

## Introduction

### I. Town Profile

The Town of Cross Plains is located in west-central Dane County (Map 1-1). The terminal moraine, or farthest westward extent of the most recent ice age glacier runs



through the northeastern corner of the township making most of the town a part of the 20,000 sq. mile area known as the Driftless Area. As a consequence, the topography of the Town of Cross Plains is one of broad, flat valleys with productive agricultural soils bordered by steep hills and coulees (Map 1-2).

While the area was likely an Oak-Savannah ecological community prior

to territorial settlement, today it is a landscape of agricultural fields on hilltops and valley floors. There are stands of hardwood forest and some pines on the steep slopes of hills and coulees. Two large valleys are formed by the Black Earth Creek watershed in the northern half of the town, and the Sugar River watershed in the southern half. As an unglaciated landscape, the Driftless Area is of considerable geological and biological interest, and there is a Cross Plains Unit of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve and a newly designated Cross Plains State Park within the Town of Cross Plains.

The rural settlement of Pine Bluff is located within the south-central part of the Town of Cross Plains, and the Village of Cross Plains adjoins the town on its northern boundary. The Village of Cross Plains is the only incorporated village providing sewer and water services that adjoins the Town of Cross Plains. Although the Town of Cross Plains does have two residential subdivisions within it, these areas have no sewer services.

### II. Planning History

The Town of Cross Plains adopted the existing *Town of Cross Plains Comprehensive Plan* in 2009. The town plan was also adopted by the Dane County Board of Supervisors as part of the *Dane County Comprehensive Plan*.

This comprehensive plan is intended to aid the Plan Commission and Town Board in matters related to the growth and development of the Town.

### III. Plan Updates

As per Wisconsin's comprehensive planning legislation, the Town will review and update the *Comprehensive Plan* at least every ten years. Changing conditions and

experiences in the Town will be noted and adjustments will be made to the *Comprehensive Plan* text and maps.



## CHAPTER 1: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### I. Background and Existing Conditions

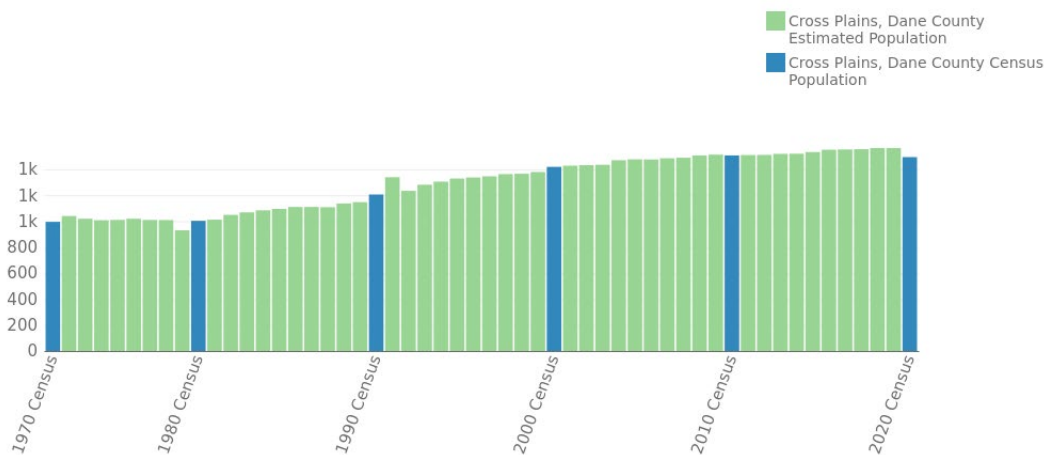
#### Population Trends and Projections

The Town of Cross Plains experienced minor losses in population in the decades 1940 to 1960; however from 1960 to 1970 the population grew by more than 16%. The following decade saw a very modest population growth rate of 1.4%, but between 1980 and 1990, the population grew by more than 30%, the largest surge in growth since 1940. From 1990 to 2000, the population has grown by 7.5%. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) projects an average annual population growth rate of about 0.77% over the next 20 years for the Town of Cross Plains. Between 2005 and 2025 the town is projected to grow by 248 people, or 16.6%.

Chart 1-1: Population Growth

#### Population Estimates over Time

1970-2020



Data source: Wisconsin Population and Housing Estimates

Image produced by GetFacts.wisc.edu, a product of the Applied Population Lab

Table 1-A: 2013 Population Projections for Surrounding Communities

Municipality	2020 Census	2025	2030	2035	2040
Town of Cross Plains	1,494	1,630	1,670	1,695	1,710
Town of Middleton	6,792	7,180	7,635	8,000	8,330
Town of Springdale	2,056	2,205	2,315	2,400	2,470
Town of Berry	1,168	1,185	1,200	1,205	1,205
Town of Vermont	871	835	840	840	830
Village of Cross Plains	4,104	3,965	4,125	4,230	4,320

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

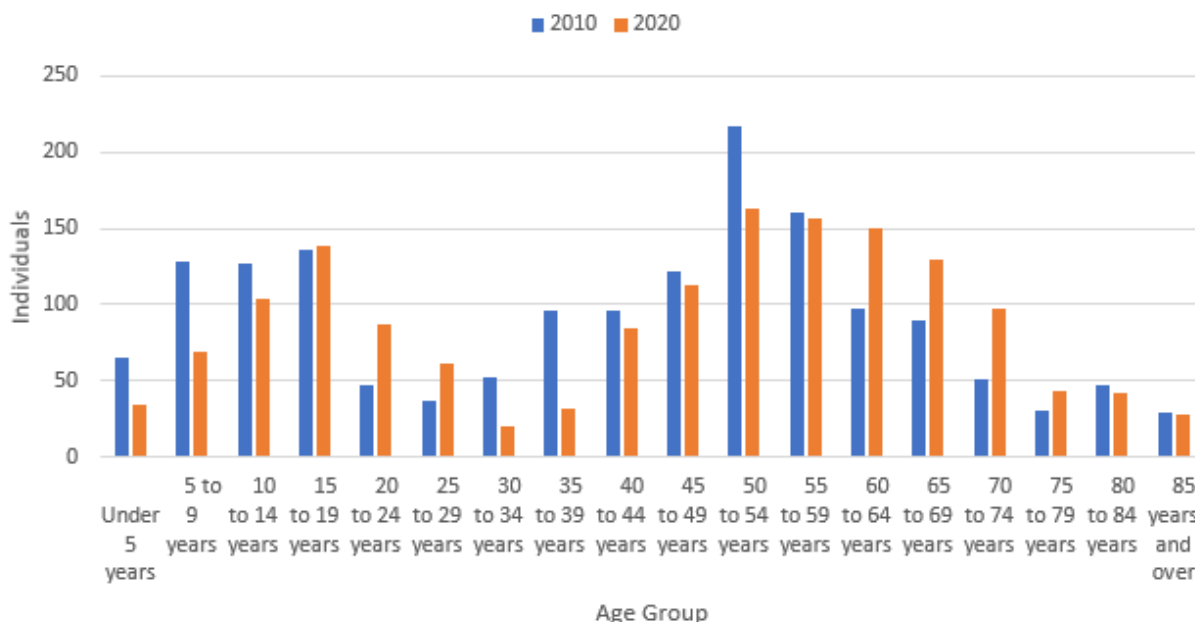
Demographic Trends

Age

The median age of the Town of Cross Plains’ population has increased from about 46.2 years in 2010 to 50.5 years in 2020. (2010 it was 46.1) By comparison, the median age in Dane County over the same period increased from 34.3 to 35.2 years of age.

As might be expected from the change in median age, the main difference in age demography of the Town of Cross Plains from 2010 to 2020 is an increase in all age groups 60 years of age and older. In comparison with Dane County, the Town of Cross Plains in both 1990 and 2020 censuses showed fewer individuals aged 20 years to 45 years. The Town of Cross Plains is likely to have an increasing proportion of its population over 65 years of age, with an increasing demand on social services, and more retirees living on a fixed income.

