

- LEGEND**
- River and Water Bodies
  - Wetlands
  - River Floodplain: County
  - River Floodplain: Observed
  - Drainage Paths
  - Steep Slopes (10-15%)
  - Soil Contamination
  - Elevations

### Market Strengths and Opportunities

Baker Tilly Virchow Krause prepared a market analysis to understand the local Merrill market’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Baker Tilly Virchow Krause presented the market strengths and opportunities at each community meeting.

In summary, Merrill is experiencing:

- Aging population and higher median income
- Shift in employment centers
- High tax rate
- Some retail leakage in niche industries
- Projected need for future senior-focused and market rate housing

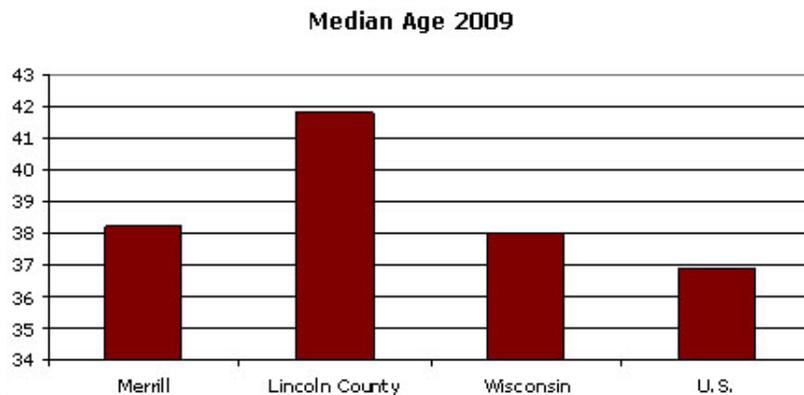
#### Demographics

The population for the City of Merrill has remained relatively constant since 2000; however the number of households has

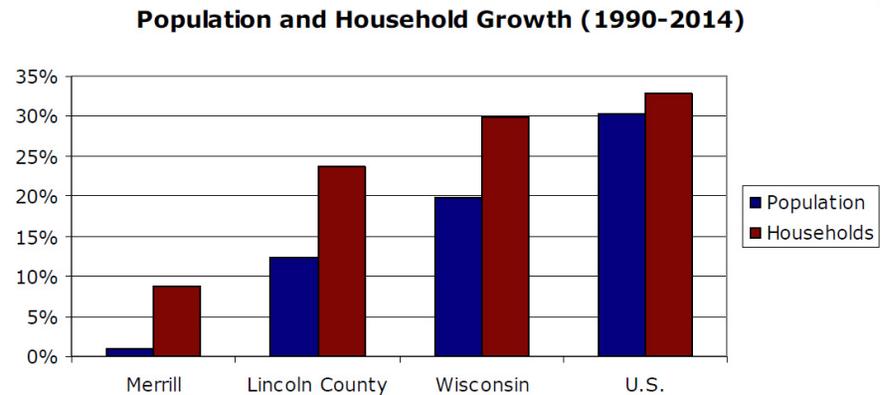
increased over this time period. Although neither rate of growth is keeping pace with Lincoln County, the State of Wisconsin or the nation, the upward trend of households is a positive indicator for the local market and for revitalization efforts in Merrill.

Merrill households have experienced growth in median income which has outpaced the County, State and nation. Income growth from 2000-2009 in Merrill has nearly doubled the inflation rate over this same time period. This increase in income is also a positive sign for the local market.

City of Merrill and Lincoln County residents are older than residents across the State and nation. According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, this may trend have material impacts for the future workforce of Lincoln County as older workers retire. The fastest growing age demographic is the 45-74 age group. The younger 20-24 age demographic has increased since 2000 and the 25-34 population is projected to continue this increase.



Source: US Census Bureau, ESRI BIS estimates for 2009



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*Employment*

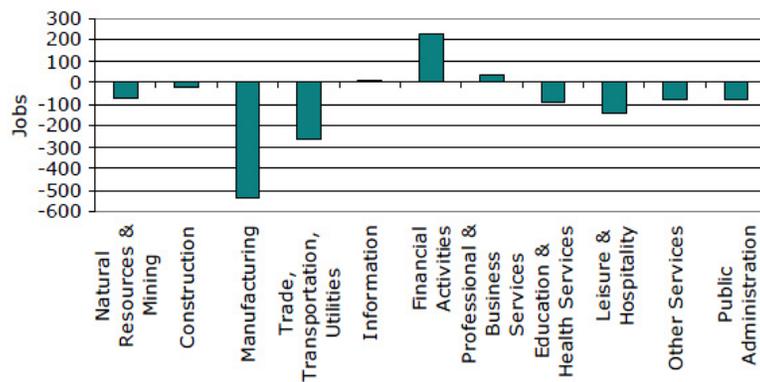
From 1970 – 2001 employment grew and outpaced population growth in Lincoln County. Beginning in 2001 employment started to decline while population continued to grow slightly.

From 2001-2008, Lincoln County lost 1,002 jobs or 8% of its employment base. Manufacturing, which currently accounts for approximately 30% of the County’s workforce, has accounted for 53% of the County’s job loss since 2001 (535 jobs). This loss is 14% of the sector’s total employment in the County. Manufacturing has historically supplied well-paying jobs (average wage \$40,580) to area residents primarily in wood product manufacturing. This loss has contributed to the current

11.6% unemployment rate which is significantly higher than the State and nation rates at 8.8% and 9.4% respectively.

While the Manufacturing sector has lost jobs, positive signs of growth have been seen in the Financial Activities sector. This

**Lincoln County Employment Change (2001-2008)**



Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Workforce Training, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

sector gained 231 jobs from 2001-2008. The majority of these jobs have been in the insurance subsector which paid an average wage of \$44,990 in 2008. The growth of this sector is a positive sign for the County as it provides well paying jobs (average annual wages of \$39,214).

There are more workers than jobs in Lincoln County as the number of jobs in the County was only 90% of its total workforce in 2000. This percentage decreased from 94% in the 1990 Census. The majority of residents that leave the County for work head south to Marathon County. In 2000, 20% of Lincoln County residents traveled to Marathon County for work as compared to 14% in 1990.

*Property Tax and Equalized Value*

The City of Merrill has a higher property tax rate than all of the Towns that surround the City. A \$100,000 home in the City of Merrill would pay approximately \$2,467 in annual property taxes compared to \$1,538 - \$1,624 in the surrounding

**Tax Rate Comparison**

City/Town	Full Value Effective Rate per \$1,000
City of Merrill	24.67
Town of Merrill	15.38
Town of Pine River	16.24
Town of Scott	16.17
City of Wausau	24.00
City of Baraboo	20.24
City of Chippewa Falls	18.26
City of Menomonie	21.10
City of Wisconsin Rapids	23.50
City of Marshfield	21.47

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue