



# Engaging a New Workforce

Fall 2020  
Adams County

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PPPM 606 Special Problems



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This report represents original student work and recommendations prepared by students in the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program for Adams County. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from the University of Oregon.

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## About SCI

The Sustainable Cities Institute (SCI) is an applied think tank focusing on sustainability and cities through applied research, teaching, and community partnerships. We work across disciplines that match the complexity of cities to address sustainability challenges, from regional planning to building design and from enhancing engagement of diverse communities to understanding the impacts on municipal budgets from disruptive technologies and many issues in between.

SCI focuses on sustainability-based research and teaching opportunities through two primary efforts:

**1.** Our Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP), a massively scaled university-community partnership program that matches the resources of the University with one Oregon community each year to help advance that community's sustainability goals; and

**2.** Our Urbanism Next Center, which focuses on how autonomous vehicles, e-commerce, and the sharing economy will impact the form and function of cities.

In all cases, we share our expertise and experiences with scholars, policymakers, community leaders, and project partners. We further extend our impact via an annual Expert-in-Residence Program, SCI China visiting scholars program, study abroad course on redesigning cities for people on bicycle, and through our co-leadership of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), which is transferring SCYP to universities and communities across the globe. Our work connects student passion, faculty experience, and community needs to produce innovative, tangible solutions for the creation of a sustainable society.

## About SCYP

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a year-long partnership between SCI and a partner in Oregon, in which students and faculty in courses from across the university collaborate with a public entity on sustainability and livability projects. SCYP faculty and students work in collaboration with staff from the partner agency through a variety of studio projects and service-

learning courses to provide students with real-world projects to investigate. Students bring energy, enthusiasm, and innovative approaches to difficult, persistent problems. SCYP's primary value derives from collaborations that result in on-the-ground impact and expanded conversations for a community ready to transition to a more sustainable and livable future.

## Course Participants

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## **Executive Summary**

A variety of business types and sizes are integral to a thriving economy and future for Adams County, Wisconsin. Yet, for the past two decades, the county has been losing entry level workers aged approximately 20 to 30 (U.S. Census, 2014). And while America overall has become more diverse, the makeup of Adams County and its workforce has not. Younger and more diverse workforce populations are integral to the survival of rural communities as employees over 65 retire and exit the workforce. This leaves gaps in the qualified labor market to economically support and give back to the community.

Adams County is a perfect case study of rural life in America, with the disenfranchisement and disconnect among community members challenging unity in growth and understanding of growing disparities among all demographics. Engaging a new workforce of young and diverse peoples can bring the vitality and attention required to support the current community and maintain economic success in its rural setting. Adams County can be a hopeful example for other counties in a similar position. The intent and purpose of this report is to prepare Adams County's businesses, County members, and communities for a new workforce, ensuring stability, progress, and understanding.

Businesses in Adams County, in collaboration with the county, should consider activating strategies and tools

that can attract multigenerational and diverse applicants to inject youth and vitality into a potentially stagnating and linear economy. Employers can review and improve their policies, benefits, and trainings while the county can promote assets and advocate for improving infrastructure the county currently lacks to attract and sustain the growth they seek.

The overarching questions that this report seeks to consider include:

- How can Adams County businesses incentivize younger, employable generations to relocate?
- How can Adams County businesses be more attractive to diverse applicants?
- What existing assets can Adams County leverage to attract a new workforce?

This report introduces Adams County and outlines the county's demographics. It includes profiles and livability wants and needs of Generations X, Y, and Z. To help introduce Adams County to the benefits and challenges of new diverse peoples in a small-town location, a case study from rural Minnesota was chosen for its similarities to Adams County. Other similar sized county case study examples from Wisconsin and Oregon are included for further comparisons of ways to attract new workforces. The report is tailored to provide information for Adams County businesses and Adams County Commissioners and Chamber members, synchronously and independently.

Analyses of Adams County's economy and major employers are included. Comparative analysis and sourced data are pulled from Dane and Door Counties in Wisconsin as well as additional comparators Jackson County,

Oregon and the city of Hood River, Oregon. These examples outline smaller communities that have encountered similar population, economic, and diversity questions for their workforce. Each example shares how the community navigated their economy, natural spaces, infrastructure, and/or tourism, issues and assets.

Finally, the report includes a summary of major recommendations. Implementation of these recommendations is advised to support long-term community success and well-being. For example, Adams County businesses and County leaders should strive to work together towards diversity to attract a new workforce. This will contribute to a gradual shift in culture rather an immediate change. Adams County, local businesses, and the Chamber can help fast track this culture-change by modeling and implementing the proposed recommendations.

## Introduction

Adams County is home to about 20,000 full-time residents. In the summer, the population swells to nearly 35,000 because of the many seasonal homes in the county. Roughly 45% of housing in Adams county remains vacant until the tourism season begins (Adams County Rural & Industrial Development Commission, 2016).

Comparator counties in Wisconsin and in Oregon provide context relative to Adams County demographics. Dane County represents the city of Madison, Wisconsin, a region with heavy implications on attracting a new workforce for Adams County. Door County shares numerous demographic similarities to Adams County yet has more of a reputation as a destination than Adams. Jackson County and Hood River, Oregon were chosen because of the authors' first-hand knowledge. Jackson County is a successful agricultural county in Southern Oregon, while Hood River is a destination town about 1.5 hours from Portland, approximately equidistant to that of Dane and Adams counties.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, the population in Adams County has been

steadily increasing and is projected to grow through 2030. Population in Adams County is represented largely by two groups - Millennials, those born approximately between 1977-1992, and those 65 and older. Within the county, there are about 6,700 millennials, lower than the national average. The older segment is comprised of about 9,650 people, well above national average for an area this size. Currently, the median age of Adams County is 52.2 years of age, 13 years older than the state median age of 39.1. Adams County has half the number of 18-34-year-old's and 15% more of 55-74-year-old's compared to Dane County (See Figure 1) This means that the majority of the population in the county will be of retirement age of 66 by 2024. (Data USA Adams County, 2020).

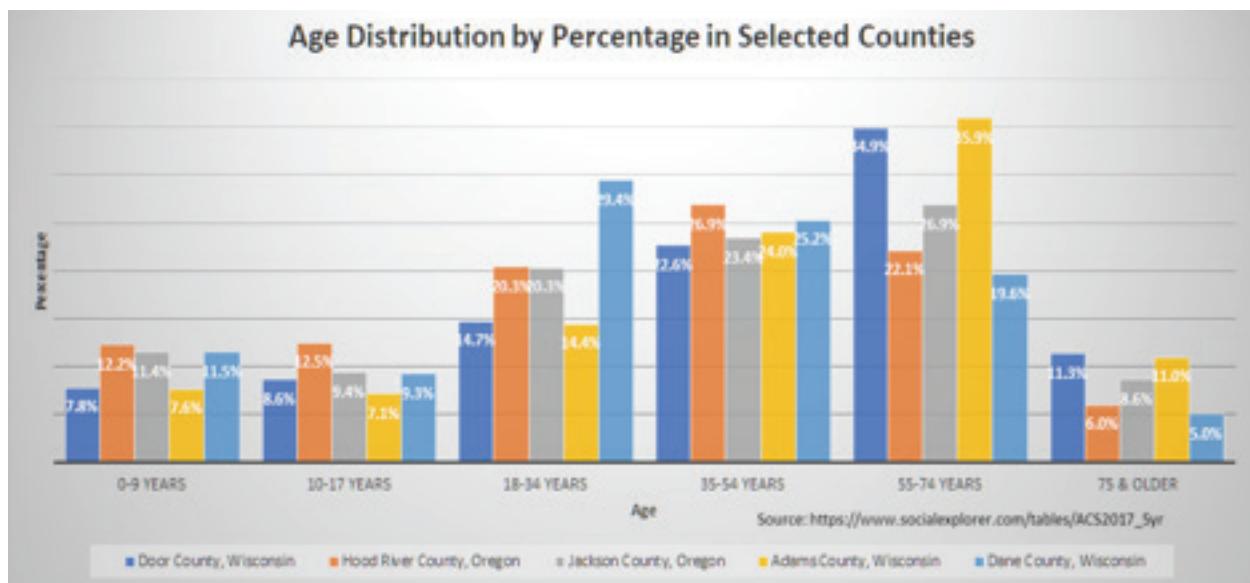


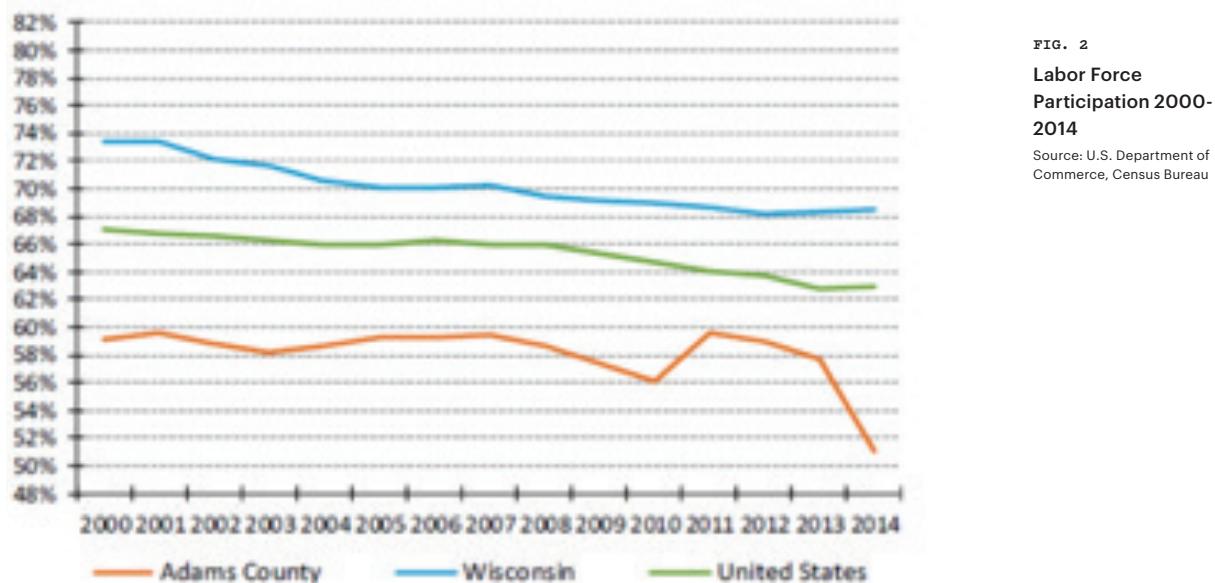
FIG. 1

**Age Distribution in Selected Counties in Wisconsin and Oregon**

Source: American Community Surveys (5-year estimates)

While the Adams County population experiences poverty at similar rates to that of Wisconsin overall, its median household income is about 80% of the state average (ACS, 2018). This suggests that while costs in the county are affordable, the opportunity to increase wages are limited. Major industries include manufacturing, healthcare and social assistance, retail, and food and hospitality services. The county has identified the need to create more jobs locally; over 3,300 people left the county for employment elsewhere (Adams County Rural & Industrial Development Commission, 2016). Adams County has further identified which industries have the capacity to grow through their Economic Development Strategy, including manufacturing, wholesale and retail, transportation, and utilities.

Tourism is the main economic driver for the county, fueled by its abundant outdoor opportunities, including hunting, fishing, biking, hiking, and ATV trails (Adams County Chamber of Commerce, 2020). It attracts an array of seasonal visitors between its numerous golf courses and abundant lakes and waterways. Adams County has identified its dependence on tourism as an issue because it provides unstable wages that are below county and state averages. These factors are likely contributing to dwindling labor force participation (See Figure 2); the combination of the seasonality of these jobs coupled with the lack of opportunity and education growth within the industry likely contribute to disenfranchisement of the local population.



Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau

Marketing of tourism jobs seems directed at aging and temporary populations with more disposable income. This does not attract new peoples to Adams County for recreation when they might get a feel for the county and like what it can offer. Further, it is possible that residents themselves do not seem to take advantage of their natural surroundings as evidenced by both obesity rates and physical activity time (Adams County Strategic Plan, 2019).

**FIG. 2**  
**Labor Force**  
**Participation 2000-**  
**2014**

Source: U.S. Department of  
Commerce, Census Bureau

## **Why Diversity and Inclusion Are Important to Businesses and Economy**

Businesses that invest in their diversity and inclusion are investing in their own economic return. As the topic of diversity in the workforce becomes more prominent, data begins to back this priority as not just smart and ethical but is becoming mandatory for economic viability and growth (Diverse Recruiting Experts).

Diverse backgrounds bring diverse perspectives and unique talents, bringing greater problem-solving techniques and resolutions to the work environment when a greater array of voices is heard from (People Management, 2017). This flexibility enables a business to stay current with fast-changing business environment.

The ability to employ and diverse workforce raises awareness in cultural issues within the organization and

among one's customer base. Having that on-hand decision making for different situations mitigates negative interaction businesses might receive from lack of cultural awareness.

Lastly, numerous reports show that businesses see a significant uptick in increased profits and finances with a more racially diverse management teams by increasing outreach and innovation (Lee, 2020).

## SWOT Analysis

Based on Adams County research, a multi-faceted and wholistic approach is appropriate to understand the full scope of what employers would need to attract a multigenerational and diverse workforce. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis (See Figure 3) identifies potential challenges and highlights for attracting a diverse, multigenerational workforce to Adams County.

Current regional economic development efforts, a variety of outdoor and recreation opportunities, tourism, quality of life, and a lower cost of living are strengths within the region. An aging population, lack of access to

broadband, dependence on traditional manufacturing industries, limited heavy transportation by roads and railway, and the unavailability of diverse affordable housing options were identified weaknesses relevant to the region.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not “Shying” away from challenges</li> <li>• Strong parks system</li> <li>• County employees are welcoming and professional</li> <li>• Variety of outdoor spaces and recreation opportunities</li> <li>• Cost of living</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of diversity</li> <li>• Locals do not want change</li> <li>• Broadband infrastructure</li> <li>• Lack of modern infrastructure and facilities</li> <li>• Skilled labor has high turnover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation and Tourism</li> <li>• Substantial affordable developable land</li> <li>• Wholesome clean living, opportunity to be away from congestion and traffic</li> <li>• Central location in the State</li> <li>• Capitalize on area agriculture, innovative farming, and agri-tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drugs in the community and lack of health services</li> <li>• Lack of public transportation</li> <li>• Loss of youth and lack of youth engagement</li> <li>• Housing availability and affordability</li> <li>• Negative politics/ misinformation</li> </ul>

FIG. 3  
SWOT Analysis  
of Adams County  
to Engage a New  
Workforce

## SUMMARY OF SWOT

Reviewing the strengths of Adams County, the region is prepared to take action to invest and build upon their greatest assets—affordable living and green space. However, the county may be ill-equipped to move forward without better infrastructure, community support and respect for differing opinions or needs. While there is opportunity for growth and the potential to take advantage of its location and associated amenities, tourism, and affordable land, the lack of social and health services, negative politics, and lack of youth engagement threaten to create ongoing challenges for the county and its growth.

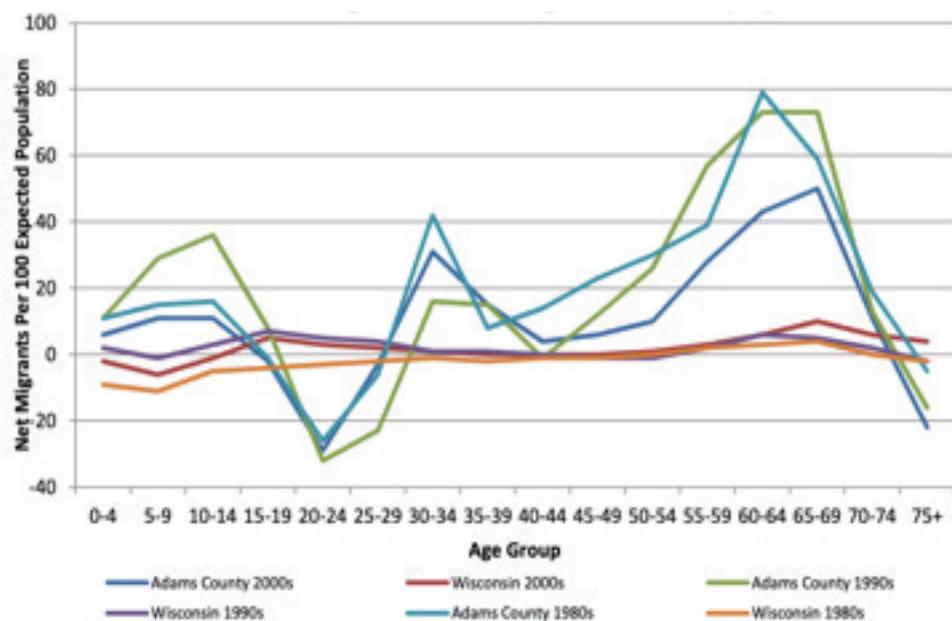
## Who is the New Workforce?

### CURRENT MAKEUP OF ADAMS COUNTY

Adams County has seen dramatic changes to its population through an outgoing migration of younger adults (U.S. Census, 2014). Opportunities for growth are lacking in the region for a multicultural, younger population, and concerted efforts would be needed to reverse this trend. Adams County possesses a wealth of unique attractions and features that can attract younger families and professionals. If local businesses promote, implement, and market a variety of research-backed benefits, Adams County could attract emerging workforces to this beautiful area of America's Heartland.

Adams County businesses would need to collectively present themselves to attract desired workforce. Highlighting needs through the Adams County Economic Development Plan is pivotal to attract a younger, diverse workforce and what these groups identify as quality work environments. For example, integrating work-life balance into employees' lives is essential to building the community. This has the potential to help reverse migration rates shown below (See Figure 4).

**FIG. 4**  
**Net Migration Rates by Age**  
Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison



Source: Winkler, Richelle, Kenneth M. Johnson, Cheng Cheng, Jim Beaudoin, Paul R. Voss, and Katherine J. Curtis. Age-Specific Net Migration Estimates for US Counties, 1950-2010. Applied Population Laboratory, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2013. Web. [10/27/16.] <<http://www.netmigration.wisc.edu/>>.

## GENERALIZED PERCEPTIONS

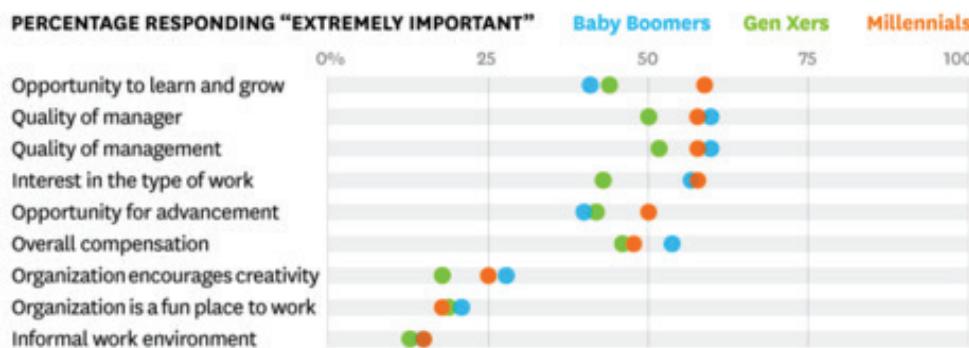
Contrary to how the generations are often portrayed by popular media, research shows that there is actually little difference in what different generations want from a job (Harvard Business Review, 2016).

Recent Silicon Valley startups are known for their “fun” work atmospheres, pool tables, and free snacks. The cost of entry to these

workforce environments may look unachievable, expensive, or require a complete change in work culture. However, such amenities are not necessarily needed to compete for the emerging workforces. Millennials and Gen Xers rate the want for an informal work environment and having a fun place of work much lower than desire for a high-quality manager (Figure 5; Harvard Business Review, 2016).

## What Different Generations Look for When Applying for a Job

According to a survey of 1,700 U.S. workers.



**FIG. 5**  
**Generational Opinions  
on Job Attributes**  
Source: Harvard Business Review,  
2016

The main difference that separates the closer-to-retirement Baby Boomers from their Gen X and Millennial coworkers is that Baby Boomers are less likely to want opportunities to learn and grow at work. Opportunities to learn and grow, high quality of management, and an individual employee's interest in the type of work are more important than fun and creativity when seeking to attract members of the emerging workforces (Harvard Business Review,

2016). Baby Boomers and Gen Xers also rate opportunity for advancement slightly lower than Millennials. Generational similarities and differences are further described throughout this report. Of note: Generations X, Y, and Z are more diverse than any other workforces prior; they highly value this workforce diversity (McLaren, 2019). Generational and workforce diversity is increasing throughout the United States.

## **People of Color and Diverse Applicants**

### **CURRENT MAKEUP OF ADAMS COUNTY**

Adams County is 93% White, 3% Black or African American, and 2% two or more races (NCWRCP & ACRIDC, 2016). Compared to the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau's population estimate of Wisconsin, approximately 87% of people identify as White throughout the state (U.S. Census, 2019). This means that Adams County has about 6% more people who identify as White only than the state average.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY**

The opportunity to increase diversity is a significant opportunity for Adams County. Studies show that when diverse candidates are hired and retained, staff make better decisions and innovations. Innovation can lead to a wider customer base and cause company growth (Guillaume et al, 2015).

If Adams County engages a new and diverse workforce, more People of Color (POC), LGBTQ folk, and families could be interested in moving to the area. When seeking employees, Adams County businesses should consider how they describe the culture into which a prospective employee will be welcome. In such job descriptions, businesses will want to consider the implications and potential worries of asking diverse people to move to a place that is not traditionally diverse.

For example: In 2018, there were a total of 26 race, ethnicity, or ancestry driven crimes in Wisconsin, eight of which occurred in non-metropolitan cities (FBI, 2018).

Opportunities can also lead to challenges. When there are high levels of tension among co-workers, diversity can lower morale, create more conflict, and lower overall job performance (Guillaume et al, 2015). If Adams County businesses want to attract a more diverse workforce, issues of race or other questions of identity may arise in the community. It is important for the county to be prepared to address potential problems that could arise from "Othering." Othering occurs when one group seeks to make themselves socially distinct from another, often with a negative result of exclusion or marginalization. This practice may focus on someone's appearance, genetic makeup, preferences, income, language, or culture (Leitner, 2012).

To harness the many benefits of diversity, it is important to create environments where diversity can succeed. This will require a shift in workplace culture. Workplace culture can be defined as "the policies, practices, procedures, and behaviors that get rewarded, supported, and expected at work," (Guillaume, 2015, p. 278).

## CASE STUDY - DEVEREAUX, MINNESOTA

Adams County is one of many places challenged with declining numbers and a need to integrate diversity. Helga Leiter of the University of Minnesota has studied the trend of small towns in the rural Upper Midwest experiencing economic changes and an influx of diversity (Leiter, 2012). This case study takes place in a small, rural town in Minnesota called Devereaux.

### Adaptation in Devereaux, Minnesota

There is much nostalgia regarding rural small-town USA. Iconic images like those created by Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion radio show paints the image of a White, Christian, European decent town, "Where all the women are strong, the men are good looking, and the children are above average... and where everyone knows each other's names" (Leiter, 2012). This nostalgia has imparted a sense of invisibility to non-European immigrants and people of color who have lived in America's Heartland for years or are now trying to make it their new home (Leiter, 2012).

Leiter (2012) found that White residents who had resided in the town for many years felt that the town was "(their) space." Leiter noted this attitude came with a "we" versus "them" attitude, and a need to "defend" White culture and the status quo. The way to welcome diversity in small town American is broadening the idea of what acceptable mainstream culture is.

Residents can begin to feel isolated and vulnerable as their towns change, idealizing the way things once were. Older residents might blame immigration for "unjust" state practices that favor immigrants over US citizens (Leiter, 2012). Some scholars speculate this is the "new racism", which is characterized with a focus on cultural differences instead of the "traditional racism" that focuses on biological heredity. Citizens may sometimes believe that immigrants take over towns and make them prone to drug trafficking, fighting, and other crimes (Leiter, 2012), though there is no evidence that immigrants cause crime to increase.

Townspeople in Devereaux thought of language as a huge barrier to cohabitate with immigrants. Townsfolk expected immigrants to learn English quickly (Leiter, 2012). They often worried that when people spoke in another language that they were insulting the people around them. For many, there is an expectation that immigrants will assimilate completely and conform to the White cultural norms (Leiter, 2012). This is not a realistic expectation, and education on other cultures might be required to create understanding.

What helped Devereaux adapt? A variety of events, meetings, and intermixing cultures in schools and other public places were all helpful to Devereaux. Intersectional friendships and relationships are effective tools to avoid "othering" a group. Friendships can break through the barriers of cultural stigma and help understand each other's culture (Leiter, 2012).

### What can Adams County Do?

Helping people in the county talk about and identify their anxieties about issues like change and identity in a constructive group setting can help change the culture and create spaces for respectfully listening to and challenging radical ideas. Encouraging diversity in the area through informational campaigns should be led by respected community members.

Local initiatives such as celebrating culture differences can promote understanding (Leiter, 2012). It is also important that all voices are included to add credibility and buy-in for the community. The goal is to make rural American calm, peaceful, stable, and culturally diverse, but that will not happen without active education on diversity and how it will affect rural citizens.

## MILLENNIALS

### Goals of the Generation

Millennials (1977-1992) are driven by quality of life and work-life balance (Harvard Business Review, 2016). They have seen a lot of change in how the work environment functions. The Recession collectively stalled their career growth; individuals in this generation have had to acquiesce and be willing to take jobs that they are vastly overqualified for. Further, prior generations including Baby Boomers have been forced to stay in the job market longer than expected due to the economic downturn. Therefore, the Millennial generation are willing to try new industries, and are not afraid of change and advocating for themselves for the betterment of long-term opportunities.

### More Than Just a Job

This generation is defined by their unwillingness to sacrifice their quality of life for the sake of employment. The 9-5 cycle has never worked for them. Money isn't the sole priority, nor have the demands for constantly travelling or residing in a cubicle. Most will look onward for jobs that offer resonating engagement or new opportunities that challenge their skill sets. Millennials typically want to feel that their investment in their work will mean something to a greater good. When looking at a company for employment, Millennials will often take company values into high consideration.

### Balance over Finance

Millennials are committed to their personal growth of learning and development, and their work represents but a small facet of that process. Money is not the main driver of considering a job or company, but rather how the culture and quality of the workforce is. This premise fuels the notion that Millennials are 'job-hoppers' or lack commitment and loyalty. This group has grown accustomed to change and isn't afraid to change to find this balance of lifestyle and culture in another workplace.

### Continuity of Growth

Millennials bring an array of skills to any workforce. They thrive in performance achievement atmospheres and remain engaged with new sets of problems and challenges. Creating personalized agendas for an employee's career projection shows that an employer is actively seeking to keep who they have.

### Engagement and Input

While this generation appreciates mentorship, Millennials thrive on open dialogue, honesty, and the feeling that their work imbues change. They appreciate work that forces them to offer dynamic outcomes and solutions. Companies who administer mentoring programs or workshop atmospheres tend to show stronger employee retention, regardless of opportunity for advancements.

### **What Can Adams County Do?**

Adams County can attract a Millennial workforce by fortifying their industries to meet the professional growth that this workforce seeks. This group is entering their peak career years and needs to see companies as either a strong steppingstone or the culmination of previous experiences. Adams County should consider consolidating and highlighting their community strengths, including the affordable housing market, abundant open space, and recreation opportunities. Strengthening social services to meet these growing families' needs when they arrive is likely equally important. Employers in Adams County can identify elements of inclusion and positivity within their work atmosphere and be pragmatic about ways to improve culture, expectations, and employee growth factors that will contribute to a better overall environment. The County Commission should consider working with Dane County and the University of Wisconsin for opportunities to expand employment networks and learning opportunities that meet Adams County's industry needs.

### **GENERATION Z**

#### **Goals of the Generation**

Generation Z is now budding into current employment sectors, making up 24% of the nation's workforce. (McLaren, 2019). They are engaged, active, and open-minded. They seek opportunities to place themselves in a competitive advantage in a consistently daunting job market. They are the first generation to have lifelong access

to technological advances of media and inter-connectivity. They value this consistent access as a source of information and decision-making. They are globally conscious and prioritize advocating for diversity in the workforce.

#### **Financial Security**

Having endured a second economic downturn in their family lives before reaching the prime of their own working years, Generation Z understands the need for financial stability and competitive advantage. While an employer may infer that providing perks to a job for this younger audience is attractive, offering stable health coverage and an opportunity to contribute to a 401k program are invaluable to this demographic.

#### **Opportunity for Growth**

Gen Z people are aware that job platforms are changing around them, and that the needs and requirements of jobs are also adapting. Acquiring skills and knowledge of relevant tools are crucial to future opportunities in their career. As with Millennials, an employer will more likely attract this workforce by emphasizing growth opportunities. In addition, Gen Z seeks employers who offer consistently open dialogue about career paths and goals for engaging employees. Employers, partnering with higher education opportunities, might consider offering loan-repayment support, scholarship programs, and continuing education as solid attractors for this workforce.

### **Digitally Savvy**

Generation Z has been accustomed to retrieving knowledge and information autonomously their entire lives. Any online medium that isn't user-friendly, attractive, and mobile optimized is an immediate turnoff for this group and implies that other areas of technological infrastructure are lacking. While this generation may be perceived as reliant on such technology, it remains a strength and skill to utilize.

### **Racially Diverse & Equitable**

Most importantly, this demographic base is most aware of changing global needs and amplifying underrepresented voices, championing diversity and equity. It is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation yet, as nearly half of the United States' population are people of color (McLaren, 2019). Gen Z understands that welcoming of all workforce populations is important to raise the bar for sales and engagement (steady income and customer base), intergenerational and intercultural learning (dynamic workplace), and ongoing organizational and economic health (dynamic workforce and community). Political measures and social movements have further brought gay marriage and gender inequality to the forefront of society's understanding; leading businesses have touted the importance of a culturally and racially diverse workforce and community environment. Employers need to stay up to date with ongoing improvements to business practices as well as to national and local policies; businesses that have not stayed current

have found themselves short-handed and less attractive to prospective employees.

### **What Can Adams County Do?**

Adams County, in concert with the Chamber of Commerce and employers, will need to define and offer opportunities for growth and stability when seeking to attract Generation Z employees. This young, diverse generation needs support from older generational knowledge and experience to develop networks and the traits to successfully build their careers. Connecting with University of Wisconsin extension programs, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and Mid-State Technical College for containing education opportunities will greatly benefit youth development in the county.

An easily searchable online source for the wealth of information about Adams County would be highly beneficial. Updating the county website to be more user-friendly and dual Web/mobile platform will allow Gen Z to more readily discover the qualities and benefits that the region currently possesses. This has potential to create a sense of intrigue to discover more about Adams County and its employment opportunities on their own time. Formatting an online presence and user-based technologies for local companies will be a determinate factor for this generation when deciding on employment opportunities. Lastly, shifting the culture to a more equitable and inclusive environment will open employers to a wealth of quality applicants.

## GENERATION X

### Goals of the Generation

Generation X (1961-1981) individuals are in their prime for leadership roles among companies, holding more than half of such positions around the globe (Rise, 2019). They possess wants and attributes like their younger cohorts. These desires include flexible hours, autonomous workflow, and rewarding outcomes. Gen X employees have often defined what the work life balance environment looks like today. They are also the first generation to recognize the importance of diversity in the workforce (Mulvanity, 2001).