Chart 1-2: Age Cohorts 1990-2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates 2010, ACS 5-year estimates 2020

**Ethnic Minorities**

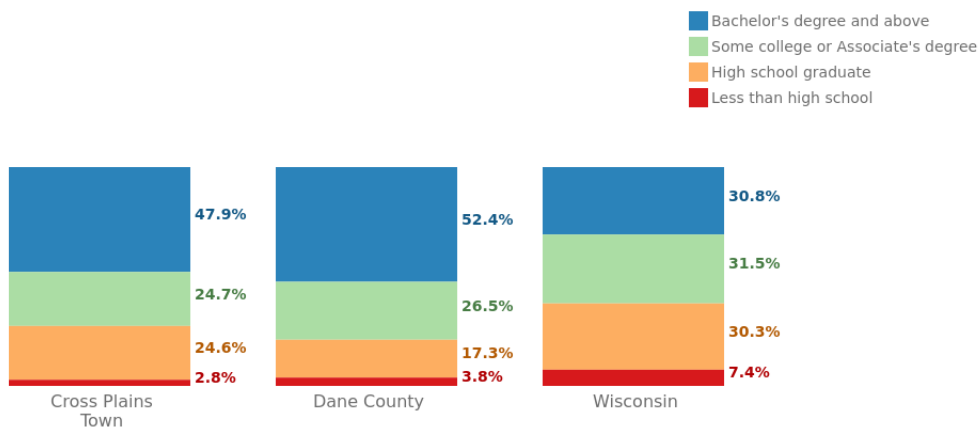
U. S. Census data show that the minority population of the Town of Cross Plains is 7% of the total population. The census shows 11 self-identified racial groups other than white, with African American (3.1%) and Asian (0.7%) being the most frequent after the 98% White population group.

**Education**

Educational attainment is similar to the County as a whole; 97.2% of Town of Cross Plains residents 25 years or older hold a high school diploma or higher degree. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of Town of Cross Plains residents with bachelor’s, graduate or professional degrees, grew by 25.

### Educational Attainment (for Population 25 Years and Over)

2016-2020 5-Year Estimate



Data source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates - S1501  
 Image produced by GetFacts.wisc.edu, a product of the Applied Population Lab

### Income

Household income levels in the Town of Cross Plains are similar to other comparable towns in Dane County. The Town of Cross Plains’ median household annual income in 2020 was \$116,936, substantially above the Dane County median of \$101,806, but comparable to neighboring towns. According to the U.S. Census data, 23 individuals or 1.7% of Town of Cross Plains’ total population were living below the poverty level.

Table 1-C: Median Household Income, 2020

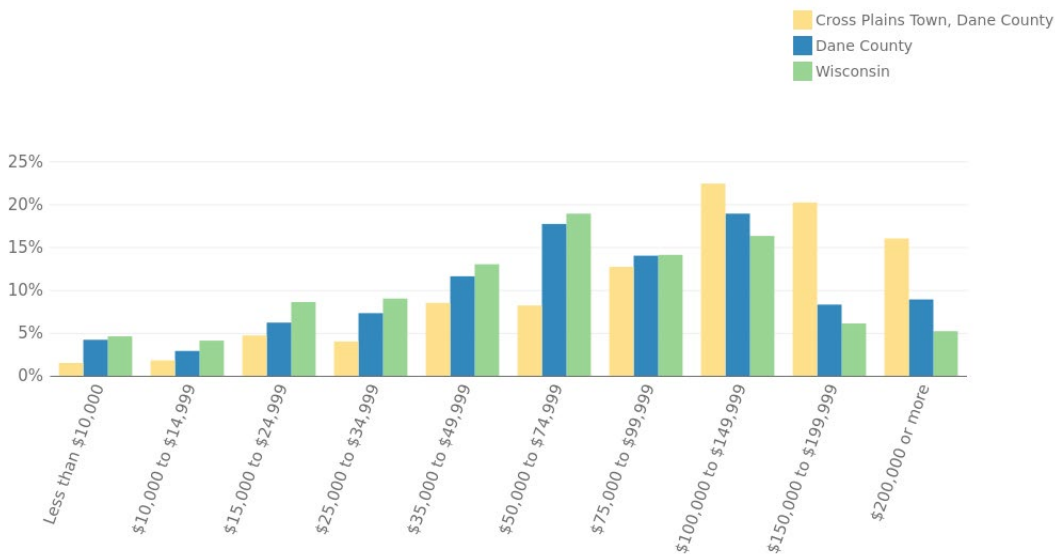
Municipality	Median Household Income
Town of Cross Plains	\$116,936
Town of Middleton	\$160,948
Town of Springdale	\$123,889
Town of Vermont	\$120,227
Town of Berry	\$101,830
Village of Cross Plains	\$106,500
Dane County	\$101,806

