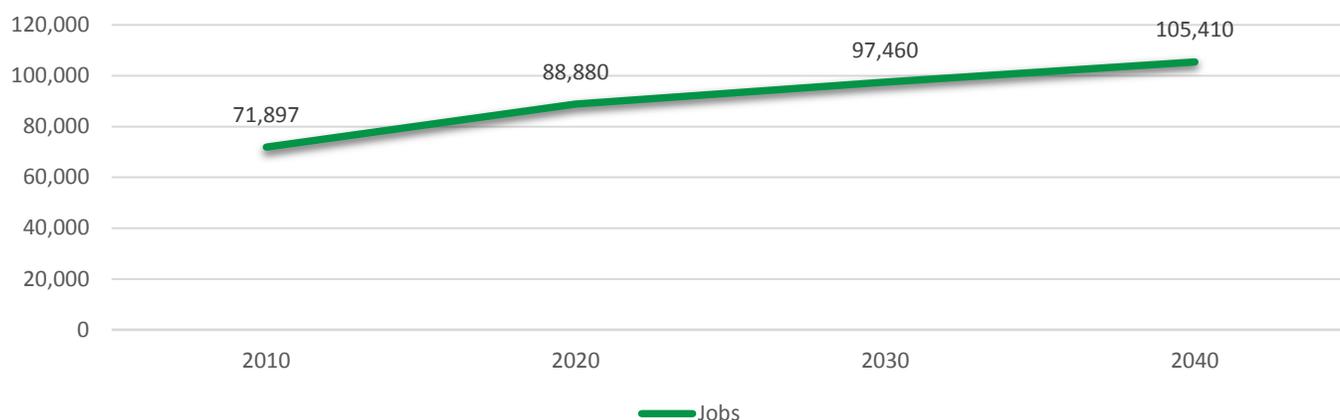
Year	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate	
				Washington County	Metropolitan Area
1990	82,781	79,691	3,090	3.7%	4.1%
1995	104,642	101,893	2,749	2.6%	3.0%
2000	118,092	115,159	2,933	2.5%	2.7%
2005	125,591	121,213	4,378	3.5%	3.8%
2010	132,046	123,188	8,858	6.7%	7.3%
2017	142,034	137,259	4,775	3.4%	3.9%
Change 2000 to 2010				<i>Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, 2017 Q2</i>	
Number	13,954	8,029	5,925		
Percent	11.8%	7.0%	202.0%		
Change 2010 to 2017					
Number	9,988	14,071	-4,083		
Percent	7.6%	11.4%	-46.1%		

Jobs



The Metropolitan Council projects employment in Washington County to grow by 33,453 jobs in 2040, a 46.5 percent increase from 71,957 jobs in 2010. The number of jobs located in Washington County is projected to grow by nearly 17,000 between 2010 and 2020 (23.5 percent), about 8,600 between 2020 and 2030 (9.7 percent), and approximately 7,900 between 2030 and 2040 (8.2 percent) (see Figure 10). Appendix E contains the Metropolitan Council’s projected employment by community.

Figure 10: Washington County Projected Job Growth, 2010 to 2040



Source: Metropolitan Council

Employment by Industry

The number of employees and average annual wage continue to fluctuate by industry throughout Washington County (see Table 5). MN DEED data indicates that Washington County experienced job growth since 2010 in every industry sector except financial activities. The construction, manufacturing, other services, natural resources/mining, and professional and business services industries all experienced over 20 percent growth. The average annual wage throughout all sectors increased by 16.5 percent between 2010 and 2016. The greatest average wage changes from 2010 to 2016 was in the other services category at 30.4 percent; the wholesale, transportation, and utilities category at 27.7 percent; and the construction industry at 26.4 percent.

Table 5: Washington County Jobs by Industry, 2010 to 2016

Industry	2010			2016			Change	
	# of Jobs	% of Total	Average Wage	# of Jobs	% of Total	Average Wage	Number	Percent
Natural Resource/Mining	655	0.9%	\$31,564	792	1.0%	\$38,740	137	20.9%
Construction	2,741	3.9%	\$49,400	3,476	4.2%	\$62,452	735	26.8%
Manufacturing	7,492	10.6%	\$60,112	9,288	11.3%	\$66,612	1,796	24.0%
W. Trade, T & U*	4,634	6.6%	\$47,268	5,087	6.2%	\$60,372	453	9.8%
Retail Trade	11,510	16.3%	\$22,464	13,448	16.4%	\$25,272	1,938	16.8%
Information	---	---	---	676	0.8%	\$40,664	---	---
Financial Activities	4,712	6.7%	\$60,476	3,812	4.7%	\$67,860	-900	-19.10%
Professional & Business Services	6,662	9.5%	\$51,844	8,019	9.8%	\$64,376	1,357	20.4%
Education & Health Services	16,079	22.8%	\$41,080	19,170	23.4%	\$47,476	3,091	19.22%
Leisure & Hospitality	9,830	14.0%	\$14,248	11,322	13.8%	\$16,952	1,492	15.18%
Other Services	2,543	3.6%	\$19,656	3,102	3.8%	\$25,636	559	22.0%
Government	3,559	5.1%	\$45,760	3,712	4.5%	\$53,716	153	4.3%
Total	70,417	100%	\$38,738	81,904	100%	\$45,136	10,811	15.4%

* Wholesale Trade, Transportation, & Utilities

--- Information not available

Sources: MN Dept. of Employment and Economic Development

Commuting

The mean travel time to work has decreased from 25.8 minutes in 2010 to 25.4 minutes in 2015. In 2015, a majority of workers, 82.5 percent, drove alone to work, while 8.6 percent carpooled, 2.1 percent used public transportation, 2.3 percent used other means, and 4.5 percent worked from home. Based upon U.S. Census Bureau Local Employment-Household Dynamics data for 2014, St. Paul and Minneapolis are the top two workplaces of people who live in Washington County (see Table 6). Woodbury has the greatest number of residents who also work within the County.

Table 6: Washington County Commuting Patterns, 2014

Top 10 workplaces of people who live in Washington County		Top ten residences of people who work in Washington County	
Workplace Location	# of Workers	Residence Location	# of Workers
St. Paul	18,572	Woodbury	6,271
Minneapolis	13,447	St. Paul	4,974
Maplewood	8,847	Cottage Grove	4,256
Woodbury	7,398	Stillwater	3,171
Stillwater	4,158	Oakdale	2,763
Bloomington	3,736	Forest Lake	1,990
Eagan	3,088	Maplewood	1,797
Cottage Grove	3,034	Minneapolis	1,398
Oakdale	2,907	White Bear Lake	1,121
Roseville	2,795	Hugo	1,021
Other	44,331	Other	22,727

Source: 2014 U.S. Census Bureau Local Employment-Household Dynamics