### The Standard Bearers

Generation X, the "latchkey" generation, is now the gatekeeper for most workforces. This generation often initiates the priorities, attitudes, rewards, and feedback implemented into a work environment, paving the way for new policies and goals for the future. This group appreciates hands-on projects that embellish their 'can do' attitude.

### What Can Adams County Do?

As Gen X employees will often be the most qualified generation, having most of their work experience behind them, changes in their careers will be made for quality-of-life standards that involve either family or equity. Specific to Adams County, employers and the Chamber should consider the resources they may have or can find to attract this developed workforce. Questions this generation asks of employers include: Can their families be supported? Will the education system help their youth? What community organizations or activities can they involve themselves in? What are the benefits of buying property in this area? Adams County should be prepared to offer services, amenities, and cultural benefits that meet these established needs to better attract this generation.

## **Contributing Factors Affecting Attraction of Workforce**

### **HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE**

Healthcare is important, yet there is a drought of practitioners in the area. Physical and mental healthcare systems in Adam County appear sparse. Adams County has one hospital, Gunderson Moundview Hospital. Gunderson has 25 total beds (DHS, 2020), which is limited when compared to the county population of 20,000 full time residents (Adams County Rural & Industrial Development Commission, 2016). There is one dentistry practice, Adams Family Dentistry. There are a variety of small practitioners in the area with single-person practices. However, there are no major doctors' offices in the area.

There is also a lack of mental health care in the area; an online search reveals three or four solo therapist practices in the area. There are more providers in nearby Wisconsin Dells, however, that can be a long drive for someone in need of assistance.

This lack of healthcare providers is not a problem unique to Adams County, but one seen in similar sized, predominantly rural areas across the nation. This lack of healthcare infrastructure has come to the forefront for employees and employers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rise of

telehealth due to COVID-19 is a great improvement for Adams County. For certain issues, county residents will be able to access mental and physical health services through telehealth. However, the internet quality (described below) might be a limiting factor in receiving telehealth in the area. Additionally, drug and violence problems may intensify if the area lacks crisis care and assistance for mental disorders.

### **INDUSTRY & EMPLOYMENT**

The biggest employers are transportation and utilities, leisure and hospitality, and manufacturing. However, these industries have been unable to attract the interest of younger populations. Construction, natural resources, education, and healthcare are some of the industries that may offer more opportunities for expansion.

Figures 6 and 7 highlight a decreasing employment rate for both the state and the county. Creating additional employment opportunities for local youth by utilizing strategies suggested above may make employment openings more attractive and feasible for diverse applicants.

<b>ECONOMY</b>		<b>LARGEST EMPLOYERS</b>	
<b>County Employment By Industry</b>		<b>Major Employers</b>	
<b>Industry</b>		<b>Name</b>	
Natural Resources	270	Chula Vista Resort	
Construction	563	West Rock	
Manufacturing	1,032	Lake Arrowhead Golf Course	
Trade, Transport. & Utilities	1,607	Allied Cooperative	
Information	81	Market Fresh Buffet	
Financial Activities	311	Terrace Homes	
Professional & Business Services	405		
Education and Health	1,387		
Leisure and Hospitality	1,158		
Other Services	338		
Public Administration	305		

Source: ACS 2015

<b>Employment Trends</b>		
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>
Adams County Labor Force Participation Rate	50.9%	47.0%
Adams County Employed	8,780	7,457
Adams County Unemployed	1,093	839
Adams County Unemployed Rate	11.1%	10.1%
Wisconsin Labor Force Participation Rate	69.0%	67.2%
Wisconsin Unemployment Rate	8.3%	6.3%

Source: ACS 2010 & 2015

FIG. 6

**Adams County Employment**

Source: (Data USA Adams County, 2020) Adams County Guide. (2020). ACS 2010 & 2015

FIG. 7

**Largest Employers in Adams County**

Source: (Data USA Adams County, 2020) Adams County Guide. (2020). ACS 2010 & 2015

**ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES BASED ON ASSESSMENT**

Though a rural area surrounded and isolated by other rural counties, Adams County has a solid economic foundation. A cluster analysis (See Figure 8) shows that coordinated efforts are necessary to support existing businesses and industries as well as a new workforce. Guided by the Adams County Rural & Industrial Development Commission (2016) report (See Figure 8), the three main economic opportunities based on assessment are as follow for Adams County:

**Crop Production and Animal and Aquaculture Production:**

Adams County is famous for its crop production, food production and farm implements. It is one of a few counties in the U.S. that has increased the number of acres for farms in the last few years. It is anticipated that The Gross Rating Point (GRP) will continue to grow for the county in production.

**Corrugated and Solid Fiber Box Manufacturing:**

Paper manufacturing, consisting mostly of Corrugated and Solid Fiber Box Manufacturing, could be considered an emerging industry. The average wage in this industry is \$57,727, well above the county average wage but below the national average of \$74,072 (Economic Development Strategy, 2016). The development of the Paper and Packaging industry provides an opportunity to attract new businesses.

**Food Processing and Manufacturing:**

Adams County ranks third in vegetable sales (potatoes, sweet corn, snap beans) within the state. Cranberries, tree nuts, and berries are also large-scale production crops.

**FIG. 8**  
Adams County Cluster Analysis

Industry	Cluster	2015 Jobs	Average Wages	2014 GRP	Imports \$	Purchases from other industries
<b>Crop, Animal and Aquaculture Production</b>	Agricultural Inputs and Services	551	\$53,073	\$47 million	122 million	Crop Production; Petroleum Refineries; Animal Production and Aquaculture; Farm Labor Contractors and Crew Leaders; and Other Animal Food Manufacturing.
<b>Corrugated and Solid Fiber Box Manufacturing</b>	Paper Manufacturing	259	\$57,727	\$22 million	66 million	Paperboard Mills; Paper Mills; Corporate, Subsidiary, And Regional Managing Offices; Newsprint Mills; and Rail Transportation.
<b>Fruit and Vegetable Canning</b>	Food Processing and Manufacturing	19	71,943	\$3 million	11.8 million	Flavoring Syrup and Concentrate Manufacturing; Fruit and Vegetable Canning; Metal Can Manufacturing; Crop Production; and Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices.

Source: EMSI 2016.2

### What Can Adams County Do?

The county has its own distinct economy and industry which provides many development opportunities. For example, farm industry business could consider flexible, attractive incentive plans for farm workers. Incentive plan characteristics for farm workers could include:

- Wages above and beyond the normal basic wage and privileges
- Programs to mentor and train those interested in agricultural practices and industry work
- Pre-identified percentages of land ownership could be contracted to sign over to an employee after successfully working for a certain number of years, and that
- Payments are based on the performance of the employee, not the performance of the farm

## Infrastructure

### BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Wisconsin is behind other states in supporting its rural areas with broadband services (38th out of the 50 states in internet access). More than 40% of rural residents in Wisconsin lack access to high-speed internet (Mills, 2020). U.S. Census data from 2014-2018 shows that only 71.2% of households in Adams county have a broadband internet subscription (U.S. Census, 2019).

Adams County leaders should consider prioritizing increased broadband infrastructure in the context of attracting workforces. Daily life for contemporary families and professionals, whether for work, entertainment, or decision-making, occurs through reliable broadband

connectivity. Remote work and social connections have increased by needed behavioral changes due to COVID19. Figure 9 provides broadband capabilities with chosen comparative counties in Oregon and Wisconsin. Relating the current broadband infrastructure of Adams County to other counties with relatable socioeconomic structures highlights how successful communities and counties can build from that foundational infrastructure that has become so necessary for today's resources. Although not a direct result of growth, broadband internet enables greater access for small communities to education services, healthcare, job, and other vital resources.