Source: APL: 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates - DP03

Chart 1-4: Household Income, 2022

### Household Income Distribution

2016-2020 5-Year Estimate

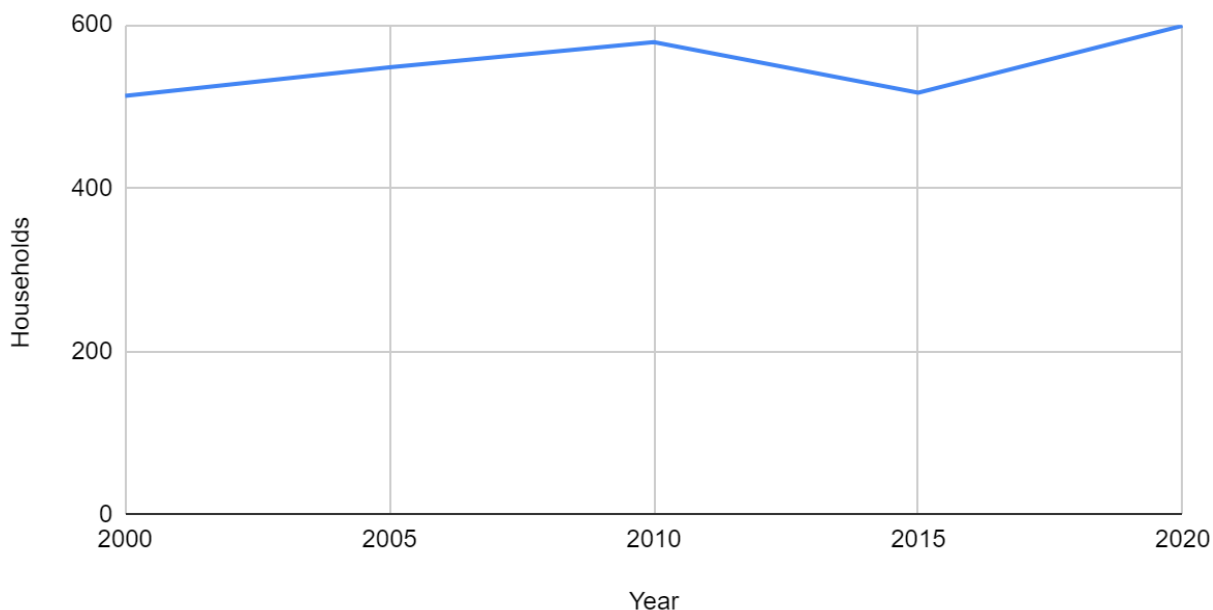


Data source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates - DP03  
 Image produced by GetFacts.wisc.edu, a product of the Applied Population Lab

### Housing and Household Trends

The number of households in the Town of Cross Plains increased from 579 in 2010 to 599 in 2020, an increase of 3.45%. However, mean household size in 2010 was 2.60 persons, which decreased to 2.41 persons in 2020. This change mirrors a national trend in decreasing size of households. WDOA projects the number of households in the Town of Cross Plains to grow from 513 in 2000, to 655 in 2025, a growth of 27.6%.

Chart 1-5: Number of Households, 2000-2020



### Labor Force and Employment Trends

The Town of Cross Plains’ labor forces includes those individuals over the age of 16 who are currently employed or who are available for work. Of the Town of Cross Plains’ total labor force of 839 people, 14 persons, or 1.67%, were unemployed as of the 2020 census.

Between 2010 and 2020, the total labor force in the Town of Cross Plains decreased by 7.3%. However, there were marked changes in the occupations of town residents. Most notable are an increase of 128% in the number of persons employed in retail, and a 68% decline in the number of persons employed in information technology (IT).

Between 2000 and 2025, the Town of Cross Plains is projected to grow by over 300 new residents. If current trends continue, it is likely that the bulk of these new residents will be employed in management and professional occupations, service occupations, and sales and office occupations, working outside Town of Cross Plains in the cities of Madison, Middleton or other nearby municipalities. While these jobs will likely be available in the nearby communities, these residents will be daily commuters who will add to the need for transportation infrastructure.