FIG. 9

Comparison of Broadband Speeds in Wisconsin Counties

Source: Broadbandnow.com, Find Internet Providers in Your Area, 2020

### **What Can Adams County Do?**

Currently, the State of Wisconsin allows underserved areas to apply for the Broadband Expansion Grant Program. While the application process for 2020 will be closed by the time this report is submitted, applications will re-open for another \$24 million in grants to be distributed in 2021 by December 2020. State law requires that any municipality seeking grant funding must locate a private partner to receive such grants and implement such infrastructure (Hubbuch, 2020). Adams County should consider applying for the next round of funding in 2021 by working with the Public Service Commission based in Madison.

### **MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES**

The Adams County Strategic Plan highlighted public transportation as a weakness. Lack of investment and maintenance of transportation infrastructure are noted as threats. Adams County has identified pursuing alternative means of transportation as a priority. Such alternatives can be a means of attracting and retaining a different labor force. Following through on multimodal transportation opportunities like those identified below will strengthen the region's bid for diversity in industry and workforce, support an aging population, and provide stronger reliable transportation for more types of labor force employees.

### **What Can Adams County Do?**

Currently, the Wisconsin Public Transit System does not have any routes through Adams County, and transportation options between north and south portions of the county are sparse. However, state and federal

grants may be available through the Federal Formula Grant Program for Rural Areas. Adams County's Transportation Plan includes the potential use of grants as an option to meet certain needs. For example:

#### Rail Access

The strain on transportation in Adams County can be traced as far back as 1857, when the county was bypassed by the railroad to the Wisconsin Dells (Coming of the Railroad, Railroads in Adams County, N.D.). Only one Union Pacific line runs through Adams County. Adams County has a unique opportunity as a rural hub between Chicago and Minneapolis. The county could seek development from industries focused on lumber and building manufacturing, wheat and grain, and plastics to meet Union Pacific's supply chain. Investing in industries that Union Pacific receives and exports could lead to job and skill training opportunities for all workforces.

#### Bicycle Access

Outdoor and recreation opportunities in Adams County boost their seasonal tourism (North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission). Fifteen proposed bike routes are scheduled to be implemented by 2023. Commuter bicycling is unlikely for the current local population and distances between rural towns. Promoting recreational bicycling could highlight the area's beautiful environment and healthy behavioral activity. The county could also be a destination for distance road cyclists who may appreciate the county's natural beauty and reduced road traffic. Such approaches could help diversify the seasonal economic base.

### Bus Transit Access

Adams County recently developed a Transportation Plan to benefit residents who are unable to drive, whether from age or disability. Implementing the Transportation Plan in a coordinated fashion with regional counties can enable greater access to basic needs and health services. Additionally, if Adams County is to engage a more diverse workforce, working families may need multimodal transportation opportunities.

### **HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Comprehensive assessments conducted by Adams County (Economic Development Plan, 2016) identified the need for changes in housing. While the scope of housing needs for Adams County is beyond the framework of this report, identifying land use and commute patterns

regarding workforce populations is relevant. Currently, 63% of the county's workforce commutes from other county residencies. As noted in the Economic Development Plan (2016), "3,816 workers choose to commute rather than move into the county" (p.19).

Additionally, Table 10 reveals that Adams County's population are cost-burdened. Cost-burdened citizens are identified as owners and renters who pay more than 30 percent of their household income divided by total household units (Rental Burdens HUD User, n.d.). Further, Adams County has yet to make a significant recovery from the Recession, whereas Door and Dane Counties have made improvements to being cost-burdened since 2012. This may prohibit citizens from feeling comfortable with their finances, investing in assets, and may stall the local economy.

Wisconsin		Adams		Dane		Door	
2012	2018	2012	2018	2012	2018	2012	2018
40%	33%	42%	39%	41%	34%	45%	32%

**FIG. 10**  
**Cost-burdened\***  
**Citizens by Selected**  
**Counties**

Source: Social Explorer and ACS, 2018

The Economic Development Plan notes that Adams County has one of the highest mobile home unit rates in the state (23% in 2018; See Figure 11). Homeownership plays an integral role in a household's accumulation of wealth (Neal, N.D.). While manufactured housing provides attainable ownership and stability, mobile homes are the only type of home that loses value; owners of mobile homes cannot build equity like traditional homeowners. The six-year average sales price of manufactured homes in Wisconsin from 2014-2019 is \$66,133 (US Census, 2019). The median house value in Wisconsin is \$173,600, while Adams County is \$125,100. Adding more multi-unit households could provide more balance to Adams County's housing unit structure while contributing to a higher median housing value.

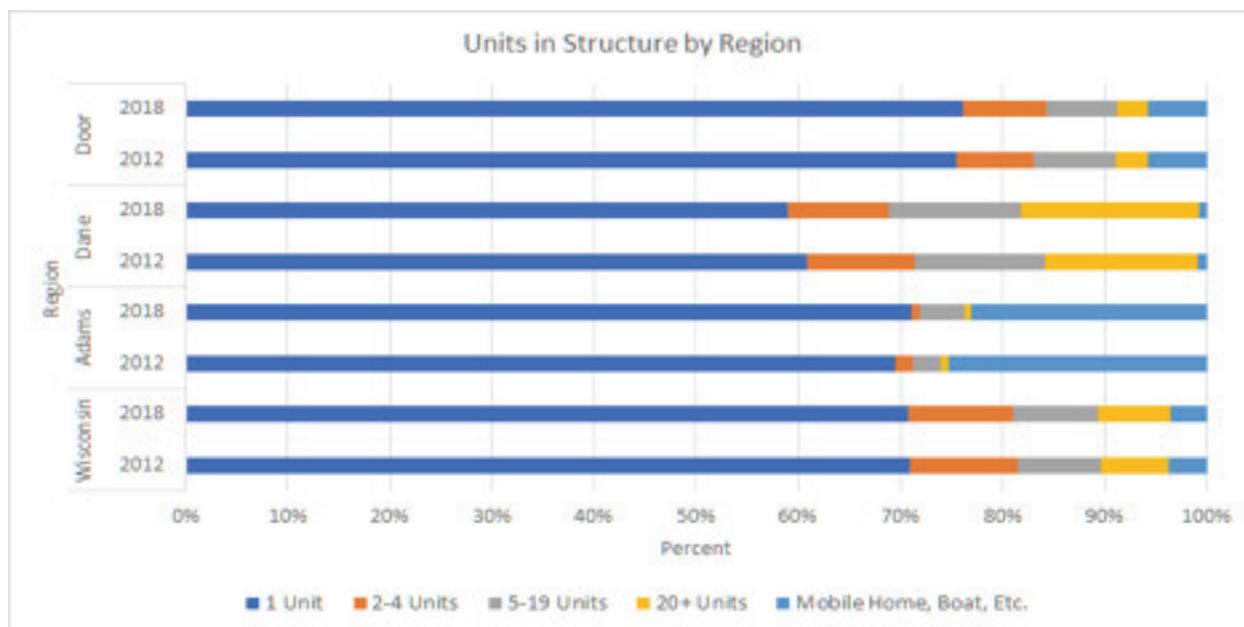


FIG. 11

**Units in Structure by Selected Counties**

Source: Social Explorer and ACS, 2018

Housing tenure in the state of Wisconsin reflects that buying property is attainable and prevalent. Dane County's tenure statistics support that having an economic and commercial hub like Madison within its county promotes homeownership. However, both Adams and Door County possess a number of vacant units. While this can be attributed to their dependencies on tourism and seasonality, this likely creates a huge strain on market-value housing availability while significantly limiting off-season commerce by not utilizing developed lands.

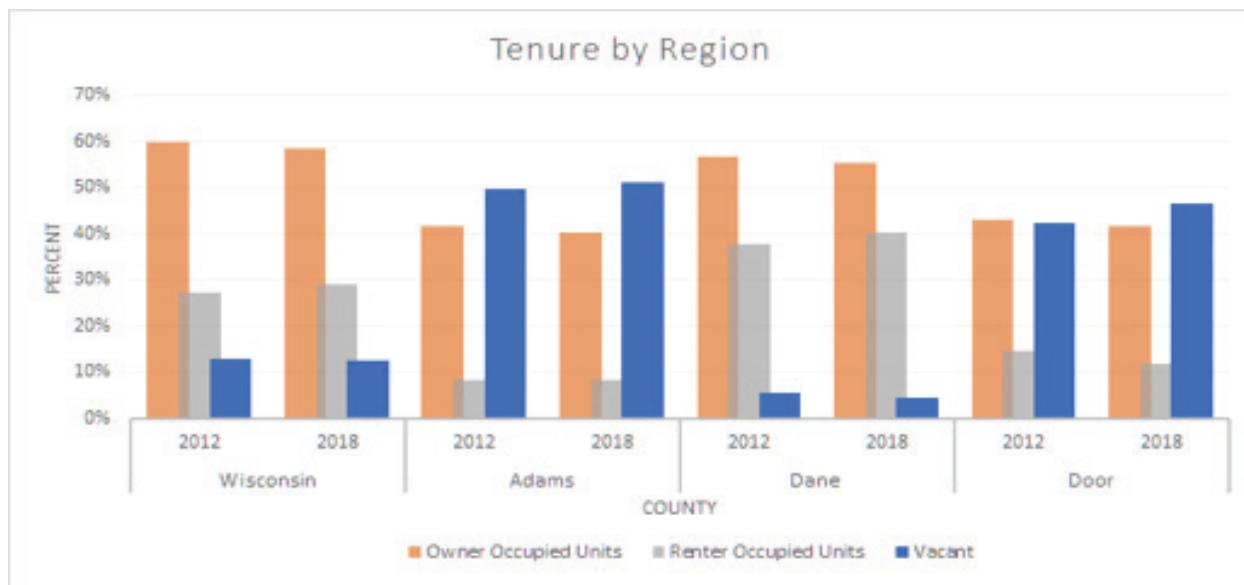


FIG. 12

**Housing Tenure by Selected Counties**

Source: Social Explorer and ACS, 2018

### **What Can Adams County Do?**

Adams County could consider creative approaches to attract new housing unit investors and to fill vacant, seasonal homes on a year-round basis. The Commission and Board could consider lowering the percentage of mobile homes in the county through development of more multi-unit structures. Offering housing options with more stability and equity could raise median household values across the County. Themed, communal structures or designated properties could be an idea to attract newcomers and jumpstart the workforce through housing incentives.

### **MARKETING**

#### **Public Engagement and Approachability**

Marketing and messaging are identifiable issues for the Adams County. Attracting a younger and more diverse population and conveying assets and opportunities through multi-media platforms is helpful to garner their attention and interest. Over the last few years, Adams County has assessed regional needs and created plans to achieve needs, including: a community health assessment needs, a public-transit transportation plan, annual county guides, and more. The county has developed many useful plans for development and guides to their attractions; yet the main website does not necessarily supply all these useful features together. For younger audiences, the website may be their first impression when looking to discover a new place, and the ease or difficulty one finds using a website can often dictate interest going forward.

### **What Can Adams County Do?**

We live in the age of social media; Googling information about a place or topic is often the first action members of younger workforce generations may take. Therefore, updating county websites to be more approachable and user-friendly, offering concise and consolidated information on the region could be inviting to current and potential residents and visitors. Promoting assets such as its' abundant outdoor and recreation opportunities could paint Adams County as a destination place and generate interest and revenue from diverse markets beyond its workforce.

Expanding ongoing exposure on current platforms that younger audiences use regularly, such as Instagram and Facebook, could provide easier access to personal viewership when individuals look to explore the county and what it has to offer.

Consider incentivizing seasonal owners to sell property back to county or city. Adams County's land use issue is potentially related to their seasonal home vacancy rate (See Figure 11). As year-round residences, these homes could inject vibrancy and commerce to the region. Adams County could initiate a buy-back program of housing to jumpstart the opportunity for new families to move into the area.

The Chamber of Commerce or local businesses could consider establishing a program that mentors a team of high school youth to create social media posts. Such a program could support youth training for contemporary jobs across multiple industries, create a sense of responsibility and community belonging in the youth. Students

participants could help identify the marketing, communications, or workforce attractions problems and become a part of the solution. The program could collaborate with local schools to provide academic credit, an internship or practicum, or offer a

monthly stipend for part-time work. This type of program could also be an intergenerational opportunity for learning and job skill development while further establishing social bonds between members of the Baby Boomer generation and Generation Z.

## Comparative Analysis

The following case studies provide comparative analysis of two different counties that have used their geographic location, existing industries, and tourism to increase economic opportunities and a diverse workforce.

### DOOR COUNTY, WISCONSIN

Door County is on a peninsula between Green Bay and Lake Michigan, in the state of Wisconsin. It is known for its long shoreline and many parks. While many recognize Door County as a vacation destination, it is also known for its thriving business climate energized with companies whose products are marketed locally and globally. Door County's website provides a strong example of website communications with visitors and residents.

Figure 13 identifies the county's local businesses categories. These categories are intended to attract tourists and local young people to a beautiful and active county that is also one that is organic and supports small businesses. Creating an online work engagement tool has been extremely beneficial for Door County.

FIG. 13  
Door County Website  
Source: Destination Door County, 2020

The screenshot shows the Destination Door County website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for DESTINATION DOOR COUNTY, DISCOVER, EXPERIENCE, DINE, STAY, EVENTS, MY TRIPS, and a search icon. Below the navigation, there is a section titled "Lodging Vacancy Calendar" with fields for "Arrival" and "Departure". To the right, it says "Showing 1108 results" and lists letters A through Y for filtering. A green button labeled "Lodging Availability" is visible. On the left, there is a sidebar titled "Categories" with a list of business types: Lodging (selected), Dining, Recreation, Art, Shopping, Service, Water Activities, Wedding, and Groups & Meetings. Below this is a section titled "Communities" with a link to "All of Door County" and a "Deselect All" option. The main content area displays two business profiles: "Fat Belly" and "Fat Louie's Olive Oil Company". Each profile includes a thumbnail image, the business name, address, a brief description, and contact information (Email, Phone, Visit Website). There is also a "+ My Trip" button next to each profile.

## **What Can Adams County Do?**

Adams County can engage local businesses and residents in identifying and describing attractive local features and amenities. Such descriptions can then be used to differentiate Adams County from other destinations in the state.

### **HOOD RIVER, OREGON:**

Hood River, OR is located along the Columbia River Gorge and the Cascades Mountains at the border of Washington and Oregon. As of the 2018 census, the county population was 23,267. They have been very successful in creating an economically thriving environment ideal for small businesses as well as young people with families. (City of Hood River, 2020). Marketing and public engagement attributes that have made the town popular with younger generations is described in this case study.

### **Factors Affecting Attraction of Workforce**

#### Tourism & Development:

Hood River is a one-hour commute to the urban center of Portland, OR. The area offers scenic views, access to outdoor recreation, an attractive downtown, and a small-town feel.

Opportunities for outdoor recreation, agricultural tourism, and other attractions are abundant, including scenic hiking and mountain biking trails, craft breweries and farm-to-table bounty. (Hood River County Chamber of Commerce, 2019).

#### Economy:

The City of Hood River and Hood River County economies mainly consist of forestry, agriculture, wine, technology, outdoor gear and active-wear companies, as well as tourism from recreation opportunities. The area is an internationally known destination for outdoor recreation—windsurfing, kiteboarding, sailing, and hiking. (Port of Hood River, 2020)

#### Engagement:

Hood River followed an intentional community engagement process to meet their growth and promotional goals. They first identified supporters and opponents of initially discussed goals. They also established direct opportunities for community feedback regarding improvements of goals and methods. They also established markers of short-term success; celebrations among advocates and community members were offered when goals were met.

## **What Can Adams County Do?**

Hood River provides an example of successfully marketing a small town and its surrounding county as a destination spot to comfortably settle down and raise a family. Adams County could similarly highlight the excellent agricultural and outdoor recreation niches and low cost of living. Adams County has an advantage similar to Hood River: They are close to metropolitan areas such as Milwaukee, WI; Chicago, IL; and Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN. Stronger intentional digital promotion and marketing could attract workforce populations from locations like these for work or family life or for opportunities to start a business.