The Town of Cross Plains has a large gravel extraction site, several quarries, a landscape contracting business, a trailer manufacturing facility, and several taverns within its boundaries. Most of the land in Town of Cross Plains is devoted to agricultural production. We anticipate that the employment related to all these activities will



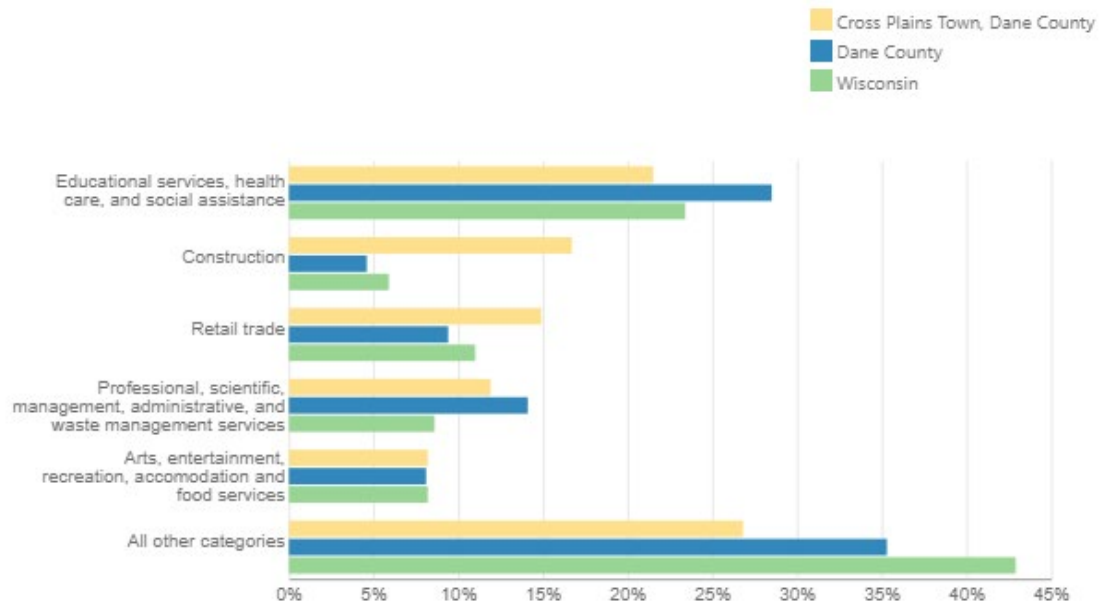
continue at its present level, and provide employment within the town.

**Table 1-C: Occupation**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census

**Employment by Industry**

2016-2020 5-Year Estimate



Data source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates - DP03

## II. Key Planning Issues and Overall Goals

### *Public Participation Process*

At the very beginning of the planning process, the town adopted a public participation plan (see Appendix A). This plan included development of a plan steering committee, and various methods of ensuring participation, including a newsletter, website, community survey, an open house and a public hearing.

The survey generated useful input into the comprehensive planning effort. Surveys were distributed to 1,000 residents, and 575 responded, a 58% return rate. Residents were asked if they agreed with the overall goals identified in the 1981 Town of Cross Plains Land Use Plan. Results indicated strong majorities supported the original goals. Detailed results included:

- 84% agreed or strongly agreed that the town should seek to “Preserve the productive farmlands in the town for continued agricultural use.”
- 86% agreed or strongly agreed that the town should seek to “Protect farms from

conflict with incompatible uses.”

- 84% agreed or strongly agreed that the town should seek to “Control sporadic development.”
- 92% agreed or strongly agreed that the town should seek to “Protect the natural environment.”
- 87% agreed or strongly agreed that the town should seek to “Maintain the rural character of the town.”
- 87% agreed or strongly agreed that the town should seek to “Avoid substantial expenditure of public funds for urban development.”

*Detailed analysis of survey results is available in Appendix 1.*

#### **Overall Goals**

- Preserve the productive farmlands in the town for continued agricultural use.
- Protect farm operations from conflict with incompatible uses.
- Protect the natural environment.
- Control sporadic development.
- Maintain the rural character of the town.
- Avoid significant expenditure of public funds for urban development.