## **Recommendations**

### **AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION**

Addressing the issues reflected in this report requires a two-pronged, cohesive, and community-driven directive. A bottom-up approach should be considered for businesses and employers to prepare for a younger and more diverse work force. Additionally, the Adams County Board should strongly consider addressing infrastructure and social service needs in a top-down approach to meet identified community needs. We believe that the combination of business, community, and county official-driven efforts will connect residents and foster understanding of newcomers, which will promote a sense of long-term belonging. With these efforts, Adams County could be an example for similar rural regions in America.

The following recommendations are listed in order of priority, both in implementation and in response to the scope of work. Adams County Board and Chamber members can consider these recommendations in short and long-term planning efforts.

### **For Small Businesses and Employers:**

This section focuses on more immediate objectives that small businesses could incorporate in their workforce navigation “tool kits.” Local business and employers should consider:

**1)** Creating new policies and benefits within their organizations targeted towards the new workforce. This includes:

- Highlighting professional, growth-oriented positions.
- Creating support and guidance networks between older and younger employees.
- Advocating for social and health services to meet growing families’ needs.
- Collaborating with university extension and training programs to provide experience for youth and young professionals entering the workforce.
- Incentivize employment benefits and livability/lifestyle opportunities for prospective employees. Incentives fall into two categories. “General” incentives are those that support all employees and are highly attractive to young, diverse applicants. “Unique to Adams Co.” incentives are those that offer opportunities to employees unavailable in other locations.
  - General incentives include:
    - Sick Leave: COVID-19 has made employees rethink what type of sick time they can take off work. Offering regular paid sick leave and emergency sick leave when an employee or their family members are ill are significant incentives.
    - Insurance Plan: Company based insurance policies are always attractive. Alternatively, the Affordable Care Act allows low-income employees to afford health care if unprovided through an employer. Plan premium options and where employees can afford to purchase an insurance program should be taken into consideration. Preferred providers on the insurance plan should be readily available in the area through limited travel or telehealth options that work in Adams County.

- 401K Match: Collapsing economies over the last decade have reaffirmed younger employees' desire for pensions, social security, or IRAs to prepare for an affordable retirement. Offering a 401K match shows the company is committed to planning for the employee's future.
- Salary: Millennials, and most likely Gen Z, frequently change jobs for a 20% or 30% salary increase (Harvard Business Review, 2016). Increasing wages at these levels or above will make employment opportunities in Adams County more attractive to prospective employees.
- Time off: Employees of all ages want work life balance. Businesses can offer generous vacation time and both encourage and allow their use.
- Possible incentives unique to Adams County, though there is no research to support "fun" incentives, they are enjoyed anecdotally. Some potential incentives could be:
  - Memberships or passes to the county's abundant recreation facilities such as golf courses, tennis grounds, ATV routes, or state parks.
  - Annual passes to lakes and campgrounds.
  - Fishing or hunting licenses.
  - Supplying apparel and equipment or rental passes for recreation, such as kayaks, fishing rods, golf clubs, bicycles, helmets, motorcycles, etc.
- **Encouraging Diversity**
  - Educate and train staff at all levels on successful workforce diversity practices.
  - Identify diversity goals together; track progress toward these goals.
  - Celebrate a multicultural office culture and the unique backgrounds and perspectives each employee brings.
  - Be welcoming and practice hospitality to all employees.
  - Hire diverse applicants as managers and high-ranking staff members

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2) Create a small-business coalition, amplifying the need for county infrastructure to attract new workforce.

- Local businesses should consider looking inward for improvements, yet employers cannot attract a new workforce alone. Adams County should consider the facilities, amenities, and services prepared to meet a new workforce's needs. The county may respond to meet those needs if small businesses in the county unite around a common message.
- The Coalition could work with the Adams County Board or Chamber to develop a coordinated and comprehensive Young Professional Group and a Family Outreach Plan that focuses on youth development and education, mental health and healthcare capacity services, housing affordability, and employment and industry growth.
- Collaborate with the Adams County Board of Supervisors to complete previously identified strategic priorities. The small-business coalition can help monitor progress on the 2019 strategic priorities identified by the County Board. Fulfilling the following priorities should meet many of the new workforce needs:

- 1.** Clear Communication—Offer clear, accurate information to address misinformation or rumors.
- 2.** Thriving Economy—Diversify the local economy to provide economic opportunity for all residents.
- 3.** Embracing Technology--Update and modernize county policies, processes, and equipment.
- 4.** Robust Infrastructure--Provide adequate county facilities for services to residents.
- 5.** Housing Diversity—Offer varied living options for all life stages throughout the county.
- 6.** Attract Talent--Create a community that draws people to live and work.
- 7.** Moving Forward—Be future oriented. Tell the story of county assets.
- 8.** Environmental Sustainability--Blend county safeguards and resource utilization
- 9.** Drug Crisis—Address this issue.
- 10.** Break the Cycle--Change generational factors leading to long-term dependence on assistance programs.

**For Adams County Board, Community, and Chamber Members:**

Employer progress relies on county support to prepare and promote a new workforce. The County Board, county residents, and members of the Chamber all have different roles that must work together in order to achieve a coordinated result. The Adams County Board must work on managing infrastructure, stimulating the economy, and guiding government and policy to attract the new workforce. The community must stay active and communicate with the County Board and make sure their wants and needs are heard. Community members also have responsibility in making county culture welcoming and friendly. Chamber Members must help coordinate the power of local businesses, create high quality jobs, and innovate to stimulate the economy.

Recommendations in this section are both short- and long-term objectives that the County Board and Chamber should consider. They are not necessarily the responsibility of a specific organization but include all stakeholders. Following these steps is crucial for the economic development as well as the social uplift and unification of the area.

- Establish connections and growth opportunities with University of Wisconsin and Mid-State Technical College to attract younger diverse workforce.
  - Higher education institutions are economic hubs, partnering to form programs that allow students to get involved with the local economy, and to learn from small businesses and industry professionals. Consider a local mentorship program that allows students to get coaching and mentoring from community or university members. This could also include experiential learning programs like job shadowing, internships, or guided short-term projects.
  - Create an international student mentorship program within local businesses or government offices. This type of program may bring more diversity and innovation to the county and help create awareness of and engagement with international cultures. Experiences with students from other cultures may assist local businesses in responding to the needs of various populations.

- **Amplify the County's commitment to attracting a new workforce.**
  - Diversify County and Chamber staff. Symbolic representation matters. Confidence, belonging, and engagement are increased for young and diverse employees when they see someone who looks like them or has had similar life experiences. Consider ways to add youth, gender, and ethnic representation on committees that advise the County.
  - Add educational opportunities for county commissioners and citizens on the importance of access, inclusion, and equity for a future workforce as well as economic growth and social stability.
  - Establish diversity goals and related metrics for the county. Measure and track process toward these goals.
  - Celebrate the various multicultural backgrounds of county residents.
  - Create collaborations between the younger and the senior generations to increase understanding and empathy for each other's differences and, by extension, others living in the county.
- **Identify funding opportunity resources for infrastructure needs specific to broadband, housing, and transportation.**
  - Broadband: Identify a broadband provider partner and apply for state funding with the Public Service Commission.
  - Housing: Provide more flexible housing options, according to the community's needs. Seek developers who are interested in financing housing developments to meet those needs.
  - Transportation: Create an alternative transportation system to improve accessibility and opportunity. Adams County should investigate partnering with neighboring counties, Union Pacific, and state parks to seek funding from State of Wisconsin grants and resources for multimodal transit systems.
- **Consolidate and update county website information to serve as a resource for potential employees.**
  - Adams County has done tremendous work to address issues of need for their residents, creating short and long-term goals that are realistic, pragmatic, and attainable. Placing and then highlighting this work on county websites and social media forums could help showcase abundant recreation opportunities, housing affordability, and ease of living to potential employees, tourists, and others attracted to Adams County as a destination.

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